

## Exercises of games 1st Round NATO Chess 2019

Jan Cheung, 11 July 2021

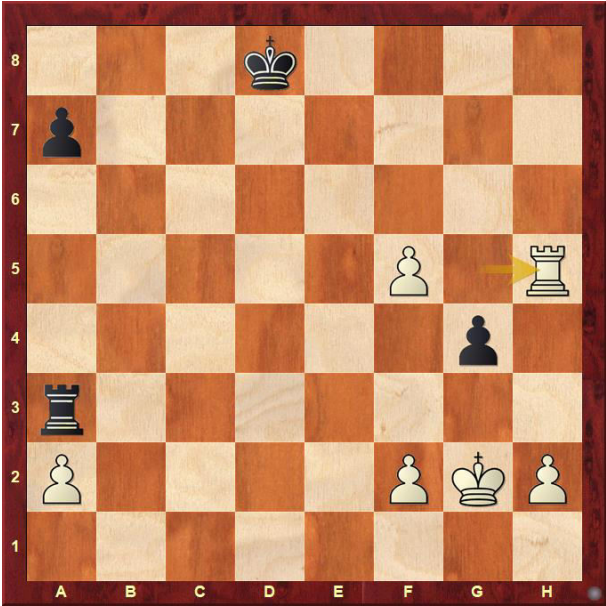
Here are some exercises of the games of the 1<sup>st</sup> round of the NATO Chess Championship 2019. Look at the position, try to find candidate moves. Then try to find the difference of the candidate moves.

### Position 1



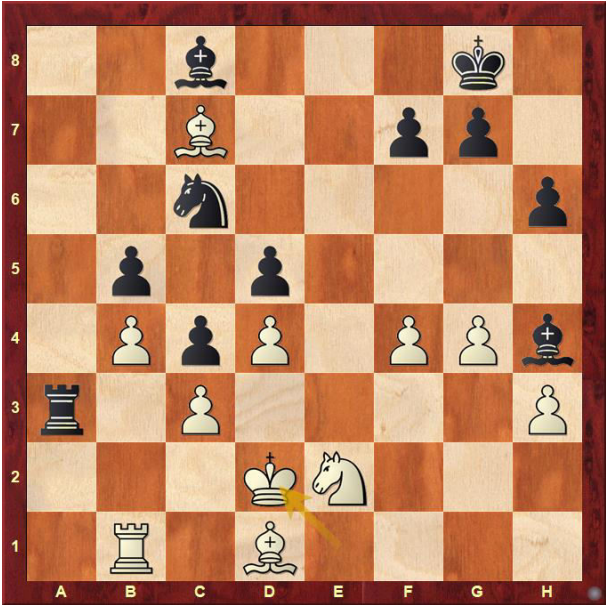
Position after 19.c4-c5. Black to move. Choose between a) 19...bxc5, b) 19...Nd5, c) 19...Rb8 and d) 19...Be6.

Position 2



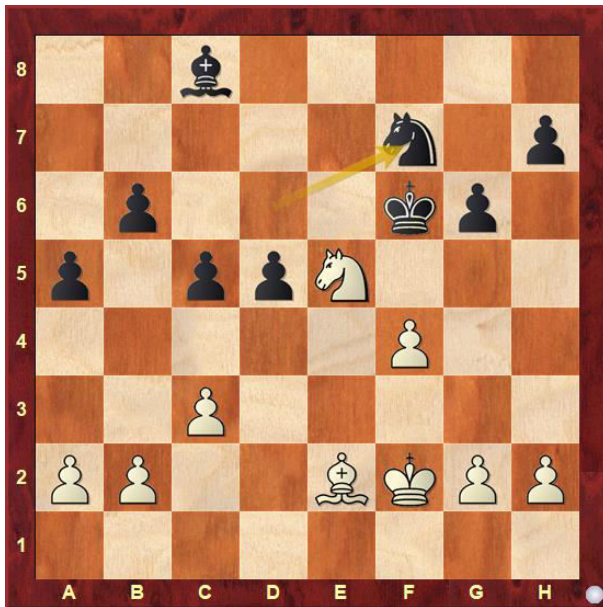
Position after 51.Rg5xh5. Black to move.

Position 3



Position after 38.Ke1-d2. Black to move.

### Position 4



Position after 37...Nd6-f7. White to play. Choose between 38.Nxf7, 38.Ng4, 38.Nf3 and 38.Nd3.

### Position 5



Position after 15...Be6

Find Whites best plan.

## Position 6



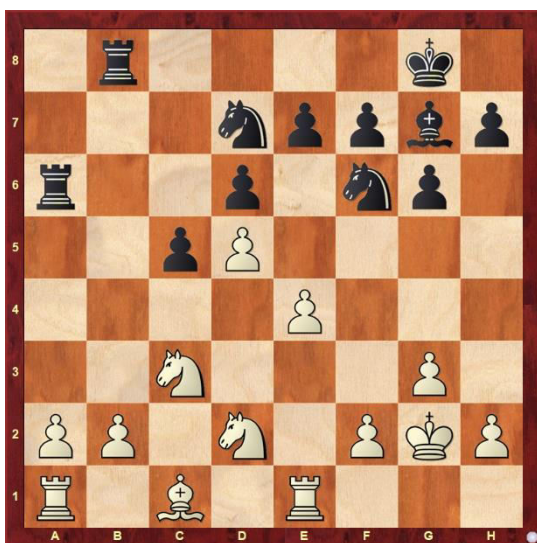
Position after 4...Nf6-e4.

Choose between a) 5.Bh4 and b) 5.Be3.

## Solutions

**Position 1 is the game Helbig – Kruit (1.2).**

This position looks like a reversed Benko Gambit (see Analysis diagram),



*Analysis position, a middle game in a Benko gambit*

in which the attacking side has not sacrificed the a pawn for opening the a line. Without this pawn,

White has even a got better position because White's rooks can be very active along the a and b file. But now with a pawn at a2, White is less active, although the play is the same than without the pawn at a2. With 19.c5! White has conquered square d6 for the knight.

For Black, it is important to restrict the activity of White's pieces. If he has opportunities to give back the pawn in return for more activity, he should do that.

A move like 19...bxc5 only gives White more opportunities and can be skipped easily as a candidate move. After 20.Nxc5 Qc7 21.Nb7 Rd7 22.Nc4 Black has big trouble to cope with the activity of White's pieces.

In the game Black played 19...Nd5?, but the knight is not stable at this square. Black thought to give back the pawn in return for more activity, but after 20.Nd6! Nc3 21.Nxc8 Nxb1 22.Rxb1! Rxc8 23.cxb6 axb6 24.Rxb6 White is now a pawn up, while maintaining the activity

Black best defence is 19...Rb8, to defend pawn b6, not giving away square c5 and to avoid any tactics after a possible Ne4-d6. After 20.Nc4 Nd5 Black has adequately defended the queen side.

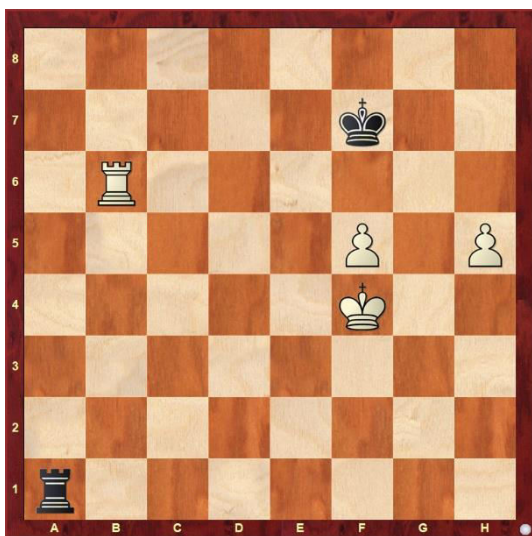
Finally there is another candidate move 19...Be6, trying to defend square d5. This gives back the pawn, but does not reduce White's activity. After 20.cxb6 axb6 21.Rxb6 Ra8 22.Qc5 Ra5 23.Qc1 White initiatives continues.

### Position 2 is the game Wantiez – Drenthen (1.3).

Despite a huge difference in ELO rating, black could cope up with whites play so far.

All rook endings are drawn, Tarrasch once said...

Even if white only has a f and h pawn in a rook ending, the result can be drawn if the pawns have not reached the 6<sup>th</sup> rank and the Black king is not cut off from action.



*This position is drawn, even with White to move.*

Back to the game. In this position, piece activity is more important than material. White main threat is Rh7, cutting the black king from action. To prevent this, it is necessary that Black should play

**51...Ke7!** instead of grabbing a pawn with 51...Rxa2. Look that the rook at a3 is very active. It prevents the White king to become active.

In the game Black underestimates his chances and got a critical position after

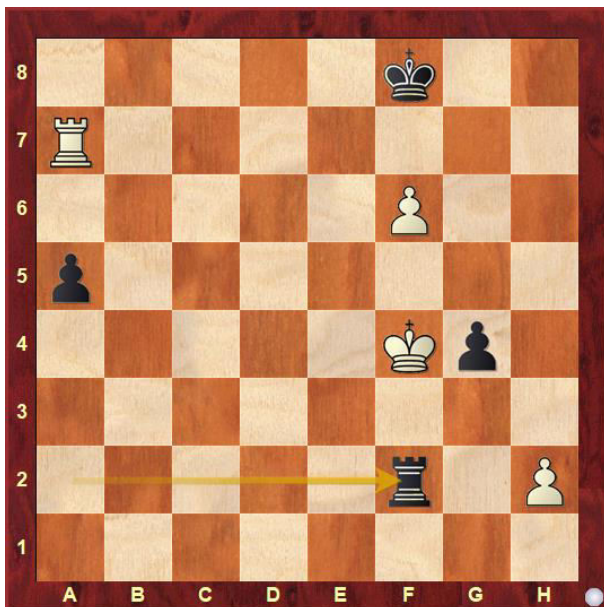
**51...Rxa2? 52.Rg5? (52.Rh7!) 52..Ra4? (52...Ke7!) 53.Kg3 a5?**



**54.Rg7!**

Now the Black King is doomed into passivity and that decides the game. The final moves are educational.

**54...Ra1 55.f6 Ke8 56.Re7+ Kf8 57.Ra7 Ra2 58.Kf4 Rxf2+**



**59.Kg5!**

The decisive move. The White king uses the Black pawn of g4 as a shield to support the passed pawn at f6.

**59...Rxb2 60.Kg6 Re2 61.Ra8+ Re8 62.Rxe8+ Kxe8 63.Kg7 1-0**

### **Position 3 is the game De Cat – Sycz (1.11).**

Whites pieces are interfering with each other to protect pawn g4. In this position, you should ask yourself what the difference is between h6-h5 and f7-f5.

After **39...f5! 40.Rg1 fxb4 41.hxb4 h5! 42.gxh5** and now **42...Bf5** white has problems to defend the pawn.

In the game black played **39...Ra2+**. Normally a sensible move before a time control. After **40.Bc2** Black got another chance to play **40...f5! 41.Rg1 fxb4 42.hxb4 h5 42.gxh5 Bf5**, but the game continued with **40...h5?** After **40.Rg1 hxb4 41.hxb4** white has hold the defense line because square f5 is not available for the Black Bishop.

### **Position 4 is the game Wagenaar – HC Andersen (1.13).**

The White knight can only be used as a defender. Exchanging this piece reduces the vulnerability. After **38.Nxf7 Kxf7 39.g4** white cannot lose, but also cannot win.

**38.Nd3** contradicts with the rule of thumb that pieces shouldn't collide with each other. Although this move does not lose the game, there are not any arguments you have to change a position to a worse position.

**38.Nf3** is a reasonable move if you want to keep the knight, but this piece is only a defender while Blacks knight have potential to come at e4.

**38.Ng4+** was played in the game. It is not a logical move. The knight is heading to a worse square c2 to defend the position. At crossing square e3, it collides with the activity of White king. This move does not lose the game, but should White take any risks?

Comparing the candidate moves. **38.Nxf7** seems to be the best choice. It only reduces Whites vulnerability.

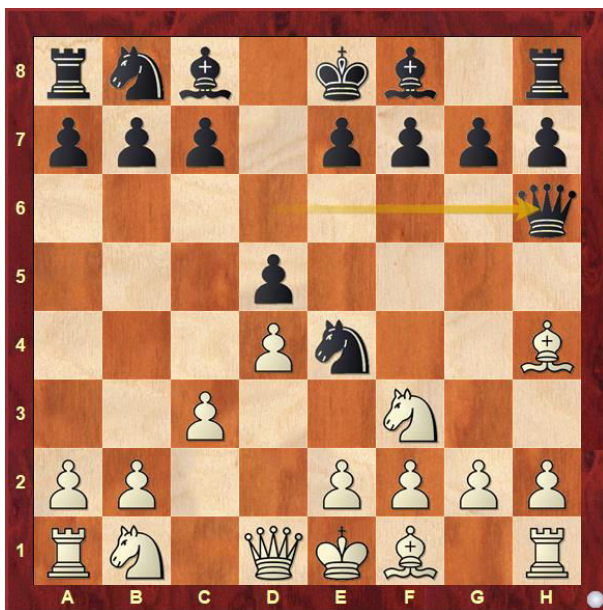
### **Position 5 is the game Kaan – Pavlidou (1.19).**

White has a strong square d5 and can only improve the position by marching the queen side pawns. At the moment this is not possible because a move like **16.b4** only makes the position of Na3 worse: After **16...Rc8!** the knight at a3 is stuck at defending c4: if now **17.Nd5** then after **17...Bxd5! 18.cxd5 Rc3!** and White is in trouble. So you might ask, is there an active future for Na3 besides defending c4 and preventing b7-b5? Yes: after **16.Nd5!** Now after **16...Nxd5 17.cxd5 Bd7** the passive knight will head to the active square c4: **18.Nc4**. The move **16.Nd5** also prevents Qd8-a5. In the game, White choose to wait and soon had to cope with difficulties: **16.Rfc1**. This move does not solve the bad position of the knight at a3. **16...Rc8 17.b3?** Weakens the dark squares. It is not too late for **17.Nd5**, but in worse condition than after **16.Nd5**. **17...Qa5! 18.Qb2 Nec6**. With natural moves, white is

brought in a passive position. 19.Nc2?? Pieces blocking each other is always an ingredient for tactics. Better was 19.Bf1. 19...Qxc3 0-1.

**Position 6 is the game Smit – Hansen (1.25).**

The position arises after **1.d4 d5 2.Nf3 Nf6 3.Bg5 Qd6 !?** with threat Qb4+ **4.c3 Ne4!?** Judging the moves I guess that White wants a quiet London / Torre setup and that Black wants to outbalance the game straight from the start. We are still in the opening. What now? I guess that White still wants a quiet London / Torre setup by heading the g5 bishop to g3, taking into account that the bishop at g3 will be traded by the knight at e4. So in the game White played immediately **5.Bh4**. Now the strange move Qd8-d6 will be revealed. After **5.Bh4? Qh6!**



White is stuck with a problem. After a Nxe4 it is not possible to capture the knight back with hxg3, due to the pin at the h rank! The game continued with **6.Nd2 g5! 7.Bg3 Nxe3 8.fxg3 g4** and whites position is a night mare after eight moves!

So what is the verdict? Instead of persisting a London / Torre setup, White should change plans by playing **6.Be3!** and continuing the development with g2-g3, Bf1-g2.