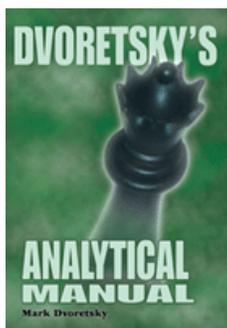




COLUMNISTS

The Instructor

Mark Dvoretsky



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Emotions and Playing Strength

As we go through some of our own games, we're at a loss: how on earth could I have played so weakly?! Emotional instability can be one of the factors giving rise to a failure by chess players in important duels. Under the influence of surging emotions (and not necessarily negative ones) we sometimes lose concentration and stop objectively evaluating the events that are taking place on the board. This has even happened to great fighters who possess a powerful sporting instinct – not to mention mere mortals.

During Emanuel Lasker's game against a young Carlos Torre in the Moscow International Tournament of 1925, the ex-world champion was given a telegram with the news that the play he had written with his brother Berthold was going to be produced. Excited about a happy event that was important to him, Lasker, who by that point had obtained a winning position, lost his ability to control the course of the battle, made several mistakes and in the end allowed his opponent to undertake an impressive combination on the theme of the "windmill."

Torre-Lasker
Moscow, 1925



1...?

21...Qa5-f5

Vladimir Zak (in his book *Lasker*) considers the move made by Black inaccurate and recommends 21...Qd5! 22.Rg3 h6 23.Bf6 Ng6 24.Rxg6 fg 25. Qxg6 Qxg2+! with a winning endgame. Then again, Lasker didn't make the mistake that actually relinquished the victory here, but on the next move.

22.Rd3-g3

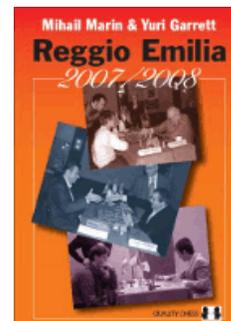
22.Rh3 e5 is also unpleasant.

22...h7-h6?

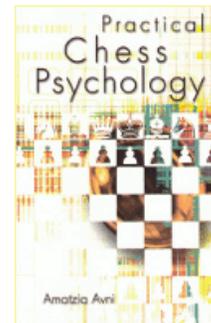
22...f6! 23.Nc4 Re7! 24.Nxd6 Qd5-- led to the win of a piece.

23.Na3-c4!

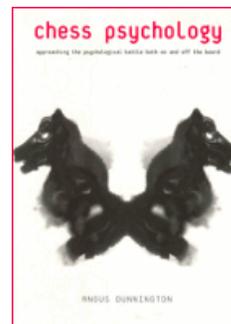
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1...?

23...Qf5-d5?

It was necessary to transfer into an endgame by the route 23...hg 24.Nxd6 Qg6 (or immediately 23...Qg6) 25.Qxg6 Nxb6. Zak evaluates the position that arises after 26.Nxb7 Re8 27.Nc5 Rxb4 as favorable for Black. In fact it is equal: 28.Rxg5 Rxd4 29.Nxe6 Re8 30.Kf1.

24.Nc4-e3 Qd5-b5?

Considerably more stubborn is 24...Qxd4!?, on which White replies 25.Rd1. In Zak's variation 25...Qb2 26.Bxh6 Ng6 27.Bg5 Be4 28.Rh3 f6 White obtains a decisive advantage by means of 29.Nc4! Qxb4 (29...Qc2 30.Rc1) 30.Qh7+ Kf8 31.Nxd6 (threatens 32.Bxf6) 31...fg 32.Rb3!? (also good is the immediate 32.Nxe4) 32...Qa4 33.Nxe4 Qxe4 (on 33...Rad8 he can reply 34.Rxd8 Rxd8 35.Rf3+ Nf4 36.Qh8+ Kf7 37.Nxg5+ Kg6 38.Qxd8) 34.Rf3+ Qxf3 35.gf. Then again, with 25...Qe4 26.Bxh6 Ng6 27.Bg5 Black's position also remains difficult.



1.?

25.Bg5-f6! Qb5xh5 26.Rg3xg7+ Kg8-h8 27.Rg7xf7+ Kh8-g8 28.Rf7-g7+ Kg8-h8 29.Rg7xb7+ Kh8-g8 30.Rb7-g7+ Kg8-h8 31.Rg7-g5+ Kh8-h7 32.Rg5xh5

The "windmill" has ground up a lot of extra material for White.

32...Kg6 33.Rh3 Kxf6 34.Rxh6+ Kg5 35.Rh3 Re8 36.Rg3+ Kf6 37.Rf3+ Kg6 38.a3 a5 39.ba Rxa5 40.Nc4 Rd5 41.Rf4 Nd7 42.Rxe6+ Kg5 43.g3 1-0

A similar case occurred with Anatoly Karpov during his second match against Garry Kasparov in 1985. After ten games the world champion was leading with a score of 5½-4½. And at that point an article titled "Tolya's Million" appeared in the German magazine *Der Spiegel*, describing Karpov's lawsuit against his business partner, who hadn't paid the world champion the royalties he was owed from the sales of chess computers. Karpov had been hoping to keep it all a secret, as in the Soviet era independent business activity without the permission of the authorities wasn't encouraged, to put it mildly. Disclosure of this kind of information threatened him with serious repercussions. So, as Karpov himself tells it in the newspaper Sport Express from March 23, 2001:

From the morning they started harassing me. Gramov called (the chairman of the Sport Committee – M.D.), asking what this story was about. They called from Staraya Square (where the Central Committee of the Communist Party's building was located – M.D.), to inquire how this was possible - a Soviet citizen, and suddenly he has a lawsuit somewhere in Germany... Basically, due to all this song-and-dance I was completely knocked off balance and couldn't play the 11th game properly, of course... The outcome is well known: I tripped up horribly and lost very quickly.

Kasparov-Karpov

Moscow, 1985



21...Rd8-d7?!

In connection with White's reply, which hadn't been taken into account, it would have been more accurate to double the rooks by the route 21...Rc7! 22. Be4 Rcd7, obtaining complete equality (Kasparov).

22.Qa4-g4! Rc8-d8??

Karpov was playing almost as if he wasn't thinking. The position remained approximately equal with 22...Rdd8 or 22...Rd6!?.

23.Qg4xd7! Rd8xd7 24.Re1-e8+ Kg8-h7 25.Bd5-e4+ 1-0

Nevertheless, the chess player is more often unbalanced by events that take place directly on the board. There don't have to be any non-chess distractions by someone (the opponent, the arbiter or the surrounding people). Calmness and self-confidence are sometimes lost as a consequence of an unfavorable opening, unexpectedly strong (or weak) moves by the opponent, one's own errors, and so on. The following game, played by the future grandmaster in an international junior tournament, is a good example. I'll base this on the commentary by Alexei Shirov, and in a number of cases I'll take issue with him.

Lev-Shirov

Lloyds Bank Open 1991



1...?

Shirov thought for a long time, trying to calculate an interesting combination.

15...Ng4!? 16.h3 Nxf2! 17.Kxf2

In the event of 17.Qf3? Black has a pleasant choice between 17...f5!? 18.Qxf2 fe and 17...Ncd3!? 18.Bxd3 Rxc3 19.Qxf2 (19.Kxf2 f5-+) 19...Rxd3-/+.

17...Qb6

Now 18.Ke2? Na4! doesn't work, and it wasn't possible to find anything convincing after **18.Kf3!**, so White played differently.



1...?

Indeed, no good are

a) 18...f5? 19.Nc4 fe+ 20.Kg3 Bf4+ 21.Bxf4 ef+ 22.Kh2+-;

b) 18...Ne6? 19.Nc4 Qg1 20.Ne2!+- (but not 20.Bxh6 Nd4+ 21.Kg3 f5 with an attack);

c) It's more difficult to refute 18...Nxe4?!. I managed to find the only, far from obvious, means of obtaining a decisive advantage: 19.Ndx4 f5 20.Bxh6 fe+ 21.Kg3 Rxc3+ 22.Kh2 Rf2 (22...Qf2? 23.Kh1+-) 23.Kh1 Bxh3 24.g4 Rg3.



1.?

25.Re3!! (weaker is 25.Be3 Rxe3 26.Rxe3 Qxe3 27.Qg4 Qd2 28.Bg2 e3=) 25...Rxe3 26.Qg4! Rf5 27.Bxe3 Qxe3 28.Bg2.

No use is the attempt to simplify the task for himself by the route 19.Ncxe4 f5 20.Nf6+ (better is 20.Nc4 fe+ 21.Kg3, leading the game after 21...Rxc4 22.Bxh6! Rc3+ 23.Kh2 into the variation examined above) 20...Rxf6 21.Nc4 e4+ 22.Kg3.



1...?

Black doesn't play 22...f4+? 23.Kh2 Qf2 24.Nd2! Rc3 25.Kh1+-, but 22... Qg1!. His opponent is forced to execute a series of only moves in order to maintain approximate equality: 23.Bxh6 f4+ 24.Bxf4 Rxf4 25.Bd3! (very bad is 25.Kxf4? Qf2+) 25...Qf2+ 26.Kh2 Rf3! 27.Kh1! (otherwise 27...Rxb3#) 27...Rxd3 (or 27...Bxb3 28.Bf1=) 28.Qe2.

d) 18...Nd3 19.Bxd3 Rxc3 20.Nc4 Qd4 21.Ke2! f5 22.Bxh6 fe 23.Bxf8+-.

Only after the game the future grandmaster found an impressive opportunity to continue the attack: **18...Nd3 19.Bxd3 f5!!**.



Losing is 20.ef? Rxc3 or 20...Bxf5, so it was necessary to go into the variation **20.Nc4! fe+ 21.Kg3 Qf2+ 22.Kh2 Rf3! 23.Kh1! Bxb3 24.Bf1 Bxg2+** (weaker is 24...Bg4?! 25.Nxe4! Qh4+ 26.Kg1 Rxf1+ 27.Rxf1 Bxd1 28.Bxh6, and White retains his material superiority) **25.Bxg2 Qh4+ 26.Kg1 Qf2+**, ending in perpetual check.

So Black's combination led to a forced draw. But, contrary to Shirov's opinion, I think that the continuation he chose in the game was objectively no worse and preserved fully-fledged counterplay for Black.

15...Nc5-d3!?

(?! - Shirov)

A different opportunity: 15...b5 is justified with 16.Nxb5? Bxd2 17.Bxd2?! (17.Qxb2 Ncxe4 18.Qb2=+) 17...Ncxe4-/+ with the threats of 18...Rc5; 18... Nxf2!, or 16.Bxb5?! Bxb5 17.Nxb5 Bxd2 18.Bxd2 Ncxe4 19.Be3 Qd7 unclear.

However, White plays 16.b4! ab (16...Nd3!? 17.Bxd3 Rxc3 18.Qe2+/-) 17.ab Na4?! (17...Nd3) 18.Nxa4 ba 19.h3! with an advantage (but not 19.b5 Ng4 20. Be2? Nxf2! 21.Kxf2 Be3+!, and Black wins).

16.Bf1xd3 Rc8xc3

Black was counting on 17.Nc4 Bxc1 18.Rxc1 Rxc1 19.Qxc1 b5!, and not 20. Nxd6? because of 20...Qb6. If 17.Bc4 (planning 18.Bb2), then 17...Ng4! is strong.

17.Qd1-e2!



And I couldn't find a decent reply. For the remainder of the game my opponent made very accurate moves, while I got into time trouble and played indifferently.

17...Nf6-g4?!

Certainly the decisive mistake. After the correct 17...b5! 18.Bb2 Rc8 19.Nf1 Qb6 the position remained playable.

I think that Black would hardly have been any worse and his opponent would have had to make an accurate move like 20.Bc1= to maintain equality.

17...Nh5 18.g3 f5 was also worthy of attention (or 18...b5).

18.Nd2-c4!

Of course, not 18.h3? Nxf2! 19.Kxf2 Qb6+ 20.Kf1 f5-+.

18...Qd8-h4 19.h2-h3 Ng4xf2

I also considered 19...Bxc1 20.Rexc1 Rxd3, but after 21.hg! Rd4 22.Nxd6 Bxg4 23.f3 White must win.

20.Qe2xf2

No good was 20.Bxh6? Nxd3 21.Qd2 (21.Bxf8 Nf4!) 21...Nxe1 22.Qxc3 Nxc2! 23.Bxf8 Nf4-+.

20...Qh4xf2+ 21.Kg1xf2 Bh6xc1 22.Rb1xc1 Rc3xd3 23.Re1-e3!



This is what I overlooked. White is a pawn down, but his position is almost won, as the black bishop is completely blocked in.

In actual fact, approximate equality has been preserved on the board for now.

23...f7-f5?!

The last chance was certainly 23...Rd4 24.Nxd6 f5 25.Rc7 fe+ 26.Ke1 Bf5.

In the final position of the variation there is evidently nothing for White: 27. g4 Rxd5= or 27.Nxf5 Rxf5 28.Rxb7 Rxd5 29.Rxe4 Rf7=.

Possible also is 23...Rxe3 24.Kxe3 (24.Nxe3 f5 or 24...b5) 24...Rc8 25.Kd2 Kf8 26.Nxd6 Rxc1 27.Kxc1 b5! 28.Kd2 f5! with an unclear minor piece endgame. Weaker is 28...Ke7?! 29.Nb7 a4 30.d6+! Ke6 (better is 30...Ke8) 31. Nd8+ Kxd6 32.Nxf7+ - here White preserves a noticeable advantage.

24.Re3xd3 f5xe4+ 25.Kf2-e3 e4xd3 26.Nc4xd6 Rf8-f4



27.Rc1-c4!?

On 27.Rc7 Black doesn't reply 27...Rd4 28.Kd2 e4 due to 29.Nxe4! Rxe4 30. Rxd7 Rd4 31.Rxb7 Rxd5 32.a4! with the subsequent 33.Rb5, but 27...Bf5! 28. g4 Be4! 29.Nxe4 Rxe4+ 30.Kxd3 Rd4+ 31.Ke3 Rxd5 32.Rxb7 Rd1 33.Ke4 Rh1 with good drawing chances in a rook ending.

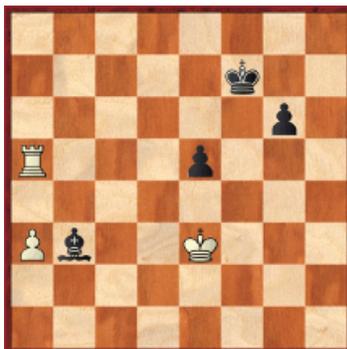
27...d3-d2 28.Ke3xd2 Rf4-f2+ 29.Kd2-e3 Rf2xg2 30.Rc4-c7 Bd7xh3 31. Nd6-e4!



1...?

Even here Black could still fight successfully by preserving the h-pawn: 31... h5! 32.d6 Kf8.

31...Bh3-f5? 32.d5-d6! Kg8-f8 33.Rc7xh7 Rg2-g4 34.Ne4-c5 b7-b6 35.d6-d7 Rg4-d4 36.Rh7-h8+ Kf8-f7 37.d7-d8Q Rd4xd8 38.Rh8xd8 b6xc5 39. Rd8-d5 Bf5-e6 40.Rd5xc5 Be6xb3 41.Rc5xa5



41...Kf7-e6 42.Ra5-b5

With the black king cut off from the passed pawn, the win is achieved without difficulty.

42...Bb3-c4 43.Rb5-b6+ Ke6-d7 44.Ke3-e4 g6-g5 45.Ke4xe5 g5-g4 46.Ke5-f4 Kd7-c7 47.Rb6-b1 Bc4-e6 48.a3-a4 Be6-c8 49.a4-a5 Kc7-c6 50.Rb1-c1+ 1-0

I'll sum up my impressions in brief. Throughout the entire game Shirov mistakenly believed that he was worse, more than once making mistakes in his evaluation of the variations he'd calculated. The reason obviously lies in an emotional breakdown, a sharp deterioration of his mood after his protracted think on move fifteen and his rejection of a tempting combination.

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