# Time Management

The biggest mistake our students make is not related to strategy or tactics, openings or endgame play – it is playing way too fast. I always suspected that much, but when we started regular tournaments online, I started a to see a clear pattern – most players spend between 2 and 5 seconds per move. I've called a ⇔3-second rule' – no matter what happens in the game, most players spend just that on their moves – whether they think which piece to develop first or they are about to be checkmated!

Let's have a look at a few examples from the games of our **_advanced_** players:

## AlexColBelle – LFIDaniel
ChessKid.com 29.11.2020
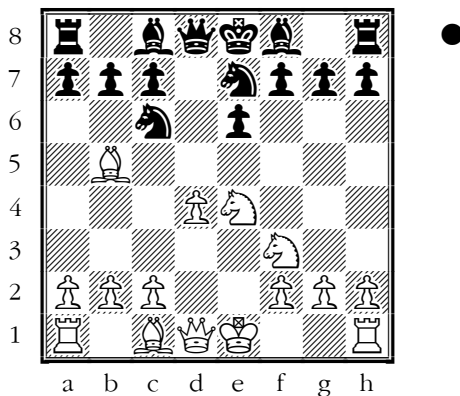
Black has problems with developing his dark-squared bishop. He had to try something like 6...a6 7.♗a4 b5 8.♗b3 ♞a5. But after 3 seconds he came up with a different 'solution':
6...g6?? 7.♞f6#
Black spent 18 seconds on this game! 🙁 Is that something he should proud of? Hardly...

ShellybanksMax (1297) – MarysBNSRathVivaan (1434)
ChessKid.com, 08.11.2020
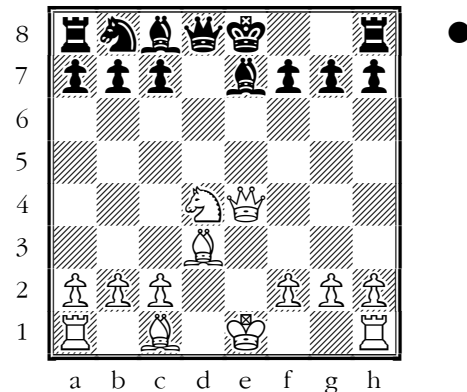
Chances would be about equal after 9...♞d7! 10.♞f5 ♞c5 11.♗b5+ c6 12.♕xe7+ ♕xe7+ 13.♞xe7 cxb5 14.♞d5 ♞e6 15.♗e3, but the game went
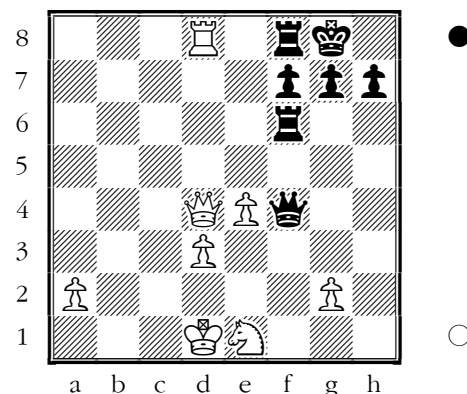**9...0–0??** (2.8 seconds)
10.0–0? (2.9 sec)
Missing 10.♕xh7#.
10...♗c5?? (2.8 sec) **11.♕xh7#**

ConlethEli-John (1116) – ConlethDeclan (1128)
Chess ChessKid.com, 20.12.2020

Black is winning. He could choose between 37...♕c7 or 37...g6, but after 5 seconds he played **37...h6?? 38.♖xf8+ ♚xf8 39.♕d8#**

This is one point less which Black scored in the tournament – and these points quickly add up!

Big mistakes often creep in when a player is winning – over-confidence does not help to see the dangers. Here is a case in point:

MarysBNSRathGavin (1639) – StJosephsWoods (1683)
ChessKid.com (6), 20.12.2020
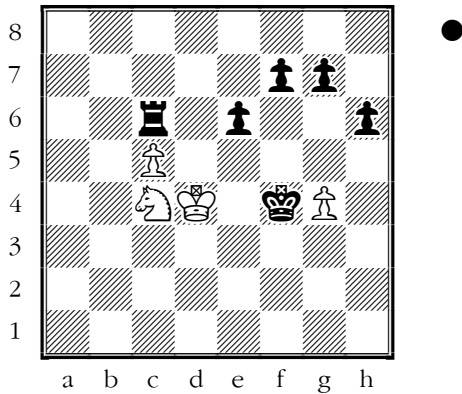
At that point Black had over 4 minutes on the clock! He could play 51...♖c7!, but after 5 seconds he chose **51...♔xg4?? 52.♘e5+ ♔h3 53.♘xc6** and White eventually won.

ConlethDeclan (1179) – MarysBNSRathVivaan (1431)
ChessKid.com (1), 17.01.2021
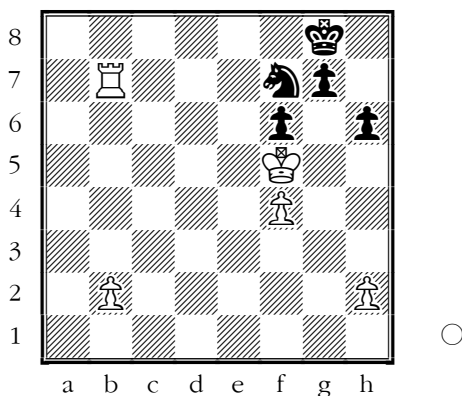
White could play 41.♖d7 ♔f8 42.b4 ♔e8 43.♔e6 ♘d8+ 44.♖xd8+ ♔xd8 45.f5 or 41.♖b8+! ♔h7 42.♔e6!. But after 4 seconds White played **41.♔e6??** and soon lost: **41...♘d8+ 42.♔d7 ♘xb7...**

Sometimes our players play so fast that I they end games with more time on the clock than at the start. Here are a few examples:

### MerrionConorW (1378) – ManorHYannick (1669)
ChessKid.com, 20.12.2020
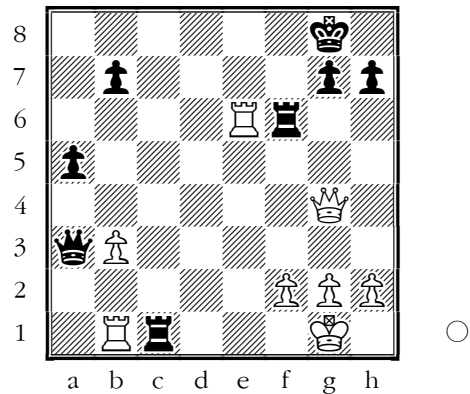
Had White played 26.♖e1 ♖xe1+ 27.♖xe1 ♕xb3 28.h4, chances would be about equal. Alas, White spent only 6 seconds at this critical junction:
26.♖xc1?? ♕xc1+ 27.♕d1 ♕xd1+ 28.♖e1 ♕xe1#
Time: 05:29" – 04:41" White had actually more time on the clock than at the start of the game!. It seems that he spent 110 seconds in total, "saving" 330 seconds! Saving for what?

ConlethChris (1195) – ConlethVladimir (1290)
ChessKid.com, 20.12.2020
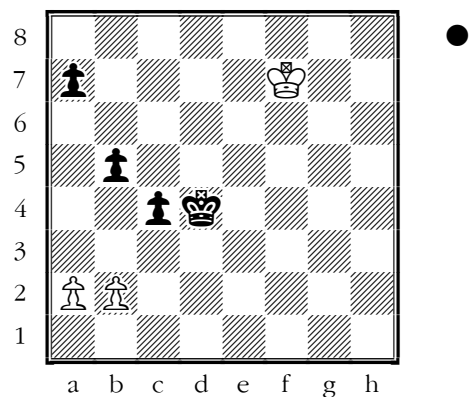
40...♔c5? (4.5 seconds!)
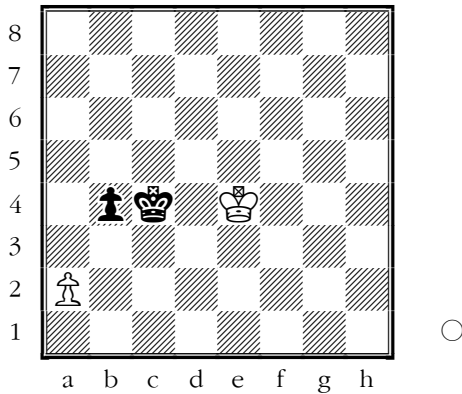What is the point of this move, where is the king going?! Black would win easily after 40...b4 41.♔e6 c3 42.bxc3+ bxc3–+.
41.♔e6 a5 42.♔e5 b4 43.♔e4 c3? (4.5 seconds)
Missing a simple win: 43...a4 44.♔e3 b3 45.axb3 axb3 46.♔d2 ♔d4 47.♔c1 ♔e3 48.♔d1 ♔d3 49.♔c1 ♔e2 50.♔b1 ♔d2 51.♔a1 c3 52.bxc3 ♔c2.
44.bxc3 ♔c4
44...bxc3 45.♔d3 ♔b4 46.♔c2 ♔c4 47.♔c1!=
45.cxb4 axb4 (D)

46.♔e3? (4.6) White had to keep his king active – 46.♔e5! ♔c3 47.♔d5 ♔b2 48.♔c4= In the game Black eventually won after **46...♔c3 47.♔e2 ♔b2.**

When White was finally checkmated on move 56, he had 6 minutes left – more time than at the star of the game! What is the point of playing so fast and making lots of mistakes in the process?! BTW, Black had 4 minutes left, which clearly contributed to the mistakes he made on moves 40 and 43.

It is important to understand that an increment makes a huge difference and one can afford to think. Take, for example, our 5+5 time control. As an average game

lasts about 30 moves, this translates into 15 seconds per move on average. As some natural moves are played much faster, a player can spend more time (say, 1–2 minutes) at critical junctions – when you have to make important decisions. Let's check the following game:

**CarysfortNSPeter (1151) –
HaroldDalkeyDaniel (1286)**
ChessKid.com, 08.11.2020

1.c4 (2.7 sec) **e5** (2.9)
2.♘c3 (3.5) **♘c6** (4.4)
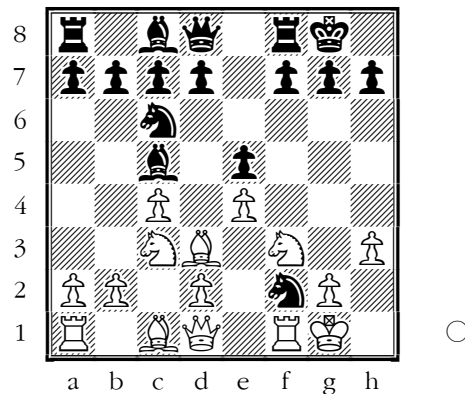**3.e4** (3) **♘f6** (3.4)
4.♘f3 (2.9) **♗c5** (3.3)
5.♗d3 (3.2) **♘g4?!** (3.1)
This move is premature; Black should have opted for 5...0–0 6.0–0 d6 7.♗e2 a5∓.
6.0–0 (4.2) **0–0** (4.5)
7.h3 (3.2) **♘xf2?** (3.7)
It was better to play 7...♘f6=.

White would have better chances after 8.♖xf2 ♗xf2+ 9.♔xf2 d6 10.♔g1 – in the endgame rook and pawn are equal to bishop and knight, but in the middlegame two minor pieces are usually stronger. However, White did not bother with such considerations as after 3 seconds came **8.♕e1?? ♘xd3+ 0–1** Time: 06:12" – 06:38"

My advice? Slow down at the key moments and win more games!