
The hard part: to win a won game

Posted by Sciurus - 2007/10/11 09:36

I spend some time lately analyzing my games and found two main reasons why I lose my games:

The most primitive mistake: leaving my pieces en prise:blink:

In many cases when I get a strong advantage, such as getting ahead in material, I simply have no idea how to win. This becomes particularly obvious in "faster" sudden death time control games like in this example, a G/30 OTB game I played about 2 weeks ago.

Anyway, here's the game:

1.e4 d5 2.exd5 Qxd5 3.d4 Nf6 4.Nf3 Nc6 5.Nc3 Qd6 6.Be2 a6 7.a3 Bg4 8.h3 Bh5 9.b4 e6 10.Be3 Be7 11.Qd3 O-O 12.Ne4 Nxe4 13.Qxe4 Bg6 14.Qf4 Bxc2 15.Qxd6 Bxd6 16.Rc1 Ba4 17.O-O a5 18.b5 Na7 19.Rb1 Bc2 20.Rb2 Bg6 21.b6 cxb6 22.Rxb6 Bxa3 23.Bd2 Nc6 24.Rxb7 Rfb8 25.Rxb8+ Rxb8 26.Ra1 Bb4 27.Bxb4 axb4 28.Rc1 Be4 29.Nd2 Nxd4 30.Kf1 Nxe2 31.Kxe2 Bg6 32.g4 h5 33.gxh5 Bxh5+ 34.Ke3 b3 35.Kd3 b2 36.Rg1 b1=Q+ 37.Nxb1 Bg6+? 38.Kd2 Bxb1 39.f4

The game was played in a 4 round G/30 tournament. I played Black and used the Qd6 variation of the Scandinavian Defense to fight my opponent's King's Pawn opening.

1.e4 d5 2.exd5 Qxd5 3.d4 Nf6?!

Better is ... Nc6 attacking the d-pawn.

4.Nf3 Nc6 5.Nc3

(5.c4 Qa5+ 6.Bd2 Qf5 7.Nc3)

5...Qd6 6.Be2 a6 7.a3 Bg4

I am not sure how much sense ... Bg5 makes after White already played Be2.

8.h3

For some reason Shredder favors the exchange over anything else!?

8...Bh5 9.b4 e6 10.Be3 Be7 11.Qd3 O-O

I tried to delay the decision on which side to castle for a while. Castling kingside looked a bit safer to me because of White's advanced pawns on the queenside ready to become a menace there, although I did not see a big difference. As usual, Shredder disagrees and prefers ... 0-0-0.

12.Ne4?

Looses a pawn.

12...Nxe4 13.Qxe4 Bg6 14.Qf4 Bxc2

White is now a pawn down and has an isolated d-pawn which is well protected for now but may become weak later.

Gotta read up on isolated pawns strategy!

15.Qxd6 Bxd6 16.Rc1 Ba4 17.O-O a5 18.b5?!

Makes the pawn on a3 a weak target.

18...Na7 19.Rb1 Bc2?!

Better would have been to capture the a-pawn with ... Bxa3.

20.Rb2 Bg6 21.b6 cxb6 22.Rxb6 Bxa3 23.Bd2 Nc6 24.Rxb7 Rfb8 25.Rxb8+ Rxb8 26.Ra1 Bb4 27.Bxb4 axb4 -/+

Black now has a nice passed pawn and his light-colored B controls the promotion square. Furthermore, Black is one pawn up.

28.Rc1 Be4 29.Nd2 Nxd4

Threatening a fork.

30.Kf1 Nxe2

I did not have that much time to think but figured I should be able to win at least a piece by pushing my passed pawn.

Decided to exchange pieces to reduce the number of White's defenders.

(30...Bxg2+ 31.Kxg2 Nxe2)

31.Kxe2 Bg6?

Better: ...Bxg2 winning another pawn. Still controlling the promotion squares but hopefully far enough from the action to not get bothered by White's army.

32.g4 h5

I figured that this should give my king an escape square to avoid backrank trouble later.

33.gxh5 Bxh5+ 34.Ke3 b3 35.Kd3 b2

White is in trouble here because the position of his king allows Black's B a nice shot.

36.Rg1 b1=Q+

(36...Bg6+ 37.Ke2 Ra8 38.Rg3 Ra2 39.Ke3 Ra1 40.Ke2)

37.Nxb1 Bg6+?

Better would have been to force the exchange of rooks to simplify the endgame!

38.Kd2 Bxb1 39.f4

Now Black is a piece and a pawn ahead. Furthermore, White's pawns are isolated and therefore vulnerable. But I was unable to make a winning plan in time trouble.

I stopped writing down the moves here and don't remember how it continued, except for the fact that I ran out of time.

Post edited by: Sciurus, at: 2007/10/11 09:50

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Re:The hard part: to win a won game

Posted by Sciurus - 2007/10/21 12:19

1.e4 d5 2.exd5 Qxd5 3.d4 Nf6 4.Nf3 Nc6 5.Nc3 Qd6 6.Be2 a6 7.a3 Bg4 8.h3 Bh5 9.b4 e6 10.Be3 Be7 11.Qd3 O-O 12.Ne4 Nxe4 13.Qxe4 Bg6 14.Qf4 Bxc2 15.Qxd6 Bxd6 16.Rc1 Ba4 17.O-O a5 18.b5 Na7 19.Rb1 Bc2 20.Rb2 Bg6 21.b6 cxb6 22.Rxb6 Bxa3 23.Bd2 Nc6 24.Rxb7 Rfb8 25.Rxb8+ Rxb8 26.Ra1 Bb4 27.Bxb4 axb4 28.Rc1 Be4 29.Nd2 Nxd4 30.Kf1 Nxe2 31.Kxe2 Bg6 32.g4 h5 33.gxh5 Bxh5+ 34.Ke3 b3 35.Kd3 b2 36.Rg1 b1=Q+ 37.Nxb1 Bg6+? 38.Kd2 Bxb1 39.f4

The board on the left shows the position at the end of the game. Black clearly has a winning position here - he is a bishop and a pawn ahead. But my problem was not to recognize that I had a winning position but to figure out how to convert the material advantage to a win within the limited time I had left on the clock. So what is the best way to approach a problem like this?

Well, first of all, both parties have a rook each left, which is White's last piece. Therefore, exchanging rooks would be a good idea for Black because it amplifies the material advantage.

Secondly, White has only two pawns left. There is no connection between those pawns - they are unable to protect each other. Therefore, they are weak and can be used as targets for an attack.

Lastly, I have to get rid of the idea that there must be a quick blow when one side is clearly ahead. There mustn't! In fact, In the position shown above, there is no quick way for Black to force a win. Therefore, the only way to win the game is to use White's weaknesses to get an even better position.

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