

Mark Lowery's Exciting World of Chess

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Beginner Lessons

Checking and Checkmating Studies II

Simple Checkmates/Basic Endgames

Introductory Overview

I use the phrase **simple checkmates** not so much to denote that the positions are always necessarily easy checkmates to develop during a game because some may well not be so "easy." I use the phrase - simple checkmates - to denote these mating patterns and mating nets as being "**elementary mating patterns**" [phrase used in The Complete Chess Player, by Fred Reinfeld (complete book reference is in Recommended Readings section at website)]. These mating patterns and mating nets positions are applicable throughout positional situations involving checkmating, drawing, and stalemating on the chessboard. They also are commonly referred to **basic endgames**.

At higher levels of play, simple checkmates generally are not as common as complex checkmates often because a player smartly resigns in the face of inevitable doom. For lower level players, these checkmates may be more commonly encountered because beginners and novices facing an inevitable checkmate may keep moving about perhaps trying to get a stalemate or draw, or for true beginners even worse not seeking that possibility and not realizing the inevitability of the doom which is pending. However, learning recognition of the elementary aspects of these checkmate patterns provides the analytical framework for devising plans to create more complex checkmates through mating patterns and mating nets that may "appear hidden" to the opposing player.

Simple checkmates when they happen usually happen most often when there are few pieces and/or pawns remaining on the chessboard, but may occur at any point in a game. The two-move checkmate (Fool's Mate) against White, the comparable three-move checkmate against Black, and the four-move checkmate called The Scholar's Mate, are all simple checkmates. Each one is nothing more than the application of basic principles and concepts of checking and checkmating...applying the underlying anatomy of a mate. That is to say, while all the pieces and pawns remain on the chessboard for the two-move (Fool's Mate) and comparable three-move checkmate and all but a single Black pawn which is captured in the four-move checkmate (The Scholar's Mate), each

of the above checkmates requires nothing more than simple pattern recognition of a King being entombed (trapped) to permit checkmate as a result of simple obvious pawn advances and moves by pieces.

Introductory Problem

We begin with a simple checkmate that is an eloquent example of several basic principles and concepts. Look at the diagram below (I have used different board colors and style of pieces and pawns for variation). Black to move and mate in three. Find the solution and basic principles and concepts involved.

DIAGRAM SCKM-1



The solution:

From **Rabinovich-Grigorieff**, Moscow 1916

White played Qh6, anticipating mate in one...Qg7#; overlooking:

1...Qxf1+ 2.Kxf1 Bc4+ and all White can do is delay the inevitable with
3.Rd3 Bxd3+ 4.Kg1 Re1 mate.

This is called a **back rank mate**. Beginners often fall prey to a back rank mate; novices less often, more experienced even less often. As a player gets more experienced, he or she learns to apply pattern recognition and usually provides one or more escape squares and path for preventing a back rank mate (**luft**). The basic principles and concepts involved are:

Anatomy of Mate: In narrowly focusing on checkmating Black in one move, White failed to follow the basic elemental principle of simplification...always first examine the chessboard in a general broad view. White forgot that White's King is entrapped into just two squares

of the six-square Anatomy of Mate pattern for a King located on a square in one of the sides of the chessboard [wings and back ranks] other than a corner square [in this game...squares g1 and g2 out of f1, f2, g1, g2, h1, and h2], blocked in by White's own pawns at f2, g2, and h2, and White's Rook at f1.

Mating Pattern and Mating Net: Pattern recognition that the key square is the f1 square because the King is located on the back rank, blocked in by White's three pawns. White forgot the important principle of luft - to provide an escape square and path for the King off the back rank to prevent a back rank mate by doing a pawn advance. In a Kingside castle position, usually this is accomplished by a single or two square advance of the h file pawn (although doing so too early may lead a sustained Kingside attack with significant Kingside weakness), but can be by advance of the g file pawn (to fianchetto the Bishop is an example of an early move that compliments providing possible luft for a castled King); and also less commonly the f file pawn.].

Combinations: Pattern recognition for the mating pattern and mating net required Black simply to consider only basic moving and checking patterns for the Queen, the Bishop, and the Rook, working in combination in the sequential series of just three moves establishing the mating pattern and mating net. Nothing fancy here, really just the simple basics.

Queen sacrifice: This higher-level concept often is the hardest to spot at the appropriate time because a player's natural tendency is not to give up his or her Queen to capture. In developing mating patterns and mating nets involving the Queen, it is perhaps the most important because it is often the most deadly one a player can employ to checkmate an opposing King.

Checkmate square: The principle of the checkmate square [g1 in this simple checkmate] required pattern recognition of (a) Black's Rook's power to attack and check the White King along the horizontal back rank, (b) White's Rook at f1 had to be removed from its defending and protecting position (by bringing into play the Queen sacrifice principle), (b) White's King had to be driven back away from the f1 square to permit Black's Rook to check and checkmate White's trapped King, and (d) with the Queen sacrifice the only piece able to do this is Black's Queen's Bishop.

Bishop-Rook checkmate: Pattern recognition that for a Bishop-Rook checkmate, the Bishop is only useful either to force the King to the checkmate square where it is entombed, or used to checkmate the opposing King at the checkmate square with the Rook forcing the opposing King to the checkmate square and entombing it there. The two mating pattern lines result because the Bishop only attacks, checks, and controls squares along its own color diagonal lines. The above checkmate is an example where the Bishop is utilized to force the opposing King to the checkmate square so that the Rook can checkmate. The example can be considered an offshoot variation on the mating pattern and mating net theme employed in Pillsbury's Mate (Bishop-Rook mate where Rook delivers the checkmate), which is a variation of Morphy's Mate (Rook-Bishop mate where Bishop delivers the checkmate).

Admittedly, some might say this should fall more into the complex checkmates section. However, there is nothing in the above checkmate that requires much advanced forward thinking, either for Black to do the back rank mate or for White to avoid the back rank mate. White had several options to do so. For example, if White had done luft with the f2 pawn to f3, then Black simply could not have accomplished this simple Bishop-Rook back rank mate. The sacrifice of Black's Queen would have been a blunder and just resulted in the loss of the Queen for nothing. Another example is if White had moved White's Rook from g3 to f3. This would have blocked Black's ability to effectuate the back rank mate with Black's Rook from f8. In each situation, White retained the ability to move White's Queen to h6 to obtain checkmate on Black's King in one move, and Black could do nothing about it.

In studying the simple checkmates, one basic principle should be remembered. For any simple checkmate that uses only the Queen or Rook and the King against a lonely opposing King, the player must force the King to one of the sides of the chessboard to effectuate the checkmate (and preferably to one of the corners, but this is not required). If the opposing King is not on one of the sides of the chessboard, the opposing King cannot be checkmated by only a Queen or a Rook and the King. The principle of forcing the opposing King to one of the sides or corners of the chessboard to effectuate checkmate is, perhaps, the most common of all the mating patterns and mating nets and the one most frequently encountered from simple checkmates to complex checkmates.

Tutorial Links

The following are the separate supplemental tutorials for Checking and Checkmating Studies II Simple Checkmates/Basic Endgames.

[Queen Simple Checkmates](#)

[Rook Simple Checkmates](#)

[Simple Bishop-Knight Checkmate](#)

[Simple Bishop Pair Checkmate](#)

The tutorial continues with

[Checking & Checkmating Studies III Complex Checkmates](#)