

THE MARTIAN SYSTEM IN CHESS

This system is for beginners in chess, and if it is applied diligently in the games they play, they will soon be very much improved, and theirs will be the joy of beating those who once beat them.

LESSON ONE, OBSERVING HIS THREATS

By James Hurt

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Introduction

These lessons are for beginners in chess. You have learned the moves of the different pieces, you know the laws of the game, you have played a few games, but, as yet, you are not a very good player. Chess has fascinated you because it is something new to you. However, if you continue to lose games you are going to lose interest in chess; chess will sour on you. Despite the romantic background of chess, and, in spite of chess being an ideal conflict of two minds, the real joy, the real satisfaction of chess, comes from winning games. I am going to teach you how to defeat your opponent in a new and easy way. I may not succeed in this, but if we work together I am sure that you will begin to win more and more of the games you play. I haven't very much to tell you, but the things I do tell you must be over-learned. It would be foolish to read this over once, and then expect to find yourself a better player. You Must use the knowledge I give you in every game you play, and you must practice using the points in these lessons at every move. It is only in this way that I can help you become a better player, and it is only in this way that you will become aware of the real beauty of chess, and experience the real happiness that comes from chess.

Yours Very Sincerely,

James Hurt

Chess Champion, State of Washington

Editor's Note: James Hurt was the Washington State chess champion for the years 1935, 1937-38 and 1941. This article was recently discovered by IM John Donaldson, and scanned and converted by Eric Holcomb.

OBSERVING HIS THREATS

If I can teach you the proper way to make a move, I will have taught you how to play good chess, as a chess game is nothing more than a series of moves. If you learn how to make a good move, and you make a good move every time it is your turn to play, it is hard to see how anyone could ever beat you. So the purpose of these lessons is to teach you how to make a good move, and it is your duty to try to make a good move **EVERY TIME IT IS YOUR TURN TO PLAY**. Above all, remember that one hasty or careless move usually will cost you the game. By far the majority of games that I have seen have contained a very simple error, a careless move, and invariably the other person has won the game because he has taken advantage of that **ONE BAD MOVE!**

In making a good move there are a number of things that you have to consider, and if you neglect to consider one of these points, you are quite likely to make a bad move. This lesson will deal with the most important thing you must do, and that is: **YOU MUST LOOK FOR HIS THREATS**. Now the only way to do this is to look over each of his men, and see just where it can go. You do something like this, you say to yourself, “What can his pawns do? He has only moved two of them, but I must watch those two, and see if they can take any of my men. Now let's see where his knights are, hmm, this one can go here, here, and here – and this other one is still at home; now his bishops, one is away down here – he can take my knight, but I can take back with my queen or my pawn, so that is alright. His other bishop is over here, now let's see where he can go, down this diagonal he ends at the edge of the board, but down this other diagonal he can take my KB pawn, checking my king, but if he does, I can capture him back as my King protects my KB pawn. Now his rooks – They are both home, and behind his own pawns, so nothing to worry about there. Now his terrible queen – I must be especially careful of her, the old witch, as she can go to so many different squares! Down this way she ends here, down this way she ends – oh ho! She is attacking my KB Pawn. My king protects it, but now my tricky opponent is attacking it with two of his men, with his queen, and with his bishop. – I must do something about this!” Now that is a sample of the way you must go about looking for his threats.

It may sound long and boring, but the only men you have to watch are the men that he has moved. The men he leaves at home can do you no harm. Usually you will only have to watch one or two pawns, two or three knights and bishops, and the terrible queen. But it is absolutely necessary for you to take each man separately and see exactly where he can go, and see what he does when he gets there. You **MUST** do this if you are going to make a good move. After doing this **AT EVERY MOVE**, for several games, you will get so you can do it quite rapidly. Experienced players can do it almost at a glance. Now this is all there is to lesson one. It isn't very hard, but it is very, very necessary. If you neglect to do this at one of the moves you make, then that move will very likely be a bad move, and if he takes advantage of it, you will finally lose the game, just because you were careless, and didn't **LOOK FOR HIS THREATS**. After you have practiced observing each of your opponent's men to see what each of them can do, you will begin to see that it is always the last move that he makes that you have to be especially careful of. His last move will be his most recent attempt to kill you, and so quite naturally you must pay special attention to this

man that he has just moved and see just where he can go, and what he can do to you; in a word, WHAT HE THREATENS. It is easy to see that if your opponent uses only one man to attack you with, your task will be very simple; you will only have to watch this one man, and see what this lone man threatens. He is usually a knight, and after jumping around a bit, he usually jumps into an early grave. But against better players, you will find that you will have several men to watch. If things seem to be getting too complicated, and you have too many of his men to watch, you should try to trade men with him, thus reducing the number of men on the board, and therefore making it easier to see his threats, as now you haven't so many men to watch. This is especially true of pawns. It is a good idea to trade pawns when he gives you the chance, as in that way you can forget all about those certain pawns, as they are off the board. Now about checks, they are his worst threats, as they are aimed at your king, and if they are successful he will mate you, so you must never overlook any check he has on your king. If he suddenly checks you out of nowhere, you will know that you are being careless, and that you have failed to do the most important thing of all, namely to see just where each of your opponent's men can go. So whenever you find one of his men pointed down towards your king, you want to be especially careful to see just what he can do; and if you find two of his men aimed at your king, then it is high time you got busy and traded one of them for one of yours, or make sure that you have your king safe behind a bodyguard of your men. Neglect this, and soon you will find that he has torn you wide open, and then your king will have to make a run for safety, and most of the time he will be waylaid, and brutally murdered, while the rest of your men stand helpless in some other part of the board.

About his knights; you can keep them from attacking you by proper pawn moves. A knight has to be very close to you before he can spear you, and whenever a knight lands on your side of the board you can nearly always chase him back home by pushing a pawn up one square, and attacking him with this pawn. About his bishops; if he has one of them bearing down on you, the best way to make sure that he doesn't stab you is to move your bishop out on the same diagonal that his bishop is on, and in doing this the two bishops will be threatening each other, so you will have to be very certain that your bishop IS WELL PROTECTED. Then, if you want to simplify things, you can trade them off, and you won't have to worry about THAT Bishop of his stabbing you any more. If his queen gets out there you can oppose it with your queen, and trade them off too. This all may sound queer, so I will explain. Actually, what you are doing is to do away with his threats. IF YOU LET HIM, he will get so many of his men THREATENING YOU; that soon you will have so many things to watch and protect that you will be swamped under. You won't be able to guard everything, and suddenly he will swoop down on you and the air will be thick with flashin swords, and when it is all over, and the dead and wounded are counted, you will find that you have ended up minus a man or two, and from then on it is just slow torture until he finally squeezes the last bit of life out of you. So when one of his men threatens you, do your best to either drive it away, or oppose it with one of your men, and trade it off. In trading, remember that a bishop and a knight are equal, that a bishop (or knight) is worth three pawns, that a queen is worth three bishops and knights (Two bishops and one knight, or two knights and one bishop), that a queen is worth two rooks, that a rook is worth more than a bishop (or knight), but that two bishops (or two knights, or a bishop and a knight) are worth far, far more than a rook. The main thing to remember is that bishop and knight are equal.

Now back to the basic principle of this lesson: **LOOKING FOR HIS THREATS**. The only way to do this is to take his men, one by one, and investigate just where each one of them can go, and see what happens if he goes there. This is the first thing you **MUST** do if you are going to make a good move. It must be done **AT EVERY MOVE** if you are going to play a good game of chess. Now of course this won't win games, but it will go a **LONG** way in keeping you from losing games, and I repeat sincerely that by far the majority of the chess games that I have seen have been lost simply because one of the players (the loser) failed to do this on one of two of his moves, and his opponent gleefully took advantage of his carelessness and soon won the game.

Here is an example of this.

White is J. Hurt, Black is H. Enochson

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|------------|---------|------------|
| 1. P-Q4 | N-KB3 | (d4 Nf6) |
| 2. N-KB3 | P-K3 | (Nf3 e6) |
| 3. P-K3 | P-QB4 | (e3 c5) |
| 4. B-Q3 | N-QB3 | (Bd3 Nc6) |
| 5. Castles | P-QN3 | (o-o b7) |
| 6. P-QB3 | B-N2 | (c3 Bb7) |
| 7. QN-Q2 | B-K2 | (Nbd2 Be7) |
| 8. Q-K2 | Castles | (Qe2 o-o) |
| 9. P-K4 | BPxQP | (e4 cxd4) |
| 10. BPxQP | N-QN5 | (cxd4 Nb4) |
| 11. B-QN1? | ... | (Bb1 ...) |

Now here I just didn't look to see where all his men could go, especially his QB. I had the idea that he was going to capture my bishop with his knight, and I had crazy plans that I was going to mate him with that bishop, so I moved him back home where he was safe.

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| 11. --- | B-QR3!! | (... Ba6) |
| 12. Q-K3 | BxR | (Qe3 Bxf1) |

and he has won my good rook for his crummy bishop; now he really should win the game without much trouble. But he went wild under the excitement of having me beat; you see, if he would have won this game, he would now be State Champion instead of me. So naturally he was very excited; and this accounts for the mistakes he makes later in the game. It is obvious that after he threatened my queen with his bishop, that it would be wrong to play 12. QxB (Qxa6), because his knight would recapture my queen. Also that for me to put something in between my queen and his bishop would fail, as 12. B-Q3, BxB (Bd3 Bxd3), and he has won a man, as again if I capture his bishop with my queen, he recaptures my queen with his very proud knight. Also if I save my queen by playing 12. N-QB4 (Nc4), he simply plays 12. --- P-Q4! (... d5), and as my poor knight cannot move away (because if he did my queen would be captured by his bishop) I must watch him capture my knight with his crummy pawn, and again I am a man behind. So the only thing I could do was to move my queen with:

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| 12. Q-K3 | BxR | (Qe3 Bxf1) |
| 13. NxB | R-QB1 | (Nxf1 Rc8) |

And now he threatens to play his proud knight down to his QB7 (c2) square, where it will be able to capture either my queen or my queen's rook. To avoid this I will have to play

bishop takes knight, and he will capture back with his rook, and he will soon beat me. So I play my other bishop to queen two:

14. B-Q2 Q-QB2 (Bd2 Qc7)

See, he was afraid to play his knight down there now, as I would capture him, and when he recaptured, I would play B-QB3 (Bc3) and his rook could not get back home, and I could soon play Q-Q3 (Qd3) on my next move, and he would have to lose his good rook for my poor bishop thus: 14. --- N-QB7 (... Nc2); 15 BxN, RxB (Bxc2 Rxc2); 16. B-QB3! (Bc3), any move; 17. Q-Q3, RxB (Qd3 Rxc3); 18. PxR (bxc3) and the game is even again. So he plays instead 14. --- Q-QB2 (Qc7), and now he can play his knight down there, as I cannot trap his queen! I don't want him to do this, as I still want to mate him with that bishop, so I play

15. BxN BxB (Bxb4 Bxb4)

And now I can breathe again, you see, he has no threats on me. But I am behind in men, so I must attack his king and do it quick, so I play

16. N-KN5 P-KR3 (Ng5 h6)

Of course there is no mate there yet, in fact, I haven't any threats even, but he wants me to take my knight back home, so he won't have to worry about what MIGHT happen in the future! And now he is threatening to play PxN (hxg5), so I MUST DO SOMETHING. I hate to bring my knight back home, so I decide to ATTACK HIM

17. P-K5 PxN (e5 hxg5)

Well, here we are, I wouldn't move him, so he took him, and now to keep things even, I have to take his knight too. But if I do, he takes back with his pawn on KN2 (g7), and he is safe. So I look for something else. The bishop that I have been so careful to keep has a check on his king, BUT he is protecting the check with his king, and ALSO his knight, BUT I am going to capture his knight, unless he moves it, and if he moves it then it isn't protecting his king any more, so I play

18. Q-KR3! ... (Qh3 ...)

And now, if he moves his knight away, I can play Q-KR7 Mate (Qh7++)! My Queen is protected by the PRESERVED BISHOP! If he doesn't move his knight away, I can capture it, and then play Q-KR7 Mate (Qh7++). Realizing that he must lose his knight, he decides to protect his King. One way is to play P-KN3 (g6), as this shuts out my BISHOP, and if my queen goes to KR7 (h7), he simply plays KxQ (Kxh7). But if he plays 18. --- P-KN3 (... g6); 19. PxN (exf6)! and I threaten to play Q-KR6 (Qh6)! and then Q-KN7 MATE (Qg7++)! My queen is protected by the pawn. He has ways of stopping this mate, but he doesn't care to investigate them, so he plays:

18. --- N-K5 (... Ne4)

Editor's note: Correct was 18 ... g6, 19. exf6, Qf4!

19. BxN P-KN3 (Bxe4 g6)

And now we see the difference. He has lost the knight, but in a good way, as his KING is SAFE. I cannot threaten mate now by Q-R6 (Qh6), as my pawn is not down on my KB6 (f6) square. But I can't give up – I still have my bishop, and a little chance yet, so I play

20. P-QR3 P-Q4 (a3 d5)

I attack him, but he is tired of being attacked, so HE COUNTERATTACKS ME!! If I take his bishop, HE TAKES MINE, so I retreat, he does too.

21. B-Q3 B-K2 (Bd3 Be7)

22. Q-R6 B-Q1 (Qh6 Bd8)

My last move threatened to cause trouble as I threatened to play 23. BxP, PxB (Bxg6 fxg6); 24. QxP ch, K-R1 (Qxg6+ Kh8); 25. Q-R6 ch, K-N1 (Qh6+ Kg8), and I just keep playing Q-N6 ch (Qg6+), Q-R6 ch (Qh6+), Q-N6 ch (Qg6+), over and over and over, and I get a DRAW BY PERPETUAL CHECK, and of course he knows that he has me beat, so why should he give me a draw. That is why he played B-Q1 (Bd8), as this frees his queen, so he can play his queen in front of his king and stop my checks! However; this is a mistake, as you shall presently see. Much better was KR-Q1 (Rfd8), which allows his king a FLIGHT square. If I try to draw by perpetual like I did before, he runs with his king over to the queenside, and escapes. Also he could then chase my queen away (if I didn't try for perpetual check) by playing B-KB1 (Bf8)!!, and either way it is quite clear that his king would become safe, and he could go ahead on the other side of the board and gradually win by attacking me. However, he isn't perfect, so we will excuse his move. I have a draw now, by 23. BxP, PxB (Bxg6 fxg6) (else I play Q-KR7 Mate (Qh7++)); 24. QxP ch (Qxg6+), and now he dare not put his queen in between, for if he does I will play 25. QxKP ch (Qxe6+)!, and then play 26. QxQR (Qxc8)!! and I am three pawns ahead and I will win easily.

So he will have to move his king into the corner, and I play Q-R6 ch (Qh6+), and again he cannot put his queen in between because I will simply play QxKR ch (Qxf8+)!! and again I am ahead in men, and should win easily. So now I have escaped with a draw. But I don't rush into it; I look my meager forces over, and I see a brave knight at KB1 (f1) square, who is eager to perform some deeds of valor. So I play

23. N-K3! ... (Ne3 ...)

Now Enochson collapses. After having a won game, he has had to fight to keep me from drawing with him, and now he sees DEFEAT staring him in the face. HOW?? The brave knight!! In two jumps he arrives on my KB6 (f6), thus 24. N-KN4 (Ng4)!! and 25. N-KB6 check (Nf6+)!! Do you see that THIS would be MATE, except for one thing, he can capture it with his BISHOP, but when he does, I RECAPTURE with my pawn on K5 (e5) square, and then next move I play Q-KN7 MATE (Qg7++)!, as my queen will be protected by the pawn! So I am threatening to mate him, and now he must defend himself. The knight haunts him for fifteen minutes of thinking, and he decides to keep my knight and bishop both shut out by a pawn move. A bad decision, for he could have saved everything by playing this pawn one square, instead of two. He plays:

23. --- P-KB4?? (... f5)

24. QxP ch K-R1 (Qxg6+ Kh8)

He dare not play 24. --- Q-N2 (Qg7) because I would play 25. QxKP ch (Qxe6+)! and 26. QxQR (Qxc8) winning easily! Now you see why he should have played P-KB3 (f6) – it would stop me from playing QxKP ch (Qxe6+)!, as the pawn on KB3 (f6) would be between my queen and his KP.

The game continues

25. Q-R6 ch K-N1 (Qh6+ Kg8)

The king must return to the knight square for if he plays Q-R2 (Qh7) blocking my check, I play QxR ch (Qxf8+), and again I win a rook, and I will win easily. Notice black's poor miserable bishop. He is the cause of all the trouble, as he keeps the rooks from protecting each other!

26. Q-N6 ch K-R1 (Qg6+ Qh8)

27. Q-R6 ch K-N1 (Qh6+ Qg8)

White has a draw, and now he is taking a breathing spell, as he realizes that a miracle has happened, and that he has avoided defeat. Now he decides to go ahead and try for a win.

28. QxKP ch K-R1 (Qxe6+ Kh8)

Black still can't put his queen in between, and he is afraid to put his rook in between, so he humbly returns to his corner. Other moves might have been better, but Enochson (a junior at the university) is tired out, and would like nothing better than to go somewhere and die.

29. Q-R6 ch K-N1 (Qh6+ Kg8)

30. BxP! ... (Bxf5)

Finale! The main threat is BxQR (Bxc8), and white will be enough material ahead to win without much trouble. If black plays his QR out of danger, white plays 31. B-K6 ch, R-B2 (Be6+ Rf7) (only move he has, right?); 32. N-B5! (Nf5) and 33. Q-KN7 MATE (Qg7++). There is no way that black can stop that final move, as his KR CANNOT MOVE!! So black plays a final desperate move, and says a little prayer.

30. ... KRxB?! (... Rxf5)

Editor's note: The only try!! (Nothing else is better.)

Praying that I will make a hasty move, for if I now play 31. NxR??, Q-QB8 CHECK! (Nxf5?? Qc1+); 32. RxQ, RxR MATE (Rxc1 Rxc1++)!! and black would win! Win the game, and also be the new chess champion of the State! How he must have prayed that I would disregard the FIRST POINT IN MAKING A MOVE ... TO LOOK FOR HIS THREATS! I have written a whole lesson on it, and I did disregard to look for his threats away back on move eleven, but now I am as merciless as Satan, and I will kill him without a shudder. The game goes on:

31. Q-N6 ch RESIGN! (Qg6+ Resigns)

Enochson sees that I have seen through his trap, and that I am going to recapture his KR with my queen, and he knows that it is just slow torture to continue now, as he will be three pawns behind, and all I need to do is trade queens and rook and then march my pawns down to get new queens, so he resigns the game, and. goes away somewhere to curse himself to his hearts content, and then to drown his sorrow in a jug of beer. In the meantime I am away up in the clouds, still surprised and amazed at this turn of events that has changed defeat to victory.

Of course you see that after I play QxR (Qxf5) he cannot Mate me, as after he plays 32. --- Q-B8 ch (Qc1+); 33. RxQ, RxR ch (Rxc1, Rxc1+); 34. N-KB1 (Nf1) and I am safe. That KNIGHT WON THE GAME!

And so ends the first lesson. I have told you the first thing you must do to make a good move, and I have shown you that the only way to do this is to examine his men, one by one, and see exactly what each of them can do to you. This is the first requirement of a good chess player, and if you fail to do this AT EVERY MOVE, you will never really enjoy chess. It is up to YOU. I wish you patience and courage!