

Susan Polgar:

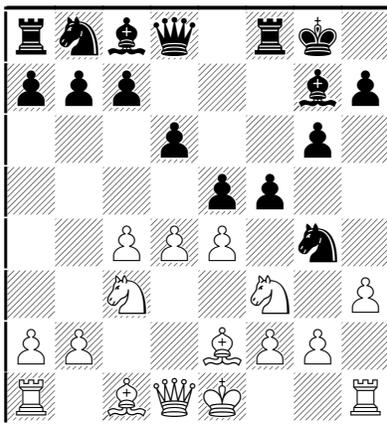
Move forward!

When we teach a beginner player about chess, one of the first things we talk about is to move our pieces forward toward the opponents' territory. As young chess players develop, far too often they stop thinking much about basic principles and try to calculate concrete moves and variations. They are looking for the exceptions from the rules even in the type of positions when calculation is not really necessary because decisions should be made based on general principles and common sense.

There are also situations where indeed very concrete and precise calculation is required. In all of the following examples a Knight will be attacked and will be at a crossroad, to move forward (which in some cases involves a sacrifice) or more passively backwards.

The position below in our first example has been reached after some common opening moves in the King's Indian defense.

Eletsikh A. : Pancevski F.,
Herceg Novi 2005



White has just played 10.h3 (a serious mistake) trying to chase the enemy Knight

home. But due to a concrete tactic Black has a much better option.

10...Nf2!

An unexpected sacrifice based on a beautiful forced tactic.

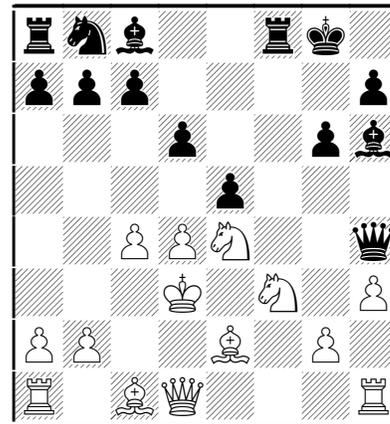
11.Kf2 fe4 12.Ne4 Qh4

This move (which is possible due to the pin along the f-file), is what Black's whole combination is based on.

13.Ke3

Otherwise White simply loses a Knight after 13.Ng3 e4. Or 13.Kg1 Qe4, which was still the lesser evil. And now the King chase continues with

13...Bh6 14.Kd3



Did Black run out of steam? It certainly looks like it. But...

14...Qe4!!

A gorgeous Queen sacrifice which forces checkmate if White accepts the "gift."

15.Kc3

If 15.Ke4 Bf5 16.Kd5 c6 17.Kd6 Rd8 18.Ke5 (or 18.Kc7 Rd7 19.Kc8 and ending with a cute checkmate by discovery with 19...Na6#) 18...Nd7 19.Kd6 Bf8 20.Kc7 and now the quiet 20...Rab8! followed by the unstoppable 21...Rdc8 checkmate.

15...ed4 16.Nd4

Black is already a Pawn up, but the real problem for White is the "over-active" position of the King.

16...Bg7

The pin over the Knight on d4 seals the deal.

17.Bf3 Qh4 18.Rf1

The last trick to attempt the escape.

18...Kh8

A simple, quiet but powerful move.

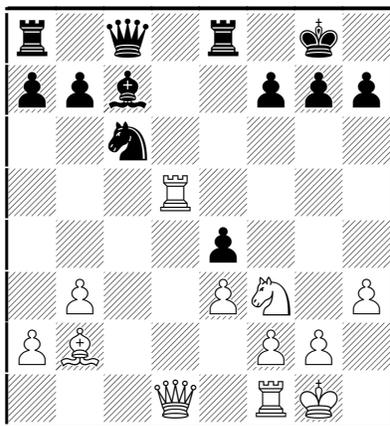
If 18...c5, the White Knight manages to get out of the pin after 19.Bd5 Kh8 20.Rf8 Bf8 21.Nf3.

19.g3 Qg3 20.Kc2 Bh3 21.Rg1 Qf2

and White resigned **0:1**.

Krush I. : Baginskaite C.,

Saint Louis 2014



The Knight is under attack. Where should it go? Following the general advice, the natural instinct should be to move forward to g5. But that only works if the Knight will not be trapped after a Pawn attacks it. And that requires concrete and precise calculation. This is the key moment in the game.

19.Ng5!

Only move that White can count on keeping her advantage.

19...f6?

Black already had difficulties, but after the next move, it is basically game over. The problem with this move is that it weakens the seventh rank.

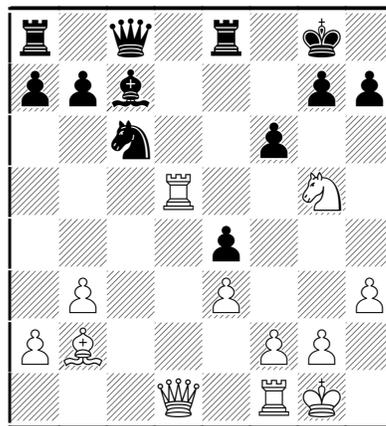
Attacking the Knight from the other side, while a better choice, still leads to a loss of Pawn after 19...h6. The tempting sacrifice

with 20.Nf7 works great if Black takes, but Black has a better defense with the quiet 20...Qe6! (20...Kf7, with a winning attack after 21.Rd7 Re7 22.Qd5 Kg6 23.Re7 Ne7 24.Qe4 Kf7 25.Rc1 Nc6 26.Qf3 Kg8 27.Qd5 Kh7 28.Qf7) when the only way to keep the advantage is with 21.Ba3!

But not 21.Rd7? Re7 and Black is fine.

After 19...h6, best is to rather continue with 20.Qh5! hg5 21.Rg5 Be5 (21...g6 22.Qh8#) 22.Be5 Ne5 23.Re5.

Or after 19...Be5 the e4 Pawn will be lost too. 20.Be5 Re5 (20...Ne5 21.Ne4) 21.Re5 Ne5 22.Qd5.



20.Rd7!

All of a sudden, White has perfect harmony between her pieces, and due to the weakness of the seventh rank and the a2–g8 diagonal, Black's position is undefendable.

20...Ne7

If 20...fg5 21.Qd5 checkmates in a couple of moves.

21.Qh5!

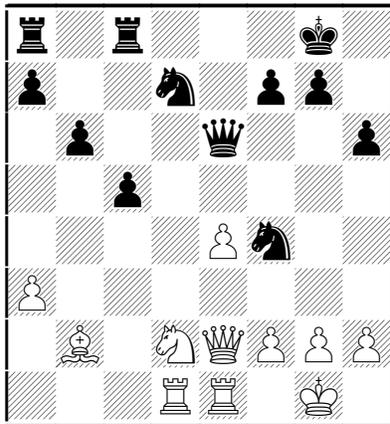
Another energetic move, moving forward, and bringing another key piece to join the attack.

21...Qd7

If 21...fg5 22.Qg5 g6 23.Qf6 and Black's King is busted.

22.Qf7 Kh8 23.Bf6 and Black resigned. If 23...Rg8 24.Qh5 h6 (24...Qf5 25.Nf7#) 25.Qh6# **1:0**.

Li Shilong : Hou Yifan,
Xinghua 2013



23.Qe3

White hoped that Black would have to retreat the Knight with 23...Ng6, then after 24.f4 White has a dangerous initiative after the e and f Pawns start advancing.

But Black had a much better option.

23...Ne5!

23...Qg4 was the second best move.

24.Be5

After 24.Qf4 Nd3 Black captures the Bishop on b2 next, with a clearly better position as White would not have sufficient compensation for the sacrificed Pawn.

24...Qe5 25.Nc4 Qg5

Only so. By threatening to checkmate on g2, Black gains a valuable tempo.

25...Qc7 would be a blunder, due to 26.Nd6 when White is winning an exchange.

26.Qf3 Ne6

There was no rush to retreat with the Knight. 26...Rd8 was more logical, preventing the White Rook from entering the 7th rank, and if 27.Nd6 Qe5 28.Nc4 Qe6.

27.Rd7 Qf4 28.Qh5

Given the fact that White is a Pawn down, it is understandable that he prefers to avoid the trade of Queens.

28...g6

Another option was 28...Ng5 and if 29.h4 g6 and then White cannot capture the Pawn

with 30.Qh6?, because of the upcoming discovery with 30...Nf3.

29.Qd5 Rd8

Once a Pawn up, generally all exchange of pieces helps to get a step closer to victory.

30.g3 Qg5 31.Ne5

This move makes Black's life easier. 31.e5 was White's best bet.

31...Rd7 32.Nd7

After 32.Qa8? Rd8 White loses a piece.

32...Rd8!

A strong move. If 33.Qg5 now then Ng5 34.Ne5 f6 and Black wins easily.

33.Qd6 c4

Another optimal move. Black advances her passed Pawn, and at the same time, prepares to swing the Queen over to the other side of the board to b5.

34.e5 Kg7

A cautious move, although the more straight forward 34...c3 was more accurate.

35.h4 Qf5 36.Qe7 c3 37.Rf1 c2 38.Nf6 Qe5

This is fine. However, 38...Rd1 was perhaps more brutal and then if 39.Ne8 Kh8.

39.Ne8 Re8

The most practical and natural way to end the battle.

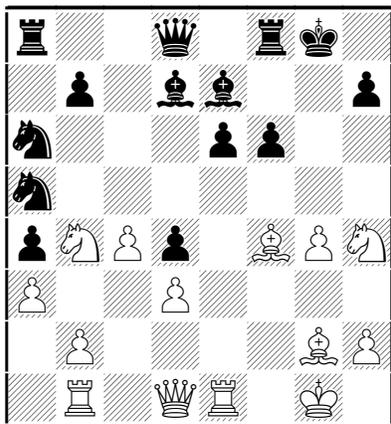
Rybka's top choice is 39...Kh8 instead. For the human eye it looks a bit scary to allow 40.Qf7 and having White's Queen and Knight so close to Black's King. However, in reality Black has more than one way to convert the advantage to gain the full point. For example: 40...Rd1 41.Nf6 Rf1 42.Kf1 c1Q 43.Kg2 Nf4 44.gf4 Qc6 45.Kg3 Qef6.

40.Qe8 Qc3

and White resigned **0:1**.



Ivanchuk V. : Alekseev E.,
Jermuk 2009



After Black's last move 20...Na6, the natural response would be to exchange Knights. But Ivanchuk found an impressive alternative.

21.Nd5!!

True, this brilliant idea requires some calculation, but actually is more based on intuition.

21...ed5

If Black ignores the sacrifice with 21...Bc5?! White continues to advance with 22.g5!, most importantly to open up the route to White's Queen toward the King side. Here some sample variations: 22...fg5 (22...ed5 23.Bd5 Kh8 24.Qh5) 23.Qg4 ed5 (23...e5 24.Qg5 Qg5 25.Bg5+; 23...Rf7 24.Re5!+) 24.Bd5 Kg7 25.Be5 Kh6 26.Be6 Be6 27.Qe6 Kh5 28.Nf5 Rf5 29.Qf5+.

22.Bd5 Kg7

No better was 22...Kh8 23.Qf3, with the threat of 24.Ng6 and if 24...hg6 25.Qh3 Kg7 26.Qh6 checkmate. As you can see from the following variations, Black has no satisfactory defense. 23...Qe8 (23...Be8 24.Nf5 Bc5 25.Bh6 Rf7 26.Bf7 Bf7 27.Bg7 Kg8 28.g5+; 23...Kg7 24.Qh3 h5 25.Nf5 Bf5 26.gf5+) 24.Re2! Nc6 25.Rbe1.

23.Kh1

The more straight forward 23.Qf3 heading to h3 was fine too.

a) 23...f5 24.Be5 Bf6 25.g5! Be5 26.Qh5+;

b) 23...Bc5 24.Qh3 Nc7 (24...Rf7 25.Bh6 Kg8 26.Bf7 Kf7 27.Qf3+–) 25.Bh6 Kh8 26.Ng6 hg6 27.Bf8#;

c) 23...Qe8 24.Qh3 Kh8 25.Re7 Bg4

(25...Qe7 26.Ng6) 26.Re8 Bh3 27.Rf8 Rf8

and despite the material balance White has a winning endgame after 28.Kh1 Nc5 29.Bh6 Re8 30.Rg1 Ne6 31.Be6 (31.Rg3 Ng5) 31...Re6 32.Bg7 Kg8 33.Bf6 Kf8 34.Bd4.

23...Re8?

This speeds up the end of the game, but Black had no satisfactory defense after other defensive attempts either:

23...Rg8? 24.Nf5! Bf5 25.gf5 Qd7 26.Bg8 (or 26.Rg1) 26...Rg8 27.Rg1 Kh8 28.Rg8 Kg8 29.Qg4+–;

23...Bc5 24.g5 Bc6 (24...fg5 25.Bg5 Qg5 26.Rg1 Qg1 27.Qg1 Kh6 (27...Kh8

28.Qg5+–) 28.Qg3+–) 25.Bc6 Nc6 26.Qh5 Kh8 (26...Qd7 27.Rg1+–) 27.g6 Qd7 28.Nf5 Rg8 29.Re7+–;

23...Kh8 24.g5!;

23...Nc6 24.Nf5 Kh8 25.Bh6 Rg8 26.Bg8 Kg8 27.Qf3 Bf5 28.gf5 Bf8 29.Rg1 Kh8 30.Bf4±.

24.g5!

As we have already seen in some previous variations, this is a key idea to rip apart defense near Black's King and to let the White Queen enter the attack.

24...Kh8

If 24...Bc6 25.Bc6 Nc6 26.Qh5+– or 24...fg5 25.Qh5 gf4 26.Rg1 Kh8 27.Ng6.

25.Qh5

Threatening with 26.Ng6 Kg7 27.Qh6 checkmate.

25...Rg8 26.Bg8

Here White already has more than one way to win.

26.Re7 Qe7 27.gf6 Qc5 28.Be5+–.

26...Kg8 27.g6!

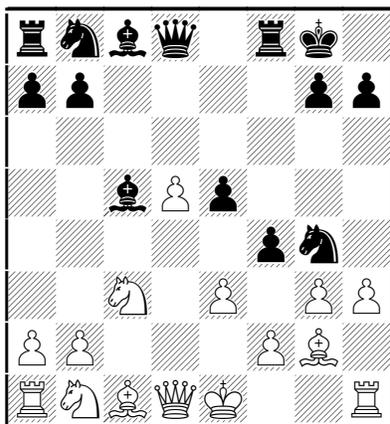
27.gf6 Bc6 28.Re4 also wins, but the text move is even more precise as it forces mate.

27...Bc6 28.Re4

28.Kg1 hg6 29.Qg6 Kh8 30.Bh6 Bf8 31.Qf7 also did the job.

28...Be4 29.de4 hg6 30.Qg6 Kh8 31.Qh5
and Black resigned as after 31...Kg7 32.Rg1
Kf8 33.Bh6 checkmates, **1:0**.

Costa J.L. : Polgar J.,
Biel 1987



Judit was just turning 11 years old during the tournament that this game was played at. White has just played 11.h3. Judit's comments in her own recent book *How I beat Fischer's record* were: "This is a very provocative move. Did he not know who he was playing with?! Just a few years later my opponents would display more caution in such situations".

11...Nf2!

A typical intuitive sacrifice, where one needs to rely on instincts rather than trying to calculate all possible variations until the end. As Judit wrote: "I mainly relied on my intuition, which said that White's underdeveloped army should not be able to offer adequate protection to the exposed King."

12.Kf2 fe3 13.Ke1

The only move, as after either 13.Kg1? e2 (discovered check) or 13.Ke2? Rf2 White suffers immediate material loss.

13...Rf2

It is rare that a Rook would manage to get to the second rank at such an early stage of the game. Judit felt that "a knight was not too

high a price to pay for such an achievement."

The critical moment of the game where White missed the best move, which would keep the game rather complicated.

14.Rg1?!

Black's attack would be very strong after 14.Be4 Qg5 15.Ne2 Bf5 16.Qc2 Na6. The best way to get counterplay was with 14.d6! when Black could respond with 14...Na6 or 14...Kh8 with decent compensation in either case.

14...Qf8

Despite its deceptive look (moving on the back rank) it is a strong attacking move. Of course the more active looking 14...Qf6? would be a blunder due to 15.Ne4.

15.Qd3

The idea of the Queen move is, to clear the d1 square for the King to avoid a Qf2 checkmate (once the Rook would be gone from there).

Now 15.Ne4? would not have the same effect, as then Black can win with 15...e2 16.Qc2 and 16...Rg2!.

15...Na6

Despite being a piece down, Black is in no rush, but simply improves her position.

16.a3

Trying prevent the Nb4 jump, but it has a cost: weakening the b3 square.

16...Bf5 17.Be4

Moving the Knight into the pin with 17.Ne4? would end the game even much quicker, after 17...Bd4, followed by Nc5.

17...Be4 18.Qe4

The alternative 18.Ne4 does not help much either, because of 18...e2 19.Nbd2 and 19...Rh2 traps the Rook on g1.

18...Bd4!

Clearing the c5 square for the Knight.

19.Be3?

More stubborn defense was 19.b4 when Judit has planned to continue with 19...Rc8 20.Be3 Rc3 21.Nc3 Bc3 22.Kd1 Ba1 23.Bf2

Qf2. But interestingly even 19...Nc5 20.bc5
Qc5 is not bad and if 21.Qd3? e4.

19...Nc5

Now the game is practically over.

20.Bd4 ed4

More precise than capturing the Queen,
which would also be good enough to win the
game.

21.Qd4 Re8 22.Kd1 Qf3

and White resigned, as after 23.Kc1 Black
checkmates with 23...Nb3.

This is game won the brilliancy prize at the
legendary Biel Chess Festival, and still to
date remains one of Judit's all-time favorite
games **0:1**.

Conclusion: Remember, when you are at a
crossroad of keeping your pieces active or
admit to passivity and retreat, always look if
there is a way to advance or at least keep
your ground. Often it may require material
sacrifice and accurate calculation.