

Thomas Willemze

The Chess Toolbox

Practical Techniques Everyone Should Know

New In Chess 2018

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Introduction

Congratulations! You have just acquired your first Chess Toolbox. Inside, you will find concrete tools that you can apply to your game, improving your results. These tools are not easy to use, but I will demonstrate the techniques in great detail and provide you with enough exercises to master them.

Chess is fun

The aim of this book is to make you a better chess player, but never forget: studying chess has to be fun! Therefore, I have added quizzes, puzzles and as many entertaining subjects as possible. Think, for instance, of beautiful combinations like **the Windmill** and **Lasker's double bishop sacrifice**. These topics were a lot of fun to cover; hopefully you will appreciate studying them as well.

The most important tools

When you study chess, it is much more effective to become an expert on a limited number of topics than to acquire only a shallow knowledge of almost everything. Drawing from my experience as a trainer, I have carefully selected the most important tools; the ones that I consider to be the most beneficial for your improvement. The tools I picked are all related to one central theme: **piece coordination**. We will see how important concepts like **structure** and **initiative** can help us to find the right destination for our pieces.

In the first three parts, you will learn a whole range of techniques that enable you to **make the right exchange**, **mobilize your rooks** and execute a successful **attack** or **defence**. In the final part, we will wrap up all the techniques and apply them to a practical situation: the Isolated Queen's Pawn (IQP). In my experience, IQP positions are extremely suitable occasions to demonstrate the clash between structure and initiative and practice your piece coordination skills.

Ambitious club player

If you want to learn new skills, you have to make sure they connect to your current level. This book is written for the ambitious club player. I have broken down the subjects into pieces that are both large enough to stay interesting and small enough to digest. The exercises have the same

level of difficulty, although, I must admit, I have added quite a few brain teasers.

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

Thomas Willemze
Haarlem, June 2018

Foreword by International Master John Watson

Most works on positional chess list and describe the many elements of strategic play in some systematic fashion. That's fine, of course, but it gives the reader only a brief and incomplete exposure to each topic. Thomas Willemze's book takes a different, intensely practical, approach. The reader is meant to develop specialized skills that go well beyond a general understanding. Hence the term 'tools', indicating that the player will have these skills at hand, ready to use as required. As a chess teacher myself, I recognize how Willemze's method stems from his experience of what works with his students. As he himself says, 'When you study chess, it is much more effective to become an expert on a limited number of topics than it is to have only a shallow knowledge of almost everything'. Indeed, most masters and grandmasters will tell you the same thing.

This book's organization is unique in the literature of chess improvement books. Willemze first expounds upon a number of skills that he feels are particularly useful, beginning with how to decide upon when to exchange pieces and when not to. That subject splits into a number of practical tasks, including but not limited to trading inferior pieces for good ones, using exchanges to combat a space advantage, and breaking down blockades. In the latter case, he demonstrates how exchanging minor pieces and retaining rooks tends to be the way to make progress, a principle I haven't seen elsewhere in the literature. In addition, the discussion of passed pawns is particularly insightful and original.

Willemze then turns to the important but little-explored topic of how best to use one's rooks. His focus, as elsewhere in the book, is on how to improve one's chances by understanding what it takes to achieve optimal rook effectiveness, rather than simply showing a series of positions in which the rooks are already well-placed on the 7th rank or unopposed on open files. He emphasizes problem-solving in real-world positions.

A large part of the book is devoted to attacking themes and defensive techniques. While covering a considerable number of these (many under the rubric of 'entrance squares'), he again uses the principle that immersion in specifics is important for improvement, as reflected in his lengthy, example-driven chapters on the Greek Gift sacrifice and the Double Bishop sacrifice. Part 4 continues that theme, with a 60-page discussion of the Isolated Queen's Pawn which could constitute a book

on its own. In this section, Willemze brings together all of the skills previously described (the 'toolbox') and applies them to solving problems that arise in IQP positions. Refreshingly, he devotes as much time to defending against the isolated pawn as he does to the ways in which the side with the IQP can attack. Most authors concentrate upon the latter topic and brush over the former.

In order to significantly improve your play, it's necessary to employ these tools in practice. The book's 281 exercises offer you the chance to do so, and are essential to go through if you want to get full value from this work. They are also full of interesting content, which makes studying more enjoyable.

To sum up, Thomas Willemze has made a unique and thoughtful contribution to the literature of chess improvement, as well as contributing new insights into several areas of the game. His writing is clear and uncluttered, with a consistent focus on the practical player's needs. I can't think of another book that would be more helpful to the average player who is intent upon improving his chess.

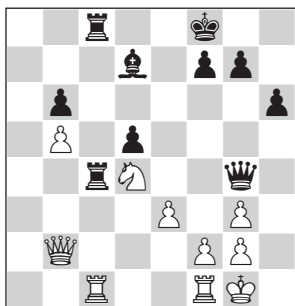
John Watson
San Diego (CA), USA
July 2018

CHAPTER 8

Fighting for the entrance square

8.1 Introduction

One of the most important reasons for sacrificing a piece in a mate attack is to get access to the enemy king. Unfortunately, simply removing the pawn that stands in front of the king will not automatically give you access. You can compare this to the conclusion on the 7th rank, which was demonstrated in the Gupta-Sukandar game in Chapter 3:



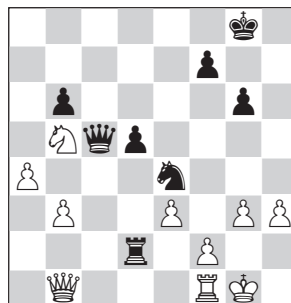
A promising 7th rank does not mean anything without an entrance square for the rook.

We need this same entrance square when it comes to getting access to the enemy king. Only this time, the queen is the most likely candidate for it.

The right entrance square

Finding the right entrance square for your queen is not always easy.

Take, for instance, our example from Chapter 2:



Both $\dots \text{Nxf2}$ and $\dots \text{N} \times \text{g3}$ are very suitable sacrifices to get access to the king, but they do not work yet. Why? Because the queen needs the g3-square to enter the king's position, instead of e3. That is why Black should wait a little longer and execute the manoeuvre $\dots \text{Qc5-c8-b8}$ first. Only when the black queen is in place, the timing is right for one of the two knight sacrifices. We have already seen the devastating effect of this manoeuvre in Chapter 2.

The Caro-Kann as a practical example

This chapter is about delivering the mate by finding the right entrance square for your queen. I decided to center the entire theme around one single opening line: the main line of the Caro-Kann. Or what

was considered to be the main line, before the rise of the Advance Variation.

There are two reasons why I only selected one specific opening in this chapter:

- The different examples have many characteristics in common, which makes it easier to draw comparisons;
- This is one of the most effective ways to increase your understanding of a particular opening.

I choose this specific line for its static black kingside pawn structure, which looks like this:

Game 95

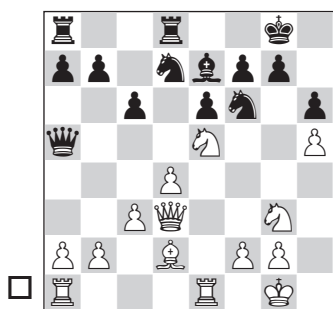
Joachim Solberg

2211

Uwe Arndt

2023

Helsingor 2016 (7)



Black has four kingside pawns that are unable to move and are therefore highly susceptible to piece sacrifices. White clearly understood the specific role of the different black pawns, as he was able to deliver the right sacrifices with the right timing.

17. ♖xf7!

White starts with the elimination of the f7-pawn. This important defender was not just supporting its colleague on e6, its main task was to prevent the white queen from entering the position.

17. ♖xf7 would have allowed Black to counter with 17... ♗xe5!

17... ♖xf7 18. ♔g6+

You can imagine that in this particular position, e6 would have been a nice entrance square for the queen as well.

18... ♖g8

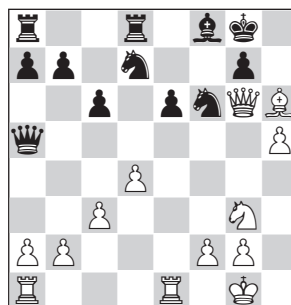
After 18... ♖g8, White finds the time to eliminate pawn number two with 19. ♖xe6 before he continues his attack. The e6-pawn is responsible for keeping both the white rook and knight at a safe distance.

19. ♖xe6

The white bishop is heading for g7 and collects an extra pawn on its way. With the elimination of h6, the white h-pawn will soon be able to join the attack as well.

19. ♖xe6 would now have been met with 19... ♗f8.

19... ♗f8



20. ♗xg7!

There goes pawn number three.
20... ♖xg7 21.h6! ♘e8 22. ♖xe6



The black king has become pawnless. With both the white rook and knight at striking distance, the battle will soon be over.

22... ♘df6
22... ♘f8 23. ♖xe8!
23. ♖xf6 1-0

- In conclusion, each of the black pawns had his own task:
- h6: blocking the white h-pawn;
 - g7: protecting h6 and shielding the king;
 - f7: covering e6 and g6;
 - e6: keeping the e-file closed and controlling f5.

Many different sacrifices possible
 These pawns can be eliminated with piece sacrifices. In this specific line, there are at least six (!) different ways to sacrifice a white knight, bishop or rook, and also many combinations are possible. To make sure we keep seeing the forest for the trees, we will split this chapter into three different categories:

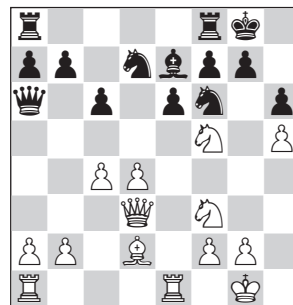
- Sacrifices involving a knight on f5;
- Sacrifices involving a knight on e5;
- No knights involved: the ♖xh6 sacrifice.

The aim of this chapter

This chapter is about sacrificing one or more pieces in order to give your queen access to the enemy camp and deliver the mate. Studying it will enable you to identify the most vulnerable spot in your opponent’s camp and finding the most convincing way to exploit it.

8.2 Knight on f5

If White wants to use the f5-square for bringing his knight to the attack, he has to use the following pin:



Black sometimes takes on f5, hoping that his control over the e4-square will compensate for the loss of his bishop. If he decides to ignore the knight, extreme care is required. The white knight went to f5 with a reason, as the following game demonstrates.

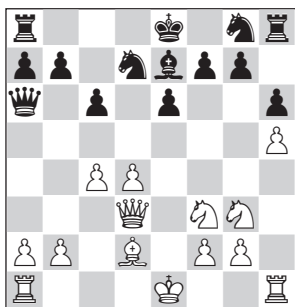
Game 96

Frederic Decoster 2145
René Tiggelman 2219

Belgium tt 2005/06 (1)

**1.e4 c6 2.d4 d5 3.♘c3 dxe4 4.♗xe4
 ♙f5 5.♗g3 ♙g6 6.h4 h6 7.♗f3 ♘d7
 8.h5 ♙h7 9.♙d3 ♙xd3 10.♚xd3 e6
 11.♙f4 ♚a5+ 12.♙d2 ♙b4 13.c3
 ♙e7 14.c4 ♚a6**

The most popular choices are
 14...♚c7 and 14...♚b6.



With the text move, Black wants to keep an eye on the a-pawn, preventing White from castling queenside. Without opposite-side castling, it should be harder for White to build up an attack. However, the queen does seem a bit out of play.

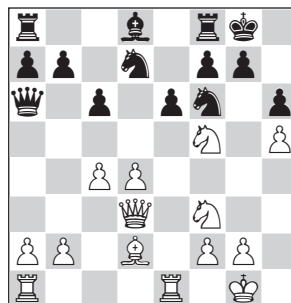
15.0-0 ♗g6 16.♖fe1 0-0

Both players have more or less finished their development and things seem to be alright for Black. However, appearances can be deceiving. White has a clear plan in mind: trying to take advantage of the stray queen on a6.

17.♗f5! ♖fe8

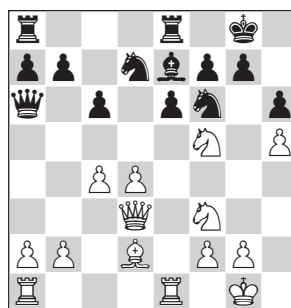
Black did not like to allow a rook on the 7th rank. There was, however, no real choice. Taking the knight would have been the only way to stay out

of trouble. 17...♙d8 would not have helped either. Black is simply unable to defend without his queen.



analysis diagram

18.♗xh6+! gxh6 19.♙xh6 ♖e8
 20.♗e5! (allowing the queen to enter the stage via g3. The white pieces cooperate beautifully and Black needs too much time to organize his defence) 20...♗xe5 21.dxe5 ♗g4
 22.♚g3 ♙h7 (White wins back his piece after 22...♚xc4 23.♙f4 with a winning position) 23.♚xg4 ♙xh6
 24.♚f4+ (the queen is looking for the right square to enter the black position) 24...♙g5 (24...♙g7 25.♖e3 is hopeless for Black) 25.♚xf7 ♖g8
 26.♚xe6+ ♙g7 27.♖ad1 with four pawns and a strong initiative for the piece. The black queen is still enjoying a sabbatical.



We have arrived at a crucial point in the game. It is time for White to show his cards. Once he starts sacrificing, there is no way back. The main challenge is to grant the queen access to the black king's position, with g6 as the most promising entrance square. This means that both the g7- and the f7-pawns have to be eliminated. This is possible:

- The f-pawn is overloaded and could be lured away with ♖xe6;
- The g-pawn could be removed directly with ♜xg7, or lured away as well with either ♜xh6 or ♙xh6.

This brings us to two important questions:

- What is the right move order: should we start with the f7- or the g7-pawn?
- What is the most effective way to get rid of the g7-pawn?

If we combine the two questions into a concrete line, we get six (!) different possibilities. Which one should we take?

18. ♖xe6!

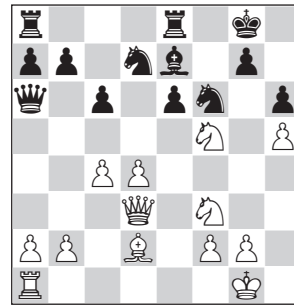
The right move! White starts with the least forcing sacrifice and saves the more powerful ones for later.

This makes a lot of sense. In the previous chapter, we already came to the conclusion that you should prevent your opponent from only accepting the first and rejecting the second sacrifice.

18. ♜xg7 ♝xg7 19. ♖xe6 ♙f8

20. ♙xh6+ ♜g8 is rather unclear.

18...fxe6



The first question has been answered, leaving us with three options for the second one. What is the most effective way to eliminate the g-pawn?

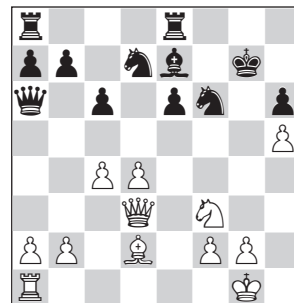
19. ♜xg7!

This move has a large advantage compared to the other two: it lures the black king to the front, making it more vulnerable. 19. ♙xh6 exf5!

loses for White and 19. ♜xh6+ gxh6 20. ♙xh6 ♙f8 only leads to a perpetual after 21. ♖g6+ ♜h8 22. ♙xf8 ♖xf8 23. ♜g5 ♖ae8 24. ♖h6+ ♜g8 25. ♖g6+.

19...♜g7

A more stubborn defence would have been 19... ♙f8, even though White had too much compensation for the piece in the game Alexander van Beek-Speelman, Gibraltar 2007, after 20. ♜xe8 ♖xe8 21. ♖g6+ ♙g7 22. ♙xh6 ♖e7 23. ♙f4.



20. ♖xh6+!

Three sacrifices in a row! Again, with force! This is why the king had to be lured to g7. A very thematic line, well worth remembering. White first removes all the black pawns on the kingside, after which his queen will have free rein.

20... ♖h8

This king feels much more comfortable on the back rank.

21. ♖g7+!

But this magnet pulls the king back to g7 to prepare the entrance of the white queen to g6 with tempo. It is very important to realize that time is much more important than material in this attack. White has already invested too much material to allow his opponent to organize a defence.

21... ♖g8 22. ♖g6 ♖xh5 23. ♖e5+

23. ♖f6+ ♖f8 24. ♖g5 would have been a quicker mate, but the text of course also wins.

23... ♖f8 24. ♖h6+ ♖g8 25. ♖h8+ 1-0

Note that in the final position, the queen still stands at a6.

The queen joins the defence

To get an idea of how much the black queen is missed in the defence of the king, we will now look at the same line, with a queen on c7 instead of a6. This does not stop 18. ♖xe6! from being a dangerous line, but this time Black has enough defenders at his disposal and should be able to hold the game.

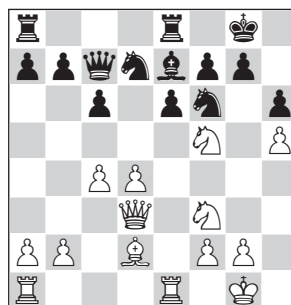
Game 97

Harmen Jonkman 2470

Frank Kroeze 2419

Netherlands tt 2005/06 (8)

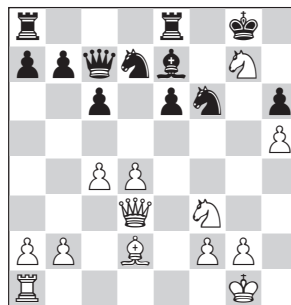
1.e4 c6 2.d4 d5 3. ♖d2 dxe4 4. ♖xe4 ♖f5 5. ♖g3 ♖g6 6.h4 h6 7. ♖f3 ♖d7 8.h5 ♖h7 9. ♖d3 ♖xd3 10. ♖xd3 e6 11. ♖f4 ♖a5+ 12. ♖d2 ♖b4 13.c3 ♖e7 14.0-0 ♖gf6 15.c4 ♖c7 16. ♖fe1 0-0 17. ♖f5 ♖fe8



18. ♖xe6 fxe6

In the game Rothuis-Abeln, Netherlands tt 2006/07, Black did not feel confident enough to allow the sacrifices and went for 18... ♖f8 19. ♖xe8 ♖xe8 20. ♖e1, after which White was simply a pawn up.

19. ♖xg7



19... ♖f8!

Also in this line this is the most stubborn defence. With the queen

on c7, Black should also be able to hold in the line that arises after 19...♙xg7. He has to be very precise though: 20.♙xh6+ ♚h8 21.♙g7+! (again, the standard procedure) 21...♙g8! (the only move. He cannot allow the white queen to enter the stage with tempo after 21...♙xg7?? 22.♖g6+ ♚f8 23.♗g5 and white wins) 22.♖g6 ♗f8 23.♙xf8+ ♚xf8 and here White went for a perpetual in Geske-Bravo Lutz, Schwäbisch Gmünd 2013. He could have tried 24.♗g5.



analysis diagram

Now Black has to be careful:

A) The most logical move 24...♙d8 loses. It is interesting to see that keeping the rooks connected is far more important than preserving the knight: 25.h6 ♖e7 (suddenly the awkward position of the black bishop is being felt; 25...♙e7 26.♖g7+ ♚d6 27.c5+ ♚d5 28.♖g6 also leads to a quick mate) 26.♖xf6+ ♚g8 27.♖g6+ ♚h8 28.h7. This would have been a draw with a bishop on d6 or b4, but now Black can answer 28...♖g7 with 29.♖e8+!

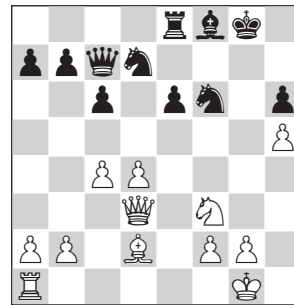
B) Now Black knows what to do: keep the rooks connected! He

can save the day with 24...♙d6! (or 24...♙b4), for instance: 25.♖xf6+ ♚g8 26.h6 ♖e7! (Black's defence is fully organized, covering both the 7th and the back rank) 27.♖g6+ ♚h8 28.♖f6+ ♚g8 with a perpetual.

20. ♗xe8

Already here a draw was agreed in Bobras-Hoffmann, Bad Wiessee 2007.

20... ♖xe8



21. ♖e1

21.♖g6+ ♙g7 22.♙xh6 ♗f8 23.♖g5 ♗h7 24.♖g6 ♖f7 would have been stronger, with a balanced position. After the text move, White no longer had sufficient compensation for the piece, but he managed to equalize quickly:

21... ♙g7 22.♗e5 ♗xe5 23.dxe5 ♗xh5 24.g4 ♖d8 25.♖e2 ♖xe5 26.gxh5 ♖xe2 27.♖xe2 ♚f7 28.♙e3 a6 29.♙g2 ♚f6 30.♖e1 ♚f5 31.b3 ♙c3 32.♖c1 ♙b2 33.♖b1 ♙f6 34.♙xh6 ♖h8 35.♙e3 1/2-1/2

The double knight sacrifice

The aim of ♖xe6 is to clear the g6-square for the white queen. This can, however, also be achieved in a different way. Sometimes ♗xg7

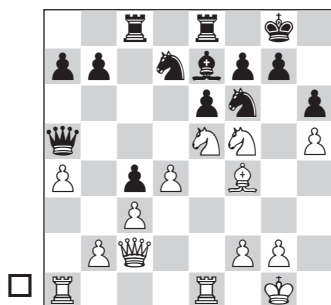
can be successfully combined with sacrificing the other knight on f7, with the same result.

Game 98

Nona Gaprindashvili 2405

Juraj Nikolac 2450

Wijk aan Zee 1979 (1)



19. ♖xg7!

19. ♖xf7 is easily refuted with

19... ♗xf5!.

19... ♖xg7 20. ♕xh6+ ♖xh6

20... ♖g8 21. ♖e3! (bring up your

pieces!) 21... ♖xe5 22. dxe5 ♖xh5

23. ♗e2 ♖g7 24. ♕xg7 ♖xg7 25. ♗h5!

♕c5 26. ♗g5+ ♖f8 27. ♖h3 with a

winning attack.

21. ♖xf7+

Only now does White remove the important defender of the g6-square. With tempo!!

21... ♖xh5

There is no way back for the black king, and it should not come as a surprise that he will be mated quickly.

22. g4+ ♖h4 23. f3 ♖xg4 24. ♖e4 1-0

Conclusion

It takes more than one piece sacrifice to both open up the king's

position and clear the entrance square for your queen. This often leads to complex combinations in which the attacker has to keep the initiative and make sure his opponent is unable to organize his defence. The following guidelines are useful to remember:

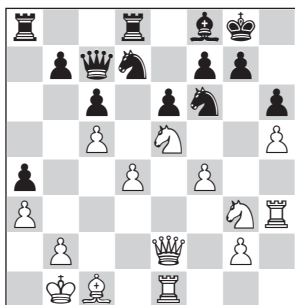
- Save the most forcing sacrifices for last;
- Bring up your pieces with tempo;
- Time is more important than material;
- From a defensive point of view, we were once again witness of the strength of the 7th-rank technique. It does, however, only work when the queen is ready to step in.

8.3 Knight on e5

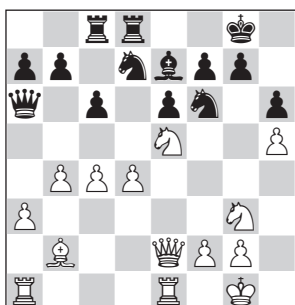
This last example in the previous section formed a nice bridge to the next topic: sacrifices with a knight on e5! These kind of positions are much more common than those with a knight on f5. There is a logical explanation for this. The knight on f5 is usually under attack by the black pawn on e6 and will therefore only be able to stay there for a short period of time. The knight on e5, on the other hand, has often found a very comfortable place in the centre, on which it can relax and wait until the time has come to sacrifice itself for the pawn on f7.

The ♖xf7 sacrifices are often a bit less complex than the ones we have seen in the previous section.

When searching for these in the Mega Database, you can find lots of examples in which Black went astray and White could successfully play ♟xf7 . Here are two very straightforward positions that don't require any further comments.



1. ♟xf7 ♞xf7 2. $\text{♞xe6}\#$

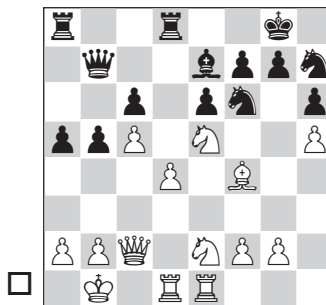


1. ♟xf7 ♞xf7 2. ♞xe6+ ♞f8 3. ♞xe7+

This chapter contains many ideas that you are already familiar with. It will again be about removing the pawns on f7 and g7 in order to allow the white queen to enter the stage. The f-pawn will most likely be eliminated by the move ♟xf7 , and the move ♞xe6 usually takes care of the g-pawn. Move orders will again play a very important role, since Black can always decide

to accept the first sacrifice and reject the second one. This becomes clear in the next example:

Game 99
Petr Haba 2525
Zoltan Gyimesi 2610
 Germany Bundesliga 2007/08 (12)



QUESTION: Should White start with 23. ♟xf7 or with 23. ♞xe6 ?

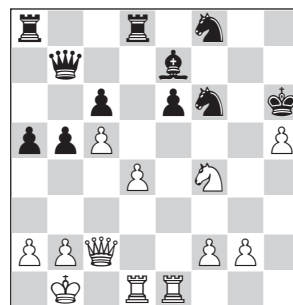
23. $\text{♞xe6}!$

The right choice! 23. ♟xf7 ♞xf7
 24. ♞g6+ (24. ♞xe6 $\text{♟f8}!$) 24... ♞g8
 25. ♞xe6 ♞f8 26. ♞c1 ♞f7 allows Black to defend successfully.

23... gxe6 24. ♟xf7 ♟f8

24... ♞xf7 would only make things worse: 25. ♞g6+ ♞f8 26. ♟f4 .

25. ♟xe6+ ♞g7 26. ♟f4 ♞xe6



27. $\text{♟xe6}!$

Eliminating the last defending pawn. The black pieces are

completely uncoordinated and White decides the game convincingly.

**27... ♖6h7 28. ♜e5 ♘g5 29.f4 ♘xf4
30. ♗xf4 ♗g5 31. ♚c1 ♗fh7 32. ♗h3
♜g8 33. ♜e6+ ♖xh5 34. ♗xg5 ♗xg5
35. ♜h1+ ♖g4 36. ♜h4+ ♖xh4
37. ♚f4+ ♖h5 38.g4+ 1-0**

The queen enters the 7th rank

The main aim of the ♗xf7 sacrifice is to remove the defender of the important g6-square. There is, however, another way to do so. This was experienced by the Dutch Grandmaster Sipke Ernst in the C-group of the Corus Tournament in Wijk aan Zee in 2004. He had played a fantastic tournament. With already enough points for a GM-norm he had to play the 14-year old (and even younger looking) Magnus Carlsen. Ernst was confronted with a line that looked quite innocent at first sight. However, things went very wrong shortly.

Game 100

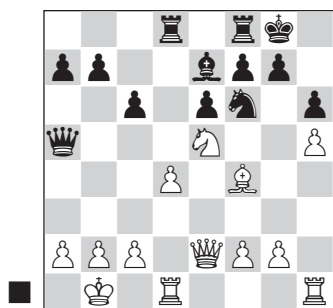
Magnus Carlsen

2484

Sipke Ernst

2474

Wijk aan Zee 2004 (12)



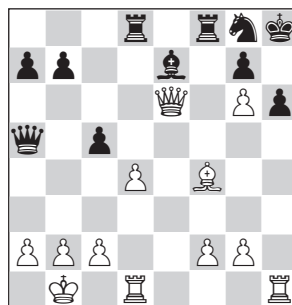
White just played 17. ♚d3-e2. In 2004, this was a very relevant position from a theoretical point of view. Black's best option would be 17... ♚b6, to keep an eye on b2 and, in some occasions, facilitate the useful zwischenzug ... ♘a3. Black, however, went for the less promising **17...c5**

Magnus showed no hesitation:

18. ♗g6! fxg6

Ernst soon regretted his decision to accept the sacrifice. The best reply would have been 18... ♜fe8 19. ♗xe7+ ♜xe7 20.dxc5 with an advantage for White.

19. ♚xe6+ ♖h8 20.hxg6 ♗g8



At first sight it looks as if Black should be able to hold this position. This is, however, far from true. In fact, White is completely winning. The black pieces lack coordination and White is soon going to launch a crushing attack.

**21. ♘xh6! gxh6 22. ♜xh6+! ♗xh6
23. ♚xe7**

The black kingside has open wounds on both the 7th rank and the h-file, which makes it almost impossible to defend.

23... ♗f7 24.gxf7!

From now on the black king is on its own, and it will be an easy target for the white queen and rook. It is instructive to see how well those two can cooperate in checkmating the enemy king.

24... ♔g7

24... ♖b6 25. ♕e5+ ♔h7 26. ♖h1+ would not have helped either.

25. ♖d3

The rook is lifted towards the king.

25... ♖d6

25... ♖b6 26. ♖g3+ ♕g6 27. ♖xg6+ ♔xg6 28.d5 is also completely winning.

26. ♖g3+ ♖g6 27. ♕e5+ ♔xf7

28. ♕f5+ ♖f6 29. ♕d7# 1-0

Conclusion

The ♖xf7 sacrifice is a very common way to clear both the g6 and e6 entrance squares for the queen. If White directs his queen to g6, we get lines that are very similar to the ones we discussed in the previous chapter. Carlsen showed us how the e6 entrance square has its merits as well. He opened both the 7th rank and the h-file and developed an irresistible attack from two different directions.

8.4 No knights involved

After having witnessed half a dozen convincing knight sacrifices, you might understand how tempting it can be to simply swap those knights off. However, I have to warn you. This can be very dangerous. White will recapture with a pawn and try to start a very dangerous attack on your king.

Game 101

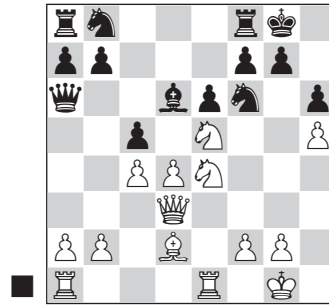
Irisberto Herrera

2475

Julio Becerra Rivero

2545

Las Tunas ch-CUB 1996 (13)

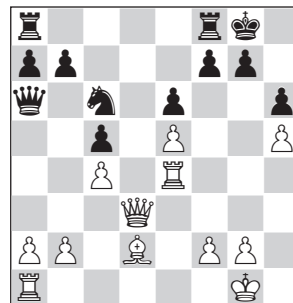


This is a very standard set-up in this variation. White has manoeuvred both knights towards the centre and is aiming for a powerful attack. Black was probably a bit intimidated by the cavalry and decided to swap off both of them.

16... ♗xe5

A risky move. White will recapture with his pawn, allowing it to get a firm hold on the centre. It is already very hard for Black to defend himself. The most natural reply would have been putting pressure on the centre with 16... ♖xe4 17. ♕xe4 cxd4 18. ♕xd4 ♖b6 with a balanced position.

17.dxe5 ♗xe4 18. ♖xe4 ♗c6

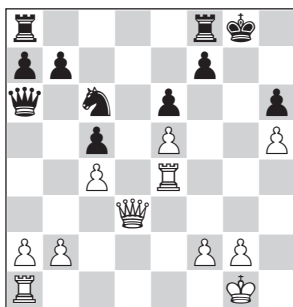


19. ♖xh6!

White shows no hesitation. This move should not come as a surprise by now. However, things are different without minor pieces on the board. This game is a very elegant demonstration of the brute force of the queen and rook combination. All they need is a few lines and files and it seems like mating the king goes all by itself.

19...f5

Unfortunately, Black does not allow his opponent to finish the game with a very instructional mating attack. This would have happened if he went for 19...gxh6



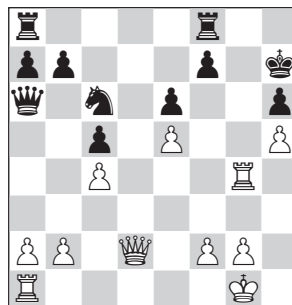
analysis diagram

20. ♖g4+ ♖h8 and now White has two different roads to a brilliancy prize nomination:

A) 21. ♕e3!. The queen is beginning the so-called ‘staircase’ manoeuvre. A very elegant way to bring up the most important attacker with tempo! 21... ♖h7 22. ♕e4+ ♖h8 23. ♕f4 ♖h7 24. ♕f6 White has managed to direct the queen from d3 to f6, without allowing his opponent to move a single piece. A quick mate is now

unavoidable: 24... ♖g8 25. ♕xf7+ ♖h8 26. ♖g6! ♖xg6 27. hxc6 ♕xc4 28. ♕h7#;

B) I like 21. ♕d2 even better: 21... ♖h7



analysis diagram

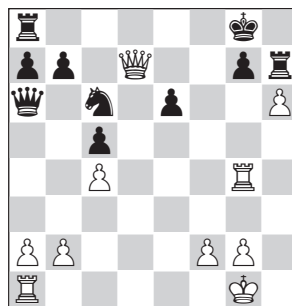
22. ♖g6! fxg6 23. ♕d7+ ♖g8 24. hxc6 Remember this one? It not: check the Hein-Figura game in Chapter 2. Note that Carlsen created a similar pattern in his game against Ernst in the previous section.

The text move did not help Black either.

20.exf6 ♖xf6 21. ♖g4 ♖xh6 22. ♕d7

The queen and rook are at their best if they can combine play on an open file with play on the seventh rank. In the meantime, the black pieces are poorly coordinated.

22... ♖h7 23.h6!



It is almost impossible to defend when you are under attack from two sides.

**23...g5 24. ♖xe6+ ♔f8 25. ♖f6+ ♔e8
26. ♖g6+ 1-0**

Conclusion

It can be very tempting to get rid of the centralized white knights and avoid the dangerous double or triple piece sacrifices we saw earlier in this chapter. Swapping off the knights is, however, not without risk either. White can recapture with his pawn and use his central dominance to launch an attack with his major pieces.

8.5 Defending techniques

We have seen quite a few examples in which White managed to develop a convincing attack. In the worst case, he had to settle for a draw by perpetual. Luckily for Black, things are not always this clear. There are lots of examples in which White is a bit overexcited, receiving some compensation for the piece(s) but then going down anyway. I want to show you three examples from which black players can build some confidence. They show the following defensive techniques that we are already familiar with:

1. Evacuation of the king;
2. Bring up defenders;
3. Controlling the centre.

8.5.1 Evacuation of the king

We will first look at a complete game. Note how Black first manages

to fend off the white attack with active play. Afterwards, he refutes the pieces sacrifice by successfully evacuating his king.

Game 102

Claire Marchadour 2127

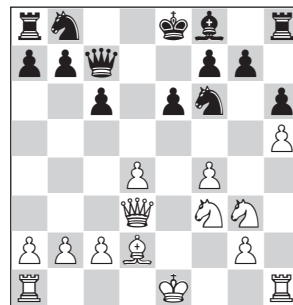
Pierre Theon 2214

France tt 2002 (1)

**1.e4 c6 2.d4 d5 3.♘c3 dxe4 4.♗xe4
♙f5 5.♗g3 ♙g6 6.h4 h6 7.h5 ♙h7
8.f4**

An ambitious approach!

**8...e6 9.♗f3 ♗f6 10.♙d3 ♙xd3
11.♖xd3 ♖c7 12.♙d2**



12...♙e7

12...♙d6, immediately challenging f4, would have been the best continuation.

13.0-0-0 c5

Opening the position is in Black's favour, since that would make it harder for White to execute an attack. Black aims to exchange a few pieces in order to take advantage of the weakened white kingside pawns.

14.♗e5 cxd4 15.♖xd4 0-0 16.♗e4!

White correctly directs her knight to the battlefield and brings the option of g2-g4 into the position.

16...♖c8 17.♘c3

A better way of preventing mate would have been 17.♙c3, since the knight is needed for the attack.

17...b5



Black plays aggressively as well. As long as he manages to keep White busy on the queenside, he does not have to worry about her attack!

18.♙d3 b4 19.♘b5 ♖b6 20.♘d4 ♘a6

20...♘bd7 would have been the most natural square for the knight. If Black manages to neutralize the important knight on e5, he will be clearly better.

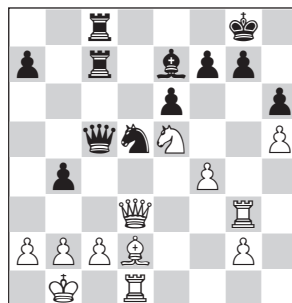
21.♘b3

A bit too careful. Instead of taking defensive measures, she should have accelerated her own attack with 21.f5! ♘c5 22.♙f3 with a very double-edged position.

21...♘c5 22.♘xc5 ♖xc5 23.♙b1 ♘d5

Black has managed to manoeuvre all of his pieces to the right squares and now has a very nice advantage. White most likely realized there was no time to waste and started a brave attempt to revive her attack.

24.♖h3 ♖c7 25.♖g3 ♖ac8



26.♘xf7!

The last chance to put pressure on the black position. Even though the sacrifice is not winning, it is by far the best attempt. 26.♖c1 ♙f6 would have given Black a simple and risk-free attack.

26...♙xf7 27.♙g6+ ♙f8 28.♙xg7+ ♙e8 29.♙g6+ ♙d7

Up to this point the moves have been more or less forced. Black has managed to evacuate his king to the queenside and has a clear advantage. However, White already had a difficult position four moves ago and sacrificing the knight was therefore the most practical decision.

30.♙e3

After 30.♖c1, White would still have had something to play for, for instance by grabbing h6 and pushing the h-pawn. The text move, however, enables Black to exchange queens and liquidate into a winning ending.

30...♙xc2+ 31.♙xc2 ♖xc2 32.f5 ♙f6 33.♙c1 ♙e7 34.♖gd3 ♘b6 35.fxe6 ♙xe6 36.♖e1+ ♙f7 37.♖f3 ♖8c6 38.♖ef1 ♖xg2 39.b3 ♘d5 40.♙xh6 ♖b2+ 0-1

8.5.2 Bring in defenders

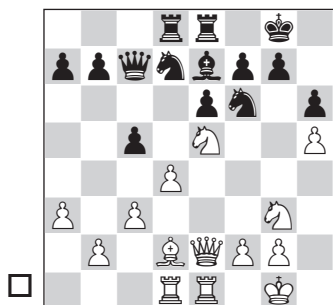
In the second example, Black simply has too many defenders at his disposal for his opponent's piece sacrifice to be successful.

Game 103

Miguel Navarro Cia 2338

Fernando Peralta 2563

Andorra 2007 (2)



20. ♖xf7 ♕xf7 21. ♖xe6+ ♔f8

22. ♖f5

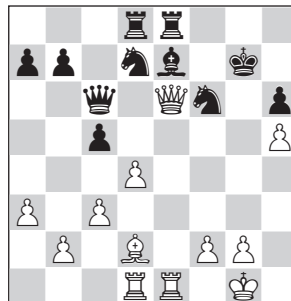
This is the standard follow-up after the ♖xf7 and ♖xe6+ combination. White threatens to take on h6 with either the knight or the bishop and ♕f4 is a threat as well. However, he won't get time for any of this. Black will immediately try to exchange queens, which would suddenly remove the sting out of the white attack.

22... ♖c6 23. ♖xg7

A desperate attempt, but White was already in trouble. He cannot prevent the black queen from neutralizing all the threats. For instance, 23. ♖a2 ♖d5! 24. ♖b1 ♖f7 promises a large advantage for Black, and 23. ♖e3 ♕d6 24. ♖h3 ♕g8 has the same evaluation. White has

a hard time directing his pieces to the right squares.

23... ♕xg7



24. ♕xh6+

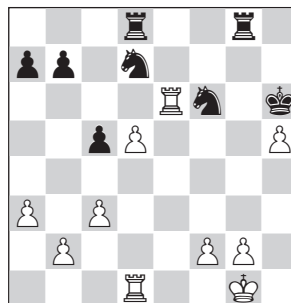
We know this sacrificing scheme by now and have seen a few very convincing victories with it. In this case, however, White does not have any pieces left that could back up his queen. Black, on the other hand, has no less than six (!) defenders at his disposal.

24... ♕xh6 25. ♖f7 ♖g8

With three extra pieces, one can easily sacrifice one in order to force a trade of queens.

26. d5 ♖d6 27. ♖xe7 ♕e5 28. ♖e6

♖xe6 29. ♖xe6 ♕ed7



The two knights are of course much stronger than the four pawns. Black is winning easily.

**30.f3 ♖xh5 31.g4+ ♔g5 32.♕f2 ♕f4
33.b4 ♜h8 34.♕g2 b6 35.c4 ♜h7
36.♞g1 ♜dh8 0-1**

8.5.3 Controlling the centre

In the introduction to Part III, Anand demonstrated how central play can be a powerful defensive tool. Chess always looks simple if you click through the games of great players like Anand. Finding yourself in the driver's seat (without an engine!) is, of course, a completely different story. Anand followed the adage 'Under attack on a wing? React in the centre!'. Chess wisdoms like this can be helpful guidelines that point you in the right direction. They are, however, rather useless if you are unable to apply them correctly in a practical game. Take for instance the following position.

Game 104

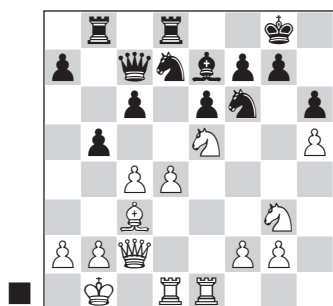
Jiri Lhotka

2082

Alexandre Belsley

1842

Prague Ech U18 2012 (7)



White is building up an attack and Black has taken the right

preparations to react in the centre. But how should he continue? What is the right move to quell the white attack?

He went for the thematic

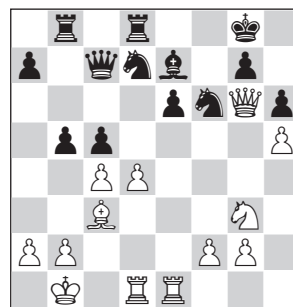
20...c5

However, this move fails to keep the white pieces at a distance.

On the contrary, White does not hesitate and launches a deadly attack.

21.♘xf7! ♕xf7 22.♞g6+ ♔g8

22...♕f8 23.♞xe6! or 23.d5!, both followed by a quick ♘f5, is also rather hopeless.



23.♘f5 ♕f8 24.♞xe6 ♞e8 25.d5!

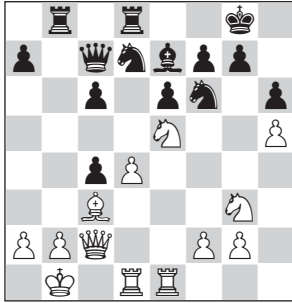
b4 26.♕xf6 ♞xe6 27.♘xh6+ ♔h8

28.♞f7 ♘xf6 29.♞xc7 1-0

A tough defeat for Black. It is a fate that every Caro-Kann player has to undergo every now and then. The stakes are always high for a defender, since a single move can turn a promising position into a complete disaster.

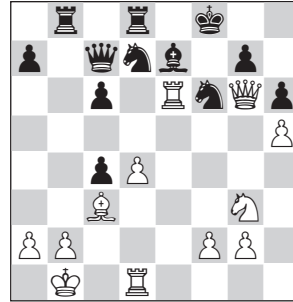
Black's position was very promising in our starting position. He had rightly pushed his pawn to b5, attacking the white c-pawn. The aim is not just to open up the b-file,

but also to acquire the control of the important d5-square in order to optimize the defence. This leads us to the right reaction in the centre:
20...bxc4!



A normal move like 21.♘xc4 would allow Black to control all the important squares with 21...♖b5 and get a very comfortable game. But what happens if White persists and goes for the sacrifice anyway?

21.♘xf7 ♔xf7 22.♚g6+ ♔f8!
23.♗xe6



23...♘c5! 24.♗e2
 24.dxc5 ♖xd1+ 25.♔c2 ♖d5 26.♘f5
 ♗xf5! 27.♚xf5 ♖d8 puts an end to the white attack as well.

24...♘d5!
 The white pieces have been expelled and Black can start an attack himself. Mission accomplished!

Conclusion

We have seen quite a few convincing piece sacrifices in this chapter, but of course the attacker does not always prevail.

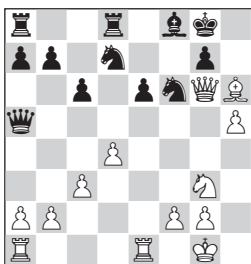
Defending is never easy. Here are three guidelines that can help you find the right moves:

- If the attack cannot be neutralized, always consider the evacuation of your king to a safer part of the board;
- Make sure you always have enough defenders at hand;
- Fight for the control of the important central squares (especially d5!).

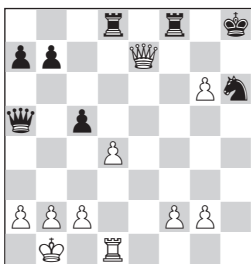
8.6 FLASH CARDS



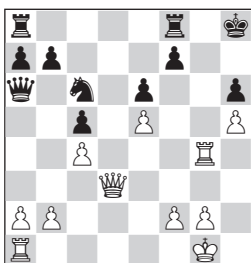
Entering technique 1: eliminate the f7-pawn
g6 is the most common entrance square for the queen and a well-timed 17.♘xf7! is the standard way to clear it. 17...♔xf7 18.♚g6+ ♔g8 19.♙xh6 ♙f8 brings us to flash card number 2.



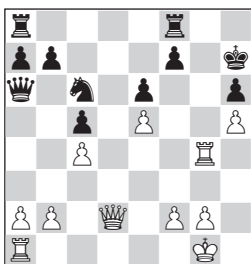
Entering technique 2: eliminate the g7-pawn
Bringing the queen up to the attack is not always enough. We need access to the king as well. The pseudo-sacrifice 20.♙xg7! is worth remembering. White won after 20...♙xg7 21.h6! ♘e8 22.♖xe6.



Entering technique 3: attack from two sides
Remember how Carlsen successfully combined an attack along both rank and file. Black is a rook and a piece up, but lost quickly after 23...♘f7 24.gxf7! ♔g7 25.♖d3 ♖d6 26.♖g3+ ♖g6 27.♚e5+ ♔xf7 28.♚f5+ ♖f6 29.♚d7#.



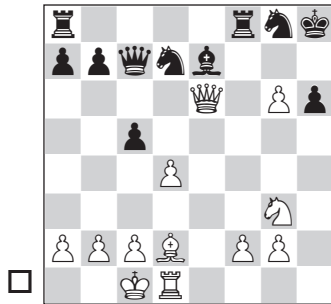
Entering technique 4: the staircase
A very elegant way to bring up your queen to the attack with tempo is the so-called staircase manoeuvre: 21.♚e3! ♔h7 22.♚e4+ ♔h8 23.♚f4 ♔h7 24.♚f6 ♖g8 25.♚xf7+ ♔h8 26.♖g6! ♖xg6 27.hxg6 ♚xc4 28.♚h7#.



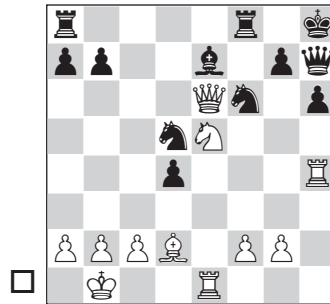
Entering technique 5: the sneaky 7th rank
Sometimes you can deflect your opponent by entering from the side instead of using the front door. White wins after the beautiful 22.♖g6! fxg6 23.♚d7+ ♔g8 24.hxg6.

Exercises – Attack

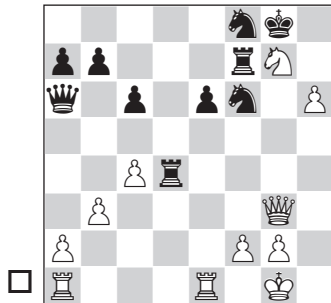
8.1 (solution on page 358)



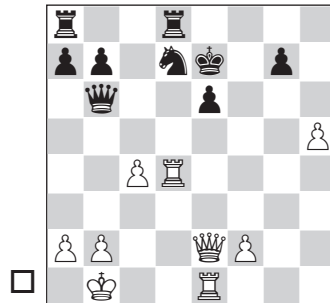
8.2 (solution on page 358)



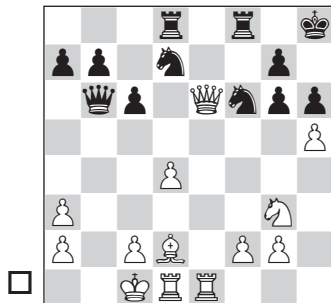
8.3 (solution on page 358)



8.4 (solution on page 359)



8.5 (solution on page 359)



8.6 (solution on page 360)

