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Introduction

I wish to define breaking the rules as follows: allowing our intuition, calculation or reasoning about a position to look beyond the rules and precepts we have imposed on ourselves. These rules and precepts have a vital purpose: they cut down the number of things we have to examine and so save us from drowning in a sea of possibilities. They might have been built up and refined over many years, and chess would remain a baffling world without them to guide us.

The rules of positional chess are essentially designed to prevent one of the following:

- a) Jeopardizing your king's safety;
- b) Losing material;
- c) Ruining your pawn structure;
- d) Being outnumbered in the fight for central or other important squares;
- e) Putting or leaving the pieces on inactive or exposed squares.

It stands to reason that, *everything else being equal*, precepts and laws that warn us of the dangers of the above five scenarios are of great value. The problem is they become like a second nature, and we can't see excellent possibilities that lie beyond their reach.

If you haven't made as much progress in chess as you feel your capabilities deserve, it is easy to imagine you need to learn more precisely what a good move or plan looks like. The problem might actually be the opposite – you have too strong impressions of what a good move or plan should look like, and have excluded, perhaps at an unconscious level, all regard for moves that don't fit this ideal. Yet it could be that one of those 'not quite right looking', or 'decidedly odd' moves that you have filtered out is the key to the position.

The purpose of this book is to investigate ways of playing and ideas that often escape our rule-blinkered notice. It is hoped that seeing the originality of Carlsen and Ivanchuk and other great minds will give a boost to your own imagination. Then when a voice says in your head, 'It's obvious what I need to do here', a second, more doubtful voice will at times interject: 'I feel this might be a special mo-

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ment in the game. May we look a little further?’

I hope you enjoy reading this book and that it gives a boost to your creativity and results.

Neil McDonald,
Gravesend,
May 2012

Chapter Four

The King as All Action Star

In the middlegame, the king is merely an extra, but in the endgame, he is one of the star actors.

Aron Nimzowitsch.

As I write these lines Magnus Carlsen is the highest-rated player in the world. No, I'm not going to talk about his evident genius for the game or his exceptional capacity for work at the board. What I want to point out is that in the middlegame he often seems to have an extra piece. Most of his opponents treat their king as a nobody, a feeble fellow who has to be well wrapped up in case he catches a cold. In contrast the Norwegian's king is already a rising star in the middlegame. He is a Hollywood action hero who does his own stunts. Sometimes a stunt may go horribly wrong, but most of the time Carlsen's king is enjoying a glorious career.

We have already seen in Chapter

One how 20 ♔e2! gave White's queen-side pressure a vital boost in Carlsen-Wang Yue. Here are two more examples in which setting the king to work in the middlegame boosted Carlsen's results: he scored 2/2 when without the help of the king he could only have expected 1/2/2.

The king helps a hobbled horse

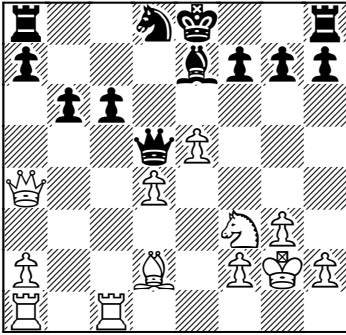
Game 22

A.Huzman-M.Carlsen

European Club Cup,
Kallithea 2008

Queen's Indian Defence

1 d4 ♘f6 2 c4 e6 3 ♘f3 b6 4 g3 ♙a6 5 ♚c2 ♙b4+ 6 ♙d2 ♙e7 7 e4 d5 8 cxd5 ♙xf1 9 ♚xf1 exd5 10 e5 ♘e4 11 ♘c3 ♘xc3 12 bxc3 ♚d7 13 ♙g2 ♘c6 14 c4 ♘d8 15 cxd5 ♚xd5 16 ♚a4+ c6 17 ♚hc1



Here Carlsen played **17...♔d7!**

According to an anonymous commentator on chessgames.com: “Only a lousy or excellent player could play a move like that.” Exactly. We all need to try to regain the native creativity we had before rules and precepts took over. As Picasso once said: “It has taken me my whole life to learn to paint like a child.”

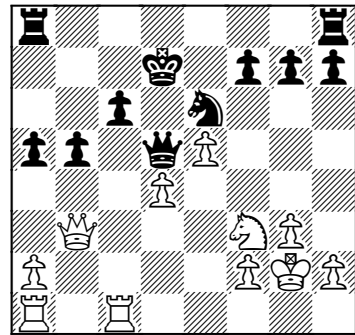
The king goes to d7 so that 18...♖e6, putting the knight on an excellent blockade square in the centre, becomes possible without dropping the c6-pawn. We could try for the same effect with ‘more normal’ moves by 17...a5, intending 18...♖c8 and then 19...♖e6. But this is laborious, and besides after 17...a5, 18 ♖b3 looks a good reply, hitting b6. Then 18...♖xb3 19 axb3 gives White pressure on the queenside. Or if 18...b5 19 ♖xd5 cxd5 20 ♖c7 invades the seventh rank.

The game move is much more economical. The king is well placed for the endgame, should White offer the exchange of queens, as occurs in the

game. It is also safe – note that the pawn sacrifice 18 e6+ would look silly after 18...♖xe6 as 19 ♖e5+!? is a great move, but it isn’t legal.

The most important feature of the position is the dominant black queen. She paralyses the knight on f3 and is ready to support a pawn advance on either wing. For example, if White plays passively he might suddenly be hit by a ...g7-g5 lunge on the kingside, threatening to win the knight with ...g5-g4. In the game, however, Carlsen focuses on the queenside.

18 ♖b4 b5 19 ♖a3 ♖xb4 20 ♖xb4 a5 21 ♖b3 ♖e6



Black has achieved his ideal set-up. Now let’s imagine that White exchanged queens with 22 ♖xd5+ cxd5 here. In that case Black’s mobile queenside pawn majority would give him a serious advantage. The white majority of pawns on the kingside would be much harder to set rolling, not least because the white knight has to defend d4 and so can’t move out of the way to facilitate an f4-f5 pawn advance. Also

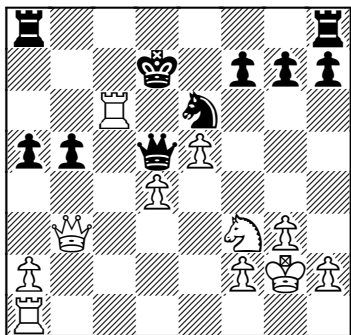
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after 22 ♖xd5+ cxd5 the proximity of Black's king to the c-file would mean that White has no infiltration points along it. The black knight would also be doing a good job guarding the c5-square. Meanwhile Carlsen could utilize the c4-square with ...♖c8 and ...♖c4.

Returning to the position after 21...♗e6, if White does nothing active then Black can continue his queenside build-up, perhaps with 22...♖hc8 or even 22...b4!?. Huzman sees that he is being positionally outplayed whether or not he exchanges queens, and so tries to prove that 17...♗d7 belongs in the 'lousy' rather than 'excellent' category with:

22 ♖xc6!?

This would terrify a lot of players, but Carlsen has always been philosophical about putting his king in danger. Above all he wants to set his opponent problems, and if the best way to do it is to have his own king floating around in the centre, then so be it.

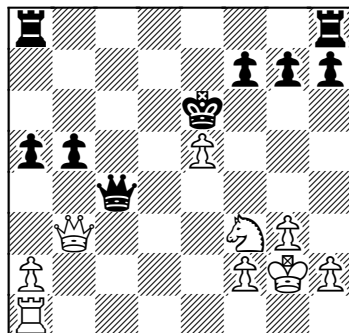


22...♖xc6

White wins after 22...♖xb3? 23

♖d6+! or 22...♗xc6 23 ♖c1+.

23 d5 ♖c4 24 dxe6+ ♗xe6



25 ♗d4+

Slow play is also inadequate: for example, 25 ♖e3 can be answered by 25...♖hc8 26 ♖g5 ♖d3!, dominating the central files when 27 ♖xg7 ♖g6 exchanges queens.

25...♗d5!

Perhaps Huzman expected the king to retreat when he keeps the initiative. Instead we have another 'lousy or excellent' move from Carlsen. Once again he is willing to dispense with king safety in the pursuit of victory. White is obliged to give up the knight to avoid the exchange of queens and so will lose – unless, of course, there is a mate or a perpetual check.

26 ♖f3+ ♗xd4 27 ♖e3+ ♗d5 28 ♖d1+ ♗e6 29 ♖d6+ ♗e7 30 ♖g5+ ♗e8

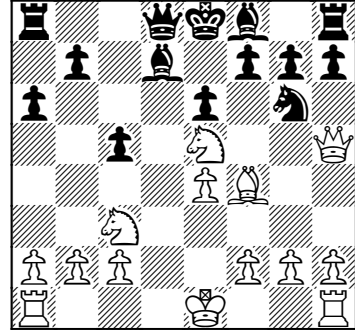
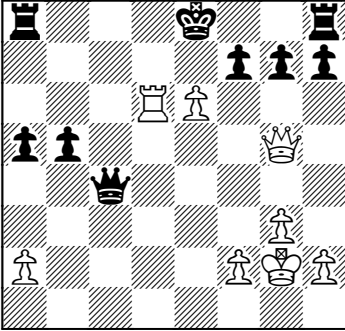
It wasn't too late for Black to lose with 30...♗f8 31 ♖d8+ and mate next move.

31 e6

It still looks rather dangerous for Black, but not so in reality. Carlsen

gradually consolidated his extra rook and won after the remaining moves:

♙xd7+ ♙xd7 6 dxc5 dxc5 7 ♘c3 e6 8 ♙f4 ♘e7 9 ♘e5 ♘g6 10 ♚h5



31...♖c8 32 exf7+ ♚xf7 33 ♖d3 ♚b7+ 34 ♙h3 ♖f8 35 ♚h5+ ♙e7 36 ♖e3+ ♙d8 37 ♖d3+ ♙c7 38 ♖d5 ♖ce8 39 ♙c5+ ♙d6 40 ♖xb5 ♚c8+ 41 ♙h4 ♚c4+ 42 g4 ♚d4 0-1

The king frees a bishop from captivity

I watched the following game live at the tournament venue. Everyone seemed to think that Magnus was in trouble during the early middlegame, which somewhat gives the lie to talk of the 'wisdom of crowds'. We should have taken one look at black's king in the centre and thought: 'A target? Pah! How often is Carlsen mated? The king is there to solve a problem, not create one'.

Game 23
Ni Hua-M.Carlsen
London 2009
Sicilian Defence

1 e4 c5 2 ♘f3 d6 3 ♙b5+ ♘d7 4 d4 a6 5

A very threatening move as if 10...♘xf4? 11 ♚xf7 mate. At the same time 11 ♖d1 or 11 0-0-0 is threatened, with a fatal pin on d7. It looks like Carlsen is in deep trouble, but he defends with a cool head.

10...♙c6

Countering the threat of a pin. If now 11 ♘xc6 the recapture 11...bxc6?! leaves Black with broken queenside pawns. So Black should respond with 11...♘xf4, when after 12 ♘xd8 ♘xh5 13 ♘xb7 ♖b8 14 ♘a5 ♖xb2 it is about equal. How good are you at making this sort of calculation? Its forcing nature should make things easier to work out. If it is beyond your powers at the moment, I recommend you practice with a book of tactical puzzles. Otherwise you will be obliged to play safe but poor moves like 11...bxc6 in your games.

11 ♙g3

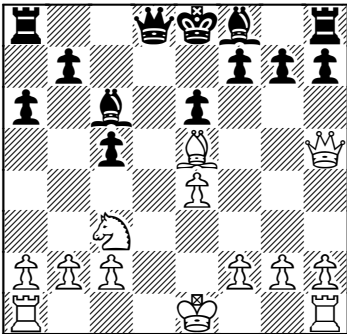
Ni Hua should probably have converted his initiative into something

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more tangible with 11 ♖xg6 fxg6 12 ♖g4, when Black's pawns are fractured and it is somewhat awkward to defend the e6-pawn. Knowing Carlsen's proclivities we might expect him to reply 12...♙f7, getting his king to perform a useful role in the centre. Nonetheless, White would keep a definite edge after 13 ♖d1.

With the game move White threatens 12 ♖xc6 to break up the queenside pawns, as well as 12 ♖d1, building up his attack. Therefore Black is more or less obliged to exchange knights on e5.

11...♞xe5 12 ♞xe5



It was this position that tempted the Chinese Grandmaster to decline a small but persistent advantage with 11 ♖xg6. The pressure on g7 makes it difficult to see how Carlsen is going to develop his kingside, as 12...♞e7? 13 ♞xg7 ♖g8 14 ♖xh7 is obviously a catastrophe for Black. With the black bishop tied down to the defence of g7, it seems that White has plenty of time to castle kingside and prepare a winning attack against the king with ♖ad1,

etc. Perhaps Ni Hua was even hoping to win a brilliancy prize against the world no.1 with a future ♞d5 sacrifice, opening up all lines in the centre...

Alas for him this remains only a pleasant day dream, as the Norwegian finds a way to develop his kingside with some precise and fearless moves:

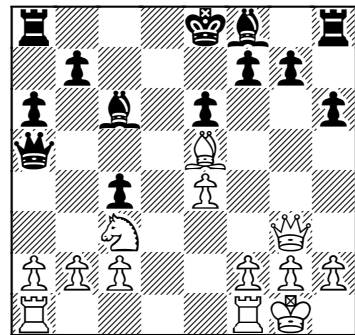
12...c4! 13 0-0 ♖a5

Black has found an excellent spot for his queen. The white bishop, which thought it was bullying the g7-pawn, suddenly finds itself victim of a pin. Carlsen also gives himself the option of whisking his king from the centre with 14...0-0-0 (when 15 ♖xf7? in reply drops the white bishop).

14 ♖g5

White begins to manoeuvre his queen out of the pin. If now 14...f6? 15 ♞xf6! wins a pawn.

14...h6 15 ♖g3

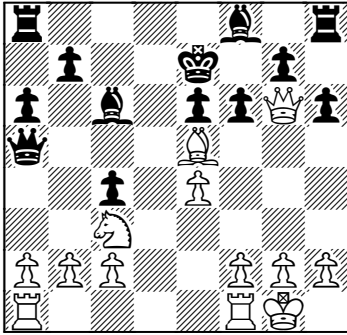


Things still look unpleasant for Black. The pressure on g7 is as strong as ever, paralysing the bishop on f8 which in turn blocks in the rook on h8. If 15...0-0-0 16 ♖ad1 leaves the black

king even more vulnerable on c8 than e8.

Carlsen realizes that the key to Black's survival is to break the attack on g7 at all costs. And so:

15...f6!! 16 ♖g6+ ♔e7



It is paradoxical that in order to develop his kingside pieces and safeguard his king, Carlsen puts his king on e7, blocking in the bishop!

It is, of course, a question of potential. Black's piece disposition might look ugly at first glance, but he only needs a couple of moves to develop his game. If Ni Hua fails to find a telling blow during this small time frame, he might even get the worst of it due to Black's long-term advantage of the bishop-pair.

17 ♙f4 ♙e8!

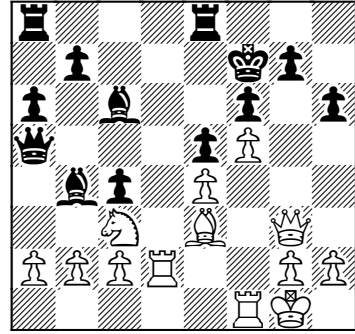
This retreat wins the f7-square for the king. Black is finding unexpected resources on the chessboard – the e7-square for the king and the e8-square for the bishop.

18 ♗g3 ♘f7 19 ♖ad1 ♙c6

And now the lithe bishop returns to

c6. Black is well on the way to having every piece mobilized.

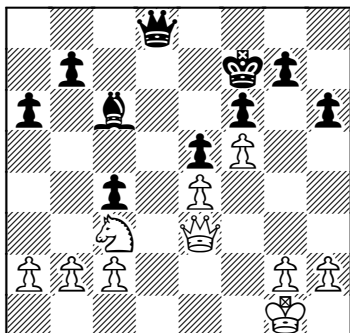
20 ♖d2 e5 21 ♙e3 ♙b4 22 f4 ♖he8 23 f5



23...♙c5!

Having completed his development Black might have relaxed and missed the danger posed by White's last move. He exchanges bishops to negate the threat of a ♙xh6 sacrifice, which combined with ♖g6+ gives White a powerful attack. For instance, after 23...♙xc3 White has 24 ♙xh6!?, threatening mate on g7, when 24...gxh6? 25 ♖g6+ ♘f8 26 ♗xf6+ gives him a winning attack. However, 24...♖g8! seems to lead to draw after 25 ♖g6+ ♘e7: for example, 26 bxc3 gxh6 27 ♖h7+ ♘f8 28 ♗xh6+ ♘f7 29 ♖h5+ ♘f8 30 ♖h6+ when the black king can't evade the checks, or 26 ♙xg7 ♙xd2 27 ♗xf6+ ♘d7 28 ♗e6+ ♘c7 29 ♙xe5+ ♘b6 30 ♙d4+ ♘c7 31 ♙e5+ with a repetition. Alternatively, if White wished he could simply recapture after 23...♙xc3 with 24 bxc3, maintaining a latent threat of ♖g6+ and then ♙xh6, or vice versa.

24 ♖fd1 ♜ad8 25 ♜xd8 ♙xe3+ 26 ♚xe3
 ♜xd8 27 ♜xd8 ♚xd8



All danger has passed for Black, and he has the better endgame due to his superior minor piece, control of the d-file and more compact pawn structure. He can play to win by advancing on the queenside and targeting the e4-pawn. Perhaps demoralized by the turn of events White doesn't offer great resistance. Here is how it finished:

28 ♙f2 ♚d6 29 a3 a5 30 ♙f3 ♙g8 31 g3
 b5 32 ♙e2 b4 33 axb4 axb4 34 ♗d1 ♙a4
 35 b3 cxb3 36 cxb3 ♚a6+ 37 ♙d2 ♙b5
 38 ♚c5 ♚a2+ 39 ♚c2 ♚a7 40 ♚c8+ ♙h7
 41 ♙c1 ♚a1+ 42 ♙c2 ♚d4 0-1

The e-pawn drops due to the threat of 43...♙d3+. A marvellous example of ice-cool defence from Carlsen. His willingness to play unusual moves not only kept him alive but won the game.

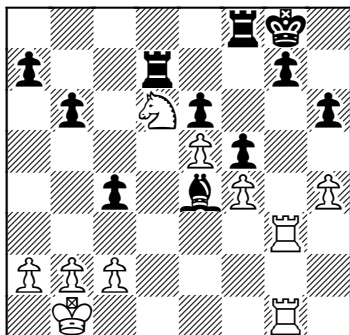
The king sets off to rescue a rook

Naturally Carlsen is not alone among elite players in recognizing that a passive king is wasting powers that could be used to energize the rest of the

pieces.

Game 24
H.Nakamura-N.Vitiugov
 Reggio Emilia 2011/12
French Defence

1 e4 e6 2 d4 d5 3 ♘c3 ♗f6 4 e5 ♗fd7 5
 f4 c5 6 ♗f3 ♗c6 7 ♙e3 ♙e7 8 ♚d2 0-0 9
 dxc5 ♗xc5 10 0-0-0 ♚c7 11 ♙b1 b6 12
 ♙b5 ♙b7 13 h4 ♗a5 14 ♙d4 ♜ac8 15
 ♗g5 ♗c4 16 ♚e2 h6 17 ♙xc4 dxc4 18
 ♙xc5 ♙xc5 19 ♗ge4 ♙b4 20 ♗d6 ♜cd8
 21 ♜h3 ♙xd6 22 ♗b5 ♚c6 23 ♗xd6
 ♚xg2 24 ♚e3 ♙e4 25 ♜c1 f5 26 ♗g3
 ♚h2 27 ♗g1 ♚xg1 28 ♜cxcg1 ♗d7



Black, temporarily at least, has an extra pawn. After the natural recapture 29 ♗xc4 Black achieves at least a satisfactory game with 29...♜c8 due to his pressure along the c-file. Instead Nakamura decided to go after the pawn on h6:

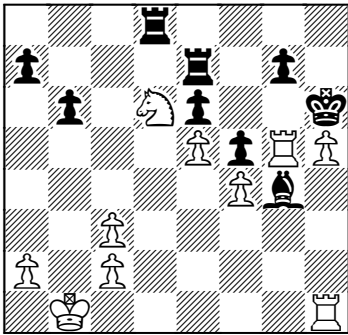
29 ♗g6! ♜e7

He has to guard the e6-pawn.

30 ♜xh6 c3

This seems a better idea than 30...♙d5, when 31 ♖hg6 followed by 32 h5 gives White pressure. Vitiugov's reasoning is as follows: 'I will give my opponent doubled pawns on the c-file. Then I will trap his front rook on g6 or g5 with ...♙f3 and ...♙g4. He will have to free it by retreating his knight via c4 to e3, and this will give me the chance to penetrate down the d-file or else attack the doubled c-pawns, with ...♖c8.'

31 bxc3 ♙f3 32 ♖hg6 ♙g4 33 ♖g5 ♖h7
34 h5 ♖h6 35 ♖h1 ♖d8



Black's defensive strategy appears to have worked well. The white rook is boxed in on the g5- or g6-squares, and a rescue mission with the knight gives Black counterplay: for example, if here 36 ♖c4? ♖d1+! 37 ♖xd1 ♙xd1 38 ♖e3 ♙xh5 39 ♖xf5, hoping for a knight fork on f5, then 39...♖c7! looks good for Black. White can prepare a better version of ♖c4, no doubt, but Black nonetheless gains counterplay.

Instead Nakamura decided to rule out any black activity along the central files:

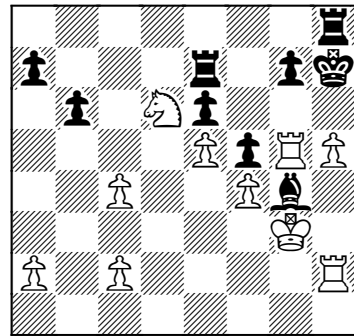
36 c4!

At first it seems like White has given up trying to win, as there is no longer a ♖c4 and ♖e3 lifeline to free the rook on g5. In fact there is a way for the rook to escape his prison, and it will be provided by a piece that has been barely mentioned so far: the white king sitting far from the action on b1. Let's see how play unfolds.

36...♙f3 37 ♖h2 ♙g4 38 ♖b2!

The first step of a long journey. Black can undertake nothing active and can only hope that his position is solid enough to survive the white king's intervention.

38...♖b8 39 ♖c3 ♖d8 40 ♖d4 ♖b8 41 ♖e3 ♖h7 42 ♖f2 ♖h8 43 ♖g3



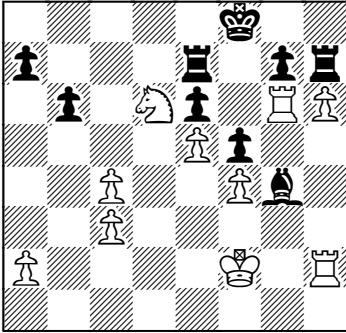
43...♖g8

Vitiugov sees that he can't keep the rook entombed on g5 and so permits the advance of the white h-pawn. If he continues to wait then White will play ♖h4, ♖g6, ♖g5 and h5-h6. If after 43...♖c7 44 ♖g6 ♖e7 45 ♖h4 Black tries for a trick with 45...♙xh5, to answer 46 ♖xh5?? with 46...♖g8+ winning the

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rook on h2, White can turn the tables with 46 ♖g5!, winning the bishop due to the pin on the black king.

44 h6 ♖h7 45 ♜g6 ♔d1 46 c3 ♙g4 47 ♙f2 ♙f8



48 ♙e3

Now that the position has become fluid on the kingside Nakamura sends his king back to the centre to create a passed pawn with ♙d4 and c4-c5. Black can't oppose this with ...♖c7 without allowing ♖xe6.

Another way to win was with the forcing sequence 48 hxg7+ ♖exg7 49 ♖xh7 ♖xh7 50 ♖xe6 ♖h2+ 51 ♙e3 ♖xa2 52 ♖f6+ ♙e7 53 ♗xf5+ ♙xf5 54 ♖xf5 when the connected passed pawns will decide the game. In the game White won slowly but surely. The remaining moves were:

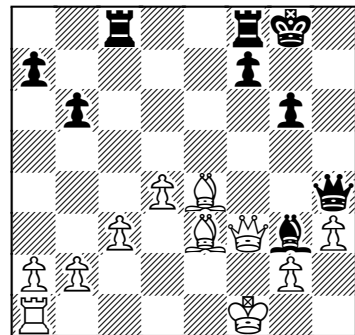
48...gxh6 49 ♖hxh6 ♖hxh6 50 ♖xh6 ♙g7 51 ♖h2 ♖d7 52 ♙d4 ♙f3 53 ♖h3 ♙g4 54 ♖h1 ♙f3 55 ♖g1+ ♙g4 56 c5 bxc5+ 57 ♙xc5 ♖c7+ 58 ♙b4 ♖c6 59 ♗b5 ♙f8 60 a4 a5+ 61 ♙xa5 ♖c4 62 ♗d4 ♖xc3 63 ♖b1 ♖c8 64 ♖b6 ♙f7 65 ♗xe6 ♖c4 66 ♗g5+ 1-0

A running king ruins the opponent's plan

In the next game sending the king on a journey removes it from the clutches of the enemy pieces and pawns. The opposing forces somehow become demoralized and lose their vigour once their natural prey has eluded them. The psychological effect of running with the king is not to be underestimated.

Game 25 N.Short-V.Mikhalevski Gibraltar 2011 Four Knights Game

1 e4 e5 2 ♗f3 ♗c6 3 ♗c3 ♗f6 4 ♙b5 ♗d4 5 ♙a4 ♗xf3+ 6 ♖xf3 c6 7 0-0 d6 8 h3 ♙e7 9 ♗e2 0-0 10 c3 h6 11 d4 d5 12 exd5 e4 13 ♖g3 ♙d6 14 ♖h4 cxd5 15 f3 ♙e7 16 ♙b3 b6 17 ♖f2 ♙a6 18 ♙e3 ♗h5 19 fxe4 ♙h4 20 ♖f3 ♙xe2 21 ♖xe2 ♗g3 22 ♖g4 h5 23 ♖d1 ♗xf1 24 ♙xf1 dxe4 25 ♖xh5 ♙g3 26 ♙d5 ♖c8 27 ♙xe4 g6 28 ♖f3 ♖h4



White has a bishop and two pawns for the exchange. His 4-2 majority on the queenside, including a protected passed pawn, should give him the edge in an endgame, but is he going to survive the middlegame?

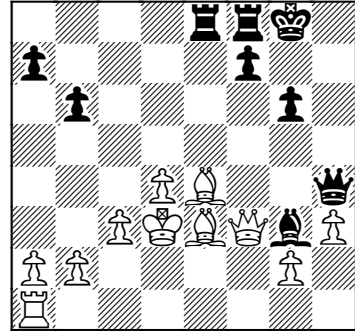
The white king stands on a semi-open file. In order to meet the threat of 29...♖ce8, 30...♗e6, and 31...♗f6, pinning him against the queen, you might expect 29 ♔g1, moving into shelter behind the kingside pawns. Then Black could play 29...♖ce8, followed by doubling rooks along the open e-file, say, with 30...♗e7 and 31...♗fe8. This would make the white bishops vulnerable, and if a black rook ever broke through to the e1-square then White's back rank would have fallen. Black might also combine the plan of activating his rooks with a pawn advance on the kingside, beginning with ...f7-f5 and ...g6-g5. Then the threat would be ...g5-g4, ramming the h3-pawn in order to bring the black queen into action against the white king.

Therefore playing 'according to custom' with 29 ♔g1 doesn't bring White any joy. Instead Nigel Short came up with a brilliant alternative:

29 ♔e2! ♖ce8 30 ♔d3

So what has the former World Championship Challenger gained through breaking the rules? Firstly, there can be no more talk of the white king coming under attack by the black kingside pawns. Nor is there any need to be anxious about the back rank. The

white bishops are more secure, since the king is lending his hand in their defence. This frees up the queen to help repel Black's initiative. And, finally, if the position simplifies, the white king is well placed to support the advance of his passed pawn.



30...♗e7 31 ♔c6!

An aggressive form of defence: Short not only meets the threat of 31...♗fe8, but even prevents Black from doubling rooks on the e-file.

31...♔h7?

A key moment. White's next move carries us firmly into Reuben Fine's 'the king is a strong piece: use it!' endgame territory. Instead after 31...f5!, which was later recommended by Mikhailievski, we still have one foot in 'the king as target' camp.

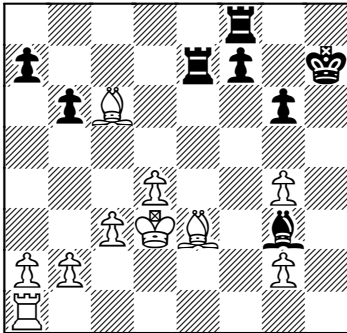
32 ♗g4!

Thanks to the king doing a job on d3, rather than hiding away on g1, the white queen doesn't have to worry about defending e3. With the exchange of queens White's pawn mass on the queenside becomes the most signifi-

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cant factor. That at least would be the logical course of play. Instead in time pressure Mikhalevski blunders the exchange.

32... ♖xg4 33 hxg4

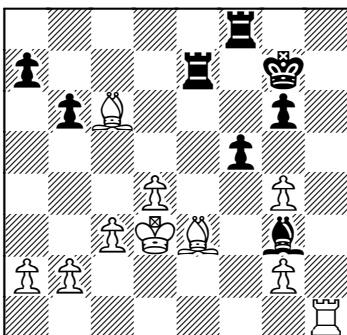


33...f5?

He had to move his king from the h-file, when there is a hard fight ahead.

34 ♖h1+ ♔g7

After 34... ♖g8 35 ♔d5+ Black has to give up the exchange on f7 as 35... ♖g7 36 ♔h6+ wins a rook. It is ironic that Black's king proves in more trouble on the kingside than White's in the middle!



35 ♔h6+ ♔f7 36 ♔d5+ ♔e8 37 ♔xf8

♔xf8 38 gxf5 gxf5

Losing a piece, but alternatives weren't at all enthralling.

39 ♖h8+ 1-0

For if 39... ♔g7 40 ♖g8+ and g3 drops.

Nigel Short was at one time a big fan of the King's Gambit, so he is well attuned to breaking the rules as regards king safety. On the other hand, it is important to remember that the manoeuvre 29 ♔e2 and 30 ♔d3 isn't some piece of eccentricity reserved for players with a maverick style. It is not only creative and rule-breaking, but also necessary for the safety of the white position. Assuming they were suitably inspired to see the king march to d3, I'm sure that even the most law-abiding grandmaster would play it.

It's never too late to learn new ideas

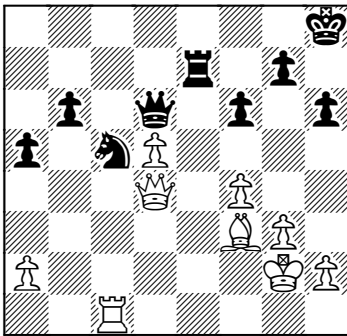
Whilst I was immersed in looking at extraordinary journeys by fearless kings I had to play a game for my local chess club against IM Graeme Buckley. It wasn't at all inspiring until move 35.

Game 26
G.Buckley-N.McDonald
 Surrey League 2012
Queen's Gambit Declined

1 d4 d5 2 c4 e6 3 ♖c3 ♔e7 4 ♗f3 ♗f6 5 ♔g5 h6 6 ♔h4 0-0 7 e3 b6 8 ♔e2 ♔b7 9

♙xf6 ♙xf6 10 cxd5 exd5 11 b4 c6 12
 0-0 a5 13 b5 c5 14 ♘e5 ♖a7 15 ♗d2
 ♙a8 16 ♖ad1 cxd4 17 exd4 ♗d6 18 f4
 ♖d8 19 ♙f3 ♘d7 20 ♖c1 ♘f8 21 ♘c6
 ♙xc6 22 bxc6 ♗xc6 23 ♘xd5 ♗d6 24
 ♖fe1 ♙h8 25 ♘xf6 ♗xf6 26 d5 ♘e6 27
 ♖c4 ♘c5 28 ♗e3 ♖dd7 29 ♗c3 ♖e7 30
 ♖e5 ♗d6 31 ♗d4 f6 32 ♖xe7 ♖xe7 33
 ♖c1 ♖e8 34 g3 ♖e7 35 ♙g2

Despite White's passed pawn, the black pieces are holding their own in the centre. The knight is well entrenched on c5 and prevents any invasion by the white rook along the c-file. Meanwhile Black's own rook controls the e-file, and the queen blocks the passed pawn. On the other hand, Black can't do anything active – if he tries to advance his queenside pawns by arranging ...b6-b5, his knight will lose its support.

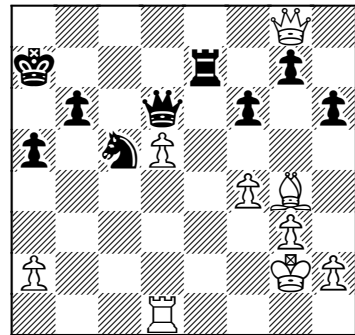


White can try to engineer an advance of his kingside pawns as a prelude to an attack on the black king – the positional justification would be that the black knight is a long way from the defence of its monarch. Alternatively,

White can try the manoeuvre ♗c4, ♗b5 and ♗c6 to try to break the blockade of the passed pawn.

It seems that Black is going to suffer some mild pressure, but fortunately as I said above my head was full of king marches. And so I decided the black king should move over to a7. It felt absurd for the black king to abandon its shelter on the kingside and venture out into the hostile centre, but I couldn't resist! And so:

35...♙g8 36 ♖d1 ♙f8 37 ♗c4 ♙e8 38
 ♗c2 ♙d8 39 ♗h7 ♙c7 40 ♗g8 ♙b7 41
 ♙g4 ♙a7



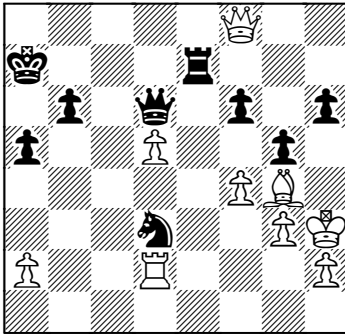
What has Black achieved? Firstly, his king is no longer in danger of being attacked by the white kingside pawns and is reunited with his knight. And, secondly, White's projected manoeuvre ♗c4, ♗b5 and ♗c6 loses some of its sting once the black king is near the scene and able to help deal with the passed pawn.

So much for the objective merits of the king march. We might also talk about psychology – White has been

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distracted from the plan of ♖c4 and ♖b5 by the chance to attack the black king with ♖h7 and ♖h8. My opponent, who was short of time, seemed bemused by the king manoeuvre and ended up blundering his queen:

42 ♖h3 ♘e4 43 ♜f1 ♞c5 44 ♜f2 g5 45 ♜f8 ♞d3 46 ♜d2



46... ♞xf4+! 0-1

The queen is lost after 47 gxf4 ♜e3+.

I don't claim this is a great game. The point is that I would never have manoeuvred my king from h8 to a7 if I hadn't examined the games in this chapter. It would never have occurred to me. During the game I felt I was doing something a bit absurd and embarrassing, and I would soon be cursing myself when it went wrong. In other words, I was taken outside my comfort zone. So it seems you can teach an old dog new tricks!