## PROOF GAMES: BEWARE OF IMPOSTORS

number 8          August 18, 2012

The task in a *proof game* is to show how a given position can be reached in a legal game. There are three types of proof games, differing by their move requirement.

1) General. The goal is simply to prove that a position is legal. The number of moves is not important.

2) Shortest proof game (abbreviated SPG). The goal is to reach the position in the fewest moves possible.

3) Move stipulation. The position must be reached in a precise number of moves, no more and no less.

The puzzles in this column are all the third type. They are proof games in 4.0 which means four moves by each side. Don't worry about strategy. Weird moves are normal. The only thing that matters is legality.

### Proof Game 05
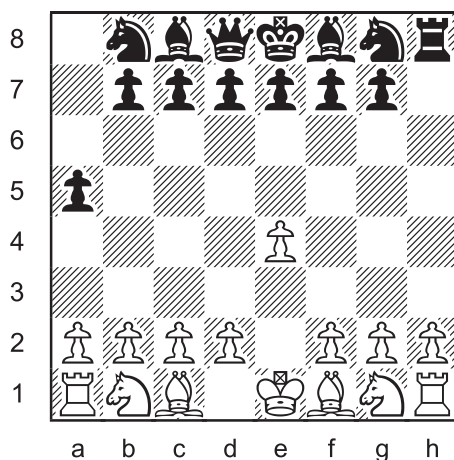


The diagrammed position, with White to play, was reached in a game after each player made exactly four moves. Can you figure out how?

For problems 1-4 and more information on proof games, see column 03 in the archives.

The next puzzle has appeared in many articles and collections. The composer is Géza Schweig (1895-1957), a Hungarian medical doctor whose specialty at the chessboard was helpmates.
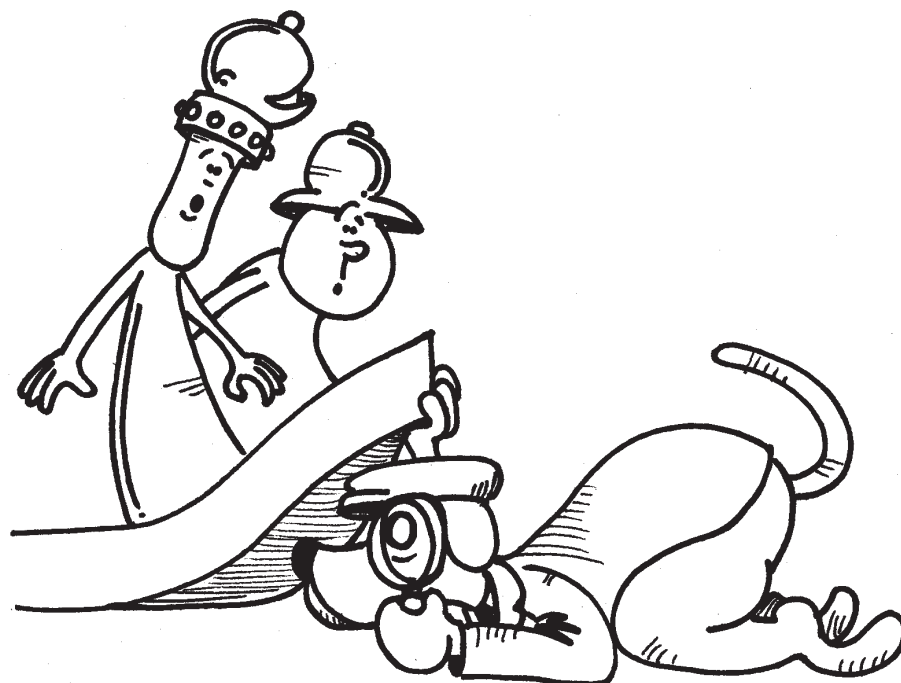
This proof game was published in 1938 in the Budapest periodical *Tükör* (Magyar for "mirror"). The name is often given incorrectly as 'Tukon'.
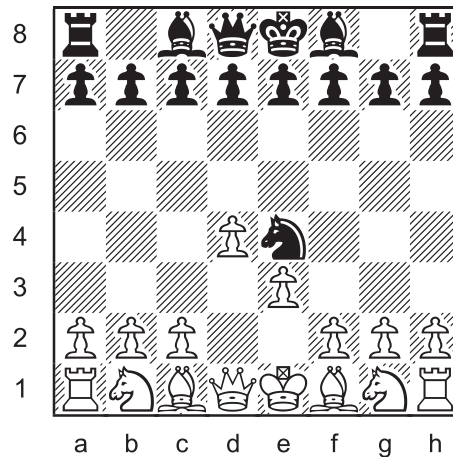
## Proof Game 06
Géza Schweig 1938
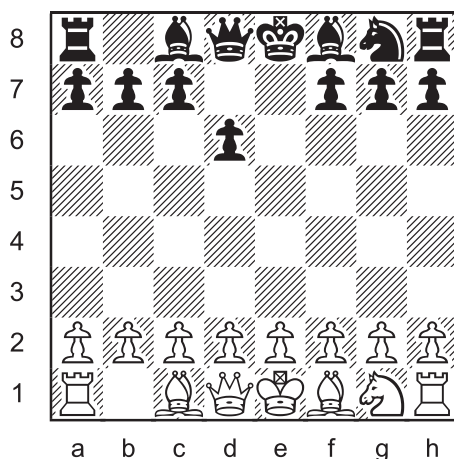


This position was reached after Black's fourth turn. What were the moves?

## Proof Game 07



This position was reached after Black's
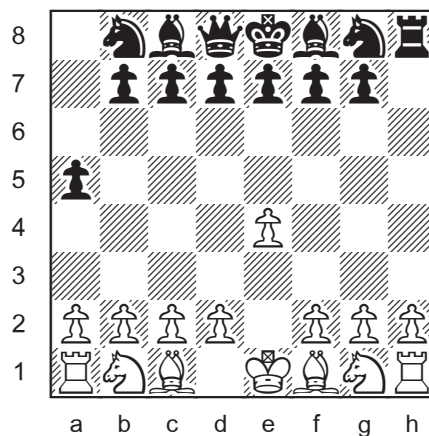fourth turn. What were the moves?

# SOLUTIONS

*PDF hyperlinks*. You can advance to the solution of any puzzle by
clicking on the underlined title above the diagram. To return to the
puzzle, click on the title above the solution diagram.

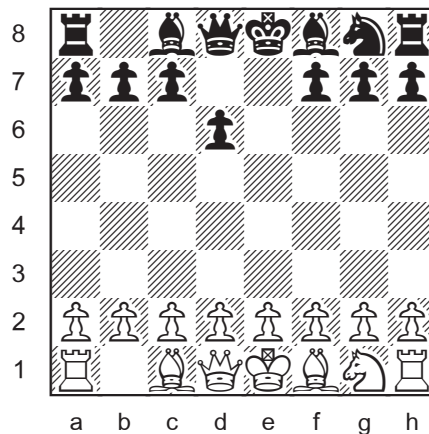## Proof Game 05

J. Coakley  2012

*ChessCafe.com*



1.e4 a5  2.Qh5 Ra6  3.Qxh7 Rh6  4.Qxh8 Rxh8

The black rook on h8 is an *impostor*, pretending to be the rook that
started on that square. This deceptive trick is very common in longer
proof games.

# Proof Game 06

Géza Schweig 1938

*Tükör*



1.Nc3 d6  2.Nd5 Nd7  3.Nxe7 Ndf6  4.Nxg8 Nxg8

The black knight is the *impostor* this time.

From a normal chess perspective, it is natural to assume that the knight on g8 began the game there, and not on b8. When solving a puzzle, we must often see past our assumptions.

There are two other well-known proof games which are very similar to Dr. Schweig's position. These puzzles (06b and 06c) did not appear in the main part of this column, but are shown below.

The discussion that follows concerning the connection between the three puzzles is rather dry, but may be of interest to chess historians. Please skip ahead to proof game 07 if you're eager to get back to the fun.

Proof game 06b was published in 1991 by noted Ukrainian composer Andrey Frolkin in a book called *Shortest Proof Games,* co-authored by German retro specialist Gerd Wilts. It was presented as a "version" of an earlier proof game by Ernest Mortimer.

Mortimer's composition was flawed because there was more than one solution. Frolkin's version eliminated the dual solutions. Perhaps more significantly, his version is a *homebase* proof game. In a "homebase" (or "at home") position, all of the pieces appear to be on their starting squares. This is considered an attractive feature.

# Proof Game 06b  (4.0 moves)

### Ernest C. Mortimer (version by Andrey Frolkin) 1991
*Shortest Proof Games (by Gerd Wilts & Andrey Frolkin)*
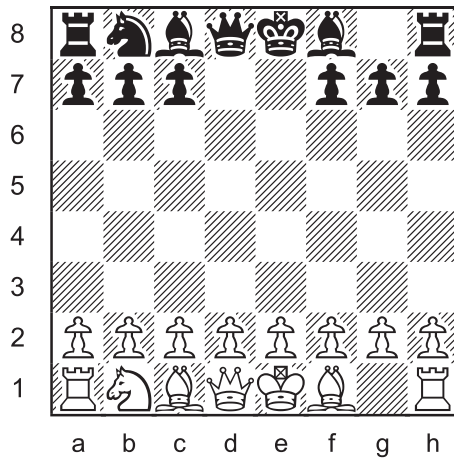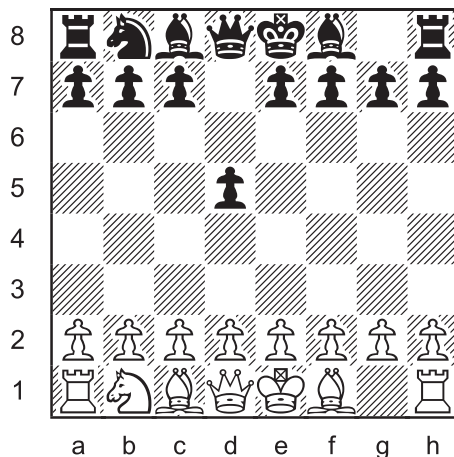


1.Nf3 e5  2.Nxe5 Ne7  3.Nxd7 Nec6  4.Nxb8 Nxb8

As you can see, this puzzle closely resembles the Schweig proof game. Compare it to a "mirrored version" of the Schweig position, with all the moves *reflected* left to right:

1.Nf3 e6  2.Ne5 Ne7  3.Nxd7 Nec6  4.Nxb8 Nxb8

The only difference is Black's first move, 1...e6 instead of 1...e5.

# Proof Game 06c  (4.0 moves)

### Ernest C. Mortimer  (year?)
(*publication?*)



Here is the original problem by Ernest Clement Mortimer. Does any reader know where and when it was first published? Despite considerable effort, I have been unable to find that information. Other problems by him were composed between 1916 and 1942.

This proof game and Schweig's are very similar, so it might be said that one "anticipated" the other, if we knew which was published first.

In chess terminology, an *anticipation* is an earlier composition with the same idea and similar setting. It is different from 'plagiarism' because composers are usually unaware of the earlier composition. The issue is giving creative credit to the right person.

Gerd Wilts and Andrey Frolkin were both kind enough to discuss this proof game with me last week. They did not know the date of publication, but for some reason had assumed that Mortimer's puzzle predates Schweig's. They are probably correct, but it would be good to know the exact date.

Some sources reference the October 1981 issue of *Die Schwalbe*, the German periodical dedicated to chess compositions. The Schweig proof game appears in that issue and Mortimer's proof game is mentioned in the notes, but without a date.

Surprisingly, the unrevised Mortimer proof game has shown up on numerous chess blogs over the last few years, with no mention of the Frolkin version or Schweig (or a date). I assume that means that there is an independent source out there somewhere. Quite the mystery.

The puzzle itself is "cooked" because there are four solutions. A proper proof game has a unique solution.

**1.Nf3 d5  2.Ne5 Nf6  3.Nc6 Nd7  4.Nxb8 Nxb8**

The first two moves by Black can be interchanged, and White can also play 2.Nd4.

Although the basic idea of a black knight *impostor* is the same, this proof game is different in several ways from the Frolkin version. For example, the white and black knights both take different paths to b8. It could be seen as the least similar of the three puzzles.

For that reason, if we eventually discover that Schweig's problem anticipated Mortimer's, then it may be more accurate to say that proof game 06b is a version of Schweig rather than a version of Mortimer.

In any case, the Frolkin version, whether we say it is "after Mortimer" or "after Schweig", is a nice addition to the class of *homebase* proof games.

# Proof Game 07

J. Coakley 2010

*Winning Chess Puzzles For Kids Volume 2*
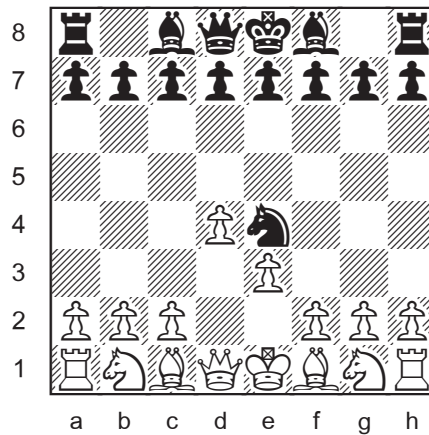
1.d4 Nh6  2.Bxh6 Na6  3.Bc1 Nc5  4.e3 Ne4

There is a lot of deception at work in this puzzle. On the white side, we have the *switchback* of the bishop to c1 after capturing on h6. That is followed by the closure of the c1-h6 diagonal with the e-pawn. On the black side, we have a *pseudo-impostor* on e4. The "normal path" for that knight would be from g8 via f6, and not from b8.

Did anyone not try 1.e3 Na6 2.Bxa6? After 2...Nf6 3.d4 Ne4 4.Bf1, the diagrammed position is reached, but Black has only made three moves.

Until next time!