



SKITTLES  
ROOM



Several months ago a new book by GM Valeri Beim about the legendary Paul Morphy appeared. Essentially Beim put Morphy's games under a 21st-century analytical microscope. With the permission of the publisher, [ChessCafe.com](http://ChessCafe.com) is pleased to present and we hope you enjoy an...

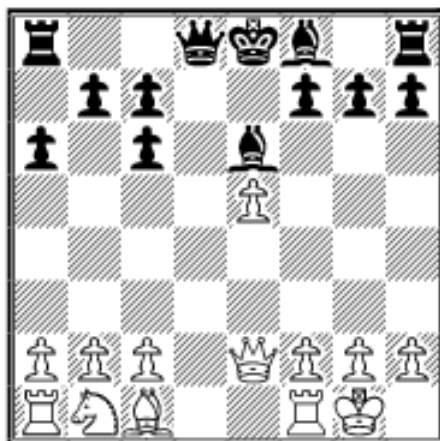
## Excerpt: Paul Morphy: A Modern Perspective

by Valeri Beim

*Morphy, P. - Löwenthal, J.*

Match, London (14), September 21, 1858

1.e4 e5 2.Nf3 Nc6 3.Bb5 a6 4.Ba4 Nf6 5.d4 exd4 6.e5 Ne4 7.0-0 Nc5  
8.Bxc6 dxc6 9.Nxd4 Ne6 10.Nxe6 Bxe6 11.Qe2



11...Bc5?!

This natural looking move is the root of all Black's troubles. After 11...Qd4 chances would have been about equal.

12.Nc3 Qe7 13.Ne4 h6

Black must defend himself against the threat of 14.Bg5.

14.Be3!

An outstanding positional decision; by exchanging bishops White deprives his opponent of the bishop pair, and gains the upper hand on the dark squares. The last two moves offer a clear demonstration of why Black's 11th move was an error.

14...Bxe3 15.Qxe3 Bf5

15...0-0-0 was bad because of 16.Qa7; but 15...b6!? 16.f4 0-0-0 was worth

considering: if then 17.f5? Bc4.

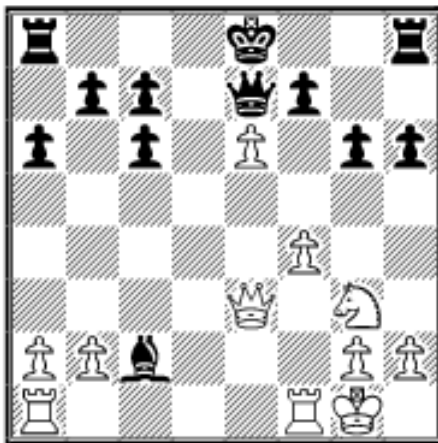
### 16.Ng3!?

16.f4 Bxe4 17.Qxe4 0-0-0 keeps a small advantage for White. But Morphy bravely sacrificed a pawn for a small, but lasting initiative. Today, this is how chess is played, but in those days nobody played this way. It was only Alekhine who first began to regularly treat the game this way – and he was born 55 years after Morphy.

### 16...Bxc2 17.f4 g6

17...0-0 18.f5 Qg5 19.Qc3 Ba4 20.f6 leaves White with a dangerous initiative.

### 18.e6!

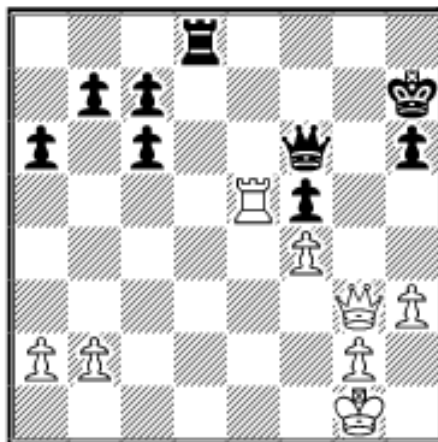


Simple, but effective; the aesthetic effect of this uncomplicated stroke is considerably enhanced by the fact that it did not come about by chance, but as the logical consequence of the pawn sacrifice on move 16.

### 18...Bf5

Short castling would be worse for Black. After 18...0-0 19.Rf2! Bf5 (19...Ba4? 20.b3 Bb5 21.a4) 20.Nxf5 gxf5 21.Qb3 b6 22.Re1 White would have a strong initiative. But long castling would be just awful: 18...0-0-0? 19.Rac1! Bd3 (19...Ba4 also loses: 20.Qa7 Qxe6 21.b3 Bb5 22.Rfd1 Rd6 23.Qa8+) 20.Qa7 Qxe6 21.Rcd1! (It has to be this rook: after 21.Rfd1 c5! 22.Qa8+ Kd7 23.Rxd3+ Ke7 24.Rxd8 Qe3+ it's Black who's winning!) 21...Qc4 22.Rf3 and wins.

**19.Nxf5 gxf5 20.exf7+ Kxf7 21.Qh3 Qf6 22.Rae1 Rhe8 23.Re5! Kg6 24.Rfe1 Rxe5 25.Rxe5 Rd8 26.Qg3+ Kh7 27.h3**



**27...Rd7?**

To save himself Black had to play 27...Rd5! at once; and then after 28.Re8 Qg7 29.Qh4 Rd1+ 30.Kh2 Rd2 31.Re7 Rxc2+ the game would end in a perpetual.

This line is not absolutely forced for White, but I don't see any real winning chances for him otherwise. As Botvinnik said about one of his games in *Analytical*

*and Critical Works Part III*: "Even now, analyzing this game, I find it hard to reproach myself for anything. But still, having gotten the better of the opening, I was only able to retain the more pleasant position, which still must be evaluated as drawish. Well, it happens, sometimes."

Now, Morphy inexorably tightens the noose.

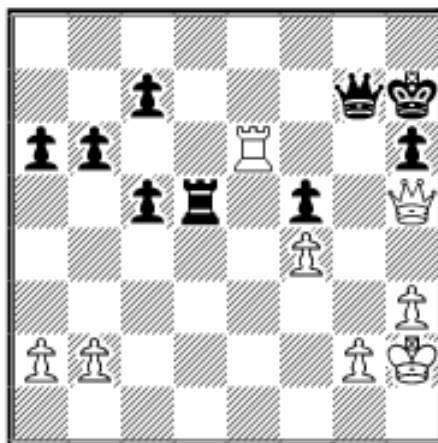
**28.Qe3 b6 29.Kh2!**

Morphy, always energetic, proceeds to straightforwardly strengthen the position, knowing that *the necessary level of coordination between his pieces* has not yet been attained.

**29...c5 30.Qe2 Qg6 31.Re6 Qg7**

White also develops his initiative after 31...Qf7 32.Qe5 c4 33.Re8.

**32.Qh5! Rd5**



All of Black's pieces are bound to the defense of weak squares and weak points, which means that Black has no reserves to bring up because of the small number of pieces left on the board. So the chances of the passive side falling into zugzwang are very great.

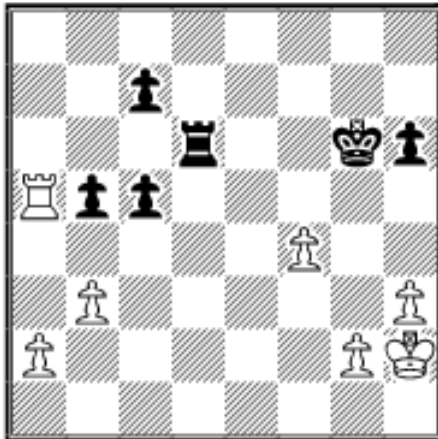
**33.b3!**

Black already has a hard time finding an acceptable reply.

**33...b5**

After 33...a5 34.a4 the zugzwang is still in force.

### 34.Rxa6 Rd6 35.Qxf5+ Qg6 36.Qxg6+ Kxg6 37.Ra5



There can be no doubt that White must win, but he must play very precisely. Naturally, he must first calculate the pawn endgame, which is won by a hair's breadth – move on move:

37.Rxd6+ cxd6 38.Kg3 b4 39.Kf3 d5  
40.g4 Kf6 41.h4 Ke6 42.h5 Kf6 43.Ke3  
Ke6 44.g5 hxg5 45.fxg5 Kf5 46.g6 Kf6  
47.Kf4 d4 48.Kg4 Kg7 49.Kg5 d3  
50.h6+ Kg8 51.Kf6 d2 52.h7+.

Was Morphy correct to avoid this line or should we be critical of his decision? It's hard to give a categorical answer. He often chose a complicated way to win if it was more comfortable for him, and this approach had some justification. The best way to realize a great advantage is not objectively by the shortest means, but by *the most secure means for the individual involved*. And all the better when both are the same! Since Morphy would often stumble once he had reached a winning position, then we can appreciate the intelligence of such a young player and his remarkable ability of self-programming, as Botvinnik would have called it.

### 37...Rb6

White would have had greater problems to solve after 37...c6 38.a4 bxa4 39.Rxa4 Rd3 (39...Rd4 40.Rxd4 cxd4 41.Kg3 h5 42.h4 c5 43.Kf3 Kf5 44.g3 Kf6 45.Ke4 Ke6 46.b4 is not enough, either) 40.Rc4; but here too, White's advantage would be obvious, and easily exploited.

**38.g4 c6 39.Kg3 h5 40.Ra7 hxg4 41.hxg4 Kf6 42.f5 Ke5 43.Re7+ Kd6  
44.f6 Rb8 45.g5 Rf8 46.Kf4 c4 47.bxc4 bxc4 48.Kf5 c3 49.Re3 1-0**

Morphy was so far ahead of his time that this game would be a treasure even by modern-day standards!

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**Order** *Paul Morphy: A Modern Perspective*  
by Valeri Beim

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