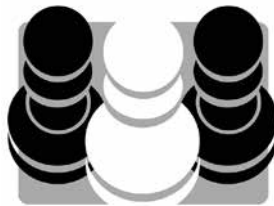


The Woodpecker Method 2

By

Axel Smith

To Henry



Quality Chess
www.qualitychess.co.uk

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Foreword by Hans Tikkanen

Wow! The amount of hours and the dedication that must have been put into this book...

When the prospect of writing a second Woodpecker book arose after the success of the first one, my initial thought was that it should contain positional rather than tactical exercises. I soon realized that it was likely to be a harder and more time-consuming project than the first volume.

Despite a part of me really wanting to be involved in *The Woodpecker Method 2*, I decided for practical reasons that it was better not to involve myself. I think everyone involved is thankful for that – the fact that it took me months just to write this short preface is an indication of how severely delayed the book might have been!

Having read Axel's preface and looked through some of the exercises and solutions, I can see that a tremendous amount of work has been done to provide both the quality and quantity of exercises that were required. The content of this Woodpecker sequel is fully in keeping with what I envisaged years ago, when the idea was first discussed.

Just as the original book is a good complement to other types of tactical books – for instance, those with lots of explanatory text, and/or complex, hard-to-calculate variations – I believe and hope that this one will be a great companion to other types of books on positional chess. Best of luck to all the hard-working chess students at the start of this journey – and also to all us not-so-hard-working chess enjoyers!

Hans Tikkanen
Gullringen, June 2023

Preface

I never get tired of examples showing the ability of the human brain to process information subconsciously. A test on elite volleyball players showed that they needed to see a photo for only 16 milliseconds (i.e. 0.016 of a second) to understand what's going on. Even without seeing the ball, the body positions tell them all they need to know. This is not a skill they have deliberately practised – it's called experience.

This book is designed to boost the reader's experience, pattern recognition and subconscious ability in the realm of positional chess, the way its predecessor did with chess tactics.

What is the Woodpecker method anyway? For those who are not yet familiar, it was developed by my friend Hans Tikkanen as a self-training method to develop his own tactical ability. Hans solved a vast number of tactical puzzles (in excess of a thousand), then repeated the same set of puzzles over and over, getting faster each time and enabling his brain to assimilate the patterns at an unconscious level. After training with this method in 2010, Hans achieved three GM norms in just a seven-week period. The Finnish word Tikkanen is roughly translated as “small woodpecker” in English, and the term also fits perfectly with the repetitive nature of the method. I wrote a bit about the method in my 2013 book *Pump Up Your Rating*, and the readers took notice. It was only natural for Hans and I to author *The Woodpecker Method* in 2018, in which we assembled and presented a full set of over a thousand tactical exercises, along with detailed instructions and recommendations for carrying out the training.

I think it's a great idea to repeat relatively simple exercises over and over again, and Hans' success after using his method speaks for itself. Even so, we did not foresee how popular *The Woodpecker Method* would become. The readers have been more ambitious than I ever imagined, and several young players have asked me for coaching while mentioning that they have worked through the book up to eight times. I have heard about the book in the unlikeliest of places, from being recognized by a stranger while dumpster-diving for food one night, to being sent a photo of a reader posing with the book at the summit of Kilimanjaro.

A while ago I started learning Swahili in preparation for a trip to Kenya. I tried to do it the Woodpecker way, avoiding text books in favour of translating sentences back and forth – mostly via Duolingo, where Quality Chess co-founder John Shaw has a streak of more than 1800 days. However, at some point I had to resign myself to borrowing a grammar book from the library, after encountering a two-word sentence in Swahili that became twelve words when translated into English. In Kenya, I visited St Patricks, a high school which has produced more than thirty-five Olympic and World Champions in athletics. While many students visibly did sports, the school also had a thriving chess club. Even though Swahili is never used in chess, meeting the

players taught me Swahili in a way that Duolingo, grammar books and university courses could not do. I do not have a ‘Grand Theory of Learning’ that I can pass on to you, other than the general guideline that while passive learning (for instance by reading) can help to fill some gaps in one’s knowledge, learning by *doing* tends to yield the best results. This book contains 1000 positional exercises to turbo-charge your active learning.

After the success of our Woodpecker tactical workbook, it was natural to think about using the same method to improve one’s positional chess. *The Woodpecker Method 2* was born, and I began the process of assembling and annotating suitable exercises in February 2019. I discovered that it was much more difficult to write a positional Woodpecker book than a tactical one. The general idea of the method is to keep the exercises and solutions fairly short and simple, in order to work through a high volume of examples – too much intervention from the author and the momentum is lost. This isn’t too difficult with short tactical puzzles, as one can quickly see if the solution leads to mate, gain of material or some other obvious benefit. Positional exercises are not so straightforward, as the reader may require a more detailed explanation and possibly more thinking time to understand and accept the solution. As the project progressed and feedback was received from numerous test solvers, the exercises and solutions gradually evolved until, nearly five years after work on this project began, I was satisfied with all 1000 exercises and solutions.

I would like to thank Kaan Küçüksari, Alexander Nord and August Jalving, as well as Lunds ASK for the use of their library.

Thanks also to the test solvers, who included Renier Castellanos, Christopher Yoo, Sam Shankland and Nodirbek Abdusattorov. By the way, Nodirbek worked through most of the 1000 exercises (as well as many others which were subsequently cut) and has since rocketed to 4th in the live rankings at the time of writing.

I am also grateful for valuable help from Ellinor Frisk, and invaluable help from Jacob Aagaard.

Axel Smith
Lund, March 2024

Introduction

Before we get started, I will present a general overview of this book. As explained earlier, the Woodpecker concept involves solving a high volume of exercises, then repeating the process multiple times. This book contains a total of 1000 exercises, divided into two main categories, each containing three sub-sections. As with *The Woodpecker Method*, the exercises come from games involving World Champions – with a few exceptions, as will be explained.

Part 1 – Priyome

Priyome is a Russian noun without a direct English translation. In Russian, when it is used in a chess context, it describes some sort of thematic technique or manoeuvre. In this section of 545 exercises, the overarching theme will be common pawn structures and the positional motifs associated with them.

In my previous books, I have mentioned how great it would be to have a book exploring the details of *every* pawn structure. I had a rough draft almost a decade ago, and wanted to work on it with Ulf Andersson, who is hand-in-glove for the task. However, he was impossible to convince. Having abandoned the idea, I felt a certain sense of relief. Chess is too complex, and Ulf's knowledge cannot be transferred into a book with clear guidelines.

Let's approach pawn structures the Woodpecker way. The Priyome exercises show standard positional moves in a variety of common pawn structures. Don't expect to find any move with two exclamation marks. Such moves need to be not only strong, but also difficult and surprising. That's not what we are looking for.

The Priyome section also contains some simple tactical combinations that should be part of your positional repertoire. Many such moves should simply seem *normal*, not deserving of an exclamation mark. They nevertheless need to be 'woodpecked'.

Public Education

You may have seen video clips where Magnus Carlsen is shown positions from games of World Champions. He recognizes all of them: the players, the tournament and the continuation. Such skills are easy to admire but hard to achieve. Fortunately our aim is not to remember the exact positions, the players or the year the games were played. Typical ideas are enough, and we have the luxury to 'woodpeck'. Let's aim to include the ideas from the first 296 positions in your public chess education.

Exam

The second Priyome section is a smaller one, featuring certain ideas and pawn structures which I regard as important but which I couldn't find in the games of the World Champions. Some of the 43 test positions occurred in games involving other players, while in a few cases when I couldn't find a suitable example of a certain motif, I composed a realistic-looking position myself to demonstrate the key idea. Most of these positions take place during or shortly after the opening phase.

Academic Level

The last Priyome section consists of 206 exercises, still involving standard ideas in thematic pawn structures, but at a slightly higher level than before. You can expect to find more subtle ideas in the solutions, and a bit of calculation may be needed to justify the standard moves.

Part 2 – Positional Rules of Thumb

In this section we will be focusing on positional 'rules of thumb' rather than ideas associated with pawn structures. Well, it's hardly possible to keep these elements completely separate, so in the first section you can expect to find certain positional principles in action which could also be applied in other pawn structures, while in the second section you will find examples where the pawn structure is still of some relevance to the principle on display. So the difference between the two sections lies in the overall emphasis of each, rather than an absolute distinction.

When I first started playing chess, I was taught twenty positional rules, such as "place rooks on open files", "don't move pawns in front of your king" and so on. The list later expanded to sixty-four positional principles which started to build upon, combine and sometimes contradict some of the previous rules. For instance, "when your opponent has the advantage of the bishop pair, it will often have cost some time, in which case the side with the knight(s) should open the position as fast as possible" – contrary to the more general principle about bishops preferring open positions and knights being better suited to closed positions.

Let there be twenty, or sixty-four, or 400, or 5,362 rules. They are useful guidelines – not an exact science.

Medium Difficulty

Part 2 starts with this section of 194 exercises. By the way, the exercises in each section are arranged in chronological order, so they generally start with games involving Steinitz and end with those of Carlsen or another of the champions from the modern era. Apologies to Ding Liren, who became World Champion too late for his games to be included. By the time he achieved the highest title in April 2023, I had already finished selecting exercises and was into the phase of refining the solutions.

Hard Challenge

The difficulty level increases in the next 241 exercises. Of course the difficulty level is just an approximate guide – I would expect most players to solve at least a few of the “harder” exercises with relative ease, and to struggle with some “easier” exercises.

Expert

Finally we will meet 20 exercises which I’m sure most readers will find more challenging.

We will end with an Epilogue, featuring some further discussion of positional concepts and decision-making. It’s a little unorthodox to include such a discussion at the end rather than the start of the book, but it’s the Woodpecker way. You will work hard in solving so many exercises for multiple cycles. The Epilogue will give you a break from solving, along with some final food for thought regarding the challenges of making complex decisions at the board, especially when we need to weigh up competing positional principles.

Selection Process for Exercises

A database containing all the games of the World Champions consists of more than 50,000 games. Since it would not have been a practical use of time to play through all of them, I searched for different openings and manoeuvres and chose positions where the intended solution is objectively the best continuation.

From time to time, solutions can be disputed. An example of a grey area could be when a World Champion chooses a move connected with a manoeuvre or other positional idea of clear instructive value – but the latest Stockfish narrowly prefers a different option, or assesses multiple moves with its favourite 0.00 evaluation. I received valuable feedback from the various test solvers named in the preface, as well as from Jacob Aagaard who checked every exercise and solution. After taking everyone’s comments and feedback into account, I took the final decision on discarding and replacing certain exercises, while keeping some others with some debatable aspect to them.

In the great majority of these 1000 exercises, the side to move stands better and the solution is the strongest continuation, confirmed by the engine. However, there are three types of exercises that you might not be used to:

1) Positions with multiple winning continuations

It’s not always easy to convert a winning advantage. Thus, when a certain continuation wins more convincingly than the others and also contains a wider instructive point, I consider it a worthy exercise.

2) Positions where you stand worse

We all reach bad positions sometimes, and we still need to search for good moves. In a few exercises, the solution is the best way to limit the disadvantage while also demonstrating an important positional motif, which makes it a valid exercise according to my way of thinking.

3) Positions where the engines evaluate several moves equally

Generally in these situations there is still a correct positional plan, but it might be possible to delay it for a move or two. In such cases, it is generally better to play the key idea and then make the more peripheral decisions based on the opponent's reaction. Also, let's remember that the engine evaluation is based on what it sees as optimal play on both sides, which does not reflect the practical reality of human chess. To take an abstract example, you might set up an endgame with rook and bishop versus rook, which the tablebase will instantly prove to be a draw; and if the stronger side then allows its rook to be captured, the position is still a draw – so does that mean it wasn't a mistake to throw away the rook?

In each of the above three scenarios, I considered the arguments against the exercise in question and ultimately used my best judgement. I discarded and replaced several, but kept some others. When you encounter such exercises and check the solution, you might not agree that it was a good exercise to include. Such cases are a small minority in a pool of 1000 exercises, so just move on to the next one.

Other Background Information

As with *The Woodpecker Method*, I selected almost all the exercises from games involving World Champions, except for the 43 exercises in the Priyome Exam. For the avoidance of any confusion, when I refer to World Champions I mean players who held the highest title at some point in their careers – not necessarily when the games were played. I tried to avoid the absolute most famous games, though of course it's likely that you will have seen some of the examples before. If you recognize some positions and already know the continuation then no problem – you have many more exercises to work through, and our training method relies on reinforcement through repetition anyway.

In the majority of the exercises, the World Champion executes the key positional idea in a classical game against a strong opponent. Kasparov scored 83% from the 132 relevant positions in this book, and half of the points he dropped came in games against other World Champions. However, there are also some positions where the solution was overlooked by a champion. We will also see a small number of exercises where the solution was played, or could have been played, against a World Champion. Chess history is not written by games from simultaneous exhibitions, but I did not shy away from using such games when they contained sufficiently instructive ideas. I also selected a few examples from games involving faster time controls and even blindfold events.

Don't expect to find any endgame positions. When the game enters its final phase, typical middlegame principles are often superseded by new and contradictory priorities. Perhaps a theme for a future book?

Evaluation Symbols

Chess Informant-style symbols are forbidden in the chess magazine where I am editor. I consider them a lazy shortcut compared to using words to explain what's happening. Quality Chess has also moved away from using evaluation symbols in some of their publications. However, in this book the evaluation tools are included as a useful complement to the text. If the solution says, for instance, that weak squares are more important than a pawn which has been sacrificed, it is useful to know if that means the position is clearly better or only slightly better. In my magazine or a normal chess book, all this could be expressed in words. However, I have already spoken in the Preface about the challenges of keeping the solutions from getting too lengthy, so the space-saving benefits of symbols are the most important consideration.

We are almost ready to begin your positional Woodpecker training! The next few pages will provide everything you need to know about organizing your solving sessions and generally getting the most out of the process.

Chapter 1

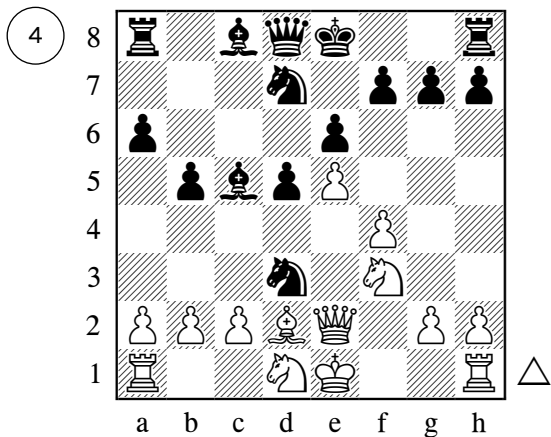
Public Education Exercises



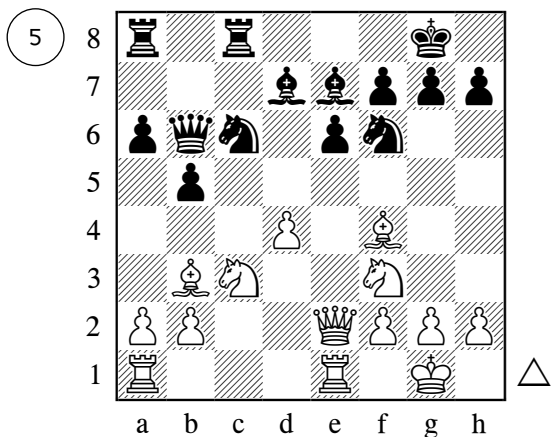
Few things are as psychologically brutal as chess. – Garry Kasparov

*To be champion requires more than simply being a strong player;
one has to be a strong human being as well.* – Anatoly Karpov

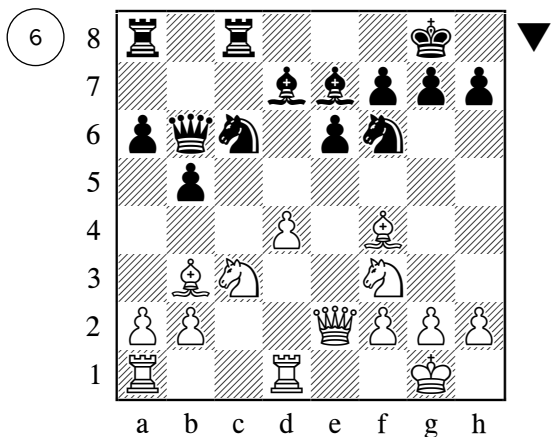
Steinitz – Sellman, Baltimore 1885



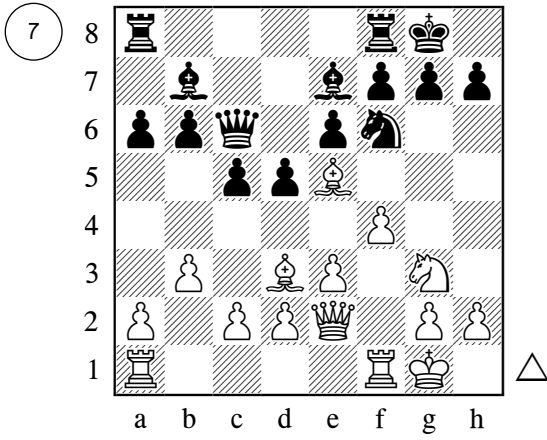
Zukertort – Steinitz, USA (13) 1886



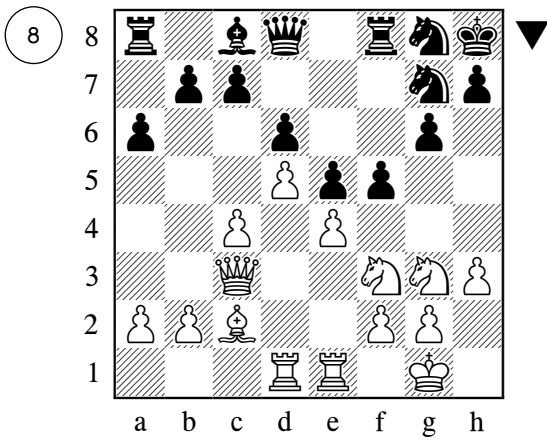
Zukertort – Steinitz, USA (13) 1886



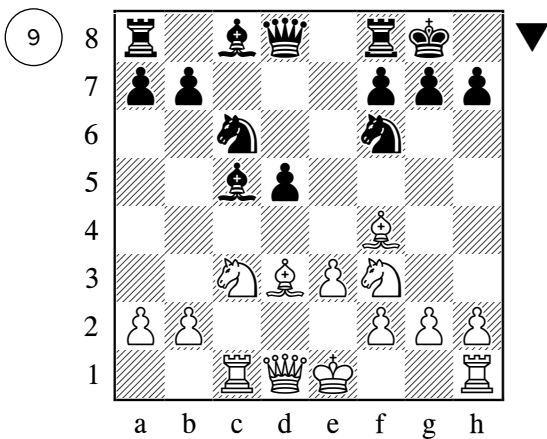
Lasker – Bauer, Amsterdam 1889



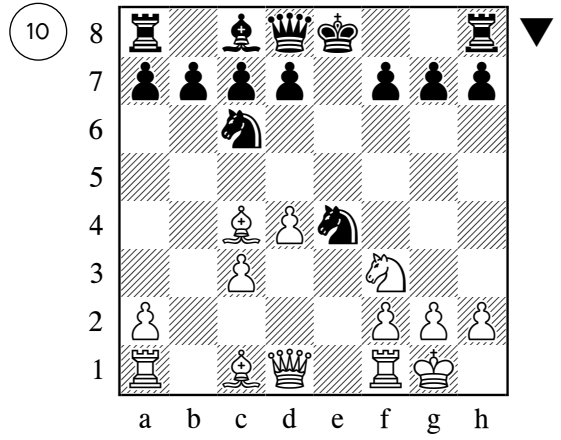
Lasker – Steinitz, St. Petersburg 1895



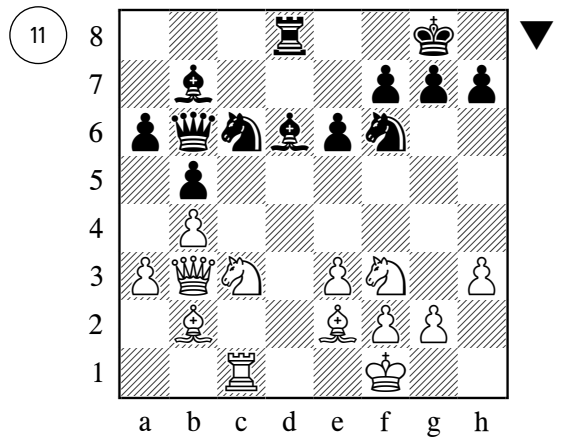
Steinitz – Lasker, St. Petersburg 1895



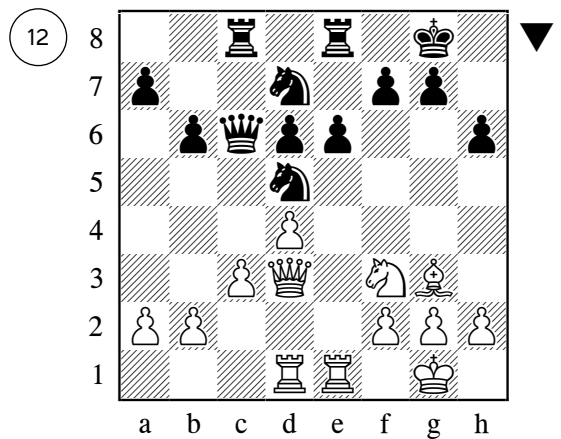
Steinitz – Lasker, Moscow (3) 1896



Lasker – Maroczy, London 1899



Blackburne – Lasker, London 1899



Chapter 7

Public Education Solutions



In November, there was a USSR Championship in Moscow. Open championship, perhaps the last one – I don't know. On 9th November, I played there and made my draw, and Alexei Shirov from Riga won brilliantly, came to me and said, "I'm glad that it was today, 9th November (Tal's birthday), that I played so good. I dedicate this game to you." Very moving. – Mikhail Tal

1. William Steinitz – James Robey, London 1862

16.g4!± Launching an attack. 16.0–0 was played in the game, but White should be happy that the king is still on e1. A plausible continuation: **16...♟d7 17.h4 c6** Stopping ♟d5. **18.g5 f6** White continues with g5-g6 or ♟g4, ♞a2-g2 and h4-h5.

2. William Steinitz – Joseph Henry Blackburne, London (1) 1862

10.f5! Increasing the scope of the f1-rook, e3-bishop and e2-knight; and after the next move, also the remaining pieces on d3, c3 and a1. It can hardly be better! If White does not push immediately, Black can play 10...d5 and it will be too late. **10...exf5** Otherwise Black would get a weak e-pawn after fxe6. **11.exf5±** White continues with ♙g5 or ♙h6, playing on the kingside.

3. William Steinitz – George Alcock MacDonnell, Dublin 1865

14.f5! Steinitz played 14.♟d2 which allows 14...exf4 15.gxf4 g6, when the open centre (rook against queen!) gives Black some counterplay. **14...♟c5** Since the centre is closed, White obtains a dangerous attack by advancing the g-pawn. In the event of 14...♟f8 15.g4 h6 a possibility that might be worth remembering is: 16.h4 (The simple 16.♟d2± is also good.) 16...♟6h7 A standard defence. 17.g5 hxg5 18.♟h1!↑ With ♞g1 coming next.

4. William Steinitz – Alexander Sellman, Baltimore 1885

12.cxd3! This improves White's structure since:

- a) It controls the c4- and e4-squares (the main point)
- b) White can use the open c-file
- c) Black can't use his queenside pawns to open files (not relevant in this game)
- d) The pawn can advance to d4
- e) It closes the a6-f1-diagonal. "It may seem strange to attach an exclamation mark to a move which today would be automatically made by any candidate master," wrote Kasparov in the book series on his predecessors. "But then, in 1885, the consequences of the pawn capture were by no means obvious, and the majority of players were simply unable to think long-term." According to Kasparov, Black had to play **12...b4** followed by ...a6-a5 and ...♙a6. 12...a5 has the same idea. 12...d4 opens the long diagonal for the light-squared bishop, but also gives up the e4-square. 13.♟f2±

5. Johannes Zukertort – William Steinitz, USA (13) 1886

17.d5! A standard isolated queen's pawn position. Pushing and exchanging the pawn is usually favourable, as White's pieces are more actively placed. Zukertort missed this opportunity by playing 17.♞ed1?, which takes us to the next exercise. **17...exd5 18.♟xd5 ♟xd5 19.♙xd5 ♙f6 20.♞ad1 ♞f8 21.♙e4** All White's pieces are on excellent squares and Black has no good defence. For instance, **21...♞ad8 22.♞c2** with a double threat – or triple if you count ♞d6.

6. Johannes Zukertort – William Steinitz, USA (13) 1886

17...♟a5! Chasing back the bishop to increase Black's control over the important d5-square. 17...b4 is met by 18.♟e4= and if ...♟d5, White can trade on d5. **18.♙c2 b4 19.♟e4 ♟d5?** The isolated pawn is blocked for the foreseeable future.

7. Emanuel Lasker – Johann Hermann Bauer, Amsterdam 1889

14.♟h5! Exchanging the key defender. 14.f5 g6!± defends quite well. **14...♟xh5 14...♟e8 15.♙xg7! ♟xg7 16.♞g4** wins. 14...♞fc8! was the best defensive try, when White can win the

h7-pawn but the black king escapes to the centre and the game continues. **15. ♖xh7!** 15. ♖xh5 f5= **15... ♖xh7** 16. ♖xh5+ ♖g8 17. ♖xg7!! ♖xg7 18. ♖g4+ ♖h7 19. ♖f3 Black has to give up too much material to avoid mate. **19... e5** 20. ♖h3+ ♖h6 21. ♖xh6+ ♖xh6 22. ♖d7! White could have won more slowly, but the double threat ends the game in short order. Why are we seeing a tactical combination in a book of positional exercises? Because classic combinations such as this one should be part of one's foundational knowledge, which can guide us towards correct positional decisions – in this case, exchanging the defensive knight.

8. Emanuel Lasker – William Steinitz, St. Petersburg 1895

21... f4! Closing the centre and gaining space. Black prepares to push the g-pawn and launch an attack, using as many pieces as possible on the kingside. After the game continuation 21... fxe4? White gets a nice square on e4. 21... ♖f6 22. exf5 gxf5 opens things up for White's pieces. There is even 23. ♖xe5!? dxe5 24. ♖xe5 with compensation, as Black is cramped. **22. ♖f1 b6** 23. ♖1d2 After 23. b4 a5 24. a3 g5 25. c5 h5+ White's pieces are not well placed to attack on the queenside. **23... g5** 24. ♖f1!∞ White should run from the kill zone.

9. William Steinitz – Emanuel Lasker, St. Petersburg 1895

10... d4 Following the school book by exchanging the isolated pawn to release the active pieces behind it. **11. exd4 ♖e8+!** An irritating intermediate move, forcing White to retreat. There is no need to calculate further. Lasker played 11... ♖xd4 with a balanced position.

10. William Steinitz – Emanuel Lasker, Moscow (3) 1896

9... d5! White should not be allowed to gain space with d4-d5. 9... 0–0? 10. d5± **10. ♖a3?** White should play something else, but in that case Black simply castles with a good game. The only downside to Black's last move would be if White could catch the king in the centre, so this is the only critical move to check. **10... dxc4** 11. ♖e1 Black has several decent moves, so you didn't need to decide between them before choosing 9... d5. Best is: **11... ♖d5** 12. ♖d2 ♖e6 Followed by long castling.

William Steinitz

"A sacrifice is best refuted by accepting it."

11. Emanuel Lasker – Geza Maroczy, London 1899

18... ♖e5! Opening the diagonal for the bishop on b7, and also in some way preparing ... ♖e5 which neutralizes White's bishop on b2. In many similar positions with the c- and d-pawns exchanged, both players try to be first with ... ♖e5 or ♖e4, to exploit their respective diagonals. **19. ♖xe5** Instead Lasker accepted doubled pawns on f3, a long-term concession. **19... ♖xe5** 20. ♖c2 Black has slightly more active pieces, but it's not enough to claim a real advantage.

12. Joseph Henry Blackburne – Emanuel Lasker, London 1899

18... b5! A standard minority attack, to eventually create a weak white pawn on the queenside – and in the meantime, solidifying the c4-outpost for a knight. 18... f5 is also a good move, gaining space and controlling the light squares. The game continuation is more straightforward though.

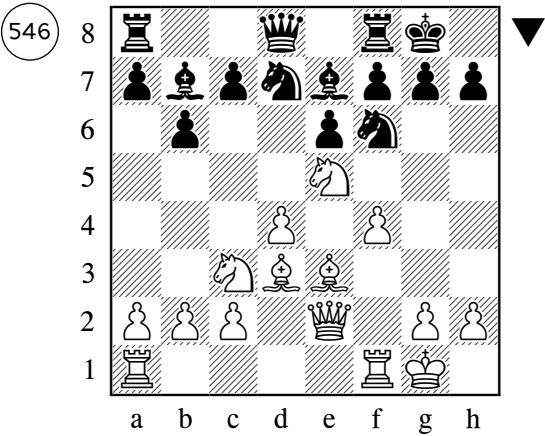
Chapter 4

Medium Difficulty Exercises

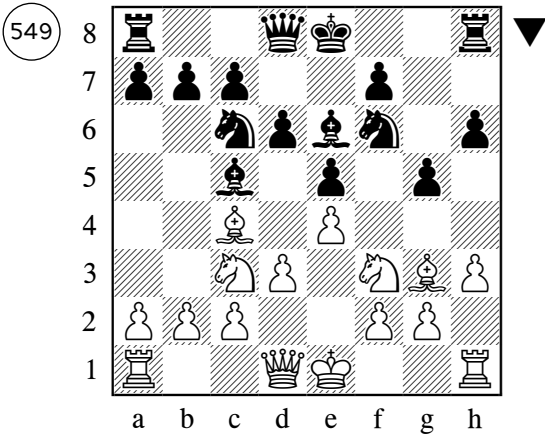


When I was young, I spent days and nights at the board, studied everything that was created, all stages and twists of theory and chess history. My knowledge was encyclopaedic. And then – also for hours, very intensively – I studied music. These are two things that I love. Music gave me rest, a special state of mind, and opportunities to connect with people emotionally. Chess was more of a struggle. – Vasily Smyslov

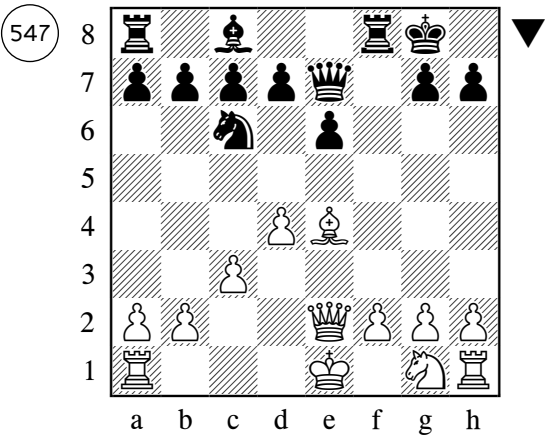
Steinitz – Mongredien, London 1862



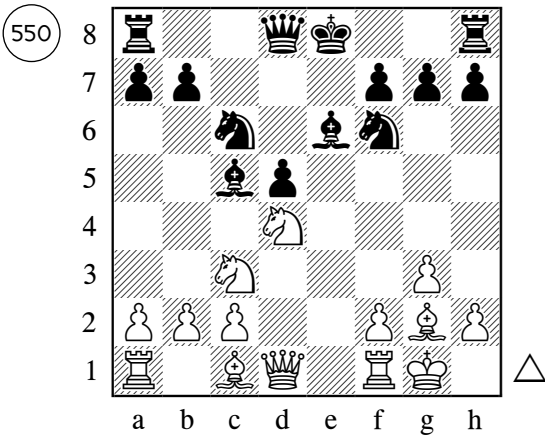
Green – Steinitz, London (Casual) 1864



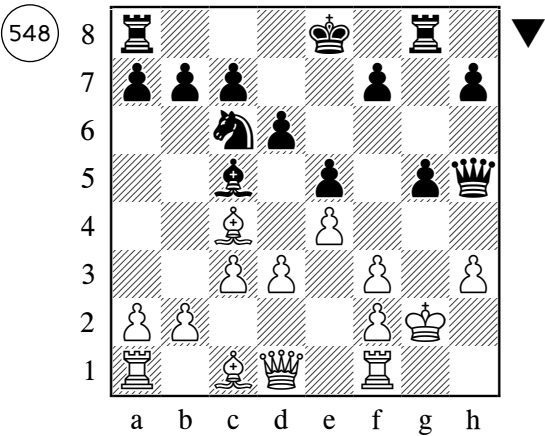
Blackburne – Steinitz, London (4) 1862



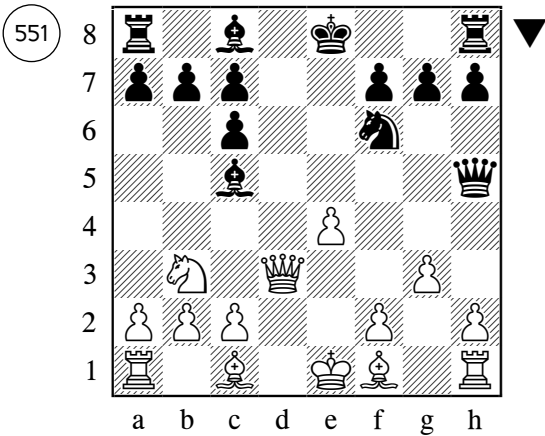
Steinitz – de Riviere, Paris 1867



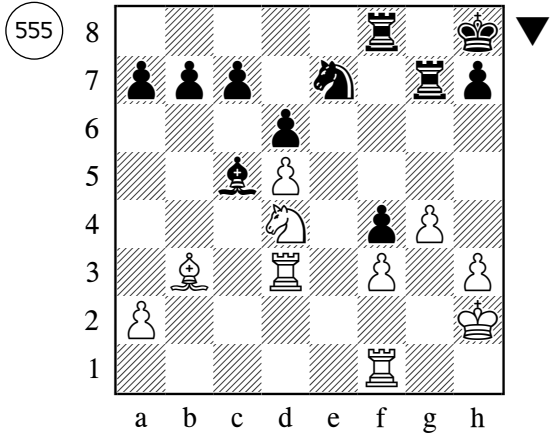
Green – Steinitz, London (1) 1864



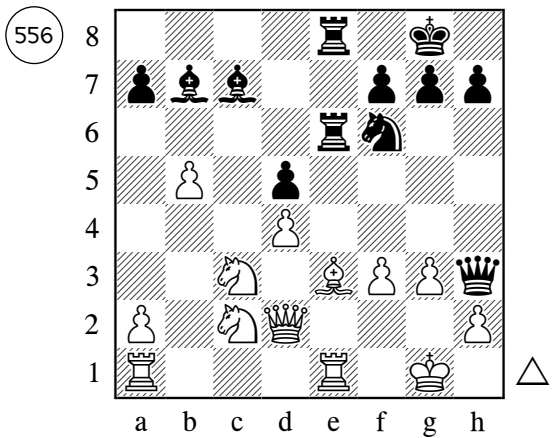
Kolisch – Steinitz, Paris 1867



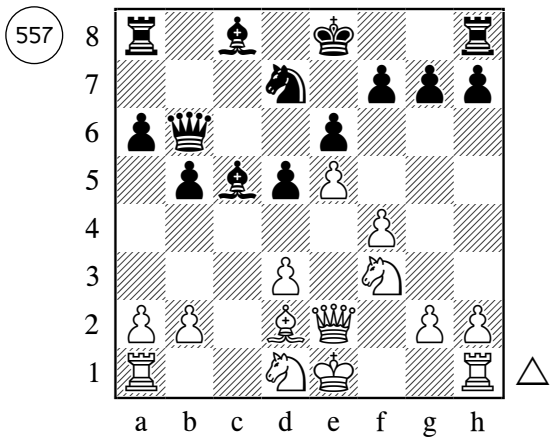
Zukertort – Steinitz, England (Consultation) 1875



Steinitz – Rosenthal, London 1883



Steinitz – Sellman, Baltimore 1885



Chapter 10

Medium Difficulty Solutions



Previously there was a lot of respect for the thinking and creativity of a grandmaster. Now you see spectators saying that the machine took three seconds to come up with a move but the player took half an hour, negating all their creative effort. – Veselin Topalov

546. William Steinitz – Augustus Mongredien, London 1862

11...c5! Challenging the centre and undermining White's strong knight on e5. The game went 11...♘d5?! 12.♘xd5 exd5? 13.♞f3 and Steinitz won a beautiful attacking game. **12.♞ad1** After 12.dxc5, Black can recapture with either the knight or the bishop with comfortable equality. **12...cxd4 13.♙xd4 ♘xe5** A safe choice, since White can't take back with the pawn. **14.♙xe5 ♞c8=**

547. Joseph Henry Blackburne – William Steinitz, London (4) 1862

10...d5! Developing with tempo. **11.♙c2 11.♙f3 ♞d6** Black defends the d5-pawn and threatens ...e6-e5. After 12.0–0–0 ♞b8+ an attack is coming up. **11...e5!+** White is more or less forced to castle long soon, leaving temporarily weak pawns on g2 and f2.

548. Valentine Green – William Steinitz, London (1) 1864

13...♘e7!+ Redirecting the knight to the attack. 13...♞g6 gave White the opportunity for 14.♙b5!, which he failed to take.

549. Valentine Green – William Steinitz, London (Casual) 1864

9...♙xc4 10.dxc4 ♙b4! 11.♞d3 ♙xc3† 12.bxc3+ The moves speak for themselves. To keep equal material White had to accept tripled, isolated pawns.

550. William Steinitz – Jules Arnous de Riviere, Paris 1867

10.♘xe6! A difference compared to a normal isolated pawn position is that White has a c-pawn instead of an e-pawn. That makes it much easier to attack e6. 10.♘b3?! was played in the game. **10...fxe6** Typical moves include ♙h3 and ♞e1, but another good idea is to start by chasing away Black's bishop: **11.♘a4+–** This also prepares c2-c4.

551. Ignaz Kolisch – William Steinitz, Paris 1867

9...♙g4! An active move, making use of White's dubious development. Black threatens ...♞d8 and if the queen moves, then ...♞d1 mate. **10.♙e3 10.♙e2 ♞d8 11.♞c4 ♙b6+–** White can't develop properly and if nothing else, Black continues smoothly with ...0–0 and ...♞fe8. 10.♘xc5 ♞d8+ **10...♞d8 11.♞c4 ♙xe3 12.fxe3 0–0+–** Losing the e4-pawn is far from White's only problem.

552. Emile D'Andre – William Steinitz, Paris 1867

10...d5! Good timing when White can't defend with f2-f3. 10...g5? is a swashbuckling try, but after 11.♙xg5 ♞g8 12.♙xf6 ♞e6 13.♙xe5 ♞xe5 14.♘f5± Black's compensation should not be enough. **11.♙xb6+** A concession, allowing Black to connect the pawns. Both recaptures are possible although **11...axb6** feels more natural.

553. William Steinitz – Jonathan Baker, Great Britain (Simul) 1868

25.h3!+– Avoiding ...h4-h3, weakening White's king. 25.♙c4 h3 26.g3 might still be winning, but the risk that something goes wrong is much bigger with the black pawn on h3. Having a superior position is no excuse for not choosing the best moves.

554. William Steinitz – Abraham Mocatta, England (Consultation) 1875

10.♙xc6! Avoiding ...♘d4. You don't need to plan any further than this to solve the exercise.

10...bxc6 11.0–0–0!± Normal. Instead, Steinitz started with 11.♘e2± and castled short ten moves later. 11.♙g5?! ♙d4 12.♘e2 ♙xb2 13.♖b1 ♖b8 14.c3± is unnecessarily complicated.

555. Johannes Zukertort – William Steinitz, England (Consultation) 1875

29...♙xd4! The knight must not be allowed to reach the outpost on e6. **30.♖xd4 ♘g6** In addition, Black gets a beautiful knight on e5, which White can't challenge with the bishop.

556. William Steinitz – Samuel Rosenthal, London 1883

27.♘a4! Heading for c5, hitting two of Black's pieces. 27.♙f4 ♙a5⇒ **27...♘h5?** It's not your task to find Black's best defence, but it was not Rosenthal's desperate try. **28.♘c5 ♘xg3 29.♘xe6 ♖xe6 30.♖g2+–** It's over. Instead, White gave back material with 30.♙f4?? and later lost. 30.hxg3+– also works.

557. William Steinitz – Alexander Sellman, Baltimore 1885

13.b4! Taking control over the dark squares in the centre. **13...♙e7 14.♖f2±** Continuing with the same strategy. Steinitz played 14.a3, which is a reasonable move but not essential at this point.

William Steinitz

“The task of the positional player is systematically to accumulate slight advantages and try to convert temporary advantages into permanent ones, otherwise the player with the better position runs the risk of losing it.”