

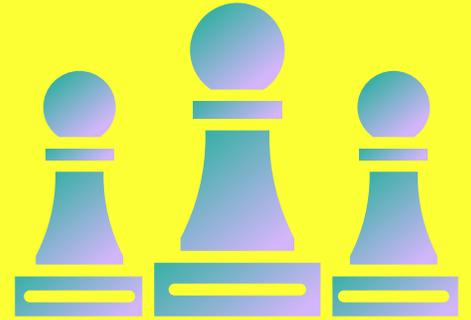
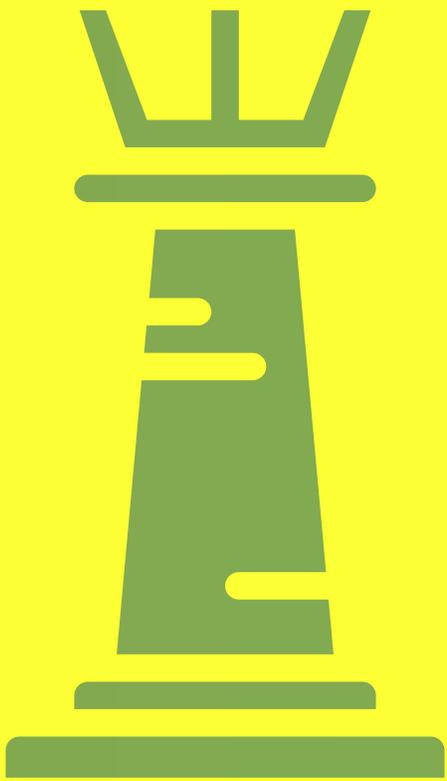


Modern Chess Magazine

Issue 21

Fortress

The Ultimate Defence



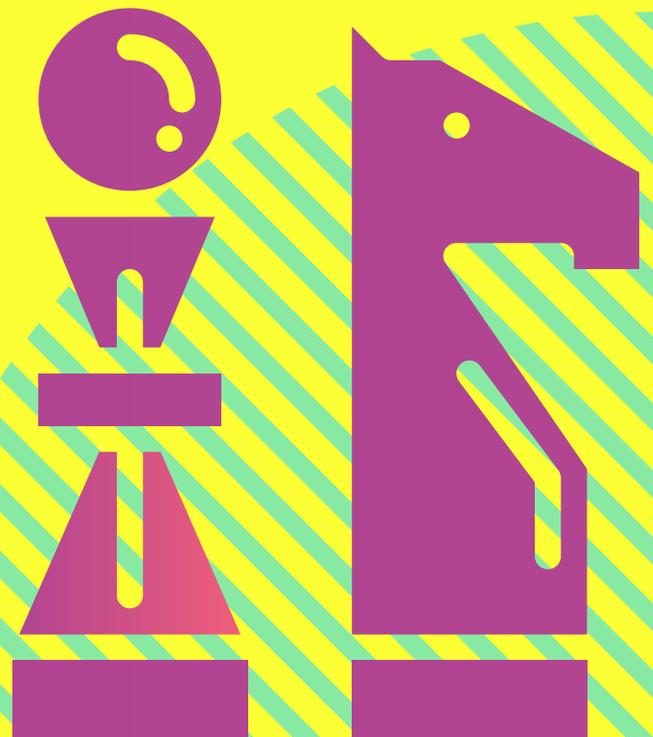
Understand the English Hedgehog **Part 2**

The Danger of Making Natural Moves

Learn to Fight Your Reflexes

Understand the Najdorf Structures **Part 2**

Endgame Series 21
Simplifications in
Difficult Endgames



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The Danger of Making Natural Moves - Learn to Fight Your Reflexes



GM Valeriy Aveskulov

All humans are followed by reflexes. Wikipedia names more than 50 reflexes known to modern science. But I know one more reflex that is unknown to Web Encyclopedia. I call it “natural moves” reflex. ABSOLUTELY every chess player has a set of chess instincts that (1) make some moves undoubted or (2) makes some moves not possible for him/her. For every level of players, there is a different set of reflexes. For example, beginners take everything they can or attack the queen whenever he/she can do this. Experienced players already understand that such behavior does not bring dividends and become more flexible. Stronger players know that in the endgame king should go to the center; when you attack you do not need to exchange queens; do not exchange fianchetto bishop when your king is castled to the same side etc. Such a list can be enormous. But in chess every single position is individual. Every single position has own nuances. Even the flap

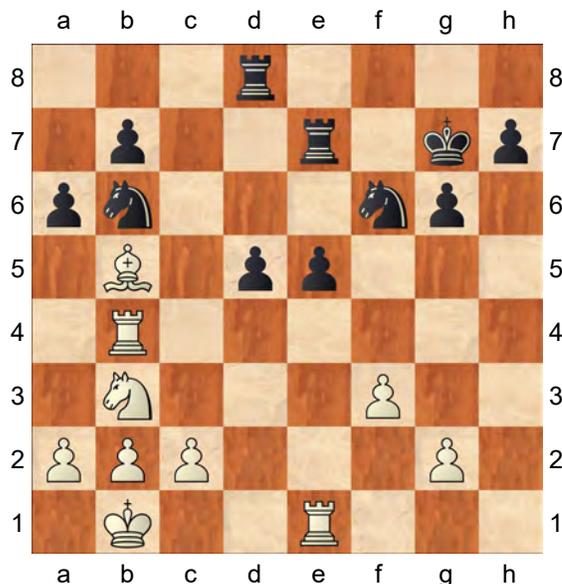
of a butterfly wing on one continent may cause an earthquake on another. Rephrasing this formula of Chaos Theory we can state that a move that was good with the pawn on h2 may be a fatal mistake with a pawn on h3. Definitely, reflexes help us when we are short on time. But if we have enough time on the clock, we need to consider all nuances and to double-check all around do not miss something important that can be out of our reflex system. Now let me show how all this can influence on our play.

Captures

What can be more natural than to take an opponent's piece -especially when he/she took our piece on the last move. One of the first things we learn as chess beginners are how to capture and this reflex goes through all our chess life. Even top players are affected by to-take-instincts. But chess is not draughts and capturing is not compulsory in our game. The first example I would like to share demonstrates the most primitive form of this reflex. You take - I take. Black was my former student who could not handle with own instincts.

☐ **Joe Belomo**

■ **Bruce Highcock**

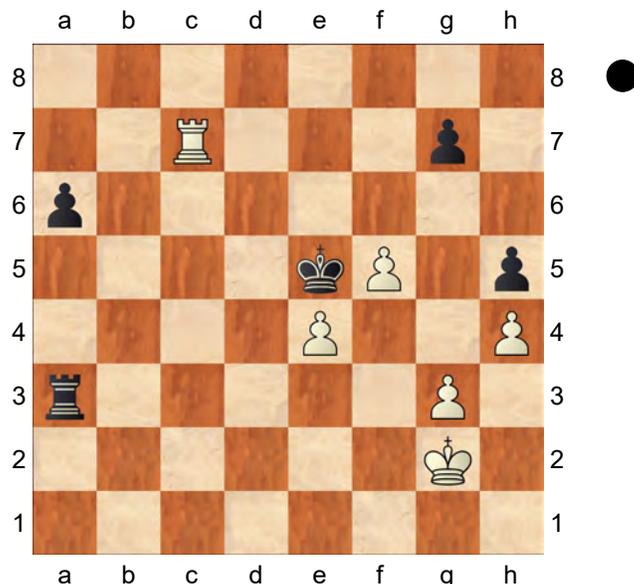


The last move was not the best - a7-a6 -and White confidently take this pawn. **30.Bxa6!** Bruce admits that he made a mistake and without any doubts takes back. **30...bxa6?**

[The best move was out-of-reflexes 30...Rd6! Black defends the knight and forces the bishop to retreat. 31.Bf1 Now Nc8 with idea to exchange White's active rook (by means of Rb6) would hold a balance.]

31.Rxb6± and rapidly Black lost but there is no sense to see the end of this game. We can make two conclusions based on watching this game - one concrete and one general. The concrete conclusion is when the opponent takes something we should not hastily take it back. General rule teaches us that we should always create a list of candidates moves. Even if you see a good move that wins a pawn look around before making the move. Maybe instead you can win a queen and end the game. An influence of natural moves reflex increases when time on the clock is running out. For Fabiano Caruana it happened in the most unsuitable moment - in the first tie-break game of his World Championship match.

□	Carlsen,Magnus	2835
■	Caruana,Fabiano	2832
	WCh Rapid TB 2018 (1)	2018



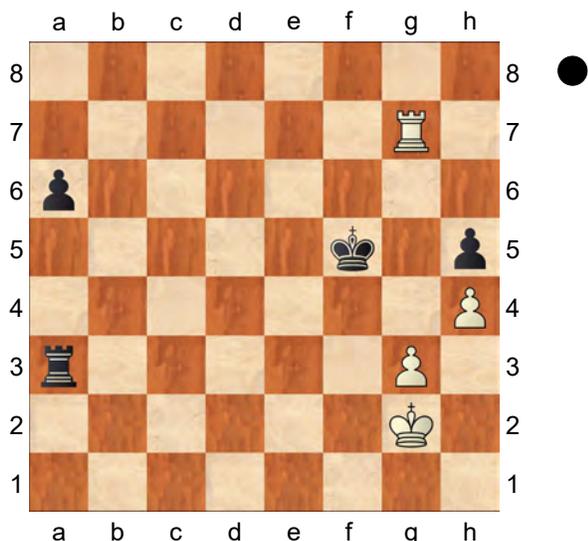
Caruana had had a tough defense from the very opening and in the position on the diagram he had less than a minute on the clock. He calculated the most natural line - take, take, check - and correctly evaluated the final position as drawn. But chess is not draughts; here one is not obliged to take. **37...Kxe4?**

[The correct move order was 37...Ra2+! 38.Kh3 Kxe4 using a bad location of White king Black saves the game. 39.Rxg7 (here check does not help because of 39.Re7+ Kf3 followed by Ra1.) 39...Ra1 with idea of Kf3. 40.Rg5 (or 40.Rc7 Rf1 41.Rc6 Rxf5 42.Rxa6 Rb5=) 40...Kf3 41.Kh2 Ra2+=]

38.Re7+!

[Carlsen does not follow opponent's plan; before taking on g7 he pushes Black king backward. 38.Rxg7? Ra2+ 39.Kh3 Ra1= as we know leads to a draw.]

38...Kxf5 39.Rxg7+-

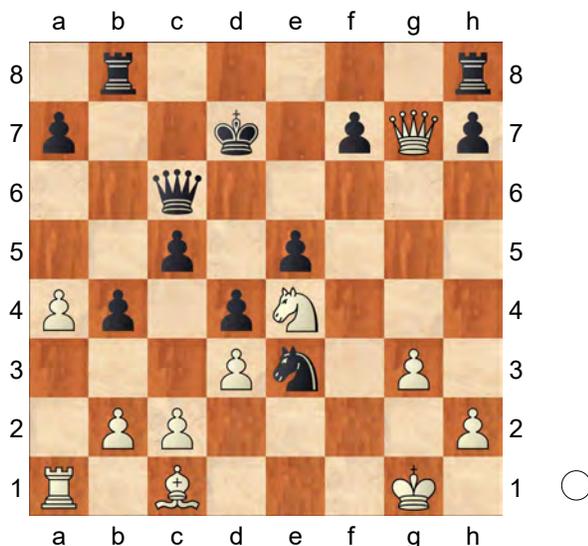


Two connected passed pawns guarantee White a win. 39...Kf6 40.Rg5 a5 41.Rxh5 a4 42.Ra5 Ra1 43.Kf3 a3 44.Ra6+ Kg7 45.Kg2 Ra2+ 46.Kh3 Ra1 47.h5 Kh7 48.g4 Kg7 49.Kh4 a2 50.Kg5 Kf7 51.h6 Rb1 52.Ra7+ Kg8 53.Rxa2 Rb5+ 54.Kg6 Rb6+ 55.Kh5 Black resigned.

1-0

Here is another example on the theme of instinctive capture.

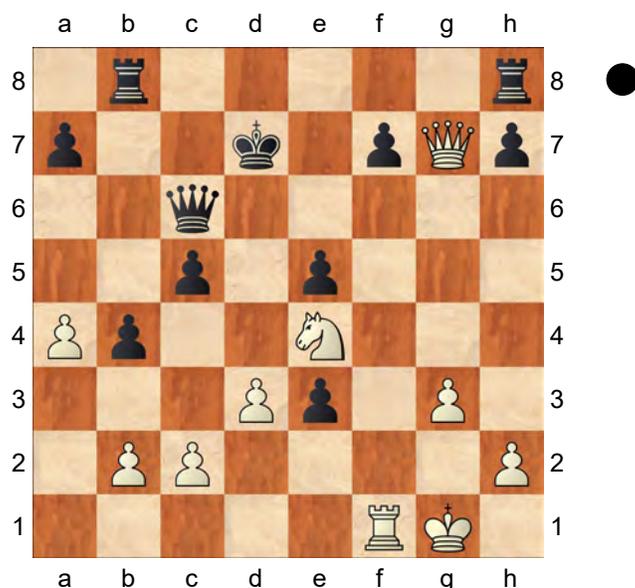
Valenti, Richard 2149
 Lam-Roques, Kalvin 2039
 Chpt de Paris (position from analysis)



I'm pretty sure that many of you would take on f7 with a check - immediately of after previous Bxe3. To take with a check is a reflex of high level - not many players can handle it. But such capture in this situation leaves Ra1 without a job. Development of pieces is supposed to be our primary reflex! **22.Bxe3!**

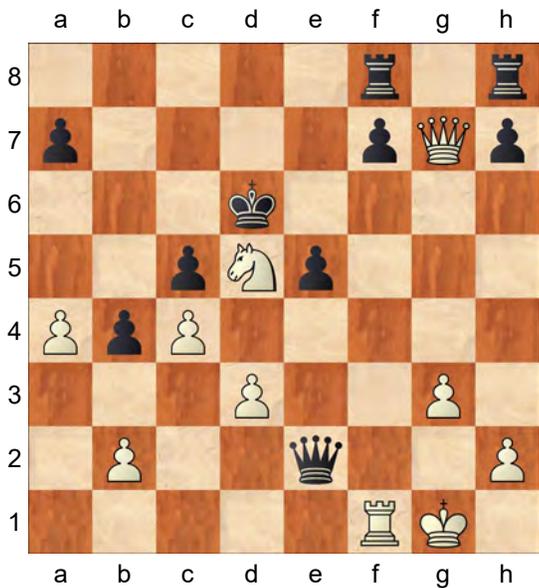
[After 22.Qxf7+? Kc8 23.Bxe3 dxe3 24.Qxa7 (or 24.Qe7 Rd8∞) 24...Rd8 25.Rf1 (25.Re1 c4!) 25...e2 26.Re1 c4 with double-edged position.]

22...dxe3 23.Rf1!



Three pieces attack the king more effectively than two do. **23...Rbf8** Now it is necessary to block another reflex and do not take on f7. Rooks on f8 and h8 are passive and White pieces can direct own pieces to opponent's king. **24.Rf6 Qd5 25.Rf5**

[25.Rd6+ is also possible Qxd6 26.Nxd6 Kxd6 27.Qf6+ Kd7 28.Qxe5 king stops pawn on e1; should be winning.]



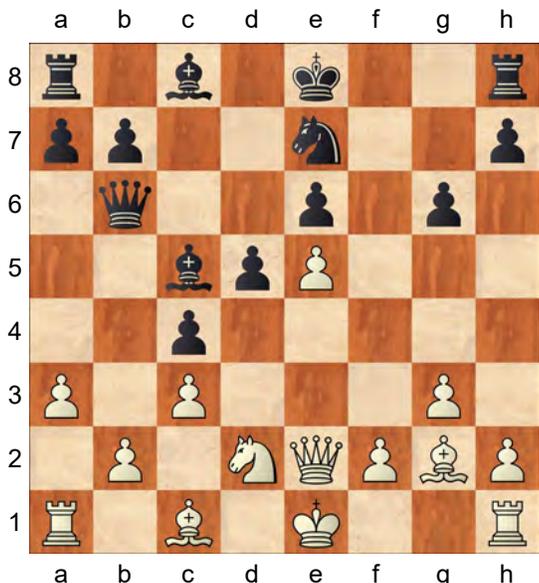
with a decisive attack.

Castling

Another thing we are taught in the first stages of our career is to hide the king with castling. The same as captures do castling instinct appears too strong for many players. Especially if it is possible to play 0-0 and to create a threat.

Sax, Gyula
 Bhaskar, Gupta
 GM tournament

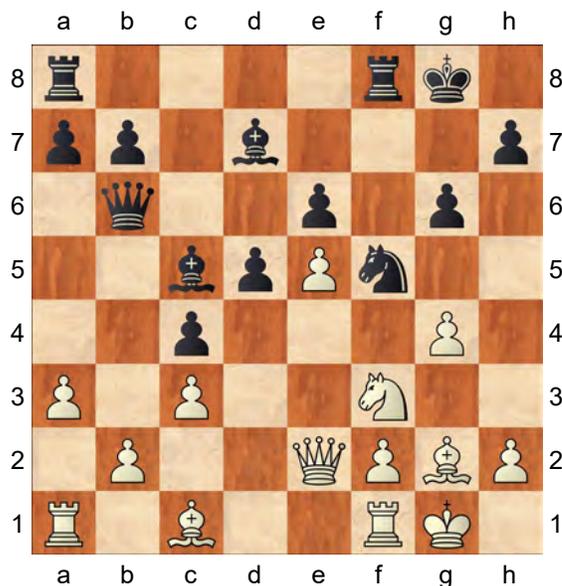
2451
2218
 2012



13...0-0?! Black got attracted by this natural move and didn't think about alternative ways. King on the king side will feel unsecured and that was important.

[Less reflex 13...Bd7 followed by 0-0-0 was a way stronger. After that Black king is fine since White has no ways to break through on the queen side. 14.Nf3 0-0-0 15.0-0 h6 with idea g6-g5; Black has a nice position.]

14.0-0 Nf5 15.Nf3 Bd7 16.g4!

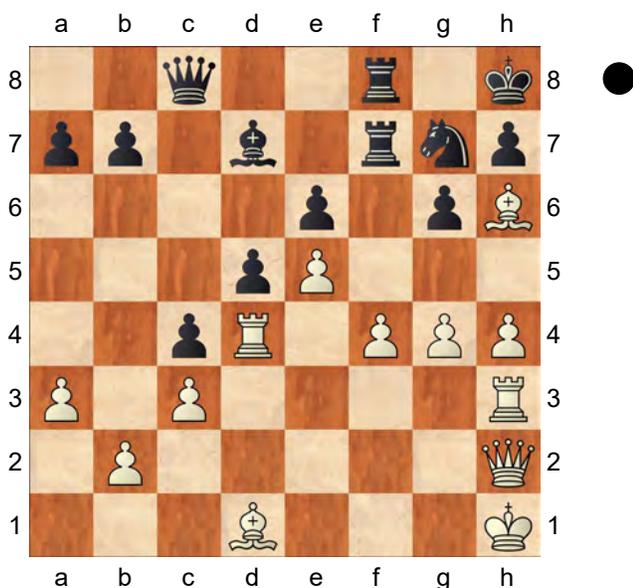


wins square h6 for the B. From here Hungarian GM conducts very instructive attack on the king. When White has ways to improve own position it is hard to advise something worthy to Black.

16...Ng7 17.Bh6 Rae8

[17...Ba4! would prevent comfortable Rd2 setup.]

18.Rad1! Ba4 19.Rd2 Rf7 20.Nd4 Bxd4? This exchange does not look good. He would always have a chance to take on d4. More crucial is that dark squares became frail. **21.Rxd4± Ref8 22.f4 Bd7 23.Kh1 Bc8 24.Rf3 Qc6 25.Rg3 Kh8 26.h4 Rg8 27.Rh3 Bd7 28.Bf3 Qc8 29.Qh2 Rgf8 30.Bd1!**

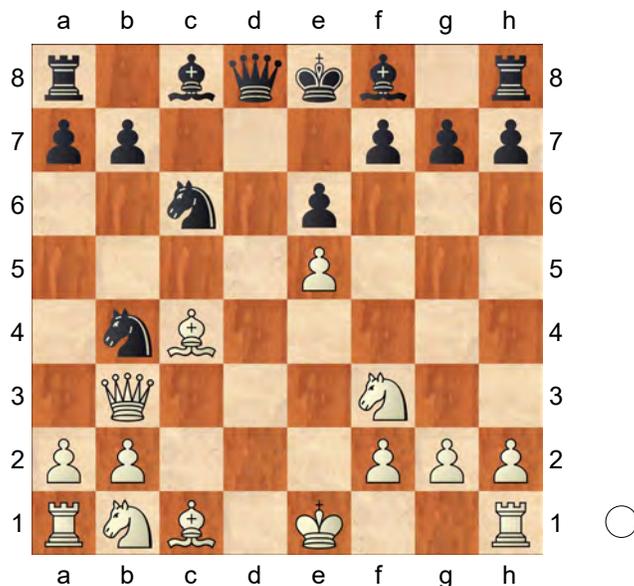


Strong player does not force things if he has not all pieces placed perfectly. B goes to c2 where it pushes on g6, h7 squares. **30...Rg8 31.Bc2 Qc7 32.Bg5 Ne8 33.h5!** All preparations are done. Now it is the beginning of the end for Black. **33...gxh5 34.Rxh5 Bc8 35.Qh4 Rgf8 36.Bg6** Black resigned. His king could not survive from an attack that was provoked by natural 0-0. Kudos Sax! Excellent attack. **1-0**

Alapin variation

In the next example I try to prove that even theoretical 0-0 can be a weak decision.

1.e4 c5 2.c3 Nf6 3.e5 Nd5 4.Nf3 d6 5.d4 cxd4 6.cxd4 Nc6 7.Bc4 dxe5 8.dxe5 Ndb4 9.Qb3 e6

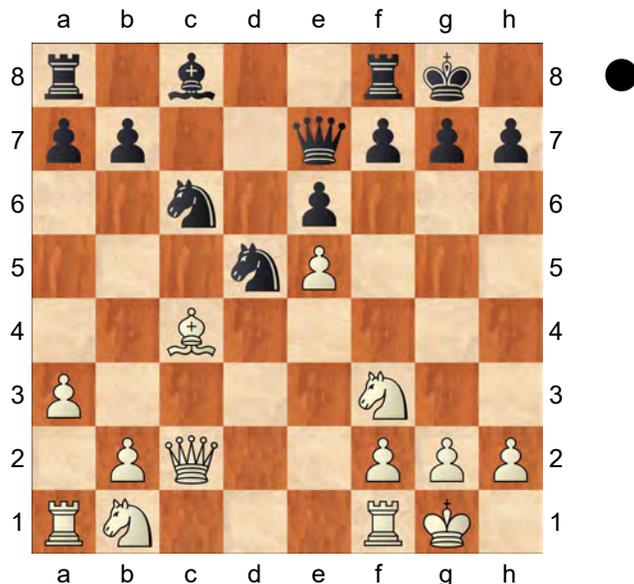


After this pawn move Bc8 is the main possible Black's problem. If he or she will not be able to develop it to big diagonal, Black is under risk to get a worse position. The optimal is to exchange it (no piece no problem). Additionally, every new exchange brings players closer to the endgame where over advanced e5-pawn can be a serious weakness. Considering Bc8 and Pe5 problem White needs to keep more pieces on the board to get more dynamic. White's probable plans are an attack on the king side and pressure on central lines. But what happens on practice? In my database, this position happened 108 times. In 98 games White played 0-0. **10.0-0?** But this natural move

allows Black to exchange his weakest piece by force.

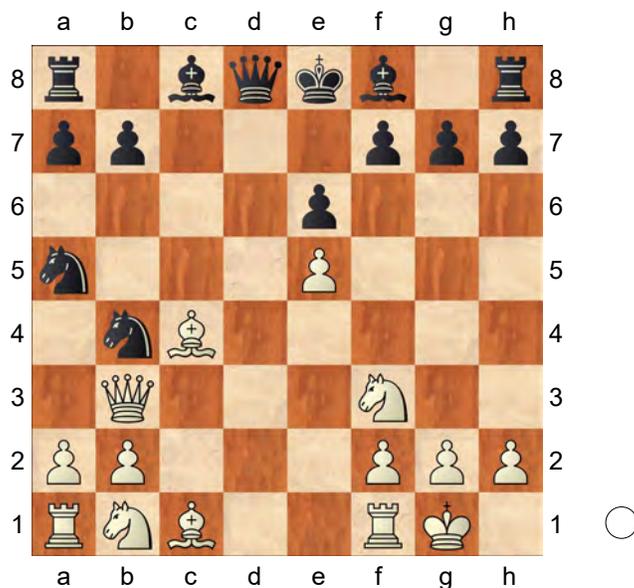
[Instead White may play 10.Bg5!? offering Black to exchange dark-squared bishops that benefits to White more. Be7 (Black queen can retreat 10...Qb6 with idea of Na5 to exchange Bc4. 11.Be2!? A modest move that saves all minor pieces on the board. Onwards White easily develops the rest of his pieces when Black still has some troubles to activate Bc8. The position remains equal but the play of White looks simpler.; 10...Qd7 11.Bb5

11.Be2 was another possibility. a6 12.Be2 h6 13.Bd2 b5 Santos,J (2193)-Perunovic,M (2604) Lisbon POR 2017 14.a3 Nd5 15.Nc3 Black Q will feel uncomfortable if White brings own rooks to "c" and "d" files.) 11.Bxe7 Qxe7 12.a3 Nd5! Black hopes to develop Bc8 with pawn's sacrifice but White is not forced to accept this gift. (in case of 12...Na5? 13.Bb5+ Nbc6 14.Qc3± Na5 has problems.) 13.0-0 (13.Bxd5 exd5 14.Qxd5 Bf5 15.0-0 Rd8≡) 13...0-0 14.Qc2

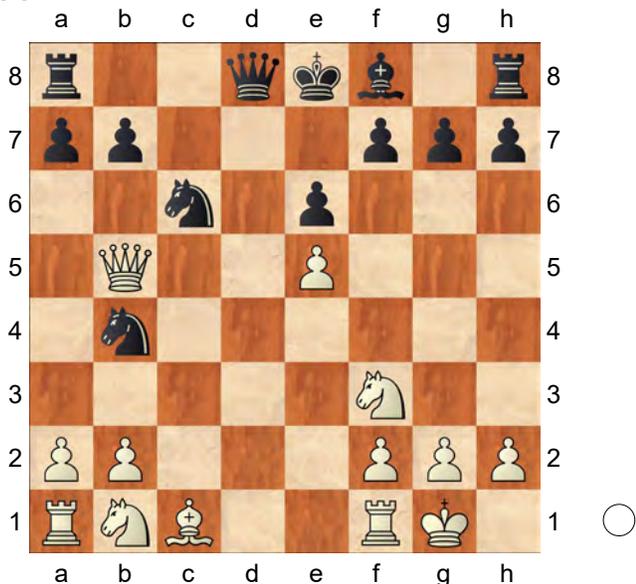


Again White is a side who pretends for advantage mostly thanks to the bad position of Bc8. Beside this White can also hope for an outpost on d6 (thanks to the exchange of dark-squared bishops).]

10...Na5!

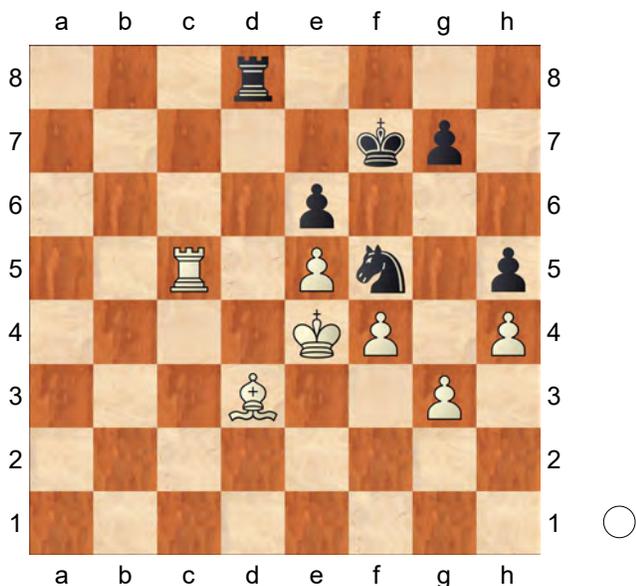


11.Bb5+ Bd7 12.Qa4 Bxb5 13.Qxb5+
Nac6



Here both statistics and analysis prove that White already does not pretend for any sort of advantage. Moreover, he or she needs to be careful to avoid serious problems - the e5-pawn is a bad sign for almost all possible upcoming endgames.

Petr, Martin 2484
 Aveskulov, Valeriy 2538
 Cup's rector 2011



First time I thought about the natural moves problem happened when I have made it myself and lost. To be more precise next day my opponent did the same mistake and I already had no chances do not see the matter. Let's see how it happened. White is a pawn up but Black should be able to make a draw thanks to good cooperation of his rook and knight.

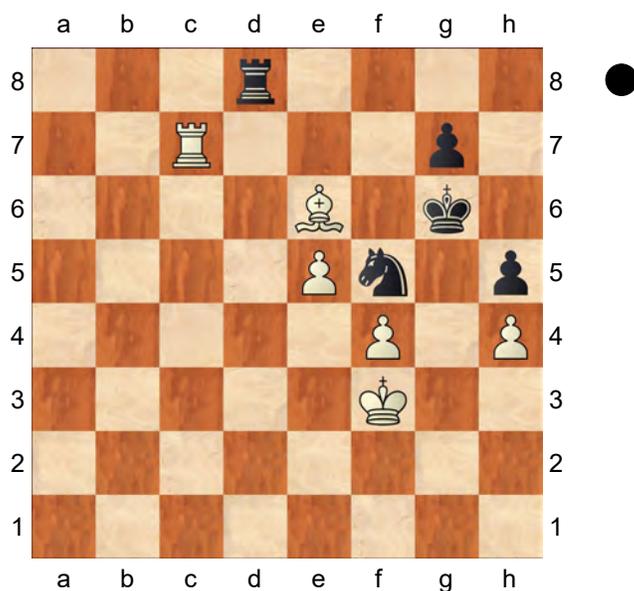
54.Rc7+

Move 54 rarely arises with a lot of time on the clock. I have calculated one line and moved king forward.

54...Kg6?

[Instead 54...Kf8! would practically fix a draw. White has no real resources to fight for the advantage. 55.Bc4 Nxc3+ 56.Kf3 Nf5 and 57.Bxe6? is not a problem Nd4+ But I have not even considered backward moves.]

55.Bc4 Nxc3+ 56.Kf3 Nf5 57.Bxe6!



Only now I understood that I should fight for a draw anew. **57...Rd3+?**

[57...Nxb4+ 58.Ke4 Rd1 with idea of Re1 was stronger but I was unable to find this.]

[57...Nd4+? of course was bad 58.Ke4 Nxe6 59.f5+ Kh6 60.fxe6 pawn e6 is unstoppable.]

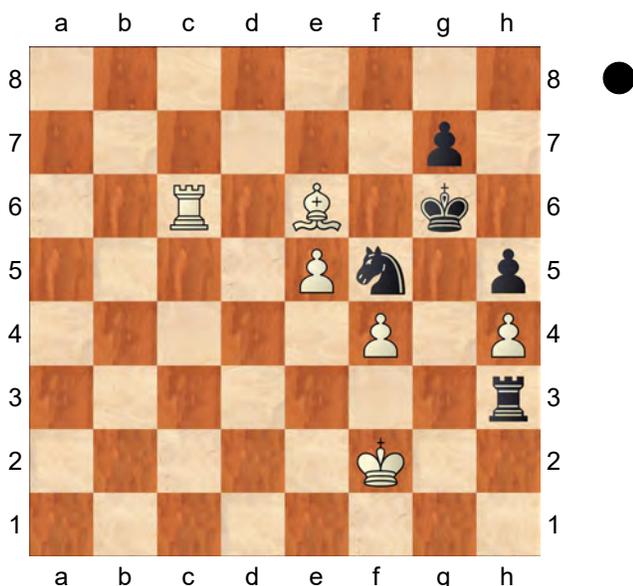
58.Ke2 Re3+ 59.Kf2 Rh3?

The decisive blunder.

[After 59...Re4 White might force rooks exchange. 60.Rc4! with winning B vs N endgame. Rxc4 61.Bxc4 Nxb4 62.Bd3+ Kh6 (62...Kf7 63.Kg3 Ng6 64.Bxg6+ Kxg6 65.Kh4+-) 63.Kg3 g5 64.e6!+-]

[59...Ra3! was correct instead.]

60.Rc6!



Suddenly I realized that can not take on h4. **60...Nd4**

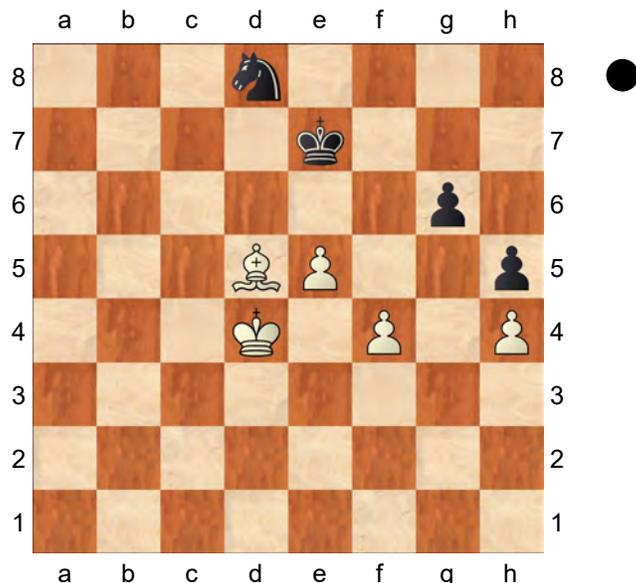
[After 60...Rxb4?? 61.Bg8+! wins the knight.]

61.Bxb3+ Nxc6 62.Ke3 The rest is relatively simple. **62...Kf7 63.Ke4**

[63.Bd7! Ne7 64.f5 even would not allow an appearance of N on g6.]

63...Ne7 64.Kf3 Ng6 65.Kg3 Kf8 66.Be6 Ke8 67.Bd5 Ne7 68.Be4

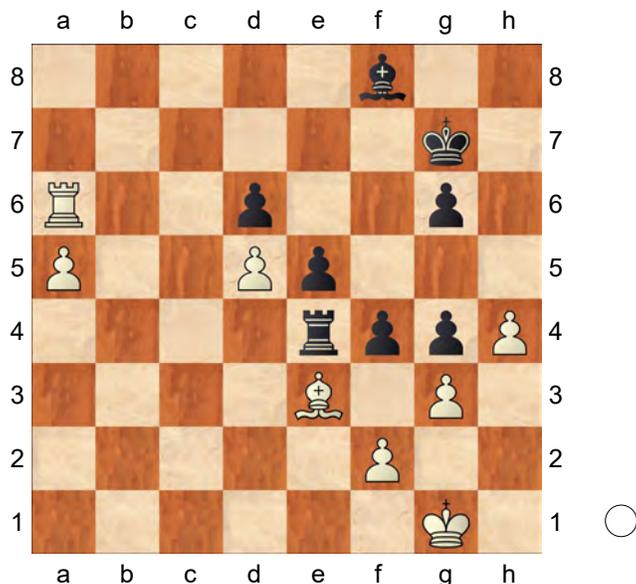
Bishop took care of pawn h4 and the king can return to the center. **68...g6 69.Kf3 Kf7 70.Ke3 Ke6 71.Kd4 Kf7 72.Kc4 Ke6 73.Kd4 Kf7 74.Bd5+ Ke8 75.Be6 Nc6+ 76.Kc5 Nd8 77.Bd5 Ke7 78.Kd4!**



N is totally bounded; now king can go back to the king side. **78...Ke8 79.Ke4 Kf8 80.f5 gxf5+ 81.Kxf5 Kg7 82.Kg5 Kh7 83.Kf6** Black resigned.

1-0

□	Aveskulov, Valeriy	2538
■	Yuffa, Daniil	2285
	Rector Cup - 2011	2011



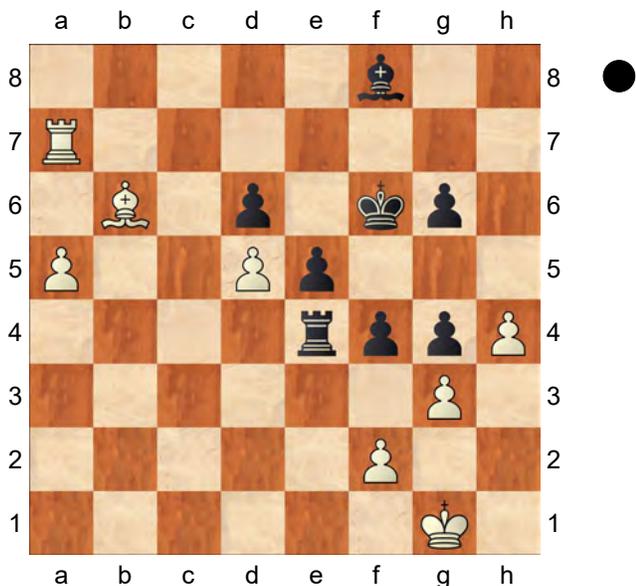
As I said earlier the next day the natural moves problem arose again. Even the introductory move was the same - Ra7+. **38.Ra7+** Black quickly moved his king to the center.

38...Kf6?? and this

appeared a decisive mistake.

[Correct move was backward (the same as in the Petr-Aveskulov). 38...Kg8 and after 39.Bb6 Rb4 White rook and bishop can not organise promoting of own pawn.]

39.Bb6!+-

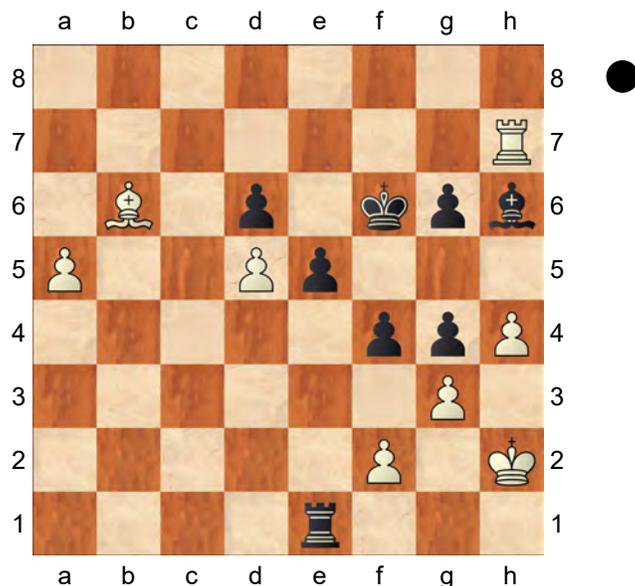


Additionally to idea of pawn advancing White created a threat to Black king and bishop (Bd8 and Rf7). Black can not handle with both.

39...Re1+ 40.Kh2 Bh6

[Black can not stop pawn after 40...Be7 41.a6+-]

41.Rh7!



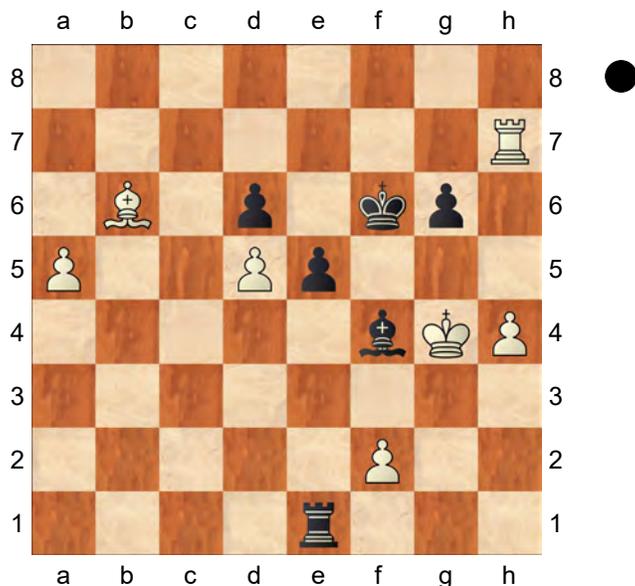
fxg3+

[41...Bg7 42.gxf4 exf4 43.Bd4+-]
[41...Bf8 42.Bd8+ Kf5 43.Rf7+ Ke4 44.Rxf8 Kf3 45.Bb6+-]

42.Kxg3 Bf4+

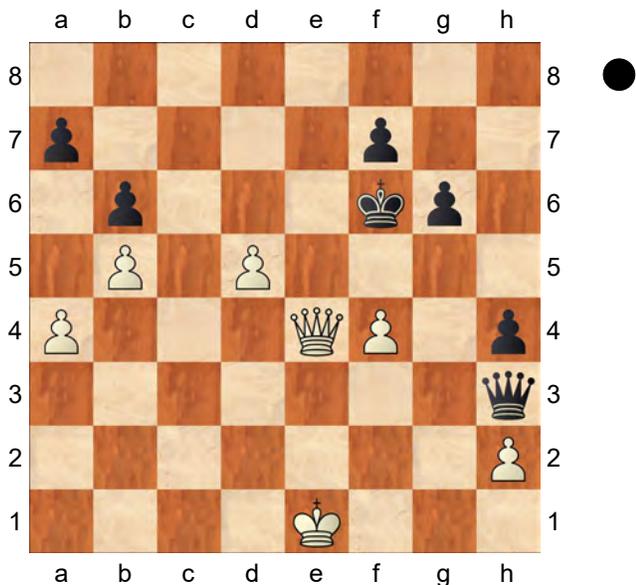
[After 42...Bg7 43.Be3! Black can not defend against Bg5-Kf7, Bh6 idea. Rg1+ (43...Bf8 44.Bg5+ Kf5 45.Rf7+ Ke4 46.Rxf8+-) 44.Kh2 Ra1 45.Bg5+ Kf7 46.Bh6+-]

43.Kxg4



Black has saved his bishop but meanwhile position became hopeless.
43...Rg1+ 44.Kf3 g5 45.hxg5+ Bxg5
46.a6 Ra1 47.a7 Black resigned.
1-0

Aveskulov **2529**
 Onischuk, Volodimir **2720**
 Rector Cup (rapid) **2016**



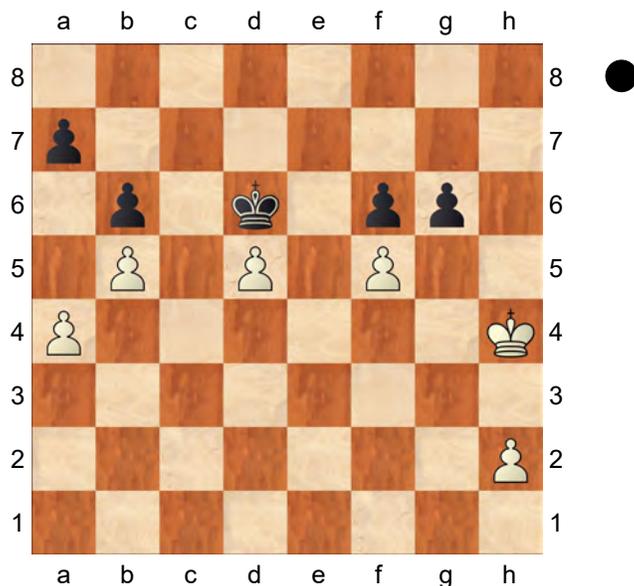
Unfortunately, these examples have not taught me a lot (probably that's why I have decided to write this article). Black fought for a win all the game and now he overpushed. **44...Qf5??**

My opponent forgot that after **45.Qxf5+ Kxf5** Pawn f4 is not hanging and the White king has time to come closer.

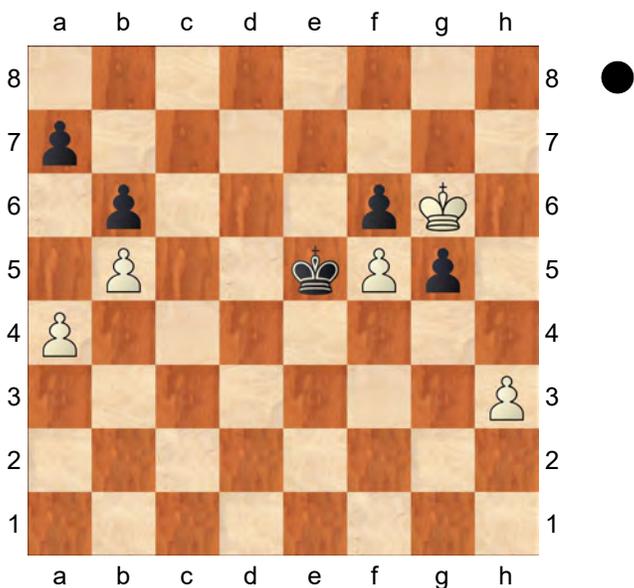
46.Kf2 g5

[46...Kf6 was also lost 47.Kf3 Ke7 48.Kg4 Kd6 49.Kxh4 f6 (49...Kxd5 50.Kg5 Ke6 51.h4 Ke7 52.f5+- and pawn "h" decides the game.)

50.f5!



Creating remoted passed pawn wins the game. **gxf5 (or 50...g5+ 51.Kh5 Kxd5 52.Kg6 Ke5 53.h3+-**



(reserve moves are extremely important in pawn endgames).)

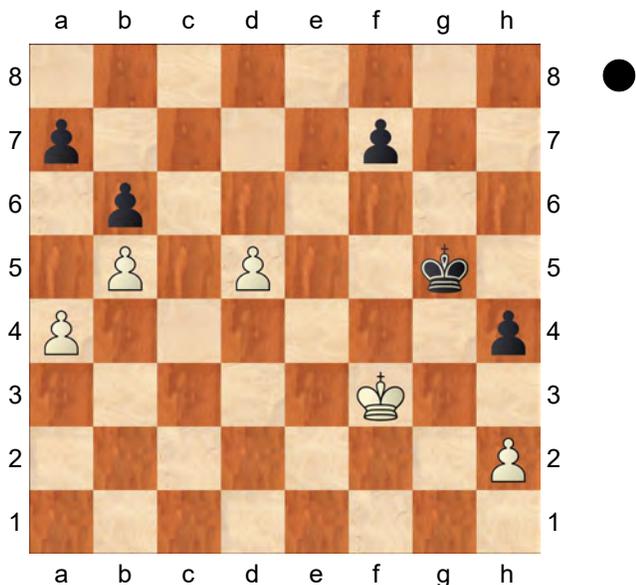
51.Kg3+-]

47.fxg5

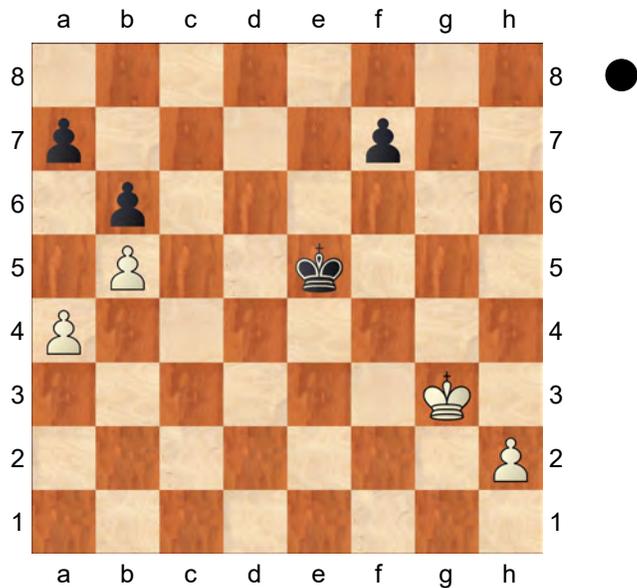
[47.d6 Ke6 48.fxg5 Kxd6 49.Kf3 +-was the simplest. But move in the game does not spoil yet the win.]

47...Kxg5 Having seconds on the clock I moved my king ... of course to the center. **48.Kf3?**

[Instead less attractive 48.Kg2!would win the important tempo Kf5 with king on f3 White needed to make useless pawn move when now he could continue own way to pawn h4. 49.Kh3 Ke5 50.Kxh4 Kxd5 51.Kg5 Ke5 52.h4+- and pawn promotes with a check.]

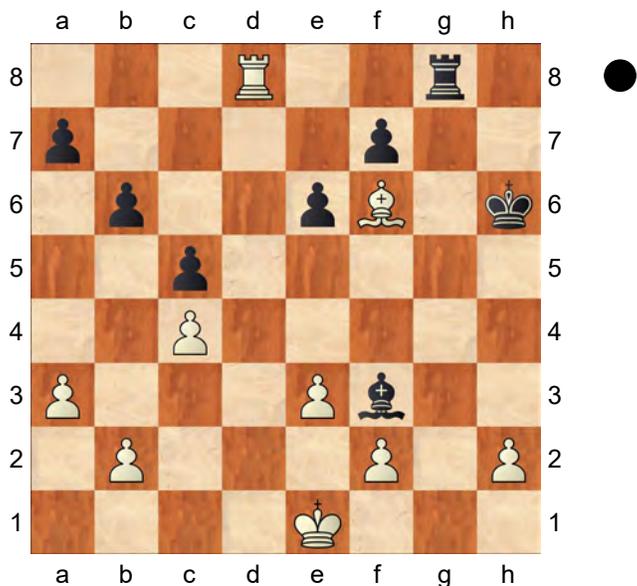


48...Kf5 49.d6 Ke6 50.Kg4 Kxd6 51.Kxh4 Ke5 52.Kg3



Other king moves would not change anything. **52...Ke4 53.h4 f5 54.h5 Ke3 55.h6 f4+ 56.Kg4 f3 57.h7 f2 58.h8Q f1Q** Draw. **1/2**

Williams, Simon 1999
 Le Ruyet, Leopold 2220
Bunratty 2016



Checks

Another interesting example of natural moves reflex is when we give checks. Seemingly in such moments, we forget that the goal of our game is to checkmate but not just to check him. White has a free pawn but presence of opposite-colored bishops on the board and good position of Black pieces help him to hold a balance. **23...Rg1+** Black plays naturally - check and attack. Many players would do the same without serious doubts. As a result, White activates own king and seizes the initiative.

[Instead he had to think about own king and to provide its activation. **23...Rg4!** First attacking on c4; White needs to defend it. **24.b3 Kg6!** **25.Be7** (Bishop should stay on h4-d8 diagonal because in case of **25.Bc3??** he loses the rook: **Rg1+ 26.Kd2 Rd1 +-+**) **25...Kf5!** King goes to e4. With such active pieces, it is impossible to lose. Now White should be careful to avoid problems. **26.Rf8**

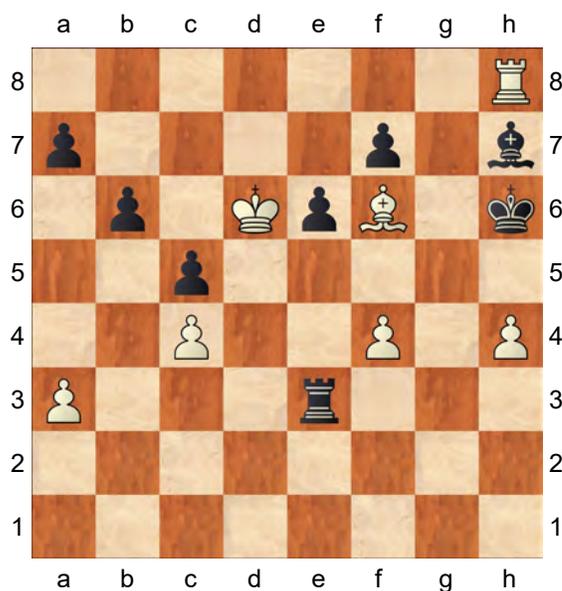
(or **26.Kd2 Rg2 27.Rf8 Rxf2+ 28.Kc3 Bh5** Black is slightly better since his pieces are more harmonious.) **26...Ke4 27.Rxf7??** (of course it is just a demonstration of Black's resources. White can play instead **27.Kd2 Rg2 28.Bh4 Rxh2 29.Bg3 Rh7** with equal position) **27...Kd3-+** with inevitable checkmate.]

[It worth of mentioning that rooks exchange can not satisfy Black because he will lose one of his queen

side pawns. Black would still have high drawn chances but surely it is a weak decision if you have other options. **23...Rxd8? 24.Bxd8 Kg6 25.Bc7 Bc6 26.Bb8 a6 27.Ba7±]**
24.Kd2 Rg2 25.e4!? White does not try to defend on f2 and frees e3-square for the king. It is the beginning of a long rabbit-like maneuver (e1-d2-e3-f4-e5-d6-e7) that Black has not even tried to prevent. **25...Bxe4 26.Ke3 Bg6 27.h4!?** Objectively the position remains equal but now Black is a side who should prove this. **27...Rg4 28.b3 Rg1 29.Rh8+ Bh7 30.Kf4 Rb1**

[Prophylactical **30...Re1** directed against **Ke5** would level all risks.]
31.Ke5 When Black goes to take pawns White continues to activate own king; finally the difference between king decides the game. **31...Rxb3 32.f4 Re3+** One more natural and weak check.

[Again Black had to prevent king's running but these checks are so attractive. **32...Rd3!=]**
33.Kd6



Re4?? A mistake that makes position lost.

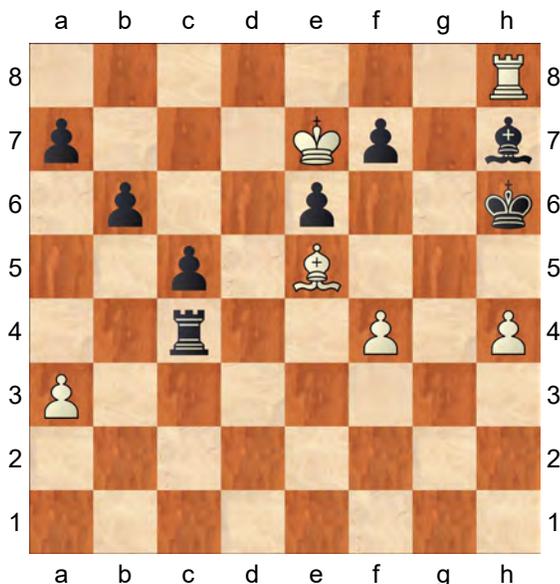
[Black had at least two defending ways. One is to exchange rooks. Bishop will stay ridiculous after that but White will not be able to make use of this. 33...Rg3 34.Ke7 Rg8 35.Rxg8 Bxg8 36.Kf8 Bh7 (36...Kh7?? puts Black into unusual zugzwang. 37.a4 a6 38.h5 a5 39.h6+-) 37.Kxf7 Bd3=]

[Second way was to defend on f7 33...Kg6 34.Ke7 and then to prevent h4-h5. Rh3=]

34.Ke7 Rxc4

[34...Kg6 already does not save the game: 35.h5+ Kh6 36.Be5 f5 37.Kxe6 Rxc4 38.Kf7 b5 39.Bg7+ Kxh5 40.Rxh7+ Kg4 41.Be5+-]

35.Be5!+-



White wins the bishop. **35...Kg6 36.h5+ Kh6 37.Kxf7 Ra4 38.Bg7+ Kxh5 39.Rxh7+ Kg4 40.Be5** Black resigned. To get some use from this material we need to make conclusions. Here they are.

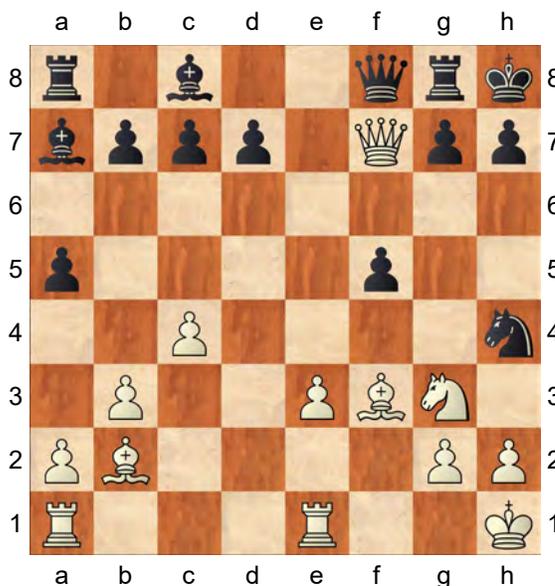
1. Natural moves can impact on our play in a few ways - (a) we play moves that are natural for us and do not see strong

alternatives; (b) we do not consider moves that are unnatural for us.

2. We should be critical during the game (unless we know concrete position) and do not accept anything as absolute truth.

3. I offer such a scheme of thinking process that should minimize most of the calculating mistakes: · First, we ask ourself what opponent's threat/idea is; · secondly, we pick up candidate moves. It is important to include possible checks and captures. If they are strategically dubious they can be an introduction to some tactic; · third, we calculate our candidates and based on our skills compare arising lines; · fourth, we double-check if our best move does not blunder anything and make it.

Analysis position



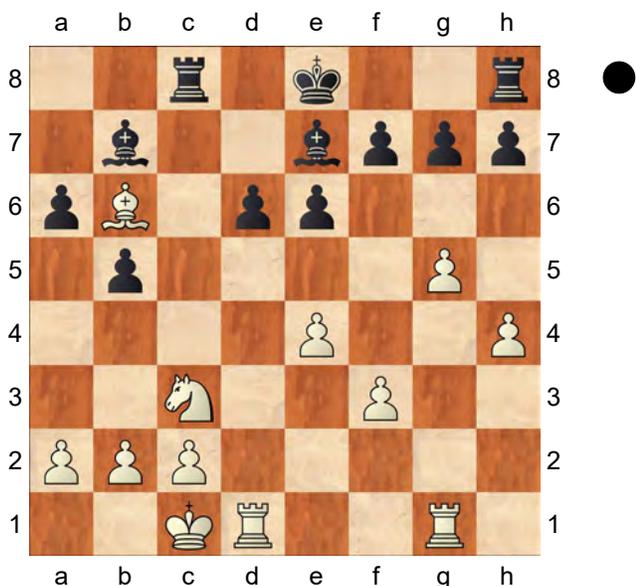
At the end I offer you to solve a few positions that will help you to adopt described ideas. White to move.

Wright,Chris
 Wood,David
 Chas L Hart Cup

1709
2002
 2010

Carlsen,Magnus
 Grischuk,Alexander
 7th Mikhail Tal Memorial (4)

2835
2761
 2012



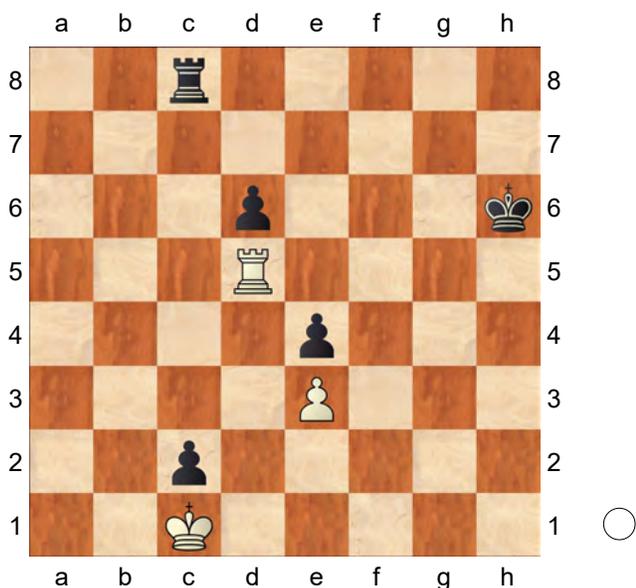
Black to move.

Aveskulov,V...
 Panchanathan,Magesh
 Miami (it) (8)

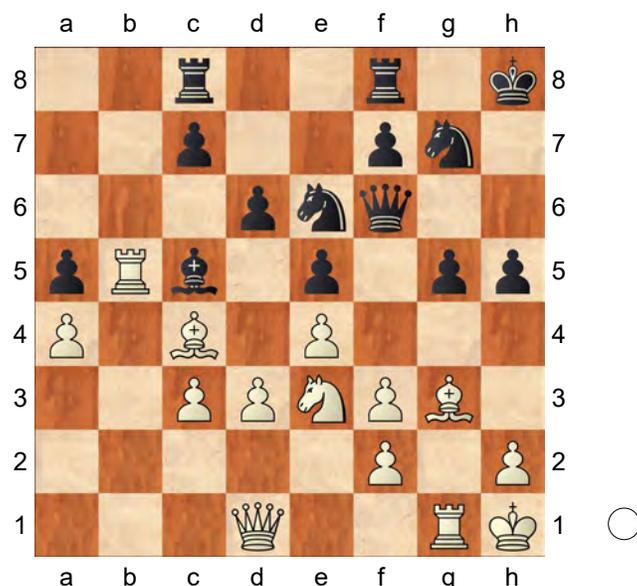
2539
2482
 22.04.2007

Tarlev,Konstantin
 Aveskulov,Valeriy
 Kucherenko memorial (rapid)

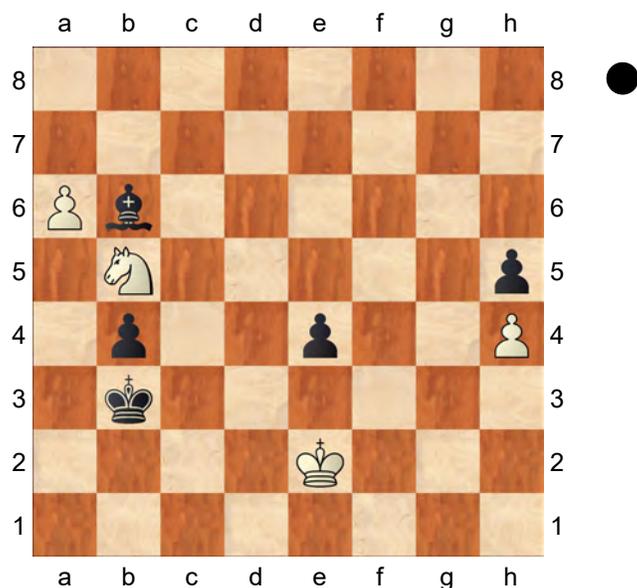
2017



White to move.
0-1



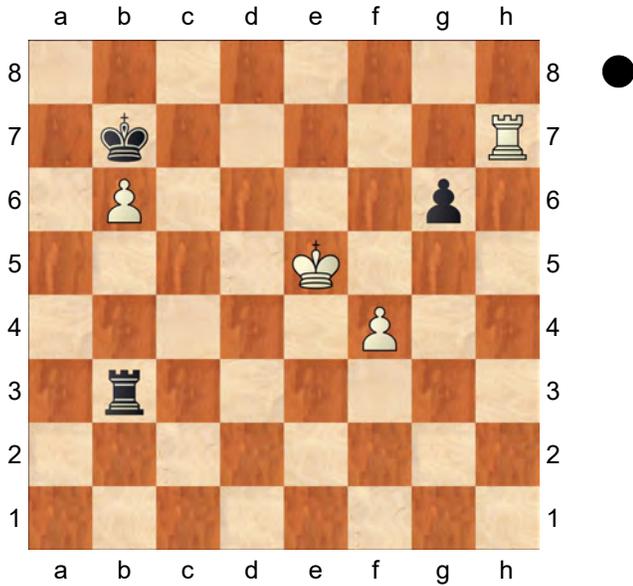
White to move.



Black to move.
1/2

Dominguez Perez, Lenier **2723**

Topalov, Veselin **2793**
 Makedonia Palace GP **2013**



Black to move.

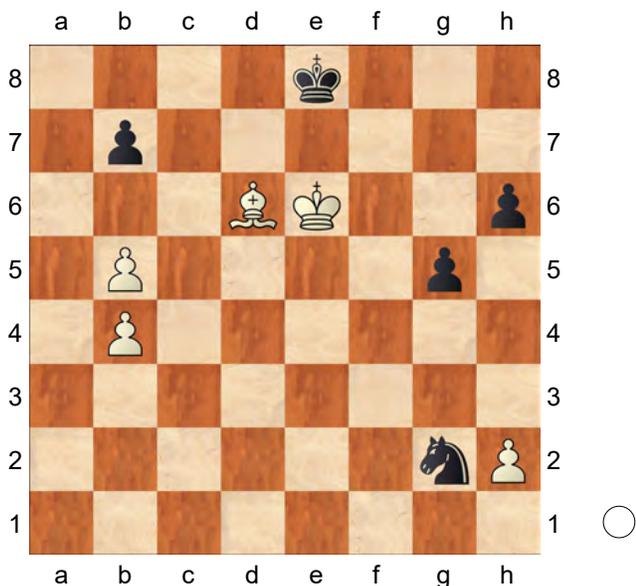
You can find the solutions in the PGN version or on the website where you can solve the positions interactively.

Fortress - The Ultimate Defence



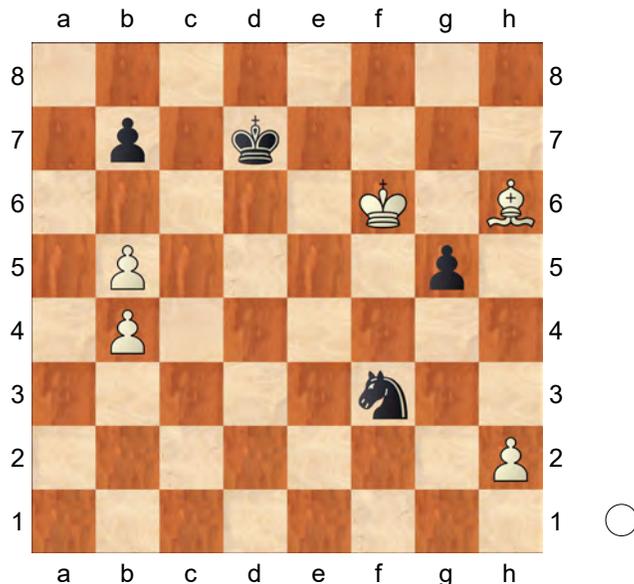
One of the highlights of Tata Steel tournament last January occurred in the game between the American champion Sam Shankland and Netherland's No.1 Anish Giri in round 11.

Giri, Anish **2783**
 Shankland, Samuel **2725**
 81st Tata Steel GpA (11.4) 25.01.2019



38.Kf6 Black is about to lose his kingside pawns and consequently the resulting ending. Is any hope left?

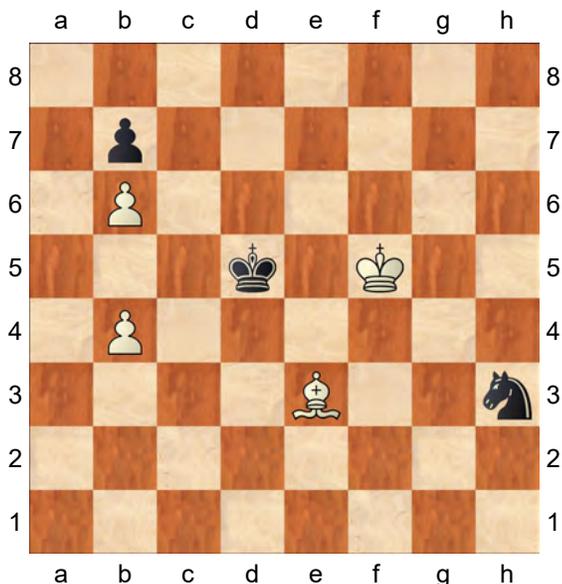
38...Kd7 39.Bf8 Nh4 40.Bxh6 Nf3!



Black deliberately steps in the cage.
41.h3 Ng1! 42.Bxg5 Nxh3 43.Be3. The knight is dominated. Time for Black to lie his arms down?
43...Kd6 44.Kf5 Kd5 45.b6

[Black is indeed about to lose his knight however the resulting position is surprisingly still drawish! Following
 45.b6 Kd6 46.Kg4 Kd7
 47.Kxh3 Kc8 48.Bf4 Kd7
 49.Kg4 Kc8 50.Kf5 Kd7 51.Kf6 Kc8
 The game reaches a well known positional draw as his opponent explained to him right after their handshake. The black king is may not be driven out of that part of the board owing to a stalemate! What we witness here is a special type of positional draw where the inferior side, despite its significant material

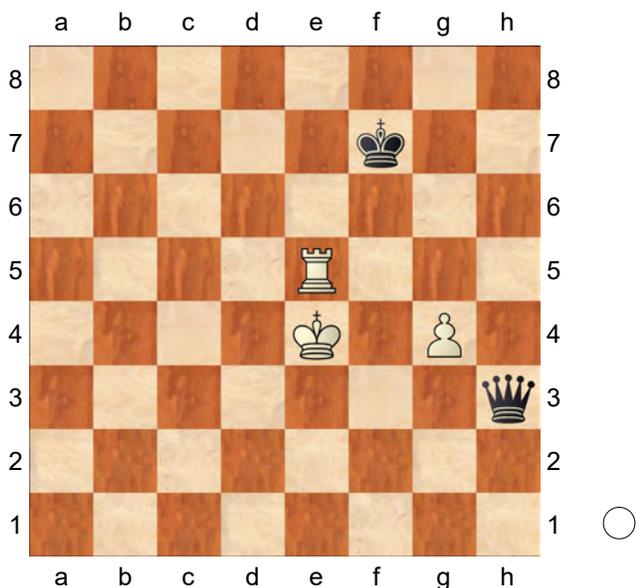
inferiority, builds up an impenetrable zone of protection. A proper fortress denies any king penetration, pawn breakthrough or Zugzwang.]



At this point Black resigned!
1-0

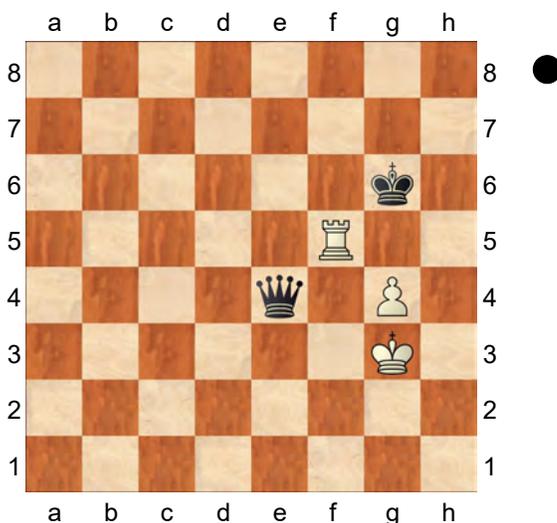
□ Piket, Jeroen
■ McShane, Luke J
Bundesliga 9697

2640
2400
1997



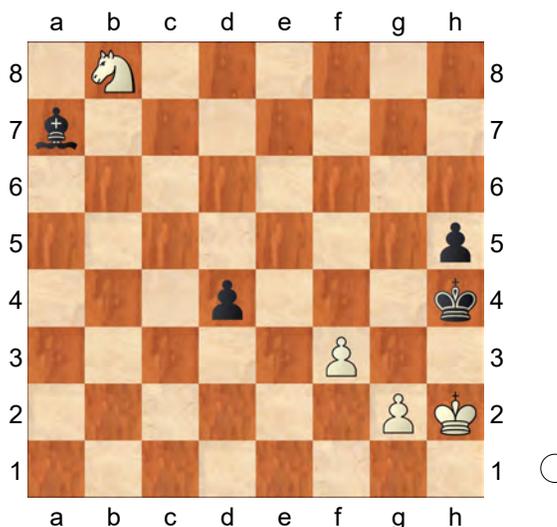
The fortress is a common way of defence in basic theoretical endings.

Most common and useful are Queen vs. Rook + pawn (or pawns) endings. Here is a relatively simple example from grandmaster practice. 66.Rf5+!= Kg6 67.Kf4 Qh2+ 68.Kf3 Qg1 69.Rh5 Qf1+ 70.Kg3 Qe2 71.Rf5 Qe4 72.Kh3 Qe1 73.Kg2 Qe3 74.Kh2 Qe4 75.Kg3



Draw. The Black king cannot penetrate the barrier. The white king is maneuvering around his pawn and Zugzwang is not available since the Rf5-h5 and back are safe waiting moves.
1/2

Alexey Troitzky
Tidskrift for Schack 1910



The fortress as an extreme and versatile defensive tool has naturally turned on the imagination of the study composers who have demonstrated numerous artistic fortresses, partly with practical value and partly mere creatures of fantasy. Here is one by the father of Modern study. Can white meet his opponent's double threat? White cannot both save his knight and stop the passed pawn and should find a creative reply to the promotion.

1.Nc6!

[1.Nd7? d3 2.Nf6 is refuted by the zwischenschach Bb8+! (to avoid 2...d2 3.g3+ Kg5 4.Ne4+)]

1...d3! 2.Nxa7!

[2.Ne5? is met by d2 3.f4 with another zwischenschach Bg1+!

(to avoid 3...d1Q? 4.g3#)]

2...d2 3.Nb5! d1Q 4.Nc3!

5.Kh1! Qd6+

[Not 5.Kg1? Qc5+]

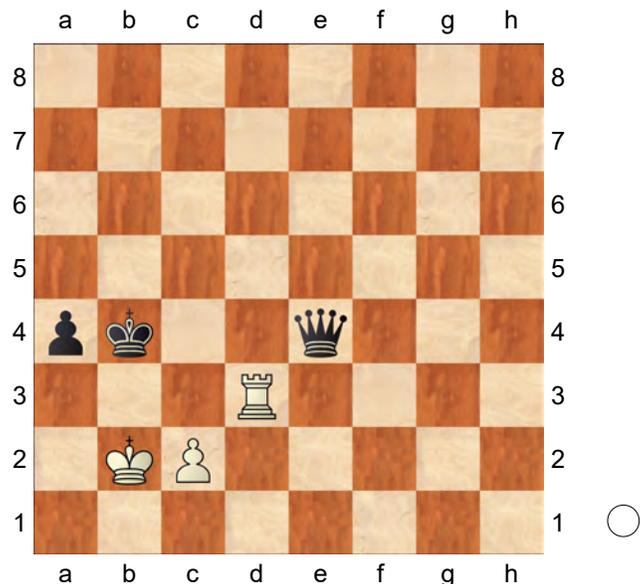
5...Qe6 Or any other queen move.

[5...Kg5 6.Ne4+] [5...Kg3 6.Ne4+]

6.Ne4! The knight has completed the sieg around the black king From now on dear reader it's your move!

1/2

□ **Timman,Jan H** **2655**
 ■ **Nunn,John DM** **2590**
 Hoogovens Wijk aan Zee (2) 16.01.1982



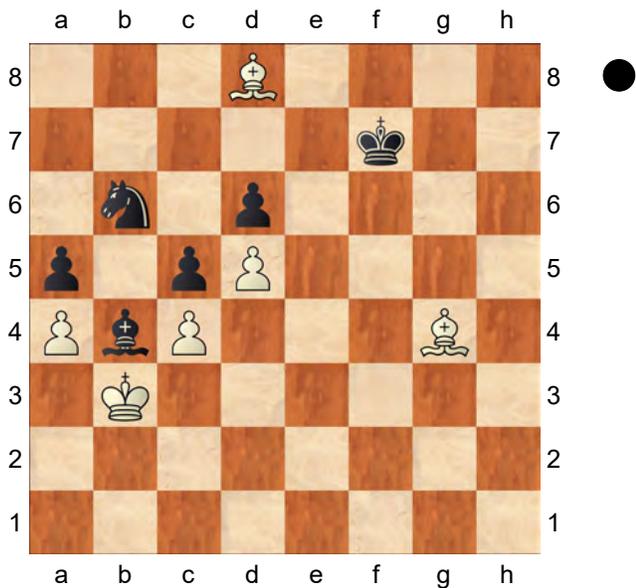
White was well aware that he had already created a fortress position, but still carelessly blundered the game away by **69.Ka2?? a3!** after which he had to call it a day as the fortress falls apart following **70.Rb3+**

[Or 70.Kb1 Qe1+ 71.Ka2 Qc1 72.Rb3+ Ka4 winning.]

70...Kc4 White resigned. What should white play instead? If instead of the unfortunate 69.Ka2?? white played 69. Ra3 and kept moving his Rook to a3 and d3 Black would not shatter the fortress.

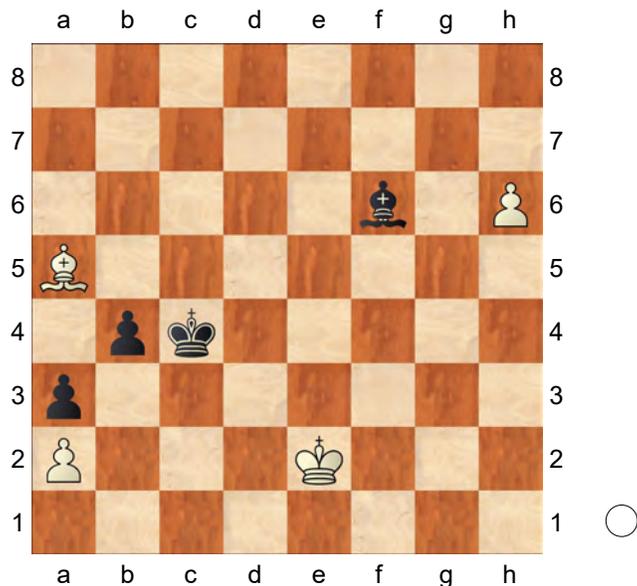
0-1

Exercise 1



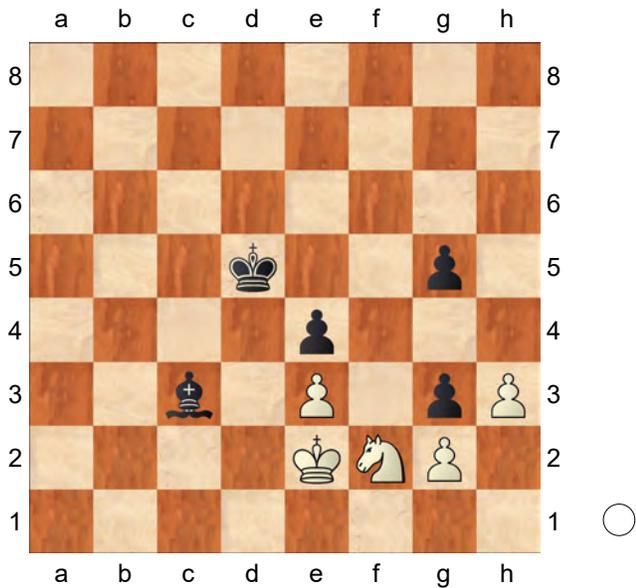
The Knight seems to be trapped. Is the game over for Black?

Exercise 3



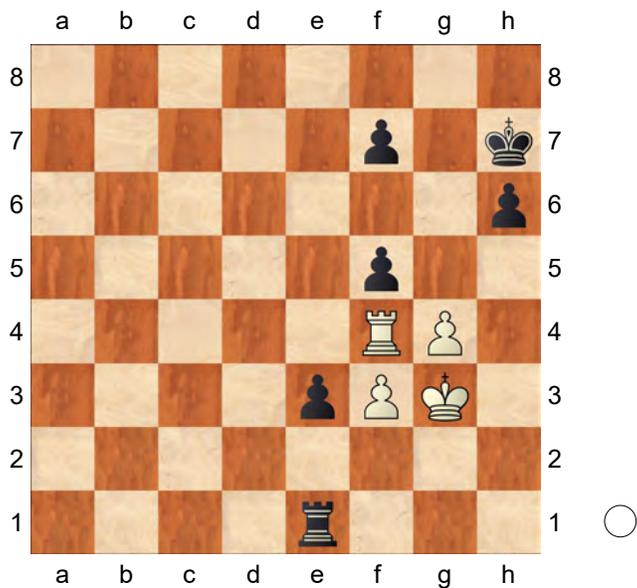
How to restrain the pawns on the queenside?

Exercise 2



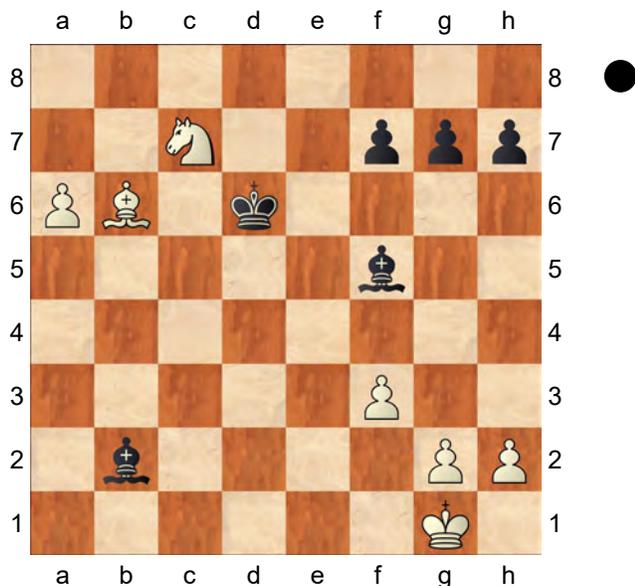
There is probably more than one way to avoid losing in this position, however, there is only one way to force the draw right away and save further defensive struggle. How?

Exercise 4



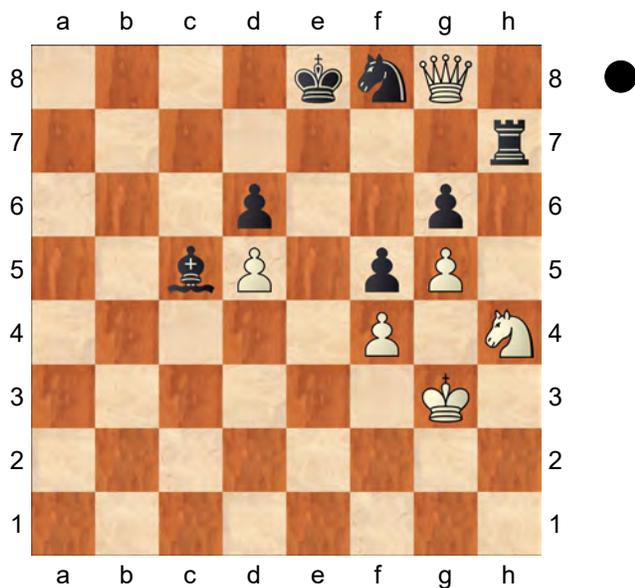
How White can save the game?

Exercise 5



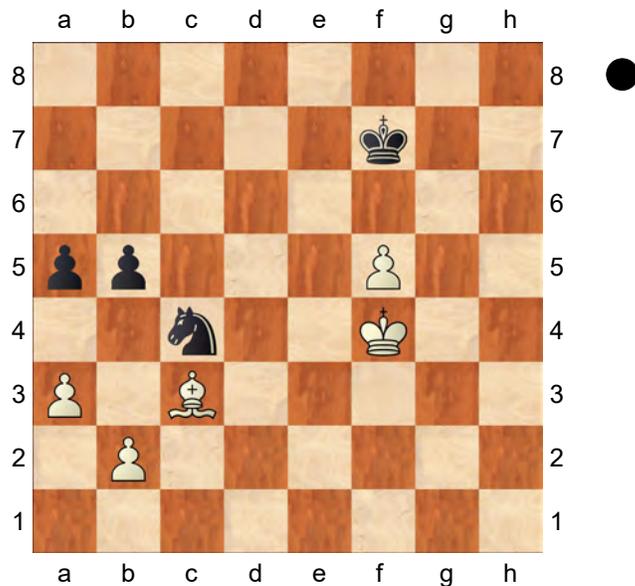
The white passer is about to cost black a piece. Is this fate indeed unavoidable?

Exercise 6



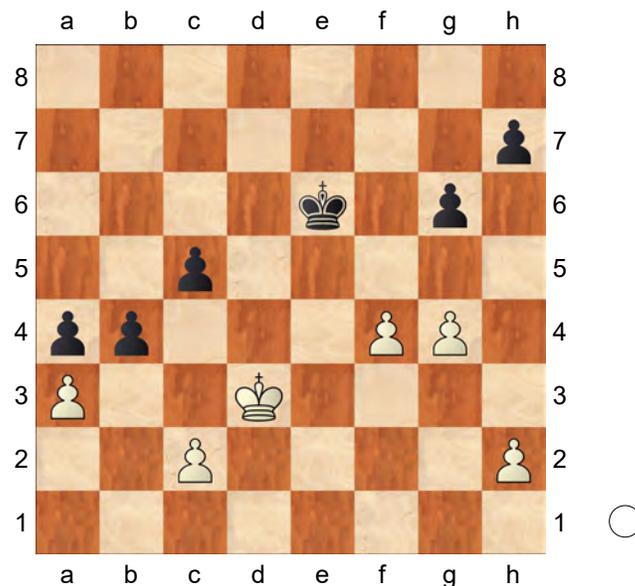
White threatens to destroy the black castle by 60.Nxg6. Is there any defense?

Exercise 7



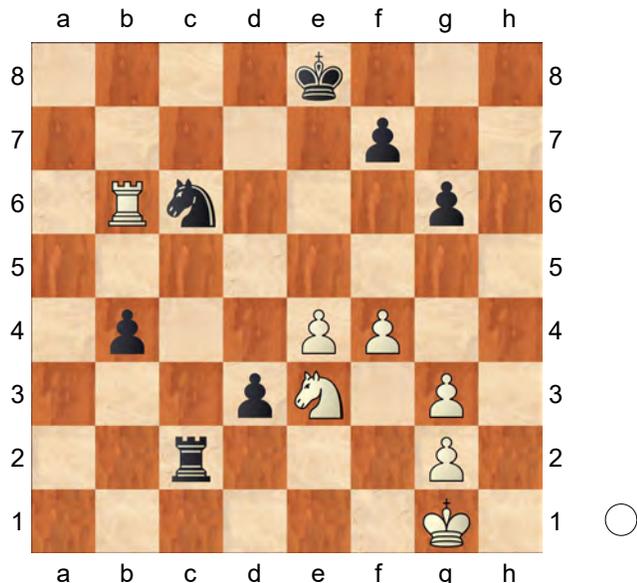
White, a pawn ahead, is ready to move his King to the queenside while the black king is tied up to restrain the passer. How should black face this threat?

Exercise 8



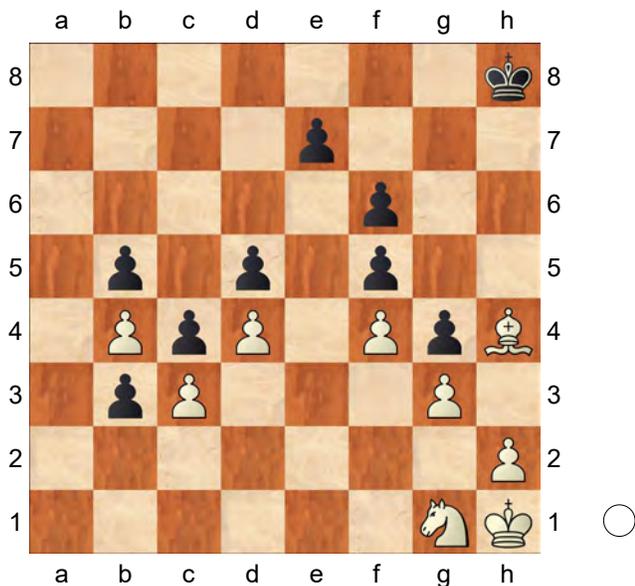
Can you find a defense for White?

Exercise 9



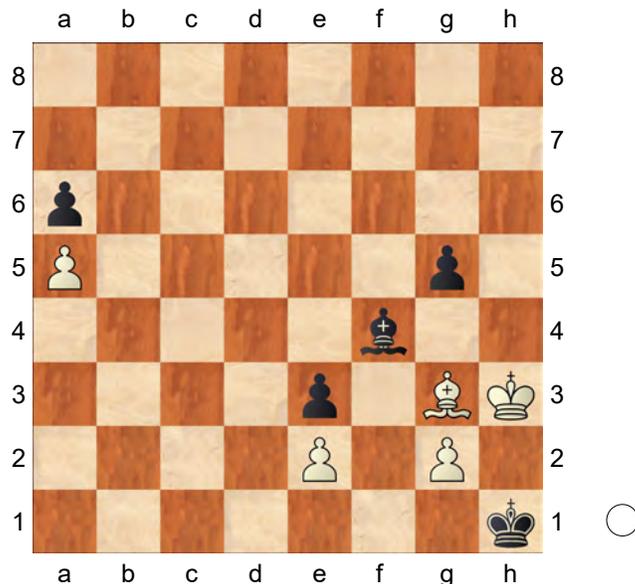
White seems in trouble facing 2 advanced enemy passed pawns. Where lies his best chance to escape defeat?

Exercise 10



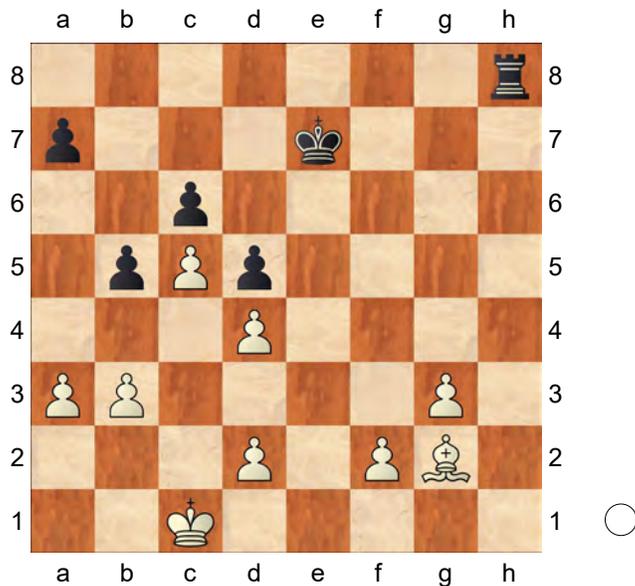
How should white welcome the newborn queen?

Exercise 11



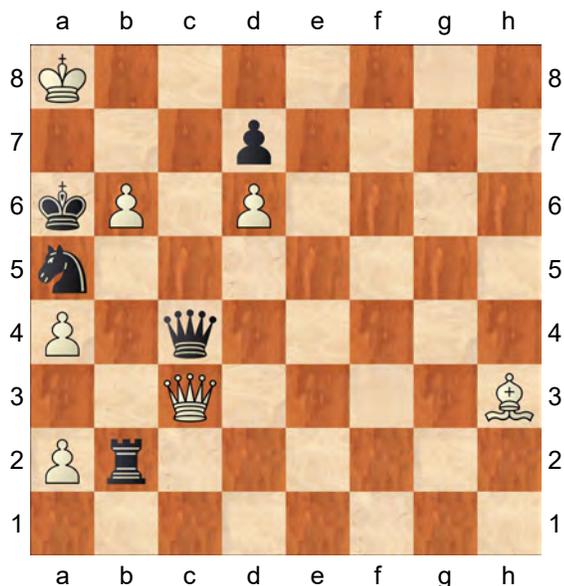
Though the ending is materially equal White is in serious trouble as any liquidation to a pawn ending would lead to his defeat. What good advice could we still give him?

Exercise 12



How should white face the unavoidable invasion to the second rank?

Exercise 13

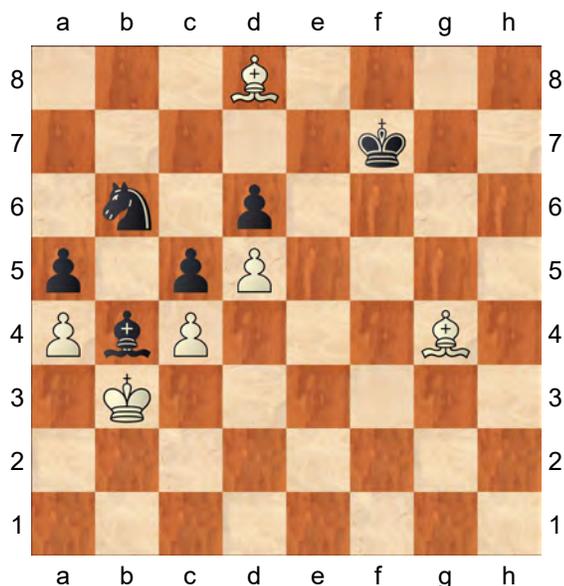


How should white face the unavoidable invasion to the second rank?

Answers

□ **Kobaidze**
 ■ **Cereteli**
 USSR

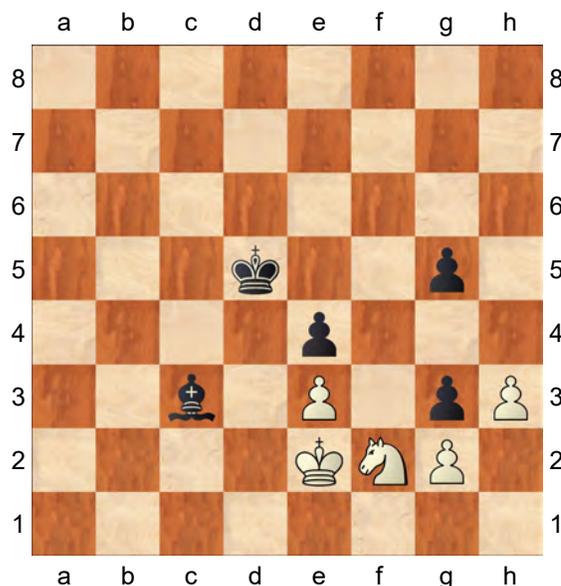
1969



Exercises: The Knight seems to be trapped. Is the game over for Black? Not as yet! 1...Ke8!! 2.Bxb6 Ke7! creating a fortress. The black Bishop moves along the diagonal a5-e1 with the white King unable to help his Bishop behind the enemy line.

1/2

□ **Serper, Grigory** **2542**
 ■ **Nakamura, Hikaru** **2620**
 USA-ch San Diego (6) 30.11.2004



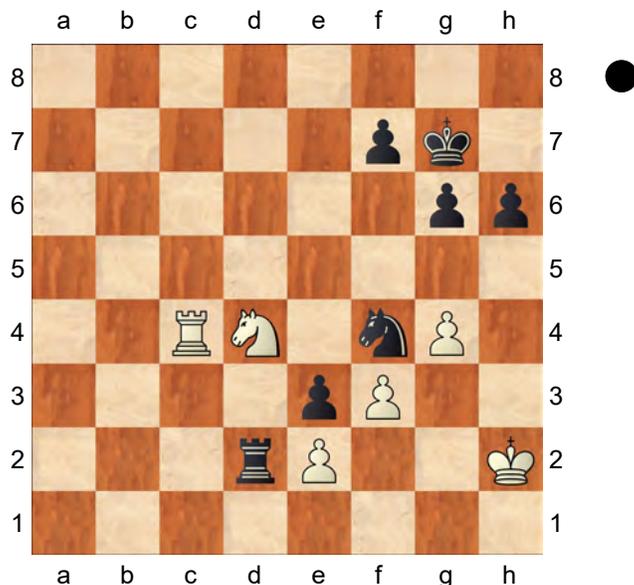
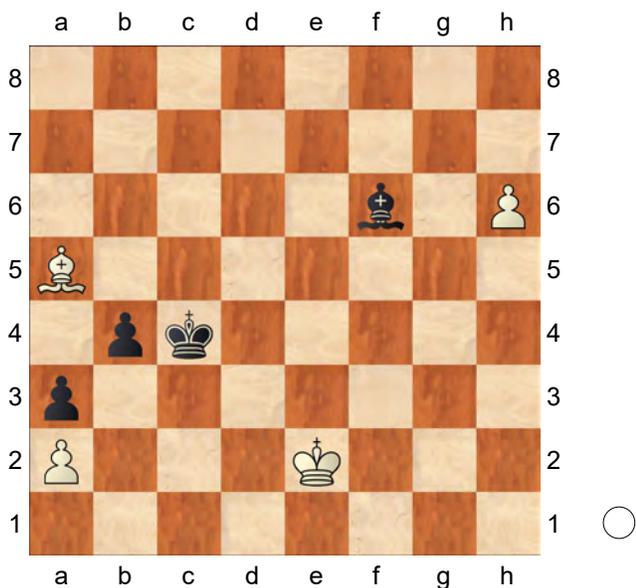
There is probably more than one way to avoid losing in this position, however, there is only one way to force the draw right away and save further defensive struggle. How? 82.Nxe4! Kxe4 83.Kf1! Be5 84.Kg1 The White king may stand either on f1 or on h1. Black, despite being a piece ahead is unable to make any progress further than stalemating the white king, as indeed happened.

84...Kd3 85.e4 Ke3 86.Kf1 Kd4 87.Kg1 Kc4 88.Kh1 Kd3 89.Kg1 Ke2 90.Kh1 Bd4 91.e5 Bxe5 92.Kg1 Ke1 93.Kh1 Kf2 94.h4 gxh4

1/2

Ivan Cheparinov **2678**
 Alexander Grischuk **2779**
 Rapid World Championship (4.5) 6.6.13

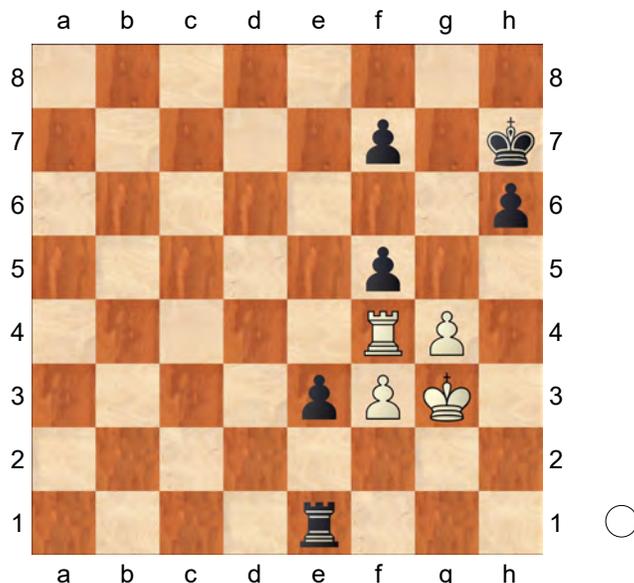
Salov, Valery **2665**
 Kortschnoj, Viktor Lvovich **2635**
 Hoogovens Wijk aan Zee (13) 02.02.97



41...Kh7 A decisive moment in Wijk aan Zee 22 years ago. In the very last round the leader Salov secured his tournament victory by a miraculous fortress. In this desperate position he went for **42.Nf5!? gxf5?** and Korchnoj indeed fell for it.

[After 42...Rxe2+ 43.Kg3 almost any move of the black knight wins.]

43.Rxf4 Rxe2+ 44.Kg3 Re1



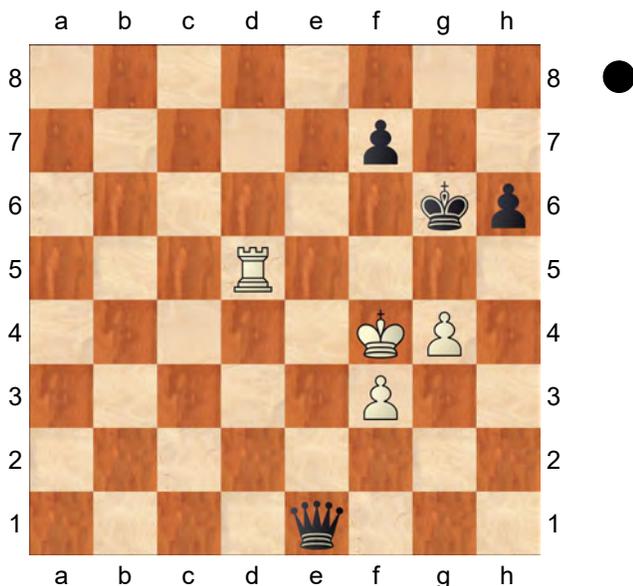
How to restrain the pawns on the queenside? By giving away his own Bishop and create a fortress in return. **46.Bxb4! Kxb4 47.Kd3 Bg5 48.h7 Bf6 49.h8Q** By no means necessary however the pawn is useless anyway. **49...Bxh8 50.Kc2 Kc4 51.Kb1 Kc3 52.Kc1**

[Attention! 52.Ka1?? Kc2#]

52...Kd3 53.Kb1 Black cannot get more than stalemate.

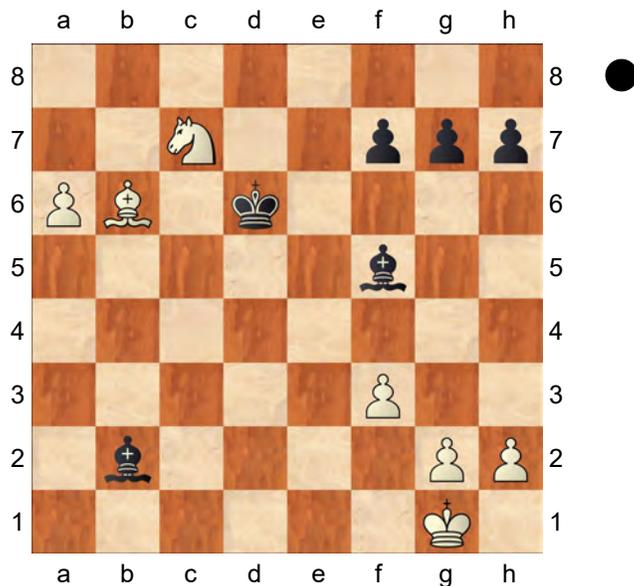
1/2

How did the Russian save the game?
45.Rxf5! Rg1+ 46.Kh2 e2 47.Kxg1 e1Q+ 48.Kg2 Kg6 49.Rh5 Qe2+ 50.Kg3 Qf1 51.Kf4 Qe1 52.Rd5=



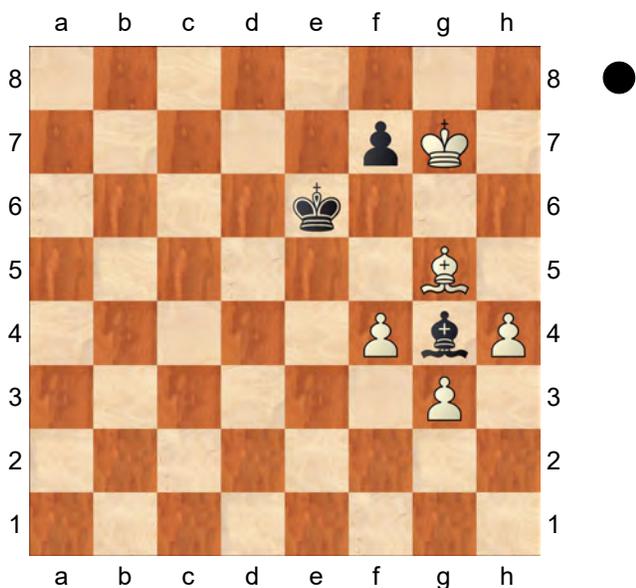
Picking up the fruits of his creativity. It's a firm fortress which even stubborn Victor did not manage to crack in the next moves. **52...Qc1+ 53.Kg3 Qc7+ 54.Kg2 Qf4 55.Rh5 Kf6 56.Rd5 Ke6 57.Rh5 Qd2+ 58.Kg3 f6 59.Rf5 Qc1 60.Rh5 Qg1+ 61.Kf4 Qe1 62.Rb5 Qc1+ 63.Kg3 Qg1+ 64.Kf4 Qh2+ 65.Ke3 Kf7 66.Rh5 Qg1+ 67.Kf4 Kg6 68.Rd5 Qh2+ 69.Ke3 Kf7 70.Rh5 Qg1+ 71.Kf4 Ke6 72.Rb5 Qh2+ 73.Ke3 Kd6 74.Rf5 Qb2 75.Rh5 Ke6 76.Kf4 Qc3 77.Kg3 Qc7+ 78.Kg2 Qf7 79.Rb5 Qe8 80.Rf5 Qg6 81.Rb5** Draw was finally agreed to crown Salov as the tournament winner.
1/2

□ **Lautier,Joel** **2666**
 ■ **Rublevsky,Sergei** **2670**
 Poikovsky Karpov 04th (7) 27.04.2003



The white passer is about to cost black a piece. Is this fate indeed unavoidable? Black may change the nature of the ending at the price of a single pawn by **32...Bd4+! 33.Bxd4 Kxc7 34.Bxg7 Kb6 35.Kf2 Kxa6 36.Ke3** Black is a pawn behind and has his king in exile still enjoys one of the friendliest options if one is in material inferiority- An opposite colour bishop ending. Black is going to survive this position too. **36...Kb7 37.Kf4 Bd3 38.Kg5 Kc6 39.Kf6 Bc4 40.h4**
 [40.Bh6 Kd7 41.Kg7 Ke6 42.Kxh7 Bf1 43.g3 Bg2 44.f4 Bh3=]
40...Kd7 41.Bh6 Bf1 42.g3 Be2 43.f4 Ke8 44.Kg7 Bg4 45.Kxh7 Collecting a second pawn does not change the result. **45...Ke7 46.Kg7 Ke6 47.Bg5**

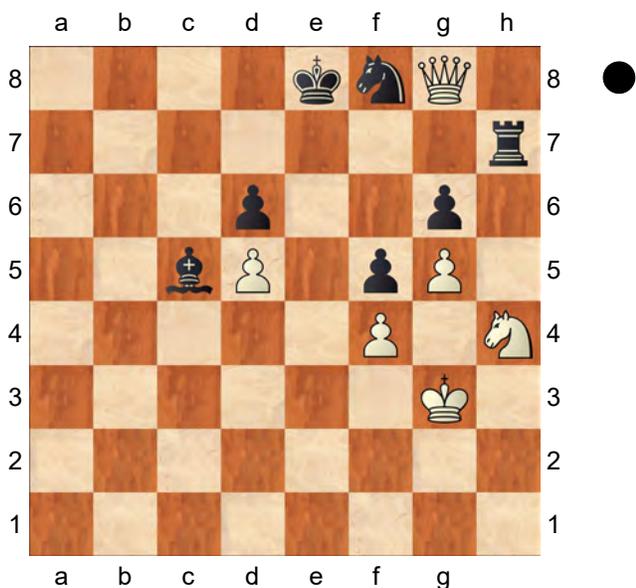
47...Kf5! Nice even if not necessary. White is 3 pawns ahead however they are totally blockaded. **48.Kxf7 Bh5+**



49.Kg7 Bd1 50.Be7
1/2

□ Hans Ree
■ Vlastimil Hort

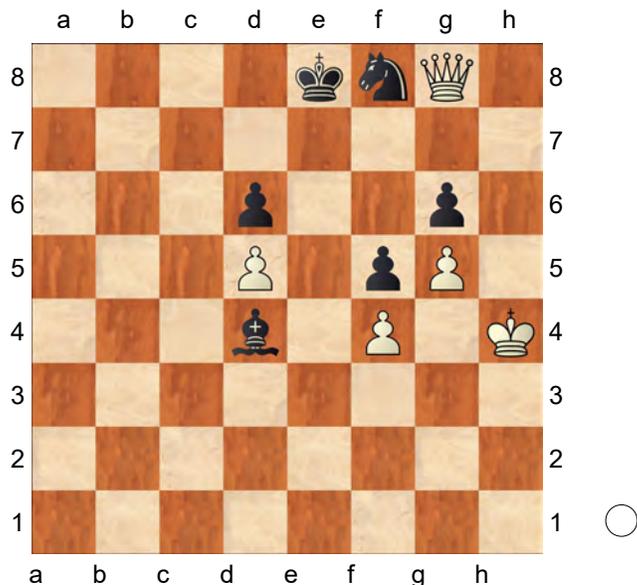
Hoogovens Wijk aan Zee NED (12)



White threatens to destroy the black castle by **60.Nxg6**. Is there any defence? **59...Rxh4!!**

[The alternative **59...Bf2+?** **60.Kxf2 Rxh4 61.Ke3** allows white winning chances owing to the weakness on d6. Black's choice on the other hand results in a complete fortress.]

60.Kxh4 Bd4!

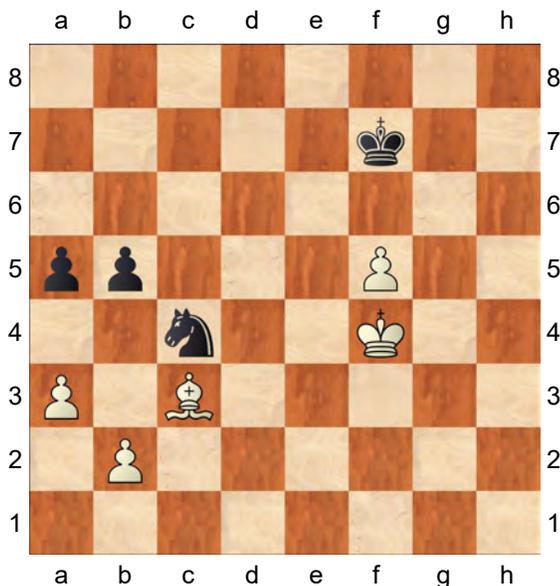


The queen is surprisingly dominated. **61.Kg3 Ke7 62.Kf3 Ba1** There is nothing to play for anymore and draw was agreed with no delay.
1/2

□ **Kozul,Zdenko**
 ■ **Zaja,Ivan**
 Pula op 11th (8)

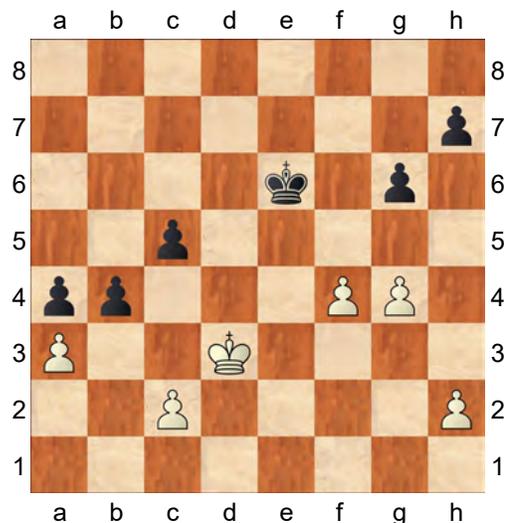
2590
2440
 1997

The passed pawn is under control while the black pawn is safe as the bishop is unable to attack its guard.
1/2

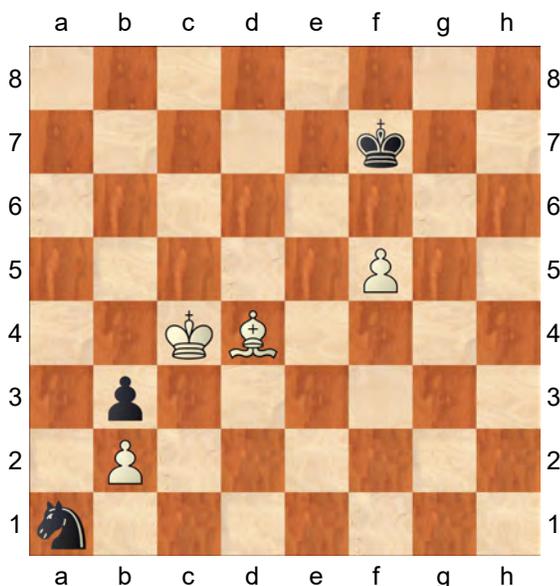


□ **Polgar,Sofia**
 ■ **Smyslov,Vassily V**
 Women-Veterans (4)

2480
2510
 1996



White, a pawn ahead, is ready to move his King to the queenside while the black king is tied up to restrain the passer. How should black face this threat? **58...b4!**
59.axb4 axb4 60.Bd4 Na5
 [Or 60...Nd2]
61.Ke4 Nb3! 62.Kd5 Na1! 63.Kc4 b3



40.c4!!

[While 40.Kd2 loses to Kd5]
 [Just before the time control White played the automatic 40.axb4? a3 41.Kc3 cxb4+ 42.Kb3 Kd5 (White resigned in view of 42...Kd5 43.c3 bxc3 44.Kxa3 Ke4 45.f5 gxf5 46.gxf5 Kd3-+ Was there still a proper defence for white prior to the time control? She should have played 40.c4!! Kd6 (Attention! After 40... bxa3?? 41.Kc2 Kd6 42.Kb1 white even wins) 41.Kc2 Kc6 42.Kb2 creating a fortress that allows no entry to the enemy king. Draw!)]

40...Kd6

[(Attention! After 40...bxa3?? 41.Kc2 Kd6 42.Kb1 White even wins)]

41.Kc2 Kc6 42.Kb2 creating a fortress that allows no entry to the enemy king.
Draw!

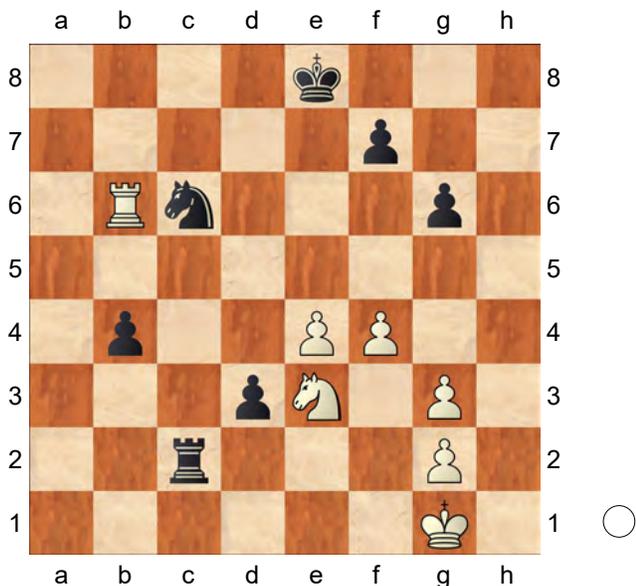
0-1

☐ Sokolov, Andrei
 ■ Vaganian, Rafael A
 Candidates qf1 (6)

2595
2645
 1986

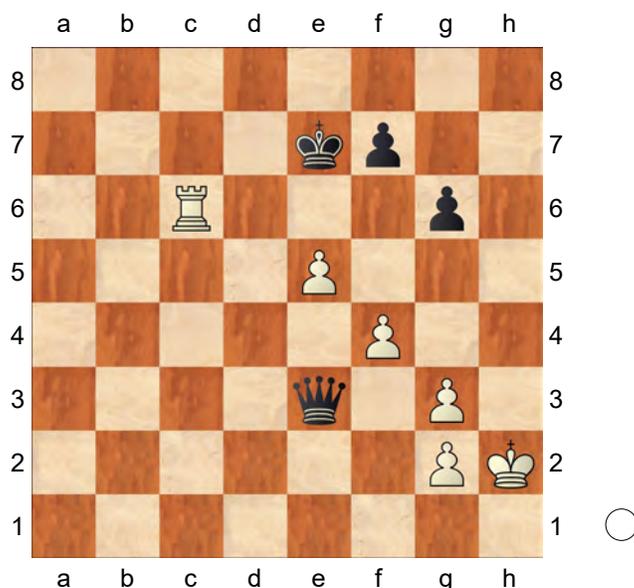
The game has reached a blockade by a pawn chain, denying any penetration of the black king, while the white king is perfectly safe. **52...Qe3**

[An attempt to shake white's pawn formation by 52...g5 would be met 53.Rf6 gxf4 54.gxf4 Black had tried to shake the fortress for some 30 more moves before the players shared the point.]

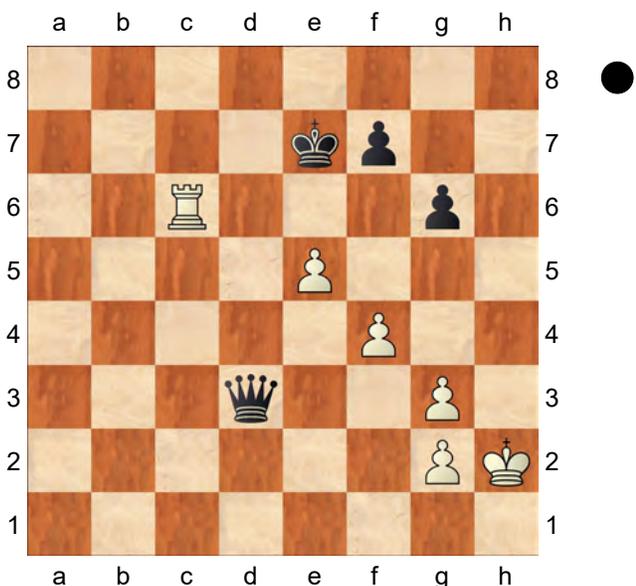


White seems in trouble facing 2 advanced enemy passed pawns. Where lies his best chance to escape defeat? White took advantage of the rare opportunity to liquidate to a fortress as follows:

44.Nxc2! dxc2 45.Rxc6 b3 46.Kh2 b2 47.Rc8+ Ke7 48.Rc7+ Kf8 49.Rxc2! b1Q 50.Rc8+ Ke7 51.e5!Qd3 52.Rc6

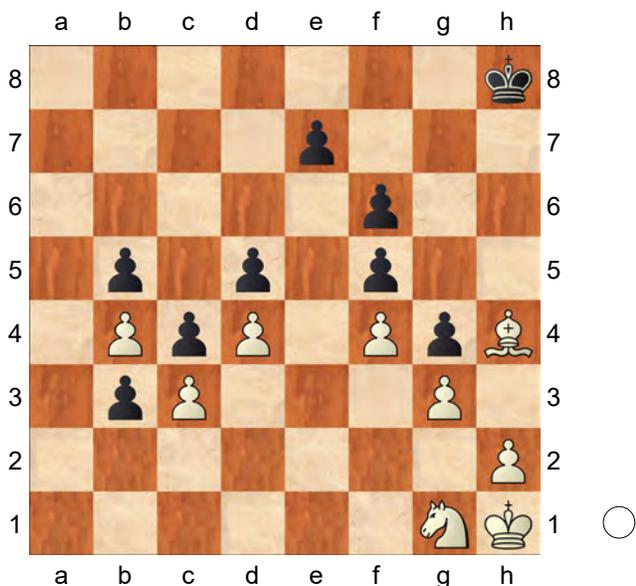


53.Ra6 Qc5 54.Ra1 Ke6 55.Rf1 Kd5 56.Rf3 Kc4 57.Kh1 Qd4 58.Kh2 Qd1 59.Rf2 Kd4 60.Rf3 Ke4 61.Rc3 Kf5 62.Rf3 Qd8 63.Kg1 Qd5 64.Kh2 Kg4 65.Rc3 Qd4 66.Rf3 Kf5 67.Kh1 f6 68.exf6 Qxf6 69.Kh2 Qh8+ 70.Kg1 Ke4 71.Rb3 Qh5 72.Rf3 Qf5 73.Kh2 Kd4 74.Kg1 Qc5 75.Kh2 Qh5+ 76.Kg1 Kc4 77.Rf1 Qc5+ 78.Kh2 Kd3 79.Rf3+ Ke2 80.Kh1 Qc1+ 81.Kh2 Qb1 82.Rc3 Qb2
1/2

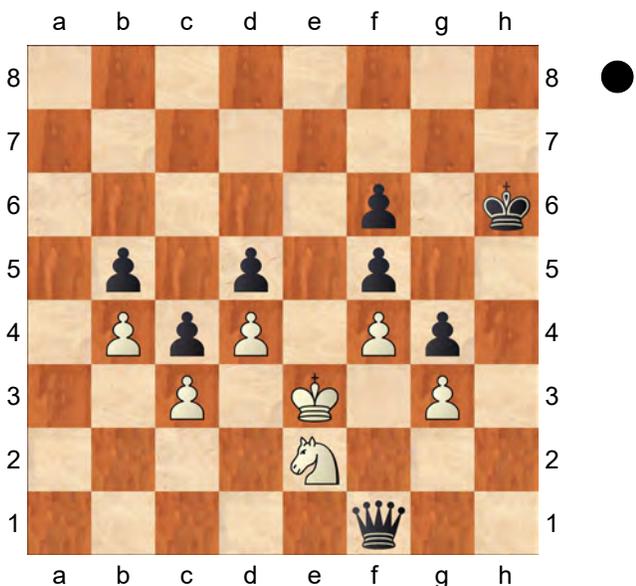


Froim Simkhovich

Schweizerische Schachzeitung 1923



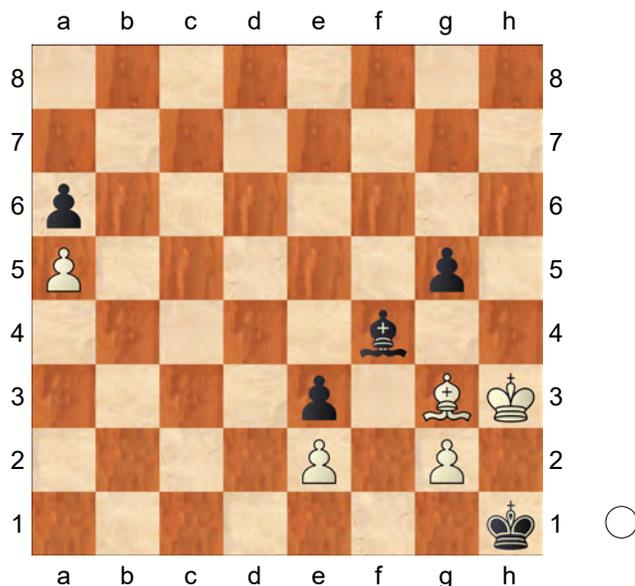
How should white welcome the newborn queen? **1.Bxf6+! exf6 2.h4! b2**
 [2...gxh3 e.p.fails to 3.Nf3 b2 4.Nd2 when white even wins.]
3.Kg2! b1Q 4.Kf2 Qb2+ 5.Ne2 Qa1 6.Ke3! Qe1
 [6...Qd1 7.Kf2]
7.h5 Kh7 8.h6 Qf1 9.Kd2 Kxh6 10.Ke3



It's a fortress. The king remains out of the action while the queen alone is not capable more than a stalemate.
1/2

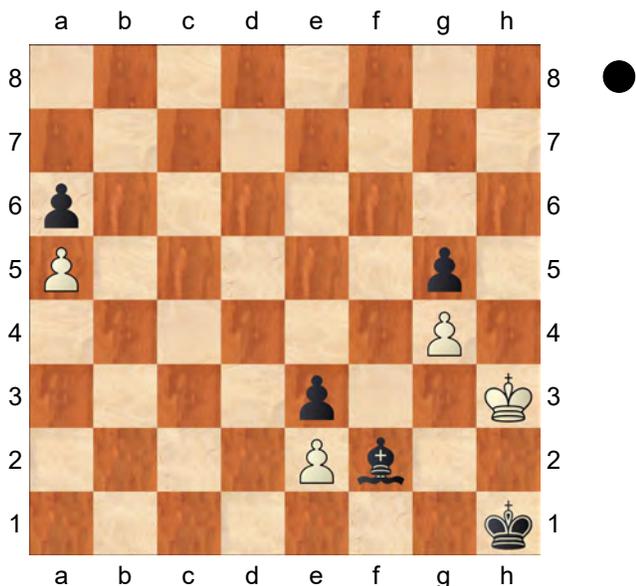
A.Gurvich

Etyudi 1961



Though the ending is materially equal White is in a serious trouble as any liquidation to a pawn ending would lead to his defeat. What good advice could we still give him? **1.Bh2!**
 [1.Bxf4? gxf4 2.Kg4 (2.g4 f3) 2...Kxg2 3.Kxf4 Kf2 winning]
 [1.Be1? Kg1 2.g3 Kf1! wins.]
1...Bxh2
 [Not 1...g4+ 2.Kxg4 Bxh2 3.Kf3 draws.]
2.g4! Bg1
 [2...Bc7 is stalemate!]

3.Kg3 Bf2+ 4.Kh3!



Bg1

[4...Be1 or]

[4...Kg1 are both stalemate!]

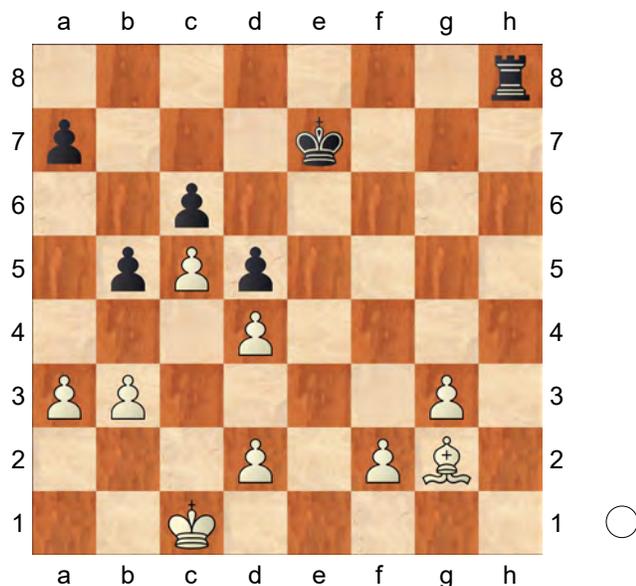
5.Kg3 Bh2+ 6.Kh3 Black can make no progress. It's a fortress!

1/2

Vitaly Chekhover

Parna Ty Bull

1947



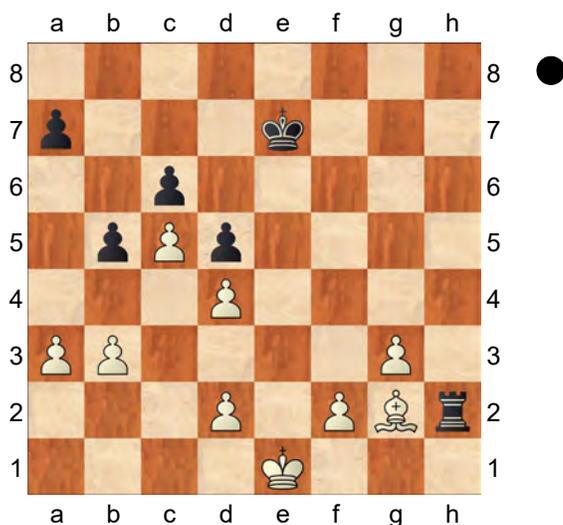
How should white face the unavoidable invasion to the second rank? **1.Kd1!**

[Following either 1.Kc2? Rh2! 2.Bf1 Rxf2 3.Bd3 Rg2]

[or 1.Bf3? Rf8 2.Bh5 Rxf2 3.g4 Rg2 4.Kc2 Rg3 the black king will join his rook on a decisive attack.]

1...Rh2 2.Ke1!!

[or 2.Ke2]



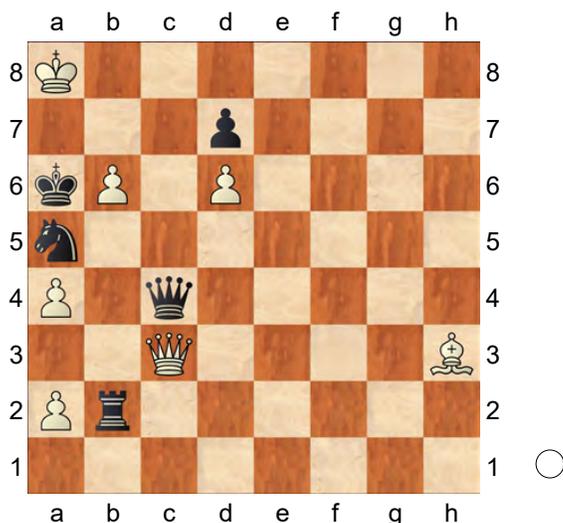
2...Rxc2 3.Kf1 Rh2 4.Kg1 Rh3 5.Kg2

Rh6 6.f3! Rh7 Black can make no progress against the white fortress.

1/2

Yochanan Afek

Dedicated to the Dutch open Dieren



A tougher nut to end with. White is a rook down and his king is in danger. What could we still advise him? **1.Bf1!**

[Not 1.Qxc4+? Nxc4 2.Bf1 Kxb6 3.Bxc4 Rd2 wins.]

1...Qxf1 2.Qc8+ Nb7!

[2...Kxb6 loses to 3.Qc7+ Ka6 4.Qa7#]

3.Qxb7+ Ka5 4.Qa7+!

queen exchanges with a rook down saves the day !

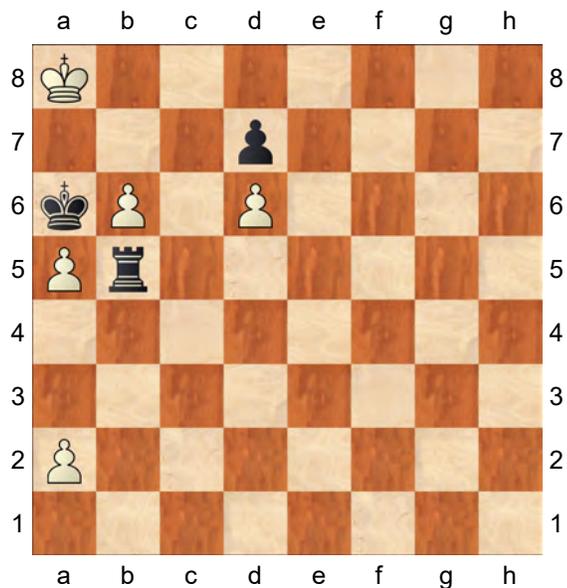
[The more natural option 4.Qd5+? fails to Kxa4! 5.b7 Qa6+ 6.Kb8 Rxb7+!! The one and only! 7.Qxb7 Qxd6+ 8.Ka7 Ka5! followed by queen exchanges after which pawn is won for black. e.g. 9.Qb1 Qa6+ 10.Kb8 Qb6+--+]

[4.Qc8? Rb4!-+]

4...Qa6

[After 4...Kb4 5.b7 Qf3 6.Qb6+ Ka3 7.Qc7= Black can make no progress.]

5.Qxa6+ Kxa6 6.a5! Rb5!



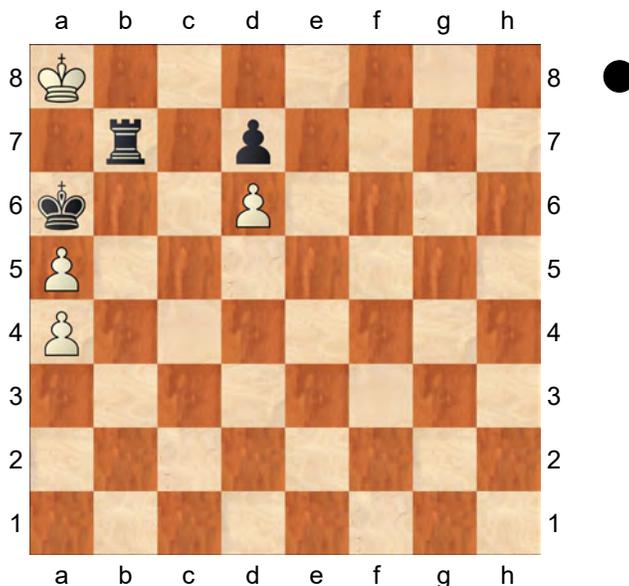
Time to lay arms down? **7.b7!!**

[Not as yet! White sacrifices his best pawn! Not 7.a4? Rxa5 8.b7 Kb6+--+]

7...Rxb7 8.a4! Threatening...stalemate!

8...Ra7+ 9.Kb8 Rb7+ What else?

10.Ka8!



It's a fortress in which black, a rook ahead may choose between repeating moves or stalemate!

1/2

Endgame Series 21 - Simplifications in Difficult Endgames



Simplification is a method of reducing the number of pieces on the board with a certain purpose. In the endgame, simplification can serve two purposes:

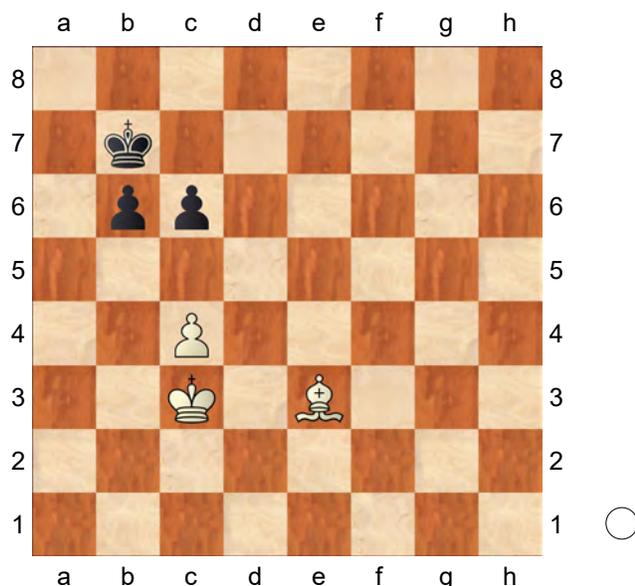
- 1) **Defensive strategy** (i.e. achieving a draw)
- 2) **Winning strategy** (i.e. winning the game) In this issue of Endgame series, we will explore simplification as a defensive strategy, while in the next one, we will focus on simplification as a winning strategy. The goal of simplification as a defensive strategy is to reduce the number of opponent's fighting units, and thus his winning chances. Usually, this is done by exchanging our own pieces/pawns for opponent's, but it can also be accomplished by sacrificing material for opponent's important assets, such as a far advanced passed pawn.

Considering the importance of pawns in endgames, simplification by reducing the number of pawns on the board usually increases drawing chances. The primary reason for that is the fact that many pawnless endgames are drawn either due to insufficient mating material (K+N/B vs K) or theoretically drawn (e.g. R+B/ N vs R are the most common ones). The secondary reason is that reducing the number of defender's own pawns reduces the number of potential targets that the stronger side could exploit (e.g. backward or isolated pawn). Besides drawing scenarios mentioned above, there are several other ways a draw can be reached in a chess game, and I list them below: Draw by:

- *Stalemate*
- *Threefold repetition*
- *Perpetual check*
- *Insufficient mating material*
- *Theoretical draw* (well-known positions with limited material in which defending side needs to know the correct drawing method or sequence; e.g. Philidor defense in R+p vs R or Cochrane defense in R+B vs R)
- *Positional draw* (e.g. blockade, fortress, wrong color bishop etc.)
- *Fifty-move rule*
- *Mutual agreement*

Simplification, if done wisely, can help us achieve many of these drawn outcomes while defending a worse endgame. Now, let us see some examples from grandmaster practice, in which simplification as a drawing method played the key role in the endgame. Draw due to insufficient mating material We start with a simple example, from an 1841 study by Walker.

□ Walker
 ■ 1841



The material balance that we have on the board is often sufficient for White to win the game. The usual plan is to send the king toward d6-square and outflank the opponent's king or provoke Black into pushing his pawns when it becomes easier to pick them up. However, in this particular case, Black can achieve a draw by permanently threatening to trade off white c-pawn with a timely ...c6-c5, followed by ...Kc(a)6 and ...b6-b5.

1.Kd4

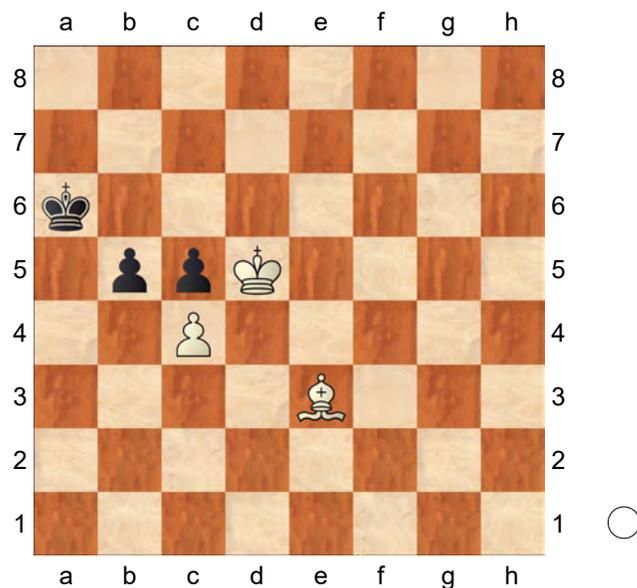
[White can prevent the aforementioned simplification plan by going the other way with his king -1.Kb4 but after: Ka6 2.Bg5 Kb7

3.Bd8 Ka6= neither side can make progress, so we have a positional draw.]

1...Ka6 2.Ke5 c5!

[2...b5? 3.c5 b4 4.Kd6 Kb5 5.Bd4 b3 6.Bb2+-]

3.Kd5 b5

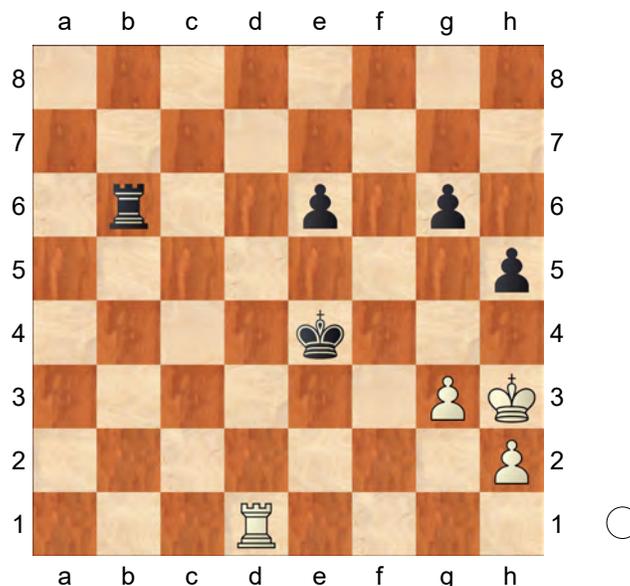


and after trading off last white pawn, a draw due to insufficient mating material is reached.

1/2

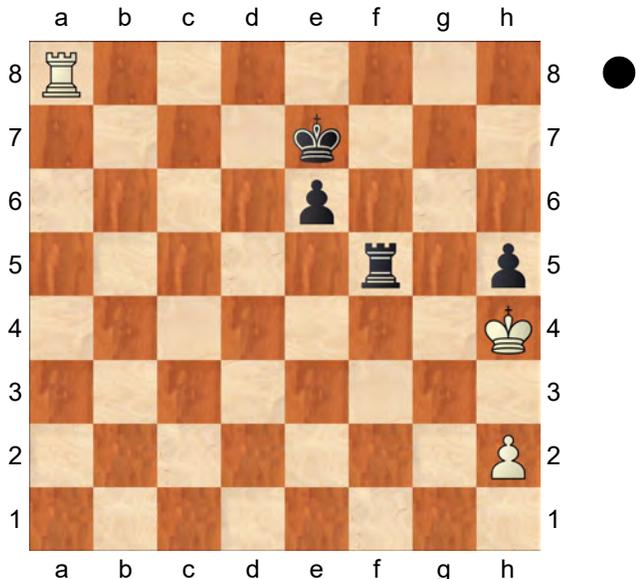
In the next example, we have a typical simplification method in rook endgames:

□ Kortschnoj, Viktor Lvovich 2650
 ■ Miles, Anthony John 2590
 Baden-Baden 1981



Endgames with 3 against 2 pawns on the same flank have very drawish tendencies. However, in this case Black has a passed pawn on the e-file, which increases his winning chances. How should White hold this endgame? Viktor Kortschnoj provides the answer: **46.g4!** As Kortschnoj notes in his "Praxis des Turmendspiels" ("Rook endgames practice"), this move increases White's drawing chances in three ways: 1. by simplifying the position; 2. by allowing passive white king to activate 3. by creating a weak pawn on g6- or h5-square that White can exploit. **46...Rb3+**

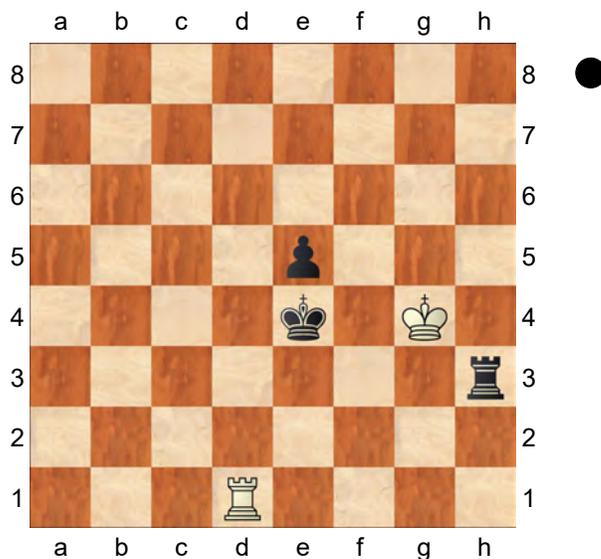
[Black can hold the h-pawn under control with: 46...Rb5 47.Re1+ Kd5 48.gxh5 gxh5 49.Kh4 Kd6 50.Ra1 Rf5 but White easily holds the position with: 51.Ra6+ Ke7 52.Ra8



achieving a drawn position thanks to maximum activity of his rook and king. For example: e5 53.Ra6 e4 54.Ra4 Re5 55.Kg3 e3 56.Ra1= and the e-pawn falls.]

[The most direct attempt is: 46...e5 47.gxh5 gxh5 48.Kh4 Rb2 49.h3

A) 49...Rb3 50.Kxh5 Rxb3+ 51.Kg4

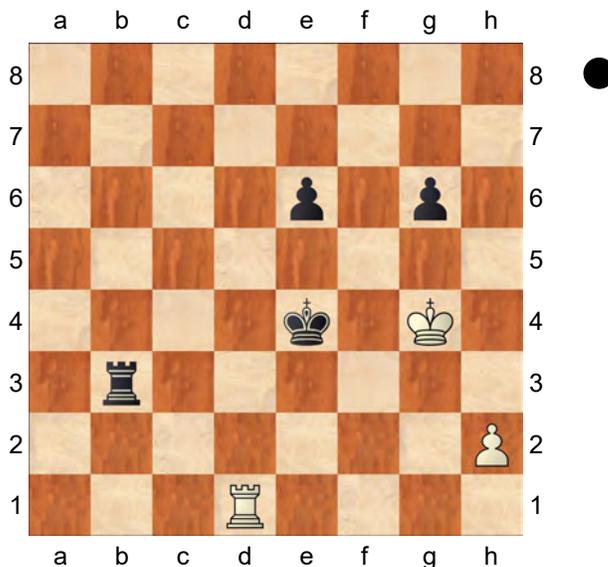


leads to theoretically drawn R+p vs R endgames, in case of both: Ra3 (and: 51...Re3 52.Ra1=) 52.Re1+ Kd5 53.Rd1+ Ke6 54.Re1=; **B) 49...Kf3** 50.Kxh5 e4 51.h4 e3 52.Kg6 e2 53.Re1 Kf2 54.Rxe2+ Rxe2 55.h5= Black king is too far away to catch the pawn, so the game is drawn.]

47.Kh4 hxg4

[One last trick was: 47...Kf4 but White can simply sidestep it with: 48.Rd4+ (48.gxh5?? g5#) 48...Ke5 49.Ra4 hxg4 50.Kxg4=]

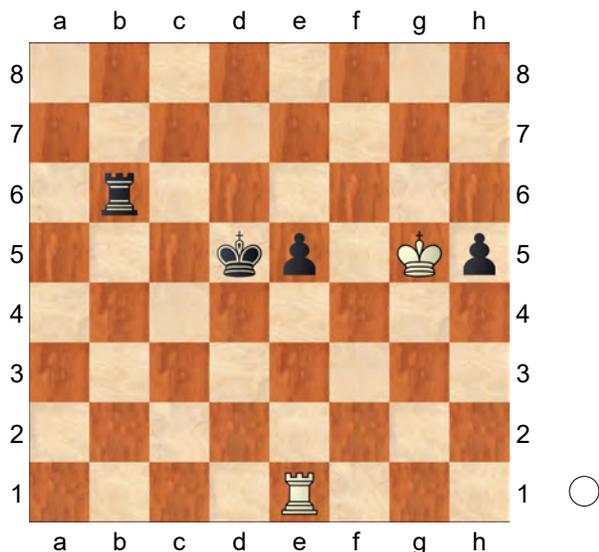
48.Kxg4



Now, we have a 2 vs 1 rook endgame, getting White closer to a draw. **48...e5**
49.h4 White prepares counterplay against the g6-pawn. **49...Rb2** **50.Re1+ Kd5** **51.Kg5 Rb6**

[A more active 51...Rg2+ also does not work due to: 52.Kf6 e4 53.Rd1+ Kc4 54.Ke5 e3 55.Ke4 e2 56.Rc1+ Kb3 57.Kf3=]

52.h5 gxh5



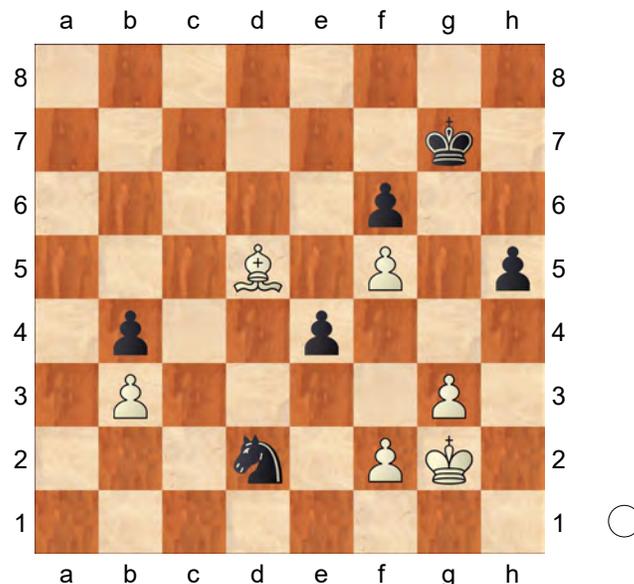
Kortschnoj swapped off another pair of pawns, and now he uses a small finesse to force a draw at once: **53.Kf5! =**
 In principle, it is more important to eliminate the central pawn, since rook's pawn is less dangerous.

[That being said, there was nothing wrong with 53.Kxh5 e4 54.Kg4 Ke5 55.Kg3= either.]

53...Rb5 **54.Rxe5+ Kc4** **55.Rxb5 Kxb5** **56.Kg5 Ka5** **57.Kxh5**
1/2

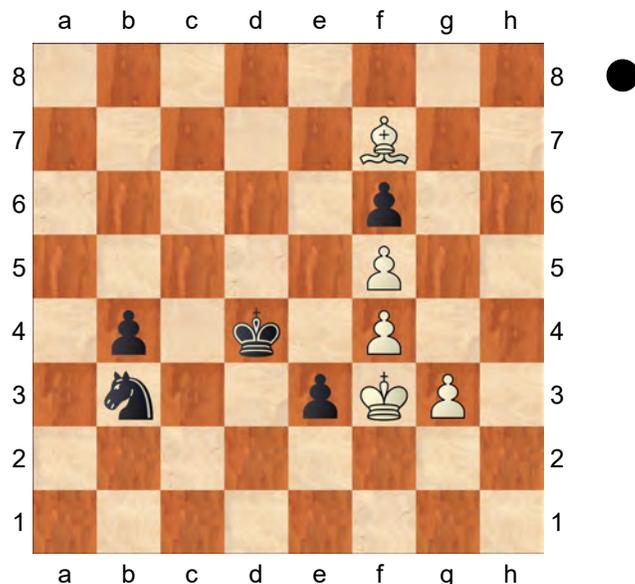
□ Rubinstein, Akiba
 ■ Alekhine, Alexander
 London it

The example below can serve as a good training exercise. White to move and draw!

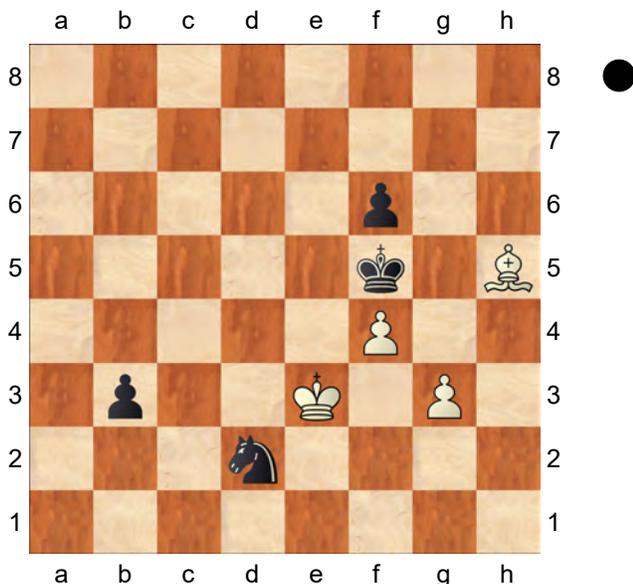


In this minor piece endgame, White has to play carefully because his king is cut off from the center and he has pawn weaknesses on b3 and f5. Nevertheless, he can achieve a draw with a series of pawn sacrifices: **50.g4!** This is the first one.

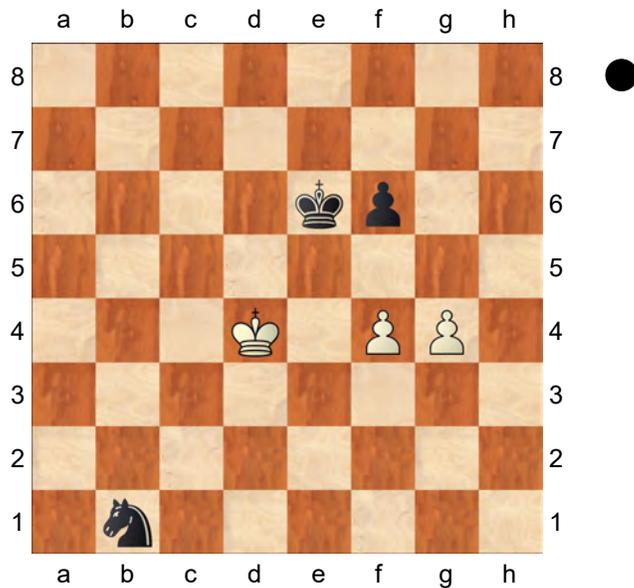
[50.f4? was Rubinstein's choice in the game, but after e3! his king remained cut off on the kingside and Alekhine won the endgame convincingly after: 51.Kg1 Kf8 52.Kg2 Ke7 53.Bg8 Kd6 54.Bf7 Kc5 55.Bxh5 Nxb3 56.Kf3 Kd4 57.Bf7



Kd3! 58.Bxb3 Kd2 59.Bc4 b3
 60.Bxb3 e2 0-1]
 [However, another, more complicated,
 way to the promised land exists:
 50.Kh3!? Kh6 51.Kh4 Nf3+ 52.Kh3
 Nd4 53.Kg2! White needs to bring his
 king back urgently. (53.Bxe4?
 loses after: Nxb3 54.Kg2 Nd2
 55.Bd3 b3-+) 53...Kg5 54.Bxe4
 Nxb3 and now White recentralizes his
 king with a tempo - 55.f4+!
 although he still needs to show
 precision after: Kg4 (55...Kh6 56.Kf2
 Nc5 57.Bb1 b3 58.Ke3 b2
 59.Kd2=) 56.Bf3+ Kxf5 57.Bxh5 Nd2
 58.Kf2 b3 59.Ke3!



Only like this can White draw the
 game. The key is in defending the f-
 pawn, which can be seen from the
 following sequence: b2 60.g4+ Ke6
 61.Bg6 White prevents the promotion
 and further reduces material by
 sacrificing his bishop. b1Q 62.Bxb1
 Nxb1 63.Kd4

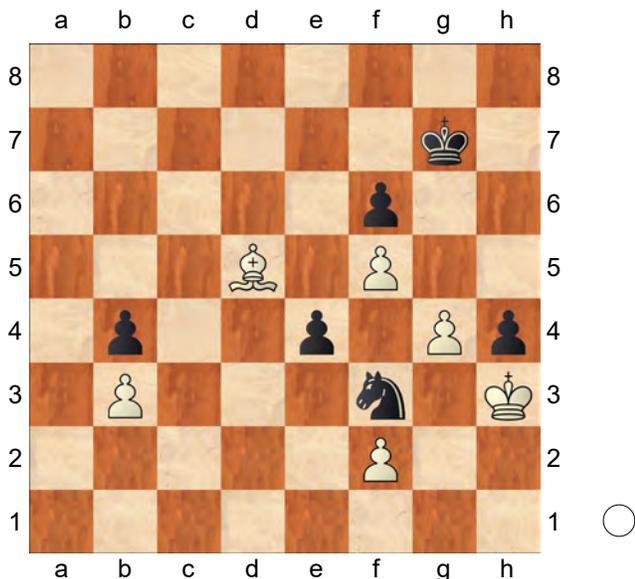


Interestingly, this position is a
 theoretical draw! White's idea is very
 similar to the first example - threaten
 simplification with f4-f5 and Kf4, g4-g5
 if black pieces stray away from g5-
 square. For example: Kf7 (63...Nd2
 64.f5+ Kd6 65.Ke3= and 66.Kf4, 67.
 g5 can not be prevented.) 64.Ke4
 Nd2+ 65.Ke3 Nc4+ 66.Ke4! Nd6+
 67.Kd5! (67.Kd4 Ke6-+) 67...Nb5
 68.Ke4= and Black can not strengthen
 his position without allowing trade of
 his last pawn, so the position is
 drawn.]

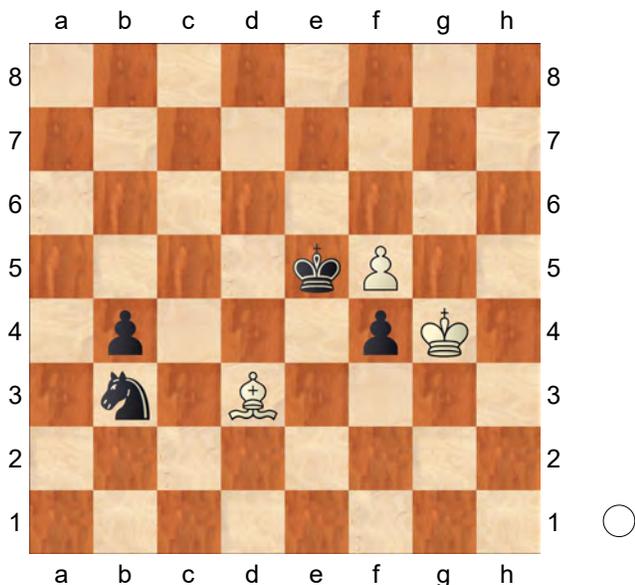
50...h4 Naturally, Black prefers to avoid
 pawn exchanges.

[50...hxg4 leads to an easy draw
 after: 51.Kg3 e3!? 52.fxe3 Nf1+
 53.Kf2 Nd2 54.Kg3=]

51.Kh3 Nf3



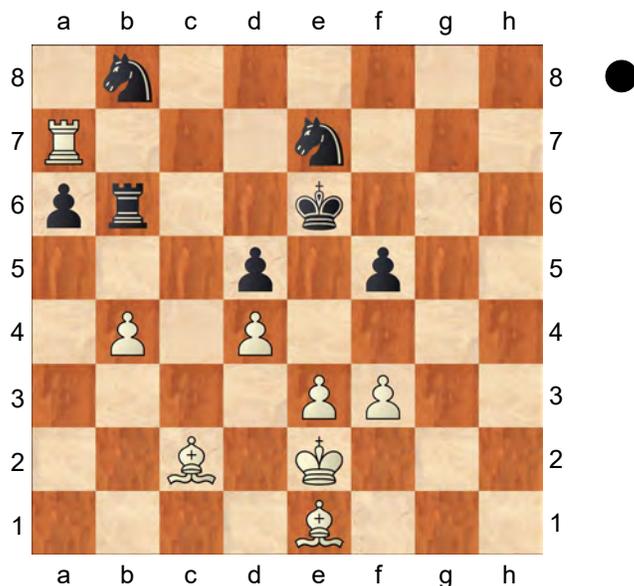
And here comes the second one. ...
52.g5! fxc5 53.Bxe4 Nd4 ...and
 the third one: **54.f4! gxf4**
55.Kxh4 White managed to trade two
 pairs of pawns and the situation has
 simplified significantly. The rest is easy.
55...Kf6 56.Kg4 Ke5 57.Bd3
Nxb3



and now he can simplify even further
 with **58.f6! Kxf6 59.Kxf4=** and draw
 can be agreed because the advantage of
 one pawn in this position is not enough
 to win the game.

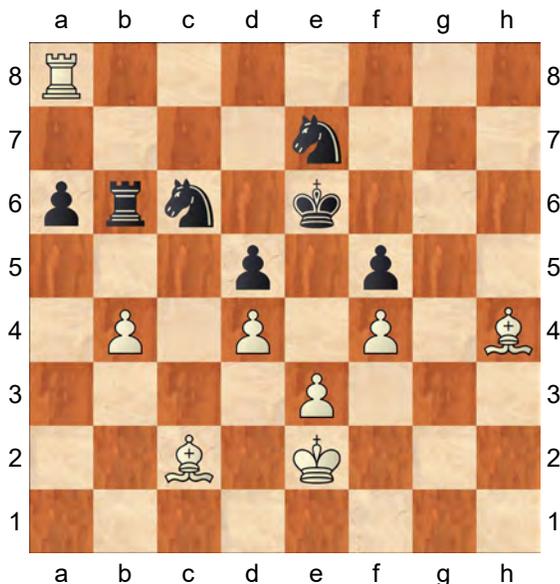
Theoretical and positional draw
 Knowledge of basic theoretical and
 positional draws is essential for every
 aspiring chess player because it allows
 us to foresee favorable simplifications in
 positions which seem difficult or
 tiresome to defend. One of such cases is
 the following endgame:

□ **Pashikian, Arman** **2647**
 ■ **Malakhov, Vladimir** **2716**
 WchT 7th Bursa (7.4) 11.01.2010

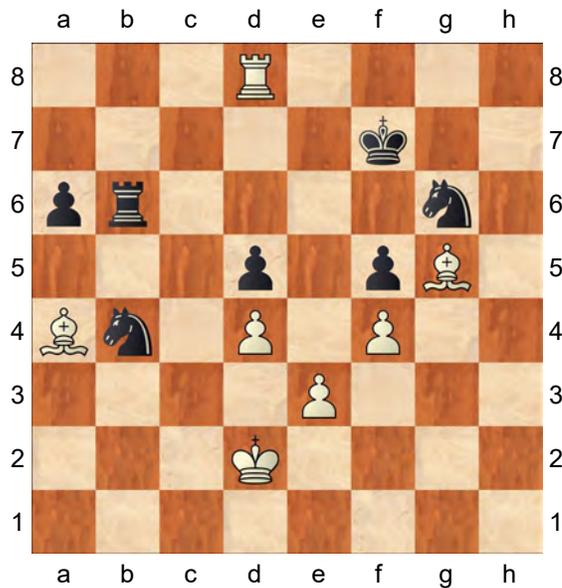


Vladimir Malakhov defended a joyless
 endgame, being down a full pawn, for a
 long time. His opponent, GM Pashikian
 somehow failed to act decisively in
 previous stages of the conversion phase,
 and this position was reached on move
 39. White still enjoys a big positional
 advantage, but not many pawns have
 remained on the board, which is always
 a good circumstance for the defending
 side. Malakhov played: **39...f4!**
 forcing a trade of another pair of pawns
 and, thereby, reducing White's winning
 chances.

[Passive defense with 39...Nbc6 40.Ra8 Kf7 may not hold, (The alternative is 40...Nxb4 41.Bxb4 Rxb4 42.Rxa6+ Kf7 43.Kd3 when several pieces get exchanged, but unlike a similar position from the game, White keeps some winning chances here since he has a light-squared instead of the dark-squared one, and an extra pair of pawns is on the board.) since White can first prevent simplification with 41.f4 Ke6 and then put his bishops to work: 42.Bh4!

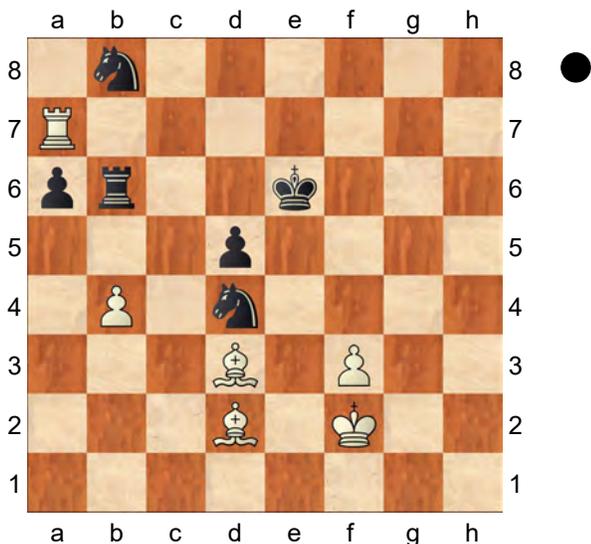


b4-pawn is sacrificed for positional domination. White plans to use the power of his bishop pair, supported by the rook, to organize an attack on the black king. Kf7 (42...Nxb4 is met by: 43.Rf8! Kd7 44.Ba4+ and White should be winning here.; 42...Rxb4 43.Rxa6 also looks extremely unpleasant for Black.) 43.Ba4 Ke6 44.Kd2 Ng6 45.Bg5 Nxb4 46.Re8+ Kf7 47.Rd8



with complete domination of white pieces.]
40.Bd3 Taking the pawn would obviously allow the fork on c6. **40...fxe3 41.Kxe3 Nf5+** To make things worse for White, he either has to allow further simplification or lose the pawn on d4. Pashikian did not want to surrender his material advantage and played **42.Bxf5+**
 [As we will see in the game, White's winning chances do not increase with this exchange, so it is worth considering the alternative: 42.Kf4 seriously. After: Nxd4 43.Bd2 Black would have to find the simplifying maneuver: Nbc6! (Materialistic 43...Ndc6?! is too passive and White would obtain excellent winning chances with 44.Rh7 Kd6 45.Kg5! preparing 46.Bf4+.) 44.Rxa6 Rxa6 45.Bxa6 Ne5 46.Bc8+ Kd6 47.Bg4 Nc4 48.Be1 Nc2 49.Bc3 d4= and Black finally forces a draw.]
 [However, a somewhat less intuitive move with a similar goal in mind 42.Kf2!? might have been the best solution for White.

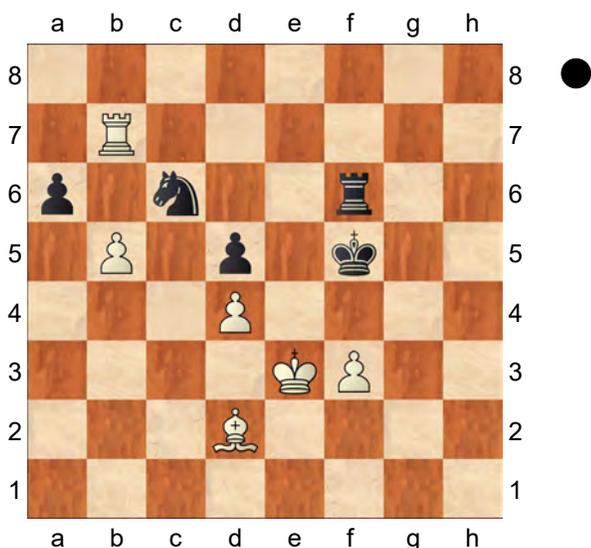
After Nxd4 43.Bd2



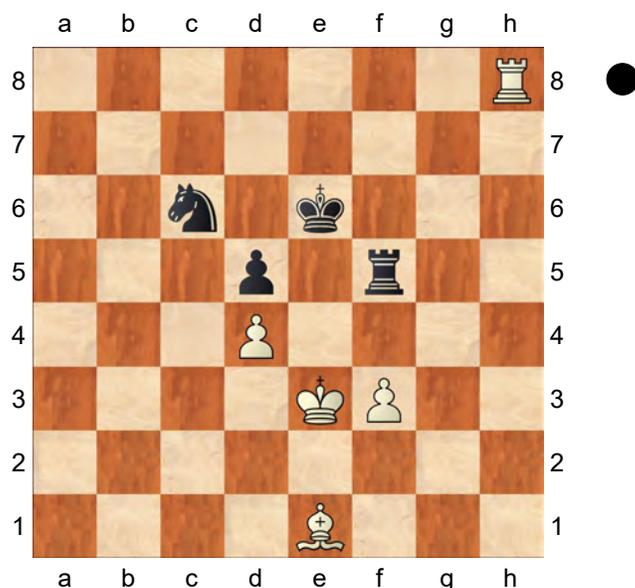
Black would not have the simplifying combination with 43...Nbc6 any more. This would keep the tension in the position. Even though the material would have been significantly reduced, there would be no forced ways for him to simplify the position further. White would still keep some initiative and, consequently, winning chances alive.]

42...Kxf5 43.Rf7+ Rf6 A usual sign that a position gravitates toward a draw is when piece exchanges increase defender's drawing chances significantly.

44.Rb7 Nc6 45.Bd2 Rg6 46.Rc7 Rf6 47.Rd7 Ke6 48.Rb7 Kf5 49.b5



White hardly had any choice in the matter since his b4-pawn was becoming a burden. Yet, the exchange of another pair of pawns can only satisfy his opponent. The arising position is very drawish. 49...axb5 50.Rxb5 Ke6 51.Rb6 Kf5 52.Rb5 Ke6 53.Rb7 Kf5 54.Rh7 Ke6 55.Be1 Rf7 56.Rh5 Rf5 57.Rh6+ Rf6 58.Rh7 Rf7 59.Rh6+ Rf6 60.Rh5 Rf5 61.Rh8



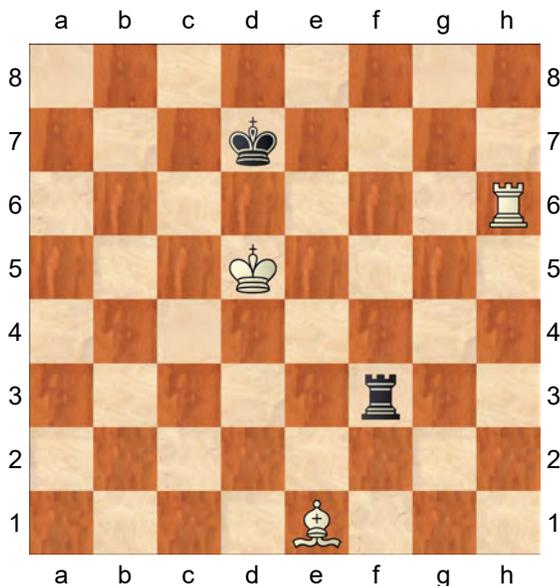
Nxd4!? This simplification is the most practical solution. Malakhov uses his knowledge of the theoretical endgame: R+B vs R, in which draw can be obtained by using one of two correct methods of defense.

[Black could also hold the position with: 61...Rf7 62.Bh4 and now it would be necessary to activate the

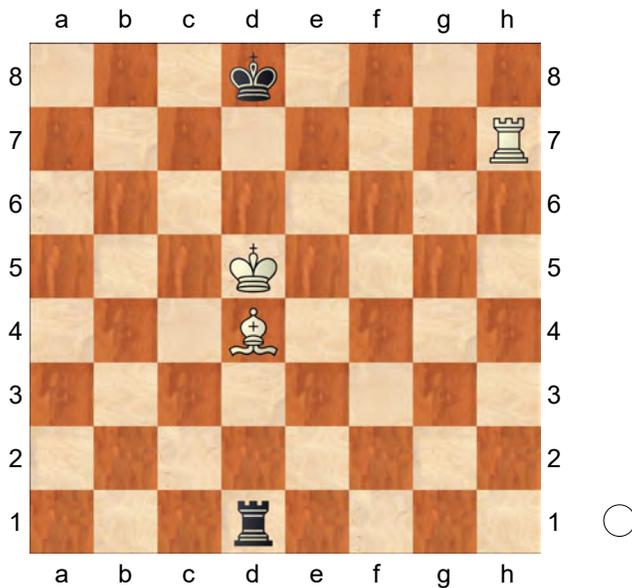
rook with Ra7! which gives Black sufficient counterplay against the d4-pawn. (On the other hand, continuing passive defense with 62...Rf5? would does not work anymore because of 63.Rh6+ Kd7 64.Bf6! and by planting his bishop on e5, White most likely obtains a winning position, as we can see in the following variation: Ke8 65.f4 Kd7 66.Be5 Ne7 67.Kf3+-

This is probably the reason why Malakhov forced the issue by sacrificing the knight on d4.) 63.Rh6+ Kd7 64.Bf6 (64.Rh7+ Ke6=) 64...Ra3+ 65.Kf4 Rd3=]

62.Rh6+ Kd7 63.Kxd4 Rxf3 64.Kxd5

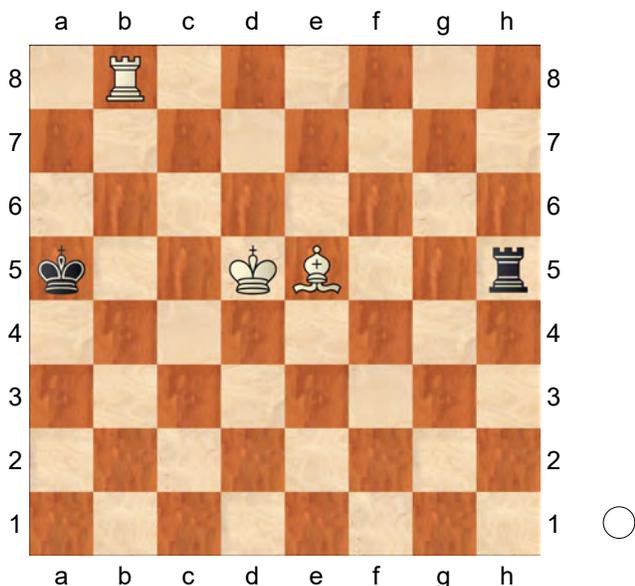


From this position, White should try to checkmate Black in the next 50 moves, or otherwise Black can claim a draw due to the 50-move rule. In this game, Malakhov demonstrates the correct defensive method for Black, the so-called Cochrane defense. **64...Rd3+ 65.Kc5 Ke7 66.Bf2 Rd1 67.Bd4 Rc1+ 68.Kd5 Rd1 69.Rh7+ Kd8**



This is the basic setup of Cochrane defense. It is easy to remember since all pieces besides white rook (which cuts off Black king along the seventh rank) are lined up on the same file. It is very important to remember that this defense is correct only if the kings are not in opposition, i.e. if the White king was on d6 instead of d5 and the bishop was on d5, we would have the so-called Philidor position which is theoretically winning for White. When king is two files apart, there is no immediate mating threat, so Black can avoid the Philidor position with precise play. **70.Ke5 Kc8!**

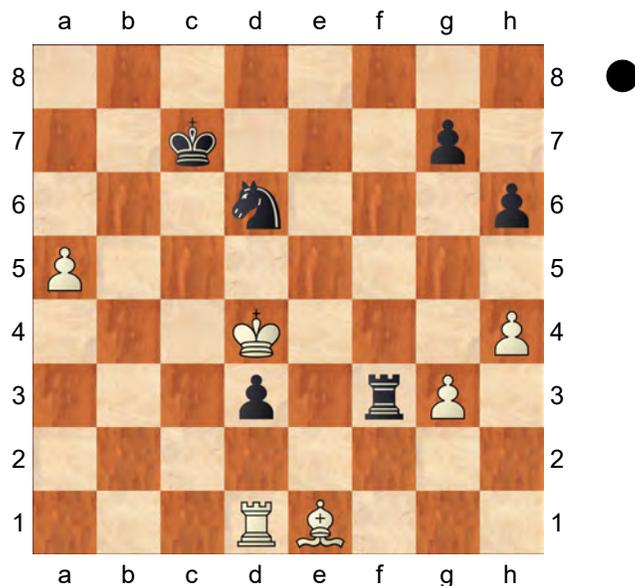
This is the best reply, methodically. When White king goes to one side, Black king moves the other way. By the same token, 70.Kc5 is best answered by 70...Ke8. **71.Bc5 Rd7!** This is the most efficient method of defense at this point because it allows Black king to escape from the last rank and gets Black closer to claiming a draw by 50-th move rule. **72.Rh8+ Kb7 73.Bd6 Rg7 74.Rb8+ Kc6 75.Rc8+ Kb5 76.Kd5 Rg5+ 77.Be5 Rh5 78.Rb8+ Ka5**



After some maneuvering, Malakhov constructed Cochrane defense again, only turned 90 degrees counter-clockwise. **79.Kd4 Ka6! 80.Bd6 Rb5** Black used the same method all over again, proving that his knowledge of this theoretical endgame is solid. White tried to win for another 30 or so moves, but couldn't even manage to push black king to the edge of the board, so Malakhov saved the game after a valiant defensive effort on move 113. The key defensive method that facilitated it was a simplification. **81.Rf8 Kb7 82.Kc4 Rh5 83.Rf6 Rg5 84.Re6 Kc6 85.Bc5+ Kd7 86.Rd6+ Ke8 87.Rf6 Kd7 88.Kb5 Rd5 89.Rf7+ Ke6 90.Re7+ Kf6 91.Re2 Kf5 92.Kc4 Re5 93.Rf2+ Ke4 94.Bd6 Re6 95.Rd2 Rg6 96.Rd4+ Ke3 97.Bc5 Kf3 98.Kd3 Rg5 99.Bd6 Rf5 100.Bc7 Rf7 101.Be5 Rf8 102.Rd7 Rf5 103.Re7 Rf8 104.Bd4 Ra8 105.Rf7+ Kg4 106.Ba7 Rd8+ 107.Ke2 Kg5 108.Kf3 Kg6 109.Rf4 Rd7 110.Ra4 Kf5 111.Ra5+ Ke6 112.Ke4 Rd1 113.Bf2**
1/2

Shengelia, Davit **2512**
 Brkic, Ante **2565**
 Olympiad-43 Batumi (9.3) 03.10.2018

In the following game, we have a very common endgame motif - simplification into the elementary drawn 'wrong bishop' endgame.



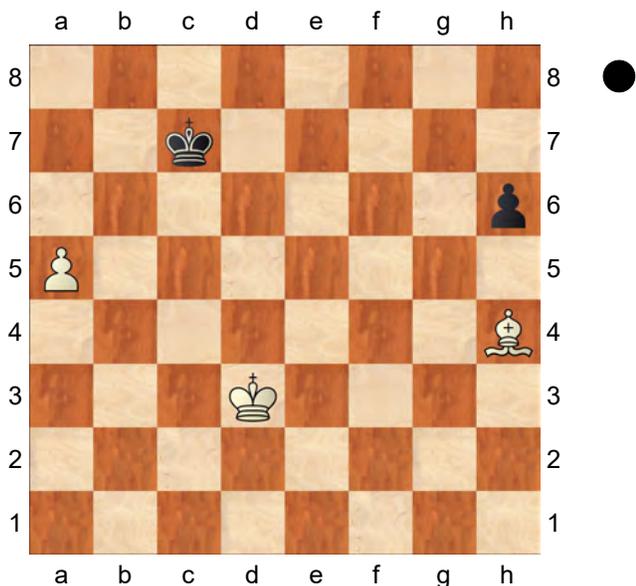
Despite equal and reduced material, Black's defensive task does not appear to be trivial. His d-pawn is all but lost, while white pawns are impressively defended by the bishop on e1. What is he to do? GM Brkic's solution is very instructive: **49...g5!** The idea is to force a trade of pair of pawns in order to facilitate transposition into the famous positional 'wrong bishop' draw.

[On the other hand, other moves would lead to a difficult endgame for Black. For example: **49...Nf5+ 50.Ke4 Rf1 51.Kxd3** and now he can not take advantage of the pin on the bishop with **Nxg3??** because **52.Bxg3+** is a check.]

50.h5 White plays the most principled move.

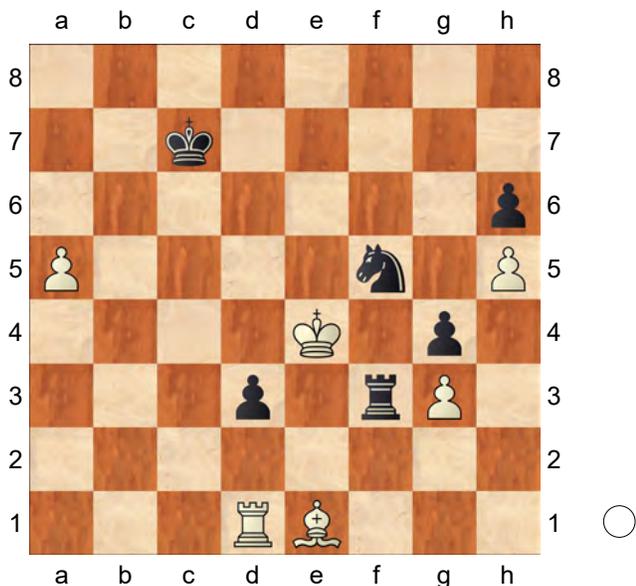
[Black's idea can be seen in variations: 50.hxg5 hxg5 51.Rxd3 Nf5+ 52.Ke4 Rxd3 53.Kxd3 Nxc3! 54.Bxc3+=]

[and: 50.Rxd3 Nf5+ 51.Ke4 Rxd3 52.Kxd3 Nxc3! 53.gxc3 gxc3 54.Bxc3+=]



when White's material advantage is not enough to win the game if Black parks his king on a8.]

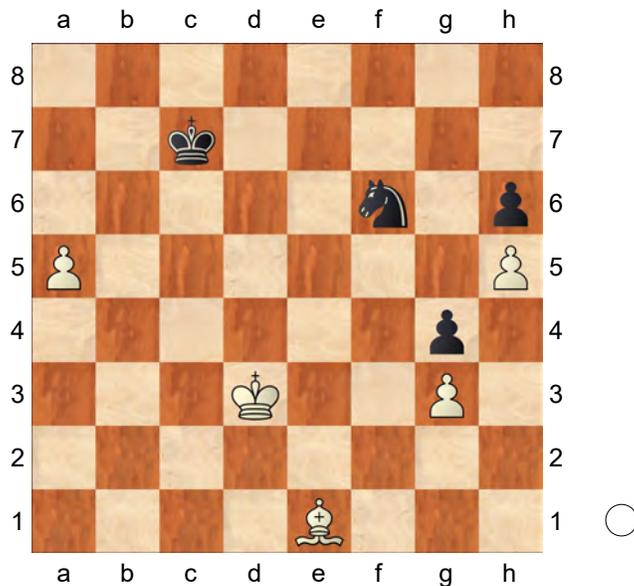
50...Nf5+ 51.Ke4 g4!



This move is the point of Black's simplification combination. It not only protects the rook, ensuring that it will be exchanged for White rook on d3, but also fixes white pawns on h5 and g3, so that the knight can snatch them both easily. **52.Rxd3 Nd6+** Black would like to draw by a perpetual check,

[although simple: 52...Rxd3 53.Kxd3 Ng7 54.Ke4 Nxc3 55.Kf5 Nxc3+ 56.Bxc3+ Kb7= would have done the job just as well.]

53.Kd4 Nb5+ 54.Kc4 Nd6+ 55.Kc3 Ne4+ 56.Kd4 Finally, Black swaps the rooks: **56...Rxd3+ 57.Kxd3 Nf6**



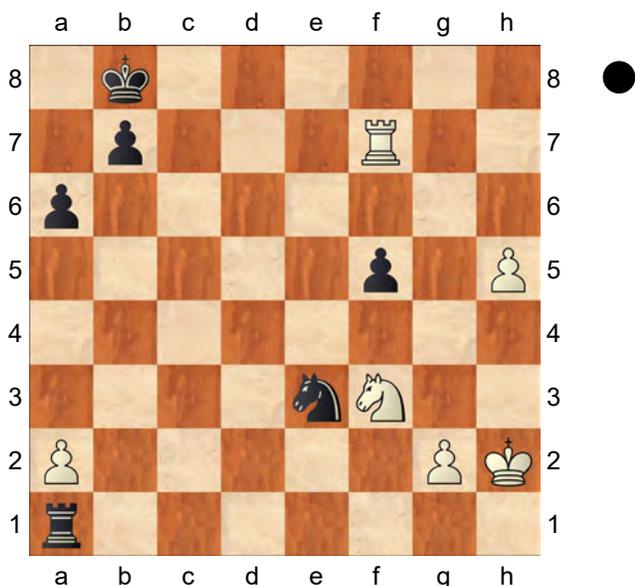
and the draw is inevitable as the knight captures both white pawns, forcing the wrong bishop endgame. **58.Bd2 Nxc3 59.Bxc3 Kb7 60.Ke4 1/2**

When your opponent has a dangerous passed pawn, your main goal should be to eliminate it, even if it costs some extra material. The following encounter between two ex-world champions is instructive in that respect.

☐ Fischer, Robert James

■ Petrosian, Tigran V

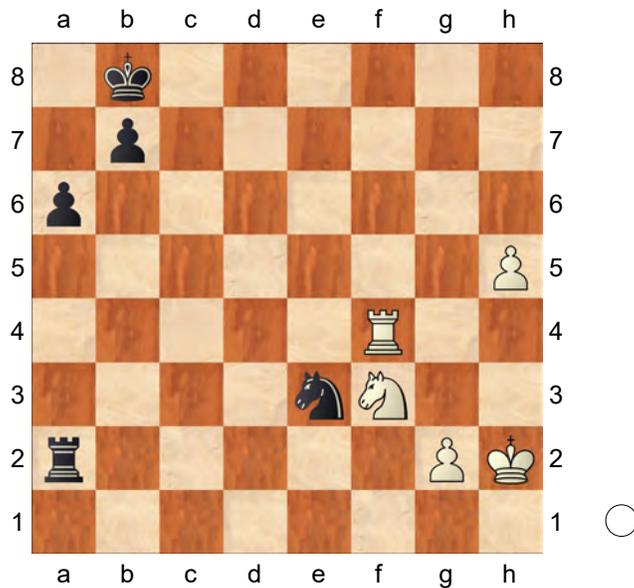
Candidates f Fischer-Petrosian +5-1=3 (1)



This position arose in the first game of the 1971 Candidates final between Bobby Fischer and Tigran Petrosian. Petrosian had an excellent position in the middlegame, but he slowly drifted into an unpleasant endgame. Fischer's h-pawn looks very dangerous, but Black still has defensive resources.

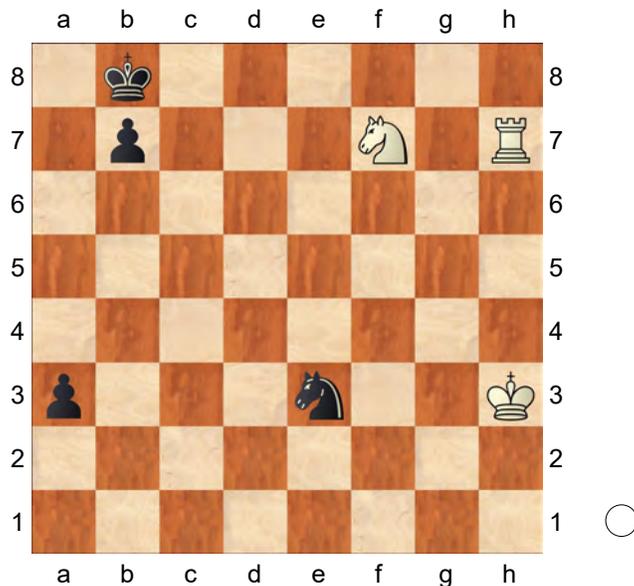
Unfortunately, Petrosian missed the point by playing 36...f4? and he lost the game in short order. The right move was **36...Rxa2**

[After 36...f4? 37.Rxf4 Rxa2



Petrosian probably thought that he could force a draw by winning the g2-pawn and catching the h-pawn with his rook. However, after the simple:

A) Maybe Petrosian counted only on the forced line: **38.h6 Rxc2+ 39.Kh3 Rg8 40.h7 Rh8 41.Ng5 a5! 42.Rh4 a4 43.Nf7 Rxc7 44.Rxc7 a3**



when White already has to force a draw with: **45.Rh8+ Ka7 46.Nd6**

(46.Rh4 b5!) 46...a2 47.Nb5+ Kb6 48.Ra8=;

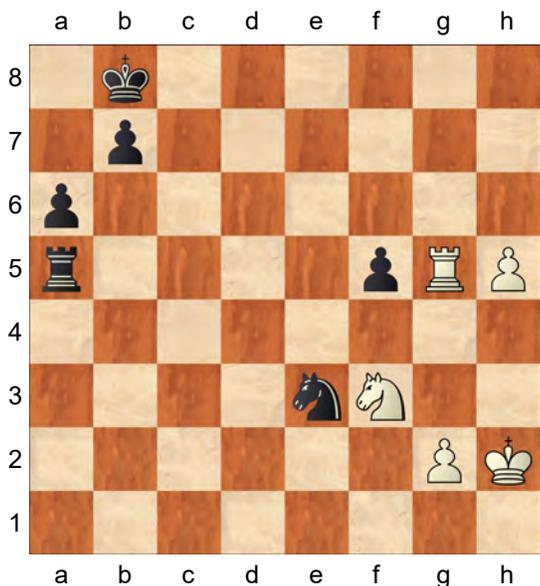
B) 38.Re4! Nxc2 39.Kg3 Ra5 40.Ne5 both his pieces were cut off from the passed pawn, and he had to resign.]

37.Rg7 Ra5! The rook joins defense via the fifth rank, preparing simplification with ...f5-f4.

[This is not the only defense, as: 37...Ng4+!? 38.Kg3 a5 would also give Black good drawing chances in a double-edged fight. Since simplification is our topic in this issue, we will focus on 37... Ra5.]

38.Rg5

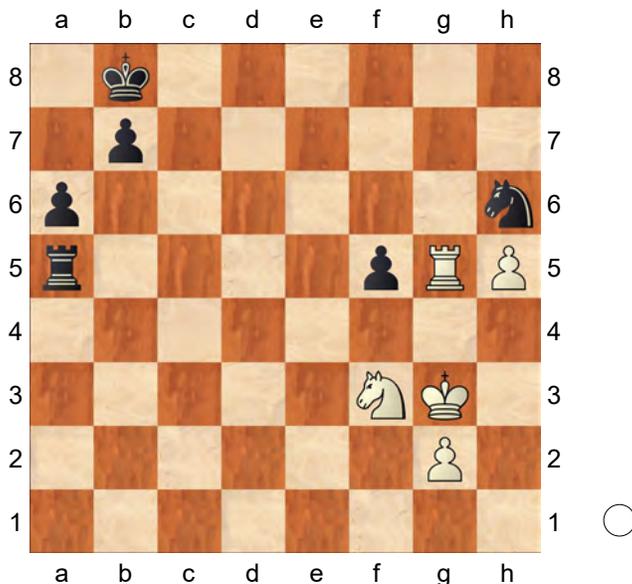
[Black's idea can be seen in the variation: 38.Kg3 f4+! 39.Kxf4 Nxc2+ 40.Rxc2 Rxc2= And R+N vs R is a theoretical draw even without black pawns.]



This is the critical moment for Black. White is threatening to play 39.Kg3, 40. h6 etc. Black can save the game only with: **38...Kc7!** King centralization was emphasized as one of the most

important endgame principles in previous issues of Endgame series. One should never forget about the king in the endgame.

[It looks like Black does well by blocking the pawn with: 38...Ng4+ 39.Kg3 Nh6

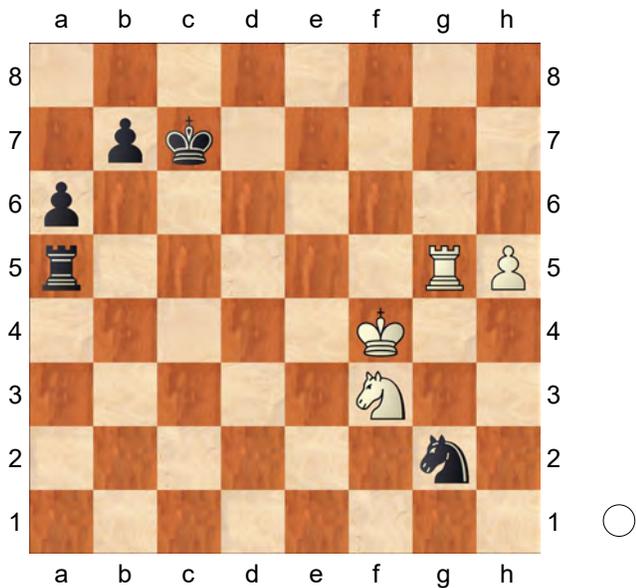


but, in that case, White is the first one to activate his king: 40.Kf4! Ra4+ 41.Ke5! Sacrificing the exchange. Nf7+ 42.Kxf5 Nxc2 43.Kxc2+ and in the resulting position, the rook can not fight against four white pieces alone.]

39.Kg3

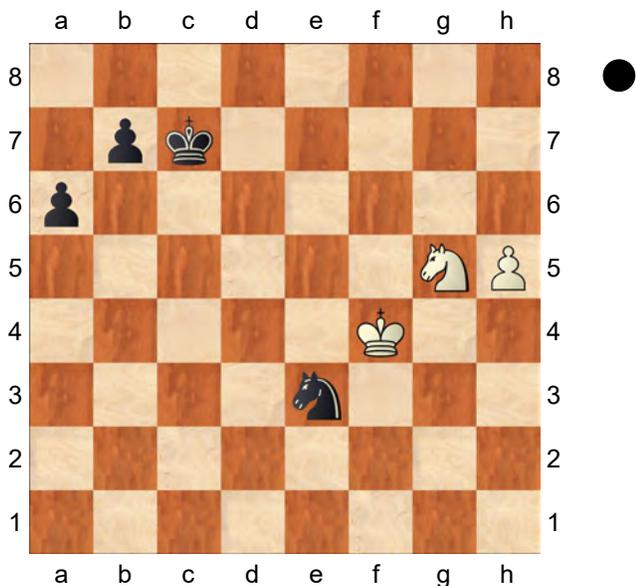
[The alternative 39.Nh4 gives Black just enough time to get his king into the square of the h-pawn: Kd7 40.Kg3 Ke7 41.h6 f4+! Simplifying into a drawn knight endgame. 42.Kxf4 Rxc2 43.Kxc2 Kf7 44.g4 Nd5 45.Nf5 Kg8=]

White is threatening 40.h6, so Black needs to simplify matters: **39...f4+! 40.Kxf4 Nxc2+**



If White takes the knight, the h-pawn falls, with a draw. However, the fight is not over yet... **41.Kg3!** White preserves his strongest asset - the h-pawn. The question is: can black stop the h-pawn after the rook trade?

[41.Rxg2 Rxh5=]
41...Rxg5+ 42.Nxg5 Ne3 43.Kf4



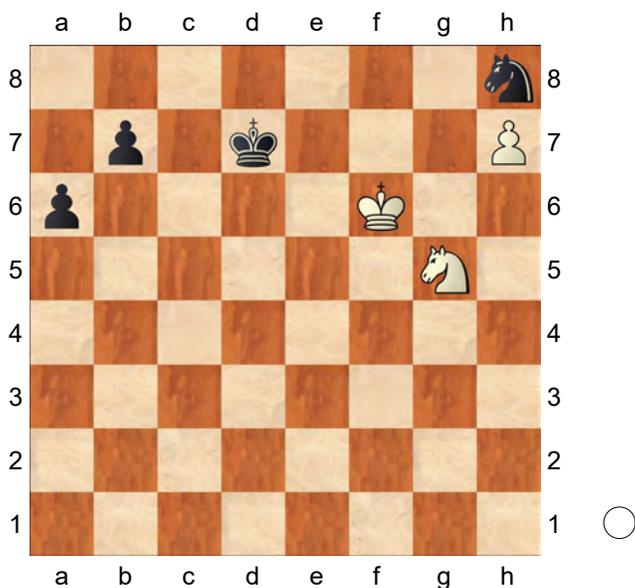
The answer is: Yes, he can - but only with the study-like: **43...Kd6!!**
 This diagonal king movement (also

discussed in previous issues of Endgame series) to get inside the square of the h-pawn, is very reminiscent of Reti's famous study.

[Instead, 43...Nd5+ does not save Black because the knight is a notoriously inefficient piece when it comes to stopping rook's pawn.

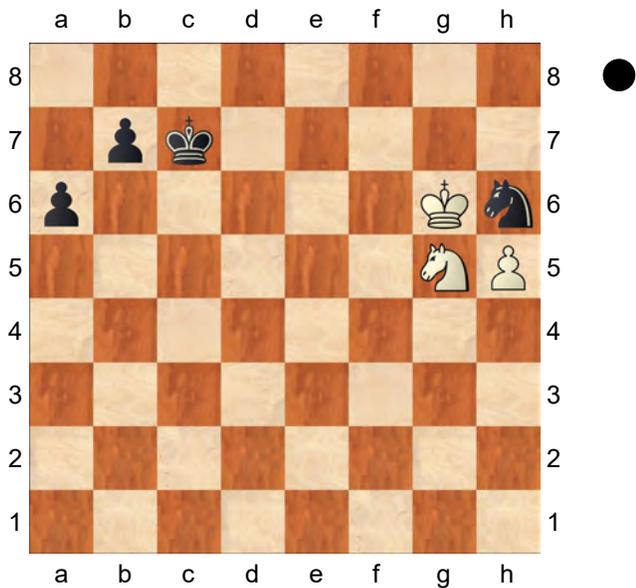
44.Ke5

A) In case of a more passive:
 44...Ne7 45.h6 Kd7 46.h7 Ng6+
 47.Kf6 Nh8



White just needs to make sure not to fall for the last trick and play:
 48.Nf7! (48.Kg7?? leads to a well-known positional draw after: Ke7!
 49.Kxh8 Kf8=) 48...Nxf7
 49.Kxf7+-;

B) 44...Ne3 45.Ke6! Ng4 46.Kf5
 A little triangulation can not hurt White's chances! Nh6+ 47.Kg6



Now, wherever black knight moves, White wins by taking away the key square for the knight. Ng8

(In case of 47...Ng4 it is the e5-square. Thus: 48.Nf3! a5 49.Kg5 a4 50.Kxg4 a3 51.Nd4+-) 48.Kg7 while after Ne7 it is the f5-square, so here: 49.Ne6+ Kd6 50.Nd4! does the trick! Ke5 51.h6 Kxd4 52.h7+-]

44.Kxe3

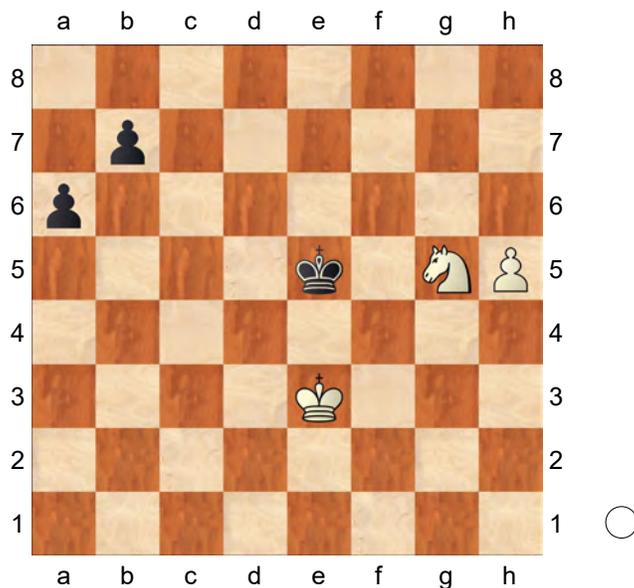
[In case of 44.h6 Black gets his knight back just in time: Nd5+ The key is that White does not have 45.Ke5 any more. 45.Kf5 Ne7+ 46.Kg4 (46.Kf6 Ng8+ 47.Kg7 Nxf6 48.Kxf6=) 46...Ng6 47.h7 Ke5=]

44...Ke5=

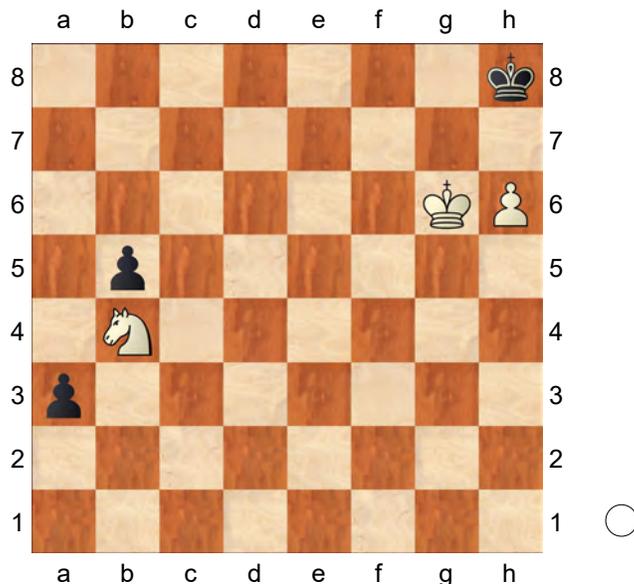
Black king is in the square of the h-pawn, but what is more interesting is that White can not win this endgame with an extra piece and passed pawn. The position that arises by force after: **45.Kf3**

[By the way, 45.h6 Kf6 46.h7 Kg7= is a well-known positional draw even without black pawns.]

45...Kf5 46.Ne4 a5 47.Kg3 a4 48.Kh4



a3 49.Nc3 Kf6 50.Kg4 b5 51.Nd5+ Kg7 52.Nb4 Kh6 53.Kh4 Kg7 54.Kg5 Kh7 55.h6 Kg8 56.Kg6 Kh8=

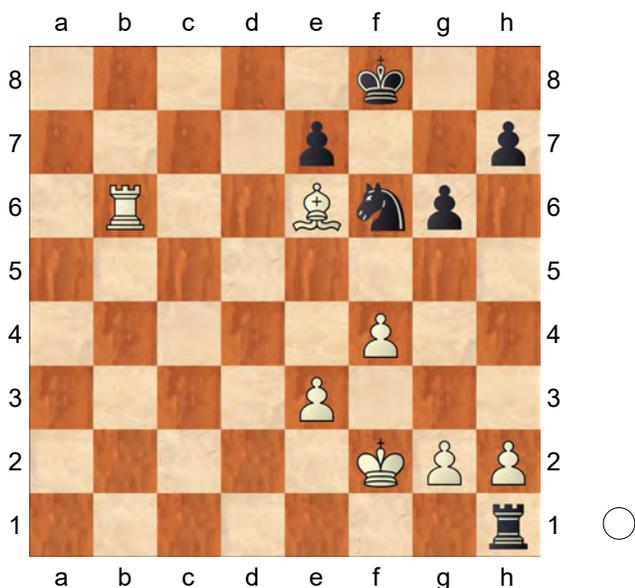


has been analyzed by Yuri Averbakh in Comprehensive Chess Endings. The predecessor was the game Smorodski - Breitmann, 1933. Averbakh concludes that we have a positional draw on the board because White's attack with the knight: **57.Nc6?? a2 58.Ne5 a1Q 59.Nf7+ Kg8 60.h7+ Kf8** does not

work since the newly-promoted queen attacks the h8-square, so after **61.h8Q+ Qxh8 62.Nxh8 b4-+** White may even lose!

Xiong, Jeffery **2618**
 Robson, Ray **2663**
 USA-ch Saint Louis (3) 16.04.2016

Finally, let us see how the stronger side needs to be careful not to allow unnecessary simplification that may lead to a positional draw.

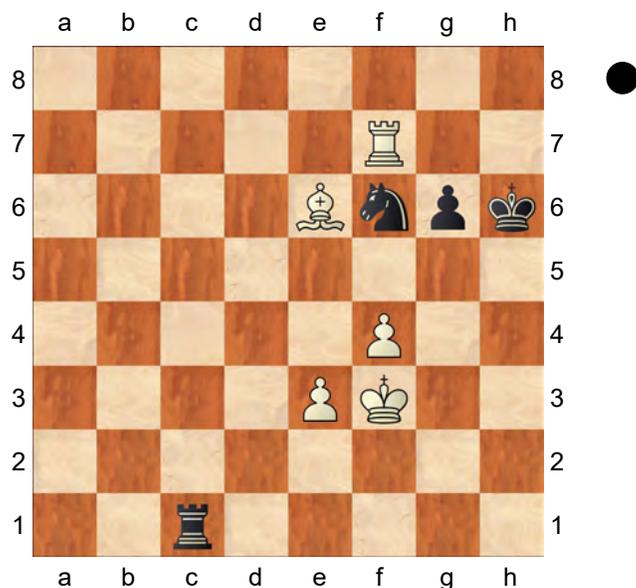


Similar endgames with 4 vs 3 pawns on the same flank offer winning chances in the long run, but they require patience. Young Jeffery Xiong forced the issue with: **37.g4?!** allowing simplifications.

[Instead, it was required to obey 'do not hurry' principle and play a modest move 37.h3 There is no guarantee that White would win this endgame, but Black's defense would be far from easy.]

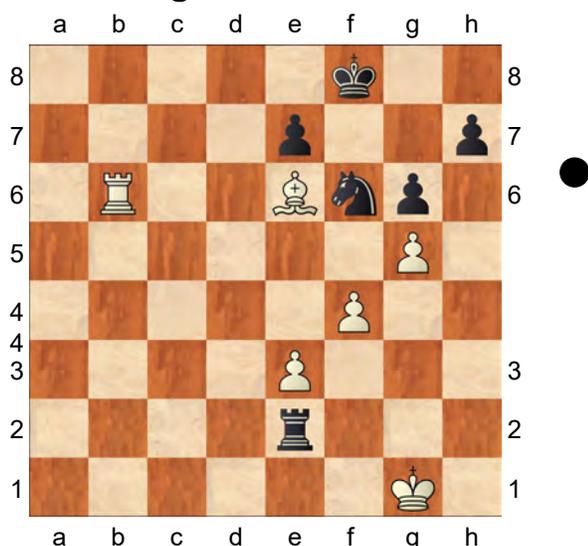
37...Rxh2+ 38.Kg1?! Xiong insists on winning a piece. However, this leads to loss of his e-pawn and, as we will see, an endgame which is a positional draw despite White's extra piece.

[White would keep some winning chances with: 38.Kg3 avoiding simplification that occurred in the game since the e3-pawn would remain alive. Rc2 39.g5 Ne4+ 40.Kf3 Nd2+ 41.Kg4 Black saved the knight, but he will have to give up his e-pawn to defend against the mating attack. Kg7 42.Rb7! (42.Rb8 h5+) 42...h5+ 43.gxh6+ Kxh6 44.Rxe7 Rc1 45.Kg3 Ne4+ 46.Kf3 Nf6 47.Rf7



and the arising endgame still gives White, at least practical, chances to fight for a full point.]

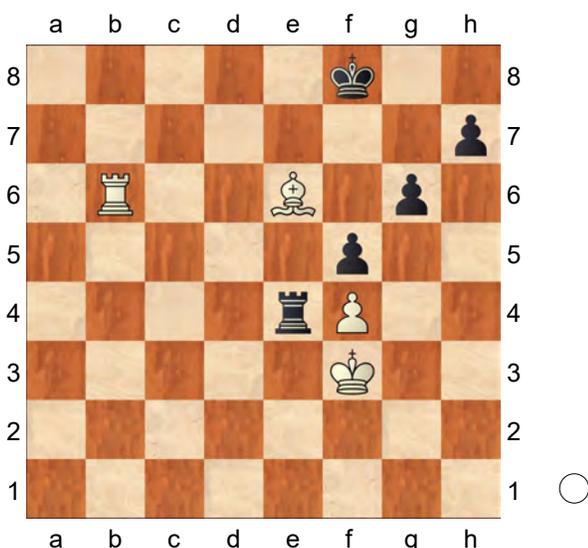
38...Re2 39.g5



The knight can not move due to the mating threat Rb8+, Rg8#, so Black is forced to give up the piece. However, this also reduces the number of white pawns that could potentially become a new queen. **39...Rxe3**

[I should add that in case of 39...Ne8 40.Rb3! puts Black in some sort of zugzwang because he can not force the favorable simplification any more. For example: Kg7 (40...Rc2 41.Rb8 Rd2 42.Bc4+-; 40...Nd6 41.Rb8+ Ne8 42.Bd7+-) 41.Kf1 Ra2 42.Rb8 Ra6 43.Bc4 Rc6 44.Bd5 Rd6 45.Bb3+-]

40.gxf6 exf6 41.Kf2 Re4 42.Kf3 f5



This is a positional draw. Black just keeps his king on g7 and rook on the seventh rank. White can not organize a successful attack with his three remaining pieces due to a permanent threat of simplification with ...Re4 or ...h6, g5. Xiong tried for another 28 moves but to no avail. The black position proved to be a simple fortress.

43.Rb8+ Kg7 44.Rb7+ Kf6 45.Bd5 Re7 46.Rb6+ Kg7 47.Rd6 Kf8 48.Be6 Kg7 49.Rc6 Kf6 50.Bc4+ Kg7 51.Rd6 Rc7 52.Be2 Re7 53.Rc6 Kf8 54.Kf2 Kg7 55.Bf3

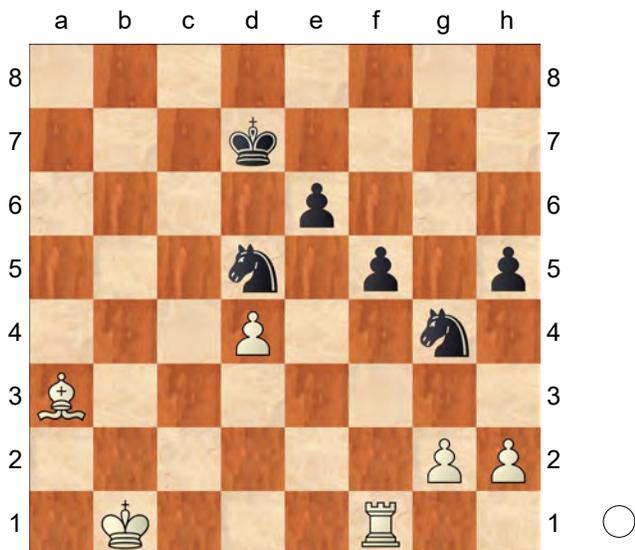
[White king can not cross over to the other side of the board: 55.Rc4 Kf6 56.Ke1 because Black liquidates everything with: Re4! 57.Rxe4 fxe4 58.Kf2 g5=]

55...Kf8 56.Kg3 Kg7 57.Kh4 h6 58.Kg3 Kh7 59.Bd5 Kg7 60.Kf3 Kh7 61.Kf2 Kg7 62.Bc4 Kh7 63.Be2 Kg7 64.Rc4 Kf6 65.Rc8 Kg7 66.Rd8 Kh7 67.Bf3 Kg7 68.Bd5 Kh7 69.Rd6 Kg7 70.Be6 Kf6 71.Bd5+ 1/2

More complex examples In this section, we will examine slightly more complex examples in which decisions that involve simplification are not so straightforward because it is may not be easy to foresee drawing resources or accurately assess the arising positions.

Kuljasevic, Davorin **2555**

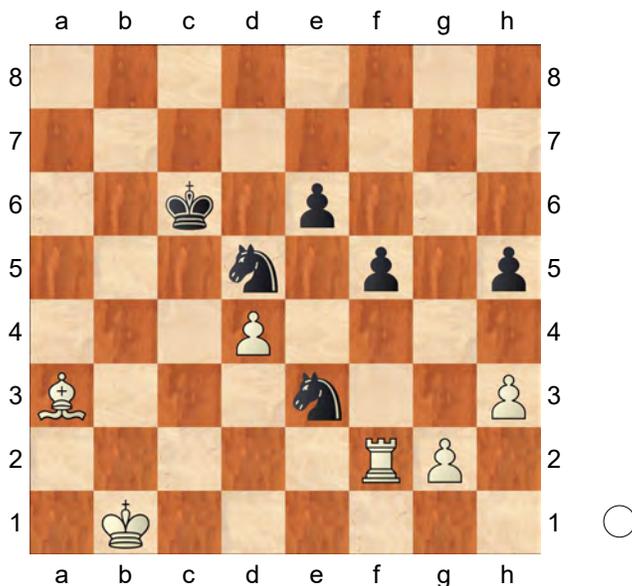
Sulava, N. **2453**
 2nd Krunoslav Hulak Mem (5.6) 03.12.17



This endgame with unusual material balance is not easy to evaluate accurately. Black's drawing chances are considerable in the view of the firm blockade on light squares, which allows him to easily maneuver his knights and activate his king. On the other hand, if White could centralize his own king and activate the rook, he may be able to gradually push black pieces back and start attacking his e- and h-pawns. The most immediate question for White is: how to deal with the threat to h2- pawn? In the game, I played **42.Bc1?!** which, in hindsight, is not a principled decision because the trade of h-pawns favors Black. My reasoning was that the rook would be a passive piece in case I defended the h-pawn, and the game move allows me to activate it. Here, we see two important endgame principles clashing against each other - what is more important: rook activity or preventing simplification? It is often difficult to weigh such factors against

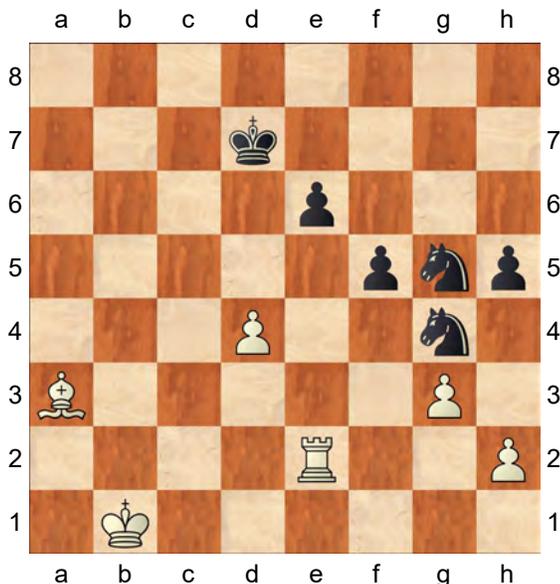
each other and come up with the correct decision based only on logical reasoning. Careful calculation of possible variations is crucial.

[In this particular case, it was more important to keep the pawns on the board and thus 42.h3 is the most natural candidate. I was bothered with the following variation: Nge3 43.Rf2 Kc6



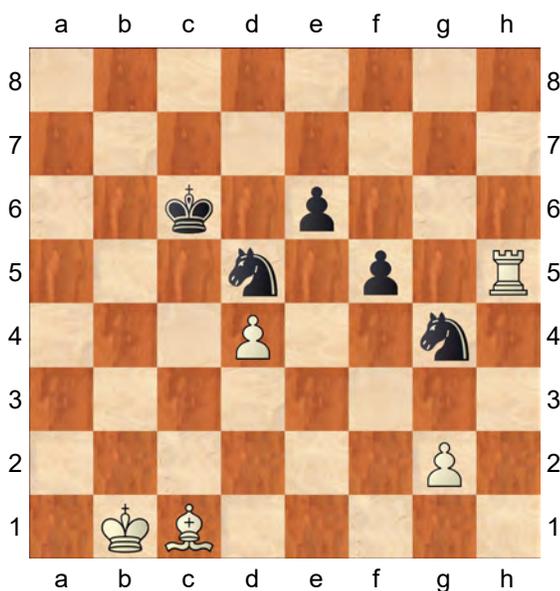
when black king invades via b5-c4 route while white pieces are extremely passive. Still, White could consolidate and try to play for a win even without the d4-pawn after: 44.Bc1 Kb5 45.Bxe3 Nxe3 46.Kc1 Kc4 47.Kd2 Nd5 48.Ke1 Kxd4 49.Ra2±]

[Another, much less obvious (at least to me) way to avoid simplification was: 42.Rh1!? This seems even more passive, but actually if one looks a bit deeper, there is no reason why White should refrain from playing this way. For example: Nf4 43.g3 Nh3 44.Re1 Ng5 45.Re2±



and here Black can continue his counterplay on the light squares in several ways: Nf3 (45...Ne4; or 45...Kc6 keeping drawing chances. However, the point is that there is still a lot to play for in this position and Black does not have an easy or forced way to hold a draw, so the fight continues.)]

42...Nxf2 43.Rh1 Ng4 44.Rxf5 Kc6! ♖



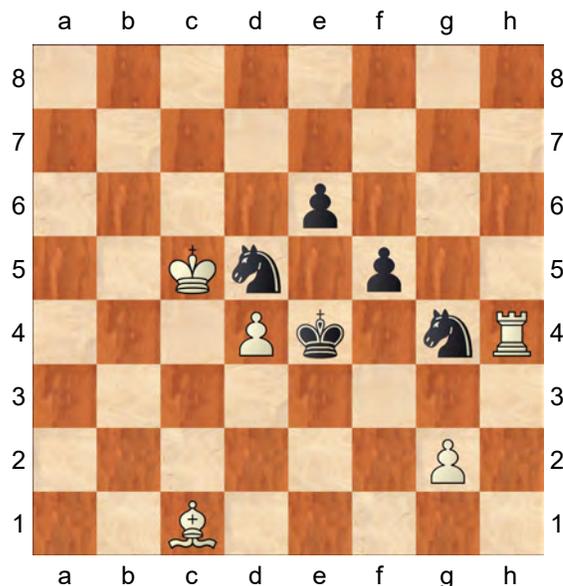
Black will use his king as an attacking

piece to target white pawns. This would not be an issue for White if his king was already somewhere on e2 or d3, but as it is, he is too slow getting it to the center.

45.Rh8

[It made more sense to activate the king at once 45.Kb2! and after: Ndf6 46.Rh4! Kd5 47.Kc3 Ke4!

(The cunning point behind putting the rook on h4 can be seen in a tempting variation: 47...Ne4+ 48.Kd3 Nef2+ 49.Ke2 and d-pawn is indirectly defended on the account of Kxd4? 50.Be3+-) 48.Kc4 Nd5 49.Kc5



Here, at the very least, White would have obtained practical counterplay against the e6-pawn, which would force Black to find the best moves to hold the balance in a tricky position: Nc3! 50.Bg5 Ne2 51.Rh1! Nf2!=]

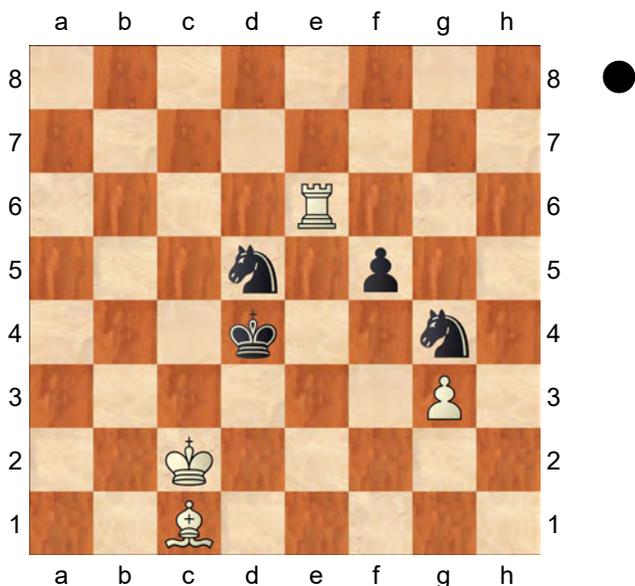
45...Nde3 46.g3 Kd5 47.Rd8+ Ke4 48.Rd6

[48.Re8 Kxd4 49.Rxe6 Kd3 is similar. White plays without the king, so Black has no obstacles getting his king toward the g3-pawn.]

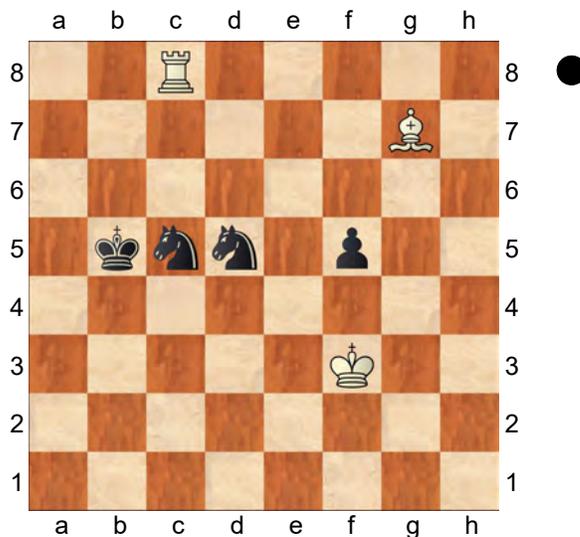
48...Nd5

[During the game, I thought that Black would have gotten an easy draw by simplifying the position further: 48...e5 49.dxe5 Kxe5 50.Ra6 Ke4 51.Ra3 Kf3 52.Rd3 Kf2= and White can not strengthen his position.]

49.Rxe6+ Kxd4 50.Kc2



This gave me a little bit of hope that I can still play for something as I finally get to centralize my king. This comes at the cost of the g-pawn, but I thought that simplification of the position could actually work against Black to some degree because his knights become a bit lose on an open board. **50...Nge3+ 51.Kd2 Nf1+ 52.Ke2 Nxc3+ 53.Kf3 Ne4 54.Bh6** Finally, the bishop is active, too. **54...Nc5 55.Bg7+ Kc4 56.Rc6 Kb5 57.Rc8**



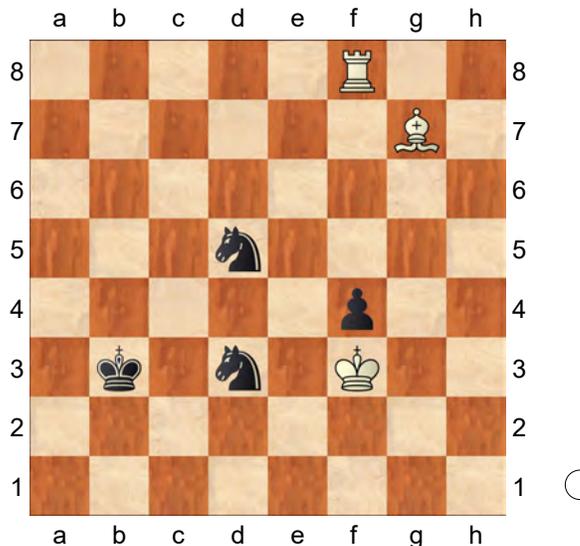
A very interesting endgame. It should be a draw, of course, but when you play on 30-second increments as we did at this point, anything can happen in a real game. Black would like to keep his knights centralized and keep the pawn on f5, but there are also some tricks to watch for. **57...Nd3**

[57...Kc4?? 58.Bf8+-]

[57...Kb6?? 58.Bd4+-]

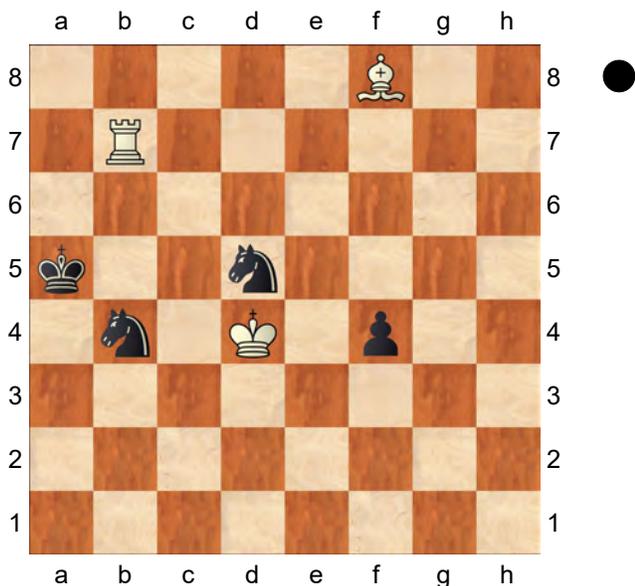
[57...Ne7!? 58.Rc7 Nc6 was also interesting. The geometry of the knights proves to be very tricky in variations like this one: 59.Ba1 Nb3 60.Bh8 Nbd4+ 61.Ke3 Ne6=]

58.Bd4 Kb4 59.Bg7 Kb3 60.Rf8 f4



White made some progress by forcing the pawn to f4. His king can join the attack now: **61.Ke4 N3b4** Black knights defend each other well enough and any further simplification leads to an immediate draw, so White's only chance is to force a zugzwang by paralyzing the knights. In that case, Black would have to push his pawn to f3 and White could simply pick it up. The resulting pawnless endgame: R+B vs N+N is a win according to the endgame tablebase; however, depending on the starting position, the conversion process can take up to 170 moves with the best play by both sides! **62.Rc8 Nb6 63.Rc3+ Ka4 64.Bf8 N6d5 65.Rc8 Nb6 66.Rb8 N4d5!** My opponent decided to switch up the position of his knights. This was the most practical decision

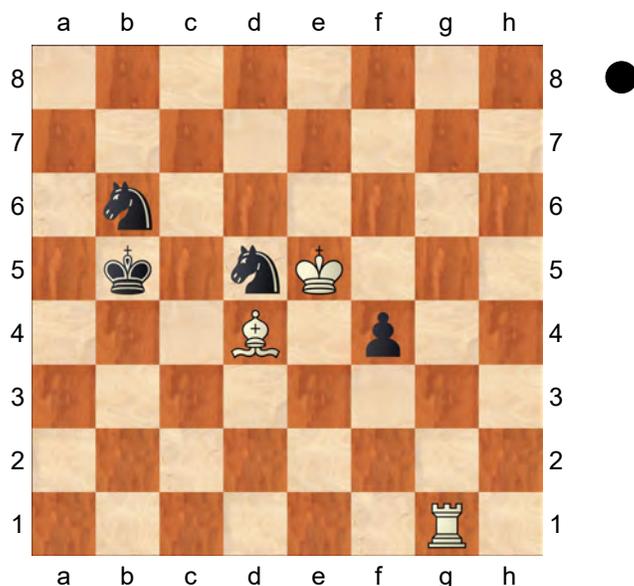
[since in case of 66...N6d5 67.Rb7 Ka5 68.Kd4



he would have to find the only move: **Ka6!** (Passive defense **68...Ka4** loses to **69.Bc5! Ka5 70.Kc4+-**; while in case of **68...f3 69.Rf7 Kb5 70.Rxf3** Tablebase announces

checkmate in 43 moves!) **69.Rh7 Kb5 70.Rh5 Ka4 71.Bd6 Kb3=] 67.Bg7 Kb5 68.Bd4 Kc6 69.Rh8 Kb5 70.Rh6 Ka5 71.Be5 Kb5 72.Bd4 Ka5 73.Rg6 Kb5 74.Bf2 Ka5 75.Bh4 Kb5 76.Bf2 Ka5 77.Kd4 Kb5 78.Ke5 Ka5 79.Bd4 Kb5 80.Rg1**

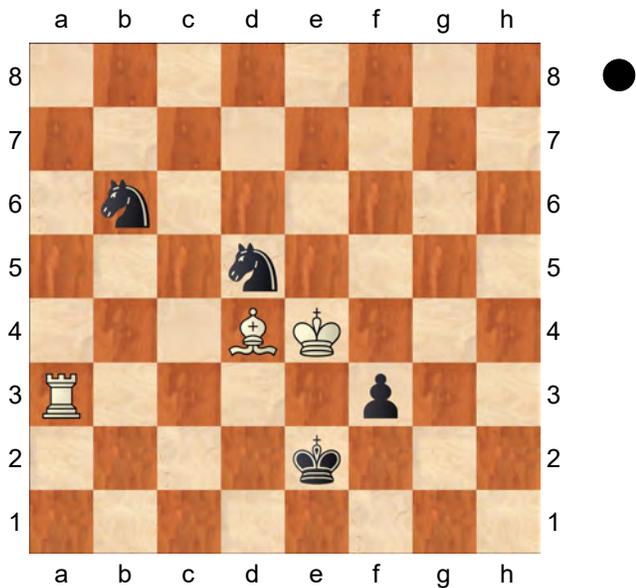
[80.Rh6 Ka5 81.Ke4 Kb5 would not lead to any progress for White, so it would remain a positional draw.]



Tired of passive defense, Sulava uses the first possible opportunity to defend actively: **80...Kc4! 81.Rg7**

[81.Ke4 would be met by **Nc3+!=] **81...Kd3!** With only several seconds on the clock, Black decides to go all-in. His knights lose protection, but he banks on the power of his passed pawn. **82.Rb7 f3 83.Rf7****

[Alternatively, **83.Ra7 Ke2 84.Ra2+ Kd3 85.Ra3+ Ke2 86.Ke4**



With this move, Black forces further simplifications and draw is inevitable.

85.Bxe3

[or 85.Rxf2 Ng4+ 86.Kf5 Nxf2 87.Bxf2=]

85...Kxe3 86.Rxf2 Kxf2

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□	Khalifman,Alexander	2628
■	Leko,Peter	2701
	Budapest m (3)	05.01.2000

runs into a very nice tactic: Nf6+!
87.Bxf6 (87.Kf4 Nbd5+) 87...Nc4
88.Ra2+ Nd2+ 89.Kd5 f2 90.Ra1
f1Q 91.Rxf1 Nxf1=]

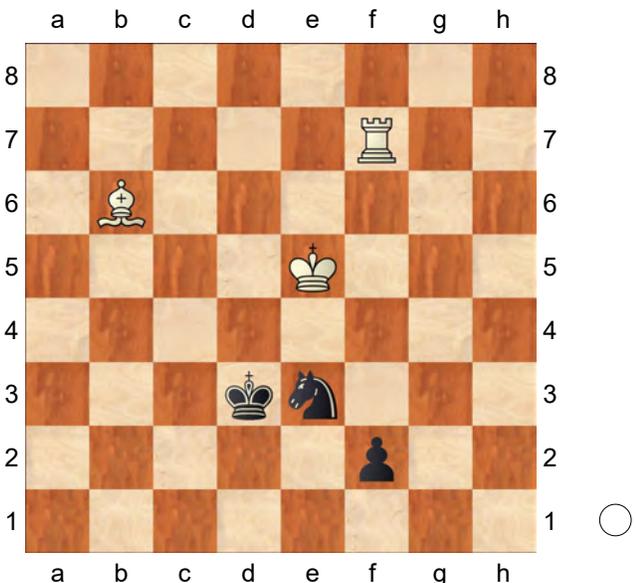
83...Ne3!? I was impressed with Sulava's handling of knights in this endgame,

[although Black could also simplify matters with: 83...Ke2 84.Ke4 Nc3+ 85.Bxc3 f2=]

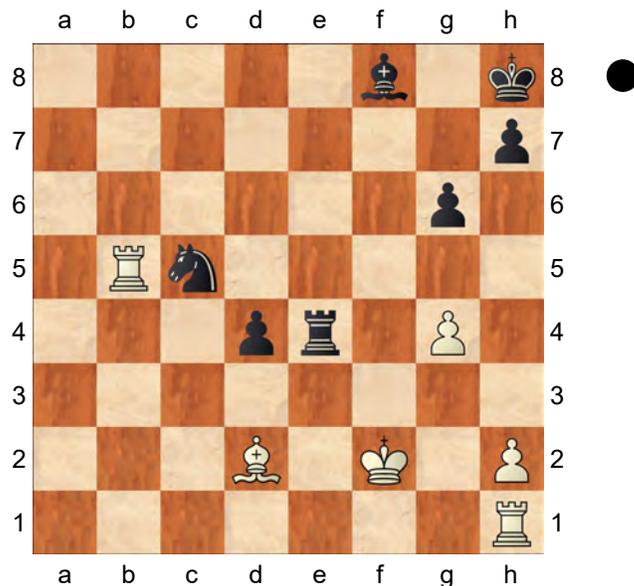
84.Bxb6

[84.Rxf3 Nbc4+=]

84...f2!



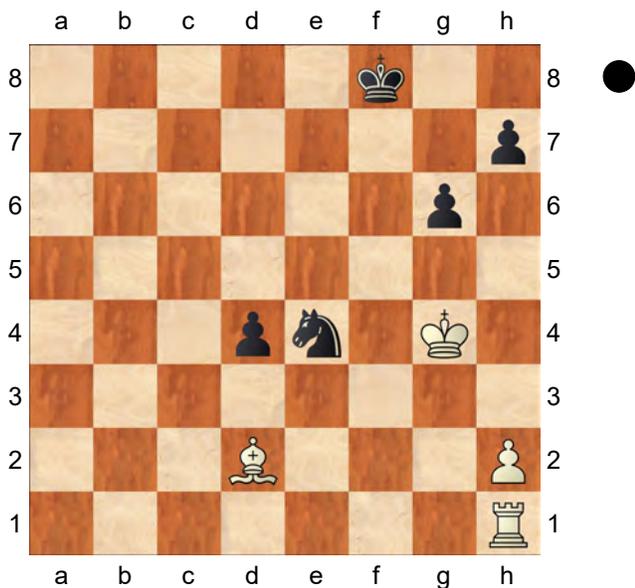
The next game is very interesting not only from a practical, but also theoretical point of view. It was not easy to make correct endgame decisions involving simplification even for a world-class player and resilient defender like Peter Leko.



Being an exchange down for one pawn, Black would surely like to grab another pawn (31...Rxf4) in order to get closer to one of favorable simplification scenarios. However, this move looks risky because it disrupts coordination of black pieces and, not surprisingly, Peter Leko chose a safer option **31...Re8**

[However, concrete analysis proves that the critical continuation 31...Rxf4! would indeed enable Black to achieve favorable simplifications. The most unpleasant reply is

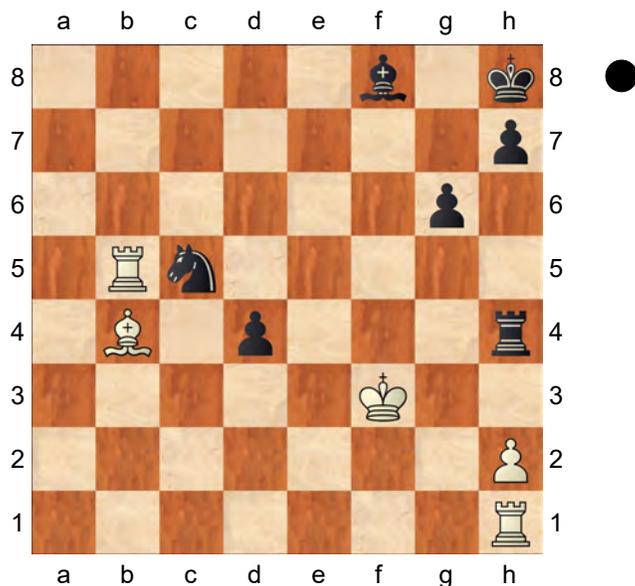
A) Direct attack with **32.Rb8 Kg7 33.Rxf8** gives Black an opportunity to liquidate into a drawn endgame with: **Ne4+ 34.Kf3 Kxf8 35.Kxg4**



Nxd2 (Interestingly, even a piece down endgame after: **35...Nf2+!? 36.Kf3 Nxh1 37.Kg2 Kf7 38.Kxh1**

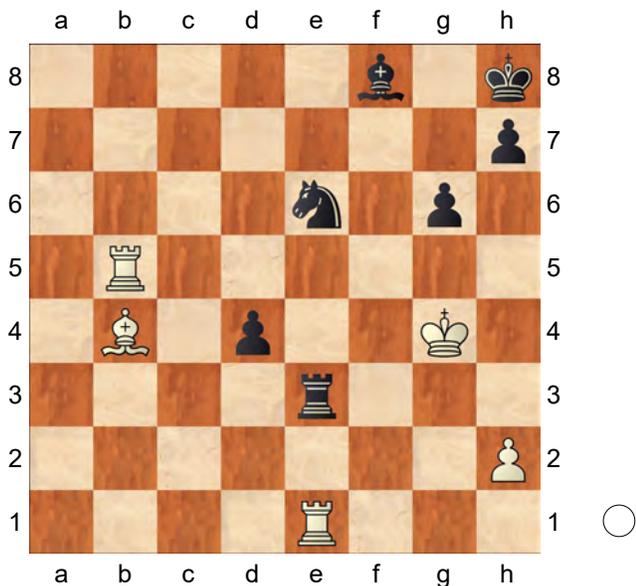
Kf6 39.Kg2 Kf5 40.Kf3 g5= is a draw because White can not fight on two fronts - he either has to allow the trade of his h-pawn or clear the way for the passed d-pawn.) **36.Rd1 Nc4 37.Rxd4 Ne5+ 38.Kf4 Nf7=** and this R+p vs N+2p endgame is a well-known draw.;

B) 32.Kf3! Rh4 33.Bb4



This pin is quite unpleasant given Black's lack of coordination. However, he has a simplifying solution in: **Ne6** (The other way to protect the bishop - **33...Nd7** is inferior because White has the option: **34.Be1! Rh3+ 35.Bg3** continuing to apply the pressure without allowing Black to simplify the position.; In their endgame book 'Mastering Complex Endgames', Adrian Mikhalchishin and Oleg Stetsko suggest **33...Rh3+ 34.Kg4 Rh5 35.Rb8 Kg7 36.Ra1 Bd6 37.Rb6** but Black still needs to tread very carefully in this position. **33...Ne6** is a much simpler solution,

though.) 34.Re1! This is the critical attempt. (34.Rb8 Kg7; 34.Be1 Rf4+ and; 34.Kg3 Re4 are all harmless.) 34...Rh3+! This intermediate check allows Black to interfere with the rook on the e-file. (34...Bxb4? on the other hand, loses after: 35.Rxe6 d3 36.Rb7+-) 35.Kg4 Re3

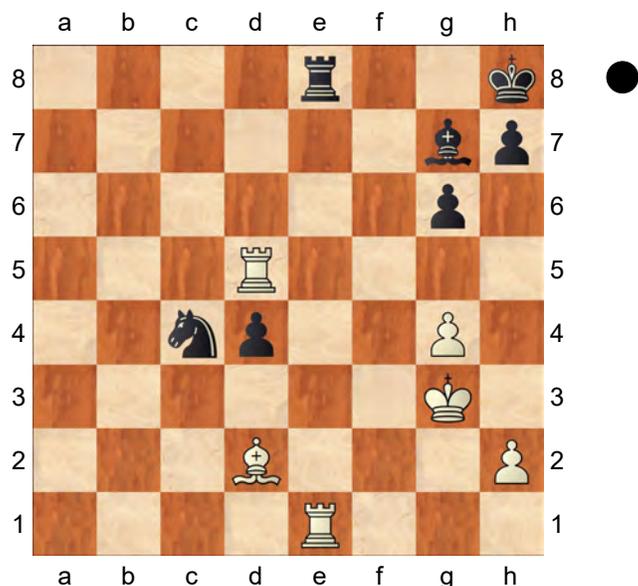


and after the exchange of rooks, Black's drawing chances increase significantly. 36.Rxe3 dxe3

B1) White can avoid the bishop trade with: 37.Bc3+ Kg8 but he would have difficulties trying to win the e3-pawn in that case: 38.Kf3 (or 38.Re5 Nc7! 39.Rxe3 Nd5 simplifying into an easily drawn R+p vs B+2p endgame. 40.Rd3 Nxc3 41.Rxc3=) 38...Bc5=;

B2) 37.Bxf8 Nxf8 38.Rb7 Ne6 39.Kf3 Ng5+ 40.Kxe3 Kg8 41.Kf4 Nf7= and this endgame is a draw, as we have seen before.]

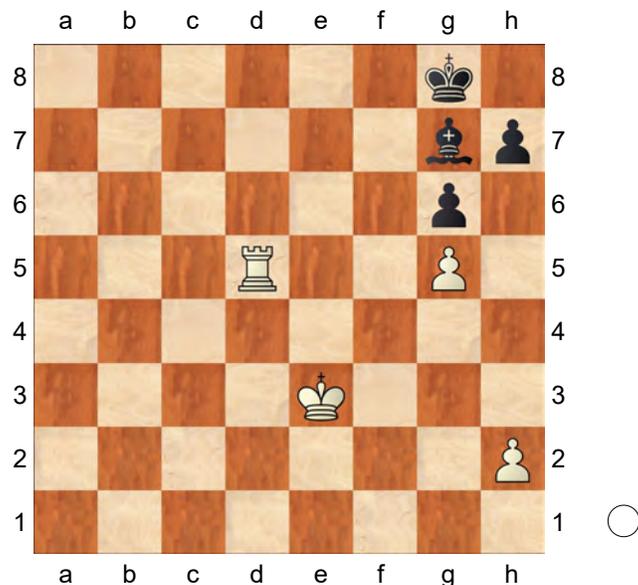
The following sequence, while not completely forced, is quite logical:
32.Kf3 Nd3 33.Rd5 Bg7 34.Rf1 Ne5+ 35.Kg3 Nc4 36.Re1!



This time around, trade of rooks is in White's favor. Leko's response is quite human: **36...Ne3** - he aims to simplify the position by sacrificing a pawn, counting that the resulting R+2p vs B+2p endgame with pawns on the same flank is a theoretical draw.

[Avoiding simplifications with 36...Ra8 hardly brings Black any benefits. After 37.Bf4 Ra3+ 38.Kf2 Ra2+ 39.Re2 all white pieces are active and he should be gradually winning.]

37.Bxe3 dxe3 38.Kf3 Bh6 39.g5 Bg7 40.Rxe3 Rxe3+ 41.Kxe3 Kg8

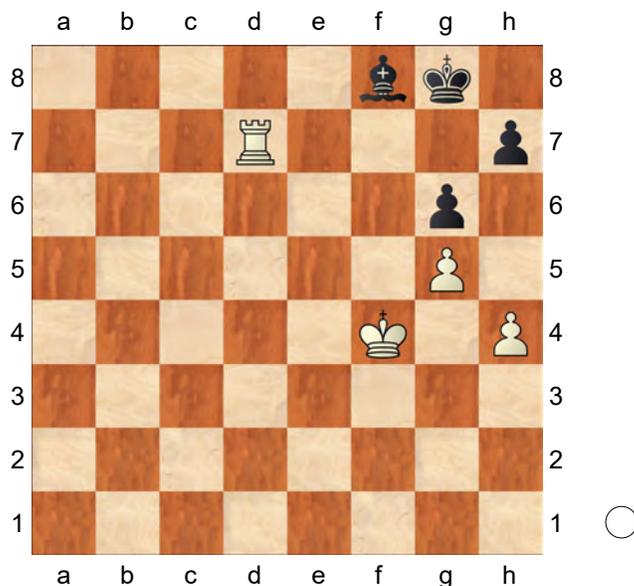


By force, we reached a slightly controversial endgame. I believe that a brief exposition of historical facts is required to explain it. Firstly, it is well-known and documented that a similar endgame where black pawns are on g6 and h5 is a theoretical draw. However, the endgame with white pawn on g5 has not been properly analyzed in some of the more popular endgame manuals in the past. It was either omitted (Averbakh) or incorrectly assessed as a theoretical draw (Portisch & Sarkozy). Perhaps some of the 'blame' for this goes to the game Ljubojevic-Keene, 1971, in which Keene (the stronger side) failed to achieve progress (he never pushed h4-h5) and draw was agreed. However, in the meantime, the plan with h4-h5 has been implemented successfully in two games: Estevez -Zaichik, 1987, 1-0 and a more high-profile game Wolff - Browne, 1992, 1-0. These developments may have enticed American-Israeli composer and problemist Noam Elkies to revisit the well-known R vs B endgame with g5 vs h7 pawn (to be discussed below) in 1993. He proved that this endgame is winning for White, contrary to the previous conclusion by Paul Keres that it is a draw. The game between Khalifman and Leko was played 7 years after Elkies' discovery and it might be possible that both players were not aware of it at the time

because it hasn't been referenced in endgame books until 'Dvoretsky's Endgame Manual' in 2006. There, Dvoretsky links the basic Elkies position with Khalifman-Leko game and makes the final verdict for this endgame: White is winning! **42.Rd8+ Kf7 43.Rd7+ Kg8 44.h4 Bb2 45.Kf3 Bg7!** Leko defends the best way, keeping the option to simplify with ...h7-h6.

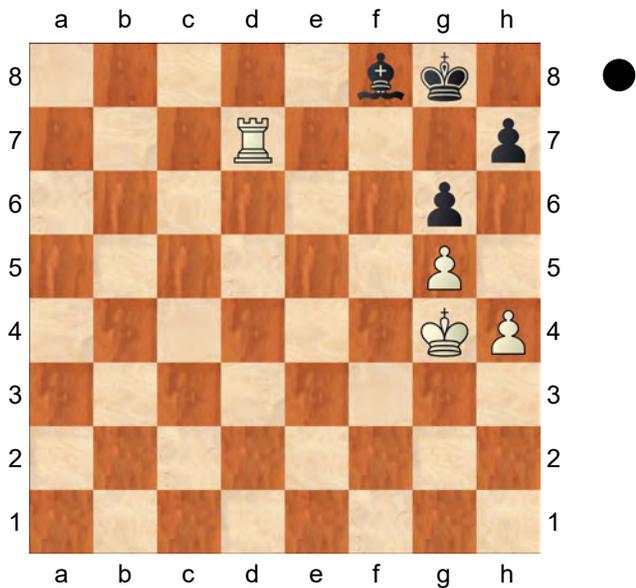
[In practice, most people would just leave the bishop on the long diagonal 45...Bc3, allowing White to simply transpose into Elkies position after: 46.Kg4 Bb2 47.h5 gxh5+ 48.Kxh5 Ba3 You can see the full analysis of this theoretical position in the line: 46.Kf4 Bf8 47.Kg4 Bb4.]

46.Kf4 Bf8



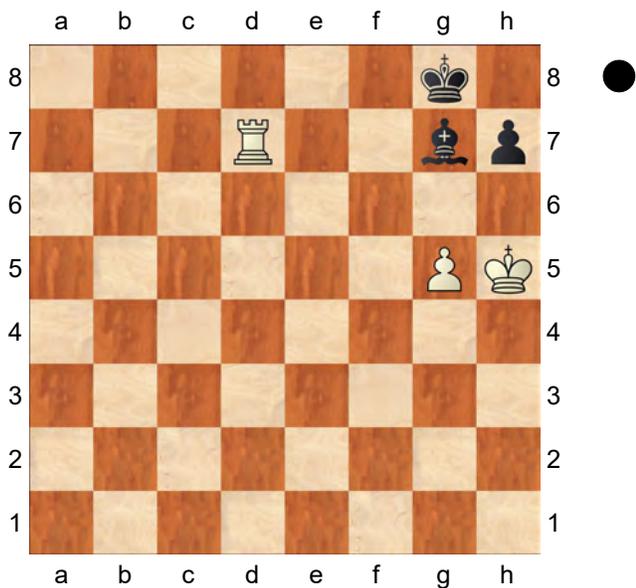
White should push h4-h5, but the ex-FIDE World champion rushes it: **47.h5?** which allows Black to set up a fortress, as we will see shortly.

[It was necessary to prepare the pawn push with 47.Kg4



and now we have a critical position. Black can either allow 48.h5 or prevent it by pushing his own h-pawn.

A) The least critical choice is 47...Bg7 when 48.h5 gxh5+ 49.Kxh5



leads to a simply winning position because the bishop is not placed well on g7. Bf8 (49...Bb2 50.Kh6+-) 50.g6! h6 (50...hxg6+ 51.Kxg6+- and the king can not run

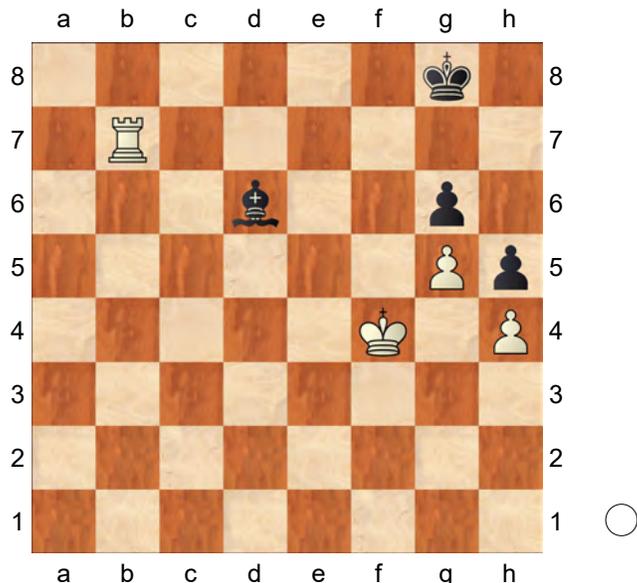
toward the center because his own bishop is in the way.) 51.Rd8 Kg7 52.Rxf8 Kxf8 53.Kxh6 Kg8 54.g7+-;

B) 47...h6 weakens g6-pawn and White can immediately take advantage of it with: 48.Kf4 Ba3 (48...Bg7 allows favorable transposition into pawn endgame with: 49.Rxg7+ Kxg7 50.Ke5+-) 49.gxh6 Bc1+ 50.Ke5 Bxh6 51.Kf6 Bc1 52.Kxg6+-;

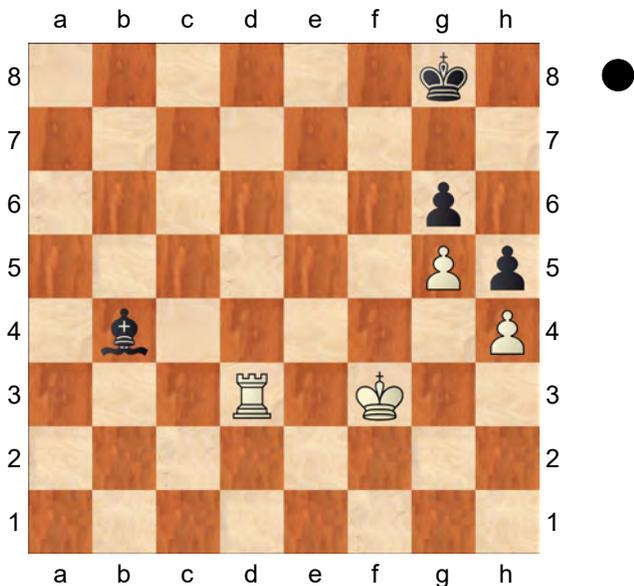
C) A more challenging h-pawn move is 47...h5+!? when White has to be careful as only

C1) 48.gxh6? is obviously a draw after Bxh6 49.h5 gxh5+ 50.Kxh5 Bc1 51.Kg6 Kf8= and black king escapes from the wrong corner.;

C2) However, the most natural continuation 48.Kf4? does not work because after Ba3! 49.Rb7 (49.Ke4 would allow Black to set up the well-known fortress with Bb2=) Black has a check: 49...Bd6+!

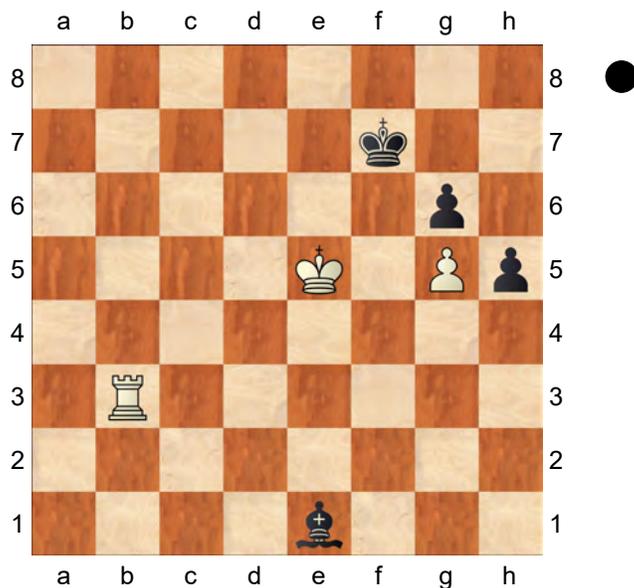


which forces White to allow access to a1-h8 diagonal, or else he loses the h4-pawn: 50.Kf3 (50.Ke4 Bg3=) 50...Be5=; **C3) 48.Kf3!** as pointed out by GM Sergey Shipov, works for White. 48...Bb4 Black has to stretch his bishop to reach the long diagonal. (The point is that he can not put his bishop on the desired a1-h8 diagonal immediately because White wins the pawn endgame after: 48...Bg7 49.Rxg7+ Kxg7 50.Ke4 Kf7 51.Kd5!+- due to diagonal opposition.; In case of 48...Ba3 49.Rb7 Bd6 is not a check, so White wins with 50.Rb6+-) 49.Rd3!! (Shipov's suggestion 49.Rc7!? Be1 50.Rc4 works, too, although it is a bit time-consuming to defend the h4-pawn. With 49. Rd3, White can make progress without having to defend it.)



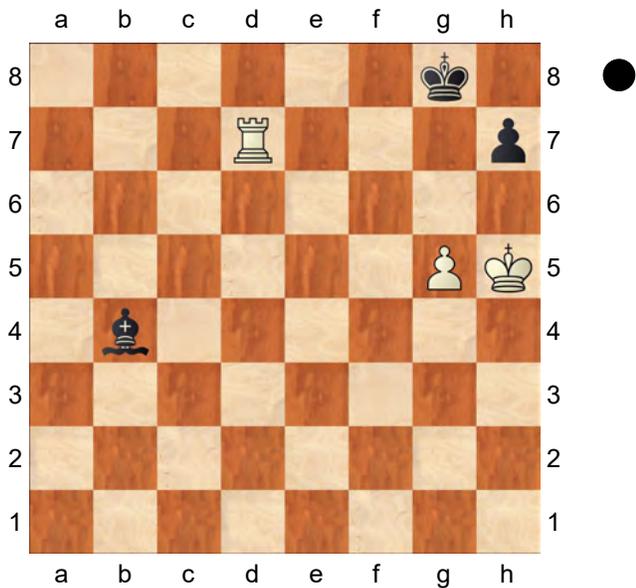
This strong move allows the rook to dominate black bishop so that

it can not reach the long diagonal. We will see this key domination motif in Elkies' study, as well. 49...Be1 (49...Bf8 50.Ke4 Bg7 51.Rd8+ Kh7 52.Rd7 Kg8 53.Rxg7+ Kxg7 54.Ke5+-) 50.Kf4! White can afford to give up the h-pawn because the bishop will be misplaced on h4. Bxh4 51.Rh3 Be1 52.Ke5 Kf7 53.Rb3!



Rook dominates the bishop along the third rank, similar to the Philidor position in R+B vs R endgame. Black can not prevent decisive intrusion of white king to f6 any more: h4 54.Rb7+ Kg8 55.Kf6 h3 56.Kxg6 Kf8 57.Rh7+-;

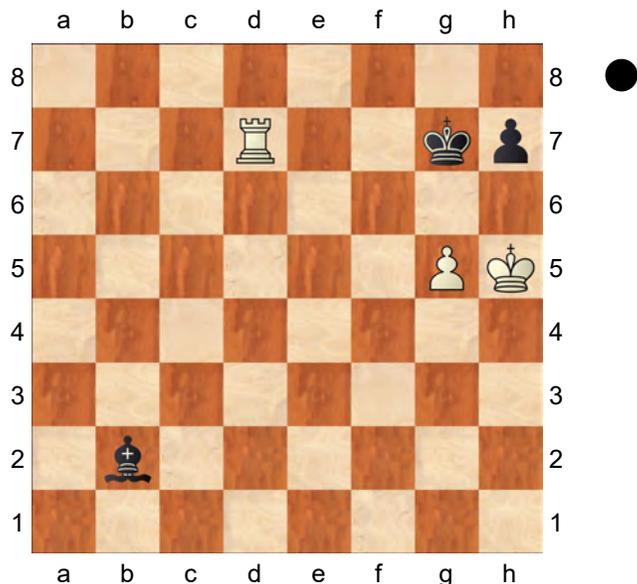
D) 47...Bb4 48.h5 gxh5+ 49.Kxh5



After the trade of g- for h-pawn, we have reached an important endgame position that has been considered to be a draw by Keres and, a bit later, also by Panchenko in his 'Theory and Practice of Chess Endings'. The position seems deceptively simple because it appears like Black can easily hold a fortress by keeping his bishop on a3-f8 diagonal if white king threatens to penetrate via h6, and on a1-h8 diagonal if it tries to penetrate via f6. However, Elkies has proved that by a combination of: 1. leaving the king on g4 to threaten both Kf5-f6 and Kh5-h6 and 2. wise rook maneuvering on the 3rd, 5th and 7th rank, White can methodically take away useful squares from black bishop. Basically, White will use the well-known 'two weaknesses' endgame strategy in a sophisticated way. Let us see the proof: Ba3 This is the most flexible square for the bishop. It should stay away from f8 and g7 because in that case g5-g6 break leads to an elementary winning R vs B endgame. 50.Rd3.

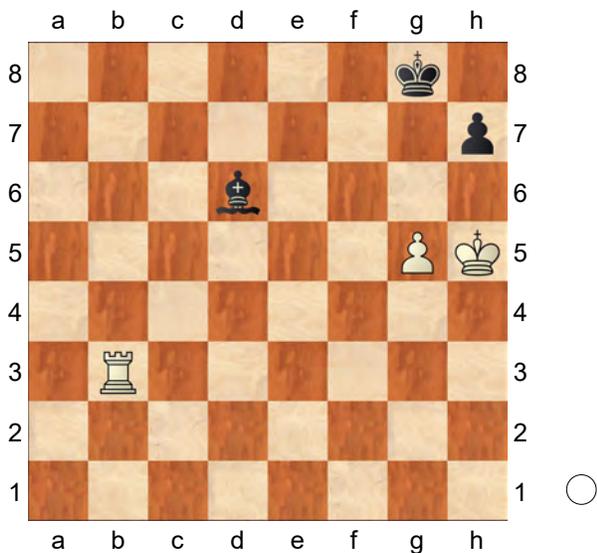
D1) because 50...Bb2

would allow White to take control of the seventh rank by force:
51.Rd8+! Kg7 52.Rd7+



and here White wins after: Kh8 (or 52...Kg8 53.Kh6+-) 53.g6! (53.Kh6 Bg7+!) 53...h6 54.Kxh6 Bg7+ 55.Kh5 Bb2 56.g7+ Kh7 57.Rf7! This is an elementary winning method in this endgame. Bc3 58.g8Q+ Kxg8 59.Kg6+-;

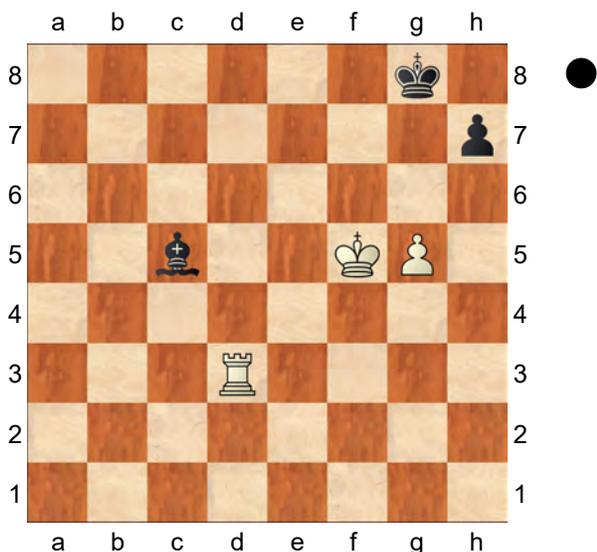
D2) 50...Bb4 Black needs to remain flexible with his bishop, 51.Rb3 Bd6 (It is also important to have in mind the winning sequence in case of: 51...Bf8 52.Rb8 Kg7 53.Rb7+ Kg8 54.g6 h6 55.Rb8! Kg7 56.Rxf8 Kxf8 57.Kxh6 Kg8 58.g7+-; 51...Bc5 52.Kg4 Bd6 53.Rb5! Bc7 54.Rd5! transposes to the main line of analysis below.)



We have reached the original position from Elkies's study. I provide his analysis (via Dvoretzky's Endgame Manual) below for readers to explore. 52.Kg4 White king assumes the most flexible position.

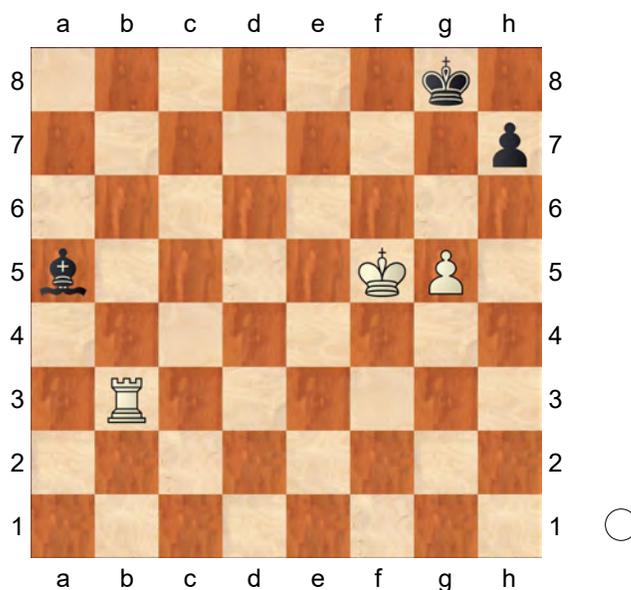
D2a) 52...Bc5 53.Rb5! Taking away useful squares b2 and c5 from the bishop. Bd4 (53...Ba3 54.Kf5+-; 53...Bd6 54.Kf5 Bc7 55.Rd5!+-) 54.Kh5 Bg7 55.Rb8+ Kf7 56.Rb7+ Kg8 57.g6+-;

D2b) 52...Bf8 53.Kf5 Bc5 54.Rd3!

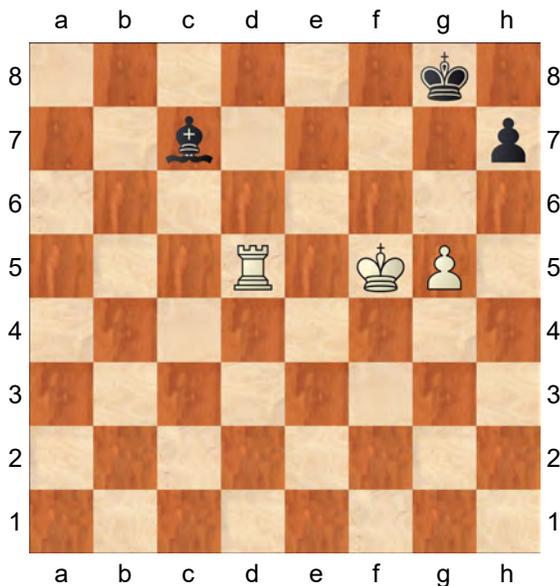


This is the key move. White rook is perfectly placed on d3 as it takes away virtually all active squares from the bishop: a3, c3, d4, d6. In order to defend against 55.Kf6, Black needs to resort to passivity, which is usually equivalent to signing a death sentence in R vs B endgames. Bb4 (Alternatively, after 54...Be7 White wins with:

55.Rc3! Bb4 56.Rc8+ Kf7 57.Rc7+ Be7 58.Rb7 Kf8 59.Kg4+-) 55.Kf6 Ba5 56.Rb3! Bd8+ (56...Bc7 57.Rb5 Bd8+ 58.Ke6! Kg7 59.Kd7+- is a fantastic example of domination of White pieces over black bishop.) 57.Kf5 Ba5 (57...Bc7 58.Rb5! puts Black in zugzwang.)

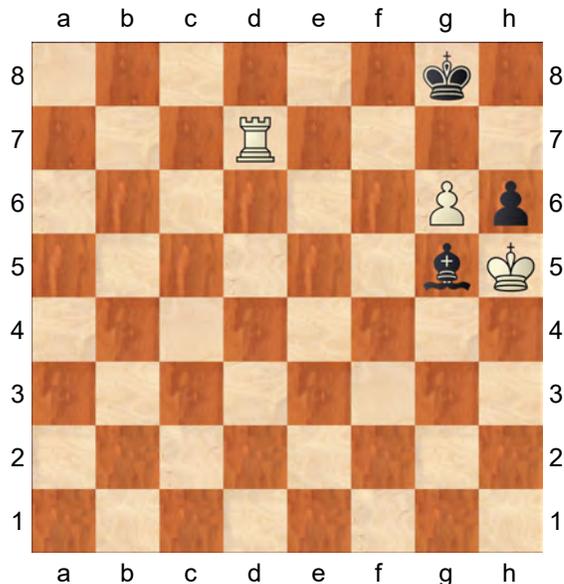


and now that the bishop has been sidelined, White attacks the 'second weakness' - the h6-square: 58.Kg4 Bc7 (58...Bd2 allows: 59.Kh5 Bf4 60.Rd3 Be5 61.Rd7 Kh8 62.g6!+-) 59.Rb5! Once again, the bishop is being completely dominated. (59.Kh5?! Bd6) 59...Bd6 60.Kf5! The bishop can not control both h6 and f6, so White sends his king back to f6. Bc7 61.Rd5!



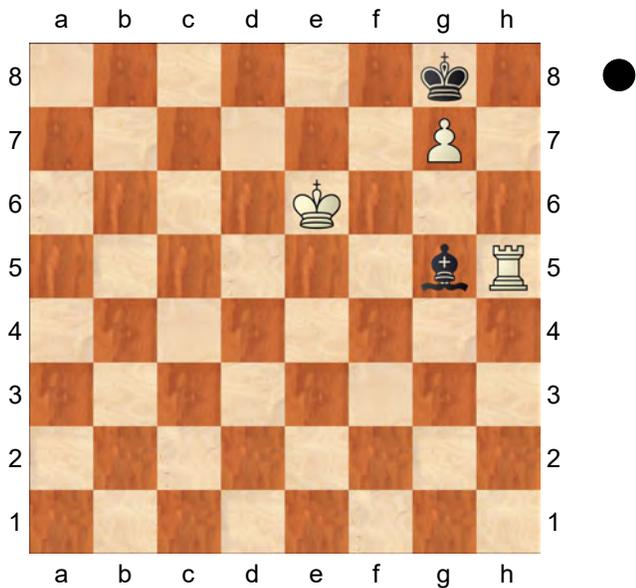
This is the final move of the study. There is no way to prevent Kf5-f6 any more! We can take it a few moves further: Bb6 62.Kf6 Bc7 63.Rd7 Bb6 64.Rg7+! Kh8 65.Kf7+-]

47...gxh5 48.Kg3 White will get his pawn back, but the problem is that Black can now play: **48...h6! 49.g6 Ba3 50.Kh4 Bc1 51.Kxh5 Bg5**



● and this position is a theoretical draw! At first, it seems like White has made progress by pushing the pawn to g6, compared to Elkies position. However, there are two downsides to this: 1. it is not possible to play for two weaknesses any more as f6 is the only penetration route now; and 2. Black has a 'safe' square for the bishop on g5, which is extremely important in R vs B endgames. **52.Kg4 Bc1 53.Kf5 Bg5 54.Ke6 Bh4 55.Rh7**

[In case of 55.g7 Black holds the fort with: Bg5 56.Kf5 Kh7 57.Rf7 (57.Ke6 Kg8!=) 57...Bc1 58.g8Q+ Kxg8 59.Kg6 Bg5=]
55...Bg5 White tries his last chance:
56.g7!? h5!
 [56...Kxh7?? 57.Kf7+-]
57.Rxh5



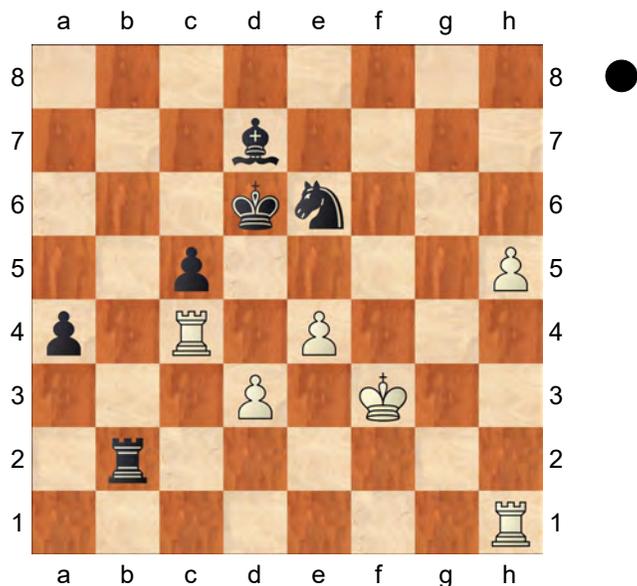
and now the key defensive move is:
57...Bf6!! A beautiful tactical point. 58. Kxf6 is a draw by stalemate, so Black conveniently gets his bishop to the crucial a1-h8 diagonal. The arising R vs B endgame is a draw even with black king in the wrong corner.

[57...Bd2?? would lose after: 58.Kf6 Bc3+ 59.Kg6 Bxg7 60.Rb5+-]
58.Rh3 Bxg7 59.Ke7 Bb2 60.Rb3 Bd4 61.Rd3 Bb2 62.Rg3+ Kh7 63.Ke6 Kh6 64.Kf5 Kh7 65.Rg6 Bc3 66.Kg5 Bb2 67.Kh5 Bc3 68.Rg2 Bd4 69.Rd2 Bc3 70.Rc2 Ba1 71.Rc7+ Kg8 72.Rd7
1/2

Gelfand, Boris **2733**
 Grischuk, Alexander **2747**
 Candidates Tournament (3.2) 20.05.2011

The final example is from the final of the Candidates matches in 2011 between Gelfand and Grischuk. Stakes were high as the winner of the match would play

the World championship with Anand in 2012. Gelfand was in a difficult situation in the endgame of the third game of the match, but he managed to save his skin with timely simplification after Grischuk's mistake. The most interesting part of the analysis of this action-packed endgame is uncovering resources that would have allowed Grischuk to avoid simplifications.



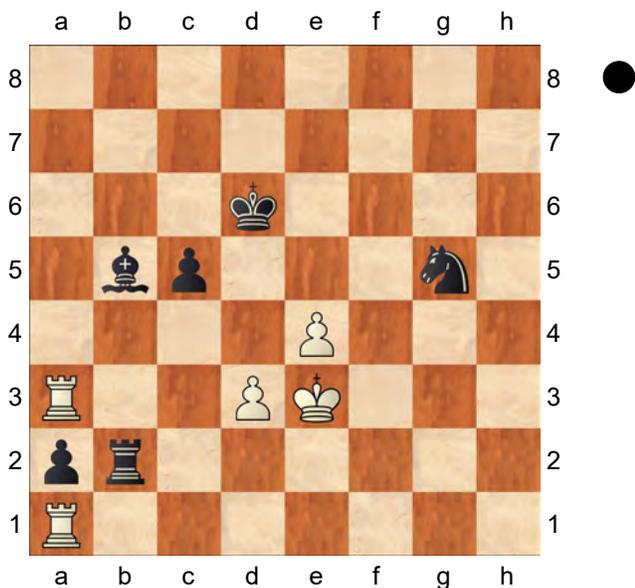
We have another complex endgame with imbalanced material on the board. Black is clearly playing for a win because two centralized and well-coordinated pieces usually trump a rook. An exciting facet of this position is that both sides have relatively far advanced outside passed pawns. All this makes the position very tactically rich, so even one mistake by either side could have serious consequences. White's chances for successful defense definitely lie in simplification of position. If he could somehow trade his h- for black a-pawn and sacrifice an exchange for one of black minor pieces and a pawn, he would reach a theoretically drawn

endgame R+minor piece vs R. Grischuk played **43...Nd4+** which has been criticized with a '?' mark by Mikhalchishin and Stetsko in 'Mastering Complex Endgames'. However, I do not think that this move is so bad in itself because Black still keeps some winning chances with it, but only if he follows it up with a precise sequence that prevents the liquidation of his minor pieces.

[It was suggested that Black should have continued: 43...a3!?

which indeed puts White under a serious test. The best move is far from obvious

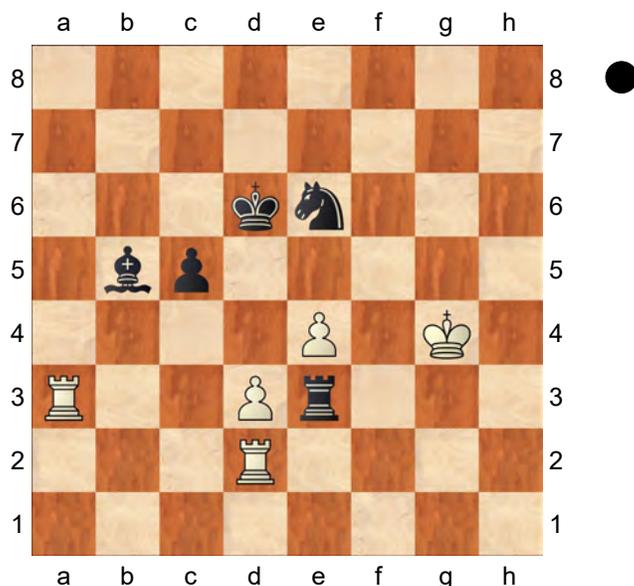
A) In case of the straightforward 44.h6 a2 45.Ra1 (45.h7 loses to Ng5+ 46.Kf4 Nxf7 47.Rh6+ Be6 48.Ra4 Nf8-+) 45...Bb5 46.h7 as analyzed by Sergey Shipov, Black wins thanks to the knight fork: Ng5+ 47.Ke3 Nxf7 which is the reason why White should play 44. Kg3 in the first place. Now the line continues: 48.Rc3 Ng5 49.Ra3



when White threatens to eliminate the a-pawn, while also defending

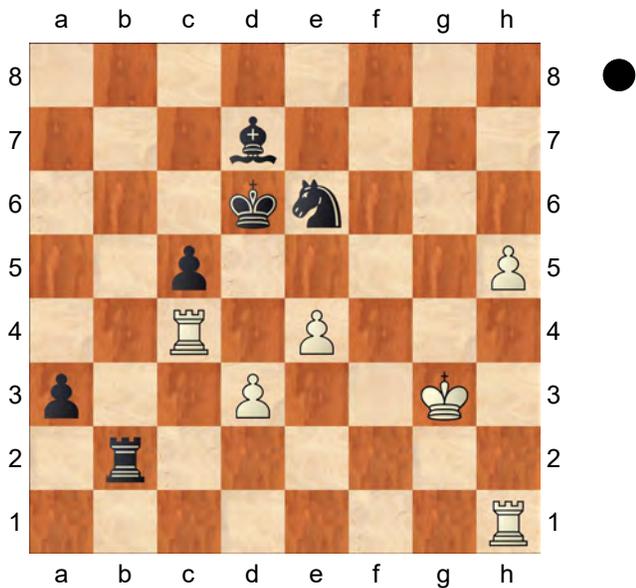
his vulnerable d-pawn. However, Black demonstrates the power of united minor pieces with the following sequence: Rh2! 50.R1xa2 Rh3+ 51.Kf4 (or 51.Kd2 Nf3+ 52.Kc3 Ne5-+ and d-pawn falls.) 51...Ne6+ 52.Kg4 Re3!

Black avoids simplification (which would give White excellent drawing chances in case of: 52...Rxd3 53.Rxd3+ Bxd3 54.Kf5!) 53.Rd2



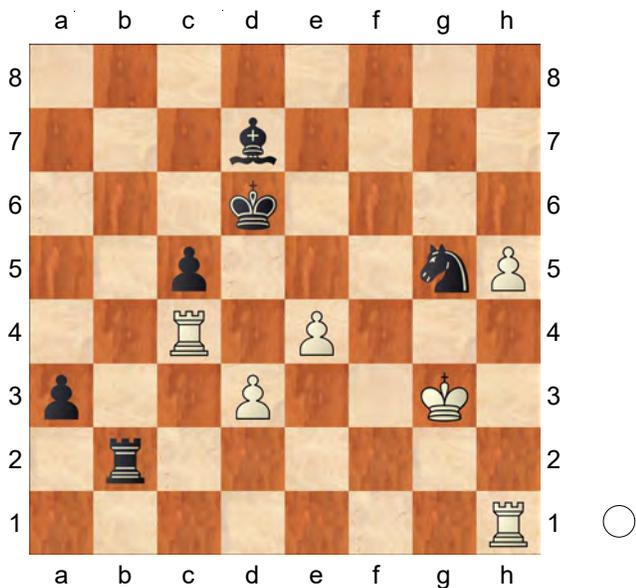
and Black achieves complete positional domination by including his king in the action: Ke5-+ and the fall of d3-pawn is only a matter of time.;

B) 44.Kg3!

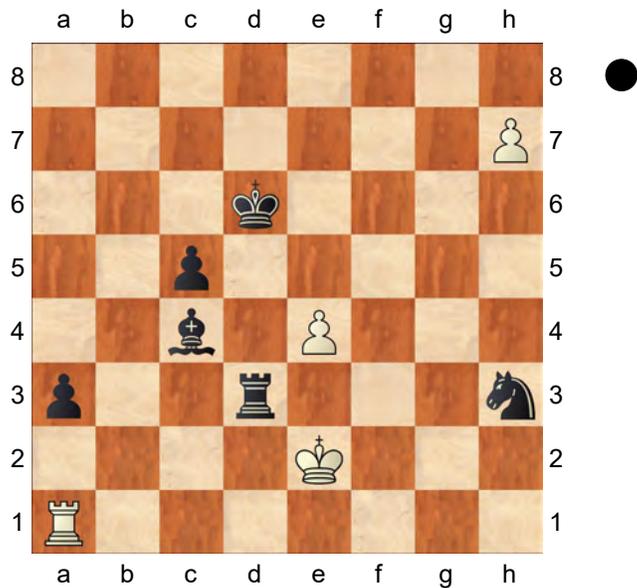


The idea is to prevent ...Ng5+ fork when white pawn reaches h7. Sometimes, the king can also be useful on g3 to prevent Black from putting his rook behind the h-pawn.

B1) Additionally, 44...Ng5!?

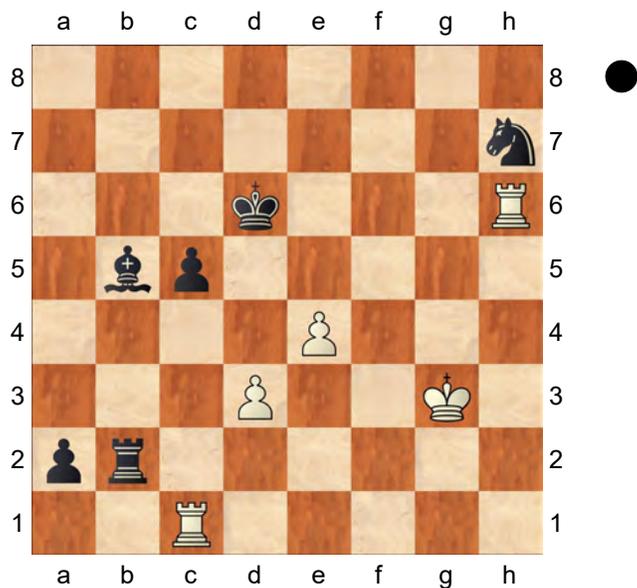


is another serious attempt to play for a win. White should continue pushing the pawn: 45.h6 (because 45.Ra1 fails to Rb3! 46.Kf4 Nh3+ 47.Ke3 Bb5+ and Black is winning. One entertaining variation is: 48.h6 Bxc4 49.h7 Rxd3+ 50.Ke2



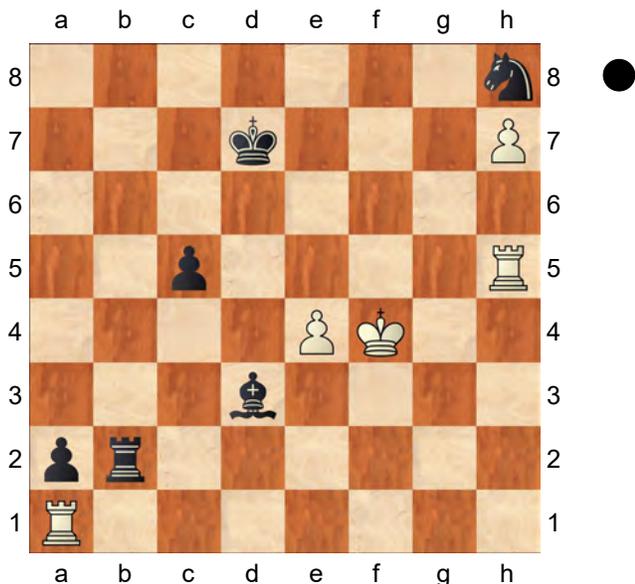
Ng5! 51.h8Q Rh3+-+) 45...a2 46.Rcc1 Bb5 and here White needs to thread very carefully:

B1a) Instead, 47.h7 Nxh7 48.Rh6+



is met by a spectacular knight interference: Nf6!! (48...Ke5 allows White to escape after: 49.Rxh7 Rb1 50.Rxc5+ Kd4 51.Rd5+ Ke3 52.Ra7=) 49.Rxf6+ Ke7 50.Rff1

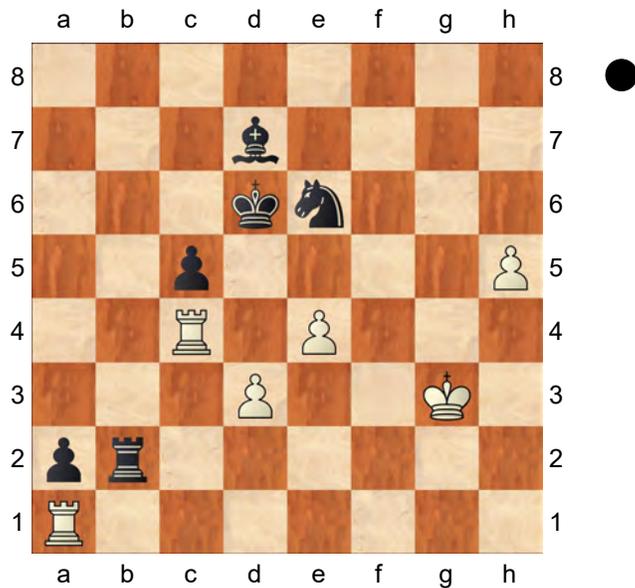
Bxd3+;
B1b) 47.Kf4! Nf7 48.h7 Bxd3
 49.Ra1 Nh8 and now White
 should continue 50.Rh6+!
 (50.Ke3? Bb1 locks the rook
 on a1.) 50...Kd7 51.Rh5⇌



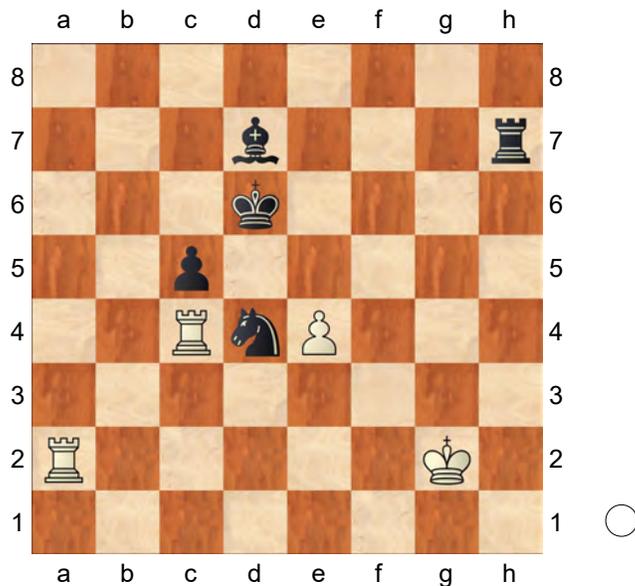
and White probably obtains
 enough activity to hold this
 position, although it remains
 complex.;

B2) It is important to note that
 Black does not achieve anything
 by winning the d-pawn with
 44...Rb3 because the h-pawn
 runs fast: 45.h6 Rxd3+ 46.Kf2
 a2 47.Rcc1 Ng5 48.h7 Nxh7
 49.Rxh7=;

B3) Black has more than one
 promising continuation in this
 double-edged position.
 Mikhailchishin and Stetsko
 advocate 44...a2 45.Ra1

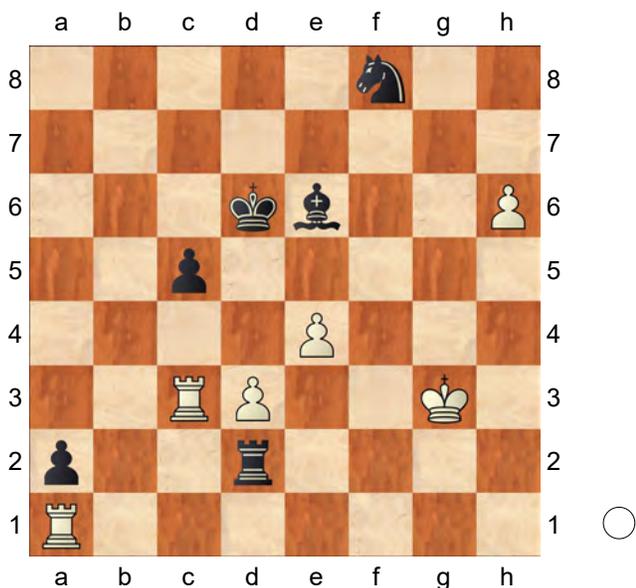


Black has several winning
 attempts. M&S suggests: Rd2
 (Another way to win the d-pawn
 is 45...Nd4 46.h6 Rd2
 when White can not defend it
 with 47.Rc3. After the forced:
 47.h7 Rxd3+ 48.Kg2 Rh3
 49.Rxa2 Rxh7



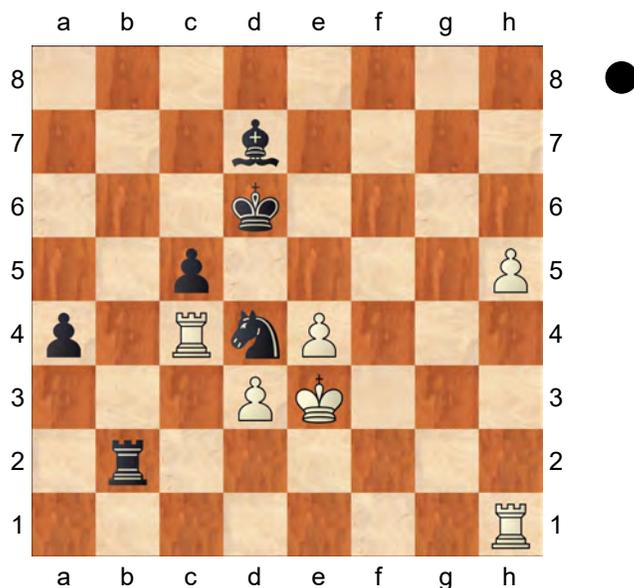
White is fortunate to have
 50.Rd2!= forcing simplification
 into R+B vs R endgame after the
 inevitable exchange sacrifice on
 d4.; Trying to stop the h-pawn

with the king: 45...Ke5 46.h6 Kf6 47.Rc3 Kg6 is too slow as White has time to capture the a-passer. 48.Ra3=) 46.Rc3 Nf8 47.h6 Be6



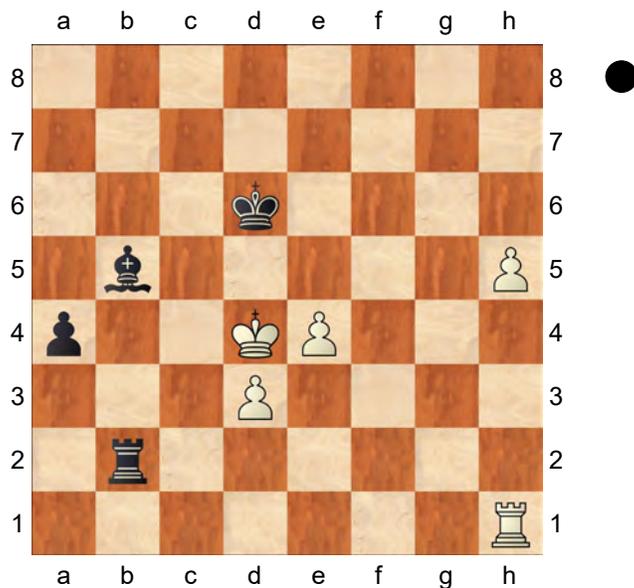
This is probably the maximum that Black can achieve in this variation. He prevented simplification, secured his strong a-pawn and blocked opponent's passed pawn. Yet, it is still very unclear whether he can actually win this position. For example, after: 48.Ra3 Ke5 49.Rc1! Kd4 50.Ra4+ Kxd3 51.Rxc5 the rook breaks free and the most likely result is a draw because White should be able to simplify the position in one way or another.]

44.Ke3



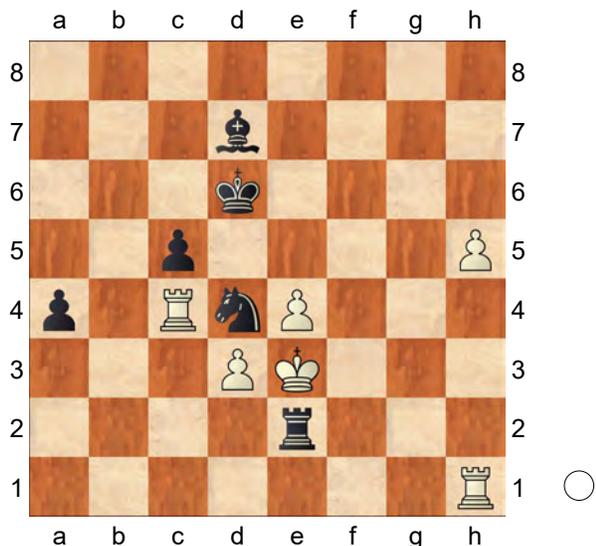
However, Grischuk's next move **44...Be6?** is definitely a mistake because it allows White to favorably simplify the position in more than one way.

[44...Bb5 would have been similarly ineffective due to 45.Rxd4+!? cxd4+ 46.Kxd4

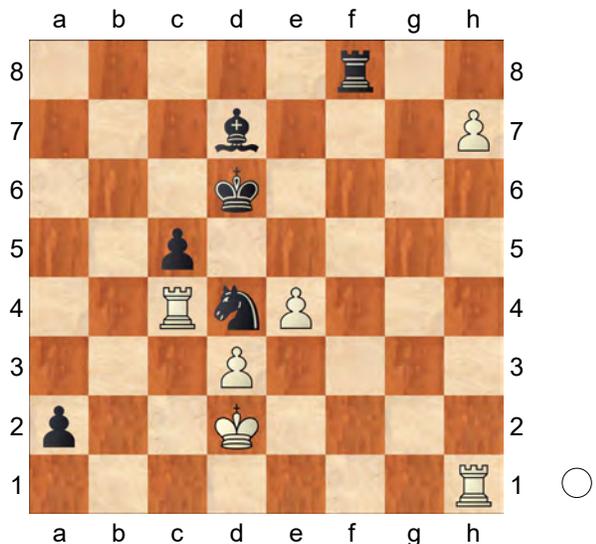


and White just needs to eliminate last black pawn to get into the safety zone. This is not difficult to do with the well-supported h-passer. For example: Rb3 (or 46...a3 47.h6 a2 48.Ra1 Rh2 49.h7 Rh3 50.e5+ Ke6

51.Rxa2=) 47.e5+ Kc6 48.h6 Rxd3+
 49.Ke4 Rd7 50.e6! Rh7 51.Kf5 a3
 52.Ra1=]
 [However, Black had a way to prolong
 the fight for full point: 44...Re2+!

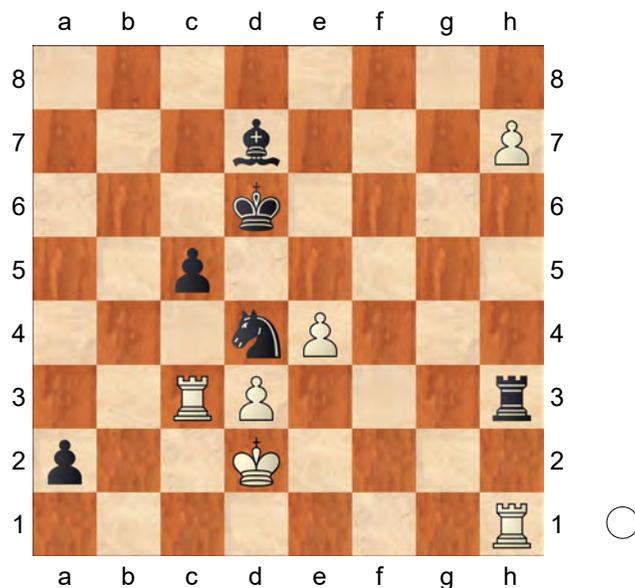


45.Kf4 Rf2+ 46.Ke3 White should
 keep his king close to the vulnerable d-
 pawn (because in case of 46.Kg3 Rf8!
 47.h6 Black wins with Bb5 48.h7 Bxc4
 49.dxc4 Rh8-+) 46...Rf3+ Now the
 White king has to back off from the d4-
 knight, which eliminates the possibility
 of simplification combinations. 47.Kd2
 a3 The pawn race can start! 48.h6 a2
 49.h7 Rf8

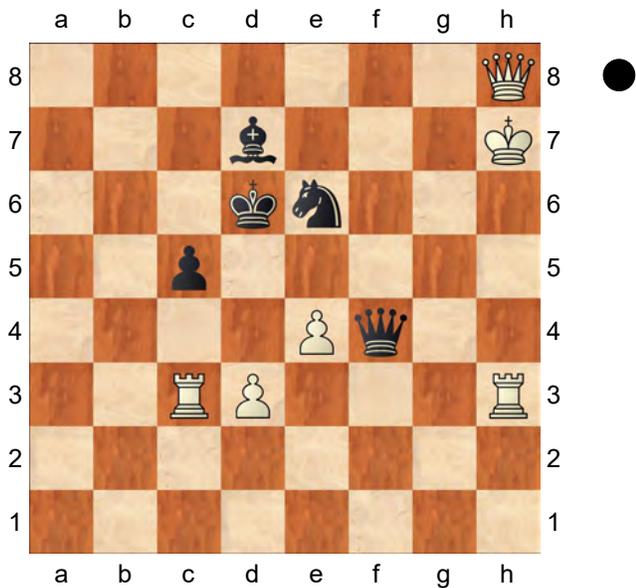


This is the critical position. The
 only move that keeps White in the
 game is

A) White would go wrong by
 playing another apparently
 sensible move 50.Rc3 when Black
 has a beautiful winning
 combination: Rf2+ 51.Ke3 Rf3+
 52.Kd2 Rh3!!

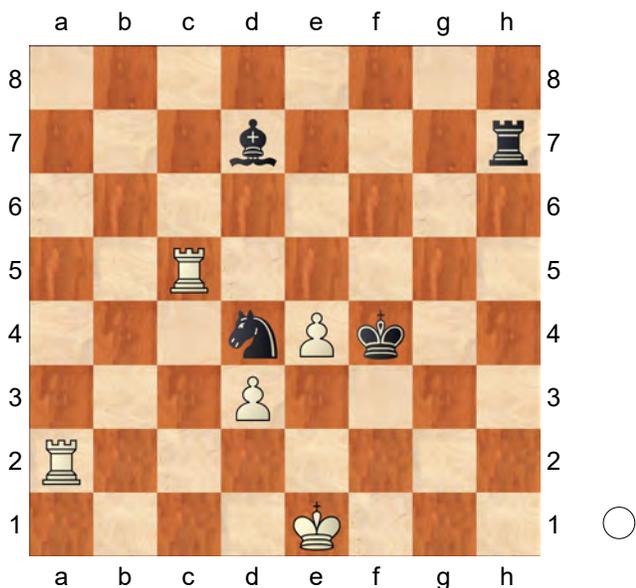


Stunning. White is lost now
 whatever he does. The
 most beautiful variation
 arises after:
 53.Rxh3 (53.Rcc1 is met by: Rxh7!
 54.Rxh7 Nb3+ 55.Kc2 Nxc1
 56.Kb2 Be6!-+) 53...a1Q
 54.h8Q and Black launches a
 mating attack: Qb2+ 55.Ke3 Qe2+
 56.Kf4 Qf2+ 57.Kg5 Ne6+
 58.Kh6 Qf4+ 59.Kh7



which culminates with a quiet move: Ke7!!-+ and White has no good defense against 60...Nf8+, followed by 61...Qf7 checkmate!;

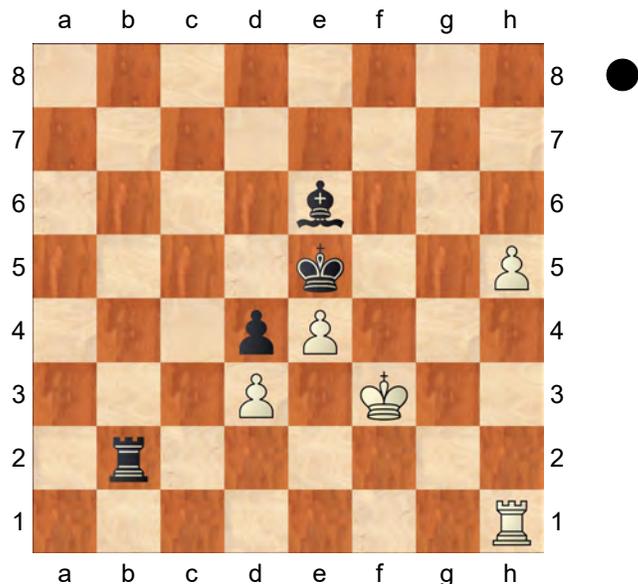
B) 50.Rh6+! Ke5 51.Ra6 and after the forced line: Rf2+ 52.Ke1 Rh2 53.Rxa2 Rxh7 54.Rxc5+ Kf4↑



White should still sweat a lot to achieve a draw because his king may run into a mating net.]

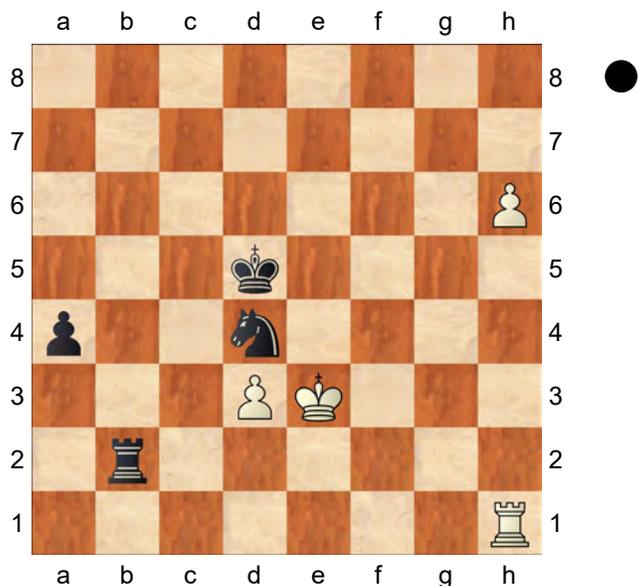
45.e5+! This is probably the simplest (no pun intended!) way to simplify into a basically drawn endgame,

[although 45.Rxa4!? Ke5 46.Rxd4 cxd4+ 47.Kf3



would also get the job done. Black has no convenient way to stop the h-pawn and prevent simplification, as we can see in following variations: Rb8 (and: 47...Rd2 48.h6 Rxd3+ 49.Kf2 Bg8 50.h7 Bxh7 51.Rxh7 Kxe4 52.Ke2=) 48.h6 Rf8+ 49.Ke2 Bg4+ 50.Kd2 Rh8 51.h7 Kf6 52.Rh6+ Kg7 53.Rd6=]

45...Kxe5 46.Rxc5+ Bd5 47.Rxd5+ Kxd5 48.h6

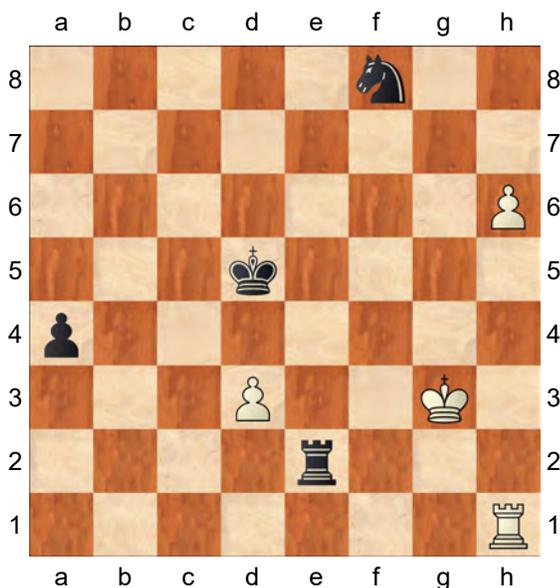


Like in the 45.Rxa4 line, Black can not simultaneously stop the h-pawn and keep his last pawn on the board.

Simplification is imminent. **48...Re2+**
 [48...Nf5+ 49.Kf3 Rb8 50.h7 Rh8
 51.Rh5 Ke6 52.Kf4 Ng7 53.Ra5
 Rxh7 54.Kg4!=]

49.Kf4 Ne6+
 [49...Re8 50.Rh5+ Kc6 51.Ra5
 Ne2+ 52.Kf5 Nc3 53.h7 Rh8
 54.Kg6 Kb6 55.Rxa4 Nxa4
 56.Kg7=]

50.Kg3 Nf8



Gelfand decided to go for a drawn rook endgame with **51.h7**

[which is much more practical than playing a R+N vs R endgame after
 51.Ra1 Re6 52.Rxa4 Rxh6=]

**51...Nhx7 52.Rhx7 a3 53.Kf3 Re1
 54.Ra7 Ra1 55.Ke3 a2 56.Ra5+**
 making some space for the king on d4.
56...Kc6 57.Kd4 Kb6 58.Ra8 Kb7

Conclusion: · Simplification is a method of reducing the number of pieces on the board with a specific purpose, that can be used both as a defensive and winning strategy. · Goal of simplification

as a defensive strategy is to reduce the number of opponent's fighting units, and thus his winning chances. · Considering the importance of pawns in endgames, the defender is usually well-advised to reduce the number of opponent's pawns, whether through exchange or sacrifice. · The defender should welcome simplification because many pawnless endgames are drawn, either due to insufficient mating material (K+N/B vs K) or theoretically drawn (e.g. R+B/N vs R).

· Besides draw to insufficient mating material and theoretical draw, there are several other drawing scenarios that facilitate defense in endgames: positional draw, 50 move-rule, and stalemate. · Knowledge of basic theoretical and positional draws is essential for every aspiring chess player because it allows us to foresee favorable simplifications in positions which seem difficult or tiresome to defend. · A usual sign that a position gravitates toward a draw is when piece exchanges increase defender's drawing chances significantly. · When your opponent has a dangerous passed pawn, your main goal should be to eliminate it, even if it costs some extra material. · For the stronger side, it is sometimes better to allow material concessions in order to avoid forced simplifications, and thus keep some winning chances. · Some decisions that involve simplification are not so straightforward because it is may not be easy to foresee drawing resources or accurately assess the arising positions. In such cases, it is not enough to rely just on basic guidelines; precise calculation of variations is the key.

1/2

Understand the English Hedgehog - Part 1



GM Mihail Marin

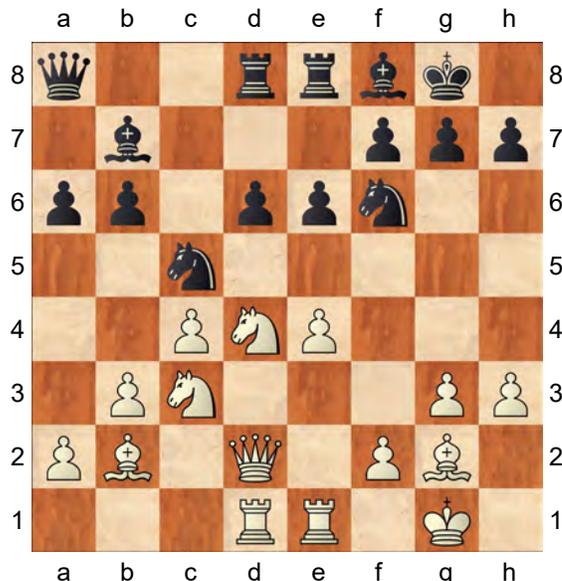
The ...b6-b5 pawn break

We cannot argue about the fact that the Hedgehog system (be it in the Sicilian or in the English opening) is one of the most paradoxical. It may appear that Black is playing awfully timidly, mainly aiming at defending on three ranks only. But this impression is false. In most cases, Black intends to outplay his opponent in the (possibly late) middlegame, by avoiding early exchanges and forced variations. White cannot convert his space advantage into something concrete that easily while Black has several plans to create counterplay at his disposal. Among his main resources I would quote the pawn breaks ...b6-b5, ...d6-d5, ...e6-e5 (the latter usually with a white pawn on f4) or, if White refrains from e2-e4, a massive

kingside expansion. All these plans need separate investigation, even though they sometimes interfere. The first article deals with ...b6-b5. Since White's normal development involves having knights on d4 and c3, this plan requires thorough preparation. One way or another, by creating minor threats against White's slightly over-extended position, Black could "convince" one of the knights to retreat, when his plan would become more realistic. Here is a typical example.

□	Velikov, Petar	2470
■	Ribli, Zoltan	2590
	Baile Herculane zt (4)	1982

1.Nf3 c5 2.c4 Nf6 3.Nc3 e6 4.g3 b6 5.Bg2 Bb7 6.0-0 Be7 7.d4 cxd4 8.Qxd4 d6 9.Rd1 a6 10.b3 Nbd7 11.e4 Qb8 The reasons why the more natural 11...Qc7 is not the best in this concrete position will be explained in the theoretical section. **12.Bb2 0-0 13.Qe3 Re8 14.Nd4 Bf8 15.Qd2 Qa7 16.Re1 Rad8 17.Rad1 Nc5 18.h3 Qa8**



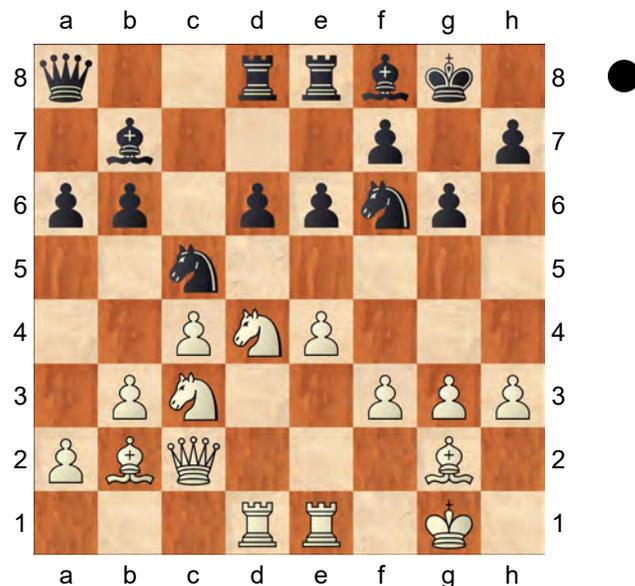
Both sides have completed their development (or, in other words, the first regrouping phase). Black's pressure on e4 is not dangerous by itself, of course, as White can defend it easily, but this will lead some small concession. **19.Qc2 g6** Another typical Hedgehog move. Black opens new horizons for his bishop but also takes the f5-square away from the d4-knight. The latter aspect is more important here. Black threatens ...e6-e5, when any knight retreat would leave e4 with insufficient defense. **20.f3**

Finally, White makes a move which he would have gladly refrained from. His kingside is slightly weak now and he also decreased the control over d5, making ...d6-d5 look more realistic than before.

[20.b4 Ncd7 does not spoil Black's coordination at all while offering him a comfortable target on c4.]

[After a neutral move such as 20.Kh2 the aforementioned threat requires some explanation: e5 21.Nde2 Ncxe4 22.Nd5!? Bxd5 23.Rxd5 An interesting but flawed tactical idea. Nxd5 24.Bxe4 Nb4! Black unpins his knight and keeps considerable material advantage.]

[20.a3 would solve this problem, but then Black could play Rc8 renewing the threat by pinning the c-pawn in advance. The queen could not evacuate the c-file because this would leave the b3-pawn hanging after 21... e5.]



20...Bg7!? Black keeps regrouping, thus proving that he fully trusts his position.

[Anticipating a theme from the next article, 20...d5 typically runs into 21.cxd5 exd5 22.e5 with a perfect blockade.]

[But due to the hanging a2-pawn, 20...e5 21.Nde2 b5= was entirely possible. On the other hand, it is understandable that Ribli wanted to keep his position flexible, without such committal moves as ...e6-e5.]

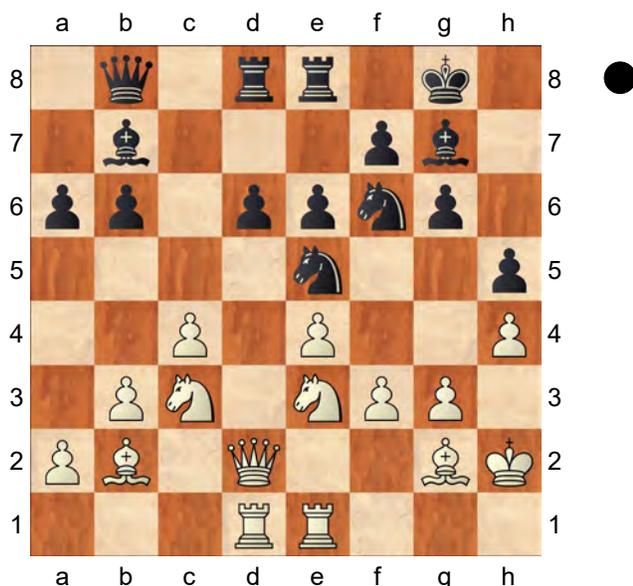
21.Kh2 h5 22.h4 Qb8 Indirectly targeting g3, but also keeping an eye on e5. **23.Qd2 Ncd7!** The knight has done a wonderful job on c5, by provoking f2-f3, but now it returns to over-defend e5 and to threaten ...d6-d5. **24.Nc2** This is the critical moment mentioned in the introduction. White prevents the pawn break physically but weakens the control over b5.

[Increasing the indirect pressure on e5 with 24.Qe2 does not prevent d5 The point is that 25.e5 runs into Nxe5 26.Qxe5 Ng4+!]

24...Ne5

[If 24...d5 25.exd5 exd5 26.Rxe8+ Rxe8 27.Nxd5 Black has no way of making use of the apparently hanging b2-bishop.]

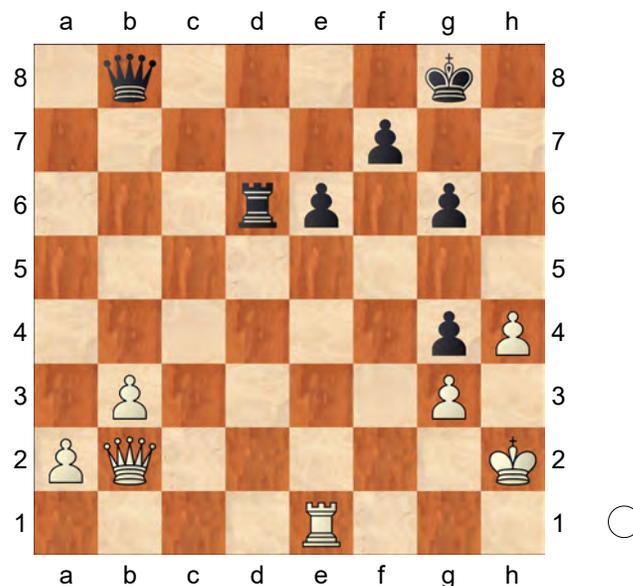
25.Ne3



b5! It appears that Black can already break the queenside, even without preparing it with ...b6-b5. **26.cxb5 axb5 27.Nxb5** Practically forced. The main threat is ...b5-b4, gaining space and leaving the c3-knight short of favorable squares.

[Apart from weakening c4, 27.b4? is simply bad due to d5 28.exd5 exd5 when White cannot prevent the killing ...d5-d4, for instance: 29.Ne2 d4 30.Nxd4 Nxf3+ with a winning initiative.]

27...Bxe4 Black restores the material equality and unbalances the position from a strategical point of view. **28.Qe2 Nxf3+ 29.Bxf3 Bxf3 30.Qxf3 Ng4+!** Otherwise the knight would be hanging. **31.Nxg4 hxg4 32.Qe2 Bxb2 33.Nxd6 Rxd6 34.Qxb2 Red8 35.Rxd6 Rxd6**



In principle the position remains approximately equal; but from a practical point of view, it is easier to play with Black as White's king is exposed.

36.Qc3 Qa7 37.Qc2 Qd7 38.Re2 Rd1 39.Qe4 Qa7 40.Rg2 41.Qc5 Qxg4?

[White should have kept his queen close to the h1-square, for instance:

41.b4 Qc1 42.Re2 Kg7 43.a4 f5 44.Qb7+ Kh6 Threatening the deadly ...f5-f4 45.Qa8! with a probable draw by repetition.]

41...Qc1 Black has a dangerous attack now.

42.Rf2 Rh1+ 43.Kg2 Qg1+ 44.Kf3 Qd1+ 45.Kf4?

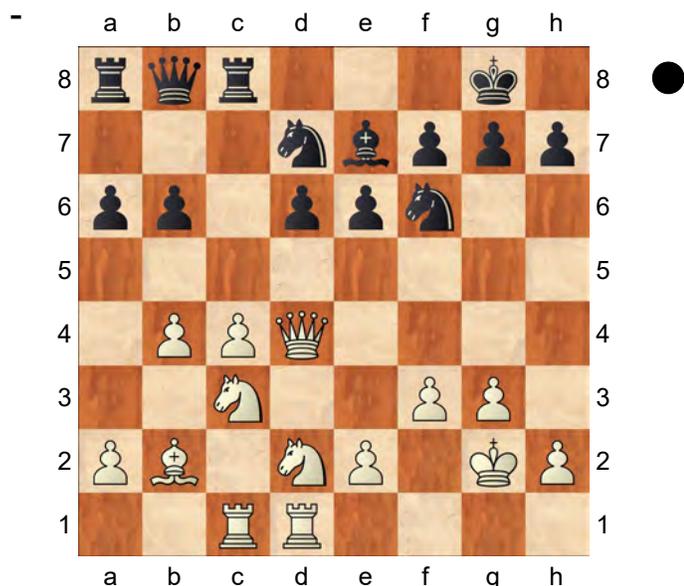
[The decisive mistake. 45.Re2 ♣ would still have offered some chances to survive.]

45...e5+ 46.Kg5 Qc1+ 47.Kf6 Qc6+ 48.Kg5 Kg7 49.Qc4 f6+ In this game, Black achieved his counterplay after thoroughly preparing it. Provoking f2-f3 later helped him to induce the knight retreat when the game already entered a concrete phase with excellent black counterplay. In the next example Black could skip the introductory play, but the instructive aspect is that the counterplay initiated on the queenside eventually resulted in a decisive kingside attack.

0-1

□	Miles,Anthony J	2560
■	Adorjan,Andras	2525
	Riga Interzonal (17)	1979

1.Nf3 Nf6 2.c4 c5 3.g3 b6 4.Bg2 Bb7 5.0-0 e6 6.Nc3 Be7 7.d4 cxd4 8.Qxd4 d6 9.b3 0-0 10.Ba3 Na6! 11.Rfd1 Nc5 12.Rac1 a6 13.b4 Ncd7 14.Bb2 Qb8 15.Nd2 Transferring the knight far from d4 will facilitate Black's counterplay. **15...Bxg2 16.Kxg2 Rc8 17.f3**



White has chosen an original, but not entirely consequent setup.

Having refrained from any ambitions in the center by keeping his king's pawn on e2, he has unnecessarily weakened the c4-pawn with the pseudo-active b3-b4.

17...b5! Black has no reason to refrain from this thematic move which weakens White's light squares and questions his space advantage.

18.cxb5

[This looks like a small concession but there is no obvious way of restricting Black's counterplay, for instance:

18.a3 Ne8!? Planning ...Bf6.

(18...bxc4 19.Nxc4 d5

is a reasonable and typical alternative. After eliminating the c4-pawn Black starts to put his center into motion. But White's queenside activity is likely to keep the balance even. 20.Na5 Bd8 21.Na4 with unclear play.)

19.Nce4 (19.c5 Bf6 20.Qd3 Rd8

21.cxd6 Nxd6 leaves Black with the more active side of an almost symmetrical position.) 19...f5

The start of huge complications.

20.Nf2 Bf6 21.Qe3 Bxb2

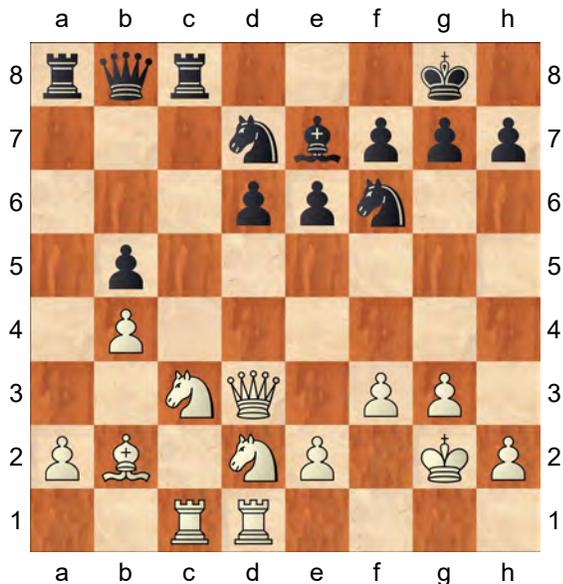
22.Qxe6+ Kh8 23.Qxd7 g6

(Stronger than 23...Bxc1 24.Qxf5 Nf6 25.Rxc1 with reasonable compensation for the exchange.)

24.Qf7 (The careless 24.Rb1 loses the queen after Nf6

25.Qf7 Ra7 26.Qe6 Re8+) 24...Nf6 and Black wins an exchange.]

18...axb5 19.Qd3



The b5-pawn is doomed. But Black can obtain a very strong initiative which will more than compensate for the material deficit. **19...Ne5! 20.Qxb5 Qa7**

[Aiming for more than just retrieving the pawn with 20...Qxb5 21.Nxb5 Rcb8 22.Nc3 Rxb4♣]

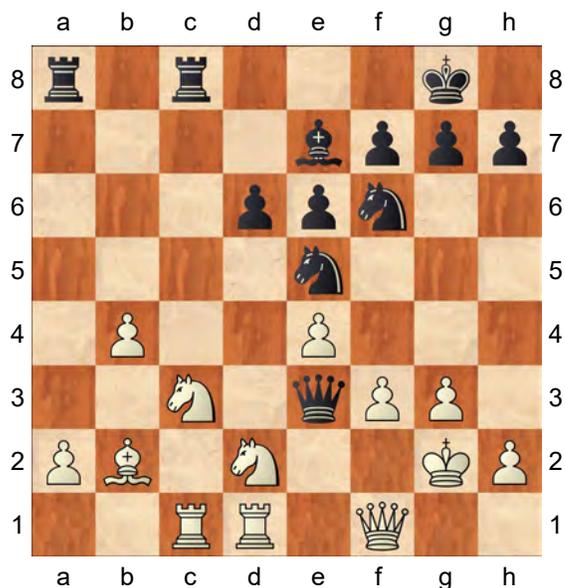
[Adorjan's move surely is nice, displaying Black's confidence in his position and intending to use White's lack of harmony to switch to a kingside attack, but there was something objectively even stronger: 20...Nd5! Immediately taking advantage of the absence of a pawn on e4. 21.Qxb8 (21.Nf1 Nxb4 22.a3 Na2 23.Qxb8 Rcb8 24.Nxa2 Rxb2♣ wins a pawn with reasonable winning chances.) 21...Ne3+ 22.Kg1 Rcb8 23.Re1 Rxb4 24.Ba1 Black should now consolidate the knight in view of the threat Kf2. f6!?) (Overdefending the knight in order to advance the d-pawn. Another possible plan is

24...Bd8!?) 25.Nce4 N5c4) 25.Kf2 (25.Nf1 Nxf1 26.Rxf1 d5♣ offers Black very active play with the probable win of the a2-pawn.) 25...d5!♣ The knight is taboo due to 26.Kxe3? Bc5#]

21.e4 White needs to advance his pawn in order to clear a safe retreat for the queen anyway.

[If 21.Qa5 Black's best would be to return with the queen to b8 and then choose one of the alternatives indicated above. But psychologically, this would have been the best solution!]

21...Qe3 Threatening with the paralyzing move ...Nd3. **22.Qf1**

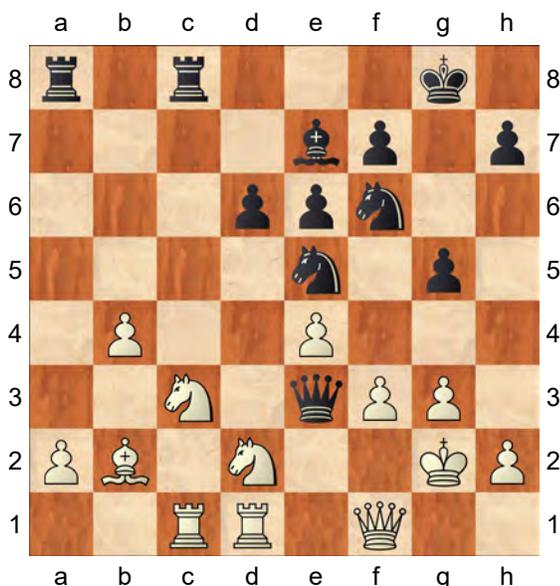


White has kept his extra pawn and parried the immediate threats, but his position is very passive. **22...g5!?** A typical scenario. The queenside diversion has resulted in the maximal activation of all of Black's pieces and in a serious loss of coordination for White. These elements make such radical measures as the last move quite logical. The immediate threat ...g5-g4 with a

further invasion on the light squares is only temporarily parried with 23.h3 due to 23...h5.

[22...Nd3? fails to 23.Nc4!± (Adorjan)]

[But the central approach 22...d5 may objectively be more promising: 23.Nxd5 (23.exd5 Bxb4±) 23...exd5 24.Rxc8+ Rxc8 25.Bxe5 Rc2 26.Bf4 Qc3 with dangerous initiative.]



White miscalculates the consequences of the following tactical operation. **23.Rc2?**

[White's best chance for survival was 23.Ncb1 Rxc1 24.Rxc1 Rxa2 25.Rc3 Qb6 26.Rb3 White has improved his position a lot with chances to neutralize Black's initiative.]

23...Rxa2!+ 24.Nd5 Miles might have put big hopes in this move, possibly underestimating the force of the queen sacrifice.

[24.Re1 Qd3 wins material, for instance 25.Qxd3 Nxd3 26.Nxa2 Nxe1+ (Adorjan)]

24...Rxc2! 25.Nxe3 Rxb2 26.Qe2 The pin along the second rank is very

unpleasant especially after Black continues his initial plan: **26...g4! 27.f4**

[Or if 27.fxc4 Nxe4 28.Nef1 Nxd2 29.Rxd2 Rxd2 30.Nxd2 Bg5 wins material.]

27...Nxe4 28.Nef1 Nxd2

[28...Nc3 29.Qe1 Nf3 also wins.]

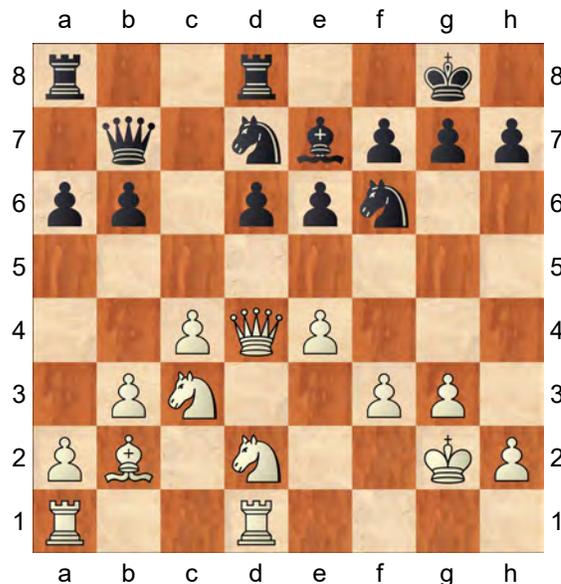
29.Rxd2 Rxd2 30.Nxd2 Nf3 31.Qc4

Rxd2+ 32.Kf1 Bf6 Planning ...Bd4 and ...Rf2 mate.

0-1

□ Skembris, Spyridon **2525**
 ■ Marin, Mihail **2520**
 Moscow ol (Men) (7.1) 08.12.1994

Since ...b6-b5 is such an unpleasant positional threat, one natural question is whether White does not better to play a2-a4. The following game shows that this does not necessarily prevent Black's counterplay: **1.c4 Nf6 2.Nf3 c5 3.g3 b6 4.Bg2 Bb7 5.0-0 e6 6.Nc3 a6 7.d4 cxd4 8.Qxd4 d6 9.b3 Nbd7 10.Bb2 Be7 11.Rfd1 0-0 12.Nd2 Bxg2 13.Kxg2 Qc7 14.f3 Rfd8 15.e4 Qb7**



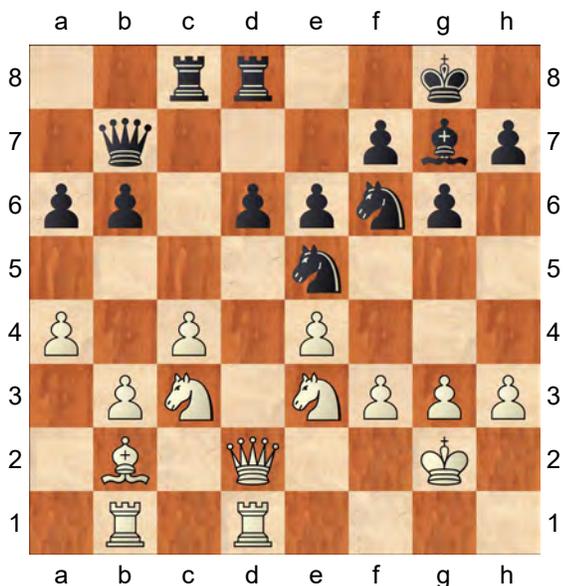
Black threatens ...b6-b5 already so the next move is quite logical: **16.a4** The main problem for White is that in view of the permanent threat ...Nc5 and of his natural wish to activate the d2-knight he will need to keep a major piece busy with defending b3. **16...Bf8 17.Rab1 Rac8 18.Nf1 Ne5!**

[Now that 18...Nc5 is simply parried with 19.Ba1 Black re-directs his knight closer to White's kingside weaknesses on the light squares.]

19.Ne3 g6 20.h3 Bg7

[When I played this move I had already planned the tactical operation initiated on the next move. Otherwise, I would have preferred 20...h5!?= keeping both ...Bg7 and ...Bh6 in reserve.]

21.Qd2

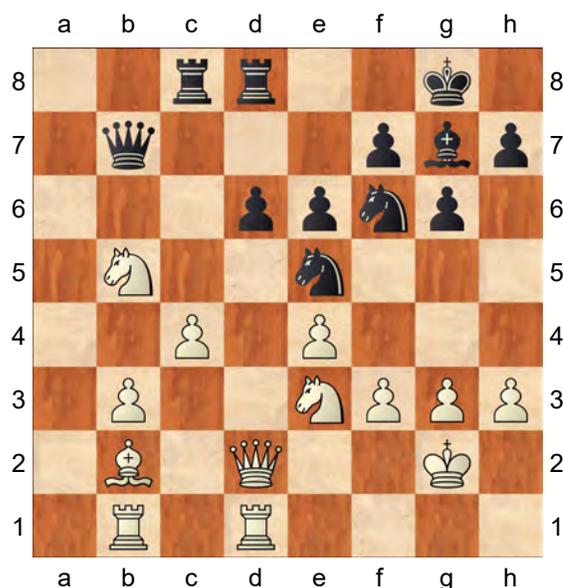


White's position is rather rigid and he

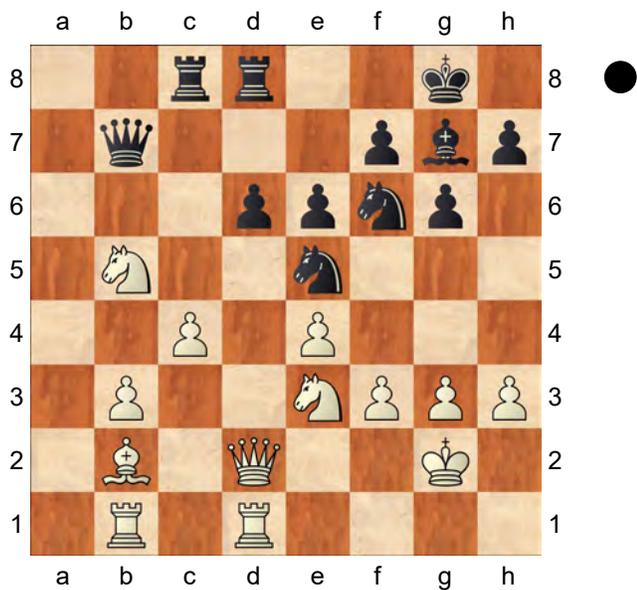
does not have any active plan available. But since the Hedgehog is mainly aimed as a winning weapon Black needs to undertake something concrete himself. **21...b5!!** Suddenly White has concrete problems with keeping his position together. I do not remember clear details from almost a quarter of a century ago, but I then assumed that this came as a shock to my opponent. Still, Spyridon always displays a somewhat surprised facial expression, as if constantly asking: "Isn't it the time to agree on a draw?!" We have better things to do at home." **22.axb5 axb5**

23.Nxb5

[If 23.cxb5 Nxf3! 24.Kxf3 d5 the multiple threats including ... dxe4+ winning the queen, and ...d4 forking the knights would at least retrieve the sacrificed material and leave White with a ruined structure.]



Trying to keep the stability in the center.

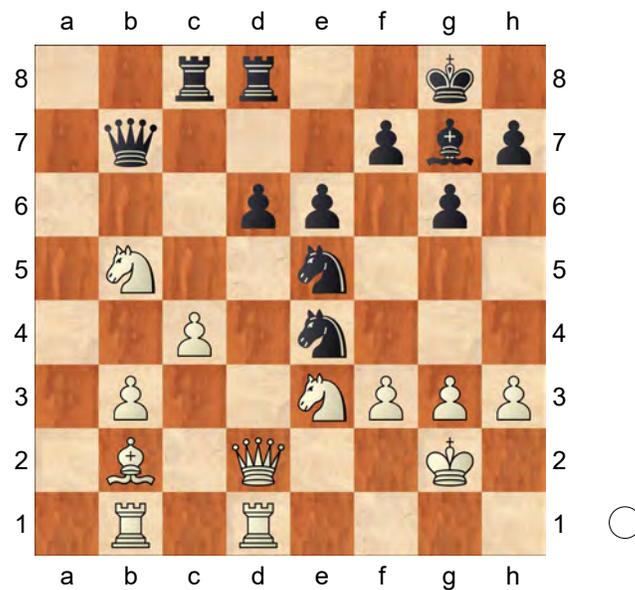


When I sacrificed the pawn I intended to use the weakened defense on e4 by sacrificing a knight, but I was not entirely sure which one of them. Prolonged thinking, unfortunately, led me to the wrong decision: **23...Nxe4?** I chose this move because I felt that calculating lines after 24.fxe4 was easier than after 23...Nxf3. But I failed to notice that it does not cause any structural damage so White is not forced to capture the knight at all.

[Things are different with 23...Nxf3!, ruining the whole white kingside structure. White could not have taken half-measures any longer. 24.Nxd6

(Or if 24.Kxf3 Nxe4 25.Qe1 Nc3+ 26.Kf2 Nxd1+ 27.Qxd1 Bxb2 28.Rxb2 d5 with sharp play and approximate material equality.) 24...Rxd6 25.Qxd6 Nxe4 26.Qd7! Ne1+ 27.Kg1 Nf3+ 28.Kg2=

A draw may look a bit disappointing, but it means that before 21...b5 the position was about equal.]



24.Qe2! A move out of the blue - suddenly Black's position is hanging. I had to make use of all my tricking resources to save the game.

[I was counting on 24.fxe4 Qxe4+ 25.Kf1 Qh1+ 26.Kf2 Qf3+ 27.Ke1 Qxg3+ 28.Qf2 Qxh3 29.Kd2 d5 with three pawns for the knight and continuing initiative.]

24...Nc5

[24...Ng5 25.Bxe5 Bxe5 26.h4+- wins the knight.]

25.Bxe5!?

[25.Nxd6 Rxd6 26.Rxd6 Qxb3 27.Rdd1+-]

25...Bxe5 26.Ng4 Ra8 27.b4 Na4

28.Nxe5 dxe5 29.Qxe5+- White is obviously winning but I somehow managed to save the day. **29...Nb6**

30.Rxd8+ Rxd8 31.Nd6 Qa6 32.c5 Nd5 33.Rb2 Ra8 34.h4 h5 35.Ne4

Qb5 36.Nf6+ Nxf6 37.Qxf6 Ra1

38.Rf2 Rc1 39.Qd8+ Kh7 40.Qf8 Qd7

41.Ra2 e5 42.Re2 Qd1 43.Qxf7+ Kh6

44.Qf8+ Kh7 45.Qe7+ Kh6 46.Qg5+

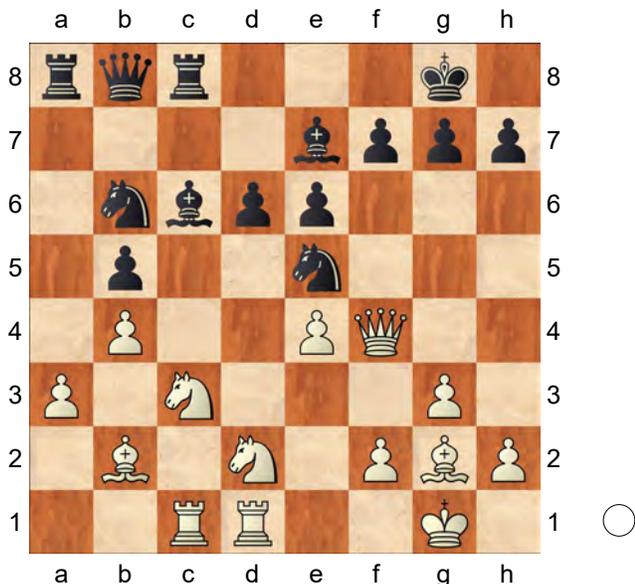
Kh7

1/2

□ Uhlmann,Wolfgang
 ■ Ljubojevic,Ljubomir
 IBM Amsterdam (2)

2535
 2615
 1975

33.Bc4 Rc2 34.Bb3 Rb2 35.Kg2
 Rdd2 36.Nd3 Rxb3 37.Nxc5 Rxf3
 0-1



Black has carried out ...b6-b5 under favorable circumstances and White's wish to prevent ...b5-b4 has weakened c4. With **20.Bf1** he intended to inhibit the invasion. Does this really work? **20...Nbc4!** For hidden tactical reasons this is stronger than White had thought.

21.Nxc4

[21.Bxc4 bxc4 ♣ followed by ...Nd3 is also bad for White.]

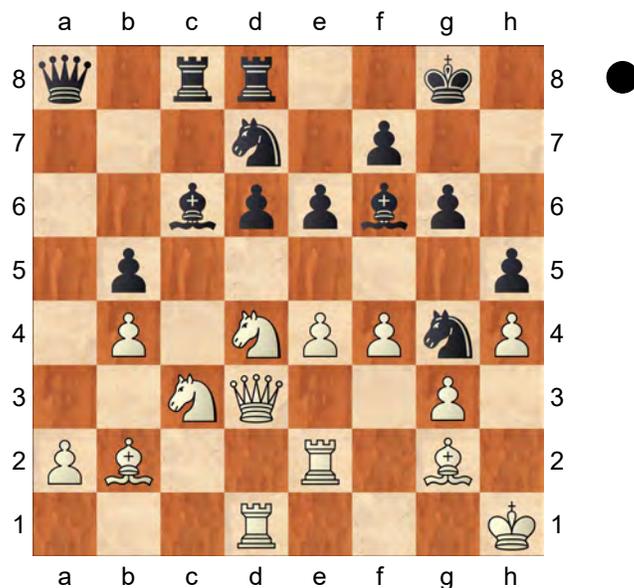
21...Bg5!♣ The point. Since 20.Bf1 has left f3 undefended the last move wins material.

[21...Nxc4? 22.Bxc4 bxc4 23.Ne2!?= would leave White with satisfactory stability on the dark squares.]

22.Nxe5 Bxf4 23.Nxc6 Bxc1 24.Nxb8 Bxb2 25.Nxb5 Rcx8 26.Rb1 Bxa3 27.Rb3 Bc1 28.Nxd6 Ra4 29.b5 Ba3 30.Nc4 Bc5 31.Ne5 Ra2 32.Rf3 Rd8

□ Espig,Lutz
 ■ Shipov,Sergei
 Berliner Sommer 13th (4)

2415
 2510
 1995



Black is very active, but his b-pawn seems to be in danger. How to develop the initiative? **34...Nde5! 35.Qb1**

[35.fxe5 dxe5+ retrieves the piece with a decisive advantage.]

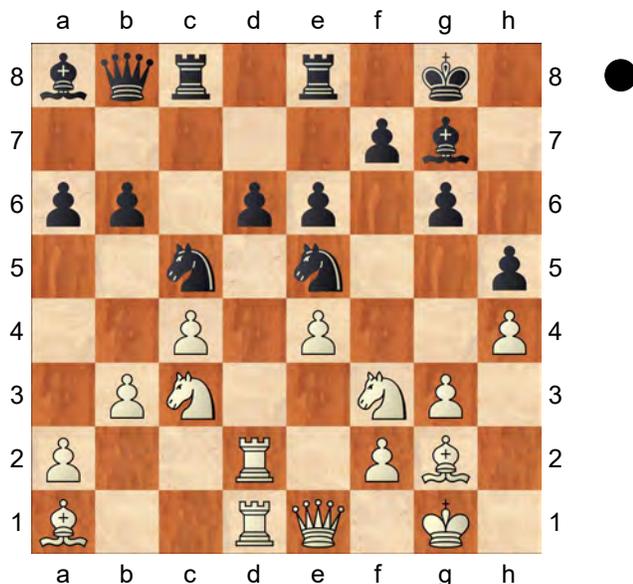
35...Nc4♣ Once the knight has occupied this square White is practically doomed. The b5-pawn is taboo because of the hanging b2-bishop and the complications initiated by White will turn against him.

36.Nxc6 Nxb2 37.e5 Nxd1 38.Qxd1

[38.Ne7+ Bxe7 39.Bxa8 Nxc3+ leaves the queen alone against a whole black army.]

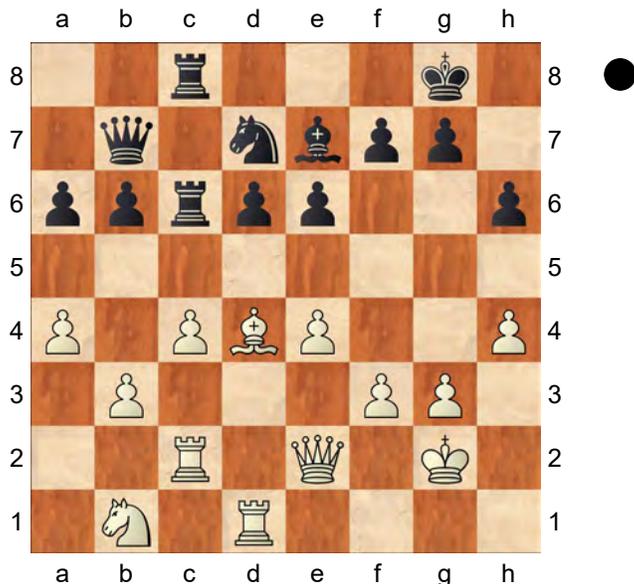
38...Rxc6 39.exf6 Qc8 40.Bxc6
Qxc6+ 41.Ne4 Qxe4+!
0-1

☐ Gorshkov, Yury S 2320
 ■ Suba, Mihai 2379
 EU-ch Seniors 65 Rapid (9) 20.03.2014



Black ignored the threat on d6 with 27...b5 28.cxb5 axb5 What did he have in mind after 29.Rxd6? Nxf3+! 30.Bxf3 b4 Black wins a piece as the d1-rook is overloaded with defending d6 and a1.
0-1

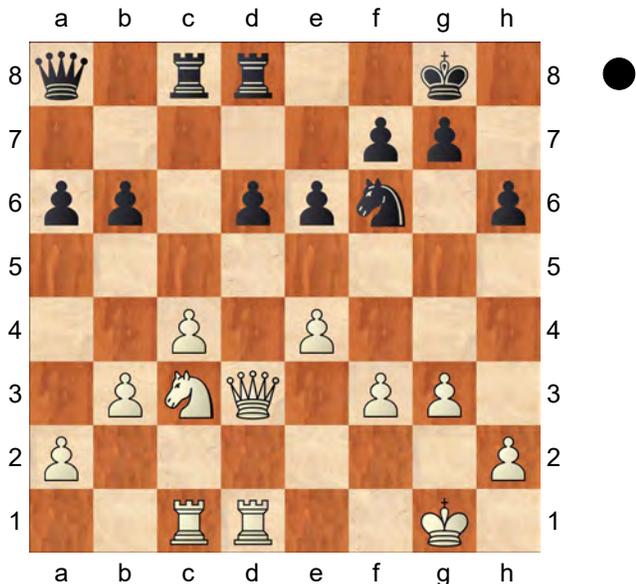
☐ Spiridonov, Nikola 2420
 ■ Shipov, Sergei 2510
 Paris op 1995



Evaluate the consequences of 27...b5 The last move is correct, but White has resources to stay in the game: 28.axb5 axb5 29.Ra2! Threatening to win a knight with Ra7. 29...Ra6 30.Rxa6 Qxa6 31.cxb5 Qa5 White has won a pawn but due to its weakness, Black is likely to retrieve it soon with a more pleasant play which can be seen from the ulterior course of the game. 32.Qb2 Bf8 33.b4 Qxb5 34.Na3 Qa4 35.Rd3 d5 36.exd5 exd5 37.Rb3 Re8 38.b5 Nc5 39.Bxc5 Bxc5 40.b6 Bd4 41.Rb4 Qd1 42.Qxd4 Re2+ 43.Kh3 Qf1+ 44.Kg4 h5+ 45.Kf4 Qc1+
0-1

Kortschnoj, Viktor Lvovich **2635**

Adorjan, Andras **2555**
 Cannes (6) 1986



The massive minor piece exchanges turn White's space advantage into a vulnerability. Black played **21...b5!**

[Unfortunately 21...d5? loses a pawn without compensation: 22.cxd5 exd5 23.Nxd5 Rxc1 24.Rxc1 Nxd5 25.Rd1±]

What did he have in mind after **22.cxb5 d5!** This reveals that the main idea of the previous move was to weaken White's control over d5 for just an instant. It is suggestive that a player with Kortschnoj's calculating skills failed to stay in control - White's position is too unstable to allow a mathematical solution!

[22...axb5 23.Qxb5 Rd7 also offers Black perfectly adequate compensation but, from practical point of view, the game continuation is better.]

23.e5
 [23.exd5 Nxd5 24.Nxd5 Rxd5±]
23...Nd7 24.Qe2

[24.f4!? Cvetkovic axb5 25.Qxb5 Qa7+ (25...Rc6 26.Na4 Rdc8 27.Rxc6 Rxc6) 26.Kg2 d4!
 White needs a series of accurate moves in order to survive. 27.Na4 Qa8+ 28.Kf2 f6 29.exf6 Nxf6 30.Rxc8 (30.Qe2 Ne4+ 31.Kg1 d3 32.Qe3 Rc2+-) 30...Ng4+ 31.Kg1 Rxc8 32.Qe2 Ne3 33.Nb6 Rc2 34.Qxc2 Qf3 35.Qd2 Nxd1 36.Nc4 Nc3± White's position remains unpleasant, but at least he has an extra pawn to compensate for his troubles (Marin)]

[24.bxa6 Nxe5 25.Qe2 Nc6 Δ...Nb4, Δ...e5]

24...Rc5! 25.a4

[25.bxa6?! Rdc8 26.Qe3 Qxa6 27.f4 Qa3! 28.Rc2 Qa5±]

25...Rdc8 26.Qe3 Qb8! 27.f4 Qb6! 28.Kg2 axb5

[28...Rxb5? 29.Nxd5!+- Cvetkovic]

29.Kh3

[29.axb5 Qa5 30.Ne2 Rc2±]

29...R5c6! 30.Qxb6 Nxb6 31.a5□ Rxc3 32.axb6?

[32.Rxc3! Cvetkovic Rxc3 33.axb6 Rc6 34.Rc1 Rxb6 35.Kg4! Δ h4_h5 (35.Rc7?! Ra6 36.Rb7 Ra2 37.Rxb5 g5!±)]

32...b4!-+ 33.Kg4

[33.Rxc3 bxc3 34.b7 Rb8 35.Rd3 c2 36.Rc3 Rxb7 37.Rxc2 Rxb3 38.Kg4 (38.Rc7 Rb2! Δ Re2, g5, Kg7_g6) 38...Kh7 39.h4 h5+!-+ Cvetkovic]

33...Kh7! 34.Rxc3

[34.h4 h5+!]

34...bxc3 35.Rc1

[35.Kf3 c2 36.Rc1 Rc3+-+]

35...d4 36.Kf3 d3 37.b7 d2!

38.bxc8Q dxc1Q 39.Qc4 Qd1+ 0-1

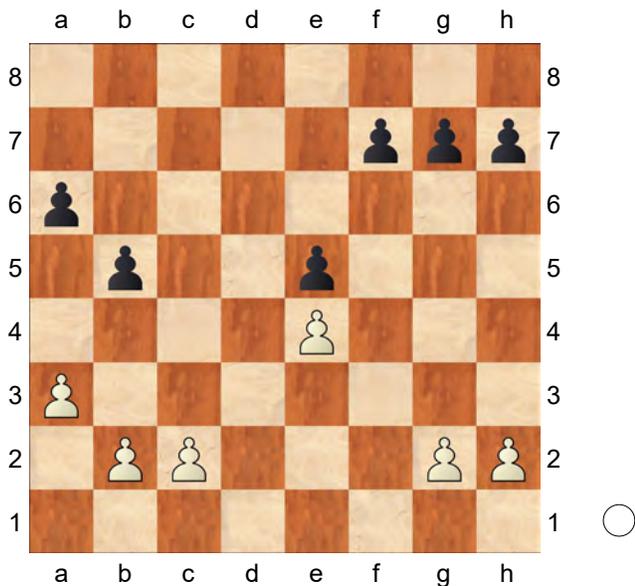
Understand the Najdorf Structures - Part 2



After releasing the tension in the center, White accepts a worse structure (the isolani on e4) in order to have open lines and chances for a kingside initiative. That is why Black should try to reach an endgame type of position. In such structures, the exchange of the dark-squared bishops is favorable for Black. After such an exchange, White will remain with weak dark squares and passive light-squared bishop.

□	Maryasin, Boris Feliksovich	2340
■	Szabo, Krisztian	2508
	Gibraltar Masters 7th (7)	02.02.2009

Structure 1

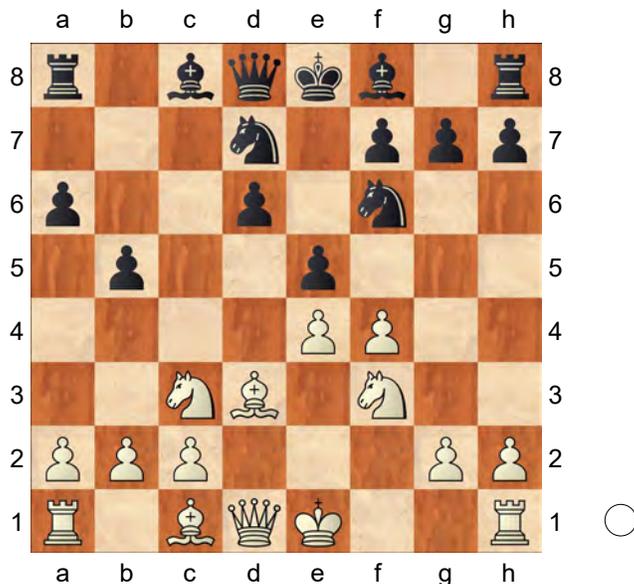


This structure can be reached in the line with 6.f4 when White plays fxe5. He can, of course, keep the pawn on f4, but then Black has ...exf4 when we reach structure 6 of the previous database. A slightly different position can be reached if White had already played a2-a4 in order to prevent b7-b5. Nevertheless, the structural ideas would be the same.

1.e4 c5 2.Nf3 d6 3.d4 cxd4 4.Nxd4 Nf6 5.Nc3 a6 6.f4 e5 7.Nf3 Nbd7 8.Bd3

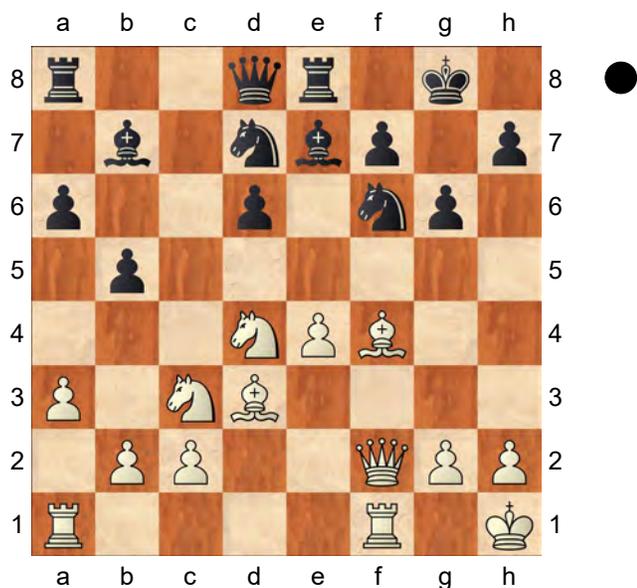
[8.a4 is the most played, preventing Black from developing the queenside actively Be7 9.Bd3 0-0 10.0-0 exf4! this gives Black easy development and pressure against the e4-pawn 11.Kh1 Nc5 12.Bxf4 Bg4]

8...b5!



Black takes his chance. **9.0-0 Be7**
10.Qe1 0-0 11.Kh1 Bb7 12.a3 Re8!
 Black threatens to open the e-file and build up annoying pressure on e4.

[12...exf4 13.Bxf4 Re8 this move order gives White more freedom to arrange his pieces 14.Nd4 g6 15.Qf2



with nice development]

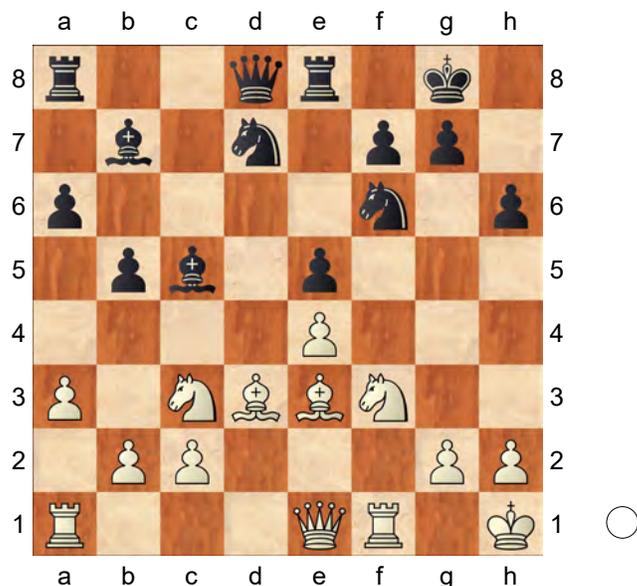
13.fxe5 Other moves would leave the e4 pawn weak.

[13.Bd2 for example exf4 14.Bxf4 Bf8 15.Nd4 Black is one tempo ahead now and can play d5! with advantage 16.e5 Bd6! 17.Nf3 Bxe5 18.Bxe5 Ng4±]

[13.f5? is also bad, due to d5! 14.exd5 Nxd5 15.Nxd5 Bxd5±]

13...dxe5 14.Qg3

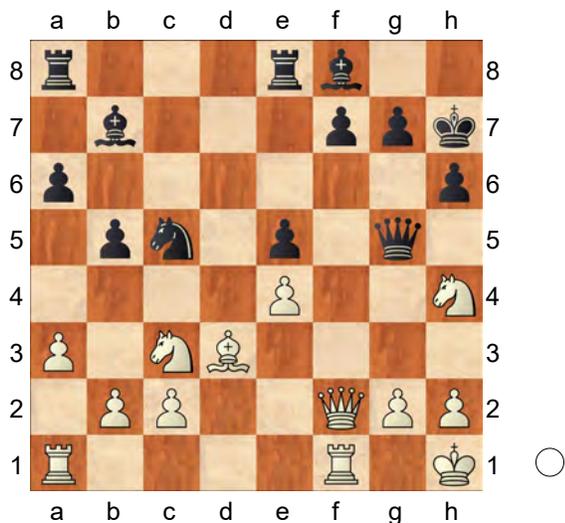
[14.Bg5 is also played. White aims to provoke h6 15.Be3 as the pawn become a target in some positions after Nh4-f5 or Qg3, for example. But a good solution for Black is (15.Bd2 Nc5±) 15...Bc5!N



exchanging the dark-squared bishops improves Black's position and reduces White's potential of an initiative, as this bishop is an important attacking piece 16.Nh4 (16.Bd2 Bd4 17.Nh4 Nc5= 18.Rd1 Nxd3 19.cxd3 Bc8! and Black is fine) 16...g6! Black is able to prevent Nf5 17.Bxc5 (17.Bxh6 Ng4 18.Bd2 Bf2! 19.Rxf2 Qxh4-+ is the tactical reason) 17...Nxc5 18.Qf2 Nxd3 19.cxd3 Re6 20.Rad1 Qe7 Black is fine]

14...Rc8

[14...Nc5 was also very strong, attacking d3 and e4 immediately 15.Bh6 Bf8 16.Bg5 h6! 17.Bxf6 (17.Bxh6 Nxd3 18.Rad1 Qb6!-+) 17...Qxf6 18.Nh4 Qg5 19.Qf2 Kh7!



with advantage for Black]

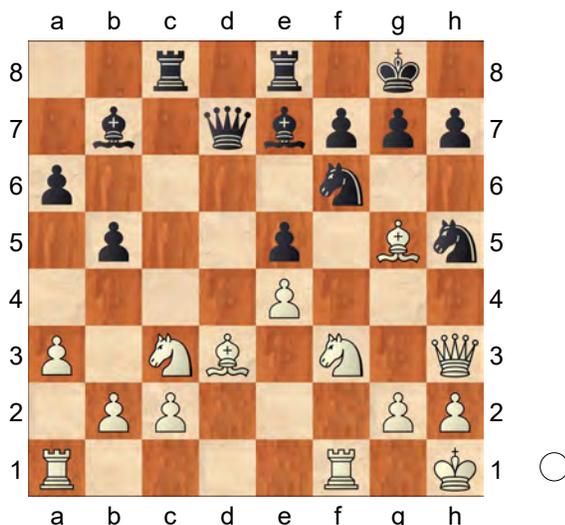
15.Bh6?

[15.Nxe5 is bad in view of Nxe5 16.Qxe5 Bb4! and Black regains the material with a much better position 17.Qf5 Bxc3 18.bxc3 Bxe4 19.Bxe4 Rxe4 20.Bg5 Re6]

[15.Nh4?! Nxe4! wins a pawn for Black 16.Nxe4 Bxh4 17.Qh3 Nf8]

[15.Be3 Nc5 also seems better for Black 16.Bh6 Bf8 17.Rad1 Qc7 18.Nd2 Nh5 19.Qf3 Nf4! a nice and instructive sacrifice 20.Bxf4 exf4 21.Qxf4 Qxf4 22.Rxf4 Bd6]

15...Nh5! Black is able to improve his pieces now. **16.Qh3 Ndf6 17.Bg5 Qd7!**



Another precise move. **18.Qh4**

[the simplifications 18.Qxd7 Nxd7 19.Bxe7 Rxe7 would result in a very nice position for Black, as the knights now have many squares, which shows how important the dark-squared bishop was in White's position 20.Rad1 Nc5 21.Rfe1 g6 22.Kg1 Nf6] only Black's position can be improved here, which is a great

practical advantage in the endgame]

18...Qe6 19.Nd5?! White should look for something active, or his position will become very unpleasant.

[for example 19.Rad1 h6 20.Bd2 Rcd8 21.Qe1 Nf4]

[19.a4! was a better version compared to the game b4 20.Nd5 h6 (20...Bxd5 21.exd5 Qxd5 22.Bxa6 Rxc2 23.Rad1 and White is active) 21.Nxf6 + Nxf6 22.Bxf6 Bxf6 23.Qf2 Black is still better in view of the weakened dark squares, but White is also solid]

19...Bxd5 20.exd5 Qxd5 21.Rae1 e4!?

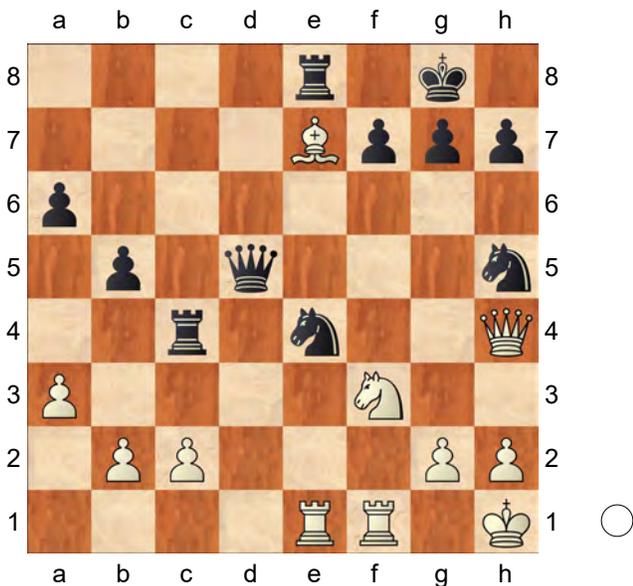
[21...Bd8 just protecting the pawn was very good]

22.Bxe4 Nxe4 23.Bxe7? The decisive mistake.

[23.Qxe4 was the best chance for White Qxe4 24.Rxe4 Bxg5 25.Rxe8+ Rxe8 26.Nxg5 Re2! 27.Nxf7 Nf6 28.Ng5 Rxc2 Black is still better, but White has some chances to hold the endgame]

[23.Rxe4 Bxg5 24.Rxe8+ Rxe8 25.Qxg5 Qc4! and Black coordinates the pieces with some threats]

23...Rc4!

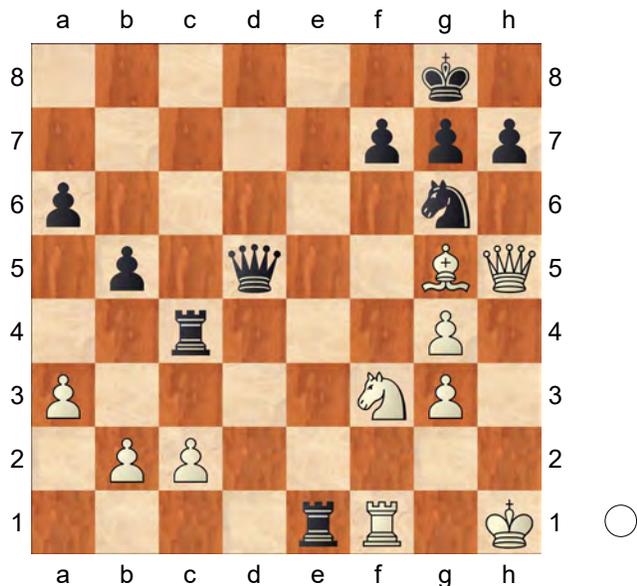


Probably the move missed by White. Black is winning. **24.g4**

[24.Bg5 Neg3+! 25.hxg3 Rxh4+-+ the detail is that Black wins the queen with check]

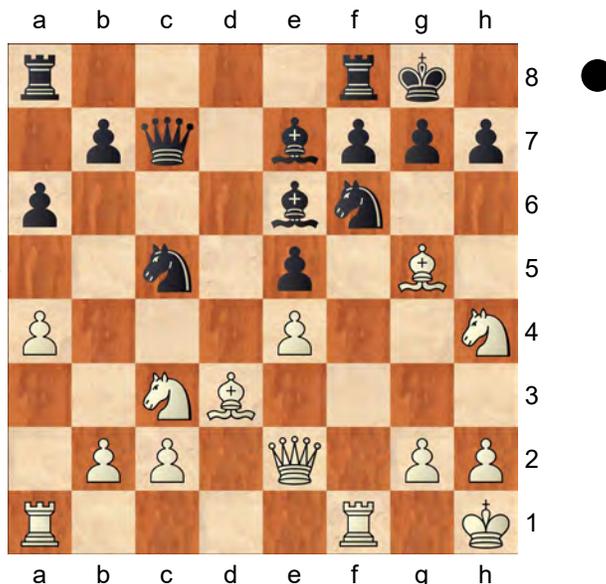
[24.Kg1! was the only try, but Black is still winning after Neg3 25.Qg5 Qxg5 26.Bxg5 Ne2+! 27.Kh1 h6 28.Bh4 g5 29.Bf2 Rxc2±]

24...Nf4 25.Bg5 Ng6 26.Qh5 Ng3+! 27.hxg3 Rxe1



0-1

Exercise



What should Black play in this position?

15...Nxd3

[the direct 15...Ne8? would be premature 16.Bxe7 Qxe7 17.Nf5 Bxf5 (17...Qc7 18.Bc4 White can also get rid of his bad bishop here Nxe4? 19.Bxe6 fxe6 20.Nh6+! gxh6 21.Rxf8 + Kxf8 22.Nxe4±) 18.Rxf5 Nd6 19.Rf3 and White has a decent position, despite the Black knights being also well posted]

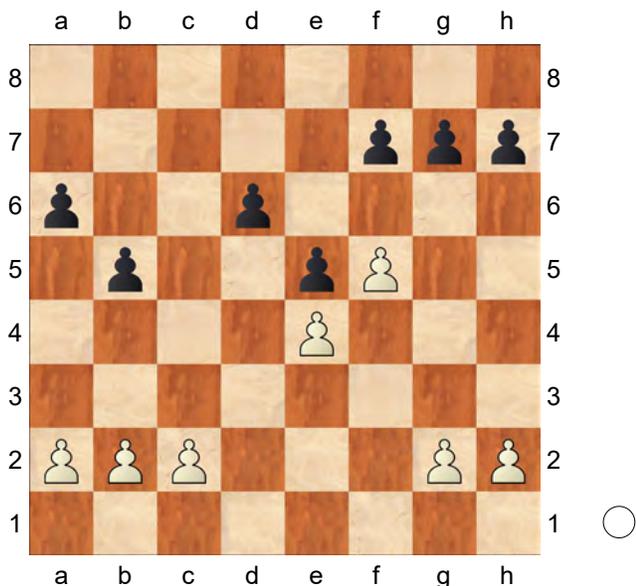
16.cxd3 Ne8! After this nice positional operation, Black has no problems.

17.Bxe7 Qxe7 18.Nf3 Hou, Y (2623)-Giri, A (2693)/Hoogeveen Unive Crown 16th 2012 (2)/1/2-1/2

[18.Nf5 Bxf5 19.Rxf5 Nc7 is also harmless for Black]

18...Qd6 19.Rfd1 Bg4= and Black is fine.

Structure 2



In Part 1, we have dealt with the same pawn structure. The only difference is that now White's light-squared bishop will be placed on b3, instead of e2. If White manages to get such position with all pieces developed, his kingside initiative might become dangerous. The good news, however, is that this is not an easy task for White. In the 6.Bc4 lines, Black quickly expands on the queenside by means of b7-b5. When White concentrates all his efforts on the kingside, Black usually makes use of the vulnerability of the e4-pawn. There are two ways to exploit the weak central pawn - chase away the c3-knight by means of b5-b4 or go for an exchange sacrifice with ...Rxc3. In the former case, the extra pawn and White's spoiled structure give Black more than sufficient compensation for the exchange.

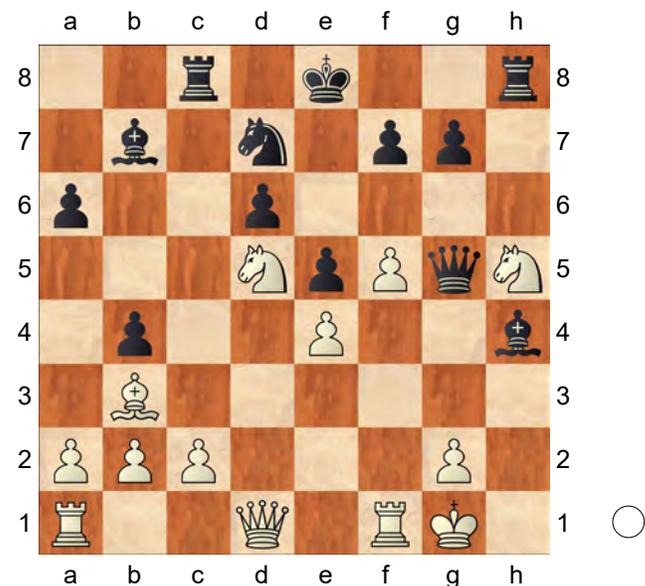
□ Janosevic, Dragoljub

■ Polugaevsky, Lev

Skopje Solidarnost-05 (10) 25.11.1971

1.e4 c5 2.Nf3 d6 3.d4 cxd4 4.Nxd4 Nf6 5.Nc3 a6 6.Bc4 e6 7.Bb3 b5 8.0-0

[8.f4?! immediately is risky for White, as an old game by Fischer illustrates very well Bb7 9.f5 e5 10.Nde2 Nbd7! (10...Nxe4 11.Bd5! offers good compensation for White) 11.Bg5 Be7 and White has problems with e4 already 12.Ng3 (12.Bxf6 Nxf6 13.Qd3 Rc8 14.0-0 0-0 15.Ng3 Qb6+ 16.Kh1 a5!↑ ;Malik,J (2352)-Cernousek,L (2438)/CZE-chT 1112 2011 (3.7)/0-1) 12...Rc8 13.0-0 h5! an unexpected move that creates very unpleasant problems for White 14.h4 (14.Bxf6 Nxf6 15.Qd3 Qb6+ 16.Kh1 Rxc3! 17.bxc3 h4 18.Ne2 Bxe4 19.Qh3 Rh5! with a winning attack for Black) 14...b4! 15.Bxf6 Bxf6 16.Nd5 Bxh4 17.Nxh5 Qg5-+

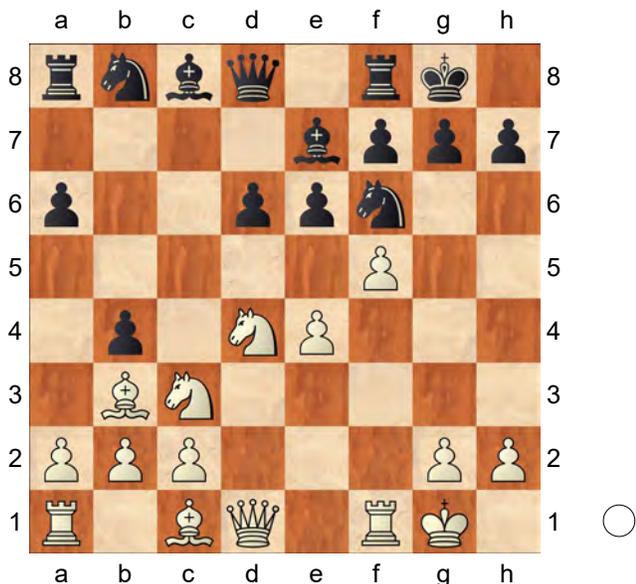


Byrne,R-Fischer,R/Interzonal-07+ 1967 (12)/0-1 Black was totally winning]

8...Be7 9.f4

[9.Qf3 is the main line]

9...0-0 10.f5? Normally, rushing with f4-f5 isn't a good idea for White, but Black should know how to answer it. **10...b4!**



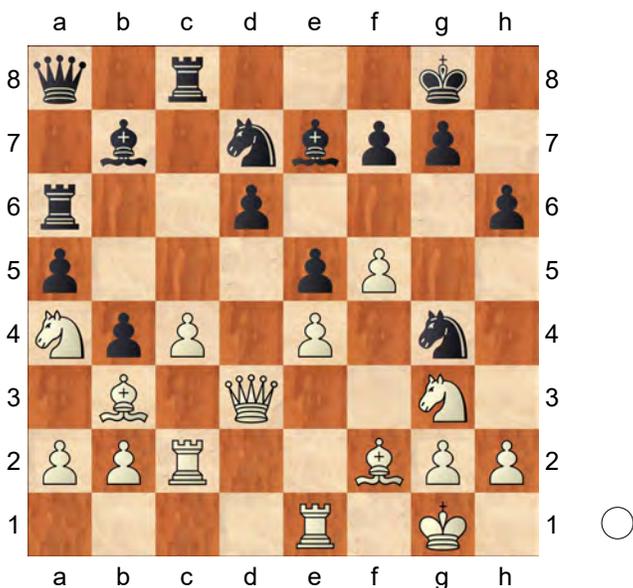
11.Na4 e5! This is the best reaction to White's idea. White's knights will have a hard time reaching d5. **12.Ne2 Bb7 13.Ng3 Nbd7!** Black continues his development in a simple way. Besides the pressure on e4, White has another annoying problem: The Na4 is out of play.

[13...Nxe4? is bad because after 14.Nxe4 Bxe4 15.Qg4! Black has unnecessarily lost his positional advantage and White obtains nice counterplay for the pawn d5 16.Bh6 Bf6 17.Bxg7! Bxg7 18.f6 Bg6 19.fxg7 Kxg7 20.Rad1]

14.Qf3

[an encounter of two legends went 14.Qe1 a5 15.c4 Qc7 16.Qe2 Rfc8 17.Bg5 Nc5 18.Rac1 (18.Nxc5 Qxc5+ 19.Kh1 a4) 18...h6 19.Be3 Ncd7! Black takes away the exchange offer and the Na4 problem persists

20.Bf2 Ra6 21.Rc2 Qb8! nice regroupment of pieces by Ivanchuk, to increase the pressure over e4 22.Re1 Qa8 23.Qd3? (Δ23.h3) 23...Ng4!



24.Nf1 Ndf6 25.Nd2 Nxf2 26.Kxf2 Bc6 27.Rcc1 Qa7+ 28.Ke2 Rd8 ;Anand,V (2635)-Ivanchuk,V (2695)/ Linares 09th 1991 (8)/0-1 and soon Black had a direct attack against the king]

14...Bc6 15.Be3 Qc7

[Black is not able to win the knight with 15...Qa5 in view of the resource 16.a3!]

16.c3 a5! It is important to keep the knight on a4 out of play. Black doesn't need to rush here, just keep improving his position. White is practically playing a piece down. **17.c4 Qb7 18.Bc2** White has the dream to someday play b3 and rescue the knight via b2, but this task is anything but easy. **18...Rac8 19.Rac1**

[19.b3? Bxa4 20.bxa4 Rxc4-+] **19...h6** Preventing the pin, although it wouldn't help White.

[19...Rc7 20.Bg5 h6 21.Bh4 Rfc8
22.Qe2 Qa6]

20.Qe2 White is at least able to play b3 now. **20...Rc7**

[20...Nxe4 21.Bxe4 Bxe4 22.Bxh6!]

21.b3? This is a mistake, but try to play a whole game with a useless trapped knight on the edge of the board... It is not an easy task, and players tend to become annoyed enough to make big mistakes in such cases.

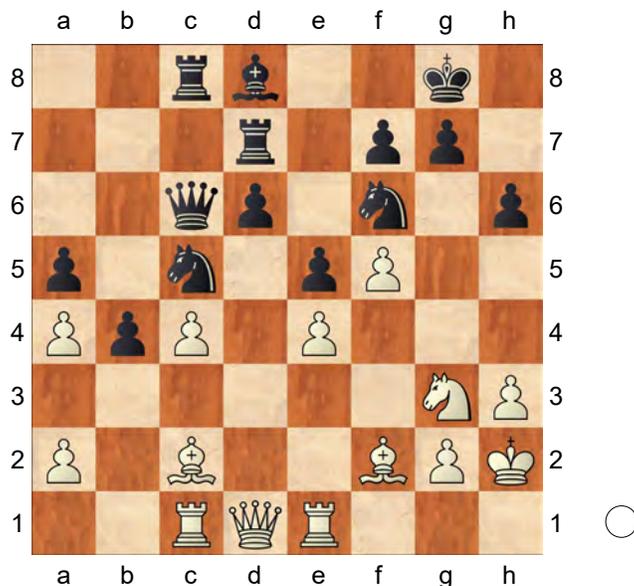
[21.Bf2 keeps everything defended for White, although in practice his position seems always unpleasant to play. The position is also very similar to the game Anand-Ivanchuk mentioned in the notes to 14.Qf3. A possible follow-up could be Qa6

22.Rfe1 Rfc8 somehow White still holds, but it is evident that he is on the edge of the precipice, for example

23.Bb3 Qb7 24.Bc2 Ne8!? 25.Be3 Bh4! 26.Bf2 Nef6 27.Kh1 Bxg3 28.Bxg3 Bxa4 29.Bxa4 Qxe4! 30.Qxe4 Nxe4 31.Rxe4 Nc5 32.Bc2 Nxe4 33.Bxe4 Rxc4 34.Re1 Rc1-+]

21...Bxa4! 22.bxa4 In this case, the medicine was even worse than the disease: White has multiple weaknesses in his camp, but his position is not as solid as in the previous note. Polugaevsky knows how to increase his advantage, and shows it in an instructive way.

22...Qc6 23.Qd1 Rd8 24.Re1 Nc5 25.Bf2 Rdd7 26.h3 Rc8! 27.Kh2 Bd8!

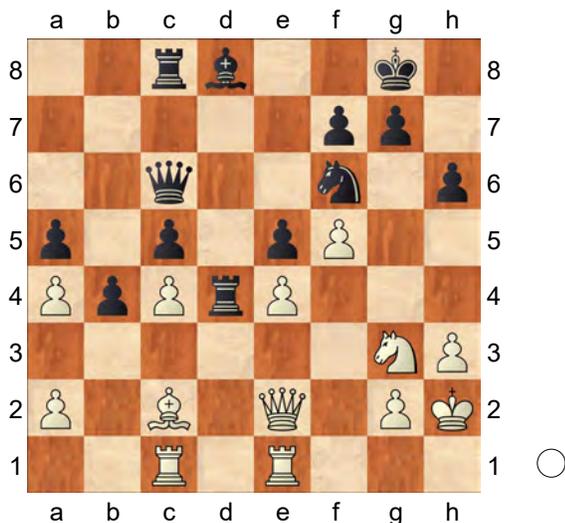


Black's next step is to exchange the dark-squared bishops, a typical idea in such structures, that leaves White's position even more exposed.

28.Bxc5? Again making things easier for Black, as the weaknesses on the dark-squares will not disappear after this move. It seems that White was so scared about the opponent's threats in this game, that this made him take desperate decisions, offering very weak resistance.

[28.Ra1 Bb6 29.Nh5!? was still a better chance Bd8 (29...Nxe4 30.Qxe4 Nd3! 31.Bxd3 Bxf2 32.Re2 Bd4 33.Rf1) 30.Nxf6+ Bxf6 31. Rb1]

28...dxc5 29.Qe2 Rd4+

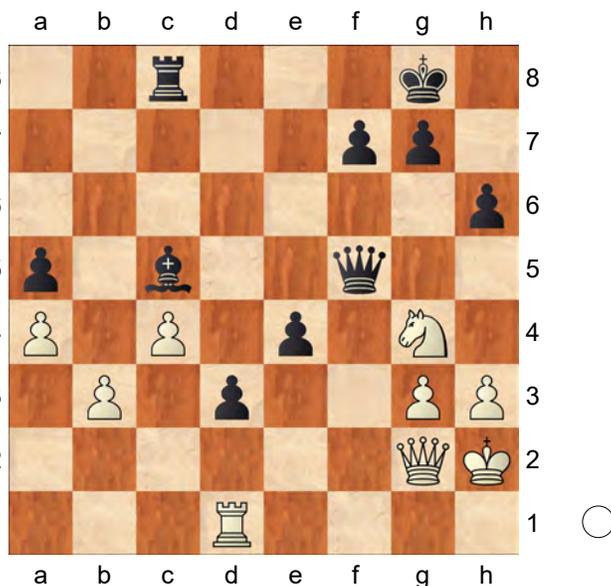


White is just defenceless against the invasion on the dark-squares now.

30.Rcd1 Qa6 31.Rxd4?

[31.Bb3 would force Black to find the path to victory, although it is not so difficult Qc6 32.Qf3 Be7 33.Kh1 Rcd8 34.Kg1 Ne8! and Black finds the decisive regroupment of pieces 35.Nf1 Bg5 36.Rxd4 Rxd4 37.Qe2 Nf6 38.Ng3 Bf4-+]

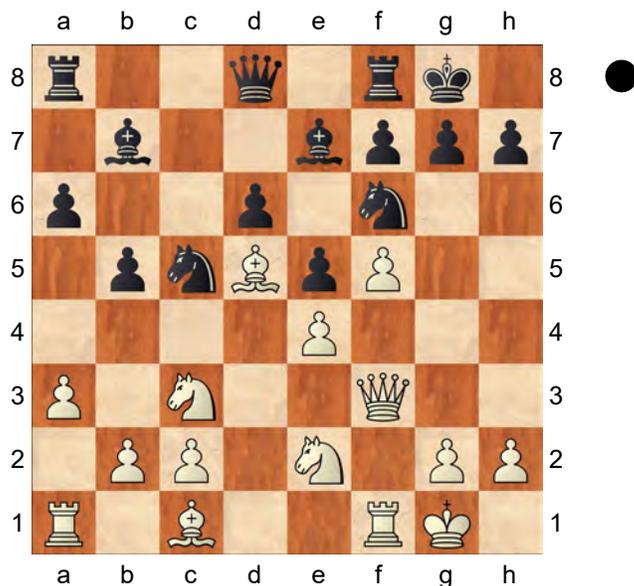
31...cxd4 Black now has the excellent c5-square and a strong passed pawn on d4. **32.Bb3 Qb6 33.Rd1 Nd7 34.Nh1 Nc5 35.Nf2 Qc6 36.Qc2 Bg5!** Soon everything falls. **37.g3 Be3 38.Nd3 Nxb3 39.axb3 Qxe4 40.Nxb4 Qf3 41.Nd3 e4 42.Ne5 Qxf5 43.Ng4 d3 44.Qg2 Bc5**



Although White has offered weak resistance in this game, I think it is a very instructive example of how to face this early f4-f5 as Black.

0-1

Exercise



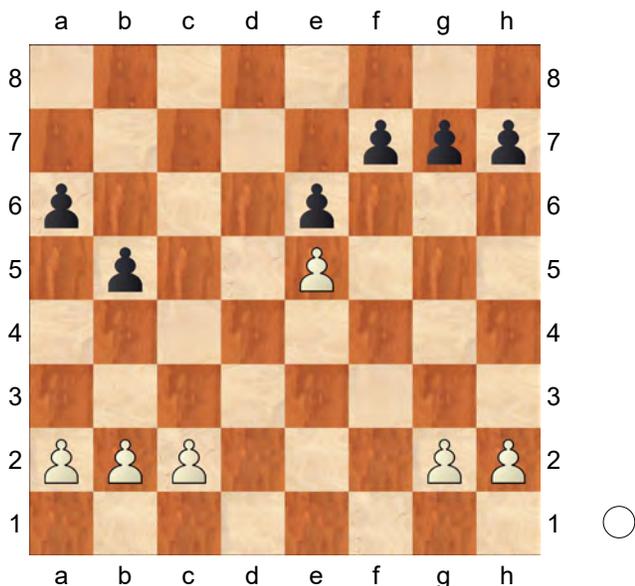
14...Ncxe4! 15.Bxe4

[15.Bxb7 Qb6+]

15...d5! 16.Bd3 e4! This is the point: Black regains the piece with a nice initiative due to the bishop pair in an

open position. **17.Qg3 exd3 18.Qxd3**
 Badii,M (2295)-Oll,L (2560)/Clichy op
 1991 (4)/0-1 **18...d4!** Would be very
 strong for Black now. **19.Qxd4**
 [19.Nxd4 Bc5 20.Be3 Re8 21.Rad1
 Ng4 22.Bf2 Qd6 23.Bg3 Qc6-+]
19...Qc7 Black has a dangerous initiative,
 for example **20.Kh1 Rad8 21.Qf2 Rfe8**
22.Bf4 Qc8↑

Structure 3



We have a typical structure from the 6. Bc4 variation. In this case, White has played e4-e5 instead of f4-f5. As compensation for the spoiled pawn structure, White has a space advantage and attacking chances. Being on b3, White's bishop is restricted by the e6-pawn. In such structures, Black keeps this bishop under control by putting one of his knights on c5. Objectively speaking, Black is fine if he manages to defend his kingside without creating

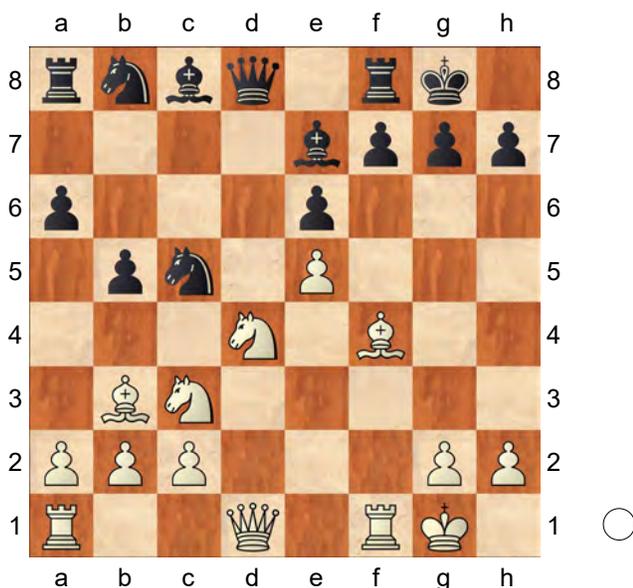
weak squares around the king. So, moves as Be7-f8 or Bb7-e4-g6 should be preferred instead of moving pawns on the kingside. Black has nice chances not only from a strategic point of view. In some positions, Black can use the open lines and diagonals in order to harass White's king.

□	Rezan,Sasa	2430
■	Palac,Mladen	2571
	CRO-Cup 18th (2)	21.05.2009

1.e4 c5 2.Nf3 d6 3.d4 cxd4 4.Nxd4
Nf6 5.Nc3 a6 6.Bc4 e6 7.0-0 Be7
8.Bb3 0-0 9.f4 b5 10.e5 dxe5
11.fxe5 Nfd7 12.Bf4

[I consider 12.Be3! to be the best option for White, sacrificing the pawn for active development. Even then, Black has a good game Nxe5 13.Qh5 Nbc6 14.Nxc6 Nxc6 15.Rf3 Qd6!an important idea (15...g6!? seems a bit risky to me) 16.Rh3 h6 17.Bxh6 Qc5+! 18.Qxc5 Bxc5+ 19.Be3 Bxe3+ 20.Rxe3 Rd8; Ashton,A (2294)-Gallagher,J (2565)/SUI-ch int Saas Almagell 2005 (6)/0-1 White managed to get rid of his weak e5-pawn keeping the material balance, but the endgame still seems a bit unpleasant from a practical point of view, as the Bb3 remained a bit clumsy and Black's pieces have more freedom -]

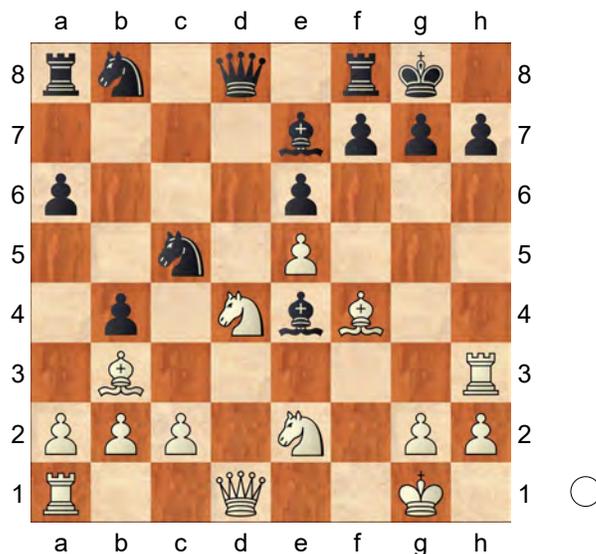
12...Nc5



The light-squared bishop doesn't seem particularly scary, but this a good way to prevent sacrifices on e6 and continue development. Black always has the opportunity to grab the bishop pair, too. **13.Rf3** White needs to try something on the kingside, or his position will simply be bad.

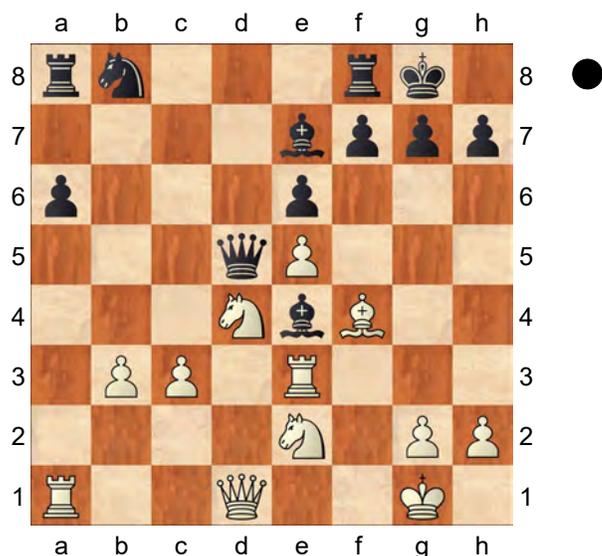
[13.Nce2 is an idea to rescue the bishop via c2 and transfer the pieces to the kingside, but Black can always take on b3 before White realizes his dreams Bb7 14.Qe1 (14.c3 Nxb3) 14...Nc6 15.Nxc6 (15.Rd1 Qc7N 16.Qg3 Nxb3 17.axb3 Nxd4 18.Nxd4 Be4!) 15...Bxc6 16.Rd1 Qc7 17.c3 Nxb3 18.axb3 Be4! this bishop is useful for attack and defence. Black is better]

13...b4 14.Nce2 Bb7 15.Rh3 Be4!



A nice idea to remember, this is enough to prevent any active idea by White on the kingside. **16.c3 Nxb3 17.axb3 bxc3 18.bxc3 Qd5** Black already has a pleasant advantage. **19.Ng3?** This is strange and bad.

[19.Re3!

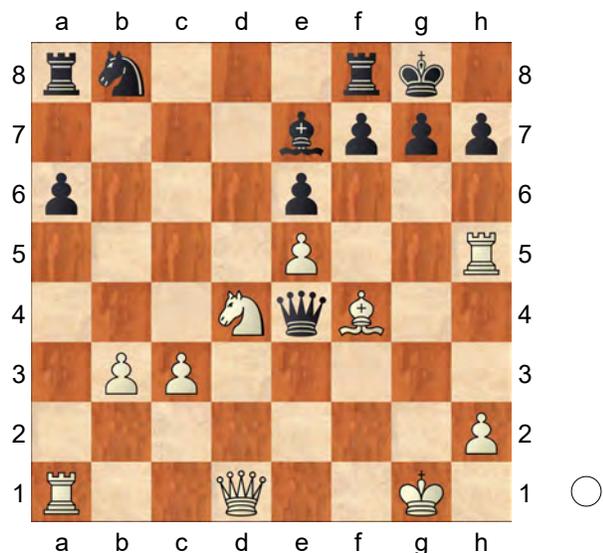


was the best chance, although it is a difficult move to find over the board Qb7! (19...Bxg2? reveals a nice resource for White 20.Rg3! Be4 21.Bh6 Bg6 22.Bxg7! Kxg7 23.Nf5+) 20.Ng3 Bg6 (20...Bxg2 21.Qg4 seems dangerous for Black)

21.Qg4 Nc6 Black is still better, for example 22.h4 Bc5! 23.Ra4 Ne7 24.h5 Bf5

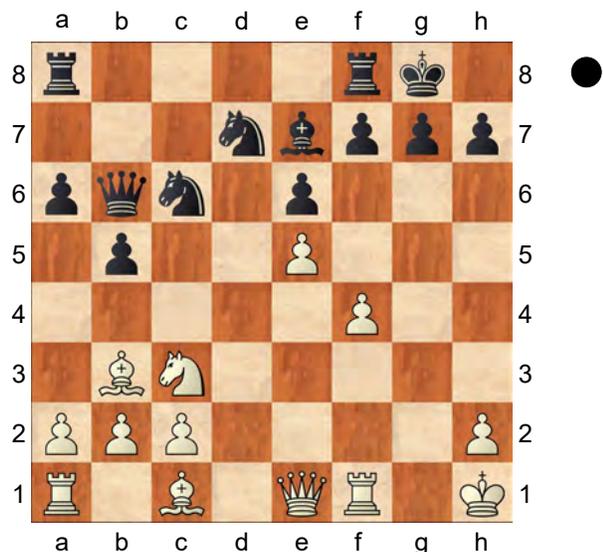
19...Bxg2 White for sure missed something, as he is just lost. 20.Rh5 [20.c4 Qb7-+]

20...Be4 21.Nxe4 Qxe4-+



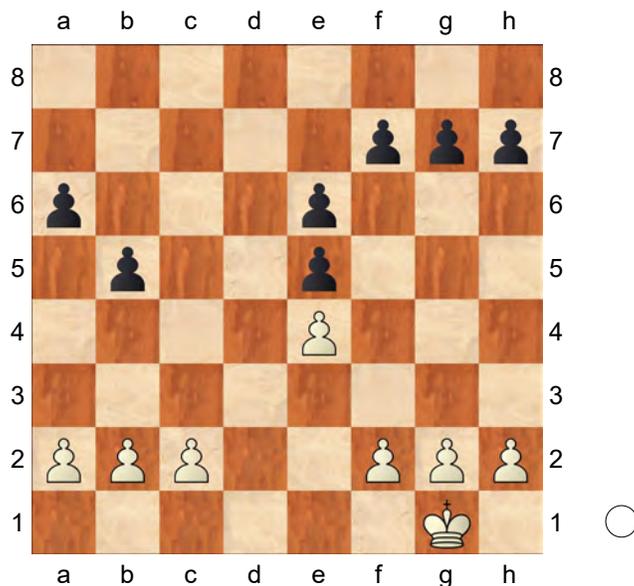
22.Qb1 Qxb1+ 23.Rxb1 Bc5 24.Be3 Nd7 25.b4 Ba7 26.c4 a5 27.b5 Rfc8 28.Nc2 Rxc4 29.Bxa7 Rxa7 30.Ne3 Rc5 31.Rh4 Nxe5 32.Kf1 Rb7 33.Rd4 f6 0-1

Exercise



What should Black play in this position? **16...Bb4!** The pin prevents White from achieving an active position with Ne4 and c3-Bc2, and secures a better endgame, as the knights will be much better than the bishops in such a fixed structure. **17.Qe3** [17.f5? Bxc3 18.bxc3 Ncxe5] **17...Bxc3 18.bxc3** [18.Qxc3 a5 19.a4 Nd4!] **18...Na5 19.Qf3 Rac8** Black has a nice advantage.

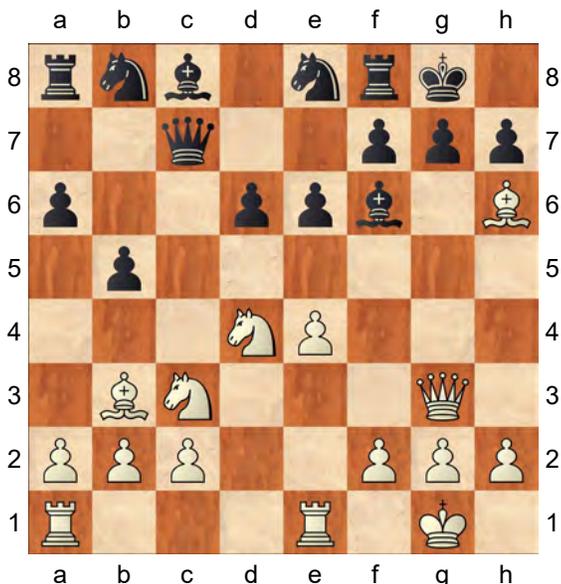
Structure 4



The following structure is a nice example of how doubled pawns can be beneficial in some cases. This usually arises after an exchange of the knights on the e5-square. Black's doubled pawns not only control important central squares but also make the idea of f2-f4-f5 impossible. Since White usually has a knight on c3, Black can make use of the d4-square which can be occupied by a knight. White usually tries to attack with his pieces. Such an attack, however, is not very efficient since Black has no weaknesses.

Tissir, Mohamed 2388
 Giri, Anish 2755
 Baku ol (Men) 42nd (1.1) 02.09.2016

1.e4 c5 2.Nf3 d6 3.d4 cxd4 4.Nxd4 Nf6 5.Nc3 a6 6.Bc4 e6 7.Bb3 b5 8.0-0 Be7 9.Qf3 Qc7 10.Qg3 0-0 11.Bh6 Ne8 12.Rfe1
 [12.Rad1 is the main move]
12...Bf6!



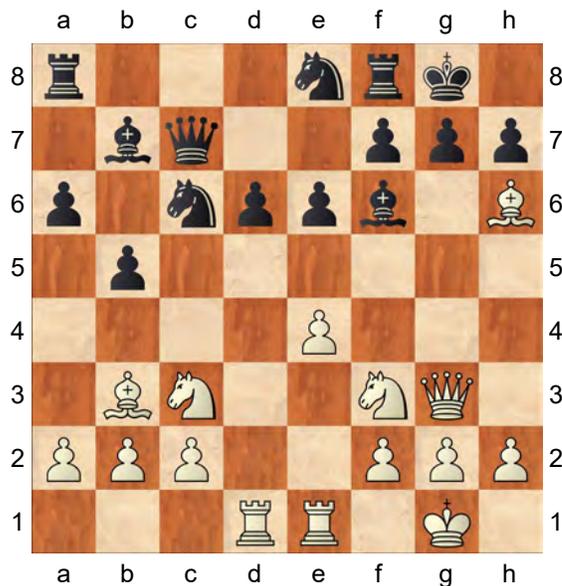
Giri is a very good reference to follow in the Najdorf, he always shows a good understanding of the positions and move orders, and this is no exception: Black defends g7 winning a tempo.

13.Nf3

[the natural 13.Rad1? is bad Be5! 14.Qg4 (14.f4 Bxd4+ 15.Rxd4 Qa7-+; 14.Bf4 Bxf4 15.Qxf4 b4! 16.Nce2 e5-+) 14...Bxd4! 15.Rxd4 e5-+]

[13.Be3 can be played, but relieves the pressure on g7 and allows Black to continue his development without problems Bd7 14.a3 Nc6 15.Nxc6 Bxc6 16.Bf4 a5 17.Qd3 Qb7; Sevian,S (2371)-Troff,K (2421)/USA-ch Saint Louis 2013 (5)/0-1]

13...Nc6 14.Rad1 Bb7



As White has no threats to sacrifice on e6 anymore, this bishop can be developed in a more active way. **15.Bf4 Rd8 16.h4** White still looks to the kingside, although he is lacking useful ideas. **16...Kh8! 17.Rd3**

[17.Bg5 was White's idea, but Black can just play h6! now 18.Bxf6 Nxf6 and his position should be easier, for example 19.a3 (19.e5? dxe5 20.Rxd8 Rxd8 21.Nxe5 Nxe5 22.Qxe5 Qxe5 23.Rxe5 b4! 24.Ne2 Rd1+ 25.Kh2 Ng4+-+) 19...Ne7 20.Nd2 (20.e5? Nf5 21.exd6 Rxd6 22.Qf4 Bxf3 23.Qxf3 Rfd8) 20...Qc5 (20...Ng6? 21.Bxe6!) 21.Qe3 Ng6 22.g3 Ne5]

17...Ne5! An instructive idea, as the transformation of the pawn structure leaves White's pieces without prospects of improving. **18.Bxe5**

[18.Nxe5 dxe5 19.Bg5 seems equal, and was maybe a safer option]

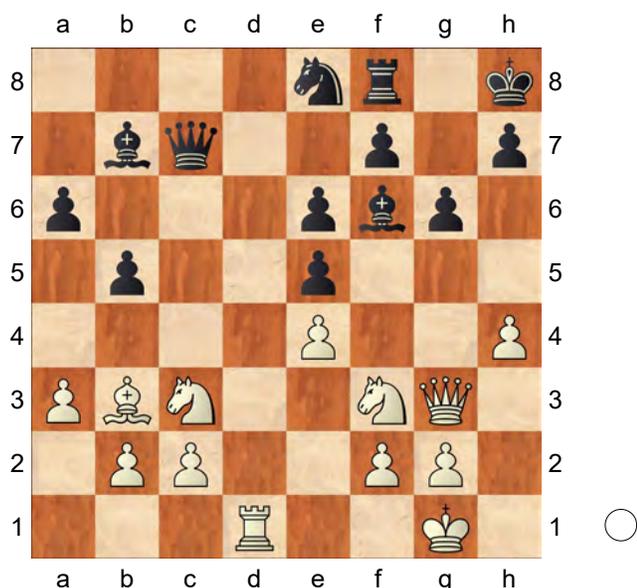
18...dxe5 19.Rxd8 White probably has thought this was good, as he can occupy the d-file, but actually, it gives Black more freedom to develop his pieces.

[so, 19.a3 should be better, for example g6 (19...Nd6 20.Nxe5) 20.Red1 Rxd3 21.cxd3 and the position seems equal]

19...Qxd8 20.Rd1

[20.Nxe5 Bxh4 21.Qe3 Bg5 22.Qd3 (22.f4 Be7 $\bar{7}$) 22...Nd6 23.Rd1 Be7 $\bar{7}$]

20...Qc7 21.a3 g6!



Giri finds a way to improve the knight.

22.Ng5

[22.Qh2 was the better try, but a difficult move to find h5 (22...Ng7 23.g4! is the idea) 23.Qg3 and the Ne8 is deprived of h5]

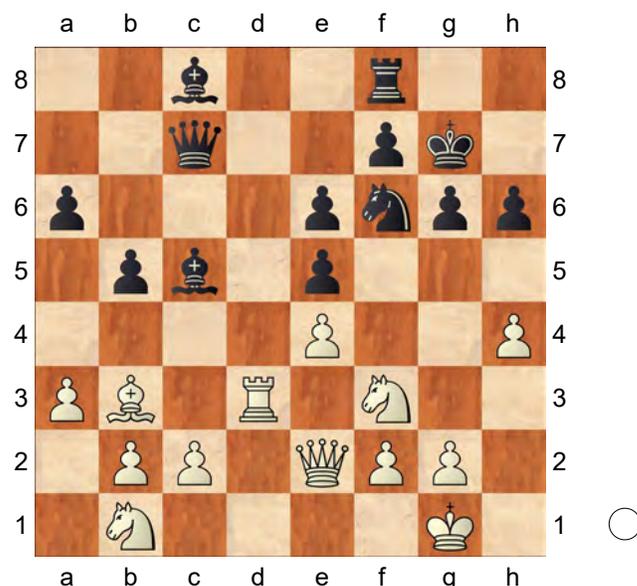
22...Bc8! Giri again finds a nice preventive move, this time overprotecting e6 against possible resources.

[22...h6 23.Bxe6!? could be White's idea hxg5 24.Rd7 Qc6 25.Rxf7 Qxe6 26.Rxb7 although Black should be technically winning]

23.Qd3 White managed to regroup the pieces, but due to Black's solid structure, it is very difficult to imagine a way of making further progress for him.

[23.a4!? was more active, but after h6 24.Nf3 b4 25.Nb1 a5 26.Nbd2 Ba6 $\bar{7}$ Black keeps a big advantage]

23...Be7 Finally the knight is back in the game. **24.Qe2 Nf6 25.Rd3 h6 26.Nf3 Kg7 $\bar{7}$** Black has more than one plan available: he can try Nd7-c5, or Bc5 and Ng4, or even prepare the advance of pawns on the queenside, all of these ideas seem very promising. Nothing similar is available for White, so it is fair to say that Black has a clear advantage. **27.Nb1** White looks for a regroupment of pieces, but he is just unable to accomplish it. **27...Bc5!**



28.Nh2

[28.Nbd2? Ng4-+ simply wins]

28...a5

[28...Nh5 was also very strong]

29.c3 Ba6 Black's moves are all natural and strong. **30.Rf3 Qc6 31.Nd2?**

[\triangleleft 31.Bc2 b4 32.Qe1 bxa3 33.Nxa3 Rb8-+]

31...a4!

[White was probably counting only on 31...b4 32.Bc4 Bxc4 33.Qxc4]

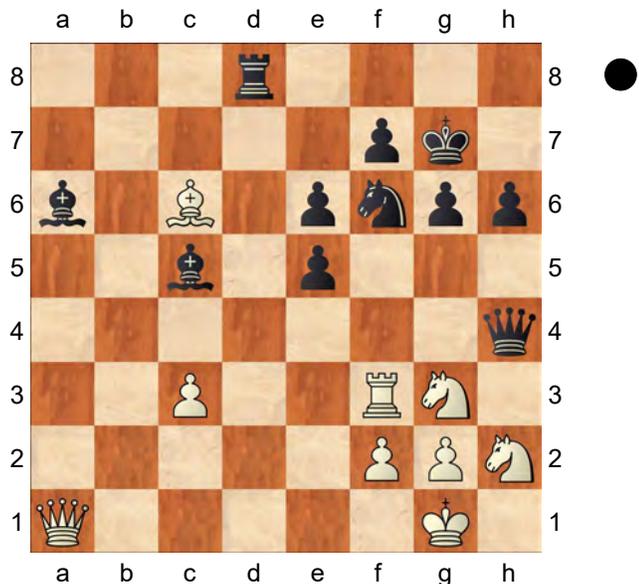
32.Bc2 b4! White is unable to avoid material losses. **33.Qe1**

[33.Bd3 Bxd3 34.Qxd3 bxa3 35.bxa3 Bxa3-+]

33...bxa3 34.bxa3 Rd8 35.Ndf1

[35.Nb1 h5-+ White is almost in zugzwang]

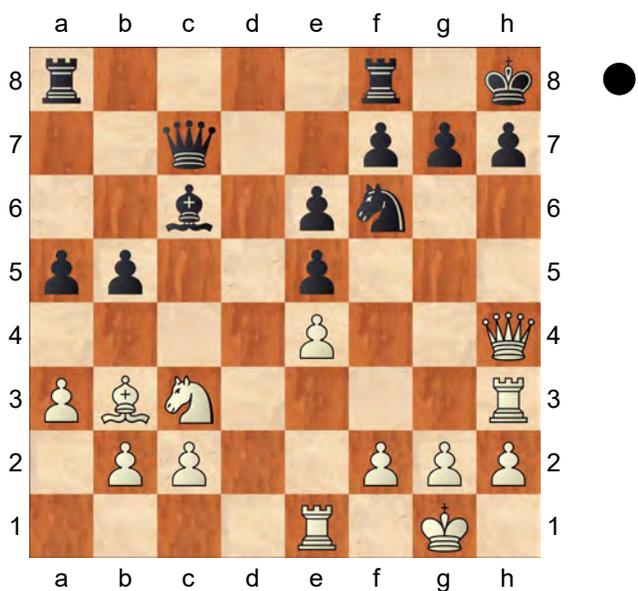
35...Bxa3-+ 36.Qa1 Bc5 37.Bxa4 Qxe4 38.Ng3 Qxh4 39.Bc6



A highly instructive example of how to handle such positions by Giri.

0-1

Exercise



21...Rg8! This curious set-up is quite solid for Black, and White has no attack at all.

[21...h6? it is rarely advisable to advance pawns on the side you're

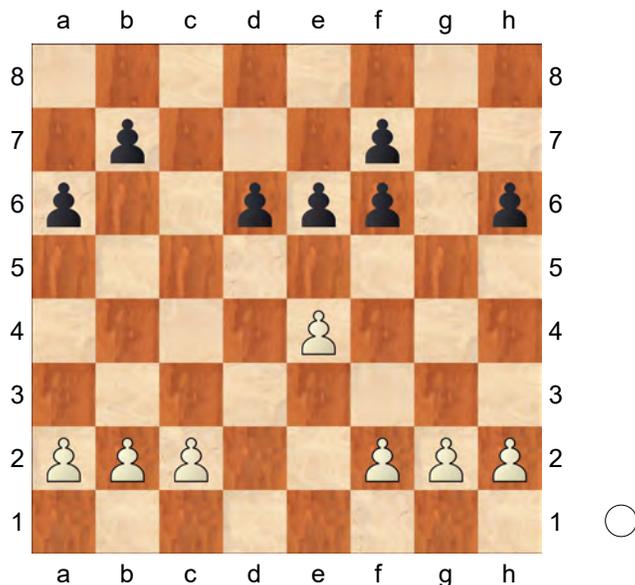
being attacked 22.g4 Nh7 23.g5 Rg8 24.Ree3 can be complicated in practice]

22.f3 Schlosser, M (2380)-Van der Vorm, T (2405)/ Vienna op 1996 (6)/0-1 What's the best continuation for Black?

[22.g4 g5! was the point of Black's defense 23.Qg3 (23.Qh6?? Rg6-+) 23...Kg7-+ Black's king is solid enough now, and he is ready to take the initiative on the queenside]

22...a4! 23.Ba2 b4! 24.axb4 Qb6+ 25.Qf2 Qxb4 26.Nd1 a3! 27.bxa3 Rxa3 28.Bb3 Ra1-+ Black is winning, as besides the active position, thanks to the Rh3 White is playing a piece down.

Structure 5 - without queens

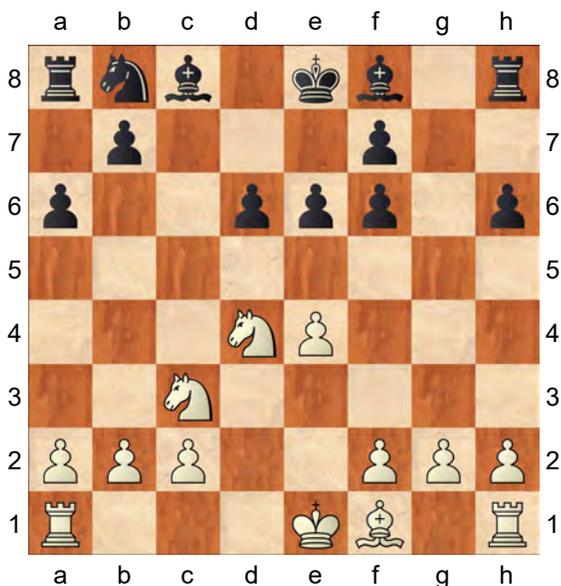


This structure may arise out of many Sicilian positions, but it is more common in the Najdorf and the Classical Rauzer. White had given the bishop pair away in order to spoil Black's pawn structure.

White's task is to put pressure on the central pawns by means of f4-f5, thus keeping Black busy enough to prevent the bishop pair from coming actively to the game. Due to his compact center, Black is usually solid enough to keep an equal position. The open g-file allows Black to put White's kingside under pressure after the typical h5-h4 advance. Another point is that when White realizes the plan with f4-f5, the e5-square becomes very attractive for a knight, but especially for the dark-squared bishop. Black can make use of it by means of the maneuver Bh6-f4-e5. The fact that queens are not on the board favors Black because the white queen puts a lot of pressure on Black's center.

Opcensky, Karel
 Kavalek, Lubomir
 CSR-ch30 Kosice (10) 17.02.1961

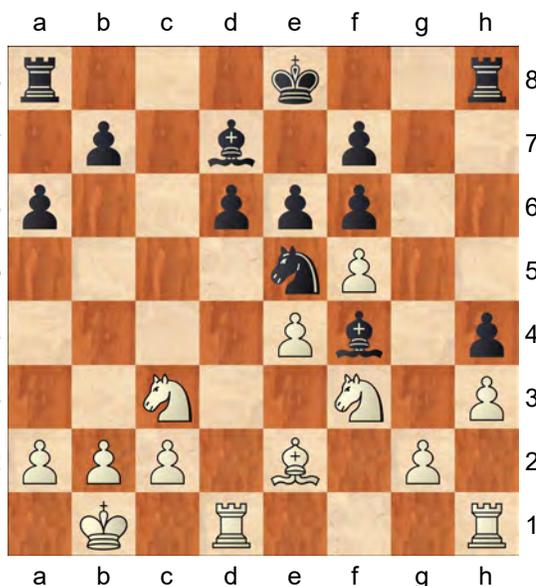
1.d4 c5 2.e4 cxd4 3.Nf3 d6 4.Nxd4 Nf6 5.Nc3 a6 6.Bg5 e6 7.Qf3 h6 8.Bxf6 Qxf6 9.Qxf6 gxf6



This leads to a balanced position where Black has no problems. **10.Be2**

[10.f4 this direct assault in the center doesn't work h5 11.f5 Nc6 12.Rd1 Bd7 13.Bc4 Ke7! 14.Bb3 Bh6 15.Rf1 Nxd4 16.Rxd4 Rag8 Chapter 5-6.Bg5 - 7th move sidelines/ 2018 with an excellent position for Black -]

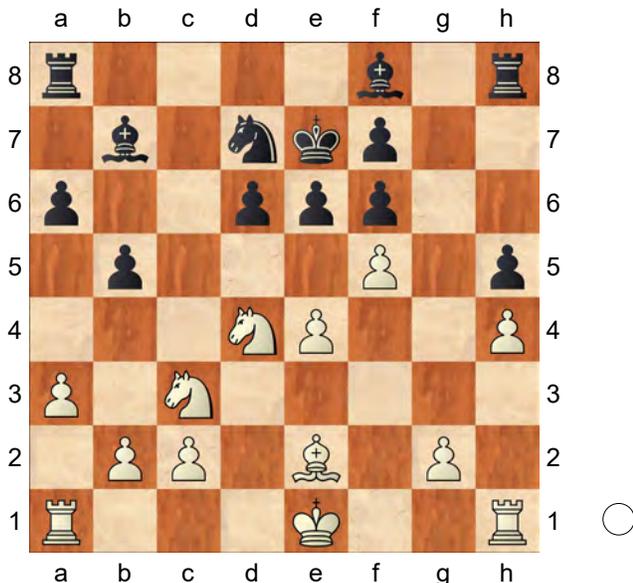
[10.0-0-0 Bd7 11.f4 Nc6 12.f5 Ne5 13.Be2 h5 14.h3 h4 15.Nf3 Bh6+ 16.Kb1 Bf4!



;Androsov, S (2102)-Bodnaruk, A (2331)/St Petersburg op 2007 (9)/0-1 was also great for Black as the bishop reached the nice e5 square]

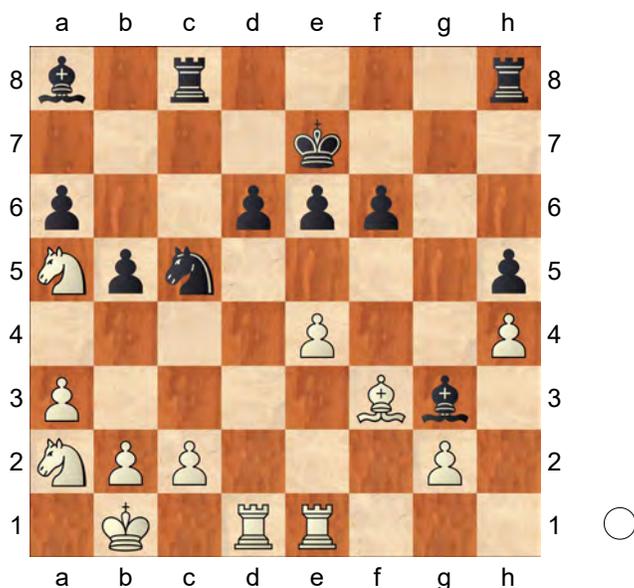
10...h5! A very important move, preventing the annoying positional threat Bh5 and also threatening h5-h4 and Rg8 with pressure on the kingside. [for example 10...Bd7 11.Bh5! the bishop not only keeps f7 attacked but also prevents the idea h5-Bh6, which is essential for Black Nc6 12.0-0-0 Nxd4 13.Rxd4 Be7 14.f4 Rc8 15.Rf1±]

11.h4!? White tries to exploit the weakness of the h5-pawn, fixing it as a target and keeping the Rh8 tied to its defense. He hopes to follow-up moving a knight to f4 or g3. But his plan is too slow and allows Black to get an easy and active development. **11...b5! 12.a3 Bb7 13.f4 Nd7 14.f5 Ke7!**

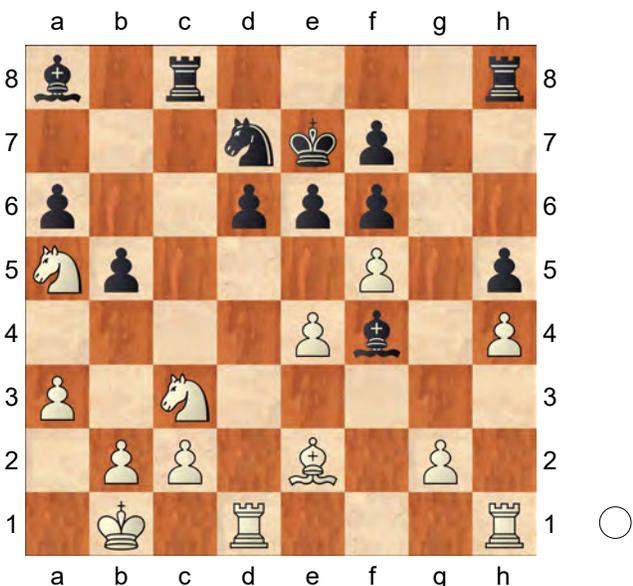


The bishop will cut both sides of the board from e5, giving Black a great advantage. Black has achieved all of his positional goals. **19.fxe6** White is forced to make concessions.

[19.Bf3 Be5 20.Ne2 Nc5-+]
19...fxe6 20.Bf3 Be5 21.Na2 Nc5
22.Rhe1?
 [Δ22.Rde1♣]
22...Bg3-+

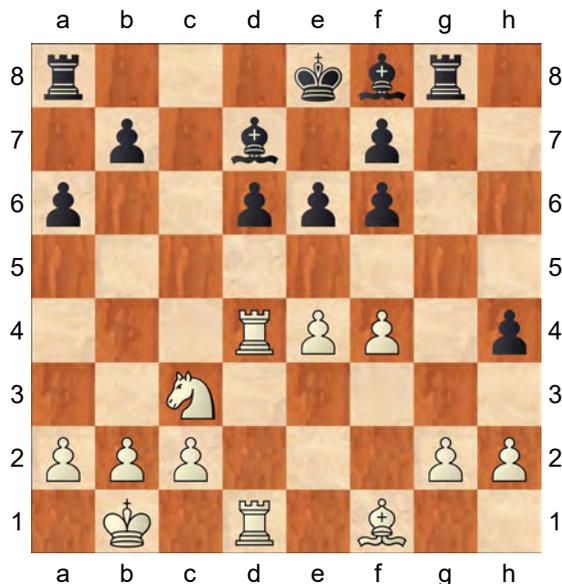


The king belongs to e7 in this endgame. **15.Nb3 Rc8** Now Black anticipates Na5, vacating a8 for the bishop. **16.Na5 Ba8 17.0-0-0 Bh6+ 18.Kb1 Bf4!**



White cracks under the pressure and can't avoid material losses. **23.Re2 Bxh4 24.c4 Rcd8 25.b4 Na4 26.Rh1 Bg5 27.Rxh5 Rxh5 28.Bxh5 bxc4 29.Nxc4 d5 30.exd5 Bxd5 31.Na5 Rh8** A very instructive game, as White didn't make obvious mistakes and still Black achieved all his strategical goals. **0-1**

Exercise



Find the best plan for Black.

16...Bh6! Improving the bishop by means of tactical motifs.

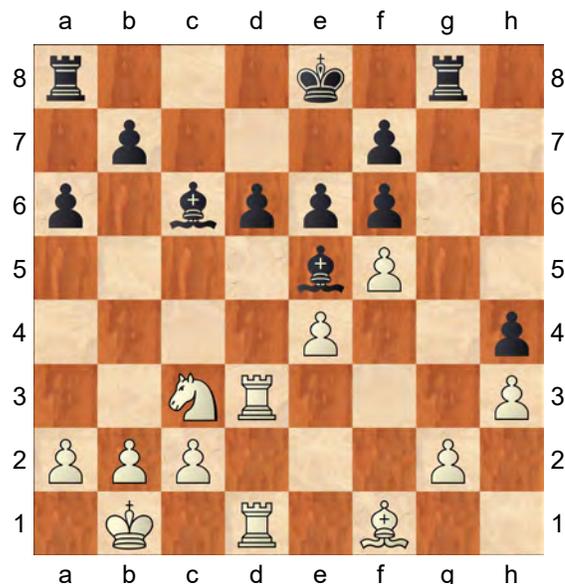
[instead, I played 16...Rd8?!
17.a4 Rg4 18.Ne2 Bc6 19.g3
hxg3 20.hxg3 Van Riemsdijk,H
(2320)-Quintiliano Pinto,R (2484)/
Florianopolis op 3rd 2017 (9)/ 0-1
with pressure for Black -]

17.f5

[17.Rxd6 Bc6 and Black regains the pawn with a better position, for example 18.f5 Bf4±]

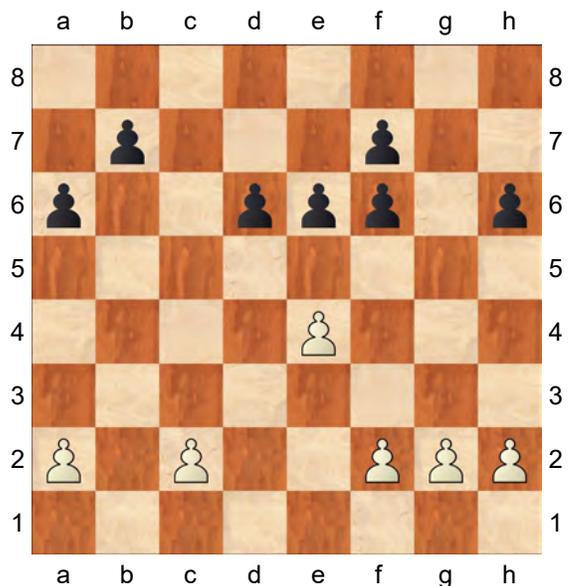
[17.Ne2 Bc6±]

17...Bf4 18.h3 Be5 19.R4d3 Bc6+



Black is almost winning.

Structure 6 - with queens



In this structure, White has sacrificed the b2-pawn, but the queens are on the board. In such positions, Black should be careful as the king is not that safe in the center anymore. In order to protect

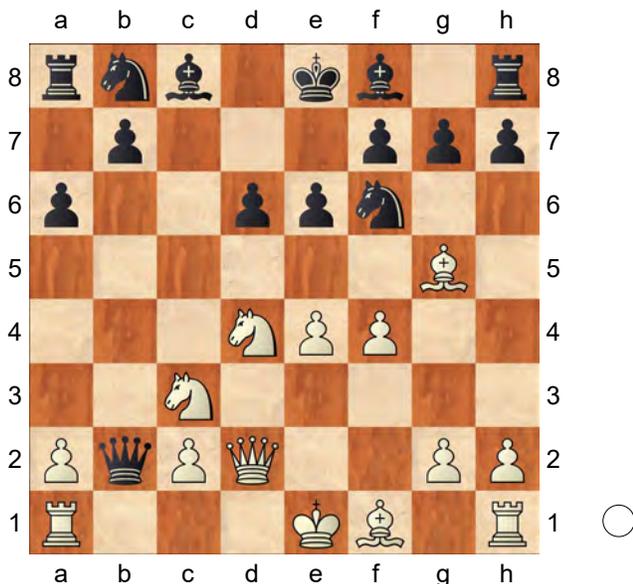
his king, Black usually castles long. I think that with a careful play, Black holds the balance in such structures.

□ Popov,Ivan1 **2594**
 ■ Shomoev,Anton **2559**
 RUS-chT Dagomys (10) 12.04.2008

1.e4 c5 2.Nf3 d6 3.d4 cxd4 4.Nxd4 Nf6 5.Nc3 a6 6.Bg5 e6 7.f4 Qb6

[another popular variation that reaches this structure is 7...Qc7
 8.Bxf6 gxf6 although White has not sacrificed b2 in this case]

8.Qd2 Qxb2



9.Nb3?! I think this is a bit inferior to developing the rook.

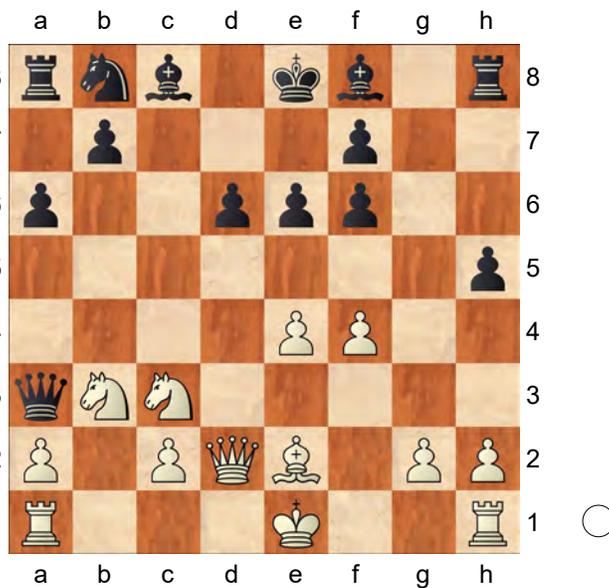
[9.Rb1 Qa3 10.Bxf6 gxf6 seems to be a better version for White: He has kept the centralized knight on d4 and developed one more piece. A recent game went 11.Be2 h5! 12.0-0 Qa5 13.Kh1 Nc6 14.Nxc6 bxc6 15.Qd4 Be7 16.Na4;]

Kokarev,D (2608) -Leko,P (2691)/TCh-ESP Div Honor 2018 2018 (3.3)/1/2-1/2]

9...Qa3

[9...Be7?? would fall in the only trap 10.a3+-]

10.Bxf6 gxf6 11.Be2 h5!



We already know how important it is to prevent the light-squared bishop from coming to h5. **12.0-0** White has some compensation for the pawn, of course, as he has developed all his pieces while Black kept making moves with the queen and pawns. But the typical way of exploiting a lead in development is by opening lines in the opponent's camp, and Black is safe against this in view of his solid central pawns. **12...Nd7 13.f5**

[13.Kh1 h4! an interesting way of looking for counterplay on the kingside 14.h3 (14.Rad1 h3! 15.g3 b5 ;Gashimov,V (2625)-Palac,M (2561)/EU-ch 7th Kusadasi 2006 (7)/0-1 the bishop is more active on b7 now due to the weakened diagonal -) 14...Be7 15.Rad1 b5! 16.Qe3 Bb7 17.f5 Ne5; Pruijssers, R (2261) -Senff, M

(2467)/Dieren op 2005 (2)/0-1 Black is solid enough, White soon ran out of active ideas and began to make mistakes]

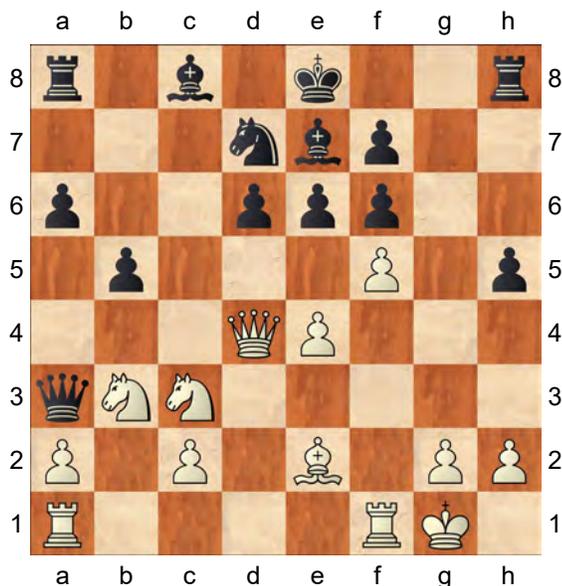
13...Be7 Black should forget the idea of developing the bishop to h6 with queens on the board: It is more important to keep the center and the king safe.

14.Qd4 Threatening to win the queen.

[14.Kh1 is most played]

[14.Nb1 Qa4!? (14...Qb2 15.Nc3 Qa3 16.Nb1=) 15.c4 Ne5 16.Nc3 Qc6 17.Kh1!? is still complex]

14...b5!



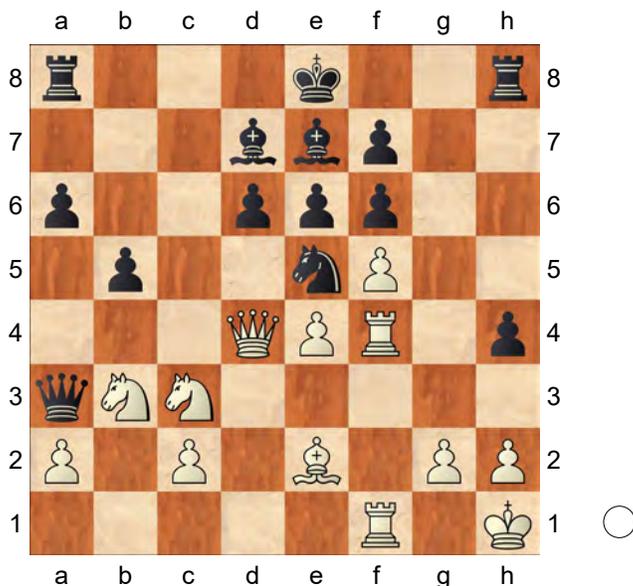
15.Kh1

[15.Nb1 is harmless now due to Qa4]

[15.Rf3 ;Guseinov,G (2489) - Villavicencio Martinez, A (2308)/ Rilton Cup 31st 2001 (5)/1/2-1/2 had an idea similar to the game - Black could obtain a great advantage now with Ne5 16.Rh3 h4 17.Rf1 Bd8! 18.Rf4 Rb8! 19.Kh1 Bb6 20.Qd1 Ke7 21.Rfxh4 Rxh4 22.Rxh4 b4 23.Nb1 Qxa2-+]

15...Ne5! Black is very solid now, and if the material was even we could say that

he was in a good position, but he is even a pawn up. **16.Rf4 h4! 17.Raf1 Bd7**



18.Nd1 Aiming to concentrate his forces on the kingside.

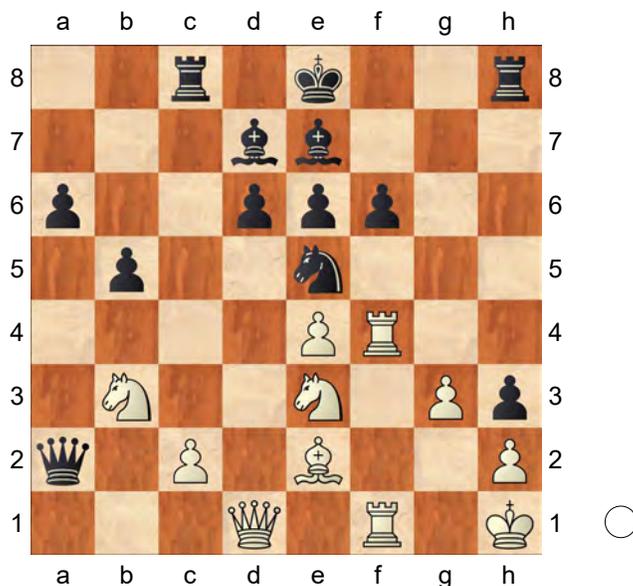
[18.h3 Rc8 seems almost winning for Black, for example 19.fxe6 fxe6 20.Qe3 Qb4 21.Nd1 Rxc2-+]

18...Rc8 19.Ne3 Qa4! Disturbing

White's forces. **20.fxe6 fxe6 21.Qd1**

[21.Qxa4 bxa4 22.Nd4 Rc3 23.Ng4 Nxc3 24.Rxc3 e5 25.Nf5 Rxc2 26.Bxa6 Rxa2-+]

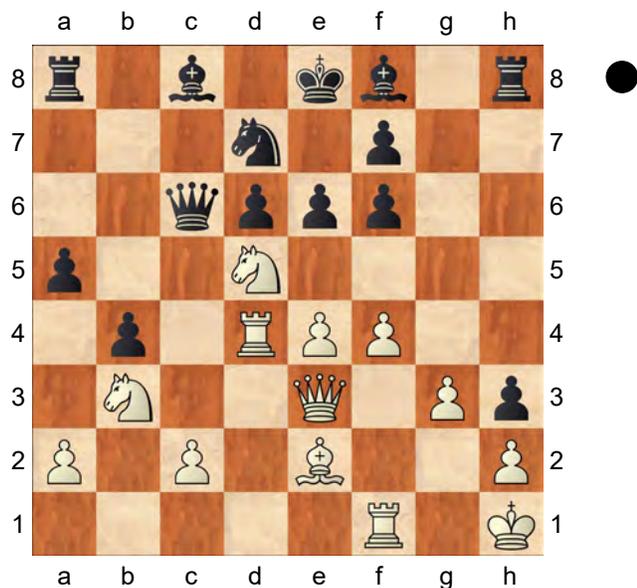
21...h3! 22.g3 Qxa2-+



Black has played solidly enough to prevent any active ideas by White, and it is time to realize the material advantage. **23.Nd4 Rc5 24.R4f2 Qa3 25.Nb3 Rc7 26.Ng4 Nxc4 27.Bxc4 Rc4 28.Rf4 Qb4 29.Nd2 Rd4 30.R1f2 Qb2 31.Qf3 Ra4 32.c3 Qc1 + 33.Nf1 Rc4 34.Rxf6 Rxc3 0-1**

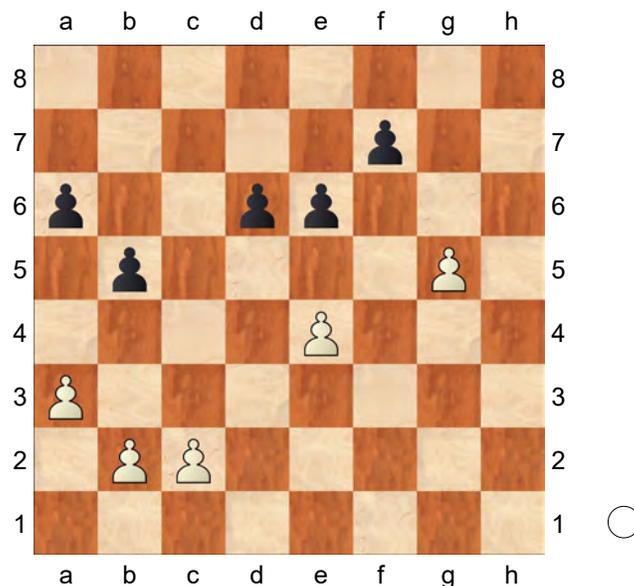
22...Bg7
 [22...Qxb5?? 23.Nc7+]
23.Re1 Kf8! Now, White has multiple problems with his attacked pieces. **24.a4**
 [24.Bxd7 Bxd7-+ the knight has no squares]
24...f5! Attacking a third piece, and guaranteeing that Black will win at least one of them. **25.Rdd1 exd5 26.exd5 Bf6-+ ;Gashimov,V (2625)-Palac,M (2561)/EU-ch 7th Kusadasi 2006 (7)/0-1**

Exercise



21...Qb7!! A nice defensive move, anticipating White's ideas.
 [21...Be7? 22.Rc4+-]
 [21...Ba6? 22.Nxa5±]
22.Bb5? After this move, White has burned all the bridges behind him.
 [22.Re1 exd5 23.exd5+ Ne5! is also better for Black]

Structure 7

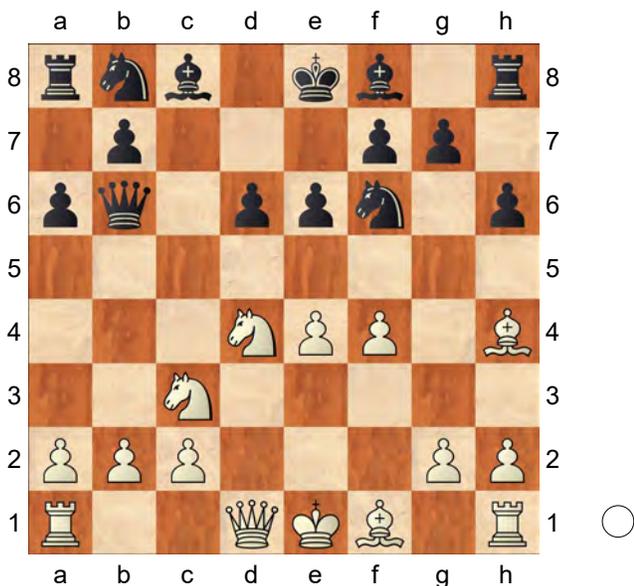


Now, we have a structure which is being reached in the line with 9.a3 of the Modern Poisoned Pawn. Regarding the pawn structure, Black has obvious advantages: White has two isolated pawns which can be attacked, and usually Black establishes a strong knight

on e5. Black's plan is to find nice squares for his remaining pieces and to provoke new weaknesses in White's position. Accepting a passive defense is a risky choice for White. Instead, he should play actively when possible. Complicating matters with g5-g6 is often a typical idea in such positions. Another typical idea is to put pressure on e5 with Nf3 and Bd4, thus aiming to eliminate the defense of f7. Objectively, the position should be equal, but in practice, Black's play seems always easier.

Karjakin, Sergey **2760**
 Vachier Lagrave, M.. **2789**
 9th London Classic 2017 (7.5) 09.12.17

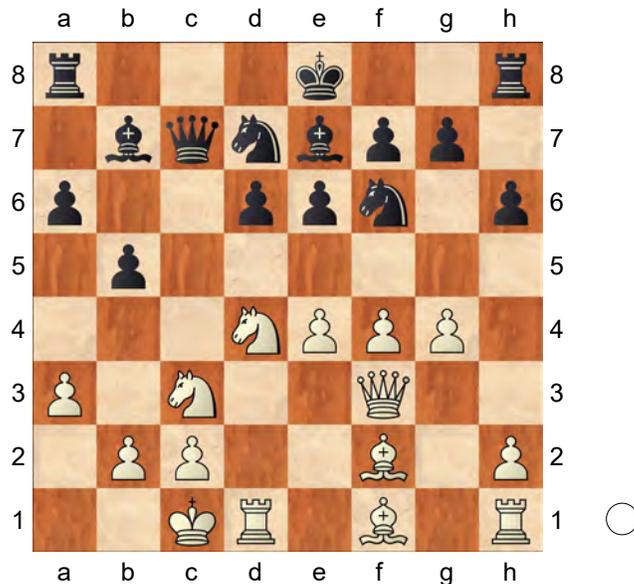
1.e4 c5 2.Nf3 d6 3.d4 cxd4 4.Nxd4 Nf6 5.Nc3 a6 6.Bg5 e6 7.f4 h6 8.Bh4 Qb6



Maxime really trusts in this Delayed Poisoned Pawn variation. He has played it very often and against some well-prepared guys like Giri, Nakamura, and Caruana, with a very good score. **9.a3 Be7 10.Bf2**

[a few months ago, Caruana surprised him with 10.Qd3!? Caruana, F (2807)-Vachier Lagrave, M (2791)/Sinquefeld Cup 5th 2017 (6)/1/2-1/2 but his idea didn't find followers since then.]

10...Qc7 11.Qf3 Nbd7 12.0-0-0 b5 13.g4 Bb7



in the later games Vachier Lagrave has opted to develop the bishop. **14.Bg2** White develops his bishop in order to make the thematic break d5 harder for Black. **14...g5** Vachier Lagrave improves his own play from his only defeat in this variation in recent games.

[that game went 14...Rc8 15.Kb1 g5 16.Qh3! Nc5? (in the notes of the game, GM Meier analyzes the strange move 16...Nh7!? that was played in correspondence games and looks like the best option) 17.Rhe1 White has developed all his pieces and is ready to take active measures in the center h5 (17...gxf4 18.g5 Nfd7 19.g6!→) 18.Nf5! ; Nakamura, H (2779)-Vachier Lagrave, M (2804)/ London Classic 8th 2016 (7)/1-0 White's attack was strong and precise -]

[14...d5? is not good anymore. After 15.exd5 Nxd5 16.Nf5! the point behind 14.Bg2 becomes clear]

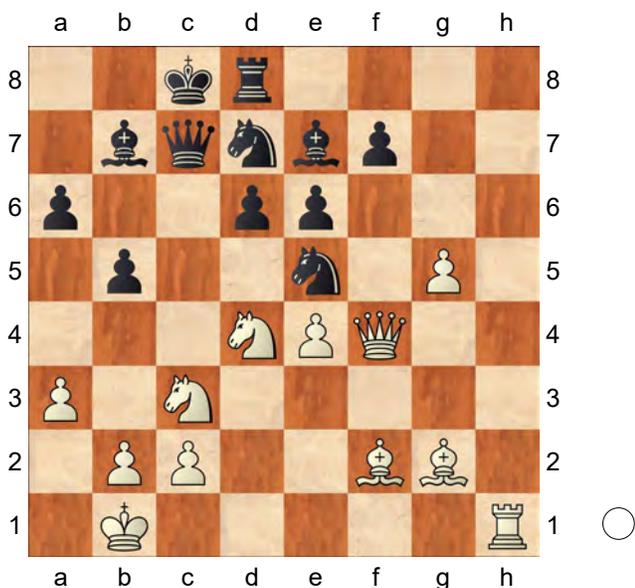
15.h4 Karjakin also shows excellent preparation, as this principled move was also played by Yu Yangyi and Naiditsch.

[15.f5 , closing the kingside, didn't give White an advantage. e5 16.Nb3 h5!? 17.h3 Rc8 18.Rhe1 Henriquez Villagra,C (2517)-Salem,A (2656)/Wch Rapid Doha rapid 2016 (6)/1/2-1/2 Black could have reached a better position with hxg4 19.hxg4 a5!⚡]

[15.Qh3 Compared to Nakamura-Vachier Lagrave, Black has a totally adequate response now 0-0-0! Kulaots,K (2597)-Santos Ruiz,M (2473)/EU-ch 18th Minsk 2017 (3)/0-1 suddenly, the Black king is safe and White's play on the kingside looks unjustified]

15...gxf4 16.g5 White rushes to open the kingside, the only way to take advantage of his better development.

16...Ne5! Black should vacate the d7 square for the other knight. **17.Qxf4 hxg5N 18.hxg5 Rxh1 19.Rxh1 Nfd7 20.Kb1 0-0-0=**



When watching the game, I was impressed by how Vachier Lagrave made Black's challenges in this variation look easy to solve. Black has finished his development, his king is safe and the knight is solidly placed on e5, securing him a nice position. Besides, the e4 and g5 pawns offer some good chances in the ensuing endgame. **21.Rh3** Karjakin had at least two interesting plans in this position.

[21.Nf3! would be good to play against the blockader on e5, and Black's life is not that easy, at least if he is hoping to play for a win

A) 21...Nxf3 22.Bxf3 Ne5 23.Bh5!Rf8 24.Bd4! again aiming to eliminate the annoying knight Kb8 25.Be2 and it is White who is fighting for the advantage;

B) 21...Kb8 22.Rh7 g5-g6 is a very unpleasant threat, even after Nf8 23.Rg7 Nfg6 24.Qg3 Rf8 25.Nxe5 Nxe5 26.Bd4↑ White keeps some pressure;

C) 21...Rg8 counter attacking g5 seems natural 22.Bd4! Kb8 (22...Nxf3? 23.Qxf3) 23.Bxe5 Nxe5 24.Nxe5! dxe5 25.Qxf7 Rxg5 26.Bf1 Bc8 27.Rh7 Bd8± forcing the trade of the queens, and despite White keeping some advantage, Black should be able to hold;

D) 21...Rf8 good prophylaxis

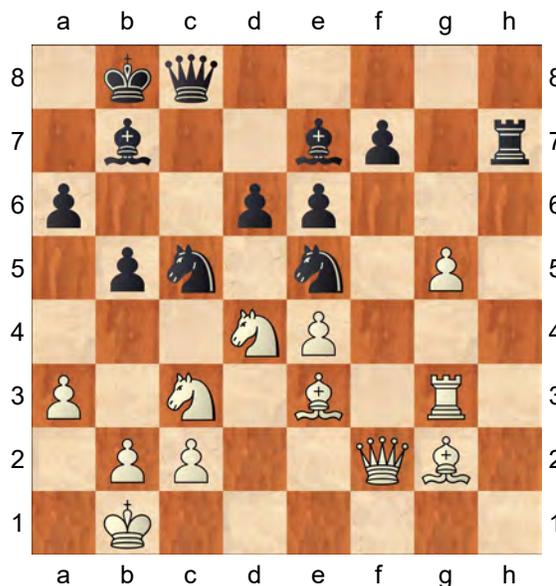
22.Rh7 Qd8! Now Black looks better organized to protect his position and to attack the opponent's weaknesses 23.Bh3 (23.Nxe5 Nxe5 24.Be3 Rg8 25.Rh5 is harmless for Black) 23...Nxf3 (23...Kb8 24.Nxe5 Nxe5) 24.Qxf3 Ne5 25.Qh5 Kb8! (25...Bxg5? contains a very dangerous and unexpected trap 26.Nd5! Nd7 27.Bg3! exd5 28.Bxd6→) 26.Bg3 The following sequence is almost forced: Bxg5 27.Bxe5 dxe5 28.Rxf7 Rh8 (28...Rxf7!/? could be a good practical solution 29.Qxf7 Bxe4! 30.Qxe6! Bb7 31.Qxe5+ Ka8± White is a pawn up, but I believe that Black has good chances in this endgame, especially because of the reduced number of pawns) 29.Qg4 Bc8 30.Qg1! Be7 31.Qg3 Bd6± White still can have some hopes due to Black's exposed king and the weak pawns, but Black should be fine with correct defense. The bishop pair covers many important squares.]

[21.g6!/? Rg8! keeps everything under control for Black, although the main line is very complicated 22.gxf7 Rxf7 23.Nxe6 Qc4! 24.Rh8+! (24.f8Q+? Nxf8 25.Nxf8 Qf7!! 26.Qxf7 Nxf7-+) 24...Nf8 25.Nxf8 Qf1+ 26.Be1! (26.Ka2 Rxf2-+) 26...Qxf4 (26...Qxe1+ 27.Ka2 Rf2 28.Qh6! Rxf7 29.Qe6+ Kc7 30.Ng6!) 27.Ng6+ Kd7 28.Nxf4 Rg1 29.f8Q Rxe1+ 30.Ka2 Bxf8 31.Rxf8 Bxe4 32.Nxe4 Rxe4=]

21...Kb8 22.Be3 Rg8 23.Rg3 Rg7
Of course, White's position should be still fine, but with the last moves Vachier

Lagrange protected f7 and started to press g5, even with the position remaining objectively equal, in a practical game it seems that White is about to feel uncomfortable. **24.Bh3 Rh7**

[24...Nf8!/?]
25.Qf2 Nc5 And so there's also e4 to take care about. **26.Bg2 Qc8!**



A nice move, now the queen can be directed towards the kingside, and the bishop has the excellent route d8-b6 or d8-c7 to be improved. **27.Bc1**

[27.Nb3!/? would stop both plans, but at the price of damaging the queenside structure, which is not an easy decision]

27...Bd8 28.Nf3 Ng6! Karjakin went for Nf3 too late, as in this position the black knight is not forced to stand on e5. **29.Nd4 Ne5 30.Nf3 Ng6 31.Nd4** One more draw in London? **31...Bb6** ...no! **32.Be3 Ne5 33.b3** A clear signal that White's position is already slightly unpleasant. I'm pretty sure that Karjakin would have preferred not to play this move.

[33.Nf3? is bad due to Nc4 $\bar{7}$ and the dangerous Bb6 prevents that White retreats his bishop to c1]

[33.Nb3 was the better option Nc4 34.Bd4 Qc7 35.Nd2! and White keeps everything under control Ne5 36.Rh3=]

33...Rh4 Vachier Lagrave steadily increases the pressure. **34.Nde2!** Karjakin is also showing his defensive skills. **34...Qc7 35.Bd4 Ncd7!** Forcing advantageous exchanges for Black.

[35...Nxe4? would be a terrible mistake 36.Nxe4 Bxe4 37.Bxe4 Bxd4 38.Qxd4 d5 39.Nc3! dxe4 40.Nxe4 \pm]

36.Bxb6?! We know from his match against Carlsen that Karjakin has really impressive skills to resist in passive defensive positions, and here he goes for it. However, this endgame will be too much, even for him.

[36.g6!? looks interesting fxc6 37.Bh3 Nc5 Black is keeping an extra pawn, although after 38.Bxe6!? Nxe4! 39.Nxe4 (39.Bxb6 Nxf2 40.Bxc7+ Kxc7 $\bar{7}$) 39...Bxd4 40.Nxd4 Bxe4 ∞ the nature of the endgame has changed, it looks sharper and can offer practical chances for White]

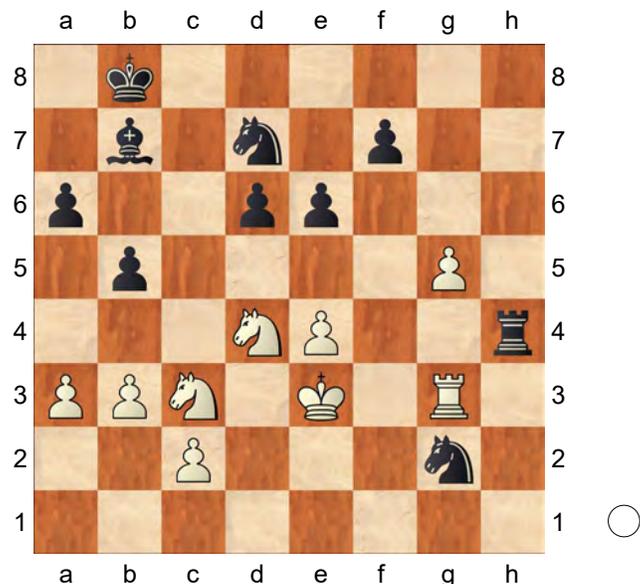
36...Qxb6 37.Qxb6 Nxb6 38.Nd4 Ng6!

The knight is alternating between e5 and g6 many times in this game, always posing problems for Black. Now it heads for f4, and the other knight will replace it on e5, with great pressure in White's camp. **39.Kc1** The monarch runs to help his forces in the center. **39...Nd7**

40.Kd2 Nf4 41.Ke3

[41.Bf3 is not keeping the bishop alive at all Ne5 $\bar{7}$]

41...Nxc2+!



Sometimes we become a bit hypnotized by such beautiful knights on good squares, but not strong players like Vachier Lagrave: He understands that without this bishop, White's defense is harder, and the e4-pawn is weaker.

42.Rxg2 Rh3+ 43.Kd2 And White is even more passive than before.

[43.Nf3?? Ne5 44.Rf2 Ng4+-+]

43...Ne5 44.Nde2 The only acceptable move in this difficult position.

[44.Rf2 Rg3]

[44.Rg1 looks like another playable option, but Black has a way to keep improving the position Ka7! 45.Rg2 Kb6 $\bar{7}$]

[44.g6!? was maybe the last practical chance fxc6 45.Rf2 (45.Nxe6 Nf3+ 46.Ke2 Nh4!-+) 45...Bc8 46.Rf6 $\bar{7}$]

44...Nf3+ 45.Kc1 Nh4 46.Rg1 Ng6

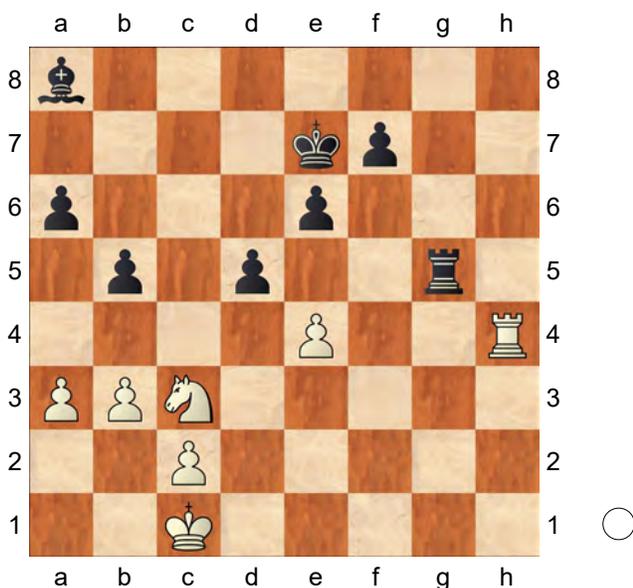
Black still didn't make much progress, but in such endgames, you don't really need this: Only keep playing good moves and make sure that your opponent is in an unpleasant position. In general, nerves, time and the difficulty of the position decide the issue. **47.Kd2**

Kc7 Finally, the king finds a useful function: To protect the f7-pawn. **48.Nd4 Kd7 49.Rf1 Ke7 50.Rg1 Ne5 51.Rg2 Ba8 52.Nde2** Now, further improvements are possible.

[52.Rg1 would offer more chances]
52...Nf3+ 53.Kc1 Rh1+! After bringing his king to the center, Vachier Lagrave expels White's king. **54.Kb2 Nh4 55.Rg4 Ng6 56.Nf4** Losing a pawn, but what else? There's no good advice's for White here.

[56.Ng3 Rh3 57.Nge2 Ne5 58.Rg2 (58.Rg3 Rxf3 59.Nxf3 Nf3) 58...Rh4]
 [56.Rg3 Rh4 57.Nd4 (57.Re3 Rg4) 57...Ne5! (57...Bxe4 58.Nxe4 Rxe4 59.Nc6+ with some chances) 58.Nf3 Nxf3 59.Rxf3 Rg4]

56...Nxf4 57.Rxf4 Rg1 58.Rh4 Rxf3 59.Kc1 d5

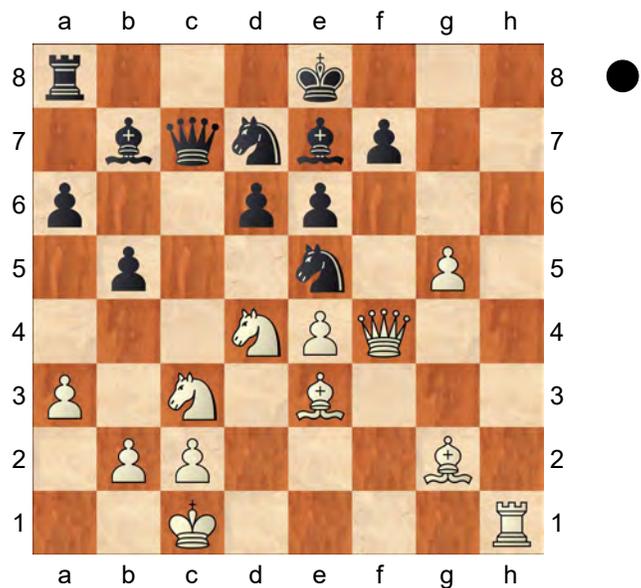


Black is totally winning and with the e and f-pawns passed and connected, the technical task is not exactly difficult, so Karjakin decided to call it a day. A nice win by Vachier Lagrave and the game had a great theoretical value, as even if

White plays the correct plan, Black seems to be ready to keep a fine position against this aggressive variation.

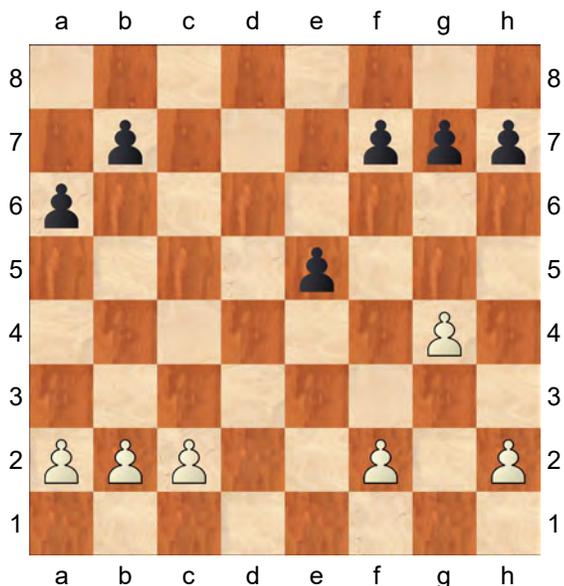
0-1

Exercise



20...Nf8! A good preventive move.
 [20...0-0-0?! would allow 21.g6!? White sacrifices the pawn for active play Nc5! 22.Kb1 fxf6 23.Rh7=]
21.Kb1 0-0-0 22.Bf1 Nfg6 23.Qg3 Rh8= Black is ok.

Structure 8



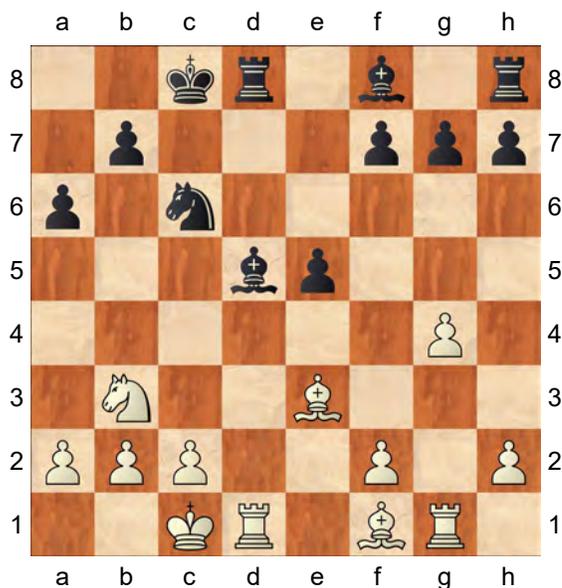
This unusual structure arises almost naturally in the endgame of the sideline 6.Rg1. Black has exchanged queens and a pair of knights and both kings usually go to the queenside. The nature of this variation is a draw with a correct play by both sides, although some details should be known. Due to the g4-pawn, White has an exposed position on the kingside and should be careful not to create new weaknesses. Black can use his kingside majority in a long run, but his main plan is to provoke the g4-pawn to advance. In this case, he can make use of the f5-square. With a white pawn on g5, Black can play g7-g6 followed by h7-h6 in order to invade via the h-file.

Belousov, Danila **2340**
 Antipov, Mikhail AI **2457**
 Chigorin Memorial 20th (9) 04.11.2012

1.e4 c5 2.Nf3 d6 3.d4 cxd4 4.Nxd4 Nf6 5.Nc3 a6 6.Rg1 e5 7.Nb3 Be6 8.g4 d5 9.exd5

[9.g5 is another way to reach the endgame, but knowing that one of Black's ideas is to provoke this advance in the endgame, I would say that this is even a slightly improved version for him Nxe4 10.Nxe4 dxe4 11.Qxd8+ Kxd8 12.Bg2 Kc7 13.Bxe4 Nc6=]

9...Nxd5 10.Nxd5 Qxd5 11.Be3 Nc6 12.Qxd5 Bxd5 13.0-0-0 0-0-0

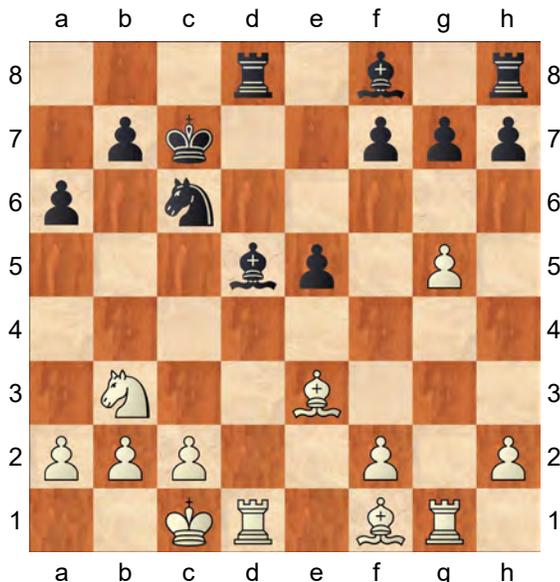


14.g5?! This advance is dubious from a strategical point of view. It seems to gain space on the kingside, but actually Black will use the pawn as a hook to open the h-file.

[14.Bb6 or]
 [14.Be2 should be more reliable]
14...Kc7!

Preventing Bb6. **15.Bh3?!** This will bring White problems.

[15.Be2 g6 16.h4 h6 17.a3
seems still equal hxg5 18.hxg5 Rh4
19.Rd2 Be6 20.Rxd8 Nxd8 21.Nc5



Bf5 22.c3=]
[15.a4 was also playable Be6
16.Rxd8 Nxd8 17.a5 Nc6 18.Bb6+
Kc8 19.Nd2]

15...g6! h6 in the next move is already unpleasant.

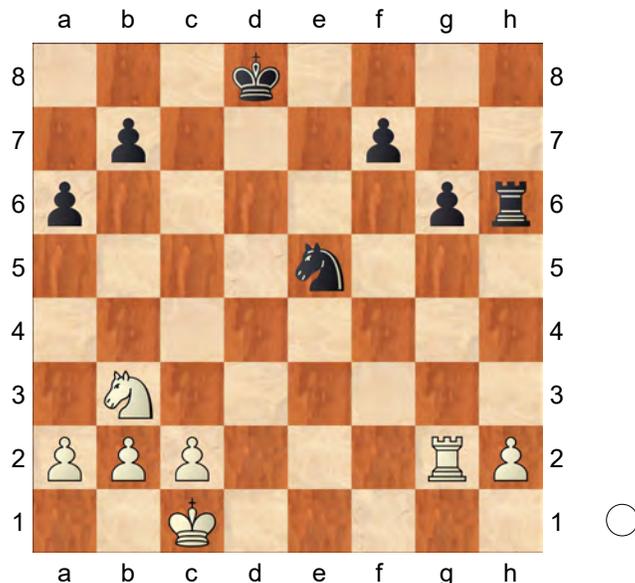
[White was probably just counting on 15...h6 16.g6! when Black has no advantage]

16.f4?

[White could still avoid the worst with 16.Bg4 h6 17.h4 after hxg5 18.hxg5 Rh4 I think Black is a bit more active, but White has no serious problems and should keep the balance]

16...h6! 17.fxe5 hxg5 18.Bxg5 Bh6! Maybe the move missed by White.

19.Bxh6 Rxh6 20.Bg2 Bxg2 21.Rxd8 Kxd8 22.Rxg2 Nxe5



The endgame is much better for Black - he has a passed pawn already, pressure on h2 and more active pieces. **23.Nc5 Kc7 24.Nd3?!**

[24.Re2 f6 25.c3 a5 26.b3 b6 27.Ne4 Ng4 28.Kd2 f5 29.Nf2 Rxh2! Black wins the pawn endgame. 30.Nxg4 Rxe2+ 31.Kxe2 fxc4 32.Ke3 Kc6 33.Kf4 Kd5+]

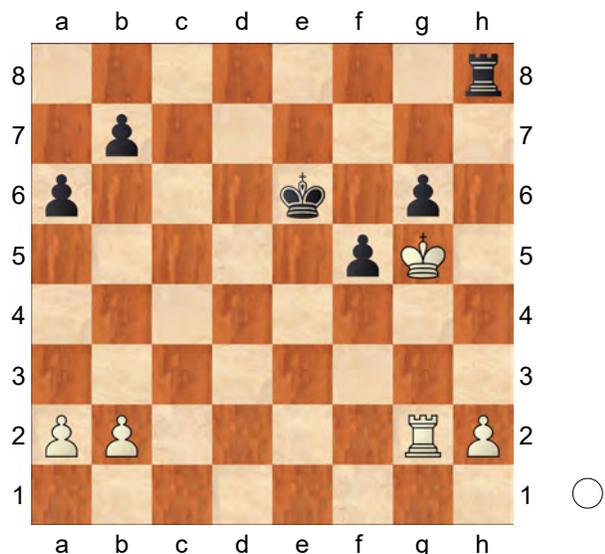
24...Nxd3+! White was betting on drawing chances of rook endgames, but Black knows what he is doing, as his king and rook will be more active than the opponent's. **25.cxd3 Kd6 26.Kd2 f5 27.Ke3 Ke5 28.d4+ Kf6 29.d5!?** White looks for desperate measures to activate his pieces, or at least one of them.

[29.Kd3 b5! 30.Kc3 a5! The king can't be activated]

[29.Rd2? Rh3+-+]

[29.Kd2 f4 30.Kd3 Kf5 31.d5 g5+- is an easy win for Black]

29...Ke5 30.d6 Kxd6 31.Kf4 Ke6 32.Kg5 Rh8!



This resource secures Black's advantage. **33.Rc2**

[33.Kxg6? Rg8+-+]

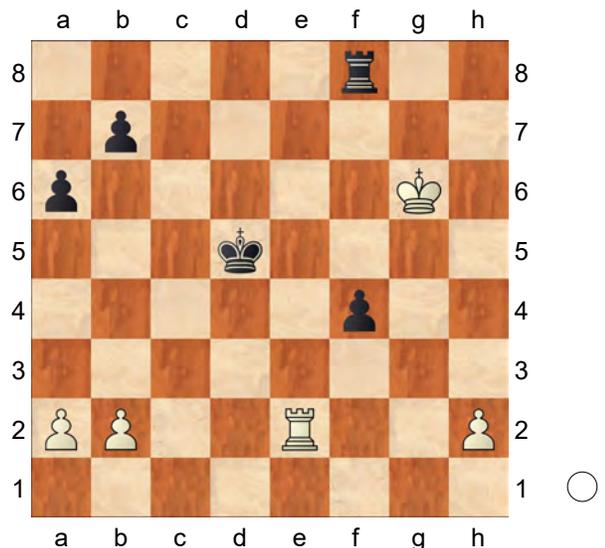
33...Rf8! By supporting the f-pawn now, Black wins. **34.Re2+**

[34.h4!? was White's best chance Rh8! 35.Rc4□ (35.Re2+ Kf7-+) 35...Rd8!

A) 36.Kxg6 Rg8+ 37.Kh7 (37.Kh5 Kf6) 37...Rg4!-+;

B) 36.Rb4 b5 37.a4 Rd2 38.axb5 Rg2+ 39.Kh6 axb5 40.Rxb5 f4-+]

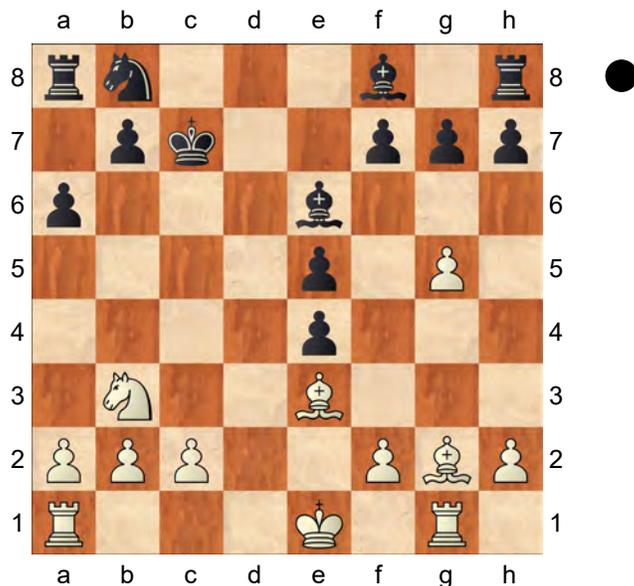
34...Kd5 35.Kxg6 f4-+



The f-pawn is unstoppable now. **36.Kg7 Rf5 37.Kg6 f3! 38.Rf2 Ke4 39.h4 Rf8**

40.Kg7 Rc8 41.h5 Ke3 0-1

Exercise



Find the most promising idea for Black. **13...h6! 14.gxh6**

[□14.h4 hxg5 15.hxg5 Rh4 16.Nd2 Nc6 17.Nxe4 Nd4 18.Bxd4 exd4̄]

14...g6! A nice operation to leave White with weak points on the kingside.

15.Bxe4 Nd7 16.0-0-0 Bxh6 17.Rg3

Prasad, D (2465)-Sasikiran, K (2569)/IND-ch 39th Nagpur 2002 (4)/0-1

17...Bxe3+ 18.Rxe3 Rac8̄ And Black has practical chances in view of his better structure.