



COLUMNISTS

Middlegame Motifs

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Rooks Lifts

Continuing last month's discussion on the properties of a rook, one of the most important attacking techniques is to develop a rook along the third or fourth rank to bring it opposite the opposing king. Certain pawn structures particularly lend themselves to this kind of play, one of the most noteworthy being the asymmetrical formation arising from an Exchange Variations of the Queen's Gambit (1.d4 d5 2.c4 e6 3.Nc3 Nf6 4.cxd5 exd5) or Caro-Kann (1.e4 c6 2.d4 d5 3.exd5 cxd5).

Taking the Queen's Gambit version, White's most common plan is to play a so-called minority attack on the queenside with b2-b4-b5, prising the half open c-file open and creating some pawn weaknesses in Black's camp. How should Black counter this? Well, he can play for his own minority attack with ...f7-f5-f4 in order to prise open the half open e-file. But a far more popular approach has been to go for piece play on the kingside.

Part of this plan involves bringing a rook into play along the third rank with ...Re8-e6 and then go on to g6 or h6. Clearly this will help with any play against White's king but there is also another benefit. A rook on the third can also defend a Black pawn on c6, which is one of White's major targets in the minority attack.

Let's see how this works out in the following classic game in which Salo Flohr, a great exponent of the minority attack for White, faces an opponent who knows how to defend himself. The result is a model game for both sides in which attack and defence are evenly balanced.

Flohr, Salo – Apсениекs, Fricis

Kemerі Kemerі, 1939

Queen's Gambit Declined [D36]

1.d4 d5 2.c4 e6 3.Nc3 Nf6 4.Bg5

White could already create the key formation with 4.cxd5. Delaying the exchange changes the options for both sides.

4...Be7 5.e3 0-0 6.Nf3 c6 7.Qc2 Nbd7 8.cxd5 exd5 9.Bd3 Re8 10.0-0 Nf8 11.Ne5

Plenty of other moves have been tried here, White's most popular option having been 11.Rab1 preparing b2-b4.

11...Ng4 12.Bxe7 Qxe7 13.Nxg4 Bxg4 14.a3



[FEN "r3rnk1/pp2qppp/2p5/3p4/3P2b1/P1NBP3/1PQ2PPP/R4RK1 b - - 0 14"]

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The Queen's Gambit Declined

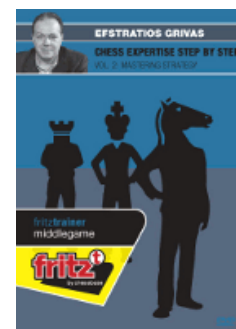
by Andrew Martin



What Grandmasters Don't See

See, Vol. 2

by Maurice Ashley



Chess Expertise: Mastering

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by Efstratios Grivas

Getting ready to play b2–b4. But Black meanwhile has his own ideas, including a rook lift along the third rank to harrass White's king.

14...Rad8! 15.Rfe1 Rd6! 16.Ne2

Black's threats are already forcing White to shift forces back to the kingside. In this case he had to deal with ...Rh6 followed by ...Qh4.

16...Rh6! 17.Ng3 Bc8 18.b4

The standard minority attack move, getting ready to play b4–b5.

18...a6!

Another instructive moment. Playing the pawn to a6 does not really stop White's b4–b5 pawn lever. But what it means is that Black can exchange his a-pawn off and thus leave himself with a queenside weakness less.

19.Rab1 Qc7 20.a4 Nd7 21.Rec1

After the immediate 21.b5, Black can play 21...axb5 22.axb5 c5! with good play, for example 23.dxc5 Nxc5 24.Rec1 b6 securing the knight's position and stopping White from developing further pressure. So before White makes his pawn break he has to rule ...c6–c5 out.

21...Nf6 22.Nf1 Ne4 23.b5



[FEN "2b1r1k1/1pq2ppp/p1p4r/1P1p4/P2Pn3/3BP3/2Q2PPP/1RR2NK1 b - - 0 23"]

Finally getting in his strategic aim after which Black is forced to accept a pawn weakness on the queenside. But with this just being c6, and the rook on h6 both defending it and pressuring White's king, it turns out to be far from fatal.

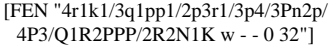
23...axb5 24.axb5 Bd7 25.Qa2 Qd8 26.bxc6 Bxc6 27.Bb5 Rg6 28.Bxc6 bxc6

The backward pawn on c6 is clearly a target, but White's pieces are tied down to the need to look after his king.

29.Rb2 h5

Creating luft for the king and bringing a new attacking unit into play.

30.Rbc2 Qd7 31.Kh1 h4



32.h3 Qf5

The c6-pawn is now immune because of the pressure on f2. Flohr brings his knight to g4 to protect it but that still doesn't snuff out the danger.

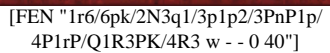
33.Nh2 Qg5 34.Ng4 f5 35.f4 Qh5 36.Ne5 Rg3

A new target for counterplay appears, the pawn on e3.

37.Re1

A critical moment. White could have won a pawn with 37.Rxc6 Rxe3 38.Qxd5 + but after 38...Kh7 he would have faced dangerous threats to his king.

37...Rb8 38.Kh2 Kh7 39.Nxc6 Qg6



40.Rg1

Discretion is the better part of valour. After 40.Nxb8, there follows 40...Rhx3 + 41.gxh3 Qg3+ 42.Kh1 Qxe1+ 43.Kh2 (43.Kg2 Ng3 44.Kf3 Ne2 45.Rxe2 Qg3#) 43...Ng3 leaving White defenceless; for example, 44.Rc1 (44.Kg2 Qf1 + 45.Kh2 Qh1#.) 44...Qxc1 45.Qg2 Nf1+ 46.Kh1 Qb1 47.Nc6 Nxe3+ 48.Qg1 Qe4+ 49.Kh2 Qxf4+ 50.Kh1 Qf3+ 51.Kh2 Nf1+ winning White's queen.

40...Rxe3 41.Nxb8 Qg3+ 42.Kh1 Qxf4

Black could also force a draw with 42...Re1 43.Qa5 (43.Rc1 is bad because of 43...Rxc1 44.Rxc1 Nf2+ 45.Kg1 Nxh3+ 46.Kh1 Nf2+ 47.Kg1 h3 etc.) 43...Rxc1 44.Kxc1 Qe3+ 45.Kh2 Qxf4+ 46.Kg1 Qe3+ with perpetual check.

43.Rd1 Ng3+ 44.Kg1 1/2-1/2

After 44.Kg1 Qxb8 45.Qxd5 Qf4, White's king is under too much pressure for him to realistically think about winning.

This next game features the same pawn structure with colours reversed in the Caro-Kann Defence. This time it's White who aims for piece play on the kingside with Jan Timman conducting the attack.

Timman, J – Pomar Salamanca, A

Las Palmas, 1977

Caro-Kann Defence [B13]

1.e4 c6 2.d4 d5 3.exd5 cxd5 4.Bd3 Nc6 5.c3 Nf6 6.Bf4 Bg4 7.Qb3 Na5 8.Qa4+ Bd7 9.Qc2 e6

9...Qb6 may be a better move here, aiming to exchange off the light-squared bishops with ...Bd7–b5. White should probably circumvent this idea with 10.a4.

10.Nf3 Nc4

Once again White should probably meet 10...Qb6 with 11.a4 to keep his light square bishop on the board.

11.0–0 Bd6 12.Be5!



[FEN "r2qk2r/pp1b1ppp/3bpn2/3pB3/2nP4/2PB1N2/PPQ2PPP/RN3RK1 b kq - 0 12"]

A strong move which threatens 13. Bxc4 Bxe5 14.dxe5, winning a piece.

12...Qc7 13.Re1

Coming to the half open e-file which in turn lays the ground for a rook lift via e3.

13...Nh5 14.Bxc4 dxc4

The pawn structure has been altered with the exchange on c4 to give White greater central control (he can now use the e4 square as well). Whilst it's true that Black's light square bishop has more scope, on the whole I think these changes favour White.

15.Nbd2

Threatening 16.Nxc4 Qxc4 17.Bxd6, etc.

15...b5 16.Ne4 Bxe5 17.Nxe5 0–0



[FEN "r4rk1/p1qb1ppp/4p3/1p2N2n/2pPN3/2P5/PPQ2PPP/R3R1K1 w - - 0 18"]

This walks into a devastating attack but it's difficult to find alternatives. White is threatening 18.Ng5 could meet 17...h6 with 18.Nc5! Nf6 (18...Bc8 19.a4!) 19.Nexd7 Nxd7 20.Rxe6+! fxe6 21.Qg6+ Ke7 22.Qxe6+ Kd8 23.Qd5 etc.; 17...Nf6 is also unsatisfactory because of 18.Ng5 0-0 19.Ng4! etc.

18.Re3!

This rook lift is exceptionally strong.

18...Bc6 19.Ng5 g6

The only way to stay on the board. 19...Nf6? loses immediately after 20.Ng4 Rfc8 21.Nxf6+ gxf6 22.Qxh7+ Kf8 23.Rxe6! etc.

20.Rh3 Nf6 21.Qd2

Threatening 22.Nxh7 Nxh7 23.Qh6.

21...Ne4

The best try. After 21...Bd5, there follows 22.Qf4 Qe7 23.Rh6! followed by 24.Qh4 with a winning attack.

22.Nxe4 Bxe4 23.Qf4!



[FEN "r4rk1/p1q2p1p/4p1p1/1p2N3/2pPbQ2/2P4R/PP3PPP/R5K1 b - - 0 23"]

23...Qb7?!

Missing a hidden chance of survival. Black should have tried 23...Bxg2! 24. Kxg2 f6 after which 25.Nxg6 Qb7+ 26.Kg1 hxc6 27.Re1 gives White strong pressure but nothing like the devastation of the game.

24.Qf6 Bxg2 25.Ng4 Rfe8?!

The final error, missing White's twenty-seventh. 25...Rfd8 was better when 26. Nh6+ (26.Rg3 Bd5 27.Re1 would keep a powerful attack) 26...Kf8 27.Nf5? simply doesn't work because of 27...gxf5 28.Rxh7 Ke8 etc.

26.Nh6+ Kf8 27.Nf5! 1-0

Exercises (Solutions next month)



[FEN "r1b2rk1/2q2ppp/p1n1pb2/3pN3/1p1P1P2/
2PB1R2/PP1N2PP/R2Q2K1 w - - 0 16"]

How did White to play set in motion a devastating attack?



[FEN "7r/k1pr1q2/NpQp1p1n/p4Pp1/
4P1Pp/5R1P/PPP5/1K1R4 w - - 0 29"]

How did White to play develop a winning attack?

Solutions to last month's exercises

Bronstein, David – Geller, Efim
URS-ch28 Moscow, 1961



[FEN "4r1k1/pR3pp1/1n3P1p/q2p4/
5N1P/P1rQpP2/8/2B2RK1 w - - 0 20"]

White to play. How did he use the rook on b7 to launch a devastating attack?

20.Qg6!! 1–0 20.Rxf7! also wins but the move played is far more elegant.;
The point is that after 20.Qg6 fxe6 21.Rxe7+, Black is mated next move with
22.Nxe6. Meanwhile there's no good defence to the threat of 21.Qxe7 mate.

Alekhine, Alexander – Yates, Frederick
BCF Congress London (10), 1922



[FEN "r5rk/2RN1Rp1/b3p2p/3p1p1P/p2P1K2/Pp2PPP1/1P6/8 w - - 0 36"]

Although the position has simplified White still has a devastating combinative sequence at his disposal. What is it?

36.Nf6! Rgf8 The only way to make White think as if he takes on g7 the knight on f6 hangs. But a further surprise is in store. **37.Rxg7!! Rxf6 38.Ke5 1-0** The brilliant point. Whether Black retreats the rook to f8 or brings the a8 rook over to protect it he gets mated with 39.Rh7+ followed by 40.Rcg7 mate.

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