



COLUMNISTS

Middlegame Motifs

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Sacrifices on f7

In the opening the f7-square tends to be the most vulnerable in Black's camp and sacrifices on this point appear in many different openings. A couple of good examples are the Vitols knight sacrifice in the Petroff Defence (1.e4 e5 2.Nf3 Nf6 3.Nxe5 d6 4.Nxf7) and the bishop sacrifice on f7 in the Muzio Gambit (1.e4 e5 2.f4 exf4 3.Nf3 g5 4.Bc4 g4 5.0-0 gxf3 6.Qxf3 Qf6 7.e5 Qxe5 8.Bxf7+). In the middlegame, especially when Black has castled, f7 is no longer considered to be such a weakness. For example, it is usually considered less vital than h7 or g7 and when Black has castled it will often be protected by a rook on f8. Nonetheless, it can provide vital protection for Black's king.

Additionally, it turns out that sacrifices on f7 are actually quite common due to the ease of access in a number of different openings. A white bishop can often be lurking on b3 (for example, in the Italian Game or Ruy Lopez) and knights frequently get to e5 or g5. If the conditions are right, a sacrifice on f7 can often decide matters. The first of this month's games is an Alekhine classic in which a bishop sacrifice on f7 provides the coup de gras:

Alekhine, Alexander – Junge, Klaus

Poland (5), 1942

Ruy Lopez [C86]

1.e4 e5 2.Nf3 Nc6 3.Bb5 a6 4.Ba4 Nf6 5.0-0 Be7 6.Qe2



[FEN "r1bqk2r/1pppbpp/p1n2n2/4p3/B3P3/5N2/PPPPQPPP/RNB2RK1 b kq - 0 6"]

The Worrall Attack, a favourite of Alekhine, which was later used by Nigel Short in his match victory over Anatoly Karpov. One of the ideas is to make room to put a rook on d1 in order to apply pressure along the d-file.

6...b5 7.Bb3 0-0 8.c3 d5 9.d3 dxe4?! 10.dxe4 Bg4 11.h3 Bh5 12.Bg5 Ne8

Alekhine noted that the point behind his last move was that it prevents 12...Na5 because of 13.g4 Bg6 14.Nxe5, winning a pawn.

13.Bxe7 Bxf3 14.Qxf3 Nxe7 15.Rd1 Nd6 16.Nd2 c6

Alekhine suggested that Black try to get some counterplay here via 16...Kh8, intending ...f7-f5. Certainly this would have given him more play than the game, though there would be the isolated e-pawn to worry about.

17.Nf1 Qc7 18.a4

Bringing the a1-rook into play without moving it.

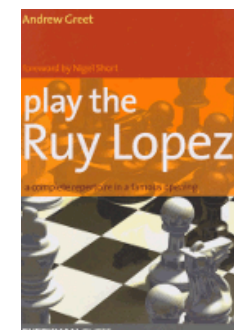
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18...Rad8 19.Ng3 Nec8 20.axb5 axb5 21.Nf5 Nb6 22.Qe3!



[FEN "3r1rk1/2q2ppp/1npn4/1p2pN2/4P3/1BP1Q2P/1P3PP1/R2R2K1 b - - 0 22"]

Threatening both 23.Nxd6 Rxd6 24.Rxd6, picking up the knight on b6, and 23.Qg5! Nxf5 24.ef Nd7 25.Rxd7! Rxd7 26. f6 g6 27.Qh6, followed by mate on g7.

22...Nxf5

Black might also consider 22...Nbc4, but then 23.Bxc4 Nxc4 (Or 23...bxc4 24.Nxd6 Rxd6 25.Qc5, when Black looks set to drop a pawn) 24.Rxd8 Rxd8 25.Qc5! Nxb2 26.Ra7 Nd3 27.Qe3! leaves him without a good move; for example, 27...Qb8 28.Qg5! g6 29.Nh6+ with mate in a couple more moves.

23.exf5 c5

Another possibility was 23...Nd5, after which 24.Qc5! gives White strong pressure.

24.f6!

Setting fire to Black's king position and threatening 25.Qg5. The reply is more or less forced.

24...gxf6 25.Qh6 f5



[FEN "3r1rk1/2q2p1p/1n5Q/1pp1pp2/8/1BP4P/1P3PP1/R2R2K1 w - - 0 26"]

26.Bxf7+!!

This leads to a forced win for White.

26...Qxf7

The alternatives are no better. After 26...Kxf7, 27.Qxh7+ wins Black's queen; whilst 26...Rxf7 27.Qg5+ wins the rook on d8.

27.Rxd8 Na4

Here too 27...Rxd8 28.Qg5+ will pick up the rook on d8.

28.b3 1–0

After 28.b3 Nxc3 (28...Rxd8 29.Qg5+ will win Black's rook with check and then the knight) 29.Raa8, Black will be mated.

In this second game White's knight sacrifice on f7 might officially be considered "opening theory" because it had been played in an earlier game. Yet with Black's king castled, I nonetheless consider it to be a middlegame motif.

Krasenkow, Michal (2525) – Arbakov, Valentin (2400)

Moscow-ch, 1989

Catalan [E05]

1.Nf3 d5 2.d4 Nf6 3.c4 e6 4.g3 Be7 5.Bg2 0–0 6.0–0 dxc4 7.Na3!?



[FEN "mbq1rk1/ppp1bPPP/4pn2/8/2pP4/N4NP1/PP2PPBP/R1BQ1RK1 b - - 0 7"]

This enterprising line appeals to aggressive players. White will not necessarily recover the pawn on c4, but he gets compensation for it.

7...Bxa3 8.bxa3 b5 9.a4 a6 10.Ba3 Re8 11.Ne5 Nd5

Blocking the h1–a8 diagonal, but moving the knight away from his king. This gives White the opportunity for some speculative violence.

12.e4 Nf6



[FEN "rnbqr1k1/2p2PPP/p3pn2/1p2N3/P1pPP3/B5P1/P4PBP/R2Q1RK1 w - - 0 13"]

Trying to keep the knight close to the king, but allowing an interesting piece sacrifice. 12...Nb6 is also worth considering, though White still has dangerous attacking chances via 13.Qh5!?, which is also interesting after 13...f6 14.Ng4.

13.Nxf7!? Kxf7 14.e5

Attacking both the knight on f6 and the rook on a8. Black's reply is forced.

14...Nd5 15.Qh5+ Kg8 16.Be4 g6

16...h6 may also be playable as Black can meet 17.Qg6 (threatening mate on h7) with 17...b4 when 18.Qh7+ Kf8 19.Bxb4+ Nxb4 20.Bxa8 N8c6 produces

a messy position. After the move played, White must sacrifice another piece; will he have anything better than a draw?

17.Bxg6 hxg6

This looks like the best. In the game Kuzmin-Anand, Frunze 1987, Black tried 17...Re7, but after 18.Bxe7 Qxe7, the line 19.Bxh7+ Qxh7 20.Qe8+ Kg7 21.Qxc8 would have been quite good for White.

18.Qxg6+ Kh8 19.Rfe1



[FEN "rnbqr2k/2p5/p3p1Q1/1p1nP3/P1pP4/B5P1/P4P1P/R3R1K1 b - - 0 19"]

Seeking more than a draw by perpetual check, which was available via 19.Qh6+. White could also have brought the other rook into play with 19.Rae1, though after 19...Nc3 20.Re3 Bb7 21.Rxc3 Nc6 he again seems to have no more than a draw via 22.Qh6+, etc.

19...Nc3

Preventing White's threatened 20.Re4.

20.Re3 Bb7

This time stopping the rook coming to f3 and f7. And here White was threatening to bring the rook to f3 and then f7, which would follow 20...Nd7 for example.

21.Rxc3 Nd7??

A natural looking attempt to bring the knight back but it loses by force. Black should have played 21...Nc6 when White has nothing better than a draw.

22.Qh6+ Kg8 23.Qg6+ Kh8 24.Qh6+ Kg8 25.g4!

Preparing to bring his rook to h3.

25...Re7

25...Nxe5 doesn't help Black after 26.dxe5 Qd7 27.Rh3 Qg7 28.Qf4, intending 29.Rh5.

26.Rh3 Nf8 27.Qh8+ Kf7 28.Rh6 Ke8



[FEN "r2qkn1Q/1bp1r3/p3p2R/1p2P3/P1pP2P1/B7/P4P1P/R5K1 w - - 0 29"]

29.Rxe6!

This hammer blow decides matters. This rook has had quite a career!

29...Rxe6 30.Qxf8+ Kd7 31.Qf7+ Re7

31...Kc8 32.Qxe6+ leaves White with way too many connected passed pawns.

32.e6+ Kc6 33.Qf6 Qd5 34.Bxe7 Kb6 35.f3! Rg8?!

35...Qxf3 would lead to a lost endgame after 36.Bc5+ Ka5 37.Qxf3 Bxf3 38.h3.

36.Bc5+ Ka5 37.Qf4?!



[FEN "6r1/1bp5/p3P3/kpBq4/P1pP1QP1/5P2/P6P/R5K1 b - - 0 37"]

After having conducted the game brilliantly thus far, White commits an inaccuracy. The right way to do this is via 37.Kf2! Rxc4 38.e7 Rg8 39.Qf4, when 39...c3 40.Qe3! Qc4 41.e8Q wins Black's rook.

37...c3?

Black could stay in the game with 37...Qxf3 38.Qxf3 Bxf3 39.h3 Kxa4, as he then has his own passed pawns. But White would still be winning after 40.Kf2 Bc6 41.Rc1, intending e6-e7.

38.axb5 axb5?

38...Qxf3 was still the best try.

39.a4 Rc8 40.axb5+ Kxb5 41.Rb1+ Kc4 42.Qe3 1-0

There's not much to be done about the threat of Rb4 mate.

Exercises (solutions next month)



[FEN "r3r1k1/1bq1nppp/p1np4/1ppBpN2/4P3/2PP1N2/PP3PPP/R2QR1K1 w - - 0 19"]

How did White to play launch a decisive attack?



[FEN "r1bq1rk1/pp3pbp/2n3p1/2pn2N1/2N2B2/1QPP2P1/PP4BP/R3R1K1 w - - 0 16"]

This position is more tactical than the previous one featuring some decisive cross pins. White to play and win.

Solutions to last month's exercises

Gausel, E – Davies, N
Oslo, 1988



[FEN "r1bq1rk1/5pbp/2p3p1/p2Pn3/Pp6/1B2BP1P/1PPQ2P1/R3K1NR b KQ - 0 15"]

Black to play has a winning sequence involving the h8-a1 diagonal. What is it?

15...Nc4! 16.Bxc4 Bxb2 Threatening 17...Bxa1, 17...Bc3, and 17...Qh4+. White cannot defend everything. **17.Ne2 Qh4+** Stronger than taking the rook straightaway. **18.Bf2 Qxc4 19.Rb1 Bc3 20.Nxc3 bxc3 21.Qd3 Re8+ 22.Kd1 Qa2 23.Rc1 Ba6 24.Qxc3 Qxd5+ 25.Qd2 Rad8 0-1**

Tarrasch, Siegbert – Walbrodt, Carl August
Hastings (4), 1895



[FEN ""3b2rk/7p/p7/2pbqNm/Pp1p1R2/
1P1Q2P1/1BPN1R1P/6K1 w - - 0 34]

In this position, it is White who decides the game on the h8-a1 diagonal. How did he do it?

34.Rxd4! Opening up the bishop on b2 is even worth a rook. **34...Nxg3** Of course, 34...cxd4 35.Bxd4 wins Black's queen, so he makes a desperate counterattack. **35.Nxg3 Rxd3** **36.hxg3 Rxd3** **37.Kf1!** **Rxd3** **38.Rg4!** **1-0** 38.Rg4 Qxb2 39.Rf8+ leads to mate next move.

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