THE CHESS TACTICS DETECTION WORKBOOK

Volker Schlepütz & John Emms

About the Authors

Dr Volker Schlepütz is an ambitious amateur chess player and a member of the Sport-freunde Katernberg chess club in Essen, Germany. He owns a school chess licence and has experience in chess coaching. He has a PhD in economics and works as a teacher at several universities, most notably at the Hochschule Fresenius – University of Applied Sciences in Cologne, giving lectures in Mathematical Economics and Economics.

Grandmaster **John Emms** played for the England team in two Chess Olympiads and was captain of the team at the 2002 Olympiad in Bled. He's an experienced coach who has worked with World Championship finalist Michael Adams and some of England's top junior players. He's also a highly respected chess writer, with many outstanding works to his name.

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Introduction

This workbook offers a unique framework for improving tactical skills. To create a realistic environment, many chess coaches advise students to practise chess tactics by solving puzzles independent of tactical themes and difficulty. However, the often-stated drawback of most chess puzzles is that students *know that there is definitely a tactic in the position* to find. To partially combat this drawback, a few books have incorporated puzzles where nothing can be gained tactically. However, a more realistic training framework for improving tactical skills is still missing.

With this workbook, I would like to fill a gap in chess literature by offering a framework to study chess tactics independent of themes, difficulty and, most importantly*, even the existence of a tactic in a given position.* This framework is created by a selection of games between players with Elo ratings ranging between 1100 and 1700 (advanced beginners through to club players), divided into three separate sets. We do not include expert or master games.

Armed with this material, students cast themselves in the role of a *tactics detective,* just as if they were a chess engine analysing a game after it has been played. Indeed, that is what many chess players do after a game. What they often fail to do is to check for tactical errors and missed opportunities *without* the help of a computer engine.

The role of the tactics detective in this training environment is to set up a chess board and to play through the games *move by move*. After each pair of moves, the student is called upon to detect tactical possibilities that have been allowed or overlooked, *and* to evaluate the consequences of these tactical possibilities. This training is repeated, move by move, for the entire game.

The entire game concept

This proposed training method resembles an over-the-board situation more realistically than traditional puzzle books because each move of the game has to be analysed with respect to tactical possibilities. This is in line with the often-proposed way of thinking during a chess game: Does my opponent's move set up a threat? If not, can I set up a decisive threat myself? This thinking method is suggested by highly regarded coaches such as Gaprindashvili, Heisman and Hertan, to name just a few. This workbook creates a structure where exactly this way of thinking is trained during an *entire game*.

Instead of offering only one or two puzzle positions from a single game, as most puzzle books do, our approach is to use an entire game (or, more accurately, the moves from the beginning of the game up to the point where continuing is no longer useful for training purposes). By offering the entire game or a significant section of the game, *without any information concerning tactical themes*, nothing is given about possible tactical ideas for either side. The student starts each game from the beginning, just like playing a real game. On each move, the student does not know whether there is a possible tactic or not. In addition, when tactical possibilities do occur, they will often be interlinked with other tactics in the same game. All of these factors add up to create a real-game situation, much more so than with traditional chess puzzles.

Why do we use games involving low-rated players?

Beginners, intermediate players and club players do not possess the same skills at creating sophisticated tactical possibilities that grandmasters do. During their games, tactical possibilities are most likely to arise when an opponent has committed a serious mistake. By focusing on games played between players rated 1100-1700 (rather than experts or titled players), the exercises are far more suited to the needs of these players, who must solve the task of how a mistake or even a blunder from an opponent can immediately be exploited. Games between low-rated players offer plenty of missed tactical opportunities and overlooked threats, so the material is rich in tactical themes.

Why is this workbook needed?

One could argue that this kind of training could easily be done without a workbook. A player could select some random games from a database, go through the games as suggested above, and then check his or her answers with an analysis engine. Indeed, if all chess players could commit themselves to such a discipline, this workbook (and many other books which collect material for training purposes) would be useless. However, people like to have a structured environment, well-written solutions and a scoring system. In this respect, I believe we are all chess kids to some degree. Providing such players with a unique method of training is what gave me the motivation to write this book.

What this workbook does and doesn't do

This workbook focusses only on *tactics* and improving tactical skills. We do not ask students to find good strategic moves or to evaluate positions strategically. We also do not ask students to suggest possible improvements during the opening phase (there are many good books dealing with strategy and opening play).

We've presumed that most readers are familiar with basic tactical themes. For those readers who aren't familiar with them, we've provided a brief guide of tactical themes in the glossary at the end of the book, and we recommend reading through this glossary before attempting the exercises. We would also advise further reading of material which covers these tactical themes in greater depth.

Within the solutions to each game, we've given detailed explanations as to why and how the tactics have worked and awarded points for correct answers. We've also listed the tactical themes present in the game.

Volker Schlepütz,
Dortmund,
December 2014

For developing players, there's no doubt that chess tactics is the most important part of the game. Improving your tactical skills by solving exercises will lead to increased understanding and knowledge of tactics, and also better results!

I've always been a big fan of chess exercises which aim to recreate real-life over-the-board situations as much as possible. When Volker approached me with his idea for this workbook, I hadn't seen anything quite like it before. I was immediately attracted to his *tactics detective* concept, and to his idea of the 'entire game' exercise where students wouldn't know if or when tactics existed. I was only too happy to help Volker achieve his goal of producing this workbook. The vast majority of the games in this book were initially selected, analysed and annotated by Volker. I added further analysis and annotations to some of these games, selected and analysed some new games, and added the glossary of tactical themes.

I hope you enjoy the book. Good luck with the exercises!

John Emms,
Hildenborough, Kent
December 2014

Instructions for the Exercises

For each of the games, please do the following exercises:

Exercise 1: Set up a chess board. You have the White pieces. Run through the game, move by move. After *each move* by White, decide whether White's move misses an opportunity for a tactic in his favour, or overlooks a tactic against himself. There are two outcomes:

a) There was no possible tactic, either in White's favour or against White. In this case, go on to the next pair of moves and repeat your evaluation.

b) White's move misses a tactic in his favour, or allows a favourable tactic for Black, or both. In this case write down the relevant variations and assess the final outcome (for example, a material gain of at least a pawn). If White's move failed to meet a tactical threat by Black, suggest alternative moves for White which would prevent the tactic. Then go on to the next pair of moves.

Exercise 2: Restart the game and run through it a second time, now from Black's viewpoint. Do the same as in Exercise 1. After *each move* by Black, decide whether Black's move misses a tactic in his favour or overlooks tactic against himself. This exercise gives you a second chance to spot any tactics you may have overlooked in Exercise 1.

When analysing possible variations, do so without moving the pieces on the board – you wouldn't be able to move pieces while analysing in a real game, so you shouldn't here! Instead, try to visualize as much as possible.

Be aware that during long stretches of the game, there may be no tactical possibilities whatsoever. But be alert, be a tactics detective! There could be a tactical blow after any move. The only clue we can give is that each game contains at least one tactical possibility.

In the openings, please ignore gambit play. For example, after 1 e4 e5 2 f4 Black can win a pawn with 2...exf4 but this isn't a tactical opportunity for Black – it's the King's Gambit for White!

Exercises are terminated before the end of the game when one side already has an overwhelming material advantage or when the rest of the game is unsuitable for the purpose of the exercise. When this occurs, an asterisk is placed at the end of the notation and the student should analyse up to and including the final move before the asterisk. (For completeness, the rest of the game is included in the solutions.)

Finally, set a time limit of 90 minutes per game. Of course, the time required for each game will vary significantly, depending on the number of moves and tactical possibilities.

Solutions

After completing Exercise 2, compare your notes with the solutions given in the book. For each tactical possibility, points are usually awarded for identifying the first key move, for outlining the critical variations after the first move, and for finding defences to threats that were overlooked in the game. Sometimes an alternative tactical possibility is mentioned which is just as good as the main one, and it should be awarded the same number of points. Occasionally there are a multitude of defences to a certain threat and only the most logical, obvious defences are noted in the solutions. The points system isn't by any means an exact science, but it will certainly give you a good indication of your progress.

A sample game

Before we begin, here's a concocted game (with solutions) just to illustrate the format of the exercises:

1 e4 c6 2 d4 d5 3 ♘c3 dxe4 4 ♘xe4 ♘d7 5 ♗c4 ♘gf6 6 ♘xf6+ ♘xf6 7 c3 ♗g4 8 ♘f3 b5 9 ♗b3 e6 10 h3 ♗h5 11 g4 ♗g6 12 ♘e5 ♕c7 13 ♗f4 ♗d6 14 ♘xg6 hxg6 15 ♗xd6 ♕xd6 16 ♕d3 ♘d5 17 ♗xd5 exd5 18 ♕e3+ ♕e7 19 ♕xe7+ ♔xe7 20 ♔d2 ♔d6 21 ♖ae1 ♖ae8 22 ♖xe8 ♖xe8 23 h4 ♖e4 24 f3 ♖f4 25 ♖f1 f5 26 gxf5 ♖xf5 ½-½

For White

(1) 8 ♘f3?

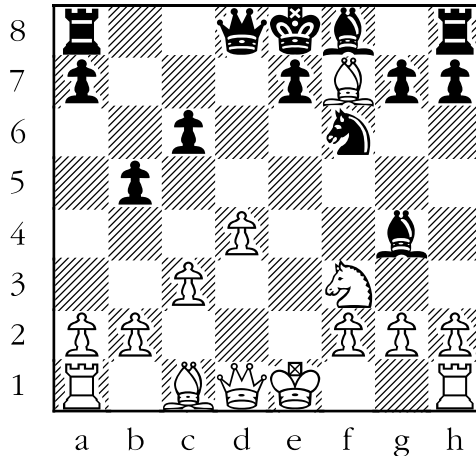White misses the chance to play 8 ♕b3! **(1 point)**.
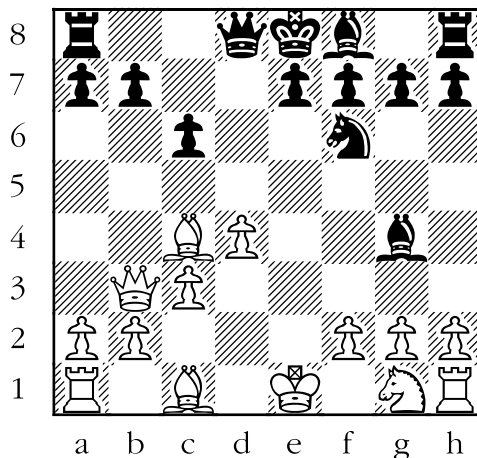
Position after 8 ♕b3 (analysis)

This queen move wins a pawn because of the double attack on the f7- and b7-pawns.

(2) 9 ♗b3?

White could have played 9 ♗xf7+!, a typical combination:

Position after 9 ♗xf7+ (analysis)

Following 9...♔xf7 (9...♔d7? is met by 10 ♘e5+ winning a piece and a pawn) 10 ♘e5+! **(2 points)** and 11 ♘xg4 White wins a pawn and also displaces Black's king.

(3) After **16 ♕d3?** the queen no longer protects the g4-pawn. This allows Black to win the pawn with 16...♘xg4! **(2 points)**, exploiting the pin on the h3-pawn: 17 hxg4? loses to 17...♖xh1+.

(4)
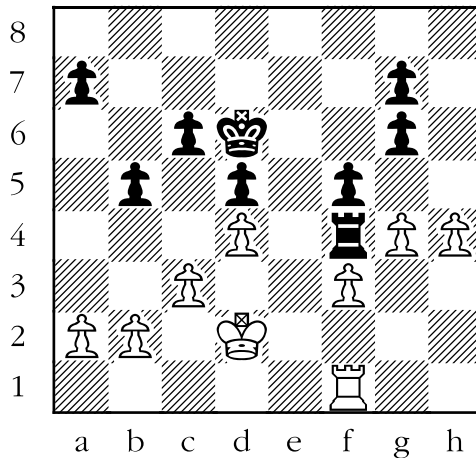
Position after 25...f5

26 gxf5? misses a golden opportunity to win the game with 26 ♔e3! **(2 points)**. Black's rook is trapped and can't be saved.

<div align="center">

For Black

</div>

(5) 7...♗g4? is a natural developing move, but here it is a mistake. White can reply with 8 ♕b3! (**1 point**) winning a pawn, as shown above.

(6) 8...b5? fails to defend against White's threat of 9 ♗xf7+! ♔xf7 10 ♘e5+ **(1 point)**. The simplest and most logical way to deal with the threat is by blocking the bishop's path to f7 with 8...e6!. A good alternative is 8...♕c7 intending to meet 9 ♗xf7+? ♔xf7 10 ♘e5+ with 10...♕xe5+ 11 dxe5 ♗xd1 when Black wins a piece for a pawn. **(1 point)**

(7) 16...♘d5? misses the chance to win a pawn with 16...♘xg4!, as shown above. **(1 point)**

(8) 25...f5? leaves the rook without any safe squares. White can trap it and win it with 26 ♔e3!. **(1 point)**

You have scored _____ out of 12 points.

Tactical Themes
Double Attack, Attraction, Pin, Trapped Piece

Without further ado, let's move on to the real exercises. Good luck!

Chapter One
Games Between Players Rated 1100-1300 Elo

1 d4 e6 2 ♘f3 d5 3 e3 ♘f6 4 ♗d3 b6 5 0-0 ♗a6 6 c3 g6 7 ♖e1 ♗g7 8 ♗c2 0-0 9 ♘g5 h6 10 ♘f3 c5 11 ♘bd2 c4 12 a4 ♘c6 13 e4 ♕b8 14 exd5 exd5 15 b3 cxb3 16 ♗xb3 ♖e8 (*)

1 d4 e6 2 c3 d5 3 ♘f3 ♘f6 4 ♗g5 ♗e7 5 ♗xf6 ♗xf6 6 g3 c6 7 ♘bd2 0-0 8 ♗g2 ♘d7 9 0-0 ♗e7 10 ♘b3 c5 11 dxc5 ♘xc5 12 ♘xc5 ♗xc5 13 e3 ♗d7 14 ♖e1 ♕b6 15 ♕b3 ♕xb3 16 axb3 a5 17 ♘d2 b5 18 e4 b4 19 c4 d4 20 e5 ♖a7 21 ♔h1 ♖d8 22 ♖ed1 ♗c8 23 h4 (*)

Solutions: Games 1-40

Solutions to Game 1
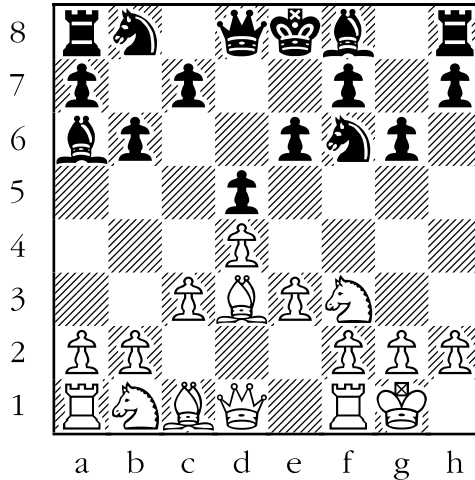
D.Svensson-M.Marttila
Hallstahammar 2001
Colle Opening

1 d4 e6 2 ♘f3 d5 3 e3 ♘f6 4 ♗d3 b6 5 0-0 ♗a6 6 c3 g6 7 ♖e1 ♗g7 8 ♗c2 0-0 9 ♘g5 h6 10 ♘f3 c5 11 ♘bd2 c4 12 a4 ♘c6 13 e4 ♕b8 14 exd5 exd5 15 b3 cxb3 16 ♗xb3 ♖e8 (*) 17 c4 dxc4 18 ♗xc4 ♗xc4 19 ♘xc4 ♘g4 20 h3 ♖xe1+ 21 ♕xe1 ♘xd4 22 hxg4 ♘c2 23 ♕d1 ♘xa1 24 ♗xh6 ♕f8 25 ♗xg7 ♕xg7 26 ♘ce5 f6 27 ♕d5+ ♔h7 28 ♕xa8 fxe5 29 ♕e8 ♕c7 30 g5 ♕c1+ 31 ♔h2 ♕f4+ 32 ♔h1 ♕c1+ 33 ♘g1 ♕xg5 34 ♕f7+ ♔h6 35 ♕xa7 ♕h5+ 36 ♘h3 ♕d1+ ½-½

For White

(1)

Position after 6...g6

7 ♖e1?
White missed the chance to carry out a threat set up by his previous move, 6 c3. Here White can play 7 ♗xa6! ♘xa6 8 ♕a4+! **(2 points)** winning a piece because of the double attack on the knight and king.

(2) 8 ♗c2? missed a second chance to win a piece with the same tactic: 8 ♗xa6! ♘xa6 9 ♕a4+! followed by ♕xa6. **(2 points)**

For Black

(3) 6...g6? overlooked the threat – created by 6 c3 – of ♗xa6 followed by ♕a4+ **(1 point)**. The simplest way to deal with this threat is by swapping bishops: 6...♗xd3 7 ♕xd3. **(1 point)**

You have scored _____ out of 6 points.

Tactical Themes
Double Attack

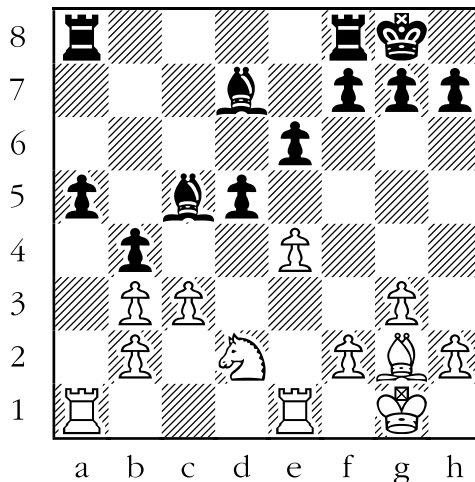## Solutions to Game 2

B.Jurgan-E.Ludwig
Bergen 2007
Torre Attack

1 d4 e6 2 c3 d5 3 ♘f3 ♘f6 4 ♗g5 ♗e7 5 ♗xf6 ♗xf6 6 g3 c6 7 ♘bd2 0-0 8 ♗g2 ♘d7 9 0-0 ♗e7 10 ♘b3 c5 11 dxc5 ♘xc5 12 ♘xc5 ♗xc5 13 e3 ♗d7 14 ♖e1 ♕b6 15 ♕b3 ♕xb3 16 axb3 a5 17 ♘d2 b5 18 e4 b4 19 c4 d4 20 e5 ♖a7 21 ♔h1 ♖d8 22 ♖ed1 ♗c8 23 h4 (*) d3 24 ♘f3 ♗xf2 25 ♘d2 ♗xg3 26 h5 ♗xe5 27 ♗e4 ♗xb2 28 ♖a2 ♗c3 29 ♔g2 f5 30 ♗c6 ♖d4 31 ♖e1 ♖g4+ 32 ♔f3 ♖g5 33 ♖xe6 ♗xe6 34 ♘f1 ♖xh5 35 ♘g3 ♖g5 36 ♔f4 ♖g4+ 37 ♔f3 d2 0-1


For White

(1)

Position after 18...b4

19 c4?

White missed the opportunity to win a central pawn, with simply 19 exd5 exd5 20 ♗xd5. **(1 point)**

(2) 20 e5! was an excellent move, opening the long diagonal and vacating the e4-square for the knight. However, **21 ♔h1?** doesn't exploit the mistake Black committed earlier with 19...d4. In fact, the black pawn on d4 is weak. After 21 ♘e4! **(2 points)**, the knight attacks the defender of the d-pawn:
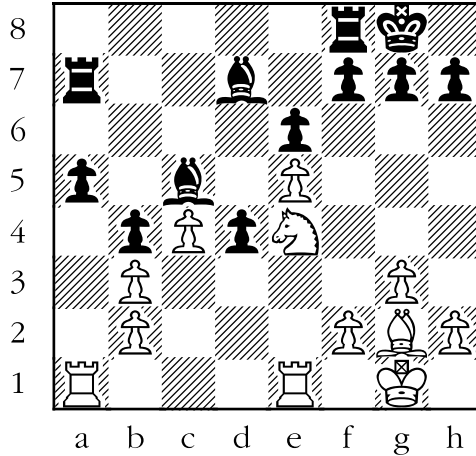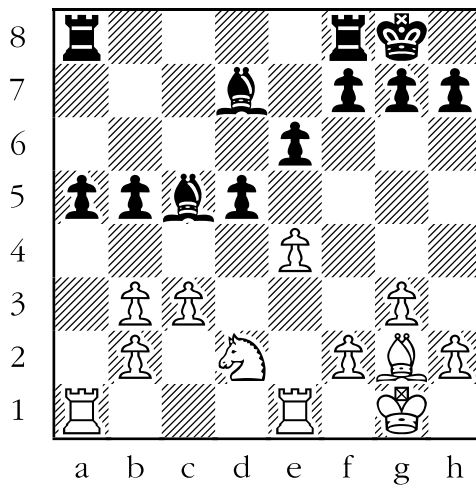
Position after 21 ♘e4 (analysis)

a) If the bishop retreats with 21...♗e7, one of the rooks can attack the d-pawn with 22 ♖ed1 (or 22 ♖ad1), and Black has no defence to 23 ♖xd4 **(1 point)**.

b) If Black protects the bishop with 21...♖c8, then after 22 ♘xc5 ♖xc5 the defender of the d-pawn has been captured and White can gain the d-pawn a move later with 23 ♖ad1. **(1 point)**
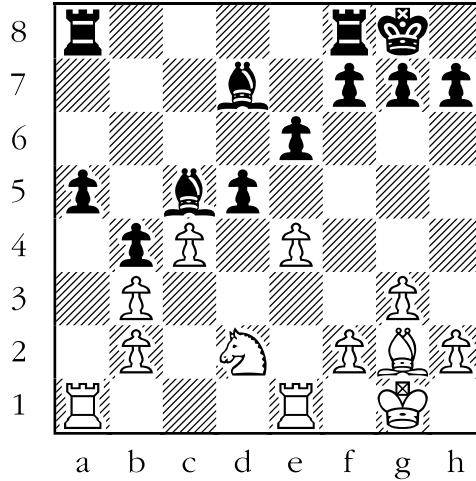
For Black

(3)

Position after 18 e4

18...b4?

Black does not deal with the threat of losing the d-pawn. Black can save the pawn by playing, for example, 18...d4 or 18...♗c6. **(1 point)**

(4)

Position after 19 c4

19...d4?

This allows White a second chance to win the d-pawn, as shown above **(1 point)**. To cope with the threat of losing the d-pawn, Black should exchange pawns with either 19...dxe4 or 19...dxc4. **(1 point)**

You have scored _____ out of 8 points.

Tactical Themes
Counting, Removing the Defender

Solutions to Game 3

Y.Baldi-A.Alessandri
Bastia 2009
Four Knights Game

1 e4 e5 2 ♘f3 ♘c6 3 ♘c3 ♘f6 4 ♗b5 ♗b4 5 ♘g5 0-0 6 ♗xc6 dxc6 7 d3 ♗e6 8 a3 ♗c5 9 ♘a4 ♗d4 10 c3 ♗b6 11 d4 exd4 12 cxd4 ♗xd4 13 f4 ♘g4 14 ♖f1 ♘xh2 15 ♖h1 ♘g4 16 ♖f1 ♘e3