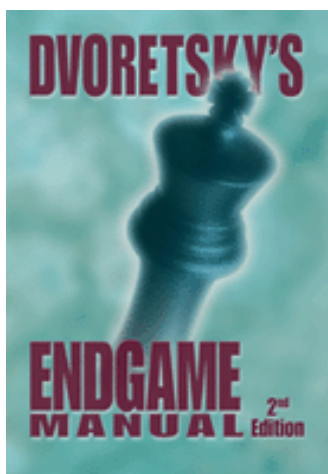




COLUMNISTS

The Instructor

Mark Dvoretsky



Patient Defense

Writing about active defense is much easier than writing about its counterpart. In my collection of works, there are more than a few examples of the former, taking up the entire final quarter of my book, *School of Chess Excellence 2 – Tactical Play*. But the situations where one side is forced to accurately secure his position and just ward off immediate threats, unable to alter the course of the struggle flowing continuously against him – that's not much fun to watch, and hence not very attractive to the reader. But such cases occur repeatedly in every player's practice – which means they should be studied, too.

Another problem is that when we defend bad positions our choices are, as a rule, limited – there are times when we seek out and play “only” moves. This in turn means that everything depends upon concrete calculation. So does this give us grounds for generalization – can the rules of alertness help us in making our decision?

In fact, the best advice here is to look at well-played examples of stubborn defense, to get a sense of the sort of problem confronting the weaker side and to accumulate some useful experience. And yet, there are some general principles that can help us. It's worth recalling the counsel of one of the greatest defensive specialists in all of chess history: the second World Champion, Emanuel Lasker.

Opposed to the strategy of attack is the strategy of defense established by Steinitz. The side with the inferior position must give ground. But, in accordance with the principle of economy, he must make only the most insignificant, and only the most necessary retreats – and not a jot further. This comprises the inner esthetic principle of defense.

In order to hinder the opponent's attack as much as possible, the defender should not wait for the situation to become critical; he should strive to eliminate the major weaknesses of his position. And on the whole, he must seek to lay down so much resistance at each point that the “line of least resistance” will be almost impossible to reach. If Steinitz's rules bring success to an attacker, then inescapable logic dictates that his defensive rules must lead to success as well.

The following two examples are presented in the classic work, *Lasker's Manual of Chess*.

Steinitz – Golmayo



White's king is exposed, but he does have an extra pawn. How can White save this position? By strengthening his weak points: c2 and g2. Additionally, the knight at d3 blocks the d2-pawn, whose function is to defend the advanced pawn at e4. Thus, Steinitz's move in this position is, without a doubt, correct.

1.Nd3-e1!

Black tried to forestall d2-d3 by tactical means, but his combination encountered a simple refutation.

1...Nc6-b4? 2.a2-a3

Of course not 2.d3? Nxc2!.

2...Rh8-e8? 3.a3xb4 Nf6xe4 4.Qf4-f5+!

The queen gets out of danger with gain of time. White went on to realize his extra piece (although, with the king stuck in the center, this is still no easy task).

Undoubtedly, Steinitz was absolutely correct in retreating his knight to e1. Nevertheless, the starting position here looks difficult for White: his opponent has an overwhelming lead in development, and excellent attacking prospects against the king stranded in the center. In such situations, even the best defensive move cannot alter the assessment – it can only create maximum difficulties for the opponent. Let's look for a stronger reaction from Black.

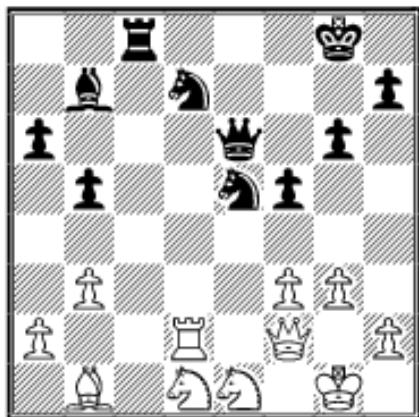
Of course, the e4-square is the weakest link in the white king's cover. But an immediate attempt to break through here would not be effective. After 1...Nxe4?! 2.Nxe4 Rhe8 3.d3 Nb4 (threatening 4...Nxc2), the variation 4.c3?! Qd7 5.cb f5 leaves Black still holding a dangerous initiative; however, White has the more accurate 4.Qf3! or 4.Qf5+! Kb8 5.c3. And on 3...Qd7!?, he has 4.Kd1.

Worth consideration is a hard move to spot – the prophylactic 1...Ba5!?, increasing the pressure on the e4-pawn and directed against d2-d3. 2.Nf3 Qc5 would be bad. White's best way out would have been the immediate return of his extra pawn by 2.d3! Bxc3 3.bc Qxc3 5.Rb1 Rhe8 (4...Nd4+ 5.Kd1 Nxc2? fails against 6.Bb2!+-) 5.Bb2=/+.

Vadim Zvjagintsev suggested a more dangerous plan: **1...g6!**, with which Black prepares to break in the center by f7-f5. A sample line: 2.d3 Nh5 3.Qh4 (3.Qxf7 Rhf8 4.Qe6+ Kb8) 3...f5, with a powerful attack; or 2.Rf1 Nxe4 (2...Nh5 3.Qxf7 Qd6! would be equally strong) 3.Nxe4 Rhe8 4.Kd1 (4.d3 f5) 4...Rxe4 5.Qxf7 Ne5! 6.Nf3 Qe3! 7.Qe6+ Kb8 8.Re1 Ng4 9.Rxe3 (9.Qxg4 Qxe1+ 10.Nxe1 Rxc4) 9...Nxe3+ 10.Ke2 Rxe6, and realizing the exchange plus will not be difficult for Black.

Steinitz – Lasker

USA/Canada 1894, 18th match game



Black threatens 33...Bxf3 (or 33...Nxf3+) 34.Nxf3 Nxf3+ 35.Qxf3 Qe1+ and 36...Qxd2, when good advice is hard to come by for White.

33.Qe3? is not a defense against 33...Bxf3!

After 33.Rc2? Rxc2 34.Bxc2 Qc6, the f3-pawn cannot be defended: 35.Kg2 Nxf3 36.Nxf3 Ne5.

After 33.Kg2? Nxf3! 34.Nxf3 Ne5, the pin on the knight, coupled with the threat of a rook invasion at c1, decides the outcome: 35.Re2 Rc1 or 35.Rd3 Nxf3 36.Rxf3 Rc1.

In reply to 33.Ne3, the simplest would be attacking the knight by 33...Rc3. Another way could be 33...Rc1 34.Rd1 Rxd1 35.Nxd1 Qd5 (35...Qc6; 35...Nxf3+ 36.Nxf3 Qc6), and Black comes out a pawn up.

The line 33.Re2? Rc1 34.Bc2 Qd5 leaves Black with too many threats.

Steinitz finds the only way to hold this position.

33.Kg1-f1! =/+

The king neutralizes the enemy queen by covering its invasion squares on the e-file. In addition, it gets out of the danger zone on the kingside. Now, if Black's queen goes to c6, White has the additional defensive resource f3-f4. Meanwhile, White would like to continue 34.Qe3 or 34.Rc2.

Of course, the first thing to be considered must be the rook invasion 33...Rc1. This can be met either by 34.Bd3 followed by Be2, providing maximum protection of all his weaknesses; or by 34.Bc2 (intending to continue 35.Qe3) 34...Qc6 35.Qd4! (but not 35.Qe3? Nxf3), intending 36.Qb2, without fearing 35...Nxf3 36.Qxd7 Nxd2+ (36...Nxe2+? would be bad: 37.Ke2 Rxc2 38.Qd8+) 37.Qxd2 Qh1+ 38.Ke2.

The game continued: **33...Rc5 34.Qe3 Rd5 35.Rxd5 Qxd5 36.Nc3 Qc6 37.Kf2** (37.f4!?) **37...Kg7 38.Ne2**, and White achieved the draw.

For our analysis of the next game, we will again be relying on Lasker's commentary – from his book about the second world championship match between Alexander Alekhine and Efim Bogolyubow.

Alekhine – Bogoljubow

Germany 1934 8th Match Game

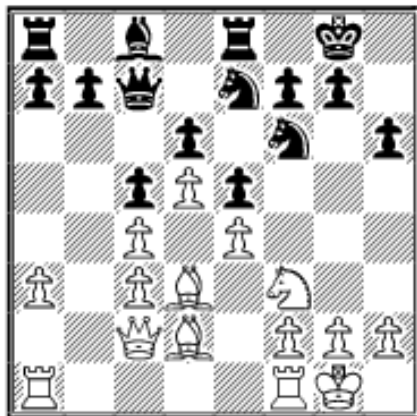
1.d4 Nf6 2.c4 e6 3.Nc3 Bb4 4.a3 Bxc3+ 5.bc c5 6.Nf3!?

We no longer play this way; the usual continuations are 6.f3 and 6.e3.

6...0-0 7.Bg5 d6 (7...Qa5!? 8.Qc2 Ne4 9.Bd2 f5 – Nimzovitch) 8.Qc2 Re8 9.e4 h6 10.Be3

Lasker considers both 10.Bh4 e5 and 10.Bf4 cd 11.ed e5 inferior.

10...Qa5 11.Bd2 e5 12.Bd3 Nc6 13.0-0 (13.h3!?) 13...Qc7 14.d5 (14.Be3) 14...Ne7



White is in difficulties. The center is closed; and as a consequence, the knights are now stronger than the bishops.

15.Nf3-h4?!

The psychological consequence of Alekhine's realization of the weaknesses of his position is the rising in him of a thirst for aggression. Patient defense is not for him, if he sees any sort of chance to create an attack. But sound strategy often requires respect for the will

and strength of the adversary to shore up his weaknesses and rid himself of the defects in his position.

The correct plan of play here would have been Kg1-h1, Nf3-g1, and then g2-g3, f2-f3 and Rf1-f2. In this way, all the squares on the kingside would have been defended, all the way up to the 4th rank. If Black prepares an attack with f7-f5, then White can either play f3-f4 himself, or take the f5-pawn. White must accept the fact that it is Black who holds the initiative; attempts to seize the initiative oneself have the least likelihood of success.

Lasker's recommended strategy is undoubtedly best, but in such positions a slightly different layout – Nf3-e1, f2-f3, g2-g3, and Ne1-g2 – is more commonly employed.

15...g7-g5 16.Nh4-f5

The piece sacrifice with 16.f4?! is most likely incorrect.

16...Ne7xf5!

The bishop must be preserved, both for attack and defense.

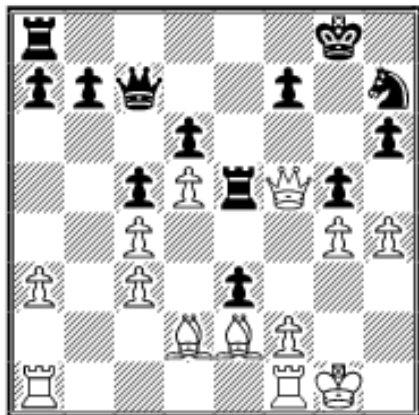
17.e4xf5 e5-e4 18.Bd3-e2 Bc8xf5 19.h2-h4 Nf6-h7 20.g2-g4

White embarks upon a desperate counterattack.

Black should not fall for 20...Bg6? 21.h5, as he has the strong counterblow...

20...e4-e3! 21.Qc2xf5 Re8-e5

21...ed 22.Bd3 was clearly weaker.



22.Qf5-d3

Nimzovitch correctly recommended here (in the Amsterdam Telegraaf of April 25, 1934) 22.Qxe5 de 23.Bxe3 as a strategy which, in this desperate situation, might have done the most to hinder Black's victory. In addition to 22...de, Black could also quite properly take the pawn: 22...ef+ 23.Rxf2 de, keeping an indisputable advantage.

Nimzovitch's suggested positional queen sacrifice is one of the techniques of active defense. It's hard to decide whether it would have given White greater practical chances than the game continuation.

22...e3xd2 23.Qd3xd2 Ra8-e8 24.Be2-d3 Qc7-e7

Seizing the only open file guarantees Black a great advantage.

25.Bd3-f5

If 25.f4, then 25...Re3! 26.Bxh7+ Kxh7 27.fg hg-/+.

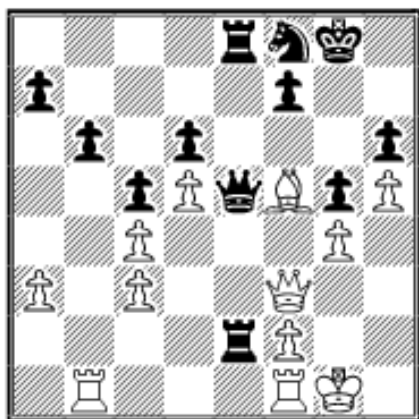
25...Re5-e2 26.Qd2-d3 Nh7-f8

Threatening 27...gh.

27.h4-h5 Qe7-e5 28.Ra1-b1 b7-b6

It would be premature to play 28...Qf4, as 29.Rxb7 R8e3 30.Qxe3 Rxe3 31.fe Qxe3+ 32.Kg2 gives White the strong threat of 33.Be6. But now Black really does threaten 29...Qf4.

29.Qd3-f3



29...Qe5-f6?!

Black should have played 29...Ra2!, preventing a3-a4-a5, and intending to continue 30...Qe2. 30.Rfe1? Qxe1+ 31.Rxe1 Rxe1+ 32.Kg2 Rxa3 33.Qg3 Re5 would be hopeless for White. On 30.Ra1, there follows: 30...Qe2 31.Qg3 (after 31.Qxe2 Rxe2, Black threatens 32...Rxf2, and 32.Rxa2 Rxa2 33.Re1 Rxa3 34.Re8 Rxc3 35.Rd8 Rxc4 offers no saving chances) 31...Rxa1 (but not 31...R8e5?, as Lasker recommended in his

book, because of 32.Bd3 Qd2 33.Rxa2 Qxa2 34.f4) 32.Rxa1 Re5 (32...Qxc4 is worse: 33.Qxd6 Qxc3 34.Rf1) and White's position remains difficult.

30.a3-a4 Kg8-g7?

Time-pressure takes its toll; Black is playing without a concrete plan. Here, too, 30...Ra2 was correct, not just in order to take a pawn, but also preparing to bring the knight out to d7 (since the immediate 30...Nd7?! is useless, in view of 31.Kg2).

31.Qf3-d3 Re8-e7 32.Rb1-a1 Qf6-e5 33.a4-a5 Nf8-d7 34.Qd3-f3 Qe5-f6?!

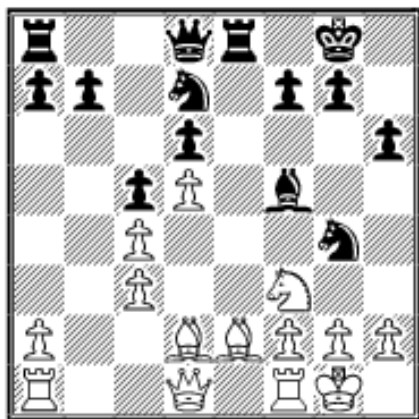
34...ba 35.Rxa5 Nb6 36.Bd3 Rd2 was worth considering, although White can still hang on after 37.Rc1.

35.a5xb6 Nd7xb6 36.Ra1xa7 Nb6xc4 37.Ra7xe7 Re2xe7

With a series of exchanges, Alekhine increased his saving chances. The game was eventually drawn.

Lipnitsky – Averbakh

Minsk 1952, XX USSR Championship Semi-Final



The pawn structure is about the same as in the previous example. White stands worse. The enemy pieces are more actively placed, and Black's threat is to activate them further by Qf6, Re7, and Rae8. The c4-pawn is vulnerable, which will become especially acute if the light-squared bishops are exchanged.

White's first priority must be to shore up his weaknesses; only afterward can he begin to think about creating counterplay.

14.Nf3-e1!?

14.Bf4!? Qf6 15.Bg3 was worth consideration. 15...Qxc3?! 16.Rc1! Qb2 17.Nh4 Rxe2 18.Nxf5 and 19.Nxd6 would cost Black the initiative. On 15...Re7, White can trade off the bishops: 16.Nh4! Nge5 17.Nxf5. Black keeps the better game by continuing 15...Nge5! 16.Nxe5 Nxe5, with 17...Re7 to follow.

14...Ng4-f6?!

On 14...Nge5, White can drive the enemy pieces back by 15.g4! Be4 16.f3 Bh7 17.f4!. In this variation, we see why it is important that the white knight on e1 covers the weak square d3.

However, instead of the modest knight retreat, Black had the much more dangerous sortie 14...Qh4!. For example: 15.Nf3 Qf6; 15.h3 Nge5 16.f4 Ng6 17.Bd3 Bxd3 (or 17...Qf6) 18.Nxd3 Nb6; 15.Bf4 Nge5 16.Bg3 (16.Qd2!?) 16...Qe4! – in all cases, with advantage to Black.

15.f2-f3!

White must take the e4-square away from Black.

15...Nd7-e5 16.Rf1-f2

White has covered all his vulnerable center squares and is now ready to show some initiative on the kingside by g2-g4, Ng2 (or Rg2), h2-h4 – the h6-pawn will serve as a “hook” to help White eventually open lines on the kingside.

16...Qd8-a5 17.g2-g4 Bf5-d7 18.a2-a4!

Black threatened b7-b5, breaking up White’s center. This had to be prevented.

18...Re8-e7



Here, White had to continue with his plan of strengthening his position by 19.Ng2! Rae8 20.Bf1, getting his pieces out from under the e-file threats and intending 21.Qc2 followed by Nh4-f5. By being too hasty about preparing active operations on the kingside, White once again allowed “holes” to appear in his position.

19.Rf2-g2? Ne5-g6

On the immediate 19...Rae8, Black apparently feared 20.g5 hg 21.Bxg5; and if 21...Ng6 then 22.Qd2=/+.

20.Be2-d3 Ra8-e8 21.Qd1-c1?

Clearly an oversight. 21.Bxg6 fg 22.g5 hg 23.Rxg5 was preferable, but here, too,

White's position would be difficult after 23...Qa6!, when Black exploits the absence of the light-squared bishop, which was defending the weak pawn at c4.

21...Ng6-f4! 22.Bd3-f1

No better was 22.Bxf4 Rxe1+ 23.Qxe1 Rxe1+ 24.Rxe1 Qxc3 25.Rd2 g5 26.Be3 Bxa4+.

22...Nf4xg2 23.Ne1xg2 Nf6-h7

Slightly more accurate was 23...Bc8 followed by Nd7.

24.h2-h4 Nh7-f8 25.Bd2-f4 Qa5-c7 26.h4-h5 Bd7-c8

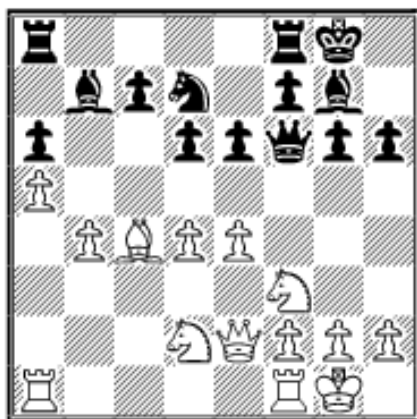
And Black realized his exchange plus.

A common story – at first Isaak Lipnitsky defended his weaknesses accurately, but at some point he lost patience, which immediately brought his defenses crashing down.

Our concluding example is our most nuanced and interesting. Do you recall the famous case of the hidden doubling of the black rooks on e7 and e8 behind the pawn on e6, in the last game of the second Karpov – Kasparov match? Well, what Ulf Andersson does here is even more “twisted” – he hides his rooks in the corner of the board behind his own a6-pawn. As the game went, the Swedish GM's defensive plan triumphed completely – later analysis even confirmed the correctness of his idea.

Botterill – Andersson

Hastings 1978/79



Black's position is difficult. The first thing to be done is to take measures against the threat of 16.b5 (after 16...ab 17.Bxb5, White's pawn goes on to a6).

15...Ra8-a7!

Now on 16.b5?!, there is 16...Rfa8!! and the a5-pawn becomes a weakness.

16.Qe2-e3 Qf6-e7 17.Ra1-a2

White is still thinking of playing b4-b5, but he should have switched to play on the c-file by 17.Rac1, intending Bb3. At the same time, he would prevent the break c7-c5, threaten his opponent with d4-d5, and take away the c6-square from the enemy bishop. On the other hand, it does not appear that he would have had any significant advantage. Here's a sample line: 17...Rfa8! 18.Bb3 Nf6 19.Ba4 d5! 20.e5 Ne4 21.Rb1 Nxd2 22.Nxd2 Bc8 23.Nb3 Bd7. In the final position,

Black retains counterchances thanks to the possibility of attacking the b4-pawn along the b-file.

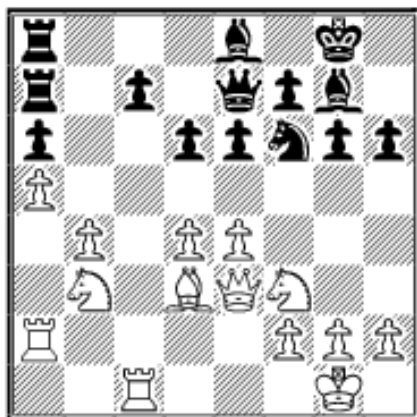
17...Rf8-a8!!

This is, of course, only a temporary spot for the rook. By defending his other rook, Andersson frees the eighth rank for maneuvers by his other pieces, and prepares for c7-c5. For example, 18.Rc1 c5 19.dc?! bc 20.Bb3 cb 21.Rc7 Qd6 22.Rac2 Bc3. Alternatively, White could retain the upper hand here, by playing simply 19.bc dc 20.Be2 cd 21.Nxd4, so it's unclear whether he should be in such a hurry to play this break.

18.Nd2-b3?!

This parries the idea c7-c5, but grants Black the possibility of carrying out a favorable regrouping of forces.

18...Nd7-f6 19.Bc4-d3 Bb7-c6! 20.Rf1-c1 Bc6-e8



Black's bishop now controls the b5-square, but, more importantly, it isn't underfoot of its own rooks, which are now ready to attack White's only weakness – the b4-pawn – along the b-file. Plus the c7-pawn is safely defended by its heavy pieces along the rank.

21.h2-h3 Ra7-b7 22.Qe3-e1 Qe7-d8

Threatening 23...Qb8.

23.Nb3-a1 Bg7-f8!

Andersson maneuvers his pieces excellently along the seventh and eighth ranks. He is ready to meet White's intended Nc2 with the break c7-c5.

24.Na1-c2 c7-c5

The "taut trampoline" now releases. In pursuit of a vanishing initiative, Botterill sacrifices a pawn, but obtains no real compensation for it.

25.d4-d5?

White could have retained rough equality by 25.bc dc 26.e5 Nd5.

25...e6xd5 26.e4xd5 Nf6xd5 27.b4xc5 Rb7-e7 28.Qe1-d2 d6xc5 29.Bd3-c4 Nd5-c7 30.Qd2xd8 Ra8xd8 31.Nc2-e3 Kg8-g7 and Black realized his extra pawn.



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