

Karsten Müller / Jerzy Konikowski

The Best Combinations of the World Champions



Volume 2

From Petrosian to Carlsen

JBV Chess Books

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Table of Contents

Preface	6
Foreword by GM Mihail Marin	7
Introductory remark	14
Explanation of symbols	16
The ninth world champion – Tigran Petrosian	18
Solutions of the exercises	32
The tenth world champion – Boris Spassky	42
Solutions of the exercises	54
The eleventh world champion – Robert Fischer	64
Solutions of the exercises	81
The twelfth world champion – Anatoly Karpov	92
Solutions of the exercises	108
The thirteenth world champion – Garry Kasparov	118
Solutions of the exercises	134
The fourteenth world champion – Vladimir Kramnik	144
Solutions of the exercises	160
The fifteenth world champion – Viswanathan Anand	170
Solutions of the exercises	184
The sixteenth world champion – Magnus Carlsen	194
Solutions of the exercises	210
Try to find the combinations of the world champions	221
Solutions of the exercises	230
About the authors	237
Index of sources	240

Preface

Since every world champion was the most outstanding player of his time, it makes sense to study the various aspects of the royal game using the world champions' games – and of course to enjoy them. In this first of two volumes on the world champions' art of combination, the authors (both recognized experts in the field of chess literature) offer the reader the opportunity of trying to find plenty of these best combinations themselves – and thus to assess and improve their own tactical skills.

But that's not all. In addition to often breathtakingly spectacular sample games, which are thoroughly analyzed and commented on in a comprehensible way, individual pet topics are highlighted in which the world champions have created particularly outstanding works.

So you are invited to take a closer look at Petrosian's deeply thought out exchange sacrifices, at Spassky's always tactically alert attacking skills and Fischer's often combinatorial exploitation of advantages in the endgame. Furthermore, at the tactical aspects of Karpov's dominance and restriction methods, Kasparov's dynamic pressure play, Kramnik's positional power play, Anand's fine sense for dynamics and – last but not least – Magnus Carlsen's combinatorial conversion of his excellent endgame strategy.

The game examples and special topics were selected and edited by Karsten Müller – the numerous examples of the 'best combinations' by Jerzy Konikowski, who used material from his numerous books and other publications (see – Index of sources).

The authors would like to thank Mihail Marin for his excellent foreword, Frederic Friedel and Rainer Woisin from ChessBase for the idea of working with QR codes, Thomas Beyer for the perfect layout and Robert Ullrich for the exemplary cooperation.

Karsten Müller/Jerzy Konikowski
Hamburg/Dortmund, February 2022

Tactics – more than a matter of style



Mihail Marin

It is hard to imagine a more effective way of annoying the younger generations than preaching about 'the reliable past'. At the same time, it would be a pity if the rich treasure left to us by the former World Champions fell into oblivion. With their book, Karsten Müller and Jerzy Konikowski have managed to fight against the latter without falling into the typical *grandpas' mistake*. The authors have gathered a large number of combinations from the World Champions' practice, thus inviting the reader to evaluate, treasure and measure his or her own forces with that of the heroes from the past.

Solving tactical puzzles has never ceased to be one of the most effective training methods.

I used to do that before tournaments intensively, and have encouraged many of my pupils to do it, too, but it can also be a day-by-day activity.

Which is the reason making tactics so important?

The authors themselves have explained in the introduction that the World Champions could be classified into several categories. Is this not one of those situations when several alternative methods could lead to the same goal?

The simplest part of the answer is that solving tactical puzzles systematically improves one's shape, allowing one to take quick correct decisions over the board, no matter whether they are of strategic, tactical, theoretical or pragmatic nature.

I could also add that there are many famous cases of games and results turned upside down by tactical operations after one of the players had been outplayed in the theoretical or strategic battle. The reversed situation is less common. It would take a miracle to save a game due to one's strategic superiority after having been caught tactically. True, superior theoretical knowledge in the endgame can sometimes make up for tactical accidents, but if one falls under a tactical attack, things are not likely to get as far as the endgame.

All these are only superficial aspects, though. The inner truth is much deeper. Strong players (and maybe not only they) conduct the biggest part of the game according to their personal taste and style, making possible such classifications as that used by the authors. However, there are moments when there is only one 'best decision'. On such occasions, tacticians and strategists alike

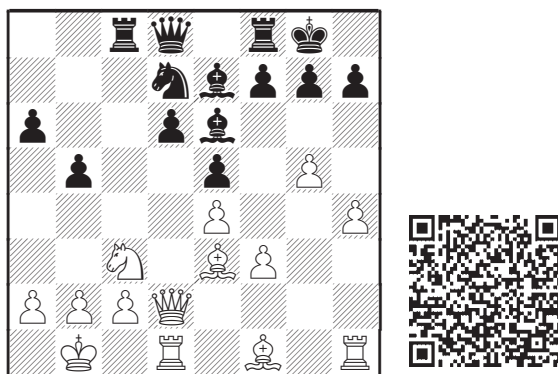
have to forget about their style or preferences and play accordingly to the concrete requirements of the position. Since the authors have also mentioned the champions' weaknesses, I would add that the impulsive one should use the best of his patience if a strategic solution is required – and the lazy one should exit his comfort zone and calculate when things are about to get messy.

It is precisely the latter that is connected with the spirit of the previous volume. The chronologically first hero, Wilhelm Steinitz, famously stated that the player having an advantage can and *must* attack, facing the threat of otherwise losing his superiority or even getting the worst of it. Aged almost 60, the founder of the “new school”, based on strategy, illustrated this axiom in his brilliant game against Von Bardeleben, the first sample game in the first volume.

The spirit of many combinations included in the second volume acquires new dimensions. The technique of defence improved dramatically with the pass of the decades and in order to deliver a winning combination, one would have to prepare it thoroughly. Most typically, the tactical fireworks are the deserved crowning of superior strategy, but background tactical tricks are likely to serve the strategic purposes, too. In other words, tactics and strategy should be connected in both ways.

As a first example, we will use the game Fischer – Bolbochan, corresponding to the diagram 56.

Fischer – Bolbochan Interzonal Stockholm 1962



This game is mainly known as an illustration of the fight between a strong knight versus a passive bishop. We will see, though, that other pieces also play important roles.



Chapter 1

The ninth world champion – Tigran Petrosian

Tigran Vartanovich Petrosian (June 17, 1929 – August 13, 1984) was born to Armenian parents in the Georgian capital Tbilisi, where he spent a large part of his youth and only learned chess at the relatively late age of 12. In the 1963 match for the world championship he prevailed against Mikhail Botvinnik with 12.5–9.5 points, defended the title in 1966 against Boris Spassky (12.5–11.5), but then lost (10.5–12.5) to the same opponent in 1969.

As a ‘reflector’ he had his very own style with the typical characteristics of this type of player (see also the introductory remark on page 14). Because of his rather defensive approach and the great importance he attached to prophylaxis, he was given the respectful nickname ‘Iron Tigran’.

Furthermore, he is well known for his long-term positional exchange sacrifices – such as in the following game.



Spasski – Petrosian

7th match game, Moscow 1966 (D03)

1.d4 ♘f6 2.♗f3 e6 3.♙g5 d5 4.♗bd2
♙e7 5.e3 ♗bd7 6.♙d3 c5 7.c3 b6 8.0-0
♙b7 9.♗e5 ♗xe5 10.dxe5 ♗d7
11.♙f4?!

11.♙xe7 ♗xe7 12.f4 is more natural.

11...♗c7 12.♗f3 h6 13.b4 g5!?

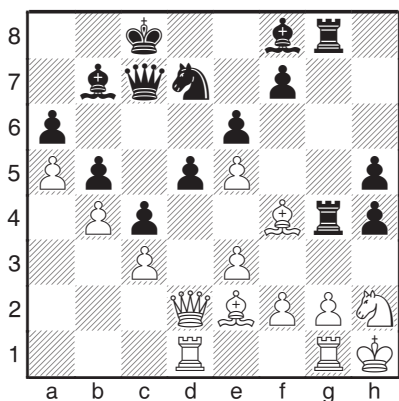
As opening the position with
13...cxb4?! 14.cxb4 ♙xb4 15.♗d4
would be favorable for the opponent,
White begins his own attack.

14.♙g3 h5 15.h4 gxh4 16.♙f4 0-0-0
17.a4 c4 18.♙e2 a6!

Petrosian makes sure the queen side
cannot be opened.

19.♔h1 ♖dg8 20.♖g1 ♖g4 21.♗d2
♖hg8 22.a5 b5 23.♖ad1 ♙f8 24.♗h2?

This accelerates the black attack con-
siderably. Good advice is expensive,
however, because Black can exert
pressure on the pawn on e5 anyway.



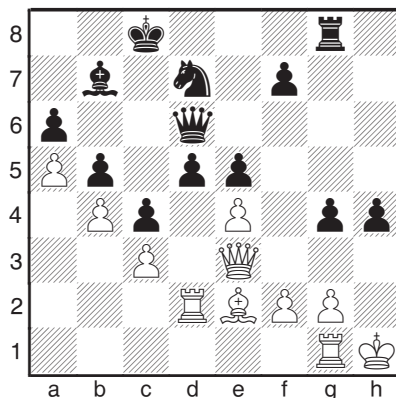
24...♗xe5!

Of course, Petrosian doesn't need to
think twice before giving the exchange.

25.♗xg4 hxg4 26.e4 ♙d6 27.♗e3
♗d7

27...dxe4 was also strong.

28.♙xd6 ♗xd6 29.♖d4 e5 30.♖d2



30...f5!!

Tsunami alert!

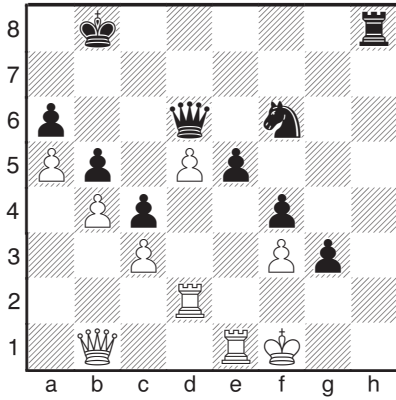
31.exd5?

31.exf5 was better, although after
31...♗f6 32.f3 g3 33.♖e1 ♗xf5, Black
remains in the driver's seat.

31...f4 32.♗e4 ♗f6 33.♗f5+ ♔b8
34.f3?!

Neither this, nor the more tenacious
34.♙d1 ♙xd5 35.♖xd5 ♗xd5 36.♙xg4
could stop the attack.

34...♙c8 35.♗b1 g3 36.♖e1 h3 37.♙f1
♖h8 38.gxh3 ♙xh3 39.♔g1 ♙xf1
40.♔xf1



40...e4

There are still enough pawns for a pawn roller.

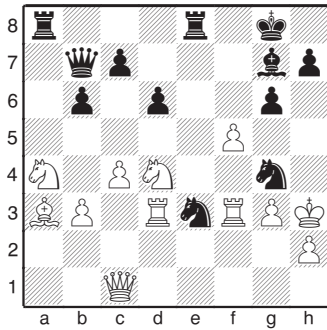
41. ♔d1 ♘g4 42. fxg4 f3 43. ♖g2 fxg2+ 0-1

Combinations

(Solutions starting on page 32)



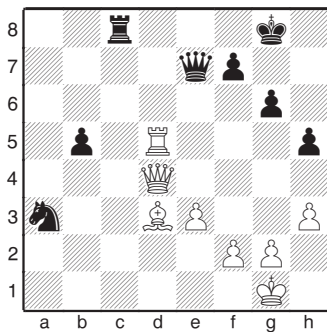
1



Black to move and win



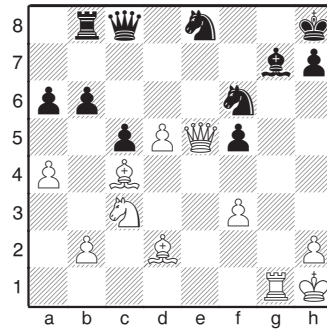
2



White to move and win



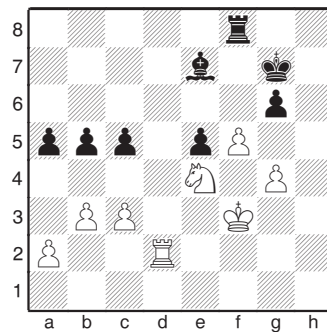
3



White to move and win



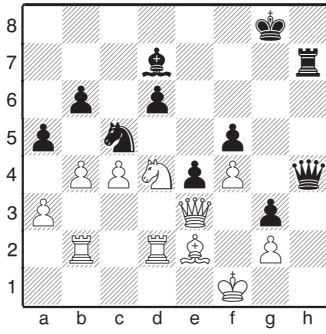
4



White to move and win



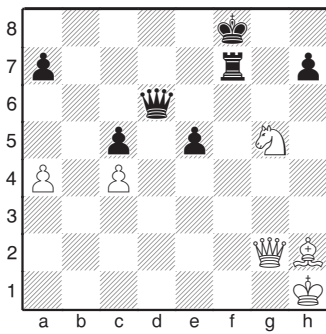
5



Black to move and win



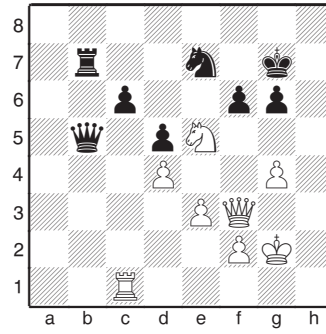
6



White to move and win



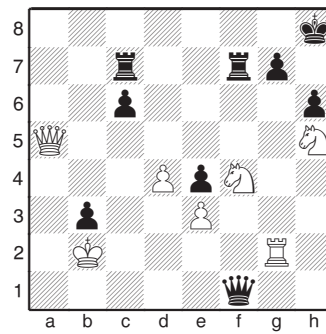
7



White to move and win



8



White to move and win



Chapter 8

The sixteenth world champion – Magnus Carlsen

Magnus Carlsen was born on November 30, 1990 in the Norwegian town of Tønsberg. He learned chess at the age of six, but since he was not particularly interested in it straight away, but only a few years later, the first outstanding successes did not appear until after the year 2000.

From then on, however, things made huge strides: IM title in 2003, GM in 2004 (at the age of 13 years and 5 months!), countless victories at elite tournaments and finally the world championship title after his convincing victory (6–3) over Anand in 2013. Subsequently he successfully defended the title four times (2014 against Anand, 2016 against Karjakin, 2018 against Caruana and 2021 against Nepomniachtchi) and during this time he won the world championship in rapid and blitz chess several times.

The ‘Mozart of Chess’ is a typical reflector (see also the introductory remark on page 14), and since representatives of this type tend to stay on the world champion’s throne for a long time, the end of his reign is not in sight at the moment.

His strategy of dominance and restriction often leads to an irresistible attack – as in the following game.



Magnus Carlsen (2861)
Hikaru Nakamura (2769)
 Wijk aan Zee 2013 (B32)

1.e4 c5 2.♘f3 ♘c6 3.d4 cxd4 4.♗xd4 e5 5.♗b5 d6 6.g3!?

“Very typical of Carlsen’s style – he is not actively trying to refute openings, like a Kasparov, but rather just building up a slight advantage, before viciously outplaying the opposition in the middlegame and endgame. But beware of drawing him into a battle – just because his natural style is to grind, doesn’t mean he can’t mix it with the best of them.” (Gormally in CBM 153)

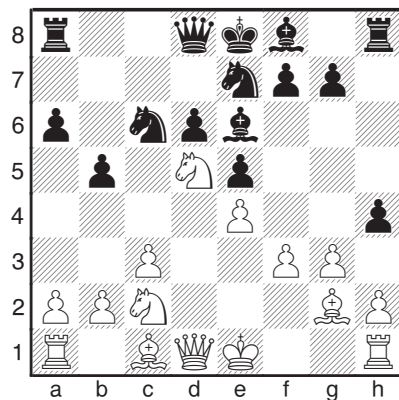
6...h5

This rather extravagant move is probably playable.

7.♗1c3 a6 8.♗a3 b5 9.♗d5 ♗ge7 10.♙g2 ♙g4?!

In the press conference, Magnus pointed out the probably more precise alternative 10...♗xd5 11.exd5 ♗e7.

11.f3 ♙e6 12.c3 h4 13.♗c2



13...♗xd5?!

This exchange is strategically highly risky because the white squares are significantly weakened. However, it’s not easy to find something convincing to solve Black’s problems.

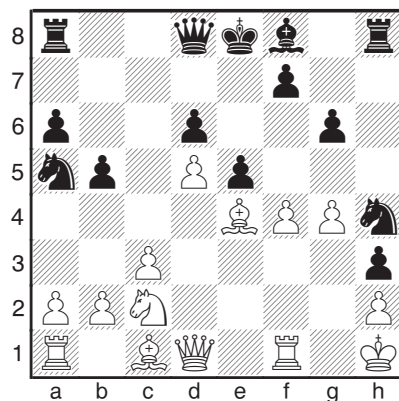
14.exd5 ♗a5 15.f4 ♗f5?!

According to Carlsen, 15...hxg3 16.hxg3 ♖xh1+ 17.♙xh1 ♔d7 was more precise, although it still looks better for White.

16.g4 h3 17.♙e4 ♗h4

17...♔h4+ is simply answered with 18.♙f1 ♗e7 19.♔e2. (Gormally)

18.0-0 g6 19.♙h1



Try to find the combinations of the world champions

Practical tips on how to solve combinations

Success in chess largely depends on whether you can find the right path to the goal at a critical moment. By trying to solve the following 32 combinations from the tournament practice of the world champions, you can not only test your tactical and analytical skills, but also improve your methodical calculation – an important element in the education and training of players of all levels.

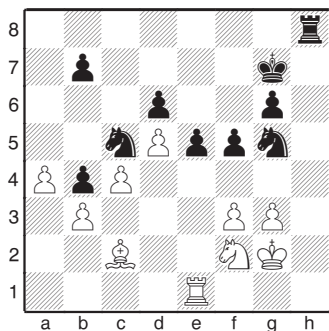
By systematically performing these exercises (which vary in difficulty and thus require different levels of skills and previous knowledge), you can also expand your collection of strategic and tactical motifs. Because the more you know about such ideas and their implementation, the easier it will be to keep your bearings in complex situations.

With the help of these exercises, you can test your current combinatorial skills – not by dealing with random tactical positions, but with those created by the strongest players of all time. For effective training, it's advisable to work under tournament conditions, which means that all calculations should take place in your head.

(Solutions starting on page 230)



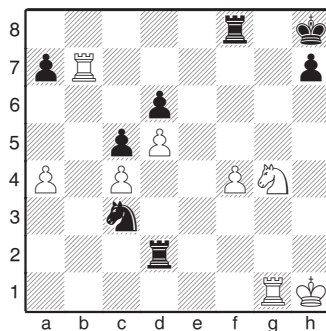
Exercise 1



Black to move and win



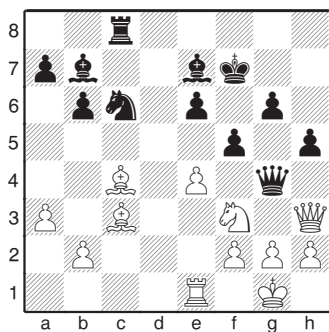
Exercise 3



White to move and win



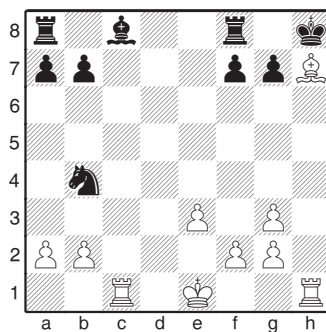
Exercise 2



White to move and win



Exercise 4



White to move and win

About the authors

GM Dr. Karsten Müller was born on November 23rd, 1970 in Hamburg. He studied mathematics and received his doctorate in 2002. From 1988 to 2015 he played for the 'Hamburger SK' in the German 'Bundesliga' and in 1998 he was awarded the title of Grandmaster. As a player he belongs to the type 'activist' – as a trainer and author, however, he is a 'theorist'.



He is the author (or co-author) of the following highly esteemed works:

Secrets of Pawn Endings (with Frank Lamprecht, 2000)

Fundamental Chess Endings (with Frank Lamprecht, 2001)

Danish Dynamite (with Martin Voigt, 2003)

ChessCafe Puzzle Book 1: Test and Improve Your Tactical Vision, 2004

ChessCafe Puzzle Book 2: How to Play Chess Endgames (with Wolfgang Pajeken, 2008)

ChessCafe Puzzle Book 3: Test and Improve Your Positional Intuition (2008)

Bobby Fischer, The Career and Complete Games of the American World Chess Champion (2009)

ChessCafe Puzzle Book 4: Test and Improve Your Defensive Skill! (with Merijn van Delft, 2010)

Mastering the positional principles (with Alexander Markgraf, 2012)

The Magic Tactics of Mikhail Tal: Learn from the Legend (with Raymund Stolze, 2012)

Fighting chess with Hikaru Nakamura (with Raymund Stolze, 2013)

The slow (but venomous) Italian (with Georgios Souleidis, 2016)

The Magic of Chess Tactics 2 (with C.D. Meyer, 2017)

Magical Endgames (with C.D. Meyer, 2020)

The Human Factor in Chess (with Luis Engel, 2020)

The Best Endgames of the World Champions (Volume 1 and 2) 2021

His excellent series of ChessBase–DVDs *Chess endgames 1-14* also attracted attention.

Müller's popular column *Endgame Corner* was published at 'www.ChessCafe.com' from January 2001 until 2015, and his column *Endgames* is published in *ChessBase Magazine* since 2006.

The busy and globally recognized endgame expert was named 'Trainer of the Year' by the German Chess Federation in 2007.

FIDE Master Jerzy Konikowski (born 1947) is a recognized German trainer and chess theorist of Polish origin. He completed his studies as a chess coach in Warsaw and was the Polish national coach from 1978 to 1981.

In 1981 he moved to Germany and received German citizenship. He coached the youth team of North Rhine-Westphalia for 15 years and played in various teams in the German 'Bundesliga' from 1983–1994.

His numerous books and articles have been translated into several languages and published in many countries.

His other passion is correspondence chess. He won several tournaments in the European class and represented Germany in the final of the 17th European Correspondence Chess Championship (1993–1998), where he placed 7th.

He is also a renowned chess composer who created about 400 chess problems, over 100 of which received awards in international competitions. Eight of his problems have been included in FIDE albums, the collections of the world's best problems.



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