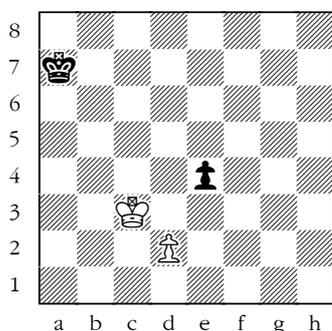


En Passant

By Steven Craig Miller

The term *en passant* is French for “in passing.” The *en passant* rule is undoubtedly the most difficult rule for most people to integrate into their knowledge of the rules. All other captures in chess are accomplished by moving to the square of the piece being captured. There is no other (legal) move in chess which allows one to make a move with a piece and then to remove an opponent’s piece from another square.

Before the 15th century, Chess was played with slightly different rules than those we use today. The queen could only move one square (like the king today), and pawns could only move one square. In the 15th century, a number of changes were made to the rules, speeding up the tempo of the game. These new rules gave the pieces new powers (queens could move more than one square, making her the most powerful piece on the chessboard), and gave the game a faster pace. One of those changes was that a pawn on its first move could move one or two squares. In order to compensate for this new power, they also developed the rule which we call *en passant*.



For example, if the white pawn on d2 moves two squares to d4, we would have a situation for an *en passant* capture. The white pawn on d4 can now be captured by the black adjacent pawn on e4. Black could play *exd3 en passant*.

How do you know if a situation is right for an *en passant* capture? Ask yourself these two questions: (1) “Did a pawn just move two squares?” and (2) “If that pawn which just moved two squares had only moved one square, are there any enemy pawns which might have captured it?” If the

white pawn had move to d3 instead of to d4, it would be easy to see that the black pawn at e4 could take the pawn on d3. The *en passant* rule merely allows something very similar.

If a pawn has just moved two squares, an adjacent enemy pawn can capture it as if it had only moved one square.