Code Geass: Lelouch of the Rebellion (Chess Analysis)

Made by: magadaz. [Stockfish dev-2024]



| Categories & colors from this doc | Anime adaptation - for timestamps |

The screenwriters and authors of anime series may not be well-versed in chess. The year of publication can influence the quality of the chess games depicted. **NOTE:** I will provide translatio‼️ the anime from my native language into english - for clarity and ease of understanding.

"Code Geass" and its remarkable protagonist, Lelouch. Code Geass, an anime that premiered in 2006, is set in an alternate reality where the Britannian Empire has conquered Japan, renaming it Area 11. The story follows Lelouch Lamperouge, a former prince of Britannia who acquires the power of "Geass," enabling him to command others with absolute obedience. Motivated by a desire for revenge against his father and a longing to create a better world for his sister, Nunnally, Lelouch embarks on a mission to dismantle the imperial regime and liberate Japan from its oppressive rule. Through his transformation into the masked vigilante Zero, he leads a rebellion known as The Black Knights, navigating complex moral dilemmas and personal sacrifices along the way. Without further delay, let's dive right in. **I will focus ONLY on on-screen games and chess related feats.**

The Day a New Demon was Born

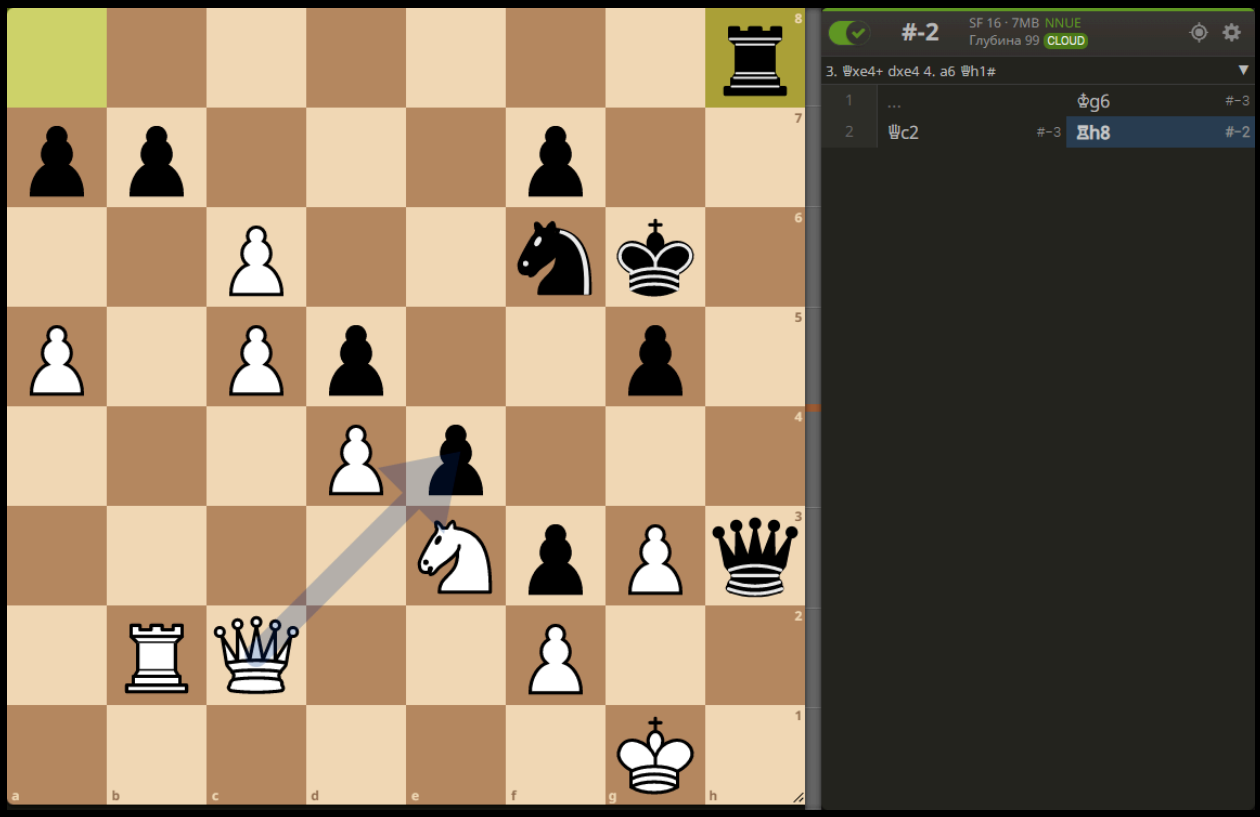
[Season 1, Episode 1] - We see a room where a chess match is taking place between a Britannian noble and what appears to be a teacher from an academy. As time runs out for the black pieces, the Britannian noble grants an additional 20 seconds (without delving too deeply into this, let's just acknowledge that specific time rules are in play). At that moment, Lelouch and his friend Rivalz enter the room, with Lelouch confidently stating that he can turn the situation on the chessboard within nine minutes. The Britannian noble says that Lelouch has only 20 seconds per move. Lelouch plays Kg6, *the point of the move is to open the h-file for the Rook*. Move was played in 22.3 seconds (If you touch a piece, you are required to make a move with it unless you state "correcting" beforehand. Before the clocks were adjusted, Lelouch was looking at the board; it would be absurd to suggest he wasn't calculating during that time. I counted the entire duration before he touched a piece.), the Britannian noble laughs, but in fact that's the strongest move according to Stockfish, this position wasn't random mess on the board and its actually a real game:

Emil Nikolic (White) vs Robert James Fischer (Black) [Vinkovci 1968]

They didn't show us anything further, so here the continuation from a real game: *Qc2, Rh8* - Emil resigned, because it's impossible to stop black from playing Qh1#. [FEN below.]



[4:30] - Position on the board, black's turn to move.



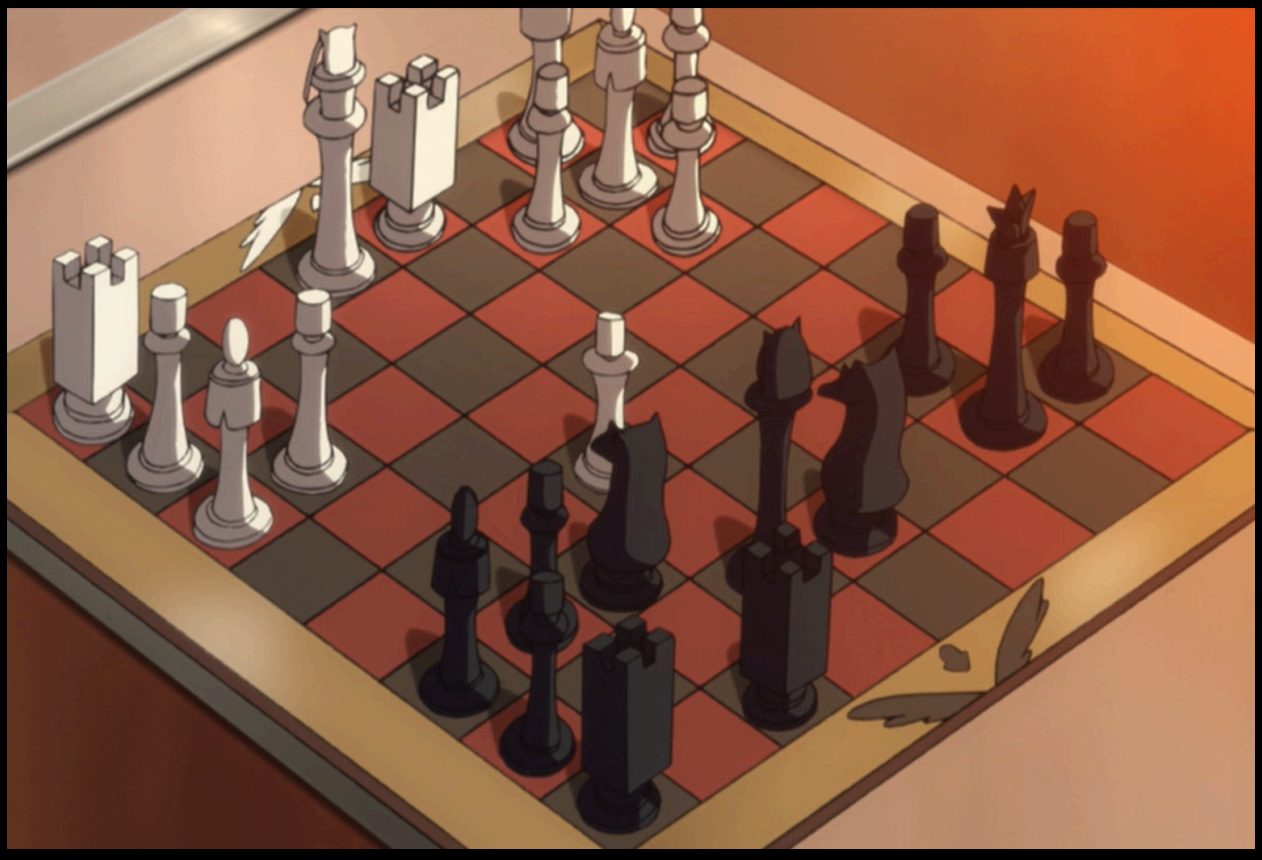
[FEN] - Stockfish suggests that the only way to prolong this game is to sacrifice the Queen.

COMMENT: In general, this game should have portrayed Lelouch as an exceptionally strong chess player in the eyes of the audience. Did it succeed? If we disregard the chess semantics, then yes, undoubtedly. However, upon closer examination, while the speed with which he assessed the position and identified the best move is indeed impressive, it becomes clear that his old teacher did most of the work for him. Lelouch merely executed a checkmating maneuver, which diminishes the overall impact. Since this was their first episode, the creators opted for a safer approach than in other works by featuring a game of two real chess masters, a decision for which they deserve commendation; they executed this task remarkably well.

After some scenes we see Lelouch and Rivalz walk out from that room happily, in anime it was stated that Lelouch won that game, his friend says next: *"8 minutes and 32 seconds, a new record"* - don't expect me to criticize Lelouch for thinking too long to play Rh8, because he, in less than 30 seconds, found the only winning move Kg6, *plus it has never been stated that they played a new game*, it was clearly shown that Lelouch and that old man were teammates happening to play as black, and the Britannian noble says: *"So this is your teammate?" [4:05]*, the whole time he was either doing:
1) Nothing, just relaxingly sitting on a chair. 2) Actively trolling the Britannian noble. Personally, I believe more in a second variant, because on [5:36] we see the Britannian noble's unsatisfied face.

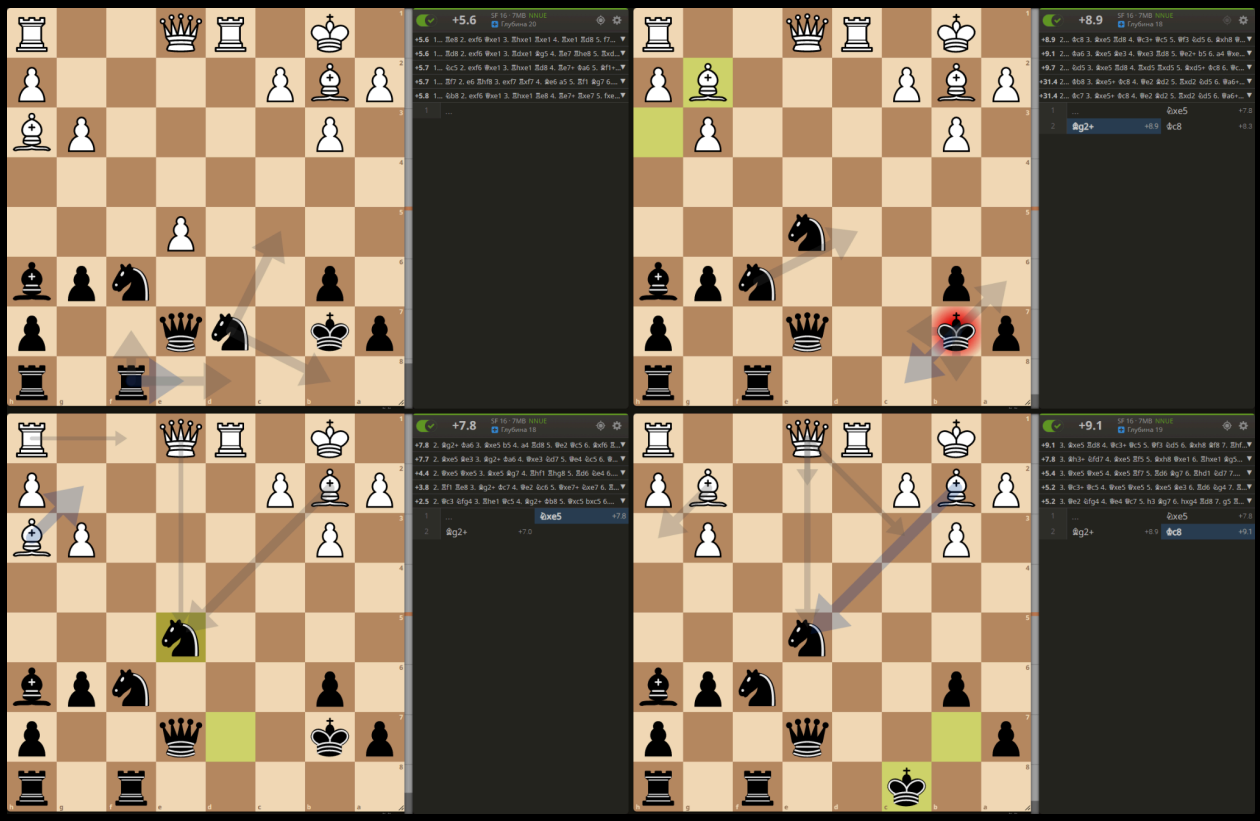
Geass vs. Geass

[Season 1, Episode 14] Lelouch gets a call from Shirley. When he answers it, however, he discovers the man, who is right behind him, on the line. Lelouch demands to know what he did to Shirley, and the man agrees on the condition that he face him in a game of chess. C.C., meanwhile, talks to a motorist about it when she sees Lelouch and the man on a mountain railcar. She appears to be shocked when she sees the man, and identifies him as someone named Mao. It is shown that Mao and Lelouch are playing chess in the railcar, where Lelouch realizes that Mao is calling all of his moves. C.C. then steals the guy's motorbike and races up to reach the two. Lelouch finds out about Mao, a young man who also has the power of Geass, which he uses to read minds, and thereby wins a chess game with Lelouch. So let's take a look at their chess game on the rail car.



[14:28] - Position, available database says this game doesn't exist, looks like the authors created it.

Mao says that he never played that game before, but Lelouch completely ignores it, while having different thoughts in his head, *with the fact that he still haven't figured out that the man sitting right in front of him is Mao*. [14:35] Lelouch plays Nxe5, Mao plays Bg2+, Lelouch moves away Kg8.

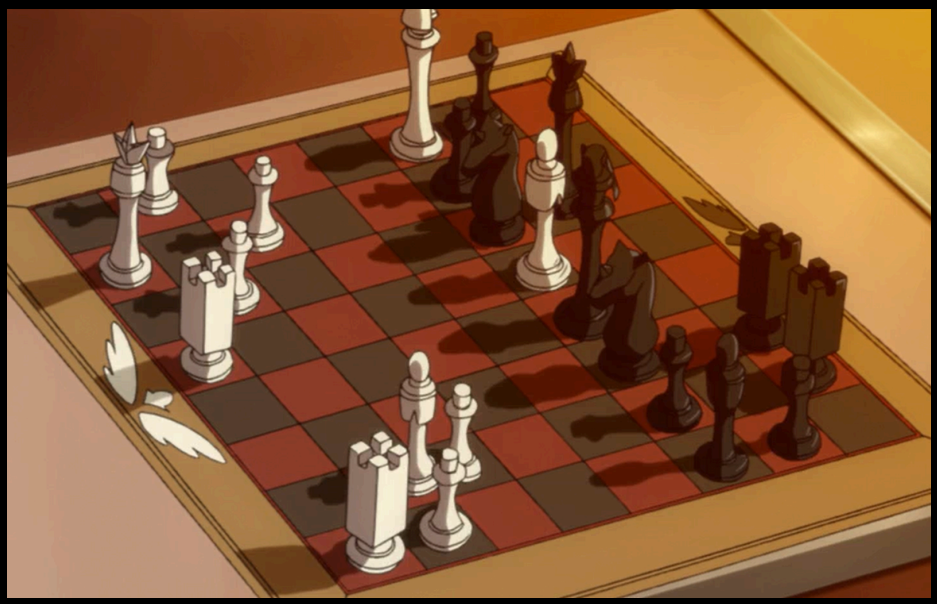


[FEN] - I would call this position a real one, *with some stretch of the imagination*; it's clear that the authors didn't bother thinking about their moves before what we saw on the screen...

[15:00] Lelouch realizes that Mao is not a beginner in chess and exposes him.

[15:14] Later we see Lelouch face full of stress and panic.

Board changed quickly to this position, before pieces fell off.



[15:23] - That's a completely different position, still no clue when Mao played Ba3.



[FEN] - Mao claims victory. Lelouch failed to checkmate or make the game drawish.

NOTE: If you think about it properly, then the whole game was essentially played against himself by Lelouch. Of course, it is possible that I do not thoroughly understand the plot; in the future, you can correct me if necessary, and I will make adjustments. Mao actually did not lie when he claimed to be a beginner in chess; yes, Lelouch has every right to say that he is not a beginner, but this was true only until he learned about Mao's ability to read minds with his unique Geass. It is also fair to say that Lelouch was emotional throughout the entire encounter and was not only focused on chess but also on who was sitting in front of him and what plan Mao had devised against him. It's reasonable to assert that Mao could have anticipated moves that Lelouch might think of, which could lead to mistakes or blunders. Mao couldn't have won if Lelouch had remained calm, because, as mentioned earlier, it turns out that Lelouch was effectively playing against himself. Therefore, technically, the game should have ended in a draw; however, due to his lack of emotional control, he lost...

Nunnally Held Hostage

[Season 1, Episode 16] At Ashford, Lelouch has Suzaku stay with Nunnally. Afterwards, Lelouch goes back up, finding Mao (who is complaining to himself about all the students' minds) inside a chapel. Mao questions why Lelouch hasn't done anything to stop Mao physically, Lelouch ignores this question and goes straight to a point and it is revealed that Mao called him up there personally for a "game", which Mao reveals to be chess, a rematch. Mao then explains the rules of the chess game: it matters not whether checkmate is called but rather how many pieces are taken. Once the pieces are taken they are placed on respective sides of a scale. If Mao gets enough pieces, a switch will trigger the bomb and detonate it; however, if Lelouch gets enough pieces, another switch will disarm the bomb.

(I honestly tried and gave up, board and position changes too often and not even a first move was animated, this game is purely narrative. Maybe there will be some madman who will actually try, but I won't, I consider this a useless episode where chess is mentioned, though this variant of chess seems interesting, yet needs a lot of rules, explanation & details. Fun fact: Lelouch lost to Mao: 2 - 0)

The Day a Demon Awakens

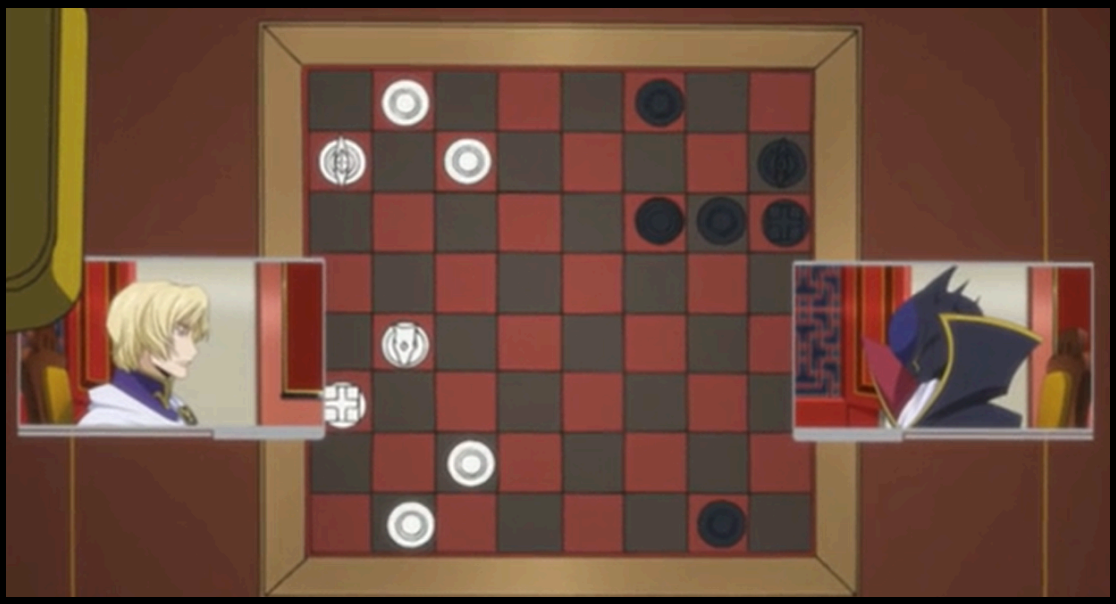
[Season 2, Episode 1] The man, who is revealed to be part of the mafia, Lelouch challenges him to chess. Rolo tries to get him to stop, and in turn the man decides to brush him off again, but Lelouch reveals that the man is The Black King, a famous illegal chess player.



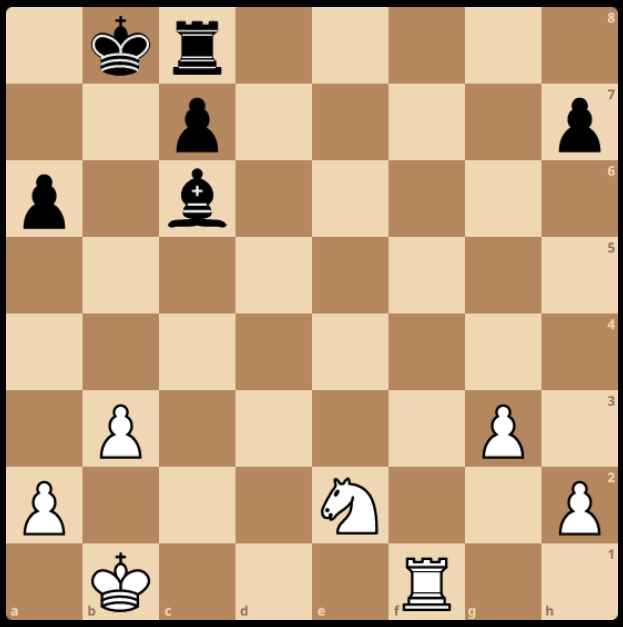
[10:06] - *No comment. Just look*. Even if we assume that on e3 is the Black king, still not enough covered squares to checkmate him, and actually Lelouch has less material, just for a fact.

A Bride in the Vermilion Forbidden City

[Season 2, Episode 9] Zero offers to play chess with Schneizel. If Zero wins, he can have Kaguya take Suzaku away from the party as a "present," intending to use Geass on everyone else to let him take Tianzi (since he can't use it on Suzaku); however, if Schneizel wins, Zero must unmask to everyone, to Kallen's dismay. The chess game is moved to another room for the protection of Odysseus and Tianzi, with Odysseus betting on Schneizel.

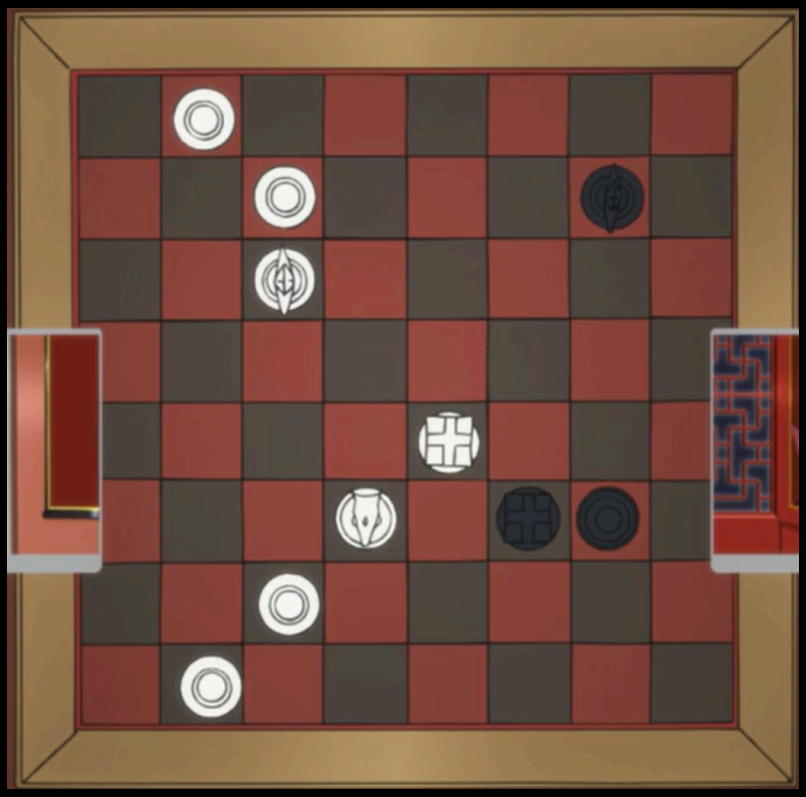


[14:58] - Unknown who's right to move, below position for you.

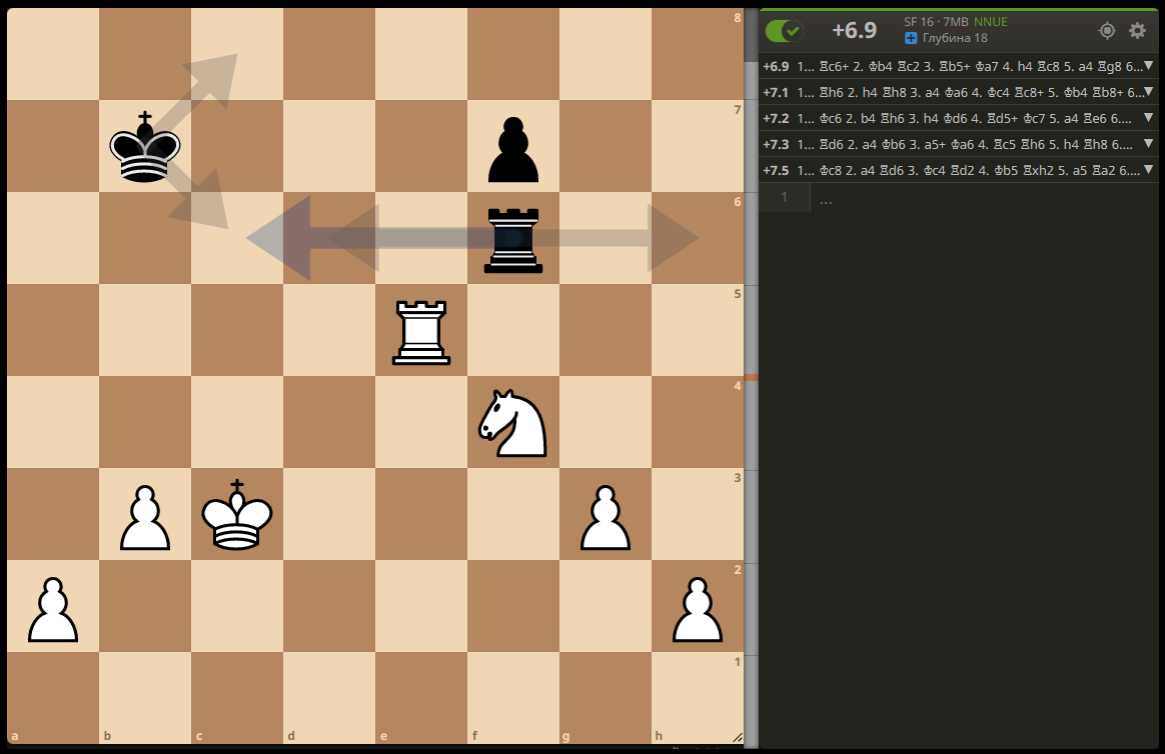


[FEN] - White is clearly winning, with perfect play, it doesn't matter if it Black turn right now.

Then position changes to this, I won't question, because next scene is going to be meme-tier:



[16:07] - Bishop & Pawn are gone for no reason...



[FEN] - It's not even equal as other character states, White is clearly winning.



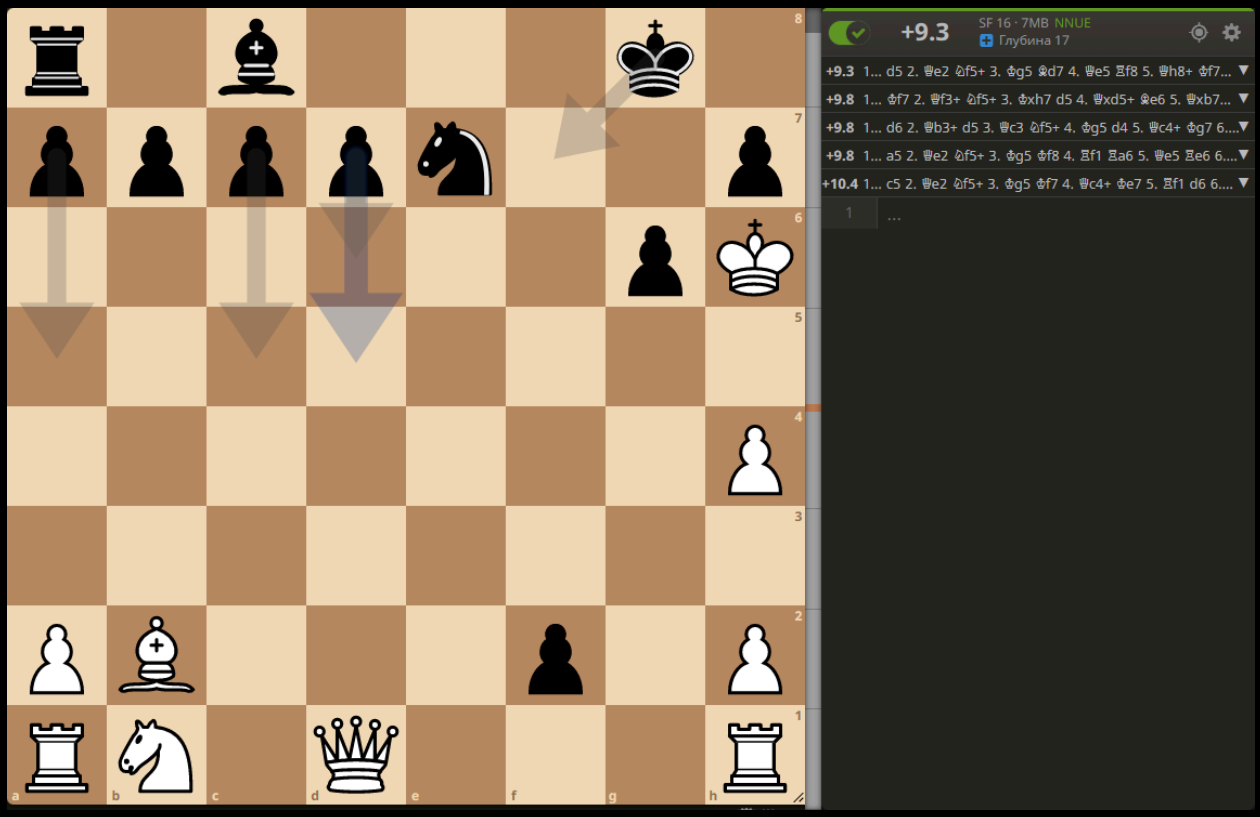
[16:35] - ...

The Brightness Falls (Code Geass: Akito the Exiled)

[Episode 3] The only available chess position and without any blurs, here two positions below, in this scene Julius Kingsley (Lelouch) has a mental breakdown because his Geass malfunction:



[42:42] - Black to move. Position is unreal, with White King on h3, but it's for plot of the story.



[FEN] - Personally for me it's bizarre that White are winning here.

Then we find another position, right before Lelouch slam all pieces off the table:



[44:04] - Knight on h8 is something unexpected. Also White King is checkmated. Lelouch won here.

Conclusion

For the first time I see the main character not progressing in something but degrading, the very first episode of the first season of Code Geass, Lelouch was at the peak of his powers (in Chess). After that - it's just a farce. It’s hard to believe but you can high-ball him and glaze above 1200 elo, only if you talk about Lelouch ep. 1, Lelouch after ep. 14 and so on is below 600 elo.

Elo (Overall + on-screen): 600(-);

Elo (Overall + off-screen + statements + narrative): 750(+);

Elo (1st Episode): 1200(+).

BONUS



[14:47] - lol...