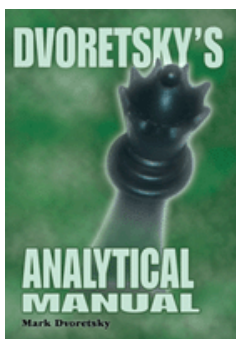




COLUMNISTS

The Instructor

Mark Dvoretsky



CHESTHEATRE

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Enlarging your Strategic Arsenal

Where can we find quality annotations, capable of enlarging a chessplayer's strategic arsenal, and teaching him to evaluate a position properly? There are, of course, a lot of useful sources.

For example, we may confidently recommend books where great players select their own games, and annotate them themselves. Grandmasters usually explain their own work deeply and accurately, getting not only into the purely technical, but also the sporting and psychological aspects of the struggle.

Also quite interesting and illustrative are those monographs (although of course not all of them – far from it – I mean only the best ones), illuminating the most important aspects of contemporary chess theory and practice. To name but a few of the authors responsible for some outstanding (non-openings related) books: Aron Nimzowitsch, John Nunn, Jonathan Rowson, Mihai Marin, Jacob Aagard, Karsten Müller... This is not a full listing, of course – and there are also a number of players who have published only one or two books each – but they are of very high quality.

It distresses me to note that, among the names presented above, not one writes in the Russian language. On the other hand, it's not only books that serve as a source of valuable information – there are also magazines, and Internet sites – one can find a great deal of excellent material there.

The games and fragments I present here have already been annotated by various authors. Computer checking has forced some corrections and additions to be made here and there, some of which are interesting in and of themselves, but they certainly do not negate the work of the annotators. The ideas and assessments they express still mostly hold true, and remain exceptionally useful to study.

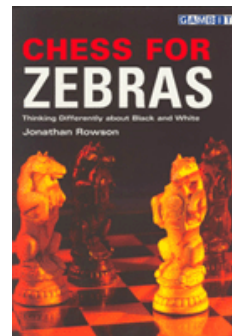
Each of these authors has his own style of annotating. For example, Botvinnik's annotations are rather dry, strict and definitive, much like a teacher's. Here's how he described a pair of episodes from his own games, in which he had to make skillful use of a pair of knights (a theme that closely resembles what we looked at in our last article, and which coincides with it at some points).

Ciocaltea – Botvinnik
Tel-Aviv Olympiad, 19644

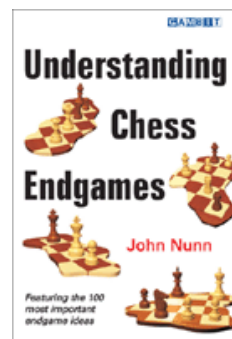


Black to move

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Chess for Zebras
by Jonathon Rowson



Understanding Chess Endgames
by John Nunn



Bishop v Knight: The Verdict
by Steve Mayer

It is hard to believe that in such an ending it is possible to win in just six moves. To intensify the pressure in the centre, Black transfers his knight from b6 to c5, and his rook will occupy the strongpoint at d4.

Believing that a game might come to a quick end isn't so difficult – over-the-board, anything can happen. What's harder to believe is that such a quick finish was justified. And in fact, White could have defended quite a bit more stubbornly. On the other hand, Botvinnik's regrouping was in fact the strongest plan, setting his opponent the most complex tasks.

23...Nb6-d7! 24.Rh1-c1+

White could have fought Black's idea by taking control of c5, with 24. Ne4!? In that event, 24...Ne5 25.Rc1+ Kb6 26.Nxf6 gf 27.Rc3 is not dangerous. Botvinnik would probably have replied 24...Nxe4+ 25.de Nc5 + 26.Ke3 Rd3+ 27.Ke2 Rd4 28.f3 Rb4, anticipating the continuation 29. Rc1 Kb6 30.Rc3 a5, with an overwhelming advantage. White could improve this defense by 29.Kd2! Nxb3+ 30.Kc3 Rb5 31.ab; on the other hand, after 31...Rc5+ 32.Kd3 Kb6, White's troubles are still not over, since the resulting rook ending is pretty unpleasant for him.

24...Kc7-b6 25.Rc1-c3?

He had to continue 25.f3!, so as to put his knight on e4 at the first available opportunity. For example, 25...Nc5?! 26.Bc4 Rd4 27.Ne4! Ncxe4+ 28.fe =/+ , and Black can't play 28...Nxe4+? 29.Ke3. After 25... Ne5 26.Rc3 Ng6 27.Rc4, White's position remains clearly worse, but defensible.

25...Nd7-c5 26.Kd2-e2?!

26.Ke3 Ng4+ 27.Ke2 would have held out longer.

26...Rd8-d4 27.h4-h5

27.Rc4 Rxd3 28.Rxc5 Rxb3 was absolutely hopeless.



Black to move

27...a7-a5

27...Rh4 could also have been played immediately, but Black is aiming at a more important pawn – b2.

Perhaps it was more accurate to aim at it by 27...Rb4, with a7-a5 to follow, since White could now play 28.Bc4, forcing the enemy rook to go after the h-pawn after all. By the way, an immediate 27...Rh4?! could be met by 28.Rc4, when 28...Rh2? doesn't work, in view of 29.Kf1 and 30. Kg1. On the other hand, 28...Rxc4 29.Bxc4 Na4 would maintain Black's advantage.

28.Ke2-e3?! Rd4-b4 0-1

Now 29...a4 is threatened, and if 29.d4 there follows 29...Ng4+. In addition my opponent had hardly any time left on his clock.

Botvinnik – Levenfish

Moscow/Leningrad 1937, 12th Match Game



Black to move

17...Nd7-c5?

An obvious positional error. One black knight should have occupied d4, and the other controlled the squares c4 and d5 (from b6). Thus by continuing 17...Nd4 18.Qd2 Qa5 followed by ...Nb6 Black would have achieved an equal game.

18.Qe2-d2 Nc5-e6 19.Ra1-c1 Ne6-d4

It appears that Black has played quite sensibly, securely occupying the d4 square. However, it transpires that the knight at c6 is out of play, the weakness of the d5 square is not covered, and Black's only active piece – his knight at d4 – is attacking not those squares on which the white pieces must stand, but only those that they pass over without stopping.

For this example, I have deliberately ignored those points where Black could have defended better – this is unimportant. What is much more important is the evaluation given by Botvinnik, and the development of events in this game, which supports it. We see that, first of all, control of even so powerful a square as d4 sometimes carries no real weight; and secondly, that knights which are protecting one another are most often ineffective, and therefore such a placement is to be avoided (an example of the “superfluous piece” principle).

20.f2-f4

The advance of the f-pawn is highly unpleasant for Black.

Another plan – 20.Nd5, with 21.Rc4 to follow – wasn't bad, either.

20...Qd8-a5 21.f4-f5 f7-f6 22.Rf1-f2

The rook frees the queen from having to defend the b2 pawn, so that it can head off to the kingside.

22...Kg8-h8 23.Qd2-d1 Rb8-d8

Of course, the exchange 23...gf 24.ef is unfavourable for Black, since it activates White's king's bishop. But now White himself exchanges pawns and weakens the enemy king's defences.

24.f5xg6 h7xg6 25.Qd1-g4 Nc6-e7 26.Bg2-f1

Threatening 27.Bc4.

26...d6-d5 27.Nc3xd5 Ne7xd5 28.e4xd5 Nd4-f5



White to move

As Botvinnik pointed out, 29.Rxf5! gf 30.Qh5+ Kg8 31.d6 Rf7 32.Bc4 Rdd7 33.Bxf7+ Rxf7 34.d7 would have won by force. On the other hand, the move he actually played, **29.Bc5**, doesn't let slip his decisive advantage, and White did go on to win.

This endgame reminds me of an old game, which I might have played better, had I been familiar with the classic example we just looked at.

Radashkovich – Dvoretzky

Batumi 1969



In contrast to the Botvinnik – Levenfish game, here the knight on d4 plays a significant role, because it works together with the rook, which has just invaded the enemy camp. The other Black knight occupies a shaky position; but for now, the threat of a2-a4 isn't too dangerous, in view of Ne2+, followed by Nbd4.

Black's task is to bring up new fighting units in support of his already advanced troops, so that they will not be doomed to extinction after his opponent consolidates.

19...Bg7-h6?!

A risky path. Had I known the Botvinnik game then, I would have been more afraid of the advance of White's f-pawn.

19...Qd6 wasn't bad, but it required accurate calculation. On 20.a4, Black should not continue 20...Ne2+ 21.Kh1 Nbd4 22.Ne3 +/-, but 20...Na3! 21.Ne3 Ne2+ (21...Nxb1 22.Nxc2 Nd2! 23.Ba3 Qd7 24.Bxf8 Bxf8 is also interesting) 22.Kh2 Rd2 23.Qxd2 (23.Bxa3 Rxd1 24.Bxd6 Rxd6=) 23...Qxd2 24.Bxa3 Nd4, with roughly equal chances.

And 19...Qg5!/? was also worth considering.

20.f2-f4! f7-f5

20...Ne2+? 21.Kh2 Nbd4 22.Rf2 +/- would not work, as White threatens both 23.Bxd4 and 23.Rxe2.

Retreating the bishop seemed illogical, but this move was quite playable: 20...Bg7!? 21.Kh1 ef 22.Rxf4 (22.gf Re8 is worse, as all the black pieces become quite active) 22...Rxb2 23.Rxb2 Ne6 24.Rc2 Nxf4 (24...Nbd4?! 25.Rc8!) 25.gf +/-.

21.Qd1-d3 Bh6-g7

21...Qd6? loses to 22.fe Qxe5 23.Qxc2. And the knight reconfiguration is still premature: 21...Ne2+ 22.Kh2 Nbd4 23.Bxd4 Nxd4 24.fe Rd2 25.Qc4 +/-.

22.Kg1-h1!

The king avoids the check, thereby creating a threat of 23.a4. And here again, Black fails to withstand the tension.



Black to move

22...e5xf4?

He had to play 22...fe! (rather than 22...Qd7? at once, because of 23.fe!) 23.Bxe4! (23.Qxe4? would be bad because of 23...Nd6 and 24...N6f5) 23...Qd7 24.g4 ef (Black could also play 24...Rd8 25.Ne3 Rxb2 26.Rxb2 ef unclear) 25.Nxf4 Rfc8, with chances for both sides. After the text, White simplifies favorably.

23.Nd5xf4! Qd8-c8 24.Rb1-c1 Rf8-e8 25.Rc1xc2 Qc8xc2 26.Qd3xc2 Nd4xc2 27.Bb2xg7 Kg8xg7 28.e4xf5

And Black ends up a pawn down. The attempt to solve this problem tactically meets a rather simple refutation.

28...Nc2-e3?! 29.Rf1-e1 Nb5-d6 30.Nf4-e6+ Kg7-f6 31.Ne6-c7!

I had been hoping for 31.Rxe3? Nxf5 +/-.

31...Re8-e7 32.Re1xe3 Re7xc7 33.Re3-e6+ 0-1

Bent Larsen is one of my favorite chessplayers and authors. The famous Danish grandmaster's annotations clearly reflect his creative nature and his deep, non-standard understanding of chess, along with his indisputable literary talent.

Larsen wrote many articles, which managed to be both amusing and instructive. His book, *Larsen's Selected Games of Chess*, came out in a Russian edition way back in 1972, in Valeri Murakhveri's brilliant translation (what a pity that this amazingly talented, multi-faceted, and wise human being is no longer with us). Since that time, it has not been reprinted.

Let me show you one of Larsen's games, related to our theme. The first half will be presented with short notes.

Larsen – Donner

Beverwijk 1960

1.g2-g3 e7-e5 2.Bf1-g2 d7-d5 3.Ng1-f3

An original development scheme that Larsen used with success. His book features a number of victorious encounters stemming from this variation.

3...Bf8-d6

3...e4 has also been tried (Larsen – Donner, Zurich 1959, Larsen – van Scheltinga, Beverwijk 1960), as has 3...Nc6 (Larsen – Geller, Copenhagen 1960, Larsen – Simagin, Moscow 1962).

4.0-0 Ng8-e7 5.c2-c4?!

In Larsen's opinion, White would have done better to have played 5.d3, intending Nbd2 and e2-e4.

5...c7-c6 6.d2-d3 0-0 7.Nb1-d2 Nb8-d7 8.e2-e4 d5xe4

8...d4! deserved, not just consideration (Larsen), but preferment.

9.Nd2xe4 Bd6-c7 10.b2-b3

10.d4 ed 11.Qxd4 Ne5 is good for Black.

10...Rf8-e8 11.Bc1-b2 Ne7-f5 12.Rf1-e1

I had caught a bad cold, and my thinking apparatus was rotating at minimum speed. On these not very ingenious moves I had spent more than an hour and a half!

12...Nd7-f8 13.Qd1-d2 14.f7-f6 15.Ra1-d1

Afraid of time pressure I began to play quickly. If I didn't wish to play the equalizing 14.d4, then 14.b4 at once was possibly better.

14...Nf8-e6 15.b3-b4 a7-a5 16.b4-b5 Bc7-b6

16...cb a4 was stronger.

17.b5xc6 b7xc6 18.Qd2-c1 a5-a4 19.c4-c5 Bb6-a5 20.Bb2-c3 Re8-e7 21. Bc3xa5 Ra8xa5 22.Nf3-d2 Ne6-d4 23.Nd2-c4 Ra5-a7 24.f2-f4



Black to move

Of course Black has every reason to be proud of the Knight on d4, but exaggerated care for it leads him astray. The black position must not be

overestimated; also the white Knights are full of pep.

Black should play ...exf4, but Donner thought that the centralized Knight deserved to keep its solid pawn protection. During the rest of the game this Knight does not do very much.

What follows belongs to my dearest recollections. That is why the game has been included in this selection, although, seen as a whole, it can hardly be called one of my best games.

I shall present one more extended commentary on this position, from author Steve Mayer's interesting book, [*Bishop v Knight: The Verdict*](#).

One thing that's remarkable about this game is how well-placed all four knights appear to be. Whose knights are actually better placed? A straightforward arithmetic approach suggests that Black's are; after all, White's knights are "only" on the fourth rank, while Black has a knight on the fourth rank and a somewhat further advanced knight on the fifth rank.

You may have noticed that the black knights "link up" with each other. This can sometimes be a very useful arrangement, as it means that one knight can replace another if an exchange occurs. In fact, Mark Dvoretsky has made a useful discovery that he terms *The Superfluous Piece*...

In Larsen – Donner, we see an excellent illustration of *The Superfluous Piece*, and it helps us to determine whose knights are really better placed. Donner's knights look impressive, but only one of them can occupy d4, while the other has no special square that beckons. Thus, Donner's knight at f5 is superfluous. By contrast, Larsen's knights both occupy good squares in their own right and have the potential of playing into the hole at d6. At the moment, however, a white knight playing into d6 would make the other knight largely superfluous, as it would have no better square to play to than its present post. In part, this is the reason behind Larsen's suggesting 24...ef here, as no new squares would open up for the white knights.

In conclusion, I think that we could say that each side's knights are equally well-placed following White's 24th move. However, this evaluation will soon change.

After something like 24...ef! 25.Qxf4 Nc2 26.Re2 Ncd4 27.Red2, White appears to stand better, but not by much.

24...Bc8-e6? 25.f4xe5 f6xe5 26.Kg1-h1

The black Knight must be shown due respect. Now it can never give check.

In my view, White could also have spared the respect: 26.Ned6! Kh8 27. Qg5 +/- is quite strong – while 26.Nxe5?! Bxa2 27.Qf4 would be far less convincing.

Here's one more of Steve Mayer's annotations.

And now we can see how Donner's mistake at move 24 has hurt his position. His own knights still have the same possibilities as before and the knight at f5 is still superfluous. But the white knights have gained a number of possibilities, for example, the knight at c4 presses on the weak e5-pawn, while the knight at e4 has gained the possibility of using g5 as a staging ground for tactical operations on the kingside and possible entry to the hole at e6. Consequently, if either white knight plays into d6, the other knight will still retain possibilities of improving its current placement and therefore avoid the fate of Dvoretsky's *Superfluous Piece*.

26...Be6-d5 27.Re1-f1 Re7-e6 28.Rf1-f2 Ra7-f7 29.Rd1-f1

White is making progress. He is gaining control of the f-file, and Black has problems with his weak e5 pawn. Now something must be done against Ng5.

29...Bd5xc4 30.d3xc4 Nf5-h6 31.Rf2xf7 Nh6xf7 32.Qc1-d1!

A strong move. Black must defend his a-pawn, and then White starts an action on the King's side.

32. . .Qd8-a5 33.Qd1-h5 Qa5-c7 34.Bg2-h3



34...Re6-h6?

Here the rook is quite misplaced. 34...Re8 was impossible because of 35. Ng5 but 34...Re7 had to be tried. The black position was difficult, but not clearly lost.

35.Qh5-g4 Rh6-g6

He can no longer get his rook back: 35...Re6 36.Qxe6! Nxe6 37.Bxe6+-. He should probably have left it on h6, to keep an eye on the bishop. On the other hand, after 35...Qd8 36.Qd7!? Qxd7 37.Bxd7, White also retains a great advantage.

36.Qg4-d1 Qc7-a7 37.Qd1-b1! Nf7-g5 38.Qb1-b6! Qa7-a8

38...Qxb6 39.cxb6 would obviously give White an irresistible passed pawn.

39.Ne4xg5 Rg6xg5 40.Qb6-c7 h7-h6 41.Rf1-b1

The game was adjourned here and Black sealed 41...Kh7 after which 42. Bg2 wins easily. But 41...Qa6 was no better because of 42.Bf1! But what I like about this game is this: What did the black Knight on d4 really accomplish?

Botvinnik's annotations showed us his conclusions regarding the assessment of the position, and his plan of action. Larsen expressed the feelings he had at various stages of the battle. Meyer explained in detail the connection between various elements of the concrete position on the board, and the general principle having the most to do with its assessment. As you can see, these various approaches to annotating differ significantly, but each is interesting in its own way, and gives us some excellent food for thought.

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