

Karsten Müller / Jerzy Konikowski

The Best Combinations of the World Champions



Volume 1
From Steinitz to Tal

JBV Chess Books

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ISBN 978-3-95920-995-3

1st Edition 2022

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Editor: Robert Ullrich

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Preface

Since every world champion was the most outstanding player of his time, it makes sense to study the various aspects of the royal game using the world champions' games – and of course to enjoy them. In this first of two volumes on the world champions' art of combination, the authors (both recognized experts in the field of chess literature) offer the reader the opportunity of trying to find plenty of these best combinations themselves – and thus to assess and improve their own tactical skills.

But that's not all. In addition to often breathtakingly spectacular sample games, which are thoroughly analyzed and commented on in a comprehensible way, individual pet topics are highlighted in which the world champions have created particularly outstanding works.

So you are invited to take a closer look at how Steinitz handled the 'Steinitz King' – at Lasker's phenomenal art of defense and Capablanca's mastery of 'small combinations' (for which the French term 'petite combinaison' has become common in chess language).

Furthermore, at Alekhine's dashing attacks, at Euwe's seventh sense for dynamic transformations, Botvinnik's tactical solutions to strategic problems, Smyslov's virtuosity even in tactical endgames and – last but not least – at Tal's downright magical tactical works of art with which he not only bewitched his opponents, but the entire chess world.

The game examples and special topics were selected and edited by Karsten Müller – the numerous examples of the 'best combinations' by Jerzy Konikowski, who used material from his numerous books and other publications (see – Index of sources).

The authors would like to thank Mihail Marin for his excellent foreword, Frederic Friedel and Rainer Woisin from ChessBase for the idea of working with QR codes, Thomas Beyer for the perfect layout and Robert Ullrich for the exemplary cooperation.

Karsten Müller/Jerzy Konikowski
Hamburg/Dortmund, February 2022

Tactics – more than a matter of style



Mihail Marin

It is hard to imagine a more effective way of annoying the younger generations than preaching about „the reliable past“. At the same time, it would be a pity if the rich treasure left to us by the former World Champions fell into oblivion. With his new book, Karsten Mueller has managed to fight against the latter without falling into the typical „grandpas' mistake“. The author has gathered a large number of combinations from the World Champions' practice, thus inviting the reader to evaluate, treasure and measure his or her own forces with that of the heroes from the past.

Solving tactical puzzles has never ceased to be one of the most effective training methods.

I used to do that before tournaments intensively, and have encouraged many of my pupils to do it, too, but it can also be a day-by-day activity.

Which is the reason making tactics so important?

Karsten himself has explained in his introduction that the World Champions could be classified into several categories. Is this not one of those situations when several alternative methods could lead to the same goal?

The simplest part of the answer is that solving tactical puzzles systematically improves one's shape, allowing one to take quick correct decisions over the board, no matter whether they are of strategic, tactical theoretical or pragmatic nature.

I could also add that there are many famous cases of games and results turned upside down by tactical operations after one of the players had been outplayed in the theoretical or strategic battle. The reversed situation is less common. It would take a miracle to save a game due to one's strategic superiority after having been caught tactically. True, superior theoretical knowledge in the end-game can sometimes make up for tactical accidents, but if one falls under a tactical attack, things are not likely to get as far as the endgame.

All these are only superficial aspects, though. The inner truth is much deeper. Strong players (and maybe not only they) conduct the biggest part of the game according to their personal taste and style, making possible such classifications as that used by Karsten. However, there are moments when there is only one „best decision“. On such occasions, tacticians and strategists alike have to

forget about their style or preferences and play accordingly to the concrete requirements of the position. Since Karsten has also mentioned the champions' weaknesses, I would add that the impulsive one should use the best of his patience if a strategic solution is required and the lazy one should exit his comfort zone and calculate when things are about to get messy.

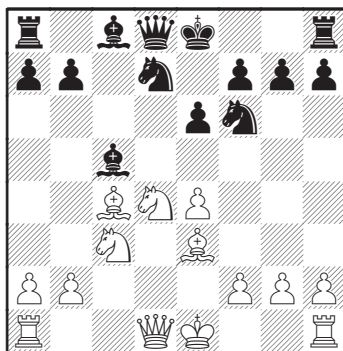
It is precisely the latter that is connected with the spirit of this book. The chronologically first hero, Wilhelm Steinitz, famously stated that the player having an advantage can and *must* attack, facing the threat of otherwise losing his superiority or even getting the worst of it. Aged almost 60, the founder of the "new school", based on strategy, illustrated this axiom in his brilliant game against Von Bardeleben, the first Beispielpartie in this book.

Capablanca was widely known as a phenomenal positional player and end-game specialist, but his ability to deliver "des petites combinaisons" was also famous. The latter aspect fails to portray him as a player with a complete and well-balanced style yet. Small tactical fireworks are only auxiliary tools to the strategic player. The large number of Capablanca's combinations included in this book hint at his tactical mastery and ability to spot the critical moments in the game, too. His game against Zubarjew, Moscow 1925 (number 65) is inserted only from the moment when the piece sacrifice was the only way of avoiding an obvious draw. Those curious enough to check the previous phase of the game will notice that the Cuban had taken the decision a few moves earlier, when he had a choice between playing with a clear advantage and win by force, as happened in the game. The latter surely required some effort of calculation, but Jose Raul was up to the task.

One may argue that due to his exquisite technique, Capablanca would have won even if he had chosen the quiet way, but here is an even clearer case illustrating my preaching about the importance of tactics.

Capablanca – Bogoljubow

Moscow, 1925



White has considerable advance in development, but if allowed to castle, Black would be doing fine. Hence:

9.♙xe6!!

One may think that this is not a typical “Capablanca move”. Paraphrasing Fischer, I would answer: “I do not believe in styles, I believe in the best moves!”

9...fxe6 10.♘xe6 ♔a5

Bogoljubov opined that 10...?b6 would have repelled the attack, but Capablanca later proved this illusory.

11.0-0 ♙xe3 12.fxe3

White has an almost decisive advantage. Capablanca later allowed the game to become messy, but eventually won anyway. **(1-0)**

This book came as a pleasant surprise to me and I hope that time will allow me to use it for training purposes before my tournaments. True, I am not “completely unfamiliar” with the classical inheritance, but I would mention an old anecdotic episode. On the way back from a Chess Olympiad, Mikhail Tal could be seen solving tactical puzzles in the airplane. “But Misha, you must have seen all the combinations in this book already!” a friend told him. “This may be true”, answered Tal, “but I wanted to check whether I forgot any of them!”

I wish you, dear reader, that by working with this book, you will turn tactics into your “comfort zone”.

Mihail Marin

Romania,

St. Valentine’s Day 2022

Introductory remark

The assignment of every single world champion to a certain ‘playing style’ goes back to the recently published book ‘The Human Factor’ (by GM Karsten Müller and GM Luis Engel; Joachim Beyer Verlag 2020). Since we are of the opinion that this aspect plays an important and often clearly recognizable role also in the tactical approach, here is a brief overview of the details that characterize the different types of players. Readers interested in this aspect can look up these explanations if a particular category is mentioned in the text.

Activists

World champions: Alekhine, Tal, Spassky, Kasparov, Anand

(As to the rare type of ‘hyperactive player’, all of the following characteristics are even more pronounced.)

Their strengths: They rate initiative and attacking options relatively high and material values lower. They often have a good sense for initiative and dynamics and are also ready to accept static weaknesses. One of their usual strengths is the concrete calculation of lines based on intuitive evaluation.

Their weaknesses: Sometimes they make pawn moves that look good at the moment, but do far more harm than good in the long run. They tend to overestimate their own attack on the king while underestimating the opponent’s attack. They are significantly less good in defense, often take risks and as a rule try to keep the third result (meaning: their own victory) in the game.

Theorists

World champions: Steinitz, Botvinnik, Kramnik

Their strengths: They are extremely familiar with their structures and all the associated maneuvers and plans and can also rely on their sharpened intuition when using them. Their play is logical and systematic. Many representatives of this type are good at theoretical endgames and know the entire relevant endgame theory by heart.

Their weaknesses: They stick to their principles, even if they sometimes don’t fit the position. Occasionally, they lack a sense of the limits of the respective area of application and also the flexibility required to switch to other approaches in a specific position if necessary.

Reflectors

World champions: Capablanca, Smyslov, Petrosian, Karpov, Carlsen

Their strengths: They have a very deep understanding of the game and recognize relevant patterns almost at first glance. They have a very fine feel for the harmony and coordination of the pieces. They are very good when it comes to restricting the opposing pieces more and more and disrupting their coordination. Therefore, active prophylaxis and strategies of dominance and restriction are typical for them. And they are also very good in strategic endgames, in which their strengths come into their own, because the dynamic potential of the queens no longer ‘disturbs’ and accordingly less dynamic chaos can arise.

Their weaknesses: They are sometimes not so good when it comes to calculating concrete lines, which makes them vulnerable in the sense that the opponent can strive for concrete dynamic positions in which every single move is important and which require much concrete calculation.

Pragmatics

World champions: Fischer, Euwe, Lasker

Their strengths: They are characterized by the fact that they have a very concrete approach. They calculate long lines very accurately and rarely blunder. They incorporate many practically relevant factors into their decisionmaking and are often good at confronting opponents with problems that are unpleasant to solve in practice. Pragmatics can often defend themselves very tenaciously by using their precise calculation skills

Their weaknesses: The concrete approach can, however, turn out to be weakness under certain circumstances. In strictly technical or positional situations a pragmatic occasionally feels a little bit insecure because he doesn’t know what to calculate. In general, they may have difficulty recognizing longterm plans and taking them into account. Sometimes they are a little too materialistic (similar to theorists). Overall, however, they are relatively balanced and have hardly any weaknesses worth mentioning.



Chapter 1

The first world champion – Wilhelm Steinitz

Wilhelm Steinitz (May 14, 1836 – August 12, 1900), a native Austrian (from 1888 US-American), was the first generally recognized world chess champion from 1886 to 1894 (after his victory over the Polish-German master Johannes Zukertort). In a sense, he is considered a revolutionary because he sharply criticized the fierce attacking chess that was prevalent at the time (the so-called ‘romantic chess’). Based on his scientific approach, he laid the foundation for the ‘positional school’ of modern chess by formulating principles of strategy and positional play that are still valid today.

As for his style, he was a ‘theorist’ (see also the ‘introductory remark’ on page 10). However, he was also a great tactician, as often strategy and tactics go hand in hand anyway, which is perfectly illustrated in the following game.

Example game



Wilhelm Steinitz
Curt von Bardeleben
Hastings 1895

1.e4 e5 2.♘f3 ♘c6 3.♙c4 ♙c5 4.c3
♘f6 5.d4 exd4 6.cxd4 ♙b4+ 7.♘c3

Instead of this enterprising but risky approach, the quiet alternative 7.♙d2 ♙xd2+ 8.♘bxd2 d5 9.exd5 ♘xd5 10.♚b3 ♘a5 11.♚a4+ ♘c6 is the modern main line.

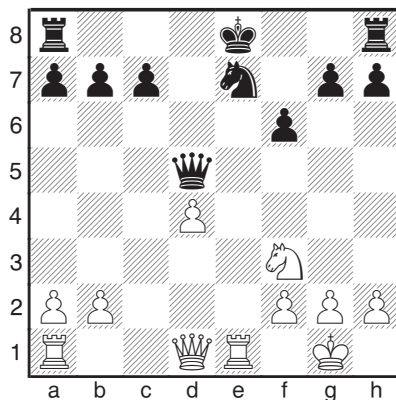
7...d5?!

After the usual 7...♘xe4 8.0-0 ♙xc3, the 'Möller Attack' 9.d5 is considered the critical continuation, although White cannot expect any advantage.

8.exd5 ♘xd5 9.0-0 ♙e6 10.♙g5 ♙e7?!

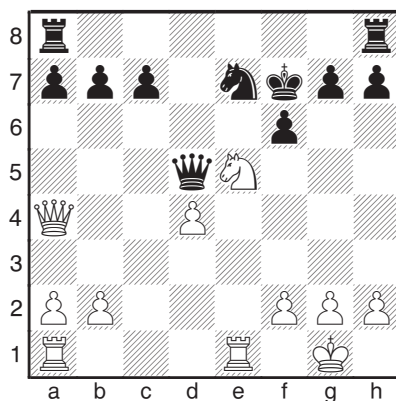
Kasparov prefers 10...♚d7 11.♙xd5 ♙xd5 12.♞e1+ ♔f8.

11.♙xd5 ♙xd5 12.♘xd5 ♚xd5
13.♙xe7 ♘xe7 14.♞e1 f6



15.♚e2?!

15.♚a4+! is stronger, as 15...♔f7? fails to 16.♘e5+!! (a thunderbolt discovered by GM Geller in 1983).



White wins as shown in the sample line 16...fxe5 17.♞xe5 ♚d6 18.♚c4+ ♔f8 19.♞ae1 ♘g8 20.♞d5 ♚c6 21.♚b4+ ♔f7 22.♞c5 ♚d6 23.♚c4+ ♔f8 24.♞xc7+-.

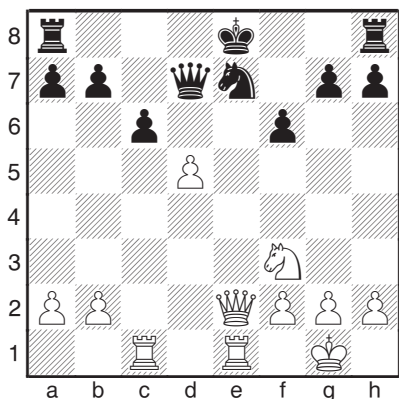
15...♚d7 16.♞ac1

16.♞ad1!? was worth trying. The reply 16...♔f8! is forced, as 16...♔f7? fails to 17.♚c4+ ♘d5 18.♘e5+ fxe5 19.dxe5+-.

16...c6?

After the immediate escape 16...♔f7!, there's no win in sight; e.g. 17.♘d2 ♖he8 18.♗e4 ♘d5= or 17.♗e5+ fxe5 18.dxe5 ♖e6 19.♗f3+ ♔g6 20.♖xc7 b6=.

17.d5!!



In typical fashion, the isolani is used as a battering ram to open lines for the attackers.

17...cxd5?!

17...♔f7 was required, although the attack was still very strong; e.g. 18.dxc6 bxc6 19.♖ed1

(19.♖c4+!? ♖d5 20.♗g4 is also dangerous.)

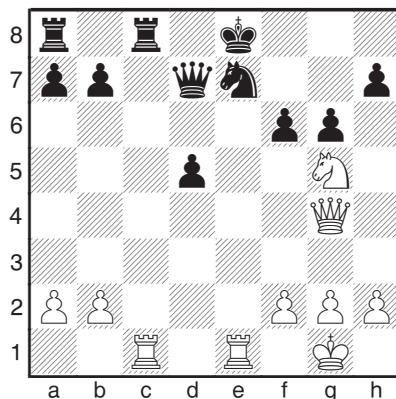
19...♗e6 20.♗xe6+ ♔xe6 21.♗d4+ ♔f7 22.♗xc6 and according to Kasparov, White has good practical winning chances.

18.♗d4 ♔f7 19.♗e6 ♖hc8?!

This runs into a wonderful refutation, but the black position was hopeless anyway; e.g. 19...♗c6 20.♗c5 ♖d6 21.♗xb7 ♖d7 22.♗c5 ♖d6 23.♗h5+ g6 24.♗h4 ♗e5 25.f4 ♗c4 26.b4 f5

27.♖e6 ♖d8 28.♗h6 ♗d6 29.h4 ♗e4 30.h5 ♗xc5 31.hxg6+ ♔xe6 32.♖xc5+-.

20.♗g4 g6 21.♗g5+ ♔e8



22.♖xe7+!!+-

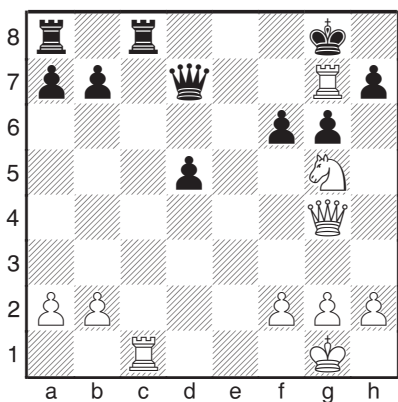
Ready for take off?!

22.♗xh7? ♖xc1 23.♗xf6+ ♔f7 24.♖xc1 ♗e6 would have sold the advantage too cheaply.

22...♔f8

22...♔xe7 (22...♗xe7 23.♖xc8+) 23.♖e1+ ♔d6 (23...♔d8 24.♗e6+ ♔e8 25.♗c5+) 24.♗b4+ ♖c5 (24...♔c7 25.♗e6+ ♔b8 26.♗f4+ ♖c7 27.♗xc7) 25.♖e6+ ♗xe6 26.♗xe6

23.♖f7+! ♔g8 24.♖g7+!!



The extraterrestrial rook simply continues its 'mission impossible'.

24...♖h8

24...♖f8 25.♘xh7+ ♖xg7 26.♙xd7+

25.♙xh7+

At this point, von Bardeleben left the tournament hall without a word. He later sent a courier to announce his surrender. Meanwhile, Steinitz showed the spectators the amazing finale.

25...♖g8 26.♙g7+ ♖h8 27.♙h4+

Now Black is forced to finally take this nightmare of a rook.

27...♖xg7 28.♙h7+ ♖f8 29.♙h8+ ♖e7
30.♙g7+ ♖e8 31.♙g8+ ♖e7 32.♙f7+
♖d8

(32...♖d6 33.♙xf6+ ♙e6 34.♙xe6#)

33.♙f8+ ♙e8 34.♙f7+ ♖d7 35.♙d6#

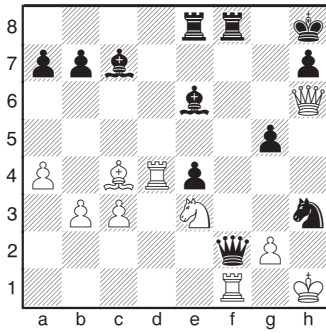
This masterpiece is rightly considered the most spectacular of Steinitz's games.

Combinations

(Solutions starting on page 28)



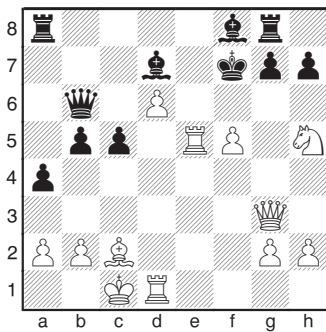
1



Black to move and win



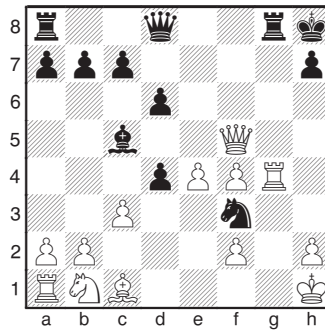
2



White to move and win



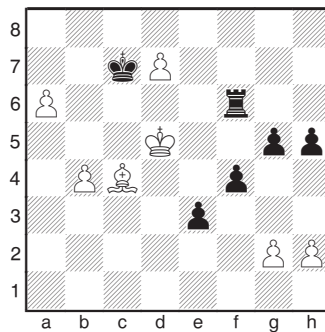
3



Black to move and win



4



White to move and win

The 'Steinitz King'

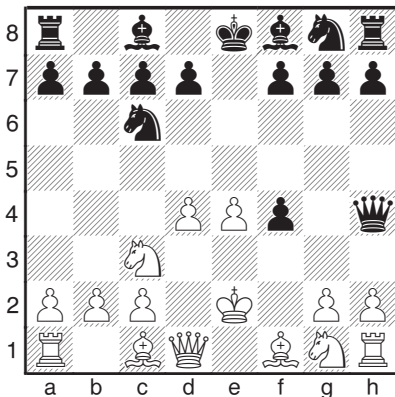
As has been mentioned, Steinitz was a 'theorist'. However, not all of his theories caught on. For example, his assumption that the king can often defend itself and sometimes even become active in the opening and middlegame. To understand his reasoning, let's take a closer look at the following spectacular game.

Example game



Wilhelm Steinitz
Louis Paulsen
 Baden-Baden 1870

1.e4 e5 2.♘c3 ♘c6 3.f4 exf4 4.d4?!
 ♔h4+ 5.♔e2

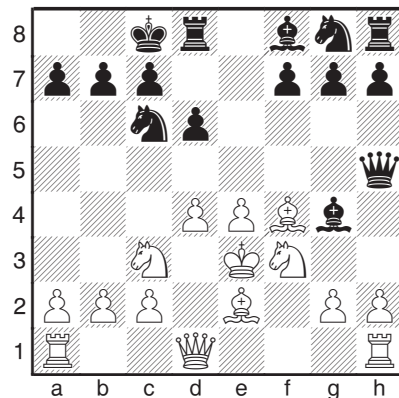


The notorious 'Steinitz king' in action!
 "A blasphemy for a normal player of the time." (Kasparov)

5...d6 6.♘f3 ♙g4 7.♙xf4 0-0-0?!

According to Kasparov, 7...f5 is the critical test.

8.♔e3 ♔h5 9.♙e2

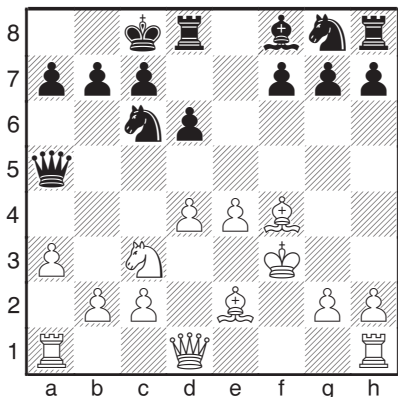


9...♔a5?

The queen will find neither peace nor security on the queen side.

With 9...g5!? Black could try to fish in murky waters; e.g. 10.♘xg5 ♘f6 11.d5 ♘e5 12.h3 ♙xe2 13.♙xe2 ♙g6 14.♘f3 ♙h6 15.♙xh6 ♙xh6+ 16.♔f2 ♖hg8 with compensation for the pawn.

10.a3! ♙xf3 11.♙xf3!



Since 11.♔xf3? fails to 11...g5 12.♔g3 ♔g7, the 'Steinitz king' solves the problem in person.

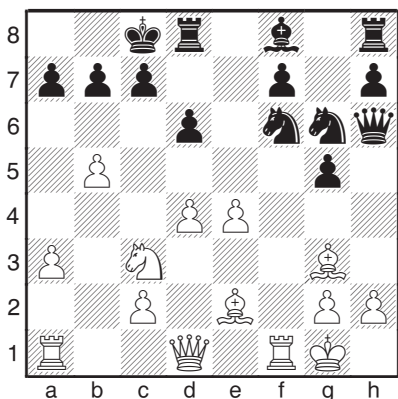
11...♖h5+ 12.♔e3 ♖h4 13.b4?!

13.d5 ♘e5 14.♖d4 ♔b8 15.♖af1 is even better.

13...g5?

Again, 13...f5 was the right way to attack the king.

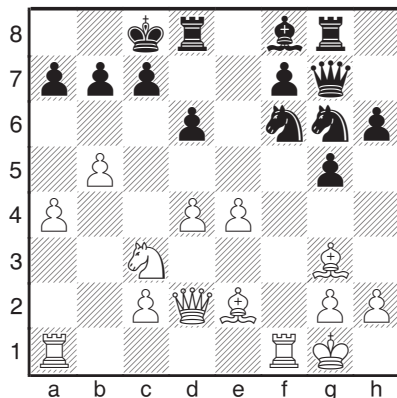
14.♔g3 ♖h6 15.b5 ♘ce7 16.♖f1 ♘f6 17.♔f2 ♘g6 18.♔g1!



"Would you believe that the white king has already made six moves. But the outcome of the game is clear. The dis-

connected black army has nothing to counter the widespreading white attack." (Kasparov)

18...♖g7 19.♖d2 h6 20.a4 ♖g8



21.b6!

"This pawn sacrifice opens up the lines around the opponent's king, a manoeuvre that became typical for the games in our century." (Kasparov)

21...axb6 22.♖xf6!

Steinitz launches the final attack.

22...♖xf6 23.♔g4+ ♔b8 24.♘d5 ♖g7 25.a5

The battering ram approaches.

25...f5

25...b5 doesn't help either; e.g. 26.a6 b6 27.a7+ ♔b7 28.c3 f5 29.♖a2 ♔a8 30.exf5 ♘h4 31.♔xh4 gxh4 32.♔f3+-.

26.axb6 cxb6 27.♘xb6 ♘e7

27...fxg4 28.♖a8+ ♔c7 29.♖c3+ ♔xb6 30.♖a5+ ♔c6 31.d5+ ♔d7 32.♖xd8

28.exf5 ♖f7 29.f6 ♘c6 30.c4 ♘a7 31.♖a2 ♘b5 32.♘d5 ♖xd5 33.cxd5 ♘xd4 34.♖a7+ ♔c7 35.♖c1+ ♘c6 36.♖xc6#



Chapter 2

The second world champion – Emanuel Lasker

Emanuel Lasker (December 24, 1886 – January 11, 1941), the so far only German holder of this title, was also a mathematician and philosopher. In 1894 he defeated Wilhelm Steinitz quite clearly (+10 =4 –5) and maintained the chess crown for a period of 27 years (until 1921) and thus longer than any other world chess champion. During this time he defended his title several times – 1896/97 against Steinitz (+10 =5 –2) – 1897 against the American Frank James Marshall (+8 =7 –0) – 1908 against Siegbert Tarrasch (+8 =5 –3) – 1910 against the Austrian Carl Schlechter (+1 =8 –1) and 1910 against the Polish–French champion Dawid Janowski (+8 =3 –0).

As he stylistically was a pragmatic (see also the ‘introductory remark’ on page 10), we are going to take a closer look at his tenacious art of defense. Furthermore, he could calculate well and far and carry out dashing attacks, as for example in the following game.

Example game



Harry Nelson Pillsbury
Emanuel Lasker
 St. Petersburg 1896

1.d4 d5 2.c4 e6 3.♘c3 ♘f6 4.♙f3 c5
5.♙g5 cxd4 6.♖xd4 ♘c6 7.♗h4?!

7.♙xf6 gxf6 8.♗h4 is the main line.

7...♙e7 8.0-0-0 ♖a5 9.e3 ♙d7
10.♙b1?

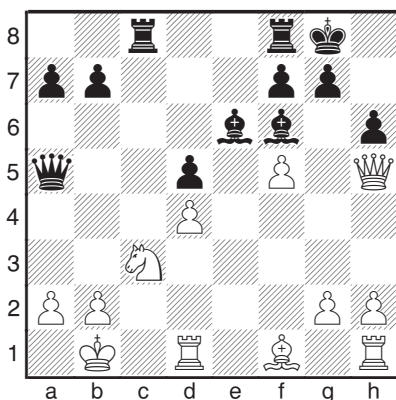
10.cxd5 exd5 11.♙b5 was the lesser evil.

10...h6! 11.cxd5 exd5 12.♘d4 0-0
13.♙xf6 ♙xf6 14.♗h5 ♘xd4 15.exd4
♙e6 16.f4?

With this approach, White will lose the race.

16.♙c4 ♖ad8 17.♙b3 is more tenacious because the black attack cannot pick up speed as fast.

16...♖ac8 17.f5



17...♖xc3! 18.fxe6 ♖a3!!

A really impressive 'zwischenzug sacrifice'!

19.exf7+?

The only defense was 19.bxa3 (19.e7? ♖e8+) 19...♗b6+

– 20.♙c2? ♖c8+ 21.♙d2 ♗xd4+ 22.♙e1 (22.♙d3? ♖c2+ 23.♙xc2 ♗b2#) 22...♗e3+ 23.♙e2 fxe6 24.♗h3 ♙c3+ 25.♙f1 ♖f8+ 26.♙f3 ♗e4 27.♗g3 ♗c4+ 28.♙f2 ♙d4+ 29.♙e1 ♗c3+ 30.♙f1 e5–+

– 20.♙b5! ♗xb5+ 21.♙a1 fxe6 22.♗g4 ♗b6 23.♖d3

19...♖xf7 20.bxa3 ♗b6+ 21.♙b5!
♗xb5+ 22.♙a1 ♖c7?

The rook should better be activated on the e-file with 22...♗c4 23.♗g4 ♖e7+.

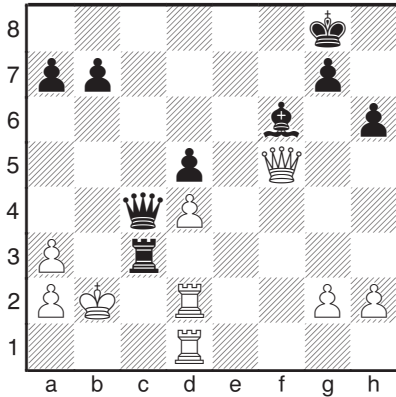
23.♖d2 ♖c4 24.♖hd1?

Instead of this too passive move, the active alternative 24.♖e1! led to a draw by perpetual check after 24...♗a5! 25.♖e8+ ♙h7 26.♗f5+ g6 27.♖e7+!! ♙xe7 28.♗f7+ ♙h8 29.♗e8+ ♙g7 30.♗xe7+ etc. (Kasparov)

24...♖c3?

This is too slow, while the direct 24...♗c6! 25.♙b1 ♙g5 would have won.

25.♗f5 ♗c4 26.♙b2?



The king is not safe on this square, while after 26.♔b1! ♚b5+ 27.♖b2 ♚c6 28.♖b3 only White could hope to win.

26...♖xa3!!

"In the magical world of chess, lightning can strike twice in the same place! One wonders if Pillsbury could believe

his eyes – here comes the horror again!" (Kasparov)

27.♚e6+ ♔h7?!

27...♔h8 28.♔b1 ♚xd4 29.♚e8+ ♔h7 is more precise.

28.♔xa3??

Pillsbury is deeply shocked and allows to be mated.

However 28.♚f5+ didn't save either.

– 28...♔h8? 29.♔b1! ♖xa2 30.♖xa2 ♚b3+ 31.♔c1 ♚g5+ 32.♖ad2 ♚c3+ 33.♚c2 ♚a1+ with a perpetual check. (Kasparov)

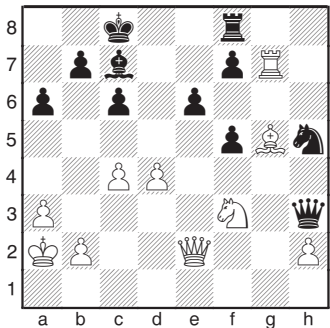
– 28...♔g8! 29.♚e6+ ♔h8 (Sorokin)

28...♚c3+ 29.♔a4 b5+ 30.♔xb5 ♚c4+ 31.♔a5 ♚d8+ 0-1 in view of 32.♚b6 ♚xb6#.

Special exercises 5 (Solutions starting on page 55)



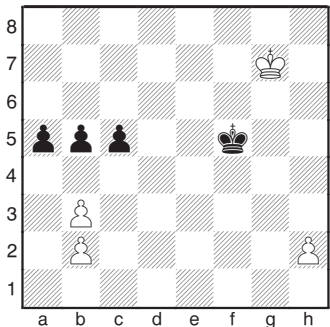
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How can White save himself?



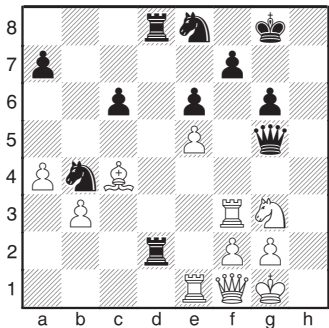
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Can White still save himself?



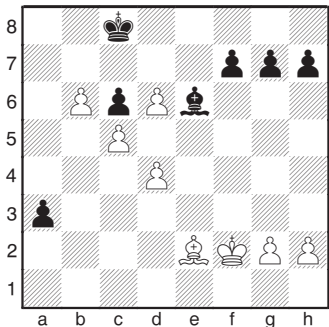
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Black has a subtle 'trick' to play for a win.



8



How can White win by tactical means?



Chapter 8

The eighth world champion – Mikhail Tal

Mikhail Nekhemyevich Tal (November 9, 1936 – June 27, 1992) was born in Riga, Latvia. In 1960, at the age of 23, he convincingly defeated Mikhail Botvinnik (+6 =13 –2) and became the youngest world champion in chess history to date. Unfortunately, his career was often overshadowed by massive health problems.

He is the only ‘hyperactive player’ (see also the ‘introductory remark’ on page 10) who has made it onto the world championship throne so far. Since his style was strongly tactical and risky (especially in his youth), he conquered the hearts of many chess fans and is still known by his awe-inspiring nickname ‘the magician from Riga’.

Here are some of his characteristic quotes:

- There are two sorts of sacrifices: correct ones – and mine.
- Centralize and sacrifice!
- The opponent can only take one piece per move.
- If the opponent attacks one of your pieces, attack two of his.

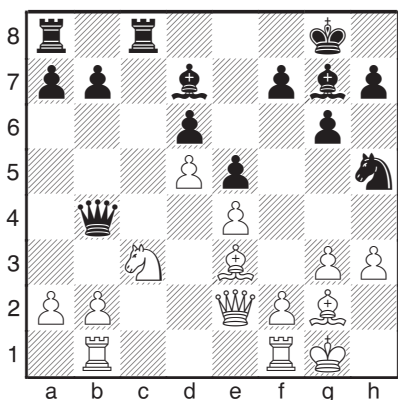
Although this style makes for very entertaining games, exciting or content-rich endgames are of course extremely rare. On the other hand, however, there are lots of spectacular mating attacks and intuitive sacrifices, such as e.g. in the following game.

Example game



Mikhail Botvinnik
Mikhail Tal
 Moscow 1960

1.c4 ♘f6 2.♘f3 g6 3.g3 ♙g7 4.♙g2
 0-0 5.d4 d6 6.♘c3 ♘bd7 7.0-0 e5
 8.e4 c6 9.h3 ♚b6 10.d5 cxd5
 11.cxd5 ♘c5 12.♘e1 ♙d7 13.♘d3
 ♘xd3 14.♚xd3 ♜fc8 15.♜b1 ♘h5
 16.♙e3 ♚b4 17.♚e2



17...♜c4?!

Objectively, this plan is too ambitious, but it fits Tal's style very well. After all, activity comes first in his (chess) worldview.

– According to the computer, 17...♚c4 is the best choice, but since this approach doesn't fit Tal's style at all, it would not have been a good practical choice.

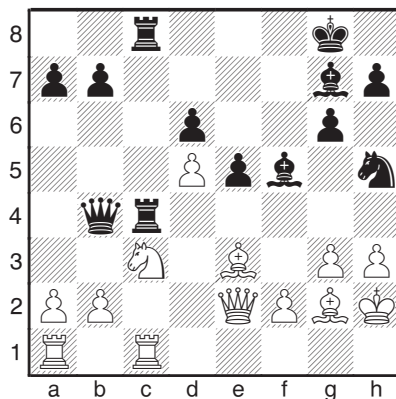
– On the other hand, 17...b5!? came into consideration, because the weakness of the square on c6 naturally doesn't deter a hyperactivist.

18.♜fc1 ♜ac8?! 19.♙h2?!

– Botvinnik misses the moment to seize the initiative on the queen side with 19.a3!; e.g. 19...♚b3 (19...♚a5?! 20.♙f1+–) 20.♙xa7 ♙h6 (20...b6?! 21.♚c2+–) 21.♙e3±.

– Another interesting option was 19.♙f1!?± (suggested by Dariusz Gorzinski).

19...f5 20.exf5 ♙xf5 21.♜a1



What follows is one of Tal's much-discussed sacrifices. From a practical point of view, it's certainly good, because White can hardly solve his problems over the board. Objectively, however, it's incorrect – true to Tal's motto: There are correct sacrifices – and mine.

21...♘f4!?

21...♘f6 was objectively necessary. However, after 22.a3 ♚b3 23.g4 ♙d7 White had the choice between 24.♙xa7

and 24. ♖c2, which Botvinnik would certainly have liked very much.

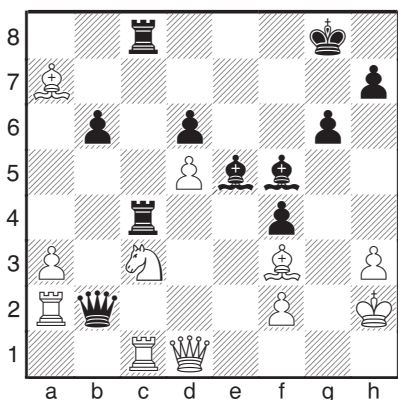
22.gxf4 exf4 23.♙d2?

In fact, the refutation was hidden in move 26 after the correct introduction 23.a3 ♖b3 24.♙xa7 ♙e5.

1) 25.♙f3? is met by the sobering reply 25...♖a8.

At the time, instead, the following line was the subject of heated discussions between the opposing camps.

25...b6? 26.♙d1(?) ♖xb2 27.♖a2



27...♖xc3

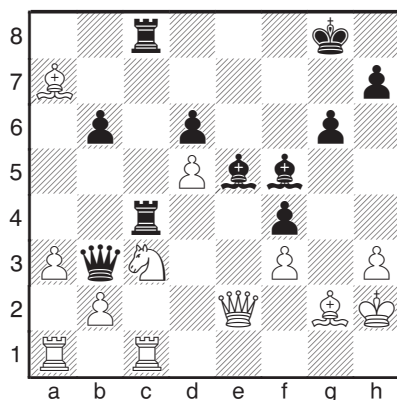
"It's significant that all black moves are of the same kind. With certain restrictions, this can be viewed as indirect proof of the correctness of the combination. Black has an easy game while White has to look for defense resources." (Tal)

28.♖xb2 ♖xc1 29.♙e2

"...here, too, the material deficit after 29...♖8c3 (shown by A. Konstantinowski) is hardly noticeable for the time being." (Tal)

Anyway, Black seems to have enough compensation; e.g. 30.♖xb6 ♙d3 31.♖b8+ ♔g7 32.♖b7+ ♔f8 33.♙d2 ♙e4=.

2) But now back to the above-mentioned refutation after 25.f3 b6.



26.a4!!

At the time, this subtle means of bailing out the bishop had escaped the protagonists and the commentators.

(Tal only gives 26.♙d1(?), which results in a forced draw after 26...♖xb2 27.♖a2 ♖xc3 28.♖xb2 ♖xc1 29.♙d2 ♙xb2 30.♙xb2 ♖b1 31.♙f6 ♖c2=.)

26...♙b4

(– 26...♙xc3? 27.bxc3 ♖xc3 28.♖xc3 ♙xc3 29.♖e1 ♙a5 30.♙e7 ♖a8 31.♙b7+–, Ragozin

– 26...♖b4 27.♙d1 ♖xc1 28.♖xc1 ♙xa4 29.♖c7±)

27.a5 bxa5 28.♙f2± (Kasparov)

Black should not have enough compensation for the piece, although it will take a very long time until White can untangle and activate his pieces with careful play.

About the authors

GM Dr. Karsten Müller was born on November 23rd, 1970 in Hamburg. He studied mathematics and received his doctorate in 2002. From 1988 to 2015 he played for the 'Hamburger SK' in the German 'Bundesliga' and in 1998 he was awarded the title of Grandmaster. As a player he belongs to the type 'activist' – as a trainer and author, however, he is a 'theorist'.



He is the author (or co-author) of the following highly esteemed works:

Secrets of Pawn Endings (with Frank Lamprecht, 2000)

Fundamental Chess Endings (with Frank Lamprecht, 2001)

Danish Dynamite (with Martin Voigt, 2003)

ChessCafe Puzzle Book 1: Test and Improve Your Tactical Vision, 2004

ChessCafe Puzzle Book 2: How to Play Chess Endgames (with Wolfgang Pajeken, 2008)

ChessCafe Puzzle Book 3: Test and Improve Your Positional Intuition (2008)

Bobby Fischer, The Career and Complete Games of the American World Chess Champion (2009)

ChessCafe Puzzle Book 4: Test and Improve Your Defensive Skill! (with Merijn van Delft, 2010)

Mastering the positional principles (with Alexander Markgraf, 2012)

The Magic Tactics of Mikhail Tal: Learn from the Legend (with Raymund Stolze, 2012)

Fighting chess with Hikaru Nakamura (with Raymund Stolze, 2013)

The slow (but venomous) Italian (with Georgios Souleidis, 2016)

The Magic of Chess Tactics 2 (with C.D. Meyer, 2017)

Magical Endgames (with C.D. Meyer, 2020)

The Human Factor in Chess (with Luis Engel, 2020)

His excellent series of ChessBase–DVDs *Chess endgames 1-14* also attracted attention.

Müller's popular column *Endgame Corner* was published at 'www.ChessCafe.com' from January 2001 until 2015, and his column *Endgames* is published in *ChessBase Magazine* since 2006.

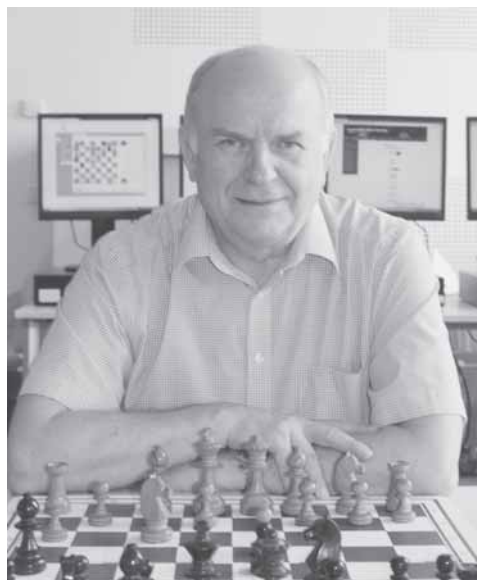
The busy and globally recognized endgame expert was named 'Trainer of the Year' by the German Chess Federation in 2007.

FIDE Master Jerzy Konikowski (born 1947) is a recognized German trainer and chess theorist of Polish origin. He completed his studies as a chess coach in Warsaw and was the Polish national coach from 1978 to 1981.

In 1981 he moved to Germany and received German citizenship. He coached the youth team of North Rhine-Westphalia for 15 years and played in various teams in the German 'Bundesliga' from 1983–1994.

His numerous books and articles have been translated into several languages and published in many countries.

He is also a renowned chess composer who created about 400 chess problems, over 100 of which received awards in international competitions. Eight of his problems have been included in FIDE albums, the collections of the world's best problems.



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