



COLUMNISTS

The Instructor

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The Chess Cafe

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Non-Standard Combinations

Tactical mastery, in a chessplayer, is put together from several parts. The basics are:

- 1) tactical alertness, resourcefulness, an eye for combinations;
- 2) the ability to anticipate unexpected possibilities from one's opponent;
- 3) lengthy and accurate calculation of variations; and
- 4) self-assurance, courage, and a readiness for risk.

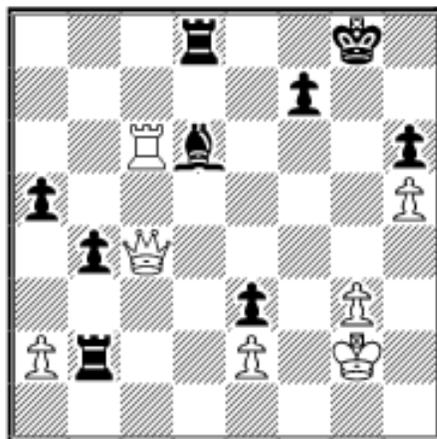
It hardly needs demonstrating that training for tactical mastery begins precisely with our first point: the growth of fantasy and resourcefulness. It's no accident that so many problem-books are published, for beginners as well as for midrank players. Solving the combinations in these collections acquaints you with the most important tactics, things like forks, interference, decoying, etc. After this, finding typical combinations won't cause you the slightest difficulty.

But suppose we have a chessplayer who has gained experience, and has already reached a high level of mastery. His tactical training nevertheless can and should continue - just in a somewhat different way. What we train for then is not the mastery of the basic tactics, but the capability of quickly finding unexpected solutions - solutions that are not obvious at first glance. And we do not just look for combinations (recall Botvinnik's definition: "A combination is a forcing variation involving sacrifices"), but also for concrete moves which do not involve sacrificing material.

In one of the tests given in a recent session of my school



in Russia, I included the following example:



***Korchnoi – Savon USSR
Championship, Riga 1970***

White to move

White has a great advantage. Wouldn't 38 Kf3, or exchanging rooks by 38 Rc8, seem like the simple, safe route? Those

answers were given by almost all solvers (grandmasters and strong masters among them). In both cases, however, Black could have dragged out resistance for quite some time; after the move Korchnoi makes, the battle is over at once.

38 Qh4!

The rook is en prise, and 38..Rd7 is met by the forking 39 Qg4+. After **38...Rxe2+ 39 Kf3** (39 Kh3) **39...Be7 40 Qxe7**, Black resigned.

White's solution was tactical - but not combinative, since nothing was sacrificed (of course, we don't count the e2-pawn). Such exercises in real-world tactics are not to be found in any books of combinations; yet they are most effective in developing tactical alertness.

Of course, in order to train one's combinative alertness, it is useful to get training in finding combinations - non-standard combinations, whose difficulty lies in their unexpectedness and subtlety. Such as the following:



Kujala – Zagorovsky
Correspondence 1992/96

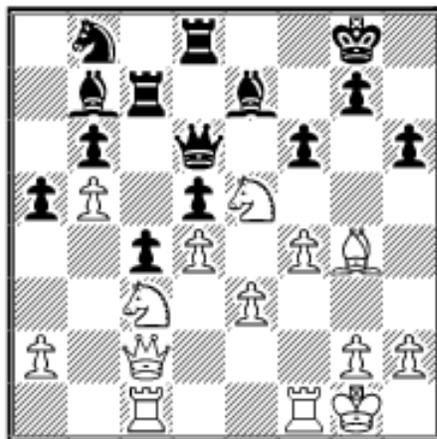
White to move

1 Nxg5? Rg7 is a mistake;
 nor does White get
 anything out of 1 Qxg5+?!
 Qxg5 2 Nxg5 Nc4 3 Rc3
 Rxa3 4 Rxa3 Nxa3

(unclear).

1 Nd4!!+- (attacking the b5-pawn). Black resigned in view of **1...ed 2 Bxd4 Rb7 3 Rxb6! Rxb6 4 Rc8!! Qxc8** (4...Qe7 5 Rxe8 Qxe8 6 Qxg5+ and 7 Bxb6) **5 Qxg5+ Kh7** (5...Kf7 6 Qf6+) **6 Qh5+ Bh6 7 Qf7+**. In order to give mate here, White had to find a combinative means to open his dark-squared bishop's diagonal, and draw off all the enemy pieces defending the king.

And now, watch how habits and knowledge, developed by this kind of training, help achieve success in tournaments against very strong opposition. You have before you several sharp examples of the work of my student, Vadim Zvjagintsev, at the recently completed round-robin grandmaster tournament in Essen (Germany), where he secured first prize, winning six games while drawing only three.



*Zvjagintsev –
Kasimzhanov Round 1*

White to move

Black has just played f7-f6, to drive back the strong knight and thereby reduce the pressure on his position. After the

unexpected reply **24 Qg6!!**, he had to resign at once, since 24...fe 25 Be6+ Kh8 26 fe leads to a quick mate.



*Fridman – Zvjagintsev
Round 2*

Black to move

Black has the extra pawn on c4, but it will be recovered soon, leaving White with a good position. What can be done

here? Vadim finds a surprising solution.

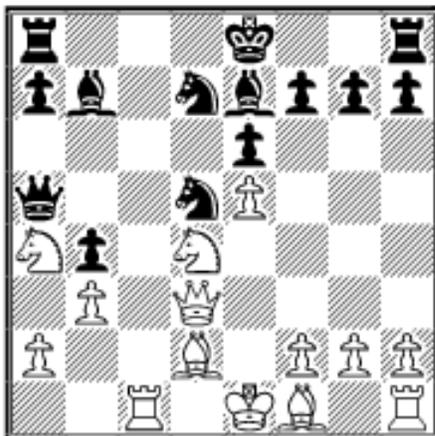
12...Bb4! 13 Nxc4 On 13 e4 Bxc3 14 bc Bd7! is unpleasant, as the pawn is taboo; whereas now, 13...Nxd5? would be bad because of 14 0-0-0.

13...Bh3!!

The weakness of the d5-pawn tells, nevertheless: after 14 Bxh3 Bxc3+ 15 bc Qxd5 -/+, the forking attack on rook and knight allows Black to recover the piece.

14 Bf3 0-0 15 e4 c6! With the White king stranded in the middle of the board, Black opens the game up

right away. Now he has an obvious advantage, which he successfully converted.



Korchnoi – Zvjagintsev Round 4

Korchnoi had introduced an opening novelty, and obtained a promising position. Here, he could continue 15 Qb5! Qxb5 16 Bxb5+/=, but decides he wants more.

15 Qg3?! His calculus is understandable: 15...0-0 leads to the loss of the exchange after 16 Bh6; on 15...g6, Black must consider both 16 Bh6 and 16 Bb5!?!; and other ways of defending the g7-pawn have their drawbacks too. Zvjagintsev considered his next move for only a couple of minutes.

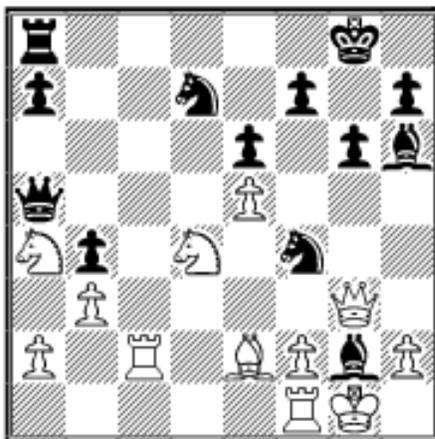
15...0-0!! 16 Bh6 g6 17 Bxf8 Bxf8 Unlike the preceding examples, this isn't a combination, but rather a positional sacrifice. Finding it required not so much tactical as strategic resourcefulness: the ability to evaluate properly the coming non-standard position.

For the time being, Black doesn't have even one pawn for the exchange sacrificed. However, the e5-pawn is vulnerable, and he also threatens 18...Bh6, followed by Bf4 or Nf4. White should probably have played either 18 Bb5 Bh6! 19 Rc2, or 18 Nc6 Bxc6 19 Rxc6, leading to a complex position with mutual chances. Korchnoi, however, went into a long think, and found a deep and beautiful combination with a queen sacrifice.

18 Be2?! Bh6 19 Rc2 (19 Nc6 Bxc6 20 Rxc6 Nf4

21 Rc2 Qxe5 22 Qf3 Qa1+ 23 Bd1 Rd8 is bad)
19...Nf4 20 0-0 The g2 square is indefensible: 20 Bf3
 Qxe5+, or 20 Nf3 Qd5 21 0-0 Qe4 22 Bd1 Qxc2! 23
 Bxc2 Ne2+ 24 Kh1 Nxc3+ 25 hg Rc8-+.

20...Bxg2



21 Qxg2!? Nxg2 22 Nc6

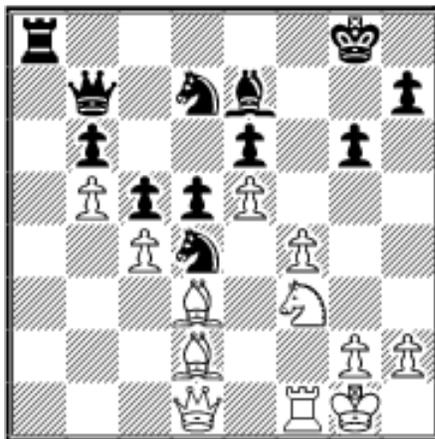
This was Viktor Lvovich's idea. The queen has nowhere to go; 22...Rc8 is met by 23 Nxa5 Rxc2 24 Bd1, with two Black pieces en prise. However, Vadim demonstrates a spectacular refutation.

22...Ne3!! 23 fe Black

also has the advantage after

23 Nxa5 Nxc2 24 Nc6 (24 f4? Ne3 25 Rf3 Nd5; 24 Bf3 Rc8 25 Nc6 Rc7) 24...Bf4.

23...Bxe3+ 24 Kg2 Qd5+ (thanks to this check, White does not get the Ne7+ fork) **25 Bf3 Qd3 26 Rb2** (26 Nxb4 Qb5 27 Bxa8 Qxb4-+) **26...Qb5! 27 Re1** (27 Ne7+ Kf8-+) **27...Bg5 28 Rd1 Nb6 29 Nd4 Qe8 30 Nxb6 ab 31 Bxa8 Qxa8+ 32 Nf3 Bf4**, and Black soon converted his advantage.



Zvjagintsev – Dautov Round 5

In the first part of the game, Zvjagintsev played to restrict the Black pieces: in fixing the Black pawn at c5, he blocked both the bishop at e7 and the knight at d7. But now, feeling that there are too few defenders near the Black king, he

begins an assault, without worrying that, at the same time, he is opening the floodgates to the enemy pieces as well.

24 Nxd4! cd 25 Qg4 Kg7 After 25...Nf8 26 f5 ef 27 Bxf5, White has a strong attack.

25...Nc5!? leads to interesting complications. It's likely that Dautov did not play this, because of the tempting bishop sacrifice 26 Bxg6 hg 27 Qxg6+ Kh8. But how does White continue the onslaught? 28 Rf3 is met by 28...Ra1+ 29 Kf2 Bh4+!, and the Black bishop comes to h4 with tempo, cutting off the White rook's path to his king. 28 f5 Bf8 isn't convincing, either. Let's look at 28 Qh5+!? Kg8 29 Qg4+ Kh8 30 f5



Here 30...Bf8 leads to a difficult position for Black after 31 cd ed 32 Qh4+ Kg8 (32...Qh7 33 Qxd4 is bad for Black - this is why the queen moved to the 4th rank) 33 f6. It looks as though his king also cannot be saved after 30...ef 31 Rxf5. But you must verify this - that is, continue the analysis. Here again, a sharp combinative eye will come in extremely handy.

Black has to expend all his checks: 31...Ra1+ 32 Kf2 Ne4+ 33 Ke2 d3+ 34 Kxd3 dc+ - and now where does the king go? If 35 Kc2 Ra2+ 36 Kc1 Ra1+ 37 Kb2, then 37...Ra2+!!, and 38 Kxa2? Qa8+ 39 Kb1 Nxd2+ is bad. On 35 Ke2, Black has the brilliant counterstroke 35...Ng3+!! 36 hg (36 Qxg3? Qe4+) 36...Qxg2+ 37 Rf2 Qh1!, when White has no more than a perpetual check.

So - does 25...Nc5 only give us a draw? No: as Zvjagintsev notes, he would have sacrificed the bishop a different way: 26 f5! (instead of 26 Bxg6) 26...Nxd3 (26...ef 27 Bxf5 dc 28 Bxg6 hg 29 Qxg6+ Kh8 30 Qh5+ Kg8 31 Bh6+-) 27 fg, and White's attack is very strong.

26 Qxe6 Nc5 27 Qh3 Ra2

Black also stands poorly after 27...Nxd3 28 Qxd3 Ra3 29 Qe2. The text allows Vadim to play a decisive combination, sacrificing two pieces.



**28 f5! Rxd2 29 f6+ Kg8
30 Bxg6!**

There was a second way to win - but only a computer would find it: the non-standard 30 Qh4!, after which there is no satisfactory defense against 31 fe.

30...hg 31 Qh6 Bf8 32 Qxg6+ Bg7 33 f7+ Black resigned.

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Translated by Jim Marfia

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