Improve Your Positional Chess

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Symbols

+ check  Wch world team championship
++ double check  Ech European championship
# checkmate  Echt European team championship
!! brilliant move  ECC European Clubs Cup
! good move  Ct candidates event
?? interesting move  IZ interzonal event
?? dubious move  Z zonal event
? bad move  OL olympiad
?? blunder  jr junior event
+- White is winning  wom women’s event
± White is much better  rpd rapidplay game
± White is slightly better  tt team tournament
= equal position  sim game from simultaneous display
þ Black is slightly better  corr. correspondence game
♯ Black is much better  1-0 the game ends in a win for White
→ Black is winning  ½-½ the game ends in a draw
Ch championship  0-1 the game ends in a win for Black
Cht team championship  (n) nth match game
Wch world championship  (D) see next diagram

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Foreword and Acknowledgements

Thanks for picking this book up. I’m sure that with careful study it will help you understand the intricacies of positional chess much better and guide you to making better decisions throughout the course of all of your games.

The process that ended with the creation of this work has been long, starting back when, barely eleven years old, I picked up a copy of Nimzowitsch’s My System. I didn’t understand everything Nimzowitsch wrote about, but I can now see how it shaped my understanding of chess. One’s education in chess never ends; I continue to be amazed by the insights by other great chess authors like Dvoretsky, Nunn, Shereshevsky and Watson, to mention but a few.

Many people deserve to be thanked; my mother, who taught me to play chess; and my father, who helped me understand chess better and helped me understand the value of working on your game on your own. My brother gave me the first motivation to study, by winning a prize in a tournament where I didn’t win any and has since then been one of my biggest supporters. Many thanks to my chess friends and analysis partners, together with whom I have uncovered more secrets of the game than we could have done on our own. Also thanks to Stephanie, who kept me at the fire and helped me focus. Finally, my deepest gratitude to the Gambit team, Murray Chandler, John Nunn and Graham Burgess, for taking a chance on me back in 1998, and for their patience with me and for the hard work they have put into all phases of my books.

Carsten Hansen
Hackensack, New Jersey, November 2004
Introduction

Tactics is what you do when there is something to do; strategy is what you do when there is nothing to do.
Savielly Tartakower

What is Positional Chess?

Let’s start out by defining what we are about to discuss in this book. Positional chess refers to all the elements in chess that go into the evaluation of a position, and into the assessment of which plan and strategy is best in a given position.

I know, this doesn’t really tell you much, but I just suggest you keep this in mind as you work your way through the book. An individual topic may look a bit out of touch with the overall subject of positional chess, but as you pull the threads together, it should hopefully make sense.

So what are we looking at?

Think for a little while about which factors you consider when you evaluate a position. How many of the following elements made it into your mental checklist?

• Material Balance/Imbalance
• Pawn-Structure
• Pawn Distribution
• Isolated Pawns
• Backward/Hanging Pawns
• Passed Pawns
• Piece Coordination
• Piece Distribution
• King Safety
• Development
• Weak Squares
• Weak Colour Complex
• Open Files
• Control of Ranks/Diagonals
• Good vs Bad Pieces
• Initiative
• Control of Centre
• Kingside Potential
• Queenside Potential

More could be mentioned, but I shall stop here. Even if you had most of them, I am sure there are still things to learn or to be improved on. Even the strongest players keep working on their understanding of the game. If you are serious about getting better, which I assume you are since you bought this book, you will need to do the same. How strong you become not only depends on how much time and effort you put into it, but also how well you understand what you have worked on and how you apply it to your game when you play.
In this book I shall go through a lot of examples illustrating a variety of elements, themes, ideas, etc. I suggest that you don't rush through the examples, but rather take time to evaluate each position and make up your mind as to who has the better position, and what you would play if you had the position in one of your own games.

**Chess is 99% Tactics**

This claim was first made by Richard Teichmann, and has since been repeated hundreds of times in a variety of books of all sorts by all kinds of authors. Yet I shall allow myself to disagree, as I think it is, at best, misguided. The reason I think so is because the tactics normally exist because of an imbalance in one or more positional factors. Nimzowitsch once wrote: "Positional play and combinative play have to support each other," and he continues: "To play positional chess is to make a claim of the following kind: 'I'm better centralized than my opponent' or 'my opponent is weak on the light squares' and so on. But one thing is to make the claim, another is to prove it. And now it should be, as some kind of peculiarity, observed, that positional play doesn't always have the sufficient capacity to make the proof. Often enough it will come about without any difficulty; e.g. the centralization will force the opponent to seek to lighten the pressure through 'restrained' exchanges: as a result, several tempi are lost and the centralized party will obtain a superior endgame... but there are also other cases where the positional superiority cannot be demonstrated by positional play. In these cases the combinative play will have to assist. In this we see the deeper importance of combinative play; isn't it wonderful that combinative play, despite its explosive dynamite-filled content, in a way still applies to positional play!"

The 2nd World Champion, Emanuel Lasker, once wrote: "By combination the master aims to show up and defeat the false values; the true values shall guide him in positional play, which in turn shall bring those values to honour."

I think that chess is at least 90% based on positional factors.

While tactics are considered relatively easy to study, positional chess has an altogether different standing in most people's minds. Tactics can easily be practised; most chess magazines have a regular feature with combination puzzles to solve, but for positional chess nothing similar can be found. Yet had it not been for the positional imbalances and weaknesses in a given position, the combination would not exist. So while we are being spoon-fed with examples of various combination patterns and themes, little is passed on to us about how we can most easily determine whether a combination can be expected to be found or not.

In this book, I shall show you what to look out for to help evaluate positions relatively quickly. This will not only help you with your positional play, strategy and planning, but also the tactical side of your game.

I shall get back to that shortly. But for now, let's look a little forward at how this book is organized, and what you can expect from the chapters.

The book is divided into four parts:

- Part 1: General Terms
- Part 2: Relative Value of Pieces
- Part 3: Dealing with Pawns
- Part 4: Big Decisions

Each part contains three to four chapters, each covering a different topic. I shall explain the theory and understanding of the topic in question based on games taken from contemporary master play. The games include some by players such as Kramnik, Karpov, Petrosian, Larsen, Andersson and several other of my favourite players, but also a lot of games feature players you may not be so familiar with.

At the end of each chapter, there will be a number of exercises for you to solve. The solutions to these exercises can be found in the last chapter of the book.
A Tool for You

In the course of a game there is a relatively simple formula that will help guide you to make the right decisions, both short-term and long-term. The formula is based on a number of elements that we shall look at throughout this book when making the decision as to which course the game should take. The elements are:

1. King safety
2. Pawn-structure and distribution
3. Piece coordination and distribution
4. Unprotected pawns and pieces
5. Weak squares
6. What would your opponent do if it were his turn? (prophylaxis)

Whenever it is your turn, you should go through this little list. It sounds a bit tedious, but once the process is started, it is relatively easy to follow, as most elements remain the same from move to move and therefore don’t have to play an immediate role in the decision-making. However, if your opponent makes a move or starts a plan where several of the elements will change, then you know that you are at a critical point in the game and you can take the necessary time to make the right decision.

These elements are not only useful when making positional decisions, but also when you have a highly tactical position on the board. Critical tactical decisions are easier to make when you have a clear idea of the basic features of your position and you don’t have a horde of loose pawns and pieces unaccounted for all over the board. Indeed, combinations will also be detected with greater ease.
1 Understanding Imbalances

I hope the subject for this chapter doesn’t scare you off completely. If it sounds way over your head, please trust me: it isn’t half as complicated as it sounds. Imbalances are the factors in any given position that determine who is better, who has the initiative and who can play for the win. The better you learn to understand imbalances and to evaluate how they balance out, the better you will become as a chess-player.

In this chapter I shall briefly go over the more important imbalances. In the remainder of the book we shall go into more depth with the subjects and look at some more complicated examples.

King Safety and Placement

As mentioned in the introduction, this is the first factor to look at when assessing any given position. To determine the safety of the king, you can ask yourself the following questions and use the answers as a guideline:

1. Is the king castled? Is it still in the centre? Has the right to castle been lost?
2. Is the pawn-structure in front of or around the king intact or has it been damaged?
3. Does the opponent have any open files or diagonals in the direction of our king?
4. Does the opponent have the potential to start a pawn-storm against the king?
5. Are there enough pieces to protect the king if the opponent starts to attack?
6. Does the king have breathing space?

This may seem like an awful lot of things to keep an eye out for, but the situation of the king doesn’t usually change too much from move to move. Therefore, when assessing the king safety in the flow of a game, just ask yourself how the last move influenced the situation of the king. Most moves don’t even have any direct relation to the king’s safety, but it will keep you on your toes if you have an insufficient number of defenders to look after the king. After all these words, let’s have a look at a couple of examples to illustrate the general idea behind all these questions.

In the diagram we see a number of imbalances:

- Black’s kingside, and in particular the b1-h7 diagonal, is weakened by the advance of the h7-pawn and the absence of a knight on f6 to protect the h7-square.
- White has an isolated pawn and three pawn-islands against Black’s two pawn-islands.
- Black has the pair of bishops against White’s bishop and knight, but Black’s bishop on a6 is quite misplaced.
- All of White’s pieces are centralized and ready for action, while their black counterparts are uncoordinated.

Based on the above it is fairly obvious that White’s advantage lies on the kingside and in the centre. As soon as that has been established, it isn’t so difficult to find the right way for White to continue.

23 $\text{a}2$!

An amazingly simple move: White plans to play $\text{w}c4$ with a threat against h7. In addition, if Black now proceeds with 23...$\text{w}d5$, which is the best move, preventing White’s intentions, he can switch attention back to the centre with 24 $\text{b}3$; e.g., 24...$\text{w}d6$ 25 f4 followed by d5,
when White has clearly the better chances due to his centralized pieces.

23...\textit{\textbf{\text{n}e}4} 24 \textit{\textbf{\text{n}e}4} \textit{\textbf{b}c8}

Against the 'natural' move, 24...g6, White finishes effectively with 25 \textit{\textbf{\text{n}x}f7}!; for example, 25...\textit{\textbf{\text{n}x}f7} 26 \textit{\textbf{\text{n}x}g6+} \textit{\textbf{e}7} 27 \textit{\textbf{\text{n}b}3}, and the threat against e6 decides the game.

25 \textit{\textbf{\text{n}h}7+} 26 \textit{\textbf{\text{n}h}8} \textit{\textbf{b}6} \textit{\textbf{h}3} (D)

Karpov often manages to throw this cautious move in the middle of a skirmish where nobody else would think of it. Here it may well be White's most accurate continuation, even though Karpov later claimed that he should have increased the pressure with 26 \textit{\textbf{\text{n}b}3}. His main line continued 26...\textit{\textbf{\text{n}e}7}?! 27 \textit{\textbf{\text{n}g}4}, when 27...\textit{\textbf{\text{n}h}8} 28 \textit{\textbf{\text{n}f}5} gives White clearly the better chances, while 27...\textit{\textbf{\text{n}x}d}4? 28 \textit{\textbf{\text{n}e}3}! \textit{\textbf{\text{n}f}6} 29 \textit{\textbf{\text{n}d}5+} \textit{\textbf{e}x}d5 30 \textit{\textbf{\text{n}x}d}4 \textit{\textbf{e}8} 31 \textit{\textbf{\text{n}d}1} \textit{\textbf{e}e}5 32 \textit{\textbf{\text{n}b}1} also leaves White better thanks to Black's open king. However, Black can play 26...\textit{\textbf{\text{n}b}6}! 27 \textit{\textbf{\text{n}g}6+} \textit{\textbf{f}x}g6 28 \textit{\textbf{\text{n}x}e}6 \textit{\textbf{x}e}6! 29 \textit{\textbf{\text{n}x}e}6 \textit{\textbf{f}7}, when White will not be able to extract his queen from h7.

26...\textit{\textbf{\text{n}b}6}?

This error ends the game for Black. The move looks natural, but takes an important square away from Black's queen. The idea is that if White plays \textit{\textbf{\text{n}b}3}, Black has \textit{\textbf{\text{n}b}6}. For the same reason, 26...\textit{\textbf{\text{n}b}5} and 26...\textit{\textbf{\text{n}b}5} both fail. 26...\textit{\textbf{\text{n}e}7} is correct, when Karpov only mentions 27 \textit{\textbf{\text{n}g}4} \textit{\textbf{h}8}! 28 \textit{\textbf{\text{n}f}5} \textit{\textbf{\text{n}x}d}4 29 \textit{\textbf{\text{n}e}4} \textit{\textbf{h}d}8 30 \textit{\textbf{\text{n}e}3} g6 and Black should be able to parry the attack. However, I think White is able to pursue the \textit{\textbf{\text{n}b}3} idea with 27 \textit{\textbf{\text{n}a}4+} \textit{\textbf{w}d}5 (27...\textit{\textbf{\text{n}h}8} 28 \textit{\textbf{\text{n}c}4}, threatening \textit{\textbf{\text{n}d}5}, leaves Black with a terrible position) 28 \textit{\textbf{\text{n}e}3} \textit{\textbf{\text{n}c}4} 29 \textit{\textbf{\text{n}a}6} 30 \textit{\textbf{\text{n}b}4} \textit{\textbf{a}xb}4 31 \textit{\textbf{\text{n}b}3} \textit{\textbf{\text{n}d}6} 32 \textit{\textbf{\text{n}b}4} with a dangerous attack for White.

27 \textit{\textbf{\text{n}b}3} \textit{\textbf{\text{n}b}7} 28 \textit{\textbf{d}5}

As Karpov points out, 28 \textit{\textbf{\text{n}g}6+} \textit{\textbf{f}x}g6 29 \textit{\textbf{\text{n}x}e}6 would also have won, "but the central breakthrough is more pleasing." It certainly is a triumph for the initial plan laid out by White.

28...\textit{\textbf{\text{n}c}7} 29 \textit{\textbf{\text{n}d}x}e6 \textit{\textbf{\text{n}d}1} 30 \textit{\textbf{\text{n}g}6+} 1-0

Black resigned due to 30...\textit{\textbf{\text{n}f}x}g6 31 \textit{\textbf{\text{n}e}7+} \textit{\textbf{\text{n}x}e}7 32 \textit{\textbf{\text{n}g}8#}!

\begin{figure}
\centering
\includegraphics[width=0.8\textwidth]{image.png}
\caption{Andersson – David\newline Bundesliga 1999/00}
\end{figure}

At first glance, nothing really seems to be going on. The kingside structures are nearly identical, although Black's is slightly more weakened on account of the h6-pawn. White has a little more space. However, the key issue is the black knight on f6, which has to prevent the white knight from jumping to d5, and therefore cannot move. White finds a clever way to exploit that:

27 \textit{\textbf{\text{n}d}4}! \textit{\textbf{\text{n}c}6} 28 \textit{\textbf{\text{n}f}4}

The idea behind White's previous move now becomes apparent: he wants to sacrifice the exchange on f6 and then place a dominant knight on d5. Black thinks he cannot prevent it and therefore continues with his plan.

28...\textit{\textbf{\text{n}b}5}?!

Black could have tried the clever 28...\textit{\textbf{\text{n}c}8} 29 \textit{\textbf{\text{n}x}f}6 \textit{\textbf{e}x}f6, intending to meet 30 \textit{\textbf{\text{n}d}5}? with the effective 30...\textit{\textbf{\text{n}x}d}5! 31 \textit{\textbf{\text{n}x}d}5 \textit{\textbf{\text{n}x}c}1+ with better chances for Black, but White has 30 \textit{\textbf{\text{n}g}4}! maintaining the better chances thanks to Black's weakened kingside structure.

29 \textit{\textbf{\text{n}f}6}! \textit{\textbf{e}x}f6 30 \textit{\textbf{\text{n}d}5}

Now Black has nothing better than to return the exchange, if he intends to survive.

30...\textit{\textbf{\text{n}c}4}
And now instead of 31 \( \text{\textcyr{d}xc7}\)! \( \text{\textcyr{w}xc7} \) 32 \( \text{\textcyr{w}xf6} \) \( \text{\textcyr{g}e8} \) 33 \( \text{\textcyr{c}c3} \) a5 with an edge for White, he has a better way to take the exchange back: 31 \( \text{\textcyr{d}xf6+!} \) \( \text{\textcyr{r}f8} \) 32 \( \text{\textcyr{d}xd7+!} \) \( \text{\textcyr{w}xd7} \) 33 \( \text{\textcyr{h}h8+} \) \( \text{\textcyr{c}c7} \) 34 \( \text{\textcyr{w}xb8} \), and Black’s king is far from ideally placed in this major-piece ending.

Another consideration to make is how the king is placed, considering what you may be planning to do. This could be a variety of things: will the king be safe if you go ahead with a pawn-storm, using the pawns in front of your own king? Or looking ahead to the endgame that may be coming up at some point in the future, whose king is closer to the centre or to a key square?

The following game is an excellent illustration of what can be considered before you move ahead with a given plan.

\begin{center}
\includegraphics[width=0.5\textwidth]{game.png}
\end{center}

Petrosian – Peters

\textit{Lone Pine 1976}

Here we have equal material. Black has an isolated pawn on d4, which in addition blocks the b6-bishop. White’s pieces are nicely coordinated, preventing Black from achieving any active counterplay, but his position is nonetheless solid. White has a space advantage on the kingside, which may enable him to start a pawn-storm on this front. However, if White starts pushing his kingside pawns forward, his own king will most likely be left in as much (if not more) danger as his counterpart. Petrosian finds a solution that will enable him to proceed with the pawn-storm, albeit after a little preparation.

30 \( \text{\textcyr{d}f1}! \)

A multi-purpose move; while White’s plan isn’t obvious yet, it is clear that his king is one step closer to the centre, which, in the event of Black succeeding in exchanging down to an endgame, will allow him to pick up the weak pawn on d4.

30...\( \text{\textcyr{e}e6} \) 31 \( \text{\textcyr{b}b5} \) \( \text{\textcyr{a}a7} \) 32 \( \text{\textcyr{b}b3} \) \( \text{\textcyr{c}c6} \) 33 \( \text{\textcyr{h}h5}! \)

White proceeds on the kingside.

33...\( \text{\textcyr{c}c7} \) 34 \( \text{\textcyr{d}e1}! \)

Aha! That is the idea behind White’s play. Before continuing the kingside attack, White relocates his king to the safety of the queenside. Black on the other hand cannot do anything.

34...\( \text{\textcyr{d}d5} \) 35 \( \text{\textcyr{b}b5} \) \( \text{\textcyr{f}f6} \)

Unfortunately for Black, 35...\( \text{\textcyr{c}c}f4 \) 36 \( \text{\textcyr{c}c}f4 \) only helps White, as the passive bishop on b6 is no match for White’s active knight.

36 \( \text{\textcyr{d}d1} \) \( \text{\textcyr{d}d5} \) 37 \( \text{\textcyr{e}e5} \) \( \text{\textcyr{d}e7} \) 38 g4 \( \text{\textcyr{g}g}3 \) \( \text{\textcyr{d}a7} \) 40 \( \text{\textcyr{w}b3} \) \( \text{\textcyr{c}c6} \) 41 \( \text{\textcyr{c}c1} \) \( \text{\textcyr{e}e4} \) 42 f3 \( \text{\textcyr{e}e3} \) 43 \( \text{\textcyr{b}b1} \)

With his king transfer completed, White is ready for the next step in his plan: transfer the queen to the fifth rank, and then proceed by pushing his kingside pawns forward.

43...\( \text{\textcyr{d}e7} \)

This is a fundamental misunderstanding of the position. Black allows White to trade off his bishop for Black’s knight, leaving the above-mentioned good knight vs bad bishop on the board. Peters suggested 43...\( \text{\textcyr{d}a7} \) as a possible improvement, initially preventing \( \text{\textcyr{w}b5} \), but after 44 \( \text{\textcyr{e}e5!} \) \( \text{\textcyr{c}c6} \) 45 \( \text{\textcyr{f}f4} \) \( \text{\textcyr{c}c6} \) 46 \( \text{\textcyr{w}b5} \), White gets what he wants.

44 \( \text{\textcyr{h}h4!} \) \( \text{\textcyr{w}d6} \) 45 \( \text{\textcyr{e}xe7} \) \( \text{\textcyr{x}xe7} \) 46 \( \text{\textcyr{c}c8+} \) \( \text{\textcyr{h}h7} \)

47 \( \text{\textcyr{f}f8} \) \( \text{\textcyr{w}c7} \)

If Black tries 47...\( \text{\textcyr{x}xe2} \), White wins promptly with 48 \( \text{\textcyr{w}xf7} \) \( \text{\textcyr{w}e6} \) 49 \( \text{\textcyr{g}g6+!} \) \( \text{\textcyr{w}xg6} \) 50 \( \text{\textcyr{h}xg6+} \) \( \text{\textcyr{x}xg6} \) 51 \( \text{\textcyr{f}f4} \).

48 \( \text{\textcyr{f}4}! \)

The game is over as Black has no answer to White’s kingside attack. Black’s next move speeds up the inevitable.

48...\( \text{\textcyr{c}c5?} \) 49 \( \text{\textcyr{w}d5} \)

White has a couple of other wins to pick between: 49 \( \text{\textcyr{x}xc5} \) \( \text{\textcyr{w}xc5} \) 50 \( \text{\textcyr{w}d3+} \) g6 51 \( \text{\textcyr{x}xf7} \) 52 \( \text{\textcyr{w}xg6+} \) with an easily won endgame, or as found by Fritz: 49 \( \text{\textcyr{g}g5} \) \( \text{\textcyr{h}xg5} \) 50 \( \text{\textcyr{x}xc5} \) \( \text{\textcyr{w}xc5} \) 51 \( \text{\textcyr{w}d3+} \) g6 (51...f5 52 \( \text{\textcyr{x}xf5} \) +++) 52 \( \text{\textcyr{h}xg6+} \) \( \text{\textcyr{g}g7} \) (52...\( \text{\textcyr{x}g6} \) 53 \( \text{\textcyr{h}h3+} \) \( \text{\textcyr{g}g7} \) 54 \( \text{\textcyr{h}h8#} \) ) 53 \( \text{\textcyr{w}h3} \) \( \text{\textcyr{f}f6} \) 54 \( \text{\textcyr{g}g7} \) \( \text{\textcyr{x}g7} \) 55 \( \text{\textcyr{w}h8+} \) \( \text{\textcyr{g}g6} \) 56 \( \text{\textcyr{g}g8+} \) \( \text{\textcyr{f}f5} \) 57 \( \text{\textcyr{x}xg5+} \).

49...\( \text{\textcyr{e}e5} \) 50 \( \text{\textcyr{f}fx7} \) 1-0

The torture is over.
Pawn-Structure

This subject is extremely important. In Chapters 8 and 9, I shall discuss it in more detail, but otherwise you will see it mentioned in every chapter and it is a factor in every evaluation. The pawn-structure tells us a lot about a position: where the action is likely to take place, where the weaknesses and strengths are, and which measures have to be taken to have a chance of success.

For example, let’s look at the following basic position:

We can see that White’s pawns are pointing in one direction, towards Black’s kingside, whereas Black’s pawns are pointing at White’s queenside. This means that the obvious place for White to start an attack would be on the kingside, while Black is likely to make a go of it on the queenside. This is the general guideline. But of course this dynamic can change. For example, Black might decide to castle queenside to avoid having his king staring the impending kingside attack straight in its eyes. White then has to reconsider his options: is he willing to run the risk of weakening his own king to retain the initiative on the kingside, or should he instead attempt to break up Black’s pawn-chain and open files towards Black’s relocated king?

The ability to read a pawn-structure is vitally important, while not to difficult to obtain.

Pawn Distribution

Here we have another factor that will tell us a lot about how a position should be played.

When looking at the pawn distribution, we count the pawn-islands, consider their sizes and look at where and how they are placed on the board. Generally speaking it is preferable to have as few pawn-islands as possible. In the following position, there is a symmetrical pawn-structure with each side having two equally sized pawn-islands.

As you can see a symmetrical pawn distribution doesn’t necessarily mean that the pawn-structure is symmetrical. Piece position is very important if you are to make anything of your position.

Then we have positions where the pawn distribution isn’t symmetrical. Here is a classical example:

This pawn-structure, sometimes called the Carlsbad structure, arises in many openings and is especially typical of the Exchange Queen’s Gambit. If you play 1 d4 as White there are few pawn-structures as important as this one, and whether you play queen’s pawn openings or not, it will be very worthwhile to study this particular structure. The reason why this is such an important position is that involves the study of the minority attack in action. The pawn distribution leaves White with a minority, three against four pawns, on the queenside. On the
kingside White obviously has an extra pawn, but the notable thing is that both sides will be aiming to play on the side where the opponent has a pawn-majority. We shall return to that theme later.

**Weak Squares**

When is a square weak? It depends on several factors: the pawn-structure, the pieces, the pieces’ ability to attack or defend the square, and, most importantly, the relative importance the weak square has on the overall position. It is of little use if you have control over a weak square on the queenside, if your opponent is in the midst of nailing you on the opposite wing.

Let’s take a look at an example of a weak square.

![Diagram](image)

It is quite easy to see that d5 is a weak square, although it is of course by no means decisive.

We shall touch upon the subject of weak squares in almost every game in this book. The ability to identify such squares is very important, because it is such a frequently occurring imbalance.

**Open Files and Ranks**

Imbalances are differences in the position for each side, so how can an open file be an imbalance, when by its nature it is open for both sides? It can be an imbalance because one side can use it to access a useful square on the open file and from there reach other targets, while for the opponent, the open file does not offer the same kind of possibility because the entry-squares are guarded. Open files can therefore, like weak squares, be useful or obsolete, depending on the individual situation.

In Chapter 5, we shall examine this subject in detail.

**Piece Coordination and Placement**

In my opinion, imbalances which are based on piece coordination and piece placement can be very difficult to assess. In some instances, such imbalances seem to favour one side entirely, while in an apparently very similar position, it may turn out to be the other way around.

For example, in the next diagram, White appears to be well-coordinated, better developed and his piece set-up seems to make sense. Meanwhile the situation looks bleak for Black: his king is still in the centre, his queen is almost trapped on its square on the queenside, his rooks have yet to be connected, and his minor pieces don’t appear to have a common aim. Nevertheless, Black has the better chances.

![Diagram](image)

**Hjartarson – Cu. Hansen**

*Reykjavik Z 1995*

Both sides have nearly completed their development, so it is time to decide how play should continue. White often plays a3 to force resolution regarding Black’s dark-squared bishop. How should Black respond: roll with it after 12 a3 or play 11...\(\text{c}3\)bd5 to give the queen a retreat-square?

11...\(\text{c}3\): 12 \(\text{c}3\) \(\text{b}5\)

The Scandinavian Defence is an interesting opening and also one full of contradictions. With his last two moves, Black tries to maximize his control over the light squares, while it
seems like he has entirely given up on the dark squares. How can such a strategy work out for Black? The point is that White’s dark-squared bishop will have no targets to work against. The fact that Black takes on a pair of doubled pawns is of no importance again because there is no way for White to benefit from it.

13 \(\text{\texttt{Wxb5}}\) \(\text{\texttt{exb5}}\) 14 \(\text{\texttt{Ac5}}\)

If White wanted to get rid of the f5-bishop with 14 \(\text{\texttt{Wh4}}\), Black would play 14...\(\text{\texttt{Ae4!}}\) and eventually put it on d5 to exchange it for White’s light-squared bishop.

14...\(\text{\texttt{a5}}\) 15 a3 \(\text{\texttt{Ae4!}}\)

Although White’s bishop-pair is of almost no consequence, Black has to play with some care to avoid White getting his say. For example, 15...0-0 16 f3 and Black’s light-squared bishop can become a target for White’s kingside pawns after g4 and h4, when as Curt Hansen indicates, White will be doing very well.

16 \(\text{\texttt{He1}}\) 0-0 17 f3 \(\text{\texttt{d5}}\) 18 \(\text{\texttt{xd5}}\) \(\text{\texttt{fxd5}}\)

Look at the difference in the strength of the minor pieces. What happened to White’s dark-squared bishop? Well, it is still on c3, but now it has to get on the move.

19 \(\text{\texttt{Ae2}}\) 20 \(\text{\texttt{Cc1}}\)

Black is clearly in control, and the once-proud bishop gets more and more hidden away.

20...\(\text{\texttt{Fce8}}\) 21 f4 b4

The immediate threat is 22...\(\text{\texttt{bxa3}}\) 23 \(\text{\texttt{bxa3}}\) \(\text{\texttt{Axc3+}}\), and given that the exchange on b4 is too dangerous for White due to the open a-file, he has to figure out something else.

22 \(\text{\texttt{Axc4}}\) \(\text{\texttt{Axc4}}\) 23 \(\text{\texttt{Aa3}}\)

Once again, 23 \(\text{\texttt{axb4}}\) \(\text{\texttt{axb4}}\) is hazardous for White due to the threat of ...\(\text{\texttt{Cc6-a6}}\). So unfortunately for White, Black gets the opportunity to rid himself of the doubled b-pawn. The advantage of the strong knight vs the bad bishop also still reigns supreme.

23...\(\text{\texttt{bxa3}}\) 24 \(\text{\texttt{Exa3}}\) b5

Black doesn’t take the offered pawn on d4 due to 24...\(\text{\texttt{xd4}}\) 25 f5, which will force Black to take on an isolated e-pawn in return due to 25...\(\text{\texttt{exf5}}\)? being met by 26 \(\text{\texttt{xa5!!}}\).

25 f5 b4 26 \(\text{\texttt{Aa3?!}}\)

Although 26 \(\text{\texttt{xa4}}\) \(\text{\texttt{Cc6}}\) leaves White’s rook misplaced on a4, Curt Hansen considers this White’s best option because it ties the a8-rook to the a-pawn and the other rook to the e-pawn, though in any case this is clearly better for Black too.

26...\(\text{\texttt{exf5}}\) 27 \(\text{\texttt{Cxe5}}\) \(\text{\texttt{d8}}\) 28 \(\text{\texttt{Axf5}}\) a4

For obvious reasons Black wants to keep his knight on d5, where it dominates the board. For now Black has to work with all of his pawns to do so. As Curt Hansen points out, Black can kick the rook away from f5 with ...\(f6\), ...\(\text{\texttt{Ee7-f6}}\), and if necessary ...g6. Once the rook is gone, Black’s d8-rook is freed from its defensive duties and can then join the offensive against White’s king.

29 \(\text{\texttt{Ad2}}\) f6 30 h3 \(\text{\texttt{Ef7}}\) 31 g4 g6 32 \(\text{\texttt{Bxf3}}\) \(\text{\texttt{Cc8}}\) 32...\(\text{\texttt{Cc6}}\)! is a good alternative; e.g., 33 c3 \(\text{\texttt{bxc3}}\) 34 \(\text{\texttt{bxc3}}\) \(\text{\texttt{Ab8+}}\) 35 \(\text{\texttt{Aa2}}\) \(\text{\texttt{Bb3}}\), and White is thoroughly tied up.

33 c3?

White lets Black in to the second rank. 33 \(\text{\texttt{Af7}}\) is a better try. Now Black finishes the game in effective manner.

33...\(\text{\texttt{Ae2}}\) 34 \(\text{\texttt{cbx4}}\) \(\text{\texttt{Exb4}}\) 35 \(\text{\texttt{Cc3}}\) \(\text{\texttt{xb4}}\) 36 \(\text{\texttt{Cc7+}}\) \(\text{\texttt{Cc6}}\) 37 \(\text{\texttt{Cc1}}\) \(\text{\texttt{Ed1}}\) 38 \(\text{\texttt{Cc3}}\) \(\text{\texttt{Aed2}}\) 39 \(\text{\texttt{Ff4}}\) \(\text{\texttt{Ad3}}\) 40 \(\text{\texttt{Cc6+}}\) \(\text{\texttt{dd5}}\) 41 \(\text{\texttt{Axcb6}}\) \(\text{\texttt{xb2+}}\) 42 \(\text{\texttt{Cc1}}\) \(\text{\texttt{Ab5}}\) 43 \(\text{\texttt{Exd6+}}\) \(\text{\texttt{Cc5}}\) 0-1

White cannot prevent the loss of a piece.

**Piece Distribution**

Finally, here is something you can spot without too much difficulty, right? Sure, but determining when something is to your advantage, and when it is not, is far more difficult than you might think. Are two bishops always better than a knight + bishop or two knights? No; even if the position is open, there are many situations that favour the knight + bishop side, which makes it difficult to generalize. It all comes down to where pieces are placed, what they can do and how they work together with the other pieces. This obviously doesn’t just apply to knights and bishops, but to all pieces. However, noticing the imbalances in conjunction with the pawn-structure will help you reach the correct conclusions and make the right moves more consistently than if you play without an eye on these imbalances.

In the following diagram, we enter the game at a point where Black has just played 18...\(\text{\texttt{Wxc6}}\), threatening 19...\(\text{\texttt{Ad2}}\) with a fork on White’s queen and rook, as the f3-knight is tied down due to the possible mate at g2.
There are two notable imbalances: Black’s isolated b-pawn on White’s open b-file, and White’s bishop-pair. Right now, the bishop-pair isn’t of much use, tucked behind their own pawns. However, if the position opens, they could easily become a major trump for White.

19 \textbf{\textit{Qc1}} \textbf{\textit{Qd7}}

Characteristically, Karpov chooses the solid move, but in this case it is also the only good move. Obviously there is no point in playing 19...\textbf{\textit{Qd2}} any more due to 20 \textbf{\textit{Wb4}}, when White is just better. However, 19...\textbf{\textit{Qg4}} needs to be examined. After 20 \textbf{\textit{d5}}, it becomes apparent why White placed his rook on \textit{c1} and why two bishops are strong in open positions:

a) 20...\textbf{\textit{Wc7}} 21 \textbf{\textit{dxe6}} \textbf{\textit{fxe6}} 22 c5! \textbf{\textit{Qxc5}} 23 \textbf{\textit{Qxc5}}! \textbf{\textit{dxc5}} 24 \textbf{\textit{Wxc6+}} \textbf{\textit{Qh8}} 25 \textbf{\textit{Wxg4}} wins for White (Kramnik).

b) 20...\textbf{\textit{exd5}} 21 \textbf{\textit{cxd5}} \textbf{\textit{Wxd5}} 22 \textbf{\textit{Wxb6+}}, and Black’s position is falling apart.

c) 20...\textbf{\textit{Wc8}} 21 \textbf{\textit{Qf1}}! \textbf{\textit{Wc7}} 22 \textbf{\textit{Qd4+}}, and since 22...\textbf{\textit{Qd2}}, doesn’t work on account of 23 \textbf{\textit{Qc3}} \textbf{\textit{Qxf1}} 24 \textbf{\textit{Qb5}} (Kramnik), it is White’s turn to play on the long diagonal.

20 \textbf{\textit{Qe1}} \textbf{\textit{Wa4}} 21 \textbf{\textit{Wxa4}} \textbf{\textit{Qxa4}}

With the queens off the board, it appears that Black has taken the heat out of the game. The following phase is what makes this game very instructive.

22 \textbf{\textit{f3}} \textbf{\textit{Qe6}} 23 \textbf{\textit{Qd1}}!

White’s plan is to grab complete control of the centre, put his pieces on the most active available squares and then break open the position.

23...\textbf{\textit{Aa2}} 24 \textbf{\textit{Qd3}} \textbf{\textit{Qf8}} 25 \textbf{\textit{Qb3}} \textbf{\textit{Qa8}} 26 \textbf{\textit{e4}} \textbf{\textit{Qb8}} 27 c5?!

Exactly the right moment; Black’s pieces are barely holding together a closed position, but now that the game is opened up, it immediately becomes apparent how badly coordinated they are.

27...\textbf{\textit{bxc5}} 28 \textbf{\textit{dxc5}} \textbf{\textit{dxc5}}

28...\textbf{\textit{d5}}? is worse: 29 \textbf{\textit{Qxf6}} \textbf{\textit{gxf6}} 30 \textbf{\textit{exd5}} \textbf{\textit{Qxd5}} 31 \textbf{\textit{Qxd5}} \textbf{\textit{exd5}} 32 \textbf{\textit{Qb4+}} (Ftačnik).

29 \textbf{\textit{Qxc5}} \textbf{\textit{c8}} 30 \textbf{\textit{e5!}} \textbf{\textit{Qe8}}?

This is given as the decisive mistake by Kramnik, but 30...\textbf{\textit{Qd5}} isn’t pretty either: 31 \textbf{\textit{Qa4}}! \textbf{\textit{Qa6}} 32 \textbf{\textit{Qc6}} \textbf{\textit{Qb8}} 33 \textbf{\textit{Qa3}} \textbf{\textit{Qg8}} 34 \textbf{\textit{Qd3}} and Black is completely tied up.

31 \textbf{\textit{Qa4!}} \textbf{\textit{Qc7}}

31...\textbf{\textit{f5}} 32 \textbf{\textit{Qd1}} \textbf{\textit{Qa6}} 33 \textbf{\textit{Qc6}} \textbf{\textit{Qb8}} 34 \textbf{\textit{Qa3}} \textbf{\textit{Qxc5}} 35 \textbf{\textit{Qxc5+}} \textbf{\textit{Qf7}} 36 \textbf{\textit{Qd8}} \textbf{\textit{Qc7}} 37 \textbf{\textit{Qd6}} (Ftačnik) is a beautiful picture of White’s supremacy.

32 \textbf{\textit{Qa3}} \textbf{\textit{Qg8}} 33 \textbf{\textit{Qe4!}} \textbf{\textit{Qxa4}}

After 33...\textbf{\textit{Qba6}} 34 \textbf{\textit{Qd6}} \textbf{\textit{Qa7}} 35 \textbf{\textit{Qb5!}} (Kramnik) Black loses on the spot due to the threat of 36 \textbf{\textit{Qxa6}}, which cannot be parried.

34 \textbf{\textit{Qxc7}} \textbf{\textit{Qa6}} 35 \textbf{\textit{Qc5!}} 1-0

Black cannot prevent 36 \textbf{\textit{Qxa6}}.

Material

This is the most obvious imbalance when looking at any position as it comes down to merely counting the numerical value of the pieces remaining of the board. However, there are a lot of exceptions to the basic counting scheme. We shall see many examples throughout the book; for example, in Chapter 10, we look at positional pawn sacrifices, while in Chapter 6, it is the exchange (i.e. a rook for a knight or bishop) that is discussed, and in Chapter 7, we shall look at situations where various combinations of pieces together with positional pluses can provide compensation for a queen. While positional compensation for material sacrifices may be relatively difficult to grasp at first, it is an essential part of evaluating any position.

Space

One evaluation criterion that is often deceitful is the one based on space. Generally speaking, a spatial imbalance is determined by the pawn-structure. Take, for example, the following position from mainstream theory:
It's obvious that White controls far more space than Black, and therefore has an easier time manoeuvring his pieces to more attractive squares. However, he does not have any real advantage here. The game continuation was 16 \textit{\textcopyright}f1 \textit{\textcopyright}d8 17 \textit{\textcopyright}c2 \textit{\textcopyright}e5 18 \textit{\textcopyright}a4 d5 19 exd5 exd5 20 c5 b5, and Black was doing fine. So why isn't Black worse in the diagram position? It's important to remember that every pawn move leaves a weakness behind. This is also the case here, where White has placed a number of pawns on light squares, leaving the dark squares somewhat weakened. In addition, we can see that the c4-pawn is slightly vulnerable, which Black exploited in the game continuation. As Nimzowitsch and Petrosian liked to demonstrate, just because a position is cramped, doesn't mean that it is without resources. In fact, Black's 'Hedgehog' is known to be a flexible set-up with latent resources, allowing Black to sit and wait for White to loosen his grip, whereupon Black will then throw in a counter-punch.

In some openings, one side actually invites the opponent to build up a broad centre, only to start undermining it immediately. One such opening is the Alekhine Defence, 1 e4 \textit{\textcopyright}f6, in which White is able to construct a big centre with 2 e5 \textit{\textcopyright}d5 3 d4 d6 4 c4 \textit{\textcopyright}b6 5 f4 (D) if he wishes.

There are a number of other examples of opening lines in which Black takes on a slightly passive position and then seeks counterplay by attacking his opponent's somewhat more exposed position. This approach was introduced by the Hypermodern school, headed by the likes of Nimzowitsch and Réti. The Hypermodern approach is in stark contrast to the classical understanding of chess that was defined and documented by Tarrasch. The Classical school argues that both players should aim to occupy and control the centre with pawns. An example is the following line in the Ruy Lopez (Spanish): 1 e4 e5 2 \textit{\textcopyright}f3 \textit{\textcopyright}c6 3 \textit{\textcopyright}b5 a6 4 \textit{\textcopyright}a4 d6 5 c3 \textit{\textcopyright}d7 6 d4 \textit{\textcopyright}ge7 7 \textit{\textcopyright}e3 (D).

As mentioned above, having control of more space does give you more room to manoeuvre your pieces around, and possibly the ability to switch your attention from one wing to another faster than your opponent, who obviously has less space to work with from the outset.

As you may have noticed, I have not cast any evaluation as to which approach (Classical or Hypermodern) is the correct or better one. This is for a reason. I think it is very important to keep the advantages of both approaches in mind. This will not only help you to be more objective when looking at the pros and cons of any given position, but also enable you to handle both types of position better and without prejudice.
**Initiative**

This is an important imbalance, which, like development, is of a more fleeting kind and has to be exploited right away if it is not to disappear. The next chapter is devoted to the discussion of the initiative.

**Exercises**

The following exercises are not about finding the right move, but rather identifying the imbalances on the board.

1.1 List all the imbalances you can find in this position.

1.2 List all the imbalances you can find in this position.

1.3 List all the imbalances you can find in this position.

1.4 List all the imbalances you can find in this position.

1.5 List all the imbalances you can find in this position.
2 What is the Initiative?

In every opening book you open you will find the evaluation ‘White (or Black) has the initiative’, and even in books covering other phases of the game, you will run into this comment. What does it mean and how does it influence the game?

I’m sure other people may have other ways of describing the concept of the initiative, but I loosely define it as the ability to create threats or to a certain extent control the path of the game.

In this chapter, I provide an introduction to the initiative, and examples of which kinds of initiative you can have. This is not meant to be an all-exhaustive study of the initiative, but rather to open your eyes to what it can consist of, so that when you play your games, you can establish who has the initiative and possibly find a good way to counter it. Throughout this book, you will find plenty of other examples of the initiative and different ways of trying to exploit it. As with any other kind of advantage, you have to work hard to keep the initiative. If you hesitate, the initiative will fizzle out, or, even worse, shift to the hands of your opponent.

In the first example we shall look at (see following diagram), one side has a number of weaknesses, which the opponent can progressively attack, creating a flow and thereby maintaining the initiative throughout.

Black has obviously played quite aggressively in the opening, pushing his kingside pawns forwards. The pawns are not an immediate threat to White’s king because they still lack sufficient piece support to be considered really dangerous. For now they have also created a problem for Black to find safety for his king. In addition, the pawns can be considered weak, along with the d6-pawn and the b6-square, at which the f2-bishop is already pointing, with a potential Qa4 follow-up. Are the weaknesses in Black’s position sufficient for White to win? I don’t think so, but if White can make enough threats to start forcing Black into a defensive role, then there is some potential. That is what working with the initiative is all about.

15 Qd2!

Aside from the obvious threat against the d6-pawn, the path to b6 is cleared for the bishop and the retreating knight can support the f4 pawn-push, breaking up Black’s kingside.

15...We7 16 Qa4!

The immediate target is obviously on b6, but the knight’s journey can be continued to c4, adding more pressure on the d6-pawn.

16...b5?

This is a type of mistake many chess-players all too easily make: you feel you are under a bit of pressure and therefore, to reverse the trend, you make an active move which in the end turns out to weaken your position further. With his last move Black has created another weakness – the entire queenside. More prudent is 16...0-0-0!?, which isn’t entirely comfortable for Black, but connects the rooks and allows Black to play on the kingside.

17 Qb6 Qb8 18 c3

Just because you’re trying to maintain an initiative doesn’t mean that you should throw pawns away.

18...Qe5 19 Qxd7

The knight has served its purpose: Black’s queenside is weaker than before and with the
exchange on d7, Black’s bishop-pair and some of his potential for counterplay have been eliminated. If White had hesitated with the exchange, Black would have played ...\texttt{c}c6 followed by ...h4 and ...g4, as in Shirov-Kasparov in the next chapter.

19...\texttt{W}xd7 20 \texttt{\textbf{d}}d4 \texttt{\textbf{g}}g8?! 

I’m not sure what Black is trying to do here, but the bishop doesn’t need defending, whereas the h-pawn does. The correct move is 20...h4, letting Black continue with a worse, but by no means lost position. Now, on the other hand, Black’s position falls apart.

21 f4! gxf4 22 \texttt{\textbf{c}}xf4 h4 23 \texttt{\textbf{W}}h5 \texttt{\textbf{h}}h8 24 \texttt{\textbf{W}}e2 \texttt{\textbf{h}}h6 25 a4!

White opens another front. This wouldn’t have been possible if Black had not weakened his queenside with ...b5 earlier on.

25...\texttt{b}xa4 26 \texttt{\textbf{W}}xa6 \texttt{\textbf{c}}xb2?! 27 \texttt{\textbf{\textbf{F}}}fb1 \texttt{\textbf{\textbf{F}}}xb1+ 
28 \texttt{\textbf{\textbf{F}}}xb1 \texttt{\textbf{\textbf{F}}}f6 29 \texttt{\textbf{W}}a8+ \texttt{\textbf{\textbf{F}}}d8 30 \texttt{\textbf{W}}b7 1-0

We saw a general flow from the beginning of the game of threats being replaced by other threats, not allowing Black time to consolidate and get some play of his own going.

\textbf{Space Advantage}

Usually a space advantage is determined by how much more one side has staked out with his pawns in comparison with that by his opponent. But a space advantage can also be determined by the pieces, if they are actively placed without the risk of being chased away. From their more active squares, the pieces can help restrain the other side’s pieces and assist in advancing their own pawns and pieces.

In the following example this is exactly the case (see next diagram).

How should we assess this position? Despite the symmetrical pawn distribution, Black clearly holds the initiative. If you compare White’s pieces with their respective black counterparts, each of Black’s pieces has a more active role. In fact, all of them are nearly ideally placed. So how does Black improve his position while keeping the pressure on White? In this case, it isn’t too difficult to arrive at the answer: by advancing his kingside pawns, he will not only gain more space, but he will also push White’s pieces to less attractive squares. At the same time this increases the scope of Black’s pieces, which in combination with the spatial plus will allow Black to create new opportunities to weaken his opponent’s position and strengthen his own.

17...g5! 18 \texttt{\textbf{d}}h2 f5!?

As Kramnik points out, the more solid 18...h6 would also have kept an edge for Black.

19 \texttt{\textbf{\textbf{F}}}f1 \texttt{\textbf{F}}f7!

There is no reason to provoke a premature crisis by uncritically pushing the kingside pawns further forward. When holding the initiative, just as in a balanced position, you need to weigh the options closely, to see what serves your game-plan best. If Black advanced his pawns without further preparation, he would give White some targets to play against, but if properly prepared, the threat of the pawn advance will leave White helplessly watching their march forward.

20 \texttt{\textbf{\textbf{R}}}d1

The active approach, 20 \texttt{\textbf{Q}}e3, only results in more problems after 20...\texttt{\textbf{\textbf{R}}}xd4! 21 \texttt{\textbf{\textbf{Q}}}xd4 \texttt{\textbf{\textbf{R}}}xd4 
22 \texttt{\textbf{\textbf{Q}}}xf5 \texttt{\textbf{\textbf{\textbf{Q}}}c}5 (Kramnik), when Black is clearly better: his pieces are far better placed and f2 is a target.

20...f4!

A simple and effective move: Black temporarily shuts down the h2-bishop, while taking the e3-square away from the c2-knight. White obviously has to take immediate action to regain some activity for his pieces, if he is ever to hope for counterplay. White’s next move fits this bill, but also weakens his kingside significantly.

21 g3 fxg3 22 fxg3 \texttt{\textbf{\textbf{F}}}f8 23 \texttt{\textbf{\textbf{Q}}}g2?!
Kramnik questions this move, and instead calls for 23 g4. In reality, White's situation is pretty miserable, and while 23 g4 does increase the scope of the h2-bishop, this is of little significance in the overall picture, and after 23...\texttt{\text.ascii{g6}}, Black is much better. However, in the game continuation Black's road to a winning position is very clear.

23...\texttt{\text.ascii{a5}!}

There are many weaknesses on the light squares in White's position, and they will be even more vulnerable with the light-squared bishop off the board. In addition, tactical blows based on pressure along the a2-g8 diagonal are now out of the picture.

24 \texttt{\text.ascii{w}f4}

On 24 \texttt{\text.ascii{e}3}, Kramnik gives 24...\texttt{\text.ascii{c4}!!?} 25 \texttt{\text.ascii{xc4} dxc4 26 \texttt{\text.ascii{x}e4} d5}, but the simple continuation 24...\texttt{\text.ascii{c8}} is even more effective; e.g., 25 \texttt{\text.ascii{w}e2} \texttt{\text.ascii{x}b3} 26 \texttt{\text.ascii{x}b3} \texttt{\text.ascii{w}a6} 27 \texttt{\text.ascii{e}1} \texttt{\text.ascii{w}a2} 28 \texttt{\text.ascii{x}b7} \texttt{\text.ascii{x}d6} 29 \texttt{\text.ascii{b}4} \texttt{\text.ascii{g}6}, and White's weak light squares prove decisive.

24...\texttt{\text.ascii{w}xb4} 25 \texttt{\text.ascii{xb}4} \texttt{\text.ascii{x}b3} 26 \texttt{\text.ascii{a}xb3} \texttt{\text.ascii{d}6}!

The first target is the b3-pawn.

27 \texttt{\text.ascii{a}3} \texttt{\text.ascii{b}6} 28 \texttt{\text.ascii{h}4} \texttt{\text.ascii{c}8} 29 \texttt{\text.ascii{f}e5} \texttt{\text.ascii{e}8}!

Oh, those weak light squares...

30 \texttt{\text.ascii{g}4} \texttt{\text.ascii{a}4}! 31 \texttt{\text.ascii{a}1} \texttt{\text.ascii{b}5} 32 \texttt{\text.ascii{d}1} \texttt{\text.ascii{f}8} 33 \texttt{\text.ascii{d}e1}

For some reason, Kramnik states that 33 \texttt{\text.ascii{e}3} \texttt{\text.ascii{c}2}+ is only clearly better for Black, but White can only wait for Black to finish him off; for example, 34 \texttt{\text.ascii{g}1} 35 \texttt{\text.ascii{g}3} \texttt{\text.ascii{d}6} 36 \texttt{\text.ascii{e}1} \texttt{\text.ascii{c}7}! 37 \texttt{\text.ascii{h}4} \texttt{\text.ascii{b}6} 38 \texttt{\text.ascii{f}3} h5!, and the end is rapidly approaching; e.g., 39 \texttt{\text.ascii{hxg5} d5} 40 \texttt{\text.ascii{g}xg5} \texttt{\text.ascii{d}xd4} – game over.

33...\texttt{\text.ascii{d}6}! 34 \texttt{\text.ascii{e}3}??

34 \texttt{\text.ascii{d}1} is slightly better, but also loses: 34...\texttt{\text.ascii{g}4}.

34...\texttt{\text.ascii{c}2}+ 35 \texttt{\text.ascii{g}1} \texttt{\text.ascii{d}3} 36 \texttt{\text.ascii{d}xd3} \texttt{\text.ascii{b}2} 37 \texttt{\text.ascii{c}1} \texttt{\text.ascii{d}xb4} 0-1

It looks quite simple in the hands of Kramnik to orchestrate such an offensive, and a word of warning is in order: only advance your pawns on your kingside if your opponent is not in a position to strike back and attack them.

**Better Piece Mobility**

First of all, what is piece mobility? It is the ability to move the pieces more freely to relevant squares, e.g., from wing to other or from the back rank to active squares in the centre or from one file to another. Better piece mobility makes it possible to take advantage of those fleeting moments when an opportunity arises in one or more spots on the board and your pieces can readily switch from their current roles to taking advantage of those kinds of opportunities.

In the following example, we have a fairly typical situation where White has an isolated d-pawn, but his pieces are developed slightly more actively, whereas Black has a little less space but otherwise is also fully developed.

![Chess Diagram](image)

**Nunn – Lutz**

*Bundesliga 1994/5*

16 d5!

One of the standard ideas when playing with an isolated pawn is to push it forward, forcing a change of the game. Generally a number of exchanges will always follow, but the idea behind the pawn-break is that the one with the more active pieces will maintain some sort of pressure.

16...\texttt{\text.ascii{d}xd5} 17 \texttt{\text.ascii{d}xd5} \texttt{\text.ascii{e}xd5} 18 \texttt{\text.ascii{d}xd5}

So far, so good. The question is now how Black should continue: force more exchanges or try to improve on the position of his pieces. Black chose the latter in the game, so let's look at the alternatives:

a) 18...\texttt{\text.ascii{d}xd5} 19 \texttt{\text.ascii{w}xd5} \texttt{\text.ascii{g}6} 20 \texttt{\text.ascii{d}d4} \texttt{\text.ascii{d}xd4} (or 20...\texttt{\text.ascii{d}d8} 21 \texttt{\text.ascii{c}xc6} bxc6 22 \texttt{\text.ascii{w}a2} ±) 21 \texttt{\text.ascii{c}xc8}+ \texttt{\text.ascii{w}xc8} 22 \texttt{\text.ascii{w}xd4} a6 23 \texttt{\text.ascii{f}3} with a small but clear advantage for White in the endgame; his bishops are much stronger than Black's.

b) 18...\texttt{\text.ascii{f}3} 19 \texttt{\text.ascii{f}3} (19 \texttt{\text.ascii{f}d8}+ \texttt{\text.ascii{d}d8} 20 \texttt{\text.ascii{f}3} \texttt{\text.ascii{d}d4}! will merely transpose to the main line) 19...\texttt{\text.ascii{f}3}! 20 \texttt{\text.ascii{c}xc8} (Black equalizes after 20 \texttt{\text.ascii{d}d8}+ \texttt{\text.ascii{d}d8} 21 \texttt{\text.ascii{d}d1} \texttt{\text.ascii{c}c1} 22 \texttt{\text.ascii{f}3} \texttt{\text.ascii{d}d3}+ 23 \texttt{\text.ascii{w}f3} \texttt{\text.ascii{c}c7} 24...\texttt{\text.ascii{f}3}+ 21 \texttt{\text.ascii{g}f3}
\[ \text{What is the Initiative?} \]

When your opponent’s rooks are allowed in on your second rank (his seventh) it is rarely a good sign.

23...\text{\textcopyright}e8

The attempt to activate his own rook in similar fashion by playing 23...\text{\textcopyright}e2 is met with 24 \textbf{\textcopyright}d4, and the rook can make its retreat again.

24 \text{\textbf{\textcopyright}a4} \text{\textbf{\textcopyright}f5} 25 \text{\textbf{\textcopyright}b7} \text{\textbf{\textcopyright}d8} 26 \text{\textbf{\textcopyright}xa7}

White has won a pawn and his pieces are still active and mobile. The fact that Black’s best move is possibly 26...\text{\textbf{\textcopyright}f8} to guard the f7-pawn indicates the severity of his troubles.

26...\text{\textbf{\textcopyright}d5} 27 \text{\textbf{\textcopyright}d4} \text{\textbf{h}6}

Now White could have settled the game with 28 \textbf{\textcopyright}c4! \text{\textbf{\textcopyright}f8} 29 \text{\textbf{\textcopyright}xd5} \text{\textbf{\textcopyright}xd5} 30 \textbf{\text{\textcopyright}f6} \text{\textbf{\textcopyright}xf6} 31 \text{\textbf{\textcopyright}d4}, when he wins without further headaches.

Please keep in mind that even if the pawn distribution and piece distribution are identical and both sides have developed their pieces to apparently reasonable squares, there are often small but important differences in the position, and only by examining these carefully will you spot subtle differences in piece mobility.

**King-Safety Issues**

As I have already mentioned on several occasions, the king’s safety is of foremost concern and consideration. One or two weak squares around the king can be the difference between having a good position or a bad one. Obviously the number and the kinds of pieces remaining are important, but the dividing line is often very thin and not always immediately obvious. A good example follows.

\[ \text{Diagram:} \]

Krasenkow – Beliavsky

Lvov 2000
In addition to Black’s majority on the queenside with the potential to create a passed pawn, White’s structure is somewhat weakened by the fact that he has played f3.

30...\texttt{b}3 \texttt{c}1 31 \texttt{f}2 \texttt{d}5

The black pieces are more active, and they have an easier time finding active squares. However, White’s position is very far from being without potential. He has the option of building a broad centre and possibly creating a passed pawn on the d-file, once the safety issues of the white king have been taken care of.

32 e4 \texttt{a}1! 33 \texttt{c}6

The first problems caused by White’s open king are already emerging; e.g., 33...\texttt{e}2 \texttt{b}6 34 \texttt{f}2 \texttt{a}4!, when the a-pawn falls. Even worse is 33 exd5? \texttt{xd}4+ 34 \texttt{e}3 \texttt{c}5 35 \texttt{xd}4 \texttt{xd}4+ 36 \texttt{e}2 \texttt{xe}5 and the endgame is easily won for Black.

33...\texttt{b}6 34 \texttt{e}2 h5!?

Stop for a moment and look at the differences between the two sides: White’s king is wide open and within striking distance of all sorts of attacks, whereas his counterpart is hidden safely on a8; Black’s knight has a wonderful anchor square on e4, while White’s is chasing around the board. As for the pawn-structures, White’s is rather loose, while Black’s is neatly guarded. Therefore White has to force some weaknesses in Black’s set-up if he is not to suffer a certain death.

35 \texttt{b}8

Ribli suggested that White try 35 h4, but this too has its problems; e.g., 35...\texttt{d}6! 36 \texttt{a}5 \texttt{c}1, and Black is far better coordinated.

35...\texttt{xd}4 36 \texttt{xa}6 \texttt{c}4

Black’s active pieces remain the biggest threat against White’s open king.

37 \texttt{c}7 \texttt{g}1 38 \texttt{f}2 \texttt{g}2? (D)

This move is given a ‘!’ in Informator, but Ribli’s ‘?’ in CBM is closer to the truth, but neither provided the best continuation: 38...\texttt{hxh}2! 39 \texttt{xb}5 (39...\texttt{xb}5 \texttt{c}5 40 \texttt{xc}4 \texttt{xf}2++ Ribli) and now:

a) Ribli’s 39...\texttt{d}6! is reasonably good, but is not the most accurate move: 40 \texttt{ex}6 (40 \texttt{xc}4 \texttt{g}3 41 \texttt{c}5 \texttt{xf}2-- Ribli) 40...\texttt{g}3 (40...\texttt{xe}6 41 \texttt{xc}4 \texttt{g}3 42 \texttt{xb}6 \texttt{h}8 43 \texttt{b}6 \texttt{h}4 44 \texttt{a}4 \texttt{h}3 45 \texttt{a}5 \texttt{g}2 = Ribli) 41 \texttt{e}8+ \texttt{h}7 42 \texttt{g}5+ \texttt{g}6 43 \texttt{xf}7+ \texttt{g}5 44 \texttt{g}7+ \texttt{h}4, and now instead of 45 \texttt{f}7+ \texttt{h}3 46 \texttt{e}6+ \texttt{g}2 47 \texttt{xc}4 \texttt{h}1-- as given by Ribli, White should try 45 \texttt{f}6+ \texttt{h}3 46 \texttt{f}5+ \texttt{g}2 47 \texttt{x}g3 \texttt{xg}3+ 48 \texttt{d}3 \texttt{b}2+ 49 \texttt{c}3 \texttt{d}1+ 50 \texttt{d}3, when there is still a lot of work left to be done.

b) 39...h4! 40 \texttt{xc}4 (40 \texttt{g}5 is given by Beliavsky in Informator, and after 40...\texttt{h}3 41 \texttt{e}8 \texttt{h}7 42 \texttt{h}5+ it’s a draw; however, after 40...\texttt{e}7! 41 \texttt{xe}7 \texttt{hx}3 42 \texttt{c}5 \texttt{gf}2 43 \texttt{a}4 {43 \texttt{xf}2 \texttt{xc}7--+} 43...\texttt{f}1+ 44 \texttt{xf}1 \texttt{d}2+ 45 \texttt{e}1 \texttt{xf}3+ Black is winning) 40...\texttt{g}3 41 \texttt{d}4 \texttt{xf}2 42 \texttt{a}6 \texttt{g}5!? (42...\texttt{f}1+ can also be tried: 43 \texttt{xf}1 \texttt{xa}2 44 \texttt{d}3 \texttt{e}7 45 \texttt{f}2 \texttt{a}1+ 46 \texttt{f}2 \texttt{h}1 and White’s unsafe king and offside knight promise Black excellent winning chances) 43 \texttt{xf}2 \texttt{d}6 44 \texttt{a}7 \texttt{c}6 45 \texttt{e}1 \texttt{c}1+ 46 \texttt{e}2 \texttt{b}2+ 47 \texttt{d}3 \texttt{b}1+ 48 \texttt{d}2 \texttt{xa}2+, and Black has every chance of winning the endgame.

One of the lessons from these variations is that queen and knight is often a stronger tandem than queen and bishop, but other rules apply when you cannot coordinate the pieces.

39 \texttt{xb}5 \texttt{d}2 40 \texttt{hxh}5?

In time-trouble, White makes the decisive mistake, but nonetheless Black would still have winning chances after 40...\texttt{xd}2 \texttt{xf}2+ 41 \texttt{e}2 \texttt{d}4+ (41...\texttt{b}4+?! 42 \texttt{d}3 \texttt{b}6 43 \texttt{b}2 is given as ± by Beliavsky, but it isn’t entirely obvious how White should improve his position after 43...\texttt{a}5) 42 \texttt{d}3, and now Ribli only mentions 42...\texttt{f}2+ settling for a draw, while Beliavsky gives 42...\texttt{g}1?! 43 \texttt{e}2 \texttt{b}1 44 \texttt{a}6 \texttt{xa}2+ 45 \texttt{e}3 \texttt{b}1 with the initiative in the endgame. Black can also consider 42...\texttt{b}4+? 43 \texttt{e}2 \texttt{f}2+ 44 \texttt{b}3 \texttt{a}5 45 \texttt{a}6, when both 45...\texttt{e}1?! and 45...\texttt{hxh}2 46 \texttt{b}5 \texttt{g}3 47 \texttt{xa}5 \texttt{xf}3+ 48 \texttt{f}3 \texttt{e}4 promise Black good winning chances.
40...b4!
Oops! Now the king is trapped in a mating-net.
41 \textcolor{red}{\textbullet}xe6 \textcolor{red}{\textbullet}f1+ 42 \textcolor{red}{\textbullet}e3 \textcolor{red}{\textbullet}c4+ 43 \textcolor{red}{\textbullet}f4 \textcolor{red}{\textbullet}xf2
44 \textcolor{red}{\textbullet}b5 \textcolor{red}{\textbullet}d6+ 45 \textcolor{red}{\textbullet}g5 \textcolor{red}{\textbullet}xf3 0-1
White resigned due to the fact that 46 \textcolor{red}{\textbullet}xc4 allows 46...\textcolor{red}{\textbullet}e7#.

For now I shall leave it at that, but throughout the book we shall see examples where king safety plays a role.

**Better Piece Coordination**

I think most of us have been in the situation where both players have finished developing, but it just seems like your opponent’s pieces are working better together. That what piece coordination is all about. It really doesn’t matter that you have ‘completed’ your development if none of your pieces are working together. That is why there are general principles for developing your pieces. For example, placing a knight on the edge of the board in the opening will generally only be of use if it can jump to a more useful square elsewhere, or perform a very important purpose. Another useful rule of thumb is to play your least active piece to a more attractive square.

\begin{center}
\begin{figure}
\includegraphics[width=\textwidth]{image1.png}
\caption{Gelfand – Khalifman
\textit{‘Russia vs The World’ rpd, Moscow 2002}}
\end{figure}
\end{center}

\textbf{16 \textbullet}e3!

Apparently, this was a prepared improvement over a Kasparov game, in which Black obtained an advantage after 16 \textcolor{red}{\textbullet}g5? \textcolor{red}{\textbullet}xd3 17 \textcolor{red}{\textbullet}xd3 \textcolor{red}{\textbullet}xc3! 18 \textcolor{red}{\textbullet}xf6 \textcolor{red}{\textbullet}xf6 19 \textcolor{red}{\textbullet}xd7 \textcolor{red}{\textbullet}xb2 (Pelletier-Kasparov, Zurich 2001). However, as Ribli points out, White can also try 16 \textcolor{red}{\textbullet}fd1!? \textcolor{red}{\textbullet}xd3 17 \textcolor{red}{\textbullet}xd3 \textcolor{red}{\textbullet}c6 18 \textcolor{red}{\textbullet}g3 with a good game.

Gelfand’s move makes a lot of sense, activating an otherwise fairly passive piece, addressing the multiple dark-squared weaknesses and preparing a clear path for the rook that will move to d1.

\textbf{16...\textcolor{red}{\textbullet}d6 17 \textcolor{red}{\textbullet}fd1}

White’s pieces are already finding harmony and purpose, while Black’s queen is still looking for a comfortable square.

\textbf{17...\textcolor{red}{\textbullet}eg4}

This makes a lot of sense: Black provokes a weakness in front of White’s king, and gets to exchange a bishop that could easily end up causing Black some long-term problems. To boot, the alternatives aren’t all that attractive:

\begin{itemize}
\item a) 17...\textcolor{red}{\textbullet}xd3?! 18 \textcolor{red}{\textbullet}xd3 \textcolor{red}{\textbullet}e7 19 a3 \textcolor{red}{\textbullet}xc3 20 \textcolor{red}{\textbullet}c5 (Ftačnik) with a solid advantage for White.
\item b) 17...\textcolor{red}{\textbullet}e7?! 18 a3 \textcolor{red}{\textbullet}xe3 (18...\textcolor{red}{\textbullet}d6 19 f4 \textcolor{red}{\textbullet}xd3 20 \textcolor{red}{\textbullet}xd3 \textcolor{red}{\textbullet}b8 21 \textcolor{red}{\textbullet}c5 \textcolor{red}{\textbullet}a7 22 \textcolor{red}{\textbullet}xa7 \textcolor{red}{\textbullet}xa7 23 e5 is very unpleasant for Black) 19 \textcolor{red}{\textbullet}c5 +– (Ribli).
\end{itemize}

\textbf{18 g3}

As Ribli points out, 18 f4? is a terrible idea, as after 18...\textcolor{red}{\textbullet}xc3 19 \textcolor{red}{\textbullet}xe3 \textcolor{red}{\textbullet}g4 White has done a major disservice to his position by weakening the dark squares around his king while his opponent gets rid of his dark-squared bishop.

\textbf{18...\textcolor{red}{\textbullet}xe3 19 \textcolor{red}{\textbullet}xe3 \textcolor{red}{\textbullet}g4}

Black embarks on a fairly ambitious project, but it doesn’t appear to be the best way to proceed. The alternative is 19...\textcolor{red}{\textbullet}e7?! 20 a3 (20 e5 \textcolor{red}{\textbullet}xc3 21 bxc3!? \textcolor{red}{\textbullet}d5 22 \textcolor{red}{\textbullet}e4 f5!? 23 exf6 \textcolor{red}{\textbullet}xf6 24 \textcolor{red}{\textbullet}xf6 \textcolor{red}{\textbullet}d5 (Ribli) with the threat 25...\textcolor{red}{\textbullet}f8 and therefore more or less forcing 25 \textcolor{red}{\textbullet}e1 \textcolor{red}{\textbullet}f7 26 \textcolor{red}{\textbullet}c5 \textcolor{red}{\textbullet}xf2+ with a perpetual check) 20...\textcolor{red}{\textbullet}xc3 21 \textcolor{red}{\textbullet}xc3 e5 (21...\textcolor{red}{\textbullet}a4? 22 e5 \textcolor{red}{\textbullet}d5 23 \textcolor{red}{\textbullet}e4 +–) 22 \textcolor{red}{\textbullet}e7 (Ribli) with a slight pull for White.

\textbf{20 \textcolor{red}{\textbullet}g5 e5?}

This is in my opinion a truly strange decision; Black lets White get the d5-square in return for keeping the knight temporarily on g4 and using it to generate counterplay against White’s kingside. However, what Black fails to take into account is the fact that after 20...e5 White’s pieces get more potential to become active and thereby counter Black’s plans. A safer and better option is 20...\textcolor{red}{\textbullet}e5 21 \textcolor{red}{\textbullet}e2 f6!
22 \textit{Ex}d6 fxg5 23 \textit{Ex}b6 \textit{Ex}xc3 24 \textit{Ex}xh3 \textit{Ex}e6 25 \textit{Ex}x\textit{c}5 g4 26 \textit{Ex}xb7 (as Ftačnik points out, 26 h3!? is adequately met by 26...\textit{Ex}ad8! 27 hxg4 \textit{Ex}d2 28 \textit{Ex}e3 \textit{Ex}h5! =) 26...\textit{Ex}e4 27 \textit{Ex}x\textit{e}6 ('+' Ribli) 27...\textit{Ex}f3+ 28 \textit{Ex}xf3 \textit{Ex}xf3 29 \textit{Ex}x\textit{c}5 \textit{Ex}ad8 30 \textit{Ex}d3 \textit{Ex}f5 31 b3 a5 32 \textit{Ex}e3, and White has stabilized the situation and can now concentrate his efforts on converting his pawn advantage into victory.

21 \textit{Ex}d5! h6

Displacing White’s queen, but to a square where it still fully participates in the action. Other moves are not too attractive:

a) 21...\textit{Ex}f6 22 \textit{Ex}xb4 (22 \textit{Ex}xf6+ is also possible, although after 22...\textit{Ex}xf6 23 \textit{Ex}xf6 gx\textit{f}6 24 a3 \textit{Ex}a4?! 25 \textit{Ex}e2 quite a bit more technique is required of White) 22...\textit{Ex}xb4 23 \textit{Ex}xe5 (Ribli) with an extra pawn.

b) 21...\textit{Ex}a5 22 \textit{Ex}e2 f6 23 \textit{Wh}4 \textit{Ex}c1 24 \textit{Ex}x\textit{c}1 \textit{Ex}h6 25 \textit{Ex}xf6+ \textit{Ex}xf6 26 \textit{Ex}xf6 \textit{Ex}xf6 27 \textit{Ex}d7 (Ftačnik), and with an extra pawn and better-coordinated pieces, White should have every chance of converting his advantage into victory.

22 \textit{Wh}4 \textit{Ex}a5?

It seems like Black isn’t sensing the danger and commits the losing blunder. As Ftačnik points out, Black’s best chance is to take a bad endgame after 22...\textit{Ex}f6 23 \textit{Ex}xf6+ \textit{Ex}xf6 24 \textit{Ex}xf6 gx\textit{f}6 25 a3 \textit{Ex}a4 26 \textit{Ex}c2 (or 26 \textit{Ex}c4 \textit{Ex}e7 27 \textit{Ex}d5 \textit{Ex}e4 26...\textit{Ex}c8 27 \textit{Ex}a1 \textit{Ex}xc2 28 \textit{Ex}xc2 \textit{Ex}c5 29 \textit{Ex}f1 (Ftačnik) with a solid plus for White in the endgame; the knight is considerably stronger than the bishop and in addition, Black’s pawn-structure on the kingside will cause him long-term headaches.

23 \textit{Ex}f3!

As simple as it is good. All of a sudden, Black has too many pieces hanging and not enough defenders. The rest of the game is desperation on Black’s part.

23...\textit{Ex}c1 24 \textit{Ex}xc1 f5 25 ex\textit{f}5 \textit{Ex}xf5 26 \textit{Ex}xf2 \textit{Ex}x\textit{f}5+ 27 \textit{Ex}g2 \textit{Ex}c6 28 \textit{Ex}h3 \textit{Ex}e6 29 g4 1-0

The next example is from another normal-looking position (see following diagram).

Here we have a fairly typical position from a Sveshnikov Sicilian. White has his knight anchored on d5 with the support of other pieces and a neat pawn-structure, while Black’s pieces are more active and he has some potential to advance his e- and f-pawns to interfere with White’s piece coordination and increase the scope of his own pieces. The dynamic qualities of Black’s position are undeniable; in fact, my computer program goes as far as calling the position equal.

So which problems can we point at in Black’s set-up? A number of things in fact. The pawns are split up into three islands; two of them are isolated, and in particular the a-pawn is a relatively easy target. The coordination between the b5-rook, the knight, and their supervising protector, the queen, could become a tactical problem. On the kingside, Black has the traditional positional defect that comes with this opening: a weakened pawn shield in front of his king. The g7-bishop usually makes a good substitute provided Black is active, but if he stays passive and doesn’t manage to advance his pawns, the bishop can be terribly passive on g7. Let’s see how Sokolov addresses these positional issues.

20 \textit{Wa}4

Initially, White points to the tactically fragile protection of Black’s pieces on the queenside. The b2-pawn cannot be taken (20...\textit{Ex}xb2 21 \textit{Ex}c4 \textit{Ex}b7 22 \textit{Ex}db6 ++) thus forcing Black to make a decision he isn’t too happy with: he must remove the rook from the kingside – the rook that was intended to be the locomotive behind the pawn advance.

20...\textit{Ex}f8 21 \textit{Wh}4!

With the f8-rook gone, this queen-swing all of a sudden becomes attractive as the f6-square has become accessible, even if Black should
play ...f5. Without activity on the kingside, Black’s dynamic compensation is reduced significantly. The kingside problems Black is facing are illustrated well by the following line: 21...\textit{\textsubscript{W}}xb2 22 \textit{\textsubscript{W}}xf6 \textit{\textsubscript{W}}xf6 23 \textit{\textsubscript{W}}xf6+ \textit{\textsubscript{Q}}g8 24 \textit{\textsubscript{Q}}e4! (but not 24 \textit{\textsubscript{B}}a4, when Sokolov continued 24...\textit{\textsubscript{W}}xe7 25 \textit{\textsubscript{W}}h6 \textit{\textsubscript{Q}}d8 26 \textit{\textsubscript{Q}}d5 in \textit{\textsubscript{I}}nmator, because of 24...\textit{\textsubscript{Q}}d4!) 24...\textit{\textsubscript{Q}}xe7 25 \textit{\textsubscript{B}}xa5 and Black’s positional problems are more evident than before.

21...\textit{\textsubscript{W}}d8 22 \textit{\textsubscript{W}}xd8+ \textit{\textsubscript{Q}}xd8 23 \textit{\textsubscript{Q}}c7 \textit{\textsubscript{B}}xb2 24 \textit{\textsubscript{Q}}xe6 \textit{\textsubscript{Q}}xe6 25 \textit{\textsubscript{B}}c4 \textit{\textsubscript{B}}c2 26 \textit{\textsubscript{B}}xd6 \textit{\textsubscript{Q}}g8 (D)

Black cannot go for 26...\textit{\textsubscript{B}}xc3, because 27 \textit{\textsubscript{Q}}xf7+ \textit{\textsubscript{Q}}g8 28 \textit{\textsubscript{B}}d6 \textit{\textsubscript{B}}d3 29 \textit{\textsubscript{Q}}f5 \textit{\textsubscript{B}}d5 30 \textit{\textsubscript{B}}c1 leaves him positionally busted.

30 \textit{\textsubscript{Q}}xa5 \textit{\textsubscript{Q}}e7 31 \textit{\textsubscript{B}}d6 \textit{\textsubscript{Q}}e7 32 \textit{\textsubscript{Q}}f5+ \textit{\textsubscript{Q}}f6 33 \textit{\textsubscript{Q}}e3

As if Black needed a reminder about the weak light squares, White prepares a devastating fork on d5.

33...\textit{\textsubscript{B}}2xc3 34 \textit{\textsubscript{Q}}d5+ \textit{\textsubscript{Q}}g6 35 \textit{\textsubscript{B}}xc3 \textit{\textsubscript{B}}xc3 36
\textit{\textsubscript{B}}a6 \textit{\textsubscript{B}}f8 37 \textit{\textsubscript{B}}h3! \textit{\textsubscript{B}}f6 38 \textit{\textsubscript{B}}xe6 fxe6 39 \textit{\textsubscript{B}}a7
\textit{\textsubscript{B}}h6 40 \textit{\textsubscript{B}}dd7 \textit{\textsubscript{B}}c5 41 \textit{\textsubscript{B}}f7+ \textit{\textsubscript{Q}}g6 42 \textit{\textsubscript{B}}g7+ \textit{\textsubscript{B}}f5 43 \textit{\textsubscript{B}}af7+ \textit{\textsubscript{Q}}e4 44 \textit{\textsubscript{B}}g6 1-0

It is important to remember that there don’t have to be a lot of external factors in place for one side to have better piece coordination; it is merely a matter of determining an overall setup for the pieces and which weaknesses you are able to target (and which of your weaknesses your opponent can target), and then orchestrate a plan where his pieces don’t work together as well as yours do.

How do I Counter my Opponent’s Initiative?

After seeing one example after the other on how to take advantage of the initiative, you are perhaps wondering what you can do if your opponent holds the initiative. Obviously, doing nothing isn’t the answer. You need to tip the scale a bit and throw a spanner in the works. Consider what your opponent intends to do and what is required of him to keep the fire burning, and then see if it is possible to cross his plans by not allowing this, while obviously not allowing something else too.

The example below is a good illustration of what can be done.

Sepp – Gelfand
Berlin ECC 1996
White has sacrificed a pawn. As compensation, his pieces are active and control a number of important squares, while Black's pieces are placed very defensively. So what can Black do if he doesn't want to suffer in silence? A good idea is a timely return of the sacrificed material in a fashion where it breaks the opponent's momentum.

19...e4!

At first glance, this move may not appear to make much sense. However, if White takes the pawn, Black will be able to gain a couple of tempi to organize a proper defensive set-up on the kingside and gain time to activate some pieces. If White decides to leave the pawn alone, Black may play ...f5. Let's briefly look at the alternatives:

a) 19...a6?? allows a forced mate by 20 g6+ hxg6 21 f3.

b) 19...b6!? is an interesting alternative; e.g., 20 wxe4 exf4! 21 xf4 wxe4! 22 e3 with sufficient compensation for the pawn, but probably not more than that.

20 wxe4 d6

The first benefit from the pawn sacrifice: Black forces the exchange of one of White's active pieces for one of Black's previously defensive pieces.

21 xd6 xd6 22 f5 e8!

Now a tempo is gained, while making room for the bishop on f8. It's interesting to see how all of a sudden White starts losing his aggressive edge and starts playing much more timidly. This trait is very common at all levels: if one side has controlled the initiative and then loses it, this side is often seen playing less sharp and less accurate moves than before.

23 wf3?!

Taken aback by the change in dynamics, White follows the familiar path, not playing as aggressively as he did before. Correct is 23 d5 f8 24 e1 with an edge for White. Now Black doesn't have any problems.

23...f8 24 b4 w7 25 d4?!

Another questionable decision: why offer to exchange a well-posted knight for a knight that represents no problems for White? In my opinion, White should have tried to strengthen his position, for example by playing 25 e1.

25...xd4 26 xd4 a6 27 e1 ed8 28 w4 b6!

Black is gradually seizing the initiative, and by creating a passed pawn on the a-file, he will soon give White a genuine cause for concern.

29 e3 a5 30 bxa5 bxa5 31 b1?!

White is truly playing in accordance with Black's wishes. It is necessary to create counterchances of his own. 31 h3?? h6 32 g6 would be a couple of steps in the right direction, and the game would then still be undecided.

31...ab8 32 xb8 xb8 33 g4?!

Too little, too late. Now it only serves to weaken his position.

33...wd7 34 we6 wxe6 35 xe6 ea8 36 c4 a4 37 c5 a3 38 c6 a2

38...g8? could also be considered, but with both players in time-trouble, one of the most effective measures is to advance a pawn.

39 e1?!

This blunder ends the game. 39 g2! e5 40 a1 would have prolonged the struggle.

39...c5 40 xc5 a1 0-1

It is obviously important to recognize the fact that your opponent holds the initiative if you are to do something about it, and the sooner you realize it, the better chances you have to do something about it. This may sound elementary, but at the board things happen to us that often can be difficult to make sense of afterwards. In the next example, Anand notices the change in the game and immediately counters it.

Anand – Shirov

Moscow FIDE KO 2001

18...f6?!

The natural 18...exf3 19 xf3 would leave Black somewhat worse, so he decides to try his chances with a pawn sacrifice.
19 fx e4 \( \text{d}5 \)

An important detail: before the bishop is put on \( \text{d}4 \), Black provokes a further weakness of the dark squares in White’s position.  
20 h3 \( \text{d}4 \)

This bishop is a monster, and unless White does something drastic – and promptly – he is going to have a major problem on the dark squares; e.g., 21 \( \text{h}1 \)?? \( \text{g}3 \) is anything but pleasant. Anand then gives the following line in Informator: 22 \( \text{d}3 \text{fxe}4 23 \text{xf}e8+ \text{xf}8 24 \text{xf}e4 \text{exd}3 25 \text{xf}e3 \text{xf}4! 26 \text{f}1+ \text{xf}1 27 \text{xf}1 \text{g}6 with a small plus for Black. Alternatively, 21 exf5? \( \text{xf}5 \) is very good for Black.  
21 e5! \( \text{xe}5 22 \text{h}1 \text{d}7 \)

Stohl calls this move dubious, while Anand passes over it without any comment. I tend to agree with Anand, and find that the line given by Stohl fails to provide a clear-cut answer as to why 22...f4?! is any better than the game continuation: 23 \( \text{d}3 \text{f}5 24 \text{xe}5 \text{xc}2 25 \text{d}3 \text{xe}5 26 \text{xc}2 \text{c}7 is “devoid of prospects” [for Black], but White’s edge remains at best only minimal.” Despite the relative lack of active assignments for the bishop-pair, it is still a long-term factor that has to be counted in White’s favour and that also goes for the passed d-pawn. After 27 \( \text{d}2! ? \text{ae}8 28 \text{ae}1, \) White commands clearly the better chances.  
23 \( \text{d}3 \text{a}4 ? \)

This, however, is a clear mistake; White’s light-squared bishop is a fairly weak piece, and White would need a considerable investment in time to give it a useful role. Black’s light-squared didn’t yet partake in the action, but to spend time exchanging these two bishops makes very little sense.

Stohl suggests 23....\( \text{f}6 24 \text{f}4 \text{ae}8 25 \text{ae}1 \) as a better way for Black to proceed, although he still thinks White is better due Black’s out-of-play knight on a6.  
24 \( \text{xa}4 \text{xe}2 25 \text{f}3 ! \)

A simple and solid decision which prevents Black from generating any real counterplay.  
25...\( \text{ae}8 \)

Stohl criticizes this move, but it’s difficult to suggest anything better. The alternatives are:

a) 25...b5? 26 cb5! \( \text{b}4 \) (26...\( \text{c}7 27 \text{f}4 \text{xd}5 28 \text{c}4 \text{e}4 29 \text{e}1 \text{e}3 30 \text{a}2 ! \) (Stohl) 27 axb4 c4 28 d6 exd3 29 \( \text{b}3+ \) h8 30 \( \text{xd}3 \) (Stohl) and White is winning.

b) 25...\( \text{c}7 26 \text{f}4 \pm \) (Stohl).

c) 25...\( \text{e}8 26 \text{b}3 \pm \) (Stohl).

26 \( \text{f}4 \text{h}6 \) (D)

This move is played in accordance with a good rule of thumb: if you have the worse position, disturb the material balance in some sort of way.

Another attempt is 26...\( \text{f}6, \) but as analysed by Stohl, White easily meets Black’s counterplay with 27 \( \text{h}2! \text{g}6 28 \text{g}3 \).  
27 \( \text{d}6 ! \)

The attempt to win Black’s queen by 27 \( \text{e}1? \) only allows Black unnecessary counterplay: 27...\( \text{c}1+ 28 \text{e}1 \text{e}1+ 29 \text{h}2 \) g5, and Black is still in the game.  
27...\( \text{f}6 28 \text{f}4 \text{e}4 29 \text{c}6 \text{exe}6 ! ? \)

Black has to do something about the hanging e8-rook, and 29...\( \text{a}8 30 \text{b}5 \) is hardly an option. Anyway, this is what Shirov had in mind when he played 26...h6, attempting to rock the boat a little.  
30 dx e6 \( \text{xe}6 \)

30...\( \text{xe}6 \) doesn’t offer Black any hope: 31 \( \text{g}3 \text{xb}2 32 \text{e}1 \text{c}6 \) (or 32...\( \text{xe}1+ 33 \text{xe}1 \text{e}1+ 34 \text{h}2 \text{e}5+ 35 \text{g}3 +) 33 \text{xe}6 \text{xe}6 34 \text{f}5 \text{b}6 35 \text{e}8+ \text{h}7 36 \text{a}8 (\text{Stohl}), and the endgame is comfortably won for White.  
31 \( \text{g}3 \text{xb}2 32 \text{e}1 \text{f}7 33 \text{h}4 ! \)

Rather than attempting to win a pawn with 33 \( \text{e}8+ \) \( \text{h}7 34 \text{a}8 \) and misplacing his rook on a7, Anand prefers to keep his pieces active and coordinated.  
33...\( \text{e}6 \)

Despite needing to create counterplay, Black should not opt for 33...g5? due to 34 \( \text{fe}3 !, \) when Black’s king is a target; e.g., 34...\( \text{g}6 35 \text{e}8+ \) h7 36 \( \text{d}7+ \) f7 37 \( \text{e}7 \) g7 38
\[ \text{xg7+} \text{e}7 \text{e1} g4 40 c3, \text{and White wins.} \]

34 xxe6 \text{xe6} 35 \text{e}2 d4 36 xf5?!  

Being an exchange up, Anand offers the queen exchange, knowing well that if Black decides to side-step by taking the c4-pawn, the black king will be own his own defending against \( \text{w}+\text{w}+\text{h} \).

36...\text{xc4}?!  
Shirov goes for it anyway since 36...\text{xf5} 37 \text{xf5} b8 38 \text{f}2?! is a trivial win for a player of Anand’s calibre.

37 \text{h}2!  
There is no need for White to allow any kind of unpleasant back-rank checks.

37...\text{e}2  
Or 37...\text{c}1 38 \text{e}6+ \text{h}7 39 \text{e}4+ \text{g}8 40 \text{e}7 \text{g}1+ 41 \text{g}3, when Black has no satisfactory way of stopping 42 \text{f}8#.

38 \text{g}3!  
White builds a safe cover for his king, while at the same time preventing the a6-knight from returning to the game.

38...\text{d}1 39 \text{f}1 \text{b}3 40 \text{e}4  
Anand here points to 40 \text{c}8+ \text{h}7 41 \text{f}8 \text{b}1 42 \text{h}8+ \text{g}6 43 \text{c}8+ as the most accurate continuation. However, Black is completely lost anyway.

40...\text{b}5 41 \text{e}6+ \text{h}7 42 \text{f}5+ \text{g}8 43 \text{c}8+ \text{h}7 44 \text{f}8 1-0

Aside from solving the exercises below, try to work on some of your own games too by determining at which stage in the game you held the initiative and when it was controlled by your opponent, and what you and your opponent could have done to keep the initiative and what you and he could have done to stop each other’s initiative. It is particularly important that you do this with the games you lost, because we tend to learn more from our own mistakes than those of others.

### Exercises

#### 2.1 White has a very active position and all of his pieces are developed, while Black’s position is quite solid. How should Black continue?

#### 2.2 White has a little more space and Black the better pawn-structure. How can White grab the initiative?

#### 2.3 In this nearly symmetrical position, how should White go about claiming the initiative?
3 The Quest for Weaknesses

Even those with just the most basic understanding of chess will have some ideas as to what constitutes a weakness, much like what constitutes a strength. For example, an isolated or doubled pawn will often be a weakness that all of us will recognize. However, as players become stronger, and the more experience they gain, they become adept at detecting even the smallest and apparently insignificant weaknesses. This chapter will far from exhaust the various types and degrees of weaknesses, but seeks to highlight more of them and how to exploit them.

What is a Weakness?

This question is rather easily answered by the somewhat obscure and non-committal ‘it depends on the position!’ For example, an isolated pawn can be a weakness for most of the game, but in the endgame it may all of a sudden become a strong passed pawn. Therefore a weakness is only a weakness if there is a realistic possibility that the opponent can exploit it in one way or another. For example, if one side has all of his pawns on light squares, thus potentially leaving the dark squares weakened, this will only constitute a weakness if the other side has a chance to use these dark squares to penetrate; otherwise the weakness is not significant.

In the following sections, we shall categorize some of the types of weaknesses, but as a warm-up, let’s first look at the following example (see next diagram).

Black has just played 10...d7-b6. Try to see how many weaknesses you can spot on each side, and then determine if the other side has a realistic chance of taking advantage of each of them. These considerations are often critical in evaluating positions with locked or semi-locked pawn-structures.

For White, we notice a few things:

1) White’s kingside is a bit open due to the advance of the f-pawn; potentially the a7-g1 diagonal could become a problem in the future.

2) White’s kingside pawn-chain and the d4-pawn are all on dark squares, leaving the light squares slightly exposed.

3) The many pawns on dark squares restrict the dark-squared bishop.

For Black, the weaknesses are:

1) The pawns on light squares restrict the c8-bishop.

2) The same pawns have left the dark squares weak, in particular the a3-f8 diagonal.

3) The b6-knight is somewhat out of play and to some extent blocks the natural development of the queenside pieces.

4) Black lagging behind in development also constitutes a weakness, but may be considered a temporary one.

Did you have all of them? OK, let’s look at which can be exploited.

Of the weaknesses we listed for White, there is in my opinion only that can potentially become a concern for White and that is the weakness of the kingside through the f4 advance. If Black succeeds in opening the centre with ...f6 and ...e5, then Black’s queen and dark-squared
bishop can become a strong factor. The other weaknesses are of relatively minor concern as Black’s light-squared bishop is struggling for air behind its own pawns and therefore has no real influence at the moment. White’s dark-squared bishop can be developed to a3 after he plays b3. Black’s weaknesses are more hands-on and more difficult to deal with: the c8-bishop will only come to life if Black achieves the above-mentioned central pawn-break, ...e5. White can quite easily attack the weak dark squares with b3 and a3. The problem knight on b6 will need to be moved again before this weakness will be eliminated, particularly because White can easily restrict its reach.

Based on these considerations, it appears that Black’s last move must be erroneous and that the normal continuation, 10...Cc6 11 Ce3 (to protect the d-pawn, because if Black plays ...f6, White wants to retreat the knight to d3) 11...Cb6 makes more sense due to White’s dark-squared bishop being placed on a worse square, behind its own pawns and further away from being able to take Black to task for his weak a3-f8 diagonal.

Black’s plan to develop his pieces and prepare a pawn-break in the centre is rather obvious, and based on the above discussion, so is White’s.

11 b3
The b6-knight is immediately restrained and c1-bishop can now go to a3 whenever needed.

11...f6 12 d3 a7f7
This move looks a little odd if Black’s plan is to play ...e5, but Black is trying to be flexible and will wait to decide which file to place his rook on. The move also has a prophylactic idea, which will be seen in a few moves.

13 a4
Why does White play this move rather than 13 a3 directly? The move actually threatens to play a5 at some point, kicking Black’s b6-knight away, and therefore invites the ...a5 response from Black to prevent White’s intention. Yet if Black plays ...a5, new weaknesses will be created in Black’s camp, particularly on b5, making the d6-square more easily accessible for White. For this reason, White postpones a3, which can be played later after further preparation.

13...Cc6 14 e3 Kb8 (D)

This also looks somewhat strange, but the idea is to play ...Ca8-c7 to cover the b5-square, when Black has played ...a5.

15 g4!? 
Naturally 15 a3 is also perfectly good, but with the text-move, White threatens to play 16 f5, e.g., 16...exf5 17 a5! and the d5-pawn will fall. Therefore Black’s reply is forced.

15...a5 16 a3 a8 18
This is the response Black prepared with 12...f7, but even so, Black’s prospects are far from golden. Currently he is nowhere near achieving his central pawn-break, while White has options everywhere. Black’s weaknesses on the dark squares and poor piece coordination/development have not changed significantly.

17 a5
If Black had hoped to play ...Cb4 at some point, this is now prevented; in addition, Black will now have to consider the possibility of f5 followed by a6b6, removing Black’s defence for the important d-pawn.

17...g7
Out of the a2-g8 diagonal.

18 a1 a6
I am not sure what kind of thinking went behind this move but it is very rare that when you are weak on one colour of squares that the situation can be improved by exchanging your bishop of that colour. In addition to the problems on the dark squares on the queenside, Black has opened himself up for trouble on the a1-h8 diagonal. White can attack with his queen on b2 or c3 and then play g5 to break open the pawn-cover around Black’s king.

19 dxc5 a8
Another possibility is 19...Cd7, which is best met with 20 Cb5 and White can still opt for pawn-breaks involving both f5 and g5.
20 \( \text{Q}b5 \text{Qc}7 21 \text{We}1 \) (D)

White puts the queen in position to attack the a1-h8 diagonal along with supporting a possible pawn-push in the centre with the e-pawn.

21...\( \text{Qa}6?! \)

This move really doesn’t make any sense; White is ready to attack in the centre and on the kingside, and Black puts one of his knights as far away as possible. Gelfand suggested 21...b6?! as a possible way to generate just a little bit of counterplay. It is clear that White then has the better chances too, but Black is far from knocked out, as shown by Gelfand: 22 \( \text{Qd}4 \) (another move, not mentioned by Gelfand, is 22 \( \text{Qd}6?! \); e.g., 22...\( \text{Qf}8 \) 23 \( \text{Qxc}8 \text{Rx}c8 \) 24 \( \text{cx}b6 \text{Rxb}6 \) 25 \( \text{g}5?! \) \( \text{fxg}5 \) 26 \( \text{Qc}3+ \) \( \text{Qg}8 \) 27 \( \text{fxg}5 \text{Rx}f1+ \) 28 \( \text{Rxf}1 \) \( \text{Qx}d4 \) 23 \( \text{cx}d4 \) 24 \( \text{Qf}3 \) 25 \( \text{hx}d3 \) 26 dx5 27 We3 28 g5, and Black can still fight.

22 e4!

With one strike, White opens the position in order to take advantage of his more actively placed pieces.

22...\( \text{dx}e4?! \)

Black should play 22...b6?! to activate his slumbering queenside pieces.

23 \( \text{Qxe}4 \text{Qd}7 24 \text{We}3 \text{b}6?! \)

Black missed two opportunities earlier to play ...b6, but now it is definitely wrong. The tactic isn’t too difficult to see for a strong player. However, good alternatives are difficult to come by; e.g., 24...\( \text{Qe}7 \) 25 g5 \( \text{Qd}5 26 \text{Qxd}5 \text{ex}d5 \), and rather than 27 \( \text{Wd}4 \) as given by Ftačnik, White has 27 f5! d4 28 \( \text{Qc}4 \), when Black will have a hard time holding his rubble together. Possibly best is 24...\( \text{Qg}8 \) 25 \( \text{Qc}1 \) f5 26 gxf5 gxf5 27 \( \text{Qxe}7+ \) 28 \( \text{Qg}2 \) with a clear plus for White (Gelfand).

25 \( \text{Qe}5! \) \( \text{Qxe}5 \)

The alternative is 25...fxe5, but after 26 \( \text{Qxc}6 \text{Qd}2 \) 27 \( \text{Qd}6 \text{Qd}4 \) 28 fxe5 the fun is over for Black.

26 fxe5 \( \text{Qxc}5 \)

26...f5 27 \( c6 \) is also winning for White. The rest of the game illustrates how to blow an already weak king position apart.

27 exf6+ \( \text{Qf}7 \) 28 \( \text{Wh}3 \text{Qg}8 \) 29 \( \text{Qc}6 \text{Qd}3 \) 30 \( \text{Qe}8+! \) \( \text{Qxe}8 \) 31 f7+ \( \text{Qxf}7 \) 32 \( \text{Qd}6+ \text{Qxd}6 \) 33 \( \text{Qxf}7 \) \( \text{Qf}7 \) 34 \( \text{Qxh}7+ \text{Qe}8 \) 35 \( \text{Qc}7 \text{Qd}4 \) 36 \( \text{Qxb}8 \) \( \text{Qd}7 \) 37 \( \text{h}3 \) 1-0

After this introduction, let’s look at other, more specific, types of weaknesses.

Weak Squares

This is the most common type of weakness. The first example shows a very basic exploitation of a weak square and a clumsy piece set-up that leads to a more substantial advantage.

![Diagram of chessboard]

Karpov – Lobron
Baden-Baden 1992

We quickly notice that White is somewhat ahead in development, and those of Black’s pieces that are developed are not particularly well coordinated. In addition, the f5-square is easily within reach of White’s f3-knight and with that, as we shall see, follow all sorts of problems for Black.

15 \( \text{Qh}4! \) \( \text{Qf}8 \) 16 \( \text{Qf}5 \text{Qd}7?! \)

This move is given as dubious by Dautov in CBM, while in Informator Karpov only mentions the alternative 16...\( \text{Qa}6 \) and gives 17 \( \text{Qh}3 \) \( \text{Qh}8 \) 18 \( \text{Qg}2 \) as the reply; clearly Black cannot be happy with this either. Seeking active counterplay with a move like 16...c5 will
only induce more weaknesses in the centre and on the queenside, but given the alternatives, this could possibly be Black’s best. White now has a few more things to target...

17 \( \text{Qe3!} \)

White threatens 18 \( \text{Qh3} \), winning the exchange, but he is also putting the d5-pawn under fire.

17...\( \text{Wd8} \) 18 \( \text{Qe5!} \) c6

Sadly, Black doesn’t have a choice because 18...\( \text{We8} \) runs into 19 \( \text{Qh3} \) \( \text{Be7} \) (or 19...f6 20 \( \text{Qe5+} \) \( \text{Qh8} \) 21 \( \text{Wg6!} \) fxe5 22 dxe5 with 23 \( \text{Bf5} \) on the horizon) 20 \( \text{Qxd5!} \) \( \text{Bxd5} \) 21 \( \text{Qxd5} \) \( \text{Wxd5} \) 22 \( \text{Bg2} \) (Karpov).

19 \( \text{Qh3} \) \( \text{Be7} \) 20 \( \text{Bxf6} \) gxf6

The first wave of attack is over and Black’s kingside pawn-structure is shattered. In the next phase of the game, White brings his forces to the kingside by mainly using the light squares that have been left particularly weak.

21 \( \text{Qf5} \)

Also 21 \( \text{Wf5} \) followed by \( \text{Wg4+} \) and \( \text{Qf5} \) would be strong at this point.

21...\( \text{Be8} \) 22 \( \text{Wd2} \) \( \text{Qh7} \) 23 \( \text{Wd3!} \) \( \text{a6} \)

This move appears to send White’s queen in the direction it wanted to go anyway, but Black also needs to get it off the b1-h7 diagonal, where it is causing the black king headaches.

24 \( \text{Wf3} \) \( \text{Qc8} \)

The bishop needs to head to the kingside to help defending the many light-squared weaknesses.

25 \( \text{Wh5} \) \( \text{a6} \) 26 \( \text{Qd3!} \) \( \text{g7} \)

For some reason Dautov gives 26...\( \text{Qd7} \) 27 \( \text{Qf3} \) \( \text{g7} \) 28 \( \text{Qf4} \) \( \text{Qg8} \) as only clearly better for White, but after 29 \( \text{Wh4} \) \( \text{Wf8} \) 30 \( \text{Qxg7} \) \( \text{Wxg7} \) 31 \( \text{Qf5+} \), the game is effectively over as Black will lose a piece at least.

27 \( \text{e4!} \)

White keeps throwing more wood on the fire, though consistently playing on light squares. For the rest of the game, Black is merely a spectator at his own execution.

27...\( \text{Qxe4} \) 28 \( \text{Qxe4} \) \( \text{Qg8} \) 29 \( \text{Qf3} \) \( \text{Qd7} \) 30 \( \text{Qc1} \)

The last piece joins the attack.

30...\( \text{Qf8} \)

Or 30...\( \text{Qd5} \) 31 \( \text{Qfd6!} \), threatening 32 \( \text{Wf5+} \), 32 \( \text{Wxd5} \) \( \text{Qxd5} \) 33 \( \text{Qf5+} \) \( \text{Qh8} \) 34 \( \text{Qxf7#} \) and 32 \( \text{Qxc6} \! \).

31 \( \text{Qxc6} \) \( \text{Qg6} \)

Here 31...\( \text{Qd5} \) is met with 32 \( \text{Qxh6!} \).

32 \( \text{Qh4} \) \( \text{Qe5} \)

Or 32...\( \text{Qxh3} \) 33 \( \text{Qxg6} \) fxg6 34 \( \text{Wxh3} \), and White is winning.

33 \( \text{Qxe6} \) 1-0

The next example is more typical.

\[ \text{Rublevsky – Volkov} \]

Smolensk 1991

This position is from a French Defence, from which some clear characteristics remain: the perennial bad bishop on c8, the backward pawn on e6 (which arose after Black played ...f6 and White exchanged), the white isolated d-pawn, and weak dark squares surrounding Black’s pawns in the centre and on the kingside. For the time being Black can guard the dark squares in the centre with his knight, and the e6-pawn is sufficiently guarded by the “bad” bishop. If he could arrange it, White would not doubt love to exchange his bishop for Black’s knight, the guard of the dark central squares and the piece that applies pressure against White’s d-pawn. With this in mind, it is rather odd that Black makes such an obvious mistake on his next move.

17...\( \text{Qd7} \)?

Although Black no doubt thought that his slight lead in development would provide some compensation for the weak squares, there is absolutely no reason why he shouldn’t simply play 17...a6! followed by 18...\( \text{Qd7} \) and 19...\( \text{ac8} \) with a good game. The fact that Volkov is an experienced French player makes the mistake even more difficult to understand.

18 \( \text{Qb5!} \) \( \text{ac8} \) 19 \( \text{ac1} \)

It seems that the knight cannot go anywhere, but my computer discovered an interesting little
idea which I find too compelling not to mention: 19...\(\text{Qxd4}\)?, which has a rather deep point: 20 \(\text{Qxd4 Qxb5}\) 21 \(\text{Qxc1}\) 22 \(\text{xf2+}\) 23 \(\text{Qh2}\) a6 24 \(\text{Qd6}\) \(\text{Qxb2}\), and Black has three pawns for the piece. Nonetheless, White is clearly better after 25 \(\text{Qxe1}\), when Black will lose a pawn; e.g., 25...b5 26 \(\text{Qg4}\) or 25...\(\text{Qf6}\) 26 \(\text{Qxb7}\).

19...\(\text{a6}\)

Rather than waiting for the inevitable, Black forces events so as to activate his pieces.

20 \(\text{Qxc6 Qxc6}\) 21 \(\text{Qa3}\)

Had Black played 20...\(\text{Qxc6}\), this would still have been White’s answer.

21...\(\text{Qb5}\)

Later in this book we shall look at the exchange sacrifice, and this is indeed what Black could have considered at this point, playing 21...\(\text{Qxf3}\), subsequently picking up the d4-pawn. But even so, after 22 \(\text{gxf3 Qxd4}\) 23 \(\text{Qe1}\) 24 \(\text{f4}\), White has a nice dark-square blockade set up and will win eventually.

22 \(\text{Qe1}\) 23 \(\text{Qxc1}\) 24...\(\text{Qe2?!}\) 24...\(\text{Qg5}\!\)! 25...\(\text{Qe8}\) 25 \(\text{Qe3}\) (D)

White has established complete control over the dark squares in the centre and to boot has a strong knight versus a fairly bad bishop.

25...\(\text{Qxb2}\)?

Black should continue the withdrawal of his forces and play 25...\(\text{Qd8}\) followed by the retreat of the bishop.

26 \(\text{Qc8}\)!

In positions with a poorly guarded king and bad piece coordination for the opponent, combinations such as this one are very often found. Aside from the rook, Black has no defenders for his king, so it is not surprising that White can force a win without much ado.

26...\(\text{Qxe8}\) 27 \(\text{Qxe6+ Qg7}\) 28 \(\text{Qe7+}\) \(\text{Qh6}\) 29 \(\text{Qf7+}\) \(\text{Qg7}\) 30 \(\text{Qg5+}\) \(\text{Qh6}\) 31 \(\text{Qe6!!}\) \(\text{Qc1+}\) 32 \(\text{Qh2}\)

White’s queen, knight and kingside pawns keep Black’s king locked in.

32...\(\text{Qe6}\) 33 \(\text{Qg7+}\) \(\text{Qh5}\) 34 \(\text{f4!}\) \(\text{h6}\) Or 34...\(\text{Qg4}\) 35 \(\text{Qf6+}\) +

35 \(\text{Qf6}\) 36 \(\text{Qg7+}\) 1-0

The above game illustrated that profiting from a positional advantage, even amongst strong players, doesn’t have to become something overly complicated.

In the following position, nothing decisive appears to be going on, but let’s try to look at existing and potential weaknesses and based on that concoct some sort of guideline of where play should be directed.

\[\begin{array}{c}
B
\end{array}\]

Borgo – Portisch
Reggio Emilia 1993/4

White’s position seems fairly solid. His king is safe, his pieces appear reasonably well developed, and he has a pawn-majority on the queenside. I see a slight problem on the light squares in White’s camp, especially if the knight is forced to retreat from d4, as the d3-square could become vulnerable. For Black, the main concern could be the pawn-minority on the queenside, if White manages to advance his pawns. Otherwise, Black’s pieces are all quite actively placed with no real weaknesses.
Therefore, based on the above considerations, it seems appropriate to give Black a small plus. Also with the above in mind, White’s plan should be to advance on the queenside, while Black should try to prevent it before starting play on the light squares and attempting to dislodge the knight on d4. Had it been White to move, he probably would have opted for a move like a4, but since it Black’s move, he immediately stops White’s only active plan...

22...b5!

Aside from preventing a4, this move also advances Black’s long-term plan of playing on the light squares and, with the potential threat of b4, creates some pressure that might force the retreat of White’s knight. When considering this, White has to keep in mind that playing a3 will leave the light squares more open for attack.

Left with essentially no active plan, how shall White now proceed? A logical step is to attempt to exchange some pieces to reduce Black’s initiative.

23 a3 h6!!

In positions where there are no especially pressing issues to address, it often makes sense to give the king an air-vent if it can be accomplished without weakening the position. Moves of this kind are often seen in games by solid positional players like Kramnik, Karpov and Andersson, as well as Portisch, as seen here.

24 Qf3 Qd5 (D)

25 Qd2?!

Even though this is part of White’s plan of exchanging, he has to be careful not to play too passively (which this is). However, finding a good alternative is quite difficult:

a) 25 Qe5 is met with 25...d6 26 Qxd5 exd5, and despite the isolated pawn, Black holds the initiative; e.g., 27 Qd2 Qe6 28 Qd3 Qxe1+ 29 Qxe1 Qe4.

b) 25 Qd4!? Qxd4 26 cxd4 (the ‘natural’ move, 26 Qxd4, also hands Black the better game after 26...Qd5 27 a3 e5 28 Qg3 f6) 26...Qd7 27 Qe1 Qf6, and although Black is somewhat better, White at least has some measure of counterplay on the open c-file.

25...Qd8 26 Qd1?!

White continues his plan of exchanges, but gradually gets into a worse and worse position, because the exchanges happen on Black’s premises. Once again 26 Qd4 should be considered; e.g., 26...Qxd4 27 cxd4 (here too 27 Qxd4 will be in Black’s favour: 27...Qe7 28 f3 Qd5 29 b3 Qf6 30 Qe3 Qh4, and Black can continue to harass White while improving his own position) 27...Qd7 28 Qe5 Qe8 with a plus for Black.

26...Qxd2! 27 Qxd2 Qxd2 28 Qxd2 Qd5

White has managed to exchange both sets of rooks, but Black’s pieces, mainly the queen and knight combo, are very active. While it appears innocent at first glance, White already has some problems; e.g., 29 b3 is refuted elegantly by 29...Qxd3 30 Qe3 Qxg2+ 31 Qxg2 Qe1+.

29 c4 bxc4 30 Qxc4

30 Qxc4 is met by 30...Qd3 31 Qe3 Qxb2 32 Qxa6 Qd1!, when Black clearly has the upper hand.

30...Qd3 31 Qd2

Necessary, as 31 Qe3? runs into 31...Qe1, when the game is over.

31...Qc5 32 Qe3 (D)

32...Qd7

The nature of the game has changed a lot. The weakness in White’s game now consists of
his passive pieces. To observe how Portisch converts this advantage is quite instructive.

33 \( \text{d}1 \) \( f5! \)

This is a logical follow-up. With his pieces nearly ideally placed, Black grabs more space with his pawns, intending eventually to push White’s pieces further backwards.

34 \( \text{a}3 \) \( \text{e}7 \)

For now the bishop has served its purpose on the \( a7-g1 \) diagonal and now wants to sit on \( f6 \) to help target the white queenside.

35 \( \text{e}3 \) \( \text{f}6 \) 36 \( b4 \) \( \text{w}5 \) 37 \( \text{e}2? \)

A rather unnecessary error, possibly caused by time-trouble, from which White never recovers. Black would still have ground to cover after 37 \( \text{f}3? \), intending \( \text{f}2 \).

37...\( \text{b}3 \) 38 \( \text{d}2 \) \( \text{f}7 \) 39 \( \text{c}3?? \)

Black is clearly better after other moves, but this just loses a piece.

39...\( \text{f}4 \) 40 \( \text{d}2 \) \( \text{x}c3 \) 0-1

White chose to resign because of 41 \( \text{xc}3 \) \( \text{x}c3 \) 42 \( \text{xc}3 \) \( \text{e}2+ \).

Squares are only weak if they are exploited by the opponent. Once a weakness arises, the opposite side has to try to take advantage of it; otherwise the chance may pass, and the other side will escape punishment for creating the weakness.

**Weak Colour Complex**

One of the more enjoyable tasks in positional chess is taking advantage of a weak colour complex. The remarkable thing is that this type of weakness occurs relatively often, yet it is often left unexploited by inexperienced players who fail to notice it.

The next example (see following diagram) is from one of my own games, where my opponent fails to realize the long-term problems he is causing for himself through his faulty strategy of blocking the position.

White has just retreated his queen from f3 to d1, instead of the normal 12 a3, which prevents the plan Black moves on with in the game.

12...\( \text{b}4 \)

White didn’t seem to be too worried about this option, probably expecting to be able to eliminate any black initiative on the weakened squares through exchanges. As we shall see in the game, despite a number of exchanges, Black keeps the initiative thanks to White’s weak dark squares and lack of counterplay.

13 \( \text{c}4 \) \( \text{d}4 \) 14 \( \text{f}3 \) \( \text{xf}3+ \) 15 \( \text{xf}3 \) \( \text{e}5 \)

White managed to remove one knight from d4, but the second is already on the way.

16 \( \text{d}1 \) \( \text{c}6 \) 17 \( \text{b}1 \) \( e6 \) 18 \( \text{a}4 \)

White hopes that with this activation, the bishop will have a chance to interrupt Black’s play a little bit.

18...\( \text{d}4 \) 19 \( \text{e}3 \) \( \text{h}4 \)

This move is played in anticipation of White’s next move, which is consistent with his game-plan so far, inviting White to do something that is in Black’s interest.

20 \( \text{g}4 \)

Accompanied by a draw offer, which was promptly declined.

20...\( \text{w}g4 \) 21 \( \text{hx}g4 \) \( \text{ab}8 \)

Black isn’t really in a hurry to knock White down; at this point it was a matter of trying to see if White could be provoked to weaken his dark squares further. White, being overly concerned with the threat of ...b3, happily obliges.

22 \( \text{b}3? \) \( \text{fd}8 \) 23 \( \text{bc}1 \)

**Exercise:** Stop for a second here. Evaluate the position, and based on the evaluation, outline a plan for Black.

23...\( \text{f}8 \)

First Black wants to get his king out of the way to let the rooks operate freely on the back ranks and so have access to the kingside. The second step of the plan is to open a file on the kingside through the advance of the h-pawn. The open file is what Black needs to penetrate White’s passive, but solid, position.
24 \text{\texttt{f1}} \text{\texttt{e7}} 25 \text{\texttt{f3}} \text{\texttt{h5}} 26 \text{\texttt{g3}} \text{\texttt{bc8}} 27 \text{\texttt{f2}} \text{\texttt{f6}} 28 \text{\texttt{gxf6+}} \text{\texttt{xf6}}

A file has been opened, but not the h- or g-file as Black really wanted. However, noting all of White’s pawns being on light squares, an obvious idea is to set up a dark-squared blockade.

29 \text{\texttt{h1}} \text{\texttt{h4}} 30 \text{\texttt{g3}}

White is beginning to have real problems, but this doesn’t make things better as it leaves the f-pawn under more pressure. The weakening of the f-pawn will sooner or later force White to exchange his dark-squared bishop for the d4-knight, completely surrendering the dark squares to Black, while White’s control of the light squares through the bishop on a4 is of no importance as it doesn’t grant him any counterplay.

30...\text{\texttt{g5}} 31 \text{\texttt{g4}}?

This just makes everything worse for White as he is now a sitting duck. In addition, Black now has an outside passed pawn. Better moves are 31 \text{\texttt{f4}} or 31 \text{\texttt{h3}}, both giving Black a harder time penetrating White’s position.

31...\text{\texttt{g8}} 32 \text{\texttt{h3}} (D)

This prevents f4, and the rook can always vacate this square when the king is ready to take over.

Please note that Black is in no hurry to get things over with. Patience is often a necessity when playing positional chess, and, for that matter, endgames too.

35 \text{\texttt{xf6}} 36 \text{\texttt{hh1}} \text{\texttt{e5}} 37 \text{\texttt{h3}} \text{\texttt{f7}} 38 \text{\texttt{fh1}} \text{\texttt{f4}}

First step of the plan completed.

39 \text{\texttt{1h2}} \text{\texttt{d8}} 40 \text{\texttt{h1}} \text{\texttt{c7}} 41 \text{\texttt{d1}} \text{\texttt{d5}} 42 \text{\texttt{cx5}} \text{\texttt{ex5}}

Black is on the way to completing the second step in the plan, the opening of another file.

43 \text{\texttt{c1}} \text{\texttt{c3}} 44 \text{\texttt{d1}} \text{\texttt{d6}}

Played to prevent the a4-bishop from entering the game and possibly to threaten a doubling of the rooks on the d-file.

45 \text{\texttt{hh1}} \text{\texttt{e7}} 46 \text{\texttt{f2}} \text{\texttt{dxe4}}

This looks inconsistent with Black’s previous careful moves, but now the h-pawn decides the outcome.

47 \text{\texttt{dxe4}} \text{\texttt{xd1}} 48 \text{\texttt{xd1}} \text{\texttt{h3}}

“Passed pawns must be pushed.”

49 \text{\texttt{g1}} \text{\texttt{xf3}} 50 \text{\texttt{d7}} \text{\texttt{d4+}} 0-1

The above example was rather clear-cut, which is usually not the case. More often, one side has committed his pawns in a bid for space or potential counterplay, and with proper care, this can be exploited. In some situations you can provoke your opponent to create a weak colour complex due to defensive necessities.

Karpov – Shirov

Biel 1992

Through conventional thinking most of us will probably consider Black’s main weakness
to be the dark squares around the a6-b5-c6 pawn-chain on the queenside. In fact, my first thought when looking at this position was how Black should meet 20 \( \texttt{xd4} \) intending \( \texttt{e5} \). However, it doesn’t take too long to discover that Black can defend the c5-square with 20...
\( \texttt{xd7} \), and when the knight retreats to g3, then 21...g6 will leave Black in decent shape. Does that mean that Black is OK? With his next move Karpov shows exactly where the problem lies.

20 \( \texttt{g3} \)!

This simple move at once makes Black’s position appear problematic. In addition to the weak square on f5 (for a similar idea see Karpov-Lobron above) and the related problem of the a1-h8 diagonal, Black’s pieces now seem randomly scattered, and in particular his minor pieces are problematically uncoordinated.

20...
\( \texttt{f6} \)

This is not the kind of move Black wants to play, but after 20...g6, the simple 21 \( \texttt{xd8} \texttt{xd8} \) 22 \( \texttt{d1} \) leaves Black with a long-term problem on the dark squares: 22...
\( \texttt{e7} \) 23 \( \texttt{e4} \) f5 24 \( \texttt{e4} \) d6 25 \( \texttt{h6} \) intending \( \texttt{xf5} \) (Karpov).

21 \( \texttt{xe5} \)!

This is an excellent idea that forces Black into a very unpleasant position.

21...
\( \texttt{xe5} \)

Also 21...fxe5 22 \( \texttt{f3} \) is clearly better for White; the e4-square is conveniently only available for White’s pieces.

22 \( \texttt{d3} \) h6

An ugly but necessary decision as 22...g6 23 \( \texttt{xe6} \texttt{hxe6} \) 24 \( \texttt{xe6} \) h8 25 \( \texttt{h6} \) +g8 26 \( \texttt{h7} \) should win for White. After the text-move, Black has ended up with a weak colour complex on the kingside. It’s a joy to see how Karpov exploits this advantage.

23 \( \texttt{g6} \)!

Simple chess: the rook is pushed to a less active square.

23...
\( \texttt{f8} \) 24 \( \texttt{f5} \) c5

Shirov is not a man to sit and wait for his execution, and seeks active counterplay by clearing the path for the sleeping bishop on h7. Black’s alternatives don’t make for much joy; e.g., 24...
\( \texttt{e7} \) 25 \( \texttt{e4} \) c5 26 \( \texttt{e6} \) +h8 27 \( \texttt{h4} \) with big problems on the light squares, or 24...
\( \texttt{c8} \) 25 \( \texttt{h4} \) g5 26 \( \texttt{h7} \) +f7 27 \( \texttt{f3} \), and the end is near.

25 \( \texttt{axh5} \texttt{axh5} \)

25...
\( \texttt{e4?} \) 26 \( \texttt{c4+} \) \( \texttt{d5?} \) 27 \( \texttt{xd5} \texttt{xd5} \) 28 \( \texttt{xd5} \) +xd5 29 \( \texttt{e7} \) obviously wins for White.

26 \( \texttt{a7} \) (D)

26...
\( \texttt{c7} \)

Once again the alternatives are not particularly attractive:

a) 26...
\( \texttt{xd1} \) + 27 \( \texttt{d1} \texttt{c7} \) 28 \( \texttt{xe6+} \texttt{h6} \) 29 \( \texttt{e4} \) +b8 30 \( \texttt{d5} \) +a8 31 \( \texttt{g4} \), and the rook can’t protect both the bishop and g8.

b) 26...
\( \texttt{e4?} \) 27 \( \texttt{xe4!} \texttt{xd1} \) + 28 \( \texttt{h2} \) +xe4 29 \( \texttt{xe4} \) +g7 30 \( \texttt{h7} \) +g8 31 \( \texttt{xe6} \) (Karpov).

c) 26...
\( \texttt{b8} \) 27 \( \texttt{e7} \) +h8 28 \( \texttt{f5} \) +xa7 (or 28...
\( \texttt{xd1} \) + 29 \( \texttt{xd1} \) +d8 30 \( \texttt{g4} \) +xa7 31 \( \texttt{g6} \) +g8 32 \( \texttt{g6} \) +g8 30 \( \texttt{e6} \) (Karpov) and game over.

27 \( \texttt{h4} \)

Intending 28 \( \texttt{h7} \) +h8 29 \( \texttt{g6} \), winning.

27...
\( \texttt{xd1} \) + 28 \( \texttt{xd1} \) \( \texttt{a8} \)

Both game and variations thoroughly illustrate the severity of Black’s light-squared problems; here 28...
\( \texttt{d8} \) is met by 29 \( \texttt{g4} \) +b6 30
\( \texttt{xe7} \) +xe7 31 \( \texttt{e6} \) +f8 32 \( \texttt{h5} \) with \( \texttt{g6} \) + coming.

29 \( \texttt{g4!} \texttt{c6} \)

29...
\( \texttt{a7} \) 30 \( \texttt{e6} \) +f8 31 \( \texttt{e8} \) is of course out of the question.

30 \( \texttt{b7} \) +xb7 31 \( \texttt{f6} \) +h8 32 \( \texttt{e4} \) 1-0

Sadly, Black decided to resign here. The end could have been 32...
\( \texttt{a6} \) 33 \( \texttt{g6} \) +h7 34
\( \texttt{f5} \) +h8 35 \( \texttt{f7} \) +g8 36 \( \texttt{xh6} \) +h8 37 \( \texttt{g8} \) +g8 38 \( \texttt{f7} \) !

Such a display should remind us of the possible consequences if we let our opponent control a weak-square complex in our position.
Weak Files and Ranks

Just because a file is open doesn't mean that it is weak, nor does it mean that it has to be occupied by a rook or a queen. By occupying an unimportant open file you can give the game a more drawish nature, which isn’t necessarily what you want to do. The key issue is whether there is anything worth attacking on the file, either a pawn, a piece, or a square, or if occupying the file simply prevents your opponent from attacking you through that open file. In Chapter 5, we shall look much closer at how we decide what is important and what is not. But to start off with, let’s look at the following example.

![Diagram]

**Uhlmann – W. Schmidt
Polanica Zdroj 1967**

Black has just played ...c6 to exchange White’s pawn on d5, which had been restraining his game significantly. Not only has it forced the knight to the uncomfortable a7-square, it also more or less forced the bishop to stay on d6 to guard the c7-pawn, which was an obvious target for White on the open c-file.

If White now exchanges on c6, Black’s worries are nearly over, and with a symmetrical pawn distribution, Black has good chances of equalizing completely. White isn’t obligated to exchange immediately, so maintaining the tension in the centre along with keeping the knight on a7 just a bit longer makes perfect sense.

18 f4! a6

This apparently perfectly logical move is also forced due to White’s threat of 19 Qxd6, after which 19...Wxd6 is met with 20 dxc6 and 19...Bxd6 with 20 Bxa3. So with the threat of 19...cxd5, White is forced to exchange on c6, right?

19 d6!

Wrong! The idea of this move is as hard to spot as it is simple in its beauty.

19...Qxd6 20 Qxd6 Qxd6 21 Qxd6 Qxd6 22 Qd1 Qe6

So far, so good: White has taken control over the d-file, but has sacrificed a pawn for it. With Black having guarded the attractive d7-square, how should White continue?

23 Qg4!

This is White’s big plan, eliminating the guard, so White can penetrate on d7; for example, 23...Qxg4 24 hxg4 f6 25 Qd7 Bb8 (25...b5 is also met with 26 f4) 26 f4 exf4 27 exf4 followed by g5 and Black cannot keep the kingside under control any longer.

23 f5 24 Qc4!

The queen exchange is now unavoidable, and Black is lost. The combination of rook on d7 and the bishop on b2, along with Black’s pawn weaknesses on e5, g7 and b7, leaves Black helpless.

24...Qxc4 25 bxc4 Qf8

Or 25...Qe8 26 Qd7 Qc8 27 c5, and White controls everything.

26 Qxe5 Qf7 27 c5 Qc8 28 f4 h6?

Black lacks constructive moves, but this blunder obviously isn’t the solution Black is looking for.

29 Qd8+ Qf8 30 Qxc8! 1-0

After 30...Qxc8 31 cxb6, the b-pawn will cost Black his rook.

The situations you will encounter in your own games will rarely be as clear-cut as this one, but occasionally they are, so keep looking out for them.

Weak Pawns

While weak pawns are probably the most easily recognizable weaknesses, I shall only briefly cover them in this chapter because they are such a prominent feature in almost every chapter.

In the following example, we notice that White has an isolated pawn couple on c3 and d4. As compensation, White has a fairly active position and has set up a threat of exchanging on c6 and possibly picking up a pawn.
So how should Black continue?

Given the threat against the black knight, 11...\(\text{d7?!}\) obviously should be considered. Although this is somewhat passive-looking, Black intends to kick the bishop with 12...a6 on the next move and possibly follow up with ...\(\text{a5}, \text{c8},\) and ...b5, fixing the white pawns and laying claim to the light squares around them. White will probably have to play a prophylactic move like 12 \(\text{wa3}\) to counter Black’s plan, although Black still is doing fine after 12...\(\text{xc7}\) 13 \(\text{g5}\) \(\text{g4}\).

Another continuation is 11...\(\text{d5}\) (Notkin), preventing the exchange on c6 outright and with intentions not unlike those described after 11...\(\text{d7}\). However, White seems to be better after 12 \(\text{f4}\), intending to meet ...\(\text{g4}\) ideas with \(\text{e5}\).

Miles, however, played neither of the above.

11...\(\text{e6?!}\)

Black invites White to take on c6; e.g., 12 \(\text{xc6}\) bxc6 13 \(\text{xc6}\) \(\text{c8}\), winning the pawn back on c3. Then, with the bishop-pair in an open position such as this, Black would be clearly better. If White doesn’t take on c6, Black will proceed with ...\(\text{a5}, \text{a6}, \text{b5}\) and ...\(\text{c8}\), thus saving a tempo over the line given after 11...\(\text{d7}\).

12 \(\text{xc6!}\) \(\text{bxc6}\) 13 \(\text{a3!}\)

The hole in Black’s plan: White doesn’t have to take on c6 twice. Now Black has three weak pawns: the obvious and fixed one on c6, the isolated a-pawn, and the e-pawn, which White will attack from the diagonal and head-on on the e-file. Black is now left to find an appropriate set-up to cover all three of them.

13...\(\text{c7}\) 14 \(\text{fe1}\) \(\text{fe8}\) 15 \(\text{ve5}\) \(\text{ab8}\) 16 \(\text{c4}\)

White is not yet in a position to win the c6-pawn since 16 \(\text{xc6?}\) loses to 16...\(\text{xe5}\), and 16 \(\text{xc6}\) \(\text{xd7}\)! 17 \(\text{c4}\) \(\text{xd4}\)! 18 \(\text{ad1}\) \(\text{be8}\) 19 \(\text{xd4}\) \(\text{xc6}\) (Notkin) equalizes handsly for Black. Aside from White’s choice in the game, he can also consider 16 \(\text{c5?!}\).

16...\(\text{b6}\)?

This mistake is not an entirely unusual one, attempting to force the action while opening up the game instead of setting up a more passive defensive position. In this case, however, it doesn’t work out. In \(\text{CBM}\), Notkin offers the following idea: 16...\(\text{xe5?!}\) 17 \(\text{xe5}\) \(\text{ed8}\) 18 \(\text{c5}\) \(\text{d7}\) 19 \(\text{ae1}\) \(\text{b2}\), and while White still holds the better chances, Black’s position is defensible.

17 \(\text{c5}\) \(\text{b2}\) 18 \(\text{xc6}\)

The alternative 18 \(\text{xc6}\) is also perfectly good for White.

18...\(\text{c8}\) 19 \(\text{a4}\) \(\text{b7}\) 20 \(\text{ad1}\) \(\text{xe5}\) 21 \(\text{xe5}\) \(\text{c6}\)

This was Black’s idea behind the previous move: to set up a position with opposite-coloured bishops and possible chances of survival through that factor. The problem is that White doesn’t need to oblige.

22 \(\text{xa7}\) \(\text{b7}\) 23 \(\text{a3}\) \(\text{xc4}\) 24 \(\text{xe7}\)

It’s amusing that White has now managed to win all three of the weak pawns he targeted after his 12th and 13th moves. Aside from being two pawns down, Black has the added problem of having to defend the weak dark squares around his king without a match for White’s dark-squared bishop.

24...\(\text{d5}\) 25 \(\text{de1}\) \(\text{g7}\)

25...\(\text{hg2}\) loses to 26 \(\text{c5}\).

26 \(\text{we3}\) \(\text{eh8}\)

26...\(\text{xa2}\) is answered by 27 \(\text{c5!}\) \(\text{we6}\) 28 \(\text{xc8}\) \(\text{xc8}\) 29 \(\text{f6+}\), and White wins on the spot.

27 \(\text{h4}\) \(\text{bl}\) 28 \(\text{xb1}\) \(\text{xb1}\) 29 \(\text{wh2}\) \(\text{h6}\)

After 29...\(\text{hg2}\), White has the beautiful 30 \(\text{wh6+}\) !\(\text{xb6}\) 31 \(\text{f8\#}\)!

30 \(\text{f3}\) \(\text{xa2}\)

Here White played 31 \(\text{c5}\) and later won, but 31 \(\text{d5!}\) is even better; e.g., 31...\(\text{wc1}\) 32 \(\text{d4}\) \(\text{wh1+}\) (or 32...\(\text{wd1}\) 33 \(\text{f6+}\)); e.g., 33...\(\text{xf6}\) 34 \(\text{e6+}\) \(\text{f5}\) 35 \(\text{g4\#}\) or 33...\(\text{wh7}\) 34 \(\text{e8}\) \(\text{xd4}\) 35 \(\text{h8\#}\) 33 \(\text{g3}\) \(\text{wh7}\) 34 \(\text{f8}\) followed by \(\text{e7}\) with mate.
Weak pawns appear in all types of positions. Sometimes they stare right at you, while at other times it takes a bit of probing to discover which are truly weak and which are not. Nonetheless, it is by far the most common type of weakness and therefore important to recognize. I shall not cover it further in this chapter, but we shall return to the subject again and again throughout this book.

Weak Pieces

In the first example in this chapter, we saw amongst other things an example of a weak piece. It can more or less be any piece that is isolated from the action or from its fellow pieces, but is more often than not a minor piece. This is because they are restricted to a limited number of squares, i.e. the light or dark squares for a bishop, and as few as three or four squares for knight on the edge of the board, a number that can be even lower due to other pieces.

In some openings one side takes on a problematic piece to achieve other things such as smooth development of the remaining pieces or to restrict the opponent’s choices.

13 \( \text{Wd2} \! \)

Normally White isn’t particularly happy about allowing an exchange of the fianchettoed bishop in front of his king, but in this instance it makes a lot of sense. If he can get both sets of bishops off, White will essentially play with an extra piece because the h6-knight will not be able to influence the action from its nest on h6.

13...\( \text{Kh3} \) 14 \( \text{Cd5} \! \)

With this move, White forces the exchange of the dark-squared bishops and leaves it to Black to decide whether he wants to kick the knight away from d5 with ...e6 at some point, and thereby weaken the dark squares and the d6-pawn in particular.

14...\( \text{Rxg2} \) 15 \( \text{Cxg2 f5} \)

Black has a dilemma: he wants to play ...e6, but cannot allow White to put the knight on f6, and therefore has to play this ugly move first. The problem is that Black’s central and kingside structure is weakened further.

16 \( \text{Rxg7} \) \( \text{Rxg7} \) 17 \( \text{Ld1} \! \)

Fully aware of Black’s intentions, White takes early aim at the upcoming principal weakness in Black’s position.

17...e6 18 \( \text{Wb2}+ \) \( \text{f7} \) 19 \( \text{Ldc3} \) \( \text{Lad8} \) 20 \( \text{Lb5} \) \( \text{Ld7} \) 21 \( \text{La3} \)

Although White’s play has been rather simple, the threats are real. Had Black’s knight been on a better square, it might have been able to help guard against the ensuing structural damage. Black’s next move is forced.

21...d5 22 cxd5 exd5 23 \( \text{Wxe7+} \) \( \text{Lxe7} \) 24 \( \text{f4} \)

The queens have come off the board, yet the knight on h6 still isn’t part of the game and in addition, Black has a weakened structure full of holes.

24...g5 25 \( \text{Ld3} \) \( \text{c6} \) 26 h4!

If Black had any illusions about getting back into the game, this move must have snuffed them out. Given that 26...g4 would leave the knight on h6 looking even more pathetic and the hole on f4 even more obvious, Black only has one option.

26...\( \text{gxh4} \) 27 \( \text{Lh1} \! \)

The idea behind White’s previous move: now all of Black’s pawns become possible targets for White’s pieces.

27...\( \text{Lg4} \) 28 \( \text{Lxh4} \) \( \text{f6} \)
Finally back in the game, but it’s too little, too late.

29 b4 d4 30 c6 bxc6 31 hxd4 1-0

A splendid display by Gelfand.

There are two ways of dealing with a weak piece. One way is to isolate it by not letting it get back into the game. Another is to instigate an attack in its direction, when the opponent will be forced to create other weaknesses to deal with it. A combination of both plans was shown in Gelfand-Van Wely in the beginning of the chapter.

Weak Coordination

A related topic to weak pieces is the matter of weak coordination. This is not just a matter of one piece, but a general lack of communication between the pieces in a position. This can include a weak piece, but this doesn’t have to be the case. Earlier in this chapter we saw Karpov-Lobron, in which Lobron had to deal with both square weaknesses and poor coordination.

Black’s 11th move had already been tried once before with a decent result, but in that game White opted for 12 xc3 and achieved nothing from the opening. Kasparov’s move is much stronger and immediately promises him the better chances due to his strong centre and ideas such as c4 and c2 followed by c4. Also, with a strong central set-up, Black standard ...c5 is far less potent.

In Informator, Kasparov now gives 12... c6!? as best, offering 13 cd2 ca5 14 e4 dx4 15 dxe4 ± as the probable line.

12... a6?!

This isn’t a happy decision. We have already looked at the preconditions for a weak piece, and once on a6, the knight has become just that. Kasparov doesn’t waste a moment to take advantage.

13 e4!

With this strike at the centre, White begins to illustrate the poor coordination of not only the knight on a6, but also Black’s entire set-up.

13... dx4?!

Black unwisely plays along as if he doesn’t have an alternative. However, when you are poorly coordinated, you don’t want to open up the position, as this will merely enhance the strength of your opponent’s forces. The alternative is 13...c5??, although White still has the better of it after both 14 e5 c7 15 c3 and 14 exd5 xd5 15 c4 f5 16 h4 d7 17 d5 xe8 18 xd2 (Kasparov).

14 c2 g5?

This move is bad for several reasons. First of all: what is Black thinking about? He is happily ruining his kingside for the cost of a pawn – against Kasparov! He is simply asking for a beating that Kasparov is happy to hand him.

Secondly, Black obviously has a better move. All sources (Kasparov himself, Dokhoian and Ftačnik in CBM) suggest 14... e8 as better, although they don’t entirely agree about the evaluation, which varies from won or clearly better for White to equal chances (Ftačnik). After 15 e1 g5 (with the white rook away from f1, this makes more sense as the attack employed in the game is not possible) 16 xe4 Black has two options:

a) 16... xe4 17 xe4 (Ftačnik only mentions 17 xe4, which he analyses to equality after 17... gxf4 18 xe8+ xe8 19 f1 b5 20...
\textasciitilde x a 8 \textasciitilde x a 8 2 1 \textasciitilde x b 5 \textasciitilde c 8 2 2 \textasciitilde e 1 c 6 , but this is hard to agree with, as White is better due to Black’s still uncoordinated pieces) 1 7 ... g x f 4 1 8 \textasciitilde a 4 \textasciitilde b 8 1 9 \textasciitilde x a 6 \pm \textasciitilde (Kasparov).

b) 1 6 . \textasciitilde x e 4 (Ftačnik, whose analysis we shall follow) 1 7 \textasciitilde x e 4 g x f 4 1 8 \textasciitilde e 8 + \textasciitilde x e 8 1 9 \textasciitilde x b 7 f x g 3 2 0 h x g 3 c 5 2 1 \textasciitilde x a 6 c x d 4 2 2 c x d 4 \textasciitilde d 8 , and here Ftačnik ends his line with ‘=’, but once more I disagree with his verdict; for example, 2 3 \textasciitilde f 3 \textasciitilde g 7 2 4 \textasciitilde c 7 \textasciitilde d 7 2 5 \textasciitilde c 8 \textasciitilde d 8 2 6 \textasciitilde x d 8 \textasciitilde x d 8 2 7 \textasciitilde c 4 , and despite the limited material, White is better due to Black’s relatively unsafe king, where the opposite-coloured bishops are in White’s favour and so is the passed d-pawn.

1 5 \textasciitilde e 3

1 5 \textasciitilde x e 4 ! ? is an interesting alternative; for example, 1 5 ... \textasciitilde x e 4 1 6 \textasciitilde x e 4 g x f 4 1 7 \textasciitilde h 5 \textasciitilde e 8 1 8 \textasciitilde x h 7 + \textasciitilde f 8 1 9 \textasciitilde b 7 c 5 2 0 \textasciitilde x a 6 c x d 4 2 1 \textasciitilde f 1 f x g 3 2 2 h x g 3 \pm \textasciitilde (Kasparov).

1 5 ... \textasciitilde e 8

This move looks wrong considering Black’s loose kingside and therefore you would think that the rook could be needed in the defence. However, 1 5 ... \textasciitilde e 7 also fails: 1 6 \textasciitilde h 5 c 5 1 7 \textasciitilde c 1 ! c x d 4 1 8 \textasciitilde x e 4 d x e 3 1 9 \textasciitilde x f 6 + \textasciitilde x f 6 2 0 \textasciitilde x b 7 and White wins.

1 6 f 4 !

A very instructive moment in the game: White opens the f-file to exploit the weak black kingside, in particular the f7-pawn.

1 6 ... e x f 3 1 7 \textasciitilde x f 3 \textasciitilde d 5 !

The only move that keeps the game going a bit longer. Other moves fail spectacularly; e.g., 1 7 ... c 6 1 8 \textasciitilde e 4 \textasciitilde g 7 1 9 \textasciitilde h 5 h 6 2 0 \textasciitilde x g 5 ! h x g 5 2 1 \textasciitilde h 7 + \textasciitilde f 8 2 2 \textasciitilde h 6 + , \textasciitilde g 7 2 3 \textasciitilde x f 7 + ! \textasciitilde x f 7 2 4 \textasciitilde f 1 + and mate follows shortly.

1 8 \textasciitilde x d 5 !

White cannot allow Black time to organize a defensive set-up with ...c 6 and ...\textasciitilde c 7 . After the exchange on d 5 , Black’s pieces still lack some basic coordination.

1 8 ... \textasciitilde x d 5 1 9 \textasciitilde x f 6 \textasciitilde x e 3 2 0 \textasciitilde g 4 !

Also worth consideration is 2 0 \textasciitilde f 1 , targeting the a6-knight and the g5-pawn through the threat of d 5 . The text-move, however, seems most effective.

2 0 ... \textasciitilde e 6

Or 2 0 ... \textasciitilde a 8 2 1 d 5 \textasciitilde e 6 2 2 \textasciitilde x g 5 + \textasciitilde g 6 2 3 \textasciitilde f 4 h 6 2 4 \textasciitilde f 1 followed by \textasciitilde c 4 with a winning advantage for White (Kasparov).

2 1 d 5 \textasciitilde c 6

And now rather then 2 2 \textasciitilde x g 5 + , which won the game, but taking another 2 1 moves, White should have opted for 2 2 \textasciitilde f 1 ! with a continued attack; e.g., 2 2 ... \textasciitilde x c 3 2 3 \textasciitilde x f 7 \textasciitilde e 3 + (or 2 3 ... \textasciitilde g 6 2 4 \textasciitilde c 7 ! \textasciitilde x d 2 2 5 \textasciitilde d 7 ! and game over) 2 4 \textasciitilde h 1 \textasciitilde (Kasparov), and Black cannot hold the rubble on the kingside together any longer.

Although Kasparov’s notoriety isn’t primarily based on his positional chess, his understanding has a solid foundation in basic positional values and he possesses a superb ability to translate these into dynamism. Here he demonstrated the drawbacks of an uncoordinated position by dynamic means.

\textbf{How to Create a Weakness}

Having gone through the various kinds of weaknesses, I’m sure you have asked yourself something like: “that’s all fine, but what if he doesn’t have any weaknesses, or at least any that I can exploit?” There are of course positions where such circumstances exist. In those positions, you will have to look at the imbalances that exist on the board and see how you can use them to create a weakness in your opponent’s position, either through provocation or through goal-oriented play where you see a way to establish a weakness. Don’t fool yourself into thinking that such possibilities exist in every position and that they will prove decisive when they do exist. But one weakness may be all it takes to disturb the balance and thereby create new possibilities for both sides.

\begin{center}
\textbf{Shirov – Kasparov}
\textit{Linares 1997}
\end{center}
The most obvious feature is Black’s advanced kingside pawns. We may also notice the d6-pawn, which can become a target for White too. These two structural weaknesses may cause Black’s king long-term discomfort unless he manages to change the flow of the game. The redeeming factors for Black are his bishop-pair and the active knight on e5. However, if Black’s bishop remains restrained, they will not be able to impact the game and White may be able to turn events in his favour. So how should Black proceed?

16...g4!

This is the kind of move that makes you scratch your head and wonder if you have misunderstood everything. If White now plays 17 f4, the e5-knight will have to move, right?

17 f4 h4!

Aha, we notice that after 18 fxe5 dxe5, the d4-knight is trapped, while 18 c4 (to clear a square for it) is met with 18...g3 19 hxg3 Qxg4, which will both remove White’s dark-squared bishop from the board and open the kingside for a black frontal attack, neither of which White can afford to allow.

18 e3 h3!

Here 18...g3? allows 19 fxe5 as the knight can retreat to f3. After the text-move, White will obviously also close the kingside with 19 g3, so what is the difference? The answer lies in the fact that White’s kingside pawns now are bolted on dark squares and therefore by definition weakening the light squares, and with Black having a light-squared bishop and White not. Also the fact that White’s king position is now more open on the diagonals may cause him headaches later on.

19 g3 Qc6

It doesn’t make sense to keep the knight on e5 any longer; with the pawn-structure changed, the next step in Black’s plan has to be executed: taking control over the a8-h1 diagonal.

20 Qd3 0-0

A paradoxical move, Black’s kingside pawns are advanced as far as they can possibly get, yet this is where he decides to put his king. It is in fact the safest place for it to be, and another benefit from castling is seen on the next move.

21 a3 d1 f5!

With the king out of the centre, Black can take the next step in attacking the a8-h1 diagonal.

Note that if White now chooses 22 Qxe6, he will be playing right into Black’s hands by putting the bishop on the diagonal where it wants to be; e.g., 22...Qxc6 23 exf5 exf5 24 Qd4 (safer than 24 Qxd6?! Qxe8! 25 Qd3 Qe4 26 Qc4+ Kh7 =) 24...Qe4 25 Qd2 d5 with the better game for Black (Kasparov).

22 c4 Qa5?? (D)

23 Qc3?

Up to this move, White had been doing OK; his space advantage and potential pressure along the d-file were sufficient to keep the balance.

The problem with 23 Qc3? is that gives White fewer options than before, because the knight is only protected by the queen, which consequently cannot participate elsewhere.

White should instead have tried to offer a queen exchange with 23 Qd2; after 23...Qxd2 24 Qxd2 Qae8! 25 Qfd1 (or 25 Qc2 e5 26 Qxd6 Qc8 and Black is better) 25...Qxe4 26 Qxc6 Qxc6 27 Qxd6 e5 28 Qd6 (28 Qf2 Qh7 is unclear according to Kasparov) 28...Qd8 29 Qe1 Qd3 30 Qc1 Qxe3 31 Qxe3 exf4 32 gxf4 Qxf4 everything is still unresolved (Kasparov). Instead of allowing this, Black can also consider 23...Qa3!? 24 Qc3 Qd6 25 Qde2 Qb4 (Kasparov), when matters are again still unresolved.

23...Qae8 24 Qf1?

Now the wheels are coming off for White. Kasparov gives 24 Qde2 as best, and continues 24...Qf7 25 Qa4 e5! 26 Qb6 (or 26 Qxd6 exf4 27 Qxf4 Qxe4 28 Qd5 Qd8 29 Qxc5 Qxe3 30 Qxd7 Qe8 and thanks to White’s open king, Black is clearly better) 26...Qb4 27 Qxd6 Qxd6 28 Qxd6 exf4 29 Qxf4 Qe5 30 Qc5 Qc6 and despite the queens coming off, Black has the better chances due to White’s open king and
his own strong bishops. After the text-move, Black gets to open the position as he pleases.

24...e5! 25 \(\text{\(\text{Q}\)}xe6 \text{\(\text{Q}\)}xe6 26 b4?!

Black also wins after the stronger 26 fxe5; e.g., 26...fxe4 27 \(\text{\(\text{Q}\)}xe4 \text{\(\text{Q}\)}xe5 28 \text{\(\text{Q}\)}xd6 \text{\(\text{Q}\)}f3 29 \(\text{\(\text{Q}\)}d2 \text{\(\text{Q}\)}xd2 30 \text{\(\text{Q}\)}xd2 \text{\(\text{Q}\)}d3 (Kasparov).

26...\(\text{\(\text{Q}\)}a3??!

Black falls for White’s attempts to create confusion. Kasparov points out 26...\(\text{\(\text{Q}\)}xb4 27 \text{\(\text{Q}\)}b1 (or 27 \(\text{\(\text{Q}\)}d5 fxe4 28 \(\text{\(\text{Q}\)}xe4 exf4 29 \text{\(\text{Q}\)}xe8 \text{\(\text{Q}\)}xe1+ and Black is winning) 27...fxe4 28 \text{\(\text{Q}\)}xe4 \text{\(\text{Q}\)}a5 29 \text{\(\text{Q}\)}xd6 exf4 30 \text{\(\text{Q}\)}xe8 fxe8 31 \text{\(\text{Q}\)}g7 gxh2+ 32 \text{\(\text{Q}\)}xh2 \text{\(\text{Q}\)}e5+, when White is mated shortly.

27 b5 exf4 28 \(\text{\(\text{Q}\)}xf4 axb5 29 cxb5 \(\text{\(\text{Q}\)}c5+(D)

30 \text{\(\text{Q}\)}e3?

The losing error; Black is only clearly better after 30 \text{\(\text{Q}\)}e3! \text{\(\text{Q}\)}xe4 31 \text{\(\text{Q}\)}xd6! \text{\(\text{Q}\)}xd3 32 \text{\(\text{Q}\)}xc5 \text{\(\text{Q}\)}xe3 33 \text{\(\text{Q}\)}xe3 \text{\(\text{Q}\)}c4 34 \text{\(\text{Q}\)}d4 \text{\(\text{Q}\)}h6 (Kasparov). The rest is elementary.

30...\(\text{\(\text{Q}\)}xc3 31 bx\(\text{\(\text{Q}\)}c6 \text{\(\text{Q}\)}xc6 32 \text{\(\text{Q}\)}xd6 \text{\(\text{Q}\)}xe4 33 \text{\(\text{Q}\)}d5+ \text{\(\text{Q}\)}xd5 34 \text{\(\text{Q}\)}xd5 \text{\(\text{Q}\)}c3 35 \text{\(\text{Q}\)}e2 \text{\(\text{Q}\)}e4 36 \text{\(\text{Q}\)}f2 \text{\(\text{Q}\)}e8 37 \text{\(\text{Q}\)}d3 \text{\(\text{Q}\)}d6 38 \text{\(\text{Q}\)}ed2 \text{\(\text{Q}\)}e3 0-1

White said stop at this point since 39 \text{\(\text{Q}\)}xe3 \text{\(\text{Q}\)}xe3 40 \text{\(\text{Q}\)}xe3 \text{\(\text{Q}\)}g5+ 41 \text{\(\text{Q}\)}e2 \text{\(\text{Q}\)}xd2 42 \text{\(\text{Q}\)}xd2 f4 would win easily for Black.

With the basic introduction over, here are a few exercises to solve.

**Exercises**

3.1 How can White create a permanent weakness in Black’s position?

3.2 Determine if there are weaknesses in Black’s position and then decide how best to continue.

3.3 Is it White’s knight on h6, Black’s king on f8 or something else that constitutes the biggest weakness? How should White continue?
4 Cats and Dogs: Knights and Bishops

On the point scale, the knight and bishop are worth about the same, approximately three pawns, but that’s about where the similarities between these two pieces end.

In this chapter, we shall consider the weaknesses and strengths of the two pieces and how they work together and against each other.

The Happy and Unhappy Bishop

A bishop is tied to one colour of the board. What the bishops can do depends mainly on what we and our opponent do with our pawns. If treated optimally, a bishop can rule a position; if buried behind pawns, it becomes one of them.

In order to gain space and complete development in the opening, it is common to make some positional concessions regarding the pawn-structure. In the following example, Black has blocked in his bishop on the queenside behind a pawn triangle in anticipation of playing the ...c5 pawn-break.

16 ∇d3!

A simple, yet strong answer to the question. The idea behind the move is fairly uncomplicated: if Black now plays 16...c5, his kingside will be destroyed after 17 dxc5 ∇xc5 18 ∇xf6 gxf6 and ultimately cost him a pawn after 19 ∇g4+ ∇h8 (or 19...f8 20 ∇h5) 20 ∇h4.

16...g6?

Black, who by no means is a bad player, commits a blatantly obvious positional error and weakens his kingside and dark squares permanently.

With ...c5 prevented for now, Black should have played 16...b4!? to minimize the discomfort, although after 17 ∇c2 ∇d5 18 ∇c1 White has a small but clear advantage.

17 ∇c1 ∇d7 18 b4! a5 19 a3

With very simple moves, White has effectively managed to bury Black’s light-squared bishop by ensuring that ...c5 will never happen.

19...a6c8 20 afd1 ∇d8 21 ∇c2 f8 22 ∇c5 ∇xc5 23 dxc5 ∇d8 24 b3

The b7-bishop is completely out of play and is likely to remain so if White proceeds with some care.

24...a6d1+ 25 a6d1 a6d 26 a6d a4 27 a6c2 a6c8 28 f4 a6d3 29 a6d3 a6d7 30 a6e4 a6d8 31 a6d2 (D)

As we can see, White has permitted Black to exchange both rooks, but has not released his stranglehold on Black’s position. Black threatened to play ...a6f6 to exchange the dark-squared

Andersson - Gisbrecht
Bundesliga 1999/00
bishops. Given the possibility of penetrating on the weak dark squares around Black's king, White cannot and need not allow Black to have a say in which pieces can stay on the board and which can leave.

31...<c8 32 <c3
White obviously cannot allow the exchange of queens right now. Black is a sitting duck and can only wait for White to make his move.

32...f6 33 <f2 <f7 34 g4 <f8 35 <f3 <e7 36 h4 <f8 37 <e2
There is always something to learn from studying Andersson's technique. Note how he is rarely, if ever, in a rush to force a decision. With his latest move, he takes time to cover the possible entry-squares on the d-file with his king. In addition, potential checks on h4 with a bishop or queen are eliminated.

37...<c7 38 <c1 <d7 39 <c2 <d8 40 h5 <g8 41 hxg6 hxg6 42 <e4 f5
This marks the end of any possible hopes Black may have had to create any counterplay. The problem for Black is that the attempt to keep the pawn-structure fluid with 42...<g7 is met with 43 g5.

43 <g2 <f6 44 g5
The time is right to block the kingside, as White now lays complete claim to the dark squares and can penetrate the black position at will.

44...<xb2 45 <xb2 <d7 46 <e5 <f7 47 <f3 <d8 48 e4 <d7 49 <a1 <g8 50 <f6 <f7 51 <xf7+ <xf7 52 <e3 <e7 53 <d4 <d7 54 <e5 <e8 55 <e2 <d7 56 <e3 <c8 57 <c2 <d7 58 <b1 <c8 59 <a2 <d7 60 exf5 exf5 61 <g8 1-0

The foundation for long-term problems and successes are made with every pawn move we make, right from the beginning of the game. Therefore it is at all times of paramount importance to consider what you are trying to achieve, and if the means you intend to use are the right ones.

Morović – Cu. Hansen
Wijk aan Zee 1994

White has just played 9 f2-f4 to manifest his control over the c5-square and thereby secure his knight. However, it also created weaknesses on the light squares around the pawns, in addition to reducing the range of his dark-squared bishop on c1.

9...<d8!
Black centralizes his rook and simultaneously introduces a little tactical threat in 10...<xe5 11 fxe5 <xd4 12 <xd4 <xc5.

10 <e2 <c7 11 <h3
White really would have wanted to play 11 g4, but here it is met with 11...<xe5 12 gxf5 <xc4. After the text-move, the threat of g4 is real as the c4-bishop is no longer hanging at the end of this line.

11...h5!?
A standard reaction, but one it takes confidence to make with the king still in the centre and the option of queenside castling gone. Black not only prevents White's threat of 12 g4, but also enhances his general hold of the light squares that White has so generously weakened.

12 <h1 a6
In his annotations to the game, Curt Hansen says that he didn't want to castle immediately as he felt the h5-pawn should be supported by the h8-rook for the moment. The point behind the text-move is that he intends to play ...c5 and
wanted to rule out any possibility of White playing $\texttt{Qb5}$ after $\texttt{Qd2}$ from White and ...$\texttt{Wc7}$ from Black.

13 $\texttt{Qd2} \texttt{Wc7} 14 \texttt{Qae1}$

White introduces yet another tactical threat in 15 $\texttt{Qxf7} \texttt{Qxf7} 16 \texttt{exf6+ Qxe6} 17 \texttt{Wxe6+}$. After Black’s next move, this option is no longer possible as the queen protects the e7-bishop.

14...$\texttt{Qb6} 15 \texttt{Qe3 Qbd5}$

By continuing to play on the light squares, Black continues the strategy he initiated with ...h5.

16 $\texttt{Qg1}$

16 $\texttt{Qxd5}?!$ looks like a fairly obvious move, but it would serve to strengthen Black’s grip on the light squares and in particular the e4-square. Curt Hansen points to the fact Kasparov made a similar mistake against Anand in their 1995 world championship match.

16...$\texttt{Qxc3} 17 \texttt{bxc3} 0-0$

Having decided that he needs to bring the h8-rook into play and determining the kingside sufficiently safe, Black finally castles.

18 $\texttt{c4} \texttt{c5} 19 \texttt{c3 g6}$

It’s very instructive how Hansen continues to play on the light squares. If White had only been active on the dark squares, the strategy could possibly have backfired, but the bishop is tucked away on g1 for now.

20 $\texttt{Wf3 Qg7} 21 \texttt{dxc5?}$

White is tempted by the prospect of winning a pawn, but his position quickly falls apart thanks to Black’s stronghold on the light squares in addition to White’s poor bishop on b3 and his damaged queenside pawn-structure.

21...$\texttt{Qxe5} 22 \texttt{Qxe5 Wxe5} 23 \texttt{Wxb7 Qg4}$

Nominally White is a pawn up, but the position tells a different story: with his last move Black offers to exchange the knights, removing White’s only well-placed piece.

24 $\texttt{Qxg4}$

Even if White delays the exchange of the knights with 24 $\texttt{Wf3}$, Black will penetrate further with 24...$\texttt{Qd2}$.

24...$\texttt{hxg4}$

Another file is opened, this one pointing directly towards the white king.

25 $\texttt{Qb4 Wc6!?}$

Black tempts White to place his bishop on an even worse square.

26 $\texttt{Qa4 Wc7} 27 \texttt{c5 Qd5} 28 \texttt{Qe5}$?

The final and decisive error. But the prospects after other moves don’t inspire confidence either; e.g., 28 $\texttt{c6 Qb8} 29 \texttt{Wa3 Qa5}$ with an unpleasant pin on the bishop. Black intends to continue with ...$\texttt{Qc5-c4}$ (or ...$\texttt{Qxc3}$).

28...$\texttt{Qxb8} 29 \texttt{Wxa3 Qxe5} 30 fxe5 $\texttt{Wxe5} 31 \texttt{Wc1 Qb1}$

The final penetration.

0-1

The Happy and Unhappy Knight

A knight is by its very nature a complicated piece, but when it comes to assessing its qualities in a given position, it isn’t all that difficult. As with the bishop, it is decided by the pawn-structure: does it have a square where it can be left in peace or is supported and cannot be kicked away by a pawn, or is it being chased around without being able to find a home? Sometimes it seems like rather insignificant details in the pawn-structure make a huge impact on the strength of a knight.

One of my favourite illustrations of knight usage is the following classic example:

\[ \text{Nimzowitsch – Rubinstein} \\
\text{Dresden 1926} \]

How does White improve his position? We note that White controls the a2-g8 diagonal, but by itself this doesn’t have much significance. However, if White could get his knight to g5, he could take a close look at creating threats on e6 and f7, as well as putting pressure on h7 and so threatening the black king.

18 $\texttt{Qh1!}$

Using the corner square for redeployment of a knight isn’t a very common manoeuvre, but
one worth remembering. The idea is to send the knight to g5 via f2 and h3. Due to the other weaknesses around his king, Black cannot keep the knight away from g5 with ...h6.

18...\(\textsf{\textit{d7}}\) 19 \(\textsf{\textit{f2}}\) \(\textsf{\textit{ae8}}\) 20 \(\textsf{\textit{fe1}}\) \(\textsf{\textit{xe2}}\) 21 \(\textsf{\textit{xe2}}\)

Ideally Black would have liked to exchange the second set of rooks as well. But right now it can be met with \(\textsf{\textit{wd5}}\).

21...\(\textsf{\textit{d8}}\)??

Black now starts playing quite passively, slowly drifting into a bad position. In my opinion it would have been better to play more actively with 21...b5 22 \(\textsf{\textit{bh3}}\) \(\textsf{\textit{b4}}\), intending 23...\(\textsf{\textit{c6}}\) and possibly ...\(\textsf{\textit{d5}}\) with a decent position for Black.

22 \(\textsf{\textit{h3}}\) \(\textsf{\textit{c6}}\) 23 \(\textsf{\textit{wh5}}\) g6 24 \(\textsf{\textit{wh4}}\) \(\textsf{\textit{g7}}\)?? 25 \(\textsf{\textit{wd2}}\)

Black's play has left the d4-pawn vulnerable; White now attempts to force Black to re-group his pieces to defend the central squares and files before striking back at Black's weak king.

25...\(\textsf{\textit{c5}}\)

On 25...\(\textsf{\textit{b6}}\), White has the elegant 26 b4 intending 27 \(\textsf{\textit{c3}}\)!

26 b4 \(\textsf{\textit{b6}}\) 27 \(\textsf{\textit{wh4}}\)!!

The simple 27 \(\textsf{\textit{we1}}\), as pointed out by Nimzowitsch himself, looks much better. The transfer of the bishop from d6 to b6 is already making itself felt on the dark-squared weaknesses around the king.

27...\(\textsf{\textit{we8}}\) 28 \(\textsf{\textit{we5}}\) \(\textsf{\textit{af7}}\)??

Nimzowitsch mentioned that 28...h6 would be met with 29 g4; e.g., 29...fxg4 30 f5 \(\textsf{\textit{we5}}\) 31 f6+ \(\textsf{\textit{xf6}}\) 32 \(\textsf{\textit{wh6}}\)\#, but 29...\(\textsf{\textit{wd7}}\) holds on a bit longer.

29 \(\textsf{\textit{xf7}}\) \(\textsf{\textit{xf7}}\) 30 \(\textsf{\textit{g5}}\)

Finally White's knight reaches its intended square and immediately strengthens the attack against Black's king.

30...\(\textsf{\textit{wg8}}\) 31 \(\textsf{\textit{xe8}}\)

The rook exchange means easier access to Black's king.

31...\(\textsf{\textit{xe8}}\) 32 \(\textsf{\textit{we1}}\) \(\textsf{\textit{c6}}\) 33 \(\textsf{\textit{we7}}\) \(\textsf{\textit{h8}}\) 34 \(\textsf{\textit{b5}}\)

Game over. Black struggled on a bit longer, but victory for White is inevitable. Nimzowitsch considered this to be one of his most elegant attacking games and, given the stunning knight manoeuvre, it is easy to agree.

Knight play is a fascinating aspect of positional play. A small change in the pawn-structure can mean that an otherwise well-placed knight all of a sudden becomes rather useless. In order to restrict a knight and limit its reach, a standard facet is to make the support squares unavailable. In the next example, the squares of most importance are d4 and d5, but as the battle progresses, this changes.

\[\text{Petrosian – Sax}
\]
\[\text{Tallinn 1979}\]

This position has been played a number of times, but I find this game particularly instructive. The game looks fairly even, but not drawn. Despite the symmetrical distribution of pawns, there is still plenty of play left in the position. White has the pair of bishops, but that isn't particularly significant. The main battle will revolve around the knights and their support squares.

15...a6

Played to prevent a possible \(\textsf{\textit{db5}}\) by White.

16 \(\textsf{\textit{db1}}\)!

A beautiful, yet easily understandable manoeuvre: the weakest square in White's position is d4, but now White can play c3 to cover this square. By the same logic, you would think that d5 is the weakest square in Black's position. This is true, but unfortunately the immediate 16 \(\textsf{\textit{d5}}\)! can be met with 16...\(\textsf{\textit{xd5}}\) 17 \(\textsf{\textit{xd5}}\) \(\textsf{\textit{d4}}\) 18 \(\textsf{\textit{xd4}}\) exd4, when Black has equalized, as in, for example, Timman-Matulović, Wijk aan Zee 1974. The knight now intends to head for e4, from where it can put pressure on the black centre while supporting the pawn advance on the queenside.

16...\(\textsf{\textit{d8}}\)
Due to the weakness of the d4-square, and, more importantly, the limited range of Black’s g7-bishop, another idea is to exchange the dark-squared bishops. This can be achieved by 16...h5, and after 17 c3, continuing 17... gated 18 d3 d6, although I think White is a tiny bit better after 19 c4, as bishops generally tend to be better with pawns on both wings. The reason for this is that while, for example, partaking in the actions on the kingside, it can support the advance of pawns on the queenside. The light-squared bishop may also be transferred to the queenside to apply pressure on the a2-g8 diagonal and prevent a ...f5 from Black.

17 d8 d8 18 c3!

An important move, as it takes control over the important d4-square and thereby restrains the black knight on c6. I should also mention that it weakens the d3-square, but this will only be a temporary problem, as White can kick the black queen away with threats of queen exchanges, which due to the bishop-pair will be to his advantage.

18...d3 19 d2 f8 20 b1 b5

As mentioned above, an exchange of queens will favour White, so over the course of the next few moves Black does everything he can to prevent it.

21 c2 d8

Ideally Black would still like to exchange the dark-squared bishops, but on 21...c5, White can either go 22 g5 immediately or 22 a4 b6 23 c4 a7, and only then 24 g5. In either case White has the better chances.

22 b3 d3 23 c4 d6 24 b2!

The black queen has been kicked home, and now White makes room for c4.

24...b6?

Black should probably have tried 24...b5 to take the c4-square away from the knight. This is more important than the slight weakness of the dark squares. Black’s play, starting with this move and going on for the next few moves, is very passive, which makes White’s task much easier.

25 d3 c6 26 a3 e7

Mednis thinks that Black should have played 26...h5 to take the g4-square away from White. That makes perfect sense, but what concerned Black was probably the further weakening of the dark squares on the kingside that would be the result of this pawn advance. In addition, as Petrosian himself pointed out, White can just as well play b4, c4 and d1-b3.

27 b4 d8 28 e4 d7 29 g4

This is what Mednis wanted Black to prevent.

29...e6 30 a5! (D)

Now Black is forced to make the pawn advance he tried to avoid earlier, but now under less favourable circumstances.

30...b5 31 c6

Every pawn move leaves a weakness behind. Black’s last move created weak squares on c6 and c5, as well as a weak pawn on a6.

31...e8 32 c4!

Now it’s beginning to look easy; if Black plays 32...xc4, the a-pawn will be terminally weak after 33 xc4.

32 xf6 33 xxb5 axb5 34 xb5 xe4

Black avoids losing a pawn but White’s bishop-pair and passed a-pawn are really the factors that matter now.

35 c4 d6 36 d5 h5 37 xe6

Strictly speaking, 37 f3 might be just as strong, but the exchange helps to eliminate Black’s remaining counterplay.

37...fxe6 38 c5 f5 39 e2 g7 40 h5 d4 41 c4 d7 42 a4 f5 43 e2 1-0

Knight vs Bishop

This imbalance is one of the most difficult ones to judge as so many minor details have to be taken into consideration when evaluating the outcome of a given situation. Whole books have been written about the subject, but even today there are people who dogmatically claim that a bishop is nearly always stronger than a knight. I
don’t agree with that notion at all and will encourage you to evaluate each position individually.

White’s position is quite unattractive, but nonetheless solid, so the game is far from over.

33 $\text{e}2$ $\text{d}7$ 34 $\text{a}4$?

I’m not sure what White hoped to do with this move, but sealing off the queenside and thereby excluding himself from any counterplay seems unwise. That Black’s pawns on the queenside are locked on dark squares is of less importance as they are completely out of the bishop’s reach. White should instead have awaited Black’s plan with 34 $\text{c}2$.

34...$\text{c}7$! 35 $\text{c}2$

White cannot allow something like 35 $\text{a}8$? $\text{d}3$ 36 $\text{a}7+$ $\text{c}8$ 37 $\text{a}8+$ $\text{d}7$ 38 $\text{b}7+$ $\text{e}8$ 39 $\text{b}8+$ $\text{f}7$ 40 $\text{b}7+$ $\text{e}7$ (Karpov), when White’s defence is crumbling.

35...$\text{d}8$!

This is the deeper point behind Black’s previous move: if the white queen vacates the h1-a8 diagonal, Black’s queen will be ready to take over. Note that Black cannot offer the exchange of queens at the moment as he will not be able to penetrate White’s position.

36 $\text{e}1$

White’s problems are illustrated by the fact that 36 $\text{d}3$ is met by 36...$\text{a}8$! and 36 $\text{f}3$ by 36...$\text{d}4$. 37 $\text{e}2$ $\text{a}1$, when White is in serious trouble.

36...g5! (D)

37 $\text{f}xg5$

The only move as 37 $\text{c}2$ g4, with ...$\text{h}4$ to come at Black’s convenience, decides the game.

37...$\text{e}5+ 38 \text{e}2 \text{e}7 39 \text{h}7 \text{d}7$

Black could also force the queens off immediately with 39...$\text{g}6+ 40 \text{xg6} \text{xg6}$, essentially picking up the e-pawn in the process, but I think Karpov’s move is even more accurate.

40 $\text{e}4$ $\text{f}5$ 41 $\text{d}3+$ $\text{c}6$ 42 $\text{xf}5$
White’s options are limited as 42 \( \text{Ke1} \text{Kxe5} \) doesn’t look rosy either. While the endgame still requires some technique, Karpov makes it look very easy.

42...\( \text{exf5} \) 43 \( \text{Kxe3} \) \( \text{Qg6} \) 44 \( \text{e6} \) \( \text{Qd6} \) 45 \( g5 \) \( \text{Qxe6} \) 46 \( \text{d2} \)

Note that 46 \( g8 \) is well met by 46...f4 47 \( \text{gxf4} \) (or 47 \( \text{xh6} \) \( \text{fxg3} \) 48 \( \text{exe5} \) \( h4 \)) 47...h4, when White has to give up his bishop for the h-pawn.

46...\( f4! \) 47 \( \text{gxf4} \) \( h4 \) 48 \( \text{h3} \) 49 \( f3 \) \( f5 \) 50 \( g3 \)

Kharitonov gives 50 \( \text{h6} \) h2 51 \( g2 \) \( \text{xf4+} \) 52 \( \text{Kxh2} \) \( \text{e4} \) 53 \( g5 \) \( \text{e6} \), and Black’s king makes it to the queenside first.

50...\( \text{xf4} \) 51 \( \text{d8} \) \( e2+ \) 52 \( \text{Kh3} \) \( d4 \) 53 \( g6 \)

If White tries to gain some time by running with the king first, Black will merely do the same, as illustrated by Karpov: 53 \( \text{g2} \) \( e4 \) 54 \( \text{f1} \) \( \text{d5} \) 55 \( \text{e1} \) \( \text{xb3} \) 56 \( \text{d1} \) \( \text{xc4} \) 57 \( \text{e2} \) \( \text{d4+} \) 58 \( \text{b2} \) \( \text{c6} \) 59 \( \text{xb6} \) \( \text{b4} \) and Black wins.

53...\( \text{xb3} \) 54 \( \text{d8} \) \( e4 \) 55 \( g4 \) \( d3 \) 56 \( f4 \) \( xc4 \) 57 \( e4 \) \( c3 \) 58 \( f6+ \) \( e2 \) 59 \( e5 \) \( c4 \) 60 \( e3 \) c3 61 \( f6 \)

Other moves don’t offer White any hope either: 61 \( g7 \) \( c5 \) 62 \( d4 \) \( e6+ \) or 61 \( e4 \) \( c5+ \) 62 \( d5 \) \( xa4 \) 63 \( c4 \) \( b2+ \) 64 \( b5 \) a4 65 \( b4 \) \( d3+ \) (Kharitonov).

61...\( \text{c5} \) 62 \( \text{e2} \)

Again everything plays out in Black’s favour: 62 \( d8 \) \( d1 \) 63 \( \text{xa5} \) e2 64 \( \text{d2} \) \( b3 \) or 62 \( d4 \) \( xa4 \) 63 \( c4 \) \( b6+ \) 64 \( b5 \) a4 65 \( b4 \) \( d5+ \) (Karpov).

62...\( \text{b3} \) 0-1

A way of establishing domination over a weak piece is to isolate it. This is usually done by means of exchanges of other pieces.

In the following diagram, the first things that catch the eye are Black’s two bishops on f6 and g6 and the placing of the e5-pawn; for the moment it severely restricts the f6-bishop and leaves weak light squares around it. This position had occurred in a previous top-level game, but surprisingly White didn’t opt for Leko’s very obvious choice.

14 \( \text{d3}! \)

By exchanging the light-squared bishops, White eliminates the counterplay Black may otherwise obtain on the light squares, and takes control over the f5-square.

14...\( \text{xd3} \)

Black can also play 14...\( \text{xc5} \), but after 15 \( \text{e5} \) \( \text{h5} \) 16 \( \text{h4} \) \( \text{e8} \) 17 \( \text{e4} \) \( d4 \) 18 \( \text{xe4} \) \( \text{d4} \) 19 \( \text{xe4} \)

The exchange of the other minor pieces has left Black with a bad bishop vs a good knight. White’s advantage is far from winning, but Black’s position is unpleasant, both to look at and to play.

19...\( \text{g6} \) 20 \( \text{g4} \) \( \text{g7} \) 21 \( \text{h5} \)

White cannot afford to loosen his grip of the light squares with 21 \( g5?! \), as 21...\( \text{d7} \) 22 \( \text{h5} \) \( \text{f5} \) gives Black some counterplay to work with.

21...\( \text{d6} \) 22 \( \text{dxe6} \)

An important move. White wants to direct his knight to e4, but the immediate 22 \( \text{d2} \) allows Black to exchange the bad bishop with 22...\( \text{h6} \).

22...\( \text{dxe6} \) 23 \( \text{d2} \) c6?!

Black badly needs to activate his pieces and open some files if he isn’t to be pushed backwards off the board. The text-move fits the bill in that respect and in addition the alternatives look less than promising; e.g., 23...\( \text{xf2} \) 24 \( \text{d1} \) \( \text{xe3} \) (or 24...\( \text{e5} \) 25 \( \text{xf3} \) \( \text{e7} \) 26 \( \text{e4} \) \( \pm \)) 25 \( \text{w2} \) 26 \( \text{xe4} \) \( \text{e5} \) 27 \( \text{w3} \) \( \text{e7} \) 28 \( \text{d6} \) \( \text{xd6} \) 29 \( \text{f6+} \) \( \text{xf6} \) 30 \( \text{xa8+} \) \( \text{e8} \) 31 \( \text{w3} \) (Finkel), and White has a material advantage as well as the better position.

24 \( \text{dxe6} \) \( \text{xa8} \) 25 \( \text{f3} \) \( \text{xc6} \)

While exchanging queens may appear to ease Black’s defensive burden, the endgame
that arises is certainly not something Black will enjoy; e.g., 25...\textwxc6 26 \textwxc6!? \textwxc6 27 \textDe4 f5 28 gxf5 gxf5 29 \textDe6 \textf8 30 \textDh5 (Finkel), and White clearly has the most fun. Leko doesn’t make Black’s chances look much bigger in the game, but as a practical decision, Black made the right move.

26 \textwe2 \textwe6 27 \textDb1 e4?  

Another practical decision from Black: White’s intention was to shut the bishop down with \textDe4 and g5. The text-move costs Black a pawn, but opens a line for the dead bishop. However, the bishop is still of no use.

28 \textwxe4 \textwc8 29 \textwd3 \textDd8 30 \textwe2 \textwe6 31 \textDe4 \textxd1+

The attempt to stir things up with 31...f5 is quickly rebuffed by 32 \textxd8+ \textxd8 33 \textwc4 \textf7, when White can win in more than one way; e.g., 34 f4 or 34 \textDe3.

32 \textxd1 \textwe6 33 \textwd3 a5 34 \textDd1 \textDe5 35 \textwe3 \textwc7

If Black opts for the more active 35...h5, White will exploit this further weakening of Black’s position with 36 \textwa7! \textDc7 37 g5 a4 38 \textwd4 \textDe5 39 \textwd8+ \textwe8 40 \textwd5, and the remains of Black’s position fall apart.

36 \textDd5 \textDg7 37 \textwd3 \textwe8 38 \textDd7 \textwe5 39 a4! \textzf8 40 \textwd5 \textwf4 41 \textDd6 \textDe5 42 \textDc4

With the vulnerable black pawns ripe to be plucked, the game was soon decided in White’s favour.

The following example is another illustration of isolating the bad piece, and how little extra is needed to secure a win from such a position.

We have a fairly typical situation: Black has a bad bishop hemmed in by his pawns that are locked on the light squares. Meanwhile, White has a strong centralized knight, which takes the entry-square on c2 away from Black’s rooks as well as supporting a possible f5 break on the kingside. At some point, White would like to exchange the rooks to accentuate the strong knight vs bad bishop imbalance, but before this can happen, White needs to provoke more weaknesses in Black’s pawn-structure, as he otherwise will find no way to penetrate Black’s solid position.

25 \textwe3!

Played with the above-mentioned idea in mind: to provoke more structural weaknesses.

25...h5

This is essentially in accordance with White’s plan, but unfortunately I don’t think Black can do without it, as otherwise he will be stuck with a very passive situation on the kingside.

26 \textDh3 g6 27 \textwe3

The first step of the plan has been completed without problems. The next step is the exchange of rooks, which is achieved easily once he has found the right set-up.

27...\textDe5 28 \textwe2 \textwe3 29 \textDd1 \textDc7 30 g3 \textDg8 31 \textDf1 \textDg8  

With his previous move, Black obviously thought about breaking with 31...g5, but something must have put him off the idea. I have seen comments claiming that it was due to 32 f5 exf5 33 \textDxf5+ \textDxf5 34 \textDxf5, but this doesn’t seem particularly convincing in the event of something like 34...d4. In my opinion, White should maintain the knight/bishop imbalance, and play 32 fxg5 \textDxg5 33 \textDd4 with a solid edge in the endgame.

32 \textDd2 \textDe8 33 \textDe2 \textDc5 34 \textDc1 \textDd7 35 \textDf1 \textDc6 36 \textDf2 \textDe7 37 \textDc1 \textDc8 38 \textDd2 \textDb8 39 \textDf1 \textDa8 40 \textDc1 \textDac8 41 \textDf3! \textDd8 42 \textDg5!

Courtesy of the weaknesses, White has more options to play with, both in regards to forcing the exchange of rooks, but also eventually in the decisive breakthrough.

42...\textDxc2+

As much as Black would like to delay the exchange of rooks, it cannot be done; for example, 42...\textDe7 43 \textDxc5 bxc5 (or 43...\textDxc5 44 \textDxc5 bxc5 45 d4) 44 d4 \textDb8 (or 44...c4 45

Z. Almasi – Züger
Horgen 1995
bxc4 dxc4 46 c4, and White will penetrate with the knight) 45 a5 c5 46 a4 b2+ 47 e3 xh2 48 a7 (Almasi) is anything but desirable for Black.

43 xxc2 xxc2+ 44 xc2 c7 45 c3 b5 46 c3 b7 47 e6 c2 48 e2 49 b4 d5 50 d4 d7 51 f3?!

More accurate is 51 bxa5 bxa5 52 f3, leaving White with the entry-square on c5. This also happens in the game, albeit with some delay.

51...c7?!

Black could probably offer more resistance with 51...axb4+, after which 52 axb4 would give Black good drawing chances, but 52 xb4 followed by the exchange of the a- and b-pawns will allow White to penetrate on the queenside and eventually win.

52 g5 e8 53 h7 a4 54 f6 b5 55 bxa5 bxa5 56 f5! b6

The best defence; 56...exf5 57 xd5+ and 56...gxh5 57 xh5 both win without trouble for White.

57 fg6 fxg6 58 h7 e8 59 f8 f7

The win is now very elementary: Black’s pawns are to be fixed on the light squares, and then White will be able to enter Black’s position at will.

60 h4! b5 61 d4! a4 62 b2 b5 63 b3 a6 64 d7+ b5 65 c5 b6 66 c3 c6 67 d3 b5 68 d2

Now that the black king cannot enter on the queenside, all that remains to be done is to force the a-pawn forward to a4.

68...c6 69 d2 d7 70 e3

In order to prevent penetration on the kingside, Black’s king must follow White’s, allowing the knight to take care of business on the queenside.

70 e7 71 f4 e8 72 g5! f7 73 d3 a4 74 c5 c2 75 b7 a4

Finally, White is ready to penetrate on the queenside.

76 h6 f8 77 c5 f7 78 g5 b3 79 f4 d1 80 e3 1-0

The black king cannot follow White’s to the queenside and therefore the battle is over.

Not all examples are as clear-cut as the one above, and therefore you will have to look at each position with an open mind, and see what you need to do to move along with your plan. In some cases, you need to sacrifice your existing positional advantage in order to obtain a different kind of advantage.

Karpov – Smyslov
Moscow 1981

We note that White has the bishop-pair, and some space advantage, but hanging pawns on c4 and d4. Black’s position is a bit passive, but quite solid with very few weaknesses. So how should either side continue? White would like to open up the position for his bishop-pair and generally more active pieces, and in addition, he may even create a passed pawn on the d-file. Black on the other hand should rely more on counter-moves, but would like to play ...c5, provoking a white d5 advance, exchange the dark-squared bishops, and set up a blockade on the dark squares. This would give Black a good knight versus a bad bishop.

17 f61!

This is a counter-measure against the above-described plan by Black. Supporting the hanging central pawns is also far more important than inviting an exchange of rooks on the e-file with 17 fxe1.

17...e7 18 a3?!

This seems a bit odd, especially as the a-pawn cannot be taken, but Karpov is attempting to provoke a weakness in Black’s solid set-up.

18 f8 19 b2

White may also consider offering an exchange of the queens with 19 a5!? as the departure of the queens should help White benefit from the bishop-pair; e.g., 19...xa5 20 xa5, and Black has to watch out for c7-g3. The bishops also make it hard for Black to coordinate
the defence of the queenside. If Black declines the offer, he will either have to misplace his pieces or weaken his pawn-structure.

19...c5!

Black cannot allow White carte blanche to open the centre. As mentioned above, Black should strive towards White closing the centre with d5, and then exchange the dark-squared bishops followed by a blockade on the dark squares. For the same reason it is out of the question for White to play 20 d5?! as Black has no problems after 20...d6, intending 21...e5. With his pawn-structure breaking up, Karpov has to continue in active fashion and exert pressure against Black’s king.

20 a5!? g7?

Another strong move: if Black lets White open the long diagonal without having to exchange the bishops, White will maintain the initiative as illustrated in the following line: 20...b6 21 dxc5 xc5 22 a8h with a better game for White.

21 dxc5 xc3 22 xc3 xc5 23 f3 e7 24 h4 ?!

White has increased the pressure, but so far Black has kept the balance with accurate defensive moves. Here, however, he plays too passively and starts drifting into an inferior position. Karpov gave 24...a4!? 25 f6 b6 26 h5 xd5 27 xdx5 e5 with chances for both sides, but 24...be8!? intending...e4 can also be considered.

25 f6 e4?!

Another inaccuracy, wasting time. 25...e8 is correct, possibly followed by...e4 at a later time. Note that the tempting 25...e5? loses immediately to 26 xf7+!.

26 d4 e5 27 h5 ?!

One mistake rarely comes alone, and this one gives White a decisive advantage. The only way to stay afloat is 27...e8 (threatening...e1+), but after 28 f1, White has a powerful attack.

28 hxg6 hxg6 29 g3 e5

Equivalent to resignation, but 29...b6 30 c5! finishes Black off in short order; for example, 30...xc5 31 h3, and mate is unavoidable.

30 xg6+ h7 31 g3 f6 32 h4+ 1-0

Black faces a disaster such as 32...h5 (the alternative 32...h5 is even worse: 33 e4+

h8 34 d5) 33 f6 xd1+ 34 h2 with h3+ to follow.

Many of us have been brought up on examples of Botvinnik being triumphant despite an inferior pawn-structure. The starting position in the following example looks quite similar to some of Botvinnik’s games, but sometimes similar isn’t close enough. Here Black illustrates that it’s important to know the differences and how they can change the course of a game.

We enter the game after White’s 18 d3. A quick glance at the position reveals that White has some weak pawns on the queenside, but the positional justification for this lies in the role White hopes his bishop will play on the light squares (after e4-d5), where Black cannot oppose it. Wedberg, however, isn’t as impressed by this bishop and thinks that if Black can play around it rather than exchanging it, its significance will be limited.

18...d8 19 e2 e7 20 e4 e7 21 0-0 g6

Black has to resist the tempting 21...f5?!, which is well met by 22 d5!, when if Black accepts the pawn sacrifice with 22...xd5 23 cxd5 xd5, 24 e4! leaves him in trouble due to his unsafe king and numerous light-square weaknesses.

22 d1 g7 23 d5 d6 24 e4

Exercise: Before moving on to the next move, please try to assess the strengths and weaknesses of White’s last move, and outline a plan for Black.

24...g5!
White's last move was a clear misunderstanding of the position. It secures the position of the bishop on d5, but weakens the dark squares, particularly f4. Thus it gives Black an opportunity to start a kingside attack in which he is effectively playing a piece up.

25 g3 ęd6 26 ęd1 h5 27 ęe3 ęe7 28 ęb2

Rather than seeking counterplay through 28 a5??, White remains passive, awaiting Black’s progress. Wedberg mentions that after 28 a5 h4 29 g4, Black can go for either ...ęf6-f4, ...ęf6, ...ęh3 and ...ęh4 to target the f3-pawn heavily, or he can place the knight on f4 and then aim to open a file on the queenside and penetrate there. In either case, White may be well-advised not to play 29 g4 and instead attempt to keep the structure fluid.

28...ęh4

This is a standard idea that is worth paying attention to: Black threatens to open the h-file whenever he is ready to exploit it, but at the same time, he wouldn’t mind if White plays g4, weakening the f4-square, after which Black can play as described in the previous note.

29 ęg2 hgx3 30 hgx3 ęh3 31 ęd2 ęd8 32 ęf2??

Now things are really going wrong for White, who can no longer stop the infiltration via the h-file.

However, White had a last chance here: he should have played the clever 32 ęh2??, after which 32...ęg3+?? loses to 33 ęf2. The white position is still not pretty, but the exchange of one pair of rooks certainly eases the defensive burden tremendously.

32...ędh8 33 ęe2 ęh2 34 ęff2 ęxg2 35 ęxg2 ęh1 36 ęd3 ęd7?

A simple yet beautiful move that threatens both the weak a-pawn as well as penetration on the h-file by ...ęh3.

37 ęxg5

Or 37 ęa2 ęh3 38 ęf2 ęd1+ 39 ęe3 ęc1 40 ęd3 (also after 40 ęh2 ęxc3+ 41 ęd2 ęxf3 the lights are out) 40...ęh1 (Wedberg) with the deadly penetration on the h-file and back rank completed.

37...ęxa4 38 ęd2 ęa1 39 ęf5 ęf1+ 40 ęe3 ęe1+ 41 ęd3 ęb1+ 42 ęe3 ęe1+ 43 ęf2

Now instead of 43...ęf1+??, which does win, but drags matters on for a while longer, Black could have finished White off with 43...ęc1!!

44 ęxf7+ ęh6 45 ęe2 ęf1+ 46 ęg2 ęh1 and mate follows in short order.

The Much-Feared Pair of Bishops

While the bishop-pair plays a very important role in some positions, it is not always the case. In fact, very often knight & bishop isn’t any worse than the bishop-pair. The value of the bishop-pair is determined by the pawn-structure, pawn distribution and placement of the other pieces, and therefore they are no different from any other pieces on the board.

Before moving on, we make a couple of observations: the pawns are symmetrically distributed, White has a space advantage, and the bishop-pair and the queen+bishop are pointing in the direction of the black king. While Black’s position appears to be quite solid, Timman quickly illustrates how difficult his situation is.

20 dxс5 dxс5 21 b5!

White correctly decides to rule out any counterplay for Black on the queenside, and therefore can now concentrate his efforts on the kingside. Note how the black knights are tied down despite the relatively closed pawn-structure, while White has full control over the diagonals.

21...ęe8

Lacking a better move, Karpov tries to release his knight from the defence of the kingside, while protecting the possible entry-square on d6. 21...ęe5 to close the long diagonal also appears to make sense, but after 22 ęf5, White has the better chances.

22 ęe4 f6 23 ęd3! ęxe4
Black has to surrender his remaining bishop as the knight otherwise continues to the d6-square; for example, 23...\textit{Qf}8 24...\textit{Qd}6!\textit{Qxd}6 (or 24...\textit{Qd}8 25...\textit{Qxe}8 \textit{Qxe}8 26...\textit{Qd}6 with penetration on the 6th rank) 25...\textit{Qxd}6 \textit{Qxd}6 26...\textit{Qxd}6 \textit{Qxa}8 27...\textit{Qc}3 \textit{Qa}2 (27...\textit{Qa}3 28...\textit{Qe}1 \textit{Qa}2 29...\textit{Qd}3 \textit{Qa}3 30...\textit{Qf}1++) 28...\textit{Qd}3 \textit{Qc}8 29...\textit{Qf}1 \textit{Qa}3 30...\textit{Qe}1 (Ftačnik), and either the b6- or e6-pawn will fall.

24...\textit{Qxe}4 \textit{Qf}8 25...\textit{Qd}3 \textit{Qf}7

In the game continuation, White takes control over the a-file. Black could do this himself at this point, but after 25...\textit{Qxa}8 26...\textit{Qb}2 \textit{Qa}2 27...\textit{Qa}3 \textit{Qa}7 28...\textit{Qc}1, the black set-up on the a-file doesn’t make a lot of sense. Therefore Black decides to bring his king to the centre to make the penetration along the d-file more difficult.

26...\textit{Qc}3 \textit{Qe}7

Black had another chance to take the a-file with 26...\textit{Qxa}8, but 27...\textit{Qe}1, transferring to g3, leaves White clearly better.

27...\textit{Qa}1 \textit{Qd}8 28...\textit{Qe}2 \textit{Qd}6

White has placed his pieces on their ideal squares. The next step in exploiting his advantage is to open the position for his bishops to be at their best. For this reason, 28...\textit{Qe}5 would be mistaken due to 29...\textit{Qf}4!.

29...\textit{Qf}4 \textit{Qf}7 30...\textit{Qe}4 \textit{Qc}8

White’s threat was 31...\textit{Qe}5, breaking open the position.

31...\textit{Qe}5!

Anyway! It looks paradoxical that White apparently closes the pawn-structure, when he wants to break it open. However, the closure of the pawn-structure is only of a temporary kind and at the same time White gains more space. In addition, it is worth looking at the two open files: White controls the a-file, Black the d-file, but while Black cannot make use of a single square on the file due to White’s bishops and pawns, White can invade on a8, a6 and if Black isn’t careful even a7.

31...\textit{Qf}5

Sitting and waiting is the best policy for Black at this point. Letting White open the position, such as after 31...\textit{Qe}7 32...\textit{Qh}5+ \textit{Qeg}6 33...\textit{exe}6 \textit{gxf}6 34...\textit{Qf}1, only brings the end nearer.

32...\textit{Qf}3 \textit{Qe}7 33...\textit{h}3 \textit{Qg}8 34...\textit{Qh}2!

White still needs to take care; after the premature 34...\textit{Qg}4?, Black can bring himself back into the game with 34...\textit{Qfg}6 35...\textit{Qwg}3 \textit{Qf}8.

34...\textit{Qfg}6 35...\textit{Qf}7 36...\textit{h}4! \textit{Qg}8 37...\textit{h}5

One step at a time, White increases his spatial advantage.

37...\textit{Qh}8 38...\textit{Qd}4 \textit{Qf}8

Black has to remain passive, since otherwise he will be blown away in short order as illustrated in the following variation given by Ftačnik: 38...\textit{xg}4 39...\textit{Qxg}4 \textit{Qc}8 40...\textit{Qa}7 (that was the square I mentioned above) 40...\textit{Qe}8 41...\textit{Qh}6 \textit{Qg}6 42...\textit{Qa}8! \textit{Qxa}8 (or 42...\textit{Qd}7 43...\textit{Qd}1!, and Black loses a piece) 43...\textit{Qxe}6+ \textit{Qh}8 44...\textit{Qhg}7+ \textit{Qxg}7 45...\textit{Qf}6+ \textit{Qg}8 46...\textit{e}6, and mate is unavoidable.

39...\textit{Qxf}5 \textit{Qxf}5

On 39...\textit{exf}5, White has several good moves, but 40...\textit{Qe}6 looks most convincing, opening another line of fire against the g7-square.

40...\textit{Qxf}5 \textit{Qxf}5

White also wins easily after 40...\textit{exf}5 41...\textit{Qc}7 42...\textit{Qg}2!, when Black cannot escape without sustaining heavy material losses or getting mated.

41...\textit{Qa}8+

Quite fitting: the knight on h8 falls.

41...\textit{Qf}8 42...\textit{Qxf}8+ \textit{Qxf}8 43...\textit{Qa}8+ \textit{Qf}7 44

\textit{Qwh}8 \textit{Qb}7 45...\textit{h}6! 1-0

Black resigned due to 45...\textit{Qf}3 46...\textit{Qg}7+ \textit{Qe}8 47...\textit{Qg}8+ \textit{Qd}7 48...\textit{Qwh}7+ \textit{Qc}8 49...\textit{Qg}8+ \textit{Qc}7 50...\textit{Qg}3, when Black’s last hopes are put to rest.

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McShane – Stefansson
Hrökurinn 2003

\textbf{Question:} How should this position be assessed?

I’m quite certain that you have noticed that Black has a pair of bishops, that the position is
open, which also speaks in favour of the bishops, and that White has a backward pawn on c3. The reason why I chose this example is that none of these factors are as important as the fact that Black is very weak on the light squares; in particular the a2-g8 diagonal as well as the f5-square. In addition, White’s pieces are far better coordinated and more actively placed. Hence the advantage of the bishop-pair in open positions is in this case completely illusory. In fact, White is clearly better. However, it is noteworthy how fast it goes downhill for Black in this game.

23...\textit{\textcolor{red}{\text{d}}7}

In a previous game, Adams-Ponomariov, Linares 2002, Black tried 23...\textit{\textcolor{red}{\text{d}}8}, but after 24 \textit{\textcolor{red}{\text{h}}5}! 24...\textit{\textcolor{red}{\text{a}}7} 25 \textit{\textcolor{red}{\text{x}}e}5 left Black simply a pawn down, which White eventually converted into a win. Wedberg gives the following lines to illustrate Black’s headaches further: 24...\textit{\textcolor{red}{\text{f6}}}

25 \textit{\textcolor{red}{\text{e}}3} g6 26 \textit{\textcolor{red}{\text{g}}4} \textit{\textcolor{red}{\text{g}}7} 27 \textit{\textcolor{red}{\text{h}}4} g5 28 \textit{\textcolor{red}{\text{h}}5} \textit{\textcolor{red}{\text{a}}7} 29 \textit{\textcolor{red}{\text{ad}}1} \pm or 24...\textit{\textcolor{red}{\text{c}}7} 25 \textit{\textcolor{red}{\text{e}}3} \textit{\textcolor{red}{\text{ad}}8} 26 \textit{\textcolor{red}{\text{g}}4} \textit{\textcolor{red}{\text{d}}5} (not 26...\textit{\textcolor{red}{\text{d}}6}? due to 27 \textit{\textcolor{red}{\text{g}}6} ++) 27 \textit{\textcolor{red}{\text{e}}3} with a kingside attack for White.

24 \textit{\textcolor{red}{\text{h}}5}!

Maintaining the threats against e5 and f7.

24...\textit{\textcolor{red}{\text{a}}5}

Black would love for White to take the pawn on e5 and then be able to remove the bishop from b3 with ...\textit{\textcolor{red}{\text{a}}4}. Obviously this is not going to happen, if White has a say in it.

25 bxa5! \textit{\textcolor{red}{\text{e}}7} 26 \textit{\textcolor{red}{\text{e}}3}!

The knight is heading for g4, targeting the e5-pawn and Black’s kingside.

26...\textit{\textcolor{red}{\text{xa}}5}

Black should have played 26...\textit{\textcolor{red}{\text{b}}7}, but even so, after 27 \textit{\textcolor{red}{\text{g}}4}! \textit{\textcolor{red}{\text{x}}g}2 28 \textit{\textcolor{red}{\text{g}}6}! (threatening 29 \textit{\textcolor{red}{\text{f}}6}+ \textit{\textcolor{red}{\text{x}}h}8 30 \textit{\textcolor{red}{\text{h}}7#}) 28...\textit{\textcolor{red}{\text{h}}8} 29 \textit{\textcolor{red}{\text{xf}}7} \textit{\textcolor{red}{\text{d}}6} 30 \textit{\textcolor{red}{\text{ad}}1} \textit{\textcolor{red}{\text{e}}7} 31 \textit{\textcolor{red}{\text{g}}6} \textit{\textcolor{red}{\text{x}}h}3 32 \textit{\textcolor{red}{\text{d}}5}, the game will soon be over.

27 \textit{\textcolor{red}{\text{g}}4} \textit{\textcolor{red}{\text{d}}8} 28 \textit{\textcolor{red}{\text{xe}}5} 1-0

Black’s position is falling apart.

The Knight-Pair

The knights are for obvious reasons very different from the bishops, not only by the way they move, but also by the way they work. Two knights usually don’t work that well together against one common goal, but can be effective if working side by side on different targets.

Take a look at the following position, which has the slightly unusual match-up of knight-pair vs bishop-pair. None of the four minor pieces on the board are doing anything radical at the present time, but by looking at the weaknesses in the position, a plan can fairly quickly be formulated.

\begin{center}
\begin{tikzpicture}

\end{tikzpicture}
\end{center}

Ivanchuk - Kasparov
Linares 1991

Black’s position is rather cramped and his bishops aren’t the happiest pair, but how does White break into Black’s passive but solid position? Ivanchuk finds an interesting pawn sacrifice that clears a square for his d2-knight.

23 e5?!

Another possibility is 23 f4 to grab more space and wait a bit further for a decisive break.

23...\textit{\textcolor{red}{\text{xc}}5}?

Kasparov goes wrong immediately, but this is hardly a surprise as he likes to activate his pieces in search for counterplay rather than defend passively to obtain equality. Correct is 23...\textit{\textcolor{red}{\text{xc}}5}! (in contrast, 23...\textit{\textcolor{red}{\text{xc}}5}? 24 \textit{\textcolor{red}{\text{c}}4} is terrible for Black) 24 \textit{\textcolor{red}{\text{c}}4} \textit{\textcolor{red}{\text{b}}8} 25 \textit{\textcolor{red}{\text{d}}1} (against 25 \textit{\textcolor{red}{\text{d}}6}+, Black calmly defends with 25...\textit{\textcolor{red}{\text{x}}d}6 \textit{\textcolor{red}{\text{xb}}6} \textit{\textcolor{red}{\text{f}}7}) 25...\textit{\textcolor{red}{\text{c}}8}, and while White obviously has compensation for the pawn, Black’s position is solid and not easy to make progress against; e.g., 26 \textit{\textcolor{red}{\text{d}}6}+ (or 26 f4 \textit{\textcolor{red}{\text{f}}8}) 26...\textit{\textcolor{red}{\text{f}}8} 27 \textit{\textcolor{red}{\text{c}}8} \textit{\textcolor{red}{\text{e}}8} 28 \textit{\textcolor{red}{\text{d}}7} \textit{\textcolor{red}{\text{d}}8} 29 \textit{\textcolor{red}{\text{x}}c}7 \textit{\textcolor{red}{\text{xd}}1} 30 \textit{\textcolor{red}{\text{x}}d}1 \textit{\textcolor{red}{\text{g}}5} 31 \textit{\textcolor{red}{\text{b}}8}+ \textit{\textcolor{red}{\text{g}}7} 32 \textit{\textcolor{red}{\text{x}}b}6 \textit{\textcolor{red}{\text{h}}7} with chances for both sides (Bönsch).

24 \textit{\textcolor{red}{\text{c}}4} \textit{\textcolor{red}{\text{f}}8} 25 \textit{\textcolor{red}{\text{xb}}6} \textit{\textcolor{red}{\text{e}}8}

Black’s position is pretty rotten at this point, and it’s unclear what Kasparov had in mind when playing 23...\textit{\textcolor{red}{\text{xc}}5}. White could now consider returning the knight to c4 to pick up the
a-pawn as well, but chooses instead to put Black under more pressure.

26 f4 f5 27 exf5 exf5 28 e1 g7 29 g4!

\textbf{Ke5}

Necessary as 29...hgx3 30 xg3+ f6 31 xc3+ wins for White.

30 xxc5 dxc5 31 e8 (D)

\begin{center}
\includegraphics[width=0.5\textwidth]{larsen-schandorff.png}
\end{center}

31...f8

I'm sure Kasparov hated every moment of this, but he really cannot do much better; e.g.,
31...d8??, and now not 32 xd8?? c6+, but instead 32 xc3+ or 32 e1 with a winning advantage.

32 d8 g6 33 f5! h6 34 g5!

This is getting embarrassing for Black, who obviously was hoping for something like 34 xe8? e3.

34...h5 35 g4 exf5 36 f4 h8 37 f6+ h7 38 xb4+ 1-0

Total humiliation: there is mate on the next move.

\textbf{Opposite-Coloured Bishops}

One of the things I find most fascinating in chess is the dogma that surrounds positions with opposite-coloured bishops. Many players consider the presence of opposite-coloured bishops to be a drawing factor. And while it may be in some cases, there are so many exceptions that once other pieces are on the board it cannot be considered a rule any longer. In fact, in a position where one side has the attack or the initiative, this often isn't in spite of the opposite-coloured bishops, but in fact because of them!

Enough talk; let's look at some practical examples.

Superficially, this position isn't easy to assess. Black has a bishop-pair, but a weakened kingside. White on the other hand has knight and bishop and better coordination, but two isolated pawns. Along with Black's kingside problems, he also has to deal with his queen being somewhat overburdened with defensive tasks: both bishops and the f6-pawn. Larsen finds a way to exploit this:

26 a3!

With this pawn sacrifice, White forces Black to give up his light-squared bishop for the knight. In the resulting position, we have opposite-coloured bishops on the board. This is to the advantage of the side with the attack, and given White's solid protection of the dark squares around his king, and looking at Black's damaged pawn-structure, this should undoubtedly favour White.

The reason for this is that when you attack on the colour where your opponent cannot protect himself, he is essentially defending with a piece less.

26...xe4

The endgame after 26...f5 27 g5+ xg5 28 xg5 e7 29 xb7 xg5 30 d5 exd5 31 xd5 is quite unpleasant for Black; again the opposite-coloured bishops favour White.

27 xe4 f5?!

This move only serves to make Black's structure even weaker, and should only be played if strictly necessary.

Black would have done better to take on a3 at once; White would have continued along the same pattern with b7 and d5, but Black seems to have better defensive resources.
28 \textit{W}^f_3 \textit{B}xa3 29 \textit{W}^h_7 \textit{W}^d_6 30 \textit{d}^5 \textit{e}xd5 31 \textit{A}xd5

Now the defect of 27...f5?! is evident, as the pawn is ripe to be picked up by White.

31...\textit{B}b4? 

Although White has the initiative, Black should still make an attempt at making it as difficult for White as possible. With 31...f4! he could throw a spanner in the works; e.g., 32 \textit{W}^g_4 (+neither 32 \textit{g}x\textit{f}4 nor 32 \textit{g}4 is particularly desirable) 32...\textit{W}x\textit{h}8 33 \textit{A}xf7 (after 33 \textit{A}xf7?! \textit{xf}3 34 \textit{h}x\textit{g}3, Black actually obtains the initiative with 34...\textit{A}c5! {this is stronger than 34...\textit{W}xf6 35 \textit{W}^f_6 \textit{W}^x_6 36 \textit{A}xe6 \textit{A}c5 = Lutz} 35 \textit{W}^g_5 \textit{W}^d_4, and all of a sudden, it is Black who has the advantage of the opposite-coloured bishops) 33...\textit{A}xf7 34 \textit{A}xf7 \textit{W}^f_8 35 \textit{A}h_3 (or 35 \textit{A}xf4 \textit{W}^g_7, and White cannot prevent the exchange of queens in the long run, with a draw being inevitable – Lutz) 35...\textit{f}x\textit{g}3 36 \textit{h}x\textit{g}3 \textit{A}c5, and Black can defend – Lutz.

32 \textit{A}e_4?

White is wasting important time by delaying the capture on f5 until he can take with his bishop. However, 32 \textit{W}x\textit{f}5 is the simplest and the strongest. Now Black gets another chance to play to play...f4.

32...\textit{W}e_5?

Once more Black doesn’t find 32...f4; Lutz then gives 33 \textit{W}^g_4+ \textit{W}x\textit{h}8 34 \textit{A}xf7 (or 34 \textit{A}xf7 \textit{f}x\textit{g}3 35 \textit{h}x\textit{g}3 \textit{W}^f_6 36 \textit{W}^e_6 \textit{W}^x_6 37 \textit{A}xe6 \textit{A}c5 with a drawn endgame) 34...\textit{A}xf7 35 \textit{A}xf7 \textit{W}^f_8 36 \textit{A}b_3 (as above, 36 \textit{W}x\textit{f}4 \textit{w}g_7 forces the queen exchange) 36...\textit{f}x\textit{g}3 37 \textit{h}x\textit{g}3 \textit{A}c5, and Black shouldn’t have any trouble drawing the endgame.

33 \textit{A}d_3 \textit{W}h_8?

It’s still not too late to play 33...f4!?, even if White has 34 \textit{A}b_5!?. Black still has to play carefully to stay in the game, but it’s far better than the game continuation.

34 \textit{A}xf5 (D)

Black’s problem is that he is presently without counterplay and in order to save the pawns on his kingside, he has to set up his pieces very passively, leaving the rest of the board to White.

34...\textit{W}^g_7 35 \textit{A}c_2 \textit{W}g_8 36 \textit{W}^g_2 \textit{W}^h_8 37 \textit{A}b_3

White has plenty of time. The first step of his plan is to force Black to focus his forces on the defence of the f7-pawn.

37...\textit{W}^g_8 38 \textit{h}^4 \textit{h}_6 39 \textit{W}^d_5 \textit{A}c_3 40 \textit{A}b_6 \textit{W}^h_8 41 \textit{W}^h_5 \textit{W}^f_6 42 \textit{A}a_6

Black is completely tied down. In an attempt to free himself, Black sacrifices his a-pawn, but he only gets a short respite.

42...\textit{a}4 43 \textit{A}xa4 \textit{A}b_8 44 \textit{A}c_2 \textit{W}^g_8 45 \textit{A}d_3 \textit{A}d_4 46 \textit{A}c_4!

The bishop is back on the important a2-g8 diagonal, and once more disaster is looming over Black’s crumbling position. Now the threat is 47 \textit{A}g_6.

46...\textit{A}f_8 47 \textit{W}^d_5!

If White instead went for the inaccurate 47 \textit{A}x\textit{h}6, Black would have some counterplay with 47...\textit{A}b_2.

47...\textit{e}e_8?!

This mistake allows White to finish the game. With 47...\textit{A}g_8, Black could have fought on a bit further, although the prospects remain grim.

48 \textit{A}x\textit{h}6 \textit{A}x\textit{h}6 49 \textit{A}xf7# (1-0)

When having the attack and opposite-coloured bishops, this force can be almost unstoppable.

\begin{center}
Karpov – Kasparov
Moscow Wch (4) 1985
\end{center}
In this example we immediately notice the terribly weak light squares on Black’s kingside. What I find particularly instructive is how patiently Karpov exploits the fact that Black’s bishop cannot participate in the defence.

48 g3!

The defects in Black’s position are of a permanent nature, and therefore White shouldn’t rush matters unnecessarily. First Karpov establishes a safe shelter for his own king, while at the same time taking some squares away from Black’s bishop.

Note that a continuation like 48 d1 f6 49 e6+ f8 50 xf6+ xf6 51 xd5 wins a pawn for White, but leads to an endgame where the opposite-coloured bishops promise Black excellent drawing chances. Without the queens on the board, the weak light squares are of no significance.

48...f8 49 g2 f6 50 h7

As mentioned above, White cannot allow the exchange of queens.

50...f7 51 h4

Go away!

51...d2 52 d1 c3 (D)

53 d3!

The rook-lift, a very important ingredient in the white attack. Note how smoothly the black king is extracted from the relative safety of the kingside.

53...d6?!

This fairly logical move speeds up the process White has begun with his rook manoeuvre d1-d3. However, also after the more solid 53...f6, White will slowly but surely make progress; e.g., 54 f3 g8 55 g6 f7 56 g4 h5 57 f4 g8 58 e3 h8 59 d3 g8 60 f5.

54 f3 e7

Unfortunately for Black, this is necessary, as 54...f6 is well met by 55 g6, after which 55...g8 56 e3! ends the game, and 55...xf3 56 xf7 xf7 57 h8+ e7 58 a8 also wins for White.

55 h8 d4

Black wants to prevent the unpleasant rook check on the e-file, but this too is only temporary.

56 c8 f6 57 c5+

White could also consider playing the immediate 57 f4; for example, 57...d5+ 58 f3 with e4+ to come, but Karpov’s move doesn’t leave Black any chances either.

57...e8 58 f4!

The second rook-lift of the game. Note how helpless Black’s bishop is while White attacks on the light squares.

58...h7+ 59 e4+ f7 60 c4+ f8 61 h7

Mate is threatened on g8.

61...f7 62 e6 d7 63 e5 1-0

Black cannot delay the fatal penetration on the 8th rank; e.g., 63...d8 64 c5+ c7 65 f4+ e8 66 c6+ d7 67 g6+ or 63...c7 64 f4+ f7 65 b8+ e8 66 d6+ e7 67 xf7+ xf7 68 g6+ f8 69 b8+.

Do I or Don’t I Exchange?

During every game you play, you have to make a number of decisions regarding which pieces you want to exchange, both the exchanges you initiate but certainly also the exchanges that your opponent introduces to the game. The questions you always have to ask when facing a possible exchange are: ‘does the exchange favour me or my opponent?’ and ‘does the exchange achieve what I’m aiming for in the game?’

The questions are not always easy to answer and the answers very much depend on how you evaluate the position. But unlike other types of pieces, an exchange of a knight for a bishop or vice versa can change the dynamics of a position in ways that other exchanges normally will not. Therefore these decisions should not be made lightly or on the spur of the moment. All positional factors have to be considered before a decision of this kind is made.
Black has just played 18...\(\texttt{h}3\), offering an exchange of bishops, so the obvious question is whether to allow this exchange. In this case it shouldn’t take too long to determine that White is best served by preserving his bishop as it helps to provide pressure along the h1-a8 diagonal and thereby also supports the d5- and e4-squares, and covers the weak light squares around the king. White’s other pieces are huddled together on the queenside but do each serve their purpose. Black’s pieces look more active and nicely coordinated, but after closer examination, it is difficult to form a plan for Black where the present coordination makes any sense. In particular the knight stuck on a5 looks silly. Therefore the exchange of the light-squared bishops is entirely in Black’s favour and should be avoided.

19 \(\texttt{h}1\) \(\texttt{ab}8\)

Black has to be careful not to weaken his queenside further. This is the case after 19...c6?, which loses to 20 \(\texttt{a}4\) \(\texttt{ab}8\) 21 \(\texttt{wc}3\)!

20 \(\texttt{d}5\)

White makes use of the h1-bishop to increase the pressure on Black’s queenside, but 20 \(\texttt{d}4\) also makes a lot of sense, particularly in the light of the option Black has on his next move.

20...c6?!

This may not look like much of a mistake, but playing on the wing where your opponent has the initiative always tends to be hazardous. Black is aiming to exchange a pair of pawns, which may ease his defensive burden, but as it turns out just weakens the queenside further – the exact reason why you should normally abstain from attempting what Black does here. Instead the pawn sacrifice 20...\(\texttt{e}6?!\) is interesting; for example, 21 \(\texttt{wc}7\) (the alternative line 21 \(\texttt{xc}7\) \(\texttt{h}3\)! 22 \(\texttt{wc}3\) b6 23 \(\texttt{da}6?!\) \(\texttt{bc}8\) 24 \(\texttt{c}6\) \(\texttt{d}5\) 25 \(\texttt{xd}7\) \(\texttt{xc}3\) 26 \(\texttt{g}4\) \(\texttt{b}3\) is also quite unpleasant for White) 21...\(\texttt{xd}5\) 22 \(\texttt{xa}5\) \(\texttt{xb}1\) 23 \(\texttt{xd}1\) \(\texttt{f}5\) 24 \(\texttt{xc}3\) e4 25 d4 \(\texttt{bc}8\) 26 \(\texttt{wb}4\) \(\texttt{d}5\), and Black has more compensation than he needs for the pawn. Instead White should consider 21 b6!? \(\texttt{xb}6\) 22 \(\texttt{xb}6\) \(\texttt{we}7\) 23 \(\texttt{hb}5\) with a slight initiative, although Black obviously is nowhere near lost at this point.

21 \(\texttt{b}6\) \(\texttt{wc}7\) 22 \(\texttt{a}4\) b6?!

By some sources, this move is given as an ‘only move’, but Black may actually be better served by keeping the queenside tension intact with 22...\(\texttt{we}7\), although here too, White is somewhat better after 23 \(\texttt{wc}3\) cxb5 24 \(\texttt{a}3\).

23 bxc6 \(\texttt{ad}8\) 24 \(\texttt{wd}1!\) (D)

A very strong and beautiful move: White keeps the protecting the d-pawn and the knight on a4, while clearing the way for the rook to attack on the c-file.

24...\(\texttt{xc}6\) 25 \(\texttt{ec}2!\)

Obviously 25 \(\texttt{db}2\) is also possible; for example, 25...b5 26 \(\texttt{xb}5\) \(\texttt{xb}5\) 27 \(\texttt{xb}5\), and now 27...\(\texttt{d}4?\) can be met with 28 \(\texttt{c}5\), but Karpov wants to remove the pressure along the d-file first.

25...\(\texttt{d}7\) 26 \(\texttt{eb}2\) b5 27 \(\texttt{ce}5\) \(\texttt{wd}6\) 28 \(\texttt{xd}7\)

White eliminates the bishop, which in addition to the extra pawn also leaves him with the bishop-pair.

28...\(\texttt{xd}7\) 29 \(\texttt{xb}5\) \(\texttt{xb}5\) 30 \(\texttt{xb}5\) \(\texttt{d}4\) 31 \(\texttt{b}2\) \(\texttt{e}6\) 32 \(\texttt{d}2\)

White is a plain pawn up for nothing and won in due course.
Early on, White grabbed a spatial advantage with his pawn advances, but this has resulted in a lot of potentially weak squares. In particular we note that the light squares have been compromised around the d4-e5 pawn phalanx. Black right now threatens to play ...\texttt{b5} forcing an exchange of bishops, something White clearly cannot allow.

13 \texttt{\textcolor{red}{b1}}! \texttt{\textcolor{blue}{b5}} 14 \texttt{\textcolor{blue}{d3}}

The exchange has been prevented for now.

14...\texttt{h5}!!

This is a fairly standard idea, but one worth noting. The idea is to remove the white pawn from g4 and thereby permanently take control over the light squares and place a knight ideally on the f5-square.

15 \texttt{\textcolor{red}{g5}} \texttt{\textcolor{blue}{f5}}

White’s position looks far from enviable: Black’s pieces are well-coordinated whereas White’s are pretty far from that and in addition his pawn-structure is somewhat weak. However, as we shall see, White isn’t without resources.

16 \texttt{\textcolor{red}{e3} g6}!!

Now why did he have to do that? Black is so optimistic about his prospects that he decides to make his temporary pawn sacrifice a permanent one. Better moves are 16...\texttt{\textcolor{blue}{d4}} and 16...\texttt{\textcolor{blue}{c6}}, but in any case White isn’t badly off.

17 \texttt{\textcolor{red}{h6}} \texttt{\textcolor{blue}{xg6}} 18 \texttt{\textcolor{red}{g1}} \texttt{\textcolor{blue}{c7}} 19 \texttt{\textcolor{red}{d1}}

An interesting decision: White decides to offer an exchange of the light-squared bishops. So why is the situation different now from before? Aside from the material factor, which isn’t unimportant, Black also has two weak pawns on e6 and g6, both on light squares and the exchange of the bishops increases the importance of this factor. Finally, Black’s initiative is reduced through exchanges. Note that the otherwise natural 19 \texttt{\textcolor{red}{c1}}!! lets Black escape with a draw after 19...\texttt{h7} 20 \texttt{\textcolor{red}{g2}} \texttt{\textcolor{red}{h4}} 21 \texttt{\textcolor{red}{g3}} \texttt{\textcolor{red}{f5}}. 19 \texttt{\textcolor{red}{c1}}!? can also be considered though.

19...\texttt{\textcolor{red}{xh2}} 20 \texttt{\textcolor{red}{xe2}} \texttt{\textcolor{red}{wh7}} 21 \texttt{\textcolor{blue}{f3}} g5?!

It’s easy to think that Black is doing well at this point, but things are already starting to go awry. Psakhis gives 21...\texttt{\textcolor{blue}{c6}} 22 \texttt{\textcolor{red}{g2}} \texttt{\textcolor{red}{h5}} as unclear, but after 23 \texttt{\textcolor{red}{g5}} \texttt{\textcolor{blue}{g7}} 24 \texttt{\textcolor{red}{ag1}}, White is better, and the same goes for 21...\texttt{\textcolor{red}{h3}} 22 \texttt{\textcolor{red}{\textcolor{blue}{c1}}} \texttt{\textcolor{blue}{c6}} 23 \texttt{\textcolor{blue}{f1}} (Psakhis).

22 \texttt{\textcolor{red}{g2}}

With all immediate threats parried, activating the rook with 22 \texttt{\textcolor{red}{a1}}? makes perfect sense and is possibly better than the game continuation.

22...\texttt{\textcolor{red}{h4}}?

Another wrong move by Black and his compensation for the pawn is now out of the window. Black has to maintain his initiative with 22...\texttt{g4}?!; e.g., 23 \texttt{\textcolor{red}{g5}} \texttt{\textcolor{blue}{g6}}, but even so White is better after 24 \texttt{\textcolor{red}{b5}}+ \texttt{\textcolor{blue}{c6}} 25 \texttt{\textcolor{red}{xg4}}. Note that 22...\texttt{\textcolor{red}{xc2}}? isn’t an option due to 23 \texttt{\textcolor{red}{xc2}} \texttt{\textcolor{blue}{d3}}+ 24 \texttt{\textcolor{red}{f3}}, when the rook covers the queen.

23 \texttt{\textcolor{red}{d1}}

Psakhis gave 23 \texttt{\textcolor{red}{b5}}+ \texttt{\textcolor{blue}{c6}} 24 \texttt{\textcolor{red}{h4}} \texttt{\textcolor{red}{xh4}} 25 \texttt{\textcolor{red}{d1}} as a better option, but White also has a fairly substantial advantage after the text-move.

23...\texttt{\textcolor{red}{xc2}}! 24 \texttt{\textcolor{red}{b5}}+ \texttt{\textcolor{blue}{c6}} 25 \texttt{\textcolor{red}{f3}}!

Now is not the time to get greedy; after 25 \texttt{\textcolor{red}{xg5}}? a6 26 \texttt{\textcolor{red}{b6}} \texttt{\textcolor{red}{c4}}, Black is better as the d4-pawn will fall and with that the one on e5 too.

25...\texttt{\textcolor{red}{h6}}? 26 \texttt{\textcolor{red}{xg5}} a6?!

This further mistake gives White a decisive advantage. Black wanted to remove the pin of the knight, but at the same time, he chases the white queen to a better square. The correct line is 26...\texttt{\textcolor{red}{\textcolor{blue}{g8}}} 27 \texttt{\textcolor{red}{\textcolor{blue}{ag1}}} 28 \texttt{\textcolor{red}{\textcolor{blue}{xe6}}} \texttt{\textcolor{red}{\textcolor{blue}{xg2}}} (White’s advantage is even bigger after 28...\texttt{\textcolor{red}{\textcolor{blue}{xf3}}} 29 \texttt{\textcolor{red}{\textcolor{blue}{b3}}} \texttt{\textcolor{red}{\textcolor{blue}{e4}}} 30 \texttt{\textcolor{red}{\textcolor{blue}{xc2}}}! \texttt{\textcolor{red}{\textcolor{blue}{xc2}}} 31 \texttt{\textcolor{red}{\textcolor{blue}{xg8}}+ \texttt{\textcolor{red}{\textcolor{blue}{d7}}} 32 \texttt{\textcolor{blue}{\textcolor{blue}{g7}}+ \texttt{\textcolor{red}{\textcolor{blue}{e7}}} 33 \texttt{\textcolor{red}{\textcolor{blue}{f7}}}, when the e7-knight will fall) 29 \texttt{\textcolor{red}{\textcolor{blue}{xg2}}} \texttt{\textcolor{red}{\textcolor{blue}{g4+}}} 30 \texttt{\textcolor{red}{\textcolor{blue}{f1}} \texttt{\textcolor{red}{\textcolor{blue}{h3+}}} 31 \texttt{\textcolor{red}{\textcolor{blue}{xe2}}} \texttt{\textcolor{red}{\textcolor{blue}{h6}}} 32 \texttt{\textcolor{red}{\textcolor{red}{d1}}} and Black has some, but not enough, compensation for the two pawns.

27 \texttt{\textcolor{red}{\textcolor{blue}{b3}}} 28 \texttt{\textcolor{red}{\textcolor{blue}{xg5}}} \texttt{\textcolor{red}{\textcolor{blue}{f5}}}

28...\texttt{\textcolor{red}{\textcolor{blue}{xd4}}} is well met by 29 \texttt{\textcolor{red}{\textcolor{blue}{a4+}}, winning.

29 \texttt{\textcolor{red}{\textcolor{blue}{xe6}}}
Black's queen has too many tasks.
29...\textit{e}7 30 \textit{g}7

In time-trouble, White misses the best move, 30 \textit{w}xd5, but the text-move will also do the job. With extra pawns and an attack, White soon won.

When one side has a permanent weakness such as an attackable isolated pawn, it is often a good idea for the opponent to exchange some of the pieces to reduce potential counterplay.

\begin{center}
\textbf{Cu. Hansen – Andersson}
\textit{Helsingør 1999}
\end{center}

\textbf{16 \textit{c}5!}

A simple yet strong move. Black needs his minor pieces to create counterplay. White's strategy is to exchange some pieces, but to keep enough on to maintain pressure against the isolated d-pawn.

\textbf{16...\textit{g}6!}

Black takes advantage of White weakening the f4-square.

\textbf{17 \textit{x}d6 \textit{w}xd6 18 \textit{e}e3 \textit{ce}5?!}

This decision doesn't seem right as White is allowed to exchange some pieces. A possible improvement is 18...\textit{f}4!? 19 \textit{w}xe2 and now 19...\textit{e}e6 keeps Black very much in the game, whereas 19...\textit{c}5 20 \textit{xe5 \textit{xe}5 21 \textit{f}f3 leaves White slightly better.

\textbf{19 \textit{xe}5 \textit{xe}5 20 \textit{xe}5}

Here White can consider centralizing his queen by 20 \textit{w}d4!? with pressure against both d-pawn and queenside.

\textbf{20...\textit{w}xe5?!}

Another slight slip by Black: Curt Hansen make some instructive comments at this point: “...Black should have chosen to play 20...\textit{xe}5 intending ...\textit{c}4. If White plays \textit{b}3 in response, the pawn on \textit{c}3 is as weak as the one on \textit{d}5. 21 \textit{w}g3 \textit{f}6 22 \textit{h}d1 \textit{c}4 gives Black appropriate counterplay. In the game Black instead chooses to place the knight on \textit{f}4 as \textit{h}3 has made \textit{g}3 impossible. Despite this minor white weakness, Black's attacking force is insufficient to counterbalance the weak d-pawn. In addition, Black has to pay attention to both the d-pawn as well as the loosely placed \textit{f}4-knight. Had Black chosen to transfer the knight to \textit{c}4, it would have been protected by the \textit{d}5-pawn and therefore the black set-up would have been more harmonic.”

\textbf{21 \textit{h}d1 \textit{f}4 22 \textit{e}3 \textit{g}5?}

Only at this point does the balance tip significantly in White's favour. Curt Hansen expected 22...\textit{e}e2+? 23 \textit{f}1 \textit{xe}3 24 \textit{xe}3 \textit{g}3+ and now 25 \textit{f}2 \textit{e}4+ 26 \textit{f}3 \textit{f}6 or 25 \textit{g}1 \textit{f}5; in both cases Black would be slightly worse in the endgame, but he rated Black's drawing chances as being reasonably good.

\textbf{23 \textit{f}3 \textit{d}8 24 \textit{d}4!}

This move doesn't look very obvious as it blocks the pawn, but this is only a temporary issue as the knight is on its way to its natural square on \textit{e}3 via either \textit{c}2 or \textit{f}5.

\textbf{24...\textit{f}6 25 \textit{f}5}

From here the knight can go back to \textit{e}3, but it also cuts off the queen from protecting the d-pawn.

\textbf{25...\textit{d}7 26 \textit{h}4!}

Another careful move; White shouldn't get tempted by 26 \textit{xd}5? due to 26...\textit{xd}5 27 \textit{xd}5 \textit{wc}1+ 28 \textit{h}2 \textit{w}f4+.

\textbf{26...\textit{f}4}

White also wins a pawn after 26...\textit{xd}8 27 \textit{xd}5 \textit{xd}5 28 \textit{xd}5 \textit{xd}5 29 \textit{e}7+.

\textbf{27 \textit{xf}4 \textit{xf}4 28 \textit{g}3 \textit{g}6 29 \textit{e}4 \textit{e}7 30 \textit{xe}7+ \textit{xe}7 31 \textit{cx}d5}

White has won a pawn and converts his material advantage in convincing style.

\textbf{31...\textit{f}6 32 \textit{g}2 \textit{f}7 33 \textit{f}3 \textit{e}8 34 \textit{d}3! \textit{d}8 35 \textit{e}3 \textit{c}7 36 \textit{e}3! \textit{d}7 37 \textit{c}4 \textit{e}7+ 38 \textit{f}5 \textit{e}2 39 \textit{h}3 \textit{xf}2+ 40 \textit{g}6 \textit{b}6 41 \textit{g}7 1-0}

With every exchange that you are considering, the first question you should ask yourself is whether the exchange will actually give you the desired result both short-term and long-term.
The answers may not always be very obvious, but making the consideration before offering or accepting to exchange will definitely enable you to avoid some mistakes.

14...\textbf{xf}3??

With this move, Black attempts to exploit the white queen's duty to protect the c4-bishop. You would think that ruining the pawn-structure around White's king would be to Black's advantage, but it turns out that it isn't the case. Why is that?

For starters, despite White's damaged pawn-structure, his king is quite safe from harm as Black's pieces are not in a position to attack him, and in addition the g3-bishop provides excellent cover. What Black gave up to ruin White's pawn-structure is on the other hand far more serious, as the light squares on the queenside have become very weak after the departure of the b7-bishop. It had previously been established that Black could equalize with 14...\textbf{h}5! 15 \textbf{a}6 \textbf{x}g3 16 \textbf{hx}g3 \textbf{x}a6 17 \textbf{w}xa6 \textbf{c}7, as in Najdorf-Hort, Lugano OL 1968.

15 \textbf{gx}f3 \textbf{h}5

Due to White's strong bishops, this move was given as an ‘only move’ by Belov, but Black may be able to do better with the prophylactic 15...\textbf{b}8?!, preventing any threats on a6 with the bishop.

16 \textbf{a}6 \textbf{x}g3 17 \textbf{hx}g3

The damage to White's kingside pawn-structure turned out to be very temporary.

17...\textbf{c}7

Belov gives 17...\textbf{c}6 18 \textbf{f}d1 \textbf{f}6 19 \textbf{g}2!, intending 19...\textbf{w}b8? 20 \textbf{d}5!, or 17...\textbf{a}8 18 \textbf{f}d1 \textbf{f}6 19 \textbf{e}5 \textbf{d}xe5 20 \textbf{b}7 \textbf{b}8 21 \textbf{xd}5, in both cases with a pleasant advantage for White.

18 \textbf{f}d1 \textbf{f}6 19 \textbf{b}5 \textbf{x}c1 20 \textbf{x}c1 \textbf{d}5

Despite the exchange of some pieces, White has a small but clear advantage mainly because Black cannot counter White on the c-file.

21 \textbf{x}a7 \textbf{b}4 22 \textbf{a}3! \textbf{a}8?!

Or 22...\textbf{x}a6 23 \textbf{c}6! \textbf{d}7 24 \textbf{w}xa6 and White is winning.

23 \textbf{c}7! (D)

An opportunity to penetrate on the 7th rank should rarely be passed up. Note that 23...\textbf{c}8? can be met with 23...\textbf{g}5!; after 24 \textbf{e}7+ \textbf{e}xe7 25 axb4 \textbf{f}6 Black has the better chances.

23...\textbf{d}5 24 \textbf{b}7!

The right square because 24 \textbf{d}7 is met with 24...\textbf{d}8! 25 \textbf{xd}8+ \textbf{xd}8 26 \textbf{w}b5 \textbf{f}6 and Black has some compensation for the pawn.

24...\textbf{f}6

If Black plays 24...\textbf{b}8, White has 25 \textbf{xb}8 26 \textbf{c}6 with a clearly better endgame.

25 \textbf{c}6 \textbf{c}8 26 \textbf{e}5 \textbf{xe}5 27 \textbf{dx}e5 \textbf{c}1+ 28 \textbf{g}2!!

28 \textbf{h}2?! is inaccurate for the reason that after 28...\textbf{w}d8 29 \textbf{d}3?? (29 \textbf{c}4!), Black wins with 29...\textbf{f}4! (Belov).

28...\textbf{w}d8 29 \textbf{d}3 \textbf{a}1?

Black was probably in time-trouble at this point as he otherwise wouldn't have missed White's combination to end the game. The lesser evil was 29...\textbf{e}7 30 \textbf{x}c7 \textbf{w}xc7 with an extra pawn in the endgame for White.

30 \textbf{e}4 \textbf{g}6 31 \textbf{x}f7! \textbf{xf}7 32 \textbf{x}g6+ \textbf{f}8 33 \textbf{w}h6+ 1-0

Black resigned due to 33...\textbf{e}8 (or 33...\textbf{g}8 34 \textbf{h}7+ \textbf{f}7 35 \textbf{g}6+ \textbf{e}7 36 \textbf{w}g7+ \textbf{e}8 37 \textbf{g}6+) 34 \textbf{b}5+, when he either gets mated or loses the queen.
Exercises

4.1 Black has just played 19...wc7, and is planning to free his position with ...c5. Evaluate the position and find the right way for White to proceed.

4.4 Consider the consequences and evaluate the position after an exchange of the bishops on f6. Would this be White’s best?

4.2 Who, if anybody, is better in this position, and why? Outline a plan for White.

4.5 Black has nearly managed to close up the position. Does White have any winning chances and how should he continue?

4.3 Evaluate this position and decide how Black should continue.

4.6 Identify the most important weaknesses in Black’s position, and put a plan together for White to exploit them.
5 Not Only Open Files – Working with Rooks

The rooks together with the queen fall into the category of the so-called major pieces, and share the common fate that they are not to be developed early on as they otherwise will be vulnerable to attacks by opposing pieces of lesser value. In the early part of my own ‘chessical’ education, I was taught and told that rooks belong on open files or behind passed pawns. Initially, that is a reasonably good guideline, but things are naturally far more complex than that.

The Use of a Rook

In this chapter I shall go over a number of different scenarios of how rooks can be used. The rooks on the surface appear to be fairly simple pieces as they are only able to move along ranks and files, but I want to convey to you that good understand of proper rook handling is an open door to many points on the scoreboard. There are good reasons why more books have been written about rook endings than any other type of ending. Similarly, pure major-piece endings with queen and rooks are extremely complicated and very difficult to handle. A good example is game 5 of the Schlechter-Lasker 1910 World Championship match, which already has been discussed in length in a number of books and articles by, amongst others, Dvoretsky and Romanovsky.

Open Files

Amongst lower-ranked players, an open file is often considered as something that more or less immediately needs to be controlled by a rook, and if possible, a doubling of the rooks follows, regardless of whether there are any entry points on the file or not. Since the opponent usually is of the same opinion, exchanges of one or more of the major pieces are likely to happen. The result is that the position can easily become unexciting. Therefore, before we move on to some practical examples, let’s establish some principles.

1) An open file is only useful if there are weaknesses or entry-squares on the file or in connection with the file.

2) Don’t open a file unless you stand to benefit from it.

3) Make sure your pieces are ready to exploit the opening of a file.

4) Control of an important open file can restrain your opponent, while control of an unimportant open file is at best a waste of time.

In our first example, we have an open file, which neither side has made an attempt to claim. However, this doesn’t mean that it isn’t important.

![Chessboard Diagram]

U. Andersson – Elwert

NBC Millennium e-mail 2000

How should this position be assessed? I think most people would consider this position to be advantageous for White: space advantage due to the pawn on e5, some initiative against Black’s kingside, and the possibility of the knight jumping from d2 to c4 to d6. But first of all,
Black’s position is rather solid and if he can manage to exchange some pieces, the e5-pawn will most likely end up becoming a weakness. Furthermore, Black has a majority on the queenside. Finally we have the open file, which Black is far more likely to claim due to the e1-rook being tied to e5, and Ad3 being prevented by ...Af5. Based on these considerations, Black’s next move is logical.

23...Ad8 24 Ac3

Unfortunately for White, the idea of 24 Ac4 doesn’t work here due to 24...Ab5, when 25 Ad6 is prevented thanks to 25...Ax6.

24...Af5

An instructive decision: White’s initiative is reduced through exchanges. If White now opts for 25 Axf5, then 25...Ad2 will leave Black with the better game (e.g., 26 Ac2 Ae8 27 Ad2 Ac2 28 b3 Ad8), so White is more or less forced to let the bishops come off the board.

25 Ae1

At this point, White offered a draw, but Black correctly declined. The control of the d-file should leave him with the better chances if he is able to activate his pieces.

25...Ax1b 26 Ab1 Ae6!

With this and the next few moves, Black enhances his control over the d-file and the overall pressure on White’s position.

27 Ac3 Ag6 28 Ae4 Ad4!

Black offers a further exchange, while preparing to double on the d-file. Neither possibility is particularly attractive for White.

29 f4

White obviously cannot go for 29 Ad4 due to 29...cx4, when the e-pawn will fall shortly. White instead tries to keep it covered, only to weaken his kingside further.

29...Ad8 30 Ae2

White cannot allow Black to penetrate on the second rank.

30...h5!

This not only stops White’s pawns from rolling forward, but also helps to isolate White’s advanced e- and f-pawns.

31 Af2 Ac4 32 Ac4 Ad4!

The most accurate continuation. In Chess-Mail, Elwert illustrates why 32...Axf2 is wrong with the following long line: 33 f5 Ac5 34 Ac5 Ad1+ 35 Ac2 Axb1 36 Ac2! Ah1+ (White also holds the balance after 36...Af8 37 f6! Ah1+ 38 Ac3 Ac6 39 fxg7+ Acg7 40 Ac6+) 37 Ac3 Ac3+ 38 Ac3 h4+ 39 Ac2 Ac2 40 Ac7 f6 41 Ac8+ Ah7 42 Ac5 Ac5 43 Ac8+ with a perpetual check.

33 Ac1?

This allows a little combination that takes advantage of White’s multitude of positional weaknesses. White has other moves at his disposal but none that solves his problems. Elwert offers the following analysis as proof:

a) 33 Ac3 Ac2a.

b) 33 Ac3!? Ac7+ (or 33...Ac7+ 34 Ac2 Ac2 35 Ac3 (35 Ac2 is met with 35...Ad7) 35...Ac7 (35...h4??) 36 f4 Ac5 37 Ac5 Ac5 38 f6 Ac6 39 fxg7 Acg7, with a clear plus for Black.

33...Axf4! 34 Ac4

Against 34 Ac5, Black simply continues 34...Ac5 35 Ac3 Ac2+ 36 Ac2 (or 36 Ac2 Ac2 37 Ac4 cxd4 =++) 36...Ac3+ 37 Ac1 Ac1, and White can throw in the towel.

34 Ac5 0-1

White resigned due to 35 g3 h4!; e.g., 36 Ac4 f5, when his position is disintegrating.

The e-file has been opened, and so far Black has made the only attempt to take control over it. It is, however, noteworthy how quickly White manages to mobilize his forces, while Black doesn’t have a sufficient answer.

17 Ac5 Ac6 18 Ac7 Ac7 19 c5

Black’s bishop on b7 is quite bad, and for obvious reasons, White isn’t interested in any change in that situation. The disparity in strength between White’s and Black’s minor pieces is a
major factor in White winning this game with such ease.

19...\(\text{g6}\) 20 \(\text{d3}\) f5

Ugly, but necessary. The dark squares are permanently weakened, enhancing the strength of White’s dark-squared bishop. White now attempts to provoke further weaknesses in Black’s camp.

21 \(\text{b5}\)! a6 22 \(\text{a4}\) b5 23 \(\text{b3}\) \(\text{xd4}\) 24 \(\text{xd4}\) \(\text{xg5}\)

Black’s little combination, 23...\(\text{xd4}\), resulted in the exchange of some pieces, most notably White’s strong bishop on g5. However, another result is that Black’s remaining pieces are hopelessly uncoordinated.

25 \(\text{e5}\)??

A simple yet beautiful move, after which White takes complete control over the e-file.

It should be noted that 25 \(\text{xd5}\) is also strong; e.g., 25...\(\text{xd5}\) 26 \(\text{xd5}\) \(\text{h8}\) 27 \(\text{c6}\), and Black’s lack of coordination is causing him severe trouble: 27...\(\text{d8}\) 28 b4 \(\text{xe1}\) 29 \(\text{xe1}\), and White dominates. This option may actually be somewhat better than the game continuation due to Black’s possible defence on move 27.

25...c6 26 \(\text{ae1}\) \(\text{xe5}\) 27 \(\text{xe5}\) \(\text{f8}\)??

It’s remarkable that this natural-looking move is a mistake, but 27...\(\text{g6}\)! is much stronger; e.g., 28 \(\text{c7}\)? \(\text{e8}\)!. White’s best is probably 28 \(\text{c2}\) with good compensation for the pawn.

28 \(\text{e6}\)!

Once again 28 \(\text{c7}\)? is a mistake, this time on account of 28...\(\text{d2}\). When you are dominating your opponent, take the time needed to ensure that he doesn’t get any unnecessary counterplay.

28...\(\text{f7}\) 29 \(\text{e8}\) \(\text{f8}\) 30 \(\text{e6}\) \(\text{f7}\) 31 \(\text{d6}\)!

Another powerful shot that exploits Black’s weak back rank, and at the same counteracts Black’s possible counterplay.

31...\(\text{h6}\) 32 \(\text{e8}\) \(\text{h7}\) 33 \(\text{f4}\) \(\text{g4}\)

Black is completely tied down, and as much as he would like it, there is no counterplay anywhere. Wells gives 33...\(\text{h4}\) 34 \(\text{e6}\) \(\text{h5}\) 35 \(\text{h3}\) and 33...\(\text{f6}\) 34 \(\text{xf6}\) \(\text{xf6}\) 35 \(\text{e7}\) \(\text{a8}\) 36 \(\text{c2}\) as illustrations of Black’s situation.

34 \(\text{h3}\) \(\text{g3}\) 35 \(\text{e6}\)

The penetration of the 8th rank is nearing completion, and the end of the game is close.

35...\(\text{f6}\) 36 \(\text{g8}\) 36 \(\text{g6}\) 37 \(\text{e7}\) \(\text{h5}\) 38 \(\text{d1}\) \(\text{h4}\) 39 \(\text{xg7}\) 1-0

Casper – Stangl
Bundeshiga 2001/2

In this case Black has already put his rook on the c-file in anticipation of it being opened as a natural consequence of the preceding moves. However, as Wells points out in his excellent column in ChessBase Magazine, this preemptive occupation may well be premature due to the fact that Black has obligated himself to exchange rooks if White so offers. This may cause him further problems when the lack of development of his remaining pieces will force him to make significant positional concessions to stay in the game.

8 \(\text{d4}\) \(\text{cxd4}\) 9 \(\text{cxd4}\) \(\text{d5}\) 10 \(\text{e5}\) \(\text{e4}\) 11 \(\text{bd2}\) \(\text{xd2}\) 12 \(\text{xd2}\)

Note how Black’s developed pieces are being exchanged, while White is developing his pieces.

12...\(\text{b6}\)??

The more natural 12...\(\text{e7}\) runs into 13 \(\text{a4}\), but this is probably to be preferred over the game continuation, even though after 13...\(\text{a5}\)!!? \(\text{b6}\) 15 \(\text{b4}\) \(\text{xb4}\) 16 \(\text{xb4}\) \(\text{e7}\) 17 \(\text{a4}\) \(\text{a5}\) 18 \(\text{a3}\)! White has a solid positional advantage thanks to the weak light squares on Black’s queenside.

13 \(\text{c1}\) ! \(\text{c6}\)

With his kingside largely undeveloped, Black is more or less forced to damage his own pawn-structure in this fashion.

14 \(\text{xc6}\) \(\text{bxc6}\)

14...\(\text{xc6}\) isn’t any better; e.g., 15 \(\text{b3}\) \(\text{b6}\) 16 \(\text{c1}\) \(\text{c4}\) 17 \(\text{b4}\), and Black is in trouble.
15 $\text{wa}4$ $\text{e}7$

If Black could get $...c5$ in, he wouldn’t be so badly off, but on this occasion 15...c5 runs into 16 $\text{xc}1$ a6 17 $\text{d}xe5$ $\text{xc}5$ 18 $\text{b}4!$, and the game is over.

16 $\text{xc}1$ $\text{b}8$

And now instead of 17 $\text{c}3?!$, as played in the game, Wells gives the following line as White’s best, as Black will not have the opportunity to play $...c5$ as he did in the game: 17 $\text{b}3!$ h6 (17...0-0?! 18 $\text{g}5!$ is even more painful; e.g., 18...f6 19 $\text{f}4$ fxe5 20 $\text{xe}5$) 18 $\text{e}1!$ 0-0 19 $\text{d}3$ with a small but clear advantage for White.

In the beginning of this section I mentioned a scenario where both sides were eager to control an open file, with the inevitable result that the major pieces were exchanged. A similar strategy can be employed if your opponent has the initiative, or a space advantage. Through exchanges of the rooks, one side can decrease the size of the opponent’s initiative.

![Diagram](image)

M. Gurevich – Yusupov
Bundesliga 2001/2

We note that White has more space as well as the bishop-pair and all of his pieces are harmoniously developed. At the present time it is only the weakling on a3 that deducts from the overall impression. Black has to address the question of the open c-file as well as the looming attack that White is building against his king.

16...$\text{xf}8$ 17 e5 $\text{xf}3!$

This defensive exchange is not only noteworthy, it is necessary, as 17...$\text{d}5$? 18 $\text{d}2$ $\text{xa}3$ runs into 19 $\text{xh}7+$! $\text{xh}7$ 20 $\text{g}5+$ $\text{g}6$ (or 20...$\text{g}8$ 21 $\text{h}5$, and White wins) 21 $\text{e}4+$ f5 22 exf6+ $\text{xf}6$ 23 $\text{xe}6$#. Now Black gets to stabilize the position somewhat.

18 $\text{xf}3$ $\text{d}5$ 19 $\text{e}4$ $\text{f}8$ 20 $\text{d}3$ $\text{ab}8$ 21 $\text{d}2$ $\text{a}4$ 22 $\text{f}4$

Black has a solid position, but he has to be careful: if White gets to advance his $f$-pawn further, Black’s control over $d5$ may be in jeopardy. What Black plays now appears at first glance against all logic.

22...$\text{xc}1$! 23 $\text{xe}1$ $\text{d}8$!

The idea behind the previous move: Black voluntarily abandons the c-file to retain control over the d5-square and apply pressure against White’s d-pawn. As we have noted before, an open file is only of value if you have an entry-square, and right now the knight on d5 controls the c7-square.

Now instead of 24 $\text{c}4?$ as played by White in the game, he should have opted for 24 $\text{xd}5$! $\text{xd}5$ 25 $\text{b}4$ $\text{d}8$ 26 $\text{c}7$ with chances for both sides.

The next example carries a similar idea, but rather than using the manoeuvre defensively, White uses it to prevent an exchange that would have helped Black’s defensive task.

![Diagram](image)

Grischuk – Kasimdzhanov
Wijk aan Zee 2002

This pawn-structure with an isolated d-pawn for Black isn’t altogether untypical for the Chigorin Variation of the Ruy Lopez. Normally Black has sufficient counterplay to compensate for this imbalance, and often will be able to advance it, but thanks to the queen and c2-bishop pointing in the direction of Black’s king, this isn’t an option here. However, if Black manages to exchange both sets of rooks, he can take
time to set up a solid position on the kingside while getting his counterplay organized. At this point, White first has to address the threat against his a-pawn.

21 \( \text{h1 \text{xc1}} \) 22 \( \text{xc1 \text{c8}} \)

Black sticks to the plan of exchanging the rooks, and with the c-file being the only completely open file, it may look like he has good chances of achieving his goal.

23 \( \text{d4!} \)

White sidesteps the challenge and leaves the open file. In this case the c-file isn’t of that much use to Black, as he doesn’t have any entry-squares available, and hence his control of the file is of no importance. It’s noteworthy that in his annotations in *Informator*, Grishchuk gives the move without any comment; to him there aren’t any alternatives available.

After the text-move, the open file and the issue of the rooks is relatively minor compared to the issue of the remaining pieces; a comparison between White’s well-coordinated pieces and Black’s considerably less so counterparts unequivocally favours White. Nonetheless it is rather amazing how effortlessly White’s attack on the kingside slams through.

23...\( \text{wa3} \)

On 23...\( \text{g5} \), Grishchuk gives 24 e5 g6 25 exd6 \( \text{d8} \) 26 \( \text{g3} \) b4 27 \( \text{e5!} \) f6 28 \( \text{b2} \), and if Black now attempts to remove the d-pawn with 28...\( \text{c5} \), his position quickly falls apart: 29 h4 \( \text{h6} \) 30 \( \text{xg6!} \) hxg6 31 \( \text{xg6+} \) \( \text{g7} \) 32 \( \text{d7} \) +.

24 \( \text{wd2} \)

Black still wants to exchange rooks to release some of the pressure on his position. White obviously will not give him that opportunity.

24...\( \text{d8} \) 25 \( \text{e3} \) \( \text{a5} \)

Note that 25...\( \text{a5} \) 26 \( \text{d3} \) \( \text{c1} \)? is answered with 27 \( \text{c2} \), trapping the queen.

26 \( \text{d3} \) b4?!

If Black attempts to repeat the position with 26...\( \text{a3} \), White will play 27 \( \text{c2} \) \( \text{a5} \) 28 \( \text{g3} \) with a clear advantage (Grishchuk). However, this was Black’s best try; now the onslaught on Black’s kingside structure begins.

27 f4 \( \text{f8} \) 28 f5 \( \text{d7} \) 29 \( \text{c4} \) \( \text{b5} \) 30 \( \text{g3} \) \( \text{f6} \) 31 \( \text{xf6} \) gxf6 32 \( \text{h1} \)

White has a decisive positional advantage. We leave the game at this point, since White now proceeded to throw his advantage away but still won in the mutual time-scramble.

**The Right Rook?**

Very often we see comments about either White or Black using the wrong rook on an open or semi-open file. Despite the numerous times it is mentioned, it is rarely a topic in instructional manuals or works about positional chess. However, in *Secrets of Chess Intuition* by Beliavsky and Mikhailchisn (B&M), it is discussed over the course of six pages, hardly an exhaustive look into this dilemma that has given so many players so many headaches over the years.

I too will not spend too much time or space on the topic, as I find that in 90% of the cases where a player uses the wrong rook or isn’t sure if he is using the right rook, it is merely because he hasn’t taken enough time to look deeply enough at the position to appreciate what he should be aiming for and what his opponent is up to. B&M call it intuition, which may be the case in some very rare instances, but usually the answers are right in front of you on the board if you know how to look.

So for reason of clarification, I shall start out with some examples that B&M used.

![Kasparov – I. Sokolov
Sarajevo 1999](image)

This is the first example given by Beliavsky and Mikhailchisn, and in my opinion they get it wrong, though not in their initial evaluation of the position, which is favourable for White, but I think they have simply misjudged Kasparov’s idea.

16 \( \text{ac1} \)!
Given ‘?’ by B&M, who instead write as follows: “16...\[f8\] was correct, not allowing Black play against the a4-pawn. The game could continue 16...\[f8\] 17...\[b5\] g5 18...\[xd7\] \[xd7\] 19 \[xa5\] \[a8\] 20 \[xc5\] \[xc5\] 21...\[b3\], with an extra pawn for White.” While this option certainly is quite good for White, the moves offered for Black are hardly model play. However, the observation regarding the a-pawn is open for discussion. White can keep one rook defending, but I don’t think that Kasparov saw it to be dynamically necessary to do that. If Black plays as he does in the game, taking on a4 with the queen, White will be able to win back the a-pawn after \[a1\] and then penetrate Black’s position via the a-file. As we shall see, this is not the only point on which I disagree with their evaluation of the situation.

16...\[f8\]

If your opponent plays a move like this, it is a clear indication that something has gone quite wrong. Black would obviously prefer to castle, but the weakness that Black has created with ...h6 earlier prohibits this on account of \[d3\]. With 16...\[f8\], Black covers the g-pawn, which White otherwise could consider attacking with \[g4\] at some point. The flaw with Black’s move is that the h8-rook will not get into play until Black has advanced his g-pawn and played ...\[g7\].

17...\[b5\] \[a8\]?

B&M mention that Kasparov suggested the move 17...g5?!, but don’t provide any further details. I think that if White resists the temptation of playing 18...\[xa5\], which is answered by 18...\[xa5\] 19...\[xd7\] \[c7\] 20...\[b5\] \[c3\] 21 \[d3\] \[b5\] 22...\[b5\] \[c4\]! 23...\[c4\] \[b5\] with excellent play for Black, and instead opts for the sensible 18...\[fe1\], he has clearly the better chances. Hubner thinks that 17...\[c6\] is Black best option, offering 18...\[c6\] \[c6\] 19...\[c5\] \[c5\] 20...\[c5\] \[c5\] 21...\[c4\] \[g6\] 22...\[c1\] \[c4\] 23...\[c4\] \[g7\] to support his opinion, although the final position looks quite good for White. However, White may be able to improve with 21...\[c5\]! \[c5\] 22...\[c1\], intending to meet 22...\[b6\] with 23...\[c3\] \[xe3\] 24...\[c8\] \[e7\] 25...\[h8\] or 22...\[b6\] with 23...\[d7\] 24...\[b3\] in both cases with a solid plus for White.

18...\[d3\] g5 19...\[xd7\] \[xd7\] 20...\[c5\] \[a4\] 21...\[d4\]?

This is where Kasparov throws his advantage away, not before. B&M cite 21...\[al\] \[c6\] 22...\[xa5\] \[f4\] 23...\[xf4\] \[gxf4\] “with strong counterplay.” This, however, is unconvincing in the light of 24...\[xa1\] \[g8\] 25...\[b4\] \[c4\] 26...\[xe4\] \[xe4\] 27...\[c1\] with an extra pawn for White; the pawn on b4 will soon also be ripe to be picked up.

21...\[e8\] 22...\[c6\] \[c6\] 23...\[c6\] \[c6\] 24...\[xa5\] \[c1\] 25...\[g7\]

Black is now doing fine, which is also the conclusion that B&M drew, so I shall move on to the next example.

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Svidler – Ivanchuk
Dortmund 1998

From the first glance at this position, it should be quite clear that White has a significant advantage: the black kingside is already facing problems and on the queenside he is likely to face similar problems.

24...\[d1\]!

Here B&M write “Only a great player could sense that the al-rook is prepared for a different role.” Huh? It ought to be quite clear that one of White’s better plans consists of b4 followed by either a4 or \[b3\] followed by c4. If you are familiar with the Ruy Lopez, this shouldn’t come as a surprise.

24...\[c6\]

The only move according to Svidler, who annotated the game in Informator. On 24...\[c6\], which is mentioned by B&M, Svidler gives a lengthy piece of analysis starting with 25...\[g5\]! (B&M only mention 25...\[xf6\], 25...\[d2\] and 25...\[e3\] 25...\[g5\] 26...\[f5\] \[d7\] 27...\[g3\]!, and Black is in severe trouble.

25...\[b4\] \[a4\] 26...\[b3\]
As Black is unable to capitalize on the weak c3-pawn, White has time to deploy the bishop to this more attractive diagonal. This was one of the ideas behind 25 b4!.

26...\texttt{\texttildelow e6}

On 26..\texttt{x}c3, Svidler gives 27 \texttt{xf7} \texttt{xf3}
28 \texttt{x}d8 \texttt{xb3} 29 axb3 \texttt{x}d8 30 bxa4 bxa4 31
\texttt{xf6} \texttt{x}f6 32 \texttt{x}d6 \texttt{e}7 33 \texttt{d}5 ±.

27 \texttt{c4}?

This leads to some hair-raising complications, which apparently favour White, but White could also have considered 27 \texttt{xa4}! bxa4 28 \texttt{h}f5! (Svidler only mentions 28 \texttt{gf5?} in his analysis), when Black is facing considerable problems; e.g., 28...\texttt{gx}f5 29 \texttt{h}6+ \texttt{g}8 30 \texttt{xf5} (with the nasty threat of \texttt{w}g3+) 30...\texttt{xf}5 31 exf5 and now with both \texttt{w}xc6 and \texttt{w}g3+ in the air, Black may consider resigning.

27...\texttt{xe}4

Or 27...\texttt{b}2 28 exb5 axb5 29 \texttt{d}c1 ± (Svidler).

28 \texttt{xa}4 \texttt{b}xa4 29 \texttt{ac}1 \texttt{d}5

On 29...\texttt{b}5, Svidler's main line runs 30
\texttt{xc}6 \texttt{xc}6 31 \texttt{h}f5! \texttt{gf}5 32 \texttt{xf}5 \texttt{g}8 33
\texttt{xe}7+ \texttt{e}7 34 \texttt{d}6 \texttt{d}7 35 \texttt{w}g4 \texttt{f}6 36
\texttt{xe}7 \texttt{xe}7 37 \texttt{xd}7+ \texttt{xd}7 38 \texttt{g}7+ \texttt{d}6 39
\texttt{w}x\texttt{g}8 ±.

30 \texttt{h}f5! \texttt{gf}5?

If Black opts for 30...\texttt{d}4, Svidler gives 31
\texttt{xc}4 \texttt{xc}4 32 \texttt{xe}7 \texttt{w}e7 33 \texttt{xf}6 \texttt{e}6 34
\texttt{g}5 with a clear advantage, as 34...\texttt{xb}4? 35
\texttt{w}3 \texttt{d}6 36 \texttt{d}2 \texttt{b}6 37 \texttt{wd}6+ \texttt{d}6 38
\texttt{d}4 wins for White.

Now instead of 31 \texttt{xf}5??, as played by Svidler, which allows 31...\texttt{xe}4! 32 \texttt{h}6+ \texttt{h}6! (Ivanchuk played 32...\texttt{g}8??) 33 \texttt{hx}h6
\texttt{g}5 34 \texttt{w}f5 \texttt{wb}6, White should play 31 \texttt{h}6+ \texttt{g}8 32 \texttt{xf}5 \texttt{xe}4 33 \texttt{xc}4, which was the position reached in the game, and in which Black chose to resign. This looks somewhat premature, but after 33...\texttt{xc}4 34 \texttt{xd}5! \texttt{g}5 35
\texttt{xd}8 \texttt{xd}8 36 \texttt{x}g5 \texttt{dx}5 37 \texttt{w}e3! (Wedberg; Svidler only mentions 37 \texttt{w}h5 \texttt{f}6 38 \texttt{w}h6 with a clear plus for White) 37...\texttt{f}6 38 \texttt{g}7 \texttt{f}7 39 \texttt{w}e7 White wins according to Wedberg.

\section*{Pressure on a Closed File}

One of the most effective ways of utilizing a rook is to place it on a file that is either closed or semi-closed, but can be opened. The threat to open the file or to put pressure on the pawns and pieces on the particular file may force the opponent to make concessions that he may not otherwise have made.

15...\texttt{xf}8

A first glance, this doesn't look like the most obvious move, so let's look a little closer to find the motivation that lies behind it.

White's idea will normally be to route his d2-knight via f1 to either e3 or g3. The c1-bishop can be deployed to e3 to force the queen to a less attractive square. White can choose to enhance his pressure on the queenside or attempt to play against the backward pawn on d6. At the present time Black isn't able to play...b4, to put pressure on the white queenside, as it allows \texttt{c}4.

16 \texttt{axb}5

If White now plays 16 \texttt{f}1, Black can proceed with 16...b4, putting pressure on White's queenside. Therefore, lacking a better plan, White seeks some relief through exchanges.

16...\texttt{axb}5 17 \texttt{xa}8 \texttt{xa}8

Note that Black now has won the a-file and still maintains the option of playing...b4 at a later time.

18 \texttt{f}1 \texttt{d}8

Rubinstein decides to manoeuvre his pieces a bit before proceeding with...b4, but even at this point, 18...b4 could be considered.

19 \texttt{e}3 \texttt{d}6 20 \texttt{f}5

The alternative is 20 \texttt{d}5, which I believe is better, although after 20...\texttt{xd}5 21 \texttt{exd}5 \texttt{f}8 Black is doing fine; e.g., 22 \texttt{d}4 is answered with the ever-looming 22...b4.
20...\textbf{f8} 21 \textbf{h2}

White continues with his plan of a kingside attack, and so Black’s next move shouldn’t come as a surprise to you.

21...\textbf{b4} 22 \textbf{cxb4}

Black is fine after 22 \textbf{g4} \textbf{xg4} 23 \textbf{xg4} g6!, when White’s attack doesn’t get much further, while Black’s continues on the queenside.

22...\textbf{xb4} 23 \textbf{f1}?! 

23 \textbf{g4} was the correct continuation. When White backs off from his game-plan and extracts no concessions from Black, the battle is going downhill.

23...g6! 24 \textbf{h6+} \textbf{hxh6} 25 \textbf{xh6} \textbf{d4}

Black gave up his dark-squared bishop and in return obtained the d4-square for his knight.

26 \textbf{xd4}

This is a further indication that White is going down: an exchange is given up without any proper compensation.

26...\textbf{xd4} 27 \textbf{f3} \textbf{h5} 28 \textbf{e3} \textbf{e6} 29 \textbf{g4} \textbf{xg4} 30 \textbf{hxg4} \textbf{f4} 31 g3

And finally there is time for the rook that opened the battle to enter with decisive force.

31...\textbf{a1}+ 32 \textbf{h2} \textbf{f1} 0-1

\textbf{The Seventh and Eighth Rank}

Nimzowitsch wrote at length about the strength of an invasion of either of these two ranks. Why is that? The eighth rank obviously has something to do with king-safety issues. If one side can penetrate on the back rank, your king is bound to leave the protected shelter behind the pawns, and the same goes for the other pieces on the back rank. Numerous combinations are based on the theme of a weak back rank. The seventh rank is a little more complicated, but not that much if you think logically about it. From the seventh rank a rook can attack pawns and pieces from the side, and the defending side has to keep an eye on both defending the pawns and pieces on the seventh rank while still keeping the eighth rank in mind.

Nimzowitsch himself provided a good example in \textit{Chess Praxis} (see following diagram):

Black overall has a little more space and somewhat more active pieces, but White’s position looks generally acceptable. In regards to the pawn-structure, we note that Black has hanging pawns on c5 and d5, while he may be able to put pressure on the b-file, by either advancing the a-pawn to a4 or the c-pawn to c4. Black cannot afford to postpone his active plans too long.

22...a5 23 \textbf{d2} c4!?

This was the idea behind Black’s 22nd move, which now prevents White from playing b4. However, Nimzowitsch points out that 23...\textbf{d7} followed by ...\textbf{bd8} and ...a4 may have been better, intending to meet bxa4 with ...\textbf{c4} and penetration on the b-file.

24 \textbf{bxc4}

White can be forgiven for not fancying the look of something like 24 \textbf{ad1} \textbf{d3} 25 \textbf{d4} \textbf{d6}, but the text-move merely allows Black to penetrate on the b-file without interference.

24...\textbf{xc4}!

Taking charge of the b2-square.

25 \textbf{d3} a4!

Black’s idea is to push the pawn to a3 with complete control over b2 and thereby access to the seventh rank.

26 \textbf{d2}?! \textbf{xe3}!

White should have prevented this by playing 26 \textbf{d4}, which is quite pleasant for Black after 26...\textbf{e5}. White couldn’t take on a4 with the queen due to the ...\textbf{b2} knight fork.

27 \textbf{fxe3}

Normally not a move White would be happy to make, but 27 \textbf{xe3} d4 28 \textbf{d3} \textbf{b4} (Nimzowitsch) 29 c4 \textbf{c3} is even worse than the game continuation.

27...\textbf{a7}?! 

Aesthetically a nice move, protecting the a-pawn and attacking along the a7-g1 diagonal, but 27...a3 is probably just better; e.g., 28 \textbf{b1}
\[ \text{Karpov – Uhlmann} \]

**Madrid 1973**

Here Black has an isolated pawn, but this is not as important as the fact that it is on a light square. At present there is only one open file on the board, the e-file, which Black temporarily has blocked with his bishop on c4. If White can force the bishop away, he will gain access to the seventh rank via e7, as White's bishop on b5 prevents Black from defending from both e8 and d7. The only thing White has to prevent is

Another inaccuracy in time-trouble, but due to White's unsafe king and Black's access to the seventh and eighth ranks, Black should continue to have good winning chances in the long run. Nimzowitsch gives 41...\textbf{h7} as better, based on the following line: 42...\textbf{g2} (42...\textbf{xf5}+ loses to 42...\textbf{xf5} 43...\textbf{xf5} 43...\textbf{xa2} 44...\textbf{xd5} 46...\textbf{b2}, when the a-pawn cannot be stopped) 42...\textbf{g6} 43...\textbf{g1} \textbf{e4}, and Black wins in a similar fashion to the game.

42...\textbf{g2} 46...\textbf{f4}!? White is playing as if he is already lost; 43...\textbf{g4}!? is a better attempt at keeping the pot boiling, although Black should have good winning chances after 43...\textbf{e4} 44...\textbf{xf5} 45...\textbf{g3} 46...\textbf{b2}.

43...\textbf{e4}+! 44...\textbf{xe4} dxe4

Now the win is fairly simple.

45...\textbf{e2} 46...\textbf{f2} 46...\textbf{e6} 47...\textbf{d2} 48...\textbf{e2} 49...\textbf{d1} 50...\textbf{e2} f4!

This breakthrough guarantees the win.

51...\textbf{xf4} 52...\textbf{c5}+ 53...\textbf{d6} 54...\textbf{xf4} 55...\textbf{e4} 56...\textbf{e2} 57...\textbf{e2} 58...\textbf{e3} a1\textbf{w}

Black won shortly.
Black transferring his bishop back to e6 via f5 before playing f3.

22 g4!

This does exactly what White needs: takes away the f5-square from Black’s bishop and therefore prepares to play f3 with penetration to the seventh rank.

22...\textit{Qxd4}?!  

This makes it somewhat easier for White, because the bishop now stands unopposed. In the game continuation, please note the difference in strength between White’s and Black’s bishops. The best move for Black is 22...\textit{Qac8}, when it is still a game.

23 \textit{Qxd4} \textit{Qxd4} 24 \textit{cxd4} \textit{Qac8} 25 f3 \textit{Qg6} 26 \textit{Qe7}  

This is a good time to evaluate the progress that has been made. White has penetrated on the seventh rank and pacified Black’s bishop. The pawn on b7 (or b6) is likely to fall, and once both white rooks are on the seventh, White can start attacking Black’s king. Karpov makes this look very easy.

26...b6 27 \textit{Qae1} h6 28 \textit{Qb7} \textit{Qd6}  

In case Black tries 28...\textit{Qc2}, then after 29 \textit{Qe2} \textit{Qxe2} 30 \textit{Qxe2} \textit{Qd6} 31 \textit{Qb5} the white king will enter the battle unopposed.

29 \textit{Qee7} h5  

The extent of Black’s problems is illustrated well in the following line: 29...\textit{Qc2} 30 \textit{Qb8}+ \textit{Qh7} 31 \textit{Qee8} \textit{Qc1}+ 32 \textit{Qh2} \textit{Qb1} 33 f4 \textit{Qe4} (or 33...f5 34 \textit{Qh8}+ \textit{Qg6} 35 \textit{Qfb8} followed by \textit{Qe8}#) 34 f5 g6 35 f6 g5 36 \textit{Qg8} \textit{Qxf6} 37 \textit{Qh8}+ \textit{Qg7} 38 \textit{Qbg8}# (Uhlmann/Schmidt).

30 gxf5 \textit{Qxh5} 31 g4! \textit{Qg6} 32 f4 \textit{Qc1}+ 33 \textit{Qf2} \textit{Qc2}+ 34 \textit{Qe3} \textit{Qe4}  

Unfortunately for Black, the endgame after 34...\textit{Qc6}+ 35 \textit{Qxe6} fxe6 36 \textit{Qxa7} is completely hopeless for him.

35 \textit{Qxf7} \textit{Qg6} 36 g5 \textit{Qh7} 37 \textit{Qfe7} \textit{Qxb2} 38 \textit{Qxe8}  

The dominant bishop makes its entry, and decides the game once and for all.

38...\textit{Qb3}+ 39 \textit{Qe2} \textit{Qb2}+ 40 \textit{Qe1} \textit{Qd6} 41 \textit{Qxg7}+ \textit{Qh8} 42 \textit{Qge7} 1-0  

The position in the following diagram is quite interesting, when looking at the imbalances: the open e-file, White’s doubled c-pawns and isolated a-pawn, the semi-open b-file, Black’s structural weaknesses on the light squares around the king, the dark squares in the centre, and the two restricted bishops behind the pawns. My first impression is that White must have the better chances as the weaknesses in Black’s position are more significant than those in White position, and White’s pieces have more potential of becoming active.

20 \textit{Qb1}!  

In \textit{Informator}, Leko went as far as awarding this move a ‘!!’, which I think is a little too much, but the idea is that White wants to tie the black rook to the defence of this weak pawn rather than contend for the e-file. With White’s rook having nothing better to do, this makes perfect sense. White can then proceed to place his pieces on better squares.

20...\textit{Qb8}  

Note that 20...b6 weakens the light squares too much and is well met by 21 \textit{Qb5}.

21 \textit{Qd3}!  

Black’s e8-rook is just about his only active piece and therefore it makes sense for White to exchange it. In addition, from d3 the bishop takes a look at the f5-pawn and the light squares in general.

21...\textit{Qxe1}+ 22 \textit{Qxe1} \textit{Qd7} 23 \textit{Qf4}  

White’s pieces have already found better homes on more active squares – compare this position to the diagram position. White has made significant progress, while Black has been limited to waiting for White. Now a solid move like 23...\textit{Qh7} is met with the restrictive 24 h4, which clearly isn’t to the taste of someone like Grischuk, but patience is needed at this point.

23...\textit{Qe8}?!
Leaving the b-pawn to its own devices isn’t the end of the problems; it’s the beginning of even bigger problems to come. Also the c-file is of little or no importance at this point as neither side has any entry-squares available.

24 \textit{\textbf{Wd2}} g5 25 \textit{\textbf{Exb7!}}

Oops! White accepts the invitation to enter the seventh rank without hesitation.

25...\textit{\textbf{Ec8}}

On 25...\textit{\textbf{gxg4}}, Leko gives 26 \textit{\textbf{Wxf4}} \textit{\textbf{Ag5}} (or 26...\textit{\textbf{a6}} 27 \textit{\textbf{Wxh6+ Ac7}} 28 \textit{\textbf{b5}}, and White wins) 27 \textit{\textbf{Wxc7}} \textit{\textbf{Wxc7}} 28 \textit{\textbf{Exc7}}, and with more pawns ready to be picked, White is winning. Note how helpless Black’s minor pieces are.

26 \textit{\textbf{h4?}}

This piece sacrifice isn’t strictly necessary. Both 26 \textit{\textbf{a6}} and in particular 26 \textit{\textbf{b5!}} \textit{\textbf{gxf4}} 27 \textit{\textbf{Exa7}} are excellent for White, both illustrating the havoc that White’s rook is causing on b7.

26...\textit{\textbf{gxf4}} 27 \textit{\textbf{Wxf4}} \textit{\textbf{Ag7}} 28 \textit{\textbf{Wxf5}} \textit{\textbf{Wd8?!}}

28...\textit{\textbf{we8}} 29 \textit{\textbf{b5}} \textit{\textbf{e6}} 30 \textit{\textbf{Wf4}} is also highly unpleasant for Black, but in the game things get even worse for Black.

29 \textit{\textbf{Ag5! hgx5}} 30 \textit{\textbf{hxg5 Wf8}} 31 \textit{\textbf{h3+ Ac6}} 32 \textit{\textbf{Af5}}

Also fully acceptable for White is 32 g4xh6 \textit{\textbf{Ac8}} 33 \textit{\textbf{Exc7 Ac1+}} 34 \textit{\textbf{Af1 Ac7}} 35 \textit{\textbf{Exa7}} (Leko) with five pawns for the piece.

32...\textit{\textbf{Ac8}} 33 \textit{\textbf{Exc7 Ac1+}} 34 \textit{\textbf{Ah2 Ac7}} 35 \textit{\textbf{g4}} Black is paralysed.

35...\textit{\textbf{Ac6?!}}

35...\textit{\textbf{Ac6?!}} offers more resistance, although after 36 \textit{\textbf{Ag2 Aa6}} 37 \textit{\textbf{c6! Cxc6}} 38 \textit{\textbf{Exc6}} \textit{\textbf{Cxc6}} 39 \textit{\textbf{Wxh6+ Wxh6}} 40 \textit{\textbf{ghxh6}} White is winning (Leko).

36 \textit{\textbf{Wxh6+ Wxh6+}} 37 \textit{\textbf{g6xh6 Ac5}} 38 \textit{\textbf{gxf5}}

Most of the pieces have come off the board, and White’s pieces are more than Black’s rook and bishop can handle. It could have helped Black to have his king participate in the defence, but being tied down on the back rank prevents this from happening.

39 \textit{\textbf{Eh7 Ac6}} 40 \textit{\textbf{Exa7 Ac1}} 41 \textit{\textbf{Ag3 Ac3+}} 42 \textit{\textbf{Af4 Ac5}} 43 \textit{\textbf{Af2 Ac3}} 44 \textit{\textbf{c6 Ac4}} 45 \textit{\textbf{a5 Ac6}} 46 \textit{\textbf{a6 Ac2}} 47 \textit{\textbf{Ac7}} 1-0

\textbf{The Rook-Lift}

While the strength of a rook on an open file or on the seventh rank is easy to understand, the ideal piece for a rook isn’t necessarily either. Sometimes in order to exploit a weakness, a rook is needed in front of your own pawns. For this purpose, we have a concept known as the rook-lift, which if conducted properly can add a mighty force to what is an otherwise simple-looking position.

\begin{center}
\begin{tabular}{|c|c|}
\hline
\textbf{L.B. Hansen – Brynell} & \textbf{Copenhagen 2000} \\
\hline
\end{tabular}
\end{center}

This position may not look like much for either side, but there are some things that favour White: the availability of the f5-square for the white knight, the weak dark squares in Black’s position, but most importantly the relatively fragile state of Black’s king. The knight on f5 will be difficult to remove without weakening the dark squares further, and as Hansen demonstrates in the game, the reinforcements for White’s attack come very quickly.

23 \textit{\textbf{Af5! Ac7}} 24 \textit{\textbf{b4! Af8d8?}}

Black plays as if he has no idea of White’s intentions. This move effectively cuts the queen off form the defence of his kingside. 24...\textit{\textbf{Ac7?!}} is necessary, to meet 25 \textit{\textbf{b5}} with 25...\textit{\textbf{h5}} 26 \textit{\textbf{Ah4 Wd8}}. This gives Black a decent position, although White retains somewhat the better chances.

25 \textit{\textbf{b2!}}

White’s pieces are wonderfully coordinated, and now a crude move like 26 \textit{\textbf{Ac4}} is looming. Black’s reaction isn’t pretty, but nor are the alternatives; e.g., 25...\textit{\textbf{Ac1+}} 26 \textit{\textbf{Eg7+}}.

25...\textit{\textbf{h5}} 26 \textit{\textbf{Ah4 Ac7}} 27 \textit{\textbf{Axg7}}

The battle is over, and the remaining moves are just desperation on Black’s side.

27...\textit{\textbf{Wxf4}} 28 \textit{\textbf{Exf4 Wxg7}} 29 \textit{\textbf{Ac1 Ac4}} 30 \textit{\textbf{Af5 Ac4}} 31 \textit{\textbf{Wc5 Ac4}} 32 \textit{\textbf{g3 Ac7}} 1-0
The rook-lift can also be used in cases where one rook cannot be brought into play by natural means and normal development.

\begin{center}
\begin{tikzpicture}
\tkzDrawChessBoard[notknightmoves,lighter,legend=]{3}\tkzLegend{W}{B}
\node at (-1,0.75) {W};
\node at (1.5,0.75) {B};
\end{tikzpicture}
\end{center}

Bareev – Short

‘Russia vs The World’ rpd, Moscow 2002

This is an interesting position. White has an extra pawn, but is largely undeveloped and has three weak pawns. Black on the other hand has completed his development, but his king is a bit unhappy due to the open g-file and White’s annoying f6-pawn. Black’s plan is relatively easy to figure out: play a rook to the d-file, exchange one set of rooks and then attack White’s weak pawns with the remaining rook. However, Black can only allow one set of rooks to be exchanged; if both sets depart the board, White’s extra pawn will soon tell, particularly since Black’s kingside pawns are all on light squares. Once this has been established, it isn’t too difficult to find the right way for White to continue...

19 h4!
Enter the h1-rook.
19...\textcolor{red}{\texttt{B}}fd8 20 \textcolor{blue}{\texttt{B}}h3 \textcolor{red}{\texttt{B}}e4

As mentioned above, Black cannot allow both sets of rooks to be exchanged; e.g., 20...\textcolor{red}{\texttt{B}}xd1+ 21 \textcolor{red}{\texttt{B}}xd1 \textcolor{blue}{\texttt{B}}d8+ 22 \textcolor{blue}{\texttt{B}}d3 \textcolor{red}{\texttt{B}}xd3+ 23 exd3 c5 24 g4, with a winning endgame for White.

21 \textcolor{blue}{\texttt{B}}e3 \textcolor{red}{\texttt{B}}g6

Necessary, as 21...\textcolor{red}{\texttt{B}}f5? is answered with 22 g4, winning even more time for White. Now, having prevented Black’s counterplay and only active plan, White can advance on the kingside.

22 g4 \textcolor{red}{\texttt{B}}h6 23 \textcolor{blue}{\texttt{B}}g2 \textcolor{blue}{\texttt{B}}d6 24 f4 \textcolor{blue}{\texttt{B}}cd8 25 \textcolor{blue}{\texttt{B}}xd6 cxd6 26 \textcolor{blue}{\texttt{B}}g3

White now threatens f5, forcing Black’s reply.

26...\textcolor{red}{\texttt{B}}b1 27 g5 \textcolor{red}{\texttt{B}}h7

Even worse is 27...h5 28 \textcolor{blue}{\texttt{B}}f3 \textcolor{red}{\texttt{B}}g6 29 e4. 28 e4 \textcolor{blue}{\texttt{B}}c8 29 h5 \textcolor{blue}{\texttt{B}}c5

Black’s situation is pretty grim; 29...\textcolor{red}{\texttt{B}}g8 is met with 30 \textcolor{red}{\texttt{B}}d2 intending 31 \textcolor{blue}{\texttt{B}}e1 \textcolor{blue}{\texttt{B}}a2 32 g6+ fxg6 33 f7++. The rest of game is flawlessy executed by Bareev:

30 \textcolor{red}{\texttt{B}}d2 \textcolor{blue}{\texttt{B}}c4 31 g6+ \textcolor{red}{\texttt{B}}g8 32 \textcolor{blue}{\texttt{B}}e3 \textcolor{blue}{\texttt{B}}c5 33 \textcolor{blue}{\texttt{B}}f3 e5 34 f5 \textcolor{red}{\texttt{B}}a2 35 \textcolor{blue}{\texttt{B}}e2 \textcolor{blue}{\texttt{B}}b3 36 \textcolor{blue}{\texttt{B}}g3 d5 37 exd5 \textcolor{blue}{\texttt{B}}xd5+ 38 \textcolor{blue}{\texttt{B}}d3 \textcolor{blue}{\texttt{B}}c4 39 \textcolor{blue}{\texttt{B}}xd5 \textcolor{blue}{\texttt{B}}xd5 40 \textcolor{blue}{\texttt{B}}e3 \textcolor{blue}{\texttt{B}}e4 41 \textcolor{blue}{\texttt{B}}xe4 1-0

\begin{center}
\begin{tikzpicture}
\tkzDrawChessBoard[notknightmoves,lighter,legend=]{3}\tkzLegend{W}{B}
\node at (-1,0.75) {W};
\node at (1.5,0.75) {B};
\end{tikzpicture}
\end{center}

Gelfand – Adams

Wijk aan Zee 2002

It doesn’t take a genius to see that Black’s position makes a far more harmonious impression. White’s kingside expansion has left weaknesses on both light and dark squares around the king. But how does Black exploit these weaknesses? Adams makes it look very easy.

25...\textcolor{red}{\texttt{B}}a4!
The target square for the rook is f4 to apply pressure against f2.

26 \textcolor{blue}{\texttt{B}}c2 \textcolor{blue}{\texttt{B}}e7

This opens the way for the queen and prepares to enter White’s position. However, Adams thinks 26...\textcolor{red}{\texttt{B}}f4 followed by ...\textcolor{blue}{\texttt{B}}c5 was somewhat stronger.

27 \textcolor{blue}{\texttt{B}}h2??

It is necessary for White to play actively and attempt to stop Black’s plan. According to Adams, this is best accomplished by 27 d4 e4 28 \textcolor{blue}{\texttt{B}}e1 \textcolor{blue}{\texttt{B}}d5 29 \textcolor{blue}{\texttt{B}}b3 \textcolor{red}{\texttt{B}}aa8 30 \textcolor{blue}{\texttt{B}}g2 e3 31 \textcolor{blue}{\texttt{B}}d3 exf2+ 32 \textcolor{blue}{\texttt{B}}xf2 \textcolor{blue}{\texttt{B}}e4, and although Black is better, White is still in the game.

27...\textcolor{red}{\texttt{B}}d5 28 \textcolor{blue}{\texttt{B}}f3 \textcolor{red}{\texttt{B}}f4 29 \textcolor{red}{\texttt{B}}g2

The severity of White’s situation is well illustrated by the following line: 29 \textcolor{red}{\texttt{B}}g3 \textcolor{blue}{\texttt{B}}c8 30
31...\texttt{x}xf2!

The point has been made before, but here it is made again: often to capitalize on a positional advantage, you have to use tactics. Black ends up with a couple of extra pawns and a busted position for White.

31 \texttt{x}xf2 \texttt{xf}4 32 \texttt{wg}3 \texttt{xf}2+ 33 \texttt{x}xf2 \texttt{xd}3+ 34 \texttt{xf}1 \texttt{x}b2 35 \texttt{h}4 \texttt{d}7 36 \texttt{g}2 \texttt{d}3 37 \texttt{f}1 e3 38 g5 hxg5 39 hxg5 \texttt{h}5 0-1

\section*{The Mysterious Rook Move}

The concept of this type of move was also introduced by Nimzowitsch. By making a mysterious rook move, one side places a rook on a file, usually a closed one, where it apparently has little or nothing to do. However, the move is played in anticipation of the file being opened as a consequence of the opponent's natural follow-up or to prevent it.

In his excellent book \textit{Secrets of Modern Chess Strategy}, John Watson presents some interesting examples, such as the one in the following diagram.

Here Kasparov played the odd-looking...

13 \texttt{e}1!

It's quite interesting how the opinions on this move differ. Kasparov, apparently quite pleased with the move, awards no less than '!!', while Danish GM Curt Hansen in \textit{CBM} calls the move dubious, while Watson likes the move and gives it a '!!'. This divergence is based on conceptual differences. Kasparov wanted to prevent Black from playing 13...b6, which can only be prevented by the text-move, while Curt Hansen addresses the issue of what the rook is doing on c1 if Black doesn't play 13...b6, as it turns out in the game.

13...\texttt{e}8!?

Let's take a look at the point behind White's 13th move. If Black plays 13...b6?!, White replies 14 c4 bxc5 (on 14...dxc4, Kasparov gives 15 \texttt{xc}4 \texttt{xe}4 15 dxe5 c4 15...a6 16 \texttt{a}4 dxc4 17 \texttt{xc}4 \texttt{d}e5 Kasparov) 16 \texttt{xc}4 (Curt Hansen only mentions 16 \texttt{d}6 '±' in his annotations, but 16 \texttt{xc}4 is the move that Kasparov had planned, and the following line is just an amazing testament to the depth of his 13th move) 16...\texttt{xc}5 17 \texttt{b}5 \texttt{e}7 18 \texttt{c}2 \texttt{d}4 19 \texttt{xc}5 \texttt{xc}5 20 \texttt{xc}5 \texttt{xb}5 21 a4 \texttt{a}3 22 \texttt{c}3, and the rook traps the knight.

As Watson points out, Black could have considered 13...\texttt{e}5!? , extending 14 \texttt{xd}7 \texttt{xf}3+ 15 \texttt{xf}3 \texttt{xd}7, after which it is difficult for White to claim an advantage, but 14 a4!? appears to offer White good chances of an advantage; e.g., 14...\texttt{xf}3+ 15 \texttt{xf}3 a6 16 \texttt{xd}7 \texttt{xd}7 17 a5! and Black will run into problems on the b-file.

14 \texttt{e}1 \texttt{f}6

Black is aiming to exploit the fact that White's rook on c1 is rather passively placed as long as Black doesn't play ...b6. One problem with mysterious rook moves is that if the opponent doesn't go through with the plan the rook move was supposed to prevent, the move may remain mysterious. However, if the move does more good than it damages, who's to complain?

Here Kasparov continued with 15 \texttt{b}1, and after 15...b6 16 \texttt{a}6 \texttt{c}8 17 \texttt{b}5 \texttt{d}7 18 \texttt{a}6 \texttt{c}8 19 \texttt{d}3!? he sacrificed a pawn for the initiative. However, Kasparov pointed out in his
annotations in Informator that 15...d3 intending 15...b6 16 cxd6 axb6 17...b1 ± was the best continuation available to White.

Also in the next example, White finds a surprising way to deal with Black’s intended plan.

20 h5
Dolmatov prefers 20 a3!?., offering 20...0-0-0 21 e5 d4 g8 22 e4 b8 ± as evidence, which seems correct as after 23 b5 b6 24 c4 White should have the upper hand.

20...e7
Now White played 21 e5 e7 22 e5 d6, after which Black managed to hold the balance, although not without trouble. Instead Belaovsky/Mikhailchishin suggested the complicated 21 e5, but I believe that 21 c4! (Hiarcs) is White’s best; e.g., 21...xc4 22 d6+ d8 23 xc4 f6 24 cd1 d5 25 d4, and Black’s position is both passive and quite unpleasant.

Exercises

5.1 Black can win a pawn with 21...xf3 22 xf3 xh2, but is this his best?

5.2 How should White proceed?
6 The Exchange

A very effective way of creating an imbalance is the use of the exchange sacrifice. It can be used in several different ways, both aggressively and defensively. Understanding how and when to use it effectively means the addition of a very powerful weapon in your armoury.

Why Sacrifice the Exchange?

There are about as many reasons why you would want to sacrifice the exchange as there are ways of doing so. There are, however, some common denominators that are worth familiarizing yourself with. Note that many players have hang-ups about sacrificing material and therefore will not consider sacrificing, nor that the opponent will do so.

In the first example, we see a common theme: White sacrifices to break Black’s coordination and ruin his pawn-structure.

17...exd5 18 e3

The pawns on f5 and d5 are immediately targeted, but the move is also the second step in battling for control over the light squares.

18...f6!

Gurevich is a very strong positional player and naturally understands the concept of damage control. A move like 18...fe8 is met with 19 d4 and a knight will arrive at f5 with devastating effect. The idea behind the text-move is that, as in the game continuation, if White plays d4, Black can choose to exchange it. At the same time, the bishop helps to protect the open king.

19 d4!

Kasparov also mentions 19 d1 as interesting; the idea is to follow up with 20 d4 and after Black duly exchanges it, White will use the rook to take it back. I shall not reproduce Kasparov’s analysis here, but feel free to consult Informator 79 for reference. “Why not 19 exd5?”, I hear you asking. Actually it doesn’t achieve what White is after, but nonetheless, in the game White manages to transpose to the position that could arise after 19 w6d 20 d4 x4 21 cxd4 e4. The text-move gives Black more possibilities of going wrong.

19...exd4! 20 cxd4 e4 21 xd5?!
A strange and unnecessary decision: while White still retains the better chances in the game continuation, he should instead have kept his focus on the light squares. The text-move opens up the position, something White should have saved for later, when he is better prepared for open battle. The logical move and correct positional decision is illustrated by the following line given by Kasparov: 21 $\text{h}3!\text{He}8\text{22 $\text{xf6}\text{He6}\text{23 $\text{e}1!\text{He6}\text{24 $\text{e}1!$, and White}$}$ has a solid grip on the position as Black’s rooks are of little use, while the weaknesses of the light squares and Black’s kingside are of a permanent nature.

21...$\text{e}6\text{22 $\text{e}3\text{e}6$}$

Here Kasparov played another inaccurate move in 23 $\text{h}5?!$. He instead gives the following piece of analysis supporting White’s cause: 23 $\text{xf5}\text{xf5}\text{24 $\text{e}4\text{e}8\text{25 $\text{e}1\text{e}7}\text{26 $\text{h}5\text{f5}\text{27 $\text{d}5+$ $\text{h}8\text{28 $\text{e}8\text{e}8}\text{(or 28 $\text{e}8\text{e}8\text{29 $\text{f3}\text{e}1+}\text{30 $\text{e}2$ with an edge for White)}\text{29 $\text{d1}\text{f4}\text{30 $\text{g2}\text{d7}\text{31 $\text{f3}\text{f7}\text{32 $\text{d5}\text{f6}\text{33 $\text{e2$ with slightly better chances for White.}}$}$}$}

Few other players manage to fight for the initiative as aggressively as Kasparov, and therefore it’s no surprise that we can find more examples with Kasparov sacrificing the exchange for the initiative. The next example has already become a classic, and it contains several very instructive elements.

21...$\text{g5}!$

A standard idea in this type of pawn-structure: if White now plays 19 $\text{e}3$, Black immediately eliminates it with the bishop to reduce White’s control over the d5-square.

19 $\text{a}3!\text{0-0}\text{20 $\text{e}4$}$

Due to his light-square control, White has plenty of time to get his pieces to their optimal squares, while retaining the pressure on Black’s position.

20...a5 21 $\text{d}3!$

More development.

21...$\text{b4}22\text{xb4 $\text{b8}$}$

This logical move is oddly enough a mistake. Nunn has shown that the correct move was 23 $\text{d}8!\text{??}$, after which 24 $\text{c3}!\text{c7 intending}\text{d8-e6-d4}$ is played. However, I think that White doesn’t need to invest time in 24 $\text{g3}$, and should instead opt for 24 0-0! as 24...$\text{xb4}$ can be met by 25 $\text{cxb6 $\text{a7}$}$ (or 25 $\text{a2}$ 26 $\text{e}4\text{a7}\text{27 $\text{d7}\text{e}8\text{28 $\text{b6}\text{c6}\text{29 $\text{xf8}\text{xf8}\text{30 $\text{h5 with better chances for White)}\text{26 $\text{d7}\text{d8}\text{27 $\text{xf8}\text{xf8}\text{28 $\text{g4$ by $\text{c1}$, and White is obviously better. If Black doesn’t take on h4, but instead goes for the original plan involving 24...}$}$}$}

In this typical Sveshnikov structure White has his usual grip on the d5-square, but this is normally not any kind of decisive advantage as Black can generate plenty of counterplay on the queenside along the b-file or on the kingside with...f5 accompanied by the bishop-pair. Kasparov finds an original plan to combat Black’s usual counterplay and control the game according to his own game-plan.

16 $\text{b4}?!\text{c5}?!$

In hindsight it’s easy to be clever, but this turns out to be a clear mistake that is swiftly punished by Kasparov. Similarly, 16...$\text{c6}?!$ also fails on account of 17 $\text{c4}\text{c8}$ (or 17...$\text{xd5}$ 18 $\text{xd5}$ 0-0 19 $\text{c6}$ 18 $\text{c4b4}$ as given by Nunn. The correct move appears to be 16...$\text{b8}$, after which Nunn gives 17 $\text{c4 0-0 18 0-0 $\text{g5}$}$ 19 $\text{e2$ with a small plus for White.}$

17 $\text{xb7}!!$

This beautiful move eliminates the light-squared bishop and therefore secures White’s control over the light squares. However, the true essence of White’s idea is only seen once the next few moves are played.

17...$\text{xb7}$ 18 $\text{b4}$

In addition to the control over the light squares, the knight on b7 is now stalemated by its own and enemy pawns.

18 $\text{g5}?!$

A standard idea in this type of pawn-structure: if White now plays 19 $\text{e}3$, Black immediately eliminates it with the bishop to reduce White’s control over the d5-square.

19 $\text{a3}!\text{0-0}\text{20 $\text{e}4$}$

Due to his light-square control, White has plenty of time to get his pieces to their optimal squares, while retaining the pressure on Black’s position.

20...a5 21 $\text{d}3!$

More development.

21...$\text{xb4}22\text{xb4 $\text{b8}$}$

This logical move is oddly enough a mistake. Nunn has shown that the correct move was 23 $\text{d}8!\text{??}$, after which 24 $\text{g3}!\text{c7 intending}\text{d8-e6-d4}$ is played. However, I think that White doesn’t need to invest time in 24 $\text{g3}$, and should instead opt for 24 0-0! as 24...$\text{xb4}$ can be met by 25 $\text{cxb6 $\text{a7}$}$ (or 25 $\text{a2}$ 26 $\text{e}4\text{a7}\text{27 $\text{d7}\text{e}8\text{28 $\text{b6}\text{c6}\text{29 $\text{xf8}\text{xf8}\text{30 $\text{h5 with better chances for White)}\text{26 $\text{d7}\text{d8}\text{27 $\text{xf8}\text{xf8}\text{28 $\text{g4$ by $\text{c1}$, and White is obviously better. If Black doesn’t take on h4, but instead goes for the original plan involving 24...}$}$}$}

In this typical Sveshnikov structure White has his usual grip on the d5-square, but this is normally not any kind of decisive advantage as Black can generate plenty of counterplay on the

Kasparov – Shirov

Horgen 1994
24 Qcb6 a2 25 0-0 Ad2

Now due to time-trouble both sides started making mistakes, both large and small. Kasparov did, however, win the game.

Here Nunn gives 26 Wb1!, intending Qc4, when White wins back the exchange with interest.

Sacrificing the exchange for defensive purposes is also very common. Often the sacrifice will be for an invader such as a strong knight, but might equally often be for a piece that may cause problems in the future.

The next example is used widely, but it contains a clever defensive ploy to stop a potentially fatal pawn roll, but while doing so, he invites his opponent to part with his strong bishop. You would think that it would be a no-brainer to decline such an offer, but a material advantage is very difficult to resist, even when you are a strong grandmaster.

Black is clearly under pressure, and has a number of rather significant weaknesses in his position, most importantly on d6, where White would like to place his knight. Not uncharacteristically, Andersson finds a defensive resource to make the best of Black's position.

20...f6!? 21 Qe6 Axe5

For obvious reasons, Black cannot play 21...dx6?? due to 22 Axe6+.

22 Qxd8 Axd5 23 Axd5 Qxd8

White has won the exchange, but the immediate danger element has left the board with the departure of the white knight. Black can now focus on setting up a satisfactory defensive position.

24 Afd1 Af7 25 a3 Qd4 26 Af1

White cannot play 26 b4? immediately due to 26...Qe2+ followed by 27...Qc3, winning the exchange back.

26...Qc7 27 A1xd4?!

This is not strictly necessary, as Aurell indicated that 27 Ac1!? makes more sense, but his

Black is faced with serious problems: White has a rolling pawn-centre, space advantage, bishop-pair and possibilities of a kingside attack, while Black seems to be a sitting duck. So what can he do stop the onslaught? The only place Black has something going for himself is on the queenside, but at the present time, it isn't supported well enough to be of any importance. However, if the knight could be placed on d5, then he would have support for his queenside pawn to make a break for counterplay at some point. Even more importantly, on d5 the knight serves to stop White's rolling pawn-centre. Getting the knight to d5 without allowing White to push his central pawns can only be accommodated in one fashion:

25...Ae6!!

When Petrosian played this move, exchange sacrifices of this kind were seen quite rarely. Nowadays we see exchange sacrifices all the time, but Petrosian's move still has a very special quality to it. The main point is obviously
that if White accepts Black’s challenge and plays 26 $\textbf{\text{a}}x\text{e}6$, it is met with 26...fxe6 followed by ...$\textbf{\text{c}}7$-$\text{d}$,$\text{d}$, with a light-square blockade of White’s pawns. In the resulting position, Black has complete control over the light squares, a strong bishop and a powerful centralized knight, while White is stuck with a tall pawn on b2 and an inflexible pawn-structure.

It cannot have taken Reshevsky very long to decide not take the rook immediately, but deciding what to do instead is an entirely different story

26 $\textbf{\text{a}}$4?!

White decides it’s time to open the queenside, but doesn’t entirely succeed in doing so, thus helping Black instead. Generally you should only play where your opponent is stronger if you can achieve something concrete from doing so; that is not the case here. White should instead have tried to get a kingside attack going by advancing his h-pawn and placing a rook on g3.

26...$\textbf{\text{\text{d}}}$7

Black continues according to plan and routes his knight to the desired square. Bronstein illustrates why 26...b4? would be wrong with the following line: 27 d5 $\textbf{\text{\text{d}}}$xd5 28 $\textbf{\text{\text{d}}}$xe6 fxe6 29 $\textbf{\text{w}}$xc4, and Black’s position collapses.

27 $\textbf{\text{\text{d}}}$xe6 fx$\textbf{\text{e}}$6 28 $\textbf{\text{w}}$f1

White wants to keep an eye on the c4-pawn and thus keep Black’s queenside action under control. In event of ...$\textbf{\text{\text{d}}}$3 from Black, White will give up the extra exchange. Bronstein notes that 28 $\textbf{\text{w}}$f2 $\textbf{\text{\text{d}}}$d5 29 $\textbf{\text{f}}$3 b4 is better for Black, while Crouch suggests that the only way for White to attempt to make any use of the extra exchange is 28 $\textbf{\text{f}}$3 $\textbf{\text{\text{d}}}$d5 29 $\textbf{\text{w}}$d2, and if 29...b4, then possibly 30 $\textbf{\text{ef}}$1 $\textbf{\text{wa}}$4 31 h4.

28...$\textbf{\text{\text{d}}}$5 29 $\textbf{\text{f}}$3 $\textbf{\text{\text{d}}}$3 30 $\textbf{\text{xd}}$3 $\textbf{\text{cxd}}$3 31 $\textbf{\text{\text{d}}}$xd3 b4 32 $\textbf{\text{xb}}$4

Black is already doing well at this point, particularly due to his knight on d5 and White’s poor bishop on b2. Bronstein tells us that 32 $\textbf{\text{c}}$4?! is less accurate on account of 32...$\textbf{\text{db}}$6 and now 33 $\textbf{\text{\text{c}}}1$ $\textbf{\text{\text{a}}}$4 34 $\textbf{\text{\text{a}}}$1 $\textbf{\text{\text{e}}}$6 or 33 d5 $\textbf{\text{exd}}$5 34 $\textbf{\text{\text{c}}}$5 $\textbf{\text{\text{a}}}$4 35 $\textbf{\text{d}}$d4 $\textbf{\text{c}}$8 – in either case Black’s connected passed pawns make a better impression than White’s blocked central pawns.

32...$\textbf{\text{axb}}$4 (D)

Black could have taken back with either piece as well, but as Crouch points out, this option gives White a mobile passed pawn to worry about.

33 a5 $\textbf{\text{a}}$8 34 $\textbf{\text{\text{a}}}$1 $\textbf{\text{c}}$6 35 $\textbf{\text{\text{c}}}$1 $\textbf{\text{\text{c}}}$7 36 a6 $\textbf{\text{\text{b}}}$6 37 $\textbf{\text{d}}$d2 b3 38 $\textbf{\text{d}}$4 h6 39 h3 b2 40 $\textbf{\text{b}}$1 $\textbf{\text{h}}$8?!

Crouch points out that Black could have obtained some winning chances with 40...$\textbf{\text{wa}}$6! 41 $\textbf{\text{\text{a}}}$x$\textbf{\text{a}}$6 $\textbf{\text{\text{a}}}$x$\textbf{\text{a}}$6 42 $\textbf{\text{\text{a}}}$xb2 $\textbf{\text{a}}$4, winning the d-pawn and leaving Black with a good knight against bishop.

41 $\textbf{\text{e}}$1 $\frac{1}{2}$-$\frac{1}{2}$

A completely different type of sacrifice is seen in the following example.

White has the typical pawn-centre of a Grünfeld, but the white pawns don’t have a lot of support from their own pieces, while they are relatively easy to attack. White has just played 15 $\textbf{\text{d}}$d2, threatening to attack the f8-rook from b4, and thereby winning the exchange.

15...$\textbf{\text{b}}$7?!
This type of exchange sacrifice is becoming more and more common in contemporary master games. Rather than taking on a slightly passive position, one side gives up the exchange for a pawn and some sort of dynamic compensation, e.g., an isolated pawn, a passive piece, weak colour complex (etc.) for the opponent.

16 \( \text{b4} \) \( \text{x}e4 \) 17 \( \text{xf8} \) \( \text{xf8} \)

For the exchange, Black has a pawn and the bishop-pair, while his opponent has an isolated pawn, a passive knight on e2 and not particularly good coordination. Black should be at least equal.

18 \( \text{Cc1} \) \( \text{d6} \) 19 \( \text{a6} \) \( \text{h6} \) 20 \( \text{Cc3} \) \( \text{d8} \) 21 \( \text{d3} \) \( \text{b7} \)

It is in White’s interest to exchange the light-squared bishops, as his bishop doesn’t have any targets or a comfortable placing, while Black’s bishop can create potential threats on the h1-a8 diagonal. Furthermore there is no reason to eliminate the bishop-pair.

22 \( \text{Fa4} \) \( \text{d2} \) 23 \( \text{Cc2} \) \( \text{h6} \) 24 \( \text{Cc3} \) \( \text{d2} \) 25 \( \text{Cc2} \) \( \text{h6} \) 26 \( \text{d1} \)?! (D)

I’m not sure why White avoided the repetition of moves, nor why Black initiated the repetition, as I prefer Black’s chances. Now Black has an opportunity to force White to create more weaknesses.

26...\( \text{Fd5} \) 27 \( \text{f3} \) \( \text{e3}+ \) 28 \( \text{f1} \)?

The severity of White’s situation is illustrated by the fact that 28 \( \text{h1} \), despite allowing 28...\( \text{xf3}! \) 29 \( \text{d5} \) \( \text{xd5} \) 30 \( \text{Cc3} \) \( \text{g5} \), is White’s best choice. Now it’s all over.

28...\( \text{h5} \) 29 \( \text{h3} \) \( \text{xf3}! \) 30 \( \text{b4} \) \( \text{xe2}+ \) 31 \( \text{xe2} \) \( \text{xd4} \) 32 \( \text{e7} \) \( \text{xd3}! \) 0-1

Sacrificing for dynamic compensation is very common in master games nowadays. This can be used both offensively and defensively, such as in the following example.

\[ \text{B} \]

Kruppa – Tiviakov
St Petersburg 1993

White has built up a space advantage, and can continue with either e5 or f5, whichever will suit him better. With both of his standard breaks...b5 and...d5 prevented, Black has little choice but to break White’s dynamic potential with the following exchange sacrifice.

19...\( \text{Fxg5!} \) 20 \( \text{fxg5} \) \( \text{d7} \)

In return for the exchange, Black has seized control over the dark squares. White still has a space advantage and some remainder of his initiative, but the nature of the game has been changed entirely.

21 \( \text{d5} \) \( \text{e5} \) 22 \( \text{f4} \) \( \text{xf4} \) 23 \( \text{xf4} \)

Even after the departure of the dark-squared bishop, Black retains a firm grip on the dark squares.

23...\( \text{h6} \) 24 \( \text{h4} \) \( \text{e5} \) 25 \( \text{ff1} \) \( \text{e5} \) 26 \( \text{gxh6} \)
\( \text{h7} \) 27 \( \text{h5} \) \( \text{xh6} \) 28 \( \text{xh6}+ \) \( \text{xh6} \) 29 \( \text{xg6} \)
\( \text{xg6} \)

Black’s position is as solid as ever and although White continued a while longer in his attempts to win the game, the final result was a draw.

Before considering sacrificing the exchange, there doesn’t have to be anything radical going on. Even in balanced positions, it is an element to consider, to unbalance an otherwise fairly boring position, or to unbalance your opponent.

The position in the following diagram is approximately even despite several interesting imbalances: White’s weakened kingside structure and Black’s somewhat passive position.
with the odd ...b5 thrown in. When looking at Black's pawn-structure, I only detect two weaknesses, in particular the c7-pawn, which can be attacked by the bishop and along the c-file by the rook. Rather than closing off the queenside, Black now becomes very ambitious and commits a positional error...

16...bxc4?! 17 wxc4 c6

This is the move Black relied on to counter White's 17th move. White cannot escape 'losing' the exchange as 18 fe1 h5 19 wb4 d5 is quite pleasant for Black. White was obviously aware of this when he decided to capture back with the queen, and illustrates why White has more than enough for the exchange.

18 a5! b5 19 wxc7 xf1 20 xf1 c6

White gets two pawns for the exchange; in addition he has the bishop-pair and the option of creating a passed pawn on the queenside. Needless to say, White is much better at this point, and went on to win the game on move 68.

Standard Exchange Sacrifices

There are some exchange sacrifices that are seen over and over again. These sacrifices are some that you must know well because you will face them at one time or the other.

The ...cx3 Sacrifice

In the Sicilian and English, this type of sacrifice is one you should know and should be willing to make without much hesitation. In Beating the Sicilian 2, John Nunn wrote "The true Dragon player will analyse six exchange sacrifices on c3 before breakfast...". However, as we shall see, it is not only in the Dragon that Black makes these exchange sacrifices, but they are more frequent in the Dragon than in any other line of the Sicilian.

15 xc6!

Here in addition to ruining Black's pawn-structure on the queenside, White also gets a central pawn into the bargain.

15...bxc6 16 xc5 f4

Black cannot hesitate in his attempt to create counterplay. 16....xe5 17 xe5 d5 is strongly met by 18 f4, and now if 18....xg2 19 xg2 we6 20 ec1 wd5+ 21 ef2 (Ribli), White's bishop on e5 rules supreme and White will pick up the pawn on c6, and probably even the one on c7 as well.

17 xc6 fg3 18 hxg3 h8 19 f4 a5 20 b5!

There is no reason for White to let Black exchange of any of his weak pawns, and the text-move keeps everything tightly under control without allowing Black any counterplay.

20...ab8 21 a4 b3 22 we4!

Hansen keeps it simple: protecting the a4-pawn while preparing a threat against h7 at the same time.

22....c5+ 23 d4 b4 24 ef2!

The second step in the plan initiated with the 22nd move.

24 eb6 25 h1

Step 3.

25...h6 26 g6+ xg6 27 wxc6 f6

White has won the exchange back and is two pawns up with an attack in process - needless to say White is winning. A supporting line is
27...\textit{xa}4 28 \textit{e}xh6+ gxh6 29 d5+, and the game is over. The remainder of the game isn’t any fun for Black either.

28 \textit{d}3 \textit{g}8 29 \textit{f}3 \textit{h}7 30 e4 c6 31 \textit{g}2 cxb5 32 axb5 \textit{f}8 33 d5 \textit{g}8 34 \textit{e}4 1-0

In positions with the kings on opposite wings, the exchange sacrifice to ruin the pawn-structure in front of the king is easily the most common exchange sacrifice, obviously because it is often quite effective.

The $\textit{\bar{x}}$xe6 (or ...$\textit{\bar{x}}$xe3) Sacrifice
This type is seen less often than the one above, but occurs nonetheless relatively frequently. The sacrifice creates a number of weaknesses in your opponent’s camp. First and foremost, the pawn that takes back on e3 or e6 will be a target, and so will the square in front of the pawn, as it will no longer be able to be covered by a pawn. But very importantly, it the sacrifice is made for a bishop, as it usually is, then there will be a weakness on the squares of the departing bishop.

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\textbf{B} & \textbf{W} \\
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We enter the battle right after the opening in a sharp Sicilian. Black now seizes the opportunity to destroy White’s queenside structure with the familiar exchange sacrifice on c3.

14...$\textit{\bar{x}}$xc3! 15 $\textit{\bar{x}}$xc3 $\textit{\bar{c}}$c7?!?

Black plays some preparatory moves before opening the centre, but 15...d5?!, targeting a3, is also more than satisfactory.

16 $\textit{\bar{b}}$b1 $\textit{\bar{b}}$b6
Aiming for a4.

17 $\textit{f}$5 e5 18 $\textit{\bar{g}}$3 $\textit{\bar{a}}$4 19 $\textit{\bar{d}}$2 0-0

White’s situation on the queenside is rotten through and through, and therefore there isn’t any reason for Black to speed things up unnecessarily. By castling Black brings his king into safety and adds further fire-power to his attack.

20 $\textit{\bar{e}}$e3 d5 21 $\textit{\bar{a}}$e1 $\textit{\bar{w}}$d6
More threats are added.

22 $\textit{\bar{f}}$1 $\textit{\bar{x}}$e4 23 $\textit{\bar{x}}$xe4 dxe4
Black has won material and the attack rages on.

24 $\textit{\bar{c}}$c1 $\textit{\bar{e}}$8 25 $\textit{\bar{e}}$e3 $\textit{\bar{d}}$8 26 $\textit{\bar{w}}$e1 $\textit{\bar{g}}$5 27 $\textit{\bar{g}}$3 $\textit{\bar{x}}$e1 28 $\textit{\bar{w}}$xe1 $\textit{\bar{x}}$e3+ 29 $\textit{\bar{a}}$a1 $\textit{\bar{d}}$5 0-1

\begin{center}
\begin{tabular}{c|c}
\textbf{Natof – Dominguez} & \textbf{Stefansson – Gausel} \\
\textit{Havana 2002} & \textit{Nordic Ch (Århus) 2003} \\
\end{tabular}
\end{center}

17 $\textit{\bar{x}}$xe6
Without this, Black would have a nicely coordinated, if somewhat passive, position.

17...$\textit{\bar{f}}$xe6 18 $\textit{\bar{e}}$1
We already see the effects the sacrifice has had on Black’s position: most of the dynamic potential that was there in the diagram position is gone, while White’s pieces have a relatively easy target to work against.

18...h5 19 $\textit{\bar{d}}$e5 $\textit{\bar{f}}$8 20 $\textit{\bar{g}}$4 $\textit{\bar{d}}$6 21 $\textit{\bar{d}}$3
Black has been reduced to a sitting duck, something he should accept and attempt to make the best of the situation. For an active player, Black’s situation is rather traumatic, and the Norwegian grandmaster soon makes things worse.

21...h6?!?
Weakening the kingside isn’t helping the situation. Black should probably have played 21...e5 and attempted to fight on after 22 $\textit{\bar{d}}$x5 $\textit{\bar{d}}$d8 23 $\textit{\bar{c}}$e5 $\textit{\bar{s}}$xe5 24 $\textit{\bar{c}}$e6 $\textit{\bar{w}}$d6 with better chances for White, but at least Black’s position isn’t falling apart yet.
22 \( \text{h4} \) \( \text{h7} \) 23 \( \text{g3} \) \( \text{e5} \) 24 \( \text{dxe5} \) \( \text{dd8} \) 25 \( \text{xc5} \) \( \text{wb6} \) 26 \( \text{xe6} \)

White can now win the exchange back, but he is obviously not in a hurry. Black can hardly move and his kingside, especially the g6-pawn, is very weak.

26...\( \text{hx5?} \)

This rather careless move just weakens the position further. Had Black’s king been safer, playing for light squares in this fashion might have been an option, but here it leads to a premature end.

27 \( \text{exh5!} \) \( \text{gxh5?!} \)

27...\( \text{c5} \) would have been the lesser evil, although White is two pawns up and winning easily.

28 \( \text{c2+} \) \( \text{h6} \) 29 \( \text{h4} \)

The threat is \( \text{g5#} \).

29...\( \text{f6} \) 30 \( \text{exf6} \) \( \text{exf6} \) 31 \( \text{w5} \) \( \text{g8} \) 32 \( \text{e5} \)

1-0

32...\( \text{f5} \) 33 \( \text{g5}+ \) leads to mate.

---

Karpov – Larsen
Tilburg 1979

White’s pieces look harmoniously placed, and he has a little extra space. However, the d4-pawn constitutes a weakness that is relatively easily targeted with \( \text{...e6} \) coming up. Furthermore, the knight may also be able to continue its journey to f4 or g5 from e6.

16 \( \text{w4} \! ? \)

Actually this is a sort of ‘only move’ as it is the only way to prevent Black from playing \( \text{...e6} \) without consequences.

16...\( \text{e6} \! ? \)

Larsen has never been a person to back down from a challenge and forces Karpov to sacrifice the exchange. As Karpov mentions in his annotations to the game, 16...\( \text{xd5} \) would have been more cautious.

17 \( \text{xe6!} \) \( \text{f5} \) 18 \( \text{wxe6+} \) \( \text{h8} \) 19 \( \text{w1} \)

It’s important to keep control over the e-file, even after the queen leaves for a new assignment. In contrast we note that 19 \( \text{h4?!} \) is effectively answered by 19...\( \text{xd4!} \) 20 \( \text{xd4} \) \( \text{xd4} \) followed by 21...\( \text{wxh4} \).

19...\( \text{w6} \)

The black queen was offside on b6. Now it can head to d6 and even d2.

20 \( \text{h4?!} \) \( \text{d6} \! ? \)

Larsen here gives 20...\( \text{d6} \), intending 21 \( \text{e2} \) b5 “with a clear advantage for Black”, but I find this evaluation misguided as White seems to have the upper hand after the simple 22 \( \text{a1} \)!!.

Instead Karpov mentions that 20...\( \text{d5}?! \) “comes into consideration”. In fact, this raises questions about White’s entire set-up. It prevents 21 \( \text{h5} \) due to 21...\( \text{e4} \), and otherwise threatens 21...\( \text{c7} \), winning the d4-pawn.

So perhaps White should have opted for 20 \( \text{c3} \) instead, and after 20...\( \text{d6} \) 21 \( \text{w2} \) \( \text{e7} \) (intending ...\( \text{e5} \)), invited the repetition of moves with 22 \( \text{w6} \) \( \text{d6} \) 23 \( \text{w2} \).

21 \( \text{w3} \! ? \) \( \text{e6} \! ? \)

Karpov considers this inaccurate, as it hands White a tempo for the further advance of the h-pawn. Instead he offers a piece of analysis that appears to contain several errors: 21...\( \text{d7} \! ? \) 22 \( \text{e6} \), and now Karpov’s main line is 22...\( \text{g8} \) 23 \( \text{g4} \) \( \text{h5} \) 24 \( \text{e2} \) \( \text{g7} \) 25 \( \text{c4} \) \( \text{d5} \) 26 \( \text{c4} \) “with exceptionally complicated play”, but in the final position, White is better thanks to Black’s numerous structural weaknesses; e.g., 26...\( \text{f6} \) 27 \( \text{f3} \! ? \) \( \text{g7} \) 28 \( \text{c5} \) \( \text{c8} \) 29 \( \text{e1} \).

However, both Black and White can improve on this line. Starting from the end, Black is OK after 24...\( \text{h8} \) 25 \( \text{d4} \) \( \text{f8} \). One move earlier, 23...\( \text{g4} \! ? \) looks more sensible; for example, 24 \( \text{w4} \) \( \text{f7} \) 25 \( \text{e4} \) \( \text{d5} \) (25...\( \text{xd4} \?! \) 26 \( \text{g5} \! ? \) \( \text{g8} \) 27 \( \text{e6} \!) is game over) 26 \( \text{g5} \! ? \) \( \text{g8} \) 27 \( \text{e6} \! ? \), with a better game for Black. Black can also improve with 22...\( \text{xd5} \! ? \). Therefore White should opt for 22 \( \text{xd7} \! ? \), when 22...\( \text{xd7} \) 23 \( \text{e4} \) \( \text{h6} \) 24 \( \text{c3} \) gives him a comfortable game, while after 22...\( \text{xd7} \) 23 \( \text{c3} \) \( \text{e6} \) 24 \( \text{h5} \) White once more secures the upper hand.

22 \( \text{h5} \) \( \text{gxh5} \) 23 \( \text{e5} \! ? \) \( \text{e7} \) 24 \( \text{w4} \)!
White appears to get impatient; he could have maintained his firm grip on the position with 24 c3! followed by a1.

24...\(\text{xf8} 25 \text{h5?} \)

Once more White had the opportunity to consolidate with 25 c3, intending a1. Now Black gets completely back into the game. This is a good illustration of why it is important to keep fighting in bad positions, even against much stronger players, and also why it is important to stay calm and concentrated until the game is over.

25...\(\text{exe5} 26 \text{exe5} f6 27 \text{e4 d8!} 28 \text{xa5} \)

White’s situation isn’t so easy to handle anymore; e.g., 28 \(\text{g6?exe4} 29 \text{exe4exe7?} \) or 28 c3! e5!, in both cases with better chances for Black.

28...\(\text{xd4} 29 d1 (D) \)

With this move White sidesteps Black’s threat of 33...\(\text{xf2}+ 34 \text{xf2xg5} 35 \text{xg5} \text{d2!} \), as he now can play 34 \(\text{f6}+ \) in answer to 33...\(\text{xf2} \).

33...c5!?
33...c5!! is better.
34 a1

Threatening 35 h6.
34...\(\text{a6+} 35 \text{g1 b5?} \)

The beginning of the end, but the alternatives are not too pretty either.

36 \(\text{d4! bxa4} 37 \text{e5+?!} \)
White is also better after 37 bxa4 \(\text{b6} 38 \text{xe5+} \).
37...\(\text{xe5} 38 \text{exe5+} \text{g7} \)

Note that 38...\(\text{g7?!} \) allows 39 \(\text{xe7+} \text{xe7} 40 \text{w5#} \).
39 \text{g5 axb3??}
An unbelievable blunder that loses immediately. But also after 39...\(\text{b6} 40 \text{bxa4} \) White has a solid advantage.

40 \(\text{b8+} 1-0 \)

If White, as in the following example, has played h3 and thereby weakened the kingside structure, there is an additional bonus to claim, as the defending side will have a serious problem on the dark squares.

\[ \text{Lautier – Topalov}
\text{Elista OL 1998} \]

How should we evaluate this position? White clearly has more space, and his pieces appear more harmoniously placed. Black’s pieces, while restricted to the back three ranks, are all attractively placed, ready for action. So where does the weakness in White’s position lie? I admit at first glance it isn’t easy to see, but the
dark squares are weak. Why? On the kingside, White has played h3, thus weakening the dark squares, and in the centre, the squares around the d5-pawn are weak too.

19...e1

This move is a mistake as plain as they come, but a clear indication that White had not sensed the seriousness of the weakness he has created for himself. Also after the stronger 19...e1, Black can consider the positional exchange sacrifice: 19...xe3!? 20 fxe3 e7 21 f1 e5, and Black has excellent play on the dark squares. After the text-move, Black, however, manages to set up decisive threats in addition to the positional compensation.

19...e3!

By removing White’s dark-squared bishop, Black not only establishes a superiority on the dark squares, but he also creates decisive weaknesses in White’s camp.

20 fxe3 e7

According to Wells in ChessBase Magazine, Black can also consider 20...e8!, putting a4 in the scope too; e.g., 21 f2?! x3! 22 x3 x4 23 c8! xe8 24 xa4 xd5 25 g4 d8 f.

21 a2 x1 22 x1 x4! 23 xax4 xe3+ 24 h1 (D)

24...e4?

This is unnecessarily fancy. With 24...xd4!, he could keep it relatively simple.

25 f5?

Wells indicates that White could have stayed in the game with 25 e8+ f8 26 e6! fxe6 27 dxe6 f2+ 28 h2 xe6 29 xe6+ xe6 30 e1 with chances for both sides in the ensuing endgame. Now White’s troubles on the dark squares once more become painfully evident.

25...f2+ 26 h2 e5+ 27 g3 e4 28 h3 f2 29 d3 h5!

White’s house of cards falls to the ground in very short fashion.

30 xh5 xg3 31 xg3 xh5! 32 xg6

White doesn’t have an alternative, as otherwise Black will penetrate decisively on the dark squares; for example, 32 f3 e5+ 33 g3 e1 ++.

32...xg6 33 f3 d4 34 d3 e5 35 e4 e3 f6 36 x3 xe3 e4

The game is over; Black has the better minor piece and an extra pawn to go with it.

37 g3 g6 38 f3 d4 39 e2 g7 40 e1 f6 41 d3 f2 42 f3 f5 43 e2 a7 0-1

Vyzhmanavin – A. Minasian
Manila OL 1992

White’s position leaves a more pleasant impression; his pieces are nicely coordinated, while Black’s position is somewhat passive with a semi-weakness in the d6-pawn. Black’s next move changes all of these features like the sword did the Gordian Knot.

13...e3! 14 fxe3 e5 15 b3?!

I think this is a bit too cautious, and it lets Black bring his pieces into play. To reduce Black’s dynamic potential, White should opt for exchanges of Black’s strongest pieces. This could be initiated by 15 e4!?. I shall not go into depth with the possibilities at each of the following moves as it will take up far too much space, but the game serves as an illustration of how the exchange sacrifice changed the dynamics of the position.

15...g6 16 f1 g7 17 d2 h3
Black needs the white kingside structure weakened further, and this is best accomplished through the exchange of the light-squared bishops.

18 $f4 \text{ dxe}2 19 \text{ dxe}2 \text{ h5} 20 \text{ ff}1 \text{ h6}

The next target is the weak pawn on e3.

21 \text{ g4} 22 \text{ c3} \text{ e8}!!

An invitation to the complications that follow.

23 \text{ dxe6} \text{ e7} 24 \text{ c2} \text{ xh2}!?

An intriguing sacrifice.

25 \text{ xh2}?

White should play 25 \text{ xf7}! \text{ e5} 26 \text{ f4}! \text{ xf4} + 27 \text{ exf4}, when he is obviously better.

25...\text{ xg3}!

Now Black is OK.

26 \text{ g1} \text{ d1} + 27 \text{ xf1} \text{ h4} + 28 \text{ g2} \text{ g4} + 29 \text{ f2} \text{ h4} + \frac{1}{2} - \frac{1}{2}

The ...\text{xd}5 Sacrifice

This sacrifice happens mostly in the Sicilian Dragon, and both of our examples stem from sharp lines in the Dragon, but it can happen in other situations too where one side has a controlling and harassing minor piece sitting on d5 or d4, threatening to cause all sorts of havoc.

This is another theme worth remembering: Black keeps the h-file closed and thereby denies White any kind of fun on the kingside.

21 \text{ fxg5} \text{ xg5} + 22 \text{ h1} \text{ f5}

To untrained eyes, this may look quite extravagant, but Black is merely securing his kingside. Eventually the pawns will be an excellent tool in creating counter-threats.

23 \text{ d3}?!

This mistake makes White's situation even worse. There would still be plenty of play in a continuation like 23 \text{ h6}!? \text{ f4}!?, with complications.

23...\text{ f4} 24 \text{ xc4} \text{ xc4} 0-1

Here White gave up, which seems at least a tiny bit premature. Obviously Black has two strong bishops and two powerful passed pawns, but that is hardly enough to decide the game at this point. While I clearly prefer Black, I think White could have tried 25 \text{ g2} (to prevent ...\text{f3}) 25...\text{ h8} 26 \text{ e1} \text{ b4}! (preventing c3) 27 \text{ e3}!? \text{ h6} 28 \text{ d2} \text{ b5} 29 \text{ d4} \text{ e5}, but this obviously wasn't to Ivanchuk's taste.

18...\text{xd}5!

This sacrifice is standard in the Sicilian Dragon, but is an idea worth keeping in mind in other openings too. White intends to disrupt Black's pawn-structure before continuing his kingside attack. After the exchange sacrifice, the dynamism of White's position is more or less gone.

19 \text{ exd}5 \text{ h5} 20 \text{ h5} \text{ g5}

T. Ernst – Alterman

Manila OL 1992

This position is from another game in the Sicilian Dragon. White's light-squared bishop has been kicked away from its home on b3 to the less secure d5-square. Its primary functions are to participate in the attack against the black king and to prevent Black's knight from going to c4 without getting exchanged. The exchange sacrifice that Black employs here is routine for Dragon players, but it can be used in many other situations too.

21...\text{xd}5 22 \text{ exd}5 \text{ c4}
By means of the exchange sacrifice, Black has gained access to c4. White now immediately goes wrong in the complications. The correct move for White is now 23 \( \text{Wd3} \), for which Alterman gives a rather long piece of analysis that is not relevant for the purposes of this book. But if you feel like analysing the complications, I promise you it will be rewarding for your tactical vision.

23 \( \text{Whxh}4? \text{Wc7} 24 \text{Wc3} \text{Wg4} 25 \text{Whe1?} \)

Here Alterman gives 25 \( \text{Wd3} \text{Wxh2!} 26 \text{Wxe2} \text{Wxe2} 27 \text{Wxe2} \text{Wb6+} 28 \text{Wc1} \text{Wxd4} \) as winning for Black, but White may be able to hang on with 29 \( \text{Wd3!} \).

25...\( \text{Wb8} 26 \text{b3} \text{Wc5} 27 \text{Wc1?} \)

White drives the last nail into his own coffin. As Alterman points out, 27 \( \text{Wd3} \) would again have given White hopes of survival from the onslaught.

27...\( \text{axb3} 28 \text{cxb3} \text{Wa3+} 29 \text{b1} \text{Wf5+} 30 \text{a1} \text{Wxa2+!} 0-1 \)

### What to do with the Exchange?

We have gone on at length discussing how you can sacrifice the exchange, as well as where and why. But what if you are faced with a situation where your opponent has sacrificed the exchange? How do you react? Usually your opponent will have sacrificed for some sort of dynamic compensation, let’s say for control of the dark squares. In such a situation, your best try will be to eliminate the importance of the dynamic compensation. That will mean you can attempt to exchange the dark-squared bishop or the queen that guarantees the compensation. Another will be to set up a dark-squared blockade with your pawns, although such a step has to be considered carefully first, as you don’t want your opponent to pick up all your pawns in an endgame. Another useful ploy is to exchange the major pieces. The reason for this is that in a pure endgame a knight or a bishop is normally no match for a rook, while a bishop accompanied by a rook can be very strong, or a knight with a queen.

I shall not give any specific examples in this segment, but looking closely at the games in the previous section, you will note that this is usually what the defender tried to do and the attacker tried to prevent.

### Bishop and Knight vs Rook

A somewhat related topic to the exchange is the issue of rook vs two minor pieces. Nominally two pieces should always be worth more than a rook, but when the two pieces are bishop and knight, matters are not always as easy, especially if the side with the rook has one or two pawns thrown into the mix.

First let’s look at an example of how to take advantage of the bishop & knight vs rook advantage.

![Diagram](image)

**Torre – Karpov**  
**Tilburg 1982**

The first impression I get from looking at this position is that Black must be better. His bishop is nicely placed and there is a potential for an attack on the kingside along the f-file. However, Black must proceed with care as all of White’s pieces are actively placed. Karpov nonetheless makes the win look very easy.

27...\( \text{h8} 28 \text{Ze2} \text{h6} \)

This is the first step in Black’s plan, getting away from potentially annoying checks, and creating a breathing hole, to prevent any kind of back-rank trouble.

29 \( \text{Ze3} \text{Wf7} 30 \text{Wa4} \text{Wb7+} 31 \text{Wg1} \text{a5} \)

Step 2 has been accomplished very easily too, securing the bishop on c5. By playing \( a5 \), the queenside is now looking after itself, and Black can concentrate his efforts on the kingside. Given that Black wants to attack on the f-file, White now has to take measures against this.

32 \( \text{Wf4} \text{Wf8} 33 \text{Wf5} \text{Wc6} 34 \text{Wg6} \text{Wc8} 35 \text{Ef3} \)

It looks like White has achieved what he needed, preventing the attack on the f-file, but
his coordination is gone, and therefore Black now manages to set up threats along the d-file.
35...\textit{h7} 36 \textit{d3} \textit{e8} 37 \textit{f4} \textit{d8} 38 \textit{f3} \textit{d1+} 39 \textit{g2} \textit{d8}

With the initiative in hand, there is no reason for Black to exchange queens and ease White's defensive task.

40 \textit{c6} \textit{d6}

Kicking the queen away and preventing any annoying exchange sacrifices on f6.

41 \textit{f3} \textit{d7} 42 \textit{f5} \textit{e3} 43 \textit{a8+} \textit{h7} 44 \textit{e5}

It makes sense to keep the rook on the fifth rank, as 44 \textit{f3} can be met with 44...\textit{d5} and ...	extit{h5}, forcing White to make even more weaknesses.

44...\textit{g4} 45 \textit{b7} \textit{d6} 46 \textit{h3}

An unfortunate necessity, as the queen has to be kicked away, to prevent a line like 46 \textit{xe3} \textit{xe4}! 47 \textit{xd3} \textit{f4+} 48 \textit{g1} \textit{xe2} --+

46...\textit{g6} 47 \textit{xe3} \textit{d1} 48 \textit{e1}

Attempting to prevent the penetration of the back rank with the threat of a possible exchange.

48...\textit{d5} 49 \textit{e6} \textit{f4+} 50 \textit{h2} \textit{xe6} 51 \textit{d1} \textit{c5}

White succeeds in exchanging one set of rooks, but his position is unenviable: he has problems on both the light and the dark squares on the kingside. The light-squared weakness allows Black to walk right into his position.

52 \textit{d2} \textit{g5} 53 \textit{g2} \textit{f5} 54 \textit{d7} \textit{e4+} 55 \textit{f1} \textit{e3}

Thematic, but 55...\textit{b4} may be even stronger: e.g., 56 \textit{d1} \textit{h1+} 57 \textit{e2} \textit{f3+} 58 \textit{f1} \textit{e4}.

56 \textit{e2} \textit{h2+} 57 \textit{e1} \textit{b4+} 0-1

The situation with knight and bishop vs rook can occur after one side has initially sacrificed the exchange and the defending side then sacrifices a piece for a couple of pawns to calm the waters.

In the following diagram, Black has something more active position, but further queenside progress has been halted for now as pushing the a-pawn forward will sign off the b-pawn and moving the c-pawn will leave the d-pawn to a similar fate. Petrosian finds a path to walk.

22...\textit{d4!} 23 \textit{f4

For obvious reasons, Black is unable to play 23...\textit{c5}, which forces the next move, which Petrosian naturally had expected.

23...\textit{xe3} 24 \textit{xe3} \textit{e6}

For the rook, Black gets a bishop and a pawn, and White's pieces are restrained by Black's pawn-centre.

25 \textit{xd5}

This seems pretty radical, but I suppose that Panno wanted to avoid facing ...\textit{c3} followed by a break on the a-file. I imagine Panno would have preferred to play 25 \textit{xd5 cxd5} 26 \textit{xd5} \textit{a7} 27 \textit{xf6+} \textit{xf6} 28 \textit{a4}, when 28...\textit{bxa3} 29 \textit{xa8} \textit{xa8} 30 \textit{xa3} gives White a pleasant game, but Black can improve with 28...\textit{a6} 29 \textit{xa8} \textit{xa8}, when the three minor pieces are stronger than the two rooks, mainly due to the weak c3-square. In the game continuation, we get a typical knight + bishop vs rook situation.

25...\textit{d5} 26 \textit{xd5} \textit{a7} 27 \textit{xf6+} \textit{xf6} 28 \textit{xe6} \textit{xe6} 29 \textit{xa8} \textit{xa8} (D)

After this forced sequence, let's make a quick stop and evaluate the situation. White has rook
and pawn against two minor pieces, and as we know from before, knight and bishop aren’t considered to work particularly well together. In addition, Black’s kingside structure is somewhat weakened by the exchange on e6. Do these factors then leave White better? No, in this case not, because there are several factors that speak well for Black’s cause: the weak light squares around the white king, and Black’s bishop is light-squared. We also see the above-mentioned weakness on c3 counting in Black’s favour and finally White’s rook, due to its defensive responsibilities, isn’t likely to be activated and impact the game. In fact White is left in a very unpleasant situation.

30 \textit{We}c5 \textit{W}d5!

This is an unusual decision, but Black can offer the trade of queens because after 31 \textit{W}xd5 \textit{Q}xd5 32 a3 \textit{Q}c3 33 axb4 axb4 the b3-pawn will soon be ripe to be picked up.

31 \textit{We}c8+ \textit{Wh}7 32 \textit{We}c7+ \textit{Wh}6 33 \textit{W}xa5

White has managed to pick up another pawn, but at the cost of misplacing his queen on the a-file. Black’s pieces on the other hand are working together better than ever before.

33...\textit{W}d2 34 \textit{Wh}1 \textit{Q}c6 (D)

Due to the ...\textit{Q}g2+ threat, White is forced to weaken the e3-square.

35 f3 \textit{Q}d5 36 \textit{W}e5 \textit{Q}e3+ 37 \textit{W}f2 \textit{Q}c2 38 \textit{Q}b1 \textit{Q}d4

Black’s pieces are beautifully coordinated, in contrast to White’s scattered forces.

39 \textit{W}e5 \textit{Q}xf3 40 \textit{W}e3 \textit{Q}xe2+ 41 \textit{W}xe2 \textit{Q}xe2 42 \textit{Q}e3 e5 43 \textit{Q}b2 \textit{Q}f5

I imagine most games nowadays would have continued a bit longer, but at this point the game was adjourned, which gave Black an opportunity to fine-tune his winning plan. Obviously White cannot enter the pawn endgame as Black essentially is a pawn up.

0-1

In the following example, Black gives a good illustration of why it is important to keep in mind that knight and bishop are not automatically better than a rook.

\textbf{Hort – Hübner}

\textit{Bundesliga 1981/2}

White has just played the aggressive move h4, signalling that he is ready to start a kingside attack. Black clearly has to take action very quickly if not to end up as a sitting duck watching the attack roll in. Hübner finds an interesting option that Hort clearly had underestimated.

16...\textit{Q}xh4! 17 \textit{Q}xc6

White cannot take on h4 yet: 17 \textit{Q}xh4 \textit{Q}xd4 18 \textit{W}d3 \textit{Q}xc2 19 \textit{Q}xc2 \textit{Q}xc2 20 \textit{W}xc2 \textit{Q}c8 with an even better version of the game.

17...\textit{Q}xc6 18 \textit{Q}xh4

White clearly doesn’t get anything out of 18 \textit{Q}xc6 \textit{Q}xc2 19 \textit{Q}xh4 \textit{Q}c2 either.

18...\textit{Q}xc1+ 19 \textit{Q}xc1

Let’s take stock. What has Black achieved by sacrificing two minor pieces for rook and pawn? First of all, there is now no question of White launching a kingside attack. Secondly, the black rook is much stronger than the minor pieces, which are restricted by their own pawns. Thirdly, White’s d-pawn and queenside are fairly easy to target. All in all, White is facing an unenviable task.

19...\textit{W}a4 20 \textit{W}g4 \textit{Q}h8!

Black plays it safe, not allowing \textit{Q}h6, forcing a weakness on the dark squares that potentially could give White some counterplay.
21 a3\b2 22\f4\g8
This is possibly playing it too safe, as Mak-simenko shows with the line 22.\c8 23\e3\e4 24\g5\b1+ 25\h2\xb2 26\e7\g8 27\f3\b6, when Black’s situation is even better than in the game.

23 b4\e8 24\e3\d1+ 25\h2\h5 26 g3\c3

White’s pieces have found no targets and are stuck on the kingside without any real purpose, leaving Black free to penetrate on the queenside.

27 a4\b3 28\g2
28 \d2, to protect the b-pawn, looks better at first glance, but both 28...g5 29\xg5+\xg5 30 \xg5 \xb4 and the simple 28...h6, threatening 29...g5, win for Black.

28...\xb4 29 a5\b1!

Now White is forced to exchange the queens, after which Black’s queenside majority will decide the game.

30 \f3 \xf3+ 31 \xf3\b6 32\xb6 a5 33 \g5 a4 34\e7 \xb6 35 \e1 \b2 36 \c5 h5

The black king is getting ready to enter via the light squares on the kingside.

37 \d3? a3! 38 \xa3 \b3 0-1

6.2 Evaluate the position and decide whether White should consider sacrificing the exchange on d4, either now or after 17 \xd4 \xd4.

6.3 White has pressure against Black’s backward pawn on e6 and intends to follow with \e2 and \xf4 to activate the bishop and control the centre. Put a plan together for Black to meet White’s intentions.

6.1 With the majority of his pieces on the queenside, does it make sense for Black to play ...\xf3?

6.4 Is it an option for Black to play ...\xe3 here? Which kind of compensation can Black expect to get in return?
The Worth of a Queen

My personal opinion is that the queen is a fairly underrated piece. Many players place far too much emphasis on the queen and consider it almost priceless. With that notion in mind, these same players think that a middlegame without queens on the board is boring and almost certainly on the way to a draw. However, this is far from the case.

Against aggressive dynamic attacking players, a very effective weapon is to exchange queens. This strategy was used effectively by Kramnik against Kasparov in their 2000 world championship match.

I’m sure that you will question whether you can play like Kramnik, and most of us certainly cannot, but pretty much all of us cannot play like Kasparov either. Therefore all we do is set the level a bit lower, but the factors remain the same: most dynamic, aggressive players will be unhappy with the departure of the queens.

Then there is another group of players that are happy when the queens are off the board: those who play for a draw. But again, armed with knowledge of how to handle queenless middlegames, you will be able to retain excellent chances of playing for a win.

Queen vs Other Pieces

In the following examples I shall concentrate on some examples where the side with the queen is out-battled by lesser forces. Obviously this is not necessarily always going to be the case in your everyday games, but it is important to keep these options in mind. So take the following selection as an appetizer or an inspirational exercise.

**Question:** How should the following position be evaluated?

This shouldn’t be too difficult, I hope. White’s pieces are mounting pressure against Black’s queenside, Black’s king position is quite open, Black’s hopes of playing ...e4 have been stopped for now, and Black is suffering from a number of weaknesses on both the light and dark squares. Bottom line: Black’s position is clearly worse. Larsen, however, decides to exploit the advantage in an interesting and quite instructive fashion.

18 d5+!? At first glance, a peculiar choice. Now if Black takes the bishop, Larsen gives 18...cxd5 19 exd5 c3 20 xb7 xe2+ 21 f1 xb7 22 xb7 c3 23 a7 f6 24 c5.

However, 18 b3 is also a perfectly acceptable choice. With the text-move, White commits himself to a queen sacrifice.

18...h8 19 xxa8! xxa8 20 xxa8

Why did Larsen decide to give up his queen? The answer is not really all that difficult to come up with: with the departure of the knight on c7 and the rook on a8, it will be problematic for Black to generate any counterplay. Note how Black’s pieces are tied to the defense of the back rank. This is also a good illustration of the importance of the 7th and 8th ranks, a theme that is discussed in Chapter 5.

20...h6?!

This turns out not to be the most fortunate decision. Black’s bishop essentially chases the white knight to a better square, while leaving itself on an inferior square and taking protection away from the e5-pawn. However, as Larsen
pointed out, 20...\( \text{We7} \) isn’t particularly pleasant either: 21 \( \text{\text{Nxb7! Ne6} (none of Black’s options inspire much confidence: 21...\text{Nxb7} 22 \text{Nxb7! or 21...\text{Nxd7 22 Ne8+ Nxe8 23 Nd5, in both cases with a very good game for White)} 22 Nxe8+ Wxe8 23 Na1 Nf8 24 Na8 Wc7 25 Nd5 Ng7 26 Ne3 with clearly better chances for White.\) \( \text{21 Ndf3 We7 22 Nxb7! Nd7 23 Ne8+ Nxe8 24 Nd5 Wd6 25 Nb7} \)

The next rook makes its entrance, but this move could also be substituted with 25 h4?!?, and then 26 Nh7; this leaves Black without the option to play 25...g5 as happened in the game.

25...g5 (D)

26 h4! gxh4

This move is Black’s only chance of creating perhaps just the slightest bit of counterplay, whereas 26...g4 only makes matters worse after 27 h5 g5 28 hxg5 (planning Nh2-h4) 28...h6 29 gxh6 Wxh6 30 Nh8 Wh6 31 Ng2 Nh4 32 Nh5 33 Nh5+, and White is winning (Larsen).

27 Nh4 Nh7 28 Ne3 f4

The end is drawing nearer. Instead, 28...Nh6 29 Nh6 Nh6 30 Nh5 + (or 30 Nh5 directly) 30...Nh7 31 Nh5 doesn’t offer Black any hope of rescue. The text-move attempts to knock a little crack in White’s king shield, but it’s too little too late and with the e4-square suddenly available for White’s bishop, White has gained even more ground and the game is effectively over. Larsen executes in precise fashion.

29 Nh4 Nh6 30 Nh6 Nh6 31 Nh6 Nh6 32 Nh6 Nh6 33 Nh6 Nh6 34 Nh6 Nh6 35 Nh6 Nh6 36 Nh6 Nh6 37 Nh6 Nh6 38 Nh6 Nh6 39 Nh6 Nh6 40 Nh6 Nh6 41 Nh6 Nh6 42 Nh6 Nh6 43 Nh6 Nh6 44 Nh6 Nh6

In the following example, we shall see that we don’t even have to wait for the middlegame to come across these types of material distribution.

**Adams – Ivanchuk**

**Dortmund 1998**

1 e4 e5 2 Nh3 Nh5 3 d4 cxd4 4 Nh4 Nh4 5 Nh5 Nh5 6 Nh5 Nh5 7 Nh5 Nh5 8 Nh5 Nh5 9 Nh5 Nh5 10 Nh5 Nh5

This idea was quite popular for White for a while, but the plan used by Black in this game has helped dampen the enthusiasm for this approach.

10...Nh4 Nh4 11 Nh4 Nh4 12 Nh4 Nh4 (D)

12...Nh4 Nh4

A superficial calculation of this move may lead to the conclusion that White is winning material after his next move.

13 Nh3 Nh3

The point behind Black’s previous move: Black sacrifices the queen for a rook and minor piece.

14 Nh5 Nh5

Let’s take stock of the situation: does Black really have enough for the queen? I think so, and I don’t think it’s difficult to reach this conclusion once you look at the positional factors. The open d-file will inevitably be controlled by Black, leaving White short of his strategic goal, which is to exchange one set of rooks to limit Black’s initiative. At the same time, Black has, thanks to his dark-squared bishop, the possibility of playing against the b2-pawn and White’s king. Black’s king is remarkably safe, leaving White searching for a weak point to play against.
White has just played 20 \( \text{b}5 \) pinning the c6-knight, and threatening 21 \( \text{\textit{d}} \text{x} \text{d}5 \) with devastating effect. Now 20...d4 would prevent \( \text{\textit{d}} \text{x} \text{d}5 \) but trouble then comes from another direction: 21 e6! fxe6 (21...\( \text{\textit{w}} \text{e}7 \) doesn’t help: 22 \( \text{\textit{w}} \text{f}7+ \) \( \text{\textit{w}} \text{x} \text{f}7 \) 23 \( \text{\textit{a}} \text{c}4! \) \( \text{\textit{w}} \text{x} \text{c}4 \) 24 \( \text{\textit{d}} \text{x} \text{g}6 \) \( \text{\textit{w}} \text{f}7 \) 25 \( \text{\textit{d}} \text{x} \text{h}8+ \), and White wins) 22 \( \text{\textit{a}} \text{c}4 \) \( \text{\textit{e}} \text{e}8 \) 23 \( \text{\textit{f}} \text{f}1 \), with a very uncomfortable position for Black. Facing this apparent misery, what should Black do?

20...\( \text{\textit{e}} \text{x} \text{e}5!! \)

This move just looks like a blunder, allowing...

21 \( \text{\textit{c}} \text{x} \text{c}6 \) \( \text{\textit{f}} \text{x} \text{f}4 \) 22 \( \text{\textit{f}} \text{f}6 \)
The next step for Black is to create another passed pawn. With two passed pawns, there will be no way for White to defend.

37 \( \text{w} \text{e} 1 \text{g} 8 \text{w} 38 \text{h} 4 \text{w} 8 \text{d} 7 \text{w} 39 \text{w} b 3 \text{a} 5 \text{w} 40 \text{a} 3 \\
\text{w} c 5 \text{w} 41 \text{b} 1 \text{d} 7 \text{w} 42 \text{c} 2 \text{e} 4 \text{w} 43 \text{h} 1 \text{w} 7 \text{c} 6 \text{w} 44 \\
\text{b} 1 \text{h} 8 \text{w} 45 \text{h} 1 \text{c} 2 \text{e} + 46 \text{c} 2 \text{e} 8 + 47 \text{d} 1 \\
\text{w} c 3 \text{w} 48 \text{w} d 5 \text{w} a 3 \text{w} 49 \text{w} x b 5 \\

Now that the passed pawn has emerged, it's only a matter of time. Note that at no point has Black allowed White any counterplay at all.

49...\text{w} a 1 + 50 \text{c} 2 \text{c} 8 + 51 \text{d} 3 \text{w} e 1 \text{w} 52 \\
\text{c} 2 \text{d} 1 + 53 \text{w} 2 \text{d} 3 + 54 \text{w} x d 1 \text{d} e 2 + 55 \\
\text{c} 1 \text{a} 3 56 \text{w} a 6 \text{b} 2 + 0-1

Throughout this book you will probably have noticed a fair amount of games by Kasparov. Although it isn't his positional chess he is renowned for, his games often display superb dynamic understanding of chess.

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We have reached a critical point in the game. White has just played 26 \( \text{h} 4 \) and is threatening \text{c} 4, putting the black queenside initiative to rest immediately. In addition, White may be able to create counterchances on the kingside if Black takes his attention away from the queenside operation. So how should Black, who is a pawn up, respond to this while still keeping the options open regarding playing for a win? Let's look at his possible choices:

a) 26...\text{c} 7 is best answered with 27 \( \text{h} x h 6 \) \text{w} h 6, when 28...b3 29 \( \text{w} x h 6 + \text{e} 8 \) 30 \\
\text{w} 8 + \text{e} 7 31 \text{w} h 4 + (Winants) gives White a perpetual. Black may be able to challenge White more with 28...\text{w} x d 5, but 29 \( \text{h} 1 \) followed by \text{e} 4 gives White sufficient chances.

b) 26...\text{w} x d 5 27 \text{c} 2! (this appears to offer White the best chances) 27...\text{w} a 5 (or 27...\text{w} e 6 \\
28 \text{w} x e 6 \text{f} x e 6 29 \text{w} x d 6, which is assessed as equal by Winants, and this seems correct in the light of 29...\text{c} 7 30 \text{b} 6 \text{d} 2; the materialistic \\
27...\text{w} b 7 28 \text{c} 4 \text{w} e 7 29 \text{d} 5, with some compensation for the pawns, may appeal to \\
some players, but not Kasparov) 28 \text{c} 4 \text{c} 7 \\
28...\text{w} c 7 29 \text{d} 5 gives White adequate compensation for the pawn) 29 \text{w} x h 6! \text{g} x h 6 30 \text{w} f 6 \\
\text{w} 5 (Black has to exercise some care; e.g., \\
30...\text{w} c 4 31 \text{w} x d 6 + \text{w} e 8 \) (also 31...\text{g} 7 32 \\
\text{g} 1 + \text{h} 7 33 \text{w} f 6 leaves White winning)} 32 \\
\text{g} 1 f 6 33 \text{g} 7 + - or 30...\text{w} e 8 31 \text{w} x d 6 \text{w} 5 \\
32 \text{b} 5 + ! \text{w} b 5 33 \text{g} 1, and Black is getting \\
mated) 31 \text{w} x h 6 + \text{c} 7, and now rather than 32 \\
\text{w} h 4 + as given by Winants, White should play \\
32 \text{w} g 5 + leading to a perpetual check.

Given these considerations, it isn't too difficult to start considering the move Kasparov chose in the game:

26...\text{w} e 7! 27 \text{c} 4 \text{w} c 4!

Since 27...\text{w} x d 5?? leaves the c8-rook hanging, the queen sacrifice is forced. This is of course what Kasparov had in mind when he played 26...\text{w} c 7!.

28 \text{c} 4 \text{c} 4 29 \text{w} d 3 \text{a} 8 30 \text{c} 4 \text{f} 4(D)

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Let's take stock of the situation. In terms of material, the game is fairly balanced: a queen for rook, bishop and pawn. White's king is safe behind his shield of pawns, and Black's similarly so; indeed he can even crawl up to f6 should it be necessary. The king-safety situation is particularly important when fighting against a queen and rook duo. Therefore, it will be in Black's interest to exchange White's remaining rook, after which Black will have reasonably good winning chances thanks to his
pawn-majority on the kingside and White’s weak pawns on d5 and f3.

31 \textit{Ke4??} \\

As described above, this is exactly what Black is hoping for. White should try to open up the position. Shirov mentions that 31 b3 axb3 32 axb3 $\textit{Kxc2}$ 33 $\textit{Wxc2}$ $\textit{Kxc2}$ 34 $\textit{Kxc2}$ g5 35 $\textit{gxd3}$ f5 leads to a level endgame.

31...$\textit{Kxe4}$ 32 fxe4 \\

The problems for White emerge immediately; e.g., 32 $\textit{Wxe4}$? loses to 32...$\textit{Kxh8}$, and White’s queen will soon be forced to defend the back rank: 33 a3 (or 33 b3? $\textit{Kf1}$+ mating) 33...b3 34 cxb3 axb3 35 $\textit{Wb1}$ $\textit{Kxh2}$ 36 $\textit{Wd1}$ $\textit{Kc2}$, and White can only wait for Black to finish him off. However, taking with the f-pawn gives Black a passed pawn on the g-file.

32...g5! (D)

33 a3 \\

This move cannot be avoided in the long run, and seeking active counterplay with 33 $\textit{Wa6}$ doesn’t do White any good either: 33...$\textit{Kh8}$ 34 a3 g4 35 $\textit{h7}$+ $\textit{Kf6}$ 36 $\textit{Kxb4}$ g3 37 $\textit{Wxd6}$+ $\textit{Kg7}$ (Winants), and Black’s g-pawn cannot be stopped. This line is quite similar to what we shall see in other lines too; Black can give up a couple of pawns, but the g-pawn, with some support from the rook and bishop, will decide the game.

33...bxa3 34 $\textit{Wxa6}$ $\textit{Kd8}$ 35 $\textit{Wb6}$ \\

White is trying to confuse the issue. Winants gives 35 bxa3 g4 36 $\textit{Kxa4}$ g3 37 $\textit{Ka7}$+ $\textit{Kf6}$ 38 $\textit{Wg1}$ $\textit{g8}$ 39 $\textit{Kg2}$ $\textit{Kh8}$ 40 $\textit{Kg1}$ $\textit{Kc2}$ 42 $\textit{Wh1}$ $\textit{g5}$! 43 $\textit{Wh7}$ g2+.

35...g4 36 c4 g3 37 c5 g2 38 cxd6+ $\textit{Kxd6}$ 39 $\textit{Wc7}$+ $\textit{Kf6}$! \\

Once more the strong g-pawn allows Black to give up a pawn or two, this even with a check.

But other moves will do it too; e.g., 39...$\textit{Kd7}$ 40 $\textit{Wc5}$+ $\textit{g8}$ 41 $\textit{Wc8}$+ $\textit{Kd8}$ 42 $\textit{Wc6}$+ $\textit{Kf8}$ 43 $\textit{Wc5}$+, and here Winants only gives 43...$\textit{Kg7}$ 44 $\textit{Wg1}$, but 43...$\textit{Kxh6}$! wins for Black like in the game.

40 $\textit{Wxd6}$+ \\

Or 40 $\textit{Wc5}$ $\textit{Kg7}$ 41 $\textit{Kg1}$ $\textit{Kg6}$, and White is done.

40...$\textit{Kg7}$ 0-1 \\

White ended his resistance in the light of 41 $\textit{Wc5}$ $\textit{Kh2}$ 42 d6 g1$\textit{W}$+ 43 $\textit{Wxg1}$+ $\textit{Kxg1}$ 44 d7 $\textit{Kb6}$.

The Queenless Middlegame

The queen is a powerful piece, and when it leaves the board it appears to leave a vacuum behind. In fact many less experienced players are concerned that if they exchange the queens, they allow the position to become drawish. However, with the departure of the queens, the positional factors are still in effect, such as king safety. I’m highlighting this feature because often one side gives up something in this department to get the queens off.

[Diagram 2]

Shirov – Bacrot \\
Hrokrin 2003

The queens have left the board, and Black’s king is sitting in the centre. Although the d-file is still closed, his king cannot feel safe where it is, something Shirov quickly manages to expose.

12...$\textit{Qxd3}$ 13 $\textit{bxc3}$ \\

As Macieja mentions in \textit{New In Chess Magazine}, Shirov could have considered 13 $\textit{Kxe5}$+ before recapturing on c3. It does appear that he has a point as attempts to dislodge the knight
from e5 will force Black to make other concessions; e.g., 13...\textit{\textasciitilde}e8 14 bxc3 f6 15 \textit{\textasciitilde}f3 \textit{\textasciitilde}c6 16 cxd5 \textit{\textasciitilde}xd5, and White has a nice position. However, I’m quite sure that Shirov wanted to keep the king on the more exposed d-file.

13...\textit{\textasciitilde}c6 14 \textit{\textasciitilde}b1 dxc4 15 d5??

This was probably what Shirov had in mind when he avoided 13 \textit{\textasciitilde}e5+. Khuzman mentions in \textit{ChessBase Magazine} that White has an alternative in 15 \textit{\textasciitilde}d1!? \textit{\textasciitilde}d5 16 \textit{\textasciitilde}b5 \textit{\textasciitilde}xf3 17 \textit{\textasciitilde}xf3 b6 18 \textit{\textasciitilde}d5 with the pair of bishops and better chances.

15...\textit{\textasciitilde}xd5 16 \textit{\textasciitilde}d1 \textit{\textasciitilde}e6 17 \textit{\textasciitilde}xb7 (D)

As Macieja points out, 17 \textit{\textasciitilde}b5? doesn’t offer White any hope of an advantage: 17...\textit{\textasciitilde}hd8 18 \textit{\textasciitilde}dxd5 \textit{\textasciitilde}xd5 19 \textit{\textasciitilde}xc4 \textit{\textasciitilde}d8 20 \textit{\textasciitilde}xb7, and now after 20...\textit{\textasciitilde}a5! 21 \textit{\textasciitilde}d4+ \textit{\textasciitilde}f6 22 \textit{\textasciitilde}d5 \textit{\textasciitilde}xb7 23 \textit{\textasciitilde}xb7 c5 Black has won an exchange and has every chance of winning.

17...\textit{\textasciitilde}ab8?!

Macieja states that Black could have equalized with 17...\textit{\textasciitilde}hd8 18 \textit{\textasciitilde}xc7 \textit{\textasciitilde}ac8, but even then I think White has slightly better chances after 19 \textit{\textasciitilde}xc8 \textit{\textasciitilde}xc8 20 \textit{\textasciitilde}g5+ \textit{\textasciitilde}xg5 21 \textit{\textasciitilde}xg5 \textit{\textasciitilde}e5 22 \textit{\textasciitilde}e3, but obviously it isn’t much after 22...\textit{\textasciitilde}b8. The text-move allows White some more options.

18 \textit{\textasciitilde}xc7 \textit{\textasciitilde}hc8 19 \textit{\textasciitilde}xc6+ \textit{\textasciitilde}xc6

Black cannot recapture with the bishop: 19...\textit{\textasciitilde}xc6? 20 \textit{\textasciitilde}xc4+ \textit{\textasciitilde}f5 21 \textit{\textasciitilde}d3+ \textit{\textasciitilde}e6 22 \textit{\textasciitilde}e1+ \textit{\textasciitilde}d7 23 \textit{\textasciitilde}f5+ \textit{\textasciitilde}d8 24 \textit{\textasciitilde}e5 (Khuzman), and White is winning.

20 \textit{\textasciitilde}d4+ \textit{\textasciitilde}d7 21 \textit{\textasciitilde}f5! \textit{\textasciitilde}b1?

This is definitely mistaken. Khuzman indicates that Black could have equalized with 21...\textit{\textasciitilde}b5! 22 \textit{\textasciitilde}g4 \textit{\textasciitilde}e8 23 \textit{\textasciitilde}xe7 \textit{\textasciitilde}xe7 24 a4 \textit{\textasciitilde}a5 25 \textit{\textasciitilde}a3+ \textit{\textasciitilde}f6 26 \textit{\textasciitilde}b4 \textit{\textasciitilde}c6, but now rather than 27 \textit{\textasciitilde}xa5 \textit{\textasciitilde}xa5 28 \textit{\textasciitilde}d4 with equal chances (Khuzman), White should delay capturing the rook and play 27 \textit{\textasciitilde}d4 immediately; Black’s pieces are tied up protecting each other, while White can improve his position; for example, 27...\textit{\textasciitilde}g6 28 f4 \textit{\textasciitilde}g7 29 \textit{\textasciitilde}d7, leaving White with some chances for success. However, Macieja has an interesting idea: 22 \textit{\textasciitilde}e3 \textit{\textasciitilde}d6 23 \textit{\textasciitilde}a3 \textit{\textasciitilde}f3 24 \textit{\textasciitilde}xf3 \textit{\textasciitilde}xd1+ 25 \textit{\textasciitilde}xd1 \textit{\textasciitilde}xa3 26 \textit{\textasciitilde}a4, and White will enter an endgame a pawn up.

After Black’s error, White reaches a won endgame:

22 \textit{\textasciitilde}xe7 \textit{\textasciitilde}xc1 23 \textit{\textasciitilde}xd5 \textit{\textasciitilde}xd1+ 24 \textit{\textasciitilde}xd1 \textit{\textasciitilde}d6 25 \textit{\textasciitilde}e3 \textit{\textasciitilde}d3 26 \textit{\textasciitilde}a4+ \textit{\textasciitilde}d6 27 \textit{\textasciitilde}xc4+ \textit{\textasciitilde}c5 28 \textit{\textasciitilde}e3

White eventually won the endgame.

A superior pawn-structure can be a good reason to take the queens off the board in order to reduce potential counterplay.

\begin{center}
\begin{tikzpicture}
  \node (W) at (0,0) {W};
  \node (B) at (-2,0) {B};
\end{tikzpicture}
\end{center}

\textbf{Short – Gelfand}

Novgorod 1996

In this Sicilian structure, White has nearly completed his development, while Black still has a few moves left to make before he is entirely ready for battle. As we can see, Black has played ...e5 to kick the knight back to f3. This has resulted in a couple of things: the light squares around the e5-, d6- and b6-pawns have been weakened and the d6-pawn is backward. White’s weakest point at the present time is the e-pawn, which will need support once Black plays ...\textit{\textasciitilde}b7 and is ready to follow up with ...\textit{\textasciitilde}c5. If Black is allowed to play this undisturbed, White’s piece set-up will appear rather clumsy and Black shouldn’t have too many problems.
How should White meet Black’s plan? One idea immediately springs to mind: with Black having weakened the light squares, White’s light-squared bishop belongs on the a2-g8 diagonal, but is blocked by the queen. Given that White’s queen soon will have to face an attack from a knight on c5, the answer is already at hand:

12 \textit{\textbf{W}}\textit{c}4! \textit{\textbf{W}}\textit{xc}4?

Black accommodates White’s plan. With the exchange, a couple of issues for White are resolved: the light-squared bishop arrives on the desired diagonal and White’s pieces all of a sudden have an easier time guarding the structure against Black’s pressure, in particular against the e4-pawn. Short mentions White is better after 12...\textit{\textbf{W}}\textit{b}8 13 \textit{\textbf{A}}\textit{fd}1, but instead 12...\textit{\textbf{W}}\textit{d}8?! (Kuzman) is quite interesting; e.g., 13 \textit{\textbf{Q}}\textit{d}2 \textit{\textbf{Cc}}5 14 a5 b5 15 \textit{\textbf{W}}\textit{b}4 \textit{\textbf{W}}\textit{c}7 16 \textit{\textbf{A}}\textit{fd}1 \textit{\textbf{A}}\textit{e}6, and Black’s pieces are nicely coordinated, and the chances are fairly balanced.

13 \textit{\textbf{A}}\textit{xc}4 \textit{\textbf{B}}\textit{b}7 14 \textit{\textbf{Q}}\textit{d}2 \textit{\textbf{B}}\textit{ac}8 15 \textit{\textbf{A}}\textit{fd}1?! (\textit{D})

I like this move, but at the same time, it’s wrong. Short preferred it to 15 f3 on account of 15...d5! 16 \textit{\textbf{A}}\textit{xd}5 \textit{\textbf{A}}\textit{xd}5 17 \textit{\textbf{A}}\textit{xd}5 \textit{\textbf{A}}\textit{f}6 and now 18 \textit{\textbf{A}}\textit{xb}6 (or 18 b3 b5) 18...\textit{\textbf{A}}\textit{xd}5 19 \textit{\textbf{A}}\textit{xd}5 \textit{\textbf{A}}\textit{xd}5 with compensation for the pawn, but I believe White can improve with 18 d6!: e.g., 18...\textit{\textbf{A}}\textit{xd}6 19 \textit{\textbf{A}}\textit{xb}6, and White seems to be doing quite well: 19...\textit{\textbf{A}}\textit{d}5 20 \textit{\textbf{A}}\textit{f}2 or 19...\textit{\textbf{A}}\textit{d}5 20 \textit{\textbf{A}}\textit{d}3; in both cases Black doesn’t appear to have enough for the pawn.

15...\textit{\textbf{B}}\textit{c}7?!?

Short gives 15...\textit{\textbf{Q}}\textit{g}4!? as an alternative for Black, although he believes White is slightly better after 16 \textit{\textbf{A}}\textit{d}5 \textit{\textbf{A}}\textit{xe}3 17 fxe3; one could argue that the advantage is very slight indeed. Now White’s advantage is hard to miss.

16 f3 \textit{\textbf{W}}\textit{fc}8 17 b3

White is now taking absolute control over the light squares by cementing the position of the light-squared bishop on c4. If the position were more open and Black could activate his dark-squared bishop, this strategy could have had consequences. Now Black’s counterplay is just being shut down.

17...h5 18 \textit{\textbf{A}}\textit{f}2 \textit{\textbf{A}}\textit{f}8 19 \textit{\textbf{A}}\textit{f}1 \textit{\textbf{g}}6

The white knight is on the way to e3, consolidating White’s control over the light squares, so Black could have considered something as radical as sacrificing the exchange with 19...\textit{\textbf{A}}\textit{xc}4, but after 20 bxc4 \textit{\textbf{B}}\textit{xc}4 21 \textit{\textbf{B}}\textit{d}3 (Short), Black hasn’t achieved much.

20 \textit{\textbf{B}}\textit{e}3 \textit{\textbf{A}}\textit{e}8 21 \textit{\textbf{A}}\textit{f}1 \textit{\textbf{A}}\textit{f}8 (\textit{D})

22 \textit{\textbf{A}}\textit{d}2

Now and on the next few moves, White should have opted for h3 followed by g4 with an even bigger advantage. The plan White chooses in the game also gives him a solid advantage, but taking control of the kingside would have shut Black down across the board.

22...\textit{\textbf{A}}\textit{e}7 23 \textit{\textbf{A}}\textit{ad}1?! \textit{\textbf{A}}\textit{a}8 24 \textit{\textbf{A}}\textit{cd}5?? \textit{\textbf{A}}\textit{xd}5 25 \textit{\textbf{A}}\textit{xd}5 b5

Black pushes for counterplay at the first given chance, and there really isn’t anything better: e.g., 25...\textit{\textbf{A}}\textit{xd}5 26 \textit{\textbf{A}}\textit{xd}5 \textit{\textbf{A}}\textit{f}6 27 \textit{\textbf{A}}\textit{md}2 b5 28 \textit{\textbf{A}}\textit{a}1 ± (Short).

26 \textit{\textbf{A}}\textit{a}1 \textit{\textbf{A}}\textit{ac}8 27 axb5 axb5 28 \textit{\textbf{A}}\textit{xb}7 \textit{\textbf{A}}\textit{xb}7 29 \textit{\textbf{A}}\textit{d}5 \textit{\textbf{A}}\textit{f}8

Exchanges don’t help Black either; after 29...\textit{\textbf{A}}\textit{g}5 30 \textit{\textbf{A}}\textit{e}3 \textit{\textbf{A}}\textit{xe}3 31 \textit{\textbf{A}}\textit{xe}3, Black still has the soft d5-square, and the d6-pawn now is permanently weak too.

30 c3 f5 31 \textit{\textbf{A}}\textit{da}2 \textit{\textbf{A}}\textit{f}7

Everything is horrible for Black; 31...\textit{\textbf{A}}\textit{xe}4 32 fxe4 \textit{\textbf{A}}\textit{c}5 33 \textit{\textbf{A}}\textit{xc}5 dxc5 34 \textit{\textbf{A}}\textit{a}6 leaves Black
facing a powerhouse knight and an invasion on the sixth rank. Black has to try to exchange the knights, while avoiding the exchange of White's bishop for the knight.

32 \textit{xa7} \textit{xb8} 33 \textit{xb7} \textit{xb7} 34 \textit{a8} \textit{e7}!
35 \textit{xe2} \textit{f6} 36 \textit{xf6} \textit{xf6} 37 \textit{d3} \textit{e6} 38
\textit{g8} \textit{f7} 39 \textit{c8} \textit{e6} 40 \textit{e3} \textit{d7}?

Black should try 40...\textit{f6}, although after 41 c4 \textit{xc4+} 42 \textit{xc4} White has every chance of winning the endgame.

41 \textit{g8} \textit{f6}
Both 41...\textit{f7} 42 \textit{b8} and 41...\textit{f4} 42 \textit{f2} g5
43 \textit{b8} are winning for White.

42 \textit{xg6} f4 43 \textit{f2} \textit{f7} 44 \textit{h6} \textit{g7} 45
\textit{xb5}

White went on to win.

Just as in positions with queens on the board, it is crucial that you keep fuelling the initiative, as your advantage will otherwise slowly but surely disappear.

\textbf{W}

\textbf{B}

\textit{Timman – Shaked}

\textit{Hoogeveen 1998}

\textbf{Question:} Evaluate the position and lay out a plan for White.

Black has a well-placed knight on d5, while White's pieces are aligned to influence the action on the queenside. In addition, Black's king isn't particularly safe on the queenside, and therefore it makes sense to start the battle there. Although neither side is fully developed, White does best to break open the position and then develop his pieces to the squares where they make the most sense.

17 c4! \textit{bxc4} 18 \textit{xc4} \textit{b5} 19 b3 \textit{b4}

Ideally Black would have liked to play something like 19...\textit{xc4} 20 \textit{bxc4} to close the c-file

and bring a level of safety to his king. However, this exchange would force the knight away from its stronghold on d5, open the b-file and hand the pair of bishops to White. Therefore, Black will have to forego such ideas for now.

20 \textit{b2} f6 21 a3 \textit{c5} 22 \textit{xc1}! \textit{xb8}

Black is in no position to create complications without his king-safety issue being taken care of first. Therefore 22...\textit{df4} is insufficient due to 23 \textit{cx5}! \textit{xb6} 24 \textit{xf7} (24 a4!? is also very good) 24...\textit{d2} 25 \textit{xc5} \textit{xc5} 26 \textit{c3}
\textit{dd8} 27 \textit{a5}, when Black's king is stuck in the centre, while White wins back the sacrificed material.

23 \textit{e5} \textit{e8} 24 a4 \textit{e6} 25 \textit{d3} \textit{dd6} 26
\textit{d4! (D)}

\textit{B}

White prepares \textit{c5}, which will force Black to exchange his dark-squared bishop for the white knight. Note how White is playing around Black's d5-knight. It looks like it's a good piece, but has remarkably little influence on the play that follows. Although it isn't entirely clear, Black should perhaps exchange a rook at this point, as having two rooks appears to be to White's advantage when having to break through. Usually when defending a difficult position, exchanging material will ease the defensive task.

26...\textit{g6} 27 \textit{c5} \textit{e5} 28 \textit{xc5} \textit{c6} 29 \textit{b4}
\textit{hc8}

Black is trying to stop White's breakthrough on the queenside, while at the same time threatening to play ...a5.

30 \textit{a5} \textit{d3}

Black wants to end any prospects White may have to break through on the queenside, but at the same he fails to consider that the weakest link in the pawn-structure, the e6-pawn,
is running out of suitable defenders, while ...e5 weakens the light squares. Therefore it would be better to play something like 30...f7 followed by ...g5.

31 Rfe1 Rd8 32 Qd1 Qb5 33 h4
Before proceeding, White grabs a little extra space on the kingside.

33...Qc8 34 Qd4 Qd7?
This loses a pawn, but the situation wasn’t happy anyway: 34...a4 35 Qe4 e5 36 Qxe2 is clearly better for White.

35 Qe6 Qc7
Or 35...e5 36 Qg4, which also wins for White.

36 Qe3 Qd5 37 Qxe6 Qxe6 38 Qxe6 Qf4
39 Qe4 1-0

Faced with the threats Qxf4 and Qg4, Black chose to resign.

With a symmetrical pawn distribution, the position of the pieces is of particularly high importance, and one must also consider where they may go and where they can stay.

and the one on a5 is almost out of play. White’s pieces have yet to be developed, but combined with pawn advances they can be developed to more favourable squares with tempo. Therefore I am of the opinion that White has a small but clear advantage.

The first step is to kick the knight away from c4 to the less active and less attractive b6-square.

23 b3 Qb6 24 Qe3
Karpov prefers to keep Black’s knight on a5, but an argument can also be made for 24 Qd2 Qb7 25 Qe3 Qc8 26 Qh3, after which Black’s pieces have a hard time getting into play and coordinating properly.

24...Qab8 25 Qg3 Qe6
White’s knight on f5 is becoming a nuisance, particularly with the prospect of its partner on g3 getting ready to join it. However, chasing the knight away only brings more problems; for example, 25...g6 weakens the dark squares far too much; e.g., 26 Qh6+ Qg7?! 27 Qg4 Qc3 28 Qd1 and Black’s problems become impossible to solve.

26 Qe4!
This prevents Black from playing 26...Qxf5 on account of 27 Qxf6+ gxf6 28 Qxf5, and at the same time White threatens to exchange on f6, leaving White with the bishop-pair in an open position – a definite advantage.

26...Qd5 27 Qxf6+ Qxf6 28 Qc5 Qfe8 29 Qd6 Qd8 30 f4
White got the bishop-pair and is now attempting to push Black even further backwards. This is a typical way of using the initiative.

30...Qb7 31 Qxb7 Qxb7 32 f5 Qd5 33 Qbd1 Qbd7 (D)

At first glance this position doesn’t appear particularly easy to evaluate. The queens and the c-, d- and e-pawns have been exchanged. Black’s minor pieces are actively posted, while White’s pieces, with the notable exceptions of the rook on e1 and the knight on f5, look fairly passive. So, Black is better, right?! Not so fast, please. Before a correct evaluation can be made, we have to look at how the pieces are placed; both black knights and the d5-bishop are on squares where they cannot reasonably be expected to stay. The knights can be kicked away,
Karpov doesn’t make any particular attempts to force events. Characteristically, my computer likes the move 34 \textit{d}e7 with the idea 34...\textit{e}e8 35 \textit{x}xf6 \textit{x}xel+ 36 \textit{x}xel gxf6 thanks to Black’s weakened kingside structure. However, the decision to keep the bishop-pair to ‘get something out of it later’ is quite routine for more experienced players, especially when, as in this case, it isn’t clear how White will exploit his opponent’s damaged pawn-structure.

34...\textit{h}6 35 \textit{h}h2 \textit{c}c8

Question: Can Black play 35...\textit{x}xb3 here?

Yes, but he is right not to do so. Although Black gets two pawns for the exchange after 36 \textit{x}xd7 \textit{x}xd7 37 \textit{e}e7 \textit{x}xc2 38 \textit{x}xd8 \textit{x}xf5, the endgame that has arisen is very unattractive for Black: his knight and bishop work notoriously poorly together, while a rook and bishop are known to work very well in each other’s company. The fact that the pawns are split over two wings is also in White’s favour.

36 \textit{b}4 \textit{a}5

Black reduces the battlefront on the queenside, a common defensive plan, which can be considered as long as the remaining pawns don’t become weaker.

37 \textit{g}4 \textit{a}xb4 38 \textit{a}xb4 \textit{b}c4

Black invites an exchange of at least one pair of rooks. However, I find Karpov’s decision rather surprising. Instead of exchanging just one rook and taking a fair-sized advantage after, for example, 39 \textit{x}xd7 \textit{x}xd7 40 \textit{d}d4, he decides to exchange both rooks. However, he must have regarded his chances of winning, with the bishop-pair and kingside space advantage, as very good.

39 \textit{e}d1 \textit{e}d8 40 \textit{x}xd7 \textit{x}xd7 41 \textit{x}xd7 \textit{d}d7 42 \textit{d}d6!

An annoying move for Black; he will need his king for the defence of his b-pawn, but after this move, he will have to play ...f6 to get his king over there, but this will leave his kingside pawns on dark squares, the colour of the c5-bishop. This fact will make it advantageous for White to offer an exchange of the light-squared bishop, an exchange that Black cannot allow.

42...\textit{b}6 43 \textit{g}3 \textit{d}5 44 \textit{f}4 \textit{c}4 45 \textit{c}5 \textit{g}2 46 \textit{d}3 f6

Black can’t play 46...\textit{x}xh3 due to 47 \textit{g}3, trapping the bishop.

47 \textit{h}4 \textit{e}6 48 \textit{h}5 \textit{f}7 49 \textit{e}4 \textit{d}7

As mentioned before, the exchange of the light-squared bishops favours White. As an illustration, I can offer the following variation: 49...\textit{x}e4 50 \textit{x}e4 \textit{e}5 51 \textit{d}d5 \textit{e}8 52 \textit{d}d6 \textit{x}g4 53 \textit{c}6, and once White gets his hands on the b-pawn, the game is over.

50 \textit{d}d4! (D)

The simplicity of this strong move is amazing: the bishop has served its purpose on c5 by forcing ...f6. Now it initially has to take the e3- and e5-squares away from the knight, thus preventing threats against White’s g-pawn and at the same time, it clears the way for the king to close in on its target, the b-pawn.

50...\textit{e}7 51 \textit{a}8 \textit{e}8 52 \textit{e}4 \textit{f}7 53 \textit{a}7 \textit{d}7 54 \textit{d}4 \textit{e}5 55 \textit{d}5 \textit{c}6+?

Since Black loses promptly in the game, it’s worthwhile examining Black’s alternatives at this juncture:

a) 55...\textit{x}xd5 56 \textit{x}xd5 \textit{x}xg4 57 \textit{x}d4 \textit{h}2 58 \textit{c}5 \textit{f}3 59 \textit{f}2 \textit{d}2 60 \textit{x}b5 \textit{e}4 61 \textit{c}5 \textit{g}3 62 \textit{a}6, and White is winning.

b) 55...\textit{e}8! is Black’s toughest defence, but even so, I think White can win with 56 \textit{d}8 57 \textit{f}8 \textit{x}g4 58 \textit{f}3 \textit{e}5 59 \textit{d}1 \textit{f}7 60 \textit{b}3 \textit{g}5 61 \textit{g}7 \textit{e}7 62 \textit{x}h6 \textit{e}5 63 \textit{x}g5 \textit{x}g5 64 \textit{e}5 \textit{f}8 65 \textit{f}6! (Black appears to be able to save himself after 65 \textit{f}6 g4 66 \textit{d}5 g3 67 \textit{g}5 \textit{e}2 68 \textit{f}4 \textit{d}3 69 \textit{x}g3 \textit{f}5) 65...\textit{e}2 (or 65...\textit{g}4 66 \textit{f}4 \textit{f}7 67 \textit{d}1 \textit{g}3 68 \textit{x}g3, and White wins) 66 \textit{e}6 \textit{d}3 67 \textit{g}4 \textit{f}7 68 \textit{h}5+ 69 \textit{f}8 69 \textit{e}6 \textit{c}4+ 70 \textit{f}5, and White should win, although there is still some technique required.

56 \textit{x}c6+ \textit{x}c6 57 \textit{c}5 \textit{e}4 58 \textit{e}4 1-0

Black’s kingside pawns will fall. A beautiful and powerful display by Karpov, illustrating the use and strength of the bishop-pair.
Should I? Shouldn’t I?

So what should you consider when your opponent offers to exchange queens and what should you think about before offering to exchange queens yourself?

As mentioned earlier in this chapter, you have to consider who benefits most from the exchange, and this is best determined by weighing the strength and weaknesses of the position of the king, the pawn-structure and the remaining pieces, just as if the queens were on the board.

Let’s look at some practical examples.

White already had the better chances prior to this move, but this is not the right square for the rook. Gelfand instead suggests that Black play 20...\(\text{c}e7\), bringing the king to the centre; his line runs 21 b4 \(\text{c}e6\) and now 22 \(\text{c}e2\) \(\text{c}e8\) with a minimal edge for White, but he can improve by 22 \(\text{c}a4\), with a solid advantage; for example, 22...\(\text{d}d6\) 23 \(\text{c}xe6\) fxe6 24 \(\text{c}c7+\) \(\text{d}d7\) 25 \(\text{d}d1\) \(\text{d}8\) 26 \(\text{b}c2\) \(\text{d}d6\) 27 \(\text{c}b2\) \(\text{c}e7\) 28 \(\text{d}d3\) ±. Another suggestion by Gelfand is 20...\(\text{c}e4\)!, which appears to be best met with 21 b4 \(\text{c}x3\) 22 \(\text{c}x3\) \(\text{c}e6\) 23 \(\text{c}d3\), leaving White with reasonably good winning chances.

21 b4 \(\text{c}e6\)

On 21...\(\text{c}e4\), Gelfand gives 22 \(\text{c}a4\) intending f3.

22 \(\text{c}e2\) \(\text{c}e7\) 23 a4!

White employs the theory of two weaknesses, and intends to fix Black’s a-pawn on a6, thus creating a permanent weakness there in addition to the isolated d-pawn.

23...\(\text{d}d8\) 24 a5 \(\text{c}c6\)

Black has to play actively. A move like 24...b5 would leave Black with a terrible bishop on b7 and no counterplay.

25 \(\text{c}c3\)

White doesn’t achieve anything after 25 axb6 \(\text{c}a4\) 26 \(\text{c}d2\) \(\text{c}x b6\) (Ftačník).

25...\(\text{e} e8\) 26 \(\text{f} f1\) \(\text{c}xa5\).

As on the 24th move, ...b5 would leave Black with a bishop and counterplay that both leave a lot to be desired; e.g., 26...b5 27 \(\text{c}e2\) \(\text{c}c6\) 28 \(\text{c}x c6\) \(\text{c}x c6\) 29 \(\text{c}x c6\) \(\text{c}x c6\) 30 \(\text{c}d4\) ±. Nor does 26...\(\text{c}a7\) improve the situation after 27 b5!.

27 \(\text{b}x a5\) \(\text{b}b7\) (D)

Gelfand thinks that Black didn’t make the right decision here by exchanging the queens as White has more room to manoeuvre his pieces around, and prefers 18...\(\text{c}e7\). However, also here, White seems to have the better chances: 19 b4 \(\text{c}e6\) 20 \(\text{c}e3\) ± (Ftačník) or 19 e3!? \(\text{c}e4\) 20 b4 \(\text{c}e6\) 21 \(\text{c}e5\) with a better game for White. Generally speaking, with weaknesses in your pawn-structure, such as an isolated pawn, you have to be extra careful when considering an exchange of queens, as the queen may well be the piece that secures the necessary counterplay that counterbalances the structural deficit.

19 gxf4 \(\text{c}f8\) 20 e3 \(\text{c}d6\)??

Black has an isolated pawn on d5, which White has blockaded with a knight. All Black’s pieces are actively placed, and provided Black doesn’t make any mistakes he shouldn’t have any problems maintaining the equilibrium.

18 \(\text{c}f4!\) \(\text{c}xf4\)!!

Gelfand thinks that Black didn’t make the right decision here by exchanging the queens as White has more room to manoeuvre his pieces around, and prefers 18...\(\text{c}e7\). However, also here, White seems to have the better chances: 19 b4 \(\text{c}e6\) 20 \(\text{c}e3\) ± (Ftačník) or 19 e3!? \(\text{c}e4\) 20 b4 \(\text{c}e6\) 21 \(\text{c}e5\) with a better game for White. Generally speaking, with weaknesses in your pawn-structure, such as an isolated pawn, you have to be extra careful when considering an exchange of queens, as the queen may well be the piece that secures the necessary counterplay that counterbalances the structural deficit.

28 \(\text{a}a1\)!

According to Gelfand, this was the most difficult move in the game. As he pointed out, the
a5-pawn is the key to White’s success, and he therefore followed Nimzowitsch’s principle of overprotecting such a pawn.

28...\text{Ec}7?!

I don’t know if Karpov realized that this was a critical moment of the game. His move allows White to obtain a clear advantage, whereas the advantage would have been less obvious and much harder to exploit if Karpov had played differently at this point. Let’s take a look at the alternatives:

a) 28...\text{Dc}e4?!, amazingly, is met by 29 \text{Dd}b5! \text{Dx}b5 30 \text{Dxe}4 (Gelfand) 30...\text{Cc}6 31 \text{Dxd}5, when White has every chance of winning the endgame.

b) 28...\text{Dc}e6 29 \text{Dxe}6+ \text{f}xe6 30 \text{Dd}b1 gives White somewhat better chances mainly due to his structural advantage and better bishop (all of Black’s pawns are on the bishop’s colour).

c) 28...\text{Dd}e7 is given as best by Gelfand, but he didn’t analyse it any further. Here 29 \text{Dg}2 to put pressure on the d-pawn seems logical, and the same goes for Black’s reply 29...\text{Dc}6. Now 30 \text{f}5?! \text{Dxd}4 31 \text{Dxd}4 \text{gx}f5 32 \text{Dxd}5+ \text{Dxd}5 33 \text{Dxd}5 \text{Dxd}5 34 \text{Dxd}5 gives White an edge, but is it enough to hope for a win? Another idea is the immediate 29 \text{f}5, after which 29...\text{Dd}7 30 \text{Dd}3 \text{Dg}4 31 \text{Dd}a4 \text{Dxa}4 32 \text{Dxa}4 \text{Dc}e5 33 \text{Dd}e2 also leaves White with an advantage.

29 \text{Dd}a2! \text{Dd}7

White’s knight was obviously heading for b4 to apply pressure against Black’s a-pawn, and Black had to prevent this. 29...\text{Dc}6 also runs into a little tactic that wins a pawn for White: 30 \text{Dxc}6 \text{Dxc}6 31 \text{Dxa}6! \text{Dxa}4 32 \text{Dc}c1 \text{Dxc}1+ 33 \text{Dxc}1, with good winning chances.

30 \text{f}3 \text{Dc}6 31 \text{Dd}b1 \text{Dc}7

Black’s position isn’t much fun to play, but Karpov is a patient defender, a trait that has saved him on many occasions throughout his career. The idea behind his last move is to work on the weakest point in White’s pawn-structure, and in event of ...\text{Dxd}4, White will be more or less forced to take back with the e-pawn, making his pawn-structure look worse than Black’s.

32 \text{Dc}b4 \text{Dc}5

This isn’t really what Black had in mind, but unfortunately 32...\text{Dxd}4 33 \text{exd}4 is even worse; e.g., 33...\text{Dxa}7 (33...\text{Dxe}6 34 \text{Dxa}6 leads to the same) 34 \text{Dxa}6 \text{Dxa}6 35 \text{Dxa}6 \text{Dxa}6 36 \text{Dc}b6 \text{Dxb}6 37 \text{axb}6 \text{Dc}6 38 \text{Dc}1, and White wins; another example of a rook outclassing knight and bishop.

33 \text{Dc}1 \text{Dc}7 34 \text{Dc}b1

Black’s pieces are completely tied up, and as Gelfand pointed out in his annotations, the fact that Black was in time-trouble didn’t exactly help his situation.

34...\text{Dd}7 35 \text{Db}6 (D)

35...\text{Dc}7?!

Not a fortunate decision, but the alternatives do not look particularly great either: 35...\text{Dxb}1 36 \text{Dxb}1 \text{h}5 37 \text{Df}2, transferring the king to the queenside, or 35...\text{f}6?! (with the idea 36 \text{Dxb}7 \text{Dxb}7 37 \text{Dxa}6 \text{Dxa}5 and reasonable drawing chances for Black) 36 \text{Db}4, both leave White clearly better.

36 \text{Dc}5 \text{Df}7

White penetrates even more easily after 36...\text{Dxe}5 37 \text{f}xe5 \text{Dd}8 38 \text{Dd}b6 (Ftačnik).

37 \text{Dc}3 \text{f}6 38 \text{Dxd}7 \text{Dxd}7 39 \text{Db}8!

Actually the simplest continuation, but White also has excellent chances of winning after 39 \text{Dc}b1 \text{Dd}6 40 \text{f}5?!

39...\text{Dc}6 40 \text{Dxc}7+ \text{Dxc}7 41 \text{Df}2 \text{Df}7 42 \text{Df}5 \text{g}5 43 \text{Dc}e1

Please note how all of Black’s pieces are more or less completely stalemated if he does not accept loss of material. White’s plan is to move his king to c5, at which point the threats become impossible to parry.

43...\text{Df}5 44 \text{Dxb}5 \text{Dxb}5

The endgame after 44...\text{Dxb}5 45 \text{Dc}7 \text{Dd}7 46 \text{Dd}2 (Ftačnik) isn’t any better.

45 \text{Dxb}5 \text{a}x\text{b}5 46 \text{Dxb}5

Having entered a pure rook ending, I shall not add any further comments as it is outside our topic, but for your enjoyment, I shall give you the rest of the game:
46...c6 47 dxe5 cxd5 48 d2 a3 49 c2
dxe3 50 b2 a2+ 51 b3 xh2 52 a6 h1
53 b4 a1 54 a5 b1+ 55 c5 b8 56 a7
a8 57 c6 h5 58 b7 xa7+ 59 a7 d6
60 b6 h4 61 c5 h3 62 c2 e5 63 h2
dx5 64 xh3 d4 65 c5 f5 66 d4 g4 67
fxg4 fxg4 68 h8 f3 69 d3 1-0

The idea of exposing Black’s weaknesses
by exchanging the queens with f4 and thus
reducing Black’s counterplay shouldn’t have
come as a novel idea to Karpov, who used a
very similar idea in a game nearly a decade
earlier:

![Chess Diagram]

Karpov – A. Sokolov
Linares Ct (2) 1987

23 f4!
Black’s counterchances are based on the
active play surrounding the isolated pawn. With
the queens off the board, Black’s counterchances
are of less significance, whereas if White played
23 e3, then Black would have been at least equal.

23...xf4 24 xf4 c8

The bishop has nothing further to do on a6,
while White was threatening to start penetrating
with d7-c6, and in the future f5 may become
annoying.

25 g2!
There is no reason for White to exchange the
light-squared bishops. Black’s bishop really
only has one good square, d7, whereas White’s
can possibly be used to apply pressure against
the d5-pawn or work on Black’s weak light
squares on the queenside.

25...d7 26 c3 a8 27 d1

Small problems are already emerging; White
intends to play f1-a6, and if this is not stopped,
Black will not be able to hold the c-file due to the
pin on the c5-bishop.

27 f6 28 f1 xd4

Black hopes to escape in the endgame, but
some problems remain: White has the bishop-
pair, while Black has an isolated d-pawn, and
his queenside pawns are vulnerable.

29 xd4 xc2 30 xc2 c8 31 xc8+
xc8 32 c2 f5 33 f1 f7 34 e1 e6 35
f3 d6 36 d2 d7 37 a4

We shall leave the game here, but please note
how since the rook exchanges White has forced
the knight back to a more passive square by us-
ing his king and f-pawn, and with his last move
White has taken another step to lock the queen-
side pawns on dark squares. Positional play is
the thread that goes through the entire game,
from the very first moves to long into the end-
game. All that remains to be said is that Karpov
won in another 24 moves.

![Chess Diagram]

Leko – Khalifman
Budapest (6) 2000

**Question:** Does offering an exchange of
queens with 14 f3 have any merit?

Yes. This is actually a position that has been
played a fair number of times between grand-
masters. At first glance it doesn’t look like
Black should experience any significant prob-
lems. White has an c-pawn that is a bit isolated,
being so far advanced compared to its col-
leagues, while Black’s backward pawn on the
c-file can be advanced relatively easily. But
Black’s problem right now isn’t so much the
pawn-structure as it is the coordination of his
minor pieces.

14 f3 xd1 15 xd1 g4?!
Black is already bringing problems unto himself. In Anand-Greenfeld, Haifa rpd 2000, White also obtained the better chances after 15...0-0 16 .gb5 h6 17 .hd7+ 3h8 18 3xe6 3xe6 19 3e4 3ad8 20 3e3 3g5! 21 3xg5 hxg5 22 3f1 g6 23 3ac1. But as we shall see, this was to be preferred over the continuation chosen by Black in the game. Oddly enough, the Anand-Greenfeld game was played prior to this one, so it is rather surprising that Khalifman, who usually is well-prepared, wasn’t familiar with an important game in the line he had prepared.

16 3e3 0-0 (D)

17 h3!?  

White invites Black to damage the white pawn-structure at the cost of the pair of bishops. But even if Black declined the invitation, Black’s 15th move would show its ugly side: 17...3h5 18 3ac1 3e6, and now White can penetrate Black’s position with 19 3d7 as a result of the light-squared bishop’s departure from the c8-h3 diagonal.

17...3xf3?! 18 gxf3  

Before you continue, take a moment to evaluate the position and lay out a plan for White.

Black’s nice-looking knight on c5 cannot stay there for long, and that in itself is a defeat for Black. At the same time, White has the pair of bishops, potential play against the somewhat weak queenside pawns, and he will be able to start pushing his kingside pawns. All in all, White has a clear advantage.

To put a plan together for White isn’t too difficult either; as Mikhailovski outlined in ChessBase Magazine: “He plays f4, then brings his king to f3 and prepares the advance f5 or with the king on g2, first f5, then f4 and king to f3.”

All the while Black has a very hard time generating sufficient counterplay to match White’s pawn advances.

18...3fd8 19 f4 g6 20 3g2 3a4?!  

A rather desperate measure from Black. In an attempt to eliminate one of White’s bishops and complicate an otherwise rather unpleasant position, he entirely wrecks his own pawn-structure on the queenside. A better option is 20...3e6, although Leko gives 21 f5 gxf5 22 3xf5 c5 ±.

21 3xd8+ 3xd8 22 3xa4 3xa4 23 3c1  

A simple recipe against Black’s many weak pawns: attack them. With a more active king and Black’s dreadfully weak pawn-structure, a position like this should be a fairly simple matter for a player like Leko.

23...c5 (D)

24 3d4  

Black invites White to win a pawn in return for the exchange of the dark-squared bishops.

Question: Should White take the pawn, or is there something better?

Taking the pawn would in my opinion be a serious mistake. Aside from protecting the c5-pawn, Black’s bishop isn’t contributing, whereas White’s bishop not only attacks the c5-pawn, but it also protects the doubled f-pawns and keeps the black rook away from d2 and d4. In addition, Black will obtain considerable counterplay along the b-file in the rook ending. With more than one target to play against, it isn’t difficult to decide against taking the c5-pawn and go for 24 3c4 as Leko chose in the game. Looking at Black’s alternatives, only 23...3d7 emerges as a possibility, but this is quite passive and potential counterplay along the b-file is no longer an option, and this would hardly have satisfied an active player like Khalifman.
24 \text{Ke}4

Mikhailovski gives 24 \text{Kxe}5 \text{Kxe}5 (24...\text{Kc}8 25 \text{Ke}3 \text{Kxc}1 26 \text{Kxd}1 obviously leaves White with a winning endgame) 25 \text{Kxc}5 \text{Kd}2 26 \text{Kxa}5 \text{Kxb}2 27 \text{Kxa}4 \text{Kb}6 28 \text{Kf}3, and although White has an extra pawn, the win is far from certain.

24...\text{a}3

24...\text{b}8 may be a better option for obtaining counterplay; e.g., 25 \text{Kxa}4 \text{Kxb}2 26 \text{Kxa}6 \text{c}4 (26...\text{h}5 is suggested as a possible improvement by Mikhailovski, but the win for White seems fairly trivial after 27 \text{a}8+ \text{g}7 28 \text{a}4 \text{a}2 29 \text{a}5 \text{a}4 30 \text{a}6, and unless he does something radical, Black will not be able to stop White's king from marching across the board to support the a-pawn) 27 f5 \text{gxf}5 28 \text{Kf}6 \text{b}8 29 \text{Ke}6 \text{f}8 30 \text{Ke}8 \text{xf}8 31 \text{Kxc}4 with good winning chances for White. After the text-move, White will have a fairly clear-cut way to win without allowing Black any kind of counterplay.

25 \text{b}3!

A strong move, yet an easy decision to make: the counterplay and confusion on the queenside are prevented, and the a3-pawn is fixed on a dark square, ripe to be picked up by White's bishop.

25...\text{f}8

Clearly 25...\text{d}1 26 \text{Kc}1 doesn't do anything for Black's situation.

26 \text{f}3

White is displaying good technique: the king is centralized and from there it can support the pawn-push f5. Black is already completely lost.

26...\text{e}8 27 \text{e}4 \text{d}1 28 \text{Kc}1 f5+

After 28...\text{d}8 29 f5 we have an illustration of the power of the centralized king, White dominates all parts of the board. With the text-move Black accepts the transition into a hopeless bishop ending, which, as Mikhailovski put it, “doesn't even require good technique”.

29 \text{fx}6 \text{Kxc}1 30 \text{Kxc}1 \text{Kxf}6 31 \text{Kxa}3 \text{d}4
32 f3 \text{e}7 33 \text{d}5 \text{e}3 34 f5! \text{gxf}5 35 \text{Kxc}5 \text{f}4 36 \text{b}4 \text{d}2 37 \text{d}6 \text{c}1 38 \text{a}4 \text{a}3 39 \text{c}5 \text{b}2 40 \text{d}4 \text{a}3 41 \text{b}5 \text{axb}5 42 \text{axb}5 \text{c}7 43 \text{b}6 1-0

**Exercises**

7.1 Whom does the presence of the queens on the board favour? What should Black play?

7.2 White has the traditional space advantage from the Grünfeld Defence. How should Black counter?

7.3 White has a threat against Black's queen, but several of his minor pieces are threatened. Does it make sense for Black to sacrifice his queen? Calculate the various options and decide which is best for Black.
8 Structural Weaknesses

One of the keys to successful positional play is to understand the impact of structural weaknesses. These come in all shapes and sizes, and knowing how to identify them and exploit them is a major difference between stronger and weaker players. However, often we accept one kind of structural weakness to achieve something else, possibly a different kind of structural concession by your opponent.

It is by no means possible to cover all aspects of this vast topic in one chapter, and therefore Chapter 11 will to some extent follow up on it. But still, entire books have been written on just the subject of the first kind of structural weakness I shall look at, so there is clearly room for much more study. But by being able to identify the weaknesses, it will make it immensely easier to attempt to exploit them in your own games.

Isolated Pawns

This is a terribly tricky subject, because it can in some cases be extremely difficult to determine whether they are a weakness or a strength. Some players accept them in return for the freer development, while others stay clear of them.

Positions with an isolated d-pawn arise from a great number of different openings and therefore it is essential to acquaint yourself with these types of situations from either side. When I was younger and less experienced in these structures, I was terrified of taking on an isolated d-pawn, and wasn’t too good at playing against them either. I found that studying the way Karpov handles this type of position helped me to understand them much better. One important fact that is often forgotten by less experienced players is that the pawn should be blockaded as soon as possible. Otherwise your opponent might either favourably exchange it for your e-pawn or simply gain more space through threats of advancing it, which also enables his pieces to become more active.

Karpov – Beliavsky
Moscow 1981

13 \text{Nd}f1
White immediately tries to establish a blockader on d4.
13...\text{Nd}d4
Note that Black cannot play 13...d4? because of 14 exd4 \text{Nx}d4 15 \text{B}xd4.
14 \text{B}b4 \text{Bxe}2+ 15 \text{Bxe}2 \text{B}g4 16 \text{Qe}d4
Black has obtained the bishop-pair, but White has managed to set up the desired blockade of the d4-pawn.
16...\text{Qe}4
Black must play actively. At first glance it looks attractive to damage White’s kingside structure with 16...\text{R}xd4 17 \text{B}xd4 \text{B}xf3 18 gxf3, but Black doesn’t have the potential to exploit the weakened structure, and the exchanges only help White. In fact the d5-pawn cannot be defended for long.
17 h3 \text{Be}6 18 \text{Ec}2!
With the knight blockading on d4, White can move on to the next plan, exchanging the dark-squared bishops.
18...\text{Ec}8 19 \text{Bd}c1 \text{Bxc}2 20 \text{Bxc}2 \text{h}6 21 \text{a}4!
Black managed to meet the threat of exchanging the dark-squared bishops, but his troubles are not over. The b7-pawn is unprotected.
21...\text{Ec}8?!
Black doesn’t realize the severity of the situation. Necessary is 21...a5!? 22 \text{B}b5 \text{Qd}6 23
\( \text{wd3 } \text{xe4 (Belov), with a more comfortable position for White.} \)

22 \( \text{fxe6! fxe6} \)

22...\( \text{xd6} 23 \text{a5 is even worse as White will penetrate on the seventh rank. After the exchange on e6, the d-pawn isn’t isolated any more, but new weaknesses have arisen on the dark squares in the centre and on the light squares on the kingside.} \)

23 \( \text{a5! } \text{xa5} 24 \text{xb7 } \text{b6} 25 \text{d5 } \text{d6} 26 \text{xc7 } \text{e7} 27 \text{wxa4! } \text{e7} 28 \text{xc7 } \text{xc7} 29 \text{d3!} \)

The rooks have now also come off the board, and next follows the exchange on d6 to exploit the weak light squares around Black’s king.

29...\( \text{we7} \)

As given by Belov in ChessBase Magazine, 29...\( \text{xc4} \) is met by 30 \( \text{wd7! } \text{xd3} 31 \text{exe6+ } \text{f7} 32 \text{we8+} \), and White wins.

30 \( \text{xd6! } \text{xd6} 31 \text{we8+ } \text{h7} 32 \text{f4} \)

The penetration is now inevitable.

32...\( \text{e5} \)

Or 32...\( \text{d4} 33 \text{gg6+ } \text{g8} 34 \text{exe6 } \text{d7} 35 \text{xd4 } \text{xd4} 36 \text{f7} \), and White wins easily.

33 \( \text{d6 } \text{c5} 34 \text{f7} 1-0 \)

Black gave up on account of 34...\( \text{w7} 35 \text{f5+ } \text{g8} 36 \text{exe5} \) with an easy win.

The following example is very straightforward in its approach, and at the same time very instructive, as it covers more than one positional topic.

As in many situations where one side has taken on an isolated pawn, that same side has more activity to compensate for this positional concession. As mentioned above, it is very important to get the isolated pawn blockaded to prevent it from advancing, possibly getting exchanged and gaining more space. This to a large extent dictates a lot of the moves in this type of position. The above position is no exception to this rule. If White can stop the pawn on d5 by blockading or controlling the d4-square, he will have good chances of success. Black at the same time has to play as actively as possible.

21 \( \text{e3 } \text{f4} 22 \text{b2 } \text{a6} 23 \text{b4!} \)

A remarkable decision: White kicks Black’s knight away from c5, but weakens his own c4-square. Which is more important? The c4-square turns out to be very difficult for Black to exploit, while it helps White considerably by reducing the material and eliminates a good guarded square for Black. However, decisions such as this should not be made in haste: it can have a devastating effect on your entire position if you have failed to consider your opponent’s best way to exploit a weakness created by you.

23...\( \text{xc3} 24 \text{xc3 } \text{e4} 25 \text{e3 } \text{ae8? (D)} \)

While this move has an appearance of a sensible move, I really question its quality: why offer exchanges when you have an isolated pawn? It’s an active move, but it achieves nothing. Obviously 25...\( \text{c4?? isn’t an option either due to 26 } \text{d4, and Black will have a problem protecting the pieces on e4 and c4 at the same time. Therefore, Black should have opted for 25... } \text{e8!!; e.g., 26 } \text{d4 } \text{d7} 27 \text{dc1 } \text{g5} 28 \text{d2 } \text{c4, and the a8-rook can go to d8, all the while Black keeps the position flowing by staying active.} \)

26 \( \text{d4 } \text{e8} \)

Black seeks to exploit White’s weakened light squares, but White is well prepared to meet this.
27 \textit{c} c1 \textit{x} c2 28 \textit{x} c2 \textit{w} a4 29 \textit{w} b3!

White is displaying an excellent understanding of the position. The exchange of queens would now give White control of c4 along with the entire c-file. However, maybe Black should have preferred this to the game continuation.

29...\textit{w} d7

In his annotations in \textit{CBM}, Peter Wells gives 29...\textit{w} x b3 30 a x b3 \textit{c} c8 31 \textit{x} c8+?? (better than 31 \textit{d} x e4 d x e4 32 \textit{a} a2 \textit{c} c1+ 33 \textit{g} g2 \textit{d} d1, and the white knight on d4 has to depart from its preferred square and leave Black with a considerable amount of counterplay) 31...\textit{d} x c8 32 \textit{c} c6 with a solid plus for White in the endgame.

30 \textit{w} a3 \textit{d} b5 31 \textit{g} c1! a6 32 \textit{d} c7

White utilizes the open file to enter the seventh rank.

32...\textit{w} d6 33 \textit{w} f4! (D)

\begin{center}
\includegraphics[width=0.3\textwidth]{image.png}
\end{center}

This move is similar what we saw in Gel- fand-Karpov and Karpov-Sokolov in Chapter 7. The exchange of queens essentially leaves Black without any substantial counterplay.

33...\textit{w} x f4 34 g x f4 \textit{e} f8 35 e3 \textit{d} d3?

Black's position was anything but pleasant, but after this blunder the game is decided. Black should have played 35...\textit{c} c6 to keep the knight away from the c6-square. Now the white knight gets to e5 with tempo.

36 \textit{c} c6 \textit{e} e8 37 \textit{c} e5 \textit{b} b1??

This hardly improves the situation, but other moves aren't much better.

38 \textit{e} x f7+ \textit{g} g8 39 \textit{b} b7?!

Here 39 \textit{a} a7 would have been more accurate.

39...\textit{e} e8?

And here 39...b5 would have put up stiffer resistance, but I assume time-trouble was interfering at this point.

40 \textit{h} h3 \textit{c} c1+ 41 \textit{g} g2 \textit{c} c3 42 \textit{e} e6+ \textit{h} h7

43 f5 \textit{e} e4 44 \textit{g} g8+ 1-0

\textbf{Backward and Hanging Pawns}

These two types of pawns are separate entities, yet have a lot in common as a pair of hanging pawns will often result in a pawn-structure where the same side will end up with a backward pawn.

\begin{center}
\includegraphics[width=0.3\textwidth]{image.png}
\end{center}

Sermek – Atalik

\textit{Beijing 1997}

Black's pieces, with exception of the queen, are all on the back three ranks, and he has a pair of hanging pawns on e6 and d6, each with a bishop tucked behind it. On the other hand, White has an isolated d-pawn that restricts the scope of the c3-bishop. What White would like to do is put a rook on the d-file and play d5, forcing the exchange of White's isolated d-pawn against Black's e-pawn, leaving White with a clearly superior game. Black's potential lies in action on the kingside and in the centre. Therefore it isn't that difficult to reach the decision Black did in the game.

18...d5 19 \textit{d} d3 \textit{d} d6

The weakness that Black has created for himself on e5 is rather insignificant in this case as White will have a very hard time taking advantage of it. In addition Black has prevented White from playing d5 and has activated his dark-squared bishop, pointing directly towards White's king.

20 h3

A rule of thumb is not to play where your opponent is stronger, and another is not to weaken the pawn-structure in front of your king. White
does both with his latest move, and in addition he wastes time he doesn’t have. A wiser choice is 20 \textit{xe}1 \textit{ce}7 21 \textit{de}5 \textit{wh}6 with chances for both sides.

20...\textit{xe}7!

Before moving on to the next move, please take a moment to figure out the idea behind this move.

21 \textit{wd}1

Here 21 \textit{wd}2! has been suggested as an improvement, as it takes the h6-square away from Black’s queen. However, as we saw in Chapter 6, this opens the possibility for an exchange sacrifice: 21...\textit{xf}3!?, and now Har-Zvi gives 22 \textit{ce}2 \textit{ef}7! (his main line is 22...\textit{xe}h3, which is wildly unclear) 23 \textit{wd}1 without an evaluation, but Black is winning after 23...\textit{g}5 due to 24 \textit{xf}3 \textit{fd}4, forcing 25 g3 \textit{xf}3.

21...\textit{ce}8

This was Black’s idea behind 20...\textit{xe}7, transferring the bad ‘French’ bishop to much greener pastures on either g6 or h5, beating down the diagonals towards c2 or d1 respectively.

22 \textit{ce}2

White is playing Black’s game. Tip-toeing around in this fashion doesn’t help White, as Black will continue to develop his pieces to their best available squares, while White concentrates his efforts on defending himself. 22 \textit{ce}5 is best.

22...\textit{wh}6 23 \textit{b}4

Also after 23 \textit{xd}2 \textit{ff}4 24 \textit{xf}4 \textit{xf}4, \textit{xf}4, Black is better.

23...\textit{hh}5

In this case the knight is more valuable than the bishop due to the knight’s control over the centre, as well as its defensive duties on the kingside.

24 \textit{b}5 \textit{xf}3! 25 \textit{xf}3 \textit{ff}4 26 \textit{ce}1

Unfortunately for White, he has to let Black come in on h2, so it’s time to make room for the king.

26...\textit{d}8 (D)

27 \textit{b}4?!

White has a number of weak dark squares, and obviously exchanging the dark-squared bishop under such circumstances can only be wrong. With the bishop gone, Black can do pretty much anything he wants on the kingside with his knight: either go to g5, h4 or f4. In his annotations to the game, Har-Zvi suggested 27 \textit{ff}1!? \textit{ff}7 28 \textit{wd}3 followed by \textit{dd}2, with some survival chances, but Black appears to be able to improve with 27...\textit{wh}2 28 \textit{wd}3 \textit{ff}7 29 \textit{d}d2 (to prevent ...\textit{g}5) 29...\textit{hh}8!, and the knight will join the action via g6.

27...\textit{wh}2+ 28 \textit{ff}1 \textit{ff}7 29 \textit{wd}2

Obviously 29 \textit{xd}6 \textit{dd}6 30 \textit{xd}5?? does not work due to 30...\textit{wh}1+ 31 \textit{ee}2 \textit{ex}d5+.

29...\textit{xb}4 30 \textit{wb}4?

This mistake allows Black to finish White off in short fashion. On the other hand, 30 \textit{ax}b4 \textit{xc}7! 31 \textit{ac}1 \textit{xc}1 32 \textit{wc}1 \textit{h}6!, followed by ...\textit{g}5, doesn’t inspire confidence in a successful defence either.

30...\textit{cc}7!

The threat is ...\textit{cc}2 and ...\textit{wh}1+.

31 \textit{wd}2 \textit{gg}5 0-1

White resigned due to 32 \textit{wg}5 \textit{cc}2 with mate to follow.

\section*{Doubled Pawns}

Aside from isolated pawns, doubled pawns were the kind of structural weakness that terrified me the most in my formative years as a chess-player. Having studied Nimzowitsch, I was certain that the pawns were certain to drop off. Subsequently when I ended up with doubled pawns, I played the game in a state of panic. Obviously that is not the right state of mind no matter what kind of position you are in. Despite doubled pawns appearing in all sorts of variations in contemporary opening theory, they still classify as a structural weakness.

The position in the following diagram is very interesting, but also difficult to evaluate properly. But let’s take a look at the most obvious imbalances first:
1) White’s kingside and king safety are marked by the doubled f-pawns. White may be able to tuck the king in the corner, but the weakness remains.

2) White has the bishop-pair. The one on b2 looks pretty strong, aiming towards Black’s king, and in combination with a build-up with major pieces on the g-file, he may be able to establish some sort of initiative. The other bishop on e2, however, is right now restricted by defensive tasks on the kingside and is further restricted by the c4-pawn.

3) Pawn-structure-wise, Black is obviously doing much better, having two pawn-islands against White’s four. It will, however, take some time before Black can expect to receive any dividends on that.

4) The only entirely open file is the d-file. At the present time, there aren’t entry-squares for either side, but the importance of this file lies more in the fact that either side can use it to exchange rooks, as leaving it would mean handing it to the opponent.

18 \textit{\textbf{\textit{\texttt{\text{W}}}}}c3

This position has been played on several occasions. Wells illustrates what happens if White decides to exchange one set of rooks with the following examples: 18 \textit{\textbf{\texttt{\text{W}}}}x\textit{\textbf{\texttt{\texttt{X}}}d8+} \textit{\textbf{\texttt{\texttt{W}}}xd8} 19 \texttt{\texttt{\texttt{\texttt{Wh}}}1} \texttt{\texttt{\texttt{\texttt{Q}}}e8} (19...\texttt{\texttt{\texttt{\texttt{W}}}d6}!?) can also be considered; e.g., 20 \textit{\textbf{\texttt{\texttt{\texttt{W}}}c3} \texttt{\texttt{\texttt{\texttt{Q}}}h5} 21 \texttt{\texttt{\texttt{\texttt{W}}}e5}?? \texttt{\texttt{\texttt{\texttt{\texttt{Q}}}g4}}! 22 e4 f6 23 \textit{\textbf{\texttt{\texttt{\texttt{W}}}c3} \texttt{\texttt{\texttt{\texttt{W}}}f4}}, and White is in serious trouble, Lim-Tisdall, Hastings Challengers 1976/7) 20 \textit{\textbf{\texttt{\texttt{\texttt{W}}}g1} f6 21 \texttt{\texttt{\texttt{\texttt{W}}}c3} \texttt{\texttt{\texttt{\texttt{Q}}}e6} 22 \textit{\textbf{\texttt{\texttt{\texttt{W}}}g3} \texttt{\texttt{\texttt{\texttt{W}}}d7} 23 \texttt{\texttt{\texttt{\texttt{W}}}e4} b6 24 \textit{\textbf{\texttt{\texttt{\texttt{W}}}g1} \texttt{\texttt{\texttt{\texttt{W}}}f7}}, Black has managed to solidify the position of his king, and can now start looking at the weak pawns in White’s camp, whereof the one on c4 stands out as the first obvious target: 25 \textit{\textbf{\texttt{\texttt{W}}}f4} \texttt{\texttt{\texttt{\texttt{Q}}}f8} 26 \textit{\textbf{\texttt{\texttt{\texttt{W}}}e4} h6 27 \textit{\textbf{\texttt{\texttt{W}}}f4} \texttt{\texttt{\texttt{\texttt{W}}}d7} 28 a4 \texttt{\texttt{\texttt{\texttt{W}}}d6} 29 \textit{\textbf{\texttt{\texttt{W}}}d1} \texttt{\texttt{\texttt{Q}}}e7, and White cannot defend the c4-pawn any longer, Schön-Hall, Bundesliga 1996/7.

18...\texttt{\texttt{\texttt{\texttt{Q}}}e8} 19 \textit{\textbf{\texttt{\texttt{Q}}}h1} \texttt{\texttt{\texttt{\texttt{Q}}}e6}

Wells points out that there is an interesting similarity between the main game and Ibragimov-Alexandrov, Kherson 1991, which continued: 19...f6 20 e4 \textit{\textbf{\texttt{\texttt{Q}}}e6} 21 \textit{\textbf{\texttt{\texttt{W}}}e3} \texttt{\texttt{\texttt{\texttt{Q}}}f7} 22 \textit{\textbf{\texttt{\texttt{W}}}g1} \texttt{\texttt{\texttt{\texttt{W}}}d7} 23 \textit{\textbf{\texttt{\texttt{W}}}g2} \texttt{\texttt{\texttt{\texttt{Q}}}g6} 24 \textit{\textbf{\texttt{\texttt{W}}}ag1} \texttt{\texttt{\texttt{\texttt{W}}}ad8} 25 \textit{\textbf{\texttt{\texttt{W}}}c3} b6 26 h4 \textit{\textbf{\texttt{\texttt{W}}}e6} 27 \texttt{\texttt{\texttt{\texttt{W}}}h2} \texttt{\texttt{\texttt{\texttt{W}}}h5}! All the ideas here are repeated in some form in the main game. Again this could have served as a model for Kramnik. White’s kingside initiative has been stopped, and Black can continue with his own plans. Studying related positions in the opening lines that you are playing will help you to find the right moves and ideas in your own games. The main game is an excellent example of that. The game continued: 28 \textit{\textbf{\texttt{\texttt{W}}}g3} \texttt{\texttt{\texttt{\texttt{W}}}d6} 29 \textit{\textbf{\texttt{\texttt{W}}}c2} \texttt{\texttt{\texttt{\texttt{W}}}h8} 30 \textit{\textbf{\texttt{\texttt{W}}}h2} \texttt{\texttt{\texttt{\texttt{W}}}f8} 31 \textit{\textbf{\texttt{\texttt{W}}}a1} \texttt{\texttt{\texttt{W}}}e8 32 \textit{\textbf{\texttt{\texttt{W}}}f1} \texttt{\texttt{\texttt{\texttt{Q}}}h7} 33 \textit{\textbf{\texttt{\texttt{W}}}g1} \texttt{\texttt{\texttt{\texttt{Q}}}de7} 34 \textit{\textbf{\texttt{\texttt{W}}}h3} \texttt{\texttt{\texttt{\texttt{W}}}d6} 35 \textit{\textbf{\texttt{\texttt{W}}}h1} \texttt{\texttt{\texttt{\texttt{Q}}}a5} 36 \textit{\textbf{\texttt{\texttt{W}}}c3} \texttt{\texttt{\texttt{\texttt{Q}}}c6} 37 \textit{\textbf{\texttt{\texttt{W}}}e3} \texttt{\texttt{\texttt{\texttt{Q}}}e5} 38 \texttt{\texttt{\texttt{\texttt{Q}}}xe5} \texttt{\texttt{\texttt{\texttt{W}}}xe5} 39 \textit{\textbf{\texttt{\texttt{W}}}d1} \texttt{\texttt{\texttt{\texttt{W}}}f7} 40 \textit{\textbf{\texttt{\texttt{W}}}f1} h6, and Black is clearly better and eventually went on to win.

20 \textit{\textbf{\texttt{\texttt{W}}}g1} f6! (D)

This method of neutralizing White’s strong bishop on b2 is worth remembering. The combination of knight on c8 and pawns on f6 and g7 puts a stop to threats along the diagonal as well as the g-file.

This is the key defensive formation. The f6-pawn blunts the b2-bishop, while the e8-knight is supremely well placed to neutralize White’s hopes of an attack on the g-file. Despite this, White nonetheless continues working on the kingside, but as it appears in the game, he
could well have been better served by sticking to the d-file, as leaving it in Black's hands can have dangerous repercussions.

21 \text{g}3 \text{d}d7 22 \text{g}ag1 \text{d}ad8 23 \text{c}e1

A strong indication that something has already gone clearly wrong. Black threatened to penetrate on d2 with his rooks.

23...\text{f}5!

Black provokes another weakness in White's pawn-structure and at the same time redeploy

\text{bishop for defensive purposes.}

24 e4 \text{g}6 25 h4 \text{c}e7

Another instructive move: with the immediate concerns on g7 taken care of by other pieces, Black activates his most passive piece to a better square.

26 \text{f}1 \text{e}6 27 \text{h}3 \text{h}5!

Just as in the game given in the note to Black's 19th move. Please take a look at White's position: his pawn-structure is a mess and his pieces are uncoordinated, while Black's pawn-structure is intact and all of his pieces are purposefully positioned. In this game, Kramnik makes himself look like the master that is giving his student a lesson in positional play.

28 \text{h}g3 \text{h}8 29 \text{e}e3 \text{d}d4 30 \text{g}2 \text{e}e8 31 \text{h}3 \text{a}4

White's pieces are so awkwardly placed that Black's threat of penetrating with the queen cannot be parried. The end is near.

32 \text{f}1 \text{d}1 33 \text{g}2 \text{c}2 34 f4?! \text{e}2 35 \text{f}1 \text{d}1 0-1

Black wins material, so White decides to call it a day. Note how easy Kramnik made Black's task look. By consistently improving the position of each of his pieces, while targeting White's structural weaknesses and preventing White's ideas, White's position almost effortlessly fell apart.

**Fixed Pawns**

The technique of fixing pawns to one square colour is an element that should not be underestimated in any kind of position. Even in apparently simple endgames a pawn fixed on a particular colour can be the difference between a win, draw or loss, depending on the other pieces on the board. In fact the fewer pieces you find on the board, the greater significance it can have. But in the middlegame, it is usually other aspects that come to the fore. A pawn-chain fixed on light squares can be the death of a light-squared bishop, the dark squares surrounding the pawns or even both. Throughout the book the theme of fixing pawns has been discussed on several occasions. The following example just sums up some of the basic strategies.

![Diagram](image)

M. Gurevich – P. Nikolić

*Belgrade 1991*

Black has just played ...b6-b5, leaving himself with some weak squares on the queenside. Particularly the backward pawn on c6 is a target, but how does White best exploit it?

18 a3!

The only way; Black would have liked to play 18...b4, having a target on a2 to play against. White now intends to follow up with d2-a2-b4 and c6a1 with pressure against the c6-pawn.

18...\text{d}d7 19 \text{a}d7

White could also consider 19 \text{f}5!?; e.g., 19...\text{x}e5 20 \text{x}e5 \text{f}6 21 \text{a}2 \text{a}5 22 \text{d}1 with a solid edge.

19...\text{d}d7 20 \text{d}a2 \text{d}f4 21 \text{f}3 \text{e}6 22 \text{b}4 \text{a}8 23 \text{c}3 \text{e}c8 24 \text{e}c1

All eyes are on the c6-pawn, which induces Black to advance it.

24...c5

The more solid 24...\text{f}8! leaves White better after 25 \text{d}2.

25 dxc5 \text{e}c5 26 \text{f}3 \text{x}c1 27 \text{xc1} \text{e}8 28 \text{d}d1

Now instead of one backward pawn, Black has two isolated ones, but in return he has managed to activate his pieces a bit.

28...d4 29 h4!

White's plan is to blockade the d-pawn with \text{d}3, taking any available squares away from
the black knight by playing g3 and then swing the rook around to attack the pawns from the fifth rank with e1-e5.

29...e5 30 g3 e8

It’s important for Black to remain active, and this is an odd way of doing that. Gurevich gives 30...g5?! 31 d3 d5 with some counterplay as Black’s best.

31 d3 e7??

Black should play 31...e2, when Gurevich claimed 32 f5 d7 33 e5 as winning for White, but 33...c5! equalizes.

32 d5 b7 33 x b7 x b7 34 e1!

The idea is to play the rook to d5, from where it can attack both of Black’s isolated pawns.

34 f8 e5 d8 36 b4!

Ensuring that the black knight doesn’t reach c6 to protect the d4-pawn.

36...f6 37 d5 f7 38 x d4

White has won a pawn, and 20 moves later converted the pawn advantage to a win.

The Weak Square

In nearly any kind of position, there will be one or more weak squares. Spotting them is relatively easy, but weighing which weakness is more important than another is far trickier. A good rule of thumb is that a square is only truly weak if your opponent can exploit it for something of significance.

As we saw in the previous example, in many cases weak squares are determined by the pawn-structure. Therefore before making structural decisions, it is important that you attempt to assess the long-term implications of the pawn-structure you are aiming for. Just because you initially gain a spatial advantage doesn’t mean that it has an overall positive effect on your position.
Before continuing, please stop for a moment. Evaluate the position and lay out a plan for Black.

14...a6!

This little simple move tells a tale of the problems that are to come for White. The threat is 15...\textit{b5} to exchange the light-squared bishops, leaving White with a number of weak light squares on the queenside.

15 a4

White stops ...\textit{b5}, but weakens the b3- and b4-squares. Black is already better.

15...\textit{a5} 16 h5 \textit{e7}!

A wonderful move; the knight is on its way to a5 via c6, taking a good look at the weaknesses on b3 and c4.

17 \textit{e3} c6 18 \textit{d3} a5 19 \textit{b1} e7!

Making room for the knight on b3.

20 a2 \textit{b3}

There isn’t any doubt that White is in severe trouble.

21 \textit{d2} \textit{xd2} 22 \textit{xd2} \textit{b4} 23 a5?!

White is trying to avoid 23 b3 with penetration on c3, but this only makes matters worse and the penetration on c3 will follow soon anyway.

23...\textit{a4} 24 b3 \textit{b5} 25 f4 \textit{c3}

Anyway!

26 \textit{f1} \textit{d7}!

The only counterplay White will ever be able to drum up is on the kingside, and therefore putting the king in that situation wouldn’t make any sense. The idea of putting the king on the queenside is an idea that comes up with some frequency, particularly in the French and other openings with closed centres, such as the

Hübner Variation in the Nimzo-Indian. On d7 the king is safe, and now the h8-rook can be activated as well.

27 f5 \textit{h8} 28 f6? \textit{gxf6} 29 exf6 \textit{e6} 30 f3 \textit{c1} 31 \textit{ad2} \textit{xb3} 0-1

### Colour Complexes

A weak colour complex is in reality a combination of what we have seen in the previous two sections: fixed pawns (permanently or temporarily) and weak squares, just that there are several weak squares on the same colour and that they are connected. An example of a weak colour complex is when White has arranged his pawns as follows: h2-g3-f2-e3. The weak squares are obviously the light squares surrounding this pawn-chain, and this will be particularly evident if the light-squared bishop is nowhere other than on g2.

---

This fairly normal-looking position has arisen from the Sicilian Defence. The most notable feature is Black’s pawn-chain on the light squares from c6-f7, which obviously leaves the dark squares weakened. White should obviously aim at exchanging the dark-squared bishops, while Black should kick the white knight on e4 away with ...f5, before allowing any exchanges.

12 c4!

White kicks the strong knight away, while keeping the option of a possible c5 advance in
hand. Note also how effectively Adams has sidelined Black’s light-squared bishop.

12...b4+?!  
Black decides to rob White of the chance to castle, but it costs him too much time. The correct move is 12...f5, although White would be slightly better after 13...f2.

13...f1 f5 14...xf6 15...xf6+ gxf6  
Let’s quickly take stock of the situation: the strong knights on e4 and d5 have been exchanged, and Black’s pawn-structure is somewhat more weakened, and the shelter of his king has been broken up. White is clearly better.

16...e3 w5 17...f2 e7 18 c5!  
This move provides a simple and clear refutation of Black’s game-plan; White prevents Black’s pawn-mass from becoming mobile.

18...d5?!  
This illustrates the desperate situation Black is in: despite being far worse coordinated, Black decides to break open the centre to obtain counterplay. However, this only helps White find a way to the black king. A more prudent choice is 18...f5, although here too White is much better.

19...x6d6 (D)

20...h6d1  
Black’s position is completely in shambles, his pawn-structure is more or less non-existent, four pawn-islands vs White’s two, Black’s king is open and his pieces are struggling to protect each other. White’s plan is very simple: apply pressure against Black’s central pawns.

20...e7 21 g1 c5 22 xc5+ xc5+ 23 h1 b4  
Golod suggested that Black can improve with 23...d4, giving 24 g4 f5 25 h4+ f6 26 f2, but this too is completely lost for Black; a sample line goes 26...xb2 27 xa7+ b7 28 ab1 a8 29 c5+ e8 30 xb2 xb2 31 e1.

24...e3  
In addition to working on the e-pawn, White takes a glance at the a-pawn.

24...a5  
Another possibility is 24...b6, but after 25 g3 f7 26 b3 and 27 e4, Black is once again in terrible shape.

25 b3 d7 26 c4 d8 27 e1!  
There is no reason to rush. Black’s weaknesses are permanent and therefore White might as well improve his position.

27...b6 28 g3 d8 29 h3 1-0  
There is no adequate way of defending the e6-pawn and with that the entire black position.

Even in simple positions, a weak colour complex can have a devastating effect.

Belotti – Miles  
Forli 1991

There are a number of things that immediately catch your eye in this position. Black has a strong knight on d5, and White ought to have a light-squared problem, with nearly all of his pieces on dark squares, including his terrible bishop on e3 and isolated pawn on d4. I had the pleasure of watching the post-mortem of the game in person, and it was notable how White, an international master, was unconvinced about the severity of the situation when he entered this endgame.

But how does Black take charge of the light squares that White has so generously weakened? Miles makes it look surprisingly easy.

23 f3 g7 24 c2 a8 25 h3 f4
The first step in Black’s plan: by placing the kingside pawns on dark squares, he creates a path for the king to enter White’s position on the light squares.

26 d2 f6 27 xf1 g5 28 f1 g6 29 b4 f5 30 d6 g8 31 e8?

I’m not sure what White had in mind with the decision to exchange a set of rooks, because this only eases Black’s task. The reason for this is that Black’s king can enter White’s position facing less danger.

31...hh8 32 xg8 xg8 33 e2 g4 34 hxg4+ xg4 35 f1?! (D)

Again, I don’t understand why a strong player like Belotti would even consider this move. Now the king gets tied to defending the g-pawn.

35...g8

There is no reason to let White’s rook in.

36 e2 e4

If there is any such thing as a welcome mat on a chessboard, then White has done everything to lay it out in this endgame.

37 e2+ d3 38 d2+ e4 39 e5

My computer insists that White’s best is 39 xe5+, but 39...xe5 is truly horrible for White, as Black has a very good knight against a terrible bishop.

39...e7

It’s rare that it will be worthwhile to exchange a good bishop for a bad one. This position isn’t the exception to the rule.

40 g3 fxg3 41 xg3 f6 42 e2 b3 43 e5 g5

“No, I still don’t want your bishop!”

44 d1 h6 45 h1 f8 46 b8 e7 0-1

47 xe7 is prohibited due to 47...e8, winning a piece, but White’s position is so rotten that nothing is good any longer.

Dreev – Malaniuk
USSR Ch (Moscow) 1991

The most notable feature in this position is without a doubt that nearly all of Black’s pawns are placed on dark squares, leaving the light squares on the kingside quite weak, and the d6-pawn unguarded. At some point Black will have to play ...f5 to avoid a clamp being set up on his kingside and with that also on his g7-bishop. When such a situation arises, we should ask ourselves how it can best be exploited.

In my opinion, White has two different options, the one chosen in the game, which is a fairly radical approach, and a secondary plan, which is 17 d2! (aiming at the weak pawn on d6) 17...f5 18 a3 ae8 19 f4 (blocking in the d7-bishop) 19...xe1 20 xe1 gx4 21 gx4 with a somewhat better game for White.

17 e6!?

I like the boldness and the idea behind this move: ‘Black has weakened the light squares, so let’s go for them immediately’. If Black accepts the exchange sacrifice on e6 with 17...xe6 18 dx6, White will have an annoying and potentially dangerous passed pawn that will be difficult to remove, as 18...xe6? 19 xe5! obviously isn’t an option for Black.

17...c7 18 xd6 wc7 19 xd7 wd7

White ended up getting a pawn for the exchange, while Black’s position is less cramped than it would have been had he accepted the sacrifice on e6. But the fact remains that the light squares are still very weak, now more so than before the exchange sacrifice as Black doesn’t have his light-squared bishop for the defence.

20 d1 ad8 21 b4 b6 22 bxc5 bxc5 23 d6!
Clearing the d5-square for the bishop, and at the same time preventing a blockade from being set up on the d6-square. Passed pawns must be pushed to be effective.

23...\textit{\textbf{Qe8}} 24 \textit{\textbf{Qg6}} \textit{\textbf{Qh8}}

Another line illustrating the dangers awaiting Black is 24...\textit{\textbf{Wxa4}} 25 \textit{\textbf{Qxe1}} \textit{\textbf{Wxc4}} 26 \textit{\textbf{Qh3}} \textit{\textbf{Wxc3}} 27 \textit{\textbf{Qe6+}} \textit{\textbf{Qh8}} 28 \textit{\textbf{Qf5 +--.}}

25 \textit{\textbf{Qxg5}}!

This is the start of a combination that mops up most of Black’s pawns, and leaves White with a winning position. Don’t ignore tactical options just because you are positionally superior; often tactics are necessary to maintain an advantage. The rest of the game is more or less forced.

25...\textit{\textbf{fxg5}} 26 \textit{\textbf{Wxh6+}} \textit{\textbf{Qg8}} 27 \textit{\textbf{Qd5+}} \textit{\textbf{Qf7}} 28 \textit{\textbf{Wxg5}} \textit{\textbf{Qf8}} 29 \textit{\textbf{Qxf7}} \textit{\textbf{Qxf7}} 30 \textit{\textbf{Qg7}} \textit{\textbf{Qxg7}} 31 \textit{\textbf{Wxc5}} \textit{\textbf{Qe8}} 32 \textit{\textbf{Wxh5+}} \textit{\textbf{Qf8}} 33 \textit{\textbf{Qh8+}} \textit{\textbf{Qf7}} 34 \textit{\textbf{Qh5+}} \textit{\textbf{Qf8}} 35 \textit{\textbf{Qe5}} \textit{\textbf{Qe6}} 36 \textit{\textbf{Qd4}} \textit{\textbf{Qd7}} 37 \textit{\textbf{Qh8+}} \textit{\textbf{Qf7}} 38 \textit{\textbf{Qh7+}} \textit{\textbf{Qf8}} 39 \textit{\textbf{Qf4+}} 1-0

**Diagonals**

A weakness on a diagonal is usually rather obvious if the diagonal is open, easily accessible and one side doesn’t have a bishop to guard it. But in many cases, a weak diagonal is hidden behind a solid central structure, or not apparently accessible. However, control over a diagonal that your opponent has weakened can have a decisive effect.

![Portisch – Timman Montpellier Ct 1985](image)

At first glance this doesn’t look like an easy position to assess. White has the pair of bishops, but with no diagonals to use them on and with apparent black control over the centre with both strong pawns and strong knights, Black seems to be doing quite well. Yet if White can change the character of the game by getting some diagonals opened for his bishops, he will be doing quite well.

24 \textit{\textbf{f4!}}

This type of move should be familiar from the previous example. In this case it turns out to be a pawn sacrifice, but the compensation is ample thanks to the increased range of both bishops. If Black now opts for 24...e4, opening up the b2-bishop’s diagonal, White is clearly better as Black will be entirely without counterplay, while White can play for the g4 pawn-break with moves like \textit{\textbf{Qb1-c3}}, \textit{\textbf{Wd2}}, \textit{\textbf{Qf2}}, h3, \textit{\textbf{g1}} and then g4.

24...\textit{\textbf{Qe4}} 25 \textit{\textbf{Qxe4}} fxe4 26 \textit{\textbf{Wg3}} exf4 27 exf4 \textit{\textbf{Qxf4}}

The alternative is 27...\textit{\textbf{Qxf4}}, but here too Black is soon banging his head against a wall: 28 \textit{\textbf{Wc3}} \textit{\textbf{Wc5}}, and here I have seen 29 \textit{\textbf{Wxe5}} dxe5 30 \textit{\textbf{Qxe5}} ‘+-’ recommended for White, but after 30...\textit{\textbf{Qxd1}} 31 \textit{\textbf{Qxd1}} \textit{\textbf{Qe2}}+ 32 \textit{\textbf{Qh1}} c3, White is facing ...\textit{\textbf{Qf2}} with very unpleasant consequences. Therefore White should go for 29 \textit{\textbf{Qxe4}} \textit{\textbf{Wxc3}} 30 \textit{\textbf{Qxc3}} \textit{\textbf{Qxe4}} 31 \textit{\textbf{Qxe4}}, with good winning chances.

28 \textit{\textbf{Qc1!}}

Now the h4-d8 diagonal is the target. Black’s next move is forced as he has to keep the e-pawn protected.

28...\textit{\textbf{Qh4}} 29 \textit{\textbf{Qd5!}} (D)

![Diagram](image)

An elegant move that eliminates the scope of the light-squared bishop.

29...\textit{\textbf{e3}}

29...\textit{\textbf{Qxd5}} 30 \textit{\textbf{Qxd5}} forces the knight away from e6 and therefore allows the devastating \textit{\textbf{Qg5}}, hitting all of Black’s major pieces.
30 \textbf{\textit{x}c3} \textbf{\textit{x}c4} 31 \textbf{\textit{g}5}!

Compare this position with the one we started from in this example – quite a transformation for the bishops.

31...\textbf{\textit{d}7}?

Now Black’s position falls completely apart. The correct move is 31...\textbf{\textit{f}8}!!; for example, 32 \textbf{\textit{d}2} \textbf{\textit{x}g}5 33 \textbf{\textit{x}g}5 \textbf{\textit{f}4} 34 \textbf{\textit{d}e}2 \textbf{\textit{f}7}, although White also has a fair advantage after 35 \textbf{\textit{h}4}!!.

32 \textbf{\textit{d}2} \textbf{\textit{x}g}5 33 \textbf{\textit{h}3} \textbf{\textit{e}4}

The alternative is 33...\textbf{\textit{x}b}5 34 \textbf{\textit{x}g}5 \textbf{\textit{f}8} 35 \textbf{\textit{x}c}4+ \textbf{\textit{x}c}4 36 \textbf{\textit{d}d}6, and White is winning. But in the game continuation, Black is killed on the open diagonals towards his king.

34 \textbf{\textit{x}c}4+ \textbf{\textit{h}8} 35 \textbf{\textit{h}4}!

Game over!

35...\textbf{\textit{e}8} 36 \textbf{\textit{f}2} \textbf{\textit{g}7} 37 \textbf{\textit{f}7} \textbf{\textit{d}4}+ 38 \textbf{\textit{h}1} \textbf{\textit{h}5} 39 \textbf{\textit{f}4} \textbf{\textit{g}5} 40 \textbf{\textit{f}8}+ \textbf{\textit{x}f}8 41 \textbf{\textit{x}f}8+ \textbf{\textit{h}7} 42 \textbf{\textit{g}8}+ 1-0

\begin{center}
\textbf{P. Nikolić – Short Belgrade 1987}
\end{center}

Black threatens to win with 27...\textbf{\textit{x}f}3+ owing to White’s unguarded queen. White has to respect that threat, but which other considerations should White make when looking at this position? That White has the pair of bishops obviously counts in his favour, but where they are placed, they have very little impact; only the bishop on \textbf{\textit{g}2} really does anything, but that is in the role of a defender. While Black’s position appears quite active, there are several cracks in the surface. The knight on \textbf{\textit{a}6} is anything but well-placed, but for now protects the \textbf{\textit{c}5}-pawn and possibly assists in holding White back on the queenside. Pawn-structure-wise, Black also has some deficiencies such as a backward e-pawn and 3 vs 2 minority on the queenside and also the advanced f-pawn leaves Black’s king somewhat compromised. So how can White improve his position, taking the above observations into consideration?

27 \textbf{\textit{c}1}!

This move facilitates several things: it activates the bishop to the long \textbf{\textit{a}1}-\textbf{\textit{h}8} diagonal, where it applies pressure against Black’s central piece set-up with the queen on \textbf{\textit{f}6} and the knight on \textbf{\textit{e}5}, but forces Black to safeguard his king. It also vacates the e-file so that a rook can target the backward e-pawn, protects the unguarded a-pawn, and prevents Black’s ...\textbf{\textit{x}f}3+ tactic.

27...\textbf{\textit{d}7}

Black immediately takes into account the problems involved with letting White line up his queen and bishop on the long diagonal and offers to exchange queens, but unfortunately for Black this is only the beginning of his headaches.

28 \textbf{\textit{x}f}6 \textbf{\textit{x}f}6 29 \textbf{\textit{h}2} \textbf{\textit{e}5}

The decision to advance the e-pawn is probably not one that Short made happily; it temporarily closes the long diagonal but surrenders the \textbf{\textit{d}5}-square.

30 \textbf{\textit{d}5} \textbf{\textit{f}7} 31 \textbf{\textit{f}4}!

Moves like this are often seen in positions where Black has pawns on both \textbf{\textit{e}5} and \textbf{\textit{f}5}, such as in the King’s Indian. The reasoning behind this type of move is that it makes Black’s pawn-structure rather static and, if handled properly, White can put a knight on \textbf{\textit{e}3} and play a timely \textbf{\textit{g}4} pawn-break and open the position to his advantage.

31...\textbf{\textit{e}4} 32 \textbf{\textit{h}3}! \textbf{\textit{e}8}

In response to White’s threat of 33 \textbf{\textit{x}f}5 \textbf{\textit{x}f}5 34 \textbf{\textit{e}7}+.

33 \textbf{\textit{e}3}

Another multi-purpose move: White exerts pressure against the f-pawn and clears the \textbf{\textit{d}5}-file for his rooks.

33...\textbf{\textit{f}8}

33...\textbf{\textit{g}6} is too weakening and allows White to play 34 \textbf{\textit{g}4} with advantage, as after 34...\textbf{\textit{x}g}4 35 \textbf{\textit{x}g}4 Black’s position completely falls apart because of the weak dark squares around his king.

34 \textbf{\textit{d}6} \textbf{\textit{c}7} 35 \textbf{\textit{f}d}1 (D)
35...\mate8?

The decisive mistake. A better way for Black is 35...\mate6, although after 36 \mate5 \mate8 37 \mate6 g6 38 g4, Black’s position is critical; for example, 38...\mate7 39 gx\mate5 \matexe5 40 \matexe5 \mate7 41 fxg6 hxg6 42 \mate5 \matexd5 43 cxd5 \matef4 44 d6, and it will cost Black considerable effort to stop the d-pawn.

36 \mate xc6!

This temporary exchange sacrifice permanently ruins Black’s pawn-structure.

36...\mate xc6 37 \mate xf5 \mate ef6 38 \mate e6 \mate b8 39 \mate e5 \mate e8

Nothing works out for Black; after 39...\mate xb3 White wins easily by 40 \mate xf6 \mate f8 41 \mate d8 gx\mate6 42 \mate f5 followed by either \mate h6+ or \mate d6.

40 \mate d6 \mate f8 41 \mate x f7 \mate x f7 42 \mate xc6 \mate xe5 43 fxe5 \mate xe 5 44 a4

Black has no answer to the a-pawn’s march forward, and it is soon over.

44...\mate d7 45 a5 \mate e 8 46 a6 \mate a 8 47 \mate d5 \mate e 5 48 \mate b 6 e 3 49 \mate x e 3 1-0

Open Files

If any given position has an open file with one or more entry-squares, this can constitute a structural weakness, particularly if one side controls the open file and the other has a hard time contesting it. I shall show you the following example because it was one of those games that helped shape my understanding of the power of the open file.

In the following diagram, we are not even out of the opening yet, and amazingly White has already created some problems for himself. White’s last move, 10 \mate 1 did little to improve his position either. Obviously he wants to play e4 with a space advantage and a good position.

Ståhleberg – Taimanov
Zurich Ct 1953

Unfortunately for White, Black has to move first before he can go again.

10...b5?!

Black grabs the initiative and forces White to open the c-file, while also seizing space on the queenside with ideas of b4.

However, it is also possible for Black to play 10...\mate xc4!?, which for some reason goes unmentioned by all of the books I have seen this game in. A possible continuation is 11 \mate xc4 b5 12 \mate c 2 bxc 4 13 e4 \mate a 6, when White doesn’t appear to have sufficient compensation for the missing pawn.

11 cxb5 cxb5 12 \mate d 1 b4 13 \mate b 1?!

As Bronstein notes, White still intends to play e4 at any cost. This retreat, however, is quite time-consuming. Bronstein’s suggestion of 13 \mate a 4 is certainly an improvement; e.g., 13...\mate bd 7 14 \mate xd 7 \mate xd 7 15 \mate f 4 \mate c 8, and Black is only somewhat better.

13...\mate c 6 14 \mate xc 6 \mate xc 6

Let’s take a status-check: Black is ahead in development, mainly due to White’s choice of undeveloping his queen and queen’s knight. In addition, Black has a space advantage on the queenside but even more important, he has secured complete control of the c-file.

15 \mate d 2 \mate b 6 16 e 3?

This is another ugly move that doesn’t do anything to help White in his task. With this move White shuts in his dark-squared bishop and weakens his light squares further. The alternatives are 16 \mate f 3 and 16 \mate b 3, neither of which is particularly pretty, but certainly better than what White chose in the game.

16...\mate c 8 17 \mate f 1?!
I wonder which line of thinking went behind this move. Exchanging the light-squared bishops only highlights the weaknesses in White's camp. My computer suggests a much more logical and radical approach: 17 a4 (to grab hold of the b5-square), and now, for example, 17...e6 18 e4, when Black is clearly better but White isn't out of the game yet, or 17...d3 18 f3 e4.

17...e6 18 xxa6 wxa6 19 f3 ec8 (D)

Black is not leaving anything to chance regarding the c-file. It is worth noting that despite White not having lost any material yet, a computer program like Hiarcs considers this position winning for Black.

20 b3?? e4! 21 d2?? e2!

What a minute, couldn't Black win material with 21...xc1? Yes, he certainly could, but would be giving up most of his positional advantage in the process. In many cases, it is far better to maintain complete control over the position, such as the c-file and with that the development of White's remaining pieces. In this situation, White's dark-squared bishop and a knight aren't worth nearly as much as either of Black's rooks, so you can argue that Black in fact would lose material by making this combination!

22 xe4 dx4 23 a3 h5!?

Bronstein hinted that Black didn't play as accurately as he could have done here. Bronstein's improvement is 23...d3 24 wixd3 (or 24 w4 b3!) 24...exd3 25 d1 e2, when White cannot take the d-pawn because of 26...e1+, winning the bishop. But after 26 d2, things are not that simple yet; e.g., 26...bxa3 27 bxa3 ec2 28 b4! ed8 29 dx3 xf2 30 ec1! eg2+ 31 f1 xh2 32 xc2 xc2, and Black still has to show some technique before the full point will be put on the score-table.

24 d5?! g8c4!?

White's position is terrible, but his last move made things even worse. Black could even have played 24...exd5, and if White replied 25 wixd5, then 25...w6! 26 f1 bxa3!, when White cannot take back on a3 due to the insufficient protection of his pieces on a1 and c1.

The sad thing for White is that there is nothing he can do to exploit this respite, since 25 dx6 wixe6 is lethal due to, for example, 26 f1 xc1! 27 xc1 xc1 28 wxc6 xf1+ 29 xf1 xe6, and Black is a piece up.

25 d1 exd5 26 d2 w6 27 ab1 b4 28 wa4 w5?

In the books where I have seen this game annotated, this move is often applauded, while Black's next move is criticized. However, I believe it could be the other way around. Black could have played 28...bxa3!; e.g., 29 w8+ eg8 30 bxa3 f3! 31 d7 (to prevent...h3) 31...e4c3! 32 wh3 d3, and it is curtains for White.

29 w7 a7 f8!?

Here Bronstein and others have pointed to 29...g5! to prevent White from returning his queen to f4 as in the game.

30 b8 g5 31 gxh4 gxh4 32 f4 xf4 33 exf4 d4?

This move isn't as good as it looks. Black would have kept an easily winning position by 33...bxa3 34 bxa3 c5!.

34 b3?

After 34 axb4?! c6 35 f5! cb6 36 c1 g7 37 bc1, White can still fight.

34...c6 35 axb4 f5

The remaining moves simply see the final penetration of White's position.

36 h3 a6 37 bc1 xc1 38 xc1 a2! 39 c1 b2 40 g2 xb3 41 c8 b1 42 d2 e0-1

Majorities/Minorities

The pawn distribution determines who has the majority and who the minority. A majority is a situation where one side has more pawns than his opponent on one wing.

A fairly standard example is the so-called Karlsbad structure, which can arise from a
number of different openings, such as the Queen’s Gambit Exchange Variation after the moves 1 d4 d5 2 c4 e6 3 d3 f6 4 exd5 exd5 5 xg5 e7 6 w c2 0-0 7 c3 c6 8 d3 bd7 9 f3 c8 (D), a very standard position which has been played thousands of times.

With his 14th move Black tried to stop White from playing b5, but White promptly follows up with a4 to support the further advance of the b-pawn. However, the inclusion of ...a6 and a4 ensures the exchange of an additional set of pawns, which may limit Black’s disadvantage on the queenside and enable him to exchange further pieces. You may have noted that Black now can prevent White from playing b5 by playing ...b5 himself. This idea is quite common, but only when White doesn’t have the option of playing e5 and when Black can follow up with a knight manoeuvre like ...c6-c4 and thus prevent the backward c6-pawn from becoming a target on the open c-file.

15...xf6 16 b5 axb5 17 axb5 xxd3 18 xxd3 f5 19 f6 xf6 20 bxc6 bxc6

The resulting pawn-structure is quite common after a minority attack. The backward c-pawn is now a permanent, fixed target. Notably the exchange of the light-squared bishops that Black initiated is now coming back to haunt him. If Black still had his light-squared bishop, the c-pawn would have been easier to defend. In addition, Black’s bishop isn’t nearly as strong as either of White’s knights.

21 f4 d5 22 c4 dxe4 23 cxb5 axb5 24 c5 dxc5 25 dxc5 c4 26 e4 h6 27 f5 c2 28 h3 a4 29 g4!

This advance is weakening, but since Black has no prospects of ever being able to exploit it, it actually serves to grab space on the kingside and improves White’s position.

29...h5 30 g5 hxf4 31 gxf4 xg2 32 d4 dxe2 33 c2 bxc2 34 bxc2 h5?

Prior to this move, Black’s position was simply unpleasant, but now his position falls apart. Instead he should have played 34...g7 and waited for White to make progress.

35 gxh5 gxh5 36 dxe5 b7 37 c5 g7 38 h6+ xh6 39 xh6 40 c5+ g6 41 f5 g4

and White soon won.

Overextended Structure

This section and the next two have a lot in common, yet there are very significant differences. In this section, we shall see the effect of an overextended structure that occurs when one side has stretched the structure beyond its
reasonable capability. Knowing the difference between gaining space and overextending is a fine balancing act, and as we shall see in the next two examples, even the strongest players in the world can misjudge it in the heat of the game. A solid and carefully prepared counter-punch can be all it takes to rock the boat. This, for example, is the strategy for Black in this line in the Alekhine Defence: 1 e4 ²f6 2 e5 ²d5 3 d4 d6 4 c4 ²b6 5 f4. It looks like White is doing very well, but his advanced pawns often become a liability.

**Diagram A**

Karpov – Larsen

Montreal 1979

What do we think about this position? White has a massive space advantage, but he has made some positional concessions to obtain it: his kingside is quite open, his pawns on d4, b4 and a6 are weak, even if they are protected right now. Black on the other hand has a strong knight on d5 and a solid position. As both Nimzowitsch and Petrovian illustrated in their games time after time, just because a position is cramped doesn’t mean that it cannot contain latent resources, counter-punches and stings of poison. While Karpov often makes his pieces play together like a symphony, here his position looks stretched a bit thin.

28...f6!

Just because your position is solid, doesn’t mean you have to remain passive. If White’s pieces can be kicked back and held back, his flimsy pawn-structure will be a serious liability.

29 ²f3 ²f7 30 ²d2 fxg5?!

According to Larsen, this is not Black’s best. After the game he preferred 30...²g6??, inviting White to play 31 h5, but I’m not totally sure what he had in mind now, as, for example, 31...²ge7 is answered by 32 ²ae1 with decent chances for White.

31 ²xg5?

White returns the favour immediately. Larsen gives 31 hxg5! as the correct move for White, although he likes Black’s chances after 31...²g6 followed by ...²xf5. However, White should again be fine after 32 ²xe5 ²xf5 33 ²xg6 hxg6 34 ²g4. It is remarkable how quickly White’s apparently good position completely falls apart.

31...²xf5 32 ²xa3 ²g6 33 ²xf3 ²e8

Suddenly, all of Black’s pieces are active, while their white counterparts are scrambling to defend the loose rubble that now characterizes White’s position. I’m sure Nimzowitsch would have approved of Black’s game-plan and execution of it.

34 ²xe5 ²xe5 35 ²xe5

On 35 ²xe5, Larsen indicates that 35...²c7 36 ²xf3 ²f4! followed by ...²e8 wouldn’t be to White’s fancy.

35...²xf3 36 ²a1?

Having lost control over the game, Karpov commits another error. Larsen gives 36 ²e2 as best; for example, 36...²f6 (not the tempting 36...²xb4? due to 37 ²xb4! ²xa3 38 ²xe6, and White is in the game again) 37 ²e4 ²c7 (the exchange of the dark-squared bishops favours Black, but White cannot get around it) 38 ²xc7 ²xc7, and now 39 ²xe6? loses to 39...²xf2+! 40 ²xf2 (40 ²xf2 ²xf2+ 41 ²xf2 ²xf2+ also wins for Black) 40...²f4+.

36...²xd4 37 ²e2

Other moves don’t offer any hope either; e.g., 37 ²xd4 ²xd4 or 37 ²xd4? exd5 38 ²xd4 ²g4+ 39 ²g3 ²e4.

37...²f3 38 ²xg3 ²d7!

With the simple threat of ...²f7.

39 ²xf3 ²xf3 40 ²xf3 ²xb4 41 ²d1
Or 41 ²xb4 ²xd4 42 ²ae1 ²xb4, and Black wins.

41...²xd4 42 ²e4 ²d5! 43 ²f2 ²h5+
Here 43...²xc5 is even better.

44 ²g2 ²d5 45 ²e6 h6! 46 ²d3

Even though Black takes his time winning this game, the advantage never slips away from him; White’s pawns on the queenside are very weak and the little shield White has managed to set up to protect his king will not last forever.
46...\textcolor{red}{\texttt{h7}} 47 \textcolor{blue}{\texttt{g3}} b4! 48 g4 \textcolor{red}{\texttt{g5}} 49 \textcolor{blue}{\texttt{g3}} \textcolor{blue}{\texttt{f1}} 50 \textcolor{blue}{\texttt{b3}} \textcolor{red}{\texttt{f4}} 51 g5 b5 52 \textcolor{blue}{\texttt{e8}} h4+ 53 \textcolor{blue}{\texttt{g2}} b3 54 \textcolor{blue}{\texttt{b8}} \textcolor{red}{\texttt{e2+}} 55 \textcolor{blue}{\texttt{f2}} \textcolor{red}{\texttt{e3+}}! 0-1

A beautiful effort by Larsen, where he made Karpov's aggressive approach look very ill-considered. In the next example, Black attempts something similar. In fact, Larsen told a group of fascinated youngsters (that included me) at a training camp that after the game Miles thanked him for the ideas illustrated in the Karpov game. I think he must have talking about provoking your opponent to make pawn advances to gain space, not thinking that pawns cannot go backwards.

\textit{Tal – Miles}

\textit{Bugojno 1984}

This position isn't much different from many others in the Caro-Kann Main Line with \ldots\texttt{\textcolor{red}{\texttt{e5}}}.

Rather than sitting and waiting for White to improve his position, Miles starts pressing at White's position, while provoking him into committal pawn advances.

\texttt{20...\textcolor{red}{\texttt{a5}}} 21 b4 \textcolor{red}{\texttt{b6}} 22 a4 \textcolor{red}{\texttt{b5}} 23 f4 \textcolor{red}{\texttt{a7}}

Black is trying to provoke White to play \texttt{c5}, weakening the d5-square like in Karpov-Larsen above.

\texttt{24 \textcolor{red}{\texttt{d2}} \textcolor{red}{\texttt{b8}} 25 a5 \textcolor{red}{\texttt{c7}} 26 g4 \textcolor{red}{\texttt{a8}} 27 g5 \textcolor{red}{\texttt{e8}}}

Black's position is very passive, but also almost without weaknesses. He has, however, achieved what he wanted, to get White to advance his pawns so much that White smells blood and now gets overly eager.

\texttt{28 c5}

White doesn't want to play this move, but he cannot allow Black to play \ldots\texttt{\textcolor{blue}{\texttt{d6-f5}} either. Now both b5 and d5 are calling for Black's knight, and White's dark-squared bishop is quite poor. Do you see the resemblance to the Larsen game?}

\texttt{28...\textcolor{blue}{\texttt{b8}} 29 g6?}

After this, White's position crumbles very quickly. A move such as 29 \textcolor{blue}{\texttt{b2}} makes more sense.

\texttt{29...f6 30 \textcolor{blue}{\texttt{c4}} \textcolor{red}{\texttt{xf4}} 31 \textcolor{blue}{\texttt{e2}} \textcolor{blue}{\texttt{e7}} 32 \textcolor{blue}{\texttt{b2}} \textcolor{blue}{\texttt{b5}}}

And now the d4-pawn is in trouble.

\texttt{33 \textcolor{blue}{\texttt{xe1}} \textcolor{red}{\texttt{xd4}} 34 \textcolor{blue}{\texttt{xd4}} \textcolor{blue}{\texttt{xd4}} 35 \textcolor{blue}{\texttt{xe6}} \textcolor{blue}{\texttt{xe6}} 36 \textcolor{blue}{\texttt{xe6}} \textcolor{red}{\texttt{wd8}}}

On the surface, it looks wrong to exchange a strong knight for a terrible bishop such as in this case, but in return the position has been opened, particularly around White's king. In fact, at this point, Black is winning easily.

\texttt{37 \textcolor{blue}{\texttt{e1}} \textcolor{red}{\texttt{a7}} 38 \textcolor{red}{\texttt{a2}} \textcolor{red}{\texttt{d2}} 39 \textcolor{blue}{\texttt{b1?}} \textcolor{red}{\texttt{wd5}} 40 \textcolor{red}{\texttt{b3}} \textcolor{red}{\texttt{d3+}} 0-1}

\textbf{Lack of Space}

In the introduction to the previous section, we saw how Black lured White forward in the Alekhine. In other openings one side does something similar. However, if the expected counter-punch doesn't present itself, then you end up with a lack of space and a fairly uninteresting situation.

\textit{Kramnik – Bareev}

\textit{Wijk aan Zee 2003}

Kramnik makes some general observations about this endgame: "White has a space advantage, and the fixed pawns on the kingside will make a bishop ending tricky because of the vulnerability of the g7- and h6-pawns." However, he also concludes that this is not
enough to give White a significant advantage, and that with accurate play Black should be able to draw this position. What gives White winning chances are the practical problems Black has to solve, such as where to put his king, how to connect his rooks and how to meet a white approach of putting his knight on e5 and then advancing the kingside pawns. As Kramnik mentions, Black can castle kingside to connect the rooks, but then he will probably have to bring his king back to the centre relatively soon.

White’s next move has been played almost exclusively in this position; the idea is to support the d-pawn, while clearing the f-file for either the f-pawn’s advance or for a rook to exert pressure against the f7-pawn.

18 \textit{e}e3 \textit{d}d6

A difficult decision. Let’s take a brief look at the alternatives:

a) 18...b5, and now according to Kramnik White has two interesting options: 19 d5 with a dangerous initiative, or the strategic approach 19 c5 intending to place a knight on e5 to put pressure on the weak c6-pawn and follow up with \textit{c}c2, a4 and \textit{a}a1.

b) 18...0-0-0 19 \textit{c}c5 \textit{h}h8 20 g4, and Black needs to find a plan, while it’s relatively easy for White to proceed.

c) 18...\textit{d}f6 19 \textit{c}c5 \textit{d}d7 20 \textit{d}d3 (Kramnik), and White will continue with his plan of advancing the kingside pawns.

d) 18...0-0 19 \textit{d}d5 \textit{f}d8 20 g4 \textit{f}f6 21 \textit{h}he1 \textit{a}c8 22 \textit{f}h6 23 b3 b5 24 c5 \textit{e}8 25 \textit{f}4 with an astounding space advantage, Motylev-L’Ami, Hoogeveen 2003.

19 b3 \textit{f}f6

As an alternative, Kramnik throws 19...b5!? up for consideration. His main line runs 20 \textit{e}e5 (he mentions that 20 c5 and 20 d5 can also be considered) 20...\textit{b}xc4 21 \textit{b}xc4 \textit{f}6 and now 22 c5 \textit{xe}5 23 dxe5 \textit{f}f5, when Black should have enough resources to draw. However, I think White may be able to improve with 22 \textit{f}f4?!, e.g., 22...\textit{xe}5 (this must be the acid test of White’s approach) 23 \textit{xe}5 \textit{xc}4 24 \textit{gx}g7 \textit{h}h7 25 \textit{f}d6 \textit{d}d7 26 \textit{de}1!? \textit{g}8 27 \textit{h}h1 \textit{b}b8 28 \textit{c}c2 with a slight pull for White. Nonetheless, Kramnik’s suggestion definitely needs to be considered.

20 g4

In a better position, there always seems to be more than one good continuation. Here Kramnik also offers 20 \textit{c}c2 intending to meet 20...\textit{f}f5 with 21 \textit{c}c1 0-0-0 22 \textit{b}b2, and White will soon start advancing the kingside pawns.

20...\textit{b}5 21 \textit{d}d2

Kramnik isn’t against the idea of 21 c5, but in CBM Lukacs calls this dubious and offers 21...\textit{c}c8 22 \textit{d}d2 \textit{c}c7 23 \textit{e}e4 \textit{d}d5 24 \textit{d}d6+ \textit{c}c7 '=' as proof of this notion; actually I think Black is better in this line, but 22 \textit{c}c5 with play like in the game continuation seems the correct way for White to proceed.

21...\textit{d}d7? (D)

The idea behind this move is not very fortunate, and proves a crucial time-waster. But even the plan outlined by Kramnik isn’t ideal: 21...0-0-0 22 \textit{c}c2 \textit{d}d7, and now White can play 23 a4!? with an initiative on the queenside.

22 \textit{c}c2 \textit{d}d8?!

This was the idea behind the previous move, but now Black gets himself into serious trouble. However, as Kramnik’s analysis shows, even the better 22...\textit{h}d8 is problematic after 23 \textit{h}h1 \textit{c}c8 24 c5 \textit{c}c8 25 \textit{e}e4 \textit{c}c7, and now he continues 26 g5 \textit{hx}g5 27 \textit{h}xg5 \textit{h}xg5 28 \textit{h}xg5, “and the g7-pawn is seriously threatened”, but it isn’t entirely convincing after 28...\textit{f}8 due to the weakness of the d4-pawn. However, after 26 \textit{f}4!? White seems to hold a pleasant advantage: Black is completely tied up.

23 \textit{h}f3! \textit{f}6

Unfortunately for Black, this is forced as 23...\textit{f}6 is also met with 24 \textit{c}c5+, a result of the king being on the d-file.

24 \textit{c}c5+ \textit{c}c7 25 c5 \textit{c}c5 26 \textit{d}xe5 \textit{c}c8

This is a very interesting position; if Black can get his knight to d5 without further ado, he
is doing quite well, but this turns out to be very difficult. Even if White’s bishop appears to be of less use than Black’s knight, it has a longer reach than the knight, and as we shall see in the game continuation, Black’s knight, despite the availability of some good squares, is a relatively passive spectator to the developments on the board.

27 \text{\texttt{Kh3! \texttt{Qe8 28 \texttt{Kf3 \texttt{Kh8 29 \texttt{Ad6!}}}}

This is a very unpleasant move for Black to deal with.

29\text{\texttt{...a5}}

Kramnik gives 29...\texttt{Qc8? 30 \texttt{Axd4 \texttt{Qe7 31 \texttt{Adf4}} and 29...\texttt{Qd5 30 \texttt{Qd2 a5 31 g5 hxg5 32 \texttt{Qxg5}, when Black really doesn’t have a good answer against the threat of 33 h6.}}

30\text{\texttt{g5}}

Kramnik makes a noteworthy comment at this point: “I also considered 30 a4!? b4 31 g5, but in the end I rejected it. I did see lines where having the white pawn on a4 and the black one on b4 was favourable for me, but then I also found some lines in which a knight hopping from f5 to d4 might make the b3-pawn a weakness.” Very instructive words indeed.

30\text{\texttt{...hxg5}}

This is practically forced as 30...\texttt{Qf5 is well met by 31 gxh6 gxh6 32 \texttt{Qxf5! Qxf5 33 Qxh6 with a winning position; e.g., 33...\texttt{Aae8 34 Qf6 Ae6 35 Qxf5 (Kramnik) with a technically won endgame.}}

31 \texttt{Qxg5 Qf5 32 Qd1}

Kramnik writes: “This was the whole idea of the operation started with 25 e5. It looks as if White has gone completely wrong here: he has broken up his pawn-structure, while Black has a well-protected knight on f5 and no weaknesses. But the trouble is that the d-file is of very little use to him and the knight is cut off from the game and has practically no squares.” I hope you are paying attention; you may learn more from a simple game like this than from hours of learning opening theory.

32\text{\texttt{...a4 33 b4!}}

There is no reason to allow Black to open the a-file and activate a rook.

33\text{\texttt{...Qc8}}

According to Lukacs in CBM, Black could have kept his disadvantage to a minimum by playing 33...\texttt{Qh8 34 Qf3 Qa8 35 Qd7+ Qb8}, but as Kramnik pointed out, White has a mating attack after 36 Qd8! Qxh5 37 Qc7+ Qc8 38 Qb6 Qh4 39 Qc7+ Qb8 40 Qdd7; for example, 40...Qxb4 41 Qb7+ Qa8 42 Qa7+ Qb8 43 Qdh7+ Qc8 44 Qc7!, and Black’s king is trapped.

34 Qf3 d7 35 Qd8+ Qxd8 36 Qxd8+ Qb7

Black’s position almost looks defensible, because it’s hard to see how White should break through. However, White can continue to improve his position while Black is a sitting duck.

37 Qc3 Qa6 38 Qd3 Qc7 39 Qe4 Qb7 40 Qd1 Qe8

The attempt to prevent the penetration on d8 by playing 40...Qc8 is met by 41 Qd8!, when White instead penetrates on d7.

41 Qd8+ Qb7 42 Qf4 Qc8 43 Qd7+ Qc7 44 Qd3 Qc8 45 Qd8+ Qb7 (D)

46 Qf6!!

This bishop sacrifice decides the game; the threat is 47 Qxg7 Qxg7 48 h6 and the h-pawn marches towards promotion.

46...g6?!

This is essentially the same as resigning, as can be seen in the game continuation. However, even in the critical line, after the acceptance of the bishop sacrifice, Black has no defence:

46...gx6 47 exf6 Qe8 48 Qxe8+ Qxe8 49 Qg5 Qd7 50 h6 Qxh6 51 Qxh6 e5, and now White simply plays 52 Qh7! ++.

47 hxg6 fxg6 48 Qg5 1-0

Passivity

Passivity is often linked with the previous section, lack of space, but it isn’t a prerequisite. Even in a pawn-structure where the space is shared evenly by both sides, one side can be condemned to a passive set-up, while the other
roams free. This has something to do with who controls the initiative. The side with the initiative will have to try to tie the other side up for some time to come, while the defending side should try to eliminate the initiative by, for example, exchanging pieces or otherwise changing the flow of the game.

Black is stuck with a rook on a8 protecting the a-pawn. In an attempt to free himself, he employs a slow plan, while White uses the time to improve his position.

18...\text{\textit{f}b8}

Karpov mentions that 18...\textit{fc8} is met by 19 \textit{a}a6 \textit{c}c2 20 \textit{b}3 \textit{xe}2 21 \textit{xb}x6 followed by winning the a-pawn. A number of times Black has the option of going into an endgame with five against four, which gives the side with the extra pawn reasonable winning chances, but also the defending side chances of a draw. Staying passive as Black does in the game is rarely advisable.

19 \textit{a}a6 \textit{f}8

Black transfers his king to the queenside to assist in the defence.

20 \textit{b}4 \textit{e}5 21 \textit{b}a4 \textit{b}5?

Now the time has come for Black to swallow his pride and take the 5 vs 4 endgame with 21...\textit{xb}2 22 \textit{xb}6 \textit{b}7 23 \textit{xa}7 \textit{c}8. But hoping that with the king’s presence on the queenside, the chances of a successful defence will be even greater, Black resists.

22 \textit{a}a2 \textit{b}7 23 \textit{b}3!

This is an interesting decision; White could have won a pawn with 23 \textit{xa}7 \textit{xb}2 24 \textit{xb}2 \textit{xa}7 25 \textit{xa}7 \textit{xa}7 26 \textit{xb}5, but Karpov decided that the positional pressure he maintains with the text-move offers him better chances of winning than the pure rook ending. I fully agree with his decision as Black's defence in the game continuation is quite unpleasant and demands far more accurate play from Black than anything White can conjure up in a rook ending.

23...\text{\textit{b}b8}

A very ugly move that already justifies White’s decision to avoid the pure rook endgame.

24 \textit{c}5 \textit{e}8 25 \textit{d}4 \textit{d}7 26 \textit{e}4

In Chess at the Top 1979-1984, Karpov writes that he considered 26 d5, which would have forced Black to take on an unpleasant ending after 26...\textit{d}6 27 \textit{xd}6 exd6. I understand that the ending is difficult for Black, but the game continuation is far more logical and much easier to play for White.

26...\textit{e}6 27 \textit{b}4 \textit{c}8 28 \textit{d}5!

Now is the right time. Karpov writes that 28 \textit{g}2 would be inadequate due to 28...\textit{d}7 29 \textit{a}a5 \textit{d}6! 30 \textit{xb}5 \textit{xc}5 31 \textit{xc}5+ \textit{d}8!, and “White’s king is not in time to defend his far-advanced pawns”. However, White should be able to improve on this line with 31 dxc5!; e.g., 31...\textit{d}4 32 c6 \textit{b}8 33 \textit{b}a5 \textit{e}4 34 \textit{xa}7 \textit{xb}4 35 \textit{xf}7, and White wins.

28...\textit{exd}5 29 \textit{exd}5 \textit{d}7

Black would have preferred to get his bishop out with 29...\textit{e}5, but this meets an unhappy ending after 30 \textit{e}6 31 \textit{e}8+ 32 \textit{d}8 32 \textit{c}6+ 33 \textit{e}6 34 \textit{d}c6 35 \textit{xc}6, and things are even worse than before.

30 \textit{d}6 \textit{d}8 31 \textit{g}2 \textit{d}7

Other moves are no better; e.g., 31...\textit{e}8 32 d7+! \textit{xd}7 33 \textit{f}6 or 31...\textit{b}7 32 \textit{f}3 \textit{e}8 33 \textit{f}4 h6 34 h4 followed by g4, h5 and g5 (Karpov). In both cases White wins easily.

32 \textit{e}2! \textit{c}8 33 \textit{e}7 \textit{d}7 34 \textit{a}2!

Black is finished.

34...\textit{a}5

If 34...\textit{xd}6, then 35 \textit{xd}7 \textit{xd}7 36 \textit{d}2, while 34...\textit{d}8 35 \textit{b}6+! \textit{c}8 36 \textit{e}2+ is also winning for White.

35 \textit{c}2 1-0
Exercises

8.1 Black played 11...\textit{x}b3. Assess the position and outline White’s plan.

8.4 White has an isolated pawn, Black a backward pawn on e6, but good control over the light squares. Who is better, and how should White continue?

8.2 Evaluate the position and determine how White best continues.

8.5 White is ready to get his pawn back on a5 with continued pressure on the queenside. How should Black fight back?

8.3 Evaluate each side's strengths and weaknesses and determine a plan for White.

8.6 Evaluate the position and outline a plan for White.
9 Pawn Sacrifices

First the obvious question: why are pawn sacrifices important when discussing positional chess? Like it or not, pawn sacrifices are a natural and important part of positional chess. There are many types of pawn sacrifices. We have already seen a great number of them in the previous chapters; this chapter mainly serves as a kind of summary, but also partly as inspiration and to highlight some additional ideas.

Pawn sacrifices in the opening are generally called gambits; two examples are the King’s Gambit (1 e4 e5 2 f4) and the Benko Gambit (1 d4 d5 2 e4 c5 3 d5 b5). The ideas behind these gambits differ tremendously: the King’s Gambit attempts to fight for control of the centre and to obtain rapid development, while the Benko Gambit concerns itself more with positional pressure on the queenside along the usually open a- and b-files.

Playing gambits helps us understand positional compensation for pawns much better than if we stay away from them. When I developed as a chess-player I started out with the English Opening as White and the Caro-Kann and Nimzo-Indian as Black. None of these openings were particularly heavy on gambits and positional pawn sacrifices, and certainly not in the lines I played. In fact I was terrified that I would have to sacrifice a pawn; what if I didn’t get it back? But when I was 15 years old, I participated in a tournament in Poland. The Dutch IM trainer of Dutch participants in the tournament, Van Wijgerden, told me that because I hadn’t played 1 e4 and gained experience of gambits in my earliest years, I wouldn’t become a strong player! That made an impression on me, and to some extent he has been right: I have so far not become a GM or even an IM. But as soon as I returned home from Poland, I started working on this ‘discrepancy’ in my chess upbringing. So immediately I took up the Morra Gambit, and ultra-sharp lines against a variety of openings, as well as starting to play Benko Gambit with Black, while against 1 e4, I already was playing the Sicilian Dragon and then I found some gambit lines against the English. This went on for a while, but I never really found myself comfortable being a pawn down, sometimes with questionable compensation. So aside from the Benko, most of the lines from this time in my ‘career’ went on the shelf again within a year or two, some even sooner.

What is the point of all these words, you’re probably asking yourself. The point is that the sooner you start realizing the importance of understanding material imbalances as positional imbalances, the sooner your level of chess will improve. And if playing gambits is what it takes, then go for it. It worked for me to some extent, but it may work out even better for you if you are even more consistent than me.

Pawn for Imbalance

This is where the understanding starts, and in fact this is what all of it is about: you give up a pawn in return for something else. What that something is, entirely depends on the individual position. We shall here only look at positionally-motivated pawn sacrifices. There are, however, many other kinds of pawn sacrifices that are either tactically motivated or psychologically motivated. However, I’m of the opinion that the vast majority, maybe as much as 90%, of all pawn sacrifices in one way or another are positionally motivated.

Our first example is from our current world number one, Garry Kasparov. He has a phenomenal understanding of dynamic positional compensation in return for material. To play this type of chess demands a good psyche, and excellent overall understanding of chess, both of which Kasparov has in spades.

The following position isn’t much different from many others that have arisen from the King’s Indian Defence. Black has reached a
crossroad at this point, and the game will take a different course after each of his options. Let’s take a look. If Black plays 15...\( \text{Q} \times g3 \), then White will have the better chances after 16 \( \text{h} \times g3 \) with play along the h-file and towards the black kingside with the two bishops. Aside from Kasparov’s choice in the game, Black can also consider the fork 15...f4, but here too after 16 \( \text{Q} \times h5 \) fxe3 17 \( \text{Q} \times f6+ \) \( \text{K} \times f6 \) 18 \( \text{W} \times e3 \) \( \text{g}5 \) 19 \( \text{W} \times f2 \), White has the better chances.

15...e4!

So what is the motivation behind this move? In fact you may have seen similar moves being played before and wondered why Black is sacrificing a pawn without being forced to. The interesting thing is Kasparov probably felt he was forced to do it if not to end up with a disadvantage. The pawn sacrifice occurs with some frequency in the King’s Indian, but is also seen in other openings. Black removes his e-pawn to open the long diagonal for his dark-squared bishop. This bishop will at the same time apply pressure along the diagonal and set up a dark-squared blockade. With the pawn win White gets an e-pawn that blocks the scope of his light-squared bishop; this too counts as compensation for the pawn for Black. This will be illustrated in the game continuation.

16 \( \text{Q} \times h5 \) \( \text{Q} \times h5 \) 17 fxe4 f4

This is the standard follow-up after the pawn sacrifice.

18 \( \text{f}2 \) \( \text{g}4! \)?

Knowing that White’s king will most likely be safer on the queenside, Black temporarily prevents White from castling long. Obviously White can quite easily remove the bishop from g4, but only by creating additional weaknesses in his camp.

19 h3

This weakens the dark squares further, but is also the easiest way of kicking the bishop away. However, let’s look at the alternatives. In Shakhmatny Bulletin, Gipslis gives 19 \( \text{Q} \times a4 \) f3! with a clear advantage for Black, which may be somewhat exaggerated, but there shouldn’t be any doubt that Black has more than adequate compensation for the pawn; for starters, White’s king will not find a sanctuary right away. Alternatively, White can play 19 0-0 after which Gipslis gives 19...f3 as unclear, which possibly is correct. Black has compensation for the pawn, but White is certainly still in the game after a move like 20 \( \text{e}3 \), although White’s decision to try to tug the king into safety on the queenside isn’t all that surprising.

19...\( \text{d}7 \) 20 0-0 \( \text{e}5 \) 21 \( \text{b}1 \) \( \text{f}6 \) (D)

Black’s last couple of moves are completely in line with the basic ideas behind the pawn sacrifice: the dark-squared blockade is almost completely set up and the queen and bishop are lined up on the a1-h8 diagonal. Even though my computer engines very much like White’s chances, Black is doing fine at this point. However, White soon makes it more difficult for himself than it ought to be. Now White’s best would be 22 \( \text{h}1 \) !.

22 \( \text{e}2 \) ?! \( \text{g}3 \) 23 \( \text{x} \times g3 \) \( \text{x} \times g3 \)

This position must be what White wanted when he played 22 \( \text{e}2 \), but by giving up his dark-squared bishop, White now has the permanent problem of lacking a counterpart to Black’s bishop on e5. For comparison take a look at White’s light-squared bishop on e2/f3.

24 \( \text{f}3 \) \( \text{a}8 \) 25 \( \text{e}2 \) \( \text{g}6 \)
Another idea is 25...²c4??, intending 26 ²c1 b5, also with excellent compensation for the pawn.

26 ²c1 ²xc1+ 27 ²xc1 ²e8 28 ²e3 ²f6 29 ²d2

White’s attempt to rid himself of his dead light-squared bishop with 29 ²g4 is well met by 29...²xg4 30 hxg4 ²xb2!, and now, for example, 31 ²b3 ²e5 32 ²xb2 ²xe4+ 33 ²a1 ²xg2 34 ²b1 ²c7 35 ²e1 ²f2, when White probably has to give back the extra piece.

29...²c5 30 ²c1?

Now White starts to go seriously astray; better is 30 ²c1 ²b5 31 ²c2 with chances for both sides.

30...²f4 31 ²b4 ²b5 32 ²b3?

This doesn’t help either. Now Black marches into White’s position without further ado. However, it isn’t easy for White to find a better way to go at this point. Gipslis suggests 32 e5 as White’s best, but this is rather unconvincing on account of 32...²xe5 (for some reason Gipslis only analysed 32...²g6+, but the remainder of his analysis of this move was also rather flawed) 33 ²d1 ²e4 34 ²a3 ²g6+ 35 ²d3 ²a4 36 ²b3 ²d4, and White loses a piece. White probably should try 32 ²a1!?, but also in this line, White has significant headaches after 32...²d4 33 ²b3 ²d3+ 34 ²a1 ²c7, and Black dominates the board.

32...²d3+ 33 ²a1 ²c2

Game over: now 34 ²d4 is answered by with 34...²xc4.

34 ²b1 ²e5 35 ²c1?! ²xb2+ 36 ²xb2 ²xb2+ 0-1

The next game sees a world champion who is known for his excellent positional understanding getting outplayed positionally after a pawn sacrifice in the opening.

Karpov – Larsen
Tilburg 1980

1 ²e4 ²e5 2 ²f3 ²f6 3 ²d4 ²xe4 4 ²d3 d5 5 ²xe5 ²d7 6 ²e2 ²xe4 7 ²xe4 ²xe4 8 ²xe4 ²e6 (D)

9 ²xe5

At first glance it may look like Black has just lost a pawn for very little compensation, but things are not that simple. The opening moves are now established opening theory, and the verdict is that Black has good compensation for the pawn on account of his bishop-pair, easier development and White’s somewhat vulnerable queen.

If White had instead opted for 9 dxe5, Larsen gives 9...²d5 10 ²g4 h5 11 ²h3 ²e7 12 f4 ²e6!, and now, for example, 13 ²xe6+ fxe6 14 0-0 ²c5+ 15 ²h1 0-0-0 16 ²c3 ²c6 17 f5 ²d4 18 ²h3 ²g4, and Black is winning.

9...²d7 10 0-0 0-0 11 ²e3 ²b4

Yusupov pointed out 11...²d6 12 ²a5 ²d5, which appears fully adequate.

The idea behind the text-move is to prevent the move that White actually plays in the game. If White plays 12 c3, then after 12...²d6, White no longer has the c3-square available for his knight, and the e1-a5 diagonal is not available for a retreat of White’s queen, and the light squares have also been further weakened.

12 ²c3?!

As mentioned in the previous note, this is what Black aimed to prevent with his previous move, and White’s decision to play it anyway lands him in big problems. However, the alternatives also look quite pleasant for Black:

a) After 12 c3, in addition to 12...²d6 (intending 13 ²a5 ²d5?!) as mentioned above, 12...f6 13 ²g3 ²e7 14 ²d2 h5 with excellent compensation for the pawn (Yusupov) is another possibility.

b) 12 a3 f6 13 ²g3 ²d6 (Yusupov) is better for Black.

12...f6 13 ²g3?!

According to Yusupov, White should play 13 ²f4; the idea is that Black now will have to prepare ...g5 by protecting the f-pawn. In the game continuation, Black doesn’t need to make such considerations.
13...\textit{c}xc3 14 bxc3

In his book on the Petroff, Yusupov makes the following instructive comment: "As a result of White's dubious twelfth move, his pawn-chain has lost its flexibility, and his extra pawn on the queenside is of no importance. Moreover, his dark-squared bishop is restricted by its own pawns. The activity of the bishops is normally the crucial factor in evaluating positions with opposite-coloured bishops."

14...h5!

The position is ripe for Black to start his kingside attack, and with White's queen being placed in front of his pawns it will be hit first, so White is forced to react with his pawns.

15 h4 g5 16 f3

White cannot take on g5: after 16 hgx5? h4 17 \textit{h}h2 h3 18 g3, Black has 18...\textit{d}d5 (intending ...\textit{g}g2) or 18...\textit{wc}6, in both cases with a clear advantage for Black.

16...\textit{dg}8 17 \textit{f}f2?!

It has been suggested that White should play 17 \textit{h}h1, which indeed may be better than the game continuation, but after 17...\textit{d}d5 followed by ...g4, or 17...g4 immediately, Black is completely in control of the game.

17...\textit{wc}6 18 \textit{dd}2 g4 19 f4 \textit{e}c4! (D)

The situation is getting ever more critical for White, who is facing invasion by the black rooks on the e-file and on e2 in particular. In addition, the queenside pawns are very weak, while White's bishop is completely hemmed in. With the pawn sacrifice on his next move, Karpov tries to release himself from Black's stranglehold and give his pieces room to breathe, but as we shall see the relief is only of a temporary kind, as the positional deficiencies remain.

20 d5 \textit{xd}5 21 f5 \textit{e}e8 22 a3 \textit{e}e4 23 \textit{el} \textit{He}e8 24 \textit{xe}e4 \textit{xe}e4 25 \textit{h}h2 \textit{e}e5 26 \textit{f}f4 \textit{e}e1

White has managed to exchange some pieces, but Black is nonetheless still able to penetrate White's back rows.

27 \textit{dd}2 \textit{a}a1 28 \textit{wc}3 \textit{wd}6+ 29 \textit{ff}4 \textit{b}6 30 c4 \textit{xc}4 31 \textit{wd}4 \textit{wd}4 32 \textit{xe}d4

The queens have come off the board, but the endgame is hopelessly lost.

32...\textit{b}5 33 \textit{h}h6 \textit{xa}3 34 \textit{g}g7 \textit{d}d7 35 \textit{ff}4 \textit{aa}5 36 \textit{xf}6 \textit{xf}5 37 c3 \textit{e}e6 38 \textit{gg}3 \textit{dd}5 39 \textit{ee}4 \textit{d}d7 40 \textit{ee}5 \textit{dd}2 41 \textit{ff}4 \textit{mg}2 42 \textit{gg}5 \textit{Ec}2 43 \textit{eh}x5 \textit{g}3 44 \textit{eg}3 \textit{xc}3 45 \textit{ee}5 \textit{Ec}4 46 \textit{ee}3 \textit{dd}5 47 \textit{aa}3 \textit{ee}6 48 \textit{gg}3 \textit{ff}5 49 \textit{hh}6 \textit{a}5 50 \textit{g}g7 \textit{gg}4 51 \textit{ff}6 \textit{a}4 52 \textit{ee}3 \textit{ff}3 53 \textit{ee}1 \textit{Cc}1 54 \textit{ee}7 \textit{hh}3 55 \textit{dd}2 \textit{Cc}4 56 \textit{ee}3 \textit{gg}2 57 \textit{ee}1 \textit{Cc}1 58 \textit{dd}2 \textit{dd}1 59 \textit{Cc}3 \textit{ee}5 60 \textit{ee}7 \textit{hh}5 61 \textit{ee}5 a3 62 \textit{hh}7 b4 63 \textit{h}h5 b3 64 \textit{h}h6 b2 65 \textit{gg}7+ \textit{ff}2 66 \textit{gg}3+ \textit{ee}3 0-1

A convincing performance by Larsen.  

\textbf{Damaging the Opponent's Pawn-Structure}

With so many considerations having to be made throughout each game regarding the pawn-structure, it makes a lot of sense to consider sacrificing a pawn to damage the opponent's pawn-structure. A weakened pawn-structure will not only occupy your opponent regarding protecting the weaker pawns, but it often results in you having more targets to play against.

Svidler – Kaidanov
\textit{Moscow 2003}

17 c4!

At the time of this game, this move had already been played before and therefore was
very likely familiar to Svidler prior to the game, and was possibly even part of his preparations for the present game. However, this doesn’t change the fact that it is the best way to pose problems for Black. With this pawn sacrifice White forces Black to destroy his own pawn-structure on the queenside, while, as we shall see in the game, making the c-file more available for White’s rooks.

17...\texttt{Bxc4 18 \texttt{Bac1 \texttt{Bxe5}}}

Black has also tried 18...\texttt{Bc5}. In Xie Jun-Qin Kanying, New Delhi FIDE KO wom 2000, White obtained a clear advantage after 19 \texttt{Bxc2 \texttt{Bxe3 20 Bxe3 Bc5 21 Bg5 \texttt{Bd8 22 Bxd2 Bd5 23}}}
\texttt{Bxd1 Bxd2 24 Bxd2.}

19 \texttt{Bxe5 \texttt{Bxe5 20 Bxc2 Bb5?!}}

At the time of the game, this was actually a novelty, but unfortunately for Black, not a very good one. In Bologan-Korneev, Mondariz Balneario 2002, Black was only slightly worse after 20...\texttt{Bc4 21 Bfc1 Bf7 22 Bxc4 Bxc4 23 Bxc4 Bb8 24 Bd4.} However, Kaidanov was following the analysis by Bologan from \textit{Informator 85}, where the next couple of moves were given as equalizing for Black.

21 Bxc4 Bxb2 22 Bxc7 Bf7 23 g4!

This is Svidler’s improvement over Bologan’s analysis, which looked at 23 Bxd1, 23 Bd4 and 23 a3, all leading to equality. The idea behind 23 g4! is to go along lines that were given by Bologan after 23 Bxd1, but with a slight twist as the f6-square isn’t always available to the black king due to g5+. The white king now has a breathing-hole and, in some instances, White’s rook can seek employment on other files such as in the following line given by Svidler: 23...\texttt{Bh8!? 24 Bxh7 Bxa2 25 Bc1 Bf8 26 Bc6 a5 27 Bxe6 Bf6 28 g5 Bc3 29 Bc6 Bb2 30 h4 (±) intending h5-h6.}

23...\texttt{Be8}

Neither 23...\texttt{Bxa2? 24 Bc5 Be8 25 Bb1(d1) nor 23...h5? 24 Bxd1 should be tried; in both cases, Black loses the bishop.

24 Bxd1 Bg6 25 a4 Bb4 26 Bd4 a5?!

This may well be a mistake. Svidler doesn’t call it that, but his suggestion of 26...\texttt{Bxd4!? 27}}
\texttt{Bxd4 Bf6 28 Bxf6 gxf6 29 Bc6 a5 30 Ba6 Bxd8 31 Bxa5 Bd4 32 h3 f5 (without giving an evaluation) seems to lead to an endgame that Black should be able to hold. For some reason decisions to forego opportunities such as this (exchanging down to a worse, but drawable endgame) are seen relatively often. It seems like people in general prefer to defend an unpleasant but only slightly worse endgame to an endgame that is obviously worse, but drawable. The chances of drawing will usually be higher in the latter case.

I have already moved beyond the scope of this subject, but will give the rest of the game, without further comments, for your entertainment.

27 \texttt{Bxb4 Bxb4 28 Bg2 Bd8 29 h4 h6 30 h5 Bh7 31 Bf3 Bd1 32 Bxe4 Bg1? 33 f3 Bc1 34 Bd3 Bd1+ 35 Bc2 Bf1?! 36 Bf4 Bd6 37 Bc4 Bb4 38 g5 hxg5 39 fxg5 Bg8 40 g6 Be5 41 Bc8+ Bf8 42 Bg8 Bxh5 43 Bb6 Bh4 44 Bxa5 Bc4+ 45 Bd3 Bc6 46 Bc3 Bc8 47 Bg7 e5 48 a5 Bb4 49 Bh6 Bh8 50 Bc4 Bf8 51 Bd7 e4 52 Bxd8 Bxd8 53 Bxb8 e3 54 a6 1-0}

A beautiful performance by Svidler: he began by ruining his opponent’s pawn-structure, and this left him with a small, but clear and permanent, advantage.

**Damaging the Opponent’s Coordination**

Just like a damaged pawn-structure will cause you to regroup and search for dynamic possibilities to compensate for your damaged structure, with damaged coordination you have a task at hand to get your pieces working dynamically together again.

\begin{center}
\begin{tabular}{c}
\textbf{Schandorff – Iordachescu} \\
\textit{Bled OL 2002}
\end{tabular}
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Here White finds a way to take advantage of his space advantage on the queenside and his
somewhat more active pieces, in spite of his uncastled king.

12 b5! cxb5 13 c6 e8 14 c7! b4 15 b5 bxa3 16 0-0

White has sacrificed two pawns, but the black pieces completely lack coordination and for that matter prospects of breaking the bind too. The c7-pawn is a pain in Black’s neck.

16...a4 17 c2 e4 18 f1 b6 19 h2 g6 20 e1

As Schandorff points out in Skakbladet, the tempting move 20 e6? is met strongly with 20...dc5! 21 dxc5 bxc5, and the queen is trapped. An important reminder to stay alert of tactical possibilities in every position you encounter.

20...a8 21 f3

With this simple move, the knight is kicked away and the devastating d6 will soon follow.

21...a6 22 ab1 e6 23 d6! x6 24 d6 e8 25 c6!

We are nearing the end of the road for Black as his position now completely collapses: an exchange can be picked up on c8 and the a-pawns also cannot be defended.

25...g7 26 a1 e8 27 x3 x8 28 xc8 xc8 29 xa4 e2 30 e2 xc2 31 xc2 xc7 32 xc7 x7 33 a7 e8 34 b7 d6 35 xb6 e4 36 b3

White has a won endgame.

Sacrifice to Gain Time

Pawn sacrifices to gain time are seen as early as in the opening, where one side gambits a pawn for a lead in development or to prevent the development of the other side. In the middlegame they also occur with some frequency, but not quite as often as in the opening. The stronger the players, the more frequently this type of sacrifice is seen.

In the next diagram, Black has already taken on a doubled pawn on the b-file. This, however, is of fairly little significance, as White will have to allow one of the pawns to be exchanged if he wants to make progress on the queenside. In the diagram position, Black has just played 15...g6, challenging White to make a decision regarding his knight on h4 and whether he will give Black another doubled pawn but at the same time open the f-file for Black’s rook.

16 xg6?!

Hindsight is always 20/20, so it is easy to question White’s decision, but looking at it objectively, what did White hope to achieve by exchanging on g6? Personally, I’m not sure, but he may have wanted to avoid 16 f5 on account of 16...xe4 17 xh6+ gxh6 18 xe4 wg5, which appears to give Black the type of play that an attacking player like Hector relishes. Possibly he had overlooked Black’s 19th move, which throws White a curveball from which he never recovers.

16...fxg6 17 d2 a7 18 ac1

Here 18 f3 h5 19 a4 is possibly better than the game continuation, but White’s problem will soon be the same as in the game: White will have a hard time creating threats against Black’s queenside, which despite its apparent loose appearance has amazingly few weak spots.

18...af7!

Black doesn’t waste a moment and immediately lines up for action on the kingside.

19 c4 b4!

The pawn sacrifice that makes this game fit into this chapter. White probably was anticipating 19...bxc4 20 xc4, and even in this line, Black seems to be doing well after 20...xd7 21 f3 xc5. However, this is more along the lines of mutual threats that typify play on opposite wings. In the game continuation, Black with his pawn sacrifice stops White’s queenside initiative in its tracks. The main point is that without the open c-file, White has nothing to show on the queenside. To make progress, White must get his pieces out of the way of the
pawns and then attempt to break through. This is a long-term project, while the battle is fairly close to a climax on the kingside.

20 \( \text{Nxh}5 \) 21 \( \text{Nc}2 \)

The obvious move, but is it the best? Unfortunately for White it seems so. Initially I thought that White might be able to play something like 20 \( \text{Nxa}4? \), intending 21 a3 bxa2 22 b4, but 20...\( \text{Nxd}7 \) throws a spanner in the works as 21 \( \text{Nxh}4 \) is effectively met with 21...\( \text{Nxc}5 \) creating threats on both d3 and f2, and 21 \( \text{Nxd}7 \) \( \text{Nxd}7 \) 22 f3 a5! makes it difficult for White to get any further; e.g., 23 a3 is met with 23...b3.

20...\( \text{Ngh}5 \) 21 \( \text{Nc}2 \)

At first glance it looks like 21 f3 may make sense, but this runs into a radical refutation: 21...\( \text{Nxf}4 \) 22 \( \text{Nxd}2 \) \( \text{Nh}3+ \) 23 gxh3 \( \text{Nxh}3+ \) 24 \( \text{Nh}1 \) \( \text{Nxf}3 \), and White is trouble; for example, 25 \( \text{Ng}2 \) \( \text{Nf}2+ \) 26 \( \text{Ngl} \) \( \text{Nxd}3 \), winning back some material. This leaves Black with a winning advantage due to White’s very passive and uncoordinated minor pieces and their inability to defend against Black’s invasion on the second rank.

21...\( \text{Nxf}4 \) 22 \( \text{Nc}3 \)

22 \( \text{Ne}3 \) may be better, reserving the e1-square for the queen and allowing White to defend on the third rank. Black will still continue with...h5-h4 as in the game and should still have the better chances.

22...h5 23 \( \text{Nh}1 \) (D)

23...h4

With White’s pawns and bishop fixed on light squares, it’s very easy for Black to adopt a dark-squared strategy to make progress on the kingside. White will have a hard time coming up with an answer to it as every pawn move on the kingside will create further weaknesses.

24 \( \text{Ng}3 \) \( \text{Ng}5 \)

Black’s threat is to play...h3, forcing White to make concessions on the light squares as well.

25 \( \text{Ng}1 \) \( \text{Nh}5! \)

Ouch! Now Black threatens to take advantage of White’s king being trapped in the corner with tactical themes like...\( \text{Nh}x2 \) and...\( \text{Ng}3+ \), forcing White to open the h-file, after which the white king is facing mate.

26 \( \text{Nh}1 \)

After 26 f3, Black should probably just play the simple 26...\( \text{Nh}4 \) followed by...g5. Instead, 26...\( \text{Ng}3+ \) 27 hxg3 hxg3 28 \( \text{Nh}4 \) \( \text{Nh}2+ \) 29 \( \text{Nh}3 \) \( \text{Nh}3 \) 30 \( \text{Nh}1 \) \( \text{Nh}3 \) looks tempting, but now rather than 31 gxh3?? \( \text{Nh}3+ \) 32 \( \text{Nh}1 \) \( \text{Nh}3+ \) 33 \( \text{Nh}2 \) \( \text{Nh}2+ \) 34 \( \text{Nh}1 \) g2, which wins for Black as indicated by Grann in Tidskrift für Schack, after 31...\( \text{Nh}2 \) the solution doesn’t come jumping at you as easily as in the other line. However, after closer inspection, there is a reasonably forced variation that gives Black excellent chances of winning: 31...\( \text{Nh}3 \) 32 \( \text{Nh}1 \) \( \text{Nh}2 \) 33 \( \text{Nh}2 \) \( \text{Nh}1 \) 34 \( \text{Nh}2 \) (or 34 \( \text{Nh}1 \) \( \text{Nh}3 \) 35...gxh2 36 \( \text{Nh}2 \) \( \text{Nh}3 \) 37 \( \text{Nh}1 \) \( \text{Nh}3 \) 38...\( \text{Nh}1 \) \( \text{Nh}3 \) 39...\( \text{Nh}1 \) \( \text{Nh}3 \) 40...\( \text{Nh}1 \) the bishop out of business) 40...\( \text{Nh}1 \) g5 41...\( \text{Nh}1 \) h6 42...\( \text{Nh}1 \) \( \text{Nh}1 \) 43...\( \text{Nh}1 \) \( \text{Nh}1 \) 44...\( \text{Nh}1 \) \( \text{Nh}1 \) 45...\( \text{Nh}1 \) \( \text{Nh}1 \), and White will have a hard time defending against Black’s rooks and advancing h-pawn.

26...hxg2! 27 hxg2 \( \text{Nh}1 \) \( \text{Nh}3 \) \( \text{Nh}3 \) 28...g4

Unfortunately for White, 28...\( \text{Nh}1 \) \( \text{Nh}3 \) is met by 28...\( \text{Nh}1 \) \( \text{Nh}3 \) \( \text{Nh}3 \) \( \text{Nh}3 \) \( \text{Nh}3 \) \( \text{Nh}3 \) \( \text{Nh}3 \), when he loses the queen or gets mated.

28...\( \text{Nh}1 \) 29 \( \text{Nh}1 \)

29...\( \text{Nh}1 \) doesn’t help the situation either. After 29...\( \text{Nh}1 \) \( \text{Nh}3 \) 30 hxg3 hxg3 31...\( \text{Nh}1 \) \( \text{Nh}3 \) \( \text{Nh}3 \) \( \text{Nh}3 \), White cannot prevent mate.

29...\( \text{Nh}1 \) \( \text{Nh}3 \) \( \text{Nh}3 \) 30 hxg3 \( \text{Nh}3 \) \( \text{Nh}3 \) \( \text{Nh}3 \) \( \text{Nh}3 \) \( \text{Nh}3 \)

Although White resigned after Black’s next move, Black’s best is now 34...\( \text{Nh}1 \) with mate.

34...\( \text{Nh}1 \) 0-1
Sacrifice to Win the Initiative

Fighting for the initiative is a subject that we have already covered, and doing so by sacrificing a pawn or other material is very common. Several examples throughout this book illustrate this, and many of the other examples in this chapter prove this point. By damaging your opponent's pawn-structure or piece coordination, or by forcing your opponent to make a square available to you by accepting your pawn sacrifice, you fight for the initiative. Therefore in this little section I shall only briefly cite the following classic example. It is self-explanatory, so I shall leave you to enjoy it without notes.

![Chessboard Diagram]

Botvinnik – Riumin
Moscow 1936

14 c5 dxc5 15 dxe5 d4 16 Wd3 Gg4 17 Gxg4 fxg4 18 xb7 Gf8 19 Gd5 Ge6 20 Ge6 Go6 21 Go4 Od4 22 h2 Gd8 23 Wc4 We5 24 Gxd4 cxd4 25 f3 Gxf3 26 Gxf3 Gd5 27 Gxf7 Gxf7 28 Gxd4 Gxc4 29 Gxc4 c5 30 Gf2 Gd5 31 Gd4 Gd4 32 Gc3 Gxa4 33 Gxa4 Ge6 34 Se3 Gf5 35 Gf3 Ge5 36 e3 Gd6 37 Gb2 Gd5 38 Gc4 Gc7 39 Se2 Ge4 40 Gd2+ Gf5 41 Gf3 Gf5 42 Gc4+ Gd5 43 Se2 Ge4 44 Gd2+ Gf5 45 Gf3 Ge5 46 g4 Gd5 47 h3 Gd8 48 Ge2 Gc7 49 Gd3 Go3 50 Gd4 Ge1 51 Gg5 h6 52 Go4 Gd4 53 Gc3+ Gc6 54 Gf4 Gf6 55 Gb1 Gd6 56 Gg3 Ge6 57 Gb5 a5 58 Gc7+ Gd7 59 Gd5 Gb2 60 Gb6+ 1-0

Making Way

A pawn sacrifice to open up a file, diagonal or access to an important square is a common feature in modern chess. Obviously knowing when it is worthwhile and when it is not is crucial. A good guideline is to assess whether the access to the open file, diagonal or square is permanent or only of a temporary kind. Again time is the key factor; if you have enough of it to exploit the changes in the position, your pawn sacrifice is likely to be successful, but if you don’t you may just as well start looking for another idea.

![Chessboard Diagram]

Dorfman – Schekachev
Cannes 1998

This is an interesting position, with both players having some degree of dark-squared weaknesses, but this is not the only element worth paying attention to. White has placed all of his pawns on light squares, which will effectively kill his light-squared bishop on b1 unless he takes measures to change the pawn-structure. A concern for Black is his relatively loose kingside structure involving both pawns and pieces without sufficient protection.

28 e5!

White takes the consequence of the features described above and opens a line for his bishop. Aside from his pawn-structure becoming compromised after White’s pawn sacrifice, Black is also struggling with a lack of coordination of his minor pieces.

28...dxe5 29 Gg3 Ac5?

Black tries to refute White’s play by activating his pieces with tempo, but in fact he is just removing some of the needed protection from his king and leaving the dark squares even weaker. The correct continuation for Black is 29...Gg7!, trying to hold the fort. White obviously has sufficient compensation for the sacrificed pawn with his better-placed pieces and
superior pawn-structure, but as far as I can see there is nothing decisive for White.

30 \textit{We}1 \textit{Qxg}3+

Once again 30...\textit{Qg}7 looks better; the exchange of a defender doesn’t help Black’s situation on the kingside.

31 \textit{Wxg}3 \textit{e}4 32 \textit{Wh}2!?

Aiming for the weak dark squares around Black’s king and f6 in particular.

32...\textit{e}5?

It’s almost as if Black has not understood the seriousness of the situation and just continues to play very ambitiously. Black should have opted for 32...\textit{c}6 33 \textit{Qg}4 \textit{Qe}7, which isn’t pretty for Black, but at least he is alive!

33 \textit{Ec}1 \textit{c}6 34 \textit{Qg}4 \textit{ff}8 35 \textit{Qxe}4

This suffices to give White a huge positional advantage, but in fact White could have played 35 \textit{Exf}7!, and Black’s position falls apart; e.g., 35...\textit{Exf}7 36 \textit{Qh}6+ \textit{Qg}7 37 \textit{Qxe}5+ \textit{ff}6 38 \textit{Qg}4 \textit{Qe}7 39 \textit{Qh}6+ \textit{Qf}7 40 \textit{Qg}5, and game over.

35...\textit{Qxe}4 36 \textit{Qf}6+ \textit{Qg}7 37 \textit{Qxe}4 \textit{Qd}4?

Black was probably in time-trouble at this point; someone else would most likely have opted for 37...\textit{Qc}7!?? to help defend the king. On d4, the bishop no longer participates in the game.

38 \textit{Wh}4 \textit{Qae}8?

The players don’t see much towards the end of this game. Now White has 39 \textit{Qf}6 \textit{Qh}8 40 \textit{Qh}5+ \textit{Qg}8 41 \textit{Exf}7, and the game is soon over. However, the line chosen by White does win too.

39 \textit{Ef}3 \textit{h}5 40 \textit{Eef}1 \textit{We}7 41 \textit{Wx}e7 1-0

Not all pawn sacrifices change the evaluation of a given position, but often they change the character and direction of the game.

There are a lot of imbalances in this position (see following diagram), some more notable than others. The most obvious is the pawn-structure with White’s doubled c-pawns, but there are things in the position that are far more important than a doubled pawn. Black’s king is rather open, he has yet to complete his development and there are undefended squares on both the 7th and 8th rank. Finally, White’s pieces are better-placed than their black counterparts, more active and on open files. Who is better? In my opinion White is, but taking advantage of all the favourable imbalances isn’t as easy as locating them.

19 \textit{c}5!

This is the logical approach from White; if he is to take advantage of the above-mentioned imbalances, he needs to push hard to keep the initiative. The idea behind the pawn sacrifice is to open access for his major pieces to the back ranks in Black’s position.

Other moves such as 19 \textit{We}7 lead nowhere (19...\textit{ff}7 =).

19...\textit{dx}c5?!

Rather surprisingly, Black accepts the offered pawn at the cost of allowing White in on the back ranks.

It seems like Black has two options that would have given him a decent game:

a) 19...\textit{d}5!? 20 \textit{c}4! \textit{dx}c4 (this is better than 20...\textit{c}6 21 \textit{cx}d5 \textit{Bx}d5 22 \textit{Bx}d5+ \textit{cx}d5 23 \textit{Ex}d5 \textit{Q} (Tyomkin) 21 \textit{Bx}d5+ \textit{Bx}d5 22 \textit{Bx}d5+ \textit{Bx}d5 23 \textit{Bx}d5!?? (in his book on the Classical Dutch, Pinski calls this move too optimistic and gives 23 \textit{Bxe}6+ \textit{Bd}8 25 \textit{Bb}4, “White has a little pressure”, but 23...\textit{Bd}6!? seems better; e.g., 24 \textit{Bxb}4 \textit{Bf}7 25 \textit{Bb}1 \textit{Bd}8, and Black is OK) 23...\textit{Bf}7 24 \textit{Bxe}5 \textit{Bxb}3 25 \textit{Bx}d6 \textit{Bf}5 26 \textit{Bx}d5 \textit{Bf}8 27 \textit{Bd}5+ (not 27...\textit{Bxb}7?? \textit{Bx}d6 28 \textit{Bx}d6 \textit{c}3 ++ (Pinski) 27...\textit{Bxd}5 28 \textit{Bxd}5+ \textit{Bh}6 29 \textit{Bf}7 \textit{Bxe}8 (the queen sacrifice 29...\textit{c}3 30 \textit{Bxf}8+ \textit{Bf}8 loses to 31 \textit{Bc}6! c2 32 \textit{Bc}5! \textit{Bc}8 33 \textit{c}7?) 30 \textit{Bxf}5 \textit{Bb}8 (the attempt to support the passed c-pawn with 30...\textit{Bb}5 makes White’s c-pawn more dangerous than Black’s: 31 \textit{c}6 \textit{c}3 32 \textit{Bd}7 \textit{b}4 33 \textit{Bg}4 \textit{Bf}8 34 \textit{c}7 +++) 31 \textit{Bc}6! \textit{Bxc}6 32 \textit{Bxa}7 with somewhat better chances for White.}
b) 19...e6!? 20 wb2 (here Tyomkin gives 20 wf1 as leading to equality after 20...dxc5 21 ed8+ ef8 22 efxe8+ with an edge for Black) 20...dxc5 21 ed8+ ef8 22 wb3+ c4! (so far according to Tyomkin) 23 exf8+! (Tymkin gave 23 exf4+ ef6 =', but 24 ed7 looks more pleasant for Black) 23...ef8 24 exf4+ ef6 25 ef4 with a minimal pull for White.

20 ed8+ ef8 21 exf8+ ef8 22 ef1 ef7 23 ef5

With precise moves, White ties Black down, hindering the normal development of his remaining pieces. Now Black should have opted for 23...eg8 24 ef8+ (the alternatives are 24 exf6 ef6 25 ef1 ef6 26 ef5 ef5 with at least a slight pull for White, and 24 ed6 ef5 25 ef7 ef8 26 ef7 ef8 27 ef8 ef8 28 ef7 ef7 el+ 29 ef1 ef1 28, when White is forced to take a draw by perpetual check starting with 30 ef7+) 24...ef8 25 ef7 (Tymkin) 25...eh8 26 ef1 ef8 ef8 27 ef8+ ef7 28 ed8 ef7 29 eg8 ef7 29 ef6 ef6 30 ef5+ ef5 32 ef7 ef6 33 ef6 ef6 with good winning chances for White.

23...ef5?!

A terrible blunder that leads to the loss of almost the entire queenside pawn-chain!

24 exf6 ef7 25 ef6 26 ef7

With the b7-pawn gone, it's only a matter of time before the pawns on c6 and a7 are going down.

26 ed8 ef7

A safety move, but the more straightforward 27 xf6 ef7 28 d5+ ef8 29 ef7! (Tymkin) also leads to the goal.

27...h5 28 xa7 ef7 29 ef8 ef8 30 ef8 1-0

Room to Breathe

This section could easily have been covered under the previous topic, because it is in many ways quite similar, yet it has distinctive individual characteristics. In the following example we shall see how Black turns a reasonably passive position into a very active one by sacrificing a pawn and opening a line for his bishop. This turns the game upside-down and in that respect, this is the circumstance you want to look for when considering a defensive pawn sacrifice.

Benjamin – Shaked
Kona 1998

White has grabbed some space but fallen behind in development while doing so. In addition his pieces lack coordination. Black is better developed, but his pieces, in particular the e6-bishop, are restricted by his pawns on d5 and f5. If White is allowed to complete his development, he will be doing quite well. Black is more or less out of natural developing moves, so where should he be looking to make progress? Well, that's the theme of this segment.

15...f4!

Black opens a line for his bishop; it initially costs him a pawn, but the activity of his pieces more than outweighs this. This will not be apparent right away, but Black has looked a few moves further.

16 xf4 ef5

This is the immediate idea behind the pawn sacrifice: the bishop is activated with tempo, and White is forced to respond to Black's threats. 16...g4!? is also possible, but the text-move seems better and more direct.

17 a1 ef4?!

Another threat: White now has to cover the d-pawn. Once again 17...g4!? could be considered.

18 ef2 f6

Black decides to keep the bishop-pair and open the position to profit from it. The alternative is 18...xf3 gxf3 g5, which is also quite pleasant for Black; the weaknesses in White's pawn-structure and poor piece coordination
more than compensate for the nominal disadvantage in material.

19 \text{Nh3} \text{Nh8}!

Black can no longer benefit from 19...\text{xf3} as after 20 \text{xf3} fxe5 21 \text{b3} \text{c7} 22 dxe5 \text{Nh8} White has castled by hand and brought the position reasonably under control, although the chances are approximately even. By keeping the pieces on the board, Black forces White to solve his problems on his own; the fewer the pieces, the easier it is to get them coordinated.

20 \text{f4}?! \text{a8} 21 \text{exf6} \text{xf6} (D)

Compare this position with the one we started out from: at the cost of a mere pawn, all of Black's pieces have become active, while White is still struggling to coordinate his pieces.

22 \text{e5} \text{xe5}

The alternative is to take with the knight, but this doesn't provide Black with any advantage either; e.g., 22...\text{xe5} 23 \text{b3} (23 dxe5?? loses to 23...\text{xe5} 24 \text{d4} \text{f6} 23...\text{e6} 24 \text{xe5} \text{xe5} 25 dxe5 \text{xe5} 26 \text{d4} \text{xd4} 27 \text{xd4} \text{c8} with fairly even chances in the endgame.

23 dxe5 d4?!

This looks logical: Black takes control over some of the dark squares that are otherwise White's domain thanks to his dark-squared bishop. The alternative is 23...\text{xe5} 24 \text{e3} \text{f6} 25 \text{d4} g5 26 hxg5 \text{hxg5} with chances for both sides.

24 \text{d2} \text{c5} 25 \text{e1} \text{f5}?!?

Black seems to be losing the thread, forcing White to activate his misplaced rook by placing his bishop on a less threatening square. Black should instead have opted for 25...\text{d5} 26 \text{g3} \text{xe5} with chances for both sides.

26 \text{g3}

White could also consider 26 \text{a3}!?.

26...\text{xe5} 27 \text{xe5}?

This seems to throw the last bits of White's advantage away. A more aggressive approach can be taken with 27 b4!?. My computer then spits out the following line: 27...\text{d5} 28 \text{g7} \text{c4} 29 \text{xd4} \text{d4} 30 \text{xd4} \text{xd4} 31 \text{f7} \text{d8} 32 \text{xg8} \text{f8} 33 \text{xe6} \text{g8} 34 \text{f3}, and White's pawns should prove more valuable than Black's extra piece.

27...\text{xe5} 28 \text{f4} \text{f6} 29 \text{h5} \text{hxh4} 30 \text{g7} \text{c8} 31 \text{e6} \text{xe6} 32 \text{xe6} \text{f6} 33 \text{e1} \text{a6}

With fairly even chances; the game eventually ended in a draw.

\textbf{Exercises}

9.1 Try to make a case for both of these pawn sacrifices in the Benko Gambit: 1 \text{d4} \text{f6} 2 \text{c4} \text{c5} 3 \text{d5} \text{b5}!? 4 \text{cxb5} \text{a6} 5 \text{b6}!?

9.2 White has just played the artificial 15 \text{e2}-d1. How can Black, who is well ahead in development, open the position to his advantage?
A key element in positional chess is identifying weaknesses and determining which are more significant than others, and thus deciding where to attack.

In the previous chapters we have looked at different types of weaknesses and imbalances and have seen examples of how to take advantage of them. But what do you do in those situations where things are not that obvious? That is what we are going to look at next.

Assessing Possible Targets

Before choosing any plan, it is crucial to assess your own and your opponent’s weaknesses, and which countermeasures your opponent can take against the plans you have available.

![Chess Diagram](image)

Romanishin – Karpov
USSR Ch (Moscow) 1983

We enter the game in the last stage of the opening phase. White has yet to complete his development and has just played 15 \( \text{W}b3 \), threatening the \( \text{b}7 \)-pawn and possibly intending to meet 15...\( \text{b}6 \) with 16 \( \text{L}c3 \) followed by 17 \( \text{N}ac1 \) with a decent position and some chances on the kingside.

Black’s first considerations should be:

a) Can I prevent White’s plan?

b) Does White have any structural weaknesses and are they exploitable?

c) Can I prevent White’s plan by targeting any of his structural weaknesses?

d) Can White prevent my plan?

Let’s quickly go through the answers:

a) At first glance, it looks risky for White to take on \( \text{b}7 \), exposing the queen to getting trapped, so by avoiding 15...\( \text{b}6 \), Black can possibly win a tempo that he can use to meet White’s plan.

b) White has weakened his kingside by advancing his g-pawn, but for now it doesn’t look plausible to exploit that weakness. The doubled e-pawn is another weakness that is difficult to address at the moment. However, the c-file, in particular the c2- and c4-squares, is weak and with Black having a better-placed light-squared bishop and better overall development, this is probably the best available target.

c) Let’s calculate: 15...\( \text{R}ac8 \) 16 \( \text{W}xb7 \ \text{L}c5 \) (threatening to trap the queen with ...\( \text{L}b8 \) and ...\( \text{R}c8 \)) 17 \( \text{W}b3 \ \text{L}d4 \) 18 \( \text{W}g3 \ \text{W}c7 \), and Black wins the pawn back with interest: White’s queenside is frozen.

d) It doesn’t seem likely as Black can anchor the rook on \( \text{c}4 \) with the support of ...\( \text{b}5 \).

15...\( \text{R}ac8 \)!

You may ask yourself why Black is using this rook rather than the perhaps more obvious f8-rook. Karpov has a well-developed sense of danger and rightly decides that for the purpose of attacking White on the c-file both rooks are equally effective, but the rook on f8 has a part-time job, which is to protect Black’s king, the back rank and the f7-square in particular. Therefore, for now, the rook stays on f8.

16 \( \text{L}c3 \ \text{R}c4 \)!

An important move; Black keeps the b-pawn back until he is certain that he can maintain it on \( \text{b}5 \). If Black plays 16...\( \text{b}5 \) immediately, White can meet it with 17 \( \text{a}4 \), forcing 17...\( \text{b}4 \), when Black’s control over the c4-square is permanently reduced. The text-move prepares ...\( \text{b}5 \) by providing an effective answer to a white \( \text{a}4 \).

17 \( \text{R}fc1 \)
On 17 \( \text{Wb}7 \), in Chess at the Top 1979–1984, Karpov gives 17...\( \text{Qc}5 \) 18 \( \text{Qxc}5 \) \( \text{Wxc}5 \) “with advantage to Black”, but White may not be so terribly off after 19 b3 \( \text{Qc}2 \) 20 e3. Therefore a better try is 17...\( \text{Qc}7 \)! 18 \( \text{Qxd}2 \)! (18 \( \text{Wb}3 \)?? \( \text{Qc}2 \) \( \rightarrow + \)) 18...\( \text{Qxb7} \) 19 \( \text{Qxa}5 \) \( \text{Qxb}2 \) with a solid plus for Black in the endgame, thanks to his better-placed and more active pieces.

17...b5 18 a4

As Karpov points out, exchanging on c4 will not bring White any relief; e.g., 18 \( \text{Qxc}4 \) bxc4 19 \( \text{Wb}7 \) \( \text{Qc}5 \) (Karpov) with an advantage for Black. Also clearly better for Black, but not mentioned by Karpov, is 18...\( \text{Qxc}4 \); e.g., 19 \( \text{Wd}1 \) \( \text{Qd}8 \) and Black retains the pressure on the queenside while getting to the d-file first.

18...\( \text{Qxc}1+ \) 19 \( \text{Qxc}1 \) \( \text{bxa}4 \) 20 \( \text{Wb}7 \) a3!

Karpov suspects that Romanishin overlooked this move.

21 \( \text{Qa}1 \)

Karpov gives 21 \( \text{bxa}3 \) \( \text{Qxa}3 \) 22 \( \text{Qa}1 \) \( \text{Qc}3 \) and 21 \( \text{Wx}e7 \) \( \text{axb}2 \); in both cases White is in bad shape.

21...\( \text{Qb}4 \) 22 \( \text{bxa}3 \) \( \text{Qc}3 \)

That is the idea behind 21...\( \text{Qb}4 \): the e5-pawn is ripe for picking.

23 \( \text{Qd}1 \) \( \text{Qxa}3 \) 24 \( \text{Qxa}7 \) \( \text{Wb}3 \) 25 \( \text{Qc}1 \) \( \text{Qxc}5 \) 26 \( \text{Wd}7 \) h6 27 \( \text{Qf}3 \) \( \text{Qf}6 \) 28 \( \text{Qc}8 \) \( \text{Qxc}8 \) 29 \( \text{Wxc}8+ \) \( \text{Qh}7 \)

Here we shall leave the game as we have moved outside our subject. It suffices to say that Karpov won this endgame relatively easily.

The targets are not always as easy to locate as in the above example. In the following, Black has to use some imagination to find the right plan.

Black appears to have a good grip of the light squares on the queenside, but White has taken every necessary precaution to prevent this from being a factor.

So how should Black continue? As mentioned above, it makes sense to consider White’s plan and if it can be prevented. White’s last move was 21 \( \text{Qhf}3 \), which seems to threaten 22 \( \text{Qg}5 \) offering an exchange of the dark-squared bishops, an exchange Black cannot afford to agree to due to all of his dark squares becoming tremendously weak at once. White will be able to put his rooks on c5 and c1 and then use his queen to penetrate Black’s position.

Black can only prevent White’s plan by playing the apparently passive 21...\( \text{Wd}8 \), but how should he then continue, and what can he target?

21...\( \text{Wd}8 \)! 22 \( \text{Qc}3 \) \( \text{Qd}7 \)!

Splendid! Black puts his king on a safe square where he can help in the defence of the queenside and clears the path so that the rooks can get connected.

23 \( \text{Qec}1 \) g5!

Black starts a kingside attack. With the queenside under reasonable control, Black addresses the weakness on White’s kingside constituted by the h-pawn on h3.

24 \( \text{Qe}1 \)!

White is obviously not blind to what Black is planning to do on the kingside, and starts taking preventive action by removing possible targets for a...g4 advance.

24...\( \text{Wg}8 \)

In order to be able to advance his g-pawn, Black needs the queen behind this pawn.

25 g3!

Another good move: White creates a cushion to deter Black from making a pawn advance on the kingside; e.g., 25...\( \text{Qc}7 \) can now be met with 26 h4 and 25...h4 with 26 g4. This defensive ploy is one worth remembering.

25...\( \text{Qc}7 \)??

Not being a fan of shadow boxing, my computer likes the very direct 25...\( \text{Qbc}4 \), claiming some compensation for the pawn after 26 \( \text{Qxc}4 \) \( \text{Qxc}4 \) 27 \( \text{Qxc}4 \) dxc4 28 \( \text{Wxc}4 \) g4 29 h4 \( \text{Wg}6 \) with light-squared control to balance White’s extra pawn. However, I think Black made the right decision in the game, even if it allows White to draw.

Marciano – C. Bauer

French Ch (Méribel) 1998
26 b5 g6 27 d3
White chickens out. A worthy attempt at continuing the game can be made by 27 f3!, intending to play d3, g2 and, after due preparation, f4 to open the f-file.
27...g7 28 b5 g6 29 d3 g7 30 b5 g6 \(1/2-1/2\)

The above example showed an unusual solution to an obvious problem. Often, however, we have to make a plan when there are neither obvious threats nor apparent targets.

![Chess Diagram](image)

Korchnoi – Karpov
Tilburg 1986

White has generated some space advantage on the queenside in his pursuit of the initiative, but Black’s solid set-up repelled White’s early aggression, and now Black has the task of locating possible targets. At first glance, it doesn’t look like there is much to work with, but White’s knights are not particularly well-placed, and in addition White’s pawns on the queenside are not as good as they may appear.

21 c5!
This move may look quite odd. Under most circumstances it is not advisable to fix one’s own pawns on the same colour as one’s only bishop, but here it serves a higher purpose: it restrains White’s pieces and enables Black to take action on the queenside. For example, if White now continues 22 b5, Black has 22...a6!, which places White in a dilemma: no matter how he proceeds, he will end up with a weak a-pawn for Black to target with his rooks. The game continuation sees the consequences of White exchanging on c5.

22 bxc5 bxc5
Black wisely does not take back with a piece as that would allow White to exchange one of his poorly placed knights.

23 ab1 c6!
This rook-lift gives White another headache: how does he get his knight from a4 to a better square while not losing the a-pawn in the process?

24 f4 bc8 25 x_c3 a6 26 b5 (D)

![Chess Diagram](image)

White has found a temporary solution to both of his problems, but his position is rather strained: in particular the knight is not well-placed on b5 and his overall coordination leaves a lot to be desired. Meanwhile, Black has a fairly easy position to play: he can slowly but surely improve the position of his pieces and take squares away from White’s pieces.

26 a4!
Simple chess: the rook puts pressure on the c4-pawn while clearing the a6-square for the pawn, so the b5-knight has to move.

27 d2
White continues by seeking active counterplay rather than defending the a-pawn with 27 a1, which nonetheless appears to be a better move.

27 g5!
Pushing White’s bishop to a less attractive square.

28 c3 a6 29 c3
White’s active minor pieces have been sent on a retreat, and the a-pawn falls.

29 xa3 30 de4 c7
Before White gets an opportunity to place a rook on the seventh rank, Black takes measures to prevent it. Note in the following Karpov’s methodical approach to improving the position of his pieces along with his overall coordination.
He is no rush to take advantage of his extra pawn; patience is part of excellent technique.

31 \( \text{\textit{Qd2}} \) \( \text{\textit{Qe8!}} \) 32 \( \text{\textit{Cc2}} \) \( \text{\textit{Qd6}} \)

The idea behind the previous move: Black targets the c-pawn and threatens \( \text{\textit{Qf5}} \). White’s next move is more or less forced.

33 \( \text{\textit{g4}} \) \( \text{\textit{f6}} \)

Black can also consider 33...\( f5!? \) with problems for White’s bishop on e3.

34 \( \text{\textit{Qc4}} \) \( \text{\textit{Qxe4}} \) 35 \( \text{\textit{Qxe4}} \) \( \text{\textit{Qe5}} \) 36 \( \text{\textit{Qd2}} \) \( \text{\textit{Qg7}} \)

37 \( \text{\textit{Qbd1}} \) \( \text{\textit{Qf6}} \) 38 \( \text{\textit{Qd6}} \) \( \text{\textit{Qb3}} \) 39 \( \text{\textit{Qa2??}} \)

In time-trouble White forgets his knight is in enemy territory. Relatively best is 39 \( \text{\textit{Qf3}} \) to give the knight a retreat-square. Now Black simply rings up the knight.

39...\( \text{\textit{Qb6}} \) 40 \( \text{\textit{Qad2}} \) \( \text{\textit{Qec6}} \) 0-1

**Attacking Weak Squares**

At any given time of the game there will always be squares that are weaker than others. Usually they are fairly easy to point out, but determining which weakness is most important isn’t always easy.

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**Inkiov – M. Gurevich**  
*Jurmala 1985*

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Before going any further, take a look at the position from Black’s point of view and see if you can spot any weaknesses in White’s position. Next, pick the one you find to be the most significant weakness and then lay out a plan for Black.

I hope you have noticed that White’s advance of the g-pawn has left the dark squares on the kingside and in the centre rather weak, but as you probably have realized, these weak squares are, at least for the moment, difficult to exploit: our pieces are not placed ideally for that purpose and White’s pieces are all actively placed. Yet while being active, White’s forces don’t really threaten anything of significance, which gives Black some freedom to apply pressure where he sees fit. Like in the previous example, the primary weakness in White’s position is difficult to spot, but once found, the plan is easy to outline.

19...\( \text{\textit{Qa5}} \!\!\)

The key weaknesses in White’s position are the b-pawn and the b3-square, which is remarkably accessible for Black’s pieces as White’s pieces are focused on action in the centre and on the kingside. The text-move, aside from targeting b3, also threatens 20...\( \text{\textit{Qxc4}} \) 21 \( \text{\textit{Wx}} \text{\textit{xc4}} \) \( \text{\textit{d5}} \).

20 \( \text{\textit{Qg3}} \) \( \text{\textit{Qab8}} \) 21 \( \text{\textit{Qd3}} \) \( \text{\textit{Qb6}} \)

A simple and strong move that prevents 22 \( \text{\textit{Qd2}} \) on account of 22...\( \text{\textit{Qxg2}} \) 23 \( \text{\textit{Qxg2}} \) \( \text{\textit{Qxb2}} \).

Similarly 22 b3 drops a pawn to 22...\( \text{\textit{Qxf3}} \) 23 \( \text{\textit{Qxf3}} \) \( \text{\textit{Qxb3}} \) 24 \( \text{\textit{Qb1}} \) \( \text{\textit{Qd4}} \).

22 \( \text{\textit{e4}} \) \( \text{\textit{Qa8}} \) 23 \( \text{\textit{Qb1}} \)

Against 23 \( \text{\textit{Q1d2}} \), Black can either play 23...\( \text{\textit{Qf6}} \) directly or precede it with 23...\( \text{\textit{Qb3}} \) 24 \( \text{\textit{Qe2}} \). In both cases Black is comfortably better.

23...\( \text{\textit{Qb3}} \) 24 \( \text{\textit{Qd1}} \) (\( D \))

---

24...\( \text{\textit{d5}} \!\!\)

With all of Black’s pieces on active squares and nicely coordinated and White’s less so in both departments, it shouldn’t come as any surprise that Black can play a move like this, attempting to exploit his superiority.

25 \( \text{\textit{Qxd5}} \) \( \text{\textit{Qxd5}} \) 26 \( \text{\textit{Qe2}} \)

White’s position is getting ever more uncomfortable; e.g., 26 \( \text{\textit{cxd5?!}} \) \( c4! \) 27 \( \text{\textit{Qe3}} \) \( \text{\textit{Qc5}} \) is highly unpleasant for White and 26 \( \text{\textit{Qf5}} \) \( \text{\textit{Qf6}} \)
27 \( \text{\textit{cxd5}} \) \( c4 \) 28 \( \text{\textit{Qe3}} \) \( \text{\textit{Qxd5}} \) is downright awful.
The text-move clears the d1-square for the d3-rook to retreat to.

26...f6 27 exd5 c4 28  

White has problems everywhere, and decides to give up the g4-pawn to gain time to centralize both rooks. The alternative is 30  

30...xg4 31  

Once again White has the opportunity to exchange on f6 and foregoes it. In this case 31  

31...xe4?! 

Not at all a bad move, but personally I prefer 31...e7!! to keep the bishop-pair and maintain the positional pressure arising from having better-placed pieces.

32 xxd8+ xxd8 33 xxe4 xxe4 34 xxe4

(D)

Karpov – Taimanov
Moscow tt 1983


Let’s evaluate the position. The material distribution is even, and pawn-wise both sides have the same amount of pawns on kingside and queenside. White has slightly more space on account of his pawn on e5 and his pieces are, with the exception of the knight on a3, well-placed and nicely coordinated. Black’s pieces also have plenty of active potential, although the bishop on b7 is severely restricted by his pawns on light squares.

Everything in White’s set-up indicates a kingside attack, but as Karpov points out, it needs to be prepared, as 24 g4 h6 gets White nowhere.

Once this is determined, which should not take long, you can start determining how to proceed. In positions with one piece out of play, like the knight on a3, where there isn’t anything forced, it is often a good plan to activate the remaining piece(s).

24  

A strong move, but a difficult decision that doesn’t appear entirely logical; after all why exchange the piece that appears to hold White’s position together and prevents Black from making anything happen on the queenside? The
answer lies in the variation 26 \( \text{dxf3 d4!} \); e.g., 27 \( \text{\textae x5 \texte x3!} \) (Kar-pov), and although White still
is better, Black is over the worst.

26...\text{exf5} 27 \( \text{\textae f3} \) \( \text{\textxc2} \)

Black would have liked to play 27...d4 to open a line for his dead bishop, but now it runs
into 28 \( \text{\textxd4 \textw b5} \) 29 \( \text{\textgg5 h6 30 c4! \textwc6 31 e6!} \) (Kar-pov). Therefore, lacking active counterplay,
Black does what any experienced defender will do: accept some of the offered material to make
the other side prove the validity of his strategy.

28 \( \text{\textae d4!} \) \( \text{\textwc6!} \)

Black continues to make good practical decisions in the defence. As Kar-pov points out,
28...\text{\textwb3?} leads to trouble for Black after 29 \( \text{\textwh4 \textee8}, \) but now instead of 30 \( \text{\textgg5? h5!} \) (Kar-pov only mentions 30...\text{\texthe6?} 31 \( \text{\textxf7} \) 32 \( \text{\textwf6+ ++} \)) 31 \( \text{\textxf7 \textae7} \) 32 \( \text{\textgg5 a5} \) with clearly better chances for Black, White
can take the bull by the horns with 30 \( \text{e6! \textfxe6} \) 31 \( \text{\textwf6}, \) when he should win.

Also 28...\text{\textwc7} 29 \( \text{\textgg5 h6 30 e6!} \) (Kar-pov) is better for White, while after 28...\text{\textae5?} 29 \( \text{\textwh6 \text\textae7} \) (29...\text{\textxd4 30 \textgg5! \text\textwc7 31 \text\textxe7 \text\textae6 32 \text\textgg5 ++}) 30 \( \text{\textgg5! \text\textxd4 31 \text\textwh7+ \text\textff8 32 e6}, \) Black is busted.

29 \( \text{\textwh4 \textee8!} \)

29...\text{\text\textae7? runs into 30 e6!}.

30 \( \text{e6! (D)} \)

\begin{center}
\begin{tikzpicture}
\node at (0,0) {B};
\end{tikzpicture}
\end{center}

We have seen this move in several of the lines
given above, but here I find the move particularly
instructive; White’s clears the e5-square
for his knight and opens the diagonal for his
bishop, which is now particularly strong with
the dark-squared weaknesses around Black’s
king. In addition, with all of Black’s pawns
more or less fixed on light squares, the bishop
on b7 is effectively buried alive.

30...\text{\textfxe6 31 \text\textee5 \text\textwc7 32 \text\textxe5} (!) 

After making the a3-b1-d2-f3-e5xg6 tour,
White’s knight is really showing the world what
it can do. Remarkably, its dominance over the
b7-bishop is what decides the game.

32...\text{\textgg7 33 \text\textee5 \text\textwe7 34 \text\textgg3 \text\textee8 35 \text\textfe1 \text\texthe8} 

In his annotations to the game, Kar-pov con-siders this position to be strategically lost for
Black on account of White’s minor pieces’ su-periority over their black counterparts. Yet win-
ing the game will still require both time and
technique. Kar-pov laid out his winning plan:
exchange the dark-squared bishops and transfer
the knight to the ideal square d4, with pressure
on the e-file. He adds the fact that the queens
may get exchanged but this by no means eases
Black’s defence.

36 \( \text{\textxf3 \text\texthh8 37 \text\textxg7+ \text\textwe7 38 \text\textdd4 \text\textwg3} \)

39 \( \text\textxg3 \text\textee3 40 \text\textxe6 \text\textee8 41 \text\textwh2 \)

So far everything has gone in accordance with
White’s plan. Now is the time for Black to seize
the moment and free the light-squared bishop
from its incarceration by playing 41...d4! Kar-pov
offers 42 \( \text\textxd4 \text\textee4 43 \text\textgg4! \text\textgg8 44 \text\textgg5 h6
45 \text\texthh1! \text\textgg6! 46 \text\textgg1 \text\textgg3 47 \text\texthh2 \text\textgg4 48
\text\textfe2, “when the realization of the advantage
involves the overcoming of certain technical
difficulties.”

After Black’s next move White’s win is rea-
sonably straightforward. I shall give the rest of
the game without other comments than Kar-pov’s
markings.

41...\text{\text\textxe3? 42 \text\textdd4 \text\textbb6 43 \text\textxf5 \text\textff8 44
\text\textdd4 \text\textgg8 45 \text\textee7 \text\texteg7 46 \text\textdd1 \text\texthh6?!} 47
\text\textgg1 \text\texthh6 48 \text\textff5! \text\textbb6 49 \text\textee6! \text\textxe6 50 \text\textfxe6
\text\textgg8 51 \text\textee7 \text\textee8 52 \text\textff5 \text\textee6 53 \text\textdd6 \text\textgg8 54
\text\text\textee8 \text\textee8 55 \text\text\textee8 \text\text\textee8 56 \text\textff6 1-0

An amazing performance by the knight.

In the following diagram, we see Kar-pov
facing a somewhat unusual strategic ploy by
Larsen.

This looks like a fairly standard Maroczy
Bind position. White’s position is apparently
without weaknesses, quite solid and in addition
he has a spatial advantage in the centre. So
where should Black target White’s position? If
you notice White’s pawns, the key pawns on c4
and e4-f3-g2 are all on light squares and thus by
definition the dark squares around these pawns
are weak. How can Black exploit this? Larsen provides the answer.

14...g5!

With this advance, Black starts his dark-squared campaign. He wants to set up a clamp on White’s pawn-structure, and therefore eliminate the importance of White’s space advantage.

15 Kb1 d6 16 Qd5

In a later game White tried 16 a3, but even so Black reached a comfortable endgame after 16...Qf8 17 Wc2 We5 18 b4 Qc6 19 Qd5 Wb2 (Kosten-Cebalo, Paris 1988).

16...Qxd2 17 Qxd2 Qe5 18 b4

As Peter Heine Nielsen points out, if White attempts to play for f4 with g3, the open g-file, after both sides taking on f4 with the g-pawns, will be a nuisance for White’s king and in addition it will weaken the e4-pawn.

18...Qc8 19 a4 h4 20 Qf1

White would like to play 20 a5 immediately, but it runs into 20...Qd4 21 Qf2 Qxg2 22 Qxe3+ 23 Qxe3 Qf4 (Nielsen), when Black wins a pawn.

20...f6 21 a2 Qd4 22 Qf2

Rather surprisingly, in a game played a few months later, the previous moves were repeated in Wolff-Miles, Philadelphia 1987. Here White deviated with 22 Qxd4 Qxd4 23 Qd1 Qc6 24 a5 Qe5 25 Qe3 h3! (undermining White’s pawn-chain at the root) 26 axb6 axb6 27 a7 Qc6 28 b5 h4 29 Qg2 Qd7 30 Qd5 Qb8 31 Qxb6 Qe6 32 Qd4? Qh4 (White has won a pawn, but in short order his pawns will fall, one after the other) 33 Qa8?! Qxc4 34 Qe5! Qf7 35 Qa4 Qb5 36 a3 Qc6 37 Qc7 Qxb6 38 a1 Qb7 39 Qa6 Qf4 40 Qd4 Qa7 0-1. Another positional beauty in its own right.

22...Qf7 23 a5 Qxd5 24 exd5 Qxe3+ 25 Qxe3 Qf4 26 Qd2 Qc7 27 axb6 axb6 28 a6 Qc8 29 Qxb6

29 a1 is met with 29...b5.

29...Qxd5 30 Qb5 Qf4 31 Qa5 Qg6 32 c5 Qe5 33 Qc3 dx5 34 bxc5 Qb8 35 Qb5 Qd8+ 36 Qe2 Qc6

Now the draw is certain, so I shall give the rest of the game without further comments.

37 Qxc6 Qxc6 38 g3 Qd4 39 Qb5 h4 40 h4 Qd5 41 g4 Qc7 42 Qe3 e6 43 a2 Qe7 44 a3 Qf7 45 Qc2 f5 46 gxf5 exf5 47 a2 Qg7 1/2-1/2

Attacking Weak Pawns

Detecting weaknesses in your opponent’s position is relatively easy compared to finding the right way to attack them. This often requires good technique and even better imagination. The following example is a good illustration.

[diagram]

Oll – Hodgson
Groningen PCA 1993

It should be obvious that Black has an advantage in this position. White has three pawn-islands against Black’s two. Black’s d5-knight is many times stronger than White’s lame bishop on d6. In addition, Black’s king is safer than its white counterpart. But how does Black take advantage of his apparently better position? Look at which of Black’s pieces can be improved in their activity: that is currently only the rook. Then we look at White’s position: the kingside pawns are unprotected. How can they be attacked?
34...\textit{h7}!!

Once you realize that the king will be quite safe on g6, it isn’t too hard to see this plan for Black.

\textbf{35 \textit{c5}}

Here \textit{c5} is met by \textit{...xc5 36 \textit{xc5 b4 37 \textit{c5 a8} followed by \textit{...g6-f5}, when the king finishes the job on the kingside.}

\textbf{35...g6 36 h4 \textit{h8 37 a3 \textit{h5 38 \textit{g1 \textit{h7}}}}}

Black can also consider playing the immediate \textit{38...\textit{f5}!}, but in any case White is toast.

\textbf{39 \textit{d1 \textit{b3 40 \textit{d2 \textit{f5 41 g4 \textit{f4 42 \textit{b1+ \textit{g8 43 g5}}}}}}}

Black also wins after \textit{43 \textit{c2 \textit{c4 44 \textit{xc4 \textit{xc4}}}}.}

\textbf{43...\textit{b4 44 \textit{d3 \textit{c3}! 45 axb4}}}

Or \textit{45 bxc3 \textit{xa3+ 46 \textit{a2 \textit{f1+}.}}}

\textbf{45...\textit{wa2+ 46 \textit{xa2 \textit{f1+ 0-1}}}}

It is mate next move.

\begin{center}
\begin{tikzpicture}
\end{tikzpicture}
\end{center}

Adams – Short
Sarajevo 1999

A peculiar position: both sides have yet to complete their development, but Black in particular seems to have some work to do in this department. Black’s pair of bishops is also very passively placed, and his pawn-structure also leaves him wishing that things had gone differently in the opening. Bottom line: White has a rather significant advantage. But how does White move on from here? You should first ask yourself how Black would like to continue. A possible plan for Black is \textit{18...\textit{b6} or 18...\textit{b6} to take the c5-square away from White and then continue with \textit{...b5} (intending to transfer it to e4 via d3 or exchange it on e2) and \textit{...d7} to protect the e6-pawn. Once this has been established, White’s plan is more obvious.

\textbf{18 \textit{c5}}

The thinking behind this move is that if White can force some exchanges, including the queens, Black will have a very hard time both defending the weak kingside pawns and preventing penetration via the open g-file. Black’s remaining pieces are simply not geared for both tasks at the same time.

\textbf{18...\textit{b6 19 \textit{xd7+ \textit{g8}}} 20 \textit{d3}}

Black would prefer not to play this move, and instead let White exchange on g7 if he wanted the queens off the board. However, the problem is that after 19...\textit{xd7, White will play 20 \textit{d3 with a strong attack against Black’s king who has to fend for himself.}}

\textbf{20 \textit{xg3 \textit{xd7 21 \textit{h5 b5}}}

I’m not sure what Black thought this move would bring, because he is very unlikely to generate any counterplay on the queenside. I would probably have preferred \textit{21...\textit{d8}, which, despite not being great to look at, certainly inspires more confidence than what transpires in the game.}

\textbf{22 \textit{h3} 23 \textit{g3 \textit{e7 24 \textit{xe7!}}}}

An easy decision to make: the knight is one of Black’s best defenders and White needs access to the g6-square.

\textbf{24...\textit{xe7 25 \textit{g6 \textit{h8 26 d1 \textit{b6 27 d3 a5?}}}}}

A mistake that further increases Black’s problems as White now gets a number of tactical options due to the unprotected bishop on b6. Better is \textit{27...\textit{c8} or 27...\textit{d8.}}

\textbf{28 \textit{f6+ \textit{c7}}}

Both \textit{28...\textit{c6} and 28...\textit{c8} are met with 29 \textit{xd5.}}

\textbf{29 \textit{xd5!}}

Oops! Black cannot take back on d5 due to the knight fork that follows.

\textbf{29...\textit{e3 30 \textit{xb5 \textit{xf4 31 \textit{xa5}}}}}

The game is over.

\textbf{31...\textit{b7 32 \textit{b5+ \textit{a7 33 \textit{h5 \textit{g5 34 \textit{g7 \textit{he8 35 \textit{xe7+ \textit{xe7 36 \textit{b4 \textit{c7 37 \textit{f4 \textit{c5 38 \textit{d3 \textit{d5 39 \textit{e2} 1-0}}}}}}}}}}}}}}}

Understanding the usual set of plans in a position naturally helps the understanding of where to attack before the opponent can set his plan in motion.
This is not an easy position to evaluate at just a quick glance, but let’s see if we can dissect it anyway. White’s position overall looks very harmonious with no apparent weaknesses, whereas Black has a more dynamic position and he has taken on some weaknesses in order to play more actively, something Korchnoi often has done as Black against Karpov. What first springs to mind is the doubled b-pawn and the knight on a6, which seems somewhat out of play, yet helps limit White’s options on the queenside. Black may also intend to play ...e5 at some point, forcing White to make a decision regarding his d-pawn and therefore possibly giving the c5-square to the a6-knight. However, with the same ...e5 in mind, Black will place the majority of his pawns on dark squares, thus leaving the light squares around them weaker. So if an exchange of the light-squared bishops can be accommodated, Black may have a long-term problem, both in regards to the light squares, but also his counterplay and activation of the a6-knight. In addition, if Black should exchange on a3, he will leave the b6-pawn very vulnerable. This all leaves Black’s options somewhat restricted, and White’s plan all the more logical.

13...e5!

This more or less forces the exchange of the bishops, as White now threatens d3, putting more pressure on the doubled b-pawns.

13...cxd5 14 cxd5

Although this looks slightly surprising, there is a specific idea behind it: afterwards the knight will head to e3 from where it will take control over the d5- and f5-squares if Black should play the desired ...e5 to obtain counterplay.

14...e4 15 e3 c8 16 d3

With his 15th move, Black threatened 16...a4 followed by 17...b3, effectively sealing off the queenside. White is obviously not interested in this and prevents it.

16...e5?

Personally, I don’t like this move, which is too weakening under the present circumstances. I think Black should change his plan and opt for something like 16...c6 and possibly follow it up with ...d5 at some point.

17 d4!

White immediately starts playing on the light squares. This also leaves it up to Black to exchange on d4, if he wants to activate the a6-knight, keeping in mind that the d6-pawn will be both isolated and hanging once Black takes on d4.

17...e4 18 a4 e4 d4 19 e8+ e8 20 d4

After this series of exchanges, an endgame has emerged that heavily favours White. White is virtually without weaknesses, whereas Black, in addition to the weak pawns on b6 and d6, and weak light squares, also has a very passive position. Black’s attempt over the next few moves to change this doesn’t affect the overall verdict that Black is in serious trouble.

20...c8 21 d1 c8 22 f1!

Keeping it simple; White protects the e-pawn to free the knight to attack Black’s weak pawns.

22...d3 23 d5 e5 24 h6 h6 25 f3 g5 26 c7 6 7 27 d5

Black is completely lost. Next the d6-pawn will be targeted once the knight reaches b5 via c3 or c7.

27...a4 28 c7 c6 29 b5 f8 30 d6 c6

Black takes a practical chance, which isn’t likely to work against a strong player, much less someone like Karpov.

31 d6 d6 32 a6 d6 d6 33 b6 c4 34 b8+

34 xb3?? would lose to 34...d2+.

34...g7 35 a4!

Preventing Black from connecting his queenside pawns and snuffing out Black’s last hope.

35...c6 36 e4 e5 37 e2 1-0
Attacking Open Files

In this book we have several examples of an attack on an open file; Andersson-Elwert in Chapter 5 and Ståhlberg-Taimanov in Chapter 8 are two examples of this. In the following example, we see how efficiently such an attack can run if you can mobilize your pieces faster than your opponent.

25 \textit{dxd1 exd2} 26 \textit{exd2}
Through very simple means, White has taken control of the d-file. The next step for White is the invasion of the seventh rank.
26...\textit{g6}?! 27 \textit{d7 exd7} 28 \textit{xd7 c7}
Black's problem is that despite the option to avoid White's invasion of the seventh, White has other entry-squares and more active pieces.
29 \textit{d8 f6} (D)
This is the reason behind 26...\textit{g6}.

\textbf{Karlsson – Eklund}
\textit{Swedish Ch 1999}

Aside from the h7-bishop, Black's pieces seem reasonably active, but they appear to lack a general purpose and target to play against. Meanwhile, White's bishop aims at Black's kingside and the knight is ready to join in on h5. The possibilities on the kingside are a thorn in Black's side, because down the line he will have a hard time defending due to the opposite-coloured bishops. For now Black will be able to defend g7 with ...\textit{e8}, but in the long term this will not represent an acceptable solution for Black. Therefore in order to reduce White's initiative, Black should seek exchanges of all the major pieces and then work on activating the h7-bishop. If Black were to move now, he should without hesitation play ...\textit{e8} and he should be able to exchange both sets of rooks. However, with White to move, the situation is not so easy...

24 \textit{d2!}
White gains a tempo to prevent from Black exchanging all the rooks. Now White takes control over the d-file by simple means.

24...\textit{e8}
Forced. After other moves White would have doubled his rooks on the d-file and Black wouldn't have had any choice.

30 \textit{h4 h5}
Black decides to avoid 30...\textit{f8} 31 h5 \textit{h7} 32 \textit{e2} followed by \textit{g4} and \textit{f4} (Karlsson). However, the text-move weakens the g5-square, which will become a problem if White's e-pawn is exchanged for Black's f-pawn.

31 \textit{e5! f7} 32 \textit{f4 e7} 33 \textit{a8 b6}?
Black should cut his losses and activate his pieces by 33...\textit{fxe5}?! 34 \textit{xex5 d7} 35 \textit{xa7 d6}, and while Black is a pawn down, he has managed to get his pieces more into play.

34 \textit{f5 h7} 35 \textit{f2}
35 \textit{xh5}?! could also be considered.

35...\textit{d7}??
Also here it appears that 35...\textit{fxe5}?! 36 \textit{xex5 d7} would be the right way to go.

36 \textit{e3 c7}??
Almost needless to say, Black should try 36...\textit{fxe5} 37 \textit{xe5 g6} 38 \textit{f4}, when White is better. In the game, Black loses his bishop.

37 \textit{h8}
The game soon ended in victory for White.

As discussed extensively in Chapter 5, open files only have value if something can be gained from them, such as control over an entry-square. If there is nothing to be gained from the file, you might as well look for other options.
This is a standard position from the Breuer Variation of the Ruy Lopez; it has been played many times in games between grandmasters, so clearly it must have some appeal to both sides. That of course makes our little study even more interesting. Let’s for our own purposes try to evaluate the position. No pawns have been exchanged or doubled so the distribution is identical. However, the pawn-structure for each side is very different. White has a little space in the centre, while Black has grabbed more space on both queenside and kingside, which in the case of the kingside leaves him with some structural weaknesses on the dark squares around the king. It is not uncommon that one side will commit to such weaknesses to keep the opponent’s pieces at bay. On the queenside, White has played a4 so that he can open the a-file at some point when he has prepared it sufficiently. This way of opening the queenside is very typical for this variation, and for the opening in general. Control of the open a-file can lead to domination of the entire game. This is because Black’s pieces generally are more passively placed than their white counterparts. If you look carefully, few of them carry any active potential and really only serve to solidify Black’s position. White’s pieces are more active, but aside from the opening of the a-file and potentially the structural weakness on Black’s kingside, there are few targets to take aim at. Svidler follows the most obvious plan first: doubling on the a-file in preparation for the opening of that file.

21...\texttt{a3} \texttt{b8}

Several other moves have been played at this juncture, and it seems rather illogical on Black’s part to give the a-file up without a fight. However, Black does not have the option of doubling the rooks on the a-file like White has, and therefore rather than waiting to be forced to give up the file, he chooses to do it right away and sets up a solid position to minimize the importance of White’s control of the a-file.

22...\texttt{a1} \texttt{c8}

For the inexperienced player, this move, along with Black’s 21st, will most likely not inspire a great deal of confidence, but actually it makes a lot of sense. Black is preparing a sort of welcoming committee for the invading white rooks. The effectiveness of this approach is quite astounding. A somewhat similar idea is seen in the English Opening and the Closed Sicilian, where one side starts a queenside attack, and the other allows the a-file to get opened, only to step aside and place the rook on b1/c1 (or b8/c8) to protect the b-pawn (or c-pawn).

Just for your entertainment I shall give you an example, Spassky-Geller, Sukhumi Ct (6) 1968: 1 \texttt{c4} \texttt{c5} 2 \texttt{d3} d6 3 g3 \texttt{d6} 4 \texttt{g2} g6 5 \texttt{d3} \texttt{g7} 6 \texttt{f4} \texttt{e6} 7 \texttt{f3} 0-0 8 0-0 \texttt{b8} 9 \texttt{h3} b5 10 a3 a5 11 \texttt{e3} b4 12 axb4 axb4 13 \texttt{e2} \texttt{b7} 14 b3! (D).

White realizes that he will not be able to keep control of the a-file, and with this move, White minimizes the number of targets Black can play against. For now, only \texttt{c2} is vulnerable, and this pawn will be protected by the rook. 14...\texttt{a8} 15 \texttt{c1} \texttt{a2} 16 g4 \texttt{a8}?! (later games demonstrated that 16...\texttt{a5} followed by ...\texttt{a8}, ...\texttt{a3-b2} and ...\texttt{a1} with counterplay is the best way for Black to proceed) 17 \texttt{e1} \texttt{a6} 18 \texttt{f2} \texttt{a7} 19 f5 \texttt{b5} 20 fxg6 hxg6 21 \texttt{g5} \texttt{a3} 22 \texttt{h4} \texttt{e8} 23 \texttt{xf6} exf6 24 \texttt{h7+} \texttt{f8} 25 \texttt{xf7!} \texttt{xc2} 26 \texttt{h6!} \texttt{xc1+} 27 \texttt{xc1} \texttt{xf7} 28
\[ \text{wxg7+ cec8 29 g5! f5 30 xg6+ d7 31 f7+ c6 32 exf5+ 1-0. I hope this game will provide some inspiration on how to handle the opening of a file. Yet keep in mind it is not always right to give up an open file without further ado. Each case has to be examined carefully, and recall the guidelines given in Chapter 5 regarding the opening of a file.} \]

Back to our main game...

23 axb5 axb5 24 a7 h7 25 a8

With a complete grip on the a-file, White should have a clear advantage, right? If that were the case, Black’s plan over the last few moves would have been a complete failure. The fact is that from the a-file White does not have anything to target, so at best he has some initiative. But where does White go from here? Before continuing, try to lay out a plan for White.

25...d7 26 e3 c7

There are several plans for White at this juncture.

a) The first plan we shall examine was given by Piket in his notes in Informator: 27 h1!? b6 28 a3 c4a4 29 a3a2, and while it isn’t entirely clear how White intends to continue, Black’s active play has come to a standstill, while White can still choose to continue along the path of one of the following plans.

b) 27 e2!? intending c1 and b4 is a suggestion by Wedberg in ChessBase Magazine.

The third plan, and in my opinion the strongest, is chosen by Svidler in the game.

27 f1! (D)

![Diagram](image)

White abandons his control of the a-file in favour of the opportunity to start a kingside attack. The point is that while Black will have a hard time finding targets on White’s queenside, Black’s kingside is already weakened.

27...a7 28 a7 a7 29 a5 d8

Black plans to activate his dark-squared bishop. This makes sense, but Black must keep in mind that he still needs defenders around his king.

30 h1 b6

This bishop has arrived at its destination, hoping to neutralize its counterpart on e3. Unfortunately for Black, White can tuck his dark-squared bishop back on the c1-square.

31 d f6

By kicking the knight away, Black prevents for now any sacrificial ideas White may have. However, the black kingside structure is becoming looser. Piket suggested that 31...h4 would have been better for Black at this juncture, but as Khalifman points out in *Opening for White according to Anand* – vol. 2, White has the stunning 32 d5!! gxf5 33 dxf7++, and White appears to be better after 33...d6 (33...d7?? is much worse: 34 h5+ e7 35 g5+ f6 36 h7+ d8 37 dxf6+ e7 38 g8+ d7 39 dxe7, and White is obviously winning) 34 dxe6 d8 35 xcx8 e8 36 exf5 with an advantage for White, albeit not a big one.

32 f3 d8 33 h4 c7 d7 34 c1 e7 35 f4 h7 36 f3

It seems like White is losing the thread at this point and is satisfied to settle for a draw. Khalifman shows that White still holds the upper hand after 36 f3! (to increase the pressure on e5) 36... c5 (also after 36...e3 37 fxe5 xc1 38 xc1 c3 39 xcl b3 40 b4 41 b4 b4 42 c1 36...xf4 37 xf4 e5 38 e2! White is slightly better) 37 xex5 dxe5 38 h4 e7 39 f3 c7 40 c3 with a small but pleasant advantage for White. Black’s rook is quite out of play and White’s position is relatively easier to play.

36...d8 37 d1 ½-½

The Queenside Attack

The queenside attack is a facet of the game that needs to be understood and appreciated if you expect to become a better chess-player. The queenside attack comes in all shapes and sizes, from small minority attacks to races where one side attacks with full force on the kingside before the other attempts to break down the defensive lines on the queenside. There are so many
nuances that I could easily devote an entire book to the subject. In this section I shall only give a couple of examples, but there are several examples elsewhere in the book.

15...\text{b}6 16 \text{c}4!

This move is according to White’s plan, but it seems puzzling that White surrenders the d4-square to Black’s bishop. However, like in the game Hillarp Persson-Wedberg in Chapter 4, the bishop is rather a cork in the bottle of active play than a plus for Black. The key issue remains the queenside pawns.

16...\text{d}4 17 \text{lac}1 \text{wd}6 18 \text{c}2!

It is worth taking note of Leko’s technique in this position. Knowing that Black is without counterplay, White is in no hurry to open up the position like in the following line: 18 \text{cxb}5 \text{cxb}5 19 \text{a}4 \text{bxa}4 20 \text{b}5 0-0 21 \text{c}6 \text{wd}7 22 \text{xf}6 \text{gxf}6 23 \text{h}6 \text{h}8 with chances for both sides (Leko). Therefore White improves the position of his pieces before allowing Black to do anything active.

18...0-0 19 \text{b}3 \text{fd}8 20 \text{c}2 \text{d}7 21 \text{fc}1 \text{e}7 22 \text{g}3! (D)

This is the kind of move you see quite often in the games of strong positional players like Kramnik, Leko and Karpov in his heyday. White creates a breathing hole for his king, while improving his overall position. If you are wondering why White chooses to play this move rather than 22 \text{h}3, the reason is that the white king is safer on a light square, where Black, unlike White, has no representation.

22...\text{h}6 23 \text{g}2 \text{ac}8 24 \text{a}4 \text{we}6!

Black would ideally want to open up the position as in the variation 24...\text{bxa}4 25 \text{xa}4 \text{c}5 26 \text{b}5 \text{axb}5 27 \text{cxb}5 \text{a}7 28 \text{b}3 \text{ca}8, but unfortunately for Black, White will not allow this and instead plays 25 \text{c}5! \text{wd}7 26 \text{xa}4, leaving Black’s pawns isolated and fixed on light squares.

25 \text{axb}5 \text{axb}5
25...cxb5?? is met with 26 cxb5! and White wins.

26 \(\text{b}d3\) \(bxc4\)

This doesn't look right, but Black cannot continue to wait for White to make the first move.

27 \(\text{ex}c4\) \(\text{w}d7\) 28 \(\text{xe}3\)

Another option is to play 28 \(\text{wc}2!!\) to prevent Black's untried option on the next move.

28...\(\text{xe}3?\)

Black goes completely wrong at this point, leaving himself with the easy target on c6. The only chance for counterplay is 28...c5! as given by Leko. Then best is 29 \(\text{wc}2\) \(\text{xe}3\) 30 fxe3 with a slightly better game for White according to Ribi in ChessBase Magazine.

29 \(\text{wx}e3\) \(\text{wc}7\) 30 \(\text{ac}a4\) \(\text{bb}8\) 31 \(\text{wc}3\) \(\text{ch}7\) 32 \(\text{bb}1\) e5 33 \(\text{exe}5!\) \(\text{cxe}4\) 34 \(\text{cc}8+\) \(\text{ah}7\) 35 \(\text{c}2\) f5 36 \(\text{wf}3!\)

White can also obtain a clear advantage after 36 \(\text{xe}4\) fxe4 37 \(\text{c}c4\), but with the text-move, White puts emphasis on the weak light squares in Black's entire set-up.

36...\(\text{ex}c8\)

36...\(\text{ax}d6\) isn't any better: after 37 \(\text{xf}5+\) White has every chance of winning the game.

37 \(\text{fx}f5+\) g6 38 \(\text{wc}8\) \(\text{f}6\) 39 \(\text{wc}3\)

Even though White is only a pawn up, Black is completely lost due to his weak king and, still, no counterplay.

39...\(\text{bb}6\) 40 \(\text{wc}5!\) \(\text{wx}c5\)

This leads to an endgame where Black loses without further ado, but even after 40...\(\text{wb}7+\) 41 \(\text{g}1\), Black is hopelessly lost. The rest will follow without comments.

41 \(\text{bx}c5\) \(\text{xb}1\) 42 \(\text{xb}1\) \(\text{g}7\) 43 \(\text{f}3\) \(\text{f}7\) 44 \(\text{c}6\) \(\text{e}8\) 45 \(\text{c}e3\) \(\text{f}6\) 46 \(\text{e}4\) \(\text{e}8\) 47 \(\text{d}3\) \(\text{c}7\) 48 \(\text{c}4\) g5 49 \(\text{f}5\) h5 50 \(\text{c}5\) \(\text{c}7\) 51 f3 h4 52 \(\text{d}7\) 1-0

In the King’s Indian Defence there will often be a race on opposite wings. Black will try to mate White on the kingside, while White attempts to break through on the queenside. This type of game is extremely challenging for both sides and to be successful, you need both a good understanding of the position and good instincts, because more often than not it is impossible to calculate the variations to an end. In the next example that is exactly so, but we shall also see that good fundamental understanding takes you far.

\(\text{Pereira – Kopylov}\)
\(\text{corr. Wch 1989-98}\)

This type of position is not entirely unusual in the King’s Indian. Black has already got off to a head-start, but his position is not without weaknesses. We see that the a7-pawn is under attack, but obviously right now it cannot be taken because the bishop will get trapped by ...b6: 18 \(\text{dx}a7?! \text{xa}7\) 19 \(\text{xa}7\) b6 ⊕. But once this trick is prevented, Black will need to play either ...a6 or ...b6. In either case, further weaknesses will be created on either the dark or light squares. Furthermore, the d-pawn can become a target, which is why Black has played ...\(\text{f}7\), in order to play ...\(\text{f}8\). The rook serves another purpose on f7: it protects the c7-square, which is a key entry-square for White. Does White’s position contain any weaknesses? Sure it does: the f4-square is a weakness, and White can only take control of it with g3, which creates another weakness on the light squares. Another weakness that is not that obvious yet is the fact that White will have a problem getting sufficient defenders to the kingside, whereas Black can more easily transfer his pieces in that direction. This imbalance can become a major problem in the future, and that is why it is important for White to strike promptly. Therefore White needs to force some weaknesses on Black at once.

18 \(\text{d}c2!\)

White removes another defender from the kingside and sends it to the queenside for the attack. This also renew the threat against a7, because a move like 18...h5?! can now be met with 19 \(\text{dx}a7! \text{xa}7\) 20 \(\text{dx}a7\) b6 21 \(\text{db}4!\), and since 18...b6?? weakens the light squares far too much on account of 19 \(\text{db}4\), Black only has one reasonable move.
18...a6 19  
Having eyed the weak b6-square, you may be wondering why White doesn’t play 19  
20  , intending 4-c4-b6. The answer lies in the fact that White cannot entirely forget his situation in the centre and on the kingside. Pereira points to the line 19...  20  21  21! 22! and the e4-pawn will remain weak for some time to come, and Black is getting closer to creating real threats on the kingside.

19...d7 20 3! h5

Pereira also mentions 20...e8!? as an option for Black. The idea is to create a temporary threat against the a-pawn to force White to decide what to do with his a-pawn before playing b3. However, I think White is better in that line, and that Black’s play in the game continuation makes more sense.

21 b3 e8

Black doesn’t really have an alternative to this move, even if it creates some problems for himself in so far as the f5-square and the g4-pawn (due to ...h4) are weakened.

22 b6 f6 23 e3 c7?!

I’m not convinced that this is the correct move. I prefer 23...d7!? to protect the g-pawn and therefore prepare the ...h4 advance. The chances are even, although I would personally prefer White’s chances due to Black’s lame g7-bishop.

24 b4!

This move doesn’t look particularly obvious, but if you understand it, you are getting a good grasp of what positional chess is all about. The rook move is prophylactic, covering the pawns on a4 and e4, as well as the c4-square, but its primary function is to prepare White’s next move.

24...f8

Black plays typical and normal King’s Indian moves. The idea is to cover the d-pawn, make room for the rook to transfer to h7, and possibly far out in the future, transfer the bishop to b6 or a5 via c7 and d8. However, even so, I find 24...d7!? compelling as an alternative.

25 e2!

White’s way of thinking is that unless Black fancies seeing this knight jump to f5 via g3, he will have to exchange his trump, the knight on f4.

25...xe2+ 26 xxe2 g6

Stop here and consider what White would like to achieve in regards to where he would want his pieces to be and which he wants exchanged.

27 c4

This move is one option out of probably two. White wants to get the major pieces exchanged, as any minor-piece endgame will be clearly better for White due to Black’s restrained bishops. Therefore White’s plan is to find a set-up with his other pieces so that he can play c4 and challenge Black on the c-file. If Black exchanges, White will have a relatively easy time penetrating on the queenside with his other rook as the b6-bishop is already putting in a bid for the entry-square on c7 and the other square on c8 can only be guarded with ...d7, thus weakening the c7-square further.

Aside from the move played, White can also consider 27 b3!?, guarding the a-pawn, followed by c4. If Black continues 27...d7, then White obtains a clearly better game after 28 xc4 xc4 29 xc4 f4 30 d2 followed by c1, and therefore Black must go for 27...f4, when White has to spend some time focusing on the safety of the e-pawn.

27 f4

Here Pereira mentions the interesting idea 27...g3!, which gives up one of the g-pawns in the hope that he can revive his dead dark-squared bishop and generate some counterplay after 28 hxg3 g4 followed by ideas with ...h4 after due preparation.

28 e1! (D)

This key move adds protection for the e4-pawn. Overprotection of important pawns or squares is another idea that was introduced by Nimzowitsch. Once you have the pawn or
square sufficiently guarded, you will be able to halt much of your opponent’s active plans and thereby have time to address and implement yours. Particularly in a case such as this where Black has very few angles to obtain counterplay, prophylactic ideas such as this one will be useful.

With the e4-pawn guarded, White can continue to implement his plan of $\text{Qd2}$ and $\text{c4}$, hopefully resulting in an exchange and then White can put his knight on a5 to attack the black queenside.

28...$\text{Wh7}$ 29 $\text{Qd2}$ $\text{f7}$

The alternative is 29...$\text{Wd7}$!, which White can meet in two ways:

a) 30 $\text{e3}$?, attacking Black’s rook and thereby either winning a pawn or the exchange, if Black refuses to move the rook; for example, 30...b5 (on 30...$\text{Qf7}$, White may also consider 31 $\text{Qc4}$?) 31 axb5 axb5 32 $\text{Qxf4}$ gxf4 33 $\text{Qb1}$? $\text{e7}$ 34 $\text{Qa3}$ (Pereira) with a better game for White.

b) 30 $\text{f1}$ (to prepare $\text{c1}$) 30...$\text{Cc2}$ 31 $\text{Wd3}$ (as Pereira points out, White has to be a little careful how he proceeds as 31 $\text{Cc1}$? is strongly met by 31...$\text{Qxd2}$!! 32 $\text{Cc7}$ $\text{Wxa4}$, when Black is clearly on top) 31...$\text{Cc8}$ 32 $\text{e3}$? with a better game for White.

30 $\text{g3}$!

This goes against the principles of not playing where your opponent is stronger, and weakening one colour squares where your opponent has the bishop to match and you don’t. So why did White play this weakening move? The f4-square is very important for Black and that square is now being taken away. The same goes for the option of seeking counterplay with the...g3 pawn sacrifice, which has now been eliminated. The weakening of the light squares is fairly symbolic, and the fact that Black has a light-squared bishop doesn’t really concern White too much because it isn’t likely that it will ever be able to reach them from behind his own pawns.

30...$\text{Wg6}$ 31 $\text{Cc4}$ $\text{Bb8}$!

Black does not want to accommodate White’s plans by allowing the exchange of one set of rooks. Rather than allowing an invasion on the c-file, Black starts organizing a defence.

32 $\text{Ec1}$ $\text{d7}$

Now the invasion on c8 is prevented.

33 $\text{b3}$

Guarding the other key pawn before continuing the penetration on the queenside.

33...$\text{e7}$ 34 $\text{Wc3}$! $\text{h4}$

Pereira gives the following line as an illustration if Black continued with 34...$\text{Wb8}$?: 35 $\text{Cc7}$ $\text{d8}$ 36 $\text{Wxb7}$ $\text{xb6}$ 37 $\text{Wxb6}$ $\text{f6}$ 38 $\text{Cc7}$ $\text{xf2}$+? 39 $\text{Whxf2}$ $\text{xf2}$ 40 $\text{Cxd7}$ $\text{Hxd2}$ 41 $\text{Bh7}$+$\text{h8}$ 42 $\text{Hh7}$+$\text{g8}$ 43 $\text{Bb7}$#.

35 $\text{a7}$ $\text{Bf8}$

On 35...$\text{a8}$?, Pereira offers the following line for White: 36 $\text{Cc7}$ $\text{d8}$ 37 $\text{Wxb7}$ $\text{xa4}$ 38 $\text{xf7}$ $\text{xf7}$ 39 $\text{Wxa4}$ $\text{xa7}$ (or 39...$\text{xa7}$?) 40 $\text{Cc6}$ $\text{d7}$ 41 $\text{Hxd7}$+ 40 $\text{Wa7}$ $\text{xa7}$ 41 $\text{Cc8}$ $\text{d7}$ 42 $\text{Cc4}$, and White dominates and should win.

36 $\text{Cc7}$ $\text{d8}$ 37 $\text{Wxb7}$ $\text{a5}$ 38 $\text{Cc4}$! (D)

Black wouldn’t mind 38 b4 $\text{d8}$ as the a-pawn will be soft.

38...$\text{Wf3}$?!

This move ends the pain rather quickly, but even after 38...$\text{hxg3}$, White has clearly the better chances. Pereira gives a massive amount of analysis, but of this I shall only give you the most important lines:

a) 39 $\text{fxg3}$? $\text{f3}$ 40 $\text{Wc2}$ $\text{e8}$ 41 $\text{b8}$! $\text{Cc3}$? (other moves are not of much use at this point; e.g., 41...$\text{Cc7}$? 42 $\text{Qxe5}$, 41...$\text{Wf7}$? 42 $\text{Qe3}$ $\text{Cc7}$ 43 $\text{xc8}$ $\text{xc8}$ 44 $\text{Qxd6}$ or 41...$\text{Wg7}$? 42 $\text{b6}$ $\text{xb6}$+ 43 $\text{Qxb6}$ $\text{b7}$ 44 $\text{xf8+}$ $\text{xf8}$ 45 $\text{f1}$) 42 $\text{Hxc3}$ $\text{xc3}$ 43 $\text{h1}$ (43 $\text{Qf2}$ $\text{d4}$! 44 $\text{Qxd4}$ exd4 45 $\text{b6}$ is also good for White) 43...$\text{a5}$!, and although Black still can fight a little, White clearly holds the upper hand.

b) 39 $\text{hxg3}$! seems best: 39...$\text{Wh5}$ 40 $\text{Cc5}$ $\text{h7}$ 41 $\text{f1}$ $\text{f3}$ (on 41...$\text{Wh1}$+ 42 $\text{e2}$ $\text{xf2}$+, White wins easily with 43 $\text{Wd3}$!) 42 $\text{We1}$ $\text{g6}$ 43 $\text{Wb4}$ $\text{h1}$+ 44 $\text{e2}$ $\text{xc1}$ 45 $\text{Hxd7}$ $\text{fc3}$ 46...
38...\text{Cc}6 39\text{Dd}3 3\text{Cc}3+ 48 \text{Wxc}3 \text{Wxc}3+ 49 \text{Wxc}3 \text{Wxe}4 50 \text{Ae}3, and White should win without too many difficulties.

39 \text{We}2 \text{Ae}8

39...hxg3 40 hxg3 \text{Cc}8 41 \text{Bb}8! is similar to the game.

40 \text{Bb}8! 1-0

Black resigned probably on account of lines like 40...hxg3 41 \text{Axa}5!? (or 41 hxg3) 41...\text{Wh}7 42 hxg3 \text{Bxg}3+ (or 42...\text{Axa}7 43 \text{Bxc}8! \text{Bxf}2 44 \text{Bxf}8+) 43 fxg3 \text{Wxa}7+ 44 \text{Ag}2 \text{Bxb}8 45 \text{We}3, when White is obviously winning.

The Kingside Attack

As discussed from the very beginning of the book, the issue of king safety is a positional factor that needs to be considered in every game. A successful kingside attack is often immediately decisive, and therefore it is worthwhile to study attacking techniques of various kinds. As with all attacks, it starts with an exploitable imbalance.

\[ W \]

Kramnik – Radjabov
Linares 2003

The pawn-structure is one that is very typical of the Classical French (1 e4 e6 2 d4 d5 3 \text{Cc}3 \text{Bf}6), where White enjoys a space advantage in the centre and the kingside, while Black lays claim to the queenside. In the diagram position, Black’s kingside suffers from a distinct absence of defenders, and therefore if possible this is the right time for White to strike against it.

14 \text{Wh}4!

Rather surprisingly, this move was a novelty when it was played in this game. Previously White had tried 14 \text{De}2 and obtained only a slight advantage. White will play \text{De}2 on the next move, but the key is to get Black to weaken his kingside first.

14...h6

This type of weakening of the kingside isn’t normally what Black would desire to do, but the alternatives look even worse. Kasparov gives the following lines in Informator:

a) 14...g6 15 \text{De}2 \pm

b) 14...f5 15 exf6 \text{Dxf}6 16 \text{Ae}5 \text{Ad}6 17 g4 b4 18 g5 bxc3 19 \text{Gxf}6 g6 20 f7+ \text{Dxf}7 21 \text{Axg}0, and White is winning.

15 \text{De}2 f6?!

True to his style, Black strives for active counterplay, which in the same tournament yielded him a win against Kasparov from an equally poor position. This move radically weakens his light squares on the kingside, and the pressure on White’s centre by no means compensates for this.

16 \text{Gg}4!

Immediately White takes Black to account for weakening the light squares.

16...\text{Ad}x\text{d}4

This move is pretty much forced if Black wants to remove White’s light-squared bishop on d3. Other moves don’t help Black: 16...f5 17 \text{Gg}6 \text{Bb}6 18 \text{Ag}1! \text{Axg}1 19 \text{Hxg}1 followed by g4 or 16...fxe5 17 \text{Axe}6+ \text{Ah}8 18 \text{Gg}6 \text{Df}6 19 \text{Axe}5 (Illescas); in both cases Black is busted.

17 \text{Dxd}4 \text{Cc}5 18 \text{Gg}6 \text{Dxd}3+

Even though this move leaves Black with a strength disparity between White’s knight and Black’s bishop, it makes perfect sense to remove the bishop due to the terribly weak light squares around the king. It should be added that 18...f5 19 g4 \text{Df}7 20 \text{Dxf}7+ \text{Dxf}7 21 gxf5 exf5 22 \text{Hxg}1 (Illescas) is clearly better for White on account of his strong knight and the passed pawn on e5.

19 \text{Bxd}3 \text{Cc}4?

When considering that Black can’t take the a-pawn on the next move, this move makes no sense at all. Furthermore, the queen has defensive duties to attend to on the kingside.

20 \text{Dhd}1! (D)

At this point, there are also other reasonable moves such as 20 \text{Bl}1, but activating the rook makes more sense.

20...\text{Ae}7
Black has to cover the g7-pawn. There is no time for 20...\texttt{W}x\texttt{a}2, since after 21 \texttt{W}g3 \texttt{W}a1+ 22 \texttt{W}d2 \texttt{W}a5+ 23 \texttt{W}e2 \texttt{W}f7 24 exf6 (Ftačnik), Black is toast.

21 \texttt{W}b1!

White threatens \texttt{W}c3, which will force Black to place his queen far away from the action.

21...\texttt{W}c7 22 \texttt{f}5!

With all his pieces in place, White initiates a full-out attack on Black's uncoordinated forces.

22...\texttt{W}b6?

This mistake allows White to take decisive charge of the game. Black has a couple of alternatives that are better, but in the long run probably will not save the game; for example, 22...fxe5 23 \texttt{Q}xe6 \texttt{Q}xe6 24 \texttt{W}xe6+ \texttt{W}f7 25 \texttt{W}xd5 or 22...\texttt{W}f7 23 \texttt{W}xf7+ \texttt{W}xf7 24 \texttt{Q}xe6 \texttt{Q}xe6 25 fx6 \texttt{W}e7 26 exf6 \texttt{W}xf6 27 \texttt{W}xd5. In both cases White is clearly better in the endgame.

23 \texttt{Q}h3! fxe5 24 \texttt{Q}xe6 \texttt{W}f6

Black could have resigned at this point, but continues for a while longer, but the result is never in doubt.

25 \texttt{W}e8+ \texttt{W}f8 26 \texttt{Q}h8+ \texttt{Q}h8 27 \texttt{W}xf8+ \texttt{W}h7 28 \texttt{Q}f3 \texttt{W}c7 29 fx6 e4 30 \texttt{Q}g5+ \texttt{Q}h6 31 \texttt{h}4 \texttt{Q}h5 32 \texttt{Q}f5 g6 33 g4+ \texttt{Q}xh4 34 \texttt{Q}h1+ \texttt{Q}g3 35 \texttt{Q}g1+ \texttt{Q}h4 36 \texttt{W}f6 1-0

In our last example (see next diagram), White has a more obvious weakness on his kingside.

White's last move was 23 \texttt{B}bd1 in order to prevent Black from playing the freeing ...d5. But this is not the only problem White has. His kingside is quite weak, particularly the king on f2, but also the dark squares due to the pawn-chain g2-e4 and c4-pawn all being on light squares. But how can Black take advantage of this from his relatively passive position?

23...\texttt{h}5!

A beautiful move that sticks it to White where it hurts: the idea is to play ...\texttt{h}4 and then take over the dark squares. In his notes in \textit{Skakbladet}, Hansen wrote that White now thought for no less than 40 minutes. The problem for White is that if he retreats the rook to h1 to attack the h-pawn, he gets in serious trouble: 24 \texttt{h}1 d5! 25 cxd5 \texttt{Q}xe2 26 d6 \texttt{Q}g5! 27 \texttt{Q}xc8 \texttt{Q}xc8 28 d7 \texttt{Q}d8 29 \texttt{Q}xe2 \texttt{Q}xg3, and "the d-pawn isn't nearly as dangerous as Black's kingside attack" (S.B. Hansen).

24 \texttt{W}e3 \texttt{W}f6 25 \texttt{Q}g1?! \texttt{h}4 26 gxh4 \texttt{Q}xh4 27 \texttt{W}f2 \texttt{Q}g5 28 \texttt{Q}f1 \texttt{f}4 29 \texttt{Q}h2

Black's plan has been executed and he has won control over the weak dark squares. But how does he maintain his kingside initiative?

29...g6!

Intending ...\texttt{Q}g7 and ...\texttt{Q}h8+; the white king is in serious trouble. If White now attempts to ease the pressure by offering the queen exchange with 30 \texttt{Q}g3, Black has the nasty reply 30...\texttt{W}e5. White's problem is that if he attempts to get out of the pin with 31 \texttt{Q}g1?, Black has 31...\texttt{Q}e2+!. Note how quickly Black builds a winning attack along the h-file.

30 \texttt{g}3 \texttt{Q}g7 31 \texttt{Q}g2

Hansen gives the line 31 gxf4 \texttt{Q}h8+ 32 \texttt{Q}h3 \texttt{Q}xh3+! 33 \texttt{Q}xh3 \texttt{Q}h8+ 34 \texttt{W}h4 \texttt{Q}xh4#.

31...\texttt{Q}h8+ 32 \texttt{Q}g1 \texttt{Q}h3+ 33 \texttt{Q}xh3 \texttt{Q}xh3 34 \texttt{Q}g2 \texttt{Q}h8 35 \texttt{Q}h1 \texttt{Q}h6 36 \texttt{Q}d4+ e5 37 \texttt{Q}xh6 37 \texttt{Q}g1 \texttt{Q}xc4 doesn't offer White any salvation either.

37...\texttt{Q}h2+ 38 \texttt{Q}xh2 \texttt{Q}xh2+ 39 \texttt{Q}f1 \texttt{Q}xg3 40 \texttt{W}d3 \texttt{Q}h1+ 0-1

White faces mate in three.
Exercises

In this set of exercises, I shall not provide any hints or comments, other than who is to move. The rest is up to you: locating weaknesses, assessing which are most important and how to continue.

10.1

10.2

10.3

10.4

10.5

10.6
In this chapter, I shall present you with thirty exercises. The themes all pertain in some way to what has been illustrated in the previous ten chapters, but they are by no means presented in any particular order. In some cases, I have given a few hints; use them or don’t use them, it’s up to you.

The exercises vary tremendously in difficulty so don’t be discouraged if you cannot solve them. Also take your time to solve them; in the games from which these positions are taken, the grandmasters most likely didn’t see the right continuation immediately, so don’t expect you can. Good luck!

11.1 Establish which weaknesses Black has in his position, and how White can best exploit them.

11.2 Black now played 19...b6. How does White best meet this move? Instead it has been suggested that 19...d7 was better, securing Black equal chances; is that correct?

11.3 Evaluate the position and suggest two different plans for White.

11.4 Evaluate the position and map out a plan for each side.
11.5 White is better thanks to his more active pieces; how should he continue in order to create weaknesses in Black’s position?

11.6 Here Black played 15...\texttt{\textbackslash d}xe4 to answer 16 \texttt{\textbackslash d}xe4 with 16...f5 followed by 17...e4. Who is better following this combination and why?

11.7 Establish which weaknesses White has, and how Black should continue so as to take most advantage of them.

11.8 White has a space advantage; how should he continue so as to utilize this advantage?

11.9 Black has just played 16...\texttt{\textbackslash d}ae8, probably preparing to play ...e5. How should White continue so as best to meet this plan?

11.10 Assess the positional consequences of 24...\texttt{\textbackslash d}xg3+.
11.11 Black has just played 30...f7. Evaluate the position and decide how White should continue.

11.14 In this position from a line in the Dragon Variation, White has somewhat more space. What is Black’s best way to generate counterplay?

11.12 Evaluate the position and determine which is Black’s strongest continuation.

11.15 Evaluate the position and formulate a plan for White.

11.13 The centre is closed and Black has just started action on the kingside with 15...g7-g5. Is this positionally justified, and what does White do now?

11.16 White has the initiative, but how should he break open Black’s position?
11.17 White is ahead in development, and Black’s kingside is a bit open, but he has control over the c3-square in return. How should White continue?

11.20 White has a simple threat against h7; how does Black best meet this threat? Who is better in the diagram position?

11.18 Does Black’s position contain any weaknesses? How should White continue?

11.21 Evaluate the position and determine the right way for White to proceed.

11.19 Evaluate weaknesses and strengths for each side. How should White continue?

11.22 White has a passed d-pawn. Evaluate the position and find the right plan for Black.
11.23 Black’s pieces are nicely coordinated, while White’s pieces and in particular pawn-structure make a less favourable impression. How should White continue?

11.24 Evaluate the position and establish which factors determine the right way for Black to continue.

11.25 Determine the most important weaknesses in Black’s position, and how White should proceed.

11.26 White has the pair of bishops and a superior pawn-structure. How does he best continue?

11.27 Determine the structural weaknesses for both sides, and then determine how White should proceed.

11.28 White has the pair of bishops; what is Black’s best continuation?
**11.29** Black has the more active pieces. How does he best take advantage of that?

**11.30** White has a space advantage and the better pawn-structure, but Black is slightly ahead in development. What should White do to take advantage of his structural advantages?
Chapter 1

1.1
1) Black’s king structure is more open than White’s.
2) The pawns are distributed unevenly.
3) Black has a passed pawn.
4) There are opposite-coloured bishops.
5) White’s pieces mainly focus on the kingside and the centre, while Black’s are mainly focused on the queenside and the centre.

1.2
1) White’s king is safe on the kingside, while Black’s is left in the centre.
2) White has nearly completed his development, while Black has only developed a bishop and his queen.
3) Black has won a pawn.
4) None of Black’s pieces are guarding each other, while nearly all of White’s pieces are guarded.
5) White has two isolated pawns, whereas Black has none.

1.3
1) The kings are castled in opposite directions.
2) Black’s queenside pawns are one row closer to the white king than White’s kingside pawns are to Black’s king.
3) Black has a semi-open file pointing in the direction of White’s king; White doesn’t have any.

1.4
1) Black’s king position is much more exposed than White’s and in addition he has lost the right to castle.
2) Black has all of his pawns on light squares, leaving the dark squares exposed.
3) White has two pawn-islands; Black has three, including a doubled e-pawn.
4) Black is a pawn up.

1.5
1) Black has lost the right to castle.
2) White’s king looks slightly safer than Black’s, who has to protect the knight on f6.
3) White is two pawns up.
4) White has several pieces hanging, while Black only has one.

Chapter 2

2.1

Beliavsky – Kasparov
Belfort 1988

By castling queenside, White has exposed himself to a direct attack on the queenside. Although he is ahead in development, his pieces are not particularly well coordinated to meet Black’s attempt to grab the initiative.

17...b5! 18 wh4
18 wb5? is of course met by 18..dc7, winning the exchange.

18..db4 19 dxg6?
This has an air of White not wanting to let the initiative slip out of his hands and therefore doing everything in his power to keep it. However, Black can defend against White’s threats. It was better to play 19 ed6 c4 20 de4; e.g., 20..c3 and now 21 db4! is best, as mentioned by Aagaard in his book on the Grünfeld. However, Black may also be able to improve with 20..wc5!, intending 21 xd5 e8 c3! with a dangerous attack.

19.fxg6
19..hxg6?? loses immediately to 20 dg5 e8 21 ed7.

20 ed7 wc8! 21 ec7 b6+ 22 eb1 ed8! 23 ed6
Or 23 eb1 ec6!, and Black wins.

23..cc6!
Now the game is in reality over.

24 a3 xd6 25 edx6 edx6 26 axb4 cbx4 27 wc4 h3 0-1

28 de4 ef4 29 wa8+ ef8 is hopeless for White.
2.2

Sadler – Wahls
Bundesliga 1999/00

To get full benefit from his bishops, White needs to open up the position, even if one pair of bishops gets exchanged as the remaining bishop will benefit from it too.

18 c5! a3d3 19 wxd3 bxc5

White has temporarily sacrificed a pawn. In fact Black couldn’t really continue without accepting as it would otherwise continue to c6, only to be followed by the next c-pawn marching to c5. Pawn sacrifices of this kind occur very frequently when one side wants to grab the initiative. The material deficit is often excellently compensated by more room for one’s own pieces and a weaker pawn-structure for the opponent.

20 a5 a6 21 ab1

This move isn’t entirely necessary. Simply picking the pawn back up again with 21 c4 followed by 22 xc5 appears to promise White the better chances. In the game, White commits himself to sacrificing the a-pawn to maintain the initiative.

21...af7 22 af2 xa5 23 xc5 db7 24 a3 d6 25 c4

White’s c- and d-pawns combined with the strong dark-squared bishop provide White ample compensation for the pawn.

25 wd7 26 wb3 af8 27 bf1 h6 28 c5 db5 29 c6 wd8

29...wc8 or 29...wg4!? is possibly better; now White wins back the pawn with clearly better chances.

30 xc5 d6 31 wa3 g6 32 xd6 cxd6 33 wxa6

2.3

Bagirov – Suetin
Baku 1962

This is a good example of the initiative. In this nearly symmetrical position, White has the advantage of moving first and can therefore first benefit from the unprotected bishop on b5 to penetrate Black’s position. Black is by no means lost, but White holds the initiative and Black must defend accurately.

20 wb3 wd7

In the game Shirok-Salm, corr. 1972, White also held the advantage after 20...d7 21 b1 w8 22 g5 e8 23 wb7 h6 24 e3 h7 25 wc7 f6 26 wb7. It’s amazing how little it sometimes takes to cause your opponent problems.

21 cc1 a4 22 wb4 wb5 23 xb5 xb5 24 ag5! f6 25 d5+ bh8 26 e3 d8 27 c7 f8 28 g4! gh7 29 h4 h6 30 g5 hxg5 31 hxg5 fxg5 32 a5

White has used his initiative to obtain a concrete advantage, and later even managed to win the game.

Chapter 3

3.1

Semeniuk – Kogan
USSR corr. Ch 1975-7

A standard reaction in this type of position is 17 f4, and if Black plays 17...e4, White will reply 18 dd1, possibly exchange the dark-squared bishops, play the knight to e3 and prepare g4. It is, however, by no means clear that White is better in that line of play. Here White has a better option: to take advantage of the absence of Black’s light-squared bishop.

17 g4!

By removing Black’s pawn on f5, White gains access to the e4-square, and with that the other weak light squares in Black’s position. If Black, as in the game, lets White play gxf5, the open g-file will yield attacking chances.

17...h8 18 gxf5 xf5 19 e4 e8?!

Black attempts to obtain counterplay on the g-file, but nothing is gained from this. Instead 19...xf8 would have made more sense, trying to remain active on the f-file.

20 h2 f8 21 wd4!

A highly unpleasant move for Black, who now will not be able to coordinate his pieces any longer. After a move like 21...f7, White has 22 g5 e7 23 xh7 +–.

21 e8 22 e3 db6 23 b3 dc8 24 dg3 dc7 25 xf5 xf5

Now 26 w3 or 26 e4 appears simplest, but even after 26 f1, as played in the game, White soon won.

3.2

Baburin – N. Pert
British League (4NCL) 1998/9

11 c5!
If Black replies 11...d5, he has obviously given up on the entire centre and with White ready to attack on the queenside with 12 b5, this is hardly an option for Black. The alternative for White is 11 b5, but Black should be OK after 11...e5 12 bxc6 bxc6 13 dxe5 dxe5 as the c6-pawn is difficult to attack (Pinski).

11...d5 12 cxd6 cxd6 13 b5! cxd5 14 cxd5 bxc6 15 cxb3 a3 16 cxa3 c6 17 c7 e7 18 c5!

White has sacrificed a pawn, but the weak dark squares and White’s powerful bishop on g2 more or less force Black to give it back immediately.

18...c6 19 cxd6 bxc6 20 c6 c6 d8
Now, White should just play 21 e3 with an obvious advantage; Black’s pawn weaknesses are just too numerous.

3.3

Leko – Fressinet
Cannes 2002

19 h4!
Black has several problems, but right now the safety of the king is the most evident and with his 19th move White targets the kingside. Black now tries to resolve his problems by opening up the centre and closing the kingside simultaneously. As we shall see, that causes Black another set of problems.

19...e6 20 d2?
White now threatens 21 c5 due to 21...c5 being answered with 22 c5 and 23 c6.

20...f6 21 h5 g5
An ugly necessity. Now the light squares on the kingside become tremendously weak.

22 dxe6 cxe6
Black managed to close the kingside and activate his pieces a tiny bit, but the light squares and the backward pawns on d6 and f6 can become long-term problems.

23 c5 c5 24 a3 d5 25 c5 d7 26 e5
White isn’t ready to give up on the strong knight for a mere weak pawn.

26...e6 27 c4!
The next target is the pawn on f6.

27...c5 28 c4 29 e2 a3 30 c5 31 d5 c8 32 d5 d3 33 g4 34 d4 c6 35 c5 36 c5 37 c5 38 c5 39 c5 40 c5 41 c5 42 c5 43 c5 44 c5 45 c5 46 c5 47 c5 48 c5 49 c5 50 c5 51 g4 d4 52 f2 e3+ 53 c2 e2 54 e7 1-0

Chapter 4

4.1

Je. Gilbert – Anderton
British League (4NCL) 2002/3
White has a space advantage and better-centralized pieces, but is weak on the light squares around her king. Black on the other hand has a problem on the dark squares; notice the pawns on a6, c6 and e6 and the weaknesses surrounding them. White can immediately shoot down all of Black’s dreams of counterplay and leave him with a bad bishop vs good knight:

20 c5! e5
20...d6 21 b4 (or 21 ab1?!?) doesn’t change anything; e.g., 21...e7 22 c5 23 c5 24 b4 25 c8 26 c8 27 c8 28 c8 29 c8 and White is a pawn up.

21 c5 c5 22 c5
White has achieved what she wanted, and with the next few moves, Black’s problems get even worse:

22...c5 23 ab1 c5 24 e4 25 e4 26 e4 27 a5 28 a5 29 f4
and White soon won.

4.2

Graf – Rabiega
Dresden 2002
White is better. With pawns on both wings in the endgame, the bishop is usually better in an open position such as this one. Furthermore the knight cannot find a useful square where it can be supported by a pawn. White’s plan should be to combine the attack against Black’s a-pawn with the rooks and that against Black’s kingside with rooks, bishop and advancement of the kingside pawns. Obviously Black is not lost at this point, but has an uncomfortable position.

25 c5 26 c5 27 c5 28 c5 29 c5 30 c5 31 c5 32 c5 33 c5 34 c5 35 c5 36 c5 37 c5 and 27...c5 28 c5 29 c5 30 c5 31 c5 32 c5 33 c5 34 c5 35 c5 36 c5 37 c5 38 c5 39 c5 40 c5 41 c5 42 c5 43 c5 44 c5 45 c5 46 c5 47 c5 48 c5 49 c5 50 c5 51 g4 d4 52 f2 e3+ 53 c2 e2 54 e7 1-0
with good drawing chances. I shall give the rest without comments, but try to follow White’s slow but steady progress towards victory.

27 d1 c3+ 28 g2 e5 29 b7 g6 30
h7 d7 e5 31 e7 d6 32 a6 f6 33 d1 d2
h8 34 f4 h6 35 b5 f7 36 a4 f8 37
b3 e7 e8 39 f3 c3+ 40 e3
e4+ 41 e3 c7+ 42 d5 d5 d7
44 d64 g4 45 g4 a6 d6 46 d7 47 c6
e8 48 c8 e6 49 f5 gxf5 50 x6 f5 d6 51
=5 52 xex7 53 xex7 54 c5 55 d3
f7 55 h4 a5 56 a4 e5 57 f5 f7 58 d4
e6 59 c4 1-0

4.3

Haba – Handke
Cappelle la Grande 2000

If we were only looking at the pawn-structure for each side, White would obviously be better, but the fact is that White’s kingside is wide open. Black’s task is to grab the initiative before White gets a chance to coordinate his pieces and set up some kind of screen to cover the pawn.

27...b4!

A simple and strong move which pins the knight and threatens 28...c6+ and 29...e5, winning a piece. If White now opts for 28 d3 f3, then 28...h8 29 g4 c6+ is unpleasant for White; e.g., 30 g1 e5 31 d5 exd4 32 xgb4 d6 33
e2 e5 with better chances for Black, yet it was to be preferred over the game continuation.

28 d3 e5 29 dxe5?!

This only makes things worse, but 29 e3
c6+ 30 e4 g4 31 e2 e5 32 g1 f8 isn’t pretty either. However, leaving the diagonals to Black is asking for trouble.

29...dxe5 30 f3 f8 31 e3 f6 32 g4?!

A blunder in a bad position; 32 e1 is better, although after 32...b5 White’s pieces are completely tied down.

32...f1+ 33 g3 e5! 34 c6+ h8 35
e2 f2+ 0-1

Mate cannot be avoided.

4.4

Annakov – P.H. Nielsen
Buenos Aires jr Wch 1992

It appears that it would be to White’s advantage to exchange on f6, wrecking Black’s pawn-structure. But there is a factor that is far more

important than that, and when looking at the pieces that remain on the board it becomes immediately apparent why the exchange is only to Black’s advantage: Black has a superb knight, while White has a lousy bishop that doesn’t have a single weakness to target. Black’s weak pawns are impossible for White to attack. After the exchange, Black is as good as winning.

23 c6 e6? exf6 24 d4 c7 25 x1 b2 c5
26 xex5 fxe5 27 b5 ab8 28 b1 f5 29
gxf5 gxf5 30 c6 xb2 31 xb2 g7

As Peter Heine Nielsen points out in our book Sicilian Accelerated Dragon, White appears to have an active position, but the rook and bishop are pretty much tied down as any kind of active play will give Black the b-file.

32 g3 g6 33 g2 g8 34 b4 e4 35 f4 h5
36 b1 h4 37 b5? h3! 38 c2?

Taking the pawn on h3 would lose a piece as in the game after 38...h8, but 38...f1 makes it possible for White to fight on a bit further.

38...b3 39 c3 b7 0-1

4.5

Larsen – Hort
San Antonio 1972

White is obviously doing better, but Black has blocked the position fairly tightly. However, if White can exchange the light-squared bishops, then Black will have few chances of defending.

40 b5! xb5?

This is too accommodating; 40...c8 keeping the bishops on the board is better. However, White will then put his knight on c4, line up queen and rook against the c5-pawn, and then follow up with c6 and at the right time xd6. This should leave Black unable to defend. After the text-move, on the other hand, the game is over. Black has too many weaknesses along with a lousy bishop against a strong knight.

41 x5 x5 x5 42 axb5 x5 43 f1!

The king is on his way to c4.

43...b3 44 c2 c7 45 a4! c7
d7 45...b4 46 b4 x4xb4 47 d3 a4 48 c4
a3 49 x3b3 (Hoi) of course is also winning for White.

46 d3 b6 47 c3 b5 48 c4 c8 1-0

White is winning in any number of ways; e.g., 49 a3 followed by x3b3.
4.6

Psakhis – Röder

Vienna 1991

Black has two main weaknesses: the isolated e5-pawn and his relatively open pawn-structure around the king. White can rather easily target both at the same time.

19 b3! g5 20 b4 d6 21 c4 g6

Black managed to protect his e-pawn, but next follows the attack against the king, the second stage of White’s plan.

22 b4! g4 23 h4 d4x4 24 fxe7 xg4

This vague attempt at counterplay is of course easily rebuffed.

25 d4f1 d8 26 d4d2!

Destination: a5!

26...h8 27 b3 e6?

The wheels are beginning to come off: Black should have played 27...xf1+.

28 ba5 c7??

Everything loses, but this really puts an end to the suffering.

29 b6+ d8 30 a8 1-0

Chapter 5

5.1

Wedberg – P.H. Nielsen

New York 2000

Winning a pawn looks attractive, but after

21...xf3 22 xf3 xh2 23 h1 xh1 24 xh1 f6, Black will have a hard time claiming a win if White puts his king on e2, pawn on c3 and plays a4, as indicated by Peter Heine Nielsen in Skakbladet. Instead Nielsen instructively ties down all of White’s pieces.

21...e4! 22 f1 e5 23 d3?

According to Nielsen, White’s only move is

23 d1, although after 23...h4 24 h1 e5 (or

24...f6 25 h3 f4) 25 dxe5 xxe5 Black is doing well.

23...xf3 24 xxf3 xdx4

Black is a pawn up with the better position, and later won the game.

5.2

Karpov – Unzicker

Nice OL 1974

White has a slight space advantage, but there is only one open file on the board, which Black would very much like to use for exchanges of the major pieces. However, White doesn’t need to allow this.

24 a7!

White prevents the potential exchanges and now Karpov gets an opportunity to show how important it is to have piece mobility behind the pawn-chain. Black’s main problem is that he is unable to generate any kind of counterplay or for that matter kick the bishop away.

24...e8 25 c2 c7 26 a1 e7 27 b1 e8 28 e2 d8 29 h2 g7 30 f4 f6 31 f5 g5 32 c2 f7 33 g3 f7 34 d1 h6 35 h5 e8 36 d1 d8 37 a3 f4 38 a2 g8 39 g4 f8 40 e3 g8 41 f7+ fxe7 42 h5 d8 43 g6 h8 44 h5 1-0

Chapter 6

6.1

Felgaer – Korchnoi

Bled OL 2002

Yes, that makes perfect sense. Not only is White’s pawn-structure on the kingside completely destroyed, his pieces are left passive, while Black gets a pawn in the bargain and plenty of weak pawns and weak squares to work with.

12...xf3! 13 gxf3 c4! 14 e2 xxe5 15 a3 f5 16 f4 g6 17 g4 gh4!

Black makes sure to maintain a knight on f5. It is very instructive to see how Black is steadily improving his position, bringing every piece to their ideal squares, while White is a sitting duck.

18 b4 c7 19 a5 w7 20 f3 d7 21 a1 w6 22 h1 c6 23 f2 d4!

Black gives up a pawn to open a line for his bishop and open fire on the diagonal towards the white king, another bargain. Meanwhile White’s dark-squared bishop has less and less influence on the game.

24 xf5 x5 25 cxd4 d5 26 c3 h5 27 e5 w6 28 e4 h3 29 g1 b6 30 g2 h5 31 a6 e8 32 d6? g6 33 e5? d4 0-1

6.2

Lautier – Wahl

Baden-Baden 1992

Sacrificing the exchange immediately doesn’t make too much sense because Black keeps both bishops to cover the variety of weak squares,
while after the initial exchange on d4, White gets to sacrifice the exchange against the bishop, leaving the dark squares in White’s hands:

17 \( \text{dx}d4 \text{ex}d4 \) 18 \( \text{ex}d4! \text{ex}d4 \) 19 \( \text{ed}1 \text{we}8 \)

20 f3

There is no need to hurry things: White’s grip on the position doesn’t disappear with careful play, in contrast to 20 \( \text{ex}d4 f5 \) 21 \( \text{f3} d5! \) with counterplay.

20...g6 21 \( \text{ex}d4 \text{c6} \) 22 \( \text{d6} f5 \)

In desperation, Black decides to give up the exchange for some counterplay, but this is only an illusion. Black’s kingside is hole’d like a sieve and still very vulnerable.

23 \( \text{xf}8 \text{fxg}4 \)

23...\( \text{xf}8 \) 24 \( \text{h3} \text{fxe}4 \) 25 \( \text{fxe}4 \) (Ftačnik) is also miserable for Black.

24 \( \text{d6} \text{gxf}3 \) 25 \( \text{gxf}3 \text{f7} \) 26 \( \text{d3} \) a6 27 \( \text{h4}! \)

Due to the opposite-coloured bishops, White is essentially attacking with an extra piece and Black is therefore in no position to put up a reliable defence against White’s attack on the dark squares and open files on the kingside.

27...\( \text{e}8 \) 28 \( \text{e}3 \text{e}6 \) 29 \( \text{c}3 \text{g}5 \) 30 \( \text{d}2 \) h6 31 \( \text{d}4 \text{h}7 \) 32 h4 \( \text{e}8 \) 33 h\(x\)g5 \( \text{g}8 \) 34 \( \text{h}2 \text{xg}5+ \) 35 \( \text{f}2 \text{g}8 \) 36 \( \text{e}5 \) \( \text{g}6 \) 37 \( \text{e}7+ \) 1-0

6.3

**Pedzich – Rustemov**

*Swidnica 1999*

The simplest plan for Black is the one chosen in the game:

20...\( \text{d8} \) 21 \( \text{e}2 \) \( \text{g}6 \) 22 \( \text{f}4 \text{xf}4! \)?

This is not strictly necessary, but Black’s approach is easy to follow and White’s counterplay rather limited. As we have seen in some of the previous examples, giving the opponent a weakened pawn-structure around the king provides a lot of compensation. It isn’t necessary to calculate everything to a clear position, because usually this isn’t possible, but here Black correctly judges his chances for success as reasonably good, and goes for it.

23 \( \text{gxf}4 \text{xf}4 \) 24 \( \text{xe}6+ \text{xe}6 \) 25 \( \text{xe}6+ \text{h}7 \) 26 \( \text{f}3 \text{xc}2 \) 27 \( \text{b}2 \text{f}6 \) 28 \( \text{xd}5 \) \( \text{d}3 \) 29 \( \text{e}1 \) \( \text{xa}3 \) 30 \( \text{xb}7 \) \( \text{g}6+ \) 31 \( \text{h}1 \text{xc}3 \) 32 \( \text{e}5 \text{zd}2 \) 33 \( \text{g}1 \text{xg}1+ \) 34 \( \text{xe}1 \text{d}1+ \) 35 \( \text{f}2 \text{f}1+ \) 36 \( \text{e}3 \text{gl}+ \) 37 \( \text{f}4 \text{zh}2+ \) 38 \( \text{e}3 \text{g}1+ \) 39 \( \text{f}4 \text{c}3 \) 0-1

6.4

**Rogozenko – Kovaliov**

*Cappelle la Grande 1996*

It is definitely an option. White has already played h3, leaving the dark squares particularly vulnerable. With Black’s remaining pieces quite active, Black cannot have taken a long time to consider this sacrifice.

19...\( \text{xe}3! \) 20 \( \text{xe}3 \text{g}5 \) 21 \( \text{e}2 \) \( \text{xe}3+ \) 22 \( \text{h}2 \) \( \text{a}6 \) 23 \( \text{d}2 \) \( \text{xe}2 \) 24 \( \text{a}6 \) \( \text{xb}2 \) 25 \( \text{a}8+ \) \( \text{f}8 \) 26 \( \text{xe}2 \text{xe}2 \) 27 \( \text{e}8 \text{h}5 \) 28 \( \text{a}1 \) \( \text{g}7 \) 29 \( \text{xc}7 \) \( \text{d}3 \) 30 \( \text{g}1 \text{e}3 \) 31 \( \text{e}3 \) \( \text{e}3 \) 32 \( \text{d}1 \) \( \text{e}2 \) 33 \( \text{g}2 \) \( \text{f}4+ \) 34 \( \text{f}1 \text{g}5 \) 35 \( \text{h}4 \) 36 \( \text{c}7 \) 1/2-

**Chapter 7**

7.1

**Bondarevsky – Botvinnik**

*Moscow/Leningrad 1941*

It is clearly in White’s favour that the queens are on the board due to Black’s provocative kingside set-up. Botvinnik therefore decides to try to get the queens off the board with the following manoeuvre:

14...\( \text{g}8 \)? 15 \( \text{d}2 \) \( \text{h}7 \) 16 \( \text{b}4 \) \( \text{g}5 \!\!\!\!\!

The idea behind the previous two moves becomes evident. Now the queens come off and Black’s pieces all of a sudden wake up and the central pawns start marching. An amazing turn of events.

17 \( \text{zh}7 \text{zh}7 \) 18 \( \text{ex}f6 \text{e}6 \) 19 \( \text{g}x\)e6 \( \text{xe}6 \) 20 \( \text{gxf}6 \) \( \text{xf}6 \) 21 \( \text{d}6 \text{e}8 \) 22 \( \text{h}4 \) \( \text{g}8 \) 23 \( \text{h}2 \) \( \text{e}5 \) 24 \( \text{e}2 \) d3 25 \( \text{e}2 \) dxc2 26 \( \text{f}4 \) \( \text{e}3 \) 27 \( \text{xe}5+ \) \( \text{xe}5 \) 28 \( \text{xf}5+ \) \( \text{f}7 \) 29 \( \text{f}1 \) c1\( \text{w} \) 0-1

7.2

**Korchnoi – Smirin**

*Biel 2002*

13...\( \text{w}6 \)!

This simple move forces White to exchange the queens and resolve the situation in the centre, both issues to Black’s advantage.

14 \( \text{xa}6 \)

14 \( \text{f}3 \) is simply met by 14...\( \text{f}6 \) 15 \( \text{h}3 \) \( \text{xd}4 \) 16 \( \text{cxd}4 \) \( \text{xd}4 \).

14...\( \text{xa}6 \)

White’s pieces are not at all coordinated to enter this type of position, and with amazing ease Black obtains a large advantage.

15 \( \text{d}5 \) \( \text{c}4 \)!
This typical pawn advance prevents White from connecting his pawns and thus leaves the c3- and d5-pawns as targets.

16 \( \text{\textit{\varepsilon}e3} \text{\textit{\varepsilon}e8} 17 \text{\textit{\varepsilon}xa7} \)
Or 17 \varepsilonab1 b6 18 \varepsilonfc1 \varepsilonc5 \textit{\varepsilon}(Krasenkow).

17...\textit{\varepsilon}xe3 18 \varepsilonab1 \textit{\varepsilon}d7 19 \varepsilonae3 \varepsilong7 20 \varepsilonb5 c3 21 \textit{\varepsilon}f4!?

White creates another weakness, the e4-pawn. Smirin gives 21 \varepsilonfd3 as better, although 21...\varepsilonce4 22 e5 \varepsilonb4 23 \varepsilone6 \varepsilonxd5 24 \varepsilonxb7 (Smirin) 24...\varepsilonf6!? 25 \varepsilonh6 \varepsilonc6 is clearly to Black’s advantage.

Now White goes quickly downhill.

21...c2 22 \varepsilone1 \varepsilonc4! 23 a3 \varepsilonh6 24 \varepsilonf3 \varepsilonxe4

25 \varepsilonae2 \varepsilonc7 26 \varepsilonh6 \varepsilonce3 27 \varepsilonae2 \varepsilonxa3 28 \varepsilonbxc2 \varepsilonb4 29 \varepsilonc8+ \varepsilonh7 30 \varepsilonb1

Now 30...\varepsilonad3 is the shortest road to victory.

7.3

Brendel – Tischbierek
Deizisau 2000

14...\varepsilonxd5!

Black only other worthy try is 14...\varepsilonxe4, when 15 fxe4 \varepsilonh4+ 16 \varepsilong3 \varepsilonb7 17 \varepsilonb4 \varepsilonc8
18 \varepsilonxe6 cxd5 19 \varepsilonh2 \varepsilonh5 20 \varepsilonxf8 \varepsilonxc2 gives him a dangerous initiative, but White can improve with 15 \varepsilonce7+ \varepsilonh8 16 \varepsilonxb8 \varepsilonxc2
17 \varepsilonxe6 axb3 18 \varepsilong6+ hxg6 19 \varepsilonxf8, when he is winning. Therefore Black does not have a real choice.

15 \textit{\varepsilon}xb8 axb3 16 \textit{\varepsilon}xd5?!

This move only leads to trouble for White that results in him eventually giving the queen back. Instead 16 0-0! makes sense; for example, 16...\varepsilonxb8 17 exd5 \varepsilonxd5 18 axb3, and White shouldn’t be any worse.

16...\textit{\varepsilon}xd5 17 c4?! \varepsilonb6 18 \textit{\varepsilon}xd6 \varepsilonxe4 19 \varepsilonxe7 \varepsilonxd2 20 \varepsilonxf8 \varepsilonc4 21 \varepsilona3 \varepsilonxa3 22 \varepsilonbx3 \varepsilonaxa3

Black is clearly better and later won.

Chapter 8

8.1

J. Polgar – Anand
Wijk aan Zee 1998

11...\varepsilonxb3?

After this move, White is already clearly better as Black will be sitting with two weaknesses, in particular the d5-square and the backward a-pawn. White should try to exchange his dark-squared bishop for one of the black knights and the other knight can be an even exchange. This will leave White with control over the d5-square as well as a good knight versus a bad bishop.

12 \varepsilonxb3 \varepsilonbd7 13 \varepsilonfd1 \varepsilonc7 14 \varepsilong5!

This is according to plan and a very common way of attacking a weakness like the one Black has on d5.

14...\varepsilonfc8 15 \varepsilone1!

With this simple move, White stops the only counterplay Black can hope for: pressure along the c-file against the c2-pawn.

15...\varepsilonw7 16 \varepsilonxf6 \varepsilonxf6 17 \varepsilond5

Now Black’s second knight will be removed from the board.

17...\varepsilonxd5 18 \varepsilonxd5 \varepsilonc5 19 \varepsilonad1 \varepsilonad5 20 \varepsilonee5 \varepsilonc8 21 c3 \varepsilonb4 22 \varepsilonb4 \varepsilonc4 23 \varepsilong4 \varepsilonce5 24 \varepsilonad1

White obviously doesn’t want to allow an exchange on d5 since this is the square she wants to use for the knight.

24...\varepsilona5 25 \varepsilonc2 \varepsilong7 26 \varepsiloned3 \varepsilone6 27 \varepsilonee3
\varepsilonce8 28 \varepsilong2 \varepsilonwe6 29 \varepsilonwe2 \varepsilonad8 30 \varepsilonce5

White has achieved her strategic goal, and is winning. The rest of the game follows without further comments.

30...\varepsilonce5 31 \varepsilonwe3 \varepsilonce7 32 \varepsiloned3 \varepsilonad8 33 \varepsilonaw2
\varepsilonad6 34 \varepsilonawd1 \varepsilonag8 35 \varepsilonah4 \varepsilonag7 36 \varepsilonah5 \varepsilonag5 37 \varepsilonfh3 \varepsilonce8 38 \varepsiloned1 \varepsilonee6 39 \varepsilonwe2 \varepsilonce8 40 \varepsiloneh1 \varepsilonag8 41 \varepsilonfh8 42 \varepsilonwe2 \varepsilonad7 43 \varepsilonhxg6 \varepsilonfxg6 44 \varepsilonce5

45 \varepsilonxc5 \varepsiloned8 46 \varepsilonel1 \varepsilonfh7 47 \varepsilonwe3 \varepsilonag7 48 \varepsilonce4 \varepsiloned7 49 \varepsilonwe1 \varepsiloneh5 50 \varepsiloneh6 \varepsilonad6 51 \varepsilonec8
\varepsilonwe7 52 \varepsilonwe5 \varepsiloneh6 53 \varepsiloneh8 54 \varepsilonwee3+ \varepsilonag5

55 \varepsilonf4 \varepsilonxf4 56 \varepsilonhe8+ 1-0

8.2

Hraček – McShane
Bundesliga 1998/9

Black has the bishop-pair, but with a closed pawn-structure such as this, and no targets for the light-squared bishop to work on, this result is almost a foregone conclusion.

24 \varepsilona4!

Fixing the a5-pawn on a dark square as it will be much more difficult for White to make progress if Black is able to play ...a4 and protect it with ...\varepsilonb5.

24...\varepsilonh6 25 \varepsilong3 \varepsilone6 26 \varepsilonf2 \varepsilonf8 27 \varepsilonwb6
\varepsilonxb6 28 \varepsilonxb6 \varepsilonec4 29 \varepsilonxa5 \varepsilonah3 30 \varepsilonb4
\varepsilonxb4 31 \varepsilonxb4 \varepsilonxa4
Black has succeeded in exchanging the majority of the pieces, but is left with a bad bishop and a pawn-structure that cannot be defended.

32 \textcolor{red}{$\text{Qg5}$} \textcolor{blue}{$\text{h6}$} 33 \textcolor{blue}{$\text{Qxe6}$} \textcolor{red}{$\text{fx7}$} 34 \textcolor{blue}{$\text{Qc7}$} \textcolor{red}{$\text{We7}$} 35 \textcolor{red}{$\text{b5}$} \textcolor{blue}{$\text{Qd7}$}

Nothing works for Black: 35...\textcolor{red}{$\text{Qxb5}$} 36 \textcolor{blue}{$\text{Qxb5}$} \textcolor{blue}{$\text{cxb5}$} 37 \textcolor{blue}{$\text{We3}$}, and the e-pawn decides for White, while 35...\textcolor{blue}{$\text{cxb5}$} 36 \textcolor{blue}{$\text{Qxd5+}$} \textcolor{red}{$\text{We6}$} 37 \textcolor{blue}{$\text{Qb4}$} is also easy for White.

36 \textcolor{blue}{$\text{b6}$} 1-0

8.3

\textbf{Handke – I. Sokolov}

\textit{Amsterdam 2002}

Black’s position appears solid with plenty of potential on the queenside. However, the kingside is somewhat weakened, and particularly the absence of pieces makes Black’s situation somewhat worrying. But how does White best take advantage of this?

25 \textcolor{blue}{$\text{g4}$} \textcolor{blue}{$\text{Qf8}$}?

Black immediately gets concerned about his kingside, but continuing on the queenside with 25...a4 makes more sense. So does a flexible move like 25...\textcolor{blue}{$\text{Ra7}$}, which still supports the queenside advance and helps cover the seventh rank.

26 \textcolor{blue}{$\text{g5}$}!

White cannot hesitate and needs the kingside opened as soon as possible.

26...\textcolor{blue}{$\text{fxg5}$}?

Black continues to play White’s game by focusing his attention on the kingside. Correct is either 26...\textcolor{blue}{$\text{Wa7}$}?, pointing both in direction of the f2-rook and the kingside along his second rank, or 26...a4?!, as on the previous move.

27 \textcolor{blue}{$\text{Raf1}$} \textcolor{blue}{$\text{Kf4}$} 28 \textcolor{blue}{$\text{Qxg5}$} \textcolor{blue}{$\text{Qxg5}$} 29 \textcolor{blue}{$\text{Wxg5}$} \textcolor{blue}{$\text{Kxf2}$} 30 \textcolor{blue}{$\text{Kxf2}$}

White has achieved everything he hoped for: Black’s kingside is now more vulnerable than ever, the dark squares have become weak with the departure of the e7-bishop, and Black has not come any further on the queenside.

30...\textcolor{blue}{$\text{Wd8}$} 31 \textcolor{blue}{$\text{Wh6}$} (D)

As in any situation where one side has the initiative, the defending side has to try to eliminate those pieces that are causing him trouble, either by exchanges or by forcing them to less attractive squares. The attacker will usually try to avoid the exchanges and if necessary find additional targets.

31...\textcolor{blue}{$\text{We7}$} 32 \textcolor{blue}{$\text{c1}$}!

Black’s main problem on the kingside is the weak dark squares, and consequently the best way to attack them is to use the bishop to penetrate. The bishop is aiming to go to h6.

32...\textcolor{blue}{$\text{b5}$}

If possible, Black would have loved to continue 32...\textcolor{blue}{$\text{f8}$}, but after 33 \textcolor{blue}{$\text{Qg5}$} \textcolor{blue}{$\text{We8}$} 34 \textcolor{blue}{$\text{xf8+}$} \textcolor{blue}{$\text{Qxf8}$} 35 \textcolor{blue}{$\text{Qxf8+}$} \textcolor{blue}{$\text{Qxf8}$} 36 \textcolor{blue}{$\text{Qd8}$} \textcolor{blue}{$\text{Qb7}$} 37 \textcolor{blue}{$\text{Qb6}$} (Handke), Black cannot expect to defend.

33 \textcolor{blue}{$\text{Qg5}$} \textcolor{blue}{$\text{Qg7}$} 34 \textcolor{blue}{$\text{Qh4}$} \textcolor{blue}{$\text{Qd3}$}

This isn’t what Black wants to do, exchanging White’s lame light-squared bishop, but he has to stick a cork in on f4 so as not to get flushed out with the bath water on the dark squares and on the f-file.

35 \textcolor{blue}{$\text{Qxd3}$} \textcolor{blue}{$\text{Qxd3}$} 36 \textcolor{blue}{$\text{Qd3}$} \textcolor{blue}{$\text{Qf4}$}

The cork is in place, but because White has the option of timing g3, kicking the knight away, it is only a temporary solution.

37 \textcolor{blue}{$\text{Qh6}$}

White can also win with 37 \textcolor{blue}{$\text{Qe7}$}, picking up the d6-pawn.

37...\textcolor{blue}{$\text{Wc7}$} 38 \textcolor{blue}{$\text{Qf6}$} \textcolor{blue}{$\text{Qe8}$} 39 \textcolor{blue}{$\text{Qf2}$} \textcolor{blue}{$\text{We7}$}?

Probably a mistake caused by time-trouble, but even after the better 39...\textcolor{blue}{$\text{Qd7}$}, White wins without difficulties; e.g., 40 \textcolor{blue}{$\text{Qf1}$} \textcolor{blue}{$\text{Qc8}$} 41 \textcolor{blue}{$\text{Qc1}$} \textcolor{blue}{$\text{Qd8}$} 42 \textcolor{blue}{$\text{Qc6}$} \textcolor{blue}{$\text{Qh5}$} 43 \textcolor{blue}{$\text{Qg5}$} \textcolor{blue}{$\text{Qa8}$} 44 \textcolor{blue}{$\text{Qe1}$} \textcolor{blue}{$\text{Qf6}$} 45 \textcolor{blue}{$\text{Qc7}$} \textcolor{blue}{$\text{Qd8}$} 46 \textcolor{blue}{$\text{Qg7+}$} \textcolor{blue}{$\text{Qh8}$} 47 \textcolor{blue}{$\text{Qf7}$} \textcolor{blue}{$\text{Qg8}$} 48 \textcolor{blue}{$\text{Qf8+}$} \textcolor{blue}{$\text{Qxf8}$} 49 \textcolor{blue}{$\text{Qxf8}$} \textcolor{blue}{$\text{Qxf8}$} 50 \textcolor{blue}{$\text{Qc7}$} \textcolor{blue}{$\text{Qxe4}$} 51 \textcolor{blue}{$\text{Qxa5}$}. Black’s position is so passive that White can enter it almost any way he wants as long as he is alert to cheapo-poes from Black’s side.

40 \textcolor{blue}{$\text{Qxe7}$} \textcolor{blue}{$\text{Qxe7}$} 41 g3 1-0

8.4

\textbf{M. Gurevich – Gashimov}

\textit{Batumi Ech 2002}

28 \textcolor{blue}{$\text{d5}$}!
A cool reminder to all of us that it isn’t enough to control the square in front of an isolated pawn; it has to be blockaded too.

28...\(d\)7

There are no good alternatives: 28...\(\text{dxe}_5\) 29 \(\text{c}_5\) \(\text{xf}_4\) 30 \(\text{e}_2\), 28...\(\text{fxe}_5\) 29 \(\text{c}_5\), 28...\(\text{xd}_5\) 29 \(\text{c}_5\) and 28...\(\text{exd}_5\) 29 \(\text{c}_5\) \(\text{we}_6\) 30 \(\text{g}_6\) all win easily for White.

Now, instead of 29 \(\text{dx}_6\), as played by Gurevich in the game, White could win easily with 29 \(\text{fc}_7!\) \(\text{xf}_7\) 30 \(\text{dx}_e6+\) \(\text{f}_8\) 31 \(\text{xd}_6\) \(\text{cx}_d6\) 32 \(\text{ex}_d7\) \(\text{xd}_7\) 33 \(\text{e}_6\) \(\text{c}_7\) (or 33...\(\text{dd}_8\) 34 \(\text{b}_6\)) 34 \(\text{xd}_6\). White is a pawn up, while Black is still completely tied down.

8.5

Van Oosterom – Timmerman

corr. Wch 1996–02

White has essentially already broken through on the queenside; he only needs to pick up the a5-pawn and he can start working on the c7-pawn and on breaking in on the back rank. Black’s pieces at the moment are lacking options: the dark-squared bishop is stuck behind a massive pawn-chain, its light-squared sister is at the moment stuck on c8 and the major pieces cannot be of any use unless some files open up more or less immediately – otherwise it will simply be too late. Therefore the answer is more or less presented to you by looking at the evaluation of each piece, and at present there is only one solution...

23...\(g3!\)

The next few moves are forced.

24 \(\text{hx}_g3\) \(\text{fx}_g3\) 25 \(\text{e}_g3\) \(\text{h}_6\) (D)

26 \(\text{f}2\)

This move looks wrong, but alternatives are hard to come by. For example, 26 \(\text{xa}_5\) \(\text{xa}_5\) 27 \(\text{xa}_5\) \(\text{g}_7\) 28 \(\text{f}2\) \(\text{h}3\) (Baumbach) isn’t any good for White, while after 26 \(\text{h}4\) \(\text{e}_3+\) 27 \(\text{h}2\) \(\text{f}_8\) 28 \(\text{d}3\) \(\text{d}_4\) 29 \(\text{a}_4\) \(\text{w}_5\) 30 \(g3\) \(\text{a}_6\) 31 \(\text{w}_2\) \(\text{f}_8\) Black’s pieces are about to enter White’s position and really start working together.

26...\(\text{c}7!\)

Black’s pawn sacrifice opened up a lot of possibilities on the dark squares and with White’s king in an openly vulnerable position on a dark square it’s only logical to try to take advantage of it.

27 \(\text{h}1\)

This looks a little too radical, but in all fairness, White has a serious dark-squared problem, and this is really the only way of taking care of it. If White, for example, instead tried 27 \(\text{xa}_5\), then 27...\(\text{gg}5!\) 28 \(\text{f}4\) (obviously 28 \(\text{xa}_8??\) isn’t right due to 28...\(\text{e}_3+\) 29 \(\text{e}_1\) \(\text{w}2+\) 30 \(\text{f}2\) \(\text{e}_3#\)) 28...\(\text{h}4+!\) (28...\(\text{xf}4\) only seems to lead to a draw by perpetual check) 29 \(\text{g}3\) \(\text{xe}4\) 30 \(\text{e}1\) \(\text{xa}_5\) 31 \(\text{xa}_5\) \(\text{e}3+\) 32 \(\text{f}1\) \(\text{e}4\), and Black has won the pawn back with interest.

27...\(\text{gg}5\) 28 \(\text{xh}6\) \(\text{yh}6\) 29 \(\text{xa}_5\) \(\text{xa}_5\) 30 \(\text{xa}_5\) \(\text{h}8\) 31 \(\text{a}_3\) \(\text{g}6\) 32 \(\text{a}_8\) \(\text{f}8\) 33 \(\text{h}4\) \(\text{h}6\) 34 \(\text{g}3\) \(\text{f}5\)

Finally Black’s light-squared bishop gets into play, yet there is a long technical way for Black to go before he can note the full point on the scoreboard.

35 \(\text{a}4\) \(\text{g}6\) 36 \(\text{e}2\) \(\text{g}8\) 37 \(\text{d}3\) \(\text{h}5\) 38 \(\text{e}2\) \(\text{g}6\) 39 \(\text{d}3\) \(\text{b}8\)! (D)

The only winning plan. Black will now penetrate on the queenside. Black makes it look very easy, so study it carefully.

40 \(\text{e}2\) \(\text{f}8\) 41 \(\text{g}5\) \(\text{b}4\) 42 \(\text{g}2\) \(\text{b}8\) 43 \(\text{h}6\) \(\text{b}2\) 44 \(\text{c}4\) \(\text{a}7\) 45 \(\text{c}1\) \(\text{a}2\) 46 \(\text{e}3\)
Hansen in ChessBase Magazine instead suggests the effective 32 h5! gxh5 (or 32...gxh5 33 \(g\)e7 with a clear advantage, that gets to be winning if Black continues 33...\(f\)8? 34 hxg6 \(x\)xg6 35 g7+; also 32...\(h\)h4 33 \(g\)f4 is very unpleasant for Black) 33 \(h\)h6+ \(g\)g8 34 \(f\)f4! (not 34 \(x\)xh5? due to 34...\(f\)f6! 35 \(x\)xg4+ \(f\)8, and the advantage is gone), and White wins.

8.6

**Vaganian – Kveinys**

*Germany Cup (Forchheim) 2000*

White has an advantage; there shouldn’t be any question about that. But how big is it? He controls the only open file on the board, although in the present position, it isn’t all that important as all the potential entry-squares are covered by Black. In addition, White has more space, and Black doesn’t have too many options for creating counterplay. But how does White make the best of the imbalances in his favour? The answer is quite simple: by isolating Black’s passive pieces through exchanges of the active ones.

21 \(c\)c4!

This is quite easily the strongest move of the entire game. Black is now forced to exchange all the minor pieces and thereby leave White with complete control over the open e-file, as well as potential for a kingside attack with the pawns, queen and rook. The kingside attack is an option because Black’s inactive major pieces will have a hard time participating in the defence.

21...\(d\)xe4 22 \(d\)xe4 \(d\)xe4 23 \(e\)xe4 \(h\)5

A necessity: Black cannot allow the white h-pawn to get to \(h\)5 and especially \(h\)6 due to the weak dark squares on the kingside.

24 \(e\)e3 \(f\)8

Another forced move, as \(e\)e7 has to be prevented.

25 \(c\)c3 \(g\)g8 26 \(h\)h2 \(b\)6 27 \(g\)g2 \(b\)b8 28 \(f\)f1 \(a\)a8 29 \(g\)g2 \(b\)b8 30 \(c\)c3 \(f\)8 31 g4!

This is the only remaining pawn-break, but also the only way for White to break into Black’s position. White’s space advantage and Black’s passive pieces allow White to do things he wouldn’t normally be able to consider.

31...hxg4 32 hXg4?! (D)

Not the most accurate move, since Black now has chances of keeping the balance. Curt
Chapter 9

9.1

In the Benko Gambit, 1 d4 ćf6 2 e4 e5 3 d5 b5!? Black is trying to combine speedy development with pressure along the semi-open a-and b-files and the long diagonal h8-a1. By returning the pawn after 4 cxb5 a6 5 b6!? White tries to eliminate these factors for Black while creating some positional assets for himself. Black’s a6-pawn is now in the way of the light-squared bishop on c8, and if Black should play it forward he weakens the b5-square. Also the square in front of the c5-pawn can become useful for White, who will often transfer his kingside knight via f3 and d2 to c4 where it will support the e4-e5 pawn-break in the centre and can be supported by an advance of the a-pawn to a5 and bother Black by jumping to b6.

9.2

Eliskases – Stein

Mar del Plata 1966

In situations such as this one, Black can often afford to sacrifice a pawn if White in return has to give up his dark-squared bishop. Here it is further supported by a significant lead in development and White’s king still being in the centre.

15...ćd4!

The idea behind this move is not only to exchange White’s dark-squared bishop, but also to support the advance of the b-pawn.

16 ćxd4 ćxd4 17 ćce2 d3!

By sacrificing the pawn in this fashion, White is not allowed any time to organize his pieces.

18 ćxd3 b5!

Another pawn sacrifice, but one that White cannot accept as the open a-file and the pawn-break ...d5 hanging in the air will only benefit Black.

19 ćf4 ćf5!

A primitive, yet highly effective approach: White has no answer to Black taking on e4 on the next move with either the knight or the bishop, depending on what White moves.

20 ćf1 ćxe4! 21 ćge2 ćb7

Black has won the pawn back with interest and the game is over.

22 ćd5 ćxd5 23 cxd5 ćxd5 24 b4 ćxb4 25 ćb3 ćd3+ 26 ćd2 ćxc1 27 ćxc1 ćc8 28 ćd3 ćf6 0-1

Chapter 10

10.1

Korchnoi – Galliamova

Amsterdam 2001

White has played rather aggressively in the opening and has now obtained a space advantage, but his pieces are not particularly well-coordinated. The king is left in the centre and the two centre pawns on c4 and d4 are rather weak, and if White should manage to castle, then the kingside is very open. Black’s position in contrast is very solid, not to say passive-looking. So how should Black continue in order for her to take advantage of White’s loose position?

16...ćcd8!

While you may have the urge to blow open the position and charge at the white king, it is important to make mature decisions to exploit the imperfections in the white set-up. The idea behind the text-move is to apply pressure against the white centre, while at the same time preventing White from castling since 17 0-0 is met with 17...ćc5!, winning at least a pawn. Black intends to play ...c5 and lay down a dark-squared blockade of White’s central pawns before playing the c-pawn further to c4 to target the weak d3-square and use the dark squares to enter White’s vulnerable position.

17 će3?! 18 ćf4

In conjunction with the next few moves, this move doesn’t make a particularly good impression. With the pin of the d7-knight no longer being a priority, White should in my opinion try to stabilize the position by playing 17 ćg2, followed by će2 and either ćf4 or ćc3 with a fully playable position for White.

17...će5! 18 ćf4

This is almost forced due to 18 d5 running into 18...ćc4! 19 ća4 će5, threatening an invasion on d3 and on the dark squares with ...ćc5. 18 e5 isn’t too appetizing for White either, as after 18...ćxd4! 19 exf6 ćxf6 20 će2 će5 21 ćf4 će4 Black has more than enough for the piece, which will most likely be won back shortly.

18...ća5 19 ćd2

Again necessary since 19 d5 now allows 19...ćc4.

19...ća6 20 ćf1 ćd6 21 d5
Black has succeeded in blockading White's central pawns and kept White's king in the centre. Now it is time for Black to activate his pieces for their temporary slumber.

21...\(\text{\textit{Qxe}}5\) 22 \(\text{\textit{Qe2 c4}}\) 23 \(\text{\textit{Wxb7}}\)!

There is just no way this move can benefit White; the opening of the b-file only adds another way for Black to target White's uncastled king. Better, if still awful, is 23 \(\text{\textit{Qxc4}},\) allowing 23...\(\text{\textit{Qf3]],\) but it has the benefit of White being able to play on.

23...\(\text{\textit{Ad7}}, 24 \text{\textit{Wb5 b8}} 25 \text{\textit{Wa5}} \text{\textit{Qxb2}} 26 \text{\textit{Qf4}} g5! 27 \text{\textit{Qxg5 d8]], 28 \text{\textit{Wa4 Qxe4}} 0-1\)

10.2

Filippov – P.H. Nielsen

Minsk 1996

White has a space advantage and apparently also the more active pieces, while Black's position, like in the previous example, is quite solid and virtually without weaknesses. Obviously Black's rook on a3 cannot bring harm upon White on its own, so how should Black take charge?

27...f5!

After this typical pawn-break, Black's pieces spring to life and White's pieces look surprisingly uncoordinated.

28 b5 (D)

B

With this move White forces the bishop to retreat and takes control over d5, but it also weakens the dark squares on the queenside.

28...\(\text{\textit{Qe8}}\) 29 exf5

It looks illogical to help bring Black's queen into the game, but as Nielsen points out, 29 \(\text{\textit{Wd5}},\) intending 29...\(\text{\textit{Qf7}}\) 30 \(\text{\textit{Wxb7}}\) backfires after 30...\(\text{\textit{Aa1}}\).

29...\(\text{\textit{Wxf5}}\) 30 \(\text{\textit{d5 Qf8]]})

With the last weakness in Black's position guarded, according to Nielsen Black is ready for ideas like 31...g5 and 32...\(\text{\textit{Qg6}}\) or 31...\(\text{\textit{Aa5}}\) and 32...\(\text{\textit{Qf7}}\).

31 \(\text{\textit{Aa1 Qe5!}}\)

Now 32 \(\text{\textit{Qc2}}\) is answered effectively with 32...\(\text{\textit{Aa2}},\) pinning the bishop.

32 \text{\textit{Ab1 Aa1}} 33 \text{\textit{f4 Qe4}} 34 \text{\textit{Aa1 Aa1 Axf3}}

This drops a pawn; 35 \text{\textit{Wc2}} and 35 \text{\textit{We3}} both force a queenless endgame that is better for Black, but at least offer White drawing chances. The desperate attack White now initiates is doomed before it is started.

35...\(\text{\textit{Wc4}},\) 36 \text{\textit{f5 gxf5}} 37 \text{\textit{h4 Qxb5}} 38 \text{\textit{Wh6+ Qg7}} 39 \text{\textit{Ag3 Qc6}} 40 \text{\textit{Wxe7 Axf3}}

Here 40...\(\text{\textit{Qc5+}}\) followed by 41...\(\text{\textit{Qxe7}}\) is the simplest win, although the text-move is also an easy win.

41 \(\text{\textit{Qxd6 Axf7!}} 42 \text{\textit{gxf3 Aa4+ 43 Aa2 We2+}} 44 \text{\textit{Qh3 Qf1+ 45 Qh2 Qg1+ 0-1}}\)

10.3

P.H. Nielsen – S. Pedersen

Danish Ch (Aalborg) 2000

Where is the weakness in Black's position? It is easy to suggest the backward h-pawn, but without further preparation it is too easy for Black to guard it with ...\(\text{\textit{Wf7}}\). Also the d6-pawn can be considered weak, but it too is well-protected. Nielsen finds a third and less obvious weakness.

21 \text{\textit{Wb4!}}

This move is mainly prophylactic in the respect that it prevents Black from developing his queenside, which then constitutes a weakness. As a side benefit, it also aims gently at the d6-pawn.

21...\(\text{\textit{Qg7}}\)

Black takes the h6-square away from White, but does little else. In \textit{CBM}, Ribli suggests 21...\(\text{\textit{Aa4+}},\) the move that White's 21st move was designed to prevent. His idea is that 22 \text{\textit{Wxb7}} allows 22...\(\text{\textit{Aac8+}} 23 \text{\textit{Ab1 Qc2}},\) and White cannot take the rook on account of ...\(\text{\textit{Aa4+}}.\) However, after 22 \text{\textit{Ab1}}, Black has to figure out a way to guard all the weaknesses.

22 \text{\textit{Ab1 b6 23 Aa4}}

White doesn't intend to exchange on e5, but the threat can come in handy in some lines.

23...\(\text{\textit{b7}}\) 24 \text{\textit{Wd4}}
White effectively ties down all of Black’s pieces. The threat of 25 \( \mathcal{A}xe5 \) is also something Black has to consider here, as 25...\( \mathcal{W}xe5 \) runs into 26 \( \mathcal{W}d7 \) + \( \mathcal{A}xf7 \) 27 \( \mathcal{A}xh7 \) + and 25...\( \mathcal{A}xe5 \) leaves White with a powerful passed pawn on the d-file.

24...\( \mathcal{A}g8 \) ?

Black wants his king out of the pin, but makes the h6-square vulnerable. However, after the correct 24...\( \mathcal{A}d8 \) (or 24...\( \mathcal{A}f7 \)), White has 25 \( \mathcal{A}c1 \), and as Nielsen points out it is really difficult for Black to find a constructive plan.

25 \( \mathcal{H}h6 \) ! \( \mathcal{A}f7 \) 26 \( \mathcal{A}e6 \) \( \mathcal{W}d8 \) 27 \( \mathcal{A}f6 \) \( \mathcal{W}b8 \) 28 \( \mathcal{A}h1 \) \( \mathcal{A}c8 \) 29 \( \mathcal{W}d1 \) \( \mathcal{H}6 \) 30 \( e5 \) 1-0

Black resigned on account of 30...\( \mathcal{A}xe5 \) 31 \( \mathcal{W}d3 \), followed by \( \mathcal{W}g6 \).

10.4

Korchnoi – Adams
Hrokorinn 2003

16 \( c5 \) !

Due to Black’s passive pieces and restrained pawn-structure, it makes sense for White to advance his queenside majority.

16...\( a5 \) 17 \( \mathcal{A}b5 \) \( \mathcal{A}h6 \) 18 \( \mathcal{A}b1 \) \( \mathcal{A}d7 \)

Also 18...\( \mathcal{B}xc5 \) 19 \( \mathcal{D}xc5 \) \( \mathcal{A}g7 \) 20 \( b4 \) \( \mathcal{W}c7 \) 21 \( \mathcal{A}a4 \) as given by Ftačnik is very unpleasant for Black.

19 \( \mathcal{A}c1 \) (D)

\begin{tikzpicture}

[Buchschach][chessboard][en]

19...\( \mathcal{A}g7 \) ?!

Black isn’t interested in exchanging the dark-squared bishops on account of the weaknesses there will be left after the exchange. Anyhow, this may actually be Black’s best; e.g., 19...\( \mathcal{A}xc1 \) 20 \( \mathcal{A}xc1 \) \( \mathcal{B}xc5 \) 21 \( \mathcal{D}xc5 \) \( \mathcal{W}e7 \) 22 \( \mathcal{A}xd4 \) e5 23 \( \mathcal{A}xc6 \) \( \mathcal{A}xc6 \) 24 \( f4 \) \( \mathcal{W}f6 \) 25 \( \mathcal{F}xe5 \) \( \mathcal{A}xe5 \) 26 \( \mathcal{W}d2 \) (Ftačnik) with a small but clear advantage for White.

20 \( \mathcal{B}d4 \) \( \mathcal{A}xb4 \) 21 \( \mathcal{A}xb4 \) \( \mathcal{A}a7 \) 22 \( \mathcal{A}a4 \) ! \( \mathcal{H}6 \)

Or 22...\( b5 \) 23 \( \mathcal{A}b3 \) \( \mathcal{C}d6 \) 24 \( \mathcal{A}g5 \) \( \mathcal{W}c7 \) 25 \( \mathcal{W}d2 \) + (Ftačnik).

23 \( \mathcal{W}d3 \) \( \mathcal{B}xe5 \) 24 \( \mathcal{B}xc5 \) \( \mathcal{A}e6 \) 25 \( \mathcal{A}c2 \) \( \mathcal{B}b8 \)

Black is getting some pieces into play, but the offside knight on a7 as well as the control over the dark squares including the passed c5-pawn give White a fairly clear advantage, that Black has a hard time compensating for.

26 \( \mathcal{A}f4 \) \( \mathcal{B}xb1 \) 27 \( \mathcal{A}xb1 \) \( \mathcal{A}a5 \) 28 \( \mathcal{H}4 \) \( \mathcal{B}b5 \) 29 \( \mathcal{W}e3 \) \( \mathcal{A}f6 \) ?

A tactical blunder in an unpleasant position. After the better 29...\( \mathcal{H}5 \) 30 \( \mathcal{A}e2 \) \( \mathcal{C}c6 \) 31 \( \mathcal{A}c3 \) \( \mathcal{A}c4 \) 32 \( \mathcal{A}a4 \) (Ftačnik), White is also clearly in control.

30 \( \mathcal{W}c1 \) ! \( \mathcal{A}c3 \) 31 \( \mathcal{B}b3 \) \( \mathcal{A}c4 \) 32 \( \mathcal{W}b2 \) \( \mathcal{A}a4 \) 33 \( \mathcal{D}d2 \) \( \mathcal{A}xb3 \)

Or 33...\( \mathcal{A}a6 \) 34 \( \mathcal{A}a3 \) \( \mathcal{W}h5 \) 35 \( \mathcal{W}xb5 \) \( \mathcal{A}xb5 \) 36 \( \mathcal{A}x a4 \) \( \mathcal{A}xd4 \) 37 \( \mathcal{A}xd4 \) e5 38 \( \mathcal{A}a4 \) \( \mathcal{A}e7 \) 39 \( \mathcal{A}xe5 \) \( \mathcal{A}xe5 \) 40 \( \mathcal{A}f1 \), and White is winning.

34 \( \mathcal{A}xc4 \) \( \mathcal{A}xc4 \) 35 \( \mathcal{A}xb3 \) \( \mathcal{A}xb3 \) 36 \( \mathcal{A}xb3 \) \( \mathcal{A}d5 \) 37 \( \mathcal{A}a4 \) \( \mathcal{A}d8 \) 38 \( \mathcal{A}xh6 \) \( \mathcal{A}xh6 \) 39 \( \mathcal{A}xa7 \) \( \mathcal{A}g7 \) 40 \( \mathcal{C}6 \) \( \mathcal{A}c8 \) 41 \( \mathcal{A}e4 \) 1-0

10.5

Hübner – Karpov
Baden-Baden 1992

This looks like a standard position in the English Four Knights. White’s idea is to play 12 \( d3 \), forcing 12...\( \mathcal{A}xd3 \) 13 \( \mathcal{A}xd3 \) with a decent game for White, whose pieces on e3 and g2 are particularly well-placed. Karpov devises an interesting plan to eliminate the need to exchange on d3 after White’s next move.

11...\( \mathcal{A}a5 \)! 12 \( d3 \) \( \mathcal{A}c6 \) !

Without the customary exchange on d3, White is now forced to take on a more passive set-up for all of his pieces.

13 \( \mathcal{A}d2 \) \( \mathcal{W}d7 \) 14 \( \mathcal{A}ae1 \) \( \mathcal{B}6 \) !

Black is not in a hurry and carefully guards his pieces. If White does nothing, Black will continue to improve his position by doubling the rooks on the e-file and otherwise proceed as in the game.

15 \( \mathcal{F}3 \) \( \mathcal{A}xd3 \) 16 \( \mathcal{A}xd3 \) \( \mathcal{B}5 \)

If Black settled for 16...\( \mathcal{B}h6 \) White could consider 17 \( g4 \) intending \( \mathcal{A}f5 \).

17 \( \mathcal{F}2 \) \( \mathcal{E}7 \) 18 \( \mathcal{F}e2 \) \( \mathcal{A}e8 \) 19 \( \mathcal{A}c1 \) \( \mathcal{A}b7 \) 20 \( \mathcal{A}d1 \) \( d5 \) !

Black forces the position open, leaving White more vulnerable with structural weaknesses.
and less active pieces. Take some time playing through the remainder of the game. Karpov slowly but surely makes White’s position fall apart.

21 cxd5 cxd5 22 e4 f6 23 xe7 xe7
24 xe7 xe7 25 f1 c6 26 e2 d7 27 f2 f5 28 f4 c5 29 d1 a6 30 c4
Or 30 xc7 xd5.
30...d4 31 e3 c6
The threat is 32...xd3.
32 g1 d7 33 f1 c5 34 c3 c6 35 e4 f5 36 g2 xe4 37 fxe4 e5 38 f4 d4+
39 e3 wa1+ 40 f1 g6 41 g4 hxg4 42 xg4
e5 43 e2 b5!
The decisive break.
44 xc5 bxc4 45 dxc4 xc4 46 f2 g4
47 f4 xf1 48 xf1 f1
Black has a won endgame, which Karpov duly converted into victory.

10.6

Külaoats – Hutters
Gausdal 2003

21 b1!! (D)

Black’s otherwise active set-up has left the dark squares on the queenside and the d6-pawn vulnerable; White’s idea is to play a3-c4 to address these weaknesses.

21...g6
21...d5 22 exd5 xd5 23 bc3 wa5 24 e4 h8 25 b2 (Külaoats) is also clearly better for White.
22 a3 e5
Külaoats gives 22...e5?? 23 c4 with an advantage for White as Black’s best option. White can keep applying pressure on the queenside and along the semi-open d-file, while Black essentially is without counterplay.

23 e3 f4 24 c4 c7
According to Külaoats, Black’s best chance is 24...d8. His analysis continues 25 a5 e6 26 b6 f5 27 exf5 xf5 28 c4, which in my opinion leaves White with a clearly better game. However, in the game continuation, things go from bad to worse...

25 c3 xc4 26 bxc4 xc4 27 xd6 xc3 28 c5 f6 29 ed1 1-0

Chapter 11

11.1

Glek – Dolmatov
Dortmund 1992

The key to Black’s weaknesses lies in the overburdened knight on f6 that needs to protect the d5-pawn and very importantly the h7-square. Unfortunately for Black, White can easily put a finger on his troubles.

22 g4! xe3 23 xe3 xg4 24 hxg4 d8
Prevents the pawn loss, but not the invasion on the kingside.

25 h7 f6 26 g3 f7 27 h4 g8 28 f5 e7 29 h5 exd4 30 exd4 g8 31 f5 f7
32 h7 g8 33 f5 f7 34 e6 g8 35 xd5
White is winning.

11.2

Shirov – Anand
Wijk aan Zee 2001

19...b6
19...d7 was given as equal by Kalinin, but after 20 f5! Black is in difficulties.

20 b3!

This simple retreat is amazingly strong as it takes control over the d-file and ties down Black’s queenside as 20...d7? runs into 21 e5! b5 22 c4 xe5 23 xc5, and Black is more or less finished; e.g., 23...c6 24 xb7 xb7 25 xb7 xd1 26 xb8 b8 27 d7! (Finkel). The fianchettoed bishop and the supporting knight is a very uncomfortable duo to face. This theme is also quite common in the Catalan Opening.

20 e8 21 c4
White has a space advantage, a lead in development and pressure against Black’s queenside. Needless to say, he holds a fairly substantial advantage.
21...\textit{W}c7 22 \textit{W}a5 \textit{W}xa5 23 \textit{Q}xa5 \textit{Q}f8! 24 \\
\textit{R}e3 \textit{R}b8 25 \textit{Q}b3! b6 26 \textit{Q}c6 \textit{R}d7 27 \textit{Q}a5 \textit{R}b8 \\
28 \textit{R}c6! \textit{R}e7 29 c5 b5 30 \textit{R}bd3 \\
Although the game later ended in a draw, White is clearly better at this point.

11.3

**Botvinnik – Kan**

_USSR Ch (Moscow) 1931_

12 \textit{Q}xe5?! \\
Aside from this radical idea, White can also opt to force a closing of the centre and then initiate an attack on the queenside with 12 \textit{R}ad1 \\
\textit{R}f7 13 \textit{Q}d4 e5 14 \textit{Q}d5 \textit{Q}e8 15 c5 \textit{Q}f8 16 \\
cxd6 with a better game for White, as in Makogonov-Alatortsev, USSR 1933.

12...\textit{R}xe5 13 \textit{R}xe7 \textit{R}f7 14 \textit{Q}a3 exd5 15 \\
\textit{Q}xd5 \\
White has won the bishop-pair and has a nice centralized knight to enjoy as well.

15...f4! 16 \textit{R}ad1 \textit{Q}xd5?! \\
Chekhov gives 16...\textit{Q}h3?! 17 \textit{Q}xf6+ \textit{Q}xf6 \\
18 \textit{Q}f3 \textit{R}f7 19 \textit{R}e1 with a better game as Black's best option. Now White takes complete control.

17 \textit{R}xd5 \textit{Q}e6 18 \textit{W}d3 \textit{R}xd5 19 \textit{W}xd5 \textit{Q}c6 \\
20 \textit{W}c5! \textit{Q}e8 \\
Or 20...\textit{R}xe2 21 \textit{W}e6 \textit{W}h5 22 \textit{R}d7 \textit{W}f5 23 \\
\textit{W}xf5 \textit{R}xf5 24 \textit{R}xc7 \textit{R}f7 25 \textit{R}xf7 \textit{R}xf7 26 \\
gxf4 exf4 27 \textit{R}d1 (Chekhov), and White should win the endgame.

21 b4 a6?! 22 b5 axb5 23 cxb5 \textit{Q}a5 24 \textit{W}e6! \\
\textit{Q}a8 25 \textit{R}d7 \textit{W}g6 26 \textit{R}d5 h6 27 \textit{R}xc7 \textit{W}e8 28 \\
\textit{R}b4 b6 29 \textit{Q}xa5 bxa5 30 b6 \textit{W}e6 31 \textit{W}xe6 \\
\textit{R}xe6 32 \textit{R}b1 \textit{R}e8 33 \textit{R}xf7 \textit{R}xf7 34 b7 \textit{R}b8 35 \\
gxf4 exf4 36 \textit{Q}g2 \textit{Q}e6 37 \textit{W}f3 g5 38 \textit{W}e4 1-0

11.4

**Timman – Chernin**

_Montpellier Ct 1985_

White already has a space advantage to work with on the kingside, which he would like to build on by advancing his kingside pawns with g4 and f5 and later either fxe6 or f6 with the intention of opening the f-file and invading on the seventh rank via f7. Black, on the other hand, has to contain White's kingside initiative, and he finds an effective way to do so.

17...\textit{W}h5! 18 g3 \textit{Q}ag8!

Just because Black has stopped the first wave and got White to play g3, doesn't mean that White has given up on the idea of playing g4 and f5. Therefore it is essential that Black plays very aggressively to keep the balance.

19 \textit{R}hf1 g5! 20 f5 g4 21 f6+ \\
White has to show a little care too; in the event of 21 fxe6 fxe6, it might be Black who takes advantage of the open f-file.

21...\textit{N}d8 22 \textit{Q}e3 h4 23 b4 h5x3 24 hxg3 \\
\textit{Q}xd3+ 25 exd3 \textit{Q}h2 \\
with chances for both sides.

11.5

**Hillarp Persson – Vernersson**

_Swedish Ch (Örebro) 2000_

White's active pieces in combination with Black's not particularly well guarded kingside and loose piece set-up should bring you to think about tactical solutions, the threat of which helps White to create permanent weaknesses in Black's position.

19 \textit{W}h3!

The immediate threat is 20 \textit{Q}xf7+ followed by \textit{R}xd7, but given that Black can easily stay clear of this, White obviously has something more in mind.

19... \textit{N}dd8 20 e6 \textit{f}xe6 21 \textit{Q}xe6+ \textit{Q}h8 22 \textit{Q}f5 \\
The real point behind White's 22nd move, Black is now forced to weaken his kingside structure, the light squares in particular.

22...h6 23 \textit{Q}de1 \textit{R}f7 24 \textit{Q}g5 \textit{W}f6 25 \textit{Q}e6 \\
\textit{W}xg5 26 f4 \\
Black's queen is trapped.

26...\textit{W}xf5 27 \textit{Q}xf5 \textit{Q}d4 28 \textit{Q}xh6+ \textit{g}xh6 29 \\
\textit{W}f6+ \textit{Q}g8 30 \textit{W}g6+ \textit{Q}f8 31 \textit{Q}e1 \textit{R}d7 32 \\
\textit{W}f6+? \\
32 \textit{W}xh6+! wins cleanly.

32...\textit{Q}g8 33 \textit{Q}e7 \textit{Q}xe7 34 \textit{Q}xe7 \\
White is winning due to Black's lack of cover for the king and poor piece coordination.

11.6

**Morozevich – Ponomariov**

_Moscow FIDE KO 2001_

15...\textit{Q}xe4 16 \textit{Q}xe4 \textit{f}5 \\
Despite Black winning the piece back by force, White is clearly better due to the structural weaknesses around Black’s king and on the e-file. Morozevich exploits these weaknesses easily.

17 \textit{Q}d3 e4 18 \textit{Q}g5 \textit{Q}f6 19 \textit{Q}xf6 \textit{Q}xf6 20 \\
\textit{Q}e2 \textit{Q}xf3 21 \textit{Q}xf3 b4 22 \textit{Q}d2 \textit{Q}f8 23 a3!
The target is the stranded knight on a5.
23...\textit{wb}6 24 axb4 \textit{wb}4 25 \textit{ha}4 \textit{wc}3 26 \textit{xe}3 \textit{wb}2 27 \textit{tf}1 \textit{ec}5 28 \textit{fe}1 \textit{ec}1 29 \textit{xa}5
White won in short order.

11.7

\textbf{Rukavina – Larsen}

\textit{Leningrad Iz 1973}

In return for his weak pawn on e4, Black has a rather substantial lead in development and the bishop-pair. In order to take advantage of both, Black makes the logical decision of opening up the game before White gets to catch up with his development.

15...\textit{e}3!

As 16 \textit{dx}e3 may be met by 16...\textit{xf}1 and 16 \textit{xe}3 by 16...\textit{c}2. White only has one answer...

16 fxe3 \textit{xf}1+ 17 \textit{xf}1 \textit{e}6!

Black opens a line for his queen and with that a path for his rook; the immediate threat is 18...\textit{wf}6+.

18 \textit{b}2 \textit{cxd}5 19 \textit{cxd}5

Capturing with the knight doesn’t offer any chances either: 19 \textit{dx}d5 \textit{xb}2 20 \textit{xb}2 \textit{xd}5 21 \textit{cxd}5 \textit{e}7!, threatening amongst other things...\textit{we}4.

19...\textit{g}5 20 \textit{d}1 \textit{e}5 (D)

20...\textit{xa}2! (Hiarcs) is also strong; e.g., 21 \textit{xa}2 \textit{xb}2 22 \textit{xb}2 \textit{xe}3. Larsen instead continues the positional penetration of White’s position.

\textbf{Diagram 11.7}

\begin{center}
\includegraphics[width=0.5\textwidth]{Diagram11.7}
\end{center}

21 e4 \textit{g}4

Here 21...\textit{f}4! is decisive.

22 \textit{g}1 \textit{f}8 23 \textit{e}3

23 \textit{f}1? loses at once after 23...\textit{d}4+ 24 e3 \textit{xf}1+ 25 \textit{xf}1 \textit{f}3+ 26 \textit{g}1 \textit{g}2 27 \textit{wg}2 \textit{xe}3+.

23...\textit{g}5 24 \textit{g}2 \textit{h}5 25 \textit{e}1?

Here White’s last chance to stay in the game was 25 \textit{db}5!?. Instead, 25 e3 fails to 25...\textit{gx}g2 26 \textit{xg}2 \textit{f}3+ 27 \textit{g}1, when Black can choose between 27...\textit{gx}g3 28 \textit{hx}g3 \textit{g}3+ 29 \textit{g}2 \textit{xe}3+ 30 \textit{h}1 \textit{f}4 and 27...\textit{dd}3 28 \textit{xd}3 \textit{g}3 with mate to follow shortly.

25...\textit{gx}g2 26 \textit{gx}g2 \textit{f}2+! 27 \textit{xf}2 \textit{hx}h2+ 28 \textit{f}1 \textit{h}3+ 0-1

11.8

\textbf{Fischer – Gheorghiu}

\textit{Buenos Aires 1970}

Black’s pieces are very passively placed and will find it very difficult to get mobilized for anything active including a defence of the king, who is pretty much alone in guarding the kingside. Therefore, it shouldn’t be too hard to spot that White can build a dangerous attack in very few moves.

21 \textit{e}3! b6 22 \textit{g}3 \textit{h}8 23 \textit{f}3 \textit{e}7 24 \textit{d}4

The threat is of course 25 \textit{xb}6, and therefore Black’s answer is as good as forced.

24...\textit{f}6 25 \textit{xf}6 \textit{gx}f6 26 \textit{dd}4 \textit{e}8

The queens may have come off, but Black’s chances are no better than before; the endgame is easily won for White.

27 \textit{e}3! \textit{b}8 28 b3 h5 29 \textit{ex}b5 \textit{xb}5 30 \textit{f}5 \textit{d}7 31 \textit{xb}6 \textit{d}4 32 \textit{g}3 \textit{h}6 33 \textit{xb}6 \textit{e}4 34 \textit{g}7+ \textit{h}7 35 f3 1-0

11.9

\textbf{Hermansson – Brynell}

\textit{Swedish Ch 1999}

In situations such as this one, start targeting the weakness that will arise for the opponent before his breakthrough. This is best done by centralizing the second rook.

17 \textit{ad}1! \textit{h}8 18 \textit{g}2 e5 19 \textit{dx}e5 \textit{gx}e5 20 \textit{xe}5 \textit{xe}5 21 \textit{xe}5 \textit{xe}5 22 \textit{h}1 \textit{d}4 23 \textit{e}1 \textit{f}6 24 \textit{e}2 \textit{g}6 25 \textit{h}4 \textit{f}7 26 \textit{b}5 \textit{g}7 27 \textit{g}5 \textit{wx}g5 28\textit{hx}g5

White has the better endgame.

11.10

\textbf{Grishchuk – I. Sokolov}

\textit{Bled OL 2002}

24...\textit{hx}g3+?

This is a rather strange mistake by a player of Sokolov’s calibre. The move essentially gives
White carte blanche to start a kingside attack when he sees fit to do so. With White having placed so many of his pawns on light squares, the dark squares around naturally become weakened and to address this, Black would obviously want to keep his bishop. Instead Black should opt for 24...\(\text{\textit{C}}\)f6?! 25 f3 \(\text{\textit{W}}\)e7 with chances for both sides, as given by Grischuk.

\[25 \text{\textit{K}}xg3! \text{\textit{W}}f6 26 f3 c4 27 \text{\textit{K}}b2?\]

With this move White returns the favour given to him earlier by Black’s misjudgement. After the correct 27 \(\text{\textit{K}}\)e3! intending \(\text{\textit{Q}}\)d4 and \(\text{\textit{Q}}\)g2-e3 as suggested by Grischuk, White has a very clear advantage. Now Black gets back in the game.

\[27...\text{\textit{W}}e7!\]

Black threatens ...c3 and ...\(\text{\textit{Q}}\)bxd5. He is fully equal here, but White eventually won the game anyway.

11.11

Lerner – Bunzmann

Bad Wörishofen 2000

Black has managed to set up a solid position, and if allowed to play ...\(\text{a7}\) and exchange both sets of rooks he will probably be able to get a draw. However, his pieces on the kingside are tightly clinging together, with no breathing space for any of them, and thanks to nearly all of Black’s pawns being fixed on dark squares, it screams of possibilities on the light squares. With that in mind, as well as the game Dreev-Malaniuk from earlier in the book, it shouldn’t take long to spot White’s best continuation.

\[31 \text{\textit{Q}}e6! \text{\textit{K}}xe6 32 dxe6 \text{\textit{K}}fa7 33 \text{\textit{K}}xa8 \text{\textit{K}}xa8 34 \text{\textit{W}}xd6 \text{\textit{Q}}e4 35 \text{\textit{W}}d5 \text{\textit{Q}}e8 36 g4! \text{\textit{K}}xe6 37 \text{\textit{G}}xf5 \text{\textit{W}}xd5 38 \text{\textit{K}}xg7+ \text{\textit{Q}}f8 39 \text{\textit{K}}xd5\]

White is winning.

11.12

Illescas – Short

Pamplona 1999/00

If White could keep the position closed, he would be doing quite well with his two knights against the bishop-pair; the b7-bishop looks particularly unimpressive at this point. However, White’s pieces are not particularly well-coordinated, or for that matter well enough placed, to meet an attempt from Black to open the position. Once the position opens up and the superior reach of the bishops comes into play, White will be in trouble.

\[19...\text{\textit{K}}c5!\]

The obvious move: if Black is to take advantage of his bishops and White lacking coordination, this move along with his next move is the only way to punish White.

\[20 \text{\textit{D}}xc5 \text{\textit{D}}d4!\]

The severity of the situation becomes apparent for everyone to see: the once passive bishop on b7 now rules supreme along the a8-h1 diagonal, and White’s many loose pieces become difficult to control.

\[21 \text{\textit{Q}}xd4 \text{\textit{Q}}xd4 22 \text{\textit{Q}}xd4 \text{\textit{Q}}xd4\]

The big threat is ...\(\text{\textit{C}}\)f3+, not just winning the exchange, but actually mating White. Now 23 b4, protecting the rook, will just be met with 23...\(\text{\textit{C}}\)f3+ 24 \(\text{\textit{Q}}\)xf3 \(\text{\textit{W}}\)g5+ and 25...\(\text{\textit{K}}\)xf3, while 23 \(\text{\textit{D}}\)dd1 \(\text{\textit{D}}\)f3+ 24 \(\text{\textit{K}}\)h1 \(\text{\textit{W}}\)g5! (threatening both ...\(\text{\textit{D}}\)d2 and ...\(\text{\textit{D}}\)f4) also ends the game; e.g., 25 \(\text{\textit{Q}}\)e2 \(\text{\textit{W}}\)h4 26 h3 (or 26 \(\text{\textit{G}}\)xf3 \(\text{\textit{Q}}\)xf3+ 27 \(\text{\textit{Q}}\)g2 \(\text{\textit{W}}\)xf2 28 \(\text{\textit{D}}\)xd8+ \(\text{\textit{D}}\)xd8 29 \(\text{\textit{Q}}\)f4 \(\text{\textit{Q}}\)d2 30 \(\text{\textit{Q}}\)g1 \(\text{\textit{Q}}\)c6! which is similar to the game) 26...\(\text{\textit{D}}\)xd1 27 \(\text{\textit{D}}\)xd1 \(\text{\textit{W}}\)xf2 28 \(\text{\textit{Q}}\)b3 \(\text{\textit{Q}}\)e1, and White’s defence collapses.

\[23 \text{\textit{Q}}h1 \text{\textit{Q}}f3!\]

With hardly any pieces to defend the white king, Black’s pieces have an easy time attacking the king.

\[24 \text{\textit{D}}xd8+\]

\[24 \text{\textit{D}}dd1 \text{\textit{W}}g5 transposes to line given after Black’s 22nd move.\]

\[24...\text{\textit{D}}xd8 25 \text{\textit{Q}}c6 \text{\textit{Q}}xc6 26 \text{\textit{Q}}e2 \text{\textit{W}}h4!\]

The conclusion of the game is pretty and more or less forced. Due to White’s lack of coordination and protection for his king, White is defenceless. Positional considerations are nearly always the foundation of a successful operation anywhere on the board.

\[27 \text{\textit{G}}xf3 \text{\textit{W}}xf2 28 \text{\textit{Q}}f4 \text{\textit{Q}}xf3+ 29 \text{\textit{Q}}g2 \text{\textit{Q}}d2 30 \text{\textit{Q}}g1\]

Bringing the queen to the rescue with 30 \(\text{\textit{Q}}\)c8+ \(\text{\textit{Q}}\)h7 31 \(\text{\textit{Q}}\)b1+ g6 32 \(\text{\textit{Q}}\)g1 doesn’t work on account of 32...\(\text{\textit{D}}\)d1.

\[30...\text{\textit{Q}}e4! 0-1\]

11.13

Anand – Morozevich

Frankfurt 2000

It certainly looks like Black’s pawn advance is positionally justified because it appears he
can always tuck the king away on d7 while he conducts the attack on the kingside. However, Anand had a strong shot at hand...

16 fxg5 hxg5 17 h4!

After this strong move, Black is forced to hand over the f4-square to a white knight, which again will allow White to threaten to remove the bishop on e6 and thereby leave Black’s intended hideaway for the king somewhat compromised.

17...g4?!

Allowing the white knight to enter on g5 only adds to Black’s problems. Black would be better served by taking on h4; e.g., 17...gxh4 18 c3 f7 19 h3 0-0-0 20 xex6 xex6 21 g5?!, and White is better.

18 g5 e8 19 h2!

White can start consolidating. He is already much better.

19...a5 20 g3 a6 21 e3 a4 22 c2 f8 23 f2! d7 24 e6 1-0

11.14

Britton – Silman
England 1977

Black’s set-up undeniably looks somewhat passive, and therefore a standard plan like ...a6 followed by ...b5 is a bit too slow. So how does Black generate counterplay if not through the traditional queenside attack?

13...a5!

This move looks truly peculiar, taking on doubled isolated a-pawns. Look at this position and see if you can find the reasoning behind it.

The point is that Black can exert a substantial amount of pressure along the open b- and c-files, while White has relatively little potential for aggression in the centre and on the kingside.

14 dxa5 bxa5 15 a4

White tries to stop any play on the queenside by advancing his pawns. Please note how over the following few moves Black does little more than encourage further weaknesses in White’s queenside structure.

15...c6 16 c3 d7 17 c1 d1 b6 18 b3 c6 19 e2 b7 20 c4 d7

White has a space advantage but no real opportunity to do anything with it. On the other hand, Black has two good targets to work on, the e4-pawn and in particular the backward pawn on b3. In addition the knight has an ideal square on c5, and should White feel compelled to remove it by exchanging his dark-squared bishop for it, then White will hand over complete control of the dark squares to Black for the rest of the game.

11.15

Filippov – Luther
Istanbul Ech 2003

If you recall the examples covered in Chapter 6, it should be fairly easy to find the correct plan for White and the motivation behind it. White has more space and better overall piece coordination, while Black has taken control over the d5-square. Black’s counterplay is dependent on getting his pieces to play together and at some point possibly break open the centre with ...e5.

16 xe6!

At a relatively small cost for White, Black’s position entirely loses its dynamism.

16...xe6 17 e1 d7 18 e5

For obvious reasons, Black cannot leave this knight on e5, but Black’s position looks even worse after the departure of the dark-squared bishop.

18...xe5 19 xe5 g7 20 h4 d8?!

Black cannot allow his position to become static and closed up as his extra exchange will have no significance then. Black should have played either 20...c7 or (possibly better) 20...d6 to prevent what follows.

21 xdx5! exd5 22 e2

The rest of the game will be played on White’s terms; Black is without counterplay.

22...c8 23 g4 f8 24 h5 gxh5

Now in the game White played 25 gxh5?, allowing 25...e6! with a complicated struggle ahead (though Black missed his chance and played 25...f7?). Instead 25 d3! xg4+ 26 f1 forces material gains and a won ending.

11.16

Mortensen – L.B. Hansen
Danish Ch (Aalborg) 2000

Here I shall give the word to Mortensen, from his annotations to the game in CBM: “It is not clear that White can break through on the kingside so I prepare to open the b-file to take advantage of the greater mobility of the white forces. Before playing b4 though, it is useful create a weakness on b7.”
31 a4! $h8?!

Mortensen tells us that in moderate time-trouble his opponent didn’t come to terms with White’s strategy and very quickly drifted into a hopeless position. But even after 31...b5 32 axb5 axb5 33 $gxg5 fxg5 34 $e3 $h8 35 b4 (Mortensen), Black is clearly in trouble.

32 a5 $h6 33 b4 +– $c7 34 $gxg5 fxg5 35 $e3 $f6 36 $xc5 $xc5 37 $xc5

This is the simplest; Black is denied any say in the course of events. White’s a1-rook will now penetrate Black’s position.

37...$xc5 38 $b1 $d7 38...$h7 39 $b6 +–.

39 $b6 $xe6 40 $xe6+ $g7

Now the easiest win is 41 $h4x5! $f6 (or 41...$xe6? 42 fxe6 $f6 43 e7+–) 42 c4 $d7 43 $e7+ $f7 44 f6+ $xe6 45 $e7+ $e6+ and Black will lose both of his kingside pawns as well.

11.17

Cu. Hansen – Danielsen

Danish Ch (Aalborg) 2000

Because of Black’s control over the c3-square there are some limitations to what White can do. For example, 12 $efd2, to chase the e4-knight away and then follow up with e4, is answered by 12...$e3 hitting the queen and after 13...$b7, the d5-pawn will fall. With that in mind it makes sense to take away Black’s only real asset.

12 a3!

This creates a number of problems for Black: the opening of the a-file will make Black’s queenside a target (the direct threat is 13 axb4 cxb4 14 $xd4+ followed by 15 $xa7), it reduces Black’s control over the c3-square immediately and it creates long-term problems for Black on the diagonal.

12...$a6 13 axb4 $xb4

Black cannot play 13...cxb4? as 14 $xa7 wins for White: 14...$xa6 15 $a1+.

14 $a3!

Here Curt Hansen remarks: “Black’s control over c3 has been weakened. If White can force back just one of Black’s knights he should get a clear positional advantage. The idea with the text-move is to give the queen access to a1 or from where it will control c3.”

14...$f6

Here 14...$c3 15 $a1 $xd5 runs into 16 $e3, when Black is in severe trouble on both long diagonals. An alternative is 14...c5?!, after which Black will play a more active role; e.g., 15 dx6 $xe6 16 $a1+ $f6 and Black has counterplay.

15 $e3 $b7 16 $c4

With everything under control on the queenside, White secures the d5-pawn and gets ready for the next undertaking, removing the knight from e4 and playing e4.

16...$h8

This is an attempt to balance the control of the long diagonal when White puts his queen on a1. However, as it turns out Black’s queen will be fairly unhappy on the corner square where it has significantly less mobility than its white counterpart.

17 $a1 a6 18 $h4!

This is the beginning to a process where White first pushes Black’s pride and joy, the e4-knight, backwards and then threatens to start a kingside offensive with his pawns.

18...$g8 19 $f3 $g5 20 $f4 $f7

Black would certainly have preferred to play 20...$e4 if it were possible, but after 21 g4! Black has no way to keep the f5-pawn guarded.

21 $c1 $h6 22 $f3 $e6?

The motivation behind this move is perfectly logical: Black wants to open up the position and create some play along the e-file, but Black is in no way coordinated well enough to handle an open position. However, problems abound for Black: White threatens $g5-e6, and 22...$f7 is met with 23 g4, after which Black’s queen is completely out of play on h8.

23 $g5 e5?!

This just adds to Black’s misery, but, although better, 23...exd5 24 $d1! (Cu.Hansen) is pretty miserable for Black too.

24 fxe5 dxe5 25 $e6 $e8 26 $d1 $f7 27 $a5

Now it’s curtains for Black. The rest is just desperation.

27...$e4 28 $d2 $xe6 29 dxe6 $e5 30 $xc5 $ec6 31 $e3 $d8 32 $d5 $g7 33 $e7 $xe7 34 $xc7+ $xe7 35 $xb4 1-0

11.18

Dautov – J. Polgar

Istanbul OL 2000

Black has a couple of weaknesses, the most obvious being the c-file which Black cannot
contest at the moment. More significant, however, is the c6-square, which rather amazingly is nearly impossible for Black to fight for. The first simple step is to exchange the light-squared bishops.

18 \(\diamondsuit d4! \) \(\diamondsuit f6\) 19 b5
Securing the b5-square.

19...\(\triangle x g2\) 20 \(\triangle x g2\) \(\triangle d5\) 21 \(\diamondsuit c6\) \(\diamondsuit d7\) 22 \(\diamondsuit c2!\)

Exchanges of the major pieces are at the moment to Black’s advantage, and therefore there is no reason for White to encourage any more than is needed.

22...\(\diamondsuit b7\) 23 a4 h6 24 e4 \(\triangle e5\) 25 \(\diamondsuit d3\) \(\triangle xc1\) 26 \(\triangle xc1\)

From what appeared to be an almost even position, Black has been forced into a terribly passive position with almost no hope of counterplay.

26...a6 27 \(\triangle c4\)

The idea is \(\diamondsuit d4\) and to force an entry into Black’s position along the d-file.

27...\(\triangle x b5\) 28 \(\triangle x b5\) \(\diamondsuit c7\) 29 \(\diamondsuit d4\) e5?

This only creates another weakness. Black should have stayed passive and played ...\(\triangle h8-g8-h8\), while awaiting White to make progress. White would then have to push his kingside pawns forward.

30 \(\triangle c4\) \(\diamondsuit d7?\)

This mistake drops the e-pawn and gives White a decisive advantage. 30...\(\triangle h8\) isn’t much better: 31 \(\triangle c3\) \(\triangle e8\) 32 \(\triangle a4\) \(\diamondsuit d6\) 33 \(\diamondsuit c2!\), and White’s rook is ready to enter on a7.

31 \(\diamondsuit x e5!\)

Black had overlooked this simple tactic when playing her previous move. Dautov now converts his advantage into victory without any problems.

31...\(\triangle e6\) 32 \(\triangle c6\) \(\triangle a2\) 33 e5 \(\diamondsuit d5+\) 34 \(\triangle x d5\) \(\triangle x d5\) 35 \(\triangle x d4\) \(\triangle c3\) 36 \(\diamondsuit d8+\) \(\triangle h7\) 37 \(\diamondsuit d7\) \(\triangle x b5\) 38 \(\triangle x f7\) \(\triangle c2\) 39 \(\triangle b4\) \(\triangle e6\) 40 \(\triangle d3\) \(\triangle a3\) 41 \(\triangle f3\) \(\triangle c2\) 42 e6 \(\triangle c8\) 43 \(\triangle e4\) \(\triangle e8\) 44 \(\diamondsuit d5\) b5 45 \(\triangle b7\) \(\triangle c2\) 46 e7 \(\triangle g6\) 47 \(\triangle e6\) 1-0

11.19

Cu. Hansen – Krakops

Istanbul OL 2000

White has two weak pawns on a4 and e6, but his pieces are very nicely coordinated and well-placed: in particular the strong knight on d5 and his queen, which is ready to cause problems for Black. Black has a number of problems: his kingside is quite open, his pieces lack coordination, and, unless promptly removed, the e6-pawn will cause immediate headaches. Unfortunately for Black, White is in control of what Black is going to play over the next few moves.

22 \(\diamondsuit b6!\) \(\triangle x a4\) 23 \(\triangle x a4\) \(\diamondsuit x a4\)

Black has won a pawn, but more importantly it isn’t the e6-pawn.

24 \(\triangle d3\) \(\diamondsuit c6?\)

This is a fairly disastrous move that puts the queen on a geometrically exposed square.

24...\(\diamondsuit d4!\) is a better choice, although 25 e7 \(\triangle e8\) 26 \(\triangle x b7\) (Khuzman) is clearly better for White.

25 \(\triangle b1!\)

Now the game is over. Black cannot afford the exchange of White’s bishop for the knight, thus leaving White with a strong knight and passed pawn against a miserable bishop.

25...\(\diamondsuit g7\) 26 \(\triangle x f5\) gxf5 27 e7 \(\triangle a8\) 28 \(\triangle x f5\) b5 29 \(\diamondsuit g5+\) \(\triangle h8\) 30 \(\diamondsuit f6!\) \(\triangle x c4\) 31 \(\triangle h6\) \(\triangle x f6\) 32 \(\triangle f8+\) 1-0

11.20

Yusupov – P. Nielsen

Bundesliga 2000/1

White appears to have the more active pieces and therefore the better chances. If Black plays the natural-looking 17...g6, White will have the better chances after 18 \(\triangle c4\). However, after an unconventional-looking move, Black wins a couple of tempi and grabs the initiative handsily.

17...f5! 18 \(\diamondsuit f3\) \(\triangle b4\) 19 \(\triangle b1\) \(\triangle c6\) 20 e4?!

White plays too aggressively for the initiative, but even after 20 \(\triangle e2\) \(\triangle c8\), White will have to deal with an uncomfortable position for a while.

20...\(\triangle d2\) 21 \(\triangle e3\) \(\triangle a8\) 22 \(\triangle f2\)

This loses a pawn, but the suggested improvement suggested by Nielsen, 22 \(\triangle x d1\), is even worse because of the clever 22...\(\triangle a3!\) (Hiaarc) and White is completely tied up (23 \(\triangle x f5\) \(\triangle b2\)).

22...\(\triangle x f2\) 23 \(\triangle x f2\) \(\triangle x e 4\) 24 \(\triangle x e 4\) \(\triangle d 5\) 25 \(\triangle c 5\) \(\triangle c 7!\)

With White’s king not being entirely safe, it makes sense to keep the queens on.

26 \(\triangle g1\) \(\triangle x f 4\) 27 \(\triangle e 1\) \(\triangle f 6\) 28 \(\triangle e 7\) \(\triangle e 8\) 29 \(\triangle d 6\) e5 30 \(\triangle x f 6+\) \(\triangle x f 6\) 31 \(\triangle d 3\) e4
White is a pawn down without compensation.

11.21

Hillarp Persson – K. Berg

Ronne 2001

Black is about ready to play ...c5 with equal chances. However, as in all situations where the knight on f6 has been chased away by a pawn on e5, there is a certain potential for creating threats against the castled king. White manages to prevent Black’s idea by taking advantage of Black’s relatively unguarded kingside.

16 ²c5! ²xc5 17 bxc5 ²a7

Sadly for Black, he cannot play 17...²xc5 due to 18 ²xh7+! ²xh7 19 ²g5+ ²g6 20 ²xc5 ²xc5?? 21 ²bl1 +f5 22 exf6+ ²xf6 23 ²e4+, and White wins (S. Pedersen).

18 ²c2 g6 19 ²g5!

With Black’s dark squares being so weak, it is logical for White to exchange Black’s dark-squared bishop.

19...²a6 20 ²xa6 ²xa6 21 ²xe7 ²xe7 22 ²fd1 ²cd8 23 ²d6 ²f5 24 ²e4!

White gives up an exchange, but the guarded passed pawn on d6 and Black’s weak c6-pawn provide White with more than enough compensation.

24...²xd6 25 exd6 e5 26 ²xe5 ²fe8 27 h4! f6 28 ²xc6 ²e2 29 ²d5+ ²g7 30 ²f7+ ²h8 31 ²xf6+ ²g8 32 ²f7 1-0

11.22

Bator – Wl. Schmidt

Barlinek 2001

15...²f5?

In his excellent column on chess strategy in CBM, Peter Wells makes the following very instructive comment: “Black wishes to exchange his light-squared bishop for White’s knight, which is contesting the d6-square. This square is the key, and the battle for it is worth much more than the bishop-pair. I would argue that in such a position it is to Black’s advantage that his opponent’s isolani is passed. For example, with a pawn on e7 White can exert a little pressure of his own, while here, the kingside is likely to be Black’s domain.”

16 ²b3 ²c8 17 ²e1 ²xe4 18 ²xe4 ²d7! 19 h4 ²h8 20 ²g2 f5! 21 h5 e4 22 hxg6 hxg6 23 ²d1 ²e5 24 ²f1 ²d6

While Black’s kingside looks a bit too open, White in reality has little chance of taking advantage of it. At the same time, the importance of White’s bishops has been eliminated. In essence, White is almost left to sit and wait for Black to punch him and then hope for a counter-punch of some kind.

25 ²h3 ²g7 26 ²e3 ²h8 27 ²g2 a6 28 ²a4 ²e7 29 a5 g5 30 ²d4 f4

Now, with Black’s attack ready to touch down on White’s kingside, White became desperate:

31 ²xe4 ²xe4 32 d6 ²xd6 33 ²e1 ²f7 34 ²d5 ²he8 35 ²xe5 ²xe5 36 ²e1 ²f7 37 ²xe5+ ²g8 38 ²f3 ²ec5 39 ²c3 ²xe1+ 40 ²xe1 ²wd5 41 ²wh5 ²ec1

Black soon won.

11.23

Antal – Paschall

Budapest 2001

29 ²a4!

A very critical move; if Black manages to latch onto the d4-square, the fight is essentially over. Note that this is the only way of playing for the d4 advance, as 29 ²d1 can be met by both 29...²wd4 and 29...²ed8, as White doesn’t have the same resource as in the game continuation.

29...²ed8

Black doesn’t achieve anything by 29...b5 30 axb6 ²xb6 31 d4 ²b3 32 ²a3 ± (Wells). With the text-move, Black attempts to prevent White’s pawn advance with a little combination...

30 d4! ²xd4? 31 ²e3

The point of White’s play: had he chosen 29 ²d1 instead, Black could now have played 31...²xd1+. Therefore Black should have opted for 30...b5!, intending 31 axb6 ²xb6 32 d5 ²d7 followed by ...f6, as 33 ²xf7+ isn’t an option due to 33...²h8 with the dual threats of 34...²ax4 and 34...²f8.

31...²xc3 32 ²xd4 ²e1+ 33 ²xc1 ²xd4 34 ²wd2 1-0

11.24

Zak – Zifroni

Isreali Chlt (Ramat Aviv) 2000

There are several exchanges available to Black at this point, but White has to be careful because an exchange of the light-squared bishops will leave the c6-square vulnerable. Another
point for Black is that if Black can maintain his bishop on the h1-a8 diagonal he can exert pressure against White's kingside while White doesn't have a similar strategy to work on. With this in mind, Black's next few moves are easy to find.

19...\textit{xd4} 20 \textit{xd4} \textit{b7}! 21 \textit{wg4}
This looks logical as an attempt to discourage Black from doing anything on the kingside, but please note how many tempi Black wins over the next few moves on account of White's queen.

21\textit{h8} 22 \textit{e2} f5 23 \textit{wh3} \textit{e4} 24 \textit{c4} \textit{g5} 25 \textit{wg3}!! e5
Black is already close to winning.

26 \textit{c6} \textit{xc6} 27 \textit{bxc6} \textit{e4} 28 \textit{wh3} \textit{xc6} 29 \textit{e2} \textit{xc4} 30 \textit{xc4} \textit{d2} 0-1

11.25

\textbf{Cherniaev – N. Pert}
\textit{Hastings} 2002/3

Nearly all of Black's problems are associated with the dark squares: the weak squares around the king, the b4-pawn, the h4-pawn and the c5-square. Therefore if White can exchange Black's dark-squared bishop, it is bound to cause Black problems for a long time. This problem will be magnified even further if White also exchanges his light-squared bishop for Black's knight on f5, which not only applies pressure against the d4-pawn but also helps to guard the dark squares on the kingside. For White both objectives are quite easy to achieve.

24 \textit{xf5}! \textit{exf5} 25 \textit{g5}! \textit{wd8} 26 \textit{xc6}! \textit{bxc6} 27 \textit{xe7} \textit{xe7} 28 \textit{xe1}!

After this simple move all there is left for Black is to hope for a miracle; White has a strong knight versus Black's miserable French bishop and Black's position is riddled with weaknesses.

28...g5 29 \textit{d3} g4 30 \textit{f4} \textit{g5} 31 \textit{h1} \textit{g6} 32 \textit{xc5}
The remainder of the game is just Black playing for something to fall in his lap...

32...\textit{d8} 33 \textit{e3} gxh3 34 \textit{gxh3} f4 35 \textit{xf4} \textit{g5} 36 \textit{c1} \textit{h8} 37 \textit{g1} \textit{xg1}+ 38 \textit{xg1} \textit{g5}+ 39 \textit{h2} \textit{f5} 40 \textit{d3} \textit{g7} 41 \textit{xb4} c5 42 \textit{dxc5} d4 43 \textit{xd4} \textit{hxh3}+ 44 \textit{g1} \textit{g4} 45 \textit{e6}+ f6 46 \textit{d5} \textit{f3} 47 \textit{xf6}+ \textit{h7} 48 \textit{g6}+ 1-0

11.26

\textbf{Karpov – Short}
\textit{Linares Ct} (1) 1992

In order to make his bishops count, White has to try to get the position opened up a bit. In this case, White can make this happen by attacking where Black is weakest, on the queenside.

14 b4!

This provokes an immediate crisis in Black's position. There are several problems; there is the threat of 15 bxc5 dxc5 16 \textit{wd5}, and 14...\textit{xb4} 15 \textit{axb4} \textit{b7} 16 \textit{wd4} is really awful for Black. Although far from wonderful, I think Black should bite the bullet at this point and play 14...\textit{b7}, which also leaves Black worse, but at least lets him play on with a chance to confuse the situation.

14...\textit{d7} 15 \textit{g4}!

Once again an exchange on b4 will give White the desired opening of the position, while leaving the situation as is will cause Black to end up with doubled isolated pawns.

15...a5

Alternatively, 15...\textit{b7} leads to a clearly inferior endgame after 16 \textit{xd7} \textit{xd7} 17 bxc5 \textit{wc6} 18 \textit{wd5}!.

16 \textit{xd7} \textit{xd7} 17 bxc5 dxc5 18 \textit{wd5}
Note that 18 \textit{xc7} \textit{c6} 19 \textit{d6} \textit{e4} gives Black reasonable drawing chances.

18...\textit{a6}

True to his nature, Short plays the most active moves rather than defending passively. In \textit{CBM}, Curt Hansen gives 18...\textit{e6} 19 \textit{e5} as Black's best.

19 \textit{e5} \textit{e6}?! 20 \textit{xc7}

With an extra pawn and further pawns locked on dark squares, White should be close to having a won position.

20...\textit{e8} 21 \textit{wb7} \textit{we8} 22 \textit{bab1} \textit{h5} 23 \textit{f3} \textit{c6} 24 \textit{wb2}

Black doesn't have enough for the pawn.

11.27

\textbf{Cebalo – Sax}
\textit{Slovenian Ch} 2001

White doesn't really have any significant structural weaknesses, while Black has several, mainly the weak dark squares around the king and the oddly coordinated minor pieces on a6 and c7. If Black somehow could get away with
it, he would like to play 22...b4, exchange the light-squared bishops and route the knight via b5 to d4, causing all sorts of havoc for White. Looking at Black’s only worthwhile plan and being able to prevent it rather easily, White’s next move is both obvious and strong.

22 b4!

All of a sudden it is very difficult to find useful squares for Black’s two minor pieces.

22...f6

In Informator, Cebalo gives 22...c4 23 a4 and 22...g8 23 bxc5 wxc5 24 wb2, in both cases with an obvious advantage for White.

23 bxc5 wxc5

Or 23...dxc5 24 ab1 which will leave Black with a problem regarding his b-pawn and with White’s central pawns.

24 wb2 ab8 25 de2 wb6

Now the simplest is to play 26 mac1! ab7 27 ed4 with the threat of 28 wxc7+ wxc7 29 de6. If Black prevents it with 27...fe8, then 28 ag2 is strong.

11.28

Sashikiran – Korchnoi

Bled OL 2002

With a simple pawn sacrifice, Black eliminates any hopes White may have had to obtain anything from the opening.

12...e4! 13 fxe4 de4 14 f4 de6 15 ed1 f6 16 h3 de5 17 xe5 fxe5 18 xa5 de5 19 xe1 fd8

White is left with a batch of passive pieces.

11.29

Emms – Degraeve

Gent 2001

All Black’s pieces are active, while White’s pieces are buried behind his own pawns. The main problem for White, however, is the dark squares. This is easily identified when looking at all of White’s pawns fixed on light squares. The best way for Black is to exchange dark-squared bishops, which will make it easier to penetrate on this colour. In addition it isolates White’s bad bishop against Black’s strong knight.

38...d4!
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Throughout a game of chess, we must constantly make judgements and decisions that cannot be determined simply by calculation. We must then rely on our positional judgement.

Good positional skills are primarily developed by experience, but they can also be learnt. In this book, Carsten Hansen provides a wealth of advice and ideas that will give readers a helping-hand up to new levels of positional understanding. Paramount in this discussion is the player's need to weigh up positional elements at the board, and decide which are most important for the situation at hand.

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Carsten Hansen is a FIDE Master from Denmark who currently lives in New Jersey. He has a reputation for writing well-researched books on major chess topics, and is known to many through his painstaking reviews on the ChessCafe web site. This is his fourth book for Gambit.

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