

OPENING IDEA 1: THE PIN ATTACK

Here is a game where White followed all five opening rules perfectly, didn't make any tactical oversights, but was CHECKMATED in only 11 moves.

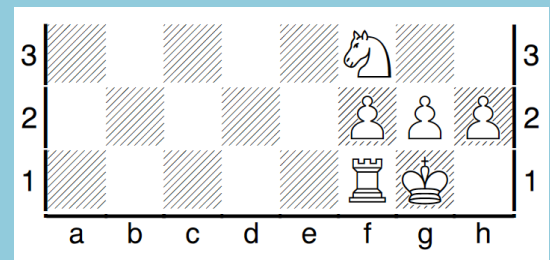
1.e4 e5 2.Nf3 Nc6 3.Bc4 Bc5 4.d3 d6 5.Nc3 Bg4 6.0-0 Nd4 7.Be3 Nxf3+ 8.gxf3 Bh3 9.Re1 Bxe3 10.fxe3 Qg5+ 11.Kf2 Qg2#

Let's see what went wrong.

In this game Black used a TACTIC, not to win a piece but with a STRATEGIC idea in mind.

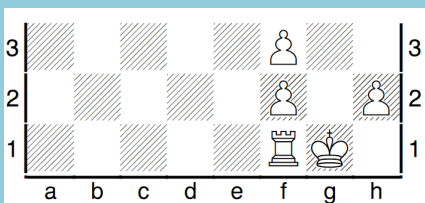
On move 5 Black set up a PIN. On move 6 Black ATTACKED THE PINNED PIECE. Black was not, in this case, trying to win points, but instead just wanted to get a STRATEGIC ADVANTAGE which would give him the better position.

Look at this.



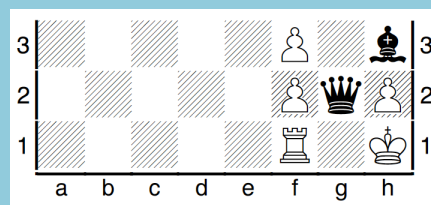
In most openings, especially those starting with 1. e4 e5 2. Nf3 Nc6, you're going to set up THIS defensive position for your king. Every time you move a pawn it will provide a target for your opponent. Sometimes it's a good idea to play h3 to drive an enemy piece from g4, or to stop an enemy piece from landing on g4, but sometimes it's a bad idea. Chess is hard: you'll need a lot of experience to work out which is which.

Now look at this.

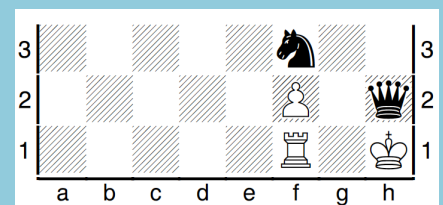


White's knight has been traded off and there are DOUBLED f-pawns. The white king is open to attack down the g-file. If Black has a queen within reach White will have problems defending the king.

With a queen and a bishop near the king, Black might be able to get CHECKMATE like this:



or with a queen and a knight, like this:



You'll recognise these checkmate patterns, with the queen on the next square to the enemy king and being protected by a friendly piece: a bishop in the first diagram and a knight in the second diagram.

Black won this game quickly by combining TACTICS and STRATEGY.

In the game above, after 6... Nd4 White's pieces are on the wrong squares and there's no way to prevent Black trading pieces on f3 and doubling the white pawns in front of the king.

Here are some more games for you to play through where Black scores a quick checkmate in this way.

- 1. e4 e5 2. Nf3 Nc6 3. Bc4 Bc5 4. 0-0 d6 5. d3 Bg4 6. Nc3 Nd4 7. h3 Nxf3+ 8. gxf3 Bxh3 9. Re1 Qf6 10. Nd5 Qg6+ 11. Kh2 Qg2#
- 1. e4 e5 2. Nf3 Nc6 3. Nc3 Nf6 4. Bc4 Bc5 5. 0-0 d6 6. d3 Bg4 7. Bg5 Nd4 8. Bxf6 Qxf6 9. Nd5 Qd8 10. .c3 Nxf3+ 11. gxf3 Bh3 12. Re1 Qg5+ 13. Kh1 Qg2#
- 1. e4 e5 2. Nf3 Nc6 3. Nc3 Bc5 4. Bc4 d6 5. d3 Bg4 6. 0-0 Nd4 7. h3 Nxf3+ 8. gxf3 Bxh3 9. Nd5 c6 10. Nc3 Qh4 11. Qe1 Qg3+ 12. Kh1 (White can't play 12. fxg3 because the f-pawn is PINNED by the bishop on c5.) Qg2#
- 1. e4 e5 2. Nf3 Nc6 3. Bc4 Bc5 4. d3 Nf6 5. 0-0 d6 6. Nc3 Bg4 7. Bg5 Nd4 8. h3 Nxf3+ 9. gxf3 Bxh3 10. Re1 h6 11. Be3 Nd7 12. Kh2 Qh4 13. Rg1 Bf1#
- 1. e4 e5 2. Bc4 Nf6 3. Nc3 Bc5 4. Nf3 Nc6 5. d3 d6 6. Bg5 Bg4 7. 0-0 Nd4 8. Be3 Nxf3+ 9. gxf3 Bh3 10. Re1 Nh5 (Moving the knight out of the way to make way for the queen.) 11. Bxc5 (Giving the queen access to g5 and allowing mate in 2) Qg5+ 12. Kh1 Qg2#

Having seen these games you might think two things.

You might think that it's a bad idea to castle early in the game. Children often tell me they used to castle in their games but stopped doing it because when they castled they got mated. In this particular opening the player who castles first often loses – but in most openings you really should castle quickly, as you'll find out later.

You might also think that it's better to be Black than White because you can copy moves until your opponent makes a mistake. Again, not true. In my database White scores 54%, so you might think that White has a slight advantage at the start of the game.

As this opening is symmetrical you can try to use the same play if you have the white pieces.

Here's the best way to do it.

It's easy to remember. PAWN KNIGHT BISHOP then PAWN KNIGHT BISHOP. In that order. Your first three moves are on the king side. Your next three moves are on the queen side.

Let's see how it works.

1. e4 e5
2. Nf3 Nc6
3. Bc4

In this position Black usually plays either 3... Bc5 or 3... Nf6. They can, as you'll see later, lead to very different positions, but if you're playing d3 next move it usually leads to the same thing.

- 3... Bc5
4. d3

Now we start on the queen side. If you move the pawn two square Black will be able to take it, so we just move it one square.

- 4... Nf6
 5. Nc3 d6
- And now...
6. Bg5

Hoping that Black will now castle (or will already have castled).

If Black continues with:

- 6... 0-0

We continue with:

7. Nd5 with the same idea again.

Some more games for you to look at:

- 1. e4 e5 2. Nf3 Nc6 3. Bc4 Bc5 4. d3 Nf6 5. Nc3 d6 6. Bg5 0-0 7. Nd5 Be6 8. Nxf6+ gxf6 9. Bh6 Re8 10. Nh4 Qe7 11. Nf5 Bxf5 12. exf5 Qd7 13. Qg4+ Kh8 14. Qg7#
- 1. e4 e5 2. Nf3 Nc6 3. Bc4 Bc5 4. Nc3 Nf6 5. d3 0-0 6. Bg5 Na5 7. Nd5 h6 8. Nxf6+ gxf6 9. Bxh6 Re8 10. Nh4 Bf8 11. Qg4+ Kh8 12. Bxf8 Rxf8 13. Nf5 Rg8 14. Qh5#
- 1. e4 e5 2. Nf3 Nc6 3. Bc4 Bc5 4. d3 Nf6 5. Bg5 d6 6. Nc3 Bg4 7. h3 Bd7 8. Qd2 0-0 9. Nd5 Bb4 10. c3 Ba5 11. Bxf6 gxf6 12. Qh6 Ne7 13. Nxf6+ Kh8 14. Qxh7#
- 1. e4 e5 2. Nf3 Nc6 3. Bc4 Nf6 4. d3 Bc5 5. Nc3 0-0 6. Bg5 d6 7. Nd5 Bg4 8. c3 Qc8 9. Nxf6+ gxf6 10. Bxf6 Na5 11. Qd2 Nxc4 12. Qg5#
- 1. e4 e5 2. Nf3 Nc6 3. Bc4 Nf6 4. d3 Bc5 5. Nc3 0-0 6. Bg5 d6 7. Nd5 Bg4 8. Qc1 Bh5 9. Bxf6 gxf6 10. Qh6 Bg6 11. h4 Kh8 12. h5 Rg8 13. hxg6 Rxg6 14. Qxh7#

After 6... 0-0 White scores 74% in my database.

Instead the most popular move, 6... h6, scores only 47% for White, and 6... Na5, preferred by some strong players, scores just 46% for White.

If you play this opening with white you'll score some easy wins against opponents who move the pinned knight, or who castle too soon. But, against players who know what to do you'll find it hard to get a good position.