

# Chess: When attack is the best defense

## WHEN ATTACK IS THE BEST DEFENSE

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Champion of Australia, 1934-38  
 FLANK ATTACK COUNTERED  
 IN THE CENTER

When a counterattack in the center is possible, a flank attack breaks down almost automatically, even though made against the king. That is the general rule, and it is so well known nowadays that good players do not begin flank attacks unless they have established control of the center or unless the center is well blocked by pawns (e.g., 1 e4 e5 2 d4 d5 3 e5).

We can, however, find examples in master play if we go back to the days before the principle had been discovered. Take the fourth game of the Anderssen-Morphy match of 1858. It is interesting to see how, even in the opening, Anderssen was firmly bent on a king-side attack.

White: Adolf Anderssen. Black: Paul Morphy.  
 Match, Paris, 1858.

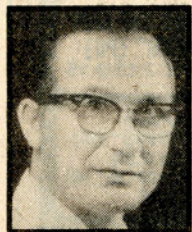
Ruy Lopez

1	e4	e5	16	Be3(f)	Nf6
2	Nf3	Nc6	17	Qd2	Re8(g)
3	Bb5	a6	18	Rd1(h)	Bd5!(i)
4	Ba4	Nf6	19	Ne5	Qd6!(j)
5	d3	Bc5	20	Qc2(k)	Nd4!
6	c3	b5	21	Bd4	Bd4
7	Bc2(a)	d5(b)	22	Nd5	Qe5
8	ed	Nd5	23	Nf6	Qf6
9	h3(c)	0-0	24	Qh7	Kf8(1)
10	0-0	h6(d)	25	Be4	Rad8
11	d4	ed	26	Kh1	Bb2
12	cd	Bb6	27	Rab1	Rd1
13	Nc3	Ndb4	28	Rd1	Qf2
14	Bb1	Be6(e)	29	Qh8	Ke7
15	a3	Nd5	30	Qh7	Be5(m)

31 Bf3 Qg3 32 Kg1 Qg6 33 Wg6 fg 34 Bb7 Rb8! 35 Ba6 c6  
 36 Kf2 Bd6 37 Rd3 Kd7 38 Ke2 Ra8! 39 Bb7 Ra3 40 Bc8 Kc7  
 41 Rd1 Ra2 42 Kf3 Bc5 43 Be6 Rf2 44 Kg3 Rf6 45 Rd7 Kb6  
 46 Bg4 Bd6 47 Kh4 c5 48 Bf3 c4 49 Rg7 Rf4 50 Bg4 c3 51  
 g3 Rg4 52 Resigns.

—From "The Australasian Chess Review," No. 7, July 1942.

(a) The imaginative Anderssen already has in mind the



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attack on the point h7, which actually comes to pass.

(b) The average player will more easily learn to play commonsense chess from the games of Morphy than any other player. They are to be commended to all who find modern games too complex to understand. Steinitz objected to the text move because it left some pawn weaknesses. But Morphy thought it worthwhile for the sake of freeing his game — and that is a lesson which the average player should take well to heart.

(c) Again based on the motif of king-side attack! Anderssen reasons that if he allows Bg4 and then drives it to h5 by h3, then Black will have a bishop to defend his king side.

(d) In order to play . . . Be6 without having to fear Ng5, a precaution frequently taken as a matter of routine even today.

(e) Black could have taken the pawn, but it would have given White the opportunity he wants, to start attacking. So often a weak pawn is better left as a burden to the opponent!

(f) If 16 Nb5, then 16 . . . Nf6!

(g) Obviously, White can start an attack by 18 Bh6. Black cannot prevent this, but he is so well situated centrally, especially after his last move, seizing the open file, that he knows White's attack would not succeed, e.g., 18 Bh6!? Nd4 19 Nd4 (not 19 Qg5 because of 19 . . . Nf5!) Qd4 20 Qg5 Nd7, and the attack has broken down.

(h) Now White really threatens 19 Bh6. Also he has set a clever trap. He wants Black to play 18 . . . Bb3, which would be answered by 19 Rc1. If at once 18 Rc1, then simply 18 . . . Ne7, and 19 Bh6 gh 20 Qh6 fails because of 20 . . . Nf5! But if Black's bishop can first be lured to b3, then this last resource would be impossible. What is Black

to do? He could, it is true, party Black's threat by 18 . . . Ne7, but Morphy finds a much better move.

(i) Counterattack in the center! Nearly 70 years later, Nimzovich stated the general principle that centralization is the normal method of forestalling or defeating a king-side attack. If now 19 Bh6?, then 19 . . . Bf3 20 gf Nd4 completely smashes the "attack." Or if 19 Nd5 Qd5 20 Bh6 gh 21 Qh6, then 21 . . . Ne4, with the same effect. Note the great power of the centralized pieces as compared with the pseudo-attackers on the wing.

(j) Black could win a pawn by 19 . . . Ne5 20 de Re5, but 21 Bb6 cb would render it of no account.

(k) Now White has his long sought attack on the point h7. He could have played 20 Qd3, but prefers to force Black's hand by threatening 21 Nd5, etc. If Black accepts the offered pawn, then he must permit White's queen to enter at h7.

(l) Black can easily stand the check at h7 after all. It is well to remember that it is nearly always harmless if the "g"-pawn is protected, as here. White's attack collapses like a pricked balloon. Centralization has defeated it quite effortlessly.

(m) And Black could now have cut short White's agony by 30 . . . Rd8!, as 31 Rd8 would lead to mate. Observe how all of Anderssen's ingenuity was wasted, because he was all the time violating what is now known as a leading principle of chess strategy: a flank attack must fail if the opponent stands better in the center.

### "NEW" MORPHY GAME

Philip Sergeant's book, "Morphy's Games of Chess," has long been considered the definitive collection of the first U.S. champion's chess games, containing 300 of the 400 known examples of his play (including all tournament, match and exhibition games, most of his casual games at no odds and a considerable number of those played at odds). One of the "missing 100" surfaced in a Spanish text supervised by Alexander Alekhine, showing a rare instance of Morphy's vigorous play as White against the Evan's Gambit Declined.

White: Paul Morphy. Black: H. Levis.

Evan's Gambit

1	e4	e5	15	Nc3	Bc3
2	Nf3	Nc6	16	Qc3	0-0(f)

3	Bc4	Bc5	17	Rae1	Ne8
4	B4(a)	Bb6(b)	18	f4	Qc5
5	0-0	Qe7	19	Kh1	d6
6	a4(c)	Nb4(d)	20	f5(g)	Nf6
7	a5	Bc5	21	Rf3	Qe5
8	c3	Nc6	22	Qd2	Qe7
9	d4	ed	23	Rg3!(h)	Nh5
10	cd	Bb4	24	f6!!(i)	Ng3
11	Ne5!(e)	Ne5	25	hg	gf
12	de	Qe5	26	Qh6	Qd7
13	Qb3	Qe7	27	Qf6	Resigns
14	Bb2	Nf6			

(Annotations from "Ajedrez Hipermoderno," edited by Ricardo Aguilera under the direction of Dr. Alexander Alekhine, Madrid, circa 1944, translated by John Romo, Livermore.)

(a) Morphy, champion of the open game, was particularly fond of the Evan's Gambit. Before him, La Bourdonnais, and after him, Tchigorin, were guardians of the sacred fire.

(b) Respectfully deferring to his opponent's expertise in the gambit accepted.

(c) A flank attack, one of the basic ideas behind this variation.

(d) Judging the moment ripe for taking the proffered pawn. Black could also prevent the threatened loss of a piece by 6 . . . a6 or 6 . . . a5.

(e) By transposition, a very favorable branch of the gambit accepted has been reached for White. The open lines and strong, mobile center ensure ample compensation for a pawn. Now a second pawn sacrifice opens even more lines of attack.

(f) Black has finally managed to castle, but his security is short lived with White's long-range artillery already trained on his new home. White intends a direct king-side assault, which if not sufficient to mate outright will certainly win material. Black's task, though more difficult, is at least more concrete: to defend with all his might, returning excess material as a last resort.

(g) White conducts the attack forcefully and logically.

(h) Threatening 24 Rg7! Kg7 25 Qg5 Kh8 26 Bf6, winning.

(i) The decisive breakthrough sacrifice. Black's resistance is simply swept aside by Morphy's forward momentum.