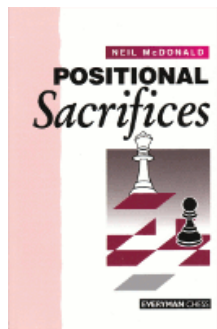




COLUMNISTS

The Instructor

Mark Dvoretsky



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Practicing Positional Sacrifices

The game that we're going to look at now will help you train your ability to find positional sacrifices and orient yourself in situations where there is a material imbalance. In the course of the game you'll be asked several questions, the answers to which I will give you at the end.

Polugaevsky-Timman

Breda 1979, Game Six
Exchange Grünfeld [D87]

1.d2-d4 Ng8-f6 2.c2-c4 g7-g6 3.Nb1-c3 d7-d5 4.c4xd5 Nf6xd5 5.e2-e4 Nd5xc3 6.b2xc3 Bf8-g7 7.Bf1-c4 c7-c5 8.Ng1-e2 Nb8-c6 9.Bc1-e3 0-0 10.0-0 Bc8-g4 11.d4-d5!?

Rejecting the usual 11.f3, White goes for an interesting positional pawn sacrifice.

11...Nc6-a5 12.Bc4-d3 c5-c4 13.Bd3-c2 Bg7xc3 14.Ra1-b1 Bc3-g7

Another possibility was 14...Bxe2!? 15.Qxe2 Qd7. Now winning the pawn back doesn't give him anything 16.Bxa7 Rxa7 17.Qe3 b5 18.Qxc3 Nb7 with mutual chances. In the game Vladimirov-Wegner, Gausdal 1991 16.Rfd1 Rfc8 17.f4 b5?! 18.e5 was played, and Black's position became difficult. Instead of his last move 17...e5 18.de Qxe6 was stronger, and here Evgeny Vladimirov recommends 19.Rb5 unclear, although 19.e5!? looks more logical, with good compensation for the pawn.

Most likely Gata Kamsky played more solidly as Black against Joel Lautier (Paris rapidplay 1992): 15...b6!? (rather than 15...Qd7) 16.f4 e5 17.de fe 18.Rfd1 Qe7 19.e5 Rad8 20.Qg4 (20.Be4 Bb4 21.Qg4 Bc5) 20...Kh8 (20...Bb4 21.Rxd8 Rxd8 22.Rxb4 Qxb4 23.Qxe6+ Kf8 24.Qf6+ Ke8 25.Ba4+ Qxa4 26.Qe6+ led to a forced draw; 20...Nc6!? deserved attention) 21.Qh3 Kg8=.

15.f2-f3 Bg4-d7 16.f3-f4 b7-b5

According to Timman, 16...e6 17.de fe 18.e5 or 17...Bxe6 18.f5 were worse.

17.e4-e5 a7-a6 18.Ne2-c3 Ra8-b8?!

A significant inaccuracy that led to difficult consequences. 18...Rc8 was stronger.



[FEN "1r1q1rk1/3bppbp/p5p1/np1PP3/2p2P2/2N1B3/P1B3PP/1R1Q1RK1 w - - 0 19"]

1) How should White play?

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19.Be3-a7 Rb8-b7 20.Ba7-c5 Rf8-e8 21.Qd1-f3 Rb7-b8 22.Qf3-f2 Qd8-c8
23.Bc5-a7 Rb8-a8 24.Ba7-b6 Na5-b7



[FEN "r1q1r1k1/1n1bppbp/pB4p1/1p1PP3/
2p2P2/2N5/P1B2QPP/1R3RK1 w - - 0 25"]

2) How should White continue?

25.h2-h3 Bd7-f5 26.Nc3-e4 Qc8-d7 27.g2-g4 Bf5xe4 28.Bc2xe4 Ra8-c8 29.
a2-a4 c4-c3!? 30.a4xb5 a6xb5



[FEN "2r1r1k1/1n1qppbp/1B4p1/1p1PP3/
4BPP1/2p4P/5Q2/1R3RK1 w - - 0 31"]

3) Evaluate 31.e6.

31.Rf1-c1

4) How should Black play?

31...Bg7-h6 32.g4-g5 Bh6-g7 33.Qf2-e3

33.Kh2? Rc4 is worse.



[FEN "2r1r1k1/1n1qppbp/1B4p1/1p1PP1P1/
4BP2/2p1Q2P/8/1RR3K1 b - - 0 33"]

5) What should Black do?

33...h7-h6 34.g5xh6 Bg7xh6



[FEN "2r1r1k1/1n1qpp2/1B4pb/1p1PP3/4BP2/2p1Q2P/8/1RR3K1 w - - 0 35"]

6) How should White play?

35.Rc1xc3 Rc8xc3 36.Qe3xc3 Re8-c8

In the event of 36...Bxf4 the move 37.Rf1 leads to a decisive advantage for White. Another tempting move, 37.Qc6?!, is significantly weaker, on which the reply can be not only 37...Qc8!?, unclear, but also the sharper 37...Qxh3!?

38.Qxe8+ Kg7 39.Rb2 Be3+ 40.Bxe3 Qxe3+ 41.Rf2 Qe1+ 42.Rf1 Qe3+ 43.Kh2 Qh6+ 44.Kg2 Qg5+ 45.Kf3 (Black's useful checks have ended, but nevertheless he retains sufficient counterplay, even though he's a rook down!)

45...Qxe5 46.Qc6 (46.Qxb5 Qxe4+! 47.Kxe4 Nd6+ with an equal endgame) 45...Nd6 46.Qc2 Qf6+ 47.Ke2 Qe5=.



[FEN "2r3k1/1n1qpp2/1B4pb/1p1PP3/4BP2/2Q4P/8/1R4K1 w - - 0 37"]

7) How should White continue?

37.Qc3-g3 Rc8-c4 38.Rb1-e1



[FEN "6k1/1n1qpp2/1B4pb/1p1PP3/2r1BP2/6QP/8/4R1K1 b - - 0 38"]

8) How should Black play?

38...e7-e6 39.f4-f5 e6xf5 40.Be4-g2 Bh6-f4 41.Qg3-f2

On 41.Qa3 Black replied 41...b4. After 42.e6 (42.Qa7 is more solid) 42...ba 43.ed a2 an unusual position that is difficult to evaluate could arise, with two bishops for the queen: 44.d6 Rc1 45.Rxc1 Bxc1 46.Bxb7 Be3+! 47.Bxe3 a1Q

+ 48.Kg2 Qb2+ 49.Kg3 Qe5+ (or 49...Qf6).

41...Qd7-e7!

Timman provokes the advance d5-d6, to obtain a favorable situation for him with three pawns for a bishop.

42.d5-d6 Nb7xd6 43.e5xd6 Qe7xd6

Objectively the chances are approximately equal – White should have continued 44.Kh1 or 44.Ba7. Instead of that Polugaevsky carries out an extremely unsuccessful idea: he moves his rook off the first rank, weakening the position of his king.

44.Re1-e8+?! Kg8-h7 45.Re8-d8?



[FEN "3R4/5p1k/1B1q2p1/1p3p2/2r2b2/7P/5QB1/6K1 b - - 0 45"]

9) How should Black play?

45...Bf4-h2+ 46.Kg1-h1 Rc4-c1+ 47.Bg2-f1 Rc1xf1+ 48.Qf2xf1 Qd6xb6 49.Rd8-d5 (49.Rd7 Qc6+)



[FEN "8/5p1k/1q4p1/1p1R1p2/8/7P/7b/5Q1K b - - 0 49"]

10) How should Black continue?

49...Bh2-c7 50.Rd5xb5 Qb6-c6+ 51.Kh1-g1 Bc7-b6+ 52.Kg1-h2 Qc6-c2+ 53.Qf1-g2 Qc2-c7+ 54.Qg2-g3 Bb6-g1+ 55.Kh2-g2 Qc7-c6+ 56.Kg2xg1 Qc6xb5 57.Qg3-h4+ Kh7-g7 58.Qh4-d4+ f7-f6 59.Qd4-a7+ Kg7-h6 60.Qa7-f7 Qb5-e5 61.Kg1-g2 f5-f4 62.Qf7-f8+ Kh6-g5 63.Qf8-c8 f4-f3+ 0-1

Answers

1. White found an excellent way to pin down his opponent's forces on the queenside: 19.Ba7! Rb7 (if 19...Rc8 or 19...Ra8, then 20.Qd4 threatening 21. Bb6) 20.Bc5. The bishop now can't be attacked by either the knight (the b7-square is occupied) or the queen (the e7-pawn is under attack). White intends to reinforce the bishop, though, by putting his queen on the g1-a7 diagonal, and then preparing an attack on one of the flanks.

2. White decided to prepare g2-g4 by playing 25.h3?!. However, a pawn

advance away from his own king gives his opponent future counter-chances. Moreover, Black obtains an opportunity to exchange off a pair of minor pieces, which is desirable in a constrained position.

Already having pinned down the enemy forces on the queenside, it would have been logical to attack there: 25.a4!. Possibly Lev Polugaevsky was disturbed by the reply 25...Nd6!?, but then possible are both 26.Na2!?, transferring the knight to the excellent square b4: 26...Nb7 27.ab ab 28.Nb4 (Timman), and 26.Rfc1!?, intending 27.ed Bxc3 28.de Rxe7 29.Bxg6.

3. The move 31.e6? could be justified with 31...Qd6?! 32.ef+ Kxf7 33.Rxb5. However, Black replies 31...fe! 32.de Qxe6 33.Bxb7 Rb8, achieving a decisive advantage thanks to the vulnerable position of the white bishops. For example, 34.f5 (nothing else is apparent) 34...Qd7 (34...gf 35.gf Qd7 36.f6! Bxf6 37.Qg2+ Kh8 38.Bc6 Qd6 39.Rbd1 Qxd1 40.Rxd1 Rg8 unclear is much less convincing) 35.fg Rxb7-+.

4. Black has to find a way to put pressure on the enemy center. In the game, he decided to provoke a weakness in his opponent's pawn structure by means of 31...Bh6? 32.g5 Bg7 (with a subsequent h7-h6). But that plan was slow and so it didn't achieve its aim (after 33.Qe3 the important c3-pawn was already under attack). Moreover, White could react with 32.Bd4! Rc4 33.Rxc3, winning the pawn back and obtaining an appreciable advantage.

On 31...Rc4!?, follows 32.Bd3. Timman points out the variation 32...Qxd5 33.Bxc4 Qxc4 34.Qd4!+/- (by the way, 34.Qf3?! is weaker due to 34...b4! 35.Qxb7 Qxf4 unclear, but 34.Qf1!+/- is possible). However, the exchange may be sacrificed another way: 32...Rec8! 33.Bxc4 Rxc4 with sufficient counterplay.

Another good solution, that Timman recommends, is to undermine the enemy center 31...f6!?. On 32.f5, follows 32...fe 33.fg Nd6=/. The move 32.d6?! is risky, it's better to parry with the move 32...fe (32...ed 33.e6! unclear), not fearing 33.Qa2+ Kh8 34.Qa7 Qxd6 35.Qxb7 ef-/+ (or 35...c2 36.Rxc2 Rxc2 37.Bxc2 Rb8-/+). If 32.e6, though, then 32...Qd6 33.Rxb5 Qa3 (with a subsequent 34...Nd6), and Black is fine.

5. The logical continuation of the intended plan 33...h6?! should have led to difficult consequences for Black. He had to support the important c3-pawn, even at the price of material losses, and with this aim he could choose one of two combinational continuations.

A) 33...Nd6!! 34.ed ed 35.Rb4! (in the event of 35.Qf3!? Rb8 36.Bf2 b4 37.Bc2 Qb5 unclear the far-advanced pawns on the queenside compensate Black for the absence of a piece) 35...c2 (threatening 36...Rc3) 36.Bd4 Bxd4 37.Rxd4 h6! (intending 38...hg 39.fg Re5) 38.Qf3 (38.gh?! f5) 38...hg 39.fg Qa7 40.Qf2 Re5 counterplay;

B) 33...e6! 34.d6 (34.Rxc3 Rxc3 35.Qxc3 ed unclear) 34...Nxd6! 35.ed e5! (35...Qxd6 36.Rxb5 is worse) 36.Bc7 ef 37.Qxf4 Qxh3 (threatening 38...Be5) 38.Bg2 Qd7 counterplay.

6. The c3-pawn can be eliminated without any punishment: 35.Rxc3!, as 35...Bxf4? 36.Qxf4 Rxc3 37.e6!+- doesn't work. After 35...Rxc3 36.Qxc3 the f4-pawn is again unassailable: 36...Bxf4? 37.Rf1!+-.

7. White didn't play energetically enough: 37.Qg3?!, gradually letting the initiative get into the hands of his opponent.

The impressive queen sacrifice 37.Qc6?! leads to equality in the variation 37...Qxh3!? 38.Qxb7 Bxf4, and with 37...Rxc6 38.dc Qe6 39.Rxb5 (Timman) 39...Nc5!! 40.Bxc5 (40.Rxc5 Bxf4-+) 41...Kg7! 42.c7 (42.Rb8 Qc4 43.Bb6 Qc1+ 44.Kg2 Qxf4-+) 42...Qd7 Black obtains an advantage.

You had to find the counter-attack 37.e6! Qxe6 (37...fe 38.Qg3!+-; 37...Qe8 38.ef+ Kxf7 39.Qg3 Qg8 40.Re1!+/-) 38.de Rxc3 39.Bxb7, for example, 39...Rxb7 40.Bd5! or 39...fe 40.Bg2 with great chances of a win (pointed out by Timman).

8. In the event of 38...Nc5?! 39.Bxc5 Rxc5 40.f5, Black's position is alarming. It's important to prevent the opponent's attacking opportunities e5-e6 and f4-f5, which is achieved with the move 38...e6!. If 39.d6, then 39...Nxd6! 40.ed Qxd6 with fully-fledged counterplay for Black. 39.Qg4 Nc5 doesn't promise White an advantage (the exchange sacrifice 39...Rxe4 40.Rxe4 Qxd5 also deserves attention) 40.Bxc5 Rxc5 41.d6 Qc8!? with the idea of 42...Rc1.

White decided to sacrifice a pawn by playing 39.f5?!, but it didn't bring him the desired result. After 39...ef, nothing comes of 40.e6?! Qd6! 41.Qxd6 Nxd6 42.Bd3 Rc3 43.Bf1 fe (43...Kf8!?!=/+ is even better, evidently) 44.Rxe6 (44.de Bg5=+/) 44...Nc4 (Timman) or 44...Bf4=+/.

9. Timman undertook a simple combination.

45...Bh2+! 46.Kh1 Rc1+ 47.Bf1 Rxf1+ 48.Qxf1 Qxb6 Three pawns for the exchange and the open position of the enemy king secures a decisive advantage for Black.

10. The bishop and the b5-pawn are under attack. It's desirable to choose a bishop retreat with which a capture on b5 would lead to mate or new material losses for White.

49...Bc7! 50.Rxb5 (50.Qxb5 Qf2-+) 50...Qc6+ 51.Kg1 Bb6+ 52.Kh2 Qc2+ 53.Qg2 Not 53.Kh1 because of 53...Bc7 – that's why 49...Bc7! is more accurate than 49...Bb8.

53...Qc7+ Here there are already different paths to the goal; for example, 53...Qc1! (threatening 54...Bc7+) 54.Rxb6 Qc7+.

54.Qg3 Bg1+! 55.Kg2 Qc6+ 56.Kxg1 Qxb5-+ and Black is two pawns up in a queen endgame.

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