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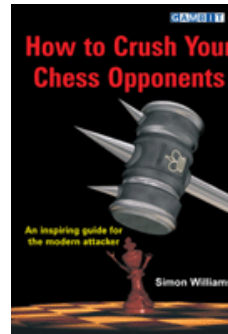
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## Bang! Crash! There goes another piece!

Steve Goldberg

*How to Crush Your Chess Opponents*, by GM Simon Williams, 2008  
Gambit Publications Ltd., Figurine Algebraic Notation, Paperback, 111pp., \$24.95

There are generally two schools of chess annotation – the *Informant*-style, essentially language-free, symbol-based annotations full of variations, and then there’s the wordy type that presents the critical ideas and options during a game, as well as whatever variations the annotator deems relevant. Both have their place, but most players will surely benefit more from the latter, particularly if the annotator is a strong player who can clearly convey the most important elements of the game.



In *How to Crush Your Chess Opponents*, author Simon Williams provides just this type of instructive annotation. The British grandmaster has selected thirty games, many from among the biggest names in chess today. J. Polgar, Topalov, Shirov, Anand, Carlsen, Ivanchuk are just some of the players you’ll encounter. The thirty games are fit into seven thematic chapters:

- Ch.1 Opening to Middlegame
- Ch.2 Keeping the Initiative
- Ch.3 Harmonizing the Army
- Ch.4 Locating the Weak Point
- Ch.5 Changing the Tempo
- Ch.6 All-in!
- Ch.7 Playing to Your Strengths

In his Introduction, Williams expresses clearly what you’ll find in this book:

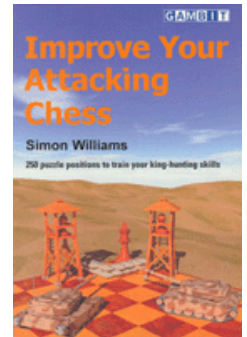
*The most fun that I get from a game is when I crush my opponent quickly. Chess, after all, is much better when you win.*

*Nowadays, there are too many boring games, games which are drawn after 8 moves, games where all the pieces get swapped off on move 10 ... yawn. I want to see games with action! Bang! Crash! There goes another piece ...*

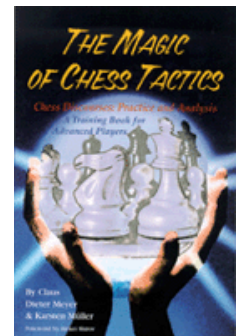
As the back cover states about the author, “He takes us inside the decision-making process, explaining how each stage in an attacking concept is formed, and shows how top players spot the signs that indicate it is time to stake everything on an all-out assault. We also get insights into the role of intuition and calculation in both attack and defence.”

Williams stresses the importance of accurate calculation, but he also clarifies the general and specific plans of the players as required. He also frequently stops to challenge the reader to think for him- or herself, asking, “What would you play here for White?” or “Put yourself in

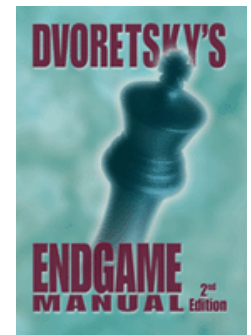
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by Mark Dvoretsky

White's position. To me, it seems that the only white piece not on its ideal square is the e2-bishop. How can the positioning of this piece be improved?"

Each game in this collection has something to offer. Let's take a brief look at a fascinating rapid game, Svidler-Carlsen, Longyearbyen 2006. Williams' comments and variations are too extensive to include all of them in this review, but selected annotations are shown:

*Svidler sees that his opponent's king is still stuck in the middle of the board on move 13, whilst his own pieces are all developed. He comes up with a thunderbolt which dramatically changes the course of the game. The main piece to watch out for is Svidler's dark-squared bishop, which divides Black's game in two. Even though Black is serious material up, the extra pieces are useless.*

**1.e4 c5 2.Nf3 Nc6 3.Nc3 Nf6 4.Bb5 Qc7**



*This was played by Leko in 2003 against Anand and Kasparov, hence the popularity. Black plays this move so as to meet 5.Bxc6 with 5...Qxc6 to avoid doubling his pawns. The queen is often quite useful on c7 as well. This is because Black's main plan in these types of position is to play ...Nd4 and after a subsequent exchange on d4 Black has pressure on the c-file. On the downside for Black, the queen is open to attack on*

*c7.*

**5.0-0 Nd4**

*Black's usual plan: he attempts to get counterplay against White's lead in development.*

**6.Nxd4**

*Critical. Other moves would lose too much time. When ahead in development, play as actively as possible!*

**6...cxd4 7.Nd5 Nxd5 8.exd5**



*As the pawn-formation has changed, it is time to take a new look at the position. White is seriously ahead in development as he has castled and his bishop is placed on a useful square. On b5 it prevents Black from moving his d-pawn, therefore making it hard for Black to develop. The e-file is also a very useful avenue to attack along.*

*Black has to play energetically to counter this. One idea for Black is to target White's pawn on d5, though in many lines White will happily sacrifice this pawn to keep the initiative.*

**8...a6 9.Ba4 g6 10.d3 h6**

*A prophylactic move aimed at stopping 11.Bg5. Black would like to play 10...Bg7 but it runs into 11.Bg5 followed by Re1, when White is doing well.*

**11.Qf3!?**

*The natural 11.Re1 had been tried before, but as Svidler commented, 'The*

general rule for this position says that Black is fine if he manages to play ...Kf8 and ...d6, and I spotted a way to stop this.'

This shows how a great player thinks. White understands the position from the opening and knows what Black needs to play in order to survive. Therefore White searches for a way to stop this, and when he finds a way he plays it.

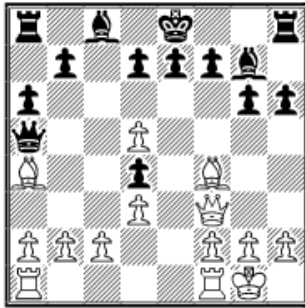
**11...Bg7**

Black must get his pieces out at some point!

**12.Bf4**

It is worth noticing how good the bishop is on a4, stopping ...d6.

**12...Qa5**



White is fully mobilized and Black's king is in the centre. Does White need to worry about his bishop on a4? Or does he have another idea? Try to work out where Black is weakest and look for a way to exploit this.

**13.Rfe1!!**

13.Bb3 would probably leave White with a small advantage, but the move played is much stronger. White is preparing a cascade of sacrifices! You should have noticed that Black is weakest along the e-file and White should aim to attack along it as quickly as possible.

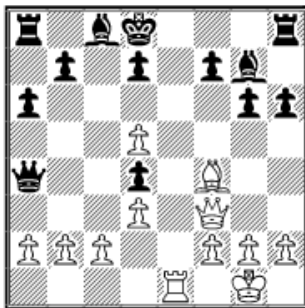
**13...Qxa4!**

Black needs to take up the gauntlet as other moves leave him clearly worse; for example, 13...0-0 14.Bb3 e6 15.Bd6, when Black's position is in a twist. This shows an important principle. If you have the choice between defending a bad position on equal material terms or grabbing material where you might get mated but things are not entirely clear, you should grab the material as it is probably your only hope!

**14.Rxe7+!**

The only way for White to continue as Black was dreaming of castling.

**14...Kxe7 15.Re1+ Kd8**



What should White play now? Black's king needs to be kept in its cage.

**16.Bd6!**

Even though White is a rook and bishop down, Black is in serious trouble due to White's massive bishop on d6, Black's king and most of his pieces are trapped, and there is no way to escape.

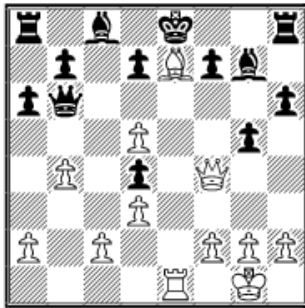
**16...Qa5 17.b4 Qb6 18.Qf4**

This prevents Black's king from moving to c7 after White plays Be7+. The black king must be kept in the middle. Black's position is very embarrassing – he can hardly move anything!

**18...g5**

Black would like to swap pieces off – a good tactic when defending.  
 However, this is impossible here; for example, 18...Re8? 19.Rxe8+ Kxe8  
 20.Qe4+ Kd8 21.Qe7#.

**19.Be7+ Ke8**



Let's now see if you can improve upon Svidler...

Up to this point White has played a great game but his next move is a slight slip-up. The critical moves are 20.Bc5+, 20.Bxg5+, 20.Bf6+ and 20.Qe4. Try to work out what Black's best reply is to all of these moves and then decide what move you would play.

**20.Bc5+?**

This move is actually an error, as White had a way to finish the game immediately: 20.Qe4! (everything so far has to do with the e-file so let's put another piece on it!) 20...Qg6 (I expect a lot of readers got this far and were put off by the queen exchange, as I am sure Svidler was, but White has a forced win, and a very pretty one at that!) 21.Bc5+! and even without the queens Black is mated: 21...Qxe4 22.Rxe4+ Kd8 23.Bb6#.

**20...Qe6 21.Qd2 d6 22.Bxd6**



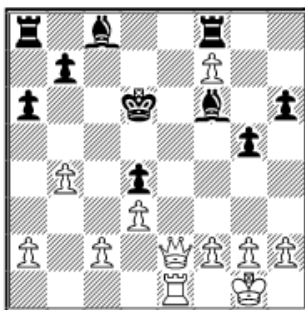
**22...Kd7?**

22...Bf8! would have left matters far from clear; for example, after 23.dxe6 (23.Bc5 Bxc5 24.dxe6 Bd6) 23...Bxd6 24.exf7++ Kxf7 Black has got over the worst and is fine.

**23.dxe6+ Kxd6 24.exf7**

The pawn on f7 is a major thorn in Black's side and White is far too well coordinated for Black to have any chance of surviving. White just needs to sneak his queen into Black's position and it will be game over.

**24...Rf8 25.Qe2 Bf6**



White's next move is my favourite one of the game. To understand it you have to work out what Black's plan is. It is obvious he wants to play 26...Rxf7, when 27.Qe8 Re7 28.Qf8 Kd7 29.Qxf6?? runs into 29...Rxe1#. So if White can stop this, maybe by defending his rook, he will win a piece. It should be easy to find now...

**26.Kf1!**

Svidler describes this move as 'very Dvoretsky-esque'! Actually, 26.c4! dxc3 27.Qe3! was also good.

**26...Kc7 27.Qh5 Bf5 28.Qf3 Rxf7 29.Qxf5 Raf8 30.f3 Bg7 31.Qc5+ 1-0**

At slightly more than 100 pages, *How to Crush Your Chess Opponents* is a slim volume, but somehow it doesn't seem to be. The pages are fairly large and the thirty games are so packed with informative and entertaining

chess, this feels like a much heftier book. Enough diagrams are included that you may not even need a board or computer screen to follow the games.

Gambit books have a history of top-notch production and first-rate instruction. *How to Crush Your Chess Opponents* continues this fine tradition.

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by Simon Williams

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