



BOOK REVIEWS

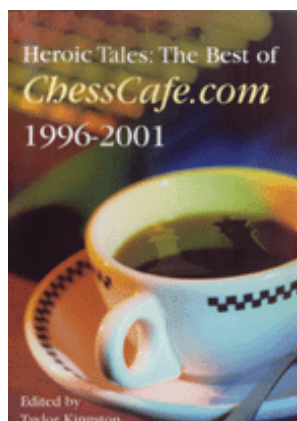
Danish Attacks

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Attack Chess Volume 1 by Jacob Aagaard (CD), ChessBase 2004

Attack Chess Volume 2 by Jacob Aagaard (CD), ChessBase 2004

"I can see Alekhine's combinations as well as he can, I just can't get his positions." – comment attributed to Rudolf Spielmann



Spielmann won Semmering, 1926 ahead of both Alekhine and Nimzowitsch. He tied for second with Capablanca at the great Carlsbad 1929 tournament, and went -3 lifetime against the three world champions of his career, making an even score against Capablanca. He was renowned as a deadly attacking player, whose book *The Art of Sacrifice in Chess* remains an entertaining and instructive text on attacking chess. So what was he complaining about?



Simply this: It is usually much easier to spot a winning combination than it is to develop the attack that leads to such combinations. How many club players have devoted hours of precious study time to tactical exercises and puzzles, yet still find themselves mired in lifeless positions without a shred of attacking potential? Even worse, how many players, club or otherwise, develop promising attacking positions only to see them fizzle out into dull equality, or even a losing endgame?

Danish IM Jacob Aagaard's two-disc set for ChessBase, *Attacking Chess*, addresses this issue. Before going further, it's worth saying plainly that Aagaard has created a terrific course here. There are a number of works available on the subject of attack, ranging from Vukovic's *Art of Attack in Chess* and Spielmann's *Art of Sacrifice* mentioned above, to modern works like *Essential Chess Sacrifices* and Colin Crouch's underrated *Attacking Technique*. This set is the equal of any of them, and probably better than most for sheer instructive value.

The full contents of the two discs are:

1. Introduction and overview (1 lesson)
2. Include all the pieces in the attack (4 lessons)
3. Development and pace in the attack (4 lessons)
4. Color schemes (2 lessons)
5. Indifference of the value of the pieces (2 lessons)

6. Evolution versus revolution (2 lessons)
7. Drawing the king into the open (1 lesson)
8. Destruction of the king position (4 lessons)
9. Opening lines to the king (2 lessons)
10. Attacking the weakest point (1 lesson)

Each lesson within the topic lasts about 20 minutes, for a total of over six hours of lessons. Most lessons focus on one particular game (sometimes with portions of other games included), but a few focus on several relevant game excerpts. Each lesson contains both comments on attacking strategy and a fair amount of Aagaard's own private analysis, which is deep, broad, and wide. Several lessons contain sections where Aagaard explores a thicket of attacking and defensive variations. These sections in particular form a high-level course in attack, and in defense as well, while showing the depth of effort that Aagaard has lavished on his material.

For example, here is part of Aagaard's analysis of a 1986 contest between two of the strongest players in the world at that time, Nunn and Sokolov. The topic, a familiar one to students of attacking play, is how to translate a lead in development into an attack on the enemy king. Although many authors have covered this topic in various ways, few have done so with either Aagaard's clarity or his gleeful brutality:

Nunn - Sokolov
Dubai Olympiad, 1986

1.e4 c5 2.Nf3 e6 3.d4 cxd4 4.Nxd4 Nc6 5.Nc3 a6 6.Be2 d6 7.Be3 Qc7 8.f4

A normal position from the Taimanov Sicilian, but now, as Aagaard points out, Sokolov adopts a flawed plan, winning the two bishops at the cost of falling badly behind in development.

8.Na5 9.0-0 Nc4



Position after 9. ...Nc4. A wandering Knight and a bad plan.

Note how Aagaard uses the Fritz Trainer's graphics to show how any exchange of this Knight for a Bishop represents a

loss of tempi – the Knight has moved three times, the Bishop only once. More on Aagaard's use of the interface later.

10.Bxc4 Qxc4 11.f5 Be7 12.Qg4 h5 13.Qf3 Bf6

Black's position was already very difficult, but here Sokolov chooses once more to neglect development in favor of an immediate threat. At this point Aagaard presents his central message about development and pace in the attack. Defending the Knight on d4 might very well lead to an eventual win for White, but it gives Black a wholly undeserved chance to catch up in development. White is already nearly fully mobilized, and the Rook on a1 is only one move away from joining the attack. Black's development is badly lagging, his King is still in the center, and his pawn cover is already threatened. As Aagaard puts it, "We cannot rely on him to keep making bad moves; we must use the bad moves he has already played." So Nunn ventured:

14.fxe6! fxe6 15.e5 dxe5 16.Ne4

This was the main point of 15. e5, to free the e4 square so that this Knight can join the attack. The threatened check on d6 forces Black to move an already developed piece, thus keeping him behind in development. One of the lessons of this course, repeated over and over, is that many attacks run on principle alone. Even if one cannot calculate ahead to a certain win, one can see so many threats that a win must exist somewhere. So it is here. After 16. Ne4, White's position is so threatening that it must bear fruit one way or another.

16...Qc7 17.Qg3



Position after 17. Qg3. Aagaard uses the graphical interface seamlessly in his presentation.

An elegant move, tactically defending the Knight while putting pressure on the weak g7 square.

17...Ne7 18.Rad1

The inclusion of this Rook accords with Aagaard's first topic, including all the pieces in the attack, and also illustrates how sacrifices and redeployments often come by turns in the attack.

18...h4

This move challenges White to prove his attack, but as Aagaard points out, there is now no underdeveloped piece for White to improve, so even without this mosquito bite he is quite happy to resume aggressive measures. To quote from Aagaard, *"We want to have this feeling of enormous pace in our attack, we want to be racing against the enemy king, and once we reach him we want to slaughter him completely. This is our goal of attacking in chess. We are not really kind people, we are evil, evil warriors intent on doing our evil deeds with the greatest pleasure possible."* In the rest of the game we see exactly this kind of relentless pressure against the Black King:

19.Nxf6+ gxf6 20.Qg7 Rf8 21.Rxf6 Rxf6 22.Qxf6 Qd6 23.Bg5 exd4 24.Rxd4 Nd5 25.Rxd5! 1-0



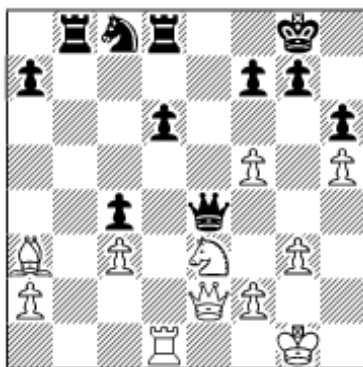
Capturing with the Queen is mate in 1, capturing with the Pawn is mate in 4, and doing neither is mate in 5.

This example shows full well Aagaard's entire goal in developing this course. Tactical exercises, such as Reinfeld's *1001 Winning Chess Sacrifices*, teach players to see moves such as move 19 or move 25, the brilliant pins, decoys, and skewers that give such delight to the player and the audience. Advanced tactical courses may teach players how to see the entire sequence from moves 19 through 25, finishing off the opponent with style. Aagaard's goal is to train the student to play moves 8 through 19 – the moves that translate an impermanent factor such as a lead in development into an overwhelming attack where winning combinations will appear as inevitably as a rainbow after a storm. The ability to throw the opponent over a cliff is useless without the ability to drive him there.

It is worth pointing out that, in addition to the high-level content of each lesson, Aagaard's use of the Fritz Trainer interface is masterful. He marches through each lesson at a brisk pace, illustrating each point with crisp and businesslike graphics, as the above images show. He clearly rehearsed each presentation thoroughly; not only can we see him consult his notes once or twice, but he presents both his verbal comments and the graphic illustrations without hesitation and in a logical sequence that can only come with practice. Although he deviates once or twice, he uses a consistent color scheme through most lessons: red for attacking lines and squares, green for defensive options or maneuvers, and yellow for weak points in either camp.

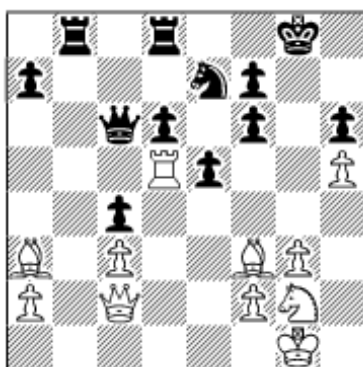


Use of a consistent color scheme helps clarify complex positions.



Black has reduced White's attacking potential significantly while retaining the nominal material advantage. Instead, the move played in the game allows White to attack with force by weakening the Black King position:

24.f6 gxf6 25.Rxd5!



This second exchange sacrifice leaves White with three active minor pieces against two inactive rooks and some pawns. Now, looking at the position, most club players would probably have trouble seeing White's compensation. His position doesn't look terribly threatening right now. But the point of this attack is that the minor pieces can gain access to key squares around the Black King more rapidly than the Rooks can do the same to the White King. The value of the pieces

is secondary; the value of the squares they can control is primary.

25...Nxd5 26.Qd2 Rb5 27.Qxh6 Ne3

A trap, set in desperation. Now 28. Bxc6? meets with 28...Rb1+ 29. Kh2 Ng4+ regaining the Queen. But White simply takes the Knight.

28.Qxe3 d5 29.Qh6



It is almost impossible to prevent the Knight from reaching f5 with deadly threats. The Bishop is also lurking, with many variations turning on its involvement as well. The game ended:

29...Rb1+ 30.Kh2 Rf1 31.Be7 1-0

After viewing all 23 lessons, I decided to test Aagaard's approach to the attack by examining the games of a legendary attacking player, namely Frank Marshall.

This is his game against Mason (White), from Monte Carlo 1902:

1.c4 e5 2.Nc3 f5 3.e4 Nf6 4.d3 Nc6 5.exf5 Bb4 6.Bd2 0-0 7.g4



White's attempt to hold the pawn leaves Black ahead in development, four developed pieces to two. As Aagaard would point out, a development advantage dissolves with time, so it must be exploited immediately. Note that Marshall first uses exchanges to increase his lead in development, leaving his army reduced, but in a better position for the attack:

7...d5 8.cxd5 Bxc3 9.Bxc3 Qxd5



From four developed pieces on two, to four on one, and lines of development for the rest – while White remains confined by his own pawns. Superior development is one of the basic principles of attacking chess, which the early American players Morphy, Pillsbury, and Marshall exploited with verve.

10.Qf3 Qc5 11.Ne2 Nb4 12.Rc1



Now Black has developed his forces about as far as he can by normal methods. We might consider increasing the pressure by moves like Nd5 or Bb7—e6. However, Marshall's continuation nicely illustrates another of Aagaard's basic points: when evolutionary (or developing) means reach their natural end, revolutionary (or sacrificial) means must be employed:

12...Nxc4! 13.Qxc4 Nxd3+

This might look like a fork to win the Rook, but the real objective is to open lines to the King – another topic from Aagaard's program.

14.Kd2 Bxf5!

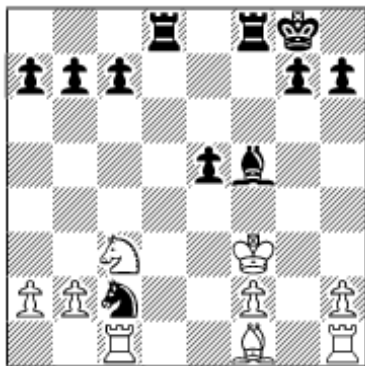


And topic #1 appears: Include all pieces in the attack!

15.Bb4 Qxb4+ 16.Qxb4 Nxb4 17.Nc3

Black is now up two pawns, but the congestion of the White pieces is decreasing. So Marshall returns to evolutionary moves, redeveloping his forces around a renewal of the attack:

17...Rad8+ 18.Ke3 Nc2+ 19.Kf3



Not that White can save the game, but it is probably better to take the Knight with the Rook. Now comes the combinational avalanche that is the just reward of a well-developed attack:

**17...Rd4 20.Rg1 Be4+ 21.Kg3 Rf3+
22.Kg4 Bd5+ 23.Kg5 h6+ 24.Kh5 Bf7+
25.Rg6 Rf5# 0-1**

The greatest difficulty in reviewing Aagaard's two-disc set is to convey to the reader how good it is. After viewing all 23 lessons twice each, I found that the games of Marshall, Morphy, and Alekhine made sense to me in a way they never had before. I was anticipating not just moves, but plans, more effectively than I had just a few days earlier. And less than a week later I played in a round-robin tournament where I won a key game against a stronger player, very consciously applying the principles from this course several times during the game. The second time I caught myself thinking, "Include all the pieces in the attack!" I knew the program had influenced my play, and the course of the game convinces me that this influence was radically for the better.

This two-disc set is an excellent investment for any player who feels nervous or hesitant about launching an attack, or who finds such attacks fizzling out too often. The course spreads over two discs because this is the amount of time needed to present a complete guide to attacking chess, so don't be tempted to buy one and not the other. That would be as foolish as buying half the chapters of a good book.

Please note that this course is designed for the Fritz Trainer, which requires one of the current chess programs from ChessBase: Fritz 8, Deep Fritz 8, Junior 8, Deep Junior 8, Shredder 8, HIARCS 9, or Chess Tiger 15. You must also download and install a patch from either the ChessBase website or the Playchess.com server. You can download this patch from the Internet by following these steps: 1) type the web site <http://www.playchess.com/updates/gui8.iup> into your browser; 2) download this file into the *ChessProgramm8* folder for your Fritz-family software; 3) run the *IUpdate* program that is already in that same folder. Once this is done, clicking File-Open in Fritz yields a new option named Chess Media File, which allows you to play the files on this or other Fritz Trainer CD's. You will also need to install Windows Media Player version 9. Though these extra steps are annoying, the content of this program will reward your efforts handsomely.

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