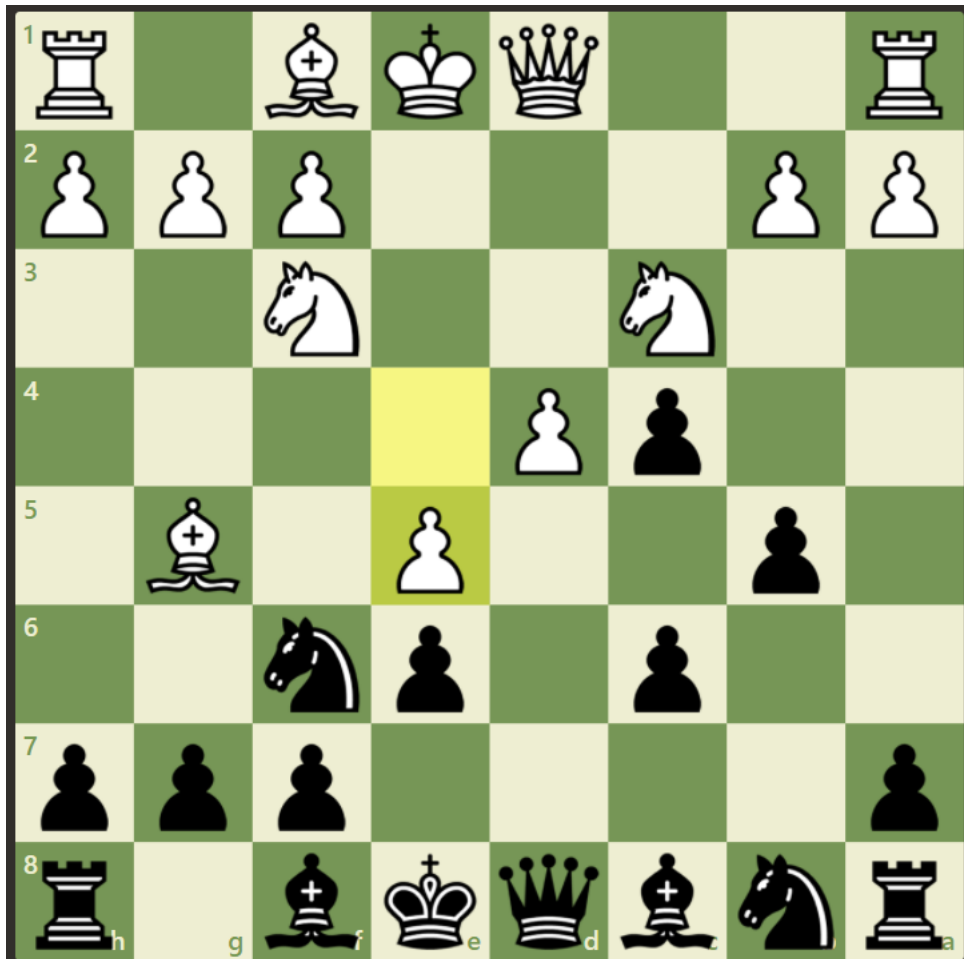


Coach M's Playing with Imbalances Puzzle Sheet

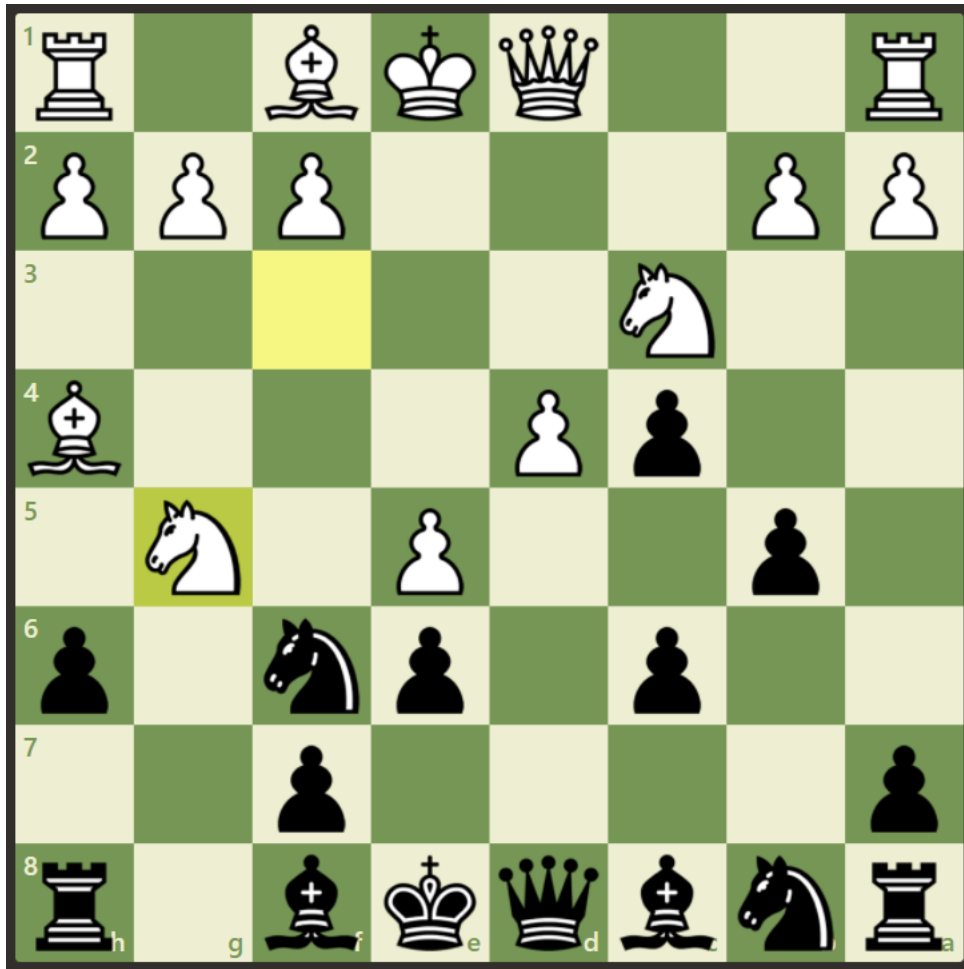
Coach M's Tip: If a puzzle position is proving too difficult, then set this position up on a physical chess board. After you've formulated your solutions for each position, you can check your work by setting up the game position in an analysis board in chess.com and then switching on the chess engine.

1. In this imbalanced Semi-Slav Botvinnik variation, black extricates himself from this seemingly gloomy position how?

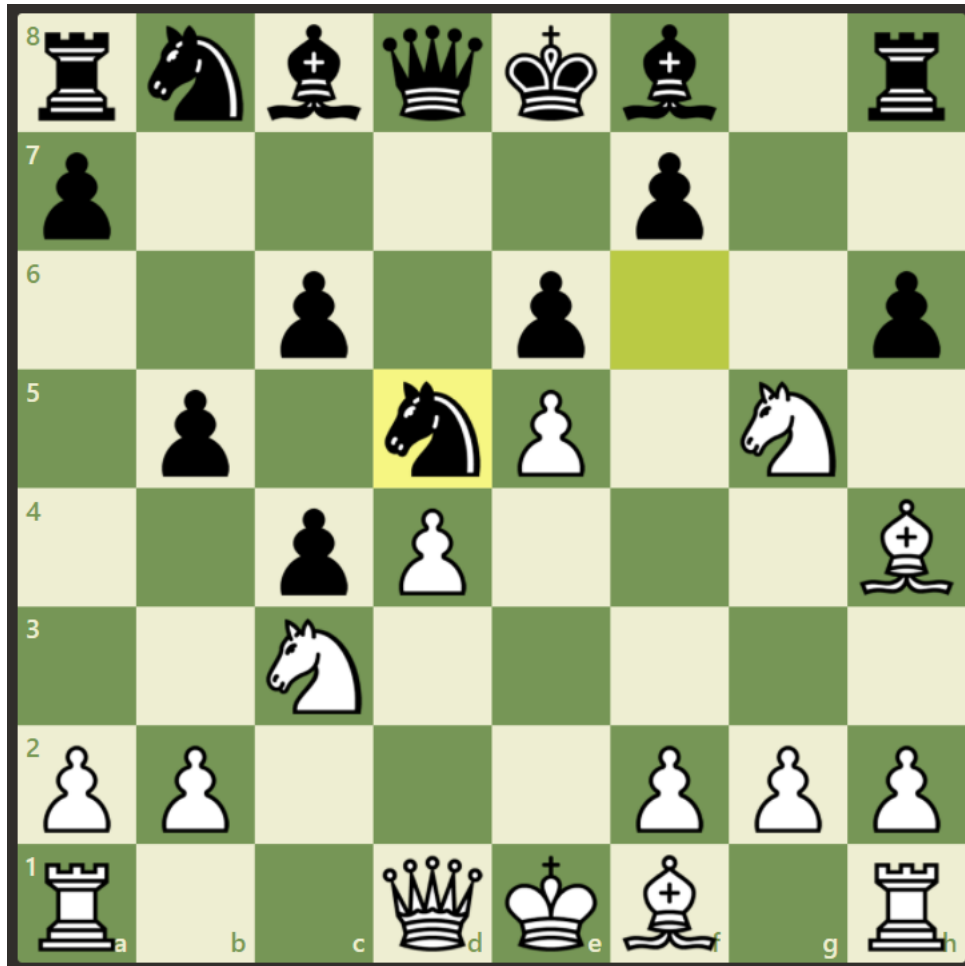


(Solutions in the Appendix)

2. Here hxN is the computer-approved continuation for black leading to a complicated and imbalanced game. However, black may also try the rather chaotic “Alatortsev” variation characterized by the move Nd4 in the game position below. After the Nd4 move, does white retain an edge with the simple retreat of the knight from g5 back to f3?



3. The Alatortsev system is very much “out of fashion” due to an alternative approach which white can play in this position. Improve on the retreating move Nf3... How to take the game to black?

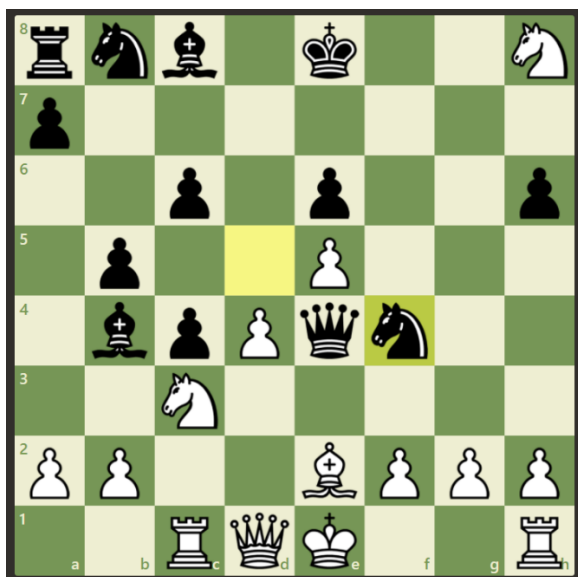


4. In the main line of the Alatorsev system, white has played the thematic Nxf7 followed by capture of the rook on h8 (see below).



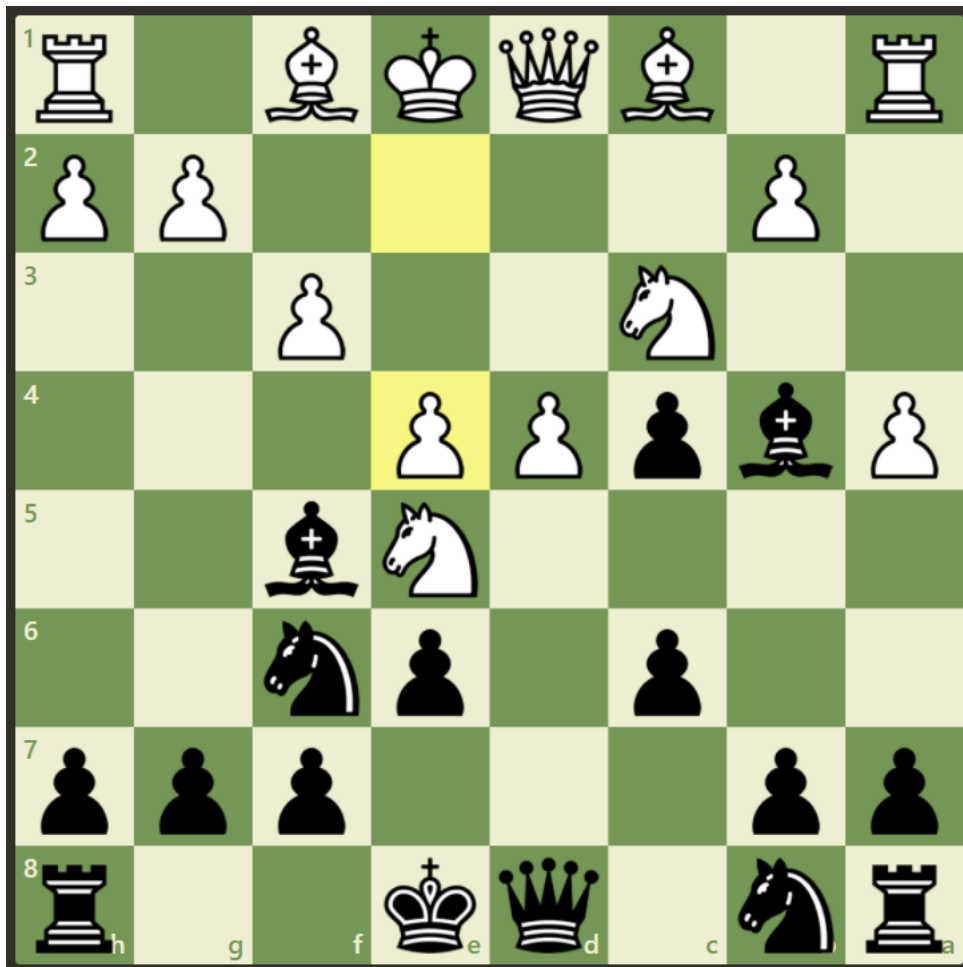
D44: Semi-Slav Defense Accepted: Botvinnik, Alatorsev System
 1. d4 d5 2. Nf3 Nf6 3. c4 c6 4. Nc3 e6 5. Bg5 dxc4 6. e4 b5 7. e5 h6 8. Bh4 g5
 9. Nxc4 Nd5 10. Nxf7 Qxh4 11. Nxh8

Black's position is objectively lost yet this highly-imbalanced variation is full of tricks and traps. I.E. How would you defend the white side here?



1. d4 d5 2. Nf3 Nf6 3. c4 c6 4. Nc3 e6 5. Bg5 dxc4 6. e4 b5 7. e5 h6 8. Bh4 g5
 9. Nxc4 Nd5 10. Nxf7 Qxh4 11. Nxh8 Bb4 12. Rc1 Qe4+ 13. Be2 Nf4

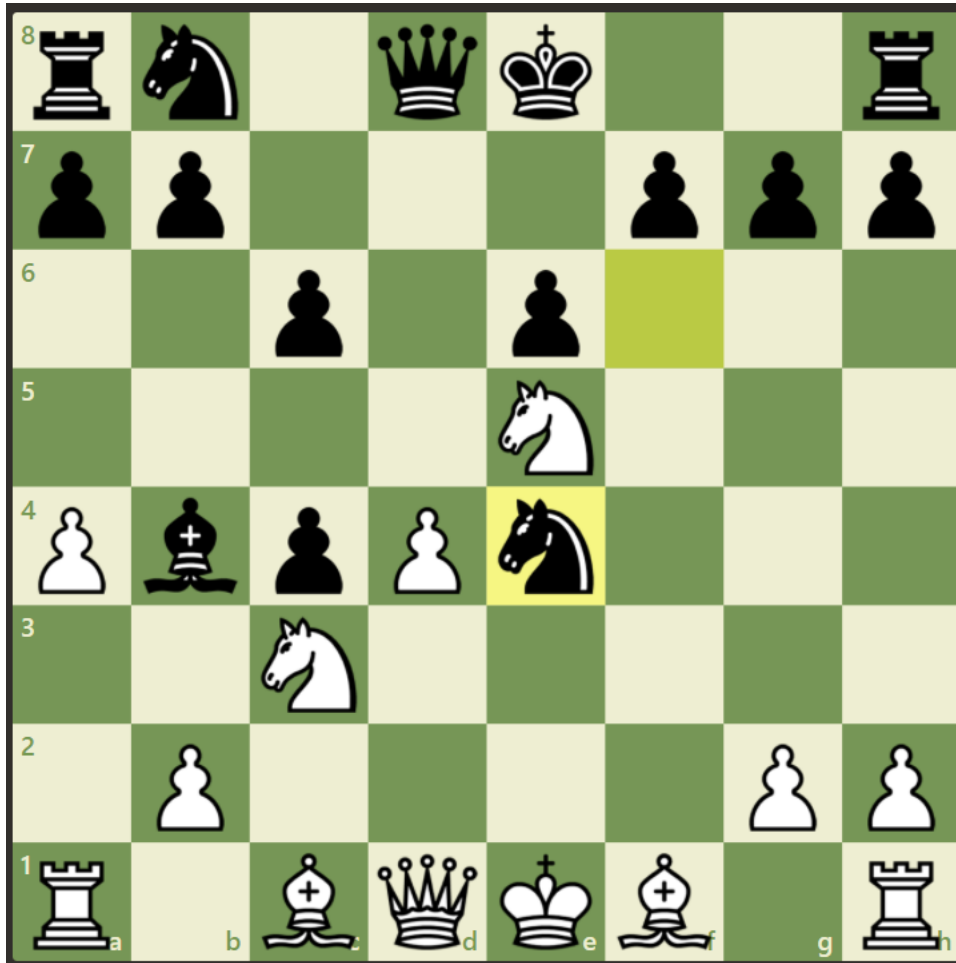
5. In this sharp line of the Slav defense, choose between Nxe, Bxe, BxN, and Qa5. Only one of these moves is adequate to preserve a dynamic balance.



© D17: Slav Defense: Modern, Alapin Variation, Czech, Krause, Wie..

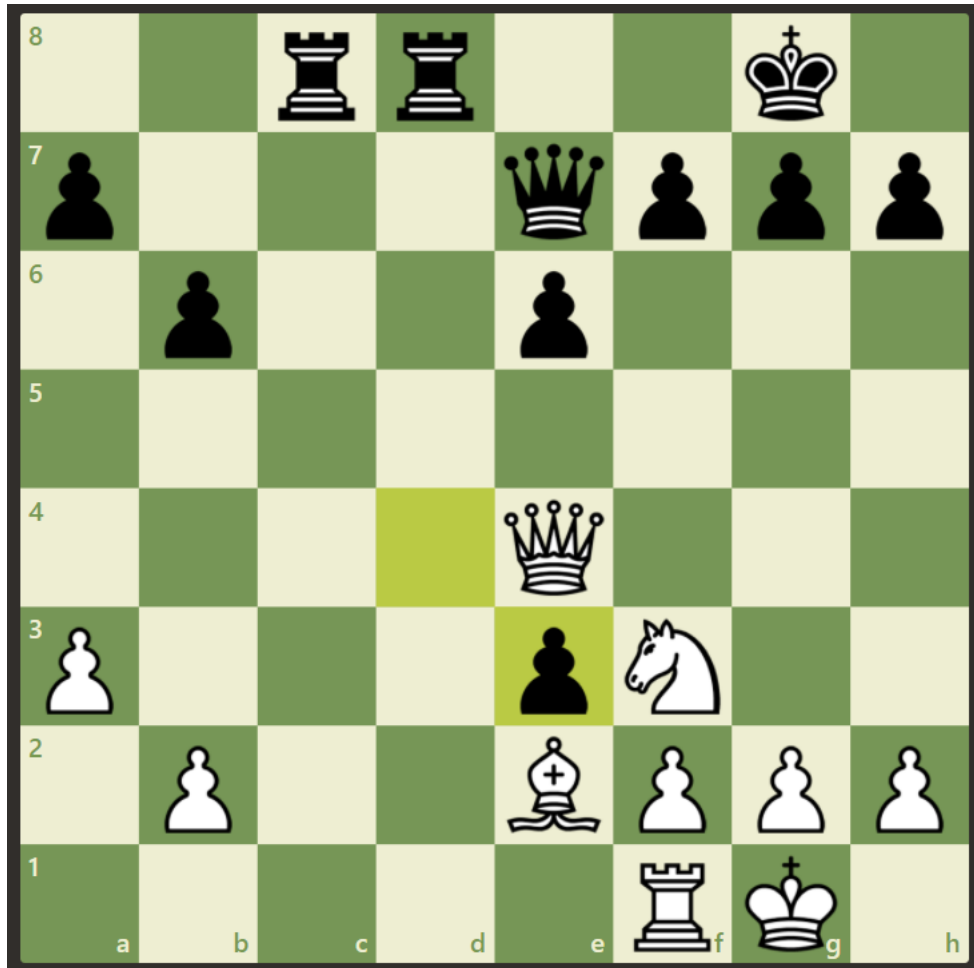
1. d4 d5 2. Nf3 Nf6 3. c4 c6 4. Nc3 dxc4 5. a4 Bf5 6. Ne5 e6 7. f3 Bb4 8. e4

6. Following the main line of this sharp Slav defense variation, white must defend against the big threat of a double-capture on c3. How would you do this? Choose between Qc2, Bd2, Be3, and Qf3. Which of these moves is NOT playable? Which ones are good enough for equality? Which one maintains an edge for white?



(See the appendix for the solution)

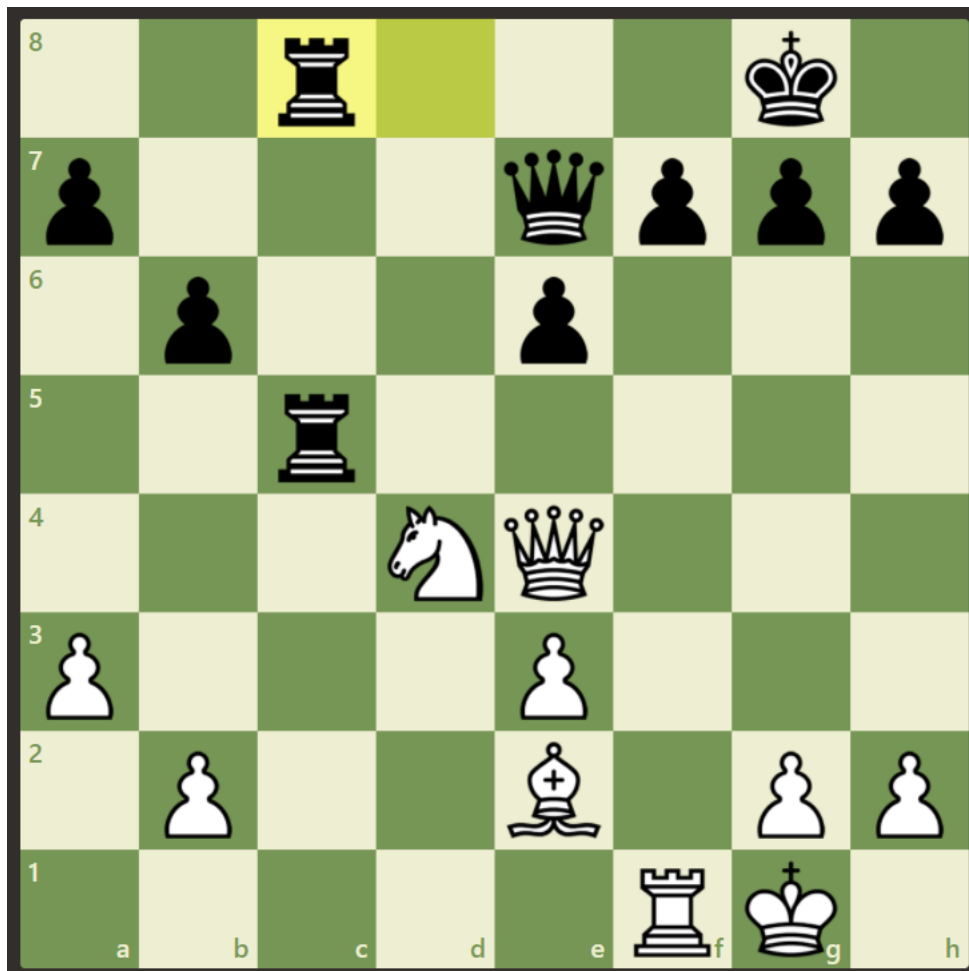
7. The following position was from an online rapid game that Coach M played against the former World #6 player, GM Pavel Eljanov (UKR). Coach M as white has N+B vs R+p. How would you recapture on e3?



(See the appendix for the solution)

8. Later in the game Coach M vs GM Pavel Eljanov...In such imbalanced middlegame positions, with two minors against a rook and pawn, it is essential that the player with the two minor pieces gets coordination of his minor pieces. If this can be done, then the minors can often outplay the rook and pawn (at least this is true in most middlegames).

How would you coordinate your minor pieces here?



9. Later in the Coach M vs GM Pavel Eljanov game...White is in the ascendency in this imbalanced middlegame due to his well-coordinated minor pieces.

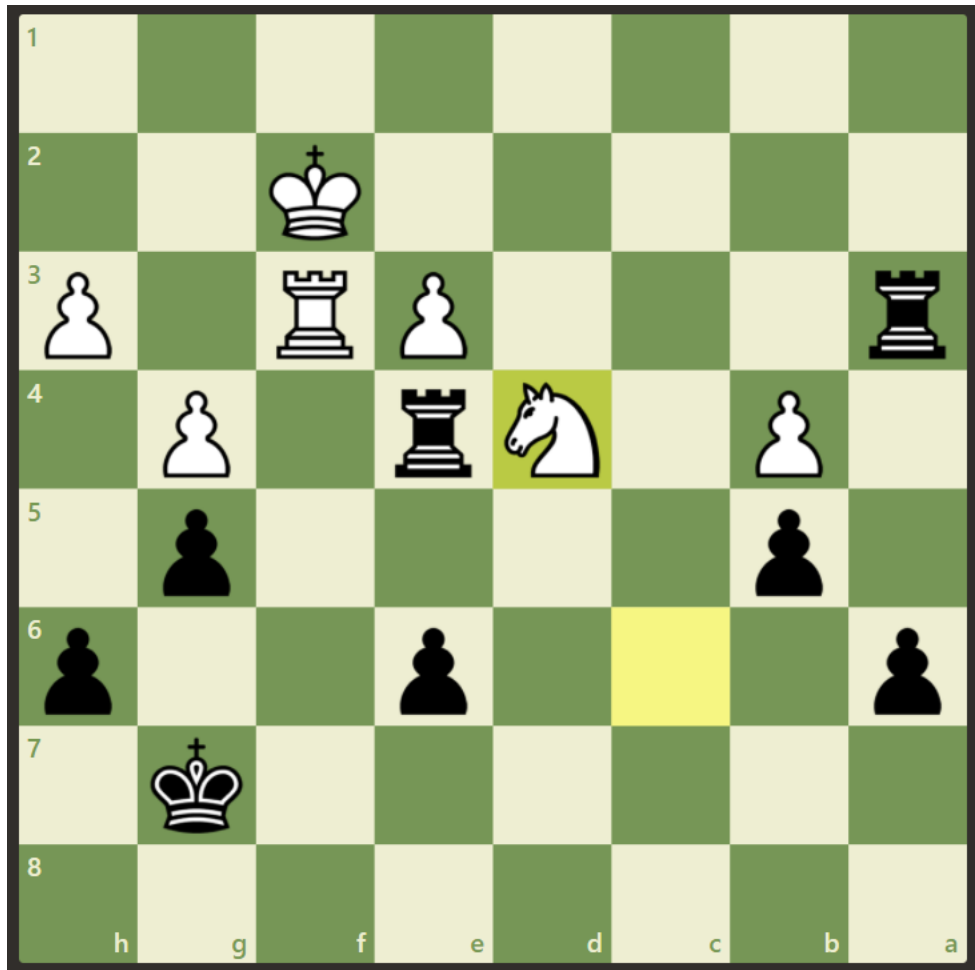
Explain why Nf3? fails then and give (2) alternatives which maintain the edge.



(see the appendix for solutions)

10. The tables have been completely turned in the game Coach M vs GM Pavel Eljanov. Black is winning convincingly...

Is RxN a convincing solution? If not, what would you play?



Appendix:

1. h6 followed by g5 is the only way...
2. the retreat Nf3 (after the Alatortsev move Nd4) is good for white and leads to a promising advantage. That said, there is a better move...
3. White should play Nxf7! here. Though tricky, white is objectively winning after this continuation.
4. Both Qd2 and a3 are completely winning for white. Hence the Alatortsev variation is in the dust bin of chess openings at the highest levels of chess.



5. After Bxe, black is very much in the game with (3) pawns for the sacrificed minor piece.
6. Solution. The move Bd2 is the only continuation leading to a white edge. Qc2? is not a playable continuation. Be3 and Qf3 are good for equality but no better.



7. fxe! and white is considerably better in this complicated middlegame.

The Top Chess Players in the World



GM Pavel Eljanov

English ▾

Full name Pavel Eljanov

Born May 10, 1983 (age 38)

Place of birth Kharkiv, Ukrainian SSR, Soviet Union

Federation Ukraine

Profiles



#47
World Ranking

2641
Rapid

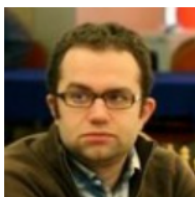
2602
Blitz

2687
Classical

Rating



PAVEL ELJANOV



Pavel was born into a chess family. His father, Vladimir Eljanov, was a strong master, a renowned trainer and a publisher of multiple chess bestsellers, starting from books by Mark Dvoretsky and Iosif Dorfman and ending with books by lesser-known authors.

Pavel quickly became one of the leading juniors of his country and in 1999, he won the U16 Olympiad with the Ukrainian national team. This victory was the forerunner of the emergence of a new generation of Ukrainian chess players in the global elite. In 2001, Eljanov became a grandmaster and played in the Ukrainian championship for the first time, where he split fourth place.

Two years later, Pavel made his debut for his national team in the European championship. Ukraine came fifth and won the Olympiad a year later in sensational fashion. Pavel Eljanov also won gold at the 2010 Olympiad, bronze in 2012 and silver in 2016, when he played on the first board. At the 2009 European team championship, he showed the best result on the first board and he led his team to the third place. The grandmaster has also won silver and bronze medals of the World team championships.

Pavel graduated from Kharkov's Yaroslav Mudryi National Law University, whose chess team he often led to the title of the Ukrainian champion. He won the B tournament in Wijk aan Zee in 2007 and in 2012, he split 1st-3rd places at Aeroflot Open but came second, behind Mateusz Bartel, due to the inferior tie-break. After winning a stage of the FIDE Grand Prix in 2010, he became sixth in the world and first in Ukraine with a rating of 2761.

He was assistant to Boris Gelfand in the World Championship Match against Vishy Anand in Moscow in 2012. He is the two-time winner of the European Cup with Saratov's Economist. He won tournaments in Polanica-Zdrój in 2000, Biel in 2004, Amsterdam in 2005, Montreal in 2006, Sarajevo in 2009 and Elsinore in 2010.

He is married and has a daughter.

8. Ba6! begins turning the screw.

9. Nf3? loses to b5! trapping the bishop. One must never “go to sleep” against a strong player. Opportunities rarely present themselves to take down strong GMs...

10. RxN (simplification attempt) is better but squanders the overwhelming edge that black has. Far more convincing is a5! as was played in the game. After Nxb, axb!, NxR, bxN, white cannot survive long.