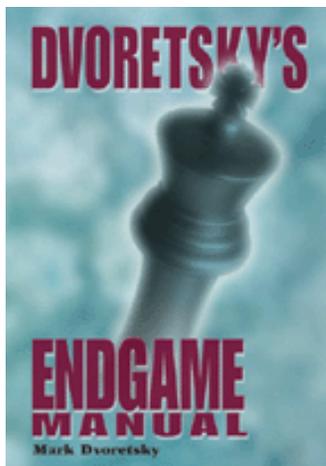




COLUMNISTS

*The**Instructor*

Mark Dvoretsky



Ripples in the Water

Part 1: Playing the Symmetrical Position

One of my favorite sayings of Kozma Prutkov is: *"When you throw rocks in the water, study the ripples they make, as otherwise, it's just a pointless time-waster."* This bit of homegrown Russian philosophy still holds true, if you substitute the study of chess games for the tossing of stones. I offer my readers the opportunity to examine the ripples from the stones I shall now throw in.

I begin with a brilliant classic, which my readers are probably already familiar with.

Rotlewi - Rubinstein
Lodz 1907/08

1. d4 d5 2. Nf3 e6 3. e3 c5 4. c4 Nc6 5. Nc3 Nf6 6. dc Bxc5 7. a3 a6 8. b4 Bd6 9. Bb2 0-0 10. Qd2?!

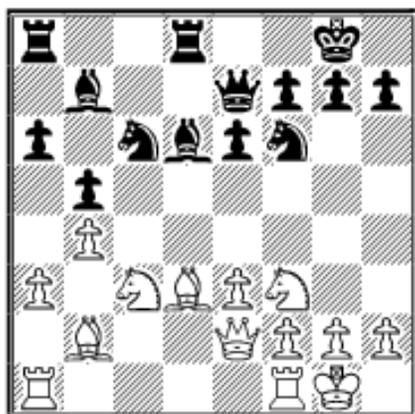
The queen stands poorly here. Playing against the "isolani" with 10. cd ed 11. Be2 was correct.

10...Qe7!

Here the queen occupies its best square - out of reach of the rooks which will be aiming to occupy the c- and d-files.

11. Bd3? (11. cd) 11...dc 12. Bxc4 b5 13. Bd3 Rd8 14. Qe2 Bb7 15. 0-0





White's poorly thought-out opening strategy has cost him two tempi. It's a symmetrical position, with Black to move; he has also managed to bring his king's rook to the center, while White has not.

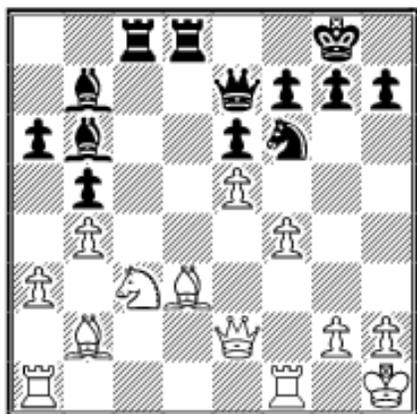
15...Ne5! 16. Nxe5 Bxe5 17. f4 Bc7 18. e4

Black threatened 18...e5, which White can now meet by 19. f5.

18...Rac8 19. e5?

19. Rac1 or 19. Rad1 would have held out longer.

19...Bb6+ 20. Kh1



20...Ng4! 21. Be4

The exchange of minor pieces by 21. Qxg4 Rxd3 obviously favors Black. And 21. Bxh7+ Kxh7 22. Qxg4 Rd2 would be still worse .

21...Qh4

Beginning a spectacular winning combination. As Nunn points out, 21...Nxh2! would have done the job, too.

22. g3 Rxc3!! 23. gh Rd2! 24. Qxd2 Bxe4+ 25. Qg2 Rh3!
White resigned.

Undoubtedly, this game we just examined left you with the impression that the White player, Herz Rotlewi, (who was, by the way, a student of Rubinstein's) was weak. Not at all - and here, I would like to divert myself from our main topic for a bit, in order to acquaint you with a little-known episode of chess history, as described by GM Grigory Levenfish in his book, *Selected Games and Memories*. He was describing the

powerful international tournament of Carlsbad 1911, won by R. Teichmann, which included as participants all the world's strongest players, with the exception of Emmanuel Lasker and J.-R. Capablanca.

A notable performance was given by young Rotlewi, who defeated powerful opposition, including Schlechter, Nimzovich, Marshall and Spielmann, in grand style. After the 17th round, Rotlewi shared the lead with Teichmann and Schlechter, a point and a half ahead of their nearest rival, Rubinstein. Whispers began to be heard among the representatives of the chess press, and an interview appeared with this new rising "star".

Rotlewi's family was very poor; his clothes were clear testimony to this unfortunate fact. City Councilman Tietz was upset. Imagine - a prizewinner of the Carlsbad tournament, appearing in pants which were quite evidently those of a younger brother! Tietz gave Rotlewi an advance against his prize, and suggested he buy some new clothes. The next day, Rotlewi arrived in a new suit and patent-leather shoes. With the jingle of kroner in his pocket, he was unrecognizable.

But Tietz had done Rotlewi no favor. Having become a dandy, the latter now partook of the pleasures of spa life, and grew unfit for serious chess. In the latter part of the tournament, Rotlewi suffered several losses, ending up in fourth place.

Soon after the tournament ended, Rotlewi fell prey to depression. Thus ended the chess career of a most talented master.

Now, let's look at another example of a quick smash, in a position bearing a similar strategic design.

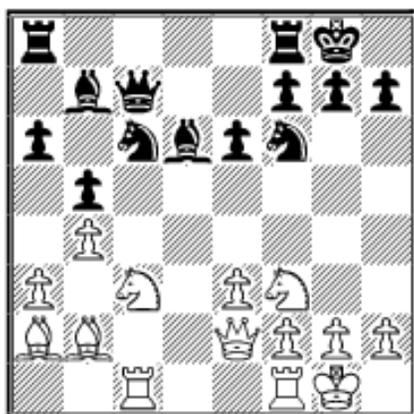
Marshall - Wolf

Nürnberg, 1906

1. d4 d5 2. c4 dc 3. Nf3 Nf6 4. Nc3 a6 5. e3 e6 6. Bxc4 c5 7. 0-0 Nc6 8. a3 Qc7

A dubious move, since a White rook must sooner or later appear on c1, when the queen will not be comfortable. 8...b5 was more logical.

9. Qe2 b5 10. Ba2 Bb7 11. dc Bxc5 12. b4 Bd6 13. Bb2 0-0 14. Rac1

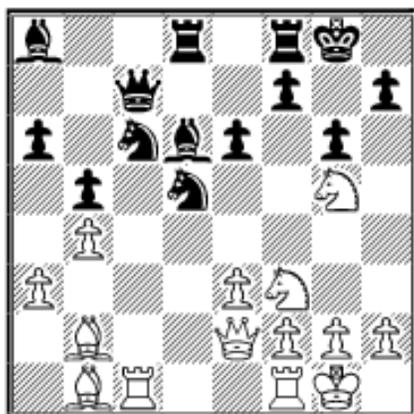


14...Rad8? 15. Bb1 Ba8?

Where Black's previous move might still have been understandable (as preparation for the retreat of the queen to b8), this bishop move makes no sense at all, and signifying only the loss of an important tempo. Marshall replies with a kingside storm.

16. Ne4! Nd5 17. Neg5 g6

Now it's time to find the decisive combination.



18. Nxh7! Kxh7 19. Ng5+ Kg8 20. Qh5!!

The queen is untouchable, because of mate, and Black's defense collapses.

20...f6 21. Bxg6 Rd7 22. Nxe6 Rh7 23. Bxh7+ Qxh7 24. Qxh7+ Kxh7 25. Nxf8+ Bxf8 26. Rfd1 Nce7 27. e4 Nb6 28. Rc7 Kg8 29. Bxf6 Ng6 30. Rd8. Black resigned.

We shall examine the following encounter in much greater

detail, using the experience we have gained thus far.

Marshall - Schlechter
Ostende 1907

1. d2-d4 d7-d5 2. c2-c4 d5xc4 3. e2-e3 Ng8-f6 4. Bf1xc4 e7-e6 5. Ng1-f3 a7-a6 6. 0-0 c7-c5 7. Nb1-c3 Qd8-c7?! 8. Qd1-e2 Nb8-c6 9. a2-a3

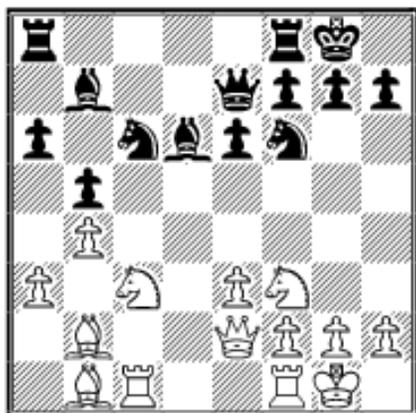
By transposition of moves, we have reached the same position as in the previous game.

9...b7-b5 10. Bc4-a2 Bc8-b7 11. d4xc5 Bf8xc5 12. b2-b4 Bc5-d6 13. Bc1-b2 0-0 14. Ra1-c1 Qc7-e7!

Schlechter finds an improvement on Wolf's play, getting the queen immediately away from the influence of the enemy rook.

15. Ba2-b1

Now how does Black continue? You will find the answer easily, if you have drawn the proper conclusions from our previous games.



In such symmetrical positions, it is most important to be the first to offer the exchange of a pair of knights. Marshall was all ready to play 16. Ne4! - after the exchange, Black loses a valuable defender of his kingside, and diagonals are opened for the White bishops. But it is Black's move now, and he can beat his opponent to the punch.

The strongest continuation would be **15...Ne5!** Why didn't Karl Schlechter, a fine positional player, make that move? Most likely, because of **16. Nxe5 Bxe5 17. Nxb5!?** This is a situation well known to us all: not wishing to strain ourselves calculating complex variations, we often select the "safer"

path. Sometimes such an approach is justified, but certainly not always. *Sometimes critical moments arise, when our decision will determine the entire future course of the game.*

If your study of the previous games has led you to a proper assessment of the importance of exchanging knights in such positions, then this observation will help you to understand that now in fact such a critical moment has arrived. Before rejecting the move 15...Ne5,

we should give it at least a bit closer examination.

Black has the counter-stroke 17...Bxg2?!, and if 18. Kxg2, then 18...Bxb2. However, White replies 18. Bxe5! Bxf1 19. Qc2!, with advantage.

Let's try **17...Bxb2 18. Rc7 Qe8!** (but not 18...Qd8? Rxb7). Now 19. Rxb7? ab 20. Qxb2 Qc6 21. Re7 allows Black not merely to force the draw - after 21...Qd6 22. Rb7 Qc6 - but even to win, by 20...Rfc8! 22. Qd4 Kf8 23. Ra7 e5.

Also after **19. Nd6 Qd8 20. Rxb7 Qxd6 21. Qxb2 Qc6** (21...Ng4? 22. g3 Qc6 would be a mistake, because of 23. Qc2!, and White wins) **22. Re7 Rfc8!?** (22...Nd5? 23. Be4 or 22...Rfd8?! 23. Qc1! are bad for Black; however, 22...Qd6 23. Rb7 Qc6 gives an immediate draw), White has problems with his rook, lost in the enemy camp. However, the rook can be saved by **23. Qd4 Kf8 24. b5! =.**

Now, let's return to the game. Black hesitated, and allowed his opponent to offer the knight exchange first.

15...Ra8-c8?! 16. Nc3-e4! Nf6xe4 17. Bb1xe4 f7-f5

Schlechter enters upon the same natural but rocky road as did Rotlewi in his game with Rubinstein. *Advancing pawns in such situations only weakens the Black king position.* As V. Bologan notes, it would make sense here to exchange the white-squared bishops by 17...Na5! 18. Bxb7 (on 18. Bxh7+ Kxh7 19. ba Kg8, the two bishops assure Black sufficient compensation for the sacrificed pawn) 18...Nxb7, with an

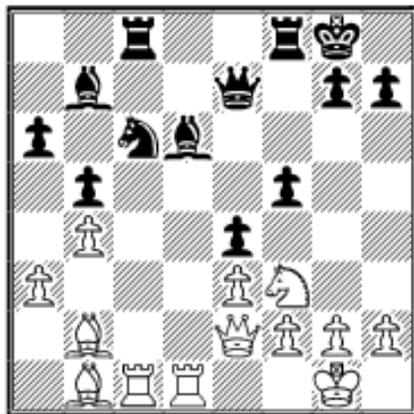
acceptable position.

18. Be4-b1 e6-e5?

In the present case, having said "a", Black should **not** have said "b". After V. Potkin's suggestion, 18...a5!, White finds it hard to demonstrate any advantage.

19. Rf1-d1 e5-e4?!

On 19...Bb8, Black feared the reply 20. e4!, but now matters grow worse for him, because of the following standard knight maneuver, which we already saw in the Rubinstein game.



20. Bb1-a2+ Kg8-h8 21. Nf3-g5!

And White has a raft of threats: 22. Qh5; 22. Nf7+; 22. Nxe7.

21...Qe7xg5

On 21...Be5? 22. Nxe7! decides - the blow John Nunn pointed out for us in the Rotlewi - Rubinstein

game.

22. Rd1xd6 Rf8-d8 23. h2-h4!

Deflection! 23...Qxh4 is bad in view of 24. Bxg7+! Kxg7 25. Qb2+, with a decisive attack. If 23...Qe7, then 24. Re6!

23...Qg5-g4 24. Qe2-d2 Rd8xd6

The threat was 25. Rxc6.

25. Qd2xd6 Rc8-d8 26. Qd6-c7 Bb7-a8 27. Ba2-b3

By covering the d1 square with the bishop, White sets up the unstoppable threat of 28. Rxc6.

27...f5-f4 28. Rc1xc6 Rd8-f8 29. Qc7-e7. Black resigned.

The finish looks clear and convincing. Nevertheless, I suggest you return to the position in the last diagram, and think about two questions:

- 1) Should White have given the bishop check? (After all, he could also have played the immediate 20. Ng5); and
- 2) Did Black have a better defense?

The answer to the first question can be easily given at once, by using the process of "*comparison*" - a technique which can sometimes simplify to a considerable extent the choice between two roughly equal-appearing continuations. The move 20. Ng5! is the more direct, since it holds the bishop check in reserve for the moment. In other words, by refraining from the immediate check, White loses nothing, while depending on circumstances he may continue with the bishop either on a2 or on b1.

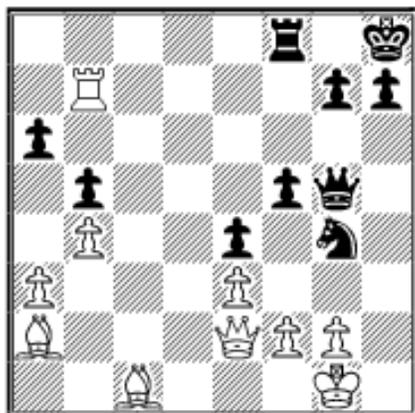
Yes, the bishop on a2 occupies an open diagonal, and at first glance (or even at second), it's hard to understand why it should stay on b1, where it runs up against the pawn on e4. Nevertheless, for strictly formalistic reasons, it should, since Black is unable to prevent the bishop check, even if we temporarily refrain from playing it.

My reasoning will probably seem abstract to you, and of no practical value in the present instance - after all, the bishop check at a2 allowed White a fairly convincing win. Well, OK - let's leave this topic for now, and move on to the second question.

In strategically difficult situations, it makes sense to create a sharp change in the character of the game, even should it involve risk. Here, even the most desperate-looking attempts should be investigated. Black decided against **21...Bxh2+!** **22. Kxh2 Qxg5** because of **23. Rd7**. Both players and later analysts stopped their analysis here, failing to notice the tactical resource **23...Ne5!**

White continues **24. Rxb7 Rxc1** **25. Bxc1**. The attempt to

recover the sacrificed piece by 25...Qh6+ 26. Kg1 Qc6 leads to a difficult position after 27. Bb2 Qxb7 (27...Nf3+ 28. Qxf3!) 28. Bxe5. Which means that Black has to go after the king: **25...Ng4+ 26. Kg1**



Which square on the h-file should the queen go to? It appears that once again we cannot do without comparison - this time, it's going to be a lot more complex.

White's queen will have to retreat either to b2 (keeping an eye on g7) or to e1 (defending the f-pawn). If the strongest continuation in either

case is the check on h2, then it's completely inconsequential where the queen moves from to deliver that check, which in turn means we have nothing to compare. But is that the case?

A) 26...Qh4(h6) 27. Qb2 Qh2+ (with the queen at h6, 27...Rd8 isn't bad, either) 28. Kf1 Nf6 (28...Ne5!?). In my opinion, Black has sufficient counterplay here. White's pieces stand poorly, and White must consider both 29...Rd8 and 29...Qh1+ 30. Ke2 Qxg2 (30...Qh5+).

B) 26...Qh4(h6) 27. Qe1!? Qh2+ 28. Kf1 Qh1+ 29. Ke2 Qxg2 30. Bb2 - here, Black is in a bad way.

How can we strengthen his play in this latter variation? Let's include the resource f5-f4! It is true that after 26...Qh4 27. Qe1 f4 is no help in view of 28. Bb2 with a mate threat; but if we play **26...Qh6! 27. Qe1 f4! 28. Bb2** (28. ef Qh2+ 29. Kf1 Qh1+ 30. Ke2 Qxg2+= - and the way is cleared for the black Queen to reach d3 via f3) **28...fe** (now the g7-square is defended by the queen) **29. Bxg7+ Qxg7 30.Rxg7 ef+ 31. Qxf2 Nxf2**, and the position is unclear. So it turns out that 26...Qh6! is more accurate than 26...Qh4.

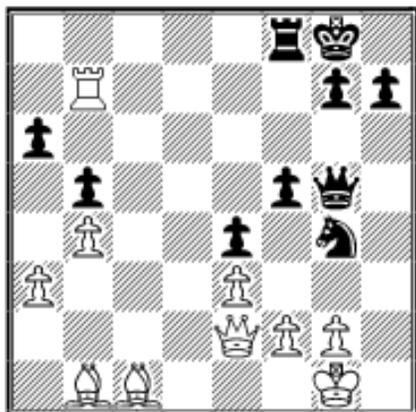
On the other hand, even after 26...Qh4 27. Qe1 Qh2+ 28. Kf1, Black gets enough counterplay, if he refrains temporarily from

taking the g2-pawn in favor of 28..Ne5! For example: 29. Qc3 Rd8 30. Bd5 Qh1+ 31. Ke2 Qh5+ with a draw, or 29. Bb2!? Qh1+ 30. Ke2 Qxe1+ 31. Kxe1 Nd3+ 32. Ke2 Nxb2 with roughly equal chances (Black will continue with 33...Rc8).

Which makes this the perfect time to return to the first question: **20. Ng5! Bxh2+!**

20...Qxg5 21. Ba2+ Kh8 22. Rxd6 is the same as the game; and 20...Be5 21. Ba2+ Kh8 22. Nxh7! is just as bad. On 20...Ne5 there follows 21. Rxc8 Bxc8 (21...Rxc8 22. Bxe5) 22. Ba2+ Nc4 (22...Kh8 23. Nxh7) 23. Bxc4+ bc 24. Qxc4+ Kh8 25. h4!?, with a winning position.

21.Kxh2 Qxg5 22. Rd7 Ne5! 23. Rxb7 Rxc1 24. Bxc1 Ng4+ 25. Kg1



A) 25...Qh4 26. Qe1! Qh2+ 27. Kf1 Qh1+ (27...Ne5 28. Bb2 is now useless - the d3 square is protected by the bishop) 28. Ke2 Qxg2 29. Bb2 (or 28. Ba2+ Kh8 29. Bb2) and wins;

B) **25...Qh6 26. Qa2+!** (this check, made possible by White not taking the bishop check, allows him a far more favorable development of his pieces than after 26. Qb2?!; remember too, that on 26. Qe1?! there is the reply 26...f4!) **26...Kh8 27. Bb2 Qh2+** (27...Rd8 28. Bd4) **28. Kf1 Nf6 29. Bxf6 gf 30. Bc2** (getting the bishop off the first rank, White frees the queen for active duty) **30...Qh1+ 31. Ke2 Qxg2** (31...Qh5+ 32. Kd2 Rd8+ 33. Kc1) **32. Qe6**, with an obvious advantage for White.

As you can see, our meditations on the reply to the first question weren't empty blasts after all - the "comparison" technique really did demonstrate White's most accurate continuation.

Thus, from consideration of a symmetrical pawn structure

characteristic of some variations of the Queen's Gambit, we end up in a quite different theme: the method of comparison. We shall take a more detailed look at this theme next month.

*This column is available in **Chess Cafe Reader** format. Click [here](#) for more information.*



[\[ChessCafe Home Page\]](#) [\[Book Review\]](#) [\[Bulletin Board\]](#) [\[Columnists\]](#)
[\[Endgame Study\]](#) [\[Skittles Room\]](#) [\[Archives\]](#)
[\[Links\]](#) [\[Online Bookstore\]](#) [\[About ChessCafe\]](#) [\[Contact Us\]](#)

Copyright 2003 CyberCafes, LLC. All Rights Reserved.
"The Chess Cafe®" is a registered trademark of Russell Enterprises, Inc.