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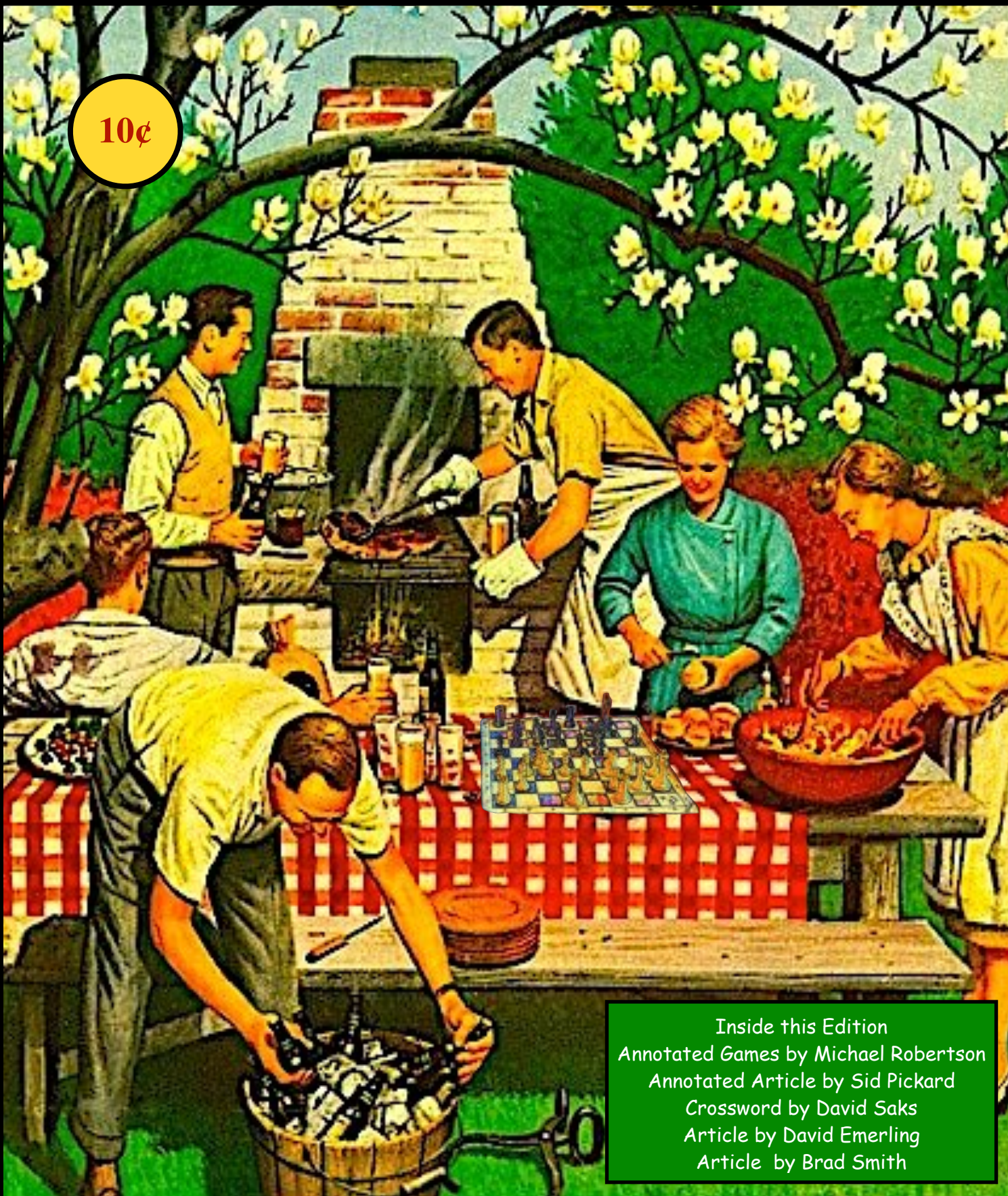
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Chess Advocate



Barbecue Edition

10¢



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Article by David Emerling
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CHESS ADVOCATE

Chess Advocate, Volume 7, Number 3, Barbecue Edition, April 2023

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Wise Club Link(s)



Link #1 Back-Issues



Link #2 Back-Issues



This Barbecue Edition of Chess Advocate is a salute to the tournaments held by Mr. Brad Smith.

Bradley's Chess Fun 2014

Bradley's Chess Fun 2018

Brad's Chess Cookout 2020



Brad's BBQ 2021

Brad's BBQ 2022

Brad's Chess Page



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"I played in the 2020 edition of Brad's Chess Cookout and had a great time, as did several of my students. The format was fun and original, the organization and direction was smooth, and the food was excellent. I hope to come back to Finger and play in another edition of the tournament!" -FM *Alex King*

"I played in Brad's Cookout Tournament in 2020. The food was great, the chess was great, and the location was cool. Definitely recommend for a unique tournament experience!" -NM *Graham Horobetz*

"The people there are nice and the food is outstanding. The location is surprisingly really nice and always at a good temperature. On top of that, there have always been strong players there in my experience." -Liam *Hereford*

"I always have a great time playing in Brad's tournaments. I only wish my chess playing was as good as the food." -Michael *Robertson*

Introducing Bradley Smith



My chess journey started out as a club player in California, playing a lot of tournaments in the Bay area.

One of my biggest successes was winning a tournament at Berkley University (formerly known as Berserkly). In that tournament, I went 4-0 which landed me as a B rated player.

One of the coolest experiences I ever had was playing at a tournament in San Francisco where George Koltanowski, who set the world record in 1937 for playing 34 blindfold chess games simultaneously, put on an exhibition where they picked 64 random players (including me). They took us into a room and asked each person to write down a set of random numbers (age, birthday, phone, etc.). They then assigned each set of numbers to a square on the chess board where George memorized each square with random sets of numbers. George then performed what is known in the chess world as a "Knights Tour". A knight is placed anywhere on the chess board where it has to make legal moves while landing on every single square on the chess board. With each move of the Knight, George would also read off the set of random numbers assigned to that particular square, all while he was blindfolded. At the end of the exhibition, George received a full 5 minute standing ovation. The room was completely blown away.

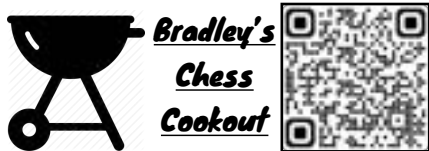
In the mid 90's I moved to Tennessee and became a member of the Jackson Chess Club. Later my wife and I ran the chess club for a couple of years, working with other chess clubs in Memphis.

I have also had the privilege of playing Women's International Master Iryna Zenyuk, 2 U.S. chess champions, 3 time U.S. champion Larry Christiansen and 3 time U.S. champion Joel Benjamin.

In recent years I have annually been hosting Bradley's Chess Cookout at my home in Finger, TN. My smoked Bar-b-q ribs have been a favorite every year. We have attracted players from beginner to master level every year and lots of spectators who come to enjoy the food as well.

We have a Facebook page, Bradley's Chess Cookout, with pictures and information. I am also including some games from the tournament in this newsletter.

I hope everyone enjoys the pictures and games. Please come visit at our annual Bar-b-q tournament.



Annotated Game from the Jackson Chess Club's WIM Iryna Zenyuk Simultaneous Exhibition



We all have games that haunt us. This game was from a BBQ tournament, the James Head Memorial, where Arlene Kleiman brought WIM Iryna Zenyuk, who was coaching at the Mid-South Chess Camp in Memphis, to perform a simul. When she walked up to my board, as seen in the photo above, I asked "Are you scared?" and she said "NO, should I be!" She clearly out played me in the game, but she made a mistake that should have allowed me to win a piece and win the game. But I also made a fatal mistake. Iryna never lost a game that day. She is definitely a great ambassador for the game we all love. It was a great pleasure for me to play and meet her. - *Brad Smith*

Simultaneous Exhibition James Head Memorial

06/13/2009

Jackson Chess Club, Jackson, TN

White: Brad Smith - 1620
Black: WIM Iryna Zenyuk - 2316

Annotations by Michael Robertson
of the Jackson, Tennessee Chess Club

1.e4 c5 2.Nc3 e6



3.g3 Nc6



This move signals that white is going to play the closed version of the Sicilian defense. Normal continuations and ideas would be to play d3, Bg2, Nge2, f4 - there might be other ideas, but this is the main goal.

4.Bg2 g6



Some beginners might see this as slow, pushing both the e-pawn and the g-pawn. The idea here is to counter white's f4 with d5.

5.d3 Bg7 6.f4 Nge7



7.Nge2 O-O 8.O-O d6



Black opting for a quieter version.

8...d5 was also an option.



9.e5



9.exd5 exd5 10.Bd2 Bg4



9...a6



Stopping white's knight from playing b5-d6.

10.Bd2



10.Be3??



Don't fall for this natural looking mistake allowing black a pawn fork the next move!

10...b5 and expanding on the Queenside.



9.Bd2 b6 10.a3



This last move might be a little slow. but why? - pose the question to yourself, "Am I worried about the knight moving to b4?" Based on the pawn structure white should be focusing on the Kingside, while black is focusing on the Queenside, this is due to the direction the pawns are pointing.

10.h3 Bb7 11.g4 Rb8



12.f5 exf5 13.exf5 gxf5 14.gxf5



10...Bb7 11.h3 Rc8 12.g4



And now the correct plan was played.

12...f5



Black does not want to allow white to play f5.



13.exf5



13.gxf5 exf5



If you are playing black, whichever way white captures, you should think about capturing the opposite way. This keeps imbalance in the position, and that's why we play the Sicilian, right?

13...gxf5 14.Ng3 Qd7



The next few moves here are critical. Black gains a strong position, let's see if we can figure out why.

15.g5



15.Kh2 Nd4 16.Bxb7 Qxb7



17.Nh5 e5 18.Nxg7 Kxg7



19.fxe5 dxe5



Note the difference in this position and the one from the game. There is not much distinction at first glance, but we see a few key differences. White's king is out of the way allowing heavy pieces to get to the f and g files, white still has tension on f5 and can open the Kingside up whenever he wants and white's bishop is not hemmed in by its own pawns. These subtle differences change the position drastically.

15...Nd4 16.Bxb7 Qxb7



17.Nh5 Ng6 18.Be1 e5



19.Bg3 Rce8 20.Nxg7 Kxg7



Black has a winning advantage here.

21.fxe5 dxe5 22.Rc1 f4



23.Be1 f3 24.Ne4 Ne2+



25.Kh2



Which is worth more? The rook on c1 or the knight on e2?

25...Nxc1



25...Ngf4 26.Nc3 Nd5



27.Nxe2 Ne3 28.Qd2 Nxf1+



26.Nd6 Qe7 27.Nxe8+



And due to white's fork (with check), white is now back in the game.

27...Rxe8 28.Qxc1 e4



29.dxe4 Qxe4 30.Bc3+ Ne5??



This move blunders and should allow white to win a piece.

31.Re1 Qh4



White has a drastic lead here. It all comes down to this next move.

31...Qf5 32.Rxe5 Rxe5 33.Qe3



32.Qe3??



32.Qd2! And the piece is lost. Such a small difference in this move makes me question the fairness of chess. It is not an easy game!



32...Kg8



33.Bxe5 Rxe5 White resigned here. Can you figure out why? 0-1



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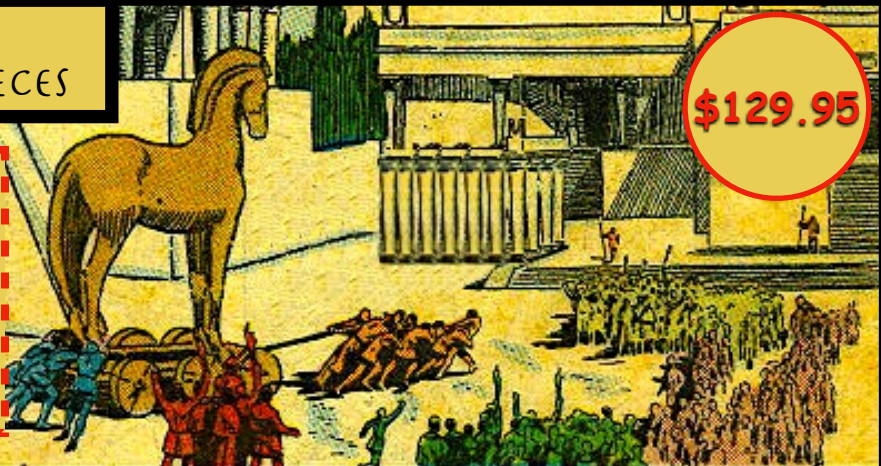
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Vic was 3-0 going into the last round against me. I felt bad with my upset win against him, but I had a great sac that I was very proud of, giving me the advantage and the win. Enjoy! - Brad Smith

Brad's Closed BBQ Tourney
02/13/2021, Round 4

White: Brad Smith - 1500
Black: Victor Want - 1755

Annotations by Michael Robertson
with a comment by Brad Smith

1.e4 c5 2.Nf3 d6



3.Bc4 e6 4.O-O Nf6



5.d3 Be7 6.Bf4 O-O



7.h3 a6 8.Nbd2 b5



The White Bishop can thank goodness for the pawn on d3!

9.Bb3 d5 10.exd5



10.Bg3?? c4 11.dxc4 dxc4



10...exd5 11.c4



11.a3



This was the alternative as some may look at 11.c4 as entombing the Bishop.

11...c4 12.dxc4 dxc4 13.Ba2



11...d4 12.Re1 Re8?



Vic told me that he thought this was the losing move. - Brad Smith



12...b4



And the Bishop can live on the a4-e8 diagonal.

13.cxb5



Opening the Bishop back up and revealing the reason **12...Re8** was thought to be a mistake.

13...axb5 14.Ng5 Nd5 15.Nxf7!!



What a shot!

15...Qd7



15...Kxf7 16.Qh5+ g6



16...Kf8 17.Bxd5 g6 18.Bh6#



Samuel Boden would be proud.

17.Qxd5+ Qxd5 18.Bxd5+



16.Qh5 c4 17.Ne5 Qd8



18.dxc4



18.Qf7+ Kh8 19.dxc4 Nxf4



20.cxb5 Nd3??



20...g5!?! This stops the forced mate.



21.Qg8+ Rxf4 22.Nf7#



18...Nxf4 19.Qf7+ Kh8



20.cxb5 Ne6



20...Nd3?? 21.Qg8+ Rxf7 22.Nf7#



And a smothered mate is on the board again.

21.Bxe6 Bxe6 22.Qxe6 Rf8



22...Ra5?? 23.Nf7+ Kg8



24.Nh6+ Kh8 25.Qg8+ Rxf7 26.Nf7#



23.Nf7+ Rxf7



23...Kg8?? 24.Nh6+ Kh8



25.Qg8+ Rxc8 26.Nf7#



The same smothered mate theme keeps showing up in these variations.

24.Qxf7 Ra7 25.Rac1 h6



26.b6 Rd7 27.Rc7 Rxc7



28.bxc7 Qxc7 29.Rxe7 Qc2



Black resigned as 30.Qxg7# follows. 1-0

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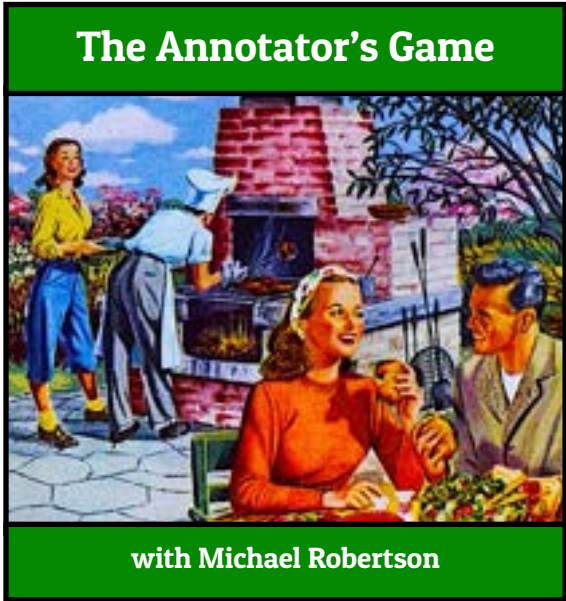
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Brad's BBQ
08/20/2022, Round 4

White: Michael Robertson - 1824
Black: Jonathan Beatty - 2056

Sicilian Defense: Alapin Variation

1.e4 c5 2.c3



I have played the Alapin variation for a while now. This is just a caveman approach to pushing for a big center. It looks slow, but can be aggressive in the middlegame.



2...d5



The other mainline of this opening is 2...Nf6
3.e5 Nd5 4.d4 cxd4



5.cxd4 Nc6 6.Nf3



Both variations have to be known if you want to play this line.

3.exd5 Qxd5 4.d4 Nf6



9.Nb5 Rc8



5.Nf3 Bg4 6.Be2 e6



9...Qd8



7.O-O Nc6 8.Na3 cxd4



10.Nbxd4 Nxd4 11.Nxd4 Bxe2



I have only ever seen this line played with this before.



12.Qxe2



This leaves me with the small advantage of the offside pawn majority.

10.Nbxd4 Be7 11.Be3 Nxd4



12.Nxd4



12.Bxd4



The machine likes this capture better due to the pressure on a7. When your opponent's King is in the center, these small attacks keeps him from castling.

12...Bxe2 13.Qxe2 O-O



14.Rfd1 Qa5 15.Nb3 Qa4



16.Rd4 Qc6 17.Rad1 a6



18.Bf4 Nd5??



How strange that such a normal looking move would cause such a problem. It puts a Knight in the center of the board and attacks my Bishop. What could be wrong with it?

18...Rcd8=



19.Rxd5 exd5



20.Qxe7 Rfe8 21.Qa3 Qc4



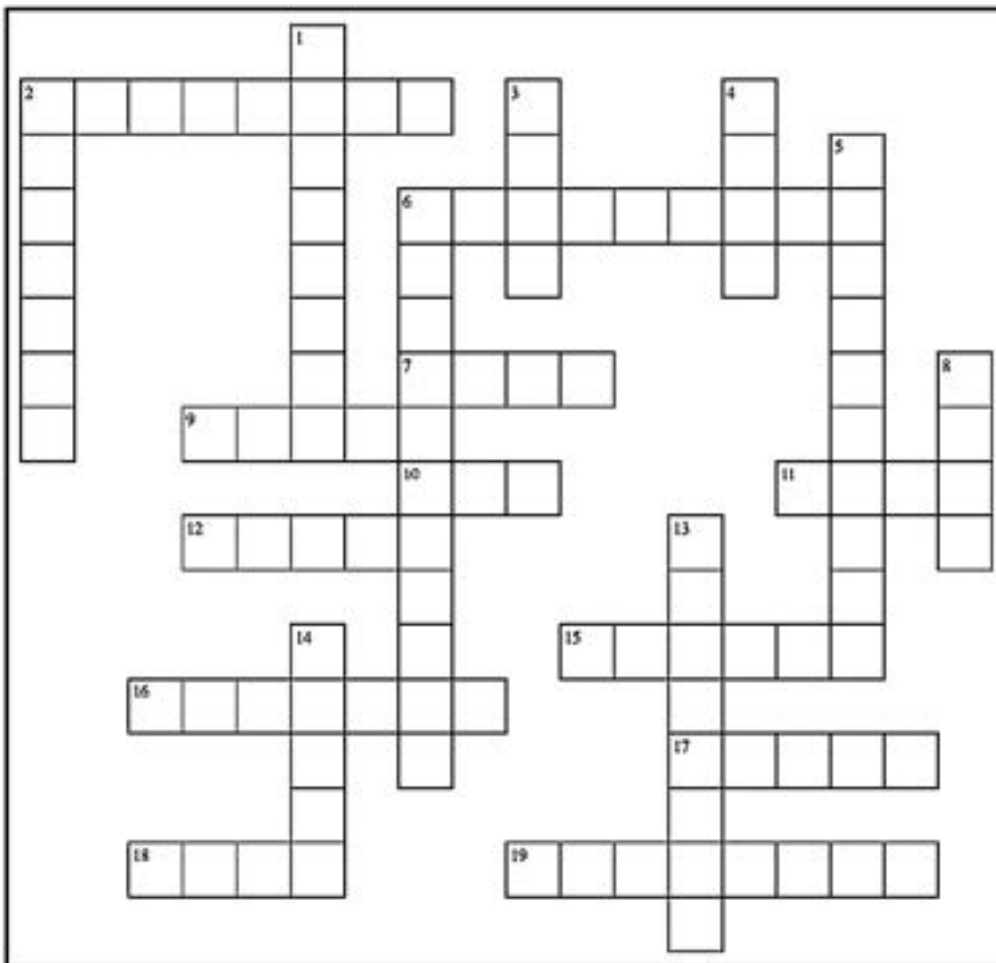
22.Nd4 Re4 23.Be3



Black resigned here after I was able to consolidate the position. It all came down to the one natural blunder. **0-1**

Picnic for Pawn Pushers

by David Saks

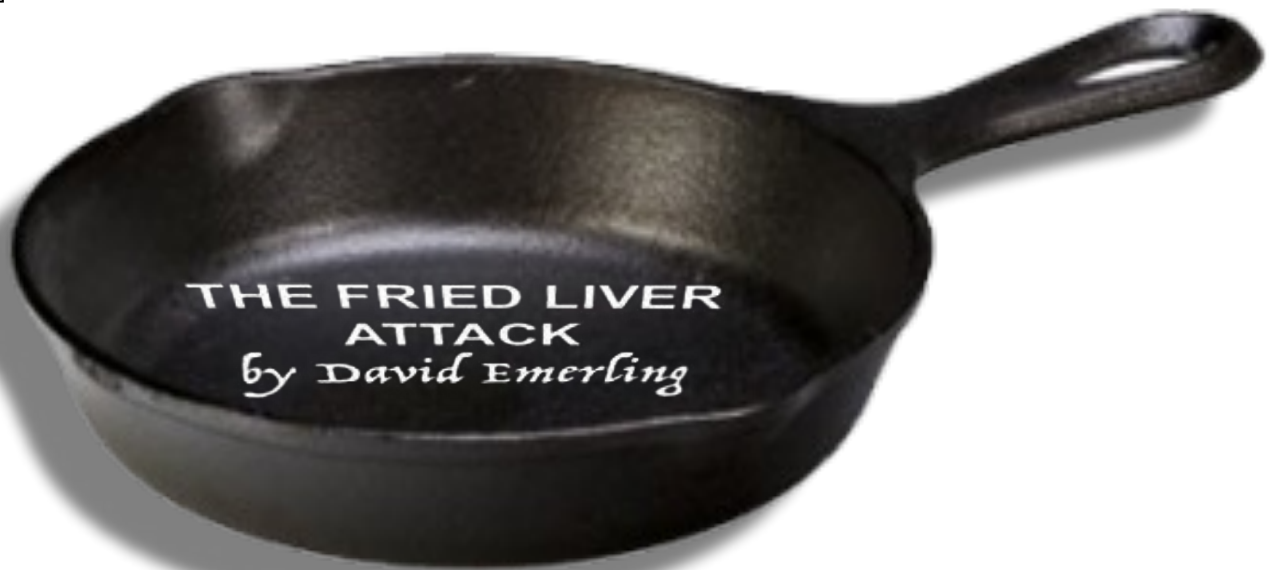


Across

Down

- 2. A coordinated sequence of combined chess moves hot enough to burn.
- 6. The plan of attacking a kingside, sometimes a fianchetto position, by advancing the h-pawn with the intention of opening a file near the defender's king.
- 7. Tactic in which a piece attacks multiple enemy pieces simultaneously.
- 9. This move will open one line in a game and close another one. A mechanical device that controls the flow of fluid.
- 10. To remove the opponent's piece or pawn from the board by taking it with one's own piece or pawn. To consume.
- 11. Two rooks acting together on the 7th rank. "**** on the 7th" typically gobble up all of your opponent's pawns on that rank.
- 12. To humiliate or completely depress your opponent (not the orange variety).
- 15. Also known as the reverse pin, you are attacking a valuable enemy piece that has lower value material blocked behind. Your opponent in most cases will have to move the higher value protector to sacrifice the lower value piece behind.
- 16. This defense (not the muffin) is characterized by the moves: 1.d4 e6 2.c4 b6. Viktor Korchnoi used it to defeat Lev Polugaevsky in their world championship semifinals match at Évian 1977.
- 17. Term used by Max Euwe in his books meant "to accelerate the crisis". That is, chess from the first move is about two opposing forces and their opposing plans. To have a "*****" position is where those plans meet each other directly and one plan can "win out" at any move. Any mistake is your last mistake. A knife edge.
- 18. An unintended solution of a chess problem. The term may also be used more generally to refer to a refutation to published analysis. To fake or falsify.
- 19. Earliest recorded notes on this defense date back to the late 16th century by the Italian chess players Giulio Polerio and Gioachino Greco. Begins with the following moves: 1.e4 c5.

- 1. Sometimes called a seesaw, a tactic that occurs when one player takes advantage of a restricted king to deliver multiple checks and discovered checks in sequence. It wipes out the board. See Carlos Torre vs Emanuel Lasker, Moscow 1925.
- 2. This describes a chess position in which you're forced to make a bad move. This occurs when you find yourself in a position where the only moves you have are all bad. Also known as Zugzwang. Could be an orange drink.
- 3. Queenside a-, b-, and c-files; or the kingside f-, g-, and h-files. A movable organ for flying.
- 4. Very offensive in smell or taste. A row of chess pieces standing abreast of one another.
- 5. This attack also called the Fegatello Attack (named after an Italian dish), is a chess opening. This opening is a variation of the Two Knights Defense in which White sacrifices a knight for an attack on Black's king.
- 6. Chernev in his book "Logical Chess: Move by Move" describes h3 as this type of chess (p.15), as done in front of the castled king, it weakens his defenses. Common with java and small restaurants where drinks and snacks are sold.
- 8. A weak chess player. Grilled patzer.
- 13. Traditionally served to gentlemen before they retreated to another room to play chess. Slice this out of an opponent's positions.
- 14. The sides of a chess formation. The side between ribs and hipbone.



In order to play your best under stressful tournament conditions you need to have a clear mind and be well-rested. Proper nutrition can help in this area. I'm not a nutritionist (nor do I play one on TV) but it is well known that the consumption of liver has many health benefits. It provides many key nutrients. In fact, liver is one of the most nutritionally dense foods on the planet. Its high cholesterol content is often offset by its other benefits. However, like most foods, once it's fried, it is not quite as healthy – just like fried chicken is not nearly as healthy as grilled or baked chicken.

Similarly, subjecting yourself to the Fried Liver Attack can be unhealthy for your chess rating.

“What is the Fried Liver Attack?” you ask. Thanks for asking!

Most of you have probably had the position below at some point in your chess journey – whether playing white or black. After the moves: 1.e4 e5, 2.Nf3 Nc6, 3.Bc4 Nf6, 4.Ng5 white is clearly targeting black's weak f7 square.



Siegbert Tarrasch (1862-1934), the great German chess master, famously called white's 4.Ng5 a “real duffer's move.” Well, there must be a lot of “duffers” out there because this is a very popular move. According to the database, white wins the majority of games when this move is played. Chess engines do not consider this a bad move. It *does* violate the general principle of not moving the same piece twice in the opening, but there are always exceptions to general principles. This is *not* the Fried Liver Attack, however. Technically, this is the Knight Attack variation of the Two Knights Defense.

The f7 square is not easily defended by black. It seems like 4...d5, blocking the bishop's diagonal, is the only move – and it's also the most often-played move. Black has some tricky alternatives, however; namely 4...Bc5 (Traxler Counterattack) or 4...Nxe4 (Ponziani-Steinitz Gambit), ignoring white's attack on his f7 square altogether. You might want to check out those interesting lines. They are both very wild. In fact, my first (and only) win against a 2000+ player, when I was only rated about 1500, was when I was playing the black side of a Traxler Counterattack. My opponent made the mistake of playing a book line against a much weaker opponent. It was no longer, “Who is the better chess player?” He clearly was. It became, “Who can remember the book lines the best?” I knew all the moves by heart because I had prepared this in advance. I wrote to Chess Life and asked Larry Evans about a line that occurred in that game. I got a Best Question Award for that issue. So, to quote Ron Burgundy (Will Ferrell) from the movie Anchorman, "I'm kind of a big deal." This was over 30 years ago. I wish I had a score of that game. I don't even have the Chess Life issue anymore. Maybe it's in a box in my attic.

Chess Life,
April 1989.



After the following moves are played: 4...d5, 5.exd5 Nxd5, we have the position below.



5...Nxd5 is rarely played at higher-levels. 5...Na5 is the preferred move. However, amateurs play this move frequently. This is where white has a choice to make.

Does he want to jump into the Fried Liver Attack? It starts with 6.Nxf7, a knight sacrifice. Of course, he's going to play it! Nobody plays the Knight Attack variation if they're not prepared to sac their knight. Chess engines think 6.d4 is actually white's best move but the majority of players drool over the opportunity to sac their knight, almost as if they have just been served some fried liver with sautéed onions. 6.Nxf7 actually scores better than 6.d4.

Of course, black must capture the knight since it is forking his queen and rook. Black plays 6...Kxf7. White follows up with 7.Qf3+ with a double attack on black's king and knight. If black wants to hold on to his extra piece (and he usually does), he has to play 7...Ke6. Now the fun begins. White keeps putting pressure on the pinned knight on d5 and also has his eye on black's exposed king in the middle of the board.



I checked the Lichess master database and there have been 17 master games played that have reached the above position. White won nine - black won five - three games were drawn. White does even better in the non-master database. There are many more non-master games, most of which are won by white.

It looks scary, but theory says that black can defend this position. It won't be any fun, however – kind of like eating fried liver isn't very fun especially with a side of Brussels sprouts. [repressed gag]

You might be thinking, “Sure, high-rated players might play this online, just for fun. But, they would *never* adopt this in a serious game.” You'd be wrong! My research indicates that very high-rated players *have* gone down this path – more times than you might imagine. As an example, below are three games played by grandmasters who decided to jump into the Fried Liver Attack in a tournament game. All three games were won by white. *Theoretically*, black can defend the attack. *Practically*, not so much. The first two games were in blitz tournaments with prize money on the line. The third game was played in the 2014 Olympiad.

Awonder Liang (2592) vs Pavel Ponkratov (2631) 8-02-2020



Sergei Zhigalko (2671) vs Simon Agdestein (2602) 12-30-2016



Shirov, Alexei (2709) vs Sulskis, Sarunas (2544) 8-3-2014



One interesting thing to note about the above three games is that, in each case, the player with the black pieces had a completely different idea for defending, all to no avail.

There is a thread on the chess.com forum entitled "[Do you like the fried liver attack?](#)" It's somewhat comical.

"Lame opening for lame chess players." -toiyabe

"Hack players will play hack openings." -Mr-Endron

"I hate it - it's the glorification of the noobish hack attack every 7 year old wants to win with." -AlisonHart

"It's a childish opening, and very easy to neutralize." -Jadulla

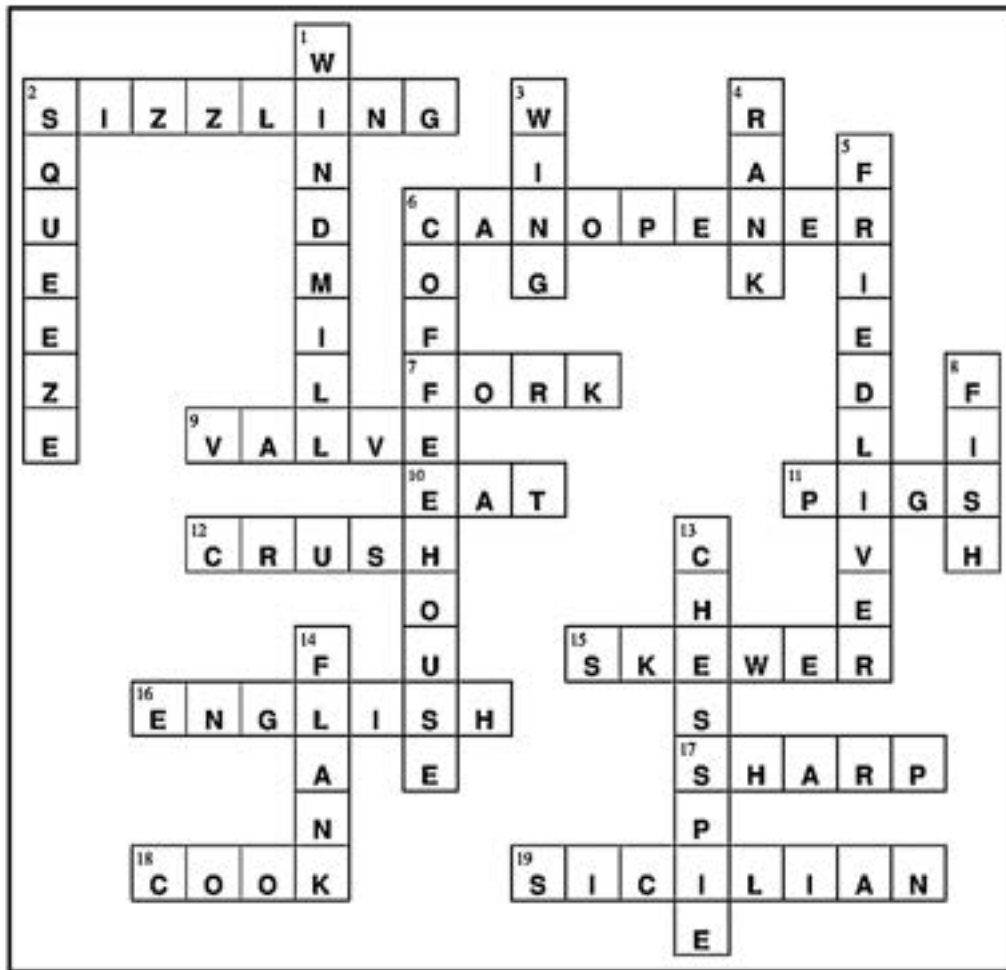
IM Levy Rozman, arguably one of today's most popular chess streamers, has a very good introduction and analysis of the Fried Liver Attack on YouTube, even though the title is somewhat clickbaity, WIN IN 8 MOVES – The Fried Liver Attack.

Siegbert Tarrasch was not just an extremely talented chess player, he was also a medical doctor. He probably knew that 4.Ng5 was going to be hazardous to *both* players' health, so he tried to discourage it by characterizing it as a "real duffer's move," hoping that people would stop playing it. There is actually a defense called the Anti-Fried Liver Defense where black plays 3...h6, preventing 4.Ng5 altogether. That defense doesn't do particularly well. It strikes me as a scaredy-cat way of playing.

When black plays 5...Nxd5 instead of the better (and more common) 5...Na5, it's like they're sticking their jaw out and daring you to "Take your best shot!" They're *daring* you! Give the Fried Liver Attack a try. Sac that knight - even though Bobby Fischer thinks white should play 6.d4. What the heck did he know? The stats don't lie. You'll probably win.

Picnic for Pawn Pushers

by
David Saks



Across

2. A coordinated sequence of combined chess moves hot enough to burn.
6. The plan of attacking a kingside, sometimes a fianchetto position, by advancing the h-pawn with the intention of opening a file near the defender's king.
7. Tactic in which a piece attacks multiple enemy pieces simultaneously.
9. This move will open one line in a game and close another one. A mechanical device that controls the flow of fluid.
10. To remove the opponent's piece or pawn from the board by taking it with one's own piece or pawn. To consume.
11. Two rooks acting together on the 7th rank. "**** on the 7th" typically gobble up all of your opponent's pawns on that rank.
12. To humiliate or completely depress your opponent (not the orange variety).
15. Also known as the reverse pin, you are attacking a valuable enemy piece that has lower value material blocked behind. Your opponent in most cases will have to move the higher value protector to sacrifice the lower value piece behind.
16. This defense (not the muffin) is characterized by the moves: 1.d4 e6 2.c4 b6. Viktor Korchnoi used it to defeat Lev Polugaevsky in their world championship semifinals match at Évian 1977.
17. Term used by Max Euwe in his books meant "to accelerate the crisis". That is, chess from the first move is about two opposing forces and their opposing plans. To have a "*****" position is where those plans meet each other directly and one plan can "win out" at any move. Any mistake is your last mistake. A knife edge.
18. An unintended solution of a chess problem. The term may also be used more generally to refer to a refutation to published analysis. To fake or falsify.
19. Earliest recorded notes on this defense date back to the late 16th century by the Italian chess players Giulio Polerio and Gioachino Greco. Begins with the following moves: 1.e4 c5.

Down

11. Sometimes called a seesaw, a tactic that occurs when one player takes advantage of a restricted king to deliver multiple checks and discovered checks in sequence. It wipes out the board. See Carlos Torre vs Emanuel Lasker, Moscow 1925.
2. This describes a chess position in which you're forced to make a bad move. This occurs when you find yourself in a position where the only moves you have are all bad. Also known as Zugzwang. Could be an orange drink.
3. Queenside a-, b-, and c-files; or the kingside f-, g-, and h-files. A movable organ for flying.
4. Very offensive in smell or taste. A row of chess pieces standing abreast of one another.
5. This attack also called the Fegatello Attack (named after an Italian dish), is a chess opening. This opening is a variation of the Two Knights Defense in which White sacrifices a knight for an attack on Black's king.
6. Chernev in his book "Logical Chess: Move by Move" describes h3 as this type of chess (p.15), as done in front of the castled king, it weakens his defenses. Common with java and small restaurants where drinks and snacks are sold.
8. A weak chess player. Grilled patzer.
13. Traditionally served to gentlemen before they retreated to another room to play chess. Slice this out of an opponent's positions.
14. The sides of a chess formation. The side between ribs and hipbone.



**The Troitzky Line
by Sid Pickard**

Alexei Troitzky (1866-1942) is a well known Russian composer of chess studies, and by most accounts the best composer who ever lived. In 1937 he published the first of a projected multi-volume collection of his studies, but World War II intervened - Germany invaded Russia, and the work was never finished. Troitzky died of starvation in August 1942, during the siege of Leningrad.

The single book that we have, Collection of Chess Studies, contains a special supplement devoted to endings with Knights against pawns. Those positions then lead to a section covering the last and most difficult "basic" checkmate in chess, a King and two Knights versus King and pawn. Here's the idea, illustrated by Capablanca as "Example 29" in Chess Fundamentals.



1.Ng6 h4



“White cannot take the pawn because the game will be drawn, as explained before.”
- Capablanca

2.Ne5 h3 3.Nc6 h2



4.Nb5 h1=Q 5.Nc7#



Very pretty, and not a mere abstraction either, as this checkmate is seen more often than we imagine. Tennessee's own IM Ron Burnett has been here twice, and there's an Australian player, IM Stephen Solomon, who has faced it three times in FIDE games. The list of Grandmasters involved in this ending is impressive, and not all have been successful at checkmate. I've had this ending twice myself; in fact, the conclusion of my first encounter with two Knights versus a pawn is a mirror of Capa's example, with colors reversed. From the game Barton-Pickard, Memphis 1982:



Barton-Pickard

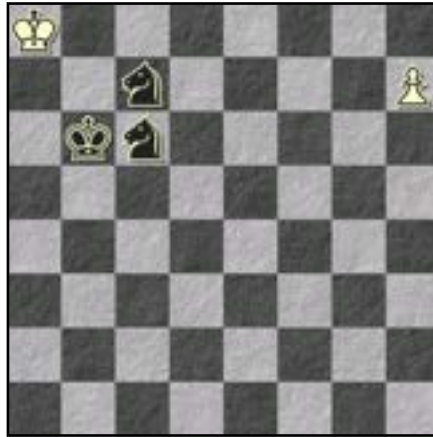
1...Nf6 2.h5 Nc6 Smothering the King, and the reason that White must have a pawn.



2.h6 Kc7



Faster is 3...Nd5 4.h7 Nc7#, checkmate.



3.h7 Nd7 4.h8=Q Nb6#, mate.



The complete score was published in Tennessee Chess News, Oct.-Nov. 1982, page 48, for those who like digging into regional archives.

TCN Oct.-
Nov 1982



The takeaway, however, is that these checkmates are being replicated almost every day - largely due to the work of Troitzky. And yet there's much left to be discovered about two Knights versus a pawn, even with those all-knowing 5-piece endgame tablebases that see every possible outcome!

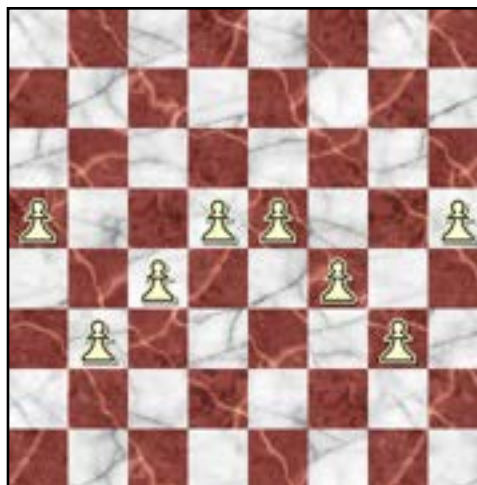
Partly to blame for any theoretical blank spots, however, is Troitzky himself. His supplement amounts to a bare 40 pages, hard to follow in the first place, and it's still in old English descriptive notation. He spends a lot of time showing proper corner positions, how to drive the weaker King along the edge, and much more besides. At last he gets to actual examples, studies really, but here we'll survey only one offshoot of our composer's analysis, the so-called Troitzky Line:



Quite a symmetrical diagram, but what does it mean? Well, the Troitzky Line is a tool used to examine our checkmate challenge of two Knights versus a pawn. The story is that if Black's pawn is blockaded on a square no further forward than the line a4-b6-c5-d4-e4-f5-g6-h4, then White can deliver mate.

An internet search for "Troitzky Line" will yield plenty of images like the one presented, all touting the same formula - blockade along the Troitzky Line and win. Sounds simple, right?

Keep in mind also that chess studies always show White as the stronger side, but in tournament play we have to imagine the reverse, in which the line a5-b3-c4-d5-e5-f4-g3-h5 wins for Black. Here's a Troitzky Line you won't see on the web.



Notice that the board can be divided in half, so that whatever is true of the four Kingside pawns is also true of the Queenside pawns. There are also four quadrants of 16 squares each, zones useful in analyzing this endgame. Real work on two Knights versus a pawn is hardly possible without the Troitzky Line to map a way forward.

The funny thing is, our composer never mentioned a Troitzky Line nor did he illustrate any such line. It was derived much later, using remarks and individual studies to build the figure above. Nowadays the Troitzky Line has become almost a meme, passed from book to book and web page to web page, with little regard for details. Block a pawn on the line and checkmate!

But is that so? I've got some questions about this Troitzky Line, seeing its late arrival on the chess scene. First, is the line actually valid? That is, can White deliver checkmate from the Troitzky Line in every case, under any circumstance in any corner? The answer is negative, as plainly analyzed by Troitzky himself.

White can indeed checkmate, but there are plenty of caveats and loopholes along the way - things they never taught us in grade school. Among those countless Troitzky Line memes there's hardly a hint of exceptions or exclusions, no conditions, no "ifs, ands, or buts" - only happy promises of victory. The actual situation, however, is quite different.

To find out what Troitzky really said we'll look at four of the pawns, each one stopped by a Knight at the Troitzky Line. First up is a center pawn, shown in the diagram below.



Black's d-pawn is blockaded on the Troitzky Line, and White wins with either side to move. One little fact, however, is never mentioned - facing best defense mate can only be achieved in the h1 corner!

Yes, Black can fall into checkmate elsewhere but it can only be enforced on the h1 square. The complete study is [linked here](#), so for now let's just describe what happens.

[Linked Study](#)

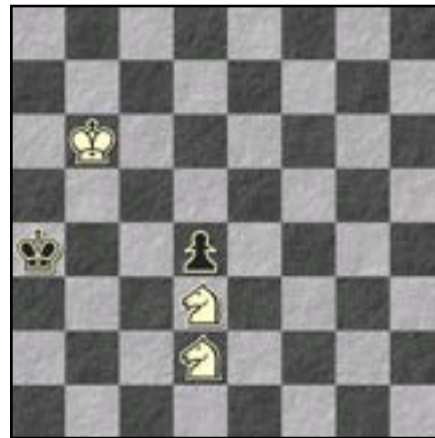


The upper left quadrant is the most difficult for White to handle, as he must begin far from the mating zone. Troitzky shows that other starting positions always lead here, and will continue inevitably as follows.

1...Kb5 2.Kc7 Ka6 3.Kc6 Ka5 4.Kc5 Ka6



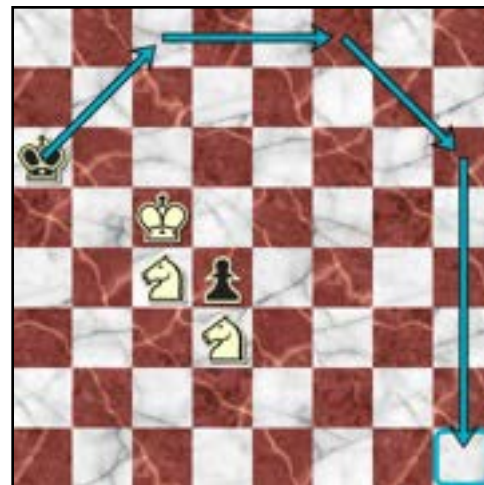
If 4...Ka4 then 5.Kb6 and it's mate in 11 moves.



Mate in 11.



5.Nc4



Mate in 27 moves, says Troitzky, though later analysis by N. Kopayev shortened the solution by four moves. Black must be driven around the edges of the board toward the h1 square, and after his imprisonment in that corner we have the following position.



Here Black has avoided capture in an upper corner, but now there's nowhere to run. If it were White's move he has mate in four; Black on the move can delay his demise one move further.

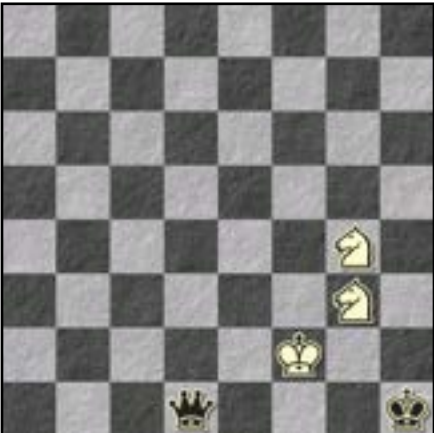
22...Kh1 23.Ne5 d3



24.Ng4 d2 25.Ne2 d1=N+



Making a Queen instead by 26...d1=Q allows 27.Ng3#, checkmate.



27.Kg3 Ne3 (Or any move.) 28.Nf2#, mate.

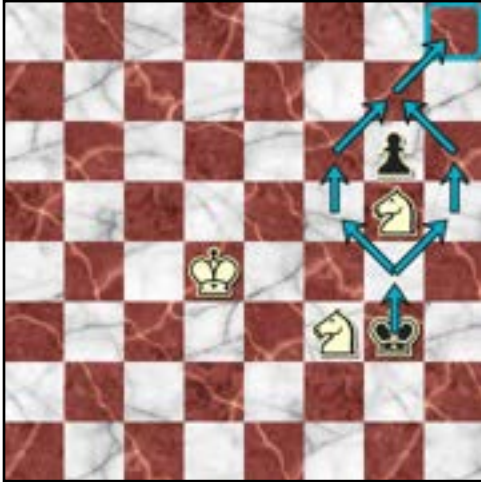


With an f-pawn on the Troitzky Line mate can be enforced only on h8, and by the same process we just saw.



Black is driven up the a-file, then across the 8th rank, and into the fatal corner. Again, if Black lets himself be surrounded in a left side corner then mate happens there, but best defense means a transit along two edges of the board. Troitzky observed that this starting position is very much like the previous d-pawn starting position, but rotated 90 degrees.





In the position above we have a g-pawn on the Troitzky Line, and marching the Black King onto h8 is the only way to checkmate by force against correct defense. From the diagram Black will be pushed up the h-file or the f-file, and into the upper right quadrant. Black can be defeated in the other corners also, if he's inaccurate.

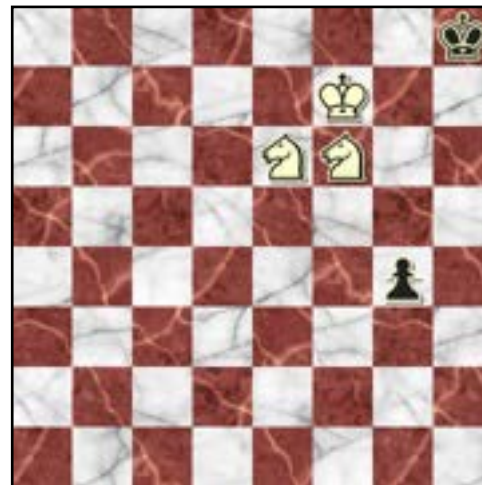


In the end White obtains a position as above, and mate is delivered shortly regardless of who moves first, e.g.

1.Ke7 Kg8 2.Ne6 g5



3.Nf6+ Kh8 4.Kf7 g4

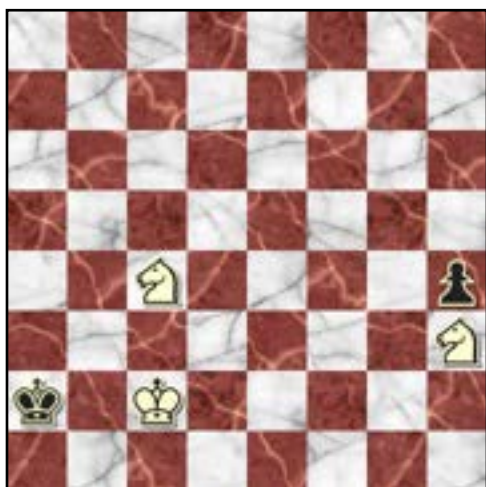


5.Nf4 g3 6.Ng6#, checkmate.



If an h-pawn is on the Troitzky Line, on the h4 square, there is another special case. Once again White can only mate by force at h8 when facing best play - makes sense, because White's reserve Knight on h3 needs but two or three moves to arrive on the scene. If Black falters he can, as usual, be defeated in the other corners, yet even stubborn resistance will lead eventually to the h8 square.

On one condition. What if Black takes refuge in the lower left quadrant?



True, he can't avoid getting trapped soon on the a1-a2 squares, as seen above. And if it is White's turn he can deliver mate in five moves, beginning with 1.Nf4. But what happens if Black has the move?

1...Ka1



Suddenly that extra Knight on h3 can't get there in time, and no checkmate is in sight. What's worse, White has no way to triangulate or pass the move to Black. The solution to this vexing puzzle is one discovered by Troitzky nearly 125 years ago.

The maneuvers are elegant, simple in conception but complex in execution. White must deliver checkmate on the h1 square!

Study Link
Mentioned
Below



The entire dance of chess choreography can be viewed at [this link](#), but here's the short version. White has to re-arrange the corner position, then put his reserve Knight on the f3 square. After that he can play Nh3-f4, answering the h-pawn advance with Nf3-h2 to freeze it on the h3 square - like so:



White has reached the original position after Black's first move, except the Kingside pieces have been brought down a rank. Only now, after 18 moves, is White ready to evict the opposite King from his a1 hideaway. Black has caused a lot of trouble, and his fate is to be dragged along the lower rank toward the h1 square. There he will be forced to capture White's blockading h2 Knight, resulting in the position below.



White may now continue **30.Ne3** when there follows **30...Kh1 31.Nf1 h2 32.Ng3#**, checkmate.



Right then, we've had a glimpse of the Troitzky Line in action! There's certainly more to it than most internet posters want to discuss. So is that all? Have we finished with this strange line on the chess board?

Not so fast. Suppose now that Black's pawn has advanced further than the Troitzky Line allows - is the game therefore drawn? Well, that depends!



Above, White has gone two squares beyond the Troitzky Line, as shown from the game [Kohler-Pickard, Hot Springs 1985](#). It's White to play, one move after the final capture, Black having just moved **83...Ng7** to stack the Knights. We've noticed this formation already, and the impenetrable wall of squares covered by these Knights. The square occupied by White at g4 is called the "pit" by Troitzky, and the King can approach no closer to the Knights.

[Kohler-Pickard](#)



The complete game is [here](#), but after 25 more moves and most of my time gone, the following standard corner position arose.



Where's the checkmate? Turns out, Troitzky says the White pawn at g5 means that Black can only force mate in the a8 corner or the h1 corner! The problem with this position is that White will get a new Queen with check. Greatly annoyed, and with about 90 seconds remaining on our analog clock, I went for the draw.

109.Ka1 Nc1 110.Kb1 Na2 111.Ka1 Nc3, stalemate.



The previous diagram, without **111...Nc3**, may still be a win for Black if he can run White's King into a correct corner. I haven't had the heart to check those tablebases!

As consolation, however, we can observe Topalov doing things the right way in the game Topalov-Karpov, Monaco 2000, pictured below. We're just after the last capture, and it's a reversed image of the previous example.



Black to move played **61...Kc3**,



and the game continued **62.Kc5 Kd3**
63.Nde2 Kd2



64.Kc4 Kc2 65.Nd4+ Kb2



66.Kb4 Ka2 67.Ndf5 Kb2



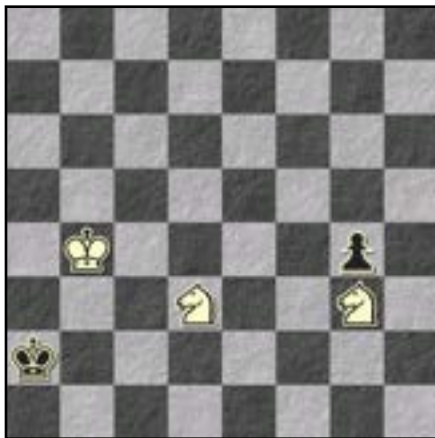
68.Ne3 Ka2 69.Nc4 Kb1



70.Kc3 Kc1 71.Nb2 Kb1 72.Nd3 Ka1



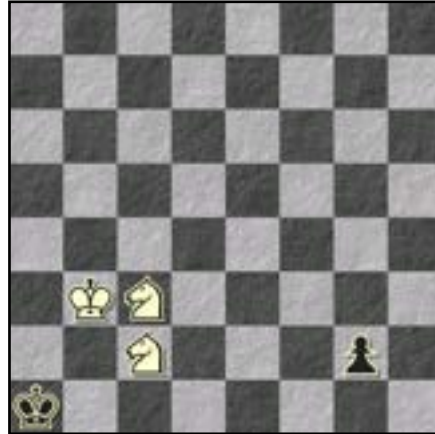
If 72...Ka2 then 73.Kb4, etc.



73.Kb3 Kb1 74.Ne2, 1-0



After 74.Ne2 Karpov resigned rather than face 74...g3 75.Nc3+ Ka1 76.Nb4 g2 77.Nc2#, mate.



So yes, there are conditions all along the Troitzky Line - many of them, and likely many more that haven't been found yet. Going back to Topalov's game after the final capture, for instance, and switching around the Kings we get the next diagram.



Here the King positions are reversed, and Black can easily flee to the safe a8 corner. Is White still winning and, if so, how long will it take until checkmate? In fact, can all checkmates from the Troitzky Line be accomplished within the 50-move rule? That's a practical question of no concern to our composer of studies. And answering such questions may risk a leap into mathematics!





If we confine these three pieces above to the upper left quadrant, and exclude ridiculous positions (trapping the Knight, leaving the zone, etc.), still the Knight will have seven or eight "reasonable" moves. Then shift the White King one square, say to d7, and again seven or eight squares appear for the Knight. After all that we can move the Black King one square and start over counting - before rewinding everything and giving Black the first move! So figure that one quadrant alone will yield perhaps 1,500 positions to examine. Of course, that's from somebody who barely passed "Fun with Numbers" in college.

A win or a draw? I don't think a computer will help us.

In conclusion, we understand that chess players are busy with opening preparation and tournament play. It's easy to concentrate on the most likely events, and ignore outliers like two Knights versus a pawn. But do so at your own peril; play enough chess and your time will come!

Troitzky, A., Collection of Studies, Tschaturanga: Ed. Olms, ISBN 3-283-00114-6 (1992). Reprinted by Ishi Press, ISBN 0-923891-10-2 (2006). Included is the supplement on the endgame of two knights against pawns.

Averbakh, Y., Knight Endings, Batsford ISBN 0-7134-0552-X (1977).

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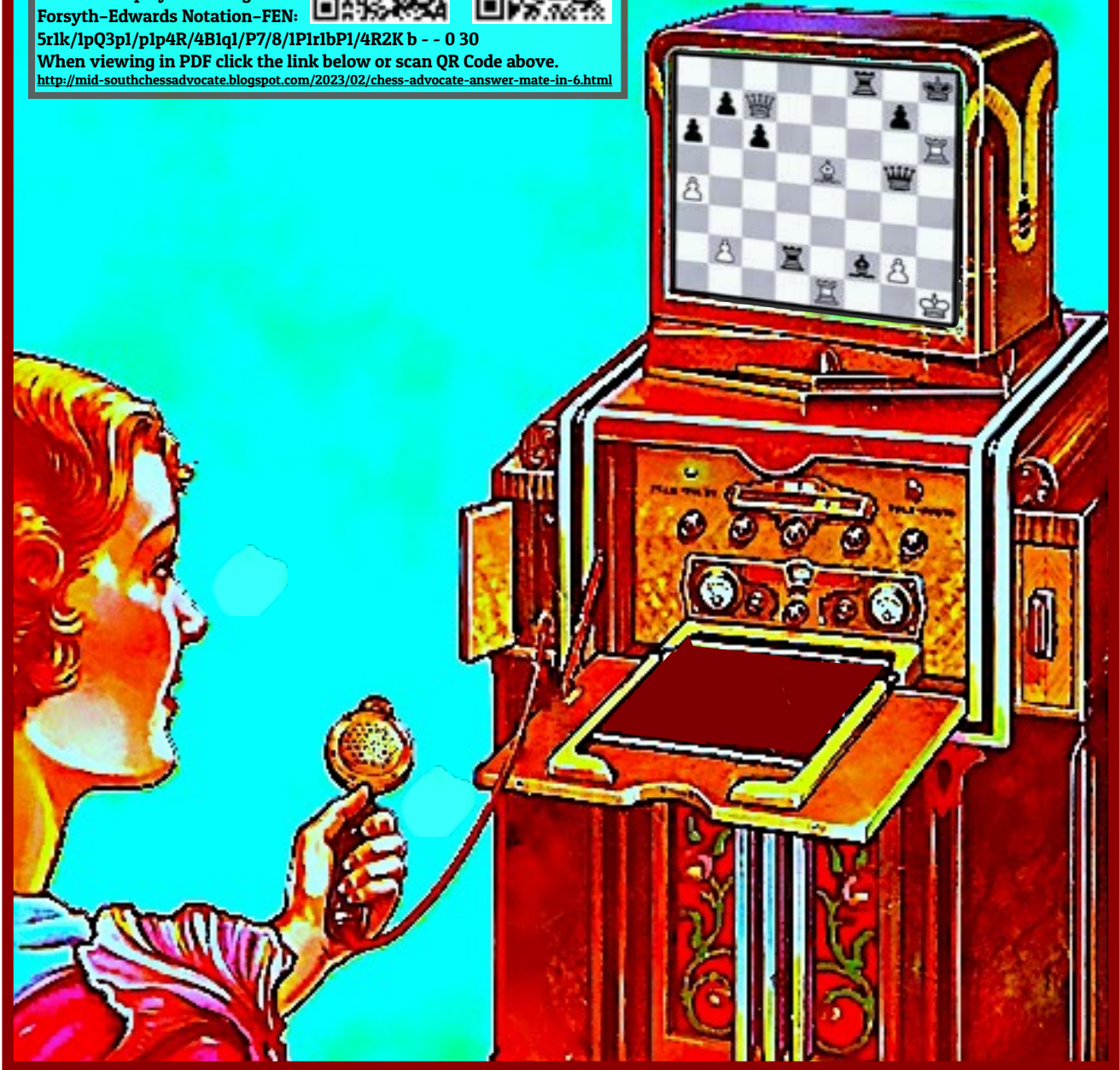


White: Cameron Wilson
Black: Diego Delgado
Event: Brad's Chess Cookout
Date: February 22, 2020
Black to move & checkmate in 6
Answer not played in the game.
Forsyth-Edwards Notation-FEN:
5r1k/1pQ3p1/p1p4R/4B1q1/P7/8/1P1r1bP1/4R2K b - - 0 30
When viewing in PDF click the link below or scan QR Code above.
<http://mid-southchessadvocate.blogspot.com/2023/02/chess-advocate-answer-mate-in-6.html>

Game & Answer



Text Answer



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