



THE PUZZLING SIDE OF CHESS

Jeff Coakley

PROOF GAMES: Rookless Homebase

number 139

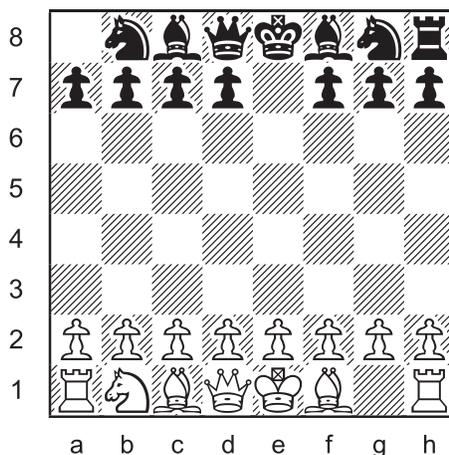
October 21, 2017

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. The first two problems are proof games in 4.0 which means four moves by each side.

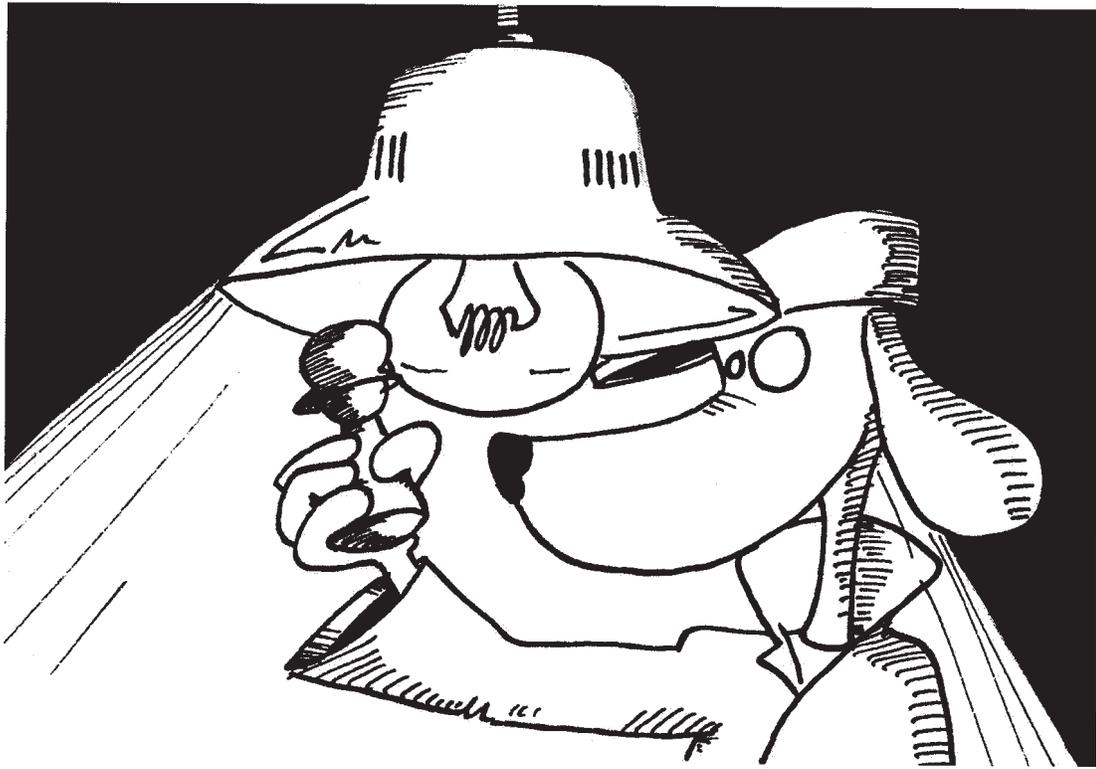
The positions may be reckless, and the strategy feckless, but the moves are legal.

This problem, by British composer Andrew Buchanan, is a *homebase* proof game. All remaining pieces are on their starting squares, or at least appear to be. The missing rook on a8 serves as a prelude to the rookless positions presented at the end of the column.

Proof Game 70

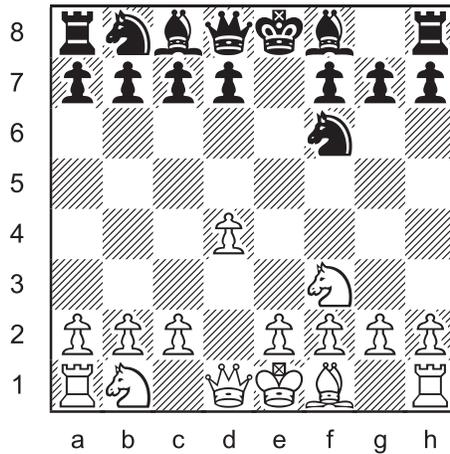


This position, with White to play, was reached in a game after each player made exactly four moves. What were the moves?



Shedding light on the problem.

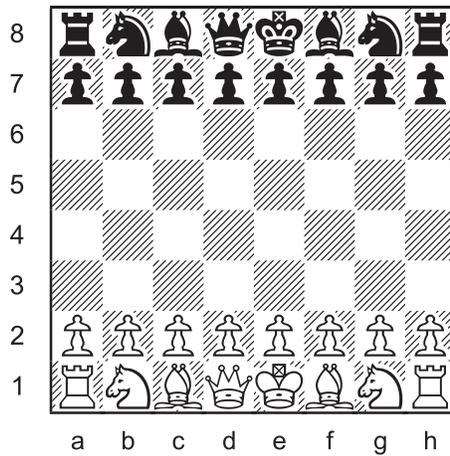
Proof Game 71



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

A *synthetic game* is similar to a proof game. But 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.

Synthetic Game 32

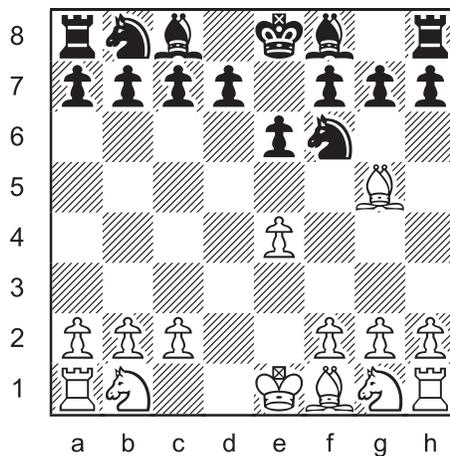


Compose a game that ends with the move **5.Rh3#**



The next game is length 4.5. Here on the *Puzzling Side*, anything greater than four is labelled “longer”.

Longer Proof Game 37 (4.5 moves)



This position was reached after White's fifth turn. What were the moves?

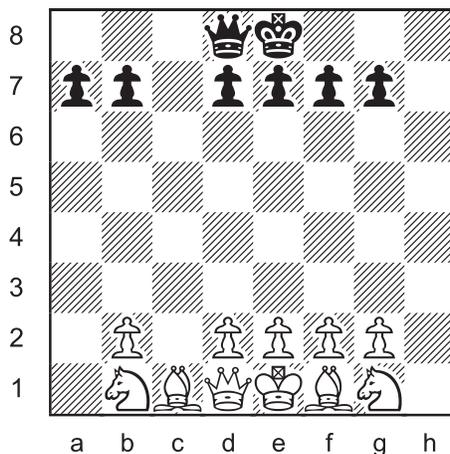
PG SHOWCASE

The following proof games exceed the normal limits of solvability for most chess detectives. They are presented here, not as puzzles, but as artistic endeavours, demonstrating some of the compositional possibilities in this type of retro problem.

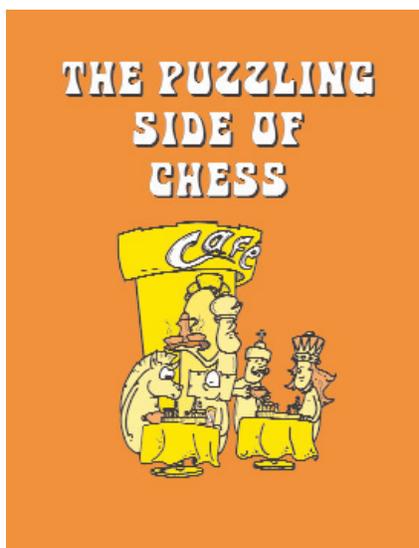


The theme of our showcase is *rookless homebases*. Rookless in the sense that all four rooks are captured.

Longer Proof Game 38 (10.5 moves)

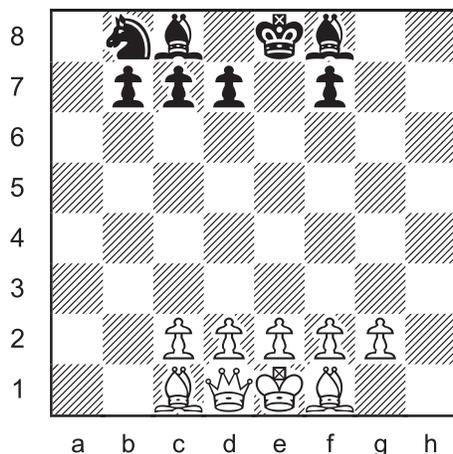


This position was reached after White's eleventh turn. What were the moves?



Length 10.5 may be the record for fewest moves needed to achieve the task in a unique homebase proof game. Here's another approach with the same number of moves. This time the position also has a vacant a-file and h-file. Empty "rook files" as we used to say.

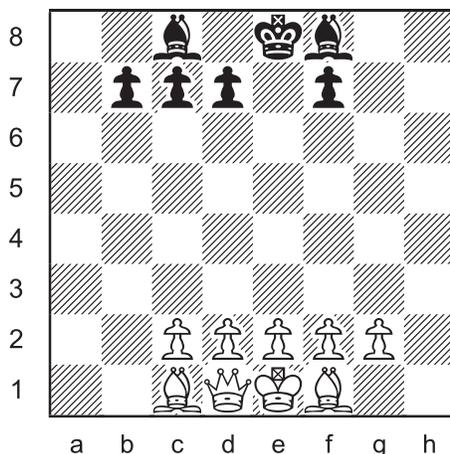
Longer Proof Game 39 (10.5 moves)



This position was reached after White's eleventh turn. What were the moves?

The next problem is a twin to the previous proof game, removing the knight on b8 and adding an extra half-move. Rookless and knightless, with rook files cleared.

Longer Proof Game 40 (11.0 moves)



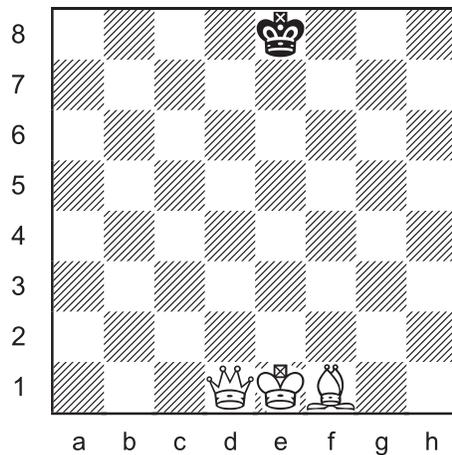
This position was reached after Black's eleventh turn. What were the moves?

In case you were wondering, all proof games on *The Puzzling Side of Chess* have been computer tested for accuracy and uniqueness.

Our final “composition” takes things several steps further. Rookless, knightless, and pawnless! Just four pieces remain on the board. Unearthed by means of a search engine programmed by Canadian computer expert François Labelle.

This problem is the record for most moves in a homebase proof game, rookless or otherwise.

Longer Proof Game 41 (16.5 moves)



This position was reached after White’s seventeenth turn. What were the moves?



Clean-up time.

SOLUTIONS

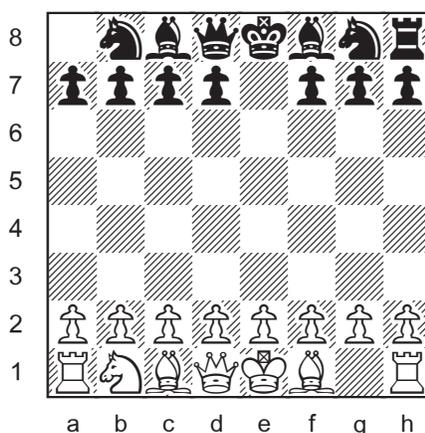
Except for proof games 70 and 41, all problems by J. Coakley, *Puzzling Side of Chess* (2017).

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 70

Andrew Buchanan 2004
internet mailing list

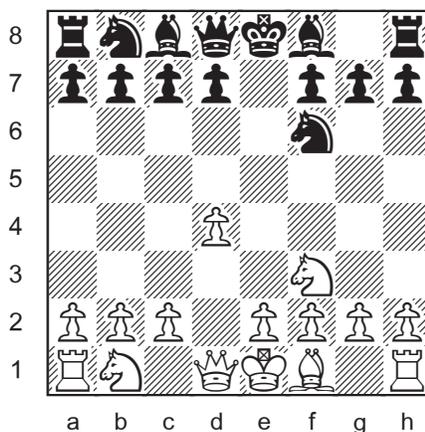
Winning Chess Puzzles For Kids (2006)



1.Nf3 e5 2.Nxe5 Na6 3.Nc6 Rb8 4.Nxb8 Nxb8

Mysterious happenings on b8.

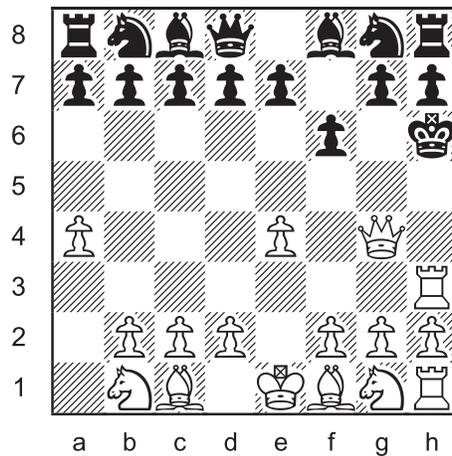
Proof Game 71



1.d3 e5 2.Bf4 exf4 3.d4 f3 4.Nxf3 Nf6

Tempo move with white d-pawn. Capture on vacant f4 square.

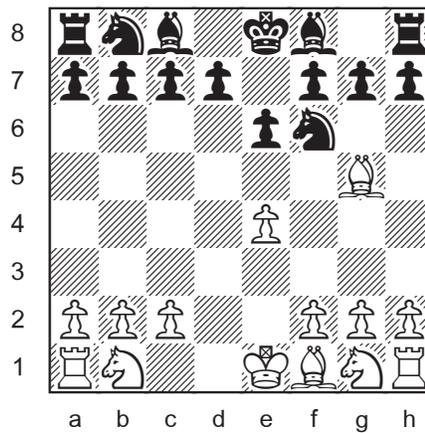
Synthetic Game 32



1.a4 f6 2.Ra3 Kf7 3.e4 Kg6 4.Qg4+ Kh6 **5.Rh3#**

The first three white moves can be played in different orders. Black can also play 1...f5.

Longer Proof Game 37 (4.5 moves)

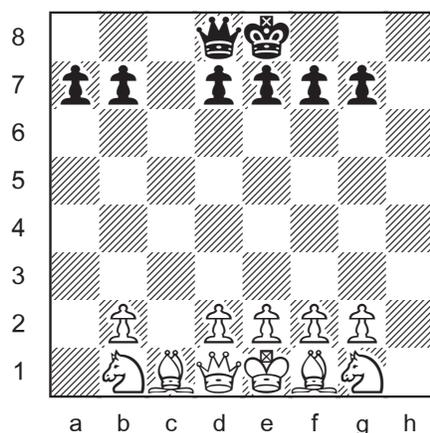


1.e4 e6 2.Qf3 Qg5 3.Qf6 Qxd2+ 4.Bxd2 Nxf6 5.Bg5

A double move by the white bishop helps conceal where the queens were captured.



Longer Proof Game 38 (10.5 moves)

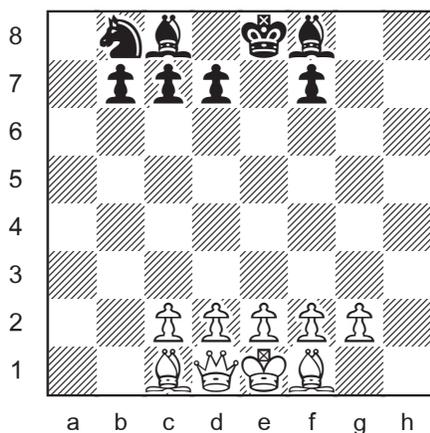


1.a4 Nc6 2.a5 Nxa5 3.Rxa5 h5 4.Rxh5 c5
5.Rxc5 Rxh2 6.Rxc8 Rh8 7.Rxh8 Rxc8
8.Rxg8 Rxc2 9.Rxf8+ Kxf8 10.Qxc2 Ke8 11.Qd1

Tricky play by all four rooks.

The last move in a homebase proof game is necessarily a *switchback*.

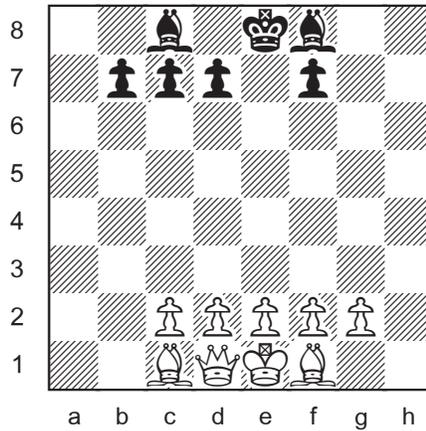
Longer Proof Game 39 (10.5 moves)



1.Nf3 e5 2.Nxe5 Qh4 3.Nc6 Qxh2 4.Nxa7 Rxa7
5.Rxh2 Rxa2 6.Rxh7 Rxa1 7.Rxh8 Rxb1
8.Rxg8 Rxb2 9.Rxg7 Bxg7 10.Bxb2 Bf8 11.Bc1

The play after 4.Nxa7, once the a-file and h-file are opened, is completely symmetrical.

Longer Proof Game 40 (11.0 moves)

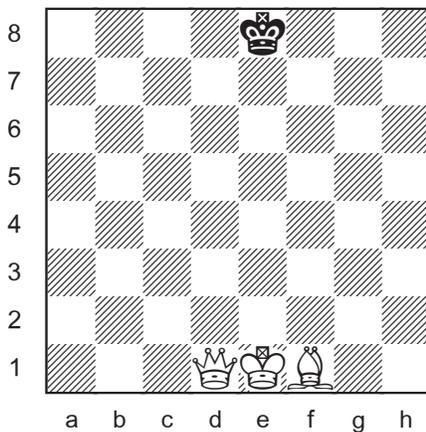


1.Nf3 e5 2.Nxe5 Nc6 3.Nxc6 Qh4 4.Nxa7 Qxh2
5.Rxh2 Rxa7 6.Rxh7 Rxa2 7.Rxh8 Rxa1 8.Rxg8 Rxb1
9.Rxg7 Rxb2 10.Bxb2 Bxg7 11.Bc1 Bf8

A nearly identical twin to 39. Remove Nb8 and add the move 2...Nc6.

Longer Proof Game 41 (16.5 moves)

François Labelle 2004
Problemesis



1.d4 h6 2.Bxh6 f5 3.Bxg7 Bxg7 4.e4 Bxd4 5.Qxd4 Rxh2
6.Qxa7 Rxh1 7.Qxb8 Rxa2 8.Qxc7 Rxb2 9.Qxc8 Rxb1+
10.Rxb1 Rxg1 11.Rxb7 Rxg2 12.Rxd7 Rxf2 13.Rxe7+ Nxe7
14.exf5 Nxf5 15.Qxf5 Rxc2 16.Qxc2 Qd1+ 17.Qxd1

A masterly massacre. Nicely finished with QxQ.

Until next time!

© Jeff Coakley 2017. Illustrations by Antoine Duff. All rights reserved.