



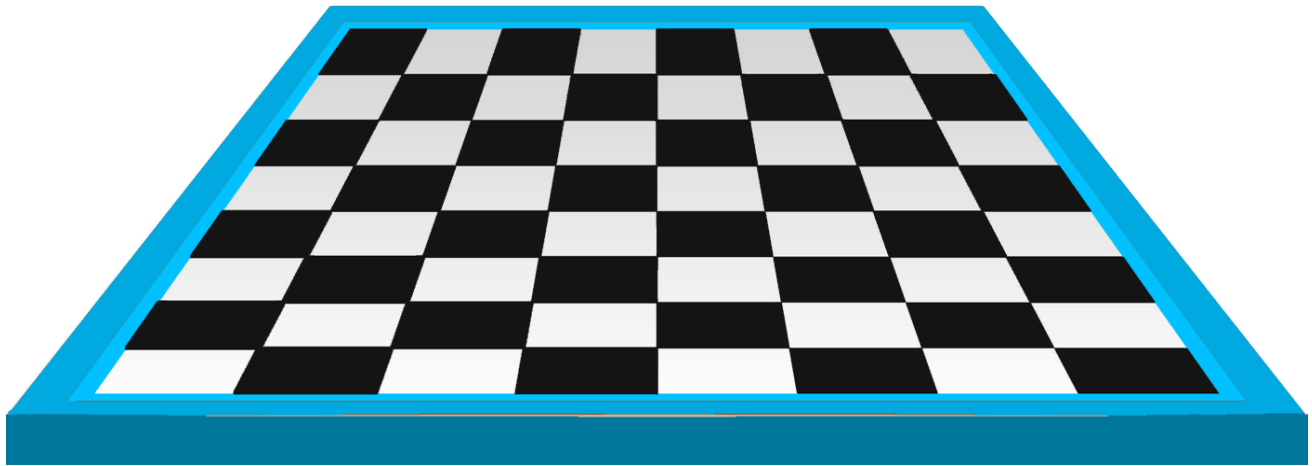
Issue 18

Modern Chess Magazine



Defense in Practical Games

Typical Anti-Sicilian Structures



Brilliant Missed Opportunities

Missed Stalemates

Benoni Strategy :

Piece Play

Endgame Series 18

Opposite-colored bishops

Part 1

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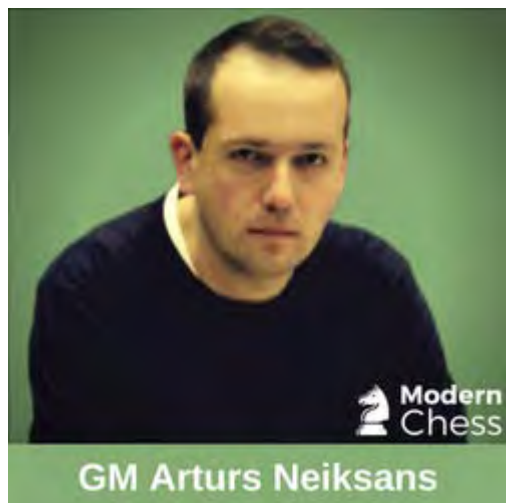
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Typical Anti-Sicilian Structures



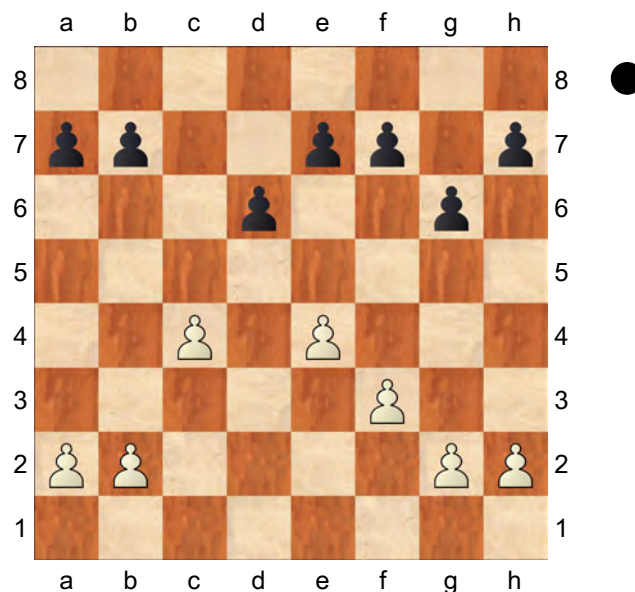
Dear Readers,

In this article, I am going to provide you with an overview of the structures arising from the so-called Moscow Variation in Sicilian Defence (1.e4 c5 2.Nf3 d6 3.Bb5+). In the database Moscow Variation against the Sicilian - Complete Repertoire against 2...d6 I examined the theoretical subtleties of this line.

Within the framework of the present article, I cover 6 structures which are typical for this variation. When dealing with a given structure I follow a simple logic:

Explanation of typical plans and ideas
Extensively annotated model game

Position 1

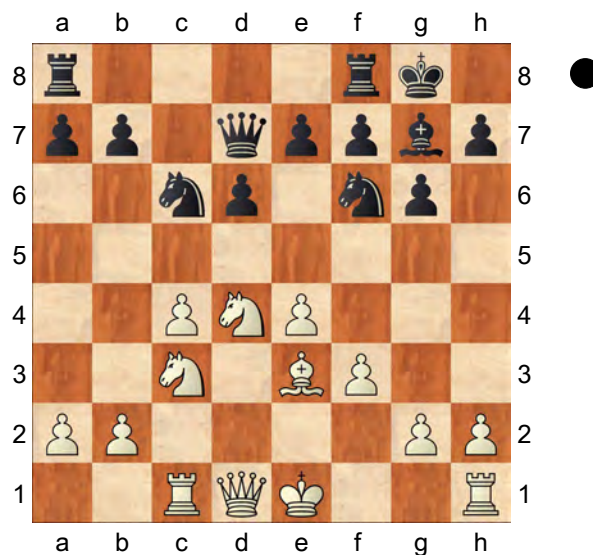


This is a classical pawn structure from the so-called Maroczy Bind setup where Black has developed his bishop to g7. Of course, it very much depends what actual pieces are present on the board but still, we can draw some guidelines to follow. First, let's take a look what Black wants. Usually Black has two potential breakthroughs with the pawns: 1) either with or without the help of the a-pawn prepare the b7-b5 push. The idea is to eliminate the annoying bind White has put on Black and free some space, most often giving two open or semi-open files for Black rooks on b-file and c-file. If the b-pawn push is successfully executed, it will also make Black easier to prepare the d6-d5. To meet it, White has a few options. He can play a2-a4 not only with intentions to double take on b5, but also organize a passed pawn by playing cxb5, followed by a4-a5, which can be supported by b2-b4. At some occasions, White can freely allow the b7-b5 to be executed as after the exchange the pawn on b5 or a6 might

become a weakness. If Black has positioned his rooks on a-file and b-file, White can meet b7-b5 with c4-c5 by trading the c-pawn for Black's d-pawn. This would undermine Black's strategy placing both rooks so far in the corner solely hoping to open some lines. 2) A very common idea for Black here is also aiming for a f7-f5 breakthrough. The idea is either to secure an outpost on e5 for a piece after the fxe4 and fxe4 or perhaps even f5-f4 or force White to play exf5 which can be met with gxf5, followed by e7-e5 and very typical for endgames → Kg8-f7-e6, giving Black a little center. This idea most often works in the endgame phase, less in the middlegame. If White has both rooks still at the board, it makes sense to go for the exf5 plan and position both rooks at the e-file and d-file, potentially also bringing a knight to d5 and targeting the weak e7 pawn. White's typical plans vary on what pieces he has on the board, but I would always recommend keeping as many pieces as you can, especially the queen who can contribute to a successful kingside attack. The most common pawn push for White here is to prepare f3-f4 and either f4-f5 for a direct assault against the Black king, or the positional e4-e5, which allows White to organize a potential passed pawn at the queenside.

□ **Carlsen, Magnus** 2834
 ■ **Vachier Lagrave, Maxime** 2773
 Model Game (2.1) 13.12.2015

1.e4 c5 2.Nf3 d6 3.Bb5+ Bd7
 4.Bxd7+ Qxd7 5.c4 Nf6 6.Nc3 g6
 7.d4 cxd4 8.Nxd4 Bg7 9.f3 0-0
 10.Be3 Nc6 11.Rc1!?



a tricky order of the moves with the idea to prevent Black from immediately targeting the c4 pawn, in that case simply playing b3 and the knight at c3 is protected. There's nothing wrong with playing 11.0-0 immediately **Nxd4** a straightforward approach to solving the opening problems which make White's choices a lot easier

[11...a6 12.Na4! Qc7 13.Nxc6 Qxc6 (13...bxc6 14.0-0 c5 15.b3 and White is pushing) 14.0-0 b5 15.cxb5 Qxb5 16.b3 and Black should be close to equal, but the position feels more pleasant for White due to the passed pawn possibilities at the queenside.]

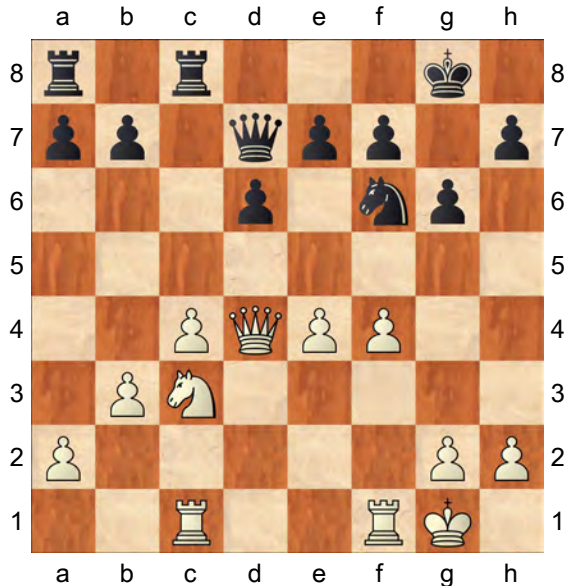
[11...Rac8 12.b3 a6 13.Nxc6! bxc6 14.0-0]

12.Bxd4 Rfc8

[12...a6 13.Na4 Qc6 14.Nb6 Rad8 15.b3 e6 16.0-0 Nd7 17.Bxg7 Kxg7 18.Na4! with a small edge for White]

13.b3 Nh5?! this can't be good as it gives White free hands to start an assault at the kingside 14.0-0 Bxd4+ 15.Qxd4 Nf6 16.Rfe1 White had at his disposal an alternative plan to attack the king instead of fighting for a better endgame

[16.f4!



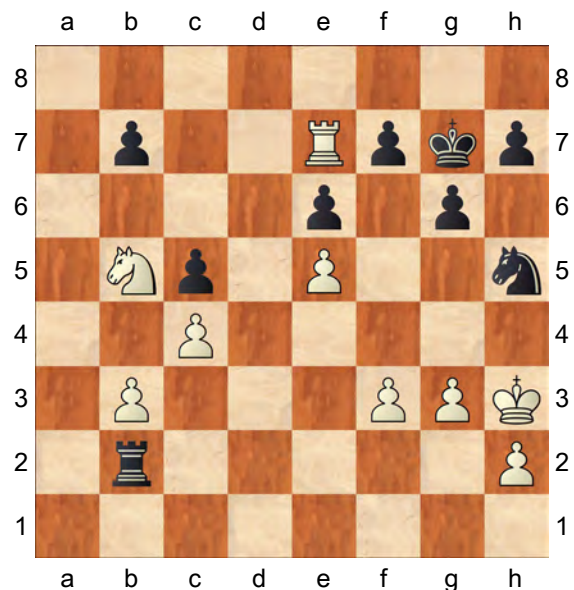
it's very difficult for Black to understand where to position his pieces. Even if the a7–a6 move becomes possible because of the b7–b5 threat, White can calmly repel it with a2–a4. White probably wants to keep queens on the board for a successful kingside assault. b6 (16...a6 17.Na4) 17.Rce1 Rc5 18.h3 a6 19.Qe3±]

16...Rc7 17.Rcd1 centralizing the heavy pieces and preparing f3–f4 and e4–e5 at the right moment **Qc6** Black badly wants to trade the queens **18.Nb5 Rd7 19.Nxa7!** a sudden change of character of the position – instead of a positional squeeze Carlsen goes for a better endgame **Qc5 20.Qxc5 dxc5 21.Nb5 Rxa2 22.e5 Rxd1 23.Rxd1 Nh5 24.g3!** because of the misplaced black knight on h5 Black has some real practical problems **Rb2 25.Rd8+ Kg7 26.Re8 Rb1+ 27.Kg2 Rb2+ 28.Kg1 Rb1+ 29.Kg2 Rb2+ 30.Kh3 e6**

[30...Rxb3 31.Rxe7 Kf8 32.Rxb7 Rxf3 33.Nd6 Ng7 34.Kg2 Rc3 35.Rxf7+ Kg8 36.g4 also doesn't look fun for Black, but perhaps here he has more chances to save the game because of the activated pieces]

31.Re7

[31.Nd6! Rxb3 32.Kg4 f6 (32...f5+ probably because of this check White discarded this variation as a possibility, however... 33.Kh4 Rxf3 34.Re7+ Kg8 35.Kg5! I assume this is what M. Carlsen missed in his calculations – that his king becomes a key piece to checkmate his colleague!) 33.Re7+ Kg8 34.f4± and White's pieces are dominating the board with excellent winning chances. Notice how the White king is ready to join the action!]



Still very good but White could have played stronger here **31...Rxb3 32.Kg4 Kf8 33.Rxb7?!**

[33.Rc7!±]

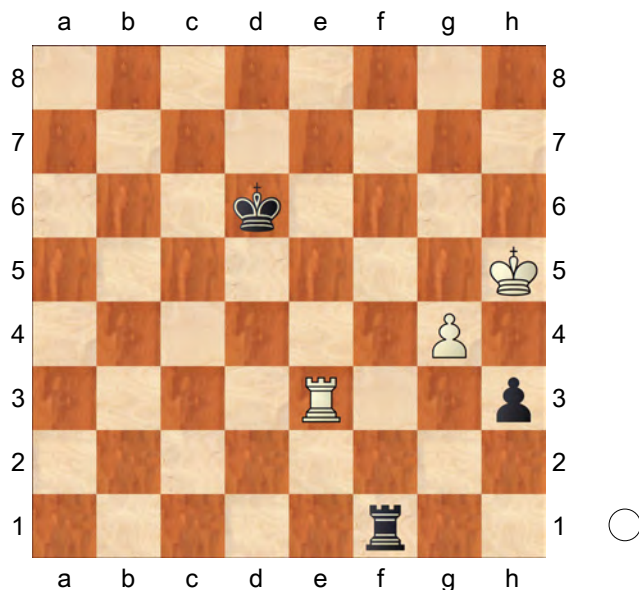
33...h6 34.Rc7 f5+! 35.exf6 Nxf6+

36.Kf4 g5+ 37.Ke5 Ne8 38.Rxc5 Re3+ 39.Kd4 Rxf3 Because of White's inaccuracies after a tough defense Black has almost managed to save the game. However, the World champion is notorious for fighting until the end!
40.Re5 Rf2 41.Rxe6 Rxh2 42.c5 h5 43.Nd6 Nxd6 44.cxd6 Kf7 45.Re3 h4 46.g4 h3?! this innocent-looking move is the first mistake in a drawn endgame, although it's not losing yet – only Black has to be extremely accurate now

[46...Kf6! 47.Kd5 h3 48.Kc6 Rc2+ 49.Kd7 h2=]

47.Ke5! body check! **Rh1 48.d7! Ke7 49.Kf5+ Kxd7 50.Kxg5 Kd6 51.Kh5 Rf1??**

[51...Ra1 now Black has to find a series of only moves 52.Rxh3 Ra8 53.Rd3+ Ke7 54.Kh6 Kf8 55.Kh7 Ra7+ 56.Kh8 Kf7 57.Rd6 Ra4=]

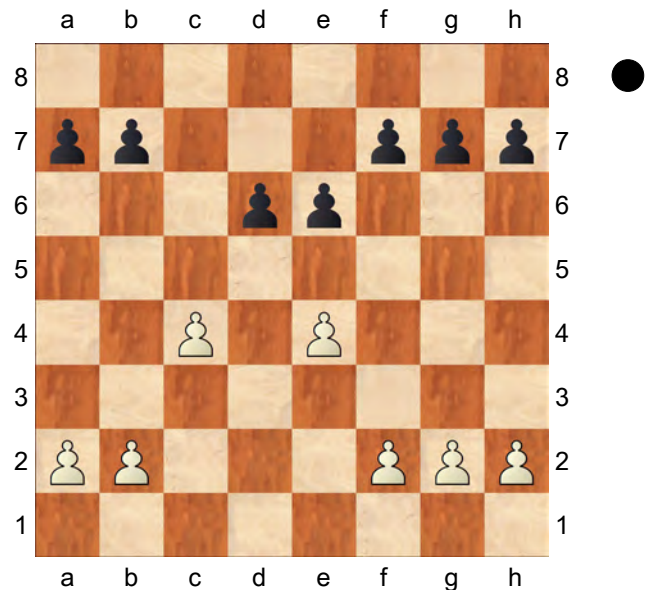


a very unfortunate retreat – pretty much the only losing move! **52.Rxh3** and just like that, White is winning **Ke7**

[52...Rf8 53.Rd3+ Ke7 54.g5 and because of the unfortunate placement of the rook, Black loses Kf7 55.Rf3+ Kg8 56.Rxf8+ Kxf8 57.Kg6+-]

53.Kg6 Rf6+ 54.Kg7 Rf7+ 55.Kg6 Rf6+ 56.Kg5 Ra6 57.Rf3 the rest is an easy technique
1-0

Position 2

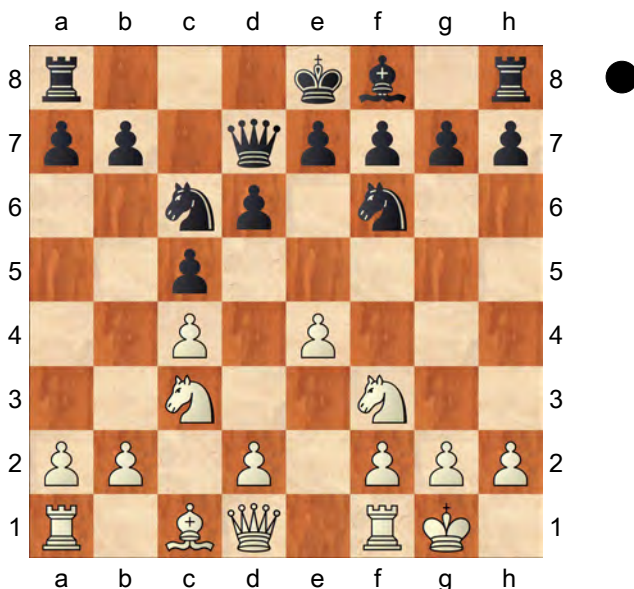


Just like in Position 1, also here Black often aims for the a7-a6 and b7-b5 push. All of the ideas regarding this, that was explained in the previous position, also apply here. However, here Black has a far more common threat - go for the d6-d5 breakthrough. The idea is quite simple - free more space for Black's pieces, force useful trades and equalize the game. It's important to note that not always Black can play it when there's an inevitable trade. Sometimes Black can sacrifice the pawn for a significant piece activity boost and, if needed, grab it back later - an idea

which is very common for the Sicilian Kan system. If White has made no positional errors in the opening, the practice shows that making d6–d5 push happen is a difficult thing to achieve for Black so White should always be alert to this possibility. However, sometimes White can even provoke Black to do it! The reason is to create an outpost at d4 – once Black plays d6–d5, White can either take with the cxd5 and after exd5 proceed with e4–e5, or play exd5 and go with c4–c5. Both of these scenarios allow White to organize a passed pawn at the corresponding side and have a very nice outpost at d4 for his knight or bishop. Similarly, like in Position 1, here White's most typical pawn advances involve f2–f4 and either f4–f5 for an attack at the kingside, or e4–e5, aiming for a positional squeeze or a better endgame.

Rublevsky, Sergei **2672**
 Klimov, Sergey **2512**
 Model game (9) 12.09.2003

1.e4 c5 2.Nf3 d6 3.Bb5+ Bd7
4.Bxd7+ Qxd7 5.c4 Nf6 6.Nc3 Nc6
7.0–0

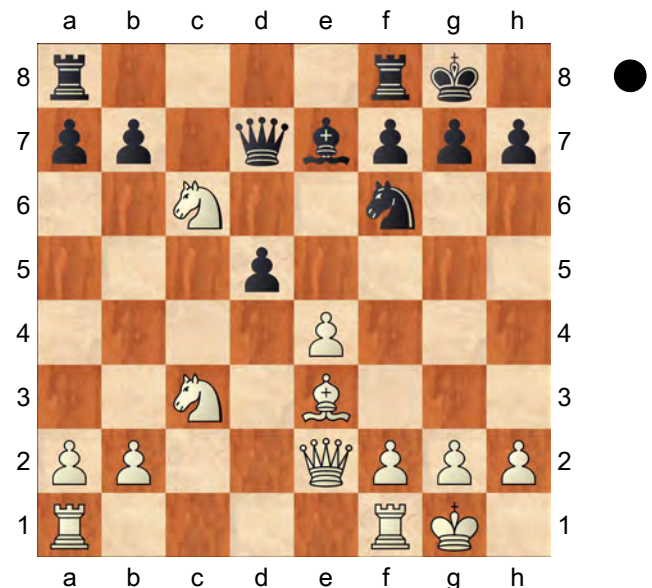


If White wants to keep his knight on d4 followed with the f3 and Be3 setup against the bishop on g7, he should play here 7.d4 first and postpone castling. Otherwise, this is a slight inaccuracy. **e6** a very solid approach – Black intends to play Be7, 0–0 and d6–d5 shortly. However, if d6–d5 won't happen, Black will be slightly passive.

[7...g6 8.d4 cxd4 9.Nxd4 Bg7 and because of the Nxe4 threat now the only reasonable continuation for White here probably is to retreat with the knight either to c2 or e2. 10.Be3? Ng4 cannot be recommended for White as the bishop is too important.]

8.d4 cxd4 9.Nxd4 Be7 10.Be3 0–0
 Against the chosen setup with the black bishop on e7, the f3 move now is useless as Black is not threatening with Ng4. White will want to execute f2–f4 in one move. **11.Qe2 Rfd8**

[11...d5?! probably the most tempting moment to make the push happen but it doesn't equalize the game for Black. 12.cxd5 exd5 13.Nxc6!]



Qxc6 (13...bxc6 14.Rad1 with a nice pressure at the d-file. White intends to take on d5 and after that position his bishop at the d4 outpost where it operates with great efficiency.) 14.e5 Ne4 15.Nb5 a6 16.Nd4 Qd7 17.Rad1 and White yet again enjoys the benefits from the d4 outpost.]

[11...Rfe8 12.Rad1 Sergei Rublevsky had another game in the same variation where he executed the same plan, and again scored a convincing win! Rad8 13.f4 Qc7 14.Kh1 a6 15.Nxc6 Qxc6 16.Bd4 Rc8 17.b3 Bd8 18.e5 dxe5 19.fxe5 Nd7 20.Ne4 Be7 21.Rd3 Nc5 22.Bxc5 Bxc5 23.Ng5 Rc7 24.Qh5 h6 25.Rxf7 hxd5 26.Rxc7 Rf8 27.Rxg7+ Kxg7 28.Qxg5+ Kf7 29.Qf6+ 1-0 (29) Rublevsky,S (2655)-Kalinin,A (2512) Moscow 2002]

12.Rad1 Rac8 13.f4 this move is beneficial due to many things – now d6–d5 breakthrough becomes very unlikely because of e4–e5, White is aiming either for e4–e5 or f4–f5 himself and start an attack on the kingside.

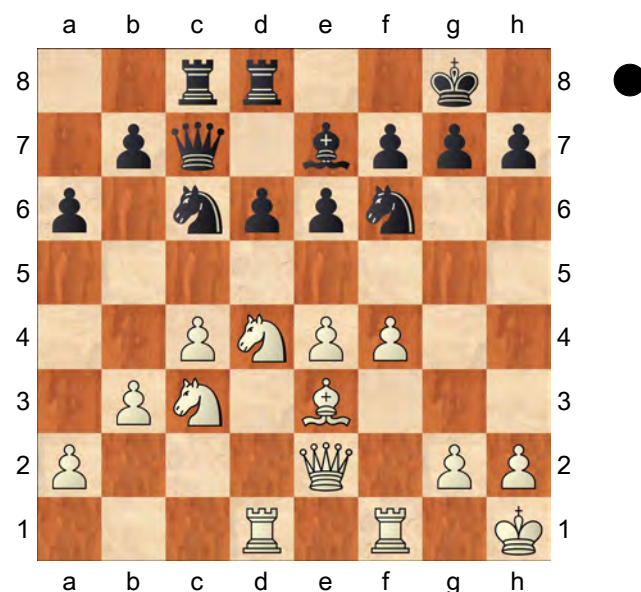
Qc7 14.b3 a6

15.Kh1

[15.g4!? would be an interesting alternative plan which pretty much forces Black to go for a counterstrike in the center d5!

16.exd5 exd5

17.g5 Bb4 18.gxf6 Bxc3 19.Nf5 Bxf6 20.cxd5±]



a very typical prophylactic move for this position should it open at some moment after the typical d7–d5 – then there are no checks for the king to worry about. Also bringing the king to the corner helps to accelerate an attack with g2–g4–g5 and Rg1 **15...Nd7**

[15...b5? now the tactics don't solve Black's problems 16.cxb5 Nxd4 17.Bxd4 e5 18.fxe5 dxe5 19.b6! Qb8 20.Nd5±]

16.Nxc6 not forced, but this thematic exchange is a good practical decision to release some tension in the center otherwise Black could either play Bf6 with several exchanges on d4, combined with the b7–b5 threat. **Qxc6**

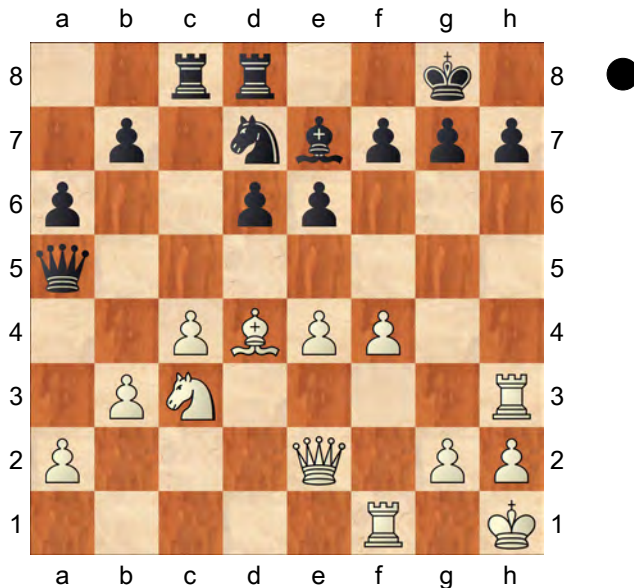
[16...bxc6 it's an uneasy decision. If Black takes with the pawn, he lacks any counterplay and White can freely continue his positional squeeze. If Black takes with the queen, he still keeps hopes alive for a b7–b5 push. 17.Bg1 and White can combine his positional pressure combined with some threats at kingside.]

17.Bd4 Qc7

[17...Bf6 18.e5! White obviously should decline the trade and go for an attack. Be7 19.Qg4 dxe5 20.fxe5 Nf8 21.Qf4 Qe8 22.Ne4 Ng6 23.Qf2±]

18.Rd3 Qa5? a mistake in an unpleasant position – Black loses an important tempo and drives away his queen from the kingside.

[18...Bf6 19.Bxf6 Nxf6 20.Qf3 Qa5 21.a4 Nd7 22.Qg4 and White is combining the attack with a positional play against the weak d6 pawn. Black has no counterplay.]

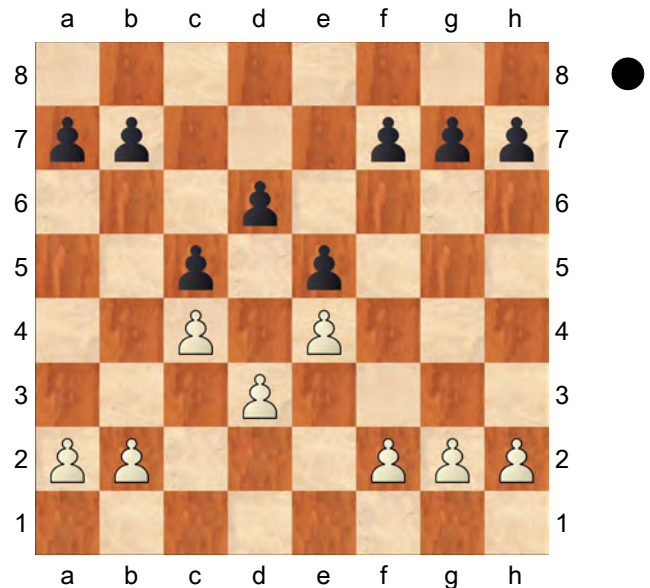
19.Rh3

suddenly there is no adequate defense for Black! All White's pieces are joining the attack. **Bf6**

[19...h6 only fuels White's attack 20.g4 Bf6 this allows a spectacular finish 21.Bxf6 Nxf6 22.g5! hxg5 23.b4! the Black queen can't any longer keep control on the g5 square. Do you remember the prophylactic move Kh1? Qxb4 24.fxg5 Rxc4 (24...Qxc4 25.Qf2+-) 25.gxf6 Rxc3 26.Qg2 g6 27.Rh6+-]

20.Bxf6 Nxf6 21.e5 dxe5 22.fxe5 Nd7 23.Qh5 Qxe5

[23...h6 this would have prolonged Black's suffering by not losing the game immediately. 24.Qxf7+ Kh8 25.Re1! Nxe5 26.Qxb7±]

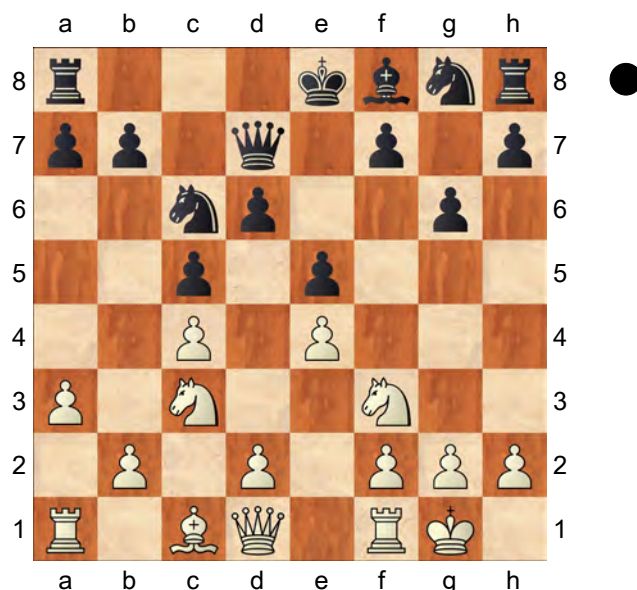
24.Qxf7+ Kh8 25.Rg3 b5 26.Ne4 Nc5 27.Ng5 Qf5 the last trick! 28.Nxe6+! Qxe6 29.Rxg7 Rd7 30.Qg8+ 1-0**Position 3**

This typical position arises in my Anti-Najdorf's database Chapter 5 – Black has closed the center to avoid the Maroczy Bind structure. Most likely, White is going to play first, so the most standard idea here is to go for the b2–b4 push. White should always question if the a2–a3 move is needed to make it happen as it costs a whole tempo. Here I have pinpointed two scenarios: 1) If the Black pawn remains on b7, the idea is to play bxc5, force Black to take with the d–pawn and then move a knight to d5 (assuming there is one at either c3 or e3!). Once Black can't endure it's

presence anymore and captures it, take with *cxd5* which will give White a protected passed pawn. At the same time, White can either proceed with a play at the pawn minority with *a2-a4-a5* and target the weak black queenside pawns, or go for an *f2-f4* push. 2) If Black plays *b7-b6* with the intention to exchange the b-pawns, I suggest transferring the weight of Black's defence to the b6 pawn by playing *b4-b5*! This will allow White to prepare *a2-a4-a5* and Black will always have to watch out for that persistent weakness at b6. Other than that, the only other pawn breakthroughs here are *f2-f4* for White and *f7-f5* for Black. Both of the sides should understand that by playing this it can free up a potential outpost for a piece at either e4 or e5 respectively so in such situation it's probably a good idea to prepare the push with the g-pawn, so that in case of a pawn trade you don't lose one of the central squares for your opponent.

□ **Rublevsky, Sergei** 2685
 ■ **Brestian, Egon** 2430
 Model game (1.1) 29.09.1998

1.e4 c5 2.Nf3 d6 3.Bb5+ Bd7
4.Bxd7+ Qxd7 5.c4 e5 a decent idea – Black closes the center to avoid the Maroczy Bind setup after White's *d2-d4* and plans to develop the pieces with *Nc6*, *g6*, *Bg7*, *Nge7*, *0-0* and *f5*. **6.Nc3 Nc6 7.0-0 g6 8.a3!**



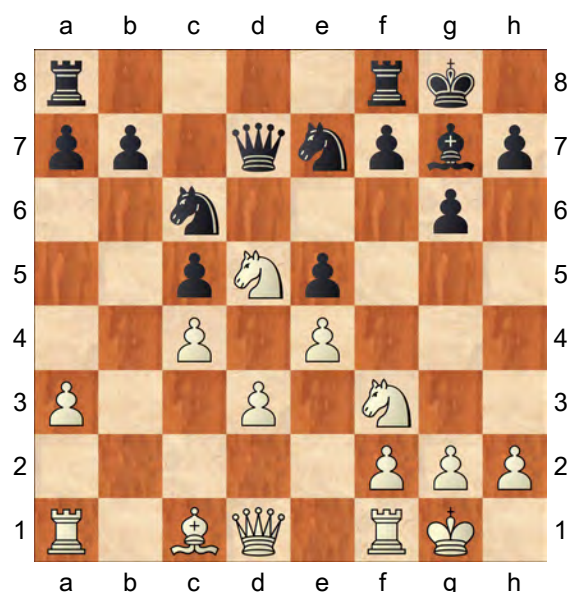
White goes for the *b2-b4* push which is the only viable plan here for White. **Bg7**

[*8...a5*?! this idea, inspired from the English Opening, won't work here. *9.Nd5 Ra6 10.Rb1* and Black is unable to stop *b2-b4*]

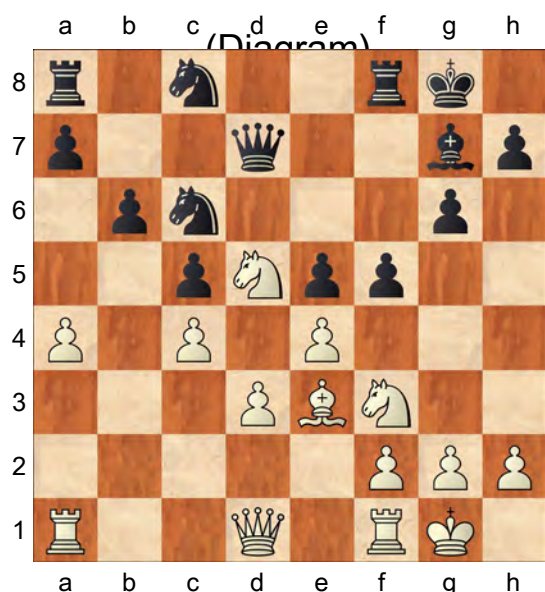
9.b4 Nge7

[*9...cxb4*? accepting the pawn sacrifice is not a great idea for Black *10.axb4 Nxb4? 11.Ba3 Nc6 12.Nb5 Bf8 13.d4 a6 14.dxe5! axb5 15.Bb2* and White's attack is crushing]
 [*9...b6* if Black doesn't want to allow the *bxc5 dxc5* trade, this is the only alternative. After this White should transfer the weight of the defense to the b6 pawn. *10.b5 Nd4 11.a4 Ne7 12.d3 0-0 13.Bg5 f6 14.Be3 f5 15.Bg5 Bf6 16.Bxf6 Rxf6 17.a5 Rff8 18.Nd2 fxe4 19.dxe4±* and a long maneuvering game ensues, with slightly better perspectives for White.]

10.bxc5! dxc5 11.d3 0-0 12.Nd5



14.Be3 b6 15.a4!



the whole concept of White's play is based on the good knight on d5 and the bad bishop on g7. White wants to force Black to take on d5, thus forming a protected passed pawn. **f5 13.Bg5 Nc8?!** this can't be a good move – the Black knight has nothing to do on c8. Even if it gets rerouted to d6, the targeted c4 and e4 pawns can be easily defended.

[13...fxe4 14.Nxe7+! Nxe7 15.dxe4 Qxd1 16.Rfxd1 Nc6 17.Rd5 Nd4 18.Nd2 and White's play seems easier as he can improve his position. It's odd that the knight at d4 is ignored. Black will try to do the same with the white rook on d5.]

[13...Nxd5 14.exd5 Na5 15.Bd2 e4 16.Rc1 exf3 17.Bxa5 fxe2 18.Kxg2 b6 19.Bd2 Rae8 20.Qf3

with an objectively equal, but easier play for White as he's enjoying the passed pawn and in the endgame can target the pawns at the queenside with the bishop.]

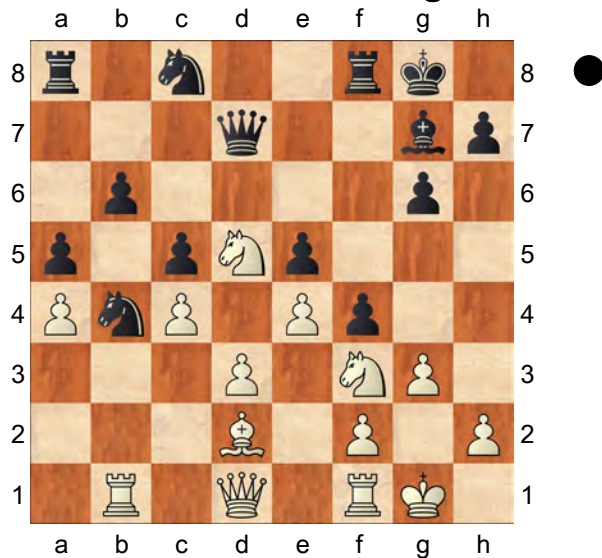
with a very annoying threat a4–a5 **f4?!a** positional mistake – Black should keep the tension in the center as long as he can. Now Black's position is very static, and White's counterstrike comes with surgical precision.

[15...Nd6? 16.a5 Nxa5 17.Bxc5 bxc5 18.Rxa5 fxe4 19.dxe4 Nxe4 20.Re1±]

[15...fxe4? 16.dxe4 Nd4 17.a5! Nxf3+ 18.gxf3±]

[15...N8e7 probably Black had to acknowledge the mistake and go back to e7 – White already can push a4–a5 with an easier play, or wait for a better moment – there are many good improving moves at his disposal.]

16.Bd2 a5 17.Rb1 Nb4 18.g3!



White needs to open some lines and diagonals to make use of his better piece positioning **Ra7 19.Bc3 Qd6 20.gxf4?! a rushed decision.** White could have prepared the idea.

[20.Kh1! with the same threat gxf4 and Rg1, only now Black won't have a counterplay with g6–g5, what happened in the game. **Ne7 21.gxf4 Nxd5 22.exd5 Rxf4 23.Ng5±**]

20...exf4 21.Bxg7 Rxg7 22.Kh1 g5! now the game becomes quite sharp with all three possible outcomes. **23.Rg1 g4?! there was no need to give up the f5 square for the white knight.**

[23...h6 24.d4 Qe6∞]

24.Nh4 h5 25.Qd2? a move which is difficult to understand – in a dynamic position White is not threatening anything while the queen's placement on d2 can be questioned.

[25.f3! the most logical continuation – open the position at the kingside for a direct assault – White's pieces are well positioned to hope for success. The Nf5 threat can be executed at the proper moment without any rush. **g3 26.d4!±** an important intermezzo to

prepare the Nf5 jump – Black's position looks very shady.]

25...Ne7 26.Rbe1? mistakes very often come in pairs

[26.Nxe7+ Qxe7 27.Nf5 Rxf5

28.exf5 Qb7+ 29.Rg2 h4 and White now has to force a draw 30.Qe1 h3 31.Qe8+ Kh7 32.Qh5+ Kg8 33.Qe8+]

26...Nec6? returning the favor

[26...Nbx d5 27.exd5 Qf6 28.Ng2 f3 29.Ne3 Ng6 and White is simply strategically lost.]

27.Nf5 Even if White saw the obvious exchange sacrifice, he has no choice otherwise the black knight will control the f5 square from the d4 outpost. **Rxf5 28.exf5 Nxd5 29.cxd5 Qxd5+**

30.Re4? this automatic and logical human move appears to be a mistake – the computer engine correctly finds the proper defense which by no means is obvious!

[30.Rg2! h4 31.Re4 h3 32.Rg1 and the main difference is that in certain variations the pawn on g4 is not well protected! **Ne5 33.f3!! Nxf3 (33...gxf3 34.Rxg7+ Kxg7 35.Qxf4 f2 36.Qxf2 Nxd3 37.Qg3+ Kf8 38.Qb8+ Kg7 39.Qg3+=) 34.Qxf4 Nxd3 35.f6 Rf7 36.Qxg4+ Kh7 37.Kxg1 Rxf6 38.Re7+ Rf7=]**

30...Qxf5? in the series of mutual errors this is the last mistake. Now White quite confidently collects the point.

[30...Ne5! 31.f3!! Nxd3 (31...Nxf3 32.Qxf4 and in this line the pawn on g4 is protected!) 32.Qe2 and the game remains very sharp, although objectively with better chances for Black if he finds the inhuman **Rd7!!**]

31.Qxf4 Qxf4 32.Rxf4 Nb4 33.Re1! Nxd3 34.Re8+ Kh7 35.Rf5

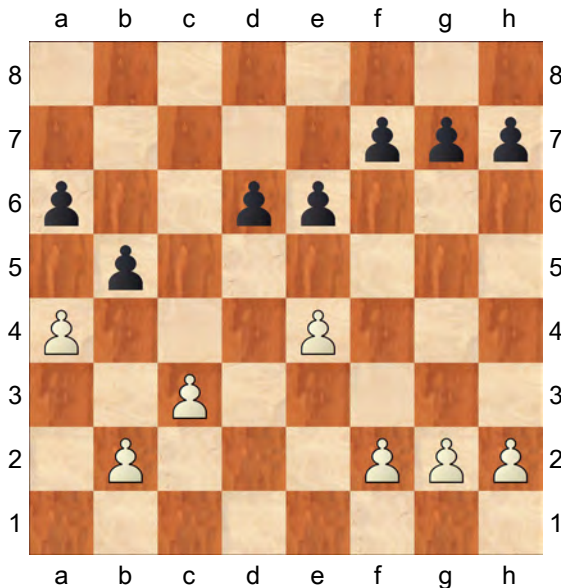
[35.Rf6 was better]

35...Kg6

[35...h4 36.Rh5+ Kg6 37.Rxh4 Nxf2+ 38.Kg2 Kg5! possibly this intermezzo was missed by Black in his calculations 39.Rhh8 Nd3 40.Kg3 and White keeps hopes for a win alive]

36.Ref8 Re7 37.R8f6+ Kg7 38.Rxb6 h4 39.h3! gxh3 40.Kh2 Re2 41.Kxh3 Nxf2+ 42.Kxh4
1-0

Position 4



This position arises in my Anti Najdorf database, Chapter 8. There White temporarily sacrifices the pawn on a4 and intends to regain it soon, by doing so also opening way to the weak a6 pawn. If Black is to move, on most occasions, he takes the pawn on a4 and tries to hold it for a moment to finish the development. If possible, White wants to grab the pawn back with the rook and possibly transfer it to the kingside after

e4-e5 with a devastating effect. If Black can take on a4 with a knight and his king is still in the center, this can give White a potentially deadly attack with a typical exchange sacrifice Rxa4 and Bxa4, combined with the e4-e5 push. If Black doesn't take on a4, after the trade the pawn on b5 can become a major weakness. Very often White can fix it with the thematic b2-b4 and depend on the piece availability - > Nb1-a3 and Bc2-d3. If the pawn is not fixed, White has to be ready for a positional pawn sacrifice b5-b4, doubling White's pawns. White has to keep an eye also quick b5-b4, sacrificing the pawn which after cxb4 can be targeted with d6-d5, presumably by the bishop from f8 or e7. Also in this position White has to be alert for the d6-d5 breakthrough at any given moment.

□	Kovalev, Vladislav	2562
■	Volokitin, Andrei	2642
	Model game (11)	23.05.2016

1.e4 c5 2.Nf3 d6 3.Bb5+ Nd7 4.0-0 a6 5.Bd3 Ngf6 6.Re1 e6 one of the

most popular responses from Black. Now according to this whole setup White has to play c2-c3 and only then Black will play b7-b5. This is the latest modern theory of the Anti Najdorf thus many lines are still unexplored and unknown to the general public.

[6...b5 7.c4 is also a very interesting approach which deserves serious attention and more analysis]

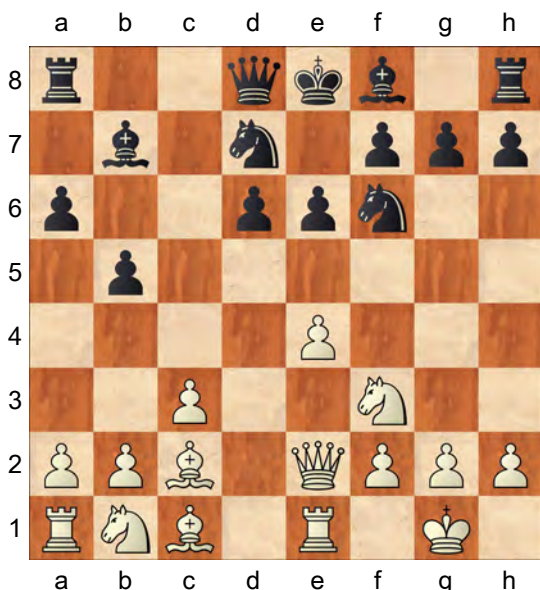
7.c3 b5 now obviously c3-c4 would be

just a waste of time. **8.Bc2 c4** the main move – Black stops White from advancing d2–d4. The alternative move 8...Bb7 gives White a far more simple and pleasant game. **9.d4** an interesting order of the moves – White postpones the a2–a4 push which I recommend in my database for the Anti–Najdorf approach. **cx d3 10.Qxd3** the bishop remains on c2 to make the a2–a4 push happen soon – without it, there's not much to do for White. White queen most likely will be rerouted to e2. **Bb7** not mandatory – since White didn't go for the early a2–a4, Black doesn't have to go for Bb7 to defend the rook on a8 – now 10...Be7 looks very much playable as well. Then again, White queen perhaps doesn't need to go to e2 anymore!

[10...Be7!?]

11.Qe2!?

[11.a4 Nc5 12.Qe2 bxa4 13.e5 and so on – the modern theory only starts here (13.Nbd2!?)]



while objectively perhaps not the strongest, it does invite Black to stop the a2–a4 push. **11...Nb6** the problem with this move is that it doesn't stop the a4 push at all.

[11...Be7]

12.a4!?

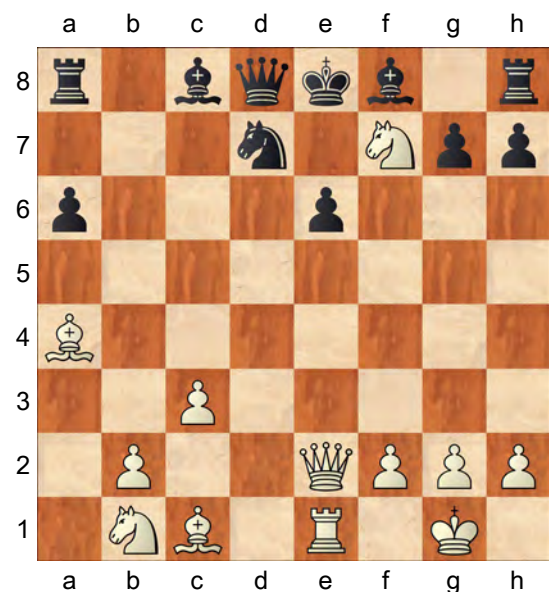
setting up a nice trap [12.Bg5 Be7 13.Nbd2 0–0 14.e5 dxe5 15.Nxe5 Nbd7 16.Ndf3 and perhaps at the right moment executed a2–a4 can give White some perspectives for a better endgame.]

12...Nxa4?! while this is not a mistake, now Black has to be extremely careful. White is already toying with the idea to sacrifice the exchange on a4!

[12...bxa4 was a more cautious continuation – White will regain the a4 pawn sooner or later with some hopes to pressure the weak a6 pawn]

13.e5! Nd7

[13...dxe5?? 14.Rxa4! bxa4 15.Bxa4+ Nd7 (15...Ke7 16.b3) 16.Nxe5 Bc8 17.Nxf7!+–



]

14.Nbd2! Black is a pawn up, but suddenly it's not very easy for him to find a good move. White's initiative spreads like wildfire. **dxe5?** a mistake in an uneasy situation

[14...d5 15.Nd4 Nab6?? 16.Nxe6! fxe6 17.Qh5+ g6 18.Bxg6+ hxg6 19.Qxg6+! Ke7 20.Nf3 Bh6 21.Bg5+! Bxg5 22.Qg7+ Ke8 23.Nxg5 Qe7 24.Qxh8+ Nf8 25.h4+-]

[14...Nab6 15.exd6 Bxd6 16.Ne4 Be7 17.Neg5 Nf8 18.Rd1 Qc7 19.Nd4 Rd8 20.Qh5 with a powerful attack.]

15.Rxa4! bxa4 16.Bxa4 and suddenly Black is in trouble! **Qa5??** most likely shaken by the unexpected turn of events, Black jumps under the train. From here there is no salvation for him.

[16...f6 this was the only reasonable continuation to keep the game alive. The variation is quite forced, but it can be difficult to evaluate it from afar. 17.Nxe5! fxe5 18.Qxe5 Qe7 19.Qc7 Bd5 20.c4 Qd6 21.Qxd6 Bxd6 22.cxd5 0-0-0 23.dxe6 Nc5 24.Bc2 Rhe8 25.Nb3 Nxe6 26.Rxe6 Rxe6 27.Bf5 Bf4! 28.Bxe6+ Kb7 29.Bg4 Bxc1 30.Nxc1 Rd2 31.Kf1 Rxb2 and this looks more like a draw than a win for White although the latter can and probably should push for it.]

17.Bxd7+ Kxd7 18.Nc4 Qc7

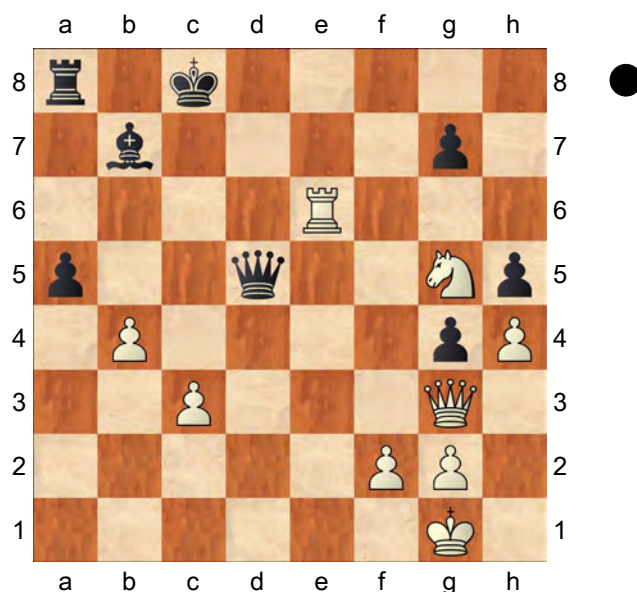
19.Ncxe5+ Kc8 20.Ng5 White's attack comes crashing through – technically Black is up an exchange, but one pawn is going to fall immediately, and the exposed king decides the fate of the game. **Bc5 21.b4 f6** of course, Black is trying his best to confuse White, but the latter remains alert to the tactical

possibilities **22.Nef7 fxg5 23.Nxh8 Qc6 24.Qg4**

[24.Qxe6+? this would throw away all of the advantages. Qxe6 25.Rxe6 Kd7! 26.Re1 Rxh8 27.bxc5 h6]

24...Be7 25.Nf7 h5 26.Qg3 g4

27.Bg5! at the 27th move finally the queenside bishop decides to enter the game! For some reason in my mind jumps the first game of the 1960 match Tal – Botvinnik where the legendary magician from Riga at 30th move developed his kingside bishop, later being quoted: "That's not a bad route for a bishop which just made it's first steps in the game!" Alas, in the mentioned game it gave White a full exchange, here it's just a very good trade, simplifying the position. **Bxg5 28.Nxg5 a5 29.Rxe6 Qd5 30.h4!**



axb4 31.cxb4? Up to this moment White played a perfect game, achieving an easily winning position. Moreover, just like that, suddenly he throws it away in just one move!

[31.Re5! would eliminate the last

tricks in Black's sleeve which are tied with his counterplay on the g2 pawn. Only after black queens retreat White would take the pawn on b4, easily winning the game because the Black king is too exposed to defend against a direct assault. Qc6 32.cxb4 Ra3 33.f3 gxf3 34.Nxf3 should be a very simple win]

31...Ra3! because of the vulnerable g2 pawn White has to go for either queen or rook exchange which dramatically increases Black's chances for survival.

32.Re3? another fine example that mistakes usually come in pairs – now Black has excellent chances to get a draw. White had to pick up the not obvious

[32.Rd6! Rxc3 33.Rxd5 Rb3 34.Rc5+! (34.Rd4 g3 35.fxc3 Rxc3 36.Ne4 Bxe4 37.Rxe4 Rb3 should be a draw) 34...Kd7 35.Nf7±]

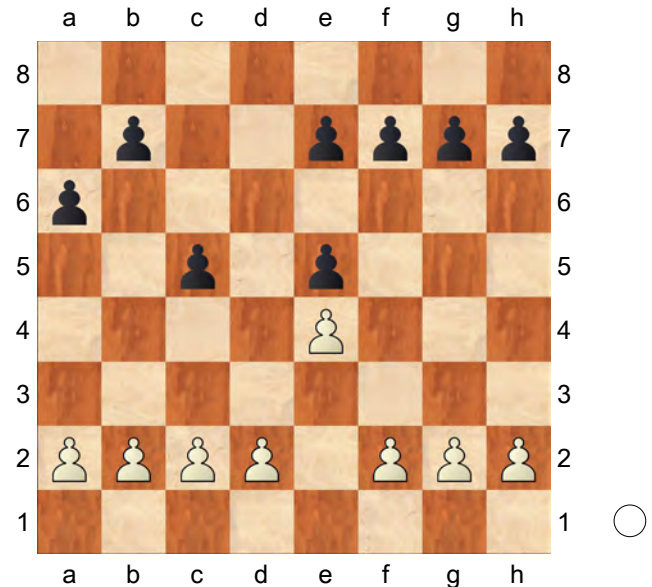
32...Rxe3 33.fxe3 Qc4?? for some reason Black decides to abandon his only hope to pressure the g2 pawn and goes for the b4 pawn.

[33...g6 34.Kh2 Bc6 35.e4 Qc4 36.Qd6 Bxe4 37.Qf4 Bd3 38.Qxc4+ Bxc4 39.Kg3 Bd5=]

34.Qf4 and White is winning again **Qc1+ 35.Kh2 Qb2** now White cleverly reroutes his knight from g5 to f4 to protect the g2 weakness, giving the queen free hands. **36.Qf8+ Kd7 37.Qf7+ Kc8 38.Qe8+ Kc7 39.Ne6+ Kd6 40.Nf4 Qf2 41.Qd8+!** a start of a nice sequence to force the queen exchange on f8! **Kc6 42.Qd5+ Kc7 43.Ne6+ Kb8 44.Qd6+ Ka7 45.Qc5+ Kb8 46.Qf8+ Qxf8 47.Nxf8** the rest is easy **Ka7 48.Kg3 Bd5 49.Ng6 Kb6 50.Nf4 Bf7 51.e4 Kb5**

52.Nd5 Kc4 53.Kf4 Kd4 54.Ne7 g6 55.Nc6+ Kc3 56.b5 Be8 57.Na7 1-0

Position 5



This position arises if Black has just played either Nc6–e5 or Nd7–e5 and White accepted the trade with Nf3xe5. Black's reasoning is simple – it pretty much stops the thematic c2–c3 and d2–d4 push. However, it also closes his dark-squared bishop. With rare exceptions, such a pawn structure will lead to a long maneuvering game. Unless White gets immediate results with the stubborn c2–c3 and d4–d4, he should proceed with b2–b3, a2–a4 and continue with Bb2, Na3 or Nc3, and Bc4 or Nc4, targeting the weak e5 pawn. a4–a5 is a possibility to fix the b6 weakness for the knight, but the move might not be required at all if Black is not even

threatening to play b7–b5 or the b6 square is well defended. If White hasn't played a4–a5 and Black has managed to play b7–b6 himself, soon White could be eyeing for a b3–b4 push, targeting Black's weak pawns at the queenside. Maybe even Qd1–b1 becomes possible to make it happen? If White has coordinated most of his pieces at the queenside, he should be ready that the uncastled Black could start a motivated attack at the kingside with h7–h5–h4, followed by Nf6–h5–f4 or g7–g5–g4. The same position can arise with the black pawn already on b5 instead of b7. Now White has two options – either go for the a2–a4 to provoke the b5–b4 move from Black which eternally weakens the c4 spot for either white bishop or a knight. Another option is to play c2–c4, with the intention to take on b5 and then fix the pawn with a2–a3 and b2–b4, and then potentially target it with Nc3, Bd3 and so on. If Black goes past with b5–b4, this can give White an edge with a2–a3, assuming that Black can't play a6–a5 and his rook on a8 is not protected. If it is protected, probably this is not a great idea, or you already missed it earlier!

Areshchenko, Alexander **2686**
 Adly, Ahmed **2597**
 Model game (9) 11.04.2017

1.e4 c5 2.Nf3 d6 3.Bb5+ Nd7 4.0–0 Ngf6 5.Re1 a6 6.Bd3 Ne5!?

this idea to block the center can occur on many occasions. It stops White's intentions to go for the c2–c3 and d2–d4 push however at the same time it also limits Black's activity, while the pawn on

e5 becomes a potential target. **7.Nxe5 dxe5 8.a4** a natural move to secure the c4 spot for the bishop against the b7–b5 push but it's not forced. Perhaps a more pragmatic approach would be

[8.b3 and White immediately start to pressure the e5 pawn. a2–a4 might be a useful move a move or two later – it's all in the details! b5 9.a4]

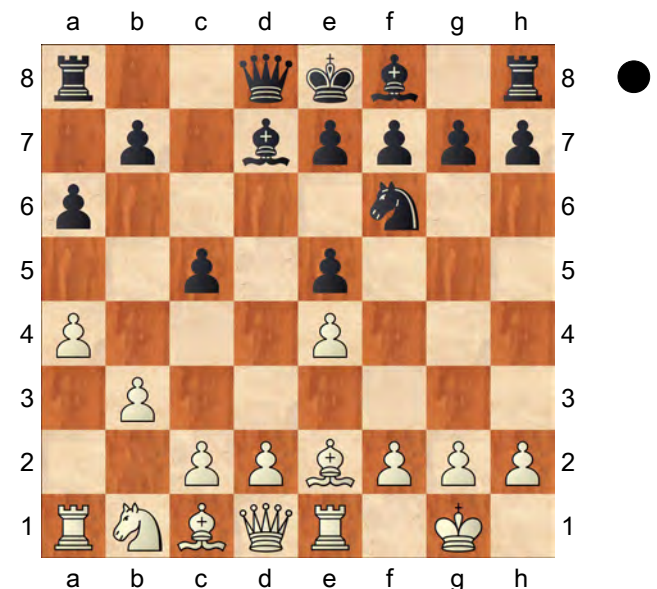
8...Bg4 a clever idea – Black doesn't intend to trade the bishops. He wants to force White to play Be2 and then protect the e4 pawn by d3, thus making the bishop on e2 much more passive than it could be.

[8...g6 9.Bc4 Bg7 10.d3 b6 11.h3 0–0 12.Be3 Bd7 13.Nd2 Qc7 14.c3]

[8...Qd4 this is an attempt to stop the b3 move and threaten c5–c4 himself 9.Bf1! Nxe4 10.Qe2 Nd6 11.c3 Qd5 12.Qxe5 Qxe5 13.Rxe5±]

[8...h5!? an idea for the true artists out there! White's kingside feels a bit vulnerable for an immediate action although the position probably remains in White's favor. 9.Bc4 h4]

9.Be2 Bd7 10.b3!



great response from White! The pawn on e4 is indirectly protected. **Bc6**

[10...Nxe4 11.Bf3 Nd6 12.Rxe5 Rc8 13.Ba3±]

11.Bb2 Qc7 12.Na3! nothing has changed – White is not in a hurry to bury his white-squared bishop with d2–d3. **e6**

[12...Nxe4 13.Bf3]

[12...Bxe4 13.Nc4 Nd7 14.Bg4+–]

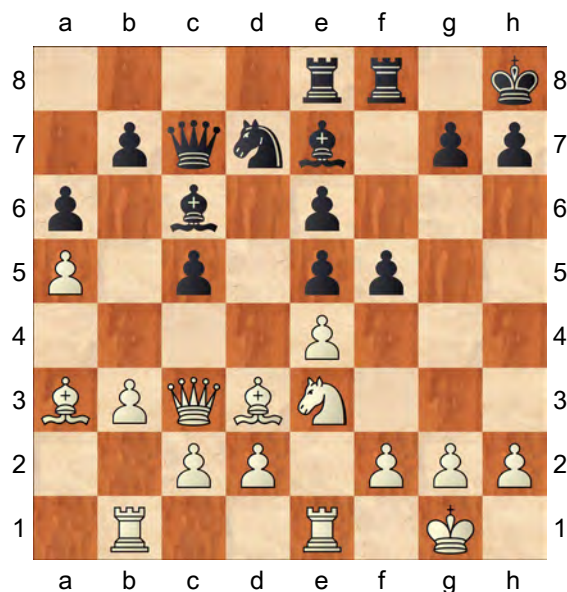
13.Nc4 Nd7 14.Bf1 Be7 15.Qh5 Bf6

16.a5 White has achieved a good position – most of his pieces, excluding the bishop on f1, are positioned better than Black's colleagues, and the pawn structure is better. Black remains very solid, so the question is – how to break through? **0–0** If I were White here, I would probably activate my bishop on f1 first – in my mind comes an idea of g2–g3, Bg2 and prepare f2–f4 for the right moment. At the same time, White should be ready that Black won't just sit and watch – a reasonable plan for Black would be Bc6–b5xc4, followed by Nd7–b8–c6–d4. **17.Qh3** White goes for a different plan – make b3–b4 happen thus opening the game at the queenside. However, it's easier said than done!

[17.g3 Bb5 18.Bg2 Bxc4 19.bxc4 Nb8 20.Bc3 here White can shift his focus on the b-file – f2–f4 doesn't look dangerous for Black anymore.]

17...Rae8 18.Qc3 Kh8 sometimes there's nothing better than sit and wait

while your opponent will try to crash through. **19.Rab1 Bb5 20.Ba3 Be7** the problem for White here is that Black's weaknesses at the queenside are easily defended, and by playing b3–b4 it only weakens the a5 pawn for White. Perhaps it was not too late to return to the original idea of g2–g3, Bg2 and f2–f4. **21.Nb2** It looks like right here White understood that b3–b4 is not going to work, so he decided to provoke Black to play f7–f5 (which is a good move). However, Black remains true to his solidness and continues to play cat and mouse. **Qd6 22.Nc4 Qc7 23.Ne3 Bc6 24.Bd3 f5**



finally! Black decides that also he can play more active instead of being solid/passive, but this leads to a very double-edged position. **25.Nc4** now White can hope to open the e-file to increase the pressure on the e-pawn. However, even that looks very unlikely because of the unfortunate placement of the white queen. **Bh4** now it's Black who tries to provoke some weaknesses in White's

camp – the loss of time here doesn't count as the position remains closed.
26.g3 Be7 27.f3?! a strange decision to even more weaken his king. While it's not an actual mistake, the problem with the pawns is that they don't go back.

[27.Qa1!? g6 28.Bb2 Bf6 29.Bf1 and here Black sooner or later is going to close the center with f5–f4, giving some resemblance to the King's Indian ideas. The position remains very complex but White should be patient and by maneuvering improve his position first.]

27...Bb5 28.Kg2 Rd8 29.Nb2 Qd6 30.Nc4 Qc7 31.Nb2 and when White seemingly is already willing to finish the game peacefully, Black changes his mind...at the wrong moment! **Nb8?** the idea to transfer the knight to c6 is right, the timing is not. **32.Bxb5?**

[I'm not sure what White didn't like after 32.exf5 exf5 (32...Nc6 33.Bxc5 exf5 34.b4±) 33.Qxe5 Bd6 34.Qc3± I assume that it was just the general feeling or intuition about White's queen's awkward placement which voted against opening the position. However, there are no direct threats neither against the white king or queen, and most importantly, a pawn is a pawn!]

32...axb5 33.Nd3 Na6? a strange mistake – a knight in the corner rarely is great

[33...Nd7=]

34.b4 c4 35.Nxe5 Bf6 36.exf5 exf5 37.f4± the long maneuvering is over, and the smoke has cleared – White is up a healthy pawn with no compensation.
Qd6 38.Re2? the idea to play it safe and double the rooks on the e–file

appears to be not so good.

[38.Rbd1 with the idea to open the position with d2–d3 would have been much stronger.]

38...Nc7

[38...Bxe5 39.fxe5 Qe6 was also possible which would give Black a decent counterplay. However, the move in the game keeps more tension.]

39.Rbe1 Kg8 40.Qf3 Nd5 41.Bb2

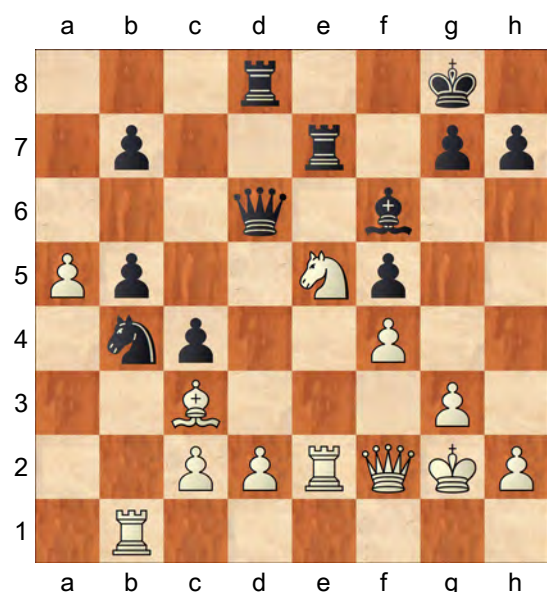
Rfe8 42.Bc3 White has achieved some harmony, improved his pieces, defended the weakness on b4, however, it's not very clear how to progress from here.

Re7 43.Qf2? an oversight which, as usual, comes in pairs.

[43.h3 Nxb4 44.Rb1 Nd5 45.Rxb5 seems to be better for White but it doesn't answer the question what White should do if Black doesn't take on b4?]

43...Nxb4 44.Rb1?

[44.Bxb4 Qxb4 45.Nf3=]

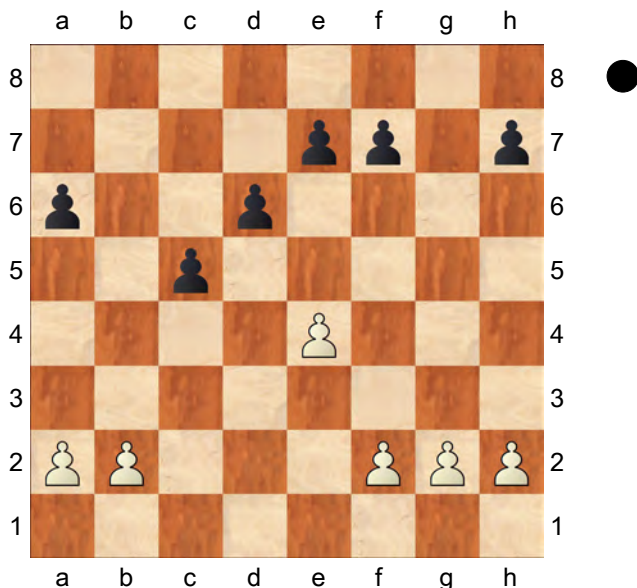


it's not clear what exactly White missed here – the check on d5 seems to be obvious, also 44...Nd5 looks good for Black. **44...Qd5+ 45.Qf3** Adjusting from the role of an attacker to a defender in a very short period always is a tough moment in chess – no wonder White goes down in flames rapidly

[45.Nf3! Rxe2 46.Qxe2 Nc6 47.Bxf6 gxf6 48.Kh3 b4 49.Re1 and even here White can hope to save the game although it's not going to be easy.]

45...Nxc2 46.Qxd5+ Rxd5 47.Kf2 Bxe5 48.fxe5
0-1

Position 6

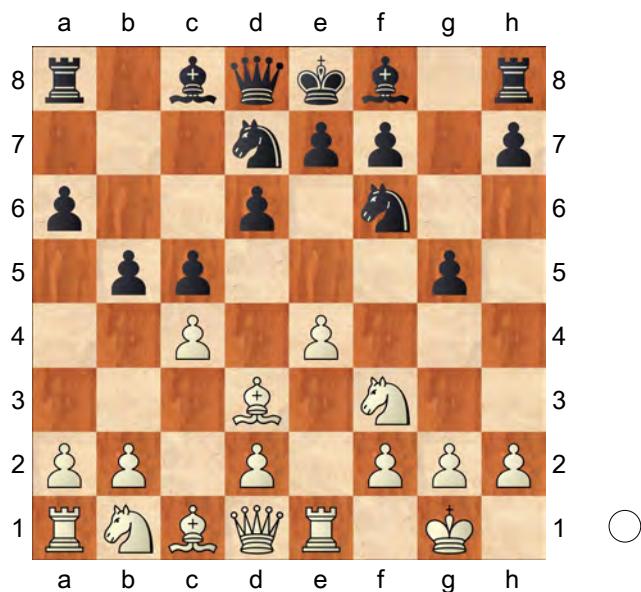


The most popular pawn structure in the Anti-Najdorf database, Chapter 9. Here it very much depends what pieces both sides have on the board but let's keep in mind one thing – Black went for this to

get a complicated game, not to defend a worse endgame. Typically for the variation, the Black king is usually stuck in the center, the a-pawn and the h-pawn are eternally weak. There are only two potential pawn breakthroughs, both of them at White's disposal: 1) e4–e5 probably can happen if White has rerouted his dark-squared bishop from c1–f4–g3 otherwise the open g-file and the diagonal h1–a8 can bring some unnecessary heat for the white king. Unlike the other structures, here I would suggest refraining from playing f2–f4 unless needed as it does weaken the white king's position considerably. 2) b2–b4 can be accomplished by playing Rb1 first or at some occasions – immediately. The goal is to open the position while the black king is still in the center and the queens – on the board. I don't see any typical pawn breakthroughs for Black – h7–h5–h4 takes too much time, and Black can't be pushing in the center if the king is behind those pawns. Either way, I think White is interested in keeping queens on the boards so that the Black king will never find a safe shelter.

Xu, Yi **2396**
 Gupta, Abhijeet **2654**
 Asian Continental op 15th (7) 01.06.16

1.e4 c5 2.Nf3 d6 3.Bb5+ Nd7 4.0-0 a6 5.Bd3 Ngf6 6.Re1 b5 7.c4 g5!?



This move was first introduced in 2015 when at Sinquefeld Cup Veselin Topalov surprised the World Champion Magnus Carlsen and won the game. Since then the continuation has been tested numerous times, and White has been scoring well so far. Black has several alternatives here, and the most solid one is 7...bxc4. **8.Nxg5**

[8.cxb5!? If you are looking for some fireworks, this continuation is for you – the complications are immense! g4 9.e5! dxe5 10.Ng5∞]

8...Ne5 the whole idea of the new concept – by attacking the bishop on d3 Black wins back the pawn by force and also opens the g-file for future operations. **9.Be2 bxc4 10.Nc3 Rg8 11.d4 cxd3 12.Bxd3** Now Black has several options – if he doesn't take the bishop, White will retreat with it to e2 as it safeguards many important squares around the king. **h6** If Black would have known the consequences, he would have chosen another move. Here he has several other alternatives, including

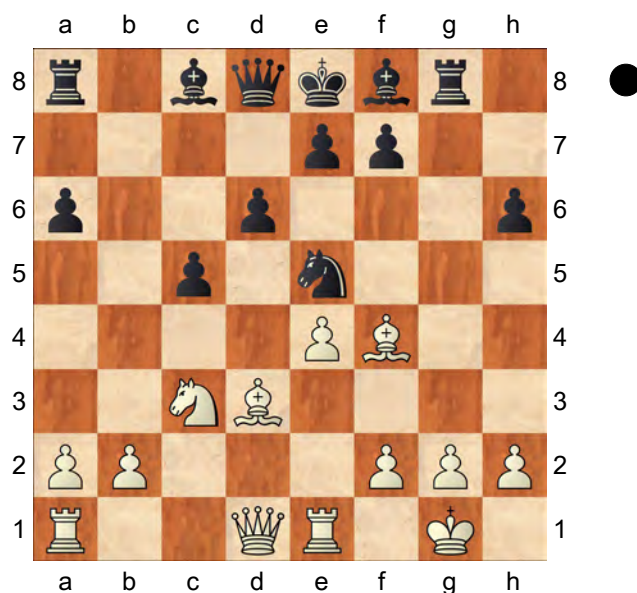
[12...Rb8 13.Be2 h6 14.Nf3 Nxf3+ 15.Bxf3 Nd7 16.Rb1 and I treat this position as easier to play for White as his plan always remains the same – Nc3–d5 and Bc3–f4–g3]

13.Nf3 Nfg4?! Black's desire to have a knight on e5 is understandable, but his position deteriorates with every move. Perhaps a better choice was

[13...Bg4 14.Be2 Bxf3 15.Bxf3 Qc8 16.Bf4 Nxf3+ 17.Qxf3 Qg4 18.Qxg4 Rxg4 19.g3± and White keeps a pleasant advantage, but Black can hope to hold the position. Probably it's not what he had in his mind, going for the aggressive 7...g5!?]

14.Be2

[more simple was 14.Nxe5 Nxe5 15.Bf4



and this looks anything but fun for Black – White will reposition his dark-squared bishop to g3, play Nc3–d5 and organize an immediate attack against the stranded Black king in the center. Black has two bishops and two semi-open files for his rooks but

it's not clear how to use them properly.]

14...Nxf3+ 15.Bxf3 Ne5 16.Bh5

a slight inaccuracy which allows Black to generate some counterplay at the g-file.

[16.Bf4! Bg7 (16...Nxf3+ 17.Qxf3 Bb7 18.Nd5 and Black is struggling here) 17.Bh5±]

16...Bh3 17.g3 Bg7?! this logical move takes away control of the g4 square which White could have used immediately

[17...Rb8 was better]

18.Nd5 While playing a good move, White misses a nice way to punish Black immediately for his inaccuracies

[18.f4! Bg4 either this or the alternative jump to g4 must have been Black's idea by indirectly defending the g4 square with the rook, threatening with the discovered check on d4 but in neither case it works because of the e4-e5 intermezzo move! (18...Ng4?? 19.e5 Qc8 20.Qd5+-; 18...Nc6 19.Bxf7+ Kxf7 20.Qh5+ Kf8 21.Qxh3+-) 19.Bxg4 Nxg4 20.e5! Qd7 21.Kg2! (21.h3 it probably was possible to collect the piece immediately, but it would give Black a certain initiative at the kingside at the cost of minimum material losses. Nxe5 22.fxe5 Bxe5) 21...dxe5 22.Qxd7+ Kxd7 23.h3 Nf6 24.fxe5±]

18...Rb8 19.f4? this allows Black to equalize the game with the same tactical motif as before.

[19.Re3 with multiple positional threats would have ensured White a stable plus.]

19...Ng4?! extremely tempting and

logical but inaccurate which allows White a wonderful resource which was missed by both players.

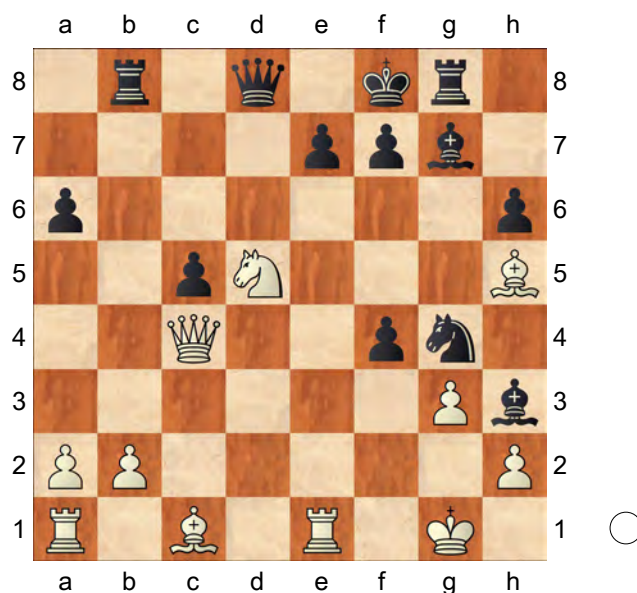
[19...Bg4! 20.Bxg4 Nxg4 21.e5 dxe5 22.Qxg4 Qxd5 23.fxe5= is what happened in the game with a different order of the moves as White missed his opportunity]

20.e5 dxe5 21.Bxg4

[21.Qa4+! the Silicon beast finds a true gem! Kf8 22.Qc4! with some checkmating ideas on f7!]

A) 22...Qa5 23.Nc3 e6 24.Bxg4 Bxg4 25.Be3 Rh8 (25...Rc8? 26.b4! Qxb4 27.Qxa6 Ke7 28.Ne4 Rgd8 29.Rab1 Ra8 30.Qf1+-) 26.Bxc5+ Kg8 27.fxe5 h5 28.b4±;

B) 22...exf4!



hardly a human's everyday's choice! 23.Nf6! Ne5!! 24.Rxe5 Qd4+! 25.Qxd4 cxd4 26.Nxg8 Bxe5 27.Nxh6 d3 28.Bg4 Bd4+ 29.Kh1 Bxg4 30.Nxg4 fxg3 31.hxg3 f5 32.Ne3 Bxe3 33.Bxe3 Rxb2 34.Rd1 Rxa2 35.Rxd3 e5

which still should be a theoretical draw – but to calculate everything up to this moment and evaluate it as drawish is just not humanly possible.]

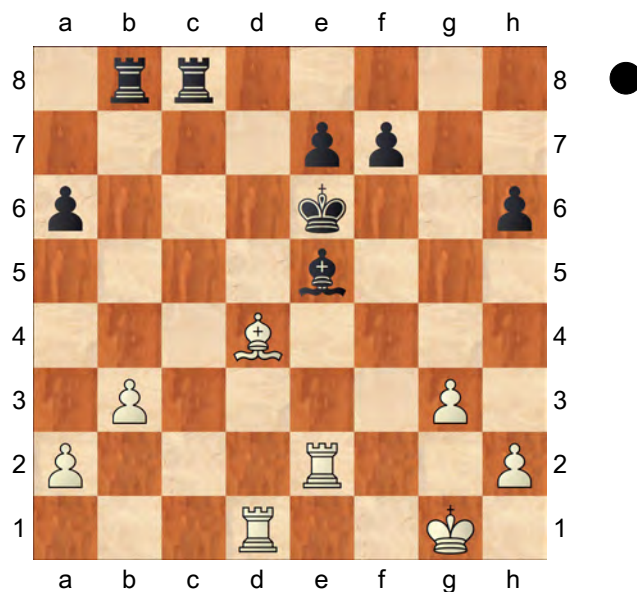
21...Bxg4 22.Qxg4 Qxd5 23.fxe5 Qd4+ 24.Qxd4 cxd4 25.b3 Kd7!

Black sacrifices the pawn on d4 to activate all his pieces which should allow him to draw the game comfortably **26.Bb2 Ke6 27.Rad1 Rgc8 28.Re2 Bxe5?** a very rash decision which could have cost Black dearly – the pawn wasn't going anywhere! Now there's a very unpleasant pin to watch out for but most importantly – one of the weak pawns will fall.

[28...Rd8 29.Rxd4 Rxd4 30.Bxd4 Rb5 While it's understandable that Black could be worried to go into a pawn endgame which indeed does look risky because of the potential white passed pawn at the queenside, Black is not in a real hurry winning back the pawn as White is tied with all of his remaining pieces into defending it.]

29.Bxd4?

[29.Rxd4! f6 30.Rh4 and White by force wins a pawn as Black can't really protect it Rh8 31.Ra4 Rb6 32.Ra5±]



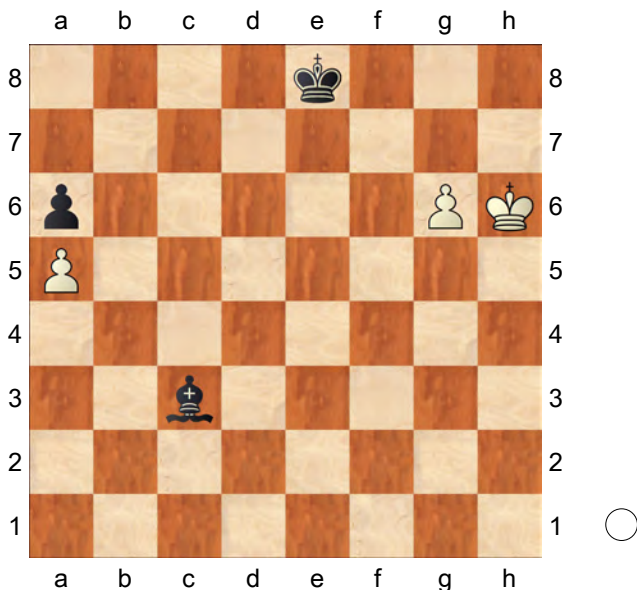
White returns the favor – now the game is drawn again. **29...Rb5 30.Rde1 f6 31.Bxe5 fxe5 32.Kg2 Rc3 33.Kf2 Ra5 34.Rd2 Rc6 35.Kf3 Rd6 36.Rc2 Rd4 37.Rc6+ Rd6 38.Rc2 Rad5 39.Kf2 Kf5 40.Rc4 Rd4 41.Rxd4 exd4 42.Rxe7 Rc6 43.Ke2 Rc2+ 44.Kd3 Rxa2 45.Kxd4 Rxh2 1/2**

Defense in Practical Games



Introduction

When I was a child I got a wonderful lesson from the old Bulgarian master Petar Liangov. My game against him taught me that the result is literally not determined until the scoresheets are signed. It was a Dune 1995 or 1996 (not sure) tournament (I was 12–13 years old and it was my first trip abroad). The master played White and after a long struggle, the game approached the position on the diagram **1.g7 Kf7** at this moment anticipating the obvious

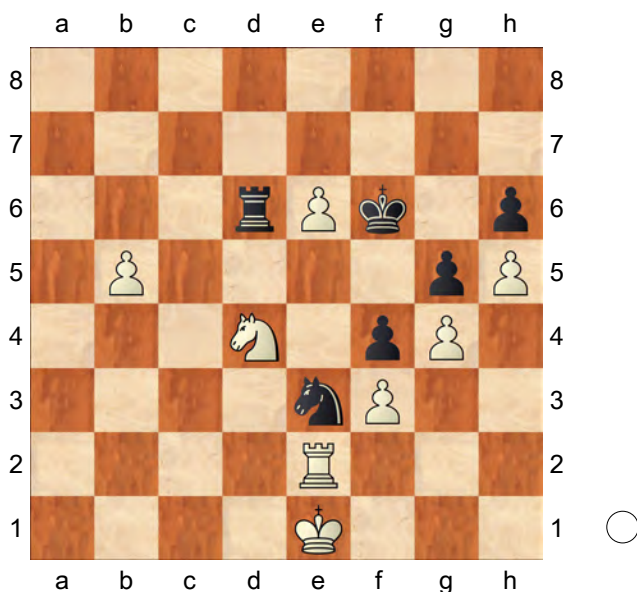


[After 1...Bxg7+ 2.Kxg7 Kd7 3.Kf6 , it is easy to see that the White's king manages to catch the pawn.]
[1...Kf7]

2.Kh7 Bxg7 I was in full confidence that the game would end with this and we will sign the scoresheets. I was glad to hold to a draw such an experienced player. What was my surprise when Liangov, visibly frustrated, stopped the clock and resigned! Of course, I immediately exclaimed that he surrendered in vain and the simple . . . Kh7 would have led to an immediate stalemate. My opponent, without batting an eye, put a draw result on his scoresheet! Since there was a stalemate on the board, I was unable to prove what happened and arbiter awarded a draw. I was only 12 and I was very upset but not because of missing an accidental victory but by the fact that first time in my life I encountered such a frank deception. Of course, now I think that I was fortunate to meet Petar Liangov and get such an invaluable experience! A person is weak and often tends to relax when being a step away from the goal. On the contrary, we often fall into despondency when the situation looks hopeless. Regardless of your game situation, you should always remember Lasker's famous saying: The hardest game to win is the won game. It is impossible to give a universal prescription for all cases how to defend stubbornly or on the contrary how to convert a decisive advantage without flaws. Nevertheless, some rules exist. In four (out of 5) of the examples that I give in the article, the strong side was too rushed to convert his advantage.

This is indeed a very common mistake which is often associated with banal fatigue and a lack of patience. Using the "do-not-hurry" principle formulated by Mark Dvoretsky in his books can often help in overcoming this haste in converting advantage. Also, you can check the games of such great technicians like Ulf Andersson, Anatoly Karpov and Magnus Carlsen. When defending bad positions, it is necessary, of course, to preserve the presence of the spirit and wait for the moment when you can take your opponent out of his comfort zone. Usually a sharp change of the situation could be very unpleasant for your opponent who is trying to increase the pressure gradually. No battle has yet been won after a premature surrender!

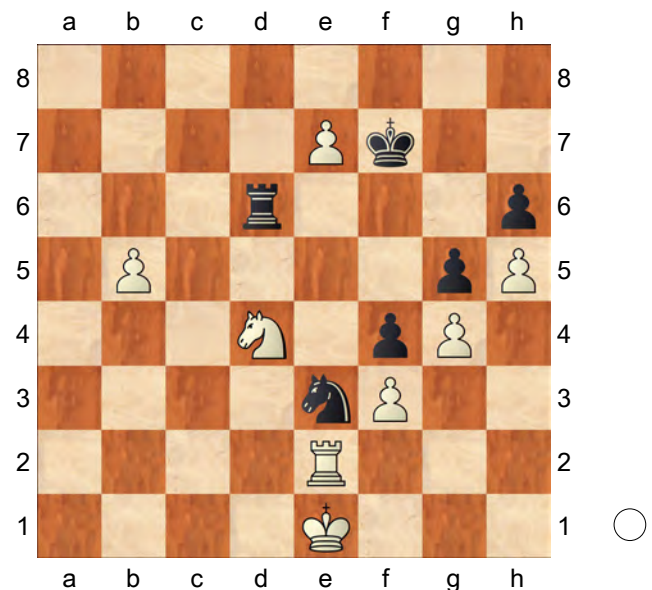
Eljanov – Lenderman Test 1



With my last move 52.Re2?, I gave my opponent the chance to overtake the initiative. How should he make use of it?

NB: You can solve the interactive version of this exercise on the website. After completing the test, you can track your result in % by entering "My Results" section. This is valid for all tests. Good luck!

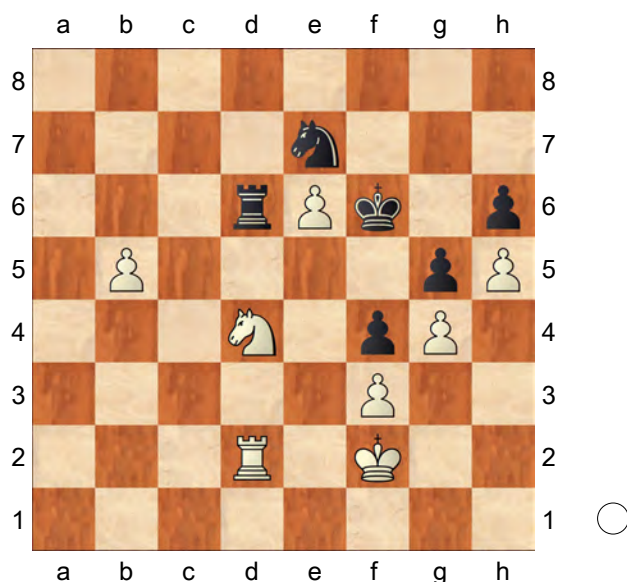
Eljanov – Lenderman Test 2



One of the most difficult things in chess is to start thinking of defence after being in a winning position. How can White save the game here?

Eljanov, Pavel **2734**

Lenderman, Aleksandr **2565**
 FIDE World Cup (1.1) 03.09.2017



In general, it's not very typical for me to make a mistake when my position is won. Nevertheless, I think that no one, even the greatest chess players, cannot avoid making such mistakes. The most memorable example of a fatal loss of concentration occurred in an inopportune moment – in one of the most important tournaments in 2017 – the World Cup. I completely outplayed my opponent and unfortunately considered that the game had already been won. I had to make a few meaningless moves and sign the scoresheets. **51.Ke1** Not a mistake yet

[Nevertheless, easier would have been 51.Ke2 Ke5 White can ignore this "threat" (51...Nd5 52.Kd3 Nc7 53.Kc3 Nxe6 54.Nf5+-) 52.Kd1 Kf6 (52...Rxd4 53.Rxd4 Kxd4 54.b6 Nc6 55.b7+-) 53.Kc2+-]

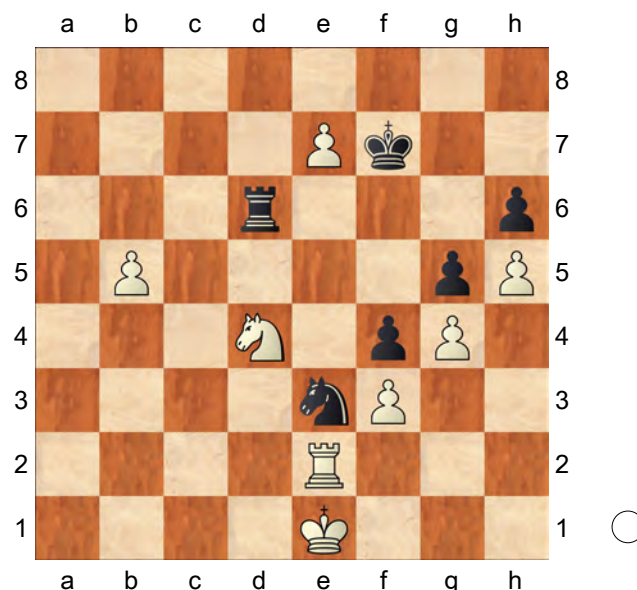
51...Nd5 A unique position: out of 19 possible moves, 15 (!) lead to a won position and only 4 to a draw. Yes, White's position is so good that I do not even have a theoretical opportunity to blunder a knight or a rook in one move. Nevertheless, I found a chance to do so! **52.Re2??**

[Easier is 52.Kd1 Moreover, it's clear there is no any danger for White.]

52...Ne3! I saw it but after **53.e7**

Black played **Kf7!**

[I was convinced that the game will end after 53...Rxd4 54.Rxe3+-]

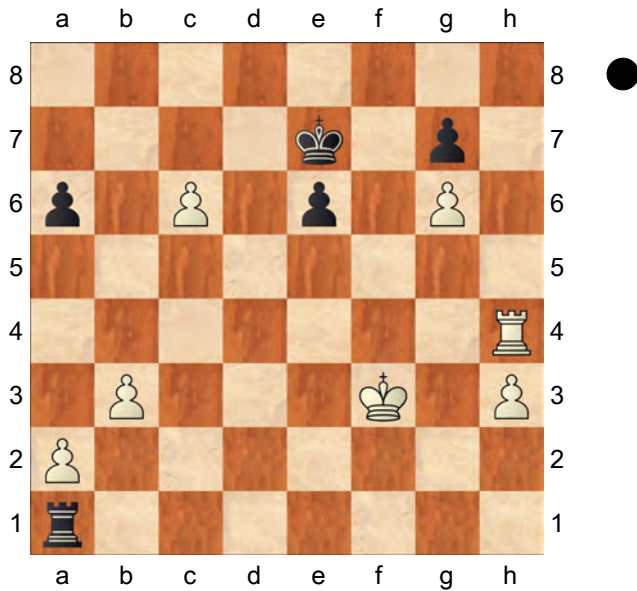


– a move that shocked me! Now it's a draw but having about 5 minutes on the clock, I could not recover from the blow and blundered the knight. **54.Rd2??**

[I understood that 54.Rxe3 fxe3 55.Nf5 Rd3 56.Nxh6+ Kxe7 57.Nf5+ Kf6 leads to a draw but unfortunately I did not have enough time to put up with the inevitable and I made another blunder.]

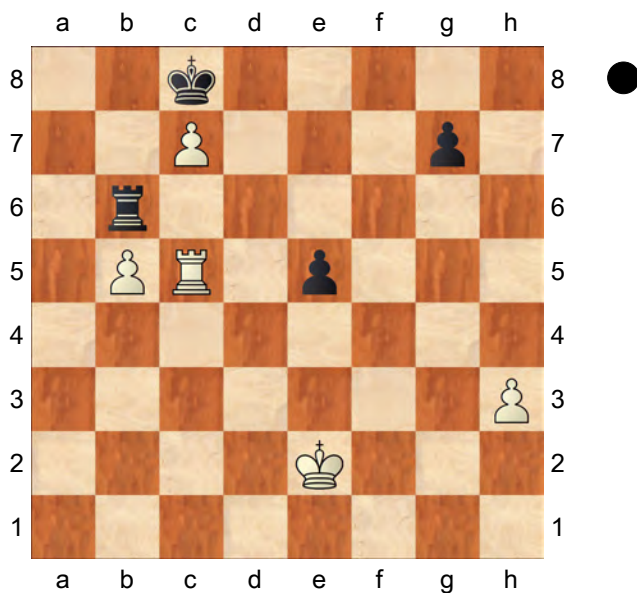
54...Rxd4! 55.Rb2 Rd7 56.b6 Rb7 57.Ke2 Nd5 0-1

Naroditsky – Eljanov Test 1



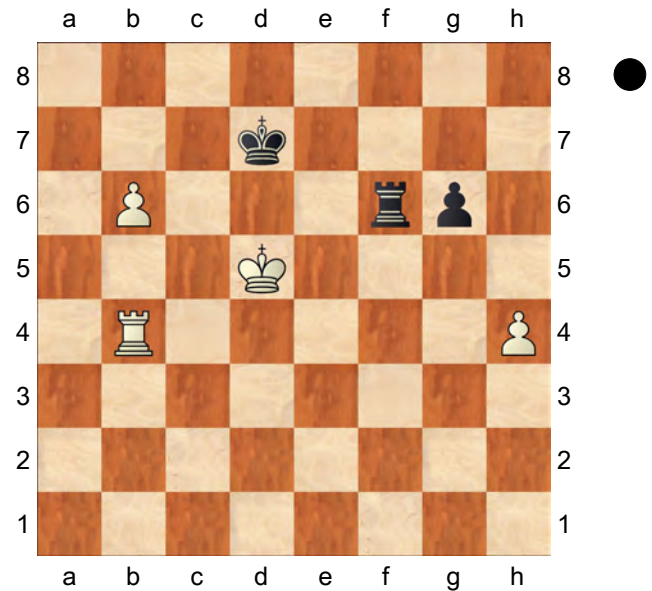
What is White's most precise way to convert his advantage?

Naroditsky – Eljanov Test 2



Can you find the narrow path to the draw in this position?

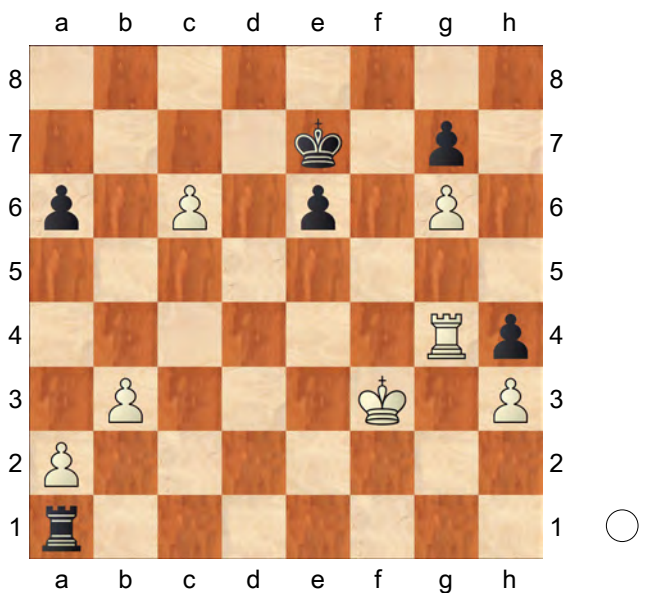
Naroditsky – Eljanov Test 3



How can Black make a draw here?

□ Naroditsky, Daniel
 ■ Eljanov, Pavel Qatar
 Masters op (7)

2620
 2719
 02.12.2014



This example and the following one are about how tricky are the rook endgames. Sometimes, the draw tendencies are so big that one should always be on the alert. I could not get out successfully of the opening against my young opponent and I spent the whole game in a difficult defense. Until this point, my opponent was on top and led the game in an almost flawless way. **41.c7?!**

[A much easier way was 41.Rxh4 Rf1+ (41...Rxa2 42.c7 Kd7 43.Rh7) 42.Ke3 Rf6 43.Rd4! Rxg6 44.c7 Rg3+ 45.Kd2 Rg2+ 46.Kd3+-]

41...Kd7 42.Rxh4 Rf1+ 43.Ke2 Rf6 44.Rc4

[Onn this and on the following move was possible 44.Rg4!? Psychologic ally, it is not easy to give the most advanced pawn but in this case the White's rook would have more freedom and the victory remained a matter of a simple technique Kxc7 45.h4 Rf5 46.Rg5! Rf4 47.h5 Rh4 48.Ra5 Kd7 49.Rxa6 Rxh5 50.a4+-]

44...Kc8 45.b4 Rxg6 46.a4 e5

White has an extra pawn and connected passers – it's hard to imagine that this position may not be won. However, I prepared a study like trap and my opponent got caught in it. **47.b5?**

What could be more logical than pushing a passed pawn with the eventual idea to connect the passers? It's a correct plan, indeed, but in endgames (especially in rook endgames) it often happens that the small nuances decide between a victory and a draw.

[It was necessary at first to bring the

h–pawn a little closer to the goal 47.h4! Re6 (47...Rg1 48.b5 axb5 49.axb5 Rb1 50.Rc5 Rb4 51.Kf3+-) 48.b5 axb5 49.axb5 Rb6 (49...g6 50.Ke3 e4 51.Rc5! the same position as in the game but with Black to move – mutual zugzwang!) 50.Rc5 e4 and now 51.h5! Rd6 52.Ke3 Re6 53.Rc6! compared to the game, thanks to the h5–pawn, this pawn endgame is won for White. Rxc6 54.bxc6 Kxc7 55.Kxe4 Kxc6 56.Kf5 Kd7 57.Kg6+-]

47...axb5 48.axb5 Rb6 49.Rc5 e4!

50.Ke3 Re6 That's the position of a mutual zugzwang I was striving for.

Amazingly, Black has enough counterplay to hold the draw in all the lines. **51.Rc4**

[51.Rg5 Kxc7 52.Rxg7+ Kb6=]

51...Rb6! 52.Rc5 Re6 53.h4 g6

54.Rc4

[The attempt to make a triangle to pass the move, does not lead anywhere – Black has enough room for maneuvering with the rook on the sixth rank. 54.Kf2 Rf6+ (54...e3+? 55.Ke2+- another mutual zugzwang) 55.Ke2 Rb6 56.Kd2 Rf6 57.Ke3 Re6=]

54...Rb6 55.Rc5 Re6 56.Rc4 Rb6

57.Kxe4

[The best try was 57.Rb4! although Black holds with a precise play Kxc7 58.Kxe4 Kd7! it's important to have the 6th rank open to keep the possibility to activate the rook. 59.Ke5 Re6+

A) 60.Kf4 Rb6 61.Kg5 Ke7 62.Rb2 Kf7 63.Kf4 (63.Kh6 Kf6 White cannot make any progress here.) 63...Ke6 64.Ke4 Kd7!

(64...Kd6? 65.Kd4 Kc7 66.Ke5 Kd7 67.Rd2+! Kc7 68.Rd5+-)
 65.Kd5 (65.Ke5 Re6+ 66.Kf4 Rb6 67.Rb4 Ke6; 65.Rd2+ Kc7 66.Rd5 Rf6=) 65...Rf6 66.b6 Rf5+=;

B) 60.Kd5 Rf6! 61.b6 Rf5+!
 62.Ke4 Kc8=]

57...Rxb5 58.Kf4 Rf5+ 59.Kg4 Re5!?

I put my rook on e5 to prevent my king from being cut off along the e-file.

Although it was not necessary, since White can win with the h-pawn alone, only if my king is cut off along the d-file.

[59...Ra5 60.Rc6 Ra1 61.Rxg6 Kxc7 62.Re6 Kd7=]

60.Rc6 Re1 61.Rxg6 Kxc7 62.h5 Kd7

63.Rf6 Ke7 64.Rf3 Rg1+ 65.Kh1 Rg1+

66.Kg5 Rg1+ 67.Kh6 Rg2

68.Kh7 Rg1 69.h6 Rg2 70.Kh8 Rg1

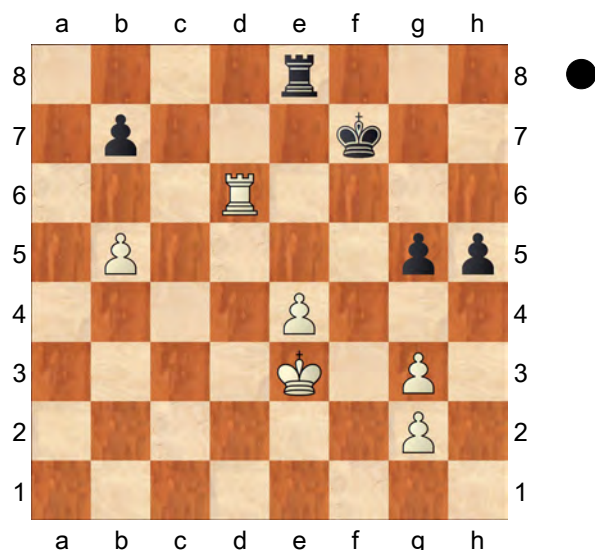
71.h7 Rg2 72.Ra3 Kf7 73.Ra8 Rg1

74.Rg8 Ra1

1/2

Grischuk – Eljanov

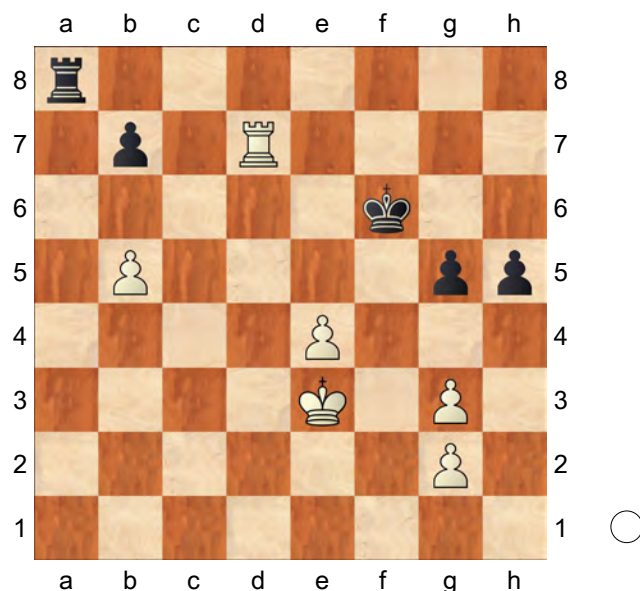
Test 1



This rook endgame is difficult for Black. Can you demonstrate the best way of defence in such positions?

Grischuk – Eljanov

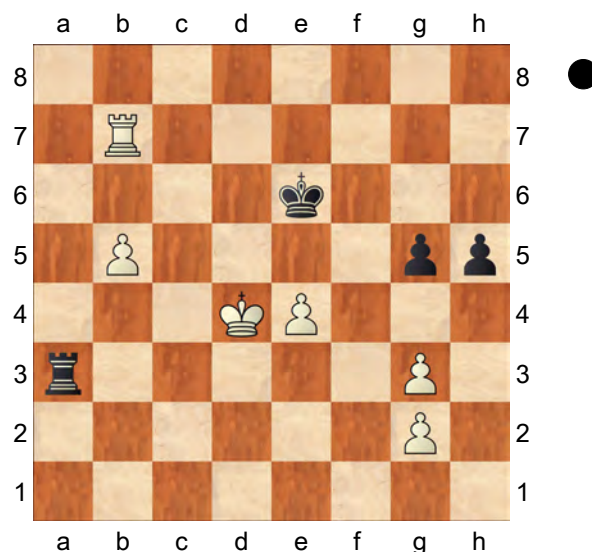
Test 2



In the game, I played ...Kf6 instead of ...Ke6. How can White make use of this mistake?

Grischuk – Eljanov

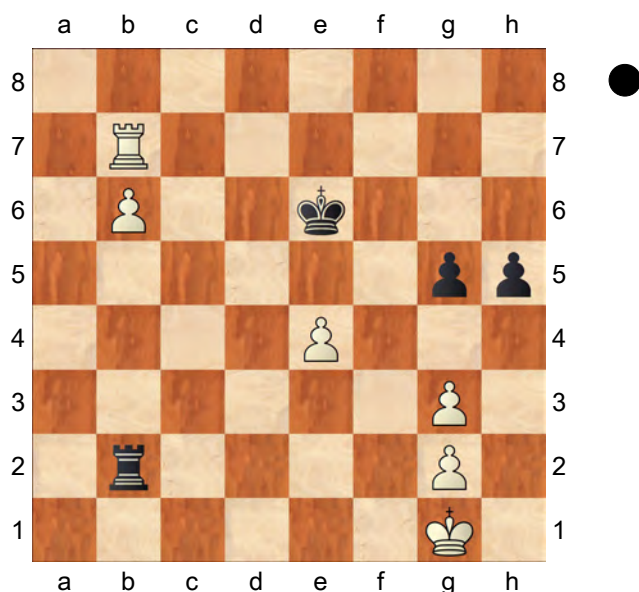
Test 3



What will be the difference if White goes for the same strategy with a black king on e6 instead of f6?

Grischuk – Eljanov

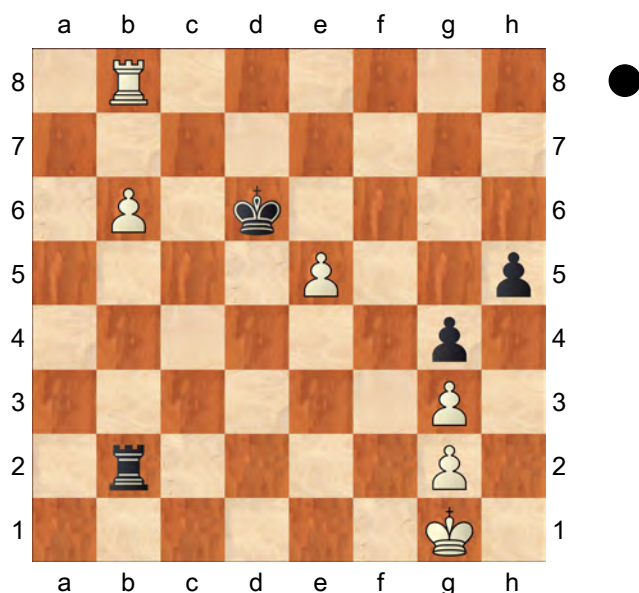
Test 4



Black's position remains very difficult but he has an amazing resource. Can you find it?

Grischuk–Eljanov

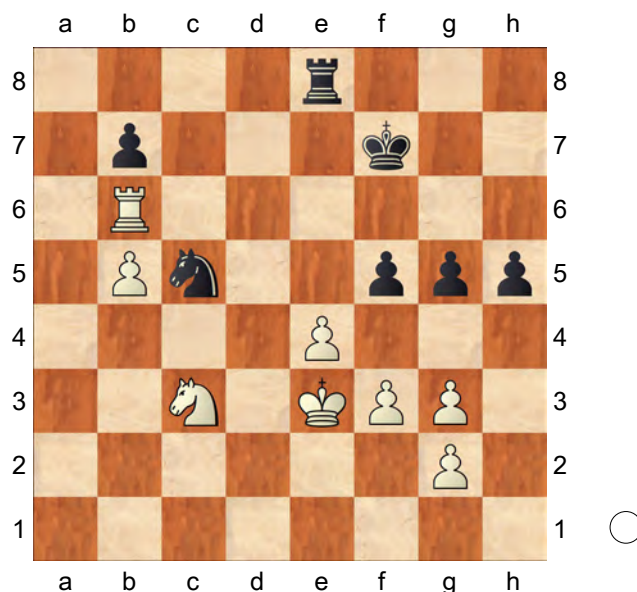
Test 5



After the advance e4–e5, the endgame becomes very sharp. Black should play very precisely.

Grischuk, Alexander **2742**

Eljanov, Pavel **2759**
 Sharjah FIDE GP (5) 22.02.2017



This is another example of a tricky rook endgame. It's very often not the best choice to go there when having a winning advantage. **39.Rd6**

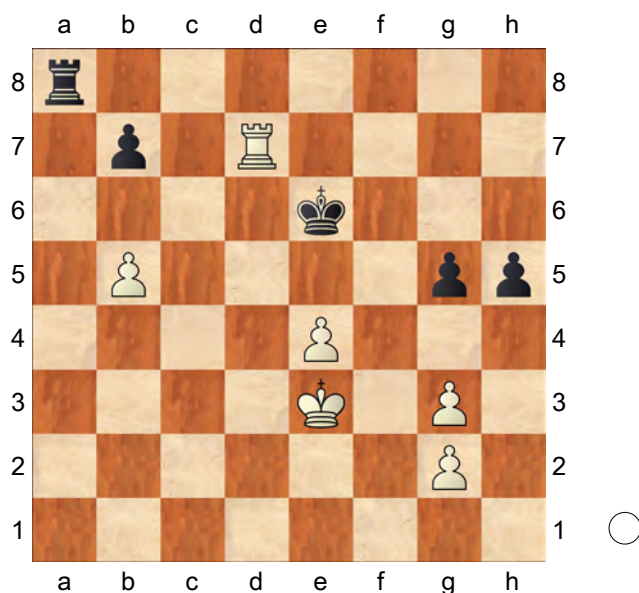
[39.Kd4 Ne6+ 40.Kd5 looked more decisive.]

39...fxe4 40.Nxe4?

[White keeps all the chances with the knights on the board. 40.fxe4]

40...Nxe4 41.fxe4 Ra8 42.Rd7+ Ke6!

[Unfortunately, I played 42...Kf6? and lost after 43.Rxb7 Ra3+ 44.Kd4 Rxb7 45.b6+- the difference is that my king is too far away from the b-pawn. Rxb7 46.Rb8 Rb2 47.b7! Kg7 48.e5 g4 49.Kc3+-]



Somehow, I overlooked the g5–g4 idea in the following lines and decided to put my king closer to the kingside pawns. I think that subconsciously I didn't believe that there could be a draw. **43.Rxb7**

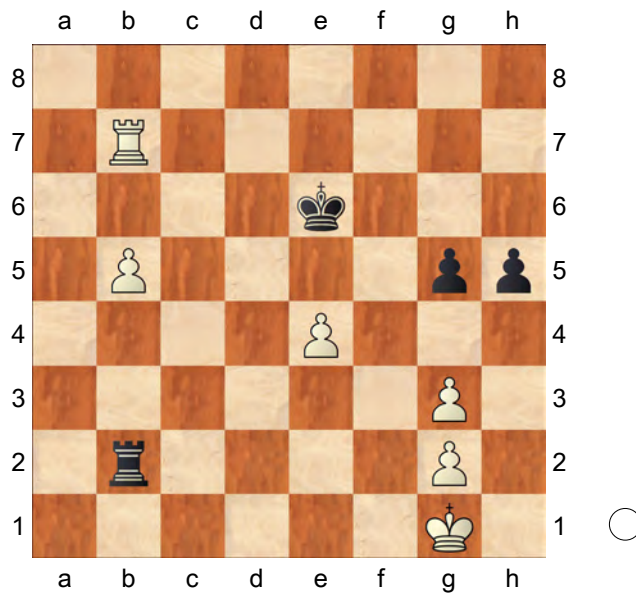
Ra3+ 44.Kf2

[44.Kd4 Rxc3 45.Rh7 (45.b6 Rxc2 46.Rb8 Rb2 47.b7 Kd7=) 45...h4 46.b6 Rxc2 47.b7 Rb2 48.Kc5 Ke5 49.Kc6 Kxe4 reaching a draw with moves to spare.]

44...Ra2+

[44...Rb3 45.b6 Rb2+ 46.Kf3 (46.Kf1 Rb1+ 47.Ke2 Rb2+ 48.Kd3 Rxc2 49.Kc4 Rc2+ 50.Kd4 Rd2+ 51.Kc3 Rg2) 46...Rb3+]

45.Kg1 Rb2!



46.Rb6+

[46.b6 g4! 47.Rb8 (47.Rh7 Ke5=) 47...Kd6

A) 48.e5+ Kc5! 49.e6 Re2

50.Rh8 (50.b7 Kb6=) 50...Kxb6 51.Rxh5 Rxe6;

B) 48.b7 Kc6 49.Rh8 (49.Kf1

Rb4) 49...Rxb7 50.Rxh5 Rb4=]

[46.g4 hxg4 47.Kh2 Ke5=]

46...Ke5 47.Rg6 g4! 48.Rg5+ Kxe4

49.Rxh5 Rb1+ 50.Kh2 Rb2

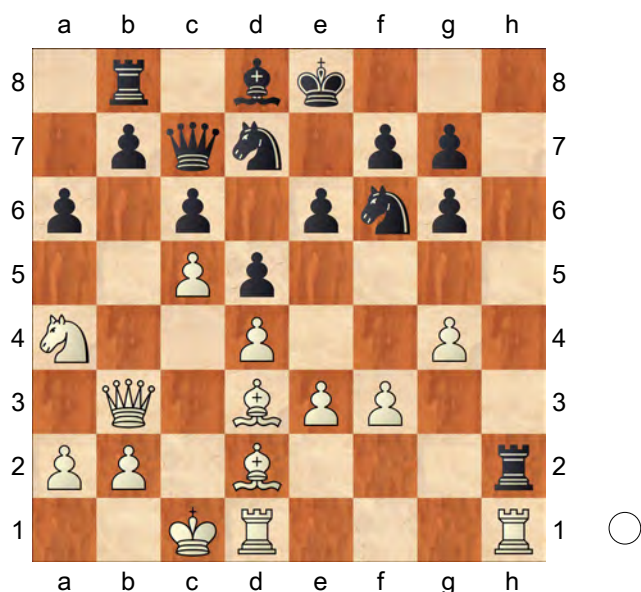
This is the point. Despite the fact White can grab the g4–pawn with a check, there is no way to keep the b–pawn alive at the same time. Then, it's just a theoretical

draw. **51.Rg5 Rb1**

52.Rxg4+ Kf5 53.Rf4+ Kg5=

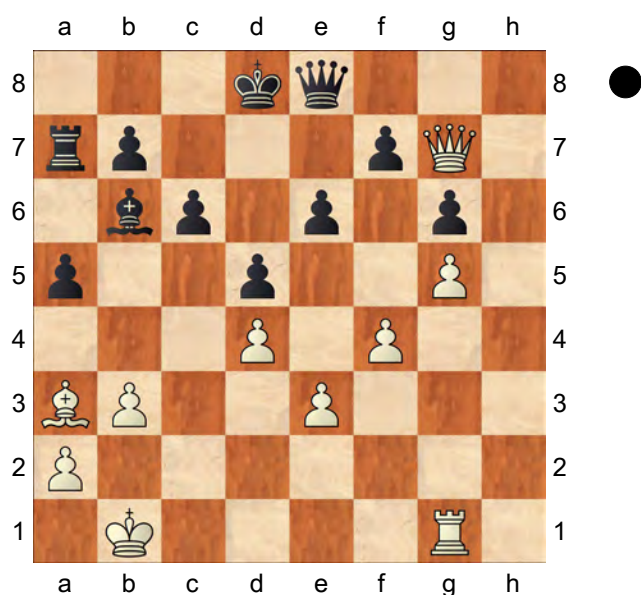
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Wang - Eljanov Test 1



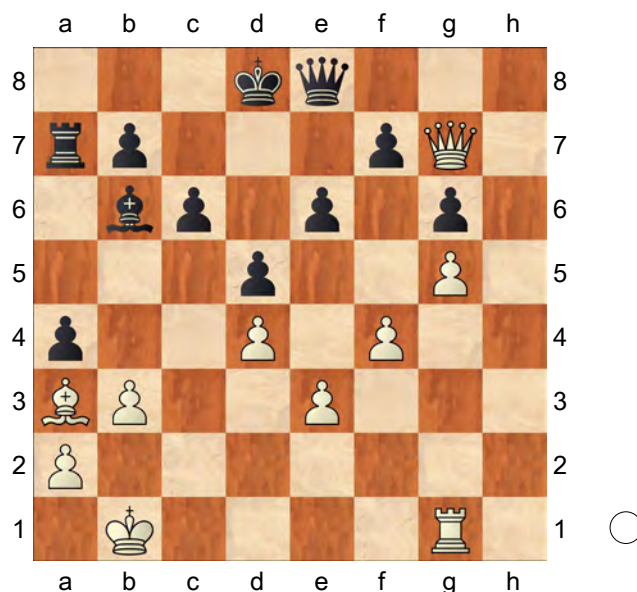
My last move ...Be7-d8 was a mistake. How can White eliminate Black's counterplay?

Wang - Eljanov Test 2



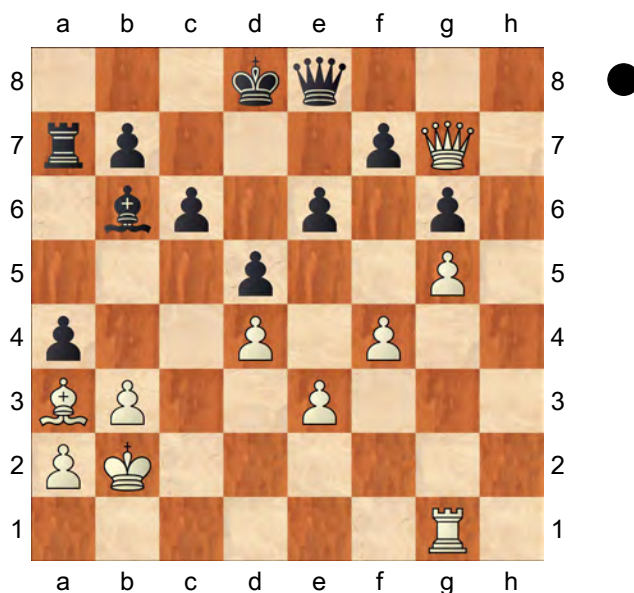
Black's position is objectively lost. Can you find his last chance?

Wang - Eljanov Test 3



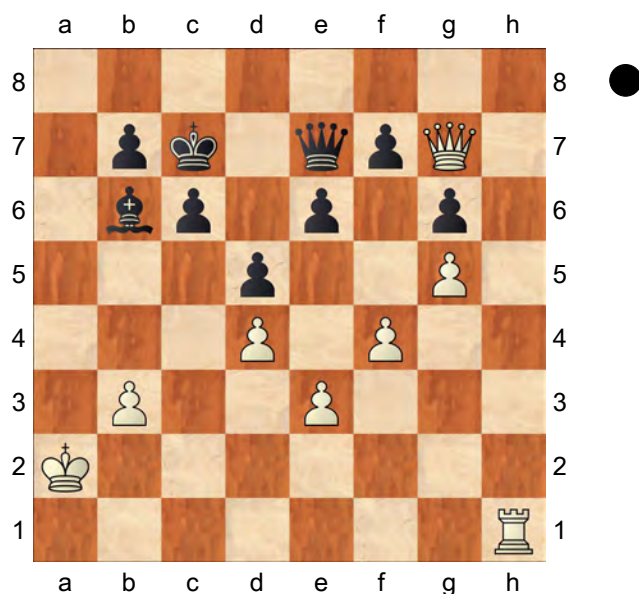
As we have already pointed out, with his last move ...a5-a4, Black is going for a desperate counterplay. What is White's most precise way to convert his advantage?

Wang - Eljanov Test 4



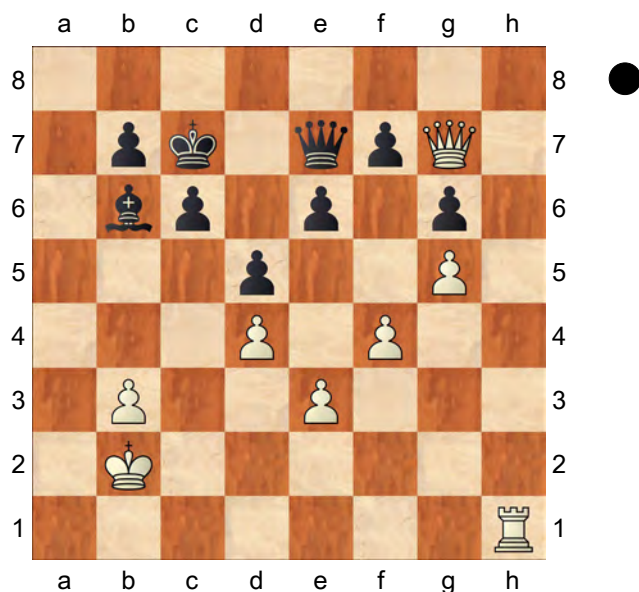
Instead of going for the forced sequence arising after Rh1, White preferred delaying the calculation and played Kb1-b2. How can Black create at least practical chances?

Wang – Eljanov Test 5



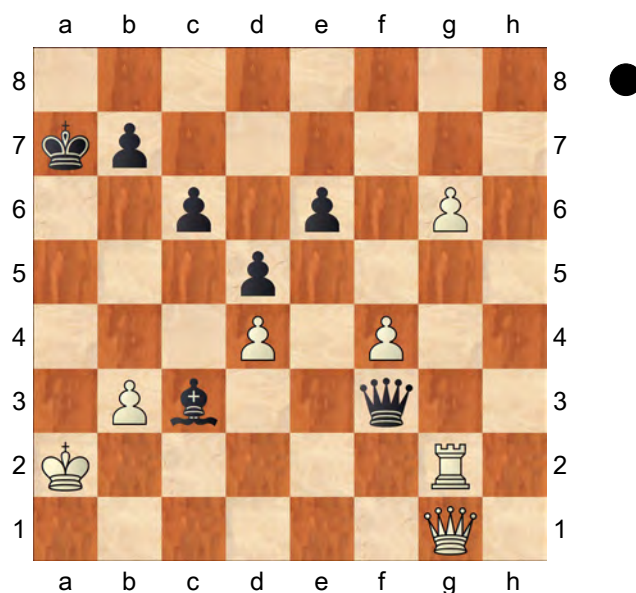
White is still winning, but Black's counterplay is getting real. At this point, you should decide which is the best square for White's king.

Wang – Eljanov Test 6



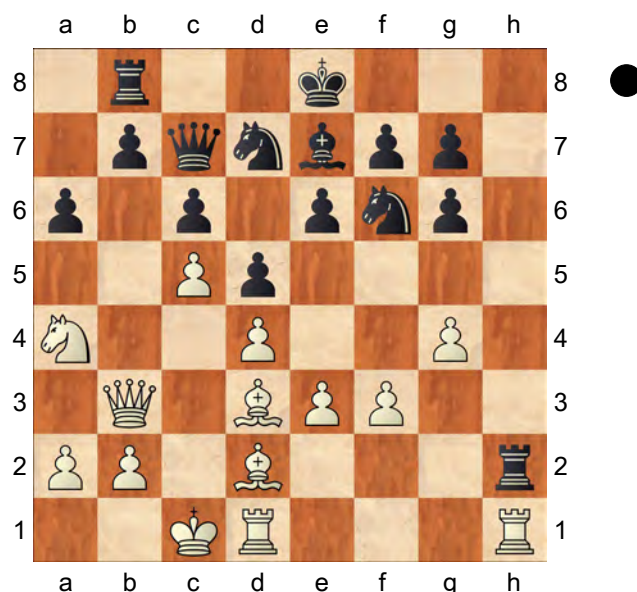
Instead of the precise Ka2, White has played Kb2. Now, Black's counterplay is getting dangerous. How to proceed?

Wang – Eljanov Test 7



This position could have arisen in the game, would the Chinese GM have played optimally. It seems that Black is losing but he has a fantastic resource at his disposal. Can you find it?

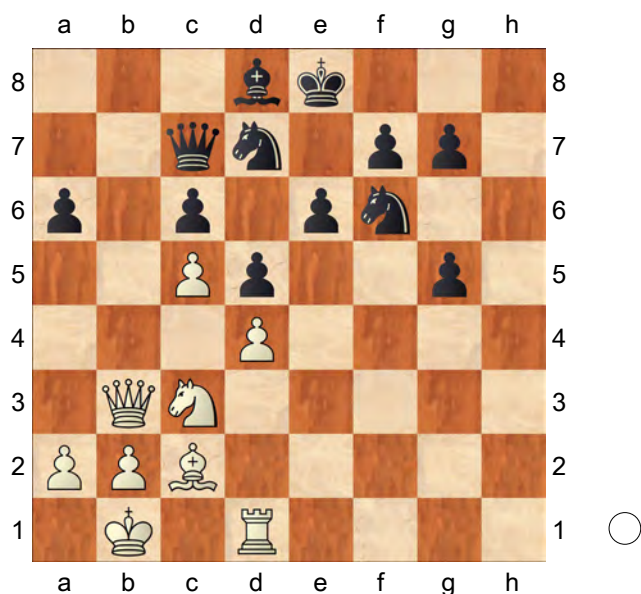
□ Wang, Yue 2752
 ■ Eljanov, Pavel 2751
 Astrakhan FIDE GP (5) 14.05.2010



Not my best game from one of the most

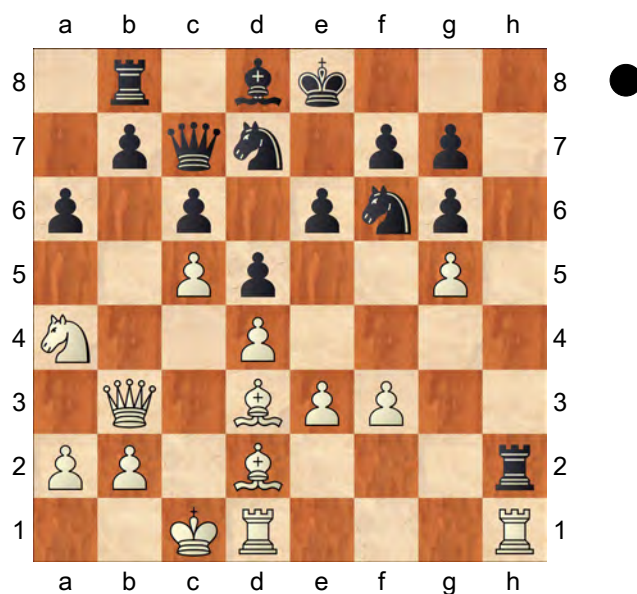
successful tournaments but it shows my readiness to fight until the end. This position is complex and I had a choice to initiate a sharp play or to try to play positionally. **15...Bd8??** A terrible mistake that I cannot explain.

[15...g5 I was worried because of 16.Ba5 (16.Rdf1 b5!? 17.cxb6 Nxb6 18.Ba5 Nfd7[∞]) 16...Qg3 17.Rhg1 Qxf3 18.Bc7 Qxe3+ 19.Kb1 but after Rd2! Black has a good game: 20.Rxd2 Qxg1+ 21.Rd1 Qxg4 (21...Qxd4!? 22.Bxb8 Nxb8 23.Qxb7 Nfd7) 22.Bxb8 Nxb8 23.Bc2 Bd8 24.Qxb7 Qf4 25.Nc3 Qc7 26.Qb3 Nbd7[∞]



] [I also saw 15...Qg3, but wasn't sure about the Black's prospects. It looks like White has a draw and no more. 16.Rxh2 Qxh2 17.Rf1 Kf8 18.Qd1 Kg8 19.Rh1 Qg2 20.Rg1 Qf2 21.Rf1 Qg2=]

16.g5!



I just forgot about this idea! **Nh5 17.f4** Now I think that Black is strategically lost. I have no space and no counterplay. **Rxh1 18.Rxh1 Nf8**

[18...Ng3 19.Rh8+ (19.Rh7 Nf5) 19...Nf8 20.Qd1 Nf5 21.Qh1±]

19.Rg1 Qc8 20.Qc2 Bc7 21.Kb1 Ke7 22.Bc1 Qe8 23.b3 Nd7 24.Nc3 a5

Desperate move. Probably, more tenacious was the passive defence, but still White has many possibilities to break through.

[24...Ra8 25.Ba3 Qg8 26.Ne2 Qe8 27.Rg2 Qg8 28.Ng1 Qe8 29.Nf3 Nf8 30.Nh4 Kd7 31.Qd1 Kc8 32.Be2 a5 Here, it's more to the point, but White is better anyway.]

25.Ba3 Ra8 26.Na4 Kf8

[My engine proposed 26...Qb8 27.Be2 Qa7!? but I don't believe in it. Maybe the engine will hold it, but for a human it's too much!]

27.Qh2 Ke7 28.Nb6 Ra7

[28...Rd8 29.Qd2 (29.Be2 Nxb6 30.cxb6+ Bd6 31.Bxd6+ Rxd6) 29...Nxb6 30.cxb6+ Bd6 31.Qxa5±]

29.Be2! Now, the game is almost over.

Kd8 30.Bxh5 gxh5 31.Qxh5 g6

32.Qh7 Nxb6 33.cxb6 Bxb6 34.Qg7

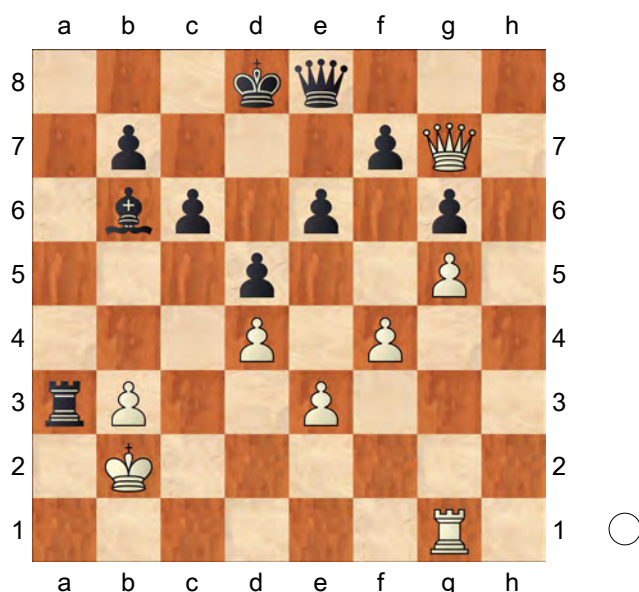
a4! Last chance. **35.Kb2** Not bad, but after

[35.Rh1 axb3 36.Qf6+! Kd7 37.Rh7

bxa2+ 38.Kxa2 Rxa3+ 39.Kxa3

Qe7+ 40.Kb3 White is just winning.]

35...axb3 36.axb3 Rxa3!



Again, the only move to continue the agony. **37.Kxa3 Kc7 38.Rh1 Qe7+**

39.Kb2? This is already a real mistake.

After it, I have decent counterchances!

[39.Ka2! Ba5 40.Rh7 Qb4 41.Qxf7+

Kb8 42.Rh2 and I have no Qc3+! Qe1

43.Qxe6 Bc3 44.Qd6+ Ka7 45.Qc5+

Ka6 46.Qa3+ Kb6 47.b4!+-]

39...Ba5 40.Rh7 Qb4! The last move before the time control and the game is beginning for a second time! **41.Qxf7+**

Kb8 42.Rh2 Qc3+ 43.Ka2 Bb4!

Again, the only move.

[43...Qxe3 44.Qf8+ (44.Qxg6 Bc3)

44...Ka7 45.Qc5+ Ka6 46.b4 Bb6

47.b5+! (47.Qc2 also) 47...cxb5

48.Qa3+-]

44.Qe8+ Ka7 45.Qxg6 Qxe3 46.Qc2 Bc3 47.g6?

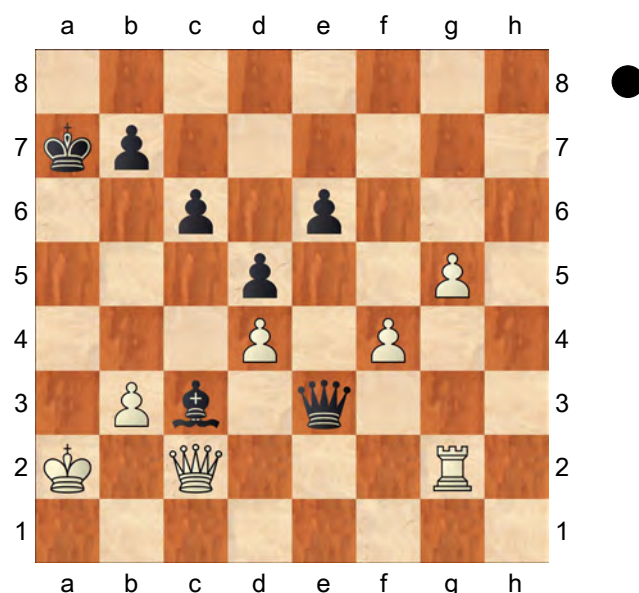
[Things are not clear after 47.Re2

Qxd4 48.Rxe6 Qb4 49.Qc1 Kb6!

50.g6 Qa5+ 51.Qa3 Qb5 52.Re3

d4±]

[47.Rg2!



was stronger. I have many possibilities, but it looks like the only try to fight is connected with a study-like idea!

A) 47...Bxd4 48.Qd2+-;

B) 47...Qf3 48.Rf2 Qh3 49.Qd1!

(49.Rh2 Qf3) 49...Qg3 50.Qf3

Qg1 51.Rf1 Qh2+ 52.Qf2 Qh8

53.Rd1 In this way, White has to

win the position.;

C) 47...Qe1! 48.Qb1 Qe3 49.g6

Qf3 50.Qg1 and here the fantastic:

c5!! manages to save the game.

51.g7 (51.dxc5 Bd4; 51.Qf2 Qd1

52.Rg1 Qd3; 51.Rf2 Qd3 52.Qf1

Qxg6 53.dxc5 Qe4 54.Qc1

Qd3±) 51...Bxd4 52.g8Q Bxg1

53.Rxg1 (53.Qg4 Qxg4 54.Rxg4

Be3=) 53...Qe2+ 54.Ka1 Qa6+

55.Kb1 Qd3+ this is a perpetual.]

47...Qe1

[47...Bxd4 more or less the same
48.Re2 (48.Qd2 Qg1 49.Rh1 Qxh1
50.Qxd4+ Ka6 51.g7 Qg2+ 52.Qb2
Qg6 looks like it's draw) 48...Qg1
49.b4]

48.b4

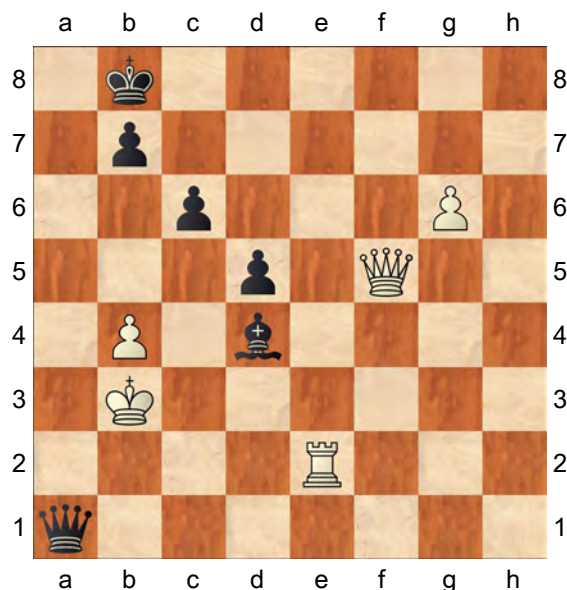
[48.Qb1 Qg3]

48...Bxd4 49.Qd3 Qg1? An unobvious mistake, thanks to which... I won this game!

[It was necessary to put my bishop in a safer place: 49...Bg7 because of the following variations: 50.Kb3 Kb8 51.Re2 (51.Ra2 Kc7; 51.Rh7 Qa1 52.Kc2 Qa4+ 53.Kc1 Qa7! with a sufficient counterplay.) 51...Qa1 52.f5 exf5 53.Qg3+ Kc8 54.Qe1 Qf6! and I have a safe refuge for my queen.]

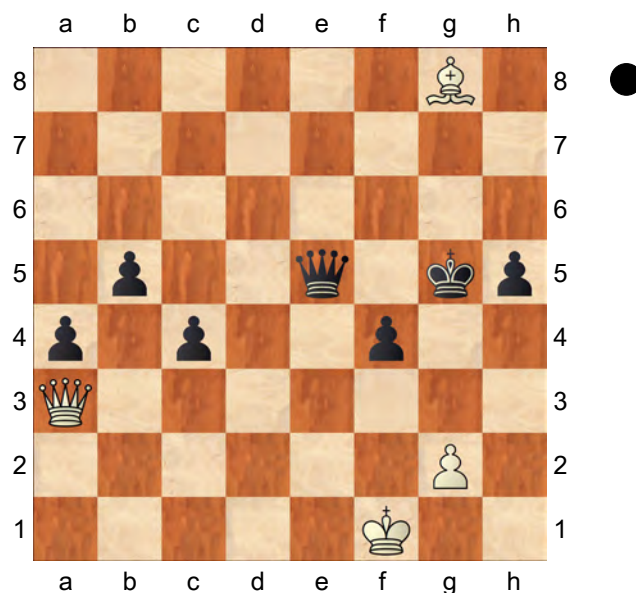
50.Re2 Kb8 51.Kb3 Qa1 52.f5! exf5 53.Qxf5??

[53.Qg3+ Kc8 54.Qe1! this is the point Qxe1 55.Rxe1 Kd7 and it looks like Black is ok, but White is just in time to transfer his rook into Black's camp. 56.Kc2 (56.Re2 Bg7 57.Kc2 b6 58.Kd3 c5) 56...b6 (56...Bg7 57.Re3) 57.Re3! Bg7 58.Ra3 Ke7 59.Ra6 Bd4 60.Kd3 Bf2 61.Ra7+ Kf8 62.Rc7 c5 63.Rf7+ Kg8 64.Rxf5 and White is winning.]



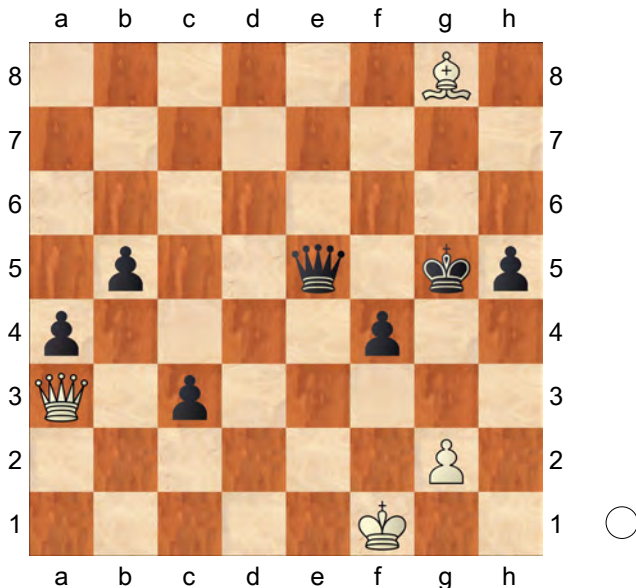
A terrible blunder. White was very close to the victory. **53...Qc3+ 54.Ka2 Qc4+** Of course, I was so lucky in this game. However, it's clear that my opponent was tired because of my stubborn defence. Sometimes, people are underestimating the art of defence and after looking the at the suggestions of the engines, they use "luck" or "unluck" definitions. To describe such situations. **0-1**

Fier – Eljanov Test 1



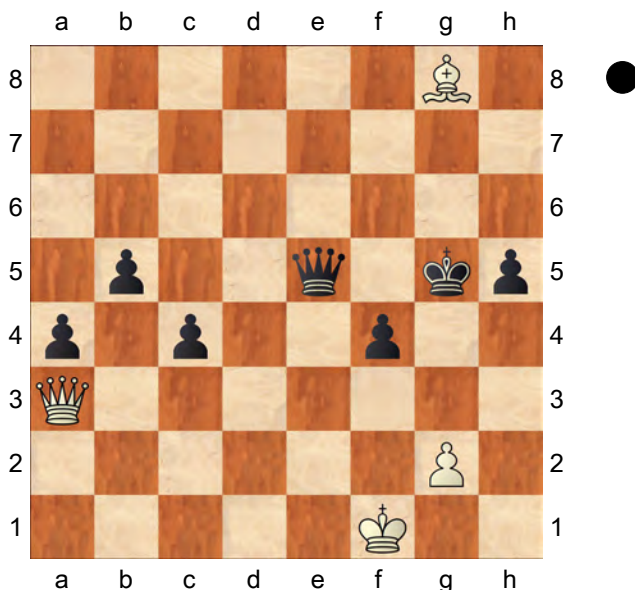
Black's advantage is out of the question.
What is the precise way to covert?

Fier – Eljanov Test 2



Instead of 1...h4!, I went for the premature 1...c3. Now, White should find the narrow path to the draw.

Fier, Alexandr **2601**
 Eljanov, Pavel **2727**
 Reykjavik op (7) 15.03.2015



[#] Black has a material advantage and strong passed pawns – it's clear that the advantage should be enough for a win. However, in fact, it's far from easy since White has a hidden counterplay.

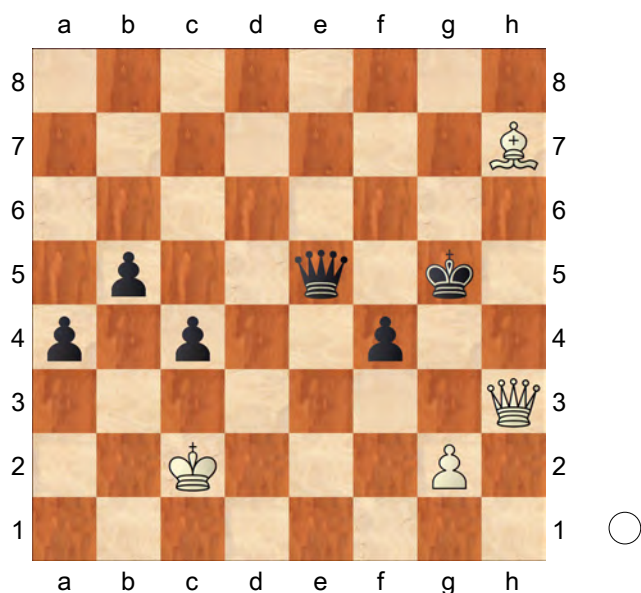
56...c3? It seems logical just to push one of the passers but this move has some drawbacks as well: I'm closing an important diagonal for my queen and in general my pawn chain become less flexible.

[56...Qe3 57.Qf8 Qc1+ 58.Kf2]

[You can find the best move if you are acquainted with the principle do-not-hurry 56...h4! Indeed, if you know the solution, it looks so obvious! Black has a great centralization and it's very logical to strengthen the position maximally. In fact, the idea is quite concrete. Black is planning to sacrifice a pawn to disrupt White's coordination.

A) 57.Qf8 now it doesn't work h3! 58.gxh3 f3! 59.h4+ (59.Qxf3 Qf4+-) 59...Kg4+-;

B) 57.Bh7 the best chance. Here Black should find a couple of difficult moves to win the game. h3! (57...f3? 58.gxf3 h3 59.Qf8! h2 60.Kg2=) 58.Qxh3 (58.gxh3 Qe3+-) 58...Qa1+ 59.Ke2 Qb2+ 60.Kd1 (60.Ke1 Qc1+ 61.Ke2 Qe3+-) 60...Qd4+ 61.Kc2 Qe5!



the point. Now, when Whites pieces are lacking proper coordination, Black's queen is coming back to the best square. 62.Qa3 (62.Kd1 b4+-) 62...Qe2+ 63.Kc3 Qe3+ 64.Kb2 Kh4 65.Qb4 Qe5+ 66.Ka2 Kg3+-]

[56...Kg6 57.Qf8 Qa1+ 58.Kf2 Qg7 59.Qe8+ Kh6 60.Qc6+ Qg6 61.Qa8 and it's not easy for Black to make any progress.]

[56...f3 57.gxf3 h4 58.Qc1+ Kg6 (58...Qf4 59.Qa3) 59.Bxc4! bxc4 60.Qxc4±]

57.Bh7□ Kh4

[57...f3 58.gxf3 Kf4 59.Be4=]

58.Bd3?

[58.Qf8! was the only move but with enough counterplay

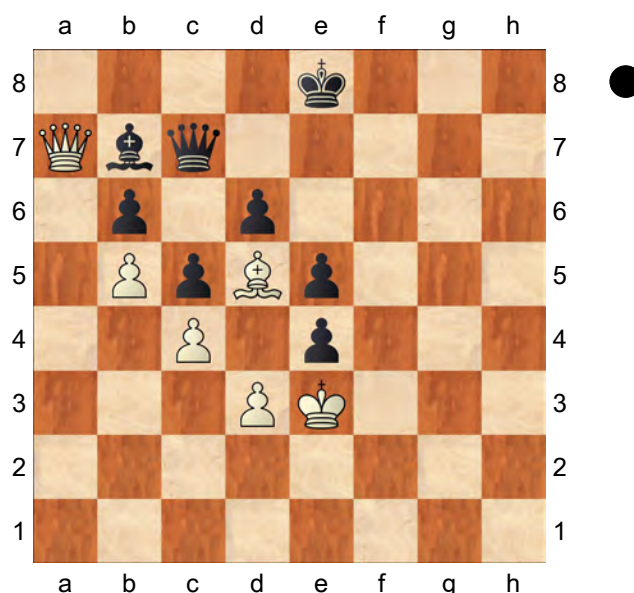
A) 58...Kg3 doesn't lead anywhere 59.Qc8! (or 59.Qg8+! Kh2 60.Qd8);

B) 58...a3!? I was relying on this move but White is not forced to take. 59.Qd8+ (59.Qxa3 Kg3 60.Qc1 Qe3) 59...Qg5 (59...Kg3 60.Qc8) 60.Qd4! Now, let's

compare this position to the initial one: black strongest pieces are on edge but on the other hand White's queen is dominating in the center. a2 61.Qxc3 f3 62.Qe1+ Qg3 63.Qe7+=]

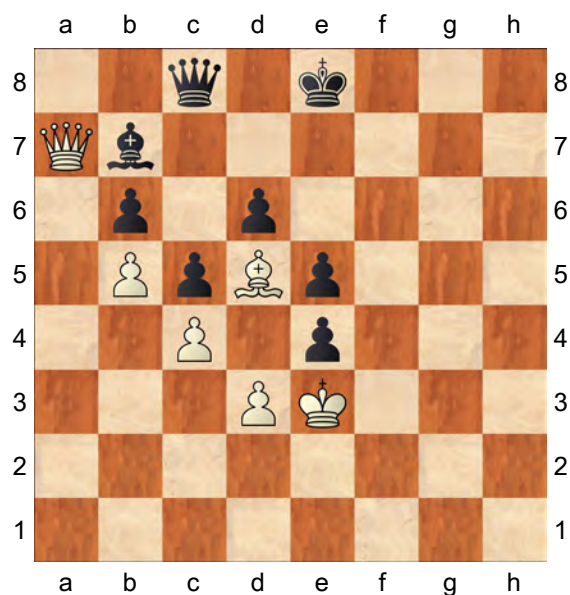
This is the decisive mistake. **58...Kg3 59.Qf8 Qd4 60.Qg8+ Kh2 61.Qh7 Qg1+ 62.Ke2 Qxg2+ 63.Ke1 Qg3+ 64.Kf1 f3 0-1**

Ding – Wojtaszek Test 1



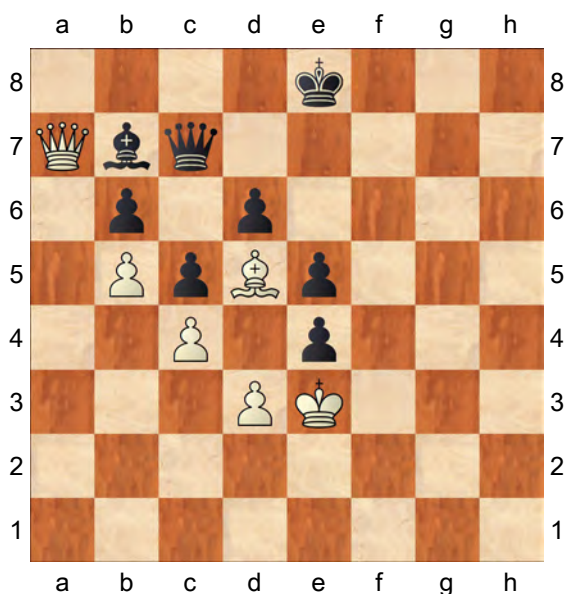
Black's position looks critical. Nevertheless, he has a saving chance. Try to exploit it.

Ding – Wojtaszek Test 2



What would have happened if Black had played 1...Qc8, instead of 1... Qd8?

Ding,Liren **2778**
 Wojtaszek,Radoslaw **2744**
 Vugar Gashimov Mem 2018 (1.2) 19.04.18



White's last move Kf3–e3 is a mistake.
49...Qd8! the correct square for the queen.

[The false track is 49...Qc8?

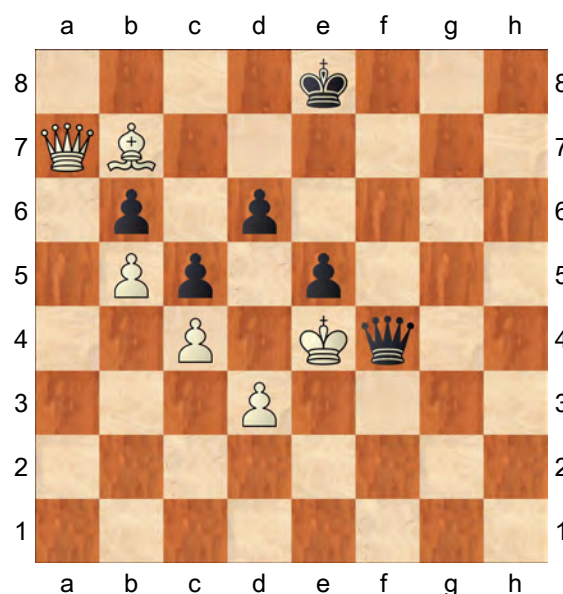
50.Qxb7! Here, White can take with a queen and it is a decisive difference. Qh3+ 51.Kxe4 Qh4+ 52.Ke3 Qe1+ (52...Qg3+ 53.Bf3+-) 53.Kf3 Qf1+ 54.Kg4 Qf4+ 55.Kh5 Qf5+ 56.Kh6 Qf6+ 57.Kh7+-]

50.Bxb7! forced

[Now, 50.Qxb7 doesn't work because of Qg5+ White cannot take the pawn and the draw is obvious. 51.Kxe4?? Qf4#]

50...Qg5+ 51.Kxe4 It seems White has found the way to run away with his king... **Qf4+!**

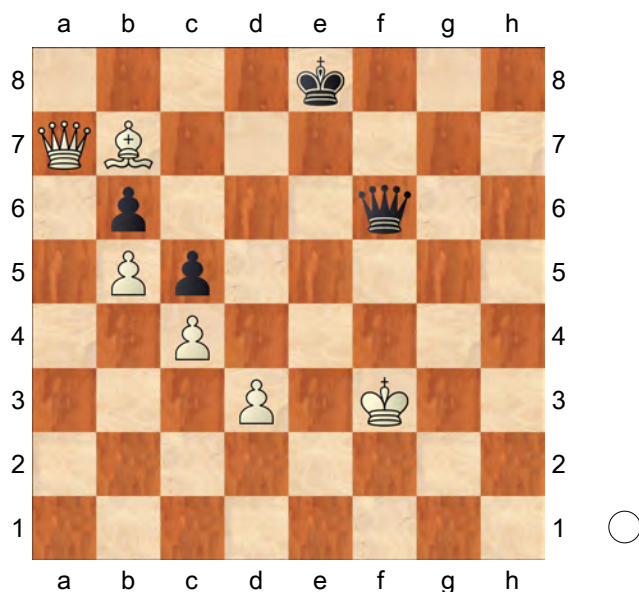
[To the same position leads 51...d5+! 52.Kxd5 e4+! 53.Kxe4 Qh4+]



52.Kd5 Qf3+! 53.Kxd6 Qf6+ 54.Kd5
[54.Kc7 Qd8+ 55.Kc6 Qf6+=]

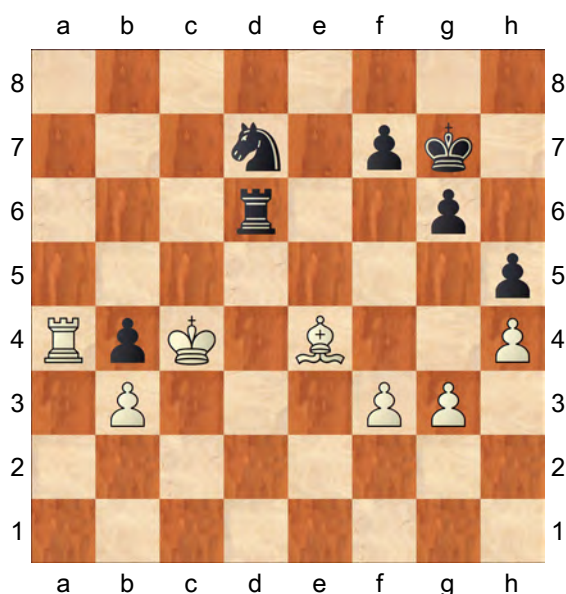
54...Qf3+ Forcing White to take the last pawn and deprive his king from his last refuge. **55.Kxe5 Qg3+ 56.Kf5 Qh3+ 57.Kf4 Qh4+ 58.Kf3 Qf6+!**

[58...Qh3+? 59.Kf2 Qh4+ 60.Ke2 Qh2+ 61.Kd1 Qg1+ 62.Kc2 Qf2+ 63.Kb3]



the last important finesse. Black should interfere white king's run to the queenside. **59.Ke2 Qb2+ 60.Ke1 Qc1+ 61.Ke2 Qb2+ 62.Kf1 Qc1+ 63.Kg2 Qd2+ 64.Kg3 Qg5+ 65.Kf3 Qf6+ 66.Ke3 Qd4+ 67.Ke2**
1/2

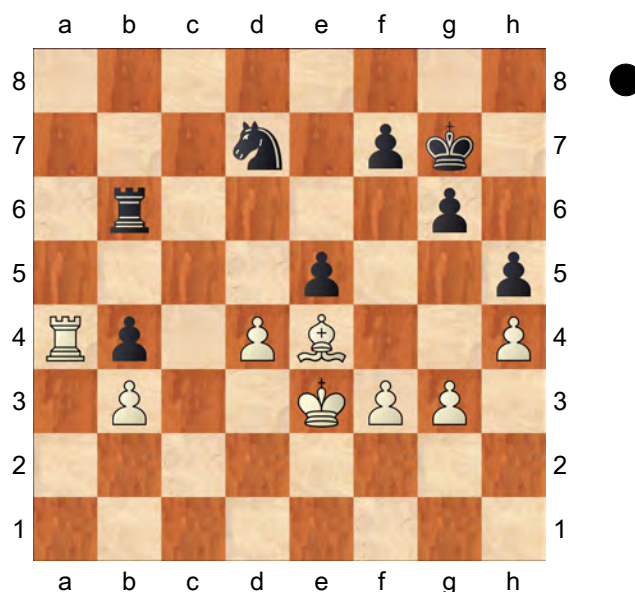
Karjakin – Eljanov Test 1



White's advantage is out of the question. In such situations, bishop usually dominates the knight. Additionally, the b4-pawn will be lost. Nevertheless, Black can save the day.

□ **Karjakin, Sergey**
■ **Eljanov, Pavel**
FIDE World Cup (6.4)

2762
2717
29.09.2015



White is better because the b4-pawn is about to fall. **41...exd4+!**

[I played 41...Kf6 and lost this game eventually 42.dxe5+ Kxe5 43.Ra5+ Kd6 44.Kd4±]

[41...f5 42.dxe5 Nxe5 43.Bd5±]

42.Kxd4 Rd6+ 43.Kc4

[43.Bd5 Nb6 44.Ra5 f6 45.Ke4 Nxd5 46.Rxd5 Re6+ 47.Kf4

(47.Kd4 Re2=) 47...Rb6=

White can try to play on but it's clear that the rook endgame is drawish.]

[43.Ke3 f5! 44.Bd3 Nb6 45.Ra7+ Kf6±]

43...Nb6+!

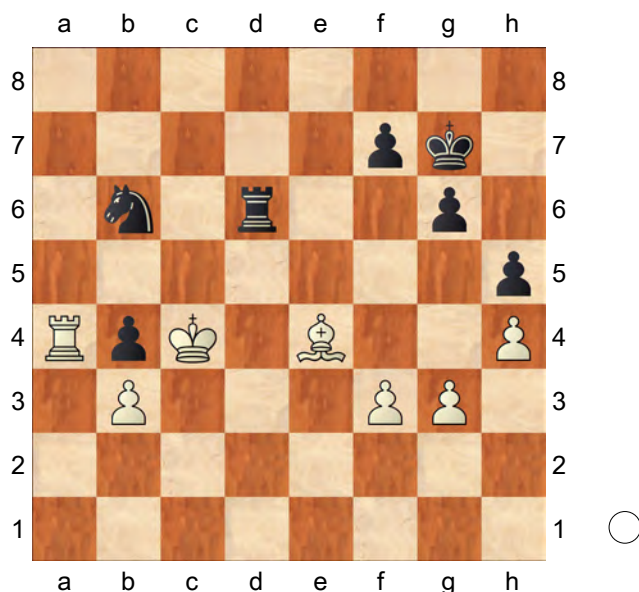
[It's seems that White is winning here 43...Rd1 44.Kxb4 Rg1 45.Ra7 Nf6 46.Bc6! Rxc3 47.Kc5 g5 48.b4

gxf4 49.b5 h3 50.Ra1 h2 51.Rh1
Rg2 52.b6 Rb2 53.b7 Nd7+!
54.Bxd7 Rxb7 55.Bb5! Rc7+
56.Bc6± even if Black has some
chances here, there is no point to
consider this line seriously since there
is a clear way to make a draw
instead.]

[or first 43...f5!? 44.Ba8

A) 44...g5?! 45.hxg5 Kg6
(45...Nb6+ 46.Kc5 Nxa4+
47.Kxd6+-) 46.Kxb4±;

B) 44...Nb6+! 45.Kc5 Nxa4+
46.Kxd6 Nc3 47.Kc5 Na2!
(47...Ne2? 48.f4! Nxf3 49.Bf3+-)]

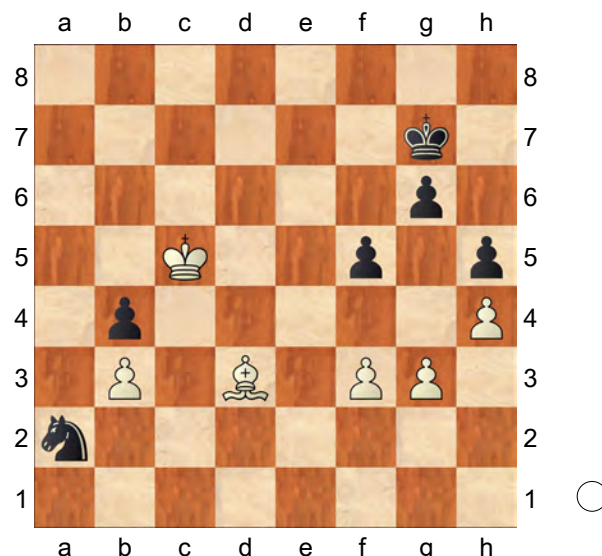


44.Kc5 Nxa4+ 45.Kxd6

Here, I interrupted my calculation
because I thought that White would grab
the pawn and win **Nc3 46.Bd3**

[46.Kc5 Na2!! (although not so clear
also 46...Ne2!? 47.Kxb4 Nxf3)]

46...f5!? Maybe it's possible to choose a
different way how to arrange the
kingside pawns but this is the most
straightforward option. **47.Kc5 Na2!!**



A study-like draw. It's clear that White is
unable to make any progress on either
flank. **48.Bb1 Nc3**

1-0

□ **Miles, Anthony John**

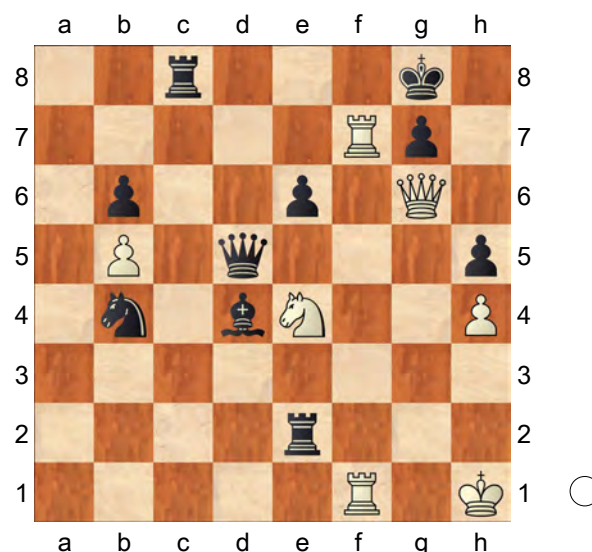
2590

■ **Nedobora, Mikhail**

2460

Seville op (8)

1994



This was a decisive game in the tournament
when my compatriot was facing a famous
GM. The last move was... Re2 and it's a
mistake. Find the best continuation for White.
41.Rf8+! Rxf8 42.Rxf8+ Kxf8 43.Qf7+
With a stalemate to follow.

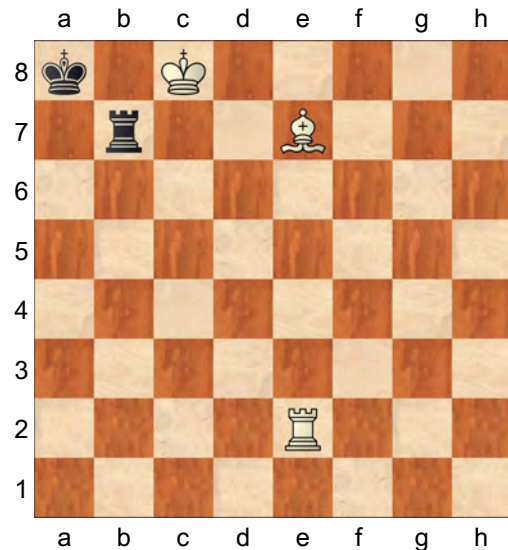
1/2

Brilliant Missed Opportunities - Missed Stalemates



Stalemate is a frequent guest in the later stage of the game, in the endgame theory as well as in the art of the endgame study. Stalemates are less seen over the board in practice. This might be the reason that it is so often associated with the most amazing blunders at all levels. Unusual oversights by top grandmasters and world champions are no exception. The appearance of such a paradox over the board is so unlikely that overlooking an upcoming stalemate defense by the opponent or even missing their stalemating option to save a desperate position is not uncommon. Let's have a look at a couple of astounding examples. One of the most amazing blunders at the top level.

□ Akopian
 ■ Kamsky
 examples + introduction

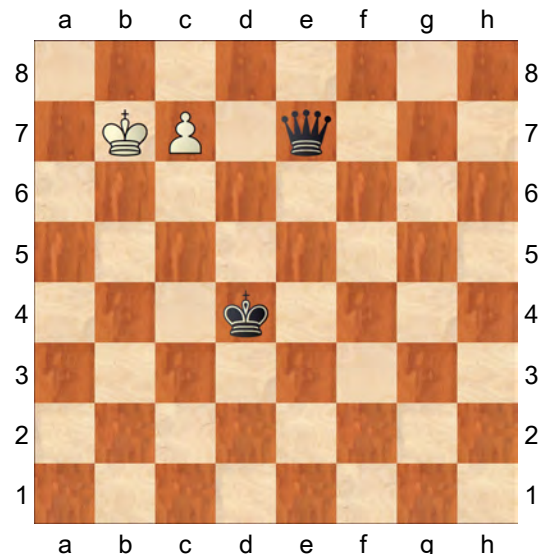


Black played here and unable to avoid the mating net he resigned following **1...Rb8+??**

[He failed to notice the one and narrow escape. Could you believe that? **1...Rxe7! 2.Rxe7 stalemate!**]

2.Kc7 Rb7+ 3.Kc6 Ra7 4.Bd8 Rh7 5.Bc7 Rh6+ 6.Bd6 1-0

□ Zhu Chen **2476**
 ■ Zhao Xue **2462**
 examples



64.Kb8?? White, is a former women world champion, played here

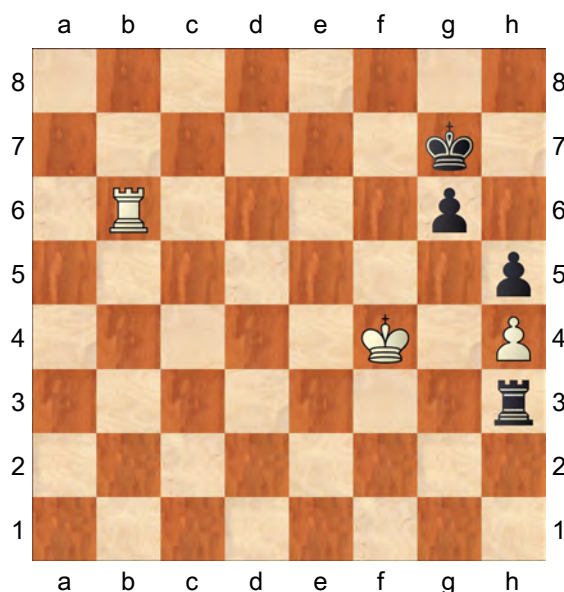
[64.Ka8!=]

64...Kc5! 65.Ka8

[65.c8Q+ is met by Kb6 and mate is unavoidable despite the material equality. .]

65...Qd7 66.Kb8 Kb6
0-1

□ **Dgebuadze**
■ **Afek**
examples



The third example is from your author's game. White, a Belgian GM from Georgian origin, was about to lose his only pawn. **1.Rb4!**

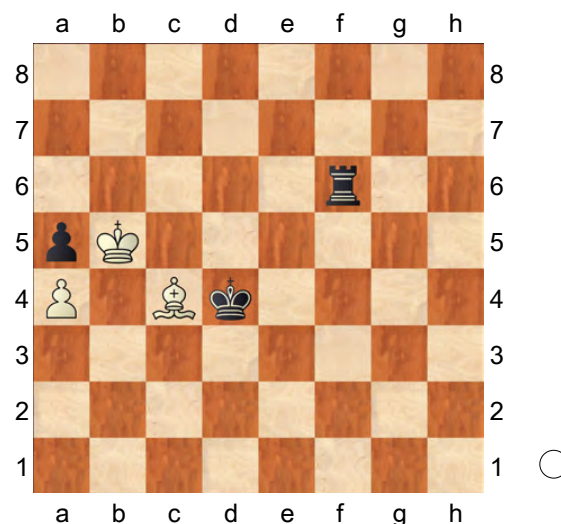
[White, in despair, sees a check gives a check 1.Rb7+?? to end up in a hopeless ending after Kh6

How could he save the game?]

1...Rxh4+ 2.Kg5 Rxb4
1-0

□ **Li Shilong**
■ **Petrosian, Tigran L**
actual game + questions

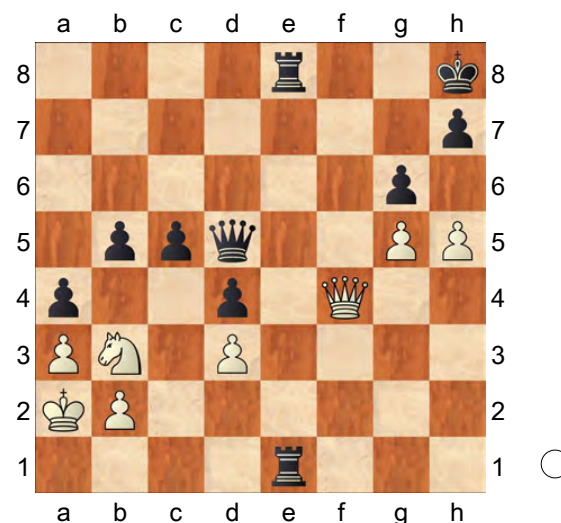
2553
2657



Exercises : White is almost there, rescue the bishop and capture the last enemy pawn. Right? wrong! The game continued: 102.Be2? Rf5+ 103.Kb6 Kc3 104.Bb5 Kb4 105.Kc6 Rc5+ 106.Kb6 Rc3 107.Bd7 Ra3 and White resigned before his pawn is captured next. Was that all really forced?

0-1

□ **Bartolich**
■ **Abkin**
actual game + questions

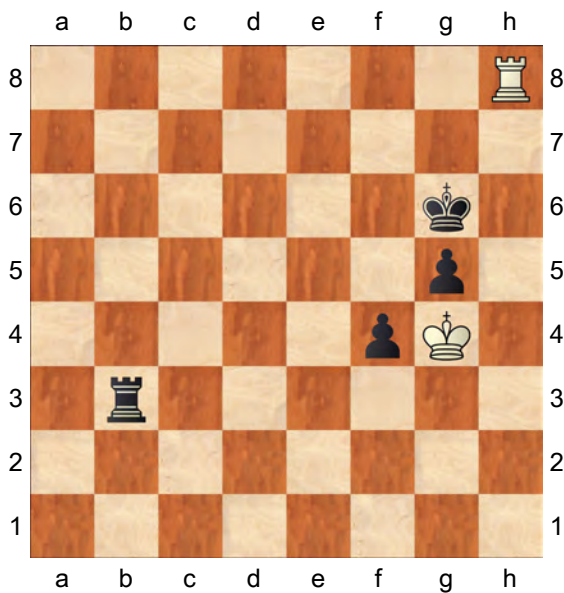


White was supposed to resign ages ago but decided to do so just now. Was it indeed the right moment to call it a day?
1/2

□ **Hickl**

■ **Solomon**

actual game + questions



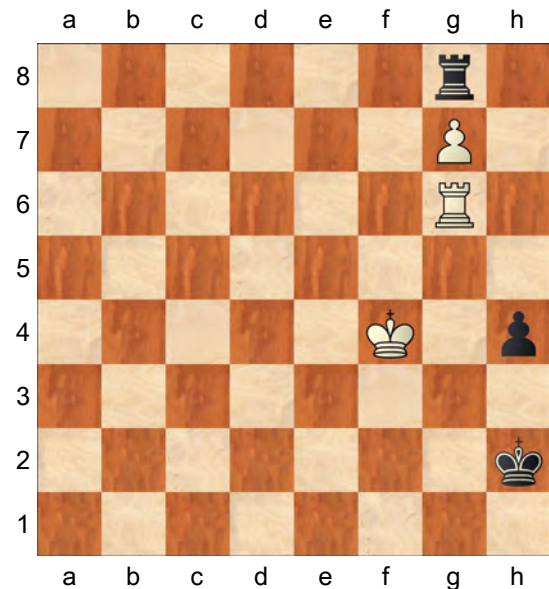
1.Rg8+ Kf6 2.Rf8+?? The game was adjourned at this point when black sealed the repetition Kg6?? while 2...Ke7 or 2...Kg7 would have won easily. Hickl did not bother to resume the game and resigned while in fact, he could still save half a point. How?

0-1

□ **Bykova**

■ **Rubzova**

actual game + questions



Black fell to one of the only traps in this position. **1...h3?**

[1...Kh3 loses too owing to zugzwang by 2.Rg4]

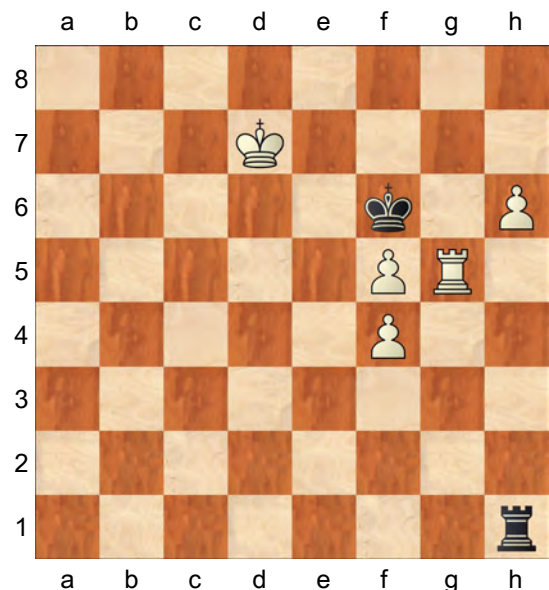
2.Rg3! Black is in Zugzwang loses his pawn and the game.

0-1

□ **Pokoevchik**

■ **Doda**

actual game + questions



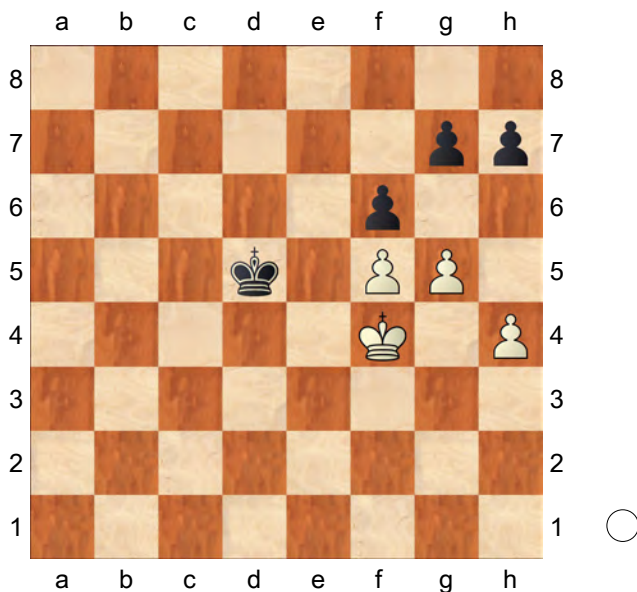
The diagram position is crying out for a stalemate, but the Polish master fails to spot one and tries in vain to block the enemy king. The game did not last long: 1...Kf7?? 2.Rg7+ Kf6 3.Ke8! Kxf5 4.Rf7+ Kg6 5.h7 Ra1 6.f5+ Kg5 7.Kf8 Can you improve on that?
1-0

□ **Tarrasch**

■ **Chigorin**

actual game + questions

1896

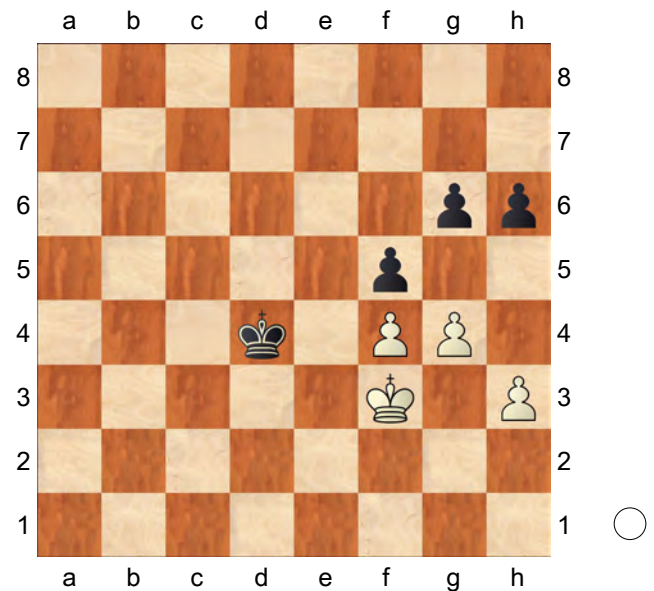


In this pawn ending of material equality the kings' position decides. White tries to change another couple of pawns. 1.gxf6 gxf6 2.Kg4 Ke4 White is in Zugzwang. 3.Kh3 Kf4 Any better idea to save white?
0-1

□ **Aronson**

■ **Mednis**

actual game + questions

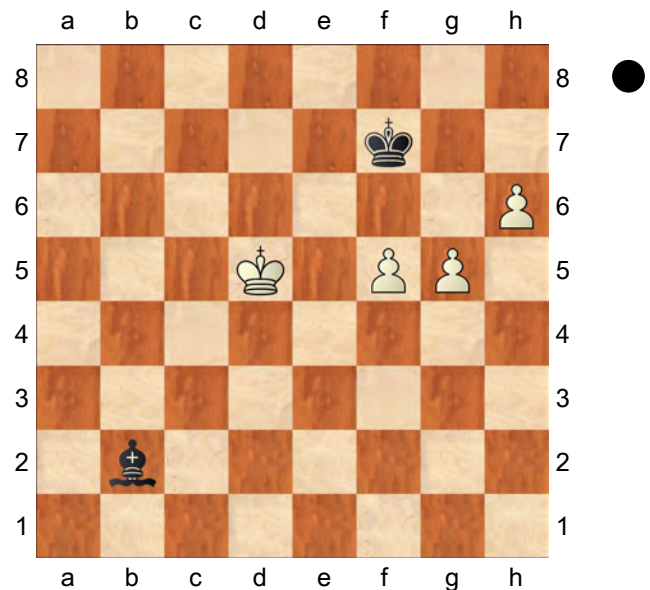


A chameleon echo of this very classic repeated almost a century later when white again ignored the right way and lost 1.h4? h5!
0-1

□ **Minev**

■ **Dikanovic**

actual game + questions



Three connected passed pawns seemed a tough challenge for black who chose the waiter **1...Bc3?** which spared him no chance against the storming infantry:

2.h7! Kg7 3.Ke6! Kxh7

[Or 3...Bb2 4.f6+ Kh8 5.Kf7 Bc3 6.Kf8+-]

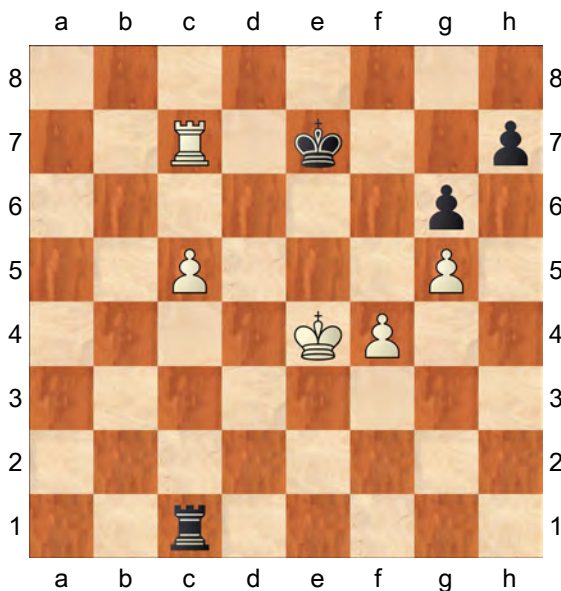
4.Kf7 Was there a no more promising resource for him?

1/2

□ **Kotov**

■ **Pachman**

actual game + questions



Willing to protect his last pawn next Black retreated his king to leave the 6th rank clear. 67...Kd8? 68.Rxh7 Rxc5 69.Rf7 But then realized that his only defence 69...Rc6 70.Rf6 Rxf6 71.gxf6 liquidated to a lost pawn ending and threw in the towel. Was the ending indeed lost as it seems?

1-0

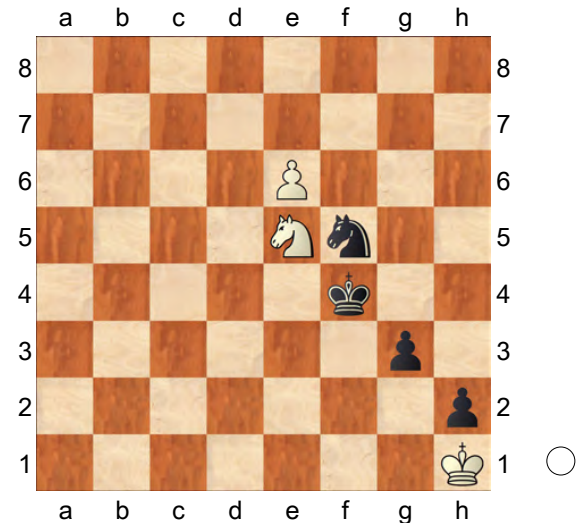
□ **Hebden**

■ **Baburin**

actual game + questions

2556

2549



● White is facing a monstrous pawn pair thus extra caution is called for. White played **79.Ng6+? Kf3??**

[79...Kg4! wins!]

80.Ne5+ Kf2 81.Ng4+ Kf3 82.Nxh2+ gxh2 83.Kxh2 Kf4 White was

eventually a bit lucky however could he force a draw regardless black's blunder ?

1/2

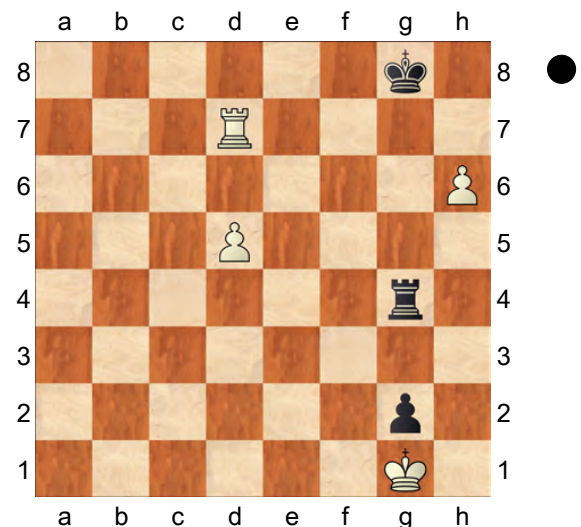
□ **Afek, Yochanan**

■ **Leuw, Micha**

actual game + questions

2325

2193



Instead black went wrong with **63...Rg5?**
64.d6 Kh8

[64...Rd5 loses to 65.Kxg2
 (but not to 65.Rg7+? Kh8 66.d7
 Rd1+! 67.Kxg2 Rd2+ 68.Kf3 Rd3+
 69.Ke4 Rd4+! where the only way to
 stop the checks by the crazy rook is
 to capture it with stalemate!)]

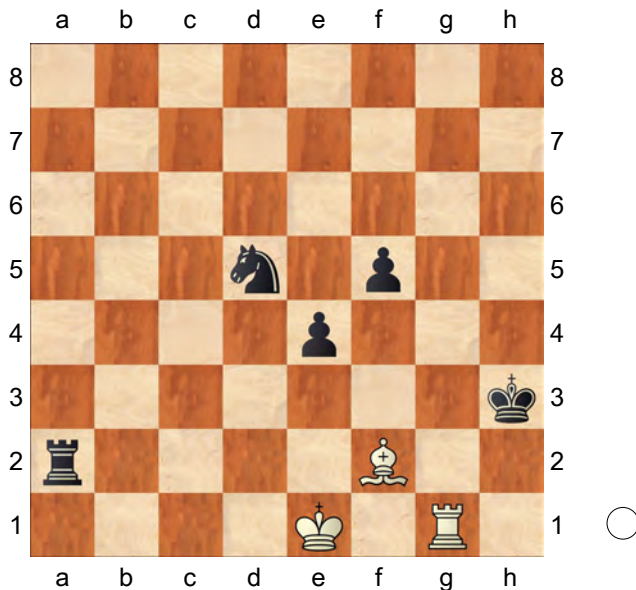
65.Re7 and black resigned as stopping
 the pawn would cost him his rook
 anyway.

1-0

□ **Afek**

■ **Lybin**

actual game + questions



Your author has also gained some
 experience in missing opportunities.
 Here is a real special one. White is two
 pawns behind but "in return" his position
 is also clearly inferior. How can he still
 save his day?

1/2

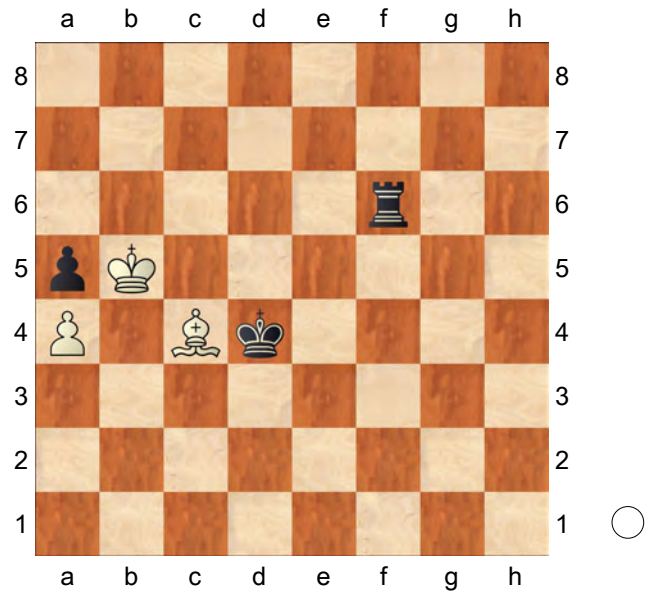
□ **Li Shilong**

■ **Petrosian, Tigran L**

2553

2657

Solutions



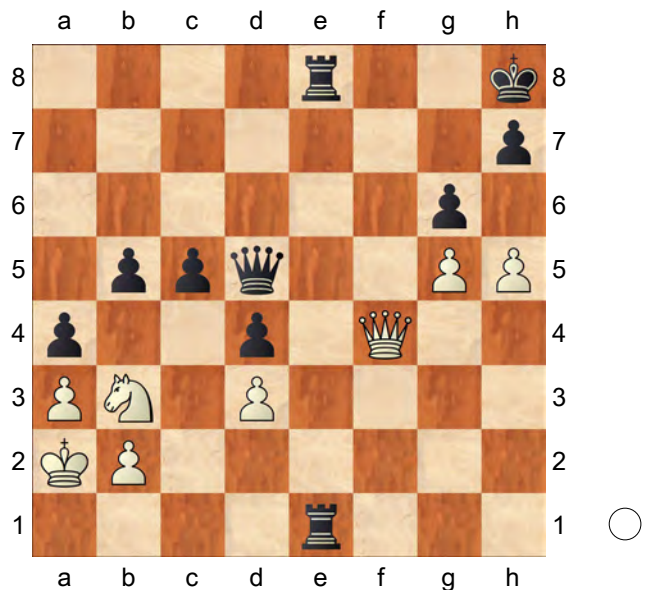
102.Kxa5! Kxc4 stalemate!

1/2

□ **Bartolich**

■ **Abkin**

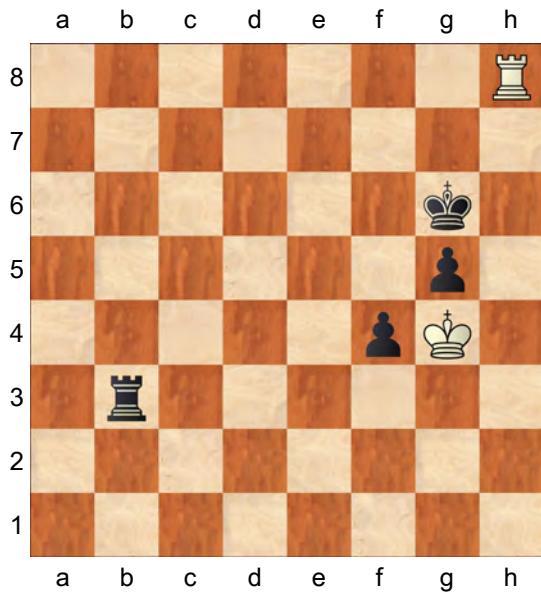
Solutions



In fact it was the worst moment to resign.
 White draws by 1.Qf6+! Kg8 2.Qg7+!!
 Kxg7 3.h6+ with stalemate.

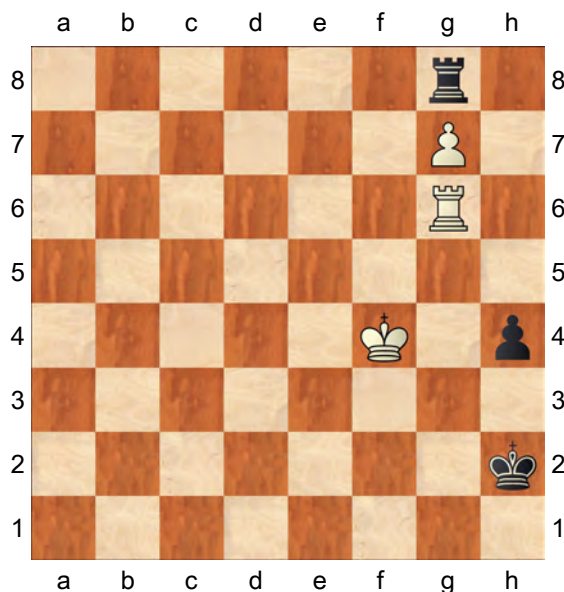
1/2

□ **Hickl**
 ■ **Solomon**
 Solutions



1.Rg8+! Kf6 2.Rg6+! Kxg6 stalemate
 which could be repeated also after the
 mistaken sealed move.
1/2

□ **Bykova**
 ■ **Rubzova**
 Solutions



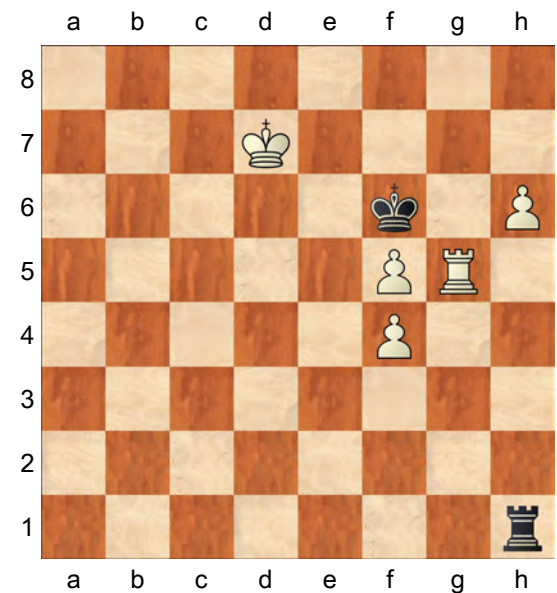
The saving move is **1...Kh1!**

The saving move is **1...Kh1!**

[1...Kh3 loses too owing to zugzwang
 after 2.Rg4]

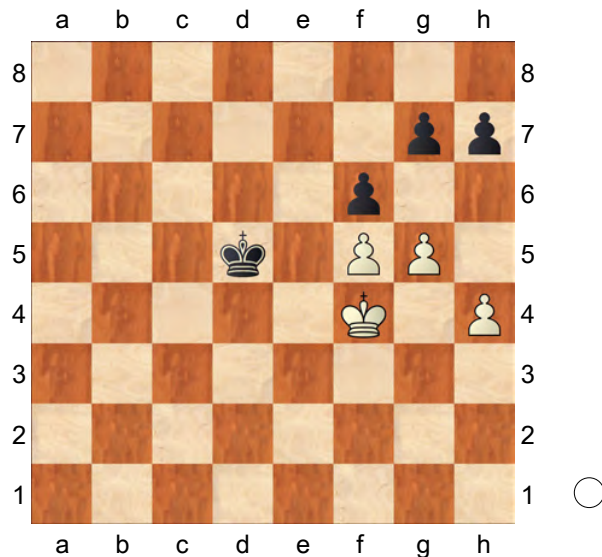
2.Kg4 h3! 3.Kxh3 Stalemate!
1/2

□ **Pokoevchik**
 ■ **Doda**
 Solutions



Correct was: **1...Rd1+! 2.Ke8**
 [2.Kc6 Rc1+ 3.Kd5 Rd1+ 4.Ke4
 Re1+ 5.Kf3 Rh1!=]
2...Re1+ 3.Kf8 Re8+! 4.Kxe8
Stalemate!
1-0

□ **Tarrasch**
 ■ **Chigorin**
 Solutions



A study-like draw could be obtained by

1.Kg4! Ke5

[1...fxg5 2.hxg5 Ke5 3.f6 gxf6
 4.gxf6 Kxf6 5.Kh5=]

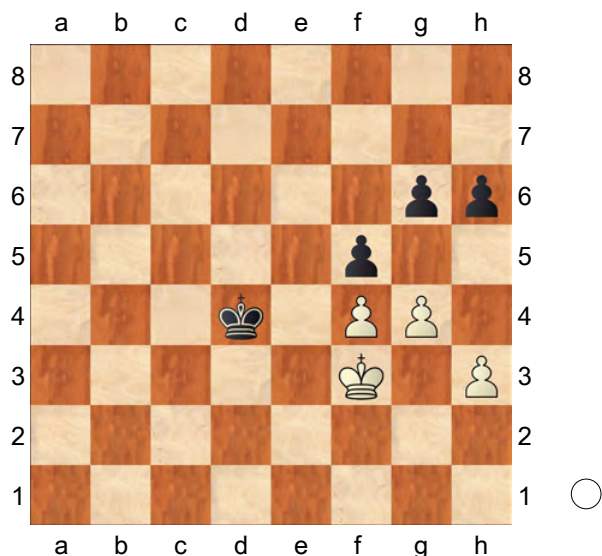
2.g6! h6

[Or 2...hxg6 3.fxg6 f5+ 4.Kg5 f4
 Draw.]

3.Kh5 Kxf5 Stalemate!

0-1

□ **Aronson**
 ■ **Mednis**
 Solutions

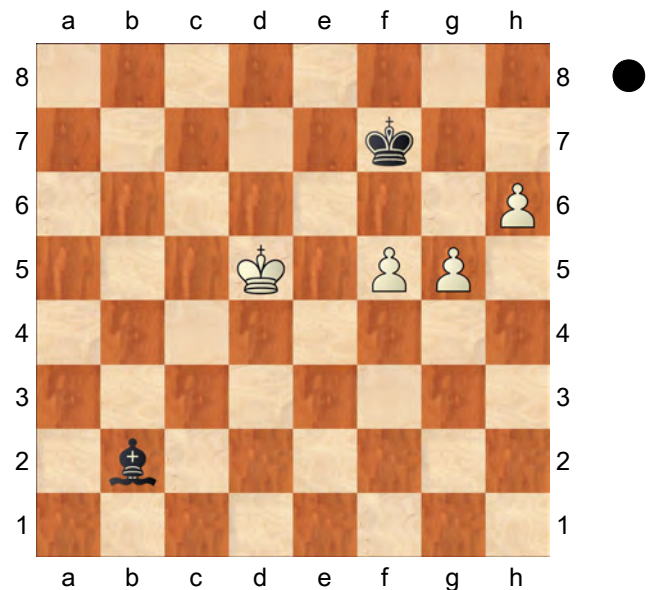


overlooking the chameleon echo
 stalemate to the previous one just a
 rank lower. **1.g5!**

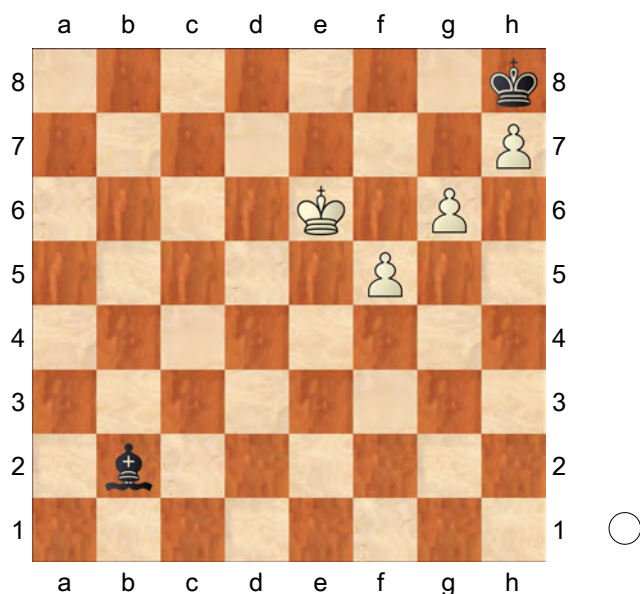
[A chameleon echo of this very
 classic repeated almost a century
 later when white again ignored the
 right way and lost 1.h4? h5!]

**1...h5 2.Kg3 Ke4 3.Kh4 Ke3 4.Kg3
 Ke4 5.Kh4 Kxf4 stalemate!
 1/2**

□ **Minev**
 ■ **Dikanovic**
 Solutions



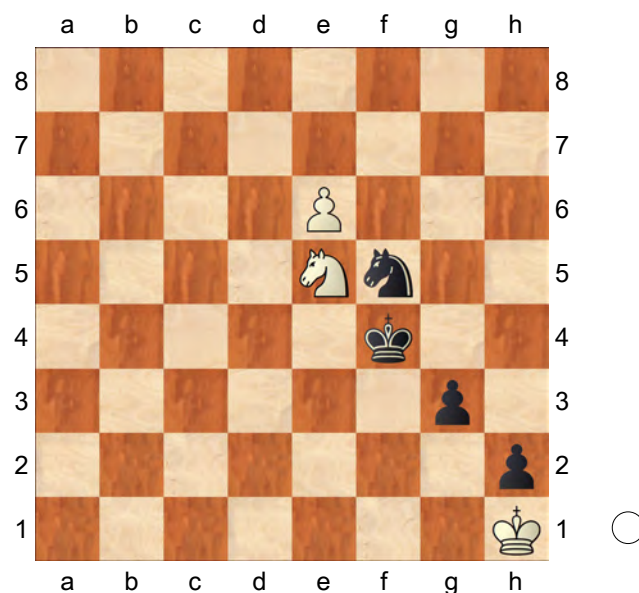
The active approach should be
 preferred: **1...Bc1! 2.h7 Kg7 3.g6 Bb2
 4.Ke6! Threatening 5.f6+! Bxf6 6.h8Q+!
 Kxh8 7.Kxf6 Kh8!!**



Positional draw or stalemate!
1/2

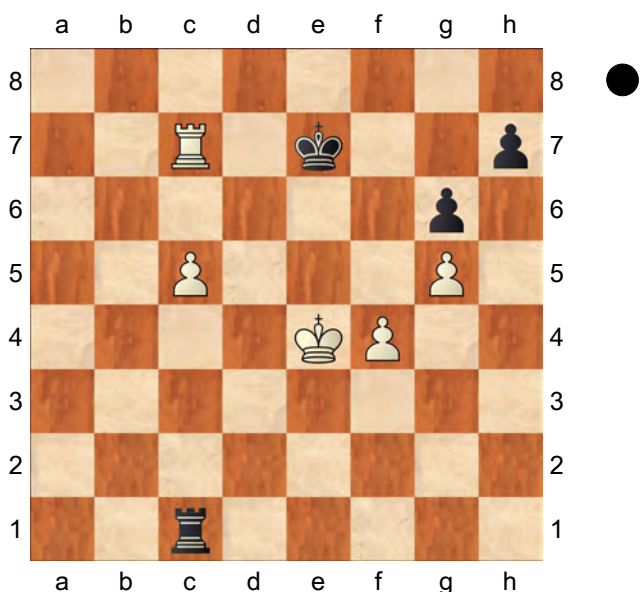
□ **Hebden**
■ **Baburin**
Solutions

2556
2549



79.e7! Nxe7 80.Nf3!! Was the right way
to force an immediate draw.
1/2

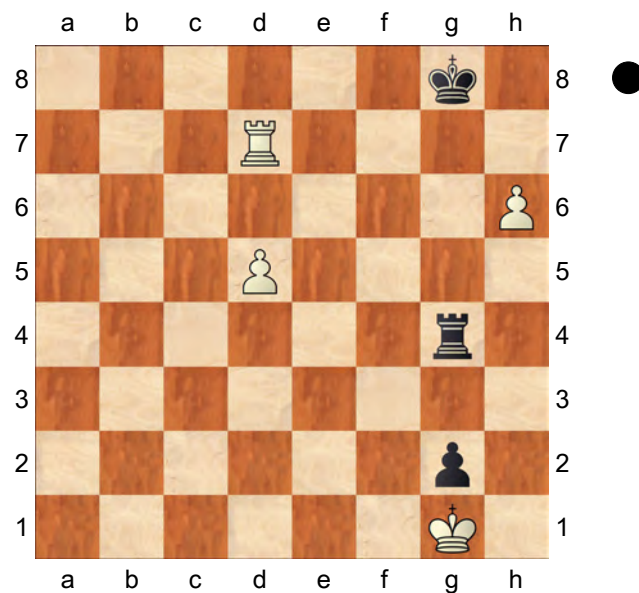
□ **Kotov**
■ **Pachman**
Solutions



Here again an active king is needed.
67...Ke6! 68.Rxh7 Rc4+ 69.Kf3 Rxc5
70.Rg7 Rc6! 71.Rxg6+ Kf5
Draw similarly to the example mentioned
above Dgebuadze-Afek.
1/2

□ **Afek**
■ **Leuw**
Solutions

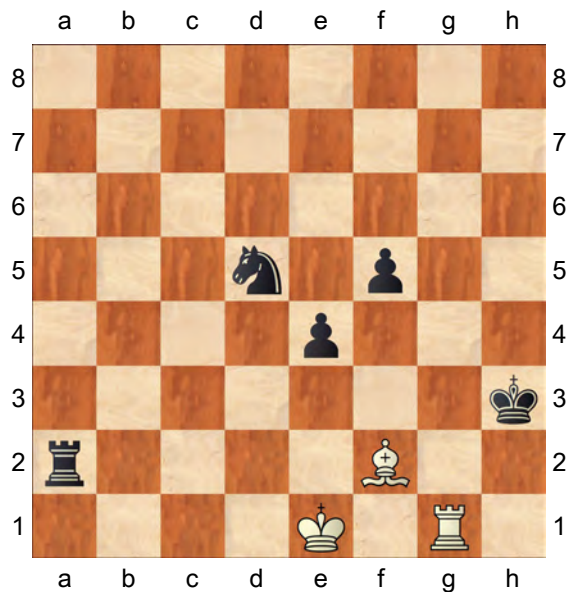
2325
2193



One square upper would have done the trick: 63...Rg6! 64.h7+ Kh8 65.d6 Rg3 66.Rb7 Rd3 67.d7 Threatening 68. Rb8 + but... Rxd7! 68.Rxd7 stalemate!

1-0

□ Afek
 ■ Lybin
 Solutions



A study was almost composed on the board: **1.Rg5!** I noticed the idea during the game but unfortunately gave an unnecessary check first which made a huge difference. Following

[1.Rg3+? Kh2 2.Rg5 Ra1+ 3.Kd2 e3+ 4.Bxe3 Ra2+ 5.Ke1 Nxe3 6.Rh5+ Kg3 7.Rh3+ Kf4 8.Rf3+ Ke4 9.Rf4+ Kd5 10.Rd4+ Kc5

black escaped the stalemating checks of the crazy rook !]

1...Ra1+ 2.Kd2 e3+ 3.Bxe3 Ra2+ 4.Ke1 Nxe3 5.Rg3+! Kh2 6.Rh3+!

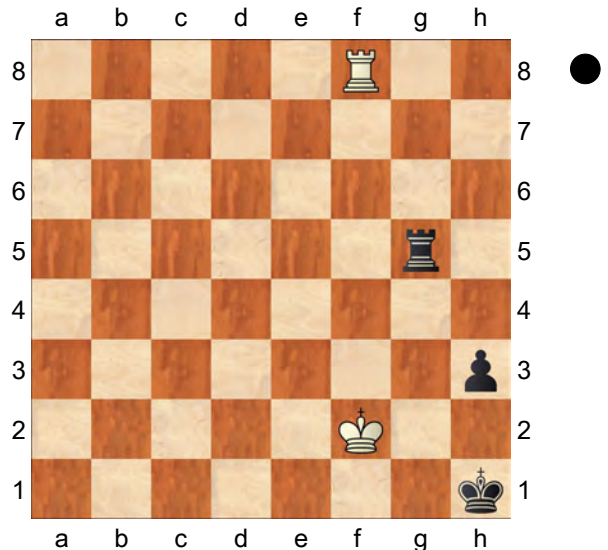
[6.Rxe3? loses to Kg2 7.Re8 f4 8.Rg8+ Kf3-+]

6...Kg1 7.Rh1+ Kg2 8.Rh2+ Kxh2 Stalemate!

0-1

□ Drimer
 ■ Ciocaltea

Solutions



All 12 exercises had one topic in common: They all exposed pretty good players in their weaker moment when they all Missed the only defence in a desperate position. I hope that you have done a better test, dear reader. Just Try not to overestimate your success. Keep in mind that unlike you those players had no clue about the hidden stalemate. Its appearance in the heat of the game might indeed prove confusing and even be deceiving. One should, however, avoid silly jokes such as in the following real episode: Realizing he cannot play for a win anymore the Romanian grandmaster offered a draw while playing 1...Rg8?? White could not find any reason to decline the proposal but to accept it. Would you do the same? I am pretty sure most readers wouldn't miss the obvious 2.Rxg8 h2 3.Kg3! Kg1 4.Kh3+ Kh1 5.Ra8 Kg1 6.Ra1+ and white wins. One last tip, dear reader: When worse comes to worst, and all defensive resources are exhausted, don't forget this last rare weapon in your or your opponent's arsenal: The stalemate. Alternatively, else you might find yourself joining the list of the victims to embarrassing blindness.

1/2

Endgame Series 18

Opposite-colored bishops: Part 1



GM Davorin Kuljasevic

Hello, Dear chess friends!

In the previous two issues of Endgame series we have discussed endgames with bishops of the same color. It seems, though, that in practice even more often we get endgames with bishops of opposite color. I am not sure why this is the case, but certainly these types of endgames deserve particular attention from chess players of all levels. In this issue we will, therefore, make a natural transition from same-colored bishops to opposite-colored bishops endgames. One peculiar and well-known feature of such endgames is that they can have drawish tendencies even when the weaker side is down several pawns. This is due to the powerful defensive technique called blockade. The blockade is, of course, possible in various types of endgames, but it is probably best pronounced exactly in opposite-colored bishops endgames. The reason for that is simple – with the bishops attacking

squares of opposite color, it is impossible for them to ever get in "contact" with one another. Therefore, if the weaker side can set up a blockade on, say, light squares, the opponent may not be able to break it with his dark-squared bishop. While blockade may indeed be a very reliable defensive technique for the weaker side, there is a flip side to it. In such endgames, the stronger side usually faces no resistance on the squares of the color of its bishop. Sometimes, by penetrating with its king along these squares, it can secure the victory. Kings and pawns (especially passed ones) play an extremely active and important role in such endgames and the outcome of the game very often depends on them. For that reason, quite often we see some brilliant, even study-like ideas in endgames with opposite-colored bishops, which some people (mistakenly) take for boring. The final part of the game Topalov-Shirov from 1998., which we will analyze in the next issue, is just one point in case. In this issue, I have picked examples where basic techniques, such as pawn breakthrough and king's penetration, as well as their prevention, hold the keys to the evaluation of endgames with opposite-colored bishops. Having this basic knowledge will be important as we study more complex endgames of this sort in the upcoming issues. For a start, let us take a look at a basic example of how the weaker side can hold a draw being two pawns down by virtue of blockade.

□ **Stefanova, Antoaneta**

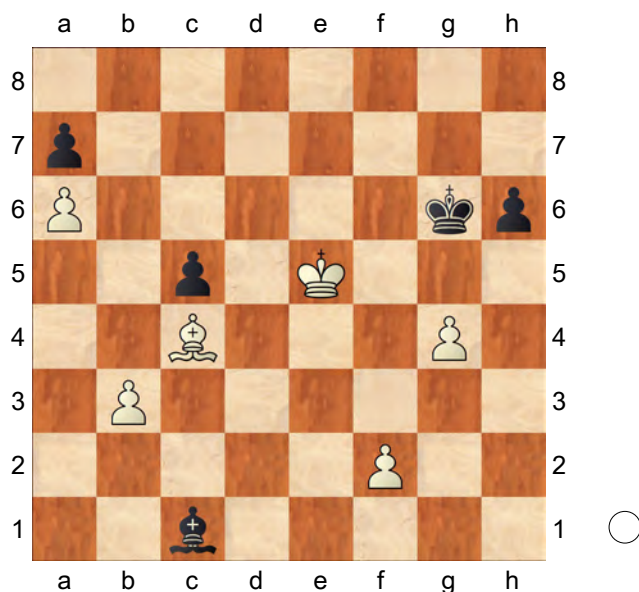
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■ **Kuljasevic, Davorin**

2297

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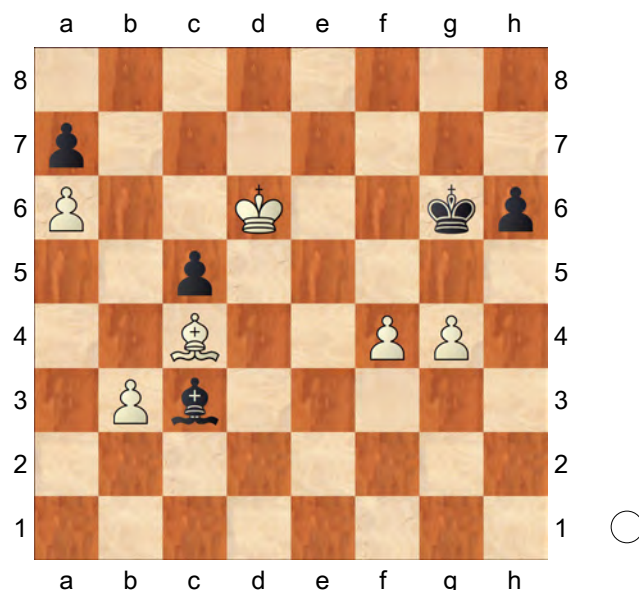
14.05.2002



Black is currently down a pawn, while also having some weak pawns on the queenside. **44.f4** is a logical follow-up, when it makes sense to play **Bb2+** in order to set up the blockade of the passed f-pawn on the square f6.

45.Kd6 White king is attacking the pawn on c5, while also threatening to win the one on a7. Black has no time to defend both of them, so he has to sacrifice one of them. **Bc3!**

[45...Bd4?? 46.Kc6+- followed by Kb7-Kxa7 wins.]



Clearly, the c5 pawn can be sacrificed as long as the a7 pawn remains protected. **46.Ke7** White is trying to confuse black with some vague maneuvering, but to no avail.

[Meanwhile, 46.Kc6 Ba5 47.Kb7 Bb6 48.Bd5 Kf6=]

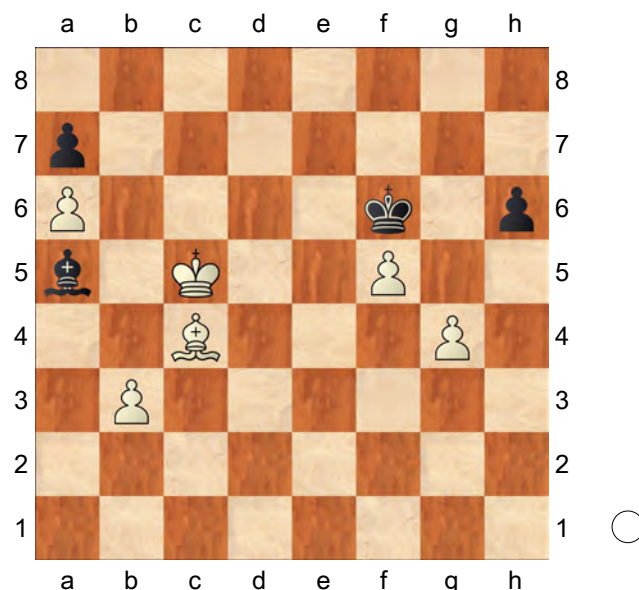
[and 46.Kxc5 Bd2 47.f5+ Kf6= also allow black to demonstrate the power of blockade.]

46...Kg7 47.f5 Bf6+ 48.Kd6 Bc3

Again, it is important to have access to square b6. **49.Kc6 Ba5 50.Kxc5**

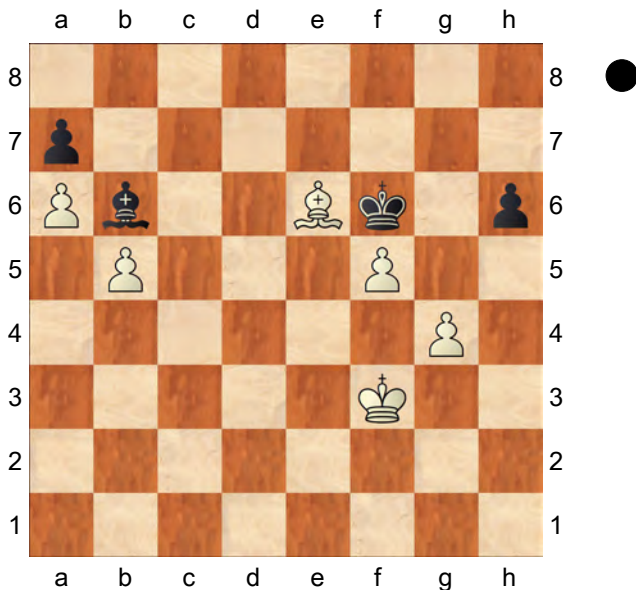
[50.Kb7 Bb6=]

50...Kf6



White's two extra pawns do not mean anything in terms of winning the game because Black has set up a full blockade on dark-squares. White's last winning attempt consists of attacking the h6-pawn with the king, while overloading black bishop with the b5-b6 break. Easier said than done, though.

51.Bd3 Ke7 52.b4 Bb6+ 53.Kd5 Bc7 54.Be4 Bb6 55.b5 Bc7 56.Bc2 Bb6 57.Ke4 Kf6 58.Bb3 Bc7 59.Be6 Bb6 60.Kf3



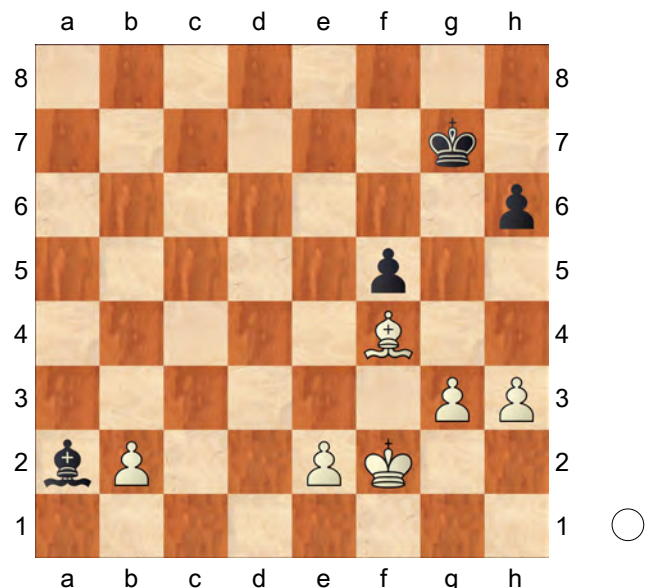
White is looking to get his king to h5 via g3 and h4. Black is alert and plays Kg5! denying the entrance through that narrow passage. The rest of the game was filling out the score-sheet; it could have been drawn here already. **61.Bf7 Bc7**

62.Bh5 Bb6 63.Be8 Bc7 64.Ke4 Kf6 65.Kd5 Ke7 66.Kc6 Bb6 67.Bh5 Ba5 68.Kd5 Bb6 69.Bg6 Bc7 70.Ke4 Kf6 71.Kf3 Kg5 72.Be8 Bb6 73.Bc6 Bc7 74.Be4 Bb6 75.Bc2 Bc7 76.Ke4 Kf6 77.Bd1 Bb6 78.Kd5 Ke7 79.Ke5 Bc7 + 80.Kd5 Bb6

1/2

Having this simple and very typical opposite-colored bishops scenario in mind, let us now take a look at slightly more complicated, yet very instructive, examples. We shall see how even Grandmasters sometimes fail to understand subtleties of these endgames in, admittedly, stressful conditions of a tournament game.

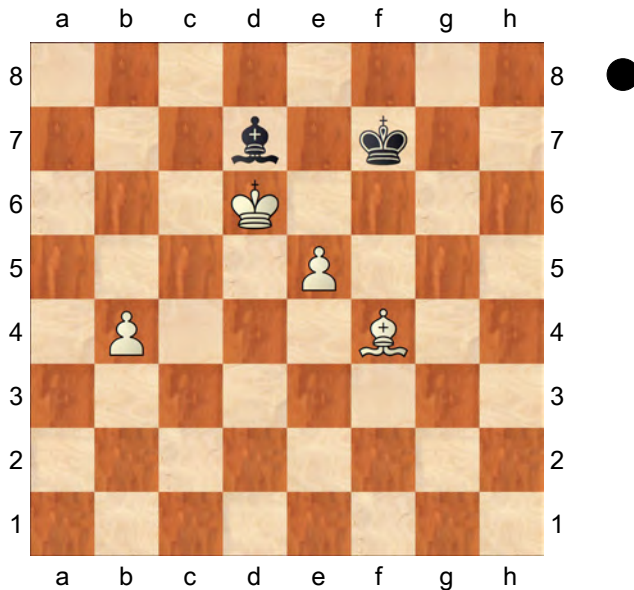
ErDOS, Viktor **2650**
 Kozul, Zdenko **2601**
CRO-chT Bol (4.4) **17.09.2013**



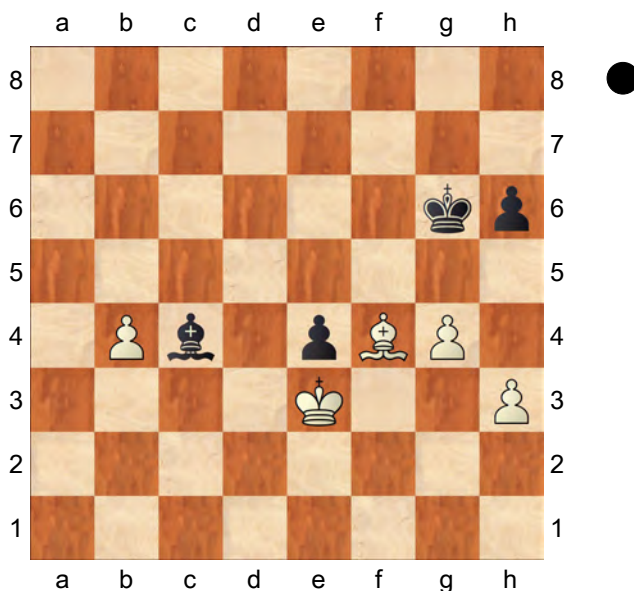
Similarly to the previous example, white is up two pawns in the endgame.

However, there is a big difference here as white's passed pawn is far away from black's king, which makes it more difficult for his defense. **35.b4 Bc4 36.Ke3?** At this point of the game, white was in severe time pressure, so he probably could not think straight. His last move is not to the point – white should instead be looking to create a passed pawn as soon as possible. Otherwise, black will be in time to create a blockade.

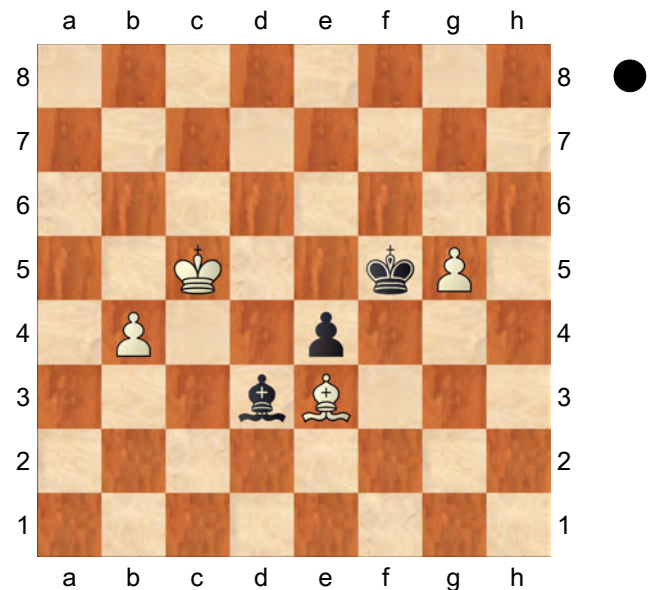
[For that purpose, both pawn advances were winning: 36.g4 fxg4 37.hxg4 Be6 38.Kf3 Bd7 Here white has to calculate precisely that after 39.e4 Kg6 40.e5 h5 41.gxh5+ Kxh5 his king reaches d6 square before its counter-part. 42.Ke4 Kg6 43.Kd5 Kf7 44.Kd6+-



In a similar position with black king on c6, the endgame would be drawn.] [and also the pawn sacrifice: 36.e4!? fxe4 37.g4 Kg6 38.Ke3



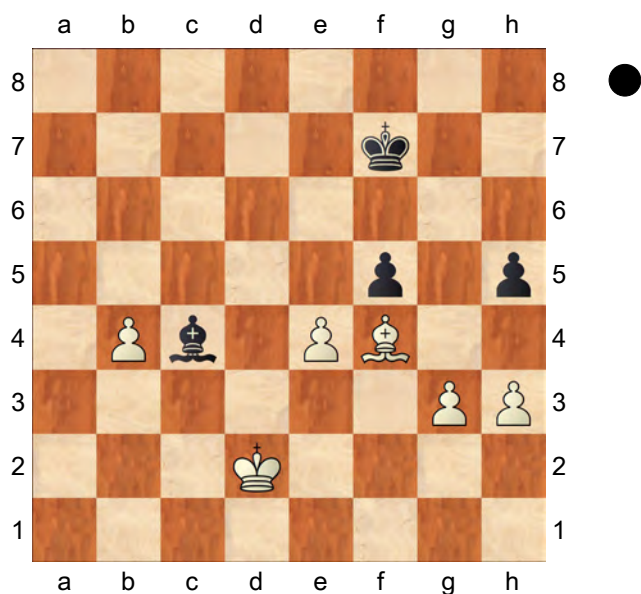
The point is that black e-pawn is easily blocked by the bishop, while white king moves toward the c5 square to support its b-passer. On the other hand, black king can not leave the kingside just like that as white also threatens to create a passed pawn there. So, in essence, white is two pawns up in this position. Bd3 (or 38...h5 39.gxh5+ Kxh5 40.Bg3 Bf1 41.h4+- which leads to a position very similar to the actual game.) 39.Kd4 Bf1 40.h4 Be2 41.g5 hxg5 42.hxg5 Bd3 43.Kc5 Kf5 44.Be3+-



and, as I said, white is basically up two pawns as the e-pawn is blocked by the bishop. It is of paramount importance that the bishop simultaneously defends the g5 pawn and block's the e-pawn.] **36...h5!** This makes creation of passed pawn much more difficult for white.

37.Kd2 Kf7 38.e4!

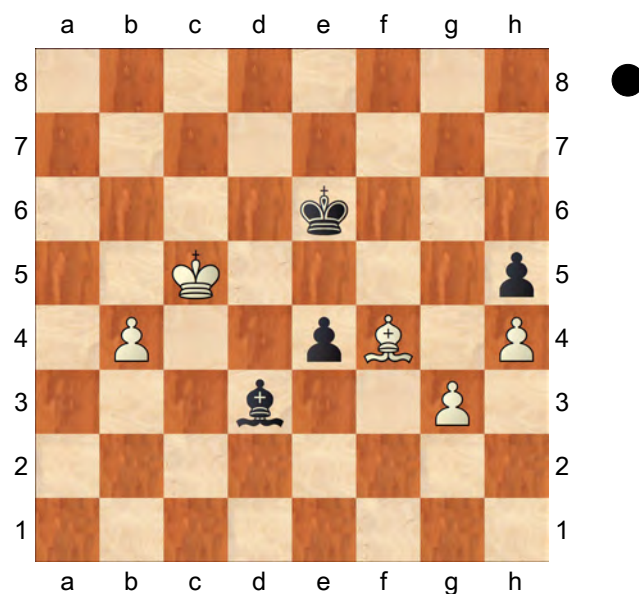
[38.e3 Ke6 39.Kc3 Kd5= gives black a simple blockade, similar to our first example.]



Still scrambling to reach the time control on the move 40, White finally realizes where his only chance lies – he needs to create another passed pawn, even if it costs one lousy pawn. **38...fxe4?** By taking the pawn, black gives white exactly what he wants.

[There was a way to avoid that with an intermediate move 38...Bf1! trying to provoke h3–h4, when white could not create a passed pawn on the kingside anymore.

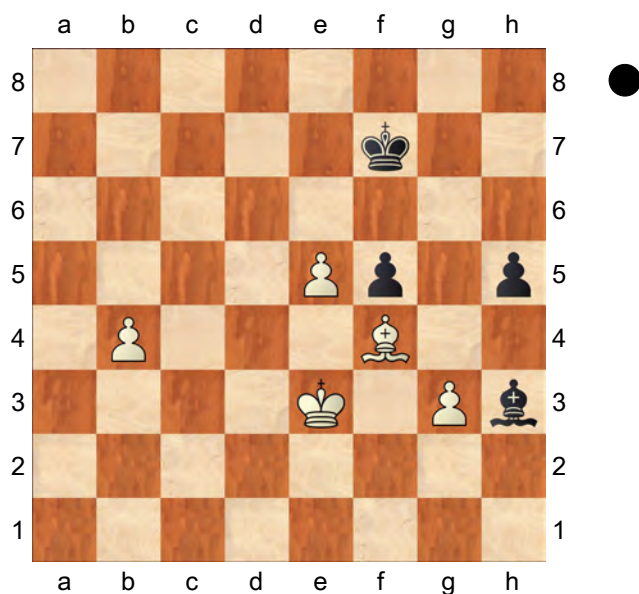
A) As I just mentioned, 39.h4 fxe4 40.Ke3 Bd3 is a different story now that white pawn is on h4 and not on h3. White can still try to win with 41.Kd4 (41.g4 is also possible, but does not lead to the desired result after *hxg4 42.h5 Kf6 43.h6 Kg6 44.Kd4 g3 45.Kc5 g2 46.Be3 g1Q 47.Bxg1 Kxh6=*) 41...Ke6 42.Kc5



but Black can force a draw with active Kf5!? (Passive defense 42...Kd7 draws too, though.) 43.b5 Kg4 44.b6 Ba6 45.Kc6 Kf3 and it turns out that the pawn endgame will be drawn by a single tempo: 46.b7 Bxb7+ 47.Kxb7 e3 48.Kc6 e2 49.Bd2 Kxg3 50.Be1+ Kg2 51.Kd5 Kf1 52.Bg3 e1Q 53.Bxe1 Kxe1 54.Ke4 Ke2 55.Kf4 Kd3=;

B) 39.exf5 Bxh3 40.b5 Bxf5 41.b6 Be4=;

C) 39.Ke3 This is the most stubborn attempt, forcing black to continue playing precisely. Bxh3 (39...fxe4 would again allow 40.g4!) 40.e5



This is White's only remaining winning attempt. Again, he is virtually up two pawns. However, we need to recall a fundamental rule for such endgames that says that in most cases having passed pawns two or fewer files apart usually leads to a draw. This means that a similar position with the white pawn on a—rather than b—file would be winning. Bf1 41.Kd4 Ke6

42.Kc5 Kd7 43.b5 Bg2

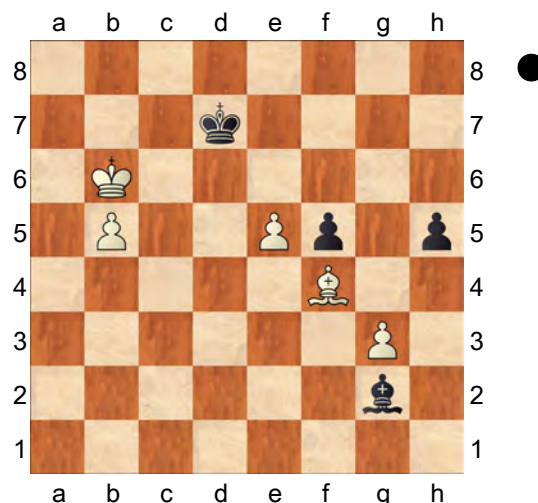
C1) instead of immediately pushing 44.b6 Bf3 45.Kb5

C1a) but not 45...Be2+?

46.Ka5 Kc6 (46...Bf3 47.Ka6 Be2+ 48.Ka7+-) 47.e6+-;

C1b) 45...Bb7!= and white king can not break through.;

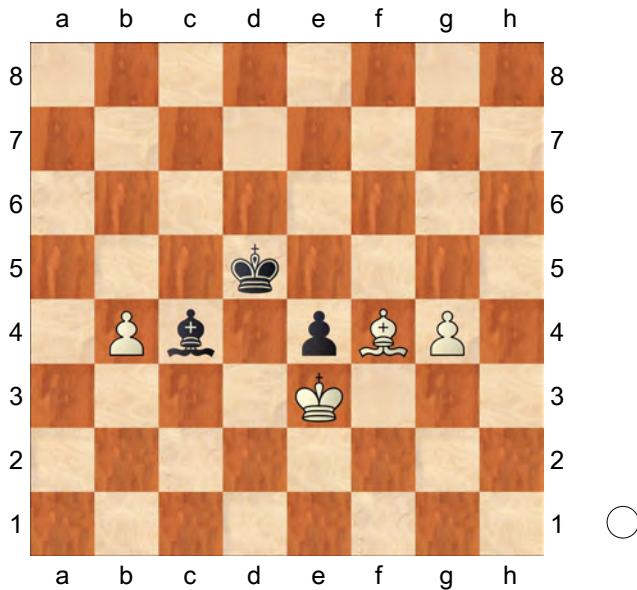
C2) 44.Kb6



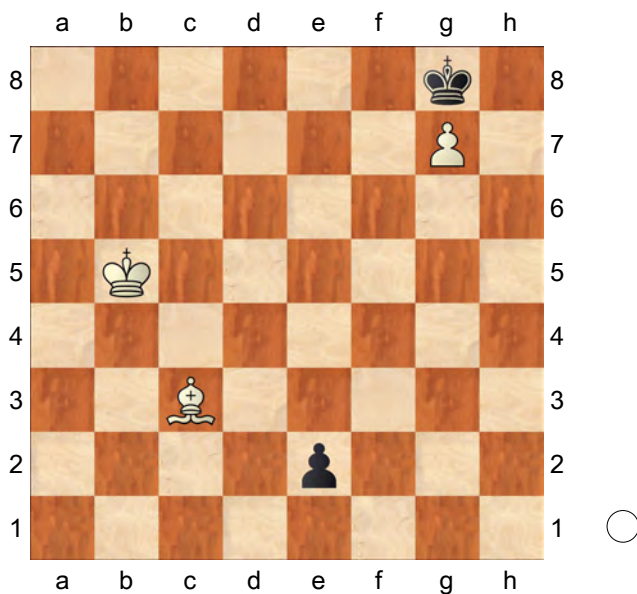
In opposite-colored bishops endgames, it is sometimes better not to push the pawn too far because it may block penetration squares for our king. In this case, it is more useful for white to have b6 square for the king, Bf1! not allowing Ka7. 45.Ka5 Bg2! This is a very instructive defense. Black needs to find only moves with his bishop, to stop white from achieving the winning setup Ka7, b6. (45...Be2? 46.b6 Bf3 47.Ka6+-) 46.Ka6 (46.b6 Bb7=) 46...Bf1! 47.Kb6 Be2 White's last try might be 48.e6+ Kxe6 49.Kc6 but then black achieves a draw simply with Bxb5 + 50.Kxb5 Kd5= and trades off white's last pawn.]

39.g4 White finally has the second passed pawn and his position should be winning. However, black makes his practical job much easier with the following move: **Kg6?!** This allows white to create a passed pawn on the h-file, where it is five files apart from the other passed pawn. It goes without saying that this gives him an easier win compared to the pawn on the g-file.

[In that sense, more stubborn was 39...hgx4 40.hgx4 Ke6 41.Ke3 Kd5



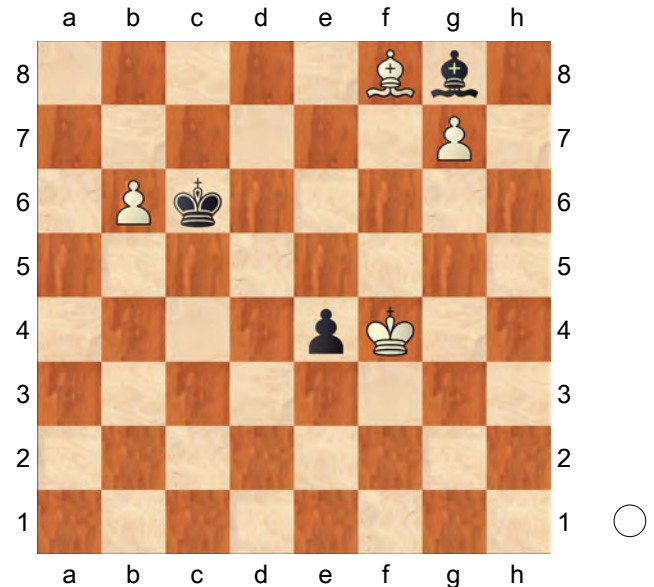
when white still has to show some cunning maneuvering to bring the point home: 42.Bh6! Only this move, with the intention to re-route the bishop to g1-a7 diagonal, lead to success. (The tempting 42.g5? Bb5 43.g6 Ke6 44.g7 Kf7 45.Be5 would throw away the win because of Bc6 46.Kd4 Kg8 47.Kc5 Bd7 48.b5 Bxb5 49.Kxb5 e3 50.Bc3 e2=



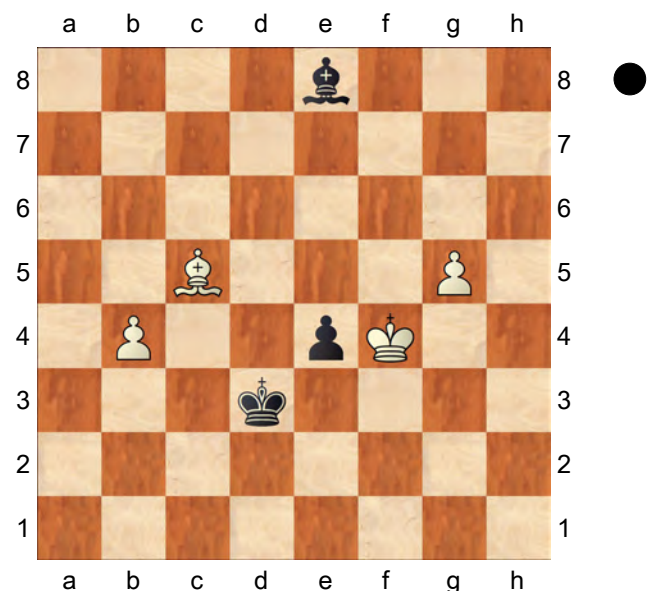
and white bishop does not simultaneously defend its pawn and

blocks opponents passed pawn, so black draws on the next move with e1Q.)

A) In case of 42...Bb5 43.Kf4 Kd4 (Black can also try to block the g-pawn with the bishop: 43...Be8 44.Bf8 Bc6 45.g5 Ba4 46.g6 Be8 47.g7 Bf7 48.b5 Bg8 49.b6 Kc6



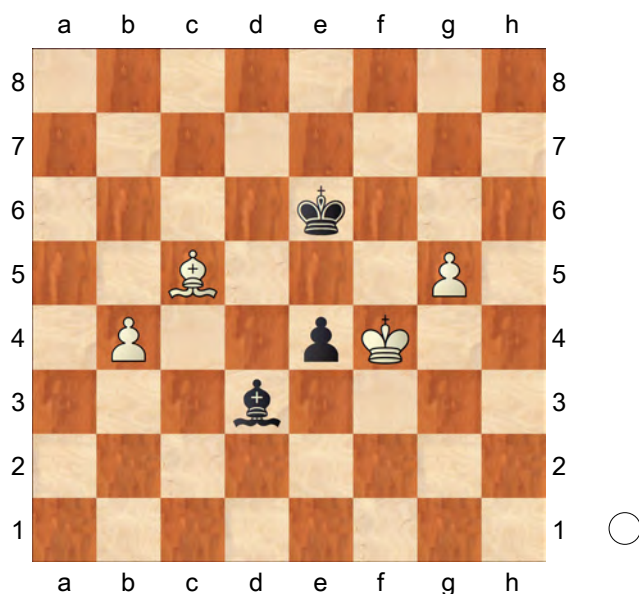
and now white wins with 50.Bc5! Bh7 51.Ke5 Kd7 52.Kd5!+- and black is in zugzwang!) 44.Bf8 Kd3 45.Bc5! This is the key square for the bishop. Be8 46.g5+-



and black is in another zugzwang as he can not hold both pawns with his bishop, so he loses the e4 pawn.;

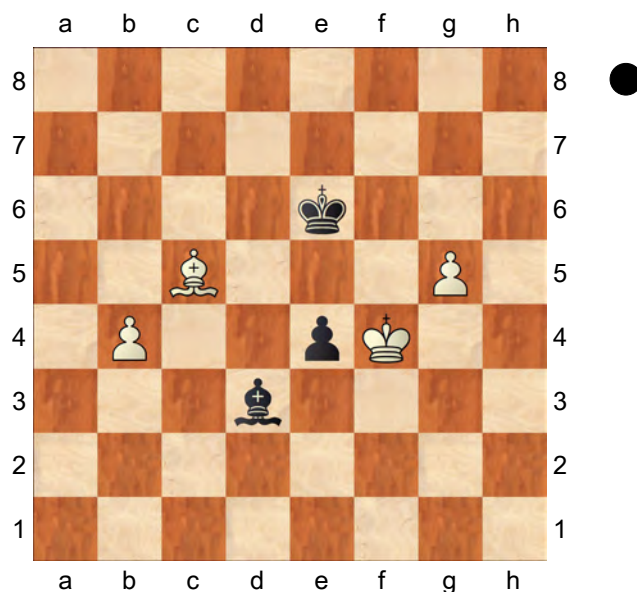
B) 42...Ke5 Preventing Kf4, but not for too long. 43.Bg7+ Kd5 44.Kf4 Bd3 45.g5 Bb5 46.Bf8 Bd3

47.Bc5! White has improved the position of his bishop and is ready to activate push his g-pawn, supported by the king. Black can stop it with Ke6



and at the first glance it seems as if white can not win. However, a seasoned endgame expert would quickly realize that this is a position of mutual zugzwang. Black would be losing in the same position if it was his move, so all white needs to do is to "lose" a tempo. Bishops

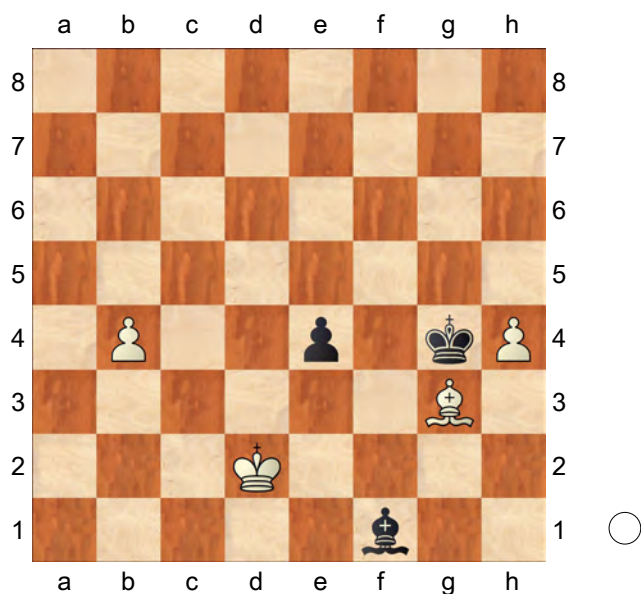
are perfectly suited for that, as we have seen in some earlier issues of Endgame series. Thus, 48.Bd4 Kd5 49.Be3! "wasting" a move. Ke6 50.Bc5○



and bishop's "triangulation" is completed. Black can not make a move without weakening his defensive setup, as we can see: Kf7 (50...Bc2 51.b5+-; 50...Bb5 51.Kxe4+-) 51.Ke5 Kg6 52.Be3! and white wins by marching his king to c5, etc. Bishop's maneuver from f4-h6-f8-c5 to e3 is very instructive.]

40.gxh5+ Kxh5 41.Bg3 Bf1 42.h4

Now it is easy. White's pawns are just too far apart for black to be able to hold them both. **Kg4**



43.Be1!+- The most technical move that illustrates well the important rule that we already mentioned: stronger side's bishop has to simultaneously protect its own passed pawn and block opponent's passed pawn. The square e1 is perfect for that purpose as it supports both b4 and h4 pawns!

[More flashy was 43.Ke3!?!+- when the bishop can not be taken due to Kxg3 44.h5]

43...Kf4 44.Kc3 e3 45.Kd4 Be2 46.Kc5 Ke5 47.Bg3+ Ke4 48.b5 and black resigned.

1-0

Hopefully you have taken away several important lessons from this example. We will list and classify important conclusions and general rules at the end of this article, so as you go through examples you can always refer to them. Now, let us take a look at a similar endgame where a top player David Navara failed to find a fairly simple way to draw the game.

□ **Adams, Michael**

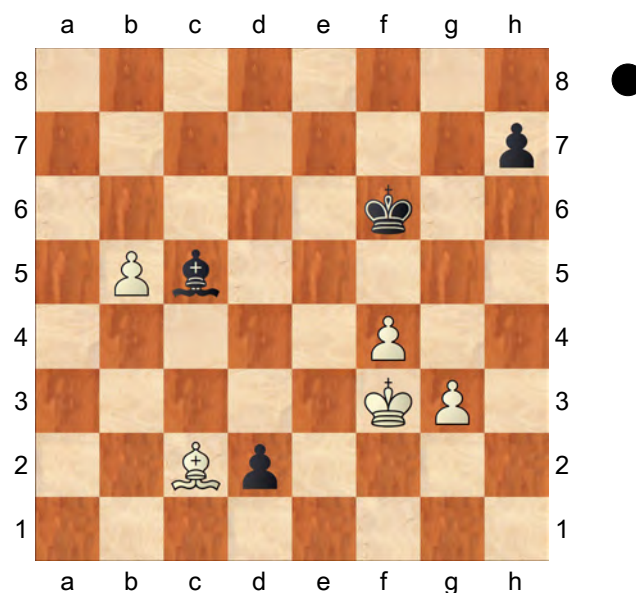
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■ **Navara, David**

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Biel GM 48th (1)

20.07.2015

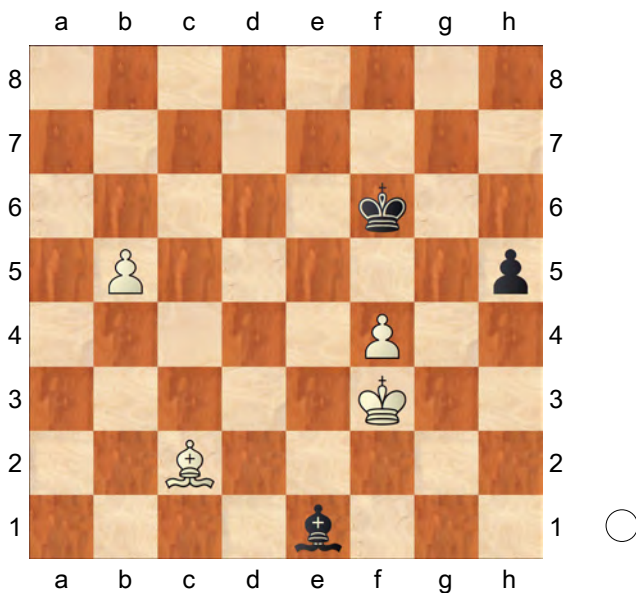


Just like in the previous example, white has a passed b-pawn. The difference is that black has an extra pawn on d2, which forces white to waste some time in order to capture it. But what happens when white takes that pawn? How can black draw the game? In the previous example we have concluded that white's passed pawns need to be at most two files apart for black to have drawing chances. Since they are 3 files apart here, it seems like white would reach a winning position once he takes the d2 pawn. However, there is another important drawing idea for black here – the "wrong-colored" bishop! Navara's next move, therefore, is logical: **42...h5!** Black's plan is to play h5-h4 and Bxf4 when white king moves away from the f4 pawn. Then, white would be left with two passed pawns on h- and b-files, which would normally be easily winning, but in this case black could simply give up his

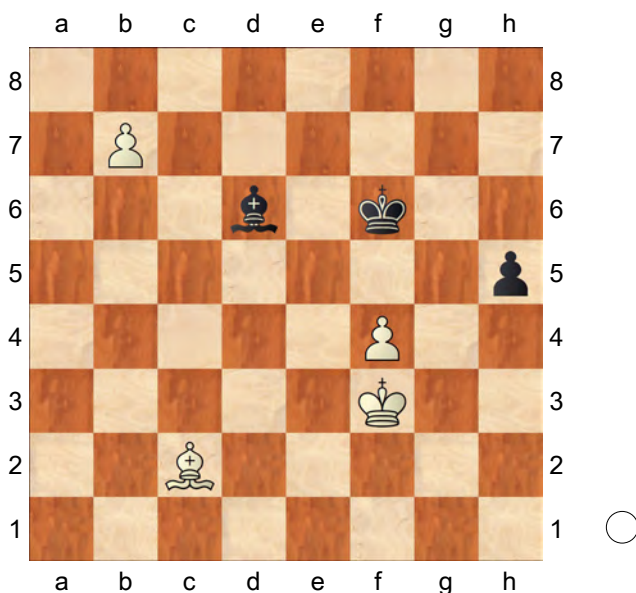
bishop for the b-pawn and keep his king on h8, when we would have a well-known positional draw due to the "wrong-colored" bishop. **43.Ke2 Bd6**

Continuing with the program,

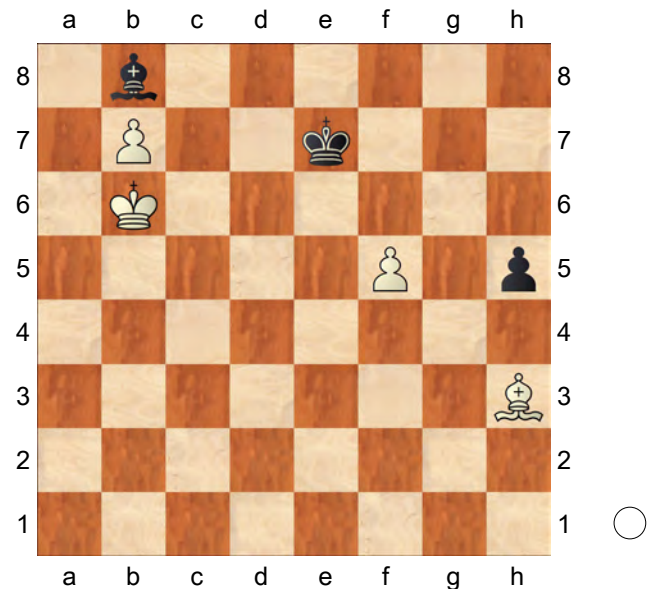
[although 43...Bb6!? 44.Kxd2 Bf2
45.Ke2 Bxg3 46.Kf3 Be1



would also lead to a drawn endgame, despite black white having pawns that are 3 files apart. The key role is played by the extra h-pawn, as we shall see. 47.Bd3 This is more precise (than 47.b6 Bb4 48.b7 Bd6

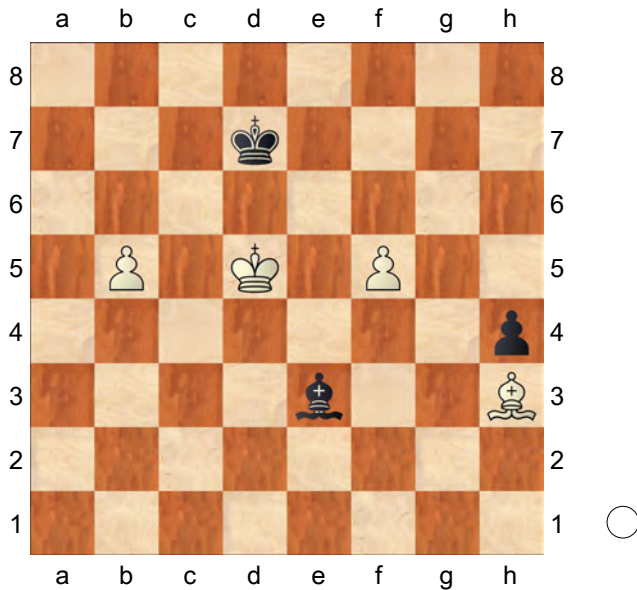


when the position is drawn even without the black h-pawn! This is one theoretical position worth remembering. The point is that the pawn on b7 actually limits the movement of his own king, which would like to break through to the a-file via the b7 square! We can see that clearly in the following variation: 49.Bd3 Bb8 50.Bf1 Bc7 51.Bh3 This bishop maneuver was necessary in order to put the bishop on the diagonal where it will simultaneously block the h-pawn and protect the f-pawn. Bb8 52.Ke4 Bc7 53.f5 White can not do without this move. Bb8 54.Kd5 Bg3 55.Kc6 and now Ke7! followed by 56.Kb6 Bb8!=

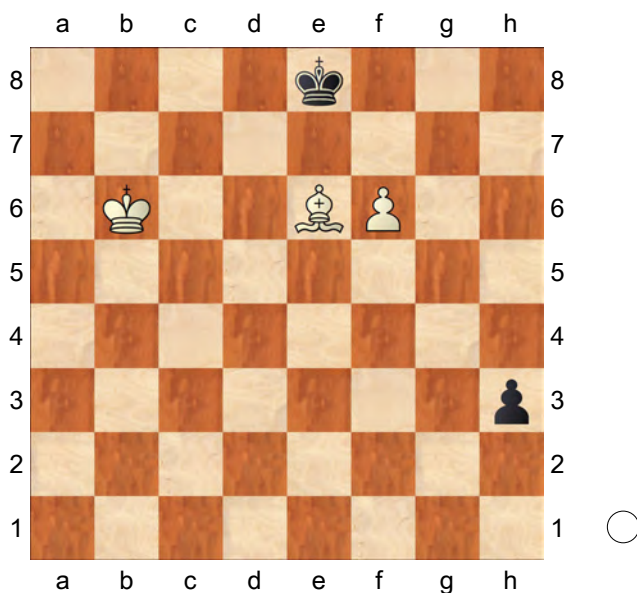


blocks all white attempts to penetrate toward c8 or a8. If the pawn was still on b5, however, white could easily achieve that.) 47...Ba5 48.Bf1 Bb6 49.Ke4 h4 50.Bh3 Ke7 51.Kd5 (White could not make progress with 51.Kf5 Bc7 52.Kg5 Kf7 53.f5 Bd8+=

either.) 51...Be3 52.f5 and in this critical position, it is essential for white to play Kd7!



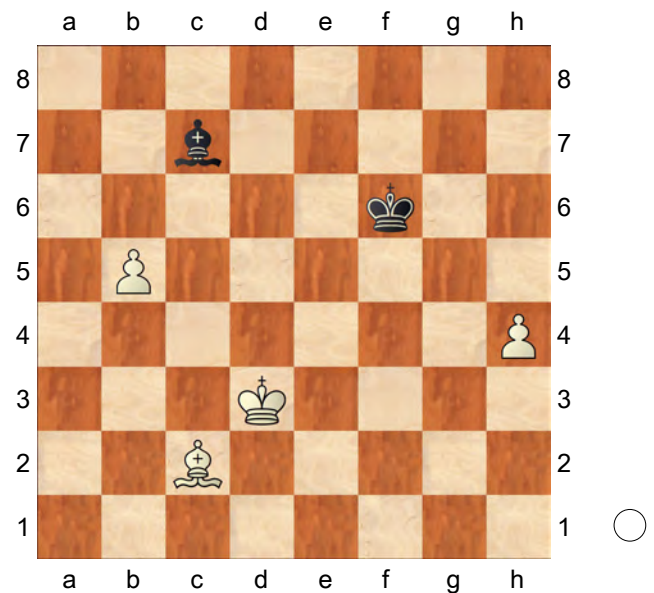
Obviously, black has prevented white king from reaching the desired c6 square, but what about the obvious discovered check: 53.f6+ ? Well, that would prove to be a fruitful provocation in the view of: Ke8! 54.Be6 Bb6 55.Kc6 Be3 56.b6 Bxb6 57.Kxb6 h3=



and black draws by deflecting the bishop away from f7 square using the h-pawn desperado. Once again, if white pawn was not advanced too far, but somehow remained on f5, white would be winning with an extra piece. However, he can not achieve that position if black defends precisely.]

44.Ke3 A waiting move.

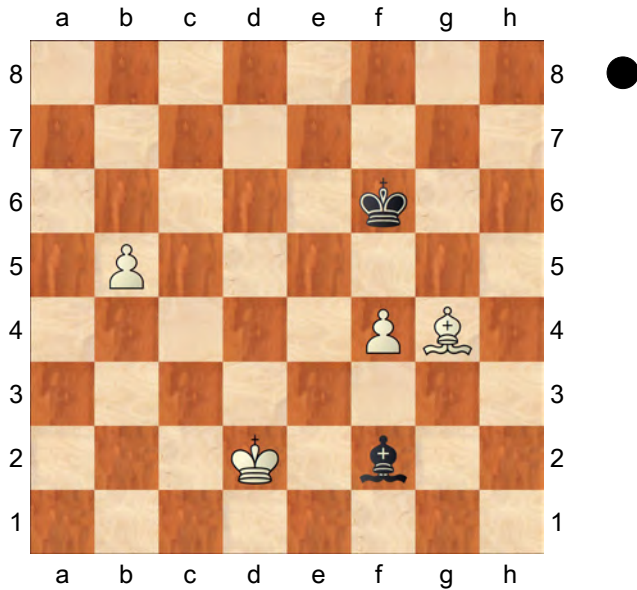
[It is obvious that 44.Kxd2 would allow black to demonstrate his drawing idea: h4! 45.gxh4 Bxf4+ 46.Kd3 Bc7=



when black sacrifices his bishop for the b-pawn and we have the wrong-colored bishop endgame.]

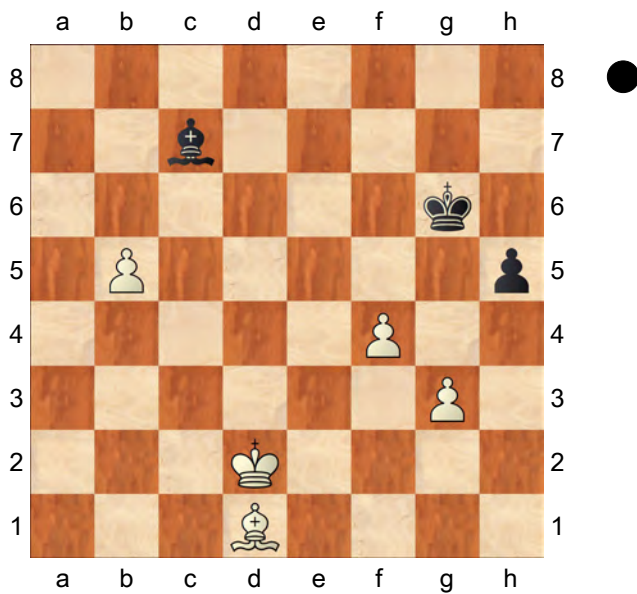
44...Bc7 45.Bd1 h4? What a shame for Navara. He was so close to reaching a draw, but he became too hasty with his plan.

[And while 45...Bb6+? 46.Kxd2 Bf2 would also be losing due to 47.g4 hxg4 48.Bxg4+-



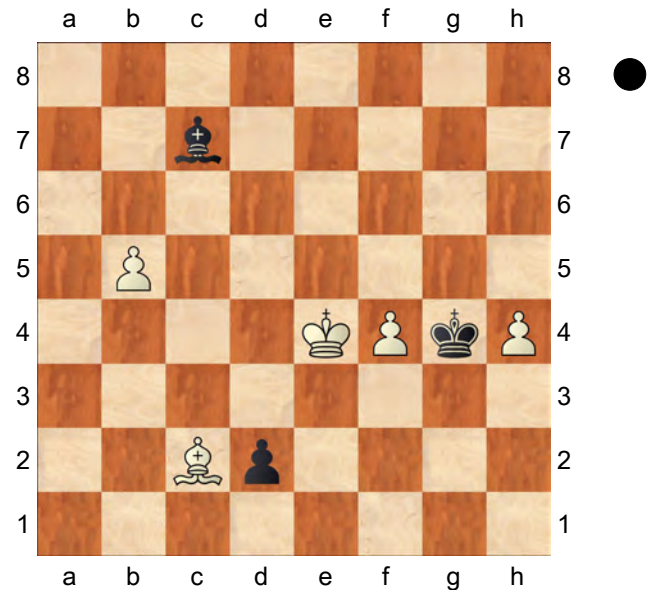
with a theoretically winning endgame (remember the pawn should be on b5, not b7!),]

[the right move was simply 45...Kg6 defending the pawn and keeping the status quo. Only when white king moves away from the f4 pawn:
46.Kxd2 (In case of 46.Be2 we hold the fort with Kh6=)



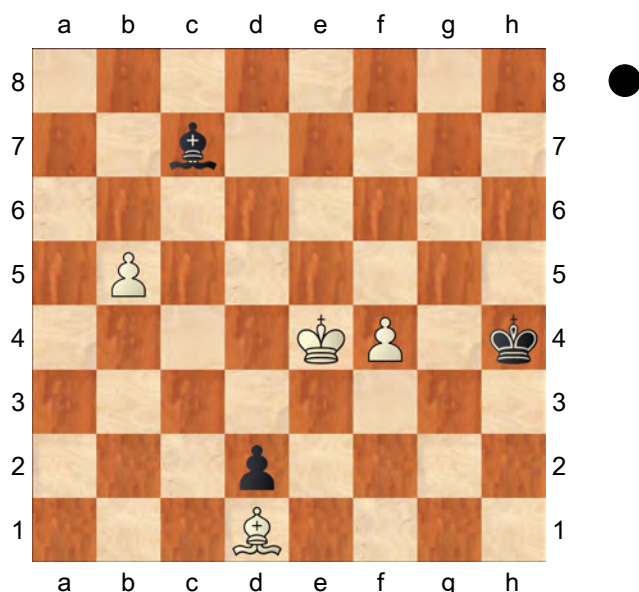
does black play 46...h4! 47.gxh4 Bxf4+= with a theoretically drawn position.]

46.gxh4 Kf5 Navara was counting on this move, when he indeed recaptures the f4 pawn. However, he likely missed:
47.Bc2+ Kg4 48.Ke4!



and suddenly black comes to understand that he will suffer because of poor position of his king! **Kxh4**

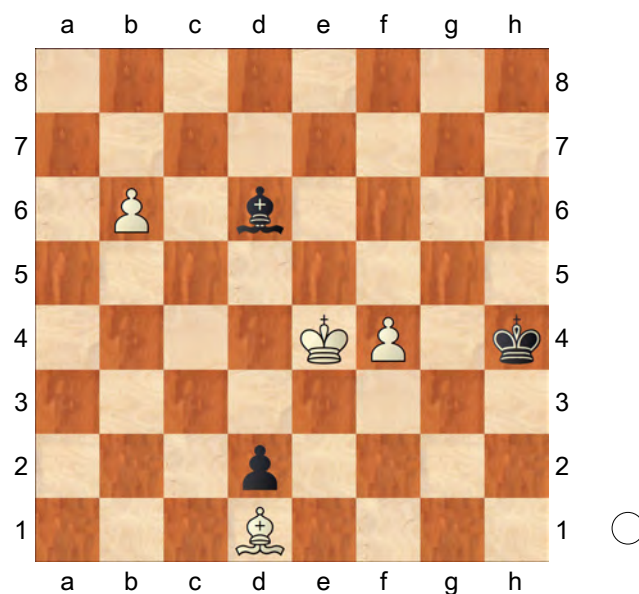
[If he went for 48...Bxf4 instead, white continues 49.Bd1+ forcing black king to move away from the h-pawn Kg3 when 50.h5+- decides the game in white's favor despite the wrong-colored bishop. The key tactical detail is that black king is not in the square of the h-pawn!]

49.Bd1!

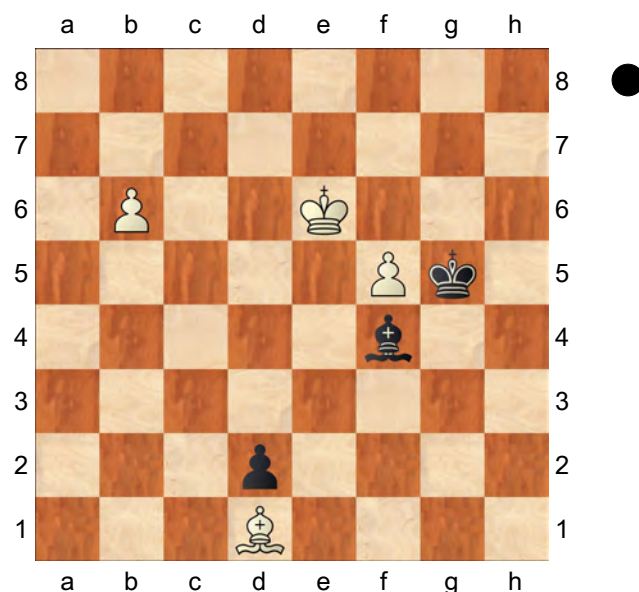
It is perhaps this quiet move that Navara had missed when he went for this variation. Black is in an unusual zugzwang. He can not move his king as it would step outside of the square of f-pawn (this is why 49.Bd1 was important – to take away g4 and h5 squares from the king). And if he moves his bishop, he allows either the b-pawn or white king to move forward. **Bd8** Navara's last line of defense is keeping an eye on both passed pawns from d8 square. This, however, allows white king to penetrate in the center.

[Obviously, white wins trivially after 49...Kg3 50.f5 Kh4 51.f6 Kg5 52.f7 Bd6 53.Kd5 Bf8 54.b6+-]

[However, he would still need to show a little subtlety in case of 49...Bb8 50.b6 Bd6



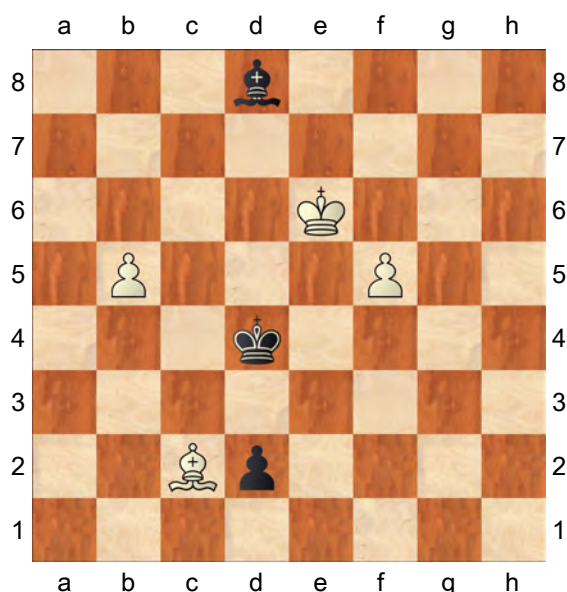
Here the only way to win is to push 51.f5! exactly when black bishop is on d6. (but not 51.b7? Bb8 52.Be2 Bc7= when black bishop can alternate between c7 and b8, without stepping on the mined square d6.) 51...Kg5 with the tactical point 52.Kd5! when black has to lose a tempo with his bishop: Bf4 allowing 53.Ke6+-



If you think about it, another important tactical detail that allowed

white to execute this winning idea has the pawns exactly on f4 and b6 from where they limited the movement of the black bishop to b8 and d6. Had black had any other square available for his bishop on the h2–b8 diagonal, the position would be easily drawn.]

50.Kd5 Kg3 51.f5 Kf4 52.Ke6 Ke4 53.Bc2+ Kd4



It seems like black's idea has almost worked out, but Adams breaks black's defensive setup with the precise:

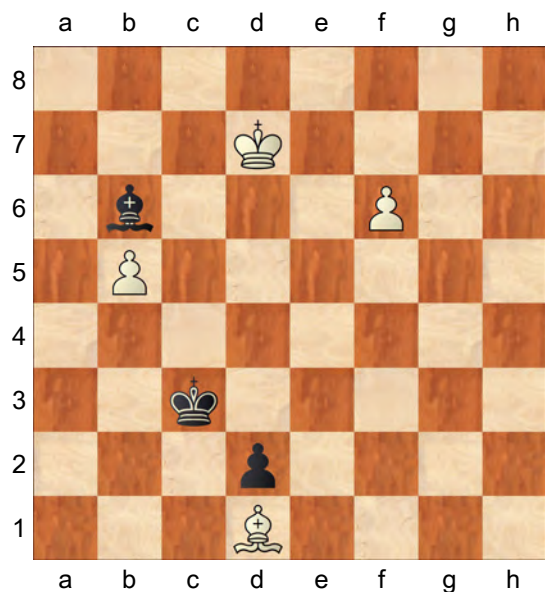
54.Kd7!+-

[It would be premature to play 54.f6? due to Bxf6 55.Kxf6 Kc5 56.Ba4 d1Q 57.Bxd1 Kxb5=]

54...Bb6

[or 54...Bf6 55.b6+-]

55.f6 Kc3 56.Bd1

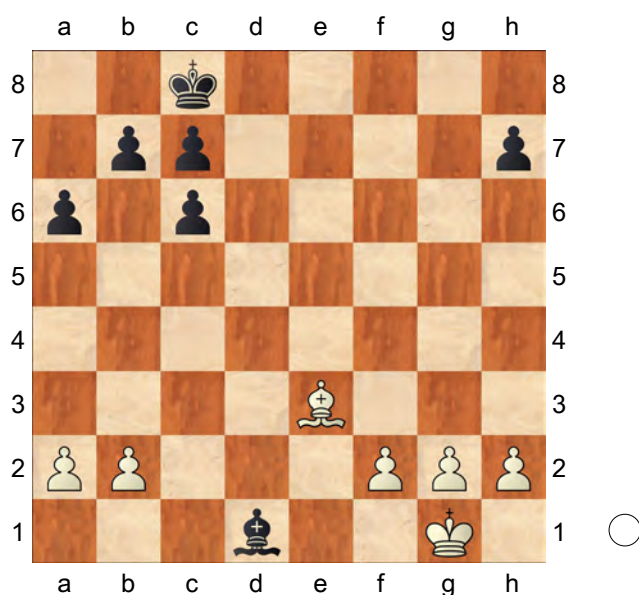


and black rightfully resigned. His bishop is overloaded and can not cope with both passed pawns, as in the following variation: **Kb4 57.f7 Bc5 58.b6** etc. 1-0

Here we learned about the importance of another drawing idea for the weaker side in such endgames - the "wrong-colored bishop". Experienced endgame players think about such details even before they enter endgames with reduced material (this hints at the issue of making the right piece exchanges, which we will talk about in one of the upcoming issues) and you should get used to doing that too, as sometimes the outcome of the endgame depends on such a detail. In addition, we have seen an important exception to the rule where passed pawns are winning if they are three files apart. It shows that one should not be hastily pushing the passed pawns. Often, it is more important to activate the king first. The next example will be more complex in terms of pawn structure and it will serve

as an illustration of several additional principles in opposite-colored bishops endgames, such as the pawn breakthrough, the strength of connected passed pawns and weakness of doubled pawns.

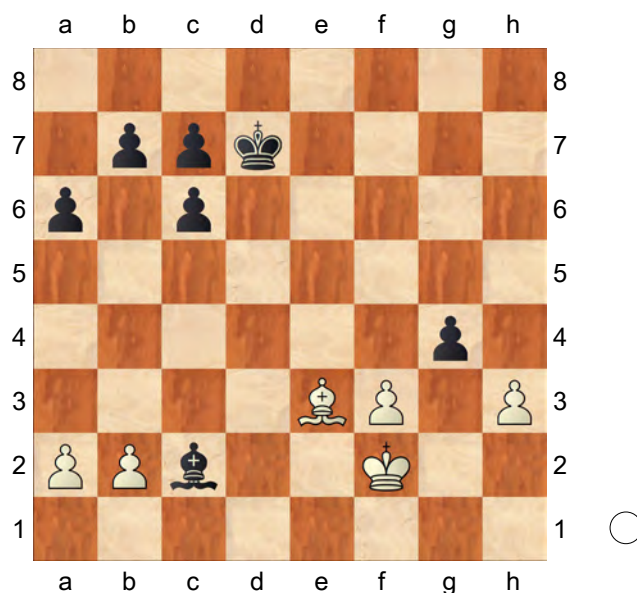
Mamedyarov, Shakhriyar **2735**
 Ragger, Markus **2688**
 Vienna m (3) 19.08.2015



Unlike the previous examples, in this one the material is equal. However, it becomes immediately clear that black is the weaker side because he has doubled pawns on the c-file. It is tough for him to create a passed pawn. On the other hand, white has a natural plan of expanding his kingside majority and creating a pair of connected passed pawns. **21.f3 Kd7 22.Kf2 a5!** Black is correctly looking to create counterplay on the queenside, although, as we said, actually creating a passed pawn there is a daunting task.

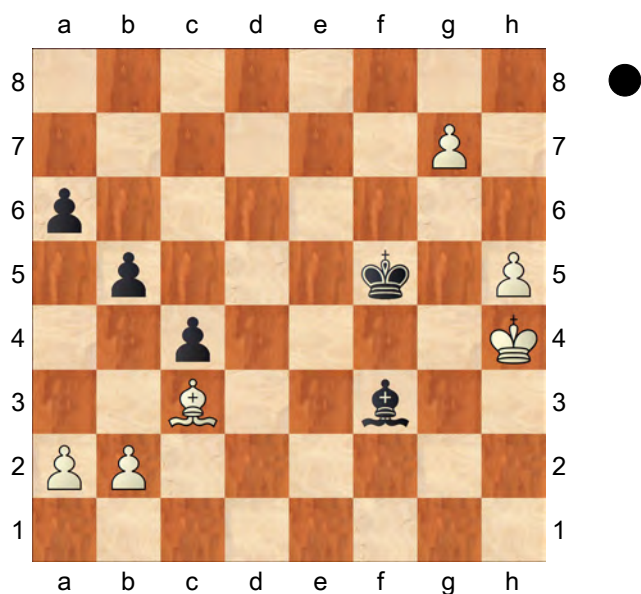
[The alternative was 22...h5

preventing white's g2-g4. However, white can continue 23.h3 Bc2 24.g4 hxc4



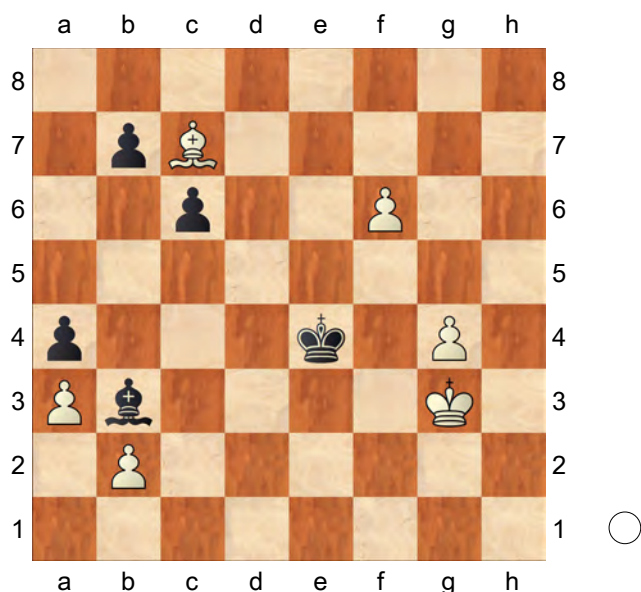
How should white recapture now? In this case, the well-known rule of thumb that pawns should capture toward the center holds true:

A) 25.fxg4? would be a mistake, in fact, since black will be able to block the pawns. Bd1 26.Kg3 Ke6 27.Bf4 c5 28.Bxc7 b5 29.h4 c4 30.Ba5 Be2 It is important to keep the bishop on diagonal d1-h5. 31.h5 Ke5 32.Bc3+ Ke6 33.Kh4 (Pawns are also easily blocked after 33.h6 Bd3 34.Kh4 Kf7=) 33...Bd1 34.g5 Kf5 The problem for white is that with h- and g-connected pawns he has no room to penetrate with his king. 35.g6 and now only Bf3! 36.g7



Bd5= draws the game.;

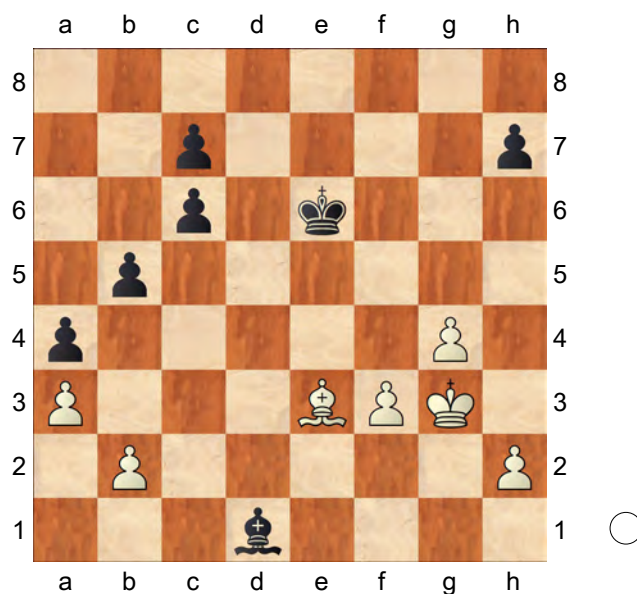
B) 25.hxg4! Ke6 26.f4 Bb1 27.a3 Bc2 28.f5+ Ke5 29.Kg3 Ke4 30.Bf4 a5 31.Bxc7 a4 32.f6 Bb3



and now we see the difference between this variation and the one with h- and g-pawns. Here white has an extra file for his king:

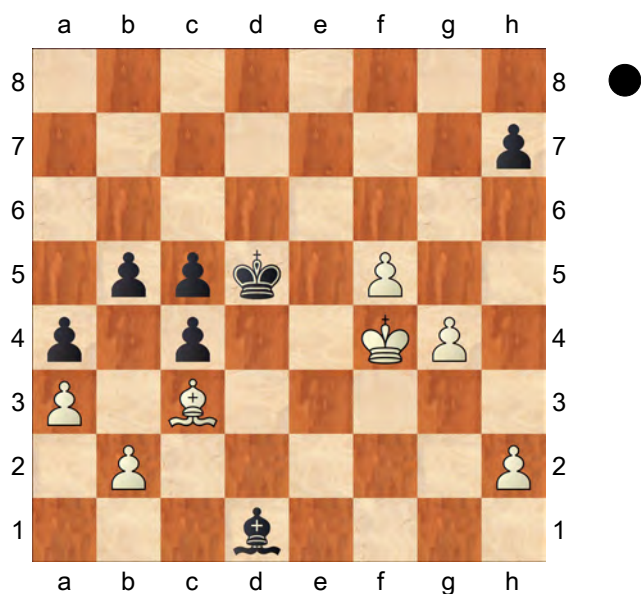
33.Kh4!+-]

23.g4 a4 24.a3 Ke6 25.Kg3 b5

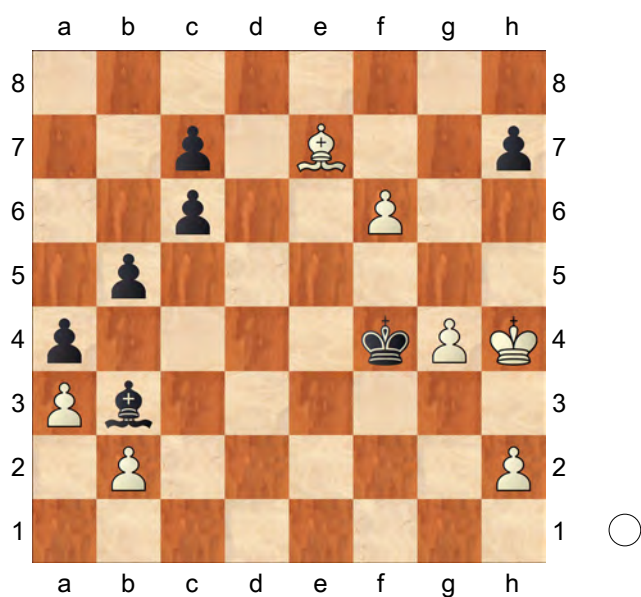


26.h4? As we already mentioned, one has to be very careful when pushing the pawns in opposite-colored bishops endgames. Strangely enough, this move lets the win slip (with the most precise defense by black), while the other pawn push wins.

[The right pawn to push was 26.f4! Kd5 (26...h5 is pointless now that white has 27.f5+ Ke5 28.h3!+- This is why it was important not to push the pawn to h4.) 27.f5 Ke4 (Black's attempt to create a passed pawn with 27...c5 28.Kf4 b4 29.h3 c4 30.axb4 c3 runs into 31.Bc1! and white has everything under control.) 28.Bc5 Kd5 29.Be7 Now white is ready to play Kf4 and push the pawns forward. This is a much more straight-forward and convincing plan than h4-h5, etc. that Mamedyarov went for in the game. Ke4 (If 29...c5 then simply 30.Kf4 c4 31.Bb4! c5 32.Bc3+-



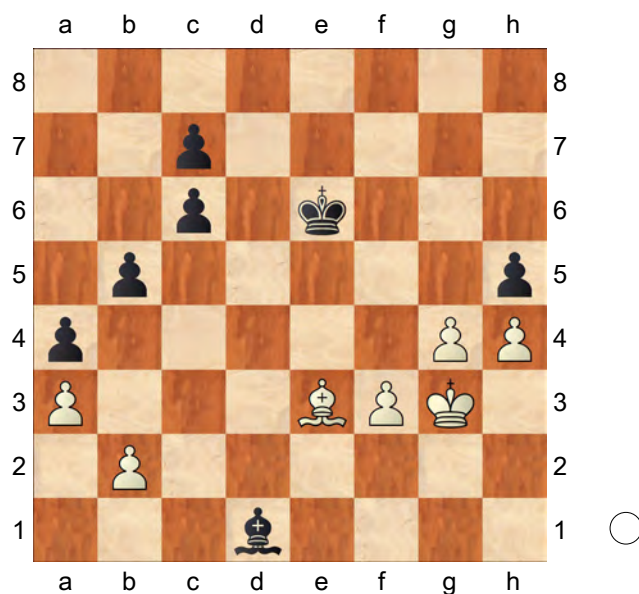
and we can see how great of a handicap doubled pawns are in such endgames.) 30.f6 Bb3 31.Kh4 Kf4



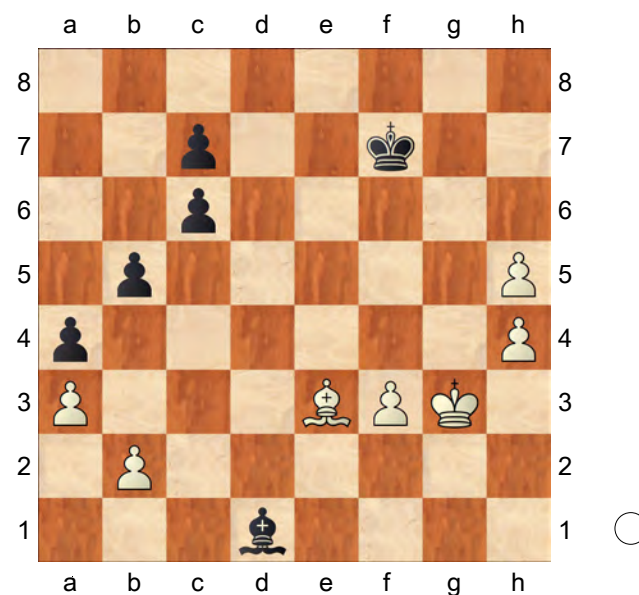
and now white wins with unstoppable king march: 32.Kh5! Bf7+ 33.Kh6 Kxg4 34.Kg7+-]

26...Be2

[Other annotators have suggested 26...h5!?

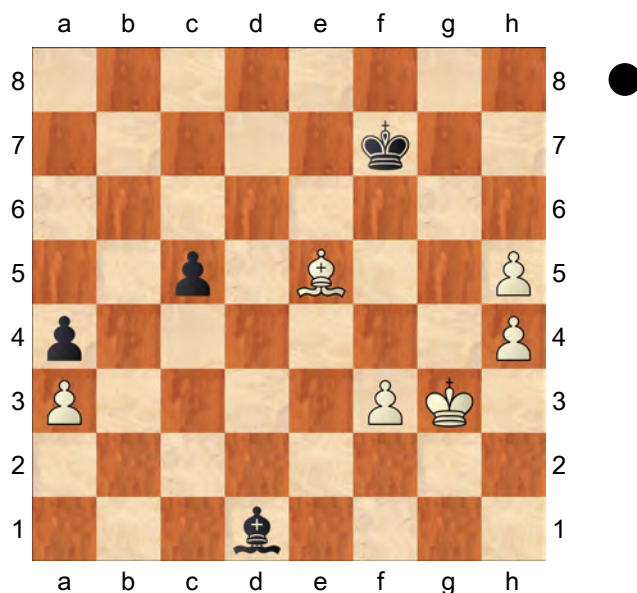


as a direct way to a draw. It indeed looks very reasonable to break up white's connected pawns, but he has a way to win that endgame, nevertheless. 27.gxh5! The only winning move. (The point is that 27.Kf4 allows a favorable exchange on g4 that we have seen in 22...h5 ... 25.fxg4? variation. hxg4 28.fxg4 Be2 29.h5 Bd1 30.Kg5 Kf7 31.Kh4 Be2 32.g5 Ke6 33.g6 Kf5=) 27...Kf7



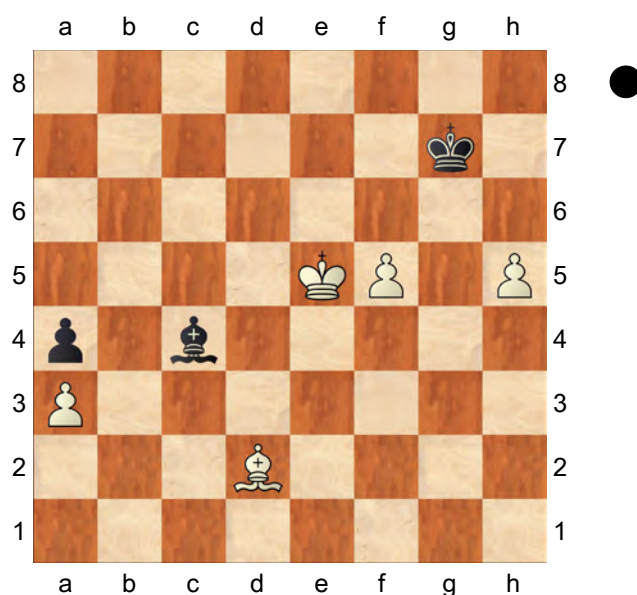
The idea behind black's pawn sacrifice is that it will be easier to block disconnected passed pawns. I have analyzed two winning attempts by white and concluded that he could win with precise play. Black's idea, as in the previous example, is to force the endgame with the wrong-colored bishop and white needs to prevent that.

A) Black's idea can be seen in the following tempting continuation:
28.Bf4? c5! 29.Bxc7 b4 30.Be5
 bxa3 31.bxa3



It was essential to execute this exchange as white is now saddled with the rook's pawn, which makes his bishop wrong-colored. Kg8 32.h6 Kh7 33.Bg7 c4! 34.f4 c3 35.Bxc3 Kxh6 Black has forced another pawn exchange. This endgame is drawn due to the

wrong-colored bishop: 36.f5 Kh5
 37.Be1 Bb3 38.Kf4 Kh6 39.Ke5
 Kg7 40.Bd2 Bc4 41.h5

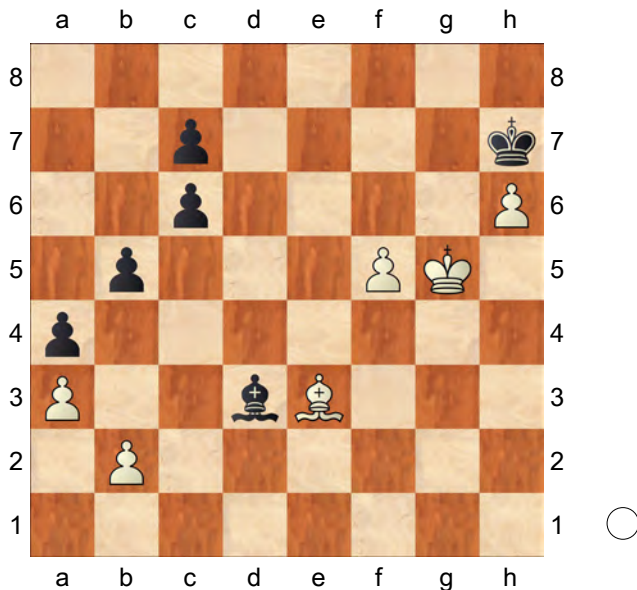


but here black needs to find a complicated bishop maneuver: Bg8! with the idea to bring the bishop to h7 from where it not only blocks the h-pawn, but also attacks the pawn on f5! 42.h6+ Kf7 43.Bc3 Bh7 44.f6 Bc2 45.Kd5 Bb3+ 46.Kd6 Bc2 47.Kc5 Bb1 48.Kb4 Bc2 The only remaining winning attempt is 49.h7 Bxh7 50.Kxa4

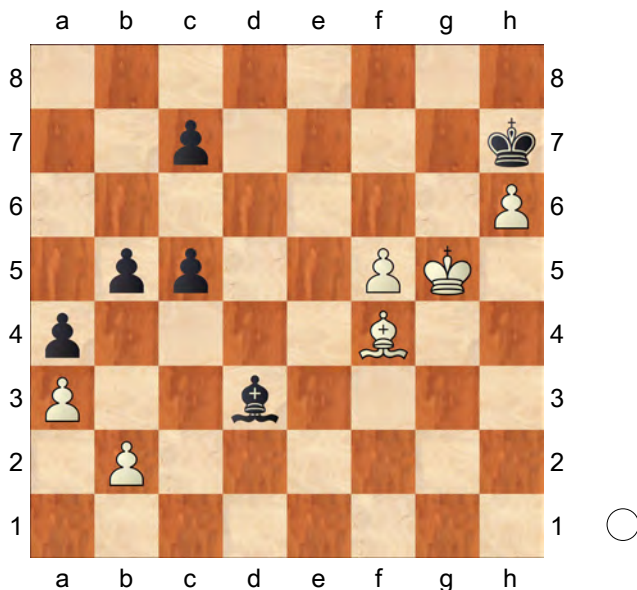
However, black is in time to reach b7 square with his king: Ke6 51.Kb5 Bd3+ 52.Kb4 (52.Kb6 Bc2=) 52...Bg6 53.a4 Kd7 54.Kc5 Kc7 55.a5 Kb7=;

B) 28.h6! Kg6 29.h5+ Kh7 30.f4 Kxh6 31.Kh4 Be2 (31...Bxh5?? 32.f5+-) 32.f5+ Kg7 33.Kg5 Kh7 Black's defensive setup is based on the blockade on squares h7 and f7 and executing a c5-b4-bxa3 exchange, as in the variation 28.Bf4. However, white has a way to avoid

that, as we will see. 34.h6 Bd3

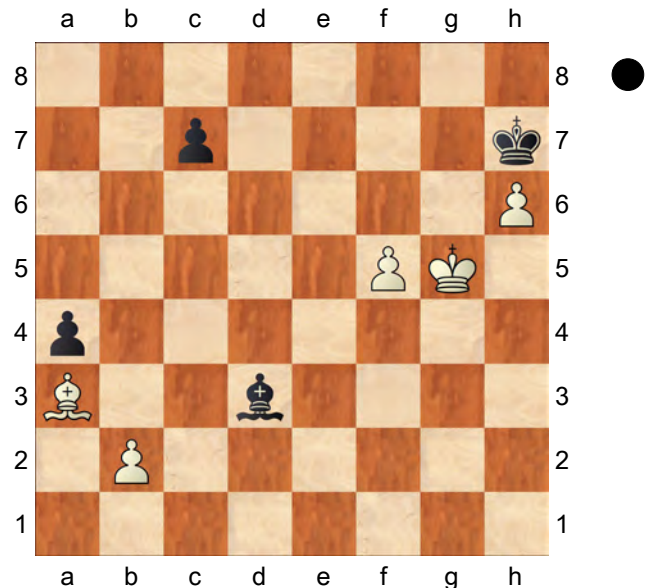


35.Bf4! (35.Kf6? allows c5 36.Ke6 b4 37.f6 bxa3 38.bxa3 Bc4+ 39.Ke7 Kg8 40.Bxc5 Bb3 41.h7+ Kxh7 42.f7 Bxf7 43.Kxf7 Kh6=) 35...c5

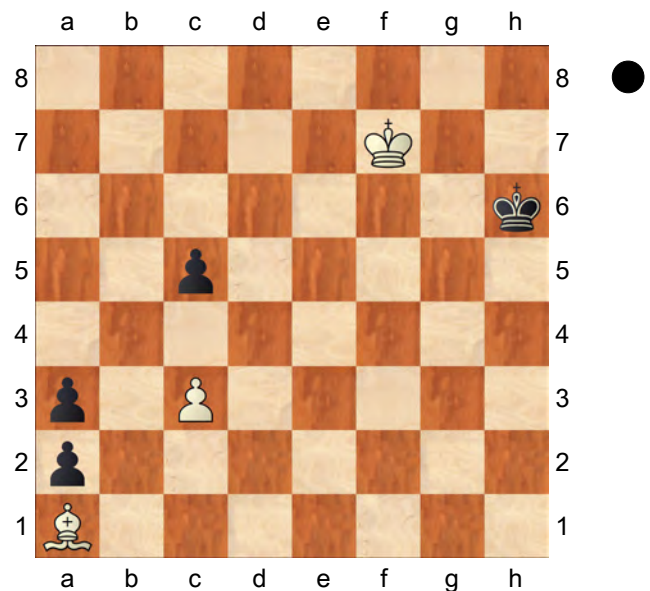


and now the only winning move is 36.Be3!! (36.Bxc7 b4=) 36...c4 (The point behind this move is that after 36...b4 37.Bxc5 bxa3

white can recapture with the bishop: 38.Bxa3!!+-



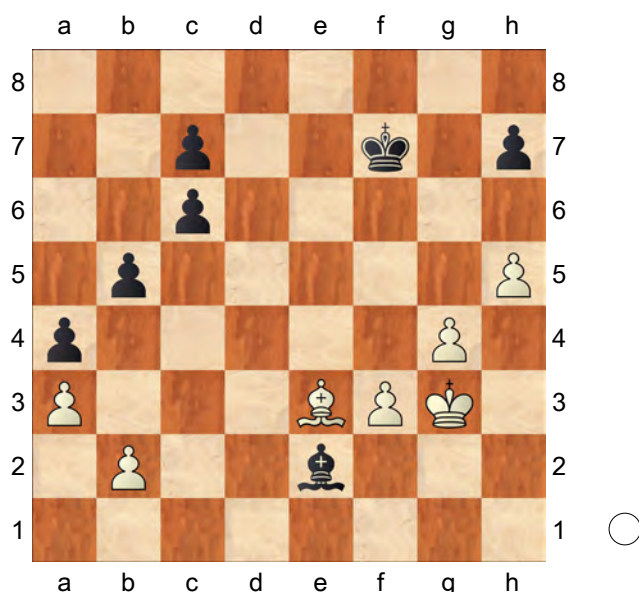
and he has the b-, instead of the a-pawn, so black can not save the game thanks to the wrong-colored bishop.) 37.Kf6 c5 Black seems to have obtained serious counterplay with his queenside pawn mass, but white wins by force with 38.Ke6! (38.Bxc5? Kxh6=) 38...b4 39.f6 c3 40.bxc3 bxa3 41.Bc1 a2 42.Bb2 a3 43.Ba1 Kxh6 44.f7 Bc4+ 45.Ke7 Bxf7 46.Kxf7+-



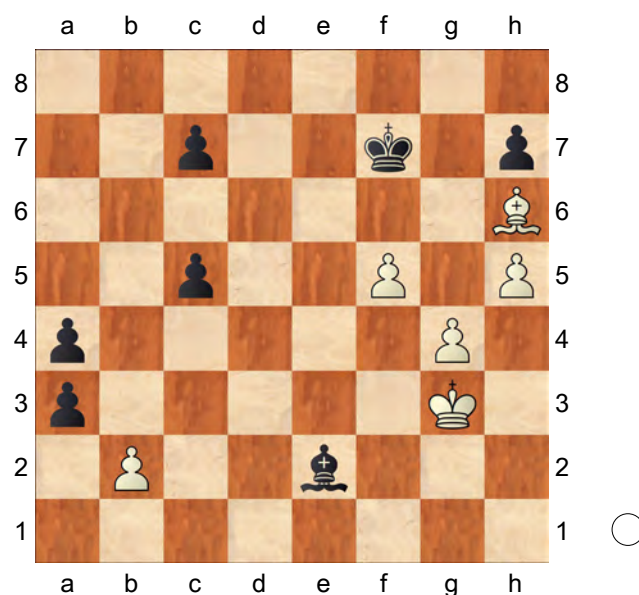
So, analytically speaking, white is winning even after 26...h5!?, although he would have to find some very precise moves and avoid many tempting, wrong continuations on that path. 26.f4 would have been more straightforward.]

27.h5 A logical follow-up by Mamedyarov. **Bd3?** Ragger goes down without a real fight.

[Black could have held a draw with 27...Kf7!

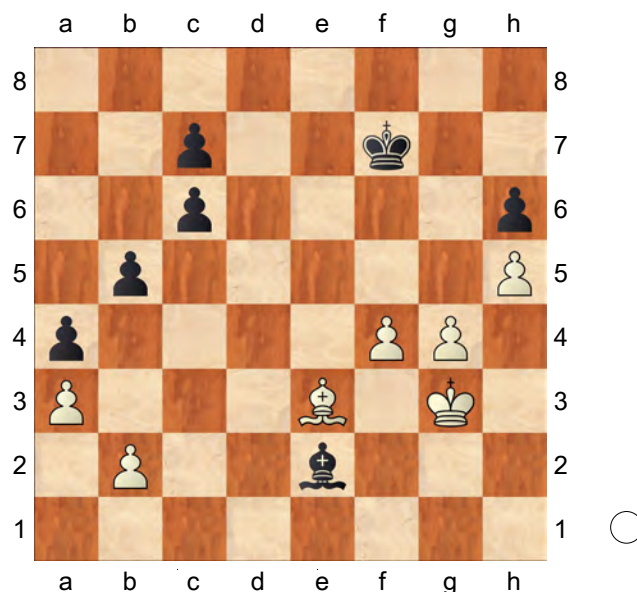


A) White could also try to block the h-pawn with 28.Bh6 in order to push f4-f5 without having to worry about h7-h6, but this allows black to start advancing the pawns: c5! 29.f4 (29.Be3 c4!=) 29...b4 30.f5 bxa3!



and black achieves his main idea in this endgame. The rest is pretty much forced and it shows how white can not avoid the endgame with the wrong-colored bishop. 31.bxa3 c4 32.Bd2 Bd1 33.Kh4 Bc2 34.Kg5 Kg8 35.h6 Kf7 36.Bc3 Bd3 37.Kf4 Bc2 38.g5 Bd3 39.Ke5 Bc2 40.g6+ Kg8 41.Kf6 Bd3 42.Ke6 Be4 43.gxh7+ Kxh7 44.f6 Bg6 45.Bd2 Kg8 46.Ke7 Bh5 47.h7+ Kxh7 48.f7 Bxf7 49.Kxf7 c3 50.Bxc3 Kh6=;

B) 28.f4 h6!!

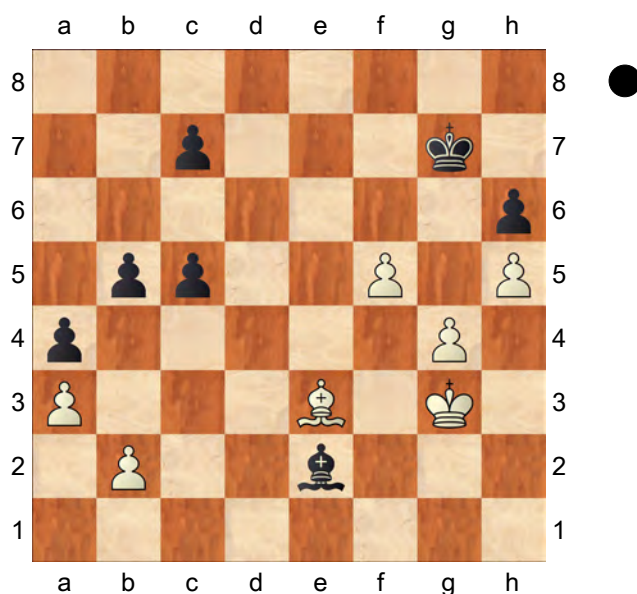


This is the key defensive idea that was probably missed by both players. It turns out that white can not improve his position after this move as his g4 and h5 pawns are blocked and the endgame after the g4–g5 push is drawn, as we know from the previous analysis.

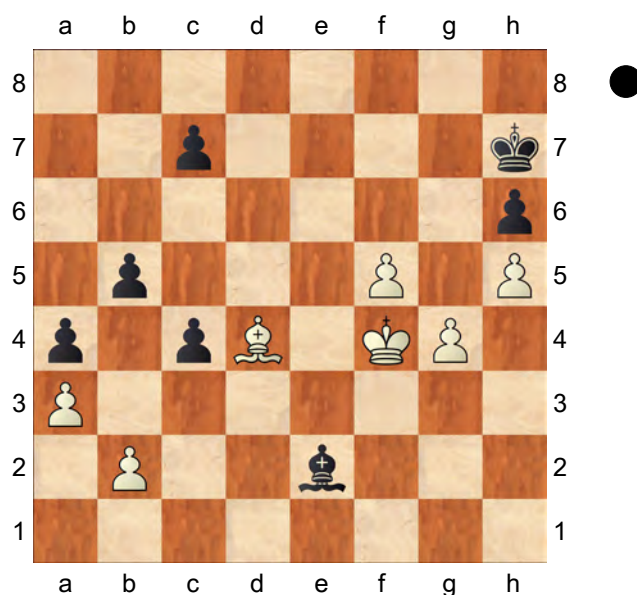
B1) 29.Kh4 Bd3 30.g5 hxg5+ 31.fxg5 (31.Kxg5 Ke6=)

31...Be2 32.g6+ Kf6=;

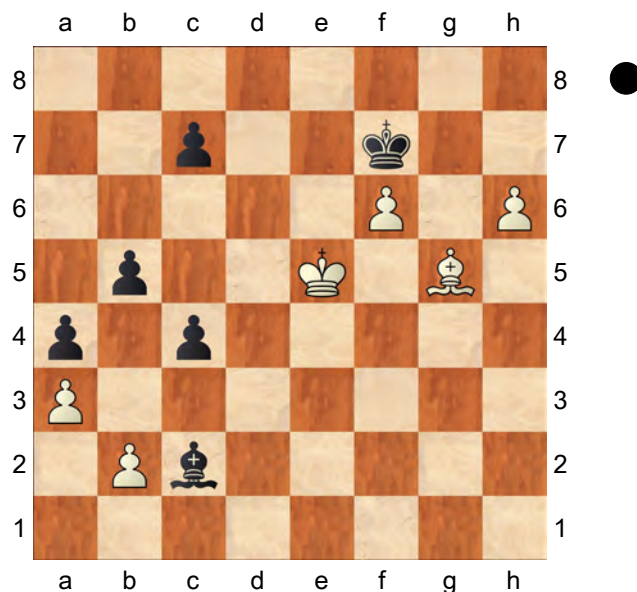
B2) 29.f5 Kg7 30.Bf4 c5 31.Be3



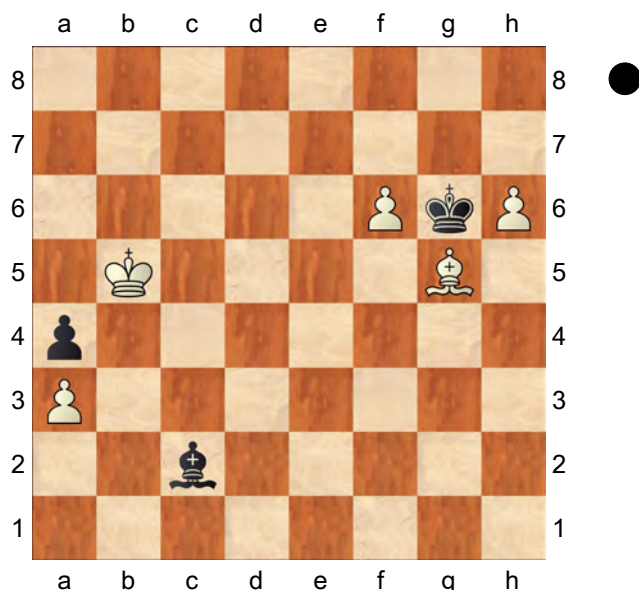
c4! (but not 31...b4? 32.Bxc5 bxa3 because of 33.Bxa3!! Bc4 34.Kf4 Be2 35.Bc5 Bd1 36.g5 hxg5+ 37.Kxg5+-) 32.Bd4+ (32.Kh4 Bd3!=; 32.Kf4 Bd1=) 32...Kh7 33.Kf4



Bd1! By always keeping one of the White pawns under attack, black does not allow white king to move forward. White has to push one of the pawns if he wants to make some progress, but black can hold his own in any case. 34.f6 (34.Be5 c6 35.g5 Bxh5 36.g6+ Bxg6 37.fxg6+ Kxg6= It is important for black that this piece-down endgame is not losing.) 34...Kg8 35.Kf5 Kf7 36.Be3 Bc2+ 37.Ke5 Bd1! 38.g5 hxg5 39.h6 Bc2 40.Bxg5



c5! The final step in black's plan, as we already know, is to force the exchange on a3. 41.Kd5 (41.Be3 b4 42.Bxc5 c3!=; 41.Bd2 Bh7 42.Bc3 Bg8 43.Kd6 b4=) 41...b4 42.Kxc4 bxa3 43.bxa3 Bb3+ 44.Kxc5 Bc2 45.Kb4 Kg6 46.Kb5

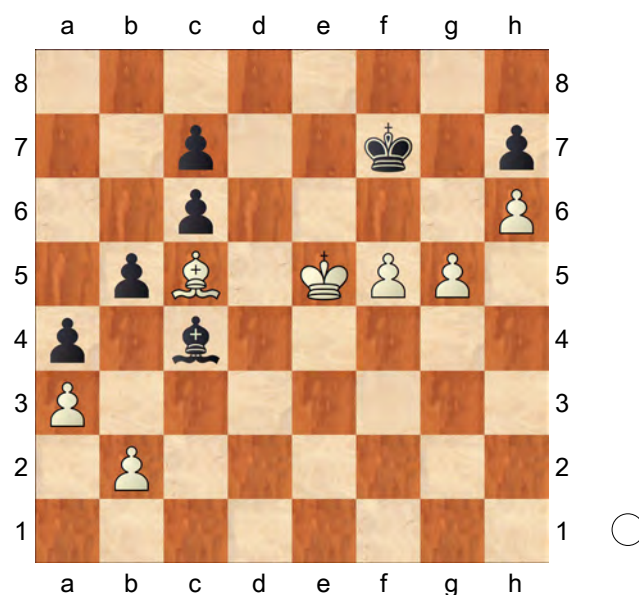


Bb3= Clearly, it is not easy to find all of this in practical play, but this is why it is important to analyze such positions in detail, because your chances to play such positions more accurately under pressure increase with the amount of analytical work.]

28.f4 Be2 29.f5+ Kf7 30.h6

The last few moves came with tempo for

white and black has been left without any real counterplay on either side of the board. Now Mamedyarov will demonstrate how to break black's defense with a pawn breakthrough. **Kg8 31.Kf4 Bd3 32.g5 Kf7 33.Bd4 Kg8 34.Ke5 Kf7 35.Bc5 Bc4**



36.g6+! This is it! Kg8

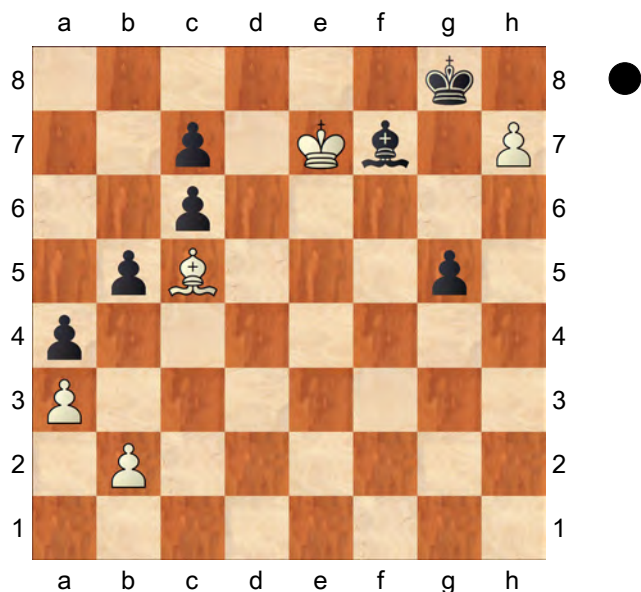
[The tactical justification is 36...hxg6 37.h7 Kg7 38.fxg6 Bd3 39.Bf8+! Kh8 40.Kf6+-]

37.Kf6 Bd3 38.Ke6 hxg6

[or 38...Be4 39.gxh7+ Kxh7 40.f6+-]

39.f6 Bc4+ 40.Ke7 g5 41.f7+ Bxf7

42.h7+



and black resigned as he loses the piece and soon all of his queenside pawns.

1-0

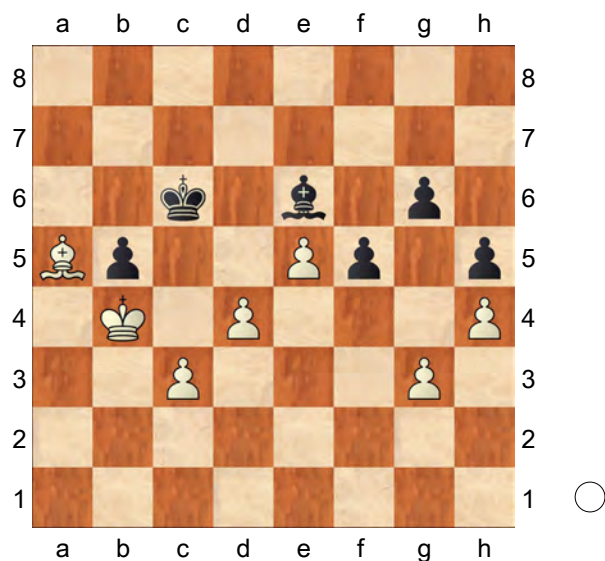
In our final example, we will examine an opposite-colored bishops endgame from a high-profile game between Karjakin and Svidler. There were two instructive moments in this game. The first one was when Svidler could have sacrificed the second pawn to keep the blockade. The second one was when Karjakin sacrificed a pawn himself to break the blockade. So, paradoxically, the position with two extra pawns would not be winning for white, while a similar position with the same number of pawns was winning. Chess is not always about the material! Let us take a closer look. (Karjakin – Svidler) One important practical takeaway from this game is how important it is to stay alert in

seemingly "dead-drawn" opposite-colored bishops endgames. As I said earlier, unusual and study-like motifs lurk in such endgames quite often, just like 78...f4!! and 80.d5!! moves in this game. We shall see a few more such brilliant ideas in the next part of Endgame Series. Finally, let us take stock and list some important conclusions about endgames with opposite-colored bishops:

1. Weaker side often has drawing chances being one, two, or sometimes even three pawns down
2. Drawing chances usually arise due to the blockade
3. Drawing chances sometimes arise due to the wrong-colored bishop (rook's pawn)
4. With two passed pawns which are three or more files apart (i.e. f- and b-; g- and c-) the stronger side usually wins; with two passed pawns two or less files apart (i.e. e- and b-; g- and d-) it is usually a draw (there are some exceptions, see Adams–Navara)
5. Winning chances increase as two passed pawns are further (more files) apart
6. In case of pawn races, it is critical that the attacker's bishop can simultaneously protect its own passed pawn and block opponent's passed pawn; otherwise defender's drawing chances increase significantly
7. Winning ideas for the stronger side: Penetrating with the king, Pawn breakthrough, Overloading defender's bishop, Improving the position of the bishop, Zugzwang

Karjakin, Sergey **2762**

Svidler, Peter **2727**
 FIDE World Cup (7.5) 05.10.2015

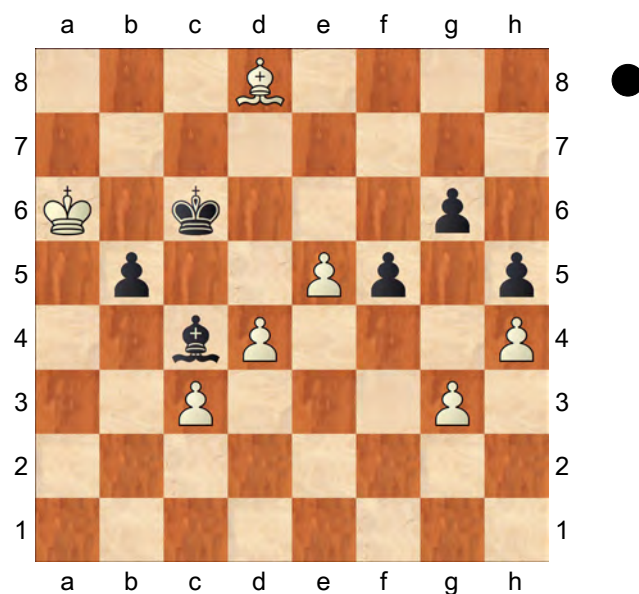


In this important FIDE World Cup final game, Svidler was down a pawn, but did hold a comfortable blockade on the light-squares. It seemed like Karjakin had no way to break it and that draw was near, but he tried his last chance with: **70.Bd8** clearing the a5 square for king's penetration. **Bd5** Keeping the fortress is the most practical approach.

[There was a way to prevent white king from reaching a6: 70...Bc4 71.Ka5 Kb7 but that would have allowed white to break out with either 72.e6 (or 72.d5) 72...Kc6 73.e7 when black would have to solve completely new problems, with unclear consequences.]

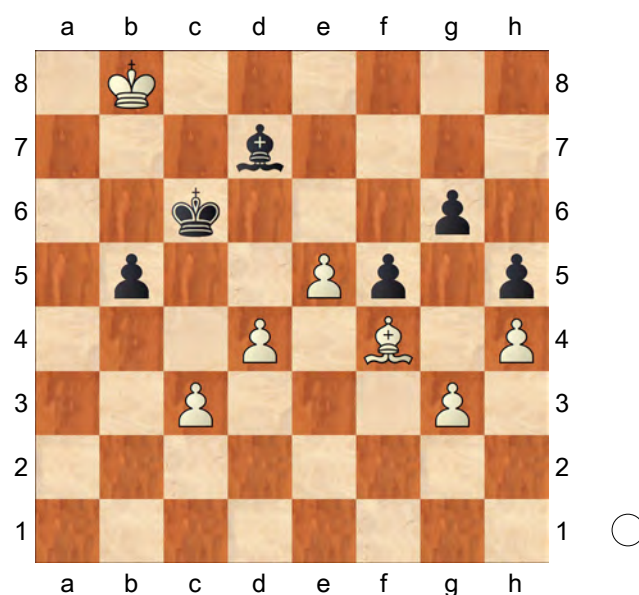
71.Ka5 Be6

[Perhaps it would be worth trying 71...Bc4 in a blitz game, hoping for 72.Ka6?? (but white can simply waste a move with 72.Bg5 when black has to return to one of the squares on the a2-g8 diagonal, allowing Ka6 on the next move anyway.)



72...b4--+]

72.Ka6 Bc8+ 73.Ka7 Be6 74.Bg5 Bd7 75.Bf4 Be6 76.Kb8 Bd7



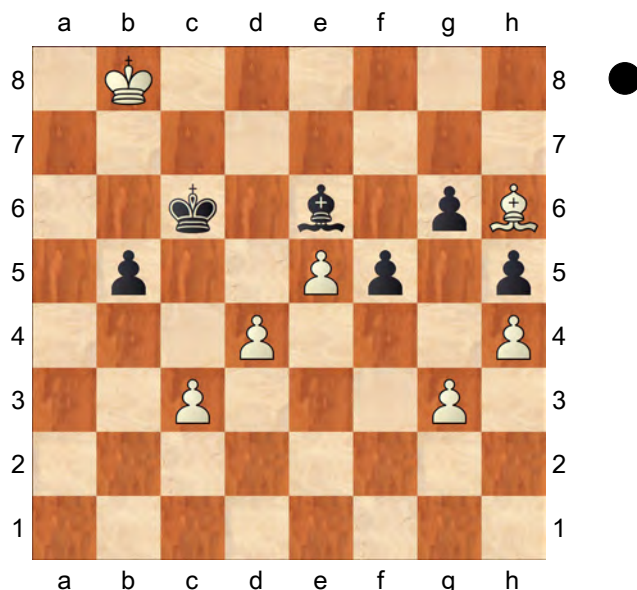
Karjakin has made progress by getting his king to b8, but the passage via c8 or c7 is closed for now. Again, it seems like the position is a dead draw as black can move his bishop to d7 and e6. However, white has one more motive left – it is the d4-d5 break. Karjakin realizes

that, but maneuvers with his bishop first:

77.Bg5

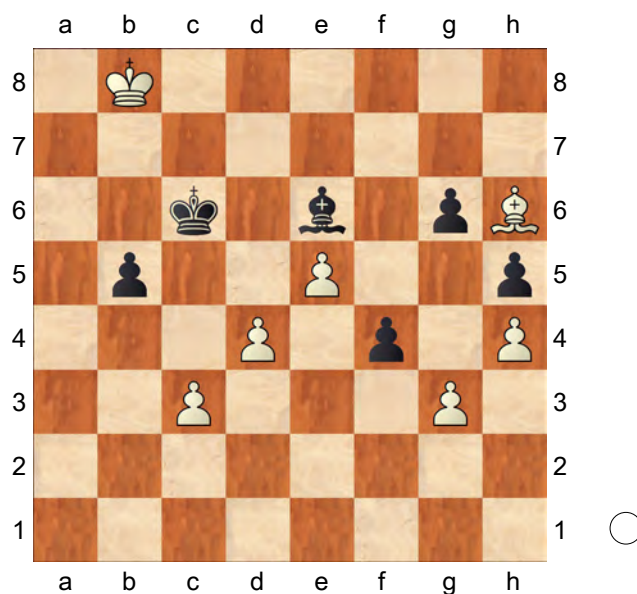
[The problem is that the immediate 77.d5+ Kxd5 78.Kc7 does not work due to Ke6=]

77...Be6 78.Bh6

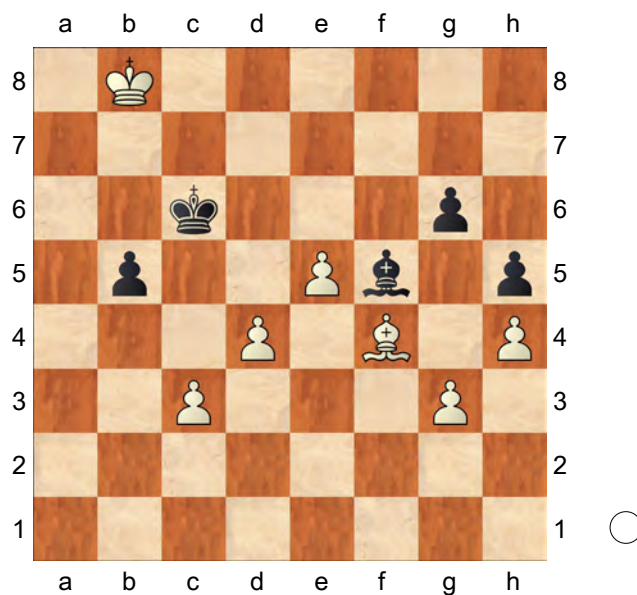


Bd7? It is very easy to lose focus when such unassuming maneuvering is taking place. But Karjakin's last two moves were not haphazard. He realized that the position after the move 76 (see diagram) was a position of mutual zugzwang, so he wanted to waste a move with his bishop in order to get Svidler to move in the same position. Had Svidler realized that,

[he would have played: 78...f4!!

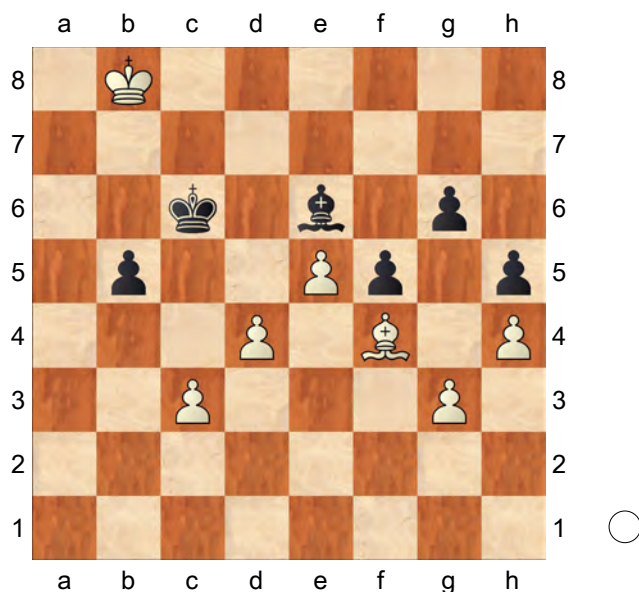


- a pawn sacrifice with the aim to get more squares for the bishop on the critical h3-c8 diagonal. Whichever way white takes, he gets no benefit from having two extra pawns - black blocks them either way. 79.Bxf4 (79.gxf4 Bf5 80.d5+ Kxd5 81.Kc7 Ke6=) 79...Bf5



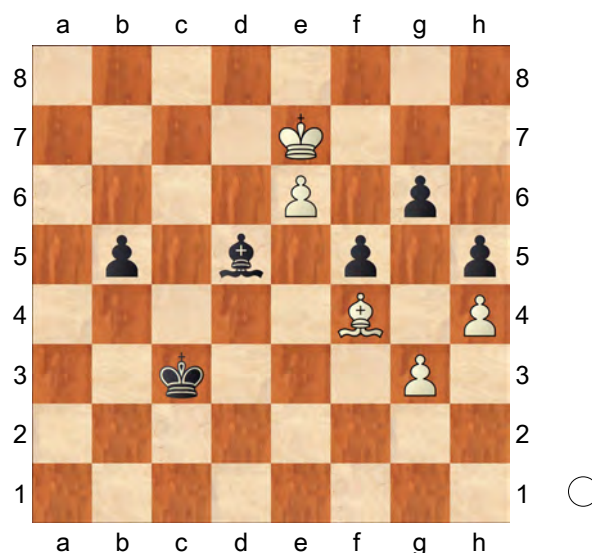
White gets nothing by sacrificing d-pawn now, so he has one more idea left – to bring his king to the kingside via f4. Let us see what happens then:
 80.Ka7 Be6 81.Ka6 Bd5 82.Ka5 Be6 83.Kb4 Bd5 84.Ka3 Be6 85.Kb2 Bc4 86.Kc2 Bd5 87.Bc1 Kd7 88.Kd2 Ke6 89.Ke3 and now black can block the passage with his king: Kf5=]

79.Bf4 If you look carefully, you will realize that this position is the same as the one after 76...Bd7, only with black to move this time around. It might seem like there is no difference as black can keep the blockade with **Be6**

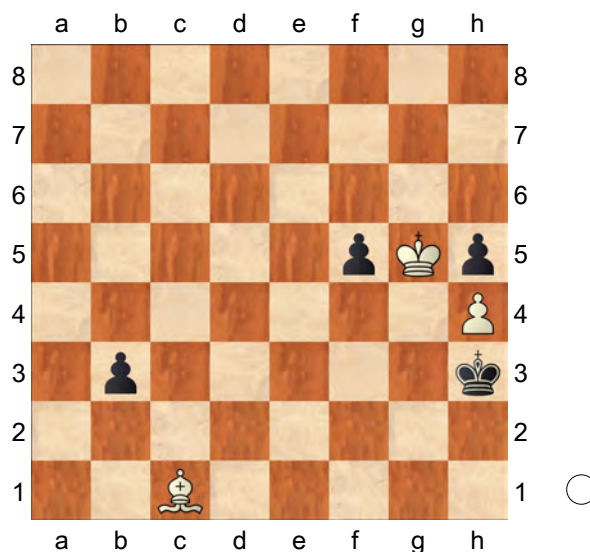


but here comes the wonderful point:
80.d5+!! A study-like motive. One of the black's pieces will be deflected from critical squares c7 or c8, allowing white king to get closer to the weak g6 pawn.
Bxd5

[The more active alternative 80...Kxd5 is no better. 81.Kc7 Kc5 82.Kd8 Kc4 83.Ke7 Bd5 84.e6 Kxc3



A) 85.Kd6? looks tempting, but in fact, wastes an important tempo
 Kd4 86.e7 Bf7 87.Kd7 Ke4 88.e8Q+ Bxe8+ 89.Kxe8 b4 90.Kf7 b3 91.Bc1 Kf3 92.Kxg6 Kxg3 93.Kg5 Kh3



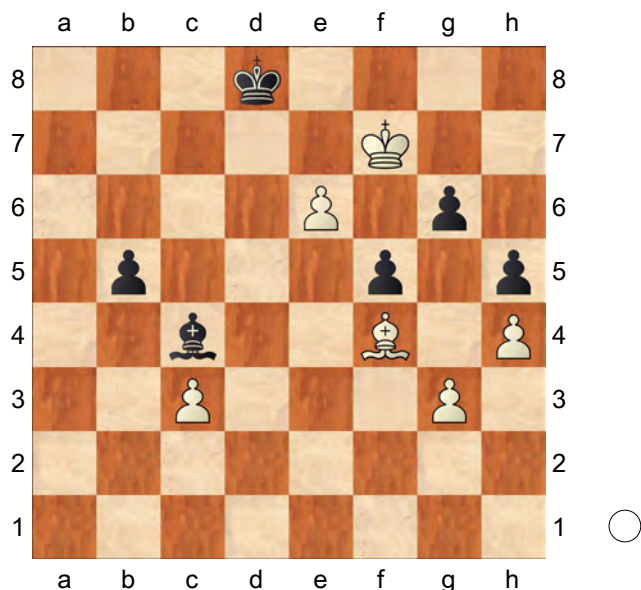
and white can not keep his h4 pawn alive. 94.Bb2 (94.Kxh5?? even loses to f4+-+ etc.) 94...f4 95.Kxf4 Kxh4=;

B) 85.Kd7! The king has to stay close to the promotion square e8. b4 86.e7 Bc4 87.e8Q Bb5+ 88.Ke7 Bxe8 89.Kxe8 b3 90.Be5+ Kc2 91.Kf7+- and white king eventually picks up all black pawns.]

81.Kc8 Bb3 82.Kd8 Bc4 83.Ke7 Bb3

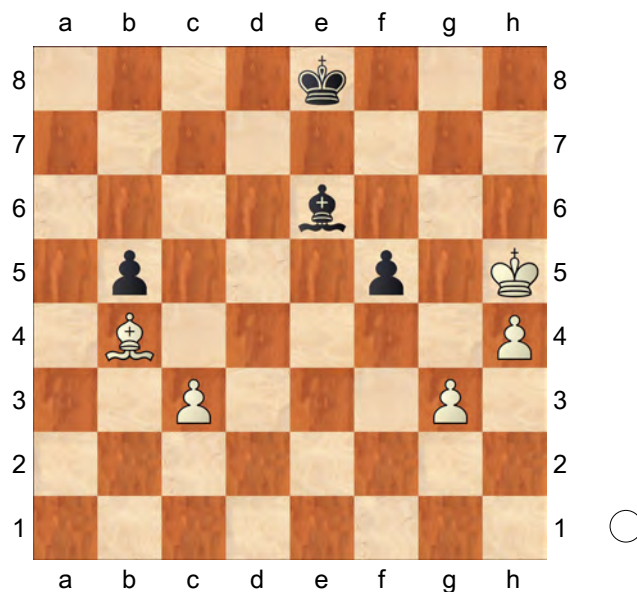
[Somewhat more stubborn was

83...Kc7 84.e6+ Kc8 85.Kf7 Kd8



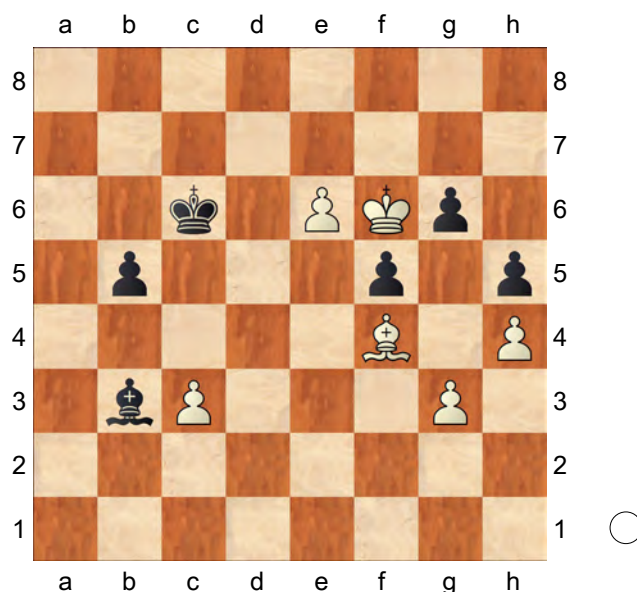
setting up the last trap for white.

86.Bd6! White needs to prevent black king from reaching f8 before he takes on g6. (Black achieves a positional draw after **86.Kxg6? Bxe6 87.Kxh5 Ke7 88.Kg6 Kf8!** now Kg7 is not possible any more. **89.h5 Bf7+ 90.Kg5 Kg8=**) **86...Bb3 87.Bb4 Bc4 88.Kxg6 Bxe6 89.Kxh5 Ke8**



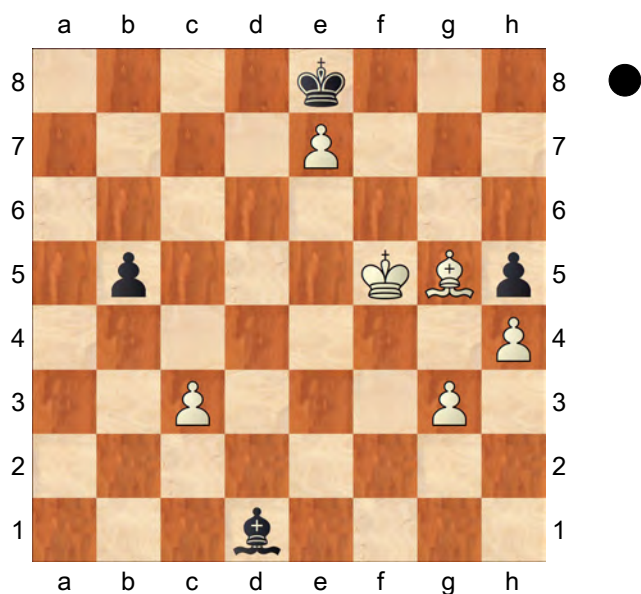
90.Kg6+-]

84.e6 Bc4 85.Kf6 Bb3



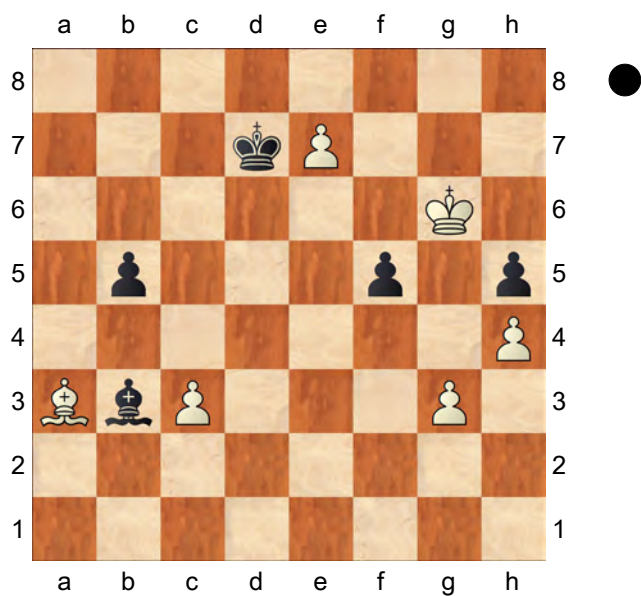
86.Bc1! The final touch. Of course Karjakin will not mess up the advantage he has carefully built up with one hasty move.

[The last way to go wrong was **86.e7? Kd7 87.Bg5 Ke8 88.Kxg6 Bd1 89.Kxf5**



Be2= when two extra pawns are of no use to white as black holds the blockade.]

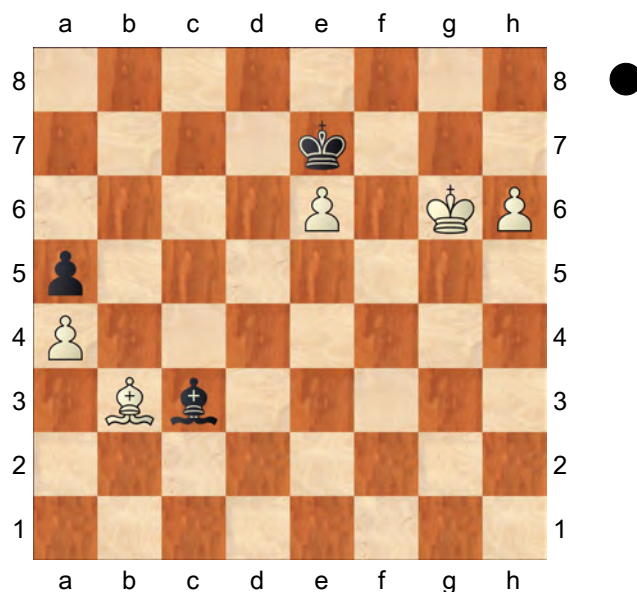
86...Bc4 87.Ba3 This was the point. White wants to play e6–e7 when the bishop supports the pawn. This way he wins the decisive tempo. **Bb3 88.e7 Kd7 89.Kxg6**



and here Svidler resigned in the view of **Bd1**

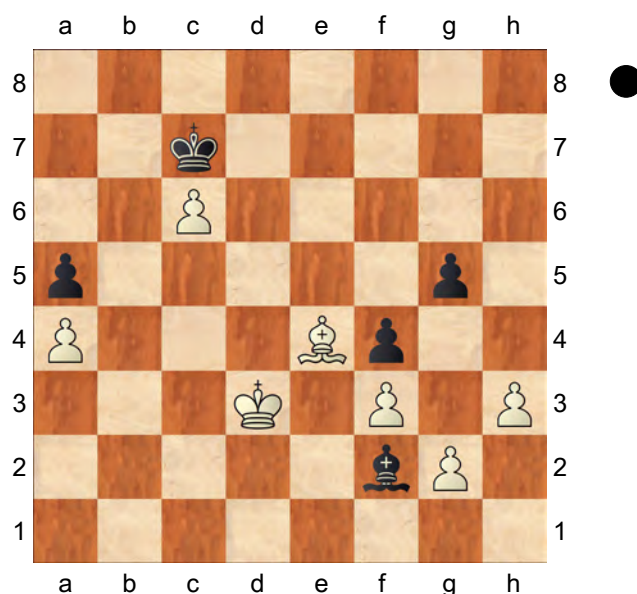
[or 89...Ke8 90.Kxh5 Kf7 91.Kg5+-]
90.Kf7 Bb3+ 91.Kf8+-
1-0

Exercise 1

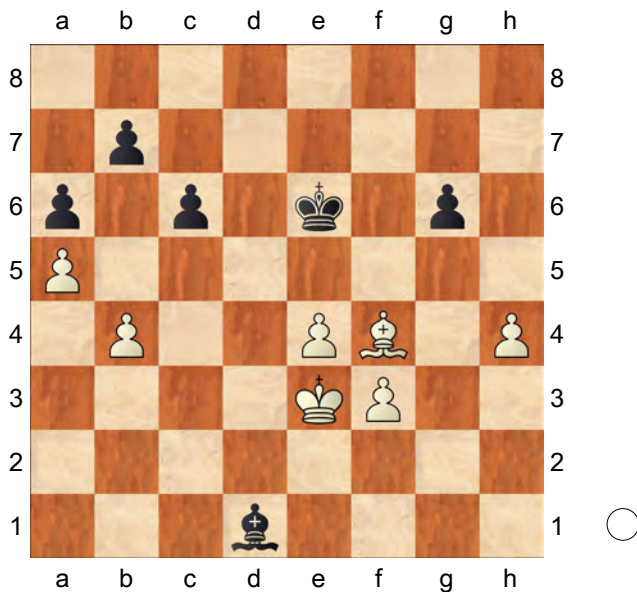


At the end, you might want to try to solve some practice exercises:
Black to move and draw.

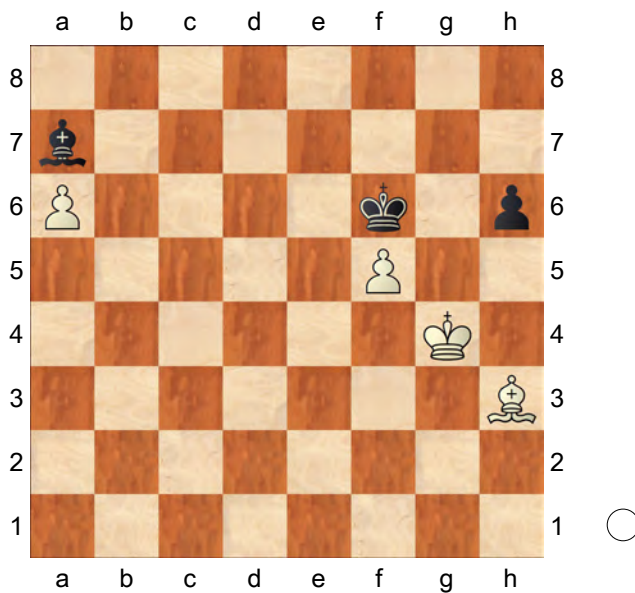
Exercise 2



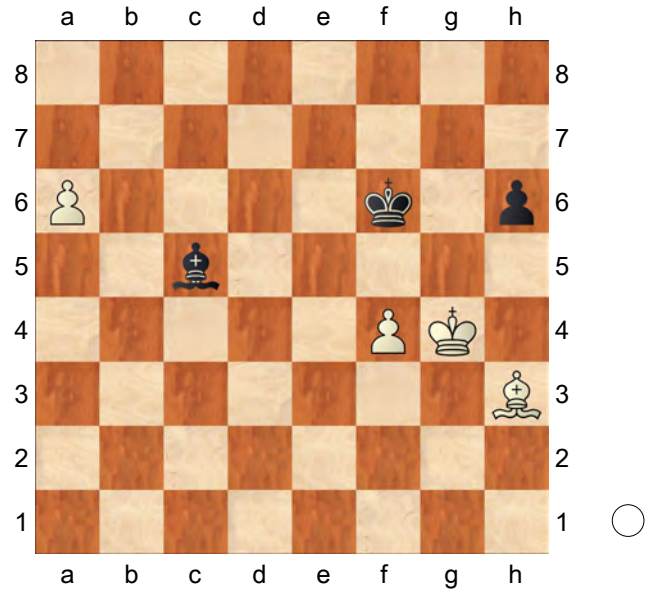
White to move and win.

Exercise 3

How did Smyslov (white) bring the full point home?

Exercise 4

In the game Aronian – Bacrot, 2005. Black resigned in this position, not realizing that it is drawn! How does black make a draw after 1.Kf4?

Exercise 5

In the same game, Aronian played 1.f5. However, what would have happened if he had played 1.Kf3 instead? Could black draw the game?

Benoni Strategy - Piece Play



GM Mihail Marin

In the previous articles we have mainly focused on both sides' pawn play. While pieces were also an important part of the process, they mainly acted in accordance with the concrete requirements of the structural modifications. Time has come to talk about the optimal piece trajectories in static positions, where pawns offer only the immobile background for piece play. In the initial phase of the game, Black has an almost chronic lack of space, meaning that he needs acting with care when developing. The main conflict is between the minor pieces (with the exception of the fianchetto bishop, which has its independent "life"). As in other openings with a white pawn on d5 and a black one on d6 the key square is d7. In principle the most solid development involves ...Nbd7 but this leaves the c8-bishop at least temporarily passive. Alternatively Black can play ...Na6, leaving the h3-c8 diagonal open, but after a later ...Nc7 the

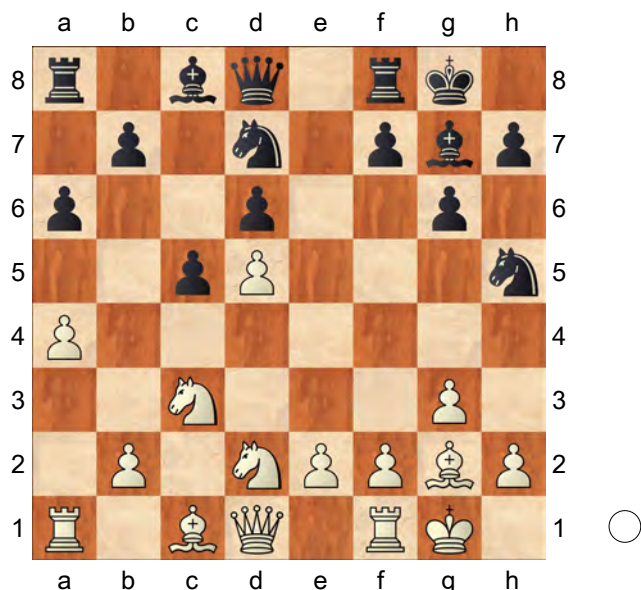
knight does not always have an easy life. We witnessed a favorable situation in the game Beliavsky-Portisch from a previous article, but such operations as ...bxa4 followed by ...Nb5 are not always available. ***The conclusion is that for Black it would be best to exchange one of his minor pieces, most typically with ...Bg4xf3 or ...Ng4 and Ne5 (any of them). But as we will see below, sometimes it is possible to use concrete details of the position to open horizons for all pieces. In principle White has it simpler as he enjoys considerable space advantage. But a closer look reveals some conflict between his minor pieces, too. The e4-pawn is one of Black's main targets, needing permanent defense. An early f2-f3 implies developing with Nge2, but this causes some problems with the f1-bishop. If Bd3 and Nge2, ...Ne5 may be molesting for instance. Optimally, White would play Nh3-f2, but if Black is accurate enough he would keep the h3-c8 diagonal open until White commits his knight to e2. ***Defending e4 with f2-f3 is not the only solution, of course. White frequently plays Nf3-d2, but this is likely to delay the queenside development by obstructing the c1-bishop. The dream scenario would be Bf4 followed by Nd2, but Black can usually organize his pressure on e4 by one move earlier than White develops his bishop. After clarifying all these abstract aspects we will start examining things more concretely. Since we have mentioned Nd2, it is worth saying that White's dream is stabilizing the knight on c4 (usually with a4-a5). This would paralyze Black's queenside and keep d6

under permanent pressure. As a general observation, piece pressure usually is good enough for helping one of the players stabilizing the position to his favor, but after obtaining an advantage he will most likely have to resort to pawn breaks to make progress. And yet, in the first example, White managed to carry out this plan in pure form, without the contribution of pawns nor allowing Black any shadow of counterplay. But if we understand the game deeper, Black himself weakened his position, fearing the slow and massive kingside pawn attack.

□ **Nikolic, Predrag** 2565
 ■ **De Firmian, Nick E** 2520
 Hoogovens Wijk aan Zee (5) 22.01.1986

**1.d4 Nf6 2.c4 e6 3.Nf3 c5 4.d5 exd5
 5.cxd5 d6 6.Nc3 g6 7.g3 Bg7 8.Bg2
 0-0 9.0-0 Nbd7 10.Nd2 a6 11.a4**

The fianchetto system may look less threatening than those implying e2-e4, but since there is no pressure on the central pawn White enjoys higher freedom for his knights. Moreover, as we will soon see, he can use the e4-square for his pieces! **Nh5?!**



an over-optimistic move. Black hopes to obtain kingside attacking chances with ... f7-f5-f4, but completely neglects the fight for the critical squares since the knight is not doing much on the edge of the board yet.

12.Nce4! Very logical thinking. The threat on d6 (which in case of 12...Qc7 or 12...Qe7 would become decisive after 13.Nc4) forces the following exchange, turning the reserve knight into a dominating piece on c4.

Ndf6 Relatively best.

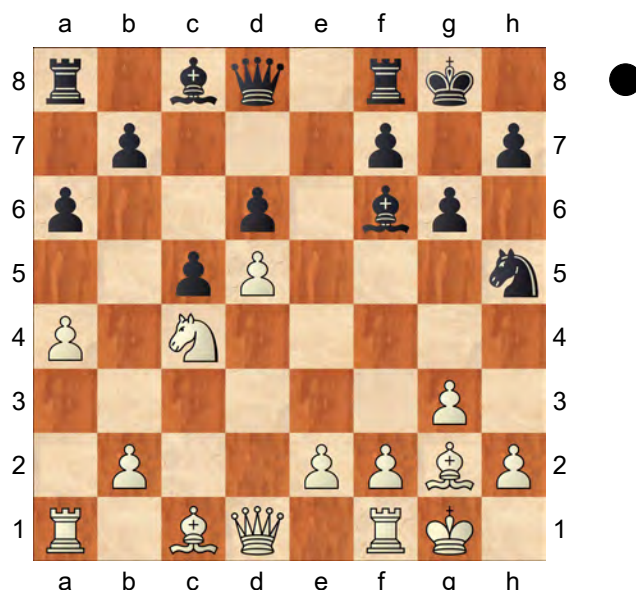
[12...Ne5 13.f4 Ng4 14.Nc4+- dooms the d6-pawn anyway.]

[12...Nb6 allows a favourable structural modification: 13.a5 Nxd5 14.Nc4 Be6 15.Nexd6 The central pawns are gone, but the c4-knight's domination is unchallenged on the chronically weakened black queenside.]

13.Nxf6+ Bxf6

[Black is not in time exchanging the c4-knight after 13...Nxf6 14.Nc4 14...Nd7 is impossible and White threatens Bf4. Ng4 15.Bf4 attacks d6 and prepares to exchange the black knight if necessary.]

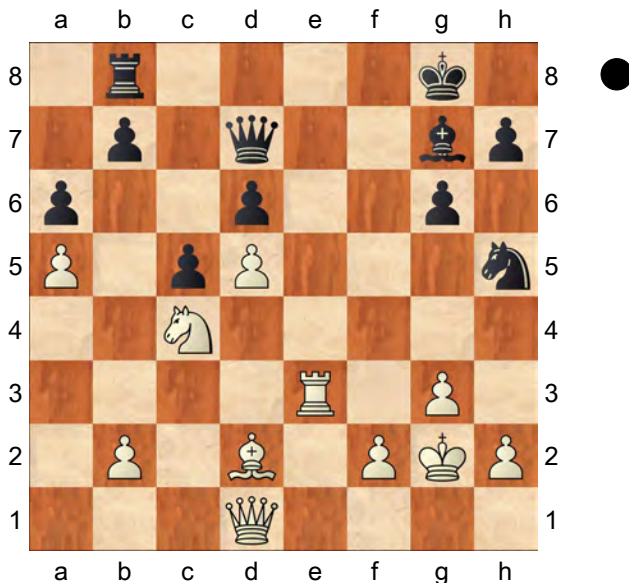
14.Nc4±



This is a dream position for White (in particular for his knight). Black has no queenside play and is tied up to the defense of the d6-pawn. The edged knight cannot come into play easily. **Bd4 15.e3 Bg7 16.e4 Re8 17.Bd2** Preparing either Bc3 to neutralize the g7-bishop or b2-b4 (after removing the rook from a1). **Rb8**

[17...b6 avoids the queenside blockade, but Black cannot make the threat ... b6-b5 real as this would allow Na5 followed by Nc6. In the meanwhile, White can start making kingside progress: 18.Re1 Defending the e4-pawn in advance in order to prepare the following operation. Rb8 19.g4 Nf6 20.h3 Soon followed by Bf4 with a crushing domination.]

18.a5 f5 In principle Black does everything logically, but the next series of gradual exchanges does not solve the main problem, the huge difference between the knights' activity. **19.exf5 Bxf5 20.Ra3 Be4 21.Re1 Bxg2 22.Kxg2 Qd7 23.Rae3 Rxe3 24.Rxe3**



Bd4?! Just losing a pawn without creating any counterplay.

25.Re6 The rest is pure agony. **Ng7**

26.Rxd6 Qf5 27.Ne3

[27.Be3!?± Ne8 28.g4! Forcing the queen to release the pressure on d5. Qf7 29.Re6 Nc7 30.Bxd4 cxd4 31.Re4 Qxd5 32.Qxd4]

27...Qe5 28.Rb6 Rf8 29.f4 Qe7

30.Qf3 Rd8 31.Nc4

[31.d6 Rxd6 32.Rxb7 Qe8 33.Nc4+-]

31...Rd7

[31...Nf5 32.Bc3+-]

32.Bc3 Nf5 33.Re6 Qd8 34.Nb6 Rd6

35.Qe4 Kf7 36.Rxd6 Qxd6 37.Nc4

The knight returns for the third and last time to the dream square, unblocking the extra pawn. **Qf6 38.Bxd4 Qxd4 39.Qxd4 cxd4 40.Kf3** The d4-pawn will soon be lost.

1-0

□ **Kasparov, Garry**

2595

■ **Suba, Mihai**

2430

Luzern ol (Men) (12)

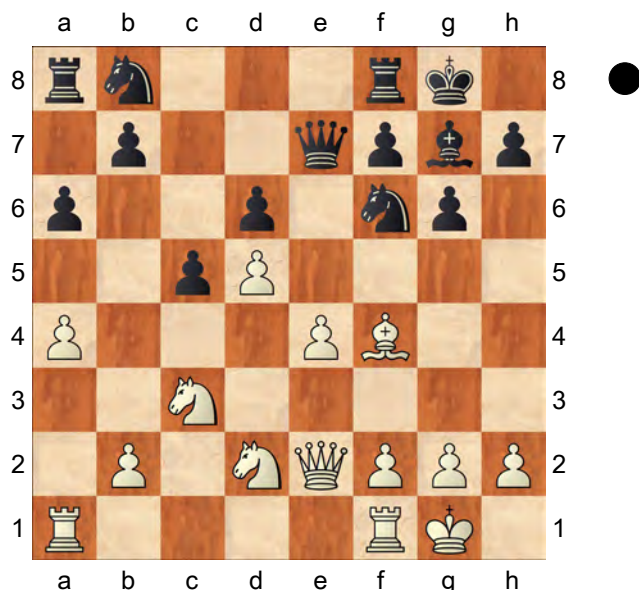
12.11.1982

The next example featuring the same theme is more complex, as Black's counterplay seemed to be more effective. But analysis shows this is more of an optical illusion. **1.d4 Nf6 2.c4 e6 3.Nf3 c5 4.d5 exd5 5.cxd5 d6 6.Nc3 g6 7.Bf4 a6 8.a4 Bg7 9.e4 Bg4 10.Be2 0-0 11.0-0 Qe7?!]**

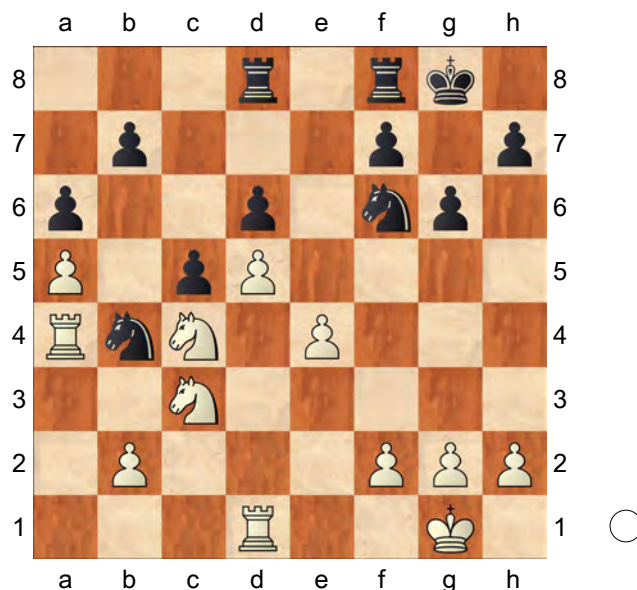
[A decade later Suba confessed me that this was a "lapsus manus". He actually intended playing 11...Bxf3 12.Bxf3 Qe7, which is examined in the first theoretical database, but carelessly played the second move of

the sequence.]

12.Nd2 Bxe2 13.Qxe2



more concretely, to the loss of a pawn after 22.Nxe5 dxe5 23.Rc4 Nd7 24.Na4 Rc8 25.Rdc1±]



As mentioned above, this is an optimal situation for White. The knights are optimally placed, over defending e4 and keeping the possibility of Nc4, while the bishop is already developed. **Nh5 14.Be3 Nd7 15.a5!** Preparing the optimal queenside structure. **Bd4!?** Since d6 and c5 are blocked on dark squares it makes sense exchanging the bishops. But once again the following exchanges do not solve the main problem, regarding the difference between the knights' careers. **16.Ra4! Qf6 17.Qd3! Ne5 18.Bxd4 Nxd3 19.Bxf6 Nxf6 20.Nc4 Rad8 21.Rd1** Play has calmed down leaving White in control as there is no way of exchanging the c4-knight under favorable circumstances. **Nb4**

[As pointed out by Kasparov, Black needs preventing b2-b4. If 21...Nf4? 22.g3 N4h5 23.b4!±]

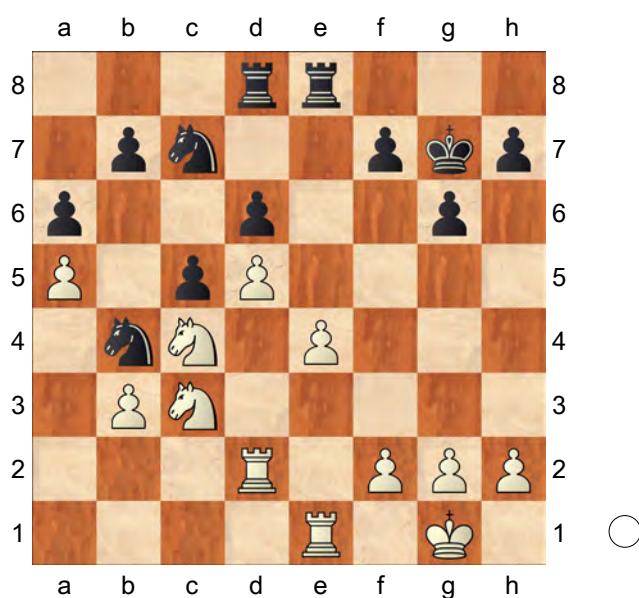
[I would add that 21...Ne5? leads to a strategic disaster and,

22.Rd2! The knight stands beautifully on b4, but it cannot help creating any form of counterplay. The last move completely restricts its mobility, preventing ...Nc2-d4 which could cause some unnecessary complications. **Ne8** As an experienced Benoni player Suba immediately spotted an optically favorable square on b5 for the reserve knight and he immediately starts a typical maneuver. **23.Ra1 Nc7 24.Re1 Kg7**

[Kasparov recommends 24...Nb5! 25.Nxb5 (ACTually 25.e5 dxe5 26.Rxe5± is also very strong.) 25...axb5 26.Na3 Ra8 27.Nxb5 Rfd8 28.Ra1 b6 29.f3 Rxa5 30.Rxa5 bxa5 31.b3!± Indeed, in this line Black can more or less survive after Kf8 32.Na3 Ra8 33.Nc4 Ke7 but stronger is 31.Na3!± followed by Nc4.]

25.b3

[Too "solid". The logical way of using the perfect knight's placement was starting pawn play in the center: 25.f4 Nb5 (25...Rfe8 does not prevent the central break: 26.e5 dxe5 27.d6 planning fxe5. The point is that exf4 28.dxc7 Rxe1+ 29.Kf2+- wins a piece.) 26.e5 with a crushing advantage.]

25...Rfe8

26.g4! Black's only source of counterplay is ...f7-f5 and Kasparov immediately takes measures against it.

Rd7

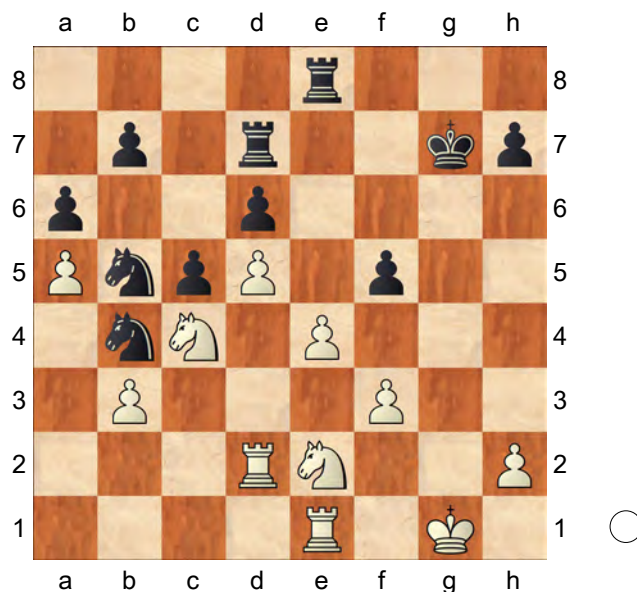
[If 26...f5?! 27.gxf5 gxf5 28.f3! followed by Ne3± and the invasion of the f5-square (Kasparov).]

27.f3 Nb5 Both black knights have occupied stable and relatively advanced squares, but they are rather isolated from the main theater of operations.

28.Ne2!± Restricting the enemy knight in a similar way as Rd2 did earlier with its colleague. No access to d4 today, sorry. **f5?!** Weakening the kingside and

offering White a dangerous attack against which the knights cannot provide much help.

[28...Nd4? 29.Nxd4 cxd4 30.Ra1! traps the knight, for instance f5 31.Ra4 fxe4 32.fxe4!+- (Kasparov). ***Black should have stayed passive, leaving White with the task of finding the best way of increasing his kingside pressure and space advantage.]

29.gxf5 gxf5

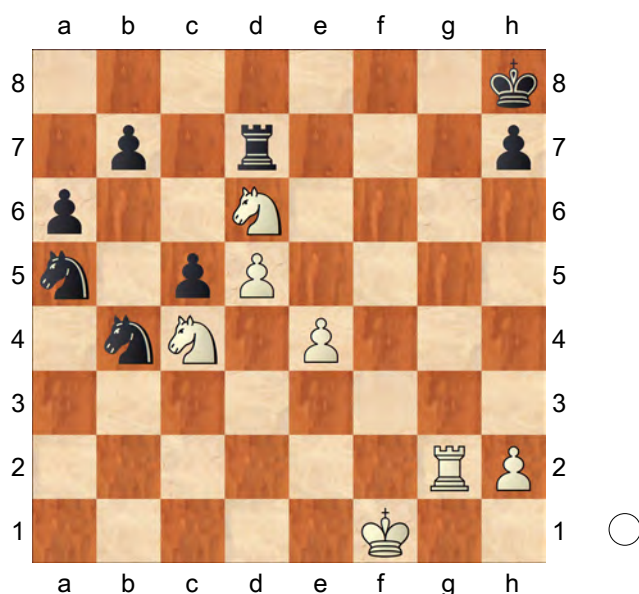
Black seems having obtained certain counterplay but the next move shatters this illusion. **30.Ng3!** Speaking about knight trajectories, there are many cases when the weakness on f5 is as inviting as now. **fxe4**

[Suba might have overlooked that 30...Nd4 is refuted by 31.Rxd4! cxd4 32.Nxd6!+- (Kasparov).]

31.fxe4 Kh8 32.Rf1! Nd4 33.Rg2

White slowly prepares his attack, without caring about the b3-pawn. For practical purposes he will be two knights up on the kingside. **Nxb3 34.Nf5 Rf8**

35.Nfxd6 Rxf1+ 36.Kxf1 Nxa5

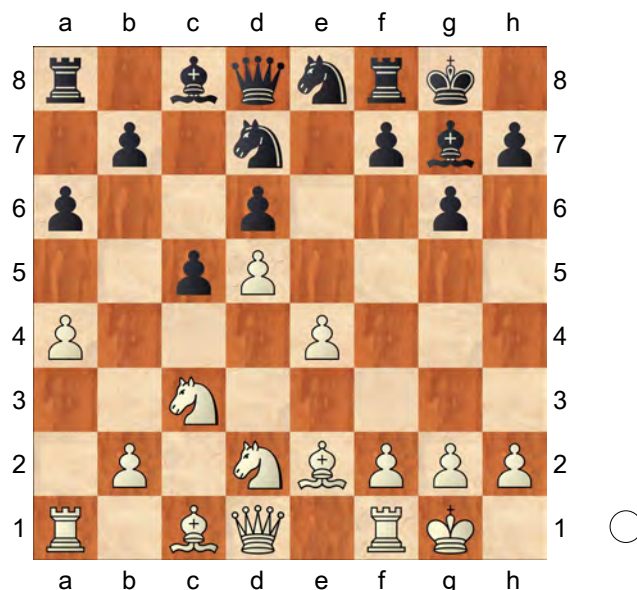


37.Ne5!+- The final touch, even though there were more than one ways to use the force of the central pawns. **Rg7** Obviously forced. **38.Nef7+ Kg8** **39.Nh6+ Kf8 40.Rf2+ Ke7 41.Nhf5+ Kd7 42.Nxb7!** Black could have already resigned, but he played a few more moves by inertia. **Nd3 43.Nxa5! Nxf2 44.Kxf2 Rg4 45.Kf3 Rg1 46.e5 Rf1+ 47.Ke4 Re1+ 48.Kf4 1-0**

Marin, Mihail **2490**
 Stefanov, Parik **2500**
 Romania 45/100 1988

So far we have seen examples where Black was completely helpless against the blockading plan. But the next old game of mine features a more favorable version of the queenside play. **1.d4 Nf6 2.c4 c5 3.d5 e6 4.Nc3 exd5 5.cxd5**

d6 6.Nf3 g6 7.Nd2 Nbd7 8.e4 Bg7 9.Be2 0-0 10.0-0 a6 11.a4 Ne8!?

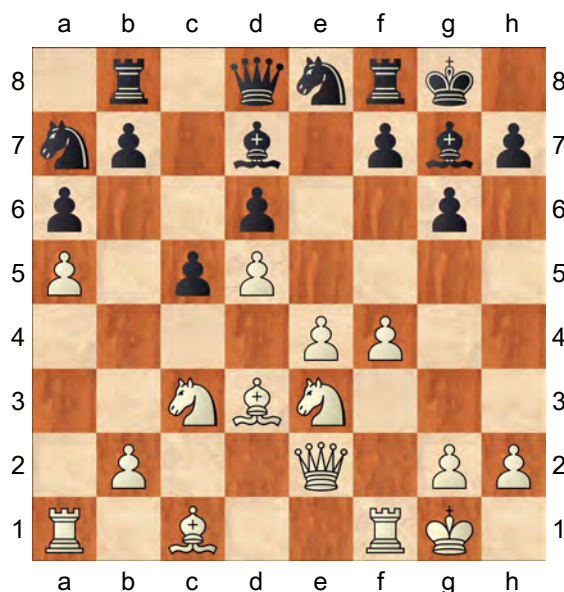


A rare move but quite typical for my opponent. Black safely defends the chronic weakness and is ready to occupy the blocking d6-square should White break with e4-e5. **12.Nc4 Nb6!?** As a general rule, Black should offer the knight exchange immediately after Nc4. **13.Ne3 Bd7** For the time being Black's play looks mysterious but a few moves later everything will acquire logical coherence. **14.Bd3 Rb8 15.f4**

[I did not want to define the queenside situation before Black threatens ...b7-b5. The main alternative was 15.a5 Nc8 16.Nc4 when Na7?! 17.Bf4 Nb5 18.Qd2 leaves White in control. But 16... f5 would have offered Black reasonable counterplay.]

15...Nc8! Black's contorted play finally gets some contours. The knight retreats to clear the path for the b-pawn and after the more or less forced answer it will embark a glorious career. **16.a5 Na7**

17.Qe2



Trying to delay the programmed ...Nb5.
Qe7

[Actually Black did not need preparing his plan as he could play 17...Nb5! immediately: 18.Nxb5?! axb5 19.Bxb5 Bxb5 20.Qxb5 Bd4 21.Kh1 Nf6 22.Qd3 Re8 \bar{r} retrieving the pawn with very pleasant play.]

18.Nc4 Nb5 19.Be3 Nd4!

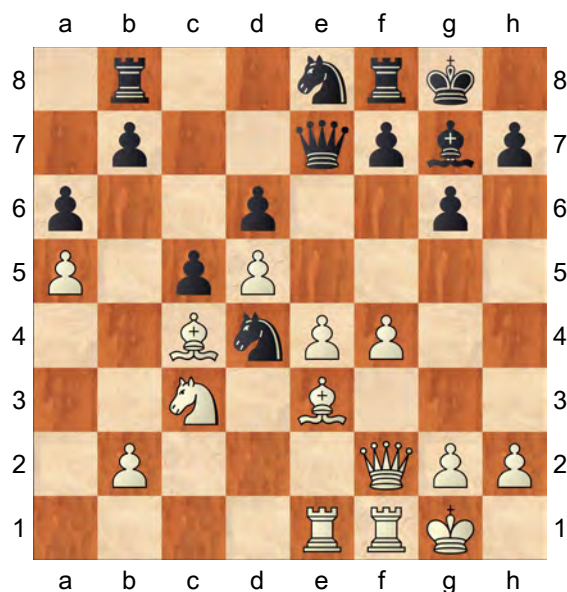
[The knight occupies the most active available square, clearing the path for his bishop. This is a fortunate case when there is no superfluous minor piece, as all of them have good squares available or fulfill useful defensive jobs (the e8-knight for instance). It would have been unwise accepting the pawn sacrifice: 19...Nxc3?! 20.bxc3 Bxc3?! 21.Rac1 Bg7 (21...Bb4 22.f5 \pm leaves the kingside poorly defended.; 21...Bd4 22.Bxd4 cxd4 23.Qb2 \pm retrieves the pawn with huge space advantage.) 22.e5 \pm Black center is about to collapse as a result of the combined

pressure exerted by the minor pieces and the central pawns. Due to the time wasted on pawn grabbing, Black is not in time to exchange the active knight: Bb5 23.Nxd6! Nxd6 24.Bxc5+–]

20.Qf2 Bb5 21.Rae1

[I could have admitted that I had no advantage and just hold the position with, say, 21.h3, keeping a5 defended and a6 under pressure so as to prevent ...Bxc4 followed by ...b7–b5. ***But I remember I was very optimistic and full of energy, which eventually paid off in the next phase of the game, even though Black is doing fine objectively.]

21...Bxc4 22.Bxc4



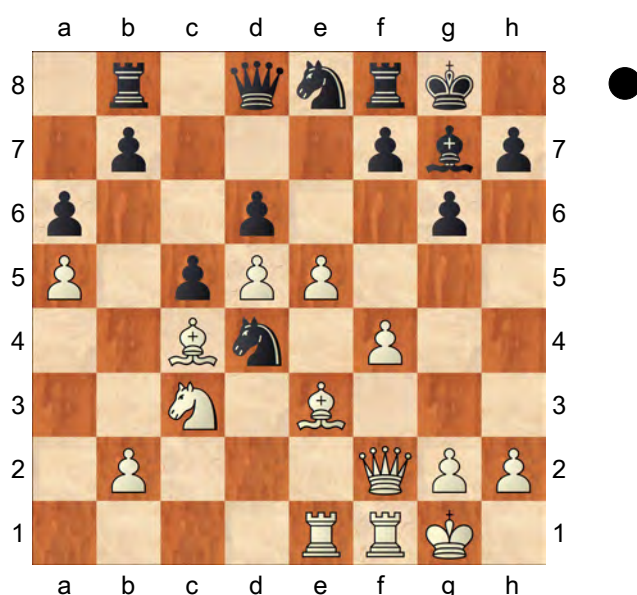
Qd8 With all the pieces well placed, Black calmly prepares to grab the essential a5-pawn, after which White's blockade would collapse.

[But the simpler 22...b5 was also possible. I published the game in the Chess Informant but one of my lines was flawed: 23.axb6 Rxb6 24.e5

dx e5 25.fxe5 Qxe5 26.Na4 Rf6
27.Bf4 I thought this to favor White,
missing the trick Nf3+! 28.Qxf3 Qd4+
29.Qe3 Qxc4 30.Nxc5 Rf5+
threatening ...Bd4 and winning the d5-
pawn soon.]

23.e5

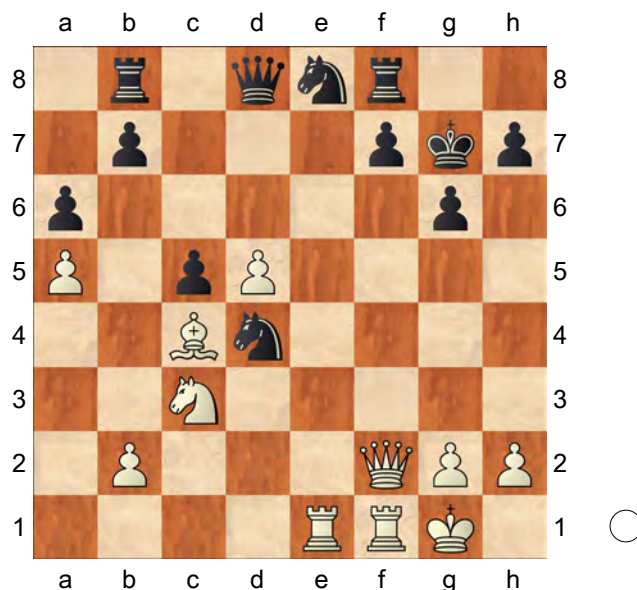
[There is no way back as after 23.Ra1
f5+ followed by ...Nf6 Black has a
dream position.]



23...dx e5?

[Black in vain clears space for White's
well-coordinated army. He should
have preferred the siple 23...Qxa5
White would have had nothing better
than 24.Kh1 (Two possible ghosts
that might have scared my opponent
were: 24.Bxd4 cxd4 25.Qxd4
when Black in fact has f6! 26.e6 f5
27.Qe3 Qb4 28.Qe2 Rc8
winning a pawn while keeping
everything under control on the
kingside or; 24.e6 when Black actually
has many good moves, for instance
Nc7 endangering the d5-pawn.)

24...Qb4 25.Ba2 with compensation
for the pawn but not more than that.]
**24.fxe5 Bxe5 25.Bh6 Bg7 26.Bxg7
Kxg7**



Black probably hoped to consolidate with
...Nd6, helped by the previous bishops'
exchange, but White's next move
develops the initiative: **27.b4!± b6**
28.Ne4 Nd6 29.bxc5 bxc5 30.Nxc5
N4f5 31.Bd3± There was nothing wrong
with taking the pawn at once but I
wanted to stay coordinated. **h5**

[31...Qxa5 32.g4 followed by Qd4+
and Nd7 kills.]
32.Nxa6 Ra8 33.Qb6+- White's extra
pawn is very dangerous and Black
cannot create effective counterplay. **Qg5**
34.Nc7 Rab8 35.Qc5 Rfc8 36.Bxf5
Nxf5 37.a6 Qd2 38.Rd1 Rxc7
39.Qxc7 Qe3+ 40.Kh1 Rb2 41.Qc1
Qe2 42.Qc3+

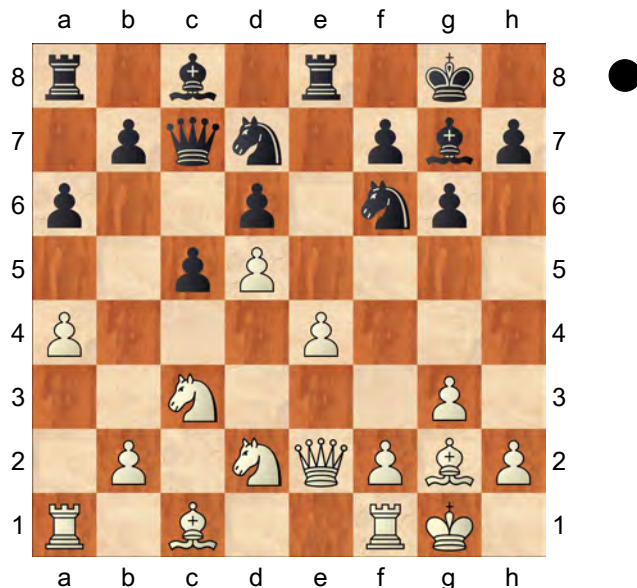
[Avoiding the trap 42.Qxb2+?? Qxb2
43.a7 Ne3 44.Rg1 Nxd1 45.a8Q
Nf2#]

42...Kh7 43.Qf3 Qxa6 44.d6 Nxd6
45.Qd5 Qe2 46.Rf6
1-0

Hort, Vlastimil
 Timman, Jan H
 Montreal (4)

2600
2625
 14.04.1979

Sometimes it makes sense playing ...
 Nb6 before Nc4, but then the black
 knight's stability is a delicate issue, in
 view of the threat a4–a5. **1.d4 Nf6 2.c4**
e6 3.g3 c5 4.d5 exd5 5.cxd5 d6
6.Nc3 g6 7.Bg2 Bg7 8.Nf3 0–0 9.0–0
Re8 10.Nd2 Nbd7 11.a4 a6 12.e4
Qc7 13.Qe2



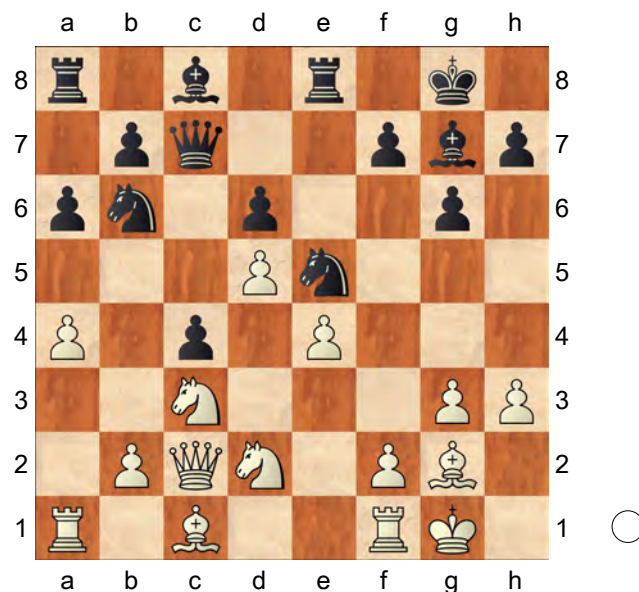
White has chosen a setup aiming at
 keeping the queenside under control.
 Black needs finding a plan before White
 completes his development. **Nb6!?**

[Gaining a tempo in view of the threat
 ...Nxd5. But there was nothing
 wrong with 13...Nxe4 14.Ndxe4 f5=
 of course.]

14.Qd3 Ng4 The other knight is
 approaching the important c4– and d3–
 squares. **15.h3**

[White obviously wanted to choose the
 right moment for a4–a5, but he
 obviously overlooked Black's main
 idea. 15.a5 was better although after
 Nd7 16.Qc2 b5 17.axb6 Nxb6
 the knight is back in business. In fact,
 the other knight would experience
 some problems after 18.h3]

15...Ne5 16.Qc2 c4



Black has prepared the invasion to d3,
 but the only open question remains
 whether he can keep c4 well defended.

17.Nd1

[Planning Ne3 and a4–a5. It was
 already too late to cause problems
 with 17.a5 for instance Nbd7 18.Nd1
 b5 19.axb6 Nxb6 with excellent
 queenside play.]

17...a5!! One of the most paradoxical
 pawn moves in the Benoni I have ever
 seen! Black ensures the knight's
 stability reckoning with the fact that the
 weakness on c4 will not be relevant after

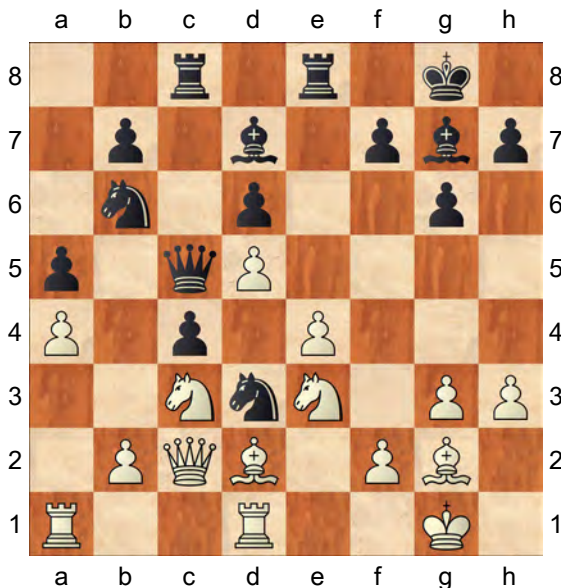
...Bd7.

[White might have hoped for something like 17...Nd3? 18.a5 Nb4? 19.axb6 Nxc2 20.bxc7 Nxa1 21.Nxc4 Re7 22.Nb6 Rxc7 23.Bf4 Ra7 24.Bxd6+-]

18.Ne3 Bd7 19.Rd1

[This has been criticized, but the recommended alternative does not work: 19.f4 Qc5 20.fxe5 Qxe3+ 21.Kh2 So far the old analysis. Qe2!! Black evacuates the queen from the exposed square, defends c4 and threatens ...Bxh3! Next, he will play ...Bxe5 with a crushing advantage.]

19...Qc5 20.Nb1 White admits his plan's fiasco and ties consolidating. Nd3 21.Nc3 Rac8 22.Bd2



Black has invaded the enemy territory and now broke the center with **f5!f**. As explained in the introduction, domination is best crowned by pawn breaks. **23.exf5 Bxf5**

[23...gxf5! followed by ...f5-f4 is even stronger.]

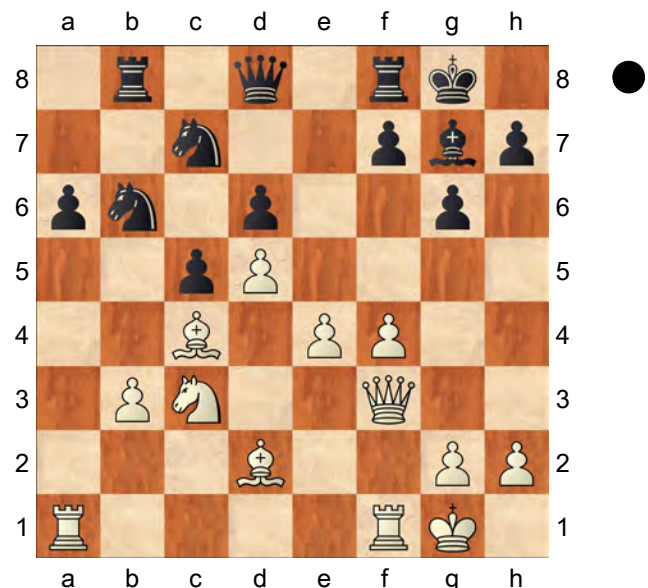
24.Rf1 Ne1? Based on a miscalculation. [Better was 24...Nb4 25.Qd1 Bd3]

25.Qd1 Nxd2 26.Kxg2?

[Missing his chance with 26.Nxf5! gxf5 27.Qf3! Defending the d5-pawn as the knight is trapped anyway. Bxc3 28.Bxc3 Qxd5 (28...Ne3?! 29.Qh5 may even cause troubles.) 29.Kxg2 Qxf3+ 30.Kxf3 Due to the incoherent Black structure and the strong bishop chances are balanced despite Black's extra pawn.]

26...Bd3 27.Re1 Rf8 Everything returned to the normal now and Black confidently converted his advantage into a win. **28.f4 Rce8 29.Kh2 g5 30.fxg5 Nd7 31.Ng2 Rxe1 32.Qxe1 Ne5 33.Kh1 Rf1+ 34.Qxf1 Bxf1 35.Rxf1 Nd3 36.Ne3 Qd4 37.Nf5 Nf2+ 38.Kg2 Qxd2 39.Rxf2 Qxg5 40.Ne4 Qd8 41.Nfxd6 Qd7 42.Nf5 Kh8 43.d6 Qe6 44.Nc3 Be5 45.Nb5 Qd5+ 46.Kh2 Qd3 47.Kg2 h5 48.Nc3 Bxd6 49.Rf3 Qd2+ 50.Rf2 Qd3 51.Rf3 Qd2+ 52.Rf2 1/2**

Mihalevski,Alexander 2443
 Marin,Mihail 2601
 06_30 Open de Andorra (9) 08.07.2001



White seems to be quite solid and Black's a-pawn is hanging. Is there a way for Black to take over the initiative? **19...Nb5!?** Spotting the hidden consequences of the weakness on c3.

20.Rxa6? Falling into the trap.

[20.Bxb5 axb5 21.Ra6 (21.Nxb5? Bxa1 22.Rxa1 Nxd5 23.Na7 Nb4 24.Bxb4 cxb4 25.Nc6 Qb6+-+) 21...b4 22.Na4 c4 22...]

20...Bd4+ 21.Kh1 Nxc4 22.bxc4 Nxc3-- Black simply wins a piece.

23.e5

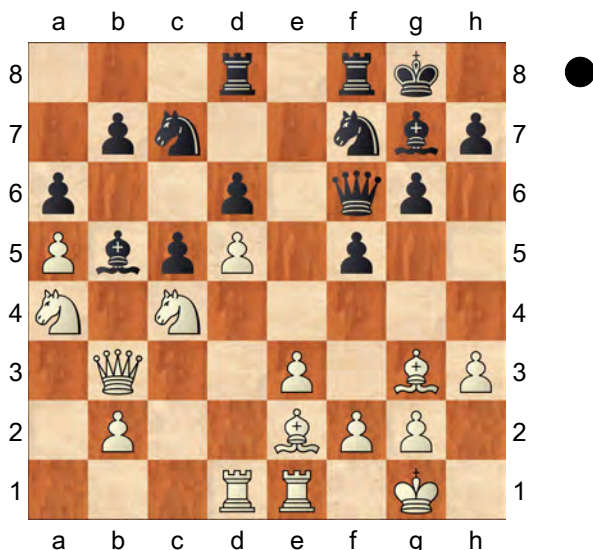
[Desperation. If 23.Bxc3 Rb3 24.Rc1 Bxc3 25.g3 there are a few ways of getting out of the pin. For instance Bd2 (25...Qc8 26.Raa1 Qh3 also wins.) 26.Qxb3 Bxc1 27.Qc3 Qe7 28.Qxc1 (28.e5 Qb7--+) 28...Qxe4+ 29.Kg1 Rb8 30.Ra1 Qd4+ 31.Kh1 Rb2--+]

23...Rb3

[23...dxe5 24.fxe5 Rb1!?--]

0-1

□ Parligras, Mircea Emilian 2650
 ■ Gashimov, Vugar 2757
 EU-chT (Men) 18th (9.2) 11.11.2011



White seems controlling the queenside rather well. Is there a way Black can question this impression? **22...Na8!?** Not all knights stand badly in the corner! This is the only way to fight for the b6-square and for opening the queenside in general. **23.Nc3 Bxc4 24.Bxc4 Rb8** Black plans ...b7-b5 followed by ...Rxb6 and ...Nc7. After fulfilling its initial job the knight will gladly return to the standard square. **25.Na4 Ne5 26.Bf1 Qd8** Suddenly White has problems defending a5. **27.Nb6 Nxb6 28.axb6?!**

[White would have maintained chances for equality after 28.Qxb6 Qxb6 29.axb6]

28...Qe7 Planning ...Nd7, ...Be5 and ...Qd8, eventually winning the pawn.

29.Bxe5 Qxe5 30.Rb1

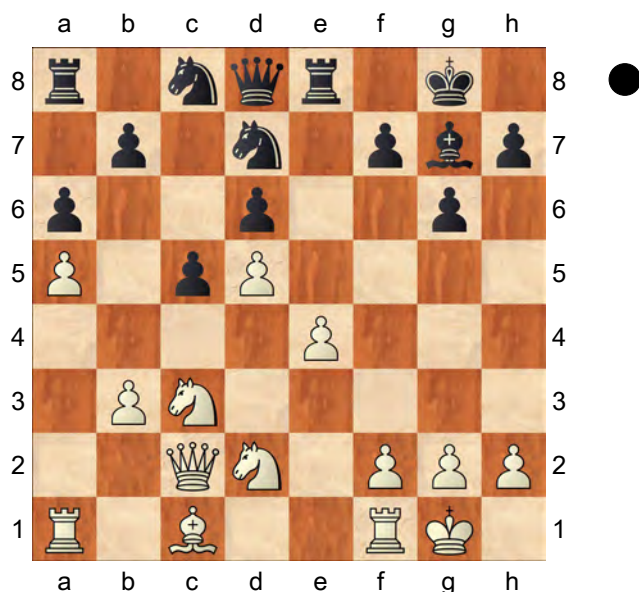
[White is not in time for securing the kingside with 30.f4 as his b2-pawn is hanging.]

30...f4! With opposite colored bishops the attack is practically decisive. **31.Qc4 Qg5 32.exf4 Rxf4 33.Re4 Bd4 34.Rxf4 Qxf4 35.Qe2 Rf8** Black won the f2-pawn and later the game.

0-1

□ Polugaevsky, Lev
 ■ Mecking, Henrique
 Candidates qf2 (3)

2620
 2635
 1977



White plans Bb2, Nc4, and Rae1 followed by the central pawns' attack. Your antidote? **17...Na7!** The knight's activity is the first emergency for Black.

[If 17...b5 18.axb6 Ncxb6 19.Bb2 he would be left without real counterplay for instance c4 20.b4!? Taking the pawn offers Black some compensation in view of the active knight after ...Nc5. Ne5 21.Nd1 Qc7 22.Ne3 Rec8 23.Bc3± White has consolidated and the b6-knight is passive while the a6-pawn is hanging.]

18.Bb2 Nb5 19.Nxb5

[With hindsight, the retreat 19.Ne2 may have been better, although Black's initiative would be beyond doubt after Bxb2 20.Qxb2 Qf6 leads to some sort of fabulous version for Black of the Kasparov-Suba game.]

19...Bxb2 20.Qxb2 axb5 21.Qc3
 [21.b4 does not spare problems either: c4 (Threatening ...Ne5-d3) 22.f4 Ra6 23.Qd4 b6 24.axb6 Qxb6 25.Qxb6 Rxb6 The hanging e4-pawn presents White from consolidating with Nb1-c3, turning the c-pawn into a terrible force.]

21...b4 22.Qg3 Nf6 23.Rfe1 Nh5 24.Qf3 Rxa5 25.Rxa5 Qxa5

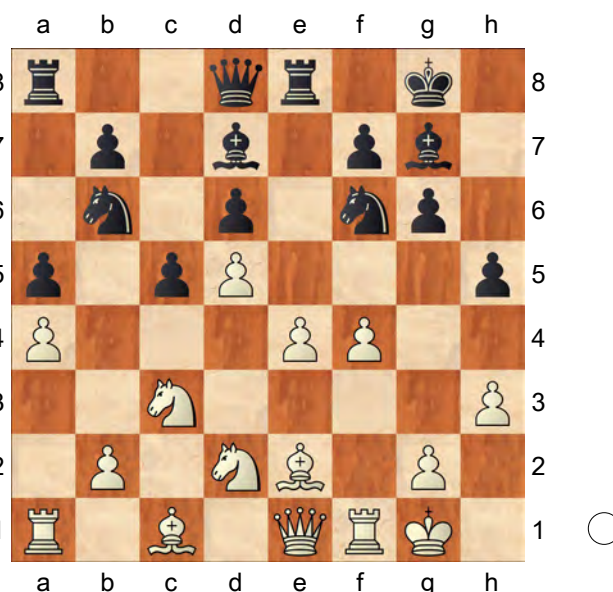
Black has won a pawn and has an antidote against the apparently strong next move. **26.g4 Qd8! 27.Re3 Nf6 28.Qf4 Qe7 29.Nc4 Rd8** White has no compensation for the pawn even though he managed to draw after adjournment.

1/2

□ Tregubov, Pavel V
 ■ Akopian, Vladimir
 EU-ch 12th Aix les Bains (10) 01.04.11

2598

2675



We are familiar with the queenside configuration after the game Hort-Timman. White's development is incomplete and it can be felt he is a bit hanging but he thought **15.Qg3** would offer attacking chances due to the

awkward position of the b6-knight. Is this right? **Nfxd5!** Actually the knights' pressure on d5 is real! **16.exd5 Bxc3 17.bxc3 Rxe2** White not only has lost a pawn, but his structure has been seriously damaged. His bishop will not be in time to create threats along the long diagonal. **18.f5 h4 19.Qd3 Qe8**

20.fxg6 fxg6 21.Nc4

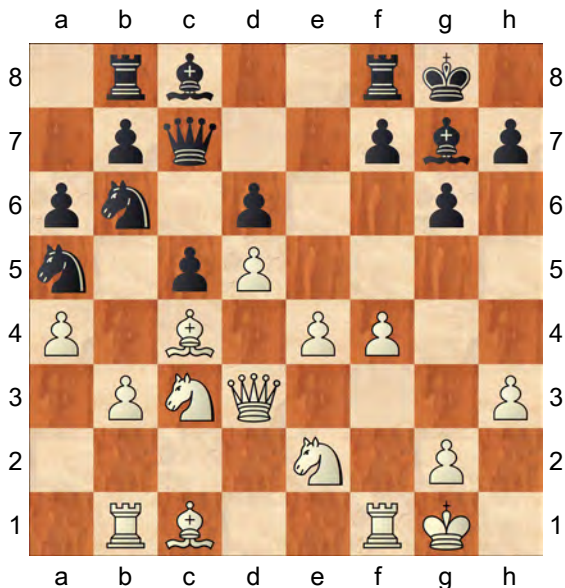
[21.Rb1 Re3! 22.Qc2 (22.Ne4 is safer, but Black has several ways of simplifying to a better ending with material advantage. *Rxd3 23.Nf6+ Kh8 24.Nxe8 Bxe8 25.Rxb6 Rxd5* 22...Bxh3! 23.Rxb6 (23.gxh3 Rg3+--) 23...Bxg2!--]

21...Nxc4 22.Qxc4 Re4 Black has a material advantage and the more active piece placement. **23.Qb3 Bxa4 24.Qb2 Bb5 25.c4 Bxc4 26.Bh6 Qe5 27.Qxb7 Bxd5**

[27...Bxd5 28.Qb1 Kh7 29.Bd2 Re2--]

0-1

□ **Kamenets,Anatolij** 2246
 ■ **Atanasov,Radislav** 2227
 Nikea op 18th (5) 23.08.2010



This was not ...Na5 King's Indian, but a genuine Benoni. The knight wandered all the way from f6 to a5 via g4-e5-c4. Black played **18...Bd7** Threatening to win the a4-pawn. Your answer?

[+++But Black's position in the featured diagram was excellent anyway. Instead of 18...Bd7 he should only have played 18...f5 19.Ng3 h5 with dangerous threats on light squares.]

19.Ra1? This was the careless game continuation, failing to stabilize the queenside.

[White should have started his kingside attack with 19.f5 for instance Be5 (But not 19...Naxc4? 20.bxc4 Nxa4 21.f6 Bh8 22.e5± burrying the h8-bishop alive.) 20.Bf4 Rfe8 (20...Bxf4 21.Nxf4 Naxc4 22.bxc4 Nxa4 23.Nxa4 Bxa4 24.fxg6 hxg6 25.Nh5!± offers White a strong attack since gxh5? 26.Qg3+ Kh7 27.Rf5 mates.) 21.Bxe5 Rxe5 22.Rf2

(Without bishops on board 22.Ra1 would be playable, too.) 22...Naxc4 23.bxc4 Nxa4 24.Nxa4 Bxa4 25.Nc3 Bd7 26.Qe3 with reasonable compensation for the pawn.]

19...Nxb3!

[Clearly overlooked by White, but actually 19...f5 was an equally convincing way of punishing White's refraining from the thematic f4-f5.]

20.Bxb3 c4 21.Bxc4 Qxc4 22.Rd1 Rfc8 With strong initiative to Black.

0-1