

Exeter Chess Club: Rooks on ranks and files

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Knights like outposts, bishops like clear diagonals: you could guess that rooks like clear ranks and files. The best rank to put your rook on is the seventh, particularly if the opponent’s king is trapped behind it. A rook on the seventh rank (or ‘on the seventh’ as people sometimes say) can threaten unmoved pawns and with assistance can create mate threats. To get to the seventh the rook will have to move along a file. You can see Znosko-Borovsky doing just that with the c-file in the Illustrative Games. The other use of rooks on files is to attack: we have seen some examples of rooks attacking down the central d- and e-files in the section above on **Attacking the King**, and in the other Illustrative Game we can see Tarrasch making good use of the g-file to attack a king which has castled.

Rooks can be moved into action along the third rank; I include a brisk wins by Keene and Miles. Beginners often develop their rooks by going a4 and Ra3; this is a manoeuvre that you may rediscover as you get on - for example, Petrosian has often used that development against the Benoni, when he has already played a4 to slow up ...b5. This has good and bad points: for example, Miles-Clarke 1976 went **1. d4 d5 2. c4 dxc4 3. f3 f6 4. e3 c5 5. xc4 e6 6. c3 a6 7. a4 cxd4 8. exd4 e7 9. O-O c6 10. e1 b4 11. g5 O-O 12. e5 e8 13. e3** Now, after playing 13. e3 Miles spotted 13. ... , fd5 14. dxd5 dxd5 15. h3 gx5 16. Wh5 but wasn’t convinced that it worked (16. ... , Wf6!?) - Clarke also thought about it but avoided it. It does show clearly some of the risks and opportunities of

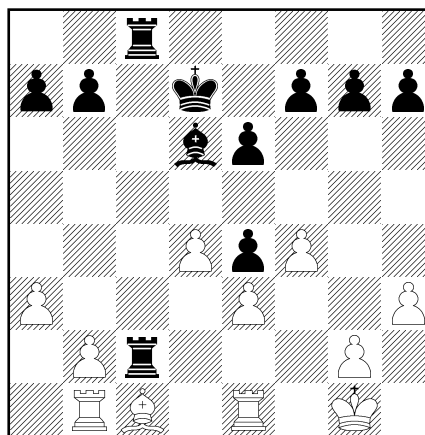
the Re3-h3 idea.

Rs can also support knight outposts, so that - in a position like the diagram above in the section on outposts - if a knight on d5 is exchanged, a rook from d1 may recapture, still putting pressure on the pawn on d6.

1 van vliet-znosko-borovsky 1907

1.d4 d5 2.e3 c5 3.c3 e6 4. d3 c6 5.f4 f6 6. d2 Wc7 ! 7. dgf3 ?! 7. ... , cxd4! 8.cxd4 db4 9. db1 d7 10.a3 c8 11.O-O db5 12. e1 c2 13. dx2 Wxc2 14. Wxc2 c2 Lovely smooth stuff from Z-B.

15.h3 d6 16. db1 de4 17. dfd2 d3 18. dx4 dx4 19. d2 d7 20. dx4 dxe4 21. b1 hc8 Monster rooks!



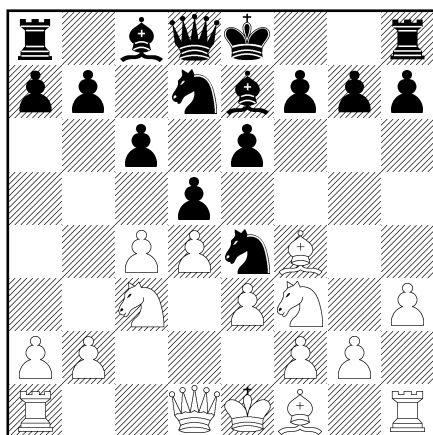
22.b4 R 8c3 23. f1 c6 24. b2 b3 25. e2 Wxe2 26. dx2 db5 27. dd2 da4 28. de2 a5 29. df2 axb4 30. axb4 dx4 31. de1 db5 ! 32. dd2 da3 33. dc2 Wxb2+ 34. Wxb2+ dx2 35. dx2 dc4 36. dc2 b5 0-1

[Event “rooks on ranks and files”][Site “- , Leipzig”][Date “1894.??.”][Round “?”]

2 [White “tarrasch”][Black “von scheve”][Result “1-0”]

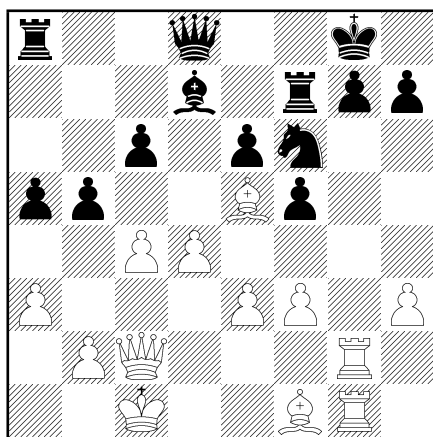
1.d4 d5 2.c4 e6 3.♞c3 ♞f6 4.♞f3 ♟e7 5.♟f4 c6
 6.e3 ♞bd7 7.h3 ♞e4 Tarrasch: ” *The decisive error. After the exchange of Knights, Black’s capturing Pawn becomes weak, and needs protection by ...f5. It is then attacked by f3, forcing Black to exchange and open up the Knight file for White. Thereupon there ensues a combined attack of White’s Queen, both Rooks and the Queen Bishop against the Knight Pawn (the keystone of the Castled position) an attack which is irresistible.*”

He adds modestly: “*I know of no game in all the chess literature in which it is possible to conceive of so detailed a plan, leading almost to mate, and in which the remaining 20 moves lead up to a catastrophe.*”



8.♞×e4 d×e4 9.♞d2 ♟b4 10.a3 ♟×d2+ 11.♞×d2
 O-O 12.♞c2 f5 13.♟d6 ♟e8 14.O-O-O Nf6
 15.♟e5 ♟d7 16.f3 e×f3 17.g×f3 b5 18.♟g1 ♟f8
 19.♟d2 ♟f7 20.♟dg2 a5

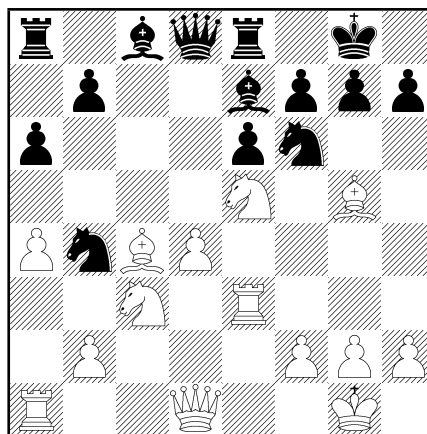
The prediction fulfilled.



21.♞f2 ♞e8 22.♟g5 ♟e7 23.♞h4 ♞f6 24.♞h6
 ♟a7 25.♟d6 ♞×d6 26.♟×g7+ ♟f8 27.♟×h7+
 ♟e7 28.♟×f7+ ♟×f7 29.♟g7+ ♟f8 30.♞×f6+
 1-0

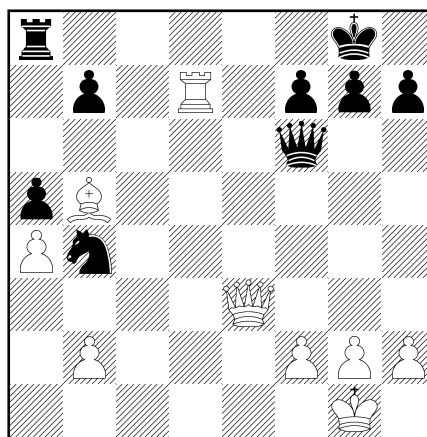
3 miles-clarke 1977

1. d4 d5 2. c4 d×c4 3. ♞f3 ♞f6 4. e3 c5 5. ♟×c4
 e6 6. ♞c3 a6 7. a4 c×d4 8. e×d4 ♟e7 9. O-O
 ♞c6 10. ♟e1 ♞b4 11. ♟g5 O-O 12. ♞e5 ♟e8
 13. ♟e3



13. ..., ♟d7 After playing 13.♟e3 Miles spotted
 13. ..., ♞fd5 14.♞×d5 ♞×d5 15.♟h3 ♟×g5
 16.♞h5 but wasn't convinced that it worked (16. ..., ♞f6!?) - Clarke also thought about it but avoided it. It does show the risks and opportunities of the Re3-h3 idea

14. ♞b3 a5 15. ♟×f6 ♟×f6 16. ♞×d7 ♞×d7
 17. ♟b5 ♞c6 18. d5 thematic 18. ..., e×d5 19.
 ♞×d5 ♞d6 20. ♟d1 ♟×e3 21. ♞×e3 ♞b4 22.
 ♞×f6+ ♞×f6 23. ♟d7 a crushing entrance



23. ..., ♖×b2 24. ♗e7 h6 25. ♗×f7+ ♘h8 26. h4 ♗a1+ 27. ♘h2 b6 28. g3 ♚c8 29. ♚e7 ♗d4 30. ♙d7 1-0 miles-clarke 1976

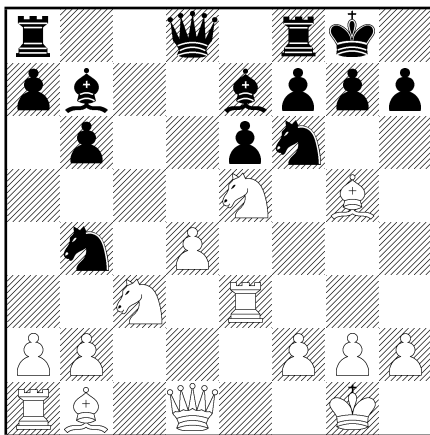
(...Re8+ Rxe8; Qxe8+ Kh7; Bf5+ mates)

Here's Tony Miles on the sharp end of the same idea.

[Event "Rook on the third rank"] [Site "hastings"] [Date "1975.??.?"] [Round "??"]

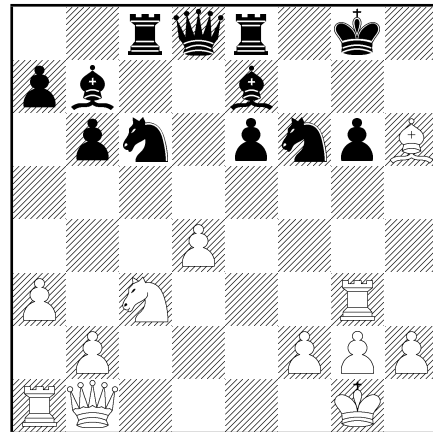
4 [White "keene, r.]" [Black "miles, aj"] [Result "1-0"]

1. c4 e6 2. d4 d5 3. ♘c3 ♘f6 4. ♘f3 c5 5. c×d5 ♘×d5 6. e3 c×d5 7. e×d5 ♙e7 (the position actually arose by a different move order) 8. ♙d3 O-O 9. O-O ♘c6 10. ♚e1 ♘f6 (10. ..., ♘cb4 11. ♙b1 ♘f6 12. ♙g5 ♙d7 13. ♘e5 is similar to the game) 11. ♙g5 11. ..., ♘b4 (right idea against the isolated d-pawn, but too early) 12. ♙b1 b6 13. ♘e5 ♙b7 14. ♚e3 This is the key move of the game, and thematic for this section. White gets away brilliantly with it in this game, but obviously the downside of this manoeuvre is that the Rook is very exposed once it is committed to the attack. The play now becomes sharp and tactical; the strategy is decided.



14. ..., g6 (or 14. ..., ♘g4 15. ♙×e7 ♘×e3 16. ♙×h7+ ♘h8 17. ♗h5 ♘g4 18. ♙g6+ ♘h6) 15. ♚g3 (15. ♚g3 ♚e8 16. ♙h6 ♙f8 17. ♙×f8 ♚×f8 18. ♗d2 +- keene 18. ..., ♚c8 19. ♘×g6 h×g6 20. ♙×g6 f×g6 21. ♗h6 ♘f7 22. ♚×g6 ♚g8) 15. ..., ♚c8 (or 15. ..., ♘c6 16. ♙h6 ♗×d4 17. ♗×d4 ♘×d4 18. ♙×f8 ♘×f8 19. h3 ♚d8) 16. ♙h6 ♚e8 17. a3 ♘c6 18. ♘×g6 h×g6 19. ♙×g6 (19. ♙×g6 ♙d6 20. ♙×f7+ ♘×f7 21. ♚g7+ ♘f8 22. ♗f3) 19. ..., f×g6 (

19. ..., ♙f8 20. ♙c2+ ♘h8 21. ♙×f8 ♚×f8 22. ♗d2 ♘g8 23. ♚h3+ ♘g7 24. ♚h7+ ♘f6 25. d5)



20. ♗b1 (20. ♗c2 doesn't quite work as well) 20. ..., ♘e5 21. d×e5 ♘e4 22. ♘×e4 ♘h7 23. ♘f6+ ♙×f6 24. ♗×g6+ ♘h8 25. ♙g7+ ♙×g7 26. ♗×g7# 1-0