



**#2 – December 24, 2002**

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**After some web hosting problems that were NOT a Christmas miracle, #2 is here. We hope your holidays were merrier!**

Readers so far say the tactics and Q&A sections are their favorites. If you disagree, tell us your opinion at the White Belt message board and vote in the [content poll](#).

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**Q&A:** We need your chess questions games in PGN for our Ask the Experts sections! Send them to [whitebelt@chessninja.com](mailto:whitebelt@chessninja.com).

**FEEDBACK:** Please tell us what you like and don't like, if things are too easy or too hard, and suggest new sections. Post your comments in the ChessNinja [message boards](#) or e-mail us at [whitebelt@chessninja.com](mailto:whitebelt@chessninja.com).

## Ask the Masters



**Q:** I know this is a common question, but I've never seen a good explanation for why amateur players (I'm around 1500) should not study openings. I know I feel more confident and win more when I can get the game into a defense I have studied and other times I feel like I was lost after 8-10 moves. – *W. Muhanna*

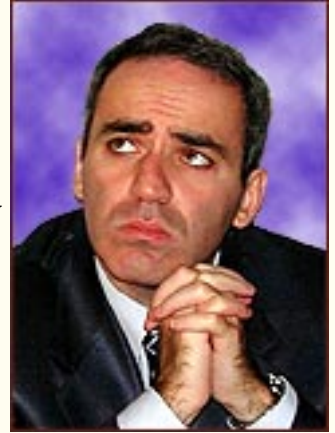
**A:** When a book or a coach tells you not to study the openings, that doesn't mean not to study the opening of the game. Every chess student should pay particular attention to the first 10 moves in order to have a fighting chance in the next 50. There is a big difference between THE openings (Sicilian, Ruy Lopez, Trompowsky) and opening principles (space, the center, development).

**An opening is just a specific sequence with a name.** It can be comforting to memorize a few lines and play a position that you are familiar with. At the top level of international chess, Grandmasters must memorize thousands of moves in hundreds of variations. The problem for a White Belt is that 1) you have limited study time, 2) you want to get the most kick-butt for

your study time, 3) you want to improve your game for the long run.

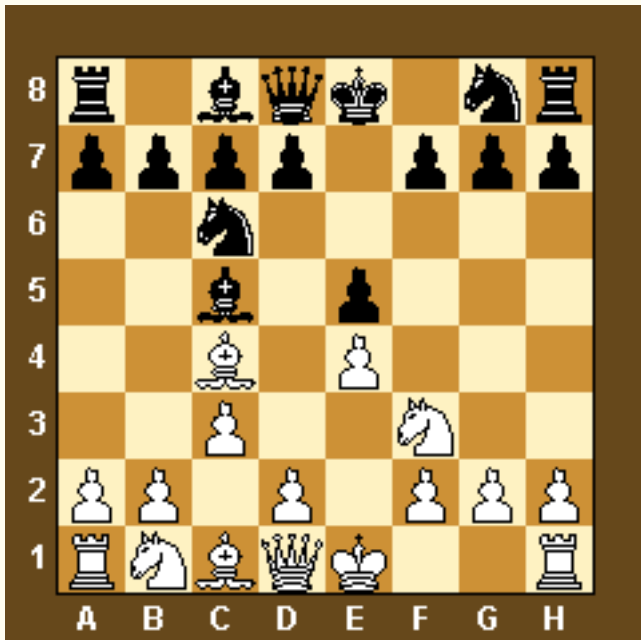
There are many other things to study that will earn you more wins and improve your chess faster than memorizing openings and trying to play the same few all the time. **This means tactics and endgames in particular.** They will be important in every game you play with both colors and regardless of your opponent's opening choice.

**Confidence is important, and playing the same thing all the time does give you confidence in that line.** But you'll feel like a fish out of water when your opponent plays something different. Plus, what if your opponent knows the same line better than you do!? Unlike **Kasparov**, you don't have time to study every possible move in every position and you don't have a full-time trainer to help you. If you use your study time wisely you will feel more comfortable in EVERY position because you can apply general principles and concrete calculation.



**This doesn't mean you should be intentionally ignorant of how others play.** Studying master games will teach you all you need to know. Wait until you are expert level before filling your shelves with books on the openings.

**Let's take an opening loved by amateurs (and a few GMs!) around the world, the Giuoco Piano.** 1.e4 e5 2.Nf3 Nc6 3.Bc4 Bc5. At this point I can hear a few groans out there because after easy moves like d3, d6, Nc3, Nf6, etc. it is about as exciting as a Meg Ryan movie.



**Maybe you can remember when you found out that you could play 4.c3 with white! (diagram)**

Maybe you're seeing it now for the first time. How cool! Instead of routine symmetrical moves, white prepares the devastating push d4 in the center, hitting the c5 bishop and threatening to push to d5.

Black has to react very precisely to combat this brutally simple plan. Suddenly white has many options, including various gambits for attacking chances. The most popular line is 4...Nf6 5.d4 exd4 6.cxd4 Bb4+ 7.Nc3 Nxe4 8.0-0 Bxc3 9.d5!? with a wild position that is more *Terminator 2* than *When Harry Met Sally*.

**No, a 1500 should not be expected to come up with all of that on his own from scratch.** But after you see the move 4.c3 planning d4 you can apply that powerful concept in similar positions, with white and black.

If you are losing after the first 10 moves the problem is with your basics, not your openings. Develop your pieces, fight for the center, protect your king, and don't get too greedy!

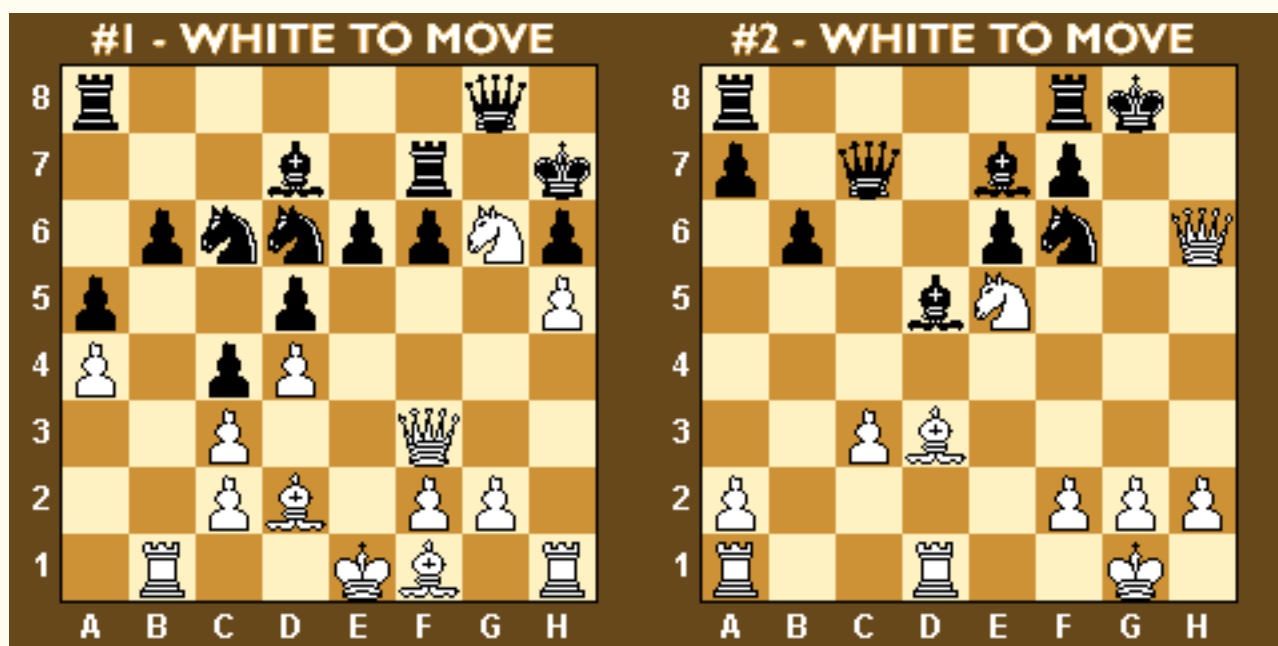
## The Cornered King

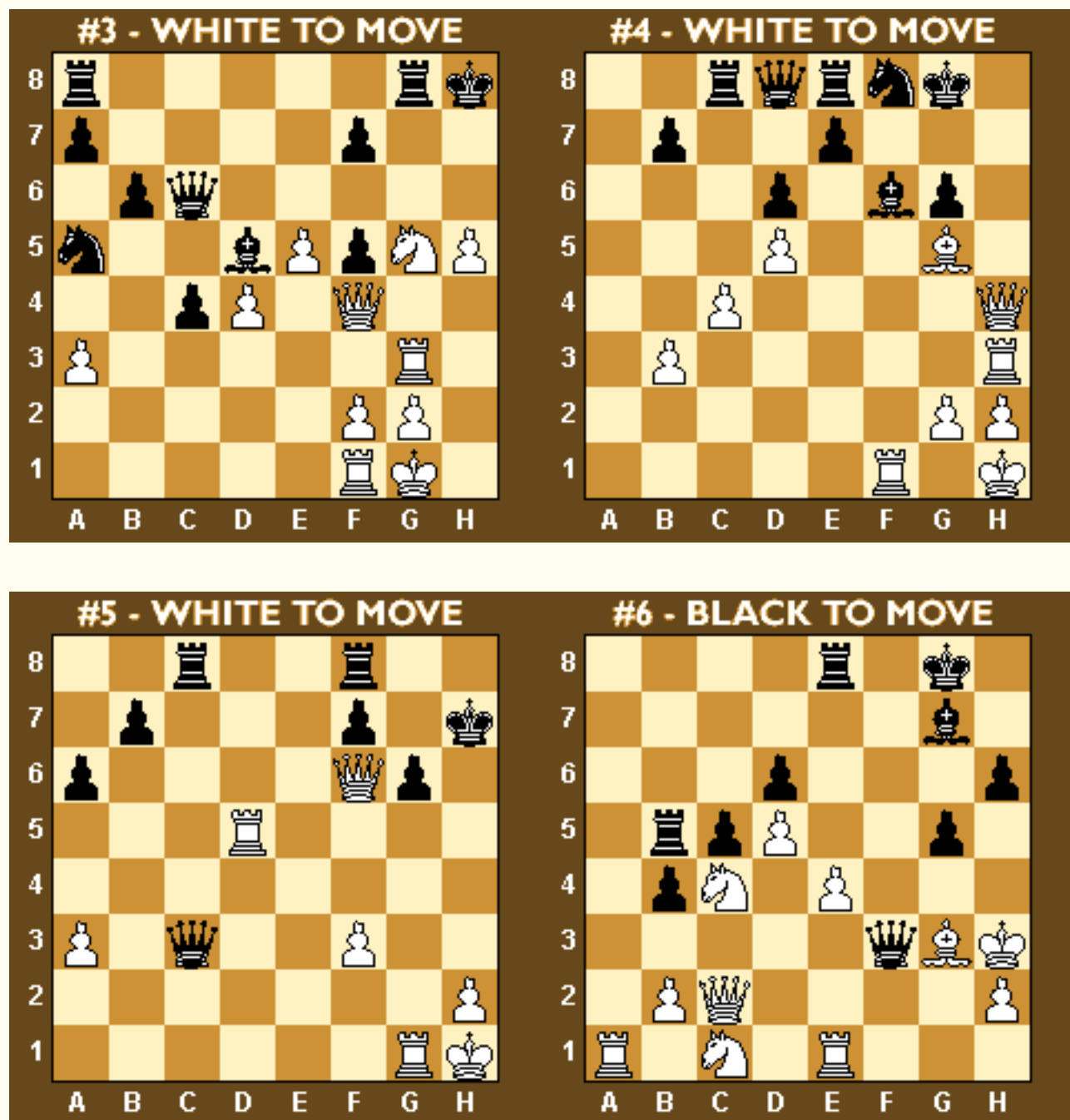
**The story:** You see a tempting sacrifice to rip apart the protection around the enemy king. Your queen will be able to move in close, there are checks everywhere. What could possibly go wrong?

**Sacrifices against the pawns in front of the king are often more intuitive than concrete.** This doesn't mean you should crash your bishop into the enemy h-pawn the first chance you get. If you win, it was a sacrifice, if you lose, it was a blunder. Some guidelines to help you sacrifice for fun and profit:

- 1)** You should be able to bring more pieces into the attack than your opponent has pieces available to defend.
- 2)** Can you force a perpetual check at some point? Having this possibility in reserve allows you to move ahead and then dig a little deeper to look for a win.
- 3)** Does your opponent have a nasty counterattack or a check that will allow him to force exchanges? Making sure your own king is safe before launching into kamikaze mode is a good idea. Sometimes you don't have time for this, but then you'd better make sure your opponent won't beat you to the checkmate.

**Most of the positions below are either before or after a sacrifice to open up the king.** Find the best move for the side to move. Look at the entire line carefully. The answers are at the end of the page, but don't check them until you've spent at least a few minutes on each position.





**[Play over the positions and solutions online](#)**

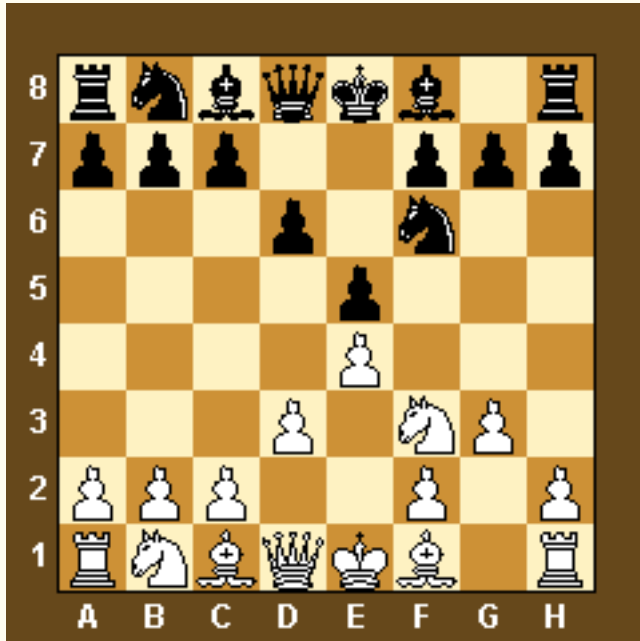
Analyze This 

**Yes, we've been hanging out over at [Playchess.com](#) again, peeking at some of the non-GMs in action. Let's see if we can learn from the mistakes of others instead of from our own mistakes for once!**

## shamwari (1622) - banditi (1676)

Playchess.com, 12/2002

**1.Nf3 d6 2.g3 e6 3.d3** What, doesn't anybody want control of the center? Both sides seem set on playing familiar moves instead of logical ones. d3 can't be better than d4! **3...Nf6 4.e4 e5** At the start of game black is down one tempo. Now in only four moves black is down two tempi. It took this pawn two moves to get to where it could have gone in one. Black is lucky that White is playing a passive system.

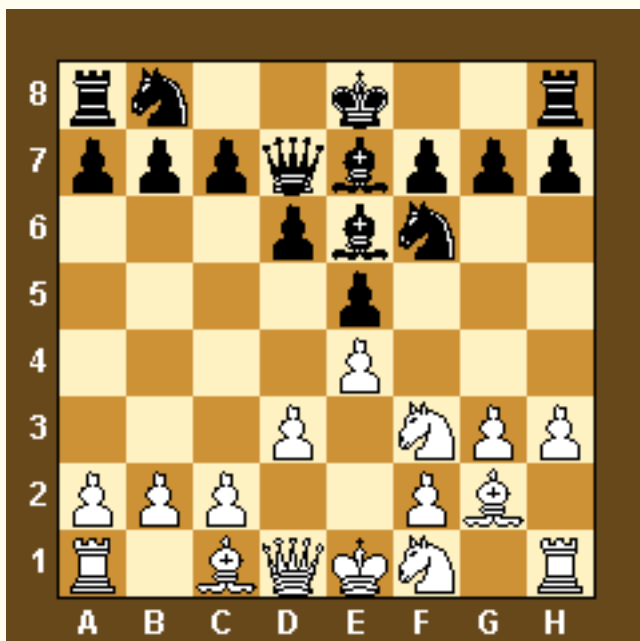


**5.Bg2 Bg4 6.Nbd2** Still single-mindedly playing the moves from this system instead of looking at the board. Why not Be3 first? Now the knight blocks in the bishop. **6...Qd7 7.h3 Be6** Why play the bishop out there to pin and then retreat it to where White can trade it off? Be consistent or you waste time.

**8.Nf1** Hard to explain this one. Two moves to get to f1? Maybe White is dreaming of Ne3-f5, or just wanted to get out of the way of the c1 bishop. Time is of the essence in the opening. You can't count on your opponent to waste time.

[ 8.Ng5 Getting the knight out of the way and exchanging off the annoying bishop that is preventing White from castling due to the attack on the h3

pawn.] **8...Be7** Black has now developed four pieces to White's two. (I'm not going to count that f1 knight.)



**9.g4** When you are behind in development you need to get caught up, not push pawns. This move just creates a huge weakness in the white camp. **9...h5 10.g5 Nh7 11.h4 f6** Black plays very consistently, inviting the white pawns forward and then attacking them head-on. The old saying is that open lines favor the better developed side, and here that is Black. Still, there was no need to rush this and getting his b8 knight out and castling queenside first would have been more solid.

**12.Ng3 fxg5 13.hxg5** Augh! The dreaded automatic recapture. Both players assumed White had to take on g5 and neither player looked at the strong pawn grab **13.Nxh5**, threatening to take another pawn on g7 with check.

Very few moves in a chess game are completely forced, look around for a second even after a



piece has been captured. [ 13.Nxh5] **13...Bg4** Protecting the pawn with ..g6 was logical. Why give away free pawns? Unless you can generate a stronger counter-threat, don't give up material.



**14.Nxh5 Bxg5?** A major blunder. Black completely misses the discovered attack on the h-file. His rook is unprotected, which should have been his first clue. Wouldn't it be nice to have that b8 knight on c6 and the king on c8 safely castled? **15.Bxg5 Nxg5 16.Nxg7+??**

White returns the favor with interest. Nf6+ was winning, now the queen captures the free knight and protects the rook on h8. [ 16.Nf6+! gxf6 17.Rxh8+ Ke7 and White is winning easily.]

**16...Qxg7 17.Rxh8+ Qxh8** White has lost a piece and now the pin on the Nf3 will cost him another one sooner or later. White prefers sooner. **18.Qd2 Nxf3+ 19.Bxf3 Bxf3** With two extra pieces there isn't a lot

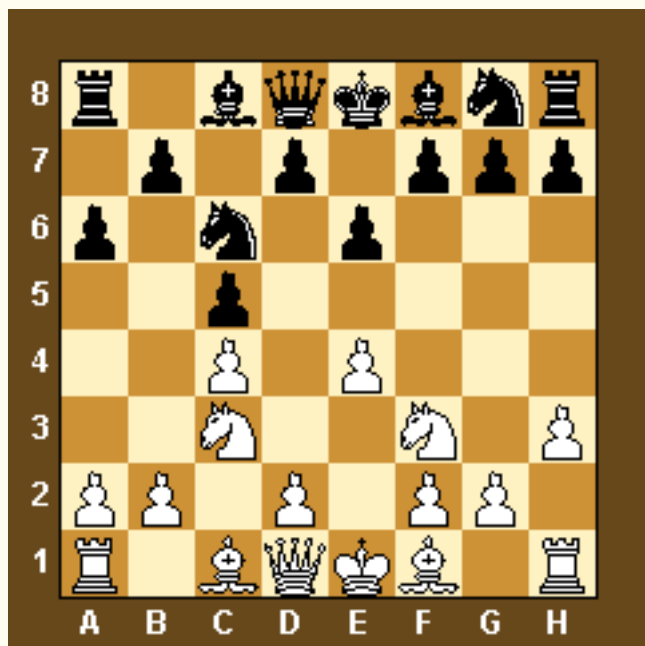
to analyze. **0-1** (Eventually)

## GAME 2

**MALISEVSCHI (1789) - Schorse (1688)**

**Playchess.com 12/2002**

**1.e4 c5 2.Nf3 a6** Playing the very sharp Sicilian is dangerous enough. Playing a non-developing move like this one on move two is asking for a karate chop in the nose. **3.c4** White clamps down on d5 and b5. It will be hard for Black to develop. **3...Nc6 4.Nc3 e6** Apparently preparing to play ..d5 anyway.

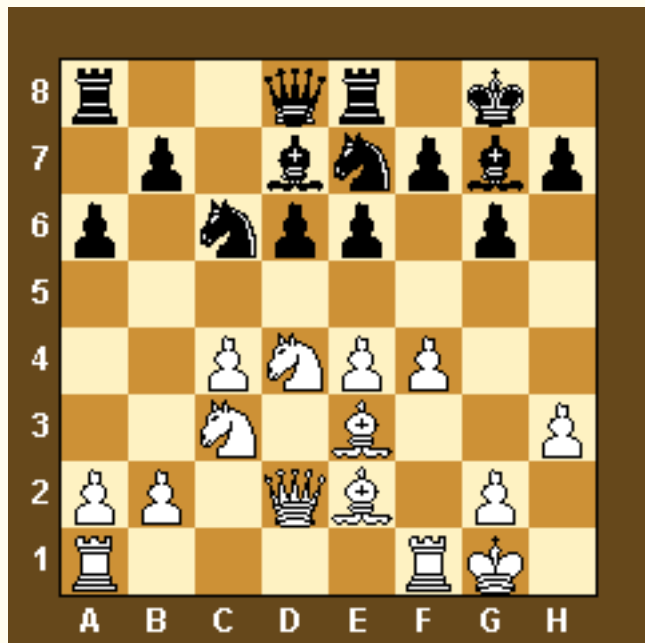


**5.h3** What is this? A completely useless move, a total waste of time. With a lead in space and development, the position was begging for d4. Every move should have a clear purpose in the opening, a purpose YOU can understand. Don't tell me about cryptic pawn pushes in GM games because THEY know why they are making them. I defy anyone to explain 5.h3 here!

**5...Nge7** Gumming up White's plan with ..Nd4 was the way to take advantage of 5.h3. **6.d4 cxd4**

**7.Nxd4 d6 8.Be3 g6** A very slow plan of development. One of the cardinal rules for defending is to exchange pieces when you have the chance, especially if you have a cramped position. Capturing on d4 and then playing Nc6 would have given Black some room to breathe.

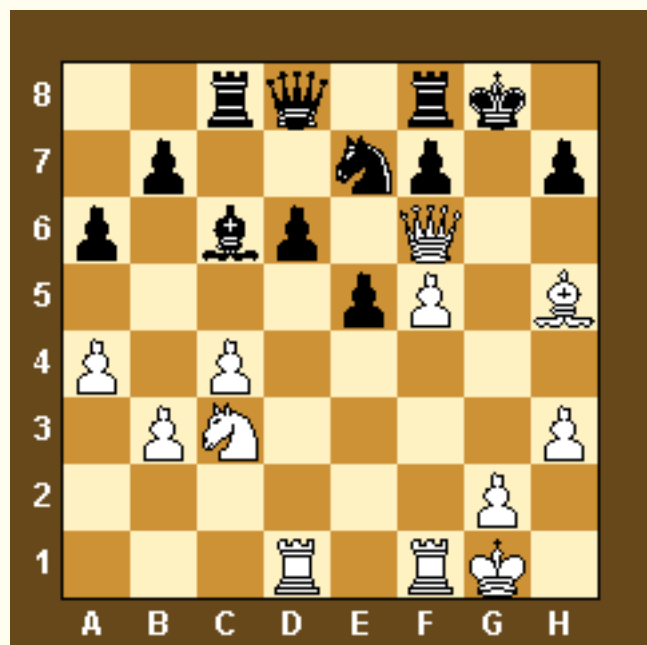
**9.Be2 Bg7 10.0-0 0-0 11.Qd2 Re8 12.Bf3** A waste of time, considering Black's response. White should be hammering the weak spot in Black's position, the d6 pawn. Rad1, for example. [ 12.Rad1 d5 13.exd5 exd5 14.Nxc6 bxc6 15.cxd5 Nxd5 16.Nxd5 cxd5 17.Bf3 Black will have trouble holding the isolated pawn.] **12...Ne5 13.Be2 Bd7 14.f4 N5c6**



**15.a4** Not a bad move, continuing to clamp down on the queenside. But White should be focusing on the d-file, which he controls and where the weak black d-pawn is sitting. Nf3 followed by bringing a rook to the d-file would have been hard to meet. Find the weaknesses and hit them! **15...Rc8 16.b3** Another wasted move. What is White protecting? Who is attacking here, White or Black!? This move makes the Bg7 much stronger.

**16...e5** A fine idea. If White isn't going to play in the center, Black will. **17.Nxc6 Bxc6 18.f5 gxf5 19.exf5 Bf6?** The sudden activity on the kingside makes Black panic. Fearing the f6 fork he gives up on his own counterplay. Remember to look for your own threats when you are attacked. Black could have fought back by finally playing the move of his dreams, ..d5! [

19...d5 20.f6 d4 White should still have an edge, but it's a very complicated position with chances for both sides. Certainly better than a passive defense.] **20.Bg5 Bxg5 21.Qxg5+ Kh8 22.Qf6+ Kg8 23.Bh5 Rf8 24.Rad1**

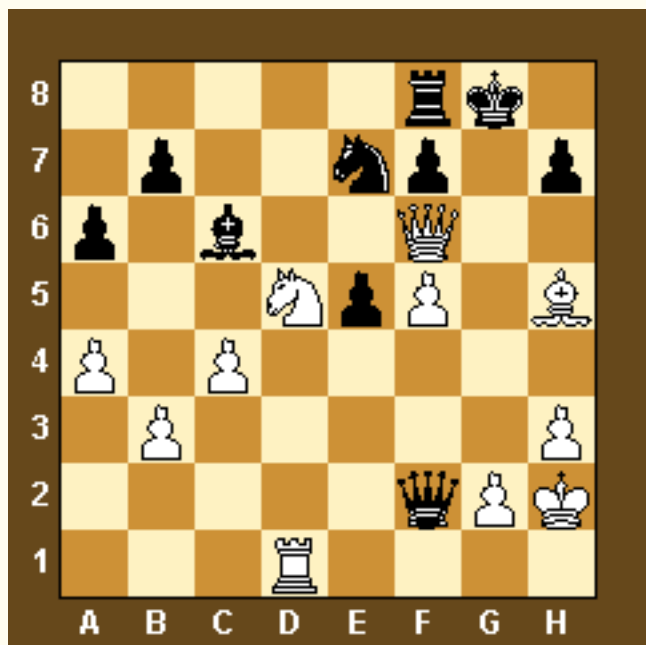


**24...Qc7** Again too passive. If you're going to go down, do it in a blaze of glory and give your opponent a chance to go wrong. Sitting there like a target hoping he misses obvious moves isn't going to work.

[ 24...Qb6+ 25.Kh2 Qxb3] **25.Rxd6** White grabs a pawn instead of going for the quick kill with Rd3 planning Rg3. When you have the enemy king pinned down, look for ways to finish him off.

**25...Rcd8 26.Rxd8 Qxd8 27.Rd1 Qb6+ 28.Kh2 Qf2** This mate in one threat is a decent last gasp attempt, but it also leaves the back-rank wide open! It's mate, but for White.

**29.Nd5?** Panicked by the attack on his king, White forgets his own attack. DON'T PANIC!! [Now it's mate: 29.Bxf7+ Rxf7 30.Rd8+ Be8 31.Rxe8+ Rf8 32.Rxf8#]



**29...Nxf5??** Allowing another mate (or losing the queen). Black's last chance to survive was that old favorite: chop wood. Exchanging the attacking forces with ..Bxd5 was best.

[ 29...Bxd5 30.cxd5 Nxf5 31.Qg5+ Kh8 Black is still alive! It's not pretty, but at least he survives to battle into an endgame.] **30.Qxf5** [ 30.Ne7+ Nxe7 31.Bxf7+ Rxf7 32.Rd8+ Be8 33.Rxe8+ Rf8 34.Rxf8# Back rank again!]

**30...Qxf5 31.Ne7+ Kg7 32.Nxf5+** White chooses a pretty liquidation into an endgame with an extra piece. **32...Kf6 33.g4 Re8 34.Kg3 Kg5 35.h4+ Kf6 36.a5 e4** Black elects ritual suicide. A cute mate to finish. **37.Kf4 e3 38.Rd6+ Re6 39.g5# 1-0**

[View these games online](#)



## Ninja Tactics

**(1) Kreiman,B (2493) - Kaidanov,G (2596) [C18]  
USA-ch Seattle (2), 06.01.2002**

**25.Bxh6 Kxh6 26.Qf4+ Kh7 27.Qxd6** Black's king is open and White has an extra pawn. White went on to win in 54 moves. Even top GMs can miss a simple fork if the position is complex enough. Keep your eye out of "hanging" pieces. That is, pieces without any protection. They are very vulnerable to forks of all kinds. Also note the introductory bishop sacrifice that lured the black king into the fork. This sort of attraction sacrifice can be hard to see unless you keep your eye on all the forking squares and attacking squares all the time. **1-0**

**(2) Jussupow,A (2630) - Beliavsky,A (2690) [E14]  
AUT-chT 9899 AUT, 1999**

White has sacrificed a bishop to open up the black king. Does he have more than a perpetual check draw with Ng6? Remember that mate is not the only thing! The unprotected status of the black queen permits a pretty combination that uses a discovered attack with check. **19.Qg5+ [ 19.Ng6 fxc6 20.Qxc6+ Kh8 21.Qh6+ Kg8 22.Qg6+= ] 19...Kh8 20.Qh4+ [ 20.Qh4+ Kg8 21.Qg3+ A beautiful zigzag to put the queen on the same diagonal as the black queen. Now the black king cannot avoid the knight check that will put black queen back into the box. 21...Kh8 22.Ng6+ fxc6 23.Qxc7] 1-0**

**(3) Markovic,M (2540) - Drasko,M (2515) [C18]  
JUG-ch53 Belgrade (5), 18.03.1998**

Another destroyed king position after a piece sacrifice. Black has countered the pressure on the g-file with his rook, and his queen defends on the 6th rank. White must add another line of attack in order to break through. **24.e6** A great line-opening pawn sacrifice. After tossing a full piece, what is one more pawn!? The keys: the white queen gets the e5 square to attack on the a1-h8 diagonal and the black queen is shut off from the defense. **24...Bxe6 25.Qe5+ [ 25.Qe5+ f6 26.Qxf6+ Rg7 27.Nf7+ The knight gives itself up to open up the rook's line of attack. This is usually called a clearance sacrifice. It is particularly deadly here because it comes with check so Black has no time to put together a defense. 27...Bxf7 28.Qxg7#] 1-0**

**(4) Portisch,L (2645) - Reshevsky,S (2565) [B36]  
Petropolis Interzonal Petropolis (14), 1973**

If you want to play aggressive, tactical chess you have to train yourself to calculate forcing variations. These are lines with lots of checks and captures, with very few options for your opponent. This is why "check every check" is so important for attack AND defense. Checks allow you to calculate lines deeply because there are so few potential moves. **27.Rxf6** [ 27.Rxf6 White sees that h8 will be open to attack after the bishop is removed. But you have to calculate at least a perpetual check draw to play this or you're just going to lose! 27...exf6 28.Qh8+ Kf7 29.Rh7+ Here's the real killer that White had to see beforehand. The queen and bishop can mate by themselves. 29...Nxb7 30.Qxb7+ Kf8 31.Bh6# The final check, and it's mate. A good mating position to remember. Thanks to all those checks, the black pieces are still sitting where they were when the combination started!] **1-0**

**(5) Minasian,A (2620) - Kosashvili,Y (2580) [D00]  
Elista ol (Men) Elista (6), 04.10.1998**

**25.Rh5+** Black tried to cover the g7 mating square with his queen. This only delays checkmate by one move. Open lines against the king are worth more than a rook! [ 25.Rh5+ gxh5 ( 25...Kg8 26.Rh8#) 26.Rg7+ Kh8 27.Qh6#] **1-0**

**(6) Taimanov,M (2530) - Gheorghiu,F (2545) [E91]  
October Revolution 60 Leningrad (10), 07.07.1977**

Black has the white king trapped up against the wall. In these situations your logic should work like this: "If I can cover the h4 square with something, then ..g4 will be checkmate. Okay, so I play my bishop to f6 threatening mate in one. The only way white can cover the g4 square is with the c4 knight to e3. But then I can play ..h5 and the mate threat with ..g4 is back in action. White can't check me or to anything else to delay ..g4, so that's it!" **29...Bf6** [ 29...Bf6 30.Ne3 h5 31.Qe2 g4+ 32.Nxg4 hxg4#] **0-1**

**Trial by Trivia #1 – We are the Champions (from White Belt #1)**

1. Who was the youngest World Champion ever? – **Garry Kasparov**
2. Who were the participants in the first world championship match to finish in a draw? – **Emanuel Lasker and Carl Schlechter**
3. Which World Champion was known as "the chess machine"? – **Jose Capablanca**
4. How many world championship matches have taken place in Asia? – **One** (1978, Baguio City, Philippines)
5. Name the three World Champions who died in the USA. – **Wilhelm Steinitz, Emanuel Lasker, Jose Capablanca**

**Congratulations go out to Joel Hagans, the first and best with the answers at the Trial by Trivial [message board](#) at ChessNinja.com! He wins a free month extension to his newsletter subscription.**

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**Analyze This Game 1 Game 2**

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