



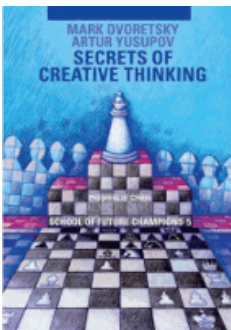
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Mikhail Tal's "Unknown" Game

This is the end of an essay by Genna Sosonko that was published in the third issue of the magazine *New in Chess* for 2011.

"In the summer of 1988, in Moscow after a trip to the U.S., Mikhail Tal showed David Bronstein an 'entertaining game' that he'd played in a simul in California. Seeing the game, David Ionovich insisted that the winner wrote it down in his own handwriting: such pearls shouldn't vanish without a trace.

"Here it is, a never-before-published game, carefully preserved for us by David Bronstein."

Mikhail Tal – N.N.
Los Angeles, 1988

1.e4 e5 2.Nf3 Nc6 3.Bc4 Nf6 4.d4 d6 5.de Nxe4 6.Bxf7+ Kxf7 7.Qd5+ Be6 8.Qxe4 d5 9.Qd3 Be7 10.0-0 Qd7 11.Nc3 Rxf8 12.Re1 Ke8 13.Ng5? Bc5 14.Nxe6 Bxf2+ 15.Kh1 Bxe1 16.Nxf8 Rxf8 17.Bg5 Nb4 18.Qe2 Nxc2 19.e6 Qd6 20.Nb5 Qe5 21.h4 Qg3 22.Rd1 Rf2 23.Qxf2 Bxf2 24.Rxd5 1-0

First a specific note – about the only question mark, which Tal placed after his thirteenth move.



[FEN "4kr1r/pppb1pp/2n1b3/3pP3/8/2NQ1N2/PPP2PPP/R1B1R1K1 w k - 0 13"]

Although the move **13.Ng5** probably isn't the strongest (it made sense to play 13.Bg5!+/-, not fearing 13...Rxf3? 14.Qxf3 Bxg5 15.Qh5+), nevertheless it doesn't let the advantage slip and so it doesn't deserve to be condemned. A real blunder was made a little later.

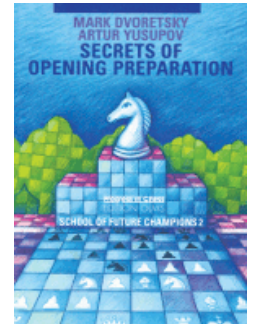
13...Bc5 14.Nxe6 (14.Rf1) 14...Bxf2+ 15.Kh1 Bxe1 16.Nxf8?

A clear advantage was preserved with 16.Nxd5! Ba5, and only now 17.Nxf8 Rxf8 18.Be3! Nxe5 19.Qd4 Nc6 20.Qe4+ Kd8 21.Rd1+/- . After the move in the game, though, the evaluation changes to favor Black.

16...Rxf8 17.Bg5?! (17.Be3=+/) 17...Nb4! 18.Qe2 Nxc2

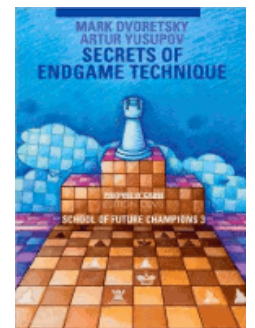
And now – the most important part. I can't speak for the whole game, but I have already been using its brilliant ending for many years as an exercise to play through with my students. My first "training game" against Artur Yusupov as white took place that same year, 1988. Obviously I learned about this combination from some publication or other (Tal didn't show it to me); it's a shame that with all the time that has passed I no longer remember where I got it. Moreover, I even know the name of Tal's opponent.

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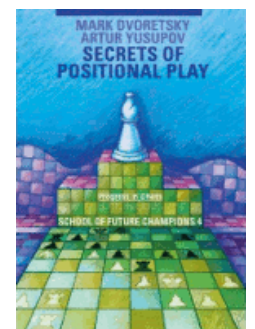
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Tal – Miller
Los Angeles, 1988



[FEN "4kr2/pppq2pp/8/3pP1B1/8/2N5/
PPn1Q1PP/R3b2K w - - 0 19"]

Naturally, before I showed this ending to my students I carefully analyzed it and then checked my conclusions on a computer. I now want to let you know the results of my analysis.

The primitive 19.Rxe1 Nxe1 20.Qxe1 leads to a losing position for White after 20...Qf5! (20...d4!? 21.Ne4 Qf5-/+ isn't bad either).

Tal preferred **19.e6!?**, and here his opponent blundered. Instead of **19...Qd6?** the move 19...Qc6! was much stronger; for example, 20.Rxe1 Nxe1 21.Qxe1 d4+. On 20.Rd1 Black can switch to a favorable endgame for him with 20...Rf2?! 21.Rxd5! Qxd5 22.Qxf2 Bxf2 23.Nxd5 Bb6-/+ . But he gets even more by continuing 20...d4! 21.Kg1 (nothing better is apparent) 21...Rf2! 22.Qh5+ g6+, and the queen has to retreat in defense of the g2-square.

Bearing in mind what's been said, I had to move the start of the training play one move forward. From this point Tal's combination is flawless.



[FEN "4kr2/ppp3pp/3qP3/3p2B1/8/2N5/
PPn1Q1PP/R3b2K w - - 0 20"]

1.?

What should White do? 20...Qe5! is threatened. 21.Rxe1? Nxe1 22.Qxe1 Qe5!-+ is bad.

20.Rc1? Rf2! 21.Qd3 Nb4! 22.Nb5 Qxe6 23.Nxc7+ Kf7-+ is forcibly refuted.

20.Rd1?! is also a mistake. Black only has to avoid the traps: 20...c6? 21.Nxd5! cd 22.Qb5+ Qc6 23.Rxd5 Rf6 (23...Ba5 24.Rc5!+-) 24.Bxf6 gf, and now you can at least switch to an overwhelming endgame, 25.Qxc6+ bc 26.Rd7. But 25.Qd3 is even stronger, planning the impressive variation 25...Nb4 26.Rd8+ Ke7 27.Qxh7+!! Kxd8 (27...Kxe6 28.Qg8+ doesn't help either) 28.e7+ Ke8 29.Qg7!, and Black is defenseless.

The advantage is preserved with 20...d4!?, or, even more simply: 20...Rf2! 21.Rxd5 Rxe2 22.Rxd6 cd 23.Nxe2 h6 – the e6-pawn is lost, and a difficult endgame for White arises.

20.Nc3-b5! Qd6-e5

On 20...Qc6 there is a pleasant choice between 21.Rd1!+- and 21.h4 Bg3 (21...Nxa1?! 22.Qh5+ g6 23.Qxh7+-) 22.e7 Rf5 23.Rf1!+-.

It's harder to refute 20...Qc5!?



[FEN "4kr2/ppp3pp/4P3/1Nqp2B1/8/8/PPn1Q1PP/R3b2K w - - 0 21"]

1.?

21.Rd1? d4! 22.Nxd4 Nxd4 23.Qxe1 Qxg5 24.Rxd4 Qe5! 25.Rd1 Qxe1+ 26.Rxe1 Rf2-+ or 22.h4 Rf2! 23.Nxd4! Rxe2 24.Nxe2 Qd6 25.Rxd6 cd-/+ fails.

Unconvincing is 21.Rc1 Rf2! (but not 21...a6? 22.h3+-) 22.Qd3 (22.Rxc2 Qxc2 23.Qxe1 Rf5 is unclear too) 22...a6! 23.Bh4 (23.Nxc7+ Qxc7 24.Be3! Nb4! 25.Rxc7 Nxd3 26.Bxf2 Bxf2 unclear) 23...Rf8 (23...Qxb5 24.Qxb5+ ab 25.Bxf2 Bxf2 26.Rxc2 Bb6+/- is also possible) 24.Nxc7+ Qxc7 25.Bxe1 Nxe1 26.Rxe1 Qc4 27.Qd1 Ke7=.

Only 21.b4!! Qb6 (21...Bxb4 22.Qh5+ g6 23.Qxh7+-) 22.Rd1! d4 (22...Rf5 23.Rxd5! Rxd5 24.Qh5+ g6 25.Qxh7+-) 23.h4 leads to the aim. On 23...Rf2 (or 23...a6) there follows 24.Qh5+ g6 25.Qxh7 Rf1+ 26.Kh2+-, and, thanks to the inclusion of the moves 21.b4 Qb6, Black has no queen check from e5. And if 23...Bg3, then either 24.Qd3+- (intending 25.Qxg3; 25.Qxh7), or 24.Qh5+ g6 25.Qxh7 Qxe6 26.Nxc7+ Bxc7 27.Qxc7+-.



[FEN "4kr2/ppp3pp/4P3/1N1pq1B1/8/8/PPn1Q1PP/R3b2K w - - 0 21"]

1.?

21.h2-h4!!

21.Rd1?! c6 22.h4 Qb8 unclear is inaccurate.

21...Qe5-g3

The queen is invulnerable because of 22.Nxc7#.

22.Ra1-d1!

Threatening both 23.Rxd5 and 23.Rd3. In the event of 22...c6, the response 23.

Rd3 Qb8 24.Rf3! is decisive.

22...Rf8-f2 23.Qe2xf2!

An elegant finish! It's harder to win with 23.Nxc7+!? Qxc7 24.Qb5+ Qc6 25.Rxd5 Rf6! (I won't bother to give my analysis, which proves that White preserves a decisive advantage here as well).

23...Be1xf2

23...Qxf2 24.Nxc7+ Kf8 25.e7+

24.Rd1xd5 1-0

*Editor's note: [Inside Chess, Vol. 1, Issue #8](#) gives the remaining moves as **24...Qxh4+ 25.Bxh4 Bxh4 26.Nxc7+ Kf8 27.Rf5+ Bf6 28.Rd5 a6 29.Rd7 Nb4 30.Rf7+ Kg8 31.Rxf6 Nc6 32.Rf7 g6 33.e7 1-0***

I gave the grandmasters who were playing this position as white against me half an hour to find the series of best moves, and only a few of them were successful. But Tal, I would remind you, solved this difficult problem in the conditions of a simul on at least twenty-five boards, with no opportunity to think about his moves or accurately calculate the variations. Well, we've just seen one more manifestation of the intuitive genius that helped the grandmaster to correctly determine where to develop an attack and instantly find successful variations that led him to his goal.

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