

Karsten Müller

Magnus Carlsen

The Creativity of a Genius



JBV Chess Books

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Preface

Magnus Carlsen has for a long time been – and apparently will remain for a long time to come – by far the strongest player on the planet. This naturally raises the question: what knowledge and which skills make him so exceptional?

In my book *Magnus Carlsen – The Chess DNA of a Genius* (Joachim Beyer Verlag, 2023), I placed special emphasis on his abilities as a ‘reflector’ (for example, his art of pawn play, his skill in strategic endgames, and his instinct for the right exchange). Now I would like to get to the bottom of the secret behind his extraordinary creativity.

My special thanks go to Harald Fietz, from whom many of the texts and analyses originate, as well as to Robert Ullrich and Thomas Beyer of ‘Joachim Beyer Verlag’ – above all for the very pleasant collaboration and the first-class layout.

Karsten Müller, Hamburg, March 2026

Chapter 1

In search of creative opening ideas

Part 1

Straightforward opening play brings power

Introduction: Simplicity at its very best

This first part presents half a dozen miniature games in which Carlsen won in fewer than 25 moves. With the exception of one game from 2006 (when he defeated his former coach Simen Agdestein in the playoff for the Norwegian Championship and won his first and only national title), all the others were played before he earned the grandmaster title. (Incidentally, we have also included this victory against his compatriot as a ‘miniature’, since Agdestein only prolonged the game out of sheer frustration in a completely lost position.)

From Agdestein’s accounts, it is well known that in the early years of his chess education Carlsen immersed himself in a wide range of chess books, virtually ‘scanning’ essential content with his photographic memory. Among them, for example, was the voluminous work by Eduard Gufeld on the *Sicilian Dragon*, and Carlsen apparently developed an immediate interest in this deeply analyzed opening, which is usually characterized by sharp attacks and opposite-side castling. Although he only incorporated the ‘Dragon’ into his top-level Black repertoire more than a decade later, his ‘chess curiosity’ had been awakened much earlier.

In this regard it was evidently a learning trait to explore something out of sheer curiosity in order to enrich one’s own play. Observing Carlsen at tournaments away from the board, one notices that almost any chess publication within his line of sight is worth at least a glance – if only for a quick flip through the pages. A constant influx of ideas is also welcome in post-mortem analyses aimed at immediately evaluating the flood of thoughts, even though this type of retrospective discussion has increasingly fallen out of fashion in modern chess. After all, ‘the truth’ is usually established only later and substantiated by consulting an engine.

At the beginning of the century, this tendency toward engine dependence was far less pronounced, which makes it worthwhile to take a closer look at Carlsen’s early years – and here especially at the opening phase, where the course of a game is set and from which numerous characteristics of both play and player can be identified. In a sense, one learns through the eyes of the developing chess master.

This part presents two illustrative examples that vividly demonstrate Carlsen's approach to the opening and show how, in his early years, a method took shape that was marked by a healthy dose of individuality. I will address its positive – and occasionally less positive – facets in what follows. At this point, however, the focus is on highlighting elements of play that were exemplary of Carlsen's opening successes at the time and that can, in a certain sense, serve as models for players of all levels.

This half-dozen miniatures (followed by four exercises) brings a number of instructive principles onto the training agenda. The material was limited to games in which White wins, since these shed particularly revealing light on Carlsen's corresponding preferences.

In the selected games, he plays 1.e4 and 1.d4, but occasionally also opts for 1.f3. This makes it clear that he was eager to develop into an all-round player – a tendency that, with the increasing role of computer preparation, became a necessity in order to sidestep any targeted preparation by his opponents.

Carlsen did not shy away from employing sidelines or unusual move orders even against renowned opponents (for example, against GM Dolmatov in 2004). This inclination toward less-trodden paths remained a feature throughout his career and was sometimes even taken to extremes. Such an approach occasionally produces surprise effects when the seasoned tournament player brings out something from his younger years. For instance, the Trompowsky Attack (from the first game of this chapter) resurfaced 14 years later in the opening game of the 2016 World Championship match against Sergey Karjakin.

In the openings of this first part, Carlsen already displays mature, straightforward thinking; in other words, from the very beginning his decisions were purposeful and subordinated to an immediate objective (for example, gaining space or opening the position).

However, he had no reservations about placing practicality above strict adherence to principles. Even on his path to the grandmaster title, he acted without stereotyped thinking, for example, by capturing away from the center with a pawn (as in the game against Dolmatov) or by developing the queen at an early stage (as in the game against Kuzubov). On the one hand, this approach reflected his talent and a considerable degree of self-confidence, while on the other hand, it made his opponent's task more difficult;

Independently of his desire to pursue his own paths in the opening, Carlsen consistently adhered in exemplary fashion to simple opening principles, as they are taught to every chess student as the 'golden opening rules' – with regard to sufficient central control, rapid piece development, and early king safety through castling.

Carlsen once described his attitude toward precarious king positions in the so-called 'confession box' at the Sinquefeld Cup in St. Louis:

“I think a general rule for opening play is that if you are one move away from castling you are pretty much always fine. If you are three moves away from castling, you are never fine, and if you are two moves away from castling, it could go either way! So, right now I am two moves from castling, let’s see how it goes!”

In all six games, Carlsen strives for a space advantage, which in turn has a beneficial effect on an effective placement and harmonious coordination of the pieces – thereby allowing the factor of ‘development lead through gain of time’ to become dominant. This frequently results in multifunctional moves that complicate the opponent’s defensive task and, above all, create problems for the opposing king. In none of the examples does Black succeed in castling, a point that should be particularly emphasized in self-study or training.

Naturally, Carlsen was always aware of the tactical richness inherent in a strategically sound build-up and the corresponding demand for strong calculation skills – skills that he demonstrated at an early stage and with the utmost precision (for example, in the sacrificial game against Dolmatov). What emerged was the style of dynamic pressure play, which enabled Carlsen to exploit both – the favorable elements of his own position and the opponent’s inaccuracies – and which ruthlessly exposed weaknesses.

No wonder this increasingly impressed even stronger opponents, as described by GM Yevgeny Vladimirov on the occasion of his game against Carlsen at the Dubai Open 2004:

“When I was preparing for my game against him (and then became his victim), the thought occurred to me that I had seen something similar before. And I did not have to ponder long to resolve this ‘dépà-vu’: the young Garry Kasparov! The same ability to expand the initiative by means that (superficially) appear simple, the same impressive calculating power, and the same way of penetrating to the essence, to the very heart of a position.”

The list of some outstanding features in Carlsen’s early opening play provides an opportunity to explore a range of conventional and unconventional modes of thinking. When replaying the sample games, the motto ‘Simplicity at its very best’ should serve as a guiding principle.

6 exemplary short games

At the age of twelve, two promising talents take part in the World Under-12 Championship. Carlsen has been a member of Simen Agdestein's training group for two years and, the previous year, as a ten-year-old, played on board one for Oslo in the European Club Cup. Yuri Kuzubov is a member of the Ukrainian training group led by Gennadi Kuzmin, who in the 1970s belonged to the extended circle of World Championship candidates. Under these circumstances, the encounter between two outstanding young talents, each guided by highly respected coaches, is remarkable from the outset.



Magnus Carlsen (2250)

Yuri Kuzubov (2186)

Heraklion 2002

Trompowsky Attack (D00)

1.d4 ♖f6 2.♗g5

After this move, Carlsen needs to be familiar with more than just the main lines of the Trompowsky Attack. From accounts by his trainer, it is known that at the beginning of his career he was able, thanks to his photographic memory, to virtually 'scan' opening books at great speed.

2...d5

Since his opponent is ready to play with doubled pawns, Carlsen can immediately steer the game into territory he has previously analyzed.

3.♗xf6

True, this exchange does not conform to the rule of thumb that a piece already developed should not be moved a second time in the early opening phase.

However, this is a special case (similar, for example, to the Ruy Lopez Exchange Variation 1.e4 e5 2.♖f3 ♗c6 3.♗b5 a6 4.♗xc6), since Black must demonstrate that he obtains some positional compensation for the compromised pawn structure.

3...gxf6

The German FM Wolfgang Gerstner wrote in 1995 in his book on the Trompowsky Attack:

This is the active plan, which envisages swift action in the center – initiated by c7-c5 and possibly followed by e7-e5. White can first develop calmly with 4.e3 or seek immediate confrontation with 4.c4.

Carlsen chooses a different path, one that is also not mentioned in the English- and Spanish-language literature of the time (Peter Wells, Nigel Davies, and Jesús de la Villa) and that aims at a completely different treatment of space in the center. On the one hand, it reflects youthful self-confidence; on the other, creative independence when White employs a new concept based on opening the central files in conjunction with rapid development and long castling.

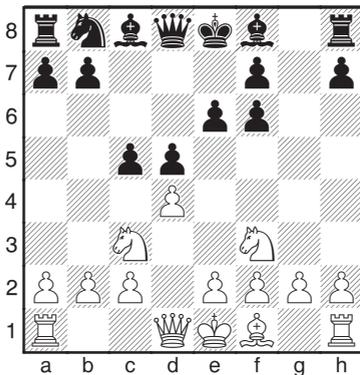
4. ♖c3 e6

Since this game, opening theory has developed considerably, and active alternatives such as 4...c5 or 4...♗f5 are now considered superior.

5. ♖f3

White follows the golden opening rule of developing the knights first. By choosing this specific line, Black has deprived himself of certain options, since castling short is risky in view of the open g-file. And with his next move, he also opens the queenside, without being able to achieve anything significant there against the 'new Carlsen concept'.

5...c5!?



Black attacks White's pawn center and opens lines for his queen toward the queenside. Carlsen now recognizes the priority of opening the position swiftly, with the aim of enabling all three remaining minor pieces to exert pressure on the opponent's still uncastled king.

6. e4!

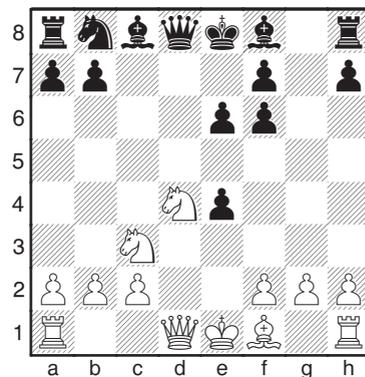
With the immediate opening of the position, White seeks to capitalize on his lead in development. The exchange on f6 has reduced Black's control of the center, while White already has both

knight in action there. In addition, his pieces are to be activated before Black's bishop pair can come into play.

6...cxd4?

Black exchanges all the pawns engaged in the struggle in order to avoid a vulnerable isolated pawn on d5 and isolated doubled pawns on the f-file. In doing so, however, he invites a White knight into the center too early. After the correct move order 6...dxe4 7. ♖xe4 cxd4, with the possible continuation 8. ♗b5+ ♗d7 9. ♖xd4 ♗e7 etc., he would have had no cause for concern.

7. ♖xd4 dxe4



8. ♗b5+

White does not automatically recapture on e4, but instead assigns higher priority to the factor of rapid piece development, since this check forces Black onto the defensive.

By contrast, after the loss of time with 8. ♖xe4?, Black could consolidate his position with 8...f5 9. ♖g3 ♗d7 etc.

8...♗d7 9. ♖h5!

Once again, Carlsen disregards a rule of thumb stating that the queen should not be brought into play too early. However, the pin on the f7-pawn creates the

threat of f6 . Moreover, long casting becomes immediately possible, which not only secures the king but also activates the rook on the open d-file.

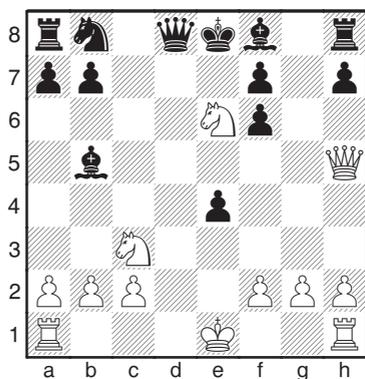
9... b6 ?

After this loss of time, Black is already on the brink of disaster.

After 9... b5 ? the power of the better-developed minor pieces also becomes evident.

(Only rapid further development with 9... c6 etc. would have led to approximate equality.)

For after 10. f6 ! ...

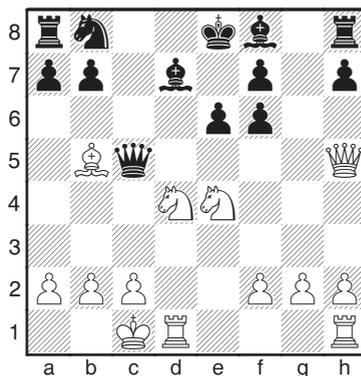


... followed by 10... d7 or 10... b6 , the strongest continuation in each case would be 11. d5 !

10.0-0 c5

In view of the threat of f4 , Black must stay the course once chosen, since after the defensive attempt 10... f5 ? White could intensify the attack with 11. g4 !

11. f4 !



This is not only more spectacular, but above all stronger than the alternative 11. xc5 ? xc5 12. f4 d4 13. xd7 + xd7 ! 14. xd4 + e7 etc.

11... hx5 12. xf6 + e7 ?

The 'instinctive' avoidance of the d-file (instead of the better 12... d8 ! 13. hx5 c7 etc.) only makes matters worse.

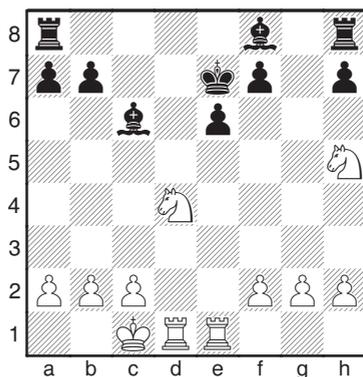
13. hx5 c6

At last this knight gets to move – however, this first move is also its last, for Magnus knows which pieces should remain on the board and which must disappear.

14. xc6 !+-

After 14. xc6 +? bxc6 , White would have to waste a valuable tempo to protect the bishop.

14... xc6 15. he1



And perhaps in view of the fact that even a tragicomic mating picture like 16. ♘f5+ ♖e8 17. ♘f6# was already looming on the horizon, Black resigned.

Summary

Why did Black lose?

- He unnecessarily accepted a damaged pawn structure as early as move 3.
- He adopted a rather passive setup and allowed White to become maximally active in the center.
- He chose an incorrect move order that enabled White to seize the initiative immediately.
- As a result, he was unable to activate either his bishop pair or his rooks.
- After a tactical oversight, White was able to strike – and after a defensive mistake, Black finally found himself in a completely lost position.

Why did White win?

- He opened the position at the earliest possible moment and advanced his development with attacking moves.
- He first gave up one bishop and soon afterward the second, fully aware that the knights needed concrete targets quickly, before the bishop pair could take control.
- He was tactically alert throughout and did not commit a single inaccuracy.

Shortly before his twentieth birthday, Carlsen outlined an important aspect of his chess philosophy in an interview as follows:

“One of the most important things is pattern recognition – the ability to identify typical motifs and images on the board, positional features and their consequenc-

es. You can learn this to a certain extent in training, but nothing replaces practical playing experience. And that is something I have always valued. I am only 19, but I have certainly already played a thousand classical games.”

If, at times, a picture is worth more than a thousand words, then this statement reveals more than a thousand position analyses. It shows Carlsen’s inner drive and his practical method of implementation. A coach might sum it up like this:

“Don’t memorize lines – explore patterns, and then vary those patterns again and again, trying to discover new nuances!”

In fact, Carlsen is a master of this approach, for in many of his post-mortem comments he draws on exemplary ideas from past and present.

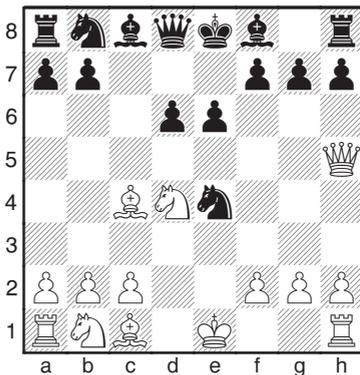
Over many years, the Norwegian has built up his own reservoir of knowledge out of sheer intellectual curiosity, and in his search for similarities or differences he continually reexamines stored patterns. Yet sometimes – perhaps due to stress of whatever kind – the proper link to the past fails to appear. In the following concrete case, however, no fewer than 18 years lay between two remarkably similar examples.



Magnus Carlsen (2863)
Ian Nepomniachtchi (2784)

Internet 2020
Sicilian (B54)

1.e4 c5 2.♫f3 d6 3.d4 cxd4 4.♫xd4 ♫f6
5.♫c4 ♫xe4 6.♞h5 e6



It should first be noted that the overly direct approach 7.♫xe6?? actually failed after 7...♫xe6 8.♫xe6 due to the nasty counter 8...♞e7!–+.

The only playable move is the intermediate check 7.♫b5+, since, thanks to the queen on h5, sacrificial ideas on e6 may arise. The fact that Carlsen instead continued with an outright losing move suggests that he no longer remembered his game from long ago against Kuzubov.

Here is a look at the two colorful lines that unfortunately remained behind the scenes:

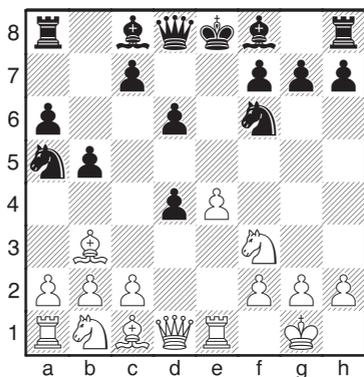
1) After the inferior continuation 7...♫d7?! 8.♫xe6, Black has only two options to limit the damage:

a) For after 8...♫f6? both 9.♫xd8 ♫xh5 10.♫xd7+ and 9.♞xf7+!? ♫xf7 10.♫xd8+ lead to a near winning position.

b) After 8...♞f6 9.♫f4 or 9.♫xd7+ ♫xd7

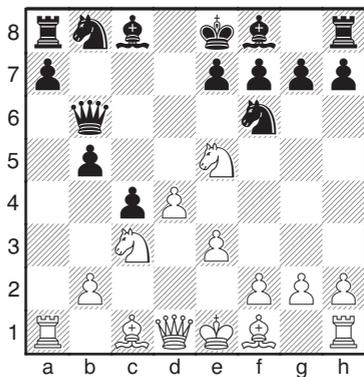
Exercises

1



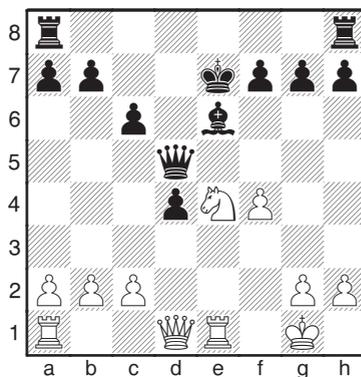
White to move and win

2



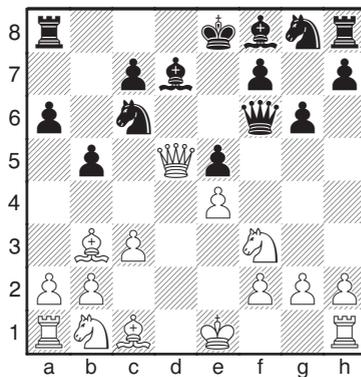
White to move and win

3



White to move and win

4



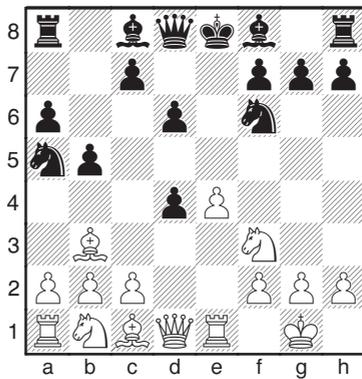
White to move and win

Solutions



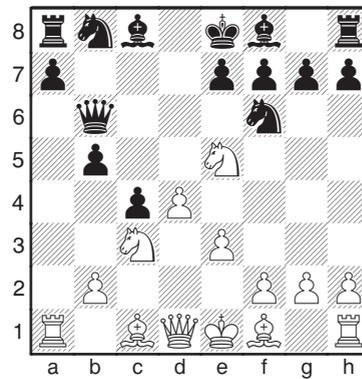
1

Magnus Carlsen
Erik Blomqvist
Norway 2001



2

Magnus Carlsen (2450)
Lorenz Drabke (2449)
Budapest 2003



9.e5!

After this central breakthrough, White is already completely winning.

9...dxe5

9...♞xb3 10.exf6+ ♕e6 11.axb3 makes no significant difference in the final outcome.

10.♞xe5!

After 10.♞xe5+?? ♕e7, Black has no real problems.

10...♕e7

And now, besides **11.♞xf7**, the alternative **11.♕xf7+ ♖f8 12.♕g5** would also have overwhelmed the defense in the long run.

11.♞xb5!+-

This demolition sacrifice is a real kick in the teeth, for in return for the knight White obtains three pawns and an attack against a homeless king.

11...♞xb5 12.♕xc4 ♞b7

12...♞b6 13.♕xf7+ ♖d8 14.♕d2 (14.0-0)

13.♕xf7+ ♖d8 and now, instead of **14.♕d2**, the total paralysis with 14.d5 might have been even stronger.

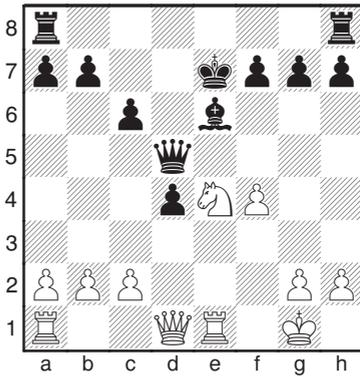
– After 14...a5, the further tactical sledgehammer **5.♞xa5! ♞xa5 16.♞c4** is decisive.

– And 14...e6! is not followed by 15.♕a5? ♕b4+, but by 15.0-0 with the main threat of ♕a5.



3

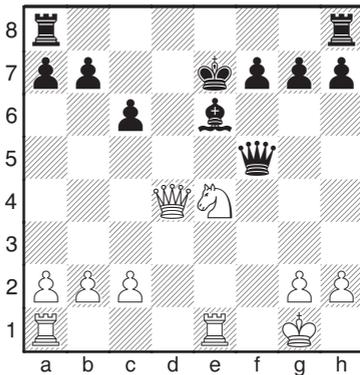
Magnus Carlsen (2552)
Deepan Chakkravarthy (2331)
Dubai 2004



14.f5!

With this second pawn sacrifice, the opposing queen is deflected, allowing her White counterpart to penetrate the center with devastating effect.

14...♙xf5 15.♙xd4



Note that the three main threats ♙d6+, ♙b4+ and ♙xg7 all target dark squares, against which the light-squared bishop can do absolutely nothing.

15...♙d5?

After this mistake, the attack breaks through effortlessly.

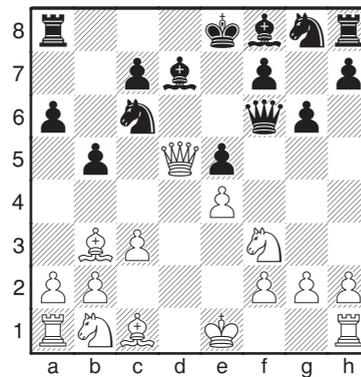
Only with 15...♖hd8 16.♙b4+ (16.♙xg7!?) 16...♔e8 17.♗d6+ ♖d6 18.♙xd6 ♖d8 could Black still have put up the strongest possible resistance.

16.♙b4+c5 (16...♔e8 17.♖ad1) 17.♗xc5 a5 18.♙a3 ♙d4+ 19.♔h1 ♙b4 20.♙e3 1-0



4

Magnus Carlsen (2675)
Simen Agdestein (2575)
Oslo 2006



10.♗xe5!

Apart from this relatively simple overloading combination, the alternative

10. ♖g5 ♜e6 11. ♗xe5 ♜xd5 12. ♖xd5
♗xe5 13. ♖xa8 would probably also have
won, although Black could still have
complicated matters considerably with
13... ♗d3+ etc.

And now, instead of 10... ♗xe5
11. ♜xa8+, the alternative 10... ♜xe5
11. ♜xf7+ ♖d8 12. ♜xf8+ would have
been no less hopeless.

Summary Part 1

Check the learning effect

Sometimes one looks at games by top players purely for aesthetic enjoyment, but many players naturally want to learn something from them as well. In my effort as an author to distill their instructive value, I have studied numerous Carlsen games. In doing so, I followed a thematic focus for each chapter and, ideally, sought to present the insights in a way tailored to a particular target group.

Unlike in a training group, however, one can never know exactly who will study the material in a book publication. For that reason, after each section I wanted to offer a few suggestions for self-assessment and propose the following approach to the ambitious reader: check whether, in comparison to your prior knowledge, you have actually learned something new. In addition to establishing basic foundations, a good chess book should also encourage the reader to undertake focused independent work.

In the first part, we examined games in which strong or even very strong players were already crushed in the opening. That alone is a remarkable fact – especially considering that they were convincingly defeated by a still very young player. One should bear in mind that at the beginning of the millennium, prodigies under the age of 14 did not yet populate the chess scene in nearly the same numbers as they did twenty years later.

This raises the question of how one can already discern the potential greatness of a chess genius in early games – and which factors stand out from which passionate club players can draw conclusions for their own play. Since this part deals with miniatures, the areas for such review and further learning are limited to certain core elements of the game.

Piece play:

How can the opening setup be characterized on the basis of these half-dozen games? Have I encountered comparable setups in my own games or in those of other players?

From which features of Carlsen's piece play have I learned something concrete?

Pawn play:

When does Carlsen depart from classical principles of central pawn play – and why does he do so?

How are the pawns employed at the beginning of the middlegame?

Turning points:

Miniatures often contain ‘crass turning points’ where everything suddenly ‘went downhill’. But what exactly happened when the games tipped?

By comparing the six games, can I recognize a ‘pattern’ in how the play developed before the turning point?

Did Carlsen ‘provoke’ these turning points through a particular kind of initiative?

Risk factor:

When is Carlsen willing to take risks – for example, to sacrifice a piece or to leave his king in the middle in favor of other factors?

Which games by other great players with a similar approach come to mind?

In such positions, would I take a comparable risk – or would I rather look for a safer alternative?

Golden opening rules:

Bring a new piece into play with every move!

Exert the most effective influence on the center!

Develop the knights before the bishops!

Bring the king to safety as early as possible by castling!

Exceptions:

These rules are taught to every beginner as if they were carved in stone. However, there are many exceptions – especially to the penultimate one (develop the knights before the bishops).

How does Carlsen’s independent streak manifest itself in his handling of these rules of thumb?

He not infrequently violates them – for example, against Kuzubov with 2.♗g5 or against Nepomniachtchi with 5.♗c4.

Dynamic development:

The prerequisites for an approach based on ‘dynamic development’ are a lead in development, opportunities to open the position, and potential for a king attack. (Thanks to the advantage of the first move, these conditions can more naturally be fulfilled with White.)

The following rules of thumb apply:

- Move each piece only once!

- Create tactical threats with every move!
- Build up pressure on the center and create opportunities to open the position!
- Bring your own king to safety as early as possible by castling!
- Open the position in order to make your lead in development count! (In closed positions, the time factor is usually far less important.)
- Keep the opposing king in the middle whenever early attacking chances arise!

Training tips:

Many coaches recommend beginning one's chess education, for example, with the games of Paul Morphy, in which the initial focus is on rapid development – followed by energetic opening of the position once the necessary conditions have been met.

In Magnus Carlsen's youth, games based on dynamic development occur frequently. Although he largely adhered to the 'golden opening rules', he not infrequently deviated from them with a certain independence whenever it was immediately expedient according to the logic of his opening setup. Later, however, his style shifted more toward positional pressure play. In that approach, the main objective of the opening is simply to reach a position that he finds comfortable to handle and that offers long-term potential.

Here is a recapitulation of the 'Golden opening rules', or the 'rules of thumb of *dynamic development*' – presented in a somewhat more detailed and correspondingly more nuanced form:

Piece development:

Each opening move develops another piece. A piece is moved a second time only if it is attacked (e.g. 1.e4 e5 2.♘f3 ♗c6 3.♙b5 a6 4.♙a4) or if it can itself create an effective threat (e.g. 1.e4 e5 2.♗f3 ♗c6 3.♙c4 ♗f6 4.♗g5).

Center:

Control of the center is achieved either by occupying it with pawns or by covering central squares with pieces. The center is only relinquished if doing so enables other pieces to gain greater space control (for example, allowing a rook to dominate an opened central file).

The factor 'king':

The king is brought to safety early by castling.

Lead in development:

Pieces that create threats while being developed hinder the opponent's development. In the sample games, this even affected the opposing king, who in not a single case managed to castle.

The use of available space:

Space in the center serves the purpose of building up positional pressure. The center is generally opened only when one's own pieces are sufficiently active to

exert pressure on the opponent's position (e.g. pressure against a pawn or square weakness, or against an uncastled king).

The time factor:

The more pieces are developed, the stronger the resulting initiative can be, since speed can be converted into pressure. This dynamic often overwhelms the defense and can also have a psychological impact. An opponent who is put under pressure at an early stage may seek relief through unfavorable exchanges or attempt counterplay, instead of focusing on defense and, above all, king safety.

By contrast, in closed positions, pieces can initially create hardly any threats, and accordingly the time factor recedes in importance in favor of maneuvering for ideal piece placement. Against elite players, Carlsen would later tend to employ this kind of positional pressure play.

Part 2

Creativity in the opening choice

Magnus Carlsen often tailors his opening choice very precisely to his opponent and does so with considerable creativity. In this, he is strongly supported by his team of seconds, and in particular his long-time chief second Peter Heine Nielsen, who himself possesses enormous experience at the highest level.

Rules of Thumb:

- Against attacking players, a calm positional approach can be effective.
- Against players who are theoretically very well prepared, one can prepare deeply analyzed novelties, since the resulting surprise effect may prove highly valuable.
- A targeted provocation can be useful in order to tempt the opponent into an immediate 'punitive' reaction, which one has previously ensured to be unsound or even faulty.
- It is not always necessary to strive for an objectively advantageous position right out of the opening. In the long run, it is often far more sensible to reach a position that is comfortable to play, suits one's own style, and in which one feels 'cosy'.
- At higher levels today, it is advantageous to be universal in the opening in order to keep many options open.

Here are several vivid and meaningful examples on the topic of 'ideas and creativity in the opening':

A) ♖c3 (instead of c3, d4) against Ruy Lopez structures

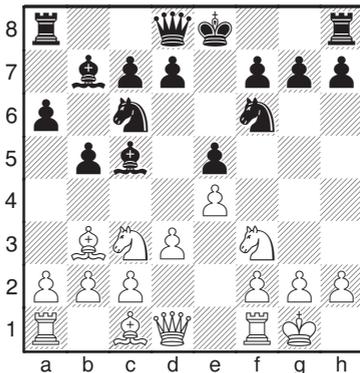
In the Ruy Lopez, White usually strives for a full center with c3 and d4, with the queen's knight typically maneuvering via d2 and f1 to g3 or e3. The alternative ♖c3 is chosen far less frequently, but it is by no means without venom – as Carlsen illustrates excellently in the following game.



Magnus Carlsen (2625)
Alexander Beliavsky (2626)

Wijk aan Zee 2006
Ruy Lopez (C78)

1.e4 e5 2.♖f3 ♗c6 3.♗b5 a6 4.♗a4 ♖f6
5.0-0 b5 6.♗b3 ♗b7 7.d3 ♗c5 8.♖c3

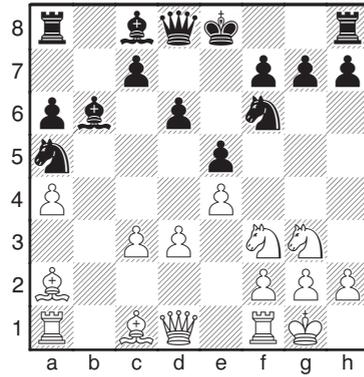


The setup with ♖c3 apparently came as a surprise to the attacking player Beliavsky and soon produced the desired psychological effect.

8...d6 9.a4 ♗a5 10.♗a2 b4 11.♖e2 ♗c8?

Instead of this overly slow recentralization of the bishop, 11...b3 12.cxb3 ♖c6 was necessary.

12.c3 bxc3 13.bxc3 ♗b6 14.♖g3



14...♗e6?

Offensive players are often not very strong in defense.

Better would have been 14...0-0, to meet 15.♗g5 (15.d4!?) with 15...h6 16.♗h4 ♗g4. Even so, White would already be clearly better.

15.d4 ♗xa2 16.♞xa2 0-0?!

This is another inaccuracy, though at this point finding good advice is already very costly.

17.♗g5

This pin is lethal.

17...exd4

17...h6 18.♗h4 g5 19.♖xg5+–

18.♖h5 dxc3

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About the author

GM Dr. Karsten Müller was born on November 23rd, 1970 in Hamburg. He studied mathematics and received his doctorate in 2002. From 1988 to 2015 he played for the 'Hamburger SK' in the German 'Bundesliga' and in 1998 he was awarded the title of Grandmaster.

The busy and globally recognized endgame expert was named 'Trainer of the Year' by the German Chess Federation in 2007



He is the author (or co-author) of the following highly esteemed works:

- Secrets of Pawn Endings (with Frank Lamprecht, Everyman/GAMBIT 2000)
- Fundamental Chess Endings (with Frank Lamprecht, GAMBIT 2001)
- Danish Dynamite (with Martin Voigt, Russell 2003)
- Chess Cafe Puzzle Book: Test and Improve Your Tactical Vision (Russell 2004)
- How to Play Chess Endgames (with Wolfgang Pajeken, GAMBIT 2008)
- Chess Cafe Puzzle Book 2: Test and Improve Your Positional Intuition (Russell 2008)
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- Chess Cafe Puzzle Book 4: Mastering the positional principles (with Alexander Markgraf, Russell 2012)
- The Magic Tactics of Mikhail Tal: Learn from the Legend (with Raymund Stolze, Edition Olms 2012)
- Fighting chess with Hikaru Nakamura (with Raymund Stolze, Edition Olms 2013)
- The slow (but venomous) Italian (with Georgios Souleidis, New in Chess 2016)
- The Magic of Chess Tactics 2 (with C.D. Meyer, Russell 2017)

His excellent series of ChessBase–DVDs Chess endgames 1–14 also attracted attention.

Müller's popular column Endgame Corner was published at 'www.ChessCafe.com' from January 2001 until 2015, and his column Endgames is published in Chess-Base Magazine since 2006.

To date, numerous of his books have been published by JBV Chess Books (Joachim Beyer Verlag) – a total of 29 in German and the following titles also in English:

Magical Endgames (2020), (together with Claus Dieter Meyer)

The Human Factor in Chess (2020), (together with Luis Engel)

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