

9. WILHELM STEINITZ

First official World Champion (1886–1894)

Wilhelm Steinitz brought a scientific approach to the game of chess, and it is for this, as much as his victory in the first-ever World Championship match in 1886, that he is best remembered. Naturally he had a complete grasp of chess tactics, but his fundamental insight was that a game of chess should be won not by one great move but by the accumulation of small advantages.

Tactics were mere building blocks, materials out of which brilliant and elegant victories could be achieved. Calculation was paramount, and unlike Tal, Steinitz didn't make sacrifices on intuition. His games nevertheless contain many deep sacrifices as well as pure technical combinations.

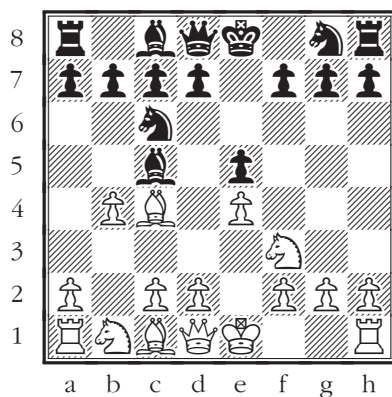
Steinitz actually proclaimed himself World Champion back in 1866, when he defeated Adolf Anderssen, generally considered the finest player of the day once Paul Morphy stopped playing. It took twenty years before a consensus was reached in the matter. Steinitz reinforced his reputation with a large contribution to the chess literature, and his *Modern Chess Instructor* was a definitive manual on the game.

WILHELM STEINITZ VS. PILHAL

Vienna, 1862

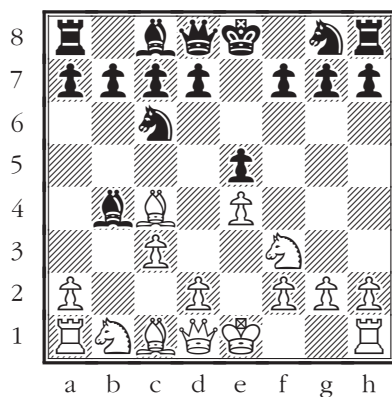
Evans Gambit

1.e4 e5; 2.Nf3 Nc6; 3.Bc4 Bc5; 4.b4.



The Evans Gambit, launched with this move, involves a decoy. The bishop is brought to b4, where it can be attacked by a pawn.

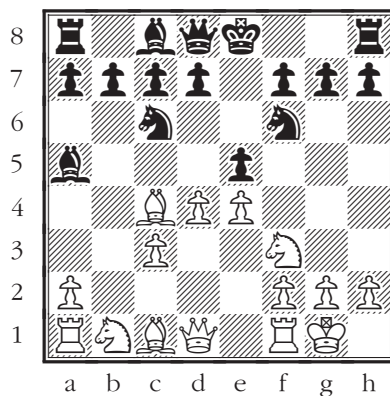
4...Bxb4; 5.c3.



The immediate threat against the bishop is only part of the story. The move also prepares for an eventual advance of the d-pawn.

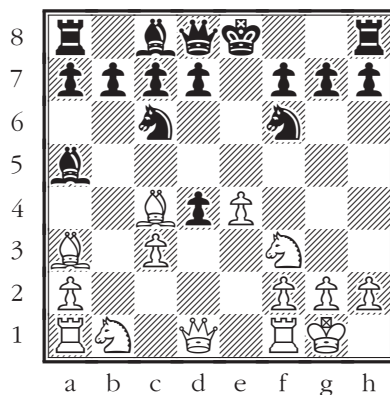
WORLD CHAMPION TACTICS

5...Ba5; 6.0-0 Nf6; 7.d4.



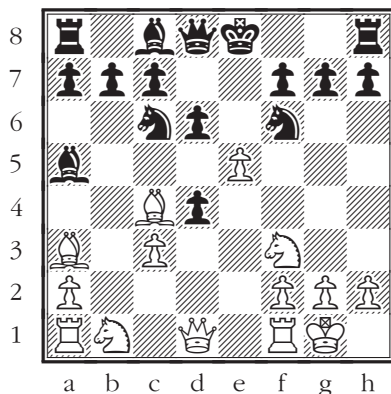
Black's pawn at d5 is under a double attack from the pawn and the knight.

7...exd4; 8.Ba3.



Steinitz applies a choke, depriving the enemy king of the crucial flight square to the kingside. Castling is now illegal.

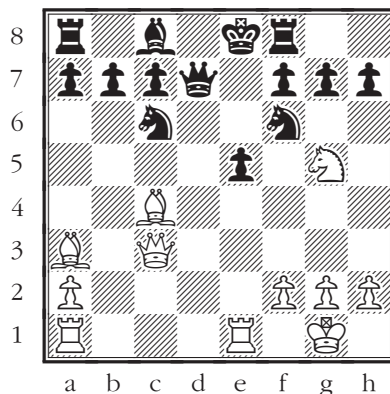
8...d6. Black erects a barrier along the a3-f8 diagonal; **9.e5.** The pawn at e5 forks the knight at f6 and pawn at d6. White can now try to destroy the barrier at d6.



9...dxe5. 9...Nxe5 forks the bishop at c4 and knight at f3, but 10.Re1 is a strong reply, pinning the knight. At the same time, the rook at e1 also means that the pawn at c3 is pinned. 10...Nfd7 (10...Bxc3; 11.Nxe5 dxe5; 12.Rxe5+ Be6; 13.Nxc3 dxc3; 14.Qb3) **10.Qb3.** The battery of queen and bishop threatens to destroy the pawn at f7. The king will have a hard time escaping. White has no other immediate threat, but this is enough to force Black into an awkward defense.

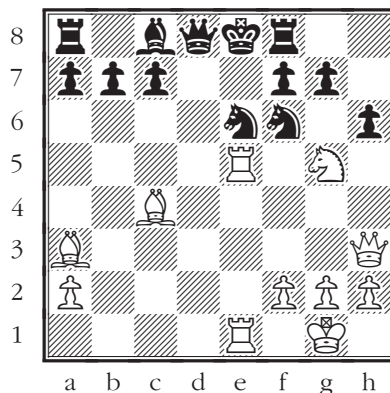
10...Qd7. {Move to end of note} On 10...Rf8 White could capture the enemy rook, but the bishop is stronger, and White can increase the pressure with 11.Ng5, renewing the threat at f7. The knight also attacks the pawn at h7, a small fork. The h-pawn is defended, of course, Still, it means that the knight at f6 is paralyzed, required to defend the pawn. 11...Qd7; 12.Re1 dxc3; 13.Nxc3 Bxc3; 14.Qxc3 leaves White three pawns down, but Black is already lost. The threat is the removal of the defender of the rook at f8. If the king is forced to move to the d-file, then White can capture the rook for free.

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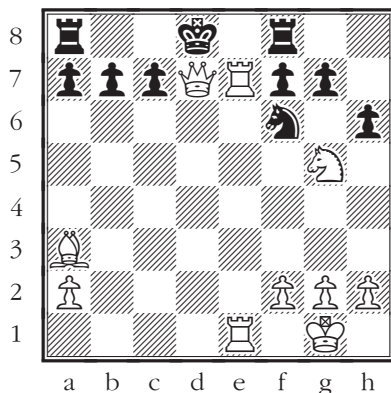


The Black rook at f8 and pawns at e5, f7, and h7 are under attack. Each is defended, for the moment, but White can play Bb4, pinning the knight which is the only defender of the e-pawn which is an important defender of the e-file. The sacrifice of three pawns turns out to be justified. 14...Nd4; 15.Rxe5+ Ne6 defends against previous threats, but the e6-square is attacked by three pieces, and another rook can come to the e-file. 16.Rae1 increases the pressure on the e-file, and Black has no defense, for example 16...Qd8, which lends the support of the bishop to e6, loses because White can add even more fuel to the fire with 17.Qh3.

This is a double attack on the pawn at e6 and pawn at h7. The knight at e6 is attacked by five pieces, and defended only by two. Black's position quickly falls apart, for example 17...h6 is mated in seven moves.

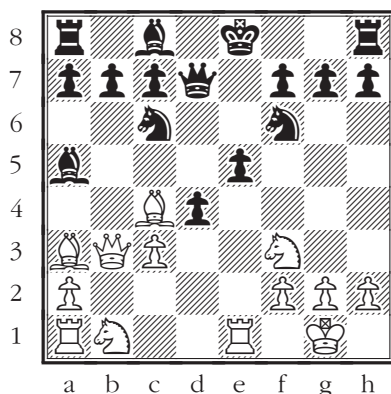


18.Bxe6 Qe7; 19.Bd7+. The discovered attack on the Black queen is combined with a check, but this is not a discovered check, because in that requires a piece which was not moved to give check. 19...Bxd7; 20.Rxe7+ Kd8; 21.Qxd7+! A queen sacrifice sets up a finish where the knight at g5 delivers the final blow.



21...Nxd7; 22.Nxf7+ Deflection. (Or 22.Re8+, which deflects the rook from the defense of e7, while also decoying it to a square where it will be captured. 22...Rxe8; 23.Nxf7+ Kc8; 24.Rxe8#) 22...Kc8 (22...Rxf7; 23.Re8#); 23.Re8+ Rxe8; 24.Rxe8#. Returning to the game, we see that Black's choice, capturing at e5 with the pawn, restores the choke, as the king can no longer cross f8.

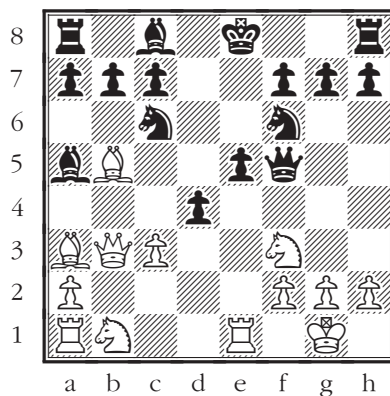
11.Re1.



The pin on the e-file weakens support of d4, and creates long-term threats against the enemy king.

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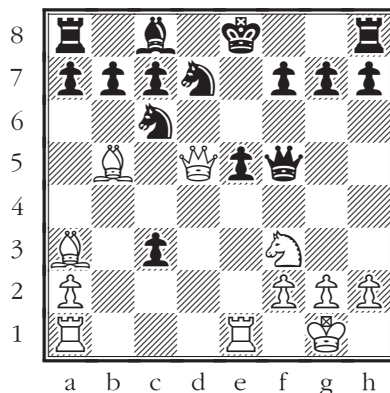
11...Qf5; 12.Bb5!



Another pin, this time against the knight which is supporting the e-pawn. White threatens 13.Rxe5+, winning the queen.

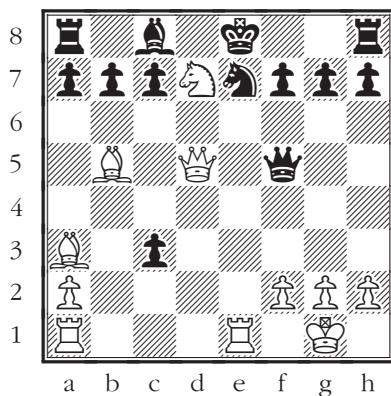
12...Nd7. An ugly move, but the pin must be broken and the pawn at e5 requires additional support. 13.Qd5. This fine move adds pressure to e5 and c6 simultaneously.

13...Bxc3; 14.Nxc3 dxc3.



Although the pawn at e5 is defended by three pieces and attacked by three pieces, it is actually lost because whenever one of the Black knights move, the pin on the other knight will be reactivated.

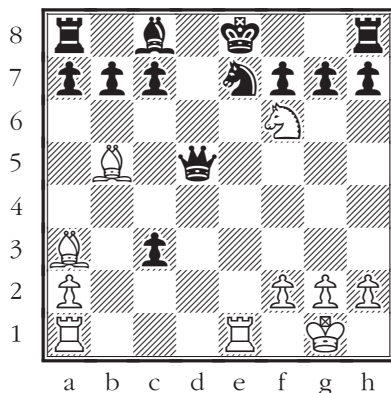
15.Nxe5 Ne7; 16.Nxd7!



This is a discovered attack against the Black queen. Of course the queen can now capture its undefended White counterpart, but there are more tactics in store.

16...Qxd5. Black would be checkmated in any case. The most prolonged suffering would be 16...c6; 17.Rxe7+ Kd8; 18.Qxf5 cxb5; 19.Nb6!! Bxf5; 20.Rd1+ Bd3; 21.Rxd3#.

17.Nf6+.



Forking the king and queen. **17...Kf8; 18.Bxe7#.**