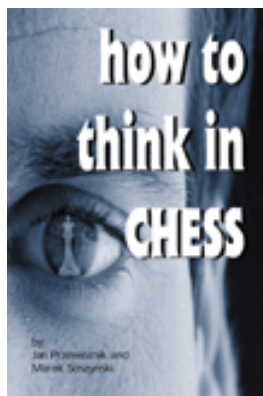




COLUMNISTS

## The Instructor Mark Dvoretsky



## A Battle of Equals

*Imagination is worth more than knowledge.*  
- Albert Einstein

The following game, though little-known, is one of my favorites. Among its attractive features are the very high level of play exhibited by both players, and the weighty arguments they made (or could have made) during the course of the game. Let me suggest that the reader attempt to make the correct decisions and find the key moments of this entertaining game for himself.

**Unzicker - Larsen Santa Monica 1966**

**1. e4 c5 2. Nf3 Nc6 3. d4 cd 4. Nxd4 Nf6 5. Nc3 d6 6. Bg5 Bd7 7. Qd2 Nxd4 8. Qxd4 Bc6**

I love commenting on old games, among other reasons because they generally leave the realm of contemporary theory quite early on, thereby obviating the necessity of preparing a detailed guide to the opening, or describing the latest breath of fashion in this variation. So it is here: 6...Bd7 is quite seldom played; but when it is, it is with the idea of continuing 8...Qa5 (instead of 8...Bc6), followed by ...Rc8.

**9. 0-0-0 Qa5 10. h4!?**

ECO refers to a game Lukin - Ivanov (USSR 1974), in which White obtained a definite opening advantage with the continuation 10. f4 h6 11. Bxf6 gf 12. Bc4 Rg8 13. Qd2 Qc5 14. Bb3 e6 15. f5 Qe5 16. Qf2. It must be said that the plan of attacking e6 with f2-f4-f5 appears fundamental here: it was the plan employed, in one form or another, in a large number of games.

Wolfgang Unzicker has come up with another, less standard strategic idea: developing his Rook to the 3rd rank.

**10...h6 11. Bxf6 gf 12. Rh3! Qe5 13. Qe3 e6?!**

13...b5 would appear to have been more exact.



The obvious 14. f4 would serve no particular purpose for White after 14...Qc5 (or 14...Qa5). One might also continue with the quiet 14. Kb1 or 14. Be2; preventing the development of Black's Bishop on the c1-h6 diagonal by playing 14. h5 would also make sense. But which move should he play?

And why must it necessarily be one of these moves? Have we examined all of White's resources? In fact, *one must first draw up a complete listing of candidate moves, before*

*making a choice among them.*

**So - find some new and promising possibilities for White.**

Failing to ask ourselves this question, we risk overlooking all the most interesting things this position has to offer. And what might those be?

First of all, the tactical shots 14. Bb5 and 14. Nb5, with the intention of meeting a capture on b5 with 15. f4. And in the second place, there is the amazing prophylactic move 14. b4!!, strengthening the threat of f2-f4 by depriving Black's Queen of the c5 and a5 squares. Unzicker, in his excellent commentary for the tournament book, considered this latter move the strongest, and we agree.

So how does Black defend himself against the threat of 15. f4 Qh5 16. Be2 Qg6 17. Rg3 or 17. g4, shutting the Queen out of the game on the kingside, and thereby granting White an enormous advantage on the rest of the board. What can he do?

14...f5!/? suggests itself, trying to create counterplay on the a1-h8 diagonal, which has been weakened by b2-b4. But Black's hopes are not to be realized here: after 15. f4 Qf6, his opponent has two excellent means of continuing the attack. The main difficulty lies in deciding which is better.

1) 16. ef!/? Qxf5 17. g4! Qxg4 18. b5 Bd7 19. Nd5. This was Unzicker's suggested line. Let's continue: 19...Kd8 20. Qc3 Qg7 (20...ed 21. Qxh8 is hopeless) 21. Qc7+ (not 21. Qa5+? b6 22. Nxb6 Qa1+ 23. Kd2 Qd4+) 21...Ke8 22. Qxb7. Unzicker is correct: this position favors him. Note, by the way, how well White's king Rook is placed for such complications.

2) 16. e5!/? de 17. Nb5 Bxb4 18. Nc7+ Kf8 (18...Ke7 19. fe is still worse) 19. fe Qe7 20. Nxa8 Kg7 21. Qxa7 - this seems even more convincing.

Let's think for a moment: Why is it that spectacular combinations bring joy to rank amateurs and experienced grandmasters alike? The reason is that sacrificing material is contrary to routine - and against the most basic routine we learn in our first steps as chessplayers, which is: the normal ranking of the pieces. For it is the unusual and the unexpected that are among the most important esthetic criteria in any walk of life.

There are many more examples of axiomatic thinking in our consciousness - going against any one of these might prove just as unexpectedly beautiful as the

conscious disturbing of the material balance. Can you remember any other cases in which a pawn is pushed forward, away from its King, apparently creating a hopeless weakening of its pawn cover, without even attacking any piece in return? I can think of only a very few examples of this kind; thus, I consider the move 14. b4!! exceptionally beautiful. Any grandmaster would have been proud to have found it over the board.

In order to develop within yourself the ability to think outside the box, it is useful to examine games which develop along unusual lines, to work this sort of exercises. Where do we find them? That's no problem for my students at least - I have notebooks full of excellent material of this type. What advice can I offer my readers? Examine the games of chessplayers with an unusual, dynamic style of play. In the world of tactics, of course, that would be Mikhail Tal; among the younger grandmasters, Alexey Shirov. In strategy - Viktor Korchnoi, Bent Larsen, Leonid Stein, Jonathan Speelman. One might also find interesting and instructive play in the games of those a little lower in the ranks - Bukhuti Gurgidze, for example, or Duncan Suttles, or Julian Hodgson. But remember that, first of all, one must study well-commented games; and second, that those decisions that interest you must be not just original, but also strong (such as 14. b4!!). Playing original and **weak** chess is not difficult - anybody can do that.

#### **14. Bb5!?**

This move is strong enough to set his opponent difficult problems. I think 14. Nb5 is less convincing. Black should not take the Knight, of course: after 14...Bxb5? 15. f4 Qh5 16. g4 Qxg4 17. Bxb5+ Ke7 18. Rg3 Qh5 (18...Qxh4? 19. Rh3 Qg4 20. Rg1) 19. e5 or 19. f5, he comes under a very strong attack. However, he could play 14...Rd8 or 14...Kd7, and work on the vulnerable e4-pawn.

#### **14...Rg8!**

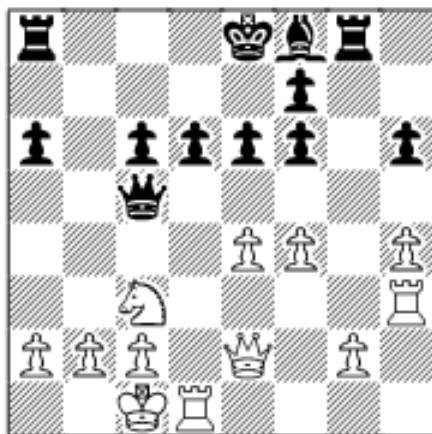
Cold-blooded defense. f2-f4 cannot be prevented; but it will leave weaknesses in White's camp along the g-file, which Larsen wishes to exploit. Black would lose after 14...Bxb5? 15. f4 Qh5 (15...Qc5 16. Qxc5 dc 17. Nxb5 Ke7 18. Rhd3) 16. g4 Qxg4 17. Nxb5.

#### **15. f4 Qc5**

#### **What do you think: Should White exchange Queens here?**

This is not a simple question. After 16. Qxc5 dc 17. Bxc6+ bc, Black's pawn structure is ruined. If White consolidates, he will obtain a great positional advantage. But can he? The g-pawn is attacked - now we understand why 14...Rg8! was necessary. If 18. Rd2 (intending 19. Rhd3), 18...Rd8, and Black has enough counterplay. 18. g3!?, intending Ne2, Rhh1, etc., is stronger. Black apparently must answer 18...h5! (18...c4 19. Rd4 is worse) 19. Ne2 e5!?, with 20...Bh6 or 20...c4 in mind. I have analyzed this continuation, and concluded that White will have a hard time exploiting the advantages of his position. The middlegame promises him more.

#### **16. Qe2!? a6 (16...Be7 was more cautious) 17. Bxc6+ bc**



Here White had the simple and strong move 18. g4!, ridding himself of that backward pawn on the g-file. Unzicker prefers a different solution: he wants to crack the enemy defenses at once.

**18. e5**

**Evaluate the move played.**

Now there is the terrible threat of 19. Ne4. After 18...d5? 19. ef (or 19. f5!?) threatens f4-f5 or g2-g4-g5; for example, 19...Bd6 20. f5 e5 21. Ne4!? de 22. Rc3. Black has only

one move:

**18...f5!**

Had Unzicker not foreseen anything concrete here and played, let's say, 19. ed Bxd6, that would have made the move 18. e5 anti-positional, leading only to a significant worsening of his pawn structure. But the grandmaster had a spectacular shot in mind:

**19. g4!!**

**How does Black defend himself ?**

On either 19...fg? or 19..Rxc4?, 20. Ne4! decides. Nor is 19...d5? any good, after 20. gf ef 21. e6 or 21. Qd3.

**19...Qb4!**

By attacking the f4-pawn, Larsen decoys White's Queen off the e-file.

**20. Qf3!**

The sharper 20. gf Qxf4+ 21. Kb1 can hardly promise White any advantage.

**20...d5 21. gf**

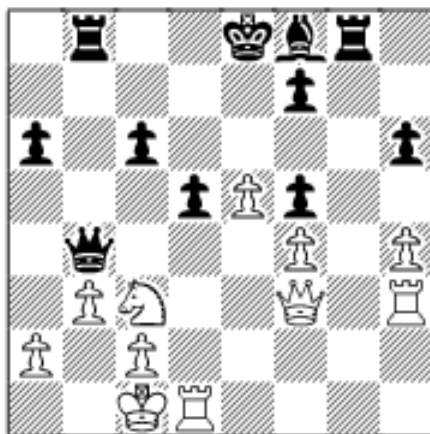
**Now what does Black play?**

21...ef? loses at once to 22. Nxd5! cd 23. Qxd5.

**21...Rb8!**

A necessary zwischenzug. Now 22. fe Qxb2+ 23. Kd2 Bb4! is unclear.

**22. b3 ef**



Although Black has escaped an immediate catastrophe, he still stands significantly worse. We may conclude that the pretty breakthrough 18. e5! f5! 19. g4!! was justified (even though the simple 18. g4 may have been no weaker).

The sacrifice on d5 is unsound here. The most natural plan would be to maneuver the Knight to d4.

### Evaluate 23. Ne2.

If Black meets 23. Ne2 with 23...Bc5?!, then 24. c4! lands him in great difficulties (24. Rg3?! Ke7 would be far less convincing). The only right move is 23...Qe4! The endgame after 24. Qxe4 fe is quite in order for Black, while 24. Nd4? even loses to 24...Ba3+ 25. Kb1 Rg1!! 26. Rxc1 Qxd4 27. Rg8+ Ke7 28. c3 Qd2. And 24. Rd4!? Rg1+!? 25. Kb2 Qxf3 26. Rxf3 Rh1 27. Ra4 Rb6 28. Ng3 Rxc4 leads to an endgame that is hard to evaluate.

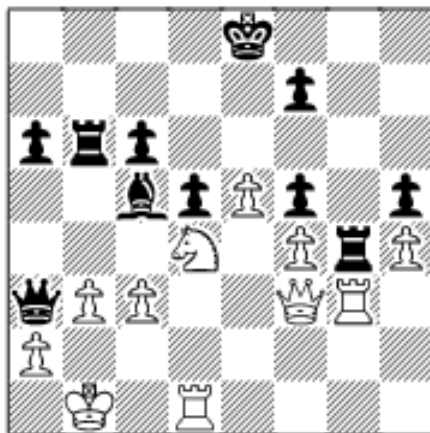
Unzicker finds a way to prepare the knight maneuver to d4.

### 23. Rg3! Rg4! 24. Ne2

#### Now what does Black play?

White would like to take twice on g4. 24...Qe4?! is no longer good, in view of 25. Qxe4 de 26. Rxc4 fg 27. Ng3!? (or 27. Rd4!?), with a bad endgame for Black. So Larsen simply reinforces the Rook on g4 with a pawn, and allows White's Knight to go to d4.

### 24...h5! 25. Nd4 Rb6



Right here is where Unzicker thinks that White let his advantage slip. He believes that White should have broken through the e-file with 26. e6 Qa3+ 27. Kb1 Bg7 (an attempted counterattack on White's King) 28. Qe3.

#### Calculate the consequences of his suggested variation.

Black would seem to be in a bad way: 28...c5 29. ef+ Kxf7 30. Re1, and if 30...Bxd4?, 31. Qe8+ Kf6 32. Qd8+. But the grandmaster overlooked the spectacular 30...Qb2+!! 31. Kxb2 Bxd4+ 32. Qxd4 cd, with an unclear endgame.

#### Now, can we improve the play in this variation?

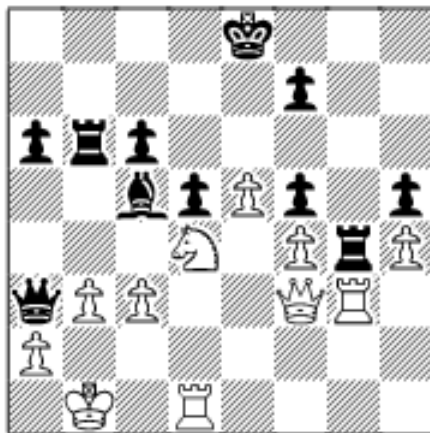
Yes, we can. Instead of 28. Qe3!?, White plays either 28. Rxc4! hg 29. ef+ Kxf7 30. Qd3! Bxd4 31. Qxd4, or 28. ef+ Kxf7 29. Rxc4! Bxd4!? 30. Rxd4 hg 31. Qd3 Kf6 32. Qc3 Kf7 33. Rd1 - in either line, he has an obvious advantage.

But it is Black who could improve earlier. He need not hurl himself into an immediate counterattack: 26...Qa3+? 27. Kb1 Bg7 is a mistake, as is the immediate 26...Bg7? 27. Nf5 Qa3+ 28. Kd2. Consolidating with 26...Qd6!, securing the position of the black King and attacking the f4-pawn, secures him sufficient counterchances. Which in turn means that the e5-e6 break was not so strong, after all.

### 26. Kb1! Bc5 27. c3

27. Nxc6? Rxc6 28. Qxd5 Qb6 is a mistake. White also gets nothing out of 27. Nxf5 Qxf4.

### 27...Qa3



### What should White play now?

As we shall soon see, capturing the f5-pawn gives White no advantage. What else could he have done?

28. e6?! Bxd4 29. ef+ Kxf7 30. cd Qe7 (or 20...Qd6) leaves Black in excellent shape.

Sacrificing the Knight at c6 is good only for a draw: 28. Nxc6?! Rxc6 29. Qxd5 Kf8 30. Qd8+ Kg7 31. Qf6+ Kh7 32. Qxf7+ Rg7 33. Qxf5+ Kg8, and White has perpetual check, with 34. Qe6+, but no more - 34. b4?

Bxb4; or 34. Rd8+ Bf8.

The only means of playing for the win was, surprisingly, the exchange of Rooks, with the idea of freeing the White Queen for active play (an idea we already saw in a previous variation). So 28. Rxc6! fg (28...hg is similar) 29. Qd3 Bxd4 30. Qxd4 (30. cd is good, too); and in the heavy piece ending White's advantage is indisputable, since his King is far better protected. The threat to open lines with e5-e6 hangs like the Damoclean sword over Black's position.

### 28. Nxf5?!

### How does Black play now?

For the time being, the rook sacrifice on b3 doesn't work; but White must always keep it in mind - for example, that's how Black would answer taking twice on g4. White has no direct threats, which means Black must now employ his only means of strengthening his position - the advance of his a-pawn.

### 28...a5!

With the threat of 29...a4. Having checked the variations, Unzicker decided that he had already lost the advantage; so he agreed to the draw.

29. Nd6+ Kf8 30. Rxc6 hg 31. Qxc6 Rxb3+ 32. ab Qxb3+ 33. Ka1 Qxc3+ 34. Kb1 Qb3+ 35. Ka1 Qa3+ 36. Kb1 Qb3+ 37. Ka1 Qa3+ 38. Kb1 - Draw

An engrossing duel, in which both sides played mistake-free chess (or nearly

so), and proved worthy of each other!

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Translated by Jim Marfia

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