

Maneuvering: The Art of Piece Play

by Mark Dvoretsky

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Find the Best Squares for Your Pieces!

To a large extent, the level of any chessplayer's skill depends on his or her ability to discover and evaluate positional operations as quickly and correctly as possible. In this book, premier chess instructor and trainer Mark Dvoretsky examines one of the most important aspects of positional skill, namely the art of playing with pieces, of maneuvering and finding the best squares for your pieces.

Training your maneuvering skills will help you at every stage of the game – which is why among the exercises there are opening, middlegame and endgame positions, and not only those that are taken from practical games, but also studies.

The conscientious student, carefully working his or her way through this book, will help improve positional mastery and significantly enhance overall playing skill.

About the Author:

Mark Dvoretsky is considered by many to be the premier chess instructor of our era. His works on the middlegame and endgame have set the standard by which other chess books are measured. He lives with his family in Moscow, Russia.

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Signs and Symbols

!	a strong move
!!	a brilliant or unobvious move
?	a weak move, an error
??	a grave error
!?	a move worth consideration
?!	a dubious move
=	an equal position
±	White stands slightly better
±	White has a clear advantage
+−	White has a winning position
∓	Black stands slightly better
∓	Black has a clear advantage
−+	Black has a winning position
∞	an unclear position
#	mate
(D)	See the next diagram
W	White to move
B	Black to move
m	match
wm	match for the world championship
zt	zonal tournament
izt	interzonal tournament
ct	candidates' tournament
cm	candidates' match
ch	championship
ch(1)	championship, 1st league
wch	world championship
ech	European championship
f	final
sf	semifinal
qf	quarterfinal
ol	Olympiad
tt	team tournament
jr	junior competitions
corr	correspondence game
simul	simultaneous display

Foreword

The subject of the book you have just opened is one of the most important aspects of positional skill, namely the art of playing with pieces, of maneuvering and finding the best squares for your men. Just like my previous book, *Recognizing Your Opponent's Resources: Developing Preventive Thinking*, this one is a problem solving practicum, an exercise book meant for self-training, so it is organized in a similar way: first we have an introduction in which different aspects of the art of maneuvering are considered, then an extensive collection of exercises, from elementary to rather difficult ones, and, lastly, solutions to those exercises.

The introduction should not be interpreted as a theory of piece play but rather as a preamble to this theory. We are going to discuss only certain facets of our subject in it; besides, this discussion will be rather sketchy and illustrated with only a few examples. You will get a much clearer and deeper understanding of the problem by solving the exercises provided in the book and examining comments to them.

As this book is organized similarly to my previous one, much of what I have said in my Foreword to *Recognizing Your Opponent's Resources: Developing Preventive Thinking* also applies to this book. Because of this I will refrain from trying to find new words for the same ideas and simply repeat here a fragment from the previous Foreword with minimum alterations.

Training your maneuvering skills will help you at every stage of the game – which is why among the exercises there are opening, middlegame and endgame positions, and not only those that are taken from practical games, but also studies. You may also independently solve the introductory examples from each chapter and the positions in the diagrams in the “Solutions” in those cases where there is a question mark and an indication of who is to play to the right of the diagrams.

The comments in the “Solutions” are quite detailed and are not limited to giving the only correct sequence of moves or explaining side variations. I have tried to detail the logic of the search for a solution to show how a player can come to the right conclusions at the board. However, the reasoning and calculations I offer are far from compulsory for everyone. Most likely, in many cases you will manage to achieve the aim another way. This is to be expected, as each of us has our own head on our shoulders and our own approach to decision-making.

I will also mention a few technical details. As in all my books and articles, quotes included in the text are given in italics. In the examples which are investigated in the introductions to each chapter, the moves made by the players are highlighted in bold text. In the solutions to the exercises things are different: the moves in the main variation of the solution are highlighted, regardless of whether or not they occurred in the game. Positions that came about during analysis of side variations and also positions in the “Solutions” are shown in smaller diagrams. Studies are often not given from their initial position. In that case, the name of the study composer is furnished with an asterisk. The same symbol is also used for practical positions that did not occur in a game, but came about during its analysis.

The majority of examples are taken from my “card index of exercises,” work on which has been going on for decades. Obviously I have already used many of the successful examples from my card index in my previous books. So was it worth giving them here again? I made a judgment call.

At the end of each of the four books in the series “School of Chess Excellence” there is a thematic index, a section of which is called “Maneuvering.” I did not include the exercises from those books here, and should you subsequently decide to continue working in this direction, you can find those and use them as you see fit. There are also no exercises here from the text “Tests 12x8” which can be found in the first book of the series “School of Future Champions.” In the list of 12 different topics (each of which contains eight exercises) you will find “Maneuvering.”

There are relevant examples in all my other books too, but it will be harder for you to extract them from there because of the absence of corresponding indexes. So I considered it possible to use those exercises here. However, there are not many of them – I have not included the overwhelming majority of examples in my books before.

I also have to note that the solutions very frequently contain not only an answer for an exercise itself, but also include the rest of the game. To get a deeper feel of positional advantages enjoyed thanks to a particular decision, it is useful to get acquainted with further developments. Besides, in the course of our analysis you are going to discover some novel and instructive situations, both positional (even if having no direct bearing on our main subject) and tactical.

I hope that careful work on this book will help you to improve your positional mastery and significantly enhance your overall playing skill.

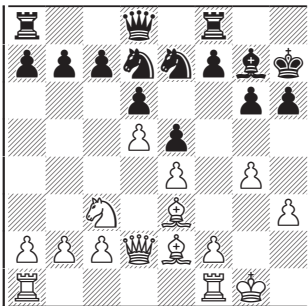
A significant portion of the games and fragments that I offer for your attention could be characterized by the term “tragicomedy” (widely used for the first time in my *Endgame Manual*) – as in them one player then the other made crude blunders. Selecting this kind of material was not intentional, but it was not accidental either. It is these kinds of episodes which most often draw the attention of commentators during analysis of games and end up on the pages of magazines, books and websites, and from there the most interesting of them get into my card index. There is a positive side to the demonstration of simple mistakes made by grandmasters: it becomes clear that you can successfully oppose even very strong players if you make progress with your own play. And since this task is hardly super-complicated, but completely feasible by means of systematic training, it makes sense to try it.

Mark Dvoretzky
Moscow
June 2016

Introduction

In the book *Secrets of Positional Play: School of Future Champions 4* by Mark Dvoretsky and Artur Yusupov, the authors tell of positional operations, the elemental “stitches” from which the fabric of our game is woven. To a large extent, the level of any chessplayer’s skill depends on his or her ability to discover and evaluate such operations as quickly and correctly as possible. The following fragment demonstrates every major kind of positional operation.

Tatai – Christiansen
Torremolinos 1977



B?

The position is difficult to evaluate. White controls more space but choosing a correct course of action poses a challenge for him. He can open the f-file with f2-f4, but at the same time this move clears the diagonal for the g7-bishop and cedes the important central e5-square to his opponent.

And what can be suggested for Black? He lacks a light-square bishop, so it is unfavorable to him to open the game with 14...f5?!. This move is met with 15.ef gf 16.f3 followed by ♖h2 and ♙d3 (16.f4?! e4 is worse). He can play a waiting game (for example, 14...a6?!), but passive play would enable his opponent to strengthen his position with ♖g2, ♙d3 and then perhaps ♗e2-g3 – such development is rather unpleasant for Black psychologically.

14...♗g8!?

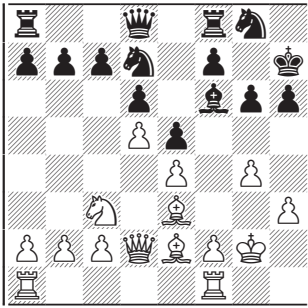
Larry Christiansen starts regrouping with an eye to exchange his “bad” dark-square bishop. He prepares ♗g7-f6-g5. The computer does not believe in this plan and insists that by playing correctly his opponent achieves an advantage. Still, taking into account that Black’s position is constrained, the grandmaster’s idea looks quite logical. I suppose that many chessplayers would play the same way.

15.♖g2

An interesting attempt to frustrate Black’s plan is 15.h4!?. The pawn is “poisoned”: 15...♗xh4? 16.♖g2 ♗e7 17.♙h1 with a crushing attack. On the other hand, the undermining move 15...f5 would become stronger because of the vulnerability of the h4-pawn. 16.ef gf 17.f3 (17.gf ♗e7) is met with 17...♗xh4 18.♖g2 (or 18.♙f2) 18...e4! with mutual chances.

15...♙f6

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Here White could change the course of play radically by sacrificing a pawn: 16.h4! ♖xh4 (otherwise Black's previous move becomes meaningless) 17.♖h1 (suggested by Ian Nepomniachtchi). 17...♔g7? loses to 18.♖xh4! ♗xh4 19.g5! followed by 20.♖h1 (the hasty 19.♖h1 ♗d8! 20.♖xh6+ ♘xh6 21.♗xh6+ ♕f6 is much weaker). Black has to answer 17...g5, which can be met both with the calm 18.♖d3 (intending ♗e2-g3) and the sharper 18.♖xh4!? gh 19.♖h1. After 19...♔g7, it is better for White not to hurry with 20.g5 hg 21.♖xg5 in view of 21...f6 22.♖xh4 (22.♖e3!? f5 23.ef) 22...♗e7. Black is hemmed in, so White has time to do something useful, for example, 20.♕f1!.

Nevertheless, the move in the text is also not bad.

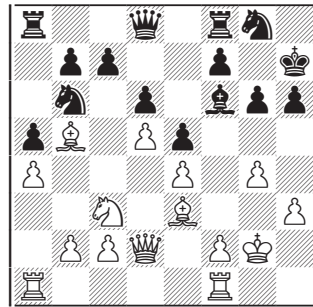
16.♖b5 ♗b6

This decision is principled, but risky. Christiansen prevents his opponent from exchanging his "bad" bishop, but his own knight moves away from the e5-square, so the advance f2-f4 gains in strength. More secure is 16...a6!? 17.♖xh4 ♗xh4 ∞. And if you insist on retreating with your knight, then it had better go to b8 followed by 17...a6.

17.a4! a5

Black had planned 17...a6, but this is thwarted by the possible reply 18.a5!. But now it would be already difficult to

drive the bishop away from b5, from where it controls the important d7-square.



18.♖e2?!

Stefano Tatai fails to find a correct plan. After 18.f4! ef 19.♖xf4, neither black knight has any chance at all to get to e5, while White is going to exert pressure against the f7-square and then to transfer his knight to d4, maintaining unpleasant pressure. For example, 19...♖g5 20.♖f3 ♖xe3 21.♗xe3 ♘d7 22.♖xd7 ♗xd7 23.♗b5, with advantage.

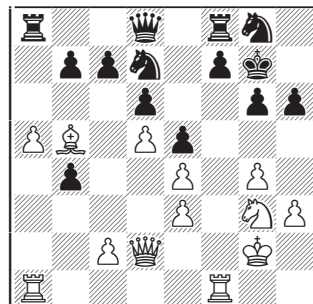
18...♖g5 19.♗g3

Now 19.f4 is already less dangerous: after 19...ef, the black knight manages to get to f6 in time.

19...♔g7?! (more precise is 19...♖xe3 and 20...♗f6, as 20.f4! is once again very strong) 20.b4?

White chooses to play in the wrong place, creating weaknesses on his queenside for no purpose.

20...ab 21.a5 ♖xe3 22.fe (22.♗xe3!?) 22...♘d7



Introduction

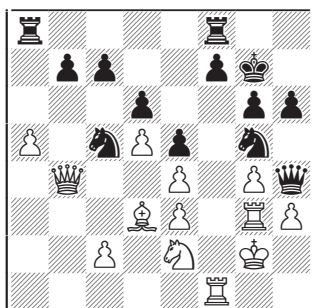
23. ♖×b4?

A positional blunder! The knight on c5 will be much stronger than the enemy bishop, so the exchange on d7 was absolutely necessary. After 23. ♗×d7! ♜×d7 24. ♖×b4 ♖a7, Black's position is preferable, but a struggle is still ahead.

23... ♗c5 24. ♖f3?! ♗f6
25. ♖af1? (25. ♗d3=) 25... ♗h7

Things look ugly for White; there is a threat of 26... ♜h4 and 27... ♗g5.

26. ♗d3 ♜h4 27. ♗e2 ♗g5
28. ♖g3



B?

His opponent has been completely outplayed. Now the black rooks join in the attack.

28...b6! 29.ab ♖ab8?!

This choice seems a bit strange. 29... ♖fb8! is much stronger, as the rooks now invade along both open queenside files. White simply does not have enough time to create a threat on f7 by trading knights by ♗g1-f3. However, this inaccuracy by Black has no influence upon the evaluation of the position.

30. ♗g1 ♖×b6 31. ♜c4 ♖a6
32. ♗f3 ♗×f3 33. ♖g:f3 h5!

White's defenses get undermined on both flanks.

34. gh ♜×h5 35. ♖g3 ♖a4
36. ♜c3? (36. ♜b5= allows White to hold out a bit longer) 36... ♖×e4!
37. ♗×e4?! ♜e2+ White resigned in

view of 38. ♖f2 (38. ♜g1 ♗×e4) 38... ♜×f2+ 39. ♜×f2 ♗×e4+.

Let us rewind the course of struggle and recall positional operations that both opponents have (or could have) carried out.

Improving pieces' positions, maneuverings, regroupings. It all started with the regrouping of the black pieces aimed at the exchange of the dark-square bishops. Black carried out another regrouping on moves 24 to 27 which allowed him to increase his pressure on the kingside dramatically. White's maneuver ♗c3-e2-g3 was not very successful; the same can be said about doubling major pieces in the f-file. Black's choice of a rook to be transferred to the b-file was not the best one.

Pawn play, creating an advantageous pawn structure. The move 17.a4! was fine, but we cannot say the same about White's subsequent pawn moves. Instead of an advantageous advance of the f-pawn, he carried out b2-b4 and that was clearly unfavorable. His taking on e3 with a pawn is equally controversial. As for Black, he was quite right to reject the banal f7-f5 and to carry out two excellent breaks, b7-b6 and h6-h5, which allowed him to increase his advantage.

Exchanges. At first Black prepared an exchange of dark-square bishops, but was unwilling to trade his opponent's light-square bishop for his knight. The latter decision was quite risky, so eventually he had to offer his knight for exchange anyway. His opponent should have agreed to it, but he did not – and was doomed because of this.