

Attacking Manual 2

By

Jacob Aagaard



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Attacking Manual 2

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Key to symbols used

?	a weak move
??	a blunder
!	a good move
!!	an excellent move
!?	a move worth considering
?!	a move of doubtful value
#	mate
(n)	n th match game

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Foreword by the author

When I decided to write this double-volume book on attack back in 2002, I had very clear ideas for Volume One, such as specific phrases, positions, structures, while all I had for Volume Two was a clear notion of what it should cover, in abstract. Where Volume One was about the laws of dynamics, the font of all attacks, and to some limited extent an original work, Volume Two was always meant to be a perfection of existing work on the attack.

Over the years I have read dozens of books on attacking chess, and they were all about knocking the king's position open, once the attack had been established. Some authors even disguised their puzzle books as books on attack – or was it their publishers? Although some books on the middlegame would mention parts of the positional basis for the attack, I was unable to refer my students to any book as *the* work on attacking chess. Simply put, none of them explained well how the attack came to be, but concerned themselves mainly with the sacrifice. This is what I tried to do in Volume One, and with some success, I think.

This volume is intended to cover all of attacking technique, by which I mean what to do once the attack is up and running. Obviously this cannot be done in 464 pages, but a decent attempt can be made, and I think I have managed to do so. In this book I will discuss such concrete items as *Destroying the defensive structure* (page 253), *The pin* (page 148), *Overloading* (page 78), as well as more abstract concepts such as *Creative play* (page 355) and *Intuitive sacrifices* (page 391). Hopefully what I have found worthwhile to say about these concepts will be useful for the reader.

Although I am a writer by nature, and place a high value on aesthetics, I am deeply aware that most readers will have picked up this book with the hope of improving their chess. My experiences and conversations with some of the best players in the World have strengthened my belief that it is very useful to solve exercises regularly if you want to improve your play. Although a well-written book can affect your play positively, it will do so much more if you are involved, rather than just reading it. For this reason I have included a diagram preview in this book. I invite you to use up to 10 minutes on each position before reading the subsequent chapter. For Chapters 1, 3, 4 & 5 I have selected 8 positions I find interesting, while Chapter 2 has 26 positions, as it is a rather big chapter. I know that not everyone will want to spend this amount of time on these exercises, but for those who have the discipline, the option is there. It is for the same reason that I have included 50 exercises towards the end of this book and 24 exercises at the end of Chapter 1.

This double-volume work has been seven years in the making; with the publication of the revised and expanded Volume One and this volume, I have fulfilled a major personal ambition. Quality Chess was founded to support the publication of *The Berlin Wall*, *Questions of Modern Chess Theory* and this work. Seven years after the first thoughts and conversations about these works, I am proud to say that it was all worth it, and that all four books were worth fighting for.

Jacob Aagaard
Glasgow, 22nd December 2009

Chapter 1

Understanding Mating Attacks

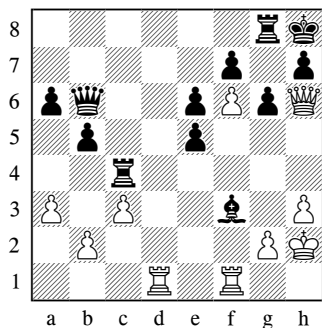


This is the three piece rule in practice. The bishop has sacrificed itself, the knight is assisting the queen, in this case by defending her, and big momma creates general devastation.

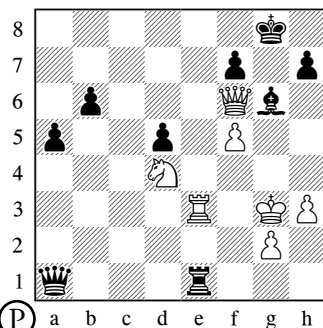
Diagram preview

On this page you find 8 diagrams with critical moments from the coming chapter. I recommend that you take up to 10 minutes to think about each of them. The solutions are found on the following pages in the annotations to the games.

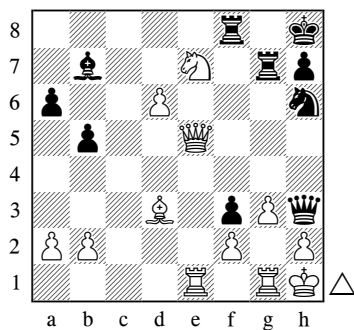
Positions with a circled P can be played against a computer.



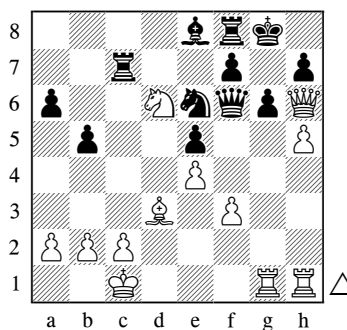
White wins, but how?
(see page 22)



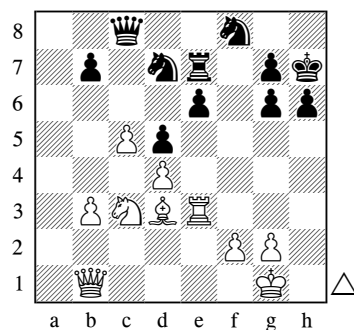
White to play and win
(see page 29)



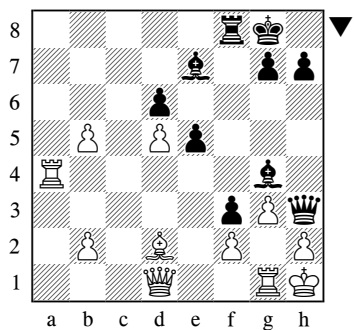
Win in the face of disaster
(see page 15)



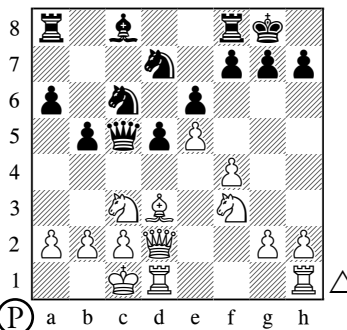
White to win
(see page 25)



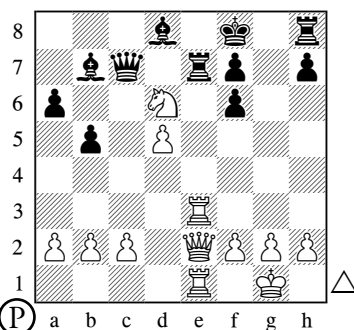
Calculate all the way
(see page 33)



Black to win in one move
(see page 17)



White to calculate very well
(see page 26-27)



Accurate attack
(see page 36)

Covered in this chapter

- Typical Mates & Focal Points
- Three Piece Attacks
- Insurance Policies
- Transformations

In this chapter we will discuss the basic mechanics of mating attacks. We will do so by looking at some basic themes and then elaborating on them, to see how they work in practice. A good place to start is with the ordinary.

Typical Mates & Focal Points

I am not sure if the notion of *focal points* has been used before in chess literature, but the place where I first encountered it and where it continues to meet new readers, was in Vladimir Vukovic's famous book *Art of Attack in Chess*, which is considered by many to be the best book ever written about attacking chess. The book is an impressive looking brick, written in 1965, which alternates between giving bloated theoretical descriptions in the tradition of Kmoch's *Pawn Power in Chess* (a book which by itself has decreased the numbers of chess players in the world!) and some sophisticated description of actual positions.

Vukovic's definition of a focal point goes as follows:

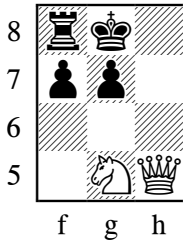
“If the attacker threatens mate or actually mates on these squares, they are *mating focal-points*, but if he only harries the king from them or uses them as points from which to break into the castled position, they are called *strategic* or *auxiliary focal-points*. It may be that there is more than one mating focal-point, and in that case we speak of *compound focal-points*. If there are many focal-points (both mating and strategic) on

squares of the same colour, we speak of a *network of weak squares*.”

I personally find this paragraph of definitions rather amusing, as it is complex and not particularly helpful for the practical player, if anyone at all. The reason why I am starting with this quote is that I had written a few pages that were going down the road of trying to define what attacking chess is, rather than showing it, before I realised that I was stuck and not able to deliver my ideas in a format that satisfied me.

Despite the fact that the theoretical basis for the idea of focal points stands on this rather shaky foundation, which despite being technically correct is of very little use, it has had a great impact on how people talk about chess even today, more than forty years after the book was written. I think this is mainly because Vukovic manages to elucidate various aspects of attacking chess with great vitality and care, and leaves the reader with real insights. But we do not need to know a lot of definitions to understand that, though it is usually easier to attack the opponent at h7 than g7 (mainly because of the easy access from the starting position for the king's bishop and knight), an attack on g7 is in general stronger, because the king will have a greater chance of escaping if it is attacked on h7 than on g7. We do not need to know a complex terminology to understand such insights, and luckily you do not need to do so to follow Vukovic's book.

Another chapter in Vukovic's book gives some generic mating positions that may seem more suitable for a beginner's book than a sophisticated book on middlegame strategy, but they do have the purpose to build a foundation for the rest of the book. An example is the following configuration:



Only two chapters after presenting this simple position, Vukovic goes deep into the Greek gift sacrifice with ♖xh7†, ♘g5† and ♕h5, in scenarios that are far from clear. He has his own points to make about this and I strongly recommend that you read his book to find out what they are, as it is always useful to see a topic discussed from various points of view.

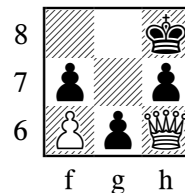
Not surprisingly it is my intention in this book to present my understanding of the various techniques and aspects of attacking chess. I am a strong believer that thinking in concepts can improve your chess and that to consider certain patterns or standard reactions can greatly improve your playing strength. If you are familiar with a lot of thematic ideas, you will definitely find them more easily at the board. For instance, if you know that *an attack on the flank is best met by a strike in the centre*, you will investigate this option with a good deal more confidence than if you had never encountered the concept.

In the first volume of this book I presented my seven global ideas, of which I am certain that we should have an intimate knowledge, if we want to be good attackers. They were deliberately made so simple as to make them seem almost comical, and for this reason I gave examples of very strong players violating them again and again. Obviously those strong players had other ideas and somehow they did not work out, but we should also not overestimate the human ability or underestimate just how

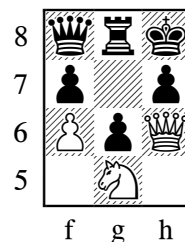
difficult chess is. We need all the help we can get to play this game just on a decent level. Developing a strong intuition for the attack by learning and mastering those seven principles will definitely do this.

It is with this foundation that we progress to this, the second volume. Here we will look at some of the typical scenarios that we encounter again and again when conducting a direct attack on the opponent's king. The first discussion will be of a typical mating pattern, one also found in Vukovic's book. However, just like Vukovic, I am not simply wishing to give a mate in one exercise, but to take this typical pattern and study it thoroughly, from the perspective of both the attacker and the defender.

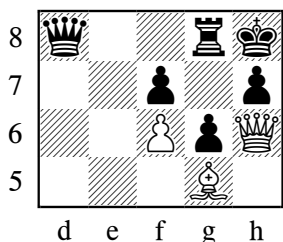
The first pattern is defined by a pawn on f6 teaming up with a queen on h6 to attack the enemy king:



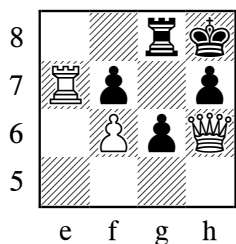
This is the archetypal position. Let us now familiarise ourselves with some typical variations on the position, which we will be discussing in more detail over the next few pages (for ease of reading I will always take White as the attacking side, but the principles will of course be just as relevant on the opposite side of the pitch).



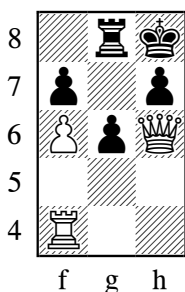
White has just played the knight to g5 and Black will have to give up his rook in order to avoid mate.



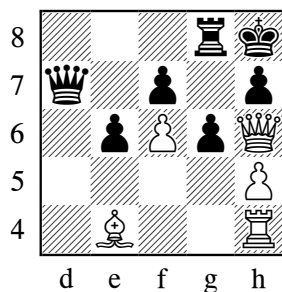
White has the chance to decide the game with 1. ♖g7†, winning a rook due to the hanging queen on d8.



Black cannot defend f7 in this position, but even if he was able to do so, White would have the deciding tactic 1. ♖e8!, diverting/pinning the rook on g8 and thus taking control over the g7-square.



Black has managed to control the vital g7-square, but if White is to move, he would have 1. ♖xh7†! ♔xh7 2. ♖h4 mate. However, Black to play would be able to defend with 1...g5! followed by 2...♖g6!, repulsing the queen.

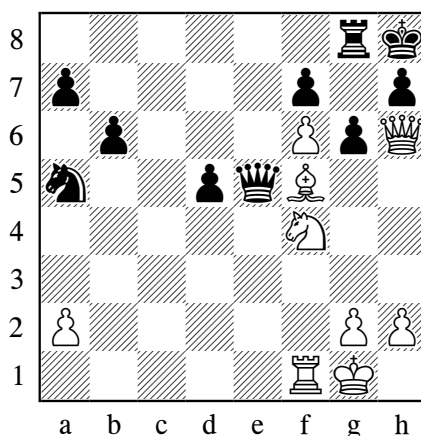


The final position shows a combination that arises rather infrequently. Here White can decide the game with 1. ♖xh7†! ♔xh7 2. hxg6 mate.

In what follows I will give thirteen relevant practical examples from games played by good players. During my research, I found it striking that serious mistakes were committed more often than not. If I had to guess, I would attribute the mistakes to the players' insufficient familiarity with the relevant patterns, not forgetting the simple fact that chess is just difficult!

David Berczes – Simon Widmer

Biel 2005



The first example starts at a point where the player leading the black pieces is on the way to inflicting a big upset against an opponent rated more than 300 points higher, when the following accident happens:

25... ♖xf5?

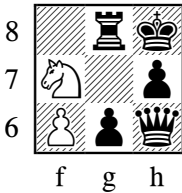
If Black had taken with the pawn on f5 he would not only have prevented anything bad from happening, but would also have been able to use the open g-file for aggressive measures.

26. ♖h3! ♖h5

Black must have believed that he had everything under control at this point. Great must his disappointment have been, upon seeing White's next move.

27. ♖g5!

There is no good way for Black to defend f7. Taking the queen allows a smothered mate:

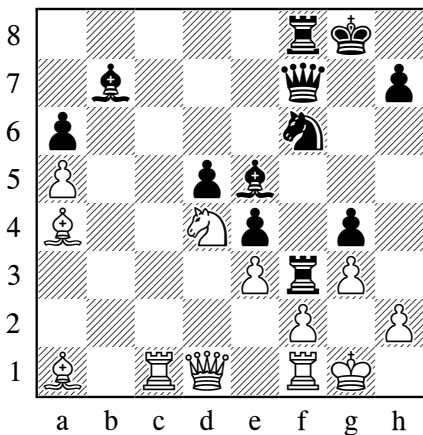


1-0

This pattern is more often seen in positions where Black gets his queen to f8 to expel the white queen from h6, as we saw above, and as is the case in the following example.

Hansjuerg Kaenel – Meinrad Schauwecker

Swiss Championship 2001



Objectively, White is probably doing rather well in this position. Black has no easy targets to attack around the white king, even if it does look rather vulnerable. The best way to continue would probably be to get the bishop to c6 and start undermining the black queenside with the idea of eventually attacking his kingside from the flank.

In the game White chose another strategy, which can at best be called suicidal. He decided to exchange probably his best piece, the knight on d4, for what is surely an ineffective piece of wood on f3, albeit theoretically of higher value, and in the process promote the pawn on g4 from being in the way of the knight to being a cold-hearted killer on f3.

You can argue that this was the basis of a miscalculation, but Kaenel is not a weak player and would not have made this type of error if he had possessed a deep understanding of the relevant themes.

28. ♖xf3? gxf3 29. ♖h1

White seems to be under the illusion that his king can be defended. But even if he had not been losing to the trick played in the game, it would still be an error of judgement to enter such a volatile position willingly, considering that his position was so promising beforehand.

29... ♖e6?

Black commits an inaccuracy. Instead 29... ♖h5! 30. ♖g1 ♖h3 would transpose to the game, without allowing the possibility mentioned in the following note.

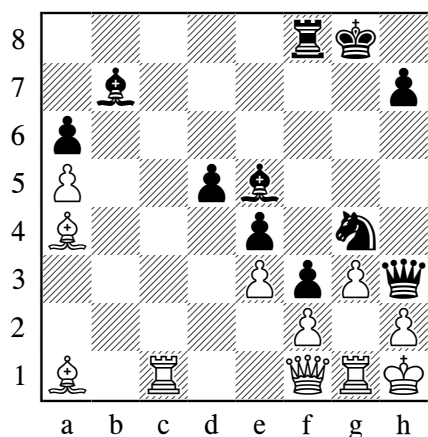
30. ♖g1?

This loses in the way we have already seen in the previous example, this time with the queen on the more typical f1-square. Instead it was possible for White to defend his king

by advancing the g-pawn, something that we will see is a quite common defensive possibility from this generic position.

The line I have analysed includes a few nice tactics and eventually leads to a draw: 30.g4! ♖xg4 31.♖g1 ♜g6 32.♞d2 ♙xh2 33.♙d7 ♙xg1 34.♙xg4 ♜h6† 35.♙xg1 ♜g6 36.♙h2 ♞d6† 37.♙h3 ♜h6† 38.♙g3 ♞d6† with an odd repetition of moves.

30...♞h3 31.♞f1 ♘g4!



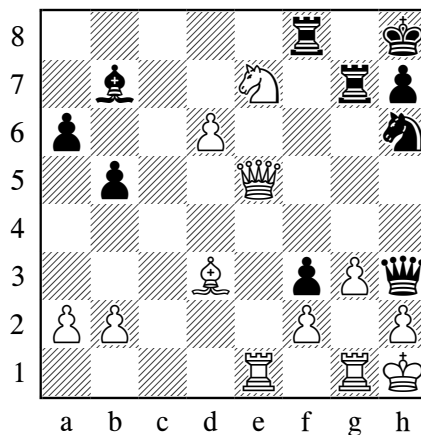
White must have been horrified to see this move. Though he had probably seen a similar theme before, somehow it had slipped his mind. He tried to give up a rook, but the material deficit was much too great for him to obtain any hope of survival.

32.♖g2 ♟xg2† 33.♞xg2 ♞xg2† 34.♙xg2 ♙xa1 35.♙xa1 ♙xf2† 36.♙h3 ♙c8 37.♙h4 ♙xh2† 38.♙g5 ♙g7
0-1

At times a knight jump to g4 can seem so convincing that it disarms us of our confidence, which I imagine is one of the ingredients in the following disaster, the other being possibly time trouble.

Ketevan Arakhamia-Grant – Stephen Peters

Port Erin 2000



White is faced with the strong threat of ...♘g4 and did not find an adequate reply. It was necessary to disturb the black coordination for long enough to turn the d-pawn from a mere player into a match winner. A bit of positive thinking was required, as White is surprisingly winning after 36.♙f5!! The relevant line goes: 36...♘xf5 37.d7! and with the threat of ♙xf5 it seems that Black has nothing better than 37...♙h6. But here White has time for 38.♞e8 or 38.♞d6, both of which decide the game in White's favour as the d-pawn is unstoppable.

In what I suspect was time trouble White followed a less convincing strategy.

36.♞e6?? ♘g4 37.♞xg4 ♞xg4
0-1

One thing that surprised me when I was researching our archetypal position was that the number of positions featuring the above pattern, involving a knight moving to g5 (or g4), is very low. In the vast majority of games, rooks were the main helpers in the attack, either against h7 or by pinning the g8-rook.