

## *Master Class*

*Master Class* offers specific, practical chess instruction to help you improve. The booklets each cover a particular topic and are designed to broaden and deepen your style. The topics are discussed in detail and the themes explored with a number of illustrative games.

All authors in this series are internationally titled players who will communicate their understanding and experience to you.

*Master Class*: Pushing up standards in chess.

Series editors: Byron Jacobs & Andrew Martin.

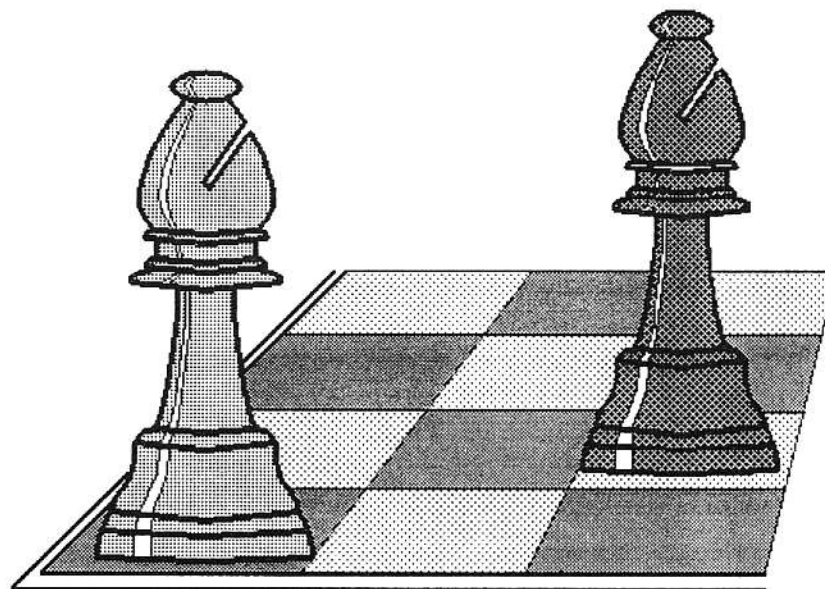
*Master Class* publications to date:

Gambit Play

Byron Jacobs

£2.95 (UK only)

## *Master Class*



## *Typical Mistakes*

*International Master* NEIL MCDONALD

Series Editors: IM Byron Jacobs  
IM Andrew Martin

## CONTENTS

	<b>Introduction</b>	<b>5</b>
<b>Chapter One:</b>	<b>Basic Technical Mistakes</b>	
	(i) Simple oversights	6
	(ii) Pawn snatching	7
	(iii) Exposing the King to attack	10
	(iv) Castling 'into it'	11
<b>Chapter Two:</b>	<b>More Advanced Technical Mistakes</b>	
	(i) Why do you lose?	13
	(ii) Bizarre mistakes	13
	(iii) The danger of obvious moves	14
	(iv) Allowing the opponent a central breakthrough	15
	(v) The weakness/strength of a pawn centre	16
	(vi) Underestimating the opponent's tactical chances	18
	(vii) Planless play/implementing the wrong strategic plan	19
<b>Chapter Three:</b>	<b>Psychological Mistakes</b>	
	(i) 'Believing' your opponent	20
	(ii) Underestimating the opponent	22
	(iii) Complacency in a winning position	24
	(iv) Mistakes never come in singles	25
	(v) The 'difficult' opponent	25
	(vi) Overestimating the opponent	26
	(vii) Setting yourself unrealistic aims	27
	(viii) Resigning too early	27
	(ix) Panicking in the opponent's time pressure	29
	(x) Blunders in time pressure	31
	(xi) Failure to guard one's nervous energy and general health	32
	(xii) Some final thoughts on chess strength	32

## Introduction

If both sides play perfectly, there can be no winners or losers in chess. Chess has maintained its appeal precisely because it cannot be fully mastered. It is simply too complicated!

No player has ever succeeded in totally eradicating errors from his play. Kasparov still makes many inaccuracies (though fewer than his contemporaries). In fact, the only way to avoid mistakes is to give up chess! Since we are not prepared to resort to this extreme measure, it is necessary to find ways of reducing the frequency and seriousness of our errors.

I hope the following guide to 'Typical Mistakes' will help you in your quest towards the 'illusion of perfect play'.

(C) Master Class Publications

June 1990

A MASTER CLASS PUBLICATION

Neil McDonald

Gravesend

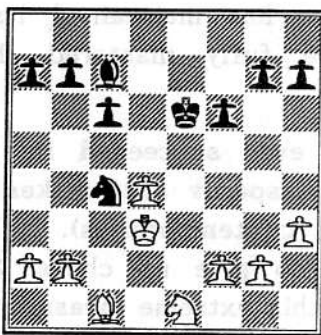
June 1990

# Chapter One

## Basic Technical Mistakes

### i) Simple Oversights

Once he avoids leaving pieces and pawns *en prise*, the beginner has completed the first stage of his chess development. Of course, this does not mean that the strongest players are immune from simple errors.



Lasker v Euwe  
Nottingham 1936

Here, rather than move his knight, Euwe counter-attacked with 23 ... Qa5. Euwe records that Lasker wrote '23 ... Qa5?!' on his scoresheet, thought a few seconds, added another question mark and then played 24 b4! Euwe resigned after 24 ... Qxb4 25 dxc2 etc., winning a piece by double attack.

The beginner has to learn about the power of pins and forks. This is a somewhat painful business. The knight in particular is a terror to the tyro.

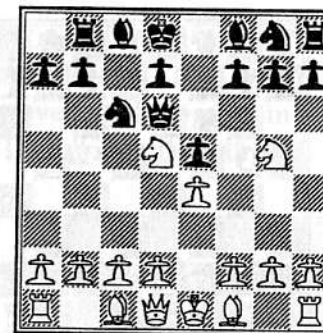
Andersson v Dowell

School Match, St Andrews 1968

1 e4 e5 2 dxf3 xf6 3 dxc3 dxc6 4 dxb5 b8!

At least he saw the main threat.

5 dxc7+ d8 6 d5 d6 7 dg5



'Having been foiled on the queenside White tries again on the kingside. Oddly, Black, although he apparently saw the first fork coming, completely misses the much more dangerous one (king, queen & rook) and merely tries to make the knight move from g5, which White was intending in any case' — David Wallace.

7 ... h6 8 dxf7+ e8 9 dxd6+ d8 10 df7+ e8 11 dxh8 dge7 12 dxc3 b6 13 xh5+ d8 14 df7+ e8 15 dd6+ d8 16 xe8+ c7 17 dcb5 mate.

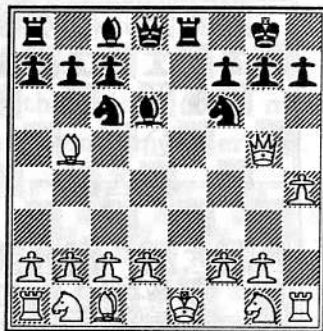
As soon as we have learned to avoid throwing away pieces, problems of development and rudimentary strategy come to the fore. The 'sins' here are:

### ii) Pawn Snatching

This is usually associated with premature development of the queen. A school game went:

1 e4 e5 2 h5 df6 (not falling for 2 ... g6 3 xe5+ winning the rook on h8. But 'best' is 2 ... dc6 3 c4 and now not 3

... ♘f6 (as many a beginner has played) but 3 ... ♖e7! followed by 4 ... ♘f6) 3 ♖xe5+ (a partial victory for White) 3 ... ♕e7 4 ♖b5 (ruling out 4 ... d6, attacking the queen) 4 ... ♘c6 5 ♖f4 d5 6 ed ♘xd5 7 ♖e4 ♘f6 8 ♖f4 ♕d6 9 ♖g5 0-0 10 h4 ♖e8+



Ms X v Mr Y

The triumph of Black's strategy. He has five main pieces in play (including the queen which - in marked contrast to White's - is actively placed without having pranced around the board). He is safely castled and has a ready target in White's king.

11 ♕e2 ♕g4 12 ♘f3 (White is forced to develop a piece ...) 12 ... ♖e7 13 0-0 (and now the threat of mate provokes castling. Normally a good idea, but here 13 ♘c3 was better) 13 ... ♖xe2 14 a4 ♕xf3 15 gf ♖xf3 16 h5 ♘g4 17 h6 ♕h2 mate!

So White was only one move away from fulfilling her strategy (18 ♖xg7 mate). Look at her queenside. Not one piece contributed to the game. Meanwhile, all Black's pieces are working (except the queen rook).

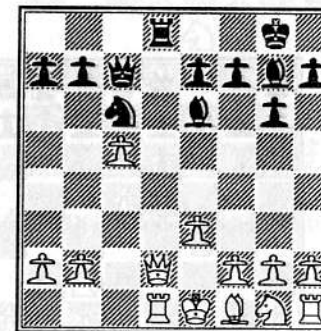
Even very strong players can misjudge the fine balance between 'rash' pawn snatching and healthy capitalism. In the following game, grandmaster Tolush thinks he can safely win

a pawn.

Tolush v Botvinnik

Leningrad 1939

1 d4 ♘f6 2 c4 g6 3 ♘c3 d5 4 ♕f4 ♕g7 5 e3 0-0 6 ♖c1 c5 7 dc ♖a5 8 cd ♖d8 9 ♖d2 ♘xd5 10 ♕c7 This is Tolush's clever idea. Botvinnik, however, refutes it in brutal fashion. 10 ... ♖xc7 11 ♘xd5 ♖xd5! 12 ♖xd5 ♕e6 13 ♖d2 ♘c6 14 ♖d1 ♖d8



Note how much time Black has gained by harassing White's queen. White is still three moves from castling. But Botvinnik must play energetically or White will develop his pieces and win with his extra material 15 ♖c1 ♖a5+ 16 ♖d2 ♖d5! (a fine move. Now, since 17 ♘f3 ♖xc5 18 ♖b1 ♕xa2 19 ♖a1 ♖c2 20 ♕d3 ♖xb2 is disastrous, White loses his whole queenside) 17 ♘e2 ♖xc5 18 ♘c3 ♕xc3 19 bc ♖xc3 20 ♖b2 ♖a3 21 ♖b5 ♖c3 22 ♖b2 ♖c5 23 ♖b1 ♕xa2 24 ♖xa2 ♖a5+ 25 ♖d2 ♖a1 26 ♕d3 ♖xb1+ 27 ♕xb1.

Now Black's passed pawns ensure his victory. The game finished: 27 ... ♘e5 28 ♖e2 ♖b5+ 29 ♕d3 ♘xd3 30 ♖xd3 a5 31 ♖d1 ♖c4 32 ♖f3 b5 33 ♖d7 b4 34 ♖a7 a4 35 ♖d8+ ♖g7 36



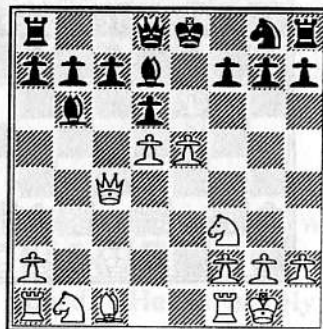
♖da8 a3 37 g3 ♗b5 0-1

### iii) Exposing the King to Attack

Morphy v Bird

London 1858

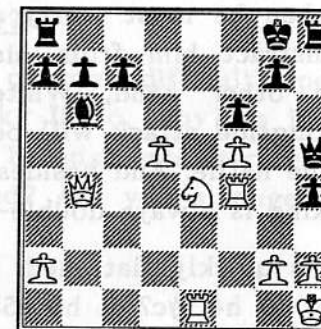
1 e4 e5 2 ♟f3 ♟c6 3 ♚c4 ♚c5 4 b4 ♚xb4 5 c3 ♚c5 6 d4 ed  
7 cd ♚b6 8 0-0 d6 9 d5 ♟a5 10 e5 ♟xc4 11 ♗a4+ ♚d7 12 ♗xc4  
de?



Position before 12 ... de

Black has the two bishops and an extra pawn. If he succeeds in developing, he will inevitably win. 12 ... de breaks the fundamental rule that if you are behind in development you should keep the position closed. Don't open up lines for your opponent's pieces (especially if your opponent is Morphy!) Instead of 12 ... de, 12 ... ♟e7! is correct: developing and keeping the position closed. Then, if 13 e6 fe 14 de ♚c6 15 ♟g5 0-0 with good chances. After 12 ... de, Morphy is in his element. The position is dynamically balanced, but Black faces a difficult defence. He finally cracks ... 13 ♟xe5 ♗f6 14 ♟xd7

♟xd7 (14 ... ♗xa1 15 ♚e1+ gives a winning attack) 15 ♗g4+ ♟e8  
16 ♚g5 ♗g6 (16 ... ♗xa1 17 ♚e1+ ♟e7 18 ♚xe7+ wins quickly) 17  
♟c3 ♟f6 18 ♚ae1+ ♟f8 19 ♗b4+ ♟g8 20 ♚xf6 ♗xf6 21 ♟e4  
♗g6 22 ♟h1 h5 23 f4 h4 24 f5 ♗h5 25 ♚f4 f6?



26 ♟xf6+! gf 27 ♚g4+ ♗xg4 28 ♗xg4+ and wins.

### iv) Castling 'into it'

Malachi v Bjornsson

Dresden 1969

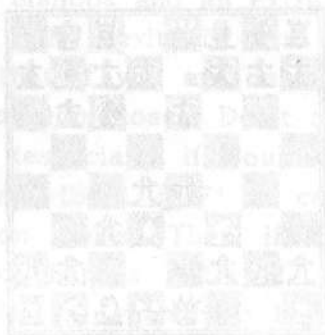
1 e4 g6 2 d4 ♚g7 3 ♟c3 d6 4 ♚e3 ♟f6 5 f3 0-0?



A basic error. White is obviously preparing a standard kingside attack with ♖d2, 0-0-0, h4-h5 etc. It was imperative for Black to seek counterplay BEFORE subjecting his king to this dangerous attack. 5 ... c6 was correct. Then Black can expand on the queenside with ... b5, ... ♗a5, etc. If White castles queenside, then he must worry about his own king's safety. This will distract him from his automatic kingside attack. If, on the other hand, White decides to castle kingside, then his kingside attack will be weakened. The king rook is needed on the h-file. And besides, advancing pawns in front of your own king is always double-edged.

In the game, Black is quickly flattened: 6 ♖d2 c6 7 0-0-0 b5 8 ♙h6 b4 9 ♗ce2 a5 10 h4 ♖c7 11 h5 e5 12 ♙xg7 ♗xg7 13 hg fg 14 ♖h6+ ♗g8 15 de de 16 ♗f4! ef 17 ♙c4+ ♖f7 18 ♙xf7+ ♗xf7 (18 ... ♖xf7 19 ♖d8+ wins) 19 ♖xh7+! 1-0 (19 ... ♗xh7 20 ♖xh7+ and 21 ♖xc7 wins easily.)

Black never had a chance after his premature 5 ... 0-0? We shall now consider more advanced technical mistakes.



## Chapter Two More Advanced Technical Mistakes

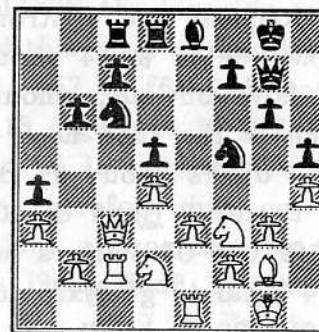
### i) Why do you lose?

Make a list of your 'difficult' openings. Are you much stronger with Black? If so, why? Is it because you prefer a defensive game, or because you overpress with White? Do you panic when attacked? Are you stronger when the queens are exchanged?

### ii) Bizarre Mistakes

The most difficult moves to foresee are backward moves by bishops and retreats by well placed pieces (especially knights). Many 'inexplicable' blunders have been made in grandmaster chess because players forget that pieces don't only go forwards (this is not draughts!).

In one game, Short sacrificed a piece, because he thought his bishop was a rook,



Nogueiras v Short  
Rotterdam 1989

it was on e8 --- a normal square for a rook, not a bishop!  
 He lost because he could not play ♕(♖)xe1+! Short played  
 ♖cxd4 and then resigned.

### iii) The Danger of 'Obvious' Moves

Emms v Hodgson

British Championship 1989

1 e4 d6 2 d4 ♖f6 3 ♖c3 c6 4 f4 ♖a5 5 ♖f3 d5 6 e5 ♖e4 7  
 ♕d3 ♖a6 8 ♖ge2 ♖b4



With a lead in development and a strong centre, White saw  
 no reason why 9 ♕xe4 de 10 ♖xe4 should not be good. 'All  
 moves, no matter how obvious, should be checked' said  
 Capablanca. And such is the case here. Furthermore, when a  
 strong grandmaster offers you a pawn "for nothing",  
 shouldn't you think twice? 9 ♕xe4 de 10 ♖xe4 f5! 11 ef ♕f5  
 12 ♖f3 ♖xc2+ 13 ♖f2 0-0-0! With a winning position. The  
 game finished: 14 g4 ♖xa1 15 gf ♖xf5 16 ♖d1 ef 17 ♖e4 ♖e8  
 18 ♖2c3 ♖b8 19 d5 ♕b4 20 dc bc 21 ♕d2 ♖c2 22 ♖d3 ♕xc3 23

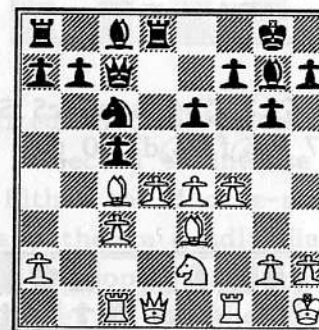
♖d6+ ♖b7 24 ♖xc3 ♖d8 25 ♖e7+ ♖d7 26 ♖e4 ♖xe4 27 ♖xe4  
 ♖d5 0-1

### iv) Allowing the Opponent a Central Breakthrough

Geller v Smyslov

Moscow 1965

1 d4 ♖f6 2 c4 g6 3 ♖c3 d5 4 cd ♖xd5 5 e4 ♖xc3 6 bc ♕g7  
 7 ♕c4 c5 8 ♖e2 0-0 9 0-0 ♖c6 10 ♕e3 ♖c7 11 ♖c1 ♖d8 12 f4  
 e6 13 ♖h1



Now Black should **BLOCK** the kingside with 13 ... ♖a5 14 ♕d3  
 f5. Smyslov neglects this vital precaution and Geller's attack  
 breaks through: 13 ... b6? 14 f5! ♖a5 (too late!) 15 ♕d3 ef 16  
 ef ♕b7 17 ♖d2 ♖e8 18 ♖g3 ♖c6 19 ♖f2 Black's basic problem  
 is that his knight on a5 is cut off from the vital action on  
 the kingside. White therefore has an extra piece on the  
 kingside. The conditions are perfect for an attack *en masse*  
 against Black's king. 19 ... ♖ad8 20 ♕h6 ♕h8 21 ♖f4 ♖d7 22  
 ♖e4 c4 Geller gives 22 ... ♖c7 23 ♖e1 ♕xe4 24 ♖xe4 ♖xe4 25  
 ♖xe4 as a better try for Black. **When attacked, you must try**



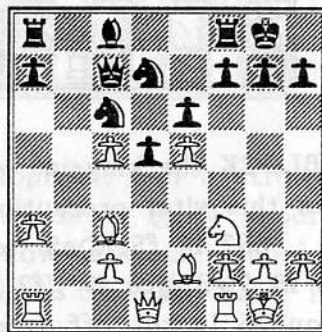
to exchange off pieces. After 22 ... c4, Black's knight never succeeds in getting back into the game. 23 Qc2 Rde7 24 Rcf1 Rxe4 25 fg!! (if now 25 ... Rxf4 26 gxh7 is mate) 25 ... f6 26 Wg5! Wd7 27 Wg1 Qg7 28 Rxf6 Rg4 29 gh+ Wh8 30 Qxg7+ Wxg7 31 Wxg4! 1-0 (if 31 ... Wxg4 32 Rf8+ is the end)

### v) The Weakness/Strength of a Pawn Centre

After studying the Geller v Smyslov game, one would think that a pawn centre is a wonderful asset. That is exactly what Tal thought in the following game.

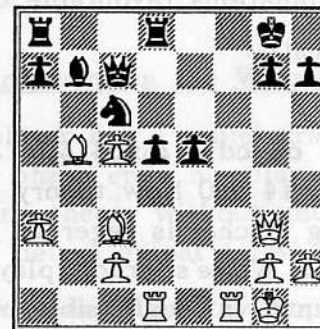
Nezhmetdinov v Tal  
Moscow 1957

1 e4 e6 2 d4 d5 3 Qc3 Qb4 4 e5 c5 5 Qd2 Qe7 6 a3 Qxc3  
7 Qxc3 b6 8 b4 Wc7 9 Qf3 Qd7 10 Qe2 Qc6 11 0-0 0-0 12 bc  
bc 13 dc



Here Tal was tempted to take the e-pawn, and create a pawn centre. With hindsight, better was 13 ... Qxc5 14 Qd3 Qe4 15 We1 Qb7! White can then win a pawn with 16 Qxe4 etc, but Black has strong pressure down the c-file and the a8-h1

diagonal. 13 ... Qxc5 14 Qxe5 Qxe5 15 Wd4 f6 16 f4 Qc6 17 We3 Rd8 18 Rad1 e5 19 fe fe 20 Qb5! White begins to undermine Black's centre. 20 ... Qb7 21 Wg3



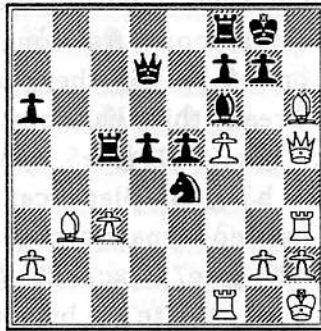
Hereabouts Tal realized that his pawn centre was in fact a liability. It will be subjected to intense pressure by White's bishops and rooks. Either the d or e-pawn will inevitably be forced to advance, and then a deadly diagonal will be opened for one of White's bishops. As long as the pawns are maintained abreast on e5 & d5, they are strong; but White has the power to break this harmony. 21 ... Rd7 22 Rf2! (threatening 23 Qxc6 Wxc6 24 Wxe5, when 24 ... Wxc5 is no longer check) Re8 23 h3 Qa8 (Black can do nothing but bide his time. His game has no dynamic potential.) 24 Qa4 Qb7 25 Wh1 Qa8 26 Rf5 e4 27 Wxc7 Rxc7 28 Rfxd5 (finally Black's centre collapses, and White's bishops become terrible monsters. The rest is gory) 28 ... e3 29 Rd7 e2 30 Qb3+ Re6 31 Qxe6+ Wf8 32 Qxg7+ 1-0 Just in time to stop 33 Qf7 mate. A game in fine 'hypermodern' style. Pieces acting from the wings destroy a classical pawn centre.

vi) Underestimating the Opponent's Tactical Chances

It is easy to be bound up in one's own plans and overlook the opponent's threats. On the other hand, players rarely overlook combinations favourable to themselves.

Fischer v Smyslov  
Bled 1959

1 e4 c5 2 ♘f3 e6 3 d4 cd 4 ♘xd4 ♘f6 5 ♘c3 d6 6 ♘c4 ♘e7  
7 0-0 a6 8 ♘b3 b5 9 f4 0-0 Now theory gives the circumspect  
10 a3. But the young Fischer is eager to attack: 10 f5?! b4! 11  
♘ce2 e5 12 ♘f3 ♘b7 White's crude play has left his pieces  
scattered and his centre is indefensible. Already he is losing a  
pawn. But Fischer presses on ... 13 ♘g3 ♘xe4 14 ♘xe4 ♘xe4  
15 ♖e1 ♘xf3 16 ♖xf3 ♘c6 17 ♖e4 ♘d4 18 ♖h3 ♘f6 19 ♘d5 ♖c8  
20 c3 bc 21 bc ♘b5 22 ♘d2 ♖c5 23 ♖h1 ♖d7 24 ♘b3 d5 25 ♖f3  
♘d6 26 ♖f1 ♘e4 27 ♖h5 h6 28 ♘xh6



Black's pieces are so well centralised that there would be no justice in chess if White's primitive wing attack won the game. Smyslov is not ruffled. 28 ... gh 29 ♘c2 (29 ♖xh6 gets nowhere after 29 ... ♖fc8, etc) 29 ... ♘g5 30 f6 ♖b8 31 ♘xe4

de 32 ♖g3 ♖f5! (a complete answer to all White's threats.) 33 ♖g1 ♖g6 and Black won easily after another fifteen moves. This game also illustrates the danger of attacking prematurely with an unsafe centre.

vii) Planless Play/Implementing the Wrong Strategic Plan

Too often a player has a sound grasp of theory, but as soon as the opening phase ends his play degenerates into one move threats. **Learning theory without understanding the ideas is useless.** It merely delays defeat a few moves longer.

If you want to play the Ruy Lopez (for instance) as Black, don't limit yourself to memorizing the first 12 moves in an opening text book. Instead, study Karpov's Ruy Lopez games. See how he coordinates his pieces in the middlegame, how he parries White's threats and eventually counterattacks in the centre. You must get a 'feel" for archetypal Spanish (Ruy Lopez) positions, or any other opening you wish to play.

## Chapter Three

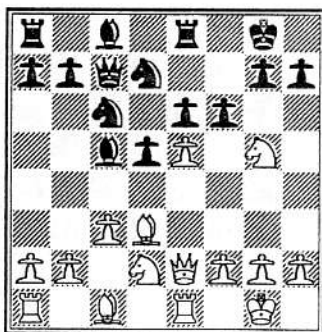
### Psychological Mistakes

This important chapter is split into twelve sections.

#### i) 'Believing' your Opponent

Often one cannot believe that the opponent has made a simple blunder. If Kasparov leaves a piece *en prise* we immediately smell a trap; if Joe Bloggs, who we know is always blundering away pieces, does the same thing, we take the piece without a second thought.

In both cases we are applying our knowledge of the individual to make subjective judgements about what should be a purely logical game. This can be a good idea. At Nottingham, 1936, the English master Winter thought for half an hour and then offered a piece against former world champion Lasker.



Winter v Lasker  
Nottingham 1936

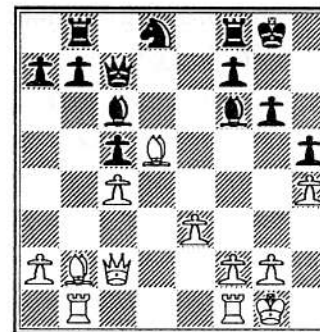
The shrewd old man replied with a safe move that declined the sacrifice. When asked what would have happened if he had accepted, Lasker replied "I don't know. But if a strong master thinks for half an hour and leaves a piece *en prise*, I think I had better not take it." The half hour that Lasker gained on the clock proved useful in the game.

Lasker's pragmatic approach was justified since he could decline the sacrifice and have a good position. But if he had been losing when Winter offered the piece, perhaps he would have taken his chance and accepted. Also, Lasker was 67 years old: this was a good reason not to waste energy on calculation when there was a safe & simple continuation.

But believing the opponent often leads to disaster. The following game illustrates this point.

Szabo v Reshevsky  
Zurich Candidates 1953

1 d4 ♘f6 2 c4 e6 3 ♘f3 d5 4 ♘c3 c5 5 cd ♘xd5 6 e3 ♘c6  
7 ♙d3 ♘xc3 8 bc ♙e7 9 ♚c2 g6 10 h4 h5 11 ♖b1 ♖b8 12 ♙e4  
♚c7 13 0-0 ♙d7 14 d5 ed 15 ♙xd5 ♙f6 16 ♘g5 ♘d8 17 c4 ♙c6  
18 ♘e4 ♙g7 19 ♙b2 0-0 20 ♘f6+ ♙xf6



At the time this game was played, Reshevsky was one of the world's leading players. Furthermore, in candidates tournaments no one allows mate in two. Therefore, Szabo played the natural 21 ♖xf6 (cf *section (iii) in chapter 2*, 'the danger of obvious moves') The master tactician overlooks the simple 21 ♜xg6+ ♕g7 22 ♜xg7 mate! Nor was this the end: after 21 ♖xf6 ♕xd5 22 cd ♖d6 23 ♜c3 ♜xd5 24 ♖fd1 ♜f5 25 e4 ♜e6 26 ♕g7 b6 opportunity knocked again. White could win a rook with 27 ♖h6 f6 (forced) 28 ♜g3, threatening both 29 ♜xb8 and 29 ♜xg6+. Instead Szabo chose: 27 ♖xf8? ♜xf8 and agreed a draw in disgust, after sitting at the board for half an hour in a daze. Which win had he suddenly spotted – 21 ♜xg6+ or 27 ♖h6? After this experience, Szabo's tournament went downhill. The half point he lost in this game was not so important; worse was the psychological depression which his bad play had invoked. Szabo, a strong grandmaster, would have undoubtedly spotted 21 ♜xg6+ in a simultaneous display. But when facing the formidable Reshevsky ...

## ii) Underestimating the Opponent

Many (but not so many) years ago, a ELO 2040 (BCF 180) graded player faced a ELO 1540 (BCF 117) grade 'kid' in the first round of a weekend tournament. The game opened: 1 d4 d5 2 c4 e6 3 ♘c3 ♘f6 4 ♕g5 c6



a ha! The stronger player was Black. The Cambridge Springs variation (an astute choice against an inexperienced player, since it is much sharper than other lines of the Queen's Gambit Declined. Often the bishop on g5 drops off). 5 e3 ♘bd7 6 ♘f3 ♜a5



7 ♕e2?! The usual passive reaction. 7 ♖xf6 was better. 7 ... ♕b4 8 0-0 Now simply ♖xc3 wins a pawn 'for nothing'. But Black was feeling lucky and still hoped to win the bishop on g5. He wanted to get the game over with as quickly as possible and have a rest before the next round. After 8 ... ♘e4 the game was indeed over very quickly, but not the way



Is he therefore to be regarded as world champion? Of course not! But this curious record shows that even the strongest players have a *bête noire*.

When Tal was at his peak, he would always lose as White against Korchnoi, and draw with Black. The reason Korchnoi gives for this is to be found in their first meeting. At the time, Korchnoi was an established master, while Tal was only a promising young player. In his first game, according to *Chess is My Life* by Korchnoi, Tal offered a draw when a pawn down (such was his optimism!) Korchnoi refused and ground him down in a gruelling rook and opposite coloured bishop endgame. From then on, Tal was helpless against Korchnoi. Korchnoi had absolute psychological ascendancy. It is interesting that nowadays Tal often beats Korchnoi. Perhaps it does not matter so much these days.

In turn, Korchnoi says that he had a 'personal' problem when facing the late Paul Keres. He was in absolute awe of his reputation and was beaten before the game had started.

What lesson is to be drawn from this by the club player? Make sure you play the younger members as soon as possible, and give them a good hiding! It will take years before they recover and challenge for your place in the team.

More seriously, it is necessary to 'play the board' and make an effort to shut out all thoughts of who you are playing. Moves, not personalities, are important.

#### vi) Overestimating the Opponent

This is not as serious as underestimating your opponent, but is also not recommended. If you are afraid of your

opponent, you will take half an hour over moves that should have been made in minutes; if he moves a piece vaguely in your king's direction, you will dream up a slashing kingside onslaught; and when he offers a draw (a pawn down) your hand will shoot out with obvious relief.

As usual, the advice is: **Play Chess!** Why should you blunder just because you are playing a strong opponent?

#### vii) Setting Yourself Unrealistic Aims

If before a tournament or club competition you aim to win all your games, how will you maintain concentration after five consecutive losses?

Psychologists point to the necessity of having a 'coping plan' available in such situations. Thus, before a tournament your (optimistic) plan may be to win first prize; your realistic plan is to score 4/6; and your coping plan is to play at least one very good game to show off to your friends.

The very best players in the world sometimes go to pieces after an early loss. Ljubojevic will win one tournament and then come dead last in another. Ivanchuk lost four consecutive games at a recent tournament after something (or someone) spoilt his mood. Clearly psychology is at work here. Note that Karpov and Kasparov rarely let one loss lead to another (though both have lost three games in a row — one in a world championship match, the other in a world cup tournament. No one is immune!)

#### vii) Resigning too Early

Anything can happen in chess. It is never too late to

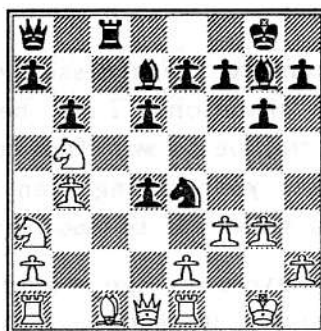


resign! After the following game Portisch admitted that on every move during the middlegame he was expecting Tal's resignation, and this had disturbed his play!

Portisch v Tal

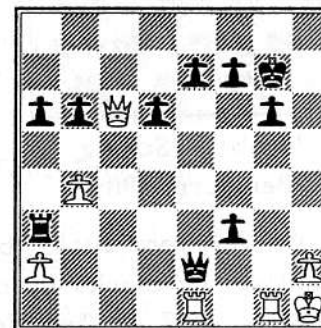
Amstersdam 1964

1 ♘f3 ♘f6 2 g3 d6 3 d4 g6 4 ♙g2 ♙g7 5 0-0 0-0 6 c4 ♙g4  
7 ♘c3 ♖c8 8 ♖e1 ♖e8 9 ♗b3 ♘c6 10 d5 ♘a5 11 ♗a4 b6 12 ♘d2  
♙d7 13 ♗c2 c6 14 b4 ♘xc4?! (the first piece to go) 15 ♘xc4  
cd 16 ♘a3 d4 17 ♙xa8 (now Tal 'loses' the exchange) 17 ...  
♗xa8 18 ♘cb5 ♖c8 19 ♗d1 ♘e4 20 f3! (this should win easily)



20 ... a6 21 ♘xd4 ♗d5 22 ♙e3 ♖c3! 23 ♘dc2 (the simple 23 fe  
♗xe4 24 ♙f2 looks good enough. Portisch is totally confused  
by Tal's play and almost manages to lose) 23 ... ♗f5 24 g4?!  
(an unnecessary weakening of his king's position, which Tal  
immediately exploits.) 24 ... ♗e6 25 ♙d4 h5! 26 ♙xg7 hg 27  
♘d4 (27 ♗d4 or 27 ♙xc3 g3! is Tal's idea, e.g. 27 ♙xc3 g3 28  
fe ♗h3 29 hg ♗xg3+ 30 ♖h1 ♗h3+ with perpetual check.) 27 ...  
♗d5 28 fe ♗xe4 (Black is a rook and two pieces down, but  
suddenly has some dangerous threats. The main one is 29 ...

♙c8! followed by ♙b7, when White faces death on the a8-h1  
diagonal.) 29 ♘f3 ♗e3+ 30 ♖h1 ♙c6 31 ♖f1 ♖xa3 32 ♗c1 gf  
(Black regains his pieces. Now 33 ♗xe3? f2+! wins - 34 ♗f3  
♖xf3 35 ef? ♙xf3 mate) 33 ♗xc6 ♗xe2 34 ♖g1 ♖xg7 35 ♖ae1  
♗d2 36 ♖d1 ♗e2 37 ♖de1 ♗d2 38 ♖d1 ♗e2 39 ♖de1 Draw



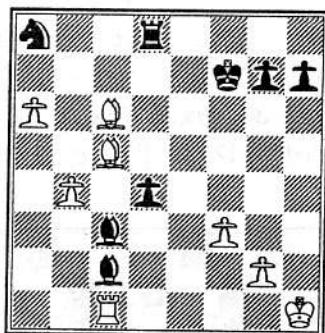
White cannot win. Black's four extra pawns – especially the  
monster on f3 – and much safer king fully compensate for the  
rook).

Players are often unwilling to defend passively. Too  
often they lash out when they should be defending solidly.  
This is another form of premature resignation. Be patient!

### ix) Panicking in the Opponent's Time Pressure

One is bound to get more nervous when the opponent  
is short of time. In a clearly winning position, it is pointless  
trying to rush the opponent. You will win anyway with  
sensible moves.

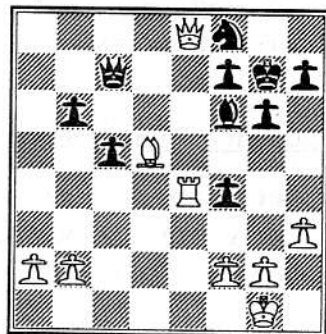
Dedicating this section to one of the joint series  
editors of *Master Class*, Byron Jacobs, the following two  
grisly examples are typical.



Jacobs - Schulz  
Benidorm 1989

Black is a piece up for very little, but mesmerised by White's horizontal clock flag, he cracks up completely ...  
 33 ... d3 34 Qe3 Qxb4 35 a7 c7 36 Qe4 Rc8 37 Ra1 a8 38 Qg1 Qe7 39 Qf2 Qd8 40 Qb7 d2 41 Qxc8 Qxc8 42 Qxd2 Qxd2 43 Ra2 Qb4 44 Rxc2+ Qd7 45 Rb2 Qc5+ 46 Qe2 Qc7 47 Rb8 and White won.

Just to show that *Master Class* series editors don't always have things their own way -



Jacobs - Depasquale  
Lloyds Bank 1986

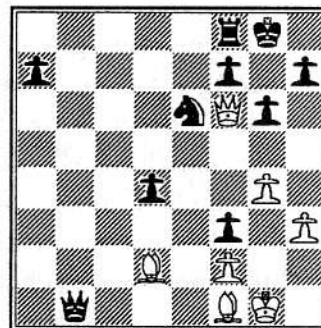
White is winning fairly comfortably, but the sight of less than a minute on his opponent's clock to reach move 40 again serves only to warp his judgement:

26 ... g5 27 b4 cxb4 28 Rxb4 h5 29 Rc4 Qd7 30 Qa8 Qg6 31 Rc8 Qd4 32 Rd8 Qe7 33 Qe4 Qc5 34 Rg8+ Qf6 35 Qd8+ Qe7 36 Re8 Qxf2+ 37 Qf1 Qg3 38 Rxe7 Qf2 mate

Too often an advantage that has been carefully nurtured for the whole game is blown in a wild time scramble. Some players deliberately get short of time to intimidate opponents. You should be aware of this.

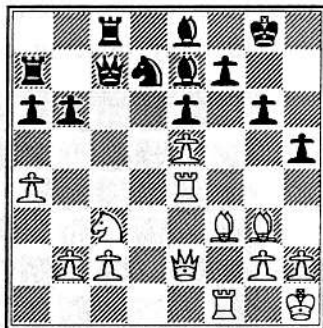
x) Blunders in Time Pressure

Regarding your own play, the best advice is: **DO NOT GET SHORT OF TIME!** But if you do (and virtually all players at sometime or other get short of time), act as if you are **NOT** in time pressure. Just move faster.



This position was reached in Garcia v Ivkov, Havana 1965. White is 'totally lost', but Black was in serious time trouble. Pachman points out that Ivkov could simply shuttle his rook backwards & forwards along the first rank and wait for the

important than strategic manoeuvring - a situation favourable to Korchnoi. The continuation of the game justifies this approach. 23 ♖e4 g6



24 h3? Black's gamble pays off. 24 ♕xh5! gxh5 25 ♖f6! would have led to a powerful sacrificial attack, but Geller shies away from taking the plunge. The upshot of this is that Korchnoi consolidates his kingside position and obtains reasonable chances. The game continued 24 ... ♕f8 25 ♕h2 ♕g7 26 ♖e3 ♘c5 27 ♗e1 ♕c6 28 ♕xc6 ♗xc6 29 ♗h4 ♖d7, and Black was fine and went on to win.

However, be sure you know your opponent well. Korchnoi would not have played this way against Tal!

Ask your friends what they think of your style. You may be surprised at their answer!

Note that we are talking about maximizing **immediate** results. If you want to improve your actual chess ability, then you must learn both strategy & tactics. If you are uncomfortable when attacked, you could play passively on purpose, just to get used to defending passively. But most players want immediate results.

I wish my readers the best of luck in improving their play!