



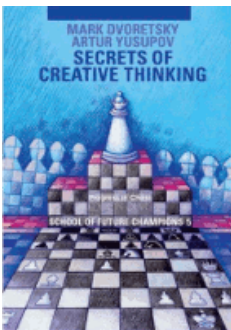
COLUMNISTS

The Instructor

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Lessons from a Loss

For a good commentator, the moves, the variations, the question marks, and the exclamation marks are just an interim, albeit essential stage of the work. His main task is to discover what's hidden behind the moves that were or were not made. On the one hand, it is important to draw readers' attention to the purely chess-related ideas, patterns, and technical methods; on the other, to bring out the battle's psychological background, to shed light on a player's thought processes during the game, to indicate the factors that helped or hindered him in finding the correct solution of the position.

Matthew Sadler is a superb commentator. In the years when he was actively playing chess (for the last few years he has been doing other things), I enjoyed studying his articles and used them in lessons with my students. The example I'm offering for your attention demonstrates the high level of his play as well as the vivid style of his commentary.

Anand – Sadler
Tilburg, 1998



[FEN"4k2r/1pr1bpp1/pq1p1n2/3Pp3/7p/1N3PPB/PPP4P/1K1RQ2R b k - 0 17"]

1...?

Here I started to spend oceans of time, but this time, I really got into the position. White's only clear goal is to play f4 and clear the black pawn from e5. This will allow him to activate his knight on b3 via d4 when Black's kingside light squares will become rather sensitive. Whilst considering the ways to prevent f4 altogether, it suddenly struck me how weak White's pawns would become after f4 ef, gf and how badly developed White was to defend his weak pawns on d5 and f4: his bishop should be on g2, not h3 and his queen has no role on e1. I therefore came up with a quite precise method of exploiting White's positional play. It took me so long to play because I knew that if it all went wrong, I would look like a complete idiot!

17...Ke8-f8! 18.f3-f4 e5xf4 19.g3xf4 Rh8-h5! 20.Bh3-g2 Rc7-c4! 21.Rh1-f1 Rh5-f5 22.Qe1xh4 Nf6-h5 23.Qh4-h3 g7-g6

The f4-pawn is lost and Black has a gorgeous position that is almost completely invulnerable.

Having obtained an overwhelming positional advantage, Matthew then made a crude tactical blunder in time trouble and was forced to settle for a draw.

In this next game, which he lost, besides purely chess-related questions, Sadler also discusses the problems of one's attitude towards the battle and of the rational expenditure of time, which are important for any player. I don't

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think that he'll mind me reproducing his notes. But I'll add a few things to them, of course. (Otherwise this would be Sadler's article, not mine.) On the other hand, my disagreement with some of the commentator's chess evaluations in no way places the main ideas expressed by the English grandmaster in doubt.

Plaskett – Sadler

Hastings, 1998/99

SSicilian Defense [B52]

I have to say that before this game, I became incredibly nervous: if there is one thing I should have learnt by now, it is that in order to win a game, particularly against someone you really feel you should beat, it is necessary not to think about winning. Thinking about the end robs you of the will to concentrate on the means: you don't want to calculate, you get impatient, the slightest flaw in your plan gets you angry and annoyed and liable to force the pace recklessly.

This game is a good example of what can happen – a bad attitude, coupled with my opponent's good play, and suddenly my tournament lurches toward disaster.

1.e2-e4 c7-c5 2.Ng1-f3 d7-d6 3.Bf1-b5+

A harmless "anti-Sicilian" system that I myself have used regularly as white, which, naturally, heightened my interest in this game.

3...Bc8-d7 4.Bb5xd7+ Nb8xd7 5.0-0 e7-e6 6.b2-b3

White intends c2-c4 and d2-d4. With an immediate 6.c4 he has to deal with the reply 6...Ne5!?, so first he takes control of the e5-square.

6...Ng8-f6 7.Qd1-e2 Bf8-e7 8.Bc1-b2 0-0 9.c2-c4 a7-a6

Black played unsuccessfully in the game Dvoretsky – Zilbershtein, USSR Team Championship, Ordzhonikidze, 1978: 9...d5?! 10.e5 Ne8 11.cd ed 12.d4 Nc7 13.Nc3 Re8 14.Rad1+/. In my view 9...e5!? deserves serious attention, not letting the pawn go to d4 and limiting the mobility of the b2-bishop, but for some reason no one has played that way against me.

10.d2-d4 c5xd4 11.Nf3xd4



[FEN"r2q1rk1/1p1nbppp/p2ppn2/8/2PNP3/1P6/PB2QPPP/RN3RK1 b - - 0 11"]

1...?

11...Qd8-b6!

An important finesse. White's most harmonious set-up is to play his knight to c3, his queen's rook to d1 and then either to play f4 and e5 or to switch his rook to the kingside via d3. By preventing Nc3, Black throws a spanner into this plan and gives himself more time to prepare against White's eventual assault.

In the following game my opponent allowed me to position my pieces ideally.

11...Re8 12.Nc3 Qa5 13.Rad1 Rad8 (13...Rac8!?) **14.f4 Nf8 15.Kh1**
 (threatening 16.e5) **15...Qh5 16.Qxh5 Nxh5 17.g3+/-** (17.e5? Nxf4!) **17...
 Nf6 18.Kg2 d5? 19.ed ed** (19...Bc5 20.Na4) **20.Nf5! Bc5** (20...dc? 21.Nxe7+)
21.cd g6?



[FEN"3rnk1/1p3p1p/p4np1/2bP1N2/
 5P2/1PN3P1/PB4KP/3R1R2 w - - 0 22"]

1.?

22.Ne4! Rxe4 (22...Nxe4 23.Nh6#) **23.Bxf6 gf 24.Bxd8 1-0**, Dvoretzky – Sziladi, Budapest, 1978.

12.Kg1-h1 Qb6-c5!? 13.Nb1-d2 Qc5-h5!?

A very careful manoeuvre – having committed White's knight to a passive square, the queen is transferred to the kingside in an attempt to prevent, or at least slow down, White's prosecution of his kingside attack.

In my view Black's idea is dubious – as the queen finds itself in the path of the attacking pawns. 13...Rfe8 14.f4 was more cautious, and now either 14...Bf8, or even 14...Qh5!? (White doesn't have the reply f2-f3).

14.f2-f3 Rf8-e8

14...Ne5 deserved attention.

15.g2-g4



[FEN"r3r1k1/1p1nbppp/p2ppn2/7q/2PNP1P1/
 1P3P2/PB1NQ2P/R4R1K b - g3 0 15"]

How do you annotate a move like this? I think it's rather horrible (why? what else should White do?), but it had a great effect on me – I had planned 15...Qg5 but just as I was about to play it, I started thinking about an interesting sacrifice for White. By the time, I'd stopped thinking, I only had 30 minutes left for the rest of my moves. This is actually the thing that made me so angry after the game – I'm an experienced player, how can I keep on doing things like this?

15...Qh5-g5 16.Rf1-g1

16.f4!? Qxg4 17.Rf3 was what I thought Jim would head for, and it is dangerous. White is looking for Rg1 and then Qg2 and Rh3 – it isn't winning,

but White does have a lot of compensation. I spent a very long time and found some good defences, but I'm not really sure that this is something you should calculate that deeply – at the end of day, either you feel it's OK or you don't. In this sort of position, you will always need more time later.

16...Nd7-e5! 17.Ra1-f1

17.f4 Qxf4 18.Raf1 (18.g5 Nfg4!) 18...Qg5 19.N2f3 Nxf3 20.Nxf3 Qg6! attacks the weak pawn on e4.

17...Ne5-g6 18.Qe2-f2

If 18.f4 Nxf4 19.Qe3 Nh3! and now:



Bxf6 Nxf6 26.Qf3! Nd7 27.Nxd6, with an overwhelming advantage for White.

In the case of 22...Bf8 he had to deal with 23.Bc1! Qg6 24.Nh6+! gh 25.g5 Ng4 (25...hg 26.Rxg5 Nxe4 27.Rxg6+ hg 28.Qf3 f5 29.Qg2!+) 26.gh f5 27.Rfg1 – White preserves a dangerous attack. True, instead of 24...gh?! he can play 24...Kh8!, but the position that arises after, say, 25.e5!? de 26.g5 Nd7 27.Nxf7+ Kg8, looks alarming, and deciding to go into it isn't easy.

It probably makes sense for Black to play a neutral move like 22...b5!?. The response 23.Bc1!? Qg6 isn't bad here either, but now not 24.Nh6+?! gh 25.g5 Nxe4 26.gh any more, because of 26...Ng5, but simply 24.Qf3. White also has an impressive combination at his disposal: 23.Nxg7!? Kxg7 24.Rf5!, but then Black manages to preserve approximate equality by playing 24...ef 25.gf h6! 26.Rxg5+ hg 27.Qh5 Rg8!

Conclusion: the pawn sacrifice 18.f4!? is correct. It seems that both during the game and when commenting on it Sadler overestimated his own position, not sensing the dangers that were threatening him.

18...Ng6-f4

Around here, I started to lose the thread of the game – I think I was starting to get a bit annoyed with my time handling. Black is not better, but he has a very nice Hedgehog position. Maybe 18...Qa5 simply followed by preparing the ...b5 or ...d5 breaks. What I did got me into a terrible tangle.

19.Qe2-e3 Nf6-d7

An unsuccessful move. 19...h6 is preferable, and on 20.Ne2 – either 20...e5 (Plaskett), or 20...Nxe2 21.Qxe2 Qa5.



[FEN"r3r1k1/1p1nbppp/p2pp3/6q1/2PNpNp1/1P2QP2/PB1N3P/5RRK w - - 0 20"]

1.?

20.Nd4-f5!

Oops. Missed that one.

20...e6-e5

20...ef 21.gf is rather tragic for Black, so I have to play ...e5 to cover the g7-square and protect the knight on f4.

21.Rf1-d1 Be7-f8?

"Blunders never come one at a time." He should have played 21...b5+/, with a completely defensible position.

And another tactical blunder: after

22.Nd2-b1

...I had intended 22...d5 which rather tragically fails to 23.Rxd5! as the knight

on f4 is now pinned to the queen on g5. Short of time, I lashed out with:

22...b7-b5?!

and put up very little resistance thereafter. This was another thing I was angry with – I'm usually a pretty tough defender, but there I gave up as if I didn't care. I suppose that if all you were thinking of doing was winning, holding on desperately for a draw just doesn't feel like a goal worth suffering for.

Black's last move allowed his opponent to obtain a strong passed pawn. 22... Nc5+/- was significantly more stubborn, with the idea of putting his knight on e6.

Sadler doesn't comment on the final stage of the game, and I'll also limit myself just to short notes.

23.Nxd6 Bxd6 24.Rxd6 Nf8 25.c5 N8e6 26.Nc3 Nh3 27.Qxg5 Nhxg5 28.c6 Nxf3 29.Rf1 (29.Rc1!+-) 29...Nfd4 (29...Nfg5!?! 30.h4 b4 31.hg bc 32.Bxc3 Rac8+/-) 30.Nd5 Rac8 31.Bxd4 ed 32.Rd7 Rxc6 33.Ne7+ Rxe7 34.Rxe7 h5 (34...h6 is a little more stubborn) 35.gh Rd6 36.Rfxf7 d3 37.Rd7 1-0

So, a very comprehensive victory in the end. And for me, a learning experience. How many will I need? I think that in the rest of my career, I'll probably have quite a few more.

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