

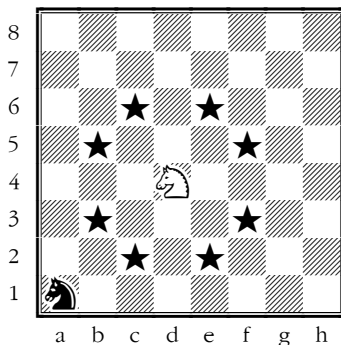
Bad Pieces & Other Advanced Piece Play

Part 1: Cramped/Bad Pieces: “Nominal” vs “Absolute” Piece Power

Concepts:

- The **real value** of your pieces is their activity!
- The best and worst positions for your pieces!
- The **nominal** piece values vs the **actual** power of the pieces

“Nominal” vs “Absolute” Power, Example 1: The Centralized Knight Dominates!

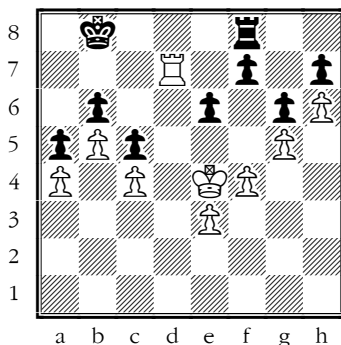


The d4-Knight must be seen as a “better piece” than the a1-Knight!

The **nominal** value of each chessman is their point value before taking anything about the **specific position** into consideration. These values were discussed in the introduction chapter (Part 2), with the Queen being worth nine points (or pawns depending on how you see it), the Rook being worth five, and so forth.

However, a piece's absolute or actual power will always depend on the exact position. The easiest way to illustrate this concept, before moving onto trickier examples, is by placing the Knight in the center – where it controls **eight** squares – against a Knight in the corner – where it only controls **two**. Clearly, the centralized Knight is worth more!

“Nominal” vs “Absolute” Power, Example 2: Rooks on the 7th Rank Always Win!

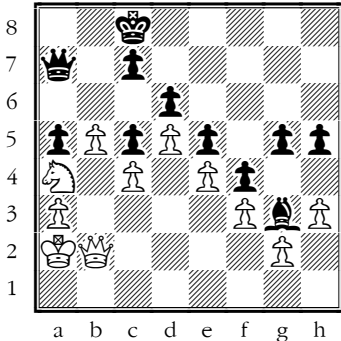


After 1...Kc8 white played 2.Re7 Kd8 (what else?) and 3.Rb7, winning the b-pawn and the game!

In our second example, the white Rook (and King) takes the spotlight! Again, the nominal value of the Rooks – both white and black's – is considered five points each, but white's Rook on d7 controls the **only** open file (d-file) and is dominating the **7th Rank**. This is important because black's Rook cannot leave the f8-square as long as white's Rook is attacking the f7-pawn. But what can black do?

White's King, also worth much more **absolute power** than his black counterpart, is threatening to enter the Kingside via e5-f6-g7 and eventually destroy every black pawn. Black, despite all material being equal, is completely lost in this position because white's pieces are **worth** so much more than his/hers. White won this game shortly...

Defensive Power: The Value of Stopping Threats is Just as Important as Pieces!

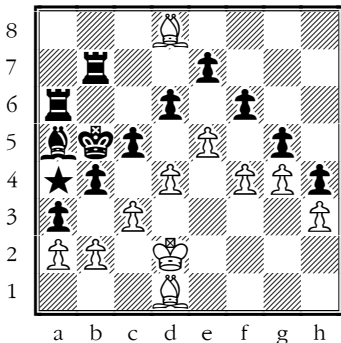


If 5.Qh1 instead of 5.gxh3 then 5...h2! is still a drawn endgame. **Despite the "points," black can draw!**

The most important thing in chess is the ability to actually make threats, not just the nominal value that each piece is *supposedly* worth. Hence, the key to this lesson! This knowledge can also be applied defensively. Here black, anticipating white's Queenside breakthrough, found a brilliant move that lost the Queen, only to save the game!

White is threatening 1.b6! After which, the bishop on g3 will be useless to white's Queenside play. After 1...Qb6!!, black sacrificed his Queen to close up all white's play. After 2.Nxb6+ (white could try to keep the pieces on the board, but the game would still be a draw with best play) 2...cxb6 3.h4! (otherwise h4 by black) gxh4! 4.Qc1 h3!! 5.gxh3 h4!, and black has closed up the entire position for a draw.

Practical Example 1 – Defend Like a Genius!

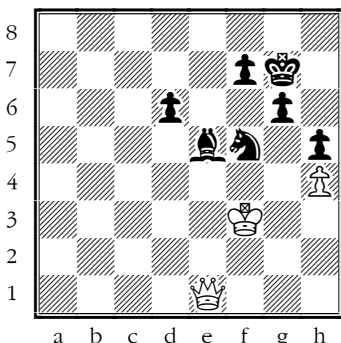


This famous problem is known by many as a fun and wacky way to draw!

Another great example where the *supposed* value of the pieces doesn't live up to their actual abilities in the position is this fun exercise. White to play and draw? Almost every piece and every pawn is under attack by black, but white has a brilliant way to solve all the issues with one move!

1.Ba4+!! With this move, white forces either a perpetual check (see Lesson 20) after 1...Kc4 2.Bb3+ repeats, or a brilliantly creative draw after 1...Kxa4 2.b3+ Kb5 3.c4+ Kc6 4.d5+ Kd7 5.e6+ Kxd8 6.f5!!, and the position has locked up, much like our previous example. Despite black's extra two Rooks and Bishop, there exists no way to make progress. This puzzle highlights our points precisely!

Practical Example 2 – The Power to Make Threats is the Most Important in Chess!



White's only real option is to sit and wait...

Our final diagram isn't nearly as flashy or exciting as the previous, but it does display clearly the idea that having targets to attack is much more important, in most cases, than the nominal value of the pieces. Despite the equal material count, black is the only one who can win here.

White has no threats to make even if black chooses to shuffle the Bishop from e5-f6 for eternity! Black on the other hand, can play 1...Bf6, 2...Bxh4, bring the Bishop back to e5, and begin pushing the h-pawn. Black's Minor pieces are better than the white Queen because they can make threats, while the white Queen can only watch in awe!

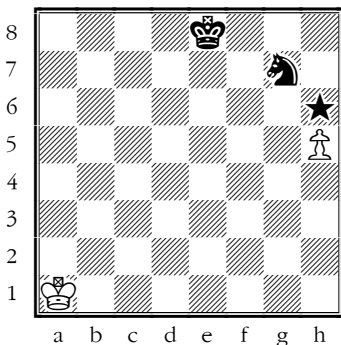
Bad Pieces & Other Advanced Piece Play

Part 2: Sidelined Minor Pieces: “Knight on the Rim” & “Bad Bishop”

Concepts:

- More examples of bad pieces!
- Knights on the *rim* (edge) are *grim*!
- The two kinds of bad Bishops: “Big Pawns” and the “Empty Bishop”!

The “Grim” Knight on the Rim Meets the Unstoppable Rook Pawn!

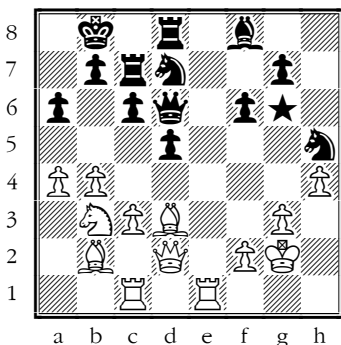


1.h6! By white is winning.
After 1...Kf7 2.h7! and white Queens the pawn!

As displayed clearly in the first diagram of Part 1, a centralized Knight is much better than a Knight in the corner or even on the rim (edge) of the board. Furthermore, if a Knight has one nemesis, it would be the outside passed Rook pawn. In general, Knights are not the best pieces in dealing with passed pawns and this is an extreme example!

After white's obvious pawn advance, the Knight (and black army as a whole) has met its doom. Black's Knight, due to lack of space, is unable to stop the passed pawn. Not even the King can save the game, as reviewed beneath the diagram. Notice that if there existed an “i” file, the Knight could move to “i6”, guarding the Queening square.

The “Grim” Knight has No Squares Available to Fight! No Help Either...

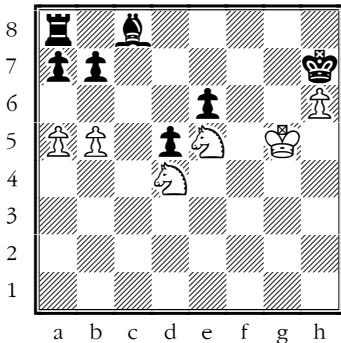


Without good reason, we need to keep the “ponies” close to the action in the center of the board!

Though there are many more examples that could be used to reveal the Knight's struggles against passed pawn(s), to clarify this point before moving on we have provided an interesting middlegame position. Here black – despite almost a full army available – could not help the h5-Knight out of his desperate position after white's obvious move.

1.Bg6! by white was played and the Knight on h5 is, rather surprisingly, trapped. Black cannot protect the Knight with 1...Qe5? (white's Rook on e1) and no other piece is in position to even consider the option. Black is losing the Knight and not long after that, the game. Of course black's play was not brilliant leading up to this position, but it does make a good point: Don't put your Knights on the rim!

Bad Bishop, Example 1: The “Big Pawn” Blocked by Its Own Pawns!

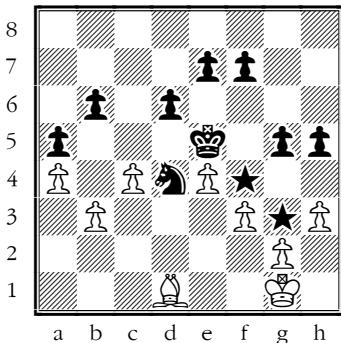


A bad bishop can make other pieces bad too – Like the a8-Rook!

What better way to redeem the horse than by showing its dominance over the other minor piece. In this famous example from Nimzowitsch in his classic book “My System”, the ***Knights are ideally placed***, with both occupying fantastic out-posts squares. White's win is not far off in this position, with black's Queenside pieces sidelined.

Black's Bishop on c8 might as well be a “big” pawn, given the amount of squares it actually controls. Without its development, the Rook will never play! If 1...a6 then 2.b6!, and 1...b6 is met by 1.a6. White will keep the pieces sidelined, and transfer his d4-Knight to f6 (via f3-h2-g4-f6) winning the game with the outside passed h-pawn.

Bad Bishop, Example 2: The “Big Pawn” Gets Dominated by the Noble Steed!

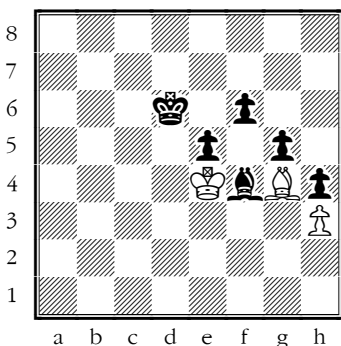


Black's out-posted Knight is worth 2-3 times as much as the d1-Bishop!

In this game, black played 1...h4! By completely controlling the dark-squares – particularly g3 and f4 – black demonstrates to white just how poor the Bishop on d1 is, **imprisoned by its own pawns**. The black King was then able to infiltrate white's camp and end the game in amazing fashion. After 2.Kf2 Kf4, white is in *Zugzwang* (Lesson 13):

The d1-Bishop cannot move to c2 in view of capture, and it can't move to e2 either because the b3-pawn falls. However, if the white King moves from f2, black enters into e3 with his King and may soon trap the Bishop on d1 with Kd2. This example displays the potential value of a **Good Knight vs a Bad Bishop** (aka “Big Pawn”).

Bad Bishop, Example 3: The “Empty” Bishop Serves No Purpose...



Opposite colored Bishop endings are common and an important study.

Sometimes a Bishop has a ton of space and options of movement, yet no real goal or purpose. In this “opposite colored” (a term used to describe endings where the **only remaining minor pieces** are Bishops of opposite square color, in this case white's light-squared Bishop vs black's dark-squared Bishop) Bishop ending – black's f4-Bishop can do nothing to break white's blockade of the pawns!

Despite black's three pawn advantage, this endgame is a forced draw. White will shuffle the bishop along the h3-c8 diagonal forever. Black can place both the King and Bishop on any square, and it makes no difference. Black's Bishop is “empty”, because it can't challenge the white counterpart.



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Instructor's Guide

Making a study of “when good pieces go bad” is a logical follow up to the introduction about pawn structure your student(s) received in lessons 17 and 18. With correct application of Lessons 17, 18 and 19 – a beginning chess player should now be thinking about his/her army as a whole. Understanding that the pawns effect the pieces, the pieces (when misplaced) can lose material, and the loss of material will eventually cost them the game.

No worksheets are provided for Lesson 19, as we believe the examples given were clear enough to illustrate each concept. Though lessons 17, 18 and 19 are a “big step up” for most beginning chess players (and likely some coaches too) – understand that getting every advanced point about structures and piece play across is **not as critical** as **the general principle of interplay between the pawns and pieces.**

At the beginning stages, development, getting castled, and simply using all the pieces is enough to play a decent chess game; however, at the more advanced levels, harmony amongst an army is very important in battle! Try to recognize, if nothing else, that every piece (especially the minors) has their “preferred” squares and are not to be developed randomly.

Practical Notes and Advice – Lesson 19:

- **If extra classroom time exists, reviewing Lessons 17 and 18, reminding the student(s) that the pawns and pieces play together is advisable. Because the pawns can't go back, every weakness is a target for a piece. Structures also “suggest” where to put the pieces, as long as the pieces know how to listen!**
- **Allowing time for practical games, asking the students to “call out” when either a “Knight is on the Rim” or when they see a bad Bishop, helps to cement the ideas more firmly.**
- **Every time a coach observes a student's game and sees a “Big Pawn,” point this out along with a suggestion as to *A*) how the pawns can move themselves, thus freeing the Bishop, or *B*) a suggestion as to how it could have been avoided. This is very helpful in teaching not only the concept of the bad Bishop, but that the pawns have a lot to do with what options a Bishop will have in a game.**