

Karsten Müller - Attack

Rules of thumb for practice



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JBV Chess Books

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Table of contents

Explanation of symbols	6
Preface	7
Chapter 1: All pieces should participate in the attack	9
Chapter 2: The attacker should not exchange attack potential	21
Chapter 3: Opening attack routes	32
Chapter 4: Typical attack motives	55
Chapter 5: Typical attack structures	68
Chapter 6: Attack with opposite-colored bishops	77
Chapter 7: Attack on a complex of weak squares	96
Chapter 8: Tal's magical attacks	105
Chapter 9: Mating attack in the endgame	118
Chapter 10: Selected attacking games by the author	130
Index of sources	138
About the author	139

Preface

Most chess players prefer attack to defense. That's why this important topic is of interest to everyone and is of course often discussed accordingly. In this book, I've attempted to demonstrate the basics of attacking play using a few rules of thumb and motives. It's of the utmost importance to train your intuition, with the aim of being able to decide with certainty in which cases the rules of thumb apply and the motives can be used – and in which cases you are dealing with an exception. Because it's precisely in this interplay of rule and exception that one of the charms of chess lies.

I would like to thank Rainer Woisin and Frederic Friedel from ChessBase for allowing me to use my DVD as a basis for this book and for the idea of working with QR Codes. My thanks also go to Robert Ullrich and Thomas Beyer for the perfect layout and the usual exemplary presentation

GM Dr. Karsten Müller
Hamburg, July 2023

Chapter 1

All pieces should participate in the attack

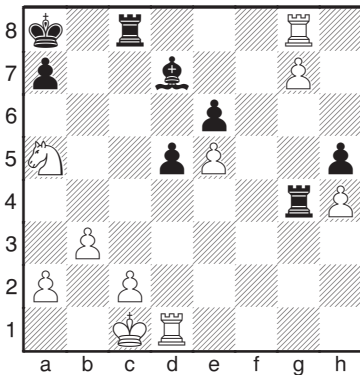
This is how the main motto for the attacker is usually formulated. Instead, however, there are also casual versions such as 'don't start the meal until everyone is seated' or even 'invite all friends to the party'. But let's get back to a more serious level. One could also choose the approach of getting a more precise picture of the relationship between the number of attackers and the number of defenders. It goes without saying that it should of course be as positive as possible for the attacker. And when looking for the 'best move', among the main candidates (checks and captures) are also those that lead more troops into the attack.



Tari, Aryan (2654)

Van Foreest, Jorden (2715)

Chessable Masters Online 2022



39. ♖f1!

Using a little tactical trick, White brings the last piece into play, which immediately overwhelms the defense.

39... ♖b8

39... ♖xg8 fails to 40. ♖f8+ ♗c8 41. ♖xg8 ♖b8 42. ♗c6+ with the lines:

– 42... ♖c7 43. ♖xc8+ ♖xc8 44. g8 ♖+ ♖xg8 45. ♗e7+ +-

– 42... ♖b7 43. ♗e7 ♗d7 44. ♖d8 ♖xg7 45. ♖xd7+ +-

40. ♖xc8+ ♗xc8 41. ♖f7 and 1–0, because the threat ♗c6+ and ♖xa7# can only be parried by sacrificing immense amounts of material.

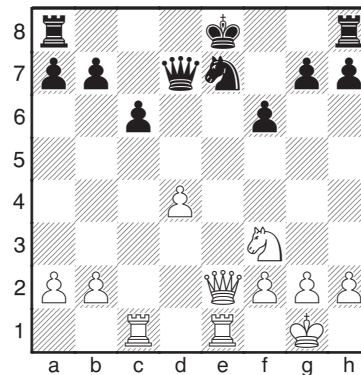
In most cases, however, the attack routes must first be cleared.



Steinitz, Wilhelm

Von Bardeleben, Curt

Hastings 1895



17.d5!!

In typical fashion, the isolani is used as a battering ram to open lines for the attackers.

17...cxd5?!

17... ♖f7 was required, although the attack was still very strong; e.g. 18. dxc6 bxc6 19. ♖ed1

(19. ♖c4+!? ♖d5 20. ♖g4 is also dangerous.)

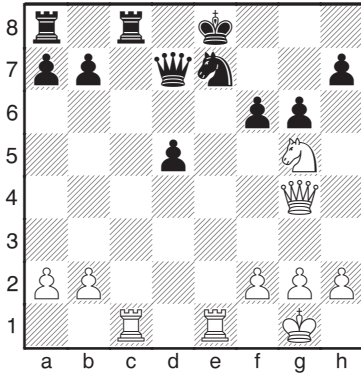
19... ♖e6 20. ♖xe6+ ♖xe6 21. ♗d4+ ♖f7 22. ♗xc6 and according to Kasparov, White has good practical winning chances.

18. ♗d4 ♖f7 19. ♗e6 ♖hc8?!

This runs into a wonderful refutation, but the black position was hopeless anyway; e.g. 19... ♗c6 20. ♗c5 ♖d6 21. ♗xb7 ♖d7 22. ♗c5 ♖d6 23. ♖h5+ g6 24. ♖h4 ♗e5 25. f4 ♗c4 26. b4 f5 27. ♖e6 ♖d8

28. ♖h6 ♜d6 29. h4 ♜e4 30. h5 ♜xc5
31. hxg6+ ♔xe6 32. ♞xc5+-.

20. ♖g4 g6 21. ♜g5+ ♔e8



22. ♞xe7+!!+-

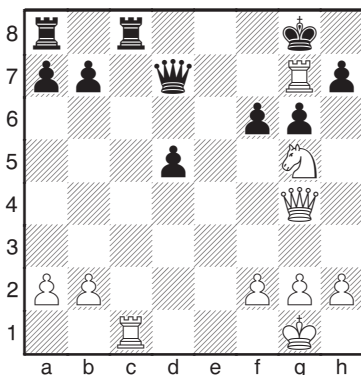
Ready for take off!!

22. ♜xh7? ♞xc1 23. ♜xf6+ ♔f7 24. ♞xc1
♞e6 would have sold the advantage too
cheaply.

22... ♔f8

22... ♔xe7 (22... ♞xe7 23. ♞xc8+)
23. ♞e1+ ♔d6 (23... ♔d8 24. ♜e6+ ♔e8
25. ♜c5+) 24. ♞b4+ ♞c5 (24... ♔c7
25. ♜e6+ ♔b8 26. ♞f4+ ♞c7 27. ♜xc7)
25. ♞e6+ ♞xe6 26. ♜xe6

23. ♞f7+! ♔g8 24. ♞g7+!!



The extraterrestrial rook simply contin-
ues its 'mission impossible'.

24... ♔h8

24... ♔f8 25. ♜xh7+ ♔xg7 26. ♞xd7+

25. ♞xh7+

At this point, von Bardeleben left the
tournament hall without a word. He later
sent a courier to announce his surren-
der. Meanwhile, Steinitz showed the
spectators the amazing finale.

25... ♔g8 26. ♞g7+ ♔h8 27. ♞h4+

Now Black is forced to finally take this
nightmare of a rook.

27... ♔xg7 28. ♞h7+ ♔f8 29. ♞h8+ ♔e7
30. ♞g7+ ♔e8 31. ♞g8+ ♔e7 32. ♞f7+
♔d8

(32... ♔d6 33. ♞xf6+ ♞e6 34. ♞xe6#)

33. ♞f8+ ♞e8 34. ♜f7+ ♔d7 35. ♞d6#

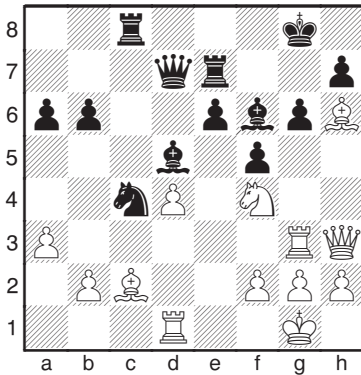
This masterpiece is rightly considered
the most spectacular of Steinitz's games.

However, in chess there's no rule of thumb without exception! – And in this regard even the rule of thumb 'All pieces should participate in the attack' is no exception.

In the next example, the feared attacking player Alexei Shirov goes a decisive step too far in this respect. However, since he was only 16 at the time of the game, it's clearly a case of youthful exuberance.



Shirov, Alexei
Lautier, Joel (2290)
Timisoara 1988

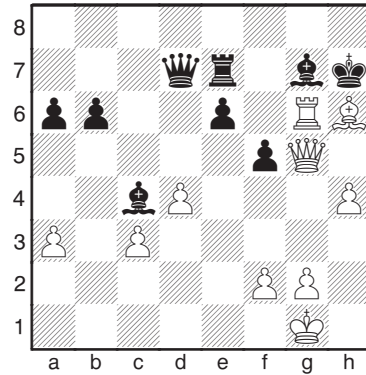


27. ♖dd3

Bringing more troops into the attack is still okay.

27... ♜d6

27... ♙g7 is followed by 28. ♞xg6 hxc6 29. ♞xg6 ♜e3 30. ♚xe3 ♜xc2 31. h4 ♙c4 32. ♜c3 ♜xc3 33. bxc3 ♜h7 34. ♚g5.



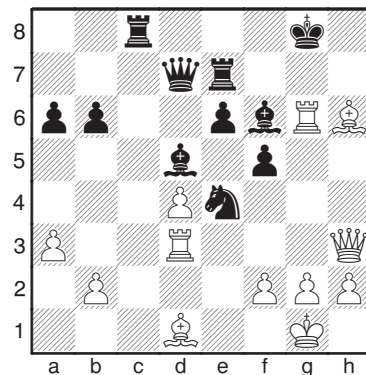
White has enough compensation, but nothing more; e.g. 34... ♜f7 35. ♙xg7 ♜xg7 36. ♚h5+ ♜g8 37. ♜h6=.

28. ♙d1?

However, this is going too far. Shirov is playing for a win with too much risk and also wants to include the bishop in the attack.

He obviously had no interest in the safe draw after 28. ♞xg6! hxc6 29. ♞xg6+ ♙g7 30. ♙xg7 ♜xg7 31. ♞xg7+ ♚xg7 32. ♜g3 ♜xc2 33. ♞xg7+ ♜xg7 34. ♚g3+ ♜f7 35. f3 ♜c4 36. ♚c7+.

28... ♜e4 29. ♜xg6 hxc6 30. ♞xg6+



30... ♙g7?

In such razor sharp positions, the material is often of less importance.

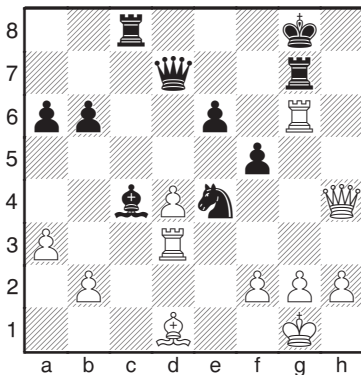
With 30...♖g7! 31.♙xg7 ♕xg7 32.f3 ♘d6 Black could ward off the attack and win in the long run.

31.♖h4 ♕c4?

This mistake runs into a counter blow.

31...♖e8 32.♙h5 ♖f8 33.h3 ♖a7= holds the shop together.

32.♙xg7 ♖xg7



33.♖h3!

This intervention of another attacker is decisive.

33...♖xd4

33...♖xg6 leads to the forced mate
34.♖h8+ ♔f7 35.♖h7+ ♖g7 36.♖xg7+ ♔f6 37.♖h6#.

34.♖h8+ ♔f7 35.♖xg7+ ♖xg7 36.♖xc8 ♕d5 37.♖d7+ ♔f6 38.♖xg7+ ♔xg7 39.♙b3 ♘g5 40.♖g3 ♔f6 41.♙xd5 exd5 42.♖c3 ♔e5 43.♖c6 d4 44.♖xb6 d3 45.♔f1 ♘e4 46.h4 ♔d4 47.h5 1-0

Since a counterattack is basically also an *attack*, it's often important to deploy as many troops as possible.

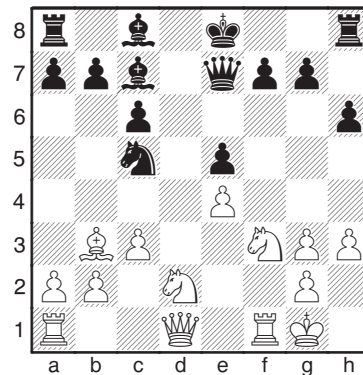


Carlsen, Magnus (2877)

Caruana, Fabiano (2801)

Saint Louis 2014

1.e4 e5 2.♙c4 ♘f6 3.d3 c6 4.♘f3 d5 5.♙b3 ♙b4+ 6.c3 ♙d6 7.♙g5 dxe4 8.dxe4 h6 9.♙h4 ♖e7 10.♘bd2 ♘bd7 11.♙g3?! ♙c7 12.0-0 ♘h5 13.h3?! ♙xg3 14.fxg3 ♘c5



15.♙xf7+

Since this interesting sacrifice is objectively incorrect, it can be warded off by accurate defense.

15...♔xf7 16.♘xe5+

16.♘h4+ ♔g8 17.♘g6 ♖d6 18.♖f8+ ♖xf8 19.♘xf8 ♔xf8 20.♖h5 ♙e6 21.♘f3 ♘d7 is also better for Black.

16...♔g8 17.♘g6 ♖g5!

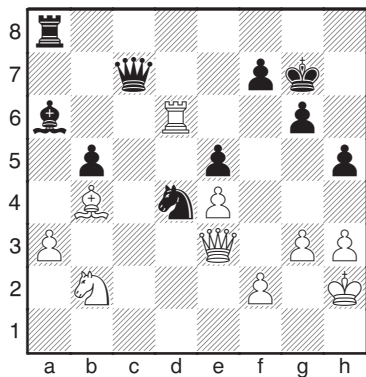


Magnus Carlsen

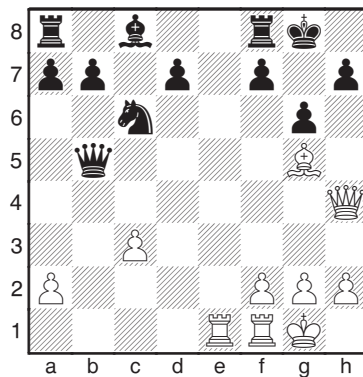


Fabiano Caruana

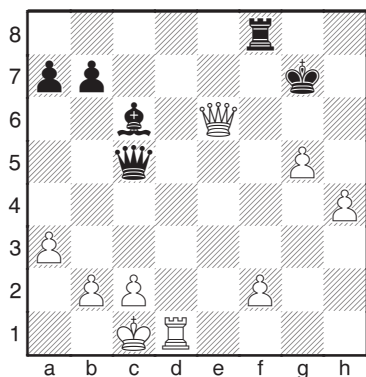
**Exercises on the topic:
All pieces should participate in the attack**



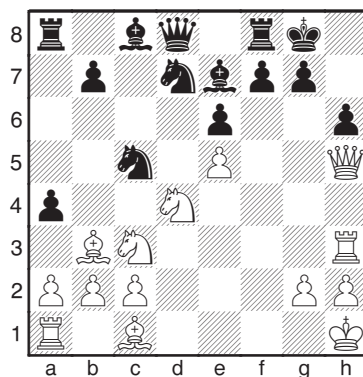
Exercise 1 White to move



Exercise 3 White to move



Exercise 2 White to move



Exercise 4 White to move

Solutions of the exercises

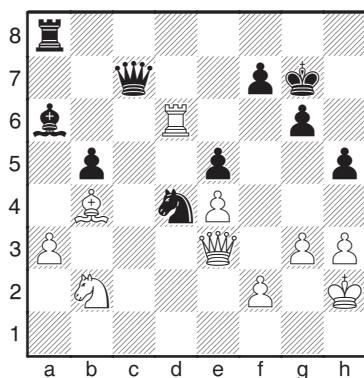


Solution 1

Moussard, Jules (2686)

Mihajlov, Sebastian (2375)

Mayrhofen 2022



44. ♖d3

The arrival of this additional attacker will overload the defense.

44...f6

– 44...♙c8 45. ♖xe5+–

– 44...♗c2 45. ♖g5 ♗xb4 46. ♖f6+ ♔g8
47. axb4 ♙b7 48. ♖xe5+–

45. ♗f4 ♙c8

1) 45...exf4 46. ♖xd4 ♗h6 47. ♖xf6 fxc3+
48. ♗xc3 ♖g7 49. ♖xa6+–

2) 45...♖f7 46. ♗d5 ♗e6 47. ♙d2 ♙c8
48. ♖h6+ ♔g8 49. ♙b4 ♖g7 50. ♖xc7+
♗xc7 51. ♗b6 ♖b8 52. ♗xc8 ♖xc8
53. ♖xe6+–

46. ♗xh5+ gxh5 47. ♖xf6 and 1-0 in view
of the possible continuation 47...♗xf6
48. ♖h6+ ♔f7 49. ♖h7+ ♔f6 50. ♖xc7+–.

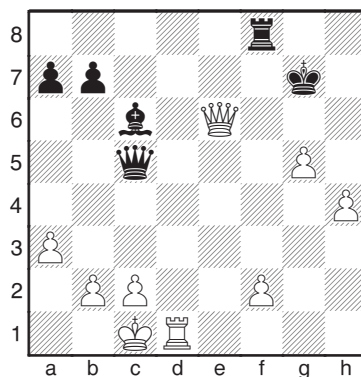


Solution 2

Kasparov, Garry (2851)

Shirov, Alexei (2751)

Frankfurt 2000



With 34. ♖d6! the rook was decisively
included in the attack.

34. ♖h6+?! should also win, although it's
less convincing than the game continu-
ation; e.g. 34...♗g8 35. ♖e6+!

(The alternatives 35. ♖d6? ♙e4 and
35.g6? ♖e7 are also better for White,
but less good than the main line.)

35...♗h8 36.g6 ♖xf2 37. ♖e7 ♖f4+
38. ♗b1 ♖h6 39.h5 ♖e8 40. ♖f6+ ♖g7
41. ♖f4+–

34...♙e8

34...♖xf2 35.♚e7+ ♖f7 36.♗g6+ +-
(Finkel in CBM 78)

34...♚xf2 35.♚h6+ ♔g8 36.♗g6+ ♔f7
37.♗g7+ ♔e8 38.♚e6+ ♔d8 39.♚d6+ +-
(Finkel)

35.♚e7+ 1-0

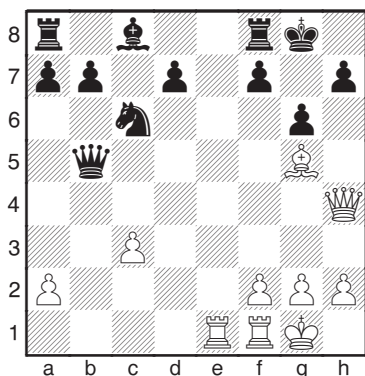


Solution 3

Polgar, Judit (2365)

Chilingirova, Pavlina (2240)

Thessaloniki 1988



16.♚h6

Now the queen plays a crucial role in the attack.

On the other hand, 16.♙f6? would be a mistake, as a look at two small lines makes clear

– 16...h5 17.♚f4 ♚f5+–

– 16...♚h5 17.♚xh5 gxh5 18.♗e3 h4+–

16...♚f5

16...f5 17.♙f6+–

17.♚xf8+ and 1-0 in view of the possible continuation 17...♔xf8 18.♙h6+ ♔g8 19.♗e8#.

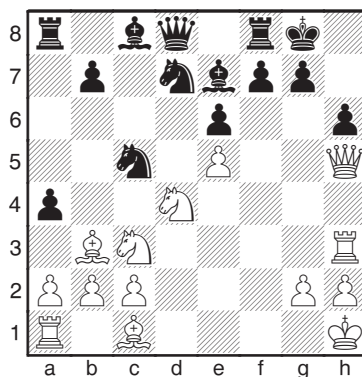


Solution 4

Müller, Karsten

Zagrebelny, Sergey

Budapest 1991



The overwhelming attack position unmistakably calls for one or the other sacrifice, and in fact there is plenty to draw from in this regard.

16.♗f5!!

The walls can be stormed directly, because almost all troops can now approach very quickly.

However, the alternatives also win, albeit not so easily:

1) 16.♙xh6 g6 17.♗g3 ♔h7 18.♚h3 ♗h8 19.♙xe6 ♗xe6 20.♗xe6 fxe6 21.♖f1 ♗xe5 22.♙f4+ ♔g8 23.♚xh8+ ♔xh8 24.♙xe5+ ♔g8 25.♗xg6+ ♔h7 26.♗g7+ ♔h6 27.♖ff7+–

2) 16. ♖g3 ♜xe5 (16...axb3? 17. ♟xh6+-)
 17. ♟xh6 ♟f6 18. ♟xg7 ♟xg7 19. ♚xe5 f6
 20. ♚xc5 axb3 21. cxb3 ♚a5 22. ♚c4+-
16...exf5
 - 16...♟g5 17. ♟xg5 ♚xg5 18. ♚xg5 hxg5
 19. ♜e7#

- 16...axb3 17. ♜xh6+ gxh6 18. ♟xh6
 bxc2 19. ♟g5+-
17. ♟xh6 ♟h4
 17...axb3 18. ♟xg7+-
18. ♚g6 ♚g5 19. ♟xg5 axb3 20. ♚h5
 ♜xe5 21. ♚xh4 1-0



Garry Kasparov

Chapter 2

The attacker should not exchange attack potential

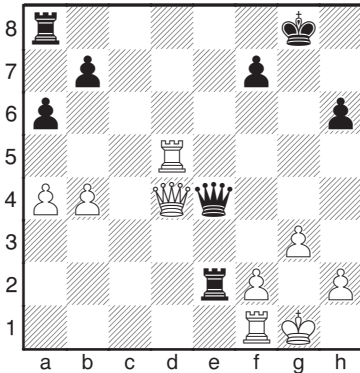
The rules of thumb on the subject of 'exchange' are often quite controversial. But I think this one is pretty good.



Loginov, Valery (2525)

Orlov, Vassily (2430)

St Petersburg, 1996

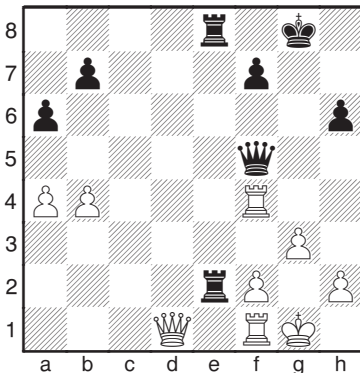


1. ♖d1!

White keeps the queen on the board for his attack on the king.

After 1. ♖xe4? ♜xe4 2. ♖b1 ♔g7, on the other hand, Black would have good drawing chances in the rook ending.

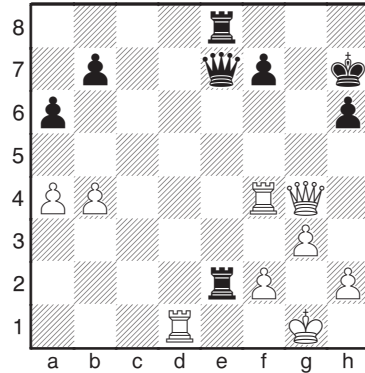
1... ♜e8 2. ♖d4 ♜f5 3. ♜f4



3... ♜e5?

After this mistake, the attack really picks up speed thanks to the intrusion of the queen, which could have been avoided with the more tenacious alternative 3... ♜e6.

4. ♖d7 ♜e7 5. ♜g4+ ♔h7 6. ♜d1



6... ♜e1+

Black's attempt to relieve his position is insufficient because it only leads to the exchange of his active rook, after which White still has enough attack potential. Although the approach 6... ♜e6 is more tenacious, it ultimately promises no salvation either; e.g. 7. h4 ♜f6 8. ♖dd4 ♜xf4 9. ♜xf4 ♜d8 10. ♜f3 ♜d7 11. ♔g2 ♔g8 12. ♜g4+ ♔h7 13. ♜f5+ ♔h8 14. ♜c2 ♜f8 15. ♜c3+ ♔h7 16. ♜f6 ♜d6 17. ♜f5+ ♔h8 18. ♜e5+ f6 19. ♜f5 ♜f7 20. ♜g6+-.

7. ♜xe1 ♜xe1+ 8. ♔g2 ♜e7

8... ♜e7 9. ♜f5+ ♔g8 10. ♜g4+ ♔f8 11. ♜h7+-

9. a5 ♜d8 10. ♜f5+ ♔g7 11. ♜g4+

11. ♜e4!?

11... ♔h8

After 11... ♔h8 White can win with 12. ♜h7! or even 12. ♜e4!? ♜g5 13. ♜h7 ♜g7 14. ♜xg7+ ♔xg7 15. ♜e7.

About the author

GM Dr. Karsten Müller was born on November 23rd, 1970 in Hamburg. He studied mathematics and received his doctorate in 2002. From 1988 to 2015 he played for the 'Hamburg SK' in the German 'Bundesliga' and in 1998 he was awarded the title of Grandmaster.

The busy and globally recognized end-game expert was named 'Trainer of the Year' by the German Chess Federation in 2007



He is the author (or co-author) of the following highly esteemed works:

- Secrets of Pawn Endings (with Frank Lamprecht, Everyman/GAMBIT 2000)
- Fundamental Chess Endings (with Frank Lamprecht, GAMBIT 2001)
- Danish Dynamite (with Martin Voigt, Russell 2003)
- Chess Cafe Puzzle Book: Test and Improve Your Tactical Vision (Russell 2004)
- How to Play Chess Endgames (with Wolfgang Pajeken, GAMBIT 2008)
- Chess Cafe Puzzle Book 2: Test and Improve Your Positional Intuition (Russell 2008)
- Bobby Fischer, The Career and Complete Games of the American World Chess Champion (Russell 2009)
- Chess Cafe Puzzle Book 3: Test and Improve Your Defensive Skill! (with Merijn van Delft, Russell 2010)
- Chess Cafe Puzzle Book 4: Mastering the positional principles (with Alexander Markgraf, Russell 2012)
- The Magic Tactics of Mikhail Tal: Learn from the Legend (with Raymund Stolze, Edition Olms 2012)
- Fighting chess with Hikaru Nakamura (with Raymund Stolze, Edition Olms 2013)
- The slow (but venomous) Italian (with Georgios Souleidis, New in Chess 2016)
- The Magic of Chess Tactics 2 (with C.D. Meyer, Russell 2017)

His excellent series of ChessBase–DVDs Chess endgames 1-14 also attracted attention.

Müller's popular column Endgame Corner was published at 'www.ChessCafe.com' from January 2001 until 2015, and his column Endgames is published in Chess–Base Magazine since 2006.

To date, numerous of his books have been published by JBV Chess Books (Joachim Beyer Verlag) – a total of 24 in German and the following titles also in English:

- Magical Endgames (together with Claus Dieter Meyer)
- The Human Factor in Chess (together with Luis Engel)
- The Best Endgames of the World Champions Vol. 1 + 2
- World Chess Championship 2021 (together with Jerzy Konikowski and Uwe Bekemann)
- The Best Combinations of the World Champions Vol. 1 + 2
- Bobby Fischer 60 Best Games
- Chess Training with Matthias Blübaum (together with Matthias Blübaum and Matthias Kreilmann)
- Typical Sicilian
- The Human Factor in Chess – The Testbook (together with Luis Engel and Makan Rafiee)
- Magnus Carlsen – The Chess DNA of Genius (2023)
- Karsten Müller – Attack (2023)