



THE PUZZLING SIDE OF CHESS

Jeff Coakley

PROOF GAMES: PHANTOM CAPTURES

number 46

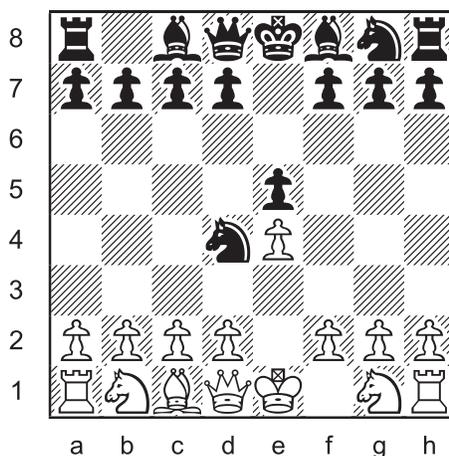
September 14, 2013

The task in a *proof game* is to show how a given position can be reached in a legal game.

The puzzles in this column have a *move stipulation*. The position must be reached in a precise number of moves, no more and no less. They are proof games in 4.0 which means four moves by each side.

From a strategic point of view, these games are nonsensical. But the moves are legal.

Proof Game 24

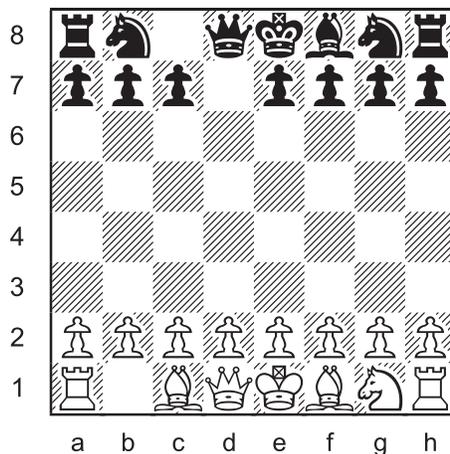


The diagrammed position, with White to play, was reached in a game after each player made exactly four moves. Can you figure out how?

For problems 1-23 and more information on proof games, see columns 3, 8, 14, 22, 29, 37, 38 in the archives.

The next problem is by Canadian composer Cornel Pacurar. Because all the pieces stand (or appear to stand) on their original squares, it is called a *homebase* proof game.

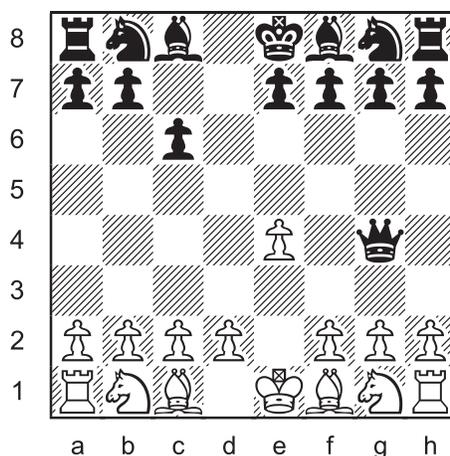
Proof Game 25



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

The white queen has gone missing in the following game. Can you explain her disappearance?

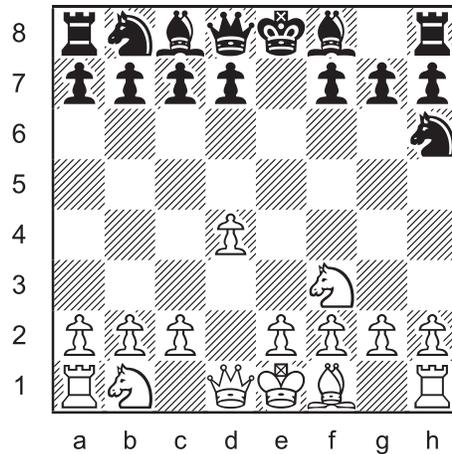
Proof Game 26



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

One more mystery to solve. Have you spotted the thread that links the puzzles?

Proof Game 27



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

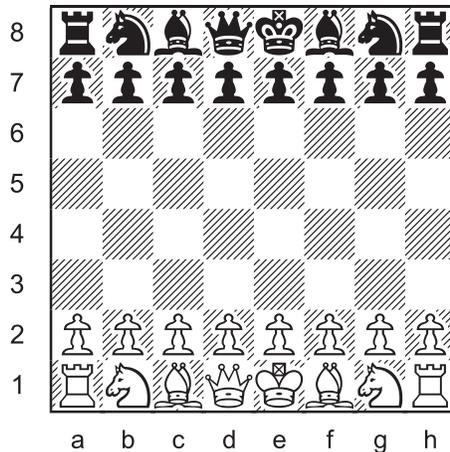
That concludes *The Case of the Phantom Captures*. There were eight missing pieces in the four puzzles. Except for one pawn, they were all taken on squares that are empty in the diagrams.



Each column on proof games concludes with a *synthetic game*. Instead of finding the move sequence that leads to a given position, the task is to compose a game that ends with a particular move.

Once again, we have a problem by British composer Charles D. Locock (1862-1946), a pioneer in the field of synthetic games.

Synthetic Game 05



Compose the shortest game possible that ends with a bishop giving mate by capturing a queen.

White or Black may give mate (BxQ# or ...BxQ#); whichever is shorter.

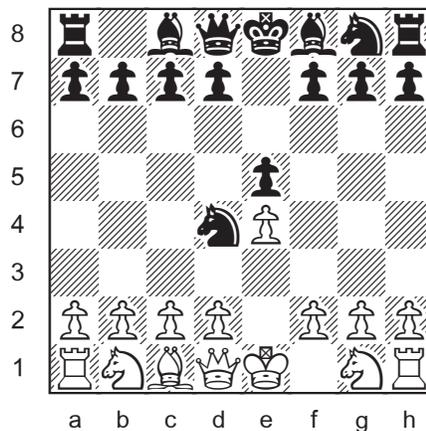
For synthetic games 1-4, see columns 14, 22, 29, 38.

SOLUTIONS

Proof games 24, 26, 27 by J. Coakley. 24: *Winning Chess Puzzles For Kids* (2006). 26: *WCPFK Volume 2* (2010). 27: *ChessCafe.com* (2013).

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 24



1.e3 e6 2.Bb5 e5 3.Bc6 Nxc6 4.e4 Nd4

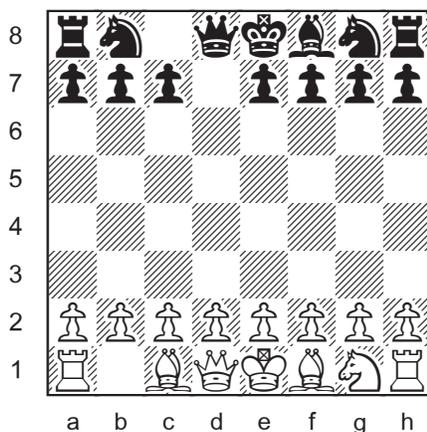
Each side plays a tempo move with their e-pawn.

Proof Game 25

Cornel Pacurar 2004

internet mailing list

Winning Chess Puzzles For Kids Volume 2 (2010)

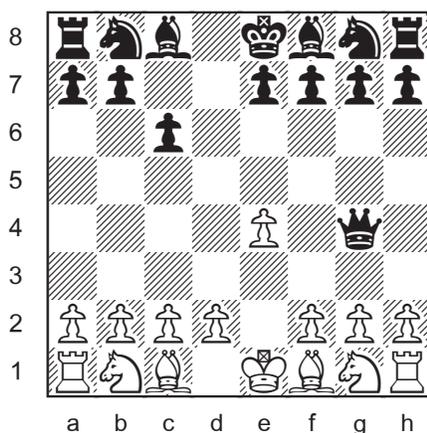


1.Nc3 d5 2.Nxd5 Bh3 3.Nxh3 Qxd5 4.Ng1 Qd8

Switchbacks by the white knight and black queen conceal the captures that they made (Ng1xh3-g1 and ...Qd8xd5-d8).

[A nearly identical homebase proof game, also by Cornel Pacurar (2004) is 1.c4 d5 2.cxd5 Bh3 3.Nxh3 Qxd5 4.Ng1 Qd8.]

Proof Game 26

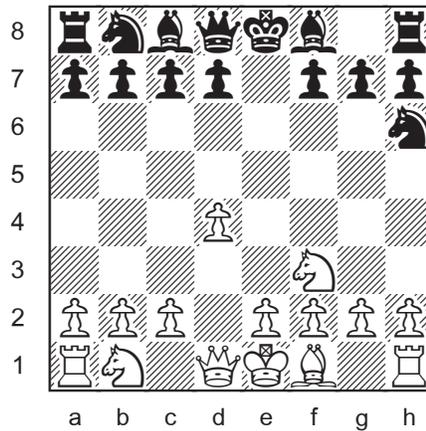


1.e3 c6 2.Qg4 Qc7 3.Qxd7+ Qxd7 4.e4 Qg4

Two more tempo moves. One by the white e-pawn and one by the black queen (taking two turns to get from d8 to d7).



Proof Game 27



1.d3 e5 2.Bf4 exf4 3.d4 f3 4.Nxf3 Nh6

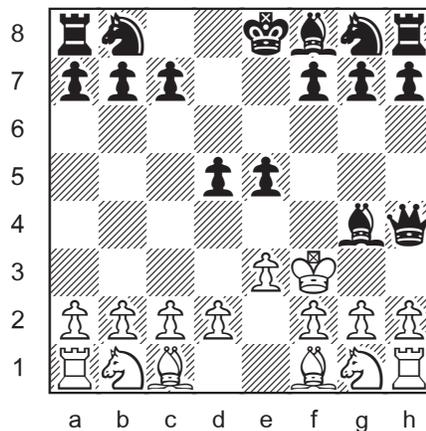
A tempo move by the white d-pawn is nothing compared to the adventures of the black e-pawn.

The *phantom capture* occurred on f4. This trick is a common tactic in proof games. A piece is taken on a square that is later vacated by the capturing piece.

Synthetic Game 05

Charles D. Locock 1946

British Chess Magazine



1.e3 e5 2.Qg4 Qh4 3.Ke2 d5 4.Kf3 **Bxg4#**

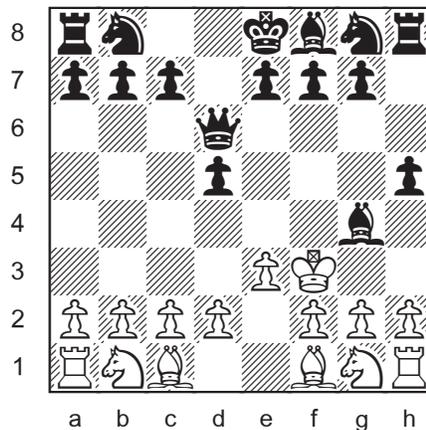
Only Black can mate on the fourth turn by capturing a queen with a bishop. White requires five turns.

There are no options with the white moves. Black can play their first three moves in different orders. (See next page.)

1.e3 d5 2.Qg4 e5 3.Ke2 Qh4 4.Kf3 **Bxg4#**

1.e3 e5 2.Qg4 d5 3.Ke2 Qh4 4.Kf3 **Bxg4#**

Here is another solution, also by Locock.



1.e3 d5 2.Qg4 Qd6 3.Ke2 h5 4.Kf3 **Bxg4#**

The white moves are the same as above. Black can also play 3...Nf6 or 3...Nh6 (instead of 3...h5) to protect the bishop on g4. Like before, Black can play their first three moves in various orders.

This puzzle can also be posed in two other ways:

“Compose a game that ends with the move 4...BxQ#.”

“Compose a game that ends with the move 4...Bxg4#.”

In the latter case, it is not necessary to specify that the piece captured on g4 is a queen.

Until next time!

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