



2017-18

U120 TRAINING

RUNNING REPORT

IAN HUNNABLE

WANSTEAD & WOODFORD CHESS CLUB

1 – THURSDAY, 12 OCTOBER 2017

This was a modest beginning to our first venture into a training programme for Club members. Three candidates attended. While the intention to mount the programme had been trailed, with dates, in pre-season literature, the confirmation of the first date taking place was, admittedly short notice. Perhaps more will be able to make the second evening.

The catchment area chosen is players graded under 120.

This first session took place in Park room, which has no Smart board so computer-generated display was not available and we used a demo board.

Those attending:

Sebastian Monzon

Terry Skippen

Tejas Mulay

SEBASTIAN'S AGENDA

My approach to these training sessions is to connect with players' needs. From those attending the first session, these were most clearly advanced by Sebastian Monzon, to whom I am grateful for suggesting topics he would like to see covered. Some of Sebastian's topics will require more in-depth preparation and will feature in later sessions, but those which lent themselves to immediate attention were (in Sebastian's words):

1. is having one rook is better than having a knight plus a bishop?
2. how to try to best position my pawns towards the end of the game;
3. the pawn game: I've always struggled to handle efficiently my pawns and calculate next moves;
4. demo on how to use chess computer engines.

1 -IS HAVING ONE ROOK BETTER THAN HAVING A KNIGHT PLUS A BISHOP?

Quick answer: it is invariably the case that having two "minor" pieces (knight or bishop) is a material advantage over a rook.

By reference to a table of values commonly accepted, the two minor pieces are reckoned to be more valuable:

 = 1 unit

 or  = 3 units each

 = 5 units

 = 9 units

So, a rook, worth 5 points, is outgunned by two minor pieces worth a total of 6 points. As always in chess, however, one must take into account the position. For instance, if there was no other material on the board, K and R v K, B and N, for instance, should be drawn, provided neither king is

trapped at the side of the board, or worse, in a corner. To force a draw, the rook has only to exchange itself for one of the opposing pieces. But in a regular middlegame position, the two minor pieces should be better than a rook; as always in chess, every position should be assessed on its merits.

The minor pieces in this exchange represent two units against one and, more importantly, can combine actions which a single unit cannot. As an example, the following position was discussed:



Diagram 1

Black to play

In this position, Black, already a pawn down, played the ill-advised...

21...Be4?

Allowing White to win material:

22.Rxd6 Rxd6

If 22...Bxf3 23.Rxd8+-

23.Bxe4 Re8

Or 23...Rd2 24.Bd5+ Kh8 25.Nf7+ Rxf7 (25...Kg8 26.Nd6+ Kh8 27.Nxb7+-) 26.Bxf7 Rxb2 27.f4+-

24.f4

Of course, it was necessary for White to calculate at move 22 that this defence was available, or the combination would not work. So White has the advantage of two minor pieces for a rook and they soon dominate the board.

24...Re7

If 24...Rd2 25.Bd5+ Kf8 26.Nd7+ Ke7 27.Nxc5 b6 28.Re1+ Kd8 29.Ne6+ Kd7 30.b4 Rxa2 31.f5+-

25.Bd5+ Kf8 26.Rd1 g5 27.Rf1 Rf6 28.g3 gxf4 29.Rxf4

When you have a material advantage, seek to exchange pieces. The extra material becomes more noticeable the more pieces are exchanged – but watch out, there are exceptions to this rule!

29...Rxf4 30.gxf4

After a few minutes consideration, Black resigned. The rook is powerless. While the move 30...Rg7 is available, there are no squares on the g-file for the rook to advance into the White position. There is still a fair bit of play in the game, but White should have no trouble organising a winning advance.

1-0

2 PAWN PLAY

Items two and three of Sebastian’s agenda, taken in full, will require further preparation to cover properly, which will provide material for future sessions. However, we made a start by looking at several examples of simple pawn endings, demonstrating common themes, and one full example of a K and pawn ending illustrating a rule regarding rook’s pawns.

i) The ‘three square’ rule;

“In K & P endings, the king that wishes to win an enemy pawn will do so if it can access one of the three squares to the side of the pawn.”

I have been playing chess now for 62 years, yet I discovered this rule only the previous day while preparing for this training session! Example:

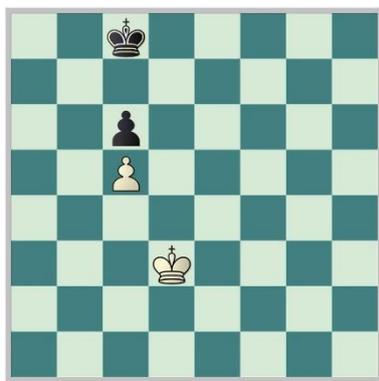


Diagram 2

White to play

To win the Black c-pawn, White must access one of the three squares to the side of the pawn: in this case, d6, e6 or f6.

Therefore, 1 Kd4? Is an error because Black will keep the king from those three squares: 1...Kd7 2.Ke5 Ke7... gaining “the opposition”. White can make no further progress, as any move to work round the Black king fails as Black retains the opposition, e.g. 3.Kf5 Kf7 4.Kg5 Kg7 5.Kf5 Kf7, etc. Draw.

Fortunately, none of the training group fell for that one and all correctly gave:

1.Ke4!

as the right first move. Now Black is powerless to prevent the White invasion.

1...Kd7 2.Kf5 Ke7 3.Ke5

and it is *White* who has the opposition. Black must give ground, e.g.

3...Kd7 4.Kf6

Mission accomplished! Now, however, Black plays, White will gain the pawn.

4...Kd8 5.Ke6 Kc7 6.Ke7 Kc8 7.Kd6 Kb7 8.Kd7

and Black can no longer defend the pawn.

White wins.

ii) Place the king in front of the passed pawn

Following on from the previous example, we then looked at K & P v K

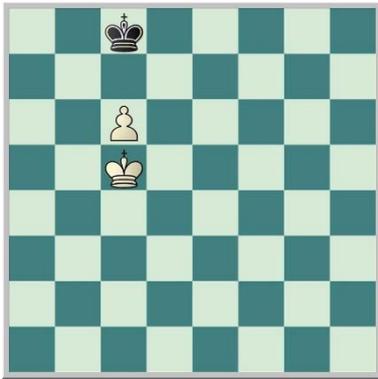


Diagram 3

Draw, whoever is to move

In this position, with correct play, Black will hold the advance of the pawn. Shall we say, it is White's move:

1.Kd6 Kd8

Taking the opposition.

2.Kd5 Kc7 2.Kb5 Kc8!

Black keeps the king in a central position, opposite the White king, waiting to see which side of the pawn White advances.

3.Kb6 Kb8

Again, Black has the opposition. White can make no further progress. Advance of the pawn will result in stalemate:

4.c7+ Kc8 5.Kc6

Stalemate. Any other move would leave the pawn undefended.

Draw.

So, the rule here is that the player with the pawn should place the king *in front* of the passed pawn:



Diagram 4

White wins, whoever is to move

(This position is the logical continuation of the play discussed in Diagram 2.)

Clearly, if it is Black to move, **1...Kd8 2.Kb7** the "shepherding square", allows the pawn to advance to queen. (1...Kb8 2.Kd7 is the same.)

If it is White to move:

1.Kd6 Kd8 2 c6

By contrast to *Diagram 3* it is now White who has the opposition.

2...Kc8 3.c7 Kb7 4.Kd7

...and the pawn queens.

iii) K and Q v K and P on the 7th rank.

We looked at this position



Diagram 5

Stop the passed pawn

Clearly, the queen needs the help of the king, but needs to buy time for the King to advance. The only way that Black can buy a move to advance the king is to force the White king to occupy the queening square.

1...Qd5+ 2.Kb7 Qe6 3.Kf8 Qf6+

The critical position, as White can only continue to defend the pawn with...

4.Ke8

...when the Black king can advance.

4...Kb2 5.Kd7 Qf7 6.Kd8 Qd5+ 7. Kc7 Qe6 8.Kd8 Qd6+ 9. Ke8 Kc3

Black repeats this cycle of moves until the Black king is near enough to support the queen, capture the pawn and give mate.

As with every rule, there are **exceptions!**

This position is only a draw:



Diagram 6

Black to play

Play follows the previous example, except that when we reach this position:

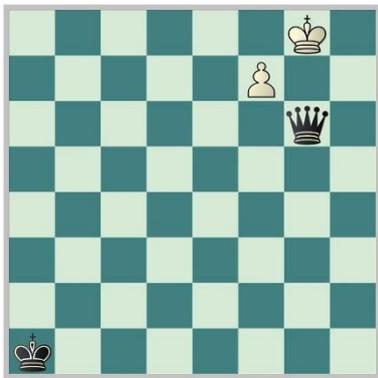


Diagram 7

White to play

White has a trick up his sleeve to save his skin:

1.Kh8!

...because,

1...Qxf7

...is stalemate. Black cannot improve on this play. **Draw.**

With a rook's pawn, it is even plainer:

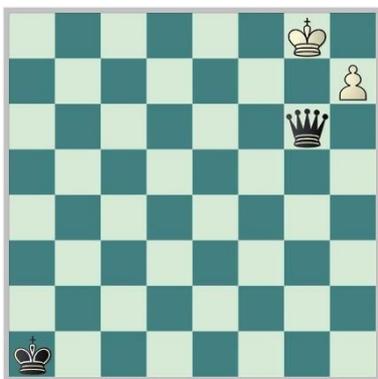


Diagram 8

White to play

1.Kh8 and if **1...Kb2** stalemate. Black cannot improve the position. **Draw.**

So the queen wins against b, d, e and g-pawns, but a, c, f and h-pawns draw.

iv) 3P v 3P make a passed pawn

The next example on the pawn play subject we looked at was this position:

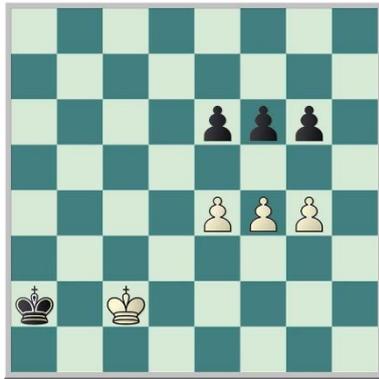


Diagram 9

White to play

First, let's dispose of the e and g-pawn tries: both fail to ...f5 when the position is blocked. (Yes, White will then mop up the black pawns with his king, but that is not the point of the diagram.) The task is "make a passed pawn" *without* use of the king.

1.f5!

By attacking two pawns White forces a capture.

1...gxf5 2.e5!

White sac's a second pawn, again forcing Black's hand as exf6 is threatened.

2...fxe5 3.g5

Passed pawn!

If Black plays 1...exf5 White plays 2.g5! fxg5 3. e5, etc.

v) Practical K & P ending, the defending side will hold a passed RP if the king can reach the bishop square nearest the queening square (e.g. f8 for White h-pawn).



Diagram 10

Black to play

White's last move was 42 Be4-d3. The eternal conundrum: is it better for Black to exchange bishops or keep them on? The outside passed pawn on the a-file would normally indicate that White must win the K & P ending if bishops are exchanged. The factors which enable Black to consider exchanging bishops are: i) if Black retains bishops, the time lost in moving the bishop, say 42 ...Bf3, allows 43 Kb4 and White can then advance the a-pawn to a6 with impunity; ii) that after the exchange the white king ends up on d3 and Black has the strong move ...Kc5; iii) Black has the pawn majority on the K-side and most importantly, has central control. This indicates that, while Black

expends time rounding up the a-pawn, White's advancement on the K-side will be slow enough to allow Black to get back to stop the last White pawn (expected to be the h-pawn).

Play continued:

42...Bxd3 43.Kxd3 Kc5 44.h4

White tries to neutralise Black's K-side majority before pushing the a-pawn. 44 a4 etc does not in fact change anything, Black can call on the same resource as in the game.

44...g6

Not 44 ...h6 (to support ...g5) as then 45 h5 is crippling.

45.h5

If now 45 ...gxh5? Black's K-side pawns are broken up and White's king can get among them after 46 e4.

45 a4 was an alternative. Then 45 ...e5 46 a5 Kb5 47 a6 Kxa6 48 Kc4 e4 and White must go as far as h7 (or spend time with h5 etc to reduce the pawn chain to g6 - it comes to the same thing), while Black can pick-off e3. Both players queen on successive moves with a draw.

45...g5

This localises the K-side majority to the e, f and g-files.

46.h6 e5 47.Kc3 Kb5 48.a3 Ka4 49.Kc4 Kxa3 50.Kd5 f4!

Another rule of thumb: when advancing a pawn majority, move the pawn that has nothing in front of it. This move ensures the draw. The threat of ...f3 forces the liquidation of all pawns beside the h-pawns. The long term calculation is whether the black king can get back to stop the White h-pawn. The key square here is f8; if the black king can reach f8 when White captures on h7, it will be a draw. When the attacking h-pawn is as far advanced as the 6th rank, getting the defending king to f7 is also good for the draw, provided it can reach that square before the attacking king leaves h7.

51.exf4 exf4 52.gxf4 gxf4 53.Ke4 Kb4 54.Kxf4

See the initial assessment above. The time taken by White to round up the last of the black pawn majority is what buys time for the black king to return to the k-side in time to secure the draw.

54...Kc5 55.Ke5

White now dances the black king down the board trying to postpone the moment when the draw must be accepted.

55...Kc6 56.Ke6 Kc7 57.Ke7 Kc8 58.Kf8 Kd8 59.Kg7 Ke7 60.Kg8 Ke8

At this point, the game was agreed drawn. However, for the point of our exercise, we can record that the continuation would have been 61.Kxh7 Kf8 – the key square – 62.Kg6 Kg8 63.h7+ Kh8 and White has no way to evict the Black king from the corner. Alternatively, 61...Kf7 and the White king cannot get out of the corner.

Drawn.

At this point, we had a break for refreshments.

3 TACTICS TRAINING

The second part of the evening was given over to looking at tactics.

Some players base their whole approach to playing tactically. Others prefer to control space, with a “positional” approach. However, even a positional approach must include an understanding of tactics. Two of the greatest players to have played the game of chess, former World Champions Tigran Petrosian and Anatoly Karpov, were/are among the most positional of players in their style of play, yet both exhibited a fine grasp of tactics. To accomplish one’s positional aims, it is often necessary to understand tactical situations which enable the positional scheme to work.

Honing one’s tactical skills is a proven way to “see” possibilities on the chess board. However much one can calculate variations, there is no substitute for having *ideas* and being able to see tactics sharpens the senses.

I set the students three positions in which they had to find the winning solutions (*answers given at the back of this volume*):

Position 1



Diagram 11
White to play

Position 2



Diagram 12
White to play

Position 3

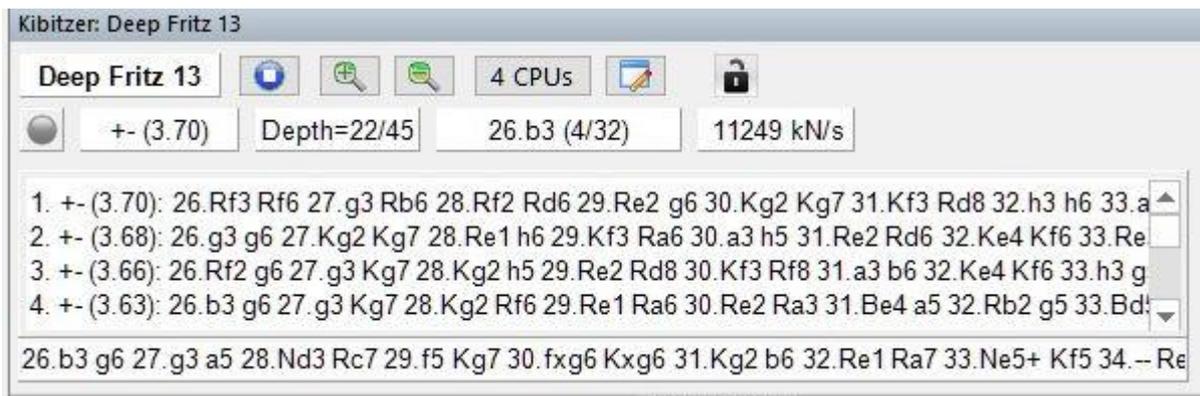


Diagram 13
White to play

See Appendix for solutions.

4 CHESS ENGINES DEMO

I dealt with this by a one-to-one illustration for Sebastian, with a computer chess ‘analysis-engine’. Example illustrated.



In the illustration, the engine has been set up to show the best four lines of play the computer can find. These lines of play are evaluated numerically and by use of common annotation symbols. The program is constantly analysing the position, so these lines of play and evaluation change all the time, though settle down after a minute or two. Facets of the position deep into a variation, however, may take several minutes before being fully evaluated, so always let the computer have a while to think.

The snapshot shown, gives the evaluation of the play from *Diagram 1* above, after 25.Kf8. The evaluation of 3.70 shows that White is clearly winning.

Numeric evaluation The higher the figure, the bigger the advantage. A figure with no sign in front of it is in White’s favour. A figure preceded by a minus sign (within the brackets) is in Black’s favour. A unit of 1.0 is usually reckoned to equate to a pawn advantage, so 0.5 for instance represents ‘half a pawn’. But I have no particular knowledge whether that is a correct analogy. Usually, by the time an evaluation gets to 1.0 (or -1.0) one player is said to be winning.

*NB the minus signs in the above illustration, are associated with the annotation symbol (covered next). The sign, if there is one, associated with the numeric evaluation will appear **inside** the brackets. For instance, if the advantage were in Black’s favour, the figures would show “(-3.70)”.*

W&WCC U120 Training

Annotation symbols The commonly-accepted annotation symbols are probably easier to understand than the numeric evaluation, though with practice, the two taken together are clear enough.

- + - means White is winning;
- +/- or \pm means clear advantage to White;
- +/= or \pm means slight advantage to White;
- = means level;
- =/+ or $\bar{\mp}$ means slight advantage to Black;
- /+ or $\bar{\mp}$ means clear advantage to Black;
- + means Black is winning.

5 NEXT SESSION

The next **U120 Training** session is set for **Tuesday, 31 October 2017**.

APPENDIX

Solutions to Diagrams

Diagram 11

White wins with **1.Qg8+!** forcing the Black king to be exposed to a discovered double-check: **1...Kxg8 2.Be6+ Kh8 3.Rg8 mate.**

Diagram 12

1.Bc4+ simultaneously masking the defence of the queen by the Black rook on c8 and opening the d-file, while giving check. Both **1...Qxc4** and **1...Rxc4** will be met by **2.Rxd8+** winning material, and of course **1...Kh8** allows **2.Qxc3**.

Diagram 13

Slightly more subtle than the first two diagrams. White wins with **1.d7 Rd8 2.Re8+ Rff8 3.Bf7!** White threatens **4.Rxf8 Rxf8 5.Be8** and if **3...Rdx8 4.Bxe8** followed by **d8=Q**, while **3...Rfxe8 4.dxe8=Q+ Rxe8 5.Bxe8** and wins.