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# **THE POWER OF TACTICS**

**Volume 1  
Tactics according  
to Smyslov**



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Typesetting  
i-Press <[www.i-press.pl](http://www.i-press.pl)>

First edition 2019 by Chess Evolution

*The Power of Tactics. Volume 1: Tactics according to Smyslov*  
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ISBN: 978-615-5793-18-9

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Printed in Hungary

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# KEY TO SYMBOLS

=	Equality or equal chances
±	White has a slight advantage
∓	Black has a slight advantage
±	White is better
∓	Black is better
+-	White has a decisive advantage
-+	Black has a decisive advantage
∞	unclear
∞	with compensation
↔	with counterplay
↑	with initiative
→	with an attack
Δ	with the idea
□	only move
N	novelty
!	a good move
!!	an excellent move
?	a weak move
??	a blunder
!?	an interesting move
?!	a dubious move
+	check
#	mate



# PREFACE

The middlegame is the most important part of the game, as the majority of encounters are decided there. We know that sometimes it is difficult to divide strategy and tactics, as they both have the same aim — to win the game. Strategy is the more difficult subject, because it involves planning and structures: tactics helps to conduct these plans in the fastest way.

In olden times there was a division of the style of players — TACTICAL and STRATEGIC. In modern chess this division practically does not exist, as every top player is able to operate with all tools. Still we can name as tactical-style players such great attackers as Mikhail Tal, Rashid Nezhmetdinov, Albin Planinc and Victor Kupreichik. Perhaps, in reality, their strategy was a bit simpler with the aim of direct attack on the opponent's king, and not simply attacking some weakness on the queenside, for example. During the times of the Soviet chess school, the label TACTICIAN led to an underestimation of attackers. But we all know that the chess public enjoy attacking play and admire great attackers much more than pure, boring strategists. Of course, this attitude is connected with the openings.

For example, in gambits, players have to consider many more tactical elements than in, for example, the Carlsbad variation of the Queen's Gambit. Likewise, the Sicilian Defence with kings castled on different sides and fierce pawn attacks on both flanks; here tactics and sacrifices are in the air as the strategy was prepared from the first moves of the openings.

There are many valuable books on tactics, and many authors have presented classifications of tactical motifs and themes. But some of them are too academic — in modern times we require a much more practical education. For this reason, nowadays different test books are becoming very popular. In this book there is a simpler model of tactics described, one according to the great former World Champion Vassily Smyslov.

In my opinion this method is simple and universal. For trainers and pupils, it can be very useful to use this simple classification. Additionally, there are many exercises to improve the pupil's tactical abilities.

IGM Aleksandr Beliavsky



# INTRODUCTION

Tactics, including the calculation of variations, is the most important part of chess. Knowledge of openings, middlegames, endgames, strategy, technique, realization of the advantage and similar is also extremely important. But all this knowledge doesn't help us if we don't calculate properly. There are many great books on tactics, wherein the authors have assembled different tactical motifs and elements.

This area of chess is more or less very well covered in literature. This begs the question, why then have we decided to write and publish our book?

Firstly, during all these years that we have been working as chess coaches, we collected a huge amount of instructive material, and it made sense to us to share it with our readers as well.

Secondly, you can never have enough tactics. Every chess player must solve as many puzzles as possible in order to grow stronger.

Lastly, we have been friends for many years and work well together, and we simply decided to show this through our books. Our plan was rather ambitious — to publish a series of three books. The books are designed for different levels.

The first book is appropriate for players with ratings up to 1800, the second for ratings up to 2100 and the third for ratings above 2000.

This opening book in the series is divided into three parts:

1. A theoretical part where you will get to know the basics about tactical elements according to Smyslov (check, pin, double attack, unprotected piece).
2. Exercises and solutions for level 1.
3. Exercises and solutions for level 2.

We prepared clear nice examples plus a lot of exercises for levels up to 1500. Study, enjoy and use tactics as much as possible in your games! Combinations really are brilliant moments in a chess game.

## RECOMMENDATIONS ABOUT SOLVING THE PUZZLES

At first try to solve every puzzle from the diagram itself. If it proves too difficult, then put the position on the board and try to solve it without moving the pieces. Exercises are divided into two levels, easier and then more complicated.

Adrian Mikhalchishin  
Tadej Sakelšek

# TACTICS IN THE AIR

Tactics are everywhere — so it is extremely important to recognize tactical motifs and elements in every position. We use tactical elements in both attack and defense and it is especially valuable to accelerate plans in different situations.

Most authors and trainers believe that tactics are the most important part of chess as it includes the most important matter — coordination of the pieces. The great GM of yesterday Richard Teichmann used to say that the game of chess is 90% tactics!

## TACTICS AND STRATEGY

When we try to define tactics, we cannot overlook the term known as strategy. Strategy is a plan of action designed to achieve a long-term or overall aim. It serves also to prepare the forces to develop, to improve and coordinate the pieces in the position. All these elements are creating a base for the tactics. So, tactics is in the service of strategy and is in reality the art of fighting. It's main

task is to solve strategic aims in the fastest or shortest way.

However, we must understand that tactics is not an ordinary operation, such as the exchange of pieces, for example, but rather an act of fast and direct solution in some part of the board. For tactics we can use all the pieces and pawns that are in this area. Sometimes the bad position of the opponent's pieces, or an unprotected piece perhaps, can help us to execute a tactical operation. The legendary Jose Raul Capablanca taught us that after increasing all the strategic factors (elements) in the position, the cooperation of the pieces reaches their highest level and it is time for a tactical explosion.

He usually completed his strategic plans with the help of small, final combinations. It was a very important input to chess knowledge that tactical operation has to be prepared with positional build up, improvement of the pieces and increment of their coordination. Another base for tactics is also a weakness in the opponent's position, or simply a mistake made by the opponent,

which allows tactical elements to appear in some areas of the chess board.

## COMBINATION, SACRIFICE AND CALCULATION

Next, we have to understand what a combination and a sacrifice are — and what sets them apart. We know different definitions. The simplest one is: a combination is a process, where we use different tactical measures (motifs and themes) and combine them to achieve some aim — such as mate, material or positional advantage or even a draw.

Finally, we come to the second important definition, that of the sacrifice. It has many purposes, such as opening the position of the opponent's king, creating long-term compensation, creating opportunities for future powerful strikes, like

a double-attack or some other tactical possibilities.

The main difference between a combination and a sacrifice is in the length of the operation. Combination is a short-term operation, while a sacrifice is a long term one. For example, if we sacrifice a piece for some sort of material gain, or a checkmate, the sacrifice is in fact a part of combination — it's like an explosion that starts the whole process. If we sacrifice a piece, for example, for long-term compensation, then this is what we can call a sacrifice.

All these processes demand correct calculation. It is one of the most important tools which every chess player uses and accordingly must train constantly. The calculation process demands strategical understanding, but at the same time a lot of tactics, on both sides, are used during this process. The best players are also the best 'calculators'.

# TACTICS ACCORDING TO SMYSLOV

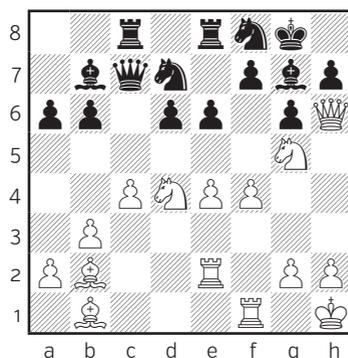
The great ex-World Champion Vassily Smyslov came up with his own fantastic and very simple system to prioritise tactical elements. He considered check, pin, double attack and the unprotected piece as the main tactical elements. All other elements are, according to him, of lesser importance.

## CHECK

The most important element was considered by Smyslov to be the simple check! Adrian was very surprised by this and, given an opportunity, asked him why he considers a simple check to be the most important tactical element. He explained that check is the most forcing move, one that demands the opponent react to the threat to their king. This win of time allows the player to use his gain of the next move for different actions. In this way check changes a lot of elements in the position. For example, it helps to improve the piece that gave the check and it doesn't allow the opponent to play freely — he is forced to either move the king to avoid the

check, cover the check with some piece, or take the piece that is giving the check if possible. There are technically a few kinds of checks — ordinary, discovered check, double check.

## Example 1



21. ♕xg7+!

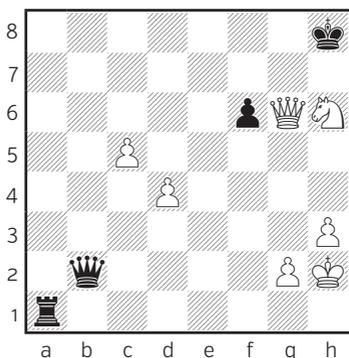
A typical combination. White will finish the game with a series of checks.

21... ♖xg7 22. ♘f5+!

Discovered and double check at the same time.

22... ♖g8 23. ♘h6# 1-0

## Example 2



48... ♔b8!

Backward tactics are not easy to see. Remember — pieces can go in all directions!

49. ♕g3

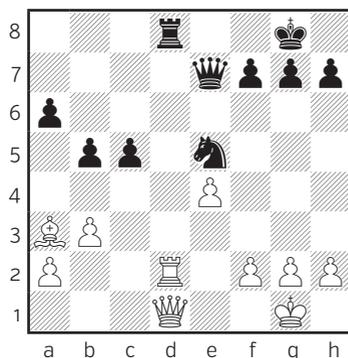
49.g3 is not possible since White will get mated! 49... ♔b2+ 50. ♕c2 ♕xc2#

49... ♖h1!

Another check after which White loses the queen.

50. ♔xh1 ♕xg3-+ 0-1

## Example 3



1... ♞f3+

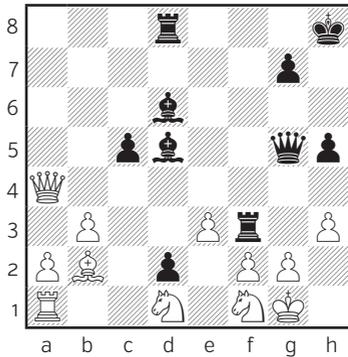
With this check Black opens up White's king and creates a double attack at the same time.

2.gxf3 ♕g5+

Combination of check and double attack. Black wins!

0-1

### Example 4



Black is winning in different ways but he decided to finish the game with a series of checks.

36... ♔xg2+!

The start of a very instructive combination!

37. ♕xg2 ♖g3+

The first double check...

38. ♕h2 ♖g2+

second double check...

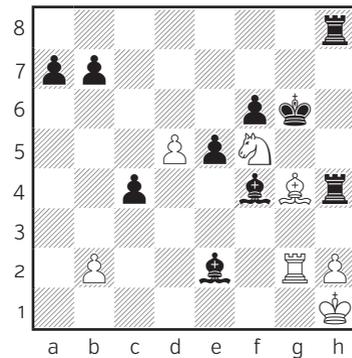
39. ♕h1 ♖h2+

and third double check!

40. ♕g1 ♖h1# 0-1

Many times in chess we can save the game with the help of check! Let's see another example:

### Example 5



Black has a big material advantage and White's position seems hopeless. But White has a saving option, using the theme of perpetual check.

1. ♕h5+! ♔xh5

1... ♕xf5?? 2. ♕g6#

2. ♖g7+ ♕h6 3. ♖f5+ ♕h5

Black's king cannot run away and the game will end in a draw.

3... ♕h7?? 4. ♖g7#

1/2

## PIN

The pin is one of the most powerful elements in chess. It creates very unpleasant situations, especially if the king is involved in the pin.

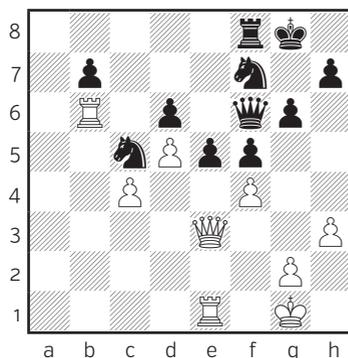
We can make a pin with a queen, rook or bishop. We also know different kinds of pin: horizontal (queen or rook), vertical (queen or rook) and diagonal (queen or bishop) pins.

Usually there is a more precious piece placed behind the pinned piece. The most dangerous pins involve the king.

The most important feature of the pin is that the process of unpinning demands effort and time from the opponent. In some cases we can unpin with the help of tactics. We might sacrifice the piece which was placed behind the pinned piece due to more important actions in some other part of the board. In many cases pins lead to material wins.

It is important to understand that not all pins are problematic, especially when the pinned piece is well protected.

## Example 1



Black has two pieces for the rook but it is White to play.

1. ♔xc5!

An example of the horizontal pin.

1...dxc5 2. ♖xf6+-

After this “small” combination White is an exchange up and has good chances of winning the game.

1-0