

MAKING THREATS



BY GM ELSHAN MORADIABADI

A 19TH-CENTURY CLASSIC
CAN still teach you how to win today.

I want to show you a game I first saw when I was 10 years old and that I still think about today. My mother got me *The Most Instructive Games of Chess Ever Played*, by Irving Chernev, for my birthday. It was 25 years old; the print was faded and it had tea stains all over, but I was determined to learn, and I read the book from cover to cover three times.

Emanuel Lasker played this game way back in 1896, and it's still a great example of the value of making threats in building the initiative. White makes a mistake on move 14, and Lasker makes 19 threats in a row until Porges resigns! The game made me much more aware of the importance

of time and tempo; I learned to respect the value of each move.

RUY LOPEZ, BERLIN DEFENSE (C67)

Moritz Porges
Emanuel Lasker
Nuremberg (1), 07.20.1896

1. e4 e5 2. Nf3 Nc6 3. Bb5 Nf6

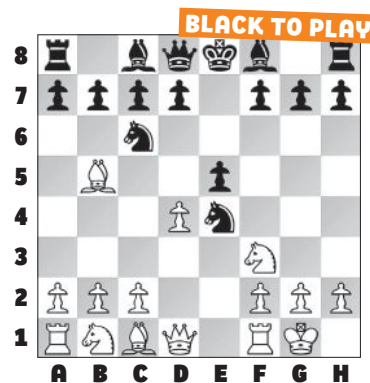
Nowadays, this move is used by GMs or other titled players as a safe way of avoiding difficulty and achieving a drawish position with Black, but in 1896 Lasker used it to provoke a fight.

4. 0-0 Nxe4 5. d4

(see diagram top of next column)

5. ... Be7?!

This is pretty passive. It's not the



worst move, but also not the best. The masters play 5. ... Nd6 these days. After 6. Bxc6 dxc6 7. dxe5 Nf5 8. Qxd8+ Kxd8 this is called the Berlin endgame, and it's been played in thousands of games.

The really important thing is to avoid 5. ... exd4?. If you haven't castled yet, you have to think really hard before you open the e-file. The lesson of this game isn't about the opening, so I'm not

going to go into everything, but I hope you notice that after 6. Re1 White is pinning the knight and threatening to win it with Nf3xd4 and f2-f3. Black can get out of losing the knight completely, but the time it takes to do that would lead to other big problems.

6. Qe2 Nd6 7. Bxc6 bxc6

7. ... dxc6 leads to troubles along the d-file: 8. dxe5 Nf5 9. Rd1 Bd7 10. Nc3 0-0 11. g4 Nh4 12. Nxh4 Bxh4.

8. dxe5 Nb7 9. b3

This is toothless. White gets more play with 9. c4 0-0 10. Nc3 d6 11. Bf4 followed by bringing the rooks to the center.

9. ... 0-0 10. Bb2 d5

Chernev notes something very important here: "Once he gets ... d5 in, Black can equalize in nearly all king's pawn openings."

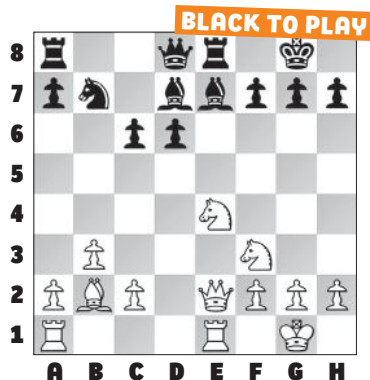
This is a good rule of thumb to remember. And it's why I recommended White play 9. c4 instead of 9. b3 — it helps prevent the ... d7-d5 break.

11. exd6 e.p. cxd6 12. Nbd2 Re8

13. Rfe1 Bd7

Now Black can move the e7-bishop.

14. Ne4??



And here we go — 19 straight threats!

14. ... d5!

Move it!

15. Ned2 Ba3!

Double threats are great! Lasker is attacking the queen and the bishop.

16. Be5 f6!

Pin it and win it!

17. Qa6 fxe5

OK, maybe this isn't exactly a threat, but White doesn't have much choice. And Black has built a dream center!

18. Qxa3 e4

Attacking the knight!

19. Nd4 Qf6

Attacking the knight again, and that's not all!

20. c3 Rf8

Rooks love open files, and now the f2-pawn is under fire!

21. f3 Qg5

The queen shifts gears, attacking the knight on d2 while eyeing g2. White can't play 22. Nf1 because of 22. ... exf3, threatening mate on g2 and a fork with ... f3-f2+, and if White takes with 23. Nxf3 Black can just play 23. ... Rxf3 because the g-pawn is pinned.

22. Qc1 Nc5!

Now the knight enters with a bang, threatening a fork on d3!

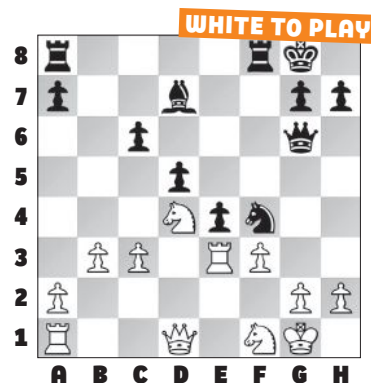
23. Nf1 Qg6

Renewing the threat!

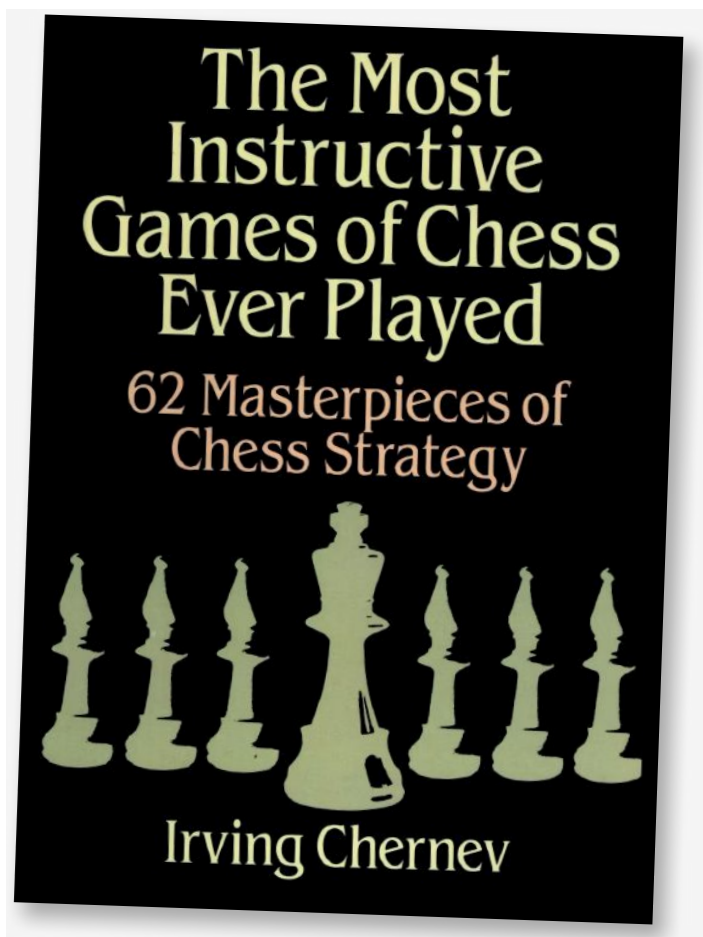
24. Re3 Nd3

No fork but still a threat!

25. Qd1 Nf4



Wait what?! This knight was just on b7 three moves ago, and now it's spearheading Black's attack! You can go from zero to hero with the power of threats. Notice that now Black has more attackers



(including the e4-pawn) than White has defending pieces, so it's not so surprising that something has to give.

26. Ng3 h5

The final phase begins: Break the barricade and attack the opponent's shield with weaker pieces against stronger ones. Black is threatening ... h5-h4, winning the knight because of the mate threat behind it on g2.

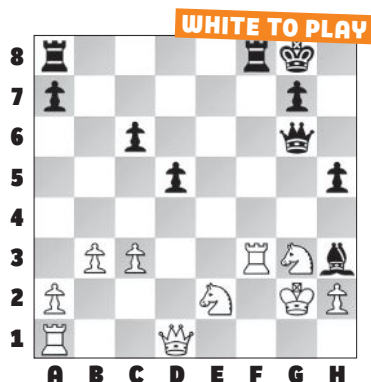
27. Nde2 Nxg2!

Tactics time! Lasker demolishes White's defense. He's threatening the rook and more.

28. Kxg2 exf3+

Check is the most obvious threat there is!

29. Rxf3 Bh3+!



Using the power of check to lure White's king under more fire.

30. Kxh3


White could try 30. Kf2 but Black could win in many ways — here's one line with even more checks: 30. ... Rxf3+ 31. Kxf3 h4 32. Nf1 Rf8+ 33. Ke3 Qh6+ 34. Kd3 Bf5+ 35. Kd4 c5+ 36. Kxc5 Qb6+ 37. Kxd5 Rd8+ 38. Ke5 Qe6+ 39. Kf4 Qe4+ 40. Kg5 Qg4, mate.

30. ... Qg4+ 31. Kg2 Qxf3+ 32. Kg1 h4 33. Nh1 Qe3+, White resigned.

Lessons from this game: (1) Threats are good! Use them! (2) Don't stop threatening! One threat can be parried; 19 in a row is hard to deal with. (3) Pins are important! (4) Always watch for the quality of your knights — and

your opponent's. It's surprising how fast they can move when they're making threats. (5) Study the players of the past and their games: Lasker was born more than 100 years before I was, but he helped me become a GM! ♦





WHO WAS IRVING CHERNEV?

Irving Chernev (1900-1981) wrote more than 20 books on chess, covering everything from brilliancies to endgames to fun trivia. GM Elshan Moradiabadi learned a lot from *The Most Instructive Games of Chess Ever Played*, but there's also *Logical Chess: Move by Move*, *Capablanca's Best Chess Endings*, *The Fireside Book of Chess*, *1000 Best Short Games of Chess*, and a whole lot more.

Chernev wasn't one of the strongest players in the country — he was a strong national master, but not more than that — but the instructional material you'll find in his books doesn't go out of style. He never wrote an openings book; that's not what he was about. He conveyed the basics you need to give yourself a shot in any game; he showed how beautiful chess can be, and he showed how fun it is.