

Editorial

Well there is no pleasing everyone. I can be saint and sinner at the same time. Gordon will put me in the former category for including the numerical listing of ratings and Malcolm in the latter for the outcome of the logo competition. Ah well... my dog loves me.

This edition has a very interesting article by Alexander Baron. It did make me smile as I have done many of the things he mentions myself. I am being tantalisingly vague here so that you have to read the article. There is also a very long and good review of the new Nunn book. This is a must have for all Chess players so don't forget to send in your money off slip when you order from Chess and Bridge. No, I am not on the payroll but I will say that IM Malcolm Pein is the only reason I read the Daily Telegraph.

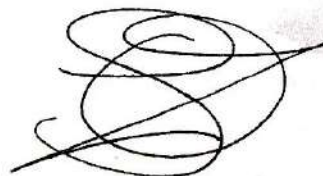
I like to think I do a passingly adequate job as Editor but it would be nice to know that the effort is not entirely wasted because we have no membership. This is where you, the readership, come in. **FIND NEW MEMBERS.** Unless we proselytise a bit more, the millennium will come and go with the chilling prospect of Alon and I being the sum total of the society.

Currently, the Reg Gillman fund stands at just over £500. We need at least twice that amount to run a half way reasonable competition. Neither the BPCF (or BFCC as it is now known) nor the BCCS would exist if it were not for his enormous input. Give it some thought and then send

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in a donation.

Have a happy Easter. I am off to Gran Canaria for some well deserved R&R. Anyone thought of taking on the editorship next year? I haven't had any offers yet.



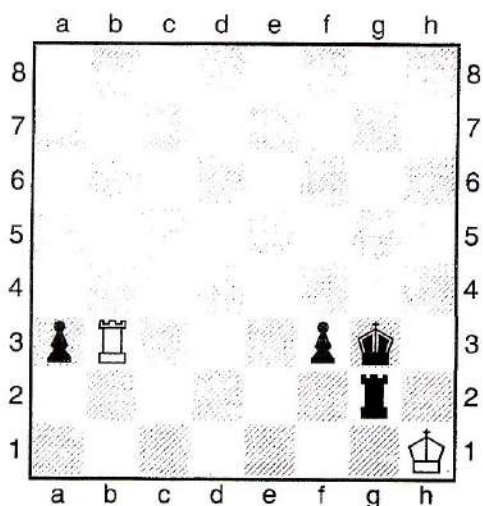
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BLUNDERS, AND HOW TO AVOID THEM

Alexander Baron

Last year I played on bottom board for my club in a four-board rapidplay match away to South Norwood. The format was two games against the same opponent. Having smashed my higher rated opponent with a Morra Gambit we both hovered around board two where Crystal Palace player Tony Andrews - who is graded 30 points above me - was defending a hopeless rook ending. The position was something like this:



Black had just advanced his pawn f3 to block the rook check; now the simple and obvious Rxf3+ Qxf3 draws. It was so simple and so obvious that both my opponent and myself saw it instantly. Andrews failed to find it and lost the game. "How on Earth could he miss that?" I thought. Then in the next round, having defended a Giuoco Piano badly, I found a tactical resource and transposed to a heavy piece ending three pawns up. Faced with a choice of centralising my queen or securing my back rank, I chose the for-

mer and soon had to give up my rook after missing an obvious tactic. I've no doubt that if Tony Andrews had been watching my game he'd have wondered how I managed to lose it.

In both cases, the main reason we fluffed was time trouble. Leaving that aside though, one can draw an analogy here with government. The Labour Party spent sixteen years in opposition during which time it attacked the then Conservative Administration unremittingly, but it had been in power only a few short months before Blair and his babes realised that it is very easy to run the country when you're not actually running it, but when it's your neck on the chopping block... (To quote Ben Elton - 'Hmm, a little bit political...a little bit controversial...' Ed.)

Ditto chess and everything else, it is always easy to see someone else's mistakes, to find wisdom in hindsight, and so on, but it is not so easy to avoid crass blunders over the board. What are the causes of blunders, and here I'm not talking about losing a pawn or missing a subtle combination, but really crass blunders, like overlooking an obvious stalemate or losing a rook?

Blunders are mostly tactical whereas positional errors are usually more subtle, often the result of poor theoretical knowledge or failure to assess a position accurately. For example, it is well known that two connected passed pawns on the sixth will, all things being equal, be too much for a rook. If a

player doesn't know this and allows his opponent to play a combination based on that formula, he has not blundered, but has been outplayed. On the other hand, if he does know it and sacrifices his rook for two pawns but misses a zwischenzug, then he has blundered. We will not concern ourselves here with such things as neglecting development, winning material at the cost of opening lines for one's opponent and so forth, these are the result of poor theoretical knowledge rather than outright bad play.

Over the board play is dominated by the clock, but it is still possible to make time related blunders in correspondence chess. It is very easy to play too quickly, especially in quiet or ostensibly familiar positions. Quiet positions are especially dangerous because they can lure one into a false sense of security. There are all manners of blunders one can make by playing too quickly or too mechanically.

(NB - Numbers in brackets refer to the notes on page 37)

Rule 1: don't assume anything.

Rule 2: if in doubt, refer to Rule 1.

Here are some typical false assumptions:

You threaten a pawn or piece, your opponent must protect it.

1. **You capture a pawn or piece, your opponent must recapture.**
2. **You sacrifice a pawn or piece, your opponent must accept.**
3. **Your opponent's knight is pinned, therefore it can't move.**
4. **Your opponent has left his queen en prise therefore he has blundered.**

5. Your opponent will not play an "unnatural" move.

To the above categories I will add three additional ones:

6. Playing for traps.

7. Winning a won game.

8. Underestimating your opponent.

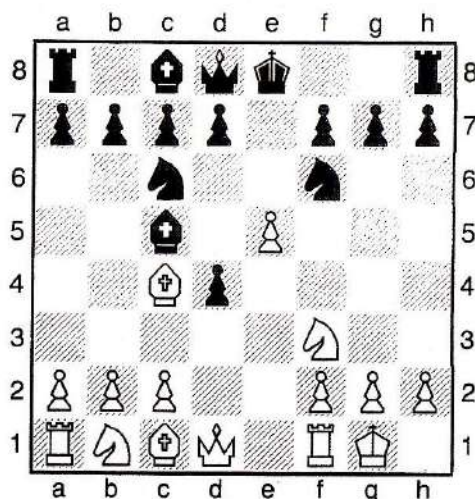
Let's look at a few examples.

There are many opening variations and traps that refute most of the above claims. For example:

1) You threaten a pawn or piece, your opponent must protect it.

In the Max Lange Attack after the moves:

1.e4 e5 2.♘f3 ♘c6 3.d4 exd4 4.♙c4 ♙c5
5.0-0 ♘f6 6.e5



A beginner might suppose that black must either retreat his attacked knight to g8, which can't be good, for obvious reasons, or else advance it to e4 where it may become a target. In fact, black has a far stronger reply, 6...d5, and if he avoids all the traps he will equalise or even obtain the better game.

2) You capture a pawn or piece, your opponent must recapture.

This is really only an extension of 1.

The most obvious move to overlook here is the *zwischenzug*. Most players will spot an intermediate move if it involves a check, but quieter moves are not so easy to detect. For example, after the moves 1.e4 d5 2.exd, Black is not obliged to recapture the pawn at once or at all but may play ♖f6 inviting the Icelandic Gambit. Indeed, after 1.e4 d5, White can transpose to the Blackmar-Diemer Gambit with 2.d4 and Black can further transpose to the French with 2...e6. In these instances no harm is done to either player, but the moral is that as White and Black you should be prepared for unexpected transpositions. After the moves 1.d4 c5 2.e4 cxd 3.c3, we have transposed from a Benoni to the Morra Gambit. If Black is not a Sicilian addict and doesn't know the theory of the Morra Gambit or doesn't even realise that he's playing one, he will soon find himself in hot water.

3) You sacrifice a pawn or piece, your opponent must accept.

Not necessarily. Ever heard of the Falkbeer Counter Gambit? It is not true always that the refutation of a sacrifice begins with its acceptance. It may be that your opponent is able to refute an unsound sacrifice by accepting all the material and defending accurately, but it may be that he can accept part of the material or accept it all then return some of it to transpose to a winning endgame. If you invest a rook in an attack then realistically you have to play for mate. If your opponent accepts the offer then is able to slow down the attack by returning a piece he will still be the exchange up, which in most endings will be enough to win.

4) Your opponent's knight is

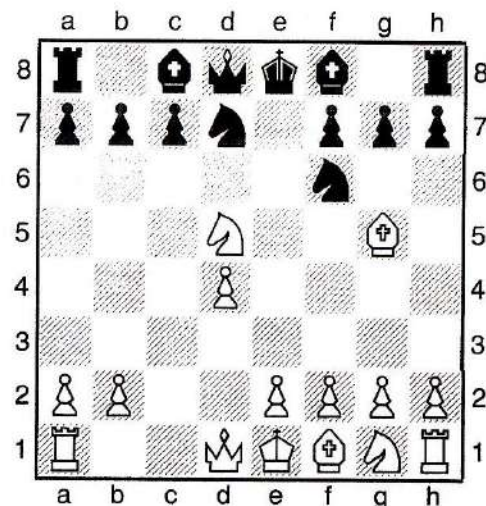
pinned, therefore it can't move.

There are several categories of pin but the only true pin is an absolute pin, where a piece is totally immobilised by pinning it against the king. Many pins are relative; another well-known opening trap is Legal's Mate, which can occur after the following moves:

1.e4 e5 2.♗f3 ♘c6 3.♙c4 d6 4.♗c3 h6 5.d4 ♙g4 6.dxe5 ♗xe5?? 7.♗xe5 (1)

And of course if Black captures the queen he is mated in two while if he doesn't, he suffers heavy material losses. Less obvious than Legal's Mate is another well-known trap, which occurs in the Queen's Gambit Declined after the moves:

1.d4 d5 2.c4 e6 3.♗c3 ♗f6 4.♙g5 ♗bd7 5.cxd5 exd5 6.♗xd5

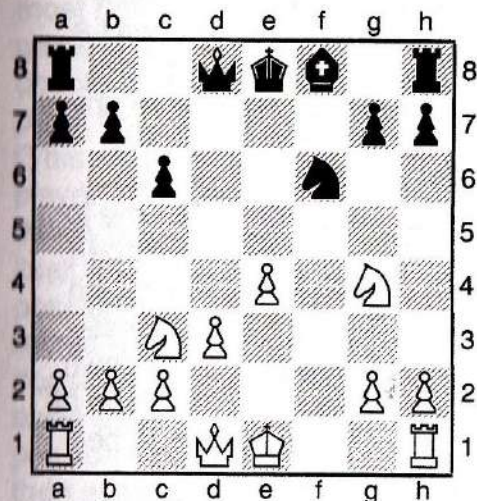


White thinks he is winning a pawn but is in fact throwing away a piece because after 6...♗xd5 7.♙xd8 ♙b4+ he has no alternative but to give up his own queen.

Often a knight can break a pin with check; the current writer played the following game in 1998.

Alexander Baron v Anthony Fulton:
Kensington, May 1998

1.e4 d6 2.♘c4 ♘f6 3.d3 c6 4.♘b3 e5 5.f4
 ♘g4 6.♗f3 ♗bd7 7.♗c3 exf4 8.♗xf4 ♗e5
 9.♗xe5 dxe5 10.♗xf7+ ♔xf7 11.♗xe5+
 ♕e8 12.♗xg4

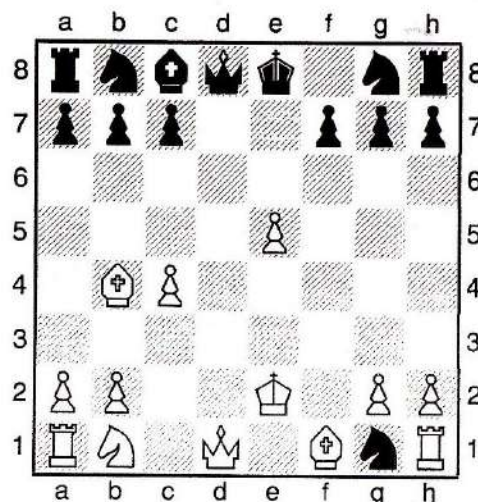


The game concluded 12...♗c5
 13.♗xf6+ and Black resigns. At the
 time this game was played my oppo-
 nent was graded 140 BCF so he was
 no mug; he is currently 150. The main
 reason for his dismal performance
 was psychological. This was the fifth
 round of what was for both of us a bad
 tournament; I had drawn my previous
 game having lost the first three; he, I
 believe, had managed to scrounge a
 full point out of the previous four
 rounds (2). Having said that, he was
 also obviously playing on automatic
 pilot. As Black he generally plays an
 obscure line called the Prebble Sys-
 tem; I had decided, perhaps unwisely,
 to play the Grand Prix Attack against
 it, but had steered it into the King's
 Gambit Declined. Even so, Black had
 nothing to worry about after 9.♗xe5
 ♗xf3!, and in fact probably has the
 better of it (3).

**5) Your opponent has left his
 queen en prise, therefore he has
 blundered.**

He may well have done, but as the
 National Lottery advert says: "It could
 be you!" The following opening trap
 from the Albin Counter Gambit, which
 involves leaving a mere bishop en
 prise, is again well known:

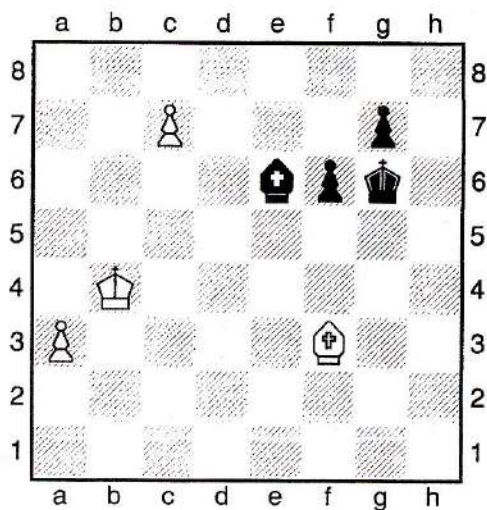
1.d4 d5 2.c4 e5 3.dxe5 d4 4.e3? ♗b4+
 5.♗d2 dxe3! 6.♗xb4 exf2+ 7.♗e2 fxg1♗+!!



and White is in deep water. Okay, un-
 der promotions are rare, but any
 player with his wits about him would
 hear alarm bells ring after Black's 5th
 move.

**6) Your opponent will not play an
 "unnatural" move.**

By this I mean a move which appears
 to lose material or at first glance
 seems bizarre. A mistake many be-
 ginners and very weak players often
 make is developing their rooks by
 means of h4, Rh3 (4). But sometimes
 - as White in some lines of the French
 Defence, for example - this may be
 desirable, or even the only way to
 bring the rook into play. Always bear
 in mind that your opponent may sacri-
 fice the exchange in order to smash
 up your pawns, or pin your bishop with
 his bishop in order to promote a pawn,
 and so on.



In this hypothetical position, Black has rather the worst of it and retreats his king in order both to advance his own passed pawns and to tie up the white king. Unfortunately, Kf7?? loses at once to Bd5! Most players would spot this obvious winning tactic if they were playing White here, but many good tactical players miss their opponent's tactical moves simply because they don't look for them.

7) Playing for traps.

In my first chess career I played for traps unremittingly and often came unstuck on account of it. In May 1997, before I entered my first congress for twenty years, I determined that I wouldn't make the same mistake. Some people mature with age, and some don't, so in Round 1 of the Kensington Rapidplay I played:

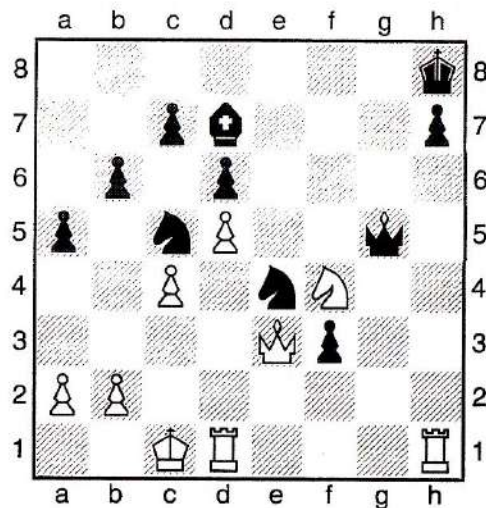
1.e4 c6 2.d4 d5 3.♗c3 dxe4 4.♗xe4 ♗d7 5.♞e2 ♗gf6 6.♗d6#

Needless to say I was pleased to win this game with two minutes on my clock, (and the tournament). (5) My opponent was shattered and said something about playing mechanically. However, 5.Qe2 is not a good move and with correct play, Black will

easily equalise or even seize the initiative. Incidentally, the above bears out what I said about playing too fast. In this instance my opponent had a bona fide excuse, namely this was a half-hour game, but in correspondence you never but never have any excuse for missing a mate in one.

Does this mean that one should never play for traps? No. The time to play for traps is when you are hopelessly lost. In the game below, which was played at Barnet before Christmas 1998, I was the exchange down twice (6) and played on only on the off chance that my opponent would become over-confident or blunder.

John Daugman v Alexander Baron, Barnet, 1998



I had just played 33...♗f6xe4 and was rewarded when he played 34.♖g1?? ♞xf4!

In this instance I had nothing to lose, but you should always try to avoid setting traps when you are still in the game, unless the trap is objectively the best move. Which bring us to ...

8) Winning a won game;

The above is a good example of this. Who hasn't been a piece down and

turned the tables, or snatched defeat from the jaws of victory by becoming over-confident or just complacent? From personal experience I find the most dangerous period is the middle game or early ending when I am a couple of pawns up, a piece for a pawn up or even a whole piece up. (This will of course vary from player to player). If you are a rook up then, all things being equal, the position plays itself, but as Amatzia Avni said: "No position is so strong that it cannot be ruined by some bad play." (7) And it doesn't take a lot of bad play to throw away a piece or to allow a crushing position to become just a good one, then even, then inferior. In an even position you have every incentive to analyse deeply, but if you are a piece up there is a tendency to think that any reasonable move will suffice. This is not the case, even the most apparently bone dry of pawn endings can be highly tactical. How many games are decided by a single pawn, or even by a single tempo?

Finally....

9) Never underestimate your opponent.

Just as you should never allow yourself to be overawed by the opposition, so should you never treat any opponent with contempt. How many world boxing titles have changed hands because a formerly undefeated (and supposedly unbeatable) champion dropped his guard for a split second? Just as even the most mediocre of boxers can occasionally produce a knock out punch, so too can the weakest of chess players' produce a dazzling combination, if only by chance. Always have a good look round the board before you move;

there really is no excuse for gross tactical blunders in correspondence chess.

Notes And References

(1) This variation is taken from the book CHESS TRAPS, PITFALLS & SWINDLES: HOW TO SET THEM AND HOW TO AVOID THEM, by I.A. Horowitz and Fred Reinfeld, published by Simon & Schuster, London, (undated paperback reprint of the 1954 edition), page 23.

(2) After my 13th move he signed the result slip and left the hall visibly distressed; he didn't turn up for the last round. In a later tournament at the same venue the boot was on the other foot. He was defending a hopeless ending with rook and bishop against queen and five pawns when his opponent, in desperate time trouble, moved his queen to the back rank obviously thinking he was checking Fulton's king. In fact he was checking the rook;

Tony could hardly believe his eyes, and neither could I.

(3) Likewise Black has nothing to worry about in the earlier example - Legal's Mate - after 6...Bxf3! followed by Nxe5.

(4) Or a4, Ra3 for White and h5, Rh6; a5, Ra6 for Black.

(5) This was a Minor Tournament; I was joint first with two others with 5 out of 6.

(6) I lost the exchange first then was faced with the unpleasant choice of either giving up the exchange again or my a8 and with it allowing his queen to run amok on the queenside.

(7) DANGER IN CHESS: HOW TO AVOID MAKING BLUNDERS, by Am-

(Continued on page 46)

Mingo G.	1749	Woods G.D.	1603	Stevenson K.W.	1422
Williams S.	1749	Walmsley R.	1602	Baguley P.H	1400
Burridge R.J.	1745	Ammon K.	1600	Beldaus P.A.	1400
Wilkinson D.	1741	Davison B.	1600	Cafaro A.	1400
Morris T.P.	1738	Dawson J.	1600	Elworthy W.M.	1400
Atkinson J.R.	1736	Dodsworth P.	1600	Greenwood G.R.	1400
Titley M.	1732	Donald J.W.	1600	Hambling Miss S.	1400
Houghton R.A.	1731	Emery J.C.	1600	Harley Miss M.	1400
Taylor A.	1727	Hoyle S.K.	1600	Hutchison J.	1400
Stothard D.E.	1723	Monaghan P.	1600	Morris R.M.	1400
Callis V.F.	1722	Pearce A.K.	1600	Preston W.	1400
Mirams R.J.	1722	Styles P.A.	1600	Scott M.L.	1400
Shortt J.	1711	Wilson G.	1600	Smith S.	1400
Godfrey R.H.	1710	Cole F.J.	1596	Tinwell G.	1400
Edwards J.E.	1707	Smith R.J.	1593	Tuckwood G.	1400
Allen M.	1700	McGinn D.A.	1583	Wall D.	1400
Ballan Dr.M.	1700	Barnes J.F.	1577	Whitehead S.	1400
Bedborough P.	1700	Long F.	1577	Costello M.J.	1398
Bland R.K.	1700	Holmes M.	1566	Winfield J.M.	1387
Eagers J.	1700	Bennett N.	1556	Griffin P.(549)	1366
Groves D.J	1700	Elliott N.M.	1554	Boughton F.T.	1352
Halsey A.	1700	Sommer J.	1548	Evans H.	1346
MacPherson R.T.	1700	Clark B.J.	1535	Hughes A.S.	1292
Matthews D.	1700	Dechant C.	1527	Rees H.	1243
Moriarty J.	1700	Day J.	1512	Devey N.	1200
Pepper H.	1700	Ross R.I.	1512	Guest L.D.	1200
Rifat A.	1700	Rogers N.	1503	Long R.	1200
Stimpson P.	1700	Everett C.	1500	Murphy P.T.A.	1200
Stonehouse R.M	1700	Harris P.	1500	Walker R.J.	1200
Tweedlie S.J.	1700	Lewis C.	1500	George R.J.	1041
Wakeman D.	1700	Hoggarth C.L.	1487	Dare P.	995
Williams V.E.	1695	Walwyn R.A.	1485		
Smith D.J.	1677	Henderson N.	1470		
Browne G.	1674	Wilson Mrs.D.	1469		
Brockwell K.J.	1673	Thrasher D.	1467		
Ingram C.W.	1665	Bennett D.W.	1455		
Phelps A.J.	1644	Birch O.G.	1452		
Crabtree P.	1639	Calvino E.C.	1450		
Cage S.M.	1636	Oldfield G.	1446		
Whetter J.C.	1634	Peach J.E.	1443		
Reid E.	1626	Knight D.W.E.	1441		
Purdy G.F.	1618	McFadden W.P.	1441		
Cook A.	1612	Chugg M.	1436		
White S.C.	1612	Sisterson Mrs.H.	1427		
Darbyshire T.H.	1608	Simnett A.	1423		

(Continued from page 37)

atzia Avni, published by
Cadogan, London, (1994),
page 37.