

Mistaken identity

THIS WEEK's topic is the paradoxical question: "When is a mistake not a mistake?"

I had better elucidate. The question is, in fact, a much-thought-about query regarding the assessment of positions. For example, if in a winning position a player plays a move which does nothing to help his position at all, is that an error? Progressing further, if a player has a choice of paths to victory, and chooses the least direct, should that move be branded with a question mark?

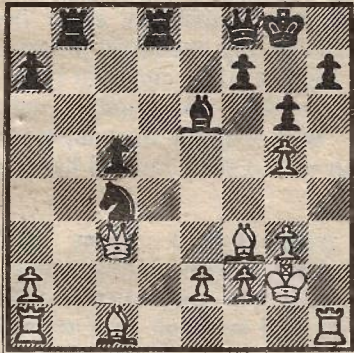
Some players will argue that if a position is winning, a player makes his move and the position is still winning, the move cannot be considered a mistake. I disagree. Tartakower once said: "White has his initiative to defend." Indeed White must actively exploit his first move advantage or it will just evaporate. Tartakower was looking at it almost as a liability.

Similarly, if we gain the advantage in our own games, we have to take care of it. The great temptation is to think you can put it on automatic pilot and it will cruise to victory by itself.

Most of us have had the situation where we "can't be bothered" working out that complicated, tactical line (even though it probably ends the fight in five moves — we *might*, after all, miscalculate!) and instead choose that safe positional move to maintain our advantage. Usually all is well, but occasionally that "safe" line does turn stropy, and we begin to regret the missed opportunity.

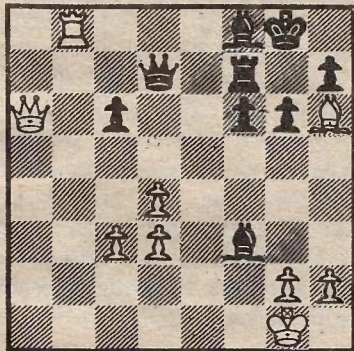
The following three positions all occurred in recent tournament games between well-known New Zealand players. In each case the player to move correctly invested a little thought to find the most straightforward path to victory. As a training exercise, before looking at the solutions (upside down at end) see how well you would have hammered the advantage home.

tential discovered check for an immediate finish?



(2) White to play

Spiller v Baumgartner, Howick-Pakuranga Summer Swiss 1981. Tournament winner Paul Spiller has just returned an earlier won pawn for attack. From the diagram play went 27.Bf4 Rb5 — see if you can visualise what happened next.

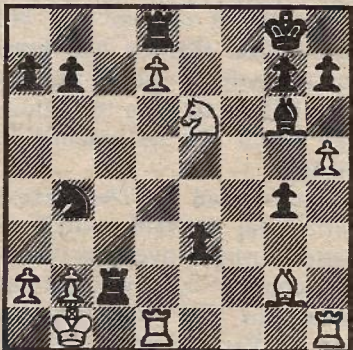


(3) White to play

Beach v Carpinter, Civic Easter Tourney Wellington 1981. Black has just played 23...B(from d5)xf3 intending 24.gxf3 Qe6 with counterplay. But an alert David Beach, who ultimately won all seven games, found something more devastating than this routine capture — what did he play?

Solutions:
 (1) 22...Rc1 dbl ch! 23.Kxc1 Nxa2 checkmate! — a lovely finish.
 (2) Rxf7 forced resignation —
 23...Kxh7 Rh1 ch mates.
 (3) 24.Qa3! Resigns (24...Qe7 25.Qxe7 Rxe7 26.Rxf8 mate).

MURRAY CHANDLER



(1) Black to play

Lynn v Sarfati, Burroughs Computers North Island Championship 1981. Paul Garbett was the well-deserved winner of this year's event, held in New Plymouth, but this game featured my favourite combination. Lynn's previous move was 22.h5, planning 22...R×g2 23.h×g6 or 22.Bf5 Nd4 with chances of resistance.

Can you do as well as junior star Jonathan Sarfati in utilising your po-