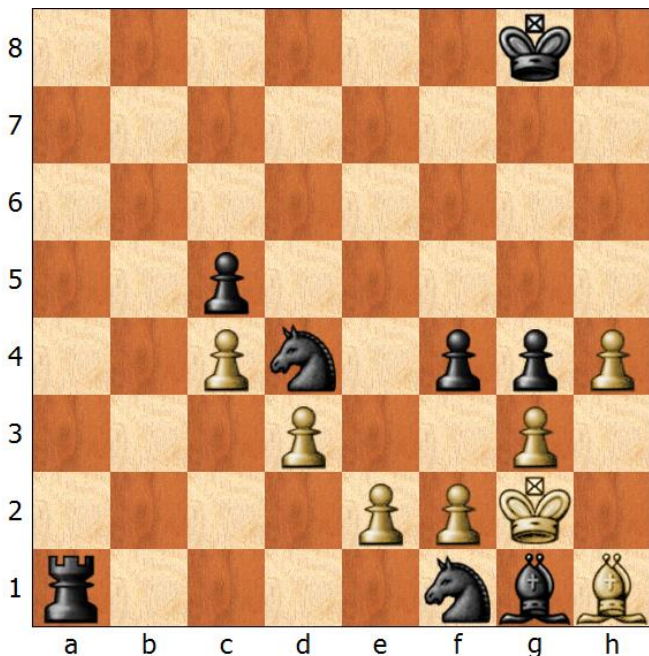


# Pawn Takes, Pawn Gives

Rhys Goldstein, August 2013

## Puzzle

In the position below, with Black to play, how can you mate the White king in 3 moves?



Black to play and mate in 3.

First observe that the White king's only legal move is Kxg1. Now, solve the puzzle in your head. The solution is at the end of these notes.

Whenever you make a move, and whenever your opponent makes a move, you should ask yourself, "has any weakness been created?" Here we will focus on a particular type of move: a pawn making a capture in one direction. The weakness is the square that the pawn had covered prior to the capture, but in the other direction.

For example, consider the opening moves 1.d4 c5 2.dxc5. The pawn capture draws your attention to the c5 square. However, when the d4 pawn **takes** on c5, it **gives** up control of the e5 square. Black may be able to use the e5 square later in the game. The point is that both players should be aware of

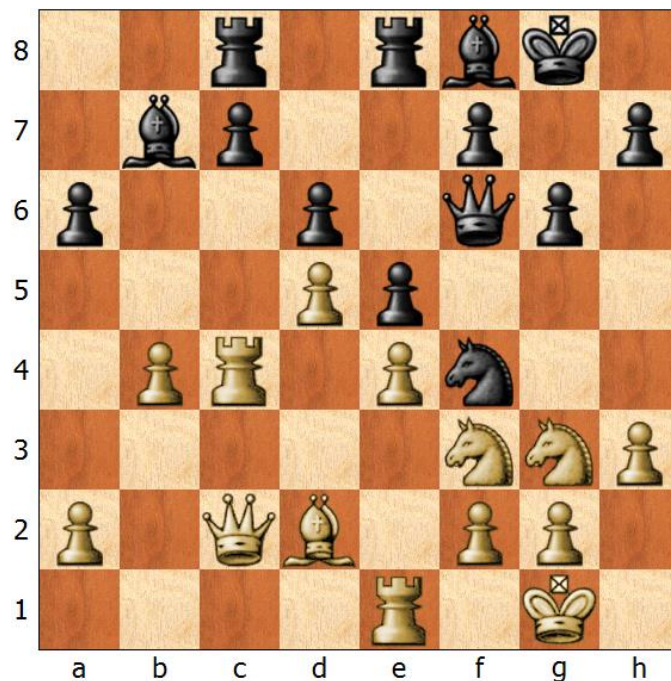
this weakness, and not give all their attention to the c5 square where the capture occurred.

When a pawn captures in one direction, have a look in the other direction. The following is one of many games that illustrates this lesson.

White: Nigel Short (2677)

Black: Shakhriyar Mamedyarov (2747)

Tradewise Gibraltar 2012



Position after 24.Q(d1)c2. Black to move.

White appears to be threatening to win a pawn with 25.Rxc7. But it's Black's move, and Black also appears to be winning a pawn with 24...Nxh3+ 25.gxh3 Qxf3. This is the first of many occurrences of our *pawn takes, pawn gives* theme. When the g-pawn takes the Black knight on h3, it gives up the f3 square and the White knight residing there.

However, 24...Nxh3+ 25.gxh3 Qxf3 would have been a disaster for Black, as after 26.Bg5! the Black queen is trapped and will be won with 27.Rc3 or 27.Re3. Black, the 14<sup>th</sup> highest rated player in the world at the time, did not fall for the trap.

## 24...Be7

Now 25.Rxc7 can be met with 25...Nxb3+. If then 26.gxh3 Qxf3, the Black queen is safe and the game is about even.

## 25.Bxf4!

How should Black recapture?

## 25...exf4?

Black's move is sound from a materialistic point of view. White does not have time to capture on c7 because his knight on g3 is threatened.

But perhaps Black should have sacrificed a pawn with 25...Qxf4! There may have followed 26.Rxc7 f5! 27.exf5. Here it looks as though Black cannot regain the f5 pawn. However, the *pawn takes, pawn gives* theme comes into play. By taking on f5, White's e4 pawn gives up d5. So what follows is 27...Rxc7 28.Qxc7 Bxd5, and Black has some positional compensation for the pawn.

The problem with Black's actual 25<sup>th</sup> move is that, by taking on f4 with the pawn, Black gives up the d4 square. White quickly occupies this square with the same knight that Black is evicting from g3.

## 26.Ne2 Bd8 27.Ned4

Black has saved the c7 pawn, but the knight that was once sitting passively on g3 is now well posted on the central square d4. Perhaps Black chose material over position deliberately in this case. But it's not hard to imagine a less experienced player focusing all their attention on f4 and g3, and simply overlooking the fact that 25.exf4 gives up d4.

## 27...Rb8 28.Qa4 Kf8 29.Nc6 Bxc6 30.Rxc6 Qb2

The queen makes an ill-fated entry into White's territory.

## 1. a3 f5? 32.e5!

Another queen trap! White's last move cuts off the Black queen's retreat on the long diagonal and threatens 33.Rc2.

## 32...1-0

The queen could have escaped with 32...Qa2 33.Rd1 Qe2. But after 34.exd6 cxd6 35.Nd4 Qe5 36.Ne6+ Kf7 37.Qxa6, White is a point up with connected passed pawns and much better pieces.

Nigel Short went on to win the tournament at Gibraltar. Some may remember that he visited the Annex Chess Club shortly after and presented another of his victories.

### Solution to Puzzle

The obvious 1...f3+ and 1...Ne3+ are both wrong. In the first case we have 1...f3+ 2.exf3 gxf3+ 3.Kh3 (of course not 3.Kg1 Nxe2#). Similarly, 1...Ne3+ fails after 2.fxe3 f3+ 3.exf3 gxf3+ 4.Kh3. Pawn takes, pawn gives; by taking on f3, the g-pawn gives up control of h3 allowing the White king to escape.

However, with **1...fxg3!** we can exploit the *pawn takes, pawn gives* theme instead of falling victim to it. Now if 2.fxg3 in reply, White gives up the e3 square and allows 2...Ne3#.

After 1...fxg3, other moves also allow a quick mate:  
2.Kxg1 Ne3#  
2.e3 Bxf2 3.exd4 Ne3#  
2.f3 Ne3+ 3.Kxg3 Nxe2#

If you chose 1...f3+ or 1...Ne3+, perhaps your attention was on f3 instead of h3. Remember to consider both directions when a pawn captures.