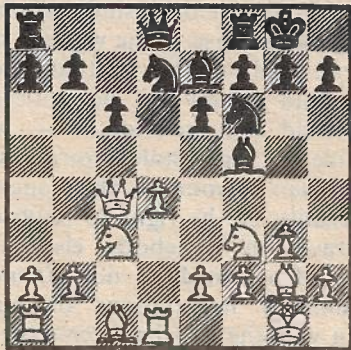


Snares and delusions

A FEW opening traps are so common almost anyone except a beginner knows to avoid them. Even the beginner will soon learn to sidestep the so-called Noah's Ark trap, when White gets his bishop captured by pawns in the Ruy Lopez (one typical variant being 1.e4 e5 2.Nf3 Nc6 3.Bb5 a6 4.Ba4 d6 5.d4 b5 6.Bb3 Nxd4 7.Nxd4 exd4 8.Qxd4?? c5 9.Qd5 Be6 10.Qc6 ch Bd7 11.Qd5 c4). Nevertheless every year (even on the lower boards of Olympiads) several players suffer a smothered mate they'll remember for life: 1.e4 c6 2.d4 d5 3.Nd2 dxe4 4.Nxe4 Nd7 5.Qe2 Ngf6?? 6.Nd6 mate! Black's routine fifth move (good against most other White fifth moves) fails to take into account the deadly threat accompanying White's unusual queen development.

At a higher level there are many subtle traps which players will avoid almost subconsciously, having learnt the danger signals from similar positions in the past. This thought process of pattern recognition is a major factor in the way we learn and improve from play and study. If, for instance, you are learning a specific opening it is often useful to play over, very quickly, a large number of master games in the variation you are dealing with. Although afterwards the exact moves of the games may not be remembered, you will have gained an impression of the various strategies and piece formations available for both sides. Later on, however, exact opening lines have to be memorised along with any subtle finesses or snares.

How easily even a master can blunder into a trap when a novel pattern appears was amusingly illustrated in one position from a tournament in Nis, Yugoslavia, a short time ago. Here White, an international master, had just played 1.Rd1, a natural enough move to inhibit the break ...c5.



Unfortunately there followed the surprising riposte 1...Bc2! putting White in acute embarrassment, for if the rook moves 2...Nb6 wins his queen. White had to humiliatingly backtrack with 2.a4 Nb6 3.Qa2 Bxd1 4.Nxd1, though he had the last laugh by drawing after his opponent fell into time trouble.

This week's game, taken from the Hanover grandmaster tournament reported several columns back, features another new trap destined for the

reference books. There is, however, an unexpected addition. In the identical position in which White here unveils his (presumably prepared) coup, another game from the Nis tournament mentioned above was agreed drawn, both protagonists unaware of the Hanover precedent!

FRENCH DEFENCE

Y. BALASHOV (USSR)	CHEN DE (China)
1. e4	e6
2. d4	d5
3. Nc3	Bb4

The Winawer variation, which frequently leads to sharp play.

4. e5	Ne7
5. a3	Bxc3 ch
6. bxc3	c5
7. Nf3	Bd7
8. dxc5	Ng6

The alternative 8...Qc7 9.Bd3 Ba4 may increase in popularity because of this game.

9. Bd3	Nc6
10. Rb1	Qc7
11. 0-0	Ncxe5
12. Nxe5	Nxe5
13. Bf4	0-0-0
14. Qe2	f6

Here the game Abramovic-Maksimovic, Nis 1983, was agreed drawn with the players assessing the position as unclear. Russian Grandmaster Yuri Balashov was less peaceably inclined.



15. Ba6! Clearly the bishop sacrifice cannot be accepted (15...bxa6 16.Qxa6 ch and mate next move), but it is the following rook sacrifice which validates the conception.

15. ...	Bc6
16. Rxb7!	Bxb7
17. Rb1!!	

Now matters are hopelessly clear; Black is quite lost. 17...Bxa6 18.Qxa6 ch Kd7 19.Rb7 Qxb7 (19...Rc8 20.Qd6 ch) 20.Qxb7 ch-Ke8 gives two rooks for the queen, but after 21.c6 the c-pawn marches to promotion. Alternatively 17...Qxc5 18.Rxb7 will force a fatal discovered check next move.

17. ...	Rd7
18. Rxb7	Qxb7
19. c6!	Resigns

19...Nxc6 20.Bxb7 ch Kxb7 21.Qb5 ch or 20...Rxb7 21.Qxe6 ch Kd8 22.Qd6 ch both win the knight on c6, leaving White a winning material advantage of queen and bishop v two rooks. An imaginative assault by Balashov, and an attacking concept worth remembering.

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