

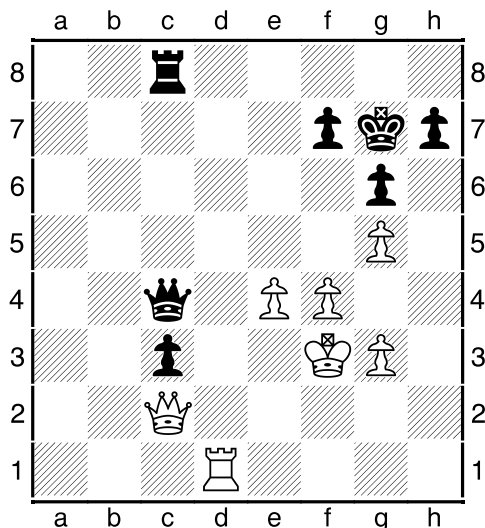


Novice Lecture – Blunders

by IM Robert Jamieson

Just about all chess games below master level are decided by blunders. It makes sense therefore to study "blunders" to see if we can understand what causes them and hence be better able to avoid them in our own games.

Here is a simple example to start with. White must choose between 1.Rc1, 1.Rd3 or 1.e5. The position looks very drawish but one of these moves is a big blunder!

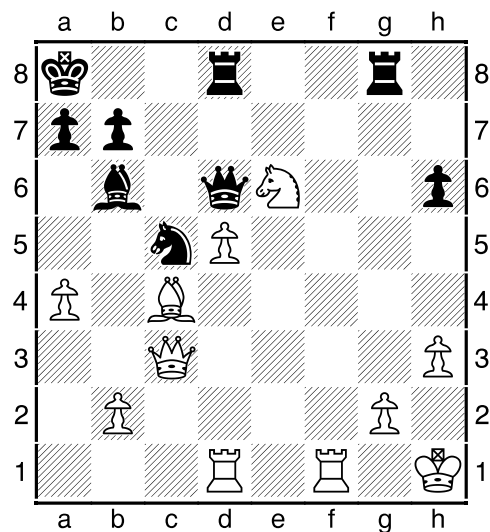


Johner v Wade Yervan 1961

1.Rd3?? Qxd3 2.Qxd3 c2 0-1. White cannot stop the pawn.

Why did White blunder? He did not ask himself "what will Black reply to 1.Rd3" and did not sense the danger. Perhaps he only looked at what he wanted to do as nothing much is happening in the original position.

The next position is from one of my own games in the 1976 Chess Olympiad v Indonesia.



Here White is clearly winning but cannot take the R on d8 as Black is threatening 1...Ne4 then 2...Ng3+. I should play 1.Rde1 and all is well, but instead decided to rid myself of that pesky black N.

I played 1.Nxc5 and assumed that Black would recapture, but instead he played 1...Bc7!

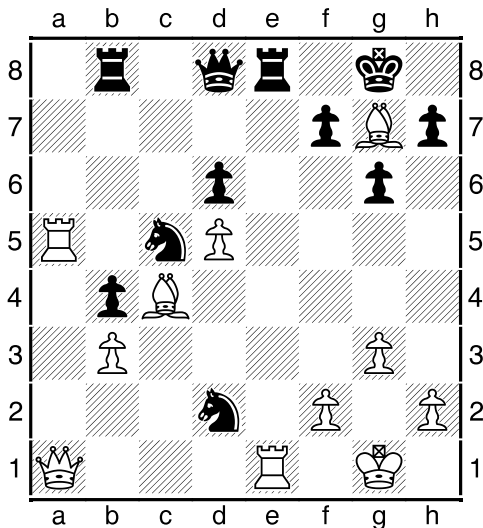
The game continued 2.g3 Rxc3 3.Rf6 Qxc5 4.Qd4 Rg8 5.Rxh6 Qxd4 0-1.

Again, White did not check his move before making it and "assumed" that Black would recapture.





In the next example, no less a player than Tigran Petrosian, World Champion from 1963-66 makes an absolute howler.



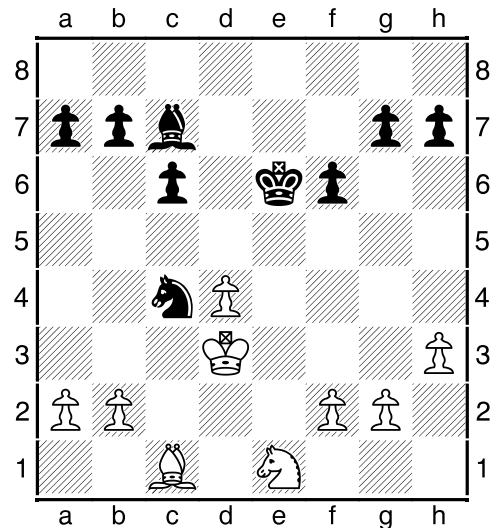
Petrosian v Gligoric 1956

It is White to play and Black is threatening 1...Nf3+ and 1...Nxb3 but White has mating chances on the dark squares around the black King. Petrosian probably analysed 1.Rxe8+ Qxe8 then was tossing up between 2.Bh8 and 2.Bh6. He eventually decided on the Bh6 line and so played **1.Bh6??**

Black replied 1...Rxe1+ and Petrosian had to resign as after 2.Qxe1 Nf3+ wins the Q. He had been so wrapped up in his analysis that he had forgotten that he hadn't yet played 1.Rxe8+.

This is a common type of blunder where our brain is still thinking in the future when we make our move. When I was playing I used to use Bobby Fischer's technique of first writing your intended move down, checking it, and only then playing the move. This always brought my brain back to the present before making a move.

The next blunder is one of the most famous of all time from a game between two former World Champions.



Lasker v Euwe 1936

Black had to choose between:

1. defending his N (1...Kd5 or 1...b5)
2. moving the N (1...Nb6 or 1...Nd6) or
3. counter-attacking White's N with 1...Ba5.

Euwe chose **1...Ba5** assuming that either White would exchange N for N or would move his N. He was wrong! White played the clever "intermediate" move **2.b4!** and after **2...Bxb4 3.Nc2** wins a piece.

Clearly Black did not sense the danger and made assumptions about his opponent's reply without checking for surprise moves.

I hope that these examples have given you some ideas about the causes of blunders and that this understanding will help you play "blunder free" chess from now on.

