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## COLUMNISTS

### Novice Nook

Dan Heisman

This month for Dan Heisman's *Novice Nook* column, we are pleased to present an excerpt from his recently released new book, *Looking for Trouble: Recognizing and Meeting Threats in Chess*. Dan has put this book together to help you to recognize threats by providing over 200 problems in which you focus on identifying and meeting threats ranging from extremely easy to fiendishly difficult. But even the identification of difficult threats – and sometimes more importantly how to meet them – is discussed in a manner that should greatly benefit players of all levels.

We have selected one example from each of the Opening, Middlegame and Endgame Threats sections of the book. The asterisks you see designate the degree of difficulty, three representing medium difficulty. We hope you enjoy this excerpt from Dan Heisman's new book.

### Excerpt:

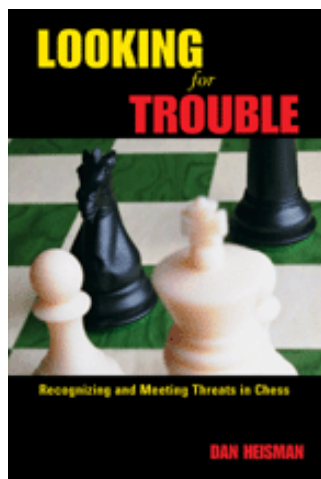
### Looking for Trouble

#### Problem 021 [From the "Opening Threats" chapter]

1.e4 e5 2.Nf3 Nc6 3.Bb5 a6 4.Ba4 Nf6 5.d3Be7 6.O-O O-O 7.Re1 Bc5 8.Bxc6 Ng4 White to move (Ruy Lopez, \*\*\*):



**Threat:** Black's "threat" to win the exchange and a pawn with 9...Bxf2+ and 10...Bxe1 wins less material than the simple recapture 8...dxc6! If you did not realize this, then you really should take some time to review the value of the pieces and *make sure not to confuse "losing the exchange" with "losing a Rook"*, a common but egregious error. In other words, don't think "I am losing a Rook" – the Rook is guarded, so you are only losing the exchange



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plus a pawn, which even together are almost always worth less than a piece. *This type of common error I call a “counting” mistake, and the fewer you make of these the better player you will be!*

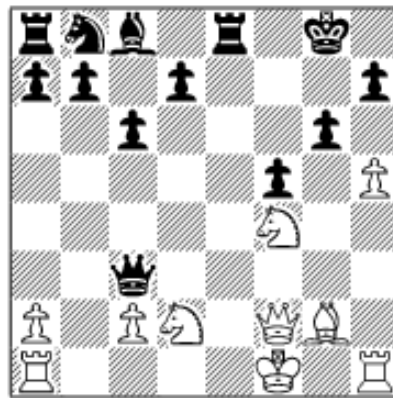
However, bonus points if you saw that 9...Nxf2 is better and more complicated than 9...Bxf2+, so ignoring the threat completely and just saving the Bishop on c6 with 9.Ba4 or 9.Bd5, while decent, is still not best.

**Prevention:** Highest grades if you found the correct **9.d4!** when, no matter how Black wriggles, he is losing a piece. For example, if 9...Bxd4 10.Nxd4 dxc6 11.Nf3 the square f2 is safe and White has won a Knight for a pawn.

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### Problem M86 [From the "Middlegame Threats" chapter]

White to move after **1...Qc3 (\*\*\*)**:



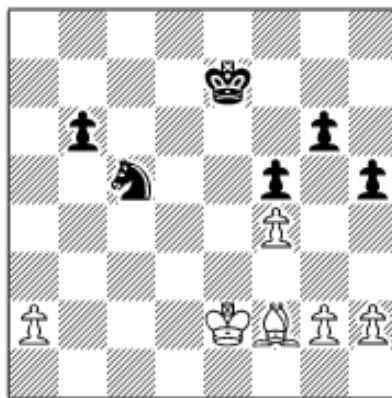
**Threat:** 2...Qxa1+ and mate thereafter. To a much lesser extent, 2...Qxc2.

**Prevention:** This is an interesting position. When I was reviewing the game during a lesson and I saw my student's move 2.Nb3, I exclaimed "That can't be right! How about something like 2.Re1?". *White's imbalance of a piece for three pawns but advanced development means that he should ignore the threat to the c-pawn and just go for the gusto on the kingside. Playing slow defensive moves during such an unbalanced position is rarely correct.* The computer verified that not only is **2.Re1!** much better than any other move, it in fact wins quite easily, e.g. **2...Rxe1 3.Qxe1 Kf8** Black has no time for picking up the c-pawn anyway! **4.hxg6** and Black's sky is falling quickly. My intuition that *one should not be worried about a pawn when so far ahead in development and the opponent's King unsafe* was perfect – this time.

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### Problem E21 [From the "Endgame Threats" chapter]

Black to move after **1.Bf2 (\*\*)**:



**Threat:** White threatens to get the outside passed a-pawn in a King-and-pawn endgame and win: 2.Bxc5 bxc5, e.g. 3.Kd3 Kd6 4.Kc4 Kc6 (4...h4 is slightly better but does not change things after 5.a4) 5.h4! Good technique, locking up the Black pawns. 5...Kb6 6.a3 Why hurry? 6...Kc6 7.a4 Kb6 8.g3 Ka5 9.Kxc5 Kxa4 10.Kd5 and White mops up Black's pawns first.

**Prevention:** Black should play **1...Kd6** so that if White plays 2.Bxc5(?) then 2...Kxc5 will not only avoid the outside passed pawn, but also give Black the superior King position. After other second moves by White, Black is not only OK, but may have a tiny advantage even though the game should be drawn.

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[Order](#) *Looking for Trouble* by Dan Heisman

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Dan welcomes readers' questions; he is a full-time instructor on the ICC as Phillytutor.

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