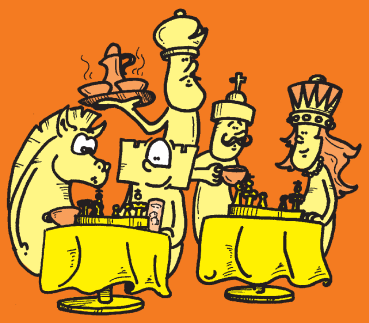


THE PUZZLING SIDE OF CHESS

Jeff Coakley

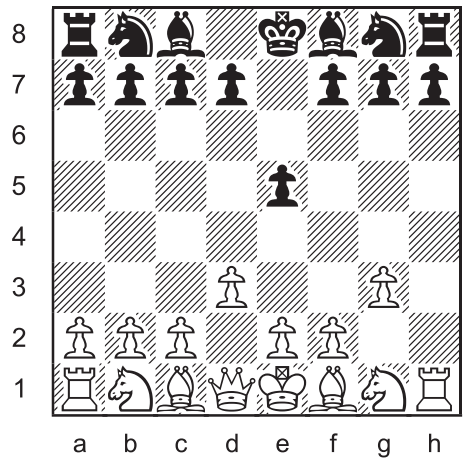
PROOF GAMES: How Did It Go?

number 129 December 24, 2016

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. The first two problems are proof games in 4.0 which means four moves by each side.

The positions may be paradoxical, and the strategy illogical, but the moves are legal.

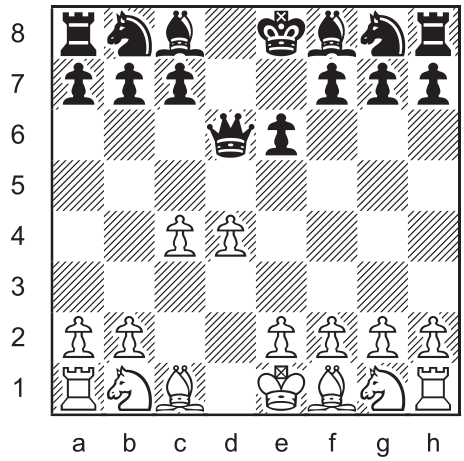
Proof Game 63



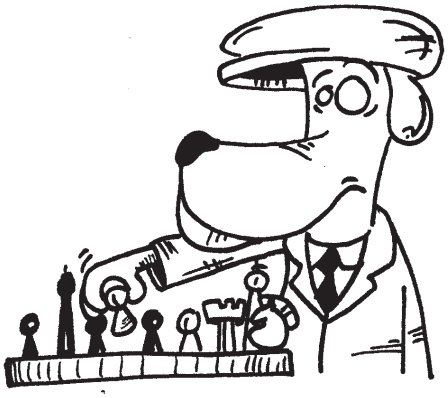
This position, with White to play, was reached in a game after each player made exactly four moves. What were the moves?

Proof game trivia. The earliest known proof game is by Sam Loyd, published by the *New York Clipper* in 1895. The only pieces on the board were two kings! The “massacre” was achieved in 17.0 moves.

Proof Game 64

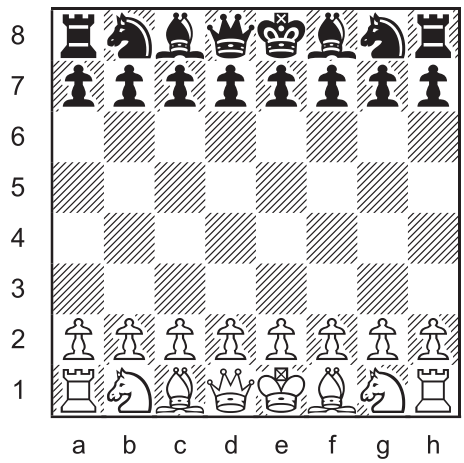


This position was reached after Black's fourth turn. What were the moves?



A *synthetic game* is similar to a proof game. But 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.

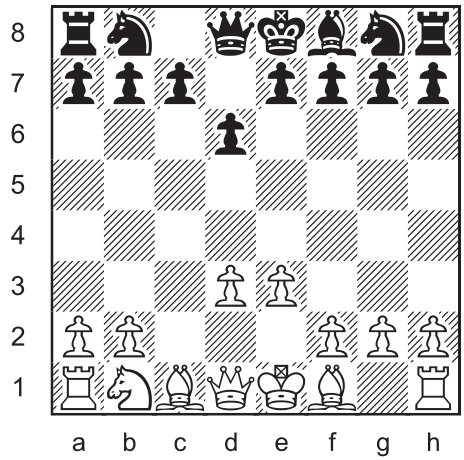
Synthetic Game 28



Compose a game that ends with the move **4...d4#**.

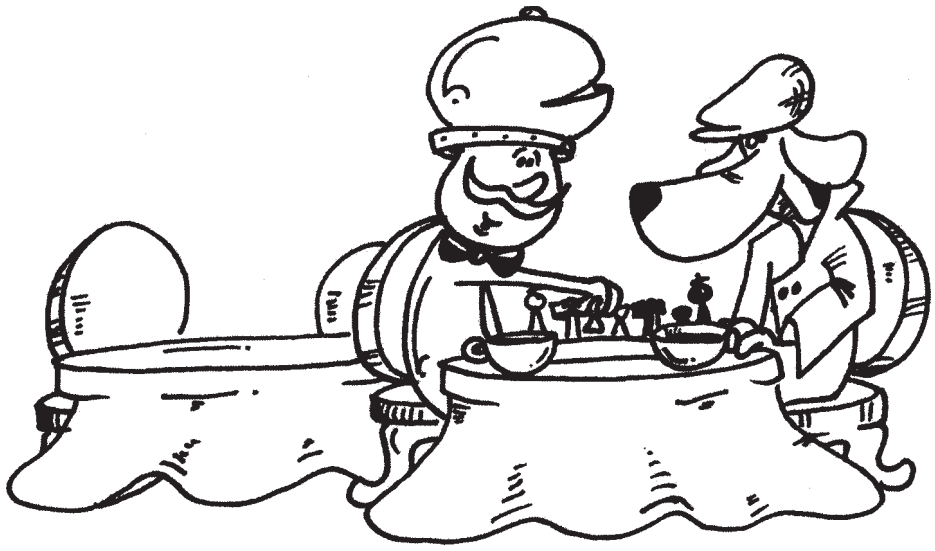
The next proof game is length 4.5. On the *Puzzling Side*, anything more than 4.0 is called “longer”.

Longer Proof Game 28 (4.5 moves)



This position was reached after White’s fifth turn. What were the moves?

The Conundrums of Kenora



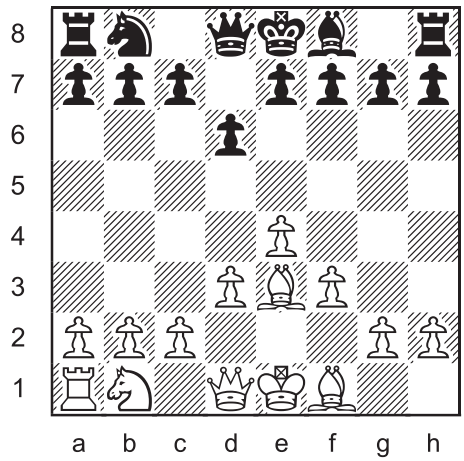
The cafe was closed for the night, but as sometimes happened, Maurice asked Harmonius Hound to stick around. After a long day serving customers, the hard-working waiter liked to relax awhile over drinks and a chessboard. Occasionally they played a game, but usually Harmonius had a new problem or two for them to look at.

After a couple cups of Irish coffee and a rather easy mate in three, Maurice suggested something more challenging.

“Tell me, Harmonius, what was the toughest case you ever solved?”

It didn’t take much pondering for him to respond. “Well, my friend, there are many to choose from, but let me tell you about a case that combined two mysteries in a single investigation. It took place at a little town called Kenora in northwest Ontario.” And with that brief introduction, the ace detective set up the following position.

Longer Proof Game 29 (8.0 moves)



This position was reached after Black’s eighth turn. What were the moves?

Harmonius explained, “It was a calm night at the local pub. But as sometimes happened, a dispute arose. A pair of cantankerous old fogeys were at the point of fisticuffs, apparently because of this chess problem. However, as I learned later, the roots of their animosity ran much deeper.”

The hound paused for a sip of coffee and a bite of leftover stew, then continued. “No one was quite sure how the fight started or where the position came from. But the police were called in, and the two angry men were carted off to jail, charged with disturbing the peace. That’s when the authorities approached me, hoping I could resolve the chess aspect of the situation. Of course, I was only too happy to lend a hand.”

“The problem proved to be much trickier than expected. The given position must occur exactly after Black’s eighth turn. Not a move sooner, not a move later.

[*Spoiler alert. The next page gives away essential and perhaps unwanted clues.*]

“I succeeded fairly quickly at finding a solution in 7.5 moves. The main task was determining the fate of the missing white rook.” Having said that, Harmonius reset the pieces and played out the following line.

1.e4 d6 2.Bc4 Bg4 3.Ne2 Bxe2 4.Rf1 Bxf1 5.Bxf1 Nf6 6.d3 Ng4 7.f3 Ne3 8.Bxe3

“Two captures on f1, white rook and black bishop, are the key. It’s also possible to capture the black knight on the same square.”

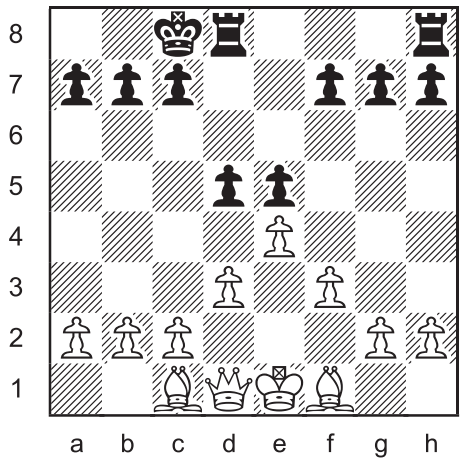
1.e4 d6 2.d3 Bg4 3.Ne2 Bxe2 4.Bxe2 Nf6 5.Rf1 Nh5 6.f3 Ng3 7.Be3 Nxf1 8.Bxf1

A sip of the Irish, followed by an observation. “But the problem remains. Black must make the final move. That extra tempo is the mystery. You’ll never guess where it’s hiding.”

The hound was right. Maurice couldn’t guess, and he was suitably impressed when shown the solution. So much so that he brought out another bottle of his finest.

When he returned to the table, Harmonius had already set up the next position. Very similar to the first problem, with a longer stipulation and white rooks missing from both corners.

Longer Proof Game 30 (12.0 moves)



This position was reached after Black’s twelfth turn. What were the moves?

Harmonius set the stage. “It turns out that the old fogeys were actually arguing about two proof games. Though again, it’s not clear why. But lucky for us, they were. Otherwise we might have called it a night already.” And then, with a houndish grin, “Say, Maurice, is there any more of that stew?”

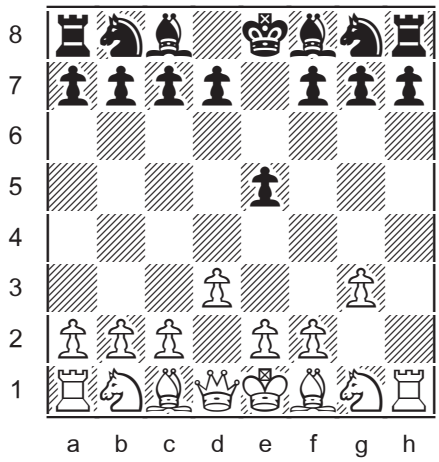
SOLUTIONS

All proof games by J. Coakley, *Puzzling Side of Chess* (2016).

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.

Archives. Other columns with similar problems can be found in the Puzzling Side archives.

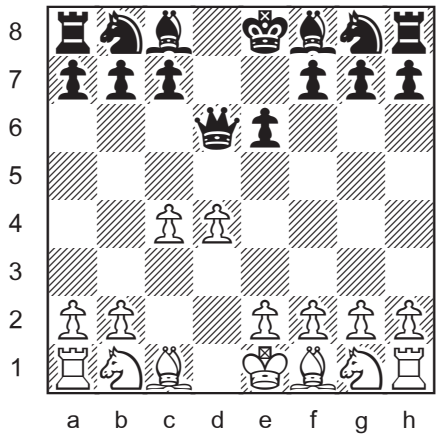
Proof Game 63



1.g4 e6 2.g5 Qxg5 3.d3 Qg3 4.hxg3 e5

Deceptive white g-pawn, plus a black pawn tempo move.

Proof Game 64



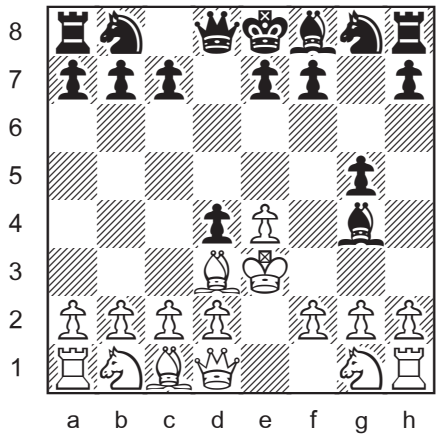
1.c4 e6 2.Qa4 Qe7 3.Qxd7+ Qxd7 4.d4 Qd6

Black queen shuffle.

Synthetic Game 28

George Jelliss 1981

En Passant (National Correspondence Chess Club)



1.e4 d5 2.Ke2 Bg4+ 3.Ke3 g5 4.Bd3 **d4#**

Other move orders are possible. Black can also play 3...e5 or 3...Qd6.

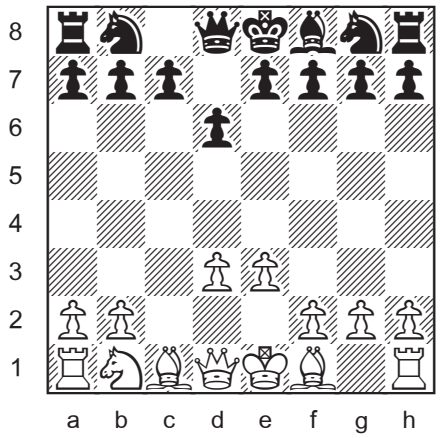
There are three other mating patterns beginning 1.d3.

1.d3 d5 2.Kd2 Qd7 3.Ke3 Qg4 4.Nd2 d4#

1.d3 d5 2.Kd2 Qd7 3.Kc3 Qa4 4.Bd2 d4#

1.d3 d5 2.Kd2 a5 (or 2...e5 or 2...Nc6) 3.Kc3 Be6 4.Qd2 d4#

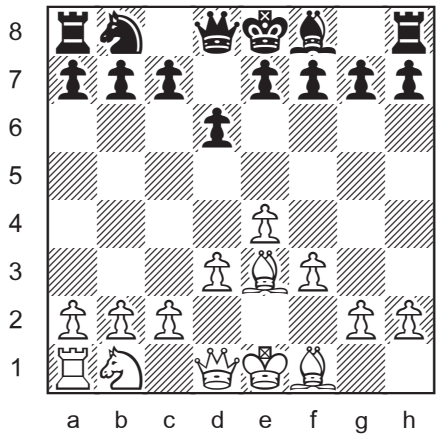
Longer Proof Game 28 (4.5 moves)



1.e3 d6 2.Ne2 Bf5 3.Nec3 Bxc2 4.d3 Bxb1 5.Nxb1

Impostor white knight.

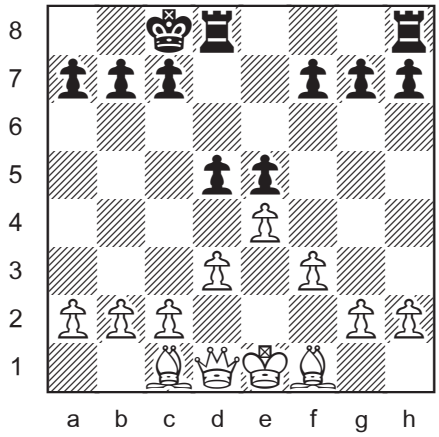
Longer Proof Game 29 (8.0 moves)



1.e4 Na6 2.Bxa6 d6 3.Ne2 Bg4 4.Rf1 Bxe2
5.f3 Bxf1 6.Bxf1 Nf6 7.d3 Nd7 8.Be3 Nb8

The impostor knight on b8 provides the necessary tempo for the final move. Orbán effect (*when a piece captures on its original square*) by the bishop on f1.

Longer Proof Game 30 (12.0 moves)

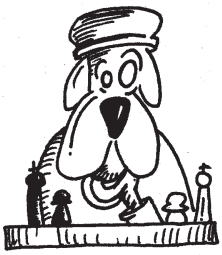


1.e4 Na6 2.Bxa6 d5 3.Ne2 Bg4 4.Rf1 Bxe2
5.f3 Bxf1 6.Bxf1 e5 7.d3 Bb4+ 8.Nd2 Bxd2+
9.Bxd2 Nh6 10.Bxh6 Qg5 11.Rc1 Qxc1 12.Bxc1 0-0-0

Vanishing rooks, double Orbán effect, and long castling. Fun stuff, and ridiculously tough to solve.

“So, Harmonius, what were you doing in Kenora anyway?”

“Oh, I went there to watch the huskies race. My cousin is lead dog on a champion sled.”



Kenora

Located in the southwestern corner of Northwest Ontario, overlooking Lake of the Woods on the Trans-Canada Highway, 200 km east of Winnipeg. Population 15,000.

The town was originally called Rat Portage, and was part of Manitoba until 1889, when the provincial boundaries were changed.

The Kenora Thistles won the Stanley Cup in 1907. Yes, the professional hockey Stanley Cup.

Husky the Muskie, symbolic sculpture of Kenora

An annual dog sled race is held each spring in Kenora, called *Mushin' for Mutts*. A different kind of husky.

Until next time!