

Chess Opening Traps

Unveiling the Subtle Snares



42 deadly traps to outwit your opponent.
Fully annotated, commented, and explained.

Filip Rachůnek

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Preface

Chess, the timeless game of strategy and intellectual prowess, has captivated the hearts and minds of players for centuries. Its origins can be traced back to ancient civilizations, and throughout its evolution, chess has grown into a rich tapestry of intricate moves, deep calculations, and tactical brilliance. The beauty of chess lies not only in its complexity, but also in the strategic battles that unfold on the 64-square battlefield.

In the vast universe of chess, one aspect stands out as a testament to the ingenuity and cunning of its players: the art of opening traps. These cunning maneuvers, cleverly disguised within the initial moves of a game, have the power to ensnare even the most seasoned opponents. From the unsuspecting beginner to the seasoned grandmaster, opening traps have the ability to turn the tide of a game in a single, devastating moment.

This book, "Chess Opening Traps: Unveiling the Subtle Snares," aims to illuminate the hidden world of opening traps and expose the treacherous pitfalls that lie within the first moves of a chess game. Whether you are a novice seeking to expand your knowledge or an experienced player looking to sharpen your tactical acumen, this book will serve as your guide through the labyrinth of opening traps.

Within these pages, you will embark on a journey of discovery. Each chapter will unravel the mysteries of different opening traps, showcasing their deceptive allure and demonstrating how they can be used to gain a decisive advantage or turn the tables on an unsuspecting adversary. You will witness the missteps of history's greatest players, succumbing to the temptations laid by their opponents, and learn from their mistakes.

But this book is more than a collection of traps. It is a celebration of the strategic depth and tactical brilliance that makes chess such a captivating game. It is an exploration of the human mind and its ability to devise intricate strategies and counter-strategies. As you navigate through these pages, you will not only learn about specific traps, but also develop a deeper understanding of the fundamental principles that underpin successful openings.

It is my hope that this book will inspire you to embark on your own journey of discovery, to explore the vast repertoire of opening traps, and to arm yourself with the tools necessary to outwit your opponents. Whether you seek to surprise your

adversaries with a cleverly laid trap or to avoid falling victim to one, the knowledge contained within these chapters will be your compass on the chessboard.

- Filip Rachůnek

How to study this book

In my descriptions of traps and associated games, I utilize the English algebraic notation. Whenever you come across a D-code (such as D12), it signifies that the position immediately following that specific move is illustrated in diagram number 12, typically located below the text. Diagrams serve the purpose of emphasizing significant situations and aiding readers in confirming their adherence to the game notation accurately.

What does the algebraic notation mean? Chess moves are denoted by a piece code (**N** - knight, **B** - bishop, **R** - rook, **Q** - queen, **K** - king), and the target square in an intersection of a file (**a-h**) and a rank (**1-8**). For instance, a knight's move to f3 would be written as **Nf3**. If multiple pieces of the same type can reach the square, the current file/rank (before the move) would be added, e.g. **Ngf3** (the knight standing on the g-file moves to the square f3).

What about pawns? If a move does not possess a piece code prefix, it is deemed a pawn's move. The opening sequence **1. e4 e5** means that White moved the e-pawn to e4, and Black advanced their e-pawn to e5.

Diagrams

I utilized a self-programmed generator to create all the diagrams featured in the book. This choice stemmed from two reasons: Firstly, as a developer, I find joy in crafting practical applications and scripts. Secondly, it provided a straightforward solution to circumvent any potential licensing complications that might arise with a third-party tool.

Indeed, I discovered my solution to be highly practical and beneficial, particularly when presenting captured pieces alongside the board. This approach allows readers to grasp the position more easily without the necessity of counting live pieces to

evaluate potential material advantages for each side. Additionally, the images consist solely of black and white elements, where what appears as a gray square is, in reality, a dense pattern of black and white dots. Such intricacies ensure that the book remains easily viewable on a diverse array of devices.

Symbols and abbreviations

In the game notation, I use symbols that the vast majority of readers undoubtedly know, but just to make sure, I will describe them here:

!	good, strong move
!!	brilliant move
?	mistake, bad move
??	blunder, terrible move
!?	extraordinary, interesting move
?!	dubious, questionable move
x	capture
=	promotion
+	check
#	checkmate
O-O	short (king-side) castling
O-O-O	long (queen-side) castling

In literature, we sometimes encounter an extremely abbreviated notation for capturing a pawn with a pawn, for example, "ef" instead of "exf4". Personally, I find something like that to be excessively unaesthetic. Moreover, there is no reasonable reason not to press two more keys while writing, so I have preferred the standard notation.

Why is the knowledge of chess opening traps important?

Knowledge of chess opening traps is important for several reasons:

1. **Gain an advantage:** Opening traps are designed to catch opponents off guard and force them into unfavorable positions early in the game. If you are aware of

these traps, you can avoid falling into them and prevent your opponent from gaining an advantage. This knowledge allows you to maintain control and potentially gain a superior position in the game.

2. **Save time:** By being familiar with common opening traps, you can quickly recognize them and avoid spending excessive time analyzing the position or trying to find the best move. This saves valuable time on the chess clock, allowing you to allocate more time to critical moments later in the game.
3. **Psychological impact:** Falling into an opening trap can have a demoralizing effect on a player. It can shake their confidence and disrupt their concentration, making it easier for you to exploit their mistakes later on. By being knowledgeable about opening traps, you can use them strategically to create psychological pressure on your opponent.
4. **Preparation and planning:** Knowing common opening traps helps you prepare your opening repertoire and develop a plan of action. You can choose openings that avoid these traps, or even use traps yourself as part of your strategy. Understanding the potential pitfalls in the opening phase allows you to make informed decisions and navigate the early stages of the game more effectively.
5. **Education and growth:** Studying opening traps exposes you to a wide range of tactical motifs, themes, and strategic ideas. It helps you develop your chess understanding, pattern recognition, and calculation skills. By analyzing and learning from past traps, you can expand your overall chess knowledge and become a more well-rounded player.

While knowledge of opening traps is valuable, it's important to note that it should be complemented with a more in-depth understanding of chess principles, middle game strategies, and endgame techniques to excel in the game. Opening traps alone won't guarantee success, but they form an essential part of a comprehensive chess education.

What is the difference between a chess opening trap and a chess miniature?

A chess opening trap and a chess miniature are two distinct concepts in chess, although they can sometimes be related.

1. **Chess opening trap:** A chess opening trap refers to a tactical or strategic sequence of moves in the opening phase of a game that is designed to lure an

opponent into making a mistake or falling into a disadvantageous position. Opening traps often involve a hidden tactical idea, a positional trap, or a combination of both. The intention is to exploit an opponent's lack of knowledge, overconfidence, or carelessness. Opening traps are usually short sequences of moves, typically ending within the first 10 to 15 moves of a game.

2. **Chess miniature:** A chess miniature, on the other hand, refers to a complete game of chess that is exceptionally short in duration. A miniature is typically defined as a game that ends in 25 moves or fewer, often with one player achieving a decisive victory, such as checkmate, or a significant material advantage. Miniatures can occur at any stage of the game, including the opening, middle game, or endgame. They can result from blunders, tactical oversights, or strategic errors by one or both players.

While there can be an overlap between the two concepts, not all chess miniatures involve opening traps, and not all opening traps lead to miniature games. A chess opening trap can be successful in achieving its intended outcome - gaining an advantage - but the game may still continue for many moves afterward. On the other hand, a miniature can occur due to various factors, such as tactical oversights or blunders, which may or may not involve an opening trap.

In summary, a chess opening trap focuses on a specific tactical or strategic idea within the opening phase, whereas a chess miniature refers to a complete game that is unusually short, often resulting in a decisive outcome.

In each chapter of the book, you will find a comprehensive analysis of a specific tactic that forms the essence of the trap discussed. Moreover, the book offers insights into alternative paths that can be taken, particularly useful when our goal is to steer clear of falling into the trap ourselves. This thorough examination ensures a thorough understanding of the trap, its variations, and the strategic considerations surrounding it.

Chapter One: 1. e4 traps

Chess traps can be captivating and treacherous, especially when they arise from popular opening moves like 1. e4. Awareness of these traps is essential for both white and black players, as falling into them can lead to swift defeats. By studying and understanding these traps, players can navigate their way through the early stages of the game with caution and confidence. Remember, in chess, knowledge and preparation are key to success on the board.

Not all traps in chess result in immediate checkmate, although it is true that such traps tend to be the most memorable. However, it is crucial to recognize that comprehending the underlying principles behind these tactical maneuvers, even if they only lead to a minor material or positional advantage, is equally important for elevating your game to the next level.

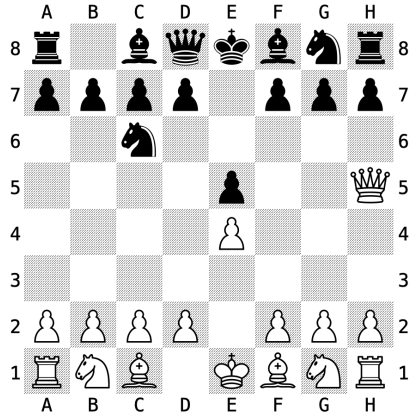


Diagram 2

This is one of the appropriate responses to the queen's charge. Inexperienced players frequently play 2. ... Nf6 or even 2. ... g6, as the opportunity to push the queen back is tempting. However, they completely overlook the unprotected pawn on e5. Then, naturally, 3. Qxe5+ leads to a pawn loss, or even worse if 2. ... g6?? opened the path to the unguarded rook at h8.

3. Bc4 (D3)

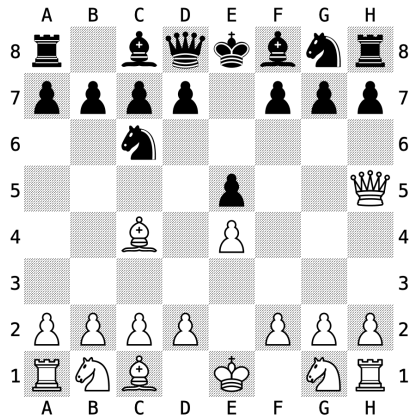


Diagram 3

The threat of checkmating on f7 is looming, and Black must act or face the consequences. Soon, we'll look at how the Black can use the situation to their

advantage and create their own trap to catch the white queen. But for now, let's see how the Scholar's Mate catches on.

3. ... Nf6?? 4. Qxf7# (D4)

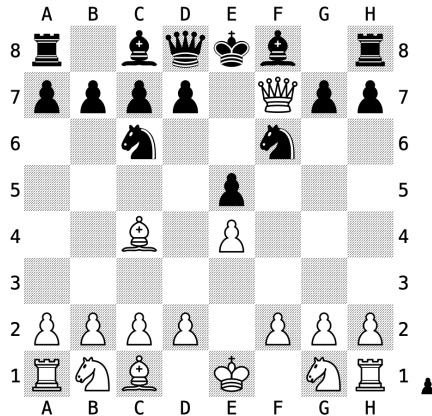


Diagram 4

The Scholar's Mate is considered a **beginner's trap** because it relies on Black making specific mistakes. Knowledgeable players can easily avoid falling into this trap by not moving their pieces in a vulnerable manner or by employing a sound opening strategy.

In other words, the Scholar's Mate is not a recommended strategy for serious play, as experienced players will quickly recognize and defend against it. Let's turn the chessboard around, and examine a **countermeasure** to thwart an opponent attempting to employ the Scholar's Mate against us and instead put them at a disadvantage.

1. e4 e5 2. Qh5 Nc6 3. Bc4 g6 (D5)

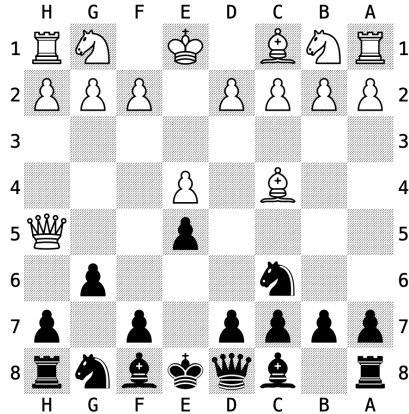


Diagram 5

Good job. The g-pawn move is correct in this instance, as the e-pawn has already been safeguarded by the knight. White is compelled to withdraw, and the most common tactic is to add another checkmate threat.

4. Qf3 Nf6 (D6)

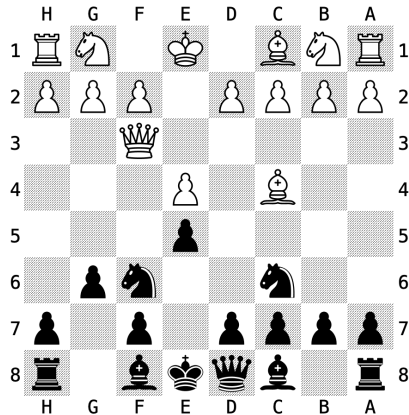


Diagram 6

White has to find another way to continue the game because the opponent's queen doesn't have a straight line to f7 anymore. Let us examine the line that conceals a devious trap to ensure Black's victory.

5. Ne2 Bg7 6. d3 O-O 7. Bg5 (D7)

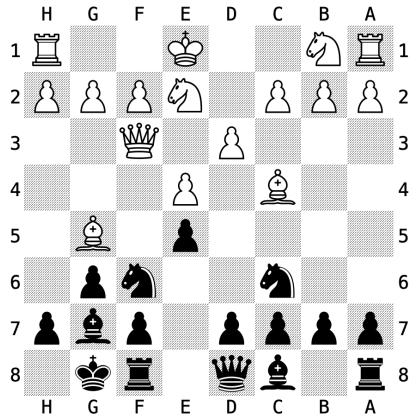


Diagram 7

White didn't abandon the idea of attacking over the f-file completely, and pinned the black knight with the plan to get the knight through c3 to d5. But we have a simple way to stop that threat.

7. ... h6 8. Bh4?! (If White decides to keep the pin as long as they can, it only gives us a chance to stop the bishop completely.) 8. ... g5 9. Bg3 d5! (D8)

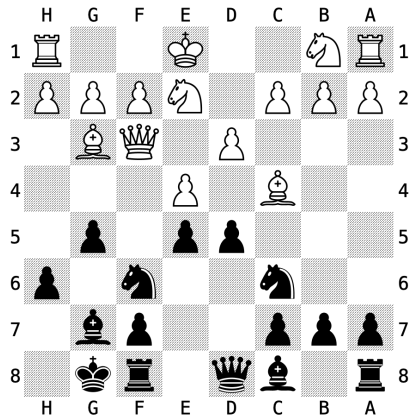


Diagram 8

We responded with a counter-attack. Although it may look like a mistake, given that White appears to have obtained the d-pawn for nothing, the actual goal of this maneuver was to open the diagonal for the king-side bishop with a swifter pace.

10. exd5 Bg4! (D9)

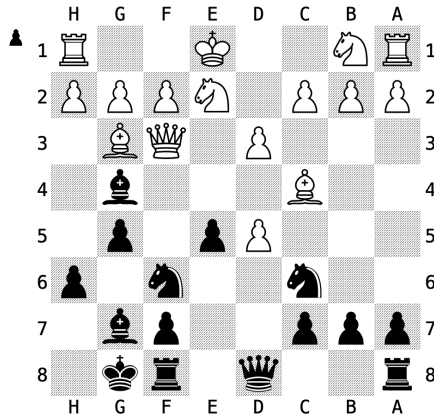


Diagram 9

The charge with the bishop is an important intermezzo move, or *zwischenzug* (a German word which is actually used in the English chess terminology as well). Only one square can be used by the white queen to retreat.

11. Qe3 Nd4 (D10)

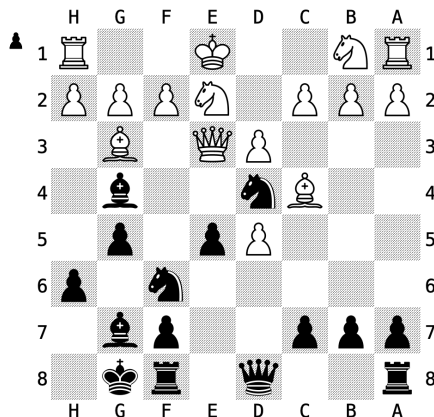


Diagram 10

A logical continuation of the previous move. As we are threatening to deliver a deadly fork to c2, and the white knight is also under attack, White is forced to capture our knight. It matches our plan perfectly because we can use the e-file to attack the white king directly.

12. Nxd4 13. Qxd4 Re8+ (D11)

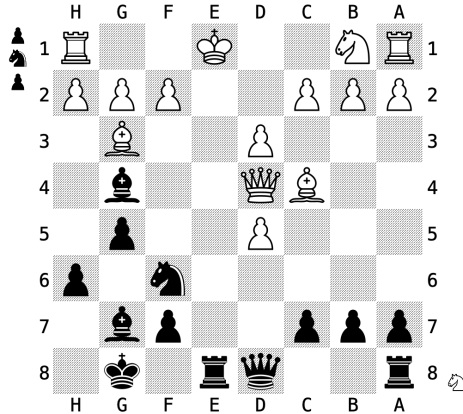


Diagram 11

White is in a bad situation now. There are only three ways to resolve the check, and none of them would improve their position.

14. Kf1 (The relatively best move. After 14. Kd2 Ne4+, White would lose the queen, and 14. Be5 c5! 15. Qc3 Nxd5 16. Bxd5 Rxe5+ 17. Kf1 Qxd5 would cost them at least a minor piece.) **14. ... Be2+ 15. Kg1 Nd7** (D12)

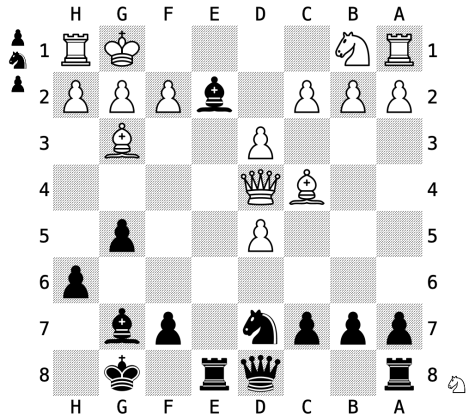


Diagram 12

We reached the apex of the combination because the white queen is trapped. Black will easily win the game from this point onwards.

Blackburne Shilling Gambit: Set a trap for a greedy opponent

Let's examine a particular trap that is strategically placed at an early stage - specifically, during the third move of a variation of the **Italian Game** (1. e4 e5 2. Nf3 Nc6 3. Bc4), one of the oldest and still very popular openings. The variant is called **Blackburne Shilling Gambit** and begins with somehow a dubious move that shouldn't be used against strong opponents. However, this trap, if not overused, can be pretty effective in blitz games.

1. e4 e5 2. Nf3 Nc6 3. Bc4 Nd4?! (D13)

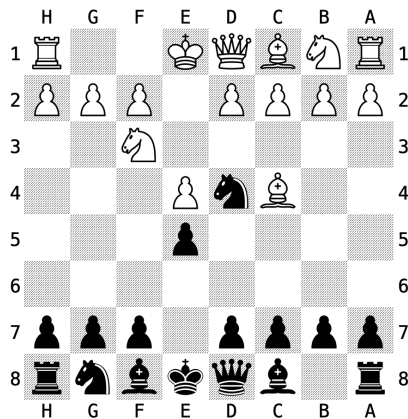


Diagram 13

It is also sometimes referred to as the **Kostić Gambit** after the Serbian grandmaster Borislav Kostić, who played it in the early 20th century.

4. Nxe5? (White took the bait and captured the poisoned pawn. This is precisely why this trap is highly effective against opponents who prioritize a greedy approach and seize every chance to gain a material advantage without hesitation. The right response would be, for instance: 4. Nxd4 exd4 5. O-O with a strong positional advantage of White.) 4. ... **Qg5!** (D14)

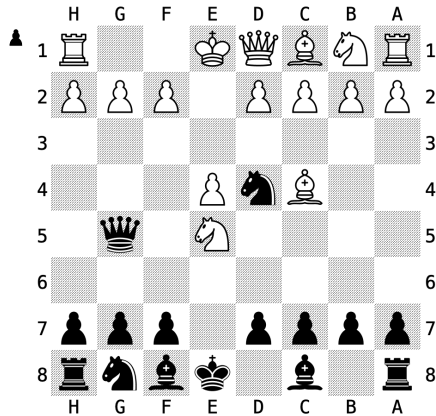


Diagram 14

This is the point of the whole combination. The black queen attacks the white knight and the g2 pawn simultaneously, so White usually resorts to the most obvious line (which is a road to hell).

5. Nxf7? (White follows the original idea to attack the weak point f7. The alternative line 5. Bxf7+ Kd8 6. Ng4 Nh6 would only compensate White with two pawns for the lost knight/bishop. Or 5. Ng4 d5 and White loses a piece.) 5. ... Qxg2 (D15)

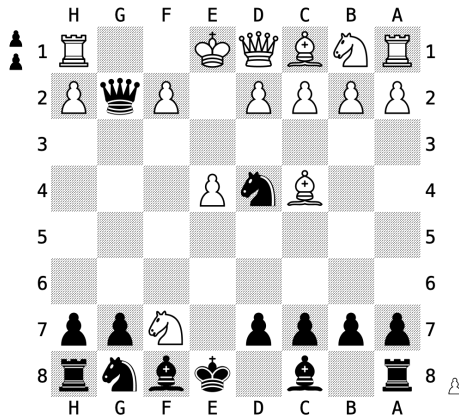


Diagram 15

White finds themselves in an extremely unfavorable position, and in reality, the game is already lost for them. It is common for many players to attempt to rescue their rook, but this only accelerates the inevitable conclusion of the game.

6. Rf1 Qxe4+ (D16)

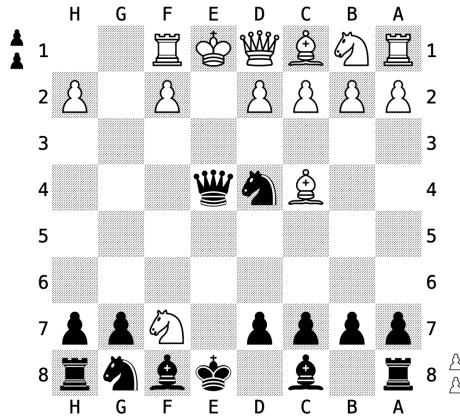


Diagram 16

White finds themselves in a predicament where they have only two choices available:

1. Give up the queen - 7. Qe2 Nxe2 8. Bxe2 Kxf7
2. Get a quick checkmate - 7. **Be2 Nf3#** (D17)

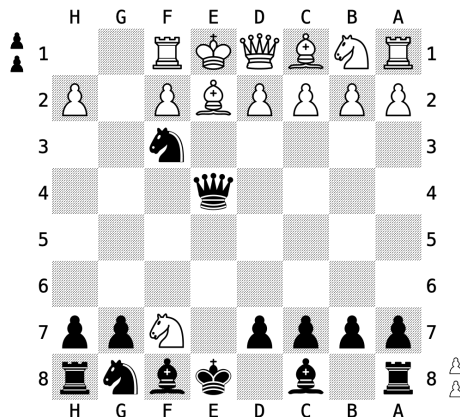


Diagram 17

Due to the black queen's pinning of the white bishop, it becomes impossible to neutralize the lethal check from the black knight. The final position is the so-called "smothered mate", as White's own pieces block the king from escaping the black knight check.

What's in the name? The English master **Joseph Henry Blackburne** reputedly used it to win one shilling per game from café visitors. However, the story could have been made up, as there are no reliable records of Blackburne playing this line.

Alapin Gambit: The pawn is mightier than the bishop's sword

In chess, one of the most important strategic elements is the proper placement and use of the pieces on the board. Among them, the rook is a powerful piece that can significantly impact the game when used effectively. Opening a file for a rook is a crucial tactic that players often use to gain control of the board and create an advantage over their opponents.

Alapin Gambit follows this pattern, as Black sacrifices a bishop to unleash a devastating attack on the h-file. White isn't forced to accept the sacrifice, and good players usually won't do so, but even a strong opponent can be sometimes distracted by this unusual move sequence and fall into the trap if the time pressure negatively affects their decisions.

1. e4 e5 2. Nf3 Nc6 3. Bb5 a6 4. Bxc6 dxc6 5. O-O Bg4 (D18)

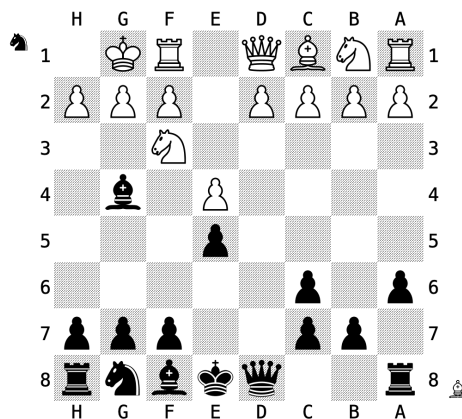


Diagram 18

Both players have followed the theory of **Ruy López**, one of the most popular openings in the past and present time. They chose the **Exchange Variation**, which is considered a balanced line, where White attempts to exploit the pawn majority on the king-side in the endgame.

6. h3 h5!? (D19)

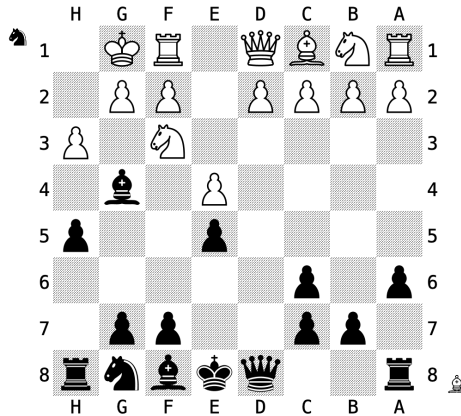


Diagram 19

The Alapin Gambit was named after **Semyon Zinovyevich Alapin** (1856-1923), a Russian chess player and theoretician who lived in the late 19th and early 20th centuries. Black is willing to sacrifice the bishop to open the rook file.

7. hxg4? (Wrong line. The material advantage is irrelevant here, as Black's pressure on the weakened king-side will be too strong to resist. 7. d3 to open the bishop's diagonal is definitely stronger.) 7. ... **hxg4** (D20)

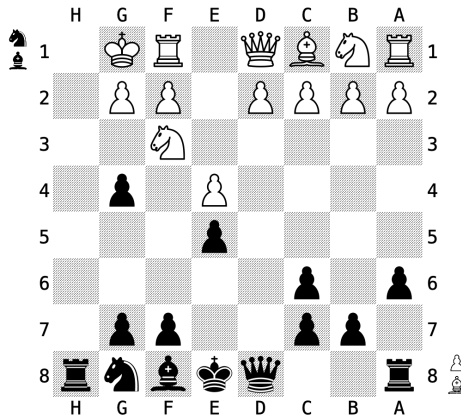


Diagram 20

8. Nh2? (In an effort to preserve the advantages in material terms, White fell into the trap immediately. They would be better off with 8. d3, returning the piece and activating the queen after 8. ... gxf3 9. Qxf3) **8. ... Qh4** (D21)

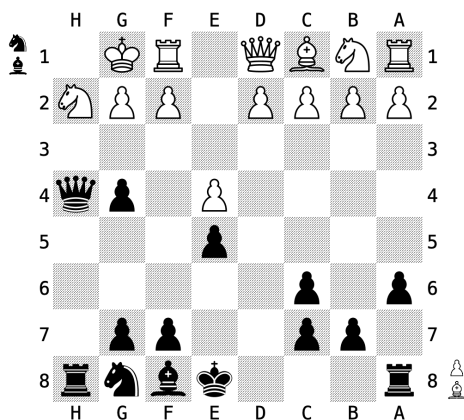


Diagram 21

The white knight is lost. White cannot protect it, and any attempt to move the knight away would result instantly in a checkmate (9. Nxg4 Qh1#). Preparing an escape route for the king is the only way to avoid an instant defeat.

9. f4 Bc5+ 10. d4 Bxd4+ and White must sacrifice the queen (11. Qxd4 Qxh2+ 12. Kf2 exd4) or face a checkmate in three moves.

Or:

9. Re1 Qxh2+ 10. Kf1 Qh1+ 11. Ke2 Qxg2 12. d3 g3 and nothing will stop us from winning the game.

Vienna Game: Frankenstein-Dracula Variation: Learn the Bök trap

The **Vienna Game** is a chess opening that starts with the moves 1. e4 e5 2. Nc3. It is a relatively uncommon opening, but has been played by several top-level chess players throughout history.

The **Frankenstein-Dracula Variation** is a specific line within the Vienna Game that begins with 1. e4 e5 2. Nc3 Nf6 3. Bc4 Nxe4, usually followed by 4. Qh5, which is one of the early queen charges that actually make sense. The variation contains many lines and sub-variants which are interesting enough to analyze them thoroughly. However, to keep with the main theme of this book, let's just take a look at a neat trap that's worth keeping in your arsenal.

1. e4 e5 2. Nc3 Nf6 3. Bc4 Nxe4 (D22)

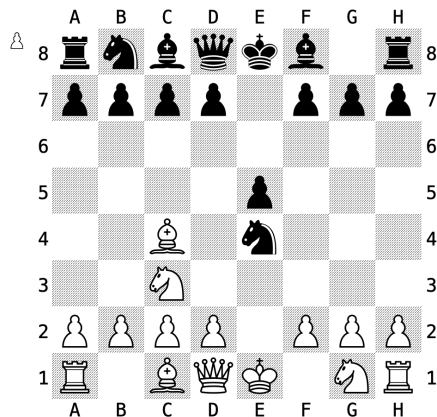


Diagram 22

To novice players unfamiliar with such combinations, this move may appear unconventional. It might seem like a mistake to allow White to seemingly capture the knight without consequence. However, this sacrifice is merely temporary. After 4. Nxe4 d5, Black executes a move that results in a fork, attacking both the bishop and the knight. Consequently, White is compelled to return the captured piece in the subsequent move.

4. Qh5 (D23)

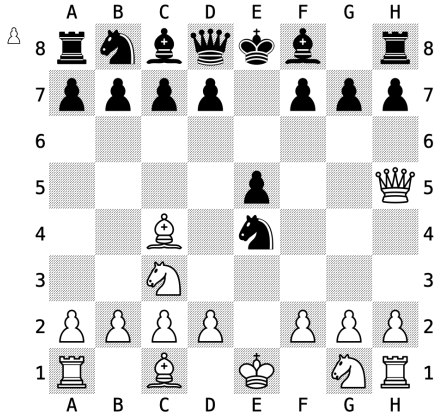


Diagram 23

The Frankenstein-Dracula Variation of the Vienna game. Unlike other early queen attacks, this one is perfectly correct.

4. ... Ng5 (D24)

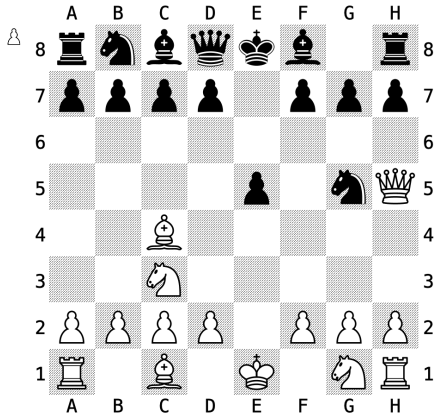


Diagram 24

The most commonly chosen defense by Black is typically based on its logical appeal. By placing the knight on g5, it serves the dual purpose of safeguarding the vulnerable f7 square and obstructing the white queen's access to the e5-pawn. Nevertheless, a stronger alternative exists in the move 4. ... Nd6. Although this move does hinder the advancement of the d-pawn, it allows the knight to

simultaneously attack the white bishop, providing a tempo to fend off White's impending attack.

5. d4 Ne6 6. d5 g6? (D25)

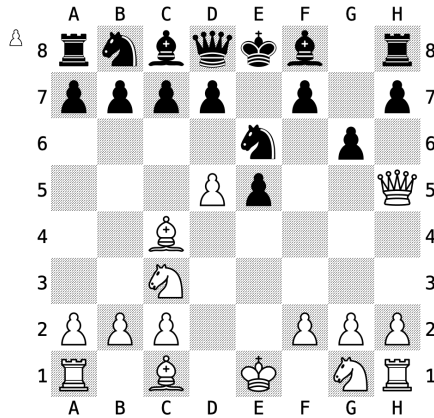


Diagram 25

Black couldn't resist attacking the queen, which is actually the trap idea. Everything would be fine after 6. ... Nd4 7. Qxe5+ Qe7 8. Qxe7+ Bxe7 9. Kd2.

7. dxe6!! gxh5 (D26)

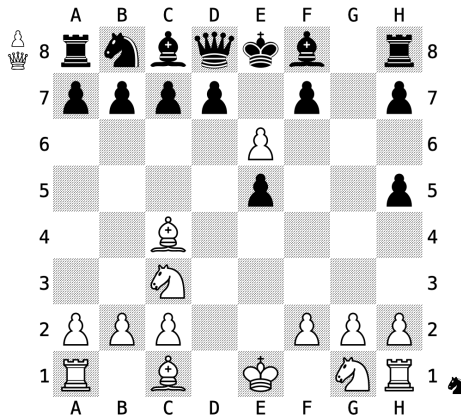


Diagram 26

An intriguing move by White unfolds as they sacrificially offer their queen! Let's examine Diagram 26 closely. The white pawn enjoys the protection of the bishop, enabling it to capture the black pawn on f7 with a check. As a result, the black king has only one option for retreat. Subsequently, the other white bishop enters the fray, compelling the king to flee even further, thereby leaving the queen completely undefended. This sequence of moves adds an exciting dynamic to the game.

8. exf7+ Ke7 9. Bg5+ Kd6 10. Bxd8 (D27)

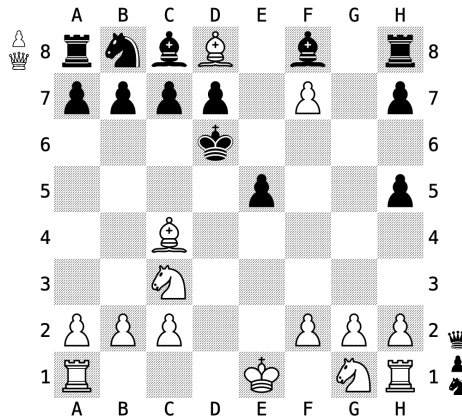


Diagram 27

White is poised for victory due to their material advantage with the knight, a pawn positioned near the promotion rank, and the weakened state of the black king, leaving them highly content.

The trap that bears its name was originated in a game where the Finnish chess master **Eero Einar Böök** executed a move 10. O-O-O+ to kickstart a remarkable assault, culminating in a captivating checkmate at the opposite end of the chessboard. Diagram 28 showcases the conclusive position.

(...)

You have reached the end of the excerpt from the book "Chess Opening Traps: Unveiling the Subtle Snares". I hope that what you have read so far has piqued your interest, and you would like to learn more about the art of trapping your opponent in the game of chess.

Please visit my portfolio at <https://Filip.Rachunek.com> to learn how you can purchase the full book, or email me at Filip.Rachunek@gmail.com.

Good luck on the chessboard!