

Georg Mohr: Mobile center - the typical pawn structure d4 + e4 : e6

It is very easy to describe the mobile center: we can talk about the mobile center, when one of the players has some pawns in the center (at least two) and the other player has one or even none. For example: **e4, d4 : e6** or **e4, d4 : d6** or **d4, e5, f5 : c6, f7** or **e3 : d5, e5, f5**.

We talk about mobility, because one of the attacker's pawns is able to move freely due to not having any pawns in front of him. That kind of positions are usually very tense and the value of every move is very high. Every tempo can be decisive for the end result of the game. There is no room here for slow maneuvers, for standing still, but only for a concrete action supported by accurate calculations.

It is clear that a player with the mobile center has the positional advantage. The pawns (the two pawns) are putting pressure on the opponent and are taking his space. Seemingly, the defender's play is also quite simple. His first wish will be to attack the opponent's center in order to block or even destroy it. And yet another very important rule: when there is an active, mobile center, the defender needs to forget about any kind of wing activation!

The d4-e4 pawn against the e6 pawn

The very important Pawn structure for this kind of mobile center is the position with a pawn pair d4-e4 against the e6 pawn. This position was representing a huge problem for many chess masters!

White has a pawn up in the center and Black has a pawn up on the queenside which is good for the Ending. White's plans are clear: everything is spinning around the d4-d5 move or around the e4-e5 move. In the first case White will place his bets on the passed d-pawn that will disturb the coordination between Black's pieces.

After the exchange on d5 White in some cases takes with the piece when he thinks that the active pieces would bring him more benefits than a passed pawn. In the second case White is placing his bets on the attack on the king. A version of the second possibility is also very important where White sacrifices d4-d5 and after the taking he does not take back, but on the contrary he progresses with the e4-e5 move, with a sharp attack (the d-pawn is being sacrificed to block the dark-squared bishop's way and so destroys the coordination between the defence pieces). Let us get to know some classic games on the previously described themes, which will help you to understand how difficult this pawn structure is.

Keres P. : Geller E.
Moscow 1962

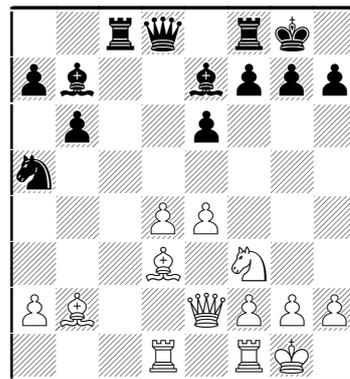
1.d4 Nf6 2.c4 e6 3.Nf3 d5 4.Nc3 c5 5.cd5 Nd5

This time the pawn structure comes from an improved Tarrasch Defence variation, where Black takes on d5 with the knight instead of with the pawn like in original Tarrasch.

6.e3 Nc6 7.Bc4 Nc3

The exchange is maybe premature. Black could have chosen 7...cd4 8.ed4 Be7, with the positions with the passed pawn and with other type of play that will be shown in the next games.

8.bc3 Be7 9.0-0 0-0 10.e4 b6 11.Bb2 Bb7 12.Qe2 Na5 13.Bd3 Rc8 14.Rad1 cd4 15.cd4



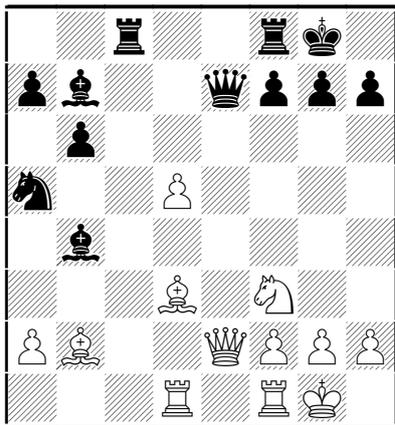
A classic position on our theme. White's bishops are placed behind the pawns, but there is a great attack potential in them. It is clear that in this kind of positions the center needs to be opened. The progression with the e4-e5 has less sense here, because it would close the dark-squared bishop. That is why White is left with the progression with the d4-d5 move.

15...Bb4?

Due to the previously described it would be better to play 15...Bf6.

16.d5! ed5 17.ed5 Qe7

It is hard to give Black a wise advice. It is bad 17...Bd5? 18.Qe5 f6 19.Qh5 g6 20.Bg6 hg6 21.Qg6 Kh8 22.Qh5 Kg7 23.Rd5 or 17...Bc3 18.Bf5! Rc4 19.Ne5; the best it would be 17...Re8 18.Ne5 (with the threat 19.Bh7) 18...Qh4 19.Bb5 Red8 20.Bd7 and White always has an advantage.



18.Ne5

"After this move, there is no defence."
(Kasparov)

18...f6

It would also be hopeless 18...Bd6 19.Qh5 g6 20.Ng4!! (Keres) or 18...Rfd8 19.Qe4 g6 20.Qd4! Rd5 21.Ng6! fg6 22.Qh8 Kf7 23.Qh7 Ke8 24.Bb5! Rb5 25.Qg8 Qf8 26.Qg6 Qf7 27.Rfe1! Be1 28.Re1 Kf8 29.Qh6! (Rybka, Kasparov).

19.Qh5! g6

19...fe5? 20.Bh7 Kh8 21.Bg6.



20.Ng6! hg6 21.Bg6 Qg7

This move lead to a quick loss, but Black is already lost. For example 21...Ba6 22.d6! or 21...Rc7 22.Bf5!

22.Rd3 Bd6

22...Ba6 23.Rg3 Bf1 24.Bh7 Kh8 25.Bf5 +-.

23.f4 Qh8 24.Qg4 Bc5 25.Kh1 Rc7

26.Bh7! Kf7 27.Qe6 Kg7 28.Rg3 1:0.

The theme of the next game is the d4-d5 progression, along with e4-e5 and with another kind of attack.

Keres P. : Fine R.

Ostende 1937

1.Nf3 d5 2.d4 Nf6 3.c4 e6 4.Nc3 c5 5.cd5 Nd5 6.e4 Nc3 7.bc3 cd4 8.cd4 Bb4

This exchange variation was among the theoreticians for a long time considered to be one of the basic variations that ends with a draw and it was used by all "great draw players" in the chess history. The move itself is pointing to the difference between the last variation – after the exchange of the dark-squared bishops White's attack potential will minimize.

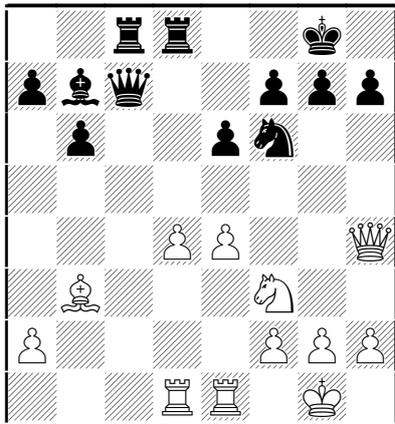
9.Bd2 Bd2

For some time the players with black pieces tried to play 9...Qa5, until the great Akiba Rubinstein discovered the 10.Rb1 move!

10.Qd2 0-0 11.Bc4 Nd7

The second possibility is 11...Nc6, and we will take a look into it in the next game.

12.0-0 b6 13.Rad1 Bb7 14.Rfe1 Rc8
15.Bb3 Nf6 16.Qf4 Qc7 17.Qh4 Rfd8



A very important moment! White is standing on the crossroad: if he wants to achieve anything, he will need to move one of the central pawns. The d4-d5 penetration and the big exchanges do not do him any good and that is why he started to fancy the 18.e5 move. The move is logical, because White is opening a potential diagonal for his bishop and he is at the same time getting rid of the knight on f6, from where it is able to defend the king and he is also creating a known trampoline on the e4-square for his pieces, above all for his knight that will with the help of the Ng5-e4 maneuver join the attack. For example: 18.e5 Nd7 19.Ng5 Nf8 20.Ne4 or 18.e5 Nd5 19.Ng5 h6 20.Ne4 Nc3 21.Nf6!

But Keres decided for another kind of penetration, for a motive, which was unknown until then.

18.Re3 b5! 19.Rde1 a5!

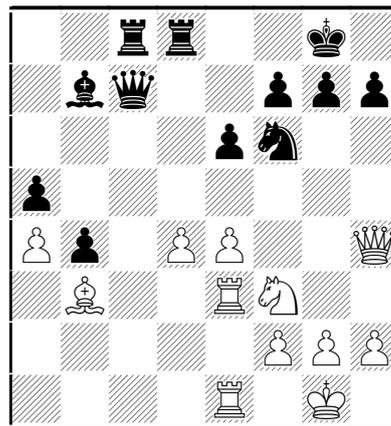
Black managed to achieve a nice counterplay – White's bishop is in danger.

20.a4

The only move.

20...b4?

This move is freeing White's hands and above all it giving White some extra time or a tempo for an opening of the action. It would be correct 20...ba4 21. Ba4 h6 and White's attack is being stopped.



21.d5! ed5 22.e5!

Fine was surely not expecting that.

22...Nd7 23.Ng5 Nf8

It would be more resistant 23...h6, where White's attack would go on like this:

24.e6! hg5 25.ef7 Kf7 26.Re7.

24.Nh7! Nh7 25.Rh3 Qc1 26.Qh7 Kf8

27.Rhe3 d4 28.Qh8 Ke7 29.Qg7 Rf8

30.Qf6 Ke8 31.e6 1:0.

When the attacker, after the penetration, takes with the piece there are present some different kind of dangers, which the defender is facing.

Spassky B. : Petrosian T.

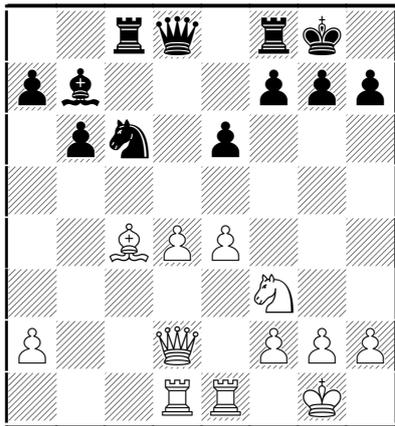
Moscow 1969

1.c4 Nf6 2.Nc3 e6 3.Nf3 d5 4.d4 c5 5.cd5 Nd5 6.e4 Nc3 7.bc3 cd4 8.cd4 Bb4 9.Bd2 Bd2 10.Qd2 0-0 11.Bc4 Nc6 12.0-0 b6 13.Rad1

This move and this placement of the rooks on d1 and e1 were prepared by Spassky especially for this match. Alekhine preferred to play 13.Rfd1, but what Spassky had in mind was the penetration in the center, of which we already heard about.

13...Bb7 14.Rfe1 Rc8

Later on player, with more success, tried 14...Na5 15.Bd3 Qd6.



15.d5 ed5 16.Bd5

The play on the domination of the pieces in the center. With the bishop on c4 it is hard for White to count on the attack and due to that it would be worse 16.ed5 Na5 17.Bf1 Qd6 18.Ng5 Qh6!

16...Na5 17.Qf4 Qc7

The swap of the queens is usually in favor for the player that is defending.

18.Qf5 Bd5 19.ed5

Without the white-squared bishops the passed pawn is a decisive factor on the board. It is supported by both White's rooks and by the queen and Black will not be able to set up the basic defence plan in the battle against the passed pawn – The blockage.

19...Qc2

It is to slow 19...Nc4 20.Ng5 g6 21.Qh3 h5 22.Ne4± or 19...Qd6 20.Ng5 Qg6 21.Qg6 hg6 22.d6! Nb7 23.d7 Rcd8 24.Re7 Nc5 25.Rd5! +-.

20.Qf4! Qa2 21.d6!

White is proving how powerful a passed pawn is with a great play.

21...Rcd8 22.d7 Qc4 23.Qf5 h6 24.Rc1 Qa6 25.Rc7 b5 26.Nd4 Qb6 27.Rc8! +- Nb7

27...b4 28.Re8 Qd4 29.Rf8 Rf8 30.Rf8 Kf8 31.Qc5!!+-; 27...g6 28.Rd8 Qd8 29.Qb5+-; 27...Qd4 28.Rd8 Rd8 29.Re8+-.

28.Nc6 Nd6 29.Nd8!! Nf5 30.Nc6 1:0.

The conclusion

To achieve a mobile, full center is considered to be advantageous. The player that manages to achieve it has a space advantage, because the opponent's pieces are pulled back and they need to wait. We can evaluate the position only after some time has passed, because every move and every won tempo is important.

Undoubtedly there is no room here for a sleepy play and slow maneuvers!

The attacker will try to progress with the pawns and squeeze the opponent even more. With the maneuver in the center he will gain a passed pawn or he will move the play to the wing, from where he will start to attack the opponent's weaknesses. The defender has got no choice. He will try to block the opponent's center first and then try to destroy it.

It is important to know that as rule there is no room for the defender's actions on the wing in this kind of position (we attack on the wing when there is a fixed center).