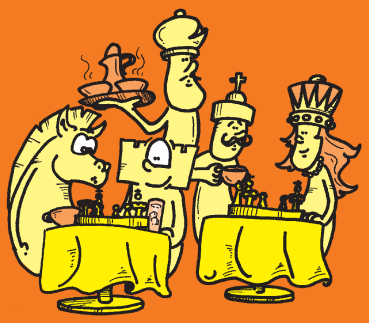


THE PUZZLING SIDE OF CHESS

Jeff Coakley

PROOF GAMES: SWITCHBACK CITY

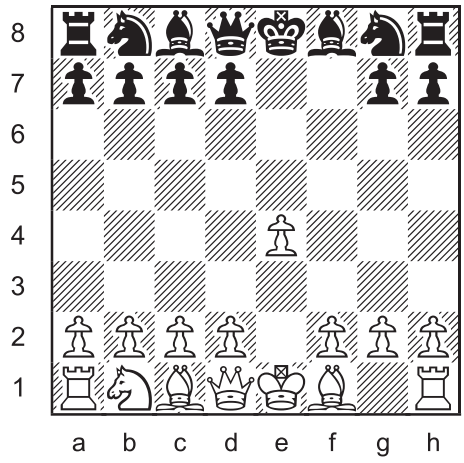
number 77 December 19, 2014

The task in a *proof game* is to show how a given position can be reached in a legal game.

The puzzles in this column have a *move stipulation*. The position must be reached in a precise number of moves, no more and no less. With one exception, they are proof games in 4.0 which means four moves by each side.

There is a distinct lack of strategy in these games. But the moves are legal.

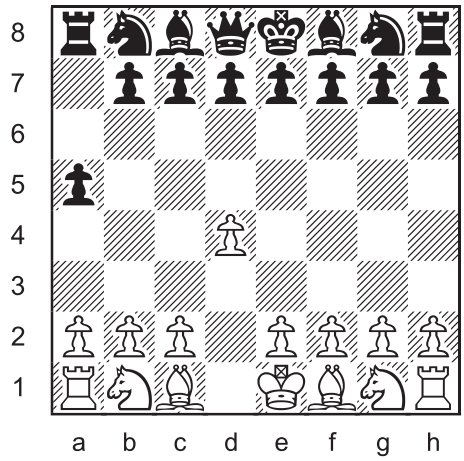
Proof Game 37



The diagrammed position, with White to play, was reached in a game after each player made exactly four moves. Can you figure out how?

A *switchback* is a move in a chess problem where a piece returns to a square that it previously stood on. This tactic can be especially deceptive when the piece goes back to its starting square.

Proof Game 38

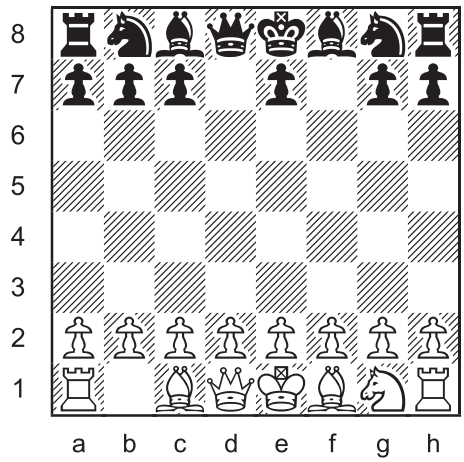


This position was reached after Black's fourth turn. What were the moves?

Switchbacks are a common occurrence in proof games. Sometimes they almost seem like a mandatory ingredient.

The next problem is a *homebase* proof game by Canadian composer Cornel Pacurar. As in the first puzzle, all of the black pieces are on their original squares. So we know that the last move was a switchback to the 8th rank. But which piece?

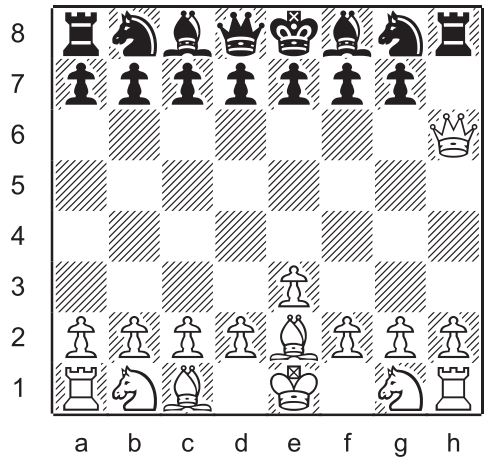
Proof Game 39



This position was reached after Black's fourth turn. What were the moves?

Let's switch back now to 2004, with a holiday puzzle from *ChessBase.com*. This problem and the longer one that follows are by French composer Joachim Iglesias.

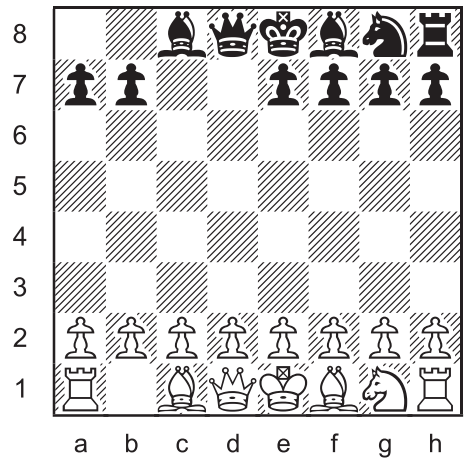
Proof Game 40



This position was reached after Black's fourth turn. What were the moves?

Most proof games on *The Puzzling Side of Chess* are four moves long, an appealing length for prospective solvers. But, if you're up to the challenge, here's something to wrack your brains over.

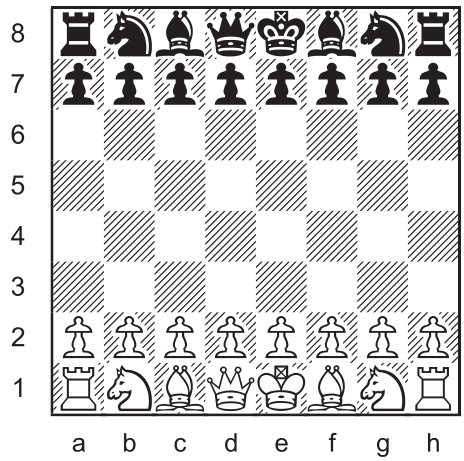
Longer Proof Game 09 (6.0 moves)



This position was reached after Black's sixth turn. What were the moves?

Each column on proof games concludes with a *synthetic game*. Instead of finding the move sequence that leads to a given position, the task is to compose a game that ends with a particular move.

Synthetic Game 10



Compose a game that ends with the move **4...e4#**.

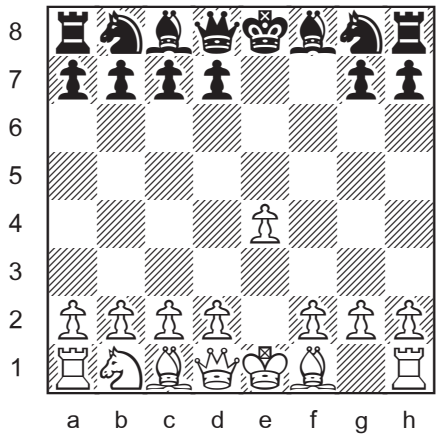
SOLUTIONS

PDF hyperlinks. You can advance to the solution of any puzzle by clicking on the underlined title above the diagram. To return to the puzzle, click on the title above the solution diagram.

Proof Game 37

J. Coakley 2014

Chesscafe.com



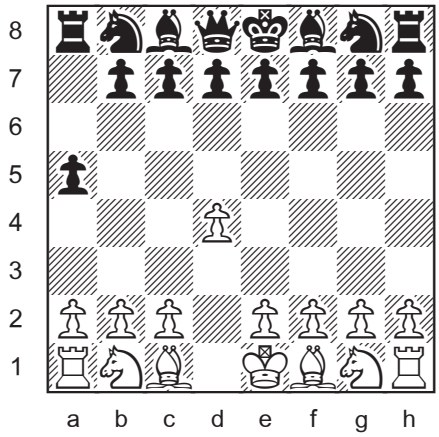
1.Nf3 e5 2.Nxe5 Ke7 3.Nxf7 Kxf7 4.e4 Ke8

The black king takes care of the tricky business in this puzzle, with a tempo move and a switchback.

Proof Game 38

J. Coakley 2010

Winning Chess Puzzles For Kids Volume 2



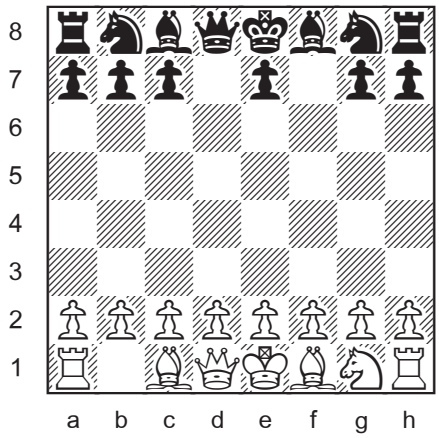
1.d3 a6 2.Qd2 a5 3.Qh6 Nxh6 4.d4 Ng8

Both sides waste a tempo with pawn moves. And the black knight carries out the obligatory switchback.

Proof Game 39

Cornel Pacurar 2004

Internet Mailing List



1.Nc3 d5 2.Nxd5 f6 3.Nxf6+ Kf7 4.Ne8 Kxe8

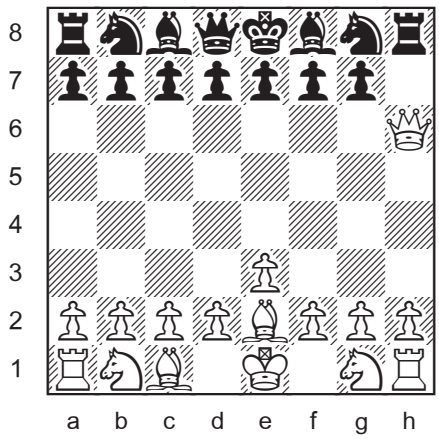
Another switchback by the black king. This time with *Orbán effect,* capturing on its original square. See column 3.

A *homebase* proof game is one in which all the pieces are on their starting squares (or at least they appear to be).

Proof Game 40

Joachim Iglesias 2004

ChessBase.com



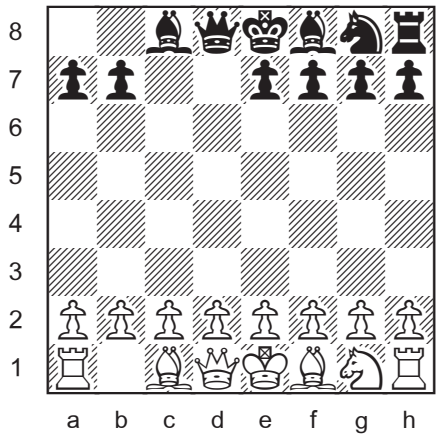
1.e3 h5 2.Qxh5 Rh6 3.Be2 Rh7 4.Qh6 Rh8

An unusual tempo loss and switchback by the black rook.

Longer Proof Game 09 (6.0 moves)

Joachim Iglesias 2004

Phénix



1.Nc3 d5 2.Nxd5 Nd7 3.Nb6 Ndf6 4.Nxa8 Kd7
5.Nxc7 Ne8 6.Nxe8 Kxe8

The obvious question: “Where was the white knight captured?”

The truly difficult question: “Where was the black knight captured?”

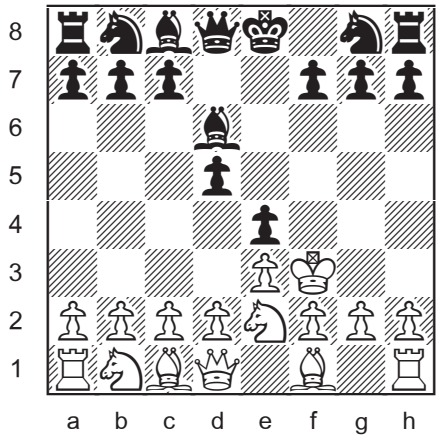
Amazingly, they both met their fate on the same square: e8.

An extraordinary homebase proof game. With Orbán effect!

For a list of longer proof games, see column 64.

Synthetic Game 10

George Jelliss 1981



1.e3 e5 2.Ke2 d5 3.Kf3 Bd6 4.Ne2 **e4#**

A pleasing game by a British authority on shortest mates.

There are many solutions to the task.

The following two lines by British composer George Jelliss (*Synthetic Games* 1998) probably date back to 1981 in *En Passant* magazine (National Correspondence Chess Club).

1.e3 d5 2.Ke2 Qd6 3.Kf3 e5 4.Be2 e4#
1.e3 e5 2.Ke2 Nf6 3.Kf3 Bd6 4.Be2 e4#

American mathematician Richard Stanley (1996 *retro mailing list*) provides a unique 4.0 proof game ending with 4...e4#.

1.e3 e5 2.Ke2 Qh4 3.Kf3 f6 4.Be2 e4#

Similar proof games exist with 3...Ke8, 3...Ke7, 3...Ne7, 3...Be7, 3...Nf6, or 3...g5.

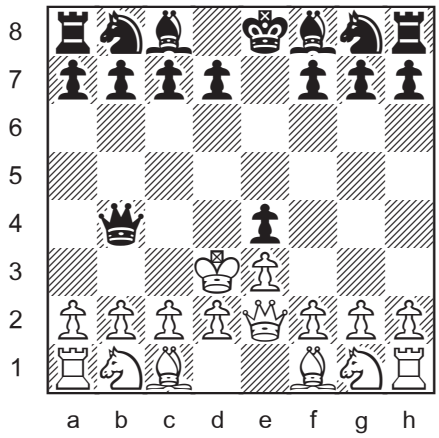
Here are three more lines with the king getting mated on f3. In each case, White's fourth move can be 4.Be2, 4.Ne2, or 4.Qe2.

1.e3 f5 2.Ke2 e5 3.Kf3 Qg5 4.Qe2 e4#
1.e3 e6 2.Ke2 e5 3.Kf3 Qh4 4.Ne2 e4#
1.e3 Na6 2.Ke2 e5 3.Kf3 Qh4 4.Be2 e4#

The king can also be mated on d3.

1.e3 e5 2.Ke2 Qe7 3.Kd3 Qb4 4.Qe2 e4#

Another unique 4.0 proof game. But way too easy.



The puzzle can also be posed this way:
Compose the shortest game that ends with the black e-pawn giving mate.

Until next time!