Arthur van de Oudeweetering

Improve Your Chess Pattern Recognition

Key Moves and Motifs in the Middlegame

New In Chess 2014
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**Foreword by Ian Rogers**

Most players begin to recognize standard combinational themes through puzzle books. But acquiring a knowledge of positional concepts which set up those combinations is harder to do.

Players constantly ask ‘The opening is over; what do I do now?’ But apart from stop-gap principles like ‘Improve your worst placed piece’, the task of finding a suitable plan is a mystery to many.

The 1980s volume *Chess Middlegames*, ghosted by Laszlo Hazai, covered multiple themes in 4,000 examples and was the finest reference book of its type. However the book is languageless, so a player needed to be dedicated to begin to understand the connections and differences between, say, the 100+ examples of both strong and weak isolated queen’s pawn positions.

Into the breach steps Arthur van de Oudeweetering, who has not only collected hundreds of examples, mostly recent, to illustrate many important middlegame themes, but has also provided new terminology to assist in the recognition of each pattern.

This book is not just a worthy new middlegame treatise but one which is fun to read. As a new chapter begins you think ‘Whatever does he mean by “Inside the Chain”, or “Fishing for the Hook”? ’ But enlightenment follows soon.

After reading *Improve Your Chess Pattern Recognition*, a player will no longer miss opportunities to become a Bishop Snatcher or use the Second Option for their rook. You will also become more aware of obstacles preventing you from winning without opposition; if you have a Bulldozer you will look out for your opponent’s Runner.

Van de Oudeweetering’s coverage of the Killer Knight would probably find favour with Kasparov who, before the age of computers, was rumoured to have developed a sophisticated piece valuation system based in part on how close to the opposing king a knight could be posted.

In fact after I’d absorbed *IYCPR* it was easy to speculate that Caruana’s loss to Carlsen at the 2014 Tromsø Chess Olympiad could have been caused by the Italian overvaluing his Octopus. (This is not a phrase I ever thought I would find myself writing.)

Once the reader has started applying the patterns in *IYCPR* in their own games, they will find that the post-opening phase of the game becomes easier and they will more often build up a strong position. Then comes the difficult part – converting that strong position into a win, as happens in most of the examples in *IYCPR*. For that, you need tactics training as well, though fortunately there are dozens of books which cover that territory. *IYCPR*, however, is one of a kind.

Ian Rogers
September 2014
Sometimes it requires imaginative prophylactic thinking or concrete calculations to arrive at a counter-intuitive decision. Let’s clear our heads and learn from some impressive examples.

Eliminating the Bishop Pair
We have had a look at White’s elimination of the King’s Indian bishop on c8 by transferring a knight to a7 (see Chapter 9 ‘The Deceptive Bishop from c8’). There are other, less standard occasions which require out-of-the-box thinking. Here is a recent example where an astonishing defensive resource eluded such a strong player as Anish Giri.

Anish Giri
Levon Aronian
Istanbul 2012
1.d4 d5 2.c4 c6 3.♗f3 ♗f6 4.♗b3 e6 5.g3 ♘e7 6.♗g2 0-0 7.0-0 ♘bd7 8.♗f4 a5 9.♘c1 h6 10.a4 ♗e4 11.♗fd2 ♗d6 12.♗xd6 ♗xd6 13.e4 dxe4 14.♗xe4 ♗b4 15.c5 ♗f6

Aronian’s comments in New In Chess 2012/7 are revealing: ‘A mistake. When immediately after the game Anish asked me where he had gone wrong, I pointed out to him that after 16.♗d6 ♗e8 17.♗xc8 followed by the defence of the d-pawn White would have gained equality. Despite the fact that at the present moment the c8-bishop is not a very attractive piece, after Black plays e5 together with the b4-bishop it will become a powerful force.’

That may sound simple, but I think for most of us it would be incredibly hard to decide on giving up our strong knight for the undeveloped bishop even if we had recognized its powerful hidden force.

16...♗xe4 17.♗xe4 ♗h8 18.♗g2

16.♔c4?

18...e5! 19.d5
19.\textit{dxe5} \textit{\textgreek{e}7} 20.\textit{f4} \textit{\textgreek{f}5} and White already has big development problems.

19...\textit{f5} 20.\textit{dxc6} \textit{\textgreek{e}4} 21.\textit{cxb7} \textit{\textgreek{e}b7} 22.\textit{c6} \textit{\textgreek{a}6} 23.\textit{\textgreek{w}b3}
23.c7 \textit{\textgreek{xc}4} 24.\textit{cxd8\textgreek{w}} \textit{\textgreek{axd}8} 25.\textit{\textgreek{xc}4} \textit{\textgreek{d}1+} 26.\textit{\textgreek{f}1} \textit{\textgreek{f}4} and White’s pieces are tied up, though maybe not as much as Black’s pieces in Vachier-Lagrave-Ding Liren earlier the same year:

Eventually Giri could not hold on after the text move, either.

\textbf{Eliminating a Defender}

Aronian’s comments immediately reminded me of this game.

\textbf{Vladimir Kramnik}
\textbf{Alexey Dreev}
Linares 1997

1.\textit{\textgreek{f}3} \textit{d5} 2.d4 \textit{\textgreek{f}6} 3.c4 \textit{c6} 4.\textit{\textgreek{c}3} \textit{\textgreek{e}6} 5.e3 \textit{\textgreek{bd}7} 6.\textit{\textgreek{w}c2} \textit{\textgreek{d}6} 7.d3 0-0 8.0-0 \textit{\textgreek{w}e}7 9.c5 \textit{\textgreek{c}7} 10.e4 \textit{dxe4} 11.\textit{\textgreek{xe}4} \textit{\textgreek{d}5} 12.\textit{\textgreek{d}2} \textit{\textgreek{d}8} 13.\textit{\textgreek{ae}1} \textit{f6}

Here Kramnik starts the same remarkable exchange: his centralized knight for Black’s bad bishop. But, given the chance, this bishop would be transferred via d7 and e8 to g6 and become the strongest defender on the board. Impressive prophylactic action by Kramnik!

14.\textit{\textgreek{d}6} \textit{\textgreek{f}8} 15.\textit{\textgreek{xc}8!} \textit{\textgreek{axc}8} 16.\textit{\textgreek{e}4}

Also, now that the bishop has gone, the pawn on e6 has been deprived of its natural defender, just as in the French positions from ‘The deceptive bishop from c8’ where Black had exchanged his bad bishop. Over and above that, White’s pair of bishops will become a force when the position opens up.

With hindsight this may all sound very logical, but who would have been so clear-headed as to decide on \textit{\textgreek{d}6xc8} so early? Kramnik slowly improved his pieces, secured his space advantage...

16...\textit{\textgreek{w}f7} 17.\textit{\textgreek{fe}1} \textit{\textgreek{e}8} 18.b4 \textit{a6} 19.a4 \textit{\textgreek{a}8} 20.g3 \textit{\textgreek{d}7} 21.\textit{\textgreek{c}4} \textit{\textgreek{eb}8} 22.\textit{\textgreek{b}1} \textit{\textgreek{d}8} 23.\textit{\textgreek{ee}1} \textit{\textgreek{g}6} 24.\textit{\textgreek{d}3} \textit{\textgreek{f}8} 25.\textit{\textgreek{f}1} \textit{\textgreek{g}6} 26.b5

... and went on to win the game.

\textbf{Concrete Calculation}

\textbf{Ana Ivekovic}
\textbf{Mladen Palac}
Zagreb 2013

1.d4 \textit{\textgreek{f}6} 2.c4 \textit{e6} 3.\textit{\textgreek{f}3} \textit{d5} 4.\textit{\textgreek{c}3} \textit{\textgreek{b}4} 5.e3 0-0 6.\textit{\textgreek{w}c2} \textit{c5} 7.a3 \textit{\textgreek{xc}3+} 8.\textit{\textgreek{bx}c3} \textit{\textgreek{w}c7} 9.\textit{\textgreek{b}2} \textit{\textgreek{c}6} 10.\textit{\textgreek{d}3} \textit{\textgreek{a}5} 11.\textit{\textgreek{e}5} \textit{b6} 12.cxd5 \textit{c4} 13.\textit{\textgreek{e}2} \textit{exd5} 14.0-0 \textit{\textgreek{e}4} 15.\textit{\textgreek{g}4} \textit{\textgreek{b}3} 16.\textit{\textgreek{ad}1} \textit{f6} 17.\textit{\textgreek{xc}8} \textit{\textgreek{axc}8} 18.\textit{\textgreek{f}3} \textit{\textgreek{fe}8} 19.\textit{\textgreek{c}1} \textit{\textgreek{d}6} 20.\textit{\textgreek{w}b2} \textit{b5} 21.\textit{\textgreek{d}2} \textit{\textgreek{ex}d2} 22.\textit{\textgreek{xd}2} \textit{\textgreek{c}6} 23.\textit{\textgreek{fe}1} \textit{f5} 24.\textit{\textgreek{c}1} \textit{\textgreek{f}6} 25.\textit{\textgreek{c}2} \textit{\textgreek{ce}6} 26.\textit{f3}
Things become more understandable when you don’t have to consider various future strategic possibilities, but can rely on concrete variations. Yet here too you have to start with the counter-intuitive capture of a bad bishop. Perhaps Hertan’s method of ‘forcing moves’ may be of help here. Although other moves are also possible, the grandmaster now decided on...

26...\(\text{\texttt{\#}}\times c1\) 27.\(\text{\texttt{\#}}\times c1\)

As I have written on other occasions, what counts is not what’s taken from the board, but what’s left behind (just as a computer, unlike us humans, will never bother about previous moves!). Blacks will win the e3-pawn by force.

27.\(\text{\texttt{\#}}\times e7\) 28.\(\text{\texttt{\#}}\times f2\) \(\text{\texttt{\#}}\times h4+\) 29.\(\text{\texttt{\#}}\times g1\) f4 30.\(\text{\texttt{\#}}\times b1\) \(\text{\texttt{\#}}\times e3\) 31.\(\text{\texttt{\#}}\times e3\) fxe3 32.\(\text{\texttt{\#}}\times b5\)

So White wins back his pawn, but the passed e-pawn will prove to be too much for her.

32...\(\text{\texttt{\#}}\times f2+\) 33.\(\text{\texttt{\#}}\times h1\) \(\text{\texttt{\#}}\times d8\) 34.\(\text{\texttt{\#}}\times c6\) e2 35.\(\text{\texttt{\#}}\times e6+\) \(\text{\texttt{\#}}\times h8\) 36.\(\text{\texttt{\#}}\times g1\) h6 37.\(\text{\texttt{\#}}\times e5\) \(\text{\texttt{\#}}\times f8\) 38.a4 \(\text{\texttt{\#}}\times f6\) 39.\(\text{\texttt{\#}}\times e8+\) \(\text{\texttt{\#}}\times h7\) 40.\(\text{\texttt{\#}}\times e5\) \(\text{\texttt{\#}}\times g6\) 0-1

Of course, you should try to make sure your calculations are correct. Take a look at Alburt-Geller, Reykjavik 1984, where Alburt presumably overlooked a tactical counterblow when swapping his strong knight for an undeveloped bishop!

This is a very well known example, which illustrates the subject of this chapter excellently. White has created a strong outpost on c5, which is also aiming at the weak pawn on a6. Yet on the next move...

22.\(\text{\texttt{\#}}\times d7+\)

... White exchanges it for the passive bishop! However, Black was intending to play 22...\(\text{\texttt{\#}}\times b5\). And Fischer was a protagonist of clear strategies: what remains is a strong white bishop against an inactive knight on f6, while the white rooks control the c-file. The black pawns on a6 and d5 are still vulnerable and White will always have the option of creating an outside passed pawn on the queenside. You could also see this as converting one type of advantage into another.
22...\textit{c}xd7 23.\textit{c}c1 \textit{d}d6
23...d4 seems to be a better continuation. Not because ‘passed pawns must be pushed forward’ (yes, Fischer!), but to give the f6-knight a future on d5. For example, 24.\textit{c}c6 \textit{d}d5 25.a3 \textit{f}f4.

24.\textit{c}c7
With White’s rook on the seventh rank Black’s position looks pretty hopeless.

24...\textit{d}d7
Now 24...d4 fails to 25.\textit{c}c4.

25.\textit{e}e2 g6 26.\textit{f}f5 h5 27.\textit{f}f4 h4
28.\textit{f}f3 f5 29.\textit{g}e3 d4+ 30.\textit{d}d2 \textit{b}b6 31.\textit{h}h7
Definitely the end for Black.

31...\textit{d}d5 32.\textit{f}f7+ \textit{e}e8 33.\textit{f}f3 \textit{d}d5+ 34.\textit{c}c4 1-0

Paving the Way

Fedor Duz Khotimirsky
Emanuel Lasker
St Petersburg 1909

1.d4 d5 2.\textit{f}f3 \textit{f}f6 3.c4 e6
4.\textit{c}c3 \textit{e}e7 5.\textit{f}f4 0-0 6.e3 \textit{bd}7
7.\textit{d}d3 c6 8.\textit{w}c2 dxc4 9.\textit{b}bxc4
\textit{w}a5 10.0-0 \textit{d}d5 11.\textit{g}g3 \textit{xc}c3
12.bxc3 \textit{f}f6 13.\textit{d}d3 h6 14.\textit{e}e5
\textit{w}d8 15.f4 \textit{d}d5 16.\textit{f}f3 c5 17.e4
\textit{f}f6 18.f2 cxd4 19.cxd4 \textit{d}d7

When annotating the previous game in \textit{My Great Predecessors Part IV}, Kasparov speaks admiringly of Fischer’s play in that game and adds: ‘It should be borne in mind that at that time such exchanges of a powerful knight for a passive bishop were most unusual’. However that may be, here is yet another example from a much earlier period.

20.\textit{d}d7
Again, this is certainly not the only move, but it does mobilize the pawn centre and also the pair of bishops behind it.

20...\textit{d}d7 21.h3 \textit{ac}8 22.\textit{w}e2 \textit{c}c7 23.\textit{f}f5!
Now Black has to do something against the threat of the central advance e4-e5.

23...\textit{h}h7 24.e5
Anyway!

24...\textit{g}g5 runs into 25.f6 \textit{xf}3+ 26.\textit{w}xf3 and Black is without defence.

25.\textit{w}xf5 \textit{d}d8 26.\textit{d}d1 g6 27.\textit{c}c2 \textit{w}c8 28.\textit{b}b3

Now it will only be a matter of time before the white d-pawn moves forward.

28.\textit{c}c1 29.h2 \textit{g}g5 30.\textit{d}d3 \textit{xd}1 31.\textit{d}d1 \textit{d}d8 32.h4 \textit{e}e6
33.d5
Here it is.

33...\textit{f}f4 34.\textit{e}e4 \textit{g}g4 35.\textit{g}3!
White is not afraid of ghosts.

35...\textit{x}h4
35...\textit{h}h3+ 36.\textit{g}1 \textit{h}5 and now for instance 37.\textit{d}d3 also looks hopeless.
No Prejudice
Here is a recent example, where an objective judgement is combined with concrete calculation.

Peter Michalik
Kamil Banas
Slovakia 2012/13
1.d4 d5 2.c4 e6 3.\textit{\texttt{e}}f3 c6 4.e3 \textit{\texttt{f}}5 5.b3 \textit{\texttt{b}}b4+ 6.\textit{\texttt{b}}bd2 \textit{\texttt{f}}6 7.\textit{\texttt{d}}3 \textit{\texttt{d}}7 8.0-0 0-0 9.\textit{\texttt{b}}2 \textit{\texttt{e}}4 10.a3 \textit{\texttt{d}}6 11.b4 \textit{\texttt{d}}f6 12.\textit{\texttt{d}}x5 \textit{\texttt{e}}5 13.\textit{\texttt{b}}3 \textit{\texttt{e}}7 14.\textit{\texttt{c}}5 b6 15.\textit{\texttt{a}}4 \textit{\texttt{b}}7 16.\textit{\texttt{e}}5 a5 17.f3 \textit{\texttt{g}}5 18.b5 \textit{\texttt{d}}7 19.\textit{\texttt{e}}2 \textit{\texttt{ac}}8
20.\textit{\texttt{ac}}1 \textit{\texttt{xc}}1 21.\textit{\texttt{xc}}1 \textit{\texttt{cc}}8

22.\textit{\texttt{xd}}7!
The unassailable Stonewall knight on e5 is exchanged for the bad Stonewall bishop. But as usual, what remains on the board is all that matters.

22...\textit{\texttt{xc}}1+ 23.\textit{\texttt{xc}}1 \textit{\texttt{xd}}7 seems a better try, as the game continuation utterly fails: 24.h4 \textit{\texttt{f}}7 25.e4 fxe4 26.fxe4 dxe4 27.\textit{\texttt{xe}}4 \textit{\texttt{xa}}3.
The immediate 22...\textit{\texttt{xd}}7 yields White a dangerous passed pawn after 23.\textit{\texttt{xc}}8+ \textit{\texttt{xc}}8 24.\textit{\texttt{xb}}6 \textit{\texttt{b}}8 25.\textit{\texttt{a}}4 \textit{\texttt{xh}}2+ 26.\textit{\texttt{f}}1.

23.\textit{\texttt{xc}}8+ \textit{\texttt{xc}}8 24.h4 \textit{\texttt{f}}7 25.e4 \textit{\texttt{f}}8 26.\textit{\texttt{xe}}4 dxe4 27.\textit{\texttt{xe}}4 \textit{\texttt{xa}}3.

25.e4
The position will be opened up for White’s bishops, and the black central pawns are vulnerable now that the light-squared bishop has disappeared. May I once more remind you of Suba’s dictum: ‘A bad bishop defends good pawns’?

25...fxe4 26.fxe4 \textit{\texttt{c}}7 27.exd5 exd5 28.\textit{\texttt{c}}3?
28.\textit{\texttt{f}}8 first was called for, and only after 28...\textit{\texttt{f}}8 (28...\textit{\texttt{f}}8 29.\textit{\texttt{h}}7+ \textit{\texttt{xf}}7 30.\textit{\texttt{xf}}7) 29.\textit{\texttt{c}}3.
28...\textit{\texttt{f}}6 29.\textit{\texttt{f}}3 \textit{\texttt{d}}8
Returning the favour; the immediate 29...\textit{\texttt{e}}7 would have been stronger.

30.\textit{\texttt{f}}1 \textit{\texttt{e}}7 31.\textit{\texttt{xd}}5 \textit{\texttt{xd}}5 32.\textit{\texttt{xd}}5 \textit{\texttt{g}}3
32...\textit{\texttt{xa}}3 33.\textit{\texttt{xa}}3 \textit{\texttt{xa}}3 is impossible due to 34.\textit{\texttt{a}}8+ \textit{\texttt{f}}8 35.\textit{\texttt{h}}7+; while after 32...\textit{\texttt{xf}}4 33.\textit{\texttt{a}}8+ \textit{\texttt{f}}8 34.\textit{\texttt{f}}3 White is also better. After the text move White went on to win with the help of his passed d-pawn and pair of bishops.

Back to Basics

Jan Timman
Simen Agdestein
Taxco 1985
1.e4 e6 2.d4 d5 3.\textit{\texttt{c}}3 \textit{\texttt{b}}4 4.e5 \textit{\texttt{c}}5 5.\textit{\texttt{d}}2 \textit{\texttt{e}}7 6.\textit{\texttt{b}}5 \textit{\texttt{xd}}2+
Mind you, on many occasions the right decision will be ‘inside the box’: that is, the bad bishop should be left alone and the strong knight retained. This game is from the Interzonal in Taxco 1985, which Timman won very convincingly with 12 out of 15. This and the earlier examples might lead you to believe that his next move was a fine decision.

13.\( \text{\texttt{\texttt{\texttt{\texttt{x}}}}\text{c8} \)

True, there is nothing wrong with this move; strictly speaking, it is forced. The desirable option, leaving the octopus where it is and protecting f4 with 13.\( g3 \), fails to the tactical trick 13...\( fxe5 \) 14.\( \text{\texttt{\texttt{\texttt{\texttt{x}}}}\text{xe5} \).

13...\( fxe5 \) 14.\( \text{\texttt{\texttt{\texttt{x}}}}\text{xe5} \)

Attacking the pawn, which is no longer defended by the light-squared bishop, but here the white king is, not uncharacteristically for this kind of French position, very unsafe, rendering White’s intentions harmless.

16.\( f8! \) 17.\( a3 \)

Now 17.\( \text{\texttt{\texttt{\texttt{\texttt{x}}}}\text{xe6} \) can be met with 17...\( \text{\texttt{\texttt{\texttt{\texttt{x}}}}\text{cxe5} \).

17...\( a5? \)

Black could have justified his earlier 12...\( g6 \) move with 17...\( \text{\texttt{\texttt{\texttt{\texttt{x}}}}\text{cxe5} \) 18.\( \text{\texttt{\texttt{\texttt{\texttt{x}}}}\text{xe5} \) 19.\( fxe5 \text{\texttt{\texttt{\texttt{\texttt{\texttt{x}}}}}} \text{c4} \), for example: 20.\( \text{\texttt{\texttt{\texttt{\texttt{x}}}}\text{g2} \) 21.\( \text{\texttt{\texttt{\texttt{\texttt{x}}}}\text{f5} \) 22.\( \text{\texttt{\texttt{\texttt{\texttt{x}}}}\text{f1} \) 23.\( \text{\texttt{\texttt{\texttt{\texttt{\texttt{e1}}}}}} \text{\texttt{\texttt{\texttt{\texttt{\texttt{f2+!}}}}} \).

18.\( \text{\texttt{\texttt{\texttt{\texttt{d4}}} \)

Now White is OK and he went on to win.

**Summary**

After these examples I hope you will keep a more open mind for less obvious exchanges.

Don’t generalize! When calculating exchanges, remember to also look what remains at the board.