

Grandmaster Training Camp 1

Calculation!

By

Sam Shankland



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GRANDMASTER TRAINING CAMP 1 — Calculation!

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Preface

For my entire adult life, I have been both a professional chess player and a professional chess trainer. I have always had clear priorities, and my main ambitions lie behind the board. Playing comes first, training others comes second. In my early twenties, my main activity on training others was with helping private students. Every now and then, I would write a short article or record a brief video. But everything changed in late 2017, when I wrote my first book, *Small Steps to Giant Improvement*.

This book took me about six weeks to complete. That was all I did in this time, and I logged many hours every day. I did not keep a precise count of how the hours were proportionally spent. But I would estimate that it was about 90% on researching the topic of pawn play, looking for examples and trying to properly understand them; 10% on writing. I chose the topic because it was something I wanted to study. Most of the work I did towards completing the book was improving my understanding of chess. It did not feel like I was writing a book; rather, it felt like I was doing my normal training and inviting my readers to come along for the ride.

Perhaps it was just a coincidence, but right after doing my work on *Small Steps to Giant Improvement*, I experienced the biggest breakthrough of my adult life. In early 2018, I won the US Championship ahead of three top-ten players and followed it up with wins at the Capablanca Memorial and American Continental. I shot to 2730 and finally reached Super-GM status, after being stuck in the mid-high 2600s for the previous five years. Furthermore, I was seeing many themes that I had written about showing up in my tournament practice. I was handling the positions much better than I used to.

Ever since then, I have focused a lot on creating content. I wrote a follow-up book for Quality Chess on mastering passed pawn play, *Small Steps 2 Success*. I also published a full opening repertoire series on Chessable. Every single word I have written for both publishers has been done with the same stated goal in mind: to make myself a better player. Successful books that help supplement my income and help others improve their chess is just icing on the cake.

The writing process involves a lot of research. This deepens my understanding and forces me to organize my thoughts and newfound knowledge in a coherent manner. Writing both books helped me make better decisions with my pawns. Digging deep into many opening lines, while building my Chessable repertoire, developed my understanding of some of the common and important resulting middlegame structures. I was able to play my own analysis against countless 2700+ opponents and get good positions. *Grandmaster Training Camp 1* gave me an excuse to solve three hundred difficult exercises to continue the never-ending process of trying to improve my calculation.

I have had nothing but positive experiences with both Quality Chess and Chessable. They both bring something unique to the table. Physical print books and online interactive e-books both have their advantages and disadvantages, their proponents and their critics. As far as I am concerned, Quality Chess is far and away the best chess publisher when it comes to print books, as Chessable is for online books (or courses as they are often called).

I am absolutely delighted that the work you are presently holding will be available on both platforms. It was first published as *Shankland's Chess Calculation Workbook* on Chessable in September 2022. It is now also released in book form as *Grandmaster Training Camp 1* with Quality Chess in February 2023. It is fully accessible to those who like all the bells and whistles of web-based training and the tools it has to offer, as well as all those who prefer the sight and feel of a quality physical book and board.

Whichever medium the reader prefers, it is my sincere hope that this work helps them reach further towards their chess goals.

Sam Shankland

Walnut Creek, November 2022



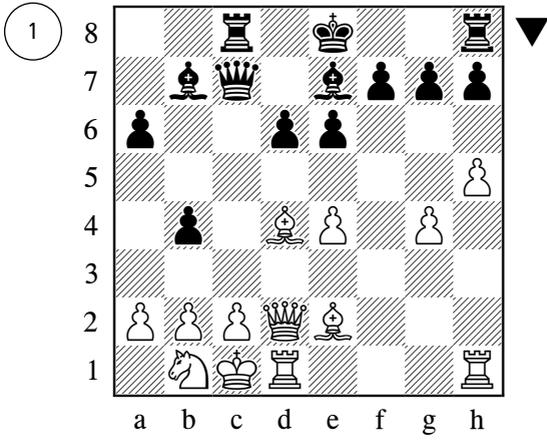
GM Tenor and GM Sam Shankland

Chapter 1

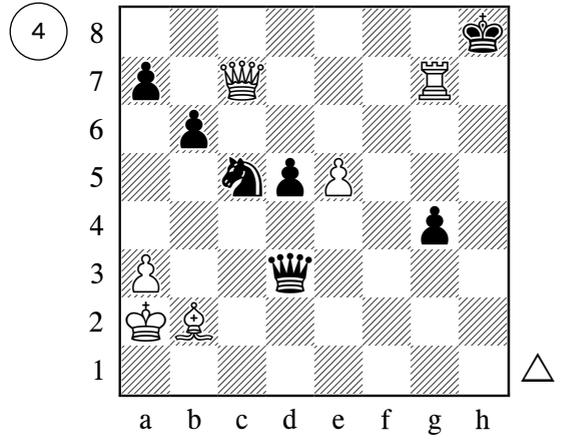
Tactics



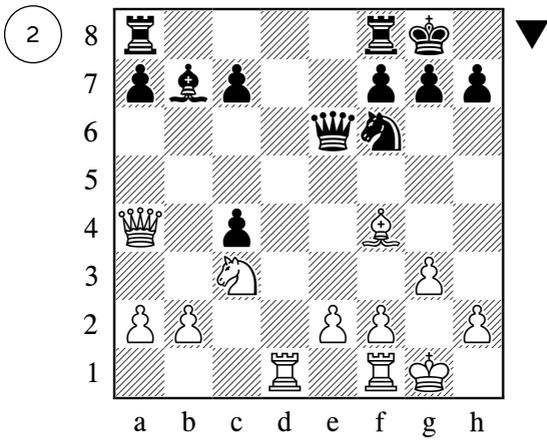
Cork – Morris, West Bromwich 2006



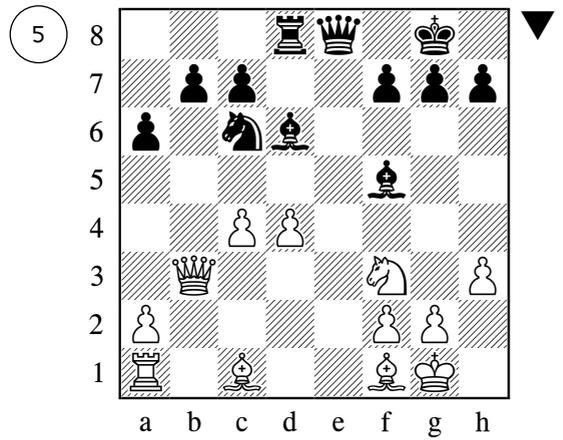
Levin – Maltsevskaya, Chelyabinsk 2022



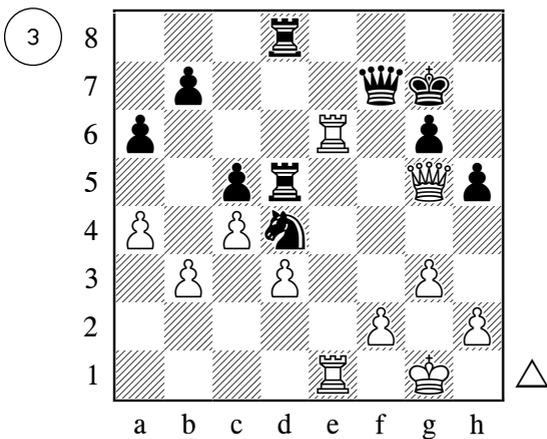
Morera Rodriguez – Campora, Malaga 2021



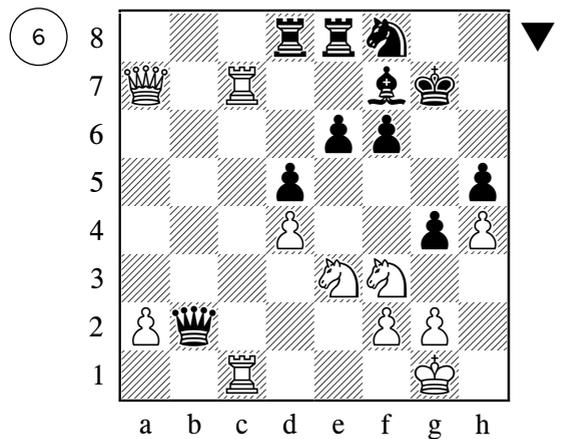
Van Osch – Heimann, Germany 2022



Kosakowski – Adly, Warsaw 2021



Blohberger – Christiansen, Warsaw 2021



Chapter 7

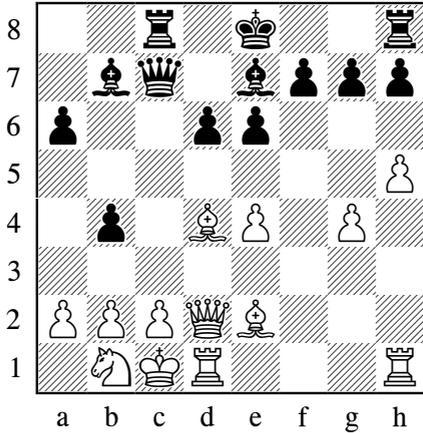
Solutions



Solutions to Chapter 1

1. David Cork – Graham Morris

West Bromwich 2006



The first one is certainly very easy. There is not much to see here, but Jacob always tells me that he likes to build up my confidence a little before tearing it down!

16...♗g5!

The bishop is immune from capture thanks to the mate on c2.

17.♙xg7 was the game continuation, which obviously did not influence the result, or even the length of the game after 17...♚xc2# 0-1. Taking the bishop would have been met with a similar response.

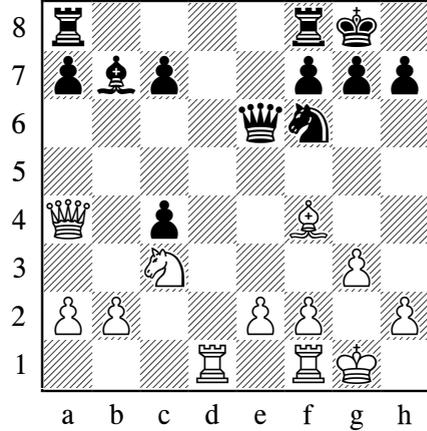
17.♚xc2#

Now that the queen has been distracted from c2, Black can deliver a quick mate.

17...♚xc2#

2. Ignacio Morera Rodriguez – Daniel Campora

Malaga 2021



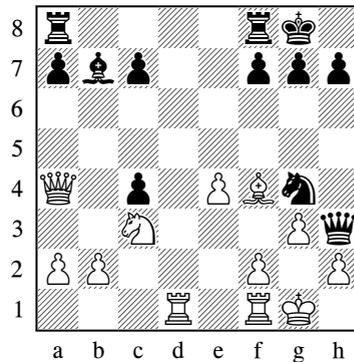
The second one is very straightforward as well. The most direct moves work.

15...♚h3!

Black threatens mate on g2.

16.f3

16.e4 ♖g4 is like the main line. White is promptly mated.



17.♜f1 ♚xh2† 18.♙f1 ♚xf2#

After the text move, one key rule of calculation is on point. Whenever you have a move that you really want to play, but it seems like your opponent is stopping you from making it, the

first question you should always ask yourself is: *what happens if I do it anyway?* Here, Black would very much like to play ...♘g4 and give mate with ...♝xh2. This seems impossible because the f3-pawn is controlling the g4-square. But what happens if I do it anyway?

16...♘g4!

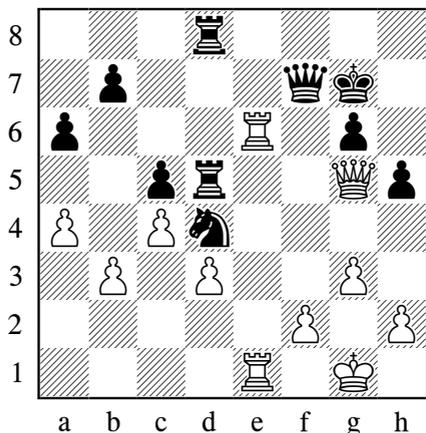
The knight is immune from capture and Black wins.

17.fxg4 ♝g2#

0-1

3. Jakub Kosakowski – Ahmed Adly

Warsaw (rapid) 2021



40.♞xg6†!

The third problem was a little harder than the first two. It was the first one that I actually had to slow down and think a little about. But I solved it fast. The first key tenet of calculation is: *always examine all checks and captures*. Being mindful of this tenet will lead White to a quick victory.

Tempting as it may be to take a loose rook with 40.cxd5?!, always examine all checks and captures! While the move should be examined, all of Black's follow-up checks and captures

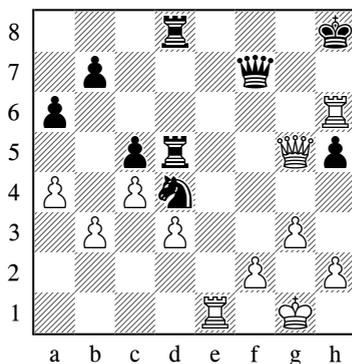
should be examined as well. After 40...♘f3†!, White loses his queen and the game.

40...♝xg6

Leaving the enemy rook alive would only make matters worse.

40...♖f8 41.♝h6† and Black is mated.

40...♖h8 41.♞h6† Black is mated shortly here as well, as if losing a mountain of material was not enough.

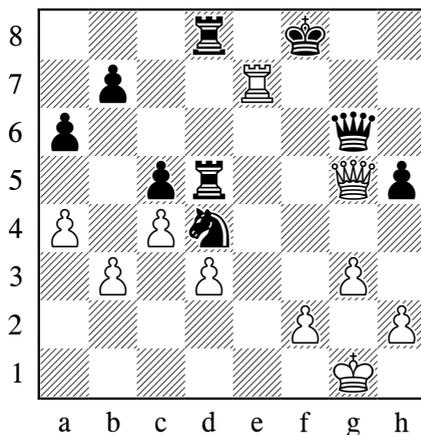


41...♝h7 42.♞xh7† ♖xh7 43.♞e7† ♖h8 44.♝g7#

41.♞e7†!

Again, always examine all checks and captures.

41...♖f8



42. ♔xg6!

Checks and captures...

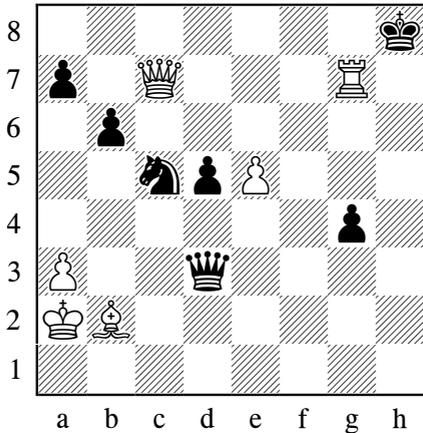
42... ♕xe7 43.cxd5

And more checks and captures!

This one was checks and captures all the way through. White is routinely winning with his extra material. He put the game away without much further discussion.

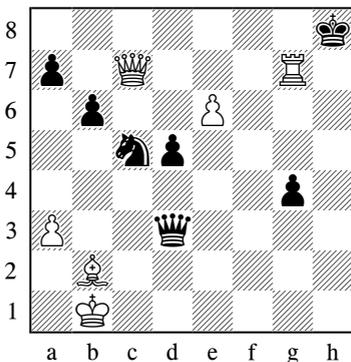
4. Evgeny Levin – Aleksandra Maltsevskaya

Chelyabinsk 2022



We had just seen a case of examining all checks and captures. Here we see another one.

White needs to be direct, since Black is threatening a perpetual check. For example, 43.e6? would squander half a point: 41... ♖b3† 42. ♕b1 ♗d3† White is unable to escape the checks.



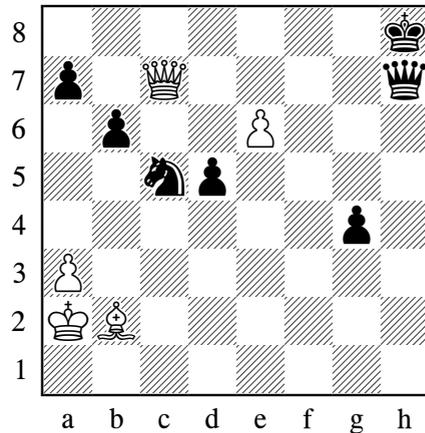
41. ♖h7†!

It might look wrong at first glance to leave the rook en prise, but when thinking of two key tenets of calculation it makes perfect sense. First, obviously examine all checks and captures. Second, ♖g7-h7† is clearly the move White really would like to make, but it seems as if he cannot because the rook is hanging. But what happens if I do it anyway? Black resigned rather than face the music.

1-0

Let's see how the game would have ended had she continued the game.

41... ♖xh7 42.e6†!



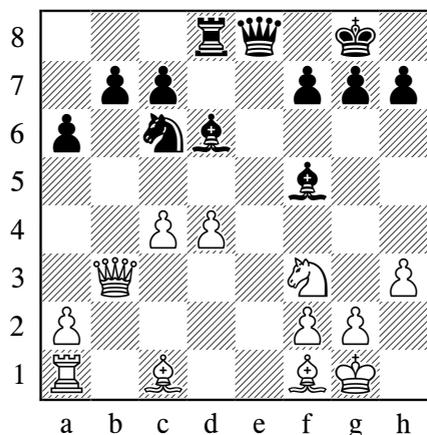
Checks and captures. After:

42.. ♕g8

Any queen move to the back rank will be mate.

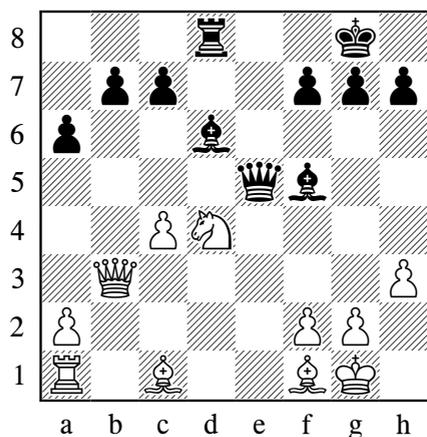
5. Mees van Osch – Andreas Heimann

Germany 2022



Black's position looks a little suspect thanks to White's central control. But again, always examine all checks and captures.

15...♖xd4! 16.♗xd4 ♕e5!



It transpires that due to the pin along the d4-a1 diagonal, White is unable to bring the knight back to f3, and as such cannot both prevent the threatened mate and save the d4-knight.

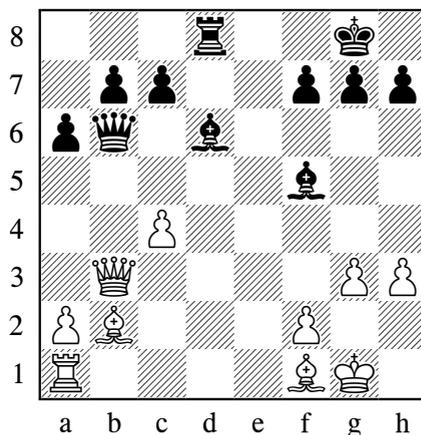
17.g3

17.♗f3 ♕xa1 leaves Black up an exchange and a pawn.

17...♕xd4

Black is a clean pawn up, and White is unable to take on b7, thanks to the loose rook on a1.

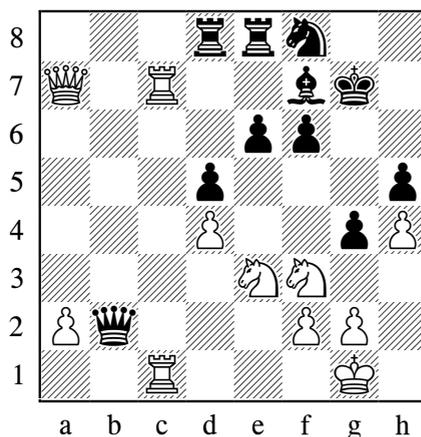
18.♗b2 ♕b6!



Black has other winning moves, but I like this one for its simplicity. No further calculation is needed. Black is a clean pawn up with no weaknesses whatsoever.

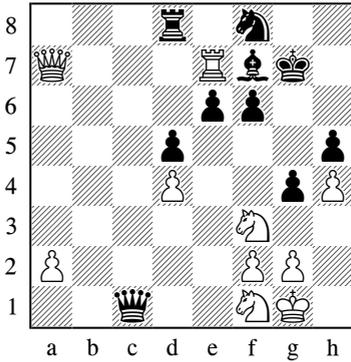
6. Felix Blohberger – Johan-Sebastien Christiansen

Warsaw (rapid) 2021



Black is facing some problems along the seventh rank, but he can solve them with a clever resource.

28...♖e7? When comparing this move to the solution, we see that once White takes on e7, the white rook will not hang down the road.
 29.♖xe7! ♜xc1† 30.♘f1



Black is now lucky to have 30...♘d7, with approximate equality. He could have, and did do, so much better.

28...♜d7!

The right rook. Now, Black has two large threats in ...♜xc1† and ...g4xf3. White is unable to prevent both.

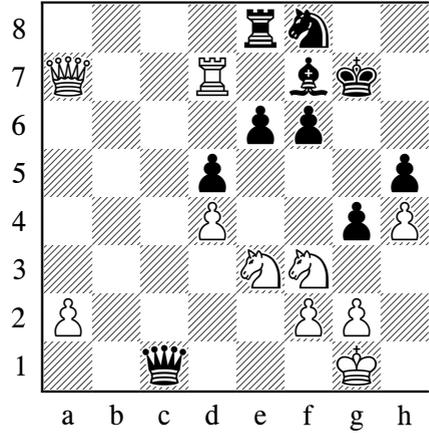
29.♖xd7

Other moves will not solve White's problems either.

29.♘h2 saves the knight but not the rook:
 29...♜xc1†! 30.♖xc1 ♖xa7 and Black is winning.

29.♜a5 saves the rook but not the knight:
 29...gxf3 and again Black is winning.

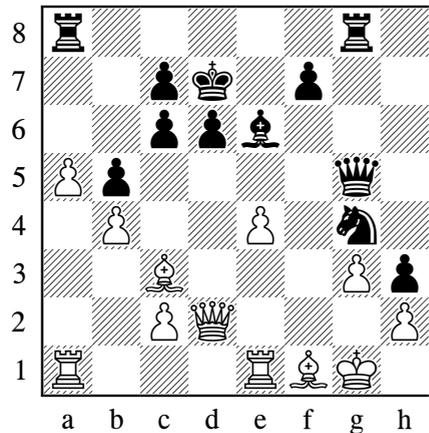
29...♜xc1†!



White resigned. After stepping out of check, Black is ready for ...♘d7, with a massive material advantage.
 0-1

**7. Pontus Carlsson –
 Jose Fernando Cuenca Jimenez**

Warsaw (rapid) 2021



Here we see yet another case of examining all checks and captures.

32...♘xh2!

It turns out the knight is immune from capture and taking on g5 allows Black a nice intermezzo. Black wins material.

Name Index

In the last few decades in the chess world there has been a confusion regarding names. It all started with Viswanathan Anand, whose family name is Viswanathan and first name Anand. Still, he is known as Anand. Other Asian players are known by their first name, Vidit for example, while others are not. Some are known by the surname and others only by their full name. Ding Liren is now known as Ding, his family name, while Le Quang Liem is rarely referred to as Le.

This book does nothing to resolve this linguistic inconsistency and provides a name index to help the common chess player find the players in the book, based on a compromise between the naming we believe they are used to and what makes most sense. When in doubt, we have used the family name as the main name.

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