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# Hacking Up the King



# Contents

Introduction	7
Chapter 1: Basic Attacking Ideas	9
Chapter 2: Finishing Off the Attack!	21
Chapter 3: Sicilian Attacks	40
Chapter 4: Attacking When Only You Have an Attack	65
Chapter 5: Hacking Up the Scandinavian	93
Chapter 6: Taking Your Chances	113
Chapter 7: Attacks Featuring Opposite-Side Castling	138
Chapter 8: Misplayed Attacking Positions	156
Chapter 9: Nice-Looking Attacking Ideas that Shouldn't Work, But Often Do in Practice	171
Chapter 10: Attacking to Exploit an Early Lead in Development	190
Chapter 11: Attacking in the Endgame	216
Index of Players	224

# Introduction

I hope that reading *Hacking Up the King* will help you to develop your chess-playing skills, especially the skills of calculation and analysis. Some chess books consist mainly of short fragments of games without much exploration of possible variations. They are easy to read, often without the need to even set the positions up on a board. But, aside from being pleased with his progression through the book, how much does the reader really learn? There is only so much you can learn from a verbal explanation of a position, no matter how eloquently put, without delving deeply into the other lines that could have occurred.

This is not one of those books. Apart from the first chapter, which you can consider a warm-up, all of the other chapters are very heavily annotated with comments and variations. “Will it be hard work to get through a game?”, I hear you ask. The answer is a definite, “Yes!” But it will also be rewarding and, if you pause in complex positions to try and work out the continuations for yourself, it should vastly improve your calculation skills.

I would definitely recommend playing through the games on a board. It is probably worth also having a small pocket set on hand. That way, when you reach a position where there are several continuations for a side to choose between, you can quickly store the position on the pocket set – so that, after playing through the first variation, you don’t find yourself unable to get back to the starting position to look at another, as you can simply refer to the position on your pocket set! Some variations aren’t very long and you will be able to follow the analysis in your head. Everyone will be able to do this to a greater or lesser extent, but if you find yourself getting lost often then it is time to set the position up on a board. Sometimes I ask what should be played next, when it is beneficial for you to do your own analysis before looking at mine. Trying to work things out yourself can always be helpful, so whenever you find yourself really intrigued by a position and feel like musing over it on your own, then go ahead – there doesn’t need to be a prompt in the book for you to do this!

So, on to the theme of the book. Trying to checkmate my opponent in the middlegame has always been my favorite part of chess, ever since I began to play the game. Since checkmate ends the contest, it can be possible to sacrifice vast amounts of material for an attack on the king because, if the attack works, the extra material doesn’t matter. Sacrifices for attacks occur time and time again throughout this book. The attacks are grouped together in chapters based upon common themes. One thing all the games in every chapter have in common is that, for the attack to succeed, you need more attacking pieces than your opponent has defenders around your opponent’s king. If you like, you can think of very

## INTRODUCTION

badly placed defending pieces which block the king from escaping as counting as unintentional attackers – a bit like friendly fire in a war.

Most of the time, attacking very early in the game is not to be advised, as your opponent will probably be able to easily beat off your aggressive schemes. But there are exceptions, as you will learn in Chapter 10 about attacking to exploit an early lead in development. Time and time again, midway through the attack, it is when you pause in the heat of battle to bring your last piece into the attack that your opponent's defenses will begin to crumble. This is a golden rule and should always be somewhere at the back of your mind.

The editor might observe that, by the time I finished this book, the king could have simply died of old age rather than being hacked up. This is a similar situation to the timid kings of countries today, who will typically live into their nineties. The kings of 500 years ago have more in common with the kings in this book, as their sense of adventure and warmongering would often lead them to being “hacked up” on the battlefield!

Anyway, enough from me for now.

Happy hacking!

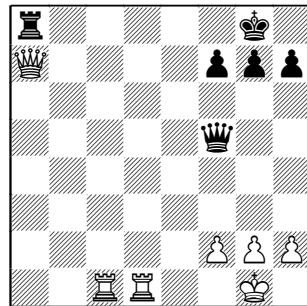
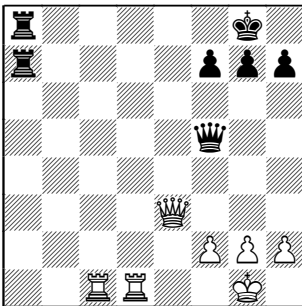
David Eggleston  
Durham, England  
January 2014

# Chapter 1

## Basic Attacking Ideas

### Back Rank 1

It is easy to look at a well-played attacking game and think, “Wow! How did he find all of those plans and ideas – I could never do that myself,” without realizing that there are typical attacking patterns that occur time and time again. Mastering the ability to recognize them and implement them in your own games is a key skill to develop and that is the subject of this chapter. We will start with the back-rank checkmate. From your own games, you will know that both sides usually castle to get the king to safety and that it is often advisable to avoid moving pawns in front of your king because it can damage their effectiveness in providing cover from the opponent’s pieces. This typically leads to a situation where White will have ♖g1, Pf2, Pg2, and Ph2 and Black will have ♜g8, Pf7, Pg7, and Ph7 – as in the following example. If a rook or queen can reach the opponent’s back rank in this situation without getting captured or blocked by a piece, it will be checkmate.



Here, moving a rook or queen to the back rank would be unsuccessful: Black would simply capture it. This should make you think of ways to distract the black rook on a8. What other jobs does it do for Black in this position? It defends the rook on a7.

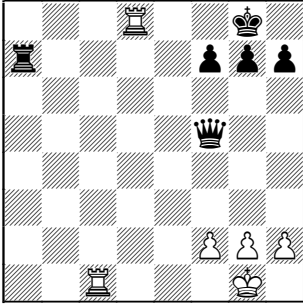
1. ♖xa7!

Now Black loses a rook and the game.

1... ♜xa7

The a8-rook can't perform both tasks at the same time.

2. ♖d8#

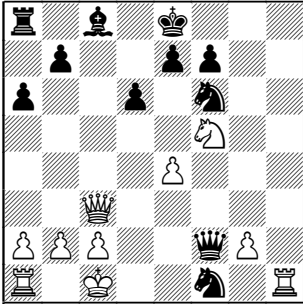


And White wins with the back-rank checkmate.

## Back Rank 2

**Ryan Rhys Griffiths (2137) – David Eggleston**

British Championship 2009

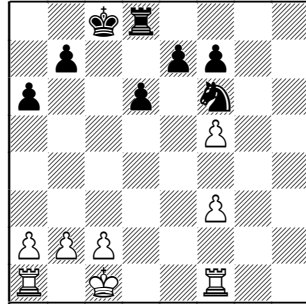


In this position, White will not succeed with 21. ♖h8+ because after 21... ♔d7 the black king runs away and White has no further checks. 21. ♛c7 doesn't work, either. The threat is 22. ♖h8+ ♘g8 23. ♖xg8# with a back-rank mate, but Black gets there first with 21... ♛e1#.

**21. ♛f3?? ♛d2+!**

White was hoping for 21... ♛xf3?? 22. gxf3, whereupon the knight on f1 is

trapped and White wins material, for example 22... ♛xf3 23. exf3 0-0-0 (23... ♘e3 24. ♖h8+ and here a back-rank check picks up the rook in the corner: 24... ♔d7 25. ♖xa8) 24. ♖xf1:

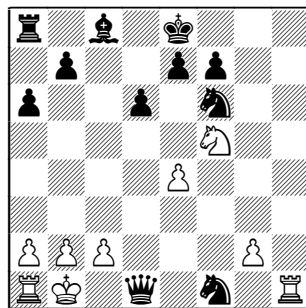


*analysis*

This would have gone very badly wrong for Black.

Also, 21... ♛e1+? would achieve nothing since here the back-rank mate doesn't work – White blocks with 22. ♛d1 and survives.

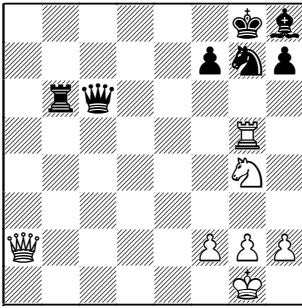
After 21... ♛xd2+, White resigned because of 22. ♔b1 ♛e1+. The white king has been pushed to b1 and it's over after 23. ♛d1 ♛xd1#:



*analysis*

Black delivers a back-rank check-mate even though both white rooks are on the back rank!

### Back Rank 3



Here, Black is up a bishop for a pawn and White's back-rank threat of ♖a8 doesn't work since Black can simply capture it. On top of that, Black is threatening ...♙c1#. Is there a way for White to strike first?

**1. ♘h6+!**

Deflecting the queen from guarding the a8 square.

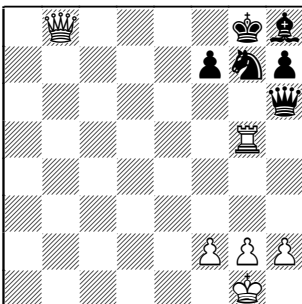
**1... ♙xh6**

1... ♔f8 2. ♖xf7#.

**2. ♖a8+**

And White mates. Black can't block with the knight on g7 as it is pinned to his king by the rook on g5.

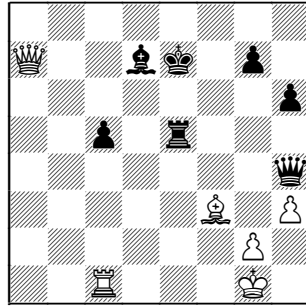
**2... ♗b8 3. ♖xb8#**



### Back Rank 4

**GM Mark Hebden (2516) –  
FM Richard Vedder (2293)**

Batavia Grolsch, Amsterdam 2012



White to play and win. This is a more complicated example of a back-rank mate; White creates the back-rank threats in an unusual but effective manner after forcing the black king behind its kingside pawns.

**1. ♙g4! ♖e1+ 2. ♔h2!**

2. ♗xe1+? ♙xe1+ 3. ♔h2 ♙e5+ 4. ♔g1 (4.g3 ♙b2+) 4... ♙e1+ leads to a draw.

**2... ♗xc1**

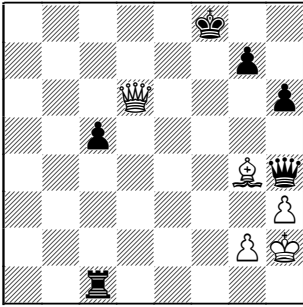
There was no way to defend d7.

**3. ♙xd7+ ♔f8**

How can White's attack succeed, given his small attacking force of only a queen and bishop?

3... ♔f6 4. ♙e6+ ♔g5 5. ♙f5#.

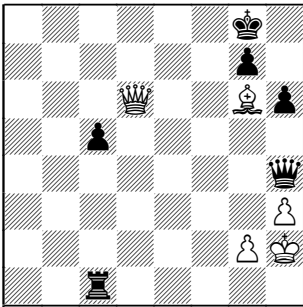
**4. ♙d6+**



4...♙g8

4...♙e8 5.♙d7+ ♙f7 (5...♙d8 6.♙e6+ ♙e8 7.♙d7+ ♙f8 8.♙f7#) 6.♙e6+ ♙f8 7.♙e8#.

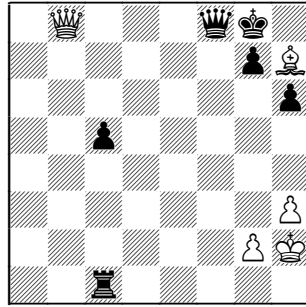
5.♙e6+ ♙h7 6.♙f5+ ♙g8 7.♙g6!



This is the key move – one that could be hard to spot. White calmly brings his bishop in to tie the black king to the back rank. The white queen plans to deliver the back-rank mate and Black's queen and rook are too badly placed to stop it.

7...♙f6 8.♙b8+ ♙f8 9.♙h7+!

Another nice twist. The bishop cannot be taken because the queen hangs.



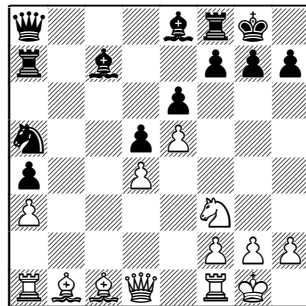
9...♙f7 10.♙f4+

Picking up the rook on c1. White would have needed to see this before playing 1.♙g4. White has optimally exploited all of the factors in the position to his advantage.

10...♙e7 11.♙xc1

And White is winning.

## The Greek Gift



The Greek Gift sacrifice is characterized by a combination of ♙xh7+, ♘g5+, and the queen's joining in the attack on h5, g4, or a square on the b1-h7 diagonal.



## BASIC ATTACKING IDEAS

It is named after the description in Virgil's *Aeneid* of the giant wooden horse that the Greeks left outside the gates of Troy after sailing away, seemingly abandoning their siege. The Trojans took the horse into their city. However, it wasn't really a gift as the horse's belly concealed Greek soldiers who slipped out during the night and opened the city gates for the rest of their army, which had returned in secret; Troy was sacked and its power destroyed.

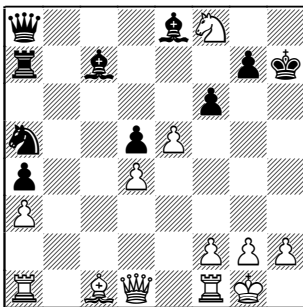
In the same way,  $\text{♕xh7+}$  isn't a gift either – the intention is a winning attack. Sometimes, matters aren't so simple and Black's position may withstand the attack after a few accurate moves. In the following example, White wins:

1.  $\text{♕xh7+! ♜xh7}$

1... $\text{♜h8}$  2.  $\text{♖g5}$  is crushing: Black is under attack and he's not even going to get any extra material.

If here 2... $\text{f5}$  or 2... $\text{g6}$ , White continues with 3.  $\text{♞f3-h3}$  and Black has no defense.

If 2... $\text{f6}$ , White wins by 3.  $\text{♖xe6 ♜xh7}$  4.  $\text{♖xf8+}$ :

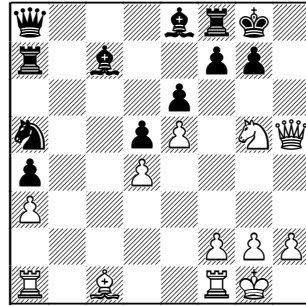


*analysis*

2.  $\text{♖g5+ ♜h6}$

There are two other typical scenarios when the Greek Gift is accepted:

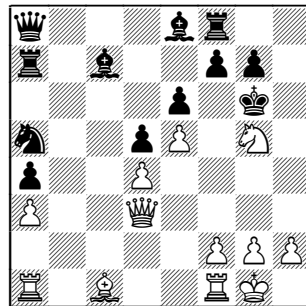
1. When the king ducks back into his castled position. 2... $\text{♜g8}$  3.  $\text{♞h5}$ :



*analysis*

– and  $\text{♞h7}$  will be checkmate next move;

2. When the king ventures out: 2... $\text{g6}$  3.  $\text{♞d3+}$ :



*analysis*

An experienced player should be able to judge, purely on intuition, that White is likely to be winning here because all of Black's pieces are on