

IDENTIFYING KEY POSITIONS

In every chess game there are certain places where you need to spend more time to plan and calculate. We call these places KEY POSITIONS.

Sometimes Key positions are objective places in the game. For example, you make a mistake, and you realize your attack has come to an end and you need to defend. Or you are defending and your opponent gets overoptimistic, blunders a piece and you launch a counterattack.

Other times Key Positions are very individual. They could be an early phase of unfamiliar opening or places where you tend to start hyper-calculating to find possible tactics. Also, every time you spot a pattern that is new to you, take a picture or repeat it over the board – do anything that will help you remember it, this is a key position

HOMEWORK FOR MASTER CHESS CLASS, AUGUST 1ST

Yudasin,Leonid (2538) - Benjamin,Joel (2563) [B13]

Minneapolis HB Global op Minneapolis (8), 22.05.2005

1.e4 c6 2.d4 d5 3.exd5 cxd5 4.Bd3 Nc6 5.c3 Nf6 6.Bf4 Bg4 7.Qb3 Qd7 8.Nd2 e6 9.Ngf3 Bxf3 10.Nxf3 Bd6 11.Bxd6 Qxd6 12.0-0 0-0 13.Rae1 Nd7 14.Qc2 g6 15.Re3 Qf4 16.Rfe1 Rab8 17.Qe2 Rfc8 18.h3 Rc7 19.Nh2 Ne7 20.Ng4 Kg7 21.Rf3 Qg5 22.Bb5 Nc6 23.Rxf7+ Kxf7 24.Qxe6+ Kg7 25.Qd6 Qd8 26.Bxc6 Rxc6 27.Qe7+ Kh8 28.Qf7 Rc7 29.Re7 Qg8 30.Qf4 Qf8 31.Rf7 Qg8 32.Nh6 Qd8 33.Qe3 Rbc8 34.Re7 Qf8 35.Nf7+ Kg8 36.Qe6 Rc6 37.Nd6+ Kh8 38.Rxd7 1-0

Go over the game above. Choose at least 5 key positions to work with. Make notes about them.

- When did the players plan their strategies?
- Where did they need to adjust them?
- What were the red flags?
- What interesting patterns did you notice?
- What are the learning points?

Make your analysis as detailed as possible and send it to jen@orlandochesshouse.com

Bellow you will find an example of how you can do it.

Have fun with the process 😊

EXAMPLE OF HOW TO WORK WITH KEY POSITIONS

The following game with notes illustrates how you can work with key positions. The main point is to stop up every time you come across something that you wonder about, or find interesting, and to make notes about it. You can use diagrams, or just words. The most important rule is to keep in mind that you are doing it for your own learning.

Nielsen, Peter Heine (2654) - Bluebaum, Matthias (2560) [D10]

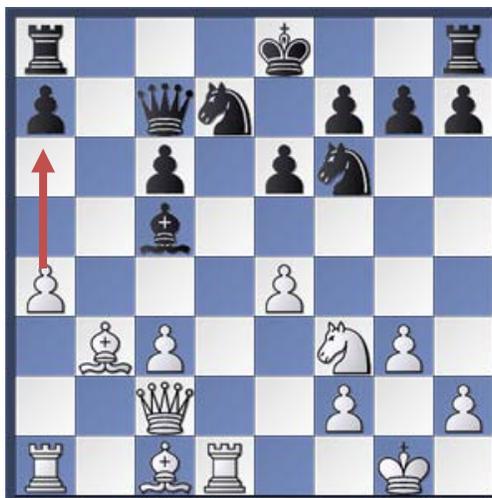
BL 1415 OSG Baden Baden - Werder Bremen (9.6), 01.02.2015

1.d4 d5 2.c4 c6 3.Nc3 dxc4

KEY POSITION 1: A key position can occur very early in the opening. Depending on how well you know your openings, your first key position could be on Move 3 or 13, or whenever you get out of your preparation and need to make **your first strategic decision**. In this game, the White player P.H. Nielsen, who is a full time second of World Champion Magnus Carlsen, faced his first challenge already on move 3! Sure, Nielsen's knowledge of openings often stretches all the way down to the endgame. Then how come he needed to make a choice so early in the game? This is what he writes in the Danish Chess Magazine Skakbladet: *"I was annoyed by my opponent's choice" This line is considered doubtful but sharp. And I was thinking, I would have made the same choice 20 years ago if facing an aging Grandmaster. Of course I had analyzed all these lines with both Anand and Carlsen. But now I needed to change my perspective from being a second to being a player, and the difference was remarkable."*

4.e4 b5 5.a4 b4 6.Nb1 Ba6 7.Qc2 Qxd4 8.Nf3 Qd6 9.Nbd2 c3 10.Nc4 Qc7 11.bxc3 e6 12.g3 Bxc4 13.Bxc4 Nd7 14.0-0 Ngf6 15.Rd1 b3 16.Bxb3 Bc5

KEY POSITION 2: Move 4-16 is a long sequence, many things happened, so why no key positions in between? Remember, a key position is **not always an objective place** in the game. The point is, if you know the opening well, you don't need to stop up and explain the plans to yourself. You are the main reader of your notes, so make sure they make sense to YOU. The obvious doesn't need explanation.



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With no specific targets yet, P. H. Nielsen makes a note about the **a4-a5-a6-Rb7** pattern he has seen before. Plus **Ba4 ideas, targeting the c6 weakness**. Already here he is thinking about how to optimize his chances in the endgame!

17.Nd4 0–0 18.a5 e5 19.Nf5 Ng4 20.Rf1 g6

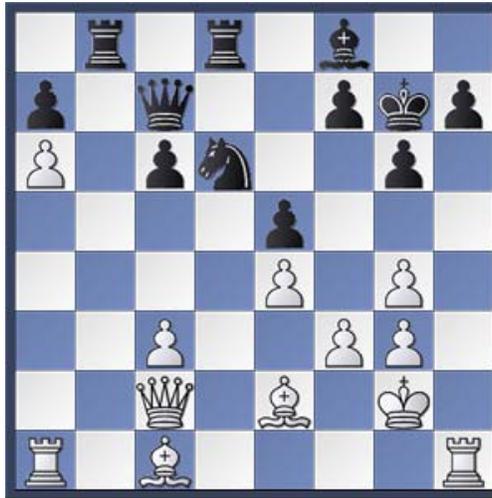
KEY POSITION 3: A red flag! With g6 Black weakened his King's position, especially the dark squares. Also, make a note to yourself about typical patterns: g6 often invites for **h4-h5**, or **opening of the h-file** somehow. All this indicates that White should play on the King-side (Nh6 instead of Ne3!) and start redirecting pieces to that side of the board!

21.h3 Ngf6 22.Nh6+ Kg7 23.Kg2 Be7 24.Bc4 Nc5 25.f3 Nb7 26.a6 Nd6 27.Be2 Rab8 28.Ng4 Nxf4 29.hxg4 Rfd8 30.Rh1 Bf8

<p>White doesn't mind opening the h-file: 21...gxf5 22hxg4 fxf4 23 Kg2 gives White a fantastic compensation for the sacked pawn!</p>	<p>Strategy: Kg2 to move away from the pin and prep to open the h-file. Bb3-c4-e2. Still remember that a-pawn is an important asset for the endgame!</p>	<p>The Knight has nothing to do on h6 anymore. Rearrange. Try to open h-file and trade Knights.</p>

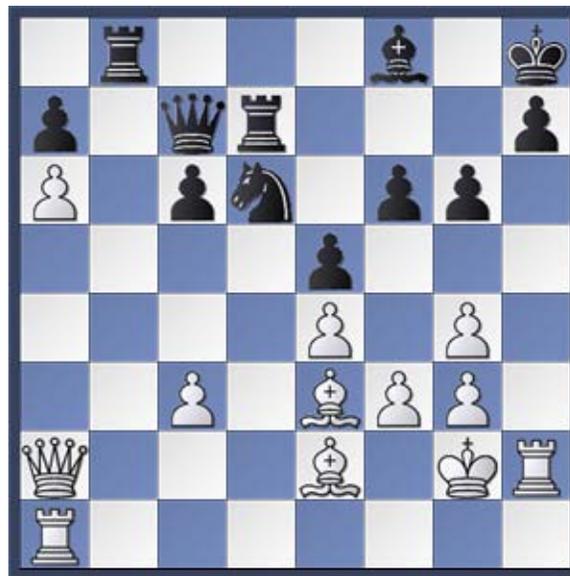
Pay attention to how Grandmasters conduct the attack and how they change strategy. Take a picture of any pattern you find interesting. Make notes to yourself. Patterns repeat themselves. If you know them, you will recognize them in similar situations when they appear in your games.

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KEY POSITION 4: Your pieces point to Black's King and you start thinking that it must be Tactic time. You consider 31 Bg5 f6 32 Rxh7 Kxh7 33 Bxf6. Why does it not work? What are the red flags?

31.Be3 31...f6 32.Rh2 Rd7 33.Qa2 Kh8



KEY POSITION 5: Time to change plans. Why? One thing is the actual position. Black defended everything, no real weaknesses on the K-side. Another thing is the psychology of the game. Black has been defending most of the time. This probably means that he is left with less time on the clock. Plus he is probably starting to relax after covering his King side.

From the rules of attack we know that we need to keep creating problems for the opponent. In this case, just change the venue!

34.Rhh1! Nb5 35.Qe6 Qd6

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KEY POSITION 6: - Total transformation! Black defended well. No weaknesses on the King-side to attack. White's attack was blocked. Why transform into endgame? Black weakness on a7, White's passed pawn on a6. Plus greater piece activity for White.

36.Qxd6 Bxd6 37.Bxb5 cxb5 38.Rhd1 Rbd8 39.Rab1 b4 40.cxb4 Bb8 41.Rxd7 Rxd7 42.Rc1 Kg7 43.b5 1-0

LEARNING POINTS

Make a list about everything you learned in this process. No rules! Things you learn from one game can be completely different from what other people learned from the same game. Make it as detailed as possible. Be as enthusiastic about it as you wish! Repeat every new pattern over the board, and not least: Make them your own!