

Secrets of Chess Endgame Strategy

Lars Bo Hansen

**How to marshal your forces in the decisive
phase of the game**





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Lars Bo Hansen

GAMBIT

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Symbols

+	check
++	double check
#	checkmate
!!	brilliant move
!	good move
!?	interesting move
?!	dubious move
?	bad move
??	blunder
Ch	championship
Cht	team championship
Wch	world championship
Wcht	world team championship
Ech	European championship
Echt	European team championship
ECC	European Clubs Cup
Ct	candidates event
IZ	interzonal event
OL	olympiad
jr	junior event
rpd	rapidplay game
tt	team tournament
simul	game from simultaneous display
corr.	correspondence game
1-0	the game ends in a win for White
1/2-1/2	the game ends in a draw
0-1	the game ends in a win for Black
(<i>n</i>)	<i>n</i> th match game
(<i>D</i>)	see next diagram

Acknowledgements

This book is dedicated to my parents, Ingrid and Egon Hansen, who always supported my chess career. I also wish to thank my wife Evgenia and our son Martin for love, support and understanding throughout the busy writing process.

Preface

As a teenager, I was fascinated by the endgame. I studied the games of endgame experts like Capablanca, Botvinnik, Smyslov, Larsen and Karpov with great enthusiasm. I even constructed my own endgames – not studies, as many of my grandmaster colleagues did, but rather practical positions, which I then analysed and contrasted with the endgame literature. It was a hobby in itself, but I am convinced that this work also contributed to my practical results at the board.

It is my firm belief that profound endgame knowledge and technique is more valuable and important now than ever before for the practising chess-player. Time-limits are continuously reduced, and there is no longer time for deep reflection on the intricacies of endgames – let alone adjournments and the thorough analysis that characterized endgame play a few decades ago. When the game reaches the endgame stage, players often do not have much time at their disposal. Therefore, understanding the basic principles of *strategic* endgames and profound knowledge of *technical* endgames are crucial to endgame success. Strategic endgames are endgames in which the result is not yet known – one player might possess a small advantage (e.g. the two bishops), but it is not clear how and if this minor advantage can be converted into a full point. Technical endgames (which can also be termed ‘theoretical’), on the other hand, are well-known from endgame literature. Here the ‘best way’ to play – and the ‘natural result’ – is already known, and the question is merely if the player knows the endgame theory and is able to steer clear of the opponent’s attempts to confuse matters.

In accordance with its title, this book is mainly about *strategic* endgames. The book outlines the 15 principles that I believe constitute the backbone of strategic endgame play. Understanding these principles – and the interplay between them – facilitates decision-making and planning in strategic endgames. In Part 1 of the book, the principles are presented and briefly outlined. In Part 2, I then turn my attention to various material distributions and examine the impact of the principles in many types of endgames – queen endgames, rook endgames, bishops and knights, etc. Next, in Part 3 I incorporate the style of the players, building on the framework outlined in my first Gambit book, *Foundations of Chess Strategy*. The structure of the book allows the reader not only to grasp the principles, but also to witness how they are *applied* in various types of endgames and by various styles of players.

There is another reason why endgame understanding and knowledge is important and interesting: strategic endgames constitute terrain in which human understanding can still outperform raw computer calculations. During the research for this book, I was struck by the fact that ‘computer aid’ was of surprisingly little assistance, as the silicon monsters often cannot exploit their vast calculation powers in these kinds of endgames. Here, understanding is more important than calculations. Endgame understanding can be improved by thorough examination of principles and practical examples, and with this book I hope to contribute to improving the reader’s practical endgame results.

Lars Bo Hansen
Nykøbing F., Denmark

1 General Principles

Introduction

For many chess-players, the endgame is considered the most difficult part of a chess game. This may sound counterintuitive, as by definition there are fewer pieces on the board in the endgame than in the opening or middlegame. Yet the reason why endgames are considered difficult is probably that in the endgame it is very small nuances that decide the game. Endgame victories are rarely the outcome of vigorous attacks or sharp calculations – rather, here it is a deep understanding of chess and chess principles that decides the game. Experience and ‘talent for the game’ (whatever that is – defining this term is inherently difficult) play a key role in the endgame. Who has not suffered the fate of being outplayed in the endgame by a stronger and more experienced player?

Still, I believe that it is also possible to improve a chess-player’s endgame skills through systematic work. In this book, it is my intention to present a number of guiding principles for how to play the endgame. While it is certainly true that endgames are often decided through very small mistakes or nuances, it is also true that most of these nuances can be categorized in a framework of general principles for playing the endgame. And it is the development and presentation of these principles that form the core of this book.

The principles outlined in this book are connected to strategic endgames, so I should first clarify the difference between *strategic endgames* and *technical endgames*. The distinction between these two types of endgames is not trivial, and various authors assign different meanings to the two terms. Here is how the terms ‘strategic endgame’ and ‘technical endgame’ are used in this book: *strategic endgames* are endgames where the result is still ‘in play’ – you cannot look it up in an endgame book or find a database telling you the ‘right’ result and

how to achieve it. In such endgames, knowledge and understanding of general principles are paramount, and hence this book is mainly about strategic endgames. Examples include positions where one player is trying to exploit the advantage of the two bishops or where a player is defending a position with a spoiled pawn-structure. It might be clear that one of the players has the advantage and is pressing for the win, but the exact way to play and the final result are still in doubt. But at some point in time, a strategic endgame turns into a technical endgame. *Technical endgames* are those where the result is clear even against best play and which can be found in the endgame literature. Examples include rook endings with rook and pawn against rook or queen vs rook. For any given position the result is known and the way to win (or draw) is shown. Consequently, most endgames start out as being strategic and only later do they become technical. They do not start out as technical in the sense of how the term is used here.

The book is divided into three parts. In Part 1 I shall develop and present the general principles underlying successful play in the (strategic) endgame, while Parts 2 and 3 deal with the practical application of these principles. The first chapter constitutes Part 1, and here I shall introduce the general principles, and in Part 2 the principles will be developed further in the context of typical endgame material distributions. Chapter 2 deals with the pawn-structure and pawn endgames, Chapter 3 with the struggle between the minor pieces (bishop and knight), Chapter 4 with the major pieces (queen and rook), Chapter 5 examines a variety of material imbalances in the endgame, and Chapter 6 closes Part 2 by investigating complex endgames.

Given that this book deals mainly with strategic endgames (although of course we shall see some technical endgames as well, arising from an initial strategic endgame) where the

best way to play is not clear, a player's approach to these endgames may differ in accordance with his personal style. As outlined in my first book *Foundations of Chess Strategy*, chess-players can be divided into a number of distinct types (activists, pragmatics, theorists and reflectors) with diverging approaches to the game. In Part 3 of the book – Chapter 7 – I shall incorporate the framework developed in my first book into the endgame by showing how various types of chess-players approach the endgame. Different types of players – while obviously knowing the general principles of endgames – apply the principles differently in practical games.

The General Principles

So, what are the general principles of strategic chess endgames? Most endgame books focus more on technical endgames, but a number of works on strategic chess endgames have been published. Most famous is probably the work by Shereshevsky (published in several languages), but work by, for instance, Mednis, Dvoretzky and earlier Keres and Fine is also interesting in the process of identifying the general principles of endgame play.

Combining my own experiences as a grandmaster and endgame player with the work of these earlier authors, I have identified the following 15 general principles:

- The importance of the pawn-structure
- The principle of two weaknesses
- The space advantage
- Control of squares and files
- Grip and suppressing counterplay
- Domination.
- Time: hurry or not?
- Making the right exchanges
- The transformation of advantages
- The two bishops
- Bishops or knights?
- King activity
- Rook activity
- Initiative and attack in the endgame
- Mate and stalemate in the endgame

In the rest of this chapter (Part 1 of the book), each of these 15 principles will be introduced,

and in the subsequent chapters (Parts 2 and 3 of the book) they will be developed further in the context of specific types of positions, material configurations and in the hands of various types of players. In other words, in this part we build the foundation, and in the subsequent chapters we apply the principles to a variety of typical game positions and through the lenses of different types of players. While the type of position, the material situation and the style of players vary in the examples you will encounter throughout the book, all the examples share the characteristic of one or more of the above principles being present. As you go over the games in the book – and when you study games and endgames in general – try to be aware of the 15 guiding principles. That will help you structure your endgame play.

Enough of the talking and categorization – let's get on with the chess!

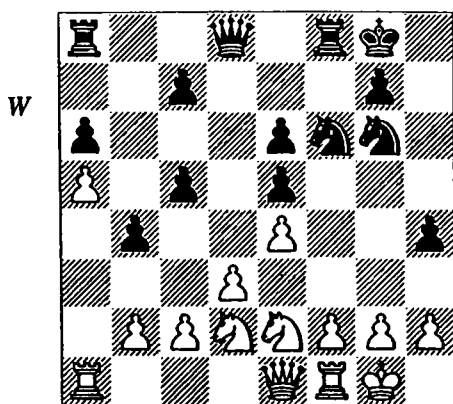
The Importance of the Pawn-Structure

Perhaps the most important endgame principle of all is the one about the importance of the pawn-structure. This principle underlies a number of the other principles as well. For example, the principle of two weaknesses is often about pawn weaknesses; space is gained through pawns (but utilized by pieces) and the evaluation of whether a bishop or knight is best also often hinges on the pawn-structure.

In this introductory chapter, we shall look at three situations where the pawn-structure plays a key role in the endgame:

- 1) If the pawn-structure is damaged, one or more pawns may become weak in their own right.
- 2) A fractured pawn-structure leads to weak squares; for example, the square in front of an isolated pawn often constitutes a wonderful outpost for a knight.
- 3) Passed pawns are powerful weapons in the endgame.

We shall look at some examples of these characteristics of the pawn-structure to whet the appetite, and in Chapter 2 we shall look into typical pawn-structure issues in more detail.



Anand – Hector
Middelfart rpd 2003

Black has voluntarily accepted two sets of doubled pawns in the hope of achieving active play – often a good idea in rapid play. But with instructive manoeuvres Anand shows the drawback of the fractured pawn-structure: with each exchange Black's potential activity is reduced, and he is eventually forced into a passive position with no compensation for the damaged pawn-structure.

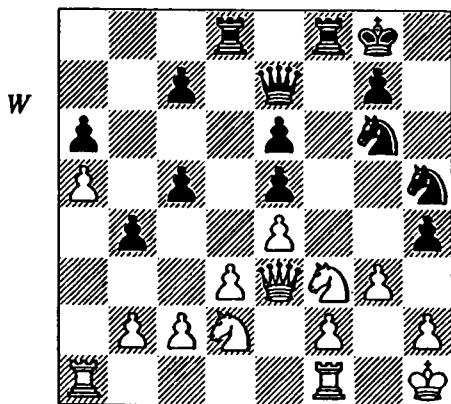
19 ♖h1!

An instructive regrouping. The e2-knight is transferred to f3, where it attacks e5 and h4. The other knight belongs on c4.

19... ♖h5 20 ♘g1! ♘gf4?!

This plays into White's hands. The move g3 was part of White's plan anyway. On the other hand, time is not really an issue here. The damage to the pawn-structure is chronic, and it cannot be repaired even with a few extra moves.

21 g3 ♘g6 22 ♖e3 ♖e7 23 ♘gf3 ♖ad8 (D)



24 ♖g5!

Anand employs a typical strategy when playing against weak pawns: with each exchange of

pieces the deficiencies in the pawn-structure become more visible.

24... ♖xg5 25 ♘xg5 ♖fe8 26 ♖b3

Forcing Black's rook into a passive position on c6.

26... ♖d6 27 ♘f3 ♘f6 28 ♘fd2!

Obviously Black should not be allowed to play ...c4.

28... ♖c6 29 ♘c4 ♖f8 30 ♖g2 ♘e8 31 ♖bd2 ♘d6 32 ♘e3! ♖f7 33 ♘dc4

Note Anand's patient knight manoeuvres.

33... ♖e7 34 f3

There is no hurry – Shereshevsky's famous principle – as White's advantage is perfectly stable.

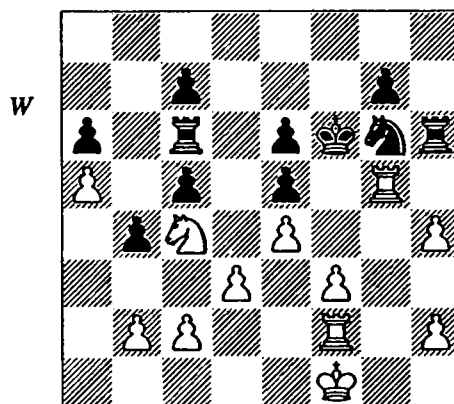
34... ♖h8 35 ♖f2 ♖h5 36 ♖g1! ♘h8?! 37 gxf4!

Finally Anand decides to act, as Black has weakened the g-file. Probably Black should have swapped on g3 on move 35 or 36, although he would still not be in an enviable position.

37... ♘xc4 38 ♘xc4 ♘g6 39 ♖f1! ♖f6 40 ♖g5!

The point of 37 gxf4. Black cannot take on h4 because of 41 ♖xg6+! ♖xg6 42 ♘xe5+ and wins.

40... ♖h6 (D)



41 ♖xg6+!

Nevertheless! The black rooks are placed very unfavourably, and White regains the exchange with an easily winning rook ending.

41... ♖xg6 42 f4!

The point.

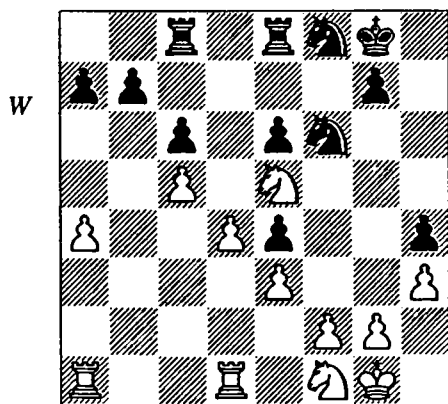
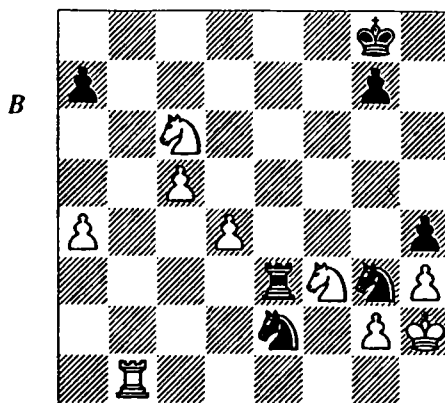
42... ♖h6

42... exf4? 43 ♖xf4+ ♖e7 44 ♘e5 is even worse – the rooks cannot cover each other!

43 ♘xe5 ♖d6 44 ♘g4+ ♖g6 45 ♘xh6 ♖xh6 46 ♖e2

With two extra pawns White is certainly winning, and Anand duly brings the game home, although perhaps not in the most accurate manner. However, the result is never in doubt.

46...c4 47 dxc4 d4 48 b3 exe4+ 49 d3 e1 50 d4! a1 51 e2 xa5 52 xe6+ g6 53 c5 a2 54 d3 h5 55 c6 a5 56 xc7 a4 57 bxa4 xa4 58 c4 xh4 59 c6 g4 60 b3 a8 61 f7 a6 62 f6 g5 63 fxg5 xg5 64 c7! a8 65 e6 c8 66 xxb4 1-0



L.B. Hansen – Ziegler
Bundesliga 1999/00

One more example of a damaged pawn-structure! Black has a weak doubled pawn, problems with b7, and even h4 may turn out to be tender.

25 d2

Attacking the lonely e4-pawn and eyeing the inviting d6-square.

25...e7 26 dec4

It is not easy for Black to avoid the loss of one or more of the vulnerable pawns.

26...e7 27 ab1 d8d7 28 d6

Loss of material is unavoidable. Black tries to initiate counterplay, but his pieces lack coordination.

28...e5 29 xb7 xb7 30 dxb7 exd4 31 exd4 d5 32 d8!

Going after the next pawn in the chain, now that the first one has been successfully besieged.

32...e3 33 fe3 xe3 34 f3!

Coordinating the pieces and targeting the h4-pawn in the process.

34...c3 35 d2 f6 36 dxc6 dfe4 37 b2 de2+ 38 h2 d4g3 39 b1 (D)

The most prudent in time-pressure. White secures his back rank.

39...g5 40 dce5?!

The last move before the time-control, and probably not the most accurate – but still good enough.

40...dxd4! 41 dxd4 xe5 42 c1!

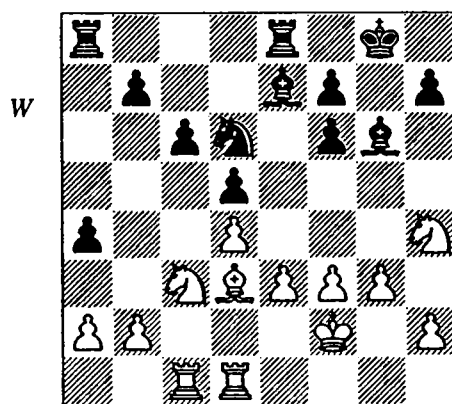
Rooks belong behind passed pawns!

42...de4 43 c6 d6 44 c7 dc8 45 b1 f7 46 b8 e8 47 f5!

A neat move! The threat is 48 xc8 xc8 49 d6+, and Black does not have a good defence against this threat; e.g., 47...f6 48 d6! or 47...f8 48 a5 a6 49 a8! with a deadly zugzwang. Black therefore resigned.

1-0

The problem with a damaged pawn-structure may not only be found in the weakness of the pawns themselves; the squares surrounding the pawns also become weak. This is especially obvious when you look at positions with doubled isolated pawns. The square(s) in front of these doubled pawns is a paradise for a knight, as it can hardly ever be dislodged. Here is an example:



Van Wely – Short
Wijk aan Zee 2005

This position is the outcome of a fairly well-known variation of the Exchange Queen's Gambit. Black voluntarily accepts the doubled f-pawns in the hope that the two bishops will compensate for this structural weakness. But here things have gone wrong for Short. The problem is not so much the f-pawns themselves, which are not attacked by any white pieces, but the vulnerable f5-square, on which a white knight would love to settle. With fine positional play, Van Wely achieves this objective – after which the black position quickly collapses.

19 g4! ♔f8 20 ♖e2! ♗h6 21 f4!

Three strong and forceful moves by White. The threat of 22 f5 forces Black into the unfavourable exchange of the light-squared bishops. Following this exchange, Black cannot stop a white knight from reaching f5, as his remaining bishop is then pretty useless.

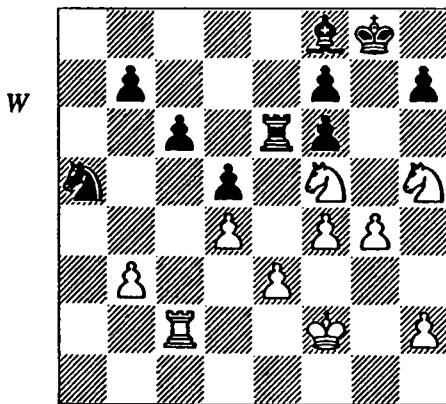
21...♗xd3 22 ♡xd3 ♗f8 23 ♖g3 ♡a5 24 ♡c2 ♡b5

This is often a good manoeuvre, but here the subsequent rook exchange on b3 only favours White due to the weakness of Black's back rank.

25 ♖hf5 ♖c4 26 b3 axb3 27 ♡xb3! ♡xb3 28 axb3 ♖a5 29 ♖h5!

Forcing Black's rook to a passive square, just as in Anand-Hector above.

29...♡e6 (D)



30 ♡a2! b6

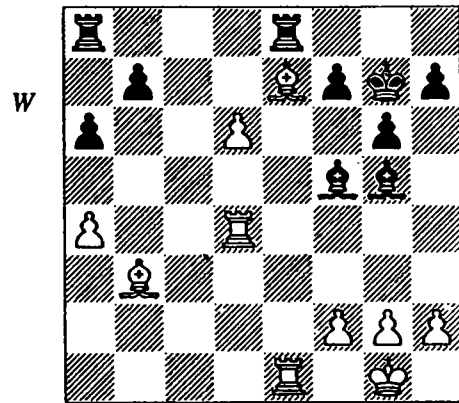
After 30...♖xb3 31 ♡a8 Black is helpless against the threat of 32 ♖h6+.

31 ♡a4!

Forcing through b4 followed by the lethal penetration on a8.

1-0

The final point that we shall look into here is the strength of the passed pawn. Here as well, the impact is twofold: obviously the pawn is dangerous in itself, but also tactics abound in the vicinity of the pawn. When facing such a pawn, you should really be alert, as a minor slip may end the game.



Predojević – Timofeev
Sarajevo 2005

Material is equal, but the strong d6-pawn secures a serious initiative for White. The end comes quicker than expected.

26 g4! ♗d7 27 ♔f1!

Covering the e1-rook and thus threatening to capture the g5-bishop. Unfortunately for Black, he cannot take on e7, as 27...♗xe7 28 ♡xe7 ♡xe7 29 dxe7 ♗e8 30 ♡d8 wins immediately for White. And 27...h6 28 h4 or 27...♗f6 28 ♡f4 does not help.

27...f6

But neither does this.

28 ♗d5 ♡ab8 29 ♡c4!

The rook penetrates on c7 with decisive effect.

29...♗d2 30 ♡c7! ♗xe1 31 ♡xd7 ♗b4 32 g5!

Initiating a devastating attack! 32...fxg5 33 ♗xg5+ ♔f8 34 ♗h6# is mate.

32...♡xe7 1-0

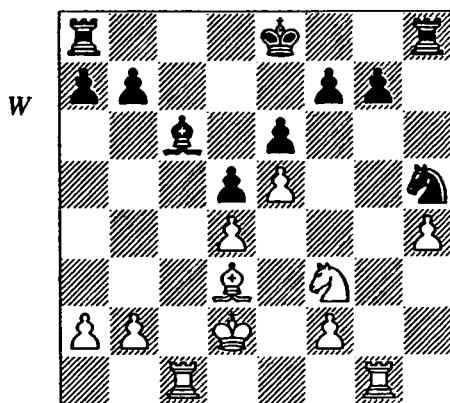
Black resigned without waiting for White's reply: 33 dxe7 ♡e8 34 ♡d8! ♡xe7 35 ♡g8# is a beautiful mate.

As we go through the remaining 14 principles, try to think about the pawn-structure. As indicated above, the pawn-structure is in itself important, but it underlies a number of the other

principles as well. As Philidor said more than 200 years ago: “Pawns are the soul of chess!”

The Principle of Two Weaknesses

The principle of two weaknesses is probably one of the best-known in the literature on end-games. In order to win it is rarely enough that the opponent has one weakness; it is necessary to create a second one that can be probed as well. A good example of this principle can be found in the last and decisive game of the Kramnik-Leko match from 2004.



Kramnik – Leko
Brissago Wch (14) 2004

Kramnik is in a must-win situation, and may be said to have some pressure due to the better bishop and activity on the kingside. But Black is solid and to increase the pressure Kramnik opens a second front on the queenside.

21 b4! a6 22 a4!

Here we are! I agree with Timman’s assessment in *New in Chess* that this is certainly the critical plan, as after 22 ♖e3 ♖e7 Black is very solid. If Black has time to connect his rooks and maybe swap one or more of them on the c-file, White’s initiative will most likely evaporate. In other words, White’s advantage is mainly *temporary* and according to the principles laid out by Steinitz 130 years ago, he must act immediately.

22...♗d8?

Definitely too passive, and now we shall see the principle of two weaknesses in action, as Kramnik combines play on both wings in impeccable style to secure the much-needed win. Black had two possible alternatives, 22...♖e7

and 22...♗xa4. In his notes in *New in Chess*, Kramnik indicates 22...♖e7 as best, giving the line 23 b5 axb5 24 axb5 ♗d7 25 ♖c7 b6 26 ♗g5 ♖hc8, and continuing 27 ♖xc8 ♖xc8 28 ♗xf7!? ♖xf7 29 ♗g6+ ♖f8 30 ♗xh5 ♖c4! 31 ♖e3 ♖c3+ 32 ♖f4 ♖d3 “with good chances of a draw”. However, Kramnik himself points to 27 ♖b7!? as probably the best chance to maintain some pressure, giving 27...♖cb8 28 ♖xb8 ♖xb8 with an edge for White. That seems correct; after 29 ♖a1 White threatens to penetrate on a7 and he at least maintains some pressure. Instead, the cool 22...♗xa4! seems best. Kramnik gives 23 ♖c7 ♗b5! and now either 24 ♖xb7 or 24 ♗b1, but without any further comments. Taking these possibilities somewhat further, Timman shows that 24 ♖xb7 ♗xd3 25 ♖xd3 0-0 is not really dangerous for Black, who has solved the question of how to connect his rooks while exchanging his potentially bad bishop, while after 24 ♗b1 ♖d8! 25 ♖xb7 ♖d7 26 ♖b8+ ♖d8 27 ♖xd8+ (27 ♖b6 0-0) 27...♖xd8 28 ♗g5 ♖e7 29 ♖c1 f6! 30 ♖c7+ ♗d7 “the black defence remains intact”.

23 ♗g5! ♗e8 24 b5!

Kramnik proceeds actively. Notice how he combines threats on both wings, in accordance with the principle of two weaknesses.

24...♗f4

After 24...axb5 25 ♗xb5! (Kramnik) Black finds it difficult to cover f7 in an appropriate fashion.

25 b6!

Securing an invasion square on c7.

25...♗xd3 26 ♖xd3 ♖c8 27 ♖xc8+ ♖xc8 28 ♖c1+ ♗c6 29 ♗xf7 ♖xh4 30 ♗d6+ ♖d8

30...♖d7 fails tactically to **31 ♗xb7! ♗xb7 32 ♖c7+.**

31 ♖g1!

Again shifting from side to side, hitting alternate weaknesses.

31...♖h3+

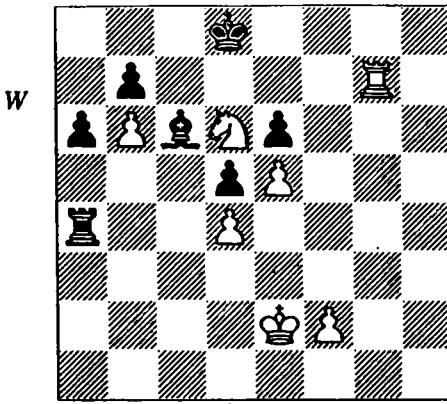
Kramnik gives 31...♖h7 32 a5 ♖e7 33 ♖g6 as too passive and hopeless for Black. It is not hard to agree with this assessment.

32 ♖e2 ♖a3 33 ♖xg7 ♖xa4 (D)

34 f4!

Again the most forceful. White starts pounding on the largest weakness of all – the black king, which is cut off on the back rank.

34...♖a2+



Driving the white king where it wants to go, but 34... Hxd4 35 f5! exf5 36 e6 H e4+ (there is nothing else) 37 Qxe4 dxe4 38 Hc7! with the threat of 39 Hxc6! is hopeless for Black.

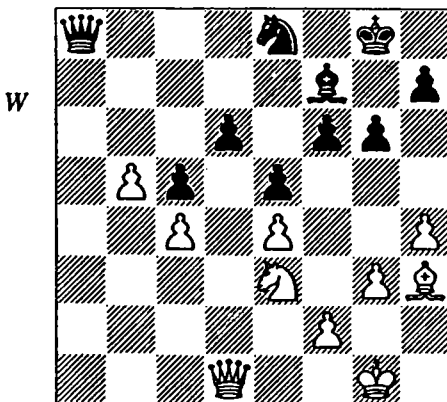
35 Qf3 Ha3+ 36 Qg4 Hd3 37 f5! Hxd4+ 38 Qg5 exf5 39 Qf6!

King activity is a principle to which we shall return! Here it suffices to say that this penetration is decisive.

39... Hg4 40 Hc7! Hh4 41 Qf7+ 1-0

Black resigned as 41... Qe8 42 Hc8+ Qd7 43 Hd8\# is mate.

The various principles of the endgame often go hand in hand. Here is an example from one of my own games, where the better pawn-structure (a strong passed pawn vs a backward pawn) and control of key squares create a definite advantage, which is then converted through the use of the principle of two weaknesses.



L.B. Hansen – Holst
Copenhagen 2004

White is certainly better, but accuracy is still required. If Black could reshuffle his pieces and get the knight to b6, he would improve his

position tremendously. However, that is not possible.

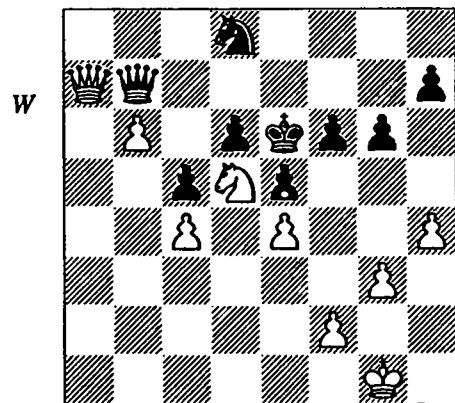
32 Qd7!

Fighting for control of key squares – another key principle of endgame play. Here the square in question is d5. From here a white knight would dominate the position and participate in play on both wings (supporting the advance of the passed b-pawn while hitting the second weakness on f6), but White does not want the knight to be swapped for Black's bishop, as that would leave him with an inflexible light-squared bishop. The right exchange – another important principle – is swapping the bishops. The text-move initiates this plan.

32... Qb8 33 Qc6! Qd8 34 Qd5 Qc7 35 Qxf7+ Qxf7 36 Qa4!

This prevents the transfer of the black knight to b6 as both 36... Qa8 37 Qa7+ Qg8 38 Qd5 and 36... Qa8 37 Qxa8 Qxa8 38 Qd5 are hopeless for Black – notice how White has won control over the key d5-square and from here dominates the black knight.

36... Qb8 37 Qa5 Qe6 38 b6 Qd8 39 Qa7+ Qb7 40 Qd5 Qe6 (D)



White is obviously much better, but how to win? The answer is straightforward: open a second front!

41 g4! f5 42 exf5+ gxf5 43 g5! f4 44 Qa3 Qd7 45 Qh3+ Qc6 46 Qf3! Qd7 47 Qf6+ Qe7 48 Qh5 Qe6 49 Qd5!

The simplest way to win. The white pieces dominate their black counterparts.

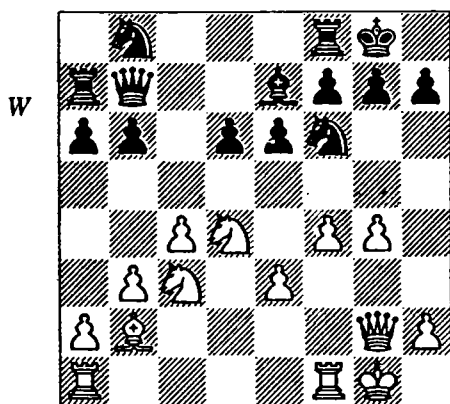
49... Qd7 50 Qxh7+ Qc8 51 g6 1-0

Although I have termed this section 'The principle of two weaknesses' it should be noted that the term 'weakness' should be understood

broadly. It does not have to be a pawn or a square – it may also be an entire wing, so that the winning plan is as much about opening a second front as it is about attacking specific weaknesses. The point is simply that being under pressure, it is hard to defend multiple wings or weaknesses. Shifting from side to side and probing the weaknesses is much easier for the attacker.

The Space Advantage

In the endgame, as well as the middlegame, space matters. The principle of the space advantage should be seen in connection with the principle of the pawn-structure and the one about two weaknesses. Space is gained with pawns, and a key feature of controlling space is that it is typically easier to shift pieces from one side of the board to the other, putting the defence under pressure through greater flexibility. Space makes it difficult for the defending side to coordinate his forces. A good example is this one.



Van Wely – Akopian
Gothenburg Echt 2005

A fairly typical Hedgehog position, but compared to most Hedgehog positions Black lacks activity, and White manages to gain space on the kingside.

18 g5! ♖xg2+ 19 ♔xg2 ♕fd7 20 h4 ♗e8 21 ♗fd1

Putting pressure on Black's main weakness, the backward pawn on d6. In itself this is not too serious for Black, but his limited space makes it difficult for him to achieve a harmonious set-up with his pieces. Furthermore he must

continuously be on the lookout for plans such as f5, h5 and g6, or a4-a5, creating a second target along the lines of the principle of two weaknesses.

21...♗c7 22 ♗d2 ♕c6 23 ♕de2!

Completely in line with the standard recipe for playing with a space advantage. In these circumstances you should not allow the opponent any exchanges, as this may relieve the pressure. The cramped pieces are stepping on each other's toes.

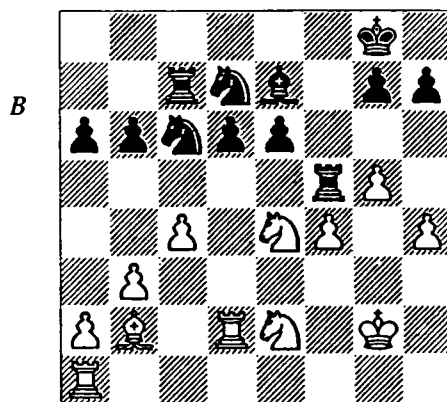
23...f5!?

A difficult decision. As Van Wely points out in his notes in *New in Chess*, it would be difficult for Black to defend d6 in the long run without this move, as the white knights have access to the e4-square, hitting d6. But now White can open a second front according to the principle of two weaknesses.

24 e4! ♗f8?!

According to Van Wely, 24...g6 was better, but after 25 h5 his position is not enviable.

25 exf5 ♗xf5 26 ♕e4 (D)



The white knight has gained access to e4 after all, and the black position succumbs.

26...e5 27 ♕xd6 ♗xd6 28 ♗xd6 exf4 29 ♗f1 ♕e7 30 ♕xf4 ♗b7 31 ♕d5!

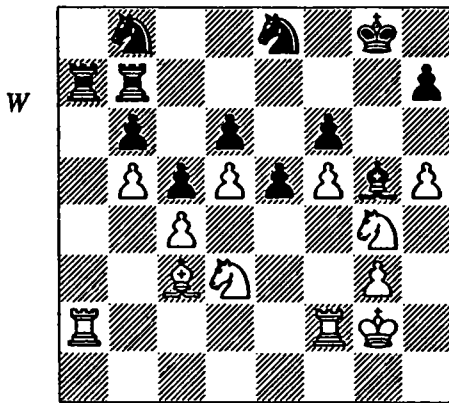
At last, White allows exchanges, correctly assuming that the remaining black pieces will be unable to generate any activity.

31...♕xd5 32 cxd5 ♗xf1 33 ♔xf1 a5 34 h5 b5 35 ♔e2 ♔f8 36 ♗d4

Besides being a pawn up, the white pieces dominate their black counterparts. White is clearly winning.

36...b4 37 ♔d3 ♔e7 38 ♗a6 ♔f7 39 ♔c4 ♗c7+ 40 ♗c6 ♗b7 41 g6+ hxg6 42 hxg6+ ♔e8 43 d6 ♔d8 44 ♗a6 1-0

A smooth win by Van Wely, utilizing the power of a space advantage. The problem with being cramped is that your pieces cannot find good squares. It is not the space disadvantage as such that kills you, it is the 'side effects'. In his early book *The Test of Time*, Kasparov provides an instructive and lengthy analysis of the following game, where the exploitation of White's space advantage is the key theme.



Kasparov – Torre
Baku 1980

43 h6!

To my mind, this move is by no means trivial, and very strong too. The pawn is put on the 'wrong' square – that of White's own bishop – and it has to be continuously guarded by the g4-knight, which thereby loses its flexibility. But this move exploits White's space advantage in a highly educational manner. Black's minor pieces have no squares (they are dominated) and the g5-bishop will be in trouble once White achieves the manoeuvre $\text{d}f2\text{-e}4$. With his cramped pieces, there is very little Black can do about that.

43... $\text{h}e7$ 44 $\text{h}fe2$ $\text{f}7$ 45 $\text{d}f2!$ $\text{c}1$ 46 $\text{d}e4$

A dream square for the knight.

46... $\text{h}ed7$ 47 $\text{f}3$ $\text{e}7$

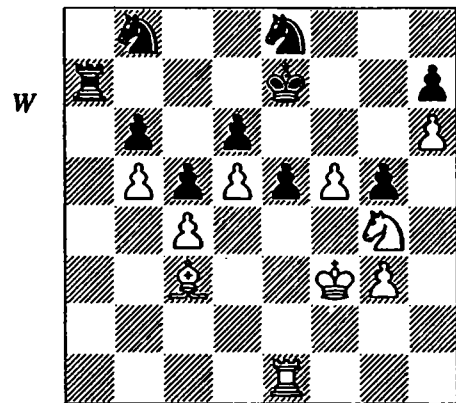
This allows White to conclude the game in typical Kasparovian fashion – with a precisely-calculated series of moves. But Black was lost in all circumstances. In *The Test of Time* Kasparov gives the following instructive variation: 47... $\text{a}3$ (trying to bring this bishop into safety) 48 $\text{a}1$ $\text{b}4$ 49 $\text{h}ea2$ $\text{h}a5$ 50 $\text{h}xa5$ $\text{b}xa5$ 51 $\text{a}xb4$ $\text{a}xb4$ 52 $\text{b}6!$ $\text{e}7$ 53 $\text{h}a7$ $\text{b}3$ (or 53... $\text{d}8$ 54 $\text{e}2$ and the white king penetrates via a4) 54

$\text{d}gf2$ $\text{b}2$ 55 $\text{d}c3$ $\text{d}d8$ 56 $\text{d}fe4$ $\text{c}8$ 57 $\text{h}a2$ $\text{h}b7$ 58 $\text{h}xb2$ $\text{d}d7$ 59 $\text{d}b5$ $\text{h}xb6$ 60 $\text{h}a2$ $\text{d}d8$ 61 $\text{h}a7$ followed by $\text{g}4\text{-h}5$ and $\text{g}4\text{-g}5$, and White crashes through.

48 $\text{h}xa7$ $\text{h}xa7$ 49 $\text{h}e1!$ $\text{g}5$

49... $\text{a}3?$ 50 $\text{h}a1$ is a deadly pin.

50 $\text{d}xg5!$ $\text{f}xg5$ (D)



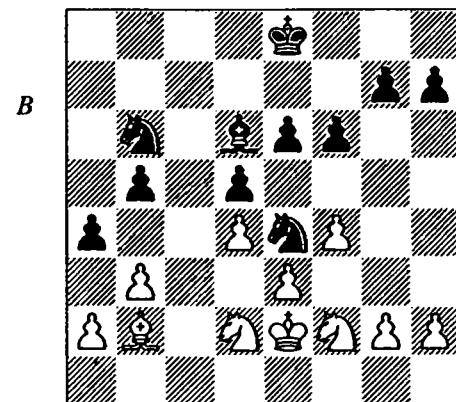
51 $\text{d}xe5!$ $\text{d}xe5$

51... $\text{h}a3$ 52 $\text{d}g6+$ $\text{d}d8$ 53 $\text{h}e3$ is winning for White, as indicated by Kasparov.

52 $\text{d}xe5!$ $\text{d}d6$

52... $\text{h}a3+$ 53 $\text{g}4$ $\text{d}d7$ 54 $\text{b}2+$ costs Black his rook.

53 $\text{f}6+$ $\text{d}d7$ 54 $\text{d}xd6$ $\text{c}xd6$ 55 $\text{h}e6+$ $\text{c}7$ 56 $\text{f}7$ $\text{h}a1$ 57 $\text{e}2$ 1-0



Avrukh – Dautov
Istanbul OL 2000

Black has some advantage with the better bishop (the white bishop is just targeting its own central pawns and is very passive, while the black bishop has more active options) and more space, although a draw would not be inconceivable. But with a fine display of endgame

technique Dautov exploits his positional advantage.

29...a3!

Like Kasparov in the above game, Dautov is willing to put his pawn on the same colour square as his bishop in order to gain more space.

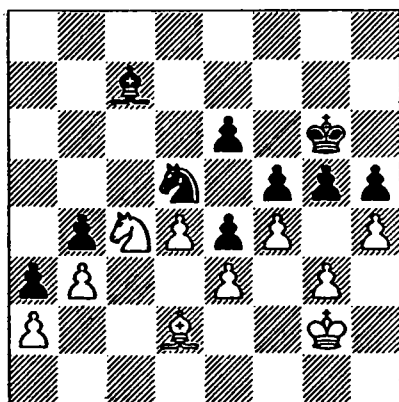
30 $\text{f} \times \text{e}4$

Forced, as 30 $\text{a}1?$ $\text{f} \times \text{f}2$ 31 $\text{f} \times \text{f}2$ $\text{b}4$ buries the bishop alive, while 30 $\text{c}1?$ $\text{c}3+$ costs White the a2-pawn. But now Black gains a dream square on d5 for his knight.

30... $\text{d} \times \text{e}4$ 31 $\text{c}1$ $\text{f}5$ 32 $\text{b}1$ $\text{b}4$ 33 $\text{d}2$ $\text{g}5!$

Grabbing more space while threatening to open a second front – all according to classic endgame principles.

34 $\text{g}3$ $\text{d}5$ 35 $\text{c}4$ $\text{c}7$ 36 $\text{d}2$ $\text{f}7$ 37 $\text{f}2$ $\text{g}6$ 38 $\text{g}2$ $\text{h}5$ 39 $\text{h}4$ (D)



A difficult decision. Now this pawn becomes a further liability, but if White just waited calmly, Black could improve his position by ...h4 and ... $\text{h}5$ -g4. With the text-move, Avrukh hopes to draw by closing off the entire board, but Dautov finds a way in.

39... $\text{g} \times \text{h}4$ 40 $\text{g} \times \text{h}4$ $\text{f}7$ 41 $\text{f}2$ $\text{d}8$ 42 $\text{g}3$ $\text{e}7$ 43 $\text{h}3$ $\text{e}8!$

The right plan. While the white king is tied to the defence of the h4-pawn, the black king can manoeuvre freely.

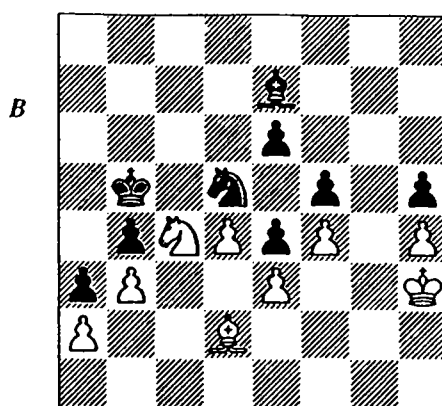
44 $\text{e}1$ $\text{d}7$ 45 $\text{d}2$ $\text{c}7$ 46 $\text{e}1$ $\text{b}7$ 47 $\text{d}2$ $\text{c}6$ 48 $\text{e}5+$ $\text{b}5$ 49 $\text{c}4$ (D)

49... $\text{c}3!$

A brilliant concept. Black now reaches a won queen ending by force.

50 $\text{c} \times \text{a}3+$ $\text{b} \times \text{a}3$ 51 $\text{c} \times \text{c}3$ $\text{b}4!$

The point of the 49th move. White cannot avoid the king and pawn ending as 52 $\text{a}1$ loses prosaically to 52... $\text{d}2$ 53 $\text{d}5$ (53 $\text{g}3$



$\text{e} \times \text{e}3$) 53... $\text{e} \times \text{d}5$ 54 $\text{d}4$ $\text{e}1!$ 55 $\text{f}6$ $\text{f}2!$ 56 $\text{d}4$ $\text{b}4$ (zugzwang!) 57 $\text{b}6$ $\text{c}3$ 58 $\text{c}5$ $\text{b}2$ 59 $\text{b}4$ $\text{c} \times \text{a}2$ 60 $\text{b}5$ $\text{b}3$ 61 $\text{b}6$ (61 $\text{c} \times \text{a}3$ $\text{c} \times \text{a}3$ 62 $\text{b}6$ $\text{e} \times \text{e}3$ 63 $\text{b}7$ $\text{e} \times \text{f}4$) 61... $\text{a}2$ 62 $\text{d}4$ (62 $\text{b}7$ $\text{a}1$ $\text{b}8+$ 63 $\text{b}8+$ $\text{c}2$ is winning for Black) 62... $\text{e} \times \text{e}3!$ 63 $\text{b}7$ $\text{e} \times \text{d}4!$ 64 $\text{b}8+$ $\text{c}2$ and Black wins.

52 $\text{c} \times \text{b}4$ $\text{c} \times \text{b}4$ 53 $\text{g}3$ $\text{c}3$ 54 $\text{f}2$ $\text{b}2$ 55 $\text{b}4$ $\text{c} \times \text{a}2$ 56 $\text{b}5$ $\text{b}3$ 57 $\text{b}6$ $\text{a}2$ 58 $\text{b}7$ $\text{a}1$ $\text{b}8+$ 59 $\text{b}8+$ $\text{c}3$

Despite the material equality, this ending is hopeless for White. The black king penetrates decisively.

60 $\text{c}8+$ $\text{d}2$ 61 $\text{c} \times \text{e}6$ $\text{e}1+$ 62 $\text{g}2$ $\text{e}2+$ 63 $\text{h}1$ $\text{f}1+$ 64 $\text{h}2$ $\text{f}2+$ 65 $\text{h}1$ $\text{c} \times \text{h}4+$ 66 $\text{g}2$ $\text{g}4+$ 67 $\text{h}2$ $\text{e} \times \text{e}3$ 68 $\text{b}3+$ $\text{c} \times \text{d}4$ 69 $\text{b}6+$ $\text{d}3$ 70 $\text{b}1+$ $\text{e}2$ 71 $\text{c}2+$ $\text{f}3$ 0-1

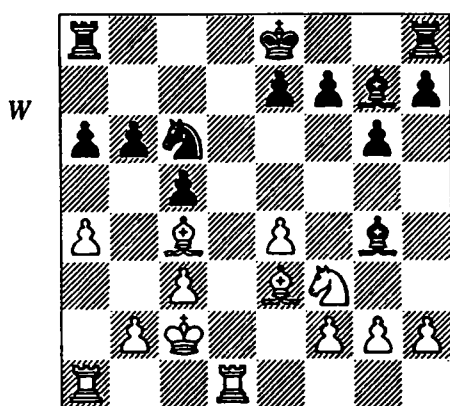
Space may constitute a powerful advantage, but it should be seen in connection with the question about who controls the vital squares and files. You may have a cramped position which is still fully tenable, if you control the key squares, diagonals and files in the position. We turn to this theme next.

Control of Squares and Files

A general theme in chess is control over crucial squares, files and diagonals. As novices we are taught to fight for the centre in the opening, and later we learn Nimzowitsch's credo of overprotection of strategically important squares.

This theme also applies in the endgame – in fact even more so. Many endgames are decided when one side loses control of a vital square, diagonal or file, which the opponent then uses to penetrate the enemy position.

The Swedish grandmaster Ulf Andersson is an endgame specialist, and I remember learning a lot about squares from his games when I studied them as a teenager. I especially recall two games by Ulf from Bent Larsen's excellent tournament book on the Clarin tournament in Buenos Aires 1979, the tournament which Bent won with 11/13, three points ahead of the competition.



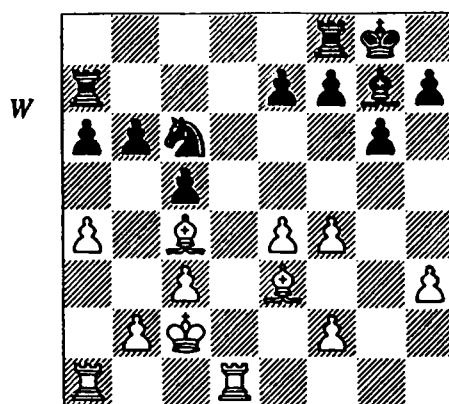
Andersson – Tempone
Buenos Aires 1979

14 h3!

White voluntarily accepts doubled f-pawns, as he correctly assesses the two bishops and the black weaknesses on the queenside as weighing heavier.

14...♙xf3 15 gxf3 0-0 16 f4 ♖a7 (D)

Black faces an unpleasant dilemma: what to do with his a-pawn? He can choose to leave it on a6, where it controls vital light squares on the queenside, but this forces him to keep the rook on a8/a7, which in turn makes it impossible to challenge White's possession of the only open file on the board, the d-file. Or he can play ...a5, which frees the rook but leaves the light squares on the queenside permanently damaged. The text-move is somewhat indecisive; on the next move Black after all chooses ...a5, but then he might as well have played it immediately. I stress the indecisiveness point, not so much because it matters in the given position – in either case White has a solid plus – but because it is a typical phenomenon in inferior endings. When there are no good moves to be found, it is easy to start drifting, and in doing so you often make things even worse. This is why you should not hurry (a key endgame principle,



to which we shall repeatedly return) if you possess a *sustainable* advantage; often the opponent makes things even worse for himself due to the lack of good moves.

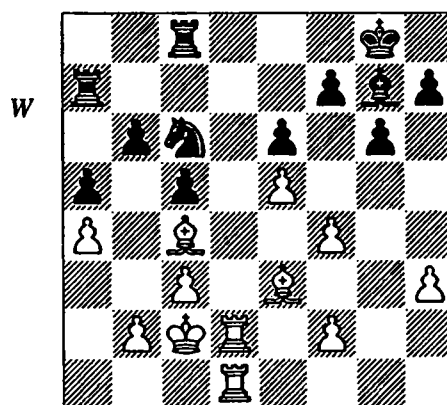
17 e5!

This move gains space in the centre and cuts off Black's bishop.

17...a5 18 ♖d2!

Securing control over the only open file on the board.

18...e6 19 ♖ad1 ♜c8 (D)



20 ♔b3!

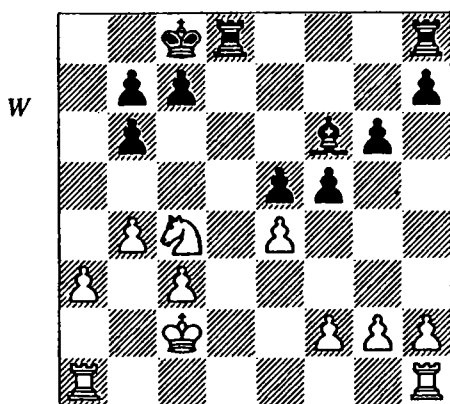
In the tournament book Larsen commented: "Now we see what made Ulf accept doubled pawns: he wins on the light squares on the queenside!"

20...♙f8 21 ♙b5! ♜cc7 22 ♙xc6!

A case of the principle of *transformation of advantages*. The two bishops are not crucial here; it is more important to make room for the king's penetration on the light squares. The king's advance, coupled with White's control of the d-file, leave Black utterly helpless.

22...♜xc6 23 ♔c4 ♙e7 24 ♖d7 ♜cc7 25 ♜xc7 ♜xc7 26 ♔b5 ♜c8 27 ♖d7 ♔f8 28 ♔xb6 ♔e8 29 ♖b7 ♙d8+ 30 ♔b5 c4 31 ♙c5 1-0

A very instructive and seemingly effortless win by Andersson, based on a profound understanding on the principle of squares and files. Here is another one from the same tournament.



Andersson – Franco
Buenos Aires 1979

This game could also have been used in the section *good knight vs bad bishop*, but I have decided to use it here, because of Andersson's systematic exploitation of the light squares (again!).

18 a4!

Preparing an expansion on the queenside.

18...g7 19 He1 He8 20 b5! f4?!

This eases White's task for two reasons: first, this pawn is put on the same colour square as the (bad) bishop; second, this frees White from worrying about ...fxe4, thus giving him a free hand for his plans. For better or worse, Black had to keep White occupied by maintaining the tension in the centre as long as possible.

21 a5!

In a sense this can be seen as an example of the principle of transformation of advantages. White voluntarily frees Black from his doubled pawn, but getting access to and control over one more open file is more important.

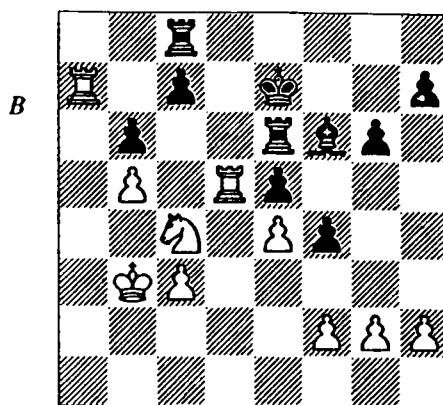
21...bxa5 22 Hxa5 b6

Probably Black should try to avoid this as long as possible – another pawn on a dark square – but it is not easy to suggest a better move.

23 Ha7 g6 24 Hea1 He6 25 H1a6!

Working with tactics: White threatens **26 Qa5!** and **27 Qc6**.

25...Hde8 26 Qb3! g8 27 Ha8+ Qd7 28 Ha2! g6 29 Hd2+ Qe7 30 Ha7 Hc8 31 Hd5 (D)



Take a look at this position! All White's pieces are on better squares than their counterparts, which are reduced to defensive tasks. But White still has to break through, and for that Andersson uses the c-pawn.

31...Qe8 32 h3!

Do not hurry when you have such a stable advantage. 'Just in case', the pawn is put on a light square.

32...Qe7 33 Qb2!

Redirecting the knight to d3, from where it still attacks e5 while supporting the c4-c5 advance.

33...Qe8 34 Qd3 g7 35 c4 g6 36 c5!

The decisive break.

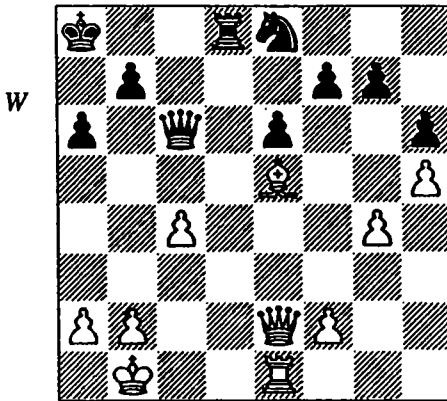
36...bxc5 37 Qxc5 He7 38 Ha6! g8 39 Qc4 g7 40 f3! Hb8 41 Qe6 g6 42 Hc6 1-0

Black resigned as **42...Hb7? 43 Hd8+ Qf7 44 Hf8#** is mate, while **42...Hc8 43 b6** is also hopeless for him.

Grip and Suppressing Counterplay

When you possess an edge in the endgame, it is very important not to allow the opponent any counterplay. In fact, in many situations that should be your top priority. But it depends on the kind of edge or advantage that you possess. As I discussed in *Foundations of Chess Strategy*, advantages can either be *temporary* or *sustainable* in nature. Temporary advantages must be exploited immediately; otherwise they disappear. For example, a misplaced piece may return to safety given a few moves. In such situations there is no time for small 'just-in-case' moves. However, if the advantage is of a sustainable nature, it is often not necessary to do anything in the short run to exploit or enhance it; often the best strategy is to make sure the

advantage is maintained through suppressing any potential counterplay from the opponent. You just need to maintain the 'grip' on the position.



Anand – Leitão
São Paulo rpd 2004

White has a long-term sustainable advantage. The powerful bishop is stronger than the passive knight in positions with uneven pawn-majorities, and the g7-pawn is always sensitive in this Caro-Kann type of position. It is instructive to watch Anand's systematic exploitation of these advantages.

28 ♙c3!

This prophylactic move suppresses any black counterplay based on ...f6 and ...e5, thus forcing the black knight to remain on the passive e8-square in order to cover the weak g7-pawn.

28... ♜d7

On 28... ♜c8 Leitão gives 29 ♞d1! , and the c4-pawn is poisoned due to 29... ♜xc4 30 ♜xc4 ♞xc4 31 ♞d8+ and the knight falls.

29 b3 ♜c6 30 ♜b2 ♞d7 31 a4 ♜b8 32 f4!

Notice how calmly Anand improves his position, while Black is devoid of any counterplay.

32... ♜c8 33 g5! ♜c5 34 ♜e3!

Going for the right exchange in order to suppress counterplay! Without queens, Black has little to hope for.

34... ♜xe3 35 ♞xe3 ♞d1 36 g6!

Undermining the black kingside and winning a pawn.

36... fxg6 37 ♞xe6! ♜d7 38 ♞xg6 ♞h1 39 ♞xg7 ♞xh5 40 ♞e5!

Again suppression of counterplay is given top priority. 40 ♞xh6 ♞d6 would certainly also

be winning, but there is no need to allow the knight into play. Anand prefers to *dominate* the knight.

40... ♞h2+ 41 ♜c3 ♞h3+ 42 ♜b2!

'Do not hurry!'

42... ♞h2+ 43 ♜a3 h5 44 a5 h4 45 ♞b6 ♜c8 46 ♞h6 h3 47 ♜b4 ♞h1 48 ♞h8 ♜d7 49 ♜c5!

King activity is another key principle in the endgame.

49... h2 50 b4 ♜d8 51 ♞h7 ♜c8 52 ♞h5!

Precise and calm play. Anand makes sure that after 53 f5 ♞f1 54 ♞xh2 the f-pawn is covered. There is no need to hurry!

52... ♜d7 53 f5 ♞f1 54 ♞xh2 ♞f6 55 ♞h8 ♞xf5+ 56 ♜b6

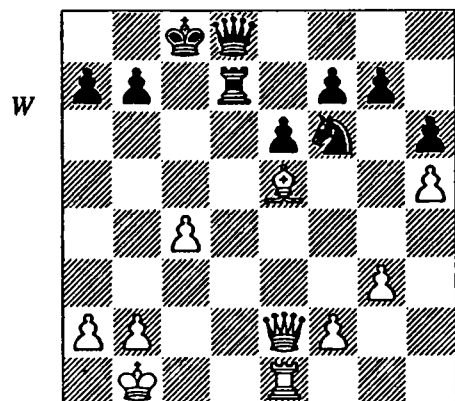
The decisive penetration.

56... ♞f2 57 ♜xb7 ♞b2 58 b5!

A nice final touch. The king hides behind the enemy lines, after which the passed pawns decide.

58... axb5 59 c5! 1-0

A nice win by Anand, but I doubt that he found it too difficult, as the basic ideas were already known. Such positions are known as the 'Caro-Kann grip'. I am sure that Vishy knew the following game by the young Garry Kasparov:



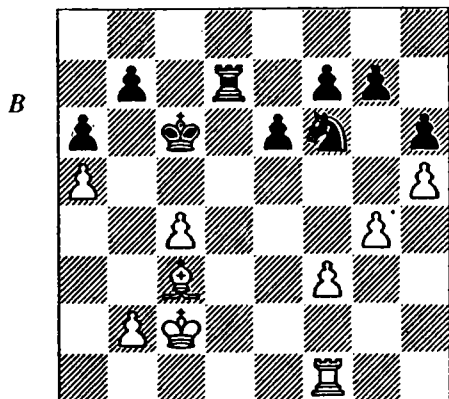
Kasparov – Vukić
Skara Echt 1980

It looks familiar, doesn't it? Kasparov booked a fine positional victory in this typical Caro-Kann grip position.

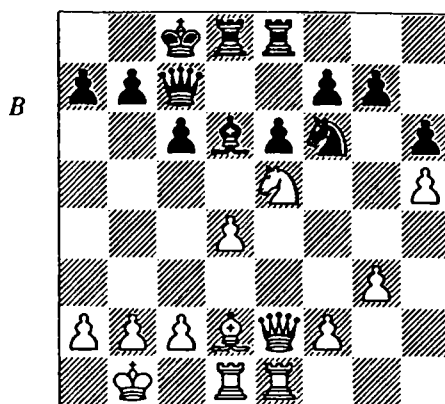
25 ♞c3!

Again this move, which here is designed to avoid counterplay by 25... ♞d2 .

25...♖b6 26 g4 ♗d6 27 f3 a6 28 a4 ♗d3+
29 ♕c1 ♕c7 30 ♗xd3 ♞xd3 31 ♞f1 ♕c6 32
♕c2 ♞d7 33 a5! (D)



positions, as, for instance, was shown in an even earlier game by Kasparov himself.



Geller – Kasparov
USSR Ch (Tbilisi) 1978

Securing the long-term prospect of creating an outside passed pawn on the queenside.

33...♕e8 34 ♞e1 ♞d6 35 f4 ♕f6?! (D)

An oversight that sets up an attractive and instructive finish. But Black's position was lost in any case. The problem is that he cannot disentangle his pieces and bring his king to the vulnerable kingside. A sample line is 35...♕d7 36 g5 ♞c6 (not 36...♕e7? 37 ♖b4) 37 ♞d1+ ♕c7 (37...♕e7 38 ♖b4+ and Black must walk into a horrible pin) 38 ♖xg7! (a standard combination in the Caro-Kann grip – a knight on g7 cannot stop a pawn on h6) 38...♕xg7 39 gxh6 and wins.

From this normal Caro-Kann position Kasparov simplifies directly into an endgame:

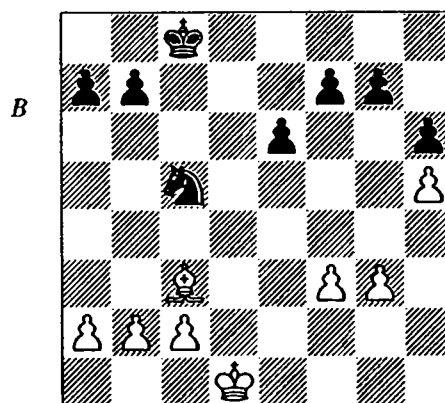
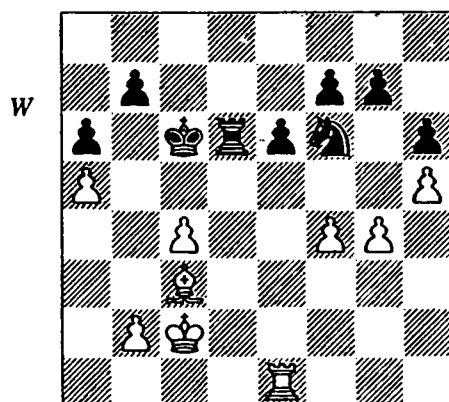
19...c5 20 dxc5 ♖xe5! 21 ♗xe5 ♗xe5 22 ♞xe5 ♞d4!

The point. The pin down the d-file allows Black to regain his pawn with a level position.

23 ♕c1 ♞ed8 24 f3

Black was threatening 24...♕e4.

24...♕d7 25 ♞e1 ♕xc5 26 ♖c3 ♞xd1+ 27 ♞xd1 ♞xd1+ 28 ♕xd1 (D)



36 ♖xf6! gxh6 37 ♞d1! 1-0

Black resigned because the pawn ending after 37...♞xd1 38 ♕xd1 is hopeless. White creates passed pawns on both wings with g5! and/or b4-b5xa6, and the black king ends up squint-eyed.

28...f6!

The difference! Compared to the two previous examples, Black is in time to set up counterplay by ...f6 and a king-march to the kingside, thus avoiding White's traditional Caro-Kann squeeze. Presumably Kasparov foresaw this as far back as move 19.

29 ♖b4 ♕d7 30 ♕e2 ♕d8

Bringing the king to f7 to secure the kingside further.

Still, the Caro-Kann grip is not deadly in itself. Black has been known to do OK in such

31 g4 ♖e8 32 f4 ♜f7 33 ♙d2 g6! 34 f5!? g5
35 ♙c3 ♖b6 36 ♙d4 ♖c8 37 ♜f3 b6 38 fx6+
♜xe6 39 c4 ♖e7 40 ♙c3 f5!

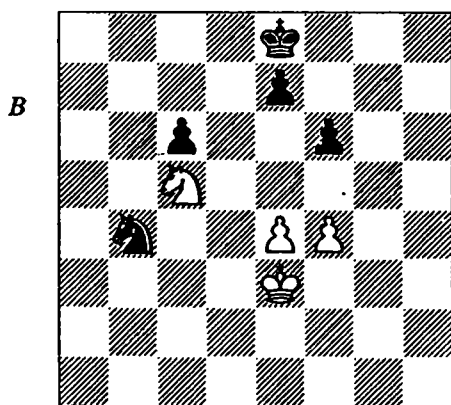
White did not manage to suppress Black's counterplay, and now a draw is on the cards.

41 ♙g7 ♖g8 42 b4 ½-½

As we shall see in future chapters, the concept of suppressing counterplay – and conversely the battle to obtain it – is a key principle of many strategic endgames.

Domination

The principle of domination refers to the situation where one or more pieces are dominated by the opponent's pieces. Often the problem is a knight on the rim, which due to its 'short legs' may have difficulty escaping. An example can be found in the above game Anand-Leitão. But a knight may also be dominated on a more or less open board.



Timman – Markowski
Gothenburg Echt 2005

Black has an extra pawn, but due to the limited material White should be able to hold the draw. Still, with 43...♖c2+ followed by 44...♖a3 – intending to bring the knight back into play via b5 – Black could squeeze for some time. But instead there followed:

43...♖d8? 44 ♖d2!

And suddenly the black knight is lost! It is *dominated* by the white king and knight. However, the limited material again matters – this time in securing the draw for *Black*.

44...♜c7 45 ♜c3 ♖a2+ 46 ♜b2 ♖b4

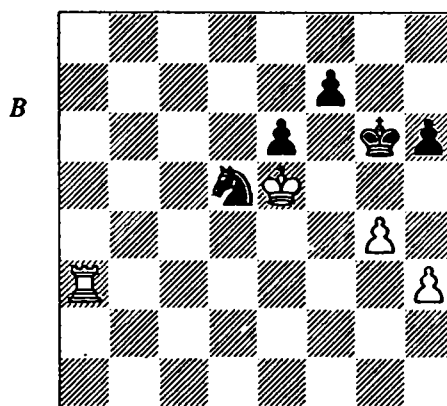
Not 46...♜d6 47 ♖d3.

47 ♜b3 ♖d5

Forced, but also sufficient to draw.

48 exd5 cxd5 49 ♜c3 ♜d6 50 ♖b3 e6 51
♜d3 ♜e7 52 ♜e3 ♜d7 53 ♜f3 ½-½

The domination theme may play a role even on a wide-open board. When playing in my first Olympiad, I was impressed by the following game:



Karpov – Ftačnik
Thessaloniki OL 1988

I think Black should be able to hold this with careful play.

74...h5

Black attempts to force the draw, which isn't necessarily a bad idea, but there is the risk that White will obtain winning chances by dominating the knight.

75 gxh5+ ♜xh5 76 ♙g3!

Cutting off the king on the rim.

76...♜h6 77 ♜d6 ♖f4 78 ♜e7 ♜h5 79 ♜f6!

White is not interested in winning the two black pawns for his h-pawn unless he can do so without allowing the knight back in the vicinity of the king.

79...♖d5+ 80 ♜e5! ♜h4 81 ♙f3 ♖b6?

This leaves the knight too far from the action. 81...♖e7 holds the draw.

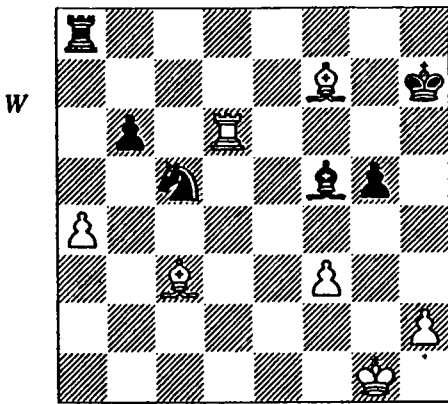
82 ♙xf7 ♜xh3 83 ♜xe6

Now it turns out that the knight cannot return from its queenside excursion in one piece.

83...♖c4

Not 83...♜g3 84 ♙c7! or 83...♜g4? 84 ♙b7 ♖c4 85 ♙b4.

84 ♙f3+ ♜g4 85 ♙d3! ♜g5 86 ♜d5 ♖b6+ 87 ♜e5 ♖c4+ 88 ♜e4 ♖b6 89 ♙d8! ♖c4 90 ♙d4 ♖b6 91 ♜e5 ♖c8 92 ♜e6! ♖a7 93 ♜d7 1-0



Kasparov – Grishchuk
Rethymnon ECC 2003

Material is limited, and Black is about to win back his pawn. Is this sufficient for him to draw? No, it is not that simple, as Kasparov manages to create new threats by dominating Black's knight.

44 h4?!

The right idea, but according to Kasparov the wrong execution. The correct move-order was 44 a5! bxa5 45 h4! gxh4 (45...g4 46 ♖d5! ♘a4 47 ♗d4! ♗g6 48 ♗e6 wins for White according to Kasparov in *Informator* – notice how the knight is dominated!), transposing to the game.

44...gxh4 45 a5! bxa5?

After this Black may well be lost, as his knight will be sidelined and dominated on a4. In his extensive notes, Kasparov gives the line 45...♘a4 46 ♗d4 ♖a7! 47 ♖f6 ♖xa5 48 ♗c4 ♗c2 49 ♖f4 ♖f5 50 ♖xh4+ ♗g6 51 ♗g2 ♖a5 52 ♗g3 ♖g5+ 53 ♗f2 ♘c5 54 ♗e3 ♖f5 55 ♖h6+ ♗g7 56 ♖xb6 ♗e4 as leading only to a marginal advantage for White and a probable draw.

46 ♖d5 ♘a4

Forced, but the knight will never return from this exile.

47 ♗d4!

A typical example of domination. And at the same time the black king is in danger, being under attack from the combined force of a rook, two powerful bishops and an f-pawn.

47...♗g6 48 ♗e6 ♗c2 49 f4

OK, but according to Kasparov 49 ♖d7+! ♗h6 50 ♗f7! ♗f5 51 ♖d5 ♗g5 52 ♗e6 ♖f8 53 ♗d7! is more precise – the dominated knight is lost.

49...♖b8 50 ♖h5+ ♗g6 51 ♖g5+ ♗h6 52 ♗f7 ♗d1

53 ♖h5# was threatened.

53 ♗h2 ♖d8 54 ♗f6 ♖c8 55 ♗e6

Here Kasparov gives 55 ♖g6+! ♗h7 56 ♖g7+ ♗h6 57 ♗g6! ♗c2 58 f5! as the shortest way to win. But notice that with the knight dominated and stuck on a4, time is not a crucial factor.

55...♖c6 56 ♗g7+ ♗h7 57 ♗f5+ ♗g8 58 ♗e4 ♖c5 59 ♗d5+?!

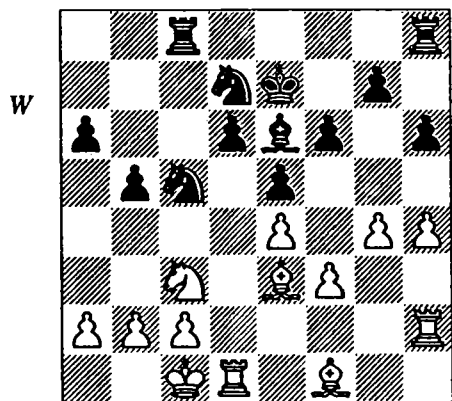
Winning, but Kasparov gives the instructive line 59 ♗d4+! (with the knight trapped White may even go for the rook exchange) 59...♖xg5 60 fxg5 ♗b3 61 g6 ♗f8 62 ♗b1! (zugzwang! The black bishop cannot allow its white counterpart onto either the a2-g8 diagonal – after which the g6-pawn queens – or onto the d1-a4 diagonal – after which the a4-knight falls) 62...♗e7 63 g7 ♗d6 64 ♗c2! and White wins. In my view a beautiful line which clearly indicates the main (and maybe only) defect in Black's position: the stranded knight on a4.

59...♗h7

Black's only chance was 59...♖xd5 60 ♖xd5 ♗xg7 61 ♖xd1, but according to Kasparov White still wins after 61...♘c3 (61...♗f6 62 ♗h3 ♗f5 63 ♖d5+ ♗e4 64 ♖xa5 ♘b6 65 f5 and wins) 62 ♖d7+! ♗f6 63 ♗h3 ♗f5 64 ♖f7+ ♗e6 65 ♖f8 a4 66 ♗xh4 a3 67 ♗g5.

60 ♗d4 ♖c2+ 61 ♗h3 ♖c7 62 ♗e4+ ♗h6 63 ♖g8 1-0

Domination is not only a theme in endgames with very few pieces. This principle also applies in endings with more men on the board, as I had to realize myself in a recent game.



Timofeev – L.B. Hansen
Skanderborg 2005

White has a pleasant edge with his two bishops and the backward pawn on d6, but given time Black may consolidate or even initiate counterplay with ...b4. So White acts:

19 b4! ♖b7?

A costly mistake. For better or worse, Black had to go for 19...♖b3+. Since Black wins back his pawn with counterplay after 20 ♖b2 ♘d4! 21 ♙xd4 exd4 22 ♙xd4 ♘e5 (threatening not only on f3 but also ...♘c6xb4), White should play 20 axb3 ♙xc3 21 ♙d3 with some advantage, as indicated by Timofeev. The text-move allows the knight to be *dominated*.

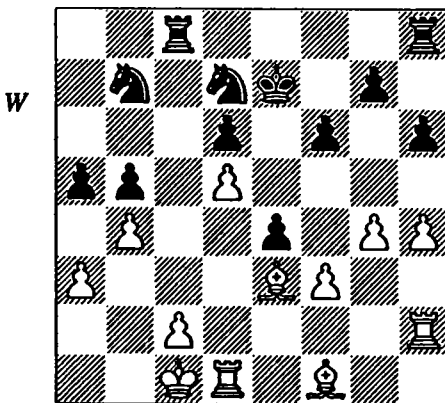
20 ♘d5+ ♙xd5

20...♖f7 is possible, but not very good. White may proceed slowly with, e.g., 21 ♖b2, or he may pound away immediately at Black's weak queenside with 21 a4.

21 exd5!

Here it is! I had forgotten about this simple recapture, having on the previous moves been mainly concerned about how to cover the weak d6-pawn when White doubles on the d-file. But now the black knight on b7 is in horrible shape, and if given a few moves (e.g. ♖b2, a4 and ♙a1) White wins easily, as Black cannot coordinate his pieces. Desperate measures are in order, but they do not quite work. However, the game is an interesting example of the fight for suppressing versus obtaining counterplay.

21...a5!? 22 a3 e4! (D)



The only chance. Black must find squares for the knights.

23 fxe4

Without the interpolation of ...a5 and a3, White could simply play f4, maintaining the grip, but here 23 f4 is met by 23...♙c3.

23...♘e5 24 ♙d4!

Strong play – White keeps the position under control.

24...♘c4 25 ♙h3! axb4 26 axb4 ♙a8 27 ♙xc4 bxc4 28 ♖d2

With accurate play, White has managed to contain Black's bid for activity, and he is winning, although time-pressure allows Black some hope.

28...♙a4 29 ♙b1 ♖d7 30 ♙c3 ♙e8 31 ♙e3 ♘d8 32 g5 hxg5 33 hxg5 fxg5 34 ♙f1 ♙e7 35 ♙f8 ♘f7 36 b5 ♖c7 37 ♙xg7 ♖b6 38 ♙d4+ ♖xb5 39 ♙b8+ ♖a5 40 ♙e1! 1-0

Here I lost on time, but White is winning anyway.

Domination is a powerful tool in the endgame; even one piece – usually a knight but not necessarily – in an inadequate position may seriously affect the entire position. This principle is a recurring theme in the future chapters as well.

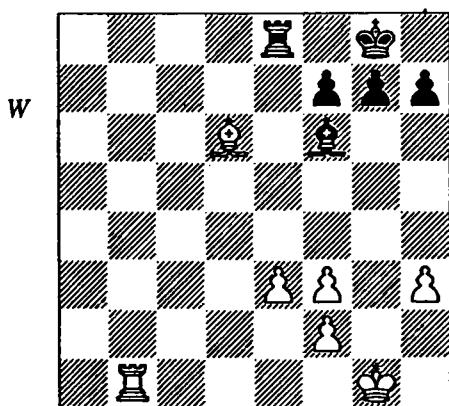
Time: Hurry or Not?

The principle 'do not hurry!' is one of the best known in strategic endgames, not least due to Shereshevsky's excellent book from the early 1980s. It is certainly very useful advice, but it must be used with some caution, as it only applies in certain kinds of positions, and not in others.

The key to understanding this principle is the concept of *sustainability of advantages*. As already pointed out by Steinitz, advantages can either be temporary or lasting (sustainable in the long term). The 'do not hurry' principle only applies to lasting, sustainable advantages – not to temporary advantages. As the term 'temporary' implies, time is important here; if the advantage is not exploited rapidly, it will evaporate. The temporary advantage may for instance be due to a misplaced piece or lack of coordination between the enemy pieces, but given time the opponent may solve these problems.

With a sustainable advantage in the endgame, the 'do not hurry' principle is a powerful tool in the conversion of the advantage into a full point. This is because it helps wear down the opponent and his defences. While the principle itself neither expands nor diminishes the

advantage from an objective (purely chess) perspective, it certainly improves the winning chances from a practical viewpoint. The opponent may get tired – it is exhausting to be under pressure for a long time – and when the decisive moment finally occurs, he is more likely to commit an error. Let's see a good example of the power of the principle of not hurrying from a recent world championship match:



Leko – Kramnik
Brissago Wch (5) 2004

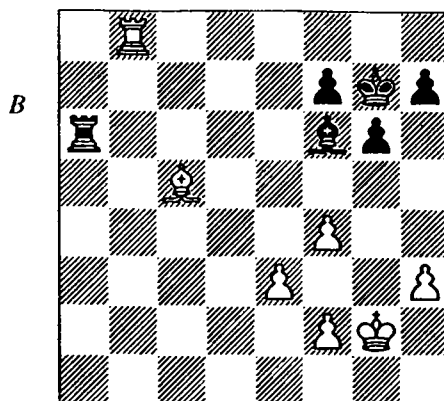
26 ♖g2

Surprisingly, this move was a theoretical novelty (it is rare to see that in a book on endgames!), as 26 ♖b5 had previously been played in a game Gritsak-Kruppa, Alushta 2002. While I doubt that the players knew this previous game, I still find it surprising that Kramnik would voluntarily enter this endgame. It is true that from an objective chess point of view, Black should be able to draw this endgame. At any rate, Black's drawing chances are higher than White's winning chances. But in a practical game things are less clear-cut. The position is certainly easier to play for White: it is less tiring to be on the white side here and psychologically it is somewhat depressing to come directly from the opening and into an ending where the best you can hope for is a draw through accurate defence. All these factors are compounded by the principle of not hurrying. While White could immediately start advancing his pawns, it makes sense first to try to wear Black down.

26...g6 27 f4 ♔g7 28 ♖b7 ♜e6 29 ♜d7 ♜e8 30 ♜a7 ♜e6 31 ♙c5 ♜c6 32 ♜a5

These rook manoeuvres help White, as Black cannot shake off the pressure.

32...♙c3 33 ♜b5 ♜a6 34 ♜b3 ♙f6 35 ♜b8!
(D)



Threatening mate with 36 ♙f8+ and 37 ♙h6+. To meet this, Black must weaken his kingside.

35...h5

Why does ...h5 weaken Black's position? Because after White plays f5 and takes on g6, Black would prefer to take back with the h-pawn to keep White from obtaining a passed pawn. With the pawn on h5, on the other hand, he would have to make the unpleasant choice (after White's fxg6) of either allowing White a passed e-pawn after ...fxg6 or taking with the king, which leaves him with a fragmented pawn-structure. Thus, by patiently manoeuvring around, White has made some progress, although the position should still be drawn.

36 ♜b5 ♙c3 37 ♜b3 ♙f6 38 e4!

Finally Leko decides to act. Notice the timing: he 'changes gear' just before the time-control and forces Black to make crucial decisions in one of the most critical phases of the game.

38...♜a5 39 ♙e3 ♜a4! 40 e5!

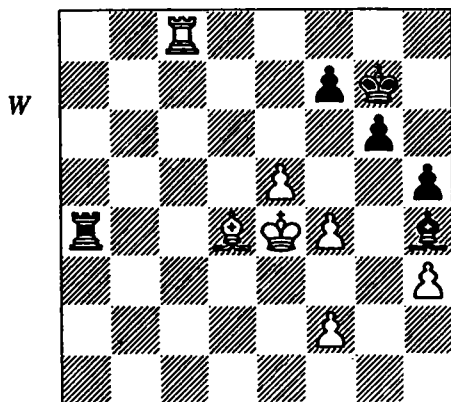
Black was ready to answer 40 ♔f3 with 40...♙d4 – the rook ending would be a fairly easy draw. To continue putting pressure on Black, White must keep both rooks and bishops on the board.

40...♙e7 41 ♜b7 ♔f8 42 ♜b8+ ♔g7 43 ♔f3 ♜c4 44 ♔e2 ♜a4 45 ♔d3 ♙h4 46 ♙d4 ♜a3+ 47 ♔c2 ♜a2+ 48 ♔d3 ♜a3+ 49 ♔c4 ♜a4+ 50 ♔d5 ♜a5+ 51 ♔c6 ♜a4 52 ♔c5 ♙e7+ 53 ♔d5 ♜a5+ 54 ♔e4

Back again! Notice how White does not hurry. The king's adventure on the queenside didn't bring any dividends, but it didn't harm

anything either. White's advantage is sustainable, and the principle 'do not hurry' applies.

54...♖a4 55 ♜c8 ♙h4 (D)



56 e6+!

Again Leko decides to change the course of the game just before the time-control, this time the one on move 60.

56...♙f6 57 e7!

The point of the previous move. White wins the exchange, but with White's scattered pawns Black would still be able to hold the draw if he could achieve a position with ...f5 and the bishop on the long diagonal (a1-h8). In that case White cannot make any progress. But accuracy is required from Black, and that is not easy when you have been material down for over 30 moves and over a time span of several hours.

57...♜xd4+ 58 ♖e3 ♙xe7 59 ♖xd4 ♙h4?

According to Leko in *Informator*, this is inaccurate. In his notes he gives the line 59...f5! 60 ♜c7 ♖f6 61 ♖d5 (the pawn ending after 61 ♜xe7 ♖xe7 62 ♖e5 h4! 63 f3 ♖f7 64 ♖d6 ♖f6 is a draw) 61...h4! 62 ♜c6+ ♖f7 63 ♖e5 ♙d8 64 f3 ♙a5! 65 ♜c8 ♙b6 66 ♖d5 ♙a5! 67 ♜c5 ♙d8 68 ♜c6 ♙f6 69 ♜c7+ ♖g8 70 ♖e6 ♙b2 with a draw.

60 f3?

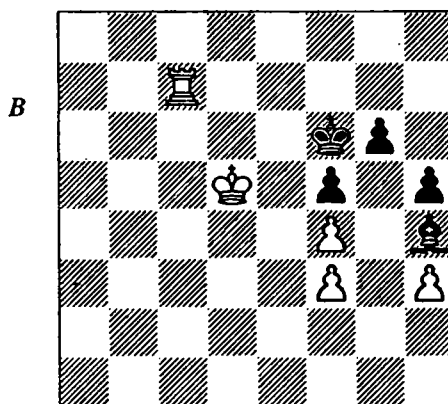
According to Timman and Motylev, this is inaccurate as well. White could win by 60 ♜c2!. The reason is twofold: first, with the white pawn on f2, the black bishop is reduced in scope; it cannot return to the desired a1-h8 diagonal 'from behind' (e1 or f2). Second, with the pawn on f2 White in some lines has a vital extra tempo in a king and pawn ending. This is important in the line 60...f5 (60...♖f6 61 ♖e4 ♖e6 62 f5+! gxf5+ 63 ♖f4 and White wins) 61

♖d5! ♙f6 62 ♜c7+ ♖g8 63 ♜c6 ♖f7 64 ♜xf6+! ♖xf6 65 h4 ♖f7 66 ♖d6 ♖f6 67 ♖d7 ♖f7 68 f3! (there it is!), where Black is out-tempoed. This line was first pointed out by Yakovenko in the press room during the match. After the text-move, Black again has the draw within reach.

60...f5! 61 ♜c7+

Now the king and pawn ending after 61 ♖d5 ♙f6 62 ♜c7+ ♖g8 63 ♜c6 ♖f7 64 ♜xf6+ ♖xf6 is drawn, as White cannot out-tempo Black.

61...♖f6 62 ♖d5 (D)



62...♙g3?

The final and game-deciding error. Black could still draw with 62...♙e1!. As indicated by Yakovenko, White cannot make any progress after, for instance, 63 ♜c6+ ♖f7 64 ♖e5 ♙a5! 65 ♜c8 ♙b6. How can two world championship contenders commit these errors in a seemingly straightforward ending? In my opinion, the explanation lies in Leko's clever patient manoeuvring earlier in the game – just as the principle of not hurrying in positions where you have a stable advantage prescribes. With the pressure being maintained over a long time, the risk of mistakes grows. While Leko himself also played some inaccurate moves late in the game, it is no coincidence that the fatal error came from the weary defender.

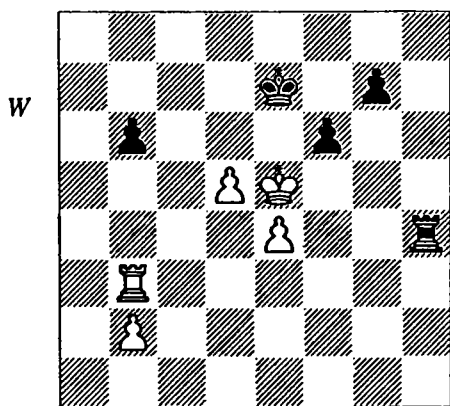
63 ♜c6+ ♖g7 64 ♖e5 h4 65 ♜c7+ ♖h6 66 ♜c4 ♖g7 67 ♖e6!

Now Black cannot prevent the white king from penetrating to f7, after which g6 falls.

67...♙h2 68 ♜c7+ ♖h6 69 ♖f7 1-0

Since it is the type of advantage you have that decides whether you should hurry in the endgame, it is vital to stay alert to changes in the situation. Sometimes the change from one

kind to the other occurs within few moves, and the 'need for speed' suddenly becomes the top priority. With rapid changes in the character of the position, you must be able to adjust mentally as well.



Atalik – Wolfsteiner
Augsburg 2004

Atalik has tried to make something out of a small advantage, but Black has defended ingeniously, resulting in an interesting rook ending. What had been a quiet position has just sharpened considerably, since the natural-looking 40 ♔f5? loses to 40... ♕f7! , when the threat of 41... g6\# forces decisive material gains. White's next move is therefore forced.

40 ♔d4 f5

Now speed becomes vital, and both players must calculate accurately.

41 ♕e5 fxe4 42 ♖xb6 e3 43 d6+ ♔d7 44 ♗b7+ ♔d8 45 ♕d5!

At first sight it seems that White has made progress. He has a threat against g7 and he can stop the e-pawn from behind (by ♗e7), while at the same time the black king has been pushed back to the back rank. But Black has a fantastic resource:

45... ♗e4!!

Suddenly the onus is on White. He has a draw by 46 ♗b8+ ♔d7 47 ♗b7+ , but can he play for a win? Atalik finds a way:

46 b3!

Black is allowed to queen, but so does White, and although Black is first, White queens with check. Notice how suddenly the quiet rook ending we started with ended up as a promotion race!

46... e2 47 ♕c6!

The point of the previous move. Black has no check on c4.

47... ♕e8 48 d7+ ♔e7 49 ♗b8 e1♗ 50 d8♗+ ♕f7 51 ♗b7+ ♗e7

The storm is over and it turns out that the game peters out in a draw. But first we shall have another pawn race, where the 'do not hurry' principle certainly doesn't apply.

52 ♗d5+ ♗e6+ 53 ♗xe6+ ♔xe6 54 ♗xe7+ ♕xe7 55 b4 g5 56 b5

56 ♕d5 ♕d7 draws as well.

56... g4 57 b6 g3 58 b7 g2 59 b8♗ g1♗ 60 ♗d6+ 1/2-1/2

Time is a crucial factor in the endgame – but it depends on the position whether you should bide time and start manoeuvring, or instead make sure that no time is wasted. In the coming chapters we shall see examples of both of these situations.

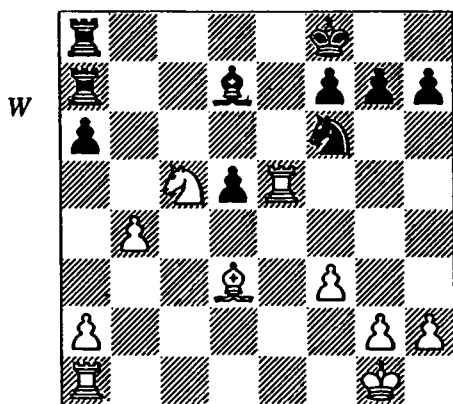
Making the Right Exchanges

Tarrasch used to say: "What is important is not what is exchanged, but what remains on the board!" True, but in practice the chess-player faces this question in virtually every game: which pieces should I exchange, and which should I leave on the board?

There is no simple answer to this question – it depends very much on concrete factors like the pawn-structure and/or the position of the pieces – but in the endgame it is very important to be aware of the impact of exchanges. This principle underlies most of the examples we shall encounter in this book. At one point or other the players must make exchange decisions.

Often the decision is straightforward – for instance along the lines of "if I exchange my knight for his bishop I shall have the potential advantage of the two bishops" or "with my pawns fixed on the dark squares I want to exchange my dark-squared bishop so that I shall have a good bishop against his bad one" – but it is necessary also to be on the lookout for less clear exchanges. Here we shall look at three examples where the exchange decision has significant impact on the proceedings in the game: one where Fischer conducts an exchange which for many commentators was surprising; one

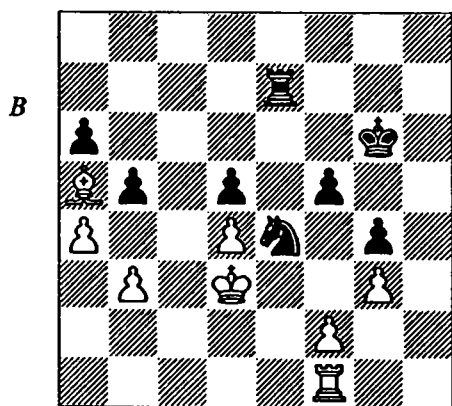
where we see an exchange of material leading to a unbalanced material position and essentially deciding the game; and one where tactics are used to achieve the right exchange.



Fischer – Petrosian
Buenos Aires Ct (7) 1971

22 ♖xd7+!

To some, this exchange was surprising. Why does White give up his powerful knight for Black's seemingly poor bishop? Fischer simply follows the 'advice' of two great players, Tarrasch and Rubinstein. Tarrasch's advice – that the most important is what remains on the board, and in this case it is a strong white bishop and control over both open files – has already been mentioned, and the one from Rubinstein stems from an old game where the great Akiba made a similar exchange of knight for bishop. No doubt Fischer knew this game:



Rosselli – Rubinstein
Baden-Baden 1925

Rubinstein concluded a fine positional game with the break 55...f4! 56 gxf4 ♖h7! 57 ♗d2

♜xd2! (the aforementioned exchange) 58 ♖xd2 ♖h3! 59 f3 gxf3 60 ♖f2 ♖f5 61 ♖e3 ♖g4 62 b4 ♖h1! 63 f5 (63 ♖xf3 ♖a1!) 63...♖e1+ 64 ♖d3 ♖e4 0-1.

22...♖xd7 23 ♖c1!

Black cannot prevent the white rook from penetrating on c6 or c7.

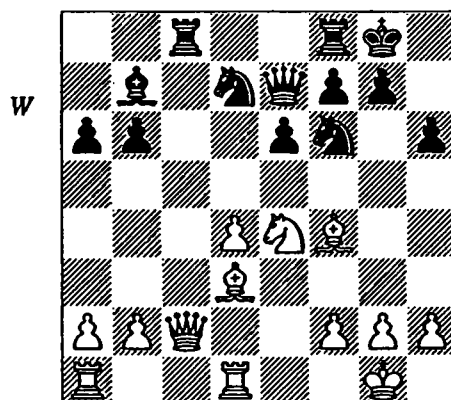
23...♖d6 24 ♖c7 ♜d7 25 ♖e2 g6 26 ♖f2 h5 27 f4 h4 28 ♖f3 f5 29 ♖e3 d4+ 30 ♖d2 ♜b6

This loses on the spot, but it is not easy to find a defence for Black.

31 ♖ee7! ♜d5 32 ♖f7+ ♖e8 33 ♖b7 ♜xf4 34 ♗c4!

Stronger than 34 ♖h7 ♜e6. But now there is no defence against 35 ♖h7 as 34...♜e6 fails to 35 ♖fe7+.

1-0



Speelman – Cu. Hansen
Bundesliga 2002/3

Black has achieved an excellent position out of the opening (a 6 ♖c2 Anti-Meran), and now Speelman misjudges the outcome of the following exchanging sequence in his (understandable) attempt to avoid the position after 19 ♖e2 ♗xe4 20 ♗xe4 ♜xe4 21 ♖xe4 ♜f6 followed by ...♜d5, when Black has a pleasant edge due to White's isolated d-pawn. However, it was necessary for White to go for this, as the exchanges simply favour Black.

19 ♗d6? ♖xc2 20 ♗xe7 ♗xe4 21 ♗xc2 ♗xc2 22 ♖d2 ♗e4 23 ♗xf8 ♖xf8

The exchanging sequence is over, and superficially White is doing OK material-wise. But rooks need open files and Black can easily prevent White from penetrating down the c-file,

after which White is slowly but systematically pushed back. It was the decision of how to exchange that decided this game.

24 f3 ♖d5 25 ♜c2 ♜e7 26 ♜c7 a5 27 ♜f2 ♘e8 28 ♜c2 ♘b8 29 a3 ♘c6 30 ♜e3 ♘d6 31 g4

White must weaken his position to prevent 31...♘f5+.

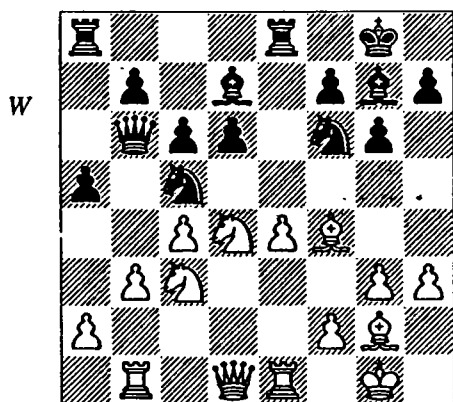
31...♘b5 32 ♞d2 ♘d6 33 ♜c2 ♘b5 34 ♞d2 a4 35 h4 ♘d6 36 ♞f2 ♘c4+ 37 ♜d3 b5 38 ♜c3 ♘b6 39 ♞e1 ♖c4 40 f4 ♘d5+ 41 ♜d2 ♘xd4

The first material gain.

42 f5 ♘b3+ 43 ♜c2 ♘c5 44 ♞f3 f6 45 ♜xe6 ♘xe6 46 g5?! h×g5 47 h×g5 ♜g5 48 ♜d2 ♘df4 49 ♜c3 ♜f6 50 ♞g1 ♜f5 51 ♜b4 g4 52 ♞fg3 ♖e2 53 b3 a×b3 54 ♞xb3 ♘d4 55 ♞bb1 ♘f3 56 ♞gd1 ♖xd1 57 ♞xd1 g3 58 ♜xb5 g2 59 a4 g1♚ 60 ♞xg1 ♘xg1 61 a5 ♘d5 62 ♜c5

White hopes to be able to eliminate all Black's pawns, leaving Black with two useless knights, but it does not materialize.

62...♜e6 63 a6 ♘c7 64 a7 ♜d7 65 ♜d4 ♘f3+ 66 ♜e4 ♘g5+ 0-1



Khalifman – Van Wely
Ter Apel 1997

Directly out of the opening (a King's Indian Defence), Khalifman initiates a series of exchanges culminating in his strong 21st move, which leads by force to a promising endgame for White.

15 ♖xd6! ♘fxe4 16 ♖xe4!

The right exchange! White should not fall for 16 ♘xe4 ♘xe4 17 ♞xe4 ♞xe4 18 ♖xe4 ♖xd4 19 c5 ♚b4 20 a3? ♖xf2+!, as indicated by Khuzman.

16...♘xe4 17 ♞xe4 ♞xe4 18 ♘xe4 ♚xd4

But now 18...♖xd4? 19 c5 ♚b4 20 a3! ♖xf2+ 21 ♘xf2! wins for White, so Black must go for the queen exchange.

19 ♚xd4 ♖xd4 20 ♞d1 ♖g7 21 ♖b8!

The brilliant point, which Khalifman must have seen at move 15 (or at home in his preparation – as it turns out, the exchanging sequence had already been mentioned in *Informator*). Now 21...♖xh3 does not work for Black in view of 22 ♞d8+ ♖f8 23 ♘f6+ ♜g7 24 ♘e8+ ♜g8 25 ♘c7 and the rook is trapped.

21...♞xb8 22 ♞xd7

With the strong rook on the 7th rank and a centralized knight against Black's rather useless bishop, White has a large advantage.

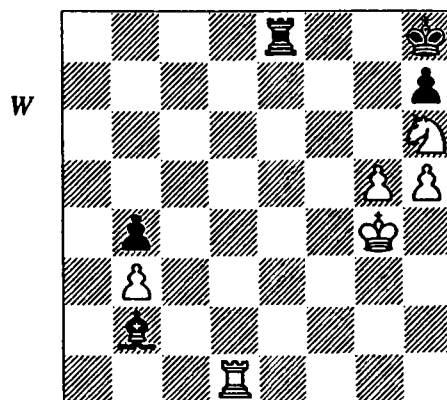
22...b5 23 ♘d6! a4 24 c×b5 c×b5 25 ♘xf7 ♞e8 26 ♜f1 ♖c3 27 ♘h6+ ♜h8 28 g4!

White has managed to consolidate with an extra pawn, and now he sets up mating threats against Black's king with the combined force of rook, knight and g-pawn. Furthermore, White does not hurry to exploit his material advantage. Notice how the FIDE World Champion from Las Vegas 1999 combines our endgame principles!

28...a×b3 29 a×b3 ♞f8 30 g5 ♞e8 31 ♘f7+ ♜g8 32 ♘h6+ ♜h8 33 h4 b4 34 ♘f7+ ♜g8 35 ♘h6+ ♜h8 36 ♜g2 ♞f8 37 ♘f7+ ♜g8 38 ♘h6+ ♜h8 39 f4 ♖b2 40 ♘f7+ ♜g8 41 ♘h6+ ♜h8 42 ♜f3 ♖c3 43 ♘f7+ ♜g8 44 ♘h6+ ♜h8 45 ♜g4 ♖g7 46 ♞b7 ♖c3 47 ♘f7+ ♜g8 48 ♘h6+ ♜h8 49 f5 g×f5+ 50 ♘xf5 ♖d2 51 ♞d7!

Not 51 h5? ♞g8. The bishop must be forced off the c1-h6 diagonal first.

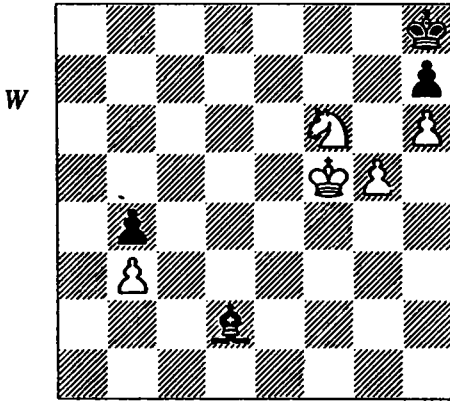
51...♖c1 52 ♞d1! ♖b2 53 h5 ♞g8 54 ♘h6 ♞e8 (D)



55 ♞d8!

By tactical means White exchanges the rooks and reaches an easily winning knight vs bishop ending with the black king inactive in the corner.

55...♖xd8 56 ♖f7+ ♔g7 57 ♖xd8 ♗c3 58 ♜f5 ♗d2 59 ♖e6+ ♜f7 60 ♖f4 ♔g7 61 ♖d5 ♜f7 62 h6 ♔g8 63 ♖f6+ ♜h8 (D)



64 ♖e4!

Accurate until the end! Of course Khalifman – with his profound knowledge of endgame principles – steers free of the stalemate traps (our last principle) 64 g6? hxg6+ 65 ♜xg6 ♗xh6! and 64 ♔g4? ♗xg5!, when Black escapes with a draw.

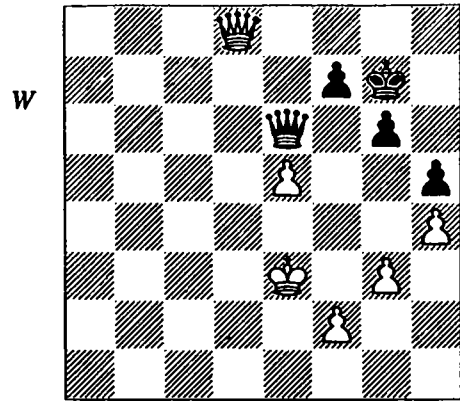
64...♗c1 65 ♔g4! ♔g8 66 ♖f6+ ♜h8 67 ♖d5 ♗d2 68 ♜h5 ♔g8 69 g6 1-0

After 69...hxg6+ 70 ♜xg6 ♗e1 71 h7+ ♜h8 72 ♖e7 ♗g3 73 ♖c6 Black cannot block all access roads to f7, so he resigned.

Many exchanges are made automatically, but in the endgame this decision may turn out to be the game-deciding one!

The Transformation of Advantages

It was the third World Champion, Jose Raul Capablanca, who first formulated the principle of *transformation of advantages*. When having one kind of advantage, you should always be on the lookout for ways to exchange it for another, even greater, advantage. This is an important principle in the endgame. Often you have some advantage or a very nice position, but in order to win, you have to ‘destroy’ the advantage. Games rarely win themselves. Let’s see an example where a material advantage of a pawn is converted – by giving up the pawn!



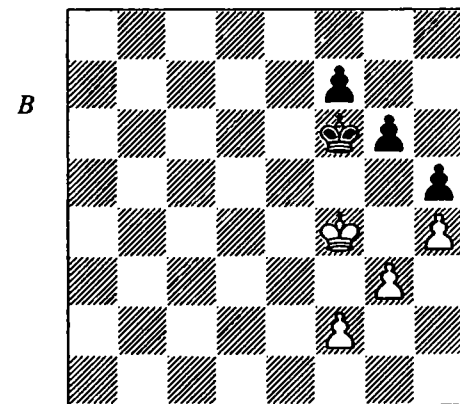
Korchnoi – Lukin
Stockholm 2003

Korchnoi won a pawn on move 22, but during the following 60 moves he had not made further progress. In this queen ending Black has decent drawing chances, but his last move, 81...♔g7?!, was a terrible mistake. The king should have gone to h7, because now Korchnoi exploits his chance to *transform his material advantage* into a more valuable one: *the opposition*.

82 ♖f6+!

Returning the pawn to reach a winning king and pawn ending.

82...♖xf6 83 exf6+ ♜xf6 84 ♜f4! (D)



The point. White gains the opposition and wins by advancing his f-pawn.

84...♜e6

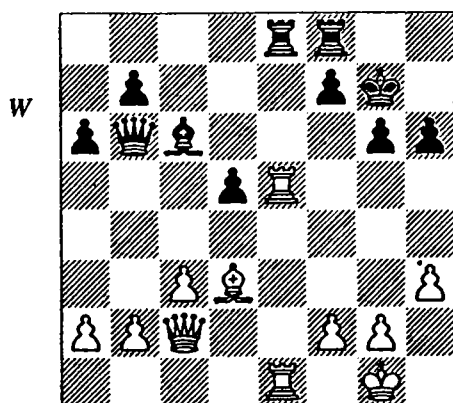
Or 84...♔g7 85 ♜e5, and the white king reaches f6.

85 ♔g5 ♜e5 86 f3! ♜e6 87 f4 1-0

White wins after 87...♜e7 88 f5.

The term ‘transformation of advantages’ covers a wide range of advantages. In the above game White abandoned a material advantage,

but it can be any other kind of advantage. Here is an example:



Cu. Hansen – Andersson
Skellefteå (5) 2001

My countryman Curt Hansen (for the record: although Denmark has three grandmasters with the surname Hansen – Curt, Sune Berg and I – we are not related; Hansen is one of the most common surnames in Denmark) is very strong at using the principle of transformation of advantages, and here he even manages to break down the defence of the Swedish defence wizard Ulf Andersson through the use of this principle. White has some edge due to the better bishop and the isolated d-pawn, but can't Black eliminate both of these weaknesses by ...d4? No, Curt shows that after ...d4; these advantages are merely transformed into another one: superior central control by White and small annoying tactical threats.

23 a3!

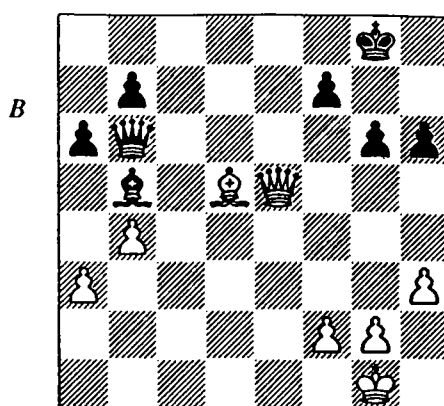
Calmly making a useful move – putting the pawn on the right colour, that is opposite to that of the bishops – while anticipating ...d4.

23...d4 24 b4 ♖xe5 25 ♖xe5 dxc3 26 ♗xc3 ♕g8 27 ♔c4! ♖e8 28 ♗g3!

Creating a threat against g6, thereby prohibiting 28...♖xe5.

28...♔b5 29 ♔d5! ♖xe5 30 ♗xe5 (D)

Compare this diagram to the previous one. The character of the position has changed considerably, but nevertheless White maintains nagging pressure. The advantage has simply been transformed; it has not evaporated. Andersson does not find anything better than giving up a pawn, leading to a very difficult ending, which Curt brings home in solid style.



30...♗d8

30...♔c6? loses on the spot to 31 ♗f6!

31 ♔xb7 ♗d1+ 32 ♕h2 ♗d2 33 ♗e3 ♗d6+ 34 g3 g5 35 ♔f3 ♕g7 36 ♕g2 ♗f6 37 ♕h2 ♔c6

The queen endgame is pretty hopeless due to the outside passed pawn. I think it was a better chance to keep the bishops on the board and wait for White to show his hand.

38 ♔xc6 ♗xc6 39 ♗d4+ f6 40 ♗d3 h5 41 ♗d1!

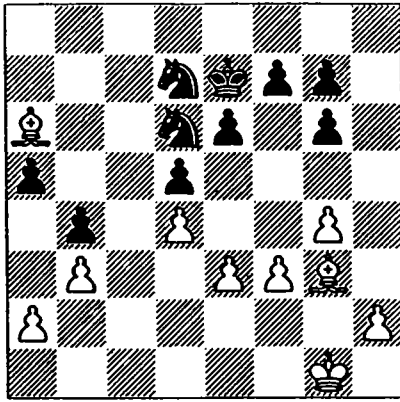
Preparing the advance of the a-pawn while conveniently hitting h5.

41...♕g6 42 a4 ♕h6 43 ♗b3! h4 44 gxh4 gxh4 45 b5 axb5 46 axb5 ♗c7+ 47 ♕g2 ♗g7+ 48 ♕f1 1-0

The transformation of advantages is a powerful tool in the hands of an endgame connoisseur, and it also has the added advantage of putting psychological pressure on the opponent. You just think you have managed to neutralize one advantage, and then...

The Two Bishops

The advantage of the two bishops has been known since Steinitz. The first World Champion laid down the rules for how to play with the two bishops against knights: take away any safe strongholds for the knights so that they do not have anywhere to settle. Having been deprived of strongholds, the short-legged knights are then no match for the far-reaching bishops. In the following example we see one of the great endgame players exploiting the advantage of the two bishops. Watch how Karpov takes squares away from the knights while suppressing counterplay.



Karpov – Istratescu
Bucharest (2) 2005

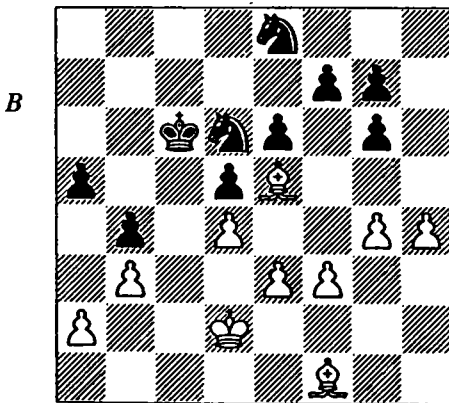
30 h4!

Fixing the doubled g-pawns as a long-term weakness.

30...♖f6 31 ♔d3 ♗d7 32 ♜f2 ♝c6 33 ♚e2 ♜fe8 34 ♜d2 ♜b5 35 ♔e5!

An excellent square for the bishop. Black can never dislodge the bishop through ...f6, as this would make the g6-pawn vulnerable. At the same time he has to look out for the typical motif of the h5 advance followed by the sacrifice ♔xg7!, after which the h-pawn cannot be stopped.

35...♜bd6 36 ♔f1! (D)



With the idea ♗d3, ♔g2 and e4, gaining space in the centre and depriving the knights of central strongholds – just as Steinitz taught us.

36...♝b6 37 ♝c2 ♜b5 38 ♔g2 ♝c6 39 ♗d3 ♜bd6

39...♜c3 is answered by **40 a4!**

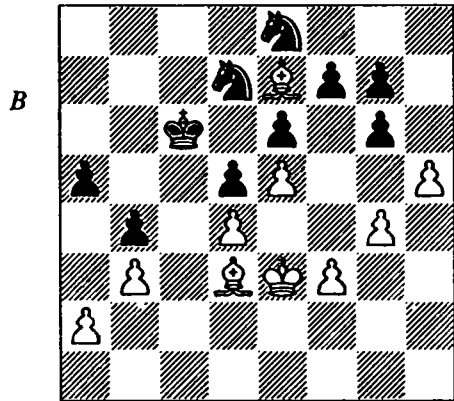
40 e4!

Finally Karpov acts. Notice that he did not hurry – another classic principle when you have a sustainable advantage.

40...♗d7 41 ♔h3 ♚e7 42 ♔f1! ♗d7 43 ♚e3 ♚e7 44 ♔d3 ♗d7 45 ♔f4!

With patient manoeuvres Karpov increases the pressure. Now he is ready to play e5, taking further squares from Black's knights.

45...♝c6 46 e5 ♜c8 47 ♔g5 ♜b6 48 ♔e7 ♜d7 49 h5! (D)



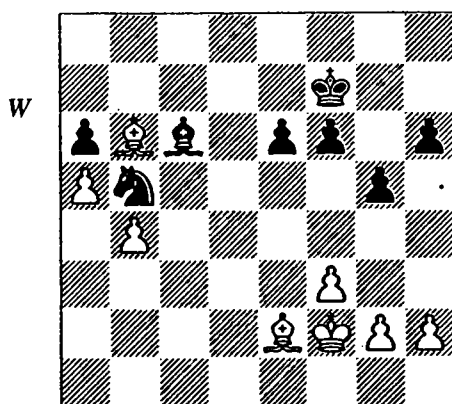
A picturesque position, somewhat reminiscent of the famous game Botvinnik-Bronstein, Moscow Wch (23) 1951. Despite material equality, Black is paralysed by the two powerful bishops. The text-move opens the decisive diagonal for White's light-squared bishop. In *Informator* Karpov gives the line 49...gxh5 50 gxh5 ♝c7 51 ♔h7! ♜b8 52 ♔g8 ♜c6 53 ♔f8 f6 (53...♜d8 54 ♗d3!, and Black is helpless against 55 ♔xg7! ♜xg7 56 h6; the prophylactic king move is necessary first to prevent ...♜f5+) 54 ♔f7 ♗d7 55 exf6 and White wins after either 55...gxf6 56 h6 or 55...♜xf6 56 ♔xg7. Istratescu tried...

49...♜c7 1-0

...but resigned without waiting for the obvious response 50 hxg6 fxg6 51 ♔xg6 followed by 52 ♔f7.

In the above game the pawn-structure was more or less symmetrical, and White's task was slowly to deprive the black knights of their squares. In open positions with asymmetrical pawn-structures, the two bishops are often even stronger, as in such positions the far-reaching powers of the bishops give them a 'competitive advantage' over the knights. The bishops are often able to perform several tasks at once – supporting their own passed pawns while blocking the opponent's, for example. Furthermore, in such positions the knights often lack

strongholds and they must choose to move to one wing or the other – with their limited movements, knights are less able to multitask than the bishops.



Bologan – Rublevsky
Poikovsky 2005

White definitely has some advantage with the two bishops in a semi-open position with an asymmetrical pawn-structure. The black knight has a good defensive stronghold on b5, blocking White's pawn-majority, but notice that this is the only task that it is performing, whereas White's bishops are active and defensive at the same time.

39 ♖e3 f5 40 g3 ♜g6 41 ♔d3 ♙d5 42 ♙d4!

Here we see another advantage of having the bishops: White can decide when he wants to allow one of them to be exchanged. Here Black cannot go for 42...♟xd4 43 ♖xd4, as the outside passed pawn on the queenside decides.

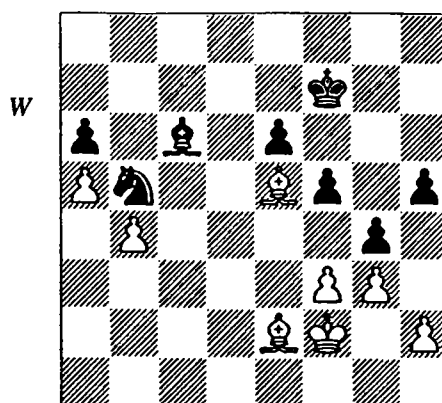
42...h5 43 ♙e5 g4?!

A difficult decision. Perhaps it was better for Black to stay put and wait for White to come up with a plan to break Black's defences. The text-move is met by a clever plan culminating on move 46.

44 ♖e3 ♙c6 45 ♖f2! ♖f7 (D)

Again it is disadvantageous for Black to go for the exchange of one of the bishops. In *Informator*, Bologan gives 45...gxf3 46 ♙xf3 ♙xf3 47 ♖xf3 ♟a7 48 ♖e3 ♟c6 49 ♙c3 e5 50 ♖d3 as clearly better for White. I agree with this assessment; Black will be hard-pressed to save this ending. The position has clarified into another principle to which we shall later return: that in endgames with asymmetrical pawn-structures

bishops often outperform knights because of the ability to 'multitask'.



46 h4!

This very strong move highlights the deficiencies of 43...g4. Black is now faced with an unpleasant choice: he can leave the pawn on h4, he can take it *en passant*, he can take on f3, or he can stay put. Unfortunately, none of these options is attractive. Taking on f3 is reminiscent of the line given in the previous note, and just staying put highlights the strength of 46 h4: not only is h5 now a long-term potential target for White's light-squared bishop, but after an eventual fxc4 Black is now forced to take back with the f-pawn, as he cannot allow an outside passed pawn on the kingside. The fxc4/...fxc4 exchange significantly improves the active options of White's two bishops, as the position is opened. When the h-pawn was still on h2, Black could always answer fxc4 with ...hxc4. Thus, Black has to take *en passant*.

46...gxh3 47 ♖g1! ♙b7 48 ♖h2 ♟a3!?

Another difficult decision for Black. By bringing the knight into play, he hopes for some activity but also opens the option of b5 for White. Again he could try to stay put and keep the knight on its stronghold on b5. However, this would cost him the h5-pawn after ♖h4 and f4.

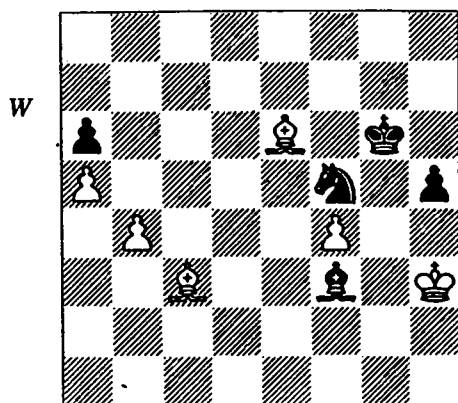
49 ♖xh3 ♟c2 50 ♙c3 ♟e3 51 ♖h4

Probably 51 f4! was more precise; Bologan gives 51...♟d5 (51...♜g6 loses to 52 b5) 52 ♙d2 ♟f6 53 b5 axb5 54 ♙xb5 as winning.

51...f4!

Black seizes the opportunity to stir up some confusion before White consumes the h5-pawn with f4. Additionally, Black hopes to find safe squares for his knight, the eternal problem for the defender in such positions.

52 gxf4 ♖g6 53 ♔d3+ ♜f5+ 54 ♖h3 ♖h6
55 ♔c4 ♖g6 56 ♔xe6 ♔xf3 (D)



57 b5!

Decisive. Black must not be allowed to block b5 by ...♔e2 or ...♜d6. Now the outside passed pawn decides the outcome.

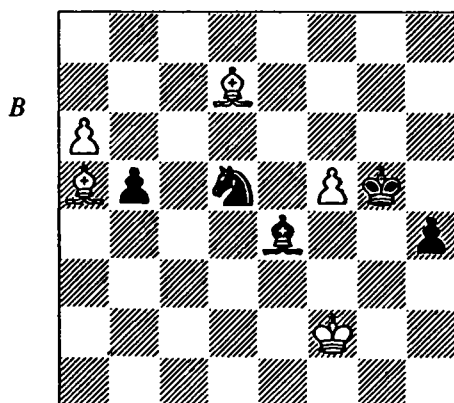
57...axb5 58 a6 ♜e7 59 ♔d7 ♜d5 60 ♖g3 ♔e4 61 f5+?!

Inaccurate. As Bologan himself points out, 61 ♔c6! would have won immediately; for example, 61...♜xc3 62 ♔xe4+ ♜xe4+ 63 ♖g2 or 61...♖f5 62 ♔a5 and the a-pawn queens.

61...♖g5 62 ♔a5?!

Another inaccuracy. Correct is 62 ♔d2+ ♖f6 63 ♔c6 ♖xf5 64 ♔a5, winning.

62...h4+ 63 ♖f2 (D)



63...♜f6?!

Bologan considered 63...b4! 64 ♔e6 ♜f6 65 ♔xb4 ♜g4+ 66 ♖g1 h3 better. Then 67 ♔d6 ♖f6 68 ♔c8 ♔d3 69 ♔b7 will lead to a two bishops vs knight pawnless ending, which might be drawn by the 50-move rule in practice. Nunn suggests 67 ♔e7+ followed by ♔d6, driving Black's king away from the f-pawn.

64 ♔c8! b4 65 ♔xb4 ♖g4

Black is a tempo short as 65...♜g4+ 66 ♖g1 h3 67 ♔e7+! ♖h5 68 ♔d6 ♔d3 69 ♔b7! ♔xa6 (forced) 70 ♔xa6 ♖g5 71 ♔d3 wins for White.

66 ♔b7 h3 67 ♔xe4 ♜xe4+ 68 ♖g1 ♖g3 69 ♔e1+ 1-0

In Chapter 3 we shall see more examples of the strength of the two bishops – and how to counter them. But first we turn to the next principle, which is related to the present one – the question of bishops vs knights.

Bishops or Knights?

Next after rook endgames, minor-piece endings are probably the most frequent in tournament practice. Accordingly, an important question arises: when is it better to have a knight, and when should one prefer the bishop?

This principle is closely connected to the principle of making the right exchanges, and again the pawn-structure plays a significant role in the evaluation of when a bishop or knight is better in the endgame.

The rule of thumb is as follows (we shall return to this in more detail in Chapter 3, where we shall also see exceptions to the rule):

The bishop is to be preferred if:

1) The pawn-structure is asymmetrical, as in this case the bishop's ability to 'multitask' (participate in defence and attack at once) typically makes it superior to the knight.

2) If the pawn-structure is symmetrical but the pawns are fixed in such a way that the bishop is 'the good bishop'. That is, the bishop's own pawns are fixed on the opposite colour to its own (thus allowing the bishop maximum freedom of movement) while the enemy pawns are fixed on the same colour squares as the bishop (so that the bishop can attack them).

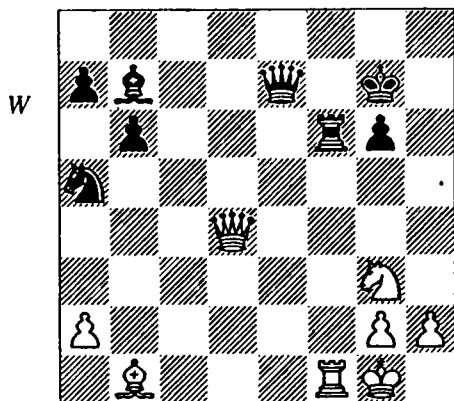
Conversely, the knight is stronger if:

1) The pawn-structure is symmetrical but the pawns are fixed in a way that makes the bishop 'bad' (only hitting its own pawns, while it cannot attack any of the opponent's pawns as they are on opposite-coloured squares).

2) The position is so closed that the bishop cannot utilize its superiority in reach; on the other hand the knight can jump around the

position, exploiting any holes in the closed structure, on squares of either colour.

Let us see some examples of these principles.



Spassky – Fischer
Santa Monica 1966

A famous example of the superiority of the bishop in positions with asymmetrical pawn-structures. I have started the fragment at an earlier stage in the game to show how Spassky utilizes his knowledge of this kind of endgame to initiate ‘the right exchange’ and reach an advantageous bishop vs knight position. With Black’s vulnerable king it was certainly conceivable for White to keep the pieces on and play for a middlegame attack, but Spassky prefers the endgame:

31 ♖e4! ♙xe4 32 ♙xe4 ♚c5 33 ♚xc5 ♜xf1+

This has been condemned by some commentators, but Fischer was afraid that after the direct recapture 33...bxc5 White might keep the rooks on the board by 34 ♜c1 c4 35 ♜c3! with the unpleasant threat of 36 ♜a3. Either way, the endgame favours White.

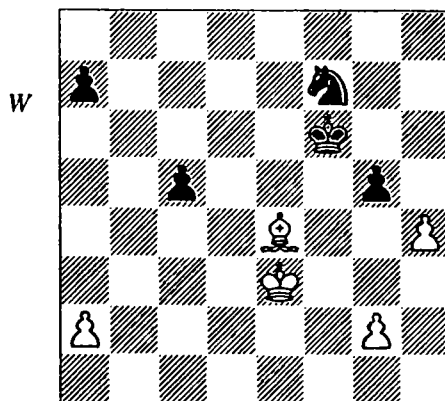
34 ♜xf1 bxc5 35 h4!

An important move. It is crucial to fix the g6-pawn on the colour of the bishop. Black does not like to play ...g5, as this gives White a dangerous outside passed pawn, against which the knight is a poor defender.

35...♗c4 36 ♜e2 ♗e5 37 ♜e3 ♜f6 38 ♜f4 ♗f7 39 ♜e3 g5?! (D)

A difficult choice, and probably the wrong one. Black removes the pawn from the gaze of the bishop but allows White a dangerous passed h-pawn. According to Gligorić and Cafferty,

39...♗h6! gave better drawing chances; e.g., 40 ♜d3 ♗f5 41 ♜c4 ♗xh4 42 ♜xc5 ♜e5, and Black can seek counterplay against White’s g-pawn.



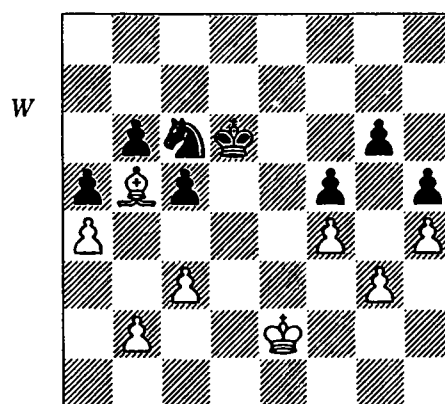
40 h5! ♗h6 41 ♜d3 ♜e5 42 ♙a8 ♜d6 43 ♜c4 g4 44 a4 ♗g8 45 a5 ♗h6 46 ♙e4 g3 47 ♜b5!

With his passive knight, Black is defenceless against the advance of the white king. Essentially White is a piece up.

47...♗g8 48 ♙b1 ♗h6 49 ♜a6 ♜c6 50 ♙a2!

No hurry! White prohibits ...c4 before chalking up the a-pawn.

1-0



Fischer – Taimanov
Vancouver Ct (4) 1971

This is from the famous and infamous match that Fischer won 6-0 on his way to winning the World Championship a year later. Curiously, two of the games in the match were decided in bishop vs knight endgames where the bishop was superior to the knight: the present fourth match game and the second game, in which

Taimanov's knight (after some mistakes) was unable to cope with Fischer's bishop and lone h-pawn. This position falls into the category where the pawn-structure is symmetrical and White has 'the good bishop'. The bishop can attack g6, thus forcing the black knight into a passive defensive role. At the same time the pawn-structure on the queenside is full of holes on the light squares, so that the white king can penetrate via c4 and b5. That is too much for the defence.

45 ♖d3! ♜e7 46 ♙e8 ♖d5 47 ♙f7+ ♖d6 48 ♜c4 ♜c6 49 ♙e8+ ♜b7 50 ♜b5 ♜c8 51 ♙c6+ ♜c7 52 ♙d5 ♜e7 53 ♙f7 ♜b7

The first stage is over. White has advanced his king and forced Black into a passive position. The next step is to make room for the white king on either a6 or c6.

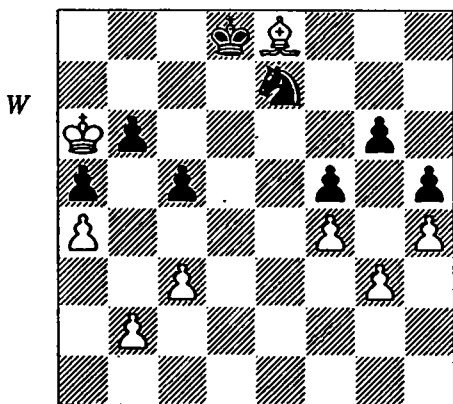
54 ♙b3 ♜a7 55 ♙d1! ♜b7 56 ♙f3+

The right diagonal.

56...♜c7

After 56...♜a7 57 ♙g2 Black is in zugzwang.

57 ♜a6 ♜c8 58 ♙d5 ♜e7 59 ♙c4 ♜c6 60 ♙f7 ♜e7 61 ♙e8 ♖d8 (D)



62 ♙xg6!

Step three: White crashes through by means of a classic piece sacrifice – a common feature in such endgames.

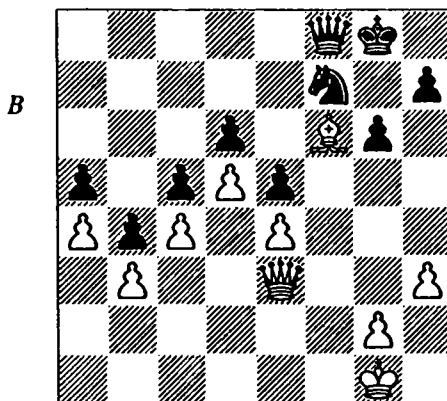
62...♜xg6 63 ♜xb6 ♖d7 64 ♜xc5 ♜e7 65 b4

Black is powerless against the advance of the pawns.

65...axb4 66 cxb4 ♜c8 67 a5 ♜d6 68 b5 ♜e4+ 69 ♜b6 ♜c8 70 ♜c6 ♜b8 71 b6 1-0

To finish this brief overview of bishop superiority let's see an example where Black shows an instructive defence mechanism: that of 'shutting

the door' so that the opponent doesn't have anywhere to penetrate.



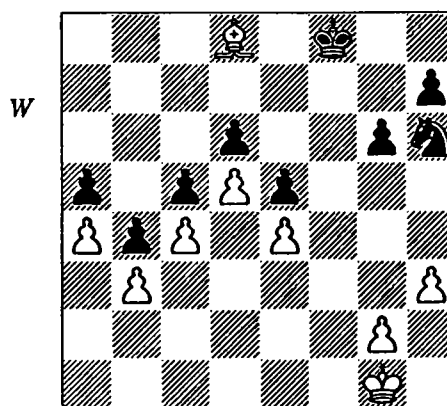
Leitão – R. Hernandez
Santa Clara 2003

With the enemy pawns fixed on the same colour as the bishop, White certainly has hopes to turn his space advantage into something more tangible. But Black is on the alert and by means of a pawn sacrifice he builds an impregnable fortress:

38...♜h6! 39 ♜xb6 ♜xh6 40 ♙d8

Or 40 ♙e7 ♜f7, and White cannot make any progress.

40...♜f8! (D)

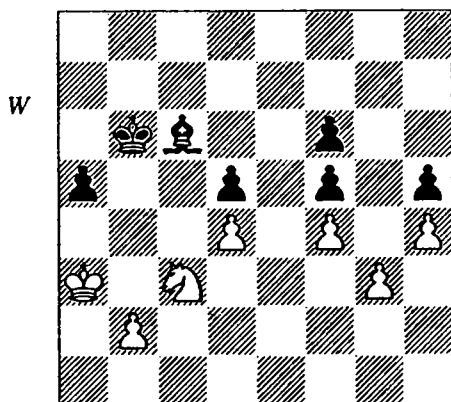


The point. Black simply catches the a-pawn with the king, puts his knight on f7 and waits for White to offer a draw. In Danish we have an expression for this kind of position: "the shop is closed!"

41 ♙xa5 ♜e8 42 ♙b6 ♖d7 43 a5 ♜f7 44 a6 ♜c8 45 ♜f2 ♜b8 46 h4 h5 1/2-1/2

Now let us turn to positions where the knight is better than the bishop. The first sub-category

is the standard one of 'good knight vs bad bishop' This is a very frequent theme in end-games. Here is a recent example:



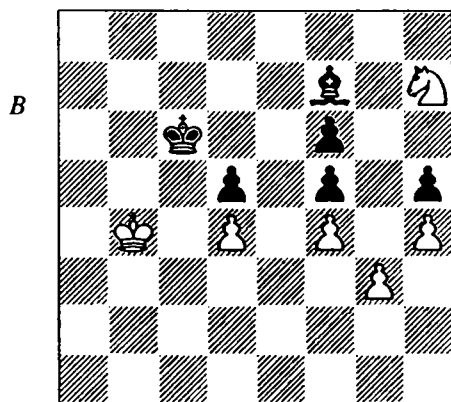
Nakamura – Hillarp Persson
Malmö/Copenhagen 2005

Black's bishop is bad, as his pawns are fixed on the same colour squares as the bishop and to boot Black has weak doubled f-pawns that must continuously be guarded. His only chance is the lack of penetration squares for White's king and knight. Therefore Nakamura starts by making more room for manoeuvre.

49 b4! ♖a6 50 ♜b3 ♜b6 51 ♖a4+! ♜b5

The king and pawn ending after 51...♙xa4+ 52 ♜xa4 axb4 53 ♜xb4 is lost for Black, as White possesses the opposition.

52 bxa5 ♜xa5 53 ♖c5 ♙e8 54 ♖e6 ♙f7 55 ♖d8 ♙e8 56 ♖b7+ ♜b6 57 ♖d6 ♙d7 58 ♜b4 ♜c6 59 ♖b5 ♜b6 60 ♖c3 ♙c6 61 ♖b1 ♙d7 62 ♖d2 ♙b5 63 ♖b3 ♙d7 64 ♖c5 ♙e8 65 ♖e6 ♙f7 66 ♖f8 ♜c6 67 ♖h7! (D)



After a lot of manoeuvring – no need to hurry as his advantage is sustainable – White is ready for action. As in Fischer-Taimanov, he is

ready to sacrifice a piece to penetrate with the king. However, with pawns on only one side it seems that Black can just about draw.

67...♜d6 68 ♖xf6 ♙g6 69 ♖g8 ♙f7 70 ♖f6 ♙g6 71 ♖g8 ♙f7 72 ♖h6!?

The knight will be trapped, but in compensation the white king makes inroads.

72...♙e6 73 ♜b5 ♙d7+ 74 ♜a5! ♙e6 75 ♜b6! ♜d7 76 ♜c5 ♜c7 77 ♖xf5!

Here is the sacrifice, but Black can hold.

77...♙xf5 78 ♜xd5 ♜d7 79 ♜e5 ♙g4 80 ♜f6 ♜d6?

The tired defender makes a fatal slip. Instead, 80...♜e8! (Nunn) is sufficient to draw.

81 f5 ♜d7 82 ♙g6 ♙f3 83 d5?!

The simple 83 ♜f7 wins immediately.

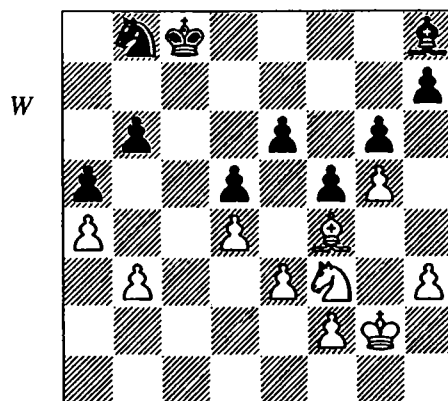
83...♙xd5 84 ♜xh5 ♜e7 85 ♙g5?

White again fails to advance his king, and this should now have cost him victory.

85...♜f7 86 g4 ♙f3 87 h5 ♙g7 88 ♜h4

Now 88...♙e4! draws, as White has no way to make progress. Instead he played 88...♙d1?, allowing White to advance his g-pawn and win in due course.

By their nature, bishops are best in open positions. In closed positions, on the other hand, a bishop often fails to excel, even in positions where it can be considered a 'good' bishop. Here is an instructive example by one of the world's top players, Boris Gelfand:



Gelfand – Malakhov
USSR Cht (Sochi) 2005

33 ♙xb8!

The right exchange! Although the bishop on h8 can be said to be 'good' with the central pawns fixed on light squares, the closed nature

of the position makes the bishop inferior to the knight.

33...♙xb8 34 h4 ♖c7 35 h5! gxf5

Regrettably forced, as otherwise White wins a pawn by 36 hxf6 and 37 ♖h4. But now the path is opened for the white king to advance.

36 ♖g3 ♗g7 37 ♙h4 ♘d6 38 ♙xh5 ♗f8 39 ♖e5 ♗g7 40 ♖d3 ♙e7 41 ♖e5 ♘d6 42 f4 ♙e7 43 g6!

Creating further room for the king.

43...hxf6+ 44 ♙xg6 ♗h8 45 ♖f7 ♗f6 46 ♖g5! ♗h8

Black cannot go for the pawn endgame after 46...♗xg5 47 fxf6, but now the supposedly 'good' bishop will be left without moves.

47 ♖h7! ♙e8 48 ♖f6+ ♙f8 49 ♖h5!

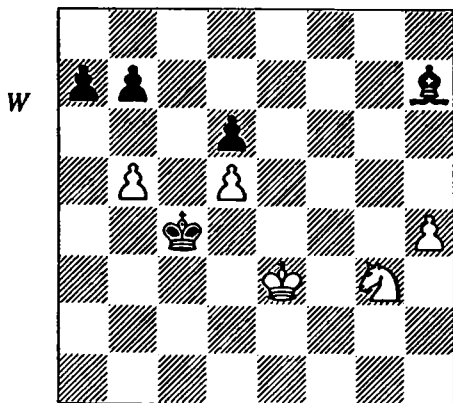
Completely depriving the bishop of its mobility.

49...♖g8 50 ♙h6!

Zugzwang! After 50...♙f7 51 ♙h7 ♗f6 52 ♖xf6 ♙xf6 53 ♖g8 ♙e7 54 ♖g7 White holds the opposition and wins the king and pawn ending.

1-0

To finish this section, here is a fragment where the knight dominates the bishop even on an open board with asymmetrical pawns. This just goes to show that every rule has exceptions – a point which is worth stressing. No list of principles can cover all situations – chess is much too complex and concrete a game for that.



McShane – Mamedyarov
Lausanne 2004

Black has just offered a draw, and with correct play that should be the natural outcome of

the game. But knights are tricky, and McShane sets a trap:

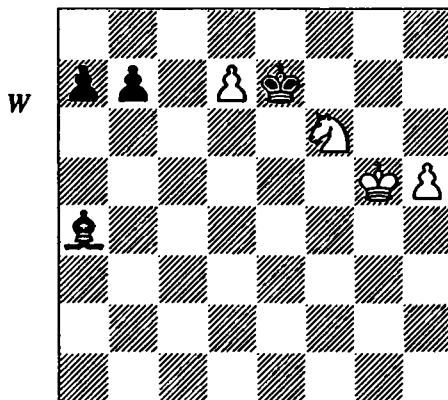
58 ♖e4! ♙xb5??

This loses. According to McShane, Black could have drawn by 58...a5! (passed pawns must be pushed!) 59 ♖xd6+ (not 59 ♖f6? a4 and Black wins!) 59...♙xd5 60 ♖xb7 a4 61 ♖d2 ♙c4 62 ♖d6+ ♙c5 with a draw.

59 ♙d4!

After this White's king and knight dominate the board. White exploits the fact that after 59...♗xe4 60 ♙xe4 a5 61 h5 he queens first and covers the crucial a1-square in the process.

59...♙b6 60 ♖xd6 ♙c7 61 ♖e8+ ♘d8 62 ♖f6 ♗c2 63 h5 ♙e7 64 ♙e5 ♙f7 65 d6 ♗a4 66 ♙f5! ♖g7 67 ♖g5 ♙f7 68 d7 ♙e7 (D)



69 ♙f4!

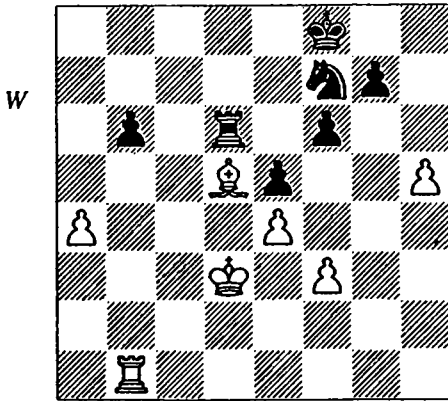
On principle bishops should be preferable to knights with pawns on alternate wings, but with this powerful move White prepares to cut off the bishop by 70 h6 ♗c2 71 ♖e4! and the h-pawn queens.

69...♗c2 70 ♖e4 ♗b3 71 h6 ♗g8 72 ♖f6!
1-0

King Activity

The former World Champion Mikhail Botvinnik was one of the greatest players in chess history, and he also understood the principle of *king activity* better than perhaps any other player. Not only in his games but also in commentary and training did Botvinnik stress the importance of this principle. One of Botvinnik's star pupils was Garry Kasparov, who trained under the 'Patriarch' (as Botvinnik was known) and later with him in the Botvinnik-Kasparov school.

Undoubtedly Kasparov was a gifted student, as can be seen in the following example:



Kasparov – Beliavsky
USSR Ch (Frunze) 1981

Material is equal, but Black has some problems with his b6-pawn. And then there is the difference in the activity of the kings...

48 ♖c4! ♘g5 49 ♜b3 ♕e7 50 ♜b5 f5!

The best chance. Black has to generate counterplay before his b6-pawn is lost.

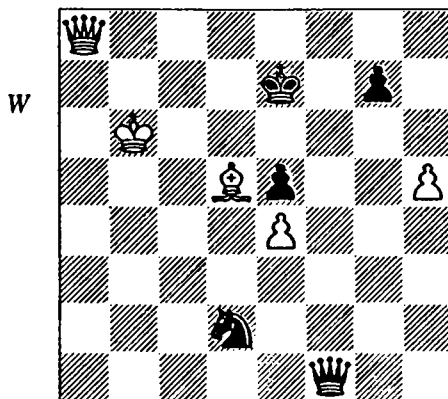
51 ♜a6 f4 52 ♜b7!

Winning a crucial tempo before taking on b6. After the direct 52 ♜xb6 Black has 52...♘xf3, and the white king is unfortunately placed in front of the a-pawn.

52...♜h6 53 ♜xb6 ♜xb6+ 54 ♜xb6 ♘xf3 55 a5 ♘d2

Black would prefer to centralize his knight by 55...♘d4, but that loses to 56 a6 f3 57 a7 f2 58 ♙c4. Black must control the c4-square, but on d2 the knight is far from the action after both players queen.

56 a6 f3 57 a7 f2 58 a8 ♖ f1 ♖ (D)



59 ♜c7!

The active king takes the stage again! Suddenly Black is faced with mating threats. Now he would really have liked to have his knight on a more active square.

59...♖c1+ 60 ♙c6! ♘xe4

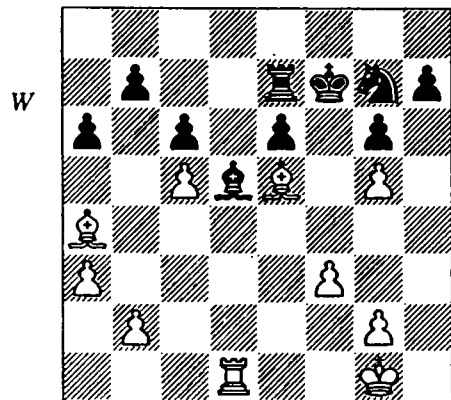
The knight arrives too late.

61 ♖e8+ ♜f6 62 ♖g6+ ♕e7 63 ♖xg7+ ♕e6 64 ♖g4+ ♜f7 65 ♖g6+!

Accuracy is required until the end. After the impulsive 65 ♖xe4 Black has 65...♖g5, after which Black may still hope to reach a drawn queen and bishop vs queen ending.

65...♜f8 66 h6! 1-0

The principle of the active king is closely connected to another key endgame principle – that of control over squares. In order to be an asset, the king must have access to squares.



Kosashvili – Psakhis
Haifa 1995

White has the two bishops, the better pawn-structure and more space. But he needs to step up the pressure, and for that he needs to include the king. So the king heads for b6, where it exhibits maximum activity and pressure.

34 ♜f2 ♜g8 35 ♙c2 ♜f7 36 ♜d4 ♘f5 37 ♜d2 ♜d7 38 g4 ♘g7 39 ♜e3 ♜f7 40 f4 ♜f8 41 ♙d1 ♘e8 42 ♜d4 ♜d7 43 ♜c3! ♜e7 44 ♜b4 ♜d8 45 ♜a5 ♘c7 46 ♜b6 ♜c8 47 a4!

Larsen once formulated an instructive principle for this kind of position: “When the king has gone through the door, the door must be shut after him!” In this way, potential counterplay is minimized. However, here White does not really need to ‘close the door’, but the black knight should be kept from b5.

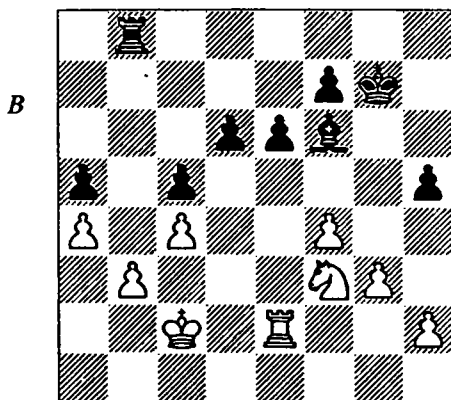
47...♜f7 48 ♙c2 ♙f3 49 ♙xc7!

An instructive example of the principle of transformation of advantages. White exchanges his powerful bishop for the poor knight in order to make the decisive f5 advance.

49...♖xc7 50 f5 ♔xg4

Not 50...gxf5 51 gxf5 exf5? 52 ♔xf5+ ♖b8 53 ♖d8+ and mate. Here we see one more advantage of the active king: mating threats! We saw this theme in Kasparov-Beliavsky above as well. Mating threats play a surprisingly large role in many endgames, and we shall return to this important principle later.

51 f6! ♖f7 52 ♖d6 e5 53 ♔b3 ♖f8 54 ♔e6+ ♔xe6 55 ♖xe6 ♔d8 56 ♖xb7 1-0



Mazzoni – Larsen
Le Havre 1966

I have included this fragment from Bent Larsen because he is a great connoisseur of king activity in the endgame. This game also shows how a king-march can inject life into a somewhat dull position.

37...♔g6! 38 ♖d2 ♔e7 39 ♖e2 ♔f5! 40 ♖d2 h4 41 ♖f1 ♔g4!

Mission accomplished. Within a few moves the white position has become highly critical.

42 ♖e3 ♔f6 43 ♔d2 ♔d4 44 ♖d3 hxg3 45 hxg3 ♖h8!

And now it is plain lost. Black penetrates.

46 ♔e2 ♖h1 47 ♖e3+ ♔xg3!

The discovered check is not dangerous.

48 ♖f5+ ♔xf4 49 ♖xd6 ♖h2+ 50 ♔d1 f5 51 ♖b7 e5 52 ♖xa5 e4 53 ♖d2 ♖h1+ 54 ♔e2 ♔c3 0-1

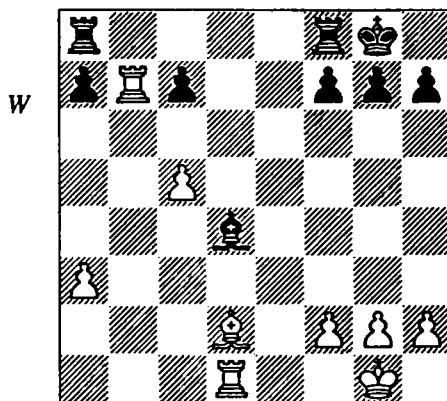
The king is an important piece in the endgame. As we shall see when coming to the last

principle, the king also plays a key role in initiating mating threats in the endgame. But first we shall look at the principle of rook activity – especially important in rook endgames.

Rook Activity

Rook endgames are the most common ones. Still, playing such endgames is far from trivial. The range of rook endgames fills the entire span from strategic rook endings with many pieces on the board to purely technical ones with only one pawn left, but still difficult decisions to make.

However, one principle guides almost all rook endgames: that of *rook activity*. It is rarely correct to play passively in the rook endgame; here maximization of the rook's activity should be the top priority.



Leko – Adams
San Luis Wch 2005

Black almost seems out of the woods, as 26 ♖xc7 ♖fd8! gives Black serious counterplay due to the pin on the d-file; e.g., 27 ♔e3 ♔xc5! 28 ♖xd8+ ♖xd8 with a likely draw. But White has better: he can enter a double-rook endgame where the greater activity of his rooks secures him a significant advantage.

26 ♔e3! ♔xe3 27 fxex3 c6 28 ♖d6!

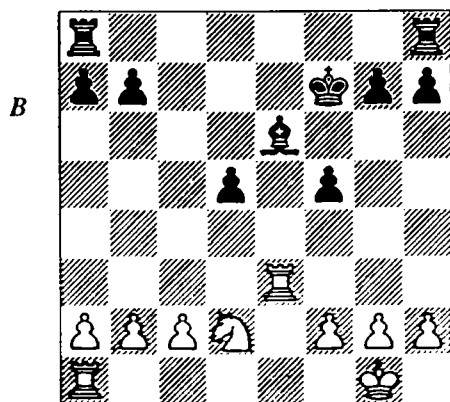
Compare the activity of the rooks: White's are clearly more active, and it is unlikely that passive defence will save Black. Accordingly Adams goes for activity as well, but it turns out to be too little too late.

28...♖ae8 29 ♔f2 ♖e5 30 ♖xc6 ♖fe8 31 ♖cc7! ♖xe3 32 ♖xf7 ♖e2+ 33 ♔g3 ♖8e3+ 34 ♖f3 ♖xf3+ 35 ♔xf3 ♖c2 36 ♖c7 h5

With 36...♖c3+ 37 ♔e4 ♜xa3 Black could restore material equality, but after 38 c6 the result would not be in doubt – compare the activity levels of the kings and rooks!

37 c6 ♔h7 38 h3 ♔h6 39 ♔e4 ♔g6 1-0

Before the Olympiad in Istanbul in 2000, the famous Russian trainer Mark Dvoretsky was in Denmark, having training sessions with a number of Danish grandmasters. One of the things we looked at were rook endings, and Dvoretsky repeatedly emphasized the need for “activity of rook”! Often activity equals material in the rook ending, and I exploited this fact in a game at the subsequent Olympiad.



Psakhis – L.B. Hansen
Istanbul OL 2000

Black faces a critical choice. Given a move or two (e.g. c3 and ♔f3-d4), White will have a safe positional advantage and Black will face an uphill struggle. But there is an alternative. After a long think I went for a forcing line where White wins a pawn but Black reaches an endgame with an active rook as compensation. I judged that this would be enough to draw.

18...d4! 19 ♞e2 ♙d5

Necessary to prevent ♔f3, but now White wins the f5-pawn.

20 ♞e5 ♞hd8 21 ♞xf5+ ♔g8 22 ♞f4

If White wants to avoid the rook endgame with the active black rook he must look for alternatives here, but Black was threatening ...♞ac8 and ...♙f7-g6 with counterplay against c2.

22...♞ac8 23 ♞xd4 ♙xg2! 24 ♞xd8+ ♞xd8 25 ♔xg2 ♞xd2 26 ♞c1 ♔f7

This is the position I had envisaged at move 18. The active rook and the fact that White’s

f- and h-pawns are isolated give Black very realistic drawing chances.

27 ♔f3 ♔f6 28 a4 ♞d5!

On its fourth rank, the black rook can achieve maximum activity in the present situation. From here all White’s pawns can be attacked from the front, and the white king has no good place to hide.

29 ♞e1 ♞f5+ 30 ♔g2 ♞g5+ 31 ♔h1 ♞c5 32 ♞e2 ♞c4! 33 b3 ♞c3

The draw is secured. It is impossible for White to dislodge the rook from its active position.

34 ♔g2 g5 35 ♞d2 ♔e6 36 h3 h5 37 ♔h2 h4 38 ♔g2 b6 39 ♔h2 a5 40 ♔g2 ♔e5 41 ♔h2 1/2-1/2

We shall return to rook endgames in Chapter 4, but for now it suffices to say that the guiding principle in rook endgames is the quest for activating the rook. But the principle applies in other endgames as well, as we shall see.

Initiative and Attack in the Endgame

Even in the endgame the fight for the initiative can be fierce, and it is even possible to initiate attacks. Going for mate is actually a surprisingly common theme in endgames, as we shall see in the next (and last) principle and throughout the book.

Here we shall look at a few examples of how the fight for the initiative may be carried from the middlegame and into the endgame – even at the expense of material. A good example from world championship level is this one (*see diagram on following page*):

In a sharp Sicilian the queens have just come off, but the tactics are not over yet. Black’s position looks highly dangerous, but with a few active moves – no holds barred – the (at the time) FIDE World Champion grabs the initiative and secures a draw a rook and piece(!) down.

30...fxe6!

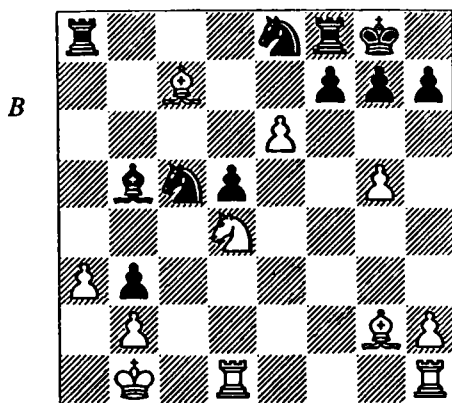
A piece is sacrificed...

31 ♔xb5 ♔xc7 32 ♔xc7 ♞f2!

And now a rook!

33 ♔xa8 ♔a4!

But the combined force of rook, knight and pawn (Kasparov has repeatedly stressed that

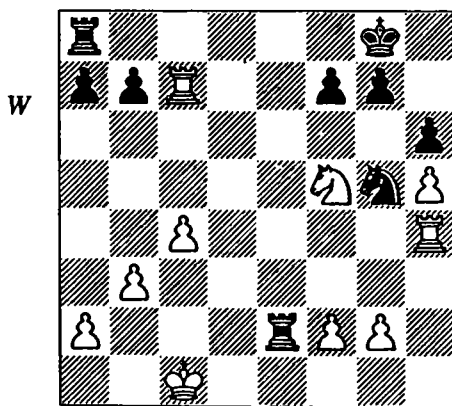


Svidler – Kasimdzhanov
San Luis Wch 2005

pawns should also be counted as part of the attacking force – this is a good case in point) is enough to draw. White cannot escape the perpetual by 34... ♖xb2+ 35 ♔a1 ♖a2+.

34 ♖d3 ½-½

When following this game live on the Internet, I was reminded of an old game of mine, where I also had to sacrifice material – albeit not the amount that Kasimdzhanov did – to construct a drawing mechanism.



Ernst – L.B. Hansen
Haninge 1992

White is a pawn up, but Black has just penetrated to the 7th rank and can hope for counterplay against White's king and pawns.

26 f4

This leads to a draw by force through a rook sacrifice setting up a well-known drawing mechanism. If White wanted to play for a win, he had to go for 26 ♖xb7, although Black is not without counterplay after 26... ♖xf2 27 ♔d6 ♔e6!

with the threat of 28... ♔c5 (28 b4 a5). The position would then remain sharp and double-edged. Now, on the other hand, the smoke clears.

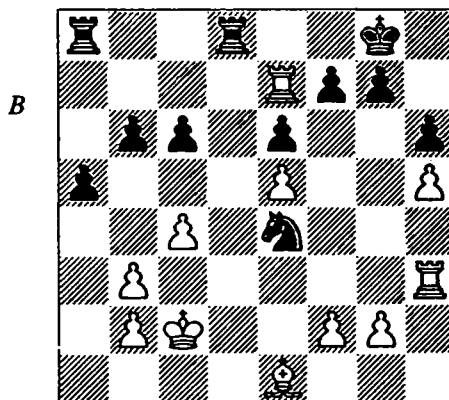
26... ♔e4 27 ♖g4 ♖d8!

The point – Black sets everything up for a draw.

28 ♖xg7+ ♔h8 29 ♖xf7 ♖d1+! ½-½

Now it is a draw after 30 ♔xd1 ♔c3+ 31 ♔c1 ♔xa2+ 32 ♔b1 ♔c3+ 33 ♔c1 (not 33 ♔a1?? ♖a2#) 33... ♔a2+.

A similar mechanism – also coming out of a Caro-Kann – was seen in another recent game. Let us conclude this section with Gyimesi's ingenious concept.



Almasi – Gyimesi
Hungarian Ch (Budapest) 2004

White threatens 27 ♖f3, and passive defence would allow White some initiative with the strong rook on e7 and the option of attacking the b6-pawn with the bishop. But with accurate calculations Gyimesi repels the attack and forces White to accept a draw – while setting a clever trap.

26... ♔a4! 27 ♖f3 a3! 28 ♖xf7 a2 29 ♖xg7+ ♔h8 30 ♖h7+ ♔g8 31 ♖eg7+ ♔f8 32 ♖a7?? (D)

White falls for it! He should accept a draw by perpetual with 32 ♖f7+.

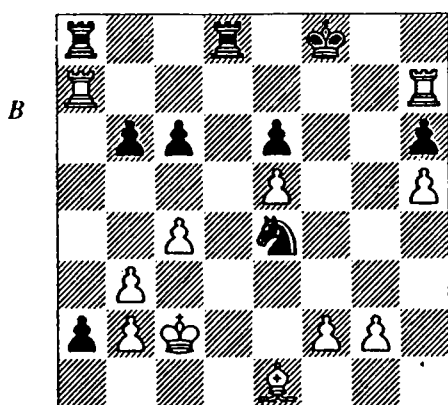
32... a1♔+!

The refutation! This rare under-promotion decides the game.

33 ♔c1

33 ♔b1? ♖d1+.

33... ♔xb3+ 34 ♔c2 ♔d4+ 35 ♔c1 ♖xa7 36 ♖xa7 ♔c5



55 ♖xg6+ ♔h4 56 ♖g3+ ♔h5 57 ♖h3+ ♔g5 58 ♖f5+ ♔h4 59 ♖f4+ ♔h5 60 ♔g3! 1-0

A quiet but devastating move! Black is unavoidably mated. The threat is 61 ♖h4#, and 60...f5 61 ♖xf5+ ♔h6 62 ♖h7+ ♔g5 63 ♖h4# does not help.

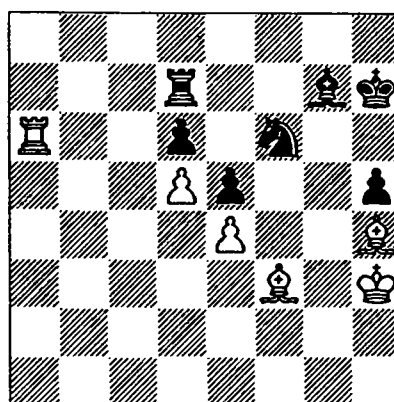
As can be seen from this example, the king is often an active piece in weaving a mating-net. Here is another example, from one of my own games:

The smoke has cleared and Black remains material to the good.

37 ♖b4 ♔g8 38 ♔b1 ♠f8 39 f3 ♠f5 40 ♗a8+ ♔f7 41 ♠b8 ♠xh5 42 ♔a2 ♠h1 43 b3 ♠h2 0-1

Mate and Stalemate in the Endgame

Even with the limited amount of pieces left on the board in the endgame, mating threats play a surprisingly large role in this phase of the game – a fact that is often underestimated. Even a force that is limited in number may be formidable if the pieces are coordinated in the pursuit of the enemy king.



L.B. Hansen – Chorfi
Novi Sad OL 1990

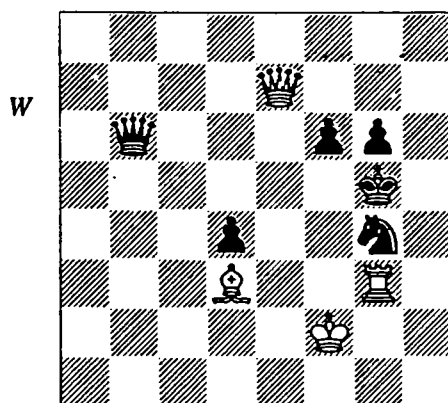
White must give up the bishop-pair to regain the pawn, but he still maintains practical winning chances because of the activity of the king, despite the limited material and the opposite-coloured bishops. In fact, the presence of opposite-coloured bishops increases White's winning chances here, as the black bishop cannot easily participate in the defence. And there is a psychological effect here as well: it is easy to underestimate the dangers in such a simple position.

50 ♖xf6 ♖xf6 51 ♖xh5 ♖g5 52 ♔g4 ♖e3 53 ♔f5 ♠d8?

Very passive, and after this it is probably impossible for Black to save himself, as his pieces lack coordination. Black should have played the direct 53...♖c5 or 53...♠g7 with the idea 54 ♠xd6? ♠g5+. In both cases Black should be able to draw, even if he must still overcome some difficulties.

54 ♔f6! ♖c5 55 ♠a2! ♖e3 56 ♖g6+ ♔g8 57 ♖f7+ ♔f8 58 ♠g2! 1-0

Mate is inevitable.

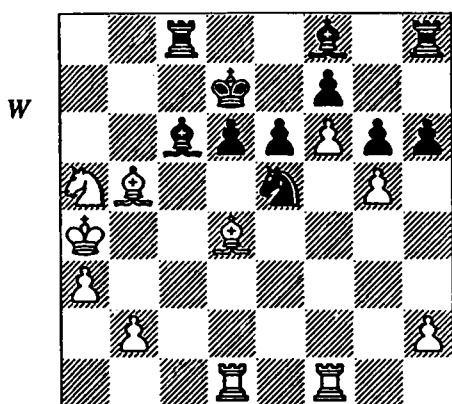


Belivsky – Speelman
Bundesliga 2001/2

White has a rook for three pawns, and this should be enough to win on its own, but Black may still have some chances to survive due to the presence of the tricky knight. That is – if it were not for a forced mate:

53 ♠xg4+! ♔xg4 54 ♖e4+ ♔g5 54...♔h3 55 ♖f1+.

In these two examples, material was limited. However, even with more pieces on the board, the king might be essential in weaving a mating-net. In the following high-class game, the players were even playing blindfold, which makes the creative endeavour even more impressive.



Kramnik – Topalov
Monaco (blindfold) 2003

I suspect a lot of players would choose 32 dxc6 here (especially if playing blindfold), hoping to exploit the nasty pin after 32... dxc6 . However, with a precisely calculated sequence Kramnik shows that a raid with the king into the enemy position almost leads to mate by force.

32 e5! xb5+ 33 xb5 c5+ 34 b6!
 xe5 35 c1!

The first point. After 35... hxg5 36 c7+ e8 37 c6! Black has no defence against 38 c8+ d7 39 d8\# . Notice how this mating picture is strikingly similar to the one from the game Kramnik-Leko, Brissago Wch (14) 2004 (shown above in the section on the principle of two weaknesses).

35... xa5 36 c7+!

Brilliant! After the obvious 36 xa5 hxg5 Black may still have some hope due to his strong central pawns.

36... d8 37 fc1! c5

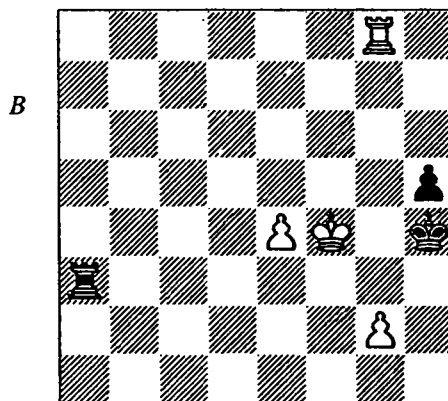
Or 37... a8 38 b7! a4 39 c8+ d7 40 c7\# . Enjoy the coordination of the limited white army and notice the impact of the principle of king activity!

38 c1xc5 dxc5 39 c6! 1-0

Another calm and devastating king move to conclude the game – reminiscent of the game

Belavsky-Speelman from above. Black is defenceless against the threat of 40 a7 and 41 a8\# .

Stalemate ideas can also influence endgame positions. While less frequent than mating threats, stalemate may sometimes be the last resort in a difficult positions. The moral is that when material is so limited that you can only move one or at most two pieces, you should watch out for stalemate possibilities. One of these helped Werder Bremen pull off a surprise victory in the German team championship of 2004/5 after a playoff with Köln Porz.



Belavsky – Babula
Bundesliga (playoff) 2004/5

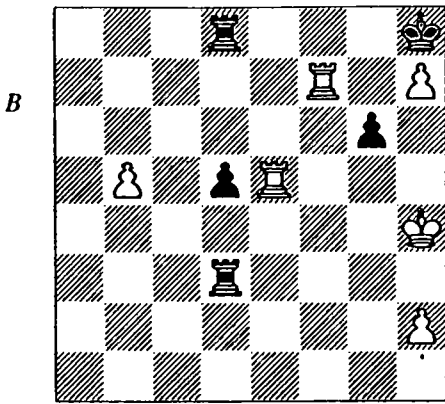
With good positional play Belavsky has exerted pressure throughout, but Babula refused to give up. But now things look bleak for Black – or do they? No, a stalemate trick secures the draw!

57... g3! 58 h8 hxg2 59 e5 f2+ 60 e3
 f1 61 g8 h3 62 e4 h4 63 e6 h2 64 g4
 h3 65 e5 e1+ 66 f5 f1+ 67 f4 e1
1/2-1/2

A nice save, but it should be noted that stalemate possibilities don't arise out of thin air – the defender needs to create them.

When your king cannot move, start looking for stalemates (*see diagram on following page*). After a long game, Kramnik has managed to win a pawn, but the resilient Hungarian practically forces a draw by exploiting a stalemate trick.

47... b3! 48 b7 d4! 49 g5 d3 50 xg6
 xb5!



Kramnik – Leko
Tilburg 1997

Not 50...d2? 51 ♖d5! and White wins.
51 ♖bxb5 d2 52 ♖bd5 d1 ♖ 53 ♖xd1 ♖d6+!
54 ♖xd6 1/2-1/2

However, when the opponent’s king is stalemated and he is trying to sacrifice his remaining piece, remember to look for ways to avoid the stalemate before accepting the draw. Sometimes the stalemate can be avoided with clever manoeuvres. The following game is a case in point:

was 52...♔g8, but after 53 ♔xa4 or 53 ♖xh6 White wins easily.

53 ♖c8!

Stronger than 53 ♖c7+ ♔g8 54 ♖g7+ ♔h8, as White no longer has a material-winning discovered check.

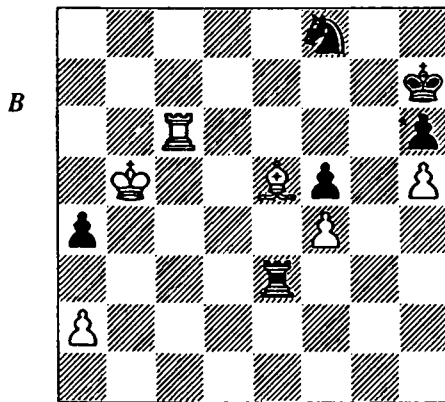
53...a3!?

Setting up the stalemate, but White has seen that he can avoid the draw.

54 ♖xf8 ♖b4+ 55 ♔c6! ♖b6+ 56 ♔d5 ♖b5+ 57 ♔e6! 1-0

The king has escaped! After 57...♖b6+ (also after 57...♖xe5+ 58 ♔xe5 there is no stalemate), 58 ♖d6 wins, as it simultaneously covers the check and releases the black king from imprisonment.

With few pieces on the board, you should always be aware of stalemate possibilities – from both sides of the board. Even such a great end-game player as Vasily Smyslov once fell for a stalemate trick. Let us conclude this chapter and the presentation of the 15 principles guiding strategic endgame play with a look at this famous and rare slip.

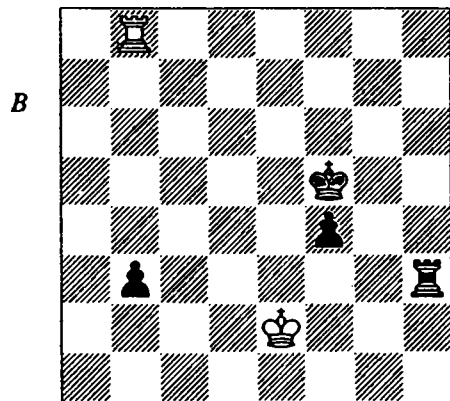


Ibragimov – Elianov
Beersheba Wcht 2005

White has the more active king, a powerful bishop against Black’s passive knight and with his last move 52 h5, he is creating mating threats against Black’s king. Things look grim for Black, and he seeks salvation by setting up a stalemate. But it doesn’t work.

52...♗e4

White was threatening 53 ♖c7+ ♔g8 54 ♖g7+ ♔h8 55 ♖g3+ and wins. The alternative



O. Bernstein – Smyslov
Groningen 1946

With two extra pawns Smyslov could win easily by, for instance, 59...♔e4 60 ♖b4+ ♔d5! 61 ♖xf4 ♖h1! 62 ♖b4 b2! 63 ♖xb2 ♖h2+ followed by 64...♖xb2 – now there is no stalemate. But Smyslov tried to force the win by the impatient...

59...b2?? 60 ♖xb2!

...only to realize too late that 60...♖h2+ 61 ♔f3! ♖xb2 is stalemate!

60...♔g4 61 ♔f1 1/2-1/2

2 The Role of Pawns in the Endgame

Introduction

The phrase “pawns are the soul of chess” was coined by Philidor more than 200 years ago. How right he was! As will be clear when studying the various principles outlined in this book, the pawn-structure normally directly or indirectly impacts the evaluation of the position on the board. Only rarely is a game decided without the influence of the pawns.

The reason for this is of course the relative immobility of the pawns. Contrary to the pieces, the pawns move only rarely and the value of pawn moves is often huge and influences the direction of the game significantly. A change in the pawn-structure frequently also changes the position as such.

A common rule of thumb from trainers is “pawns cannot move backwards”. Through this phrase, the trainer implicitly wishes to teach the students the importance of pawn-structure decisions. When a piece lands on an unfortunate square, this can often be corrected during the subsequent moves. It is what Steinitz would term a *temporary* (dis)advantage. But with pawns the consequences of mistakes are more severe. Deficiencies in the pawn-structure are often difficult to repair in the short term and thus create the basis of a long-term, *sustainable* (dis)advantage.

In this chapter we shall investigate the impact of pawns on endgame decisions and evaluations by looking at two pawn-related themes:

- Pawn-structure
- Pawn endings

Pawn-Structure

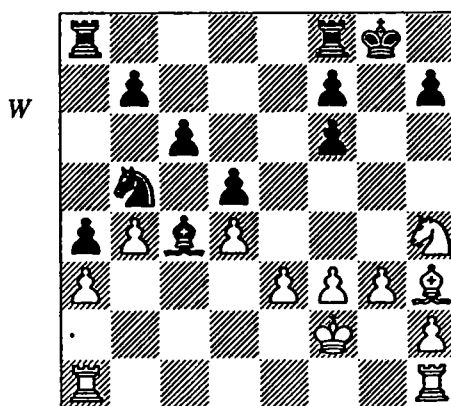
In Chapter 1, we briefly reviewed the importance of the pawn-structure, which is one of the fundamental principles of endgame play. We

considered three characteristics of the pawn-structure:

- If the pawn-structure is not healthy and connected, this leads to *weak pawns*, which the opponent can attack.
- A damaged pawn-structure leads to *weak squares*, which can be occupied by the opponent’s pieces (especially knights).
All pawns are potential *passed pawns*, whose greatest desire is to be promoted to pieces!

In this section, we shall return to each of these themes.

Pawns are often weak if they are not part of a chain, or if they are stranded behind or far ahead of the others. Pawns are social beings that need to operate in groups. They should not be left on their own. In the endgame, such lonely pawns are potential targets for the skilled opponent. According to Nimzowitsch, such pawns should be *restrained*, *blockaded* and *destroyed*.



Carlsen – Azmaiparashvili
Khanty Mansiisk WCup 2005

This is a typical endgame position in which the pawn-structure is the defining factor. White is better because of Black’s fractured pawn-structure (more precisely the doubled f-pawns). Black does have a strong knight on b5 that ties

the white rook to a3, but this is of a *temporary* nature (e.g. White could bring his king to b2 to free the rook, or he might some time in the future be able to attack the knight with the bishop), while the damage to the pawn-structure is *lasting*. But how should White proceed? A number of players would probably choose the natural 23 Qf5 (blockading the pawns), but it is not too worrying in itself to have the pawns blockaded. The pawns have already been restricted, so Magnus instead goes for the *destroy* option – he transfers the knight to h5, after which it is difficult for Black to cover f6.

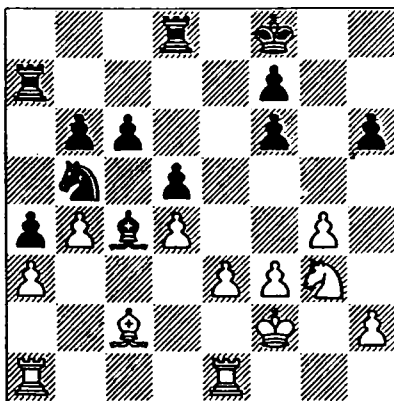
23 Qg2! Kfd8 24 Qf4 Qf8 25 Rf5!

Blocking the pawn while gaining a tempo by hitting h7.

25... h6 26 Qh5 Qe7 27 g4!

Magnus plays this phase of the game very forcefully. Black has succeeded in covering f6, but in the meantime another target has emerged on h6, so Magnus prepares the transfer of the knight back to f5. Transformation of advantages!

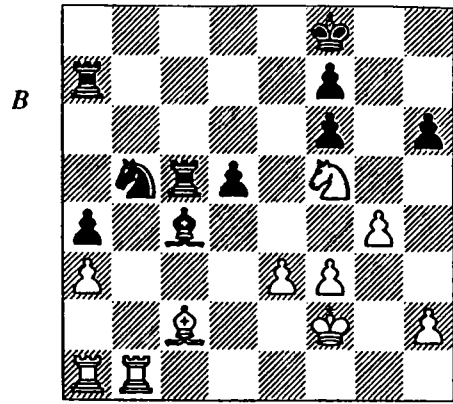
27... b6 28 Khe1 Ka7 29 Qg3 Qf8 30 Rc2! (D)



Hitting a4 while preparing 31 Qf5 . Black is in deep trouble due to his dismal pawn-structure, hence Azmaiparashvili looks for counterplay:

30... c5 31 bxc5 bxc5 32 dxc5 Kc8 33 Qf5 Kxc5 34 Kb1! (D)

Very mature play by the young Norwegian. There is no need to allow Black any counterplay with the impatient 34 Qxh6 d4!. White's advantage is sustainable, so there is no need to hurry. Furthermore, Black's 30th move has opened a path towards another juicy target: the a4-pawn.

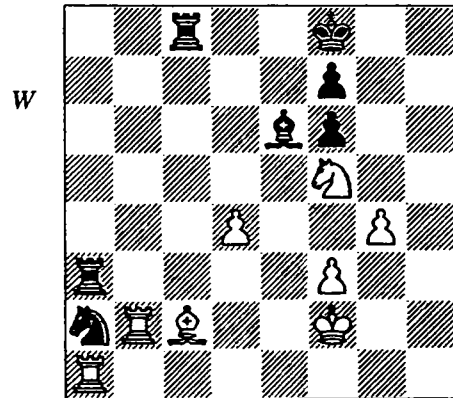


Now White has the idea of 35 Kb4 .

34... Kc8 35 Kb4! d4

Again looking for counterplay, but with Black's passive pieces and scattered pawns this is doomed to fail. However, after 35... Qc3 White can simply take the pawn with 36 Qxh6 , while continuing his positional squeeze.

36 exd4 Rc6 37 Rxa4 Qc3 38 Rc2 h5 39 h3 hxg4 40 hxg4 Qa2 41 Kb2 Kxa3 (D)



42 Kb1!

Black has managed to cut his losses to a mere pawn, but in order to do so he had to open the h-file, which now proves fatal.

42... Rxf5 43 Rxf5 Kca8 44 Kb7!

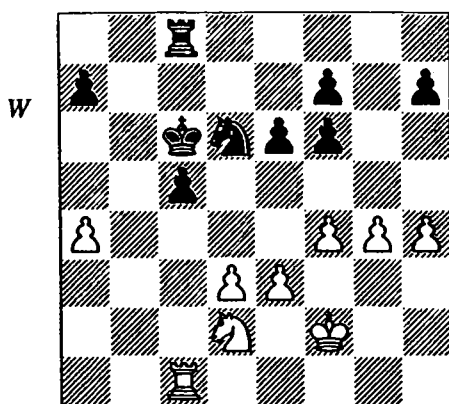
"7th rank above all!", Nimzowitsch said 80 years ago. Black cannot cover f7. Notice how helpless Black is with his rigid doubled pawns!

44... Qc3 45 Kh8+ Qg7 46 Kh7+ Qg8 47 Kxf7 Ka2+ 48 Qe3 Ke8+ 49 Qd3 Qd1 50 Kg7+ Qh8 51 Kh7+ Qg8 52 Khg7+ Qh8 53 Kh7+ Qg8 54 d5!

Decisively threatening 55 Rc6+ .

54... Ke3+ 55 Qd4 1-0

In the following diagram, we again see the doubled f-pawns as a defect in Black's position.



Nikolić – Akopian
Moscow 1990

However, here the situation is different, since the f-pawns are not isolated and are not easy for White to attack. So instead Nikolić *transfers* his attention to another weak pawn in Black's camp: the h7-pawn, which indeed is isolated and weak.

33 g5! f5

33...fxg5 34 hxg5 would leave the h-pawn doomed.

34 ♖b1!

Taking control of the only open file on the board.

34...♔d5 35 h5!

In accordance with Nimzowitsch's principle, the h-pawn has first been *restrained*, and now White intends to *blockade* it. The only remaining task would then be to find a way to *destroy* it. That is still not easy, but Black commits a typical mistake when under pressure: losing patience and making unnecessary concessions. This is why you should not hurry when you have a stable advantage: it is psychologically difficult for the defender to stay put, and he may unintentionally weaken his own position in the pursuit of activity.

35...e5? 36 fxe5 ♕xe5 37 ♕g3! ♕e6 38 ♕f4

White has been allowed to activate his king for free, and to boot the king now has direct access to the front f-pawn.

38...♞c6 39 ♘b3!

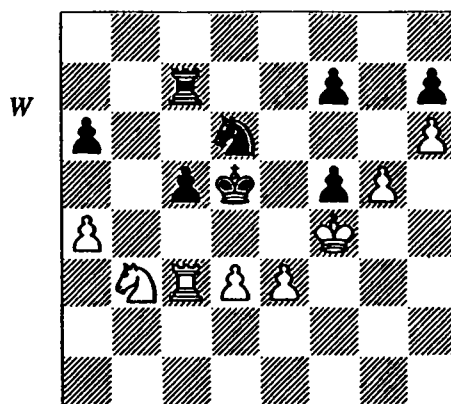
Hitting c5 and thereby preventing the reply 39...♞a6.

39...♔d5 40 ♞c1 ♞c8 41 h6!

Finally blocking the h-pawn.

41...a6 42 ♞c3 ♞c7 (D)

43 ♘a5!



Planning to drive the black knight away from d6, leaving f5 vulnerable.

43...♕e6 44 ♘c4 ♘c8

Very passive, but the rook ending arising after 44...♘xc4 45 ♞xc4 is plain lost. White threatens 46 d4, and 45...♔d5 allows 46 ♕xf5.

45 ♞b3 ♘e7 46 ♕f3 ♘d5 47 ♞b8

The decisive penetration.

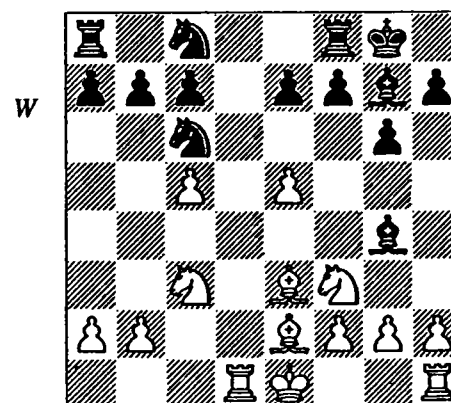
47...♘b4 48 ♕e2 ♞d7 49 ♞b6+!

Even stronger than 49 ♞h8. Black is deprived of any counterplay.

49...♕e7 50 ♘e5 ♞c7 51 ♞f6!

Finally White wins material. The doubled f-pawns drop off.

51...♕e8 52 ♞xf5 ♘d5 53 ♕d2 ♞b7 54 ♘xf7! ♞b2+ 55 ♕c1 1-0



Karpov – Kasparov
London/Leningrad Wch (17) 1986

As might be recognized, the position arose from a Grünfeld Defence. In fact, it is still opening theory, underlining the fact that even opening decisions impact the endgame. Karpov has had this position three times. In the 15th match game he didn't achieve much after 14

♟b5 ♞b8 15 ♟xc7 e6 16 ♟b5 ♟8e7 17 ♞d2 b6 18 cxb6 axb6 19 ♟g5 ♟f5, and the game was quickly drawn. For this game he had prepared a novelty – a pawn sacrifice based on deficiencies in Black’s position in combination with a crippled knight on c8. In this game it works wonderfully, but in a later game Timman managed to draw as Black against Karpov.

14 h3! ♟xf3 15 ♟xf3 ♟xe5 16 ♟xc6 bxc6 17 ♟d4!

The first point. After 17...♟xd4 18 ♞xd4 White penetrates on d7 with advantage. Black must abandon the long diagonal.

17...♟f4 18 0-0

The critical position. White has sacrificed a pawn but he has two trumps: the black pawn-structure on the queenside is a mess, and the knight on c8 is a sorry sight – a consequence of the pawn-structure. Kasparov now embarks on an impatient advance of his a-pawn, which simply ends up weak. Interestingly, this is not the only example of this happening in the young Kasparov’s games. Game 5 of the same match also went to Karpov after an unsuccessful raid by Kasparov’s a-pawn, which was eventually annihilated (see later).

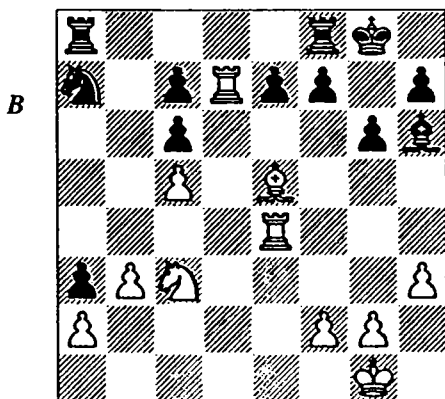
18...a5?!

The correct defence for Black was shown by Timman in a game against Karpov in Tilburg later the same year: 18...e5! 19 ♟e3 ♟xe3 20 fxe3 ♟e7! (the knight escapes!) 21 ♞d7 ♟f5 22 ♞xc7 ♞fc8! 23 ♞d7 ♞d8, and Black had enough counterplay to draw.

19 ♞fe1 a4 20 ♞e4!

Side-tracking the bishop and targeting a4.

20...♟h6 21 ♟e5! a3 22 b3 ♟a7 23 ♞d7 (D)



The triumph of White’s strategy! The black pawns fall into White’s lap like ripe fruit.

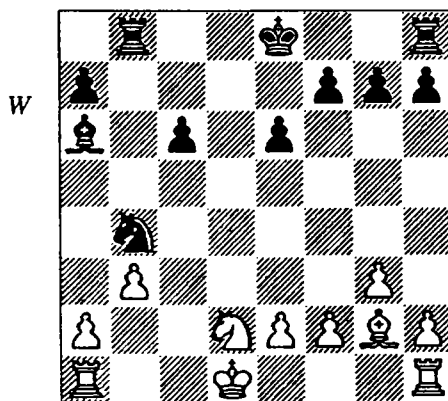
23...♟c1 24 ♞xc7 ♟b2 25 ♟a4 ♟b5

There goes another one, but the threat was 26 ♟b6.

26 ♞xc6 ♞fd8 27 ♞b6 ♞d5 28 ♟g3 ♟c3 29 ♟xc3 ♟xc3 30 c6 ♟d4 31 ♞b7 1-0

In this game, the play moved directly from the opening into the endgame, and the pawn-structure was the defining theme. This can be seen in a number of openings, and we shall return to this theme in more detail in Chapter 6.

Often weak pawns become even weaker when they are forced forward and separated from the main force. My countryman Bent Larsen formulated the principle “isolated pawns should not be blockaded; they should be encircled!” This principle can be said to be a refinement of Nimzowitsch’s ‘restrain-blockade-destroy’ principle. In the following game Gulko exploits both these principles and wins in instructive fashion.



Gulko – Jelen
Nova Gorica 1997

White has a slight advantage due to his superior pawn-structure. Black has three pawn ‘islands’ vs White’s two. This secures White a small but lasting edge. The main target is the c-pawn. Gulko starts by *restraining* this pawn.

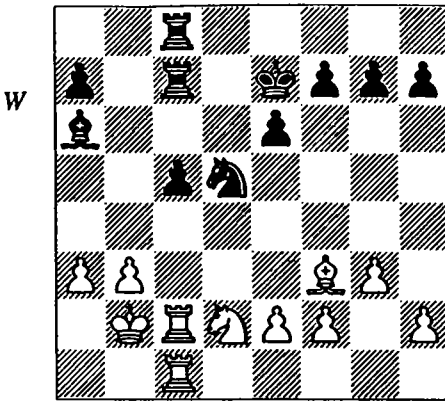
16 a3 ♟d5 17 ♞c1 ♞b6 18 ♟f3!

More precise than 18 e3, which would unnecessarily hand the black bishop a square on d3.

18...♟e7 19 ♞c5!

Blockading the pawn, although only temporarily.

19...♞c8 20 ♟c1 ♞b5 21 ♞c2 c5 22 ♟b2 ♞b7 23 ♞hc1 ♞bc7 (D)



White has successfully restrained the pawn, but Black has equally successfully managed to protect it. White can get no further down the 'Nimzowitsch' path and instead lures the pawn forward.

24 Qe4! c4 25 b4! Qb5 26 Qc3

26 Qc5 – attempting to encircle the pawn as advocated by Larsen – allows 26...a5.

26... Qc6?

A mistake which allows White to indeed encircle the pawn and eventually annihilate it. The best defence is 26... Qxc3 , although White retains a clear plus after 27 Qxc3 .

27 Qxd5!

When fighting against weak pawns in a limited area on the board, a knight is often more powerful than a bishop.

27... exd5 28 Nd2 Nd7 29 Ncd1

Restraining the next weak pawn!

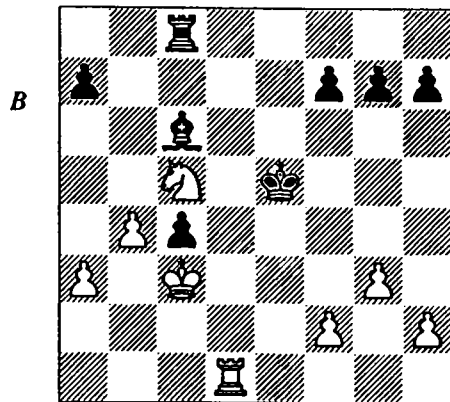
29... Qe6 30 e4!

Much better than blockading the pawn with 30 Nd4 .

30... dxe4

After 30... Ncd8 White wins by 31 exd5+ Qxd5 32 Qa4! .

31 Nxd7 Qxd7 32 Qxe4 Qc6 33 Qc5+ Qe5 34 Qc3! (D)



The c-pawn has been successfully encircled and Black cannot avoid losing a pawn. Black's attempt to cover the c-pawn leads to immediate disaster.

34... Qd5?! 35 f4+ Qd6 36 Qe4+ Qe6

36... Qc6 drops a piece to 37 b5+.

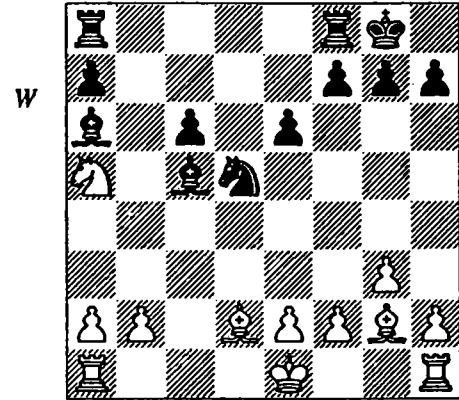
37 Qg5+ Qd6 38 Qxf7+ Qc6

38... Qe6 39 f5+ Qxf7 40 Nxd5 wins for White.

39 Qe5+ Qd6 40 Nd4! 1-0

At last the c-pawn drops – a fitting end to a nice positional performance by Gulko.

Pawn weaknesses are *lasting*, and according to Steinitz's teachings, tactics only function when you have an advantage – there is no such thing as tactics 'coming out of the blue'. Thus, you should be very careful to attempt to solve the positional problem of 'pawn weakness' by tactical means. Often such radical solutions will backfire. Here is an example where a tactical solution to a positional problem does not quite work.



Kramnik – Timman

Wijk aan Zee 1999

Timman has just castled, leaving the c-pawn *en prise* rather than covering it by, for instance, 13... Nc8 . Taking the pawn is premature for White; after 14 Qxc6? Nfc8 15 Qa5 Qd4 Black indeed has very good compensation for the pawn. But White need not take the pawn immediately:

14 Nc1

Who would imagine that this position is transformed, almost by force, into a pawn-up rook ending for White in just 12 moves?

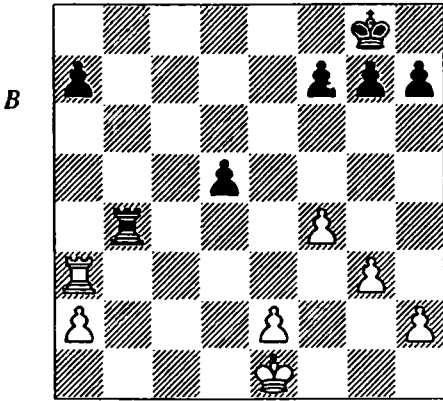
14... Qd4 15 b4! Qb5 16 Qxc6 Qb2!

Timman's point. This bishop sortie wins a tempo and by transferring the bishop to a3, Black wins back his pawn. But it is still not sufficient to equalize fully.

17 ♖c5 ♗xc6 18 ♖xc6 ♖ac8 19 ♖xc8 ♖xc8 20 ♗xd5 exd5 21 f4!

In connection with the two next moves, this is a brilliant concept that preserves White's advantage. Due to the threats of ...♗a3 and ...♖c2/c4 White could not hold on to the pawn, but the rook transfer to the third rank is strong.

21...♗a3 22 ♖f1! ♖c4 23 ♖f3! ♗xb4 24 ♗xb4 ♖xb4 25 ♖a3! (D)



Black is left with an unpleasant choice. Passive defence by 25...♖b7 26 ♖a5! ♗d7 27 ♗d2 f6 28 ♗d3 ♗f7 29 ♗d4 ♗e6 30 g4 is unlikely to hold, so Timman instead sacrifices the a-pawn for activity. Such rook endings are often tenable, but Black's problem is not just his pawn deficit, but also the fact that his king is cut off.

25...h5 26 ♖xa7 ♖b2 27 a4 ♖a2?!

Probably 27...g6 was a better chance.

28 f5!

Very strong. If Black had time for ...g6 and ...♗g7-f6, he would have good drawing chances. Such rook endings are very common in chess literature. The text-move keeps the black king in the cage, and it is very likely that the position is now won for White.

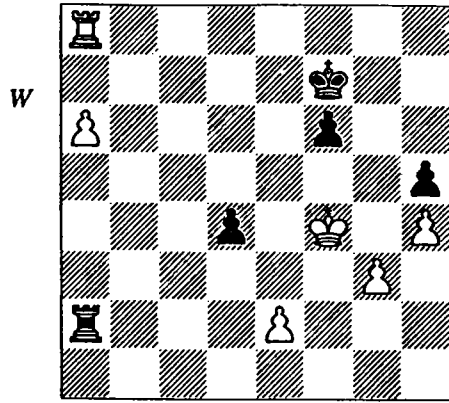
28...♖a1+ 29 ♗f2 d4 30 a5 f6 31 ♗f3 ♗h7 32 a6 ♗h6 33 h4!

Again keeping the black king locked in.

33...g6 34 fxg6 ♗xg6 35 ♖a8 ♖a2 36 ♗f4 ♗f7 (D)

37 a7!

On principle White should be careful not to push such a pawn too soon, because the king



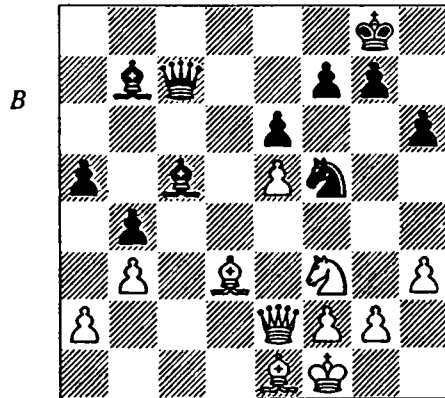
sometimes needs a hiding place in front of the pawn. But Kramnik has seen that Black ends up in zugzwang and loses another pawn.

37...♗g7 38 ♗f5 ♖a5+ 39 ♗e4 ♖a4 40 ♗d5 ♖a1

Or 40...♗h7 41 ♗c6 ♖a2 42 ♗b6 ♖b2+ 43 ♗c5 ♖a2 44 ♗xd4, and White wins.

41 ♗xd4 1-0

Since encirclement is a concept attributed to Larsen, let us also see a brief example on this theme from his hand.



Uhlmann – Larsen
Las Palmas Ct (6) 1971

It is the e5-pawn that is about to be encircled. This is a typical Meran position where White's potential attack on the kingside has not materialized, and now the e-pawn is just weak.

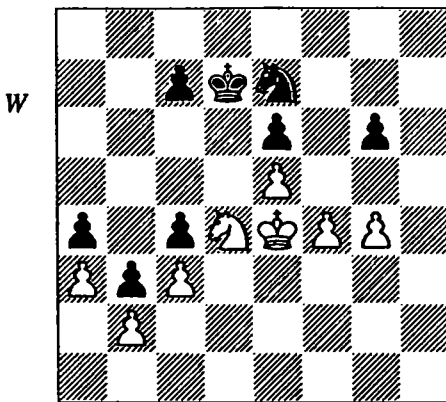
31...♗d4 32 ♗xd4 ♗xd4 33 f4?

The only way to cover the e5-pawn, but after this the black queen penetrates decisively. Presumably Uhlmann missed Larsen's cute 36th move.

33...♗c1 34 ♗d2 ♗a1 35 ♗c2 ♗c3 36 ♗b1 ♗a6! 0-1

A special kind of defect in the pawn-structure is *doubled pawns*. Why are doubled pawns a serious problem in the endgame? Basically because of three factors:

- Doubled pawns are weak in their own right – especially if they are isolated.
- They leave other pawns on their own – consider for instance doubled f-pawns: the poor h-pawn is left to its own devices.
- Doubled pawns are difficult to turn into *passed pawns*.



Carlsen – Kharlov
Warsaw Ech 2005

Here we see the problem with a doubled pawn: while White has a healthy pawn-majority on the kingside, which can be transformed into a passed pawn, Black can never make a passed pawn out of his queenside majority. This is despite the fact that material is nominally equal.

46 f5!

White temporarily sacrifices a pawn to obtain a powerful passed pawn on the e-file.

46...exf5+ 47 gxf5 c5 48 e6+ ♔e8 49 ♖e2 ♜xf5

White meets 49...gxf5+ by 50 ♔e5 and 51 ♜g3.

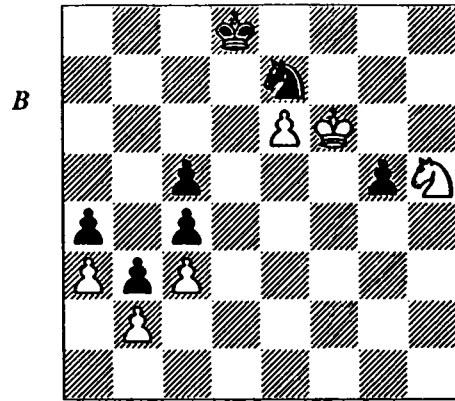
50 ♜f4 ♖e7 51 ♔e5 g5 52 ♜h5 ♜d8 53 ♜d6 ♜f5+ 54 ♔e5

There is no need for White to hurry – the advantage will not run away.

54...♖e7 55 ♜f6 (D)

White regains the pawn. Notice how useless the black pawns are!

55...♜c6 56 ♜xg5 ♔e7 57 ♜f4 ♜d6 58 ♜f6 ♖e7 59 ♜f7 ♜c6 60 ♜f6 ♖e7

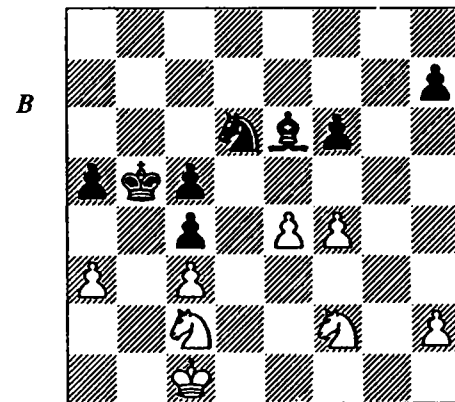


Only one question remains: how does White break the blockade on e7? The answer: triangulation and zugzwang.

61 ♜g2! ♜g8+ 62 ♔g7! ♖e7 63 ♜f7 ♜c6 64 ♜f6 ♜d4!?

A little joke at the end – but of course Magnus won't fall for 65 cxd4 c3. Other moves were just as hopeless: 64...♖e7 65 ♖e3 ♜g8+ 66 ♜g7 ♖e7 67 ♜f7 and wins, or 64...♖e5 65 ♖e3!.

65 e7 ♜d7 66 ♜f7 1-0



Glek – L.B. Hansen
Brønshøj 1995

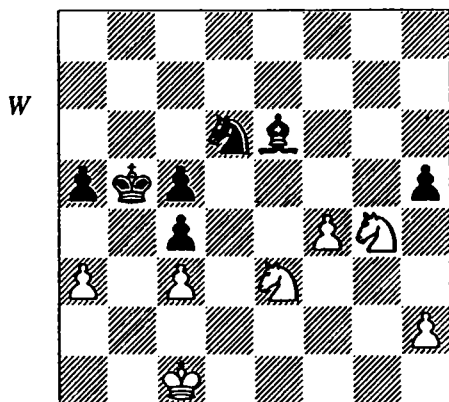
Here the situation is somewhat more complicated. As in the previous example, the black pawn-majority on the queenside is rather useless, but White must keep an eye on the threat of ...♔a4-b3, thus keeping the white king passive. This gives Black better prospects than in the previous game. But my next move is probably a mistake, which at the very least violates two endgame principles:

1) Never make such 'irreversible' pawn-structure decisions just before the time-control if you can in any way avoid it; and

2) Don't weaken your position unnecessarily on the wing where you stand worse.

Black would do best to stay put, waiting for White to show his hand.

39...f5?! 40 exf5 ♖xf5 41 ♜e3 ♜e6 42 ♜fg4 h5 (D)



43 ♜h6!

This is the move I missed. A knight on the rim is not always grim! By temporarily placing the knight out of play, White forces through the f5 advance.

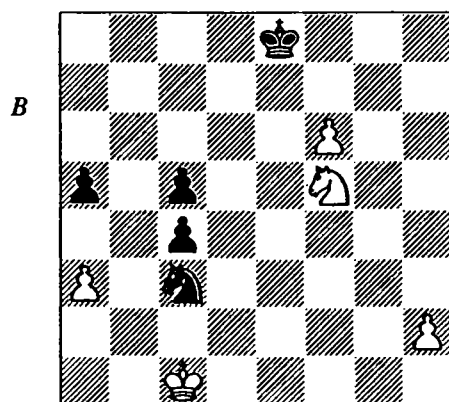
43...♖c6 44 f5 ♜c8 45 ♜g8!

Again working with tactics to bring the wayward knight back into play. The f5-pawn is untouchable due to the fork on e7.

45...♖c7 46 ♜e7 ♖b7 47 ♜7d5+ ♜xd5

Perhaps Black could try to keep his long-range bishop with 47...♖d8, although White maintains some pressure. Still, the limited number of pawns gives Black hopes for a draw.

48 ♜xd5+ ♖d8 49 f6 ♖e8 50 ♜f4 h4 51 ♜g6 ♜e4! 52 ♜xh4 ♜xc3 53 ♜f5 (D)



53...♜b5?

The losing move. After 53...♖f7 or 53...♜e4 Black could still hope to survive.

54 a4! ♜c3 55 ♜d6+ ♖d7 56 ♜xc4 ♖e6
Or 56...♜xa4 57 ♖c2 followed by 58 ♖b3, and the knight is trapped. This is the principle of domination.

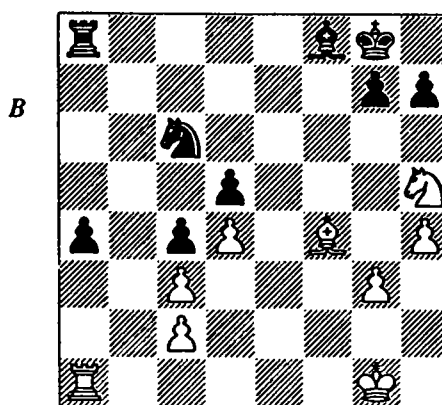
57 ♖b2 ♜d5 58 ♜xa5 ♖xf6 59 ♜c4 ♖g5 60 a5 ♜c7

60...♖h4 61 a6 ♖h3 62 a7 ♜c7 63 ♖b3 followed by ♖a4-a5-b6 wins.

61 ♖b3 ♖g4 62 ♜d2!

The last finesse. The knight returns in time to cover the h-pawn.

62...♖h3 63 ♜f1 1-0



K. Berg – L.B. Hansen
Danish League 1995/6

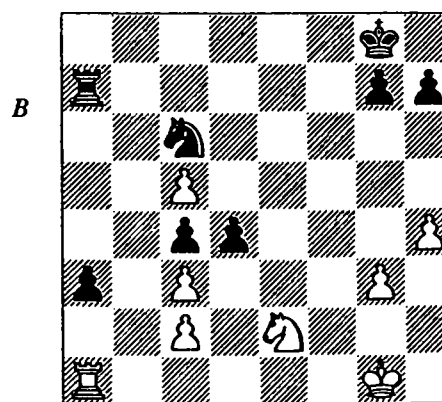
Once more we see one of the drawbacks of doubled pawns: Black has a 'free' passed pawn on the a-file.

29...a3 30 ♜c7 ♖a7 31 ♖b6 ♖a6

No need to hurry!

32 ♜c7 ♖a7 33 ♖b6 ♖b7! 34 ♜c5 ♜xc5 35 dxc5 ♖a7 36 ♜f4 d4 37 ♜e2! (D)

After 37 cxd4 ♜xd4 Black wins at once – the knight supports the promotion ambitions of the a-pawn.



37...d3!?

37...dxc3 is also fine, and perhaps more prudent. The text-move leads to an interesting rook ending.

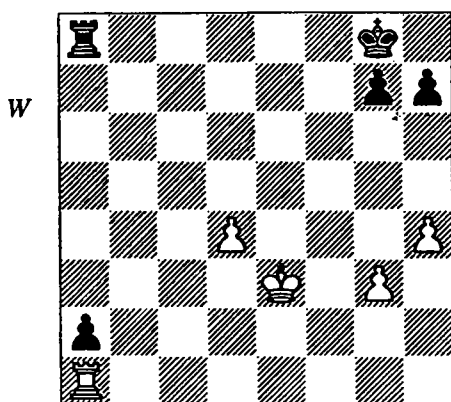
38 cxd3 cxd3 39 ♖d4 ♗xd4 40 cxd4 d2

A picturesque position! Black's threat is 41...♗e7 and 42...♗e1(+). White has only one defence:

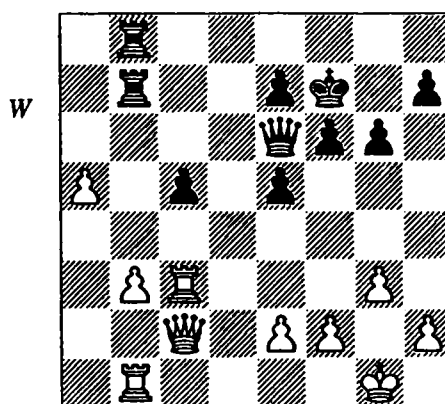
41 ♖f2 ♗e7! 42 c6 ♗e1 43 c7

Not 43 ♗xe1 dxe1 ♖+ 44 ♖xe1 a2, and Black queens with check and wins.

43...♗c1! 44 ♖e3 d1 ♖+ 45 c8 ♖+ ♗xc8 46 ♗xd1 a2 47 ♗a1 ♗a8! (D)



Kramnik's brilliant understanding and use of the last principle.



Kramnik – Topalov
Wijk aan Zee 2003

In a Benko Gambit, Kramnik has manoeuvred well and has maintained some advantage by giving back his extra pawn (the first transformation of advantages!) to destroy Black's pawn-structure. Now he plays his trump: the passed a-pawn.

27 ♗a1!

Rooks belong behind passed pawns!

27...♗xb3 28 ♗xb3 ♖xb3 29 ♖xc5 ♖b2 30 ♖c4+ ♖g7 31 ♖a2! ♖xa2

Black would like to keep the queens on, but that would allow the passed pawn even further ahead.

32 ♗xa2 ♗a8 33 a6 ♗a7 34 ♖g2 ♖f7 35 ♖f3 ♖e6 36 g4!

We have witnessed another transformation of advantages. This rook ending is clearly better for White with the rook behind the passed pawn. We shall return to this kind of endgame in Chapter 4. Despite stubborn defence by Topalov, Kramnik's technique prevails.

36...♖d6 37 h4 h6 38 g5!

In order to win, White must punch some holes in the compact black position.

38...hxg5 39 hxg5 f5 40 e4! e6 41 ♗a5! ♖c7 42 ♖e3 ♖b8 43 ♗xe5 ♗xa6 44 ♗c5! (D)

Again we have seen the transformation of advantages – the third so far! The powerful passed pawn did not manage to reach the finishing line, but to conquer it Black had to take his king far away from the kingside – from which it is now cut off. White threatens ♖f4-e5-f6.

44...♖b7 45 ♖f4 ♖b6 46 ♗c8 fxe4

By force the game has turned into a typical rook endgame with the king behind the passed pawn. Black is winning, and we shall look into this kind of endgame again in Chapter 4.

48 ♖e4 ♗a5 49 d5 ♖f7 50 ♖e5 ♖e7 51 g4 ♗a4 52 g5 g6

Zugzwang. White must commit the d-pawn, thus leaving it vulnerable.

53 d6+ ♖d7 54 ♖f6

This turns out to be insufficient, but 54 ♖d5 ♗a5+ was hopeless as well.

54...♖xd6 55 ♖g7 ♗a7+ 56 ♖h6 ♖d5

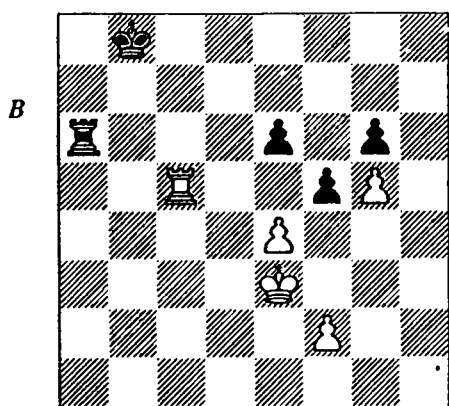
There is no stalemate, and the black king can calmly approach the a-pawn.

57 ♗d1+ ♖c4 58 ♗c1+ ♖b3 59 ♗f1 a1 ♖ 60 ♗xa1 ♗xa1 61 ♖xh7 ♗a6 62 ♖h6 ♖c4 63 h5 gxh5+ 64 ♖xh5 ♖d5

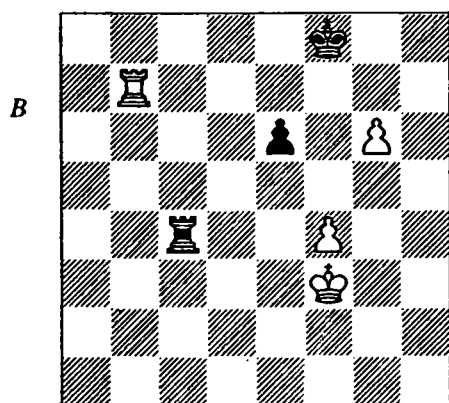
The king returns home in time.

65 g6 ♖e6 66 ♖h6 ♖f5 0-1

In this game we saw the importance of the pawn-structure, the strength of a passed pawn and the principle of transformation of advantages. These features are also present in the following high-class encounter. Note especially



46...♖a2 47 f3 does not change much.
 47 ♖xe4 ♖b7 48 ♗g8 ♖c6 49 ♗xg6
 Finally winning material.
 49...♖d6 50 f4 ♗a4+ 51 ♖f3 ♖e7 52 ♗g7+
 ♖f8 53 ♗b7 ♗c4 54 g6! (D)



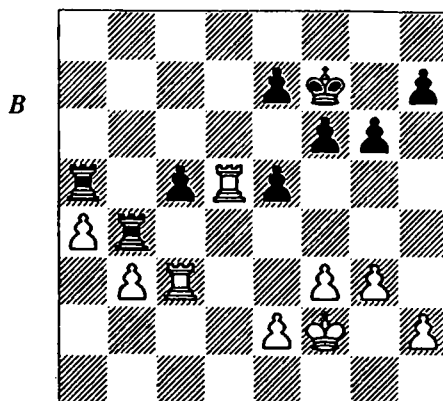
Looking merely at the material, Black is often able to draw such pawn-down endings. But not with the king cut off like this.

54...♗c1 55 ♖g4 ♗c5 56 ♗f7+ ♖e8
 56...♖g8 loses to 57 ♗f6.
 57 f5! 1-0

Black resigned as he loses the pawn ending after 57...exf5+ 58 ♗xf5 ♗xf5 (58...♗c1 59 ♖g5 with an elementary 'Lucena' position) 59 ♖xf5 ♖f8 (59...♖e7 60 ♖g5 and 61 ♖h6) 60 ♖f6 ♖g8 61 g7.

Some researchers on learning and tacit knowledge claim that "the flair of the grandmaster is nothing but the fruit of a long apprenticeship, transformed into tacit knowledge of the chances of success of the various possible moves" (Baumard, 1999: *Tacit Knowledge in Organizations*). While I believe this is a gross simplification of the complex skills of grandmasters, there is no doubt that grandmasters do

learn from each other and carry with them prior knowledge from their 'apprenticeship'. Undoubtedly Baburin knew Kramnik's prior example when playing the following ending:



Baburin – Brandenburg
 Cork 2005

Do you recognize the pawn-structure from Kramnik-Topalov above? White has just played 29 ♖g1-f2 and intends to bring his king to the queenside to cover the b3-pawn. Therefore Black decides to force matters, but in the process underestimates White's passed pawn on the a-file – and suffers the same fate as Topalov.

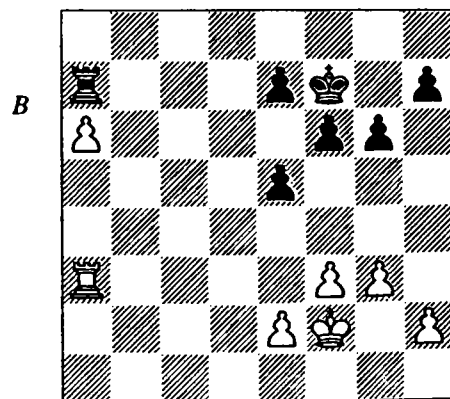
29...♗a7?

As pointed out by Fogarasi in *New in Chess Yearbook*, Black could draw with the calm 29...♖e8! 30 ♖e1 e6! 31 ♗dxc5 (31 ♗d6 ♖e7 32 ♗c6 ♖d7 forces White to take on c5 anyway) 31...♗xc5 32 ♗xc5 ♗xb3 33 ♗c7 h5 34 ♖d2 ♗a3, and contrary to the game, Black succeeds in placing his rook behind the passed pawn.

30 ♗dxc5 ♗ab7 31 a5! ♗xb3 32 a6!

Winning a vital tempo.

32...♗xc3 33 ♗xc3 ♗a7 34 ♗a3! (D)



Step 1 accomplished! Now White has to break down the black fortress, while the powerful passed pawn keeps Black occupied.

34...♙e6 35 h4 ♖d6 36 ♙e3 ♗c6 37 ♙e4 e6?!

To prevent ♗d5, but this makes it easier for White to break open Black's defences with g4-g5 – the same plan Kramnik used. White attempts to isolate the e5-pawn. It is better for Black to bide his time with 37...♗d6, although it is doubtful if it will be enough to save the game.

38 g4! ♗d6 39 ♖a5! f5+ 40 ♗d3 ♗c7 41 ♗c4 ♗b6

41...♗d6 42 ♗b5 is even worse for Black.

42 ♖xe5 ♖c7+ 43 ♗d4 ♖d7+ 44 ♙e3 ♖d6!

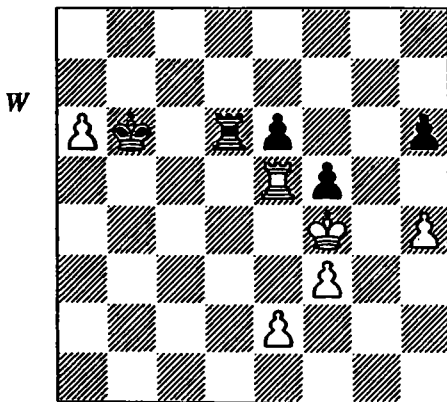
Ingenious defence, but unfortunately insufficient.

45 gxf5 gxf5

45...exf5 fails to 46 ♖e7, hitting h7 while threatening 47 a7.

46 ♗f4 h6 (D)

46...♗xa6 loses to 47 ♗g5.



47 ♖e3!

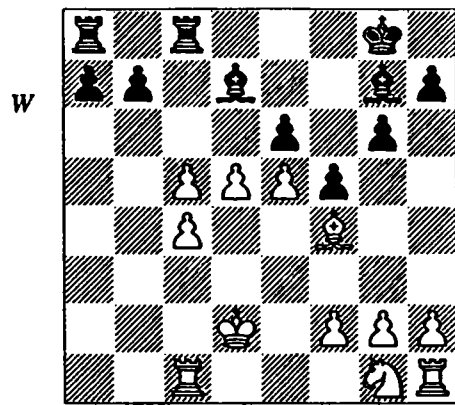
Decisive. White makes room for the king on e5. The rest is simple.

47...♖d4+ 48 ♙e5 ♖xh4 49 ♖a3! ♙a7 50 ♗xe6 f4 51 ♗f5 h5 52 ♖a2!

Zugzwang.

52...♖h2 53 ♗xf4 ♖g2 54 ♙e3 h4 55 ♖a4 h3 56 ♖h4 h2 57 ♖h6 1-0

As we have seen, passed pawns are powerful assets, not just because they can advance themselves, but also because they keep the opponent occupied, thus setting up a possible transformation of advantages. The strength of such a passed pawn is seen even at the highest level.



Karpov – Kasparov
London/Leningrad Wch (5) 1986

In one of their many Grünfeld encounters, the two great Ks have entered an endgame shortly after the opening. Now Karpov secures himself a powerful passed pawn on the 6th rank. Although this pawn is not about to queen in the near future – blockaded as it is – it keeps Kasparov's pieces passive and allows White slowly to improve his position.

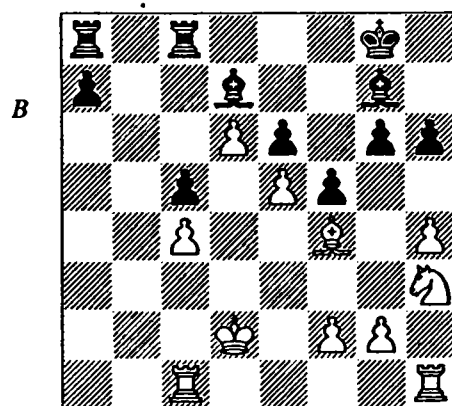
17 c6!

This strong *zwischenzug* makes the light-squared bishop even more passive.

17...bxc6 18 d6 c5

After 18...g5 19 ♖xg5 ♖xe5 the pawn is supported from the other side: 20 c5.

19 h4! h6 20 ♖h3! (D)



Planning to bring the knight to d3 via f2. Once it is there, it will be virtually impossible for Black to defend c5. In search of counterplay, Kasparov sends his a-pawn deep into enemy territory, but it never returns alive. The advance merely hastens the end. It is interesting to note that the same happened – a fruitless raid with the a-pawn – in the 17th game of the

same match, which we saw earlier in this chapter.

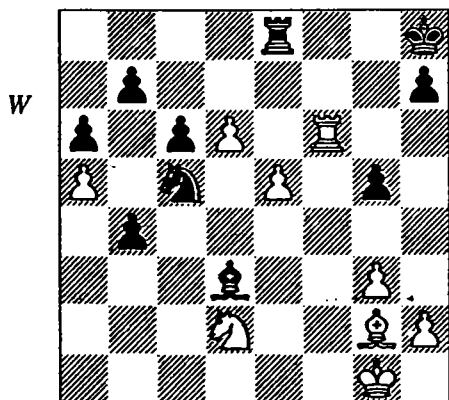
20...a5?! 21 f3 a4 22 ♖he1 a3 23 ♜f2 a2 24 ♜d3 ♖a3 25 ♖a1 g5

Desperation, but otherwise White simply picks up the a-pawn with ♖ec1-c2 and ♜c1. 26 ♙e3 was also a threat.

26 hxg5 hxg5 27 ♙xg5 ♚f7 28 ♙f4 ♖b8 29 ♖ec1 ♙c6 30 ♖c3 ♖a5 31 ♖c2 ♖ba8 32 ♜c1 1-0

A seemingly easy win for Karpov, facilitated by the strength of the d-pawn.

When passed pawns are close to the promotion square, it is always a good idea to look for *tactics*. Often a little tactic can help in clearing the way for the pawn. We have already seen Kramnik in action with the passed pawn. Kramnik has a very deep understanding of the pawn-structure. Let us therefore conclude this section with two more game fragments from his hand.



Kramnik – Illescas
Dos Hermanas 1999

At first sight a complicated position. Black is a pawn up, and aren't the passed central pawns blocked? No, Kramnik has seen a *tactic* that allows him to push the pawns and eventually win a piece.

35 e6! ♖xe6

35...♜xe6 is not better: 36 d7 ♖d8 37 ♖xe6.

36 d7 ♖e1+ 37 ♖f1!

Together with the next move, this is the point. White wins a piece, but he still has to keep Black's passed queenside pawns under control.

37...♖xf1+ 38 ♙xf1 ♜xd7 39 ♙xd3 ♜e5 40 ♙f5!

Threatening 41 ♙c8, so Black must show his hand. He doesn't have time to activate his king.

40...c5 41 ♙e4! c4 42 ♙xb7 b3 43 ♜b1!

White has achieved his objective. The black pawns are blocked, and a6 falls. White is winning.

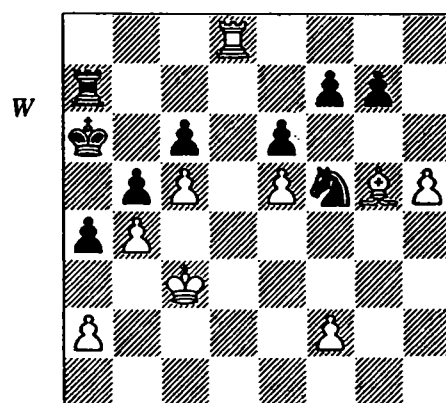
43...♚g7 44 ♙xa6 ♜c6

Necessary, as otherwise the a5-pawn becomes the most important pawn on the board.

45 ♙xc4 ♜xa5 46 ♙d5! ♚f6 47 ♚f2 ♚e5 48 ♙g8 h5 49 ♚e3 b2 50 ♜d2 ♚f5 51 h3 h4 52 g4+ ♚f6 53 ♙d5 ♚e5 54 ♙e4

Notice how Kramnik works with *domination*, so that the black knight cannot stir up any trouble.

54...♚e6 55 ♚d4 1-0



Kramnik – Bareev
Wijk aan Zee 2003

Here Kramnik does not even have a passed pawn yet, but the mere *threat* of creating a passed pawn through a tactic is enough to win the game, as the black pieces are very passive.

38 ♜d3!

First the king is activated.

38...♖c7 39 ♚e4 ♚b7 40 ♖d1

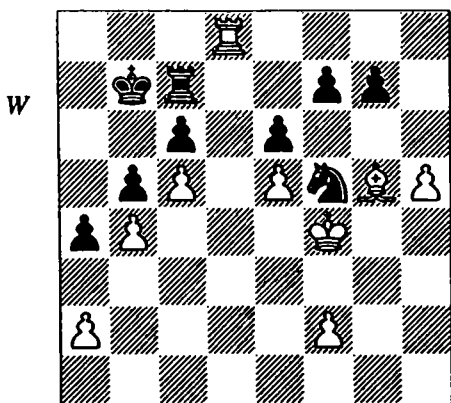
No need to hurry – Black cannot untangle his pieces.

40...♚c8 41 ♖d8+ ♚b7 42 ♚f4 ♖c8 43 ♖d7+ ♖c7 44 ♖d3 ♚c8 45 ♖d8+ ♚b7 (D)

46 ♙f6!

A brilliant tactic based on the fact that a knight is very poor at dealing with an outside passed pawn. Black cannot just wait, as the threat is 47 ♙xg7! (or calmly 47 ♚g5 first) 47...♜xg7 48 h6, and the pawn queens.

46...g6



Hopeless, but after 46...gxh6 47 exf6 ♖c8 48 ♖xc8 ♔xc8 49 ♔g5! ♔d7 50 h6 ♘xh6 51 ♔xh6 e5 52 ♔h7! White wins the resulting pawn ending.

47 hxg6 fxg6 48 ♔g5 1-0

Pawn Endings

Most king and pawn endings are technical in nature, and they are often pretty straightforward. Pawn endings arise through exchanges, and basically three types of exchanges can lead to pawn endings:

- Exchanges where the superior side (e.g. a pawn up) exploits his advantage to 'force' exchanges of all pieces, thereby entering a winning pawn ending (where the win can be calculated at the time of the last piece exchange).
- Exchanges in an even position, in which both players 'agree' on the exchanges and where a draw is the logical outcome (often after only a few pawn ending moves – again the logical outcome can be calculated at the point of the last piece exchange).
- Exchanges leading to 'strategic' pawn endings; that is pawn endings where the outcome is not clear and where the end of the game cannot be calculated at the point of the last piece exchange.

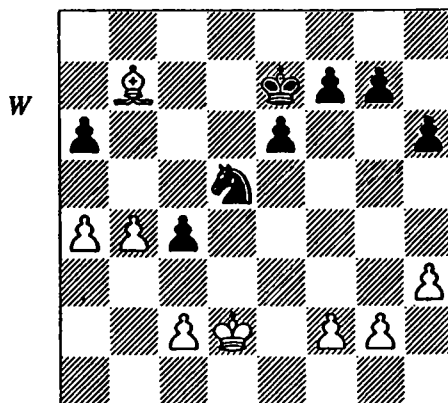
Given the focus of this book on strategic endgames, my main interest is the last type, as the two other types have been extensively studied in a number of books. They are mainly matters of accurate calculation based on well-known principles such as opposition, triangulation, breakthrough or pawn race.

However, we cannot totally ignore the two first types, as there is a certain overlap here. First of all we see players entering king and pawn endings where one player already 'knows the result', whereas the other one has not calculated everything (or has miscalculated). Secondly, as I have discussed previously, strategic endgames at some point in time evolve into technical ones.

We shall study four common themes in what I shall call 'strategic pawn endings'. These are familiar from Chapter 1:

- *King activity* is obviously crucial in king and pawn endings, as the king is the only remaining 'piece'.
- The *pawn-structure* is also vital – for two reasons: a) The possibility of creating passed pawns; and b) The pawn-structure determines whether the king can enter the opponent's position – are there any holes in the pawn-structure?
- *Exchange or not?* Since pawn endings arise from exchanges of pieces, it is important to determine correctly whether the exchange should be made.
- A subset of exchanges is the one where *piece sacrifices* are made to enter a pawn ending.

Obviously the themes are interrelated, and in many examples we shall see several of them interacting with each other.



Efimenko – Neverov
Ukrainian Ch (Rivne) 2005

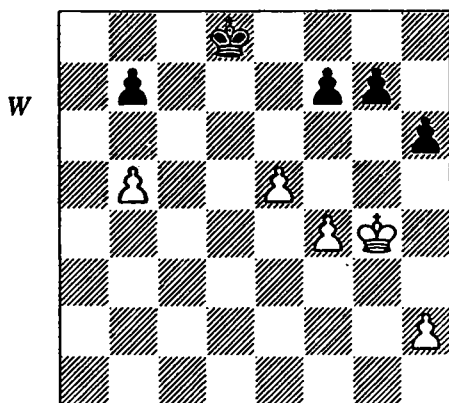
Here is a simple example where we see three of the themes in action. As we shall see in Chapter 3, the bishop is better than the knight in such endings with asymmetrical

pawns, but 46 ♙xa6 is met by 46...c3+, when 47 ♚d3? fails to 47... ♜xb4+ . However, there is a much simpler solution: *exchanging* into a king and pawn ending where the white king is more *active* than its black counterpart, and where White's *outside pawn-majority* secures him an easy win.

46 ♙xd5! exd5 47 ♚c3! ♚d6 48 ♚d4 ♚c6 49 c3 f6 50 g4 g6 51 h4 h5 52 gxh5 gxh5 53 f3

Zugzwang. Black must allow the b-pawn to advance.

53... ♚d6 54 b5 a5 55 b6 ♚c6 56 b7! ♚xb7 57 ♚xd5 1-0



Ni Hua – Lputian
Internet tt 2004

This is a very good example of the impact of king activity in pawn endings. Black has just initiated an exchange of rooks on d8 – presumably in the belief that this endgame is drawn – but he should not have done that, as Ni Hua now demonstrates a highly instructive win.

39 ♚h5!

This locks down Black's kingside pawns and threatens f5-f6, undermining the h6-pawn. Black has no time to go after the b5-pawn, as 39... ♚c7 40 f5 ♚b6 loses to 41 e6 fxe6 42 fxe6 ♚c7 43 ♚g6 . But rushing to the kingside to defend doesn't help either.

39... ♚e7 40 f5! b6 41 h3!

Zugzwang. As Black cannot allow the emergence of a *protected* passed pawn after 41...f6 42 e6, he must retreat and allow White to undermine his kingside pawn-structure.

41... ♚f8 42 f6! ♚g8

After 42...gxh6 43 exf6 Black just loses the h-pawn and the game.

43 fxg7 ♚xg7 44 h4 ♚h7

Having forced the black king into a hopelessly passive position in the corner, White can now turn his eyes to the real target: the b6-pawn.

45 ♚g4! ♚g6 46 h5+ ♚h7 47 ♚f5 ♚g7 48 ♚e4! f6

Black is too slow after 48... ♚f8 49 ♚d5 ♚e7 50 ♚c6 ♚e6 51 ♚xb6 ♚xe5 52 ♚c6 , and the b-pawn runs.

49 ♚f5!

The simplest.

49... fxe5 50 ♚xe5

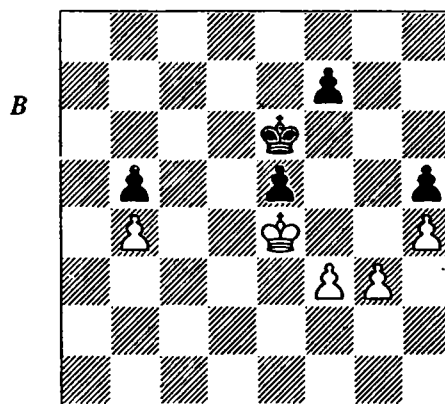
Notice the difference in king activity!

50... ♚f7 51 ♚d6

Black is too slow in any case, so he resigned here. An instructive pawn endgame.

1-0

In order for the king to be active, it needs invasion squares – holes in the opponent's pawn-structure. A key theme when judging whether to go into a king and pawn endgame is therefore to look for holes in the pawn-structure where the king can invade – or to look for ways to 'punch' such holes.



Vallejo Pons – Svidler
Leon rpd 2004

Superficially White may seem OK here – his king is centralized, and doesn't he even have a potential outside passed pawn on the h-file? But in reality it is *Black* who can punch holes in the white position and eventually invade with his king. A key factor here is that the black pawns are *mobile*, whereas the white ones are restrained. Furthermore, the black king has two possible paths: to the queenside (aiming for the

b4-pawn) and – as we shall see – to the kingside.

38...f5+ 39 ♖e3 ♘d5 40 ♘d3 e4+! 41 fxe4+

This opens a path for the black king on the kingside, but 41 ♖e3 loses as well, as the black king then goes to the queenside: 41...exf3 42 ♘xf3 ♘c4 43 ♖f4 ♘xb4 44 ♘xf5 (an unfortunate square, as Black now queens *with check*, but 44 ♖g5 ♘c4 45 ♘xh5 b4 is too slow) 44...♘c4 45 g4 b4 46 g5 (or 46 gxh5) 46...b3 47 g6 b2 48 g7 b1 ♖+ 49 ♖f6 ♖h7, and Black wins.

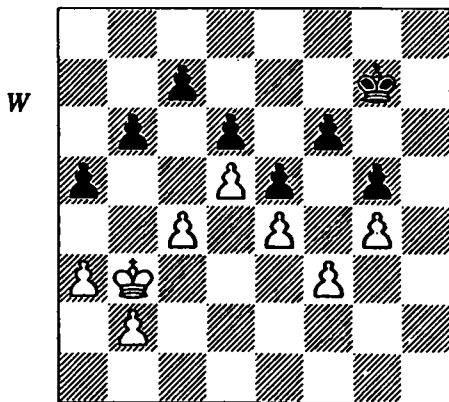
41...fxe4+ 42 ♖e3 ♖e5 43 ♖e2 ♖f5!

The door has been opened, and the king enters!

44 ♖e3 ♖g4 45 ♖xe4 ♖xg3 46 ♖f5

Hopeless, but 46 ♘d5 is too slow.

46...♘xh4 47 ♖f4 ♖h3 48 ♖f3 h4 49 ♖f2 ♖g4 50 ♖g2 ♖f4 0-1



Krasenkow – Macieja
Polish Ch (Warsaw) 2003

The game has recently featured a mass exchange of all the major pieces down the h-file (which Black, it should be noted, could not avoid). Now White enters on the vulnerable light squares on the queenside. Notice the impact of the pawn-structure – had the black a-pawn been placed on a6 instead, White could not have won.

39 ♖a4 ♖f7 40 c5!

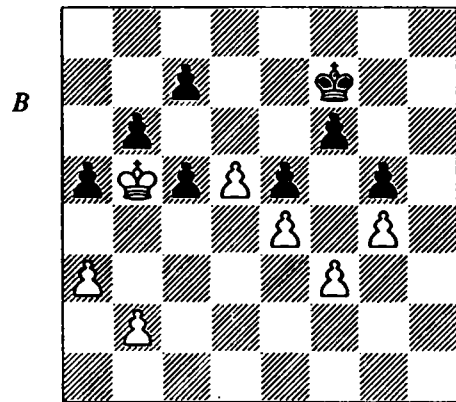
This instructive decisive break punches a hole in the black pawn-structure. After 40 ♘b5 ♖e7 41 ♖c6 ♘d8, the black king would arrive in time.

40...dxc5

Forced, as 40...bxc5 41 ♖xa5 gives White a decisive outside passed pawn, whereas the black

king is too slow in case of 40...♖e7 41 cxb6 cxb6 42 ♘b5.

41 ♘b5 (D)



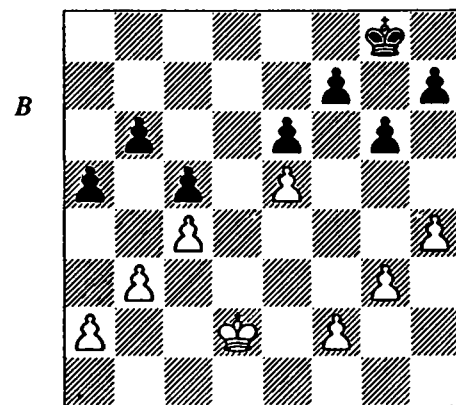
41...c4

A desperate attempt to distract the white king. Black's problem is that after 41...♖e7 42 ♖c6 ♘d8 43 d6! cxd6 44 ♘xd6 he loses prosaically – the white king picks up all Black's queenside pawns.

42 ♖c6!

White is not distracted – the black counterplay is too slow.

42...a4 43 ♖xc7 b5 44 d6 b4 45 d7 bxa3 46 bxa3 1-0



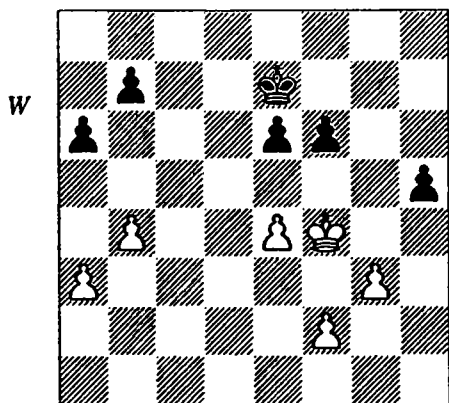
Khalifman – Nybäck
Riga rpd 2004

Do you see the resemblance to the previous example? White intends to penetrate via the vulnerable light squares on the queenside, and Black's king rushes to prevent that. It arrives in time but is then out-tempoed on the kingside.

31...♖f8 32 ♖c3 ♖e7 33 ♖b2 ♘d7 34 ♖a3 ♖c7 35 ♖a4 ♖c6 36 g4!

The right way. Now Black runs out of pawn moves, while White has plenty of waiting moves with the a- and f-pawns.

36...h6 37 g5 h5 38 f3! ♖c7 39 ♔b5 ♖b7 40 a4! ♖c7 41 ♔a6 ♖c6 42 ♔a7 ♖c7 43 f4! 1-0
43...♖c6 loses to 44 ♔b8, so Black resigned.



Dautov – P.H. Nielsen
Mainz rpd 2004

38...axb5 39 axb5 ♔g6 40 exf6 ♖xf6 41 ♔e4 ♔g5 42 f3! ♖f6 43 f4!

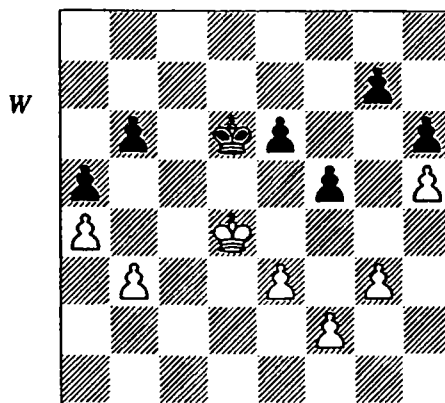
Zugzwang. Black cannot keep White's king out any longer.

43...♖f7 44 ♔e5 ♔e7 45 f5!

Punching another hole in Black's defences. Now the h5-pawn is doomed, and Black is too slow in the race towards the queenside.

45...exf5 46 ♖xf5 ♔d6 47 ♔g5 ♖c5 48 ♖xh5 ♖xb5 49 g4 ♖c6 50 g5 ♔d7

Or 50...b5 51 g6, and White arrives first.
51 g6 ♔e7 52 ♔h6! 1-0



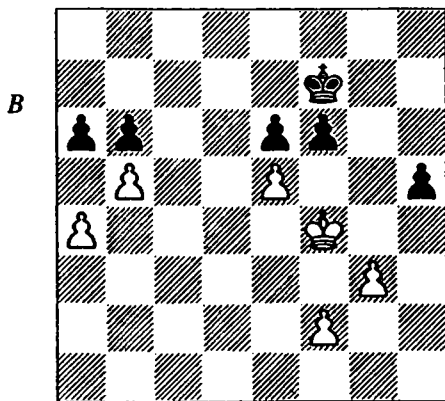
Van Wely – Ljubojević
Monaco (blindfold) 2003

The pawn-structure is important, as Philidor taught us! Here Black's h5-pawn is sticking out, but right now White cannot access it. With pointed play Dautov punches holes in Black's defences.

36 e5! ♖f7 37 a4 b6

Black would like to advance the queenside pawns as far as possible, making them ready for an eventual promotion race. However, since White's king is more active, he cannot play 37...b5, as this would open the door for White's king via e4-d4-c5.

38 b5! (D)



Careful play! White gains space on the queenside before the race begins.

Again the pawn-structure is the defining factor! The far-advanced h5-pawn secures a grip on the black position, and Van Wely punches the necessary holes in Black's structure.

40 f4!

Securing access to e5.

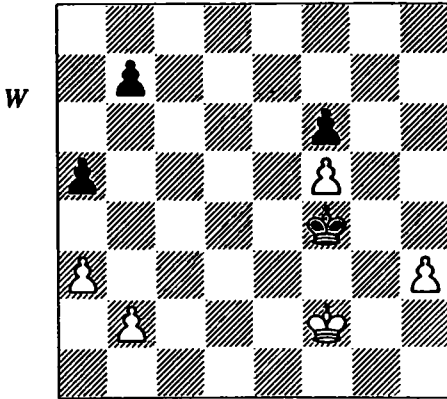
40...♖c6 41 ♔e5 ♔d7 42 e4! fxe4 43 ♖xe4 ♔d6 44 ♔d4 ♖c6 45 ♔e5 ♔d7 46 g4! ♔e7 47 g5! ♔d7

This opens the door for the white king toward the h-pawn, but Black could not allow White an outside passed pawn after 47...hxg5 48 fxg5, and 47...♖f7 48 ♔d6 doesn't help either.

48 gxh6 gxh6 49 ♖f6 ♔d6 50 ♔g6 ♔e7 51 ♖xh6 ♖f6 52 ♔h7 ♖f5 53 h6 ♖xf4 54 ♔g6 e5 55 h7 e4 56 h8♖ 1-0

In the previous examples, we have seen the impact of king activity, and the importance of being able to 'punch holes' in the opponent's pawn-structure. However, sometimes king activity is not enough. Pawn endgames are ultimately

about promoting pawns, and in this context the most valuable asset is an outside passed pawn. Even king activity cannot compensate for such a 'monster'.



Bareev – Vallejo Pons
Monaco rpd 2004

Black's king is superbly centralized and ready to pick up the f5-pawn. Nevertheless, Black is lost, as the main actor on the board is White's h3-pawn!

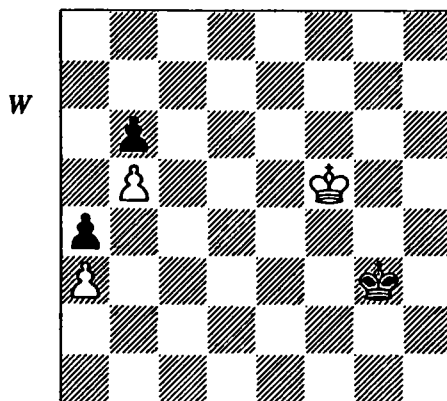
51 b4 a4 52 b5!

The same theme as in Dautov-Nielsen above. White gains as much space as possible on the queenside, anticipating the upcoming race.

52...b6 53 c2 cxf5 54 cf3 cg5 55 cg3 f5

Or **55...cf5 56 h4 ce4 57 h5 cf5 58 ch4** and wins.

56 cf3 ch4 57 cf4 cxh3 58 cxf5 cg3 (D)



59 ce4!

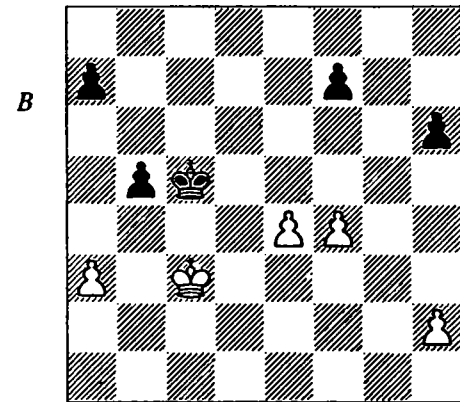
Not that it matters much here, but this is a good learning point: rather than just **59 ce5 cf3**, White 'shoulders off' Black's king in the

process. This is also a key theme in rook vs pawn endgames, to which we shall return in Chapter 4.

59...cf2 60 cd5 ce3

Black is much too late, so he resigned without waiting for White's obvious response.

1-0



Seirawan – Kasparov
Nikšić 1983

Here Kasparov does not yet have an outside passed pawn, but a pawn-majority. Despite Seirawan's ingenious defence, this proves sufficient for the win.

43...a5 44 cd3 h5 45 h4 b4 46 a4!

The only chance. White tries to close off the queenside and keep Black's king out. **46 axb4+ cxb4** (or **46...axb4**) **47 e5 cc5 48 f5 cd5 49 e6 fxe6 50 f6 cd6** is a trivial win.

46...f6! 47 f5!

Again the best chance. Now Black has to keep an eye on the e5 break, and at present he does not have any entry squares. But notice that with White to move the win would be easy – in that case White cannot hold the black king back. So Kasparov forces the win by an instructive case of *triangulation*. This is possible due to the powerful *protected* passed pawn on b4, which constrains the white king's movements.

47...cc6! 48 cc4 ce7! 49 cd3 cd7! 50 ce3 cc6! 51 cd3

Or **51 cd4 cd6**, and the black king reaches c5 or e5.

51...cc5

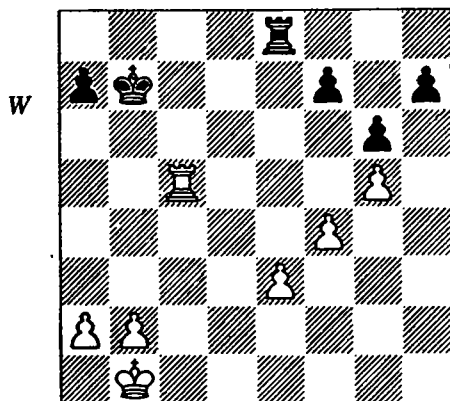
Mission accomplished – it is White to move!

52 ce3 b3! 53 cd3

53 cd2 allows **53...cd4**.

53...♖b4! 54 e5 ♔a3! 0-1
 Now Black queens with check.

By definition, pawn endings arise from the exchange of all major and minor pieces. Accordingly, the moment when the last piece exchange is made is of utmost importance. Going into a pawn ending is a irreversible decision, and accurate judgement of the resulting position is crucial.



Kasparov – Andersson
 Reykjavik 1988

Kasparov faces a critical choice: he can play a pawn-up rook ending with 38 ♖c3 (after which Black's best reply is probably 38...h6 39 gxh6 ♜h8, trying to exchange as many pawns as possible – the best defence strategy in such positions, as we shall see in Chapter 4), or he can go in for an at first sight complicated pawn ending with 38 ♜e5, where Black can regain his pawn. To judge this pawn ending accurately, strong calculating skills are necessary, and in such situations Kasparov is at his best!

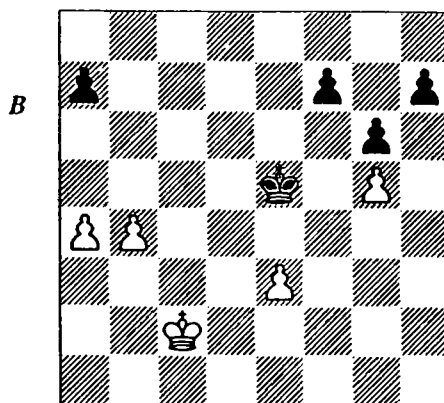
38 ♜e5!

The right decision. White wins the pawn ending by one tempo. And a further plus: Black cannot avoid the exchange due to the threat of 39 ♜e7+.

38...♜xe5 39 fxe5 ♖c6 40 ♖c2 ♖d5 41 b4! ♖xe5 42 a4 (D)

The point. White threatens to create an outside passed pawn out of his queenside majority. In the meantime the g5-pawn holds back three black pawns! Andersson tries to create a passed pawn himself but soon realizes that in the race his pawns will be too slow.

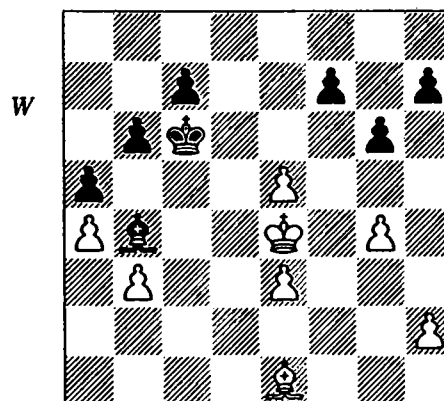
42...f6 43 gxf6 ♖xf6 44 b5 1-0



Nijboer – P.H. Nielsen
 Istanbul Ech 2003

Andersson's resignation was slightly premature for the audience perhaps, but completely justified. The final position is highly instructive in itself, and you should spend a few minutes checking the underlying variations yourself. Note that while the white king can catch the black kingside passed pawns, the black king ends up cross-eyed. Just one sample variation: 44...♖e6 45 a5 ♖d6 46 e4! ♖c5 47 b6 axb6 48 a6! ♖c6 49 e5 and wins.

In this game, Kasparov made the right 'last exchange decision', but chess literature abounds with mistakes made at this very moment – even at the highest level. You really have to be extremely alert when making this exchange, as there is no turning back if the decision is flawed! Here are two examples of this feature.



This position arose from the Berlin Defence to the Ruy Lopez, which has been extremely popular in the beginning of the 2000s following Kramnik's success with it in his London 2000 match against Kasparov. Uncharacteristically for this opening though, it is now *Black* who has

the healthier pawn-structure, with a sound 3 vs 2 on the queenside as opposed to White's fragmented kingside structure. White must therefore be careful. He could keep the bishops on with, for instance, 35 ♙h4 . Instead the Dutch grandmaster goes for an exchange of the last pair of minor pieces, resulting in a pawn ending that should be drawn, but White's margin for error is smaller than it might appear.

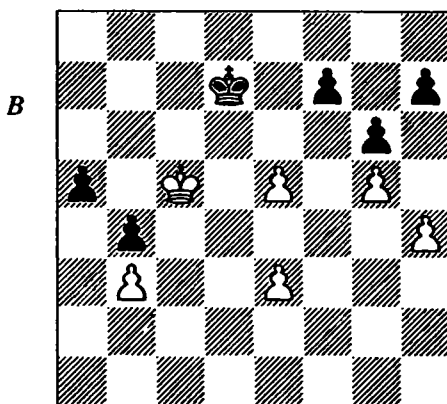
35 ♙xb4 axb4 36 g5 ♕d7 37 ♕d5 c5!

Possibly White was deceived by his active king into thinking that he was in no danger. Black's idea is to exploit his queenside majority to *liquidate* all the pawns on the queenside, while his own king then goes pawn-hunting on the kingside. White must play accurately to make sure his king returns in time.

38 h3 ♖e7 39 h4 ♕d7 40 a5?

This is the decisive error! 40 ♕c4? loses to 40... ♖e6 41 ♖b5 ♕xe5 42 ♕xb6 c4! 43 a5 c3! 44 a6 c2 45 a7 c1 ♖ 46 a8 ♖ ♖xe3+ 47 ♖b5 ♖xb3 , but Nunn points out that 40 e4! ♖e7 41 a5! draws. We shall see why in a few moves' time.

40... bxa5 41 ♕xc5 (D)



41... a4! 42 ♕xb4

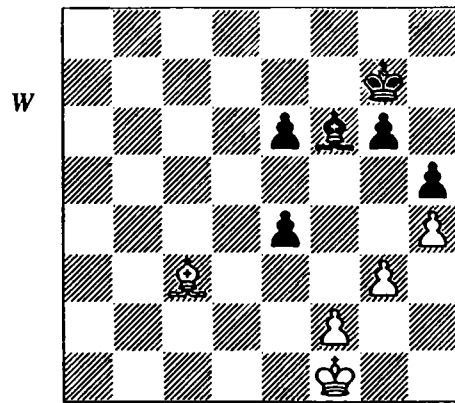
After 42 bxa4? b3 Black arrives first.

42... axb3 43 ♕xb3 ♖e6 44 ♕c4 ♕xe5 45 ♕d3 ♖f5!

Here we see why White should have inserted 40 e4! before playing a5 : with the pawn on e4 instead of e3 this position would be drawn.

46 ♕d4 ♕g4 47 ♖e5 ♕xh4 48 ♖f6 ♕g4 49 e4 ♖f4! 0-1

In the following diagram Black is a pawn up, but it is a doubled pawn and after 46 ♙d2 White



Aronian – Ivanchuk
Antalya Ech 2004

should be able to draw without too much trouble, although Black can still press for some time. But instead Aronian wants to force proceedings and misses something. In such endgames patience is a virtue!

46 ♙xf6+? ♕xf6 47 ♖e2 ♖e5 48 ♖e3 ♕d5 49 ♕f4

This leads to a queen ending with an extra pawn for Black. However, 49 ♖e2 was no better. In that case Black wins with 49... ♕d4 50 ♕d2 e5! 51 ♖e2 e3! 52 fxe3+ (52 f3 e4 53 f4 ♕c4! 54 g4 {54 ♕xe3 ♕d5 54... hxg4 55 f5 g3! 56 ♕xe3 gxf5 57 h5 f4+ wins for Black) 52... ♕c3! (perhaps this move is what Aronian missed), and Black picks up the e3 -pawn by force; e.g., 53 ♖f3 ♕d3 54 e4 (54 g4 e4+ 55 ♖f4 hxg4 56 ♕xg4 ♕xe3 57 ♕g5 ♖f3 58 ♕xg6 e3 59 h5 e2 60 h6 e1 ♖ 61 h7 ♖e5 wins for Black) 54... ♕d4 and wins.

49... ♕d4 50 g4 e5+! 51 ♕g5 hxg4! 52 ♕xg4

Necessary, as 52 ♕xg6 e3! 53 fxe3+ ♕xe3 54 h5 g3 wins for Black.

52... ♕d3 53 ♕g5 ♖e2 54 ♕xg6 ♕xf2 55 h5 e3 56 h6 e2 57 h7 e1 ♖ 58 h8 ♖ ♖e4+

Whether this queen ending is won for Black (in fact, the tablebase tells us that it is won) is not so important for the argument made here – that 'the last piece exchange moment' is highly critical. In any case such an ending is extremely difficult to defend in practical play and with limited time, and Ivanchuk eventually ground out a win.

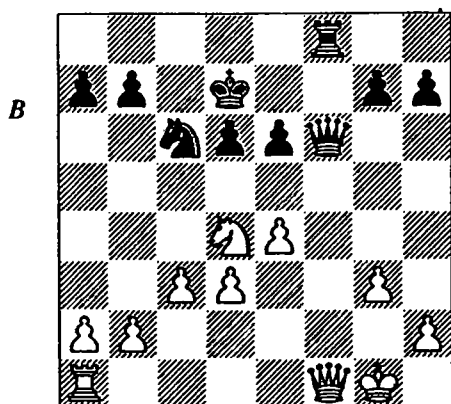
59 ♖f6 ♖f3+! 60 ♖e6

60 ♕xe5? ♖c3+ and Black wins.

60... e4 61 ♖b2+ ♕g3 62 ♖e5+ ♖f4 63 ♖a1 ♕f2 64 ♖d4+ ♕g2 65 ♖g7+ ♖f3 66 ♖a1

♖h6+ 67 ♔d5 ♖d2+ 68 ♕e5 ♖h2+ 69 ♔f5
 ♖h3+ 70 ♕g5 e3 71 ♖f6+ ♕g3 72 ♖e5+ ♔f2
 73 ♖d4 ♖f3 74 ♕h4 ♖h1+ 75 ♕g4 ♖g2+ 76
 ♕h5 ♖g3 77 ♖c5 ♖f4 78 ♖b6 ♕g3 79 ♖g6+
 ♕h3 80 ♖d3 ♖e5+ 81 ♕h6 ♕g3 0-1

Kasparov has also been in a 'last exchange dilemma' – in the last game of his career (that is, if he can really stay away from chess!).



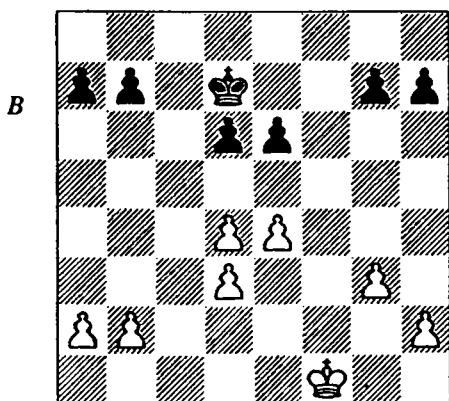
Topalov – Kasparov
 Linares 2005

In this position Kasparov went for mass exchanges into a pawn ending, which he must have thought was an easy draw, but which contains more venom than might be expected. It should be drawn, but accuracy is required from Black.

21...♖xf1+?!

21...♖d8 followed by 22...♖b6 looks like a decent alternative, and so does the rook endgame after 21...♔xd4 22 ♖xf6 gxh6! 23 cxd4 ♔c8!. As we shall see in Chapter 4, rook activity is a key factor in rook endings, and Black should not be worse here.

22 ♔xf1 ♔xf1+ 23 ♔xf1 ♔xd4 24 cxd4 (D)



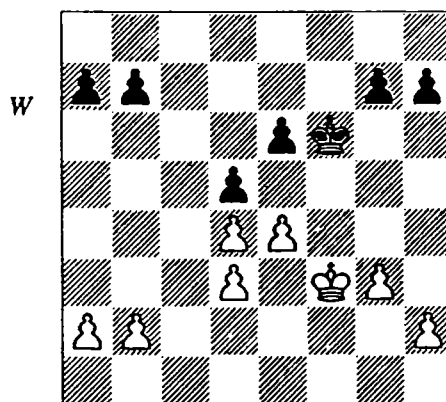
24...d5?

This natural move is the decisive mistake, as indicated by Timman in *New in Chess*. There was no need to allow the white king potential access to e5. According to Timman, Black could draw by the calm 24...♔e7 25 ♔f2 ♔f7! (but not 25...♔f6? 26 ♔f3 g5 27 e5+! dxe5 28 ♔e4 exd4 29 g4!, and White wins the tempo battle after 29...♔e7 30 ♔xd4 ♔d6 31 ♔e4) 26 h4 g5!, and Black obtains sufficient space on the kingside to avoid being pushed back as in the game.

25 ♔f2 ♔e7

Now it is too late to save Black. After the game, Kasparov demonstrated the brilliant variation 25...g5 26 ♔f3 h5 (striving to keep the kingside closed and the white king at bay) 27 h4 gxh4 28 gxh4 ♔e7 29 ♔e3! (29 ♔f4 ♔f6) 29...♔f7 (29...♔f6? 30 ♔f4) 30 ♔d2! b5 (trying to keep the queenside closed as well) 31 a4! bxa4 32 ♔c3 a5. Now 33 b4! punches a hole in Black's defences and White penetrates with his king. A highly instructive concept.

26 ♔f3 ♔f6 (D)



27 h4?

White falters, just when the win is within his grasp. Correct was 27 ♔g4 h6 28 h3!, and Black ends up in zugzwang; e.g., 28...g6 29 h4! (threatening to break through by 30 h5) 29...h5+ 30 ♔f4, and Black is eventually out-tempoed on the queenside, after which the white king penetrates victoriously to e5.

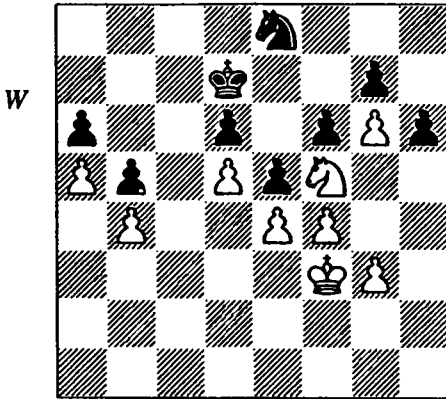
27...g6?

Kasparov repays the favour! He could have drawn by 27...h6!; e.g., 28 ♔f4 g5+ 29 hxg5+ hxg5+ 30 ♔g4 ♔g6 with a draw, according to Krnić in *Informator*.

28 b4 b5 29 ♔f4 h6 30 ♔g4! 1-0

White has ideas of 31 h5, leaving Black in zugzwang; e.g., 30...♔f7 (30...g5 31 hxg5+ hxg5 32 ♕h5 and 30...h5+ 31 ♕f4 both win for White) 31 h5! g5 32 exd5 exd5 33 ♕f5 and wins. Therefore Kasparov resigned.

A special kind of exchange is when a pawn ending is reached through a temporary *piece sacrifice*. We shall finish this chapter with a few examples of this comparatively rare but still important theme.



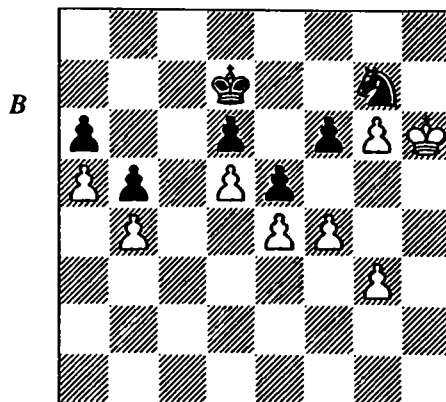
Gelfand – Campora
Izmir ECC 2004

Obviously White is better with more space and the strong knight on f5 vs the passive one on e8. But how to win? Gelfand solves this question with a well-timed sacrifice into a winning pawn ending.

49 ♕g4! ♔d8 50 ♕h5 ♕d7 51 ♖xg7!

The point.

51...♖xg7+ 52 ♕xh6 (D)



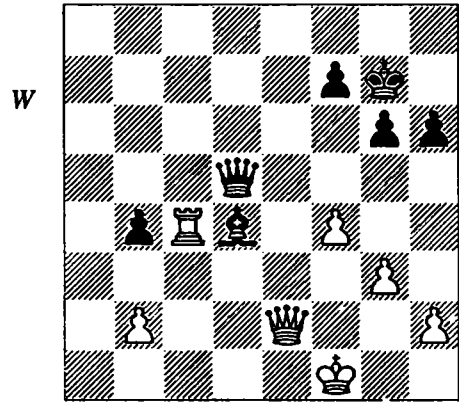
52...f5

After 52...♖e8 the simplest win from many is probably 53 fxg5! dxg5 (53...♕e7 loses to 54

exd6+) 54 g7 ♖xg7 55 ♕xg7 f5 56 exf5 e4 57 f6 e3 58 f7 e2 59 f8 ♖e1 ♖f7+ ♔d8 61 ♖f4.

53 ♕xg7 fxe4 54 ♕f7! e3 55 g7 e2 56 g8 ♖e1 ♖f7 ♖e8+ 1-0

After 57...♕c7 58 ♖c6+ White picks up all Black's central pawns.



Navara – Graf
Aghia Pelagia tt 2004

White is an exchange up, but his exposed king causes him some headaches. The young Czech decides to cut the Gordian Knot by sacrificing the exchange back to reach a tricky king and pawn ending, which should be drawn but where Black can easily go wrong.

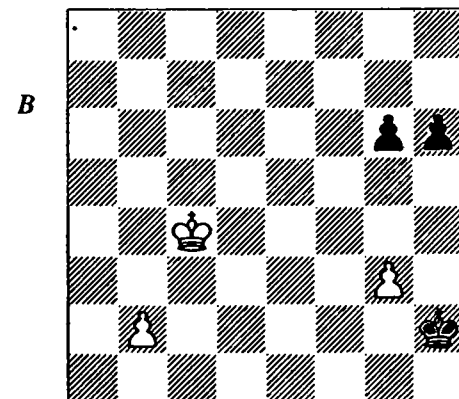
43 ♖xd4!? ♖xd4 44 ♖e5+! ♖xe5 45 fxg7 f6!

Otherwise White wins the b4-pawn.

46 exf6+ ♕xf6 47 ♕e2 ♕f5?

Black heads straight for the kingside pawns, but 47...♕e5! holds the draw. After 48 ♕d3 ♕d5 49 b3 h5 50 h4 g5! 51 hxg5 ♕e5 52 ♕c4 ♕f5 the promotion race will end in a draw.

48 ♕d3 ♕g4 49 ♕c4 ♕h3 50 ♕xb4 ♕xh2 51 ♕c4 (D)



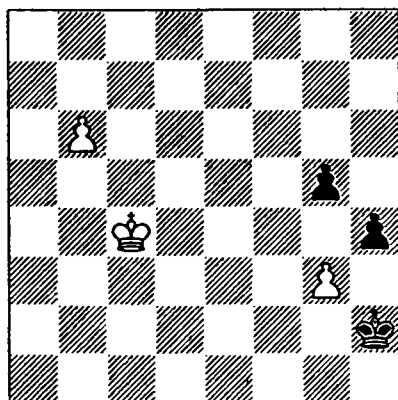
Now White wins because the unfortunate position of the black king on the h2-b8 diagonal allows White to queen with check.

51...h5

After 51...♔xg3 52 b4 Black can neither run with the h-pawn (because White queens with check and wins) nor approach the b-pawn by 52...♕f4, since White then shoulders off the black king by 53 ♕d5!

52 b4 g5 53 b5 h4 54 b6! (D)

Certainly not 54 gxh4? gxh4 55 b6 h3 56 b7 ♕g2 57 b8♖ h2 with a draw. But with an extra black pawn on the board this is just lost for Black, as can be found in any book on *technical* endgames.



54...h3

Unfortunately Black has to let the g3-pawn live, as 54...hxg3 and 54...♔xg3 both allow White to queen with check.

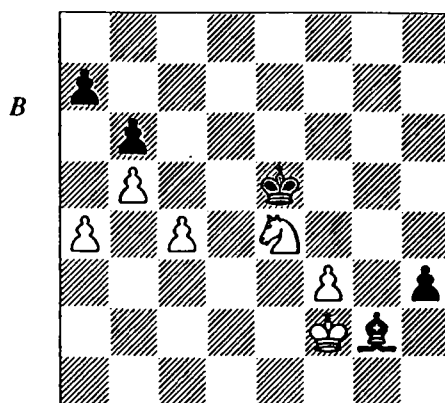
55 b7 ♕g1 56 b8♖ h2 57 ♖b1+ ♕g2 58 ♖c2+ ♕g1

Or 58...♔xg3 59 ♖e4 and wins.

59 ♖c1+ ♕g2 60 ♖xg5! 1-0

Now 60...h1♖ is answered by 61 ♖d5+ ♕g1 62 ♖xh1+ ♕xh1 63 g4!, and the g-pawn, which was thought to be doomed, carries the day!

In the next diagram, White is a pawn up, but Black, with his centralized king and dangerous h-pawn, is still in the game. But now Akopian saw what he thought was a way to sacrifice a piece to force the draw, but this is refuted by an



Shirov – Akopian
Oakham jr 1992

even smarter piece sacrifice by Shirov to enter a winning pawn ending.

53...♕xf3?

53...♕e6 was a better defence, and Black can still fight.

54 ♔xf3 h2

Black's idea is 55 ♖f2 ♕d4, and Black liquidates all White's pawns, but White does not need the knight:

55 ♕g2! ♕xe4 56 c5!

White's point. Again it is crucial that Black's king is unfortunately placed on a diagonal which allows White to queen with check.

56...♕d5

This is hopeless, but 56...bxc5 loses to 57 a5 ♕d5 (57...c4 58 b6 axb6 59 a6!, and White queens with check) 58 a6! c4 59 b6, and again White gets a new queen on a8 with check.

57 c6 ♕d6 58 ♕xh2

Finally White has time to pick up this annoying little guy!

58...♔c7 59 ♕g3 ♕d6 60 ♕f4 ♕e6 61 ♕e4 ♕d6 1-0

Unfortunately, Black's resignation denies us the chance to see the instructive trick 62 ♕f5 a5!? (62...♔c7 63 ♕e6 ♕c8 64 ♕d6 ♕d8 65 c7+ ♕c8 66 ♕c6 a5 67 bxa6 b5 68 a7 is trivial) 63 ♕f6 ♕c7 64 ♕e6 ♕c8 65 c7! (the point) 65...♔xc7 66 ♕e7, and White picks up the black pawns and wins.

3 The Minor Pieces in the Endgame – Bishops and Knights

Introduction

Play with the minor pieces is of utmost importance for the practical player. Throughout the game, decisions must be made concerning the exchange of the minor pieces. Often these decisions are part of the opening scheme and occur more or less automatically. Nonetheless, these choices have implications far into the endgame. Consider for instance the Exchange Variation of the Ruy Lopez (1 e4 e5 2 ♘f3 ♘c6 3 ♗b5 a6). At move four White may choose to give up his light-squared bishop with 4 ♗xc6 in order to saddle Black with a crippled pawn-structure at the expense of the two bishops. What is more valuable? While opening specialists still debate this matter, the issue is normally not decided until much later – in the endgame! This shows that while chess can be divided into distinct phases – opening, middlegame and endgame – these phases interconnect, and you must have a basic understanding of the typical endgame themes that may occur from your opening or middlegame decisions.

In this chapter we shall study the battle with and between the minor pieces. We shall investigate the notion of ‘the two bishops’ in more detail, study pure bishop and knight endgames, and consider endgames where bishops and knights fight against each other. Not surprisingly, a number of our 15 principles will be visible. For example, the pawn-structure is crucial in determining when a bishop is ‘bad’, and often an active king is a strong asset in minor-piece endgames. Let us first return to one of our key principles, that of the strength of the two bishops.

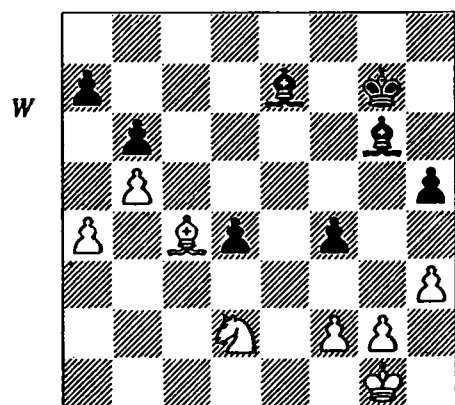
The Two Bishops

The strength of the two bishops can be traced back to Steinitz, who was the first to recognize

the power of the two bishops compared to bishop + knight. Steinitz showed the way to play with two bishops against bishop + knight or two knights: systematically depriving the knight(s) of any strongholds, after which the superior reach of the bishops will tell against a knight (or knights) that either are insecurely placed or have been pushed away from the field of action.

Another advantage of the two bishops is the fact that the player holding them may at almost any point decide to exchange one of them to reach a favourable bishop vs knight or bishop vs bishop endgame. Therefore, there is a direct connection to the later sections in this chapter, and certain overlaps.

The two bishops are often strong with asymmetrical pawn-structures, and they are very powerful in supporting a passed pawn. Nigel Short is one of the top grandmasters that in numerous games have shown the strength of the two bishops. Here are two examples from his games.



Cu. Hansen – Short
Skanderborg 2003

This is a typical two-bishop position. White hopes that the d4-pawn can be blocked and in the long run it may be vulnerable, but it turns

out to be a strong asset instead, supported as it is by the two powerful bishops. Black is pushing, but White is still in the game.

43 ♖f3 d3 44 ♜f1 ♙f6 45 ♚e1 ♙c3+ 46 ♜d1 ♜f6

In this critical position White faces a choice. One option is to go into an endgame with same-coloured bishops with 47 ♖e1 ♙xe1 (47...d2 48 ♖f3) 48 ♜xe1, but then the black king enters the game: 48...♚e5 followed by 49...♜d4 puts White under pressure. In the game White seeks counterplay on the kingside, but this plays into Black's hands by giving the two bishops targets to attack. Conclusion: unpleasant as it is, White should bide his time and stay put – for instance by 47 ♙b3. It is not easy for Black to improve his position. If he, for instance, tries to transfer his king to the queenside with 47...♚e7, 48 ♖e1 gains in strength, as the black king is then not ready to penetrate to d4.

47 g4? fxg3 48 fxg3 ♙f5! 49 ♜c1 ♚e7!

Better than 49...♙xh3 50 ♙xd3. But now Black threatens to invade via d6-c5-b4. Curt sacrifices a pawn to force the exchange of one of the bishops, but it doesn't quite work.

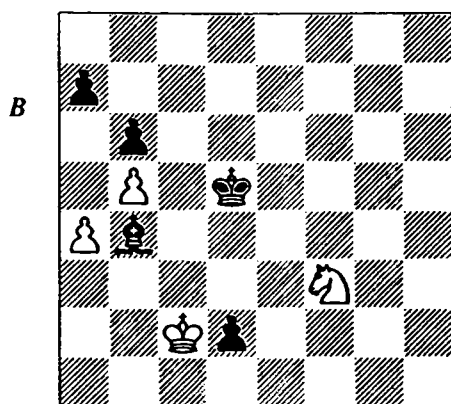
50 g4 hxg4 51 ♖h4 d2+ 52 ♜d1 ♙d7 53 hxg4 ♙xg4+ 54 ♙e2 ♙xe2+

Forced, as 54...♙e6 55 ♜c2 ♙a5 56 ♖f3 gets Black nowhere.

55 ♜xe2 ♚e6! 56 ♜d1

56 ♖f3 ♜d5 57 ♖xd2 ♙xd2 58 ♜xd2 ♜c4 wins for Black.

56...♙b4 57 ♖f3 ♜d5 58 ♜c2 (D)



58...♙c3!

Dominating the knight and making room for the black king. The pawn ending is still lost for White.

59 ♖g5 ♜c4 60 ♖e4 ♙b4!

This wins a crucial tempo. Black should not allow 60...♙a5 61 ♖d6+ ♜b4 62 ♖c8 ♜xa4 63 ♖xa7.

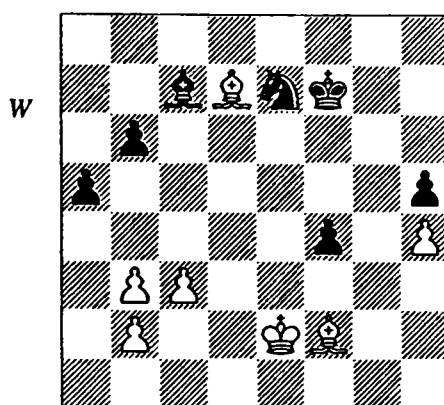
61 ♖g5 ♙a5 62 ♖e6 ♜b4 63 ♖d4 ♜xa4

But now Black is in time to capture both pawns.

64 ♖c6 ♜xb5 65 ♖xa7+ ♜c5 66 ♖c8 b5 67 ♖e7 ♙c3 68 ♖f5 b4 69 ♖e3 ♜d4 70 ♖f1

Or 70 ♖d1 ♜e4 71 ♖f2+ ♜f3 72 ♖d1 (72 ♖d3 ♜e3!) 72...♚e2 with zugzwang.

70...b3+! 71 ♜d1 b2 0-1



Short – J. Polgar
Budapest 2003

In this game too, Short has the two bishops. However, here it is Black who has a passed pawn, whereas White does not have an easy time creating a passed pawn out of his queenside pawns. But instead Short shows another strength of the two bishops: the capability to control a lot of squares, so that the king can stroll up the board unhindered and attack the black h5-pawn.

40 ♜f3! ♖g6 41 ♙f5 ♖e5+ 42 ♜e4 ♖g4 43 ♙d4 ♖e3 44 ♙h3 ♖g4?

This lets the white king in, but even the tougher 44...♜g6 is not totally sufficient in view of 45 ♙d7 ♜f7 46 ♙b5. Black is in for a long torture here as well. Still, that was the most tenacious defence.

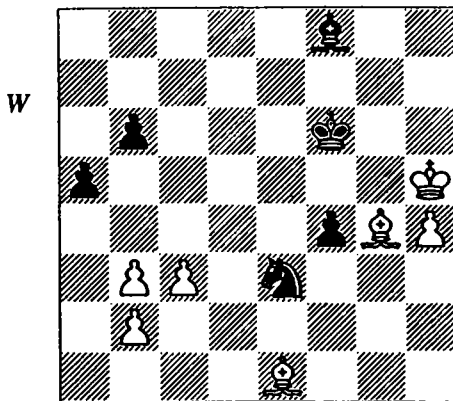
45 ♜f5!

Now it is hard to defend the h-pawn.

45...♖e3+ 46 ♜g5 ♖c2 47 ♙f2 ♖e3 48 ♜xh5 ♜f6

Black attempts to keep the white king trapped on the rim, but with accurate manoeuvres Short manages to bring his king back into the game while maintaining a healthy extra pawn.

49 ♖g4 ♗d6 50 ♗e1 ♗f8 (D)



51 b4!

Creating more room for the bishops.

51...axb4 52 cxb4 ♖d5 53 b5 ♗b4

It seems natural to get rid of one of the two bishops, but on the other hand a knight is a poor defender when battling against an outside passed pawn.

54 ♗xb4 ♖xb4 55 ♗e2 ♖f5 56 ♖h6 ♖f6 57 ♖h5 ♖f5 58 b3!

Zugzwang.

58...♖d5 59 ♗d3+ ♖e5 60 ♖g4 ♖f6+ 61 ♖f3

At last – the king has escaped, and the game has reached a typical bishop vs knight ending. We shall return to this type of ending later in this chapter. Suffice it to say that the short-legged knight does not deal well with an outside passed pawn like the h-pawn.

61...♖g8 62 h5 ♖h6 63 ♗g6 ♖g8 64 ♗c2 ♖h6 65 ♗d3 ♖g8 66 ♖g4 ♖f6+ 67 ♖g5! f3 68 h6 f2 69 ♖g6 ♖d5 70 ♗c4

White does not hurry, but 70 h7 wins as long as White meets 70...♖f4+ with 71 ♖g5 (and not 71 ♖g7? ♖xd3).

70...♖e4!

Or 70...♖e3 71 ♗e2. The text-move is a good try, but White is alert.

71 ♖f7!

Again accurate. 71 h7 is less clear due to 71...♖f4+ 72 ♖f7 ♖d3 73 h8 ♖ f1 ♖+.

71...♖e3

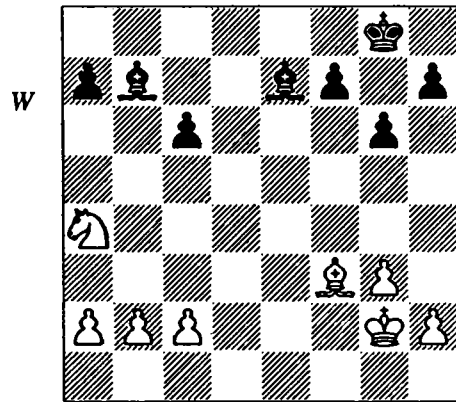
Now 71...♖f4 is answered by 72 ♗f1!.

72 ♗e2 ♖f5 73 h7 ♖e3 74 ♗f1 ♖g3 75 ♗g2

1-0

The question of how and when to transform a two-bishop ending into a bishop vs knight or

bishop vs bishop ending is crucial in this type of endgame. Both sides should be aware of these potential transitions. Here is an example where this theme turns out to be game-deciding.



Sadvakasov – Kramnik
Astana 2001

At first sight White seems to be doing OK. The b7-bishop does not appear to be a star actor in a ‘two-bishop movie’! And indeed White is fine, but he needs to be accurate, since it is easy for Black to advance his kingside pawns and activate his king, and given a few moves Black may be able to coordinate his pieces and exploit the two bishops.

30 ♖f2 f5 31 c4?

I believe this is wrong. Since the e7-bishop is Black’s strong bishop, White should instead worry about countering that. This is best done by 31 a3! a5 32 c3! followed by 33 b4, when in my opinion White has nothing to fear.

31...♖f7 32 c5 a5 33 a3 ♖e6 34 b4 axb4 35 axb4 ♖e5! 36 ♖e3

36 b5? cxb5 37 ♗xb7 bxa4 loses for White. We shall return to this kind of endgame with opposite-coloured bishops later in this chapter.

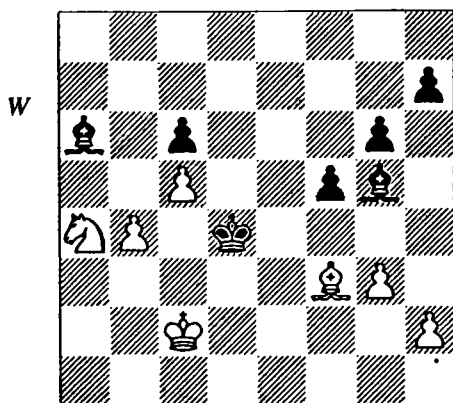
36...♗g5+ 37 ♖d3 ♗a6+

The hitherto passive bishop has escaped!

38 ♖c2 ♖d4! (D)

39 ♖c3?

The second inaccuracy, after which White is lost. Now the two bishops really do become powerful. It was best to counter this threat by exchanging one of them – even at the cost of a pawn. White’s best was 39 ♗xc6 ♖c4 40 b5! ♗xb5 41 ♗xb5+ ♖xb5 42 ♖c3+ ♖xc5 43



♔d3 , when White should have good drawing chances. With all the pawns on the same wing, the knight is often not inferior to the bishop.

39... ♙d3+ 40 ♔b3 ♜c4+ 41 ♔c2 ♙d3+ 42 ♔b3 ♙d2! 43 ♚d1 ♙e4! 44 ♙e2

Now it is too late for White to exchange the bishops – 44 ♙xe4 fxe4 is dead lost.

44... ♙d5+ 45 ♔a4 g5!

The pawns start rolling. As explained earlier, two bishops are very good at supporting passed pawns.

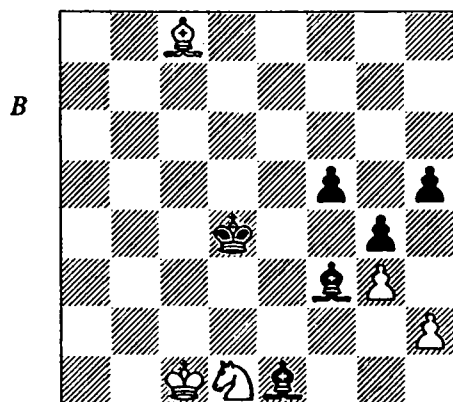
46 **b5**

A desperate attempt to create some confusion.

46... ♔xc5 47 bxc6 ♙xc6+ 48 ♔b3 ♔d4 49 ♙f1 ♙e1 50 ♙e2 g4 51 ♙a6 h5 52 ♔c2 ♙e4+ 53 ♔c1

The powerful bishops prevent the king from returning to the defence.

53... ♙f3 54 ♙c8 (D)

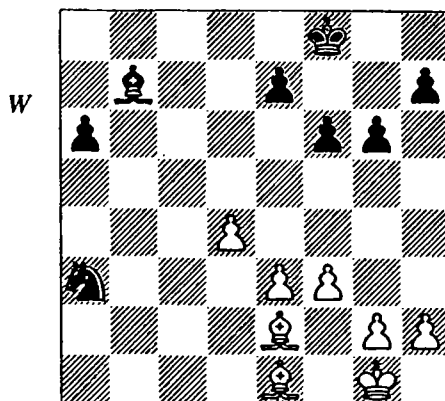


54... f4! 55 gxf4 h4 56 f5 g3 57 hxc3 hxc3

This pawn cannot be stopped in an appropriate way. 58 f6 g2 59 f7 ♙b4 shows the power of a long-range bishop compared to a knight. White therefore resigned.

0-1

Due to their long range, the two bishops are often superior to bishop and knight when the pawn-structure is asymmetrical. This theme has been seen in many games.



L.B. Hansen – Schandorff
Danish Ch (Aalborg) 1994

In some types of endgames – such as pawn, knight or rook endings – an outside passed pawn on the a-file is a real asset. But with two powerful bishops this pawn is not really dangerous, and the question is much more whether Black can successfully counter White's slow build-up of pressure on the other wing.

30 ♔f2 ♚b5 31 h4 ♔f7 32 ♙a5 ♙c6

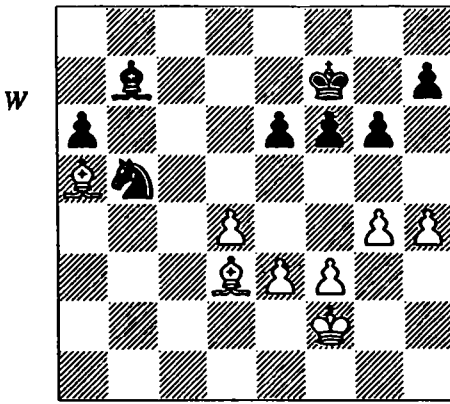
On the past three moves both players decided not to take any crucial decisions regarding the pawn-structure. The big question was whether Black should attempt to restrain e4 by ...f5, and if White should have prevented this by g4. In my original notes to this game, I indicated that ...f5 was the right set-up for Black and conversely that White should therefore have played g4. Now I am not so sure. While ...f5 does restrain e4, it also weakens the dark squares indefinitely, and White might exploit this by ♔g3-f4 , threatening to enter on the dark squares while again planning e4.

33 ♙d3 ♙b7 34 g4!

Now I decided to gain space on the kingside.

34... e6?! (D)

In my original notes I did not comment on this move. However, now I think it is inaccurate to weaken the dark squares voluntarily. Furthermore, it makes it easier for White to achieve a passed pawn on the d-file. But without ...e6, White gains further space by a timely e4 followed by d5.



35 ♔g3!

White exploits Black's previous move by bringing his king to f4 and undermining the black pawn-structure by g5. This creates an entry square for the king on e5.

35...♙d5 36 ♖b4 ♖b7 37 g5!

Now we see the drawback of 34...e6. This thrust would be less powerful with the e-pawn still on e7.

37...♞c7 38 ♖a5 ♞d5 39 e4 ♞e7 40 ♖c3!

Forcing the f6-pawn to make up its mind.

40...f5 41 ♔f4

And now the path has been opened for the white king. White is winning.

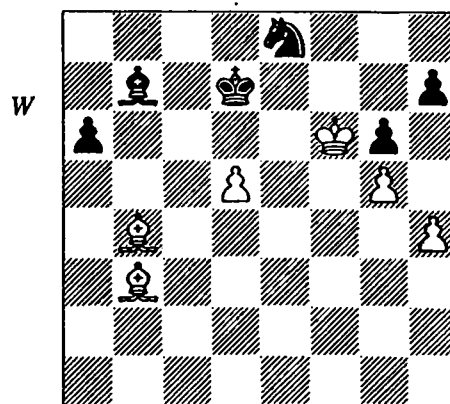
41...fxe4 42 fxe4 ♞c6 43 ♖c4 ♔e7 44 d5!

Everything has been prepared for this advance. White systematically opens the position for the two bishops.

44...exd5 45 exd5 ♞d8 46 ♖b4+ ♔d7 47 ♔e5!

The king now enters this ideal square and simultaneously dominates the knight on e8.

47...♞f7+ 48 ♔f6 ♞d6 49 ♖b3 ♞e8+ (D)



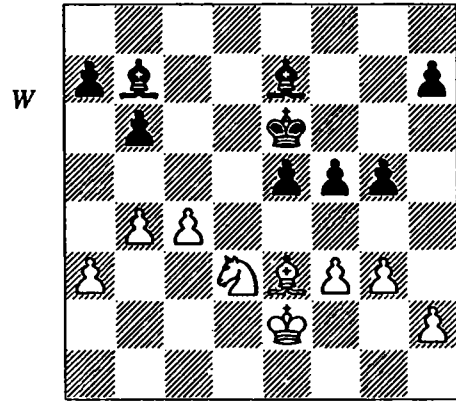
50 ♔e5!

Stronger than 50 ♔f7. The king supports the d6 advance while again dominating the knight.

50...♔c8 51 d6 ♖c6 52 ♖g8

Winning material. Notice that material gain is only achieved at the very end of the game.

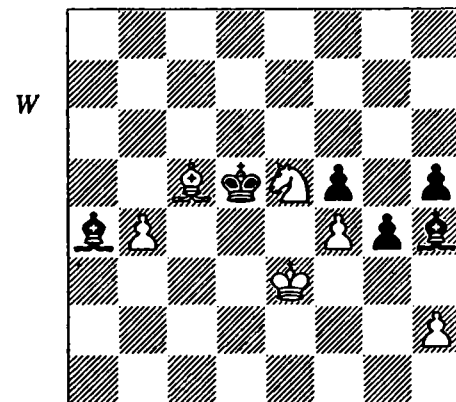
52...♞g7 53 ♖xb7 1-0



Ward – P.H. Nielsen
Copenhagen 2001

With pawns on both wings and an asymmetrical structure, the two bishops gain in strength. As in my game with Schandorff, White must decide whether to stay put or to play actively. Ward decides to act, but in the process he allows Black a potential outside passed pawn. Perhaps it would have been more tenacious simply to wait for Black to show his hand.

32 f4?! exf4 33 gxf4 g4! 34 a4 h5 35 c5 ♖f3+ 36 ♔f2 ♖e4 37 cxb6 axb6 38 ♞e5 ♖c2 39 ♖xb6 ♖xa4 40 ♖c5 ♖h4+ 41 ♔e3 ♔d5! (D)

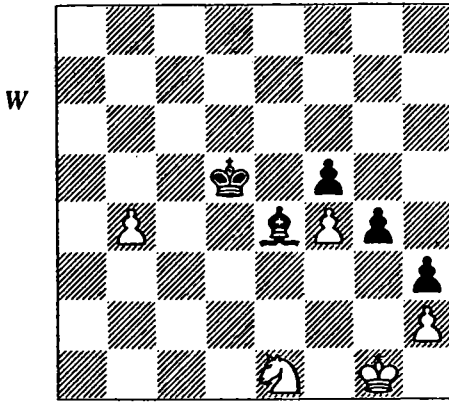


The same principle as in the previous game! The black king enters via the central square e4.

42 ♞g6 ♖f6 43 ♞e5 h4 44 ♖a7 h3!

Threatening 45...g3. The white king must retreat, thus leaving the door open for the black king.

45 ♖f2 ♙h4+ 46 ♖g1 ♙e1 47 ♗d3 ♙d2 48 ♙f2 ♙c2 49 ♙e1 ♙xe1 50 ♗xe1 ♙e4! (D)



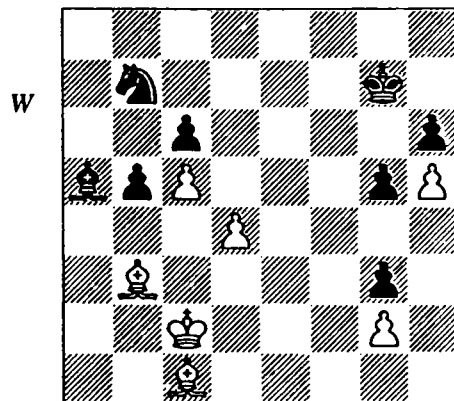
Domination! The black king picks up the b4-pawn and subsequently the knight. White might as well have resigned here.

51 ♖f2 ♖c4 52 ♖g3 ♖xb4 53 ♖f2 ♖c3 54 ♖g3 ♖d2 55 ♖f2 g3+!

The final touch.

56 ♖xg3 ♖xe1 57 ♖xh3 ♖f2 58 ♖h4 ♖g2 0-1

As we have seen, material is often not the most important concern in such endgames. It is much more vital to create room for the two bishops, so that they can demonstrate their strengths. Especially so, if they can support a far-advanced passed pawn.



Karpov – Seirawan
Brussels 1986

Black is a pawn up, but White has two powerful bishops, and the knight is stranded on b7. If you place this knight on f6 instead, then the evaluation of the position changes dramatically! But as it is, White can open up the position for the

two bishops and achieve a dangerous passed pawn on the c-file.

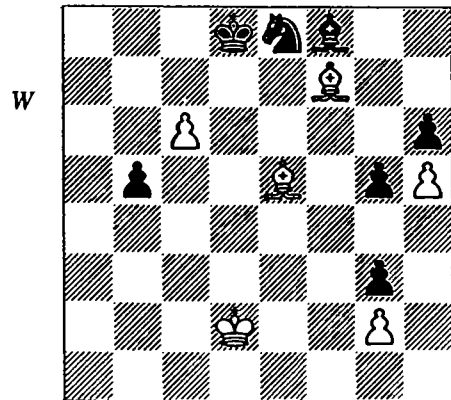
54 d5! ♗xc5 55 ♙b2+ ♖f8 56 dxc6 ♗a6

Neutralizing the two bishops by 56...♗xb3 doesn't help Black; with the kingside pawns fixed on dark squares, he will have a hard time coping with the c-pawn without losing the h6-pawn.

57 ♙a3+ ♖e8 58 ♙e6 ♙b4 59 ♙b2 ♙f8 60 ♙d7+ ♖d8 61 ♙e5!

Black still has his extra pawn, but the white bishops dominate the proceedings.

61...♗b4+ 62 ♖d2 ♗d5 63 ♙e6 ♗c7 64 ♙f7 ♗e8 (D)



65 ♙xe8!

Exploiting the principle of *transformation of advantages!* Karpov pragmatically abandons the two bishops to reach an easily winning same-colour bishop ending where Black has two weaknesses (another one of the principles): the h6-pawn and the problem of holding back the c-pawn. That is too much at once.

65...♖xe8 66 ♙f6!

Very accurate. The black king is kept away from the c-pawn. Note that Karpov doesn't bother with material; the g3-pawn is not important at the moment.

66...g4 67 ♖c3

Zugzwang! The king cannot move (because then the c-pawn queens), and 67...b4+ 68 ♖c4 doesn't change much.

67...♙d6 68 ♙g7 ♙f4 69 ♖b4! ♖d8 70 ♖xb5 ♖c7 71 ♖c5

Compare this game to the Larsen-Stein game from the section on same-colour bishop endings. While the black king is tied to the c-pawn, the white king can move freely around. *King activity* is always important!

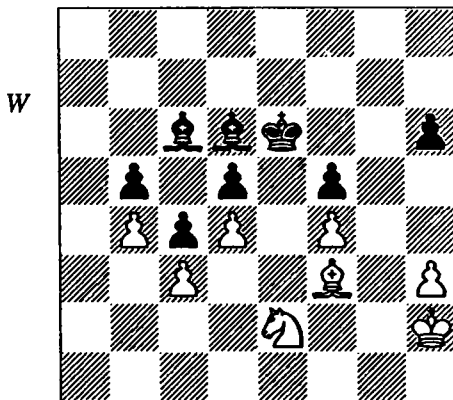
71...♙e3+ 72 ♔d5 ♙f4 73 ♙f8

Zugzwang again.

73...♗b6 74 ♙d6 ♙g5 75 ♙xg3 1-0

White plays 76 c7 and brings his king to the kingside, picking up both black pawns before queening the h-pawn.

Aren't there any situations where knights are better than two bishops? Yes, of course, although this is comparatively rare. When it happens, it is usually in closed positions where the bishops cannot display their long-range powers. Rather, the knights can jump around, exploiting any holes in the enemy position.



Torre – P.H. Nielsen
Bled OL 2002

In this closed position the bishops aren't worth much. Furthermore, the pawns on d5 and f5 are easy for White to attack. White is better.

52 ♙h5!

A good prophylactic move. White prevents any chance of Black's light-squared bishop becoming active by controlling the only diagonal on which this could happen.

52...♙e7 53 ♗g3 ♙f6 54 ♖g1!

The knight is transferred to better squares. Notice that the closed nature of the position makes time of little concern.

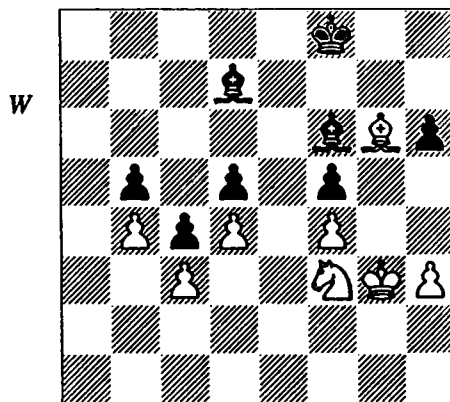
54...♗e7 55 ♙g6 ♙d7 56 ♖f3 ♗f8 57 ♖e5

57 ♖e1! (intending ♖c2-e3, hitting d5 and f5) is even better, but Torre utilizes the principle of *not hurrying*.

57...♙e6

Black has no counterplay, and he cannot take the knight, as 57...♙xe5 58 fxe5 followed by 59 ♗f4 leaves White with an easily winning same-colour bishop ending.

58 ♖f3 ♙d7 (D)



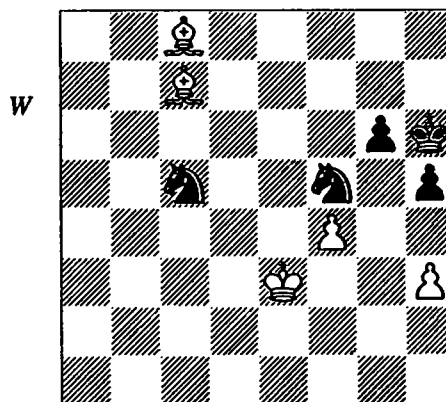
59 ♖e1!

On the right track.

59...♗g7 60 ♙h5 ♗f8 61 ♖c2! ♙e6 62 ♖e3

Black can no longer prevent the loss of a pawn. Notice how utterly powerless the bishops are in this closed position.

62...♗e7 63 ♙g6 ♙g7 64 ♙xf5 ♙f7 65 ♙c8 ♙f8 66 ♙a6 1-0



Schandorff – S.B. Hansen
Danish Ch (Køge) rpd 2005

To conclude this section, here is a short fragment illustrating the rare occurrence of two knights dominating two bishops on an almost open board. We are in the final seconds of the semi-final of the Danish Championship 2005. White – being 2-1 down – has pushed for the win, but now he had nothing better than settling for a draw with 56 ♙xf5 gx5. But instead there followed:

56 ♗d2?? ♖e7!

And suddenly the bishop is trapped. White cannot prevent the loss of a piece.

57 ♖b6 ♜e4+ 0-1

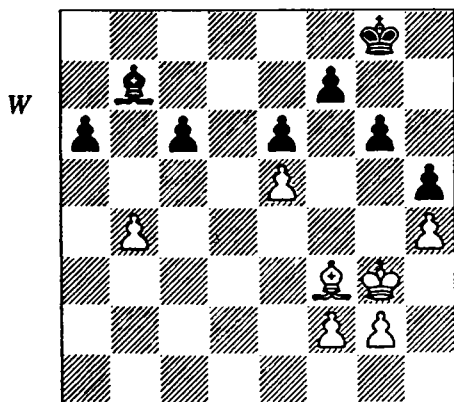
White resigned due to 58 ♔e3 ♜xc8, and the bishop on b6 hangs.

Same-Coloured Bishops

In endgames with same-coloured bishops, the key questions can basically be summarized like this:

- Who has the better pawn-structure?
- Who has the (potentially) more active king?

The pawn-structure is important not just to evaluate the strength of the pawn-structure itself – looking for weak pawns and holes in the chain – but also because the pawn-structure determines which is the ‘bad’ bishop and which is the ‘good’ bishop. A bad bishop is a bishop with the pawns placed on the same colour squares as the bishop. In this case it even may not help to have an extra pawn, as Karpov shows in the following instructive example.



Karpov – Lautier
Biel 1992

The black bishop on b7 is a sorry sight, as *all* Black’s pawns are placed on the light squares. Therefore White has plenty of weaknesses to probe. Objectively, Black is lost. Note, however, that this is only the case due to the presence of *two weaknesses*. It is not only the queenside pawns and the bishop that are weak; so is the kingside, where the white king has free access on the dark squares. With the g- and h-pawns on, for instance, g7 and h6, Black would be doing fine. In that case, he could bring his king to the queenside and may at some point even be

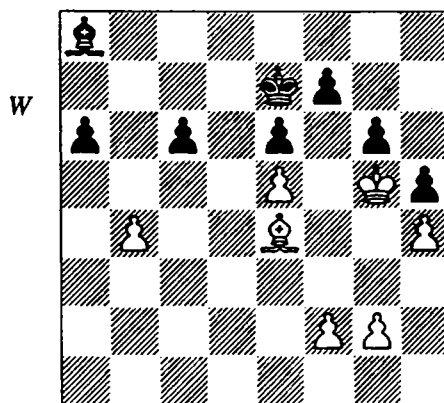
able to push ...c5. With the present kingside pawn-structure, the black king must stay there to counter the advance of the white king – but in vain.

33 ♔f4 ♔f8

After 33...♔g7 34 ♔e3! ♔f8 (34...f6 35 ♔d4 is no better) White must avoid the fatal 35 ♔d4?? c5+! 36 bxc5 ♖xf3 37 gxf3 g5!, and play 35 ♔d3.

34 ♔g5 ♔e7 35 ♖e4 ♖a8 (D)

It doesn’t help to give up the extra pawn by 35...♖c8 36 ♖xc6 – the bishop is still trapped and inactive.



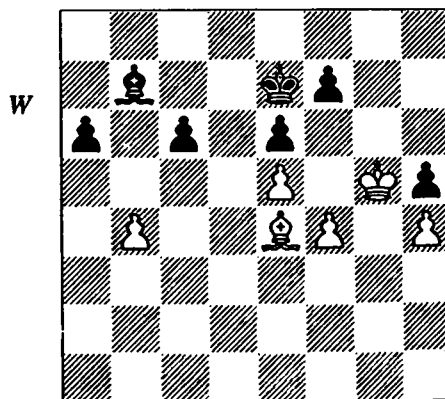
36 f3!

The winning plan. White utilizes the principle of two weaknesses by playing f3 and g4. This leaves Black with the choice between plague and cholera – either he allows the h5-pawn to be isolated and subsequently lost, or he allows White a monster passed pawn on the h-file.

36...♖b7 37 g4! ♖a8

Or 37...hxg4 38 fxg4 ♖a8 39 h5 gxh5 40 gxh5 ♔f8 41 ♔f6 and wins.

38 gxh5 gxh5 39 f4! ♖b7 (D)

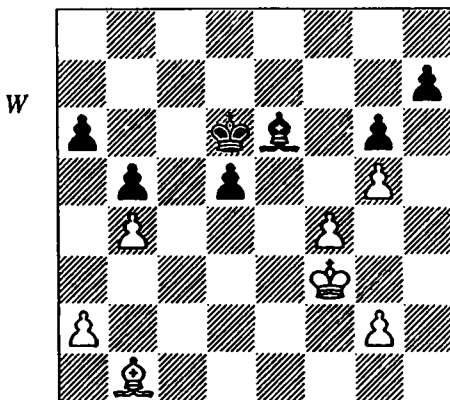


40 ♖f3!

Note these two patient moves! Karpov does not hurry to take the h-pawn but improves his position to the maximum first. After the direct 40 ♖xh5 Black could try 40...f5, which enables him to bring his king to f7 (41 ♙f3 ♖f7). There is no need to allow that.

40...♙a8 41 ♖xh5 1-0

Now, on the other hand, 41...f5 does not hit the bishop and White can calmly play 42 ♖g6 and start pushing his h-pawn. Black therefore resigned.



Karpov – Hort
Budapest 1973

Again we have a Karpov game where the opponent's pawns are all on the wrong colour. The players have just swapped knights on e6 (perhaps Black should have attempted to avoid that), and now Karpov activates his king and starts probing Black's numerous weaknesses (a6, d5, g6/h7).

38 ♖e3 ♙g4 39 ♙d3

There is no need to hurry with 39 ♖d4, as this would allow Black to activate his bishop by 39...♙e2. While this is not really dangerous, there is no need to allow Black even a hint of counterplay.

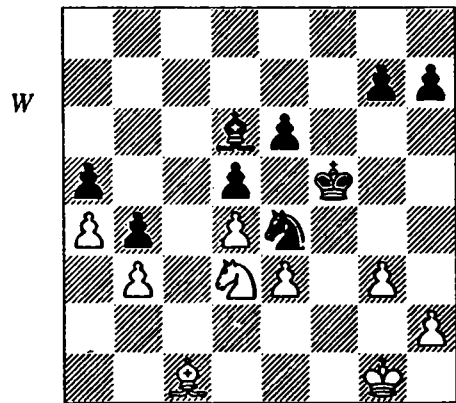
39...♙e6 40 ♖d4 ♙g4 41 ♙c2 ♙e6 42 ♙b3 ♙f7 43 ♙d1!

Black has too many weaknesses. He must cover d5, but White also threatens ♙g4-c8. Thus, zugzwang decides.

43...♙e6 44 ♙f3 ♙f7 45 ♙g4 1-0

The pawn ending after 45...♙e6 46 ♙xe6 ♖xe6 47 g4 ♖d6 48 f5 is hopeless for Black – another consequence of the superior activity of the white king.

Notice how deficiencies in the pawn-structure allow the king of the 'attacking side' to become active and obtain a dominant position. This frequently happens in bishop endings. It is easy to underestimate the dangers here, since at first sight there may not be anywhere for the king or bishop to enter. But an active king or a better bishop is a stable, long-term advantage, and the position may slowly be improved.



Hertneck – Yusupov
Bundesliga 1995/6

33 ♖f2?

In his notes to this game for *ChessBase*, Yusupov does not comment on this move. Yet to my mind it is not a trivial decision. The same critical exchange – leading into a difficult bishop ending – was seen in the previous game, Karpov-Hort. White commits an *exchanging mistake* (one of our principles is 'making the right exchanges') and allows the black king free access to e4. Like in the previous two Karpov games, Black is able to exploit his better bishop and more active king to put the opponent in a lethal zugzwang. I believe White would have had better drawing chances with the knights still on the board, though Black is certainly better.

33...♖xf2 34 ♖xf2 ♖e4 35 ♖e2 g5!

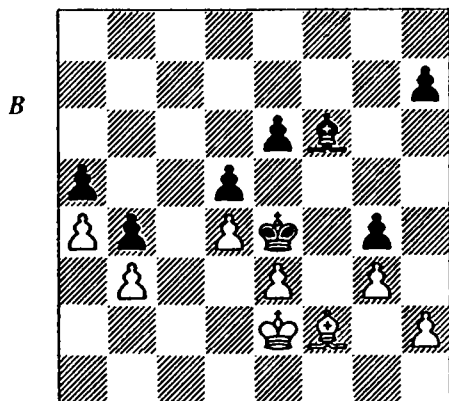
This gains further space on the kingside and nails down White's pawns on dark squares.

36 ♙d2

Passive defence will not cut it, so desperate measures could be considered. One such idea is to give up a pawn by 36 g4! to avoid being tied up on the kingside. But it doesn't help; Yusupov gives the winning line 36...♙xh2 37 ♙d2 ♙g3 38 ♙c1 ♙d6 39 ♙d2 ♙e7 40 ♙e1 ♙f6 41 ♙g3 e5 42 dxe5 ♙xe5 43 ♙f2 ♙h2 44 ♙e1 d4

45 exd4 ♖xd4 46 ♗d2 h6 47 ♙e1 ♗f4, and Black wins, as White is in zugzwang.

36...g4 37 ♙e1 ♙e7 38 ♗f2 ♗g5! 39 ♗g1 ♗f6 40 ♗f2 (D)

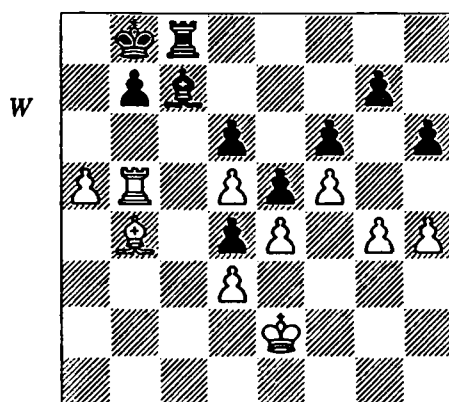


40...e5!

The decisive break. Notice that Yusupov has not touched his h-pawn. Some people might have played ...h5 'just to reinforce the king-side', but Yusupov has recognized that he needs to have a waiting move in reserve for an eventual king and pawn ending.

41 dxе5 ♗xe5 42 ♙e1 ♗c3! 0-1

Hertneck resigned as he ends up in a fatal zugzwang. The queen ending after 43 ♗xc3 bxc3 44 b4 axb4 45 a5 b3 46 a6 b2 47 a7 b1 ♙ 48 a8 ♙ ♙d3+ is hopeless, and after 43 ♗f2 the h-pawn decides: 43...h6! 44 ♗g1 d4! 45 exd4 ♗xd4 46 ♗xd4 ♖xd4 47 ♖d2 h5!, and Black penetrates.



Karpov – Ribli
Bath Echt 1973

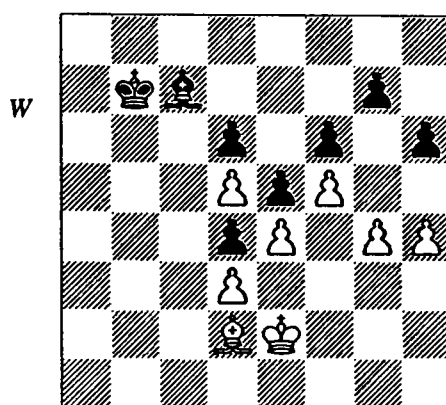
White has the better bishop, pressure against b7, and more space. With his next move Karpov

initiates a *transformation of advantages through the right exchange*. He abandons the pressure on b7 in return for a transition into a bishop ending, which he has rightly judged as winning for White.

56 a6! ♖a7

The only alternative was 56...b6, but Ribli (and I would agree with him) probably assessed 57 ♗xd6! ♗xd6 58 ♖xb6+ ♖c7 59 ♖b7+ ♖d8 60 ♖xg7 as won for White.

57 axb7 ♖b8 58 ♗d2 ♖xb7 59 ♖xb7+ ♖xb7 (D)

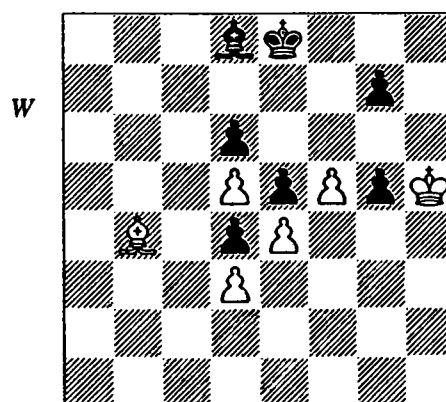


60 g5!

Creating a path forward for the white king via f3-g4-h5-g6.

60...hgx5 61 hxg5 ♗d8 62 ♖f3 ♖c8 63 ♖g4 ♖d7 64 ♖h5 ♖e8 65 ♗b4 fxg5 (D)

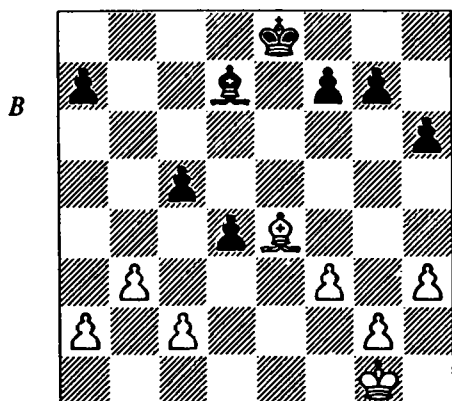
65...♙e7 66 gxf6 gxf6 67 ♖g6 doesn't help – White transfers the bishop to h4 and chalks up the f6-pawn. But the text-move is hopeless too.



66 ♗xd6 ♗f6 67 ♗b4 ♖f7 68 ♗d2 ♙e7 69 ♗xg5 ♗a3 70 ♗d8 ♗d6 71 ♖g5 1-0

71...♖e8 72 f6! gxf6+ (72...♖xd8 73 fxg7) 73 ♗xf6 followed by 74 ♖f5 is beyond hope for Black.

As will be clear from the preceding examples, the pawn-structure and king activity are the two main principles in bishop endings. But they should be combined with other principles as well. One of these is not to hurry if you have a stable advantage. The opponent may be worn down and commit an error. Here is a good example:



Zhang Pengxiang – Motylev
Sanjin 2005

With the given pawn-structure, Black can be said to have a slight advantage due to his better bishop. Still, one would think a draw is the most likely outcome. The pawn-structure is not fixed and White does not seem to have too many imminent weaknesses. However, with clever play Motylev manages to maintain some pressure and eventually ‘force’ an error.

24...f5!

This gains space and prepares a path for the black king. There is space for a potential invasion on the dark squares on the kingside.

25 ♖d3 f4! 26 ♔f2 ♔e7 27 ♖a6 ♖f5 28 ♖d3 ♖e6 29 ♖c4 ♖f5 30 ♖d3 ♖c8

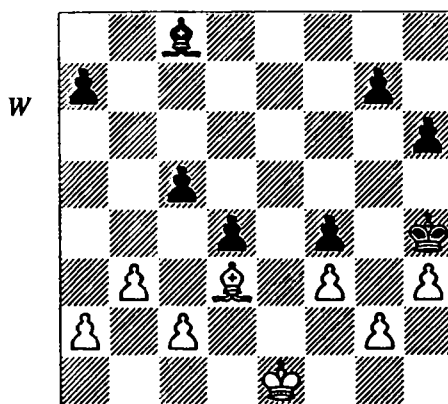
The pawn ending is drawn, but Black does not have to hurry.

31 ♔e1 ♔f6 32 ♔d2 ♔g5 33 ♔e1 ♔h4 (D)

Black has improved the position of his king, but there are still no real gains – White can prevent the further advance of the king, and contrary to the previous games there seems to be no imminent danger of zugzwang. So Black bides his time, hoping for an opening.

34 ♔f2 ♖e6 35 ♖a6 ♖f5 36 ♖d3 ♖c8 37 ♖c4 ♖b7 38 ♖d3 ♖c6 39 ♖a6 ♖d5 40 a4?!

An instructive moment. While the text-move may not be a real mistake, it is exactly what

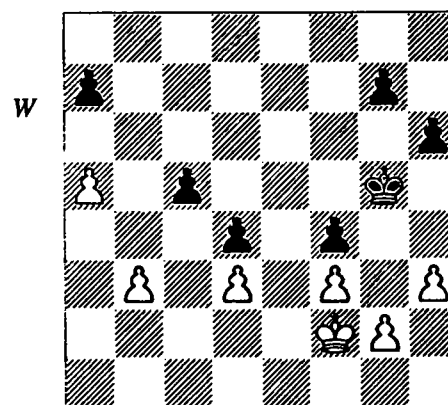


Black has been waiting for: any sign of additional weaknesses to attack. When defending such slightly worse but basically safe positions, you should avoid making any concessions – patience is the main requirement here!

40...♖e6 41 a5?

While the previous move was mainly inaccurate on the grounds of our principles, this is a clear mistake. Superficially, it places the pawn on the ‘right’ square (given the light-squared bishops), but in a *pawn ending* this pawn is just weak. Thus Black can now enter the pawn ending, which was drawn on moves 28 or 30.

41...♖f5! 42 ♖d3 ♖xd3 43 cxd3 ♔g5! (D)



Heading for the a5-pawn.

44 g3

Black is first in the king race: 44 ♔e2 ♔f5 45 ♔d2 ♔e5 46 ♔c2 ♔d5 47 ♔b2 ♔c6 48 ♔a3 ♔b5, and the a5-pawn falls.

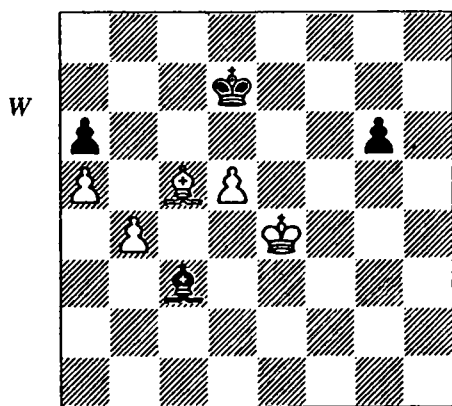
44...♔f5 45 h4

This allows Black to create an outside passed pawn, but White was lost in any case.

45...fxg3+ 46 ♔xg3 g5! 0-1

The threat is 47...gxh4+ 48 ♔xh4 ♔f4, and both 47 hxg5 ♔xg5! and 47 h5 a6! are hopeless for White.

To finish off this section, I shall give an example from which I learned a lot when I first studied the games of my great countryman Bent Larsen as a teenager. Notice the impressive footwork of the white king:



Larsen – Stein
Belgrade (USSR vs RoW) 1970

Larsen is a pawn up, but at first sight it does not seem easy to make any progress. But by exploiting the principle of *transformation of advantages*, Larsen gives up his extra pawn to gain another advantage: *an active king*, and this turns out to be decisive.

61 b5! axb5 62 a6 ♖c8 63 d6 ♔b8 64 ♔d5!

Material is now even, but notice the difference in king activity! Despite the limited material, Black is lost. While the black king is tied to the defence of the two passed pawns, the white king can stroll around the board, picking up both black pawns.

64...♗f6

64...b4 65 ♖c4 doesn't change anything.

65 ♖c6 g5 66 ♔xb5

There goes the first one!

66...g4 67 ♖c4 ♔a8 68 ♔d3 ♗e5 69 d7

Certainly not 69 ♖e4?? ♗xd6 70 ♗xd6 ♔a7 with a draw.

69...♗c7 70 ♖e4 g3 71 ♔f3

Black is in zugzwang – 71...♔b8? is answered by 72 ♗d6!

71...♗d8 72 ♔xg3

And there goes the second one!

72...♗a5 73 ♔g4 ♗d8 74 ♔f5 ♗a5 75 ♖e6 ♗c7 76 ♔f7 ♗a5 77 ♖e8 ♗c7 78 ♗e7!

Now it is a trivial technical endgame, and this is the well-known manoeuvre to queen the pawn.

78...♗a5 79 ♗d8 ♗d2 80 ♗b6 ♗g5 81 ♗c5! 1-0

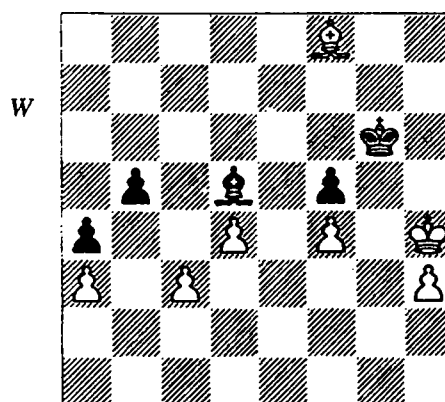
Now there is no defence against 82 ♗e7.

A very instructive example to emphasize once again the power of the pawn-structure and king activity in bishop endgames!

Opposite-Coloured Bishops

We now turn to the other kind of bishop endings: those with opposite-coloured bishops. These differ from endings with same-coloured bishops in several fundamental aspects. The essential features in opposite-coloured endings are these:

- *Passed pawns* are essential and often more important than absolute material.
- For the defensive side, a key concept is *blockade* (and for the superior side how to break the blockade).
- *King activity* is once again crucial.
- *Zugzwang* and *tactics* are often necessary to break through the opponent's defences.



Pavasović – Hector
Plovdiv Echt 2003

This is a typical opposite-coloured bishop endgame. White is two pawns up, but this material superiority does not in itself guarantee a win in an endgame with opposite-coloured bishops. In fact, Black has managed to set up a fortress (blockade) which is difficult for White to break down. There are no apparent entry squares for the king, and one common theme in this kind of endgame is the fact that pawns cannot advance on their own; they must have support from the

'commander in chief' – the king. This explains White's next move. A potential entry route via c3 and b4 is more important than an extra pawn.

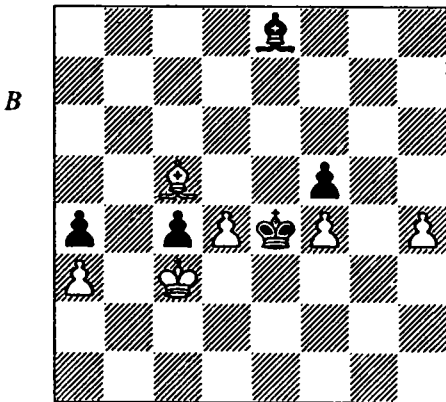
67 c4! bxc4?

A difficult decision. How should Black take? It seems natural to take with the pawn in order to have some potential counterplay with this pawn. But the counterplay is only superficial, and I believe it would have been better to take with the bishop to keep the queenside pawns connected. In the game Black experiences difficulties with the now isolated a4-pawn, and it is eventually lost.

68 ♖b4 ♙f7 69 ♙c3 ♙d5 70 ♖g3 ♖h5 71 ♙e1 ♙c6 72 ♖h2 ♖g6 73 ♖g1 ♖f6 74 ♖f2 ♖e6 75 ♖e3 ♖d5 76 ♙f2 ♙e8 77 ♙e1 ♙f7 78 ♙b4 ♙e8 79 ♙a5 ♙f7 80 ♙e1 ♙e8 81 ♙f2 ♙f7 82 h4

Finally this pawn advances! Pavasović kept it on h3 for a long time for two reasons: there was no need to hurry, and in some cases the king needed the h4-square to penetrate into Black's position.

82...♙e8 83 ♙e1 ♙f7 84 ♙d2 ♙e8 85 ♙b4 ♙h5 86 ♙c5 ♙f7 87 ♙a7 ♙h5 88 ♙c5 ♙e8 89 ♖d2 ♖e4 90 ♖c3 (D)



90...♙f7

Since passed pawns are the key to this type of endgame, on principle 90...♖xf4 91 ♖xc4 would be in White's favour. Still, Black could have tried this, as in the game he cannot maintain the blockade.

91 ♙d6 ♖d5 92 ♙b8 ♙h5 93 ♙e5 ♙f7 94 ♖b4 ♖e4

After 94...♙e8 95 ♙g7 Black is in zugzwang. The bishop cannot leave e8, as it must simultaneously cover a4 (therefore it would have been better to take with the bishop on c4 on move 67)

and prevent h5. So Black has nothing better than 95...♖e4 96 ♖xc4 ♖xf4, but now it is even in a worse version than on move 90.

95 d5!

Again a good example of the principle that in opposite-coloured bishop endgames passed pawns are more important than material. In this case it is Black's pawn on c4 which must be kept under control. White should certainly avoid 95 ♖xa4 c3.

95...♖xd5 96 ♖xa4

Finally!

96...♖c5 97 ♖a5 ♙h5 98 ♙c3 ♙d1 99 a4

Zugzwang again! Black cannot prevent the pawn from advancing – 99...♖d5 100 ♖b5 or 99...♖c6 100 ♖b4.

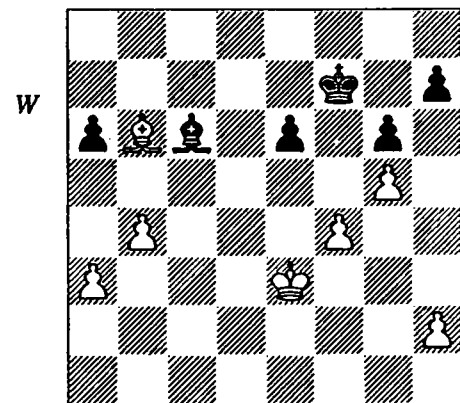
99...♙h5 100 ♖a6 ♖c6 101 ♖a7!

Now the advance of the a-pawn to a6 is secured.

101...♙d1 102 a5 ♖c7 103 a6 ♖c6

103...♖c8 104 ♙e5! ♙h5 105 ♖b6 ♙d1 106 a7 ♙f3 107 h5 or 103...♙h5 104 ♙e5+ followed by 105 ♖b6 or 105 ♖b8 does not help.

104 ♖b8 1-0



Kožul – Pinter

Croatian Cht (Rabac) 2003

White is a pawn up, but can he win? Kožul demonstrates a number of principles on the road to victory: passed pawns, king activity, blockade, tactics and zugzwang. First White brings his king up the board.

38 ♖d4 ♙a4 39 ♖e5 ♙b3 40 ♖d6 ♖e8 41 ♙d4 ♙c4 42 h4 ♙b3 43 ♙f6 ♖f7 44 ♙c3 ♖e8 45 ♖c7 ♙c2 46 ♙e5 ♙b3 47 ♖b6 ♙c4

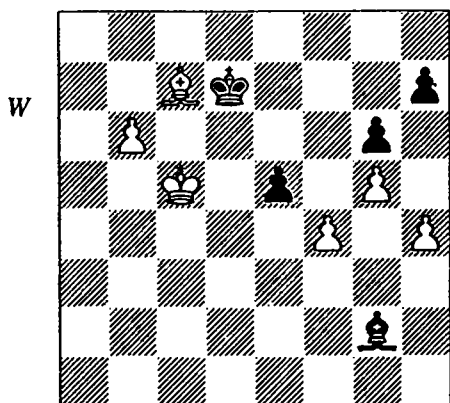
The first step has been accomplished: the white king has been brought to the queenside,

where it can support the advance of the passed pawn.

48 a4 ♖d7 49 ♜c5 ♙e2 50 b5 axb5 51 axb5 ♙f1 52 b6 ♙g2 53 ♙c7

Making room for the king to penetrate to the other side: ♖d4-e5-f6-g7.

53...e5! (D)

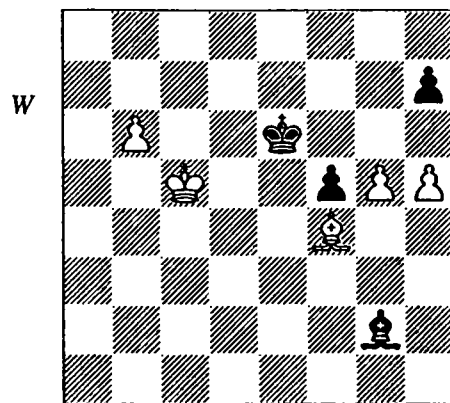


Good defence. After 54 fxe5 ♜e6 or 54 ♙xe5 ♜e6, the black king can shoulder off the white king and prevent the penetration towards the h7-pawn. Material is of less importance. But this good idea is countered by one that is even better.

54 f5!

White secures the emergence of a second passed pawn far away from the first one. This makes it impossible for Black to shoulder off the white king.

54...gxf5 55 ♙xe5 ♜e6 56 ♙f4 ♖d7 57 h5 ♜e6 (D)

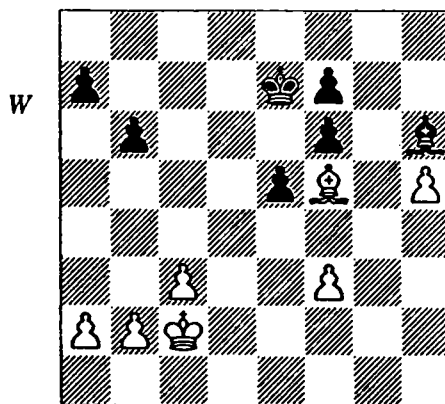


58 h6!

The threat is now 59 g6, and after 58...♖f7 59 ♖d6 followed by 60 ♖c7 and 61 b7, White wins easily. Therefore...

1-0

We have repeatedly seen that passed pawns are more important than material. It is especially helpful if the passed pawns are far apart. That makes the main defensive mechanism in this type of endgame – the blockade – difficult to implement.



Nisipeanu – Azmaiparashvili
Pune 2004

34 b4!

Material is even, but White has a dangerous outside passed pawn and the potential to create a second one on the c-file. Black's pawns, on the other hand, are immobile and lack dynamic possibilities. Black is in difficulty, although White still needs to be accurate. The text-move is stronger than 34 c4 a5!, allowing Black to restrain the pawns.

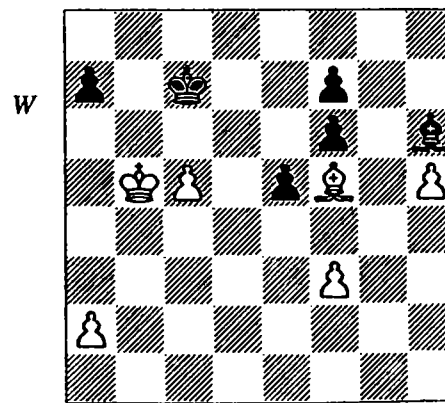
34...♖f8 35 c4 ♜e7 36 ♖b3!

The king supports the advance of the pawns.

36...♖d6 37 ♖a4! ♙e3 38 ♖b5

Zugzwang. Black cannot prevent 39 c5.

38...♖c7 39 c5 bxc5 40 bxc5 ♙h6 (D)



The first phase has been completed. White has turned his queenside majority into a second

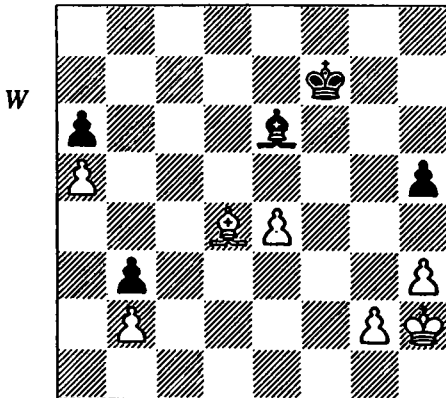
passed pawn. But how to proceed from here? Nisipeanu's answer to this question is straightforward and instructive: first, he brings his king to f5 (using subtle manoeuvres) and the bishop to the a2-g8 diagonal. Then the black king is distracted by the c-pawn, allowing White to capture the f7-pawn. This opens an entry route for the white king to g6, from where it can support the decisive advance of the h-pawn. Sometimes chess is very logical!

41 ♖c4! ♜c6 42 ♙e4+ ♜c7 43 ♜d5 ♜d7 44 ♙d3 ♙f4 45 ♙b5+ ♜e7 46 ♜e4! ♜e6 47 ♙c4+ ♜e7 48 ♜f5 ♙g5 49 c6!

All according to plan!

49...♜d6 50 ♙xf7 ♜xc6 51 ♜g6 1-0

In the previous games we have seen many examples of a king supporting passed pawns. Here are two more examples from the highest circles.



Morozevich – Kramnik
Monaco rpd 2003

Morozevich's two extra pawns do not necessarily secure him victory, as the pawns are closely connected and therefore prone to be blockaded. But with skilful manoeuvres he achieves the goal.

43 ♜g3 ♙c4 44 ♜h4 ♙e2 45 ♜g5 ♜e6 46 ♙c3 ♙d1 47 ♜f4 ♙e2 48 g4 hxg4 49 hxg4

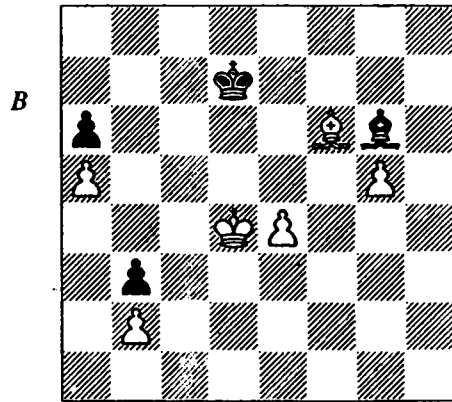
White has converted his pawn-majority into a further passed pawn. But the pawns cannot advance on their own, so the next task is to break through with the king in order to support the pawns.

49...♙d1 50 g5 ♙h5 51 ♜e3!

By threatening to go to the queenside – to attack the a6-pawn – White eventually manages to break through to the kingside. Such pointed

manoeuvres are often necessary to break down a blockade in such endgames.

51...♙g6 52 ♜d4 ♜d6 53 ♜e3 ♙h7 54 ♙f6 ♜c5 55 ♜d3 ♙g6 56 ♙e7+ ♜c6 57 ♜d4 ♜d7 58 ♙f6 (D)



58...♜c6

This gives the white king access to e5 and f6. But 58...♜e6 is no better, as White then approaches the a6-pawn: 59 e5 ♙f5 60 ♜c5! ♙g6 (60...♜f7 61 ♜d6!) 61 ♜b6 ♙d3 62 g6!, and White wins.

59 ♙g7 ♙h7 60 ♜e5! ♙g6 61 ♙f8 ♙h7 62 ♙b4 ♙g6 63 ♜f6!

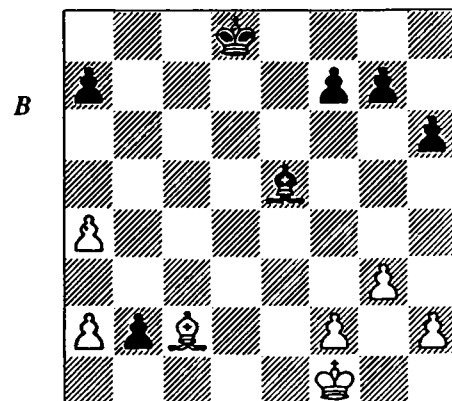
Tactics in the endgame!

63...♙xe4 64 g6 ♙d5

Or 64...♜d7 65 ♜f7 and wins.

65 ♜e7! 1-0

Shouldering off the black king. Now there is no defence to 66 ♜f8 and g7-g8♚.



Psakhis – J. Polgar
Bali 2002

The last pair of rooks has just been exchanged on b2, leaving Black with a dangerous passed

pawn close to the finishing line. But at the moment White has everything under control, and to make progress Black must create play on the kingside as well – otherwise it will be easy for White to shoulder off the black king. Notice how simple Judit makes it seem:

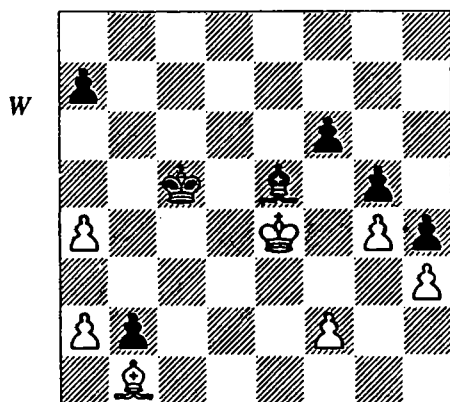
37...h5! 38 h3 g5!

This gives White an unenviable choice. Either he allows his kingside pawns to be fixed on the same colour squares as Black's bishop, thus making them eternal targets, or he plays g4 himself, which momentarily secures the pawns, but opens up a potential entry path for the black king via f4. Psakhis chooses the latter option. It turns out to be inadequate, but it is not easy to criticize the choice, as the alternative was hardly better.

39 g4 h4!

Naturally, Black does not exchange. The h3-pawn is now a potential target for the black king.

40 ♖e2 ♜c7 41 ♜d3 ♜d6 42 ♖e4 f6 43 ♜b1 ♜c5 (D)



Threatening 44...♜c4. The white king must retreat, thereby leaving open the path to f4 for the black king. Notice how these manoeuvres are very similar to Morozevich's in the previous game against Kramnik.

44 ♜d3 ♜d4 45 f3 ♜d5! 46 a5 ♖e5 47 a6 ♜b6!

Transformation of advantages! Black abandons her powerful b2-pawn to break through to the h3-pawn and thereby create a passed h-pawn.

48 ♜c2 ♜f4 49 ♜xb2 ♜g3!

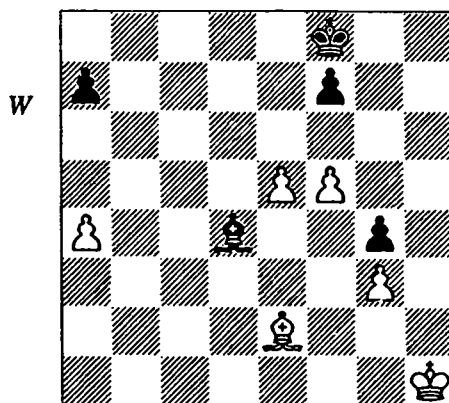
Even better than taking the f3-pawn. That pawn is just in the way.

50 ♜f5 ♜xh3

It is over – the h-pawn decides the game.

51 f4 ♜g2 52 fxg5 fxg5 53 ♜e4+ ♜g1 0-1

As will be clear by now, the main defensive plan in this type of endgame is *blockade* – building a fortress on the same colour squares as one's own bishop that the enemy pawns and king cannot break down.



M. Gurevich – Anand
Venaco rpd 2005

White will be two pawns up – the g4-pawn falls – but Anand builds a blockade that White has no chance of breaking.

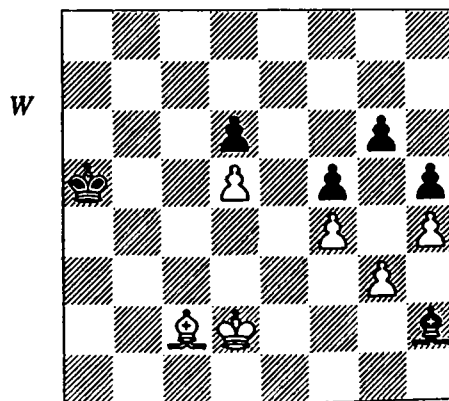
38 e6 f6!

Safer than 38...fxe6 39 fxe6 – there are more chances for White to break the blockade if the pawns are separated.

39 ♜xg4 ♜e7 40 ♜g2 ♜b6 41 ♜f3 ♜c5 42 ♜h3 ♜b6 43 ♜f1 ♜c5 44 ♜g4 a5 45 ♜h5 ♜e3 46 ♜g6 ♜g5

White has no way of making progress.

47 g4 ♜e3 1/2-1/2



J. Polgar – Kramnik
Wijk aan Zee 2003

White is about to lose two pawns, but Polgar uses the concept of blockade in order to scrape a draw. The first step is to loosen up Black's kingside pawns.

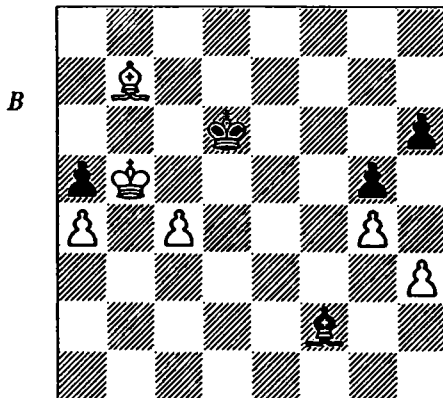
77 g4! ♟xf4+ 78 ♖e2 hxg4 79 h5! gxh5 80 ♟xf5 ♜b4 81 ♟g6!

This is what Dvoretsky calls "pawns in the crosshairs" in *Dvoretsky's Endgame Manual* – the pawns are forced onto squares of the same colour as their own bishop, after which the defender can build a blockade on the opposite-coloured squares.

81...h4 82 ♟f5! g3 83 ♜f3

The position is drawn. Black cannot break down the blockade.

83...♜c4 84 ♟h3 ♟e5 85 ♖e4 ♟f6 86 ♟f1+ ♜c3 87 ♟g2 ♜c4 88 ♟f1+ ♜c5 89 ♟g2 ♟e7 90 ♟f1 ♟d8 91 ♟g2 ♜c4 92 ♟f1+ ♜c3 93 ♟g2 ♜d2 94 ♜f3 ♜d3 95 ♜g4 ♖e3 96 ♜h3 ♟f6 97 ♟h1 ½-½

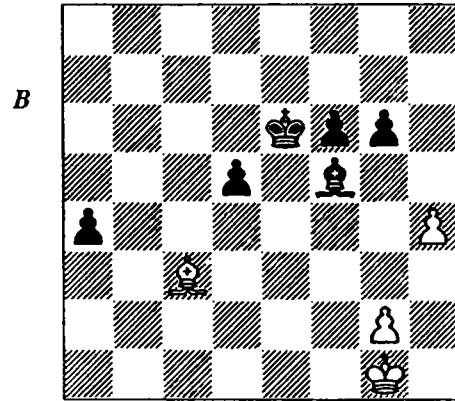


Kramnik – Svidler
Wijk aan Zee 2004

Here we have a curious situation, where a top grandmaster resigned in a drawn position. Svidler had seen that he cannot defend the a5-pawn, as 49...♟e1 is answered by 50 ♜b6! with the threat of 51 c5+. Therefore he resigned. But as Anand pointed out, he could just wait with 49...♟e3 50 ♜xa5 ♜c7 51 ♟e4 ♜d6 52 ♜b4 ♟f2 53 ♜c3 ♟g1 54 ♜d3 ♖e5!. The bishop controls the g1-a7 diagonal, keeping both pawns at bay, while the black king shoulders off its white counterpart, so that it can never penetrate to the kingside. White can make no progress! An instructive position. But...

1-0

When the opponent has built a blockade, the attacker often needs *tactics* to break it down. One such tactic is a *piece sacrifice*. One of the most impressive and famous piece sacrifices is this one:



Topalov – Shirov
Linares 1998

47...♟h3!!

A fantastic idea! White's defensive idea was to play ♜f2-e3 and g3, trying to block Black out. With the text-move Black ensures that his king reaches e4 first – a bishop in return for a tempo!

48 gxh3

Leaving the bishop doesn't help: 48 ♜f2 ♜f5 49 ♜f3 ♟xg2+! 50 ♜xg2 ♖e4, and Black wins in a similar fashion as in the game.

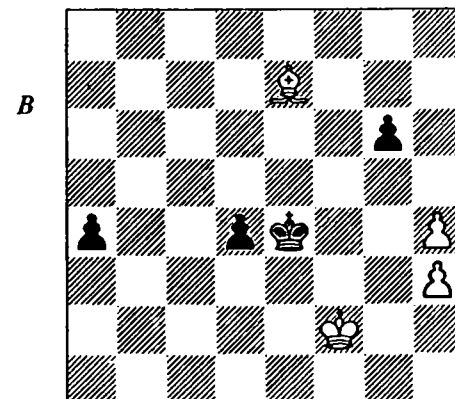
48...♜f5 49 ♜f2 ♖e4 50 ♟xf6

Or 50 ♖e2 a3 51 ♜d2 d4 52 ♟a1 f5, and Black has too many passed pawns.

50...d4

Threatening 51...a3.

51 ♟e7 (D)



51...♜d3!

The right way. The king must prevent the white king from blocking the pawn.

52 ♖c5

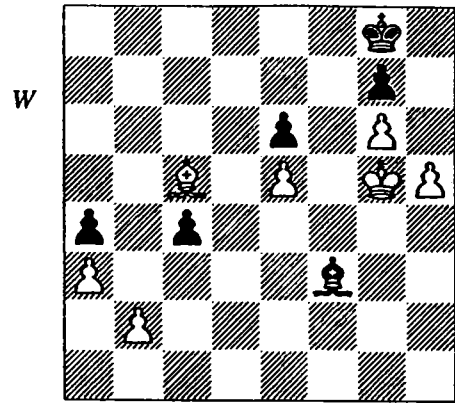
The threat was 52...♔c2, and the d-pawn runs.

52...♔c4!

Winning a vital tempo.

53 ♖e7 ♔b3 0-1

Black wins after 54 ♖c5 d3 55 ♔e3 ♔c2 56 ♖b4 a3.



Dizdar – Pavasović
Šibenik tt 2005

44 h6? gxh6+ 45 ♔xh6 is not dangerous for Black – the g6-pawn is blocked by the king, and all the pawns can be protected by the bishop. But as we know, passed pawns are the key to this type of ending, so Dizdar makes sure that he gets more of those.

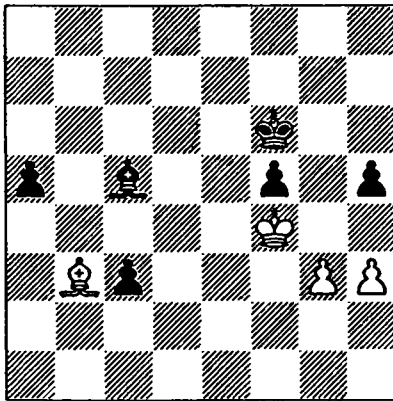
44 ♖e7! ♖e2 45 ♖f6!

The point.

45...♖f3 46 ♖xg7! ♔xg7 47 h6+ ♔g8 48 ♔f6 ♖h5 49 g7 1-0

White simply threatens to pick up the e6-pawn as well, and neither 49...♖f7 50 h7+ nor 49...♖g4 50 h7+! ♔xh7 51 ♔f7 ♖h5+ 52 ♔f8 helps.

Bishop sacrifices are dangerous, but of course they do not always win. In the last fragment of this section we see a successful defence.



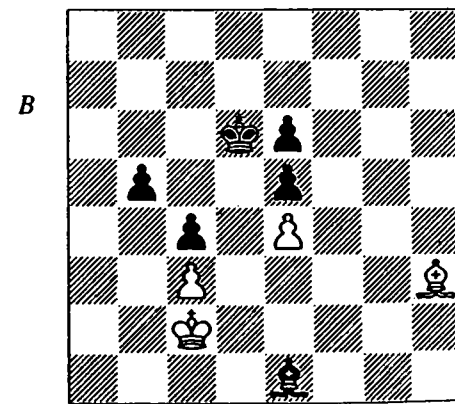
Lautier – Bareev
Enghien les Bains 2003

Black has two extra pawns, but to win he still has to penetrate with his king, so that it can support the passed pawns. This is achieved through a bishop sacrifice:

60...♖f2! 61 ♖c2 ♖e1!

The threat of 62...♖d2+ secures the black king access to e5.

62 ♔f3 ♔e5 63 h4 ♔d4 64 ♔f4 (D)



Nataf – Sargisian
Warsaw Ech 2005

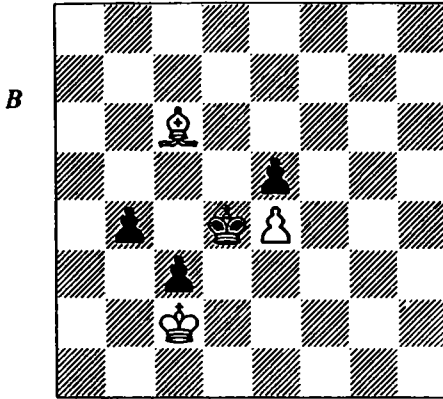
64...♖xg3+! 0-1

Black wins after 65 ♔xg3 ♔e3 followed by 66...♔d2 and 67...c2.

49...♖xc3!? 50 ♔xc3 ♔c5 51 ♖xe6 b4+ 52 ♔c2 ♔d4 53 ♖d5 c3

53...b3+ 54 ♖c1 ♜c3 55 ♙e6 ♜b4 56 ♜b2 c3+ 57 ♜c1 ♜a3 58 ♙d5 c2 59 ♙e6 ♜a2 60 ♙d5, and Black cannot make any progress.

54 ♙c6! (D)



54...b3+!?

An interesting attempt, but it was exactly this idea that White's last move was directed against.

55 ♜xb3 ♜d3 56 ♙a4!

The last finesse, which was planned at move 54.

56...♜xe4

Or 56...c2 57 ♜b2.

½-½

Bishop vs Knight

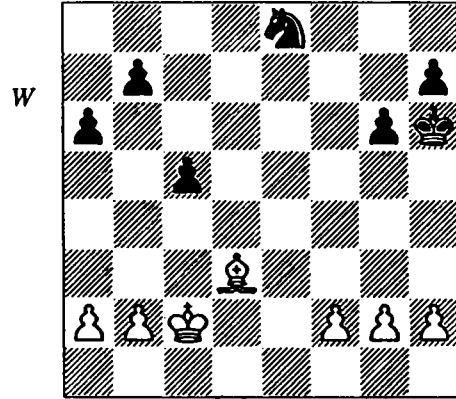
In this section we shall look into one of the most crucial features of chess: the struggle between bishops and knights. As indicated in the introduction, bishop vs knight decisions are often made early on in the game, frequently as part of well-known openings. But the impact of these early decisions may be felt all the way to the endgame.

We shall investigate two distinct sets of bishop vs knight positions – those where the bishop is superior, and those where the knight is the dominant piece. As will become clear, the assessments of bishop vs knight positions are very much connected to the *pawn-structure*.

We start by investigating positions in which the bishop is better. Basically the bishop has two major advantages over the knight:

- The bishop is a long-range piece, which makes it suitable for participation in defence and attack simultaneously.

- In many bishop vs knight endings, the bishop is able to *dominate* the knight.



Azmaiparashvili – Carlsen
Khanty Mansiisk WCup 2005

This is a typical bishop vs knight endgame where the bishop is superior. With the pawn-structure uneven, the bishop can exploit its long range to support its own pawn-majority while simultaneously holding back (and hitting) Black's queenside pawns. The knight, with its restricted movements, cannot participate on both wings at once.

30 ♜c3

King activity is an asset in any endgame!

30...♘c7 31 ♜c4 b6 32 a4 a5 33 f4

White has made progress. Black's queenside majority has been blocked, and the knight on c7 is merely a defensive piece with the sole task of holding back the white king. The bishop, on the other hand, is actively supporting the advance of White's kingside pawn-majority. Note that h7 and g6 constitute attractive targets for the bishop.

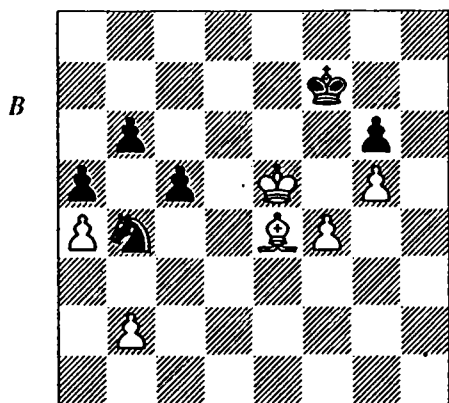
33...♜g7 34 g4 ♜f6 35 h4 h6 36 ♙e4 ♜g7 37 ♙c6 ♜f6 38 ♙f3 ♜e6 39 ♙e4 ♜f6 40 ♙c6 ♜e6 41 ♜d3!

After patient manoeuvres – White has no need to hurry – Azmaiparashvili shows his hand. While the bishop holds back Black's pawns, White transfers his king to the kingside.

41...♜e7 42 ♜e3 ♜e6 43 ♙e4 ♜f6 44 g5+ ♜g7 45 ♙d3

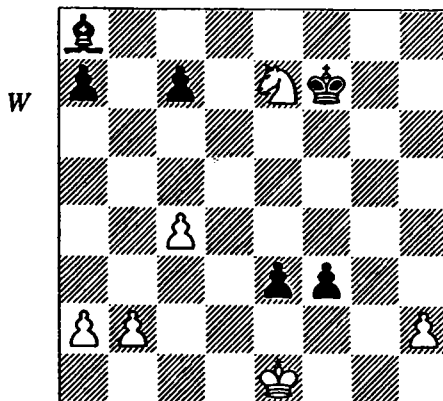
Now the path is open for the white king via e4 and e5.

45...♘d5+ 46 ♜e4 ♘b4 47 ♙b1 hxg5 48 hxg5 ♜f8 49 ♜e5 ♜f7 50 ♙e4 (D)



34...♔e7 35 ♔e3 ♖f8 36 ♜xd8 ♔xd8 37 ♔e4 ♖e6 38 ♔e5 ♔e7 39 ♜c4 ♖d8 40 ♔d5! 1-0

Simple and powerful endgame play. Black is in a lethal zugzwang.



An instructive position! The centralized white pieces dominate the position, whereas the black pieces are mainly performing defensive tasks. Black is helpless against the white king's invasion.

50...♔g7 51 ♔d6 c4 52 ♔c7 ♖a2 53 ♔xb6 1-0

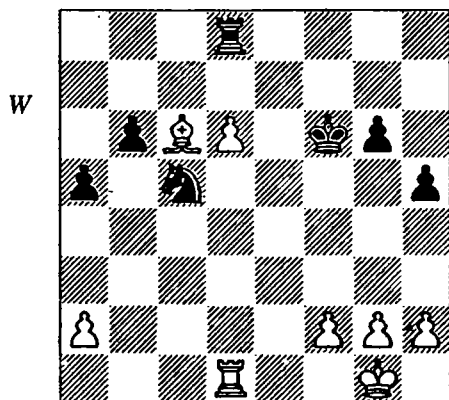
Nakamura – Ganguly
Khanty Mansiisk WCup 2005

Here we see a very asymmetrical pawn-structure! The two passed pawns on e3 and f3 look frightening, and indeed they decide the game. White's only hope is to blockade the pawns on the opposite colour to the bishop, but it doesn't work.

46 ♖f5 e2 47 ♖d4 ♔f6!

As always, activating the king is the right strategy! Giving up a pawn on the queenside is not important.

48 ♖b5 ♔e5 49 ♖xc7 ♜e4 50 ♖b5 ♜d3 51 b3 ♔e4 (D)



Dreev – Charbonneau
Khanty Mansiisk WCup 2005

White is a pawn up, but it is doubtful if he can maintain the d-pawn. But this doesn't matter – Dreev simply exploits the combined principles of transformation of advantages and powerful bishop vs restricted knight with an asymmetrical pawn-structure and easily chalks up the win.

30 h4!

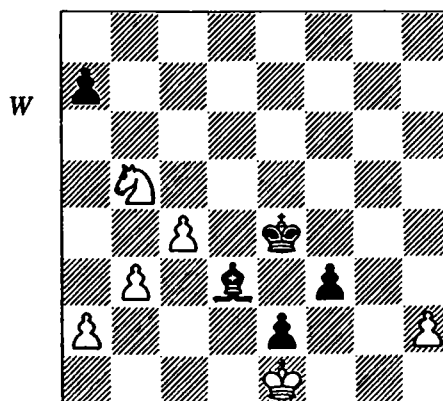
Step 1: the g6/h5 complex is fixed on the colour of the bishop.

30...♔e6 31 f3 ♖d7

The direct 31...♜xd6 fails to 32 ♜xd6+ ♔xd6 33 ♜e8.

32 ♜b5 ♖f8 33 d7! ♖xd7 34 ♔f2!

Step 2: While Black untangles, the white king is decisively centralized.



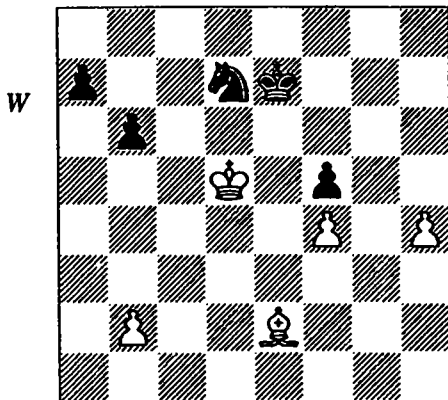
52 ♖c7

Or 52 ♔f2 e1♚+! 53 ♔xe1 ♔e3 and Black wins.

52...♜xc4! 0-1

A neat finish. After 53 bxc4 c3 54 d5 f2+ ! 55 xf2 d2 , the e-pawn queens.

Knights are particularly poor at stopping outside passed pawns. In such situations, its limited movements are felt in comparison with the powerful bishop. Even at the highest level, this difference can decide games.



Kasparov – Kramnik
Paris rpd 1994

51 h5

With his active king and outside passed pawn, White is winning. However, he must still play accurately, as the bishop has the 'wrong colour' in relation to the h-pawn's queening square.

51... xf6 52 c6 d5 53 c4 d4 54 d5 g3 55 f3 d4 56 b7 d6+ 57 xa7

The first material gain.

57... d4 58 b4 g7 59 e2 d3 60 xb6 d5+ 61 c5 xf4 62 f3 (??)

I believe something is wrong with the notation here. It is hard to believe that Kasparov (even in a rapid game) would allow 62... d3+ followed by 63... xb4 with a draw – and that Kramnik would miss it! 62 b5 was winning easily.

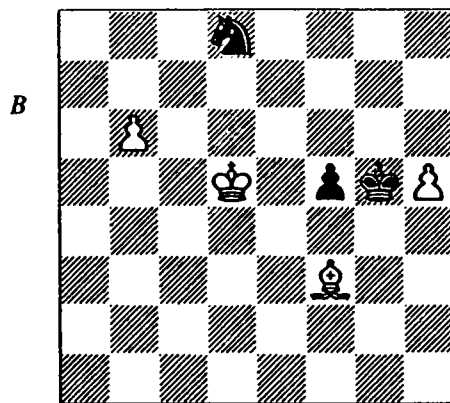
62... xf6 (??) 63 b5 d6+ 64 c4 d8 65 b6 g5 66 d5 ! (D)

Back on track – the king pushes the knight away from d8, after which the b-pawn queens.

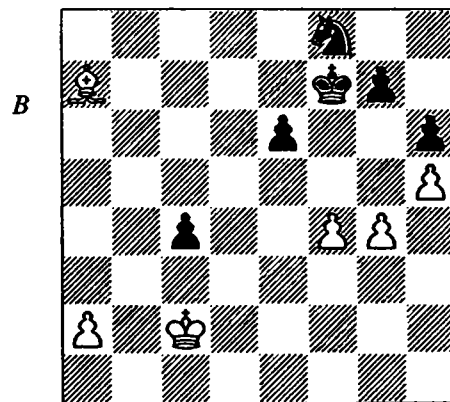
66... b7 67 c6 d8+ 68 d7 f7 69 b7

The rest was only played because this is the (time-pressure) finish of a rapid game.

69... d5+ 70 d6 xf3 71 b8 g hx5 72 f8 g4 73 g7+ f4 74 d5 e3 75 g3 f4 76 h3 e2 77 g4 e3 78 g6 h4 79 e4+ f2 80 xf4+ e2 81 hx4 d3 82



g3+ e2 83 e4 d2 84 d4 e2 85 g2+ d1 86 d3 1-0



Z. Almasi – Khenkin
Bundesliga 2003/4

The same story as in Kasparov-Kramnik! Black has a hard time coping with the outside passed a-pawn, and to boot he is troubled by the vulnerable g7/h6 complex, which is fixed on the bishop's colour. Khenkin tries to create counterplay, but in vain.

38... e5 39 fxe5 e6 40 d4 d5 41 c3 g6 42 g5 !

Creating a third passed pawn, which is too much for the poor knight.

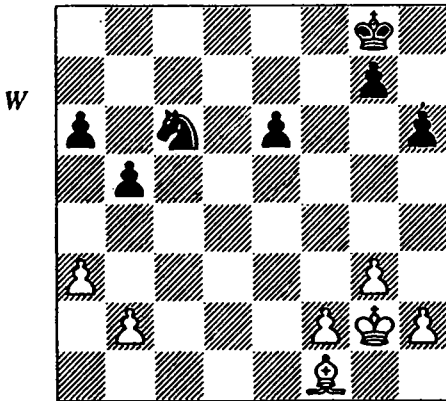
42... hxg5 43 h6 ! g4 44 d2

Notice how the bishop is active in defence (blocking the c4-pawn) and attack simultaneously.

44... d7 45 e3 d5 46 f4 g3 47 xg3 d4+ 48 f3 dxc3 49 h7 1-0

The previous examples all share one characteristic: an asymmetrical pawn-structure, which favours the bishop. However, even with

balanced pawn-structures, the bishop might be the superior piece – either due to deficiencies in the enemy pawn-structure, or because the opponent’s pawns are fixed on the colour of the bishop, making it a ‘good bishop’. Here are examples of both themes.



Karpov – Zsu. Polgar
Madrid 1992

The black pawn-structure is damaged, and White can attack it by playing a4. But first Karpov centralizes his king.

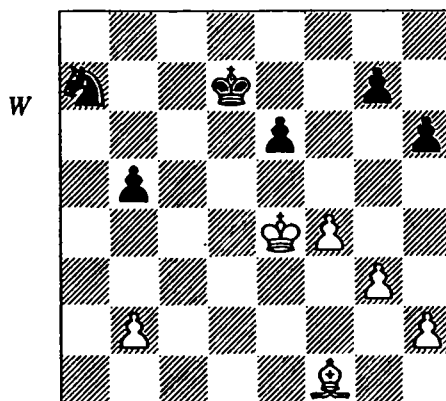
37 f3 f7 38 e4 e7 39 a4! a7

After 39... bxa4 40 xa6 , the a4-pawn cannot be covered in the long run.

40 axb5 axb5

40... xb5 41 xb5 axb5 42 e5 leads to a king and pawn ending that is won for White.

41 f4 d6 42 d3 d7 43 e2 d6 44 f1 d7 (D)



45 f5!

A good example of the principle of transformation of advantages! At first sight it might seem counter-intuitive to swap Black’s isolated e-pawn, but in return White gets access to pound

on g7 after 45... exf5+ 46 xf5 e7 47 g6 f8 48 e2 , when Black is in trouble. Still, this might have been Black’s best chance.

45... d6 46 xe6 xe6 47 h3+ d6 48 f5 g5?

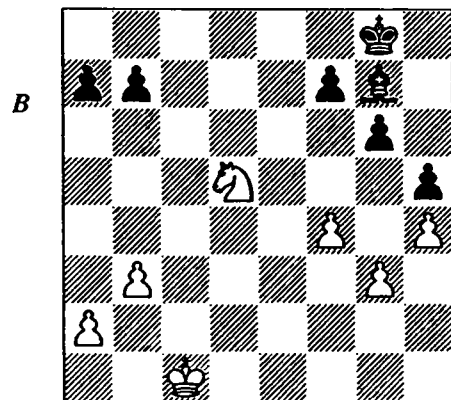
This loses trivially. Black had to try 48... e7 49 g6 f8 , when White still has to demonstrate how to win.

49 g6 e7 50 hxh6 f6 51 d7 e7 52 xb5!

Do you recognize this typical theme from the Fischer-Taimanov game in Chapter 1?

52... xb5 53 xg5 f7 54 h6 d4 55 g4 f3 56 h3 f6 57 b4 1-0

The pawns on both wings are too much for the knight to cope with.



Korchnoi – McShane
Igualeda 2005

The pawns are almost symmetrical, but unfortunately for White, his are fixed on the same colour as the bishop, making g3 a potential target.

36... d4! 37 d2 f8!

37... f2 is answered by 38 f6+ and 39 e4 . Instead, McShane centralizes his king.

38 e3 e7 39 d3 c5 40 e4 f6 41 c4 e6 42 a5 f5+ 43 f3 b5!

Taking squares from the white knight, which has difficulties finding a good foothold.

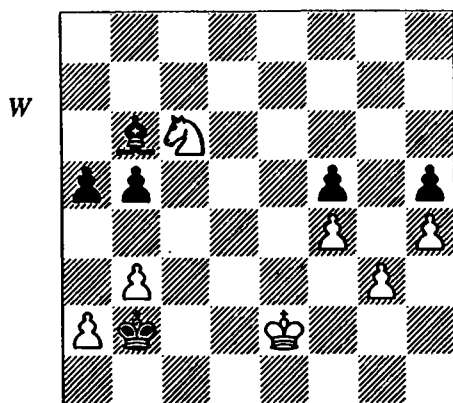
44 c6 d5!

Giving up the g6-pawn to go after the queen-side pawns.

45 e5 d4 46 dxc6 c3 47 e5 a5 48 e2 b6 49 c6 b2 (D)

The triumph of the black king!

50 b4 a4 51 d3 xa2 52 c2 a3 53 e7



Or 53 ♖c3 ♜f2.

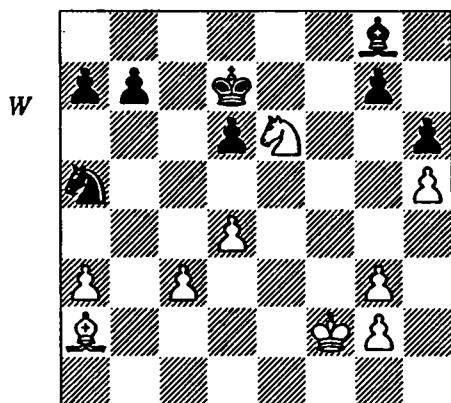
53...♜xb4 54 ♘xf5 a3 55 g4

Here 55 ♘g7 fails to 55...♜d4 followed by 56...a2, and the pawn queens.

55...hgx4 56 h5 g3! 0-1

After 57 h6 (57 ♘xg3 ♜d4 58 ♖b1 ♖b3) 57...a2! 58 ♖b2 a1♚+! 59 ♖xa1 g2 Black promotes *with check* and wins.

In many bishop vs knight endgames, the bishop is able to *dominate* the knight. Since the knight is limited in its movement, the powerful bishop can often keep it out of the game while performing other tasks in the meantime. Knights on the edge of the board are particularly vulnerable to this theme.



Grishchuk – Adams
Kallithea ECC 2002

White is a pawn up, but it is a doubled pawn, and Black should have decent drawing chances if he can coordinate his pieces. But his knight is badly placed, and with a little piece of tactics Grishchuk simplifies into a winning pawn ending.

34 ♘f8+ ♜e8 35 ♜xg8 ♖xf8 36 ♜d5!

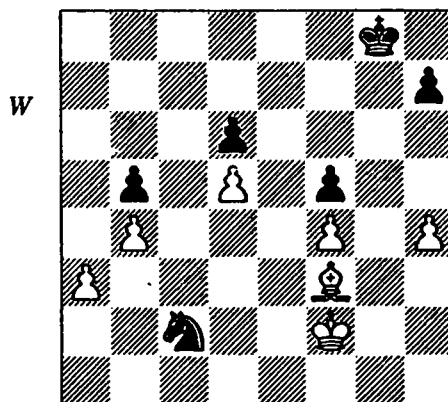
The point. The black knight cannot return to the game, and in the subsequent king and pawn ending the extra g-pawn suddenly comes in handy.

36...♜e7 37 ♜e3 ♖f6 38 ♖f4 ♘c6

This loses, but there was nothing better.

39 ♜xc6 bxc6 40 c4 ♜e6 41 g4 ♖f6 42 g5+! hxg5+ 43 ♖g4 1-0

Black will run out of pawn moves and eventually end up in zugzwang, so Adams resigned.



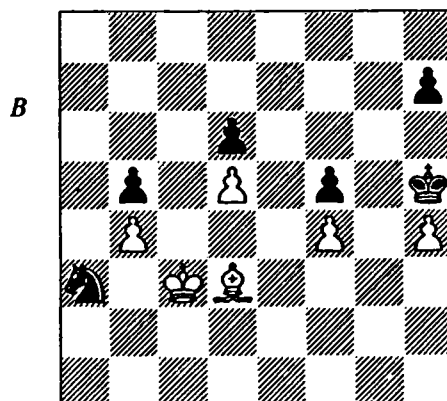
Bruzon – I. Sokolov
Wijk aan Zee 2005

Black is about to regain his pawn on a3, but unfortunately the knight will never return alive...

56 ♜e2! ♘xa3 57 ♜d3!

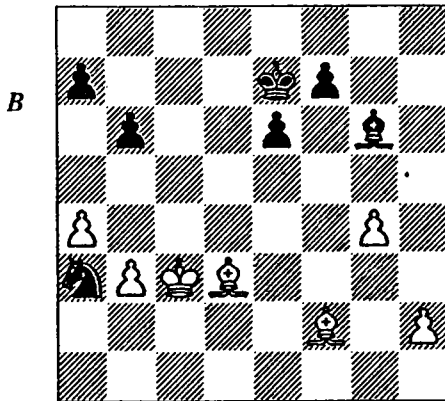
Domination! The pawn ending after ...♘c4 will always be lost for Black.

57...♖g7 58 ♜e3 ♖g6 59 ♖d4 ♖h5 60 ♜c3!
(D)



The white king strolls to the queenside to pick up the stranded knight. Black is too slow to create any serious counterplay on the king-side.

60...♖xh4 61 ♜b2 ♜b1!? 62 ♜xb1 ♜g4 63 ♜xb5 ♜xf4 64 ♜f1 ♜e5 65 ♜g2 ♜d4 66 ♜b2 1-0



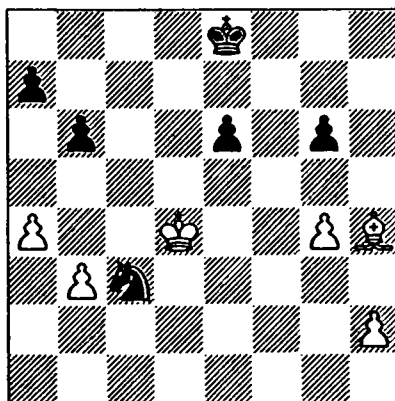
Kramnik – Malakhov
Paris tt 2004

Black has problems with the lonely knight on a3. Malakhov manages to bring the knight back into play, but Kramnik demonstrates once again the principle of transformation of advantages. The knight can only be secured at a cost!

35...♜b1+ 36 ♜c2 ♜a3+ 37 ♜c3

No need to hurry, so Kramnik calmly repeats moves.

37...♜b1+ 38 ♜c2 ♜a3+ 39 ♜d2! ♜b1+ 40 ♜e3 ♜c3 41 ♜h4+ ♜e8 42 ♜xg6 fxg6 43 ♜d4 (D)



Compare this diagram to the previous one. The knight has been rescued, but in return Black has had to allow the white king to become centralized, and in addition White has a potential outside passed pawn on the h-file. Black is in dire straits.

43...♜e2+?!

But this doesn't help. Here the knight will once again become a nuisance for Black. A better try – albeit without too much chance of a successful defence – was 43...♜d5.

44 ♜e5! ♜f7

After 44...♜c1 45 ♜xe6 ♜xb3 46 ♜f6 ♜c5 47 ♜xg6 ♜xa4 48 ♜f6 we shall see a race on either wing – a race which White is bound to win due to the long-range bishop, which simultaneously supports its own pawns while holding back Black's.

45 ♜g5!

Preventing 45...♜c1.

45...♜g1 46 ♜e4 ♜e2 47 ♜e3 ♜f6?

A mistake in a probably lost position.

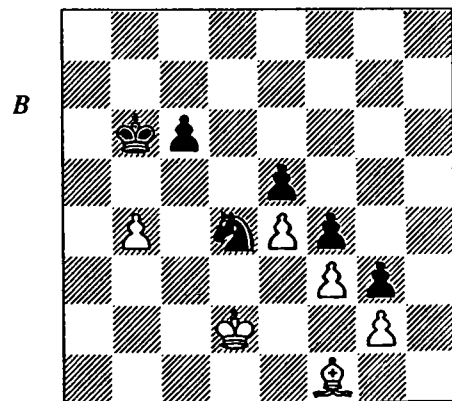
48 ♜f3! 1-0

The knight is trapped – 48...♜c3 49 ♜d4+.

Having discussed positions in which the bishop is stronger than knight, we shall now turn to positions in which the knight is the superior piece. As outlined in Chapter 1, this is essentially the case when:

- The pawn-structure is symmetrical and the pawns are fixed in a way that makes the bishop 'bad' (i.e. with its own pawns on the same colour squares as the bishop).
- The position is so closed that the bishop cannot exploit its greater range.

Let us investigate these characteristics in more detail.

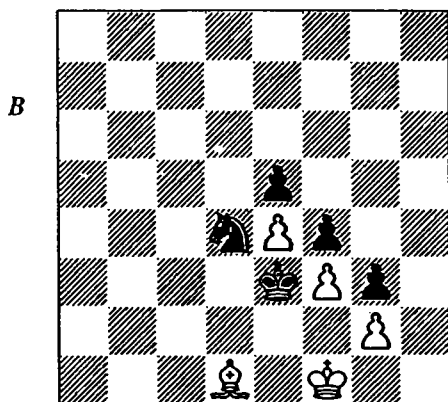


Torre – O. Jakobsen
Amsterdam 1973

I shall start with this game, as I was very impressed by my countryman Ole Jakobsen's patient and systematic approach when I first saw this game. Black is clearly better with his strong

centralized knight against a bishop that has no targets to attack. But for his king to penetrate, Black has to allow the exchange of one further pair of pawns, thus increasing the defender's drawing chances. Still, by patient manoeuvres Jakobsen manages to break through White's defences.

77...c5 78 bxc5+ cxc5 79 c3 cxb6 80 cd2 ca5 81 c3 cb6 82 cd2 cc6 83 e2 cc5 84 d1 c4 85 e2+ cb3 86 d1+ cb2 87 ce1 cc3 88 a4 cd3 89 d1 ce3 90 cf1 (D)



Black has made progress. He has managed to enter deeply into the opponent's position with his king and knight. But so far White has everything defended, so Black must continue to manoeuvre.

90...cd2 91 a4 de2 92 d1!?

A little trick. Now 92...cd1?? is stalemate!

92...dc3 93 e2!?

And so is 93...de2??.

93...db1 94 c4 ca3 95 b3 cc3 96 a4 dc4 97 b5 de3+ 98 cg1 cd2 99 a6 ce1

Black has made further headway. White has been pushed further back. Black's winning plan can now be explained as follows in verbal terms. Step 1 is to bring the knight to d2. Step 2 is to transfer the king to e2 or e3. Then Black threatens to sacrifice his knight on f3, which wins (try it yourself for practice!). If White brings his bishop to g4 or h5 to prevent the sacrifice, Black plays the manoeuvre ...db3-d4 + ...ce1, after which White cannot avoid being pushed into the corner (h1) by ...de2+, thus allowing the black king access to f2. Then another knight transfer, this time to e1, decides the game, as White cannot simultaneously cover g2 and f3. Beautiful, isn't it? Sometimes chess really is a logical game!

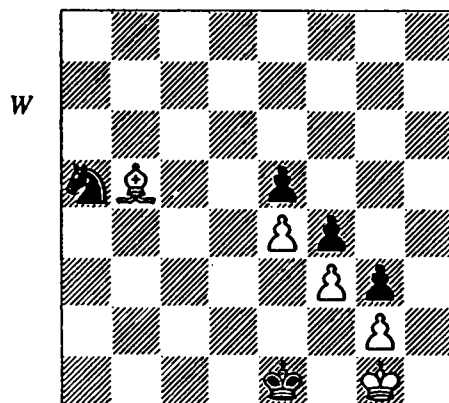
100 e3 d1 101 a6 dc3 102 e3!

White does his utmost to prevent the above plan. For the time being he prevents the knight from reaching d2 via b1.

102...da4 103 b5 dc5 104 c4!

Preventing 104...db3.

104...db7! 105 b5 da5! (D)



Tarrasch was not always right when he said that 'a knight on the rim is grim!' Now White can no longer prevent the knight from reaching d2.

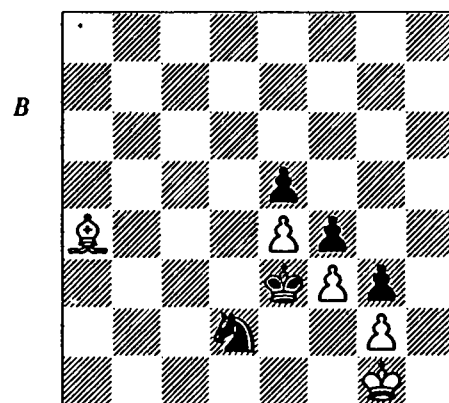
106 a4 dc4 107 b5 dd2

Step 1 has been completed!

108 a4

Making it easy for Black to complete step 2. 108 a6 cd1! 109 b5 cc2 110 a4+ cd3 111 d1 ce3 does not help, however – White is in zugzwang! As explained above, the attempt to prevent the sacrifice on f3 from the front does not help either: 108 d7 ce2 109 g4 db3! 110 h5 (110 e6 dd4 111 c4+ ce3, and 112...dxf3 cannot be prevented) 110...dd4 111 g4 ce1 112 h5 de2+ 113 h1 cf2, and Black wins by transferring the knight to e1 or e3.

108...ce2 109 b5+ ce3 110 a4 (D)



110...♖xf3+!

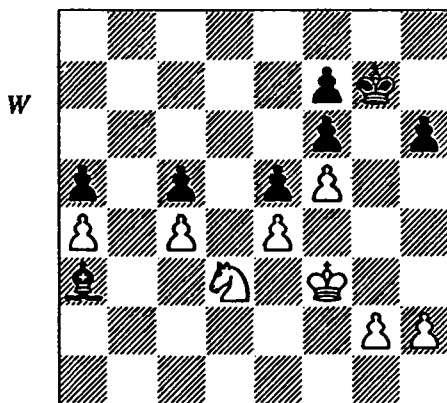
Finally!

111 gxf3 ♔xf3 112 ♗c6

112 ♗d1+ ♔xe4 wins for Black.

112...g2! 0-1

Now White is defenceless against 113...♔g3 and ...f3-f2#. In my opinion a highly instructive endgame, illustrating the 'good knight vs bad bishop' theme.



Bologan – Ye Jiangchuan
Shanghai 2001

Bologan demonstrates the principle of two weaknesses: he has a good knight against an inactive bishop *and* the better pawn-structure.

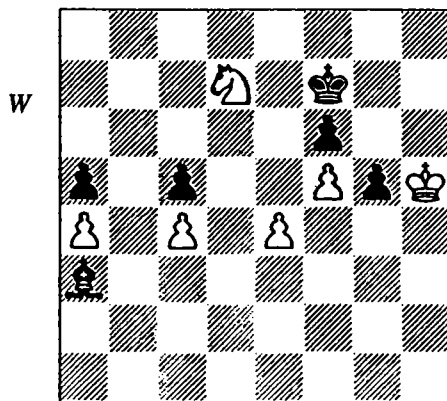
39 ♔g4!

The weak kingside pawns must be attacked by the king.

39...♔h7 40 ♔h5 ♔g7 41 h4! ♗b4 42 g4 ♗a3 43 g5!

Transformation of advantages! White allows Black to get rid of his doubled pawns in return for the central e5-pawn.

43...hxc5 44 hxc5 fxc5 45 ♖xe5 f6 46 ♖d7 ♔f7 (D)



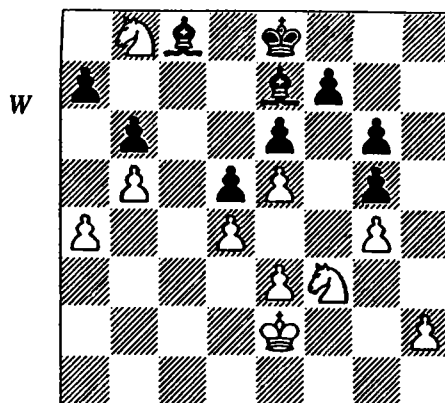
47 e5!

Breakthrough number two!

47...fxe5 48 ♔xg5!

Black cannot prevent the loss of a pawn.

48...♗c1+ 49 ♔g4 e4 50 ♖xc5 e3 51 ♔f3 ♔f6 52 ♖b3 1-0



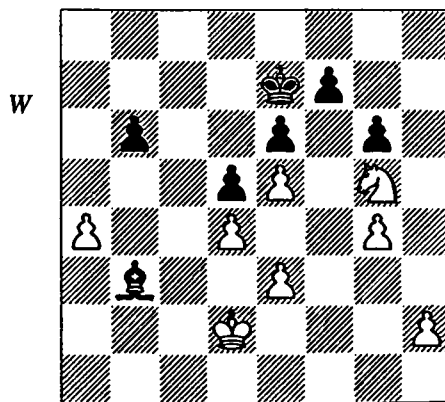
Nayer – Totsky
Cappelle la Grande 2004

We have a relatively rare situation where two knights are superior to two bishops. Obviously this is because of the closed nature of the position and the weak g5-pawn.

35 ♖c6 a6 36 ♖xe7 ♔xe7 37 bxa6 ♗xa6+ 38 ♔d2 ♗c4

Black avoids losing a pawn, but he is still in trouble.

39 ♖xg5 ♗b3 (D)



40 ♖h7!

Cutting off the black king from the h-pawn, which can now advance unhindered. Here we see one more of our principles: that of having control of important squares and files. The white knight is master of the dark squares.

40...♙xa4 41 h4! ♜b5 42 h5 gxh5 43 gxh5 ♙d7 44 ♚c3 ♙c8 45 h6 ♙a6

This loses a pawn, but Black did not have anything better. 45...♙d7? loses immediately to 46 ♘f6, and after 45...♚e8 46 ♚b4 with the idea 47 ♚b5 Black also cannot prevent the loss of a pawn.

46 ♘g5 ♚f8 47 h7 ♚g7 48 ♘xf7!

Transformation of advantages – White abandons the powerful h-pawn to win a pawn.

48...♚xh7 49 ♘g5+

The point.

49...♚g6 50 ♘xe6 ♚f5 51 ♘g7+!

Taking the knight on a round-trip that ends with picking up the b6-pawn!

51...♚g6

Not 51...♚e4? 52 e6.

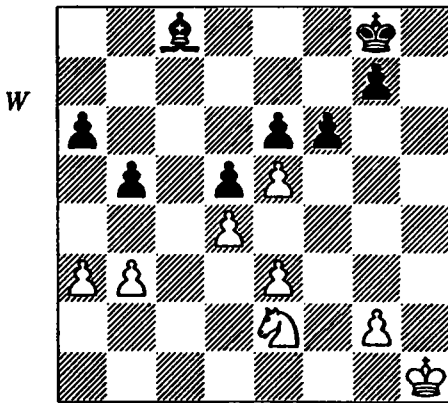
52 ♘e8 ♚f7 53 ♘c7 ♙b7

Or 53...♙c4 54 e4.

54 ♘b5 ♚e6 55 ♚b4 ♙c6 56 ♘c3 ♚f5 57 ♘a4

The knight has reached its destination – the b-pawn falls.

57...♚e4 58 ♘xb6 ♚xe3 59 ♚c5 1-0



Grishchuk – Radjabov
Dubai 2002

A typical position coming out a French Defence. Black is often saddled with a bad light-squared bishop in the Advance French – again an example of the impact of opening decisions on the subsequent endgame. White is better, but the win is still far off. Grishchuk starts by fixing more pawns on the right colour squares.

29 b4! ♚f7 30 ♚h2 ♚g6 31 g4

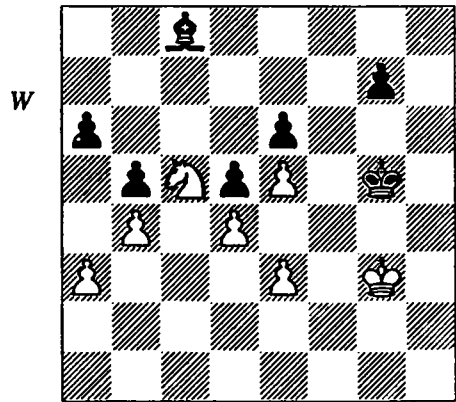
Black faces a crucial decision regarding his pawn-structure: should he take on e5, keep the

tension or push ...f5 to create a passed pawn on the g-file? It's a very difficult decision, and even after the game it is not easy to determine what is best. Arguments can be made for and against each possibility. The first option has the drawback that it hands White's knight a beautiful square on d4 and a potential entry via d4 and c5 for the white king. But it also has merits: White's pawn-structure is then less dynamic. Maintaining the tension for the time being is also possible but allows White to advance his king to f4, from where it is able to take back on e5. Radjabov decides on the last option, which however also entails risks, as we shall see in the game.

31...f5!? 32 ♚g3 ♚g5 33 gxf5 ♚xf5 34 ♚f3 ♙d7 35 ♘c1 ♚g5 36 ♚g3 ♚f5 37 ♘b3!

White will bring the knight to the wonderful c5-square, from where it hits a6 and e6, 'stale-mates' the black bishop and supports e4. What more can you ask of a square?

37...♚g5 38 ♘c5 ♙c8 (D)



39 e4!

Compared to option 1 – 31...fxe5 32 dxe5 – White has a dynamic centre, which Grishchuk now sets in motion.

39...dxe4 40 ♘xe4+ ♚h5 41 ♘c5 ♚g5 42 ♘e4+ ♚h5 43 ♚f4 ♚h4 44 ♘g5 ♙d7 45 d5!

The second break in the centre! Presumably Grishchuk had calculated the rest of the game here – White wins by *one tempo*.

45...exd5 46 e6 ♙e8 47 ♘f7! d4 48 ♚e4 g5 49 ♘d6 g4 50 ♘xe8 g3 51 ♘d6 g2 52 e7 g1♙ 53 e8♙

White has won a piece, but first he has to deal with the d-pawn.

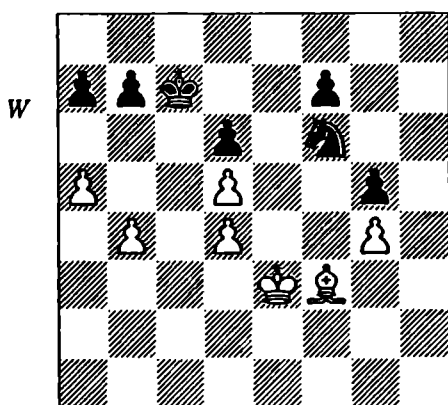
53...♙e3+ 54 ♚d5 ♙xe8 55 ♘xe8 d3 56 ♘d6!

The knight returns to stop the e-pawn just in time!

56...d2 57 ♖f5+! ♔g4 58 ♜e3+ ♜f3 59 ♜d1 1-0

After 59...♜e2 60 ♜b2 d1♖+ 61 ♜xd1 ♜xd1 62 ♜c5 ♜c2 63 ♜b6 ♜b3 64 ♜xa6 ♜xa3 65 ♜xb5 White wins by one single tempo.

As has become evident from the preceding examples, the pawn-structure is vital for the evaluation of the bishop vs knight question. Here is a simple example:



Volokitin – A. Sokolov
Greek Cht (Ermioni Argolidas) 2005

With the doubled white d-pawns, Black essentially has an extra pawn. To improve his position, Black must initiate the ...f5 break, creating a passed pawn on the g-file.

58 ♜d3 ♜d7 59 ♜e3 ♜e7 60 ♜e2 ♜g8! 61 ♜e4 ♜h6 62 ♜f3 f5!

The break! White's problem is that the king and pawn ending after 63 ♜xf5 ♜xf5 64 gxf5 ♜f6 65 ♜g4 a6! is lost.

63 gxf5 ♜f6 64 ♜e3 ♜xf5+ 65 ♜d3 g4 66 ♜c4

A rather desperate measure to take the king away from the passed pawn, but passive defence was unlikely to be successful.

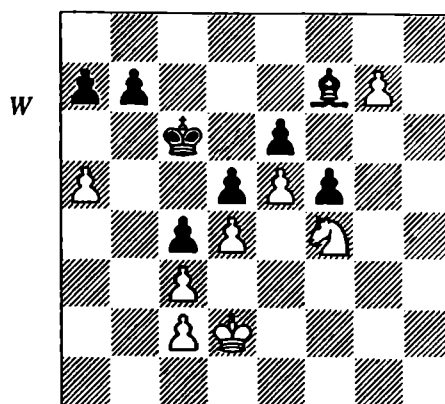
66...♜g5 67 ♜h1 ♜f4 68 a6!?

Attempting to exchange as many pawns as possible, but in vain.

68...bxa6 69 b5 axb5+ 70 ♜xb5 ♜xd4+ 71 ♜a6 ♜f3 72 ♜xa7 g3 73 ♜b6 ♜e1 74 ♜c6 ♜e5! 0-1

For a knight to be effective, it needs good squares. The knight has limited movements,

but if it can settle on a nice blocking square in a closed or semi-closed position, it is often able to perform several tasks simultaneously – just like the bishop in open positions.



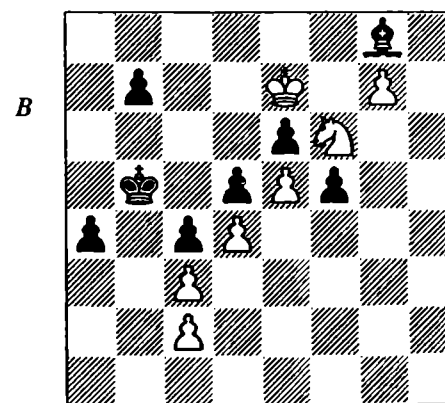
Asrian – Volkov
Warsaw Ech 2005

The knight has found a wonderful square on f4 – blocking the f-pawn and continuously hitting e6. But to win, the king must be included, so f4 is momentarily vacated:

55 ♜h5! ♜b5 56 ♜e3!

Much better than 56 ♜f6 ♜xa5 57 g8♖ ♜xg8 58 ♜xg8 ♜b5, and the king returns to defend the e6-pawn. Despite the extra piece, it is certainly not easy for White to win in view of the passed pawns on the a- and f-files. Asrian has precisely calculated that the king will be in time.

56...♜xa5 57 ♜f4 ♜b5 58 ♜g5! a5 59 ♜f6 ♜g8 60 ♜e7! a4 61 ♜f6! (D)



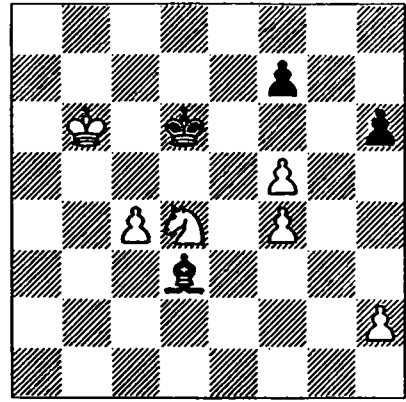
White's king and knight dominate the black bishop.

61...a3 62 ♜xg8 a2 63 ♜f6 a1♖ 64 g8♖ ♖xc3 65 ♖xe6

With a winning position for White.

65...f4 66 ♖d7+ ♔a5 67 ♖d8+ ♔b5 68 ♜e8+ ♔a5 69 ♜a8+ ♔b5 70 ♜xb7+ ♔a5 71 ♜a7+ ♔b5 72 ♜xd5 1-0

In the above game we saw the knight dominate the bishop. While this is rarer than the other way around (due to the bishop's long-range capabilities), it is seen from time to time. Here are two other examples of this theme from high-class games.



J. Polgar – Kasimdzhanov
San Luis Wch 2005

37 c5+ ♔d5 38 ♜c6!

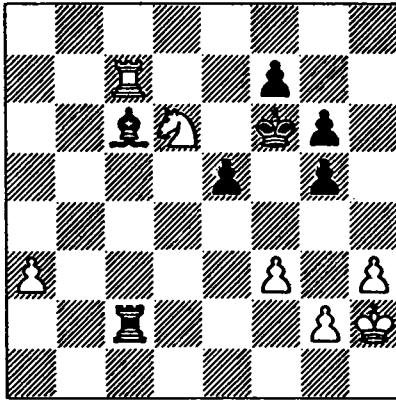
Heading for e7, where it will dominate the bishop's attempts to stop the c-pawn.

38...♜e4

The pawn ending after 38...♜xf5 39 ♜e7+ ♜e6 40 ♜xf5 ♜xf5 41 c6 is lost for Black.

39 ♜e7! ♜c2 40 c6 ♜a4 41 c7 ♜d7 42 ♜c5! 1-0

Like in the game Asrian-Volkov, the combined force of king and knight secures the promotion of the pawn.



Svidler – Rublevsky
Russian Cht (Togliatti) 2003

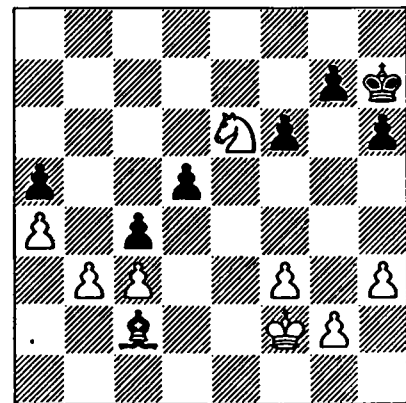
The pin on the c-file forces Black to exchange the rooks, but then the knight dominates the bishop.

35...♜a4 36 ♜e4+!

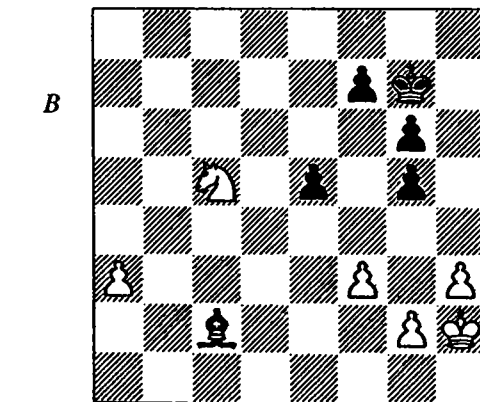
The right move-order. The king must now retreat.

36...♜g7 37 ♜xc2 ♜xc2 38 ♜c5! (D)

Sometimes a good square for the knight can be worth material – an exchange or a pawn. Here is an example of the latter case.



Tiviakov – Berkes
Plovdiv Echt 2003



A nice position: the knight is the dominant piece in a semi-open position! The passed a-pawn decides.

38...♜f8 39 a4 e4 40 a5! 1-0

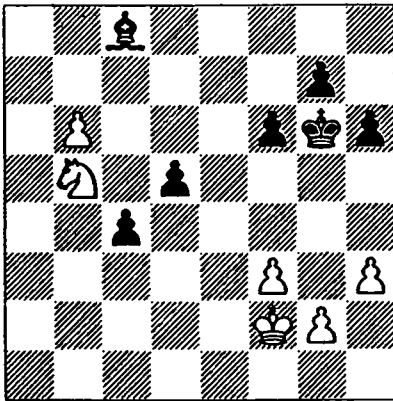
White would be somewhat better after 51 bxc4 dxc4 52 ♜c5 followed by 53 ♜b7, when the a-pawns are exchanged and Black is left with a vulnerable c4-pawn. But Tiviakov correctly judges that it is better to make a temporary pawn

sacrifice to get an outside passed pawn and a powerful blocking knight on d4.

51 b4! axb4 52 cxb4 ♖xa4 53 ♖d4!

There we have the knight!

53...♗d7 54 b5 ♖g6 55 b6 ♗c8 56 ♖b5!
(D)



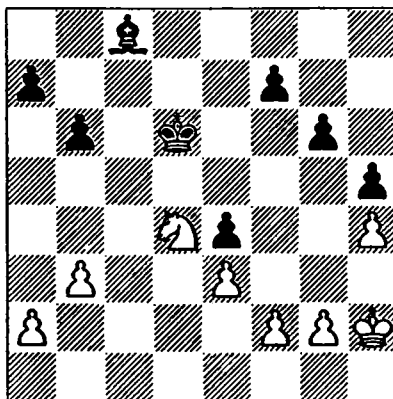
Now it is clear that Black must give up his bishop for the white b-pawn.

56...♗a6 57 ♖e3 ♖f5 58 f4 h5 59 ♖d6+ ♖e6 60 b7 ♗xb7 61 ♖xb7 h4 62 ♖a5 ♖d6 63 ♖d4 g6 64 f5! gxf5 65 ♖b7+ ♖c6 66 ♖c5 ♖b5 67 ♖e6 ♖b4 68 ♖f4

The knight has returned and White is winning.

68...♖b3 69 ♖xd5 f4 70 ♖xf4 c3 71 ♖e2 c2 72 ♖d3 ♖b2 73 ♖e4 1-0

King activity is a key factor also in this kind of endgame. Let two of the world's endgame experts, Korchnoi and Andersson, show this theme to end this section.



Korchnoi – Bruzon
Hoogeveen 2001

31 ♖g3! a5

31...♖e5? 32 ♖c6+.

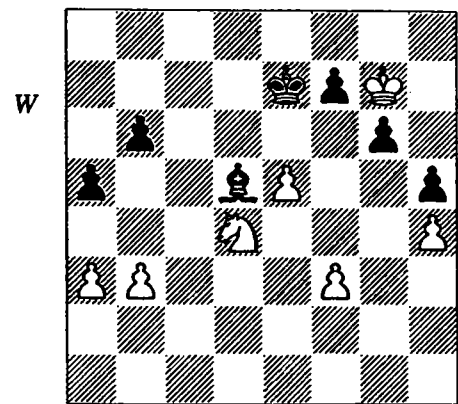
32 ♖f4 ♗b7 33 a3 ♗d5 34 ♖g5 ♖e5 35 ♖h6! ♖f6 36 ♖h7 ♗b7 37 ♖g8 ♖e7 38 ♖g7

A picturesque position! White has penetrated far into the black position, but he still needs a pawn-break to gain real dividends from this asset.

38...♗d5 39 f4!

Here it is, the break! Black cannot allow f5.

39...exf3 40 gxf3 ♗a8 41 e4 ♗b7 42 e5 ♗d5 (D)



43 ♖h6!

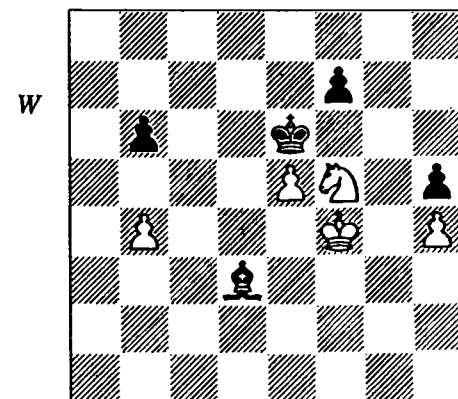
The king has done its duty and returns to support the advance of the f-pawn.

43...♗b7 44 ♖g5 ♗d5 45 f4 ♗e4 46 f5! gxf5

The pawn ending after 46...♗xf5 47 ♖xf5+ gxf5 48 ♖xf5 is lost for Black, as White picks up the h5-pawn.

47 ♖f4! ♖d7 48 b4 axb4 49 axb4 ♗d3 50 ♖xf5 ♖e6 (D)

50...♗e2 51 ♖g5 followed by 52 ♖g7 or 52 ♖g3 still wins the h-pawn, and the pawn ending after 50...♗xf5 51 ♖xf5 is still lost.



51 ♖g7+ ♖d5 52 ♖xh5 ♖c4

An inspired attempt, but too slow. Korchnoi's winning plan is instructive.

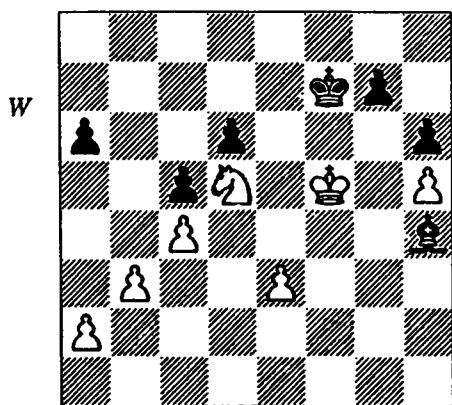
53 ♔g5! ♚xb4 54 ♘f4! ♙e4 55 h5 b5 56 e6! fxe6 57 ♘g6!

Now the h-pawn cannot be stopped.

57...♚a3 58 h6 b4 59 h7 b3 60 h8♖ b2 61 ♖c3+ ♚a2 62 ♖c4+!

The final point.

1-0



Andersson – A. Sokolov
Bilbao 1987

White has a beautiful knight on d5 and the more active king. Surely White is better. But to win White must create a passed pawn, so...

43 b4! cxb4 44 ♘xb4 a5 45 ♘d3 ♙d8 46 e4 ♙b6 47 a4 ♚e7 48 ♘f4 ♙d4 49 ♘e6 ♙c3 50 c5!

Securing the desired passed pawn. Notice how the white king controls the proceedings from its dominant position.

50...dxc5 51 ♘xc5 ♚d6 52 ♘d3 ♙a1 53 e5+ ♚d5 54 ♘f4+ ♚c4 55 e6 ♙f6 56 ♘g6 ♚c5 1-0

Black resigned without waiting for 57 e7. By the way, 56...♚b4 57 e7 ♙xe7 58 ♘xe7 ♚xa4 59 ♘c6! ♚b5 60 ♘xa5! ♚xa5 61 ♚g6 would not have helped either.

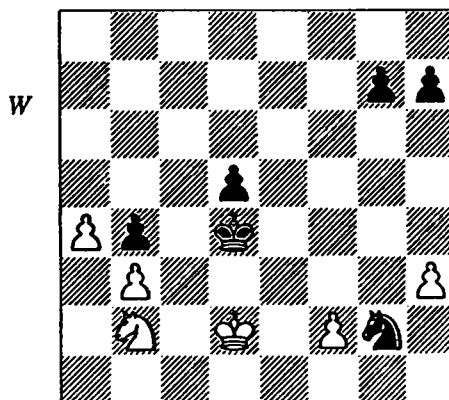
Knight Endgames

Knight endgames are seen comparatively rarely in tournament chess. But still it is necessary to study them, since they differ on a number of points from other more frequently seen types of endgames (e.g. rook endgames). It is often said

that 'knight endgames are like pawn endgames', and to a certain extent this approximation is correct. But knight endgames also have their own independent characteristics that differ from pawn endgames; for instance, opposition is less important here. There are four key factors that should be considered in the assessment of knight endgames:

- The pawn-structure
- King activity
- Squares for the knight
- Domination

The two first factors are more or less generic – they are important in almost all kinds of endgames. The last two are especially important in knight endgames due to the limited radius of the knight's movements. It is much harder to dominate a rook or a bishop. Let us turn to some games where these factors are seen in practice.



Volokitin – Goldin
Beersheba Wcht 2005

Material is even and Black has an active king, but nevertheless he is in deep trouble. The key asset here is the outside passed pawn on the a-file – just as it would be in a pawn endgame.

42 ♘d3!

Not just to grab the b4-pawn, but to prevent the black king from approaching the a-pawn via c5.

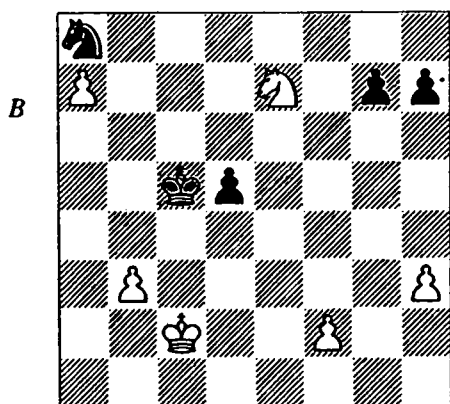
42...♘h4 43 a5! ♘f3+ 44 ♚c2 ♘g5 45 a6 ♘e6 46 a7 ♘c7

The black knight has had to go a long way around the board to catch the a-pawn, but now White can calmly collect the b4-pawn.

47 ♖xb4 ♕a8

Notice how Volokitin works with the principle *domination*. The black king still cannot approach the pawn: 47...♗c5? loses to 48 ♖a6+!. So the black knight must retreat to a humble stable in the corner.

48 ♖c6+ ♗c5 49 ♖e7! (D)



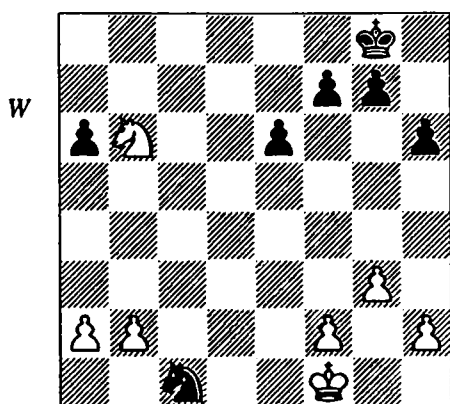
Again domination is the main theme! After 49...♗b6 50 ♖xd5+ ♗xa7 51 ♗d3 Black is completely lost, as his knight cannot escape from a8 – it is dominated by the centralized white knight.

49...g6 50 ♗d3 ♖c7 51 b4+!

With the idea 51...♗xb4 52 ♖xd5+!, and the black knight is deflected from a8. 51...♗b6 also fails to 52 ♖xd5+.

51...♗d6 52 b5 ♖a8 53 b6! 1-0

And again! Now 53...♖xb6 54 ♖c8+! secures White a new queen.



Mamedyarov – Gashimov
Istanbul jr Wch 2005

Again we see the power of an outside passed pawn – here in the disguise of a queenside

pawn-majority. Despite the limited material, Black is in trouble.

31 a4 ♖f8 32 ♗e1 ♗e7 33 ♗d2 ♖b3+ 34 ♗c3 ♖c5 35 b4!

Pawns must be pushed! Now Black cannot go for the f2-pawn, as he has no adequate way of stopping the white a-pawn after 35...♖e4+ 36 ♗d4 ♖xf2 37 b5! axb5 (37...a5 38 ♖c4 isn't much better) 38 a5!.

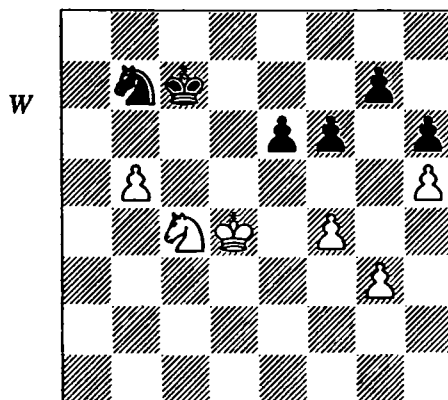
35...♖b7 36 ♖c4!

Preventing the stranded knight from re-entering the game via d6.

36...♗d8 37 ♗d4 ♗c7 38 h4 f6 39 h5!

Fixing the black kingside pawn-structure. Notice how hard it is for Black to create an opposing passed pawn.

39...♗c6 40 f4 ♗d7 41 b5 axb5 42 axb5 ♗c7 (D)



43 f5!

Allowing Black a protected passed pawn in order to increase the scope for the king. This is something we would not see in a pure king and pawn ending, but with the knights on the board White can simply put his knight on the beautiful blockading square e4.

43...e5+

Perhaps 43...♗d7 was a tougher defence.

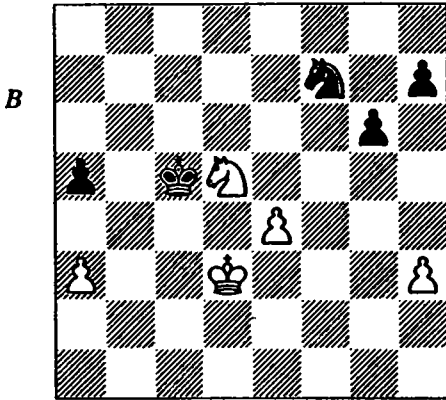
44 ♗d5 ♗d7 45 g4 ♖d8 46 ♖d6 ♗e7 47 ♖e4

The knight has reached its dream square. Black must simultaneously hold back the b-pawn while preventing White from penetrating to g7 – an impossible task.

47...♖f7 48 ♗c6 ♗d8 49 b6 ♗c8 50 b7+ ♗b8 51 ♖c5 ♖d8+ 52 ♗b6 1-0

The pawn-majority is a powerful asset in almost any endgame, but in knight endgames

even more so. This is because of the knight's limited mobility, which makes it a poor defender against outside passed pawns. Here is another example.



Romanishin – Naiditsch
Warsaw Ech 2005

With the outside pawn-majority and a nice square on e5, Black holds the advantage. But with the limited material the result is still up in the air, and initially Romanishin does a good job in defence.

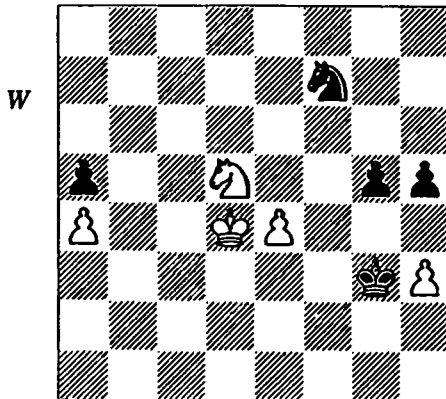
55...♖e5+ 56 ♜c3 g5 57 ♜f6 h6 58 ♜g4!

Good defence. White challenges Black's grip of the key e5-square by the fact that the pawn ending after 58...♜xg4? 59 hxg4 wins for White – the g4-pawn holds back two black pawns!

58...♜f7 59 ♜f6 ♜d6 60 a4 ♜f7 61 ♜d7+ ♜d6 62 ♜b6 ♜e5 63 ♜d3

Going for the a-pawn with 63 ♜c4+ is too slow. Instead White supports his own passed pawn, which should be strong enough to hold the draw.

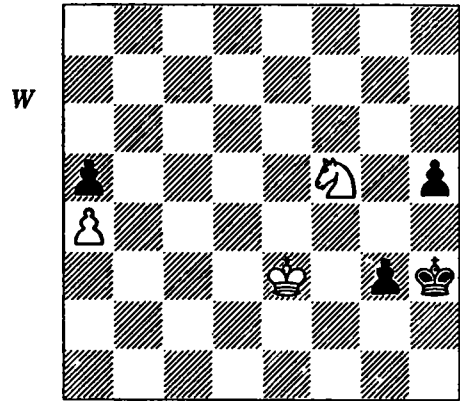
63...♜f4 64 ♜d4! h5 65 ♜d5+ ♜g3 (D)



66 e5!

White has managed to shake off Black's grip of e5 and the e-pawn now secures him sufficient counterplay to draw.

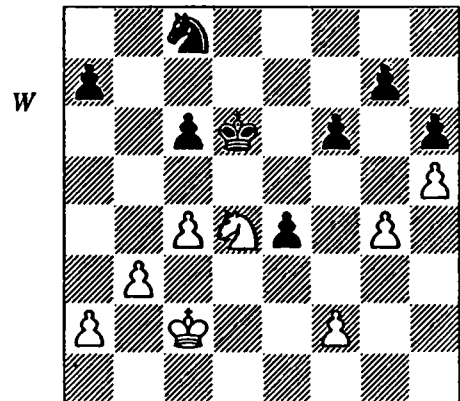
66...♜xh3 67 e6 ♜d8 68 e7 ♜c6+ 69 ♜e3 ♜xe7 70 ♜xe7 g4 71 ♜f5 g3 (D)



72 ♜f3??

Oh no! After accurate defence White blunders, just as the draw is almost secure. With 72 ♜d4 he could reach a well-known draw; e.g., 72...g2 73 ♜e2 ♜h2 74 ♜f4! g1♚ (74...h4 75 ♜g4 h3 76 ♜b4) 75 ♜xg1 ♜xg1 76 ♜g5 ♜f2 77 ♜xh5 ♜e3 78 ♜g4 ♜d4 79 ♜f3 ♜c4 80 ♜e2 ♜b4 81 ♜d2 ♜xa4 82 ♜c1 with a theoretical draw.

72...g2 73 ♜g3 0-1



Kariakin – Asrian
Warsaw Ech 2005

White is certainly better here – just look at the pawn-structure. The game came out of the 'Caro-Kann grip' that we discussed in Chapter 1, and Kariakin knows how to exploit such a grip:

35 ♜d2!

Much better than 35 f5+ , which allows Black counterplay with 35... e5 36 g7 f4 . Instead White puts pressure on the weak e4-pawn.

35... e7 36 e3 c5

It is not nice to allow White an outside passed pawn in a knight ending, but Black could not just sit passively and let White take the e4-pawn followed by a slow and incremental improvement of his position.

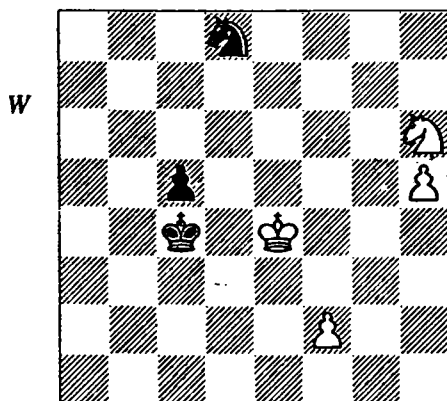
37 b5+ e5 38 xa7 f5 39 gxf5 xf5+ 40 e2 d4+ 41 f1 c2 42 a4!

Transformation of advantages! White gives up the b3-pawn to push the a-pawn as fast as possible.

42... d4 43 a5 xb3 44 a6 d6 45 e2 a5 46 b5+ c6 47 d6!

Black has defended the best he can, but he is still not out of the woods. With this tactical shot, White shifts his attention to Black's weak pawns on the kingside – another transformation of advantages.

47... b6 48 e3 xa6 49 xe4 c6 50 f5 a5 51 g7 b4 52 f5 xc4 53 xh6 d8 (D)

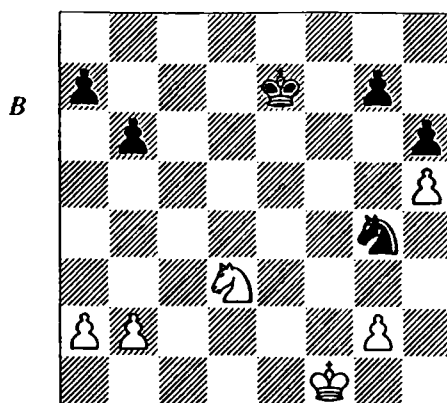


Again White is a pawn up, but the last part still requires accuracy. To win, Kariakin exploits another of our principles – that of *domination*.

54 e5! d3 55 f6!

Now Black cannot prevent the h-pawn from queening. As we have repeatedly seen, knights are very poor at stopping outside passed pawns! Notice that even the f2-pawn plays a key part here – it secures the white knight a square on e3, from which it can stop the black c-pawn.

55... c4 56 f5 c3 57 e3! b7 58 h6 d6 59 h7 e4+ 60 e7 xf2 61 h8 ♔ 1-0



Lutz – Landa
French League 2005

Once again we have the remnants of a Caro-Kann grip. But this time Black is on top. The h5-pawn is vulnerable, and Black is first to activate his king.

39... f6! 40 b4 e3+!

Forcing the white king to a passive square, as g2 must be kept defended, and 41 f2? d1+ costs White the b2-pawn.

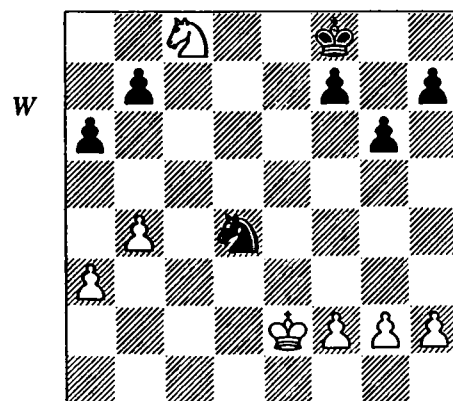
41 g1 d1 42 b3 c3 43 a4 e2+ 44 f2 d4

Black's more active pieces are getting dividends – he wins a pawn.

45 d5+ e6 46 f4+ f5 47 d5 xb3 48 e7+ g5

And now the h5-pawn is doomed as well. Landa displayed good technique in this endgame.

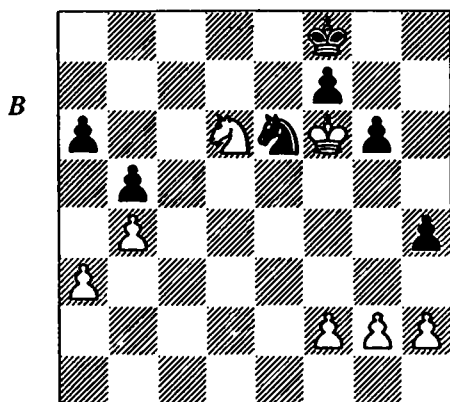
49 c8 xh5 50 xa7 c5 51 b5 xa4 52 f3 g5 53 g4 c5 54 d6 e6 55 g3 c7 56 f5 f6 0-1



Ponomarev – Vallejo Pons
Leon 2003

The king's activity alone may be sufficient to win a knight ending. In this seemingly quiet position Black is in fact in difficulty, since he cannot prevent the white king from advancing.

26 ♔d3 ♖e6 27 ♕e4! h5 28 ♕e5! h4 29 ♖d6 b5 30 ♕f6 (D)

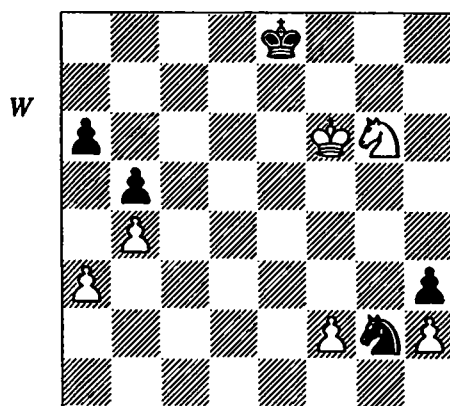


Compare this with the starting position! White has advanced his king, while Black has advanced his pawns – White has definitely got the better deal here.

30...♖f4

Passive play does not help; e.g., 30...♖d8 31 h3 ♕g8 32 ♕g5.

31 ♖xf7 ♖xg2 32 ♖e5 h3 33 ♖xg6+ ♕e8 (D)



34 ♕e6!

The white king and knight both *dominate* their black counterparts. The text-move prepares the concluding advance of the f-pawn, against which Black is powerless.

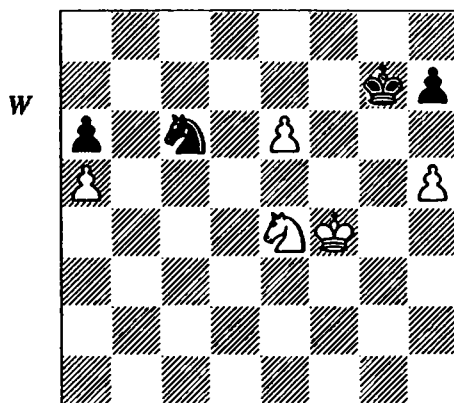
34...♖e1 35 f4 ♖f3 36 f5 ♖d4+

36...♖xh2 loses to 37 f6.

37 ♕f6 ♖f3 38 ♕g7! ♔d7 39 f6 1-0

In this game we saw the power of the king in the endgame. The king may even occasionally

initiate a mating attack – one of the rarer but still vital principles of endgame play!



Timofeev – Nayer
Saint Vincent ECC 2005

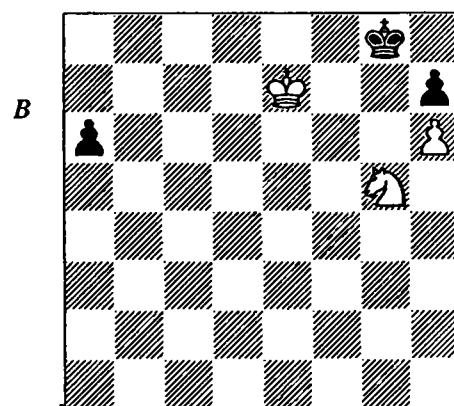
60 ♕f5!

60 ♖c5? ♖xa5 61 ♖xa6 ♕f6! draws, but now the black king is pushed back. This is more important than the a6-pawn. The point becomes evident in a few moves and may be somewhat surprising.

60...♖xa5 61 h6+! ♕f8

Not 61...♕xh6? 62 e7, and the pawn queens.

62 ♕f6! ♖c6 63 ♖g5! ♕g8 64 e7 ♖xe7 65 ♕xe7 (D)

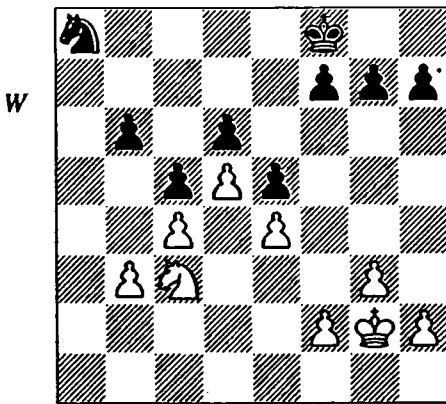


A picturesque and instructive position! Without the black a-pawn, this would be a draw, no matter who is to move. Black simply waits with ...♕h8-g8-h8, and White cannot break through. But with the a-pawn still on the board, White can arrange a beautiful mate.

65...a5 66 ♖e4 a4 67 ♖f6+ ♕h8 1-0

Black resigned as he could also see the mate after 68 ♕f8! a3 69 ♖e8 a2 70 ♖d6 a1 ♖ 71 ♖f7#.

In knight endings, the principle of *space* also applies, albeit comparatively more rarely than in other types of endgames. A very good demonstration of the space advantage in knight endgames can be found in a game by the young Garry Kasparov. Let us conclude this chapter with this fine endgame effort.



Kasparov – Hübner
Hamburg (4) 1985

The players have just exchanged queens on a8, and Kasparov proceeds to increase his space advantage.

33 f4! f6 34 ♖a4 ♜f7 35 ♜f3 g6 36 h4 h6 37 g4 g5

A difficult decision for Black. He does not want to wait for White to show his hand on the kingside, but the text-move leads to bad holes in the black position.

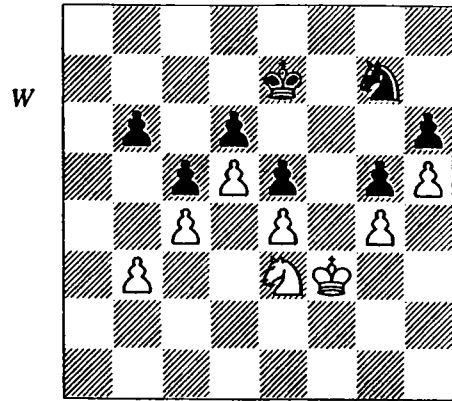
38 fxg5 fxg5 39 h5!

Fixing the h6-pawn as an eternal weakness. Now White threatens to bring his knight to f5.

39...♜e7 40 ♖c3 ♖c7 41 ♖d1 ♖e8 42 ♖e3 ♖g7 (D)

Black managed to prevent ♖f5, but White can step up the pressure by turning his attention to the other side – exploiting the *principle of two weaknesses*. The white king has a potential entrance via the queenside. So...

43 ♜e2! ♜d7 44 ♜d3 ♜c7 45 ♜c2 ♜c8 46 b4! ♜c7 47 ♜b3 ♜b7 48 ♜a4 ♜b8 49 bxc5 bxc5 50 ♜a5 ♜b7 51 ♜b5 ♜c7 52 ♜a6 ♜c8 53 ♜b6 ♜d7 54 ♜b7

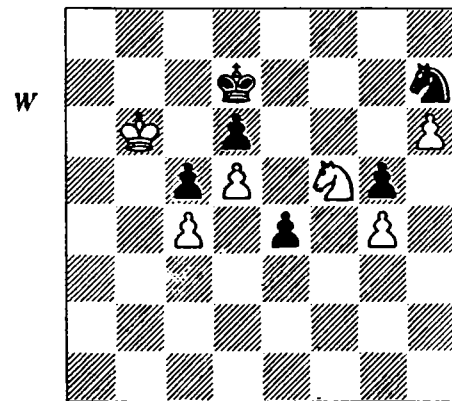


White has made the most of his space advantage and has penetrated deep into the black position. Black is now in zugzwang and must move his knight – thus allowing White access to f5 after all.

54...♖e8 55 ♖f5 ♖f6 56 ♖xh6 ♖xe4 57 ♖f5 ♖f6 58 h6!

Material is still equal, but the e4-pawn is nowhere near as valuable as the h6-pawn. The powerful knight on f5 controls the board.

58...e4 59 ♜b6 ♖h7 (D)



60 ♜b5! 1-0

Hübner could have played on a few more moves, but the result is no longer in doubt. White simply brings his king back to e2, while the black king is tied to d6 and the knight is constrained by the h6-pawn. A possible line is 60...♖f6 61 ♜a4 ♖h7 62 ♜b3 ♖f6 63 ♜c3 ♖h7 64 ♜d2 ♖f6 65 ♜e2 ♖h7 66 ♖g3!, and Black has no defence against 67 ♖xe4. An instructive demonstration of the power of space.

4 The Major Pieces in the Endgame – Queens and Rooks

Introduction

In this chapter we shall look at the role of the major pieces – queens and rooks – in the endgame. Such endgames are frequently seen in practical play, and often an important part of the chess game is the transition from middle-game to endgame. Here the major pieces often play a key role.

We shall look at three types of major-piece endings. First, we shall investigate situations in which there are both queens and rooks on the board, then we shall turn our attention to rook endings (perhaps the most frequently seen material distribution in the endgame), and finally we shall look at pure queen endings. Obviously there is some overlap here; a queen and rook ending may after exchanges become either a rook ending or a queen ending.

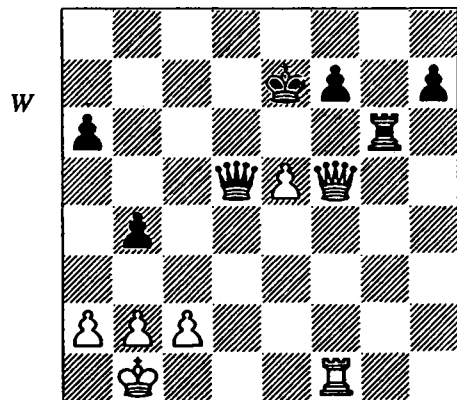
Queens and Rooks

This type of ending – ‘the battle between major pieces’ – often resembles the middlegame. In fact, they can be said to lie somewhere in between the middlegame and the endgame, and often further exchanges will occur, turning the game into a queen or a rook ending. However, here we shall mainly focus on examples in which the game is more or less decided with both queens and rooks on the board. In such positions, four crucial factors should be taken into account:

- The pawn-structure is particularly important here.
- The king’s safety (or lack of it) often plays a crucial role.
- The relative activity of the queens and rooks matters.

- Often we see a transformation of advantages – for instance, winning a pawn and bringing that into a rook ending.

We shall now turn to some examples where these factors are highlighted.



Karpov – Dorfman
USSR Ch (Moscow) 1976

Karpov has a very good understanding of this type of endgame, and you can find many games where he capitalizes on this skill. Here is a fairly straightforward example where he demonstrates the value of having the better pawn-structure in this type of position. A fractured pawn-structure not only leaves the pawns themselves vulnerable; it also jeopardizes the king’s safety, as it has no safe place to find shelter. If you compare the relative safety of the two kings, it becomes clear that Black is in deep trouble.

33 ♖f4!

This double threat – 34 ♖xb4+ and 34 ♖h4+ and 35 ♖xh7 – wins a pawn while maintaining the pressure.

33...a5 34 ♖h4+ ♔e8 35 ♖xh7 ♖f3!

A good try. Black exploits the temporary weakness of White’s first rank to throw some

sand into the machinery. But Karpov calmly re-groups.

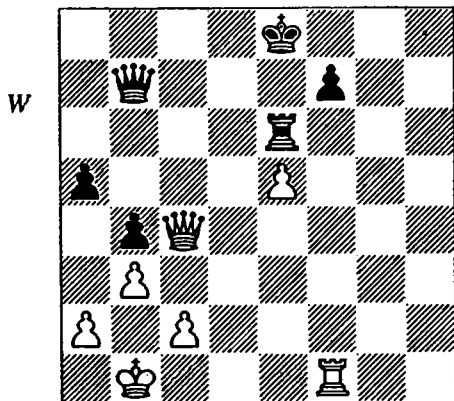
36 ♖h8+! ♔e7 37 ♖h4+ ♔e8 38 ♖c4!

A perfect spot for the queen. It simultaneously covers the rook while hitting f7.

38...♖b7 39 b3

Lufi!

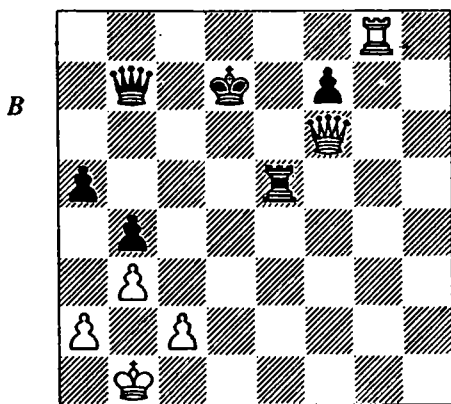
39...♞e6 (D)



40 ♞g1!

Rather than passively covering the e5-pawn, White initiates a king-hunt against Black's vulnerable king. This is definitely what one would call *the transformation of advantages!*

40...♞xe5 41 ♞g8+ ♔e7 42 ♖h4+ ♔d7 43 ♖f6! (D)



This calm move is much more poisonous for Black than any careless checks. Black loses coordination.

43...♞e7 44 ♖f5+ ♔d6 45 ♖xa5

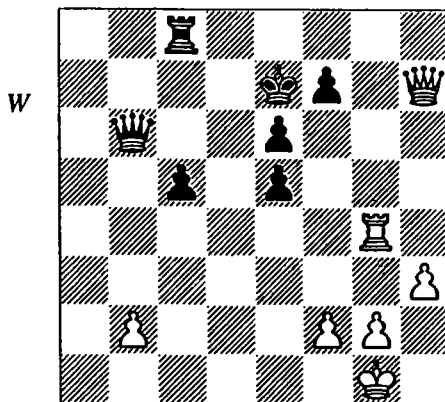
The first interest on the investment is collected. Black is lost.

45...♞e5 46 ♖d8+ ♔e6 47 ♔b2!

Again a calm but powerful move. Black has no useful move and must weaken his own position.

47...f6 48 ♞f8 ♖g7 49 ♖c8+ ♔d5 50 ♖c4+ 1-0

An instructive game by Karpov. Combining an attack on the king with positional probing of a weak pawn-structure is a powerful tool in queen + rook endings, as I was also able to demonstrate in the following game.



L.B. Hansen – B. Kristensen
Espergærde 1992

White has the better pawn-structure – including a potentially dangerous passed pawn on the h-file – and the safer king. These two factors must be combined. First, White strips the black king of a further pawn defender.

33 ♖h4+ ♔d6 34 b4!

Increasing the pressure on Black's king.

34...cxb4 35 ♞xb4 ♞c1+ 36 ♔h2 ♖c7 37 ♞b5!

Making room for the queen to shift to the queenside. 38 ♖b4+ is a nasty threat.

37...♞c4 38 ♖g3 ♞c5

Now White is able to *transform his advantage* into a winning king and pawn ending where the passed h-pawn decides. However, the plausible-looking 38...f6?! suffers an even worse fate, as White wins directly by 39 ♖d3+! ♞d4 (39...♔e7 40 ♞b7 ♖xb7 41 ♖h7+) 40 ♖a3+ ♔d7 41 ♖a8 and ♞b7 will cost Black his queen.

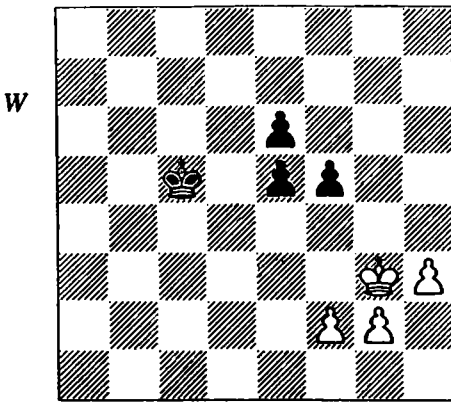
39 ♖a3! ♔d5 40 ♞xc5+ ♖xc5 41 ♖xc5+

41 ♖f3+ e4 42 ♖xf7 also wins, but this is simplest. White exploits his better pawn-structure.

41...♔xc5 42 ♔g3 f5 (D)

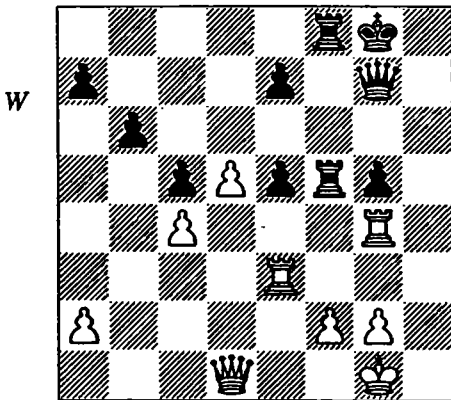
43 ♔h4!

Now the h-pawn is unstoppable, and Black's counterplay with the central pawns comes too late.



43...♔d4 44 ♔g5 ♕d3 45 h4 ♕e2 46 h5 ♕xf2 47 h6 e4 48 h7 e3 49 h8♖ e2 50 ♖d4+ ♕xg2 51 ♖e3 1-0

A damaged pawn-structure and a vulnerable king may lead to trouble even if you are a pawn up.



Bruzon – Arencibia
Cuban Ch (Santa Clara) 2005

The former World Junior Champion (from the Gausdal 1986 event) is a pawn up, but even that does not help much due to his scattered pawns and vulnerable king.

30 ♖g3 ♜f6 31 ♖a4!

A powerful move – White threatens to attack from the rear. Notice how all White’s major pieces are active and well coordinated, while Black has his hands full just to stay alive.

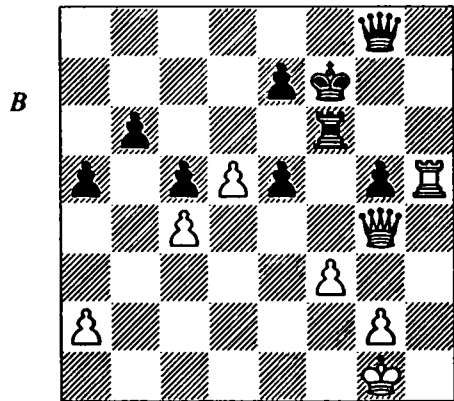
31...♕f7 32 f3 a5 33 ♖d7! ♖g8 34 ♜h3!

This prevents 34...♖e8 due to 35 ♜h7+. A queen exchange would ease Black’s defensive tasks, so White prevents it. Prophylactic thinking in the spirit of Nimzowitsch or Petrosian!

34...♜f4 35 ♜h5! ♜xg4

35...♜f5 is answered by 36 d6!.

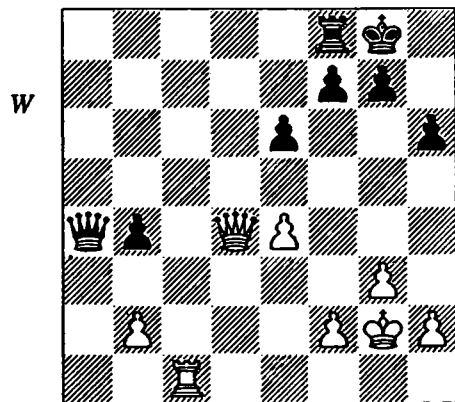
36 ♖xg4 (D)



Now Black cannot avoid losing a pawn, since 36...♜g6 is met by 37 ♖f5+, picking up the e5-pawn. And his problems with the king and the rest of his scattered pawn-structure remain.

36...♖g6 37 ♜xg5 ♖b1+ 38 ♕f2 ♖c2+ 39 ♕g3 1-0

I am not sure if Black resigned or lost on time here. In any case he is lost. The threat is 40 ♜g7+ ♕e8 41 ♜g8+ and wins, and 39...♜g6 (39...♖h7 40 ♜xe5, and Black is a pawn down with a dismal position) leads to a king and pawn ending similar to my game against Kristensen; the presence of an outside passed pawn (the g-pawn) decides after 40 ♜xg6 ♖xg6 41 ♖xg6+ ♕xg6 42 ♕f2 ♕f5 43 ♕e3 followed by 44 g4+ and 45 ♕e4.



L.B. Hansen – S.B. Hansen
Danish Ch (Randers) 1996

The position has arisen from a Catalan. White can be said to possess two advantages: the b4-pawn is ‘sticking out’ as a weakness in

the black position, and White's queen and rook are both more actively placed than their black counterparts. While Black may be able to hold the game with flawless defence, it is a very unpleasant position in a practical game.

32 ♖c7 ♜b5 33 b3 ♠a8 34 ♖c4 ♠a2?

In my view an instructive error. Approaching the time-control, Black is faced with a difficult decision. He can either defend passively with 34...♖b8 or play actively with 34...♠a2, being ready to sacrifice the b4-pawn for activity. While 34...♖b8 35 h4 certainly is unpleasant for Black – White has all the time in the world to build up the pressure on the kingside – I still believe this was relatively the best option on the basis of our endgame principles. The reasoning is this: in pure queen and especially rook endings, activity is vital and often should be given higher priority than material. However, with both queens and rooks on the board, the situation is different. While activity is certainly still very important, it should be noted that fragmented and uncoordinated activity may jeopardize one's own king's safety. Put in another way: a move like 34...♠a2 takes the rook far away from the defence of the king, and this is risky, as a queen and rook may be a formidable attacking force against a bare king. With only queens *or* rooks on the board, going for activity is fine, but with queens *and* rooks on the board, the king needs protection. Following this reasoning, 34...♖b8 is the natural move, not only to defend the b4-pawn (at least for the time being), but also to keep the king safe.

35 h4!

Stronger than 35 ♖xb4 ♜e2, when Black may actually stir up activity. The text-move threatens 36 h5 followed by 37 ♜d8+ and 38 ♖c8.

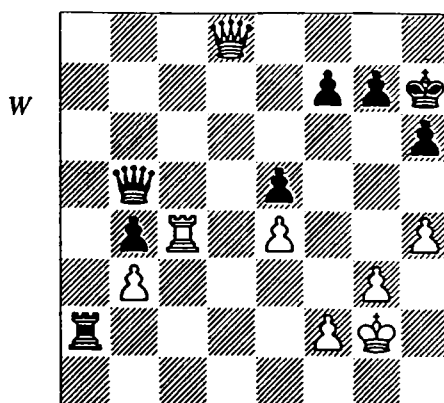
35...e5?!

This move weakens the king's position even more.

36 ♜d8+ ♔h7 (D)

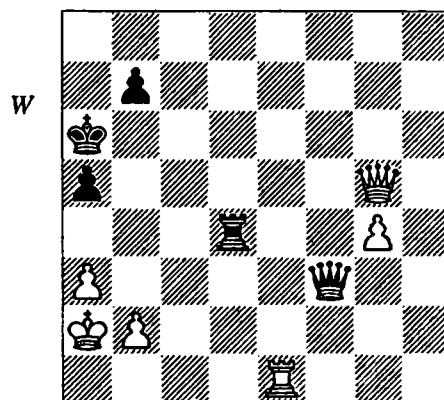
37 ♜c8!

Suddenly White has a devastating attack. The threat is 38 ♜f5+ with mate, and 37...g6 38 ♖c7 ♔g7 39 ♜e6! does not help. Notice how White's advantage (and focus) was *transformed* within a few moves: from a positional advantage due to the better pawn-structure to a decisive attack.



37...♠a7 38 ♜f5+ g6 39 ♜f6 ♜b8 40 h5!
Slamming the door open to the king's castle.
40...gxh5 41 ♖c6! 1-0

The transformation of an advantage into an attack on the king is a common theme in queen & rook endings. Here is another example.



Kasparov – Adams
Linares 2005

Kasparov is a pawn up, but with the limited material Black can hope for a draw. Right now the focus is on whether White can exploit the extra pawn – but very soon it is an attack on the king that is the focus of attention!

47 ♜g6+ ♔a7?

The question mark is from Kasparov, who in his notes in *Informator* gives 47...b6 as the best move. According to Kasparov, White should then exchange into a rook ending by 48 ♜g8 ♜d5+ 49 ♜xd5 ♖xd5 50 ♖g1 ♖g5 51 ♔b3 ♔b5 52 ♔c3 ♔c5 53 b4+ axb4+ 54 axb4+ ♔d5 55 ♔d3 ♔e5 56 ♔e3 ♔f6 57 ♖f1+ “with a clear advantage for White” (Kasparov). I believe White should win this rook ending, but we shall leave the details for now. In the next section we

shall investigate such rook endgames – with the rook behind a passed pawn – in more depth. Suffice it to say that 47...b6 was certainly better than the text-move, as Kasparov now shifts his attention to an attack on the black king.

48 ♖e5! ♖a4

It is not nice to misplace the rook like this, but Black does not have anything better. Kasparov shows that 48...♗xg4 49 ♖xa5+ ♕b8 50 ♗e8+ ♕c7 51 ♖c5+ ♕b6 52 ♗b5+ ♕a7 53 ♗a5+ ♕b8 54 ♗c7+ leads to mate, and 48...♞d5 49 ♗f5! ♗xf5 50 ♞xf5 also wins.

49 ♗h5! b6 50 ♗e8

Accurate attacking play – Kasparov’s trademark. White closes in on the black king.

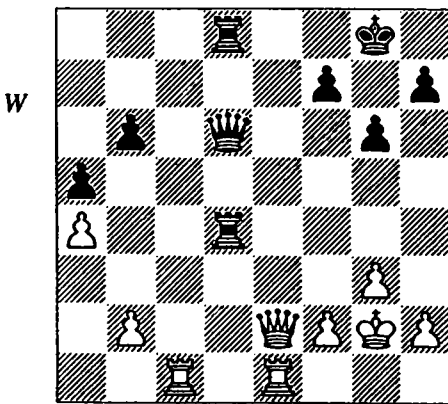
50...♞c4 51 g5!

And the passed pawn is still alive!

51...♞c7 52 ♗e6 a4 53 ♞e4 ♗d1 54 ♞b4 1-0

After 54...♞b7 55 g6 Black is tied hand and foot.

In the last two examples of this section we shall focus on *activity*. As explained above, *uncoordinated activity* may in fact jeopardize one’s own position, but *coordinated activity* (that is, where all the pieces are coordinated and active – not just one piece) is a valuable asset in these kinds of positions. Often the piece activity can be translated into material gain – following the principle of transformation of advantages.



Korchnoi – Karpov
Baguio City Wch (27) 1978

Have a look at this position from the first Karpov-Korchnoi world championship match. Material is equal and there are only major pieces on the board. Is a draw imminent? No, in

fact this is an unpleasant position for White, and Black wins in ten moves! How? Probably Korchnoi was in time-pressure, but on the board as well he is under pressure. The key is the superior *activity* and *coordination* of Black’s major pieces. Furthermore, White has a very concrete problem: how to cover the a4-pawn? 31 b3 is met by 31...♗d5+ 32 ♗f3 ♗xf3+ 33 ♕xf3 ♞d3+, winning a pawn. Korchnoi does not find a way to shake off Black’s pressure.

31 ♗b5 ♞b4! 32 ♞e8+ ♕g7! 33 ♞xd8 ♗xd8 34 ♗e2 ♗d5+ 35 f3 ♞xa4

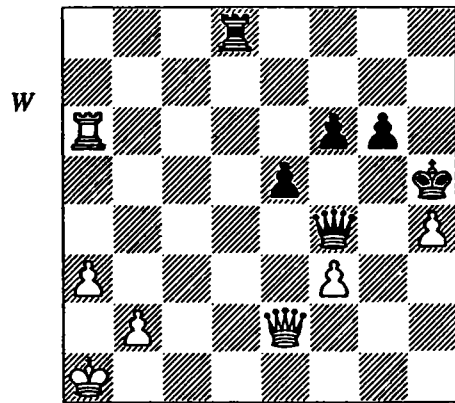
Black won the pawn, and White has even had to weaken his kingside by f3 in the process. Not a good sign.

36 ♞c2 ♞d4 37 ♗e3 b5 38 h4 h5 39 ♗e2 a4 40 ♗e3 b4

White is powerless against the advance of the pawn.

41 ♞f2 0-1.

The game was adjourned here, but Korchnoi saw no point in continuing play.



Morozevich – Svidler
San Luis Wch 2005

An unusual position. White is a pawn up and Black’s king looks somewhat peculiar on h5. But this first impression is artificial and deceptive! In fact Black has decent counterchances. His king is actually relatively safe in front of the pawns, his major pieces are active, and it is difficult for White to avoid losing the f3-pawn. Furthermore, as Nigel Short pointed out in his report on ChessBase.com, in a race Black’s pawns are further advanced, giving him the edge if it comes to a pawn race.

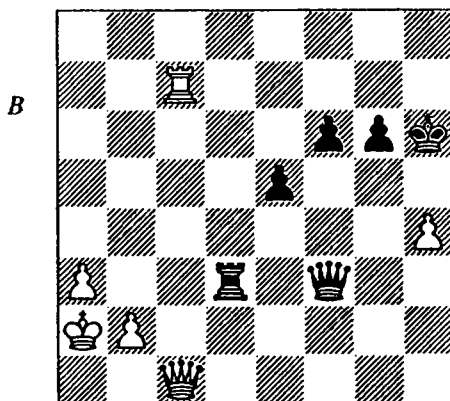
43 ♞a7

Threatening mate on h7.

43...♔h6 44 ♖c7 ♗d2! 45 ♜e1 ♗d3

Now the f3-pawn goes.

46 ♔a2 ♜xf3 47 ♜c1+ (D)



47...♔h5!

Curiously, the king is totally safe in front of the pawns. This is due to Black's very active and centralized pieces.

48 a4 ♜d5+ 49 ♖c4 e4! 50 b3 ♗d2+ 51 ♔a3 ♜d6+ 52 ♖c5+ f5!

Black's pawn avalanche is far stronger than White's.

53 ♜g1 ♔xh4!

No fear of ghosts!

54 a5 ♖c2! 55 b4 ♜d3+ 0-1

Suddenly White is mated (56 ♔a4 ♗a2#). An instructive example of the combined strength of queen and rook.

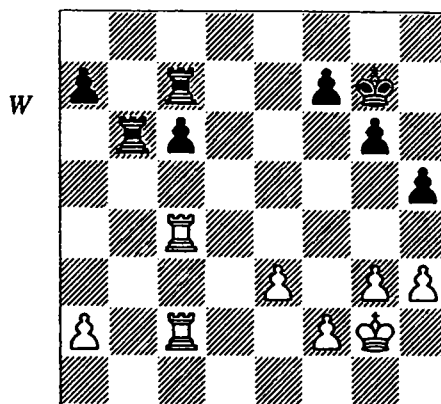
Rook Endgames

We have now reached the most common endgame type of all: the rook ending. Many excellent books have been written about this phase of the game, and it certainly is an important issue to study if you want to improve your game. Korchnoi once claimed that chess-players who studied all the examples in his book *Practical Rook Endings* would increase their rating by 100 points! Be that as it may, the frequency with which rook endings occur in practice makes the study of them an essential part of any ambitious chess-player's education.

Most books on rook endgames focus on the technical aspects – that is the positions in which the result is 'known' with best play. In line with the purpose of this book, we shall instead focus

on the more strategic features of rook endings – the guiding principles.

The overriding principle in rook endgames can be stated in just one word – *activity*. It is necessary to look continuously for ways to activate the rook(s) and/or the king. Passive defence may occasionally succeed, but in most situations activity is necessary.



Karpov – Gelfand
Linares 1991

A typical double-rook endgame with differences in the activity levels of the rooks. While the white rooks are free to manoeuvre around, the black rooks are tied to the passive defence of the c-pawn. Karpov now proceeds to create extra space on the kingside while simultaneously activating his king.

29 g4! hxg4 30 hxg4 ♔f6 31 ♔g3 ♔e6 32 a4 ♔d7 33 g5!

Fixing f7 as an eternal weakness.

33...♗a6 34 ♗d4+ ♔e8 35 ♖c5 ♗b6 36 ♔f4 ♗d7 37 ♗xd7 ♔xd7 38 ♔e5!

Now it is not only the activity level of the rooks that is in White's favour; the king has also taken up a dominant post. Black must keep the king out of f6.

38...♔e7 39 f4 ♗b4 40 ♗a5 ♗b7 41 e4 ♖c7 42 ♖c5! ♖c8 43 ♖c3 ♗e8 44 ♖c4!

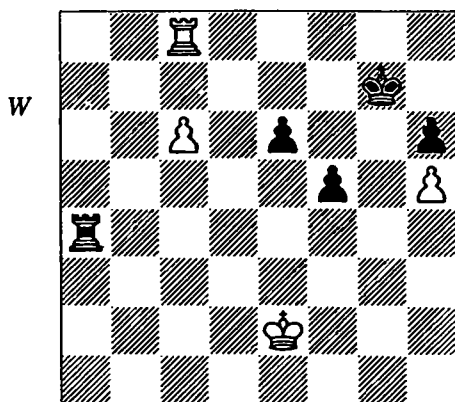
Notice how patiently Karpov manoeuvres around with his rook. His advantage is completely stable, so in line with the principle of not hurrying, Karpov takes his time. At the same time he suppresses all black counterplay by not allowing the trick 44 ♖xc6 ♔d7+ 45 ♔d5 ♗xe4!.

44...♖c8 45 ♗b4 ♖c7 46 a5 ♔d7 47 ♗b3! ♔e7 48 a6! ♔d7

Allowing the white king access to f6 is hopeless, but the king and pawn ending after 48...c5 49 ♔d5 c4 50 ♖b7 ♔d7 51 ♖xc7+ ♔xc7 52 ♔xc4 ♔b6 53 f5 ♔xa6 54 e5! gxf5 (54...♔b6 55 e6 fxe6 56 fxg6 and wins) 55 e6! simply leads to a white queen.

49 ♔f6 ♔c8 50 ♖h3 ♖d7 51 f5 gxf5 52 exf5 c5 53 ♖c3 ♖c7 54 g6 fxg6 55 fxg6 ♔d7 56 g7 ♖c8 57 ♖g3 1-0

Even with very little material, it is risky to end up in a passive position, as can be seen in the following high-class encounter.



Kasparov – Anand
Linares 2003

The position is very close to being a clear draw, but with an accurate rook manoeuvre Kasparov keeps the pressure on Black.

48 ♖e8! ♖c4

Forced, as White was threatening 49 c7.

49 ♖xe6 f4 50 ♖g6+ ♔h7

Now the black king is out of play for the time being, while the white king can roam freely.

51 ♔d3 ♖c5 52 ♔d4 ♖c1 53 ♔e4 ♖c4+ 54 ♔d5 ♖c3 55 ♔d4 ♖c1 56 ♔e4 ♖c4+ 57 ♔f3

After some probing, Kasparov brings matters to a head.

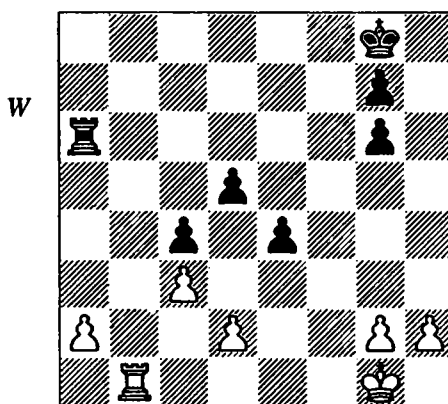
57...♔h8?

The decisive mistake. 57...♖d4? loses to 58 ♖e6, when White threatens both 59 c7 ♖c4 60 ♖e7+ and 59 ♖e4. However, 57...♖c5! draws, as the king is freed from his coffin after 58 ♔xf4 ♖xh5.

58 ♖xh6+ ♔g7 59 ♖d6 ♔h7 60 ♔g4 ♔g7 61 ♖d7+ ♔f6 62 c7 1-0

62...♔e6 63 ♖g7 ♔f6 64 h6 is winning for White.

One of the 15 principles of endgame play is the principle of *transformation of advantages*. This principle also applies in the rook endgame. In the following game Rublevsky downs Kasparov by correctly giving up his outside passed a-pawn in order to achieve maximum activity and coordination between his king and rook.

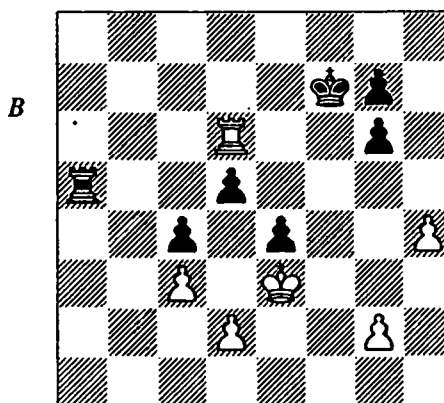


Rublevsky – Kasparov
Izmir ECC 2004

30 ♔f2!

In his notes to this game in *New in Chess* Rublevsky writes: "Of course, here an active king is more important than the a2-pawn!" Yet I am sure that a number of chess-players would have covered the pawn, but that allows Black to centralize his king by ...♔f7-f6-e5. Rather than allowing Black activity, Rublevsky aims for a position where Black is briefly a pawn up, but where he has multiple vulnerable pawns and no activity.

30...♖xa2 31 ♔e3 ♔f7 32 ♖b7+ ♔f6 33 ♖b6+ ♔f7 34 ♖d6! ♖a5 35 h4! (D)



White has achieved his objective. His rook is optimally placed on d6, hitting d5 and g6, his

king is active, and with his last move he prevents Black from obtaining activity by pushing his pawns. Black now faces an unpleasant choice between two evils – either defending passively or trying to break free by giving back his extra pawn. Since biding his time with, for instance, 35...♖b5 36 g4! ♖a5 37 g5 ♖b5 38 ♕f4! followed by ♕e5 looks grim (as indicated by Rublevsky), Kasparov chooses to strive for some activity. But it is not sufficient,

35...♖g5!? 36 hxg5 ♕e7 37 ♖c6 ♖a1 38 ♕d4!

King activity! The king is now ready to reap the fruits of the previous instructive play.

38...♖d1 39 ♕xd5 e3

As Rublevsky points out, 39...♖xd2+ 40 ♕xe4 ♖xg2 41 ♕f5! does not help Black, as the white king invades on g6.

40 ♖e6+ ♕d7 41 ♖xe3 ♖xd2+ 42 ♕xc4 ♖xg2 43 ♖e5 ♕d6 44 ♖a5

The game has entered the technical phase where White has to find the most accurate way to convert the advantage. He does so without allowing Black any counterchances.

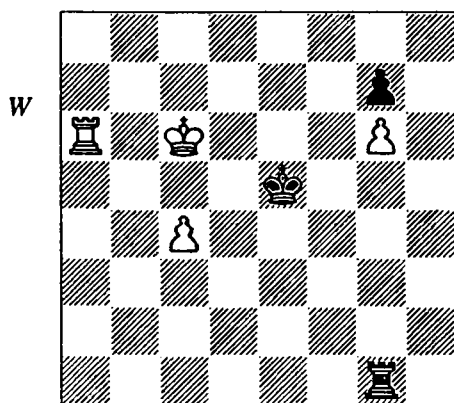
44...♖g4+ 45 ♕b3 ♖g1 46 ♕b4 ♖b1+ 47 ♕c4 ♕e6 48 ♖a6+ ♕f5 49 g6!

White fixes the g7-pawn as a target. White can now work with two plans: either pushing the c-pawn or giving it up in order to conquer the g7-pawn. Black is unable to cope with both threats simultaneously.

49...♖g1 50 ♕b5 ♕e5

The pawn ending after 50...♖xg6 51 ♖xg6 ♕xg6 52 c4 is lost for Black.

51 c4 ♖b1+ 52 ♕c6 ♖g1 (D)



53 ♕d7!

Plan number two now decides the game: the white king marches toward the g-pawn. This is a fitting end to an instructive endgame, as it was

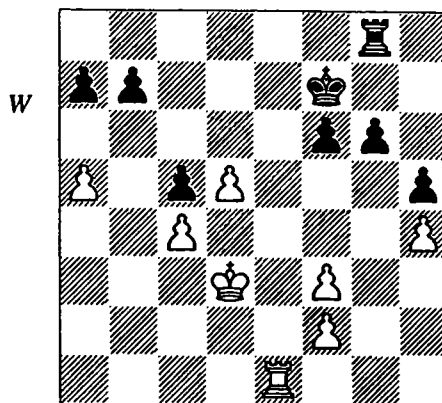
his insistence on king (and rook) activity that led to White's advantage in the first place.

53...♖d1+ 54 ♕e7 ♖b1 55 ♖a5+!

Pushing the black king away from the kingside.

55...♕d4 56 ♕f8 ♖b7 57 ♖f5! 1-0

Now 58 ♖f7 decides, leading to a simple and well-known 'Lucena' position.



Akopian – Sorokin
Dubai 2000

Material is even, but with his next few moves Akopian forces Black into a passive position from which he never recovers.

38 ♖b1! ♖b8 39 f4 f5

Perhaps Black should omit this move, as it makes his pawn-structure very rigid and causes a future king and pawn ending to be lost. But it is understandable that Black did not like the idea of leaving White the option of f5 followed by ♕e3-f4. But now the king invades on the queenside instead.

40 ♕c3! ♕e7 41 ♖b5 ♕d6 42 ♕b3! b6 43 ♕a4 ♕c7 44 ♖b3!

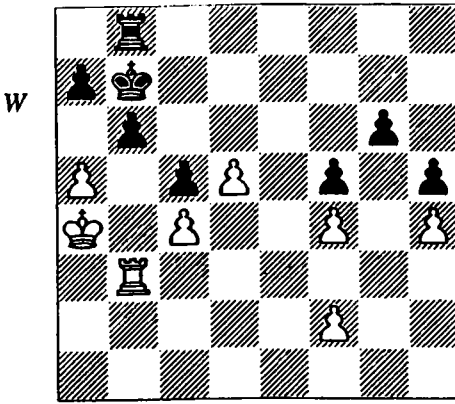
Making room for the king on b5 and threatening to transfer the rook to e3.

44...♕b7 (D)

An important point – a consequence of the pawn-structure – is that the pawn ending after 44...♖e8 45 ♖e3! is lost for Black; for example, 45...♖xe3 46 fx3 ♕b7 47 ♕b5 a6+ (White threatened 48 axb6 axb6 49 d6) 48 ♕a4 ♕c7 49 axb6+ ♕xb6 50 d6 ♕c6 51 ♕a5 ♕xd6 52 ♕xa6 and White wins.

45 ♕b5!

The most accurate. 45 ♖e3 is also tempting, but Black can still fight with 45...♕a6 46 ♖e6

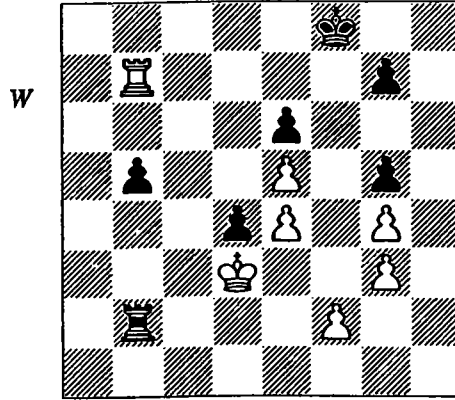


g8, as the white king then cannot invade his position. The text-move forces Black to weaken his position further by ...a6.

45...a6+ 46 c4 b5+

Hopeless, but as before the pawn ending after 46...c7 47 xxb6 xxb6 48 axb6+ cxb6 49 d6 c6 50 c5 cxd6 51 cxa6 is lost. Black loses his c-pawn and the game.

47 cxb5 d8 48 bxa6+ cxa6 49 b6+ c7 50 d6 1-0



Topalov – Kasimdzhanov
San Luis Wch 2005

The old and new FIDE World Champions squaring off in a rook endgame! White is better due to his more active king and more compact pawn-structure. Topalov wins in impressive style.

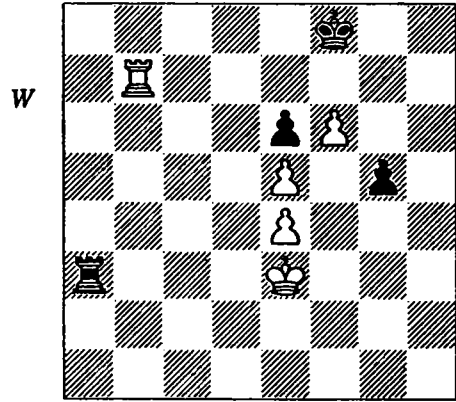
54 f4! b3+ 55 cxd4 xg3 56 f5 xg4 57 f6!

The point! Black cannot take, as the white king invades decisively via e5 after 57...gx6 58 exf6. 57...g6 58 c5 doesn't help either, as the white king picks up the e6-pawn, after which the two connected monsters decide.

57...g1 58 xg7 b4 59 c5 b3 60 b7 a1

Necessary, as Black drops the e6-pawn after 60...b1 61 d6.

61 xxb3 a5+ 62 d4 a4+ 63 e3 a5 64 b8+ f7 65 b7+ f8 66 d4 a4+ 67 c5 a5+ 68 d4 a4+ 69 e3 a3+ (D)

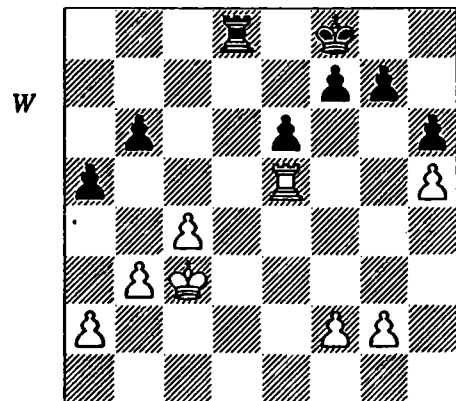


70 f2!

The right way! The king could not find any way in via the queenside, but there is room on the other side. Notice that White did not spoil anything by moving around the board with the king – his advantage is sustainable and the principle of not hurrying applies.

70...a5 71 g3 xe5 72 g4! xe4+ 73 h5! 1-0

Hiding behind enemy pawns is a common theme when supporting a far-advanced passed pawn. Black is defenceless against g6.



Nataf – Chabanon
French League 2005

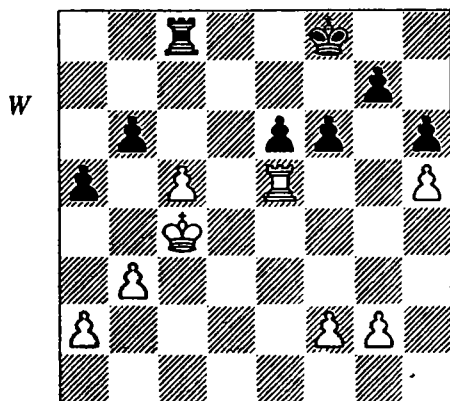
A typical position arising from a 4...f5 Caro-Kann. White has the more active king and

a pawn-majority on the queenside which is more mobile than Black's kingside majority. But with his last move, 39...♔f8, Black started to centralize his king, and given a few moves he will be able to neutralize White's advantage. In other words, this is *not* one of those positions where White should not hurry. His advantage is only temporary, and he must act in order to preserve it.

40 c5! ♖c8 41 ♔c4!

A strong move with a hidden point, which will be revealed on the next move. It was more natural to sidestep the pin by 41 ♔d4, and indeed after 41...f6 42 ♖xe6 ♖xc5 43 ♖xb6 ♖xh5 White is pressing – just look at the difference in king activity! However, as Nataf points out in his notes in *New in Chess*, the text-move is stronger.

41...f6 (D)



42 ♔b5!!

The brilliant point. White temporarily sacrifices his rook in order to obtain a dangerous passed pawn, which is well supported by the active king.

42...fxe5 43 cxb6 ♔e7 44 b7 ♖b8 45 ♔c6!
Shouldering off the black king.

45...e4 46 ♔c7 ♖d8 47 a3!

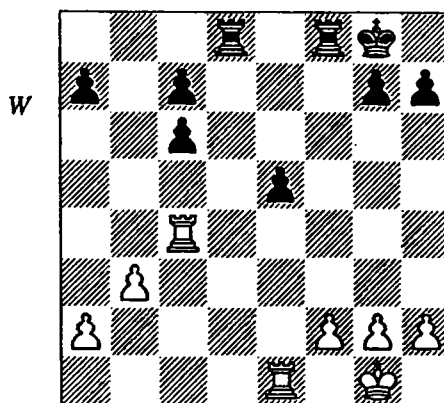
The second power-move. White prepares to enter a winning pawn endgame. As Nataf points out, 47 b8♖ ♖xb8 48 ♔xb8 ♔d6 49 ♔b7 ♔c5 would also win, but only if White finds 50 a3!, transposing to the game. On the other hand, 50 ♔a6? ♔b4 51 a4 ♔c3! 52 ♔xa5 ♔d2 53 ♔b6 ♔e2 54 a5 ♔xf2 55 a6 e3 56 a7 e2 57 a8♖ e1♖ only draws.

47...e5

47...♖d7+ 48 ♔b6 ♖d8 49 ♔xa5! ♔d6 50 ♔b6! doesn't help Black.

48 b8♖ ♖xb8 49 ♔xb8 ♔d6 50 ♔b7 ♔c5
51 ♔c7 ♔d4 52 ♔d6 ♔c3 53 b4! axb4 54 axb4
♔xb4 55 ♔xe5 1-0

In rook endgames too, the pawn-structure matters. Although activity is often the most important principle, the pawn-structure should not be forgotten! Sometimes a fragmented pawn-structure can leave you in trouble even if you are a pawn up.



Macieja – Korchnoi
Calvia OL 2004

23 ♖c2!

In *Informator*, Macieja suggests 23 f3!? ♖d2 24 ♖a4 ♖f6 25 ♖xa7 ♖g6 26 g3 ♖gd6 27 ♖f1! with some advantage for White. However, personally I prefer the text-move. It is in line with the principles of suppressing counterplay and of not hurrying when you have some kind of stable advantage. And you don't get a much more stable advantage than a fractured pawn-structure!

23...♖d5 24 f3 ♖f6 25 ♖ce2 ♖f5 26 ♖c1 ♖f6
27 ♖ce1 ♖f5 28 ♔f2 h5 29 ♖c1 ♖f6 30 ♔e3
♖a5?!

According to Macieja 30...♖fd6 was better.

31 ♖c4 ♔f7 32 ♖ec2 ♔e7 33 ♖c5!

Exchanging the active black rook – certainly the right exchange.

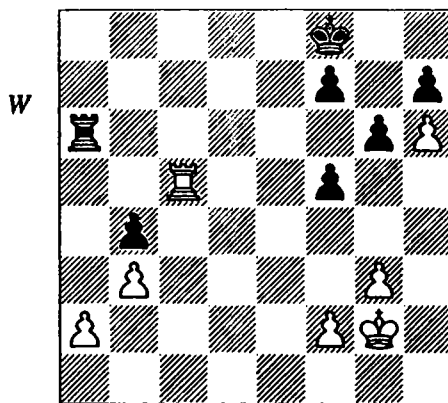
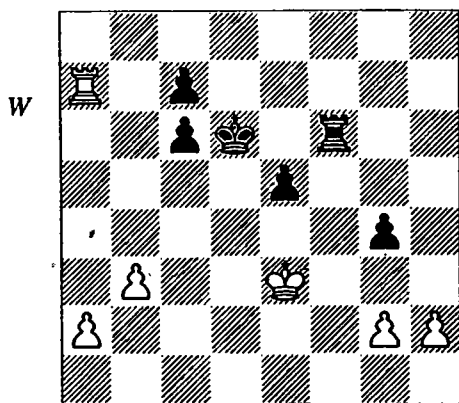
33...♖xc5 34 ♖xc5 ♔d6 35 ♖a5 g5 36 ♖xa7

Finally regaining the pawn with a clear advantage. Black still suffers from problems with his pawn-structure.

36...g4 37 fxg4 hxg4 (D)

38 ♖a4!

Again forcing a favourable exchange – this time of pawns.



38...♖h6 39 ♖xg4 ♖xh2 40 ♔e4 ♖h1 41 ♖g6+ ♔c5 42 ♔xe5 ♖a1 43 a4 ♖a3 44 ♖g3 ♔b4 45 ♖f3 c5 46 ♔d5 ♖a2 47 g3??

The two question marks stem from Macieja, who recommends 47 g4. No wonder: a basic rule of endgames is that passed pawns must be pushed. The winning line runs 47...♖g2 48 ♖f4+ ♔xb3 49 ♔xc5 ♖c2+ 50 ♔b5 c6+ 51 ♔b6 c5 52 a5 c4 53 a6 c3 54 a7 ♖a2 55 ♔b7 c2 56 ♖f1 and White wins.

47...♖c2! 48 ♖e3 ♖c1??

Korchnoi returns the favour! According to Macieja, Black should be able to draw with 48...c4 49 bxc4 ♖xc4 50 ♖e4 ♖xe4 51 ♔xe4 c5 52 a5 c4 53 a6 c3 54 a7 c2 55 a8♖ c1♖. However, he would still have to work hard for the draw.

49 g4 c6+

49...♖g1 is a better chance, when White must play accurately to win. Macieja gives the line 50 ♖e4+ ♔xb3 51 ♔xc5 ♖c1+ 52 ♔b5 c6+ 53 ♔a5! c5 54 ♖e3+ ♔b2 55 ♖g3! c4 56 g5 c3 57 g6 ♖e1 58 g7 ♖e5+ 59 ♔b4 ♖e4+ 60 ♔b5 ♖e5+ 61 ♔c4 c2 62 ♖b3+ ♔a2 63 ♖c3 ♖g5 64 ♖xc2+ ♔a3 65 a5 ♖xg7 66 ♔b5 and White wins.

50 ♔e5! ♖g1 51 ♔f4!

Do you recognize this theme from the game Rublevsky-Kasparov? The king returns to the kingside and supports the advance of the g-pawn.

51...c4 52 bxc4 ♔xc4 53 g5 c5 54 ♖g3! ♖f1+ 55 ♔e5 ♖e1+ 56 ♔f6 ♖f1+ 57 ♔e7 ♖e1+ 58 ♔f6 ♖f1+ 59 ♔e7 ♖e1+ 60 ♔d7 ♖d1+ 61 ♔c7!

And here we see a theme from Topalov-Kasimdzhanov: hiding behind the enemy pawn.

61...♖h1 62 g6 ♖h8 63 g7 ♖g8 64 ♔d6!

Back again!

64...♔b4 65 ♖g4+ c4 66 ♔e6 1-0

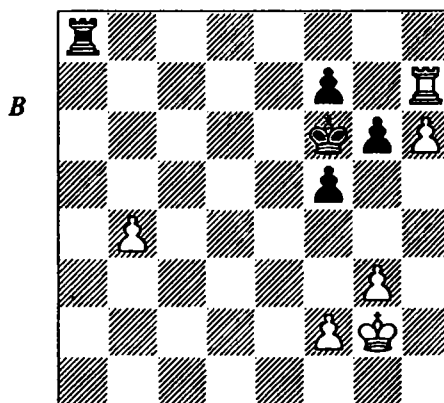
Timman – Palo
Malmö/Copenhagen 2005

Following a number of exchanges, an endgame has arisen in which White has two important trumps – both related to the pawn-structure. Due to the pawn-majority White has the option of creating an outside passed pawn, while the far-advanced pawn on h6 creates tactical threats.

34 ♖b5 ♖xa2 35 ♖xb4 ♖a6?!

In time-pressure Black was facing an important choice: the alternative was to play 35...♔e7 – which in *New in Chess* Timman calls Black's best bet – but after 36 ♖b6! White has plenty of time to improve his position. The text-move plans to conquer the h6-pawn by ...g5, but it is too slow.

36 ♖b8+ ♔e7 37 ♖h8! ♔f6 38 ♖xh7 ♖a8 39 b4 (D)



A beautiful position. At first sight the rook may seem out of play on h7, but in reality it is untouchable, and now White has two passed pawns. And as we know from the previous chapter, passed pawns create all kinds of tactical twists and turns.

39...g5

According to Timman, the best chance was 39...♖b8 40 ♗g7 f4!, but after the calm 41 b5 White should win. On the other hand, after 41 gxf4?! ♗h8 42 b5 ♗xh6 43 ♗g8 ♗h5! Black would have excellent drawing chances.

40 b5 ♗f8 41 ♗g7 g4 42 b6 ♗h8 43 b7 ♗b8 44 ♔f1!

Threatening a decisive king-march to the queenside.

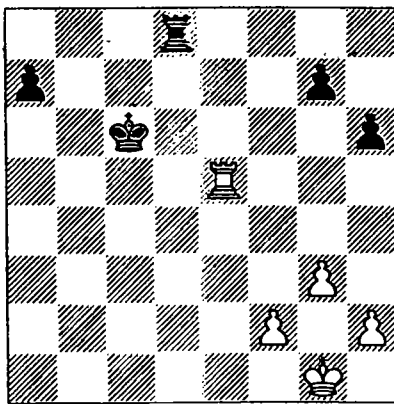
44...♗e8 45 f3!

Black has prevented the king-march, but by tactical means White secures himself a new queen.

45...gxf3 46 g4! 1-0

After 46...fxg4 47 ♗xg4 followed by 48 h7 and 49 ♗g8, one of the pawns queens.

A common pawn-structure theme is that of *pawn-majorities*. In rook endgames, we frequently see positions with equal numbers of pawns, but where the distribution is uneven. In that case it is important to be able to turn your majority into a passed pawn – especially if your rook can be placed behind the pawn. It is well-known that *passed pawns should be pushed* and that *rooks belong behind the passed pawn*. A fragment from the first K-K world championship match illustrates both these principles.



Kasparov – Karpov
Moscow ♖ch (6) 1984/5

42...♗a8!

Placing the rook behind the passed pawn, which is then ready to run. Despite the limited material, White is in big trouble.

43 ♗a5 ♔b6 44 ♗a2 a5 45 ♔f1 a4 46 ♔e2 ♔c5 47 ♔d2 a3 48 ♔c1 ♔d4 49 f4 ♔e4 50 ♔b1 ♗b8+!

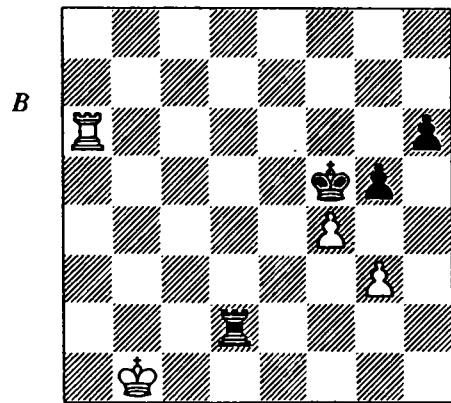
White has managed to bring his king to the queenside and thereby neutralize the passed pawn, but this has left his kingside wide open. We now see an example of the principle *transformation of advantages*. Black sacrifices his a-pawn to pound on the weak kingside instead.

51 ♔a1 ♗b2! 52 ♗xa3

The king and pawn ending is lost, as the white king is too far away.

52...♗xh2 53 ♔b1 ♗d2 54 ♗a6 ♔f5 55 ♗a7 g5 56 ♗a6 (D)

Will White manage to draw after all?



56...g4!

No draw! Despite momentarily being a pawn down, Black is winning due to the superior activity and coordination of his pieces.

57 ♗xh6 ♗g2 58 ♗h5+ ♔e4 59 f5 ♗f2!

The right way. The rook should be used to cut off the white king and to keep an eye on the f-pawn, while the king goes to pick up the g-pawn.

60 ♔c1 ♔f3 61 ♔d1 ♔xg3 62 ♔e1 ♔g2 63 ♗g5 g3 64 ♗h5 ♗f4

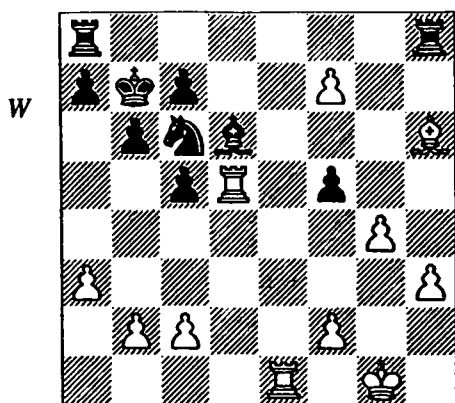
This is a well-known position without the f-pawn – the famous ‘Lucena’ position. But even the presence of an extra pawn does not help White.

65 ♔e2 ♗e4+ 66 ♔d3 ♔f3 67 ♗h1

67 f6 ♗f4.

67...g2 68 ♗h3+ ♔g4 69 ♗h8 ♗f4 70 ♔e2 ♗xf5 0-1

Having now covered positions with activity and pawn-structure being the main drivers, let us now turn to another common issue in rook endgames: how to play in positions where you are either a pawn up (looking to win) or a pawn down (fighting for a draw). Such situations occur often in rook endgames.



Carlsen – P.H. Nielsen
Warsaw Ech 2005

Who would have thought that this complex position, in which Magnus Carlsen has just sacrificed a piece, will in a few more or less forced moves end up in a rook endgame with an extra pawn for White?

23 ♔g7! ♖h7

The alternative is 23...♖hd8, but after 24 ♖xf5 White's far-advanced pawns clearly outweigh the piece.

24 ♖xd6! ♖xg7

Once again Black has nothing better. After 24...cxd6 White does not play 25 f8 ♖ ♖xf8 26 ♔xf8 ♖xh3 (although White is better here too) but 25 ♖e8! ♖xg7 26 f8 ♖ ♖xe8 27 ♖xg7+ and wins.

25 ♖xc6!

Such a tactic is known as a 'desperado' – the rook takes as much material as possible with it to the grave!

25...fxg4

25...♔xc6 26 ♖e8! ♖xf7 27 ♖xa8 fxg4 (or 27...♖g7 28 f3) 28 hxg4 ♖f4 29 ♖g8 and White wins.

26 ♖xc7+!

In *ChessBase Magazine*, the move-order is given as 26 ♖xb6+ cxb6 27 ♖e7+ ♔c6 28 f8 ♖, but that makes no sense, as Black wins by the simple 26...axb6 27 ♖e8 ♖xf7. I am sure this is a data error.

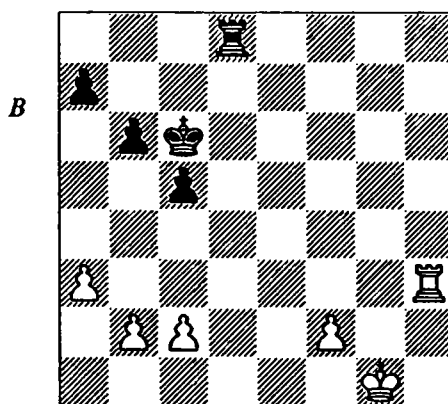
26...♔xc7 27 ♖e7+ ♔c6 28 f8 ♖!

The point of the last two moves.

28...♖xf8 29 ♖xg7 gxh3 30 ♖h7 ♖d8

After 30...♖f3 the other pawn goes anyway after 31 ♔f1 followed by 32 ♔e2. But certainly not 31 ♖xa7? h2+! with the point that 32 ♔g2 allows 32...♖xf2+!

31 ♖xh3 (D)

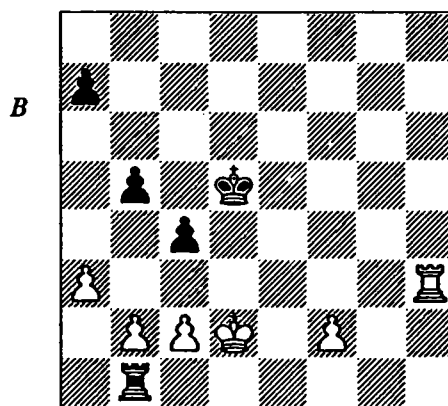


It is done! White has not only won a pawn, but the rook is also excellently placed on the 3rd rank, where it can cover the queenside pawns from the front.

31...♖d1+ 32 ♔g2 ♖c1 33 ♖c3!

With his active rook Black can certainly count on drawing chances, but now Carlsen manages to coordinate his king and rook in impressive and instructive fashion. This is one of the keys to winning such pawn-up positions.

33...b5 34 ♔f3 ♔d5 35 ♔e2 c4 36 ♔d2 ♖b1 37 ♖h3! (D)



Activating the rook while working with tactics!

37...♖f1

37...♖xb2? fails to 38 ♔c1, trapping the rook.

38 ♖h5+ ♔d4?!

Striving for activity, but perhaps the more conservative 38...♔c6 was a better chance, as now the b5-pawn is lost.

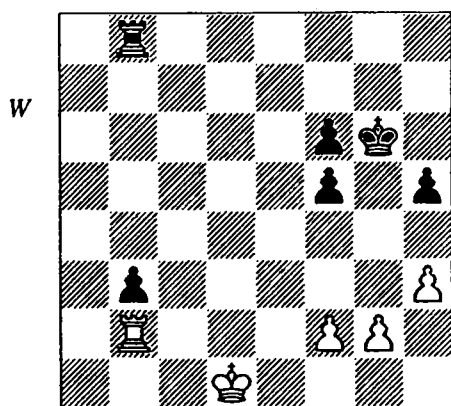
39 ♔e2 ♖c1 40 ♔d2!

No need to hurry! Black does not have anything better than repeating moves, waiting to see what White wants.

40...♖f1 41 ♔e2 ♖c1 42 c3+! ♔e4 43 f3+ ♔f4 44 ♖xb5 ♖c2+ 45 ♔d1 ♖h2 46 ♔c1! ♔xf3 47 ♖c5

Black is lost – his pawns are too weak and one more of them will drop.

47...♖h4 48 ♔b1 ♔e3 49 ♖c7 1-0



Haba – Nisipeanu
Bundesliga 2004/5

A typical theme in rook endgames: one player has an extra outside pawn, and the rook is actively placed behind the pawn. Usually such positions are winning. The only chance for the defending side is to switch places between the king and the rook, so that the king is blocking the pawn, while the rook can be employed actively. However, moving the king to the queenside leaves the kingside vulnerable, and the winning plan for the active side consists of exploiting this vulnerability by advancing his king and pawns. In fact, the scattered black pawn-structure on the kingside is quite effective here, as the advance of the front f-pawn can help destroy White's pawn-structure, while the open g-file gives direct access to the white g-pawn.

41 ♔d2

This loses prosaically. Now Black can advance his king and pawns unhindered on the kingside, thus demonstrating the standard winning plan in this type of ending. White's only chance was to try to obstruct the advance of the black king by either 41 f4 or 41 h4. However, closer examination reveals that White is probably lost in any case, although he could still put up some resistance:

a) 41 h4 is met by 41...f4 42 f3 ♔f5 43 ♔d2 ♔e5 44 ♔c3 (44 ♔d3 ♔d5 does not change

anything; then White has nothing better than 45 ♔c3) 44...♔d5 45 ♖d2+ ♔c5 46 ♔b2 (or 46 ♖b2 ♖b7, and White is in zugzwang; the king and pawn endgame after 47 ♖b1 b2! 48 ♖xb2 ♖xb2 49 ♔xb2 ♔d4 is lost) 46...♔c4 47 ♖d6 ♖g8! (switching attention to the vulnerable kingside at the right moment) 48 ♖c6+ ♔d3 49 ♖xf6 ♖xg2+ 50 ♔xb3 ♔e3 51 ♖h6 ♔xf3 52 ♖xh5 ♖h2! 53 ♖h8 ♔g4, and Black picks up the h-pawn and eventually queens his f-pawn – a very instructive line, typical for this kind of endgame.

b) 41 f4 is probably White's best chance to defend, although after 41...♔f7 42 ♔c1 ♔e6 43 ♖e2+ ♔d5 44 ♔b2 h4! (fixing the backward g2-pawn as a target) Black should eventually win.

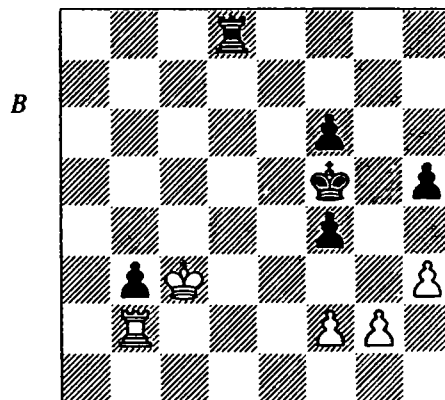
41...♔g5!

Now the black king penetrates from the front.

42 ♔c3 f4! 43 ♔d3

A sad necessity. The pawn ending is lost after 43 ♖xb3 ♖xb3+ 44 ♔xb3 ♔h4! followed by 45...f3.

43...♔f5 44 ♔d4 ♖d8+ 45 ♔c3 (D)



45...f3!

A decisive *zwischenzug*.

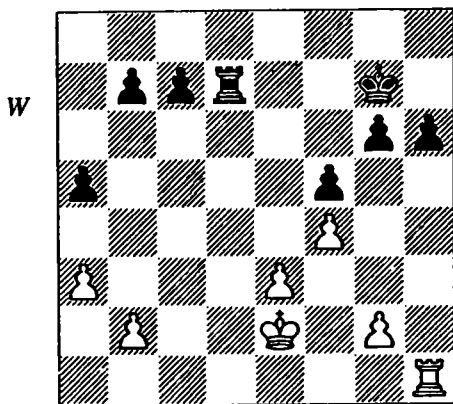
46 gxf3

The point of the previous move is seen after 46 g3 ♔e4!. White cannot take the b-pawn with either piece, as Black then liquidates into a winning pawn endgame (47 ♔xb3 ♖b8+ or 47 ♖xb3 ♖d3+), while White lacks a check on e2 that would enable the king and rook to switch places.

46...♖b8! 0-1

Back again! After this White is defenceless against 47...♔f4.

The best defensive plan when a pawn down in a rook endgame is to exchange as many pawns as possible. Many rook endgames with an extra pawn are not won if there is also limited material left on the board.



L.B. Hansen – Cu. Hansen
Skanderborg 2005

This is a fairly typical pawn-down rook endgame. The game has just seen a transition from the middlegame to the endgame, by which Black's middlegame initiative was transformed into this pawn-up rook endgame. The position should be winning for Black, but White can still put up stiff resistance. The key is to limit the number of pawns on the board as much as possible.

33 ♖c1 c6 34 a4!

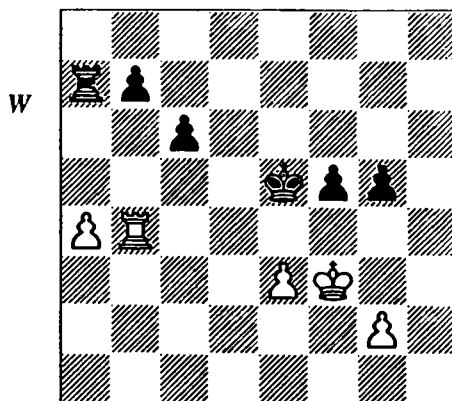
In combination with the two next moves this is White's best try. Entering a pawn ending loses after 34 ♖c5 ♖d5 35 ♖xd5 cxd5 36 ♔d3 ♔f6 37 ♔d4 ♔e6 38 ♔c5 g5!, and 34 b4 axb4 35 axb4 allows 35...♖d5!, after which Black can threaten to attack the b-pawn from the front, while he has all the time in the world to improve his position (for example, by centralizing the king).

34...♖d5! 35 ♖c4! ♔f6 36 b4 g5!?

Black makes a double-edged decision just before the time-control at move 40. On the one hand White is forced to scatter his pawn-structure (as 37...g4 cannot be allowed, gaining space on the kingside and setting up a potential outside passed pawn), but the number of pawns is further reduced.

37 fxg5+ hxg5 38 ♔f3 ♔e5 39 bxa5 ♖xa5 40 ♖b4 ♖a7 (D)

41 ♖c4!



A difficult decision, which fortunately had to be made *after* the time-control. Still, it was a difficult decision, but I think I made the right one. While Black is still winning, this gives White the best defensive chances. White would like to exchange further pawns by 41 g4, but after 41...c5 the position is pretty hopeless (42 ♖c4 ♔d5 or 42 ♖b5 fxg4+ 43 ♔xg4 ♔d5). That leaves two alternatives: 41 ♖d4 (intending 42 ♖d7) or 41 ♖c4 (restraining Black's pawns). Following our principle of playing for maximum activity, 41 ♖d4 and 42 ♖d7 seems right, but it hardly gives much hope after, for instance, 41...c5 42 ♖d7 g4+! (pushing the white king back) 43 ♔g3 c4 44 ♖c7 ♖xa4 45 ♖xb7 ♔e4, and the black king penetrates decisively. Furthermore, Black might answer 41 ♖d4 with the calm 41...b6, keeping all options open. It goes to show that no rules of thumb can cover all situations, and that principles sometimes substitute each other. You must judge which principle is the most important in the given situation. Here, White must accept a passive rook in order to achieve the desired exchange of pawns.

41...♖a5

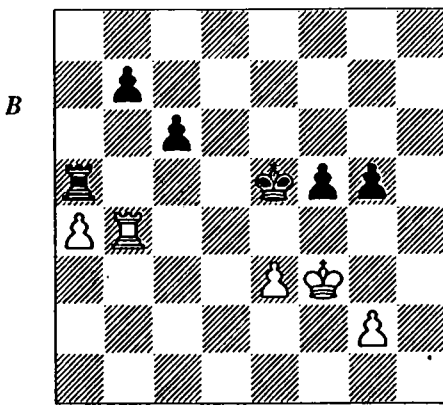
After 41...♔d5 42 ♖d4+ ♔c5 43 g4 the black king is unfortunately placed, and White achieves counterplay.

42 ♖b4 (D)

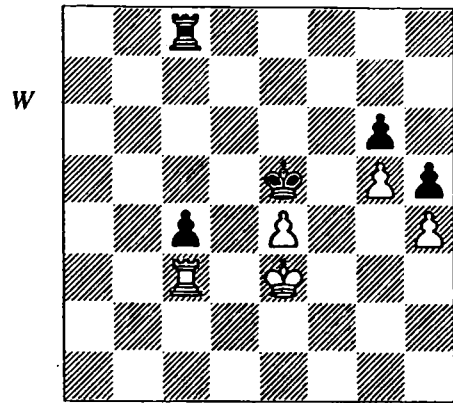
The second critical position, where it is Curt's turn to make a difficult and crucial decision.

42...b5?!

A very understandable decision, as it keeps White's rook passive. Nevertheless, after this move Black may no longer be able to win, as White in return gets the chance to exchange more pawns. The right way was 42...c5!, which



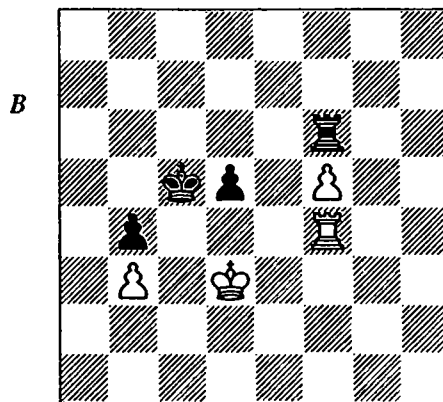
(again, the pawn endgame is hopeless) 64 ♖a2! (the decisive transfer!) 64...♙c7 65 ♖a6+ ♔d7 66 ♖b6 1-0.



Botvinnik – Euwe
Groningen 1946

seems to win. At first sight this seems counter-intuitive, as it allows White’s rook to become active on the 7th rank, but it has higher priority to start pushing the passed pawn while not allowing White the chance to exchange pawns on the kingside by playing g4. The winning line for Black goes 43 ♖xb7 ♖xa4 44 ♖e7+ ♔d6 45 ♖f7 g4+! 46 ♔g3 c4! 47 ♖xf5 c3 48 ♖f2 ♖c4 (the rook behind the passed pawn!) 49 ♖c2 ♔e5 50 ♔f2 ♔e4 51 ♔e2 g3! (zugzwang!) 52 ♖c1 c2 53 ♔d2 ♖c8 54 ♔e2 (the pawn ending after 54 ♖xc2 ♖xc2+ is won for Black) 54...♖f8! followed by 55...♖f2+ and wins. This line, which was discovered in the joint analysis after the game, is highly instructive and reminiscent of the famous rook endgames Lasker-Rubinstein, St Petersburg 1914 and Botvinnik-Euwe, Groningen 1946. Although I am sure that many readers already know these games, there is no harm in once again reviewing these classics:

Apparently the position is very similar to Lasker-Rubinstein and the line from our game above. At first sight Black seems to be winning (and that was also what players and spectators at this famous event initially thought), but there is a difference! With two pairs of pawns on the kingside (rather than just one in Lasker-Rubinstein) White is able to draw the king and pawn ending by going after the g6-pawn. This difference allowed Botvinnik to obtain the much-desired draw. There has been some speculation by historians that if Euwe – the World Champion from 1935-7 – had won this game and subsequently the tournament, FIDE would have handed him the world championship title that was vacant following Alekhine’s death that same year. As it was, Botvinnik obtained the draw, won the tournament and two years later the world championship tournament that was set up by FIDE to determine Alekhine’s successor. Botvinnik drew by 42 ♖c2! c3 43 ♔d3 ♖d8+ (43...♖c7 44 ♖xc3! draws after 44...♖xc3+ 45 ♔xc3 ♔xe4 46 ♔c4 ♔f4 47 ♔d4 ♔g4 48 ♔e5! ♔xh4 49 ♔f6!, and White is in time) 44 ♔e3 ♖d4 45 ♖xc3 ♖xe4+ 46 ♔f3 ♖xh4 47 ♖c6! ♖f4+ (47...♔f5 48 ♖c5+ ♔e6 49 ♖c6+ draws) 48 ♔e3 ♖e4+ 49 ♔f3 ♔f5 50 ♖f6+ ♔xg5 51 ♖xg6+! 1/2-1/2.



Lasker – Rubinstein
St Petersburg 1914

Black is in a deadly zugzwang and Lasker won in the same way as in the above analysis: 60...♖f7 61 f6 ♔d6 62 ♔d4 ♔e6 63 ♖f2 ♔d6

Following this journey into chess history, let us now return to my game with Curt.

43 axb5 ♖xb5 44 ♖c4 c5 45 g4!

Finally White has time for this essential move.

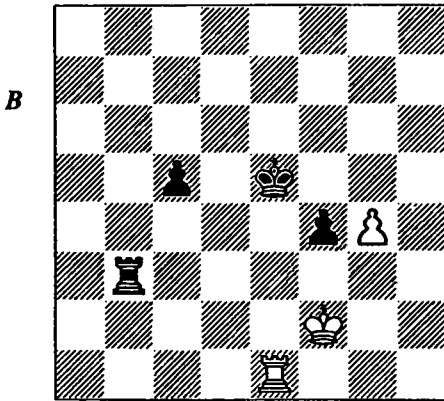
45...♔d5 46 ♖c1

Not 46 ♖c3? fxg4+ 47 ♔xg4 c4 48 ♔xg5 ♖b3!, and Black wins.

46...f4

After a long think. Immediately after the game Curt demonstrated that 46...fxg4+ is not sufficient to win either, as White draws by one tempo: 47 ♔xg4 c4 (47...♔e4 48 ♖c3) 48 ♔xg5 ♔e4+ 49 ♔g4 ♔d3 50 ♔f4 c3 51 e4 c2 52 e5 ♖b1 53 ♖xc2 ♔xc2 54 e6 ♖e1 55 ♔f5 ♔d3 56 ♔f6 ♔d4 57 e7 ♔d5 58 ♔f7, and draws. Powerful calculations on a type of position to which we shall shortly return: that of king and pawns vs rook.

47 ♖d1+ ♔e6 48 exf4 ♖b3+ 49 ♔f2 gxf4 50 ♖e1+ ♔d5 51 ♖d1+ ♔e4 52 ♖e1+ ♔d5 53 ♖d1+ ♔e5 54 ♖e1+ (D)



The final crucial position in the game.

54...♔f6

This allows White to escape into a well-known drawn rook and one pawn vs rook position, where the king is on the short side and the rook on the long side of the enemy pawn. This type of position is *technical* in nature and can be found in most literature on technical rook endgames. The alternative was to hide Black's king behind the c-pawn instead by 54...♔d5 55 ♖d1+ ♔c6. However, this also seems insufficient to win after 56 ♖g1! (the rook behind the passed pawn!) 56...c4 57 g5 ♖g3 58 g6! (not 58 ♖xg3? fxg3+ 59 ♔xg3 {59 ♔g2 ♔d5! and the black king reaches the g-pawn in time} 59...c3 60 g6 c2 61 g7 c1 ♖ 62 g8 ♖ ♖g1+ and wins) 58...♖xg1 59 ♔xg1 c3 60 g7 c2 61 g8 ♖ c1 ♖+ 62 ♔h2, and White should be able to draw this

queen ending (which the database indeed confirms to be a draw).

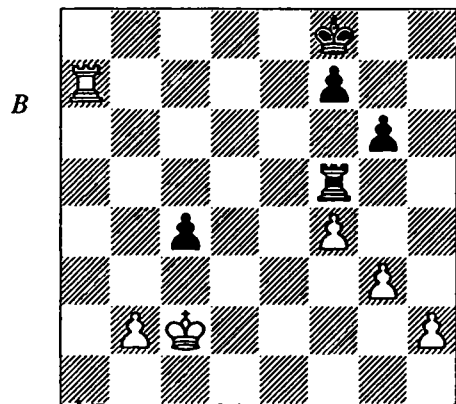
55 ♖e4! ♔g5 56 ♖e5+ ♔xg4 57 ♖xc5 ♖b2+ 58 ♔g1 ♔g3 59 ♖g5+ ♔f3 60 ♖a5! ♖b1+ 61 ♔h2

The time-control has been reached, and the position is now a technical draw, although White must still play accurately. The rule of thumb in such positions is to have the king on the short side and the rook on the long side of the pawn, from where it can give side-checks.

61...♖e1 62 ♖a8 ♖d1 63 ♖a7 ♔e2 64 ♖e7+ ♔f2 65 ♖a7 ♖d2 66 ♖a1 f3 67 ♔h3! ♖b2 68 ♔h2 ♖e2 69 ♔h3 ♖d2 70 ♔h2 ♔e3+ 71 ♔g1 ♔e2 72 ♖b1! ♖c2 73 ♖a1 ♖b2 74 ♖c1 ♖b3 75 ♖c2+ ♔e3 76 ♖c1 ♖b2 77 ♖c3+ ♔e2 78 ♖c1 ♖b8 79 ♖c2+ ♔e1 80 ♖c1+ ♔e2 81 ♖c2+ ♔e3 82 ♖c3+ ♔f4 83 ♖c7! ½-½

Now White can give 'eternal' checks from the rear.

As stated above, the key to successful defence (if it is possible) in pawn-down rook endgames is to resolutely exchange as many pawns as possible. Nevertheless, positions with very limited material may still be difficult to handle. You must remain alert until the very last move of the game.



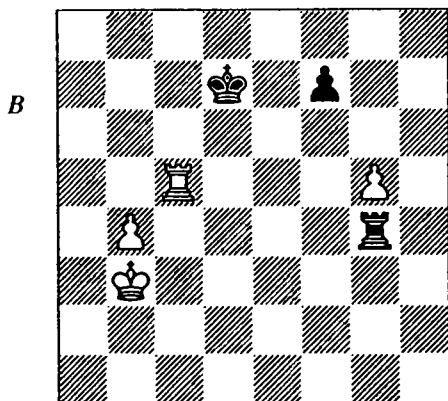
Vallejo Pons – Fontaine
French League 2005

White is a pawn up, but material is limited, and Black goes for further pawn exchanges. With correct play the draw should be within reach.

33...g5! 34 fxg5 ♖f2+ 35 ♔c3 ♖xh2 36 ♖b7 ♖g2 37 ♔xc4 ♖xg3 38 ♖b5 ♖g4+! 39 ♔c3 ♔e7 40 b4 ♔d6 41 ♖f5 ♔e6!

Not 41...♔c6? 42 b5+ ♔d6 43 ♖xf7 ♖xg5 44 ♔b4!, and White wins, as indicated by Vallejo Pons in *New in Chess*.

42 ♖c5 ♔d7 43 ♔b3 (D)



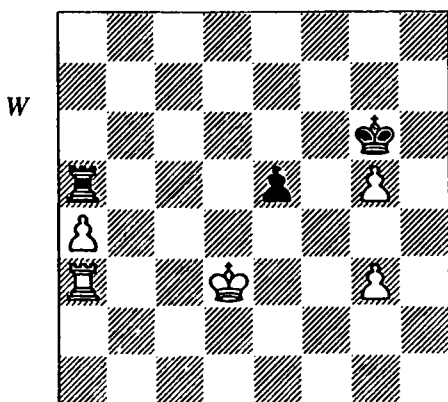
43...f6??

Oh no! After defending so well for a long time Black blunders, just as the draw is almost secure. As indicated by Vallejo Pons, White cannot make any progress if Black simply keeps the pressure on both white pawns; for example, 43...♔d6 44 ♔a4 ♖f4 45 ♔b5 ♖g4 46 ♔a5 ♖f4 47 ♖b5 ♖g4. White is tied to the defence of the g-pawn and can make no headway.

44 ♖xf6 ♖f4 45 ♔a4! ♖xf6 46 ♔a5

Now the win is easy and technical, as the black king is cut off. This is the so-called 'Lucena position', known to be winning since 1634.

46...♖f1 47 b5 ♖a1+ 48 ♔b6 ♖a2 49 ♖c1 ♖b2 50 ♔a6 ♖a2+ 51 ♔b7 ♖d2 52 b6 ♔d8 53 ♔a7 ♖a2+ 54 ♔b8 ♖d2 55 b7 ♖a2 56 ♖d1+ ♔e7 57 ♖d4! 1-0



Kramnik – Grishchuk
Wijk aan Zee 2005

Things look grim for Black, and indeed White should be winning with accurate play. But Grishchuk puts up tough resistance and eventually manages to snatch a draw.

47 ♔c4!

Moving the king to the queenside to support the advance of the a-pawn.

47...♔xg5 48 ♔b4 ♖a6!

This brilliant idea is rewarded with a draw, as Kramnik falters. The most natural move was 48...♖a8, but this loses trivially to 49 a5 e4 50 ♔c4! ♖d8 (50...e3 51 ♔d3) 51 a6 ♔g4 52 a7, as indicated by Kramnik in *Informator*.

49 a5?

This only draws. According to Kramnik White should play 49 ♔c5! ♔g4 50 a5 e4 51 ♔d4! e3 52 ♔xe3 ♔xg3 53 ♖a4! (cutting off the black king) 53...♔h3 54 ♔d3 ♔g3 55 ♔c4!, winning.

49...e4 50 ♔c4 ♖d6!

Preventing White's king from approaching the e-pawn. This pawn is Black's only hope of generating counterplay – and it works!

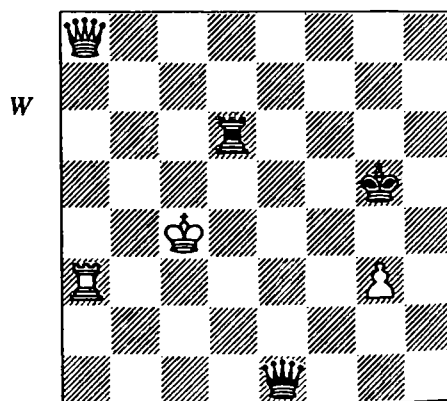
51 a6

51 ♔c5 also doesn't win after 51...♖d3! 52 ♖a1 ♔g4! 53 a6 ♔xg3 54 a7 ♖d8 55 a8♖ ♖xa8 56 ♖xa8 e3 57 ♖e8 ♔f2, and Black draws. Note this drawing mechanism: giving up your own rook to achieve a draw with king and pawn. This theme is common in rook endgames.

51...e3!

Here we see the real point of 48...♖a6: 52 ♖xe3 is now met by 52...♖xa6 with a simple draw. That would not be possible with the rook on the 8th rank.

52 a7 e2 53 a8♖ e1♖ (D)



The final critical moment in Black's escape: can he survive the onslaught of White's queen

and rook on an almost open board and with White to move? The answer turns out to be yes!

54 ♖a5+ ♔g4 55 ♜g8+ ♔f3 56 ♜f7+ ♔g2!

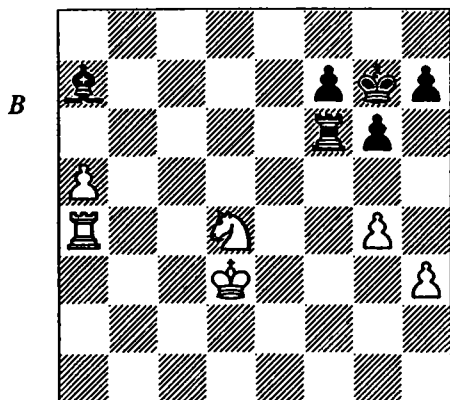
Finding safety behind the enemy lines.

57 ♖a2+ ♔g1 58 ♜a7+ ♔f1 59 ♜f7+ ♔g1
60 ♜a7+ ♔f1 61 ♖a1 ♖d1 62 ♜f7+ ♔g1 63
♜a7+ ♔f1 64 ♖xd1

The queen ending is a draw, but White has nothing better.

64...♜xd1 65 ♜d4 ♜a4+ 66 ♔d3 ♜b3+ 67
♜c3 ♜d5+ ½-½

The last type of rook endgames that we shall investigate is strictly speaking not really a rook endgame – but they often arise from rook endings and an understanding of them is important. The theme in question is *rook against pawn(s)*, a theme that we have already encountered in several of the previous games. Here we shall outline a few key principles for this kind of endgame.



Mortensen – Hillarp Persson
Køge 1997

The a-pawn is strong and White threatens 47 ♖b5, so Hillarp Persson goes for a rook vs pawns endgame that he correctly judges as drawn.

46...♗xd4 47 ♖xd4 ♖f3+ 48 ♔c4 ♖xh3 49
a6 h5! 50 ♔b5 hxg4 51 a7 ♖h8 52 ♖xg4 f5 53
♖b4 ♔f6 54 ♔a6 ♖a8 55 ♖b8 ♖xa7+ 56 ♔xa7
♔e5 57 ♔b6

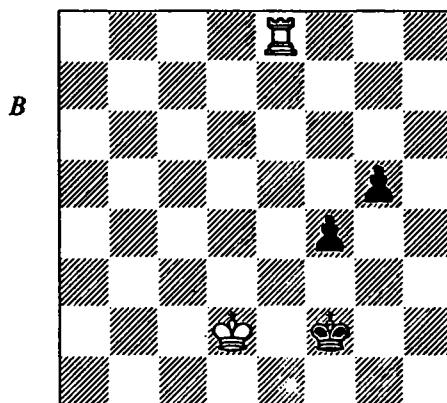
This position occurs more or less naturally from the diagram. The position is drawn, but now Black commits a game-losing error:

57...f4??

Following the principle that passed pawns should be pushed, but here another principle

should be given higher priority: that of obstructing the enemy king. We shall return to that, but let us see the game continuation first:

58 ♔c5 ♔e4 59 ♔c4 ♔e3 60 ♔c3 g5 61
♖e8+ ♔f2 62 ♔d2! (D)



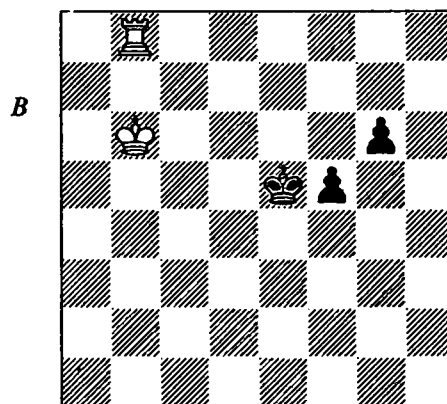
White has won the race – the king has returned in time, and two pawns are no match for a rook when it is supported by the king.

62...g4 63 ♖e4! g3

63...♔f3 64 ♖a4! g3 65 ♔e1 g2 66 ♖a3+ followed by 67 ♔f2 does not help Black, as indicated by Mortensen in *Mega Database*.

64 ♖xf4+ ♔g1 65 ♔e2 1-0

But let us return to the position before Black's fatal 57th move.



When teaching this type of endgame to young players, I always advise them to think of soccer. Imagine the situation being a one-on-one situation on the soccer pitch, where an attacker is trying to get past a defender. In soccer it is unfortunately not allowed, but in chess it is within the regulations for the defender to *obstruct* the attacker. Hillarp Persson could have drawn by...

57...♔d4!

...obstructing the white king's path back to the pawns. A sample line is:

58 ♖f8 ♕e3 59 ♕c5 f4 60 ♕c4

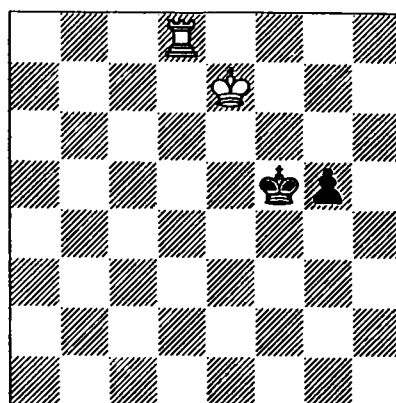
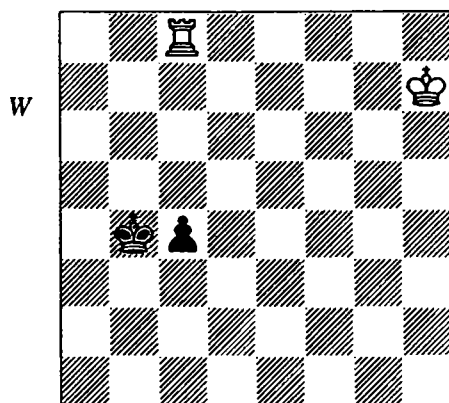
60 ♖e8+ should be answered by 60...♔d3!, again obstructing the white king.

60...f3 61 ♕c3 f2 62 ♖e8+ ♔f3 63 ♕d2 f1♚

64 ♖f8+ ♔g2 65 ♖xf1 ♔xf1 66 ♕e3

with a draw.

A good example of the obstruction theme is given by Spielman, Wade and Tisdall in *Batsford Chess Endings*:



Euwe

Nieuwe Rotterdamse Courant, 1934

which shows the theme of *going the other way around the pawn*.

1 ♖f8+ ♕e4

1...♔g4 is answered by 2 ♔f6!, while 1...♕e5 loses to 2 ♔f7! ♕f5 3 ♔g7+ ♔g4 4 ♔g6.

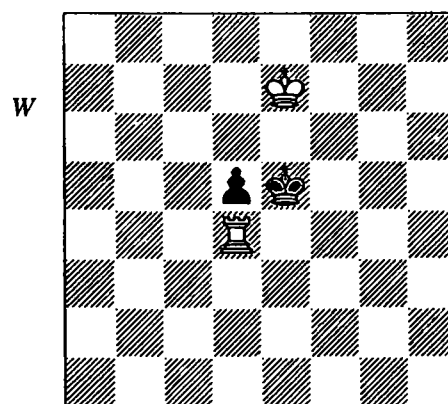
2 ♔f6 g4

2...♔f4 3 ♔g6+ ♔g4 4 ♖f5.

3 ♔g5! g3 4 ♔h4! g2 5 ♖g8 ♔f3 6 ♔h3

and White wins.

Before we return to real games, let's see a famous study by Réti.



Réti

Münchner Neueste Nachrichten, 1928

If Black is to play, he draws easily by advancing the pawn. White is not in time to catch the pawn with his king (try it yourself!). But with White to play things are trickier. He continues:

1 ♔g6

For example, White now wins after 1...c3? 2 ♔f5 ♕b3 3 ♕e4 c2 4 ♔d3. But Black can draw through *obstruction*. Rather than 1...c3?, Black should play the counter-intuitive:

1...♕c3!

Blocking his own pawn!

2 ♔f5 ♔d3! 3 ♔f4

3 ♖d8+ ♕e3!.

3...c3 4 ♔f3 c2 5 ♔f2 ♔d2

with a draw.

Obstruction is a common theme in rook vs pawn endgames. But sometimes the attacker can get past the defender after all! He can try to *go the other way around*. An example of this theme can be seen in the following piece of analysis (*see following diagram*):

The natural move is 1 ♔d6, and this does indeed win. But there is another winning method,

White needs to play very accurately to out-smart the defender and get his king through to the pawn. The natural 1 ♖d1? does not win after 1...d4 2 ♔d7 ♔d5! (obstruction) 3 ♕c7 ♕c5! (and again) 4 ♕b7 ♕c4! 5 ♕c6 d3 6 ♔d6 ♕c3 7 ♕e5 ♕c2 8 ♖h1 d2 with a draw. But White wins with *zugzwang*:

1 ♖d2!

1 ♖d3! d4 2 ♖d1! is equivalent.

1...d4 2 ♖d1!

Often time is precious in the endgame, but as our principle goes, it depends on what kind of advantage you have! Here it is more important to put Black into a deadly zugzwang where he must allow the white king around the pawn.

2...♔d5!

The best chance, but...

3 ♔d7!

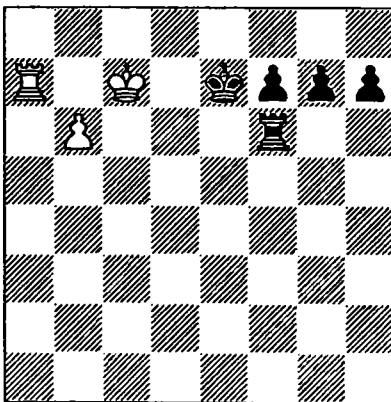
Now Black cannot obstruct the white king further – it breaks through to the pawn.

3...♔c4

3...♔e4 4 ♔c6! – going the other way around the pawn.

4 ♔e6! d3 5 ♔e5 ♔c3 6 ♔e4 d2 7 ♔e3 and White wins.

We have seen that in endgames with one or two pawns against the rook, the crucial question is whether the king and rook can return in time to catch the pawns. If the king is in time, the game is decided. However, in positions with *three* pawns against the rook, it may not be enough to be in time with the king – the position may still be drawn. A recent example arose in a high-class encounter between the European Champion and the Grand Old Man of Chess:



Korchnoi – Nisipeanu
Gothenburg Echt 2005

The far-advanced b-pawn wins a rook and the white king returns in time, but still the position is drawn.

33...♖f1 34 b7 ♖c1+ 35 ♔b6 ♖b1+ 36 ♔c6!

Now Black must give up his rook, as waiting with, e.g., 36...♖b2?? loses to 37 b8♖+!

36...♔e6 37 ♖a5!

Threatening 38 ♖b5. Black must take the pawn.

37...♖xb7 38 ♔xb7 f5 39 ♔c6 g5?

Nunn points out that 39...f4 draws, as does 39...g6 – the latter is based on the idea of defending the f-pawn so that a later ♔c3 can be met by ...♔e3.

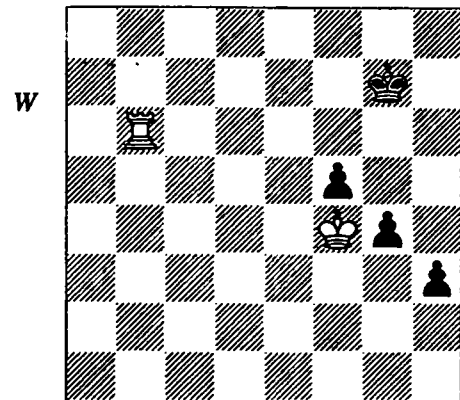
40 ♔c5 ♔e5! 41 ♔c4+ ♔e4 42 ♔c3 h5 43 ♔d2 h4 44 ♔e2 g4 45 ♖a4+?

Returning the favour. 45 ♔f2! (Nunn) wins.

45...♔e5

The king has arrived in time and the black king is pushed back, but the pawn avalanche is so strong that White cannot make any headway.

46 ♔e3 h3 47 ♖a5+ ♔f6 48 ♔f4 ♔g6 49 ♖b5 ♔h6 50 ♖b6+ ♔g7 (D)



An instructive position. Even with his king pushed back to its second rank, Black is in no danger. This was first shown by Lasa in 1843.

51 ♖a6 ♔f7 ½-½

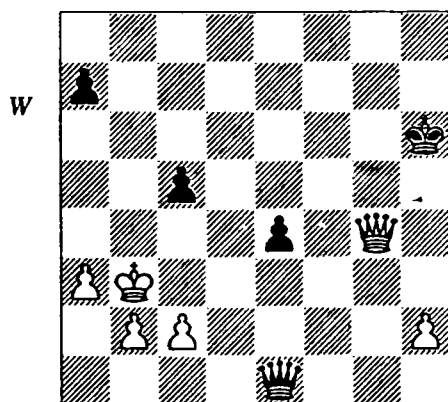
Queen Endgames

Queen endgames occur much more rarely than rook endgames. Still, knowledge of the basic principles of this type of endgame is likely to increase in value for the practical player following the seemingly continuous decrease in time-limits that we have witnessed in recent years. This is due to the fact that queen endings often result in very long games (due to the many checks and repetitions of moves) and therefore are often decided in the very last minutes. Knowing what to do in such endings with limited time available may gain you an extra half-point or two.

Queen endings are often concrete and contextual. For example, one pawn placed one square further back may secure the king the game-deciding cover needed to queen a passed pawn. However, it is still possible to formulate a number of basic principles for queen endings. These are the following:

- Passed pawns are crucial and often weigh heavier than absolute material.
- Queens must be centralized to control as many squares as possible.
- There is no need for the stronger side to hurry – repetitions may help wear the opponent down.
- The king is a strong piece in queen endings and can often be employed actively.
- When trying to queen a passed pawn, it is necessary to look for a safe hiding place for the king.
- If its own pawn-structure cannot provide cover, the king must be activated.

Let us investigate a number of examples where these principles are employed.



Fressinet – Hamdouchi
Wijk aan Zee 2004

A typical queen ending. White is a pawn up, but with his passed e-pawn Black is certainly not without chances. White must try to push his own passed pawn while containing Black's potential counterplay. A possible plan for White is also to utilize the principle of transformation of advantages – if White can force the exchange of his h-pawn for Black's e-pawn, he will most likely win with the black king cut off and the a- and c-pawns vulnerable.

48 h4 ♖e3+ 49 c3

The first key to White's success: his compact pawn-structure on the queenside secures his king a safe hiding place.

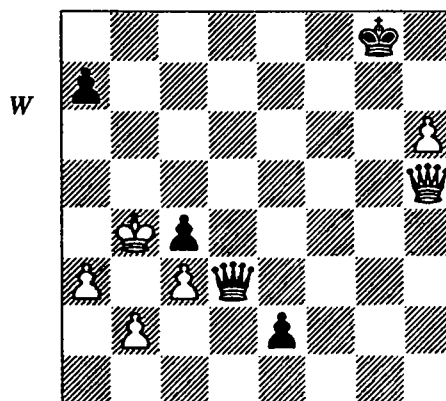
49...♚d3 50 ♖g5+ ♜h7 51 ♜f5+ ♜g7 52 h5 c4+

White must now make a difficult decision. He has to choose between two common plans in queen endings: either strive to hide the king (thus going for 53 ♜a2) or else activate the king. 53 ♜a2 e3 is certainly not easy to win for White (if at all) due to the advanced e-pawn, so Fressinet's choice to use his king actively makes sense. White's 66th move shows that this was the right decision!

53 ♜b4 e3 54 ♖g5+ ♜f7 55 ♜f4+ ♜e6 56 ♖g4+ ♜f7 57 ♜f4+

'Do not hurry' – the advantage is stable and sustainable.

57...♜e6 58 ♖g4+ ♜f7 59 h6 e2 60 ♖g7+ ♜e6 61 ♖g8+ ♜e7 62 ♖g7+ ♜e6 63 ♖g4+ ♜f7 64 ♖h5+ ♜g8 (D)



65 ♖e5!

A powerful centralization which simultaneously threatens mate on g7, covers e1 and prevents any black checks – what more can you ask from one move?

65...♖g6 66 ♜xc4!

The triumph of White's decision on the 53rd move to activate his king! Notice that the dominant white queen controls everything and allows the king to walk safely around the board. On the other hand, the impatient 66 ♖xe2? leads to an immediate draw after 66...♚b6+ 67 ♜a4 (not 67 ♜xc4?? ♖a6+ and Black wins) 67...♚b3+ 68 ♜a5 ♚b6+.

66...♜h7 67 b4!

Again not 67 ♖xe2?? ♖a6+. But now White threatens 68 ♖xe2 ♖a6+ 69 b5.

67...♖g2 68 ♔d3 e1♗ 69 ♖xe1 ♗d5+ 70 ♘c2 ♗a2+ 71 ♘c1 ♗a1+ 72 ♘d2

Black's only remaining chance is to look for perpetual check, but with careful manoeuvres White can avoid this scenario.

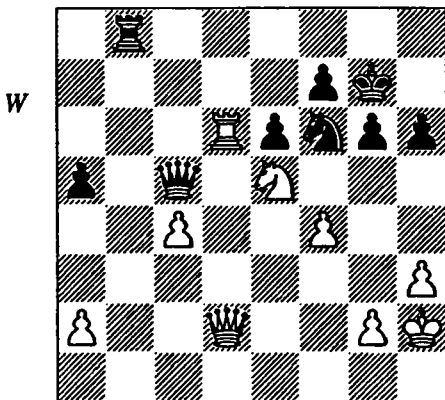
72...♗a2+ 73 ♘e3 ♖e6+ 74 ♘f2 ♖f5+ 75 ♘g1 ♖g4+ 76 ♘h2 ♖h5+ 77 ♘g2 ♗d5+ 78 ♘g1 ♖g5+ 79 ♘f1! ♖f5+ 80 ♖f2 ♖b1+ 81 ♘g2 ♖e4+ 82 ♖f3!

White is gradually centralizing his queen. Against a centralized queen, perpetual check is almost impossible to achieve – basically this is only possible with the queen on the rim.

82...♖g6+ 83 ♘f2 ♗c2+ 84 ♘g3 ♖g6+ 85 ♖g4 ♗d3+ 86 ♖f3 ♖g6+ 87 ♘h4!

No more checks, as 87...♖xh6+ fails to 88 ♖h5.

87...♘h6 88 ♖e3+ ♘h7 89 ♖xa7+ ♘h6 90 ♖e3+ ♘h7 91 ♖f3 ♗c2 92 ♘g3 1-0



L.B. Hansen – Bagirov
Debrecen Echt 1992

Nothing much has happened in the middle-game. I tried to make something tangible out of the strong knight on e5 and the passed c-pawn, but against Bagirov's solid defence nothing really came of it. However, Black's last move, 41...♖b6-c5, was somewhat careless and should have been replaced by 41...♖b4. Now White has the chance to transform the position into a queen endgame where the passed c-pawn increases in value. The outcome of the game is still open, but the onus is on Black to defend accurately.

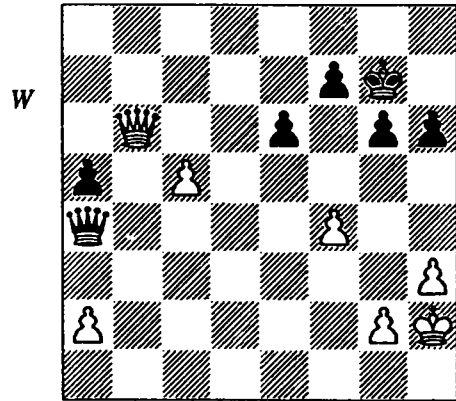
42 ♖d7! ♔xd7

Defending by 42...♖f8 43 ♖b7 is too passive for Black.

43 ♔xd7 ♖b4 44 ♖d4+ ♘g8 45 ♔xb8 ♖xb8 46 c5 ♖c7 47 ♖e5 ♖c6 48 ♖b8+ ♘g7

Black would like to take the king off the long diagonal (where it is vulnerable to checks), but 48...♘h7? loses to 49 ♖a7, hitting a5 and f7.

49 ♖b6 ♖a4! (D)



50 ♖d6!

Centralization and support for the passed pawn is more important than material! The alternative was 50 ♖b2+, but this would allow Black to activate his king with 50...♘f8!, when the white c-pawn might end up blockaded and potentially weak.

50...♖xa2 51 ♖d4+! e5?

Perhaps the decisive error. Black returns the pawn to be able to cover f7 from the a2-g8 diagonal. The point of White's 51st move was 51...♘h7 52 c6 ♖c2 53 ♖d7 (winning a tempo by hitting f7), but Black draws with 53...♖f5! 54 ♖d6 (or 54 c7 ♖xf4+, and the white king cannot escape) 54...♖c2 55 c7 (55 ♖d7 ♖f5 repeats) 55...♖c4!. Note that the problem for White is that he can neither use his kingside pawns to create a game-winning refuge for his king (because the f-pawn is too far advanced), nor is he able to activate his king to find a hiding place somewhere else on the board.

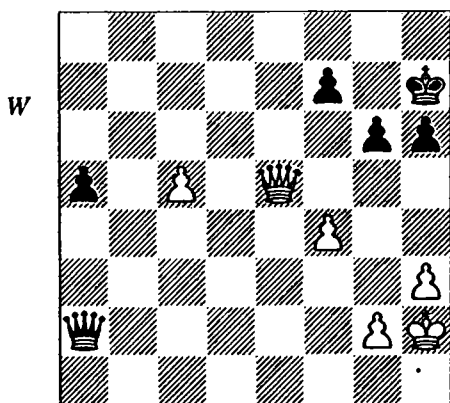
52 ♖xe5+

Certainly not 52 fxe5 ♖e6 53 ♖d6?? ♖xd6 54 exd6 ♘f8 55 c6 ♘e8 and Black wins, as the a-pawn cannot be stopped.

52...♘h7 (D)

53 ♖c3?!

A difficult decision, and I am not sure that I made the right one. Now I prefer 53 ♖e4!, keeping the queen centralized while taking important squares from the black queen, which would prefer to be placed on c4, where it halts



the c-pawn, hits f4 and supports the a-pawn. A sample line goes 53...♖b3 54 c6 ♖b6 55 ♖c4 ♖c7 56 ♔g1, and White is ready to activate his king, while Black is forced into a passive set-up. The queen is optimally placed on c4. I believe White should win.

53...♖a4! 54 ♔g3

Now White is forced to bring his king into the action. This is not in itself a problem in a queen endgame, but it would have been better to have pacified the black queen first.

54...g5!?

The alternative was 54...♖b4, but this allows White to achieve the same set-up as in the previous note with 55 ♖c1! (not 55 ♖c2 a4 56 c6 ♖b3+ with a draw) 55...♖b3+ 56 ♔h2 ♖b7 57 c6 ♖c7 58 ♖c4. The pawn move has the drawback that it exposes the black king.

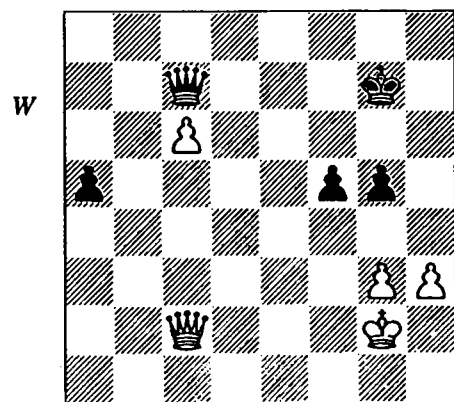
55 f×g5 h×g5

Threatening 56...♖f4#!

56 ♔h2 ♖f4+ 57 ♔g1 ♖b4 58 ♖c2+ ♔g7 59 c6

Finally the pawn can advance.

59...♖e1+ 60 ♔h2 ♖e5+ 61 g3 ♖c7 62 ♔g2 f5 (D)



63 h4!

Despite the limited material, Black is in dire straits and probably lost. In a queen endgame passed pawns are crucial, and the c6-pawn is a monster. With the text-move White utilizes the principle of two weaknesses – the h-pawn is pushed forward to distract the black king and queen.

63...g×h4 64 g×h4 ♔g6 65 ♔f3 ♔f6 66 ♖c3+ ♔g6 67 ♖c4

The direct 67 ♖c1! was stronger. I could say that having a stable advantage, my decision was in line with the principle of not hurrying, but in reality it was unintentional!

67...♔f6 68 ♔g2 ♖g7+ 69 ♔f3 ♖c7 70 ♖c3+ ♔g6 71 ♖c1!

Now I noticed it! The threat is 72 ♖g5+, and Black has no good square for his king.

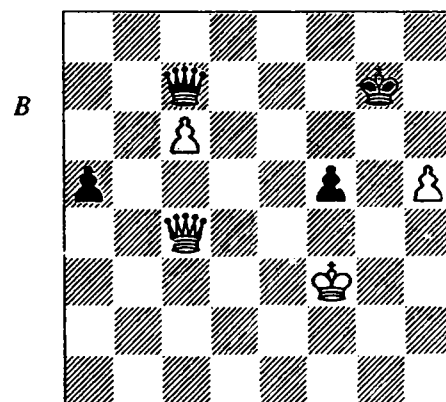
71...♔h7

71...♔f6? loses immediately to 72 ♖h6+, and 71...♔f7 72 ♖c4+ ♔g7 (72...♔g6 73 ♖e6+) 73 h5 transposes to the game.

72 ♖c4 ♔g7

72...♔g6 loses to 73 ♖e6+.

73 h5! (D)



73...a4

Giving up the a-pawn to activate the queen, but White can easily run away from the checks. However, the alternative – passive defence – was also insufficient: 73...♔f6 74 h6 ♔g6 75 h7! (deflection!) 75...♖xh7 (75...♔xh7 76 ♖h4+! ♔g6 77 ♖g3+! forces a decisive queen exchange) 76 c7 ♖h3+ 77 ♔e2 ♖g2+ 78 ♔d1 ♖h1+ 79 ♔c2 ♖g2+ 80 ♔c3 ♖f3+ 81 ♔d4, and the king escapes.

74 ♖xa4 ♖h2 75 ♖d4+ ♔f7 76 ♖c4+ ♔f6 77 ♖d4+ ♔e6 78 ♖c4+ ♔f6 79 c7 ♖h1+

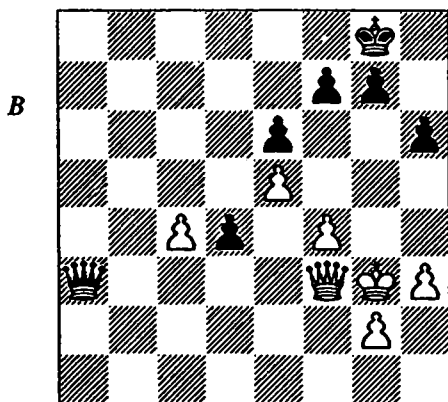
After 79...♖xh5+ 80 ♔g2 ♖g5+ 81 ♔f1! White wins immediately.

80 ♔f2 ♚h2+ 81 ♔e1

Here the game was adjourned for the second time – this was in the good old days – but Black resigned upon resumption. He can still give a few more checks, but with his centralized queen White can easily escape and safely queen the c-pawn.

1-0

As we have seen in the above games, a crucial question in queen endgames is whether the king can find a hiding place – either behind its own pawns, or by running out into the open board and hiding ‘behind enemy lines’. Here is an example where the king can safely hide ‘at home’.



Movsesian – Zelčić
Bosnian Cht (Prem) 2005

At first sight this might seem drawn, but after Black’s next move White is suddenly completely lost.

41... ♚c3!

A power move. White cannot enter the pawn ending (Black’s c-pawn queens first), and he is losing his c-pawn. But the main problem is that his chances of scraping a draw by perpetual check are almost non-existent, as Black’s kingside pawn-structure provides the perfect hiding place for his king. Therefore he can calmly advance the d-pawn.

42 h4 d3!

Even stronger than taking the pawn. Passed pawns must be pushed!

43 ♚a8+ ♔h7 44 ♚e4+ g6!

The shield is complete!

45 ♚e3

45 ♚b7 d2+ 46 ♔h2 ♔g7 47 ♚d7 ♚c1 48 ♚d8 d1 ♚ 49 ♚f6+ ♔g8 wins for Black.

45... ♚xc4

Finally Black decides to take the pawn. Notice how little importance the absolute material situation has had so far. The attention has only been on the passed pawn.

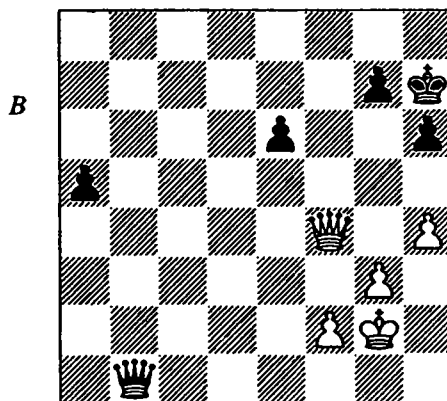
46 ♚a7 ♔g7 47 ♚d7 ♚e4! 48 h5

Or 48 ♚d8 ♚e3+, and the f4-pawn falls with check.

48... ♚e3+ 49 ♔g4 gxh5+ 50 ♔xh5 ♚xf4
Threatening mate on g5, so...

0-1

Alexander Beliavsky is an ‘old fox’ of the game, and obviously he is highly knowledgeable and experienced when it comes to queen endgames. In two recent games against my fellow Danish grandmasters Curt Hansen and Peter Heine Nielsen he managed to pull objectively losing queen endgames out of the fire.



Beliavsky – Cu. Hansen
Malmö/Copenhagen 2004

By all standards this should be a winning position for Black. He is a pawn up, it is an outside passed pawn, and his queen controls the b1-h7 diagonal, so that White does not have any checks. Still, Black faces a crucial dilemma in order to win. To advance the a-pawn he cannot keep controlling the b1-h7 diagonal, so he must decide whether he can cover the king on the kingside or if he will have to bring the king into action, thus allowing a number of checks but with the intention of employing the king actively. In the game Curt decides on the first option, but it is likely that the second one was better. Beliavsky’s cool defence in this unpromising position is instructive.

43... ♚c2 44 ♚d4 a4 45 ♚b4

Here it is. Black cannot make progress without answering the ‘hiding place’ question.

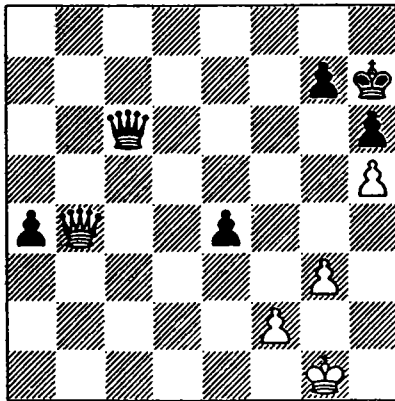
45...e5 46 h5!

Setting up a potential perpetual by taking squares from the black king.

46...♖c6+ 47 ♔g1 ♖a8 48 ♖a3 e4 49 ♔h2 ♖a7 50 ♔g2 ♖d4 51 ♖a2!

Good defence. White prevents Black from activating the king with ...♔g8 – thereby taking one option away from Black.

51...♖a7 52 ♖a3 ♖a8 53 ♔g1 ♖c6 54 ♖b4 ♖c1+ 55 ♔g2 ♖c6 56 ♔g1 (D)



In accordance with the principle of not hurrying when you have a stable advantage, Black has been manoeuvring around without committing to a decision. But eventually a decision must be made, and perhaps Black should have tried to activate the king by, for instance, 56...♖a8 57 ♖a3 ♖a7 58 ♔g2 ♔g8!, slowly preparing the advance of the king. While the win is far from trivial, I believe it is possible. In some lines Black may even approach the h5-pawn with his king, and then later return to safety on h7.

56...♖e8 57 ♖c5 ♔h8 58 ♖a7! ♔g8 59 ♔g2 ♖c6 60 ♔h2 ♔h7 61 ♖a5

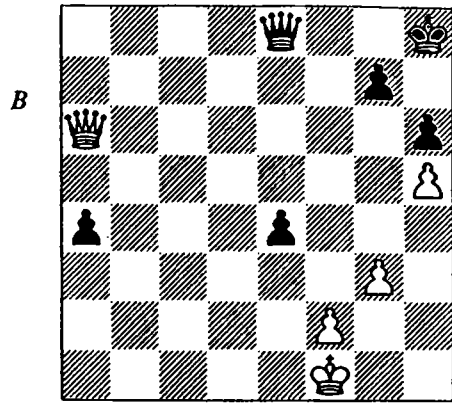
Compared to the two previous diagrams, White has improved his position. His queen is much more active behind the pawn than in front of it.

61...♖e8 62 ♔g2 ♔h8 63 ♖a6 ♔g8 64 ♖c4+ ♔h7 65 ♖a6 ♔h8 66 ♔f1 (D)

66...e3!?

Black attempts to reach a position with two extra pawns, but presumably Curt overlooked White’s 68th move. However, it was already difficult to see how Black should be able to make progress.

67 fxe3 ♖xh5 68 ♖c8+!



The *zwischenzug* that saves the draw. 68 ♖xa4? loses to 68...♖f3+, and Black picks up both pawns with check, but now Black has to misplace his queen to avoid White’s checks.

68...♔h7 69 ♖c2+ ♖g6

After 69...g6 70 ♖c7+ or 69...♔g8 70 ♖c8+ the black king cannot escape the checks. The queen on the rim is a poor helper in avoiding perpetual check – as we shall also see in the game Topalov-Anand from the San Luis world championship tournament.

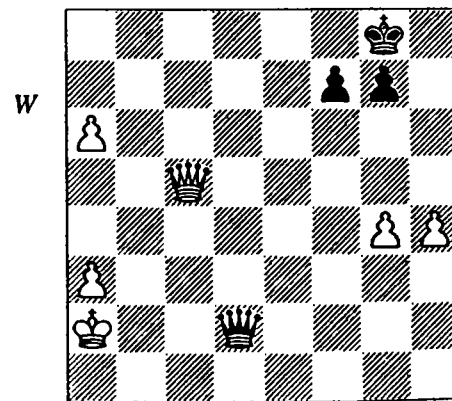
70 ♖xa4 ♖xg3

With all the pawns on the same wing the drawing probability is high. Furthermore, White can achieve counterplay by advancing his e-pawn, which after all is a passed pawn!

71 ♖e4+ ♖g6 72 ♖d5 h5 73 e4 h4 74 e5 ♖f5+ 75 ♔g1 g6 76 ♖d6 ♖g4+ 77 ♔h1 ♖f3+ 78 ♔g1 ♖f4 79 ♖d5 ♔g7 80 ♖d7+ ♔h6 81 e6

This far-advanced pawn secures the draw. A miraculous escape!

81...♖e3+ 82 ♔h1 ♖e1+ 83 ♔h2 ♖f2+ 84 ♔h1 ♖f1+ 85 ♔h2 ½-½



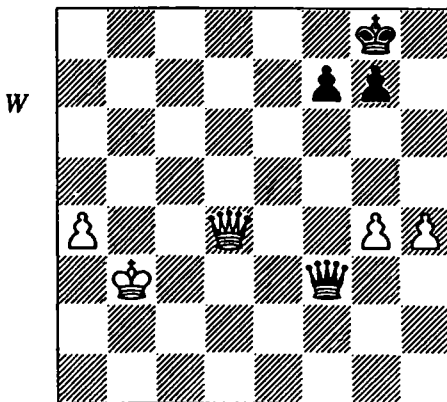
P.H. Nielsen – Beliavsky
Gothenburg Echt 2005

I witnessed this one live, as I participated on the Danish team in this event. We are in the final phase of the game, where each player gets a 30-second increment per move. Down 1-2, it was (once again) up to Peter to secure a tie, but Beliavsky again shows himself as a tenacious defender. Right now White is two pawns up, but he will lose the a6-pawn. His problem is then that the remaining pawns provide very poor cover – it would have been much better to have a b-pawn instead of an a-pawn, or if the h4-pawn stood on f3 (provided Black could not just check and take it, of course!). Once again the importance of having a safe hiding place is revealed.

93 ♠b3 ♞d3+ 94 ♠b4 ♞xa6 95 a4 ♞b7+ 96 ♠a5 ♞a8+ 97 ♠b5 ♞b7+ 98 ♠c4 ♞c4+ 99 ♞d4 ♞e6+ 100 ♠b4 ♞e1+ 101 ♠a3 ♞e7+ 102 ♠b3 ♞b7+ 103 ♠a2 ♞g2+

Here we see it: the advanced g4- and h4-pawns do not provide much help in escaping the checks. Compare this with the game Fressinet-Hamdouchi which we examined earlier, where White could use his queenside pawns to shield from the checks – even though the king was on the kingside.

104 ♠a3 ♞f3+ 105 ♠b4 ♞b7+ 106 ♠c3 ♞f3+ 107 ♠d2 ♞g2+ 108 ♠d1 ♞f1+ 109 ♠c2 ♞g2+ 110 ♠b3 ♞f3+ (D)



111 ♞c3!?

Utilizing the principle of passed pawns being more important than material in the queen endgame.

111... ♞xg4!?

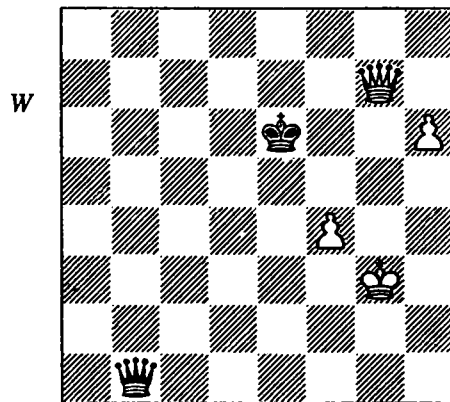
Black could also continue checking with 111... ♞d1+ or 111... ♞d5+, but taking the pawn is the principled reply.

112 a5 ♞d1+

Here we go again!

113 ♠b4 ♞b1+ 114 ♠c5 ♞b7 115 ♞e5 ♞a7+ 116 ♠c6 ♞a6+ 117 ♠c7 ♞a7+ 118 ♠d8 ♞a8+ 119 ♠d7 ♞b7+ 120 ♠d8 ♞a8+ 121 ♠d7 ♞b7+ 122 ♞c7 ♞d5+ 123 ♠c8 ♞a8+ 124 ♠d7 ♞d5+ 1/2-1/2

Lack of hiding places was also the reason why Topalov did not have a clean sheet after the first half of the world championship tournament in San Luis.



Topalov – Anand
San Luis Wch 2005

With two extra pawns White should certainly win, but even World Champions make mistakes in endgames from time to time! The easiest way to win was 85 f5+!; for example, 85... ♞xf5 (85... ♠xf5?? 86 ♞h7+) 86 h7 ♞d3+ 87 ♠h4!, and Black is out of checks (87... ♞e4+ 88 ♞g4+). Instead, Topalov misplaces his queen on the edge of the board, thus allowing Anand to escape with a draw.

85 ♞e5+ ♠f7 86 ♞h5+ ♠f6 87 ♞g5+ ♠f7 88 ♞h5+?! ♠f6 89 ♞h4+?! ♠f7 90 h7??

It was still not too late for White to win, but he needed to find 90 ♞g4! (Nunn) to avoid a three-fold repetition while preserving a winning position. The text-move throws away the win due to the unfortunate position of the white queen.

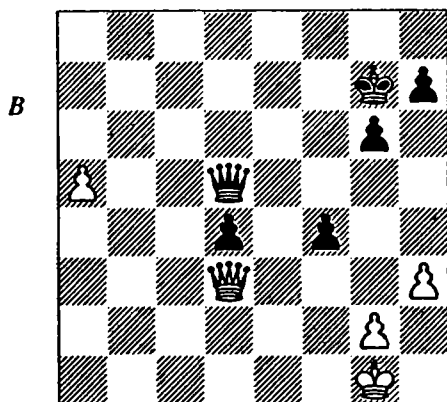
90... ♞e1+ 91 ♠g4 ♞d1+!

Avoiding 91... ♞xh4+?? 92 ♠xh4 ♠g7 93 ♠g5! ♠xh7 94 ♠f6! and wins.

92 ♠g5 ♞d8+ 93 ♠h5 ♞d5+ 94 ♞g5 ♞h1+ 95 ♞h4 ♞d5+ 96 ♠g4 ♞d1+ 97 ♠g3 ♞e1+ 1/2-1/2

White cannot escape the checks – he has no hiding place.

That passed pawns are more valuable than material is also visible in the following example.



R. Marić – Quinteros
Vinkovci 1970

Black could force a draw by 47...♙xa5 48 ♙xd4+ followed by 49 ♙xf4, but being a pawn up Quinteros is obviously looking for more. But such passed pawns as the white a-pawn should not be underestimated.

47...♙c5 48 a6 ♔f6?

A flawed concept. 48...♙c3 was necessary, although White should be able to draw comfortably after 49 ♙xc3 dxc3 50 a7 c2 51 a8 ♙c1 ♙+ 52 ♔h2.

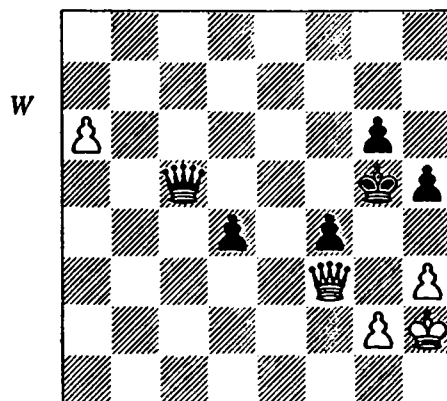
49 ♔h2 ♔g5?

Endangering the king even further.

50 ♙f3!

Threatening 51 ♙g4+.

50...h5 (D)



51 ♙e4!

Suddenly the tables have turned! Black is almost in zugzwang, and the centralized white queen dominates the board.

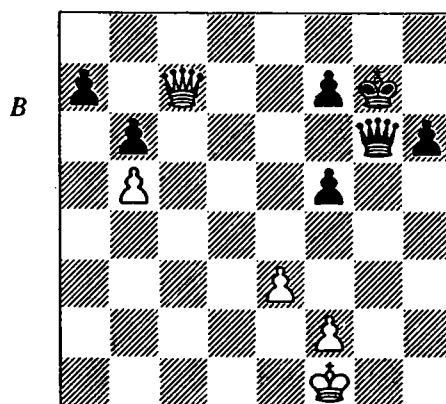
51...h4 52 ♙e2!

Again eyeing g4.

52...♔f5? 53 ♙g4+ ♔e4 54 ♙e6+ ♔d3 55 ♙b3+ ♔e2 56 ♙a2+ ♔e3 57 a7

Oh dear! I am sure Black regrets not having eliminated this passed pawn on move 47.

57...f3 58 gx3 ♙c7+ 59 ♔h1 ♙g3 60 ♙g2!
1-0



Piket – Seirawan
Amsterdam 1996

Black is two pawns up, but White is about to win the a7-pawn with good drawing chances. But by giving up a pawn Seirawan secures a decisive passed pawn.

63...f4! 64 exf4 ♙b1+ 65 ♔g2 ♙xb5 66 ♙xa7 ♙c6+ 67 f3 b5 68 ♙b8

The centralizing 68 ♙d4+ was a better try, although it would hardly alter the outcome of the game.

68...♙c5! 69 ♔g3 b4 70 f5 ♙c3!

Note Seirawan's 68th and 70th moves. They are textbook examples of good queen endgame technique. First, Black secures a refuge for his king – by centralizing and then controlling the long a1-h8 diagonal – and only then does he advance the passed pawn.

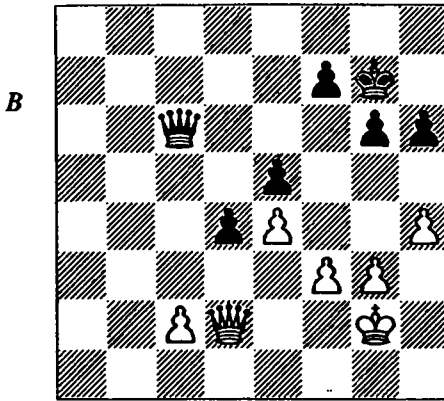
71 ♔g4 b3 72 f6+ ♙xf6!

Using the principle of *transformation of advantages*. Here Black gives up the powerful b-pawn to force a winning king and pawn ending.

73 ♙xb3 ♙e6+ 0-1

To conclude this chapter, let us see an example where the decisive principles are *king activity* and *the pawn-structure*. Even in seemingly innocuous endgames between two world-class

players the power of these two principles can decide the game!



Adams – Leko
Miskolc rpd (5) 2005

Black has the better pawn-structure (the c2-pawn is weak), and he has a hidden plan, as Leko demonstrates: to activate his king by transferring it all the way to the queenside to help attack the vulnerable pawn. But first Leko utilizes *the principle of two weaknesses*: he creates a second target on e4.

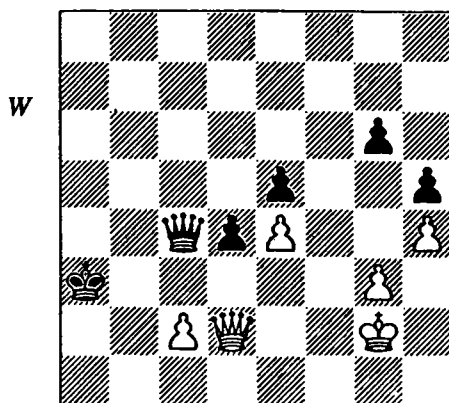
36...f5! 37 ♖d3

White cannot allow Black a powerful central pawn avalanche after 37 exf5 gxf5.

37...♣f6 38 ♣f2 fxe4 39 fxe4 h5 40 ♣e2 ♖a4 41 ♖d2 ♖c4+ 42 ♣f2 ♣e6!

The beginning of a remarkable journey. This is not a lazy king; his majesty wants to participate!

43 ♣g2 ♣d6! 44 ♣f2 ♣c6 45 ♣g2 ♣b5 46 ♣f2 ♣a4 47 ♣g2 ♣a3! (D)



Compare the activity levels of the two kings and compare this diagram to the previous one.

Black threatens 48...♖c3 and 49...♣b2, successfully finishing off the assault on the weak c2-pawn. Adams sees no other chance than to go for queen activity, but the dangerous black d-pawn leaves him little hope of saving the game.

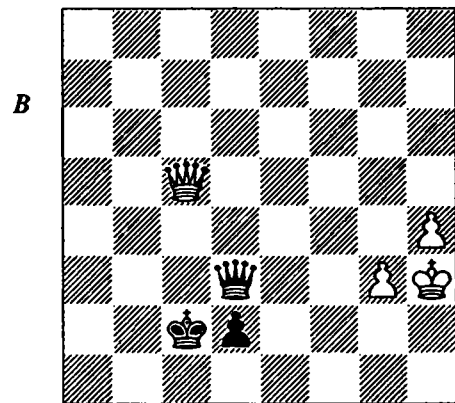
48 ♖a5+ ♣b2 49 ♖xe5 ♣xc2 50 ♖f6 d3 51 ♖xg6 d2

Black has transformed his superior pawn-structure and active king into a powerful passed pawn. *Transformation of advantages!*

52 e5+ ♣c1 53 ♖h6 ♖e4+ 54 ♣h2 ♖e2+ 55 ♣h3 ♖xe5

Leko does not hurry. He takes time to eliminate White's e-pawn, not being worried about a few checks. With the centralized king and the d-pawn to hide behind, White is bound to run out of checks.

56 ♖c6+ ♣b2 57 ♖b7+ ♣c2 58 ♖c6+ ♣b1 59 ♖b7+ ♖b2 60 ♖e4+ ♖c2 61 ♖b4+ ♣c1 62 ♖a3+ ♖b2 63 ♖c5+ ♣b1 64 ♖xh5 ♖b3 65 ♖f5+ ♣c1 66 ♖c5+ ♣b2 67 ♖e5+ ♖c3 68 ♖b5+ ♣c2 69 ♖f5+ ♖d3 70 ♖c5+ (D)



70...♣b3!

The energetic king goes on another journey! Leko has noticed that the best hiding place is in the enemy camp, where White's pawns may even hamper his hopes of a perpetual.

71 ♖b6+ ♣c4 72 ♖a6+ ♣d4 73 ♖d6+ ♣e3 74 ♖e6+ ♣f2 75 ♖f6+ ♖f3 76 ♖b6+ ♖e3 77 ♖f6+ ♣e1

Mission accomplished! White has no checks.

78 ♣g2

The last try.

78...♖e2+ 79 ♣h3 ♖f1+ 0-1

The simplest – Black forces the exchange of queens before queening the d-pawn.

5 Various Material Distributions

Introduction

In this chapter we shall look at endgames in which the material is uneven. Obviously, there are a huge number of possible material imbalances, but the main ones fall into one of the following four categories:

- Rook vs two minor pieces
- Rook vs one minor piece (exchange up)
- Queen vs other material
- Piece vs pawns

It is noteworthy that these kinds of endgames are in my view still poorly understood by computers. During my work with this chapter and the unusual material configurations, I have frequently been surprised by the evaluations and moves suggested by my computer program (which I always have running in the background in an attempt to catch the worst blunders!). When there is nothing concrete within the computer's horizon, it often has significant difficulty assigning a correct evaluation to the position. Perhaps the last bastion of mankind against the computers in the field of chess?!

I shall deal with the four types in turn.

Rook vs Two Minor Pieces

We learn in 'chess kindergarten' that a rook is worth five pawns and minor pieces three pawns each. Accordingly, two minor pieces should outperform a rook, and indeed this is often the case. However, the two pieces are especially superior in the middlegame, if they can be coordinated to launch an attack on the opponent's king's position.

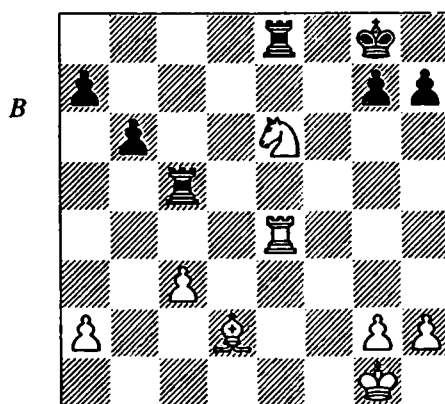
In the endgame the situation is considerably more complex. There are many examples of endgames in which a rook is not inferior to two pieces. Not surprisingly, the *pawn-structure* plays a significant part in determining whether the rook or the two pieces are to be preferred. I

shall investigate this question by looking at three distinct types of pawn-structures:

- Positions where the rook side has an *outside passed pawn*.
- Positions in which all the pawns are on one side of the board.
- Positions with 'complex' pawn-structures (pawns on both wings).

Rook and Outside Passed Pawn vs Two Minor Pieces

In general, a rook has good chances against two pieces if the rook side has or can create an outside passed pawn. This is because the two minor pieces have difficulty coordinating to catch the passed pawn, without jeopardizing the other side of the board. This is especially the case if one (or both) of the minor pieces is a knight. Knights are much stronger when the play is limited to one side of the board. Two bishops are better able to 'multitask' and perform useful functions on both wings at once.



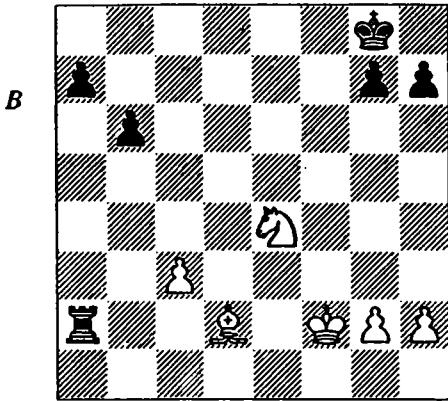
Hillarp Persson – L.B. Hansen
Danish League 2000/1

This is a typical example of the limitations of two pieces against an outside passed pawn. Material-wise, White is doing fine, but he cannot avoid losing the a-pawn, after which the lack of coordination tells.

25...♖a5! 26 ♘g5

After 26 a4 Black calmly answers 26...h6!, thus dominating the knight and preparing the unpleasant 27...♔f7 without allowing a check on g5.

26...♙xe4 27 ♘xe4 ♖xa2 28 ♔f2 (D)

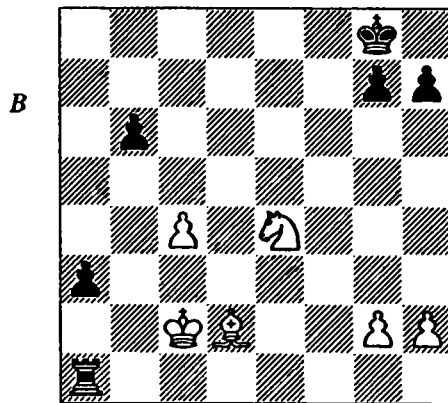


28...a5!

Simple chess, but nonetheless it is very hard for White to stop this road-runner.

29 ♔e3 a4 30 c4 a3 31 ♔d3 ♖a1 32 ♔c2 (D)

This loses, but 32 ♘c3 a2 was no better. White is in zugzwang (33 ♔c2 ♖c1+!, 33 ♔d4 ♖d1! or 33 ♙e3 ♖d1+) and eventually runs out of pawn moves.



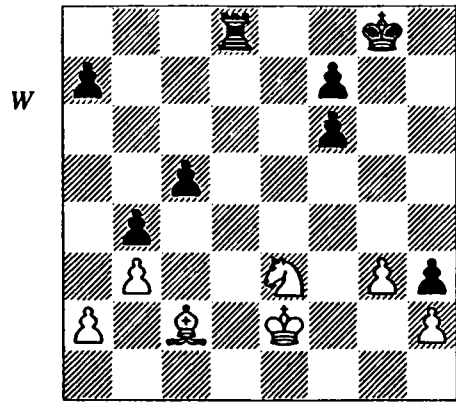
32...a2 33 ♔b2 ♖g1!

A good example of the principle *transformation of advantages*. White managed to contain the dangerous passed pawn, but now the kingside goes instead.

34 ♔xa2 ♖xg2

Not just grabbing a pawn but setting up the threat of 35...♖e2, which wins a piece. White has no defence against that!

35 ♔b3 ♖e2! 36 ♘c3 ♖xd2 37 ♘a4 ♖xh2 38 ♘xb6 ♔f7 39 c5 ♔e6 0-1



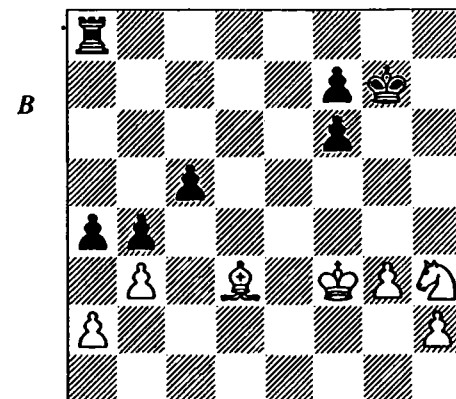
Beliavsky – Dolmatov
USSR Ch (Minsk) 1979

This is a well-known game, which has been cited in a number of sources on endgames. Rightfully so, as Dolmatov's play in this endgame is both instructive and forceful. However, usually the game score is given only a few moves later than here, but in my opinion the error committed by Beliavsky here is equally instructive. At the outset of this two pieces vs rook endgame, White had the better chances, but at this crucial point White underestimated the power of Black's queenside majority. Rather than going after the h3-pawn, White should have reinforced the queenside by 34 ♘c4!, after which he is definitely not worse. But Beliavsky is seduced by the prospect of creating his own passed pawn on the h-file and misplaces his knight:

34 ♘g4? ♔g7 35 ♘f2?!

It was still not too late for the knight to return to the queenside by 35 ♘e3, although obviously Black has then improved his position. However, in this kind of endgame, coordination is often a higher priority than time.

35...a5! 36 ♙d3 ♖a8 37 ♔f3 a4 38 ♘xh3 (D)



38...c4!

White has achieved his aim of annihilating the h3-pawn, but this brilliant shot is a highly instructive example of the power of an outside pawn-majority in this kind of endgame.

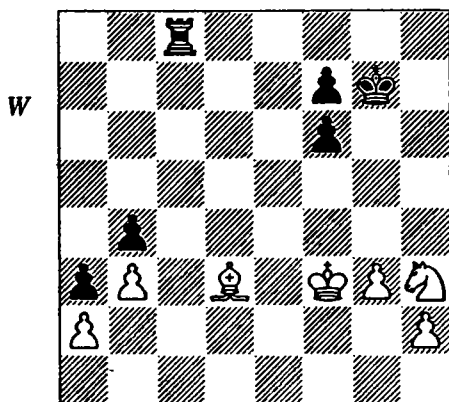
39 ♖xc4

After 39 bxc4 Black's most accurate move is 39...♞b8! (as indicated by Dvoretzky), threatening the decisive 40...b3.

39...♞c8!

Threatening 40...♞xc4! 41 bxc4 b3 42 axb3 a3!. Due to the unfortunate position of his pieces, White cannot counter this threat, and he must allow Black's rook into his position.

40 ♖d3 a3! (D)



Fixing the a2-pawn as a potential target. At this point the game was adjourned, and Beliavsky had to make a critical decision. During analysis, Dolmatov and his trainer Dvoretzky discovered that White can draw by building a fortress with 41 ♖f2! ♞c1 42 h4! ♞a1 43 ♖c4 ♞xa2 44 ♖d3 ♞f2+!? (44...♞d2 45 ♖xb4 a2 46 ♖xa2 ♞xa2 is also drawn) 45 ♖xf2 a2 46 ♖xb4 a1 ♖47 ♖d3. White plays 48 ♖f4, 49 ♖d5 and 50 ♖g2, and despite his material superiority, Black cannot break down White's fortress. We shall see the concept of 'fortress' again later in this chapter; it is a common defence mechanism in endgames with uneven material. However, seeing this fortress even during the adjournment would be by no means easy, and it is hardly surprising that Beliavsky sealed a different move, which unfortunately loses.

41 ♖e3? ♞c1 42 ♖f4 ♞a1 43 ♖d5 ♞xa2 44 ♖xb4 ♞xh2

An important gain for Black. The h2-pawn is in itself not too significant, but without it the exchange-down endgame after 45...a2 46 ♖xa2

♞xa2 is lost for White, as now the black king has free access to g5. Accordingly, White must attempt to prevent the black rook from reaching the queenside.

45 ♖e2 ♞h3! 46 ♖f2 f5!

But White's attempts are in vain. By means of a pawn sacrifice the black rook forces its way through.

47 ♖a2 f4! 48 gxf4 ♞xb3 49 ♖c4 ♞h3 50 ♖f1?!

According to Dvoretzky, White's last chance was rushing to the queenside with 50 ♖e2! ♖g6 51 ♖d2, although Black retains excellent winning chances, as his king can then attack f4.

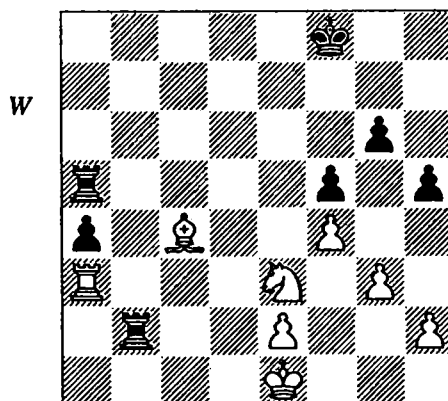
50...♞h2+ 51 ♖g2 ♖f6!

Activating the king and eyeing f4.

52 ♖g3 ♞h5! 53 ♖f1 ♞c5 54 ♖d3 ♞d5 55 ♖a6 ♞d2 56 ♖c4 ♞d4! 0-1

After 57 ♖a6 ♖f5!, the black king penetrates decisively.

With an extra pair of rooks on the board, things are much more complex. Here the defending side often has better chances to contain (and even surround and eventually conquer) the passed pawn. However, the pawn is still dangerous and the defender must be cautious. The key question here is who can manage to coordinate their forces better.



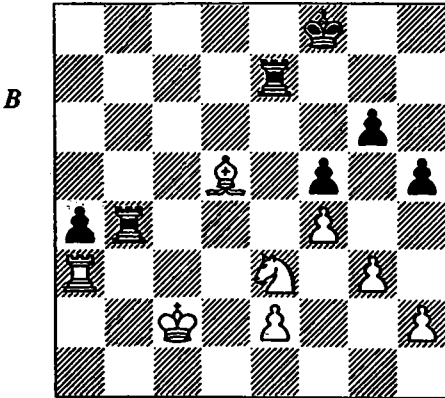
Tregubov – M. Gurevich
D'Ajaccio rpd 2005

With the extra set of rooks, White has managed to blockade the a-pawn. Objectively, White should not be worse here, and he certainly should not lose. For example, in case of an 'emergency', he could transfer his knight to c3 with the idea of eventually sacrificing it for the

a-pawn. The resulting exchange-down endgame should be drawn. However, Tregubov wants more and decides to bring his king to the queenside to surround the a-pawn. This is not necessarily bad, but is in any case a bold decision, which voluntarily brings the king into the danger zone and allows Gurevich to coordinate his rooks in an attack on the king.

56 ♔d1!? ♠a7 57 ♖c1 ♠b4 58 ♖c2 ♠e7! 59 ♙d5 (D)

The rook ending after 59 ♖d2 ♠xe3 60 ♠xe3 ♠xc4 61 ♠e6! followed by 62 ♠a6 should be drawn, although it is slightly unpleasant for White due to the outside passed pawn. But White is presumably still playing for the win – a risky decision.



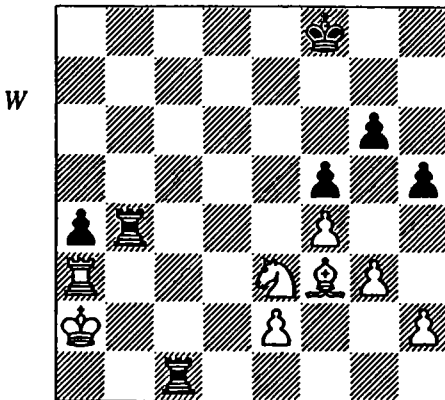
59...♠d4!

Cutting the king off. Now it cannot return to safety behind its own pawns.

60 ♙f3 ♠c7+ 61 ♖b2 ♠d2+ 62 ♖b1 ♠d4 63 ♖b2 ♠b4+!?

Black too plays for the win. With 63...♠d2+ he could strive for a repetition of moves.

64 ♖a2 ♠c1 (D)



65 ♘d5?!

The logical follow-up to White's preceding play was 65 ♠d3!, after which everything is still open.

65...♠c2+ 66 ♖a1 ♠d4! 67 e3?

67 ♖b1 is a better defence, as the text-move allows Black's rooks free rein.

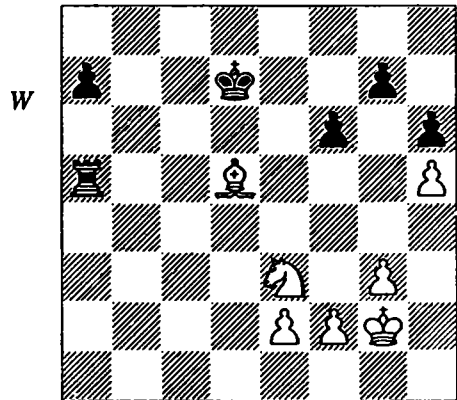
67...♠dd2! 68 ♘c3 ♠xh2 69 ♙d5 ♠hd2 70 ♙a2 ♠d3!

With a new outside passed pawn emerging on the h-file, it is in Black's interest to exchange a pair of rooks.

71 ♘b1 ♠xa3 72 ♘xa3 ♠g2! 73 ♘c4 ♠xg3 74 ♘e5 h4 75 ♙d5 h3 76 ♖b2 ♖g7 77 ♖a3 ♠xe3+ 78 ♖xa4 g5 79 ♘f3 ♠xf3! 0-1

The simplest. After 80 ♙xf3 g4 one of the black pawns queens.

Of course the two-pieces side is not just lost in this kind of endgame – far from it. But it requires exceptionally accurate play to keep such an outside passed pawn under control. The Swedish endgame expert Ulf Andersson demonstrates how it can be done.



Andersson – Nikolić
Thessaloniki OL 1984

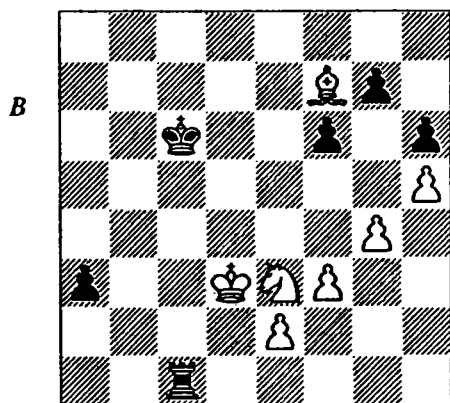
The position is reminiscent of Hillarp Persson-L.B.Hansen and Beliavsky-Dolmatov, but there is one important difference: the pawn-structure on the kingside. In those two games, the king could not walk to the queenside without jeopardizing the kingside pawns. But here they can be securely covered, and Andersson can therefore activate his king unhindered.

41 ♖f3 ♠b5 42 ♖e4 a5 43 g4! a4 44 ♙c4 ♠b1 45 f3!

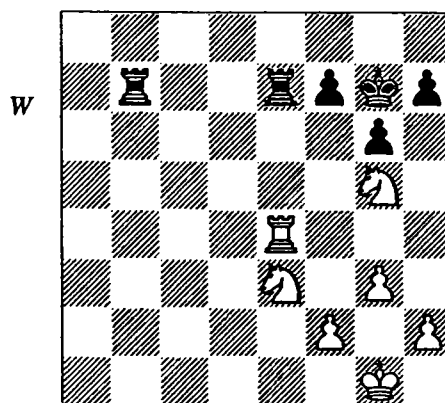
Notice how solid the white pawn-structure is. And there is one further point that should be

mentioned as well: the g7-pawn is the backbone of the black kingside pawn-structure, and it would be disastrous for Black to lose this pawn. Consider for example the case where White has to sacrifice his bishop for the a-pawn, but wins the g7-pawn with his knight in return. Even in this case Black would have to fight hard for a draw.

45...♙c6 46 ♔d4 ♝c1 47 ♚f7 a3 48 ♙d3!
(D)



and accuracy is required by both attacker (in this case the holder of the two pieces) and defender. One of the key principles for the attacker is *not to hurry*. The advantage is stable, and taking your time increases the likelihood of eventually wearing the opponent down – even if the starting position of the endgame may be objectively drawn. Conversely, for the defender it is especially important to stay alert and patient until the end. Attempts to force matters often backfire.



Note Andersson's careful manoeuvres. His kingside pawns are untouchable, and now he is ready to round up the black a-pawn with the combined strength of king, knight and bishop. It is the sound and safe pawn-structure that enables White to bring his king to the queenside without jeopardizing the kingside.

48...♙c5 49 ♘c2! ♝d1+ 50 ♙c3 ♝d7 51 ♚a2 ♝e7 52 e3!

Black cannot find any holes in the white pawn-structure – even with the white king as far away as a3.

52...♞a7 53 ♙b3 ♝d7 54 ♙xa3 ♝d2 55 ♙b3 1-0

An instructive ending, which once again underlines the importance of the pawn-structure in judging and playing these kinds of endings.

All the Pawns on the Same Wing

When all the pawns are on the same wing, the advantage of the two pieces increases tremendously compared to the above positions. Now the pieces can concentrate their efforts on a more limited part of the board. This is especially advantageous for short-legged knights. Still, the small number of pawns left on the board makes the draw possibility imminent,

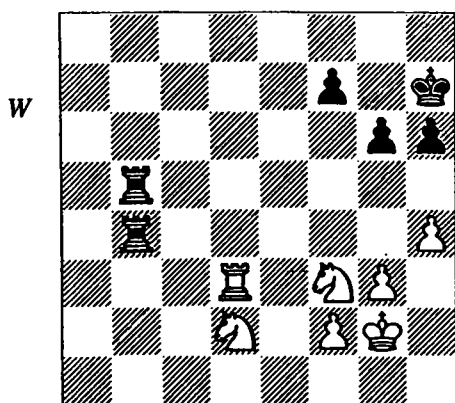
Larsen – Marjanović
Bled/Portorož 1979

This is a very instructive endgame by Bent Larsen. My countryman is certainly one of the great endgame players. In an interview Larsen once said – I believe not to boast, just making a factual statement – that “in the endgame I don't consider anybody my superior”. Here we see why. In this at first sight tedious endgame he seemingly effortlessly squeezes out a win. The first move should be noted for two reasons. First, it is to White's advantage to keep the rooks on. The combined force of rook and two knights can be very effective – as we shall see – in punching holes in the black defences, and the two black rooks don't really have any targets. Second, the rook swing to the edge forces Black to weaken his pawn-structure – a small but still vital concession.

38 ♞h4! h6 39 ♘f3 ♝b1+ 40 ♙g2 ♝b2 41 ♘c4 ♝be2 42 ♘cd2 ♝d7 43 ♘b3 ♝de7 44 ♞a4 ♝b2 45 ♘bd2 ♝eb7 46 h3 ♝2b4 47 ♞a5 ♝7b5 48 ♞a3!

With b3 covered by the knight, White can avoid the exchange of rooks.

48...♝d5 49 ♞a7 ♝db5 50 h4 ♝b7 51 ♞a6 ♝7b6 52 ♞a3 ♝6b5 53 ♝d3 ♙h7 (D)



54 ♖g1!

Preparing a knight transfer to f4, from where the knight supports the h5 advance.

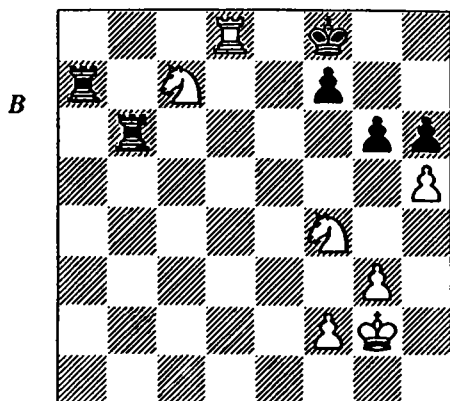
54...♗g7 55 ♖e2 ♙a5 56 ♖f4 ♙ba4 57 ♖b3 ♙a7 58 ♙d5!

A critical moment in the game. White obviously wants to attack Black's pawns by 59 h5, and the question is how Black should react to that. He basically has two options, but neither of them is appealing. The first one is to play 58...h5 himself, but that would allow White the plan of transferring one of the knights to g5 and attempting to build long-term pressure on f7. Still, I believe this is the lesser of two evils. The second option – which Marjanović chooses in the game – is to stay put and allow h5. At least White will then have to exchange another set of pawns to make further progress. But it proves impossible to cover the resulting weak pawns on g6 and h6 in the long run.

58...♙a6 59 h5! ♗h7 60 ♖d4 ♗g7 61 ♖b5 ♙b7 62 ♖d6 ♙bb6 63 ♖e8+! ♗f8 64 ♖c7!

Note Larsen's clever knight manoeuvres. Now he manages to 'smoke out' the black king from its cover behind the pawns.

64...♙a7 65 ♙d8+! (D)



65...♗e7

Sadly forced, as 65...♗g7? loses to 66 ♖fd5! ♙c6 67 ♖e8+ ♗h7 (67...♗f8 68 ♖ef6+ ♗g7 69 ♙g8#!) 68 ♖ef6+. Out of the blue Larsen has woven a mating-net!

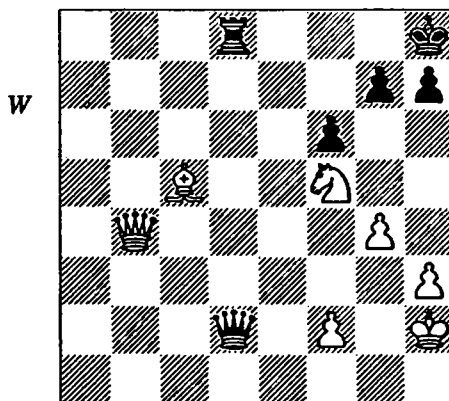
66 ♙g8! ♙c6

Due to the fork on d5, the c7-knight is un-touchable. But now the pawns go.

67 ♖cd5+ ♗d6 68 h×g6 f×g6 69 ♖b4!

Accurate until the end! By rearranging his knights to kick the black rook off the 6th rank, White wins both black pawns.

69...♙b6 70 ♖fd5! ♙bb7 71 ♙xg6+ ♗c5 72 ♙xh6 ♙f7 73 ♙c6+ ♗b5 74 ♙c2 ♙ad7 75 g4 1-0



Dvoirys – Vladimirov
Barnaul 1988

Like in the game Larsen-Marjanović above, it is to White's advantage to keep the queens on for the time being, as this reinforces his attacking squad.

61 ♗c4 h6 62 ♗f7 ♙d7 63 ♗e6 ♗f4+ 64 ♗g2 ♗c7 65 ♙d6 ♗c6+ 66 f3 ♗h7 67 ♖e7!

Working with tactics. Through the mating threat on g8, White transfers the knight to d5 and toys with potential sacrifices on f6. Note that Dvoirys does not hurry; the attack on g7 didn't materialize, so instead he focuses on f6 – the knight can always return to f5, if necessary.

67...♗c2+ 68 ♗g3 ♙d8 69 ♖d5 ♗g6 70 ♙e7 ♙a8 71 h4!

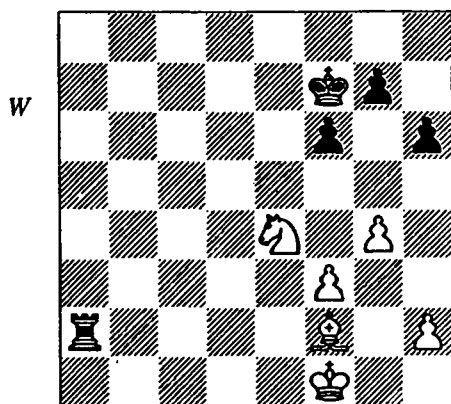
Gaining space on the kingside and threatening 72 h5, thus creating an annoying grip on the light squares on the kingside.

71...f5

71...h5 fails to 72 ♘f4, and judging that passive defence (e.g. 71...♔h8 72 h5 ♖e8) is insufficient, Vladimirov decides to give up a pawn to force the exchange of queens. White's persistent pressure yields its first dividends!

72 ♖xf5 ♖xf5 73 gxf5 ♔g8 74 ♙b4 ♕f7 75 ♙c3

Can White win this? Yes, but only because he forced Black to play ...f5! Compare this position to the famous game Capablanca-Lasker, St Petersburg 1914:

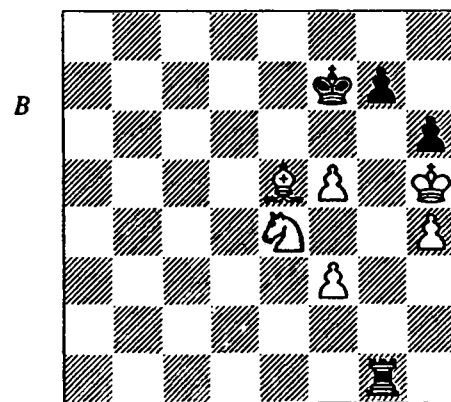


Although he tried for 100 moves (literally!), Capablanca did not manage to break down Lasker's defences. But with Dvoirys's extra pawn and the potential to play f6 and/or to attack g7, White is winning in the present game, although accuracy is still required.

75...♙c8 76 ♙e1 ♙c4 77 ♙f2 ♙a4 78 ♘c3 ♙a1 79 ♘e4 ♙d1 80 ♙e3 ♙e1 81 ♙f2 ♙d1 82 ♕g4!

The right plan. The king is brought to h5, where it supports the f6 advance by hitting h6.

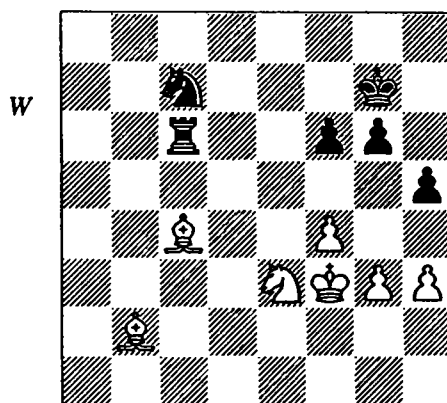
82...♙d3 83 ♙g3 ♙d1 84 ♙e5 ♙g1+ 85 ♕h5! (D)



Now Black cannot prevent 86 f6.

85...♙e1 86 f6! gxf6 87 ♙xf6 ♔e6 88 ♕xh6 ♕f5 89 ♙g5 1-0

The problem for Capablanca in the aforementioned game against Lasker was that he could not access the base of Black's pawn-structure – g7 – without exchanging too many pawns by playing g5. If, on the other hand, the base of the pawn-structure is exposed to attack, the two pieces win relatively easily by teaming up against the opponent's pawn and eventually exchanging into a winning pawn endgame, exploiting the principle of *transformation of advantages*.



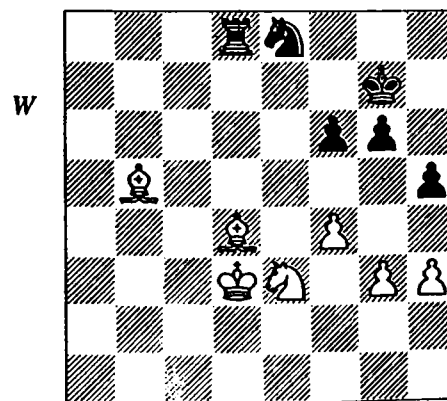
Ponomariov – Sashikiran
Biel 2004

Here f6 is a clear target for White, and Ponomariov grinds out a win without too much trouble.

48 ♕e4 ♘e8 49 ♙d4

White is not afraid of exchanging his light-squared bishop, as it is the dark-squared one and the knight that must be coordinated to attack f6.

49...♙c7 50 ♕d3 ♙d7 51 ♙b5 ♙d8 (D)



52 ♖xe8 ♜xe8 53 ♜d5 ♜e6

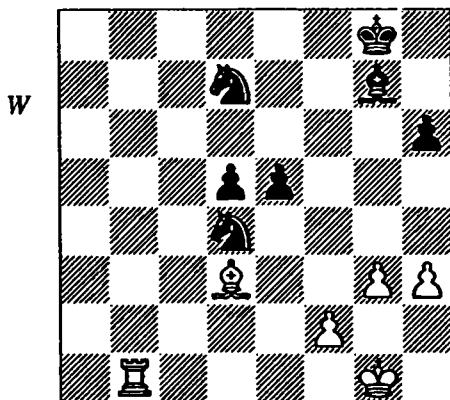
Everything is ready, and Ponomarev transforms his advantage into an easily winning pawn ending.

54 ♜xf6! ♜xf6 55 g4!

Taking advantage of the pin to win a crucial tempo.

55...hxc4 56 hxc4 ♖f7 57 ♖xf6 ♖xf6 58 ♖d4 ♖e6 59 ♖c5! ♖e7 60 ♖d5 ♖d7 61 ♖e5 ♖e7 62 g5! 1-0

If the player with the two pieces has a passed pawn, he can change his plan. Now he doesn't have to attack the opponent's pawns, but can instead work on coordinating his pieces in order to support the advance of the passed pawn.



Motylev – Yakovenko
Russian Ch (Moscow) 2005

Black's main priority is to coordinate his pieces and advance the powerful central pawns.

44 ♖g6 e4 45 ♖g2 ♜e5 46 ♖e8 ♖h7 47 ♜d1 ♜d3 48 ♜b1 ♜c2 49 ♜b7 ♜e5 50 ♖a4 ♜d4 51 ♜b8 ♜df3 52 ♖b3 d4!

Finally the pieces are on the right squares to support this advance.

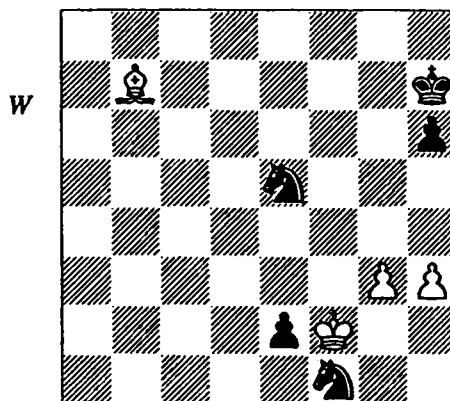
53 ♖d5 ♜d2 54 ♜b2 e3 55 fxe3 dxe3 56 ♜b6 ♜d3! 57 ♜e6 ♖e5!

Black has achieved optimal coordination among his minor pieces, and suddenly White cannot stop the e-pawn without material loss, as 58 ♖f3? fails to 58...♜e1+. But there is one complication, which Black must be aware of: the risk of ending up with two useless knights that cannot give mate. However, with accurate play Yakovenko makes sure that this concern never materializes.

58 ♖b7 e2 59 ♜xe5

Forced.

59...♜xe5 60 ♖f2 ♜f1! (D)



The clincher. When the g-pawn goes, any White hope of exchanging all the pawns vanishes.

61 ♖xe2

Or 61 g4 ♜g3! 62 ♖a6 ♖g6 63 ♖xe2 ♜xe2 64 ♖xe2 ♖g5 and 65...♖h4.

61...♜xg3+ 62 ♖e3 ♜h5 63 ♖e4 ♜f7 64 ♖c6 ♖g6 65 h4 ♖f6 66 ♖a4 ♜e5 67 ♖c2 ♜g7 68 ♖f4 ♜e6+ 69 ♖g3 ♜d4 70 ♖b1 ♜e2+ 71 ♖f2 ♜c3 72 ♖c2 ♜d7 0-1

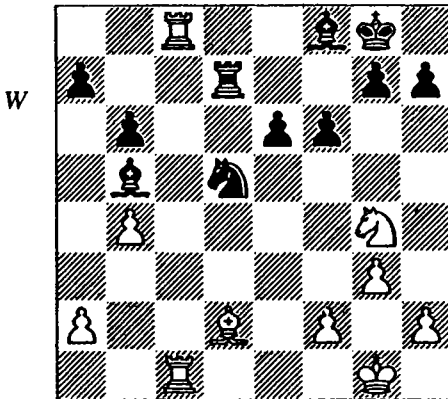
Black will calmly rearrange his pieces with his king on e5 and knights on f6 and f5, ensuring the further advance of the king.

Complex Pawn-Structures

In positions with many pawns – what I call complex pawn-structures – the relationship between rook and two pieces is highly fluid, and it is difficult to pinpoint specific rules for it. The judgement hinges on very specific features in the position. In some situations the rook is better, and in some the pieces prevail. What is it that determines these differences?

Analysing the examples given below, it becomes clear that perhaps the most important factor in this kind of endgame is the ability to *coordinate* the pieces. The player that first achieves an optimal 'fit' between his pieces is likely to attain the initiative and thus dictate the further course of the game. Obviously the pawn-structure plays a key role here; in some positions it is simply easier to coordinate the pieces than in others, and the mobility of the pieces is often determined by the pawn-structure.

Let us first examine some games in which the rook is stronger, and afterwards games in which the pieces come out on top.



Ponomariov – Topalov
Sofia 2005

White is an exchange up for a pawn, but Black has the two bishops and a perfectly sound position. But he needs one more move – 24...♔f7 – to achieve optimal coordination among his pieces. By exploiting the concept of coordination and the principle of *transformation of advantages*, Ponomariov manages to seize the initiative.

24 ♖h6+!

Coordination is more important than material here.

24...gxf6 25 ♗xh6 ♜f7 26 ♜d8! ♝e7 27 ♜c7 ♝g6 28 ♜cc8

A beautiful position! Material-wise, Black is doing fine, but he is completely lost, as he is tied hand and foot. This is the principle of *domination* at its best!

28...e5 29 f4

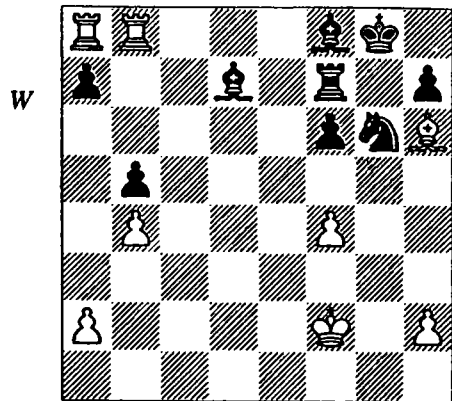
According to Ponomariov's analysis in *New in Chess*, the direct 29 h4 was even more accurate. However, the text-move does not spoil anything, as time is not a factor here.

29...♗d7 30 ♜a8 ♗h3 31 ♔f2 b5 32 ♜db8 exf4 33 gxf4 ♗d7 (D)

34 h4!

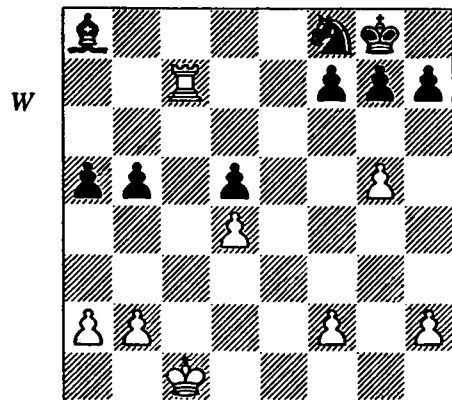
White ignores the threat of 34...♗c6, as he has accurately calculated that he can now transform his grip by force into a pawn ending that is winning for White, despite him being a pawn down.

34...♗c6 35 h5! ♗xa8 36 hxg6 hxg6 37 ♜xa8 f5



This opens the door for the white king to reach g5, but Black was in a lethal zugzwang. 37...g5 is simply answered by 38 f5, and the white king walks to g6.

38 ♔g3! a6 39 ♔h4 ♜g7 40 ♔g5 1-0



Mikhailevski – Kagansky
Ashdod 2004

Again we have a situation in which an excellently-placed rook is better than two pieces. But how to proceed? Winning a pawn with 27 ♜a7 ♗c6 28 ♜xa5 allows Black to untangle with 28...g6 or the immediate 28...♝e6. White's problem is that his present advantage may not be *sustainable* if Black is given a few moves to coordinate his pieces. The top priority for White is therefore the continued restriction and domination of the black pieces. To obtain the desired coordination, Black must play 27...g6, 28...♔g7 and 29...♝e6. Following this train of thought, White's next move is actually quite natural:

27 g6!

Throwing a spanner in Black's plans to unravel!

27...fxg6

The other capture doesn't help: 27...hxg6 28 f4 b4 (28...g5 is met by 29 f5!, again not allowing 29...g6 and 30...♔g7; Black can try to disentangle by 29...f6 30 ♖d2 g6, but after 31 fxg6 ♘e6 32 ♖c8+ ♔g7 33 ♖xa8 ♘xd4 34 ♖xa5 ♔xg6 35 ♖d3 White wins, as indicated by Timman) 29 b3 f6 30 ♖d2 f5 31 ♔e3 g5 32 fxg5 f4+ 33 ♖f3 g6 34 h4, and Black is in a lethal zugzwang, as indicated by Mikhalevski.

28 f4 h5

Black cannot coordinate his pieces, as any king or knight move costs a piece after ♖c8(+). Eventually he runs out of pawn moves.

29 ♖d2 h4 30 ♔e3 h3 31 b3 b4 32 ♖f3 ♘e6

There was nothing better. But the white rook is clearly superior to the knight in the resulting endgame.

33 ♖c8+ ♔f7 34 ♖xa8 ♘xd4+ 35 ♖g4 ♘e2 36 ♖xa5 ♘c3 37 ♖a7+ ♔e6 38 ♖a6+ ♔e7 39 ♖f3 d4 40 ♖xg6 ♘xa2 41 ♔e4 ♔f7 42 ♖b6 ♘c1 43 ♖xb4 d3 44 ♔e3 ♖g6 45 ♖d2 ♘e2 46 ♖xd3 ♘g3!?

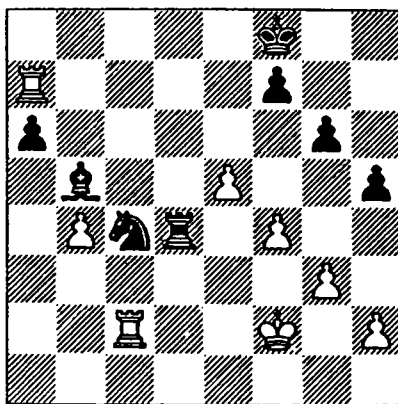
A last trick, which White best refutes by 'falling into the trap'.

47 hxg3 h2 48 f5+!

Giving the white rook access to h4. Black therefore resigned.

1-0

The side with the two pieces must stay constantly alert and be careful not to allow the 'rook side' to coordinate his pieces. Rooks need open files to excel, and the 'piece side' should seek to deny the rook any open files. Extreme caution is required in this type of position.



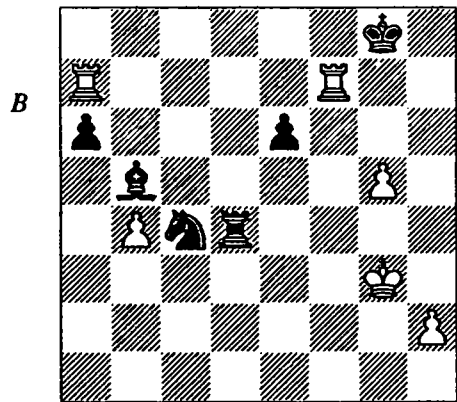
M. Gurevich – Bologan
D'Ajaccio rpd 2005

This position is probably about even, and nobody would be surprised if it petered out in a draw in a few moves. A natural move would be something like 35...♖e4, containing any white play based on e6. Bologan strives for more, but his next move is unfortunate, as it allows White to coordinate his rooks.

35...g5? 36 e6!

Gurevich immediately pounces on the opportunity. Rooks need open files and ranks, and they are especially powerful against a cut-off king on its back rank.

36...fxe6 37 fxg5 h4 38 gxh4 ♖xh4 39 ♖g3 ♖d4 40 ♖f2+ ♖g8 41 ♖ff7! (D)

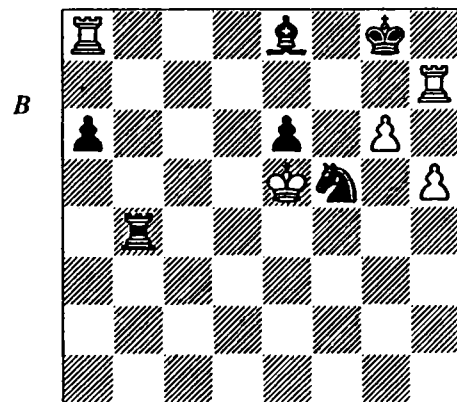


Compare this diagram to the previous one. A few moves back White could only dream of having two rooks on the 7th rank. Black is in deep trouble, and Gurevich does not let him off the hook.

41...♘d6 42 ♖g7+ ♔f8 43 ♖h7 ♘f5+ 44 ♖f3 ♖g8 45 g6! ♘h4+ 46 ♖f2 ♖d2+

46...♘xg6 obviously fails to 47 ♖hg7+.

47 ♖g3 ♘f5+ 48 ♖f4 ♖d8 49 h4 ♖e8 50 h5 ♖d4+ 51 ♔e5 ♖xb4 52 ♖a8! (D)



Decisive.

52...♖b5+ 53 ♔f6 ♕d6 54 ♖g7+
54 ♖e7 and 54 ♔e7 are equally good options.

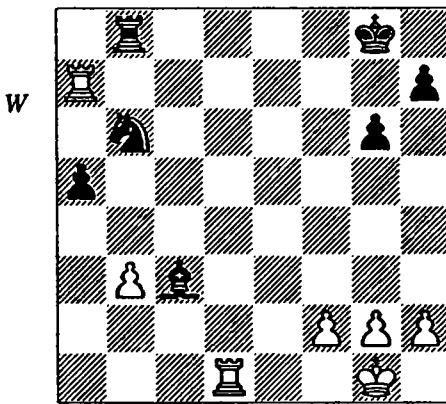
54...♔f8 55 h6 ♕e4+ 56 ♔xe6 ♕g5+ 57 ♔d6 ♕e4+ 58 ♔c7 ♖c5+ 59 ♔b6 ♖c6+ 60 ♔a7 ♕d6 61 ♖f7+!

A nice finish, but not the only way to win.

61...♕xf7 62 g7+ ♔e7

Or 62...♔g8 63 ♖xe8+ and 64 g8♙+.

63 g8♙ 1-0



L.B. Hansen – Ribli
Polanica Zdroj 1993

The position is about even. One of the white rooks is on the 7th rank, but it cannot inflict much damage on its own. To develop any kind of initiative, White must probe the black kingside.

34 h4! ♔b4 35 h5! gxf5

Black could also consider just waiting with 35...♖e8, as suggested by Chekhov in *Chess-Base Magazine*.

36 ♖d3 h4??

The decisive mistake, which allows White to double on the 7th rank – much as in the above game Gurevich-Bologan. Correct was 36...♔h8 37 ♖h3 ♕c8! (cutting off the 7th rank) 38 ♖d7 ♕e7! 39 ♖xh5 ♔g7 with a likely draw, as indicated by Ribli after the game.

37 ♖d4 ♖e8 38 ♖g4+!

Perhaps it was this *zwischenzug* that Ribli had missed.

38...♔h8 39 ♖gg7! ♕c8 40 ♖xh7+ ♔g8 41 ♖ag7+ ♔f8 42 ♖f7+ ♔g8 43 ♖hg7+ ♔h8 44 ♖g4! ♕d6 45 ♖ff4 ♔h7 46 ♖xh4+ ♔g6 47 ♖hg4+ ♔h5 48 ♖h4+ ♔g6 49 ♖hg4+ ♔h5 50 ♔h2 ♔d2 51 ♖h4+ ♔g5 52 ♖hg4+ ♔h5 53 ♖h4+ ♔g5 54 ♖fg4+ ♔f5 55 ♖d4 ♔c3?!

White should be winning in any case, but 55...♔b4 was tougher.

56 ♖d3! ♔e5+

Here 56...♔b4 fails to 57 ♖xb4 axb4 58 ♖xd6.

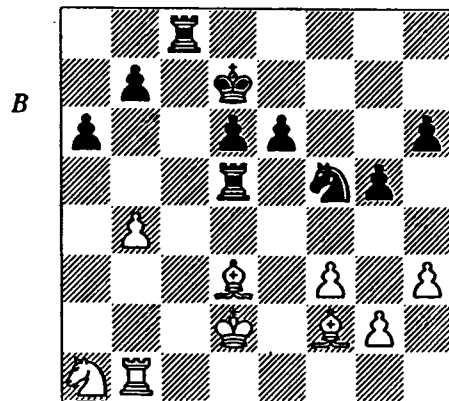
57 g3 ♕f7 58 ♖d5 ♖b8 59 ♖xa5 ♖xb3 60 f4 ♖b2+ 61 ♔h3 ♔g6 62 ♖g4+!

Certainly not 62 fxe5?? ♕g5+ 63 ♔g4 ♖b4# with a picturesque mate!

62...♔h6

Or 62...♔h5 63 ♖xe5+! ♕xe5 64 ♖g5+ and wins.

63 ♖a7! 1-0



Svidler – Topalov
San Luis Wch 2005

Playing with the rooks is all about creating open files for them. Sometimes this is even more important than maintaining a healthy pawn-structure, as the new World Champion demonstrates here.

31...♕h4! 32 ♔xh4 gxf4

Now Black can initiate threats down the newly-opened g-file. Still, White's position is initially safe. His mistake only comes later.

33 ♕c2 h5?

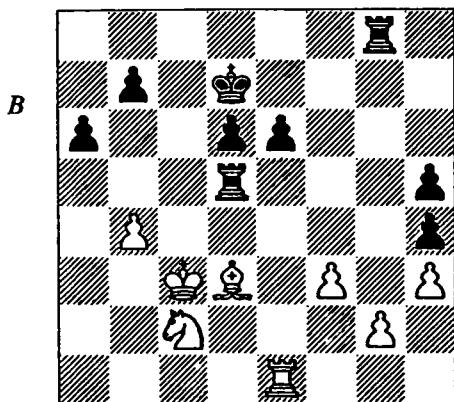
Topalov himself criticizes this move in his notes in *New in Chess*. 33...♖g8 34 ♕e3 ♖d4 is correct.

34 ♖e1?!

Not bad in itself, but Black's inaccuracy on the previous move could have been exploited by 34 b5! with the idea 34...a5 35 ♖a1! b6 36 ♖a4!, and the h4-pawn falls. Topalov had intended 34...axb5, but after 35 ♕e3 ♖dc5 36 ♔xb5+ White has improved his position, as his pieces are now well coordinated and b7 is weak.

34...♠g8 35 ♔c3? (D)

Here it is, White's mistake! Svidler wants to cover g2 through tactical means (35...♠xg2? 36 ♘e3), but this move is tactically flawed. Correct was 35 ♘e3 ♠d4 and only now 36 ♔c3, after which a draw is still the most likely result.



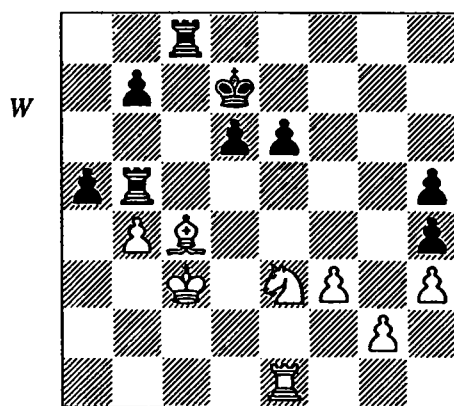
35...a5! 36 ♖c4?

White panics. 36 bxa5 is not good because of 36...♠xg2 37 ♘e3 ♠c5+! (the point behind 35...a5), but the best chance was 36 ♠e2, although Black has made significant progress after 36...♠c8+ 37 ♔d2 a4, as indicated by Topalov.

36...♠c8

This pin turns out to be deadly. White cannot escape it by 37 ♔b3 because of 37...a4+!

37 ♘e3 ♠b5! (D)



Now the threat of 38...d5 secures Black's win of the b4-pawn. White is lost.

38 ♔d3 ♠xb4 39 ♖xe6+!?

The last bullet, but it is not enough.

39...♔xe6 40 ♘c2+ ♔d5 41 ♘xb4+ axb4 42 ♠e7 b5

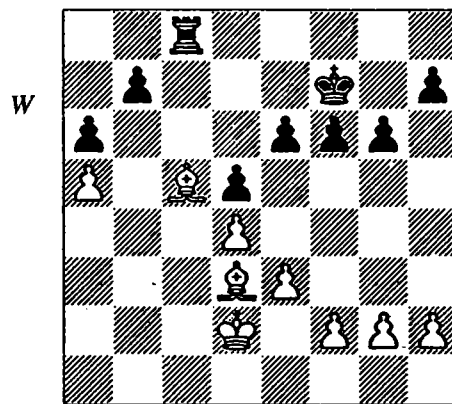
The black pawns are not a pretty sight, but he has too many of them!

43 ♠h7 ♠c3+ 44 ♔d2 ♠c4!

After 45 ♠xh5+ ♔c6, the front b-pawn is ready to run, so White resigned.

0-1

We shall now turn to games in which the two pieces outperform the rook. Obviously the two bishops are the most powerful pairing for the player with the two pieces. Under normal circumstances, these two monsters easily outperform the rook.



Nakamura – Lenderman
New York rpd 2004

Here is a typical example of the strength of the two bishops. Material-wise Black is not doing too badly with a rook and a pawn vs two pieces, but nevertheless he is utterly helpless. The rook has no open files, and the bishops dominate the proceedings. To exploit the full power of the bishops, Nakamura opens the position.

29 e4! f5 30 f3!

Stronger than 30 exd5 exd5, as this would hand the black king a square on e6. Instead, Nakamura repositions his bishop to b3 before committing himself in the centre. The young American converts his advantages in systematic fashion.

30...♔f6 31 ♖c2! ♔f7 32 ♖b3 fxe4

32...♠d8 was probably more stubborn, but White has all the time in the world to improve his position. A good start is to activate the king by 33 ♔e3.

33 fxe4 dxe4 34 ♔e3 ♔f6 35 ♔xe4 ♠d8 36 ♖d1!

The bishop has done its duty on b3. Now it is transferred to f3, hitting the weak b7-pawn.

36...♞d7 37 ♔f3 h6 38 h4 ♞f7 39 ♔d6 ♞d7
40 ♔f8 ♞h7 41 ♔d6 ♞d7 42 ♔e5+ ♚f7 43
♚d3!

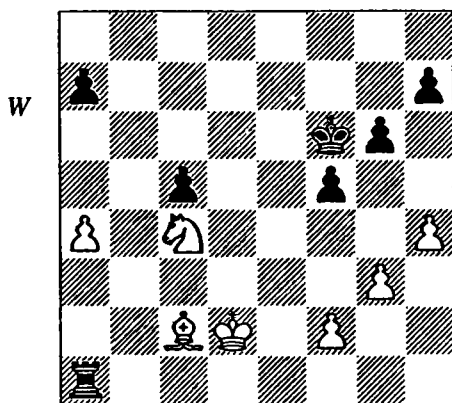
The king is transferred to b6, after which the black position collapses.

43...♚e8 44 ♚c4 ♚d8 45 ♔e4 g5 46 h5 ♚c8
47 ♚c5 ♚d8 48 ♚b6 ♚c8 49 d5! ♞e7

Or 49...exd5 50 ♔f5.

50 d6 1-0

The situation is more complicated if a bishop and a knight are facing the rook. Here patience and careful manoeuvring is required.



Ki. Georgiev – Mitkov
Skopje 2002

The former World Junior Champion Kiril Georgiev is an endgame expert who grinds out many extra points in the endgame. Here he has bishop and knight vs rook and pawn, and the position is probably about even. Nevertheless, there is still plenty of play left. To have any chance of winning, White must find weaknesses in the black position. First, he tries going after the a-pawn.

56 ♘a5 ♞f1 57 ♚e2 ♞c1 58 ♔b3 ♞b1 59
♚d3 ♞f1 60 ♚e2 ♞b1 61 ♔c2 ♞c1 62 ♔d1
♞b1 63 ♚d2

What has happened since the previous diagram? Not much really, and this is in itself noteworthy. White is in no hurry, and he hopes that Black will weaken himself – and it works!

63...h6?!

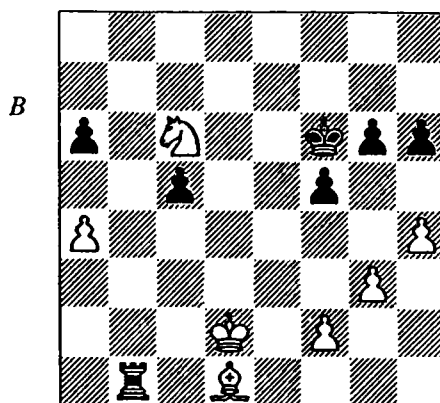
The first step in the wrong direction. With the pawn still at h7, it is difficult for White to create a weakness on the kingside. But with ...h6 played, Black will always have to be on the lookout for White's h5 advance, isolating the

f5-pawn. There was no need for this concession.

64 ♘c6!

Forcing the a-pawn to a light square, where it can be hit by the bishop.

64...a6 65 ♔c2 ♞f1 66 ♚e2 ♞c1 67 ♔d1
♞b1 68 ♚d2 (D)



68...g5?

For the second time Black loses patience, and this time it is more critical. The advance of the pawns merely jeopardizes the safety of the pawns – especially the one on f5. Again, Black would have done better to stay put.

69 hxg5+ hxg5 70 f3! ♚e6 71 ♘a5 ♚e5?!

This allows the white knight to return with tempo. 71...♚f6 is more circumspect.

72 ♘c4+ ♚d4

Here too 72...♚f6 is more prudent.

73 ♘e3!

White forces the f-pawn further forward, as 73...♚e5 loses to 74 ♘xf5! ♞b2+ (74...♚xf5? 75 ♔c2+) 75 ♔c2 ♞xc2+ 76 ♚xc2 ♚xf5 77 ♚c3, and White wins the pawn endgame.

73...f4 74 gxf4 gxf4 75 ♘c2+ ♚d5 76 ♔e2
♞b6 77 ♚c3 a5 78 ♔d3!

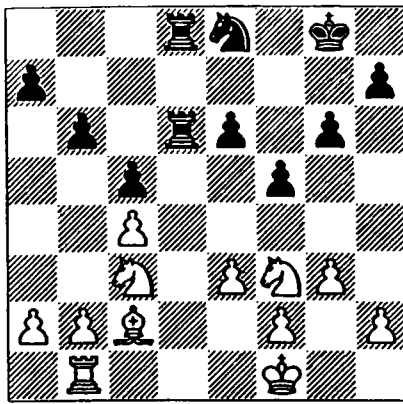
Having created the necessary weaknesses in the opponent's position, White now systematically coordinates his pieces and forces Black back.

78...♞b8 79 ♔e4+ ♚e6 80 ♘a3! ♞b4 81
♔c2 ♞b8 82 ♘c4 ♞a8 83 ♔e4 ♞a7 84 ♘d2!

The decisive reorganization. With the king on c4 and the knight on b3, Black cannot cover all his pawns.

84...♚d6 85 ♚c4 ♞c7 86 ♘b3 ♞a7 87 ♚b5
♞e7 88 ♘xa5 ♞e8 89 ♘c4+ 1-0

A triumph of patient manoeuvring by Kiril Georgiev.



Larsen – Mecking
Sousse IZ 1967

Here is a more complex example with more pieces on the board. The two black rooks occupy the only open file, but since they do not have any entry squares, White is clearly better. To exploit his material superiority, he must create weaknesses in the black position.

24 ♖b5! ♜6d7

Can't the knight just be kicked away with an eventual ...a6? Yes, but as we saw in Georgiev-Mitkov, any weakness in the pawn-structure is in the pieces' favour. For example, White can bring the knight via c3 to a4, attacking b6, or he can consider the pawn advances a4-a5 or b4.

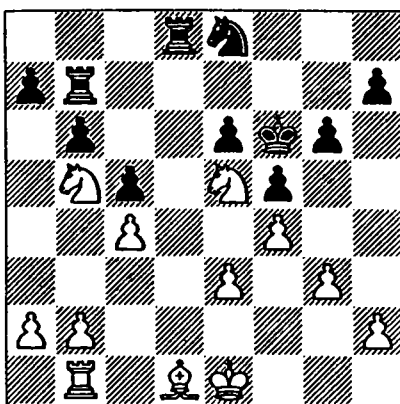
25 ♔e1 ♕g7 26 ♘e5

A nice central outpost for the knight.

26...♜b7

26...♜d2 is not dangerous for White due to 27 ♙a4 with the threat of 28 ♘d4!

27 ♙a4 ♜f6 28 f4 (D)



28...g5?

Here we are again. Black is already in serious trouble, but this impatient advance merely

increases his difficulties. In such positions patience is a virtue!

29 ♙h5!

A good square for the bishop, from where it blocks ...h5 and continually threatens ♙xe8.

29...♜g7

Black cannot kick the white bishop back with 29...♘g7?, because after 30 ♙f3 the b7-rook is trapped (30...♜bb8/♜e7 31 ♘c6). Note the excellent coordination among White's minor pieces.

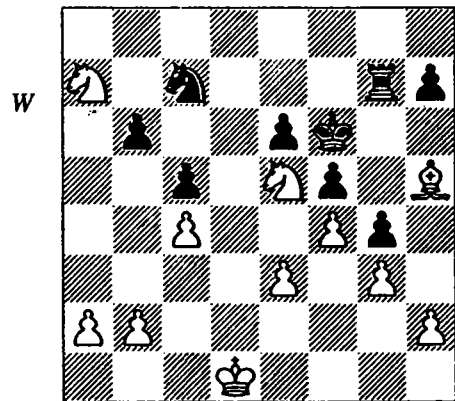
30 ♜d1!

Indirectly attacking the e8-knight.

30...♜xd1+ 31 ♔xd1 ♘c7

Forced, but it drops a pawn.

32 ♘xa7 g4 (D)



Black's last chance is to block the white bishop out of the game, but it can never be attacked and can eventually re-enter the game.

33 ♘b5 ♘a8 34 ♔c2 ♜g8 35 ♘d6 ♔e7 36 ♘b5 ♜c8 37 ♘a7 ♜f8 38 a3 ♘c7 39 b4 cxb4 40 axb4 ♜a8 41 ♘ac6+ ♔d6 42 ♔b2 b5 43 ♘d4 bxc4 44 ♘xc4+ ♔e7 45 e4!

Finally bringing the bishop back into play.

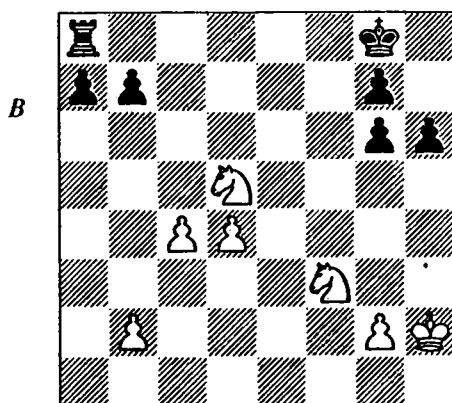
45...fxe4 46 ♙xg4 ♘d5 47 ♙xe6 ♘xb4 48 ♙f5

Black is too much material down.

48...♜d8 49 ♘e2 e3 50 ♔b3 ♘d5 51 ♙xh7 ♜h8 52 ♙e4 ♜xh2 53 ♙f3 ♜f2 54 ♘e5 ♘f6 55 ♔c4 1-0

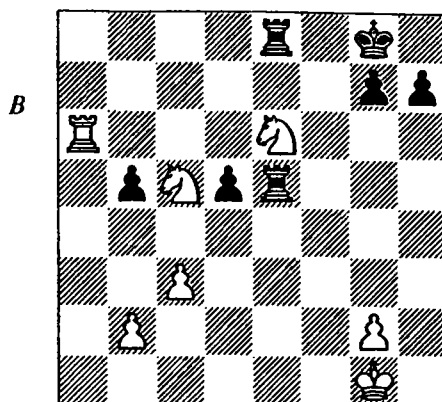
That brings us to two knights vs rook. Due to their limited mobility, the knights need to be coordinated on a relatively small area of the board to enhance their efficiency. With unpredictable knights hopping around in a small area, tactics and forks abound. In the following game, the segment of the board in which the

knights operate is the centre, supporting the advance of a passed pawn.



Grishchuk – Lautier
Cap d'Agde rpd 2003

endgame, and they may even manufacture mating threats. Mating attacks constitute a relatively rare but important aspect of endgame play.



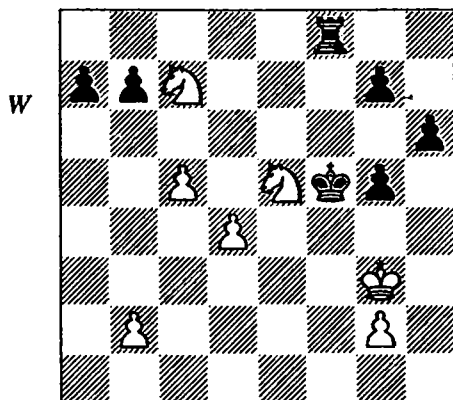
Kasparov – Shirov
Izmir ECC 2004

From a material point of view, Black is doing OK here, but his two extra pawns on the king-side are worthless, and Grishchuk manages to coordinate his knights and makes the win look easy.

28...g5 29 ♔g3 ♜f8 30 c5 ♔f7

Taking the king to the danger zone, but Black couldn't just sit idle.

31 ♘e5+ ♔e6 32 ♘c7+! ♔f5 (D)



The only square to avoid a knight fork.

33 ♘c4! ♔e4 34 ♘d6+!

Covering the d4-pawn by tactical means:

34...♔xd4? 35 ♘e6+.

34...♔e3 35 ♘e6 ♜f1 36 ♘xb7 1-0

Earlier we saw how Larsen skilfully coordinated his rook and knights against Marjanović's kingside with all the pawns on the same wing. The combined force of knights and rook is actually a powerful attacking force in the

Given a few moves, White can coordinate his pieces and start picking off Black's vulnerable pawns – for instance, something like ♜d6, ♘d4 and ♘d3-b4. Shirov therefore decides to go pawn-hunting, but this allows Kasparov to launch a mating attack with the rook and the knights.

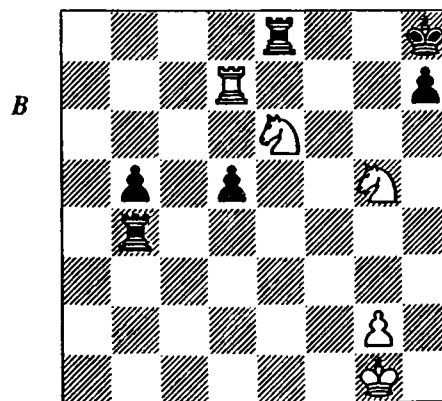
30...♜e2 31 b4 ♜c2

31...♜e3 is answered by 32 ♘c7!.

32 ♜a7! ♜xc3

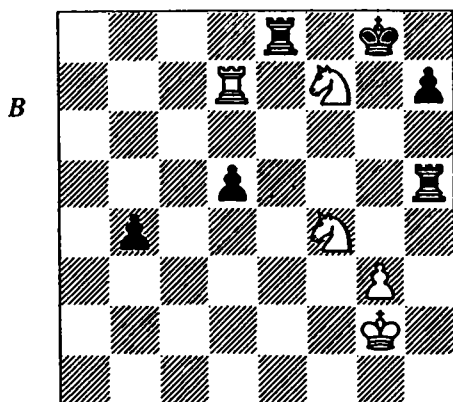
Following the plan of eliminating as many white pawns as possible, but perhaps 32...g6 was a better try.

33 ♜xg7+ ♔h8 34 ♜d7! ♜c4 35 ♘g5 ♜xb4 36 ♘ce6! (D)



Coordinating all the white pieces against Black's king and threatening mate by 37 ♜xh7+ ♔g8 38 ♜g7+ ♔h8 39 ♘f7#. Black's reply is forced but misplaces his rook.

36...♖h4 37 g3! ♜h5 38 ♔g2 b4 39 ♘f7+ ♔g8 40 ♘f4! (D)



The final position deserves a diagram as a tribute to piece coordination – crucial in this kind of endgame! The rook on h5 is trapped, so Black resigned.

1-0

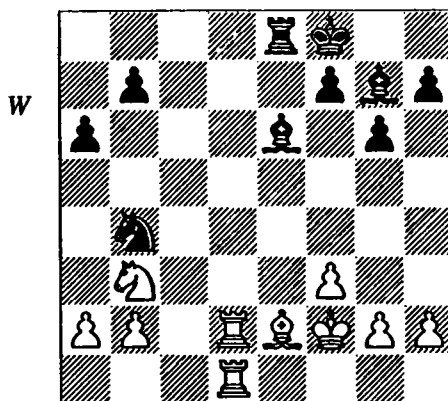
Rook vs One Minor Piece

The term ‘rook vs one minor piece’ is another way of saying ‘exchange up’. In this section we shall investigate this situation in some detail. Note that my main focus is on the strategic aspects of this type of endgame, although of course some technical endgames will arise from the more complex strategic discussion.

The big question is obviously this: when does an extra exchange simply constitute a safe material advantage, and when does the opponent have compensation for the exchange? I shall try to highlight some of the key factors of these important questions.

Let’s start by looking at some examples in which the exchange eventually prevails. I shall start by analysing three of my own games in which this theme was the defining one.

The position in the following diagram arose from Kasparov’s famous exchange sacrifice from Karpov-Kasparov, New York/Lyons Wch (11) 1990: 1 d4 ♘f6 2 c4 g6 3 ♘c3 ♗g7 4 e4 d6 5 ♘f3 0-0 6 ♗e2 e5 7 ♗e3 exd4 8 ♘xd4 ♜e8 9 f3 c6 10 ♖d2 d5 11 exd5 cxd5 12 0-0 ♘c6 13 c5 ♜xe3! 14 ♖xe3 ♖f8. This is another example of the relationship between opening and endgame, which we shall study further in the next chapter. White’s task here is to neutralize



L.B. Hansen – P.H. Nielsen
Danish Ch (Århus) 1992

Black’s activity. The two bishops and the pressure on White’s queenside give Black some compensation, but if White can exchange some pieces, his material advantage will eventually tell. So...

26 ♜d8! ♗xb2 27 ♘c5! ♗xa2 28 ♜xe8+ ♔xe8 29 ♘xb7 ♔e7 30 ♘a5

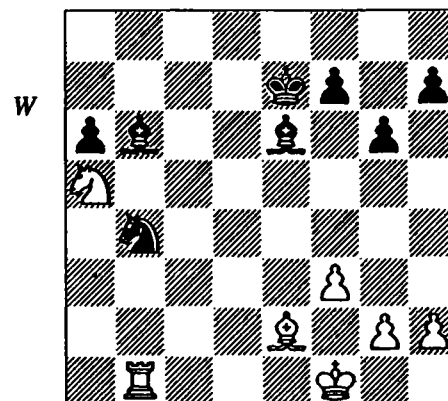
Some pieces have been exchanged and the a-pawn is blockaded. The next step is to conquer the a-pawn and turn the game into a technical win with three against three on the wing.

30...♗e6?!

It was probably better to keep the bishop on its active outpost.

31 ♜b1 ♗d4+ 32 ♔f1 ♗b6 (D)

Not 32...♗c3? 33 ♜xb4! ♗xb4 34 ♘c6+.



33 ♘c6+!

Stronger than letting Black keep the two bishops after 33 ♜xb4 ♗xa5 34 ♜b7+ (not 34 ♜a4?! ♗c7!, hitting h2 and threatening 35...a5) 34...♔f6 35 ♗xa6, although that should also win.

33...♖xc6 34 ♜xb6 ♘d4 35 ♜xa6 ♖xe2 36 ♜a7+!

An important *zwischenzug* – 36 ♖xe2?? ♙c4+ would be painful!

36...♖f6 37 ♖xe2 h5 38 h4 ♖e5 39 ♖e3

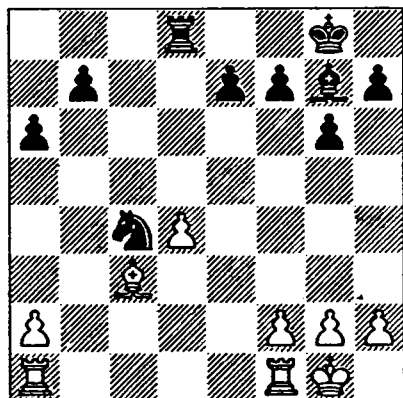
The technical phase has been reached. The winning plan is to push back the black king and eventually attack f7 with king and rook.

39...♙f5 40 ♜a5+ ♖f6 41 ♖f4 ♖g7 42 ♖e5 ♙c4 43 ♖d6 ♙f1 44 g3 ♙e2 45 ♜a3 ♖f6 46 ♖d5 ♙d1 47 ♖e4 ♙c2+ 48 ♖f4 ♙f5 49 ♜a6+ ♖g7 50 ♖e5 ♙d3 51 ♜f6! ♙b5 52 ♜f4!

Now Black cannot prevent the white king from reaching e7.

52...♙d7 53 ♖d6 ♙e6 54 ♖e7 ♙d5 55 ♜f6 ♙c4 56 f4! ♙d5 57 f5 1-0

Black resigned because 57...gxf5 58 ♜xf5 costs him the h5-pawn, and 57...♙c4 allows 58 ♜c6 ♙d5 59 f6+ ♖h7 60 ♜c8 followed by 61 ♜f8.



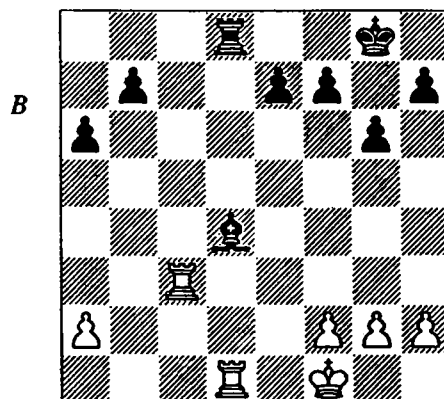
P.H. Nielsen – L.B. Hansen
Danish League 2001/2

Same players, opposite colours, same basic problem, same result – the exchange eventually prevails after gradually neutralizing the other side’s initiative. In the initial position Black seems to be doing fine. I have one pawn for the exchange and a number of ways to win a second one on d4. But how should this be done? One way is simply 21...♙xd4, after which White has two possibilities. First, he can exchange a number of pieces by 22 ♙xd4 ♜xd4 23 ♜fd1 ♜xd1+ 24 ♜xd1 ♘d6 and now 25 g4!, fixing the h7-pawn and thereby preventing Black’s planned ...♖f8-e8-d7 (which is now answered by ♜d3-h3!), worried me slightly. Still, Black

should be safe here. Second, White can play to destroy Black’s pawn-structure by 22 ♜fd1 e5 23 ♙xd4 exd4 24 a4, and Black eventually ends up with isolated pawns on b5 and d4. Can these be defended in the long run? I was uncertain at the time, and I still am! Black can also simply forget about grabbing the d-pawn and instead play positionally; e.g., 21...b5, 21...♙f6 or 21...♜d7, intending ...♘b6-d5. There are plenty of possibilities to choose from, and this is one of the problems in this kind of position! There is no clear way to play. Eventually I decided to grab the d4-pawn with the knight.

21...♘d6!? 22 ♜fd1 h5?

Serious indecisiveness, which is very dangerous when an exchange down! I changed my mind and wanted to return to playing positionally. But now Black has just lost a couple of tempi. This game shows the dangers of indecision in this kind of endgame. Accuracy and action is required, as otherwise the opponent’s material advantage will eventually tell. My concern was the position after 22...♘b5 23 ♜ac1 ♖xc3 24 ♜xc3 ♙xd4 25 ♖f1! (D).



This is an instructive position. Peter Heine Nielsen felt that White had winning chances, and I agree. Even though Black has two pawns and a seemingly safe position, White has managed to consolidate, and he may now start probing the black pawns. The black pawns are not dangerous, and White might advance his king on the light squares following a rook exchange. Still, Black is not lost, and I probably should have gone for this line – or not played 21...♘d6 in the first place. Note that Black would gladly trade his two queenside pawns for White’s single a-pawn. In that case the position would be drawn, although White may of course apply

pressure for some time. We shall return to this kind of ending later.

23 ♖a5! ♜c8 24 ♜ac1 ♘c4

Back again – probably the knight should not have left this square in the first place!

25 ♖b4 ♖f6 26 a4 b6 27 d5! ♜f8 28 d6! exd6 29 ♜xd6 ♜g7

Not 29...♘xd6? 30 ♖xd6+ and 31 ♜xc8. The exchange of the central pawns has increased the scope of White's rooks and improved his position.

30 ♜d7 ♜c6 31 g3 h4!?

Attempting to exchange as many pawns as possible.

32 gxf4!?

Accepting a fragmented pawn-structure in order to keep more pawns on the board for the time being. The black bishop cannot leave the long diagonal because of 33 ♖c3+.

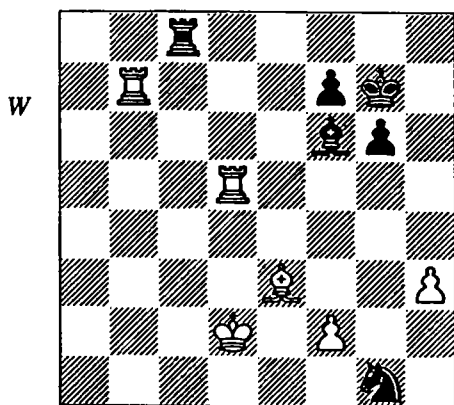
32...b5!?

Again going for pawn exchanges, but perhaps this could wait.

33 axb5 axb5 34 ♜d5 ♘e5 35 ♖c5!?

White could exchange into a more technical position by 35 ♜xc6 ♘xc6 36 ♜xb5 ♖xh4, although the fractured pawn-structure complicates the win somewhat.

35...♘f3+ 36 ♜g2 ♘xh4+ 37 ♜g3 ♜e6 38 ♜b1 ♘f5+ 39 ♜h3 ♜e2 40 ♜xb5 ♜c2 41 ♜b7 ♜c3+ 42 ♜g2 ♘h4+ 43 ♜f1 ♘f3 44 h3 ♜c1+ 45 ♜e2 ♘g1+ 46 ♜d2 ♜c4 47 ♖e3 ♜c8 (D)



48 ♜e1!

This precise move destroys Black's hopes of capturing the h3-pawn. Now 48...♘xh3 doesn't work because of 49 ♜dd7 ♜f8 50 ♖c5, and 48...♜d8 fails to 49 ♜xd8 ♖xd8 50 ♖d4+ ♖f6 51 ♖xf6+ ♜xf6 52 ♜b3!, and the knight is trapped.

48...♘f3+ 49 ♜e2 ♘e5 50 f4 ♘c6 51 ♜c5 ♖h4 52 ♜b6 ♘e7 53 ♖d4+!

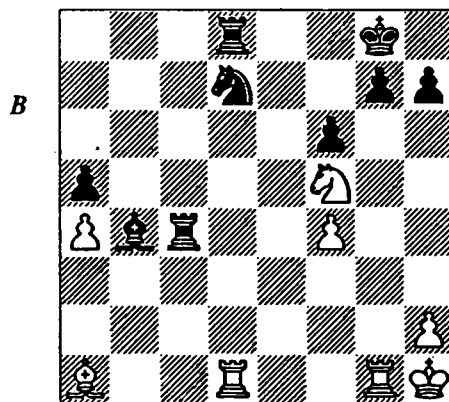
Forcing the decisive weakening in Black's position.

53...f6 54 ♜xc8 ♘xc8 55 ♜b7+

And here, in extreme time-pressure, I grabbed the knight and wanted to play 55...♘d6, forgetting about the check! A touched piece must be moved, and e7 is not a good square for the knight, so...

1-0

However, 55...♜h6 is lost anyway after 56 ♖c5!, trapping the knight. Domination is a powerful principle in the endgame!



L.B. Hansen – Romanishin
Altensteig 1993

Black is a pawn up, but White's threat on g7 and the pin on the d-file give White the initiative. Black can only disentangle by giving up an exchange.

31...♜xf4

31...g6 is answered by 32 ♖xf6! ♘f6 (not 32...♜f8?? 33 ♘h6#!) 33 ♜xd8+ ♜f7 34 ♘d6+ ♖xd6 35 ♜xd6 ♜xa4 36 ♜f1 with an advantage for White, although it is still unclear if it is sufficient to win.

32 ♖xf6!

Stronger than 32 ♜xg7+ ♜f8 or 32 ♘xg7 ♜f7. Now White wins the exchange.

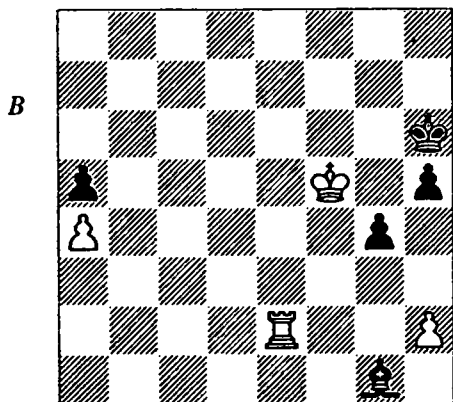
32...♜xf5 33 ♖xd8 ♘c5 34 ♖e7!

Making sure that Black does not get two pawns for the exchange, as now 34...♘xa4? fails to 35 ♜d8+ ♜f7 36 ♜f8+ ♜e6 37 ♖xb4 axb4 38 ♜e1+ ♜e5 39 ♜e8+ and wins.

34...h6 35 ♜d8+ ♜h7 36 ♜f8 ♜xf8 37 ♖xf8 g5!?

A difficult decision for Black just before the time-control at move 40. The alternative was 37...♔xa4, but after 38 ♖xg7 his king is cut off and White retains winning chances.

38 ♖xc5 ♖xc5 39 ♜c1 ♖b4 40 ♜c6 h5 41 ♖g2 ♖g7 42 ♜f3 g4+ 43 ♜f4 ♖d2+ 44 ♜f5 ♖e3 45 ♜c7+! ♜h6 46 ♜e7 ♖f2 47 ♜e5 ♖g1 48 ♜e2! (D)



The game has entered the technical phase. Black is in zugzwang and cannot avoid losing one of his pawns.

48...♖c5 49 ♜e6+ ♖g7 50 ♜g5 ♜f7

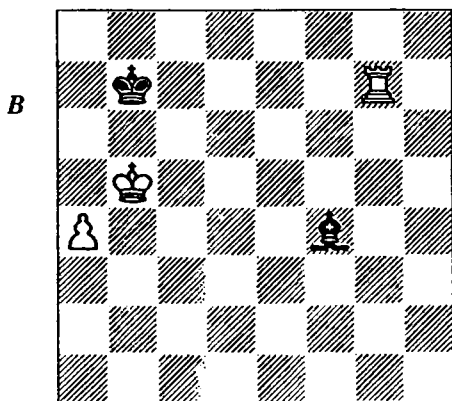
After 50...♖g1 51 ♜xh5 ♖xh2 52 ♜xg4 ♜f8 (52...♜f7 53 ♜a6) White has 53 ♜c6!, dominating the bishop and winning the a5-pawn.

51 ♜a6 ♖g1 52 ♜xh5 ♖xh2 53 ♜xg4 ♜e7 53...♖c7? is impossible because of the pin 54 ♜a7.

54 ♜xa5

This endgame is theoretically won for White, but accuracy is required. White should be careful not to advance the pawn prematurely.

54...♜d7 55 ♜a6 ♜c7 56 ♜f5 ♜b7 57 ♜h6 ♖c7 58 ♜e4 ♖b6 59 ♜d5 ♖e3 60 ♜g6 ♖f2 61 ♜c4 ♖e3 62 ♜b5 ♖f4 63 ♜g7+ (D)

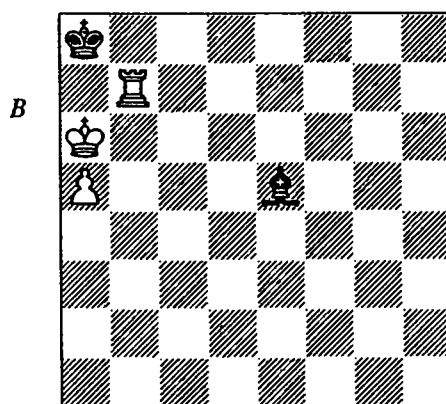


This is a famous technical endgame, which was analysed to a win by Kling, Horwitz and Lequesne more than 100 years ago. The technical task is complicated by threats of stalemate with the king in the corner and the bishop on b8, but with accurate play White can avoid that.

63...♜a8

This makes the win trivial. 63...♜b8 is a tougher defence, when Kling and Horwitz's instructive win goes 64 ♜a6 ♖e3 65 ♜b7+ ♜c8 (65...♜a8 66 a5 is similar to the game) 66 ♜b3! (the first in a series of clever rook moves with the intention of dominating the bishop) 66...♖f2 (66...♖d4 67 ♜b5!, and the black king cannot move to the b-file because of the discovered check with 68 ♜c4+, winning the bishop) 67 ♜c3+! ♜b8 68 ♜f3! (we have reached the basic winning position discovered by Kling and Horwitz; Black does not have a safe square for his bishop) 68...♖g1 (68...♖d4 fails to the now well-known discovered check 69 ♜b3+ ♜c7 70 ♜b5! ♜b7 71 ♜c4+) 69 ♜b3+ ♜c7 70 ♜b7+ ♜c8 (70...♜c6 71 ♜b3 ♖d4 72 ♜b4 followed by 73 ♜c4+, winning) 71 ♜b5! ♖e3 72 ♜a5! (this why the pawn should not be pushed too soon – the king needs this square) 72...♖d2+ 73 ♜b6 ♜b8 74 ♜e5!, and White wins.

64 ♜a6 ♖e3 65 ♜a7+ ♜b8 66 ♜b7+ ♜a8 66...♜c8 loses to 67 ♜b6. 67 a5! (D)



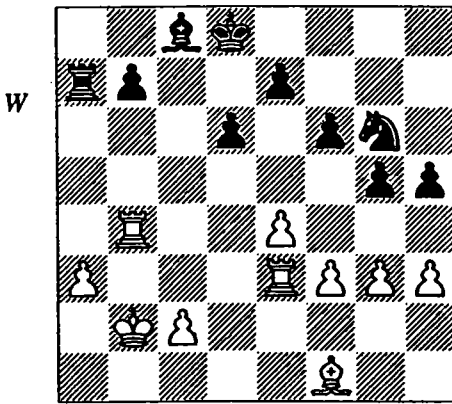
With the king in the corner, the pawn can now advance. What follows is known as the 'Lequesne Manoeuvre' from 1858.

67...♖f4 68 ♜f7 ♖e5 69 ♜f8+ ♖b8 70 ♜b5! Necessary to avoid stalemate. 70...♜a7 71 ♜f7+ ♜a8 72 a6 ♖a7 72...♖e5 73 a7 wins for White. 73 ♜f8+ ♖b8 74 ♜a5!

The decisive triangulation.

74...♔a7 75 ♖f7+ ♔a8 76 ♖b6 ♙e5 77 a7
1-0

When having an extra exchange, it is often useful to look for ways to *transform* this material advantage into another one – thus clarifying the situation. A good example of this principle was seen at the World Championship in Argentina.



Svidler – J. Polgar
San Luis Wch 2005

Svidler is an exchange up, but Black's position is solid. To break it down, Svidler plans to sacrifice material back – first a pawn is offered, and later the exchange.

34 h4!

A strong pawn sacrifice that fixes the h5-pawn – White's main target.

34...gxf4 35 gxf4 ♙d7

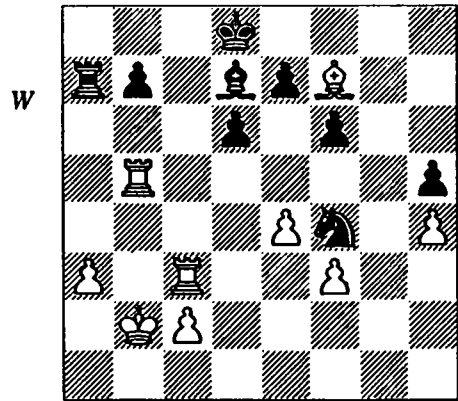
Black does not dare to take the pawn, as this would allow White to open files for his rooks. 35...♖xh4 is strongly countered by 36 e5! ♖f5 (36...fxe5? 37 ♖xh4) 37 exf6! exf6 (37...♖xe3? 38 f7) 38 ♖e1, and Black's formerly safe position has been torn up at the cost of a mere pawn – a good deal for White!

36 ♖e3 ♙c8 37 ♖b5 ♖f4 38 ♙c4! ♔c7 39 ♙f7! ♙d7 40 ♖c3+ ♔d8 (D)

41 ♖xh5!

Clarifying the situation. White gives back the exchange in return for a monster passed pawn on the h-file which Black is unable to cope with.

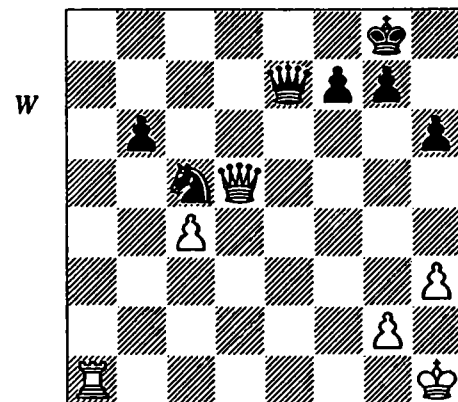
41...♖xh5 42 ♙xh5 e6 43 ♙g6 ♙c6 44 h5 ♔e7 45 f4 ♖a8 46 h6 ♖h8 47 h7 f5 48 exf5 ♔f6 49 ♖d3 ♙e4 50 ♖xd6 ♙xf5 51 ♙xf5 ♔xf5 52 ♖d7



With an easily winning rook and pawn endgame.

52...b6 53 ♖f7+ ♔g6 54 ♖b7 ♔f5 55 e4 ♔xf4 56 ♖xb6 e5 57 ♖h6 e4 58 ♔c2 ♔e3 59 ♖h2! 1-0

With queens still on and an exchange up, the situation is different. The right way to exploit the material advantage in this case is often to combine play on both wings – exploiting the principle of *two weaknesses*. The combination of queen and rook is a strong attacking force, and this makes it difficult for the defender to secure his king while at the same time keeping all his pawns safe.



Chernin – Tischbierek
New York Open 1998

65 ♖f5!

Black obviously has problems with the b6-pawn, but also the king's position is weak when attacked by queen and rook. Black is reluctant to play ...g6, as this would only weaken his kingside further.

65...♖d8 66 ♖e1 ♖e6 67 ♖d5 ♖c7 68 ♖a8+ ♔h7 69 ♖e4+ g6

Black finally decides to make this concession, as 69...♔g8 is strongly met by 70 ♖a1 ♗d6 71 ♖a8+ ♕f8 72 ♖e8! followed by a queen manoeuvre to e7 or d8, as indicated by Hecht in *ChessBase Magazine*.

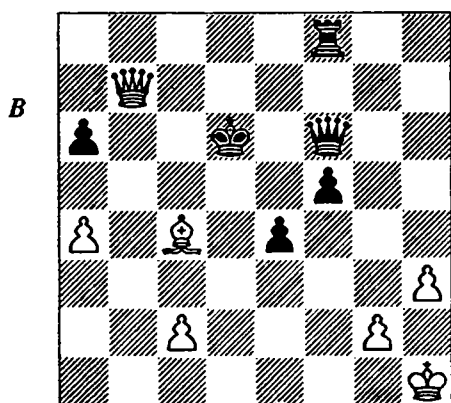
70 ♖f1 ♔g7 71 ♗f3 ♕g5

After 71...♗e7 White targets the other weakness: 72 ♗c6!.

72 ♗f6+ ♔g8 73 ♖a1! ♗b7

This allows White to enter decisively on the back rank, but 73...♕e6 does not last much longer. Hecht gives the instructive winning line 74 ♖a8+ ♕f8 75 ♗d8 ♗c5 76 ♖c8 ♗b4 77 ♔h2! h5 78 ♗f6 with the unavoidable threat of 79 c5! bxc5 80 ♗d6!.

74 ♗d8+ ♔g7 75 ♖a8 1-0



Kasimdzhanov – Morozevich
San Luis Wch 2005

With a pawn for the exchange and the black king running around the board, it could be expected that White has decent chances. However, in just a few moves Morozevich manages to coordinate his forces into a strong attack against the white king, in which the key attacker is – the black king!

43...♗a1+ 44 ♔h2 ♗e5+ 45 ♔h1 a5!

The black pieces coordinate beautifully despite his king being in the open. White now starts harassing the black king, but only succeeds in chasing it to better places. However, it was hard to suggest anything better for White.

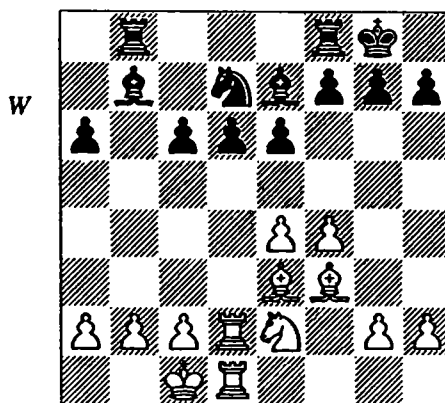
46 ♗b6+ ♔e7 47 ♗b7+ ♔f6 48 ♗b6+ ♔g7 49 ♗b7+ ♔h6 50 ♗b6+ ♖f6!

Notice how the dominant queen enables Black continuously to improve his position. White cannot play around it.

51 ♗d8 ♖d6 52 ♗f8+ ♔g5 53 ♖e2 ♔f4! 0-1

There is no way to prevent the black king from penetrating via e3 or g3 to f2, where it supports a mating assault on the white king.

So when is a piece – perhaps together with one or more pawns – superior to a rook? Basically this is possible, *if the rook can be kept passive in the long term*. As the previous examples show, this is easier said than done. Often rooks can be dominated in the short term, but it is considerably more complicated in the long run. But it *can* be done, as the following games show.



Zhang Zhong – Kunte
Dubai 2005

16 ♖xd6! ♖xd6 17 ♖xd6 ♖bd8 18 e5 ♕b8 19 ♖c5 ♖xd6 20 ♖xd6 ♖c8 21 c4

Take a good look at this position! Despite his material superiority, Black is utterly helpless, as he cannot coordinate his pieces and his rook has no prospects. White is already winning.

21...a5 22 ♕d4 ♕a6 23 a3 h6 24 ♔d2 ♖a8 25 c5!

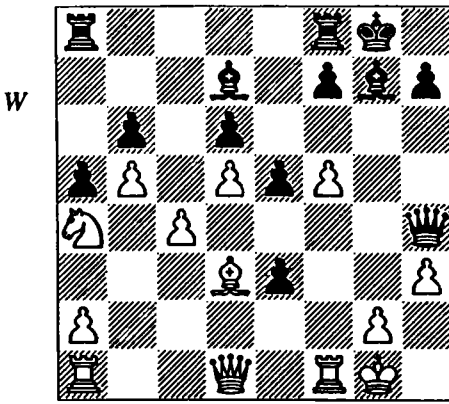
Of course Black should not be allowed to liberate his bishop by ...c5.

25...g5?

A typical phenomenon that we have seen repeatedly: by untimely activity a defender merely weakens his own position. This costs a pawn, but there was no good advice to offer him.

26 f5! exf5 27 ♕xf5 ♖e8 28 ♕xh6+ ♔h7 28...♔g7 is also met by 29 ♕xf7!, since 29...♔xf7 fails to 30 ♖h5+.

29 ♕xf7 ♔g6 30 ♖g4 ♖b7 31 e6 ♔f6 32 ♕e5 ♖xe6 33 ♖xe6 ♔xe6 34 ♕c4 1-0



Seirawan – Kožul
Wijk aan Zee 1991

This is one of my personal favourites. Black threatens ...e4, but Seirawan just ignores this threat, going into an endgame an exchange down, but where Black has no active play and the a4-knight is a monster. A knight on the rim is not always grim!

19 ♖g4! ♜xg4 20 hxg4 e4 21 ♙e2!

Totally consistent with the chosen strategy! The position must remain closed, and this is more important than material. Taking on e4 would merely open files for the black rooks and increase the value of the passed pawn on e3.

21...♙xa1 22 ♜xa1 ♞ab8 23 ♚h2!

A highly instructive position! The knight on a4 is certainly no less valuable than a rook, and now White activates his king and threatens to pick up the weak black pawns by ♚g3-f4.

23...h5 24 gxh5 ♙xf5 25 ♚g3 ♚g7 26 ♚f4 ♙h7 27 g4 f6 28 ♝c3!

The knight has done its duty on a4 and now returns to pick up the e3-pawn. It has been commonly known since Nimzowitsch's day that a knight is the best blockader.

28...♚h6 29 ♝d1 ♞be8 30 ♝xe3 ♞e5 31 ♞f1 ♞g8 32 ♙d1 f5?!

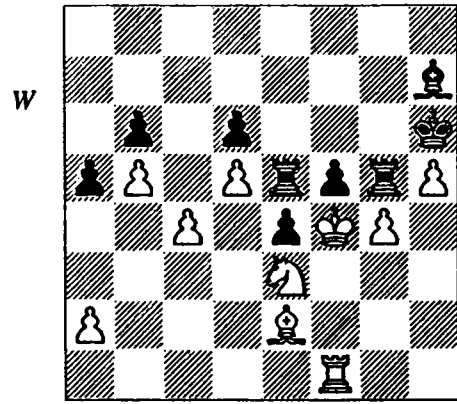
It is understandable that Black is searching for counterplay, but as before it jeopardizes his own position. This move undermines the rook on e5 and thereby sets the stage for White's break on move 34.

33 ♙e2 ♞g5 (D)

34 c5!

A beautiful break. The black pieces are too poorly coordinated to deal with the passed b-pawn.

34...bxc5



Note that Black can't take with the d-pawn as a consequence of 32...f5 – in this case the e5-rook would be hanging.

35 b6 ♞e8 36 gxf5 ♞b8 37 ♞b1!

Much better than winning the exchange back with 37 ♝g4+.

37...♞gg8 38 b7 ♚g7

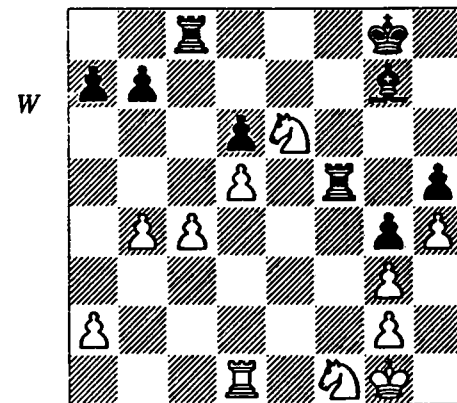
38...♞g7 39 ♙a6.

39 ♞b6!

The final touch. The rook is transferred to c8.

39...♚f7 40 ♙a6 ♚e7 41 ♞c6! ♚d7 42 ♞c8 1-0

The black rooks never participated in the game!



Kramnik – Kasparov
Linares 1994

Here we have another – more complicated – example from the highest sphere. Do Kramnik's knights and pawns outperform Kasparov's 'extra exchange'? No, with accurate play this game should probably end in a draw – see the note to move 31. The game is simply in dynamic equilibrium, but the slightest mistake is

fatal, which is often the case in positions with uneven material.

28 c5!

The same break as in the previous game.

28...♙f8

After 28...dxc5 White has a pleasant choice between 29 bxc5, 29 ♖e3 and 29 d6!, which I think is best – passed pawns must be pushed!

29 ♖e3 ♗f6 30 ♖c4! dxc5 31 b5!

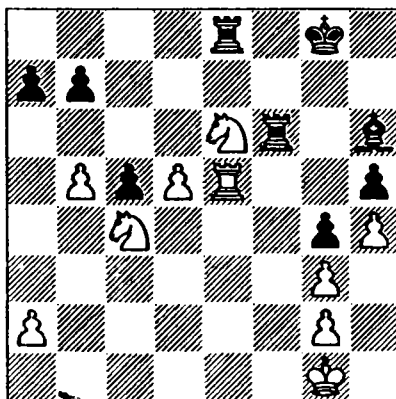
The black rooks must be kept at bay – no open files! The knights are excellently placed on active squares, while Black struggles to coordinate his pieces.

31...♙h6?

Perhaps the decisive error. Kasparov fails to deal with the main strategic problem in the position: how to activate his pieces in the light of the dominating white knights. According to Kramnik's analysis, 31...♗e8! was the correct path for Black, with the idea of cutting the Gordian Knot by giving back the exchange after 32 a4 ♗exe6! 33 dxe6 ♗xe6, and probably Black has sufficient counterplay based on the threat of 34...♗e4, kicking the knight from its powerful outpost. White has two ways of preventing the exchange sacrifice on e6. Either he can retreat his knight to f4, but this gives Black counterplay as well after 32...♗e4 – Black has managed to find an open file for his rooks – or he can overprotect (in the spirit of Nimzowitsch's *My System*, of which Kramnik has stated that he is a big fan) the knight by 32 ♗e1, which however allows Black to force a draw through repetition of moves by 32...♗f5 33 ♗d1 ♗f6.

32 ♗e1 ♗e8 33 ♗e5!?(D)

Hitting the h5-pawn. However, 33 ♖h2 was a prophylactic and calmer alternative, as indicated by Kramnik.



33...♗e7! 34 ♗xh5 ♗ef7! 35 ♖h2!

Necessary prophylaxis. Kasparov has managed to obtain a certain amount of counterplay against White's king. 35 ♖xc5? is now impossible due to 35...♗f1+ 36 ♖h2 ♗b1 followed by 37...♗ff1 and mate on h1.

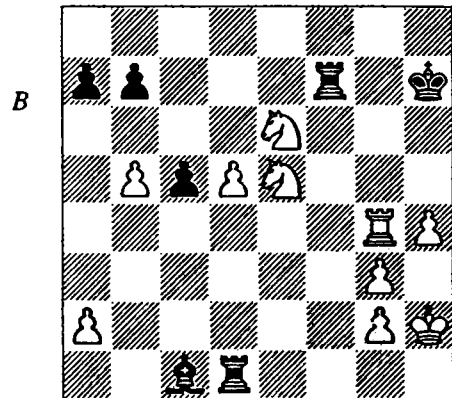
35...♙c1

Now 35...♗f1 did not work because of 36 ♗xh6 ♗c1 37 ♖e3, and White covers f1 and wins.

36 ♗e5 ♗f1 37 ♗e4 ♗d1 38 ♗xg4+ ♖h7?

Kasparov chooses an unfortunate square for his king – presumably in time-trouble. But Black was probably lost in any event. Kramnik gives the line 38...♖h8 39 ♗e4 ♗xd5 (39...♗ff1 is answered by 40 ♖h3!) 40 ♖e5 ♗f6 41 ♖f3! c4!? 42 ♗xc4 ♗xe6 43 ♗xc1 and White should win.

39 ♖e5! (D)



A beautiful position where the knights dominate the rook on f7.

39...♗e7

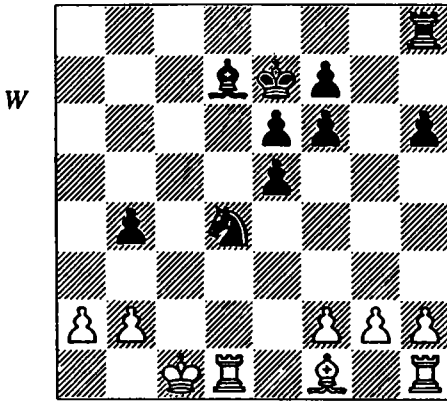
39...♗ff1 loses to 40 ♗g7+ ♖h6 41 ♖g4+ (41 ♖f7+ ♗xf7 42 ♗xf7 also wins) 41...♖h5 42 ♖f6+! ♗xf6 (42...♖h6 43 ♖g8+ ♖h5 44 g4+ ♖xh4 45 g3#) 43 g4+ ♖h6 (43...♖xh4? 44 g3#) 44 g5+ ♖h5 45 gxf6.

40 ♖f8+! 1-0

Kasparov resigned as 40...♖h8 drops the rook to a fork on g6, and 40...♖h6 41 ♗g6+ ♖h5 42 g4+ mates. A brilliant example of the battle between rook and knights.

As can be seen from the previous games, the piece is often supported by one or more extra pawns in return for the exchange. The question is whether this (or these) pawn(s) is active, or if it is simply a 'sitting duck'. Remember the

discussion from my black game with Peter Heine Nielsen. It is not always the number of pawns, but rather their (potential) mobility that determines whether piece and pawn(s) are better than a rook.



Jobava – Carlsen
Skanderborg 2005

Here is a good example of this theme. Magnus Carlsen only has one pawn for the exchange, but his pawn-mass in the centre is highly mobile, and this, combined with a superior coordination of his pieces, gives Black the better chances.

21 ♖b1?!

Now White will have eternal problems with his light-squared bishop. In his notes in *New in Chess* Magnus suggests 21 ♔d3, although Black still has the easier game.

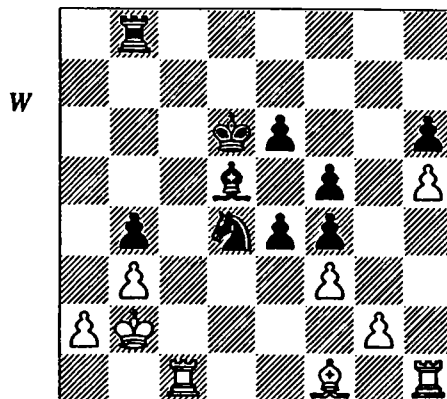
21...♗c6! 22 f3 ♜g8!

Take note of Black's last two moves. He prevents White from developing his bishop before activating his pawn avalanche.

23 ♜c1 f5 24 ♜c4 ♜b8 25 b3 f4! 26 ♖b2 f5

The pawns are rolling!

27 h4 ♖d6 28 h5 ♔d5 29 ♜c1 e4 (D)



The triumph of Black's strategy. His pawns and pieces are beautifully centralized and dominate the board.

30 fxe4 fxe4 31 ♜h4 ♖e5 32 ♜g4 e3 33 ♜g6 ♔e4!

There is no need for passive defence of the h6-pawn. Black's central pawns are too strong.

34 ♜xh6 ♜g8! 35 ♜c5+ ♖d6 36 ♜c4 ♖d5 37 ♖c1 e2

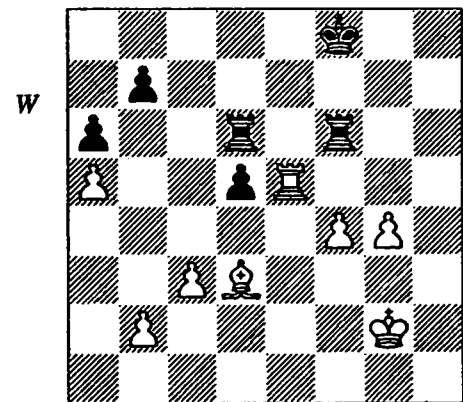
The fitting end – the pawns decide the game.

38 ♜xd4+ ♖xd4 39 ♔xe2 ♜xg2 40 ♔d1

After 40 ♔c4 ♖e3!, White is mated.

40...♜xa2 0-1

White resigned as 41 ♜xe6 ♖c3 also leads to mate. A fine game by the young Norwegian prodigy.



Morozevich – Anand
San Luis Wch 2005

When the pawns are connected passed pawns, the rooks are often defenceless. In this position Black has nothing to do against the advance of White's pawns.

38 f5 ♜f7 39 ♖g3 b5 40 axb6 ♜xb6 41 g5 ♜d7 42 f6 d4 43 ♔g6!

Connected passed pawns are not just strong in the pursuit of promotion, but also constitute a powerful attacking force. Here Morozevich exploits the pawns to build a mating attack.

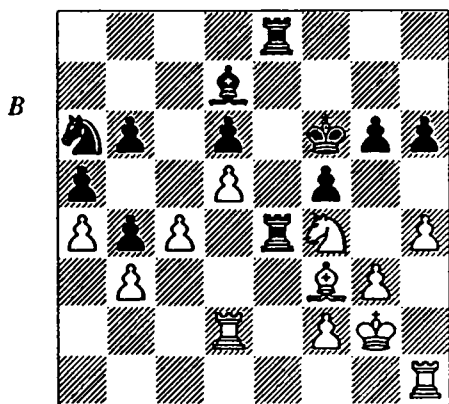
43...♜b8 44 cxd4 ♜xd4 45 ♜e7! ♜b4 46 ♜f7+ ♖g8 47 ♜g7+ ♖h8 48 ♔f7!

Now the threats of 49 g6 and 49 ♜g6 are impossible to meet.

48...♜d4 49 ♜g6! ♜d3+ 50 ♖g4 1-0

Now 50...♜b4+ (50...♜d4+ 51 ♖h5) 51 ♖f5 ♜b5+ 52 ♖e4 ♜h3 53 ♜g8+ ♖h7 54 g6+ ♖h6 55 ♜h8+ is winning for White.

As we saw in the notes to Kramnik-Kasparov earlier, positions with unusual material balances may at times end up in dynamic equilibrium. That means that the position is equal, but at the same time highly volatile. Often the 'objective' evaluation of the position is altered several times throughout the game, and a graph of the position's evaluation resembles a roller-coaster. Yet often the advantages eventually cancel each other out, and the end result is a draw.



I. Sokolov – Topalov
Wijk aan Zee 2005

Rather than retreating the rook, Topalov sacrifices an exchange, for which he obtains ample compensation. At this point the position is probably about even.

42...♖c5! 43 ♗xe4 fxe4 44 ♞b1

Reminiscent of Seirawan-Kožul, which we examined earlier.

44...♗g4 45 ♖e2 ♗f5 46 ♞bb2

So far Black can be said to have compensation for the exchange, but nothing more. This compensation is to be found in the strong knight on c5, the weaknesses of the light squares in White's camp and the closed nature of the position. With his next move Topalov indicates his intentions to go for more than just dynamic equilibrium. On the one hand he opens the way for an eventual attack on the b3-pawn, but he also opens files that White's rooks may eventually exploit.

46...e3!? 47 ♠d4 exf2 48 ♗xf2

Slightly inaccurate according to Ivan Sokolov's analysis in *Informator*. White should first kick the bishop away with 48 g4!.

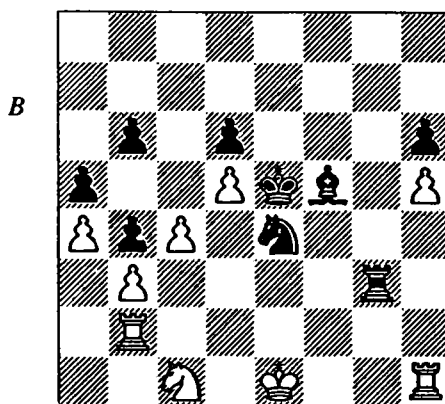
48...g5 49 ♖c1 ♗e5 50 ♠d1?

But only this is a real mistake, which tips the dynamic evaluation in Black's favour. Correct, according to Sokolov, was 50 ♗e3! with a possible draw by repetition after 50...♗f6+ 51 ♗f2 ♗e5 52 ♗e3.

50...gxf2 51 gxf2 ♠g8

Now Black threatens to enter White's position and pick up the vital b3-pawn.

52 ♞h1 ♖e4+ 53 ♗e1 ♠g3 54 h5?! (D)



Putting this pawn on the same colour as the bishop is slightly risky.

54...♗g4! 55 ♗f1 ♞c3 56 ♖e2 ♞e3 57 ♖g1 ♖c5?!

Black starts to drift. With 57...♗d1! 58 ♞h3 ♞xh3 59 ♖xh3 ♗xb3! (with the idea 60 ♞xb3 ♖d2+) he could obtain a winning position, as indicated by Sokolov.

58 ♞h4 ♗f5?

While 57...♖c5 was merely inaccurate, this is a clear mistake that hands the advantage to White. The bishop is unfortunately placed on f5, as will soon become clear. 58...♗d1 is correct.

59 ♗f2!

Now White is slightly better, according to Sokolov.

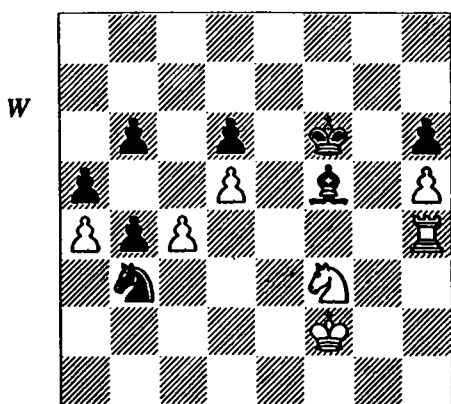
59...♞xb3?

The third inaccuracy in a row. Black should retain the rook with 59...♞c3. Now the position becomes highly critical for Black.

60 ♞xb3 ♖xb3 61 ♖f3+ ♗f6 (D)

62 ♗e3?

White misses the win which, it must be said, was not easy to see. Sokolov gives the fantastic winning line 62 ♠f4! (this is why the bishop was poorly placed on f5; this pin is highly annoying) 62...♖c1 (not 62...♖c5? 63 ♗e3, and the pin decides) 63 ♗e3 b3 64 ♖d2 ♗g5 65



f1! b2 66 f2! g4 67 b1! (the point) 67...xb1 68 xb2 d3 69 xb6 xc4 70 xd6 b3 71 xh6 xd5 72 d6! g8 (otherwise 73 h6) 73 g6+ xh5 74 xg8 c5 75 a8!, and White wins thanks to the unfortunate position of Black's king (75...xa4 76 xa5+).

62...d7

Now the position is back to a dynamic equilibrium.

63 f4+ g7?!

And now the equilibrium is disturbed again – **63...e7** is correct.

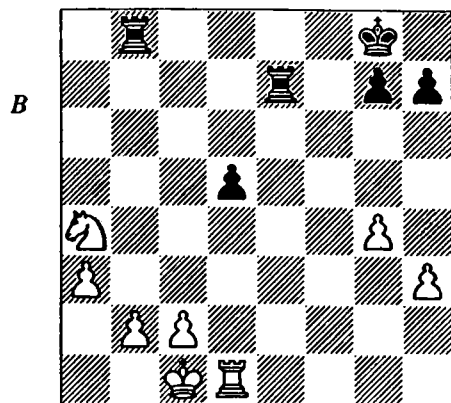
64 d4 c5 65 d2?!

Back to equilibrium! White is clearly better after **65 f1!**.

65...g8 66 e6 dxe6 67 dxe6 xe6 68 d4 f7 69 xd6 xc4 70 xh6 b5 71 axb5 xb5 72 g6 e8!

The exchanges have finally led to a drawn position – a fitting end to this dramatic game.

73 g1 f6 74 h6 g6 75 f1+ g5 76 a1 ½-½



Svidler – Morozevich
Russian Ch (Moscow) 2005

A complicated position! Following the game live on ICC, I initially thought White had the better chances with the two connected passed pawns on the queenside. But Black is in time to coordinate counterplay on the other wing, and the game peters out in a draw.

31...e3! 32 xd5

Perhaps **32 d3!?** was an alternative. Svidler wants to get the pawns rolling immediately.

32...xh3 33 c4 h4!

White's passed pawns look frightening, but Black's counterplay comes just in time.

34 c5 xg4 35 b6 f7 36 a4 xb6!

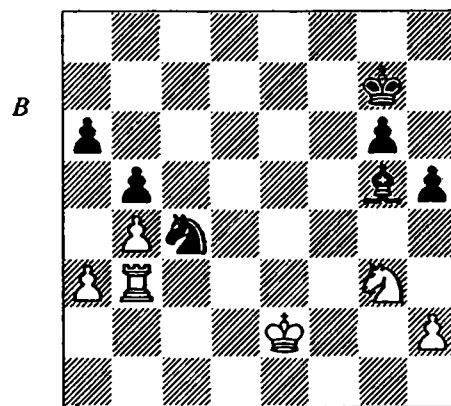
A typical theme in this kind of endgame. Black gives back the exchange to clarify matters – in this case to a draw.

37 cxb6 xa4 38 b7 b4 39 d7+ e6

Avoiding the pawn exchanges with **39...f6 40 f2** is only dangerous for Black.

40 xg7 h5 41 f2 d6 42 f3 b5 43 h7 ½-½

One of the important aspects of exchange-up positions is that most of them are drawn if all the pawns are exchanged – with few exceptions. Accordingly, being an exchange down, you should try to exchange as many pawns as possible.



Timofeev – Ivanchuk
Skanderborg 2005

I watched this game live, being a participant in the same tournament myself, and the general feeling in the commentary room was that White should win this. But Ivanchuk miraculously manages to hang on. His key priority is to exchange as many pawns as possible.

45...c1!

Very risky, but Black had no choice but to go for this pawn snatch, as White was threatening 46 Qe4 and 47 Qc5 .

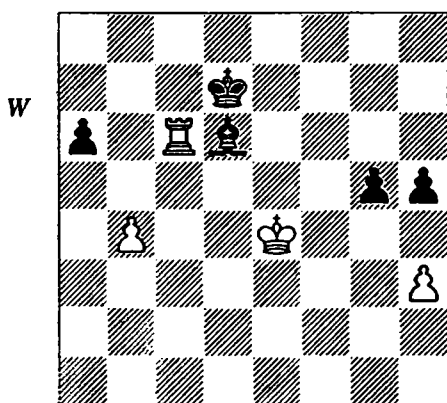
46 Qe4 Rxa3 47 Qd2 !

Stronger than 47 Qc5 a5! 48 bxa5 Rxc5 49 Rxb5 Rg1 , when Black should be able to sacrifice his bishop for the a-pawn and escape into a draw.

47... Rc1 48 Qxc4 bxc4 49 Rc3 Rf4 ! 50 h3

I think that the direct 50 Rxc4 !? was a better winning try. Now 50... Rhx2 is risky in view of 51 Rc6 , when Black does not get the b4-pawn, but Black can improve with 50... Rd6 !, tying the rook to the defence of the b4-pawn and winning valuable time for pushing the kingside pawns.

50... Rd6 51 Rxc4 Qf6 52 Qd3 g5 53 Qe4 Qe6 54 Rc6 Qd7 ! (D)



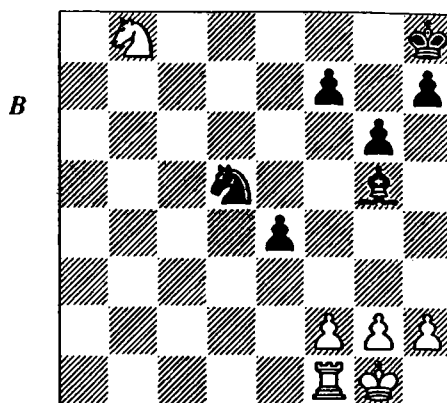
The black king arrives in time to secure the exchange of queenside pawns, after which there are too few pawns left on the board for White to win.

55 Rxa6 Rxb4 56 Rh6

This allows Black to set up a fortress on the dark squares. After 56 Qf5 Black could draw with 56... g4 ! 57 Ra7 + Qe8 58 h4 (the only winning attempt) 58... Re7 !, and the h4-pawn falls and a theoretical drawn endgame with rook vs bishop arises.

56... h4 57 Qd5 Rd2 58 Rh7 + Qd8 59 Qd6 Rf4 + 60 Qe6 Qc8 61 Rd7 Rg3 62 Rd5 Rf4 63 Rc5 + Qd8 64 Rc4 Rh2 65 Rc3 Rg3 66 Rc2 Rf4 67 Rc5 Re3 68 Rd5 + Qc7 69 Rd7 + Qc6 70 Rd3 1/2-1/2

With pawns just on one wing and one pawn for the exchange, the position is usually drawn. The defender simply trades as many pawns as possible.



Anand – Leko
San Luis Wch 2005

37... e3 ! 38 fxe3 Rxe3 + 39 Qh1 Qg7 40 Qc6 h5 41 Rd1 Qf6 42 Rb1 Qg4 43 g3 Rg5 44 Qg2 Rf6 45 Re1 Rh6 46 Qf3 Qf5

The black position is too solid for White to have any serious winning chances.

47 Rd1 Rh6 48 h3 Qf5 49 Rd7 Qf8 50 Qa5 Qd4 + 51 Qg2 Qf5 52 Qc4 Qg7 53 g4 hxg4 54 hxg4 Qe7 55 Qd6 Re5 56 Qe4 Qg8 57 g5 Qf8 58 Rb7 f6 59 Qc5 Qe8 60 Qd3 Rd6 1/2-1/2

61 Rg7 is calmly answered by 61... Qf8 , so White cannot avoid the exchange of his last pawn.

Queen vs Other Material

In this section I shall investigate various situations in which a queen fights against other material configurations. These basically fall into three groups, which we shall deal with in turn:

- Queen vs two rooks
- Queen vs rook and bishop/knight
- Queen vs rarer material

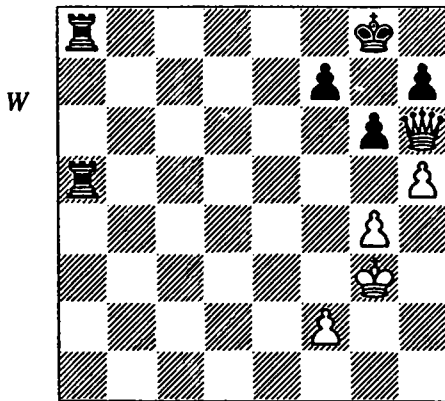
Queen vs Two Rooks

In general, two rooks can be said to be superior to a queen. After all, from our childhood we know that a rook equals five pawns and a queen nine, which should make two rooks slightly superior to the queen. Somewhere in his entertaining writings, Bent Larsen tells the story about this friend of his, who didn't believe in the superiority of the rooks. "Then I showed him, in a couple of games. You have to be

careful, though, as it takes time to activate the rooks.”

This small story actually captures quite well what the queen vs two rooks relationship is about. Given time, the rooks will be able to coordinate and exploit their greater material status, but in practice obtaining coordination and activity for the rooks is not always easy, as the queen is a dangerous piece with lots of tricks up her sleeve.

But let us first see some examples in which the rooks *do* manage to coordinate and carry the day.



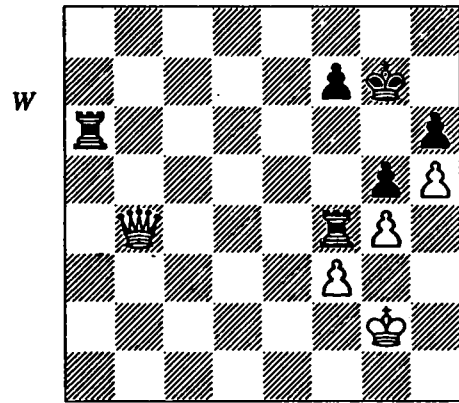
Leko – Kramnik
Brissago Wch (1) 2004

This is the famous first game of the Kramnik-Leko world championship match in 2004. In general, the side with the queen should go for as many pawn exchanges as possible, and therefore 44 hxg6 was the right move on principle. After 44...hxg6 a type of position arises which has been seen in practice before, and which is considered drawn. As a general rule of thumb, the two rooks triumph in most positions with 3 vs 3 pawns on the same wing. For example, in the famous game Gurgendize-Averbakh, USSR Ch (Baku) 1961, White (with the two rooks) won with f2-g3-h4 vs f7-g6-g5 by coordinating his rooks on the 7th rank and eventually taking the game into a winning king and pawn ending. On the other hand, 2 vs 2 positions are often drawn, as the transition into a pawn ending a pawn up is frequently not enough to win with so little material left. Leko postpones the exchange – a fateful decision which is based on a simple oversight.

44 ♖f4? g5! 45 ♖f6 h6!

This is what Leko had missed. After 46 ♜xh6? ♜8a6, his queen is trapped, and this allows Black to keep three pawns on the board. This secures the win, as in the long run White cannot prevent Black from coordinating his rooks against the f-pawn, and eventually exchanging into a winning pawn ending.

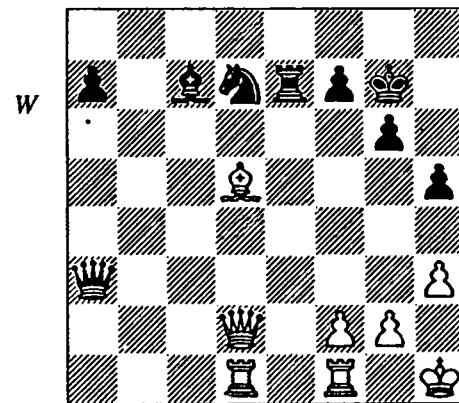
46 f3 ♜5a6 47 ♜c3 ♜a4 48 ♜c6 ♜8a6 49 ♜e8+ ♔g7 50 ♜b5 ♜4a5 51 ♜b4 ♜d5 52 ♜b3 ♜ad6 53 ♜c4 ♜d3 54 ♔f2 ♜a3 55 ♜c5 ♜a2+ 56 ♔g3 ♜f6 57 ♜b4 ♜aa6 58 ♔g2 ♜f4!
(D)



After careful and patient manoeuvring, Black has achieved his aim. The second rook comes to f6.

59 ♜b2+ ♜af6 60 ♜e5 ♜xf3 61 ♜a1 ♜f1 62 ♜c3 ♜1f2+ 63 ♔g3 ♜2f3+! 64 ♜xf3 ♜xf3+ 65 ♔xf3 ♔f6 0-1

Kramnik had prior experience in this kind of endgame – in an earlier game against Svidler he used his knowledge of this endgame to exchange into a winning endgame.



Kramnik – Svidler
Linares 1999

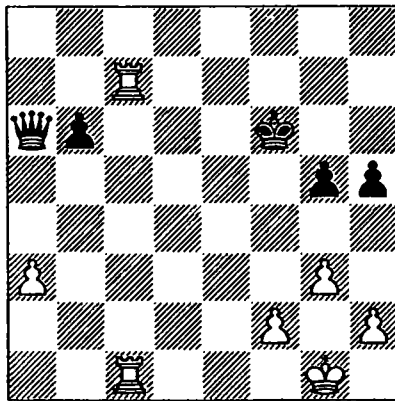
Is White facing the tedious task of winning an exchange-up endgame? No, two rooks against a queen is easier!

28 ♔xf7! ♠xf7 29 ♖xd7! ♠xd7 30 ♠xd7+ ♔h6 31 ♠xc7

The position has changed radically, and White is now facing an easy technical task: first pick up the a-pawn, and then gang up against g6. Svidler did not want to wait long for the execution.

31...♗d3 32 ♔g1 ♗d4 33 ♠c2 1-0
34 ♠a2 and 35 ♠fa1 follow.

When the king has nowhere to hide, the win becomes even simpler.



Mamedyarov – Nakamura
Lausanne 2005

With a naked king, Black has little hope to survive.

37 ♠7c6+ ♔e7 38 ♠h6!

The b-pawn is not really dangerous, as the two rooks can easily deal with it. So Mamedyarov calmly goes pawn-hunting on the kingside, before then turning his attention back to the b-pawn.

38...♗xa3 39 ♠e1+ ♔f7 40 ♠xh5 ♔g6 41 ♠h8 ♗c3 42 ♠he8 b5 43 ♠e3 ♗b2 44 ♠e6+ ♔f7 45 ♠e7+ ♔f8 46 ♠7e2 ♗b3 47 ♠e5 ♗d3 48 h3!

Securing the king against perpetual check.

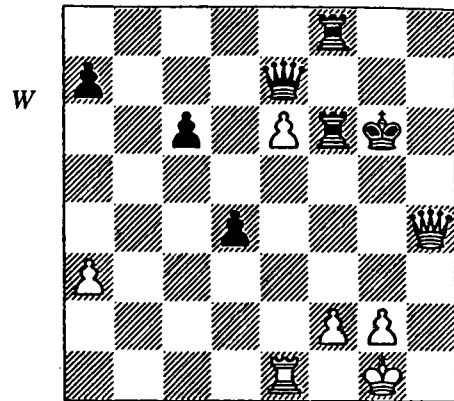
48...b4 49 ♠e8+ ♔f7 50 ♠8e7+ ♔f8 51 ♠b7 ♗c3

51...b3 52 ♠e3 ♗b1+ 53 ♔g2 b2 54 ♠e2.

52 ♠b8+ ♔f7 53 ♠b1 1-0

So when is the queen superior to the two rooks? The key is for the queen to prevent the

coordination and activity of the rooks. Often this is connected to having one or more passed pawns which the rooks must attend to so that they are not given any time to coordinate.

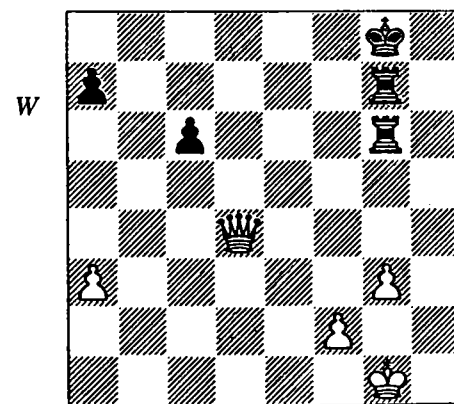


Shirov – Radjabov
Linares 2004

Shirov has sacrificed a rook for an attack, and with his next move he forces Black to give up his queen. But how?

33 ♠e5! ♗xe6?

The wrong way! In *Informator* Shirov's shows the right way – a very instructive way to draw: 33...♠xe6 34 ♗h5+ ♔g7 35 ♠g5+ ♗xg5 (forced, as 35...♔f6?? 36 ♗g6# is mate) 36 ♗xg5+ ♠g6 37 ♗e5+ ♔g8 38 ♗xd4 ♠f7! 39 g3 ♠fg7! (D).



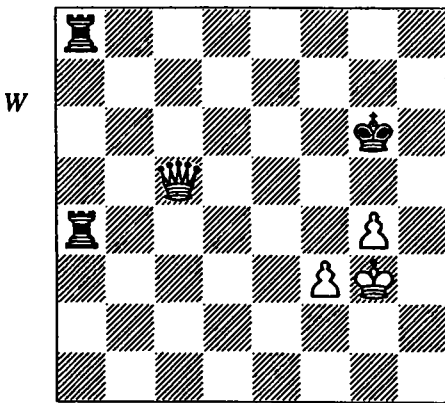
Let us stop and consider the situation. Why does Shirov consider this position drawn? Because Black has managed to coordinate his rooks in an optimal way, where they perform two crucial tasks at once: covering both black pawns while for ever preventing White's kingside pawns from advancing. Very instructive! In the game continuation, on the other hand,

Black does not manage to coordinate his rooks, and then he is helpless against the slow but inevitable advance of the white pawns.

34 Rxe6 Rxe6 35 Wg4+ cf7 36 Wxd4 a6 37 g4! Rg8 38 f3 Rf6 39 cf2 Re8 40 Wc4+ cg7 41 Wxa6

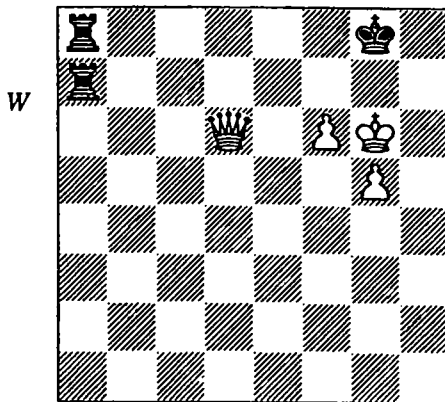
A nice pawn to pick up – not so much because of the pawn itself, but because the newly-passed a-pawn can help deflect the black rooks from the kingside, thus easing the advance of the pawns here.

41... Ref8 42 Wd3 c5 43 a4 Ra8 44 Wc3 cg6 45 Wxc5 Rfa6 46 cg3 Rxa4 (D)



Black has managed to liquidate the a-pawn, but the resulting endgame is lost for him.

47 Wd6+ cf7 48 g5 Ra6 49 Wd7+ cg6 50 f4 Ra1 51 Wd3+ cg7 52 Wd4+ cg8 53 cg4 Ra1a2 54 Wd8+ cg7 55 Wc7+ cg8 56 f5 Ra7 57 Wd8+ cg7 58 f6+ ch7 59 Wd3+ ch8 60 cf5 Ra8 61 Wh3+ cg8 62 cg6! Ra7 63 We6+ cf8 64 Wd6+ cg8 (D)



65 Wd5+!

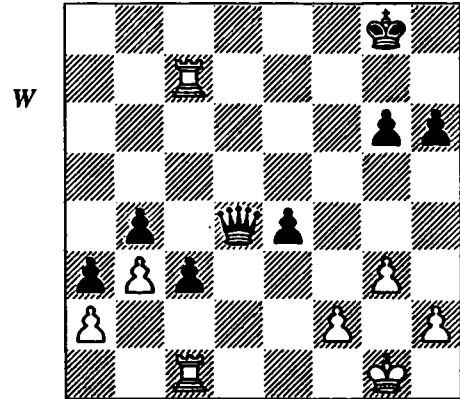
The prelude to a nice finish that encompasses the entire board.

65... ch8

After 65... cf8 the easiest win is probably 66 ch6 , paving the way for the g-pawn.

66 Wh1+! 1-0

Radjabov resigned without waiting for the conclusion 66... cg8 67 f7+! cf8 (67... Rxf7 68 Wxa8+) 68 Wh8+ ce7 69 We5+ cd7 70 f8W! Rxf8 71 Wd4+ , picking up the rook on a7.



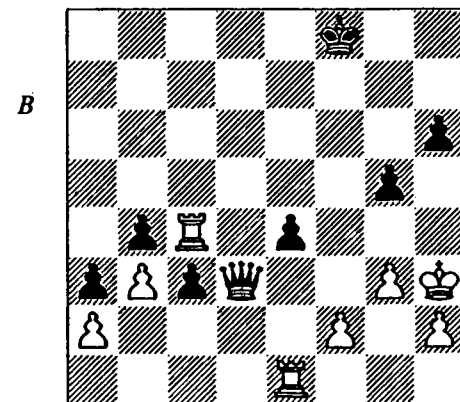
Areshchenko – Ki. Georgiev
Gibraltar 2005

The black queen dominates the board and the passed pawn on c3 ensures that White can never coordinate his rooks. Like in Shirov-Radjabov above, the final promotion comes with the help of a little tactic.

39 Re1 Wd3 40 cg2 Wf3+ 41 cg1 Wd3 42 cg2 cf8 43 ch3?!

An unfortunate square for the king, which allows a cute finish.

43... g5! 44 Rc4 (D)



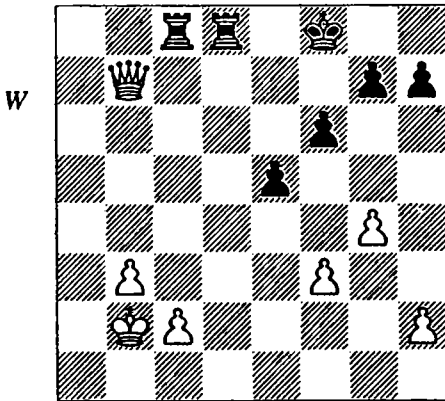
44... c2!

Based on accurate calculation. The threat is 45... Wd1 .

45 Rc1 g4+!

The point. 46 ♖xg4 is met by 46...♚d1+, and 46 ♖g2 fails to 46...♚f3+ 47 ♖g1 ♚d1+, while 46 ♖h4 ♚d8+! 47 ♖h5 (47 ♖xg4 ♚g5+) 47...♚g5# is a nice mate.

0-1



Almasi – Berkes
Paks 2005

A similar situation to Shirov-Radjabov on p.159. White's task is to advance the b- and c-pawns without allowing Black any counterplay.

31 c4 ♔d2+ 32 ♖c3 ♔cd8 33 c5! ♔d3+

After 33...♔d3+ the king hides behind the pawns: 34 ♖b2 ♔d2+ 35 ♖a3.

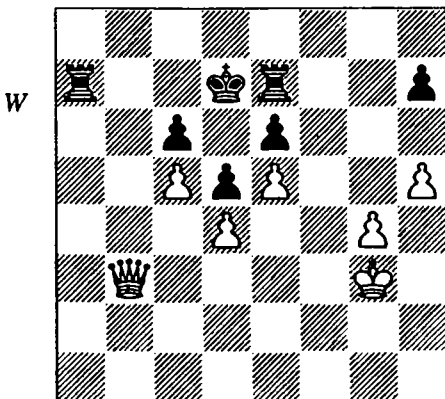
34 ♖c4 ♔d4+ 35 ♖b5 ♔xh2 36 c6 ♔b2 37 ♚a8+!

The final regrouping.

37...♖f7 38 ♚a3!

Securing the advance of the pawns.

38...♔c2 39 b4 ♖f8 40 ♖b6 ♔dc4 41 b5+ ♖f7 42 ♚d3 1-0



Ibragimov – Volkov
Abu Dhabi 2005

The eternal problem for the rooks is obtaining coordination, and for that the rooks need space for manoeuvre. We saw in Areshchenko-Georgiev that with the queen dominating the open files, the rooks suffer. This is a similar situation. There are more open files than in the previous example, but the white queen is currently the dominant piece, as it can work on both files and diagonals – especially the b1-h7 diagonal. The closed nature of the position makes it difficult for Black to arrange his rooks in an appropriate manner.

42 g5 ♔e8 43 ♖g4 ♔g8 44 ♚b6 ♔c7 45 ♚b1! ♖c8 46 ♚f1 ♖b7 47 ♚f6 ♔e8 48 ♚f1 ♔g8 49 ♚b1+

49 g6!? hxg6 50 h6! is an interesting alternative, but Ibragimov prefers the solid approach.

49...♖c8 50 g6

Finally the pawn advances.

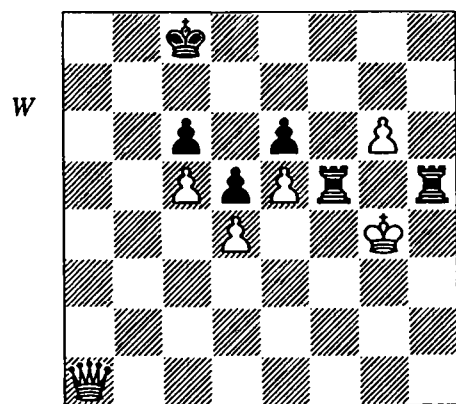
50...hxg6 51 hxg6 ♔f7!?

The alternative was to defend passively by 51...♔g7, but after 52 ♖g5 Black can never go for the pawn ending due to the nature of the pawn-structure.

52 ♖g5 ♔f2 53 ♚g1 ♔f5+ 54 ♖h6 ♔h8+ 55 ♖g7 ♔f8 56 ♚a1!

Preparing the final assault on the black position by penetrating from the left.

56...♔hg8+ 57 ♖h7 ♔h8+ 58 ♖g7 ♔hg8+ 59 ♖h6 ♔h8+ 60 ♖g5 ♔f5+ 61 ♖g4 ♔hh5 (D)



Threatening perpetual check, but the queen comes to the rescue and secures the win.

62 ♚a8+ ♖d7

62...♖c7 63 ♚a7+ ♖c8 loses to 64 ♚e7!.

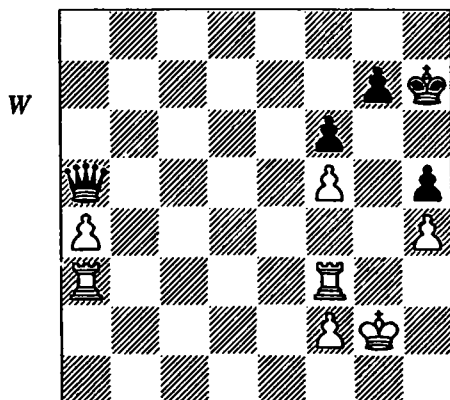
63 ♚b7+ ♖e8

63...♖d8 64 ♚b8+ and 65 ♚d6+.

64 ♚xc6+ ♖f8 65 ♚d6+ ♖g7 66 ♚e7+ ♖h8 67 g7+ ♖h7 68 g8♚++! 1-0

Now the e6-pawn falls with check, whereupon which White simplifies into a winning pawn ending.

As we have seen in previous sections in this chapter too, a situation of dynamic equilibrium often arises, where the various advantages keep each other in check. Here is an example.



Elianov – Izoria
Saint Vincent ECC 2005

With two rooks and a pawn for the queen, White has a substantial material superiority. However, Black has trumps as well. His king is safe, whereas the white king has difficulty finding a safe haven due to the nature of the pawn-structure. Despite his extra material, White is unable to win.

72 ♖g3 ♗h8!

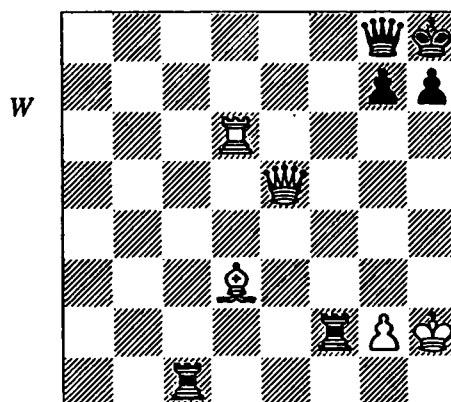
Of course Black does not take on f5; allowing the a-pawn to advance would be suicidal.

73 ♖g3 ♗d5+ 74 ♗g1 ♗a5 75 ♖e3 ♗h7 76 ♖ed3 ♗e1+ 77 ♗g2 ♗a5 78 ♖f3 ♗h8 79 ♗h3 ♗h7 80 ♗h2 ♗h8 81 ♗g1 ♗e1+ 82 ♗g2 ♗a5 83 ♗f1 ♗a6+ 84 ♖fd3 ♗a5 85 ♖dc3 ♗h7 86 ♖f3 ♗a6+ 87 ♗e1

After a number of waiting moves – sensible as the material advantage is stable – White finally decides to take his king into the open, hoping to find shelter elsewhere. However, it doesn't help him.

87... ♗a5+ 88 ♗d1 ♗d5+ 89 ♖fd3 ♗a5 90 ♖f3 ♗h8 91 ♗c2 ♗h7 92 ♗b2 ♗e5+ 93 ♖dc3 ♗a5 94 ♗a1 ♗h8 95 ♗b2 ♗h7 96 ♖c4 ♗d2+ 97 ♗b3 ♗d1+ 98 ♗b2 ♗d2+ 99 ♖c2 ♗a5 100 ♖cc3 ♗h8 101 ♖a2 ♗h7 102 ♖c4 ♗b6+ 103 ♗c2 ♗f2+ 104 ♗b3 ♗xf3+ 105 ♗b4 ♗b7+ 106 ♗c3 ♗f3+ 1/2-1/2

The white king cannot sensibly escape the checks.



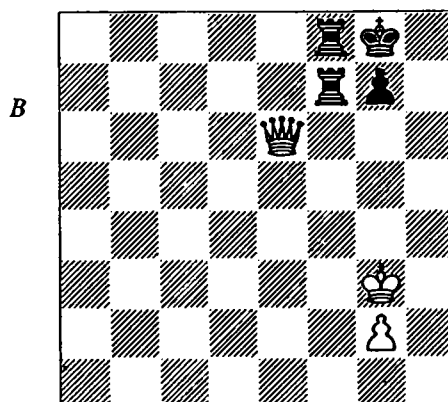
J. Polgar – Kramnik
Wijk aan Zee 2005

With just one pawn left the board, the two rooks can rarely win, although they can try to round up the pawn. Here Judit Polgar saves her skin through that fact.

34 ♖h6! ♖cf1

Certainly not 34... ♗f8?? 35 ♖xh7+ ♗g8 36 ♖h8+! ♗xh8 37 ♗h5+ ♗g8 38 ♖h7+ ♗h8 39 ♖g6+, when Black is mated.

35 ♖xh7+ ♗xh7+ 36 ♖xh7 ♗xh7 37 ♗h5+ ♗g8 38 ♗e8+ ♖f8 39 ♗e6+ ♖f7 40 ♗g3 (D)



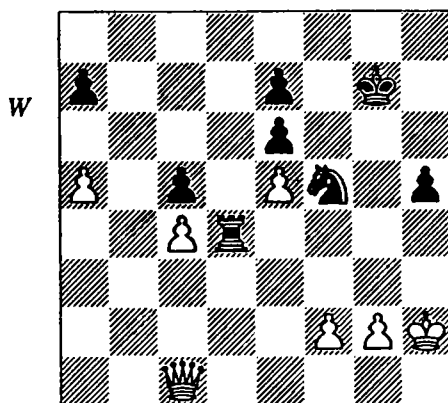
There is too little material left here for Black to have any real chances.

40... ♖d8 41 ♗g4 ♗f8 42 ♗g5 ♖f6 43 ♗b3 ♖dd6 44 ♗b8+ ♗f7 45 ♗b3+ ♖de6 46 ♗g4 ♗g8 47 ♗h4 ♗h7 48 ♗d3+ ♖g6 49 ♗f5 ♖ef6 50 ♗e4 ♖c6 51 ♗g3 ♖c3+ 52 ♗h4 ♖c5 53 ♗g3 ♖h5 54 ♗b1 ♖a5 55 ♗e4 ♖a1 56 ♗f5 ♖g1+ 57 ♗f2 ♖h1 58 ♗g3 ♖g1+ 59 ♗f2 ♖1xg4 1/2-1/2

Just as he has managed to win the pawn, Kramnik offers the draw, as he cannot escape the checks after 60 ♖h5+ ♔g8 61 ♖d5+.

Queen vs Rook and Bishop/Knight

Queen vs rook and piece frequently occurs in practice. In pure material terms, the queen is the stronger piece, and in absence of other factors (e.g. positional advantages) the queen will typically prevail by means of its larger mobility, which enables it to shift from side to side of the board using files, ranks and diagonals. That is difficult for a rook and a piece to match.



Karpov – Hort
Nice OL 1974

Karpov's main target here is the a7-pawn. Rook and piece are not well equipped to deal with an outside passed pawn. Rather than pursuing the pawn directly (e.g. by 43 ♖b2) Karpov first pushes the opponent's pieces back by a detour to the kingside, before swinging back to hit the a-pawn.

43 ♖g5+! ♔f8 44 ♖g6! ♔g7 45 ♖b1!

There it is. Following the little adventure on the kingside, the black pieces are now on passive squares.

45... ♖h4+

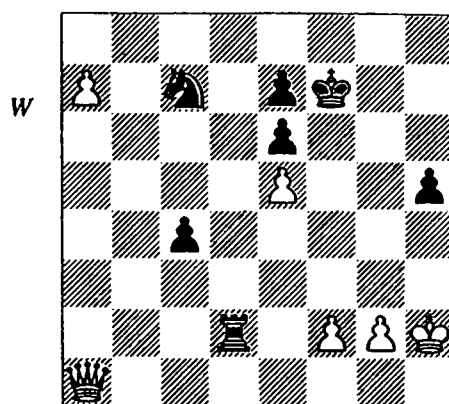
The attempt to defend passively by 45... ♖d7 loses to 46 ♖b8+ ♔e8 (46... ♔f7 47 ♖c8 and c5 falls) 47 ♖c8 ♖c7 48 ♖xe6.

46 ♔g1 ♖xc4 47 ♖b8+ ♔f7 48 ♖xa7 ♖c1+ 49 ♔h2 c4 50 ♖d4!

A strong centralizing move, which in passing covers a1 and threatens 51 ♖f4+.

50... ♖c2 51 ♖a1! ♔e8 52 a6 ♔c7 53 a7 ♖d2 (D)

53... ♖xf2 loses to 54 ♖a5! ♔a8 55 ♖d8.



54 ♖a5!

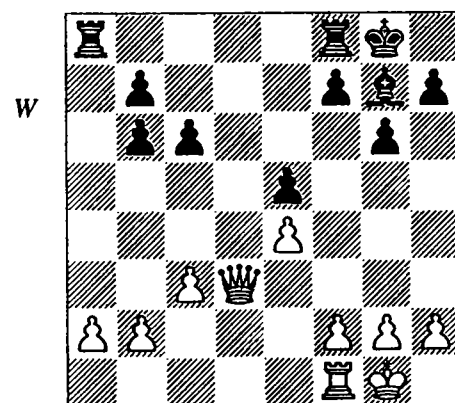
Karpov's trademark – accuracy until the end! While 54 a8♖?! ♔xa8 55 ♖xa8 ♖xf2 would most probably also win, there was no need to allow it, as this would give Black a chance to try to build an impregnable *fortress* that the queen cannot penetrate. We shall return to the concept of fortress a little later. While I don't see how Black can build such a fortress here, there is no need to allow this eventuality by promoting too quickly.

54... ♖d7

54... ♔a8? 55 ♖xd2.

55 ♖a4! 1-0

After 55... ♖d8 56 ♖xc4 ♔a8 (56... ♔d5 57 ♖c6) 57 f4 Black is in a hopeless position.



L.B. Hansen – Peng Xiaomin
Istanbul OL 2000

I have just won the queen for rook and bishop, but after 21 a3 ♖ad8 followed by 22...b5 Black has a solid and safe position. But there is no need to cover the a-pawn – in this position

coordination and control over the d-file are much more important than a mere pawn! So...

21 ♖d7!

Peng must have missed this a few moves earlier when he decided to give up his queen. Now the position is difficult for Black.

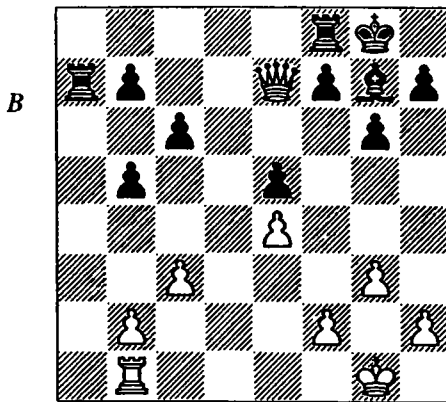
21... ♖xa2

21... ♖ab8 22 a4! (22 ♖d1) and 21... ♖fb8 22 a3 leave Black too passive. The queen dominates the only open file.

22 ♖b1! ♖a7

22... ♖b8 23 ♖c7 is no improvement for Black.

23 g3 b5 24 ♖e7! (D)



Let's take stock. White has given up a pawn, leaving Black with rook, bishop and pawn for the queen – an adequate amount from a material perspective. But in return White has obtained a dominant position for his queen. The text-move ties the black bishop to e5 and prepares ♖d1-d8. Black is obviously struggling and the main question is whether he can exchange a sufficient number of pawns and/or build a fortress.

24... ♖fa8 25 ♖d1

The threat of 26 ♖d7 or 26 ♖d8+ forces Black's hand, but perhaps the patient 25 ♖g2 was even more accurate.

25... ♖a1 26 ♖xa1 ♖xa1+ 27 ♖g2 ♖a2 28 ♖xb7 ♖xb2 29 ♖xc6 ♖f8 30 ♖d5!

This leaves Black with a critical decision. Should he cover the e-pawn or give it up in the pursuit of as many pawn exchanges as possible by 30...b4 31 cxb4 (31 c4?! ♖c2) 31... ♖xb4 32 ♖xe5? In the game Peng chooses the first option, but I think the second one was better. We shall return to this '4 vs 3 on the same wing' endgame below.

30... ♖g7?! 31 ♖d6! h5?!

This was the last chance to give up the e-pawn by 31... ♖f8 32 ♖xe5 b4.

32 ♖b8+ ♖h7 33 c4! b4 34 c5 ♖c2 35 ♖xb4 ♖g8?

This is hopeless. It was necessary to eliminate the c-pawn by 35... ♖f8, even if the ending after 36 ♖b3 ♖xc5 37 ♖xf7+ ♖g7 is winning for White. It is worse for Black to have lost the f7-pawn than the e5-pawn, as his king is vulnerable and it is easier for White to achieve a passed pawn by f4.

36 ♖b5 ♖f8 37 c6 ♖d6

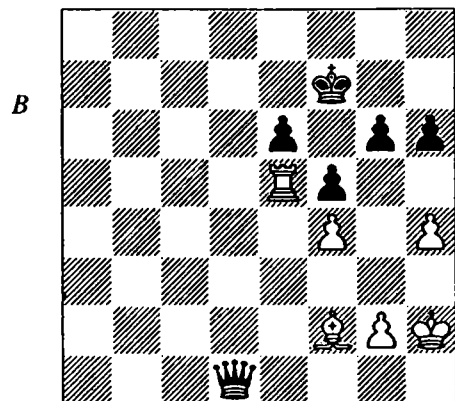
37... ♖c5 is met by 38 ♖f1! ♖xf2+ 39 ♖e1, and the c-pawn runs.

38 ♖d5! ♖c7 39 ♖d7 ♖b6 40 ♖e8+ ♖g7 41 ♖xe5+ ♖h7 42 ♖f6 ♖g8 43 ♖f1!

The most accurate. Like in Karpov-Hort, White prevents any possibility of Black building a fortress. 43 e5?! ♖xf2 44 ♖xf2 ♖xc6! may also win for White, but there is no need to allow Black a stronghold on e6. Now 43... ♖c1+ 44 ♖e2 ♖c2+ 45 ♖d3 ♖xf2 46 ♖xf2! ♖xf2 47 c7! wins for White, so Black resigned.

1-0

But what if Black had chosen to give up the e5-pawn on move 30? Can White win this endgame with 4 vs 3 on the same wing? The question is whether the side with the queen can create a passed pawn, or if the defending side can build a *fortress*.



A.N. Panchenko – Donchev
Lvov 1983

35...g5!

Creating a passed pawn. But Black still has to break White's grip on e5.

36 hxg5 hxg5 37 fxg5

Forced, as 37 g3? is met by 37...♖d2, winning a second pawn.

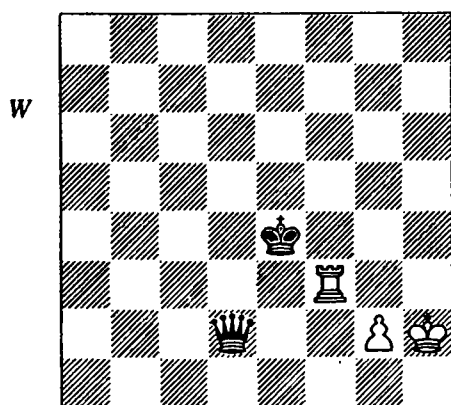
37...♗h5+ 38 ♔g1 ♗xg5 39 ♠e3 f4 40 ♠f3 e5

Now Black has excellent winning chances. But he has to sidestep one last trap...

41 ♙e3 ♔e6 42 ♙d2 ♗d8?

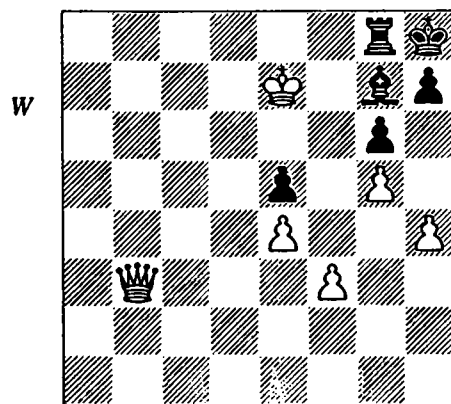
Oh no! This allows White to simplify into a position in which he can build a well-known fortress.

43 ♙xf4! ♗d1+ 44 ♔h2 exf4 45 ♠xf4 ♗d6 46 ♔g3 ♗d2 47 ♠f3 ♔e5 48 ♔h2 ♔e4 (D)



This fortress is well-known from the technical endgame literature. Black cannot make any progress.

49 ♠h3 ♔d4 50 ♠f3 ♔e4 51 ♠h3 ♔e5 52 ♠f3 ♔e4 53 ♔g3 ♗d5 54 ♔h3 ♗d1 55 ♔h2 ♗xf3!? 1/2-1/2



Ki. Georgiev – Ermenkov
Bulgarian Ch (Sofia) 1988

The same problem as before: to have any winning chances White must create a passed pawn. Georgiev tries...

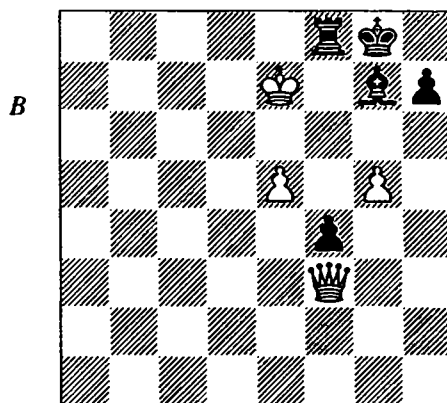
72 f4!? exf4 73 ♗f3 ♙e5 74 ♔e6 ♠e8+ 75 ♔f7 ♠b8 76 h5

Creating more space for the queen.

76...gxf5 77 ♗xh5 ♙g7 78 ♗f3?!

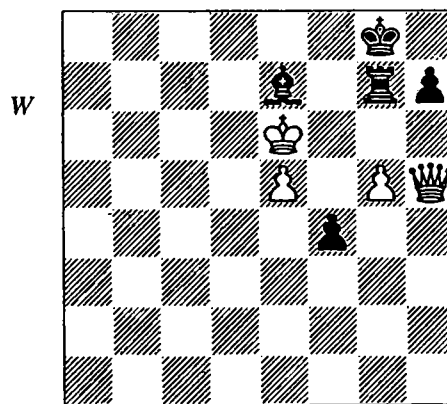
I believe 78 g6 h6 (or first some checks with the rook, luring the king to the queenside) was a better winning chance, as the advanced g-pawn would give White tactical opportunities.

78...♠f8+ 79 ♔e7 ♔g8 80 ♗b3+ ♔h8 81 ♗f3 ♔g8 82 e5! (D)



By tactical means – 82...♙xe5? 83 ♗d5+ – White finally manages to advance the e-pawn, but Black is able to build a new stronghold on e7, so it proves insufficient to win after all.

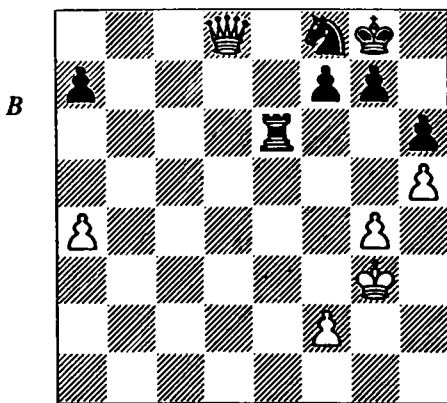
82...♠f7+ 83 ♔e8 ♠f8+ 84 ♔d7 ♠f7+ 85 ♔d6 ♙f8+ 86 ♔e6 ♙e7 87 ♗h5 ♠g7! (D)



Black has built a new fortress, which White cannot penetrate.

88 ♗e8+ ♙f8 89 ♗a8 ♠xg5 90 ♔f6 ♠g7 91 e6 h6 92 ♔f5 f3 93 ♗xf3 ♔h7 94 ♗a8 ♙e7 95 ♗e8 ♙g5 1/2-1/2

The fortress option is the last resort that the defender can turn to in such positions. But often it has to be prepared some moves in advance.



Carlsen – L.B. Hansen
Skanderborg 2005

Black has been pushed back and is material down, but there is still hope because of the possibility of building a fortress.

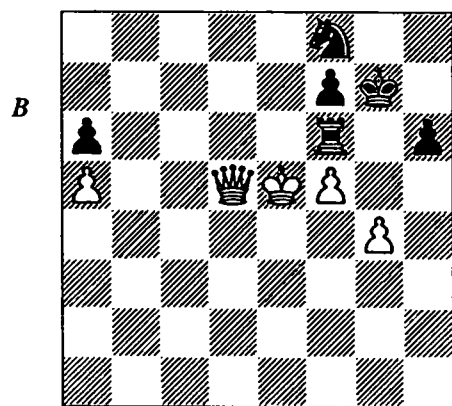
41...g5!

The first step in constructing the fortress. Black needs to exchange as many pawns as possible.

42 hxg6 fxg6 43 f4 a6 44 f5 fxg6 45 a5?!

This natural advance is probably inaccurate, as in some lines this square could be of use for either king or queen. It might not have much practical value, but there is no need for White to reduce his options.

45...fxg7 46 Wd5 fxg6 47 fxg6 fxg6+ 48 fxg6 fxg6 49 fxg6 (D)



49...fxg6+!

Constructing an impregnable fortress which White cannot break down. The rook gets strongholds on e6 and g6 supported by the vital f7-pawn.

50 fxg6

This capture could be postponed, but there was no other way forward at this point.

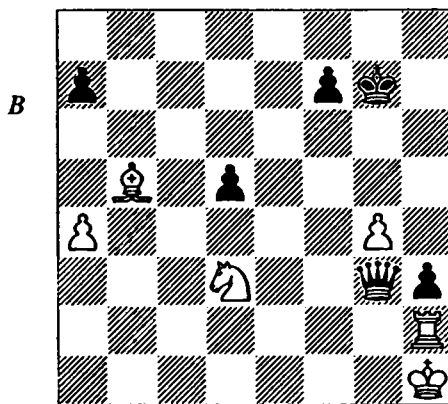
50...fxg6 51 Wd4 fxg8 52 fxg5 fxg7 53 Wd8 fxg7 54 Wc8 fxg6+ 55 fxg5 fxg6+ 56 fxg5 fxg6 57 fxg5 fxg6 58 Wb8 fxg6 59 Wb2+ fxg7 60 Wd4 fxg8 61 Wd8+ fxg7 62 Wb6

There is no way in for the white king. White can consider various ways of simplifying into a king and pawn ending, but none of them win. Notice however, that with the a-pawn still on a4 White would have more options. The position might still be drawn, but in practical play it is favourable to keep as many options open as possible.

62...fxg6 63 Wb2+ fxg7 64 fxg5 fxg6 65 fxg5 fxg8 66 fxg4 fxg7 67 fxg5 fxg8 68 Wb6 fxg7 69 Wd8 fxg5+ 70 fxg4 fxg6 71 fxg3 fxg6 72 fxg3 fxg6 73 fxg4 fxg6 74 Wd4+ fxg7 75 Wf4 fxg7 76 g5

This advance doesn't help White make progress.

76...fxg5+ 77 fxg5 fxg6+ 78 fxg5 fxg8 79 Wd4 fxg7 80 Wf5 fxg8 81 Wf3 fxg7 82 Wb6 1/2-1/2



Nikolić – L.B. Hansen
Wijk aan Zee 1995

Here too the fortress motif is crucial. White has coordinated his pieces well, but the current fortress can be broken down. But then comes another one...

43...a6!

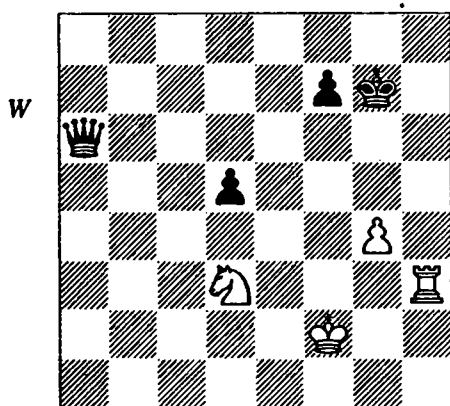
This wins a piece but the game is not over yet.

44 fxg6 Wf3+ 45 fxg1 Wg3+ 46 fxg1 Wf3+ 47 fxg1 Wd1+?

Throwing away the win! I made a simple oversight here. Obviously I wanted to pick up the g4-pawn with 47...Wxg4+, but I could not

see a way to win the bishop after 48 ♔f1 (48 ♔f2 ♖xa4 leads to the game but with the crucial difference that the g4-pawn is gone! In that case Black wins) 48...♖xa4 49 ♙c8!. But in fact 49...♖a1+! wins by a series of queen checks picking up material, while Nikolić pointed out the simple 48...♖g3!, queening the h-pawn instead.

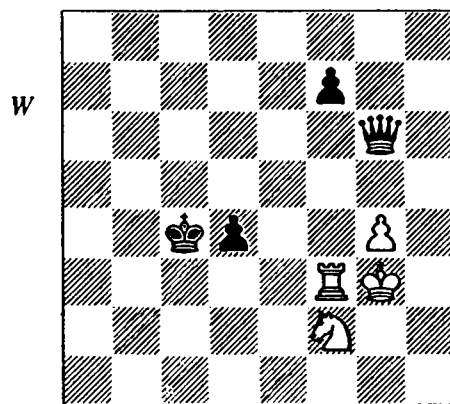
48 ♔f2 ♖xa4 49 ♜xh3 ♖xa6 (D)



50 ♜f3!

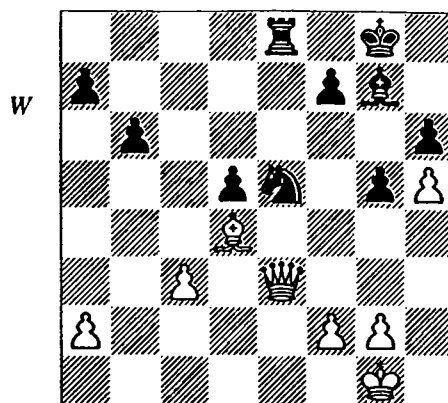
White sets up an impregnable fortress with the rook on f3, the knight on f2 and the king on g2. Coordinating his pieces this way, White simultaneously covers g4 and prevents the d-pawn from advancing.

50...♖a7+ 51 ♔g2 ♖a2+ 52 ♔f2 ♔f8 53 ♜e3 d4 54 ♜d3 ♖d5+ 55 ♜f3 ♔e7 56 ♔g3 ♔e6 57 ♔d3 ♖c4 58 ♔g2 ♖c2+ 59 ♔f2 ♖e2 60 ♜f4 ♖b2 61 ♜f3 ♖b7 62 ♔g3 ♖c7+ 63 ♔g2 ♔d5 64 ♜f5+ ♔c4 65 ♜f3 ♖c6 66 ♔g3 ♖g6! (D)



With the idea 67...f5!? 68 ♜xf5 d3. But Nikolić is on the alert.

67 ♔h3! f6 68 ♔h2! ♖h6+ 69 ♔g2 ♖g5 70 ♔g3 ♖e5+ 71 ♔g2 ♖d5 72 ♔g3 ♖e5+ 1/2-1/2



Tiviakov – Dreev
Gothenburg Echt 2005

White needs to create another weakness in Black's position, and Tiviakov goes about this task in straightforward and systematic fashion.

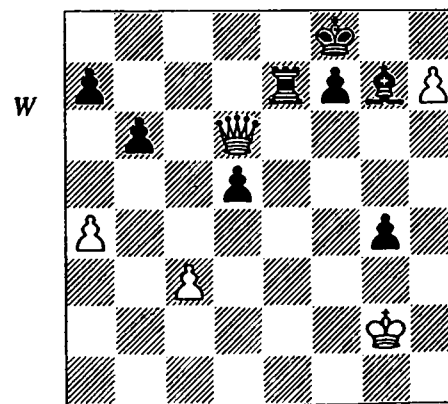
32 f4! gxf4 33 ♖xf4 ♜e6 34 ♖f5 ♙f6 35 ♔h2 ♙g7 36 a4 ♙f6 37 ♔h3 ♙g7 38 g4 ♙f6 39 g5!

Creating a passed pawn on the h-file. The advance of this pawn destroys the coordination among Black's pieces.

39...hxg5 40 h6! g4+ 41 ♔g2 ♔f8 42 h7 ♙g7

After 42...♔g7 Tiviakov gives the following forced winning line in his notes to this game in *New in Chess*: 43 ♙xe5 ♙xe5 (43...♜xe5 44 h8♖+ ♔xh8 45 ♖xf6+) 44 h8♖+! ♔xh8 45 ♖xf7 ♜h6 46 ♖e8+ and wins.

43 ♙xe5 ♜xe5 44 ♖d7 ♜e7 45 ♖d8+ ♜e8 46 ♖d6+ ♜e7 (D)

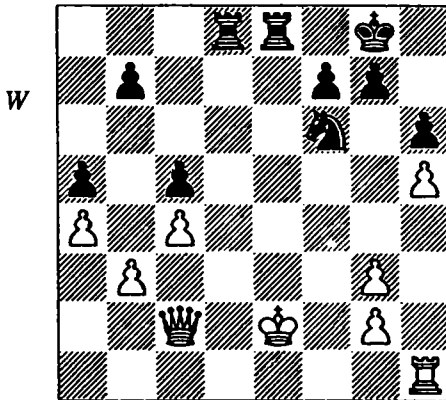


47 ♖h6!

An attractive finish to a nicely conducted endgame.

47...♜e2+ 48 ♔f1 ♙xh6 49 h8♖+ 1-0

So when do rook and piece outperform a queen? This is the case when the pieces coordinate optimally and where the queen has no way of exploiting its greater range of movement. It also helps the pieces if the pawn-structure is rigid, as this takes some of the dynamism out of the position, giving the pieces plenty of time to obtain coordination.



Enders – L.B. Hansen
Bundesliga 2002/3

Looking only at the material White is doing fine. But Black controls the two open files on the board, White's king is in trouble and his pawn-structure fractured. All in all, Black is better.

29 ♔f3 ♖d6 30 ♜h4 b6 31 ♔f2 ♜e5!

Forcing White to make an unpleasant decision: either to give up the h5-pawn or to close the rook in on h4.

32 g4 ♕e4+ 33 ♔g1 ♕g5 34 ♜h1 ♜de6 35 ♔h2 ♕f3+! 36 gxf3

This leads to a lost rook endgame, but 36 ♔h3 ♕d4 was no improvement. This is an example of the principle of *transformation of advantages*.

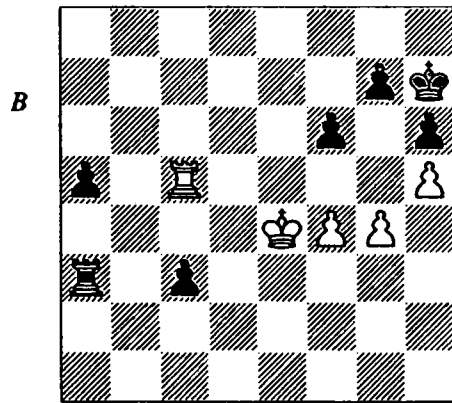
36...♜e2+ 37 ♜xe2 ♜xe2+ 38 ♔g3 ♜b2! 39 ♜d1 ♜xb3 40 ♜d8+ ♔h7 41 ♜d7 f6 42 ♜b7 ♜b4

White cannot avoid losing a second pawn. Although the black king is passive, this is sufficient to win.

43 ♔f2 ♜xc4 44 ♜xb6 ♜xa4 45 ♜b5 ♜a2+ 46 ♔e3 ♜a3+ 47 ♔e4 c4 48 ♜c5 c3 49 f4 (D) 49...♜b3!

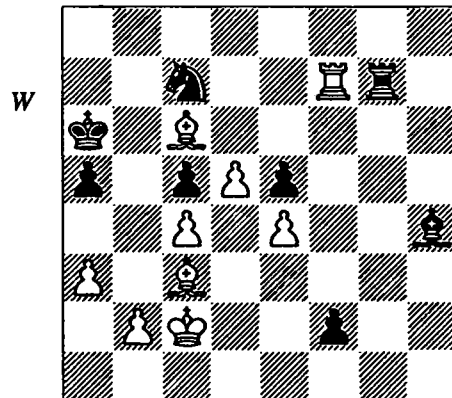
Ensuring that the rook gets to its favourite position: behind the passed pawn.

50 ♜xa5 ♜b4+ 0-1



51 ♔e3 ♜c4 wins for Black. If White goes after the c-pawn, Black picks up the kingside pawns.

Rook and piece can be a powerful supporting team for a passed pawn. This is because the queen is a poor blockader.



Karpov – Timman
Brussels 1986

Karpov had been nurturing a slight space advantage throughout the game, but in the last few moves the game has become quite tactical. What to do now? 77 ♜f3 ♜g3! or 77 ♜f5 ♜g5! does not help White (in fact Karpov already tried that), so Karpov decides to let Black queen and banks on his rook, bishop and passed d-pawn.

77 ♜xg7!? f1♜ 78 ♜xc7 ♜xc4 79 a4!

This secures the king a safe haven on b3. The e4-pawn is not important; the most important pawn on the board is White's passed d-pawn.

79...♜xe4+ 80 ♔b3 ♔e1

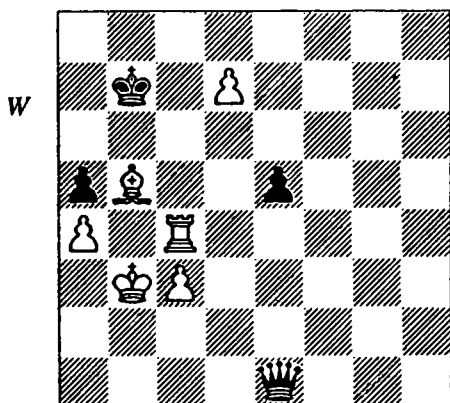
Perhaps Black should avoid this exchange, but in that case Black can never harass the white king.

81 d6 ♖h4?

81...♗b1 is better, as it isn't clear how White avoids a perpetual.

82 ♖b5+ ♔b6 83 ♜c6+ ♔b7 84 d7 ♖xc3 85 bxc3 c4+!? 86 ♜xc4 ♗e1 (D)

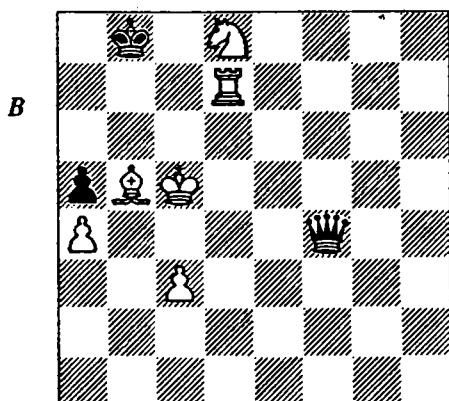
Otherwise Black has no defence against 87 ♜c8 and 88 d8♗.



Now 87 d8♗? ♗b1+ is a perpetual. But... 87 d8♖+!

This secures a decisive material advantage for White. His 'only' remaining task is to avoid a perpetual.

87...♔a7 88 ♜c7+ ♔b8 89 ♞d7 ♗b1+ 90 ♔c4 ♗f1+ 91 ♔d5 ♗f3+ 92 ♔d6 ♗f8+ 93 ♔e6 ♗h6+ 94 ♔xe5 ♗e3+ 95 ♔d6 ♗f4+ 96 ♔c5 (D)



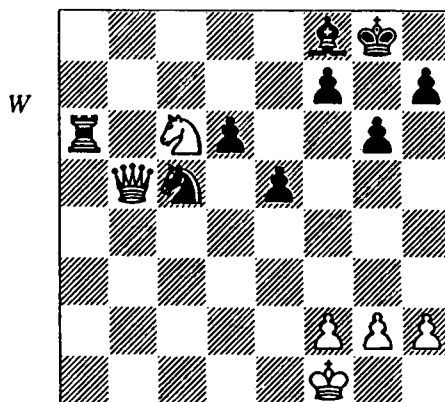
96...♗e3+ 97 ♔c4 ♔c8 98 ♖f7 ♗e4+ 99 ♔c5 ♗e3+ 100 ♔c6 ♗xc3+ 101 ♔b6 ♗e3+ 102 ♔a6!

Finally the white king has found a spot to hide.

102...♗e6+ 103 ♖d6+ ♔b8 104 ♞d8+ ♔c7 105 ♜c8+! 1-0

White wins after 105...♔xd6 106 ♜c6+. Did you notice that it is the right bishop?

When the queen has nothing to attack, the player with the rook and piece should not hurry. It is difficult to defend such positions, and the risk of mistakes in defence is high. So the opponent should be given a chance to make mistakes!



Alburts – Kasparov
Lucerne OL 1982

With rook, bishop and two strong central pawns, Black is definitely better. But notice that Kasparov takes his time – he doesn't do much for the next 10-12 moves, just waiting for the opponent to jeopardize his position further.

36 g3 ♜a1+ 37 ♔g2 ♖e6 38 ♗b8 ♞d1 39 ♗b2 ♞d5 40 ♗b8 ♜c5 41 ♖e7+ ♔g7 42 ♖c8 ♞d5 43 ♗a8 ♞d2 44 ♖b6 ♖c5 45 ♖c4 ♞d4 46 ♖e3 ♖e7 47 h4 h5 48 ♖d5 ♖d8!?

Giving White the opportunity to exchange bishop for knight – 49 ♗xd8 ♞xd5. This is certainly not nice for White, as the d-pawn is then freed. Alternatively White could bide his time by, for instance, 49 ♗a2. But under the continuous pressure White crumbles and sends his king on a suicide mission:

49 ♔f3?!

The first step in the wrong direction.

49...♖e6 50 ♗c6

It was still not too late to return to safety with 50 ♔g2.

50...♞d2 51 ♔e3?? (D)

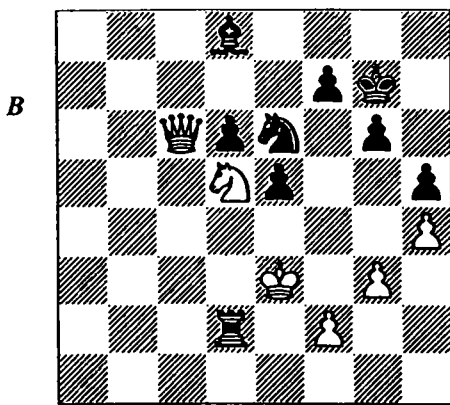
The final mistake. The king is often a strong piece in the endgame, but not here!

51...♞e2+!

Of course Kasparov seizes the opportunity. The rook is invulnerable due to the fork on d4.

52 ♔d3 e4+ 53 ♔c4 ♞c2+ 54 ♖c3 ♖f6

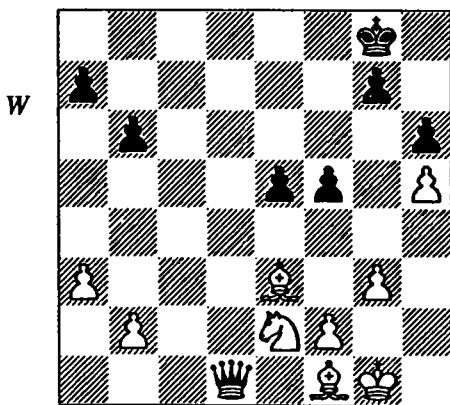
The decisive pin.



55 ♖xe4 ♜xc3+ 56 ♔d5 ♜c5+ 57 ♔xd6 ♙e5+ 0-1
 White is mated after 58 ♔d7 ♜c7+ 59 ♔e8 ♙f6! and 60...♜e7#.

Queen vs Rarer Material

In this section we shall look at some rarer piece configurations against the queen. The first of these is three pieces vs queen. It is really difficult to formulate general rules for how to play these positions, as they are very contextual – the evaluation of each position depends on very concrete factors. Two of these factors are *the pawn-structure* and the possibility of *coordinating the three pieces*.



Wojtkiewicz – Zatonskikh
 Lindsborg 2004

Here the odds are definitely with Black. She already has one extra pawn, and b2 and h5 are weak. The only question is whether White can coordinate his pieces.

31 ♙c1 ♜b3 32 ♘c3 ♜c2 33 ♘e2 ♜b3 34 ♘c3 ♜c2 35 ♘e2 ♔h8 36 f3 ♜b3 37 ♙g2 ♜f7!

Winning a second pawn.

38 g4 ♜c4!

A double attack on e2 and g4.

39 ♔f2 fxg4 40 fxg4 ♜xg4 41 ♙f3 ♜f5 42 ♘g3 ♜c2+ 43 ♘e2 ♜f5 44 ♘g3 ♜c8 45 ♘e2 ♜c5+ 46 ♙e3 ♜b5 47 ♙c1 ♜d3 48 ♘g3 ♜d4+ 49 ♔g2 ♜c4 50 ♘e2 ♜d3 51 ♔f2 a5!

Strong play. Black improves her position as much as possible without letting White off the hook.

52 ♘g3 ♜c2+ 53 ♘e2 b5! 54 ♔e3 ♜f5 55 ♙d2 ♜g5+ 56 ♔d3 ♜d8+ 57 ♔c2?!

This attempt at hiding the king on the queen-side fails. Perhaps 57 ♔e3 was a better chance.

57...♜c8+! 58 ♔d3

Back into the danger zone, as 58 ♔b1? drops a piece after 58...♜f5+, while 58 ♔d1 is met by 58...♜h3!.

58...♜c4+ 59 ♔e3 ♜c5+ 60 ♔d3 ♜c4+ 61 ♔e3 ♜b3+

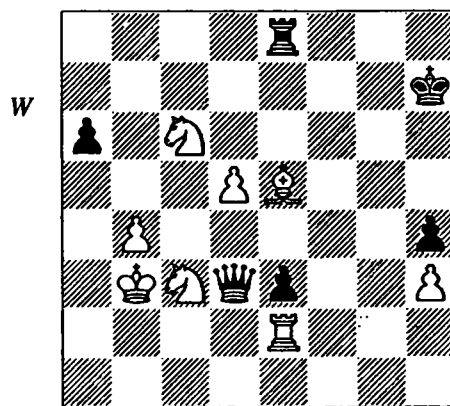
Black wins the b2-pawn, as 62 ♙c3 fails to 62...b4 63 axb4 axb4 64 ♘c1 ♜c2 65 ♙d2 ♜xb2 66 ♘d3 ♜d4+.

62 ♔e4 ♜c2+ 63 ♔e3 ♜xb2 64 ♙c3 ♜xa3 65 ♔e4 ♜a4+ 66 ♔xe5 b4 67 ♙d4 ♜e8+ 68 ♔f5 b3 69 ♘f4 ♜f7+ 70 ♔e4

70 ♔g4 ♜d7+, and the bishop on d4 falls.

70...b2! 0-1

71 ♙xb2 ♜b7+!

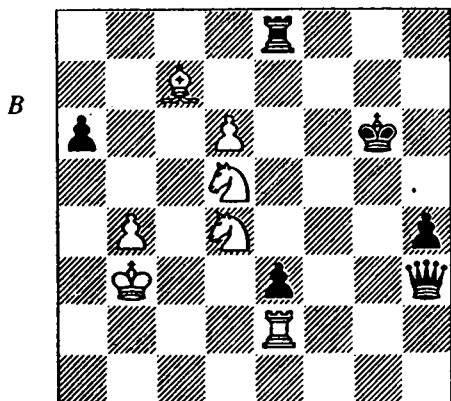


Fuderer – Najdorf
 Gothenburg IZ 1955

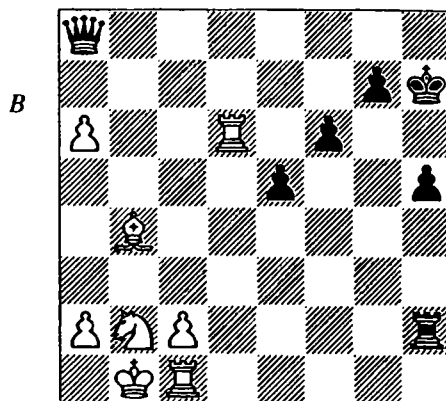
In this position the three pieces outperform the queen. That is because pieces are much better blockaders than the queen. A queen is much too valuable to perform only blockading duties, but that is not a problem for minor

pieces. Thus the d5-pawn is much stronger than the e3-pawn.

51 ♙c7! ♜f5 52 ♞d4 ♞xh3 53 d6 ♚g6 54 ♞d5! (D)



Occasionally we see a queen plus some pawns fighting against a number of pieces. The question here is whether the pieces can constrain and/or blockade the pawns.



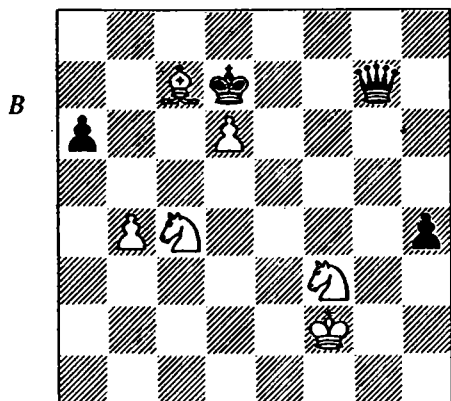
Anand – Topalov
Sofia 2005

The next piece joins the action to force through the d7 advance.

54... ♜f7 55 ♚c3 ♞e4 56 ♚d3 ♞g4 57 ♞c6 ♞f5 58 ♞xe3!

Very cool! White shows no fear of a discovered check.

58... ♞h7 59 ♞f2+ ♞f4+ 60 ♚e2 ♞xf2+ 61 ♜xf2 ♚e6 62 ♞d4+ ♚d7 63 ♞f3! ♞g7 64 ♞c4! (D)



White's minor pieces work wonderfully together. Now Black cannot prevent 65 ♞b6+ or 65 ♞fe5+ , forcing the further advance of the pawn.

64... ♞c3 65 ♞fe5+ ♚e6 66 d7!

At last – now only one task remains: to escape the queen's attempts for a perpetual.

66... ♞g3+ 67 ♚e2 ♞g2+ 68 ♚d3 ♞f1+ 69 ♚c2 ♞f5+ 70 ♚b2 ♞f2+ 71 ♚a3 ♞g3+ 72 ♚a4

Done!

72... ♞c3 73 d8♞ 1-0

This position is probably in dynamic equilibrium. But it is highly complicated and it is no surprise that the players 'exchange mistakes' before the dynamic equilibrium is restored and peace declared.

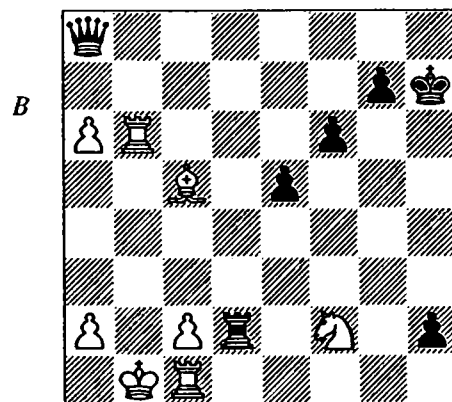
40... h4 41 ♙c5 h3 42 ♞d3?

Anand assigns this *two* question marks in *Informator*, as this hands Black the advantage. 42 a7 is correct – passed pawns must be pushed!

42... ♞d2!

Black pins the knight and threatens 43...h2.

43 ♞b6 h2 44 ♞f2 (D)

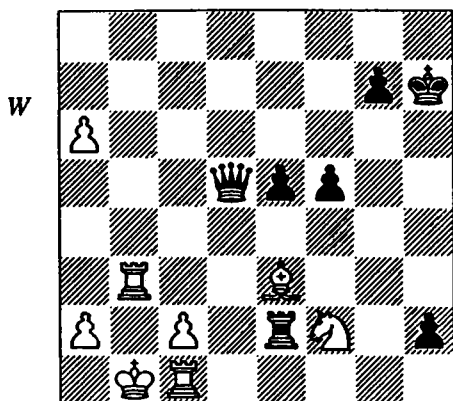


44... ♞d5?

Topalov repays the favour! According to Anand, 44... ♞d5! 45 ♙e3 ♞a5 46 ♞h1 ♞g2! is correct. That makes sense – the queen is a poor blockader but a strong attacker, and the rook is well-equipped to deal with the a-pawn. After

all, rooks belong behind passed pawns! Now White is again better – but not for long.

45 ♔e3 ♕e2 46 ♖b3 f5 (D)



47 a7?

On move 42 White's mistake was that he did *not* push the a-pawn, but now he pushes it too soon! White should safeguard his bishop by 47 ♔b6! before advancing the pawn, as indicated by Anand.

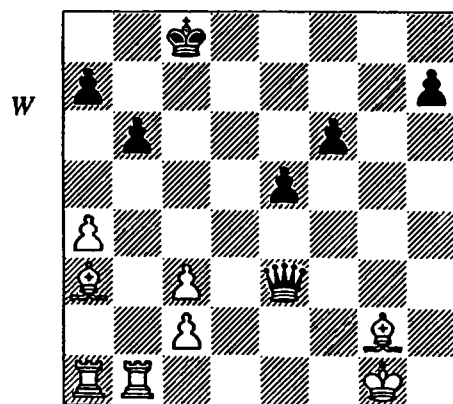
47...♕xe3!

Eliminating the passed pawn is clearly more important than material.

48 ♕xe3 ♖b7+! 49 ♖b3 ♖xa7 50 ♘h1 f4

The game is back in dynamic equilibrium. After a final pawn race, this fascinating game is finally drawn.

51 c4! e4! 52 c5 e3 53 c6 e2 54 c7 ♖xc7! 55 ♕xc7 e1♖+ 56 ♕c1 ♖e4+ 57 ♔a1 ♖d4+ 58 ♔b1 ♖e4+ 59 ♔a1 ♖d4+ 60 ♔b1 ♖e4+ 1/2-1/2



Felgaer – Rustemov
Dos Hermanas 2005

A curious material arrangement: queen and two pawns vs two rooks and two bishops!

White's material advantage is too much, and the only question is where to hide his king. Eventually White escapes with an impressive king-walk.

29 ♔f1 ♖f4+ 30 ♔e2 ♖c4+ 31 ♔d2 ♖f4+ 32 ♔d3!

White returns some of his abundant material to reach safety on b2.

32...♖g3+ 33 ♔c4 ♖xg2 34 ♔b3! f5 35 ♕g1 ♖d5+ 36 ♔b2

Finally the king can relax and White can focus on harassing the black king with his rooks and bishop.

36...f4 37 ♕g7!

Cutting off the black king on the back rank. The black pawns – though scary-looking – never make it to the finishing line.

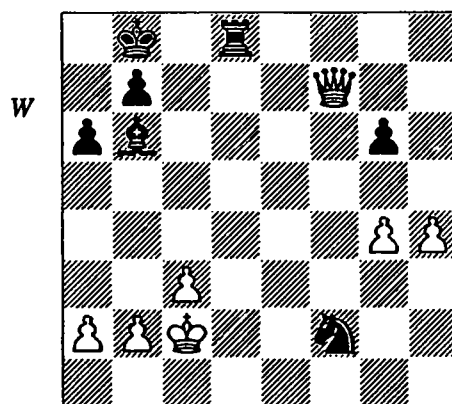
37...f3 38 ♕h1 e4 39 ♕hxh7 e3 40 ♕c7+!

Stronger than 40 ♕h8+ ♖d8, when the pawns indeed rise to stardom.

40...♔b8 41 ♕ce7 ♖g8

41...♖d8 42 ♔d6+!

42 ♕b7+ ♔c8 43 ♕hc7+ ♔d8 44 ♔d6! 1-0
Mate is now unavoidable.



Carlsen – Bareev
Khanty Mansiisk WCup rpd 2005

The pieces are poorly placed to stop White's kingside pawns. White should be winning, but Bareev does his best to initiate counterplay against White's king – his only chance.

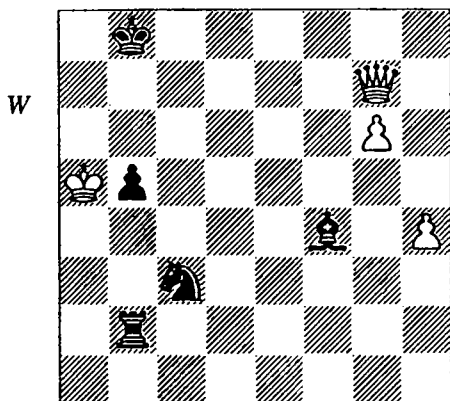
32 ♖xg6 ♔e3 33 g5 ♕d2+ 34 ♔b3 ♘d1! 35 a4!

Creating a safe haven on c4.

35...b5!?

A good practical attempt at weaving a mating-net around White's king.

36 axb5 axb5 37 ♖b4 ♜xb2+ 38 ♖a5 ♝xc3
 39 ♜e8+ ♖c7 40 ♜e5+ ♖b7 41 ♜g7+!
 Certainly not 41 ♜xc3? ♖b6#!
 41...♖b8 42 g6 ♖f4 (D)



43 ♜f8+??

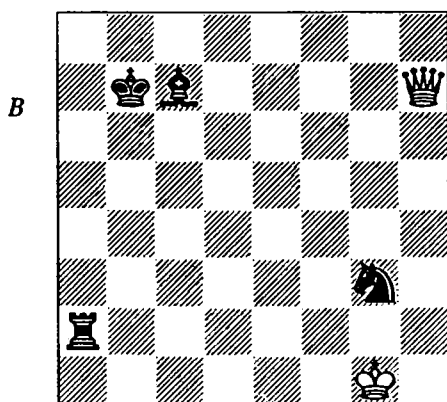
Oh no! After skilfully avoiding all Black's traps, Magnus falls for the last one, just when the win was within reach. Correct was 43 ♜f7! ♖c7+ 44 ♖a6 ♜a2+ 45 ♜xa2 ♝xa2 46 g7 and wins.

43...♖b7!

Suddenly White is trapped in a mating-net as 44 ♜xf4 fails to the fork 44...♜a2+ 45 ♖b4 ♝d5+, picking off the queen. The endgame after 46 ♖b3 ♝xf4 47 ♖xa2 ♝xg6 is lost for White. A tragic turn of events.

44 ♜f7+ ♖c7+ 45 ♜xc7+ ♖xc7 46 h5 ♜g2!
 0-1

To conclude this section, here is an interesting endgame with a highly unusual material configuration – queen against rook, bishop and knight.



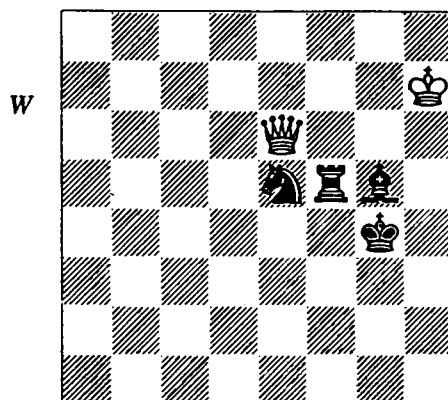
Hraček – Hübner
 Polanica Zdroj 1996

An interesting endgame. Despite his material superiority Black seems unable to make progress.

51...♜a5

51...♜e2 would allow White to exploit one of his defence mechanisms in this endgame – stalemate. White draws by 52 ♜xc7+!.

52 ♖g2 ♝f5 53 ♜d7 ♜e5 54 ♖f1 ♖b6 55 ♖g2 ♖d6 56 ♖f3 ♝d4+ 57 ♖f2 ♜e6 58 ♖g2 ♖c5 59 ♜b7 ♖c4 60 ♜a6+ ♖d5 61 ♜a8+ ♖e5 62 ♜h8+ ♖e4 63 ♜h4+ ♖d3 64 ♜h7+ ♖d2 65 ♜a7 ♜g6+ 66 ♖h3 ♖e3 67 ♖h4 ♖e5 68 ♖h5 ♜g7 69 ♜a2 ♝f3 70 ♖h6 ♜g4 71 ♖h5 ♜g5+ 72 ♖h6 ♖f4 73 ♖h7 ♝e5 74 ♜b3+ ♖f2 75 ♜c2+ ♖g3 76 ♜c3+ ♖g4 77 ♜e1 ♜f5 78 ♜g1+ ♖h5 79 ♜h1+ ♖g5 80 ♜h6+ ♖g4 81 ♜e6 ♖g5 (D)



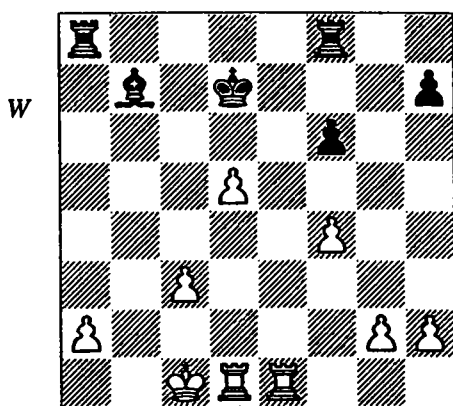
82 ♖g8 ♖f6 83 ♖f8 ♖f4 84 ♖e8 ♖e4 85 ♜a2 ♜f3 86 ♜g2 ♖f5 87 ♜c2+ ♜d3 88 ♜b1 ♖g5 89 ♜g1+ ♖h6 90 ♜h2+ ♖g6 91 ♜g2+ ♖g5 92 ♜c2 ♖f6 93 ♜f2+ ♜f3 94 ♜b6+ ♖f5 95 ♜b1+ ♜d3 96 ♜c2 ♖f6 97 ♜b1 ♖g6 98 ♜g1+ ♖g5 99 ♜b1 ♖h5 100 ♜h1+ ♖h4 101 ♖f8 ♜d8+ 102 ♖g7 ♜d7+ 103 ♖f8 ♝g4 104 ♜b1 ♝f6 1/2-1/2

The game has reached the 50-move rule (in fact a few moves ago), but White can also draw directly with 105 ♜g6+.

Piece vs Pawns

In this concluding section of this chapter we shall deal with the problem of 'piece vs pawns'. When is a number of pawns equal to or superior to a piece? Asking and answering three basic questions can help evaluate such positions:

- How far advanced are the pawns? As we know from Chapter 2, passed pawns which are close to promotion often bring tactics with them.
- How compact and healthy is the pawn-structure?
- How are the prospects of the side with the piece to blockade the pawns?



Nakamura – Gelfand
Biel 2005

Consider this position. White has four pawns for the bishop and is thus doing fine materially, but still he is close to being lost, as all three answers to the above questions are in Black's favour: the pawns are not far advanced, they are fragmented and uncoordinated, and they can easily be blockaded or even picked off. Gelfand needs only a dozen moves to wrap the game up.

27 ♖b1 ♖a4!

Blocking the pawns and coordinating the rooks at the same time.

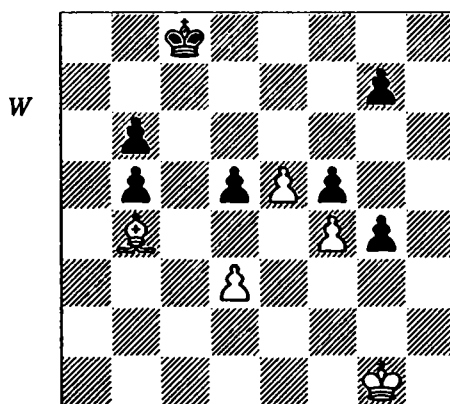
28 g3 ♖fa8 29 ♖d2 ♖8a5! 30 d6?

This makes the win trivial for Black. As Gelfand explains in his notes in *New in Chess*, he was mainly concerned with 30 ♖e6, which he would have answered with 30...♖xd5 31 ♖de2 ♖d6 32 ♖e7+ ♖c8, which should win, as White cannot take on h7 in view of the reply 33...♖e4+.

30...♖e4+ 31 ♖a1 h5 32 h3 ♖d5 33 g4 ♖xa2+ 34 ♖xa2 ♖xa2+ 35 ♖b1 ♖h2 36 ♖e3 h4!

Making the h3-pawn a sitting duck on the colour of the bishop.

37 ♖c1 ♖xd6 38 f5 ♖f2 39 ♖d1 ♖f3 0-1



Kurnosov – Lputian
Warsaw Ech 2005

Here is another example. Black's pawns are useless, and White can easily pick them off.

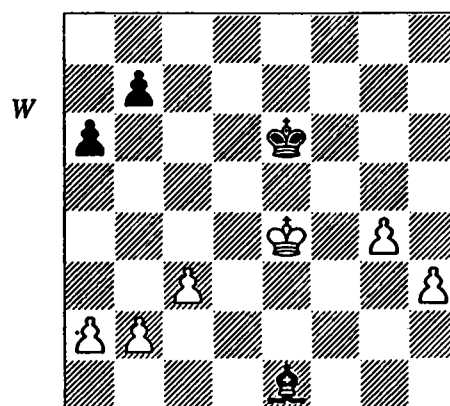
36 ♖f2 ♖d7 37 ♖e3 ♖e6 38 d4 ♖d7 39 ♖e1!

The bishop goes to the kingside, while the king goes to the queenside.

39...♖e6 40 ♖d3 g5 41 ♖g3! 1-0

After 41...gxf4 42 ♖xf4 the bishop blocks the black pawn, while the king picks up both b-pawns.

On the other hand, pawns can overpower a bishop if they are far-advanced, healthy and compact, and impossible to blockade in an adequate way.



Sulskis – S.B. Hansen
Calvia OL 2004

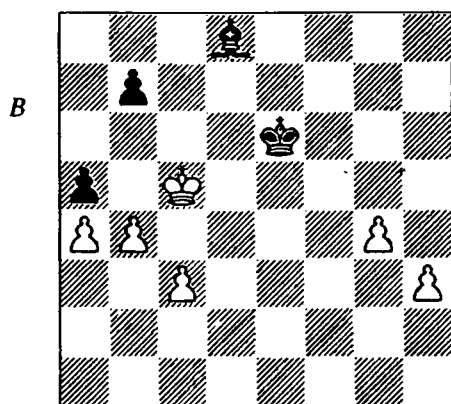
Can White win this? His pawn-structure is nice and healthy, and he may be able to make the black king 'cross-eyed' by creating passed pawns on both wings. Still, the pawns are at present not too far advanced, and the bishop is

currently able to blockade them. All in all White is pushing, but Black still has real survival chances.

41 a4 a5?

This looks wrong, and it is an instructive example of a short-term gain at the expense of a long-term loss. Pawns cannot go backward! Black briefly restrains b4, but once White brings his king to the queenside, the newly-created weakness on the light squares will tell, and furthermore it becomes easier for White to create a passed pawn on the a-file – as we shall see in the game. Basically, White wants to create a passed pawn as far away as possible, in order to deflect the black king and leave open the path to the kingside for the white king, which will eventually support the kingside pawns. In the game this plan works wonderfully. Black, on the other hand, would prefer White's eventual passed queenside pawn to be a c-pawn, so that the front he needs to defend is shorter. Therefore, Black should bide his time by, for instance, 41...♖h4, after which is it not clear if White can win.

42 ♖d4 ♗h4 43 ♖c5 ♗d8 44 b4! (D)



Here we are. An outside passed pawn is on the cards.

44...axb4 45 cxb4 ♖d7 46 a5 ♗e7+ 47 ♖c4 ♗d8 48 ♖d5!

White's plan has succeeded. Black is in zugzwang and cannot prevent the pawns from advancing.

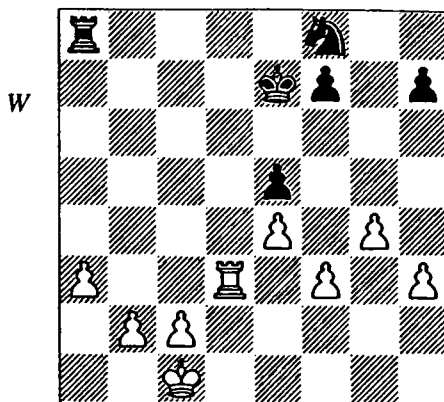
48...♖c7

48...♖e7 49 h4, 48...♗c7 49 g5 or 48...♖e8 49 ♖e6 doesn't help either.

49 b5!

Creating the outside passed pawn that decisively deflects Black's king.

49...♗h4 50 ♖e6 ♗e1 51 a6 bxa6 52 bxa6 ♖b6 53 g5 1-0



Akopian – Kūlaots
Gothenburg Echt 2005

As in Nakamura-Gelfand, White has four pawns for the piece, but unlike that game here they are solid and compact. That means that the gradual advance of the pawns will eventually carry the day.

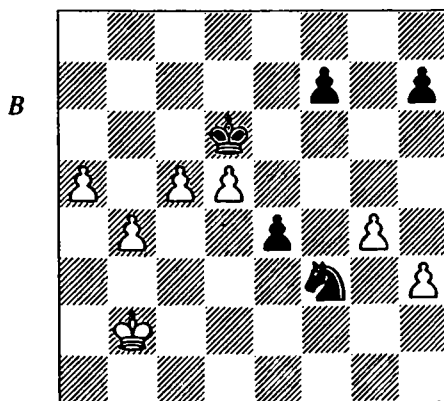
26 b4 ♖e6 27 ♖b2 ♗d8 28 ♗d5! ♗xd5

Four connected pawns are too much for Black to handle, but 28...f6 29 c4 was not much better.

29 exd5 ♖d4

29...♖f4 30 c4 ♖xh3 31 a4 is too slow for Black. But going for the f3-pawn is not sufficient either.

30 a4 ♖d6 31 c4 ♖xf3 32 a5 e4 33 c5+! (D)



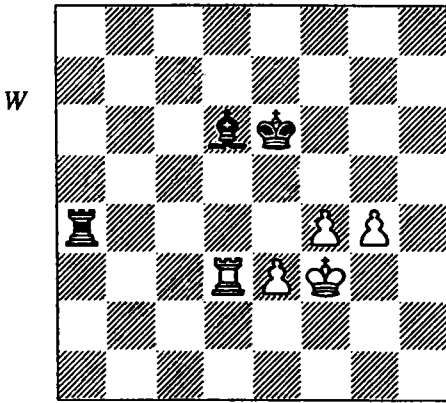
33...♖c7

After this White wins without any problems. 33...♖xd5 is a better practical chance, after which White must sidestep a trap to win. White wins with 34 a6 ♖c6 35 b5+ ♖c7 36 b6+ ♖b8

and now not 37 c6? ♖e5! 38 c7+ ♜c8 39 a7? ♘c4+ and 40...♗xb6, winning for Black, but 37 ♜c3 ♖e5 38 ♜d4 ♖d7 39 a7+ ♜a8 40 ♜xe4 ♖xc5+ 41 ♜d5, and White wins – Black cannot simultaneously control the queenside passed pawns and cover the kingside ones.

34 d6+ ♜d7 35 a6 1-0

White wins by force after 35...e3 36 a7 e2 37 a8 ♖e1 ♖e3 38 ♖b7+ ♜e6 (38...♜e8 39 ♖c8#) 39 ♖e7+ ♜d5 40 ♖xe1 ♖xe1 41 d7.



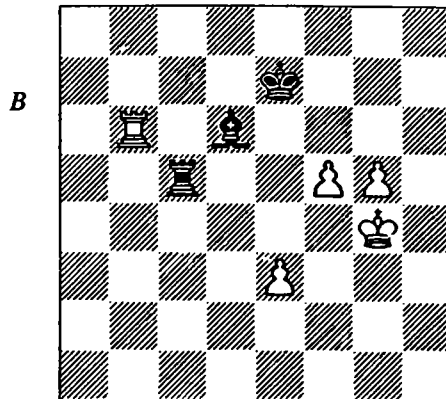
Karpov – Timman
Amsterdam 1988

With three connected passed pawns against the bishop, White is obviously the only one with winning chances. Karpov systematically advances the pawns without allowing Black the chance to sacrifice his bishop and secure a drawn endgame.

55 g5 ♖a3 56 ♖d4 ♗b8 57 ♖b4 ♗d6 58 ♖b5! ♖c3

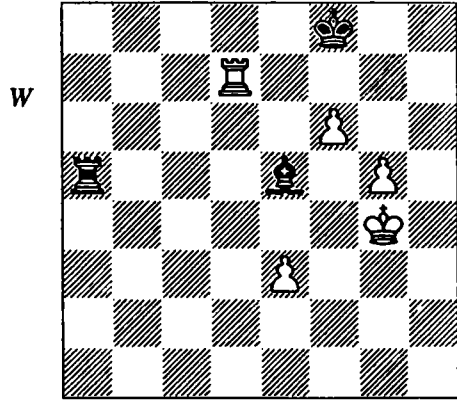
The first step has been taken – now follows the next!

59 f5+ ♜e7 60 ♖b7+ ♖c7 61 ♖b6 ♖c5 62 ♜g4! (D)



The king supports the pawns and helps create mating threats against Black's king.

62...♖d5 63 ♖b7+ ♜f8 64 f6 ♖a5 65 ♖d7 ♗e5 (D)

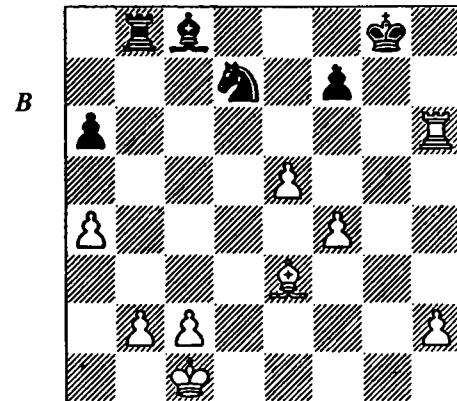


66 ♜f5!

No fear of ghosts! The white king voluntarily walks into a discovered check on its way to the decisive square g6.

66...♗b2+ 67 ♜g6 ♜e8 68 ♖b7 ♗e5 69 ♖e7+ ♜d8 70 ♜f7 ♗b2 71 g6 ♖a6 72 ♖e6 ♖a7+ 73 ♜f8 1-0

As we have seen in earlier sections of this chapter, playing endgames with unbalanced material is difficult, and even strong grandmasters frequently err.



Shirov – Azmaiparashvili
Plovdiv Echt 2003

With four good pawns for the piece, White is better. Still, none of them are currently close to promotion, so Black can still fight. His first priority is to coordinate his pieces and blockade the pawns.

27...♖f8 28 ♖d6 ♖a8 29 c4 ♗e6 30 b3?!

30 c5 is stronger – passed pawns must be pushed!

30...♙g7! 31 ♖b2 ♙g6!

Strong defence. The king enters the action and simultaneously helps block the kingside pawns.

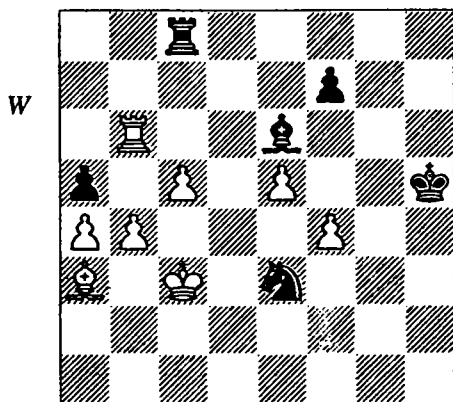
32 h4 ♙h5 33 ♖c3 ♘g6 34 b4?

On move 30, it would have been better to push the pawn, but here Shirov indicates that the prophylactic 34 ♖d1! ♘h4 35 ♙g1! was better, cutting off Black's king.

34...♘h4 35 ♙c1 ♖c8 36 c5 a5!

Now Black is very much back in the game and may even be better. He has made significant progress in the last few moves: picking up one of White's pawns and now destroying White's pawn-structure.

37 ♖b6 ♘f5 38 ♙a3 ♘e3! (D)



39 bxa5!

White gives up a further exchange and relies on his far-advanced passed pawns.

39...♘d5+ 40 ♖d3 ♘xb6?

Black is seduced by the prospect of being a whole rook up. According to Shirov, 40...♙g4! was better, after which Black has the better chances. Now the position is drawn.

41 axb6 ♙d5 42 a5 ♖a8 43 ♖d4 ♙c6 44 ♙b4 ♙g6 45 e6! f6!

Not 45...fxe6? 46 ♖e5, and the white king penetrates.

46 f5+?

Shirov errs – according to Olthof, 46 ♖c4 leads to a draw.

46...♙xf5 47 e7 ♖e6?

Azmaiparashvili repays the favour – after 47...♖e8! White would have a hard time achieving a draw.

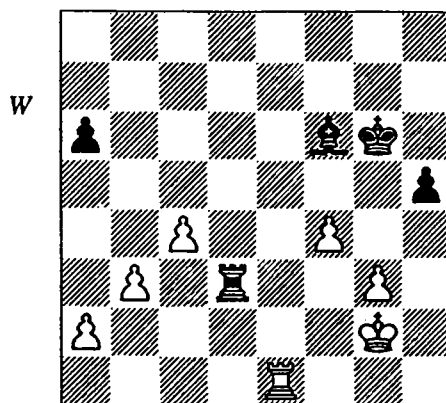
48 a6! ♖xe7

Not 48...♖xa6? 49 b7!, and White wins. Far-advanced pawns carry the seed of tactics!

49 b7 ♖d8+ 50 ♖c4 ♖d7 51 ♙c3 ♖f8 52 ♙xf6! 1/2-1/2

52...♙xb7 53 axb7 ♖c6 is an easy draw.

As we saw in this game, often the pawns and pieces cancel each other out, leading to dynamic equilibrium and a draw. This is a common outcome of this kind of endgame.



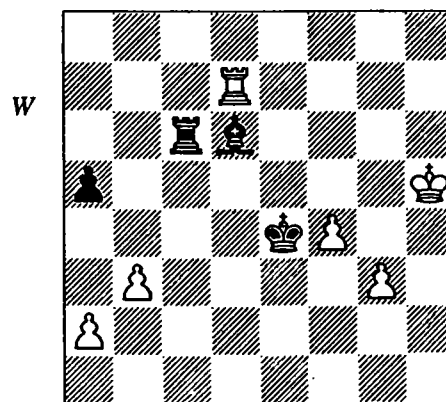
J. Polgar – Anand
Sofia 2005

The three pawns and the piece are of approximately the same value, and the game eventually peters out into a draw.

37 ♖e6 a5 38 ♖a6 ♙f5 39 c5!

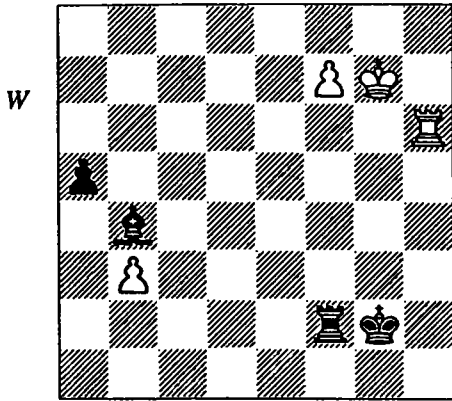
Not 39 ♖xa5+? ♙g4, and White must suddenly be very careful not to get mated!

39...♙d4 40 ♖d6 ♖e4 41 c6 ♖c3 42 ♖h3 ♙f2 43 ♙g6 ♙b6 44 ♖h4 ♖c5 45 ♖d6 ♙c7 46 ♖d7 ♖xc6 47 ♖xh5 ♙d6 (D)



If Black could pick up all White's pawns, the remaining a-pawn would be sufficient to win. But this is not really possible.

48 ♔g5 ♙a3 49 ♖a7 ♜c5+ 50 ♔g6 ♙b4 51 ♖a6 ♜c3 52 ♜e6+ ♔f3 53 f5 ♜c2 54 f6 ♖xa2 55 f7 ♔xg3 56 ♔g7 ♜f2 57 ♖g6+ ♔h3 58 ♖h6+ ♔g2 (D)



59 ♖h5!

This hits the a5-pawn and secures the draw.

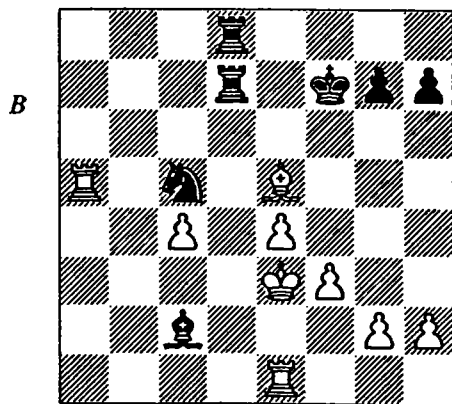
59...♜f3 60 ♖g5+ ♔f2 61 ♔g8!

Safer than playing 61 ♖xa5 ♙c3+! 62 ♔g8 ♖g3+ 63 ♔h7 ♖g7+ followed by 64...♜xf7, after which White would still have to defend the admittedly drawn rook + bishop vs rook endgame.

61...♜g3 62 ♖xg3 ♔xg3 63 f8♖ ♙xf8 64 ♔xf8 ♔f4 65 ♔e7

The white king is just in time.

65...♔e5 66 ♔d7 ♔d5 67 ♔c7 ♔c5 68 ♔b7 ♔b4 69 ♔a6 a4 70 bxa4 ♔xa4 1/2-1/2



Timofeev – Zviagintsev
Russian Chl (Sochi) 2004

Here too we see an example of dynamic equilibrium. Black has too few pawns left to have serious winning chances, and the white pawns are not close to the promotion squares.

33...♘d3 34 ♖ea1 ♙b3 35 ♙c3 ♙xc4

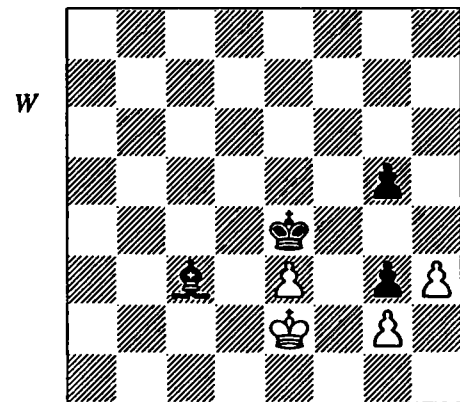
Black has won this weak pawn, but it is still not sufficient to win.

36 ♖a7 ♘c5 37 ♖a5 ♘e6 38 ♙e5 g5 39 ♖a4 ♖a7 40 ♖a7+ ♔g6 41 ♖a3 ♜d1 42 ♜c3 ♙b5 43 ♖b3 ♜e1+ 44 ♔f2 ♜e2+ 45 ♔g3 ♙e8 46 ♖b6 ♙f7 47 h4!

With the idea 47...gxh4+? 48 ♔xh4 ♖xg2 49 f4!, after which Black's pieces are on very unfortunate squares. Thus White achieves a relieving pawn exchange.

47...h6 1/2-1/2

To conclude this chapter, let us see a funny little fragment that once again shows that mate and stalemate are vital principles in the endgame. Here Serper exploits this principle to save a draw, although he only has one pawn for a piece.



Serper – Nakamura
USA Ch (San Diego) 2004

83 ♔f1!

Simply hiding in the corner! Black cannot break down this stalemate fortress.

83...♙e5 84 ♔g1 ♔d3 85 e4! ♔e3 86 ♔f1 ♔d4 87 ♔g1 ♔c4 88 ♔h1 ♔d3 89 ♔g1 ♔e2 90 ♔h1 ♙d4 91 e5! ♙xe5 92 ♔g1 ♔e1 93 ♔h1 ♔f2 94 h4 gxh4 1/2-1/2

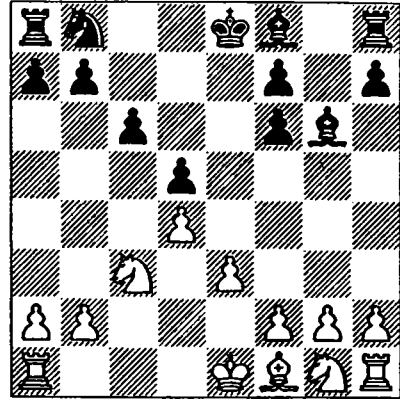
Stalemate!

6 Complex Endgames

Introduction

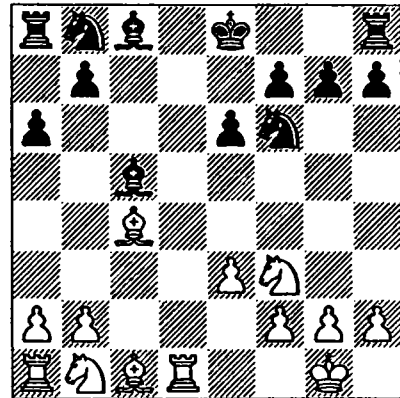
A number of openings lead to an exchange of queens within a few moves. Sometimes this means that the players must adjust to 'endgame mode' at an early stage. Examples include these well-known opening lines:

Ruy Lopez, Berlin Defence: 1 e4 e5 2 ♘f3 ♘c6 3 ♙b5 ♘f6 4 0-0 ♘xe4 5 d4 ♘d6 6 ♙xc6 dxc6 7 dxe5 ♘f5 8 ♚xd8+ ♜xd8 (D).

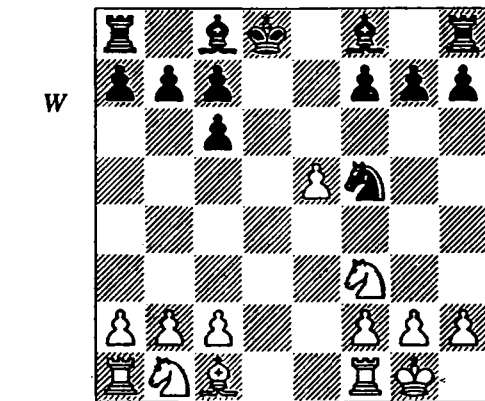


W

Queen's Gambit Accepted: 1 d4 d5 2 c4 dxc4 3 ♘f3 ♘f6 4 e3 e6 5 ♙xc4 c5 6 0-0 a6 7 dxc5 ♚xd1 8 ♞xd1 ♙xc5 (D).

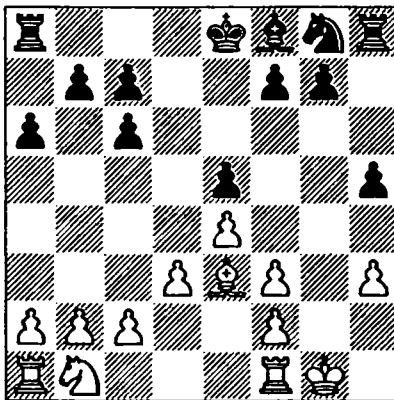


W



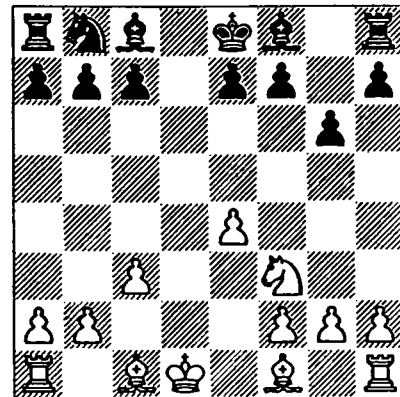
W

Exchange Ruy Lopez: 1 e4 e5 2 ♘f3 ♘c6 3 ♙b5 a6 4 ♙xc6 dxc6 5 0-0 ♙g4 6 h3 h5 7 d3 ♚f6 8 ♙e3 ♙xf3 9 ♚xf3 ♚xf3 10 gxf3 (D).



B

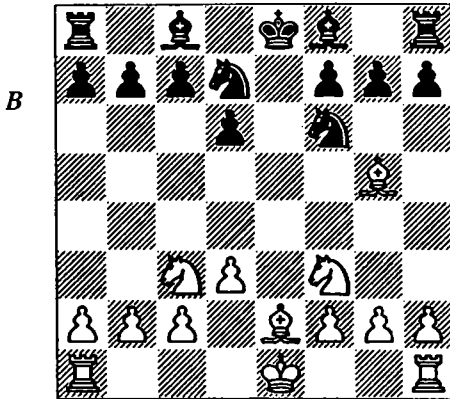
English Opening, Anti-Grünfeld: 1 c4 ♘f6 2 ♘f3 g6 3 ♘c3 d5 4 cxd5 ♘xd5 5 e4 ♘xc3 6 dxc3 ♚xd1+ 7 ♜xd1 (D).



B

Exchange Queen's Gambit: 1 d4 ♘f6 2 c4 e6 3 ♘c3 d5 4 cxd5 exd5 5 ♙g5 c6 6 e3 ♙f5 7 ♚f3 ♙g6 8 ♙xf6 ♚xf6 9 ♚xf6 gxf6 (D).

Petroff Defence: 1 e4 e5 2 ♘f3 ♘f6 3 ♖xe5 d6 4 ♘f3 ♖xe4 5 ♚e2 ♚e7 6 d3 ♘f6 7 ♙g5 ♖bd7 8 ♘c3 ♚xe2+ 9 ♙xe2 (D).



Now take a closer look at the six opening variations that I have selected. These are respected opening lines that have all been played in a number of grandmaster games – some even at world championship level. What do they have in common? Right, the only thing all six of them share is the fact the queens have been exchanged! Other than that, they really don't share many characteristics, if we are to look for common traits among all of them.

However, if we divide them into two distinct groups, it is possible to point to more features in common:

- Group A consists of the Berlin Defence, the Exchange Ruy Lopez and the Exchange Queen's Gambit. This group shares the characteristics that the pawn-structure has already been fragmented, and two of them – the Berlin and the Exchange Queen's Gambit – display the distinct characteristic of 'bishop-pair vs fractured pawn-structure'.
- Group B consists of the other three chosen opening variations, from the Queen's Gambit Accepted, the Anti-Grünfeld and the Petroff. Here both players have sound symmetrical pawn-structures and the main feature in common is the fact that queens have disappeared and that the positions display one or two open files, on which further rook exchanges are likely to occur.

What is the point here? The point that I am trying to make is that you cannot just categorize positions into one single group based on the single fact that the queens have been exchanged!

That is a gross oversimplification. The positions resulting from the openings in groups A and B are vastly different and must be approached in different ways. While the openings in group A are highly complex and strategically difficult to master – even without queens – the openings in group B are calmer and simpler, and this implies that White (who decided on an opening leading to a rapid queen exchange) does not want to win the game 'because of the advantage of the white pieces', but simply wants a sound and safe position in which playing strength and understanding of profound chess principles are more important factors than opening knowledge and calculating skills.

At tournaments one occasionally hears the phrase "the queens were exchanged quickly and the game went directly from the opening to the endgame". In my view this is a dangerous simplification of a complex issue. It implies that the endgame started somewhere around move 10 and that after a queen exchange endgame principles rather than middlegame principles apply. I shall accept that for the positions in group B. Here endgame principles like 'king activity', 'the importance of the pawn-structure' or 'control of files, squares and diagonals' can be elevated to the forefront. In quiet positions like the ones in group B, these considerations are likely to take you far. Not so, though, if you consider the positions in group A! These positions are much too complex and concrete to be encapsulated in such general terms. In fact, I shall question if they qualify as endgames at all; rather I think they should be termed 'queenless middlegames' instead to indicate that initiative, activity, king safety and concrete calculation may be the order of the day here. After all, as the saying goes, "between the opening and the endgame, God and Dr Tarrasch placed the middlegame!"

A common mistake in many games from the 'Group A openings' is in my opinion that the players handle them as endgames rather than queenless middlegames. A position doesn't automatically become an endgame just because the queens are gone. The definition of endgame is not 'no queens'; besides, no one questions that a 'queen endgame' is indeed an ending. An example from a high-class encounter can illustrate the point.

Grishchuk – Dreev
Poikovsky 2005

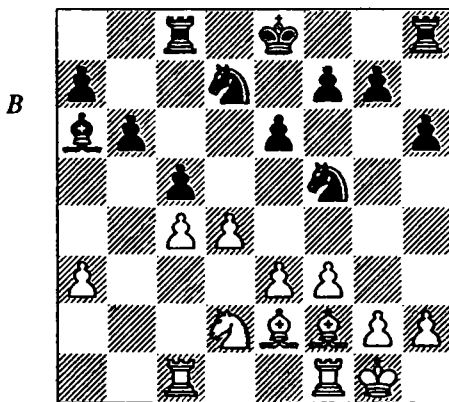
1 d4 d5 2 c4 c6 3 ♘c3 ♘f6 4 ♘f3 e6 5 ♔g5
♘bd7 6 e3 ♚a5

The old and well-explored Cambridge Springs Variation.

7 cxd5 ♘xd5 8 ♚d2 ♔b4 9 ♚c1 h6 10 ♔h4
c5 11 a3 ♔xc3 12 bxc3 b6 13 c4 ♚xd2+ 14
♘xd2

A well-known position, which Grishchuk has had before. At the FIDE World Championship in Tripoli in 2004 he was lucky to draw after 14...♘5f6, but no doubt he had improved on White's play.

14...♘e7 15 f3 ♔a6 16 ♔e2 ♚c8 17 0-0 ♘f5
18 ♔f2 (D)



18...♚e7?

Here we are! This is the interesting moment that illustrates my point. In his notes to this game in *New in Chess* Grishchuk writes (my italics): "So far, everything was logical, but I think this move is a serious mistake. *There is no endgame on the board yet, and Black should have castled and tried to attack White's centre.*" I agree with my former team-mate from Lübecker SV in the German Bundesliga. The position is much too complex to be classified as an endgame – as are most positions that arise out of the 'Group A openings' given above.

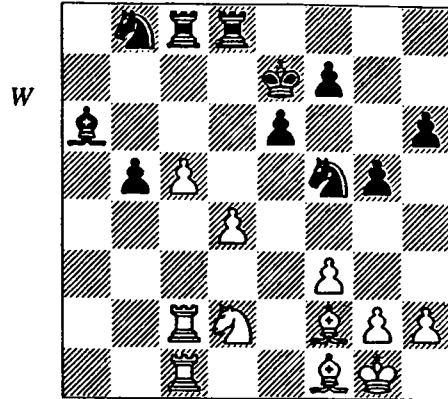
19 ♚fe1!

A nice move that places the rook opposite the black king.

19...g5?!

Continuing down the wrong path. This rash pawn advance merely weakens Black's position, and his king has difficulty finding a safe haven.

20 ♔f1 ♘d6 21 a4 ♚hd8 22 ♚c3 ♘f6 23
♚c2 ♘d7 24 ♚ec1 ♘b8 25 a5! cxd4 26 axb6
axb6 27 exd4 b5 28 c5 ♘f5 (D)



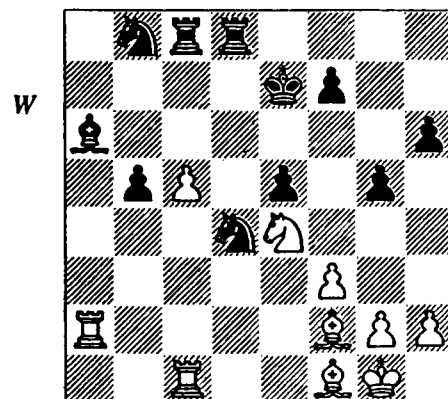
29 ♚a2?

This throws away most of White's advantage. Instead, Grishchuk gives the line 29 c6! ♚c7 (29...♘xd4 30 c7 ♘xc2 31 ♔c5+! ♚e8 32 cxd8 ♚+ ♚xd8 33 ♚xc2 ♘d7 34 ♘b3, and White remains a piece up) 30 d5! ♚xd5 31 ♔b6 ♚c8 (31...♚xc6 32 ♚xc6 ♘xc6 33 ♚xc6 ♚xd2 34 ♔c5+, and the bishop on a6 falls) 32 ♘b3 b4 33 c7! ♔xf1 34 cxb8 ♚xb8 35 ♔a7! ♚a8 36 ♚c7+ ♚f6 (36...♚d7 37 ♔c5+ followed by 38 ♚xd7 and 39 ♚xf1 with an extra piece) 37 ♚xf1, winning. A concrete and complicated line more reminiscent of a middlegame than an endgame, don't you think?

29...♘xd4

At this point Dreev only had a minute and a half to reach the time-control at move 40 – much too little for this complicated position.

30 ♘e4 e5 (D)



31 f4! gxf4?

Time-pressure takes its toll. As indicated by Grishchuk, Black could draw with 31...exf4 32

♖d6 ♜xc5! 33 ♜xc5 ♜xd6, as 34 ♜c7+ ♔f6 35 ♜a7 ♙c8 36 ♜a8 is met by 36...♙e6!

32 ♙h4+ ♔e6?

Labelled the decisive mistake by Grishchuk. Instead, Black should go for 32...♔e8 33 ♙xd8 ♔xd8 34 ♖d6 ♜c7, when he still has good drawing chances.

33 ♙xd8 ♜xd8 34 c6! ♜c8 35 c7 1-0

A Complex Endgame: The Berlin Defence

In order to illustrate the intricacies of complex endgames I shall focus on one of the most intriguing ones – the dreaded Berlin Defence in the Ruy Lopez. The following is not intended as a theoretical essay on the Berlin – there are other sources for this – but rather to illustrate the pros and cons of various approaches to playing complex endgames.

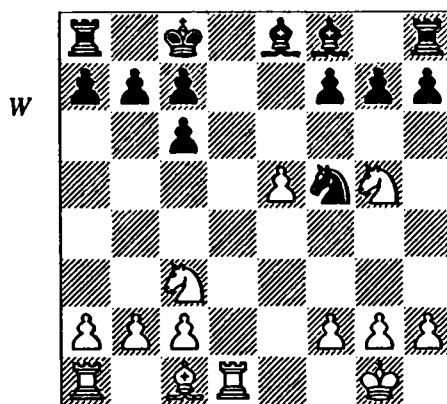
The Berlin Defence has been incredibly popular since Kramnik used it as his main weapon in the world championship match against Kasparov in London 2000. In four tries in that match Kasparov never managed to shake the Berlin. All in all Kramnik has employed the Berlin in seven games against Kasparov, drawing six and losing just one. Only in the last round of Astana 2001 did Kasparov manage to beat Kramnik in the Berlin. Few other openings and players manage to escape with ‘minus 1’ in seven black games with Kasparov! Yet the Berlin is certainly not a ‘drawing weapon’ suitable only for strong defensive wizards content with playing for a draw as Black. Its complex nature has induced active players like Anand, Topalov and Grishchuk to take up this opening – and they use it to play for a win.

As discussed above, one common danger in this complex type of endgame is to view it too statically as ‘just another endgame’. In that case things like this happen:

Kabanov – Bruzon

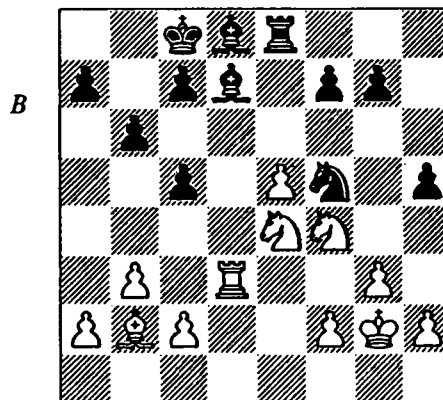
Khanty Mansiisk WCup rpd 2005

1 e4 e5 2 ♖f3 ♖c6 3 ♙b5 ♖f6 4 0-0 ♖xe4 5 d4 ♖d6 6 ♙xc6 dxc6 7 dxe5 ♖f5 8 ♗xd8+ ♔xd8 9 ♖c3 ♙d7 10 ♜d1 ♔c8 11 ♖g5 ♙e8 (D)



Superficially such a position looks good for White, but such a view is simplistic. Notice how over the next 10 moves White just shuffles his pieces around, while Black gradually improves his position.

12 b3 ♙e7 13 ♖ge4 b6 14 ♙b2 ♔b7 15 ♜d3 ♜d8 16 ♜ad1 ♜xd3 17 ♜xd3 ♔c8 18 ♙c1 ♙d7 19 g3 h5 20 ♔g2 ♜e8 21 ♙b2 ♙d8 22 ♖e2 c5 23 ♖f4 (D)



23...♖d4!

Without White making any clear mistakes, the initiative has slowly shifted to Black. This is typical for a complex endgame: such endgames must be played with the concrete calculations and the quest for the initiative that we usually see in the middlegame. Now Black is able to play his greatest trump in the Berlin: the two powerful bishops.

24 ♙xd4 cxd4 25 ♜xd4

25 ♖xh5? ♜xe5 costs White a piece, as both knights are hanging.

25...♜xe5 26 f3 f5 27 ♖c3 ♙c6 28 ♔f2 h4 29 ♖d3 hxg3+ 30 hxg3 ♜e8 31 ♖d5 ♙b7 32 ♖3f4 b5!

Preparing to include the dark-squared bishop in the game.

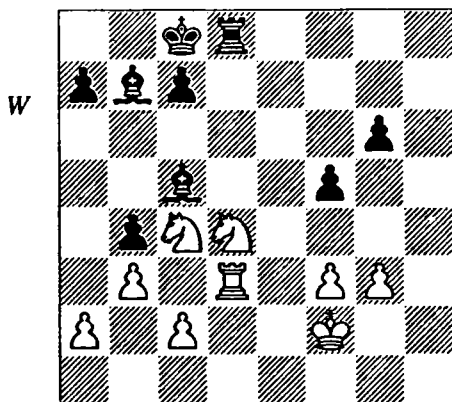
33 ♖e3 ♗e7 34 ♠d3 ♗c5!

A highly unpleasant pin for White.

35 ♖e2 b4!

Preventing White from reinforcing the knight by playing c3.

36 ♖d4 g6 37 ♖c4 ♠d8 (D)



The pin is lethal.

38 ♗e3 ♗a6! 39 f4 ♗xc4 40 bxc4 ♗b7!

The king is included in the game and targets White's a2-pawn. White is lost.

41 ♠d1 ♠d6 42 ♠d2 ♗b6 43 ♠d1 ♗a5! 44 ♠d2 ♗a4 45 ♠d3 a5 46 g4 fxg4 47 ♗e4 ♠xd4+ 0-1

Yakovenko – Bacrot
Moscow 2005

1 e4 e5 2 ♖f3 ♖c6 3 ♗b5 ♖f6 4 0-0 ♖xe4 5 d4 ♖d6 6 ♗xc6 dxc6 7 dxe5 ♖f5 8 ♗xd8+ ♗xd8 9 ♖c3 ♖e7!?

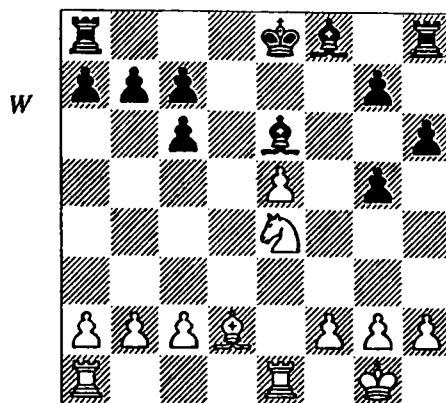
It testifies to the Berlin's versatility that Black has time for this transfer of the knight to g6. It violates typical opening principles – don't move a piece twice in the opening – but there are no concrete opportunities for White to exploit it.

10 ♠e1 ♖g6 11 ♗g5+ ♗e8 12 ♖h4 h6 13 ♖xg6 fxg6 14 ♗d2 ♗e6 15 ♖e4 g5 (D)

Two sets of doubled pawns for Black and a passed e-pawn for White – shouldn't that be good for White? No, that is 'endgame thinking', and here Black's active piece-play more than compensates for the pawn weaknesses. Black already has the more pleasant game.

16 ♠e3 ♠d8 17 ♗c3 b6 18 ♠ae1 ♗f7 19 f4 gxf4 20 ♠f3 ♗g6 21 ♠xf4 ♗e7 22 ♗f2 a5 23 a3 ♗g5!

Concrete chess! The natural 23...♠hf8 is certainly fine for Black, but this is even better –



with this surprising continuation Black wins a pawn.

24 ♖xg5

White could avoid the loss of the pawn by 24 ♠f3, but that would allow Black to create further light-squared weaknesses in White's camp by 24...♗h4+! 25 g3 ♗e7.

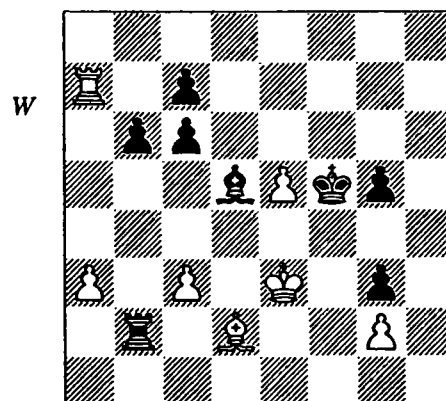
24...hxg5! 25 ♠d4 ♠xd4 26 ♗xd4 ♠xh2 27 ♠e2 ♠h4 28 c3 a4 29 ♗e3 ♗f5

Despite the opposite-coloured bishops, Black has good winning chances, as White has difficulty finding good squares for his pieces.

30 ♗d2 ♠h1 31 ♠e1 ♠h8 32 ♠e3 g4 33 ♠d3 ♠h1 34 ♠d4 ♠b1 35 ♠xa4 ♠xb2 36 ♗e2 g3!

Fixing the g2-pawn on the colour of the black bishop.

37 ♗e3 g5 38 ♠a7 ♗d5 (D)



Now it is all over – g2 falls.

39 ♠xc7 ♗xg2 40 e6 ♗xe6 41 ♗e1 ♠b3 42 ♗d2 ♠xa3 43 ♗xg3 ♗d5 0-1

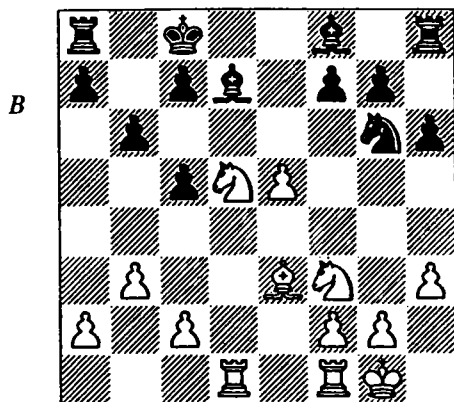
J. Polgar – Topalov
San Luis Wch 2005

1 e4 e5 2 ♖f3 ♖c6 3 ♗b5 ♖f6 4 0-0 ♖xe4 5 d4 ♖d6 6 ♗xc6 dxc6 7 dxe5 ♖f5 8 ♗xd8+ ♗xd8

9 $\text{d}c3$ $\text{d}e7$ 10 $\text{h}3$ $\text{d}g6$ 11 $\text{d}e4$ $\text{h}6$ 12 $\text{b}3$ $\text{c}5$ 13 $\text{e}3$

Apparently a new move. Earlier White put this bishop on b2.

13... $\text{b}6$ 14 $\text{a}d1+$ $\text{d}7$ 15 $\text{d}c3$ $\text{c}8$ 16 $\text{d}5$ (D)



The comment of Ivan Cheparinov – Topalov’s second – on this position in *New in Chess* is instructive: “At first sight a strong move, but the knight only *looks* good on d5.” In my opinion this is an instructive observation! Apparently the Topalov-Cheparinov team shares my view that in a complex variation like the Berlin, it is not enough that something *appears* good or natural – it must be supported by concrete calculations and evaluations.

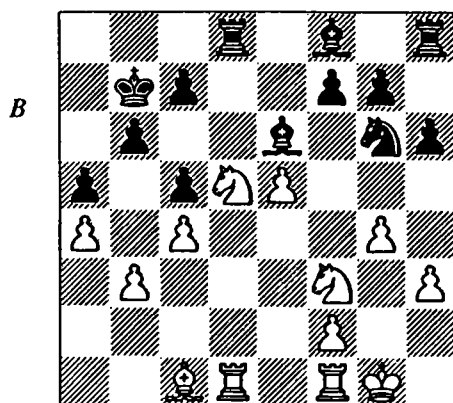
16... $\text{e}6$ 17 $\text{c}4$ $\text{b}7$ 18 $\text{e}c1$?!

This looks slightly indecisive. Cheparinov recommends 18 $\text{f}e1$.

18... $\text{a}5$! 19 $\text{a}4$

Now b3 is an eternal weakness in White’s camp.

19... $\text{d}d8$ 20 $\text{g}4$? (D)



Cheparinov labels this a decisive mistake. For no good reason, White accepts weaknesses

on the kingside and jeopardizes her own king’s position. It is interesting to speculate if a gifted tactician like Judit would ever make such a concession in a sharp middlegame. I don’t think so! I therefore assign this mistake to psychological reasons. If you subconsciously consider the position an endgame, then king safety is perhaps not your primary concern.

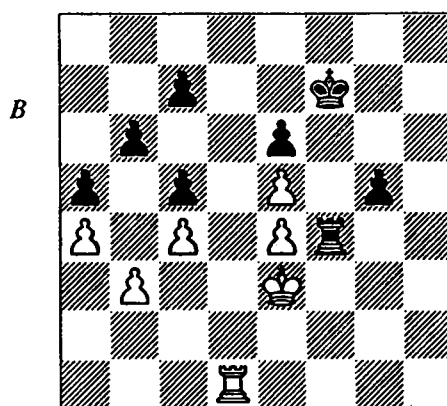
20... $\text{h}5$!

With this simple advance Black obtains a strong initiative that eventually secures him a pawn.

21 $\text{d}e3$ $\text{e}e8$ 22 $\text{f}e1$ $\text{d}f4$ 23 $\text{d}g5$ $\text{e}e7$ 24 $\text{d}xe6$ $\text{f}xe6$ 25 $\text{g}xh5$ $\text{d}xh3+$ 26 $\text{c}f1$ $\text{f}xh5$ 27 $\text{d}g4$ $\text{e}g5$ 28 $\text{e}xg5$ $\text{f}xg5$ 29 $\text{f}3$ $\text{f}f8$ 30 $\text{c}g2$ $\text{d}f4+$ 31 $\text{c}g3$ $\text{h}h5$ 32 $\text{c}f2$ $\text{d}g6$ 33 $\text{d}d7$ $\text{h}h3$ 34 $\text{e}e3$ $\text{d}h4$ 35 $\text{d}d3$ $\text{c}c6$ 36 $\text{e}c3$ $\text{h}h1$ 37 $\text{e}d3$ $\text{d}f5$ 38 $\text{d}e3$ $\text{d}d4$ 39 $\text{d}f1$ $\text{h}h5$ 40 $\text{e}e3$ $\text{f}f4$ 41 $\text{e}cd3$ $\text{g}5$ 42 $\text{e}e4$ $\text{c}b7$?!

Now the position really *is* an endgame, and there is not much need to tuck the king away on b7. 42... $\text{f}xe4$ 43 $\text{f}xe4$ $\text{g}4$ is more natural, when Black should win without too much trouble. However, even in the game the win is never really jeopardized.

43 $\text{c}g3$ $\text{f}xe4$ 44 $\text{f}xe4$ $\text{h}h4$ 45 $\text{d}d2$ $\text{c}c8$ 46 $\text{e}e3$ $\text{c}d7$ 47 $\text{e}e1$ $\text{c}e7$ 48 $\text{d}f3$ $\text{d}xf3$ 49 $\text{c}xf3$ $\text{c}f7$ 50 $\text{d}d1$ $\text{f}f4+$ 51 $\text{c}e3$ (D)



51... $\text{c}g7$!

A strong prophylactic move. As we know from Chapter 4, in rook endgames rook activity is a key factor, and with the text-move Topalov prevents White’s rook from becoming active on the 7th rank.

52 $\text{d}d7+$ $\text{f}f7$! 53 $\text{d}d1$ $\text{c}g6$ 54 $\text{d}d8$ $\text{g}4$ 55 $\text{h}g8+$ $\text{c}h5$ 56 $\text{h}h8+$ $\text{c}g5$ 57 $\text{h}g8+$ $\text{c}h4$ 58 $\text{h}g6$ $\text{f}f3+$ 59 $\text{c}e2$ $\text{c}g3$ 60 $\text{f}xe6$ $\text{c}f4$ 61 $\text{e}e8$ $\text{e}e3+$ 62 $\text{c}f2$ $\text{g}3+$ 63 $\text{c}g2$ $\text{c}xe4$ 64 $\text{e}6$ $\text{c}d3$ 0-1

So how should White handle a complex endgame like the Berlin? I believe the main factor is psychological – to see the position as a ‘queenless middlegame’ rather than an endgame. This means playing actively, calculating concrete variations, and making precise contextual evaluations rather than relying only on generic endgame principles. There is another time and place for those. It is also noteworthy that when Kasparov finally managed to beat Kramnik in the Berlin, he did so by active play and even an early pawn sacrifice. This famous game can be found in a variety of sources, and I also analysed it in my first book, *Foundations of Chess Strategy*.

Svidler – Bruzon
Beersheba Wcht 2005

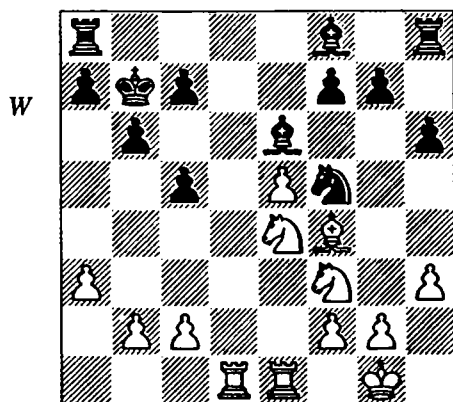
1 e4 e5 2 ♘f3 ♘c6 3 ♗b5 ♘f6 4 0-0 ♘xe4 5 d4 ♘d6 6 ♗xc6 dxc6 7 dxe5 ♘f5 8 ♖xd8+ ♔xd8 9 ♘c3 ♗d7

Above we saw Bruzon win a fine game with this line, but here Svidler manages to break ‘the wall’.

10 h3

Rather than Kabanov’s 10 ♗d1, Svidler prefers an active set-up based on centralization – a key theme in any opening, with or without queens!

10...h6 11 ♗f4 ♔c8 12 ♗ad1 b6 13 ♘e4 c5 14 ♗fe1 ♗e6 15 a3 ♔b7 (D)



16 g4!

White continues to play actively and seizes the initiative.

16...♘e7 17 ♗g3 ♘c6 18 ♘h2! g5

Forced due to White’s threat of f4-f5. However, ...g5 is a well-known plan in the Berlin.

19 ♘f6 ♗e7 20 ♘h5!

In game 3 of the Kasparov-Kramnik match, in a similar position Kasparov allowed Kramnik to take on f6, but Black obtained adequate counterplay. The text-move is more dynamic and fixes Black’s kingside while preparing f4.

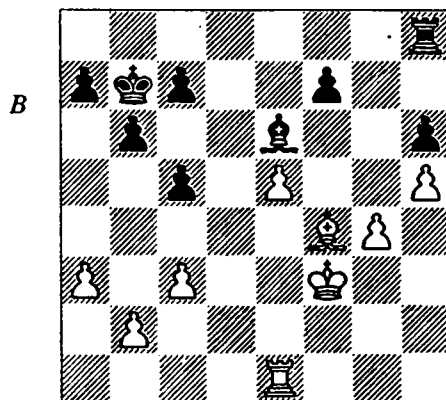
20...♗ad8 21 f4!

Continuing the strategy of actively probing Black’s kingside.

21...gxf4 22 ♘xf4 ♗c4 23 ♘f3 ♗g5 24 ♔f2 ♘d4 25 h4! ♗xf4 26 ♗xf4 ♗e6 27 c3!

White doesn’t mind going into an endgame with opposite-coloured bishops, as his majority on the kingside secures him a clear advantage. Notice that the effect of Svidler’s initial energetic play is an endgame in which one of our key principles applies – that of the better pawn-structure!

27...♘xf3 28 ♗xd8 ♗xd8 29 ♔xf3 ♗h8 30 h5! (D)



Fixing the h6-pawn as a target and preparing an eventual g5, creating an outside passed pawn.

30...♔c6 31 ♗c1 ♔b5 32 ♔g3!

Bringing the king to h4, where it supports the g5 break. Black for his part also activates his king, but to no avail, as he has no break.

32...♔c4 33 ♔h4 ♔d3 34 g5!

Finally!

34...♗g8 35 ♗f4 a5 36 ♗e3+ ♔c2 37 ♗g3! hxg5+

37...♔xb2 38 gxf6 ♗h8 (38...♗xg3 39 ♗xg3 ♗f5 40 ♔g5 followed by 41 ♔f6 wins) 39 ♔g5, and the white king forces its way to g7, winning.

38 ♗xg5 ♗e8

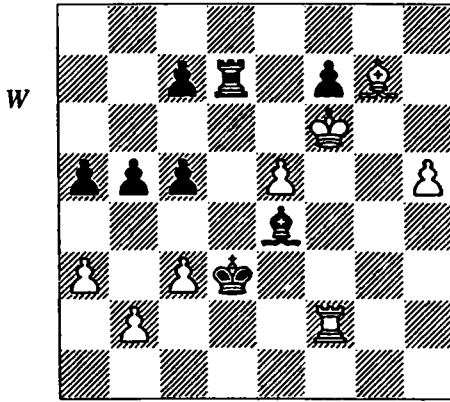
And here 38...♔xb2? loses prosaically to 39 ♗c1+, picking up the rook on g8. Notice the

concrete nature of these last few moves – based on Svidler’s core competence, accurate calculations!

39 ♖g2+ ♔d3 40 ♙f6 ♙f5 41 ♖f2 ♙e4 42 ♙g7! ♞e7 43 ♔g5!

The king decisively penetrates.

43...♞d7 44 ♔f6 b5 (D)



45 ♙h6!

A surprising yet simple way to win the game. The rook on d7 holds the black position together, so White exchanges it off.

45...♔c4 46 ♞d2! 1-0

After 46...♞xd2 47 ♙xd2 ♔d5 48 ♙f4 White picks up f7 and queens one of his pawns.

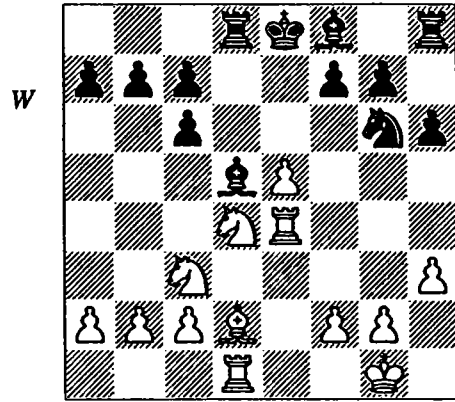
In the tournament in Tiayuan 2005, the Russian grandmaster Alexander Motylev had to face the Berlin in no fewer than three games. Sergei Kariakin escaped with a draw, but Motylev won the other two games in good fashion – playing in the style that I advocate that such complex endgames should be played.

Motylev – Zhang Zhong
Tiayuan 2005

1 e4 e5 2 ♘f3 ♘c6 3 ♙b5 ♘f6 4 0-0 ♘xe4 5 d4 ♘d6 6 ♙xc6 dxc6 7 dxe5 ♘f5 8 ♖xd8+ ♔xd8 9 ♘c3 ♘e7 10 h3 ♘g6

This game was played in round 6 of the tournament. In round 2, Motylev-Kariakin was drawn after 10...h6 11 ♙e3 ♘g6 12 ♞ad1+ ♔e8 13 a3 ♙e7 14 ♞fel h5! 15 ♘d4 h4! 16 f4 ♞h5! (Kramnik’s manoeuvre from game 1 against Kasparov: Black restrains f5 in the spirit of Nimzowitsch!) 17 ♘e4 ♙d7 18 c4 b6 19 a4 ♞d8 20 ♘e2 ♙f8 21 a5 ♙b4 22 ♙d2 ♙e7 23 ♙e3 ♙b4 24 ♙d2 ♙e7 25 ♙e3 ♙b4.

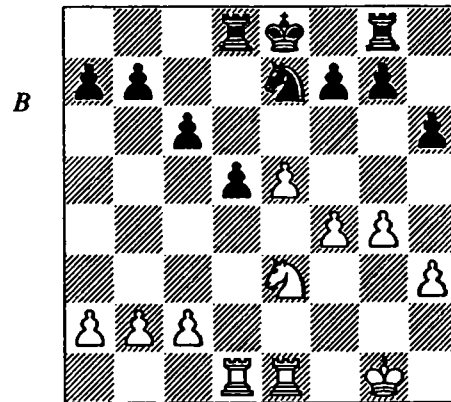
11 ♙g5+ ♔e8 12 ♞ad1 ♙e6 13 ♘d4 ♙c4 14 ♞fel h6 15 ♙d2 ♞d8 16 ♞e4!? ♙d5 (D)



17 ♘xd5!

An extraordinary concept and an example of the principle of *transformation of advantages*. White voluntarily repairs Black’s damaged pawn-structure in order to pursue another advantage: the middlegame-like advantage of a lead in development and a resulting initiative. Much better than slowly trying to probe Black’s queenside pawns!

17...cxd5 18 ♞ee1 ♙c5 19 ♘f5 ♞g8 20 ♙e3 ♙xe3 21 ♘xe3 ♘e7 22 f4 c6 23 g4! (D)



White’s concept has been a success. He has a nice initiative and a clear plan – to push the kingside pawns – while Black has trouble getting his king out of the centre.

23...g6 24 ♔f2 ♔d7?!

The centre is no safe place for the king here – in that respect this is not a ‘real’ endgame – but it is not easy to suggest an improvement for Black.

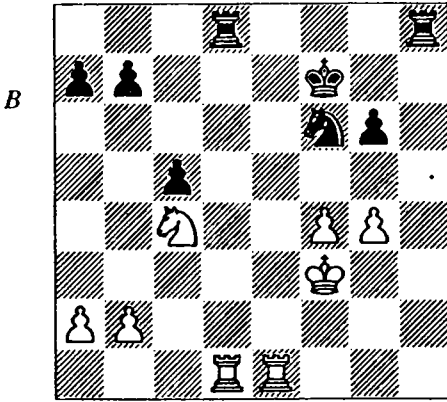
25 c4! ♔e6 26 ♔f3 h5 27 ♘c2! c5

Necessary to prevent 28 ♘d4+.

28 cxd5+ ♘xd5 29 ♔e4 hxg4 30 hxg4 f5+

After 30...♖e7 31 ♖e3 Black will have to play 31...f5+ after all.

31 exf6 ♖xf6+ 32 ♖f3+ ♖f7 33 ♖e3 ♖h8 34 ♖c4! (D)



A nice square for the knight. The threat is 35 ♖d6+, and it is difficult to parry. The black position deteriorates amazingly quickly.

34...♖xd1 35 ♖xd1 ♖h2 36 g5!

Sidetracking the black knight.

36...♖h5 37 ♖e5+ ♖e6 38 ♖xg6 ♖xb2 39 ♖g4! ♖g7 40 f5+! 1-0

Black resigned as 40...♖xf5 is met by 41 ♖e1+. A nice game – White certainly did not win by exploiting Black's fragmented pawn-structure!

Motylev – Harikrishna
Tiayuan 2005

1 e4 e5 2 ♖f3 ♖c6 3 ♖b5 ♖f6 4 0-0 ♖xe4 5 d4 ♖d6 6 ♖xc6 dxc6 7 dxe5 ♖f5 8 ♖xd8+ ♖xd8 9 ♖c3 ♖e7 10 h3 h6 11 ♖e3 ♖g6 12 ♖ad1+ ♖e8 13 a3 ♖e7 14 ♖fe1 h5 15 ♖d4 h4 16 f4 ♖h5

The 'Kramnik plan' again. But this time Motylev finds a nice way of breaking the blockade – a tactic!

17 ♖e4 ♖d7 18 c4 b6 19 b4 ♖f8 (D)

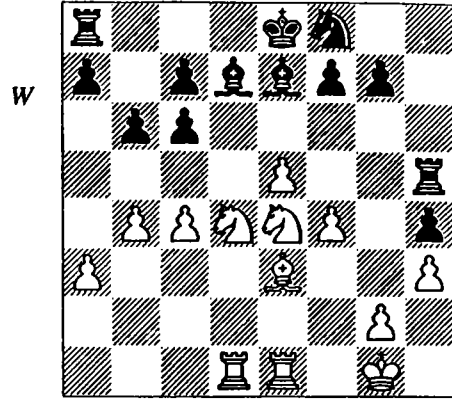
20 f5! c5

20...♖xf5 loses to the tactical shot 21 g4! hxg3 (21...♖xe4 22 gxh5 is insufficient for Black) 22 ♖xg3. But what now?

21 f6!

Not much endgame thinking here, eh?

21...gxf6 22 exf6 cxd4 23 fxg7 ♖h7



23...♖xe7 fails to 24 ♖g5+!, when 24...♖e8 (24...♖xg5 25 ♖xg5+ is hopeless for Black, as is 24...♖e6 25 ♖g3+) 25 ♖d6# is a beautiful mate.

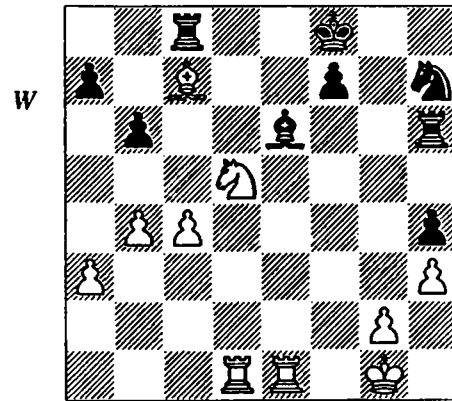
24 ♖xd4

White is winning, and Motylev wraps the game up efficiently.

24...♖h6 25 ♖c3 ♖c8

After 25...c6 the simplest win is probably 26 ♖f2 followed by 27 ♖d4, and the h4-pawn falls.

26 ♖e5 ♖xe7 27 ♖xc7+ ♖e6 28 ♖d5+ ♖f8 (D)



29 ♖f4!

The rook has no good squares.

29...♖g6?!

29...♖h5 is met by 30 ♖d6+ ♖g7 31 ♖f4, followed by 32 ♖xe6+ and 33 c5, and White wins easily.

30 ♖d6+ ♖g7 31 ♖e7!

This fork wins further material.

31...♖xc4 32 ♖e5+ ♖h6 33 ♖xg6 ♖xg6 34 ♖d4 ♖g5 35 ♖xc4 ♖xc4 36 ♖d4 ♖e6 37 ♖f2 1-0

7 The Four Types of Chess-Players and the Endgame

Introduction

As I argued in my first Gambit book, *Foundations of Chess Strategy*, chess-players are not alike, and two equally strong players may approach the same position in very different ways. This testifies to the fact that chess is not really an objective game when played between human beings. Although *eventually* computers may be able to solve ‘the riddle of chess’ through retrograde analysis, and may then manufacture ‘the perfect game’, this is not really important for practising chess-players. Perhaps at some point in time computers will be able to tell us what is the ‘one best way’ to play in a given position – thus making chess an ‘objective’ game with one right solution (and a lot of wrong ones).

However, as I observed in Chapter 5, computers still have weaknesses in understanding certain types of positions – for instance, positions with unbalanced material – and I predict that it will still take a substantial amount of years before the riddle of chess is solved. And even if it happens faster, as a human chess-player preferring to play other humans, I wouldn’t care much. From my point of view, chess is still a game between two players with their own distinct styles, prior knowledge, strengths and weaknesses and tastes concerning what is ‘good chess’. Some people prefer a wild attacking game; others a fine positional effort, and a third segment a combination.

In *Foundations of Chess Strategy*, one of my key aims was to present a model that can help chess-players determine their own chess style. Knowledge of your own chess style can help you make better and more informed decisions regarding your choice of opening, types of positions to enter and strategy for individual games, when you prepare for a particular opponent. Basically, chess-players can be divided

into four distinct types with specific characteristics:

- Reflectors
- Theorists
- Pragmatics
- Activists

These four groups arise from looking at two continuums or axes:

1) Players who are *fact-based* and put a lot of emphasis on precise calculations, ranging to players who mainly play according to *general concepts* and prefer looking at the ‘big picture’ without getting too absorbed in details (calculations).

2) Players who make decisions through *logic* and where a consistent ‘thread’ can be witnessed throughout the game, ranging to players who are *intuitive* and base a lot of their decisions on ‘feeling what the right choice is’ in a given situation.

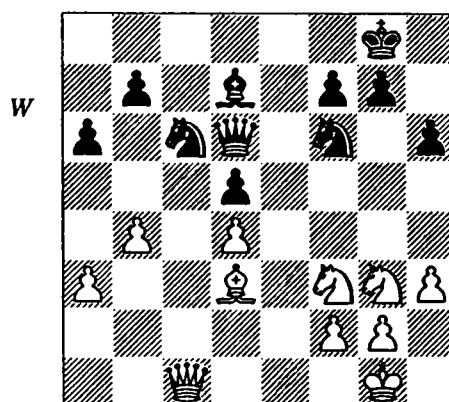
Presenting the groups graphically we get a picture like that at the top of the following page, where I have indicated in which groups a number of well-known past and present players belong (in my opinion).

It is not my intention to go over the characteristics of these four groups once again – after all, this is what a large part of *Foundations of Chess Strategy* was about – but when studying how a number of the mentioned giants play the endgame and apply our 15 general endgame principles, it is striking that differences can be found here as well. While I am sure that endgames leave less choice for ‘style’ and ‘strategic options’ than openings and middlegames, there is no doubt that even in the endgame there is room for personal style as a parameter when you apply the principles. For example, the evaluation of

INTUITION	Activists <i>Tal, Anand, Shirov, Morozevich, Topalov</i>	Reflectors <i>Capablanca, Smyslov, Rubinstein, Petrosian, Karpov, Adams</i>
LOGIC	Pragmatics <i>Lasker, Alekhine, Euwe, Spassky, Fischer, Kasparov, Korchnoi, Svidler</i>	Theorists <i>Steinitz, Tarrasch, Nimzowitsch, Botvinnik, Kramnik, Leko</i>
	FACTS	GENERAL CONCEPTS

'pawn-structure' vs 'initiative and attack' can still differ according to the eyes that see. The talent for exploiting and interest in preserving the two bishops may also differ, as may the value attached to space or control over squares and files.

In the coming four sections – which conclude this book – I shall show how the four types of chess-players identified in *Foundations of Chess Strategy* handle the endgame. Which of the principles do they attach most value to when they have to choose; for which do they display the most talent; and where may they occasionally show certain weaknesses?



Karpov – Leko
Dortmund 1994

23 ♖c5!

Pushing Black's queen back, as Black cannot allow 23...♗xc5 24 dxc5!, handing White a strong queenside majority.

23...♗b8 24 ♕e2 b6

This move – as well as the following one – makes sense, as it puts the pawn on a square of the opposite colour from Black's bishop. But at the same time it increases the scope of White's pieces and allows Karpov to demonstrate the principle of *transformation of advantages*.

25 ♗c3 a5 26 ♕e5! ♗d6 (D)

26...axb4? drops a piece to 27 ♕xc6.

27 ♕xd7!

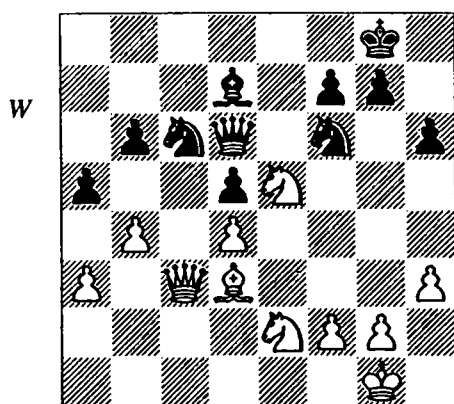
An instructive example of the principles *the right exchange* and *transformation of advantages*. A few moves ago, White's advantage was based on his better bishop, but now White voluntarily rids Black of his bad bishop! The reason is that he gets something better in return: the superior pawn-structure (the a5-pawn is exposed) and excellent piece coordination.

Reflectors

Reflectors are intuitive players with a very good sense of minor advantages, and this trait often makes them very strong endgame players – with particular strength in strategic endgames. In this section we shall study a number of typical endgames by two of the great contemporary reflectors – Anatoly Karpov and Michael Adams. For some reason there are relatively few reflectors in the world top at the moment – perhaps because chess is becoming increasingly concrete, which is not to the liking of reflectors, who are more intuitive in their play.

The strongest reflector in modern times is Anatoly Karpov, who throughout his career has won many impressive strategic endgames in which a number of our principles are visible.

In the following position, White has a small but lasting advantage with more *space* and the *better bishop*. It is instructive to see how Karpov translates these advantages into a full point.



27...♖xd7 28 ♗b5! ♖db8

This passive move is a sad necessity. Black would love to have time to exchange on b4, but 28...axb4? loses to 29 ♖xc6 ♖xc6 30 ♗xc6 bxa3 31 ♖c3.

29 bxa5 bxa5

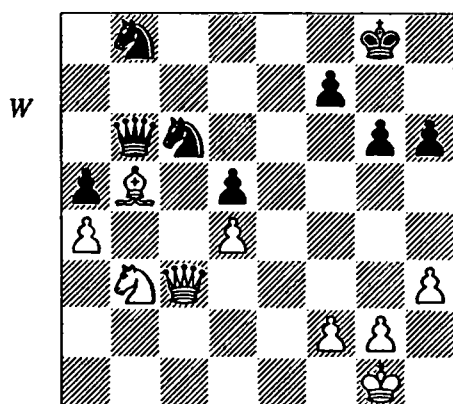
29...♖xa5 is no better due to 30 ♖c8+ ♔h7 31 ♗e8!, and suddenly Black's king is in trouble, as indicated by Ftačnik in his notes in *ChessBase Magazine*.

30 ♖c1!

Targeting the a5-pawn.

30...♖c7 31 ♖b3 ♖b6 32 a4 g6?! (D)

A natural move given the note to Black's 29th move, but this is actually a small weakening of the kingside, on which Karpov pounces immediately. This is one of the reflector's strengths – they are always very alert to minor positional nuances. However, in any case it is not easy to suggest a good defensive plan for Black.



33 h4!

White is certainly better, as his pieces are well coordinated – a typical trait of reflectors. On the other hand, Black has – despite his passive pieces – everything defended for the time

being, and to improve his position further, White must create a *further weakness* in Black's position. To do this Karpov exploits Black's previous move.

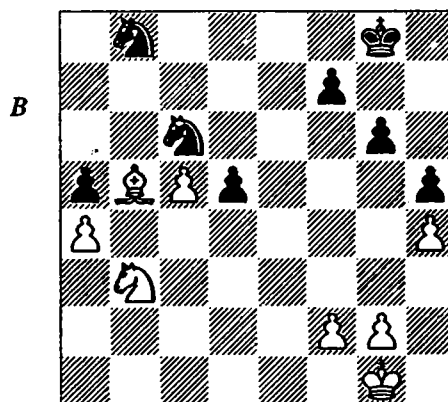
33...h5

It is understandable that Black does not want to allow White to probe his kingside further by playing h5. But ...h5 is a further small concession.

34 ♖c5!

Having created a second weakness – albeit hidden – on the kingside, Karpov now offers the exchange of queens, which (as we shall see) is the *right exchange*.

34...♖xc5 35 dxc5 (D)



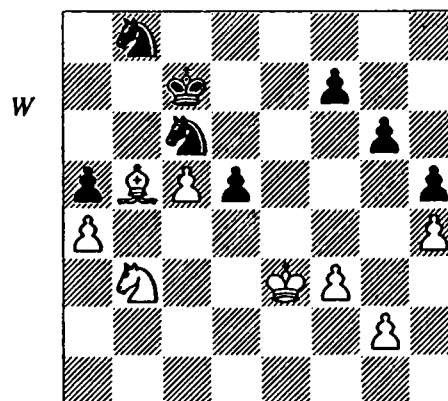
35...♔f8

After 35...♔g7 Ftačnik indicates the following winning line for White: 36 f4 ♔f6 37 ♔f2 ♔f5 38 ♔f3 ♔e6 39 ♔e3 ♔f5 40 ♗xc6! ♖xc6 41 ♖d4+ ♖xd4 42 ♔xd4, and White wins the pawn ending.

36 f3 ♔e7 37 ♔f2 ♔d8

Black has to move his king to the queenside to untangle his knights, but this leaves the kingside vulnerable.

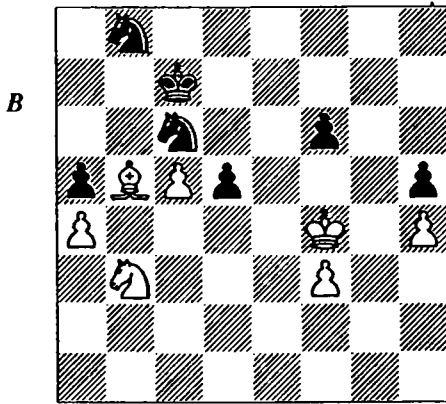
38 ♔e3 ♔c7 (D)



39 g4!

Now we see the hidden point behind White's 33rd move. Black is left with an unenviable choice. Either he takes on g4, leaving White a powerful outside passed pawn on the h-file, or he allows White to take on h5, thus leaving the h5-pawn as an isolated sitting duck on the same colour square as the white bishop.

39...f6 40 gxh5 gxh5 41 ♖f4 (D)

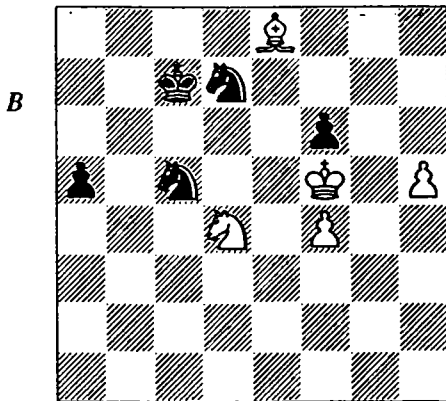


The white king enters decisively.

41...♞d7 42 ♖f5 ♞ce5 43 ♙e2 d4 44 ♞xd4!

There is no need to hurry with 44 f4, as this would allow Black some counterplay based on the d-pawn.

44...♞xc5 45 f4 ♞ed7 46 ♙xh5 ♞xa4 47 ♙e8 ♞ac5 48 h5 (D)



Although both sides have an outside passed pawn, this is not really a contest. Knights are very poor at handling such pawns, whereas the bishop is able to 'multitask'. All according to the principle of *bishop vs knight*!

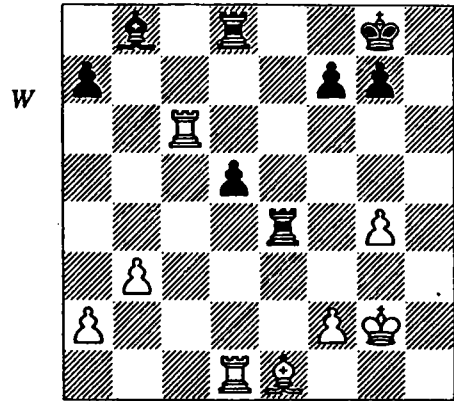
48...a4 49 h6 ♞f8 50 ♖xf6 a3 51 ♖e7! a2 52 ♞c2 ♞ce6 53 ♙f7!

Here we see the bishop's long-range powers.

53...♞d4 54 ♖xf8 1-0

After 54...♞xc2 55 ♙xa2 the bishop has triumphed.

Reflectors are very good at creating 'something out of nothing' – even in very simple positions. In such positions they can exploit their sense of very small nuances.



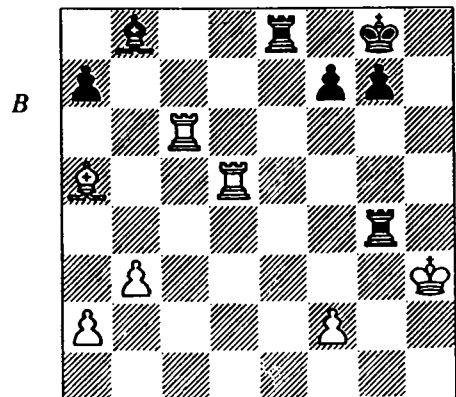
Karpov – Illescas
Bilbao 1987

Take a look at this position. Can White really be better? His g4-pawn is loose, and at first sight Black has no weaknesses. But Karpov manages to pose his opponent practical problems that turn out to be too much for him in the run-up to the time-control. This is not uncommon in games of reflectors. How does it happen? I believe one key point is *psychology*; the opponents don't 'sense the danger' until it is too late. Against reflectors, you have to be very alert to positional nuances!

32 ♙a5! ♞de8

Not 32...♞xg4+? 33 ♖h3, and both rooks are hanging.

33 ♞xd5 ♞xg4+ 34 ♖h3 (D)



34...♞f4

A natural move, by which Black may have expected 35 ♔g2 ♜g4+ 36 ♔h3 ♞f4 with a draw by repetition. But White has a hidden plan, playing against the b8-bishop, which turns out to be vulnerable. 34...♞ge4 is a viable alternative; in that case Black could calmly answer 35 ♞d8 with 35...♔h7.

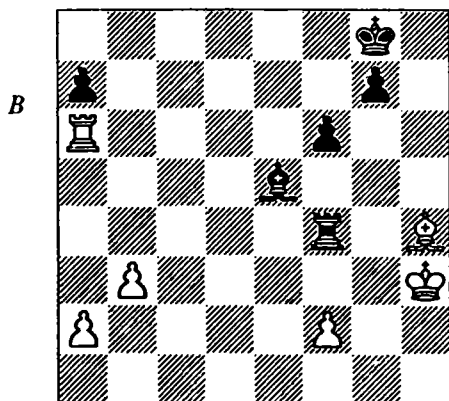
35 ♞d8! ♞xd8 36 ♙xd8 ♙e5

White's threat was 37 ♞c8 followed by an unpleasant discovered check by the bishop. 36...♔h7 was a safer way to parry this threat, only moving the bishop after 37 ♞c8. As Nimzowitsch said, "the threat is stronger than its execution". In the game White has the option of putting the rook on a6 instead.

37 ♙h4!

Defending f2 and threatening 38 ♙g3.

37...f6 38 ♞a6 (D)



Suddenly it becomes clear that Black is fighting for his life. The a7-pawn was the real target once the bishop had been lured away from b8.

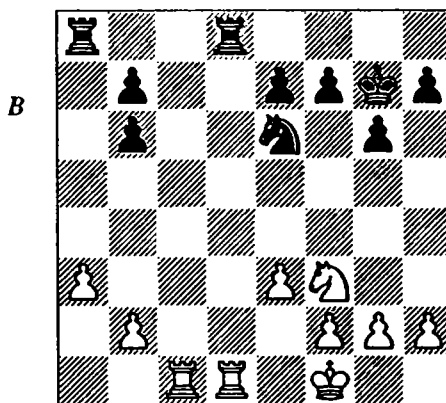
38...♙d4 39 ♞a4 g5?

The decisive mistake. Black should break the pin by 39...♞f3+! (Illescas) 40 ♔g4 ♞d3, although White retains the initiative.

40 ♙g3 g4+ 41 ♔g2 ♞e4 42 ♙b8 f5 43 ♙xa7 ♙xa7 44 ♞xa7 ♔f8 45 ♞a5 ♞f4 46 ♞a4 ♞f3 47 ♞b4 ♔e7 48 a4 1-0

Even Kasparov has occasionally underestimated the danger of seemingly simple endgames against Karpov. In *Foundations of Chess Strategy* I mentioned the 27th game of the first K-K match in 1984/5. Here is another example from the last K-K match – a rapid mini-match in New York 2002 (incidentally the only match

between the two that Karpov actually won – 2½-1½).



Karpov – Kasparov
New York rpd (3) 2002

18...♞xd1+?!

There was no need to make this exchange voluntarily. With each exchange the doubled pawns on b6 and b7 become more significant.

19 ♞xd1 ♞c8 20 ♔e2 ♔f6 21 ♚e1!

Covering Black's entry square on c2 and preparing 22 ♞d7.

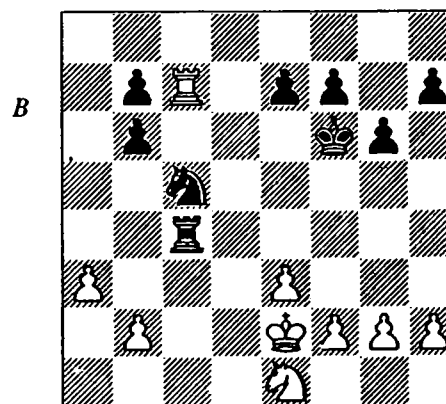
21...♞c4?

Unfounded activity – very risky against a reflector! A more cautious – and better – approach is 21...♞c7 or even 21...♚f8 followed by 22...e6 and 23...♔e7.

22 ♞d7 ♚c5

22...♞c7 is possible, but the rook exchange favours White. Still, this was probably the lesser evil.

23 ♞c7! (D)



Now it is impossible for Black to avoid material loss.

23...b5 24 f3!

Exploiting the principle *no need to hurry!* Before winning the b7-pawn by playing b4, White takes away e4 from the black knight.

24...e5 25 b4 ♖a4 26 ♖xb7

White is already winning.

26...♗c6 27 e4 ♕e6 28 h4 h5 29 ♘d3 ♗c2+ 30 ♕e3 f5

30...♖xg2 31 ♖xb5 f6 32 ♘c5+ ♘xc5 33 ♖xc5 is not better.

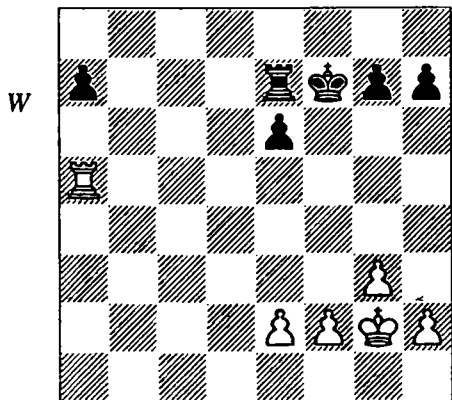
31 g3! fxe4 32 fxe4 ♖g2 33 ♖xb5 ♖xg3+ 34 ♕d2 ♖g2+ 35 ♕e1 ♘c3 36 ♖b6+!

It is better to take the e5-pawn with the knight. From e5 it hits g6 directly.

36...♕e7 37 ♘xe5 ♖e2+ 38 ♕f1 ♖xe4 39 ♖xg6+ ♕f7 40 ♕f2 ♘d5 41 ♗c6 ♘xb4!?

Attempting to get rid of as many pawns as possible. But White retains one on h4, which is more than enough to win.

42 axb4 ♖xb4 43 ♘e5+ ♕g7 44 ♗c4 ♖b5 45 ♘d3 ♕f6 46 ♗c5 1-0



Karpov – Hort
Waddinxveen 1979

Can White really win this? Often 4 vs 3 rook endings with all the pawns on the same wing are drawn, and here Black has an extra a-pawn. Indeed, I believe that the position should be drawn, but to defend such positions against a reflector, you have to be very careful and patient. Due to his scattered pawn-structure and passive pieces, Black must play accurately and be very aware of the potential impact of each decision – especially regarding the pawns.

30 h4 h6?!

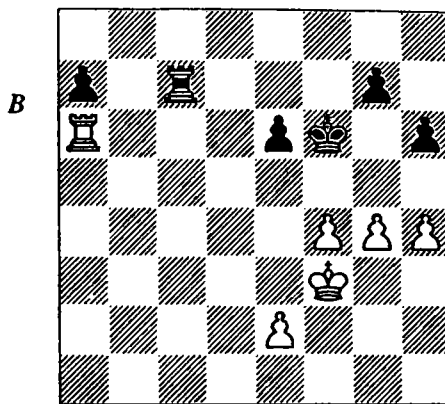
A very natural move, but in fact I think Black should have preferred to stay put. In that case he would later have the option of either keeping

both pawns on his second rank, or building a g6/h7 pawn-chain. Why this small nuance is important becomes visible later.

31 g4! ♕f6 32 f4!

White consistently grabs *space* on the king-side, while Black is forced into passivity.

32...♖b7 33 ♕f3 ♗c7 34 ♖a6 (D)



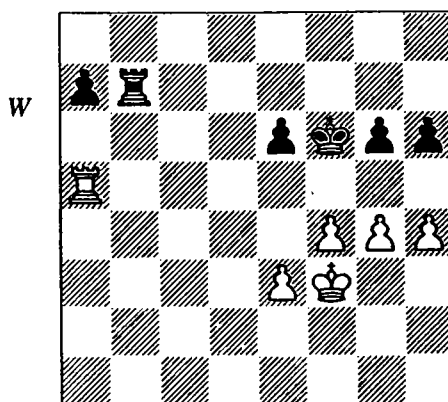
34...g6?

Preventing 35 f5, but surprisingly this may be the decisive mistake. After 34...♕f7 35 f5 (or first 35 h5 and later f5) White eventually creates a passed e-pawn and retains nagging pressure, but Black's defensive chances are still better than in the game. Hort's move attempts to prevent White from creating a passed pawn, but as Karpov shows, the g6/h6 pawn-chain has a hidden weakness. If Black wants to have the g-pawn on g6, it would be better to have the h-pawn on h7 (remember the note to 30...h6). Why this is so will become clear in a few moves.

35 ♖a5!

Taking control over the vital 5th rank.

35...♗d7 36 e3 ♖b7 (D)



37 h5!

Here it is! White undermines Black's pawn-chain and eventually creates a passed pawn after all – under much better circumstances. Note that if his pawn were still on h7, Black would be able to keep his pawn-chain intact, although he would still have to overcome serious difficulties to draw. For example, White can toy with ideas like h6 followed by a rook manoeuvre to h8.

37...g5

After either 37...gxh5 38 ♖xh5 or 37...♔f7 38 hxg6+ ♔xg6, White's plan is the same: put the rook on a6 and play f5, eventually creating the desired passed pawn.

38 ♖a6!

More or less forcing Black to take on f4 due to the threat of 39 f5. At least White doesn't get a passed e-pawn now.

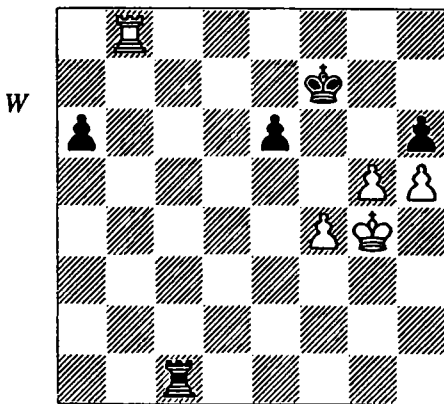
38...gxf4 39 exf4 ♖b3+ 40 ♔g2 ♖b7

After more checks White simply hides on h4.

41 ♔g3 ♔f7 42 ♖a4!

A typical prophylactic reflector move, ensuring the king a safe place on g4 after he plays g5, without being harassed by side-checks from the black rook.

42...♔g7 43 g5! ♖c7 44 ♖a5 ♔g8 45 ♖b5 ♔f7 46 ♔g4 a6 47 ♖b8 ♖c1 (D)



48 g6+! ♔g7

After 48...♔f6? 49 ♖b7! Black can only escape the mating threat on f7 by 49...♖g1+ 50 ♔f3 e5 (50...♖f1+? 51 ♔g2! ♖xf4 52 ♖f7+ ♔e5 53 ♖xf4 ♔xf4 54 g7), but after 51 ♖f7+ ♔e6 52 f5+, the two connected passed pawns bring victory.

49 ♖b7+ ♔f8 50 ♖b6!

Finally White's relentless pressure brings material dividends! Notice that it is not uncommon

in reflector games to see the material gain at a late stage in the game; the reflector's talent is in exploiting small *positional* nuances.

50...♖g1+ 51 ♔f3 ♖f1+ 52 ♔e4 ♖e1+ 53 ♔d4 ♔e7 54 ♖xa6 ♔f6 55 ♖a7 e5+!?

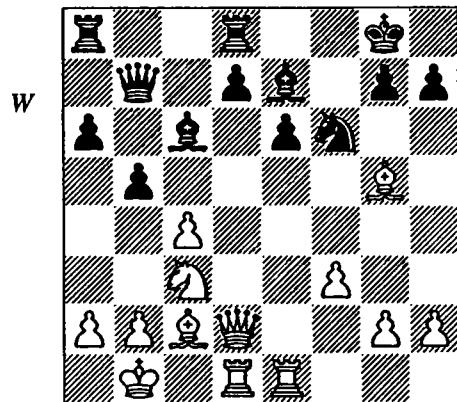
Setting a last trap...

56 fxe5+ ♖xe5 57 ♖a6+!

...which Karpov naturally does not fall for. The pawn ending after the impatient 57 ♖f7+ ♔e6 58 ♖e7+? ♔xe7 59 ♔xe5 ♔f8 60 ♔f6 ♔g8 61 g7 ♔h7 is actually drawn, as 62 ♔f7 is stalemate. Now, on the other hand, White wins easily after 57...♖e6 (57...♔f5 58 g7 ♖e4+ 59 ♔d3 ♖e8 (59...♖g4 60 ♖g6) 60 ♖g6 ♖g8 61 ♔d4, and the white king walks to f7) 58 g7!, and the pawn queens.

1-0

Reflectors thrive on collecting small advantages and do not mind taking the game into an endgame. The transformation of the game from the middlegame and into the endgame is another strong point of reflectors, as their profound understanding of small nuances helps them make the right decision regarding when to exchange into an endgame.



Karpov – Adams
Dos Hermanas 1993

At first sight a complicated position. But with a well-judged sequence of moves Karpov takes the game from a complicated middlegame and into a favourable endgame.

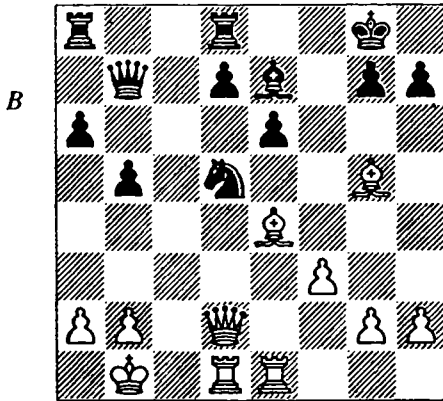
21 ♔d5! ♔xd5

Forced, as 21...♔xd5? 22 cxd5 ♔xg5 23 dxc6 costs Black a piece, while 21...exd5 22 ♖xe7 dxc4 23 ♔xf6 gxf6 24 ♔h6 leads to mate.

22 cxd5 ♔xd5

Again Black has no choice, because 22...♖xd5 fails to 23 ♖xd5 ♜xd5 24 ♜xd5! exd5 (not 24...♙xg5? 25 ♜xg5) 25 ♙xe7 ♜e8 26 ♙b3, and the two bishops easily outperform Black's rook.

23 ♙e4! (D)



The point of White's play! Now Black cannot avoid a horrible endgame with a disastrous pawn-structure.

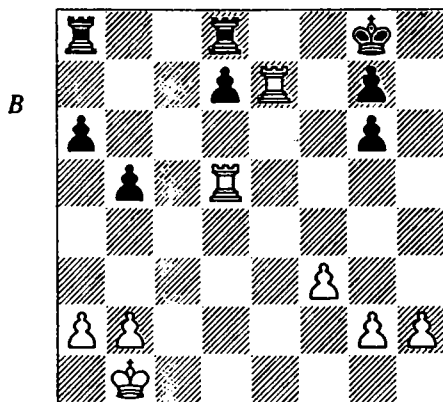
23...♙xg5

23...♙b4?? loses to the simple 24 ♖xb4.

24 ♖xg5 ♖b6 25 ♙xd5 exd5 26 ♜e7! ♖g6+

Black is forced to accept this further weakening of his pawn-structure, as 26...g6? 27 ♖e5 simply leads to mate.

27 ♖xg6 hxg6 28 ♜xd5 (D)



From 21 ♜d5 this position arose more or less by force. Rather than a complex middle-game, White now has a favourable endgame, where Black's pawns are a mess. That's all a master reflector like Karpov needs!

28...♞a7 29 ♜d6 ♚h7 30 ♜e4!

Due to the threat of 31 ♜h4+ Black cannot avoid the loss of a pawn.

30...♞c7

Giving up the a-pawn in return for a little bit of counterplay – but it rapidly evaporates.

31 ♜xa6 d5 32 ♜h4+ ♚g8 33 ♜d4!

We have already seen this theme in some of the previous games. Reflectors do not like to allow the opponent any chances, so Karpov would never go for 33 ♜xg6? d4!.

33...♚f7 34 ♜f4+

No need to hurry! White calmly repeats moves to get closer to the time-control.

34...♚g8 35 ♜d4 ♚f7 36 ♜b6!

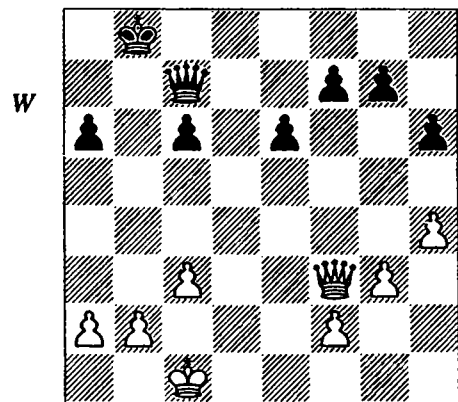
Another of the weak pawns is about to fall.

36...♞c4 37 ♜d2 b4 38 b3 ♜f4 39 ♚c2 g5 40 h3!

Again depriving Black of any counterplay. Of course ...g4 should not be allowed.

40...♜d7 41 ♚d1 1-0

Michael Adams is himself one of the world's strongest reflectors, and he too has won many endgames where the opponent did not notice the danger until it was too late. This happens even for the world's best players against master reflectors.



Adams – Anand
Linares 2002

26 h5!

This resembles 'the Caro-Kann grip' (although the opening was a French Defence), with which we are familiar from previous chapters. Adams himself evaluates the position as 'slightly better for White' in his notes in *Informator*. Still, the win seems to be deceptively simple!

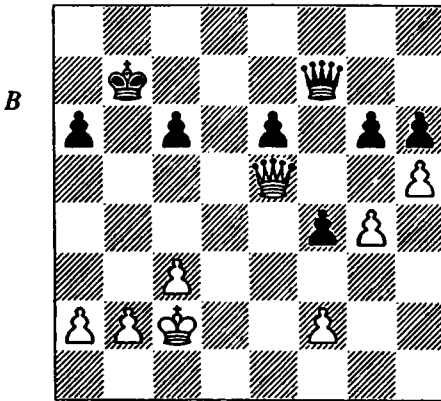
26...♚b7 27 ♚c2 f5?

In his notes Adams simply states "better is 27...f6 28 ♖e4 ♖f7 or 27...♖d7 with a slight advantage for White". The text-move illustrates

a typical danger in endgames against reflectors: stay patient and do not weaken your position voluntarily! Now Adams brings home the point without even activating his queenside majority which is often White's trump in Caro-Kann grip positions. Instead he goes after Black's vulnerable kingside pawns.

28 ♖d3 ♜f7 29 ♜e2 f4 30 g4 g6 31 ♜e5!
(D)

A dominant centralized position for the white queen.



31...g5?

Adams labels this the decisive mistake and gives 31...g5 32 g5 ♜h7+ 33 ♖c1! ♜f7 34 a4 as better, although I doubt that this would save Black in the long run either.

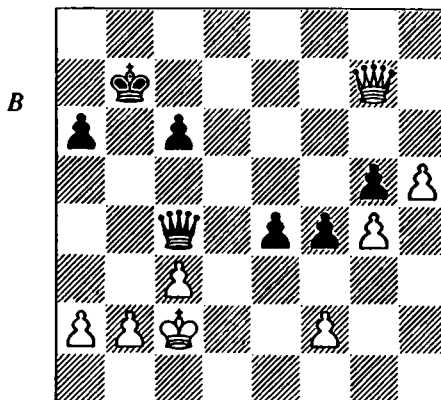
32 ♜h8!

Picking up the vital h6-pawn. Black's counterplay is insignificant.

32...e5 33 ♜xh6 e4 34 ♜g6!

Stronger than 34 ♜xg5 e3. Winning a tempo is more important than another pawn.

34...♜c4 35 ♜g7+ ♖c8 36 ♜h8+ ♖b7 37 ♜g7+ (D)



No need to hurry!

37...♖c8 38 ♜f8+ ♖c7 39 ♜e7+ ♖c8 40 ♜e8+ ♖c7 41 ♜e7+ ♖c8 42 h6!

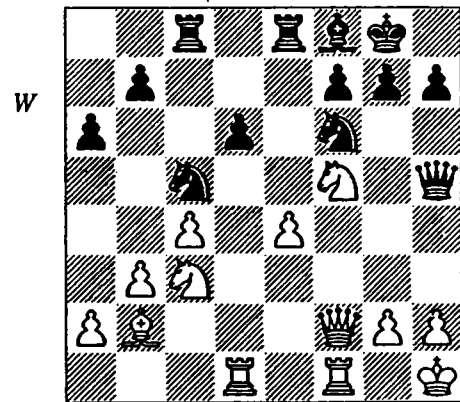
Black has no perpetual after 42...♜e2+ 43 ♖b3 ♜b5+ 44 ♜b4 ♜d5+ 45 ♖a3.

42...c5 43 ♜e8+ ♖c7 44 h7

Here too Black will run out of the checks, so he resigned.

1-0

Reflectors are very strong at *coordinating the pieces*, so that the pieces seemingly 'by coincidence' are suddenly on the right squares. They are also excellent in exploiting the principle of *transformation of advantages*.



Adams – Kengis
Århus 1997

21 ♜f3!

The exchange of queens transforms a sharp middlegame position into a favourable endgame.

21...♜xf3

A serious concession, but the alternatives were not pleasant either; for example, 21...♞cd8 22 ♘d5! ♘ce4 23 ♜xh5 ♘xh5 24 ♘c7 and wins, or 21...♖h8 22 ♜xh5 ♘xh5 23 ♘d6 ♘d6 24 ♞xd6 ♘xe4 25 ♘xe4 ♞xe4 26 ♞d7 with a clear plus for White, as indicated by Har-Zvi in *ChessBase Magazine*.

22 gxf3

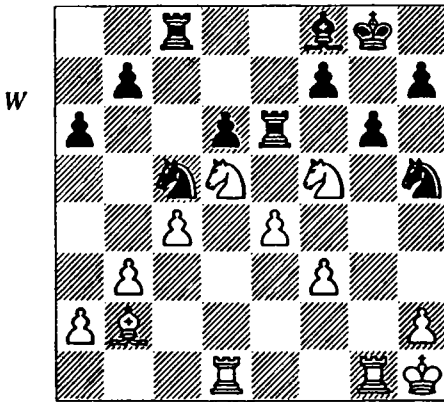
A major improvement of White's position: the e4-pawn is securely covered while the g-file is opened.

22...♞e6 23 ♘d5! ♘h5

After 23...♘d5 24 cxd5 ♞g6 (24...♞ee8 loses to 25 ♘xg7! ♘xg7 26 ♞g1) 25 ♘c1!, the black rook is in trouble.

24 ♞g1 g6 (D)

White was threatening 25 ♖xg7! ♜xg7 26 ♜xg7+! ♖xg7 27 ♜de7+ and wins.



25 ♜g5!

All White's pieces are on excellent *squares and files*, and now he exploits this to enhance his advantage by means of a small combination.

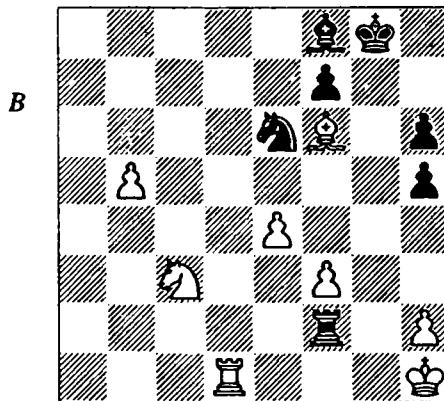
25...h6 26 ♜xh5! gxh5 27 ♜f6+ ♜xf6

Necessary, as 27...♔h8 28 ♜xh5+ ♔h7 29 ♜f6+ ♔h8 30 ♜g1! is even worse.

28 ♖xf6

White is winning – just compare the two *pawn-structures!*

28...b5 29 cxb5 axb5 30 ♜xd6 ♜a8 31 b4! ♜e6 32 ♜xb5 ♜xa2 33 ♜c3 ♜f2 34 b5! (D)



Black has done his best to obtain counterplay, but White's advantage has not diminished. The b-pawn clinches the issue. This is a simple example of the principle of *transformation of advantages*.

34...♖c5

The pawn must be stopped – 34...♜xf3 35 b6! ♜xf6 36 b7 wins for White.

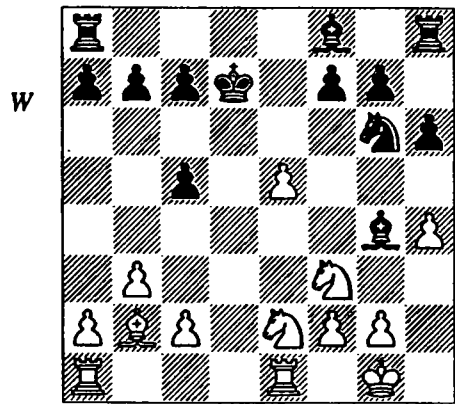
35 ♜d5 ♜xf3 36 ♜b1!

Rooks belong behind passed pawns!

36...♜f4 37 ♜xf4 ♜xf4 38 ♖d8! ♜xe4 39 b6 ♜b4 40 ♜xb4 ♖xb4 41 ♖h4! 1-0

White wins after 41...♖c5 42 b7 ♖a7 (or 42...♖d6 43 ♖g3) 43 ♖f2! ♖b8 44 ♖g3 ♖a7 45 b8♙+ ♖xb8 46 ♖xb8 – the bishop has the right colour!

Finally, reflectors have a good feel for *positional sacrifices* (e.g. of an exchange or a pawn), and for *making the right exchanges*.



Adams – Almasi
Calvia OL 2004

Undoubtedly, the reader has already recognized the features of the Berlin Defence, which we investigated in the previous chapter. Adams breaks down the wall with a strong *long-term positional pawn sacrifice*.

16 e6+! fxe6

16...♖xe6 is met by 17 h5! ♜e7 18 ♜f4 ♜d8 19 ♜ad1+ ♔c8 20 ♜xd8+ ♔xd8 21 ♜xe6+ fxe6 22 ♜xe6 with a solid advantage for White.

17 ♜f4!

White's point! Black cannot avoid the *exchange* of his vital light-squared bishop.

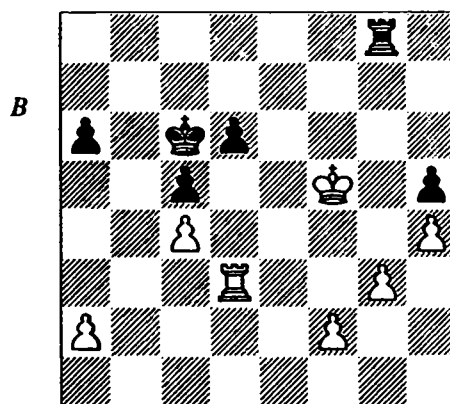
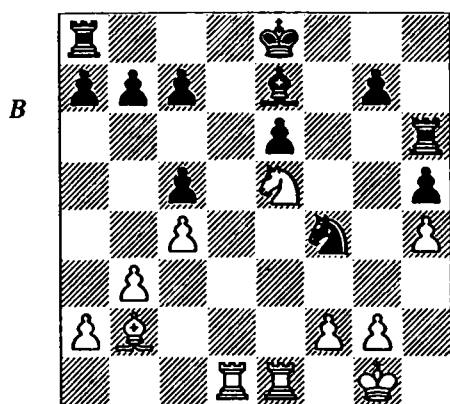
17...♜xf4 18 ♜e5+ ♔e8 19 ♜xg4 h5 20 ♜e5 ♜h6 21 ♜ad1 ♖e7 22 c4! (D)

Let's take stock. Black is temporarily a pawn up, but his pawns and pieces are scattered around the board, while White's forces are harmoniously placed and well coordinated. Conclusion: White is clearly better.

22...♜d8 23 ♜xd8+ ♖xd8 24 g3 ♜g6 25 ♜d3!

With the double threat on c5 and g7 White wins back his pawn with advantage.

25...b6 26 ♖xg7 ♜h7 27 ♖c3 ♔d7 28 ♔g2 ♖e7 29 ♔f3!



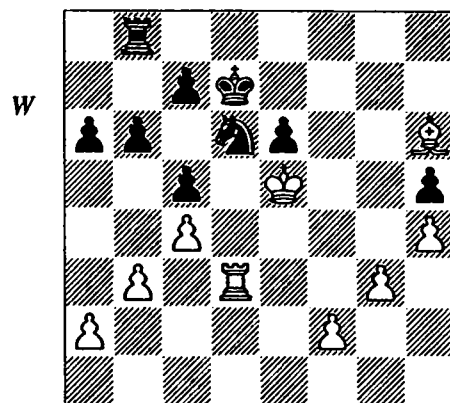
The king is wonderfully centralized on e4.
29...♔d6 30 ♖e4 ♜f7 31 ♜e3! ♜e7 32 ♜f3!

The *right exchange I*! With the given pawn-structure Black cannot allow the exchange of rooks, as his pieces will be unable to stop an eventual passed pawn on the h-file.

32...♜f5 33 ♜e5+!

The *right exchange II*! As we know from Chapter 3, with asymmetrical pawn-structures bishops are usually better than knights. Furthermore, the text-move allows the king to become even more active.

33...♔xe5 34 ♖xe5 ♜f8 35 ♔d2 a6 36 ♔h6! ♜b8 37 ♜d3+ ♜d6 (D)



38 ♖f6!

King activity! Black cannot allow the white king to pick up the h5-pawn.

38...♜g8 39 ♔f4! b5 40 ♜d2 bxc4 41 bxc4

Black is in zugzwang and cannot avoid losing material.

41...♖c6 42 ♔xd6 cxd6 43 ♖xe6 ♜e8+ 44 ♖f5 ♜g8 45 ♜d3! (D)

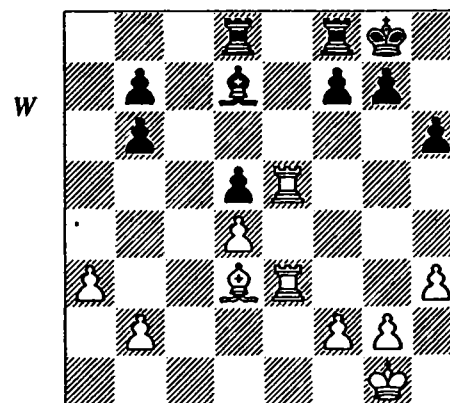
The final finesse. White prepares the advance of the f-pawn by covering the g3-pawn. 45...♜f8+ 46 ♖g6 ♜xf2 47 ♜a3! followed by 48 ♖xh5 is too slow for Black.

45...♜g4 46 f4 ♜g8 47 ♖f6 ♜e8 48 ♖g6 ♜e4
49 ♜c3 d5 50 cxd5+ ♖xd5 51 ♖xh5 ♖d4 52 ♜c1 c4 53 f5 1-0

Theorists

As the term indicates, theorists are knowledgeable players with a profound knowledge of theory, concepts and chess history. It will come as no surprise that theorists are very strong in technical endgames, in which they can exploit their vast knowledge of endgame theory. However, here we are mainly interested in *strategic* endgames, and theorists are excellent here as well.

As with reflectors, there are relatively few in the world top today, but two of the real heavyweights belong to this category, and we shall look at a number of their endgames to illustrate the play of theorists in the endgame: Vladimir Kramnik and Peter Leko.



Kramnik – Leko
Budapest rpd (9) 2001

This is a typical theorist endgame! Notice that it is a rapid game. Kramnik demonstrates

the theorist virtues of *systematic improvements* of the position, deep understanding of the *pawn-structure* and the concepts of *space* and *domination*. The queens have just been exchanged on b6, leaving Black with a somewhat fragile pawn-structure on the queenside. Furthermore, White has the better bishop and the more active rooks. That's all a master theorist needs!

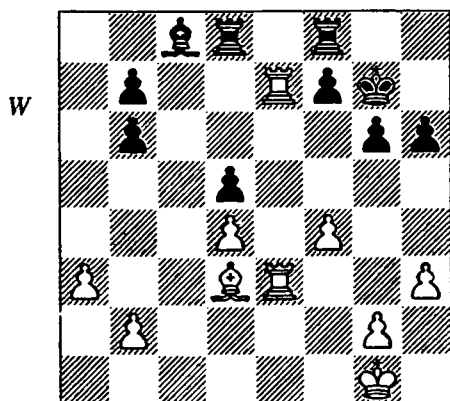
23 ♖e2

Better than 23 ♜xd5?! ♖e6 24 ♜xd8 ♜xd8 25 ♜e4 (25 ♖e4 ♜xd4 26 ♖xb7 ♜d1+ 27 ♖h2 ♜d2) 25...♖f5 26 ♜e3 ♖e6, and Black escapes with a draw.

23...♖e6 24 f4! g6 25 ♖d3!

Forcing Black back by threatening 26 ♖xg6 or 26 f5. Thereby White gets access to the 7th rank – in the spirit of Nimzowitsch, another of the great theorists.

25...♖c8 26 ♜e7! ♖g7 (D)



27 ♖b5!

A key move that takes away d7 and e8 from the black pieces, reducing them to passive spectators. The only question is whether White can incrementally improve his position enough to win. This is a typical theme in theorist games – that the opponent can only wait while the theorist systematically builds up the pressure.

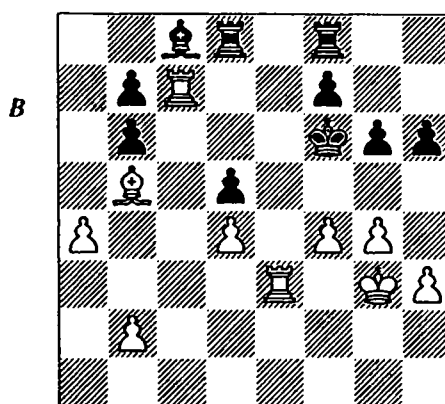
27...♖f6 28 ♜c7 ♜d6

Black faces a difficult choice here. Should he try to slow White down on the kingside by 28...h5 ? Leko chooses not to, as this would place another pawn on the colour of the bishop. I am not sure that this is the right decision.

29 ♜c3 ♜dd8 30 ♜e3 ♜d6 31 a4 ♜dd8 32 ♖f2 ♜d6 33 g4

Having systematically improved his position on the other side, White finally acts on the kingside as well.

33...♜dd8 34 ♖g3 (D)



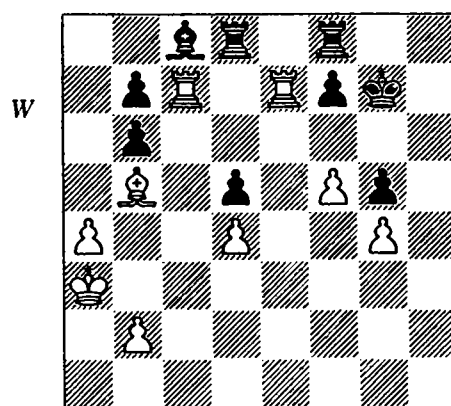
34...g5!?

Again a difficult decision. White threatened h4 and g5+, but this allows White even more space on the kingside. Theorists are experts in exploiting *space* advantages.

35 f5! h5 36 ♜ee7! hxg4 37 hxg4 ♖g7 38 ♖f3!

Black is completely tied up, and White now turns to the next step in his plan: gaining more space on the queenside and creating a path forward for the white king. Systematic chess – the trademark of theorists!

38...♖f6 39 ♖e3 ♖g7 40 ♖d3 ♖f6 41 ♖c3 ♖g7 42 ♖b4 ♖f6 43 ♖a3! ♖g7 (D)



44 b4!

White's plan is simple: he cannot attack the b6-pawn, so instead he exchanges it, so that his king gets access to c5. Then Black cannot defend the weak d5-pawn.

44...♖f6 45 a5! bxa5 46 bxa5 ♖g7 47 ♖b4 ♖f6 48 ♖c5

Like clockwork!

48...♖g7 49 ♖e2!

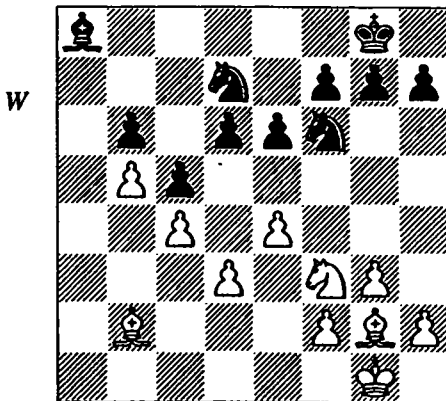
Finally allowing the black rooks to move...

49...♖de8 50 ♜xe8 ♜xe8 51 ♔f3!

...only to see White pick up several of his pawns. The one on d5 is the first to go, and b7 is next.

1-0

The term 'theorist' should not be misunderstood. When it comes to opening theory, theorists are not the ones driving theoretical knowledge forward when it comes to *single moves* (pragmatics are the ones that mainly do that). Rather, theorists work with entire *concepts* or *opening systems*. Like when Kramnik successfully employed the Berlin Defence against Kasparov in London 2000, after which 'the whole world' started playing the Berlin. Theorists prefer solid and long-lasting systems. There is a downside to this, though. Occasionally, the solid nature of theorists' openings and general play makes it difficult for them to win games against strong opposition, and theorists therefore display a relatively high drawing rate. To win games, they often have to 'grind down' the opponent – like Kramnik does here.



Kramnik – Illescas
Dos Hermanas 1997

White has two minor advantages: the *two bishops* and more *space*. Theorists love working on these two types of advantages!

21 ♖d2!

Bringing the knight to a4 to tie Black to the defence of the b6-pawn.

21...♜e8 22 ♖b1! ♔b7 23 f4 f6 24 ♖c3 ♜f7 25 ♜a4 ♜e7 26 d4!

Gaining more space. Black cannot take, as 26...cxd4 27 ♔xd4 leaves the b6-pawn defenceless.

26...♜d8 27 d5! exd5

Forced, as 27...e5? 28 ♔h3! costs Black the b6-pawn. However, any opening of the position plays into the two bishops' hands.

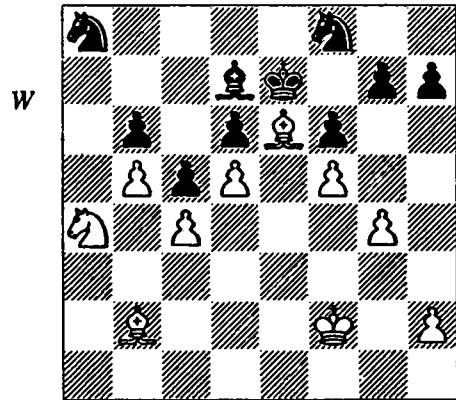
28 exd5 ♖c7 29 ♔h3 ♜a8

A sad square for the knight but necessary in order to cover the b6-pawn. However, given the closed nature of the position, it is no catastrophe to place the knight passively for a moment. White still has to break through, and that is not easy.

30 ♔e6 ♖f8 31 f5

Bolstering the bishop and keeping the black pieces out of play.

31...♔c8 32 ♜f2 ♔d7 33 g4 ♜e7 (D)



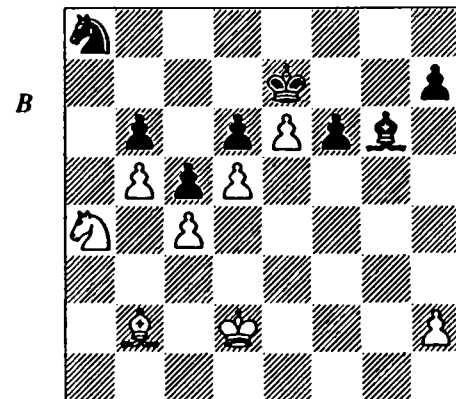
34 g5!

To win, White must break through on the kingside. There is no way through on the queenside.

34...♖xe6!

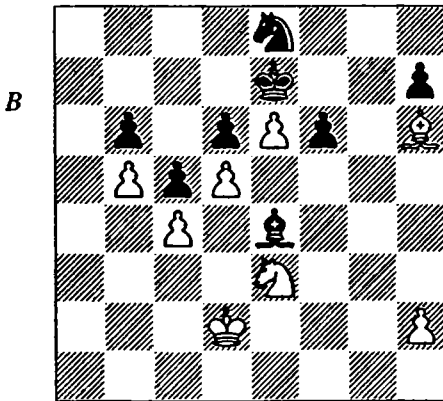
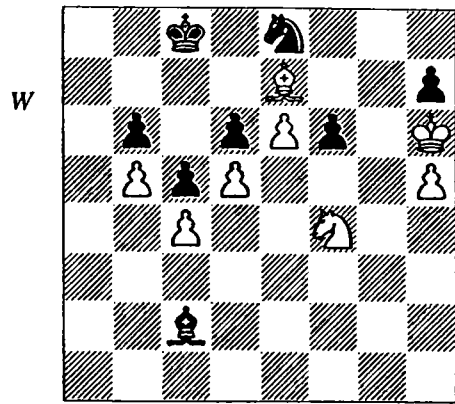
Illescas defends well. He is willing to allow a far-advanced passed pawn in order to eliminate White's bishop-pair and to activate his own bishop.

35 fxex6 ♔e8! 36 gxf6+ gxf6 37 ♜e3 ♔g6 38 ♜d2! (D)



Theorists are logical players; it is a pleasure to follow their systematic planning and playing routine. Kramnik's plan goes something like this: "First, I bring my king to c3 to cover c4. Then, I regroup my bishop and knight, so that the knight takes over the defence of the c4-pawn. Finally I bring my king back to the kingside and attempt to break through there."

38...e4 39 e1 e2 40 c3 f1 41 e6 e2 42 f4 f1 43 b2! c7 44 d1 g2 45 e3 e4 46 e6 e8 47 d2! (D)



The plan has been carried out – it is time to devise a new one, answering the question: how to break through on the kingside?

47...c7 48 e2 e8 49 f2 c7 50 g3 d3 51 g4 e8 52 f4 b1 53 f5+! d8!

After 53...xf5? 54 xf5 c7 (54...d8 55 e8) 55 e7 e8 56 e8!, Black is in zugzwang and loses. Illescas should be commended for his careful and patient defence. Such patience is necessary in games against theorists!

54 e8!

White gradually wins more space. But Black continues to defend resourcefully:

54...d3! 55 e7+

Taking on d6 is just a draw, as c4 and b5 fall in return.

55...c7 56 e3 c8 57 g4! c7 58 h5! g7+ 59 h6 e8

Not 59...f5+? 60 xf5 e5 61 e6, and the e6-pawn decides. Notice that Black's king is cut off.

60 h4! c8 61 h5 c7 62 g2! c8!

Black doesn't lose his patience. 62...xc4? loses to 63 xh7.

63 f4! e2 (D)

64 xf6?!

This piece sacrifice is a very creative way to break Black's defences, although it is not clear that it should succeed. Instead, as Nunn indicates, 64 g6! probably wins.

64...xf6 65 g7!

That's why White brought his knight to f4 on move 63.

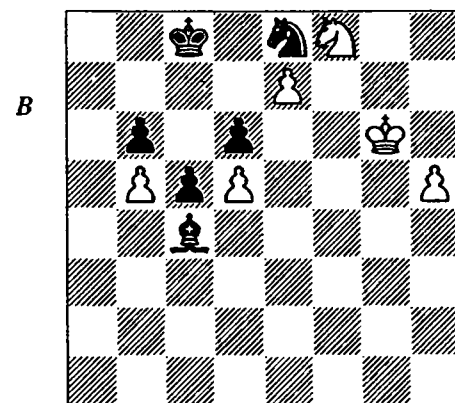
65...e8+ 66 f7 c7!

Not 66...d8 67 e7+ d7 68 e6! e1! 69 f8+ c8 70 h6! (but certainly not 70 xe8? xh5+, and Black wins!) 70...h5+ 71 g8 f6+ 72 g7, and the h7-pawn falls, after which White should win, as indicated by Ribli.

67 e7 h6 68 e6! e1 69 g6 e8 70 f8

Necessary to keep Black's king cut off.

70...e2 71 xh6 e4 72 g6 (D)



72...xd5

Ribli points out in *ChessBase Magazine* that 72...d3+! 73 f7 c4 74 xe8 c3 75 f7 xb5 76 h6 c2 77 h7 c1 h8 f4+ gives Black good drawing chances, although the e7-pawn still gives reasons for concern.

73 h6 c4?

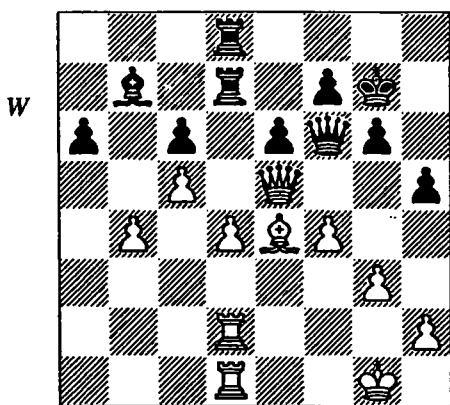
Black should play 73...c7, when after 74 e6! xe6 75 h7 d7 76 h8 xe7 he can hope to set up a fortress.

The text-move just loses. Such mistakes are not uncommon in theorist games – the opponent is simply worn down by the relentless pressure.

74 h7 ♖e4+ 75 ♔f7 ♖xh7 76 ♔xe8 ♖g8 77 ♘d7! c3 1-0

Here Black lost on time, but his position was lost in any case after 78 ♔f8.

As we have already seen, theorists thrive in closed positions. In such positions, they can exploit their skills in long-range planning and slowly but surely build up the pressure.



Kramnik – J. Polgar
Dortmund 1997

White is evidently better, but how to win? Kramnik's plan is simple and straightforward:

- 1) activate the king;
- 2) advance the kingside pawns; and
- 3) penetrate via the kingside.

30 ♔f2! h4?!

This plays into White's hands, as h3 and g4 was part of White's plan anyway.

31 ♔e3 hxg3 32 hxg3 ♖a8?!

It was better to oppose White's coming possession of the h-file by 32...♖h8.

33 ♖h2! ♗xe5 34 fxe5 ♔f8 (D)

35 ♖f1!

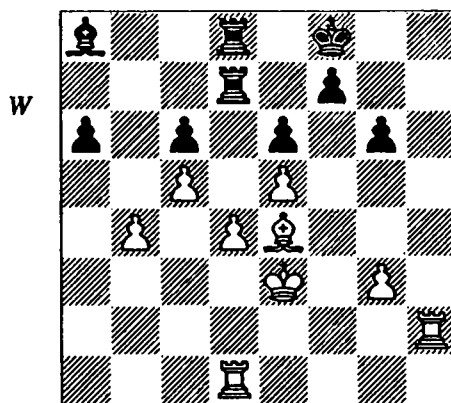
Targeting the black king. The threats are 36 ♖xg6 and 36 ♖h7.

35...♖xd4

35...♔g7 doesn't help after 36 ♖fh1 ♖xd4 37 ♖h7+ ♔f8 38 ♖xg6!, when 38...fxg6? 39 ♖h8+ ♔e7 40 ♖1h7# is mate.

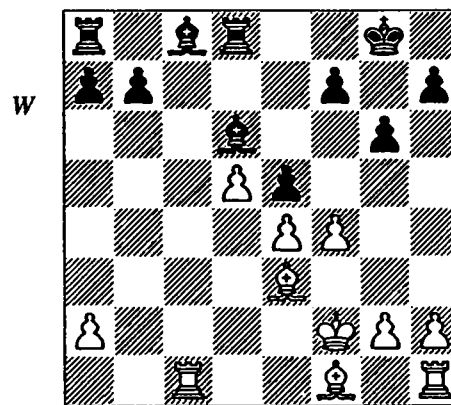
36 ♖h7! ♖8d7?

This drops a piece, but 36...♖4d7 37 ♖xg6 is not much better.



37 ♖h8+ ♔e7 38 ♖xa8 ♖xb4 39 ♖xc6 ♖b3+ 40 ♔f2 ♖d2+ 41 ♔e1 1-0
41...♖a2 42 ♖e8# is mate.

Theorists possess a very profound understanding of the *pawn-structure*. This especially applies to the *central pawns*. It was the theorist Mikhail Botvinnik that invented (or at least popularized) the so-called 'pawn-roller centre', and his legacy is carried on by modern theorists.



Kramnik – Leko
Budapest rpd (1) 2001

Play revolves around White's central pawns – especially the passed d-pawn. It is instructive to see how, step by step, Kramnik removes the obstacles ahead of this pawn, so that it can eventually decide the game.

18 ♖c5!

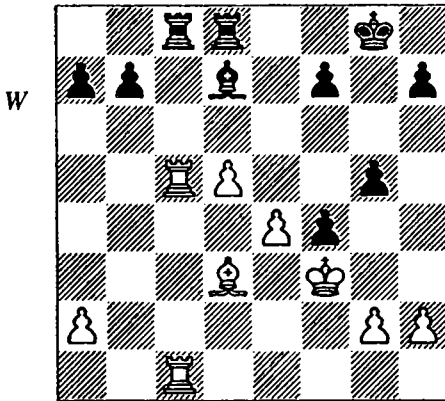
The first blocker is cleared through a temporary pawn sacrifice.

18...♖xc5+ 19 ♖xc5 exf4 20 ♔f3 ♖d7 21 ♖d3!

Not 21 ♔xf4?! ♖ac8, and Black takes possession of the open c-file.

21...♖ac8 22 ♖hc1 g5 (D)

22...♖xc5 23 ♖xc5 ♖c8 24 ♖xc8+ ♗xc8 25 ♕xf4 is better for White with his centralized king and strong central pawns.



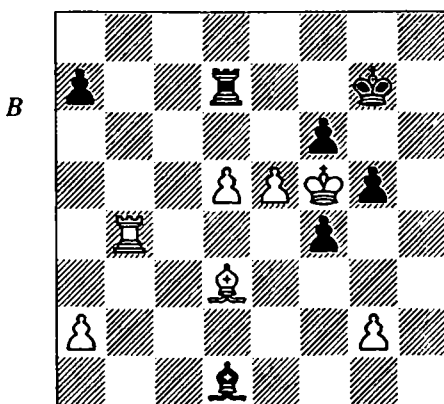
Now Black threatens 23...♖xc5 24 ♖xc5 ♖c8. 23 ♖c7!

As already mentioned, theorists are 'related' to Nimzowitsch, and one of the great thinker's mantras was 'prophylaxis'. The text-move prevents the double exchange of rooks and incidentally threatens 24 ♖xd7!. In this way the next blocker is removed from the d-file.

23...♖xc7 24 ♖xc7 ♗a4 25 ♕g4! h6 26 ♖xb7 ♖d7 27 ♖b4 ♗d1+ 28 ♕f5!

All White's pieces outperform their black counterparts.

28...♕g7 29 h4! f6 30 hxg5 hxg5 31 e5! (D)



The road is cleared for the central pawns through tactics.

31...fxe5

31...♖xd5 fails to 32 ♖b7+ ♕h6 (32...♕f8 33 ♕xf6; 32...♕g8? 33 ♗c4; 32...♕h8 33 ♕g6) 33 ♗b1! fxe5 (33...♖xe5+ 34 ♕xf6) 34 ♕e6!, and the mating threat on h7 costs Black his rook.

32 ♕xe5 f3 33 gxf3 ♗xf3 34 d6

Material is equal, but the value of the passed pawns is not. White is winning.

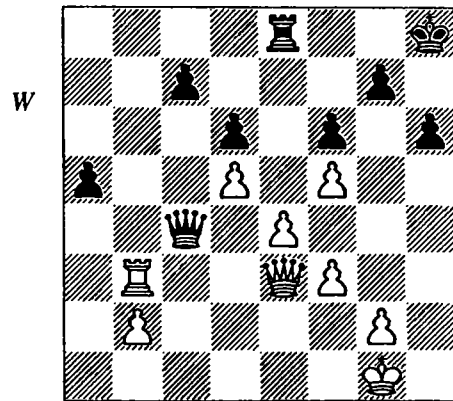
34...♖d8 35 ♗f5 ♗c6 36 d7!

As we already know from Chapter 2, tactics abound when passed pawns are close to their destination. Now 36...♗xd7 drops a piece to the pin 37 ♖b7!.

36...♖f8 37 ♖d4! 1-0

37...♖d8 loses to 38 ♕e6, so Black resigned. The triumph of White's central pawns!

Leko himself is a master theorist, and he also understands the value of a compact and strong central pawn-structure.



Leko – Gi. Garcia
Yopal 1997

White's powerful central pawn-structure grants him a clear advantage. Watch Leko's systematic work with that advantage – it is highly instructive!

38 ♖c3! ♖xc3 39 ♖xc3 ♖c8

A very passive square for Black's rook, but 39...♖e7 loses the a-pawn after 40 ♖a3. This is one of the strengths of a space advantage: greater mobility.

40 b3 ♕g8 41 ♕f2 ♕f8 42 ♕g3!

White threatens to enter via h5 and g6. This forces Black to weaken his position further.

42...g6 43 fxg6 ♕g7 44 ♕f4 ♕xg6 45 g4! (D)

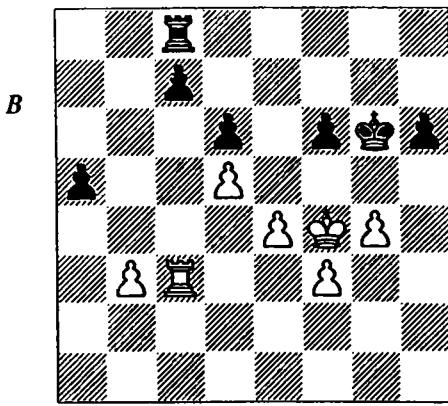
Black is in zugzwang!

45...♖b8 46 ♖xc7 ♖xb3 47 ♖a7! ♖b8

After 47...♖a3 48 ♖a6 the d6-pawn falls.

48 ♖xa5 ♖b6 49 ♖a7

Black's remaining pawns are too weak to merit any serious survival chances. Compare

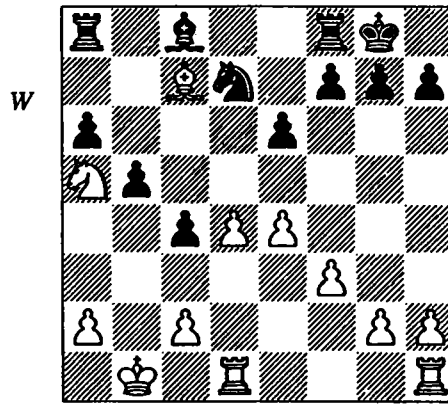


those pawns to White's sound and healthy ones – pawn-structure matters!

49...♞b8 50 ♠d7 ♞b6 51 ♠d8 ♠a6 52 ♠g8+ 1-0

After 52...♠f7 53 ♠c8! the threats of 54 ♠f5 and 54 ♠c6 decide.

Despite their affection for the central pawns, theorists are not dogmatic. They also fully understand the concept of *transformation of advantages*.



Leko – Anand
Moscow tt 2004

19 d5! exd5 20 exd5

The strong passed pawn secures White's initiative. But it is not the pawn that wins the game. This asset is *transformed* into other strengths.

20...♠f6 21 ♠he1 ♠d7 22 ♠e5 ♠fe8 23 ♠b2 ♠ac8 24 ♠xf6! gxf6 25 ♠c3

The first tangible results for White: Black's pawn-structure is in a shambles, and the white king is activated.

25...♠f8 26 ♠d4

Planning 27 c3 with total control. That would be in the spirit of Larsen's famous saying:

“When the king has walked through the door, the door should be shut after him!”

26...c3!?

Anand does his best to disturb the logical course of the game. He sacrifices a pawn to obtain some counterplay. Some, but not enough.

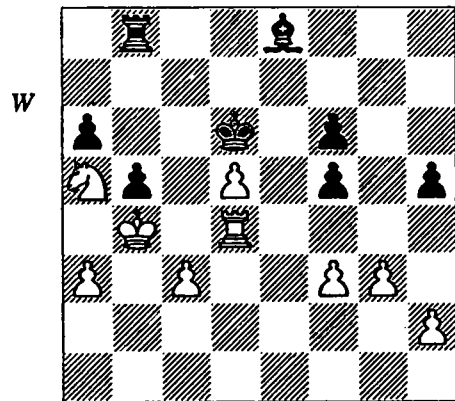
27 ♠xe8+ ♠xe8 28 ♠xc3 ♠c8+ 29 ♠b3 ♠e7 30 ♠d2 ♠d6

At least Black has managed to blockade the passed d-pawn, and White's knight is not too active at the moment. But he is still a pawn down, and the problem with the kingside pawns persists.

31 ♠b4 ♠b8 32 c3 f5 33 a3 f6 34 ♠d4!

Eyeing h4 or f4.

34...h5 35 g3 ♠e8 (D)



36 ♠c6!

Transformation of advantages! White is prepared to sacrifice his extra pawn to clarify the situation and obtain a clearly favourable rook endgame with advantages in *pawn-structure*, *king activity* and *rook activity*. All important features of rook endgames, as we know from Chapter 4.

36...♠c8!

Black wisely avoids the rook endgame ...

37 ♠a5 ♠b8 38 ♠c6 ♠c8 39 ♠a5!

... but now he has no choice.

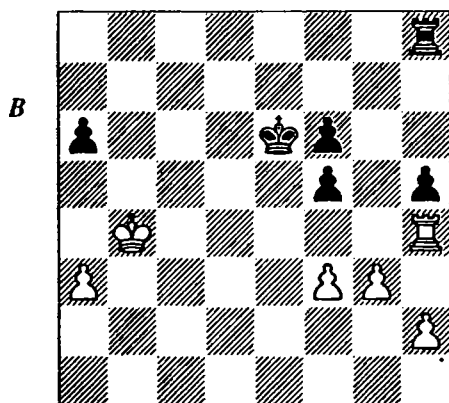
39...♠xc6 40 dxc6+ ♠xc6 41 ♠h4 ♠d6 42 ♠b4! ♠h8 43 c4!

Typical 'dry' theorist play! Leko eliminates his only weak pawn in exchange for one of Black's few strong ones.

43...bxc4 44 ♠xc4 ♠e6 45 ♠b4! (D)

Going for the weak a-pawn while Black is tied to the defence of the weak kingside pawns. The principle of *two weaknesses* in action!

45...♠b8+ 46 ♠a4 ♠d8 47 ♠a5 ♠d2

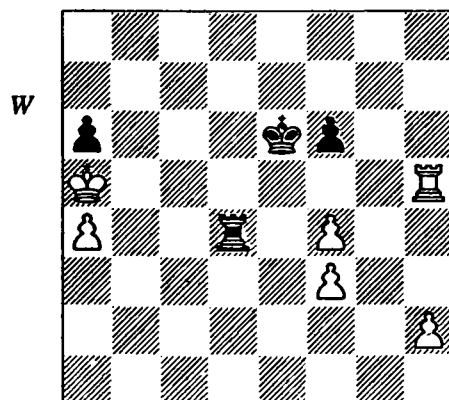


47...♖d3 48 a4 ♖xf3 49 ♔xa6 is hopeless for Black.

48 a4 f4!?

Again Anand tries to disturb the natural course of the game – this time by attempting to interfere with White’s coordination. But again the price is a pawn.

49 gxf4 ♖d6 50 ♖xh5 ♖d4 (D)



51 ♖c5!

The clincher. Having performed its duties on the kingside, the rook shifts to the queenside to support the a-pawn.

51...♖xf4 52 ♖c3! ♖h4 53 ♖b3! ♔d7 54 ♖b4!

White does not mind giving up the h-pawn – he gets the a-pawn in return.

54...♖xh2 55 ♔xa6 ♖c2 56 ♔b6 ♖c6+ 57 ♔b5

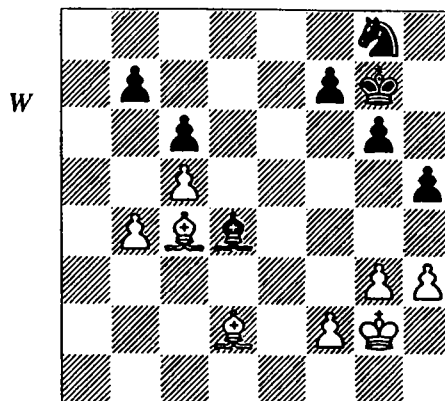
A technically winning rook endgame has occurred on the board – theorists don’t blow such positions!

57...♖e6 58 ♖e4! ♖d6 59 ♖c4 ♖d5+ 60 ♔b4 ♖d3 61 f4 ♖d1 62 a5 ♖b1+ 63 ♔a4 ♖a1+ 64 ♔b5 ♖b1+ 65 ♖b4! ♖f1 66 ♔b6 ♔c8 67 ♔c6!

The last transformation of advantages in this game! The white king goes for the f6-pawn.

67...♖e1 68 ♔d6 1-0

We have already seen that theorists are exceptionally fond of and strong with the *two bishops*. The concept for playing with two bishops was invented by Steinitz – the first great theorist. Here Leko shows what his great predecessor taught the chess world 130 years ago.



Leko – Piket
Monaco rpd 2001

36 g4!

As Steinitz explained: the knight must be deprived of any strongholds!

36...hxg4 37 hxg4 ♖e7 38 ♔f3 ♔f8 39 ♖e1!

A strong prophylactic move that frees the king.

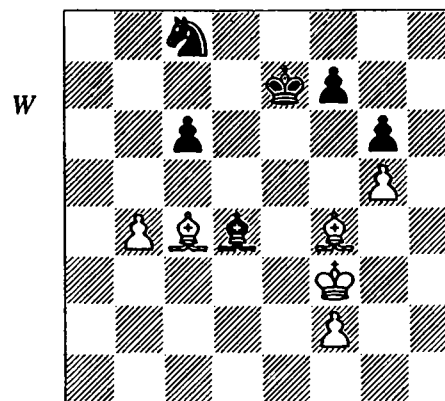
39...b6?!

It is understandable that Black does not want to sit and wait. Yet this was probably a better choice. The text-move eliminates a pair of pawns, but weakens the c6-pawn.

40 cxb6 ♖xb6 41 ♖d2 ♖c8 42 ♖f4 ♔e7 43 g5!

Continuing the strategy of taking squares from Black’s pieces.

43...♖d4 (D)



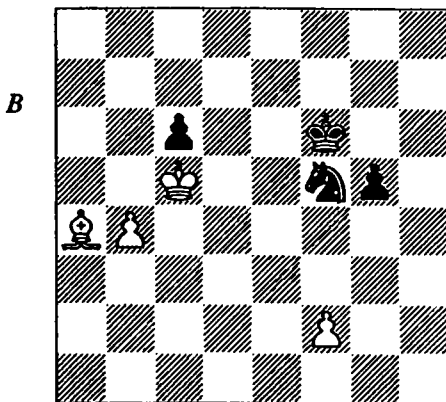
44 ♖e3!

White gives up the two bishops! Surprised? You (and Steinitz) shouldn't be. Perhaps the greatest difference between chess at Steinitz's time (along with the advances in opening theory and defensive skills) is that chess is now much more concrete. You should never be dogmatic, and the course of the game has led to White's light-squared bishop being the strongest piece, due to the way the pawns are fixed. The pawns on c6 and f7 are the targets. The exchange of bishops opens the path for White's king.

44...♟d6 45 ♖b3 ♗xe3 46 ♜xe3 f6

Taking the pawn out of the firing range and attempting to exchange as many pawns as possible. This is often a good defensive strategy, but here the c6-pawn falls, and Black's hopes of being able to exchange all the pawns on the board – leaving White with a useless extra bishop – never materialize.

47 gxf6+ ♜xf6 48 ♜d4 g5 49 ♖a4 ♟f5+ 50 ♜c5 (D)



The c6-pawn goes.

50...♜c5 51 ♗xc6 ♟d4 52 b5 ♟xb5!?

The last attempt, but Black is too slow.

53 ♜xb5 ♜f4 54 ♜c4 g4 55 ♖h1!

The last precise move. Otherwise White cannot win.

55...g3 56 f3 ♜e3 57 ♜d5 1-0

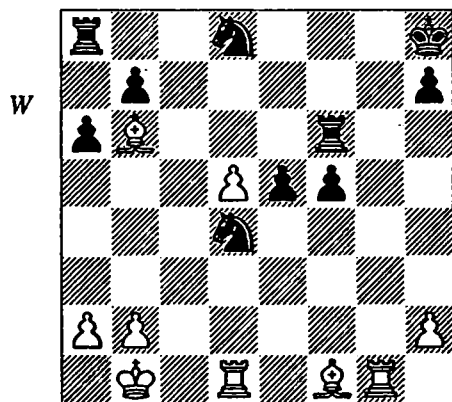
After 57...♜f2 58 f4 ♜g1 59 ♖e4 the f-pawn wins.

Pragmatics

Pragmatics are logical and fact-based players. They base their decisions and moves on concrete

calculations and evaluations, and their entire approach to chess – from thorough opening preparation to sharp middlegames and strategic endgames – is grounded in objective decision-making. “You must be thorough – always thorough,” the greatest pragmatic, Garry Kasparov, always reminded his seconds. Pragmatics possess strong combinative skills and are especially strong in execution – they are ‘doers’.

Pragmatics have been quite dominant – World Champions like Lasker, Alekhine, Euwe, Spassky, Fischer and Kasparov all fall into this category. However, in recent years we have seen a shift; now the activist category is the largest one when you look at the current world top. The most prominent pragmatics in recent times are Garry Kasparov and Peter Svidler.



Kasparov – A. Sokolov
Belfort 1988

Pragmatics are very strong in calculation, and they exploit these powers in a variety of ways when it comes to the endgame. One key benefit from accurate calculation is *making the right exchange*. In this position Kasparov has sacrificed a pawn, but he has the option of reclaiming it by 28 ♖xd4 exd4 29 ♗xd4. However, this would enable Black to build a strong *blockade* on d6 by 29...♟f7, so Kasparov finds a better way to regain the pawn.

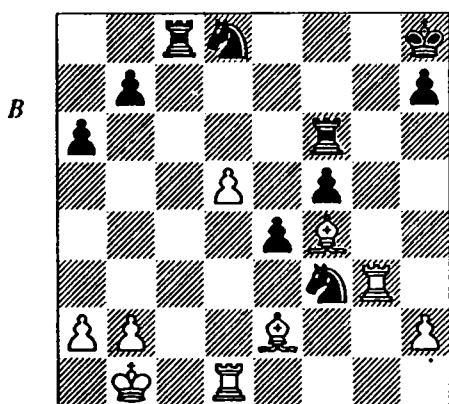
28 ♖c5!

Threatening 29 ♗xd4! exd4 30 ♖xd4, when the pin wins.

28...♗c8 29 ♖e7!

The attempted combination 29 ♗xd4? is calmly met by 29...♗xc5.

29...♗f7 30 ♖d6! ♟f3 31 ♗g3 e4 32 ♖e2! ♗f6 33 ♖f4 (D)



Now White regains his pawn in better circumstances than on move 28. It is much better for White to preserve his dark-squared bishop than the light-squared one, as Black then has trouble blockading the d-pawn on the dark squares. His king is also not too safe – always dangerous against a pragmatic. After 33...♘f7 34 ♙xf3 exf3 35 ♖xf3, White has a solid plus. Sokolov tries to relieve the pressure by going for a rook exchange – but he misses something *concrete*.

33...♖g6 34 ♙xf3 ♖xg3?

34...exf3 35 ♖xf3 is not nice, but this meets a tactical refutation. Master pragmatics never miss such opportunities!

35 ♙xe4!

This intermediate capture does the trick. Despite its great range, the rook on g3 cannot escape the combined power of White's two bishops.

35...fxe4

35...♖g4 36 ♙xf5 doesn't help – nor do any other attempts at escaping with the rook (you can try it out yourself!).

36 hxg3

Now White is winning. Black cannot stop the d-pawn and cover his weak e-pawn at the same time.

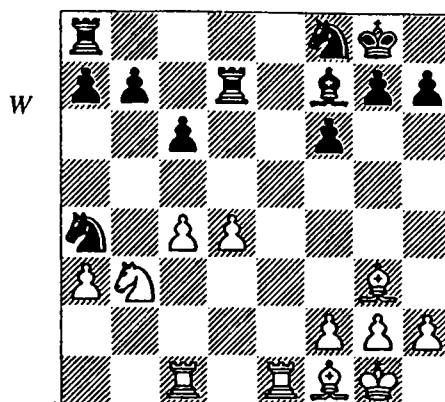
36...♙g7 37 ♖d4! ♘f7 38 ♖xe4 ♖d8 39 ♖e7!

Stronger than passively defending the d-pawn. As we know from Chapter 3, knights are poor at holding back outside passed pawns. So White goes for the queenside pawns.

39...♖xd5 40 ♖xb7 h5 41 ♖a7 a5 42 a4 1-0

In the above game we saw Kasparov exploit the advantage of the *two bishops*. This is a recurring theme also in games of pragmatics.

Pragmatics are especially skilful in coordinating the two bishops – in connection with the other pieces – to endanger the opponent's king.



Kasparov – Smyslov
Vilnius Ct (3) 1984

White has the two bishops, but in order to exploit their strength the position must be opened by a central break. That doesn't seem too easy, as Black seemingly has decent control over d5. But the d-pawn is only *restrained* but not *blockaded* (if we are to use Nimzowitsch's vocabulary), and pragmatics are very strong at finding *concrete ways* of forcing the pawn forward.

22 ♘a5! ♘e6

22...♖xd4 23 ♘xb7 is to White's advantage – the knight has a good square on d6, and any pawn exchange increases the scope of the two bishops. Since White was strongly threatening 23 ♖b1, Black could not just wait, so he initiates counterplay against d4. But the text-move decreases his control over d5...

23 d5!

Voilà! White has managed to push this pawn after all!

23...♘d4

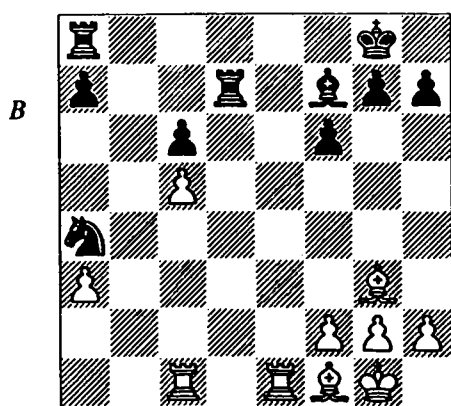
23...cxd5 24 cxd5 ♖xd5 25 ♘xb7 followed by 26 ♘d6 is clearly advantageous for White.

24 dxc6 ♘xc6 25 ♘xc6 bxc6 26 c5! (D)

White has made considerable progress. The bishop is about to take up a powerful position on d6, and Black's knight is out of play.

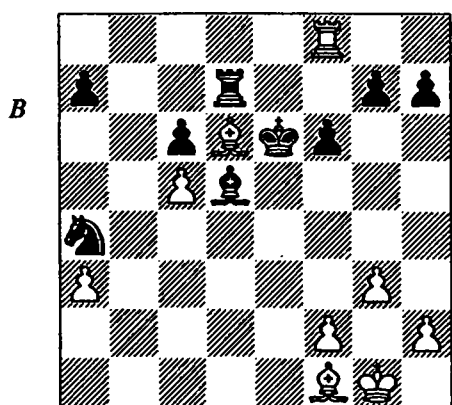
26...♖e8 27 ♖xe8+ ♙xe8 28 ♙d6 ♙f7

Kasparov explains in *The Test of Time* that a number of commentators labelled this the decisive mistake, as Black now allows White's rook to penetrate via the b-file. But the attempt to control the b-file by 28...♖b7 is no better due to



29 g3!, after which White combines an attack on the c-pawn with the threat of penetrating via the e-file instead. Black cannot both control the b-file and bring his bishop to d5.

29 ♖b1! ♔d5 30 ♖b8+ ♕f7 31 ♖f8+ ♕e6 32 g3! (D)



With the concrete threat of 33 ♔h3+ f5 34 ♔xf5#! Black must weaken his position even further. Notice the excellent coordination among White's pieces in the attack on the black king. That is the trademark of pragmatics!

32...g6

The alternative was 32...f5, but after 33 ♔a6 ♖f7 34 ♖e8+ ♕f6 (34...♕d7 35 ♖h8) 35 ♔e5+ ♕g6 36 ♔d4! Black is helpless, as indicated by Kasparov.

33 ♔a6!

Now the threat of 34 ♔c8 wins material for White.

33...♗xd6 34 cxd6 ♕xd6 35 ♖xf6+

Here we see the effect of move 32 – this pawn is now hanging!

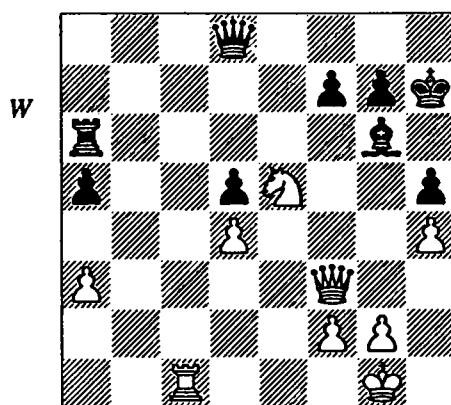
35...♕e5 36 ♖f8 c5 37 ♖e8+ ♕d4 38 ♖d8 ♕e5 39 f4+ ♕e4 40 ♔f1 ♔b3 41 ♕f2 ♕b2

Kasparov explains how Smyslov initially placed the knight on c3, but at the last moment

noticed 42 ♔d3#. But the text-move doesn't help either, as White can win easily with 42 ♖b8 c4 43 ♔xc4!. Thus...

1-0

Since pragmatics rely on their extraordinary calculation powers, they are strongest with a number of pieces on the board. They display certain weaknesses in very simple positions, where calculations are less important than a profound 'feel' for the position. That is the domain of reflectors, as we have already seen. With a few pieces on the board, pragmatics are dangerous attackers, who can whip up an attack from seemingly nowhere.



Kasparov – Karpov
London/Leningrad Wch (22) 1986

White is certainly better here. He has a strong, centralized knight against a bad bishop and his rook is on an open file. But how to proceed? Here I think we can observe a difference between the various types. A reflector might mainly contemplate a positional squeeze, perhaps exchanging the major pieces in order to win with the good knight vs the bad bishop. A pragmatic approaches the task differently. Kasparov keeps the major pieces on the board and initiates a devastating attack against Black's king.

32 ♖h3!

Preparing the penetration of the rook on the 8th rank.

32...♖b6 33 ♖c8 ♖d6 34 ♖g3 a4?!

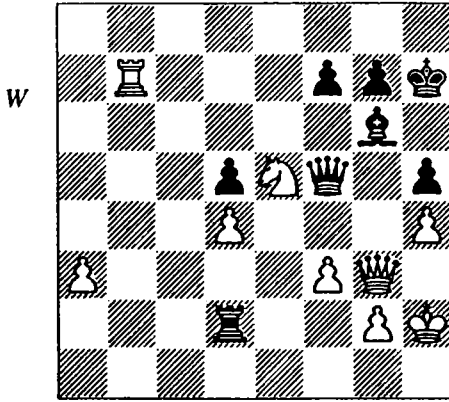
Toying with ideas like 35...♖b3, but nothing comes of it.

35 ♖a8! ♖e6

Now it transpires that 35...♖b3? loses to 36 ♖h8+! (but not the tempting 36 ♕xf7?? owing

to 36...♖b1+! 37 ♔h2 ♜xg3+ and 38...♙xf7)
36...♔xh8 37 ♘xf7+ ♙xf7 38 ♜xd6.

36 ♖xa4 ♜f5 37 ♖a7 ♖b1+ 38 ♔h2 ♙c1 39
♖b7 ♙c2 40 f3 ♖d2 (D)



41 ♘d7!

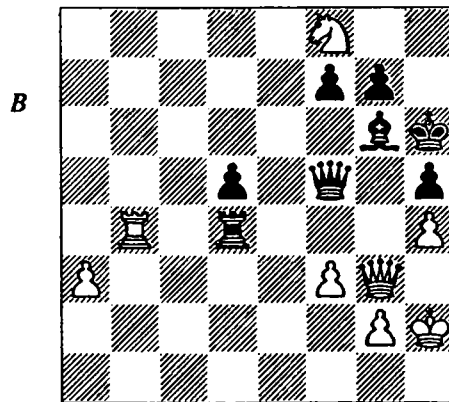
Kasparov's sealed move! Again the master pragmatic exploits his calculation powers and goes for the king rather than the quiet 41 ♖b4. Black's problem is the unfortunate position of his pieces, which entirely lack coordination. Black is not in time to disentangle them.

41...♙xd4 42 ♘f8+ ♔h6

42...♔g8 loses to the simple 43 ♖b8.

43 ♖b4! (D)

Strong attacking play! The text-move is much more accurate than 43 ♖b8?! ♜f4.



43...♙c4

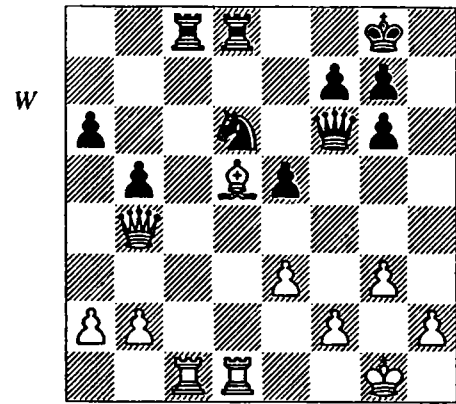
Now 43...♖d1 is answered by 44 ♖b8, and 43...♙xb4 also loses: 44 axb4 d4 45 b5! d3 (45...♜xb5 46 ♜f4+ wins for White) 46 b6! d2 47 b7 d1 ♜ 48 b8 ♜ ♜d2 (covering the threat of 49 ♜bf4+) 49 ♘xg6 ♜xg6 50 ♜h8+ ♜h7 51 ♜gxg7#.

44 ♙xc4 dxc4 45 ♜d6!

Threatening 46 ♜d2+ with mate.

45...c3 46 ♜d4! 1-0

Now 47 ♜e3+ is unstoppable. Kasparov must have seen this when sealing 41 ♘d7!. A pragmatic at his best!



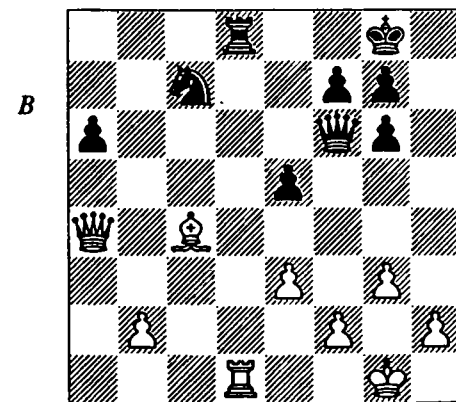
Kasparov – Vallejo Pons
Linares 2005

Obviously, pragmatics also exploit our general endgame principles. Here we see Kasparov demonstrating the principles of *two weaknesses* and *bishop vs knight*. The bishop is strong on d5 – continuously eyeing f7 and *dominating* the knight – but another target is needed to expand the advantage.

27 a4!

Hitting the queenside pawns.

27...bxa4 28 ♜xa4 ♙xc1 29 ♙xc1 ♘b5 30
♖d1 ♘c7 31 ♙c4! (D)



Here the bishop is optimally placed. It simultaneously hits the weaknesses on a6 and f7 while dominating the knight.

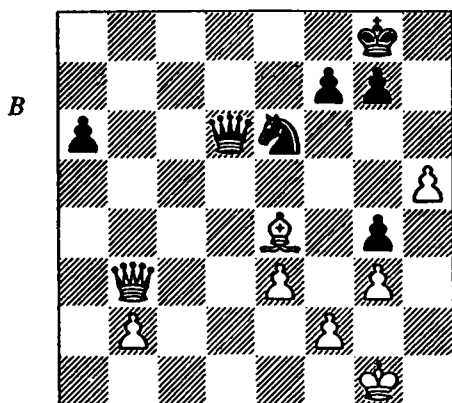
31...♖d6 32 ♙xd6 ♜xd6 33 ♜b3 ♘e6 34 h4!

Again focusing on dominating the knight. The g5-square is taken from it.

34...e4?!

I think this is inaccurate. Black loses patience and attempts to obtain some counterplay – but in the process weakens his pawn-structure.

35 ♔d5! g5 36 h5! g4 37 ♕xe4 (D)



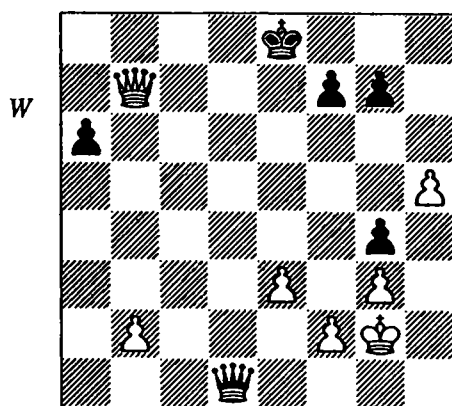
37...♘g5

This is what Black was hoping for. At least the knight is now finally on an active square. However, it is insufficient to compensate for a pawn.

38 ♖d5!

An accurate centralization that robs Black of any hopes.

38...♗xe4 39 ♖xe4 ♖d1+ 40 ♜g2 ♝f8 41 ♖a8+ ♝e7 42 ♖b7+ ♝e8 (D)



43 ♖xa6!

Black has no perpetual.

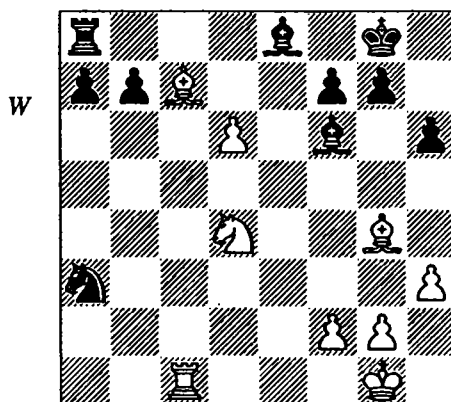
43...♖d5+ 44 ♜g1 ♖xh5 45 ♖c6+ ♝d8 46 e4 ♝e7 47 ♖c7+ ♝e6 48 ♖c8+ ♝e7 49 ♖b7+!

The best square for the queen. From here it simultaneously covers the long diagonal and supports the advance of the b-pawn.

49...♝e8 50 b4 ♖g5 51 ♖c6+ ♝e7 52 b5 ♖d2 53 ♖c5+ ♖d6!? 54 ♖g5+ 1-0

White picks up a second pawn.

Following Kasparov's retirement, Peter Svidler is probably the strongest pragmatic in the world. Like all master pragmatics, he has a keen eye for combinations and ruthless calculating skills. These assets can be put to good use in endgames as well.



Svidler – Landa
Bundesliga 2004/5

White is a pawn down, but his d-pawn is a powerhouse. On the other hand, the d4-knight is hanging, and if it moves, Black has 27...♗c6. However, White's knight does not have to move...

27 ♔f3!

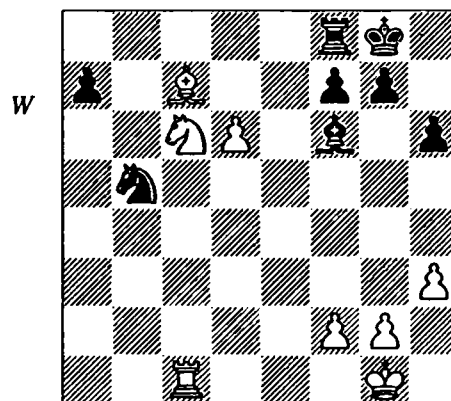
Exploiting the fact that after 27...♗xd4 28 ♗xb7 the rook is trapped. Thus, White regains his pawn.

27...♗d7 28 ♗xb7 ♖f8 29 ♗c6!

Again a small tactic! The knight is still *en prise*, but this way the path for the d-pawn is cleared.

29...♗xc6 30 ♗xc6 ♗b5! (D)

Black is defending well. By hitting the bishop on c7 he prevents d7. But Svidler finds a creative solution to that problem.



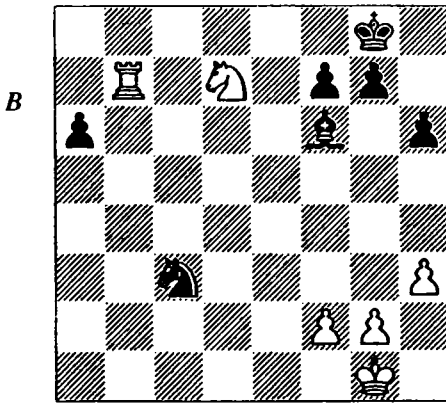
31 ♖a5!

Due to the threat of 32 d7, Black must take.

31...♟xd6 32 ♖b4!

The point. This pin wins the exchange.

32...♟b5 33 ♖xf8 ♜xf8 34 ♞b1 a6 35 ♟b8 ♟c3 36 ♞b7 ♜g8 37 ♟d7! (D)



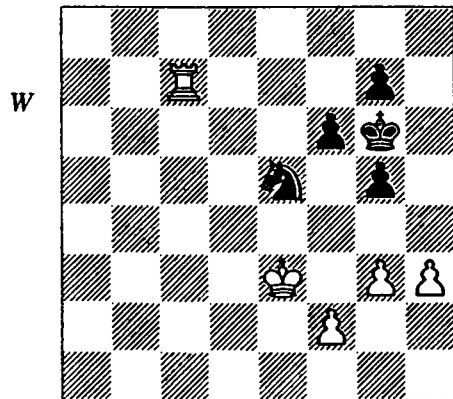
Even the technical issue is solved through accurate calculation! This is stronger than taking the pawn. Pragmatics are always alert to such alternatives! Svidler has seen that Black's bishop cannot escape the knight. This exchange greatly eases his winning task.

37...♜g5 38 ♞b8+ ♜h7 39 ♟f8+ ♜g8 40 ♟e6+! ♜h7 41 ♟xg5+ hxg5 42 ♞a8

Now the a-pawn goes anyway, but in a better version for White.

42...♟e2+ 43 ♜h2 f6 44 ♞xa6 ♟d4 45 g3 ♟f3+ 46 ♜g2 ♟e5 47 ♜f1 ♜g6 48 ♜e2 ♜f5 49 ♞a7 ♜g6 50 ♜e3 ♟c6 51 ♞c7 ♟e5? (D)

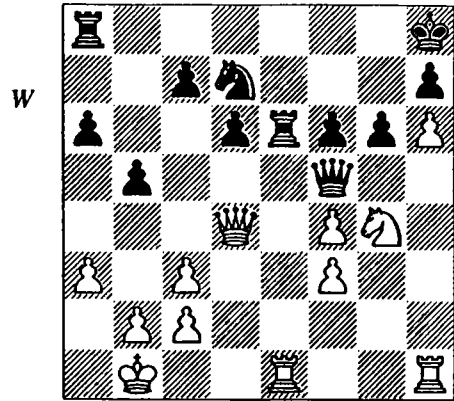
The position is lost, but this drops the knight. 51...♟d8 was necessary.



52 f4!

Oops! The knight is *dominated* and after 52...gxf4+ 53 gxf4 ♟f7 54 f5+! it is lost.

1-0



Svidler – Kramnik
Russian Ch (Moscow) 2005

My countryman Curt Hansen recently wrote in his column in the Danish newspaper *Jyllands Posten*, that 1 e4 players need to be able to break through the Petroff Defence if they are to have a good tournament. Here Svidler manages to break Kramnik's Petroff. Ironically, Svidler was Kramnik's second during Kramnik's 2004 world championship match with Leko, where the Petroff was Kramnik's primary defence against 1 e4.

25 ♟e3!

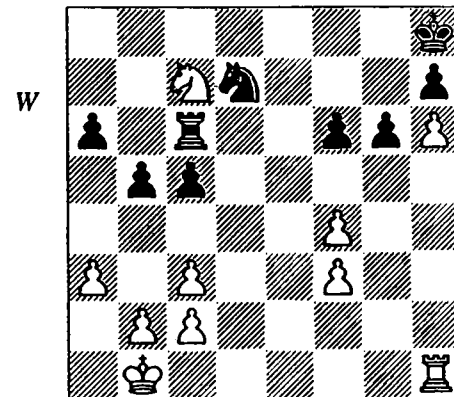
White's pawns wouldn't score very high on a 'pawn-structure evaluation', but he holds the initiative and the text-move wins a pawn by force.

25...♝c5 26 ♟d5 ♞ae8

Abandoning the e-file by 26...♞e1+ is even worse than giving up a pawn.

27 ♞xe6 ♞xe6 28 ♝xc5 dxc5 29 ♟xc7 ♞c6 (D)

Not 29...♞e3?! 30 ♞d1, and the back rank causes Black trouble.



30 ♟e8!

This surprising move is stronger than the natural 30 $\text{Qd5} - \text{d6}$ turns out to be an even better square for the knight.

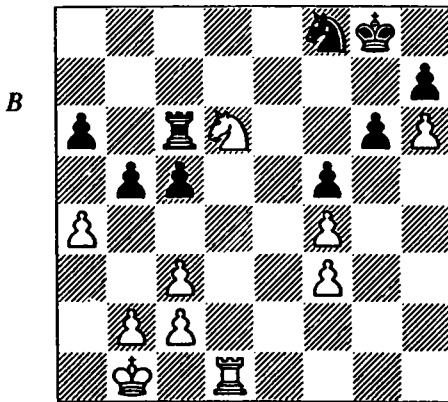
30... Qg8 31 Ed1 Qf8 32 Qd6 !

Cutting off Black's rook from activity.

32... f5 !

Fixing the f4-pawn and threatening 33... Qe6 .

33 a4 ! (D)



White continues to play actively.

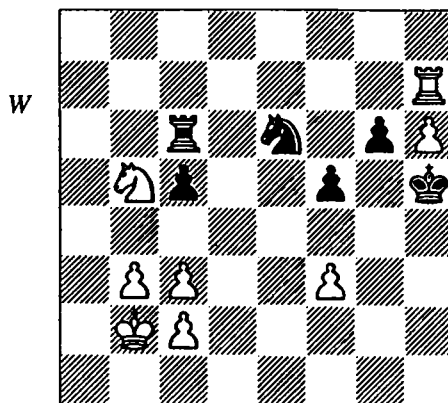
33... Qe6 ?!

A difficult decision. 33... bxa4 is strongly met by 34 Qc4 ! followed by 35 Ed7 and 36 Qe5 . That is certainly dangerous and it is understandable that Kramnik did not like to enter that line. But perhaps it was still the best chance, as after the text-move Black ends up two pawns down.

34 axb5 axb5 35 Qxb5 Qxf4 36 Ed8+ Qf7 37 Ed7+ Qf6

37... Qg8 is too passive. White has several good continuations; e.g., 38 Qd6 , 38 Qc1 or even 38 b4 . The text-move relies on activity, but it fails to another wonderful tactic.

38 Exh7 Qg5 39 b3 Qe6 40 Qb2 Qh5 (D)



Is Black about to pick up the h-pawn by 41... Qg5 ?

41 Qc7 !

No! As we have seen repeatedly throughout this book, when passed pawns are close to the finishing line, tactics are all around!

41... Qb6

After 41... Qxc7 42 h7 the white pawn promotes.

42 h7 Qb8 43 Qe7 Qg5 44 f4 Qh3 45 Qc7 !

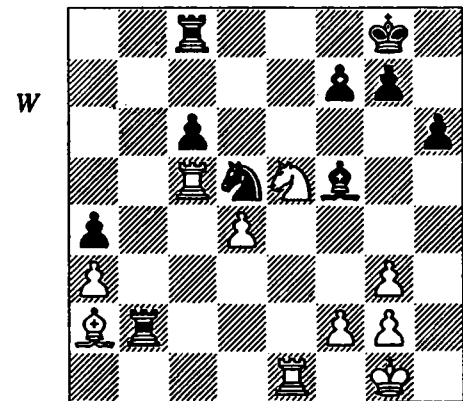
White defends the f-pawn through another accurate move.

45... Qh8

45... Qxf4 is met by 46 Qe8 , winning.

46 Qd5 g5 47 fxg5 Qxg5 48 Qe5 ! 1-0

Black stays two pawns down after 48... Qg6 49 Qe7+ Qf6 50 Qxf5+ or 48... Qg4 49 Qe3+ .



Svidler – Morozevich
San Luis Wch 2005

Pragmatics often drive forward opening theory. They are especially dangerous with White. Even if they don't win 'out of the opening', they often maintain a nagging plus. This is a case in point. In another Petroff Defence Svidler has a solid advantage, and he could now win a pawn by 30 Qxd5 cxd5 31 Qxd5 . But that would be letting Black off the hook too easily. Svidler's choice is stronger. He has seen that he can get more!

30 Qc4 !

Reminding Black of his weaknesses on a4 and c6.

30... Qf8 31 Qc1 !

Again preferring piece coordination to material gain.

31... Qb6 32 Qxf7 !

White wins material after all! And it is much better to get the f7-pawn than either the a4- or

the c6-pawn. They are still weak and can be collected later.

32...♖b1

32...♜xc4? loses to 33 ♜xf5.

33 ♜xb1 ♙xb1 34 ♜e5 ♜e7 35 ♙a6!

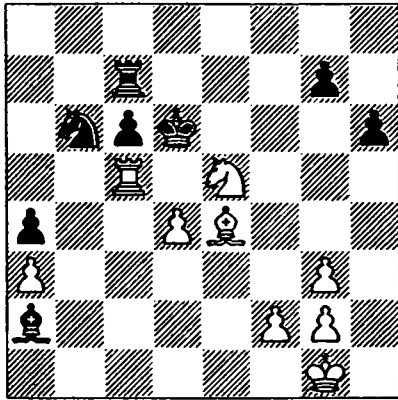
Again Svidler prefers the initiative to a minor material gain. 35 ♜xc6+ ♜d6 would allow Black unnecessary activity.

35...♜c7 36 ♙e2!

Bringing the bishop to the right diagonal.

36...♜d6 37 ♙f3 ♙a2 38 ♙e4?! (D)

Svidler sticks to his strategy of not going after material too soon. However, here I don't really see anything wrong with 38 ♙xc6, when White should win easily.



38...♙d5 39 f3 ♜e7 40 ♜c3 ♜c7 41 ♜c5 ♙b3 42 ♜f2

Here too 42 ♙xc6 looks OK.

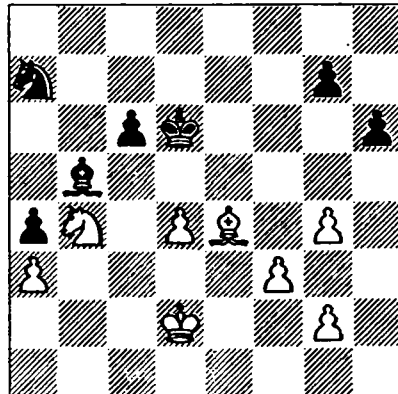
42...♜d5 43 ♜e2 ♜e7 44 ♜a5 ♜b7 45 ♜e3 ♙d5 46 ♜d3 ♙c4 47 ♜b4

Blocking Black's rook.

47...♙b5 48 g4 ♜c8 49 ♜d2 ♜a7

Black has managed to avoid losing a second pawn, but his position is still difficult – if not lost.

50 ♜xa7 ♜xa7 (D)



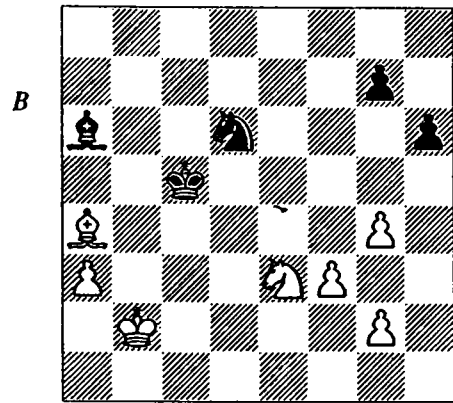
51 ♜c2!

Threatening to bring the knight to f5 to attack the kingside pawns.

51...c5 52 ♜c3 ♙f1 53 dxc5+ ♜xc5 54 ♜e3 ♙a6 55 ♙c2!

This is more accurate than the direct 55 ♜f5 ♜b5+ 56 ♜b2 ♜d6! 57 ♜xg7 ♜xe4 58 fxe4 ♜d4, when Black may still have some glimmers of hope. White has only a few pawns left to win.

55...♜b5+ 56 ♜b2 ♜d6 57 ♙xa4 (D)

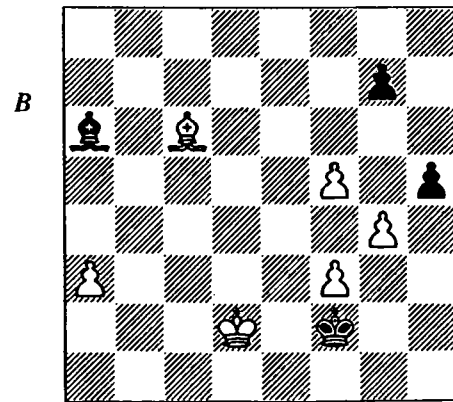


Finally this pawn falls – it has been weak for 40 moves!

57...♜d4 58 ♜f5+ ♜xf5 59 gxf5 h5 60 g3! ♙e2 61 ♙c6 ♜e3 62 ♜c3 ♜f2

Black is too late in the pawn ending after 62...♙xf3 63 ♙xf3 ♜xf3 64 a4.

63 ♜d2 ♙a6 64 g4! (D)



Calculating that the h-pawn is not dangerous.

64...h4 65 g5 h3 66 f6 gxf6 67 gxf6 ♙b5

67...h2 68 f4.

68 ♙e4?!

68 f7! wins on the spot.

68...♙e8

Or 68...h2 69 f4 ♖f1 70 f7 ♖g2 71 ♖xg2 ♗xg2 72 f8 ♗h1 ♗73 ♗a8+ and wins.

69 f4 ♖g6?

Perhaps Morozevich intended 69...♖h5 but put the bishop on the wrong square. However, White still wins after 70 a4 h2 71 ♖h1! ♖f3 (71...♗g1 72 ♗e3 ♗xh1 73 ♗f2) 72 f7 ♖xh1 73 f8 ♗ ♖f3 74 ♗h6 h1 ♗75 ♗xh1 ♖xh1 76 f5.

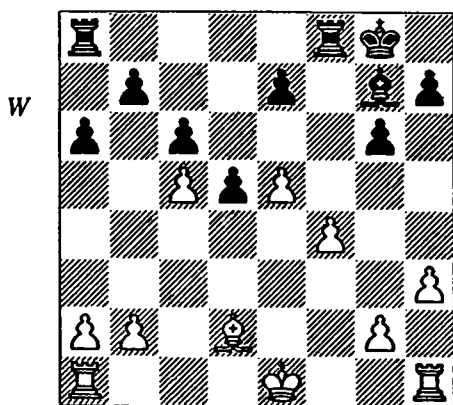
70 ♖xg6 1-0

White stops the pawn after 70...h2 71 ♖e4.

Activists

The activist type is currently the dominant one in the world's chess top – Topalov, Anand, Morozevich (three of the first four at the World Championship in San Luis) and Shirov all belong to this category.

Activists are active players with a fantastic feeling for the initiative, sharp combinative vision and a good feel for the trade-off between material and initiative. Activists have a very good understanding of king safety and the role of the king in the game. Activists play for a win with both colours (why play for a draw just because the colour of your pieces is black?!), and they are not afraid to take risks, which is not always a positive attribute when it comes to the endgame. Sometimes we see activists incurring 'unnecessary' losses on that account.



Topalov – Nayer
Ajaccio rpd 2004

White has more space, but how to proceed?
20 h4!

Not a trivial decision! A 'natural' way to proceed would be something like g3, king to d3,

bishop to d4, rooks to the kingside, and the attempt to push g4 and f5. But Black is solid and White's chances of obtaining a real advantage are unclear. Alternatively, White could play on the queenside, trying to initiate a minority attack by a4 and b4-b5 in order to open files. Topalov's plan is different. He voluntarily allows the kingside pawns to be fixed on the colour of his bishop, and rather than attacking with pawns on the queenside, he attacks b7 with the rooks. It turns out to be surprisingly difficult for Black to counter this creative plan.

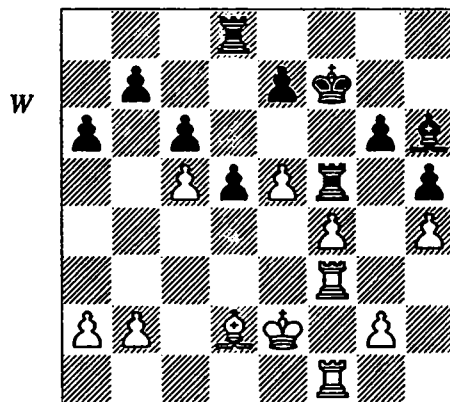
20...h5

Black cannot allow h5 with initiative on the kingside.

21 ♗e2 ♖h6 22 ♖af1!

Note that 22 g3?! would be premature. White might need this square for a rook in order to attack g6.

22...♖f5 23 ♖f3 ♗f7 24 ♖hf1 ♖d8 (D)



25 ♖b3!

The point of White's play. The b7-pawn is the target.

25...♖d7 26 ♖b4!

Here the rook is excellently placed and simultaneously covers f4 and prepares the doubling of rooks.

26...e6 27 ♖f3 ♖f8?

Probably Black's first real mistake. He attempts to defend b7 with tactical measures, but he underestimates White's response. After 27...♗g7 28 ♖fb3 ♖ff7, b7 is sufficiently covered and Black remains solid.

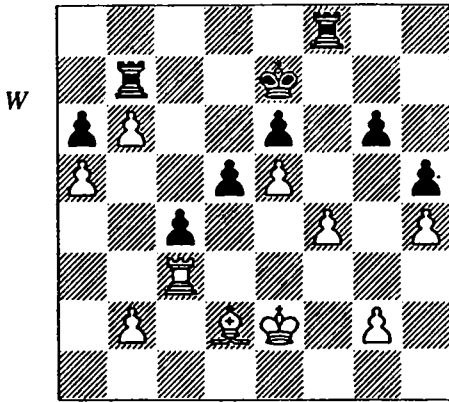
28 ♖fb3! b5 29 cxb6!

A strong exchange sacrifice. Activists have a very profound understanding of the trade-off between material and other advantages.

29...♖xb4 30 ♖xb4 ♖b7 31 a4!

Black's problem is that he has no open files for his rooks.

31...c5 32 ♖b3 ♔e7 33 a5 ♜f8 34 ♜c3 c4 (D)



35 ♜g3!

Now we see why Topalov did not hurry with g3!

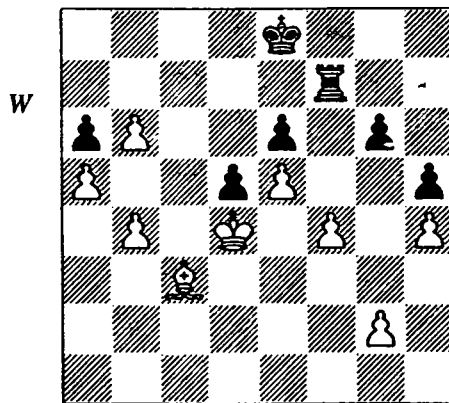
35...♔f7 36 ♔e3 ♜c8 37 ♔d4 c3?!

Understandable desperation. If Black waits, White will calmly improve his position with, for instance, ♗b4-d6, ♜c3 and b3.

38 ♜xc3!

Not allowing Black any counterplay.

38...♜xc3 39 ♗xc3 ♔e8 40 b4 ♜f7 (D)



41 g3

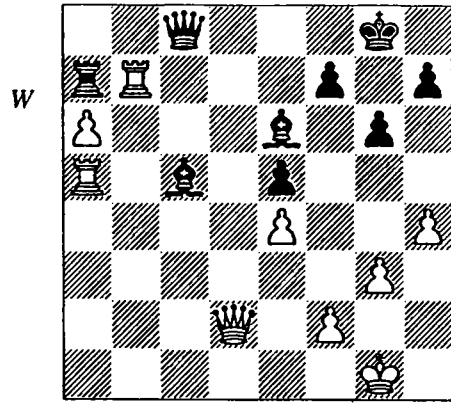
At last!

41...♔d7 42 b5!

The decisive break.

42...axb5 43 ♔c5! g5!? 44 a6! gxf4 45 a7 ♜f8 46 b7 1-0

As we saw in this game, activists have a very good understanding of positions with diverse material. In such positions their well-developed intuition guides them in the right direction.



Adams – Topalov
Sofia 2005

Are the two bishops better than a rook and an advanced pawn on the 6th rank? Yes! It turns out that the bishops eventually outperform the rook. This was White's last chance to change the material situation and reach a draw. By 39 ♖c2! ♜xa6! 40 ♜xa6 ♖xb7 41 ♜xe6! ♗xf2+ (41...fxe6? 42 ♖xc5) 42 ♖xf2 fxe6 43 ♖f6!, White could draw, as indicated in *Informator*.

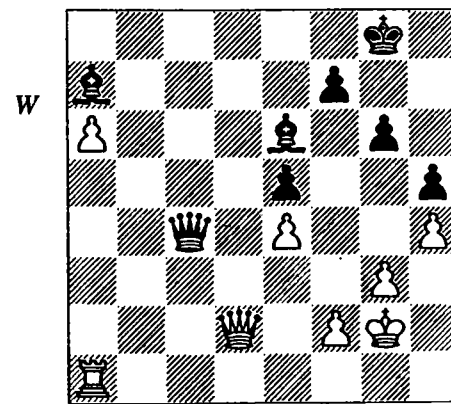
39 ♜xa7?

Now Topalov is allowed to demonstrate the combined powers of a queen and two bishops.

39...♗xa7 40 ♔h2?!

The last move before the time-control. 40 ♜xe5 ♖xa6 is also not unproblematic for White, but his best chance was 40 h5!, attempting to exchange as many pawns as possible. This is always a good defensive plan.

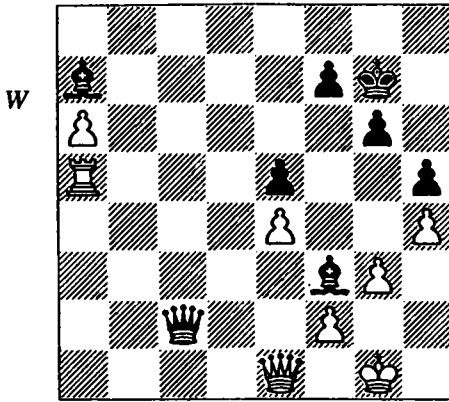
40...♖c7 41 ♔g2 h5! 42 ♜a1 ♖c4 (D)



43 ♖e1

It is understandable that Adams did not like giving the bishops even more space with 43 f3. But according to Adams's notes, this was still White's best chance.

43...♖d3! 44 ♖a5 ♙g4!
 Slowly Black closes in on the white king.
 45 ♖h2 ♖h7 46 ♖a2 ♙f3
 A powerful square for the bishop.
 47 ♖a5 ♖c2! 48 ♖g1 ♖g7! (D)



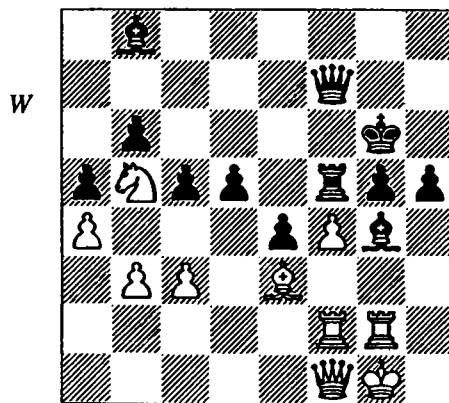
49 ♖d5
 White is mated after 49 ♖xe5? ♖c7! 50 ♖a1
 (50 ♖b5 ♖xg3+) 50...♙d4! 51 ♖xd4 ♖c1+.
 49...♙xe4 50 ♖d2

And here 50 ♖xe5 is answered by the bolt
 50...♙xf2+! 51 ♖xf2 ♖d1+! 52 ♖f1 (52 ♖h2
 ♖h1#) 52...♖d4+, winning the rook. Notice
 how Black exploits tactics in the execution of
 his plans – this is the trademark of activists!

50...♖c4 51 ♖h2 ♖c3 52 ♖e2 ♙d4 53 ♖a2
 ♙a8!

Preparing to line up the bishop and queen on
 the long diagonal.

54 ♖d1 ♖c4 0-1



Kharlov – Topalov
 Tripoli FIDE KO 2004

For large parts of this game, Topalov has
 played with only three pawns for a rook. But

even so he has managed to build up a danger-
 ous initiative on the kingside. Since White
 cannot allow 44...gxf4, White must open lines
 for Black's pieces.

44 fxf5 ♙f3! 45 ♖h2 ♙xh2+ 46 ♖xh2 ♖f4!

Giving up another exchange in order to pen-
 etrate with the queen. Note the strength of
 Black's pawns and the offside position of the
 white knight.

47 ♙xf4 ♖xf4 48 ♖g2 h4!

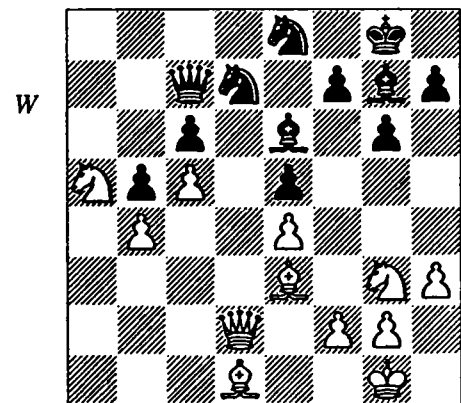
Calmly incorporating all troops in the attack.
 As Kasparov repeatedly points out, pawns are
 also attackers!

49 ♖e1 e3! 50 ♖h2 ♖xg5+ 51 ♖f1 h3! 52
 ♖b1+ ♙e4 53 ♖b2 ♙d3+!

White is mated after 54 ♖e1 ♖g1# or 54 ♖e2
 ♖g2+ 55 ♖e1 ♖g1#. Thus...

0-1

Activists are fond of having the initiative.
 From the initiative, small combinations 'sud-
 denly' arise!



Topalov – Ivanchuk
 Monaco rpd 2004

Here we see Topalov exploiting the principles
 of space, two weaknesses and better bishop.

27 ♙g4!

The right exchange! This leaves Black with
 a passive bishop on g7. Furthermore, Black's
 light-squared bishop is vital for his defence.
 White's real target is the pawn on c6, and after
 the exchange of the bishops Black has trouble
 defending this pawn in the long run.

27...♙xg4 28 hxg4 ♙f8 29 g5!

This gains more space and fixes Black's f-
 and h-pawns.

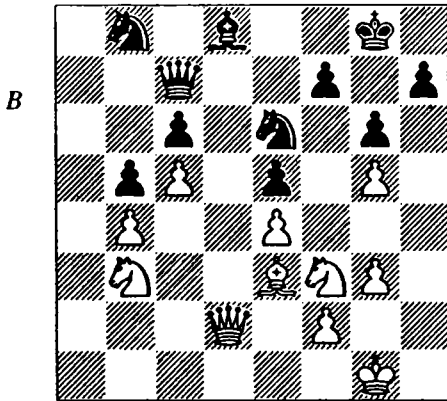
29...♗g7 30 ♖f1!

The knight has no future on g3 and is brought to better hunting fields.

30...♖e6 31 ♖h2! ♗e7 32 g3 ♗d8 33 ♖b3!

Careful play. Black threatened 33...♗dxc5!, undermining the outpost on a5.

33...♖b8 34 ♖f3 (D)

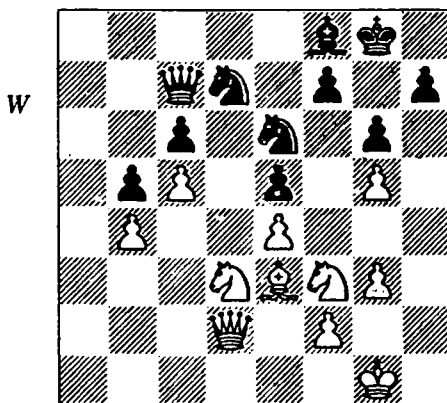


From here the knight simultaneously covers g5 and pressurizes e5.

34...♗e7 35 ♖c1!

Including the other knight in the attack on e5.

35...♗d7 36 ♖d3 ♗f8 (D)



37 ♗a2!

The decisive penetration. Black cannot prevent 38 ♗a8, as 37...♗b8 is met by 38 ♗a6!, and 37...♗b7? drops the e-pawn after 38 ♖fxe5.

37...♗g7 38 ♗a8+ ♖df8 39 ♖g2!

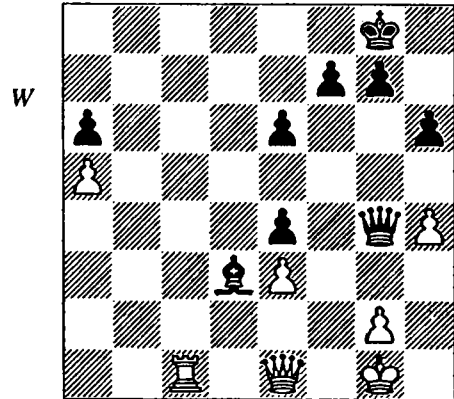
Zugzwang! Black is completely tied up and must weaken his position even further.

39...f6 40 gxf6 ♗xf6 41 ♗h6! ♖f7 42 ♗xf8 ♖xf8 43 ♗xc6!

'Suddenly' there is a combination – typical of activist games! 43...♗xc6 44 ♖fxe5+ is hopeless, so Black resigned.

1-0

Beautiful mating attacks are common in activist games. Activists are highly skilful in finding surprising mating patterns.



Shirov – Kamsky
Linares 1994

41 ♗c5!

Taking away important squares from Black's queen.

41...♖h7 42 ♖h2 g5

After 42...f5 43 ♗g3 ♗xg3+ 44 ♖xg3, White is clearly better according to Shirov.

43 hxg5 hxg5 44 ♗c8! ♖g6 45 ♗h8!

Covering the h-file and preparing to infiltrate Black's position with the queen.

45...f6 46 ♗c1 ♗e2 47 ♗c7! ♖f5

Forced due to the threat of 48 ♗h7#.

48 ♗h7+ ♖e5 49 ♗a7 ♖f5 50 ♗h6!

Cutting off the black king.

50...♗f2? (D)

The decisive mistake! In Shirov's *Fire on Board*, Black is said to be lost already, but the fantastic 50...♖g4! – indicated by Bönsch in *ChessBase Magazine* – seems to draw after 51 ♗b6 (51 ♗xf6 ♗e1!) 51...♗f2! 52 ♗xe6+ f5 53 ♗d6 ♗xe3 54 ♗h3 ♗f4+ 55 ♗g3+ ♖h5 56 ♗xf4 (56 ♗e7 g4) 56...gxf4 57 ♗g8, with a draw. But who can blame Kamsky for missing the following beautiful construction of a mating-net?

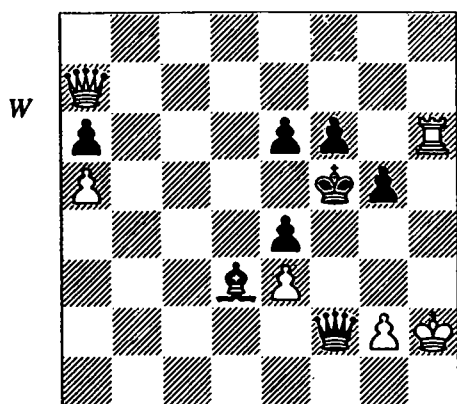
51 ♖h3!

Threatening 52 g4+ ♖e5 53 ♗c5# or 52 ♗c5+ e5 53 ♗c8#.

51...g4+ 52 ♖h2

Now that the g-pawn has left the fifth rank, White threatens mate by 53 ♗h5+ ♖g6 54 ♗h7#.

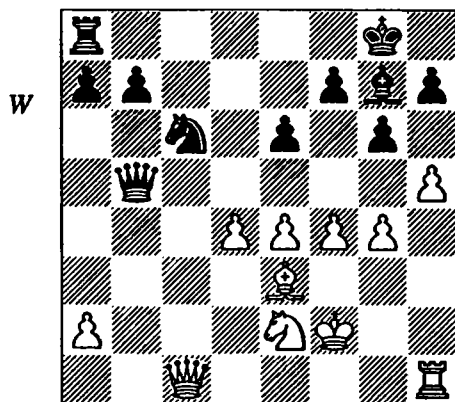
52...g3+ 53 ♖h3 ♗e2



53...♙e2 is the alternative, but as Shirov points out, White wins with the fantastic 54 ♖h4!. This threatens 55 ♖c5+ e5 56 ♖c8#. Black's only defence is 54...♙c4, but then White mates by 55 ♖h5+ ♙g6 56 ♖h7#. Such creative attacking play – exploiting the king in attack – is typical of master activists!

54 ♖g7! 1-0

This covers g4 and threatens mate on f6. 54...♖b2 fails to 55 ♖h5#, so Black resigned.



Shirov – Kamsky
Linares 1993

Same players, same place, one year earlier. Since 20 f5 ♖b4! gives Black strong counterplay, Shirov goes in for a slightly better endgame where he holds the initiative.

20 ♖b1! ♖xb1 21 ♖xb1 b6 22 f5! ♖e7?

It is dangerous for Black to accept the pawn, as after 22...exf5 23 gxf5 gxf5 24 h6 ♙f6 25 e5 ♙h4+ 26 ♖f3 Black is in trouble, as indicated by Shirov. But rather than the text-move, Black should have played 22...♖d8 23 e5 ♙f8, when he is still solid.

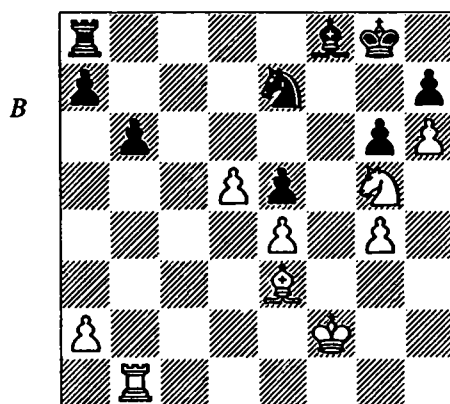
23 h6! ♙f8 24 fxe6

According to Shirov, the direct 24 ♖c1! is even stronger.

24...fxe6 25 ♖f4 ♖f7 26 ♖h3 ♙g8 27 ♖f4 ♖f7 28 ♖h3 ♙g8 29 ♖g5!

A strong pawn sacrifice that Black dare not accept. But perhaps he should have.

29...e5 30 d5 (D)



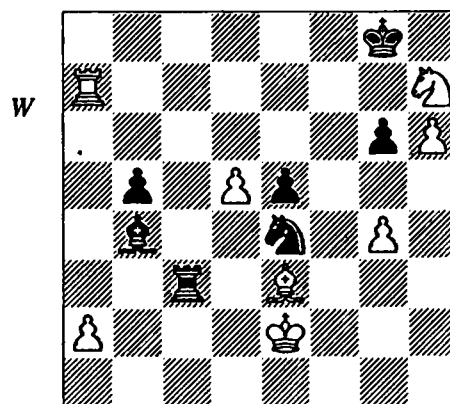
30...♖c8

Hoping to establish a blockade on d6, but it doesn't work. Perhaps he should have taken the pawn by 30...♙xh6, although White has a strong initiative after 31 ♖e6! ♙xe3+ 32 ♖xe3 ♖c8 (32...♖c8 33 d6) 33 ♖c1! ♖d6 34 ♖c6! ♖f7 35 ♖d3!, with the idea 35...♖b8 36 d6! ♖d8 37 ♖xd8 ♖xd8 38 ♖c4!, and White's king penetrates, as indicated by Shirov.

31 ♖c1! ♖d6 32 ♖c7! ♖c8

After 32...♙xh6 33 ♖xh7 ♖xe4+ 34 ♖f3 ♖d2+ 35 ♙xd2 ♙xd2 36 ♖e4, Black is in trouble.

33 ♖d7! ♖c3 34 ♖xh7 ♖xe4+ 35 ♖e2 ♙b4 36 ♖xa7 b5 (D)



37 g5!

White secures his knight a stronghold on f6. 37...♖g3+ 38 ♖d1! ♖e4

After 38...♙xe3 39 ♖g7+ ♔h8 40 ♘f6!, Black is mated.

39 ♔e2 ♘g3+ 40 ♔d1 ♘e4 41 ♗b6! ♜f3 42 ♗d8!

Now the bishop is included in the attack.

42...♜f1+ 43 ♔c2 ♜f2+ 44 ♔b3 ♗c5 45 ♘f6+ ♘xf6

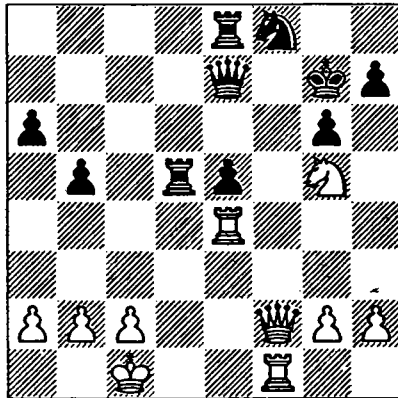
Not 45...♜xf6 46 ♖g7+ and 47 gxf6.

46 ♖g7+ ♔f8 47 gxf6

The passed pawns decide the game.

47...♜f3+ 48 ♔c2 ♜f2+ 49 ♔d1 ♜f1+ 50 ♔e2 ♜f2+ 51 ♔e1 ♜xa2 52 ♗e7+! ♗xe7 53 fxe7+ ♔e8 54 d6 1-0

Obviously activists are not only creative; they are also capable of exploiting our endgame principles. They are very good at sensing when creativity is in order, and when 'standard play' is the right recipe. Morozevich is one such activist who is highly skilled in adjusting his play to the situation.



Morozevich – Chatalbashev
Plovdiv Echt 2003

With the better pawn-structure and the exposed black king, White could try to keep the queens on, by 28 ♖e3 for instance. But Morozevich prefers to enter an advantageous endgame.

28 ♖f7+! ♖xf7 29 ♜xf7+ ♔g8

29...♔h6 30 h4! jeopardizes the king's safety, but being cut off on the back rank is also unpleasant.

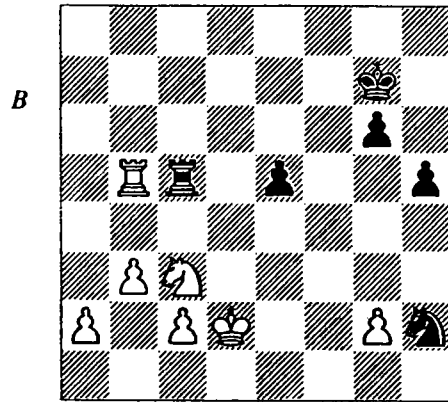
30 ♜a7 ♘d7 31 ♜h4!

Not 31 ♜xa6? ♘c5.

31...♜f8 32 b3 h5 33 ♜xa6 ♜f6 34 ♜xf6 ♘xf6 35 ♜b4!?

35 c4 looks like a natural alternative.

35...♘g4 36 ♘e4 ♔g7 37 ♘c3 ♜c5 38 ♔d2 ♘xh2 39 ♜xb5 (D)

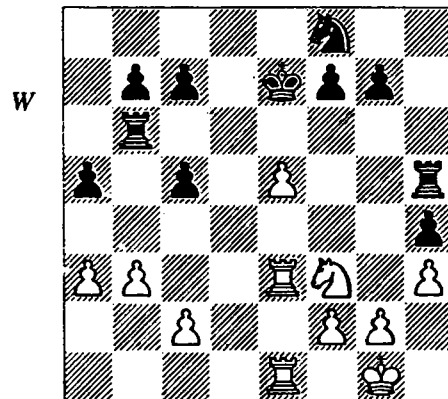


The queenside pawns are bound to carry the day.

39...♘f1+ 40 ♔d3 e4+ 41 ♔d4 ♜c7 42 ♜c5 ♜d7+ 43 ♔xe4 ♜d2 44 a4! ♜xg2 45 a5 h4 46 a6

The white pawns easily outrun Black's.

46...♜f2 47 ♜c7+ ♔h6 48 ♜c8! ♜f7 49 ♘b5 ♘g3+ 50 ♔d3 ♜d7+ 51 ♔e3 ♜e7+ 1-0



Anand – Landa
Bundesliga 2005/6

I am sure readers recognize the contours of the Berlin Defence. White has a clear advantage here, as Black does not have the usual dynamism to compensate for his pawn weaknesses.

25 ♜e4!

Forcing Black to weaken his kingside pawns further while at the same time preventing any black counterplay based on ...a4 or ...c4.

25...g5 26 ♖g4 ♖g6 27 ♘d2!

Taking the knight to better squares. Both e4 and c4 are nice outposts.

27...♖e6 28 ♘c4 b6 29 ♖e3!

White shifts gear and starts playing actively with his pieces, which coordinate much better than Black's.

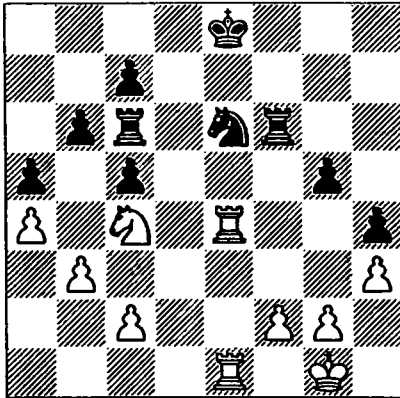
29...♙h8 30 ♘f5+ ♔e8 31 ♖d1!

White has a nasty grip from which Black can only untangle by weakening his position further.

31...f6 32 ♖e4!

With his better coordinated pieces, any opening of the position favours White.

32...♙h7 33 exf6 ♖xf6 34 ♖e3 ♖d7 35 ♖e1 ♖d6 36 ♘c4 ♖c6 37 a4! (D)



Black has avoided any immediate material loss, but his pieces are passive and his pawn-structure inferior.

37...♔d8 38 ♖e5 ♔c8 39 c3!

Taking d4 from Black's knight.

39...♔b7 40 g3!

Creating a potential outside passed pawn on the h-file.

40...hxg3 41 fxg3 ♖g6 42 ♔g2 ♘g7 43 ♖f1 ♖ce6 44 ♖f7 ♖xe5 45 ♘xe5 ♖e6 46 ♘c4!

Much stronger than entering the rook ending. While White's knight is excellently placed, Black's has difficulties finding a good square.

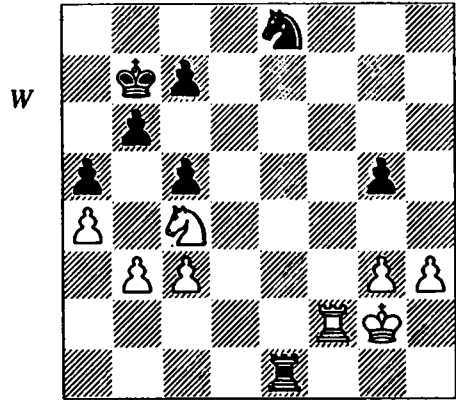
46...♖e8 47 ♖f5 ♖e2+ 48 ♖f2!

There is no need to allow Black any counterplay by 48 ♔f3?! ♖c2.

48...♖e1 (D)

49 h4!

Finally White plays his trump.



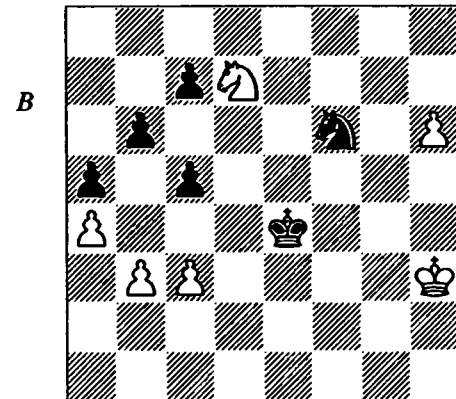
49...gxh4 50 gxh4 ♖e4 51 ♔h3 ♔c6 52 h5 ♔d5 53 h6 ♖e6 54 ♖f5+! ♔e4 55 ♖e5+!

As we have already discussed in Chapter 3, knights are very poor at stopping outside passed pawns. With a typical small activist combination Anand forces a winning knight endgame.

55...♖xe5 56 ♘xe5 ♘f6

Not, of course, 56...♔xe5? 57 h7.

57 ♘d7! (D)



Applying the principle of domination! The knight cannot take, as the h-pawn queens.

57...♘h7 58 ♔g4! c4!?

A last try. After 58...♔d3 59 ♔f5 ♔xc3 60 ♔g6 ♔xb3 61 ♔xh7 c4 62 ♖e5 c3 63 ♔g6 c2 64 ♘d3 the knight stops the c-pawn.

59 bxc4 ♔d3 60 ♔f5 ♔xc4 61 ♔g6 b5 62 axb5 1-0

62...a4 is met by 63 b6! cxb6 64 ♘xb6+ and 65 ♘xa4, and in the race after 62...♔xb5 63 ♔xh7 a4 64 ♔g6 a3 65 h7 Black is too slow.

Index of Players

Numbers refer to pages. When a player's name appears in **bold**, that player had White. Otherwise the FIRST-NAMED PLAYER had White.

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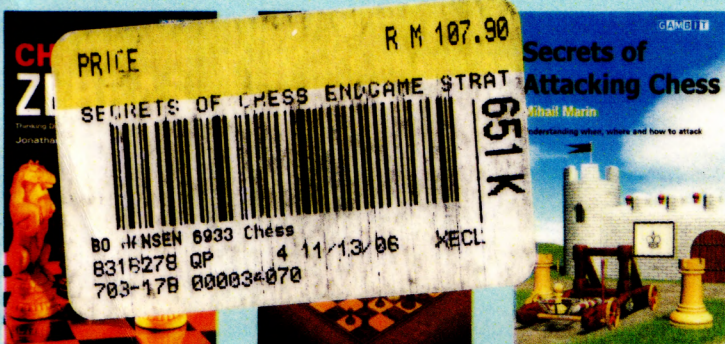
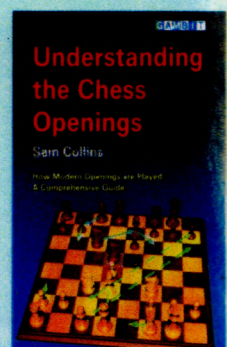
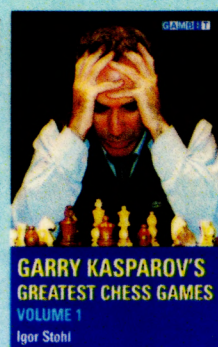
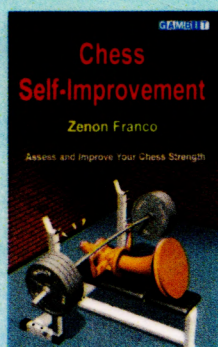
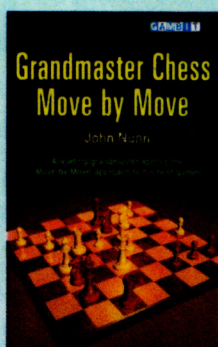
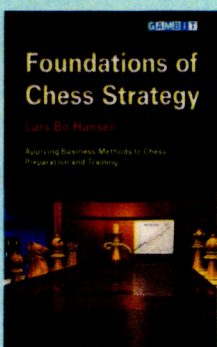
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