

Blunder-proofing

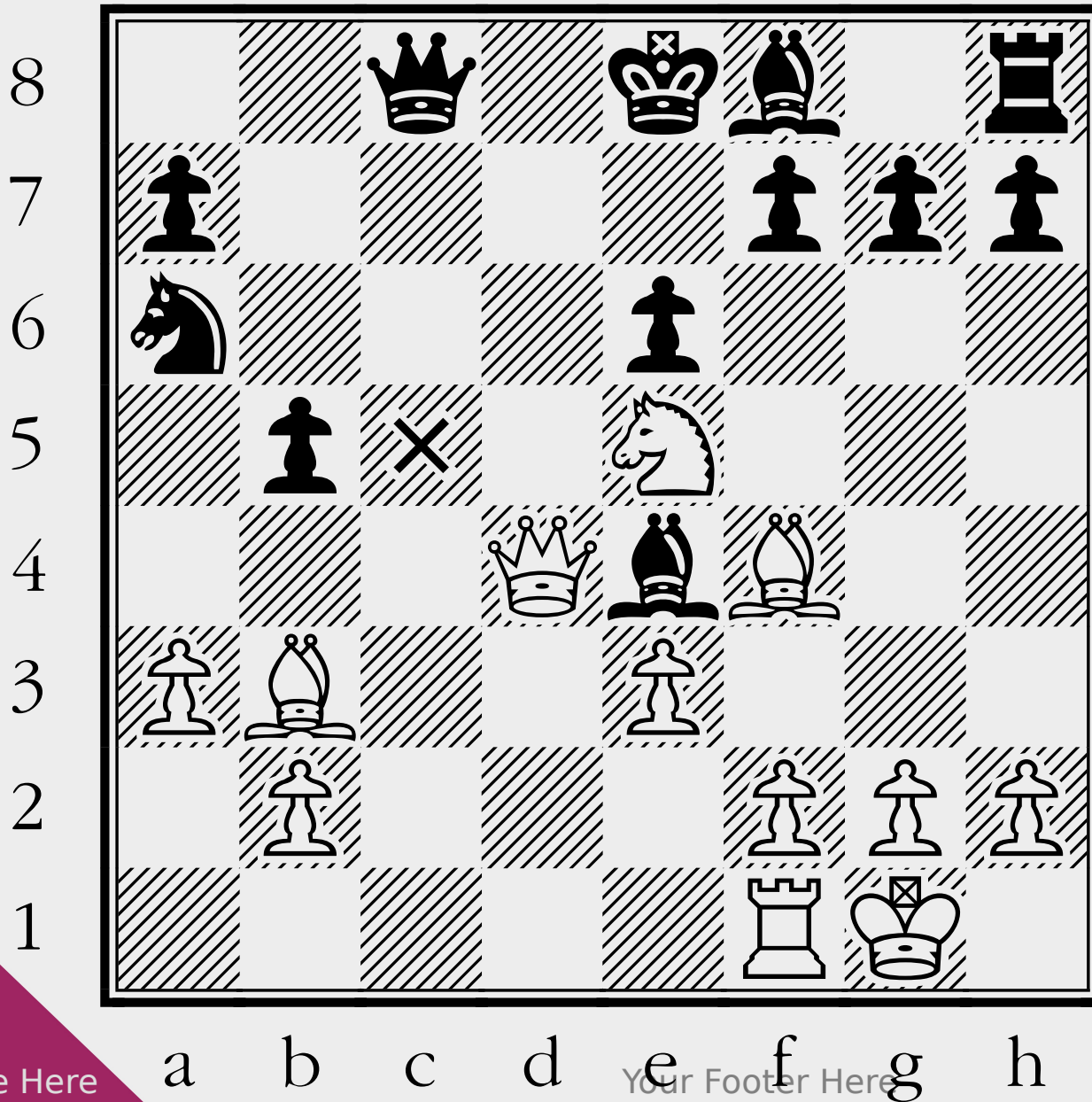


Devon Junior Chess Association

A Natural History of Blunders

- Oversights – back rank mate/backwards moves/disco moves
- Upsetting block
- Upsetting defence
- Tunnel vision (candidate moves)
- In-between moves
- Is blundering really the problem?

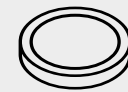
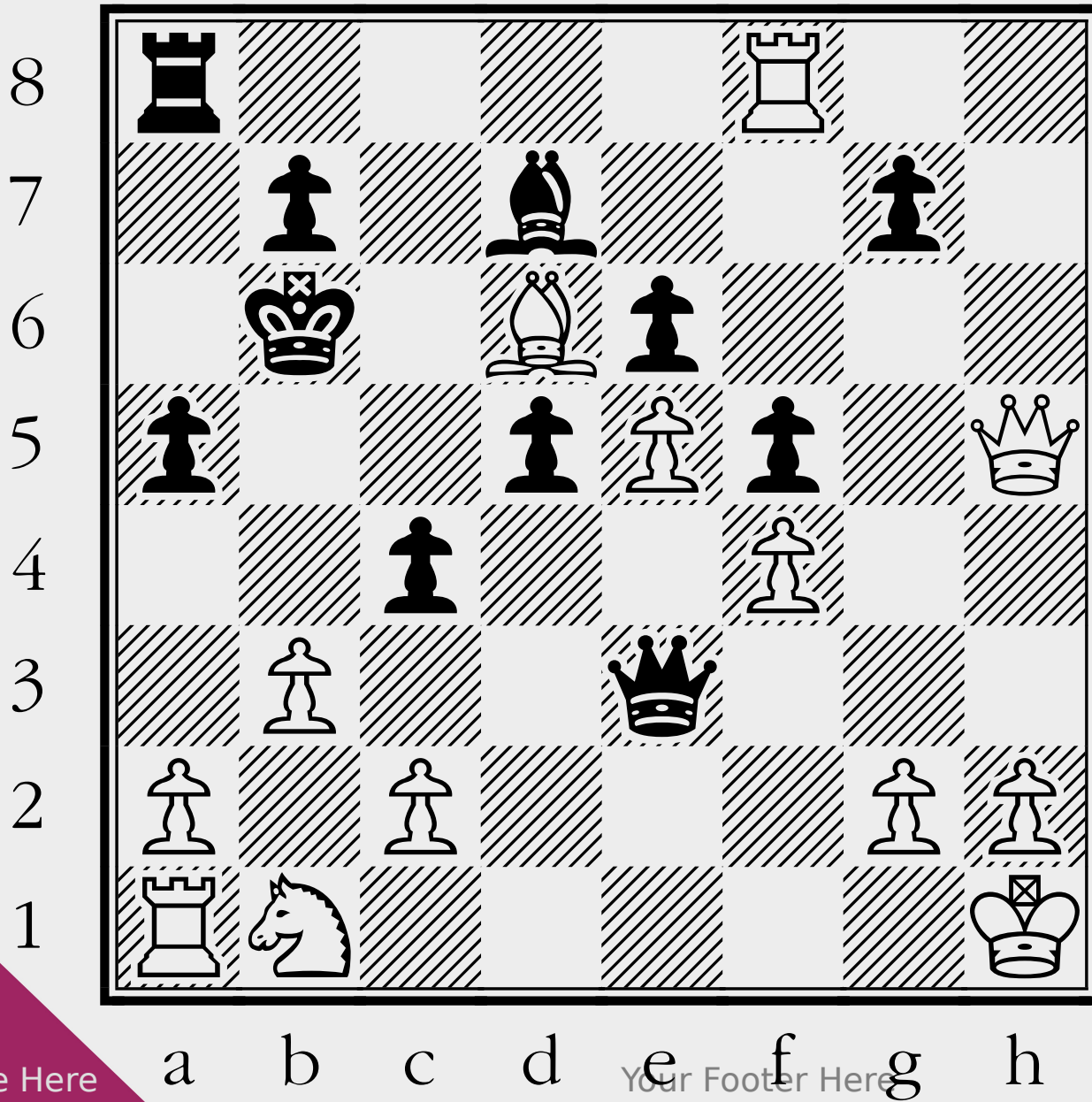
Oversight: leaving a piece *en prise* (...Bc5)



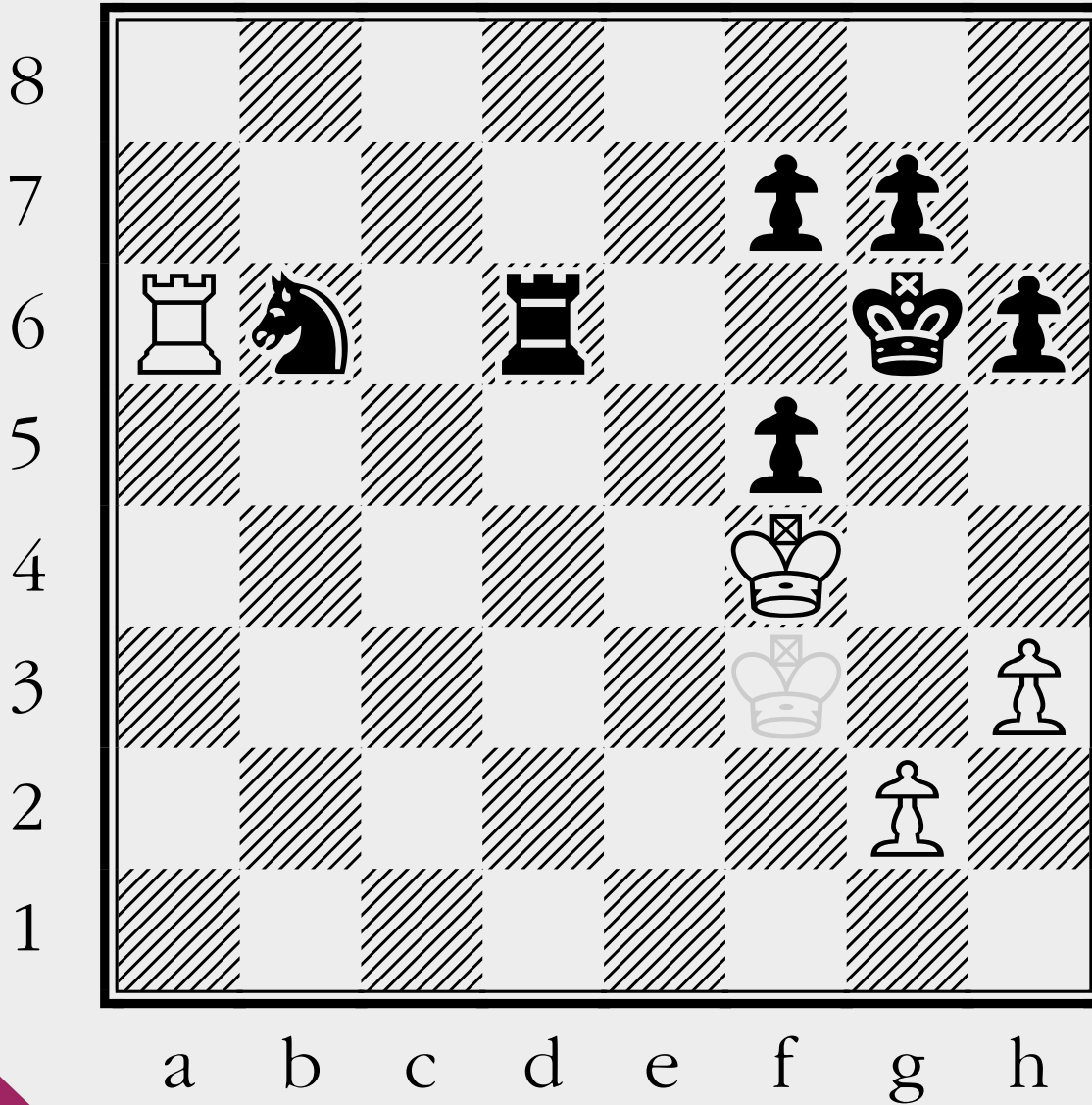
Backwards moves (Rh4)



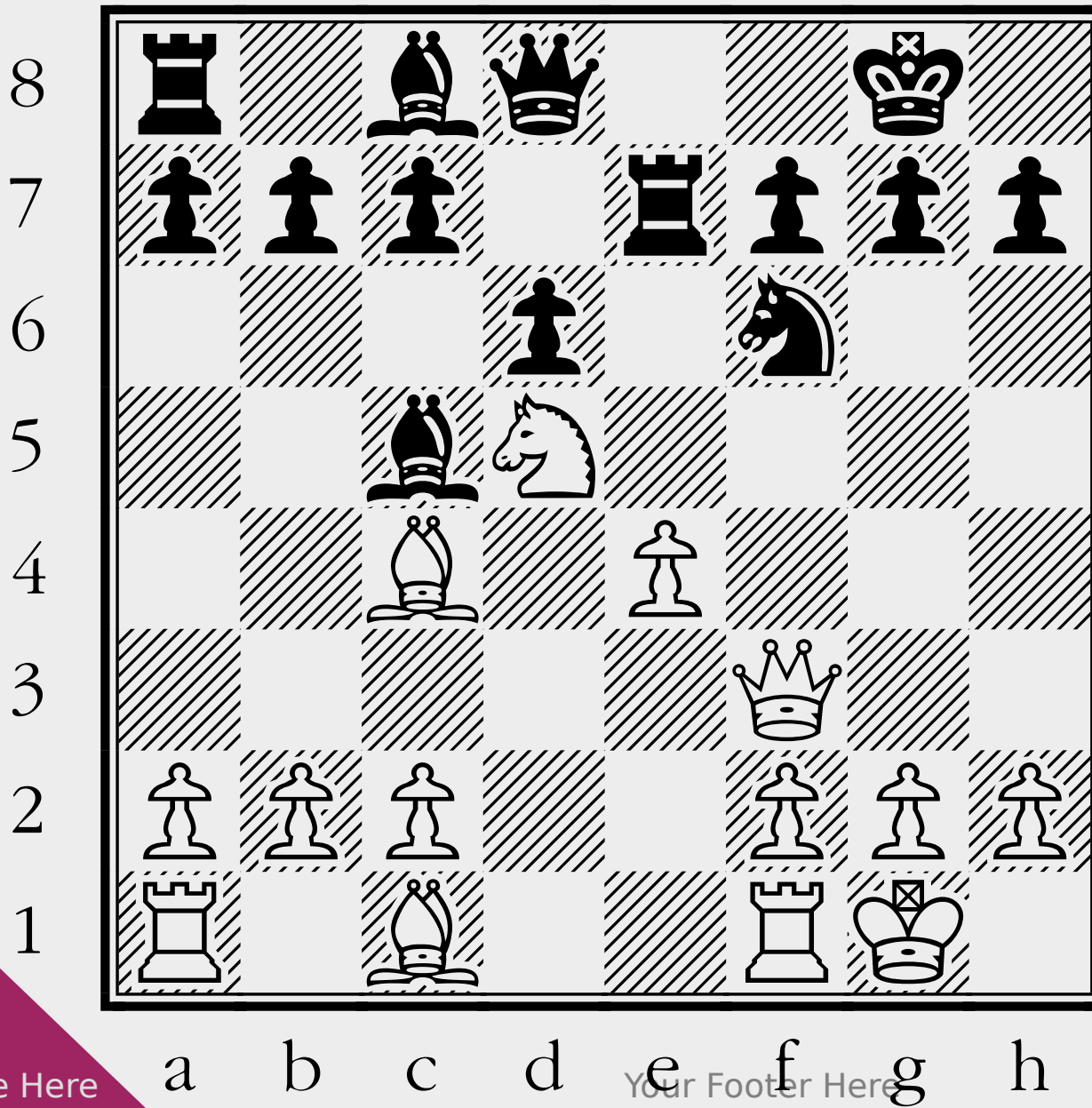
Back Rank Mates (Rxa8)



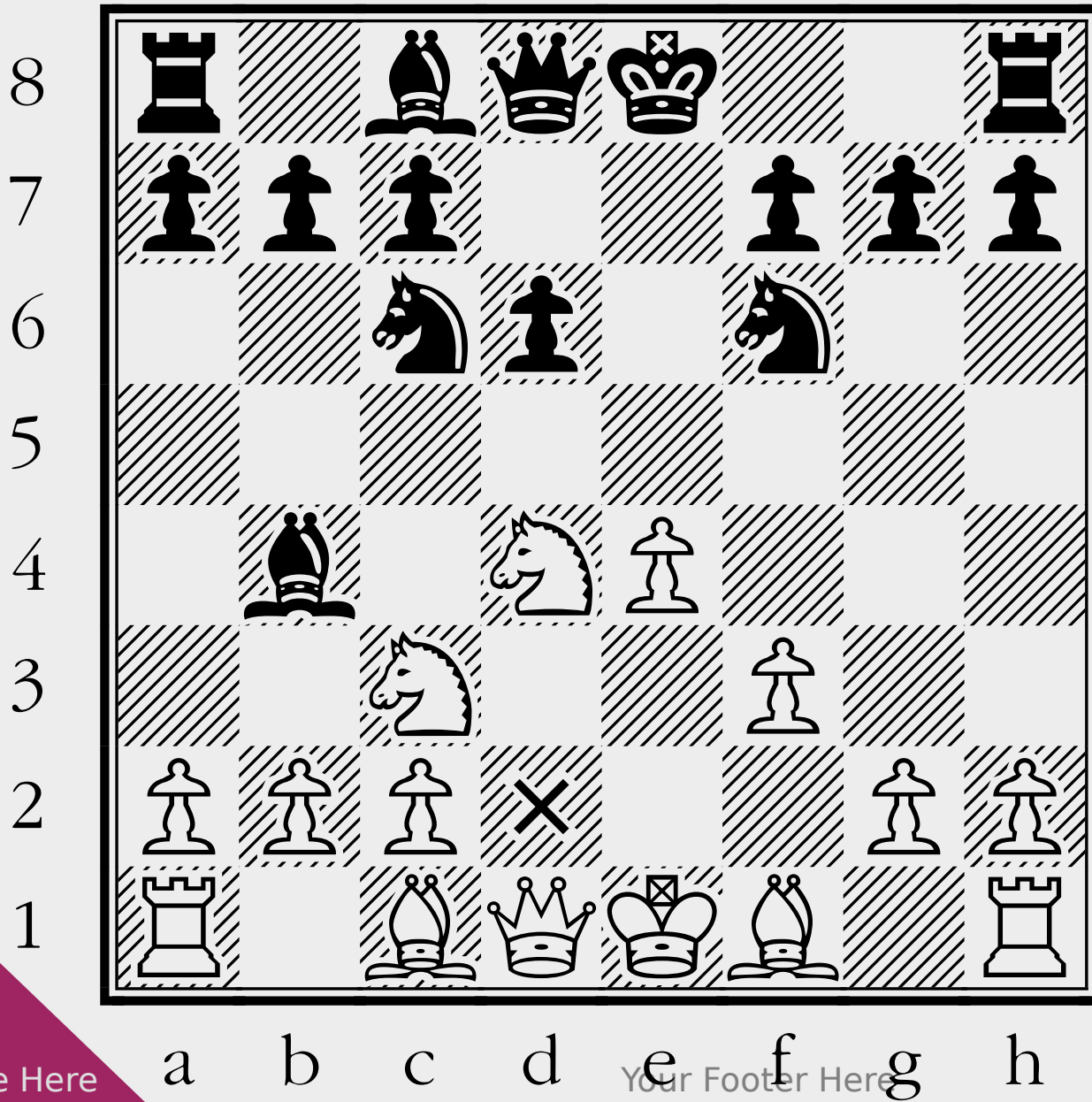
Disco moves



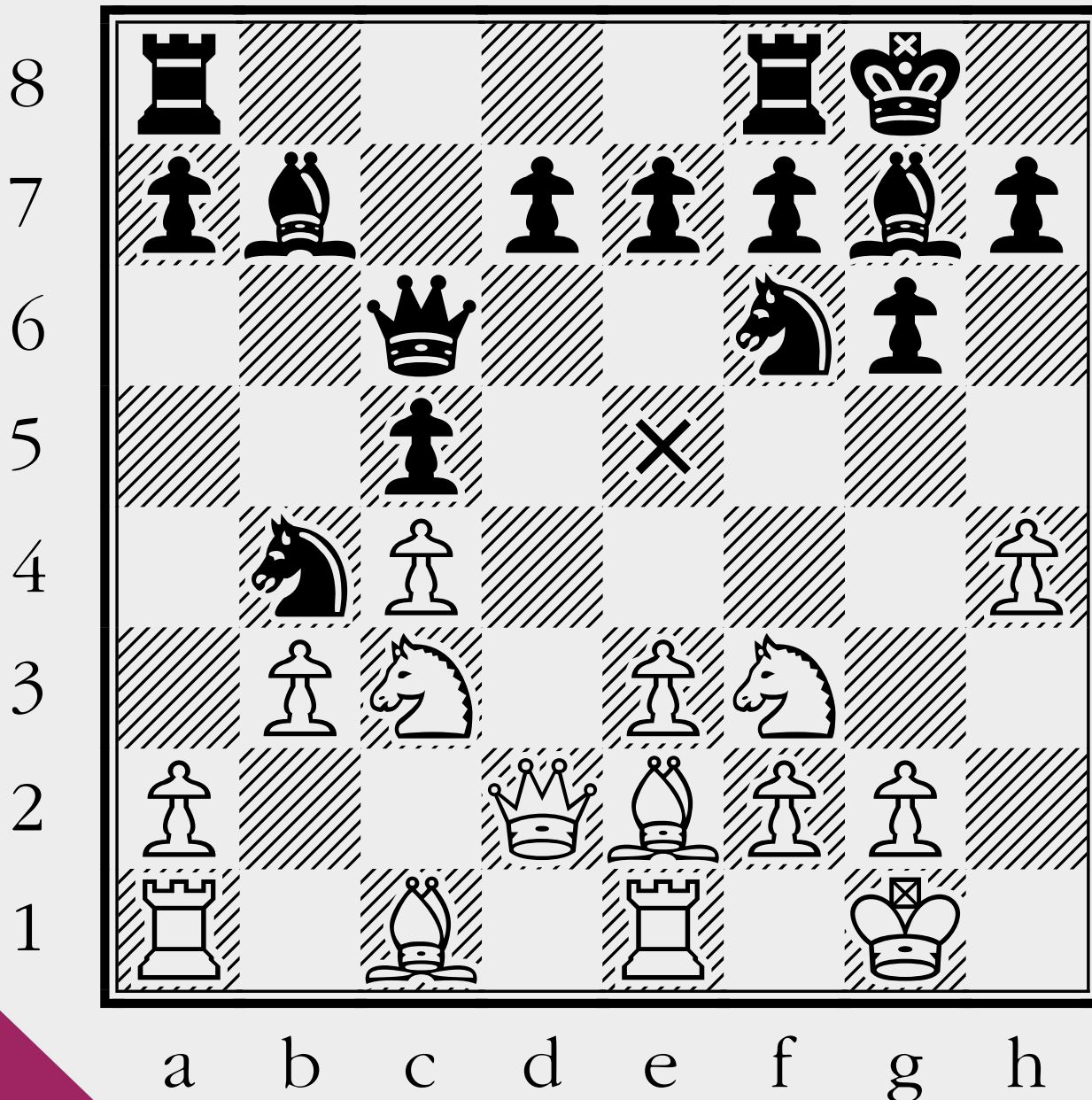
Removing the guard (...Rxe4)



Upsetting defence (Bd2)



Removing block



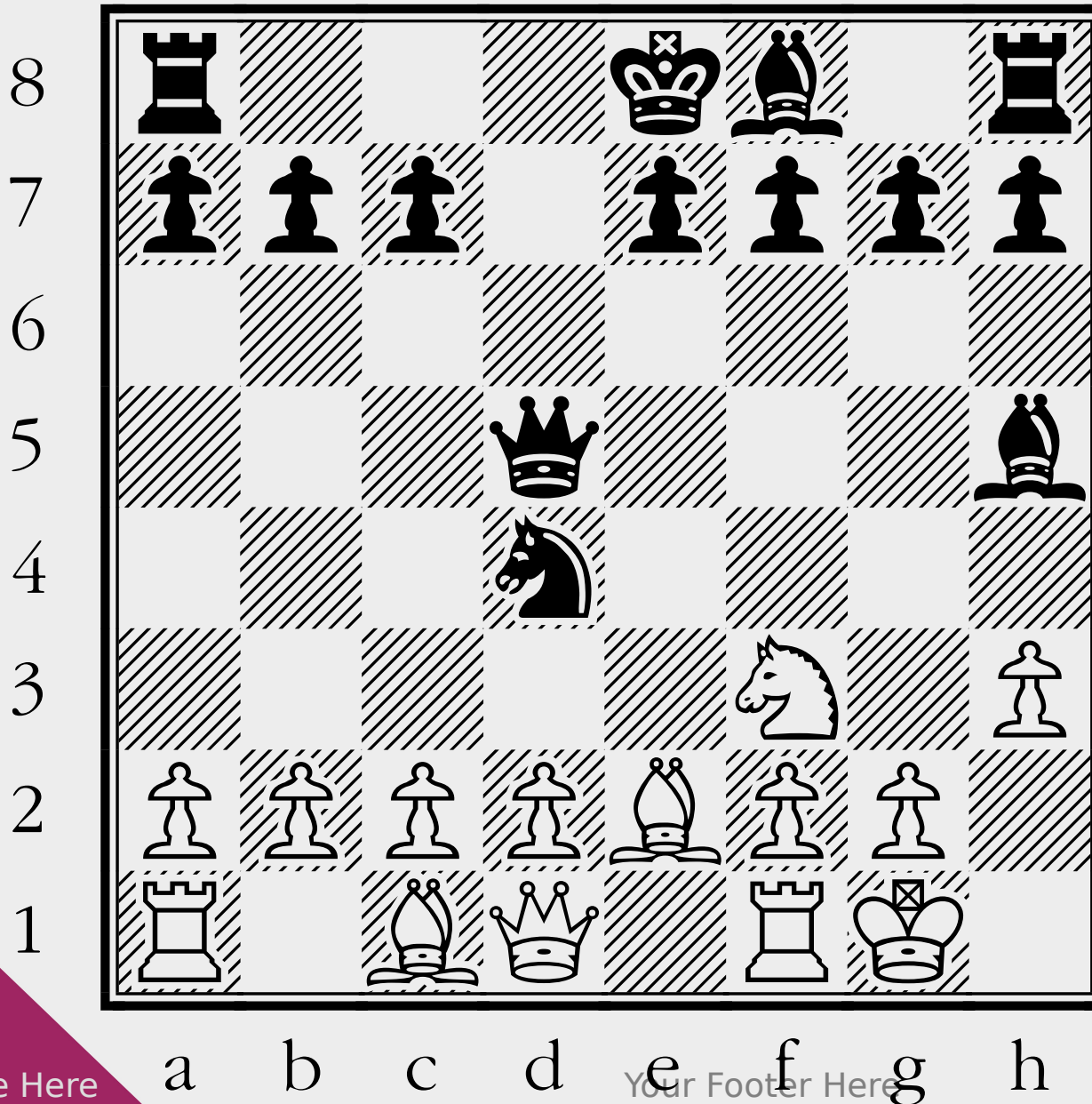
Once White touched the piece, they were dead!

Don't pick up a piece, wave it around, move it to a square holding onto it...

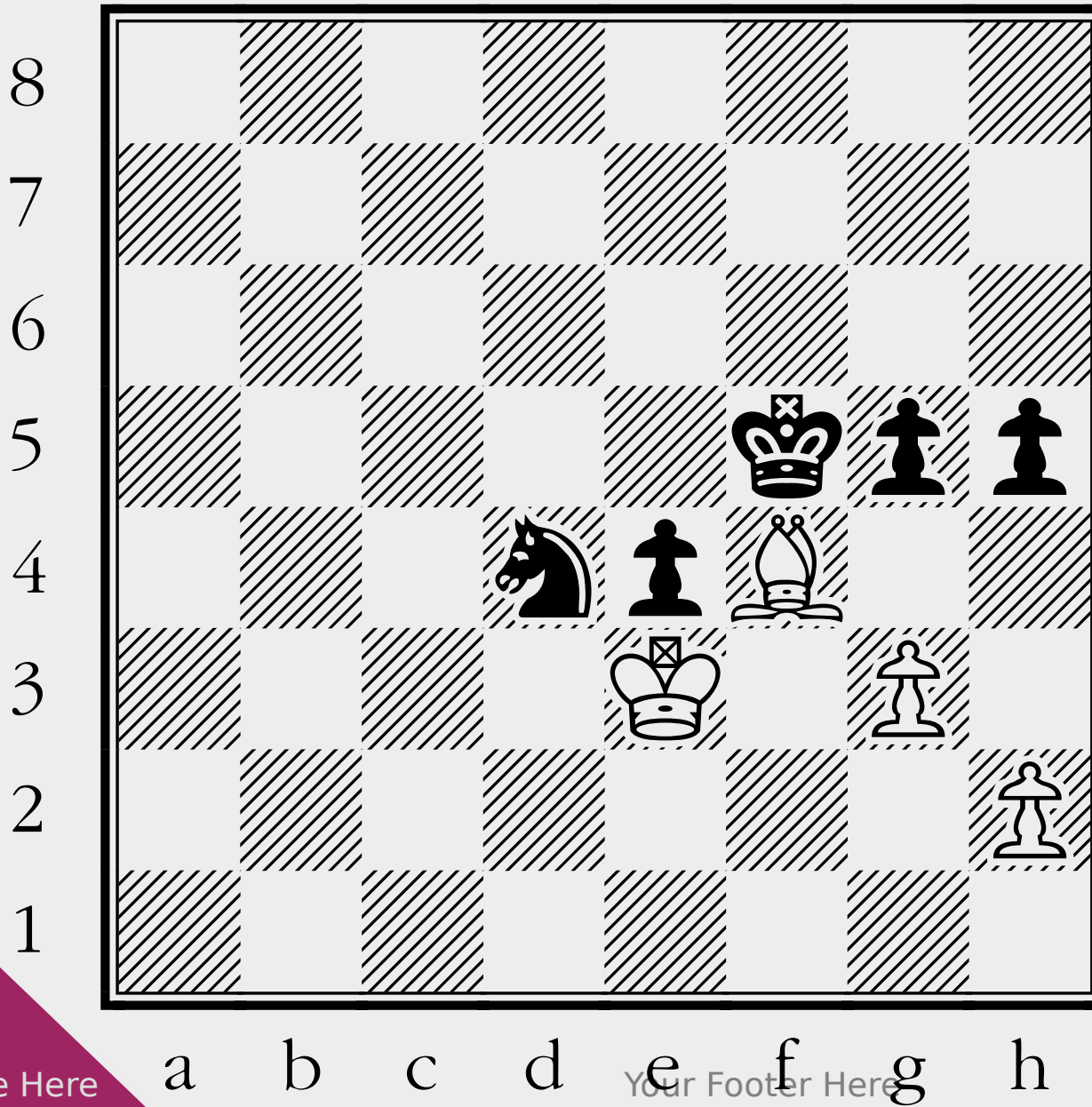


Tunnel vision - candidate moves

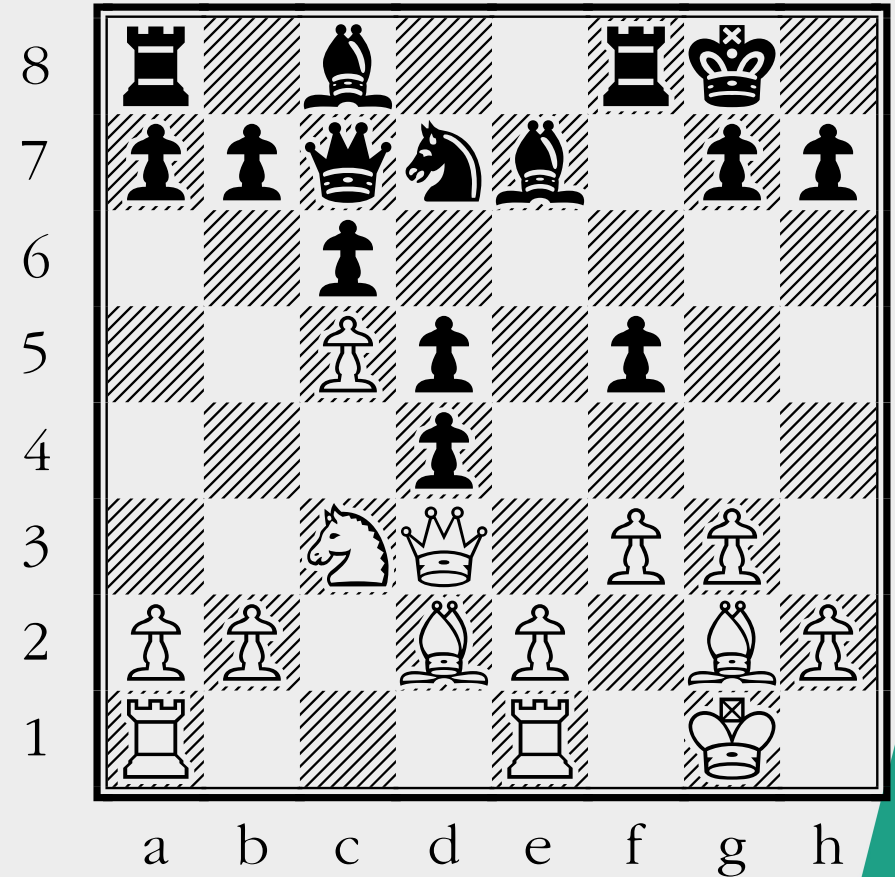
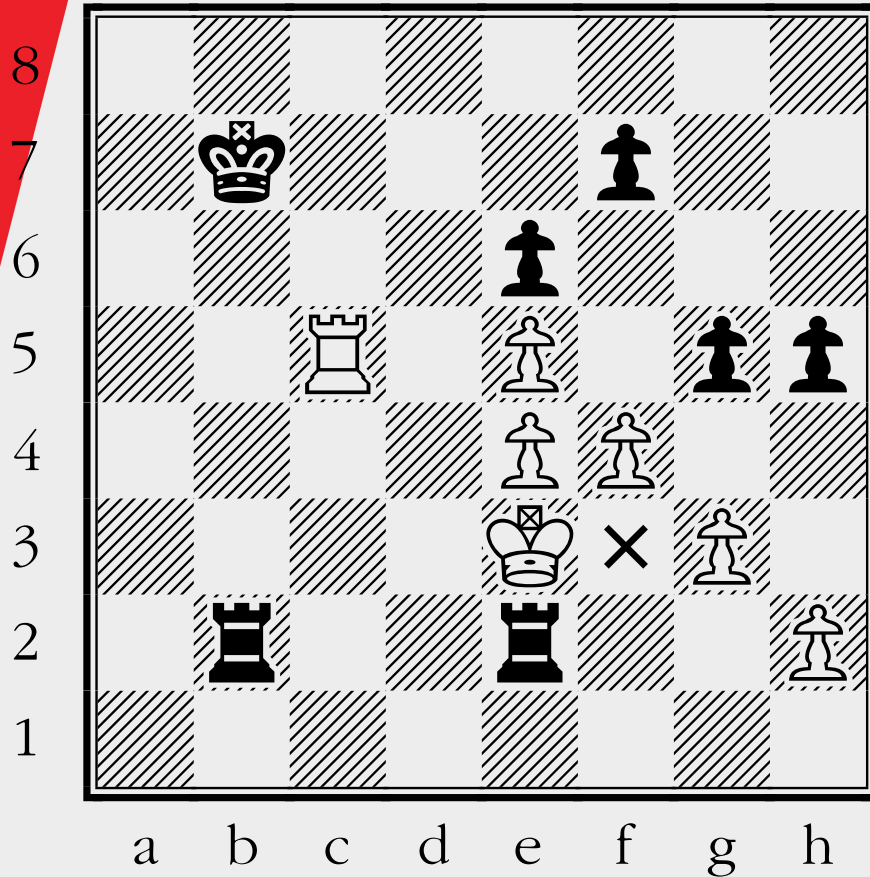
Nxd4, Bxe2; Qxe2 (Nxe2), Qxd4



In-between move (=captures aren't forced) ...g5; Bxg5, Nc2+!



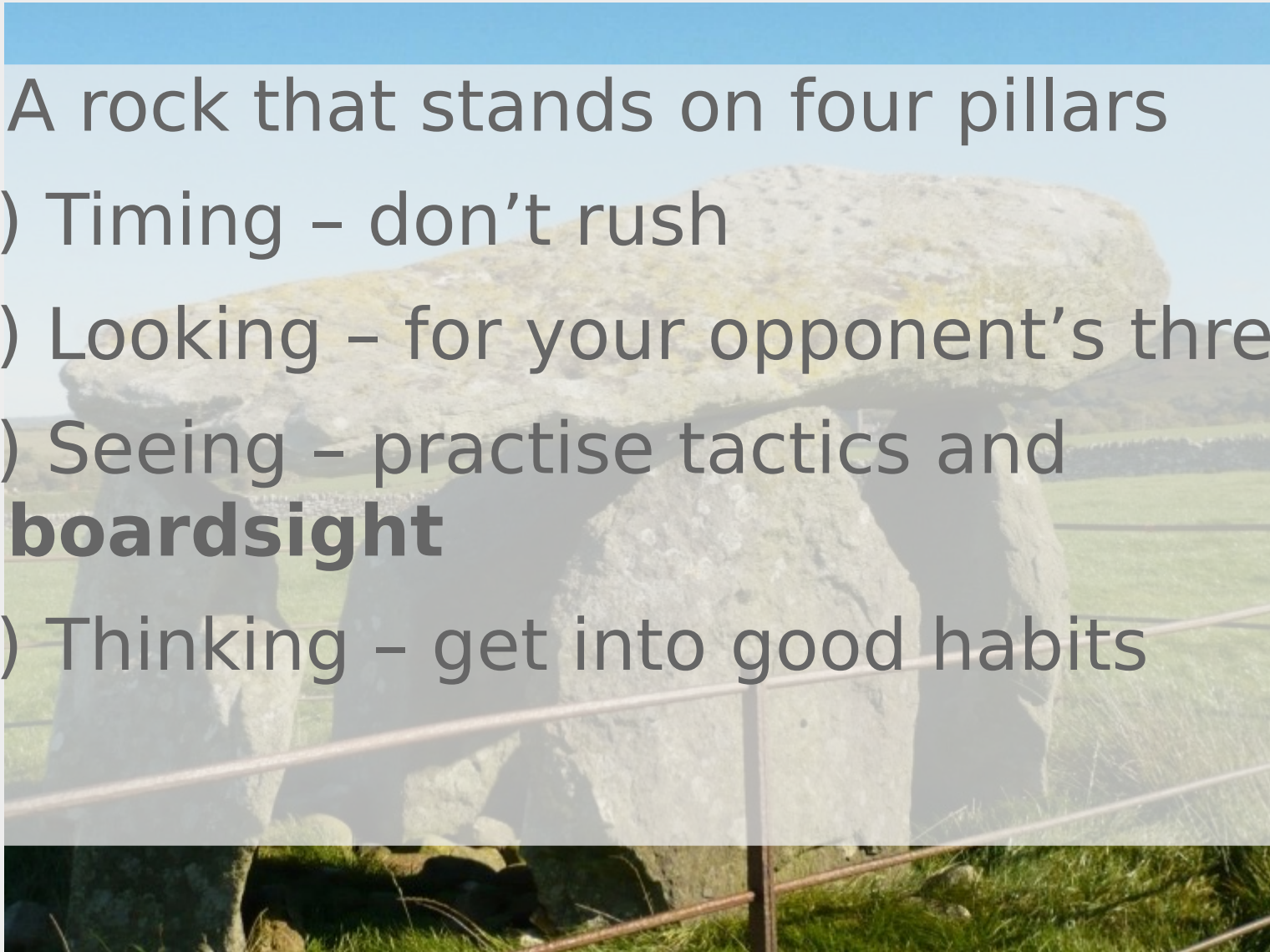
Is blundering really the problem? “a blunder in a lost position”



Blunder-proofing your chess

A rock that stands on four pillars

- 1) Timing – don't rush
- 2) Looking – for your opponent's threats
- 3) Seeing – practise tactics and **boardsight**
- 4) Thinking – get into good habits



Blunder-proofing your chess

1) Timing – don't rush

- Rushing can bring a GM down much nearer to our level
- Use most of your time in most of your games



Blunder-proofing your chess

2) Looking/checking – for your opponent's threats

- First thing you look for
 - Double-purpose moves
- Last thing you look for
 - How does my chosen move change the position?

Blunder-proofing your chess

3) Seeing – you can't see what you don't know – it's hard to see what you're not used to

- practise tactics – solve lots, repeatedly
 - You might be able to solve hard puzzles but miss simple tactics – get your eye in!
- find puzzles other than White-to-move-and-win
- boardsight

Blunder-proofing your chess

"One of the most important ideas involving **safety** is that basic tactic skills should be used to prevent an opponent's tactics, not to find winning tactics for oneself!" **[or at least - not just that - DR]**

"Unfortunately, I have found that this idea is either misunderstood or continues to fly under the radar.

[...]

...a typical 'Class B' student that I had a few years ago. I suggested he start by studying the basic tactics in John Bain's *Chess Tactics for Students*, which he subsequently purchased. At the next lesson, he began by politely shoving his copy of the book across the table at me, saying "You've got to be kidding. These problems are way too easy for me!"

I proceeded to examine two recent games he had lost, and it turned out that both losses were primarily due to overlooking, and thus allowing, his opponent to play a basic tactic. After the second game, I said "I don't understand. You said that *Chess Tactics for Students* was too easy for you, but are you saying that the two tactics that caused your losses in these games were more difficult than the tactics in this book?"

The student stared at me for a few seconds. Then he reached across the table, grabbed the book back, and quietly admitted "I see what you mean." To be fair, this student's attitude is typical of most players near his level.

After hearing this story, one could argue that it was not my student's lack of familiarity with the patterns, but his lack of a Real Chess* thought process that was his main problem. And that could be true – thought process and pattern recognition go hand in hand. But it is also undeniable that **the more familiar you are with a pattern, the more you will avoid allowing it for your opponent**, no matter how poor your thought process."

– Dan HEISMAN

* **That is - "If I play this move, can I meet all the threats that my opponent can make with their reply?" - DR**

So, do challenge yourself with hard problems, but get fluent with easier ones.

Blunder-proofing your chess

- Why are tactics in books easy to spot but blunders in games hard to avoid?

1. The position occurs outside of a problem, when there is no “red flag” saying the position is winnable

and, even more importantly,

2. When the pattern is going to be created for their opponent by their candidate move and has to be visualized and considered. The pattern is not in the present position, waiting there for them to play.

(both HEISMAN)

Also:

3. Players like thinking of their own ideas more than their opponents’.

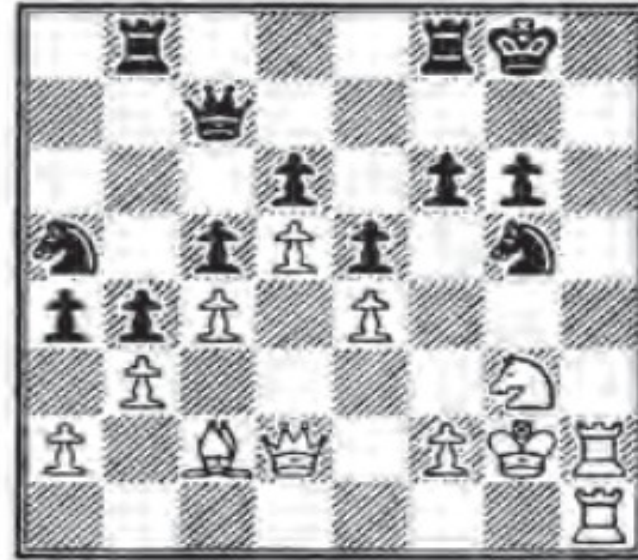
4. There are often stretches of a game where tactics are hardly present, and you turn off your burglar alarm.

Blunder-proofing your chess

- defensive puzzles (Steps, Cheng)



2. White to move



5. White to move



Blunder-proofing your chess

- defensive puzzles (Steps, Cheng)

Defending



Defending against threats: **A**

Blunder-proofing your chess

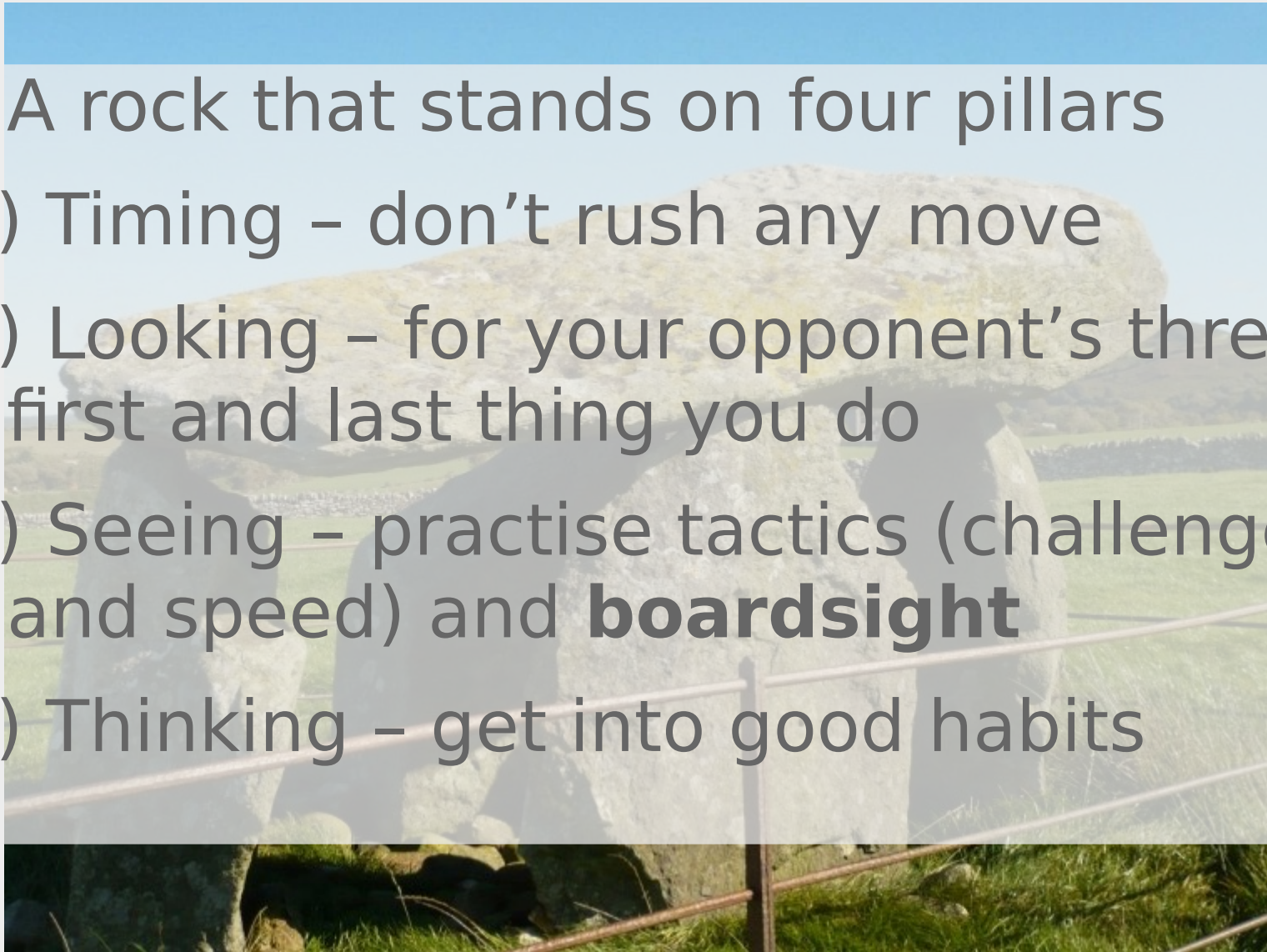
- 4) Thinking – get into good habits
- Check once more after choosing a move
 - Really check – try and look afresh



Blunder-proofing your chess

A rock that stands on four pillars

- 1) Timing – don't rush any move
- 2) Looking – for your opponent's threats – first and last thing you do
- 3) Seeing – practise tactics (challenge and speed) and **boardsight**
- 4) Thinking – get into good habits





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