



C O L U M N I S T S

The Instructor

Mark Dvoretsky

The Chess Cafe***E-mail Newsletter***

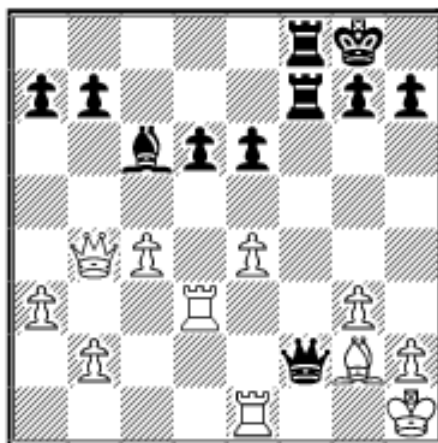
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In Search of Chess Truth

In the games which I prepare as exercises for my students, the published notes more often than not seem unconvincing to me. So I have to analyze them myself, modifying and in some cases totally rethinking the course of play in the game under consideration. But however attentively and seriously the trainer might prepare, during class time my students usually suggest some new and interesting ideas.

I invite my readers to try their strength in a creative attempt to find chess truth. You have before you three impressive episodes from the games of Rudolf Spielmann, which he analyzed in his famous book, *Richtig Opfern!*. You must modify, or in some cases even refute, some of the grandmaster's conclusions. The exercises are very difficult, not intended so much for solving, as for independent analysis (that is, you may move the pieces).



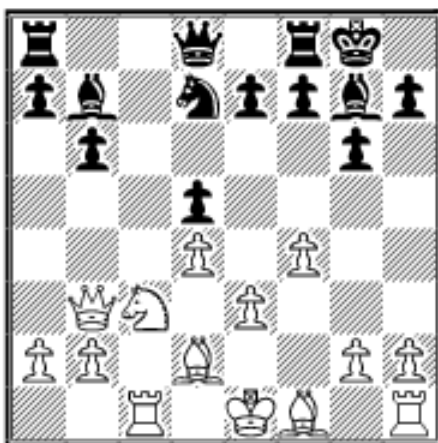
1. Black stands actively, but he must consider the threatened Rxd6. On 23...Qc2, White has a good reply in 24 Rd2; therefore, Spielmann played **23...a5!?**, deflecting White's queen from b4. If 24 Qd2, then 24...Qc5, intending a rook invasion



at f2. White must choose between 24 Qxa5 and 24 Qc3 Qc5 (after protecting the d6-pawn, Black wishes to fix the queen's wing by 25...a4) 25 b4. Which would you prefer?



2. Black to move. Evaluate the consequences of the spectacular center break 17...d5.



3. Black to move. Much as in the previous game, Spielmann decided to break in the center with 12...e5. What do you think of it?

Solutions

1. Rubinstein - Spielmann (San Sebastian, 1912)

The right choice turns out to be the coldblooded pawn snatch.

24 Qb4xa5! Qf2-c2

The move Spielmann intended, as 24...Qxb2 would allow White a more favorable queen exchange by 25 Rd2 Qb3 26 Qb4.

25 Rd3-d2!

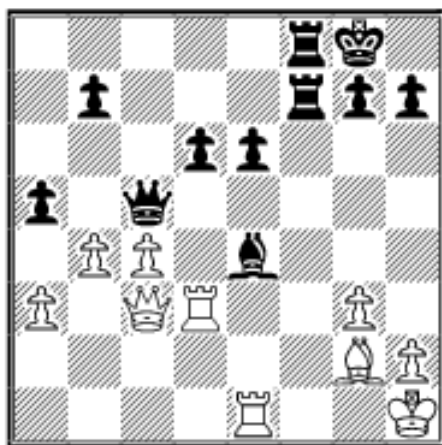
25 Qc3? would be a mistake (as would 25 Rxd6?) because of 25...Bxe4! After 25 Qd2 Qxc4, Black has the unpleasant threat of 26...Rf2.

25...Qc2xc4 26 Rd2xd6!

Right! White loses after 26 Qc3? Rf1+! 27 Bxf1 Rxf1+ 28 Kg2 Qxc3 29 bc Rxe1. But now Black can play neither 26...Rf1+? 27 Bxf1 Rxf1+ 28 Kg2, nor 26...Bxe4? 27 Bxe4 Rf1+ 28 Kg2. White has an extra pawn, and is ready to simplify the position with 27 Rd8.

In the game, Akiba Rubinstein made an unfortunate choice, allowing his opponent to execute a brilliant combination.

24 Qc3?! Qc5 25 b4 Bxe4!!



The queen is of course untouchable, in view of 26...Rf1+ and mates. On 26 Bxe4!?, Spielman gives 26...Rf1+ 27 Rxf1 Rxf1+ 28 Kg2 Rg1+ 29 Kf3 Qh5+ 30 Ke3 Qxh2. "The analysis of this position would make a wholly satisfying study.

From the practical point of view, which is our only guide when examining real sacrifices, only a general assessment of the position is possible; and that assessment, in my opinion, must favor Black. He who would not play Black to win in such a position, can hardly expect to go far in the area of sacrifices." (Spielmann)

Young Sasha Ryazantsev has shown that with 30 Kf4! (instead of 30 Ke3), White can save himself. 30...Qh6+

31 Kg4 is useless to Black; and in the variations 30...g5+ 31 Ke3 Qxh2 32 Qf6! Re1+ 33 Kd4 Qb2+ 34 Rc3 Qd2+ 35 Rd3; 30...e5+ 31 Ke3 Qh6+ 32 Kf3 Qxh2 33 Bd5+ Kf8 34 Ke4 Qe2+ 35 Re3 (35 Kf5? Ke7!) 35...Qg4+ 36 Kd3 Qd1+ 37 Ke4!, or 30...Rc1 31 Qd2! (31 Qxc1 Qh6+; 31 Qb3 Re1!) 31...Rxc4 32 Ke3! Qe5 33 Rd4 Qg5+ 34 Kf3 Qf6+ 35 Ke3, Black must accept a perpetual check.

White also had at his disposal the clever defense 26 Rf3!? (intending to answer 26...Rxf3 with 27 Qxf3!). According to Spielmann's analysis, play might then proceed as follows: 26...ab 27 ab Qc6 28 b5 (28 Rxe4? Qxe4 29 Rxf7 Qb1+) 28...Rxf3 29 Qxf3! Bxf3 30 bc Bxg2+ 31 Kxg2 bc 32 Rxe6 Rf6 33 Re7. Black has an extra pawn in a rook endgame, but White retains drawing chances.

We have now established that, objectively speaking, Black's combination should not have led to a win. But it did set White some very complicated problems, which Rubinstein was not able to cope with.

26 Rxe4? Rf1+ 27 Bxf1 Rxf1+ 28 Kg2 Qf2+ 29 Kh3 Rh1!

29...Qf5+ 30 Kg2 would have been pointless. Now, however, Black threatens that check, since the king can no longer retreat to g2, because then the queen mates at f1. White is lost, in spite of his extra rook.

30 Rf3 Qxh2+ 31 Kg4 Qh5+ 32 Kf4 Qh6+ 33 Kg4 g5! 34 Rxe6 (there is no other defense against 34...Qh5#) **34...Qxe6+ 35 Rf5** (35 Kxg5 h6+ 36 Kf4 Re1! doesn't help) **35...h6** (intending Kh7-g6; another way to win was 35...Qe4+ 36 Kxg5 h6+ 37 Kf6 Re1!) **36 Qd3 Kg7 37 Kf3** (37 Qd5 h5+ 38 Kf3 Rf1+) **37...Rf1+ 38 Qxf1 Qxf5+ 39 Kg2 Qxf1+ 40 Kxf1 ab 41 ab Kf6 42 Kf2 h5**

White resigned.

2. Mieses - Spielmann (3rd Match Game, Regensburg 1910)

In the game, after **17...d5**, White resolved to accept all the material his opponent was sacrificing: **18 ed Bxd5!! 19 cd Qxd5**. Commenting on this situation, Spielmann wrote:

“Now we can assess the results of the sacrifice: Black is a piece down (the doubled pawn can hardly be taken into account!); however, thanks to the two open central files, he has considerably outstripped his opponent in development; his threats against the d3 bishop and the g2 pawn prevent White from castling; indeed, White must lose yet another tempo, unless he wishes to play 20 Bxh7+ and 21 0-0, settling for complete equality. It is most improbable that White would not try to refute the sacrifice; consequently, Black can count on a powerful attack against the stranded enemy king in the center. Such, approximately, were the considerations, based upon which I decided to sacrifice. Only an incontrovertible belief in the strength of my position and the irrefutable principles of development drove me to this sacrifice, since I know of no similar example, even today, of such a breakthrough. I believed that, despite his extra piece, White would find it very difficult to defend against a preponderance of force, even a preponderance in only a limited area of the board, and that this circumstance would at the very least lead to the loss of several of White’s pawns. The game’s further course shows - at least from a practical standpoint - that my suppositions were entirely correct.”

20 Qg3 Rfe8+ 21 Be2 Rbd8 22 Nc3 (22 Kf1 Rxe2+! 23 Kxe2 Qc4+! 24 Ke1 Re8+) 22...Qd2+ 23 Kf1 Nd5

“Stronger than 23...Qxb2. In such positions, pawns should only be taken if one is going to that square anyway. All one’s thoughts must be concentrated on the attack.” (Spielmann)

24 Re1 Nxf4 25 Qf2 Rd4 26 g3 Nh3 27 Qf5 Qxb2 28 Qxh3?

According to Spielmann, the main line was 28 Nd1! Qd2! 29 Qxh3 Rde4 30 Nf2! Rxe2 31 Rxe2 Qxe2+ 32 Kg2 h5!, giving rise to an unclear position, with mutual chances.

28.. Qxc3 29 Qf5 Rde4! 30 Qf2 Qd2 31 Rg1 R4e6 32 Rg2 Rf6 33 Bf3 Rxe1+. White resigned.

Thus we see that the sacrifice objectively did not promise Black any advantage. In fact, it’s not too hard to demonstrate that it should have left him with the worse position.

17 ...d6-d5?! 18 e4-e5! Nf6-e4

18...dc 19 Bc2 is bad too.

19 Qh4xd8 Rf8xd8



Spielmann considers this position to be in his favor, due to his opponent’s lag in development. This is not true - the most important factors in this position are the gaping holes in Black’s pawn structure.

20 b2-b3 f7-f5 21 c4xd5 Be6xd5 22 Nd1-e3 Bd5-e6 23 Bd3xe4 f5xe4 24 Ra1-c1

And here, Black clearly faces an uphill struggle to draw.

Instead of the spectacular, but objectively not quite correct sacrifice, Spielmann could have begun a straightforward plan of exerting pressure on the enemy center by **17...Re8! 18 0-0 Bd7**, for example: 19 Nc3 (19 e5 de 20 fe Rxe5 21 Rxf6 Qxf6 22 Qxh7+ Kf8 does not work) 19...Rxb2 20 e5 Bc6! 21 Nd5 Bxd5 22 cd de 23 fe Qxd5, and Black wins.

White could defend by **19 Re1 Bc6 20 Nf2** (when 20...Rxb2? fails to 21 e5); but in that case, Black would obviously have an outstanding position.

3. Grünfeld - Spielmann (Sopron 1934)

Black has a lead in development; hence, his desire to open the game as quickly as possible, in order to create an attack on the enemy king, stranded in the center, is strategically wholly justified. But it should have been brought to life by somewhat different means. A very strong idea, not mentioned in any of the commentaries, is **12...g5!** What does White do now? On 13 g3 gf 14 gf e5! - this blow is now much stronger than it was in the game. On 13 fg, Black also plays 13...e5! And finally, on 13 Bd3 gf 14 0-0, Black does best, not to accept the pawn sacrifice, but once again, to play the now universal reply 14...e5! In all these rather simple variations, the destruction of White's pawn structure is achieved free of charge, without a piece being sacrificed, in contrast to the game.

Let's see what the immediate central break leads to.

12...e7-e5!? 13 f4xe5 Nd7xe5! 14 d4xe5

If the piece is not accepted, 14 Be2 Nc4 gives Black an obvious advantage.

14...d5-d4!



“The opening of lines must be carried through right to the end.

In commenting on this game for a chess magazine, I made the following note to this position: ‘The correctness of the knight sacrifice cannot be shown analytically; and in a

correspondence game, the sacrifice might have been refuted. But in an over-the-board contest, with a time limit of 18 moves per hour, it would nearly always end successfully.’

This underscores the point of view of a chess pragmatist, which I have emphasized repeatedly in this book.

If every sacrifice is required to show unquestionable, analytically provable correctness, then we would have to erase from the game of chess every element of risk. This, however, would lead to the rejection of all real sacrifices, leaving only the pseudo-variety, which, strictly speaking, cannot be considered sacrifices at all.” (Spielmann)

The thoughts of a grandmaster on the theme of acceptable risk in practical play are instructive and interesting. However, we should not accept them unquestioningly. In the first place, times have changed, and the technique of defense has grown considerably. Many decisions which, just a few decades ago, could have been considered correct from a practical standpoint, would be labeled dubious by modern grandmasters. And in the second place, sometimes it really does make sense to go into irrational complications when there exists no

good and safe alternative; but in this instance, as we have seen, such an alternative did in fact exist.

15 e3xd4!

It is strange that this natural move was not the one played. Grunfeld was afraid of the intermediate check 15...Qh4+. “However, the queen check is not the strongest continuation, since after Kd1 and Kc2 White threatens to escape with his king.” (Spielmann)

15...Qd8xd4 16 Nc3-e2!

16...Qxe5 is now met by 17 Bc3; 16...Qh4+ 17 Qg3 is also useless. In my view, Black does not have sufficient compensation for the sacrificed piece, and his attack will be beaten off.

Now let's see how the game went.

15 Nd1? Bxe5 16 e4 Bxe4

White has avoided the opening of the d-file, but at a steep price. The attack continues anyway, and now his opponent has two pawns for the piece. Thus, the amount of risk he is subjected to is commensurately less.

17 Nf2 Bd5 18 Qh3 Qe7 (for now, it makes no sense to lose time capturing the a-pawn) **19 Be2?**

This appears to be the decisive oversight. White hopes to castle, but he never gets the chance. 19 Kd1 was better, meeting 19...Bxa2 with 20 Bc4.

19...d3!! 20 Nxd3 Rfe8 21 Kf1 (21 0-0 Bd4+) **21...Bxb2!**

Spielmann believes that he could have recovered the piece here by 21...Bc3 22 Bxc3 Qxe2+ 23 Kg1 Re3 (he

didn't like the position after 24 Re1 Rxh3 25 Rxe2 Rxd3 26 a3), but this would have been a mistake, in view of 24 Nf4!

22 Re1 Qf6+ 23 Nf2 (23 Bf3 Bc4! is bad) **23...Bd4 24 Qg3 Re4!**

This is more exact than 24...Re5 25 Bd3! Now on 25 Bd3 Rg4! decides; on 25 Qf3 Rxe2! is sufficient - if then 26 Qxe2 Bc4! And finally, after 25 Bf3 Bc4+ 26 Kg1 Rxe1+ 27 Bxe1 Re8, any retreat from e1 by the bishop allows 28...Bf2+.

25 h4 Rae8 (threatening 26...Rxe2) **26 Bb5 Rxe1+ 27 Bxe1 Re3!** (27...Rxe1+ 28 Kxe1 Bxf2+ 29 Qxf2 Qa1+ also wins) **28 Qg5** (28 Qb8+ Kg7 29 Bb4 Bc5! 30 Bxc5 Qa1+) **28...Rxe1+ 29 Kxe1 Qxf2+ 30 Kd1 Bxg2 31 Re1 Bf3+ 32 Be2 Bc3! 33 Bxf3 Qxf3+ 34 Kc2 Bxe1** White resigned

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Translated by Jim Marfia

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