

AAGAARD

PLAY IT
ALONG
WITH
SAM

The training column is changing! After a number of years with the same format, we have decided to mix things up. Each issue this year will contain 12 exercises – 6 tactics/calculation exercises and 6 positional/strategic exercises.

All of these have been tested with GM Sam Shankland in a training camp held in early January 2023 and come from end of 2022 tournaments in Charlotte, New York and Hollywood, featuring some of the new young talents of U.S. chess, as well as established grandmasters and players.

Sam did not solve all the exercises correctly, so there is a real chance for you to compete with him. He also agreed to put his reputation on the line, as long as we promised to advertise his book *Grandmaster Training Camp 1 – Calculation!*, published by Quality Chess in 2023, and by Chessable in 2022 as *Shankland's Chess Calculation Workbook*. The writing in that book is all Sam, while the writing in the six columns from this training camp is all Jacob.

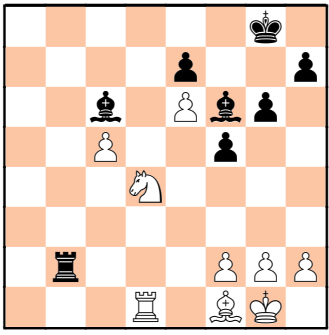
The exercises from these articles are not in the book or used elsewhere (but may be in the future!). The setup with one Tactics page and one Mixed page is the same as Killer Homework in the killerchesstraining.com academy, of which Sam and Jacob are two of the three owners...



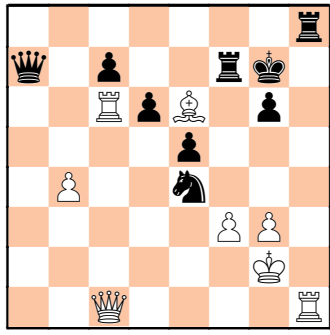
SHANKLAND

CALCULATION

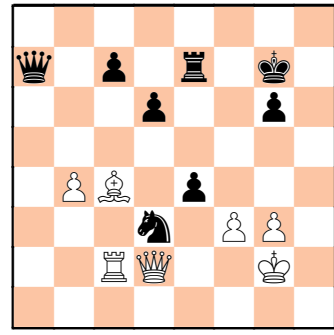
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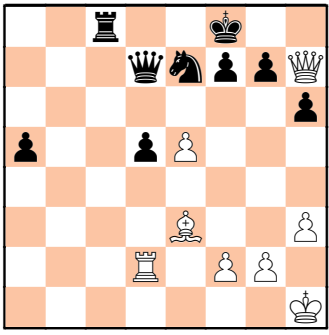
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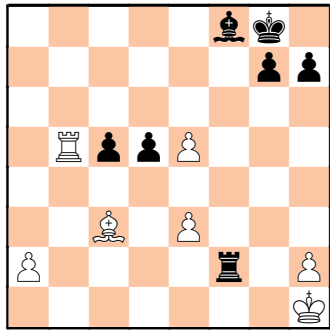
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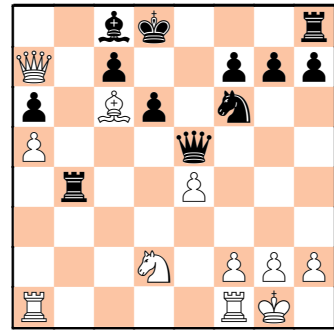
C4



C5

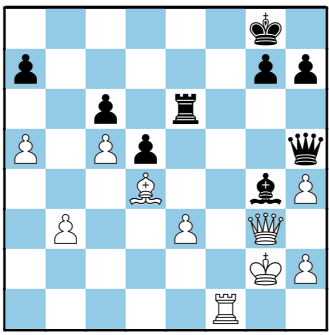


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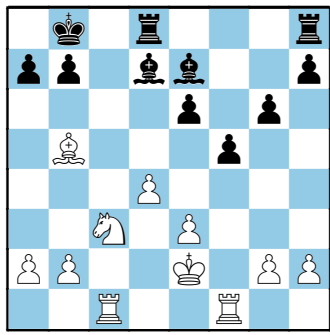


STRATEGY

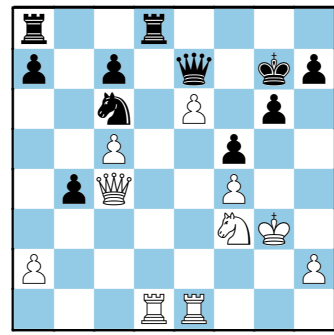
S1



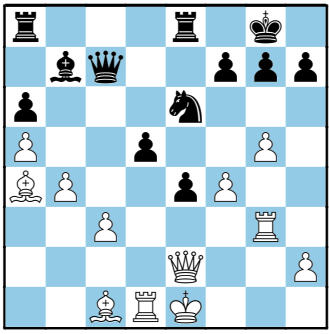
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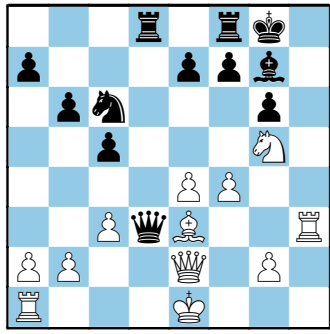
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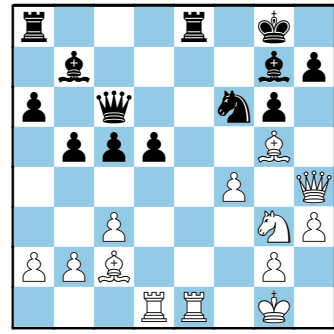
S4



S5



S6





CALCULATION

C1

Ryo Chen	2269
Arman Mikaelyan	2556

Hollywood, 2022

Black blundered. This can be explained by the unexplained blunder White had just committed. I have noticed over the years that even GMs have a tendency to miss random chances. The most famous case is Carlsen–Anand from their 2014 match where Carlsen blundered two pawns and Anand missed it, having made his move just before a horde of photographers ran into the playing hall to take pictures of the players, as the game would have turned from much better for Carlsen to winning for Anand. If Anand had hesitated a few extra seconds, he would have received an obvious hint and seen the win immediately.

Mikaelyan did not receive a hint and spent over a minute, presumably never considering giving up a strong bishop for a knight lacking stability.

After 30...♙a4?? 31.c6 ♜e5 32.♖c1 the game was drawn on move 56.

SOLUTION

30...♜xd4! Not a difficult move to find if you are looking for it. After 31.♖xd4 ♜b1 White is pinned and loses a piece.

C2

Ryo Chen	2269
Zurab Javakhadze	2479

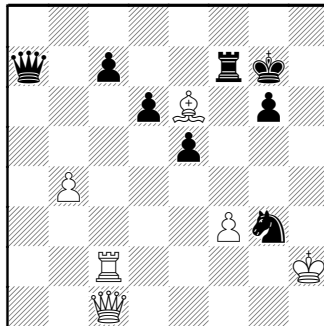
Hollywood, 2022

Again, Ryo Chen, this time on the unfortunate side of the equation when given a random chance. The difference this time is that there was no time to see finesse as Ryo was already living on increment.

After 28 seconds Ryo chose 57.♖c2?, when Black could have played 57...♖xf3!? with counterplay, as well as 57...♖xh1 58.♗xh1, as happened in the game. Now after 58...♗f2+? Black was back to being lost, but recovered in the

scramble and made the draw on move 69.

Here the brilliant escape is 58...♗xg3+!, when 59.♗g2 allows 59...♗f5!, equalizing, and 59.♗h2 is met with...



59...♗e2!! 60.♖xe2 ♖xf3 with full counterplay and a likely draw.

SOLUTION

57.♖f1! would have won a piece. There is no counterplay.

C3

Ryo Chen	2269
Zurab Javakhadze	2479

Hollywood, 2022

Later in the same game, Ryo has a second chance to win the game, but after 62.♜xd3 exd3 63.♖xd3 ♖a1, they were only a few moves away from agreeing a draw.

SOLUTION

Instead White was winning after 62.♖c3+! ♖e5!? Black has to seek complications, as both 62...♗h7 63.♖f6 ♖d7 64.♗f1 and 62...♗e5 63.f4 are entirely hopeless.

Now the cunning 63.fxe4! is the simplest, trapping the knight. But White also wins after 63.f4!? ♖e3 64.♜xd3 exd3 65.fxe5 ♖e4+ 66.♗g1 dxc2 67.exd6+ ♗h7 68.dxc7, although this is a tablebase win after 68...♖d4+!?

C4

Konstantin Kavutskiy	2383
Siddarth M Sundaram	2243

Hollywood, 2022

Kosta for some reason did not give the check, but idled with 32.♖d1?. And although he later won, we have to say that he would have been no better at all after 32...♖e6.

Also 32.♗d4 ♗f5 33.♙b2 ♖e6 would allow White to set up a blockade. You could argue that White is somewhat better after 34.♖xd5 ♖xd5 35.♖h8+ ♗e7 36.♖xc8±, but that is still a long way from proving a real advantage.

SOLUTION

White wins with the most natural move. 32.♖h8+! ♗g8 33.♜d4! It seems that the main threat is ♖xg7+, or e5-e6, but Black would be surprised after 33...♖e6 The engine capitulates with 33...♗e7... 34.♙b2! or 34.♖d3! a4 35.♙b2! with the same idea, to win a piece with a check from a3. Black has to give up the g7 pawn to survive long enough for his opponent to have a chance to blunder badly...

C5

Ekin Baris Ozenir	2352
Awonder Liang	2630

Charlotte, 2022

Awonder escaped after his opponent played 32.a4? ♖a2 33.a5 ♗f7 and the game was soon drawn.

SOLUTION

White wins by exploiting the pin to the maximum.

32.e6! ♖e2 33.♙b8 ♖xe3 34.♖e8!! ♖xc3 If 34...d4, then 35.♗d2 followed by 36.♗g5 wins.

Also 34...h6 leads to a slow death. White plays 35.a4 ♗h7 36.♗d2 ♖e2

37.♟xf8 ♟xe6 38.a5 and wins slowly, but surely.

35.e7 ♟f3 Black has managed to defend f8, but White can move the rook, for example 36.♟d8, and the pawn queens.

C6

Christopher Yoo	2573
Prateek Mishra	2213

Charlotte, 2022

The later tournament winner escaped with a scare. Black was slightly better after 23...♟d4? 24.♟xd4

♟xd4 25.♟f3, but Christopher won a long game on move 73.

SOLUTION

The winner starts with a double attack, but requires a few defensive ideas worked out in advance.

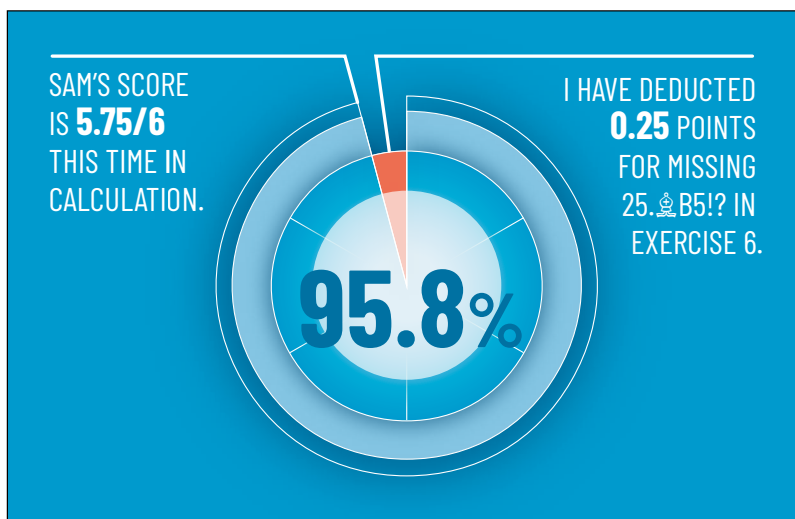
23...♟c3! 24.♟ac1 It is hard to come up with other ideas.

24...♟xd2 25.♟b5! Sam had missed this idea. He focused on 25.e5 ♟d4!, when Black wins with his two extra pawns.

25...♟e8! 26.♟xe8 ♟b7! Black wins with the extra piece. ■



GM Jacob Aagaard won the 2007 British Championship; but is mostly known as a trainer and writer. He co-founded Quality Chess and killerchesstraining.com. His books include the *Grandmaster Preparation* series, the *Decision Making* series with Boris Gelfand and latest *A Matter of Endgame Technique*. Jacob works day and night to help players of all levels improve their game and achieve their goals.



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STRATEGY

S1

Alexander Shabalov	2504
Harshid Kunka	2236

Hollywood, 2022

Kunka secured the king first with **35...h6?**, when after **36.♖b8+ ♜h7 37.♞f8** White had counterplay. **37...♞xh4 38.♞h8+ ♔g6 39.♞g3** White is fine and drew on move 57.

SOLUTION

35...♞g6! would have been difficult for White.

36.♖b8+ leads to a variation requiring just a little accuracy. After **36.♜h1 h6** White is completely lost. The bishop will go to h3 or e4 via f5.

36...♙c8+ 37.♜h1 ♞g4 38.♞g3 ♞e4+ 39.♞f3 ♙f5! The key move. Not too difficult, but possible to miss of course.

S2

Shelev Oberoi	2328
Leonid Yudasin	2401

New York, 2022

After **25...♙xb5+? 26.♜xb5 e5 27.dxe5** a draw was agreed.

SOLUTION

25...♙c8! was the right move. Black has a long term advantage with the two bishops and two pawn islands against three.

Sam said: "I did not see a reason not to keep the bishop pair intact."

S3

Alexander Shabalov	2504
Ekin Baris Ozenir	2343

Hollywood, 2022

34.♞d5! "Prophylaxis against ...♞xd1 and ...♞d8," Sam explained. His first instinct had been **34.♖b5?**, but after **34...♞xd1**

35.♞xd1 ♞d8 Black is doing well.

34...h6 35.♞d3 The direct move, threatening ♞d5-d7. Sam favored **35.h4!?**, when White keeps everything stable, including his massive advantage.

35...♞f6 White later won.

The computer comes up with the following exaggerated, but entertaining suggestion here: **36.e7!** It is based on **36...♞e8 37.♞d7 ♞ac8 38.♞a6! ♜xe7 38...♜b8** is met by **39.♞xc8!**

39.♞e6 and Black can only resign.

S4

Seth Homa	2242
Jianchao Zhou	2570

Hollywood, 2022

Sam did not find this exercise easy at all. Zhou played **25...♞ed8?** and the game was drawn after a further 88 moves following **26.f5! ♜f4 27.♙xf4 ♞xf4 28.f6** with a complete mess.

SOLUTION

Sam could not make **25...♜xf4? 26.♙xf4 ♞xf4 27.♙xe8 ♞xe8 28.♞e3** work, and indeed it does not.

25...d4 also fails. Stockfish likes **26.f5!?**, while Sam was unhappy with **26.♙xe8 d3 27.♞e3 ♞xe8 28.f5** with a clear advantage for White.

Eventually he decided on the correct move **25...♙c6!** "Played out of elimination." **26.♙xc6 ♞xc6 27.f5 ♜f8** Sam was surprised that Black is close to winning. He did not love the position. But it is easy to understand why Black is so much better when you spot the victorious idea of **...♜d7-e5**.

S5

Lazaro Bruzon	2615
Andy Woodward	2454

Hollywood, 2022

Bruzon spoiled his advantage with **17.♞xd3? ♞xd3 18.♜e2 ♞fd8** White

is still somewhat better, but after **19.e5?! ♜a5 20.♜e4 f6 21.exf6 exf6 22.♜f2 ♞3d5 23.♞d1** a draw was agreed.

Sam's **17.e5?!** was a tempo better than Bruzon, "but missing forced mate is not the way you beat strong players," he quipped. **17...♞xe2+ 18.♜xe2 ♞d5** is worse for Black, but without the queen, it is hard to give checkmate.

SOLUTION

The correct move was to avoid the exchange of queens and go for checkmate.

17.♞g4! ♙xc3+ The critical line.

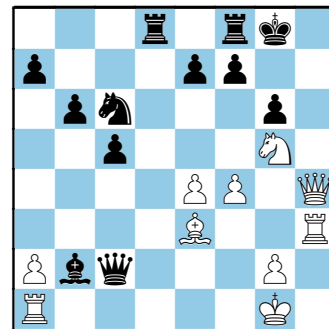
Passive play offers no salvation. After **17...♞fe8** White has enough time to build up an attack with **18.♞h4 ♞c4 19.e5** and **20.♜f2**, which is what most people would do. But **18.f5!?** is also incredibly strong.

18.♜f2 ♞c2+ Sam was uncertain about this move.

18...♙g7 is losing to **19.♞e1!?** and **19.♞h4**, but all real attacking players would play **19.♞h8+! ♙xh8 20.♞h4 ♜g7 21.e5 ♜xe5 22.fxex5 ♞f5+ 23.♜g1 ♞xe5 24.♞h7+ ♜f6 25.♞f1+** winning.

19.♜g1 But there is no problem blocking ♞ah1, as the other players are ready to do the deed on their own.

19...♙xb2 20.♞h4 20.♞f1!? is also strong. All the white pieces are ready to give mate; and e4-e5 will cut off the black queen from the defense.



20...♜g7 21.♞h7+ ♜f6 22.e5+ ♜xe5 23.fxex5+ ♜xe5 24.♜xf7+ ♞xf7 25.♞xf7 ♙xa1 26.♞xe7+ White wins.



S6

Aleksandr Ostrovskiy	2371
Parimarjan Negi	2639

Charlotte, 2022

The last exercise is great, although you could argue I should have swapped it, once Sam indicated familiarity.

Ostrovskiy played 27.f5?, when after 27...d4 28.♖xe8+ ♖xe8 29.♗d2 ♜d7 Black was already fine and later won.

SOLUTION

The correct move is 27.♗f1!! with the idea of f4-f5 with a fierce attack. Sam said, "I know it. David Preuss sent it on to me during the game. I hope I would have found it if I did not know the game. The only advantage we have is the exposed black king, so we should aim to attack." This is easy to say, but after missing the Bruzon exercise above, we can be a bit skeptical. However, knowing what to play has never been a crime in chess, so we'll let it stand. 27...d4 28.♗f2 White is now ready to start a devastating attack. ■



California-based GM Sam Shankland is a top American chess player of the present day. As a gifted junior, he tied for 1st with worse tiebreak at the 2008 World U-18 Championship, became the U.S. Junior Champion in 2010, and earned his GM title in 2011. Sam represents the U.S. national team, having won individual gold medal at the 2014 Tromso Olympiad and team gold at the 2016 Baku Olympiad. In 2018, Shankland achieved several milestones, including a win at the U.S. Championship, surpassing the 2700 Elo rating, taking first place at the prestigious Capablanca Memorial and also the American Continental Championship. He also earned an olympic team silver at the Batumi Chess Olympiad that same year. Sam reached the quarterfinals at the 2021 World Cup. Besides successful professional career, Sam is a prolific author of numerous chess video courses, and two chess books published by Quality Chess – *Small Steps to Giant Improvement: Master Pawn Play in Chess* and *Small Steps 2 Success: Mastering Passed Pawn Play*.

