

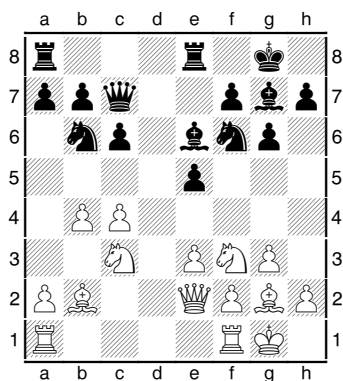
Gungahlin Junior Chess Club

The Middlegame

Once you have finished with the Opening, you reach what is called the Middlegame. The Middlegame is probably the hardest part of a chess game to play, as there are so many different ideas and plans to choose from.

When does it start?

The Middlegame begins where the opening ends. This normally happens when you have developed your minor pieces (Bishop and Knights), castled, and connected your Rooks. The following position is an example of what the start of the Middlegame might look like



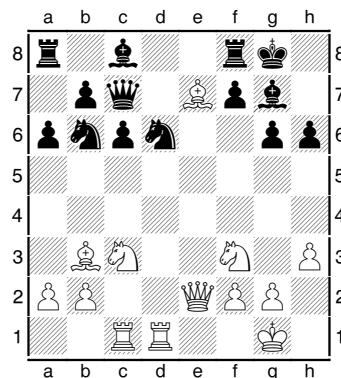
Both sides pieces have come off the back rank, the Kings are tucked away on the g file, and the Rooks have empty squares between them.

What Next?

This is the hard question. Once you have developed all your pieces you need to decide what to do with them. If nothing has gone wrong in the opening for both sides, it is often difficult to quickly checkmate your opponent. Instead you normally have two choices. Either to play for tactics, or to play for position.

Tactical Play

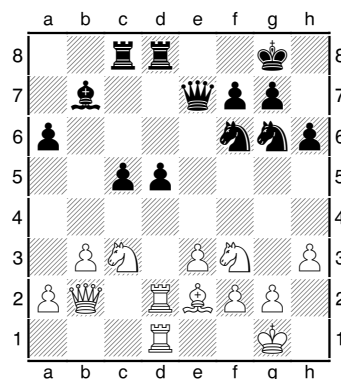
Tactical play is where you try to capture your opponents pieces, while hanging on to yours. This involves targeting weakness in your opponents positions. This weaknesses are usually pawns or pieces that are either undefended, or cannot be guarded properly. Often it is as easy as having more attackers than defenders.



In the above position White has just moved his Bishop to e7. From this square the Bishop attacks both the Rook on f8, and the Knight on d6. While the Knight is defended by the Queen, it is attacked twice (by the Bishop and the Rook on d1). The Rook on f8 is defended twice, but as the White Bishop is worth 2 points less than the Rook, any capture will be in White favour. Whatever Black does, White will gain material.

Positional Play

Sometimes your opponents are very mean, and they don't give you easy targets to attack. This is because they are concentrating on **Positional Play**. This means they are putting their pieces on good, safe squares, waiting for the right moment to attack. Instead of charging in with a bishop and a queen, they organise their pieces so when they do attack, all their pieces help out.



Here both sides have their pieces on their own side of the board. Black is using the pawns on c5 and d5 as a barrier across the centre, stopping White from moving forward. As it turned out, this was enough for Black to win.