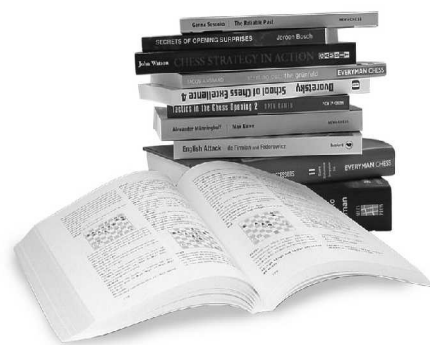


ROWSON'S REVIEWS

by JONATHAN ROWSON



Boris Spassky once ruefully remarked that he and his ex-wife were like opposite-coloured bishops. He didn't elaborate, but the pathos is touching, especially for those who have known the experience of feeling similar to someone, and often close to them, while all the time sensing that you exist in an entirely different universe.

Perhaps many divorces are caused by 'the opposite-coloured bishop problem', but I would like to think that these separations are relatively amicable, with the two estranged parties finding no common turf over which to fight. Much worse would be to marry a bishop of the same colour, for in that case you are radically incomplete as individuals and as a couple. You are liable to be competing all the time, and making each other feel redundant. An ideal relationship, on the other hand, would be the bishop pair; two farsighted creatures united by a common identity and purpose, complementing each other's efforts, but, crucially, each with their own paths to follow.

I've had a relationship with the bishop pair for just over ten years. It has been purely platonic of course, but it began when I started to feel some strain playing my then-favourite opening as Black: 1.d4 d5 2.c4 ♟f5?!. When I had begun to play this line, I used to look forward to 3.cd5 ♟b1 4.♖a4 c6 5.♞b1 ♖d5 because I

liked my active queen on d5, and was ready and eager to play ...e5 and ...♟f6-e4. I even looked forward to mating attacks with ...e6, ...♟d6, ...♞h5 and ...g5-g4. It was Christian Gabriel who first noticed that I didn't seem to care about the two bishops, and I distinctly remember that he said, with just a hint of a German accent: 'Believe me, it is a power!' I was 2400 at the time, and he added that it might take a while for me to appreciate the two bishops, but that when I began to, I would stop playing that silly opening.

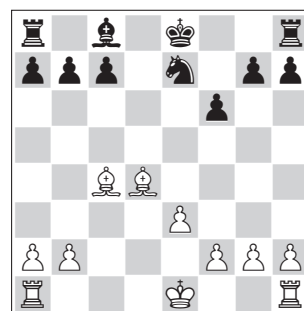
He was right, and I gradually realised that the bishop pair is worth more than the sum of its parts. In *The Seven Deadly Chess Sins* I even tried to explain this conceptually, but theory is often easier than practice and I was never too sure how to handle them in my own games. In fact my attempts to show their significance often floundered due to pseudo-profundity. To illustrate, I present the following with neither passion nor pride.

VO 14.3

Jonathan Rowson
Georg von Bülow

Bundesliga 2002

1.d4 d5 2.c4 ♟c6 3.cd5 ♖d5
4.e3 e5 5.♟c3 ♟b4 6.♟d2
♟c3 7.♟c3 ed4 8.♟e2 ♟ge7
9.♟d4 ♟d4 10.♞d4 f6
11.♟c4 ♖d4 12.♟d4



So here we are. We've arrived at an ending that should be favourable for White. I was rated more than 200 points higher than my opponent, and this factor, combined with my classic advantage, made me feel like the result should not be in doubt. The next time you hear about 'the innocence of youth' don't forget there is also 'the arrogance of youth'.

12...♟f5! 13.0-0 ♟d7 14.♟c3
14.♟c5! playing against the knight, is much stronger: 14...♟d6 15.♟d5!
0-0-0 16.♟d6!? cd6 17.♞d4 with a very slight edge. Black has only one weakness, but he would rather defend it with his king from e7, and White's pieces have much more scope here. In general I felt this structure wasn't a big yield from the two bishop advantage, but now I realise that few Black players would voluntarily go for such a position as Black. Although small, White's edge is enduring, so this would have been a reasonable transformation.
14...0-0-0

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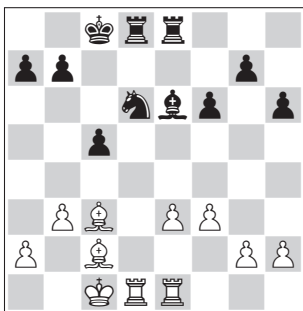
Here is where I remembered something about keeping the bishops as far back as possible, so that they wouldn't be hassled by the knight.

15. ♖b3?!

Deep, but in a shallow sort of way. 15. ♖he1 ♗he8 16. ♗d3 makes more sense, but I think I was worried about a light square pounding beginning with 16... ♗h4.

15... ♗d6 16. f3 ♗he8 17. ♗he1 ♗e6 18. ♗c2 h6 19. b3?! c5

I tried to think deeply about how I was going to make progress here and decided that I had two aims: to exchange one rook, so that I could activate my king, and to carefully advance my kingside pawns. However, achieving these aims is not so easy.



20. ♗b2?!

Continuing with the vague idea of keeping the bishops safe from harm. I had alternatives here that are more purposeful, most notably 20. h4!? which gives Black something to think about. 20... h5!? is possible, but I guess I should have let him worry about it – the h5 pawn is definitely weak in some lines. Now this seems like an important consideration, but at the time the idea of sneakily winning a pawn with a move like ♗g6 at some stage seemed almost dirty, and did not fit into my ‘grand strategy’ of slowly advancing my pawns on the kingside, rendering him completely passive, and then breaking through

to reveal the majestic significance of my dark-squared bishop.

20... ♗c7 21. ♗e2 ♗f7

Black's moves all make a lot of sense. He has restricted the unopposed bishop, advanced his majority and improved his king. I am not sure if I have a real advantage any more. Sensing this, I was happy to try the position without rooks. I felt I should only exchange one, but then I saw a ghost and was scared into trading the other one too.

22. ♗d8 ♗d8 23. ♗d2?!

I was worried about ♗e5-d3 and didn't like 23. f4!? ♗e8 24. e4 ♗d7!? when my e-pawn is a little weak. However, I should have gone for this, because when I get round to playing e4-e5 it will not be easy for Black to establish a secure blockade.

23... ♗d2 24. ♗d2 a5! 25. f4

Correct was 25. a4! (an odd-looking move, but the point is to minimize pawn exchanges and therefore to maximize winning chances) 25... ♗e5 26. f4 ♗c6 27. e4 and at least White has things to look forward to.

25... a4 26. e4?!

26. ♗c3!? ab3 27. ab3 ♗d6 28. e4 b5 29. b4!?

26... ab3 27. ♗b3?!

27. ab3 b5! I was now a bit worried about b4 and even feared I could become worse. This was really silly, because he may not have played b5 and even if he achieves b4 I have little to fear.

27... ♗b3 28. ab3 ♗d7 29. g4

♗e7 30. ♗d3 b5 31. h3 g5!

32. f5 ♗e5 33. ♗e5 fe5

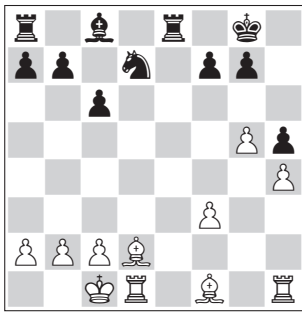
34. ♗c3 $\frac{1}{2}$ - $\frac{1}{2}$

I am not sure if this game leaves you feeling bored, disgusted or confused, but I had all three reactions at the time. What was one

supposed to do with these two bishops? In due course I asked my team mates. Nikolic felt that White was better, but that there was no way to force a win if my opponent knew where to put his pawns and pieces. Yusupov was slightly more optimistic about White's chances and felt that it was a real advantage, but conceded that it wasn't so easy to prove. What really bothered me was that I wasn't sure that I could make better use of the position if I were to have it again.

It gradually dawned on me that I was unconsciously sitting back and expecting my organic advantage to unfold, when I should have been sitting forward and making my positional trumps manifest. When you get the two bishops, you shouldn't be shy of tactics, because it is often only in the tactics that their strength is revealed. The advantage of *having* the two bishops lies in what they can *do*.

This insight was confirmed and consolidated by ten annotated games on the two bishops from *Power Chess with Pieces* by Jan Timman (New In Chess). What struck me most in these games was the absence of grand strategy. The advantage of the bishops tends to show itself on a move-by-move basis. E.g. one bishop attacks something, then the other attacks something else, this causes some disorder and allows a favourable pawn advance, and then a few more things are attacked or threatened and something else transpires. In some cases it *looks* like grand strategy, but this only arises from playing one purposeful short-term move after another. Consider the following (selected comments are Timman's unless otherwise indicated).



Bologan-Romanishin
Nikolaev 1995
position after 18...d7

19.g6!?

A magnificent pawn sacrifice that promises White a lasting initiative, without Black getting any hope of counterplay.

**19...fg6 20.gc4 gh7 21.gh1
hf6 22.gf7!**

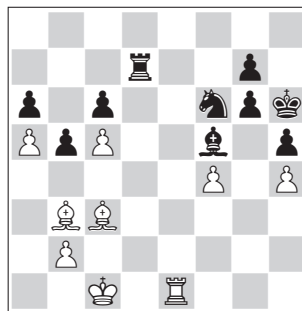
The real point of the pawn sacrifice. By attacking the black king's rook, White takes control of the seventh rank, which allows him to exert strong pressure on the black queenside pawns. The black majority on the kingside has been fixed, so White's activity yields him a large advantage.

**22...ge1 23.ge1 gh3 24.ge7
b6 25.c4 g2 26.gc3 gh6
27.f4 a6?! 28.a4 b5 29.a5!
d8 30.ge6 gf3 31.c5**

A surprising advance, one would think. White voluntarily gives up

square d5 seemingly without much in the way of compensation. Upon closer examination, however, it turns out that Black now has two permanent weaknesses - viz. his a-pawn and his c-pawn. From this moment on, White is prepared to accept a bishop swap, as this would make particularly the black c-pawn very weak. Given the situation, Black will be unable to exploit the fact that he now controls square d5.

**31...g4 32.gb3 d7 33.ge1
gf5**



Timman doesn't comment on this position, but to my mind there is definitely a disparity between the visual impression and the positional reality. It looks like White has been pushed back and that Black's pieces are all on decent squares. However, Black can only 'await developments', as Timman puts it, and White has the simple idea of swapping light-squared

bishops and entering with his rook on e6.

**34.gc2 g4 35.ge5 gh7
36.gd6**

Now White has screened off the black rook and is ready to march his king up to d4. Black is forced to put up some resistance.

36...gf5

Now Black does offer to swap bishops, the reason being that an incursion by the white rook to e6 is now less deadly than before, because the white queen's bishop is in its way.

37.gf5 gf5 38.ge6 de4 39.b4

The third queenside pawn is also fixed on the colour of the bishop, the reason being that White wants to withdraw his bishop to e5, which means that the c-pawn needs extra protection.

39...df6

If 39...d6 40.d6! c7 41.d2 and White wins.

**40.gc2 g8 41.ge5 d5
42.gb3 e7 43.d6 a7
44.gc3**

Very instructive. 44...d5 is now met by 45.d5 cd5 46.d4 f7 47.d5 d7 48.d6 followed by 49.c6 and 50.c5, after which the white king penetrates devastatingly via square b6. This variation clearly shows the strength of the advance of the white a and c pawns.



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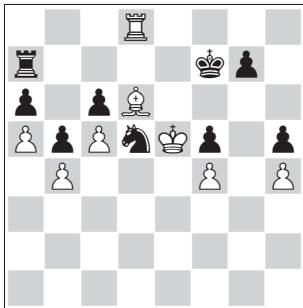
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ROWSON'S REVIEWS

44...♖f7 45.♗d4 ♖b7 46.♗d8
♙a7 47.♗d6 ♗d5 48.♗e5



48...♗g6

48...♗b4 49.♗f5 g6 50.♗g5 followed by ♗f8 and the white f-pawn decides (Timman).

This is one of very few places in the book where I wasn't immediately convinced by Timman's decision to come to a conclusion about a position. After 50...♗d3 the knight is loitering with intent and the b-pawn is ready to go, so I would like to have seen a variation here to confirm the given assessment. I am not sure what Timman had in mind, but from his notes I infer 51.♗f8 ♗g7 52.♗f6 was the idea. However, now Black has 52...♗h7! and things are not crystal clear. 53.♗g6?! ♗g7! even leaves White with some problems because the combination of the knight on d3 and b-pawn is very strong. 51.f5 or 51.♗c8 look like improvements, and I feel White should have a way to win, but all the same, I would like to have been shown the way.

49.♗b8 ♙a8 50.♗d6 ♗f4

50...♗b4 51.♗c7 ♗d5 52.♗b7.

51.♗c6 ♗e6 52.♗d6 ♖b8

53.♗e6 ♗f7 54.♗e1 g5

55.hg5 ♗g6 56.♗d7 f4 57.c6

♗g5 58.c7 ♖b7 59.♗c6 ♗c7

60.♗c7 f3 61.♗b6 1-0

A great game by Bologan.

The quality of *Power Chess with Pieces* lies in careful omission as

much as lucid explanation, leaving a polished product where almost every word and variation feels at home. There are very few exclamation marks for instance, presumably because Timman wants to save them for the significant moves that really make an impression on a discerning mind. The 28 examples are all from more or less elite Grandmaster games in which there is usually considerable defensive resistance. In addition to the extensive coverage of the two bishops, there are twelve games on the power of the knight, three on the bishop and knight duo. In this last section, two games by Kamsky, using the bishop and knight against the bishop pair to defeat Karpov and Salov, make a particularly deep impression. Highly recommended.

Staying on the theme of the two bishops, consider the following position (comments are Botvinnik's unless otherwise indicated):



Bronstein-Botvinnik

Moscow Wch m-10 1951

position after 29.♗d3

29...♗d7

Botvinnik gives variations to show (convincingly) that 29...♗e4! is strong, but he adds: 'However, with his undisputed positional advantage (possibility of occupying e5 with his pieces, blocked white pawns at e4 and f3, passive bishop

at e2), Black prefers to continue maneuvering.'

The 'undisputed positional advantage' was not at all clear to me at first glance. Then it occurred to me that I had come full circle, and was now over-estimating the importance of the bishop pair! In this instance, the bishop on b2 is very strong, but the bishop on e2 is not, and Black can make things happen before White can remedy this.

30.ab4

It is not mentioned in the notes, but with the benefit of hindsight 30.a4 might have been better here, to give a future target on a5 for the dark-squared bishop.

30...ab4 31.♗a1 ♗df8 32.♗d1 ♗e6

'Black should not have been in a hurry to complete this knight manoeuvre, which cedes control of the e5 square. 32...♗g5 did not have this defect.' (Botvinnik may not have considered 33.♗b2 ♗e6 34.♗e5 which doesn't seem worse for White than the game - JR.)

33.♗e5! ♗e5 34.♗e5 ♗g5
35.♗d8 ♗d8 36.♗d2 ♗d2
37.♗d2

'White has significantly repaired his position. Now it only remains for him to play his bishop to h3 and he will have equalised completely. Naturally, Black makes every effort to erect a barrier at g4.'

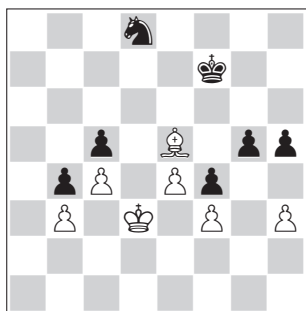
37...g5 38.♗d3 ♗f7 39.♗f1 h5 40.♗e2

'The fortieth move, the last before the time control! At e2 there is nothing for the bishop to do, and 40.♗h3 g4 could have been ventured, for example: 40.♗h3 g4 41.fg4 ♗g5 42.♗f1 ♗e4 43.♗e2 hg4 44.♗f4 ♗e6 45.♗d6 ♗c2 46.♗g2 and the position becomes so simplified that a draw is inevitable.'

It's nice to know that even in a

world championship match in 1951 it was normal to screw up your position before the time control.

40...♗e7 41.♙f1 ♕d7 42.♙h3
 ‘But now this move is unsuccessful, since White’s only chance was to rely on the strength of his bishops.’
42...♘d8 43.♙d7 ♗d7 44.h3
♗e7 45.♙g7 ♗f7 46.♙e5



‘The ending is lost for White, but the solution to this study is not at all easy to find. I sensed that there should be one, but for several hours I unsuccessfully sought the correct way to win. As a result, the analysis proved to be one of the worst in my career. The point is that I did not even suspect that there was any possibility of exploiting zugzwang in the diagram position. This was pointed out after the game by Stahlberg: 46...♗g6!! Now if 47.♙d6 there follows 47...♘e6 and the g5-g4 breakthrough is decisive, while after 47.♗e2 ♘c6 White loses his b3 pawn.’

46...♗e7 47.♙g7 ♘b7 48.♙h6
♗f6 49.♙f8 ♗f7 50.♙h6 ♗g6
51.♙f8 ♗f6 52.♗e2 ♗f7
53.♙h6 ♗g6 54.♙f8 ♗f7 ½-½

The richness of this game and the notes are typical for the book *Botvinnik-Bronstein Moscow 1951* by Botvinnik (Olms). Moreover, there is a lot of value added in this particular edition, including a preface by Kramnik, disclosure of Botvinnik’s opening notebooks

and his considered assessment of his adversary, David Bronstein.

Personally, I found the pre and post game diary entries by far the most entertaining aspect of the book. For the game above, his pre game notes are as follows:

‘The decisive game of the match is beginning

- 1 Time
- 2 Deep calculation and technique
- 3 Irony and composure
- 4 Procedure-Ragozin
- 5 Drag things out. Let’s go!’

His post-game notes:
 ‘Terrible - 1: Time trouble 2: Weak analysis (shameful)’

Throughout the match, Botvinnik places many other striking and intriguing (‘irony and composure’?) demands on himself and is constantly referring to his shame. In this respect, his diary notes give us a valuable insight into the hard-earned nature of The Patriarch’s legendary discipline. That said, although I have learned much about chess from Botvinnik’s games and analysis, his character never appealed to me. He always struck me as a man who wanted to be a machine, and I could never shake the feeling that he partly succeeded.

Moving swiftly on to greener pastures, Quality Chessbooks have started to produce some opening books. *Challenging the Grünfeld* by Edward Dearing is a thorough and lucid analysis of the Exchange Grünfeld with 8.♞b1 and is highly recommended to protagonists on both sides of this theoretical battlefield. It is difficult for me to review this book without giving away hard-earned secrets, but suffice to say that in conjunction with his previous work on the Dragon (reviewed here 2004/8) this book

establishes Edward Dearing has as an accomplished guide to difficult openings.

I briefly lent *Challenging the Grünfeld* to Alexey Shirov on a flight to the final weekend of the French League in Perpignan, to gauge the reaction of an elite player. He seemed to generally approve and said that it was well-written, but added the valuable critique that the author frequently quotes analysis from around 1996, at a time when analysis engines were much weaker. That analysis is dated doesn’t mean it is wrong, but if you give a line and then, for example ‘Shirov’, it now seems a bit irresponsible. Much better to say ‘Shirov 1996’ so that we know it is likely to be, for example, (Shirov + Fritz4) rather than ‘Shirov 2005’ which might be (Shirov + Fritz9). This is particularly important in the sharp lines contained in this book, but more of a general guideline for authors of opening books today, rather than a weakness of Dearing’s book in particular.

Finally, although already favourably reviewed in the Yearbook, I should make a quick mention of *The English Attack* by Tapani Sammalvuo. At the risk of ‘name dropping’, it is worth mentioning that Michael Adams (on the flight back from Perpignan!) pointed out that this is a particularly impressive piece of work. Given the nature of the opening, it seems that ‘work’ is the operative word because the jungle of complicated lines is infested with confusing move-orders. This would be enough to put me off such a project, but Sammalvuo has done a splendid job of organising the material, and frequently added new ideas of his own. Highly recommended. ■