

Understanding Chess Tactics

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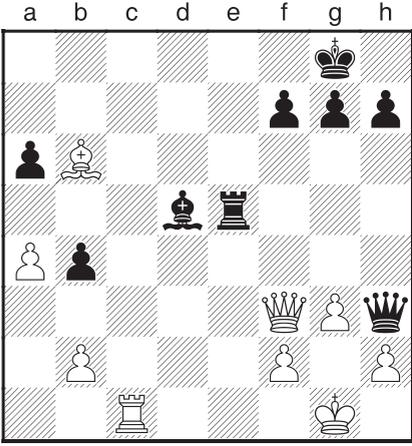
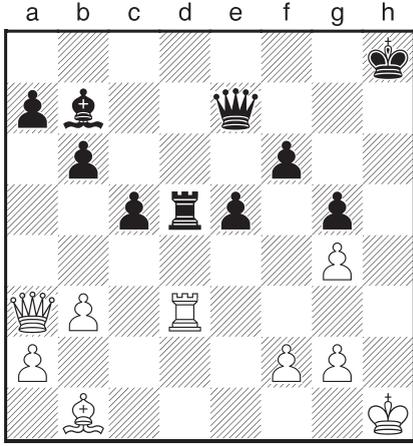
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What is this book about?

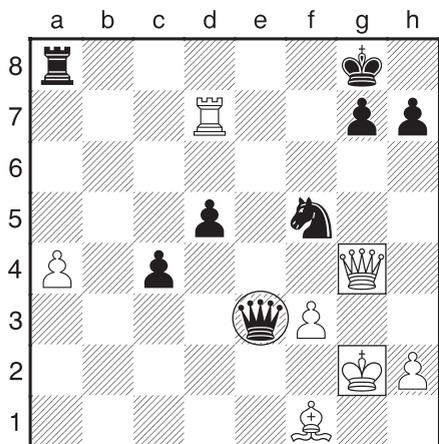
Chess is a visual game. A chess player must be able to recognise elementary patterns, therefore the tactics in this book will be primarily explained graphically. This approach is supported by a large numbers of diagrams, which will also allow the reader to study this book without a chessboard.

Chess is also a game of logic. Logic, in the same way as chess tactics, depends on collecting and processing information. This book will show you how to accurately find the elements of tactics, and work with them creatively.

This book is divided into the following parts:

Chapter 1		Chapter 2	
Becoming familiar with the pieces!		The pin	
			
<p>1.g4!</p> <p>It is an illusion to assume that after 1.g4 the black queen could take the white queen. The black queen cannot move, because she is defending against ♖c1-c8 mate. That is also why the black bishop has no time to take the white queen.</p> <p>In this chapter you will learn (among other things) to safeguard yourself against illusions of this kind.</p>	<p>1...♙h7†!</p> <p>There is much more to know about the pin than might appear at first sight.</p> <p>1...♙h7† looks like a mistake because of 2.♖h3</p> <p>but...</p> <p>The theme of this chapter is the chain of three points that constitutes the formation of a pin:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• The pin's interaction with other pieces and squares on the board.• How to recognise the pin if it is in a preliminary state (only two points out of three).• How to create a pin and work with it.		

Chapter 5 The double attack



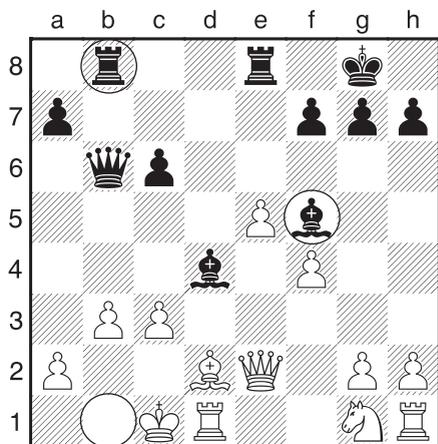
White has just played ♔g3-g4? running into a double attack.

1...♔e6!

The boxed-in squares show the targets of the ♞f5. The encircled square on e3 is the point from where the knight strikes. 1...♔e6 wins the necessary tempo against the undefended ♖d7.

An easy example, but this chapter will also reveal to you the finer points of this motif.

Chapter 6 Mate



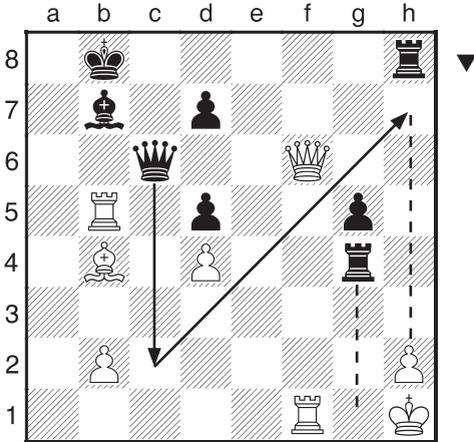
1...♖ed8!

Knowledge of mating patterns (here a ♖+♔ mate) is essential. This chapter will teach you all of the important ones.

But there is more to it than just executing the mates. Giving mate is a subtle art. Or why do you think the tactical giant Anderssen played 1...♖ed8 in the above position?

Chapter 7

Gain of tempo/Intermediate move



1...♞xh2†

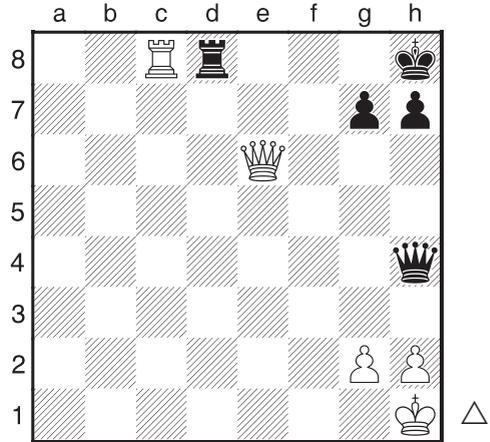
The tempo lets us find efficient ways to bring our pieces to squares otherwise impossible with a normal timetable.

Under enormous pressure himself, Black finds *time* to transfer his queen via c2† to the mating square h7.

This chapter will tell you how to make combinations possible in the nick of time. Other related themes are also investigated in this chapter.

Chapter 8

The X-ray attack

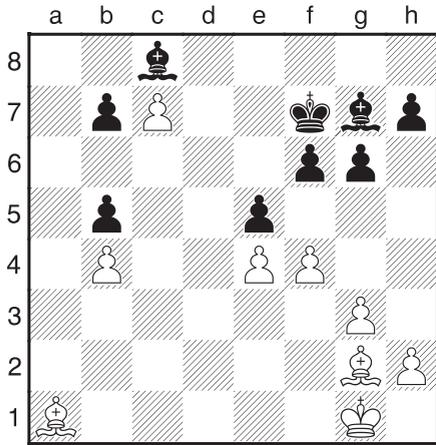


1.♞e8†

Simple but effective: the X-ray attack!

This small chapter shows you how this frequently misunderstood little motif can clearly be detected and utilised.

Chapter 9 Opening and closing lines (Lines of communication)



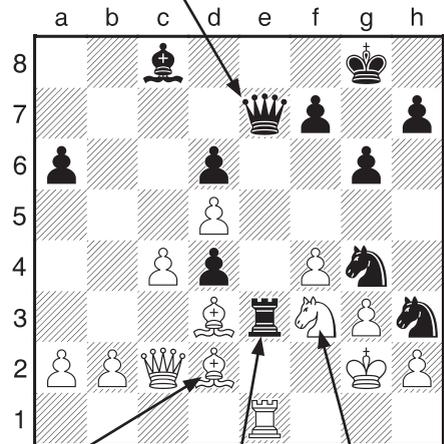
1. ♖h3!

Lines for attack or defence, lines between pieces, squares and tasks, lines to open, lines to close and interrupt are the story of this chapter.

Realise the importance of your pieces working together and learn how to cut off your opponent's pieces from their colleagues.

Chapter 10 Status Examination

Target square = h4-f2



Not defending ♖e1 (because e3)

e3 = target of ♘ double attack

Not defending h4 (because ♖e1)

1... ♘xf4†!

In the final chapter we will learn how to organise and effectively prune the calculation process when working with tactics.

This chapter brings it all together: from the easy questions such as 'How many (retreating) squares does a piece have?' to finding complex combinations like the one above.

Introduction

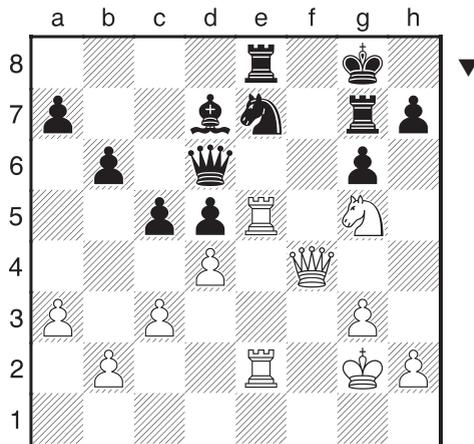
Tactics can be broken down into basic elements and systematically analysed. Therefore everybody should be able to understand tactics and use tactics successfully in his or her games.

World Champion Steinitz once pointed out that combinations are not coincidences or strokes of genius but the results of concrete positions. He taught us how to analyse any given position for its *elements*. The same method used to analyse positions can be applied to combinations. They too can be broken down into their elements. Although tactics sometimes can be very complicated, there is good news: tactics consist of basic elements that can be learned like a language or mathematics.

Some years ago I trained for about two years with the former trainer of Peter Leko, Tibor Karolyi. With Tibor I mainly studied openings, middlegame strategy, and endgames. During this time I also solved a lot of combinations to sharpen my tactical skills. I had developed my own little routine. Whenever I thought I had discovered some mechanism or characteristic of a position, I started taking notes. The work on thousands of positions grew first into a collection of unsorted tactical insights, but finally resulted in a structured overview of tactics. Over time seemingly unconnected information turned into a coherent concept. The book you are now holding in your hands is my attempt to communicate this understanding of tactics.

Most of the positions discussed in this book are original positions from my notes. It does not really matter for teaching purposes whether these examples are well known or not. However, my experience when teaching club players is that most players did not know these positions.

When I was asked to train a local club team, I thought it might be a good idea to have a look at their games from a team championship in order to find out about their playing strength. I saw the following position.

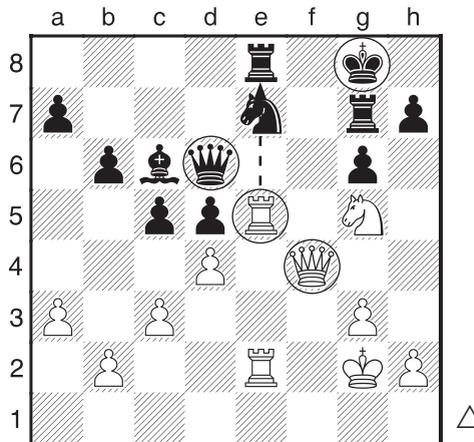


White is a piece down but has just played ♖h4-f4, and I wondered why they were asking for training if they could play moves like this!

Black obviously did not know what was going on, as he now played:

1...♙c6?!

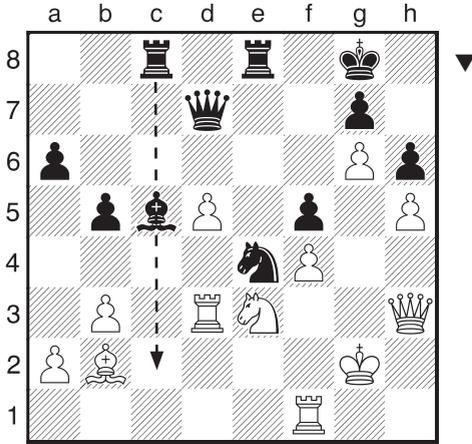
Now I was expecting White to win back his piece. Surprisingly the player from my future club moved his queen back to h4. Now I knew they definitely needed my help. Let us look at the diagram again:



After studying this book, you will immediately realise the combinative idea of the solution to the diagram position. It is the typical pattern for a discovered attack. The game should have continued:

Schwappach – Witt

Deizisau 2005



The black bishop took the knight.

1...♗xe3

Eliminating the defender of the c2-square. After his opponent took back on e3 with his queen:

2.♙xe3

Holger finished the game with the decisive double attack:

2...♞c2†

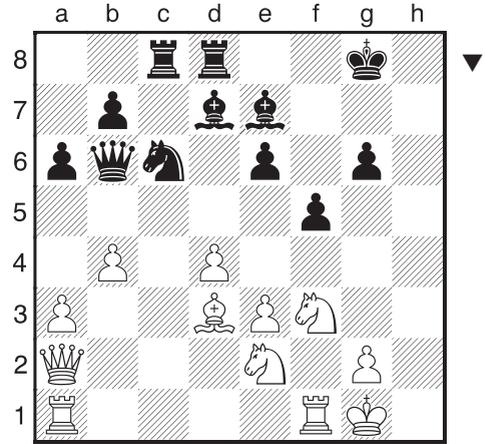
The difference between the two games was that Holger had learned to recognise a basic tactical pattern, which he then used in the game.

As in the previous example, most amateur chess games are decided tactically. Therefore, the quickest way to improve your chess is to study tactics. However, solving tactical puzzles without fully understanding the underlying mechanisms is not the most efficient way to learn. Rather than offering yet another compilation of combinations to solve, you will *understand* the elements of combinations. Do not exercise what you do not understand!

Look how tricky Holger became. In the following position he is using tactics to improve the position of his bishop.

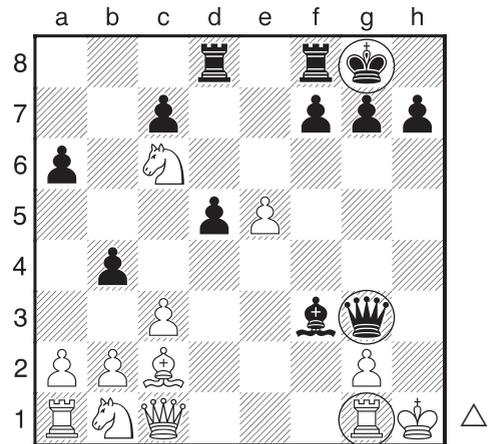
Rotermund – Witt

Frankfurt 2005

**1...♗e8!**

If White takes on e6 with 2.♙xe6†, Black would simply answer 2...♗f7 simultaneously covering the check and trapping White's queen.

Working through this book will help to improve your understanding and your results just like the players of the club I coached. On average the players improved by one to two hundred rating points and the club's team has been promoted twice in three years to a higher league. And maybe one day you will be able to uncork tactical champagne like this:



White to move

Black is threatening mate with ...♖h3 or ...♖h4. Obviously White is desperately looking for a good reply.

Again you notice the visual and obvious structural components of a tactical motif: three pieces in a row constitute a pin, here rook, queen, and king. Based on this basic pattern of a pin, White found the answer:

20. ♖h6!!

With this move White covers both threats and is threatening mate on h7 himself. If Black took the queen, White would simply take the bishop on f3, winning back his queen with a material advantage.

I am sure that by reading this book you will understand elementary tactics completely and you will successfully implement them in your games.

Since this is not just a tactical puzzle book, I purposely did not give detailed analysis for each position unless I thought it necessary. For a successful journey through this book I would advise you to concentrate on reading and understanding rather than solving the problems. Consequently, you will find a lot of diagrams in this book enabling you to read it without a chessboard.

You will benefit most from this book when you *read* through the entire material first and then go back to study certain themes more closely. My own experience taught me that I have trouble finishing a chess book when I lose myself in unnecessarily detailed analysis. I have read many of the classics from start to finish, such as Steinitz, Tarrasch, Lasker, Nimzowitsch, Reti, Capablanca, Alekhine, Spielmann, Tartakower, Kmoch, Euwe, Averbakh, Bronstein, Fischer and Vukovic. But, apart from them, my bookshelf is a graveyard for unfinished chess books featuring endless variations and sidelines.

At the end of each chapter four exercises are given. Do not despair if you cannot solve many of them. Some are rather demanding. As already mentioned, this book is not an exercise book. Consider the exercises as small lectures: they help you to understand the subjects of the preceding chapter. Understanding is the first and most important step. If you are willing to take another then you have to practise combinations and venture into practical play.

This book will endow you with all the necessary tactical tools.