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DEFENSIVE TOOLS

*A tournament
player's manual*



Chess
Evolution

Cover designer
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Typesetting
i-Press <www.i-press.pl>

First edition 2020 by Chess Evolution

Defensive Tools. A tournament player's manual
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ISBN 978-615-5793-27-1

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Printed in Greece

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KEY TO SYMBOLS

=	Equality or equal chances
±	White has a slight advantage
∓	Black has a slight advantage
±	White is better
∓	Black is better
+-	White has a decisive advantage
-+	Black has a decisive advantage
∞	unclear
∞	with compensation
↔	with counterplay
↑	with initiative
→	with an attack
Δ	with the idea
□	only move
N	novelty
!	a good move
!!	an excellent move
?	a weak move
??	a blunder
!?	an interesting move
?!	a dubious move
+	check
#	mate

FOREWORD

Skills in chess do not arrive all at once; experienced coaches know well that defensive skills are not among the first to appear in the arsenal of a young player. To be able to defend properly, one must first master the art of attacking. Just as youth can be reckless and ambitious, age and experience make room for more appreciation of defence. But enough philosophy... Defensive skills are vital for a player to really make his mark and reach for a higher level. All leading players were of course good in this department, but some excelled in it. In the end, it has to do with playing style to some extent. It has to do with grit and determination, but is also about pure chess skills.

If the era we live in may not be the brightest and most promising of all time, it certainly is an era of chess books. They are written almost on a daily basis, so that it really is a challenge to find an aspect of chess not yet extensively covered. The openings are evolving constantly and there will always be something new about this or that opening. Some time ago we discovered that of the non — opening subjects, defence is easily the one that has been the least

discussed so far in available chess literature. So the idea was born to write a book on defence. Our aim was to capture the perspective of an active tournament player who will inevitably experience his fair share of situations on the board when he/she will have to defend. To do that efficiently, a number of means and skills have been developed through analytical research, and decades (or better, centuries) of tournament practice. Some like to call them tools and so shall we. We may imagine this book as a set of useful tools, waiting to be mastered. When they are, they will be ready to use. We need not pretend to have discovered anything new; we rather look at it as an attempt to present and explain a set of tools which an ambitious, hard working player in progress should master and be aware of at all times during tournament battle. It may be useful for coaches as well. Of course, there is no promise that all games will be saved after reading this book; what you can count on is that proper use of the tools explained here will avoid a serious amount of — well, avoidable losses. As with most things in chess, the exact opposite perspective is useful as well: being aware of those tools

may just as easily help you avoid unforeseen obstacles on your way to a well-deserved win.

The attentive reader may notice that sometimes it is hard to draw a line between tools. Some examples in the book could easily have found their place in another chapter as well. But not everything can be neatly boxed in chess. One more characteristic of these tools is that they tend to supplement each other quite regularly. There are examples where in one line stalemate comes to the rescue, in the other a perpetual check. Experienced players know this feeling: some call it the 'smell' of a draw.

In collecting materials for this book, which is always a thankless task, we tried to give priority to the most recent games that passed our test. Of course, a fair share of classic examples still found a place in the book. In this respect, a special thanks goes to the man himself, Grandmaster Adrian Mikhalchishin.

Finally, we would like to thank our better halves, Miša and Mojca, who were there to keep things together as the 'chessers' were busy writing a book.

Tadej Sakelšek and Marko Tratar
October 2020

PART 1.

IMPROVEMENT OF DEFENSIVE SKILLS OVER TIME

What are the components that make a really strong defensive player?

Mostly the same that make a good chess player in general, so the question may be a faulty one. But let us nevertheless name some qualities: good calculation, regard for an opponent's threats ('feel for danger', as Petrosian's admirers know), endurance, alertness, and imagination. This book also deals with special defensive tools, but here we will try to take a look at some of the great masters' defensive achievements. As this could easily make for an independent book, we have to limit ourselves somehow when choosing their names. Not all of these great masters are well known to every chess player, but every one of them is special to our subject. Their games are worthy of careful study. Each of them added something of their own to our knowledge of defensive skills, perhaps not always consciously.

Aron Nimzowitsch, the author of the term 'prophylaxis' in chess and thereby one of the main theoreticians of defensive play, named in his magnum opus 'My System' his choice of the six

greatest defensive players in history: Wilhelm Steinitz, Emanuel Lasker, Amos Burn, Ossip Bernstein, Oldrich Duras, and Louis Paulsen. This is arbitrary of course, but it is the opinion of one of the most skilled players in this department, so it matters. There were other pioneers of ideas connected to defensive play of course. Philidor's teachings about pawn play are, although this is usually not emphasized, basically defensive in nature, as pawns — 'the soul of chess' — are the defining factor of opponents' piece activity. For those keen on studying the old masters' legacy, we should point at James Mason's games. His mastery of pawn play was above his contemporaries.

But firstly, Howard Staunton may be mentioned with his opening systems involving fianchettoed bishops; the idea of the bishop developed in this manner includes a prophylactic measure, discouraging an attack in advance. So, essentially it is a defensive tool.

Let us briefly overview some of the aforementioned players' legacy. Howard Staunton was, besides being the

best player in the world for some years in the middle of the 19th century, a player with a keen feel for defensive play. We should consider that attacking chess was what players of the time were all about. But Staunton liked to play semi-closed systems with Black, giving the opponent minimal attacking opportunities and often confusing them completely. It has to be observed, however, that his defensive skills were not challenged to the fullest as most of his contemporaries did not possess the combinational power that Adolf Anderssen and Paul Morphy introduced, marking the chess style of the coming decades. Regrettably, a proper match with either of the two never happened. Here is an example of Staunton's approach:

■ Example 1

▷ Bernhard Horwitz

▷ Howard Staunton

London 1846

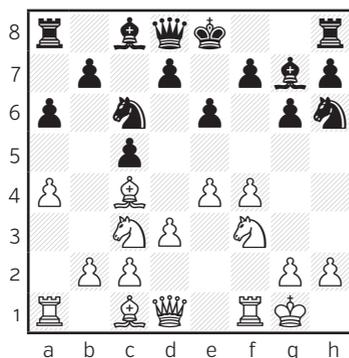
1.e4 c5 2.♙c4 e6 3.♘c3 ♘c6 4.f4

The usual way of meeting the Sicilian in the early days of this opening. White is hoping to slowly build a kingside attack.

4...a6! 5.a4

Giving Black what he wants; including ...a6 and a4 is, as a rule, good for Black.

5...g6 6.♘f3 ♙g7 7.o-o ♘h6 8.d3



8...f5!

Although White was not yet really threatening to play f5 himself, the sheer solidity of the Black setup must have been frustrating! Black discourages any notion of a kingside attack and an attacking player, as they all were at the time, is left high and dry...

9.♙e1 o-o 10.♙e3 b6 11.h3 ♘e7

Preparing ...d5, but ...♘b4 seems better with the same idea.

12.e5

White cannot play 12.d4 because of 12...fxe4 13.♘xe4 d5 winning a piece.

12...♙b7 13.d4 cxd4 14.♘xd4 ♙c7

with good play. Black won on move 48.

o-o

Louis Paulsen in his later years was probably the first to properly think

about defence in chess. His sober opinion was that, however inspired the attack, a thorough defence should always hold it. Such thinking was indeed strange to the masters of the romantic period of the 19th century who considered an all-out attack on the enemy king almost a matter of honour.

Let us see some of his efforts on the board:

■ Example 2

▷ Adolf Schwarz

▶ Louis Paulsen

Leipzig 1879

1.e4 c5 2.♘f3 e6 3.d4 cxd4 4.♘xd4
♘f6 5.♙d3 ♘c6 6.♙e3 d5 7.♘d2
♙e7

7...e5 would also be excellent for Black. It is obvious from White's insecure moves that the Sicilian was new territory in those days.

8.o-o o-o 9.c3 ♘e5 10.♙c2 dxe4

10...♘eg4 11.♙g5 ♙c7 was worth trying.

11.♘xe4 ♘d5 12.♙c1 f5

A typical tool in similar positions, but carrying some positional risk as well. Moves like ...h6 or ...♙c7 seem useful, with equal chances.

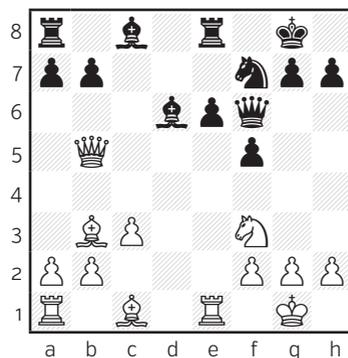
13.♘d2 ♙d6

The f6-square seems right for this bishop after ...f5. Paulsen has a special setup in mind, but it is rather demanding.

14.♘2f3 ♘f7 15.♙e1 ♘c7 16.♙b3
♙f6 17.♙e2 ♙e8

17...♙d7! would sort out any defensive issues Black is experiencing, when the activity of the white pieces is now under control.

18.♘b5 ♘xb5 19.♙xb5



Black's pieces lack harmony somewhat. He needs to finish his development while taking care of some weak points in his position. Paulsen's solution seems modern enough...

19...♙e7!!

19...♙d8?! 20.♙e3 and White is better as ♙d4 will follow.

A master of defence at work! Suddenly all squares in the black camp are protected; the plan is clear, but the point of the move is yet to be seen!

20. ♖e3 a6 21. ♚b6 ♖c7 22. ♚c5 b6
23. ♚c6?

23. ♚d4 would keep some pressure.
The text is playing into Black's hands.

23... ♖b7!

Finishing development with tempo,
Black is suddenly winning!

The bishop is untouchable thanks to
the ♖e7's x-ray power. After some ad-
ventures, Black won in 43 moves.

0-1

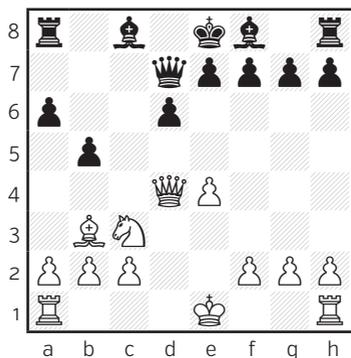
■ Example 3

▷ Max Lange

▶ Louis Paulsen

Nuremberg 1883

1.e4 c5 2. ♘f3 ♘c6 3. ♘c3 ♘f6 4.d4
cxd4 5. ♗xd4 d6 6. ♖e3 ♗g4 7. ♖b5
♗d7 8. ♚d2 ♗xe3 9. ♚xe3 a6 10. ♖a4
b5 11. ♖b3 ♗xd4 12. ♚xd4



12... ♚a7!

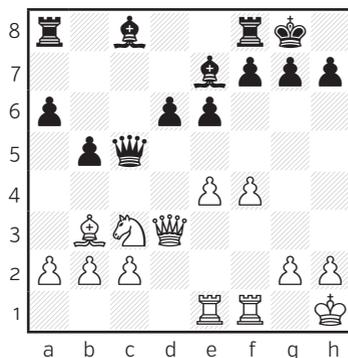
While this cool Sicilian move is
a pretty basic defensive tool by today's
standards, we have to give full cred-
it to Paulsen's reasoning. Black is es-
sentially offering to exchange his only
developed piece. White is left with
a choice: the endgame gives Black su-
perior chances with his bishop pair
and the suddenly strong king, while
otherwise the queen must abandon
her active position, allowing Black to
finish the development of his king-
side.

12...e6 would be too slow after 13.a4
b4 14.a5! and Black drifts into trouble.

13. ♚d3

13. ♚xa7 ♖xa7 14.a4 b4 15. ♗d5 e6
16. ♗xb4 ♖b7! 17.f3? d5 is playing into
Black's hands.

13...e6 14.0-0 ♖e7 15. ♚h1 0-0 16.f4
♗c5 17. ♖ae1



17... ♖d7!

Prophylactic thinking before it was
invented! Jokes aside, of course the

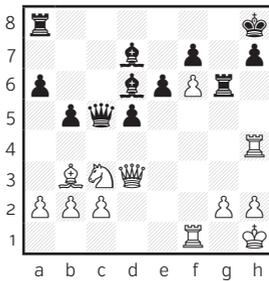
bishop has nothing to do on b7 in this case; it has to guard e6 as f5 is coming.

Besides, ...b4 and ...♗b5 is also at hand.

18.f5!?

White needs to do something but this is just what Black wants. A modern player will know that such a move has to be followed by e5, and soon.

18.e5 d5 (18...♗c6! 19.exd6 ♖xd6 and Black is not running any risks with his bishop pair.) 19.f5 was an interesting possibility, where Black is probably best advised to take: 19...exf5 (19...♖h8 20.f6 gxf6 21.exf6 ♗d6 22.♖e3 ♖g8 23.♗h3 ♖g6 24.♗h4



24...♖c8! 25.♖h3 ♖g8 26.♗xd5 exd5 27.♖xd7 ♖d8 28.♖h3 ♗e5 and Black seems OK, but the only one taking chances.) 20.♗xd5 ♖ad8 looks equal.

18...♗f6

18...♖e5 was an interesting prophylactic move, a typical choice of players who like to play ‘by hand’. It reduces greatly the attacking potential of

White’s pieces by physically preventing e5. It removes the forcing nature from the position, making White’s practical task really complicated.

19.♖h3

White had an active option: 19.e5 ♗xe5 20.♗e4 (20.f6? ♗c6 (20...♗xf6 21.♗e4 winning.)) 20...♖d4 21.♖xd4 ♗xd4 22.♗xd6 ♗xb2 23.♗xf7 with fireworks ending peacefully.

19...♖ae8?!

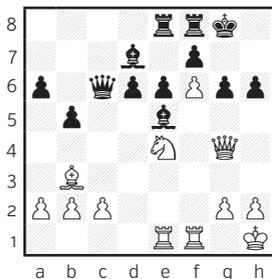
It is hard to blame Paulsen for playing such a natural move, but the poor state of White’s minor pieces should have made him ‘smell the rat’; indeed, what can White play now — if not e5 with ♗e4?

19...♖e5 was again an interesting prophylactic move. It does, however, provide White with a chance to give more scope to his pieces: 20.fxe6 ♗xe6 (20...fxe6 21.♖f5 is annoying: (21.♗d5 demands accurate action from Black. 21...exd5 (21...♖f7 22.♗b6 ♖e8 23.♗xd7 ♖xd7 24.♖f5 ♖xb2 25.♖h5 ♖f7 and Black defends.) 22.♖xd7 ♖h8 23.♗xd5 ♖ad8 24.♖h3 ♖xb2 25.e5 ♗e7 26.e6) 21...♖d4 22.♖d1 ♖b6 23.♖f3 ♖h8 and Black will be OK, but only just.) 21.♖d3 ♖ac8 and White is not really comfortable but he has the all-important d5 square; 19...♗xc3 20.bxc3 exf5 21.exf5 ♖ae8 would give Black excellent chances.

20.♖e3?

As good as resigning.

It would be interesting to see the great defender at work after 20.e5! dxe5 (20... ♙xe5 21. ♘e4 Suddenly f6 will be a big issue in all variations. 21... ♖c7 (21... ♖c6 is feeble but leads to some beautiful lines! 22.f6! making Black's rooks look like blocks of wood only preventing the king's escape... 22...h6 23. ♜e3! The killer: Black can only watch while another attacker joins the fray. (23. ♖g4 is also good enough: 23...g6



24. ♜f5!! Not the only move, but definitely a cool one! Black is left defenceless. ♜e3 is good enough as well.

a) 24. ♜f3? d5 25. ♜h3 dxe4 26. ♜xh6 ♙xf6;

b) 24. ♜e3! h5 (24...d5) 25. ♖g5 ♙h7 26. ♜h3;) 23... ♙h8 24.fxg7+ ♙xg7 (24... ♙xg7 25. ♖g4+ ♙h8 26. ♜h3 ♙g7 27. ♜f6) 25. ♜f6 is curtains.) 22.f6! Always the key move! 22... ♙c6 (22...h6 23.fxg7! (23. ♖g4 g6 24. ♜f5 d5 25. ♖h4 dxe4 26. ♖xh6 ♙xf6 Here is the answer as to why the queen should go to c7, but unfortunately it does not matter for other reasons.) 23... ♙xg7

(23... ♙xg7 24. ♘f6+ ♙h8 25. ♖d3 wins quickly.) 24. ♖g4+ ♙h8 25. ♘f6) 23. ♖g4 g6 24. ♖g5 ♙xe4 25. ♜xe4 ♙xb2± and Black will avoid checkmate after sacking his bishop on f6, but it will be a hard life.) 21. ♘e4 ♖e7 22. ♘xf6+ ♖xf6 (22...gxf6 23. ♜xe5! ♙h8± does not look attractive but is playable) 23.fxe6 ♙xe6 24. ♜xf6 ♙xh3 25. ♜xa6 and Black will have to be careful, but should just about hold. 25... ♙d7 26. ♜a7 ♙e6 27. ♙xe6 ♜xe6 28. ♜b7 ♜c6 29.c3 ♜c5±

20... ♖xe3 21. ♜xe3 exf5 22. ♘d5 ♙d4 23. ♜d3 ♙xb2 24. ♘b6

24.exf5 ♙xf5 is equally hopeless.

24...fxe4 25. ♘xd7 exd3 26.cxd3 ♜e7 27. ♘xf8 ♙xf8

and Paulsen converted in 46 moves.

0-1

Wilhelm Steinitz was a much more rounded player, a magnificent attacker in his formative years, later discovering the advantages of the strategic approach and, as a consequence, inevitably developing tremendous defensive skills. In his later phase he was often provocative, awaiting unsound attacks from the opponents, and sometimes playing with his king as a fighting unit in the middlegame which was a tad too much for his peers.

What is important for us to understand when we admire Steinitz's suc-

cesses in his defence-orientated play is that he was so successful because he understood the positional elements of the game so much better than his opponents. Here is a fresh look at a nice game between two contemporaries.

■ Example 4

▷ Louis Paulsen

▶ William Steinitz

Vienna 1882

1.e4 e5 2.♘f3 ♘c6 3.d4 exd4 4.♘xd4 ♙h4 5.♘b5 ♙xe4+ 6.♙e3 ♙e5 7.♘d2 ♙d8 8.c3 ♙c5 9.♘c4 ♙e7 10.♙e2 ♙xe3 11.♘xe3 ♘f6 12.o-o d6 13.c4 a6 14.♘c3 ♙e5 15.♙e1 ♙e8 16.♙c1 ♘d4 17.b4

17.♘cd5 looks interesting, intending ♘f6 and c5 opening the position around the black king.

17...a5

17...c5 18.bxc5 dxc5 seems solid, but invites all White's pieces to d5 giving the opponent rather easy play.

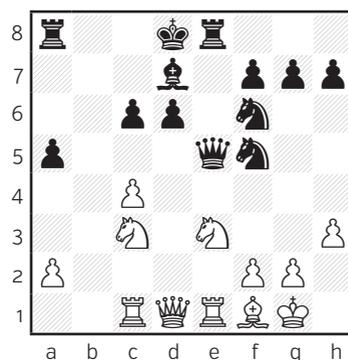
18.b5 c5 19.bxc6 bxc6 20.h3?!

Cool but slow; why not ♙f1 immediately, creating the unpleasant threat of ♘c2? The defender in Paulsen prevails, carefully covering squares when bolder play might put Black's position in danger.

20.♙f1 c5 21.♘c2 ♙f4 22.♘xd4 cxd4 23.♙b3 dxc3 24.♙b6+ ♙d7 25.g3 il-

lustrates some of the challenges Black is facing here...

20...♙d7 21.♙f1 ♘f5?



Black has a nice defensive idea ready but overlooks a killer intermediate move!

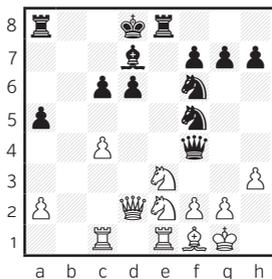
21...c5 22.♘c2 ♙f4 23.♘xd4 ♙xe1 Possible, as there is no ♘c6 with check! 24.♙xe1 and now either capture on d4 seems playable for Black.

22.♙d2?

22.♘xf5 ♙xe1 (22...♙xf5 23.♙xd6 White is evidently on the verge of winning here with the black king stuck in the centre, but — could Black not throw in some exchanges?) 23.♙b3!! Surprise! The variations look pretty easy to calculate from this point on but the hard part is to anticipate such stuff... 23...♙e5 (23...♙d2 24.♙b6+ ♙c8 25.♘b5) 24.♙b6+ ♙c8 25.♘b5!! with mate; 22.♙b3 ♙c5 and Black has it all covered.

22...♙d4

There is an echo-variation, though less impressive: 22... ♖f4 23. ♖b2! (23. ♘e2



23... ♖xf2+! A typical defensive tool! 24. ♔xf2 ♘e4+ 25. ♔g1 (25. ♔f3 ♘h4+ 26. ♔f4 g5#) 25... ♘xd2 winning.) 23... ♘e3 24. ♖b6+ ♔e7 (24... ♔c8 25. ♖b1 is decisive.) 25. ♖xe3+ ♔f8 26. ♖ce1 and White has enough counterplay.

23. ♔d3 ♘xe3 24. fxe3 ♖e5

Black can sum up his defensive operation and enjoy the results: a knight has been exchanged, the e-file closed and a nice square on e5 made for his pieces. What is essential: his king will always be able to run via e7 if necessary.

25. ♘a4 c5 26. ♘b6 ♖a6 27. ♘xd7 ♘xd7

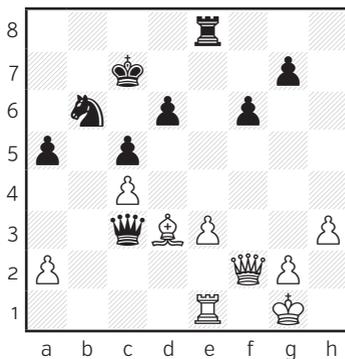
It was probably time to shift the king:

27... ♔xd7 28. ♖b1 ♔e7 29. ♖b7+ ♔f8 with a stable advantage. Nevertheless, Black manages to outplay White now.

28. ♖b1 ♔c7 29. ♖f2 f6 30. ♔xh7 ♖b6 31. ♖xb6

After 31. ♖d2 White is not worse, as the black king is not safe enough.

31... ♘xb6 32. ♔d3 ♖c3



33. ♖f1?

White, now in the role of the defender, is not up to the task: 33. ♖d1 would pose Black problems as it is too early to take the pawn: 33... ♘xc4 34. ♔xc4 ♖xc4 35. ♖g3! with equal chances.

33... ♘d7 34. ♔h1 ♘e5

The knight is now too strong and White melts away into a bad ending. Black won in 62 moves.

0-1

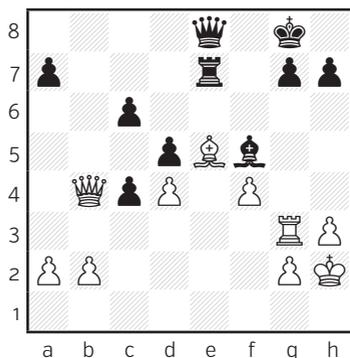
James Mason, the maestro of pawn play, was no stranger to defensive skills. But in this he was, as most masters of the time seen from today's perspective are, terribly inconsistent. There were brilliant ideas, plans and moves, but not always conducted perfectly. Here is a nice piece of double defensive play!

■ Example 5

▷ Joseph Henry Blackburne

▶ James Mason

Nuremberg 1883



Black is not really worse but the position is delicate. The opposite-colored bishops with queens and rooks on the board mean that the kings must be extra-carefully defended.

Mason goes wrong here:

35...g6?

This weakens the dark squares and should not have happened! Black is now in trouble.

White is considering activating his rook via a3 so a natural move seems 35...♙d3!= and White has trouble finding a meaningful plan.

36. ♖a3 ♙d7!

Mason realises what he has done and goes over to tough defence.

37. ♙b8+

37. ♖a6 ♙b7 38. ♙c5 c3 39. bxc3 ♙e4 was Black's idea but it falls short: 40. ♙xc6 ♙xc6 41. ♖xc6 ♖b7 42. ♖c8+ ♙f7 43. g4+- White should win.

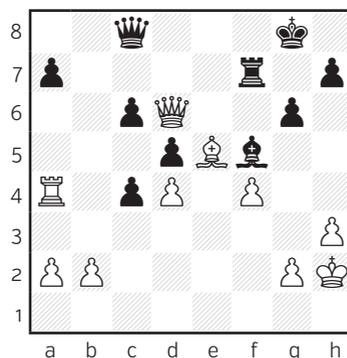
37... ♙c8! 38. ♙d6

38. ♖xa7? ♙xb8 39. ♙xb8 ♖e2+ and Black's play against g2 and b2 gives more than even chances.

38... ♖f7

The only move, covering f6 and a7. Besides that, Black managed to set a fine defensive trap!

39. ♖a4?!



The famous attacker sees a winning plan but is impatient!

39. ♙c5 ♙b7 40. ♖a4± activating the rook seems strong.

39... ♙f8!

Suddenly the white queen must be exchanged! White, typically, could not stand it:

39...♔d7 is also playable but why bother? 40.♔b8+ gives Black excellent chances of a draw but White has stronger: (40.♔b4 ♔e7 41.♔c3 with a long torture.) 40...♔c8 41.♖xa7 ♔xb8 42.♙xb8 ♖xa7 43.♙xa7 ♙c2.

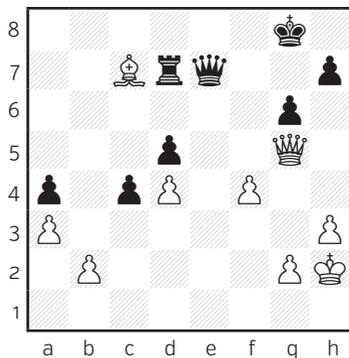
40.♔xc6?

Only Black has chances now, but such is the role of psychology in chess!

40...♙d7 41.♔a6 ♙xa4 42.♔xa4 ♔c8 43.♔a5 ♖d7 44.♔a3 ♔c6 45.♔a5 ♖f7 46.♔e1 ♔g8 47.♔h4 a5 48.♔g5 a4 49.a3 ♔e6 50.♙c7!?

A last trick? White could have fought with any of his queen moves. Black's task is difficult as his king is weak.

50...♔e7?!



A stylish defender's move but a bit sloppy!

Winning is 50...h6 51.♔h4 g5.

51.♙a5!!

A fine defensive move! Blackburne is working on a fortress, for which the bishop must be close to c3.

51...♔xg5?!

Black is cooperating.

52.fxg5 ♖f7 53.♙c3 ♖f2

53...♖f5 54.g4 brings nothing.

54.♔g3 ♖f1 55.♔h2 h5

No other plan seems available.

56.g4??

56.gxh6! g5 57.g4 seems to be a fortress! Where is Black's king planning to enter?

56...♖f3 57.♔g2 ♖e3 58.♔h2 ♖e2+ 59.♔g3 h4+!

This is it! The only way to break the defence.

60.♔f3

60.♔xh4 ♖g2 is deadly as the bishop must move.

60...♖h2

0-1

Amos Burn, who was lucky enough to be a pupil of Steinitz, unsurprisingly developed marvellous defensive skills as well. Although he was

never a true chess professional, he pioneered a variation of the French Defence, known today as the Burn Variation (1.e4 e6 2.d4 d5 3.♘c3 ♘f6 4.♙g5 de4). It really is an example of defensive play from the first move. Burn understood these positions really well.

■ Example 6

▷ **Harry Nelson Pillsbury**

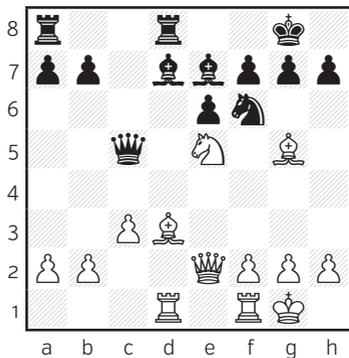
▶ **Amos Burn**

Vienna 1898

1.e4 e6 2.d4 d5 3.♘c3 ♘f6 4.♙g5
dxe4 5.♘xe4 ♘bd7 6.♘f3 ♙e7
7.♘xf6+ ♘xf6

7... ♙xf6 would later become the more popular move, also used by Burn.

8.♙d3 o-o 9.♚e2 c5 10.dxc5 ♚a5+
11.c3 ♚xc5 12.o-o ♖d8 13.♖ad1 ♙d7
14.♘e5



14... ♙e8

14... ♙a4 was possible; this move is typical in this pawn structure and is

often useful before moving the bishop to e8. White will have to choose between moving the rook and playing the weakening b3, when the bishop happily retreats. 15.♖d2 (15. ♙xf6?! ♙xd1 (15... ♙xf6 16.♙xh7+ ♘xh7 (16... ♘f8 17.♖xd8+ ♖xd8 18.♘d3 ♚d6 19.♙e4 ♙b5 20.♖d1 ♙e5 21.♚e3 ♙xh2+ 22.♘h1 ♙f4 23.♚h3 ♙h6 and White is in for a grim defence.) 17.♚h5+ ♘g8 18.♚xf7+ ♘h7 19.♚h5+) 16.♖xd1 ♙xf6 17.♙xh7+ ♘h8 (17... ♘xh7 18.♚h5+ ♘g8 19.♚xf7+ is a perpetual.) 18.♖xd8+ ♖xd8 19.♘xf7+ ♘xh7 20.♘xd8 ♙xd8 21.♚xe6 is close to equal but only Black is playing for a win.) 15...h6 16.♙h4 ♖ac8 and Black has no problems.

15.♖fe1 ♖d5!?

Burn understands the importance of the d4-square but this could be overdoing it!

15...h6 seems a useful move as White will have to pick a diagonal for his dark-squared bishop 16.♙d2 b5! Fighting for the d5 square, no less important! 17.♘g4 ♘xg4 18.♚xg4

