

Arthur van de Oudeweetering

Improve Your Chess Pattern Recognition

Key Moves and Motifs in the Middlegame

New In Chess 2014

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Foreword by Ian Rogers

Most players begin to recognize standard combinational themes through puzzle books. But acquiring a knowledge of positional concepts which set up those combinations is harder to do.

Players constantly ask ‘The opening is over; what do I do now?’ But apart from stop-gap principles like ‘Improve your worst placed piece’, the task of finding a suitable plan is a mystery to many.

The 1980s volume *Chess Middlegames*, ghosted by Laszlo Hazai, covered multiple themes in 4,000 examples and was the finest reference book of its type. However the book is languageless, so a player needed to be dedicated to begin to understand the connections and differences between, say, the 100+ examples of both strong and weak isolated queen’s pawn positions.

Into the breach steps Arthur van de Oudeweetering, who has not only collected hundreds of examples, mostly recent, to illustrate many important middlegame themes, but has also provided new terminology to assist in the recognition of each pattern.

This book is not just a worthy new middlegame treatise but one which is fun to read. As a new chapter begins you think ‘Whatever does he mean by “Inside the Chain”, or “Fishing for the Hook”?’ But enlightenment follows soon.

After reading *Improve Your Chess Pattern Recognition*, a player will no longer miss opportunities to become a Bishop Snatcher or use the Second Option for their rook. You will also become more aware of obstacles preventing you from winning without opposition; if you have a Bulldozer you will look out for your opponent’s Runner.

Van de Oudeweetering’s coverage of the Killer Knight would probably find favour with Kasparov who, before the age of computers, was rumoured to have developed a sophisticated piece valuation system based in part on how close to the opposing king a knight could be posted.

In fact after I’d absorbed *IY CPR* it was easy to speculate that Caruana’s loss to Carlsen at the 2014 Tromsø Chess Olympiad could have been caused by the Italian overvaluing his Octopus. (This is not a phrase I ever thought I would find myself writing.)

Once the reader has started applying the patterns in *IY CPR* in their own games, they will find that the post-opening phase of the game becomes easier and they will more often build up a strong position. Then comes the difficult part – converting that strong position into a win, as happens in most of the examples in *IY CPR*. For that, you need tactics training as well, though fortunately there are dozens of books which cover that territory. *IY CPR*, however, is one of a kind.

Ian Rogers
September 2014

Chapter 12

Out of the Box, into the Future

Sometimes it requires imaginative prophylactic thinking or concrete calculations to arrive at a counter-intuitive decision. Let's clear our heads and learn from some impressive examples.

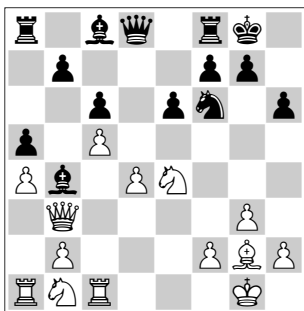
Eliminating the Bishop Pair

We have had a look at White's elimination of the King's Indian bishop on c8 by transferring a knight to a7 (see Chapter 9 'The Deceptive Bishop from c8'). There are other, less standard occasions which require out-of-the-box thinking. Here is a recent example where an astonishing defensive resource eluded such a strong player as Anish Giri.

Anish Giri Levon Aronian

Istanbul 2012

1.d4 d5 2.c4 c6 3.♘f3 ♘f6
4.♙b3 e6 5.g3 ♕e7 6.♖g2 0-0
7.0-0 ♘bd7 8.♖f4 a5 9.♗c1 h6
10.a4 ♘e4 11.♘fd2 ♘d6
12.♗xd6 ♗xd6 13.e4 dxe4
14.♘xe4 ♗b4 15.c5 ♘f6



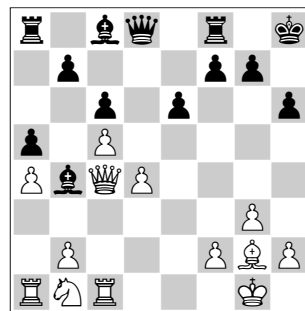
16.♙c4?

Aronian's comments in *New In Chess* 2012/7 are revealing:

'A mistake. When immediately after the game Anish asked me where he had gone wrong, I pointed out to him that after 16.♘d6 ♘e8 17.♘xc8 followed by the defence of the d-pawn White would have gained equality. Despite the fact that at the present moment the c8-bishop is not a very attractive piece, after Black plays e5 together with the b4-bishop it will become a powerful force.'

That may sound simple, but I think for most of us it would be incredibly hard to decide on giving up our strong knight for the undeveloped bishop even if we had recognized its powerful hidden force.

16...♘xe4 17.♗xe4 ♔h8 18.♗g2

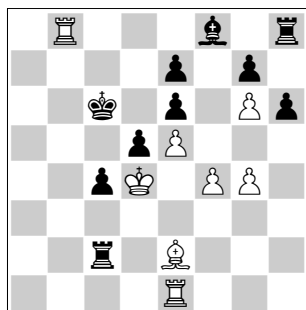


18...e5! 19.d5

19.dxe5 ♖e7 20.f4 ♗f5 and White already has big development problems.

**19...f5 20.dxc6 e4 21.cxb7 ♗xb7
22.c6 ♗a6 23.♖b3**

23.c7 ♗xc4 24.cxd8 ♖axd8 25.♗xc4 ♗d1+ 26.♗f1 f4 and White's pieces are tied up, though maybe not as much as Black's pieces in Vachier-Lagrave-Ding Liren earlier the same year:



Eventually Giri could not hold on after the text move, either.

Eliminating a Defender

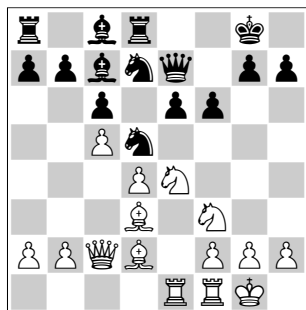
Aronian's comments immediately reminded me of this game.

Vladimir Kramnik

Alexey Dreev

Linares 1997

**1.♗f3 d5 2.d4 ♗f6 3.c4 c6
4.♗c3 e6 5.e3 ♗bd7 6.♖c2 ♗d6
7.♗d3 0-0 8.0-0 ♖e7 9.c5 ♗c7
10.e4 dxe4 11.♗xe4 ♗d5
12.♗d2 ♗d8 13.♗ae1 f6**



Here Kramnik starts the same remarkable exchange: his centralized knight for Black's bad bishop. But, given the chance, this bishop would be transferred via d7 and e8 to g6 and become the strongest defender on the board. Impressive prophylactic action by Kramnik!

**14.♗d6 ♗f8 15.♗xc8! ♗axc8
16.♗e4**

Also, now that the bishop has gone, the pawn on e6 has been deprived of its natural defender, just as in the French positions from 'The deceptive bishop from c8' where Black had exchanged his bad bishop. Over and above that, White's pair of bishops will become a force when the position opens up.

With hindsight this may all sound very logical, but who would have been so clear-headed as to decide on ♗d6xc8 so early? Kramnik slowly improved his pieces, secured his space advantage...

**16...♖f7 17.♗fe1 ♗e8 18.b4 a6
19.a4 ♗a8 20.g3 ♖d7 21.♗c4
♗eb8 22.♗b1 ♗d8 23.♗ee1 ♗g6
24.♗d3 ♗f8 25.♗f1 ♗g6 26.b5**

... and went on to win the game.

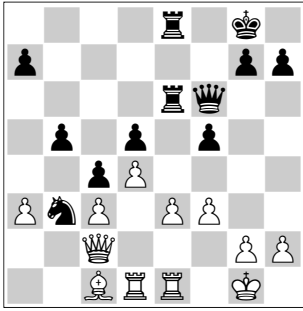
Concrete Calculation

Ana Ivekovic

Mladen Palac

Zagreb 2013

**1.d4 ♗f6 2.c4 e6 3.♗f3 d5
4.♗c3 ♗b4 5.e3 0-0 6.♖c2 c5
7.a3 ♗xc3+ 8.bxc3 ♖c7 9.♗b2
♗c6 10.♗d3 ♗a5 11.♗e5 b6
12.cxd5 c4 13.♗e2 exd5 14.0-0
♗e4 15.♗g4 ♗b3 16.♗ad1 f6
17.♗xc8 ♗axc8 18.♗f3 ♗fe8
19.♗c1 ♖d6 20.♖b2 b5 21.♗d2
♗exd2 22.♗xd2 ♗c6 23.♗fe1 f5
24.♗c1 ♖f6 25.♖c2 ♗ce6 26.f3**



Things become more understandable when you don't have to consider various future strategic possibilities, but can rely on concrete variations. Yet here too you have to start with the counter-intuitive capture of a bad bishop. Perhaps Hertan's method of 'forcing moves' may be of help here.

Although other moves are also possible, the grandmaster now decided on...

26...♗xc1 27.♖xc1

As I have written on other occasions, what counts is not what's taken from the board, but what's left behind (just as a computer, unlike us humans, will never bother about previous moves!). Blacks will win the e3-pawn by force.

**27...♖e7 28.♔f2 ♖h4+ 29.♔g1
f4 30.♖b1 ♗xe3 31.♗xe3 fxe3
32.♖xb5**

So White wins back his pawn, but the passed e-pawn will prove to be too much for her.

**32...♖f2+ 33.♔h1 ♗d8 34.♖c6
e2 35.♖e6+ ♔h8 36.♗g1 h6
37.♖e5 ♗f8 38.a4 ♗f6 39.♖e8+
♔h7 40.♖e5 ♗g6 0-1**

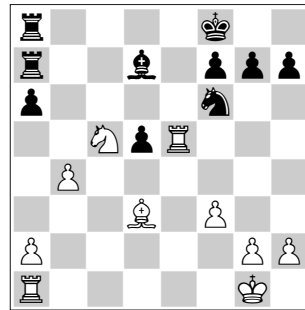
Of course, you should try to make sure your calculations are correct. Take a look at Alburtt-Geller, Reykjavik 1984, where Alburtt presumably overlooked a tactical counterblow when swapping his strong knight for an undeveloped bishop!

Bishop Versus Knight

**Robert Fischer
Tigran Petrosian**

Buenos Aires 1971

**1.e4 c5 2.♗f3 e6 3.d4 cxd4
4.♗xd4 a6 5.♖d3 ♗c6 6.♗xc6
bxc6 7.0-0 d5 8.c4 ♗f6 9.cxd5
cxd5 10.exd5 exd5 11.♗c3 ♖e7
12.♖a4+ ♖d7 13.♗e1 ♖xa4
14.♗xa4 ♖e6 15.♖e3 0-0
16.♖c5 ♗fe8 17.♖xe7 ♗xe7
18.b4 ♖f8 19.♗c5 ♖c8 20.f3
♗ea7 21.♗e5 ♖d7**



This is a very well known example, which illustrates the subject of this chapter excellently. White has created a strong outpost on c5, which is also aiming at the weak pawn on a6. Yet on the next move...

22.♗xd7+

... White exchanges it for the passive bishop! However, Black was intending to play 22...♖b5. And Fischer was a protagonist of clear strategies: what remains is a strong white bishop against an inactive knight on f6, while the white rooks control the c-file. The black pawns on a6 and d5 are still vulnerable and White will always have the option of creating an outside passed pawn on the queenside. You could also see this as converting one type of advantage into another.

22...♖xd7 23.♞c1 ♜d6

23...d4 seems to be a better continuation. Not because ‘passed pawns must be pushed forward’ (yes, Fischer!), but to give the f6-knight a future on d5. For example, 24.♞c6 ♗d5 25.a3 ♗f4.

24.♞c7

With White’s rook on the seventh rank Black’s position looks pretty hopeless.

24...♗d7

Now 24...d4 fails to 25.♙c4.

**25.♞e2 g6 26.♙f2 h5 27.f4 h4
28.♙f3 f5 29.♙e3 d4+ 30.♙d2
♗b6 31.♞ee7**

Definitely the end for Black.

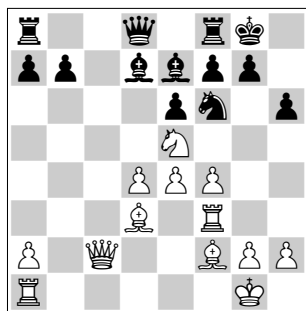
**31...♗d5 32.♞f7+ ♙e8 33.♞b7
♗xb4? 34.♙c4** 1-0

Paving the Way

**Fedor Duz Khotimirsky
Emanuel Lasker**

St Petersburg 1909

**1.d4 d5 2.♗f3 ♗f6 3.c4 e6
4.♗c3 ♙e7 5.♙f4 0-0 6.e3 ♗bd7
7.♙d3 c6 8.♞c2 dxc4 9.♙xc4
♞a5 10.0-0 ♗d5 11.♙g3 ♗xc3
12.bxc3 ♗f6 13.♙d3 h6 14.♗e5
♞d8 15.f4 ♗d5 16.♞f3 c5 17.e4
♗f6 18.♙f2 cxd4 19.cxd4 ♙d7**



When annotating the previous game in *My Great Predecessors Part IV*, Kasparov speaks admiringly of Fischer’s play in

that game and adds: ‘It should be borne in mind that at that time such exchanges of a powerful knight for a passive bishop were most unusual’. However that may be, here is yet another example from a much earlier period.

20.♗xd7

Again, this is certainly not the only move, but it does mobilize the pawn centre and also the pair of bishops behind it.

**20...♞xd7 21.h3 ♞ac8 22.♞e2
♞c7 23.f5!**

Now Black has to do something against the threat of the central advance e4-e5.

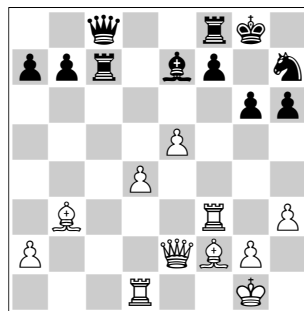
23...♗h7 24.e5

Anyway!

24...exf5

24...♗g5 runs into 25.f6 ♗xf3+ 26.♞xf3 and Black is without defence.

**25.♙xf5 ♞d8 26.♞d1 g6 27.♙c2
♞c8 28.♙b3**



Now it will only be a matter of time before the white d-pawn moves forward.

**28...♞c1 29.♙h2 ♗g5 30.♞fd3
♞xd1 31.♞xd1 ♙d8 32.h4 ♗e6
33.d5**

Here it is.

33...♗f4 34.♞e4 ♞g4 35.g3!

White is not afraid of ghosts.

35...♙xh4

35...♞h3+ 36.♙g1 ♗h5 and now for instance 37.♞d3 also looks hopeless.

36.gxh4 ♖c8 37.♖d3 ♖c1
 38.♗f3 ♗f5 39.♖d4 g5 40.e6
 ♗e5 41.♖e4 ♗d6 42.e7 1-0

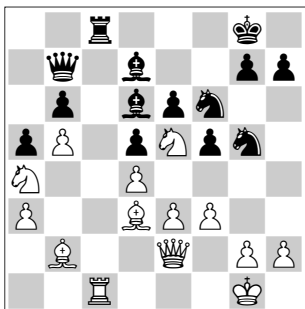
No Prejudice

Here is a recent example, where an objective judgement is combined with concrete calculation.

Peter Michalik
Kamil Banas

Slovakia 2012/13

1.d4 d5 2.c4 e6 3.♘f3 c6 4.e3 f5
 5.b3 ♖b4+ 6.♘bd2 ♘f6 7.♙d3
 ♘bd7 8.0-0 0-0 9.♙b2 ♘e4
 10.a3 ♙d6 11.b4 ♘df6 12.cxd5
 cxd5 13.♘b3 ♗e7 14.♘c5 b6
 15.♘a4 ♗b7 16.♘e5 a5 17.f3
 ♘g5 18.b5 ♙d7 19.♗e2 ♖ac8
 20.♖ac1 ♖xc1 21.♖xc1 ♖c8



22.♘d7!

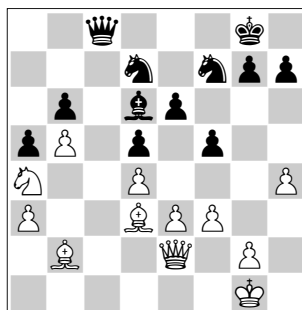
The unassailable Stonewall knight on e5 is exchanged for the bad Stonewall bishop. But as usual, what remains on the board is all that matters.

22...♘xd7

22...♖xc1+ 23.♙xc1 ♗xd7 seems a better try, as the game continuation utterly fails: 24.h4 ♘f7 25.e4 fxe4 26.fxe4 dxe4 27.♙xe4 ♙xa3.

The immediate 22...♗xd7 yields White a dangerous passed pawn after 23.♖xc8+ ♗xc8 24.♘xb6 ♗b8 25.♘a4 ♙xh2+ 26.♙f1.

23.♖xc8+ ♗xc8 24.h4 ♘f7



25.e4

The position will be opened up for White's bishops, and the black central pawns are vulnerable now that the light-squared bishop has disappeared. May I once more remind you of Suba's dictum: 'A bad bishop defends good pawns'?

25...fxe4 26.fxe4 ♗c7 27.exd5
 exd5 28.♘c3?

28.♗e8+ first was called for, and only after 28...♘f8 (28...♙f8 29.♙xh7+ ♙xh7 30.♗xf7) 29.♘c3.

28...♘f6 29.♗f3 ♗d8

Returning the favour; the immediate 29...♗e7 would have been stronger.

30.♙f1 ♗e7 31.♘xd5 ♘xd5
 32.♗xd5 ♙g3

32...♙xa3 33.♙xa3 ♗xa3 is impossible due to 34.♗a8+ ♗f8 35.♙xh7+; while after 32...♗xh4 33.♗a8+ ♙f8 34.♗f3 White is also better. After the text move White went on to win with the help of his passed d-pawn and pair of bishops.

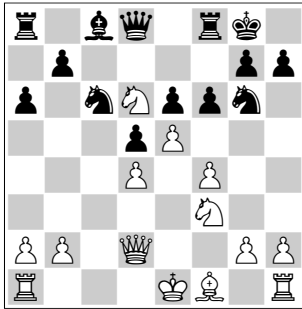
Back to Basics

Jan Timman
Simen Agdestein

Taxco 1985

1.e4 e6 2.d4 d5 3.♘c3 ♙b4 4.e5
 c5 5.♙d2 ♘e7 6.♘b5 ♙xd2+

7. ♖xd2 0-0 8. c3 ♘bc6 9. f4 a6
10. ♗d6 cxd4 11. cxd4 f6 12. ♗f3
♘g6



Mind you, on many occasions the right decision will be ‘inside the box’: that is, the bad bishop should be left alone and the strong knight retained. This game is from the Interzonal in Taxco 1985, which Timman won very convincingly with 12 out of 15. This and the earlier examples might lead you to believe that his next move was a fine decision.

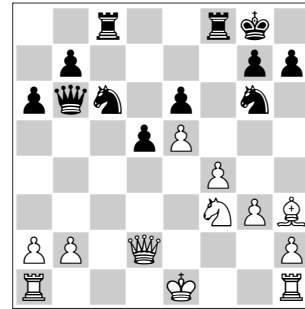
13. ♗xc8

True, there is nothing wrong with this move; strictly speaking, it is forced. The desirable option, leaving the octopus where it is and protecting f4 with 13. g3, fails to the tactical trick 13...fxe5 14. dxe5 ♗gxe5.

13...fxe5 14.dxe5

14. fxe5 ♗xc8 15. ♗d3 ♗h4 is good for Black.

14...♗xc8 15.g3 ♖b6 16.♗h3



Attacking the pawn, which is no longer defended by the light-squared bishop, but here the white king is, not uncharacteristically for this kind of French position, very unsafe, rendering White’s intentions harmless.

16...♗h8! 17.a3

Now 17. ♗xe6 can be met with 17...♗cxe5.

17...♗a5?

Black could have justified his earlier 12...♗g6 move with 17...♗cxe5 18. ♗xe5 ♗xe5 19. fxe5 ♗c4, for example: 20. ♗g2 ♗f5 21. ♗c1 ♗xe5+ 22. ♗f1 ♗f5+ 23. ♗e1 ♗f2+!

18. ♖d4

Now White is OK and he went on to win.

Summary

After these examples I hope you will keep a more open mind for less obvious exchanges.

Don’t generalize! When calculating exchanges, remember to also look what remains at the board.