

Adam Hunt

Chess Strategy

move by move

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About the Author

Adam Hunt is an International Master from Oxford with two Grandmaster norms. Since 2003 he has taught chess full-time at Woodbridge School in Suffolk, helping the school along the way to produce three England representatives. He has acquired a growing reputation for coaching having also worked with the England and Wales junior teams at many international events, including the World Youth Championships and World Under-16 Olympiad. He comes from a family of chess players, with his sister Harriet currently ranked as the top female player in England. This is his first book.

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Introduction

Welcome to the wonderful world of Chess Strategy! I really hope that you enjoy the material presented here – it has been the culmination of over a year’s hard work and has been written whilst I have taken a sabbatical from my job, teaching chess at Woodbridge School. The writing has sat hand-in-hand with playing chess full-time, as I chased the dream of becoming a Grandmaster (which I failed at 😊). There have been many personal highs and lows along the way – usually as a direct result of how the various tournaments were going!

Chess strategy is concerned with the correct evaluation of a position and the formulation of an effective plan based upon its characteristic features. When the word ‘strategy’ is mentioned, people tend to jump to the conclusion that we are talking about long-term middlegame planning, and that you have to be some sort of psychic who can see the future, but that is rarely the case. Many features of a given position which are strategically important will evolve out of the opening and finish in the endgame, so it would be foolish to completely ignore these phases of the game. Plans can be short or long term, depending on how the landscape in front of you is changing as the game progresses. This is why the subject is so complex and so much material is available on it. I have decided to split the book into twelve chapters; to be honest each one could be extended into a whole book in itself (in some cases the subjects have!). In each, I hope to give a flavour of an area of the game which I think is important.

I hope that this book is interesting and unique, not necessarily because all the ideas are revolutionary and ground breaking – they most certainly are not. Indeed a lot of the ideas I have written about are taken from previous literature, but I have tried to present them with the enthusiasm and energy that would go into my day to day teaching. There are many ‘classic’ grandmaster games presented in this book, some of which you may be familiar with and some you may not (but all of which I think you will find useful to study). There are also a number of examples taken from my own games and those of my students in which there are mistakes aplenty that we can learn from. I am hoping this will appeal to the reader of this book and indeed be in keeping with the general interactive approach to the *Move by Move* series. I am also hopeful that this book can be used by teachers as well as students, and that a dip into it will provide useful coaching material for the next generation of up-and-coming chess players.

I would like to thank everyone who has supported me in the writing of this book. The proof-readers, Caro, Harriet and John for their helpful comments and patient, polite correc-

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tions of my terrible grammar. A big thanks also to Sabrina, for her assistance and advice throughout the course of the last year, and to Arthur for being a great coach and source of ideas. Thank you to John Emms for giving me the opportunity to write for Everyman Chess and Richard Palliser for the editing. Particular thanks go to my students, who have provided me with countless pages of material that I think you will find useful and interesting. Apologies in advance to those whose losses or mistakes I have included. To the ones whose brilliant wins I have put in, the least you can do is buy a copy of the book!

Appreciation of both strategy and tactics are the 'Ying and Yang' of a strong chess player. They sit side by side, in harmony with each other and you cannot hope to improve your play without working on both aspects of the game. Usually, in order to improve our tactical ability, we solve exercises and problems from books or electronic media. I hope that with this work, the questions and exercises I ask you to solve and think about will help improve your strategic play in a similar way. Let's get started!

Adam Hunt,
Woodbridge, Suffolk,
February 2013

Chapter Seven

The Initiative

Attack! Always Attack! – Adolf Anderssen

The ‘initiative’ is a slightly mysterious chess term (well, it is to me anyway), but a hugely important and very commonly used one. When you make a move which threatens one of your opponent’s pieces, he has to parry the threat or make a counterattack. If a number of such moves can be made in quickly, then often a serious advantage can be built up.

A nice comparison (well I think so anyway) can be made with a game of tennis. The server (let’s call him Pete Sampras), as long as his serve is fast and accurate, should gain the upper hand in the rally, as the returner (let’s call him Rafael Nadal) is simply trying to put the ball back into the court. This leads to a situation where Pete has the initiative, as long as he makes good shots. If, for some reason, he plays a poor or ponderous shot it will give Rafa the opportunity to seize the initiative with a good shot of his own. If the game is on a slower surface, such as clay, then the importance of the initiative is reduced somewhat, in the same way that a slower paced chess game (which, say, has a closed centre) will rely less on the initiative and more on other strategic factors.

The initiative is very closely linked with time or tempo in chess. It is very much a short-term advantage and thus must be used as energetically as possible. Witness the following awesome display by White, where he doesn’t let up for a moment.

Game 66
V.Kupreichik-J.Sunye Neto
Palma de Mallorca 1989
Sicilian Defence

1 e4 c5 2 c3 a6

This is becoming quite a popular way of dealing with White's move order.

3 Nf3 4 b5 5 d4 6 cxd4 7 Nxd4 8 Bb7 9 Qd3

White sets up to overprotect his e4-pawn.

6... e6 7 O-O 8 Nc7 9 Nxe2

And this is a good move in that it discourages the development of the g8-knight.

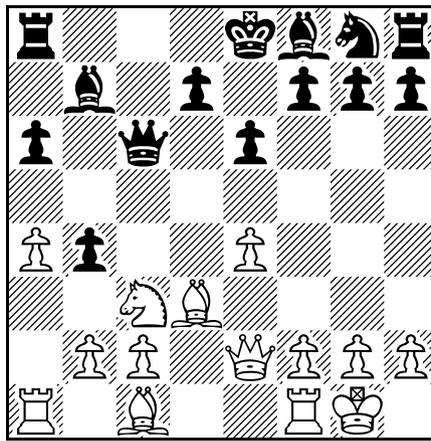
8... Nc6

8... Nf6 9 e5! would be awkward to meet.

9 Nxc6 10 Nxc6 11 a4

With a slight lead in development White tries to provoke some weaknesses in the black camp.

10... b4



Question: Where would you put the white knight?

Answer: 11 Nd5!

White is creating problems for his opponent from the word go.

11... Nf6

Alternatives:

a) 11... exd5 12 exd5 picks up the queen.

b) 11... Qd6 12 Qd2 threatens the b4-pawn when 12... a5 ? 13 Qb5 14 Nc8 15 Nxb6 would be a good example of using the initiative to rapidly obtain a winning position.

12 Qc4

I think if it were me I would have taken that knight on f6 off and left the black king with a lack of shelter on both sides of the board: 12 Nxf6+ gxf6 13 Qd2 with an advantage for White.

12... Qd6?!

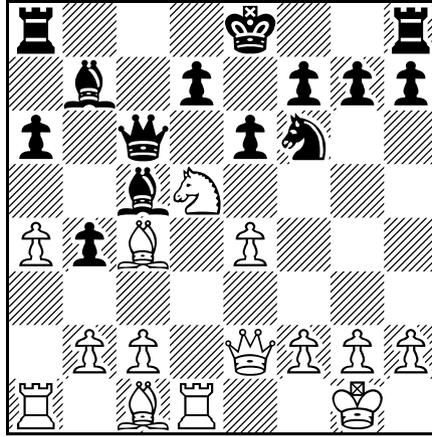
Black develops his bishop to a slightly vulnerable square, which results in a loss of time.

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12...♙c5 would perhaps have been better, but even then White can generate threats with 13 ♙f4!

13 ♜d1! ♙c5

13...0-0 loses material to 14 ♘xf6+ gxf6 15 ♙h6 as ♔g4+ is threatened, but 13...♙e5 should probably have been preferred.

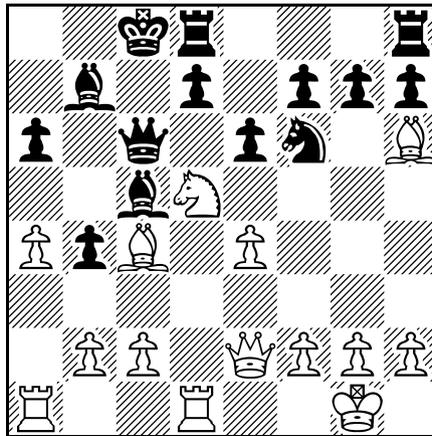


Exercise: Can you find a move to keep the pressure on, ideally a developing move with tempo?

Answer: 14 ♙h6!

This probably came as a bit of a shock to the system for Black. I bet you thought the bishop was going to f4! However, 14 ♙f4 ♘xd5 15 exd5 ♜c8 gives Black a little respite.

14...0-0-0



Exercise: Black wants to get his king out of the centre, but his last move runs into a huge problem. What is it?

Answer: 15 ♖b5!

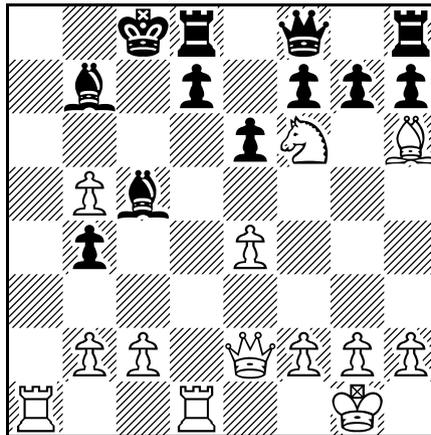
Brilliant. The black queen is very short of squares and the a-file is opened for the white rook.

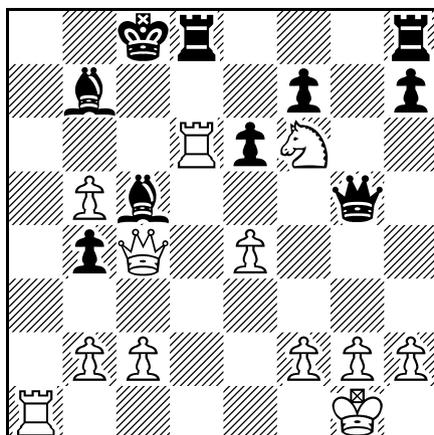
15 ♖xg7 exd5 16 exd5 ♖d6 is not so strong.

15...axb5 16 axb5 ♖d6

16...♗xd5 17 exd5 gxh6 gives Black three pieces for the queen, but again he just isn't in time to survive after 18 ♖c4! d6 19 dxe6.

17 ♘xf6 ♖f8





Exercise: Keep the energy going!

Answer: 21 ♖d5!

Attacking c5 again. This time it can't be defended.

21...exd5 22 ♜xc5+ ♔b8 23 ♜c6 1-0

Black resigned as after 23...♙xc6 24 ♜xc6 he must give up his queen to stop ♜a8 mate.

Summary

Phenomenal stuff from White. Black simply didn't have time to put his pieces in order due to the barrage of threats.

The Initiative vs. Static Positional Factors

Strong players will often unbalance the game in order to seize the initiative. Here White makes what looks like a very dubious positional decision to wreck his own pawn structure, but at the same time grabs some attacking chances.

Game 67
A.Hunt-A.Yakimenko
 Golden Sands 2012
French Defence

1 e4 e6 2 d4 d5 3 ♘c3 ♙b4 4 e5 c5 5 a3 ♙xc3+ 6 bxc3 ♜a5 7 ♙d2 ♜a4

Black looks to apply pressure to the centre, whilst stopping White from playing a3-a4 to open the a3-f8 diagonal.

8 ♘f3 ♘c6 9 dxc5!?