



## COLUMNISTS

## Middlegame Motifs

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## The Pros and Cons of Space

Space is an important concept in chess, as having more room to manoeuvre means that you can switch your pieces to different parts of the board more easily. Dr. Siegbert Tarrasch was particularly fond of it, though his teachings lost their gravity over the years as various players showed that a certain lack of space could also be OK.

One of the main weapons in the hands of the side that is cramped is to simplify the position with exchanges, so that the pieces left can operate well within the space available. This is what Black tries to do in the following game, though he never quite solves his problems and then caves in towards the end.

**Tarrasch, Siegbert – Noa, Josef**

DSB-04.Kongress Hamburg (1), 13.07.1885  
French Tarrasch [C05]

**1.e4 e6 2.d4 d5 3.Nc3 Nf6 4.e5 Nfd7 5.Nce2**

Preparing to defend his d4-pawn with c2-c3 so as to keep as much space as possible. The modern preference is for 5.f4.

**5...c5 6.c3 Nc6 7.f4 cxd4**

A contemporary French expert would probably play 7...Qb6 here; for example, 8.Nf3 f6 9.a3 Be7 10.h4 0-0 11.Rh3 a5 12.b3 Qd8 13.Ng3 h6 14.Be3 f5 15.Bd3 cxd4 16.cxd4 Nb6 led to a complex and difficult struggle in Sakaev,K-Bareev,E, Elista 1998.

**8.cxd4 Bb4+ 9.Bd2 Qb6 10.Nf3 0-0 11.Bxb4 Qxb4+ 12.Qd2**



[FEN "r1b2rk1/pp1n1ppp/2n1p3/3pP3/lq1P1P2/5N2/PP1QN1PP/R3KB1R b KQ - 0 12"]

White is better here because of his space and better bishop. Of course such positions don't win themselves, especially if Black defends himself well.

**12...Nb6**

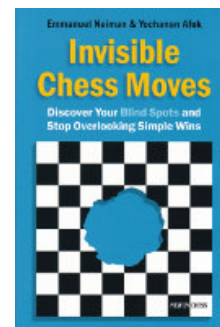
**12...f5 13.Nc3 Nb6.**

**13.Nc3 Rd8 14.Nb5**

The knight is headed for its 'ideal' outpost on d6.

**14...Bd7 15.Nd6 Rab8 16.Rc1 Qxd2+**

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Not very stubborn. Instead, Black should play 16...Nc8 in order to repel the intruder on d6.

**17.Kxd2 Nc8 18.Nb5 a6 19.Nc3 N8e7 20.Bd3**

White's position is very well organized now, and Black has certain dark square weaknesses in addition to his lack of space.

**20...Rbc8 21.b3 Nb4 22.a3 Nbc6**

Having gone to the trouble of playing 21...Nb4 he should certainly have followed up with 22...Nxd3. Simplification tends to be very useful when your position lacks space.

**23.b4 h6**



[FEN "2r2k1/1p1bnpp1/p1n1p2p/3pP3/1P1P1P2/P1NB1N2/3K2PP/2R4R w - - 0 24"]

**24.h4!**

An instructive move, aiming to take the maximum possible space on the kingside before carrying out his key lever with f4-f5.

**24...Nb8 25.Ke3 Rc7 26.Rc2 Rdc8 27.Rhc1 Kf8 28.g4 Be8 29.Nd2 Nd7 30.Nb3 Nb6 31.Nc5 Nc4+**

Getting the d5-square, but White's space advantage stays intact.

**32.Bxc4 dxc4 33.N5e4 b5 34.Nd6 Rb8**

34...Rd8 would have been better, so as to meet 35.f5?! (White should prepare this with 35.Rf2) with 35...exf5 36.gxf5 Rxd6 37.exd6 Nxf5+ 38.Kf4 Nxd6 would give Black more than enough for the sacrificed exchange.

**35.f5 Bd7?!**

It's a bit late for 35...exf5 36.gxf5 Rd8, because of 37.Ke4 f6 38.Nxe8 Rxe8 39.e6.

**36.Rf2 Nd5+?!**



[FEN "1r3k2/2rb1pp1/p2Np2p/1p1nPP2/1Pp2PP/P1N1K3/5R2/2R5 w - - 0 37"]

After this Black loses any chance of counterplay and simply gets squashed.  
36...exf5 37.gxf5 f6 was better when it still isn't easy for White.

**37.Nxd5 exd5 38.g5 h5 39.Rcf1 Kg8 40.g6**

Commencing the invasion.

**40...f6 41.Re2 Bc6 42.Rfe1 Rd8 43.Kf4 fxe5+ 44.Rxe5 Kf8 45.Nf7 Re8**

After 45...Ra8, White wins with 46.f6 gxf6 47.Rxh5 etc.

**46.Ng5 Rce7 47.Nh7+ 1-0**

It's fitting that this knight delivered the coup de gras as it has had quite a career.

The dark side of taking space is that pawns can't move back, and as they advance ever further they can leave vast gaping holes in the pawn pusher's ranks. As long as everything remains under control this will not be a problem, but if the opponent breaks free, the counterattack can be devastating.

In the following game we see Emanuel Lasker ingeniously provoke Tarrasch into taking lots of space.

**Tarrasch, Siegbert – Lasker, Emanuel**

World Championship Germany (4), 24.08.1908

Ruy Lopez [C66]

**1.e4 e5 2.Nf3 Nc6 3.Bb5 Nf6 4.0-0 d6 5.d4 Bd7 6.Nc3 Be7 7.Re1**

Tarrasch firmly believed that this position was good for White because of his space, and this may well be the case. But such was his liking of space that he was probably very sure that it is very good, and it's this overestimation of White's chances that sets him up for a fall.

**7...exd4 8.Nxd4 Nxd4 9.Qxd4 Bxb5 10.Nxb5 0-0 11.Bg5 h6 12.Bh4 Re8 13. Rad1 Nd7 14.Bxe7 Rxe7 15.Qc3 Re5!? 16.Nd4**



[FEN "r2q2k1/pppn1pp1/3p3p/4r3/3NP3/2Q5/PPP2PPP/3RR1K1 b - - 0 16"]

**16...Rc5**

A very provocative move by Lasker, which causes Tarrasch to lose his cool. The rook is not particularly well placed on this square, but it provokes the space loving Tarrasch into pushing his pawns with abandon.

**17.Qb3 Nb6 18.f4**

Cutting off the rook's retreat, but creating some weaknesses in White's position.

**18...Qf6 19.Qf3 Re8 20.c3**

20.b3, followed by c2-c4, would have been more accurate, but Tarrasch didn't

have c2-c4 in mind.

## 20...a5

Setting about provoking some weaknesses in White's queenside.

## 21.b3 a4 22.b4?!

22.c4 would have been a better way of keeping the rook on c5 out of the game. But after 22...axb3 23.axb3 Ra5, it might go to a2 with play on the seventh rank.

## 22...Rc4

Although the rook is trapped here it ties White down to the defence of c3 and exerts unpleasant lateral pressure. So although White's position seems optically very good (space etc) it stands on feet of clay.

## 23.g3 Rd8 24.Re3

24.a3!, as recommended by Kasparov, was probably best.

## 24...c5 25.Nb5?

A very strange move by Tarrasch whose love of space might have prevented him from fully seeing the danger. He should have played 25.bxc5 Rxc5 26. Red3 with approximate equality.

## 25...cxb4 26.Rxd6 Rxd6 27.e5



[FEN "6k1/1p3pp1/1n1r1q1p/1N2P3/ppr2P2/2P1RQP1/P6P/6K1 b - - 0 27"]

## 27...Rxf4!

Tarrasch probably missed this blow when playing 25.Nb5. White's position now falls apart at the seams.

28.gxf4 Qg6+ 29.Kh1 Qb1+ 30.Kg2 Rd2+ 31.Re2 Qxa2 32.Rxd2 Qxd2+ 33.Kg3 a3 34.e6 Qe1+ 35.Kg4 Qxe6+ 36.f5 Qc4+ 37.Nd4 a2 38.Qd1 Nd5 39.Qa4 Nxc3 40.Qe8+ Kh7 41.Kh5 a1Q 0-1

Tarrasch's late resignation indicates the extent of his trauma.

**Exercises (solutions next month)**



[FEN "3rr1k1/1pqbb1pp/p4pn1/2pP4/2P1N3/1P4P1/PBQ3BP/4RRK1 w - - 0 1"]

White to play. How did he convert his space advantage and active pieces into a decisive attack?



[FEN "1r1qnrk1/1b1n1p1p/pppp2pQ/8/P1PNP3/2N3PP/1P3PB1/3RR1K1 w - - 0 20"]

White to play. I had a nice space advantage in this position but needed to break through somehow. How did I do it?

### Solutions to last month's exercises

**Beudaert, Xavier (2358) – Petrov, Marijan (2406)**

Creon op 10th (5), 04.08.2005



[FEN "2r2r2/pp1bppk1/3p1np1/q3n2p/3NP1PP/1BN2P2/PPPQ4/2KR3R b - - 0 15"]

White's attack is looking very dangerous but Black has a way of hitting back. What is it?

**15...Rxc3!** This is the perfect moment for this thematic blow. White now has his own king to worry about. **16.g5?!** White, possibly in shock, doesn't defend well. But both 16.bxc3 Rc8; and 16.Qxc3 Qxc3 17.bxc3 hxg4 give Black excellent compensation for the exchange. **16...Nxe4 17.fxe4 Rc5** left Black a good pawn up with a safe king and he later went on to win.

**Abelgas, Rodolfo Varron – Hakki, Imad (2433)**

Asia Classical 15th Doha (9), 14.12.2006



[FEN "5rk1/1p1bpp1p/3p1np1/p1q1n3/P2NP3/1BP1QP2/2PK2PP/3R3R b - - 0 17"]

Black has obtained good positional compensation for the sacrificed exchange. How can he get rather more than that?

**17...Bxa4!** A nice tactic that wins a extra pawn. White can't take the bishop because of the fork on c4. **18.f4 Neg4 19.Qf3 Bxb3 20.Nxb3 Qf2+! 21.Qxf2 Nxe4+ 22.Ke2 Nexf2 23.Nxa5 Nxd1 24.Rxd1 Nxh2** and Black went on to win the endgame.

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