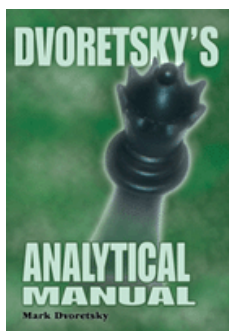




COLUMNISTS

The Instructor

Mark Dvoretsky



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The Logic of a Grandmaster

Especially valuable, to my taste, are notes that reproduce the logic of a grandmaster's search for the correct plan in a complex situation, when it isn't obvious which factors he should be relying on. Most often this is done, naturally, with demonstrations of one's own duels. But the most intelligent and competent commentators are also able to shed light on other people's work superbly. As, for example, Jonathan Rowson did, explaining a key moment in the following game to his readers.

Portisch – Christiansen
 London, 1982

1.d2-d4 Ng8-f6 2.c2-c4 e7-e6 3.Ng1-f3 b7-b6 4.a2-a3 Bc8-b7 5.Nb1-c3 d7-d5 6.c4xd5 Nf6xd5 7.Qd1-c2 Bf8-e7 8.e2-e4 Nd5xc3 9.b2xc3 0-0 10.Bf1-d3 c7-c5 11.0-0 c5xd4 12.c3xd4 Nb8-c6 13.Bc1-b2 Ra8-c8 14.Qc2-e2 Be7-f6 15.Ra1-d1



15...g7-g6

The d4-pawn is unassailable:

15...Bxd4? 16.e5! Bxb2 17.Bxh7+ Kxh7 18.Rxd8 Nxd8 19.Qxb2 Bxf3 20.gf +/- (Dvoretsky);

15...Nxd4? 16.Bxd4 Bxd4 17.Bb5! (17.e5?! Bxf3) 17...e5 18.Nxe5 Qe7 19.Nd7+/- Gligoric – Liang Jinrong, Olympiad, Lucerne, 1982.

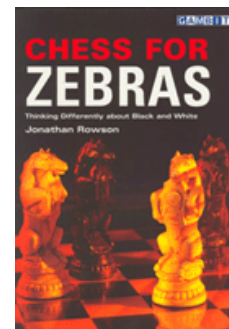
Theory recommends 15...Na5 16.Rfe1 Re8 unclear.

16.h2-h4! Qd8-e7

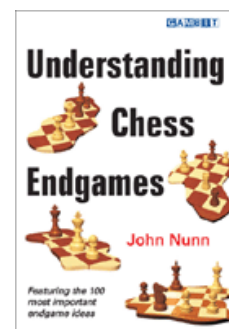
It isn't convenient to take on h4: 16...Bxh4?! 17.d5! Na5 (if 17...ed 18.ed Re8, then 19.de! Rxe2 20.Bxe2+/-, but not as proposed in Chess Informant 19.Qd2 Na5 20.Qh6 Bf6 21.Ng5 due to 21...Qxd5 22.Qxh7+ Kf8 23.Qh6+ Kg8=) 18.de, and not 18...fe? 19.Bb5+/-; he has to play 18...Qe7!+/-.

17.h4-h5 Rf8-d8

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W?

...If you were playing White, what would you be trying to do here? This is not an easy question to answer because the pressure on the centre makes it difficult to start anything serious on the kingside (e.g. with Nh2-g4) and Black seems to be very well coordinated in general. In such situations it can be a good idea to focus on one particular positional aspect and see if you can build a plan around that. It is important not to become blinkered by this single feature, but focusing your attention on something specific can lead to new insights that you may not see if you look at the position too generally.

Let's look at Black's king, our ultimate target. There are a few weak squares around it and it's only really protected by the f6-bishop. However, this prelate is difficult to exchange because White is not ready to advance in the centre. White can play h6 at some point, which would tend to signify threats to the g7-square, but we are still faced with the problem of exchanging the bishop in this regard. However, another feature of playing h6 is that Black's king is suddenly short of air and if White were ever to get "round the back" then he'd be most uncomfortable. But how can we ever do that when Black's rooks are such good guardians of the back rank and pressurize the centre? Exchange them! In fact, this thought reveals that Black rooks are currently out-performing their counterparts in any case.

...It seems that exchanging rooks would at least give us something to hope for, so let's try to do this. What's he going to do in the meantime? He'll probably play ...Na5 intending ...Nc4 or ...Nb3 but this just helps us to exchange on the c-file. Anything else? Well he might just double his rooks but then he will have to weaken himself on either c- or d-file.

18.Qe2-e3!

The first step in the plan. This defends d4 but weakens c4. Sometimes in these positions White plays e5 to gain even more space and try to exploit the weakened dark squares on the kingside, but Portisch's strategy looks much more convincing. Black is quite cooperative in this game but even if your plan is not especially threatening for the opponent, having some sense of where you are going enables you to play quickly and confidently.

18...Nc6-a5?!

This turns out badly even though it's hard to believe that it's a mistake. Black probably didn't appreciate that White wants to exchange rooks...

In Rowson's opinion, it was worth choosing 18...Rc7! 19.Rc1 Rcd7! (after 19...Rdc8 20.Rc2!? White's position is preferable) 20.e5 (weaker is 20.Bb5?! Nxd4! 21.Bxd7 Nxf3+ 22.Qxf3 Bxb2 23.Rc2 Bxa3) 20...Bg7 21.Bb5 Rc7 22.a4 with an unclear game.

19.Rd1-c1! a7-a6?!

Understandably, Black wants to play ...b5, but he underestimates the long-term danger to his king.

20.Rc1xc8 Rd8xc8 21.Rf1-c1 Rc8xc1+ 22.Qe3xc1 Qe7-d8

Probably designed to stop Ne5.

23.h5-h6!



Now he has to reckon both with 24.Qf4, and also 24.d5.

23...Qd8-c8

On 23...b5 decisive is 24.d5! ed 25.Bxf6 Qxf6 26.Qc7. Hopeless too is 23... Nc6 24.Bxa6 Nxd4 25.Bxd4 Bxa6 26.Bxf6 Qxf6 27.Qc7.

24.Qc1-f4 Qc8-d8 25.Nf3-e5 b6-b5

Deserving of attention is 25...g5!?, but such moves aren't made when life is good.

26.Bb2-c3! Na5-c4?!

This loses by force but the alternatives don't look much better.

26...Nb3 27.d5 ed 28.Nc6 Bxc6 29.Bxf6 Qe8 30.Bc3 d4 31.Qf6 Qf8 32.Bb4 +/-;

26...Nc6!?! 27.Nxf7! (27.d5? Nxe5 28.Bxe5 Bg5) 27...Kxf7 28.e5+/-

27.Bd3xc4 b5xc4 28.Bc3-a5! Qd8-e7 29.Ne5-d7! 1-0

The decisive combination was the logical conclusion of White's plan with the exchange of rooks.

As I was getting to know this game, I was reminded of another, older one, in which a similar structure arose out of a completely different opening. It was annotated in the monograph by Paul Keres, *100 Games*, published in 1966. Keres was an outstanding analyst, but still there's something to add to his notes (as usual, I should emphasize). The impressions we have just received will prove useful in the process of analysis.

Keres – Malich

Olympiad, Varna, 1962

1.d2-d4 Ng8-f6 2.c2-c4 g7-g6 3.Nb1-c3 d7-d5 4.Ng1-f3 Bf8-g7 5.e2-e3

A modest continuation. White isn't striving for an opening advantage, but intends to transfer the center of gravity of the battle to the middlegame.

5...0-0 6.c4xd5 Nf6xd5 7.Bf1-c4 Nd5xc3

A few rounds later Malich chose in this position 7...Nb6 8.Bb3 c5, which is also completely acceptable.

8.b2xc3 c7-c5 9.0-0 Qd8-c7 10.Qd1-e2 b7-b6

A good continuation here is 10...Bg4, so as to undertake Nd7 and e7-e5 when the opportunity arises. Although later analyses showed that Black shouldn't

fear complications after 11.h3 Bxf3 12.Qxf3 cd 13.Bd5 (due to 13...dc!-/+) , nevertheless without home preparation it's risky to go into such an unclear continuation.

Instead of 11.h3? the move 11.Ba3 has been tried (I also recall the recommendation of Gerardo Lebrede – 11.Rb1!?). Now already unfavorable is 11...Bxf3?! 12.Qxf3 cd 13.Bd5 Nc6 (for an endgame with extra material White undertakes an exchange of blows 13...de 14.Bxb7 Qxc3 15.Bxe7 ef+ 16.Kh1 Qxf3 17.gf Re8 18.Rad1 Rxe7 19.Bxa8+/- – Dvoretsky) 14.cd Qd7 15.Rfc1 Rac8 16.h4+/- (Keres-Pachman, Marianske Lazne, 1965). So Black replies 11...Nd7 12.Rac1 Qa5 13.Bb2 Rac8= (Najdorf – Korchnoi, Hastings 1971/72).

11.Rf1-d1

White didn't achieve anything in the game Kuzmin – Kochiev, 1st League of the Soviet Championship, Minsk, 1976, where played was 11.Bb2 Nc6 12.Rac1 Bb7 13.Rfd1 e6 14.Bb5 Rfd8 15.Ba3 Na5=.

11...Nb8-c6 12.Bc1-b2

The immediate 12.e4 looks suspect because of the possible pin 12...Bg4. For reinforcement of the center the bishop is superbly placed on b2.

12...Bc8-b7 13.e3-e4 Nc6-a5 14.Bc4-d3 e7-e6

With this good move Black prevents d4-d5 and equalizes the chances. Now follows a prolonged regrouping of forced by both sides.

15.Ra1-c1 Rf8-d8 16.Re2-e3

As in the Portisch game, the queen is successfully positioned on e3. From there it strengthens the center and is prepared for a jump to the kingside, where White plans to start an attack.

16...Ra8-c8 17.h2-h4

Also a well-known method: advancing the h-pawn increases the pressure on the position of the black king.

17...c5xd4

Well played. Black has to create play in the center and on the queenside in order to compensate for White's activeness on the kingside.

18.c3xd4 Qc7-d6 19.h4-h5



B?

19...Rc8xc1

Here Black didn't choose the best plan, in my opinion. He's relying on exchanges to simplify the position, but he turns out still to be under unpleasant pressure despite the simplification.

As in the game Portisch – Christiansen, exchanging off all the rooks is favorable for White, most of all because it weakens the enemy's home front, and the danger of the white queen penetrating into his opponent's camp increases.

Corresponding more with the demands of the position is 19...Qb4, so that after 20.Qe2 he can bother his opponent on the queenside with the move 20...Qa4.

20.Rd1xc1 Rd8-c8

In the event of 20...Nc6 very strong is 21.h6! Bxd4 (unhappy also is 21...Bh8!? 22.Bb5) 22.Nxd4 Nxd4 23.Qg5! e5 (a natural move) 24.Bxd4 ed (on 24...f6 follows 25.Bxe5!) 25.e5 Qf8 (25...f6 26.Qxg6+! hg 27.ed Rxd6 28.Rc7 with a winning endgame for White) 26.Rc7+/-.

21.Rc1xc8+ Bb7xc8



W?

22.Nf3-g5?!

Black still hasn't freed himself from the pressure. White intends to begin an attack on the kingside by the route 23.hg hg 24.Qh3. Also very strong was 22.h6!. If then 22...Bh8, then after 23.e5 this bishop is removed from play for a long time, and if 22...Bf8, then 23.d5!, and Black is threatened with major unpleasantness on the long diagonal.

In the previous game we already saw how dangerous the position of the black king becomes with rooks exchanged and a pawn on h6. True, after 22.h6! Bf8 Keres' recommendation 23.d5?! doesn't promise White an advantage because of 23...ed 24.Qd4 f6. On 25.ed simplest of all is 25...Bxh6 26.Qxf6 Qxf6 27.Bxf6 Bg7=. And if 25.e5, then 25...Qc5 26.Qa4 f5 unclear.

Considerably stronger is 23.Ne5!, intending to place the knight on g4.



A) 23...Nc6 24.Ng4 Be7 25.d5 ed 26.ed Nb4 (26...Bxg4 27.dc+/-) 27.Bc4 Bxg4 28.Qd4 Bf6 (28...f6 29.Qxg4) 29.Qxf6 Qxf6 30.Bxf6, and White has an overwhelming advantage in the endgame.

B) 23...Qd8 24.Qf4 f6 25.Ng4 Be7 – now premature is 26.d5 e5, and if 27.Nxe5?!, then 27...Bd6. But the simple 26.Be2 puts his opponent in a difficult

position: White plans 27.d5, and after 27...e5 the queen already isn't chained to the defense of the knight, and so it's correct to retreat to e3 or c1.

The move made by Keres in the game is significantly weaker, and after it the situation on the board remained close to equality.

22...Qd6-e7! 23.h5xg6 h7xg6 24.Qe3-g3

In the event of 24.Qf4 Black can't reply 24...Nc6? because of 25.Ba3!+/-.
However, it was necessary to reckon with both 24...Bh6!? 25.Qb8 Qb7 26.Qe5 Nc6+/, and 24...e5!? 25.de Be6 26.Qh4 Bxa2 27.f4 Nc6 unclear.

24...Bg7-f6?

Up till now Black has defended very carefully and has deflected all of his opponent's direct threats. However, the move in the text isn't the best and leads to significant difficulties. He overestimates the strength of the threat 25.Qh4 and places his bishop in a very unfavorable position. Correct was 24...Nc6!, so that on 25.Qh4 he could reply cold-bloodedly with 25...Nxd4!. That's why after 24...Nc6 White, should evidently play 25.e5, retaining at least a slight advantage.

25.Ng5-f3 Qe7-b4?

One mistake often drags another one behind it. This active thrust leads to a quick loss in a surprising way. Here, too, Black should have continued 25...Nc6. For example, 26.d5 Bxb2 27.dc e5! 28.Bc4 Kg7 unclear.

Then again, contrary to Keres' opinion, there's no quick win with the move in the game either.



W?

26.Qg3-c7!

The white queen invades his opponent's position with great force. Black expected this move, of course, and was relying on successfully deflecting all the threats, but...

26...Qb4xb2

If 26...Bb7, then 27.Bc1!+/- (worse is 27.Bc3 Qa3).

Black's calculation was based on the variation 27.Qxc8+ Kg7 28.e5 Be7 29.Qc7, after which 29...Kf8 gives him the opportunity to organize enough of a defense.

27.e4-e5!



B?

This strong and unexpected advance decides the game. If Black wants to keep his king's bishop, then he has to leave the d8-h4 diagonal, and after that White's attack becomes unstoppable.

After 27...Bg7 28.Qxc8+ Bf8 White can equalize with 29.Qc7 also obtain a decisive advantage by the route 29.Bxg6! fg 30.Qxe6+ and so on.

The route could have been avoided simply by resorting to tactics: 27...Bh4!! In the event of 28.Nxh4 Qxd4 29.Qxc8+ (nothing is gained from 29.Bxg6 because of 29...Qd7!) 29...Kg7 the piece is immediately won back (30.Bxg6 Qxh4= or 30.Nxg6 Qxd3 31.Ne7 Qd1+ 32.Kh2 Qh5+ with perpetual check). Useless is 28.g3?! Bb7=, and after 28.Qxc8+ Kg7 29.g3 Be7 almost the same position arises as in the one refuted by Keres, 27.Qxc8+, only with the inclusion of the move g2-g3, in some variations freeing the g2-square for the king.

Then again, the situation that arises after 30.Qc7 is far from safe for Black.



B?

If this is defended "according to Keres": 30...Kf8, then White continues 31.Qb8+ Kg7 32.Qxa7 Kf8 (32...Nc6 33.Qd7+/-) 33.Qb8+ Kg7 34.Qc7 Kf8, and now to his decisive advantage leads the impressive breakthrough 35.d5!! ed 36.e6! Qf6 (36...fe 37.Ne5+/-; 37...Nc4 38.Qc8+ Kg7 39.ef Kxf7 40.Qc6+/-) 37.Qb8+ Kg7 38.ef, and on any pawn capture follows 39.Ne5+/-, and on 38... Bf8 – 39.Nh4+/-.

More chances are retained with 30...Qa3 31.Be4 Qb4!? 31.Qxa7 Nc4 with the idea of Nb2-d1.

27...Bf6-e7?

Black is hoping for 28.Qxc8+ Kg7 and so on, but a new surprise follows.

28.Qc7xe7! Qb2-c1+ 29.Bd3-f1!

This was the whole point. After 29.Kh2? Qf4+ 30.Kh3 Bb7 there's nothing for Black to fear.

29...Bc8-b7

The main variation of White's combination is the following: 29...Ba6 30.Qd8 +! (but not 30.Ng5 Qxf1+ 31.Kh2 Qxf2 and so on) 30...Kg7 (or 30...Kh7 31.Ng5+ Kh6 32.Nxf7+ Kg7 33.Qf6+ Kg8 34.Ng5 and so on) 31.Qf6+, 32.Ng5, and Black is mated, as the f2 pawn is defended. The move in the game doesn't save Black either.

30.Nf3-g5 Qc1-f4 31.g2-g3 1-0

After 31...Qf5 32.Bd3 he loses his queen.

In conclusion, I hope readers will concern themselves only with first-class chess texts, if possible, enjoy them, and then successfully use your newly-acquired knowledge at the chessboard.

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