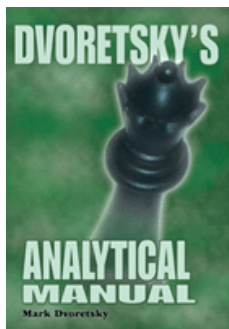




COLUMNISTS

The Instructor

Mark Dvoretsky



CHESSTHEATRE

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Determine the Best Defense

I'm offering some new examples for your perusal in which you first have to find the strongest, most dangerous continuation of the attack. Then, switching to the opponent's side, determine the best defense.

Botvinnik-Suttles
Belgrade, 1969



[FEN "2r1r3/pp3nkp/1q1p2p1/3P4/3NNP2/6Pb/PP1Q4/4RR1K w - - 0 25"]

1.?

I'll point out first that the tempting attacking move 25.f5? is refuted by 25...Rxe4!

In the game, White moved his rook out from under the attack: **25.Rf3 Rc4 26. Rd3**



[FEN "4r3/pp3nkp/1q1p2p1/3P4/2rNNP2/3R2Pb/PP1Q4/4R2K b - - 0 26"]

1...?

The position is still worrying for Black and he has to make several precise moves. The first of them is 26...Bf5!:

- a) 37.Nxf5+ gf 38.Rb3 Qc7 39.Nc3 Rxe1+ 40.Qxe1 Nh6=.
- b) 37.b3!? Bxe4+ 38.Rxe4 Rxe4 38.bc Qb1+! (so as not to come under attack he has to deflect his opponent's pieces with threats to his own king) 39.Kg2 Re1 40.Nf3 Rh1!? 41.Qe2 Rc1=.

Duncan Suttles wasn't playing as strongly and his position soon became serious: **26...Qb4?! 27.b3 Qxd2 28.Rxd2 Rc7 29.Rde2 Bg4** (29...Rce7? 30.

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Nxd6+-) **30.Re3 Bf5?** (better is 30...Bd7+/-) **31.Nxd6!**

White won a pawn and subsequently made good on his advantage.

Grandmaster Georgi Tringov suggested a clever idea: begin an attack on the a1-h8 diagonal, securing a square on this diagonal for the queen with the move **25.b3!**.



[FEN "2r1r3/pp3nkp/1q1p2p1/3P4/3NNP2/1P4Pb/P2Q4/4RR1K b - - 0 25"]

1...?

The question is, how should Black defend?

Obviously he has to choose between two possibilities: 25...Bxf1 and 25...Rxe4. Let's calculate the variations.

A) 25...Bxf1 26.Qb2 Kf8 (in the event of 26...Ne5 the simple 27.Rxf1 is decisive) 27.Ne6+ Rxe6 (27...Ke7 28.Qf6+) 28.de



[FEN "2r2k2/pp3n1p/1q1pP1p1/8/4NP2/1P4P1/PQ6/4Rb1K b - - 0 28"]

There's no visible escape from the multiplicity of threats (29.Qf6; 29.ef; 29.Rxf1). For example, 28...Qb4 29.Qf6 Rc7 30.ef Qxe1 31.Qd8+ Kxf7 32.Ng5+ (Botvinnik), or 28...Bc4 29.ef Bxf7 30.Qh8+ Bg8 31.Qf6+ Bf7 32.Nxd6 Qc6+ 33.Kh2 Qd7 34.f5!, or 28...Qc6 (the most stubborn) 29.Qf6 Rc7 30.ef Re7 31.Qh8+ Kxf7, and now either 32.Qf6+ Ke8 33.Qxd6+/-, or 32.Qxh7+ Ke8 33.Qxg6+ Kd8 (33...Kd7? 34.Kg1! with the terrible threat of 35.Nf6+) 34.Rd1! Qxe4+ 35.Qxe4 Rxe4 36.Rxf1+/-.

B) **25...Rxe4! 26.Rxe4 Bxf1 27.Ne6+ Kg8 28.Qb2 Ne5**



[FEN "2r3k1/pp5p/1q1pN1p1/3Pn3/4RP2/1P4P1/PQ6/5b1K w - - 0 29"]

29.Rxe5

Taking the pawn also deserves serious attention, as it leads to interesting forced play. Let's have a look: 29.fe Bd3! 30.Re2!! (everything else loses) 30... Bxe2 31.ed Rc1+! 32.Qxc1 Bf3+ 33.Kh2 Qf2+ 34.Kh3 Bg4+! (the only move) 34.Kh4 (34.Kxg4?? Qf5+ 35.Kh4 Qh5#) 34...Bxe6 35.de Qh2+!? (35... Qf6+ 36.Qg5 Qxe6 is also sufficient for a draw) 36.Kg5 (36.Kg4?? Qh5+ 37. Kf4 Qh6+ and 38...Qxc1) 35...Qxg3+ 36.Kf6 Qxd6. Black has won a pawn and isn't afraid of 37.Qc8+? Qf8+. However, it isn't clear how he can strengthen his position, which means that the battle will most likely end in a draw.

29...de 30.Qxe5

Botvinnik continued the variation like this: 30...Rc7 31.Qxc7 Qxc7 32.Nxc7 Kf7 33.d6 Kf6 34.Kg1 Bh3 35.Kf2 with a winning minor piece ending.

But it isn't compulsory to give up the rook. As Jose Fernandez Garcia has pointed out, after **30...Kf7!** (rather than 30...Rc7?), White only has perpetual check.

We can see that the combination that started with the move 25.b3 and the path chosen by Botvinnik in the game are objectively about equal. In both cases Black has to defend accurately, but with correct play he obtains a draw. I'll leave it to readers to decide which course of action leaves White greater practical chances of success.

Aronin-Nezhmetdinov

Cheboksary, 1950



[FEN "5rk1/6pp/2pb3r/1p3p1q/2PP1PbP/4R1P1/1P1N4/R2B1QK1 b - - 0 25"]

1...?

Black is a pawn down, but the material balance can be reestablished immediately by means of 25...Bxf4 26.Qxf4 Bxd1. This is what was played in the game. The peaceful position that arises is obviously preferable for White, and he won in the end.

The brilliant attacking player Rashid Nezhmetdinov found an impressive combination starting with the move **25...Bxd1!**, but he rejected it because of

the reply 26.Qxd1?, not noticing the simple retort 26...Bxf4! 27.gf (certainly better than 27.Rd3 or 27.Rea3) 27...Qxh4 28.Qf3 Qh2+ with a win. This often happens: a strong player undertakes deep and beautiful ideas, but still fails because of some elementary miscalculation. From which stems an important conclusion for coaches and players: reliability and accuracy in calculating variations is no less important than depth and inventiveness.

26.Rxd1 Qg4!

Here an attack on f4 is now harmless: 26...Bxf4? 27.gf Qxh4 (27...Qg4+ 28.Kf2 Qxf4+ 29.Nf3 Rxh4 30.Ke2+/-) 28.Qf3 Qh2+ 29.Kf1 Rh4 (29...Rg6 30.Qf2) 30.Qf2 Rxf4 31.Nf3 with better chances for White.



[FEN "5rk1/6pp/2pb3r/1p3p2/2PP1PqP/4R1P1/1P1N4/3R1QK1 w -- 0 27"]

1.?

What should White do now? His opponent intends 27...Bxf4 or 27...Rxf4. Losing is 27.Qf3? Bxf4 28.Rb3 (28.Qxf4 Qxd1+) 28...Rxf4 29.cb Bxg3 30.Qxg4 Rxf4.

The move **27.Kf2?**, would seem to parry both threats. But Nezhmetdinov had prepared an impressive retort for this very occasion.

27...g5!! 28.hg (28.fg f4-+) 28...Rh2+ 29.Kg1

In the event of 29.Ke1, the idea was to employ a deflecting queen sacrifice: 29...Qxg3+!! 30.Rxg3 Re8+. But I won't examine this variation as the main one because it has a prosaic path to victory, unfortunately: 29...Rh3 or 29...Bb4.

29...Rh3



[FEN "5rk1/7p/2pb4/1p3pP1/2PP1Pq1/4R1Pr/1P1N4/3R1QK1 w -- 0 30"]

Subsequently, Nezhmetdinov considers 30.Kf2 Bxf4! 31.gf Rh2+ 32.Ke1 Qh4+ and 30.Kg2 Bxf4! 31.Qxf4 Qxd1 32.Kxh3? Qh1#. In the second variation after 32.Nf1, White can still defend stubbornly, so I would prefer to win the exchange by another method: 31...Qxf4 32.gf Rxe3 with a big advantage.

Instead of a king move, it's better for White to play 30.cb!? (or immediately 30.Rde1!?) 30...cb (the consequences of 30...Bxf4 31.Qxf4 Qxd1+ 32.Nf1 or

30...Qh5 31.Qf3 Bxf4! 32.gf Rxf3 33.Nxf3 Qg4+ 34.Kf2 are unclear) 31. Rde1 Rxc3 32.Rxc3 Qxc3+ 33.Kh1. However, the advantage here unquestionably remains on Black's side, so it's worth doubting the move 27. Kf2?! and considering an alternative: retreating the rook from the vulnerable d1-square.

But to where? In the event of 27.Ra1?!, the same breakthrough 27...g5!! 28.hg Rh3 is strong, and not 29.Qf3 or 29.Qg2 because of 29...Bxf4 – the indefensibility of the e3-rook is having an effect. The solution to the position is finally becoming clear.

27.Rde1!



[FEN "5rk1/7p/2pb4/1p3pP1/2PP1Pq1/4R1Pr/1P1N4/4RQK1 b - - 0 30"]

Now 27...g5? no longer works. On 27...Rxc4, unpleasant is 28.c5! Bc7 29. Qf3, and the initiative passes into White's hands. Also, in the variation 27... Bb4 28.R1e2 Rxc4 29.Qg2!, Black encounters difficulties. This kind of play calls for a cold heart on the part of the "attacker" and it's quite possible that it would allow White not only to get out of danger, but also to obtain good chances for ultimate success. As a result we come to the same final question as in the previous example: which path is more expedient from a practical point of view, the peaceful one or the sharper one?

Vartanov-Pokinboroda

Barnaul, 1966



[FEN "3r2k1/1q1rpp1/4p2p/1pp5/5PQ1/P2P2P1/1PP1RN1P/4R1K1 w - - 0 1"]

1.?

In the game between two amateurs, the unprepossessing move 1.Qh5? was made, leading after 1...c4! to a difficult position for White.

A coach from Barnaul, Candidate Master Yuri Nikonov, found a beautiful combination starting with 1.Ne4!. Of course, such aggressive continuations should be examined before anything else, as White creates two threats simultaneously: 2.Nf6+ and 2.Nxc5.

The question is, how can Black best cope with the danger that has arisen?

First let's consider and eliminate the straightforward 1...f5? 2.Nf6+ Kh8 (even worse is 2...Kf7 3.Qh5+) 3.Qh5 gf 4.Qxh6+ Kg8 5.Qxf6+- with the

subsequent Rxe6.

But the careful 1...Kh8? 2.Nxc5 Qb6 3.b4+/- shouldn't suit us either – no compensation for the pawn is visible. You can only go into this kind of position if all other options lose by force.

The main variation in Nikonov's analysis looks like this:

1...Rc7 2.f5!! (an unexpected and effective breach of the enemy defenses on a square that appeared to have been solidly reinforced) **2...ef**

In the event of 2...Nxf5, decisive is 3.Nf6+ Kh8(f8) 4.Qxf5!. On 2...Kh8, White replies not 3.fe? f5, but 3.f6 with a big advantage. Relatively better is the cool 2...c4!? 3.f6 Ng6, although the position after 4.h4 cd 5.cd still looks unpleasant for Black.

3.Nf6+ Kf8 (3...Kh8 4.Qxf5! g6 5.Qe5+-) **4.Qxf5!**



[FEN "3r1k2/1qr1npp1/5N1p/1pp2Q2/8/P2P2P1/1PP1R2P/4R1K1 b - - 0 4"]

Taking the queen leads to mate, and on 4...g6 it's simplest to reply 5.Qf4 g5 6.Nh7+ Kg8 7.Qf6+-.

4...gf 5.Qxf6 Rc6 (if 5...Qc6 or 5...Qb6, then 6.Re6+-) **6.Rxe7 Rxf6 7.Rxb7**, and White's extra pawn will most likely bring him victory.

And now I'll show you the best defense that I've managed to find by checking Nikonov's analysis.

1...Rd4!



[FEN "3r2k1/1q2npp1/4p2p/1pp5/3rNPQ1/P2P2P1/1PP1R2P/4R1K1 w - - 0 2"]

Here the rook is positioned much more actively than on c7, which makes a difference in all variations. For example, 2.Nxc5 Qb6 3.b4 a5, and the b4-pawn is under attack. On 4.Kf1, Black replies not 4...ab? 5.Nxe6! fe 6.Rxe6+-, but 4...Qc6! with sufficient counterplay.

2.f5!? c4!

Taking on f5 is still bad: 2...ef? 3.Nf6+ Kf8 4.Qxf5! gf 5.Rxe7 Qxe7 6.Rxe7 Kxe7 7.Qxc5+. The move 2...Kh8 wins in strength compared with the

variation 1...Rc7, as after 3.f6 gf, the knight is pinned and can't take on f6. Then again, in the position that arises with 4.Qh5 Ng8 5.Nxc5 Qc7, White is still better, although possibly not by much.

3.f6

A double-edged situation that is difficult to evaluate arises in the variation 3. fe f5 4.Nf6+ Kh8 5.Qh5 cd 6.cd gf 7.Qxh6+ Kg8 8.Qxf6 Rg4 or 8...Rxd3.

3...Ng6 4.Rf2 cd 5.cd



[FEN "3r2k1/1q3pp1/4pNp/1p6/3rN1Q1/P2P2P1/1P3R1P/4R1K1 b - - 0 5"]

White has maintained unpleasant pressure on the kingside and his position is probably preferable. But weaknesses have arisen in his camp, too, and the outcome of the battle after 5...Qd5 or 5...Qb6 remains unclear.

Kasparov-Yusupov

Soviet Championship, Frunze 1981



[FEN "2nq2rb/3pr2k/1pp1p2p/p3Pp1B/3P1P2/PPN5/Q1P/R5RK w - - 0 31"]

1.?

Black is a pawn up and he wants to exchange major pieces on the g-file. White mustn't hesitate!

31.Ne4!! fe 32.f5



[FEN "2nq2rb/3pr2k/1pp1p2p/p3PP1B/3Pp3/PP6/5Q1P/R5RK b - - 0 32"]

1...?

In time trouble, Artur Yusupov didn't manage to find his way around the changed situation and quickly lost.

32...Rg5? 33.Rxg5 hg 34.f6 Kh6

34...Qf8 is refuted by 35.fe! Qxf2 36.e8Q+-.

35.fe Qxe7

No better is 35...Nxe7 36.Qf7!+-.

36.Bf7! d6 37.Rf1 g4 (37...de 38.Qe2) 38.Bxe6! Qxe6 39.Qh4+ Kg7, and Black resigned because of 40.Rf6.

Let's return to the position after White's thirty-second move and try to improve the defense.

As Garry Kasparov justifiably commented in *Chess Informant #32*, the most energetic retort to the deflecting 32...e3? is 33.Qc2!+-. Also losing is 32...Reg7? 33.Bg6+ Rxg6 34.fg+ Rxg6 35.Rxg6! Kxg6 36.Rg1+.

It was necessary to play **32...Qf8!**, defending from 33.Bg6+? Rxg6 34.fg+ Kg8-+. White has to advance his pawn to f6, and the only question is whether to do it immediately or after a preliminary exchange on g8.

First let's look at 33.f6.



[FEN "2n2qrb/3pr2k/1pp1pP1p/p3P2B/3Pp3/PP6/5Q1P/R5RK b - - 0 33"]

1...?

Kasparov limits this to a short comment: 33.f6? Reg7!. Yet the move recommended by him doesn't deserve an exclamation mark, but a question mark, as it allows White to obtain a decisive advantage by means of 34.Rxg7+ Rxg7 (34...Bxg7 35.f7!) 35.Qc2 Rg5 36.Qxe4+ Kg8 37.h4! – there isn't a single safe square for the rook on the g-file.

Sacrificing the useless h8-bishop is the key to a successful defense in all variations.

33...Bxf6!! 34.Qxf6 (34.ef Reg7! 35.Rxg7+ Rxg7, and the rook hunt now fails, as the queen is tied to the f6 pawn) 34...Reg7 35.Bg6+ Kh8 36.Raf1 Qxf6 37.ef Rxg6 38.Rxg6



[FEN "2n3rk/3p4/1pp1pPRp/p7/3Pp3/PP6/7P/5R1K b - - 0 38"]

1...?

It would seem that the passed f-pawn decides the outcome of the battle. But there follows the coldblooded 34...Kh7!!, and an ending arises in which the knight and pawns are evidently no weaker than the white rook.

Kasparov recommends **33.Rxg8 Kxg8 34.f6.**



[FEN "2n2qkb/3pr3/1pp1pP1p/p3P2B/3Pp3/PP6/5Q1P/R6K b - - 0 34"]

1...?

And again the grandmaster awards a bad move an exclamation mark - 34...Rg7?. After 35.Qe2! Rg5 36.h4!, he looks at 36...Rg3 37.Kh2, which isn't completely convincing because of 37...Bxf6! 37.Kxg3! (37.ef? Qd6+) 37...Bg7 38.Qxe4 Ne7. This position is good for White, of course, but much stronger for him is 37.f7+! (rather than 37.Kh2) 37...Kg7 38.Qh2 (38.Kh2) or 37...Kh7 38.Qxe4+ Kg7 39.Qf4+- (39.Rf1+-).

Instead of 36...Rg3, more stubborn is 36...Bxf6 37.hg (+/- Kasparov) 37...Bxg5 38.Rf1 Qd8 39.Qxe4 Ne7, but after 40.Qf3, Black's position is probably lost.

The bishop had to be sacrificed a move earlier.

34...Bxf6!! 35.ef (35.Qxf6? Rg7+) **35...Rg7! 36.Qf4**

Dubious is 36.Rf1 Rg5 37.Be8. Black makes a draw with 37...Kh8 38.Bxd7 Rf5, but he is also entitled to fight for the advantage by choosing 37...Nd6! 38.Bxd7 Kf7.

36...Rg5 37.f7+ Kg7 38.Rg1 Rxg1+ 39.Kxg1 Ne7

The strong f7-pawn compensates White for his material deficiency, but does no more than that. The game should end in a draw.

Anyone who wants to continue training on this theme can find additional examples (in English) in my [article](#) that was published a few years ago on the Russian site e3-e5.

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