

A NIGHT AT THE OPERA

Join us now as we take a trip back in time. Fasten your seatbelts as we travel back nearly 150 years, to 1858. A young American, Paul Morphy, was taking the chess world by storm. He had beaten all the best players in America, and was now visiting Europe, where he was treated as a celebrity. We join him now in the Opera House where he is sharing a box with two noblemen, the Duke of Brunswick and Count Isouard de Vauvenargues. During the interval they get their chess set out and start a game. Paul takes the White pieces, and the Duke and the Count have Black. Let's watch the game as it unfolds.

White: Paul Morphy Black: Duke of Brunswick & Count Isouard de Vauvenargues
Paris 1858

1. e2-e4 e7-e5
2. Ng1-f3 d7-d6

The Duke and the Count choose Philidor's Defence. It's only right that they should choose that opening at the Opera, as Philidor, as well as being the strongest chess player of the 18th century, also composed operas.

3. d2-d4 Bc8-g4?

White THREATENS the Black e-pawn by attacking it a second time. The Duke and the Count defend by PINNING the Knight. This isn't the best move. e5xd4 is simplest: Ng8-f6 and Nb8-d7 are also possible.

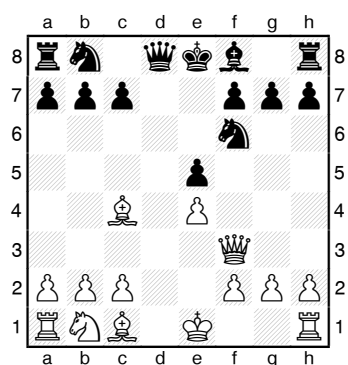
4. d4xe5 Bg4xf3

What would Paul have done if they had taken the Pawn on e5 at once - d6xe5. Would he have played Nf3xe5? Certainly not! The Knight is PINNED, remember! He would have exchanged Queens first, and then taken the Pawn safely.

5. Qd1xf3 d6xe5
6. Bf1-c4 Ng8-f6? (Diagram)

Again, not the best move. What do you think Paul will play next?

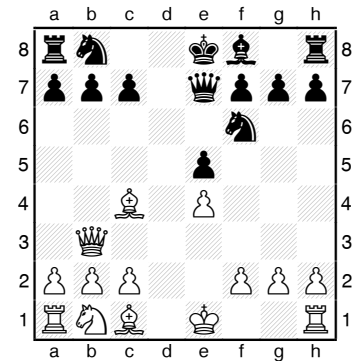
White has plenty of good moves to choose from. Perhaps you played 0-0, Nb1-c3 or Bc1-g5? They're all good DEVELOPING moves but Paul chose something different.



White to move

7. Qf3-b3

You've probably been taught not to bring your Queen out too soon, and not to move your pieces twice in the opening, but really strong players like Morphy know when these rules can be broken. If you were thinking CCT you might have found this move. In fact it's a QUEEN FORK in a way. White THREATENS two Pawns: on b7 and f7. There's no way for Black to defend both of them at once. See how White's Queen and Bishop are working together on the same diagonal.



7... Qd8-e7 (Diagram)

What would you advise Paul to do here?

White to move

The obvious move is Qb3xb7, winning a pawn. Black would then play Qe7-b4+, forcing the exchange of Queens. That's OK for White, but rather boring.

If you're really clever, you might have found 7. Bc4xf7+ Qe7xf7 8. Qb3xb7, when White really does trap the Rook. But then Black could continue 8... Bf8-c5 9. Qb7xa8 0-0 when White is well ahead on material but his only developed piece is his Queen on a8.

8. Nb1-c3!

Paul prefers to simply DEVELOP another piece. Now he really is THREATENING to capture on b7 followed by a8. So Black defends the b-pawn.

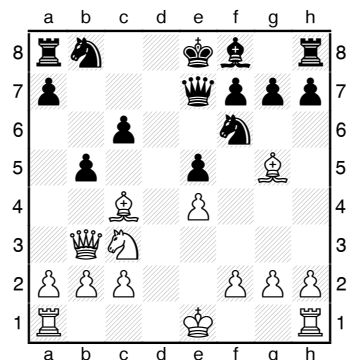
8... c7-c6

9. Bc1-g5

PINNING the Knight on f6.

9... b7-b5? (Diagram)

Paul's asking you what he should play next. Do you have any suggestions?



White to move

Our Bishop's under attack. What should we do with it?

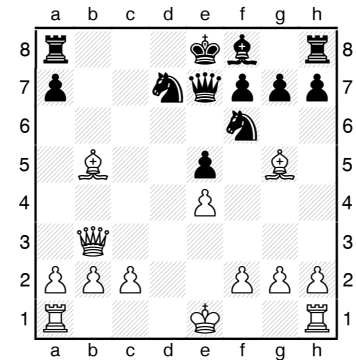
Moving it back would be rather tame. Paul's noticed White's LEAD IN DEVELOPMENT. If you're ahead in development it's a good idea to open the position. We can do this by playing a SACRIFICE.

10. Nc3xb5! c6xb5

11. Bc4xb5+

Nb8-d7 (Diagram)

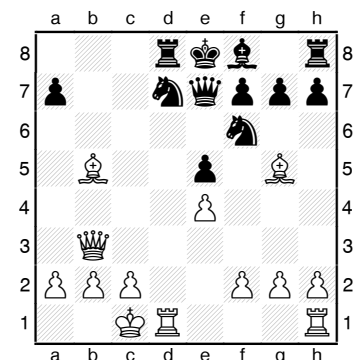
Before you guess Paul's next move, just compare the two positions. Look at the Black Rooks - both stuck in the corner doing nothing. Look at the Black Bishop - it has no moves at all. Look at the Black Knights - they're both PINNED. The one on d7 can't move at all. If the one on f6 moves what happens? White zaps the Black Queen! Look at the Black King - stuck in the middle of the board when he should be castled and safe from attack. The only piece Black can do anything with is his Queen. What Black would like to do is play Qe7-b4+, forcing the exchange of Queens. White is behind on material so must try to keep the Queens on the board. He also needs to get his Rooks into play. How can he do this?



White to move

12. 0-0-0

The perfect move! At the same time he tucks his King away from pesky checks while getting his Rook on the open d-file. REMEMBER - GET YOUR ROOKS ON OPEN FILES! The way you use Rooks is to keep them on the back rank, and when a FILE is OPENED by a Pawn exchange, GET YOUR ROOKS ON THE OPEN FILE. You also remember that if you've PINNED an enemy piece you ATTACK it with everything you've got. And here the Rook ATTACKS the PINNED Knight on d7.



White to move

12...

Ra8-d8 (Diagram)

Black's just about defending everything at the moment. How should Paul continue?

Again, TIME is all important. If Black's given any breathing space he might be able to untangle his pieces with Qe7-e6. So we must act fast!

13. Rd1xd7!

That's the way to do it. This isn't really a SACRIFICE. If Black plays Nf6xd7 what would you do? Take the Queen, of course - the Knight is still PINNED. This way White gains TIME to get the other Rook into play.

13...

Rd8xd7

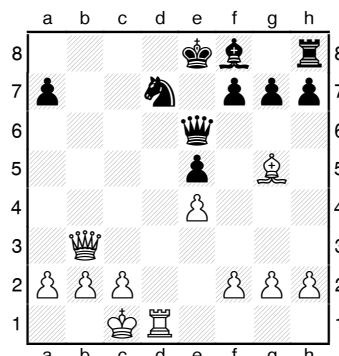
Now what?

14. Rh1-d1

There's no need to take the Rook on d7 yet. It's PINNED so can't run away. What do we do with a PINNED piece? Remember, if you're wrestling someone and you've got them PINNED to the ground they can't move so you can hit them with everything you've got.

14... Qe7-e6
15. Bb5xd7+ Nf6xd7 (Diagram)

Paul's asking your advice again. "I know there must be a win somewhere but I just can't find it. Can you help me?" Meanwhile, the lights are dimming and the curtain is about to rise for the second act. Think CCT and see if you can help Paul find the winning move.

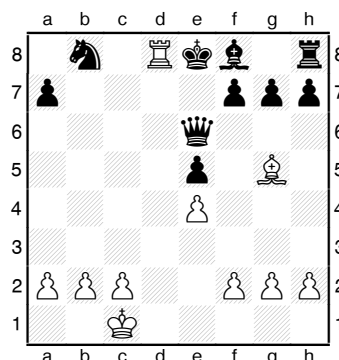


White to move

CCT. CHECKS, CAPTURES, THREATS. What checks have we got? Qb3xe6 is check but only exchanges Queens. Not good enough. We've got Qb3-b8+? Is that mate? No, not quite. Black can take the Queen: Nd7xb8. But let's have a look at this position, just in case. The d-file is now open so the Rook can move to d8. What happens then? Hey, fantastic! It's mate!

So you whisper the move in Paul's ear, and, just in time, he plays it.

16. Qb3-b8+!! Nd7xb8
17. Rd1-d8# (Diagram)



CHECKMATE!

So, a brilliant QUEEN SACRIFICE concludes the game.

A wonderful game, which has been published and played through thousands of times since 1858. Most people think it was Morphy's genius that won him the game. But you and I know better, don't we?

HELPFUL HINTS

1. Notice how Morphy used DCK in this game: DEVELOPMENT, CENTRE CONTROL, KING SAFETY.
2. In OPEN POSITIONS you must DEVELOP YOUR PIECES as quickly as you can.
3. In OPEN POSITIONS DEVELOPMENT is sometimes more important than MATERIAL.
4. If you have a lead in DEVELOPMENT you must act fast. Don't give your opponent a chance to catch up.
5. If you've got a PIN, ATTACK the PINNED piece with everything you've got.
6. Think CCT at all times. Even moves that look like mistakes might turn out to be good if you look far enough ahead.