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LAMC Chess Week 3
7/2/19

Basic Tactics: Forks and Pins

In chess, a **tactic** is a short sequence of moves that leads to some sort of gain (for example, by using a tactic, you could win one of your opponent's pieces). Tactics can happen in any stage of the game. In today's lecture, we will look at two basic types of tactics: **forks** and **pins**.

I. Concepts & Terms for this Lecture

Before discussing forks and pins, we need to clarify some basic chess terminology.

- 1. Material.** This represents how many total material-points a certain player has (recall the "Chess Piece Values" chart from week 2). A player has more material than his opponent when his total point-count exceeds that of his opponent.
- 2. Attacking.** For the purposes of this lecture, a player only "attacks" a piece if he is threatening to capture it. It is not enough to simply have the option of taking the piece; you must actually be threatening to do it.

II. The Fork

In the real world, a fork is something you eat with. However, a fork can also mean **the division of a road into two or more parts**. Similarly, in chess, a fork occurs when you attack two or more of your opponent's pieces at the same time.

In the example below, the white knight **forks** black's king and rook.

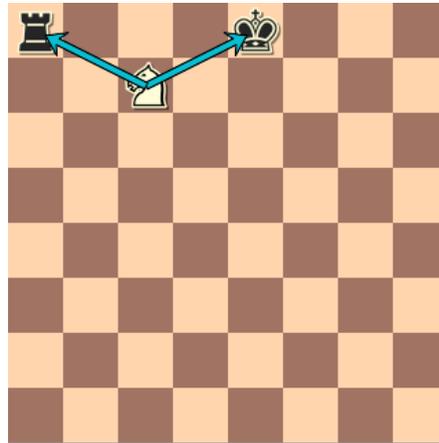


Diagram 1

See if you can find the winning fork in the diagram below.



Diagram 2

*Answer: By playing **1.Qf7+!** white attacks both black's king and rook.*

This is the power of the fork -- black cannot save both of his pieces. After **1...Kh8** **2.Qxe8+** white will most likely deliver checkmate within a few moves.

III. The Pin

It is easiest to describe a pin by immediately showing an example:

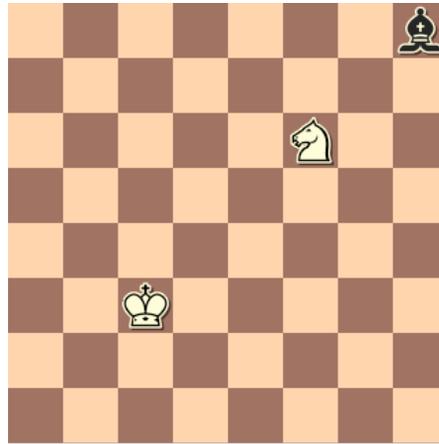


Diagram 3

What do we notice in the diagram above? White's knight is under attack by the black bishop. **It cannot move, because doing so would put white's king in check from black's bishop.** Therefore, we say that the white knight is **pinned**, and that the black bishop is **pinning** it. One of the requirements for a pin is for the piece behind to be of greater value than the piece behind (if it is the other way around, this tactic is termed a skewer -- we will study this in the next lecture).

There are two basic types of pin:

- 1. Absolute pin.** Diagram 3 is an example of an absolute pin: White's knight couldn't move even if it wanted to, because the piece behind it was the king.
- 2. Relative pin.** We will see an example of a relative pin in the next diagram. In this case, the piece behind is any piece other than the king. Then the pinned piece *can* move, but normally doesn't want to, because doing so would expose a piece of greater value to attack.

Diagram 4 shows an example of a relative pin:

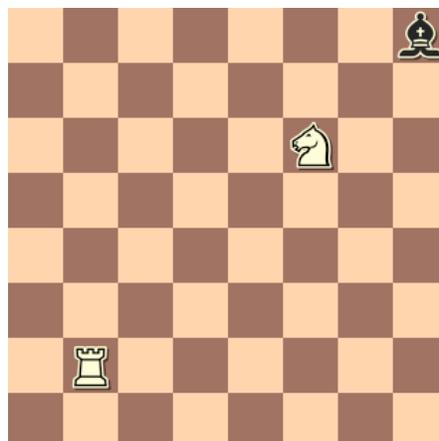


Diagram 4

In this example, white's knight *can* legally move, but doing so would put the white rook under attack.