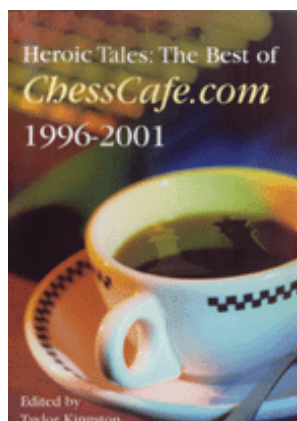




BOOK REVIEWS

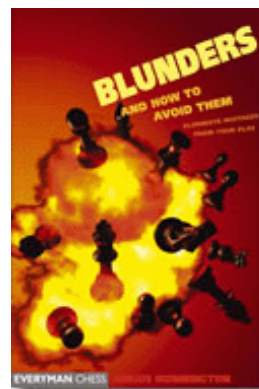


Let Know Man Cast A Blunder

Baldomero Garcia

Blunders and How to Avoid Them by Angus Dunnington, 2004 Everyman Chess, Figurine Algebraic Notation, Softcover, 144pp., \$18.95

British international master Angus Dunnington has already established himself as a prolific and popular chess author. Known mostly for his opening works, he has recently ventured into areas not limited to the opening, e.g., *Chess Psychology* and *Can You Be a Positional Chess Genius?* His latest effort, *Blunders and How to Avoid Them*, is his latest release, an enjoyable 144-page book published by Everyman. Since we all make mistakes in our chess games, this book should appeal to a wide range of players. However, in his introduction, Dunnington makes it clear that his book is intended for "intermediate and club players".



The book is divided into 15 chapters:

1. Sense of Danger (15 pages)
2. Traps & Pitfalls (10 pages)
3. Psychology (18 pages)
4. The King's Defences (8 pages)
5. Checks (7 pages)
6. Faulty Plans (11 pages)
7. Dangers of Simplification (5 pages)
8. Draw (11 pages)
9. Endings (5 pages)
10. Time Trouble (5 pages)
11. Snatching Defeat from the Jaws of Victory (11 pages)
12. Expect the Unexpected (5 pages)
13. Typical Blunders (15 pages)
14. Mega-Blunders (5 pages)
15. The Twilight Zone (7 pages)

Dunnington presents his examples very clearly. Each chapter is well-organized. As I read this book, I found myself wondering if Dunnington was a mind-reader. Many of the statements he made about mistakes are things that at one time or another I had considered. By this, I don't mean to sound immodest. On the contrary, this shows that the author is in synch with his chess audience and that knows what he is talking about.

Here is a small sample of statements that seem obvious, but there is a great

deal of truth to them:

"Sometimes we're so tuned into deep and meaningful aspects of the game that mundane factors such as hanging pieces pass us by."

"Overlooking brutal attacking possibilities is another of those faults shared by very high and low rated players..."

"Some openings and defences feature a theme or strategy around which the early part of the battle revolves, the success of both sides determined by how they address the struggle. The psychological effect of getting the better of the opposition in the matter of these conventional themes can be detrimental to the overall cause, leading to overconfidence and, consequently, the dreaded blunder."

"During the tactical phase of the game or when analysing a complicated situation we remind ourselves (at least we should) to keep our eyes peeled for the proverbial spanner in the works, the move that manages to interrupt our flow and spoil everything. However, when neither side is on the offensive or when there is no reason to believe the game has entered a danger zone, we are guilty of dropping our guard in this respect."

And this is one of my favorite quotes, as I've been guilty of making this mistake numerous times: "A common cause for our sense of danger to fail us is when lower rated opponents show 'weakness' during the opening phase. Whether this is a lack of theoretical knowledge of an apparent lack of technique or understanding, the result is that we lower our guard. Our thinking goes something like this: If the opposition is unable to demonstrate a degree of competence for the first ten or so moves, then nor will he be capable of causing any serious problems, so the plan is to play decent looking moves and simply wait for him to generate losing chances for himself as the game progresses..."

I could go on and on, but you get the idea: Dunnington presents us with his ideas as to what causes blunders. He groups those ideas and presents us some examples. One of the positive aspects of these examples is that they are very recent (quite a few from 2004, the year of publication).

The vast majority of the examples given are game fragments, but occasionally, there are complete games.

Here is an excellent example of a complete game, taken from Chapter 3, "Psychology". Note Dunnington's explanations are geared towards his target audience...

Yemelin-Kharlov
Moscow 2002
Four Knights Game

1.e4 e5 2.Nf3 Nc6 3.Bb5 Nf6 4.Nc3 Bd6?!



The Russian GM (FIDE rating 2638) turns down 4...Bb4, 4...Bc5, 4...Nd4 and even 4...d6 and opts for the unusual looking blockade of the d-pawn. Against an unsuspecting, preferably weaker player this is not a bad idea but in this case White's FIDE rating is comfortably over 2500 and he is quite capable of finding his way around the opening. Consequently Black's approach in itself is dubious.

5.d3 h6

Having committed the bishop to d6 Black should not allow the knight to be pinned.

6.h3

Same move, different idea.

6...O-O 7.g4!?



Far from being thrown by his opponent's sideline, White homes in on a logical treatment of the position. Since the thematic reply to an offensive on the flank involves a counter in the centre White judges that this is a good opportunity to launch his g-pawn, given that Black's best seems to be 7...a6 8 Bxc6 dxc6, with a Spanish Exchange flavour in Podlesnik-Pavasovic, Ljubljana 2002, when Black had at least aided the development by liberating the c8-bishop. For some reason not content with 7...a6 (too orthodox?), Black is intent on going his own way.

7...Re8?! 8.g5 hxg5 9.Bxg5

So White gets his pin in place anyway (introducing the threat of Nd5), as well as chances of generating something on the g-file.

9...Nd4?

No doubt the point behind ...Re8, but White has a surprise in store. 9...Bb4 is more appropriate, when 10.Rg1 Nd4 11.Bc4 Ne6 12.Bxe6 Rxe6 13.Qd2 should be easier to play for White, while 11...c6 12.a3 Bxc3+ 13.bxc3 Ne6 14.Bxe6 Rxe6 15.Nh4 gives White a definite plus.

10.Nd5!

With the pin and White's coming occupation of the g-file to contend with Black really should have given his f6-knight more consideration, even if the text was overlooked because it leaves the bishop on b5 unprotected. After all, White has been looking to hit f6 with both bishop and knight since Black's bishop arrived on d6. Now 10...Nxb5 11.Bxf6 Be7 12.Nxe7+ Rxe7 and White adds fuel to the fire with 13.Rg1, while 11...gxf6? 12.Rg1+ leads to forced mate, e.g. 12...Kf8 (12...Kh7 13.Nh4) 13.Qd2.

10...Be7

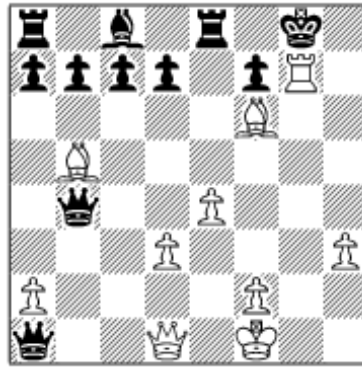
Tsearsky gives 10...c6? 11.Nxd4 exd4 (I would say that Black is hanging on after 11...cxd5 12.Nf5 as long as he plays 12...Bf8 and avoids 12...Qa5+ 13.c3 Qxb5? 14.Nxd6) 12.Nxf6+ gxf6 13.Bh6 Re5 14.Rg1+ Rg5 (14...Kh7 15.Qg4) 15.Bxg5 fxg5 16.Qh5 Bf4 (16...cxb5 17.Rxg5+ Kf8 18.Rf5 Qa5+ [18...Qe8 19.Qh8+ Ke7 20.Qf6+ Kf8 21.Rh5] 19.Ke2 Ke8 20.Qh8+ Ke7 21.Qf6+ Ke8 22.Rg1) 17.Bc4 with a decisive advantage to White.

11.Nxe7+ Qxe7 12.Nxd4 exd4 13.Rg1!

Perhaps Black was expecting White to do something about his carefree bishop this time in view of the threatened fork on b4, but again White presses ahead with the kingside strategy. In fact by now Black must have been regretting his opening experiment.

13...c6

Apart from the obvious, Black prepares ...d7-d5. Accepting the invitation with 13...Qb4+ works out badly, e.g. 14.c3! dxc3 (14...Qxb5 15.Bxf6 g6 16.Qd2 and now evicting the bishop with 16...Qb6 17.Bxd4 c5 18.Be3 leaves Black a pawn down and still with defensive problems to overcome in view of his weak dark squares) 15.Bxf6!? cxb2+ 16.Kf1 bxa1Q (16...g6 17.Rb1 Qxb5 18.Rxb2 Qc6 19.e5 looks like a lesser evil) 17.Rxg7+



17...Kf8 18.Qxa1 Qxb5 (18...Re6 19.Rh7 Ke8 20.Rh8+ Qf8 21.Bd8!?) 19.Rh7, or 15.a3 Qd4 16.Be3 Qe5 17.Rg5 Qe6 18.bxc3 c6 19.Bc4 d5 20.exd5 Qxh3 21.Kd2 cxd5 22.Bxd5 Rxe3 23.fxe3 Nxd5 24.Qg1. At best Black is fighting hard to survive in these lines, which is indicative of the mess he has got himself in. The only confusion Kharlov has succeeded in creating thus far revolves around how Black should protect his kingside.

14.Qf3!



Did White not read the script? The related squares f6 and g7 are all he seems to care about, anything on the queenside being the last thing on his mind. And good luck to him. The latest attacking gesture piles yet more pressure on Black, who is beginning to miss the guardian of the dark squares. It must be time for 14...Kf8 in order to knock some of the shine from White's enjoyment of the g-file, e.g. 15.Qg3 d5! 16.Ba4 (16.Bh6? Bg4!) 16...Qb4+ (16...dxe4 17.O-O-O) 17.Bd2 Qxb2 and White can choose between 18.Qxg7+ Ke7 19.Bg5 Qxa1+ 20.Ke2 Qxg1 21.Bxf6+ Ke6 22.Qxg1 Kxf6 23.f4 and the simple but perhaps more effective 18.Ke2. Black could try his luck with 17...Qxa4 18.Qxg7+ Ke7 19.Rg6 Nxe4 20.dxe4 Be6, which is not pleasant but looks stronger than the game continuation.

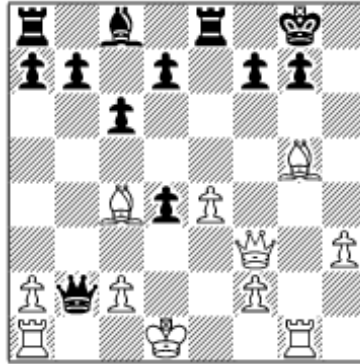
14...Qb4+?

Black can resist no longer, sufficiently frustrated by events on the kingside that he is willing to take his chances elsewhere. He could have avoided the present recklessness by sticking to a more sober opening variation, but now desperation - a sure-

fire environment for blunders - has set in, and he has only himself to blame.

15.Kd1

It seems that White has everything worked out, the strategy still revolving around Black's knight on f6. With this in mind he would have investigated 15...Nxe4 16.dxe4 Qxb2 17.Bc4!



17...d5 (17...Qxa1+ 18.Ke2 Rxe4+ [18...d5 19.Rxa1 dxc4 20.Rg1 merely prolongs the torture] 19.Qxe4 Qxg1 20.Qe8+ Kh7 21.Bd3+ with mate to follow) 18.Rc1 Qc3 (18...dxc4 19.Bf6 g6 20.Qh5) 19.Qxc3 dxc3 20.exd5.

15...Qxb2



Black is on the ropes, with his kingside ready for the taking. Despite his opponent's unexpected fourth move White has managed to conduct the game very well, his thematic, positive reaction succeeding in completely turning the tables on Black, who used strategy designed to unsettle the opposition and consequently induce jittery, poor play. Instead Black's nerves have been found wanting and it is he who has made the mistakes.

16.Bc1??

Oops. Right idea, wrong execution. Attacking the queen in fact loses a tempo as Black's queen is forced to retreat to a square from where a defence can be organised. The more immediate 16.Qxf6 features a crucial difference in that 16...gxf6 17.Bc1+ Kh7 18.Bxb2 cxb5 19.Bxd4 is awful for Black, while other

variations see the bishop stay on g5 - thus

gaining valuable time - unless otherwise required (when White wins). 16...Re6 gives White a pleasant choice between} 17.Qd8+! Kh7 18.Rc1 Qxb5 19.f4 and 17.Qxg7+ Kxg7 18.Bc1+ Rg6 19.Rxg6+ Kxg6 20.Bxb2 cxb5 21.Kd2 d5 22.Rg1+ Kh5 23.exd5 Bxh3 24.Bxd4. Putting the queen in the corner with 16...Qxa1+ 17.Bc1 g6 loses to 18.Rg4, e.g. 18...Re6 19.Qd8+ Kg7 20.Rh4. As for 16...Qxb5 White uses the saved tempo with 17.Bh6.

It is interesting that when White's blunder comes it is not a result of a sudden surprise from Black requiring an analysis update - White must have had the diagram position (above) in his head before he embarked on this course. Nor presumably, can the mistake be blamed on time-trouble as only 15 moves have been played. In fact the blunder is focused on f6 and the g-file (as everything else has been). So what did White miss, and why? One possibility is that he might have been unconvinced by the ending that results from 16...gxf6 17 Bc1+ and so on. If so, he shouldn't have been. Alternatively he may have overlooked Black's 17th move and - with Black's queen proving to be such a poor piece in so many other variations thus far - he had seen only 17...g6?? (see note to Black's 17th move). Or he could have become distracted by the hapless queen and decided (incorrectly) to kill two birds with one stone and simultaneously attack the queen and open the g-file with the 'dual purpose' Bc1. Or was it nerves, after all - the prospect of teaching GM Kharlov a lesson for his lack of respect...?

16...Qxb5! 17.Qxf6 Qh5+!

17...g6?? 18.Rxg6+ fxg6 19.Qxg6+ Kf8 20.Bh6+ Ke7 21.Bg5+ etc.

18.f3 g6 19.Rg5



19...Qh7?

Missing 19...Qxh3! 20.Rxg6+ (20.Qxd4 Qxf3+ 21.Kd2 d5 22.Bb2 Qf4+ 23.Kd1 is equal) 20...fxg6 21.Qxg6+ Kf8 22.Ba3+ (22.Bh6+ Ke7) 22...Re7 23.Qf6+ Kg8 24.Bxe7 Qf1+ 25.Kd2 Qf2+ 26.Kc1 Qe1+ 27.Kb2 Qc3+ with a perpetual.

20.Qxd4 Qg7 21.Bb2 Qxd4 22.Bxd4 d6??

No doubt Black now considered the worst to be over and the potential embarrassment of losing so quickly and brutally with 4...Bd6 skillfully avoided. However, the pain is to begin again because, in fact, the only way to prevent a second nightmare is with the more aggressive 22...d5!

23.h4

22...d6?? was way too passive. Black's mindset seems to have followed the apparent peaceful direction of the game, the adrenaline levels matching the coming ending - hence the posting of the pawn on d6 in order to shore up the vulnerable dark squares. White's latest move, however, announces a new kingside offensive, this time with the plan of exploiting the control of the long a1-h8 diagonal to send the h-pawn home.

23...Kf8

Escaping the pin. 23...d5 is too late: 24.h5 dxe4 25.fxe4 Re6 26.Kd2 and the second rook swings into action.

24.Kd2 Ke7 25.f4!

White - once again - proves difficult to shake off. The threat of f4-f5, when ...g6xf5 clears the path for the h-pawn.

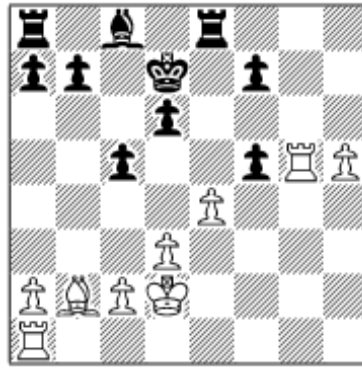
25...c5 26.Bb2 Kd7

26...b6 27.f5 gxf5 28.exf5 Bb7 29.h5 d5 30.Re1+ Kd6 31.Rxe8 Rxe8 32.Bf6 and 26...Bd7 27.f5 Rg8 28.Rag1 don't help Black.

27.f5 gxf5

27...Kc6 28.fxg6 fxg6 29.Rxg6 Be6 30.h5 Bf7 31.Rg7! Bxh5 runs into 32.Rh1 Bf3 33.Rh3 Rf8 34.Rgg3.

28.h5!



28.exf5 is simple and strong.

28...fxe4 29.h6

Onward.

29...Kc6

29...e3+ 30.Ke2 f5 31.Rxf5 Kc6 32.Rf4 d5 33.Bf6 d4 34.h7
Be6 35.a4 Bd5 36.Rh4.

30.h7 e3+

30...exd3 31.h8Q Rxh8 32.Bxh8 dxc2 33.Rg8.

31.Ke2 f6 32.Bxf6 Be6 33.Rh1 Rh8 34.Bxh8 Rxh8 35.Kxe3
b5 36.a3 a5 37.Rh6 a4 38.Rxe6 Rxh7 39.Rgg6 1-0

An instructive game. Black paid heavily for his game-plan, which completely backfired. Mistakes on his part and positive play from his opponent left him struggling throughout the game. The psychological effect of this on Black was to be satisfied with the ending after retreating the queen all the way back to h7 (as opposed to finding 19...Qh3), after which White continued in the role of aggressor. Not only did Black have his bluff called, but his standard of play also suffered.

Overall, I found *Blunders and How to Avoid Them* to be an entertaining book. However, the eradication of errors in your game will probably take more effort than simply studying this book. For the lower-rated and inexperienced player, this will serve to identify the types of errors that are made. It is up to the reader, though, to work on removing the bad habits that cause the recurring blunders. I recommend this book to those rated 1700 and below.

Order *Blunders and How to Avoid Them*
by Angus Dunnington



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