

# Mini-Lessons from Short Games of the 21st Century

by IM Nikolay Minev

## #2: The Intermediate Move

The intermediate move is a powerful tactical tool, an unexpected move that suddenly changes the situation in our favor and very often decides the game. The idea can be used in either attack or defense. The ability to see and predict the possibility for intermediate moves is an evidence for high level of tactical skill.

The three games below are from tournament practice, and are very instructive examples of this topic.

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**D18 M. Sjoberg – Rubene**  
Stockholm 1999-2000

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**1.d4 d5 2.c4 c6 3.Nf3 Nf6 4.Nc3 dxc4 5.a4 Bf5 6.e3 e6 7.Bxc4 Bb4 8.O-O Nbd7 9.Qb3**

More often used in practice is 9.Qe2.

**9...a5 10.Nh4 Bg4 11.f3 Nd5**

The theory recommends 11...Bh5

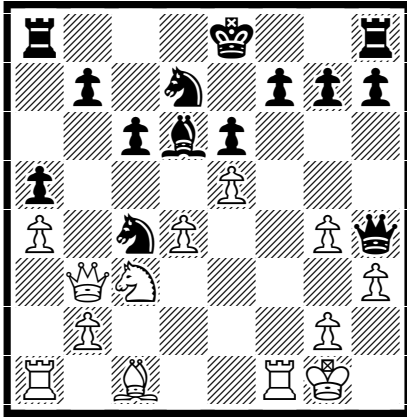
**12.f3g4**

This is much more interesting than 12.g3 Bh3 13.Ng2 O-O.

**12...Qxh4 13.e4 Bd6**

If 13...N5f6 14.h3 h4 15.g5 Ng4 16.Bf4!

**14.h3 N5b6 15.e5 Nxc4**



### 16.Ne4!!

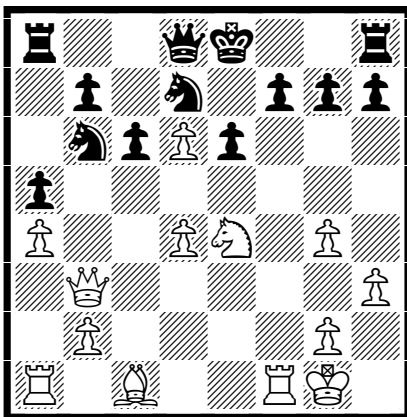
A surprising intermediate move. Instead, the expected line is 16.Qxc4 Bb8 17.Ne4 Qd8 18.Bg5 Qb6, where Black is still fighting. Now the threat is 17.Bg5! which forces Black to choose between bad alternatives.

### 16...Qd8

If 16...Bxe5? 17.dxe5 Ncxe5 18.Bg5, or 16...Be7 17.Qxc4 h5 (17...h6 18.Bd2, threatening 19.Be1) 18.Bg5! Bxg5 19.Nd6+ Kd8 20.Rxf7 Rf8 21.Qxe6 Rxf7 22.Qe8+ Kc7 23.Qxa8 with a strong attack.

### 17.exd6 Ncb6

Also after 17...Ndb6 18.Bg5 Qd7 19.Rac1 White should win.



### 18.Rxf7! Nd5

If 18...Kxf7 19.Ng5+ Kg6 20.Qd3+ Kf6 21.Qf3+ and White wins.

**19.Rxg7 1-0**

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**B18 H. Toufighi – P. Long**

Al Ain 2008

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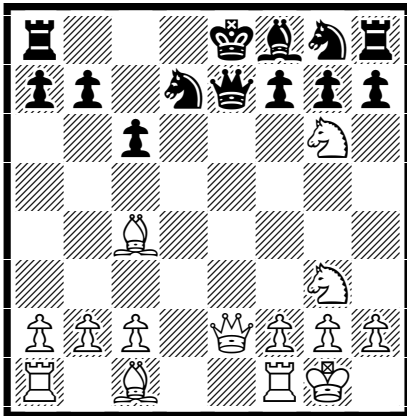
**1.e4 c6 2.d4 d5 3.Nc3 dxe4 4.Nxe4 Bf5 5.Ng3 Bg6 6.Bc4 e5**

Very rare, almost unknown, continuation.

**7.Qe2!?**

Not so clear is 7.Nf3 exd4 8.Nxd4 Bc5 9.Be3 Nd7.

**7...Qxd4 8.Nf3 Qd6 9.Nxe5 Qe7 10.O-O Nd7 11.Nxg6**



**11...Qxe2??**

Overlooking the opponent's intermediate reply, which immediately decides the game. Obligatory was 11...hxg6.

**12.Bxf7+! 1-0**

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**B22 A. Gattas – Si. Oliveira**  
Brazil (ch)-Porto Alegre 2008

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**1.e4 c5 2.c3 Nf6 3.e5 Nd5 4.d4 cxd4 5.Nf3 Nc6 6.cxd4 d6 7.exd6!?**

One of the most interesting and least analyzed continuations.

**7...e6**

Instead 7...Qxd6 is more risky.

**8.Nc3 Nxc3 9.bxc3 Bxd6 10.Bd3 O-O!**

In the game Minev-Korchnoi, Oslo 1954, there followed 10...Be7 11.O-O O-O 12.Qe2 Bf6 13.Re1 Qd5 14.Bf4 with slightly better chances to White.

**11.Qe2?**

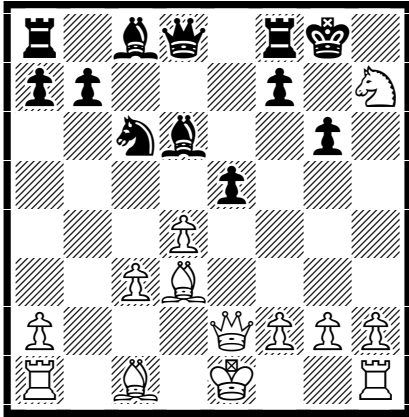
Here the typical sacrifice 11.Bxh7+? is a mistake because of 11...Kxh7 12.Ng5+ Kg6 13.Qg4 f5 14.Qh4 Rh8, but the move in the game waste of time. Correct is 11.O-O and Black can not advance 11...e5? 12.dxe4 Nxe5 13.Nxe5 Bxe5 14.Bxh7+! Kxh7 15.Qh5+ Kg8 16.Qxe5.

**11...e5! 12.Ng5?**

White initiates a combination which is suspicious because first his King is still in the center, and more importantly, because of the overlooked intermediate move that follows, ruining his tactical idea. Correct is 12.O-O, but already Black stands better.

**12...g6 13.Nxh7**

The idea behind the sacrifice is 13...Kxh7 14.Qh5+ Kg8 15.Bxg6 fxg6 16.Qxg6+ and White has at least a draw.



**13...e4!**

An unexpected intermediate move, which decides the game. This deserves to be remembered.

**14.Bxe4**

If 14.Qxe4 then not 14...Re8?? 15.Nf6+! but 14...Bf5 or simply 14...Kxh7 and Black wins.

**14...Kxh7 15.Qh5+ Kg8 16.Bxg6 Qe8+! 0-1**

For if 17.Be3 fxg6.