



COLUMNISTS

Middlegame Motifs

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An Advanced Blockader d3

The blockade of a pawn is a very common strategic theme; for example, countless games feature the blockade of an isolated d4-pawn with a knight on d5. But what happens if the blockader is far more advanced, say two squares further up? Then the position can acquire some special characteristics quite apart from the strength of the blockading piece.

When White's d-pawn is rooted to the d2-square it can also stop the bishop on c1 from being developed, and this in turn can cripple the entire queenside. With part of the army unavailable for a few moves lightning can then strike on the other side of the board. Usually White won't have allowed this to happen without gaining some compensating advantage such as extra material. In this case Black will have to act fast before White finally manages to unravel, so very sharp play can be expected. Black will try to inflict serious damage as soon as possible, possibly by using ultra-violence on the kingside.

Naturally this motif can also occur with a black pawn rooted to d7 by a blockading white piece on d6. But I've chosen to do it this way round to counteract a natural complacency many players feel when playing white. The first of this month's games features a Siesta variation of the Ruy Lopez. The fact that White plays c2-c3 can mean that d3 is vulnerable if he doesn't also get in the advance d2-d4. But it's not often that Black gets to exploit this temporary vulnerability.

Laevsky, E – Pozharsky, N
USSR, 1976
Ruy Lopez [C74]

1.e4 e5 2.Nf3 Nc6 3.Bb5 a6 4.Ba4 d6 5.c3 f5

This distinguishes the so-called Siesta Variation, which is one of Black's more interesting gambits against the Ruy Lopez.

6.exf5 Bxf5 7.0-0

White has a major alternative in 7.d4, which would prevent Black's next. By nonchalantly castling White expects that the bishop cannot be maintained on d3, though its removal can prove to be quite a tricky business.

7...Bd3!



[FEN "r2qkbnr/1pp3pp/p1np4/4p3/B7/2Pb1N2/PP1P1PPP/RNBQ1RK1 w kq - 0 8"]

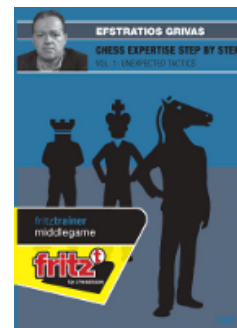
8.Re1 Be7 9.Re3

White's usual choice here is 9.Bc2, aiming to eliminate the bishop on d3

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without further ado. This certainly seems more sensible and in fact it scores much more highly than the text.

9...e4 10.Qb3!?

An interesting but risky approach, trying for his own attack rather than focusing on the removal of the bishop on d3. The main line is 10.Ne1 Bg5, with complex play.

10...b5 11.Qd5 Qd7 12.Bb3 Nf6 13.Qf7+ Kd8



[FEN "r2k3r/2pqbQpp/p1np1n2/1p6/4p3/1BPbRN2/PP1P1PPP/RNB3K1 w - - 0 14"]

14.Qxg7?

Too greedy. White should have forced the queens off with 14.Be6 Qe8 15.Qxe8+ when his position wouldn't have been too bad.

14...Rf8 15.Ng5

15.Ne1 Ne5 would maintain the blockade on d3 and leave White in serious trouble.

15...d5 16.Nxh7

Winning Black's entire collection of kingside pawns, though this has the effect of allowing him to train his rooks on White's king.

16...Nxh7 17.Qxh7 Qe6 18.Qh3

18.Rxd3 exd3 19.Qxd3 would eliminate the crippling bishop but it's already too late. After 19...Rf5, followed by 20...Re5, Black would have a decisive attack.

18...Rf5! 19.Na3 Qf6 20.f3 Bc5

Winning.

21.Bd1 Ne5



[FEN "r2k4/2p5/p4q2/1pbpnr2/4p3/N1PbRP1Q/PP1P2PP/R1BB2K1 w - - 0 22"]

22.Kf2 Ke7 0-1

White lost on time here, but it was just a merciful release.

This next game shows that even Bobby Fischer was not immune to having his d2-pawn blockaded. The lure was the win of a pawn, but Black gets more than enough compensation. Fischer needed both incredible skill and luck to survive.

Fischer, Robert James – Matulovic, Milan

Palma de Mallorca Interzonal (7), 18.11.1970

Sicilian Defense [B31]

1.e4 c5 2.Nf3 Nc6 3.Bb5

Quite uncharacteristic of Fischer, who almost always played 3.d4 and took a highly principled (if not stubborn) approach to the opening.

3...g6 4.c3 Nf6 5.Qe2 Bg7 6.e5 Nd5 7.Qc4 Nc7

Hernandez,G-Iwasaki,Y, Turin 2006 featured 7...Qb6 after which 8.Qxd5 (8.d4 looks interesting) 8...Qxb5 9.Na3 Qb6 10.Nc4 Qc7 11.Qxc5 should have been met by 11...Bxe5 12.Ncxe5 d6, with an OK position for Black.

8.Bxc6

Rather than experience the unpleasantness of the game White should have tried the immediate 8.Qxc5 after which 8...b6 9.Qc4 Nxe5 10.Nxe5 Bxe5 11.Qe4 is about equal.

8...dxc6 9.Qxc5 Qd3



[FEN "r1b1k2r/ppn1ppbp/2p3p1/2Q1P3/8/2Pq1N2/PP1P1PPP/RNB1K2R w KQkq - 0 10"]

This is very unpleasant for White and it needs some great defense by Fischer to stay on the board.

10.Qe3 Bf5 11.Qxd3 Bxd3 12.Kd1 Ne6 13.Ne1

Fischer senses the extreme danger to his position and resolves to remove the bishop on d3 by hook or by crook. 13.Na3 Nf4 14.Rg1 Rd8 would have left White with no play at all.

13...Nf4 14.Nxd3 Nxd3 15.f4 Bh6

Astonishingly Black rejects the win of the exchange via 15...Nf2+ 16.Ke2 Nxf1, though admittedly the position after 17.d4 h5 18.Be3 h4 19.Nd2 Ng3+ 20.hxg3 hxg3 21.Kf3 would be very difficult to win because of White's powerful pawn chain.

16.Kc2 Nxc1 17.Re1!



[FEN "r3k2r/pp2pp1p/2p3pb/4P3/5P2/2P5/PPKP2PP/RNn1R3 b kq - 0 17"]

Perhaps this was the move that Black overlooked in playing his fifteenth, seeing only the line 17.Kxc1 Bxf4 when Black will win another pawn because d2-d4 is illegal.

17...0-0-0 18.Kxc1 Bxf4 19.g3 Bh6 20.Kc2

White is only slightly worse now.

20...Rd5 21.b4

Making it difficult for Black to play ...c6-c5 after White's coming d2-d4.

21...b6 22.a4 a5 23.bxa5 bxa5 24.d4 c5 25.Re4 Rhd8 26.Kd3 cxd4 27.cxd4 Bg7 28.Ke3 Bh6+



[FEN "2kr4/4pp1p/6pb/p2rP3/P2PR3/4K1P1/7P/RN6 w - - 0 29"]

Fischer fear or time trouble? Black is clearly better after 28...f5, but instead appears to be playing for a repetition.

29.Kd3 Bg7 30.Kc4 f5 31.Nc3 e6 32.Rh4 g5 33.Rxh7 Rxd4+ 34.Kb5 Bxe5 35.Rc1 Rb4+ 36.Kxa5 Rc4 37.Ne2 Rd5+ 38.Kb6 Rdc5 39.Rxc4 Rxc4 40.h4 Rc2 41.hxg5 Rxe2 42.g6 Rb2+ 43.Ka6 Rb4

After 43...Rd2, White get scrape a draw with 44.Re7 Rd7 45.Rxe6 Bxg3 46.Rf6, winning Black's last pawn; for example, 46...f4 he runs into 47.Rf8+ Kc7 48.Rf7 f3 49.g7 Rxf7 50.g8Q Rf6+ will lead to a draw.

44.g7 Bxg7 45.Rxg7 Rxa4+ 46.Kb5 Rd4 47.Re7 Re4 48.Kc5 Kd8 49.Ra7 Ke8 50.Kd6 Kf8 51.Rb7

Black's poor king position makes it impossible for him to win.

51...Re3 52.Ra7 Re1 53.Rb7 Re4 54.Ra7 Re2 55.Rb7 Re3 56.Ra7 Kg8 57.Rb7 Re1 58.Re7 Re3 59.Rxe6 Rxg3 60.Kc5 1/2-1/2

Exercises (solutions next month)



[FEN "r2qk1nr/1pp3pp/p1np4/8/B3p2b/2Pb3R/PP1P1PPP/RNBQN1K1 b kq - 0 12"]

Black to play must deal with the threat of 13.Qh5+ as well as the threat to eliminate his bishop on d3. How should he do it?



[FEN "4r1k1/p1pb1ppp/Qbp1r3/8/1P6/2Pq1B2/R2P1PPP/2B2RK1 b - - 0 17"]

White's development has been severely impeded by the queen on d3. But how did Black to play deliver the knock out punch?

Solutions to last month's exercises

Alekhine, Alexander – Fernandez Rua, J

Gijon (simultaneous display), 1922



[FEN "r2br1k1/5ppp/1qp1bn2/pp1p1NB1/3P1P1P/5QN1/PPP3P1/2K1R2R w - - 0 19"]

White to play set in motion a devastating attack; how did he do it?

19.Nxg7! A nice combination by Alekhine. Black's reply is more or less forced. **19...Kxg7 20.f5!** The key follow up. **20...Ng8** After 20...Bd7, there follows 21.Bxf6+ Bxf6 22.Nh5+ getting the piece back with a winning attack. **21.fxe6 Qb7 22.exf7 Bxg5+ 23.hxg5 Rxe1+ 24.Rxe1 Qxf7** It seems as if Black has staved off the worst but the position he is left with is quite hopeless. **25.Nf5+ Kh8 26.Qf4 Re8 27.Re5 Qc7 28.g6 h5 29.Nd6 1-0**

Kaminski, Marcin (2450) – Davies, Nigel R (2505)

Liechtenstein op 11th (7), 1993



[FEN "3r2k1/1bq1np1p/p5p1/1p2p3/2p1Pn2/
2P1Q3/PPBNNPPP/R5K1 b - - 0 23"]

Black to play has a surprising combination, what was it?

23...Nxb2! 24.Kxb2 Moving the queen away, say with 24.Qh6 would leave White a pawn down for nothing. **24...Nf5 25.Qg5 h6** The point; White's queen can't continue to defend d2. **26.Qf6 Rxd2 0-1** White is left a pawn down with a hopeless position.

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