



DAVID
SMERDON

NEW IN CHESS

The
Complete
CHESS
SWINDLER

HOW TO SAVE POINTS
FROM LOST POSITIONS

The Complete Chess Swindler

David Smerdon

The Complete Chess Swindler

How to Save Points from Lost Positions

New In Chess 2020

To Leo,
Who constantly reminds me that there is always something else to discover, and new adventures to be had.

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Explanation of symbols

The chessboard with its coordinates:



□	White to move
■	Black to move
♔	King
♕	Queen
♖	Rook
♗	Bishop
♘	Knight
±	White stands slightly better
∓	Black stands slightly better
±±	White stands better
∓∓	Black stands better
+−	White has a decisive advantage
−+	Black has a decisive advantage
=	balanced position
!	good move
!!	excellent move
?	bad move
??	blunder
!?	interesting move
?!	dubious move

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Introduction

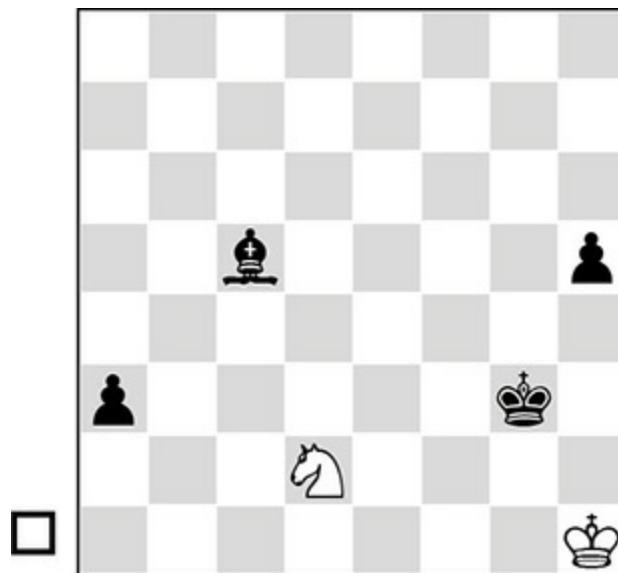
Chess is in the last resort a battle of wits, not an exercise in mathematics. Theory helps you; but you have to fight. Hence our contempt for the stupid word ‘swindle’ in chess. – C.J.S. Purdy

At the strong Tallinn tournament of 1971, the game between the grandmasters Furman and Smejkal was drawing to a close. White had already mentally given up and was simply going through the motions to conclude proceedings:

Semyon Furman

Jan Smejkal

Tallinn 1971

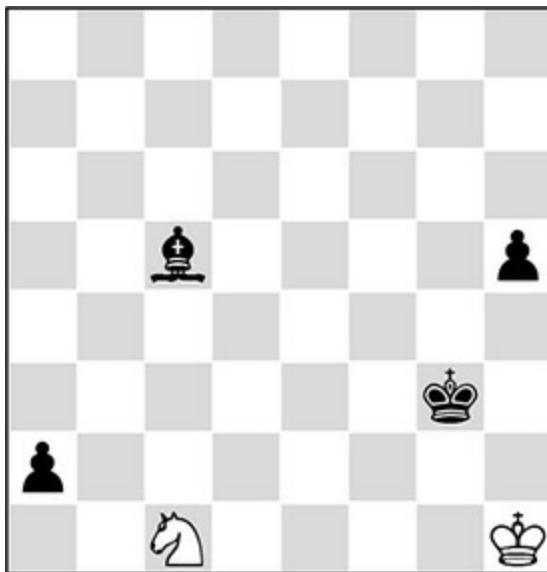


Position after 90...a3

91. ♜e4+ ♛f3 92. ♜xc5 a2 and Furman soon resigned. For most of the spectators, the finish was rather dull.

For most spectators, that is, except for one: Mikhail Tal. The former World Champion was watching on. As the British writer Leonard Barden recounts, Tal approached the board after the game's end and asked Smejkal, ‘What would you have done after 91. ♜b3?’ ‘Why, pawn to a2 of course!’ was the reply. ‘Ah,’ said the Magician from Riga, with a twinkle in his eye. ‘Then you would only have drawn.’ And with his trademark nonchalance, he pushed a few pieces:

91. ♜b3 a2?? 92. ♜c1!!



A fantastic drawing idea is revealed, no doubt to both players' horror. Promotion to a queen or rook is stalemate, while getting a new bishop is no help with a rook's pawn, even without the white knight. As Tal started to walk away, Smejkal waved him back, announcing 'Aha! I can still win! Pawn to a1 equals knight!' Unphased, Tal reached back and played

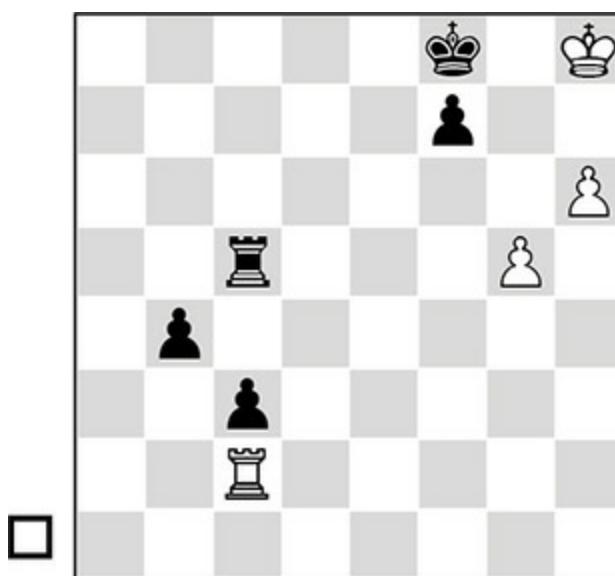
92...a1 ♜ 93. ♜ b3!!



leaving the grandmasters aghast. A picturesque swindle that, alas, never made it onto the scoresheets. I'll never be able to play like Tal. But let me share with you the closest I've come to imitating him as a spectator. Fast-forward almost 50 years to 2017 and the game that inspired this book, at a less esteemed tournament with less esteemed players and certainly a less esteemed kibitzer:

**Yi Liu
Aleksandar Wohl**

Gold Coast 2017

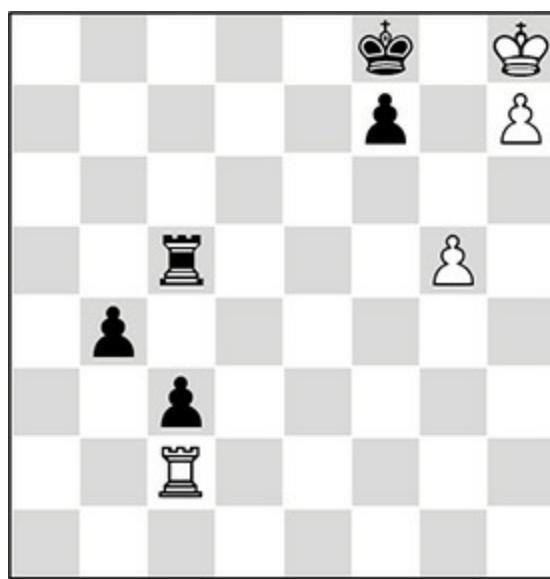


Wohl, a legendary Australian IM, had been steadily outplaying his young opponent in this endgame and had assumed complete control. As a crowd of spectators watched, myself among them, the result seemed clear on both players' faces. The white player had his head in his hands, looking completely dejected as his final seconds ticked down. From the sidelines, I spotted a cute swindling motif. Yi is a pretty good tactician, and I briefly thought his expressions were all part of some sort of theatrical bluff he was pulling on his older opponent. Alas, the gestures were legitimate angst. As I was trying to evaluate a complicated queen endgame, Yi let his clock run down to zero and resigned in the same motion. The spectators began to disperse.

Allowing a respectful pause, as I assumed Tal had done, I approached and asked Aleks what he would have played if Yi had continued with

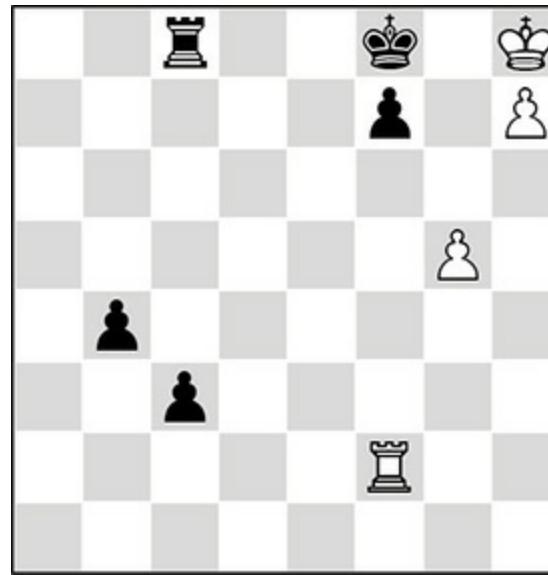
38.h7!!

Aleks looked at me as if I had suggested the moon was made of cheese, and reached out his hand for the b-pawn. But the Australian veteran had known me long enough to appreciate my swindling ways, and he paused to take a second look at the position.



'Ahh!', he exclaimed. It was then that both players realised the game was far from over, and that White has some serious self-stalemate chances: 38...b3?? 39. \mathbb{Q} xc3! \mathbb{Q} xc3 40.g6! is immediately a draw, for example. Another pretty line is 38... \mathbb{Q} b5? 39. \mathbb{Q} xc3 (anyway!) 39...bxc3 40.g6! c2

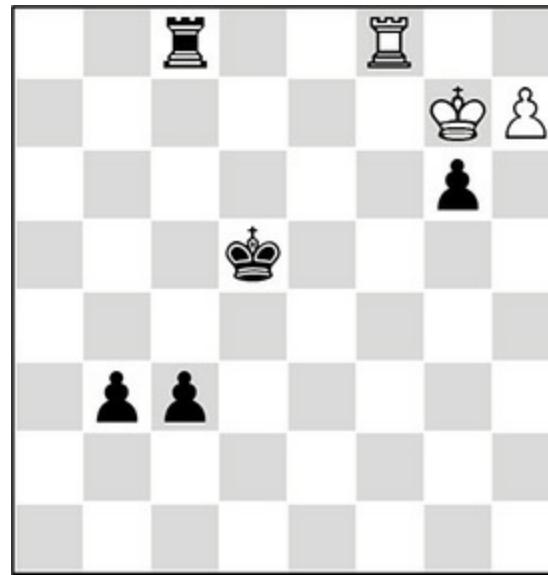
41.gxf7 and there is still no way to avoid the draw. After a few minutes, Wohl cleverly suggested 38... $\mathbb{Q}c8!$, which is the only try for Black to keep winning chances. However, White's not out of tricks yet: 39. $\mathbb{Q}f2^1$



Now g5-g6 is an unstoppable threat.

39...b3

39...c2 40. $\mathbb{Q}xc2$ $\mathbb{Q}xc2$ 41.g6! leads to a draw, while 39... $\mathbb{Q}e7+$ 40. $\mathbb{Q}g7$ b3 41. $\mathbb{Q}xf7+$ $\mathbb{Q}e6$ 42. $\mathbb{Q}f6+!$ $\mathbb{Q}d5$ 43. $\mathbb{Q}f8$ $\mathbb{Q}c7+$ 44. $\mathbb{Q}f7$ $\mathbb{Q}xf7+$ 45. $\mathbb{Q}xf7$ c2 46.h8 \mathbb{Q} c1 \mathbb{Q} also splits the point. 40.g6 $\mathbb{Q}e7+$ 41. $\mathbb{Q}g7$ fxg6 42. $\mathbb{Q}f7+!$ $\mathbb{Q}e6$ 43. $\mathbb{Q}f6+!$ $\mathbb{Q}d5$ 44. $\mathbb{Q}f8$



With an endgame that we agreed gave White excellent practical chances. It is notoriously more difficult to calculate how to escape the checks than to give them in these sorts of queen endgames, especially in time trouble. In fact, with the help of tablebases, it turns out that White can hold the draw even against best play:

44... $\mathbb{Q}c7+$ 45. $\mathbb{Q}f7$ $\mathbb{Q}xf7+$ 46. $\mathbb{Q}xf7$ c2 47.h8 \mathbb{Q} c1 \mathbb{Q} 48. $\mathbb{Q}d8+!$

with, apparently, a theoretical draw.

Perhaps Yi would have held the draw from here, or perhaps not – perhaps it would be lost ninety percent of the time. But this isn't the point. The lesson here is that with a little more grit and a dash of

optimism, White could have deployed a fiendishly cunning defensive resource that, at worst, would have made Black sweat hard for the full point, and at best would have secured an immediate draw. Ten percent is better than zero, which is all you can get from resigning.

That evening, I wondered whether today's energetic young talents, even with – or perhaps because of – their use of computer engines and vast online materials, are somehow less motivated to look for swindles than players of former generations. After the wide research I conducted for this book, I am surprised at how little attention has been paid to swindles in modern chess training. This is especially strange given that this is a part of our game where improvement yields immediate dividends. You may never reap the benefits of, say, learning 20 moves of an obscure opening sideline or memorising the Philidor manoeuvre in the notorious rook-and-bishop versus rook endgame.² On the other hand, we all get into lost positions often, and thus stealing an extra half or even full point every now and then will make a dramatic difference to both your rating and your tournament performances.

There are two reasons why the majority of players ignore the study of swindling. The first is, surprisingly, the rise of computer chess. Make no mistake: computers have drastically improved chess training, and today's players advance faster and are much more likely to reach their full potential thanks to technological tools. But an unexpected side effect of these advancements is that we have forgotten the practical nature of the battle. We are obsessed with engine evaluations, treating them as gospel (which, incidentally, has led to the rise of armchair critics – but that's another story). And that influences our own games, in which we strive to always play the 'best' move as evaluated on the screen, to the exclusion of almost all other factors.

I completely agree that a player should try to play the best moves – but I disagree that 'best' always equals the engine's first choice. The computer evaluates a position assuming that our opponent will play perfectly at every turn³; it doesn't (and cannot) consider the myriad of important human factors in a contest, such as fatigue, time pressure, risk-aversion, complacency, frustration, impulsiveness... the list goes on.

The second reason for the neglect of swindle training is simpler: it's hard! For a coach or a self-taught player, the amount of material available for other parts of the game, such as openings, endgames or tactics, is overwhelming.

But where does one start training how to swindle? You can't search a database for games with swindles, and even if you could, what would you learn?

I sympathise with coaches who want to help their students study swindling and chess psychology in general but simply can't find any relevant materials. Most of the advice I've heard or read has been vague, ranging from optimistic sentiments such as 'hang in there, because blunders do happen' to the slightly more useful 'train your tactics so you are ready when opportunities arise'. However, there's a big difference between winning a game because your opponent blundered all on his own, and setting up a swindle that actively encourages the decisive blunder. But a student seeking to learn the valuable art of swindling is liable to wind up disappointed; engines are clueless, databases are useless, and there have been virtually no good books devoted to the topic since the 1950s.

This book has grown considerably since my initial concept of an anthology of beautiful swindles. As I embarked upon my quest to collect examples, I started to appreciate why past authors have been wary

to touch the subject. There are a few collections showcasing chess curiosities that have been meticulously assembled by noted enthusiasts such as Israel Horowitz, Tim Krabbé, Ger van Perlo, Yochanan Afek and Amatzia Avni. I now appreciate what these authors must have gone through in their research, and you will find details of these superbly entertaining resources in the bibliography. Luckily, thanks to the fact that I am addicted to watching chess tournaments online⁴, and that I meticulously file interesting examples on my computer⁵, my database of modern swindles was already quite large. But for this book, I wanted more, and so I took a modern approach: crowd-sourcing. On social media, blogs and the like, I put out a call to the chess community to send me their best swindles. The response was overwhelming. Soon, my inbox was flooded with stories of games featuring horrific blunders, outrageous gamesmanship, and even blatant cheating.

The filtering task was much more laborious than I expected. Part of the problem, as Afek noted to me, is that there is not a consistent definition of ‘swindle’ in chess terminology.⁶ I painstakingly filtered through the games until I was left with over 800 examples of the purest gems, resulting in what I am sure is the largest collection of chess swindles in the world. Along the way, I discovered some miraculous escapes and mouth-watering trickery. But more significantly, I noticed familiar patterns among the games. I began to realise that this book could not only redress the glaring lack of material in the chess literature on pure swindles, but could also be a useful instructional tool for would-be Swindlers.

I don’t mean to trumpet this book as the godsend to fill this vacuum; I would be very happy if more (and better!) books were written on swindles in the future, as this is a topic that fascinates me. But until then, I’ve done my best to put together as informative and as entertaining a guide as possible to this wonderful world.

The general flow of the book is as follows. First, we look at the most common psychological biases that affect chess players over the board. Next, we discuss the most important attributes and skills the Swindler needs to exploit these biases. Finally, we bring these parts together to focus on how to train yourself to become a better Swindler.

To that end, I’ve added some swindle-specific puzzles at the end of the book that are designed to help train your swindling skills. They are different from most chess exercises in the sense that computers won’t be any help to you; in fact, quite often the engine’s best move will not be the correct answer, as it often doesn’t reflect a player’s best chance of setting up a swindle. (On the other hand, there are some puzzles in which you will try to avoid a swindle and win a won game, where, reassuringly, the computer typically agrees with the solutions.)

And along these lines, you’ll find that my annotations in the main games often don’t match the computer’s evaluations. I might award a brilliancy (‘!!’) for a move that doesn’t even make the engine’s top choices but sets up a devious swindle, or call a move a blunder (‘??’) when it technically forces checkmate but drastically narrows the margin for error.⁷ Proponents of correspondence chess may shudder at such blasphemy in a chess book – but here, too, I will demonstrate the benefits of learning to swindle by showing some remarkable rebounds within their hallowed world.

A quick note on the structure. I have tried to follow some sort of natural flow, as well as keeping congruence between the sections – for example, each psychological bias maps directly with a specific type of trap that the Swindler can employ to exploit it. The book is made up of several parts,

with each part containing several ‘mini-chapters’. Some of the chapters are quite short, containing a few or even just one example. This reflects my own preference when reading anything instructional; there are many new and unusual themes discussed in these pages, and I find that it is much easier to absorb a key idea if it is self-contained in its own chapter.

Above all, I’ve tried not to forget what got me interested in this project in the first place: swindles are fun! I hope the examples in this book will inspire and entertain you as much as they’ve delighted me. May you always win your winning positions, and may Caissa smile on you for the rest.

*GM David Smerdon,
Brisbane, January 2020*

PART I

What is a swindle?

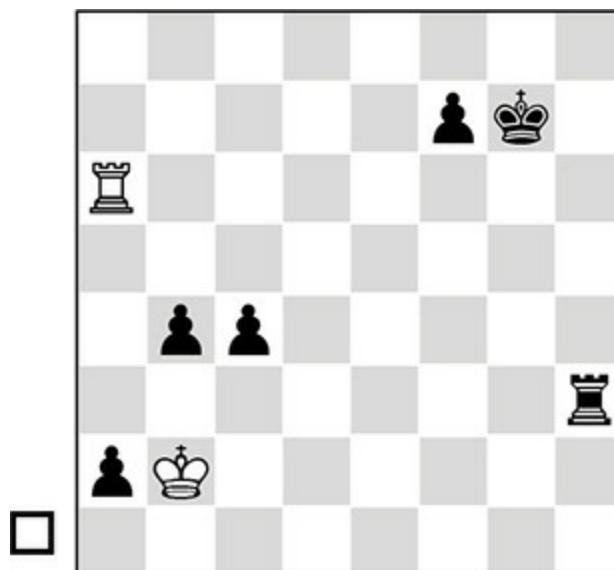
The blunders are all there on the board, waiting to be made. – Savielly Tartakower

My experience with swindles started when I was very young, as for most players, I imagine. The earliest example I can recall is a vivid memory of the penultimate round of the 1995 Australian Under 12 Championships.

David Smerdon

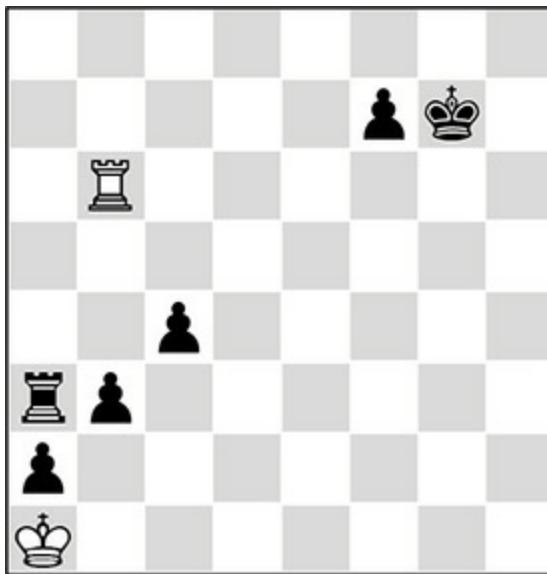
Justin Tan

Canberra ch-AUS jr 1995



If the scale goes ‘worse’, ‘losing’, ‘lost’, then we are somewhere close to ‘why are you still playing?’. Either capture of the a-pawn allows Black to swap the rooks ($66. \mathbb{Q}xa2? \mathbb{R}a3+!$). Despite the four-pawn deficit, I spotted a faint glimmer of hope:

66. $\mathbb{R}d6!?$ $\mathbb{R}d3$ 67. $\mathbb{R}c6!$ $\mathbb{R}a3$ 68. $\mathbb{Q}a1$ $b3$ 69. $\mathbb{R}b6!$



I remember trying desperately to keep my emotions in check, feeling like I was going to explode while my opponent's hand hovered over the c-pawn, and just not believing it was possible. Sure enough, the game finished

69...c3?? 70.♖g6+!

and the famous 'rampant rook' theme had gifted me an undeserved draw.

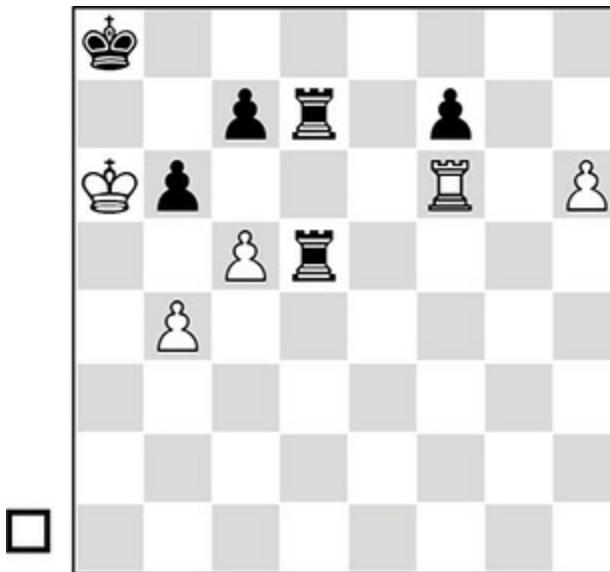
70...♚f8 71.♖g8+ ♚e7 72.♖e8+ ♚d7 73.♖e7+ ½-½

An Under-12 game may seem like a silly place to start this book, but the event had a surprising significance to me. It's conceivable that had I lost this game, I would never have become a grandmaster. The half-point proved valuable, as I made it to the blitz tie-break, where I swindled⁸ the championship trophy when my opponent made an illegal move in a winning position. In those days, only the winner of each Australian age group was allowed to play in the World Youth Championships, and so I was selected to play in Europe – a huge opportunity for a chess player from our remote nation in the 1990s – while my peers had to languish in the chess backwaters of Australian weekenders. This head-start led to my representing Australia in all of the subsequent age groups and eventually the Olympiad team, before finally becoming a grandmaster.

Far-fetched? Perhaps – though you may have heard the famous fable about the butterfly and the hurricane. On the other hand, winning this championship was a huge motivational boost to an impressionable 10-year-old, and helped focus my energies on chess rather than other hobbies. Even more importantly, my first swindle taught me a valuable lesson: that it's possible in chess to earn points from losing positions. In chess, as opposed to running or swimming or even tennis, the winner is not necessarily the stronger athlete, but often the most cunning.⁹

Despite its personal significance to me, however, it's not a great swindle. Enticing Black to play ...♜a3 by 66.♜d6 and 67.♜c6 is mildly clever, but the trap is thinly concealed and the stalemate theme is well-known to most players; frankly, I doubt it would have much success against players over the age of 10.

However, the 'rampant rook' is a common theme in some much higher-profile swindles throughout history. A much more sophisticated example is the following well-known swindle, featuring perhaps the most famous Swindler in chess history: the great US master Frank James Marshall.



A rook down, Marshall embarks on one of his famous magic tricks.

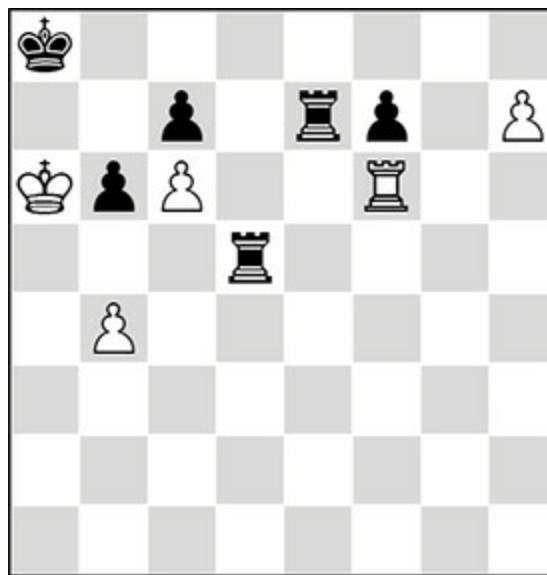
1.c6!!

A lovely introductory move. Marshall apparently places his own king in danger, but in reality, immobilises another of his own pieces.

1... ♜e7

Natural, but 1... ♜d8 2. ♜xf7 ♛b8! was easier, with the idea to play ... ♛c8 next. All will become clear...

2.h7!



This is the real set-up of the swindle. Marshall presents his opponent with a choice of three moves to stop the pawn. Only one – the most unnatural of the choices – maintains the win.

2... ♜h5??

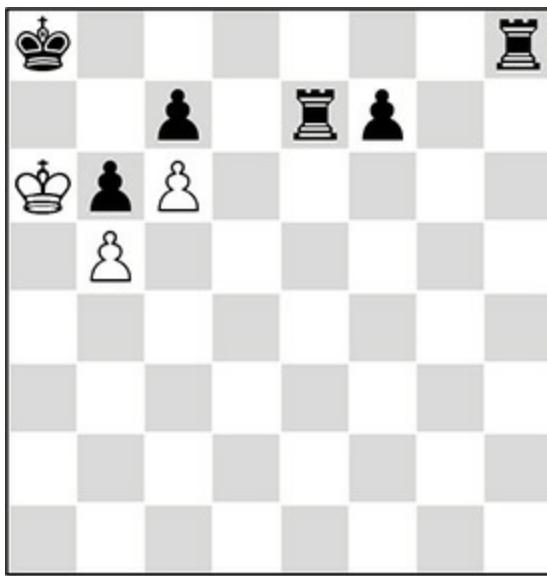
2... ♜d8?? 3. ♜g6!! also draws, but 2... ♜e8! 3. ♜xf7 ♛b8 would have collected the point. Note that this introduces the key resource of ... ♛c8, breaking the stalemate theme by allowing ♛a7 – a difficult subtlety to see from afar!



3. $\mathbb{Q} h6!$

Just like Don Vito Corleone, Marshall makes him an offer he can't refuse.

3... $\mathbb{Q} xh6$ 4. $h8\mathbb{Q}$ + $\mathbb{Q} xh8$ 5. $b5!$



Sealing the tomb. Despite being two rooks down, stalemate is inevitable – unless Black wants to try 5... $\mathbb{Q} d7??$ 6. $cxd7$ $c6??$ 7. $bxc6$ and even lose the game. McClure took the draw.

Marshall wrote one of the earliest and best-known books on swindles: the modestly-named¹⁰ *Marshall's Chess Swindles* (1914). He was so well-known for his chess comebacks that it led to the term ‘Marshall swindle’ being named after him, which, as far as anyone can tell, is the origin behind today’s chess usage. In his biography of Marshall, Soltis quotes the classical master Mikhail Chigorin as writing the following about the Vienna tournament of 1903:

‘One of the participants in the tournament called Marshall a Swindler, a charlatan. But his “charlatan”, so to speak, risky play is more to my liking than any “correct” play by many first-class players.’

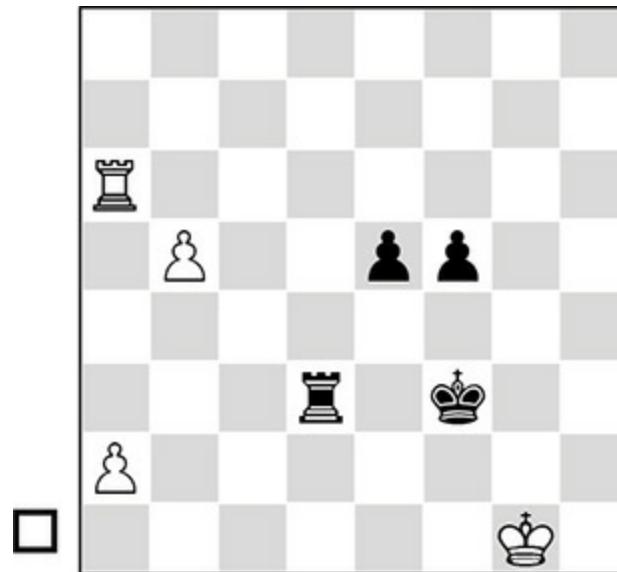
Much later, in a *New York Times* article in 1987, US grandmaster Robert Byrne offered the following definition:

‘A “Marshall swindle”, or just plain “swindle”, is not a kind of cheating or a contravening of the rules of the game. The word connotes a diabolically clever move or combination that turns the tables on the opponent.’

A pretty description, but too vague for our purposes. Swindling is a much higher skill than simply taking advantage of your opponent’s errors, no matter how clever the tactic. This is best explained through an example of an escape that is not a swindle.

Gulnar Mammadova	2355
Linda Krumina	2081

Batumi ol W 2018 (6)



At the 2018 Olympiad, the Azeri women’s team won their match by the slimmest of margins when their board 3, playing White, salvaged a remarkable draw from a hopelessly lost rook endgame. The game continued

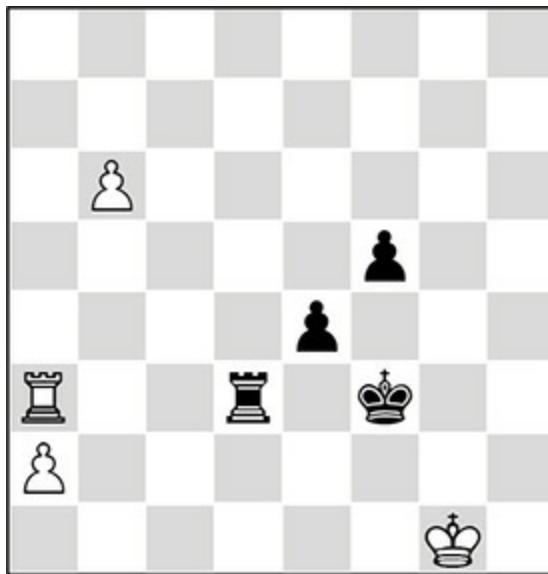
47.b6

and now instead of the crushing 47... $\mathbb{R}d1+$,

47...e4??

allowed the spectacular save

48. $\mathbb{R}a3!!$



Black's plan is violently halted by this kamikaze pin. After the forced 48... \mathbb{N} xa3 49.b7! White's pawn cannot be stopped. Black has no choice but to capture on a2 and beg for a draw, which was eventually how the game ended.

An unusual and beautiful motif, but not a swindle. White simply reacted to Black's blunder, to which White didn't actively contribute. Please don't think I'm being pedantic. It's less a matter of rigid definitions and more about what we can learn from the examples.

There's not much we can take away from this game, except the trainer's vague sentiments mentioned earlier, and maybe adding one more pattern to our memory banks. There's no provocation, no psychology. It's like a runner hoping that his main rival falls over – nice if you can get it, but hardly something you can train for (I hope!).

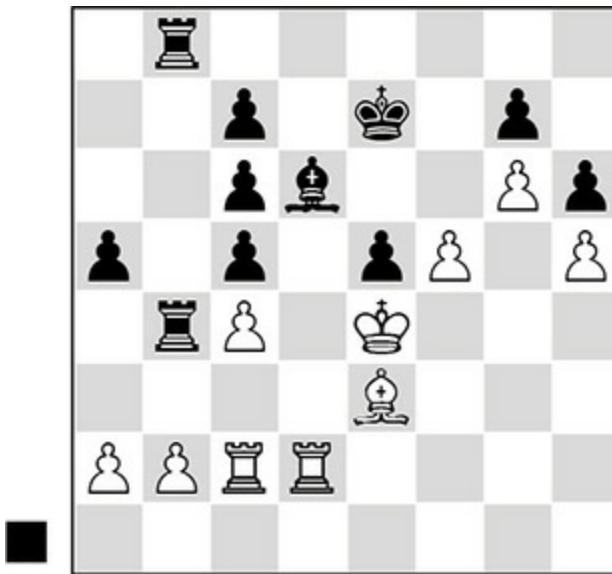
On the other hand, the true Swindler must actively entice the victim into making a decisive mistake.¹¹ Specifically, a swindle must contain the following elements:

- 1) The Swindler starts from an objectively lost position;
- 2) The Swindler consciously pro-vokes the victim into blundering, usually by taking advantage of some psychological trait;
- 3) The victim squanders the advantage, allowing the Swindler to escape with a draw or even the full point.

The second of these elements, the *set-up* of the swindle, is what this book is all about. While the computer will still declare that we are lost, our goal is to maximise the chances of our human opponent allowing the third element. This is when the swindle has been fully executed and the position is no longer objectively lost. In rare cases, it may even be winning!

Let's look at another recent game, but this time to see a genuine swindle in action.

Samuel Sevian	2642
Timur Gareyev	2557



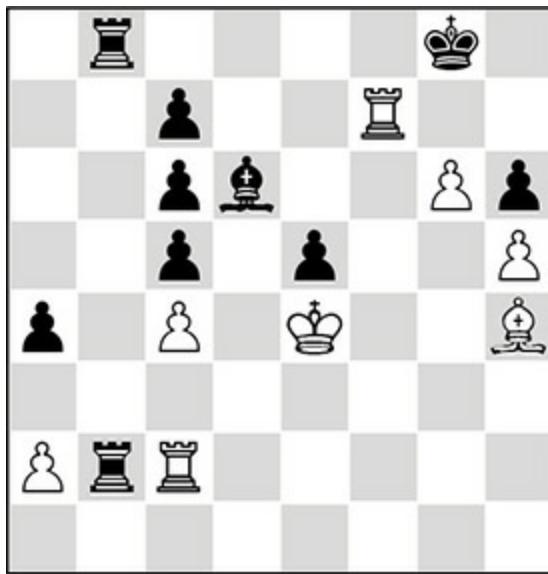
At first sight, the position may not look too bad for Black, who is after all a pawn up. But a closer inspection reveals just how utterly hopeless his position really is. He has the world's sorriest excuse for a bishop, essentially a glorified pawn tethered to the defence of c5 and e5. More importantly, he has no breaks at all – pushing the pawn to a3 is answered by b2-b3, locking the queenside up for good – while White's f5-f6 break cannot be stopped. White has all the time in the world to orchestrate this breakthrough, after which h6 will fall and White's connected g- and h-pawns will win the day.

Black's plight is desperate. 30... $\mathbb{Q}f6?$ 31. $\mathbb{Q}f2!$, threatening mate on h4, forces the black king to retreat, because 31... $\mathbb{Q}g5??$ 32. $\mathbb{Q}e1!$ leads to a quick checkmate. Better is 30... a4, leading to some fascinating variations that are worth a short digression. There follows 31. $\mathbb{Q}f2$ $\mathbb{Q}f8$ 32. $\mathbb{Q}f3$ $\mathbb{Q}b6$ (or 32... $\mathbb{Q}fb8$ 33. f6+! gxf6 34. $\mathbb{Q}xh6$ $\mathbb{Q}xb2$ 35. $\mathbb{Q}xb2$ $\mathbb{Q}xb2$ 36. $\mathbb{Q}g7$



analysis diagram

and the h-pawn has a clear path to touchdown) 33. $\mathbb{Q}f2$ $\mathbb{Q}fb8$ 34. $\mathbb{Q}h4+$ $\mathbb{Q}f8$ 35. f6! (35. $\mathbb{Q}ff2$ also wins with-out difficulty, but the text is quickest and prettier) 35... $\mathbb{Q}xb2$ 36. fxg7+ $\mathbb{Q}g8$ (36... $\mathbb{Q}xg7$ 37. $\mathbb{Q}f7+$ $\mathbb{Q}g8$



analysis diagram

38. $\mathbb{Q}f6!$ $\mathbb{Q}xc2$ 39. $\mathbb{Q}h7$ mates) 37. $\mathbb{Q}xb2$ $\mathbb{Q}xb2$ 38. $\mathbb{Q}f7!$.



analysis diagram

Threatening $\mathbb{Q}g5$ followed by $\mathbb{Q}xh6$ and $\mathbb{Q}f8+$, as well as the slower $\mathbb{Q}e4-f5-e6$ and $\mathbb{Q}f6$ followed by $\mathbb{Q}d7$ and $\mathbb{Q}d8\#$. Black is completely helpless: 38... $\mathbb{Q}h2$ (38... $\mathbb{Q}b8$ 39. $\mathbb{Q}g5!$) 39. $\mathbb{Q}d8$ $\mathbb{Q}e2+$ 40. $\mathbb{Q}f5$ $e4$ (40... $\mathbb{Q}f2+$ 41. $\mathbb{Q}e6$ $\mathbb{Q}xf7$ 42. $gx\mathbb{Q}f7+$ $\mathbb{Q}xg7$ 43. $\mathbb{Q}e7$ and White promotes) 41. $\mathbb{Q}f6$ $\mathbb{Q}f2+$ 42. $\mathbb{Q}e6$ $e3$ 43. $\mathbb{Q}d7$ $\mathbb{Q}xf6+$ 44. $\mathbb{Q}xf6$ $\mathbb{Q}e5+$ 45. $\mathbb{Q}xe5$ $e2$



analysis diagram

46. ♔f6 e1♔ 47. ♕d8+ and mate next move.

These variations are just for show; White has plenty of slower, simpler ways to convert his advantage along the same lines. It seems that White's plan is unstoppable – and indeed it is. There are no opportunities to create complications, no kamikaze attacking opportunities, and no plausible defences. In situations of such extreme hopelessness, we will see that the 'Trojan Horse' theme can often be the would-be Swindler's best bet. Black's only point in his favour is that White's unstoppable victory is still a fair way off, both in terms of time and moves. Gareyev plays to his opponent's impatience, offering him a tempting way to wrap up the game immediately. His concept is astonishingly ingenious.

30... ♕a4!!



On the live feed, the commentators WGM Jen Shahade and GM Yasser Seirawan both could not have looked more shocked if Gareyev's rook had magically turned into a mouse. The usually unflappable Seirawan couldn't hold back, exclaiming, 'No way! The rook is dead, dead, dead!', before unluckily proclaiming 'There is no trick here...' just as Gareyev played the trick. In a way, the move was ridiculed for the right reasons, for it is objectively bad.

But the reactions – and by many more spectators, myself included, I should add – reflect the

psychological mastery of Gareyev's strategy. As fellow commentator GM Maurice Ashley later remarked, 'The swindle works because ... $\mathbb{R}a4$ is just so, so dumb!' Nominally, Black threatens to win a pawn. But the antidote seems glaringly simple, with the apparent cost to Black being the permanent incarceration of his rook. It's just so easy – perhaps, for the wily player, a bit too easy. After the obvious

31.a3

Black continued with

31... $\mathbb{R}b3!!$,

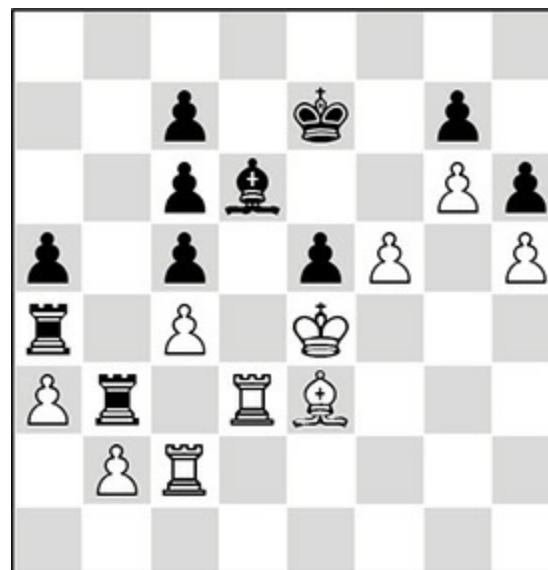
completing the set-up of the swindle.



White's attention has been entirely diverted by Gareyev's smoke and mirrors on the queenside. Instead of calmly continuing with his kingside breakthrough with $\mathbb{R}f2$ or $\mathbb{R}g2$, Sevian is too distracted by the defenceless rook on a4 and, more significantly, the prospect of winning the game much sooner than expected. Without pause for thought, he offers to trade Black's only active piece with

32. $\mathbb{R}d3??$,

intending $\mathbb{Q}c1$ and b2-b3, snaring the rook. It's worth watching the clip of this moment on YouTube, just to see Gareyev's face change in an instant from one of despair to light up like the 4th of July.¹²



32... ♕ xb2!!

Witchcraft! All of a sudden, Black's useless rooks spring to life. If 33. ♕ xb2? there follows 33... ♕ xc4+ 34. ♔ f3 e4+!, winning back the rook and leaving Black two pawns up and with four passed pawns (three of them on the c-file!). There's a fine line between madness and genius, as they say, and here a single move can change our perceptions from the former to the latter. The commentators echoed the thoughts of many of us (Shahade: 'I literally did not see a trick in the position'; Seirawan: 'I had lulled myself to sleep'; Ashley: 'High-class trickery!'). Sevian, too, needed a mental about-face, and, after several minutes of shock, recovered admirably with

33.f6+¹³ ♔ xf6 34. ♕ xd6+! cxd6 35. ♕ xb2 d5+ 36. ♔ f3 ♕ xa3,

leading to an endgame where Black has four pawns for the bishop. There were a few more twists and turns along the way, including White winning all seven (!) of Black's pawns, but eventually the game was drawn after Gareyev successfully defended the dreaded rook-and-bishop versus rook endgame (see the chapter on 'Endgames').

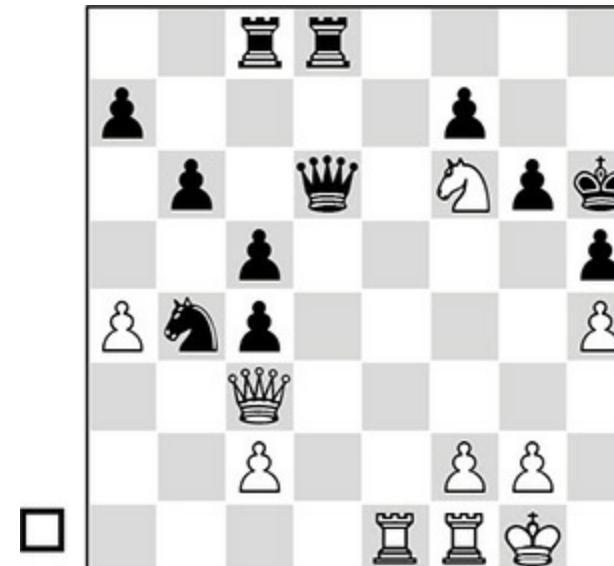
The difference between this and the previous example is clear: Gareyev actively provoked his opponent into blundering away the win, and therefore we can actually learn something from this swindle and try to replicate it in our own games. Of course, we can't all be creative geniuses like the Blindfold King¹⁴, but we can adopt some techniques that help us to logically come up with similar ideas.

In the last example, Black found a way to distract White from a clear winning plan, while at the same time seemingly offering him a short-cut to victory. These techniques – the latter being the 'Trojan Horse' idea – are two of the best tricks for laying a successful swindle when the trend is so clearly going against us.

But there are many more. The Three Questions technique is one I commonly use when my position looks dire.

Anna Muzychuk	2561
Evgenija Ovod	2375

Novi Sad tt W 2016 (6)



White is two pawns down and objectively lost. Using techniques we will discuss in this book, she

asks herself three questions:

- 1) ‘What does my opponent want?’ To simplify the position;
- 2) ‘How is she planning to do it?’ By swapping the queens. And indeed, ... ♕d4 is already a big threat;
- 3) ‘What’s good about my position?’ Black’s king is exposed, and White’s forces are in the neighbourhood.

Armed with these answers, Anna embarks on a risky endeavour that sacrifices a third pawn but, crucially, presents her opponent with an opportunity to swap the queens via an attractive tactical sequence.

27. ♜e5!!

Not even in the engine’s top-four choices, but one of the few moves to stop an immediate exchange of queens via 27... ♕d4 (which would now be met by 28. ♜g3!, and the knight on f6 is no longer en prise). The drawback, of course, is that c2 now hangs:

27... ♜xc2 28. ♜g5!!



Also frowned upon by the engine, this move is pure cunning. The swindle relies on Black being strong enough to spot the tempting simplifying sequence available to her, but weak enough not to notice its hidden flaw. I imagine most players in the Elo range of 2200-2600 would be at risk of falling into this, and Anna’s opponent is right in the sweet spot.

28... ♜d3??

Seemingly crushing. Black forces the queens off, as 29. ♜b2 ♜d4 is hopeless and 29. ♜e5 ♜xf1+ 30. ♜xf1 ♜d1+ 31. ♜e2 ♜e1+ wins the white queen with interest. Crucially, White needed to believe Black capable of seeing this sequence for the swindle to work; otherwise, more natural moves like 28... ♜d4 would have preserved the win.

29. ♜e5!!

Threatening 30. ♜xh5+ gxh5 31. ♜g5#, of course. But didn’t we already refute this?

29... ♜xf1+



30. ♔ h2!!

An unexpected side-step. Recapturing on f1 seemed so automatic that many a player might not have even realised there was an alternative. But there is, and it is a killer. Suddenly, White's king is safe, Black's queen is out of the game, and her royal partner is trembling.

30... ♕ d1

30... ♕ c1 also allows a perpetual, for example after 31. ♖ xh5+ gxh5 32. ♗ g4+. All other moves for Black lose!

31. ♖ xh5+

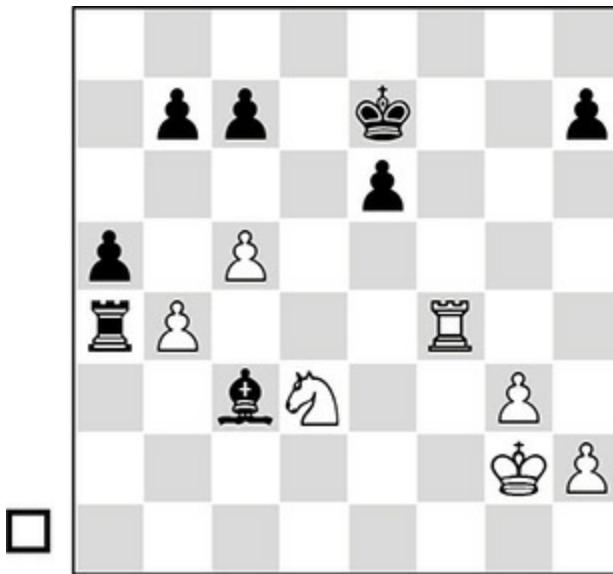
And the players agreed a draw on account of the perpetual check after 31... ♕ xh5 32. ♗ xh5 gxh5 33. ♕ f6+.

I don't know whether Anna asked herself these questions before her 27th move, but she did tell me that she saw 30. ♔ h2 in advance before playing 27. ♖ e5. We can't all be brilliant champions who see these sorts of saving ideas automatically; for us mortals, the three-questions approach is one of our best techniques for laying a successful swindle. And it's not the only one. For example, the Swindler often tries to present the opponent with a difficult or unclear choice of continuations, where at least one of the moves runs into a swindle.

Frank Marshall

Georg Marco

Monaco 1904 (4)



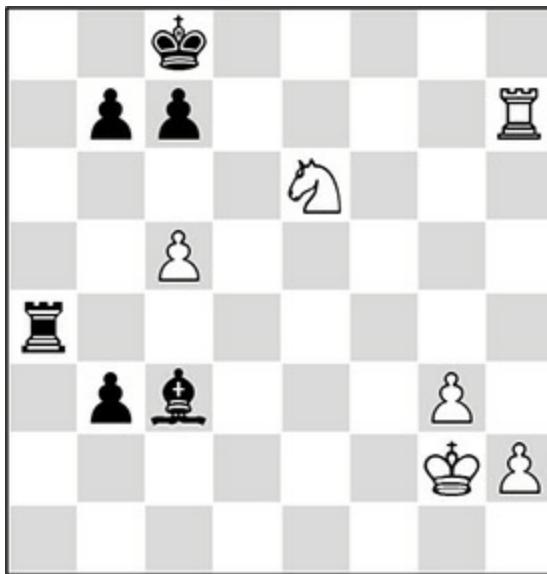
Marshall's game against Georg Marco in the Monte Carlo tournament of 1904 is perhaps the most reprinted swindle of all time. A pawn down and with his queenside falling apart, White's position is in tatters. The engine claims that simplifications after 41.bxa5 ♜xf4 42.♘xf4 ♜xa5 are forced, but with a passed b-pawn in the making and White's knight dominated by the black bishop, there is little hope. Instead, Marshall keeps pieces on and begins to sow the seeds of a devious swindle.

41.♗h4! axb4 42.♗xh7+ ♔d8



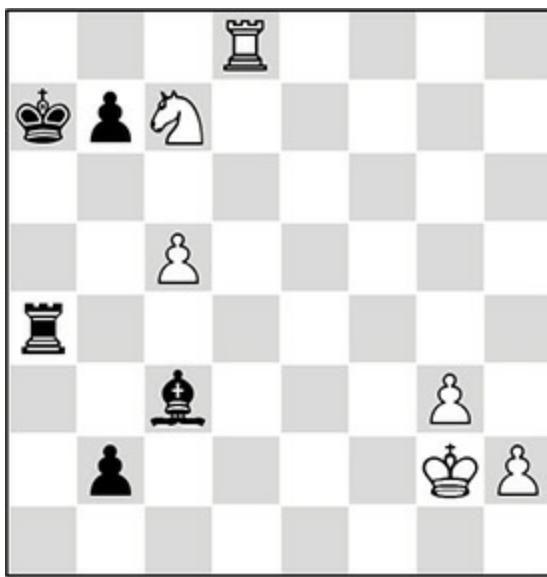
Again, the computer's defensive suggestions are practically hopeless: 43.♘c1? ♜a3 and 43.c6 bxc6 44.♘c5 ♜a2+ are easily winning (45.♔f3? b3!). To create genuine chances over the board, Marshall seeks to concoct a situation in which his opponent will have to make a difficult decision between a continuation that secures victory and one that looks winning but actually throws the win away.

43.♘f4! b3 44.♘xe6+ ♔c8



Almost all annotators of this game have started their analysis after White's next move. In fact, the diagram is an instructive moment. Marshall is objectively lost, but can choose between two moves that lead to potential swindles.

45. $\mathbb{Q}xc7+$ $\mathbb{Q}b8$ 46. $\mathbb{Q}d7!$ prepares a cunning trap: 46... $b2??$ 47. $\mathbb{Q}d8+$ $\mathbb{Q}a7$ 48. $\mathbb{Q}c7!!$.

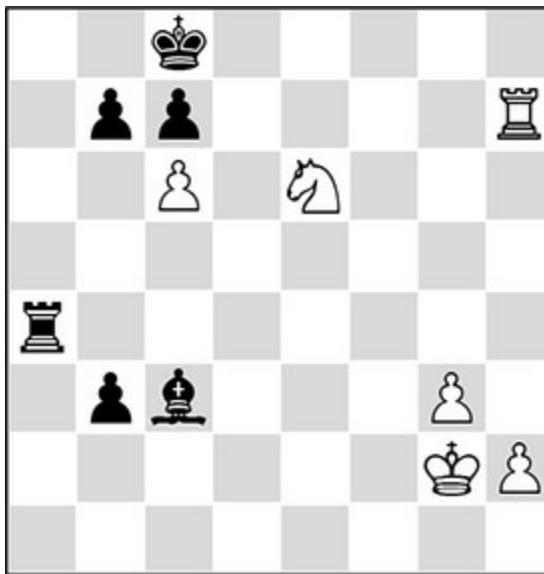


analysis diagram

Threatens both mate on a8 and $\mathbb{Q}b5+$ followed by $\mathbb{Q}xc3$. A beautiful tactic.

So why did Marshall decide against 45. $\mathbb{Q}xc7+$? Possibly the reason is because this trap is somewhat transparent. After 46. $\mathbb{Q}d7$ Marco's suspicions would surely have been aroused, and it would not have taken him long to understand the venom behind the obvious check on d8. And it is not hard to find an antidote once one's senses are alerted, e.g. 46... $\mathbb{Q}e5$ or 46... $\mathbb{Q}f6$. Unsatisfied with his chances of success in this variation, Marshall chose something that is somewhat subtler.

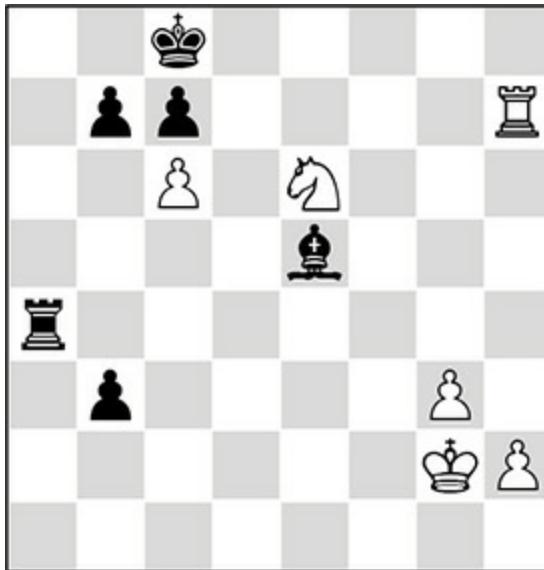
45.c6!!



This is the key move of the swindle's set-up: providing a fork in the road where the outcomes aren't at all obvious. Marco must now choose between eliminating the c6-pawn or defending his own pawn on c7. One option, 45...bxc6!, wins the game, though it takes several moves before this becomes clear: 46. \mathbb{R} c7+ \mathbb{Q} b8 47. \mathbb{R} xc6 b2 48. \mathbb{R} b6+ \mathbb{Q} c8 49. \mathbb{R} b3 \mathbb{R} b4! 50. \mathbb{R} xc3+ \mathbb{Q} b8! and the tactics all work for Black.

If the game had finished this way, then so be it. Marshall would have made the most of his chances, and Marco would have earned his point – a fair result. But instead of trusting these lengthy calculations, Black looks for a more straightforward solution, one that follows the general advice for the materially superior side to 'keep pawns on'. Unfortunately for him, this fear of complications combined with an adherence to heuristics proves his undoing.

45... \mathbb{Q} e5??



A very human move, but after this the win is gone, and Black has officially been swindled. Unbelievably, he must now fight hard just to hold the draw!

46.cxb7+ \mathbb{Q} b8

Forced, of course, as 46... \mathbb{Q} xb7 47. \mathbb{Q} c5+ won't do at all. But now, how is White to stop the b-pawn?

47. \mathbb{Q} c5! \mathbb{R} a2+ 48. \mathbb{Q} h3 b2



49. $\mathbb{Q}e7!!$

A brilliant move that needed to be seen well in advance.

49... $\mathbb{Q}a7$

Forced, as 49... $b1\mathbb{Q}$ 50. $\mathbb{Q}e8+$ $\mathbb{Q}a7$ 51. $\mathbb{Q}a8+$ $\mathbb{Q}b6$ 52. $b8\mathbb{Q}+$ transforms Black's material situation from a queen up to a queen down.

50. $\mathbb{Q}e8 c6$

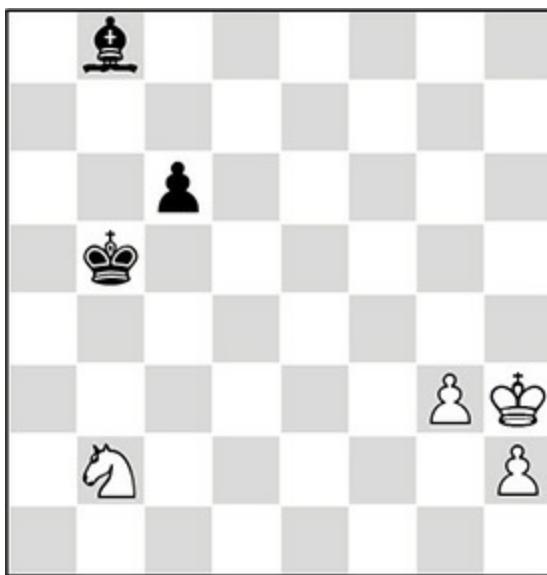


The resource on which Marco has been counting. 51. $\mathbb{Q}a8+$ $\mathbb{Q}b6$ 52. $b8\mathbb{Q}+$ $\mathbb{Q}xb8$ 53. $\mathbb{Q}xb8+$ $\mathbb{Q}xc5$ leads to a trivially winning rook endgame. Once again, it appears that Marshall's fireworks have been extinguished. But there is one final cracker in his box of tricks.

51. $\mathbb{Q}a8+$ $\mathbb{Q}b6$ 52. $\mathbb{Q}xa2!$ $b1\mathbb{Q}$



53.b8♕ +!! ♜ xb8 54.♖ b2+ ♜ xb2 55.♗ a4+ ♛ b5 56.♗ xb2



The swindle is complete. White has transformed his hopelessly lost position into an endgame in which he alone has winning chances. After such a turnaround, it is quite common for the swindled player to fail to readjust to the new situation, and indeed that was the case in this game. Mentally broken, Marco soon misplayed the endgame and resigned shortly afterwards.¹⁵

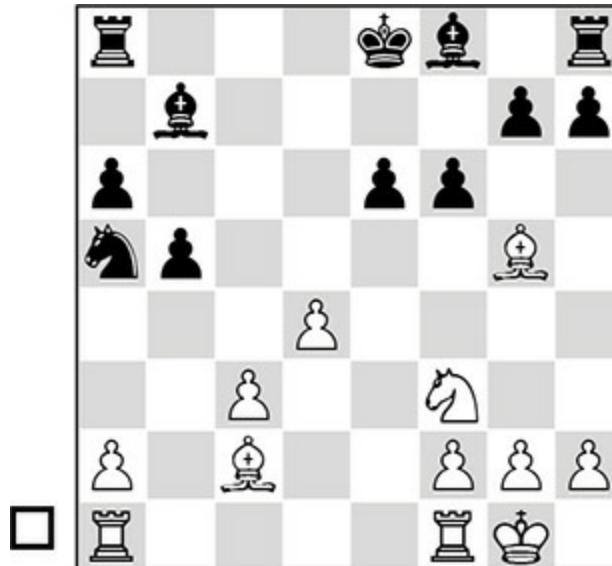
When to enter ‘Swindle Mode’

A question I often get asked is, ‘When should I start trying to set up a swindle?’ In other words, when should a player stop trying to play like a computer and start trying to play like Marshall? Having been drilled for many years on the importance of looking for the ‘best’ moves, players can find it psychologically difficult to play a move that they know is objectively bad – even if it is practically strong!

There is no easy answer, and the one I usually give is: when you think you will *almost certainly* lose if the game continues the way it has been going, then it is time to change your mindset and switch on ‘swindle mode’. Setting up a swindle is often a gamble where the most likely outcome is a certain loss, but with some probability your opponent may allow you to save the game; the Swindler’s task is to maximise that probability. Of course, the follow-up question is ‘What does “most certainly” mean?’ It depends both on the level of the players and the rating difference between them, but as a general rule of thumb, a clear pawn deficit without any tangible compensation is already enough for evenly-matched masters. This margin increases at lower levels, while the rating difference also matters. If you are down on material but several hundred points stronger than your opponent, you might prefer to keep playing the best moves you can and see whether your opponent allows you back into the game all by themselves. On the other hand, against my first super-GM, I felt it best to enter ‘swindle mode’ as soon as my position became even slightly worse.

David Smerdon	2472
Vasili Ivanchuk	2734

Netherlands tt 2006/07 (1)



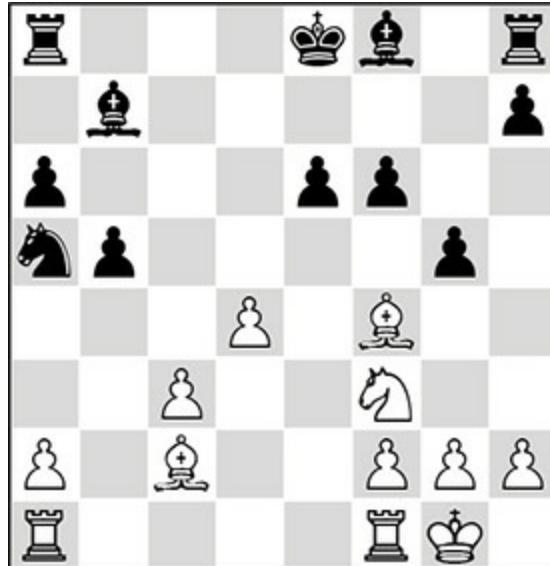
Despite material equality, Black’s advantage is almost worth a full pawn thanks to his positional trumps, which can be seen after 16. $\mathbb{Q}e3 \mathbb{Q}a3!$. Place the black knight on c4 and the other bishop on d5, and it’s clear that White is basically paralysed. This is not the sort of position I particularly cared

for defending against a super-GM, and so I decided to immediately try to change the status quo.

16. $\mathbb{Q}f4!$?

A provocative choice, offering Black the chance to gain space with a tempo. Perhaps Ivanchuk would have been more suspicious of a stronger opponent, but as a young, Australian IM, I had the advantage of anonymity on my side.

16...g5??



17. $\mathbb{B}xg5!$

An unusual tactic. Black's rook is caught in the rays of White's pair of bishops.

17...fxg5 18. $\mathbb{Q}e5!$ $\mathbb{R}g8$ 19. $\mathbb{Q}xh7$ $\mathbb{R}g7$ 20. $\mathbb{Q}xg7$ $\mathbb{Q}xg7$ 21. $\mathbb{R}ae1$



The petite combination has simplified the position into an ending in which White is no worse and even has chances to press, although Ivanchuk held the draw rather easily in the game.

It cannot be understated how important it is to be realistic about your chances during a game, so as not to enter 'swindle mode' too late. One situation where you should *definitely* be thinking about swindles is when you have started considering resigning! There is an infamous list of players who have resigned a drawing or even winning position (we will see some of them in this book), but a much longer list of players who have resigned in perfectly swindle-able situations. Alas, this common affliction affects players of all levels.

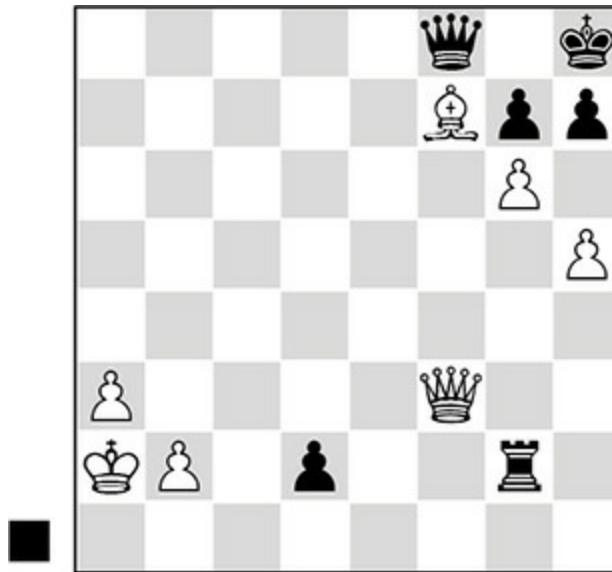
Alexei Shirov

2664

Fabiano Caruana

2812

Douglas 2019 (3)



Playing against a 2800 player is an intimidating event for anyone, even someone as accustomed to the limelight as Alexei Shirov. The position is lost, and Alexei knew it – but, mentally, he gave up just a fraction too soon. He played 52... \mathbb{Q} d3? and resigned after 52... \mathbb{Q} b8!, threatening 53...d1 \mathbb{Q} followed by 54... \mathbb{Q} xb2#. And 53. \mathbb{Q} b3 \mathbb{Q} g3! fails to help, because Black simply swaps everything on b3 and then makes a new queen. So, Shirov called it a day.

But what about 52. \mathbb{Q} d5 ? The idea is similar: to play \mathbb{Q} d7 followed by \mathbb{Q} b3, halting the d-pawn and shielding the white king. It seems that this should be refuted by the same move

52... \mathbb{Q} b8,

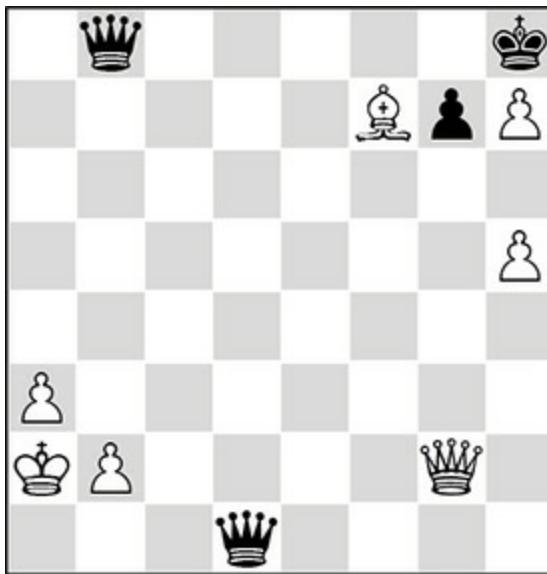
but then

53. \mathbb{Q} xg2!!

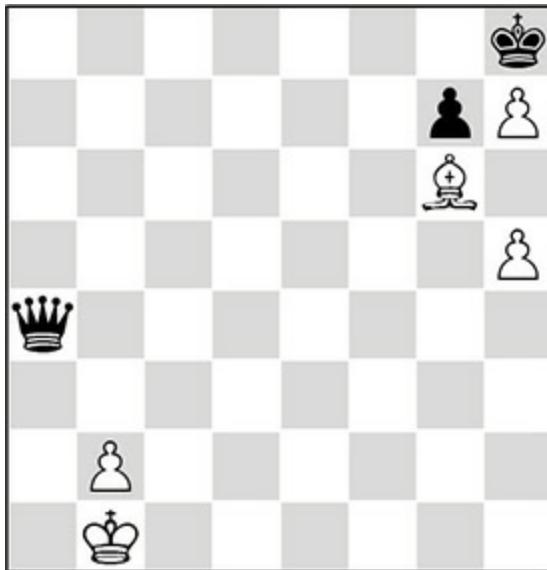


dramatically changes the equation. Black can get a second queen, but White has his own plan thanks to his domination on the light squares. After

53...d1 \mathbb{Q} 54.gxh7!!



White has the devious threat of 55. ♔g6(!!), locking down the black kingside for good. In that case, White wouldn't even mind an exchange of queens – for instance: 54... ♕bd8 55. ♔g6 ♕8d5+ 56. ♕xd5 ♕xd5+ 57. ♔b1 ♕h1+ 58. ♔a2 ♕d1 59.a4! ♕xa4+ 60. ♔b1.



analysis diagram

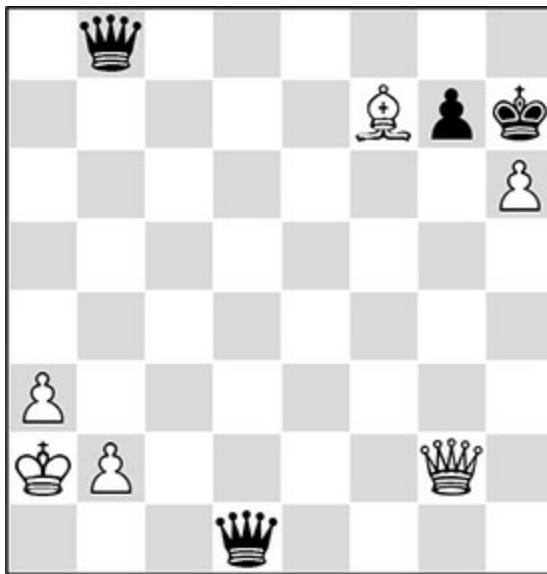
And there is no way for Black to extricate his king, while his queen can't cause enough damage by herself.

Black could therefore try

54... ♕xh7

to rule out this fortress possibility. But now the point of 52. ♕d5 (rather than the immediate 52. ♕xg2) becomes clear: the temporary absence of defenders around the black king allows for

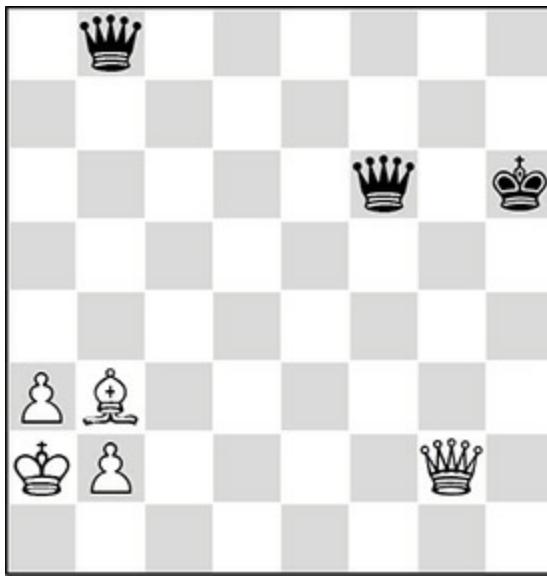
55.h6!!



Capturing the pawn either way leads to mate, so Black must give up the g-pawn after
55...g5 56.♕xg5 ♕d4

with a very strange endgame. White will probably lose his h-pawn, but having captured Black's last remaining pawn, he can set up a tenacious defensive arrangement by keeping his queen on the g-file and his bishop on b3, taunting Black to make progress:

57.♗g2 ♗f6 58.♗b3 ♛xh6



If Black could exchange queens, he easily wins by bringing his king to c1 and targeting the pawn on b2. But swapping queens is not so easy, and meanwhile White can be very annoying with his constant pestering of the black king. Technically White is still lost, but from a practical perspective, this is clearly a vast improvement on resigning!

This illustrates a key point that I will reiterate time and again in this book: when it comes to swindling, you must try to free your mind of computer evaluations. The fact that there is a win for Black in the above diagram in no way detracts from this being White's absolutely best practical shot, with excellent chances of stealing half a point – even against a 2800 player.¹⁶

Swindling, like all facets of our game, can be trained. But to learn how to swindle, we first need to understand why swindles work. To do that, we will need to delve into a complicated and misunderstood topic: chess psychology. We will get inside the chess player's mind and uncover the four flaws of our victims' psyches: Impatience, Hubris, Fear and *Kontrollzwang*. We will then move on to the Swindler's mind and look at how we can improve our own mentality to maximise our swindling chances. We'll talk about grit, optimism and the Three Questions technique discussed above.

Part III then gets into the nuts and bolts of setting up a swindle. We will discuss the specific tools at our disposal for exploiting our opponents' flaws:

- Trojan Horses for their impatience;
- Decoy Traps for their hubris;
- Berserk Attacks for their fear;
- 'Window-Ledging' for their *Kontrollzwang*;

... and other examples of how to make use of 'knowing' our opponents.

Confused? Don't worry; all will become clear by Part IV, when we move on to some of the core skills you'll need to pull off a swindle, most of which you are already familiar with, such as:

- Key endgames;
- Fortressess;
- Stalemates;
- Perpetual checks; and
- Creativity.

With some reluctance, we'll also touch on Gamesmanship (use at your own risk!).

Part V then pulls all the previous sections together for some illustrative games of great swindles by both masters and amateurs. You'll recognise bits and pieces from all the preceding sections in these games, which are both instructive and entertaining.

Finally, Part VI (yes, six parts!) contains exercises for your own study. As far as I know, this is the only published collection of swindle-training exercises, and it took me a long time to assemble, so please don't skip it. You'll break my heart.

Ready? Let's get swindling!

PART II

The Psychology of Swindles

For the chess struggle nowadays, one needs a subtle knowledge of human nature, an understanding of the opponent's psychology. – Alexander Alekhine

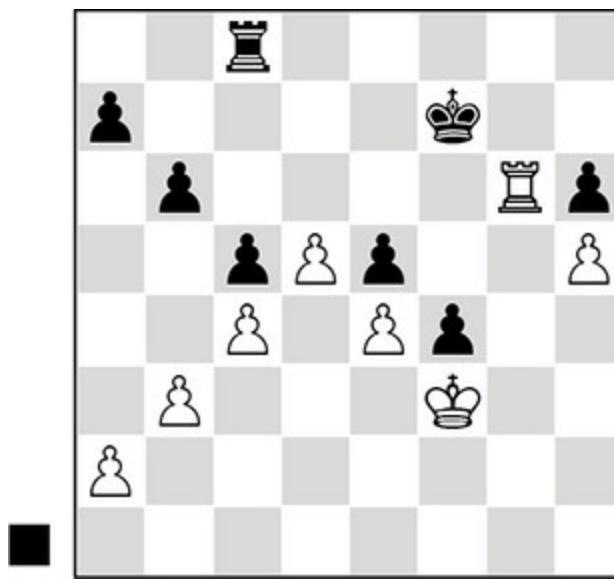
Psychology is one of most debated yet least understood parts of our game. Bobby Fischer famously scoffed, ‘I don’t believe in psychology. I believe in good moves.’ Yet, despite this being one of his most quoted sayings, Fischer spoke often about psychology in chess, stating that ‘the object is to crush the opponent’s mind’. Judit Polgar has argued that chess is 30 to 40 per cent psychology; but then again, Richard Teichmann quipped that chess is 99 per cent tactics – so somebody’s wrong.

Top players often talk about psychological factors in their writings and interviews; Magnus Carlsen and Anish Giri are prominent examples. The classical masters were even more willing to share their thoughts on the subject. In the following game between two of the game’s greats, we can learn some fascinating insights into how even a World Champion can be swindled.

Tigran Vartanovich Petrosian

Viktor Kortchnoi

Soviet Union tt 1963 (2)



This game was played shortly after Petrosian won the World Championship. White is dominating the endgame. His rook controls the only open file from its powerful outpost and threatens to mop up Black’s weak pawns on h6 and e5, while he has his own monster-pass on d5. Black’s position seems completely devoid of counterplay.

In Petrosian’s own words: ‘For a long time I had regarded my position as a winning one. Thus the whole opening phase of the struggle, when Kortchnoi was unable to get out of trouble, had psychologically attuned me to the idea that the ending would be favourable to me.’ And indeed it is – perhaps too favourable, for the world’s best player no doubt expected a quick capitulation from his

opponent. Note (in Petrosian's assessment) the recognition of the psychological factors at play.

32... $\mathbb{Q} f8!$

Rather than passively defending the h-pawn by 32... $\mathbb{Q} h8$, Kortchnoi 'threatens' to create some counterplay after 33. $\mathbb{Q} xh6 \mathbb{Q} g8$, though in reality the activity amounts to nothing. Rather than calculate, Petrosian prefers the easy path, keeping control of the g-file.

33.d6

Now 34. $\mathbb{Q} xh6$ is certainly threatened, as 34... $\mathbb{Q} g8$ is met by 35. $\mathbb{Q} g6!$.

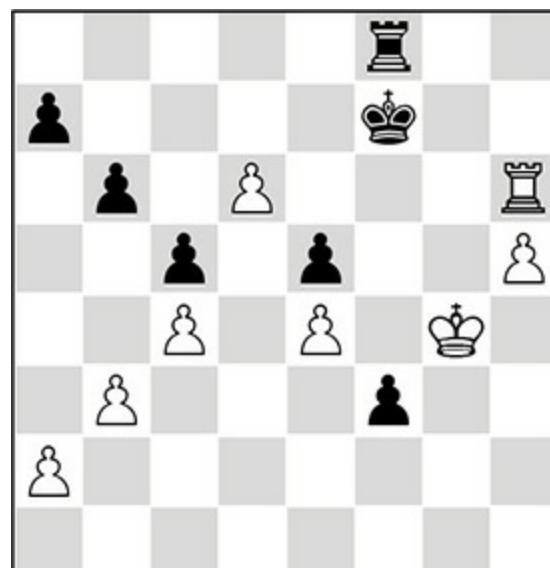
33... $\mathbb{Q} h8$ 34. $\mathbb{Q} g4 \mathbb{Q} f8!$



A cunning switchback, and the real set-up of the swindle. Kortchnoi appears to have given up hope. But perhaps this is a desperate attempt to prevent 35. $\mathbb{Q} f5$ – thanks to the sneaky 35...f3! 36. $\mathbb{Q} f6+$ $\mathbb{Q} g7!$ – at the necessary cost of the h6-pawn because, as mentioned above, 35. $\mathbb{Q} xh6 \mathbb{Q} g8+$ 36. $\mathbb{Q} g6!$ wins for White.

'That must be it!', thinks Petrosian. This, as we will see, is a fine example of a *decoy trap*, whereby an unwitting victim can be encouraged to ignore his suspicions about the real swindle after spotting the thin veneer of an alternative trick. Thinking that the trap has been averted, Petrosian decides to put the game to bed:

35. $\mathbb{Q} xh6?? f3!!$



The true trap is revealed, executing the swindle in fine style. Petrosian's comments are telling: 'I did not even see the threat ...f4-f3, possibly because it was in contrast to Black's hopeless position. Personally, I am of the view that if a strong master does not see such a threat at once he will not notice it, even if he analyses the position for twenty or thirty minutes.'

36. ♕ g5 ♕ e8

White resigned.

Psychologists have identified literally hundreds of biases that the vast majority of us have. They are part of what make us human, and it's important to remember that they are not always bad – in fact, some of them are useful rules of thumb that can help us make decisions quickly and that work most of the time. But biases can also be exploited, as anyone in marketing, politics or real estate will attest.

For our purpose, there are four main biases that can be targeted by the would-be Swindler. I've named them the 'Four Flaws of the Chess Psyche', but only because I couldn't think of a catchier name. Every player is susceptible to one or more of them, depending on their personality, the match circumstances, the position, or even just their mood on the day. It's your job to stay attuned to your opponent's psychological weaknesses and be aware of the possibilities of exploiting them. Later in this book, we'll talk about different techniques to do this. But first, let's meet the four flaws: Impatience, Hubris, Fear and *Kontrollzwang*. They will soon be your new best friends.

CHAPTER 2

Impatience

So I made what some called my biggest blunder of the tournament. I awakened Fischer. – Arthur Bisguier, on noticing Bobby Fischer had fallen asleep during their game in the 1963 US Championships. Fischer went on to win both the game and the tournament.

A delayed flight, a slow barista, a queue for the toilets – it can be enough to drive a person crazy. Impatience is one of the most common human foibles, and chess is no exception.

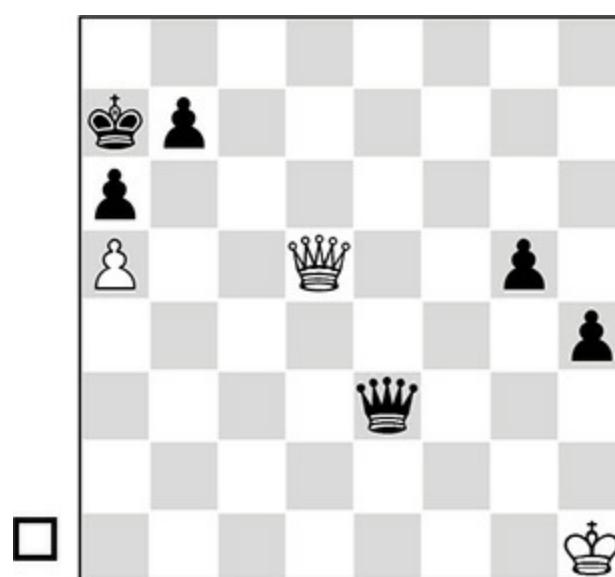
How often have you sat behind a winning position while your oblivious, soporific opponent just sits there instead of resigning? ‘My God,’ you think to yourself, ‘He’s not just wasting my time; he’s wasting his own, too. What an idiot!’ You stare at him until, finally, painstakingly slowly, he reaches out and makes a move. Instantly you bash back your reply and glare back in his face, silently demanding his resignation. Alas, instead, he goes back into his favourite thinking pose, and the dance continues...

Such situations can seem exasperating, but warning lights should be going off in your head. These are first-grade, prime-rib conditions for a swindle. The desire to finish off a game as quickly as possible is perhaps the most common cause of failures to win a won game. One of the most famous examples features the great Samuel Reshevsky in the 1942 US Championships. It’s so well known that you’ve probably seen it before in a puzzle book somewhere:

Carl Pilnick

Samuel Reshevsky

New York ch-USA 1942 (12)



Queen endings are perhaps the most protracted of all endgames, and are frequently a catalyst for impatience (and swindles!). It might seem that the position is devoid of resources, but White finds a way to set up one final trap. Key to its success is the fact that while queen endings are tedious, pawn

endings, of course, are much simpler. Pilnick's move offers Reshevsky a chance to be clever and finish the game immediately.

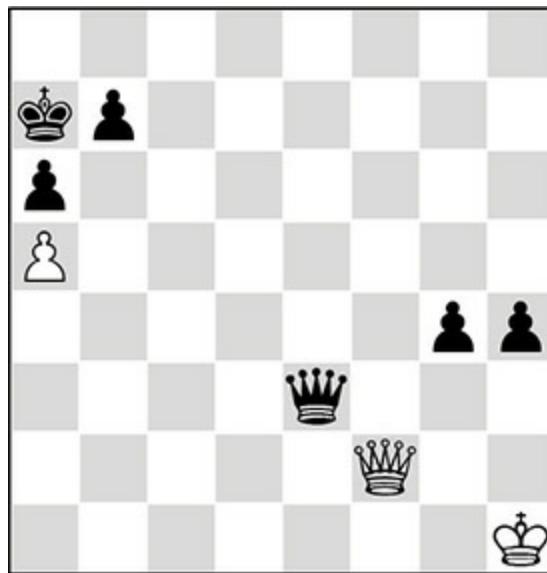
92. $\mathbb{Q}f5!!$

And into the swindle he falls! With

92...g4??

he intends to meet 93. $\mathbb{Q}xg4$ with 93... $\mathbb{Q}e1+$ 94. $\mathbb{Q}g2$ $\mathbb{Q}g3+$, after which his king saunters around to capture the a5-pawn. However, his short-cut to victory has one huge, gaping problem:

93. $\mathbb{Q}f2!!$



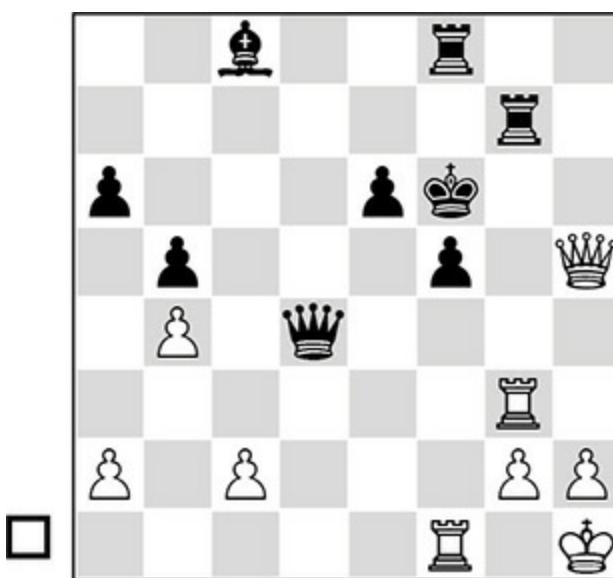
After the forced 93... $\mathbb{Q}xf2$ it's stalemate: $\frac{1}{2}-\frac{1}{2}$

We'll see plenty more stalemates cropping up throughout this book. But it is the lead-up play – the *swindle set-up* – that should really interest us about this example. Offer your opponent a fraudulent shortcut to victory, and you will be surprised how often they veer off the winning path.

Reshevsky's impatience caused him to look for a simple solution. But ironically, impatience can also lead a player to look for complications instead of playing simple chess, so long as it seems to hasten the end. Here's a recent example.

Vlastimil Jansa	2451
Eduardo Iturriaga Bonelli	2652

Benasque 2018 (4)

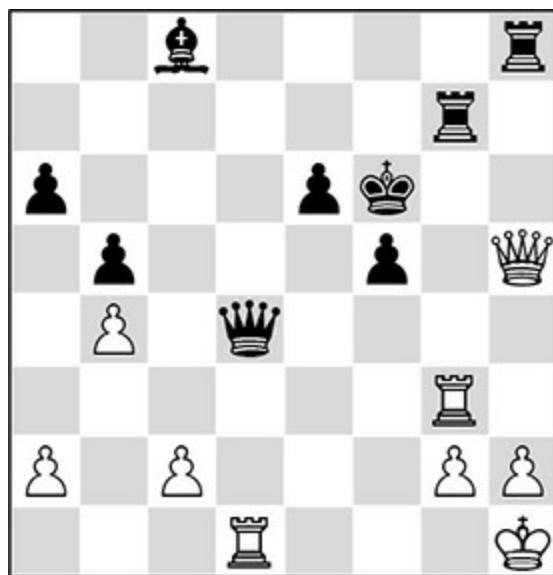


Hopelessly lost, White gives his higher-rated opponent a chance to be clever instead of patient:

33. \mathbb{R} d1!

Now almost any sensible move wins, but the strong grandmaster thinks he sees a cute timesaver.

33... \mathbb{R} h8??



The rook cannot be captured on account of back-rank mate, while the retreats 34. \mathbb{K} f3? \mathbb{R} xg3! and 34. \mathbb{K} e2? \mathbb{R} h4! lose on the spot. And all other moves simplify the position to a trivial win. All other moves, that is, except for one.

34. \mathbb{R} g6+!!

Instead of a dazzling victory, Black will find himself a whole rook down after 34... \mathbb{K} e7 35. \mathbb{R} xd4 \mathbb{R} xh5 36. \mathbb{R} xg7+ \mathbb{K} f6 37. \mathbb{R} c7. And the more straightforward point is 34... \mathbb{R} xg6?? 35. \mathbb{R} xh8 is CHECK. The stuff of nightmares. **1-0**

In this example, the strong GM playing Black displayed traits of both impatience and hubris, and indeed, these two are often found together when a player is winning against a weaker opponent, as we will see in the next chapter. But impatience also occurs when playing against a *stronger* opponent. The possibility of a memorable victory can lead a player to try to force the issue, perhaps under the impression that ‘the longer the game goes on, the more chances there are for me to go wrong’. This may even sometimes be true, but your wily opponent might be wise to your mindset and take

advantage of your agitation.

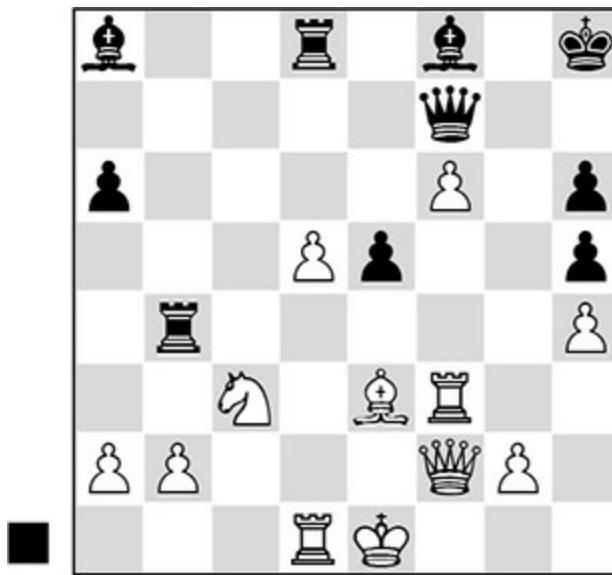
Levon Aronian

2772

Magnus Carlsen

2870

London 2019 (2.2)



The World Champion is two pawns down with a horrible position to boot. His bishops are hopelessly hemmed in by White's commanding pawns on d5 and f6, and his kingside is in tatters. Knowing that he has minimal survival chances following a normal course of events, Carlsen makes a calculated gamble:

34... xd5!!



Snatching White's trump card, Black also puts himself in a seemingly paralysing d-file pin. The pin is so debilitating that White wins slowly with any 'normal' move, such as 35. \hat{Q} f5! (eyeing up the pawns on e5 and h5) or 35.a3!, evicting Black's most active piece. But Aronian thinks he spots an immediate execution, and, after only 90 seconds of thought, he plunges head-first into the trap:

35. c5??

Seemingly crushing. If 35... ♕xc5 36. ♔xc5, Black loses his bishop on d5. But moving the rook on

b4 anywhere allows 36. $\mathbb{Q}xf8$ and Black would in any case need to remove a key defender from the d5-bishop, losing material. Did I say ‘anywhere’?

35... $\mathbb{Q}d4!!$



The brutal point of Black’s play. With one beautiful swoop, Carlsen simultaneously cuts off the lines of communication on the d-file and the g1-a7 diagonal. No matter how White captures next, a cruel intermediate move awaits him. If 36. $\mathbb{Q}xf8$ $\mathbb{Q}xd1+!$ and Black saves the piece, while 36. $\mathbb{Q}xd4$ $\mathbb{Q}xc5!$ turns the pinner into the pinned. A *zwischenzug* followed Aronian’s choice as well:

36. $\mathbb{Q}xd4$ $\mathbb{Q}xf3!$ 37. $gxf3$ $exd4$

And, although White retains an edge, the tables have certainly turned. The game was eventually drawn, Aronian’s impatience having cost him a famous victory.

There are many causes of impatience at the board: trying to win a won game, catching the last train home, a hot date¹⁷... but for some people, impatience is just an unshakeable personality trait. As we saw above, it often occurs along with hubris, which is no less a weakness for the eager Swindler to exploit. Turn the page.

CHAPTER 3

Hubris

I don't understand why arrogance is considered to be a bad thing at all. Maybe that's a sign of a narcissist and an arrogant person, but ok, who cares? – Magnus Carlsen

I suppose I could have called this flaw ‘Overconfidence’, but frankly I just like the word Hubris. Extreme, almost haughty self-belief is a common personality trait among today’s elite players (Fabiano Caruana being a notable exception).

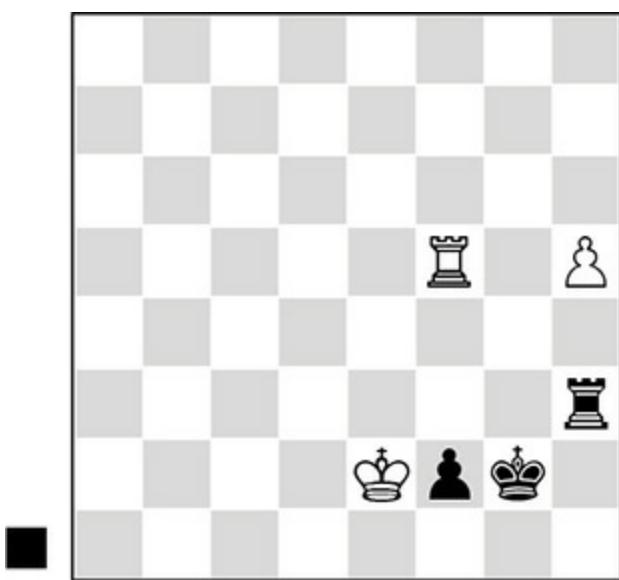
This is not a coincidence. There are many benefits to hubris in a chess sense. Self-confidence allows you to get over humanity’s natural risk-aversion, helps you to trust your intuition, motivates you to keep fighting, and spurs you on to train harder, because you seriously believe that glory awaits. A common theory for Kortchnoi’s incredible career longevity is that he was still striving to win that elusive World Championship until the end. Commentators have noted Topalov’s unwavering self-confidence as a key factor to his route to the crown. Kasparov has an established reputation for arrogance, Carlsen seems to revel in his, and Fischer’s conceit was legendary – the quote ‘I like the moment when I break a man’s ego’ is his. Good company, one might say.

But despite all that, too much confidence can be a weakness at times, which means it can be exploited. When the result seems a foregone conclusion, hubris can lead to complacency, which leads to carelessness – which, in turn, may lead to a different result!

I feel a little guilty including the following example, not only because it’s a blitz game, but also because Nakamura is quite down to earth in person, despite what you might read on internet forums. In fact, it is somewhat due to tempering his self-confidence gained from the bullet arena, where junk openings are perversely rewarded, that Nakamura finally broke into the world elite. Too bad; even if his arrogance is exaggerated, this game is a perfect illustration of our theme.

Shakhriyar Mamedyarov	2800
Hikaru Nakamura	2785

Paris blitz 2017 (16)

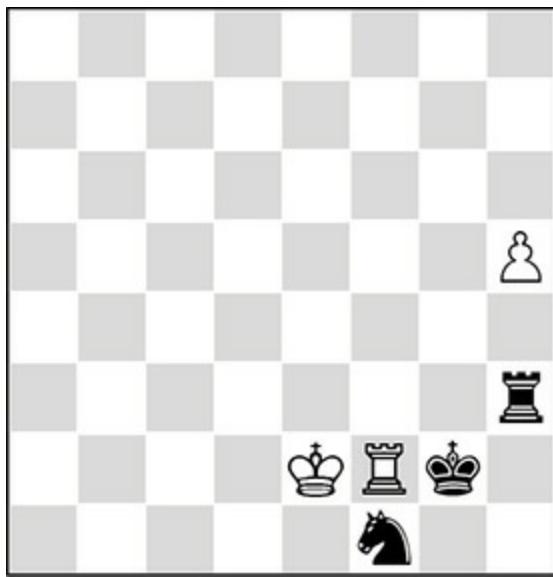


We pick up the action in the final stages of this clash between two of the world's blitz titans. White has been grimly hanging on in a hopeless endgame for some time, and his grit has paid off: two moves ago, Nakamura blundered away the win and now the position has simplified to a trivial draw. With an air of annoyance and what-does-it-matter-now, he plays a little joke:

77...f1?

Carelessness! Any other promotion would have drawn. Mamedyarov is too strong to miss such a chance:

78.♘f2+!!



A jarring check, and an unexpected punchline.

78...♔g1

To his horror, Nakamura realises that 78...♔g3 79.♘f3+! ♔g4 80.♘xh3 ♔xh3 81.♘xf1 wins for White. Therefore,

79.♘xf1+ ♔g2 80.♘f2+! ♔g1 81.♘f5

The ending is still drawn with correct technique, but the shock combined with the clock proves too much:

81...♗a3 82.♗h6 ♗h3 83.♗f6 ♗h2 84.♗f2 ♗h4 85.♗f3 ♗h3 86.♗g6 ♗a4 87.♗h7 ♗h4 88.♗g7 ♗h6??

88...♗h2! was the only move to draw. Now Mamedyarov has the last laugh.

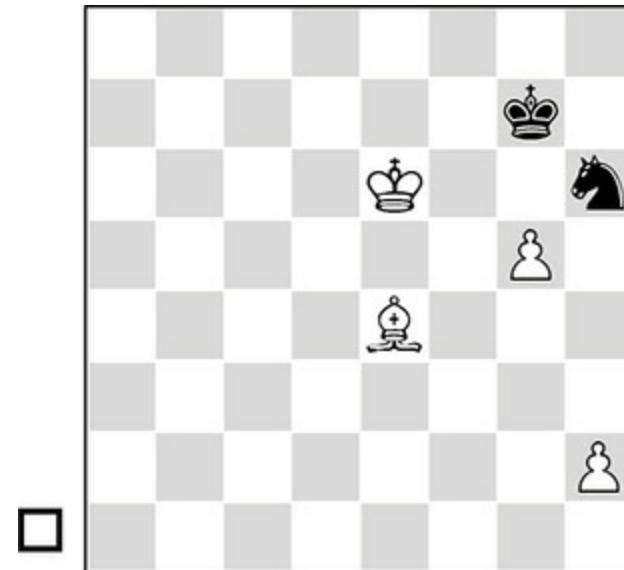
89.♗f4 ♗h4 90.♗f5 ♗h5+ 91.♗g6 ♗g4 92.♗f7+ 1-0

You're probably wondering what Black's reaction was after this game. Did he break a chair, refuse to shake hands or ice down Maurice Ashley in the interview? In fact, Nakamura just smiled. Sometimes in chess as in life, that's all you can do.

In a won position, hubris can cause a feeling of invulnerability. A player forgets all about double-checking their calculations, instead just 'believing' that a pretty idea or variation is winning. An unawareness of any small chances remaining in the position is the Swindler's playground, and we will later see how this can best be exploited via a Decoy Trap. Here's a quick teaser:

Murray Chandler	2575
Zsuzsa Polgar	2485

Biel 1987



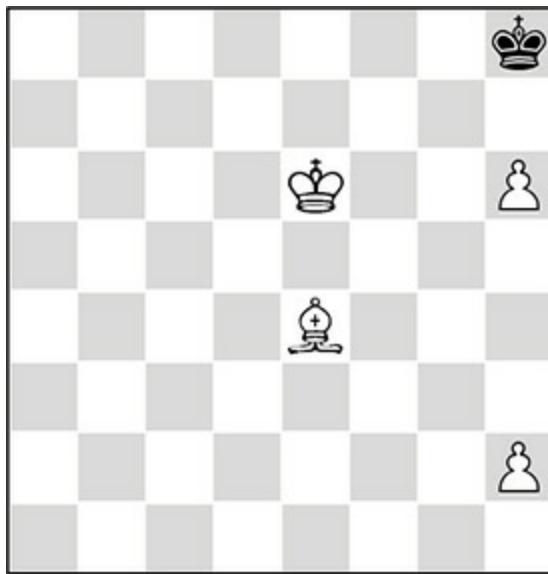
'Women can't play endgames,' a prominent commentator once said. That doesn't deserve a response, but one gender difference for which there is strong academic evidence is that men are on average more prone to overconfidence than women, especially when a situation involves risk.¹⁸

Here, Black has just played 53... ♜h6!, playing on her opponent's hubris: she tempts him with a 'clever' winning line that, however, has a rather large flaw. Chandler quickly spots the idea and – should we call this impatience, hubris, or perhaps a bit of both? – thinks that he has seen further. With a sense of finality, he confidently falls headlong into the trap:

54.gxh6+??

Expecting 54... ♛xh6 55. ♜f6! ♛h5 56. ♜f5!, when a subsequent ♛g7 will eventually shepherd the pawn home and so Black can resign.

54... ♛h8!!



It's so simple once you see it. Of course, it doesn't matter how many h-pawns White has, because as any endgame textbook will tell you, the result is still the same: draw.

CHAPTER 4

Fear

Later, I began to succeed in decisive games. Perhaps because I realised a very simple truth: not only was I worried, but so was my opponent. – Mikhail Tal

While Nakamura reached the world elite by tempering his self-confidence, Fabiano Caruana's rise was helped by getting over his timidity. Hubris and Fear are the two opposing sides of the spectrum and all of us fall on one side of the other, to differing degrees. That's yet another reason why we are no match for engines: a computer is never biased towards safety or risk-seeking, but instead just plays the best move. Or, as Fischer put it: 'You have to have confidence in yourself and this confidence should be based on fact.'

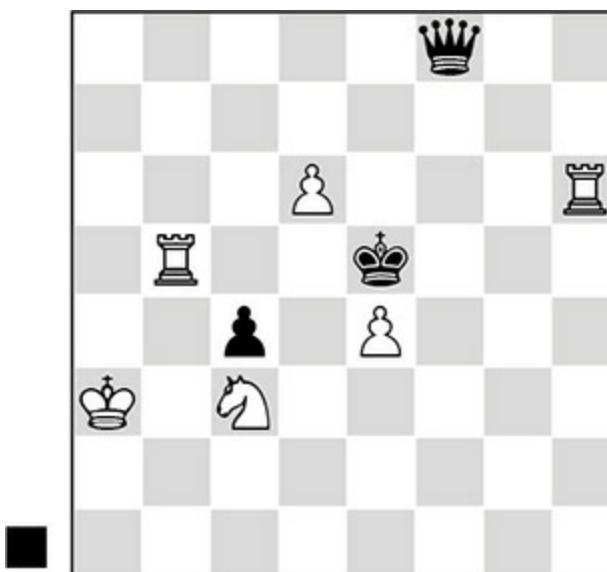
Fear is a natural bias. Humans are biologically programmed to be averse to risks and uncertainty, and generally speaking, this has served us well. It kept us alive on the Savannah when we encountered new species for the first time. It heightens our awareness and concentration. It helps insulate us from unexpected calamities, such as financial crashes. And we hate losing, even more than you might think. Psychologists and economists call this 'loss-aversion', a term popularised by Amos Tversky and the Nobel laureate Daniel Kahneman, who recently authored the best-selling book *Thinking Fast and Slow*. Many chess players suffer from this bias in a very specific form: somehow, through some evolutionary force or perhaps a subconscious false logic, the emotions from losing instead of drawing are more painful than the disappointment of drawing a won game.

But chess is a zero-sum contest: for every winner, there is a loser. A player must control his biases in order to maximise his expected points from a game. And just as overconfidence can be exploited, so too can fear.

Lawrence Trent 2470

Twan Burg 2350

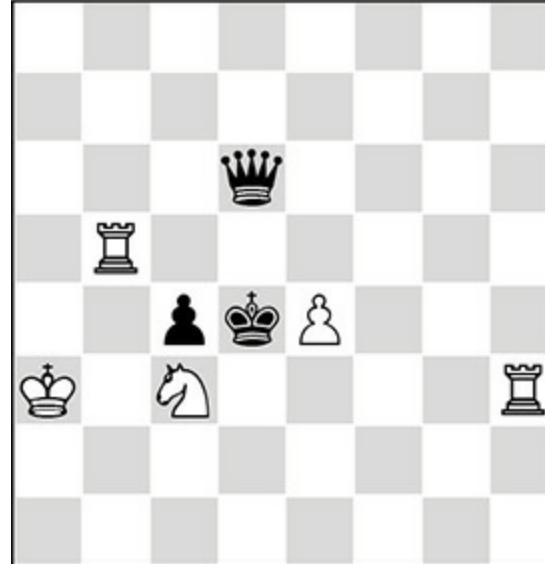
Benasque 2008 (6)



49... ♜ d4!

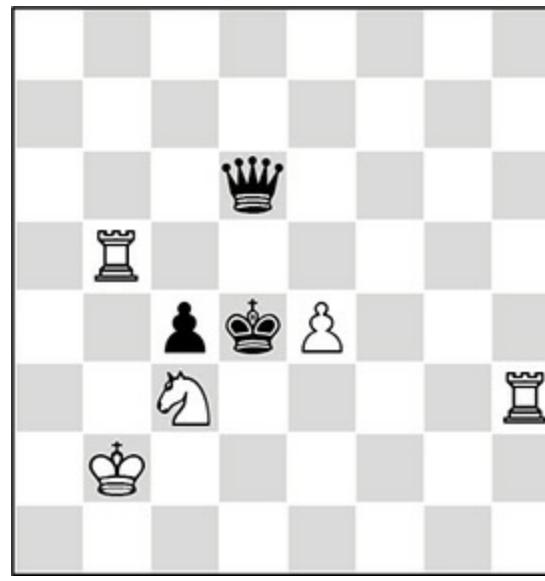
A lovely move to play in a lost position (only a true Swindler could use such a phrase). White has been desperately trying to keep control of his advantage, both materially and positionally, to nurse the game to victory without taking risks. But Black has continued to pose little obstacles. After the impertinent king move, White needs to take decisive action in order to secure victory, such as allowing the black king in with 50. ♜ e2+ or sacrificing a rook with 50. ♜ b4. But he just can't take the plunge. Ironically, White's fear of letting the win slip... lets the win slip.

50. ♜ h3?? ♜ xd6+



51. ♜ b2?

51. ♜ b4! keeps winning chances alive, though Black is well and truly back in the game.



51... ♜ a3+!!

Delivering a glorious mid-board stalemate.

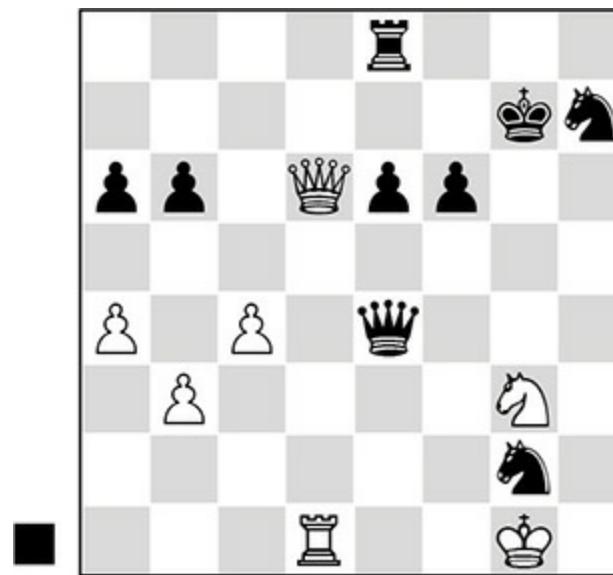
52. ♜ c2 ♜ c1+ ½-½

A nice example of how fear can ruin a won game, but not a great example of a swindle set-up. Black simply made the obvious moves and watched as his opponent self-destructed. In the next game, we see one of the greatest ever players deliberately playing to heighten his opponent's discomfort.

Anatoly Karpov

Istvan Csom

Bad Lauterberg 1977 (12)



It's not every day one finds himself a piece up against the World Champion. Perhaps it was the pressure of the occasion or perhaps it was the clock, but the black player, having played a brilliantly aggressive game until this point, starts to show clear signs of fear.

47... \mathbb{Q} a8

Not objectively a bad move, but the first indication of a timid mindset. Moves such as 47... \mathbb{Q} f3 or even 47... \mathbb{Q} g4 would have kept the initiative in Black's hands.

48. \mathbb{Q} c7+ \mathbb{K} h8?

And again. 48... \mathbb{Q} g6! was clearly winning, because after 49. \mathbb{R} d7 \mathbb{Q} g5 50. \mathbb{R} g7+ \mathbb{K} h6



analysis diagram

it's the white king who is in danger.

49. \mathbb{R} d7!



Sensing his opponent's trepidation, Karpov flings his pieces towards the black king, and in the process sets the scene for a famous swindle. Csom could have claimed a victory for the ages after 49... ♜g5!, with an overwhelming material advantage. Instead, fear got the better of him, and he chose to 'play it safe' with

49... ♜f8??

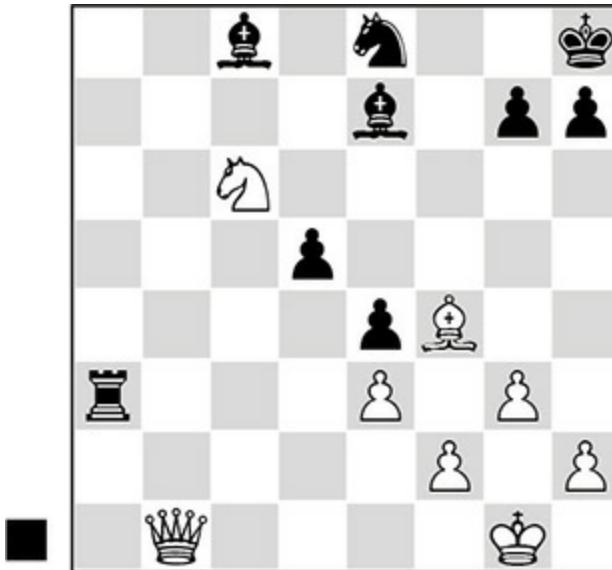
The World Champion pounced with the spectacular

50. ♜f5!!,



threatening both 51. ♜h7+ and 51. ♜h2+, and suddenly it's mate in five. Black resigned.

Fear can also take many forms over the chessboard. We have spoken of loss-aversion, whereby a player gives up the fight for the advantage in exchange for the safety net of a draw. But another common emotion is the fear of losing control, which we will speak about more in the next chapter. Won games don't win themselves, though many a player has blissfully settled into 'cruise control' after achieving a decisive advantage. Paradoxically, when our opponent looks smug and bored is often precisely the moment when they are most vulnerable to fear, and consequently when the power of surprise is most effective.



A queen for a rook and a bishop is not so bad, but the more important feature is that Black's forces are in disarray. For example: 34... $\mathbb{Q}f6$ 35. $\mathbb{Q}b4!$ and the weakness of Black's back rank is exposed. Objectively best is 34... $\mathbb{Q}f8$, but Black's coordination woes continue. For example: 35. $\mathbb{Q}g2$ (threatening $\mathbb{Q}b6$ and $\mathbb{Q}b8$) 35... $\mathbb{Q}a8$ 36. $\mathbb{Q}e5$ $\mathbb{Q}d7$ 37. $\mathbb{Q}b7$ $\mathbb{Q}xc6$ 38. $\mathbb{Q}xc6$ $\mathbb{Q}d8$ 39. $h4$



analysis diagram

and Black is completely paralysed (+9 according to my engine).

It is definitely time for Black to enter 'swindle mode', and the weakest point in White's camp is clearly the light-squares.

34... $\mathbb{Q}g4!!$



Rather than settling for passivity on her own back rank, Black launches a brazen *blitzkrieg*. It's more bark than bite, as any engine will tell you, and 35. $\mathbb{Q}b8!$ would show up Black's bluster for what it really is. But the change in character from back-rank defence to all-out attack catches White off-guard. As the time control looms, she becomes caught in the headlights of apprehension, and lunges for the bishop.

35. $\mathbb{Q}xe7?$

Expecting 35... $\mathbb{R}d3$, when 36. $\mathbb{Q}b8$ wins (among others). But Black has other ideas.

35... $\mathbb{Q}f3!!$



Shocking! Now White's queen is sentenced to defend the back rank, and the 'slow' threat of ... $\mathbb{R}a3-d3-d1$ is renewed. Suddenly, unable to find a defence to this crude plan, White has the feeling that she has been tricked, and panic starts to set in. This is precisely the emotional state the Swindler aims to induce. Rather than calmly searching for the solution (which, indeed, exists), White starts to think about bail-out options. With the time control still a few moves away, she gives in to the fear.

36. $\mathbb{Q}xd5??$

Another nervous capture. The simplest win was the surprisingly effective 36. $\mathbb{Q}f1!$ $\mathbb{R}d3$ 37. $\mathbb{Q}e1!$, and White will slowly unravel.

36... $\mathbb{R}d3$ 37. $\mathbb{Q}b4?$

Missing the last big chance: 37. $\mathbb{Q}c7!$ $\mathbb{Q}f6$ 38. $\mathbb{Q}e5!$ $\mathbb{R}d1+$ 39. $\mathbb{Q}xd1$ $\mathbb{Q}xd1$ 40. $\mathbb{Q}xf6$ $gxf6$ 41. $\mathbb{Q}f1$

with a reasonably easy-to-convert endgame.

37... ♕ d1+ 38. ♔ xd1 ♕ xd1



Black has completely turned the game on its head, with excellent chances to draw. It is a testament to the power of fear that White later blundered, even allowing Black to score the whole point.¹⁹

The philosopher Aristotle advised that ‘He who has overcome his fears will truly be free.’ This sounds a little too millennial for my tastes, but for us chess players, we might at least gain a few extra rating points. And isn’t that what life’s all about?

CHAPTER 5

Kontrollzwang

It is my style to take my opponent and myself on to unknown grounds. A game of chess is not an examination of knowledge; it is a battle of nerves. – David Bronstein

Just as impatience often goes hand in hand with hubris, so too is fear often seen together with our final flaw: *Kontrollzwang*. What's that, you say? You didn't expect to learn German in this book? I do apologise. But, as is so often the case when there's a common phenomenon that lacks a word in English, the Germans have an answer. And just think of it this way: you finally have a rhyming word for 'zugzwang' in your next chess poem.

But while *zugzwang* describes the compulsion to move, *Kontrollzwang* describes the compulsion to keep control. Its meaning is something between what we would use to describe a control freak and someone with obsessive compulsive disorder. I use it in chess to mean the need to keep control of a position and not let it get out of hand. A fear of complications, an aversion to complexity – whatever you want to call it – is the final key weakness of the chess player's psyche that a Swindler can exploit. I'm sure you can already guess how. If our opponent is afraid of chaos, then chaos is exactly what we'll give him.

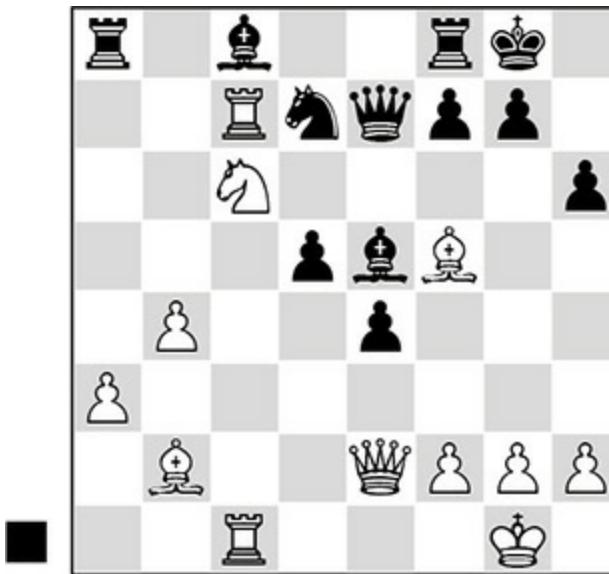
Kontrollzwang is a very common trait among chess players. Even World Champions are not immune; of the seventh World Champion Vasily Smyslov it was written: 'In this tournament²⁰... when Smyslov reached the point of exploiting the advantage he had built up, he could not avoid tactical continuations. For a long time, Smyslov has been one of these players who does not like to involve themselves in the calculation of precise variations.'

The writer of these biting words was Mikhail Tal, the eighth World Champion and one of the greatest *window-ledgers* in chess history. (Don't worry, we'll get to that later.) He had a talent for creating chaos from order and using complexity as a deadly weapon. Tal's road to the World Championship was paved by his victory in the extremely strong 1959 Candidates Cycle, where he finished ahead of Keres, Petrosian, Fischer and, yes, Smyslov.

Vasily Smyslov

Mikhail Tal

Bled/Zagreb/Belgrade ct 1959 (15)



Apparently, Smyslov had given an interview a few days before the game in which he had told a reporter that Tal's games were marred by luck, and that he regarded it his duty as a grandmaster to beat Tal in a proper manner when they faced each other. We join the game to find Smyslov well on his way to doing just that. In a fashion typical of his 'coiled spring' style, Smyslov dominates the entire board. The domination is even more evident after the engine's suggestion of 24... $\mathbb{B}f6$ 25. $\mathbb{Q}xe5$ $\mathbb{B}xf5$ 26. $\mathbb{N}c6!$ $\mathbb{Q}g5$ 27. $\mathbb{R}c3!$. Faced with painful suffocation, Tal responds in the only way he knew how. In his own words: 'Up until a certain point, Smyslov played the game brilliantly, and completely outplayed me, while in addition I had only 2-3 minutes left for some 15 moves. I had nothing to lose, there was no time for hesitation, and I only attempted to complicate my opponent's task in any way possible.'

24... $\mathbb{B}g5!$ 25. $\mathbb{h}4$

Winning a piece – the bishop on f5 is immune due to the fork on e7 – but the voluntary weakening of his kingside must have struck Smyslov deep in his *Kontrollzwang* bones.

25... $\mathbb{B}xh4$ 26. $\mathbb{Q}xe5$ $\mathbb{Q}xe5$ 27. $\mathbb{R}xc8$ $\mathbb{Q}f3+!!$

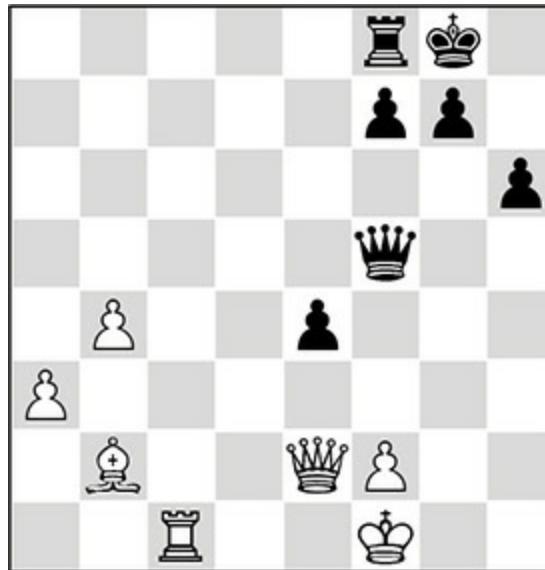


The point of Tal's play, ripping open the white king's defences. The position is clearly winning, but Smyslov no longer has the control he craves.

28. $\mathbb{g}xf3$ $\mathbb{B}g5+$ 29. $\mathbb{Q}f1$

Not 29. $\mathbb{Q}g4??$ $\mathbb{R}axc8!$.

29... ♜ xf5 30. ♜ xf8+ ♜ xf8 31. fxe4 dxe4



The board has cleared and White has emerged with an extra piece. But his king has lost most of his pawn defences and Black's two remaining pieces have found some activity.

32. ♜ e3 ♜ d8 33. ♜ g3 g5!

All troops into the attack!

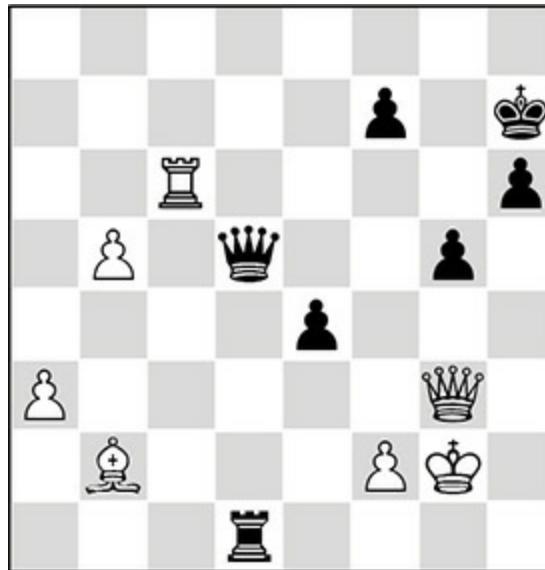
34. ♜ c5?

Smyslov continues in the style of ten moves ago, when White controlled the board and the initiative. But this move weakens the back rank and invites counter-play. Practically speaking, a better approach was to play it safe and nurse the extra material with 34. ♜ c3 or even 34. ♜ e1.

34... ♜ d1+ 35. ♜ g2 ♜ e6 36. b5 ♜ h7!

Pre-empting a check on the back rank.

37. ♜ c6 ♜ d5!

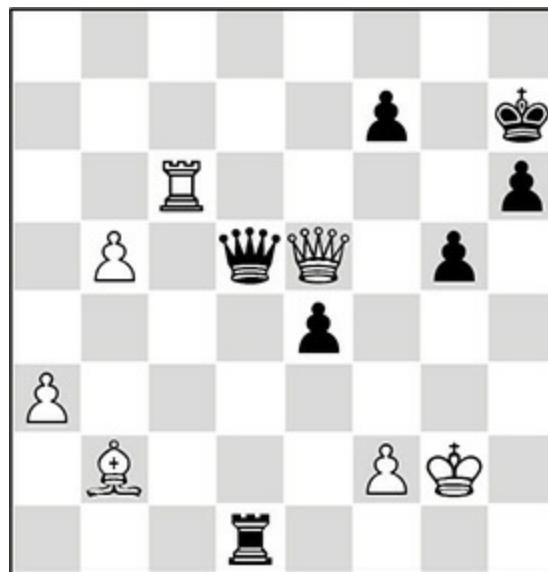


An excellent move, not just because it threatens the discovered check 38...e3+, but also because it invites an obvious and seemingly crushing refutation, a psychological combination that is hard to resist in time trouble.

38. ♜ e5??

Proposing both an exchange of queens as well as two mates in one. One can hardly ask for more from

a move – but with this, Smyslov throws away the win. Tal: ‘And then, with my flag horizontal, and a further four moves still to make, Smyslov ran into almost the only swindle I had managed to think up.’



38... ♕ g1+!!

A fantastic trick, brought about by the pressure and the chaos created by Tal’s earlier play. If 39. ♔xg1 ♕d1+ and Black secures a perpetual on the squares d1, f3 and h5.

39. ♔h2 ♕h1+!! 40. ♔g2 ♕g1+ ½-½

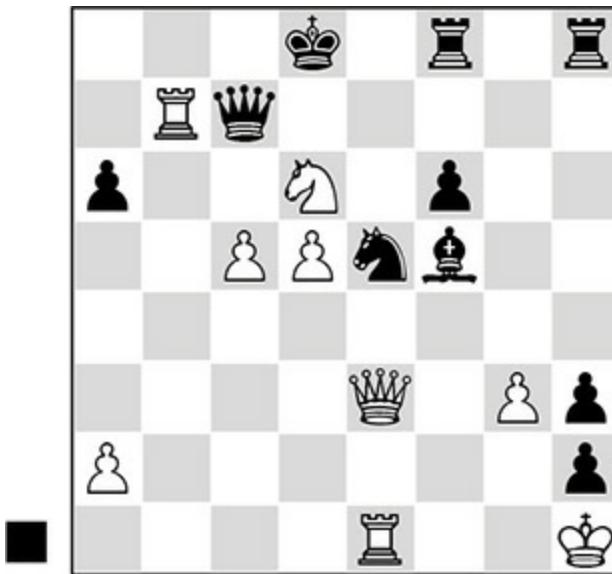
I’ll leave the final commentary to Tal: ‘Smyslov is normally imperturbable at the board, but here after 39... ♕h1+, his face changed, and after thinking for some three minutes, he made his reply and slammed his clock with furious force. Some of the pieces fell over, but contrary to my normal practice, I first gave check with my rook on g1, pressed my clock, and only then began to restore order on the board. White could no longer escape from perpetual check.’

Here’s a more recent example from an amateur game.

Helen Milligan **2016**

Junta Ikeda **2275**

Canberra 2010 (2)



It's a horrible feeling to be sitting in front of a lost position and a delighted opponent who appears to have already calculated all the winning lines. In such situations, it is useful to remind yourself that they almost certainly haven't calculated ALL the wins, just those against your natural moves. And that tells us what the Swindler's strategy should be: look for an unnatural move! In this position, Black is facing an engine evaluation of +7 and is certain to lose at least a piece, if not be mated. White's pieces dominate the board and her king seems quite safe and snug behind the shelter of Black's doubled h-pawns.

In short, White is in complete control. Ikeda finds a move most of us wouldn't consider:

32... ♕g4!! 33. ♖xc7 ♔xc7

And not 33... ♔f3+?? 34. ♕xf3 ♕xf3 35. ♖ee7 and mate next move.

34. ♖f1 ♕b8!



Materially speaking, Black's position is not so bad, although the computer evaluates it as +16! Most importantly, White now has to change her mindset from automatic attack to watching out for tactics in her own backyard. It's a subtle switch, but an important one, and one that White fails to make. Any sensible queen move that covers either b1 or g4 wins (you'll soon see why), but White doesn't spot the threat and responds with a very natural reaction to the feeling of losing control: she brings back her knight to the defence.

35. ♔e4??



35... ♜f3+!

Clearing the g4-square for the knight. The only way to prevent mate is to enter a losing endgame with 36. ♖xf3. Instead, the game finished:

36. ♜xf3 ♜b1+!

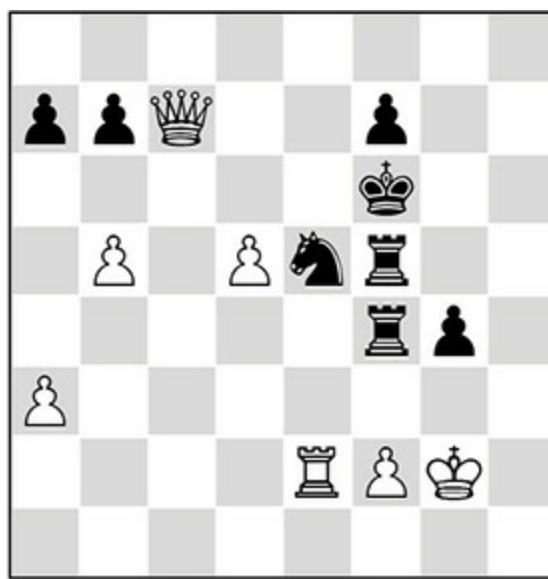
With mate to follow.

Remember the name of the black player; we'll be seeing more of him later.

A common method of exploiting *Kontrollzwang* is to force your opponent to change their plans. One moment they're sitting comfortably in their chair, with a clear plan of conversion (such as pushing their passed pawn, or ganging up on a weakness), and the next moment – BAM! – they are faced with a completely different set of problems to solve. Sometimes this can be achieved by offering up a juicy target for your opponent to chase – and what morsel is more mouth-wateringly tempting than an exposed king?

Damia Benet Morant	2082
Fedja Zulfic	2160

Gold Coast 2019 (9)

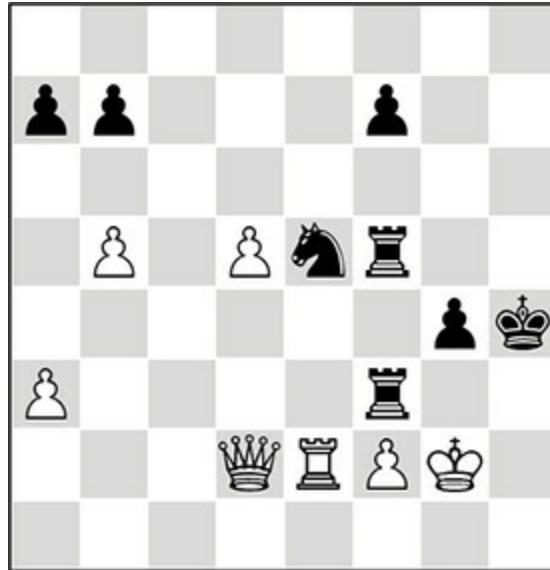


White has a material advantage and a clear plan of pushing the d-pawn. Business-as-usual just won't do for Black. He instead tries to distract White by throwing his king into the open field.

41... g5!!

Offering up a small trap: 42. xe5?? xf2+! draws by perpetual check. But there is no reason for White to deviate from her course, and, though there are several winning moves, perhaps the most straightforward is to press on with 42.d6, intending 42... d4 (forced) 43. e7+! (but not 43. xb7?? f3!) 43...f6 44. xb7 xd6 45. xa7 and there is no stopping the b-pawn. But White suddenly has eyes for the bigger prize, and loses focus.

42. c3? f3! 43. d2+ h4!



A brilliant psychological move. It is completely losing, as after the crude 44. xe5! xe5 45.d6 there is no way to stop White's passed pawn. But on the other hand, by placing his king in such a precarious position, Black practically invites White to play the obvious check.

44. h6+?

Hard to resist, but the check possibly throws away the win, and certainly makes White's life much more difficult.

44... h5 45. f8?!

45. g7! is the most testing move, which would allow Black to show off his complete range of trickery: 45... g6! 46.d6 f4+ 47. f1 g3!!.



analysis diagram

A stunning counterattack by Black's depleted forces. Now after 48. $\mathbb{Q}f6+?? \mathbb{Q}h3!$ 49. $\mathbb{R}d2 \mathbb{Q}h2!!$, White would even lose. What a march! Stronger is 48.d7!, threatening to promote with check (e.g. after 48...g2+? 49. $\mathbb{Q}xg2$). Black needs to give up a rook to stop the pawn, but his remaining pieces, aided by their king, remain supremely coordinated. There might follow 48... $\mathbb{R}d5!$ 49. $\mathbb{Q}h8+ \mathbb{Q}g4$ 50.d8 \mathbb{Q} $\mathbb{R}xd8$ 51. $\mathbb{Q}xd8 \mathbb{Q}xe2!!$ (better than 51...g2+, as it turns out that Black's advanced g-pawn is worth more than a piece) 52. $\mathbb{Q}d7+ f5$ 53. $\mathbb{Q}xe2 \mathbb{R}xf2+$ 54. $\mathbb{Q}e1 \mathbb{R}f3!!$.



analysis diagram

My analysis suggests that this is drawn. For example: 55. $\mathbb{Q}xb7 g2$ 56. $\mathbb{Q}g7+ \mathbb{Q}h3$ 57. $\mathbb{Q}e2 \mathbb{R}g3$ and White must force a draw by perpetual check.

45... $\mathbb{Q}g6!$ 46. $\mathbb{Q}d8+ f6!$



Suddenly, White has run out of checks, while Black's counterattack is ready to launch. The immediate threat is 47... ♜ f4+ 48. ♛ f1 g3, with similar play to the last note. Notice how White's queen is cut off from the action, while Black's brazen king is actually rather safe, in addition to playing a role in the attack. White, unexpectedly finding herself on a tightrope, succumbs to the fear.

47. ♜ e4??

White panics. Her desperation to eliminate the black knight when it arrives on f4 is perfectly understandable. However, the rook was needed to defend f2.

The win was in any case gone, but the most straightforward way to secure the draw was the brave 47.d6! ♜ f4+ 48. ♛ f1 g3 and only now 49. ♜ e4!, pinning the knight and ensuring its removal on the next move. Black's rooks and pawn are still dangerously placed, but are only good enough for a draw.

47... ♜ hf5!

Threatening mate in three.

48. ♜ e1? ♜ xf2+ 49. ♛ g1 ♜ e5

Good enough for the win, but it's a shame that Black didn't continue with the poetic 49... ♛ h3!



analysis diagram

which forces checkmate and would be a fitting reward for the king's bravery. E.g. 50.d6 ♜ g2+ 51. ♛ h1 ♜ ff2 52. ♜ e3+ ♜ g3 53. ♜ xg3+ ♛ xg3 54. ♛ g1 ♜ f4 with mate to follow.

50. ♕ h8+?

50. ♔ c7! would have prolonged the contest.

50... ♕ g3! 51. ♕ b8 ♕ g2+ 0-1

A well-earned swindle. Black successfully upended White's control of the position, diverting all attention from her plans. The poor d-pawn never even made it to d6.

CHAPTER 6

The Swindler's Mind

A few days pass, and suddenly you involuntarily begin to sense that, without chess, there is something missing in your life. Then you may rejoice: you belong to that group of people without a natural immunity to the chess disease.’ – Mikhail Tal

We've seen the sorts of traits that we might expect to find in a victim of swindles. But what sorts of traits do we need to *be* a Swindler?

Ask any great player (or even just your local club hustler) how they come up with their swindles, and you're likely to be disappointed. They'll tell you they're good at ‘seeing’ things, that they have a ‘feel’ for tricks, and that they seem to get lucky a lot. If they’re really honest, they’ll just say ‘I don’t know’ – because the truth is, normally each individual Swindler is born with a natural gift for the craft, which unfortunately means they’re not much good at explaining how they do it.

And Swindlers come in different shapes and sizes. There are the arrogant ones, the gregarious types with irritable personalities and a penchant for gamesmanship... but just as common are the quiet, gentle Swindlers, the introverts, the silent wood-pushers with poker faces and a meekness that belies their guile.

But luckily for us, there are some common patterns. What do our Swindlers all have in common? For one, they hate losing. Now, we all want to win and we’d all prefer not to lose, but I’m talking about a raw, deep-seated *abhorrence* for losing. Even seen a clip of Carlsen losing a blitz game? Watched Nakamura’s reaction to a loss in an online stream? Witnessed Kasparov’s facial expressions after a blunder?²¹ These guys make their feelings about losing well-known. But just because some other elite players aren’t as free with their expressions, doesn’t mean they don’t equally detest failure over the board. Luckily for them, they don’t do it very often. But the lesson for us is that such emotions are healthy for our chess results: they drive us to strive harder, to put up stiffer resistance, and to keep fighting for hours just for that tiny chance that we can avoid a big fat ‘zero’ next to our name. To be more specific, there are two traits you’ll need in large dosage in order to become a great Swindler: Grit and Optimism.

CHAPTER 7

Grit

'Tis but a scratch. – The Black Knight in *Monty Python and the Holy Grail*.

What's the key to success? In recent years, researchers have discovered that the recipe involves more than just being born with a high IQ or raw talent. One of the strongest predictors for success is the strength of your character, and specifically your resolve and determination in the face of obstacles. To use the modern buzzword, you've got to have grit.

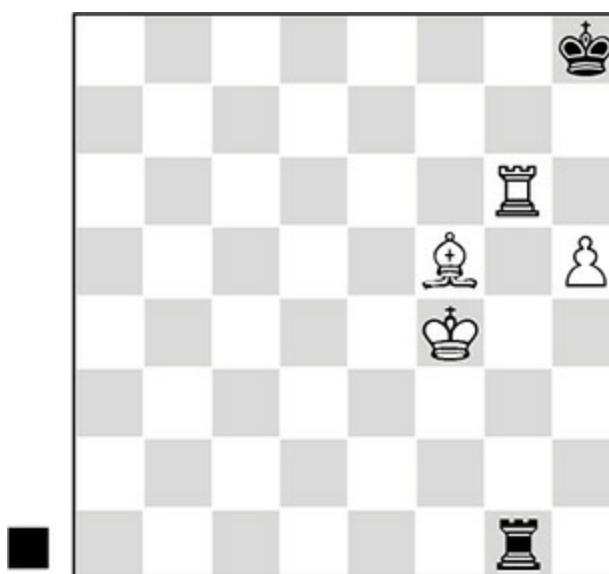
Angela Duckworth, author of *Grit: The Power of Passion and Perseverance*, is the best-known researcher of the role grit plays in exceptional performance. She talks about grit as a combination of passion and perseverance. It's a resolve to not give up even if the task is frustrating or boring or painful; to show dogged resilience despite strenuous obstacles and seemingly inevitable failure, in situations when most of us would roll over. Duckworth sparked the modern usage of 'grit', but the Finnish people have had their own word for years: *Sisu*, meaning courage, willpower and persistence in the face of adversity and repeated failures. *Sisu* has been described both as personifying the Finns' national character and as their favourite word.²²

Talent and intelligence are important, of course. But once you look beyond the things we can't change, grit stands out as the personality trait most associated with success across many domains. Researchers have shown that grit predicts which cadets graduate out of military academy, which athletes make it to the Olympics, and which employees get promoted to senior management and beyond. In chess, things are even simpler: grit saves points.

When your position is so bad to the point of being depressing, that's where grit makes the difference. You may feel like resigning and heading straight for the bar, but a gritty player keeps on going – and not only just going through the motions of playing moves, but actively, strenuously looking to squeeze the best possible chances out of the position. Maybe you end up losing anyway, and maybe you lose again next time, too. But if you can save half a point every five games, and you play thirty games a year, that's a gain of about 30 rating points a year, just for hanging in there.²³

If grit is a predictor of success in chess, then the young Iranian sensation Parham Maghsoodloo is someone to keep a close eye on.

Pouria Darini	2518
Parham Maghsoodloo	2576



After being hopelessly outplayed in the middlegame, Maghsoodloo has deliberately aimed for this ending. It is of course lost,²⁴ but it offers some practical challenges thanks to the wrong-coloured rook pawn. It's already been ten moves since the last capture or pawn move, and now Black starts to turn the annoyance factor up to the max.

77... ♜g2!

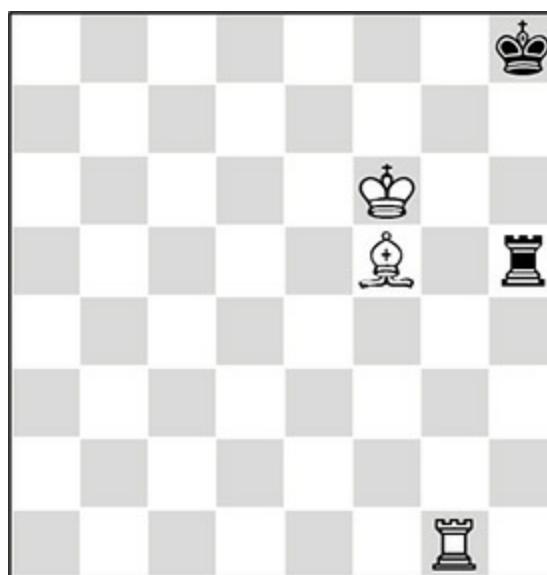
Taking advantage of his own king's immobility, which is actually Black's main swindling weapon. The self-stalemate possibilities complicate White's task. Of course, not 77... ♜xg6?? 78.hxg6!.

78.♔e5 ♜g5!

Frustrating! The rook is still immune to capture.

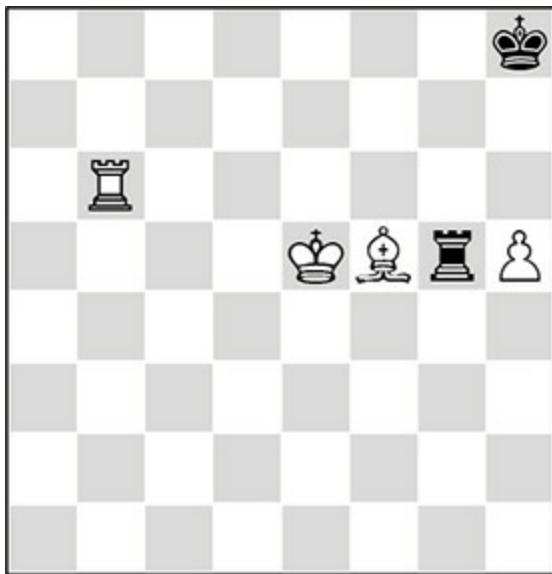
79.♜b6

There was also an element of bluff to Black's last move, banking on White dogmatically avoiding the dreaded ♜+♝ vs ♜ endgame. But in fact, giving up the pawn was the fastest way to win: 79.♔f6! ♜xh5 80.♜g1.



analysis diagram

Placing Black in zugzwang, as moving the rook h2 or h4 allows 81.♔f7 and 82.♜g8 mate. Black can try 80... ♜h6+ to answer 81.♔f7?? with 81... ♜f6+!, but White can avoid this: 81.♝g6 ♜h2 82.♜e1! and mate is unavoidable.

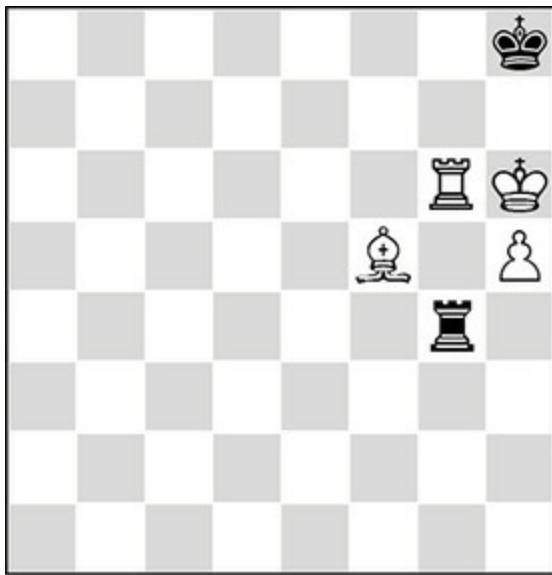


Still, Darini is no slouch and correctly spots that after his move 77. $\mathbb{Q}b6$, the pawn is also immune from capture: 79... $\mathbb{Q}xh5??$ 80. $\mathbb{Q}f6$ wins immediately. But Maghsoodloo isn't done annoying his opponent yet.

79... $\mathbb{Q}g1$ 80. $\mathbb{Q}h6+$ $\mathbb{Q}g8$ 81. $\mathbb{Q}f6$ $\mathbb{Q}f1!$

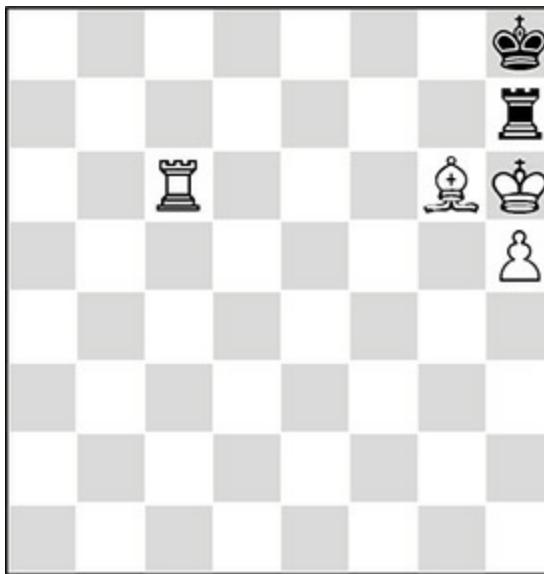
Preventing 82. $\mathbb{Q}e6+$.

82. $\mathbb{Q}g6+$ $\mathbb{Q}h8$ 83. $\mathbb{Q}g5$ $\mathbb{Q}g1+$ 84. $\mathbb{Q}h6$ $\mathbb{Q}g4!!$



Maghsoodloo again finds the path of most resistance. Both grandmasters would have been fully aware that White's position is winning, but Black demands that White 'prove it'.

85. $\mathbb{Q}c6$ $\mathbb{Q}g7$ 86. $\mathbb{Q}g6$ $\mathbb{Q}h7+!$

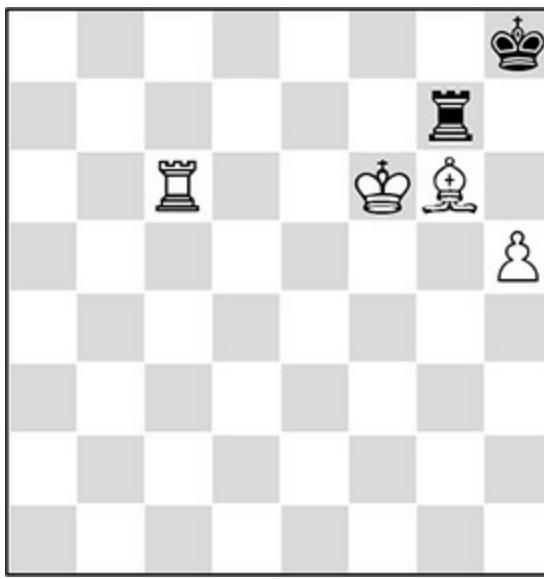


Yet another variation on the stalemate theme. Black's kamikaze rook always seems to come to his king's aid just in time.

87.♕g5 ♜g7 88.♕f6?!

Signalling that White hasn't worked out the winning plan, which must have given Maghsoodloo renewed hope. White returns the king to where it was only a few moves before, having failed to realise the correct sequence. In fact, he has a forced mate in 11 with 88.h6! followed by bringing the bishop to e6. For a grandmaster, the calculations are minimal. But focus becomes difficult in the face of all of these little niggles, and instead, White starts to lose his way.

88.h6 ♜g8 89.♖c7 ♜f8 90.♖e7 ♜b8 91.♗f7 ♜b5+ (91...♚h7 92.♗e6+ ♚h8 93.♗g6) 92.♗f6 ♜b6+ 93.♗e6 ♜b5 94.♗e8+ ♚h7 95.♗f5+ and wins.



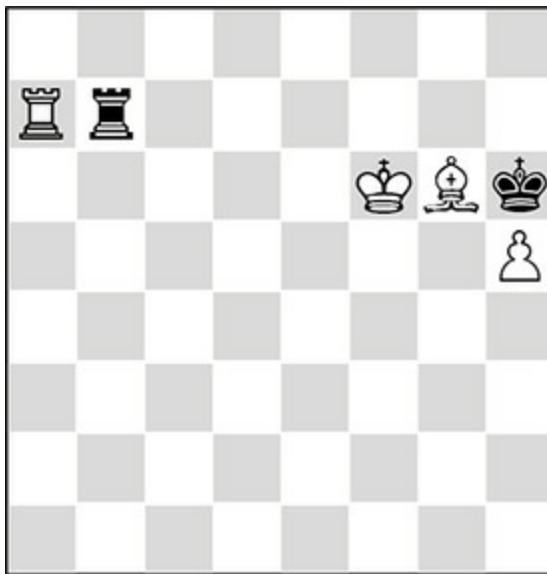
88...♜g8 89.♖b6 ♜f8+ 90.♗f7 ♚h7!

Sensing that White is close to working out the winning manoeuvre, Black takes his chance to run with the king before White hits on the correct move-order. White's forces have lost some of their coordination, which allows the black king a small window to escape from the corner.

91.♖b7

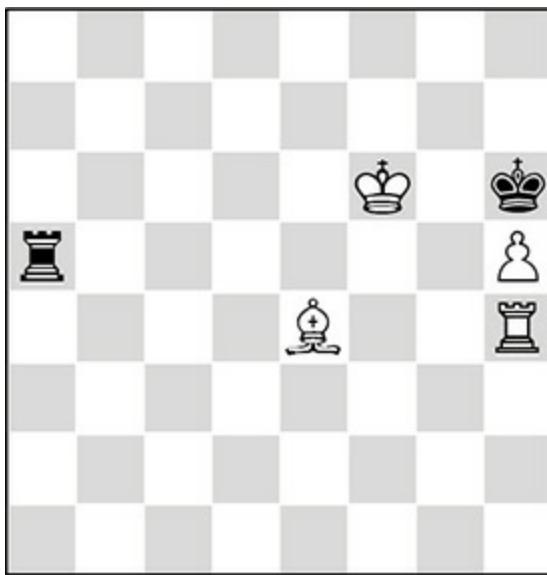
Despite Black's last move, 91.h6! was still the fastest path to victory, because 91...♚xh6?? 92.♖b5 wins on the spot.

91...♚h6! 92.♖a7 ♜b8 93.♗g6?? ♜b7!



Yet another stalemate twist. How is White to avoid the rampaging rook now? In fact, the win is still available, but we can well imagine Darini's vexation at this point.

94. $\mathbb{R}a1$ $\mathbb{R}a7!$ 95. $\mathbb{R}h1$ $\mathbb{R}a1!$ 96. $\mathbb{R}h3$ $\mathbb{R}a3$ 97. $\mathbb{R}h4$ $\mathbb{R}a4$ 98. $\mathbb{Q}e4$ $\mathbb{R}a5!$



We have reached the boiling point for White's frustrations. He has been constantly impeded in his quest, to the point where he is now much further from delivering checkmate than he was a dozen moves ago. Irritated and exhausted, White is unable to concede that he should retrace his steps to force the black king back again to the corner.

99. $\mathbb{R}f4?$

99. $\mathbb{Q}f3!$ is still winning, though White is getting dangerously close to fifty moves without a pawn move or capture. Instead, Darini decides to jettison the pawn and play for the rook-and-bishop versus rook ending, which is notoriously difficult to defend. But just look at how fittingly Maghsoodloo completes the swindle:

99... $\mathbb{R}a6+$ 100. $\mathbb{Q}e5$ $\mathbb{Q}xh5$ 101. $\mathbb{Q}f3+$ $\mathbb{Q}g6$ 102. $\mathbb{R}g4+$ $\mathbb{Q}h6$ 103. $\mathbb{Q}e4$ $\mathbb{R}a5+!!$

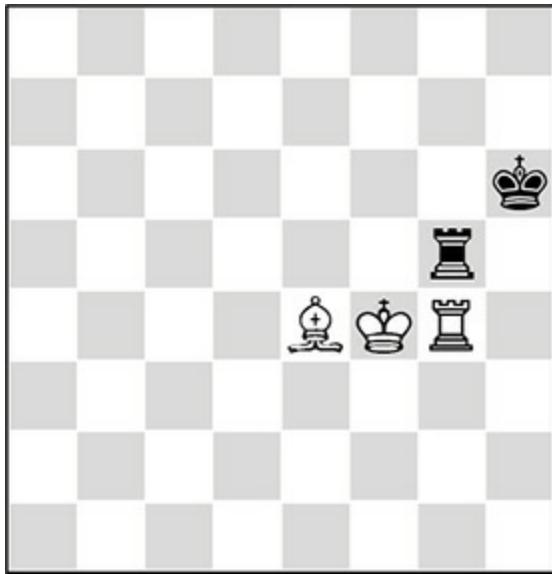


A fantastic trap, as

104. ♜f4??,

which was played, is such a natural-looking and often winning move in this famous endgame. However, this position is a quirky exception:

104... ♕g5!!



An appropriate finish to a wonderfully gritty defensive effort. The black rook manages to sacrifice itself for the cause after all.

105. ♕xg5 ½-½

CHAPTER 8

Optimism

The only one who can beat me is me. – Michael Jordan

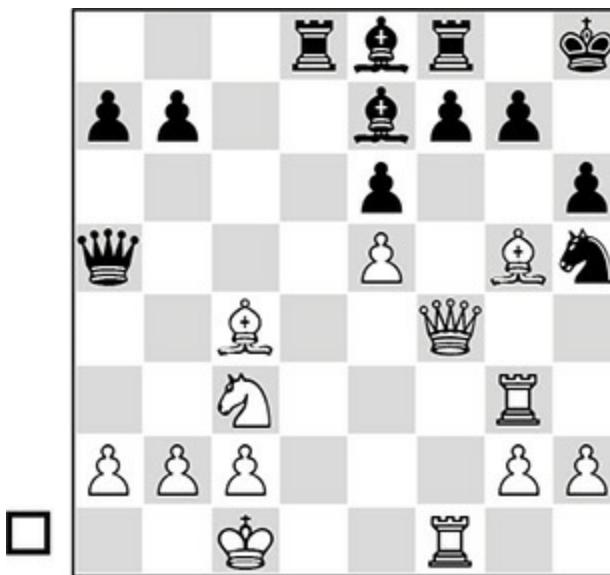
The finale of *Monty Python's Life of Brian* is recognised as one of the greatest scenes in cinema comedy. As the luckless Brian hangs on his crucifix awaiting his death, the crucified man hanging alongside tries to convince him that things are not so bad. Before long, thirty crucified prisoners are cheerfully singing in chorus to ‘always look on the bright side of life’, in bittersweet irony to their current plight.

So, too, should be your attitude to a lost position. Optimism is a key weapon in the Swindler’s arsenal, serving two important purposes. Firstly, it’s much easier to stay determined and ‘gritty’ if you believe the chances of success are good. And secondly, displays of optimism can be quite unsettling for opponents who expect you to resign. They start second-guessing themselves, checking for what they’ve missed in their calculations. Even if they come to reassure themselves of their objective superiority, your buoyant optimism can irritate and frustrate them, leading to a loss in concentration and a heightened susceptibility to impatience and hubris. We want our opponents to be focusing on their emotions, not their calculations. Optimism is thus often a self-fulfilling prophecy: by convincing yourself that there’s hope, you end up creating it.

It is not hard to find optimists among the world’s elite. The World Championship challenger Efim Bogoljubow’s optimism was legendary, as is his immortal quote: ‘When I am White I win because I am White. When I am Black I win because I am Bogoljubow.’²⁵ Kramnik was famous for his optimism during his games and, in the later years of his career, even about his lost positions. Kasparov recently called himself ‘an incorrigible optimist by nature.’ Carlsen believes that as a chess player, ‘you need to have that confidence, you need to have that absolute belief that you’re the best and that you’ll win every time.’

Optimists are common among grandmasters, and each nation seems to have at least one well-known chess idealist. In India there is Baskaran Adhiban; in Hungary, there is Richard Rapport. England has Gawain Jones, Germany has Arkadij Naiditsch and Georgia has Baadur Jobava. But chess communities at all levels have their notable personalities in this respect – the club regulars who unshakably, dogmatically believe that they are winning, no matter what the objective reality is on the 64 squares. The Dutch IM Manuel Bosboom is famous for banging down move after move as if each one is the brilliancy of the year, no matter how many queens he is short. In Australia, we have the international master Stephen Solomon, of whom it is said any endgame is winning up to a four-pawn deficit.

Optimism is often seen together with attacking prowess and creativity. The player with the white pieces in our first example is a well-known case in point.



A typical position for the man who might well have been called the Magician from Riga, if only that name wasn't already taken. Shirov has gone all out with his kingside attack, but Kramnik has been equal to the challenge and has calculated well.

It seems White has no choice but to enter the forcing simplifications after 18. $\mathbb{Q}h4$ $\mathbb{Q}xg3$ 19. $\mathbb{Q}xe7$ $\mathbb{Q}xf1$ 20. $\mathbb{Q}xd8$ $\mathbb{Q}xe5$ 21. $\mathbb{Q}xf1$ $\mathbb{Q}e3+$ 22. $\mathbb{Q}b1$ $\mathbb{Q}c6$



analysis diagram

with an ending that favours Black on account of White's uncoordinated forces. This is not a prospect one looks forward to defending against Kramnik, so Shirov decides to roll the dice instead.

18. $\mathbb{Q}xh6!?$



The great advantage of being optimistic at the board is that your opponent can never be sure whether or not your bravado is actually winning. Often the optimist also doesn't know!

18... ♜ xf4 19. ♜ xg7+ ♔ h7 20. ♜ xf4 ♜ g8 21. ♜ fg4



Black is a queen for a knight ahead, but the deadly threat is mate in one, and it isn't easy to parry. Frustrated, Kramnik acquiesces to the perpetual check:

21... ♜ xg7 22. ♜ xg7+ ♔ h6 23. ♜ g8 ♔ h7 24. ♜ 8g7+ ½-½

So, was this a swindle, or was the attack sound after all? Take another look at the diagram above and see if you can spot what Kramnik missed.

It turns out that Shirov's 'fire on the board' was actually more smoke this time. Kramnik could have won a brilliancy with 21... ♜ xc3!!.



analysis diagram

Now 22. $\mathbb{Q}xc3$ $\mathbb{Q}xg7$ leaves Black a piece up, while the exquisite point is that 22. $bxc3$ $\mathbb{Q}a3+$ 23. $\mathbb{Q}b1$ $\mathbb{Q}d1$ is mate!

To further illustrate our theme, we're going to go way, way back in time, to the days when swindling was truly an artform. I must confess that I have never paid much attention to old games, despite many times hearing a coach say: 'You have to know the classics.' It's a bias that a lot of the younger generation shares, though to be honest, I'm not certain how serious an omission this really is in the computer age. But one thing's for sure: when it comes to swindles, there are some treasures to be found in the annals of chess history.

Here is an absolute gem from 1851. Carl Jaenisch was one of the world's strongest players at the time, and is perhaps best known for his opening work on the Petroff Defence and the Schliemann Gambit in the Spanish (also called the Jaenisch, in fact).

Shumov, a Russian navy officer, is our Swindler.

Ilya Shumov

Carl Friedrich von Jaenisch

St Petersburg m 1851

1.e4 c5 2.d4 cxd4 3. $\mathbb{Q}f3$ e5 4. $\mathbb{Q}xe5??$ $\mathbb{Q}a5+$

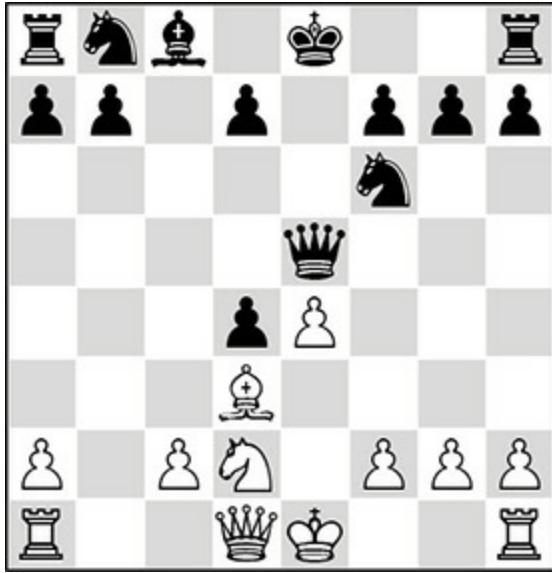


Oops! Even though there was barely any opening theory in the 1850s, there's no excuse for missing this. Of course, such a position against an elite player would immediately be resigned in today's tournaments. And most likely you would want to, too – only the most extreme of optimists could hold their head up after this monstrosity. But there was a different chess culture a century ago, and despite our many advancements, there are still things we can learn from the fighting spirit of the classical masters.

5.b4!

And why not?

5... ♕xb4+ 6. ♔d2 ♕xd2+ 7. ♔xd2 ♙xe5 8. ♔d3 ♘f6



What's good about White's position? Admittedly, not much. However, he has a slight lead in development, Black's king is yet to find safety and the black queen is a little exposed. If White is to have any chances, it must be via a lightning-fast assault before Black can make his huge material advantage count.

9.0-0 0-0 10.f4! ♖c5 11.e5! ♘d5

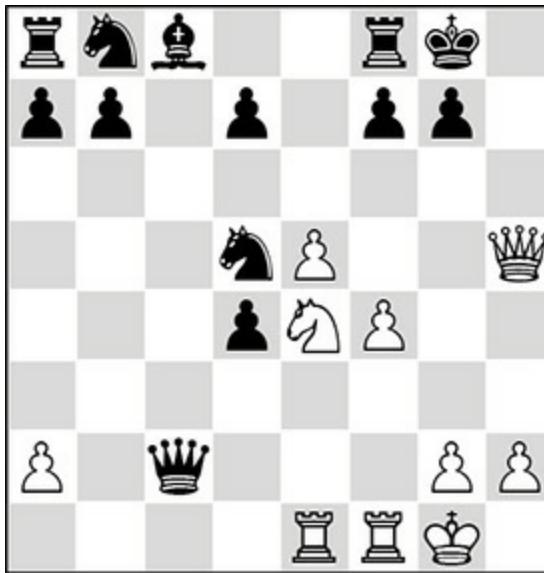


12. ♜xh7+!?

It turns out that 12. ♜h5! was actually very strong. But the point I want to illustrate is that Shumov was prepared to pull the trigger in order to put pressure on his opponent. He rips open the black kingside in a familiar way, not as part of the well-known mating combination but just to create some havoc in the position.

Notice that for the time being, Black's completely undeveloped queenside cancels out the material advantage when it comes to a skirmish on the other side of the board.

12... ♛xh7 13. ♜h5+ ♕g8 14. ♜e4 ♜xc2 15. ♜ae1



White may be two pieces down, and yet somehow one gets the feeling that White's forces are larger – at least on the kingside, where it counts. Don't forget that Black is the stronger player in this game, and in fact at the time was one of the world's best! It's very likely that Shumov's optimism combined with his aggressive, energetic strategy has affected Von Jaenisch's play. Now, 16. ♜f3 is a serious threat, and so Black's next move seems forced.

15... ♜e3?

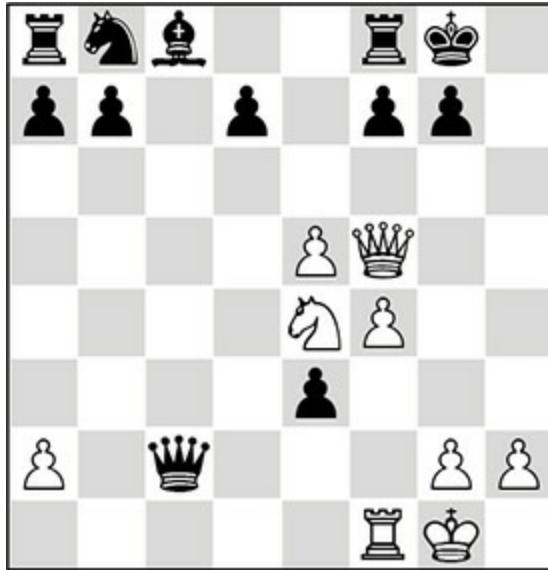
The computer points out that 15... ♜c6! wins, with the idea of 16. ♜d6 d3! 17. ♜f3 d2! 18. ♜ef1 ♜c5+ 19. ♔h1 ♜c1. However, there's one more beautiful swindling idea even in this winning variation. White can try 20. ♜g5! with the point that 20... d1? ??



analysis diagram

runs into the fabulous sequence 21. ♜ xg7+!! ♛ xg7 22. ♕ g3+ ♛ h6 23. ♔ f5+ ♛ h7 24. ♕ h3+ ♛ g6 25. ♔ h4+ ♛ h5 26. ♔ f5+ after which White, despite being two queens, a knight and a bishop behind, steals an improbable draw by perpetual check.

16. ♕ xe3 dxe3 17. ♔ f5!!



Incredibly, White continues to conjure up threats and tactics with his meagre forces. There is still one narrow route to victory for Black, but it involves a big commitment: Black must give up his queen for the knight on e4. Von Jaenisch, however, can't bring himself to accept the reality of the changed circumstances. This is a common psychological flaw of chess players, and one of the most exploitable biases for the Swindler. Instead of swallowing his pride, Von Jaenisch – understandably – brings his queen to the defence of the kingside. But his queenside remains at home...

17... ♔ e2? 18. ♔ f6+!! gx f6 19. exf6



Brilliant. With only a queen and a pawn in play, White completes his swashbuckling attack in style. Black has a massive material advantage, but his forces paint a depressing picture. The last moves were likely made out of inertia.

19... ♕c2 20. ♕xc2 d5 21. ♕d3 d4 22. ♕b5 ♖d8 23. ♖f3 ♔f5 24. ♖xf5 ♔c6 25. ♖c5

And Black resigned.

A masterful example of optimism feeding a swindle.

If you or I found ourselves in that position after four moves, we would feel like resigning. But as the game showed, optimism can be a powerful weapon, and, combined with other swindling skills, can offer hope where there appears to be none.

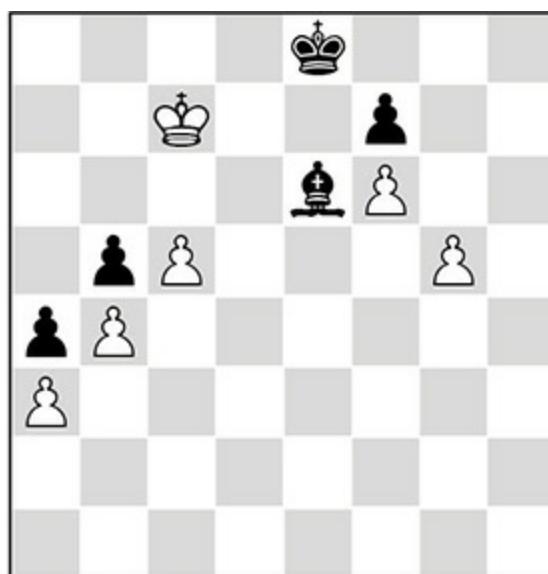
And besides, just because *you* know you're lost, it doesn't mean your opponent has realised it.

In fact, occasionally both players could do with a healthy shot of optimism, as in the following classic chess fable.

Edith Keller-Herrmann

Maja Schlemmer

ch-GER W 1943



White needed a win to tie for first place in the Championship. The amusing story recounted by Tim Krabbé goes that she looked up at her opponent at this point and declared: ‘It’s over.’

‘I prefer to play on a little,’ Schlemmer replied.

‘No,’ Keller-Herrmann clarified, ‘I mean I’M resigning.’

But the position is easily winning for White after

1.c6 ♕d5 2.♕b6 ♕d8

Or 2... ♜c4 3.c7 ♔d7 4.♔b7.

3.♔xb5 ♔c7 4.♔c5 ♜xc6 5.g6,

etc. The resignation stood, and Keller-Herrmann had to settle for third place. Schlemmer took second.

As the camera pans out from the crucified men at the end of *Monty Python’s Life of Brian*, the optimistic singer yells out a final refrain: ‘I mean, what have you got to lose? Nothing!’ If chess Swindlers ever get together and make t-shirts, this should be our motto.

CHAPTER 9

Training Your Mind

These aren't the droids you're looking for. – Obi-Wan Kenobi

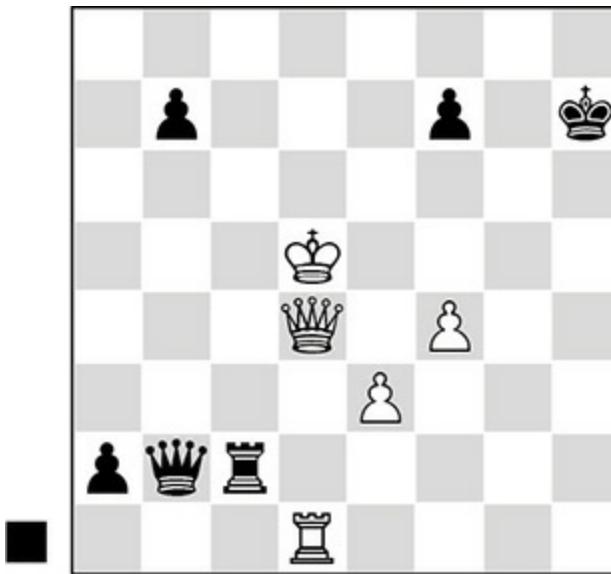
Ok, so we get it – grit and optimism are important. But unlike talent and IQ, traits of perseverance and positivity are things that we can work on. There are some simple tricks that we can apply during our chess games to help us become grittier, more optimistic players – or at least, to give that appearance to our opponents.

1. Starting from zero

The first trick is what is known in behavioural economics as realigning your reference point, but is more simply put as ‘starting from zero’. When your position is indisputably lost, the temptation to just give up can be overwhelming, and resigning may seem like your only option. This is when you should tell yourself that *you’re expected to score zero*. It’s as if you’ve started a new game where you’ve been dealt a lost position in advance, and so anything you get out of the game is a victory above expectations. Find the positives. Perhaps it’s the satisfaction of making your opponent sweat through some nervous moments, or perhaps it’s the joy of being able to play crazy moves with nothing to lose. Try to enjoy the fact that you have the freedom to play whatever style of chess gives you the most pleasure, with absolutely nothing to lose. In our previous example, Shumov’s 5.b4! must have been a thrilling move to play over the board, not to mention 12.  xh7+!.

We already saw in Keller-Herrmann-Schlemmer a case of a player resigning too early (in fact, both players wanted to do so!). There are many infamous examples of players who resigned in drawn or even winning positions (Tim Krabbé has an excellent collection on his website, entitled *The Ultimate Blunder* (timkr.home.xs4all.nl/chess2/resigntxt.htm)) and plenty more where the ‘resigner’ overlooked a venomous swindling chance. Among these, a common theme is that the unlucky loser had mentally given up some time earlier and was just playing moves on inertia. While these resignation-blunders are not what we would call swindles, there is still an important lesson for us. When you believe you have already lost, you are no longer motivated to look for defensive resources, which means you can miss potentially lucrative swindling opportunities. One way to stay optimistic is to remind yourself of these famous examples of resigning at the wrong time – don’t become another game in Tim’s list! Another way is to remember that there is (almost) always one more swindling opportunity, so it is worth another look before resigning, mentally or physically. These ‘invisible swindles’ go begging at all levels.

Magnus Carlsen	2851
Wesley So	2789



While only a rapid game, this example features two of the strongest players in the world and contains a nice illustration of a missed swindling opportunity. So had been clearly winning for the last 18 moves, and Carlsen's facial expressions all but screamed at the crowd and his opponent that he had mentally given up. Wesley could have forced mate by 51... $\mathbb{Q}b5+!$, when 52. $\mathbb{Q}d6 \mathbb{Q}c6+$ 53. $\mathbb{Q}e7 \mathbb{Q}e6+$ and 54... $\mathbb{Q}c8+$ is finished, while 52. $\mathbb{Q}e4 f5+$ 53. $\mathbb{Q}f3 \mathbb{Q}e2+$ 54. $\mathbb{Q}g3 \mathbb{Q}g4\#$ is even faster. Instead, he confidently played

51... $\mathbb{Q}b3+$,

which to both players seemed like a simpler win. Carlsen immediately resigned – after all, 52. $\mathbb{Q}e4$ runs into 52... $\mathbb{Q}c4$, while 52. $\mathbb{Q}e5/d6 \mathbb{Q}e6+$ is now mate in one. The engine evaluation is -47. And so the players shook hands and everyone moved on.

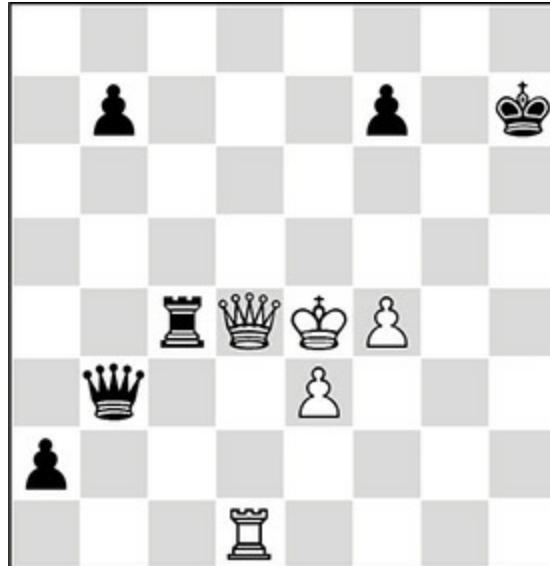
But watching live, I couldn't help but wonder if the World Champion had resigned too early. With a little more of his characteristic swagger, he could have played just one more move:

52. $\mathbb{Q}e4!!$

As the engine notes, the position is still clearly winning for Black, for example after 52... $\mathbb{Q}b1$ or 52... $\mathbb{Q}h2$. But I highly suspect that Wesley had intended

52... $\mathbb{Q}c4??$,

which, it turns out, is not winning at all!



Both players may have thought that after

53. ♕ h1+ ♔ g6

the black king happily walks down the board, but all is not what it seems:

54. ♕ g1+ ♔ h5 55. ♕ h1+ ♔ g4 56. ♕ g1+

And now 56... ♔ h5 is forced, with a draw, while 56... ♔ h4?? is met by the same treatment as 56... ♔ h3?? 57. ♕ f3!!



Suddenly, unbelievably, even cruelly – but not unjustly – Black is mated! Would this have happened? I can only speculate – my hunch is that Wesley may well have fallen for 52... ♕ c4??, but would have avoided the worst and acquiesced to a draw with 56... ♔ h5. Or perhaps, despite the time scramble, he would have won after all. In either case, this hidden tactic tells us that every chess player must stay on the lookout for that ‘one more move’, even the World Champion.

2. Miracles can happen

In the 2017 Champions League round of 16, the Barcelona football team found itself in a hopeless situation in the 88th minute of its match against Paris Saint-Germain. The team needed three goals to avoid being knocked out of the competition, and my girlfriend and housemate both suggested we stop watching. I have a tendency in such situations to disagree and say that these moments are precisely the ones in which we might see something incredible. ‘But the chances are tiny!’, they’ll say. It’s true, I’ll reply. It might be a 1-in-100 chance. But if we always give up before the end, we’ll never watch that one amazing moment, that once-in-a-lifetime comeback.

That makes me an annoying co-spectator for my friends, I admit. Fortunately, I only have to get it right once to be able to win their trust forever. Neymar hit a sensational free kick, Suarez milked a penalty, and a substitute stretched a leg in the fifth minute of injury time to complete one of the greatest comebacks in football history. And to think, we almost turned off the television.

My philosophy from the couch is your second trick at the board. When the situation is grim, remind yourself that the most miraculous swindles can *only* occur in hopeless cases like yours, right now. Just like a great magician, the more desperate the situation seems, the more incredible the escape will be. Maybe you won’t pull off that remarkable swindle this time. Maybe not in the next game either, or the one after that. But if you always resign your lost positions, you’ll never score more than zero. And in chess, like in every sport, miracles do happen...

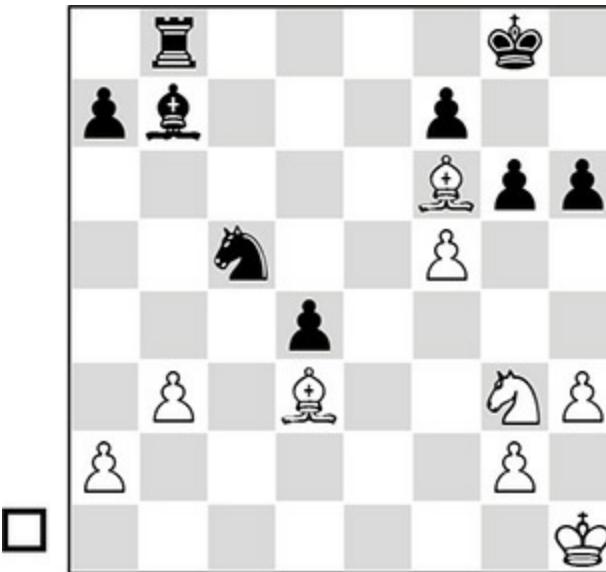
Yochanan Afek

2329

Harmen Jonkman

2497

Vlissingen 2002 (6)



The inclusion of a swindle by the author of *Invisible Chess Moves* and *Practical Chess Beauty* was mandatory. Afek shows that, even with limited material, wonders can occur. Never lose hope!

29. $\mathbb{Q}c4!$ $d3?!$

29... $\mathbb{Q}a6!$ was much safer, breaking the pin and swapping off White's dangerous bishop.

30. $f\#xg6!$ $d2??$

30... $\mathbb{Q}f8!$ keeps an edge after the sharp 31. $g7+$ $\mathbb{Q}g8$ 32. $\mathbb{Q}f5$ $d2!'$, though the endgame is likely drawn after the further forced moves 33. $\mathbb{Q}e2$ $\mathbb{Q}h7$ 34. $\mathbb{Q}e7$ $\mathbb{Q}e4$ 35. $\mathbb{Q}e5$ $\mathbb{Q}d8$ 36. $g8\mathbb{Q}+$ $\mathbb{Q}xg8$ 37. $\mathbb{Q}xg8$ $\mathbb{Q}xg8$ 38. $\mathbb{Q}g1$ $\mathbb{Q}h7$.

31. $\mathbb{Q}xf7+!$

Presumably, Black had only counted on 31. $gxf7+$.

31... $\mathbb{Q}f8$ 32. $\mathbb{Q}f5!!$

An astonishing endgame attack with an unusual configuration. Black can queen with check, but White's minor pieces are surprisingly well coordinated.

32... $d1\mathbb{Q}+$ 33. $\mathbb{Q}h2$



A picturesque final position. One would normally expect that from one of Afek's studies rather than his games. There is no defence to checkmate, and so Black resigned.

3. The Theory of Infinite Resistance

In the 1970s, an Australian player and trainer, FM Bill Jordan, developed a philosophy closely related to grit and optimism. His 'Theory of Infinite Resistance' was designed to motivate players to stay positive and look for all possible defensive chances in each position. The theory basically says:

In most positions where you are facing a decisive disadvantage, if you continue to find the most challenging continuation on every move for the rest of the game, you will not lose.

Notice that this is not specifically about swindles – though, as we saw in Darini-Maghsoodloo, intense resistance can foster swindling opportunities. But the theory of infinite resistance specifically points out that converting even a winning advantage is extremely difficult against the best defence; anyone who has tried playing an engine with piece-odds can attest to that. This is even more the case at club and amateur levels, when it is very likely that opportunities will present themselves.

Reminding yourself of this during the game is a great way to stay motivated and keep on the lookout for these chances. After all, how can your position really be hopeless if AlphaZero would win it?

4. Three questions

It's all well and good to tell yourself to stay resolved, but it's quite another to put it into practice. When you are determined to make the most of your defensive resources but don't quite know what they are, you can employ a useful technique we saw earlier, and which I call the Three Questions. Actually, I created this technique by borrowing a pair of questions from military strategy, and adding one more from GM Jonathan Rowson's excellent book *The Seven Deadly Chess Sins*. I ask myself these questions whenever I'm losing and need to work out how to put up the stiffest resistance and at the same time create the best swindling chances. To repeat the questions again:

- 1) What does my opponent want?
- 2) How does he plan to achieve it?
- 3) What's good about my position?

The first question gives you an overall insight into your opponent's mindset, including what biases might be likely to arise. Does he want to simplify the position to consolidate his extra material? Then he certainly wants to keep things under control. Does he want to convert his advantage without any tactics? Then he might be susceptible to fear, particularly a *bravado attack* (we'll talk about this in the next section). Does he want to turn his initiative into a decisive attack, or perhaps win with a flashy brilliancy? Is he enjoying the attention of the milling spectators? Hubris is on the cards. Or, does he need to win quickly? Will the hotel buffet close soon? Impatience is rife!

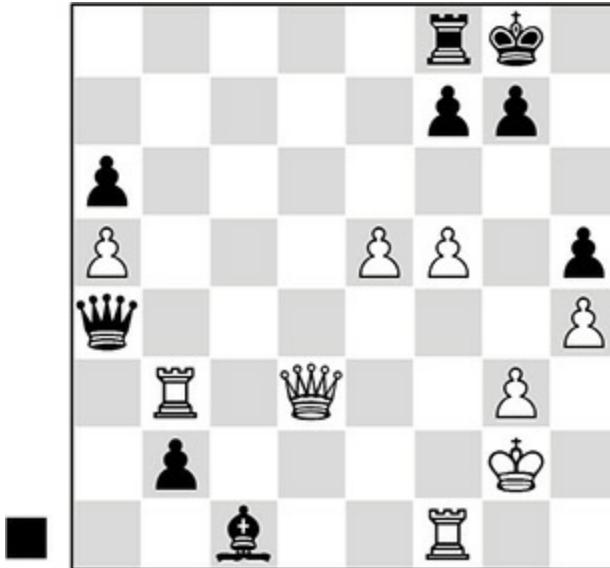
The second question gets into the details of his strategy and helps us to pre-empt and frustrate his plan. Perhaps he wants to swap off pieces – very common when your opponent is up on material, of course. Perhaps his whole strategy is to win your isolated pawn. Or perhaps he is planning an

unstoppable attack against your depleted forces.

The first two questions give you a good idea of what's going on in your opponent's mind, and where his focus lies. But a swindle needs more than just finding his weaknesses; we also need to know our own strengths in order to figure out how best to maximise our chances, and this is where the third question comes in. All together, the technique of the Three Questions provides a logical train of thought that helps to guide us towards hidden opportunities that would otherwise be hard to spot.

Anton Demchenko	2678
Dommaraju Gukesh	2529

Ho Chi Minh City 2019 (8)



Black is the exchange down, but the situation is much worse than just a material disadvantage. The answer to the first of the three questions is clearly 'He wants to crush me on the kingside', and the breakthrough is only a few moves away. White intends to do this by pushing 42.e6, which is a big threat.

Gukesh has only one possible trump card: his passed b-pawn. However, White seems to have it firmly under control, thanks to his queen on d3 and the rook on b3 both firmly guarding the queening square. Black continues the logical train of thought that started with the Three Questions, treating this like a problem-solving task:

- 1) How can I make use of my pawn? By getting rid of the rook on b3;
- 2) How can I get rid of the rook? By deflecting its protector, the queen;
- 3) How can I deflect the queen? By luring her away with my rook;
- 4) How can I do that? By moving it to d8, after first moving my king off the back rank.

Remembering that White wants to push his e-pawn, Gukesh comes up with a move that not only puts his plan in motion, but that also makes his opponent's plan seem even stronger!

41... ♕ h7!!

Seemingly nonsensical – but we know better. Now 42.f6+ g6 doesn't achieve anything (43.e6 ♙c6+!), but White's original plan seems to have grown in strength – even the engines agree!

42.e6 ♜ d8!!



The next stage of the plan. It's important to note that even if Black had not foreseen the variations to come, these moves would still be worth playing. After all, trying to make use of the b-pawn is Black's only practical chance.

43. ♕xd8?

Still winning, but 43. ♔f3! was safest. Instead, the strong Russian grandmaster believes his move leads to a forced mate with quadruple queens. Technically, he is right...

43... ♕xb3 44.e7



Now 44...b1 ♕ 45.e8 ♕ ♕b7+ 46. ♕g1! leads to a pretty position where Black has two queens and the move, but is utterly helpless.

44... ♕b7+!!

A powerful intermediate check that serves two purposes. First, it rules out g1 as a safe square for White's king, as 45. ♕g1? ♕e3+! would turn the game on its head (but as we have seen, 44...b1 ♕ 45.e8 ♕ ♕b7+ 46. ♕g1! ♕e3+? 47. ♕xe3! is a different story).

Second, it forces White to make the key decision one move earlier than he would have liked. He now needs to calculate the variations with the extra queens two moves in advance, rather than one. That may not seem like a big deal to a grandmaster, but it slightly increases the cognitive load.

Psychologists have shown that these small burdens can add up, adding to the pressure and stress felt during a game and thus increasing the probability of a mistake. It might only be by a few per cent, but

every now and then, that will be the difference.



45. $\mathbb{Q} h3??$

And this is one of those cases! White moves his king where it avoids all of the checks by both queens – seemingly crushing. But in fact, now White is lost.

We have seen that 45. $\mathbb{Q} g1?$ $\mathbb{Q} e3+$ is no good, and 45. $\mathbb{Q} h2??$ $b1\mathbb{Q}$ 46. $e8\mathbb{Q}$ $\mathbb{Q} c2+$ is even worse. But the win was still there for the taking: 45. $\mathbb{Q} f3!!$ $b1\mathbb{Q}$ 46. $e8\mathbb{Q}$, although Black can break out of the mating net with 46... $\mathbb{Q} xf5!$.



analysis diagram

The position is extremely complicated, and Gukesh could rightly feel satisfied with at least muddying the waters if Demchenko had gotten this far. This is the best sort of swindle attempt: a difficult practical task for your opponent if he avoids the trap, and the small chance of immediate dividends if he falls for it.

Back to the game, where Demchenko thinks he has avoided these obstacles and that checkmate is imminent. In its literal sense, he is correct.

45... $b1\mathbb{Q}$ 46. $e8\mathbb{Q}$



Threatening a deadly check along the back rank, while White's king appears immune to all checks. But appearances can be deceiving. Can you spot the beautiful idea that Gukesh foresaw?

46... ♕ xf5+!!

Having just been introduced, Black's new queen promptly sacrifices herself for the cause. But if she is captured, her twin will deliver mate on h1.

47. ♔ h2 ♕ c2+

And White resigned.

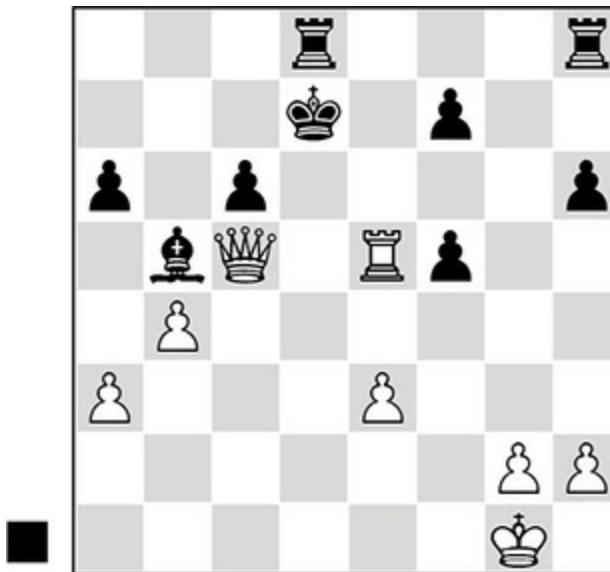
The next swindle is of a much lower standard, but it shows how the Three Questions technique can be applied on the fly.

NN

David Smerdon

Internet blitz 2018

In general, I have avoided blitz games in this book, mainly because there is no shortage of quality swindle examples in classical chess. But I have made an exception with the following snippet, as it is easier for me to illustrate how to apply the Three Questions technique by using one of my own games. Take a minute or so (you don't have more on your clock!) to see if you can find my swindling idea for Black in the diagrammed position.



Hard, isn't it? But the process of 'spotting' the idea is made a lot easier by following a logical sequence of questions and answers. Here was how my thinking proceeded over the next twenty or so seconds:

What does my opponent want? To use his material advantage to mate me. How is he going to do it? He clearly intends to do this by playing $\mathbb{R}e7+$ and $\mathbb{Q}b6/a7$. There is only one way to stop this: 1... $\mathbb{R}he8$. But after 2. $\mathbb{R}xf5$ or even just a pass move like 2. $\mathbb{Q}f2$, I'm eventually going to lose all of my kingside pawns. Still, I'm not getting checkmated, so let's keep that option in reserve.

What's good about my position? I control the light squares, and his pieces are a long way from his own king. Specifically, his back rank is weak, and a rook on f1 would be checkmate. In fact, if it were White's turn, then after 1. $\mathbb{R}e7+$ $\mathbb{Q}c8$ 2. $\mathbb{Q}a7$ $\mathbb{R}d1+$ 3. $\mathbb{Q}f2$ $\mathbb{R}f1+$ would be mate, if only he didn't have g3 for his king. I could at least play 4. $\mathbb{Q}g3$ $\mathbb{R}g8+$, but after 5. $\mathbb{Q}h4$ $\mathbb{R}g4+$ 6. $\mathbb{Q}h5$ I run out of checks. It seems like I don't have enough control of the dark squares, so he escapes.

Okay, at this point the Three Questions have done as much as they can to guide us in the right direction, and now it's up to us to find an idea, if indeed one exists. Take another minute to look at the position and see if you can find a trap.



1...h5!!



If you instead thought about 1... $\mathbb{Q}hg8!$, well done. This move, cutting off g3 and meaning that 3... $\mathbb{Q}f1+$ in the previous variation would be checkmate, might well work against weaker opposition. The purpose of 1...h5 is very similar, but in my case, against an IM-strength opponent, I wanted something a little more subtle. It's a devious, beautiful idea where to some extent 'you either spot it or don't', but by following the Three Questions technique, you give yourself the best shot of finding it.

2. $\mathbb{Q}e7+$

With more time, or perhaps more suspicion, White might have preferred 2. $\mathbb{Q}a7+! \mathbb{Q}c8$ (2... $\mathbb{Q}d6$ 3. $\mathbb{Q}e7\#$) 3. $\mathbb{Q}a8+ \mathbb{Q}c7$ 4. $\mathbb{Q}e7+ \mathbb{Q}d6$ 5. $\mathbb{Q}a7!$ and mate on the next move. Instead, my opponent paused, presumably calculating that his king could run to g3 and, if necessary, safely to the h-file. There followed:

2... $\mathbb{Q}c8$ 3. $\mathbb{Q}a7?? \mathbb{Q}d1+ 4. \mathbb{Q}f2 \mathbb{Q}f1+ 5. \mathbb{Q}g3 h4+!$

The point! White's king is forced to a light square, one of our 'strengths'.

6. $\mathbb{Q}h3$



6... $\mathbb{Q}f3+!! 7. gxf3 \mathbb{Q}f1\#$

A pretty finale, and an extremely lucky escape. But there is no shame on the internet.

The third question helps you to identify what you can use, no matter how hopeless the position. These could be any of a range of common features with which you are already familiar. Maybe his king is slightly exposed. Maybe you have better piece activity or development on a particular side of the board. Perhaps the piece combinations left on the board include textbook-draw samples, such as rook and bishop versus rook, or a bishop and wrong-coloured rook pawn. Can you see any potential for endgame fortresses? If you have few or immobilised pieces, are there stalemate ideas?

When things get really bad, try to forget about all of the forcing wins you can see for your opponent. Focus instead on what his next move will be, and how you can either stop it or set a trap around it. Ask yourself, ‘If I was him, what move would annoy me the most?’ Identify your strengths and look for a way to use them. Above all, try to find moves that don’t lose instantly. Chess authors Horowitz and Reinfeld describe a swindle in terms of both a maximum and a minimum objective. ‘The maximum objective is of course to transform a loss into a win. But the minimum objective is to make the opponent’s task more arduous and complicated, to bewilder him with obscure alternatives, to raise doubts in his mind about the accuracy of his judgement.’

In tennis, coaches talk about making your opponent play ‘one more ball’. Even if it doesn’t win you that point, it signals to your opponent that you are prepared to fight for everything, and that they are going to have to work for the victory. In chess, you can send that same signal by finding the most resilient, frustrating move at every turn. The realisation that you will not go down easily can ruin their mood and start to affect their nerves. And in chess, as opposed to tennis (but much like boxing), the entire result can flip on a single moment – in short, chess has swindles!

Part III

The Swindler's Toolbox

Give me a difficult positional game, I will play it. But totally won positions, I cannot stand them. – Hein Donner

We have looked at the most common biases in our opponent's mindset and also seen some techniques for how to fortify ours. These are useful skills for chess psychology in general, and not only for when we find ourselves in a losing position. But when it comes to laying swindles, we need to get more specific. It's not enough to say 'look out for stalemates and perpetual checks' – such advice is too vague to be useful during a game. In this section, we will discuss four of the most common, specific tools that can be used to set up a swindle. Each tool is connected with one of the four flaws of the opponent's psyche:²⁶

The Trojan Horse to exploit Impatience;
The Decoy Trap to exploit Hubris;
The Berserk Attack to exploit Fear;
Window-Ledging to exploit *Kontrollzwang*.

They are not the only tools, but in my experience they are the most common and the most effective in practice. Choosing the right one for your situation will depend on what sort of biases your opponent is most likely to be experiencing, which involves being able to read your opponent to some extent. We'll also see in the final chapter of this section, *Play the Player*, how there can be other benefits to adapting your strategy to take advantage of your opponent's mindset.

Chapter 10

Trojan Horse

Do not trust the horse, Trojans. Whatever it is, I fear the Greeks even when they bring gifts. – Virgil, in the *Aeneid*

Our goal as a Swindler is always to maximise the chances of our opponent making a blunder. Often that is done by frustrating, annoying or unsettling him, as we have seen, but not always. Sometimes, the best approach is to give him exactly what he wants.

When our opponent is impatient, he is looking for the quickest way to win the game, perhaps so he can head to the bar and show off his fabulous victory to his friends. Perhaps he thinks we should have resigned by now. Or maybe he is feeling lazy and doesn't fancy the idea of putting in the effort or time to convert the win if he can avoid it. The latter cause is quite common in practice.

This is the perfect situation to offer a *Trojan Horse*. During the Trojan War, the Greek army built a large wooden horse and left it outside the impenetrable walls of Troy as a gift to their opponents, and pretended to sail away. The Trojans, overconfident and perhaps a little haughty following their supposed victory, dragged the horse into the city and celebrated it as a trophy of triumph. Little did they know that the gift was a poisonous trap: a selection of Greek soldiers, hiding within the horse, crept out during the night and opened the gates for the waiting Greek army, who then stormed the city with devastating effect.

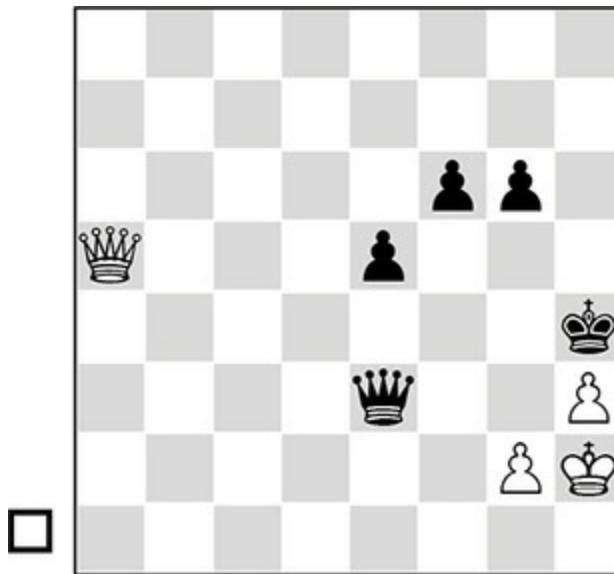
Similarly, a deadly trap disguised as an offer of a shortcut to victory can be a big temptation for an impatient opponent. Often, the overconfident and unsuspecting swindlee jumps at the opportunity for a quick finish to the game – and, hopefully for us, that's exactly what he gets.

The next example is a simple illustration of our theme.

Boidman

Siniavsky

Soviet Union 1979

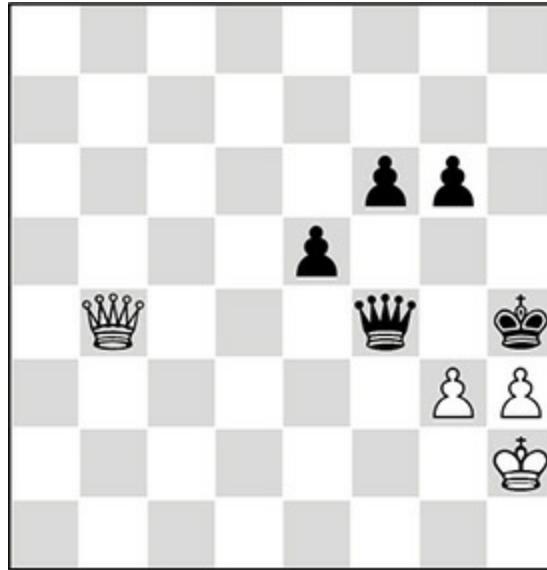


Queen endings are fertile grounds for all sorts of swindles. Black's remaining pieces are imposing and his extra passed pawn makes for a powerful trump. Still, the presence of queens always brings some anxiety to the superior side, who needs to be vigilant to the possibility of perpetual checks. Naturally, Black wants to swap queens to ease the task of converting the win. Channelling Odysseus, White makes a tempting offer:

1. ♕b4+!

'Thanks for the victory gift', thinks Black, who eagerly grabs the opportunity to finish things off quickly.

1... ♕f4+?? 2.g3+!



A quick finish indeed: 1-0

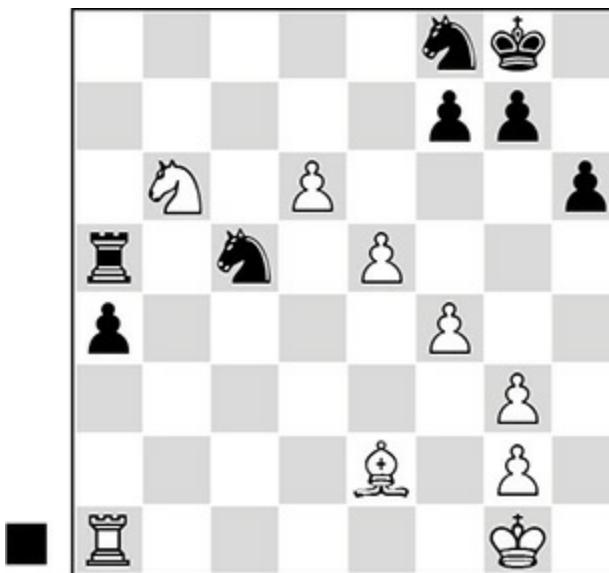
The Trojan Horse is an incredibly effective tool at club and amateur levels, especially in tournaments with multiple games a day, long drives home and general non-chess pressures on our time. But you would be surprised at how often this trick works at the elite level as well.

Vladimir Kramnik

2791

Magnus Carlsen

2802

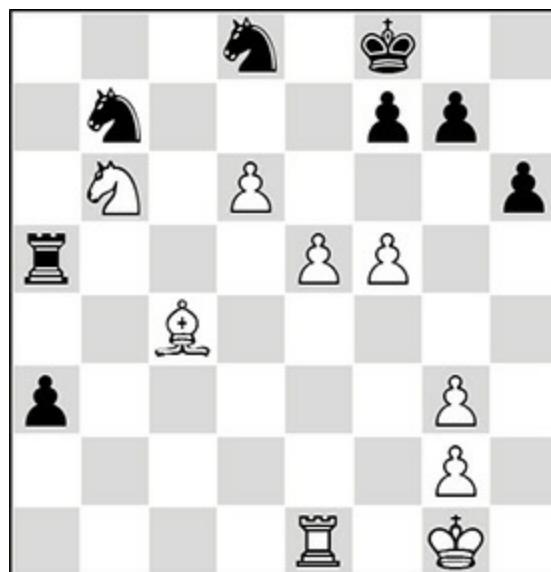


Carlsen's position is truly awful. The protected passed pawn on d6 is a monster, and with f4-f5 coming it won't be long before White forces its promotion. Note that Black's passed pawn is far less dangerous (49...a3?? 50.♘c4!). The engine recommends 49...g6 to slow down White's assault, but the evaluation is still above +2. With normal play, White can expect an easy victory. Carlsen decides to enter swindle mode. He plays a move that allows a forced sequence in which Kramnik can win a piece, but will have to give up his prized central pawns. This at least changes the nature of the contest.

49...♝fe6! 50.♞c4 ♛f8 51.f5 ♜d8 52.♝f1!

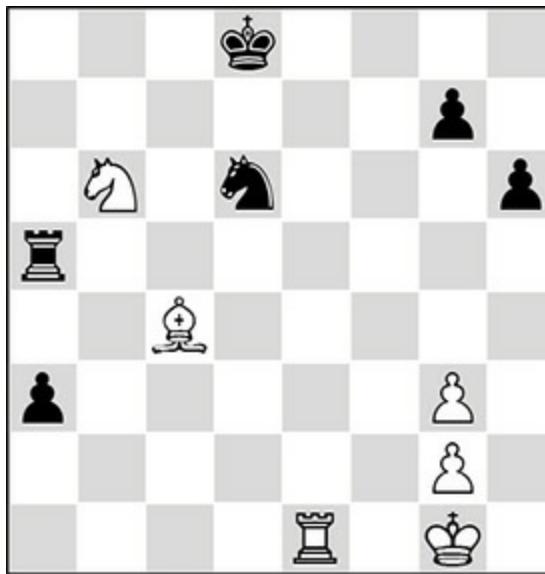
Threatening e5-e6.

52...♝cb7 53.♝e1! a3



A position that had to be foreseen in advance. Here, 54.♝a2! would keep all of White's trumps without releasing the pressure. But the temptation to cash in proves too great, and Kramnik decides to win the piece:

54.e6? fxe6 55.fxe6 ♜xd6 56.e7+ ♛e8 57.exd8♛ + ♛xd8



White, a piece up, is of course technically winning. But notice how the style of the game has shifted. Before, the pressure was all on Carlsen to find the right defensive moves to prevent the white pawns from immediately deciding the game, while Kramnik could increase the pressure at his leisure. Now, the burden of proof is on the other side: it's up to Kramnik to find the right technique, while Carlsen's moves are easy and natural.

58. $\mathbb{Q}d1$ $\mathbb{Q}c7$ 59. $\mathbb{Q}a2$ $\mathbb{Q}g5$ 60. $\mathbb{Q}d5+$ $\mathbb{Q}c6$ 61. $\mathbb{Q}c3$



Black is still materially lost, although it looks to be a slow, technical conversion. Magnus, whose mastery of psychology at the board is often underappreciated, senses that this prospect may not be too appealing for his opponent, and offers him a tempting simplification.

61... $\mathbb{Q}c5!!$



An astonishing move. Just when White had settled down for a long grind, Black rolls out the red carpet for a simple shortcut. White should ignore it and continue plainly with 62. $\mathbb{R}d3$, but of course, Black's last move allows a new possibility: 62. $\mathbb{Q}xd6+!$, a tactic that most amateurs would spot in seconds. For Kramnik, the offer is too delicious to resist.

It would be interesting to get inside Carlsen's head and understand his thought processes at this point. Of course, he would have noticed that 62. $\mathbb{Q}xd6+$ would likely follow, but how far did he see? I suspect Carlsen couldn't calculate everything at this stage, but instead understood that the endgame was far from a trivial win. Perhaps he even saw that White would likely try to break through with a future $g4-g5$, after which Black may be able to sacrifice his h-pawn, somehow force $g5-g6$, and set up an unusual fortress. We may never know, but one thing is clear: the victory now becomes far more problematic for Kramnik than when he had a passed pawn on d6!

Such forethought might seem like the stuff of chess wizards, but as we will see in the chapters on fortresses and endgames, it is perfectly feasible for players of all levels to spot these sorts of ideas from afar once we develop some core endgame skills. Even among the world's strongest players, the ability to see these patterns a move or two before your opponent does can mean the difference between a dismal defeat and a legendary escape.

62. $\mathbb{Q}xd6+?$

This is winning – possibly even the objectively-best move – but practically, this makes it so much more complicated. Instead of playing a long but relatively simple game, White now needs to play a short, precise one.

62... $\mathbb{Q}xd6$ 63. $\mathbb{B}e4+$ $\mathbb{Q}c6$ 64. $\mathbb{B}xc5$ $\mathbb{Q}xc5$ 65. $\mathbb{B}f2$

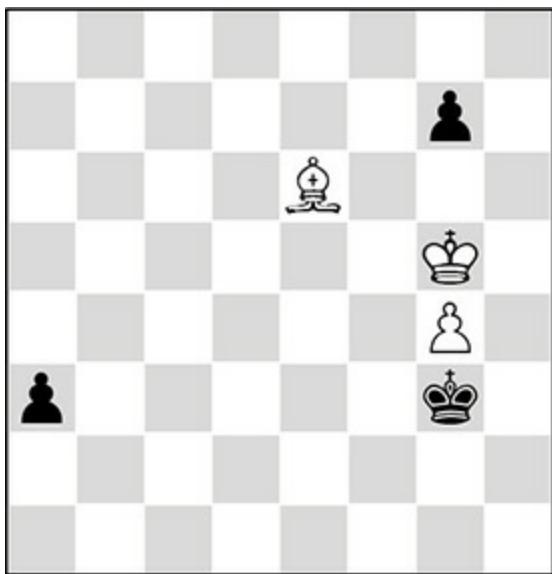
If Black now heads towards the queenside, White will happily give up his bishop for the a-pawn and meanwhile mop up the kingside with his own king. But Carlsen has quite different intentions.

65... $\mathbb{Q}d4!$ 66. $\mathbb{Q}f3$ $\mathbb{Q}d3$ 67. $g4$ $\mathbb{Q}d2!$ 68. $\mathbb{B}e6$ $\mathbb{Q}d3$



69. $\mathbb{Q}g3$

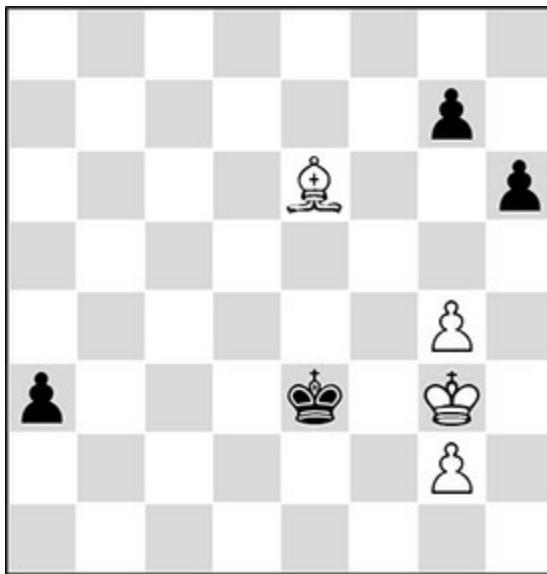
69.g5! has been analysed a lot in other sources, and my intention isn't to discuss the theory of this endgame, so I will skip most of the lines. But this winning move was certainly not an easy one to calculate, and there are a lot of drawish 'ghosts' in the variations that may have spooked Kramnik: 69...hxg5 70. $\mathbb{Q}g4$ $\mathbb{Q}e3$. For instance: 71. $\mathbb{Q}xg5?$ (71. $\mathbb{Q}a2$ leads to a complicated win: 71... $\mathbb{Q}f2$ 72.g3 $\mathbb{Q}g2$ 73. $\mathbb{Q}b3$ $\mathbb{Q}f2$ 74. $\mathbb{Q}d5$ $\mathbb{Q}e3$ 75. $\mathbb{Q}xg5$ $\mathbb{Q}f2$ 76. $\mathbb{Q}f4$, etc.) 71... $\mathbb{Q}f2$ 72.g4 $\mathbb{Q}g3!$



analysis diagram

and by playing ...g7-g6 next move, Black ensures that the g-pawns can only be eliminated together, resulting in a draw.

69... $\mathbb{Q}e3$

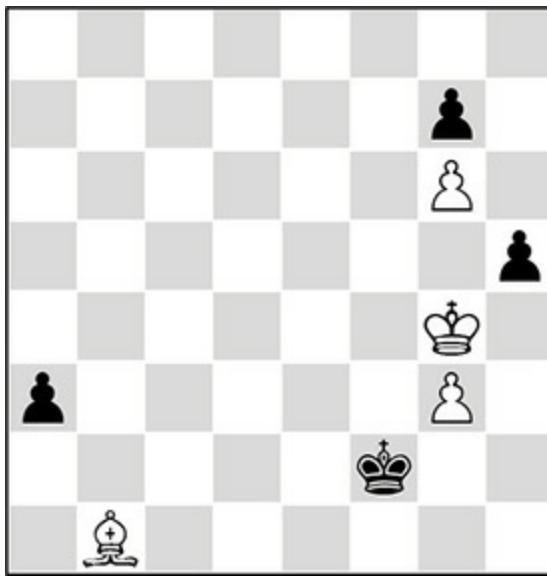


The key moment of the swindle.

70. $\mathbb{Q}h4?$

70.g5!, the ‘natural’ winning try, has been analysed to a draw by several commentators, most likely following the same lines that Kramnik himself calculated. But in fact, deep computer analysis shows that there is still a win to be had. I’ll briefly present the key lines:

70... $\mathbb{Q}e4$ 71. $\mathbb{Q}g4$ $\mathbb{Q}e3!$ 72. $\mathbb{Q}a2$ $\mathbb{Q}e4$ 73. g3 $\mathbb{Q}e3!$ (Black wants to force White to play g5-g6; White, meanwhile, tries to avoid it) 74. $\mathbb{Q}b1$ $\mathbb{Q}f2$ 75. g6. There’s no other way to make progress. Now Black offers the h-pawn: 75...h5+!



analysis diagram

and here most annotators have continued with 76. $\mathbb{Q}xh5?$ a2 77. $\mathbb{Q}xa2$ $\mathbb{Q}e3$ 78. $\mathbb{Q}g5$ $\mathbb{Q}e4!$ and White cannot prevent the black king running to f8 – which is a true fortress.

However, White has an amazing win after 76. $\mathbb{Q}f4!!$ (mate in 32!), though the variations are extremely complicated and I don’t blame the commentators for misevaluating them. The main idea is that after 76... $\mathbb{Q}g2$ 77. $\mathbb{Q}a2$ $\mathbb{Q}f2$ 78. $\mathbb{Q}d5$ $\mathbb{Q}e2$ 79. $\mathbb{Q}e5!$ $\mathbb{Q}f2$ 80. $\mathbb{Q}e6$ $\mathbb{Q}xg3$ 81. $\mathbb{Q}f7$ White is just in the nick of time, thanks to queening with CHECK on the g-file.

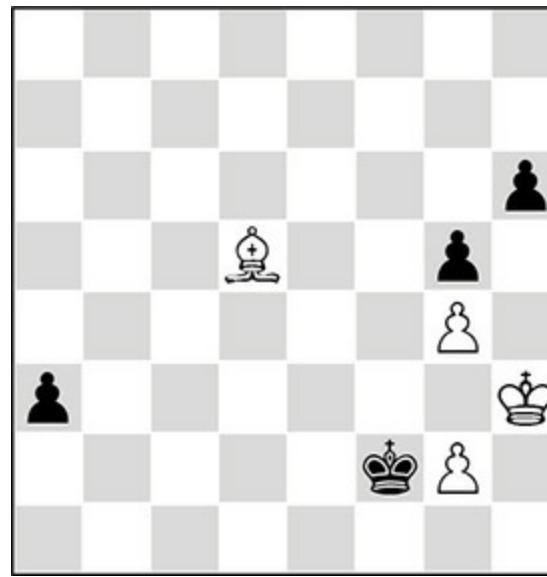
Back to the game:

70... f2!!

Now, incredibly, there is no longer a win.

71. d5 g6! 72. h3 g5!

It was not too late to go wrong with 72...h5?? 73.gxh5 gxh5 74.g3! and Black will soon run out of moves. Now, however, Black has sealed in White's king, who can never escape without giving up the pawns.



73. h2 f1!

Kramnik can make no more progress. After a few more forlorn attempts, the draw was agreed:

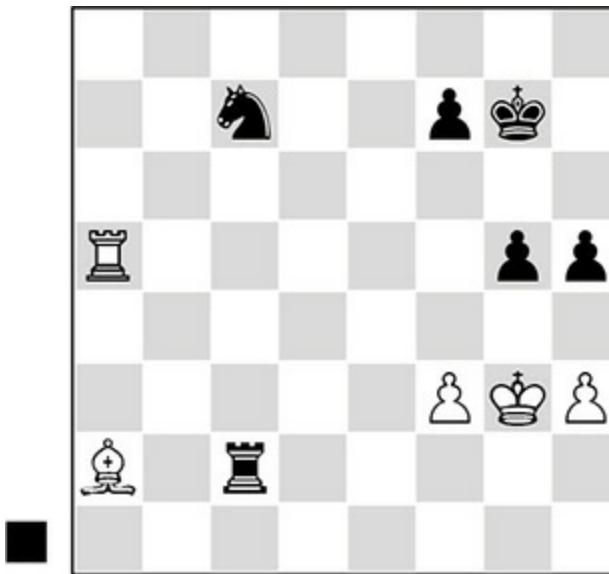
74. e6 f2 75. c4 e3 76. g3 d4 77. e6 e3 78. h2 f2 79. c4 e3 80. g1 f4 81. e6 e5 82. b3 f4 83. e6 e5 84. b3 f4 85. e6 e5 86. b3 ½-½

Vladimir Kramnik isn't the only World Champion to be tempted by a Trojan Horse; for example, Alekhine-Teichmann (1923) is another well-known example you can look up for yourself. But to round out this chapter, I want to show a cute example showing that offering the proverbial steed doesn't only work in losing positions.

Tavernier

Grodner

Charleville 1952



Humans are so prone to temptation that sometimes a player can even exploit our greed to snare the full point.

In this position, the draw is imminent. Black tried the glaringly obvious

1... \mathbb{Q} g6!?,

when surely every chess player's suspicions must be roused. However, hindsight is always 20-20, as they say. In the game, White couldn't resist:

2. \mathbb{Q} b1??

2. \mathbb{Q} xf7+ \mathbb{Q} xf7 3. \mathbb{Q} xg5 is a simple draw.

2...h4+ 3. \mathbb{Q} g4 f5+!!

A violent de-pinning.

4. \mathbb{Q} xf5 \mathbb{Q} g2#

'Don't look a gift-horse in the mouth' says another well-known proverb. When it comes to the Trojan Horse, many a Swindler's victim should have preferred to avert their eyes entirely.

Chapter 11

Decoy Trap

When you see a good move, look for a better one. – Emanuel Lasker

Most of us have heard of a decoy as a chess theme, and we've all heard of a trap. But what is a 'Decoy Trap'?

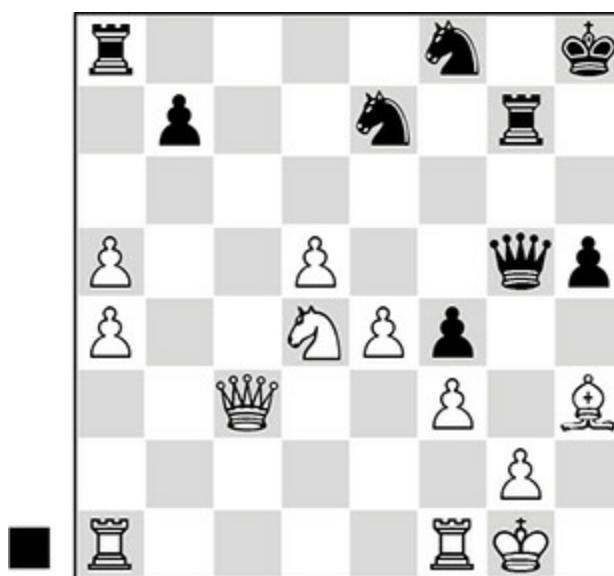
As I analysed the hundreds of swindles I collected for this book and looked for patterns, I noticed a theme cropping up again and again. The Swindler would play a move that looks like it intends a rather simple, transparent trap. This ‘Decoy Trap’ serves to give false meaning to the Swindler’s intentions, satisfying the victim that there is a point to the move. The opponent easily parries it, only to discover that hidden behind the Swindler’s move was a second, far deadlier trap – the true point.

The Decoy Trap provides just enough distraction to allow the deeper swindle an opportunity to succeed. It is most effective when the opponent is confident that the game is essentially over, so that he is more likely to believe that the decoy is all there is to the story. In other words, the Decoy Trap works best against hubris, with a good helping of carelessness. Learn it well, as it occurs very often.

I came across a surprisingly high-rated example as this book was nearing publication.

Romain Edouard	2653
Gergely Kantor	2541

Hastings 2019/20 (6)

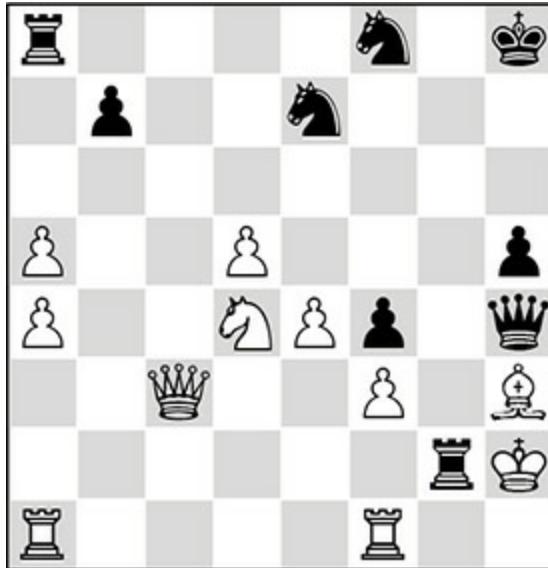


Black is three pawns down and forty minutes behind on the clock against a strong grandmaster. However, his own time trouble helps him to set up the swindle because it adds credibility to the pretence that the Decoy Trap is all there is to see.

30... ♕ h4!

Threatening 31... ♜xh3. White can defend against it in different ways, but the most straightforward

defence is moving the king off the g-file. White spots that 32. $\mathbb{Q}h1$ can't be met by 32... $\mathbb{N}g3??$ on account of the vicious discovered check 33. $\mathbb{Q}f5+$. But perhaps Black might move his king off the diagonal and so threaten 33... $\mathbb{N}g3$ on the next move. White thinks he can cleverly avoid even this possibility by 32. $\mathbb{Q}h2$ $\mathbb{N}g3+$ 33. $\mathbb{Q}h1$, and there is no more ... $\mathbb{N}g3$ to worry about. So:
31. $\mathbb{Q}h2?? \mathbb{N}xg2+!!$



Black can't believe his luck. Check all checks and captures, and especially both at once!

32. $\mathbb{Q}xg2 \mathbb{N}g3+$ 33. $\mathbb{Q}h1 \mathbb{N}xh3+$ 34. $\mathbb{Q}g1 \mathbb{N}g3+$

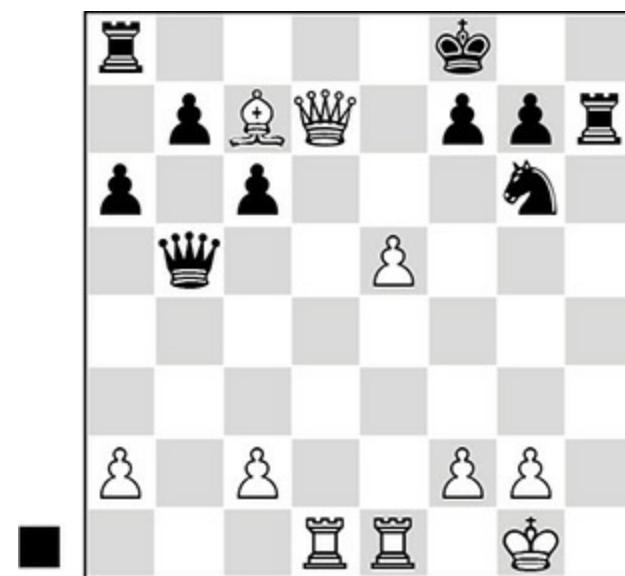
With a perpetual check: $\frac{1}{2}-\frac{1}{2}$

Here is one of my favourite swindles.

Brian Gosling

Jack Rudd

UK 1996



1... $\mathbb{N}f4!!$

A nasty trap. What I find impressive about this example is that the true swindle is cleverly disguised by the apparent 'obvious' threat created by this move. For, surely, Black intends 2... $\mathbb{N}e2+$. As an

added layer of trickery, Black also unprotects the e7-square. White, noting both features, responded naturally with

2. $\mathbb{Q}d8??$,

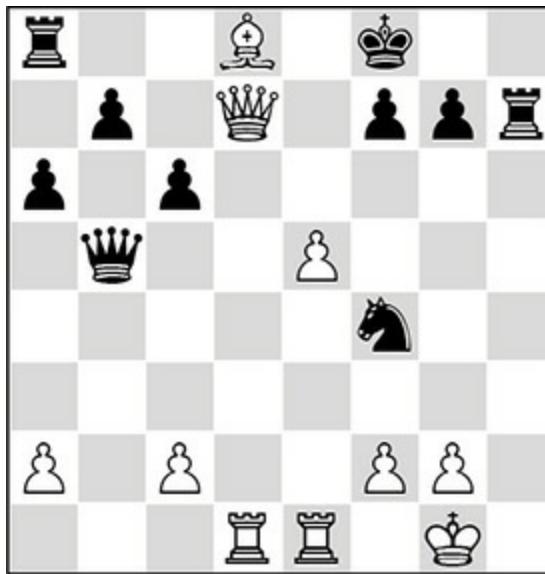
intending 2... $\mathbb{Q}e2+$ 3. $\mathbb{Q}xe2$ $\mathbb{Q}xe2$ 4. $\mathbb{Q}e7+$ $\mathbb{Q}g8$ 5. $\mathbb{Q}e8$ mate. Instead, 2. $\mathbb{Q}d6+$ (and not 2. $\mathbb{Q}e3?$ c5!) would have won after 2... $\mathbb{Q}e8$ 3. $\mathbb{Q}e3$ $\mathbb{Q}e2+$ 4. $\mathbb{Q}xe2$ $\mathbb{Q}xe2$ 5. $\mathbb{Q}d7+$ $\mathbb{Q}f8$



analysis diagram

6. $\mathbb{Q}b8!$.

However, after 2. $\mathbb{Q}d8??$, Black gleefully revealed the hidden point of his last move:



2... $\mathbb{Q}f1+!!$

Stupendous. It's mate on the next move after either 3. $\mathbb{Q}xf1$ $\mathbb{Q}h1\#$ or 3. $\mathbb{Q}xf1$ $\mathbb{Q}e2\#$.

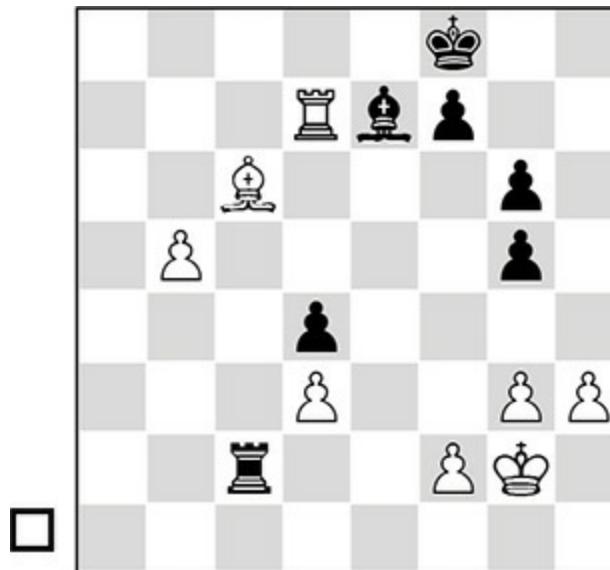
0-1

A subtler example of a Decoy Trap was enough to fool the legendary German master Wolfgang Uhlmann.

Wolfgang Uhlmann

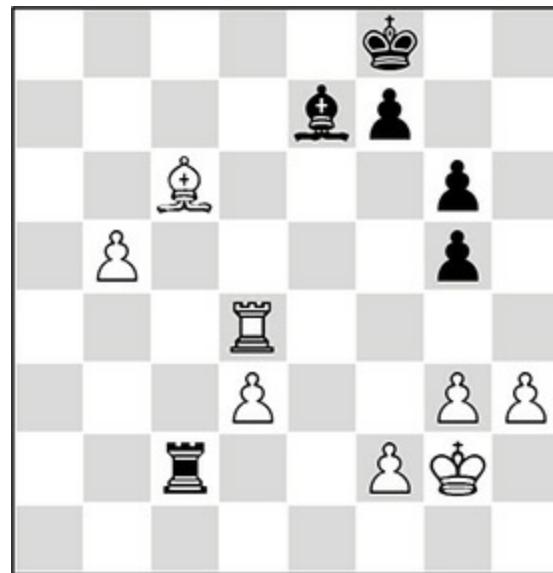
Burkhard Malich

East Berlin 1968



Black is already suffering in this endgame, and now he appears to have blundered a second pawn as well with 52... $\mathbb{Q}g7-f8$. ‘But wait a minute,’ thinks White, ‘after 53. $\mathbb{R}xd4$ he’ll play ... $\mathbb{Q}c5$! and I’m ruined. That sneaky guy – what a trap!’ White sits back in his chair and contemplates his prospects. Suddenly, his eyes flash – perhaps he can trap the trapper, and in turn save himself some trouble. ‘After 53. $\mathbb{R}xd4$ $\mathbb{Q}c5$ I can play 54. $\mathbb{R}d8+!$, followed by pushing my pawn to d4. And even if his king goes to e7, I can still play another check on d7 with my rook and then push d3-d4. Yes, yes; he thought he was tricking me, but I’ll trick him instead!’ Satisfied with his own brilliance, White confidently makes his move:

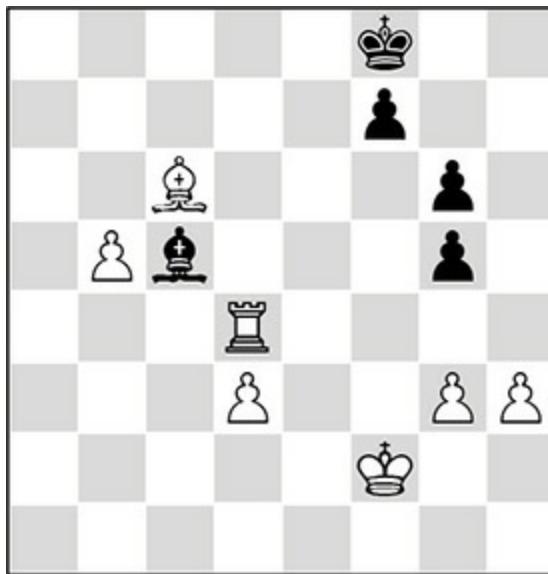
53. $\mathbb{R}xd4?$



53... $\mathbb{R}xf2+!!$

Uhlmann spots the decoy trap 53... $\mathbb{Q}c5$, and therefore misses the deadlier threat.

54. $\mathbb{R}xf2 \mathbb{Q}c5$



The realisation of the swindle hits White like a surprise uppercut. After 55. \mathbb{Q} e3 f5!,



analysis diagram

his pieces are locked in a complete bind, only to be released by jettisoning his extra rook. White tried

55. \mathbb{Q} f3

instead, but the ending after

55... \mathbb{Q} xd4

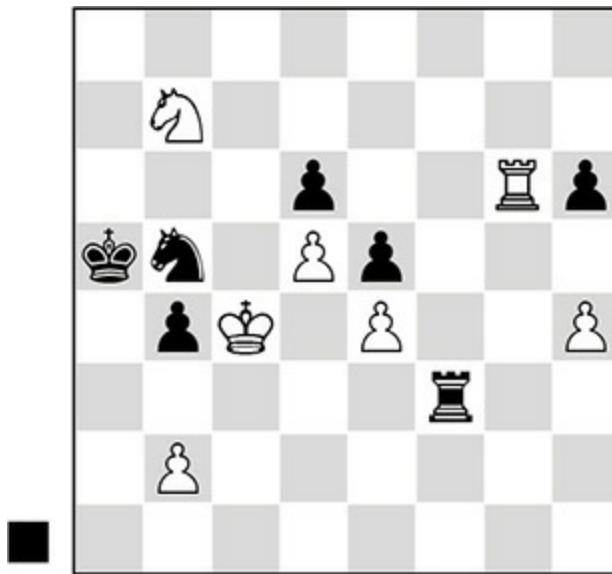
is easily drawn.

As we mentioned in Part II, it's unhelpful to focus on all the winning lines for your opponent. Instead, focus on his natural replies, and then look for what move you can play to turn those replies into bad ones. In the next short but instructive swindle, Black may well have noticed before he played it, that 58... \mathbb{Q} a4 walked into a difficult-to-see forced mate. But often for the Swindler, such risks are necessary; more importantly, the move sets up a glorious swindle in case of the obvious 'refutation'.

Srecko Nedeljkovic

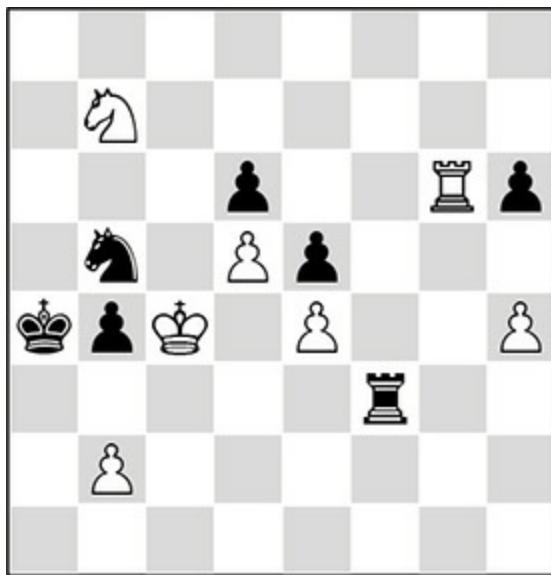
Mijo Udovcic

Sarajevo ch-YUG 1951 (8)



Your computer will scream out that Black should retreat his king, but after this the win is trivial: 58...
♚b6 59. ♜xd6 and the endgame is beyond hope.

58...♚a4!



Absolutely the only try. The main point of the swindle is carefully camouflaged beneath a small tactical fact: White is shocked to realise that his intended 59. ♜c5+? achieves nothing after the cool 59...♚a5!, and White must repeat.

Not to worry, thinks White. Black's king isn't going anywhere, and there's enough time to bring the rook around for checkmate.

59. ♜g8??

White remains with pen in hand, hovering over the scoresheet, expectantly waiting for Black's resignation. How often you'll come to recognise this expression on your opponents' faces after you learn the lessons of this book!



59... $\text{Qa}3+!!$ 60. $\text{bx}a3$ $\text{Qc}3\#$

A shockingly swift counterpunch.

59. $\text{Qg}8??$ was a horrible blunder, but it is also interesting to consider what would have happened if White had eliminated the mate with 59. $\text{Qxd}6$.



analysis diagram

This indeed wins with best play, but Black can keep fighting: 59... $\text{Qa}3+!$ and if 60. $\text{bx}a3$ $\text{Qc}3\#$! Looking a little deeper, White can maintain his advantage with 60. $\text{Qc}5$, but then Black continues fearlessly with 60... $\text{Qb}3!$ 61. $\text{bx}a3$ $\text{Qc}3+!$ followed by 62... $\text{bx}a3$, with just a whiff of counterplay. All good fun to analyse, but is there really nothing simpler for White? Indeed there is, and it makes a nice echo of Black's motif: 59. $\text{b}3+!$



analysis diagram

59... ♕xb3 60. ♜c5+!!



analysis diagram

60...dxc5 61. ♕a6#. Déjà vu!

Finally, here is a particularly rich example.

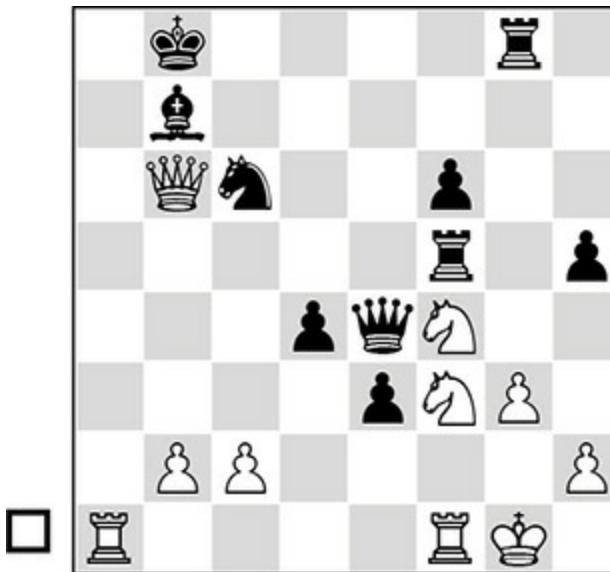
James Coleman

2142

James Adair

2247

England 4NCL 2011/12 (5)



Black has an absolutely crushing position, with a powerful attack and a huge protected pawn on e3 driving a wedge into the white position. But he has three potential issues: an exposed king, a loose rook on g8, and his own knight blocking his queen-bishop battery on the long diagonal. Sensing this, White finds a way to offer Black the solution to his problems with just one move. Talk about temptation!

27.♘ b3!!

A lovely backwards-looking move, seemingly giving up on any hopes of an attack. Instead, White threatens g8, thus temporarily halting Black's play. Black has a choice of winning moves, but the 'obvious' one is to use the knight to defend, simultaneously opening up the b7-bishop's support of the queen in eyeing g2 and h1. It's not surprising that Adair goes for this, but in fact

27...♝ e7??

is a huge blunder! After

28.♞ e6!

White has already drawn level after the forced 28...♛ c8. But poor Black is blissfully unaware of the hidden dangers.

28...e2?



And now we will see how White's 27th move and its easily refutable threat secretly harboured a real knockout.

One for your tactics training: White to move and win.

29. $\text{N}a8+!!$

Made possible by the black knight's exodus from the king's defence. It's mate in eight:

29... Qxa8 30. $\text{B}a3+$ $\text{N}a6$

Or 30... $\text{Q}b8$ 31. $\text{B}d6+$ $\text{Q}a7$ 32. $\text{N}a1+$ and wins.

31. $\text{B}xa6+$ $\text{Q}b8$ 32. $\text{B}d6+!$ $\text{Q}b7$ 33. $\text{B}c7+!$ $\text{Q}a6$ 34. $\text{N}a1+$



34... $\text{Q}b5$ 35. $\text{N}a5+$ $\text{Q}b4$ 36. $\text{B}b6+$

And Black resigned.

Beware the Decoy Trap!

Chapter 12

Berserk Attack

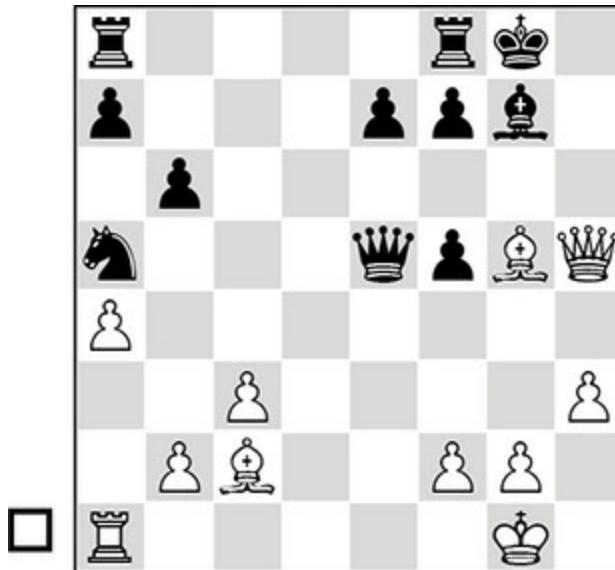
In chess, at least, the brave inherit the earth. – Edmar Mednis

‘Berserk’ is an adjective meaning ‘Very angry and recklessly defiant; wild and frenzied’. It comes from ancient Nordic legends of warriors who attacked in battle with such hysteria and fearlessness that they became invulnerable to the effects of weapons and fire.

When we’re in a lost position, we don’t have any tricks for invulnerability. But we can certainly make it seem that way. When our opponent is fearful, it’s an especially optimal time to go berserk. After all, what’s the point of self-preservation if we’re starting from zero?

Kantholi Rathnakaran	2428
SP Sethuraman	2566

Bhopal ch-IND 2013 (13)



White has sacrificed a rook for a pawn and otherwise nebulous compensation. With nothing left to lose, he launches a ludicrous berserk attack against his grandmaster opponent, which leads to a remarkable success.

23.g4!?

Why not?

23... ♜ fd8 24.gxf5 ♔ f8



Getting off the g-file and pre-empting any checks on h7. It's hard to blame Black for this safe choice, because throughout the rest of the game, Black has a luxurious choice of winning lines. Meanwhile, though, White's naively optimistic kingside attack casts shades of the infamous Shumov-Von Jaenisch swindle.

25.♔ h1

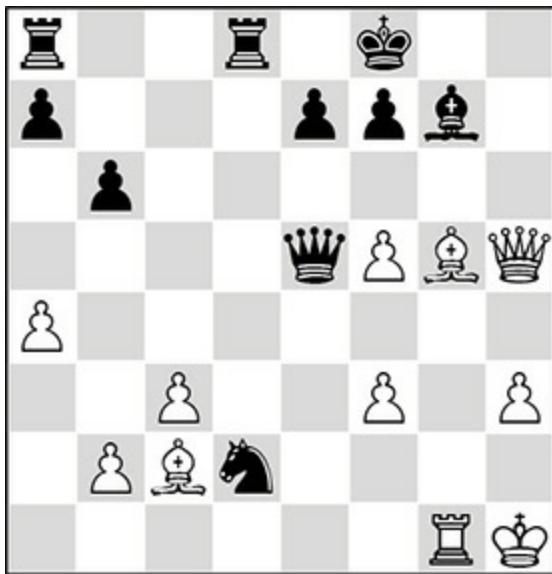
No subtlety required. White's swindling strategy is just one word: charge!

25...♝ c4 26.♜ g1 ♝ d2



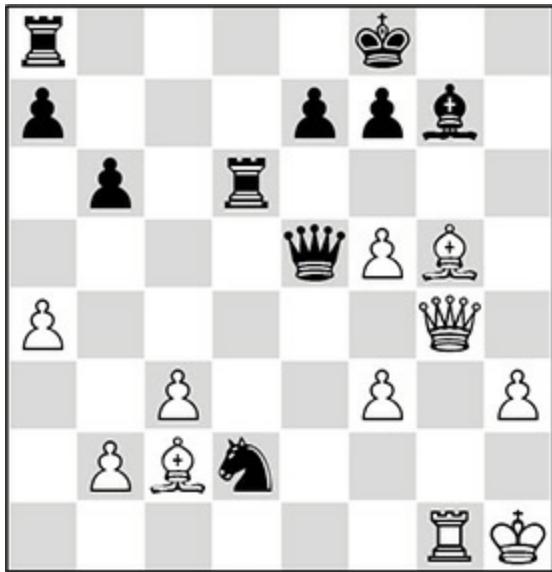
A clever move. At first it seems tempting for White to continue the attack with 27.♕ h6, with the attractive feature that 27...♝ xh6? 28.♕ xh6+ ♔ e8 29.♕ c6+!! leads to an unexpected perpetual check. But Sethuraman had planned to first interpose 27...♔ d5+!!, covering the c6-square, and only then capturing on h6: 28.f3 ♐ xh6 29.♕ xh6+ ♔ e8 30.♕ h8+ ♔ d7 and Black wins.

27.f3!!



Perhaps the most brilliant move of the game. As Sethuraman later put it, its most significant feature is that it ‘doesn’t lose by force’. A second point is that it stops $27 \dots \mathbb{Q}d5+$. But there is a third, deeper element, which is revealed when Black understandably seeks to rule out White’s $\mathbb{Q}h6$ ideas for good.

$27 \dots \mathbb{R}d6??$ $28. \mathbb{Q}g4!!$



Backwards moves are some of the hardest attacking moves to spot. White lines up on the g-file and creates the primitive idea of $29. \mathbb{Q}f4 \mathbb{Q}f6$ $30. \mathbb{Q}g5$, with a repetition. And thanks to White’s 27th move, now $28 \dots \mathbb{Q}d5??$ can safely be met by $29. \mathbb{Q}xd2!$.

Sethuraman looks, looks... and looks some more. Incredibly, however, and despite being a rook ahead, Black has no decisive way to deal with this crude threat. The knight has nowhere safe to go, queen moves are generally met by $29. \mathbb{Q}xd2$, and moving the bishop is even worse ($28 \dots \mathbb{Q}h6??$ $29. \mathbb{Q}xh6+ \mathbb{R}xh6$ $30. \mathbb{Q}g8$ mate!).

A final twist follows $28 \dots \mathbb{Q}e2!?$,



analysis diagram

threatening 29... $\mathbb{Q}xf3+$ and intending 29. $\mathbb{Q}xd2??$ $\mathbb{B}xd2!$ 30. $\mathbb{Q}xg7+$ $\mathbb{Q}e8$, when Black delivers a brutal counterattack along the white second rank. However, White can spurn the knight and play 29. $\mathbb{Q}d1!!$,



analysis diagram

leading to a different dance by the black queen with a white bishop, but the same drawn result after 29... $\mathbb{Q}e5$ 30. $\mathbb{Q}c2$ $\mathbb{Q}e2$ 31. $\mathbb{Q}d1$ or 30. $\mathbb{Q}f4$ $\mathbb{Q}f6$ 31. $\mathbb{Q}g5$, etc. (but not 29... $\mathbb{Q}d3??$ 30. $\mathbb{Q}xd2$ and White wins).

Psychologically broken and unwilling to concede to the inevitable draw by repetition, the grandmaster implodes:

28... $\mathbb{Q}e8??$ 29. $\mathbb{Q}f4!$ $\mathbb{Q}d5$ 30. $\mathbb{Q}xd6!$ $\mathbb{Q}xd6$ 31. $\mathbb{Q}xg7$

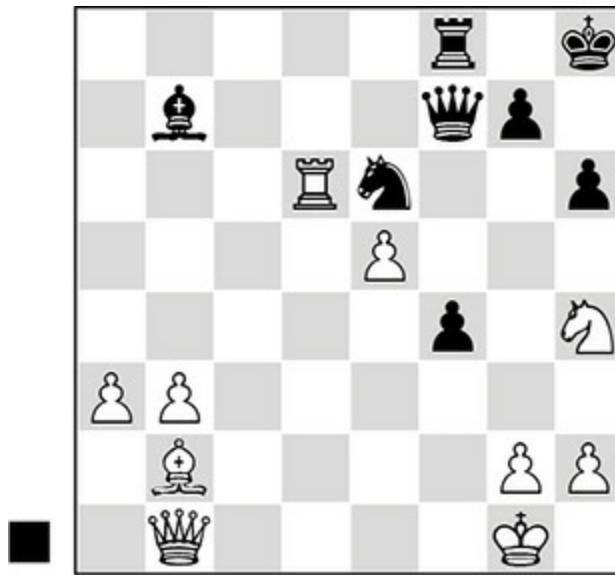


White, clearly better, went on to win.

Do you recognise the name of the black player in our next example?

Max Illingworth	2352
Junta Ikeda	2373

Sydney 2012 (4)



When I ask my Australian grandmaster colleagues who our trickiest player is, one name keeps coming up time and again: Junta Ikeda. Once renowned for having ‘the worst opening theory in Australia’, Junta has an unenviable habit of getting into lost positions – and an even more uncanny tendency to get out of them.

Two characteristics work in his favour as a master Swindler: calmness and creativity. Regarding the former, Junta can maintain a resolute, almost soporific poker face even under immense pressure (both on the board and on the clock). I’ve witnessed him many times run his clock down to exactly one second before coolly playing a nondescript move – which, typically, contains a poisonous swindle. But it’s the second feature, creativity, which really defines his escapes. Junta loves chess studies and compositions, which are very useful training tools for the Swindler. His ability to produce unorthodox or unprincipled moves is legendary. Both factors can make him seem robotic, almost ‘Stockfishy’

over the board – and just like the engines, he is infuriatingly difficult to beat. This game is a typical example. Two pawns down and facing the threat of 43. ♖g6+, Black seems forced to accept a queen exchange after routine replies. Junta goes into berserk mode.

42...f3! 43.♖g6+ ♜g8 44.♘xf8 f2+!

Not even in the engine’s top five moves for Black, but practically an uncomfortable sight for White to see. Note that the time control for this tournament was the ‘FIDE’ control of 90 minutes plus 30 seconds a move, and so there was no extra time given at move forty; in fact, both players were basically already playing a blitz game. Pushing a pawn to the seventh opens up all sorts of tricky ideas, such as ...♕xg2+.

45.♔f1 ♖g5!!



A lovely confuser. A rook and two pawns behind, Black plays a move that doesn’t even contain a direct threat. Yet, it brings Black’s last piece closer to the white king. It also introduces some mini-traps, such as 46.♖d7?? ♕a6+! or 46.♖g6?? ♕xg2+. Illingworth is too experienced to fall for two-move tricks like this, but he is forced to expend extra mental energy by constantly searching for and avoiding these sorts of tactics.

46.♔d3!

Covering a6 with a second piece while keeping an eye on f1. +11, says the engine.

46...♗xf8 47.♔e2?



White's first mistake. Illingworth naturally wants to eliminate the impudent pawn on f2, but abandoning the b1-h7 diagonal allows an attack from a different angle.

47... ♜f5!

Introducing more ideas on the weakened light squares and the freshly-abandoned first rank.

48. ♜d4

48. ♜xf2 loses to 48... ♜b1+ 49. ♜e1 ♜xg2+!.

48... ♜e6 49. ♜b4



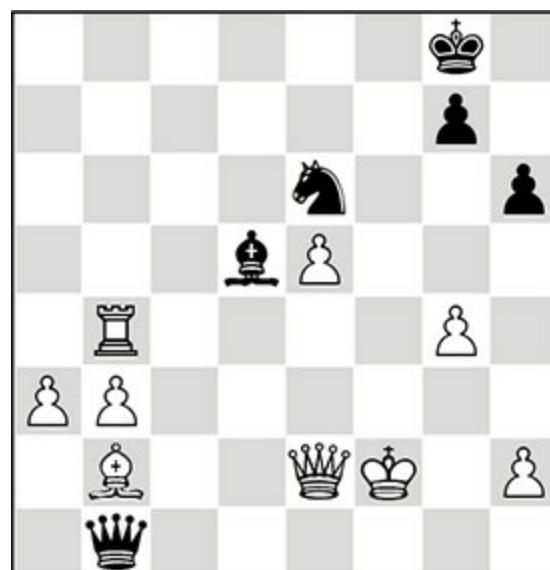
49... ♜d5

A nice, centralising move. 49... ♜c5 would have invited the simplifying 50. ♜xb7!. On the other hand, White needs to avoid further pestering of the bishop with 50. ♜b5??, as the rook is needed to cover the fourth rank (50... ♜xg2+!!).

50.g4!

Forcing Black's queen to abandon her nice post.

50... ♜b1+ 51. ♜xf2



White finally eliminates the pawn, but at the cost of his piece coordination and king coverage. Still, the engine says +3.

51... ♜g5!

Black repeats his 45th move with a vengeance, this time eyeing up some juicy squares on White's

kingside, including f3 and h3. Note that every time White weakens a line or a square, Black's pieces immediately zero in on the new target.

52. $\mathbb{Q}e3!$

The correct response. Protection for the white king is no longer guaranteed within his own confines, and so he heads on a journey elsewhere.

52... $\mathbb{Q}f3!!$



A jab in the ribs. Black makes yet another knight move, the effect of which is more about creating panic and discomfort than anything tangible. Illingworth again responds with the objectively strongest move, as he's often known to do, but it's a risky practical choice.

53. $e6?$

Best would have been 53. $\mathbb{Q}b8+!$ $\mathbb{Q}f7!$ (53... $\mathbb{Q}h7??$ 54. $\mathbb{Q}d3+$) 54. $e6+!$ $\mathbb{Q}e7$ 55. $\mathbb{Q}g8!$ and Black has to swap the queens to avoid mate, so the game is essentially over. There are faster wins, including Illingworth's move, but in the pressure of an over-the-board blitz finish, getting the queens off should be White's top priority.

53... $\mathbb{Q}g1+$ 54. $\mathbb{Q}f4$ $g5+$ 55. $\mathbb{Q}f5$



White calculated to this point in making his 52nd move, correctly evaluating the king march as winning. And indeed, he most likely calculated even further in response to Black's obvious checks:

55... ♜b1+ 52. ♔f6! or 55... ♜h4+ 56. ♔f6!, in both cases escaping the checks and scoring a brilliant victory.

But Junta DOESN'T play an obvious move, nor even a check; rather, he retreats his most active piece seemingly as far from the attack as possible! As we've discussed, these backwards moves are notoriously difficult to spot, and even more difficult to calculate from afar. Their shock effect, particularly in time pressure, can be devastating.

55... ♜a7!!



With the bewildering threat of 56... ♜h7+ 57. ♔f6 ♜g7+ 58. ♔f5 ♜h4 mate!

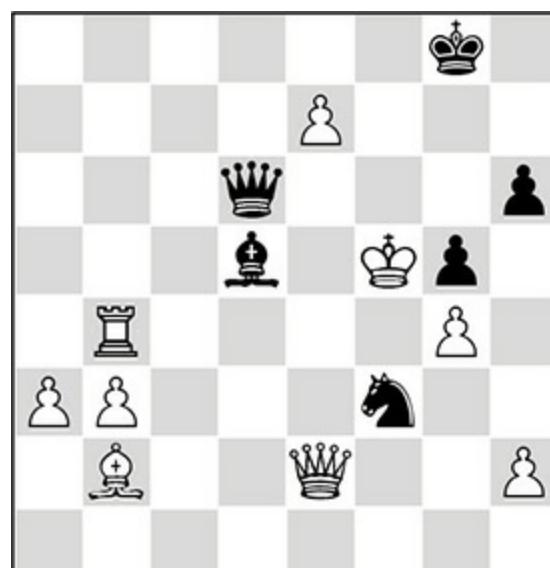
We can well imagine the dread going through White's mind after this thunderbolt. In fact, the more we stare at this position, the more we become convinced that BLACK is now winning. We can surely appreciate why White, with his ears ringing and his flag hanging, impulsively played the only sensible-looking move to cut off the queen's route to h7.

The game continued

56.e7??,

only for White to find himself mated in short order:

56... ♜d7+ 57. ♔f6 ♜d6+ 58. ♔f5



58... ♜h4# 0-1

A well-earned swindle of the finest order! But the astute reader will have noticed that White had apparently played the strongest move with 53.e6, and that his subsequent play before his blunder on move 56 was also correct. And indeed, after 55...a7 there IS a win for White: a move that simultaneously prevents checkmate, brings his king to safety and renews his own winning attack. Fittingly, it is the culmination of the white king's epic journey into the heart of the black position: 56.g6!!.



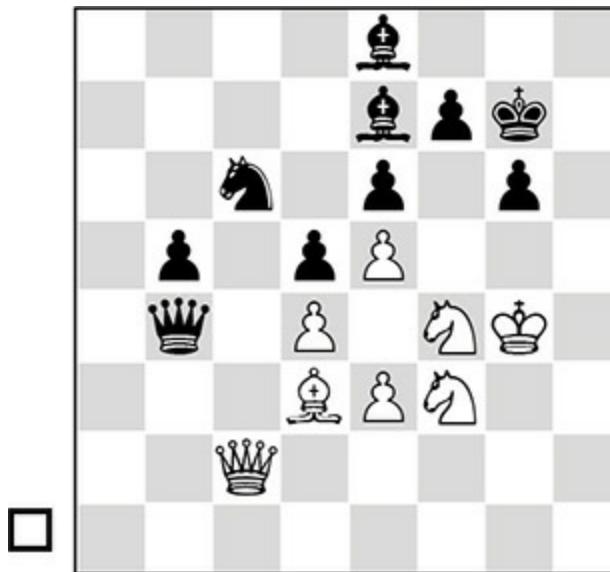
analysis diagram

Absolutely audacious. And yet, this is the only move to stave off defeat – and to win the game. After 56...h7+ White safely tucks his king into h5, whereupon the threat of 58.b8+ is simply crushing. Black can instead try 56...h4+, but then White casually chews up the black kingside with 57.xh6, and there's nothing to fear.

Give a chess player the position after 55...a7 and ask him to find White's win, and nine times out of ten they'll spot 56.g6 after some thought. But place the same player in the heat of battle, having been happily cruising to victory for hours, and then hit him with Black's extraordinary backwards move with the queen – and now see whether he finds the win. The game of chess is a mathematical puzzle, but a chess game is a fight between two people. And when it comes to human behaviour, anything can happen.

While most berserk attacks are designed to exploit an opponent's fear, it occasionally makes sense to prepare these attacks with subtlety, keeping your plans close to your chest before unleashing the assault. This not only maximises the psychological effect of your attack, but can also encourage your naïve opponent to let down his defences.

Igor Kovalenko	2674
Constantin Lupulescu	2643



White is two pawns down with minimal material remaining, which is an easily decisive advantage for 2600s. Against such strong opposition, a swindle – even a berserk one – needs a degree of subtlety in order to be effective. Kovalenko notices that Black is slightly tender on the dark squares, though he still has three defensive pieces covering the weaknesses: the bishop on e7, knight on c6 and queen on b4. So, White sneakily sets about tempting Black's pieces away from their posts.

50. ♔e2!!

Delicately hiding his regicidal intentions.

50. ♔h2? would have been far too obvious, and Black would easily convert his advantage with moves like 50... ♕a5 or 50... ♕a3 (sticking to the dark squares!).

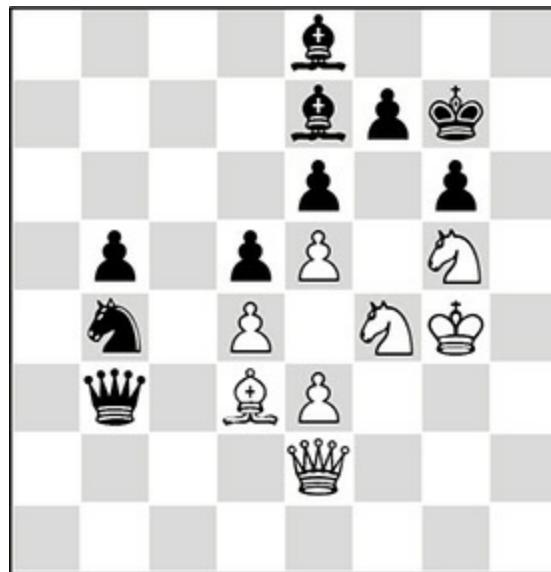
50... ♕b3?

Making room on b4, and indirectly defending the b5-pawn due to 51. ♔xb5? ♕xb5! 52. ♔xb5 ♕xe5+. However, it moves a key defender away from the kingside.

51. ♔g5!

Apparently hitting at air, and so Black continues to press on the queenside.

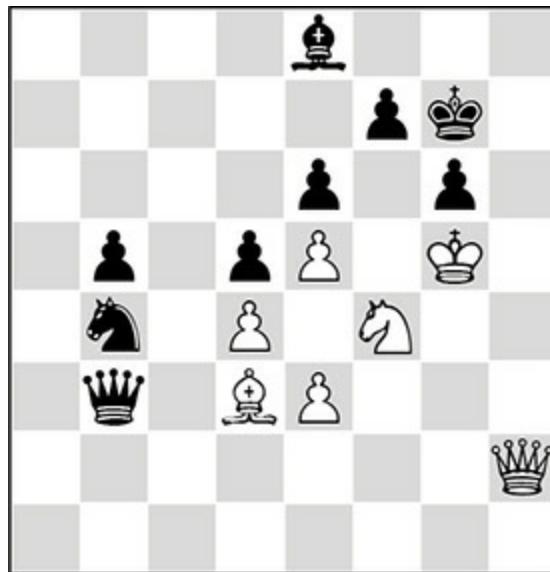
51... ♕b4??



52. ♔h2!!

Revealing the point of White's play. The attack on the dark squares comes surprisingly quickly, and no less a piece than White's own king will have a starring role.

52... ♜ xg5 53. ♛ xg5



Threatening 54. ♜ h6+, 55. ♜ f6 and 56. ♜ g7 mate, with echoes of the famous Short-Timman 1991 king march. There is no defence.

53... ♛ f8 54. ♜ f6

Black resigned.

Chapter 13

Window-Ledging

You must take your opponent into a deep dark forest where two plus two equals five, and the path leading out is only wide enough for one. – Mikhail Tal

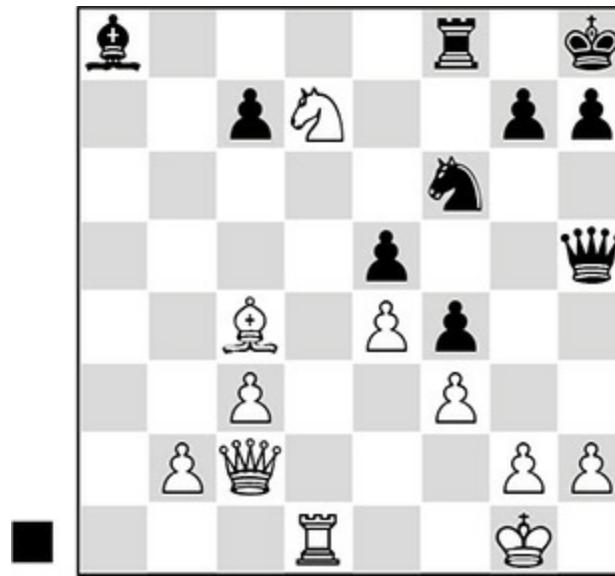
We've seen how a Trojan Horse exploits impatience, the Decoy Trap exploits hubris and a Berserk Attack exploits fear. Only a creative name will do to describe the tool to exploit *Kontrollzwang*.

Unfortunately, I couldn't think of one. But a friend of mine, a fiction author, came to my rescue. In many a classic action film with sword-fighting, the weaker swordsman, facing imminent death, climbs out onto a precarious window ledge. The implication for the dominant swordsman is clear: follow into a terrain where risk, uncertainty and deadly perils are rife for both, or give up the pursuit – and with it the advantage.

That's the idea of *Window-Ledging* that I want to convey in this chapter. Our opponent is cruising towards victory, completely in control. We need to change the environment into one where both sides can easily slip up. We need complexity; we need complications. We need chaos.

Malcolm Armstrong	2126
Thomas Rendle	2416

Liverpool 2007 (4)



Tom later told me that he knew that 25... \mathbb{Q} x d 7 was objectively forced, but he didn't trust himself to hold the draw against his lower-rated opponent. Indeed, the resulting position is pretty grim and, importantly, quite easy to play for White, as Black has virtually no counterplay. Instead, Tom steers the game into the sort of positions in which a lower-rated player feels very much not at ease: being under attack!

25... ♟ xe4!! 26.fxe4 ♞ q4 27.h3 ♞ e3



A colossal fork. The beauty of this swindle is that White appears to have such an obviously winning move in 28. $\mathbb{Q}e2$ that he doesn't bother to search for alternatives. Without such an obvious candidate, perhaps he would have found the crushing 28. $\mathbb{Q}xf8!! \mathbb{Q}xc2 29. \mathbb{Q}d8$, capping off a splendid upset. Instead, the weaker player falls prey to his instincts and jumps at the opportunity to swap the queens.

28. $\mathbb{Q}e2 f3!!$



White's kingside, so unassailably secure a few moves earlier, is being ripped apart. In fairness, White may have seen this resource in advance, but missed Black's later blow. After all, Black is sacrificing almost his entire army, while the promotion square is still defended by the bishop. How bad can things really get?

29. $\mathbb{Q}xe3??$

29. $\mathbb{Q}f1!!$ is a tough move to find, but it was the only way to win.

29... $f2+$ 30. $\mathbb{Q}h2 \mathbb{Q}xd1 31. \mathbb{Q}xf8$



31... ♜g1+!!

The killer tactic, without which Black can resign.

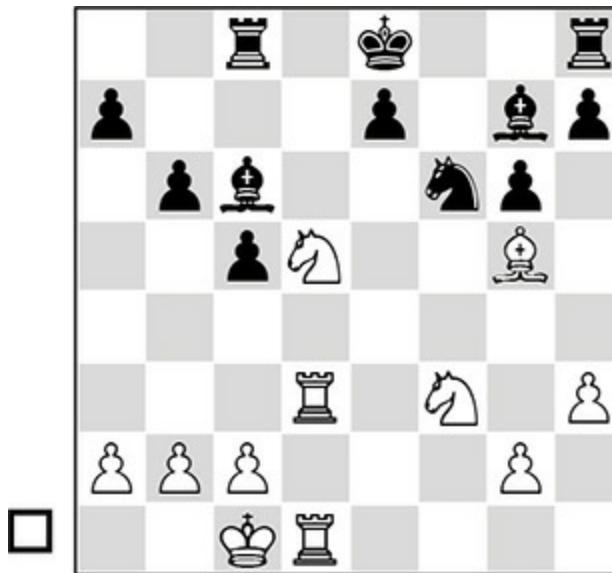
32. ♔g3 f1♕ + 0-1

Black's sacrificed knight rises like a phoenix to deliver a sweet finish. The prosaic 32...f1♕ was also sufficient, but who could resist the underpromotion? An educational victory by one of England's trickiest masters.

Window-Ledging can be an especially effective technique when your opponent is short of time. After all, every move requires a lot more care when you're standing on a ledge.

David Smerdon	2521
Jakob Aabling Thomsen	2370

Helsingør 2013 (4)



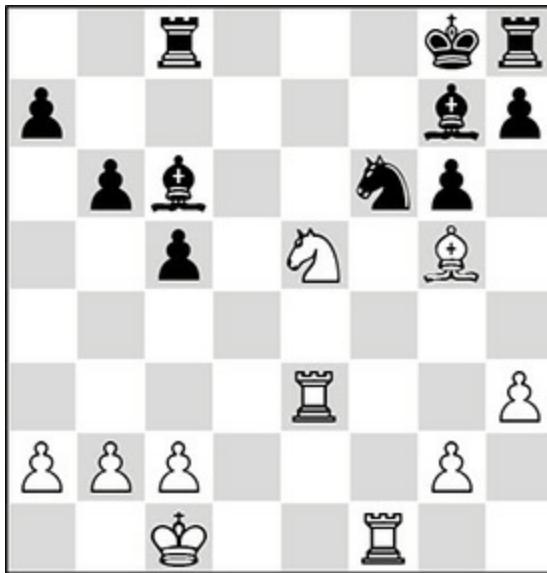
White's pawn sacrifice has fizzled out and Black is only a few moves away from consolidation. Behind on material and behind on the clock, I made a practical decision to muddy the waters.

21. ♜xe7!? ♜xe7 22. ♜e3+ ♜f8 23. ♜e5



Setting Black problems. My talented opponent rose to the challenge and played the next few moves accurately, but spent valuable minutes in the process.

23... ♜g8 24. ♖f1!

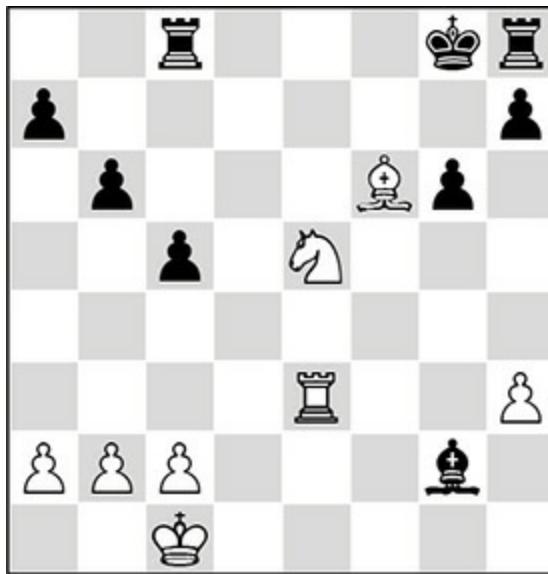


Hoping for 24... ♛d5?? 25. ♛xc6!, when Black can't take either piece without allowing checkmate.

24... ♜xg2

A natural clarifying move in light of White's window-ledging. More precise was 24... ♛d7!, which looks risky in light of 25. ♛xc6 ♖xc6 26. ♖e8+. But although he is tied up temporarily, Black can hold fast with 26... ♛f8! (not 26... ♛f8?? 27. ♛h6!) and White's compensation will eventually evaporate.

25. ♖xf6! ♜xf6 26. ♖xf6



26... ♜f8

Hoping to get a favourable endgame after 27. ♜xh8, and some much-needed fresh air for his kingside pieces.

27. ♜g4!

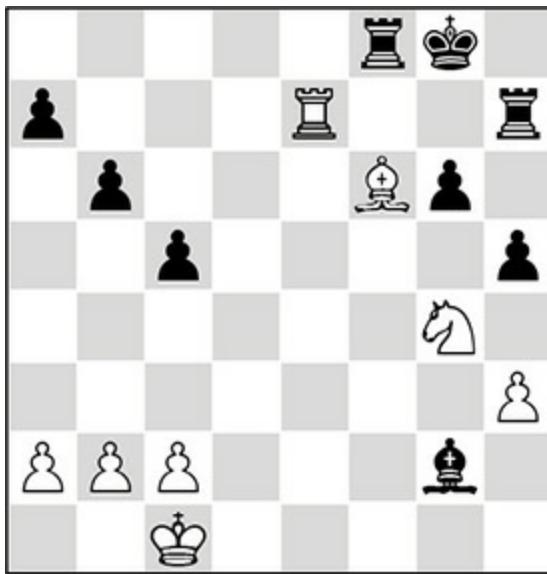


Blitzed out without a pause. This was important, as it gave my opponent the opportunity to conclude that I had blundered. With only a momentary hesitation, he fell into temptation.

27... h5??

27... ♜xf6! would have maintained a decisive advantage.

28. ♜e7! ♜h7



29. ♜ h6+!

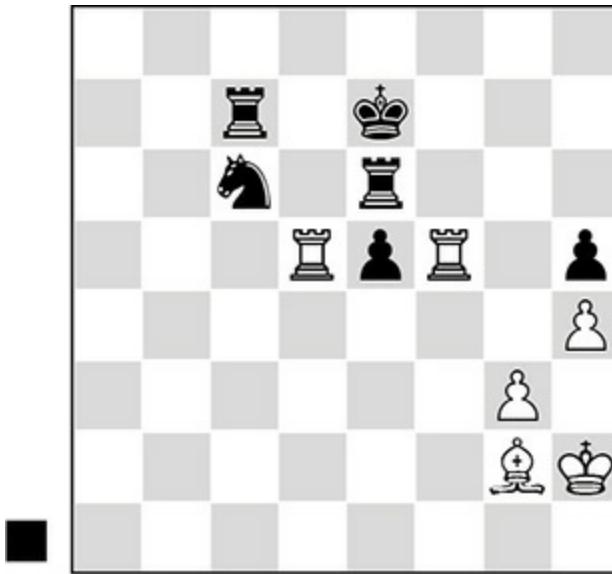
An abrupt perpetual.

29... ♜ xh6 30. ♜ g7+ ♔ h8 31. ♜ f7+ ½-½

It's uncomfortable out on the window ledge, especially if you're the sort of player who loves being in control. That pretty much describes all chess players, even up to the World Champion.

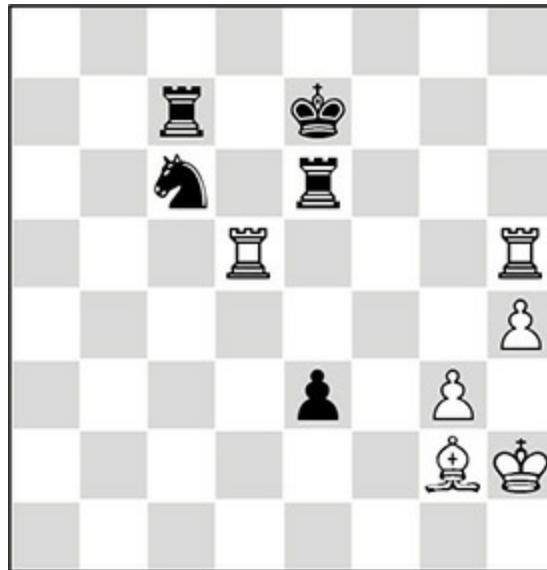
Magnus Carlsen	2840
Anish Giri	2773

Wijk aan Zee 2017 (7)



Black has been thoroughly outplayed and now faces a lost endgame against the world's best player. The most stubborn defence is 49... ♜ h6, but after 50. ♜ b5 this will almost certainly lead to a rook endgame where White is two pawns up, and Magnus would be expected to win this 95 times out of 100 against any player on earth. Instead, Giri uses the concept of Window-Ledging to create the maximum chances of a swindle. His next two moves are frowned upon by the computer; but if his position is objectively lost in any case, does this really matter? More importantly, he narrows the path to victory that Magnus must follow.

49...e4! 50. \mathbb{Q} xh5 e3!



Believe it or not, after this move White can force mate in no more than 25 moves (technology, hey?). But there's little room for error out on the ledge; Magnus needs to be accurate, or else...

51. \mathbb{Q} h7+ \mathbb{Q} e8 52. \mathbb{Q} xc7 e2 53. \mathbb{Q} f3! e1 \mathbb{Q} 54. \mathbb{Q} h5+ \mathbb{Q} f8 55. \mathbb{Q} f5+ \mathbb{Q} g8



56. \mathbb{Q} f7+?

It is likely that Magnus calculated this variation when choosing his 50th move, because he played the bishop check instantly, overlooking an elementary mate: 56. \mathbb{Q} c8+ \mathbb{Q} g7 57. \mathbb{Q} f7+ \mathbb{Q} h6 58. \mathbb{Q} h8#. I'm not sure if Giri had also missed this, or instead had seen it and decided it was still worth the gamble. If the latter, then his swindle deserves even more kudos.

56... \mathbb{Q} h8 57. \mathbb{Q} h5+ \mathbb{Q} g7 58. \mathbb{Q} xe6+ \mathbb{Q} f6



Magnus had calculated to this point and evaluated it – correctly – as winning. But one final accurate move is required, and here the champion falters:

59. ♜h6+??

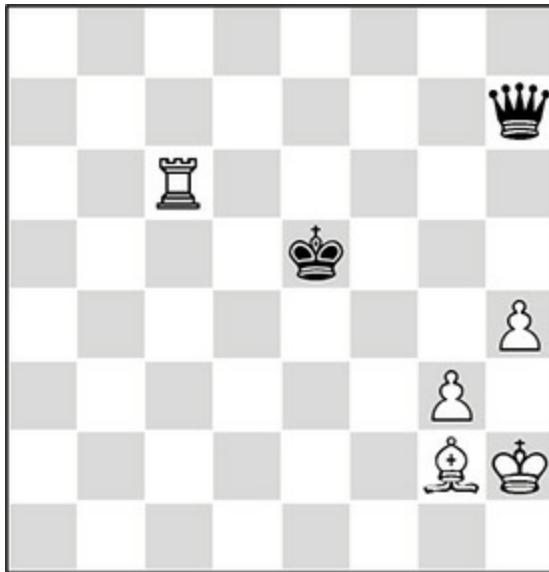
59. ♜c4! is the only winning move, covering e2 and renewing the threat on the black knight. There is no defence: 59... ♛e5 60. ♜h6+ ♛f5 61. ♜d3+!! ♛g4 62. ♜g7+ ♛f3 63. ♜f6+ ♛e3



analysis diagram

64. ♜f1!! with the lovely point that 64... ♜f3+? loses to 65. ♜xf3+ ♛xf3 66. ♜g2+ and the queen is lost. Of course, all of this was too hard to fathom in advance, but the point of Giri's play is clear: by sharpening the position, the chances of a blunder (by either player) increase dramatically.

59... ♛e5 60. ♜h3 ♜d2+ 61. ♜g2 ♜xh6 62. ♜xc6 ♜h7



The smoke has cleared, and the swindle has been successful. While Magnus pressed for another 60 moves, Giri was able to hold the endgame with little trouble. A fantastic example of using the window-ledging technique to maximise one's chances, and against no less than a World Champion.

There are many examples of Window-Ledging among the games of the great tacticians, such as Tal, Kasparov etc. But our final example is from one of my favourite amateur players, the German FM Olaf Steffens, whose unbreakably upbeat outlook on life is reflected in his optimistic chess. A diehard fan of 1.b4 with the white pieces and similar offbeat openings as Black, his over-the-top cheerfulness in the face of objective hopelessness, combined with utterly unorthodox chaos on the board, makes him a very difficult opponent. Olaf is also a master exponent of Window-Ledging.

Gavin Wall 2265
Olaf Steffens 2330

Hastings 1995 (8)

1.d4 ♜ f6 2.♘ f3 c5 3.d5 b5 4.♗ g5 ♛ b7 5.♗ xf6 gxg6



This is as mainstream as Olaf's openings get.

6.e4 ♕g8?! 7.♘c3 b4 8.♘e2 ♕g4? 9.♘g3 ♔c7 10.♘d2 ♕g5 11.♘c4 ♔f4 12.♘d3



Steffens' opening has been characteristically flamboyant (as well as characteristically weak). White has coolly rebuffed the theatrics and now looks with confidence towards calmly converting his advantage. A typical move for Black would be 12... $\mathbb{Q}g7$ or 12... $\mathbb{Q}a6$, developing some pieces. Steffens, however, prefers chaos.

12...h5!

Sacrificing a pawn to bring about complications.

13.♘xh5 ♗h4 14.♘g3 e6 15.♗e2 f5!

Another unexpected pawn thrust.

16.♘a5 fxe4 17.♘xe4 c4!

And again! Pawns just get in the way, after all.

18.♘xc4 ♗xd5



It's almost as if Black has burnt his chess textbooks and scattered their ashes over the board along with his pieces.

19.♘f3 ♗h8

One of those 'backwards moves' that we have spoken about. Black sacrifices an exchange to keep the game complicated.

Amazingly, 19... $\mathbb{Q}e7!$, avoiding knight checks on both d6 and f6, would actually have given Black quite a decent position here.

20. ♜ f6+ ♕ e7 21. ♜ xd5+ ♕ xd5 22. ♜ g3 ♕ g7 23. ♜ e3 ♜ b7 24. ♜ g5+ ♕ f6 25. ♜ c5+ ♕ d8 26. ♜ xb4



The position remains sharp, but from Black's perspective, not sharp enough. White is threatening to castle, which would take a lot of sting out of the game. But now the real Window-Ledging begins.

26... ♜ c6!!

The exchange and two pawns down and completely lost, Black's only hope is to scare his opponent into a blunder by creating total havoc. He needs to add more fuel to the fire, and so the bishop has to be sacrificed. There's no going back now.

27. ♜ xb7 ♜ b8 28. ♜ a6 ♜ xb2

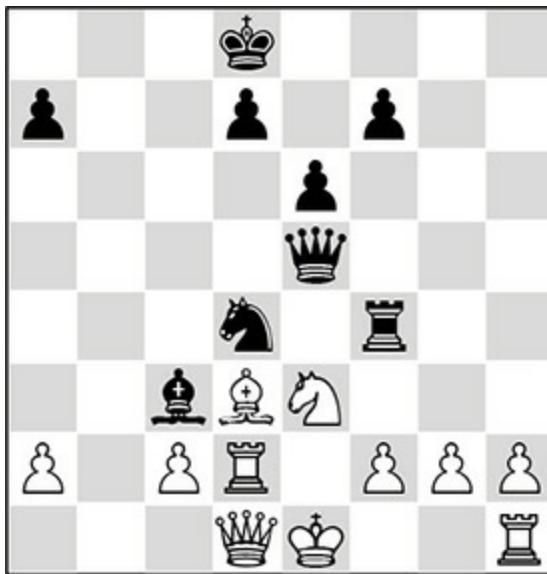
A mini-trap: 29. ♜ b1?? ♜ c3+!.

29. ♜ d1 ♜ b6 30. ♜ c4 ♜ b4 31. ♜ c5 ♜ d4!



Black must not give White a moment's respite to consolidate. The queen must be harassed!

32. ♜ g5+ ♜ f6! 33. ♜ g3 ♜ e5! 34. ♜ h3 ♜ h4! 35. ♜ f3 ♜ f4! 36. ♜ h3 ♜ h4 37. ♜ f3 ♜ f4 38. ♜ e2 ♜ c3+! 39. ♜ d2 ♜ d4!
40. ♜ d1 ♜ e5



Continuing to niggle at White's position. A rook and a pawn up, White has managed to avoid the threats, but his position has become passive as a result. The constant annoyances are exasperating.

41. ♜ e2

Black has successfully bluffed White out of castling, although this was objectively strongest: 41.0-0 ♙xd2 42. ♔xd2 ♛h4 43.f4! with a decisive advantage.

41... ♜ a5! 42.f3 d5!

Black pushes a pawn in the centre for the first time.

43. ♜ d3 e5!

... followed by another!

44. ♛ f1 ♛ h4 45.h3 e4!

When Philidor wrote that 'Pawns are the soul of chess', he probably didn't have this in mind.

46. ♜ e2 f5



Every single black troop takes part in the charade. Despite his overwhelming material advantage, White's pieces have almost reset themselves. There is nothing more infuriating in a chess game than knowing that your position is winning, but feeling like you are unable to do anything to convert it.

47.fxe4 fxe4 48. ♛ f7 ♜ e6!



Psychologically brilliant. Black threatens 49...d4. Or is it 49... \mathbb{Q} f4? Or perhaps 49... \mathbb{R} f4? In truth, the move creates nothing other than confusion and fear – which, incidentally, are two very powerful weapons. White's confusion is amplified by the fact that he can play no less than 20 (!) winning moves in this position, but none of them is obviously clear.

49. \mathbb{K} f1?

White cannot bear the pin any longer. However, while this move is still winning, it is based on a hallucination.

49... \mathbb{Q} xd2 50. \mathbb{Q} c4?

White panics. 50. \mathbb{Q} b1! was the strongest of several winning moves.

50...dxc4 51. \mathbb{Q} xc4 \mathbb{Q} g5!



The pesky knight returns with a vengeance. Bamboozled by the Window-Ledging and completely traumatised by his opponent's insanity, White collapses.

52. \mathbb{Q} xa7 \mathbb{Q} c3 53. \mathbb{Q} a8+ \mathbb{Q} c7 54. \mathbb{Q} g1 \mathbb{Q} xh3+! 55. gxh3 \mathbb{Q} g3+ 0-1

It's mate after 56. \mathbb{Q} f1 \mathbb{Q} f4+.

Chapter 14

Play the Player

I am trying to beat the guy sitting across from me, and trying to choose the moves that are most unpleasant for him and his style. – Magnus Carlsen

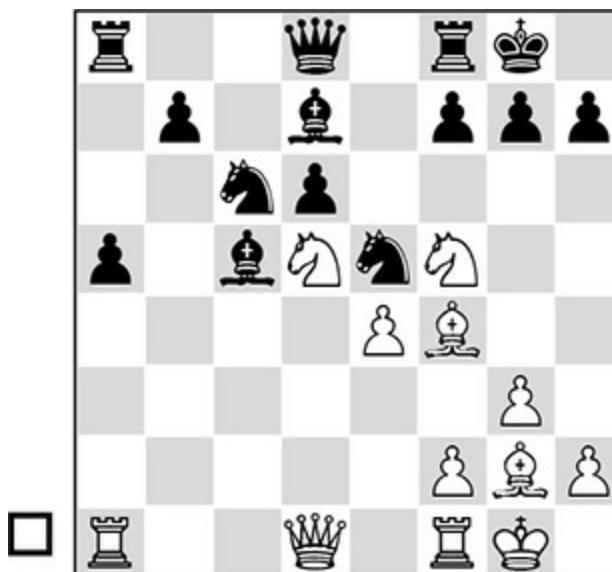
When I was young, my coach repeated to me the common chess saying: ‘Play the board, not the player!’²⁷ Most chess players have heard this one. The advice is well-intentioned. When they start out, juniors are easily distracted by our opponents: their moods, their mannerisms, their facial expressions, their age, their gender, their time trouble... It is easy to lose the focus on your own game, and with it your concentration. For the most part, it is far better to forget about who is sitting opposite you and instead put your energy into your concrete calculations and into finding the best moves. That’s what I tell my students, too.

But swindling is a different story. Best moves are often not enough when the position is hopelessly, indisputably lost. We need to use more than just what the board allows. We need to play the player.

We have already seen examples of strong grandmasters playing the player, such as Mikhail Tal in his game with Smyslov. Botvinnik also famously exploited his insights into Smyslov’s psychology in their World Championship matches. Kramnik used this technique in his masterful choice of the Berlin Defence in his successful World Championship match with Kasparov. Kasparov and Karpov came to know each other’s styles intimately during their legendary ‘KK’ matches, leading to many attempts to exploit any sign of personal weakness. One of Kasparov’s most famous swindles, and a typical example of playing the player, was against a different ‘K’...

Garry Kasparov	2740
Viktor Kortchnoi	2650

Brussels 1986 (2)



Surprised in the opening, Kasparov has subsequently tried to bluff his way out of trouble with a series

of speculative pawn sacrifices. So far, Kortchnoi has competently rebuffed the tricks and ended up with a solid and decisive material advantage. The only downside is that it has cost him some time on the clock, but at this stage, it's nothing too serious.

What's good about Kasparov's position? His pieces are active and massed in the direction of Black's king. But probably Kasparov asked a slightly different question, given his opponent: 'What's good about my situation?' The answer, as Kasparov well knew, is that Kortchnoi was always prone to nervousness, particularly when under attack and, like most of us, especially in time pressure.

Kasparov tries to amplify this characteristic by applying as much pressure as possible.

By Window-Ledging to complicate the position and launching a Berserk Attack on his opponent, White can exacerbate the psychological effects of time trouble like anxiety and fear, which will soon become the most important factors in the game. So, instead of trying to hold back his opponent's racing a-pawn, Kasparov deliberately moves his rook AWAY from the file, signalling his aggressive intentions. True, that pawn may queen, but the king is on the other side of the board!

22. ♜ c1! a4 23. g4!

In annotating this game, Kortchnoi wrote: ‘It has to be agreed that Kasparov has a wonderful feeling for attack.’

23...a3 24.g5 a2 25. h5



Threatening 26. $\kappa x g7.$

25... xf5

Kortchnoi thought this move was forced, while Kasparov later claimed 25... ♔d3 was stronger. Of course, computers take the fun out of everything: 25... ♔h8! 26. ♕xg7 ♖g8!! is winning, as is 25... ♔d4! 26. ♕xg7 ♔d3!!.. But the resulting variations in either case are perilous, while Kortchnoi's elimination of the white knight is far more natural.

26.exf5 ♕ d4! 27.♕ xe5!

The best chance, exchanging a key defender.

27... κ xe5 28. ω e4 κ e8



29. \mathbb{R} c7!

The continuation of the vision that began with 22. \mathbb{R} c1. White must move all pieces forward. 29.f6? \mathbb{Q} g6 30. \mathbb{Q} e7+ \mathbb{R} xe7! gets White nowhere.

29...a1 \mathbb{Q} 30. \mathbb{R} xa1 \mathbb{Q} x a1+ 31. \mathbb{Q} g2



A remarkable position, which looks almost like a normal game – until you count the rooks. Kasparov presses on as if nothing is wrong. Meanwhile, time trouble has finally arrived, and there are precious seconds left for both players to make it to the time control of move 40.

31... \mathbb{R} a2?!

Objectively strong, but leaving the position complicated.

31... \mathbb{R} e1! was a better practical move, intending to eliminate the bishop after 32. \mathbb{Q} c2 \mathbb{R} c1 !

32. \mathbb{R} e7!!



A brilliantly chaotic move. Kasparov throws his rook into the midst of the black forces with reckless abandon. Kortchnoi's words are insightful: 'If there had been even five minutes each on our clocks, the World Champion – a rook and two pawns down – would have had to resign. But our flags were hanging; for the last eight moves we had less than a minute left. Therefore he had the moral right to prolong resistance, and even had some hope, although a faint one, of saving the game. There are no saving moves, and all that remains is to hope for a miracle, for the psychological effect of some surprise.'

There is substance behind the surprise, too. Black cannot simply pass, because White's last move finally threatens 33.f6!. Previously, Black had the answer ... $\mathbb{Q}g6$, but now there would follow 34. $\mathbb{Q}xg6$ $hxg6$ 35. $\mathbb{Q}xe8+$! $\mathbb{Q}xe8$ 36. $\mathbb{Q}e7+$!, winning. Black has eight winning moves to choose from, including both 32... $\mathbb{Q}xf2+$ and 32... $\mathbb{Q}xe7$. Kortchnoi sees the latter, but thinks he can get one move closer to move forty by first playing the former – and taking a pawn with check, no less.

Unfortunately, this combination of the alternatives makes Kortchnoi's life much more difficult.

32... $\mathbb{Q}xf2+$ 33. $\mathbb{Q}g3$ $\mathbb{Q}xe7?$

The prosaic 33... $\mathbb{Q}g6$! would have ended all of Kasparov's attacking dreams.

34.f6!



Kasparov's material disadvantage has doubled to two rooks and two pawns, but he bravely (or

berserkly?) presses on. In extreme time trouble, mate is always a powerful threat.

34... ♜ g6 35. ♜ xe7+ ♔ f8 36. ♜ xh7



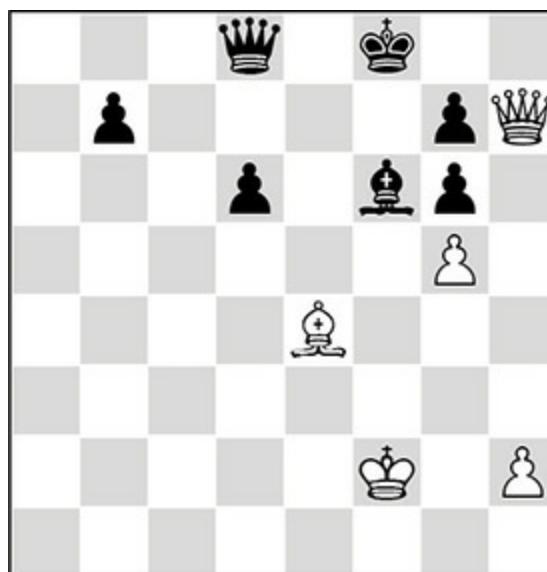
The height of White's swindle. From a place of pure hopelessness, Kasparov has orchestrated a situation in which, finally, Kortchnoi must find an only move. That's the best that White could have hoped for from his energies. With more time, or on a better day, Viktor the Terrible would have bravely played the principled 36...gxf6!! 37. ♜ xg6+ (or 37. ♜ xg6 fxg6!) 37...fxg6 38. ♜ d5 ♕ e8! and the black king runs to the queenside with impunity: 39. ♜ g8+ ♔ e7 40. ♜ e6+ ♔ d8 41. ♜ xd6+ ♜ d7 42. ♜ f8+ ♔ c7 and His Majesty finally reaches safety. But this was not that day, and the time-trouble nerves have the final say.

36... ♜ xf6?

Kortchnoi: 'Apparently my opponent had persuaded me that I was threatened with dozens of mates.'

37. ♜ xg6+ fxg6 38. ♜ xf2?

A small mistake – but Kasparov was also playing on fumes. There was a straightforward draw available after 38. ♜ h8+ ♔ f7 39. ♜ xd8 ♜ xd8 40. ♜ d5+ ♔ f8 41. ♜ xf2=.



38... ♜ b6+?

38... ♜ d4+! would have kept the game alive, though after 39. ♜ f3 ♜ xg5 40. ♜ xg6! ♜ xg6 41. ♜ xg6 d5 42. h4 White draws with accurate play.

39. ♜ g2 ♜ b2+ 40. ♜ h3??

One of many famous ‘move 40’ blunders (40. ♜ f3=)



40... ♜ xg5??

... which is followed by another! With seconds remaining, Kortchnoi ‘believes’ his opponent, thinking that the advantage has fully slipped away. Instead, 40... ♜ e5! would have won, the key point being 41. ♜ g4 ♜ e2+ 42. ♜ f3 ♜ c4+! 43. ♜ h3 ♜ f1+ 44. ♜ g4 ♜ g1! with mate.

41. ♜ xg6 ♜ f6?

An understandable decision. The time control reached and the vast majority of Black’s advantage vanquished, Kortchnoi decides to immediately force the draw. With 41... ♜ f6! he could have made Kasparov work hard to split the point, but after such a turnaround and with his nerves shot, we can appreciate Kortchnoi’s desire to end the game.

42. ♜ xf6+ ½-½

The opposite-coloured bishop endgame is trivially drawn, and the players formalised it immediately. Kortchnoi: ‘This game, in my view a shameful one for both grandmasters, left its mark on our chess relations. It is probable that the World Champion convinced me of his infallibility, his invincibility. After it I lost seven times to Kasparov, without reply... it has to be admitted that at the chess board, the 13th World Champion is a subtle psychologist.’

With more and more tournaments being added to the professional circuit, today’s top players face each other more often than ever before. Thanks to commercial online matches, some members of the 2800 club have played their peers literally hundreds of times, allowing them an intimate window into each other’s chess personality. Of today’s elite, Carlsen is well-known for taking theoreticians into his own waters. He has weaved his psychological voodoo on numerous pet opponents, such as Nakamura, against whom he has amassed an outrageous plus score. But even Carlsen is human, and a few players, like Nepomniachtchi and Giri, seem to have a particular knack of getting under his skin. At the time of writing, both Nepomniachtchi and Giri²⁸ have a plus score against the World Champion in classical chess, although – you already see it coming – both have a minus score against Nakamura! Such result ‘cycles’ are evidence that styles and personalities do matter in chess, even at – or, rather, especially at – the elite level. Top grandmasters play each other so regularly that they become acutely familiar with subtle cues, moods and biases. This may explain why most are rather coy when it comes to talking about psychological strategies against specific opponents²⁹, as there will inevitably soon be

chances for revenge. I have no such inhibitions, so we continue with two examples from my own games.

David Smerdon

2519

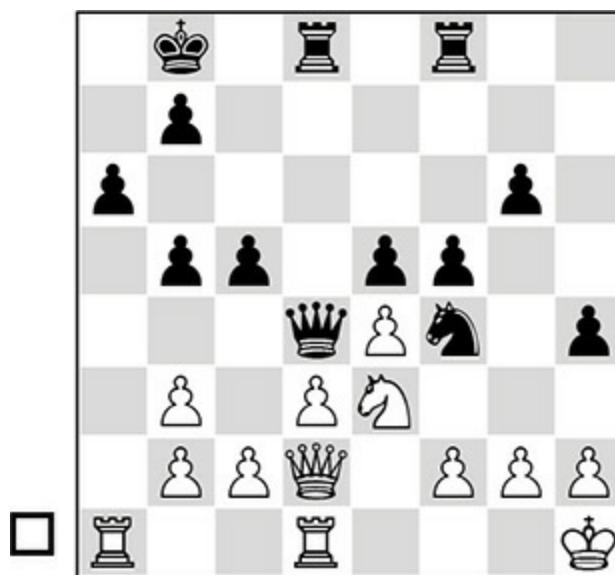
Max Illingworth

2476

Sydney 2015 (10)

I have an unbeaten plus score against almost the entire current Australian team by playing them when they were young and then promptly leaving the Australian chess scene right when they all got strong. That's the way to do it. This game was played at about the time when Max had overtaken me in strength, putting my cunning retirement strategy to the test.

At the time it was played, Max's greatest weakness was his chess psychology. He was particularly good at responding to threats and calculating concrete variations. He would pride himself on playing computer-like chess, always searching for what he believed to be the objectively best move. Unsound sacrifices should always be accepted; offbeat openings should always be refuted. Laudable intentions, of course, but by now we know that a little flexibility can go a long way across the board.



In this game Max had completely outplayed me straight from the opening, and my game was verging on collapse. I was so depressed with my position here that I seriously considered resigning because I realised White is helpless against the triple threats of ... \mathbb{Q} x b 2, ...fxe4 and ...h4-h3. As my eyes swept between these threats, I suddenly came upon an outrageous swindling attempt. With nothing else to play for, I started swinging my queen around the board in apparent aimlessness:

29. \mathbb{Q} a5!?

First point: 29...fxe4?? 30.dxe4 skewers the rook on d8.

30.g3 \mathbb{Q} e6



Defending d8, so:

31. ♜ b6!? ♕ d6 **32. ♜ a5!?**

Once again resurrecting the skewering motif.

32... ♕ c6! **33. ♜ e1!**



This was the position I had been playing for on my 29th move. It looks like White is back where he started, and thus nothing seems to stop Black executing his original threats. Indeed, 33...fxe4 should win eventually, although White can hang on to e4 with 34.c3. But what about the other pawn?

33... ♞ xb2??

Such a computer move to play. The human approach was to keep control of the position and focus the energies in the centre and kingside, where there is obvious superiority. But Max couldn't resist pawn-grabbing if he believed it to be the 'principled' decision. Here, unluckily for him, it is not.

34. exf5 gxf5 35. c3!!

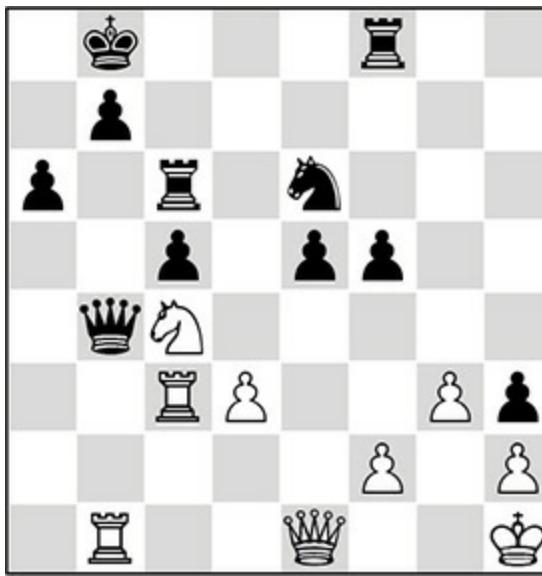


And just like that, the black queen finds herself locked up. Note the key difference of the white queen sitting on e1 instead of d2, which makes this move possible.

35...b4! 36. \mathbb{Q} dc1! \mathbb{Q} xb3 37. \mathbb{Q} c4! bxc3?

37... \mathbb{Q} c7! would have kept an advantage after 38. \mathbb{Q} xe5 \mathbb{Q} d8!.

38. \mathbb{Q} xc3 \mathbb{Q} b4 39. \mathbb{Q} b1



Max started shaking his head and then fell into a long think. A lesser player would have collapsed, but after nearly half an hour's pause, he recalibrated his outlook and steeled himself for the defence.

Admirable grit.

39...e4! 40. \mathbb{Q} xb4 cxb4 41. \mathbb{Q} b3 \mathbb{Q} fc8!

It's a testament to just how lost I was ten moves ago that Max could blunder his queen and still have enough compensation to snatch a draw! Max defended tenaciously from here and eventually we split the point. Some would say this was a just result, but there's very little justice in chess, as the pages of this book demonstrate.

42. \mathbb{Q} b1 exd3 43. \mathbb{Q} e5 \mathbb{Q} c3 44. \mathbb{Q} xd3 \mathbb{Q} xd3 45. \mathbb{Q} xe6 \mathbb{Q} cd8! 46. \mathbb{Q} e1?

46. \mathbb{Q} e1! \mathbb{Q} a7! 47. \mathbb{Q} g1 a5 48. \mathbb{Q} f1 with winning chances.

46...b3 47. \mathbb{Q} g1 \mathbb{Q} 8d5 48. \mathbb{Q} f1 \mathbb{Q} a7 49. \mathbb{Q} e2 a5 50. \mathbb{Q} a1 b6 51. \mathbb{Q} c1 \mathbb{Q} d7 52. \mathbb{Q} e5 \mathbb{Q} a6 53. \mathbb{Q} h8 \mathbb{Q} d8 54. \mathbb{Q} e5 a4

55. \mathbb{Q} c4 \mathbb{Q} d1+ 56. \mathbb{Q} e2 \mathbb{Q} 8d2+ 57. \mathbb{Q} f3 b2 58. \mathbb{Q} xa4+ \mathbb{Q} b7 59. \mathbb{Q} g7+ \mathbb{Q} c6 60. \mathbb{Q} c3+ \mathbb{Q} b7 61. \mathbb{Q} g7+ \mathbb{Q} c6 62. \mathbb{Q} c3+ ½-½

After this tournament, Max started working seriously on the psychological aspects of his game, and

soon gained the grandmaster title.

David Smerdon

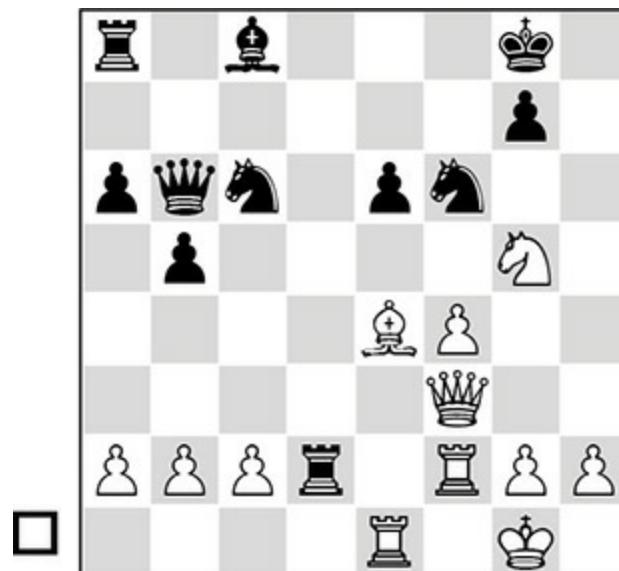
2519

James Morris

2378

Sydney 2015 (8)

James Morris is another strong young player in Australia's current golden generation. He is known for his tactical wizardry, but if there is any weakness in this (sorry, James), it's that he cannot resist the showy razzle-dazzle tactic in a position, even if it could be won by simpler means.



In this game, my piece sacrifice had backfired and I was now dead lost. The computer recommends 22. $\mathbb{Q}xc6$, but against a player of James' calibre, I might as well resign after 22... $\mathbb{R}xf2$ 23. $\mathbb{Q}xf2$ $\mathbb{B}xc6$. I spotted one last trick: a Trojan Horse that is less about offering a shortcut than about offering James the chance to finish the game brilliantly.

22. $\mathbb{R}ef1!?$

Now 22... $\mathbb{Q}d7$ or 22... $\mathbb{R}xf2$ win routinely, but an attacking player like James is always looking for that glorious knockout blow. He thought he saw it here:

22... $\mathbb{Q}d4??$



Winning against every reply, except one.

23. $\mathbb{Q} h7+!!$ $\mathbb{Q} xh7$ 24. $\mathbb{Q} h5!$

Quite an unusual variant on the standard Greek Gift sacrifice.

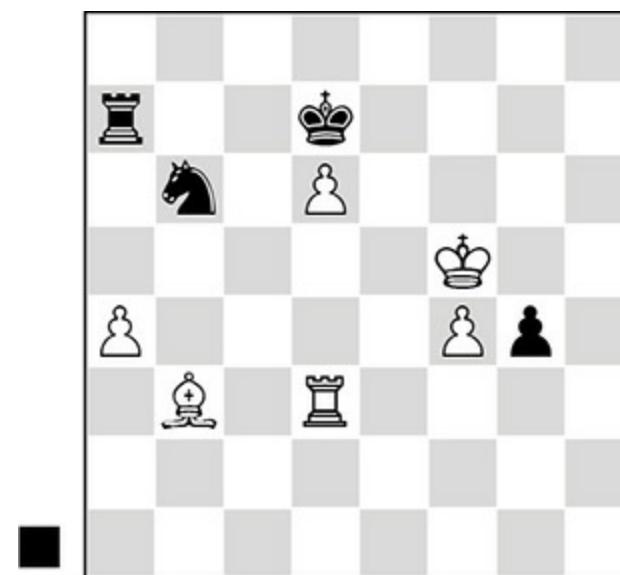
24... $\mathbb{Q} xg5$

And a draw was agreed, as White forces a perpetual check after 25. $\mathbb{Q} e8+$ $\mathbb{Q} h7$ 26. $\mathbb{Q} h5+$.

Now that I have selfishly snuck in two of my own games, let's look at some other examples of playing the player.

Stuart Conquest	2563
Luke McShane	2615

England 4NCL 2009/10 (9)



Conquest was one of Britain's strongest grandmasters in the 1990s, and his ease at outplaying his fancied opponent in this game is testament to his enduring skill. However, in later years Stuart had begun to doubt his own calculations; the phenomenon will sound familiar to many of us. As we have seen, maintaining optimism and a degree of self-confidence (but not too much!) is crucial in chess. Without this, we may become too risk-averse in our decision-making, prone to time-trouble conservatism and passing up decisive opportunities.

In this game, McShane, himself a masterful Swindler and perceptive chess psychologist, realises that his opponent's self-doubt may be the only chance for him to save half a point. Luke tries a desperate swindle:

64... $g3!?$ 65. $\mathbb{Q} e6+$ $\mathbb{Q} c6$ 66. $d7$ $g2!$



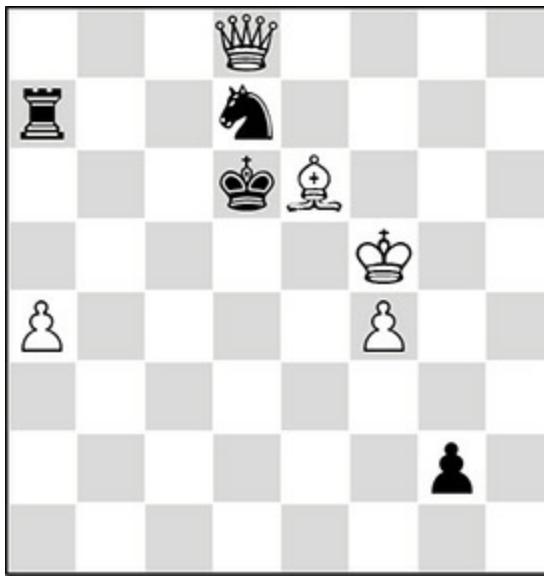
The key moment.

Conquest's intuition would certainly have led him to believe that 67.d8 ♜ mates, and indeed it does. But McShane, who knows Conquest well, banks on his opponent wishing to avoid any complexity. He presents the very tempting possibility of a promotion to a new queen, even with check! Conquest, thinking he has spotted a shortcut to victory, jumps at the opportunity to simplify the winning task.

67. ♜ d6+??

For the record, the calculations required for victory were 67.d8 ♜ g1 ♜ 68. ♜ d6+ ♛ b7 69. ♜ xb6+! ♜ xb6 70. ♜ c8#.

67... ♛ xd6 68.d8 ♜ + ♜ d7!!



An outrageous resource. White cannot stop the pawn: 69. ♜ g5? ♜ a5+ or 69. ♜ g8? ♜ a5+ 70. ♜ e4 ♜ f6+ both lose the queen. In fact, the swindle is so good that White now has to scramble to save the draw, and I dare say many players would have failed. Luckily, Stuart pulled himself together to rescue half a point.

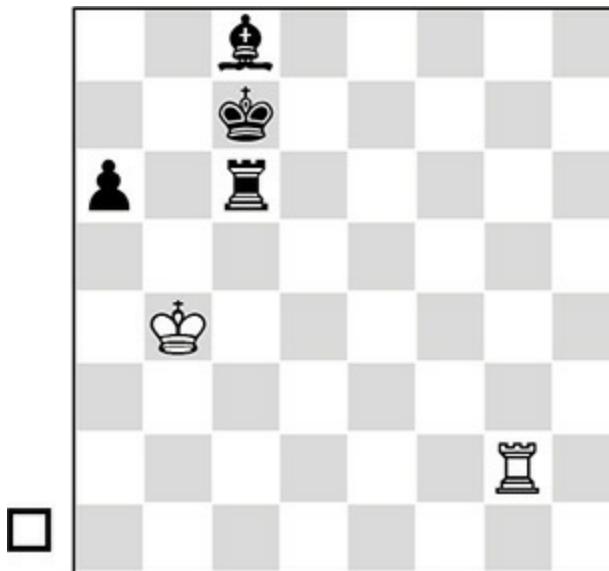
69. ♜ xd7! g1 ♜ 70. ♜ e6+ ♛ c6 71. ♜ d5+ ♛ b6 72. ♜ b5+ ♛ c7 73. ♜ e5+ ♛ b6 74. ♜ b8+ ♛ c6 75. ♜ b5+ ♛ c7 76. ♜ c4+ ♛ d6 77. ♜ d5+ ♛ e7 78. ♜ e5 ♛ b6 79. ♜ g7+ ♛ d6 80. ♜ e5+ ½-½

Pia Cramling

2535

Emanuel Berg

2574



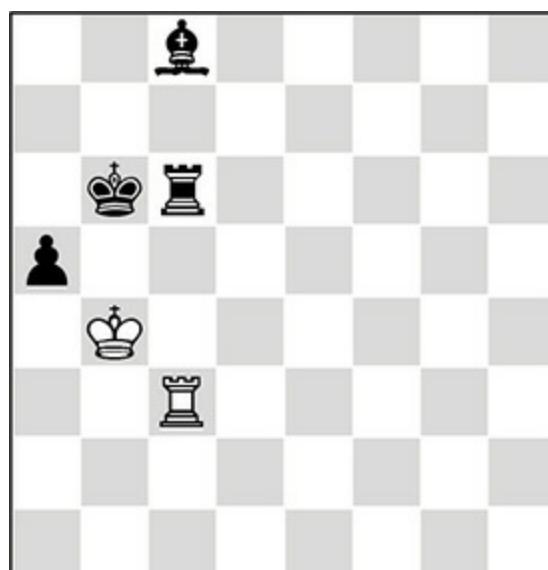
Many a swindle relies on the delicate balance of one's opponent being tactically strong enough to fall for the bait, while at the same time being either too careless or too impatient to calculate deeper. Emanuel Berg has a well-earned reputation as an excellent tactician and a principled player, which his opponent and compatriot knows. Black can and should convert this position by playing slowly and carefully, eliminating the need for any deep calculation.

But as we saw in Darini-Maghsoodloo, the technique to win this endgame requires accuracy and awareness, and Black can easily go wrong. To lay her swindle, the former women's number one appealed to Berg's principled nature, offering him a potential short-cut to victory. With

72. ♕g3!

Cramling combines the Trojan Horse and Decoy Trap themes. Berg of course sees the obvious threat of 72. ♕c3 and that a conservative reply such as 72... ♛b7, which most players would consider, maintains the advantage. However, he thinks that he can set a counter-trap of his own and at the same time speed up progress.

72... ♛b6?? 73. ♕c3! a5+



Relying on 74. ♛b3 ♜e6+ followed by 75... ♜d6, and Black has saved some time on the road to victory. But there is a rude awakening:

74. ♕ a4!!

Magnificent. A rook exchange leads to a wrong-coloured rook pawn for the bishop, and so

74... ♜ xc3

is forced... and is stalemate. A delightful trap by the Swedish legend.

I've always found it very useful to know something of my opponent's chess psyche before a game. The easiest way to find out is simply to ask a friend, perhaps someone who has played them, or who attends the same club. A more laborious method is to play through their games in the database (and not just those that are relevant for your opening preparation).

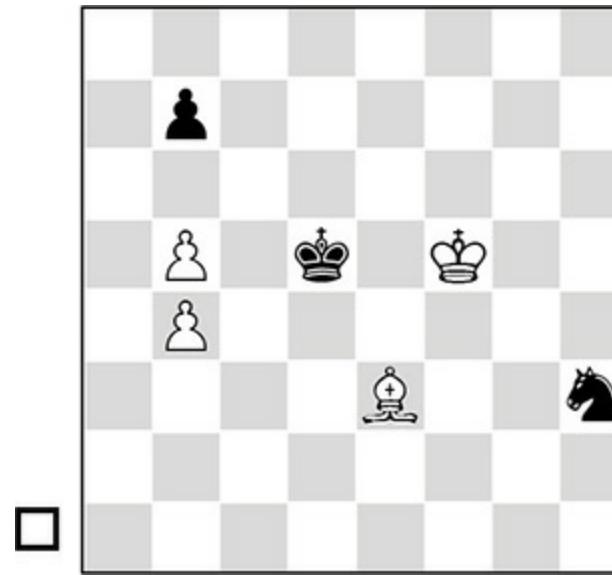
But even when it isn't possible to get a personal insight into their chess style and personality, there are other ways to glean something. What does the tournament situation mean for your opponent – are they chasing a norm or vying for a prize that requires a high percentage of wins? Are they coming straight from work, or perhaps dressed to head out afterwards? What does their body language suggest during the game? Do they lean back in their chair with their hands behind their head – a well-known signal of confidence – or do they sit with their arms folded and legs crossed, suggesting feeling insecure about their position?

Of course, these sorts of observations should be taken as suggestive evidence rather than gospel³⁰, but they can help you form a picture of which sort of exploitable biases are more likely to be in play. To finish this chapter, let's visit a recent tragicomedy featuring a familiar name to our pages.

Anish Giri 2783

Samuel Shankland 2725

Wijk aan Zee 2019 (11)



Most online commentators and spectators, myself included, believed Shankland had deliberately played for this ending, which is a textbook draw. It's worth noting that not only are 45. ♜ g4 ♜ e4 and 45. ♜ c5 b6 easily drawn, but Black could also play 45... ♜ c4! against both tries, for once the white pawn lands on b6, a standard drawing fortress is reached. We already saw the mirror image of this in Kramnik-Carlsen.

However, Giri, sitting across the board from Shankland, saw something that we could not: 'From his body-language, I realised he thought it was lost, so it was very difficult for me to behave. On the one

hand, I wanted to think about the position to see if there were still some chances, but on the other hand I realised that after b5-b6 he might think he's lost. So, I decided to give it a shot. And with a stone-cold face I played

45.b6!!

Giri's read of his opponent's body language was spot on. It turns out that Shankland thought that the fortress of ♔ + ♕ + ♙ vs. ♔ + ♙ only applied if Black's king can get to a8, which it cannot after 45... ♔c6 46. ♔g4 ♕d7 47. ♔xh3 ♕c8 48. ♕d6. But in fact, the king only needs to find its way to c8 to hold the draw. Tragically, even simply playing out the final moves of the supposed losing line would be enough for Black to stumble into the fortress.

Giri's psychological gamble was made easy in the sense that there were no tangible alternative winning chances to be had. But it paid off, in a sharp, brutal case of successfully playing the player. In the game, Shankland paused for a few moments and then extended his hand. As Giri shook it, he leaned over and asked his opponent: 'Did you resign?' Shankland replied: 'Yes.'

Are you tempted to call this an unfair result? Don't be. Chess is a battle of two minds, and here the stronger one was victorious. Admittedly, one must feel some sympathy for Shankland – after all, we can hardly be expected to know every important endgame. But we can at least learn the most common ones for swindling.

On to the next section!

PART IV

Core Skills

One bad move nullifies forty good ones. – Bernhard Horwitz

I have heard people say ‘To be a good Swindler, you need to be good at tactics.’ This is indisputably true, but also something of a cop-out. Training your tactics is useful for all elements of your chess development, as is training any general part of your game: endgames, strategy, studying the masters, and so forth.

The aim of this book, on the other hand, is to discuss the specific elements of swindling that a player is unlikely to spend much time on in their regular study of chess. This section details a few areas of core skills that are particularly common to the art of swindling. It is not an exhaustive list and is necessarily subjective, but these are the most common themes that I have noticed in my collection of swindles, and I hope will be a handy guide of what to look out for.

Statistically, the majority of swindles occur in the endgame. There are a number of reasons for this. Psychologically, some players are prone to complacency once the endgame is reached, lulled into relaxing their sense of danger. It is also the prime time for impatience and hubris to creep into the superior side’s psyche. But equally important is that many players neglect the study of endgames more than any other facet of the game. This weakness has often been pointed out by chess writers, but it is especially interesting for us because the endgame contains particular features that are in the Swindler’s favour. In particular, in contrast to the military representation and origins of our game, it is possible for the side with far fewer remaining forces to evenly split the spoils.

In the next chapters, we will discuss three of the most extreme illustrations of this theme: the fortress, stalemate and perpetual check. Perhaps these were the chapters you most expected when you first opened this book. However, while these drawing themes often star in the final scene of practical swindles, it is difficult to learn how to apply them in our own games. Often, we will hear grandmasters talk, unhelpfully, about how they ‘spotted’ a stalemate or a fortress idea, as if inspiration suddenly appeared from nowhere. The truth is that we cannot create these drawing mechanisms out of nowhere; the real skill you will learn from this section is the ability to recognise and then make the most of these opportunities when they appear.

On the other hand, cultivating grit and optimism and applying the Three Questions method are useful techniques in all practical situations. And the first chapter in this section is similarly beneficial for one’s overall chess development. We begin our development of core skills by looking at nine of the most important textbook endgames that a Swindler should know.

Endgames

After a bad opening, there is hope for the middle game. After a bad middle game, there is hope for the endgame. But once you are in the endgame, the moment of truth has arrived. – Edmar Mednis

José Raul Capablanca famously advised that ‘In order to improve your game, you must study the endgame before everything else.’ This is undoubtedly sound advice, but most players do not have unlimited time or resources, not even within this one discipline, and so we must prioritise. In this chapter, I have listed the most important endgames to know for the Swindler. Some of these endgames are frequently seen over the board, but just as importantly, some of these endgames can *potentially* occur quite often in practice. What I mean is that a player who is well versed in these endgames can ‘threaten’ to enter them at an earlier stage of the ending, which may persuade a less well-versed opponent to make an inferior decision rather than compete on book knowledge. For example, a player who is skilled in the drawing technique of rook-and bishop versus rook can confidently threaten to sacrifice their bishop for their opponent’s remaining pawn in a $\text{Q} + \text{R} + \text{B}$ vs. $\text{Q} + \text{R}$ ending.

The list is comprised of the most useful endgames that are related to swindles.³¹ Some of these are theoretical draws where one side is well behind on material, which can be used as the final execution of a swindle. Other endgames may be theoretically lost, but are great to know when you think you can gamble on your opponent’s lack of knowledge to essentially bluff your way to a swindle. The superior side often heads for an endgame because they might recall it is winning from some book, believing that they will be able to figure out the correct technique over the board. What they don’t realise is how difficult it is to win against the trickiest and most resilient defence. The first example is a case in point.

1) $\text{Q} + \text{B} + \text{N}$ vs. Q

Most juniors start off learning how to checkmate with a king and a queen against a sole king. They then progress through the standard checkmates, but for some reason, this progression commonly ends before getting to the notorious bishop and knight checkmate. And even for those who learned it as juniors, it is often many years before the technique is tested in tournament play.

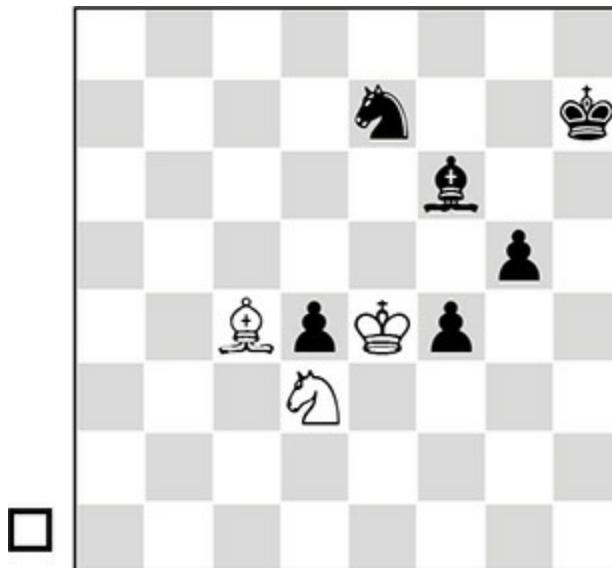
Nevertheless, refreshing this skill is very important, because this configuration often has the potential to emerge in minor-piece endgames but is avoided by one side or the other. Being aware that many players are uncertain about the winning method can be an effective tool for the would-be Swindler, even if it is a bluff of sorts. This insecurity is naturally highly pronounced among amateurs, but it extends all the way to grandmaster level as several infamous examples show.

Robert Kempinski

2498

Vladimir Epishin

2567

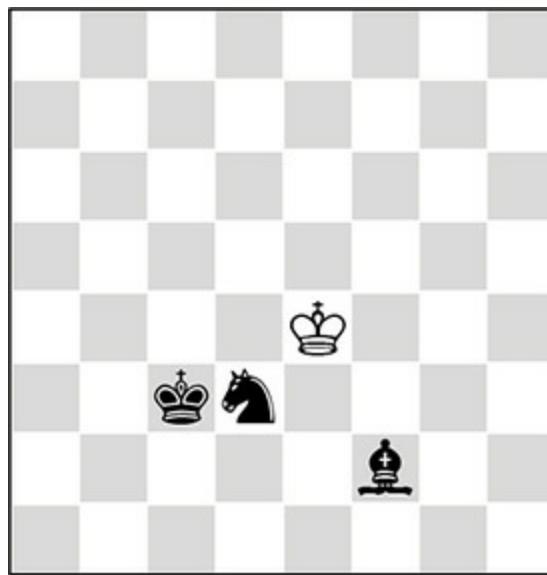


111. $\mathbb{Q}xf4!$?

A risky decision, but given the circumstances, probably the smartest. At this stage both players were down to increments, but Black has plenty of moves to build up some stock on the clock and gradually make progress. White instead forces the matter, bringing about the $\mathbb{Q}+\mathbb{B}$ vs \mathbb{K} endgame sooner rather than later. His decision was perhaps influenced by two factors outside of the position itself:

- a) time-trouble; and
- b) his opponent's reputation for nerves in time pressure.

111... $gxf4$ 112. $\mathbb{Q}xf4$ $\mathbb{Q}g7$ 113. $\mathbb{Q}g4$ $\mathbb{Q}c6$ 114. $\mathbb{Q}f5$ $\mathbb{Q}h4$ 115. $\mathbb{Q}e4$ $\mathbb{Q}f2$ 116. $\mathbb{Q}b5$ $\mathbb{Q}b4$ 117. $\mathbb{Q}c4$ $\mathbb{Q}f6$ 118. $\mathbb{Q}e2$ $\mathbb{Q}e6$
119. $\mathbb{Q}c4+$ $\mathbb{Q}d6$ 120. $\mathbb{Q}e2$ $\mathbb{Q}c5$ 121. $\mathbb{Q}f1$ $\mathbb{Q}c6$ 122. $\mathbb{Q}e2$ $\mathbb{Q}b4$ 123. $\mathbb{Q}f1$ $\mathbb{Q}c3$ 124. $\mathbb{Q}b5$ $\mathbb{Q}b4$ 125. $\mathbb{Q}f1$ $d3$ 126. $\mathbb{Q}xd3$
 $\mathbb{Q}xd3$



And so, here we are. You can find a discussion of the winning technique for this and the other core endgames in any good textbook. One would expect a grandmaster of Epishin's calibre to know it, so I would guess that time and/or nerves explain the result. In any case, though it was a long shot to work, Kempinski's decision to aim for this was probabilistically correct. And in this game, it worked.

127. $\mathbb{Q}f3$ $\mathbb{Q}c5$ 128. $\mathbb{Q}e4$ $\mathbb{Q}c4$ 129. $\mathbb{Q}f5$ $\mathbb{Q}d5$ 130. $\mathbb{Q}f6$ $\mathbb{Q}d6$ 131. $\mathbb{Q}f7$ $\mathbb{Q}e5+$ 132. $\mathbb{Q}e8$ $\mathbb{Q}e6$ 133. $\mathbb{Q}d8$ $\mathbb{Q}f7+$ 134. $\mathbb{Q}c8!$

Perhaps the most basic rule to know is that the side with the minor pieces can never force checkmate in the corner of the opposite colour to the bishop. So, White heads that way.

134... $\mathbb{Q}d5$ 135. $\mathbb{Q}b7$ $\mathbb{Q}c5$ 136. $\mathbb{Q}a6$ $\mathbb{Q}c7$ 137. $\mathbb{Q}b7$ $\mathbb{Q}d6$ 138. $\mathbb{Q}a6$ $\mathbb{Q}c6$ 139. $\mathbb{Q}a7$ $\mathbb{Q}d6$ 140. $\mathbb{Q}a8$ $\mathbb{Q}d8$ 141. $\mathbb{Q}a7$ $\mathbb{Q}b5$
142. $\mathbb{Q}b8$ $\mathbb{Q}b6$ 143. $\mathbb{Q}a8$ $\mathbb{Q}b7$ 144. $\mathbb{Q}b8$ $\mathbb{Q}c7+$ 145. $\mathbb{Q}a8$ $\mathbb{Q}c6$ 146. $\mathbb{Q}a7$ $\mathbb{Q}c5$ 147. $\mathbb{Q}a8$ $\mathbb{Q}d7$ 148. $\mathbb{Q}a7$ $\mathbb{Q}b6$ 149. $\mathbb{Q}a6$

b8! 150. ♜ a5 ♜ c5?

150... ♜ d5 is the way to win, following the ‘W’ pattern with the knight along ... ♜ b6-d5-b4-d3-b2. I often find that juniors get scared they are letting the king out, but it doesn’t go very far: 151. ♜ a4 ♜ c5 152. ♜ b3 ♜ b4 153. ♜ c3 ♜ f4 and the king is contained in the ‘right’ corner. And if the white king instead tries to head back to a8, we can see the ‘W’ pattern in action: 151. ♜ a6 ♜ b4+ 152. ♜ a5 ♜ c5 153. ♜ a4 ♜ c4 154. ♜ a5 ♜ c7+ 155. ♜ a4 ♜ b6 156. ♜ a3 ♜ d3 157. ♜ a4 ♜ b2+ 158. ♜ a3 ♜ c3 159. ♜ a2 ♜ c2 160. ♜ a3 ♜ c5+ 161. ♜ a2 ♜ b4 162. ♜ a1 ♜ d3 163. ♜ a2 ♜ c1+ 164. ♜ a1 ♜ c3#. 151. ♜ a6 ♜ d6 152. ♜ b7

But now it is clear that Black doesn’t have the right idea, though it is hard to work out over the board that it is impossible to force checkmate in the bishop’s ‘wrong’ corner if you don’t already know it. The game was eventually drawn by the fifty-move rule.

152... ♜ b5 153. ♜ a7 ♜ c6 154. ♜ a6 ♜ b8 155. ♜ a5 ♜ d5 156. ♜ a6 ♜ c7 157. ♜ a7 ♜ b6+ 158. ♜ b8 ♜ c5 159. ♜ a8 ♜ c7+ 160. ♜ b8 ♜ b5 161. ♜ a8 ♜ b6 162. ♜ b8 ♜ a7 163. ♜ a8 ♜ a6 164. ♜ b8 ♜ b6 165. ♜ a8 ♜ b5 166. ♜ b8 ♜ d6 167. ♜ a8 ♜ b5 168. ♜ b8 ♜ c6 169. ♜ a8 ♜ c7 170. ♜ a7 ♜ b7 171. ♜ a8 ♜ c5 172. ♜ a7 ♜ b6+ 173. ♜ a8 ♜ c7 174. ♜ a7 ♜ d7 175. ♜ a8 ♜ d6 176. ♜ a7 ♜ b6 177. ♜ a6 ♜ b8 178. ♜ a5 ♜ c7 179. ♜ a6 ♜ c8 ½-½

There are many, many more examples of players failing to win ♜+♝+♞ vs ♜ in the database, including ten games played by grandmasters, and one by a reigning Women’s World Champion.

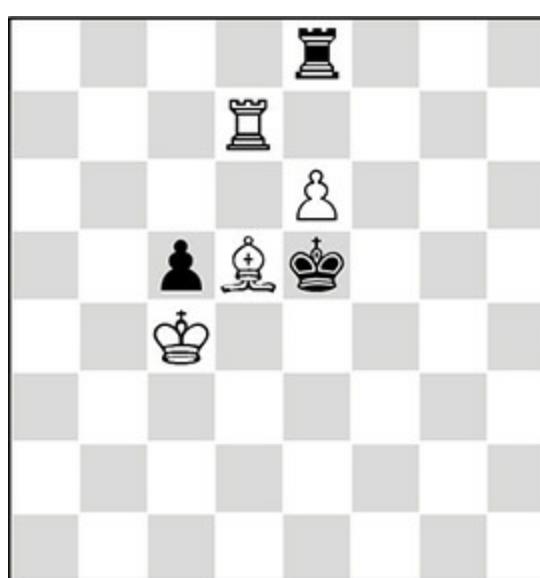
2) ♜ + ♜ + ♜ vs ♜ + ♜

Perhaps the most notorious endgame in chess. Philidor famously described the winning method in the 18th century, but it continues to frustrate even elite grandmasters today, on both sides of the equation.³² Books have been written about this ending, so I will save our pages for more swindles. But I will say that knowing the two standard drawing techniques – Cochrane’s Defence and the Second-Rank Defence – are extremely useful skills for the Swindler. We have already seen an example in Darini-Maghsoodloo; here is one of my favourite examples.

Luis Henrique Coelho 2394

Alexandr Fier 2471

Santos 2006 (5)

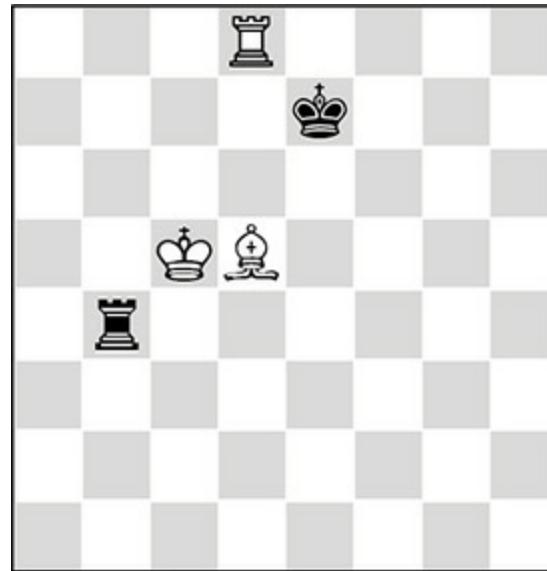


There does not even seem to be a hint of a swindle in this position, but Fier finds a remarkable Trojan Horse:

67... ♕ b8!! 68.e7 ♔ f6

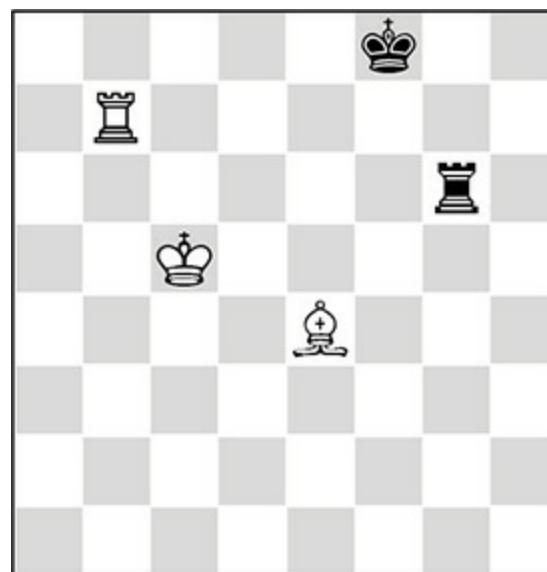
Now 69. ♔ xc5 finishes things quickly, but White tries to save himself a few moves:

69. ♕ d8?? ♕ b4+! 70. ♔ xc5 ♕ xe7!!



Reaching ♔ + ♕ + ♙ vs ♔ + ♕ after all. Fier had no issues holding the draw.

71. ♕ h8 ♕ a4 72. ♕ h6 ♕ f4 73. ♕ e6+ ♔ d7 74. ♕ e5 ♕ f6 75. ♕ g5 ♔ e7 76. ♕ g7+ ♔ f8 77. ♕ b7 ♕ g6 78. ♕ e4



78... ♕ g7!

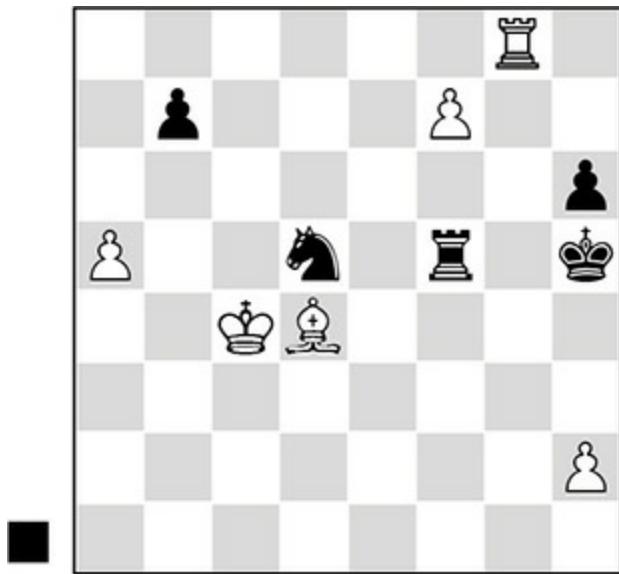
The second-rank defence is one of the more important themes to know about this endgame.

79. ♕ b6 ♔ e7 80. ♕ h6 ♕ g5+ 81. ♕ d5 ♕ g1 82. ♕ e6+ ♔ d7 83. ♕ f6 ♕ g7 84. ♕ h6 ♔ e7 85. ♕ e6+ ♔ d7 86. ♕ e5 ♕ g6
87. ♕ h5 ♔ e7 88. ♕ f5 ♕ f6 89. ♕ e5+ ♔ f8 90. ♕ e6 ♔ e7 91. ♕ d5 ♕ f2 92. ♕ h3+ ♔ f6 93. ♕ e6+ ♔ g5 94. ♕ e4 ♔ f6 ½-½

And here is an example I would rather forget.

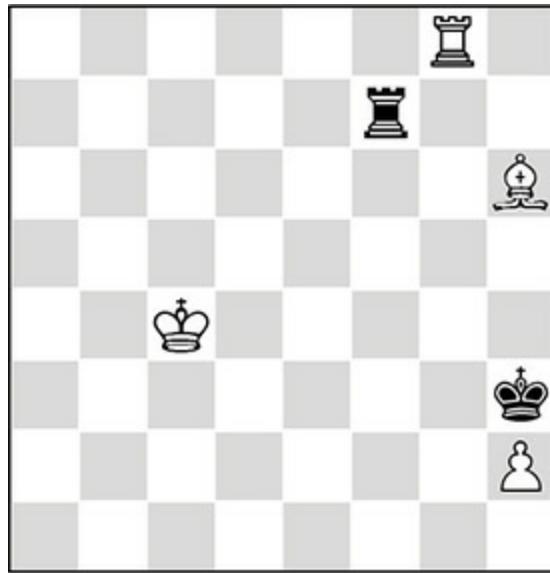
Heather Richards 2192

David Smerdon 2520



An embarrassing almost-swindle is afoot. White's f-pawn is about to queen, and the only way to stop it – capturing it with the rook – loses the knight. Out of options, I tried 44...b5+!,

as much for shock value as anything else. White should not worry too much about her f-pawn and instead recognise that her a-pawn now has a clear path to the eighth rank. Instead, there followed 45.axb6?? ♜ xb6+! 46. ♜ xb6 ♕ xf7 47. ♜ e3 ♔ h4 48. ♜ xh6? ♔ h3!



and Black reached the book draw. Sadly, I struggled to hold it at 30 seconds per move and undid all my good swindling work by blundering a few moves from the draw:

49. ♔ d2 ♔ xh2 50. ♔ e4 ♕ f2 51. ♜ f4+ ♔ h1 52. ♔ e3 ♕ e2+!

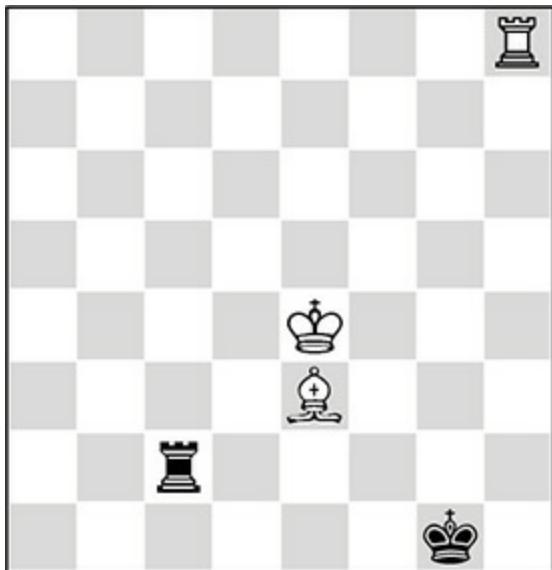
A neat stalemate trick, though Black's king remains perilously placed.

53. ♔ d3 ♕ f2 54. ♔ e4 ♕ e2+ 55. ♜ e3 ♕ g2 56. ♕ h8+ ♕ h2 57. ♕ a8 ♕ h4+? 58. ♔ f3? ♕ h3+ 59. ♔ e2 ♕ h2+ 60. ♜ f2 ♕ h5 61. ♕ g8 ♔ h2 62. ♜ g3+ ♔ h1? 63. ♜ f4 ♕ h3 64. ♜ g4? ♕ a3 65. ♜ e3 ♕ a2+ 66. ♔ f3 ♕ g2!



Another stalemate trick. So far, so good...

67. $\mathbb{Q}a4$ $\mathbb{Q}g3+!$ 68. $\mathbb{Q}e4$ $\mathbb{Q}g4+$ 69. $\mathbb{Q}f4$ $\mathbb{Q}g2$ 70. $\mathbb{Q}a8$ $\mathbb{Q}c2$ 71. $\mathbb{Q}h8+$ $\mathbb{Q}g1$ 72. $\mathbb{Q}e3+$



72... $\mathbb{Q}g2??$

72... $\mathbb{Q}f1!$ 73. $\mathbb{Q}g8$ $\mathbb{Q}e2$ 74. $\mathbb{Q}g2+$ $\mathbb{Q}d1$ is that second-rank defence again.

73. $\mathbb{Q}g8+$ $\mathbb{Q}f1$ 74. $\mathbb{Q}d3$ $\mathbb{Q}g2$ 75. $\mathbb{Q}f8+$

And I resigned. Some consolation was that this was the first victory by an Australian woman over a grandmaster in 17 years (though I would have preferred it to have been a different grandmaster).

3) $\mathbb{Q} + \mathbb{R}$ vs $\mathbb{Q} + \mathbb{P}$

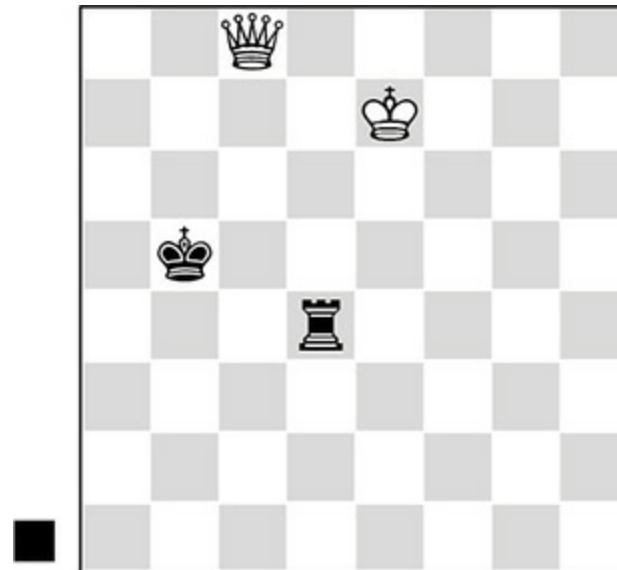
This is perhaps the most underappreciated endgame in chess. Almost all of us will experience it in our chess careers, and yet as juniors we are only taught how to win it with the queen at a very broad and basic level: ‘Force the opposing king to the edge, split their king and rook, and then check a few times to fork and win the rook.’

Perhaps I’m exaggerating, but this is how I and several of my colleagues were taught the endgame, and the failure of top grandmasters to win it is testament to its difficulty. I believe a big part of the reason for its neglect in training is that the queen almost always wins when the players have similar knowledge. At club and amateur level, both players usually don’t have sufficient book knowledge, and the side with the rook normally fails to defend in the most tenacious way and quickly gets

checkmated or forked. At master level (but not always!), the side with the queen knows the textbook winning manoeuvre regardless of the level of defence. In either case, the queen wins. But what happens below master level when the side with the rook knows the best defensive methods? Then the task to win can become extraordinarily difficult, as has been seen many times in practice. This is not an endgame book, but the ♕+♚ vs ♕+♜ endgame is such an important tool for the Swindler, and often poorly covered in textbooks, that I have made an exception and discuss the key positions in the examples below. The focus will be on the most tenacious defensive techniques, but we will necessarily cover the winning methods as well.

Alexander Morozevich	2747
Dmitrij Jakovenko	2671

Pamplona 2006 (5)



This game was played with a classical time control between two of the world's best players.

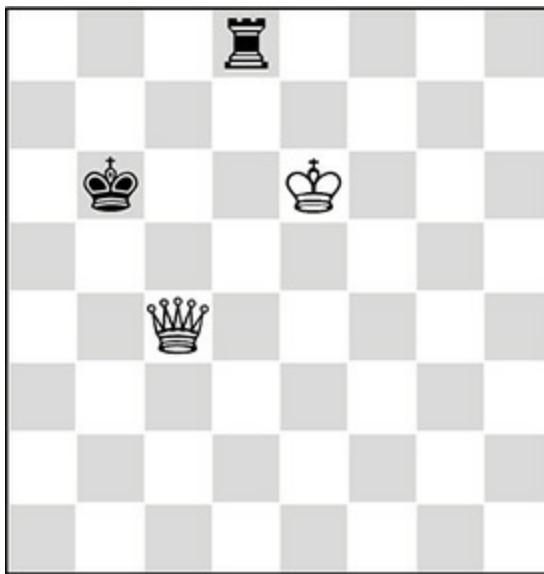
72...♜d5!

The side with the queen can hit upon the correct technique by accident after some time, so it is important to frustrate the opponent from the start. The fifty-move rule is often a key resource for the defender, so Jakovenko chews up moves by making it as difficult as possible for White to bring his king towards his black counterpart.

73.♕e6 ♜d4 74.♕e5 ♜d3 75.♗c2 ♜d8!

In order to keep the white king away, Black sometimes needs to put a little distance between his own pieces. This is risky, of course, so every counter-sequence of checks needs to be carefully calculated to make sure there are no winning forks.

76.♗b3+ ♛c5 77.♗c3+ ♛b5 78.♗e6 ♛b6 79.♗c4!

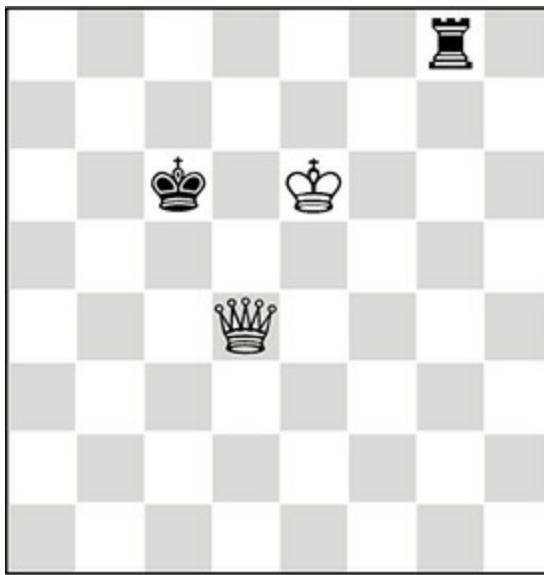


Now Black is forced to switch plans, as the rook is lost if it stays on the d-file, which is also the case after 79... ♕b7 80. ♔e7!.

79... ♕g8!

Using the white king as a shield from forks. This diagonal pattern is worth remembering, as it typically tells you the safest square for your rook when it is forced to split up with the king.

80. ♔d4+ ♕c6



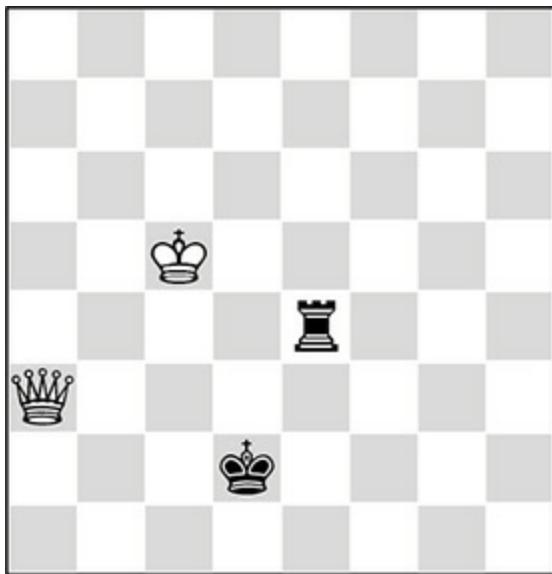
81. ♕c3+

Often, the superior side tries to do everything with checks, which works well against weak defence, but is not a smart approach against the best defence. Here, 81. ♕e7! was much stronger.

81... ♕b5 82. ♔d6 ♕g6+ 83. ♔c7 ♕g4!!

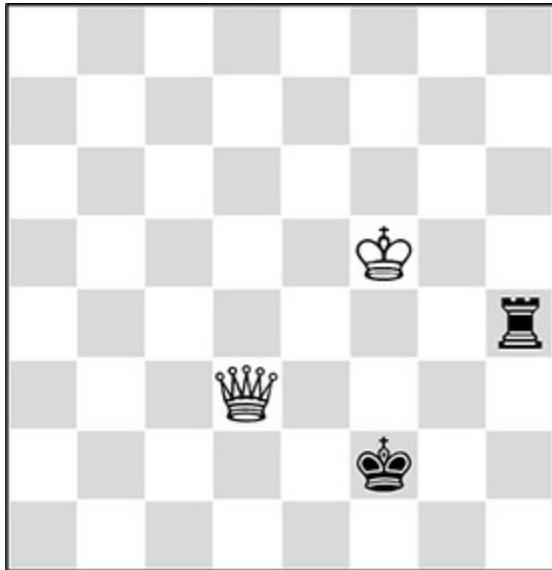
This is the sort of ‘risky’ move you will need to make in order to defend in the most resolute manner. In this case, Jakovenko has calculated correctly, and his rook is safe for now: Black can either move his king to dark squares or else interpose a check with his rook.

84. ♕c6+ ♕b4 85. ♔d6+ ♕c3 86. ♔c6 ♕d4 87. ♕a3+ ♕d2 88. ♕c5 ♕e4!



Adopting the same cut-off method from before, only this time with the board rotated 90 degrees.

89. $\mathbb{Q}d5 \mathbb{R}g4$ 90. $\mathbb{Q}f3 \mathbb{R}b4$ 91. $\mathbb{Q}c5 \mathbb{R}a4!$ 92. $\mathbb{Q}f6 \mathbb{Q}d3$ 93. $\mathbb{Q}d6+$ $\mathbb{Q}e3$ 94. $\mathbb{Q}g3+$ $\mathbb{Q}e2$ 95. $\mathbb{Q}c3 \mathbb{R}f4!$ 96. $\mathbb{Q}d5 \mathbb{R}g4$ 97. $\mathbb{Q}e5 \mathbb{R}h4$ 98. $\mathbb{Q}f5 \mathbb{Q}f2$ 99. $\mathbb{Q}d3!$



Finally forcing Black to change direction.

99... $\mathbb{R}h7!$

Again, using the white king as a shield along the diagonal is the most tenacious.

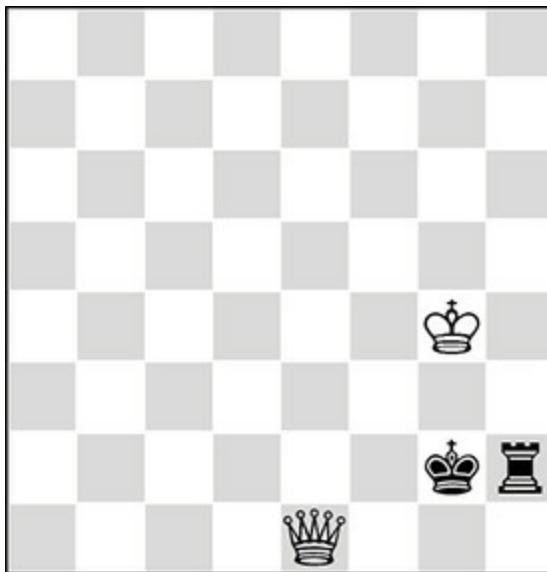
100. $\mathbb{Q}d4+ \mathbb{Q}f3$ 101. $\mathbb{Q}g5!$

Note that White's most effective moves are usually not checks.

101... $\mathbb{R}h2!$

Setting up the final defensive structure on the second rank.

102. $\mathbb{Q}f4+ \mathbb{Q}g2$ 103. $\mathbb{Q}g4! \mathbb{Q}g1$ 104. $\mathbb{Q}d4+ \mathbb{Q}g2$ 105. $\mathbb{Q}d3 \mathbb{Q}g1$ 106. $\mathbb{Q}e3+ \mathbb{Q}f1$ 107. $\mathbb{Q}c1+ \mathbb{Q}f2$ 108. $\mathbb{Q}d2+ \mathbb{Q}g1$
109. $\mathbb{Q}e1+ \mathbb{Q}g2$

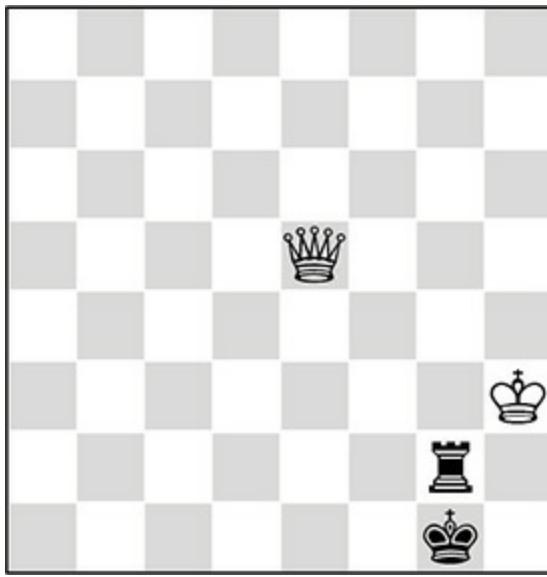


And so, after 35 moves, we reach one of the two critical positions of this endgame. You are almost guaranteed to reach one of them; the other is the so-called Philidor Position³³, where the black rook sits on g2 instead (see the next example).

This, as Michal Krasenkow calls it, is ‘Black’s last defensive line’. But it can be a tough one to crack thanks to a devious stalemate trick. This was also the position that Peter Svidler famously failed to win against Boris Gelfand, though that was a rapid game.

A key point is that White wins if he can pass the move to Black, which is one way to win the position. I prefer another rule of thumb: First, ‘attack’ the black rook, and second, triangulate your king. Thus:

110. ♔e5! ♕g1 111. ♔g3! ♕g2+ 112. ♔h3!



analysis diagram

and Black loses the rook or gets checkmated. Bear in mind the key difference in the placement of the white king when compared to the Philidor Position in the next example.

110. ♔g3+?!

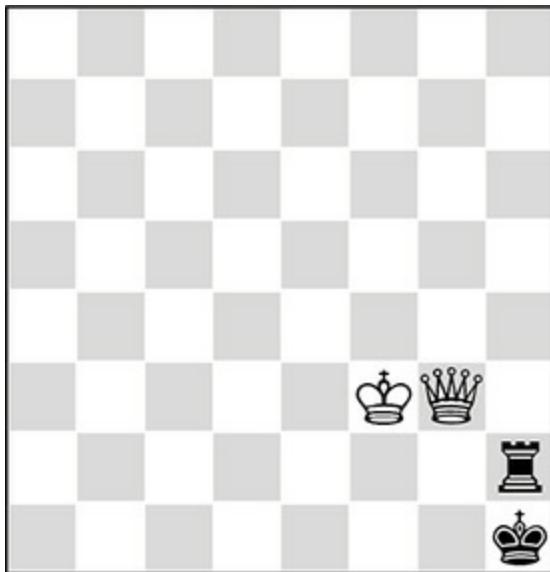
Natural, but not part of the winning method. Still, I think many players would find this intrusive check hard to resist.

110... ♕h1 111. ♔f3??

It appears that Black is helpless. Suffocated, one might even say. Almost without moves. Do you see

where I am going with this?

111. ♔ e5 was still correct.



111... ♕ f2+!!

One of several standard stalemate tricks in this endgame, which are remarkably common in practice.

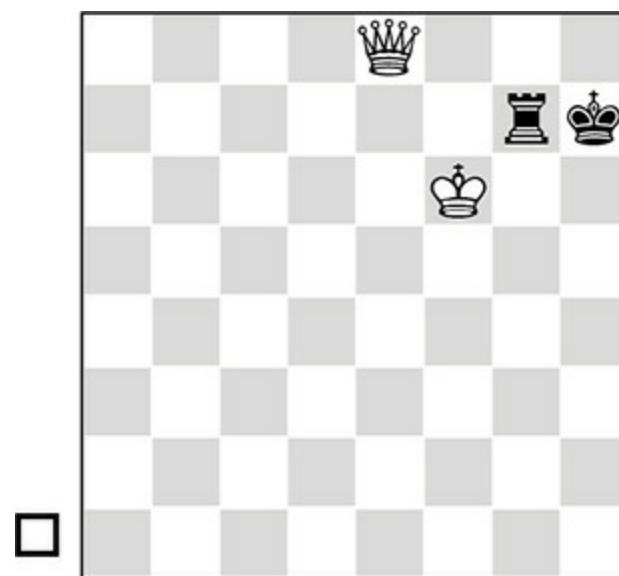
112. ♔ e3 ♕ e2+ 113. ♔ d3 ♕ d2+ 114. ♔ xd2 ½-½

Learning how to put up stiff resistance can open up extra defensive options in rook endgames. For example, ♕+♔ vs ♕+♕ is often reached as a result of a rook endgame with mutual passed pawns, such as when one side sacrifices their rook in order to force a promotion. This is how the next example occurred.

Bela Khotenashvili 2513

Aleksandra Goryachkina 2423

Khanty-Mansiysk Wch blitz W 2014 (27)



This is the Philidor Position, which you will find in most textbooks and even Wikipedia. In my opinion, the position in the previous example, with essentially the defending side's king and rook

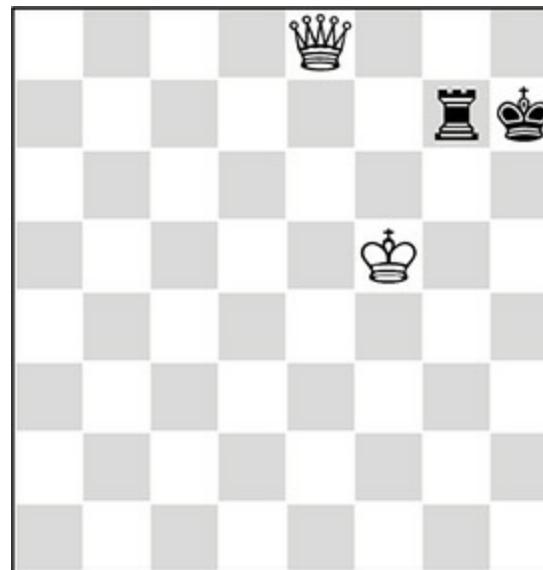
swapping places, is more tenacious. But sometimes the defender will not have a choice, and so we may end up here anyway.

Again, White would love to pass the move over to Black. Once you are aware that this is the objective, the task becomes quite manageable; e.g. 142. $\mathbb{N}e4+$ $\mathbb{Q}g8$ 143. $\mathbb{N}a8+$ $\mathbb{Q}h7$ 144. $\mathbb{N}e8$, or 142... $\mathbb{Q}h8$ 143. $\mathbb{N}h1+$ $\mathbb{Q}g8$ 144. $\mathbb{N}h5$, reaching a rotated version of the diagram but with Black to move. But in my experience, many amateurs simply don't know that 'losing a move' is necessary to win, and so they press forwards instead, as Khotenashvili does here:

142. $\mathbb{N}f8?$ $\mathbb{Q}g6+$ 143. $\mathbb{N}f5$ $\mathbb{Q}g7$

143... $\mathbb{Q}g5+!$ is even more resilient, and a handy trick to remember.

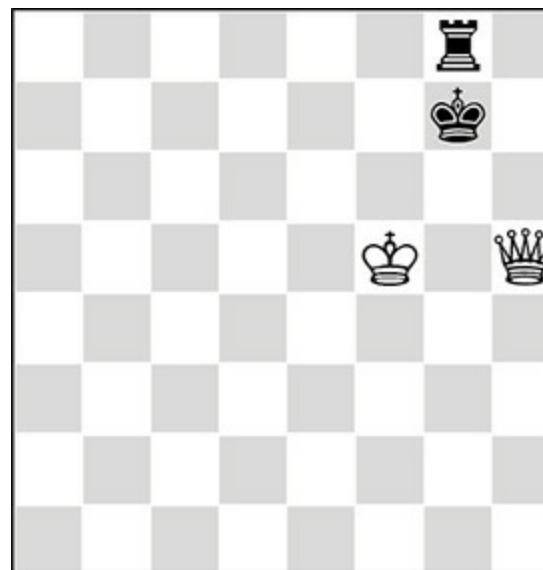
144. $\mathbb{N}e8$



144... $\mathbb{Q}g8?$

A defensive mistake. It is much better to try and maintain the structure, especially if you think your opponent doesn't know the winning method. Moving the rook far away to a7, b7, g2 or g1 was better, with the intention to return it to g7 on the next move.

145. $\mathbb{N}h5+$ $\mathbb{Q}g7$



146. $\mathbb{N}e6?$

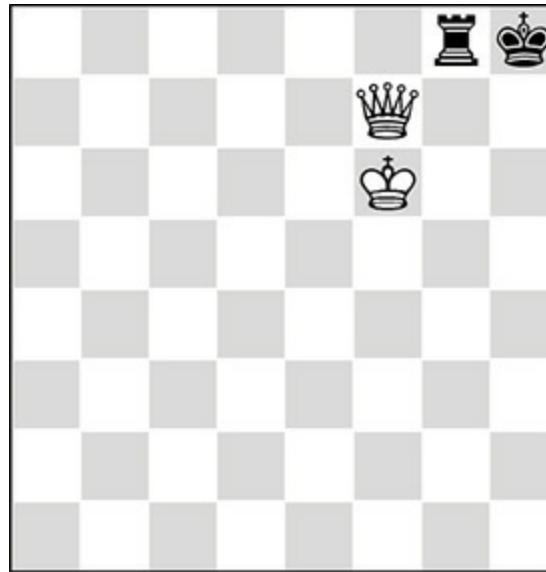
146. $\mathbb{Q}g6+!$ $\mathbb{Q}f8$ 147. $\mathbb{N}f6+$ $\mathbb{Q}e8$ 148. $\mathbb{N}e6$ wins easily. Notice that White would much prefer to have

Black's king on the middle of an edge rather than the corner, as then there are fewer stalemate possibilities.

146... ♕ f8 147. ♕ g5+ ♔ h7 148. ♕ e7 ♕ g8 149. ♕ h5+ ♔ g7

Now we are back in the second of the two key defensive set-ups.

150. ♕ f7+ ♔ h8 151. ♕ f6??



The same blunder we saw in the previous game.

151... ♕ g6+!!

And the game should be drawn, and indeed it was. But ironically, the draw was agreed by the fifty-move rule and not perpetual check or stalemate. Black inexplicably gave a lateral check instead of sticking to the g-file, leading back to a lost position – but by that stage, White had run out of moves:

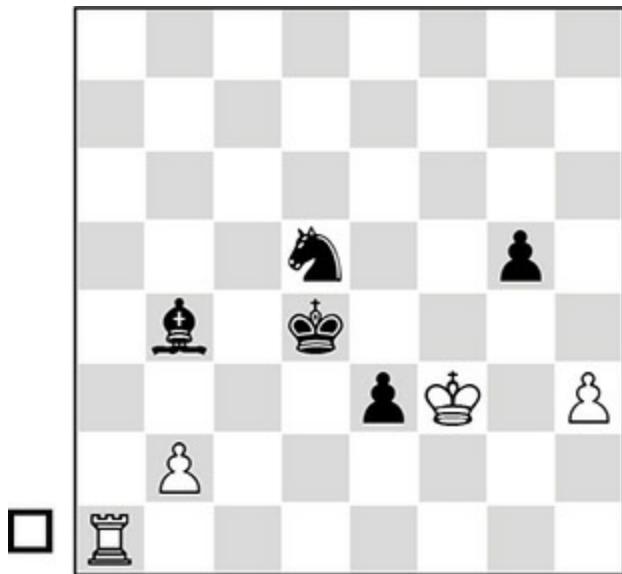
152. ♕ f5 ♕ g5+ 153. ♕ f4 ♕ g4+ 154. ♕ f3 ♕ g3+ 155. ♕ f2 ♕ g2+ 156. ♕ e1 ♕ g1+ 157. ♕ d2 ♕ d1+ 158. ♕ c3 ♕ c1+
159. ♕ b4 ♕ b1+ 160. ♕ a3 ♕ a1+ 161. ♕ b2 ♕ b1+ 162. ♕ a3 ♕ a1+ 163. ♕ b4 ♕ b1+ 164. ♕ c5 ♕ b5+ 165. ♕ d4 ♕ b4+
166. ♕ c3 ♕ b6 167. ♕ e8+ ♔ h7 168. ♕ d7+ ½-½

4) ♔ + ♕ + ♙ vs ♔

More commonly known as the ‘bishop and wrong-coloured rook-pawn’ endgame, this frequent visitor to tournament chess is much simpler than our last endgame. The first time one sees it as a junior, it is hard to believe that such a superior army as a king, bishop and pawn can fail to win against a lone king, especially as so many ♔ + ♕ vs ♔ endings are won.

Of course, you must expect every opponent to know this one. But the trick, as we have already seen in Chandler-Polgar, is to be able to spot this endgame from afar.

Elvira Berend	2300
Elisabeth Pähtz	2513



White cannot stop ... \hat{Q} d4-d3, ... e3-e2 etc. So:

62. \hat{B} g1!!

Leaving Black with a difficult choice. Only 62... \hat{B} f4!! wins after 63.h4 \hat{Q} d3! 64.hxg5 \hat{Q} e6! 65. \hat{B} g2 e2!, forcing $\hat{Q} + \hat{B} + \hat{Q}$ vs \hat{Q} . Such calculations seem both unnecessarily risky, however, and present the intimidating task of checkmating with bishop and knight under time pressure. The more human reaction is to play the position slowly and keep both pawns on the board. But it transpires that trying to maintain control with

62... \hat{Q} e7??,

although natural, allows a nice trick:

63.h4!! gxh4 64. \hat{B} d1+ \hat{Q} e5

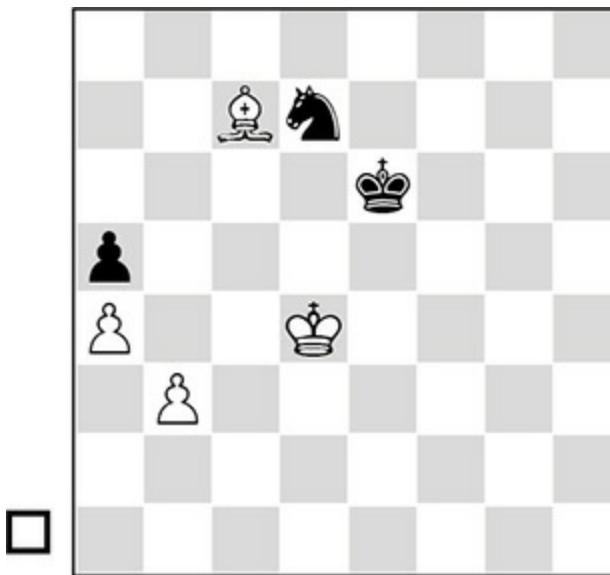


65. \hat{B} xd5+! \hat{Q} xd5 66. \hat{Q} xe3

And the game is saved.

66...h3 67. \hat{Q} f2 \hat{Q} d6 68. \hat{Q} g1 \hat{Q} c4 69.b4 \hat{Q} xb4 70. \hat{Q} h1 \hat{Q} h2 ½-½

Often, this endgame features as a swindling motif when the opponent exhibits impatience, such as in the following tragicomedy.

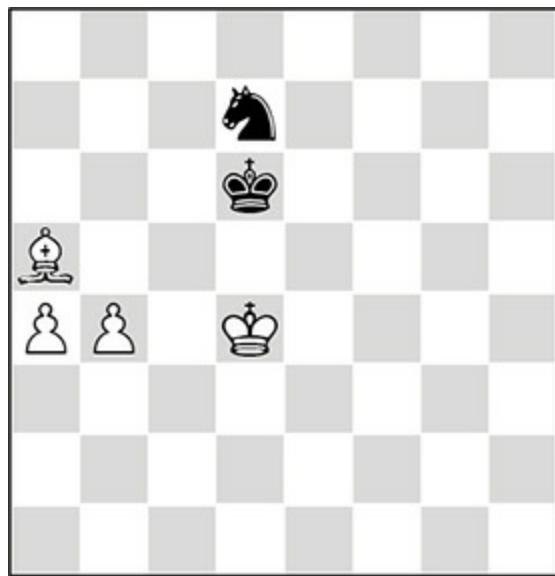


61... ♜xa5

61. ♛c4! is much easier. There is no reason to rush.

61... ♜d6 62.b4??

But this further impatience has dramatic consequences. Again, 62. ♛c4! was needed.



62... ♜b8!!

This study-like retreat threatens 63... ♜c6+, which follows even after 63.b5. No matter what, White cannot preserve his crucial b-pawn.

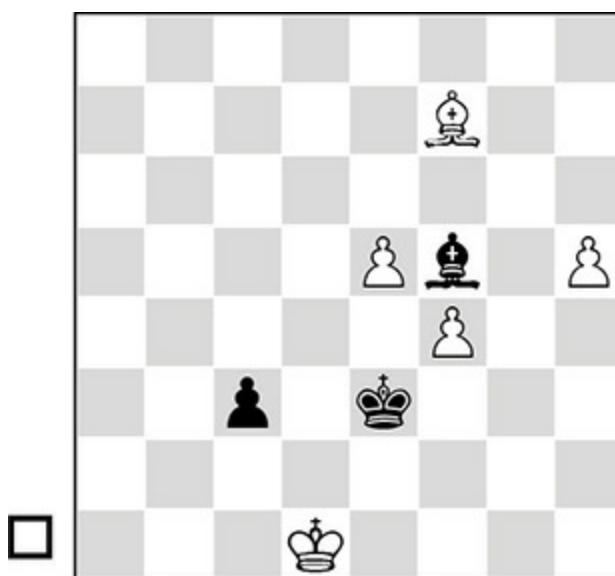
63. ♛c4 ♜c6 64. ♛b5 ♜xb4 65. ♛b6 ♜d3! ½-½

On the other hand, sometimes the cause of the swindle can only be put down to pure carelessness.

Lev Gutman

Vladas Mikenas

Riga 1969



Pushing either pawn wins trivially, but instead

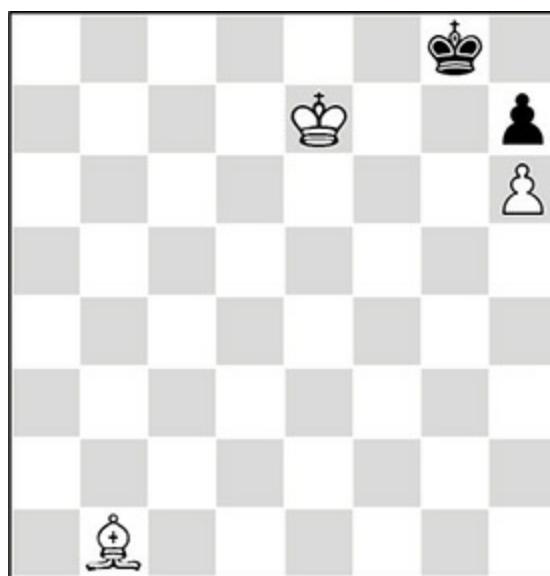
1. ♕g6?? ♔xf4 2. ♕xf5 ♔xe5!

With a draw.

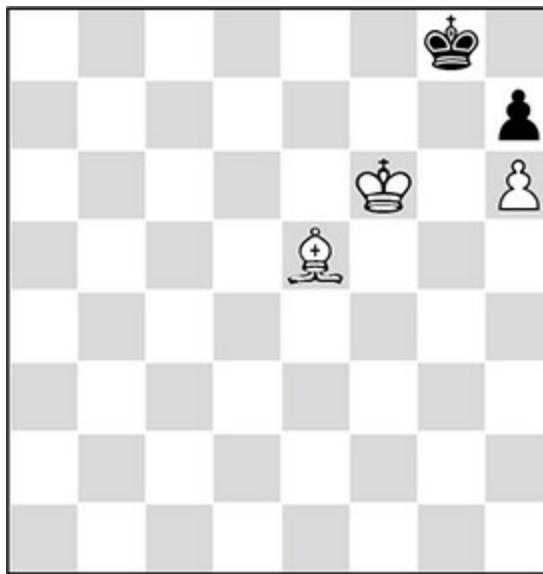
5) ♔ + ♕ + ♙ vs ♔ + ♙

Similar to the previous example, there are some standard drawing positions with this configuration of a king, bishop and one pawn versus a king and a pawn. Below is a quick list of these mini-fortresses with the bishop:

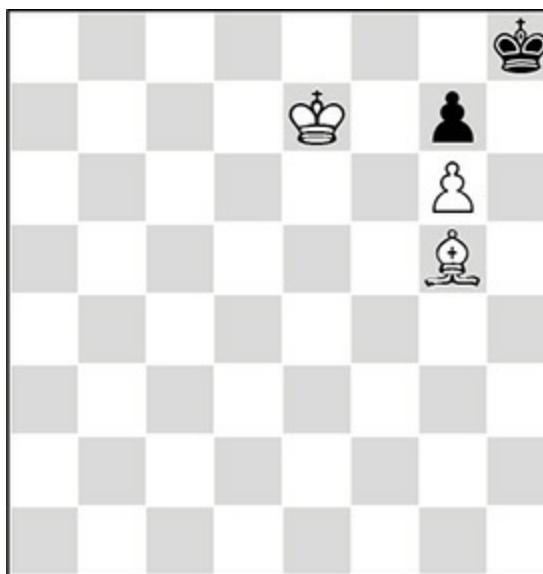
ENDGAME MINOR PIECE FORTRESSES: BISHOPS



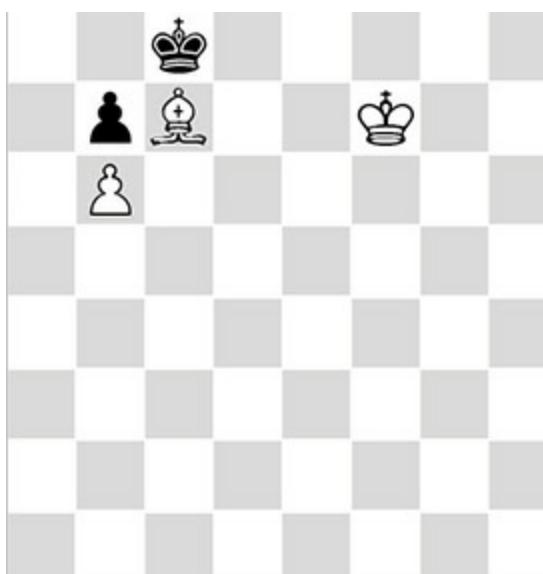
Draw (Sibilio-Belotti, 1988)



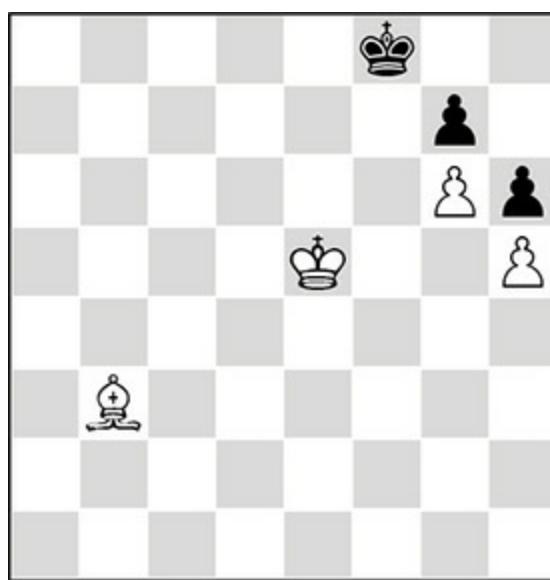
Draw (Rubinstein-Omeliansky, 1906 – but not 1... \hat{Q} h8?? 2. \hat{Q} f7#!)



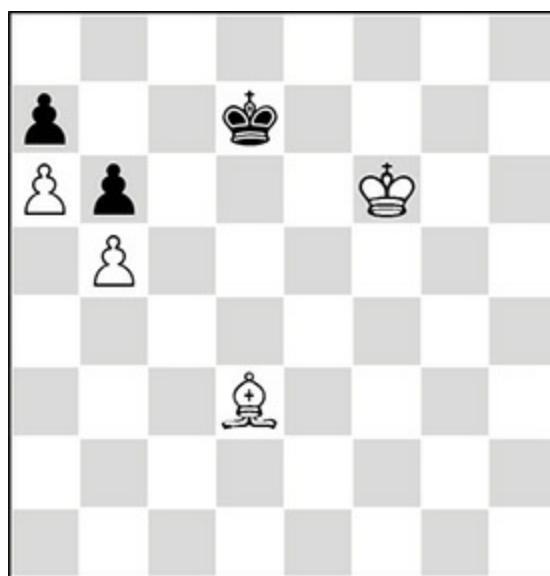
Draw (Minnulin-Hector, 1994)



Draw (Siemms-Panno, 1953)



Draw (Vogler-Preiss, 1989)



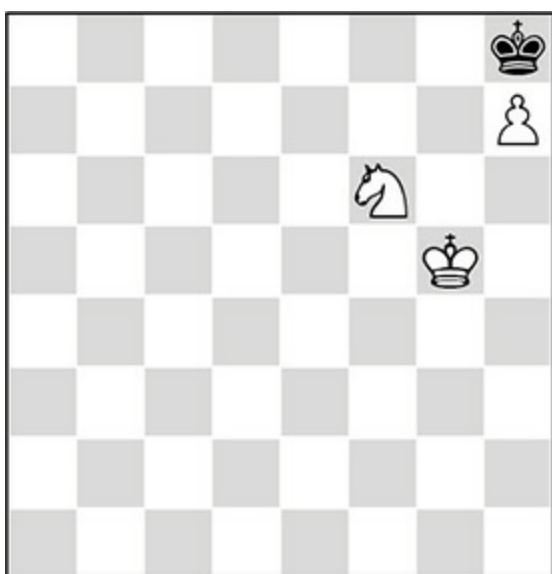
Draw (T.Hansen-Tikkanen, 2001)



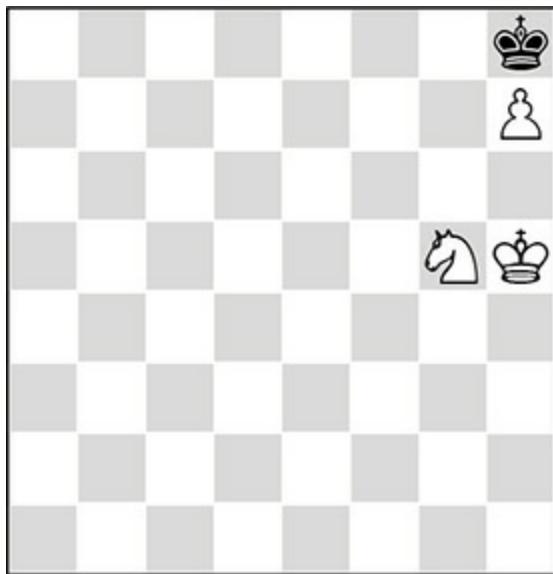
Draw (Kortchnoi-Karpov, 1978)

While we're at it, we may as well discuss the corresponding knight positions for the endgames above. These are less common in practice, but still useful to know. There are a few configurations where a knight and pawn draw against a lone king if the rook pawn is on the seventh rank. With a pawn each, blocked at the opponent's seventh rank, the position is still a draw with rook pawns. But – importantly – it is a win with knight pawns.

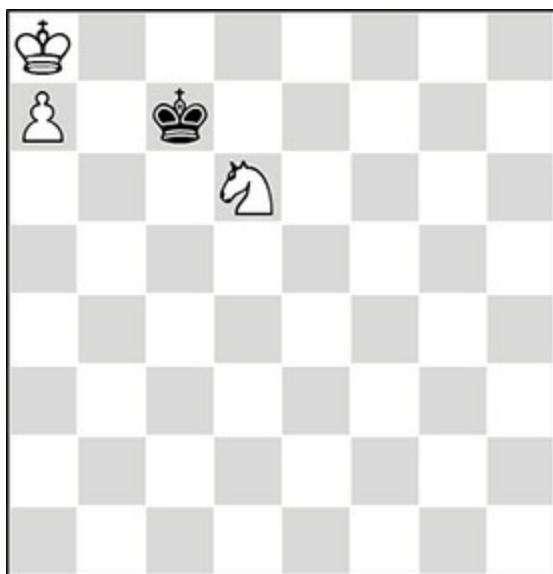
ENDGAME MINOR PIECE FORTRESSES: KNIGHTS



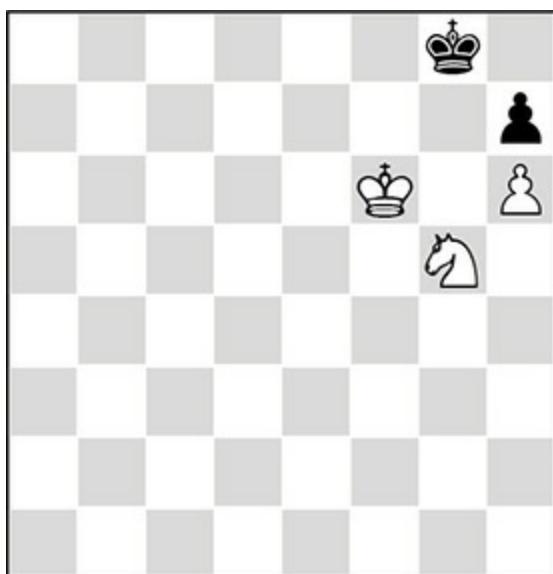
Draw (Bukavshin-Ponomarev, 2015)



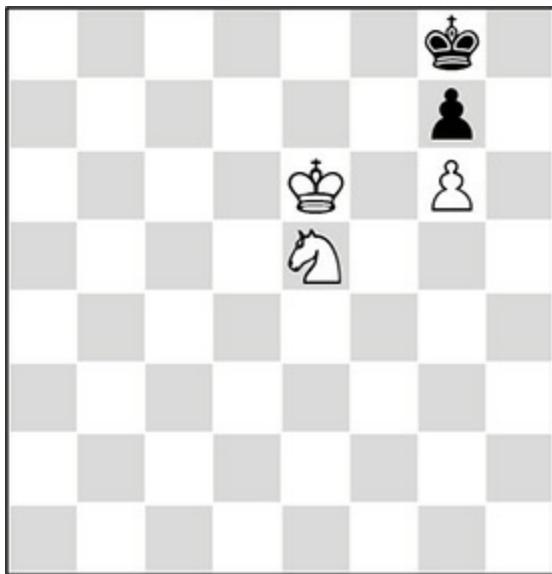
Draw (Zhao Xue-Kosteniuk, 2014)



Draw with White to move (Varga-Dinev, 2016)



Draw (Kramnik-Carlsen, 2010)

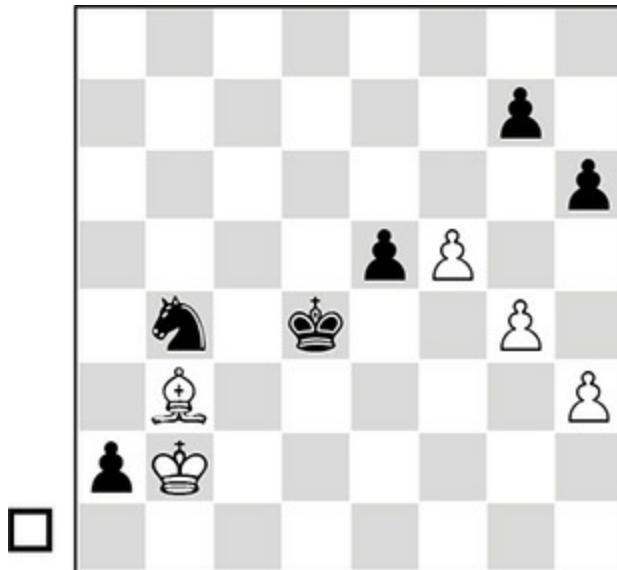


White wins with 69. ♜d7! ♛h8 70. ♜f6! (Landa-Bergez, 2005).

Again, knowing these positions is only the first step. The key is to be able to see them coming in advance.

Nikolaos Aggelis	2294
Mateusz Bartel	2611

Greece tt 2011 (5)

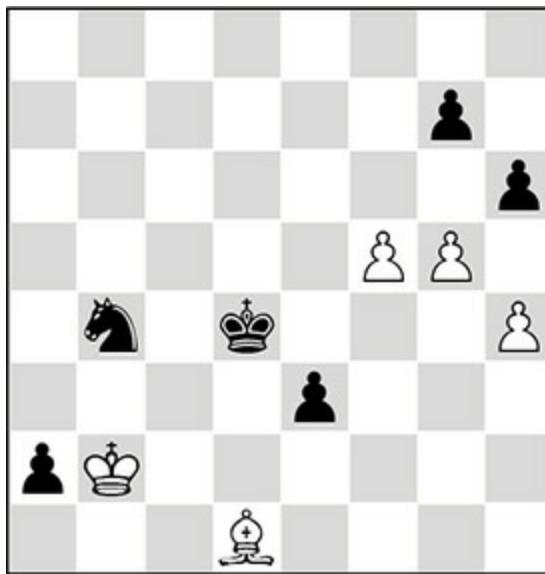


White's teammates must have wondered why White hadn't already resigned this position from the Greek Teams Championship. Against a strong grandmaster over 300 points his superior, and hopelessly lost, White relies on one of our Swindlers' mantras: *You Never Know*.

51.h4!

A good start. If there's to be any hope, White must follow the old endgame maxim 'When down on material, swap pawns, not pieces'. He also creates vague notions of creating a passed pawn on the kingside, though the threat is stronger than the reality.

51...e4 52.g5 e3 53.♘d1



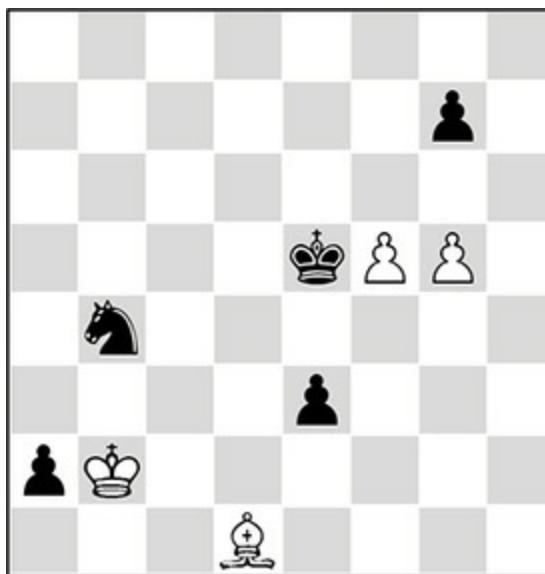
53...hxg5

Still winning, but a sign that Black is ‘seeing ghosts’, or perhaps NOT seeing the potential pitfalls ahead. Black may have been worried about a pawn break along the lines of 54.f6 gxf6 55.gxh6, but in reality this is easily parried. For example: 53... \mathbb{Q} d5! 54.f6 \mathbb{Q} xf6 55.gxf6 gxf6 and Black easily wins the king-and-pawn endgame after forcing through ...e3-e2.

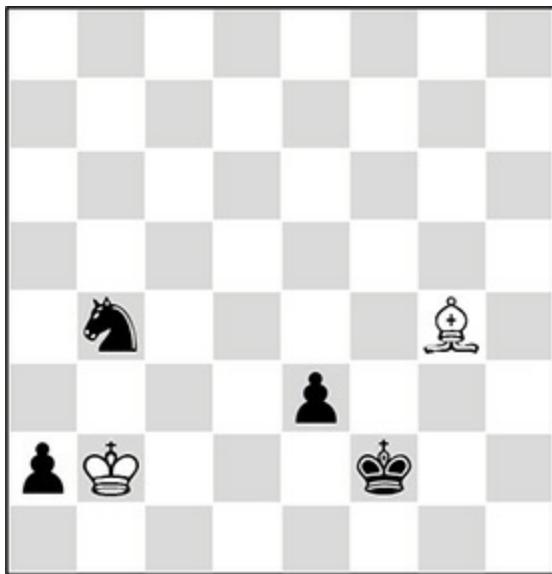
54.hxg5 \mathbb{Q} e5??

But this throws away the win. It’s tempting to pick up a second pawn, but Black is oblivious to the forthcoming fortress.

Instead, 54... \mathbb{Q} d5! would have won in a similar way to the previous comment.

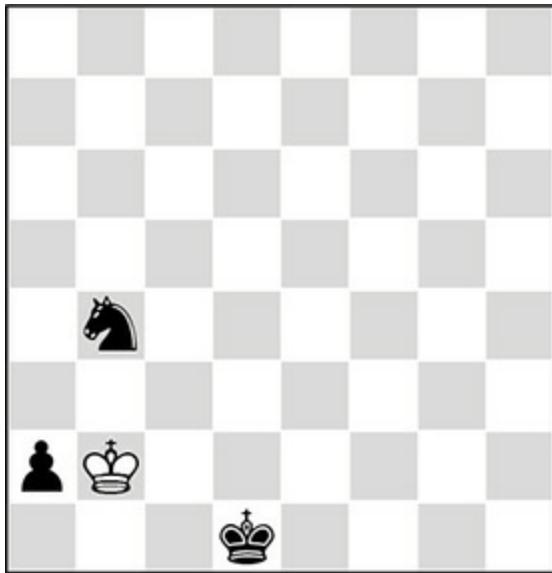


55.f6! gxf6 56.gxf6! \mathbb{Q} xf6 57. \mathbb{Q} e2 \mathbb{Q} g5 58. \mathbb{Q} f1 \mathbb{Q} f4 59. \mathbb{Q} e2 \mathbb{Q} g3 60. \mathbb{Q} h5 \mathbb{Q} f2 61. \mathbb{Q} g4



The trap snaps shut! Too late, Black realises that he cannot win the bishop, as the endgame with king versus king, knight and pawn on a2 is a book draw. Black cannot try to be clever and jettison a2 to bring his knight to f3, either, as White will sidestep this with ♜d1 – against a centre pawn, the bishop has no problems holding the draw. A big reward for the amateur's resilience.

61... ♕g2 62. ♜h5 ♕g3 63. ♕a1 ♕h4 64. ♜f3 ♕g5 65. ♕b2 ♕f4 66. ♜h5 ♕e4 67. ♜g4 ♕e5 68. ♜h5 ♕f4 69. ♕a1 ♕e5 70. ♕b2 ♕d4 71. ♜g4 ♕d3 72. ♜h5 e2 73. ♜xe2+ ♕xe2 74. ♕a1 ♕d2 75. ♕b2 ♕d1

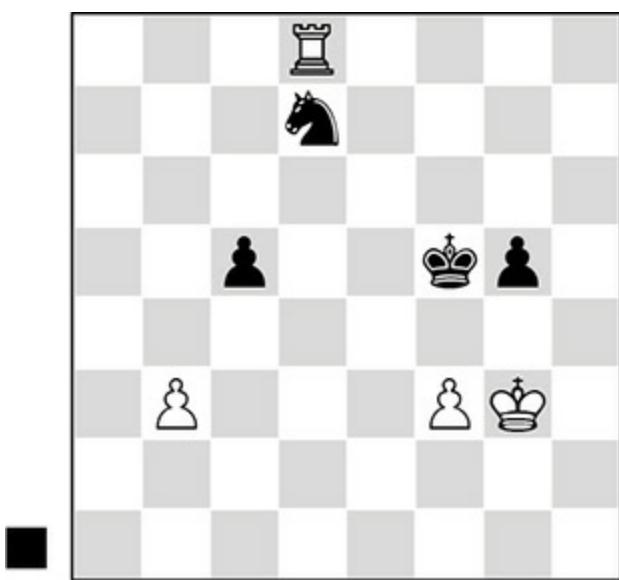


76. ♕a1 ♕c1 ½-½

6) ♕ + ♜ vs ♕ + ♜

Another fundamental endgame that you should already know is that the weaker side has drawing resources with a bishop pawn or a rook pawn, thanks to stalemate tricks. Once again, the main message repeats: you need to spot these reduced endgames in advance.

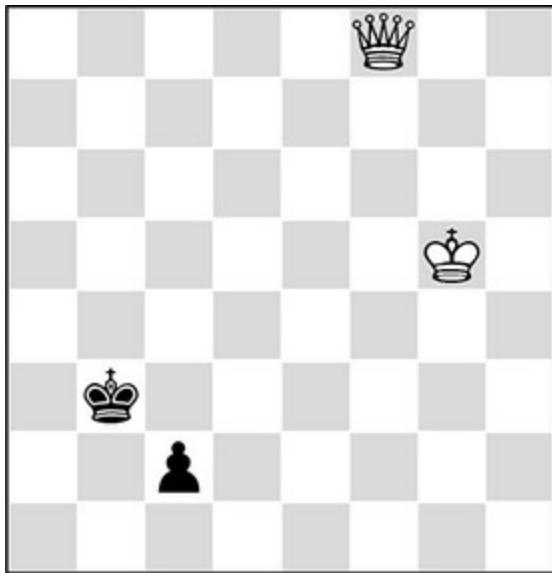
Tuan Minh Tran	2512
Iyer Akash Pc	2432



54... ♜ e6!

A very clear Trojan Horse, offering a gift of a straightforward route to victory. White counts and then recounts: I promote and he doesn't!

55. ♕ xd7?? ♜ xd7 56. ♜ g4 ♛ c6 57. ♜ xg5 ♛ b5 58.f4 ♛ b4 59.f5 ♛ xb3 60.f6 c4 61.f7 c3 62.f8 ♛ c2



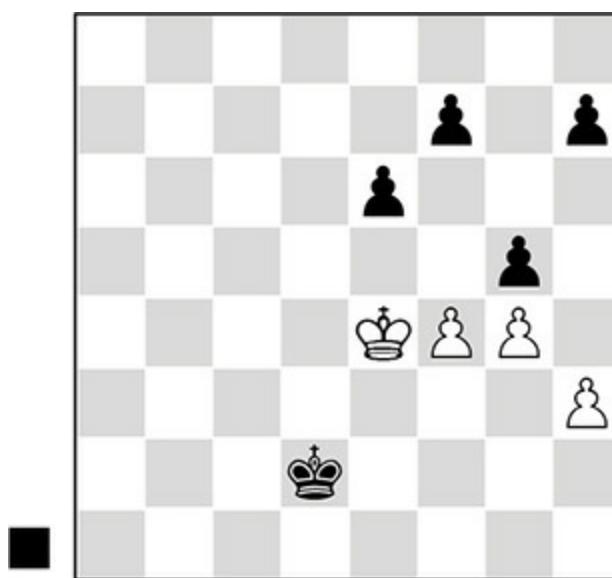
Indeed, Black's pawn remains a pawn, but, as a bishop pawn, it has made it far enough to secure the draw. White would win if he could get his queen to a1 or c1, but there is no such possibility here.

63. ♜ b8+ ♛ a2 64. ♜ a7+ ♛ b1 65. ♜ b6+ ♛ a1 66. ♜ a5+ ♛ b1 67. ♜ b4+ ♛ a1 68. ♜ c3+ ♛ b1 69. ♜ b3+ ♛ a1 ½-½

Ian Rogers 2470

Vasily Smyslov 2570

Groningen 1989



Poor Smyslov doesn't fare too well in this book. Against Australia's most decorated player, the former World Champion could win this textbook pawn ending with any of 52...gxf4, 52...f6, 52...e2 or 52...e1. But not

52...h6?? 53.f5!!

and the bishop pawn saves the day:

53...exf5+ 54.gxf5! f6

Or 54...h5 55.f6.

55.d5 h5 56.e6 g4 57.hxg4 hxg4 58.xf6 g3 59.e7!

And not to the g-file!

59...g2 60.f6 g1

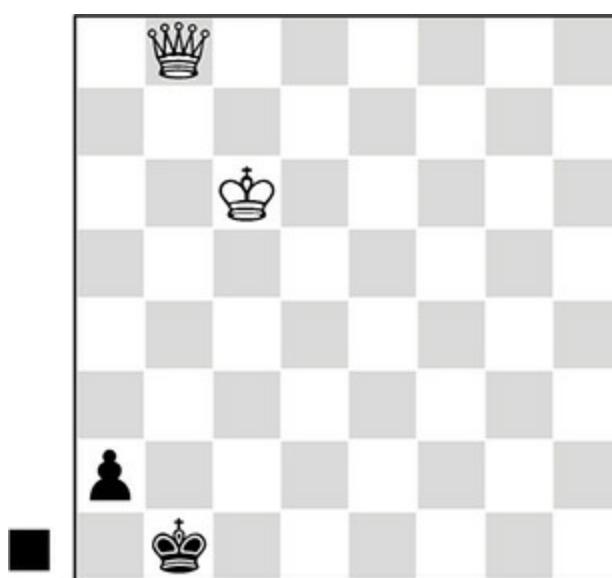
With a draw.

When learning these endgames with either a rook or bishop pawn, a player also needs to know the winning zones for the superior side's king, from which it can enter to force checkmate even after the inferior side has queened. Don't forget to learn this, as even strong players can go wrong.

Wesley So 2875

Vladimir Fedoseev 2821

World Fischer Random Championships (QF) 2019



In the inaugural Fischer Random World Championships, Vladimir Fedoseev had done well to make the quarterfinals against the eventual winner, Wesley So.

Having done all the hard work to reach this drawn endgame, and with plenty of time on his clock, Fedoseev inexplicably lost concentration:

1... $\text{Qa}1??$ 2. $\text{Qb}5!$ 1-0

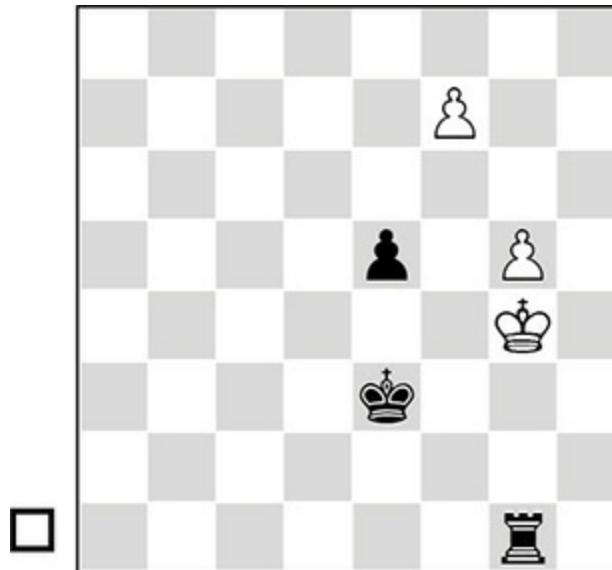
Relieving the stalemate temporarily in order to bring the king into the winning zone. Black resigned on account of 2... $\text{Qb}2$ 3. $\text{Qc}4+$ $\text{Qc}1$ 4. $\text{Qf}4+$ $\text{Qb}1$ 5. $\text{Qb}3$.

I can't resist showing a final game to demonstrate that on rare occasions, other pawns draw too.

Aleksander Mista 2562

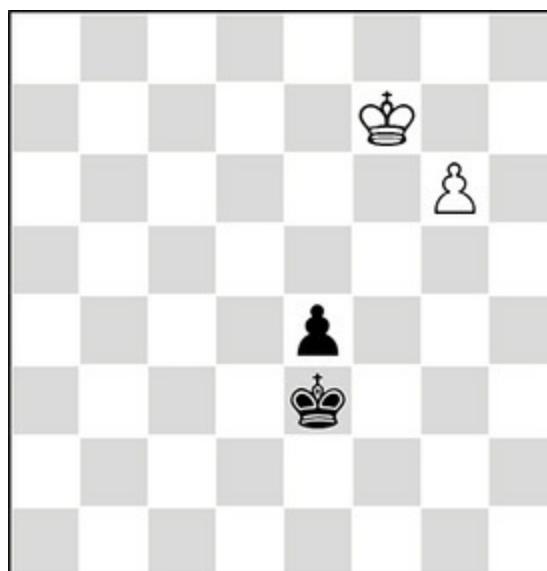
David Navara 2710

Czechia tt 2012/13 (4)

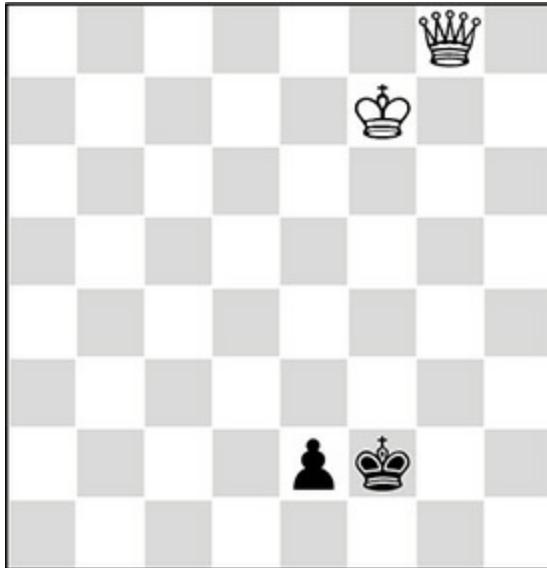


White wins with 52. $\text{Qh}3$ or 52. $\text{Qh}4$, though even after he promotes, it will be a long process to first win the black pawn and then grind out Q+K vs Q+K (as we have just seen). To avoid the tedium, White takes a simple shortcut:

52. $\text{Qf}5??$ $\text{Kf}1+$ 53. $\text{Qe}6$ $\text{Kxf}7!$ 54. $\text{Qxf}7$ e4 55. g6



55... ♕ f2!! 56. g7 e3 57. g8♕ e2



Every junior knows that a queen beats a knight or centre pawn, because there are no stalemate tricks and the superior side can use standard checking or pinning manoeuvres to slowly bring their king close to the action. This rule holds for 99 percent of cases. But, with no checks or pins, here is our one-percent exception.

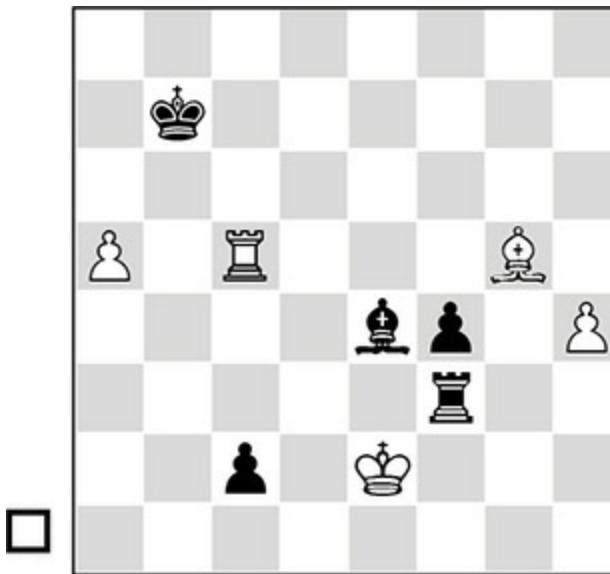
58. ♕ e8 e1♕ 59. ♕ xe1+ ♔ xe1 ½-½

7) ♕ + ♜ + ♙ vs ♕ + ♜

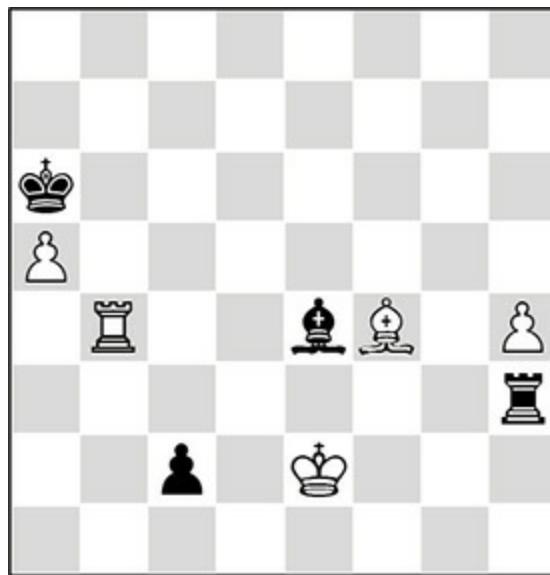
Most players learn from an early age that ♕ + ♜ vs ♕ + ♜ is a draw. The defending side simply runs his king to the corner of the *opposite* colour to the bishop, after which the king and rook can make no progress without allowing stalemate. What is less well known is that the endgame is sometimes drawn even if the superior side has an extra pawn – and even when the position is theoretically winning, the technique is incredibly difficult. This can be a very useful defensive idea that is surprisingly rarely mentioned in texts.

Sergey Dolmatov	2545
Tamaz Giorgadze	2530

Yerevan zt 1981 (3)



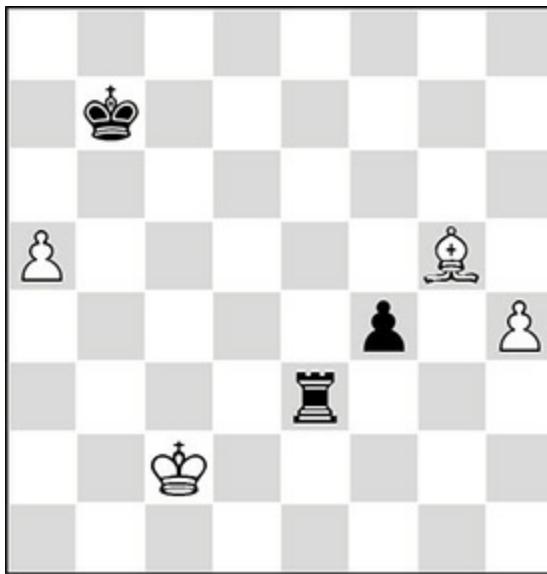
Black's two pawns are far outracing their white counterparts. White has an uphill task; e.g. 90. \mathbb{Q} c4 \mathbb{Q} h3! (threatening 91... \mathbb{Q} d3+) 91. \mathbb{Q} b4+ \mathbb{Q} a6 92. \mathbb{Q} xf4



analysis diagram

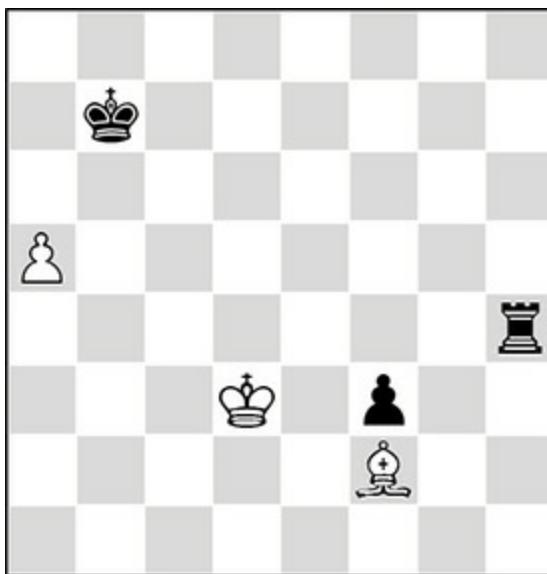
92... \mathbb{Q} h2+! and White has nothing better than to accept a $\mathbb{Q} + \mathbb{R}$ vs $\mathbb{Q} + \mathbb{B}$ endgame after 93. \mathbb{Q} xh2 c1 \mathbb{Q} 94. \mathbb{Q} xe4 \mathbb{Q} c2+!, because if 93. \mathbb{Q} e1, 93... \mathbb{Q} d3 threatens a killer rook check on e2. Dolmatov, an endgame specialist, finds a more obstinate defence:

90. \mathbb{Q} xc2!! \mathbb{Q} e3+ 91. \mathbb{Q} d2 \mathbb{Q} xc2 92. \mathbb{Q} xc2



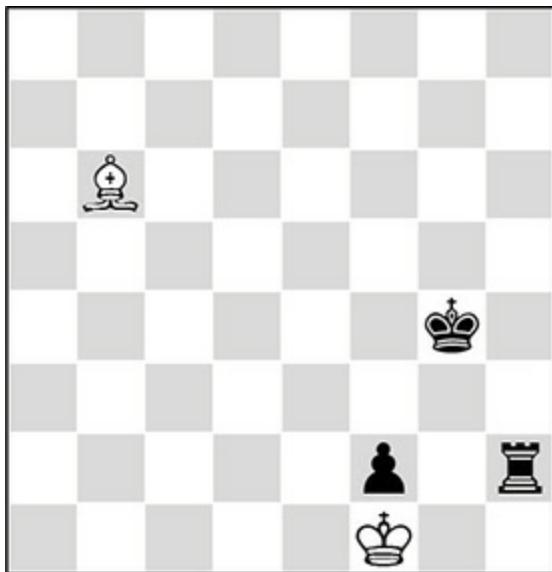
Now 92... $\mathbb{Q}e2+!$ is an accurate winning move, controlling the key f2-square. Instead, Black makes the very human mistake of focussing on eliminating his opponent's pawns – a common error in this sort of ending.

92... $\mathbb{Q}e4??$ 93. $\mathbb{Q}d3$ f3 94. $\mathbb{Q}e3!$ $\mathbb{Q}xh4$ 95. $\mathbb{Q}f2!$



The pawn on a5 is lost, but it is irrelevant to the position. This endgame is actually a theoretical draw, but even in similar positions where there is a win, it is often extremely difficult to convert and thus worth the Swindler's while to understand. In the game, Giorgadze tries for many moves, but eventually agrees to the draw.

95... $\mathbb{Q}f4$ 96. $\mathbb{Q}e3$ $\mathbb{Q}f7$ 97. $\mathbb{Q}g3$ $\mathbb{Q}a6$ 98. $\mathbb{Q}f2$ $\mathbb{Q}xa5$ 99. $\mathbb{Q}e5$ $\mathbb{Q}b5$ 100. $\mathbb{Q}d4$ $\mathbb{Q}c4$ 101. $\mathbb{Q}b6$ $\mathbb{Q}d3$ 102. $\mathbb{Q}c5$ $\mathbb{Q}e4$ 103. $\mathbb{Q}b6$ $\mathbb{Q}f5$ 104. $\mathbb{Q}a7$ $\mathbb{Q}f6$ 105. $\mathbb{Q}c5$ $\mathbb{Q}a6$ 106. $\mathbb{Q}f1$ $\mathbb{Q}c6$ 107. $\mathbb{Q}a7$ $\mathbb{Q}c2$ 108. $\mathbb{Q}b6$ $\mathbb{Q}f4$ 109. $\mathbb{Q}d4$ $\mathbb{Q}g4$ 110. $\mathbb{Q}a7$ $\mathbb{Q}h2$ 111. $\mathbb{Q}b6$ f2



112. ♜ e2!

The last trick you need to know. 112. ♜ xf2?? ♛ f3! wins.

112... ♛ g3 113. ♜ c5! ♕ g2 114. ♜ b6 f1 ♜ + 115. ♜ xf1 ♛ f3 116. ♜ e1 ♕ a2 117. ♜ c5 ½-½

We will see another example of this in Mikhalevski-Wiersma in the chapter on fortresses.

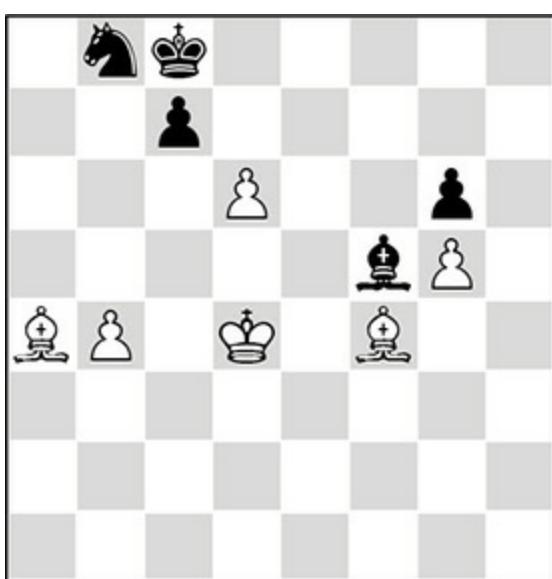
8) Opposite-coloured bishops

This is a whole topic in itself and is well covered in most good endgame books. Suffice to say, this is an important theme to keep in mind for swindles. We will look at just one well-known example to illustrate this.

Mark Taimanov

David Bronstein

Leningrad tt 1960

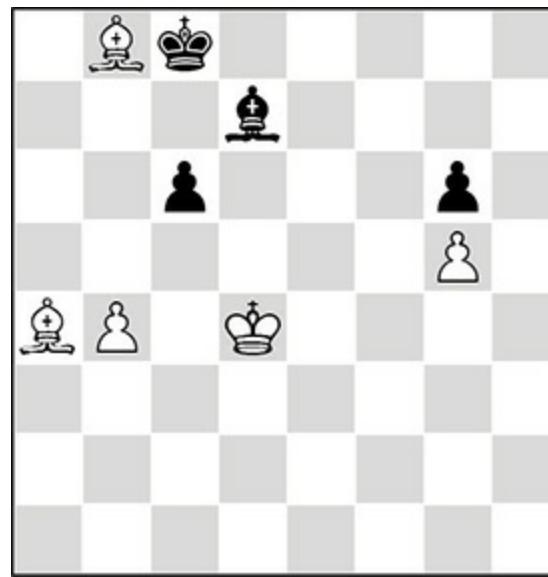


A cute example featuring two of the great Soviet masters of the sixties. It seems not to matter whether Black plays 69...cxd6 or 69...c6, and indeed it should amount to the same thing (a lost endgame). However, one of these moves conceals a cunning trap, and therefore should be preferred.

69...c6! 70.d7+! ♜ xd7!

Now 71. $\mathbb{Q}c2!$ leads to a technical win, which, while requiring patience, is crystal-clear. But so, apparently, is the technical bishop endgame after an exchange on b8, and it's much quicker, too. The perils of the shortcut!

71. $\mathbb{Q}xb8??$



71...c5+!!

To his horror, White realises that he will get a bishop endgame, but certainly not the one he wanted! Dejected and fooled, Taimanov agreed to a draw.

9) $\mathbb{Q} + \mathbb{N} + \mathbb{P}$ vs $\mathbb{Q} (+ \mathbb{N})$

I hesitated to include this final endgame, as it doesn't appear that often in practical games. And we all know that two knights cannot force checkmate against a lone king. But it is still worth mentioning because often this endgame is 'threatened' at an earlier stage, though it never actually materialises. This is typically the case when the superior side has two knights and a pawn or pawns versus a rook and pawns, or two knights and a pawn or pawns versus a minor piece and pawns. In these cases, the defending side can try to sacrifice their remaining pieces for the pawn or pawns of the superior side. I will briefly mention that two knights can force checkmate against a king and a pawn, so long as the pawn is not sufficiently advanced. The threshold here is the famous 'Troitsky Line', which you can look up yourself. But to be honest, even if the pawn is behind the line such that the position is theoretically winning, the technique required is so advanced, and these endgames so rare in practice, that I cannot advise spending any time learning them. You would be much better off brushing up on $\mathbb{Q} + \mathbb{R} + \mathbb{P}$ vs $\mathbb{Q} + \mathbb{R}$!

Once again, and for the last time, I reiterate: train yourself to look for the possibility of these core endgames as early as you can. Recognising their potential will help you to spot hidden resources and swindling opportunities.

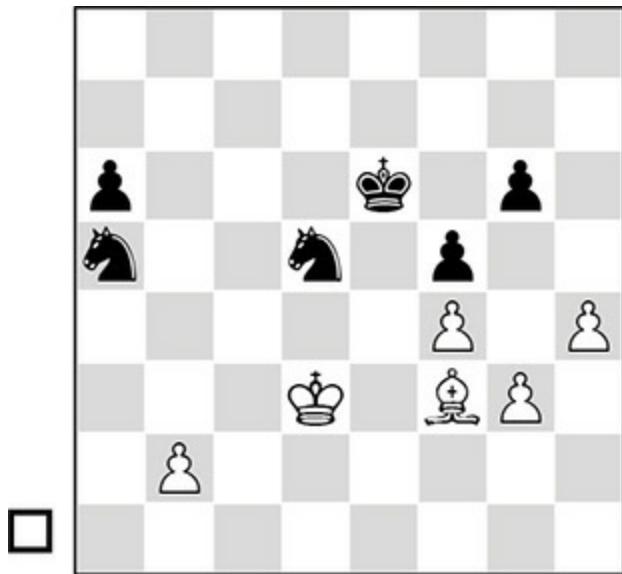
Friso Nijboer

2515

Matthew Sadler

2667

Arnhem 1999 (5)



52.h5!

Again following the general defensive rule of ‘When behind in material, swap pawns, not pieces’.

52...gxh5 53.Qxh5 Rf6 54.Qe2 Qc6 55.Qc4 Qd6 56.Qd3! Qd5 57.Qb3! a5

It was very hard to calculate, but 57...Qc5! 58.Qxa6 Ra5+! 59.Qa3 (59.Qa4? Rc4!) 59...Rc4+ 60.Qa4 Rd6!



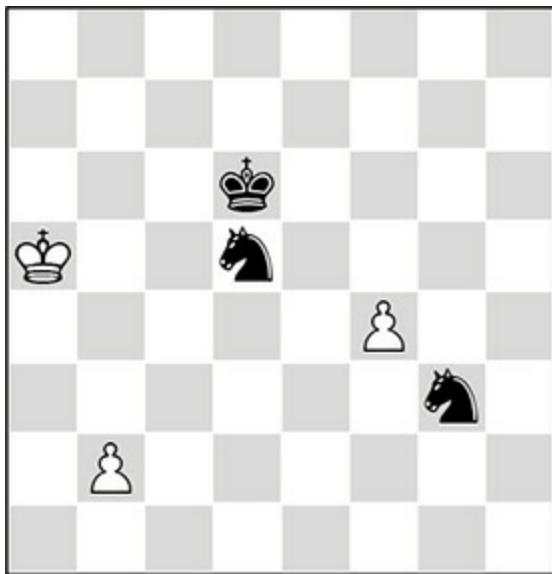
analysis diagram

was the way to play it, trying to preserve Black’s remaining pawn for as long as possible (e.g. 61.Qd3 Re4!).

58.Qxf5!!

Eliminating both of Black’s remaining pawns, even though the resulting endgame is theoretically lost. But if Matthew ‘AlphaHero’ Sadler can’t win it, then surely this is a safe bet against any opponent.

58...Rd4+ 59.Qa4 Rxg3 60.Qxa5 Rg3



61.b4

61.f5! is the most resilient, after which 61... ♜f6!! leads to mate in 66 moves. In general, the defending side prefers a knight pawn, or otherwise a bishop pawn, to give the knights the least latitude in forcing checkmate. If you only remember one thing about this endgame, this is it.

61... ♜f5 62.b5 ♛c5 63.b6 ♜xb6 64.♔a6 ♜c4

Black can mate in 16 moves with best play, but the method is excruciatingly difficult. In the game, Sadler failed to find the way, and the players drew by the fifty-move rule.

CHAPTER 16

Fortresses

March to Helms' Deep! Leave none alive! – Saruman, The Lord of the Rings: Two Towers

As opposed to stalemate, perpetual check and the drawn endgames described above, the fortress is a drawing motif that actually is consistent with military warfare. History is littered with examples of desperately outnumbered sides outlasting or severely delaying their enemy's assault from within their fortifications. During the 14th and 15th centuries, a tiny garrison at Mont Saint-Michel remained unconquered against the British armies for the entirety of the Hundred Years War. After the decline of the Western Roman Empire, Rome survived no fewer than seven sieges, while Constantinople was besieged 17 times before the Turks finally ended the Byzantine Empire in 1453. In the 17th century, a few hundred of the Knights of Malta were besieged by over 60,000 Ottoman troops at Candia, in modern-day Crete. The Ottomans controlled the island, but the Knights tenaciously defended the city for over 22 years before the besiegers eventually broke through.

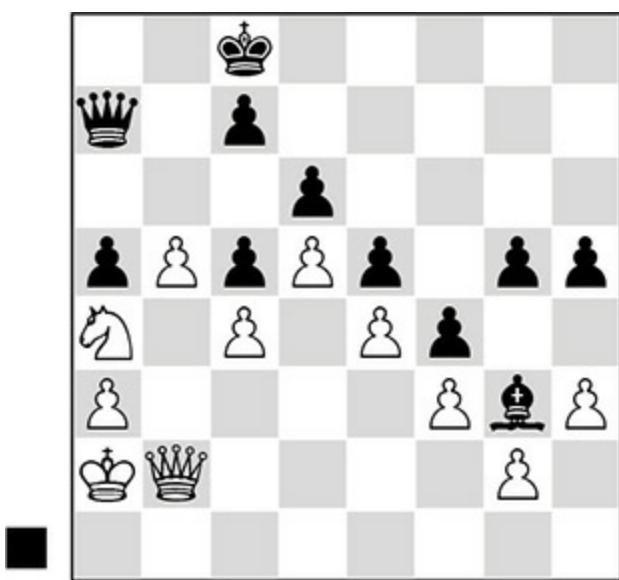
Most chess books refer to a fortress as an objectively impenetrable defence, such as the ♔+♕+♗ vs ♔+♘ positions mentioned earlier. This is a common misconception. In military strategy, fortresses are not designed with the belief that they can never be broken. Rather, the purpose of a fortress, such as castle fortifications, is to hold out against the enemy attack for as long as possible. In warfare, prolonged resistance might deplete the enemy's supplies or give time for reinforcements to arrive. In chess, a fortress both exhausts the opponent and helps bring us closer to our own 'reinforcement': the fifty-move rule.

This is not just a quibble about terminology. The fact is that truly impenetrable fortresses are quite rare in practice; Magnus Carlsen famously remarked that he does not believe they exist.³⁴ One of the most beautiful 'impenetrable' fortresses in chess history was only recently discovered to be little more than a bluff, which indeed led to a famous swindle.

Arshak Petrosian

Laszlo Hazai

Schilde op U18 1970 (9)



A position that has been reprinted countless times. White threatens 46.b6, which he will even play in response to 45... \mathbb{Q} b7 (46.b6 \mathbb{Q} a6 47.bxc7+ \mathbb{Q} xc7 48. \mathbb{Q} b5! and wins). The longer you stare at the position, the more inevitable the b5-b6 breakthrough, followed by victory, seems. But Hazai, with astonishing freedom from chess dogma, notices that there is indeed ONE way to stop b5-b6:

45... \mathbb{Q} b6!!



Talk about offering a tempting Trojan Queen! Black pours cement into the queenside holes, at great cost. White played along, but after

46. \mathbb{Q} xb6+ cxb6 47.h4 gxh4 48. \mathbb{Q} d2 h3!! 49.gxh3 h4



the board had completely sealed itself and, with his extra queen worthless, White had no choice but to agree to the draw:

50. $\mathbb{Q}b3 \mathbb{Q}b7$ 51. $\mathbb{Q}a4 \mathbb{Q}a7$ 52. $\mathbb{Q}g2 \mathbb{Q}b7$ 53. $\mathbb{Q}b2 \mathbb{Q}a7$ 54. $\mathbb{Q}c2 \mathbb{Q}b7$ 55. $\mathbb{Q}c3 \mathbb{Q}a7$ ½-½

Amazingly, however, Black's beautiful 45th move was actually more bluff than brilliancy. By eschewing the queen and calmly going after a mere pawn instead, White could have slowly forced victory. After the prosaic 46. $\mathbb{Q}d2!$



White has the unstoppable plan of $\mathbb{Q}b3$, $\mathbb{Q}b2$, $\mathbb{Q}a4$, followed by $\mathbb{Q}d3-c1-b3xa5$.

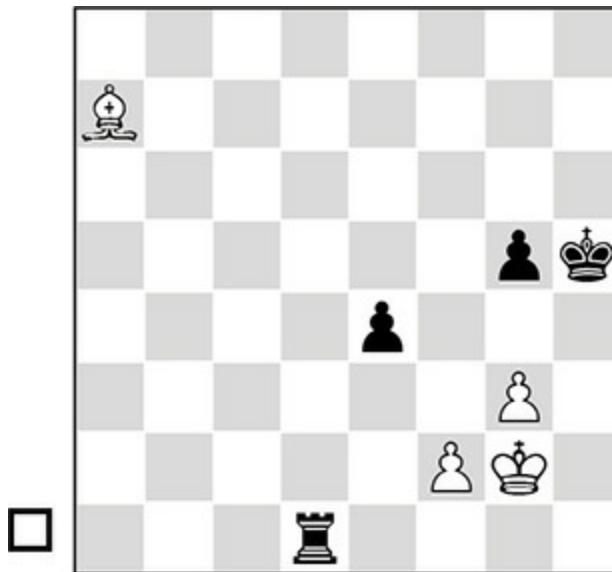
Despite this refutation, it is incredibly useful for the Swindler to look out for tenacious defensive set-ups that give us the best chances of frustrating our opponents and encouraging them to make bad decisions, even if a theoretical breakthrough exists. A good example of this is the opportunity Shirov missed against Caruana (a very unusual $\mathbb{Q}+\mathbb{Q}+\mathbb{Q}+\mathbb{Q}+\mathbb{Q}$ vs $\mathbb{Q}+\mathbb{Q}+\mathbb{Q}!$) that we saw at the start of this book. We will mainly focus on these sorts of 'pseudo-fortresses' in this chapter.

Victor Mikhalevski

2516

Eelke Wiersma

2362



Black has just played 54... ♜g4-h5, threatening an obvious winning plan: pushing ...g5-g4, followed by walking his king to e2, playing ...♜d1-d3-f3 and finally swapping off to an easy king-and-pawn endgame with the breakthrough ...e4-e3. White would be helpless. There is only one way to force Black off autopilot:

55.g4+!!

A masterly defensive stroke. White sacrifices a pawn to create counterplay.

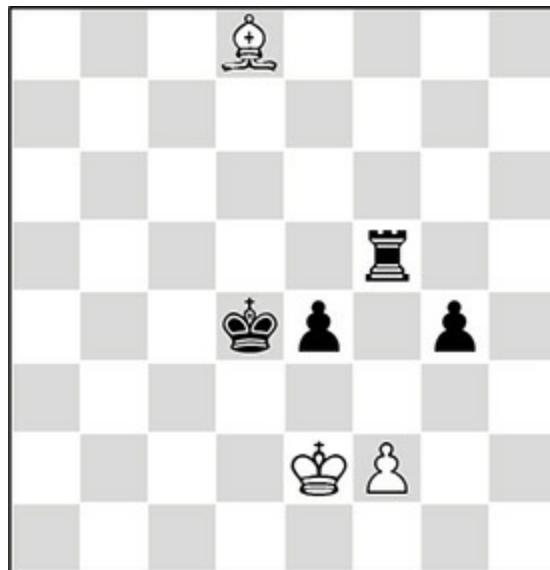
55...♛xg4 56.♝e3 ♜d3 57.♝a7 ♛f5 58.♝b6 ♜b3 59.♝c5

Now if Black continues his king walk to the queenside, White will attack the g5-pawn to provoke ...g5-g4, after which it will be vulnerable to his king. The position is technically winning, but Black has now been forced to find the correct manoeuvre, rather than follow a cut-and-dried plan. He starts out by playing the position slowly and carefully, hoping that the winning method will spontaneously reveal itself:

59...♜b5 60.♝e3 ♛g4 61.♝a7 ♜b3 62.♝d4 ♛h4 63.♝c5 ♜d3 64.♝a7 ♜f3 65.♝b6 ♛g4 66.♝c5 ♛f5 67.♝b6 ♛e5 68.♝d8 ♜f8 69.♝e7

69.♝xg5?? ♜g8!.

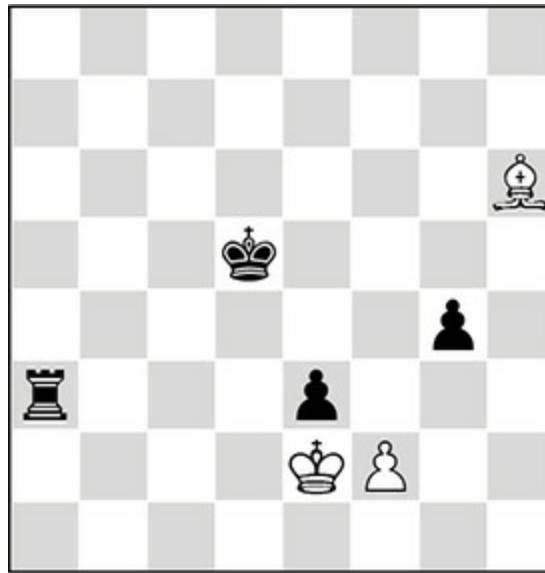
69...♜f7 70.♝d8 ♛d4 71.♚f1 ♜f5 72.♚e2 ♛g4



After failing to make progress, Black gives in and pushes the pawn. The fortress can still be broken, but the position requires careful calculation by Black – whereas White simply oscillates from one

piece to the next.

73. $\mathbb{Q} b6+$ $\mathbb{Q} d5$ 74. $\mathbb{Q} a7$ $\mathbb{Q} f3$ 75. $\mathbb{Q} e3$ $\mathbb{Q} e5$ 76. $\mathbb{Q} d2$ $\mathbb{Q} h3$ 77. $\mathbb{Q} e2$ $\mathbb{Q} d5$ 78. $\mathbb{Q} f4$ $\mathbb{Q} d4$ 79. $\mathbb{Q} g5$ $\mathbb{Q} b3$ 80. $\mathbb{Q} h6$ $\mathbb{Q} a3$
81. $\mathbb{Q} g7+$ $\mathbb{Q} d5$ 82. $\mathbb{Q} h6$ e3!

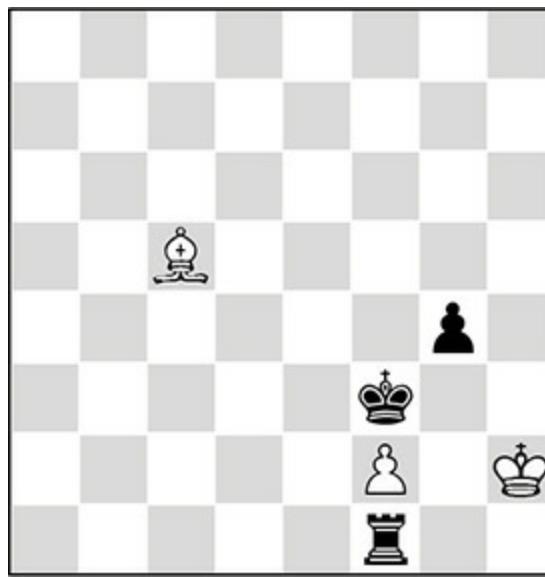


Finally hitting upon the right break. However, this is still only part of the winning method.

83.f3!!

A brilliant final bluff.

83. $\mathbb{Q} xe3$ holds out the longest according to the tablebases, but again, it allows for a straightforward winning plan where Black swaps off into a king-and-pawn endgame: 83... $\mathbb{Q} e4$ 84. $\mathbb{Q} c5$ $\mathbb{Q} a2+$ 85. $\mathbb{Q} f1$ $\mathbb{Q} f3$ 86. $\mathbb{Q} g1$ $\mathbb{Q} a1+$ 87. $\mathbb{Q} h2$ $\mathbb{Q} f1$



analysis diagram

followed by 88... $\mathbb{Q} xf2+$. Mikhalevski's move should lose faster, if Black can shift his focus to cold calculation rather than eliminating White's pawns...

83...gxf3+??

The 'human' move again, but here it is a huge blunder.

83...g3!! 84. $\mathbb{Q} xe3$ (or 84. $\mathbb{Q} f1$ $\mathbb{Q} a1+$ 85. $\mathbb{Q} g2$ e2) 84... $\mathbb{Q} a1$ wins the bishop after ...g3-g2-g1.

84. $\mathbb{Q} xf3$ $\mathbb{Q} d4$ 85. $\mathbb{Q} g5!$

The draw is similar to what we saw in Dolmatov-Giorgadze in the previous chapter.

85... \mathbb{Q} b3 86. \mathbb{Q} h6!

Completing a well-earned swindle. The fortress is now unbreakable.

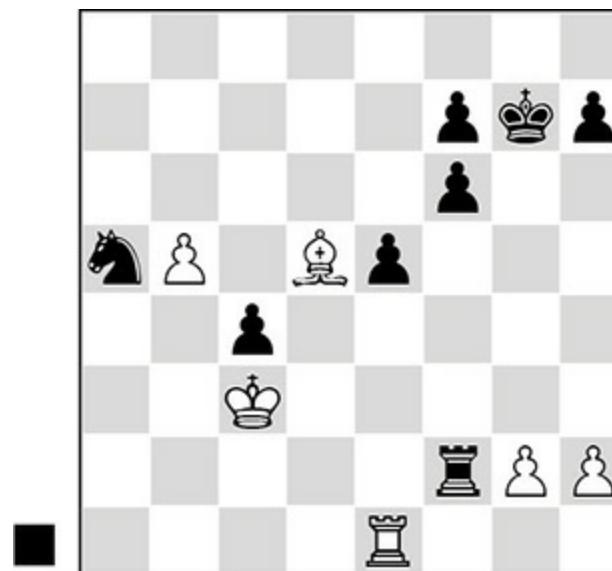
86...e2+ ½-½

Another advantage of both military and chess fortresses is that they shift the onus of decision-making to the attacking side. In medieval open-plain battle, military strategy was not particularly complex³⁵, and the side with the larger numbers usually ran over the enemy. But a siege situation forces the attackers to come up with plans to break down the defences, while for the besieged, the plan is simple: hold the fort! The same principle holds for chess, and is even more important nowadays as tournament time controls become shorter and shorter. Setting up a fortress forces our opponent to spend precious time trying to work out the correct mathematical breakthrough, while we can cheerfully shuffle our pieces backwards and forwards within our defensive set-up.

Constantin Lupulescu 2620

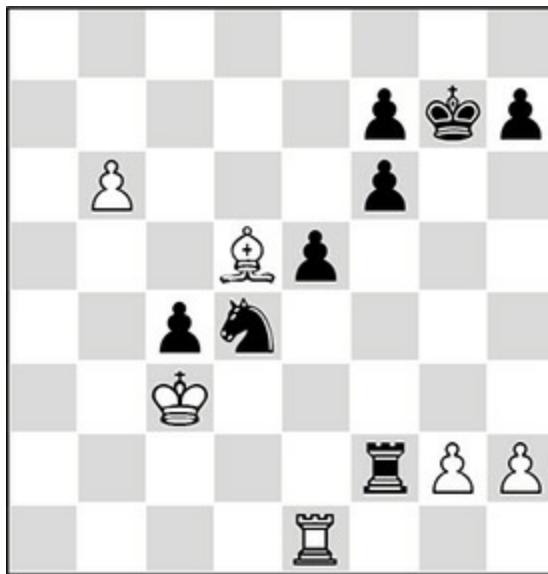
David Navara 2726

Antalya tt 2017 (6)

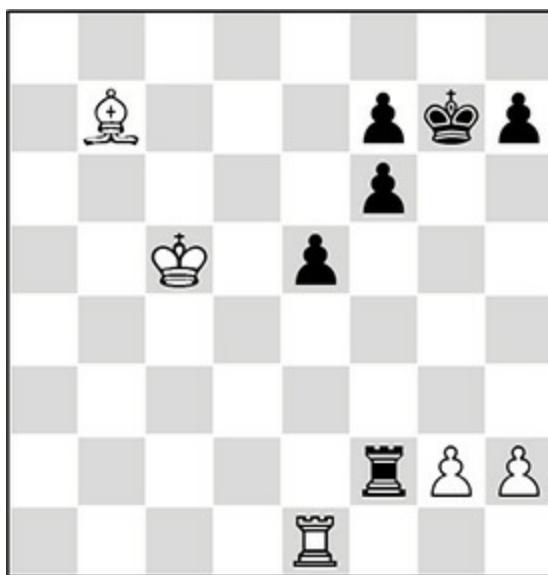


Despite being temporarily up two pawns, Black is lost. White intends b5-b6 followed by either \mathbb{Q} a1 or \mathbb{Q} b4, attacking the one obstacle in the way of the b-pawn. This is an unstoppable plan against normal defence, and so Navara is forced to try something radical.

35... \mathbb{Q} b3! 36.b6 \mathbb{Q} d4!



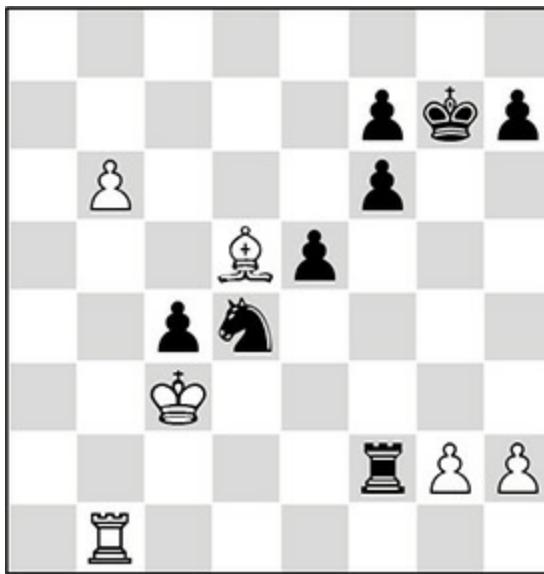
At first, this seems like sheer lunacy. Black has moved his knight AWAY from the white pawn. But there is a catch: after 37.b7 ♜b5+ 38.♕xc4 ♜d6+ 39.♕c5 ♜xb7+ 40.♕xb7



analysis diagram

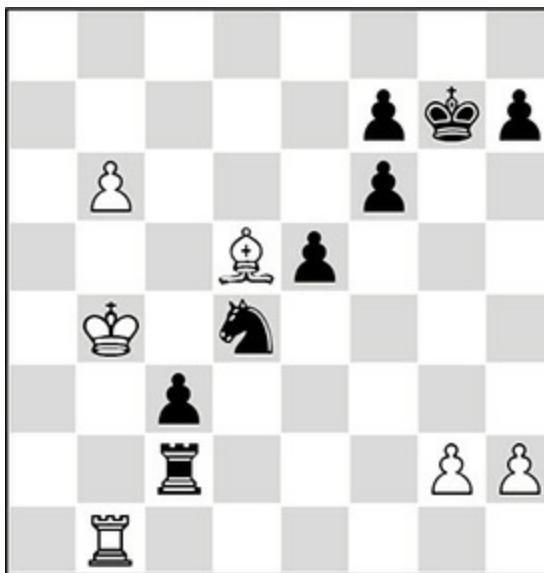
Black has eliminated the dangerous pawn once and for all. The game would then take on a very different nature, with excellent swindling chances for Black. Notice the two common drawn endgames that might emerge from this configuration: ♔+♜+♝ vs ♔+♜ and ♔+♝+♝ vs ♔ with the wrong-coloured rook's pawn.

37.♝b1



Avoiding the aforementioned difficulties. However, Black's previously sidelined knight now takes on the star role in coordinating with Black's rook and c-pawn.

37... $\text{Nc}2+$ 38. $\text{Qb}4$ $\text{c}3!$



39. $\text{Ka}3?$

39. $\text{b}7!$ is what Black's last move was designed to prevent, but in fact it is still the best move. After 39... $\text{Nb}2+$ 40. $\text{Kxb}2$ $\text{cx}b2$ 41. $\text{Qe}4$ $\text{Nc}6+$ (41... $\text{f}5$ 42. $\text{Qc}3!$) 42. $\text{Qc}3$ $\text{Nb}8$ 43. $\text{Qxb}2$



analysis diagram

Black is a pawn up, but his knight is completely tied down and White will overrun Black's position as soon as his king re-enters the fight.



It is understandable that White preferred the text to a minor-piece endgame a pawn down; after all, how does Black plan to stop the b-pawn now?

39... ♜d2!

He doesn't! Instead, Navara orchestrates counterplay with his own pawn. The play is now forced:

40.b7 c2 41. ♜c1 ♕b5+ 42. ♔b2



42... ♜ xd5!! 43. b8 ♜ ♜ d4!



A remarkable position. Black only has a few pawns and a knight for the queen, but what a steed it is!

44. ♔ c7 ♜ b5+ 45. ♔ a2

And not 45. ♔ c3?? ♜ b1! 46. ♔ d2 (46. ♜ xc2 ♜ b5+!) 46... ♜ b3+, when White is lucky to be able to escape with a repetition after 47. ♔ c3! ♜ d4 48. ♔ d2.

45... ♜ b4!



Threatening a draw by repetition via 46... ♕a4+, because a3 and c3 are currently ‘mined’ squares for the white king on account of ... ♜b5+.

46.♕ xc2

White can try to do without this move for the time being, but eventually the exchange is inevitable if he wants to make progress.

46... ♜ xc2 47.♔ xc2



The ensuing endgame is very complicated. It is an academic question as to whether this position is already a theoretical draw or not. If it is, then we can say that the swindle was successfully executed when White was bluffed out of playing 39.b7!. But even if it is not, Navara’s creative play has greatly increased his chances of saving the game, as many rook-and-pawn fortresses such as this one are incredibly tough nuts to crack.

47...h5!?

Clever. Navara ensures that White will have to agree to some pawn exchanges if he wants to make further progress on the kingside. For the record, and despite my previous compliment, my analysis of this position suggests that objectively Black should wait rather than swap off the pawns immediately, for somewhat unintuitive reasons. My notes suggest that the position is then drawn with best play, whereas the game continuation leads to a theoretical win for White. Still, it is instructive to see Navara’s plan unfold, as it is generally a good one for these types of endgames.

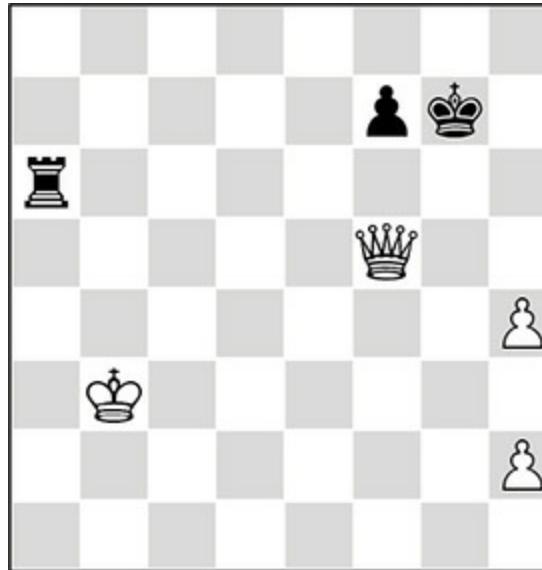
48.g3 h4? 49.♔c3!

Perhaps missed by Navara.

49...♜d4 50.gxh4

Now 50...♜xh4?? loses to 51.♕g3+.

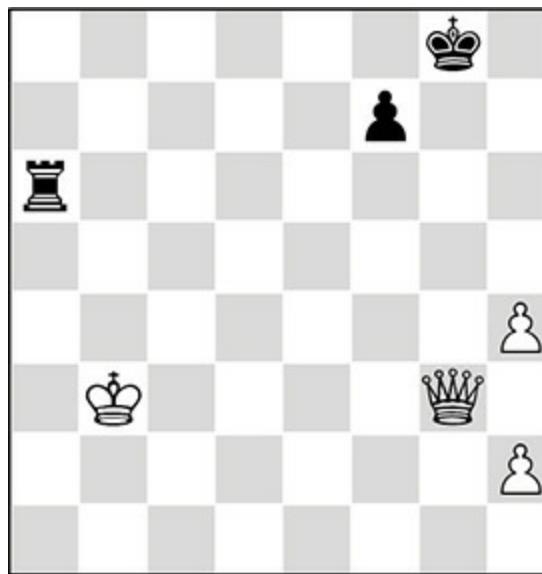
50...f5!? 51.♕g3+ ♔h7 52.♗xe5 ♜a4+ 53.♕b3 ♜a6! 54.♗xf5+ ♔g7



Black has given up three (!) of his pawns just to damage White's structure. But while my seven-piece tablebase tells me that White can mate in 29 moves, White's task, practically speaking, is no walk in the park. In fact, the exchanges make Black's life easier as the game enters the increment stage, in the sense that his best moves are obvious. He will shuffle his rook along his third rank and wait while White tries to think of a plan.

55.♗e5+ ♔g8 56.h5??

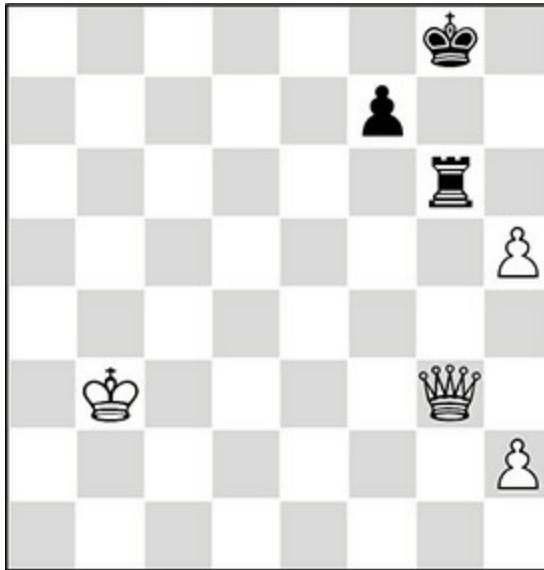
Amazingly, this throws away the win! The only moves leading to victory were the two checks on the eighth rank, as well as the best move, 56.♗g3+!!.



analysis diagram

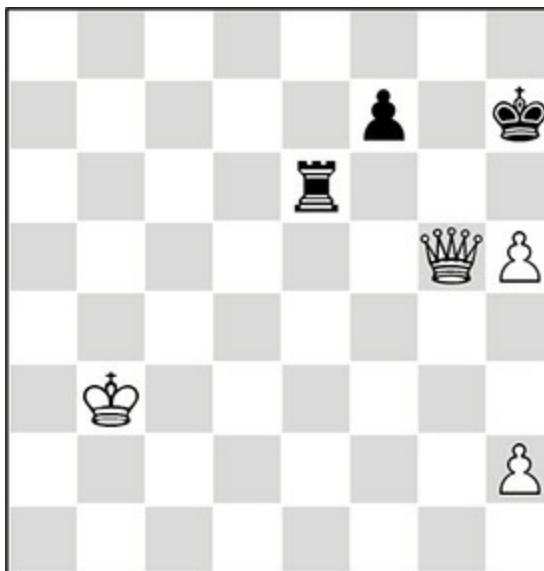
Then 56...♔h7 57.♗d3+ and 56...♔h8 57.♗c3+ both win the black rook, while 56...♔f8 opens the path for White's pawn after 57.h5. But the main point is that 56...♜g6 is met by the beautiful

57.h5!!



and White violently undoubles his pawns, leading to a winning king-and-pawn endgame.

56... ♕ e6 57. ♜ g5+ ♔ h7!



White tried for more than fifty moves, but Navara's fortress held firm. Fantastically creative vision by the Czech star (and the world's strongest 'David').

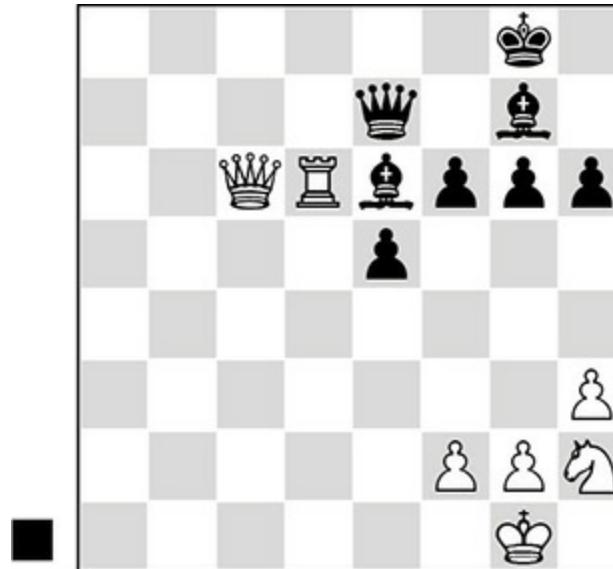
Just as with the common endgames, the key to using fortresses in your swindle set-ups is to spot the patterns in advance. If you can see the possibilities before your opponent does, you can take advantage of their impatience and lure them into an apparent short-cut, only to reveal to them that the win is far from easy. Frustration and annoyance can set in, often coupled with panic and regret, and these emotions breed mistakes. After all, we are all prone to human biases, and, as we saw in Kramnik-Carlsen, even World Champions are human.

'It's easy enough for Carlsen to find these fortress ideas,' you may argue, 'but what about the rest of us?' It is true that there are no easy methods to learn how to spot fortresses from afar. However, there are some common themes that we can keep in mind when our backs are against the wall.³⁶ Most fortresses require the defending side to have domination of one of the colour complexes, and many

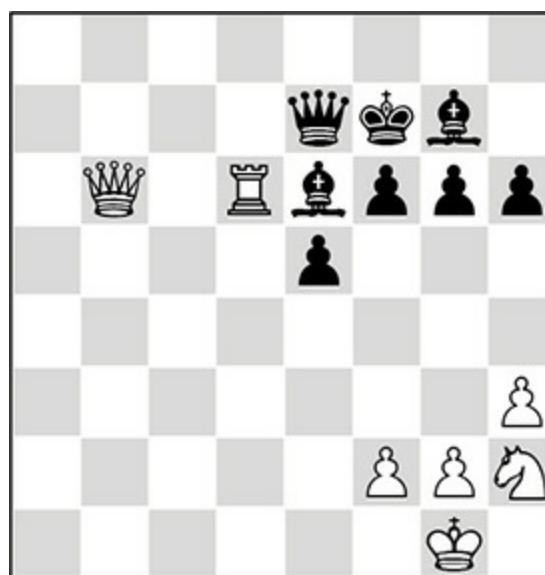
also involve all the pawns being on one side of the board. If you stay alert to the potential for these themes to emerge in your endings, you will already go a long way towards identifying promising fortresses.

Abhijit Kunte 2528
Daniel Howard Fernandez 2299

Sydney 2010 (9)



Materially speaking, Black isn't doing too badly: he is down the exchange for a pawn, with all of the pawns on one side. But the decisive feature is the weakness of his first two ranks, thanks to having earlier been forced to push his f-, g- and h-pawns from their starting squares. These concessions mean that his defences are fatally vulnerable to an assault by White's major pieces along the ranks. For example, after the engine's suggestion of 38... $\mathbb{Q}f7$ White plays 39. $\mathbb{Q}b6!$,



analysis diagram

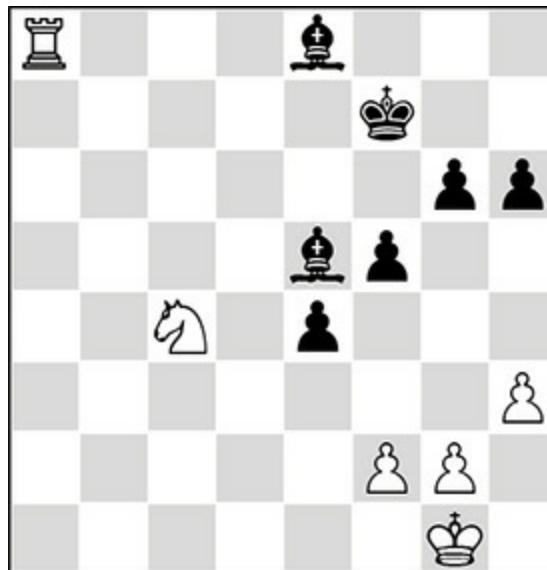
preparing to switch the rook to the seventh via $\mathbb{R}d6-c6-c7$. Black can only prevent this at the cost of his piece coordination; e.g. 39... $\mathbb{Q}d7$ 40. $\mathbb{Q}b8!$ $e4$ 41. $\mathbb{R}a6!$ (preparing either $\mathbb{R}a7$ or $\mathbb{R}a8$) 41... $f5$

(41...e3 42. $\mathbb{N}b3+$ wins the pawn) 42. $\mathbb{N}f1!$, threatening a decisive infiltration. Black cannot allow the white knight to join its colleagues, and so 42... $\mathbb{Q}d4$ is forced, but there follows 43. $\mathbb{Q}a8 \mathbb{Q}e8$ 44. $\mathbb{Q}e3!$ anyway.



analysis diagram

Black's defences fall quickly after the exchange on e3 – note the new possibility of infiltrating on the dark squares via $\mathbb{N}b8$ -b2-h8 – while even a queen exchange won't save him: 44... $\mathbb{Q}e5$ 45. $\mathbb{Q}xe5!$ $\mathbb{Q}xe5$ 46. $\mathbb{Q}c4!!$



analysis diagram

with a picturesque win of a bishop. After 46... $\mathbb{Q}f4$ 47. $g3 \mathbb{Q}b5$ 48. $\mathbb{Q}a3$ White wins a piece. These lines are not forced (though they do follow the engine's recommendations), but they illustrate the reality of Black's impending fate.

Fernandez realises that a slow death is on the agenda and decides that drastic measures are necessary. 38... $\mathbb{Q}f7!!$



A brilliant psychological move. We have just discussed the desperate weakness of Black's seventh rank, and yet Fernandez invites White to invade without offering any resistance! The retreat gives the appearance that Black is resigned to his fate, but in reality it is connected to an ingenious fortress idea.

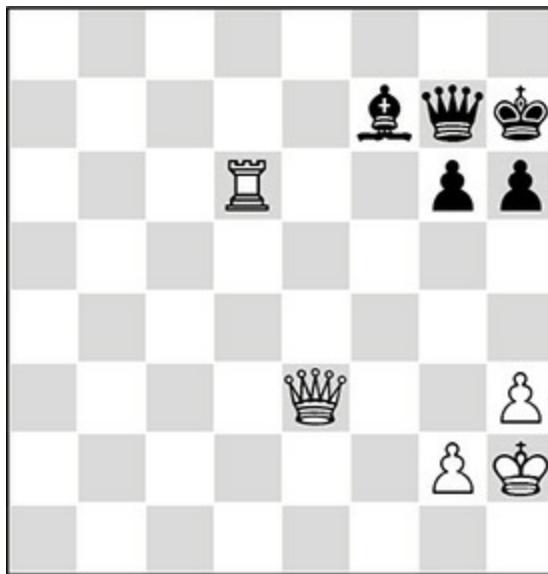
39. ♖d7

Natural and objectively best, so it is no wonder that White likely didn't search for alternatives. Still, in hindsight, 39. ♖g4!? may have been a better practical move. Black can hardly allow White to capture on f6, but even after 39...f5!, hoping to transpose to the game after 40. ♖c8+ ♔h7 41. ♖d7 ♕e6, White can still play 40. ♖f6+! anyway. After 40...♖xf6 41. ♖xf6 ♔g7 42. ♖d6



analysis diagram

the weakness of Black's back ranks is so dire that he will have to give up at least a pawn to ease the defence. A plausible continuation is 42...f4 43. ♖d7 ♕f6 44. ♖c5 e4! 45. ♖d6 ♕a1+ 46. ♔h2 e3 47. ♖d8! ♔h7 48. ♕e7 ♕g7 49. fxe3 fxe3 50. ♖d7 ♔g8 51. ♖d6 ♔h7 52. ♕xe3,

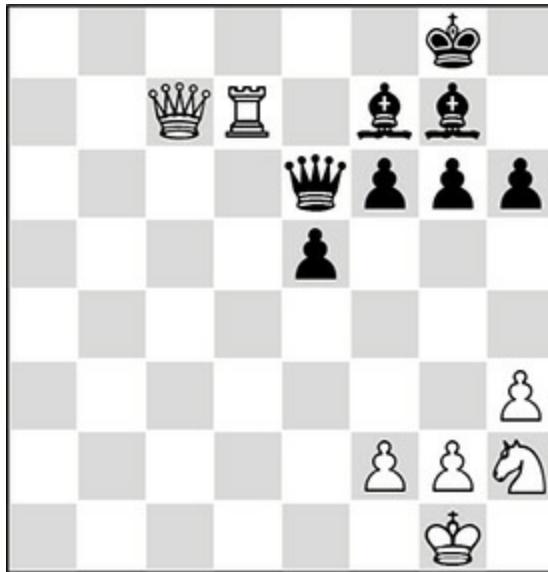


analysis diagram

reaching a technically winning endgame, though it requires a good deal of finesse. As we have learned, though, ‘technically winning’ is not a particularly useful evaluation for the practical player. I prefer an AlphaZero-style probabilistic assessment. In this case, Black’s defensive task is also quite onerous, and so I estimate White’s chances of winning in a practical game to be about three times Black’s chances of holding the draw.³⁷

Back to the game:

39... ♜ e6 40. ♜ c8+ ♛ h7 41. ♜ c7 ♛ g8

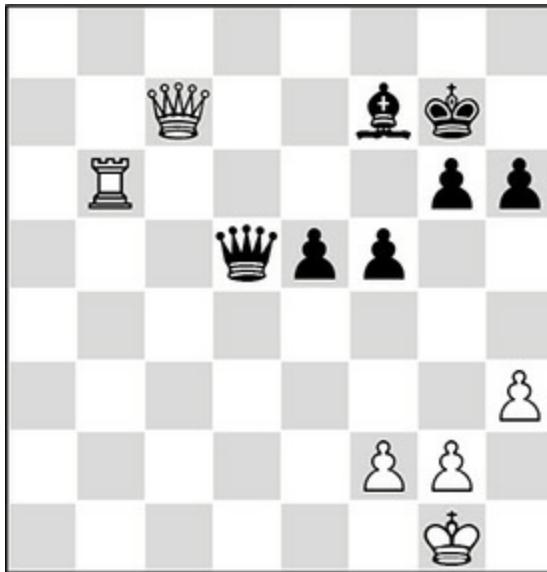


All very natural. It seems that White has made enormous progress, with Black being completely tied down and the white knight’s entry imminent. Consequently, White’s next move seems both entirely obvious and completely crushing. This is part of the reason why I previously said that White should have preferred a different, more practical continuation on move 39. To see why, consider White’s best, and perhaps the only practically winning continuation from the diagram. He needs to move his rook *away* from its splendid new post with 42. ♜ d6!!.. Now, moving the queen to b3 or a2 would allow White to gain a move via the sequence 43. ♜ d8+ ♛ h7 44. ♜ d7 ♛ g8 and only now 45. ♜ g4!. Instead, Black should offer to trade queens with 42... ♛ c4, but there would follow 43. ♜ c6!



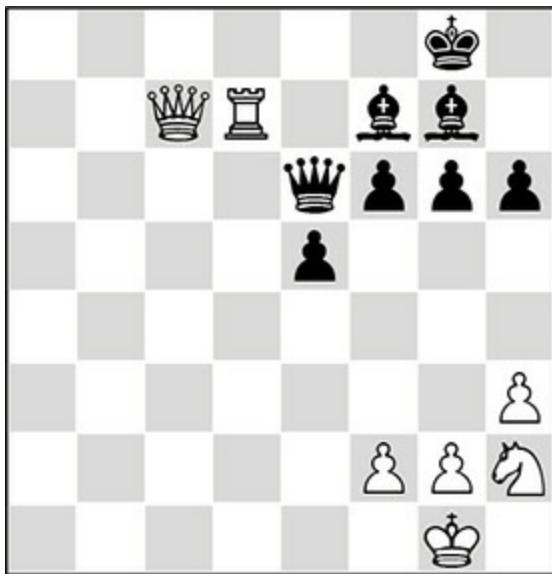
analysis diagram

and subsequently ♜h2-g4-f6+, followed by a fatal weakening of Black's dark squares. For instance,
43... ♖d5 44. ♜g4 f5 45. ♜f6+! ♖xf6 46. ♜xf6 ♛g7 47. ♜b6



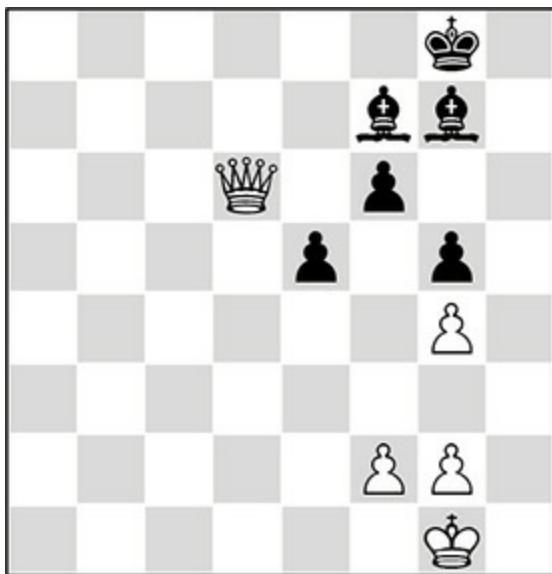
analysis diagram

and then ♜e7 and ♜b8 in some order. This is a crushing variation, but it is also quite unintuitive. Having just acquired control of Black's seventh rank, White's rook must retreat, not once, but twice. It is the sort of unnatural sequence that usually only appeals to computers – only, in this case, engines also miss it! Well, in fairness, they do recognise that it is winning, but they strongly prefer the continuation that White chose in the game, also failing to appreciate Black's pseudo-fortress.



42. ♜g4? f5!!

42...h5 43. ♜d6 ♜xd6 44. ♜xd6 hxg4 45.hxg4 g5



analysis diagram

is another variant of the same theme. The difference between the two near-fortresses is that White can take his time to work out the winning plan from the diagram, whereas in the game, he must act immediately and precisely in order to prevent an actual drawing fortress.

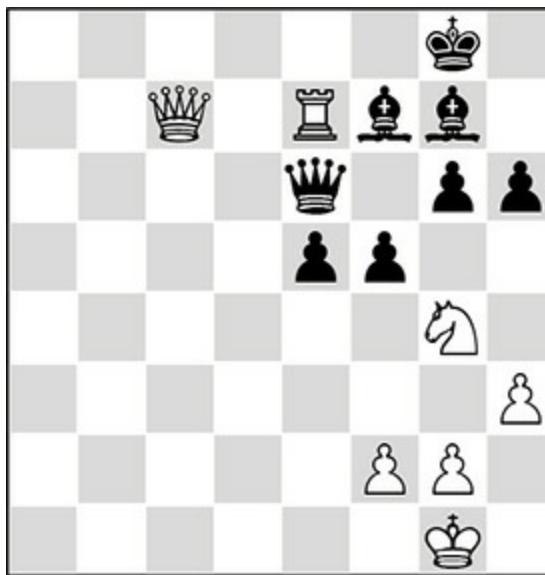
43. ♜e7??

Practically a blunder, though given the engine's approval, we can hardly blame Kunte. The position is still clearly better for White after 43. ♜e3 e4 44. ♜d6! ♜a2 45.g3!, but Black's prospects have definitely improved. A tricky move is 45... ♜f6!,



analysis diagram

indirectly defended thanks to 46... $\mathbb{Q}a1+$, and intending to create counterplay via ...f5-f4 and ... $\mathbb{Q}h4$, if permitted.



43...fxg4!!

A fantastically creative concept that needed to be devised in advance. Black gives up more material, but in a crude, philosophical sense, he is removing two of White's attacking pieces in exchange for one of his own. Granted, that one is his most powerful piece, but we all have to make sacrifices in this world.

44. $\mathbb{Q}xe6 \mathbb{Q}xe6$ 45. $hxg4 \mathbb{Q}h7$ 46. f3

46.g5 h5! gives Black's bishop a sturdy outpost on f5 that can only be broken at the cost of doubling White's pawns.



46... \mathbb{Q} a2?!

It is hard to criticise this move, which completes the swindling concept and which is also immediately successful in the game. In his annotations to the game, Fernandez writes that he saw the idea of playing ...g6-g5 and putting his bishop on g6, leading to an impenetrable fortress, and so he went for it. Perhaps Fernandez felt confident that his opponent, shaken by the queen sacrifice, was likely to overlook this plan, and so he tried to disguise it by redeploying the bishop first and leaving the pawn push until last. However, this allows White the chance to seize the win, if he can spot it. Against a level-headed opponent, I would have preferred to start with the objectively more tenacious 46...g5!.

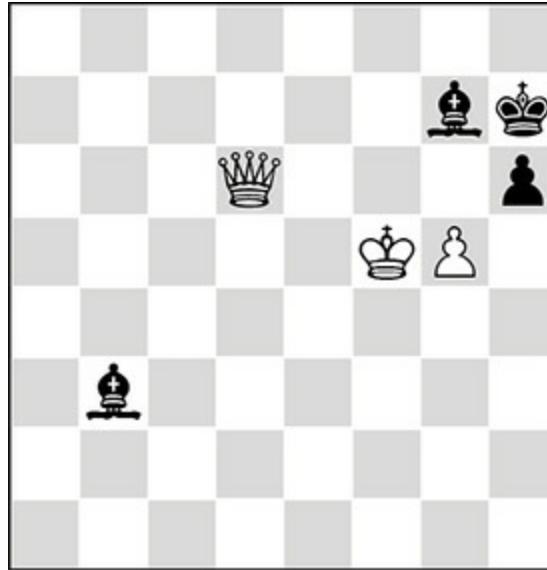


analysis diagram

Crucially, this permanently prevents White from being able to make a passed pawn via g2-g3 and f3-f4. Although Black will be unlikely to reroute his bishop to the a2-h7 diagonal, and so White should be able to occupy e4 with his king, this isn't the end of Black's defensive resources. Note that a set-up with the black king on g6 and his bishops on f6 and f7 would most likely be impossible to break down.

White can prevent this formation by playing accurately: 47. \mathbb{R} c2+! \mathbb{Q} g8 48. \mathbb{R} g6!, when the game

will, by one way or another, almost certainly end up in the following structure: 48... ♕b3 49. ♕f5 ♘a2 50. ♕f2 ♘f7 51. ♕e3 ♘f8 52.g3 ♕e7 53. ♘e4 ♕f8 54. ♘h7 ♘e6 55. ♘g6 ♘f7 56. ♘d6+ ♕g8 57.f4 exf4+ 58.gxf4 gxf4+ 59. ♕xf4 ♕h7 60. ♕f5! ♕b3 61.g5.



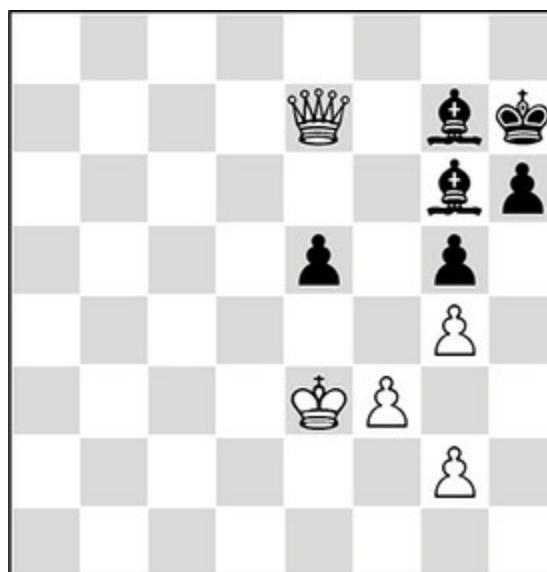
analysis diagram

Unfortunately for Black, he has lost control of g6 and can therefore not afford to play ...h6-h5. The resulting pawnless endgame is one of the ♕+♘ vs ♕+♗+♘ positions that is a tablebase win. Still, after 61... ♘c2+ 62. ♕g4 ♘g6 63.gxh6 ♘xh6, White would have to show that he knows his stuff, which is why I think this would have been a better practical chance for Black. On the other hand, ‘hindsight is 20/20’, as the saying goes. Black’s gamble immediately pays dividends, as White is oblivious to the fortress idea.

47. ♘e7? ♘b1 48. ♕f2??

48. ♕b7! would have won, transposing into positions we have seen already.

48...g5!! 49. ♕e3 ♘g6



Now there is no preventing the draw, as after the exchange of two sets of pawns, Black can ensure that he prevents the third pair from coming off.

50. ♘d2 ♕g8 51. ♘e6+ ♕h7 52.g3 ♘h8 53. ♘e3 ♘g7 54.f4 exf4+ 55.gxf4 gxf4+ 56. ♕xf4 ♘h8! 57.g5 h5!

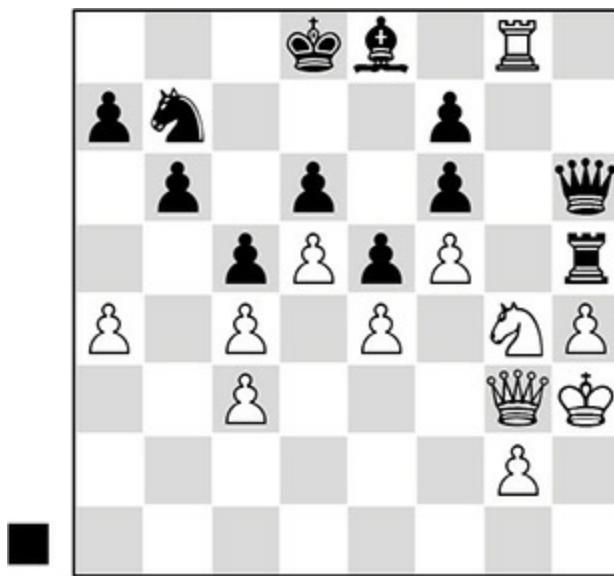


Erecting a brick wall. A fine swindle. ½-½

So far, I have only shown examples of successful fortress-based swindles. It is not always the case, of course. Like the castles of old, the Swindler's fortress is designed to maximise the chances of saving the game. We can only try our best, and even if we fail this time, perhaps we will succeed tomorrow. At the very least, we should get a nice reaction from the spectators and our opponent...

Alexander Kotov
Gudmundur Arnlaugsson

Amsterdam ol 1954 (6)



White has just played $\mathbb{Q}e3-g4$, intending $84\ldots \mathbb{Q}c1$ $85.\mathbb{Q}xf6 \mathbb{Q}h1+$ $86.\mathbb{Q}g4$ and wins. Alexander Kotov, the noted author of *Think Like a Grandmaster*, paints an amusing picture of what happened next: ‘Having played $\mathbb{Q}g4$ I went for a stroll. When I came back to the board I did not understand at first what was happening.’

84... $\mathbb{Q}g5!!$

A brilliant sacrifice, along the lines of Hazai’s masterly bluff.

85. $\mathbb{Q}xg5$ $f\times g5$ 86. $\mathbb{Q}e3$ $\mathbb{Q}xh4+$ 87. $\mathbb{Q}g3$ $\mathbb{Q}xg4+!!$

A second fabulous sacrifice on the g-file.

88. ♜ xg4 f6



The position is not as sealed as what we saw in Petrosian-Hazai, but Black's minor pieces do an excellent job of covering the key squares. As Kotov writes: 'Now I looked at the board in dismay. How was I going to win? Where could I force an entry?'

89. ♜ h3!!

Now if Black could magically transfer his king to g7, he would indeed cement his fortress. In reality, however, the defences here are not quite airtight. Not every opponent would be able to break through, but Kotov, following his own methodical 'analysis-tree' approach, is able to find the way.

89... ♛ e7 90. ♜ h7+ ♚ f7 91. ♜ h8! ♜ e8 92. ♜ g8 ♜ d8 93. ♜ h7+ ♚ f7 94. a5!



At the right moment, White shifts the action to the queenside.

94... bxa5 95. ♜ h1 a4 96. ♜ b1 ♜ e8 97. ♜ b8 a5

97... ♜ f7 was a better attempt, but I will spare you the details.

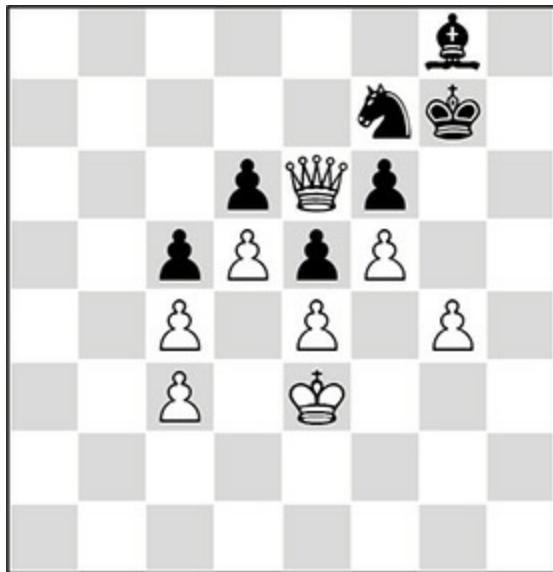
98. ♜ c7+ ♜ d7 99. ♜ h5 ♜ f7

99... g4!



analysis diagram

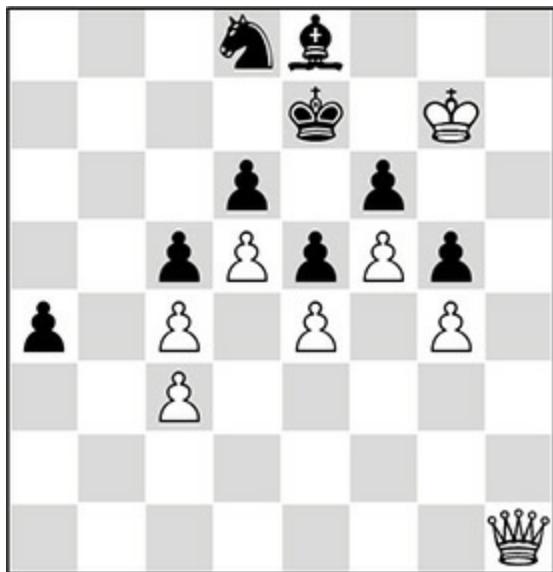
is a very creative attempt to prolong resistance. The idea is to open up g5 for the black knight, diverting the white king to the defence of the e-pawn. I analysed this position for some time and concluded that White can still win, but it is devilishly tricky. In case you are interested, here is the main line of my analysis: 100. $\mathbb{Q}xg4$ $\mathbb{N}f7$ 101. $\mathbb{Q}f3$ $\mathbb{N}g5+$ 102. $\mathbb{Q}e3$ $\mathbb{N}f7$ 103. $\mathbb{Q}xa5$ $\mathbb{N}g5$ 104. $\mathbb{Q}a8$ $\mathbb{N}f7$ 105. $\mathbb{Q}b8$ $\mathbb{N}d8$ 106. $\mathbb{Q}d3$ $\mathbb{N}e8$ 107. $\mathbb{Q}d2$ $\mathbb{N}f7$ 108. $\mathbb{Q}c8$ $\mathbb{N}g5$ 109. $\mathbb{Q}d3$ $\mathbb{N}d7$ 110. $\mathbb{Q}g8$ $\mathbb{N}e8$ 111. $\mathbb{Q}g7+$ $\mathbb{N}f7$ 112. $\mathbb{Q}e3$ a3 113. $\mathbb{Q}h8$ $\mathbb{N}e8$ 114. $\mathbb{Q}h1$ $\mathbb{Q}f7$ 115. $\mathbb{Q}b1$ $\mathbb{Q}g7$ 116. $\mathbb{Q}b7+$ $\mathbb{Q}f7$ 117. $\mathbb{Q}a7$ $\mathbb{Q}h6$ 118. $\mathbb{Q}xa3$ $\mathbb{Q}g8$ 119. $\mathbb{Q}a6$ $\mathbb{N}f7$ 120. $\mathbb{Q}c8$ $\mathbb{Q}g7$ 121. $\mathbb{Q}d7$ $\mathbb{Q}h7$ 122. g4 $\mathbb{Q}g8$ 123. $\mathbb{Q}e7$ $\mathbb{Q}h7$ 124. $\mathbb{Q}e6$ $\mathbb{Q}g8$



analysis diagram

125. g5! fxg5 126. $\mathbb{Q}g6+$ $\mathbb{Q}f8$ 127. f6 and wins.

100. g4 $\mathbb{N}d8$ 101. $\mathbb{Q}g6$ $\mathbb{N}f7$ 102. $\mathbb{Q}g7$ $\mathbb{N}d8$ 103. $\mathbb{Q}xa5$ $\mathbb{N}f7$ 104. $\mathbb{Q}b6$ $\mathbb{N}e8$ 105. $\mathbb{Q}b1$ $\mathbb{N}d8$ 106. $\mathbb{Q}h1$



And Black resigned.

A good effort by the Icelandic player, and equally impressive technique by Kotov. You can't save them all...

CHAPTER 17

Stalemate

LIVERPOOL FAIL TO FIRE IN STALEMATE WITH INJURY-HIT MANCHESTER UNITED – Sports headline in *The Guardian*, 24 February 2019

Stalemate is the single most common mechanism for swindles in practice.³⁸ Despite this, it receives only minor attention among the themes of this book because the ability to train for stalemating chances is limited. Usually, opportunities just present themselves via a careless blunder by the opponent, and then it is up to us to spot the draw.

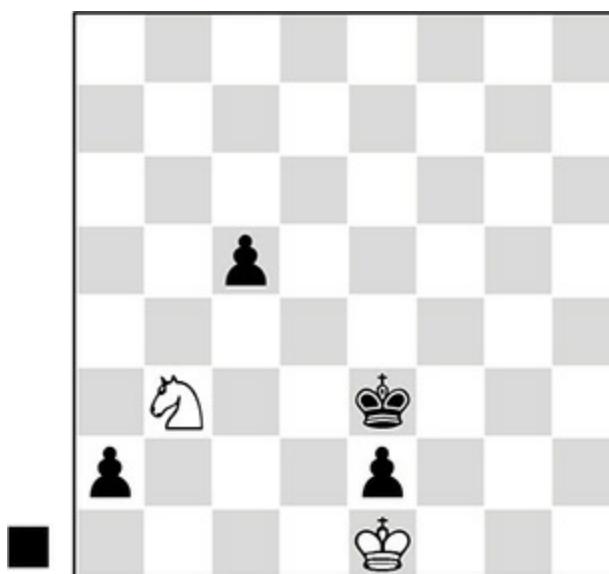
One general piece of advice is to be aware of stalemate possibilities when most of our pawns are blocked (or missing!) and our king is restricted – but this is somewhat obvious. More practically, stalemates statistically occur most often in queen endings, which make them prime environments for our swindling senses to be heightened. Furthermore these stalemates are often harder for our opponents to predict because the stalemated king can go from having several escape squares to none in a single move. Stalemate is also at the heart of the ‘rampant rook’ theme, which we saw in the introduction and which is an important defensive motif in rook endings.

A full discussion of stalemate-themed endgames could easily fill another book. We cannot cover everything, but instead we will consider some of the most common stalemating patterns, which develops the ability to foresee stalemate possibilities several moves in advance. For example, it is possible that Tal’s creative kibitzing of Furman-Smejkal, the first example in this book, was inspired by the following finish from a game played in Moscow a decade earlier.

Tikhomirova

Voitsik

Moscow 1960



Black wins by moving his king to d3 or f3. But instead, the game finished

1...c4??

and of course now you spot it:

2.♕ c1!

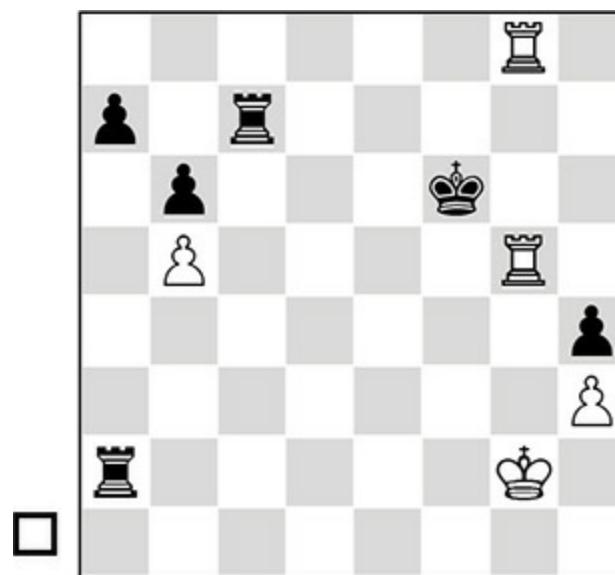
with a draw.

The next game features one of the most consequential stalemates in chess history.

Robert Hübner	2600
Andras Adorjan	2550

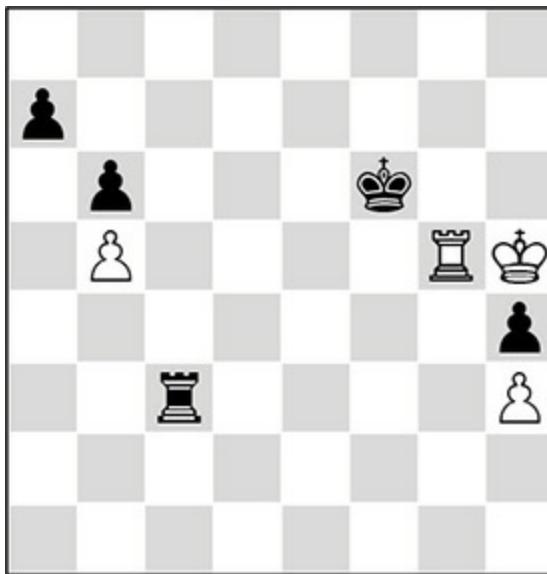
Bad Lauterberg ct 1980 (9)

In the 1980 Candidates quarterfinal, the Hungarian Grandmaster Andras Adorjan found himself one point behind the great Robert Hübner with two games left to play. However, the author of the book *Black is OK!* had reached a winning rook endgame with the black pieces and looked set to level the scores.



Objectively, 62.♔h1 lasts the longest, but against such a passive king, the win is not too difficult. Instead, Hübner spots a brilliant swindling opportunity from afar. He invites Black to calculate a short, direct line that seemingly trades off all the rooks.

62.♕ f3!! ♜ c3+ 63.♕ g4 ♜ g2+ 64.♕ h5 ♜ xg5+ 65.♕ xg5

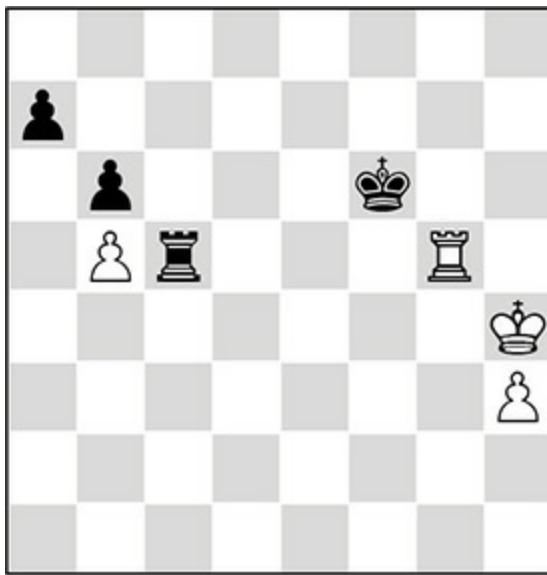


All natural and forced. And here, Black can secure the win with 65... \mathbb{Q} xh3, which is two pawns too many for the rook endgame. But with both players having blitzed out the previous sequence, Adorjan did not even pause before playing the ‘clinical’

65... \mathbb{Q} c5??

Do you see it?

66. \mathbb{Q} xh4!!



A brutal stalemate that Hübner had envisaged some five moves earlier.

66... \mathbb{Q} xg5 ½-½

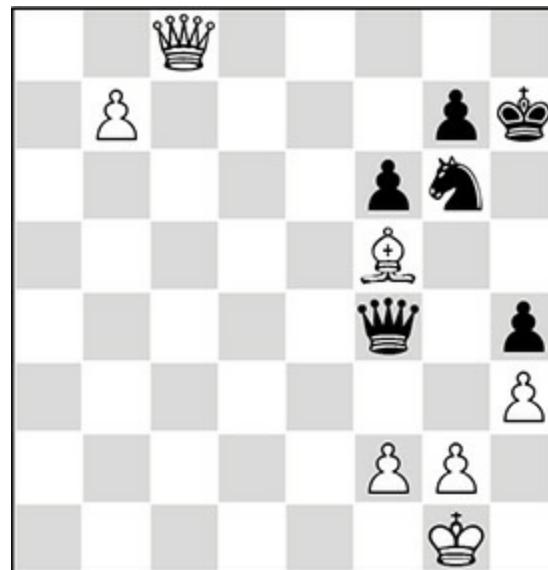
Saving this draw won Hübner the match and would ultimately lead him all the way to the final against Kortchnoi. Adorjan, sadly, never again reached the same heights.

With the potential of a World Championship Match at stake, Hübner needed no further motivation to look for every last swindling opportunity in the position – and he was rewarded for his efforts. In our own games, we have to make our own motivation, staying optimistic using the tips and tricks outlined earlier in this book. The classical masters were extremely good at this, delaying resignation whenever they spotted a chance to make their opponents find one last, accurate move.

Joseph Henry Blackburne

Szymon Winawer

Berlin 1881 (10)

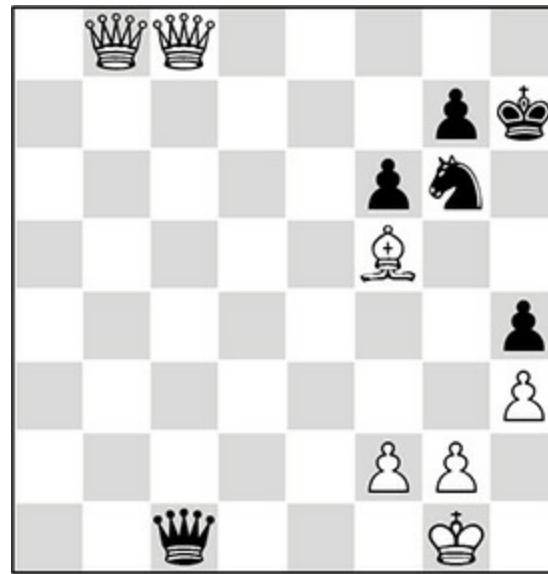


Time to resign?

37... ♜ d2!!

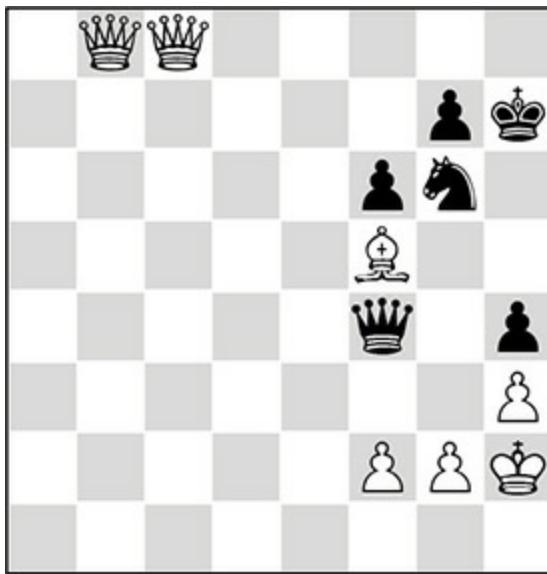
How many players on the white side would disregard this move as a joke, and merrily queen the pawn? Not Joseph Henry Blackburne, as it turns out! In the game, White deliberately reached out his hand as if to queen his pawn... then, with a flourish, suddenly whipped his hand across to his bishop and took the knight on g6. With a wry grin, Black resigned, for his swindle had been neatly avoided:

38.b8 ♕ ?? ♜ c1+!!



Brilliant! Capturing the queen brings about stalemate, but after

39. ♜ h2 ♜ f4+!!

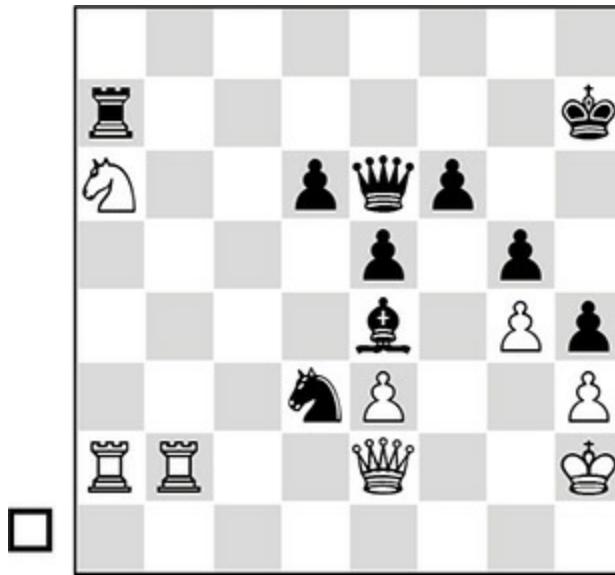


the situation remains the same: draw, either by stalemate or perpetual check. But as mentioned, White both spotted and avoided the swindle, and the game ended with laughter all round.³⁹

A more complicated example, with many more pieces on the board, is the following more recent encounter.

Dejan Bojkov	2522
Jure Borisek	2509

Gothenburg 2005 (5)



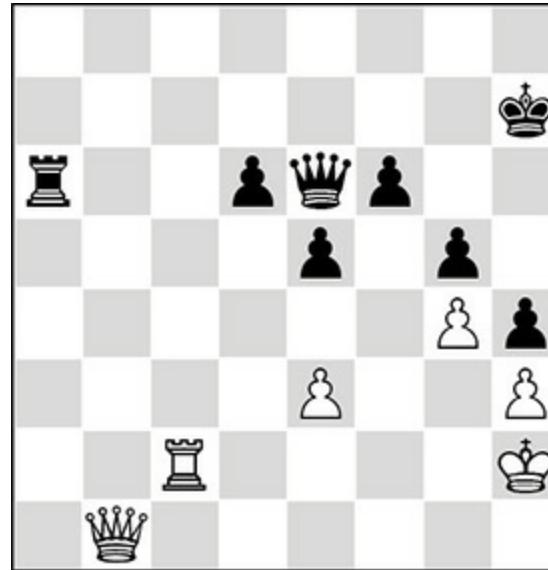
Material is equal, but Black's forces dominate the position and his king is much safer. It is hard to find a good move: 64. $\mathbb{R}c5?$ loses to 64... $\mathbb{N}xa2$ 65. $\mathbb{R}xe6$ $\mathbb{N}xb2$; 64. $\mathbb{R}d2$ allows 64... $\mathbb{N}b7!$ with penetration on the back rank (but not 64... $\mathbb{R}c1$ 65. $\mathbb{R}c5!$), and 64. $\mathbb{R}b1$ is met by 64... $\mathbb{N}f4!$ 65. $\mathbb{R}xf4$ $\mathbb{N}xb1$.

White instead tries

64. $\mathbb{R}c2!$,

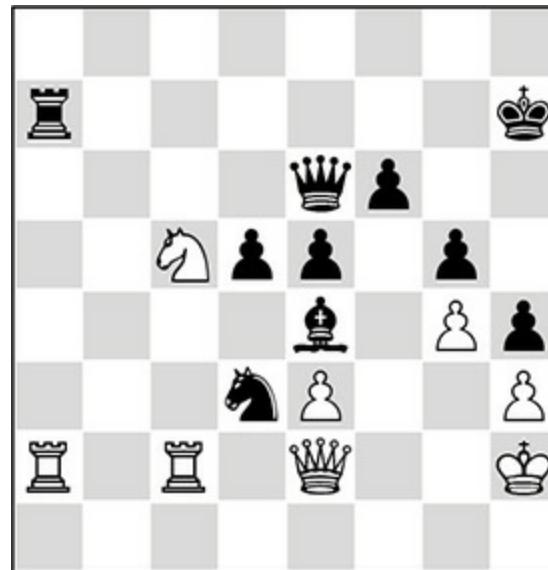
which at least is a move that does not lose instantly. In fact, neither of Black's winning continuations is trivial: 64... $\mathbb{N}f7$, preventing 65. $\mathbb{R}c7+$, or the precise 64... $\mathbb{N}e1!$ 65. $\mathbb{R}xe1$ $\mathbb{N}xc2$ 66. $\mathbb{R}xc2$ $\mathbb{N}xa6$

67. ♔b1



analysis diagram

67... ♕h6!! (the only move that doesn't lose!) 68. ♔b8 ♕g6!, and Black wins. Once again, we can understand Black's reluctance to enter such calculations, especially as he spots the chance to lay a trap of his own that will finish the game immediately. It begins with a very natural centralising move: 64...d5?? 65. ♜c5!



White 'falls' for the trap, attacking several black pieces simultaneously, but allowing the combination prepared by his opponent.

65... ♜xa2 66. ♜xe6 ♜a1



The point of Black's play. A lovely queen sacrifice has led to an inevitable checkmate on h1. But as you will have noticed by this stage of the book, when I use words like 'inevitable' to describe something, it normally ends up being quite the opposite!

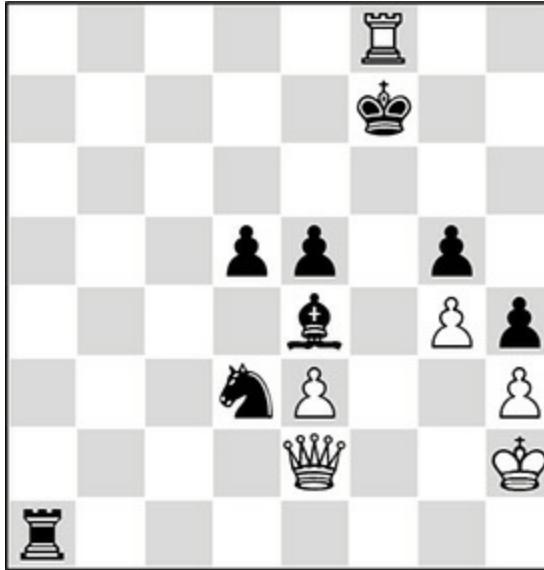
67. ♕xg5+!!

Did you notice that White's king can no longer move?

67...fxg5

Forced, as 67... ♔h6?? 68. ♕xe4 releases the checkmate pattern.

68. ♜c7+ ♔g8 69. ♜c8+ ♔f7 70. ♜f8+!



The second sacrifice.

70... ♜xf8

70... ♔e7 71. ♜f7+ is no use, because 71... ♔d6?? 72. ♜f1! ♕c1 73. ♜f6+ ♔e7 74. ♜f1 transfers the advantage to White.

71. ♜f1+!!

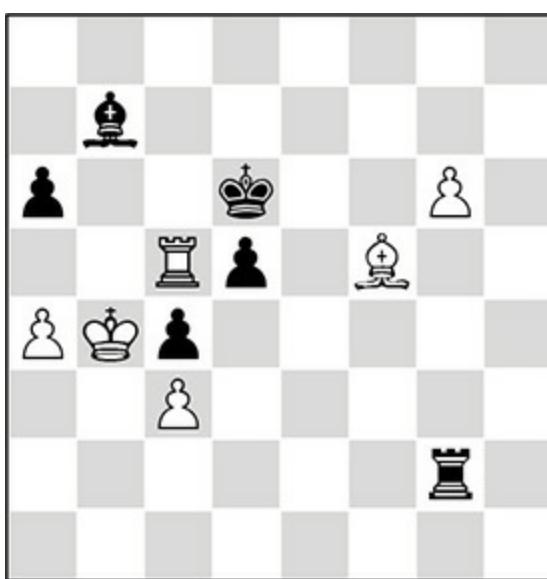
Very accurate. The other checks would have allowed Black to break the stalemate.

71... ♜xf1



And despite his overwhelming material advantage, Black had to cede half the point: $\frac{1}{2}-\frac{1}{2}$. Usually, of course, stalemate opportunities emerge when there are already reduced forces on the board. Whenever you reach an objectively lost ending in which your king is even remotely deprived of flight squares, always keep your eyes open to possible self-incarcerations. Try the next diagram for practice.

**Karoly Honfi
Levente Lengyel**
Budapest ch-HUN jr 1963



White to play and swindle

Black has played 46... $\mathbb{Q}g1-g2$, threatening 47... $\mathbb{Q}b2+$. White's rook is trapped, and so 47.g7? $\mathbb{Q}xg7$ is no real help. Despite his desperate situation, White lands upon a brilliant concept based on stalemate.

Take your time – can you see it?

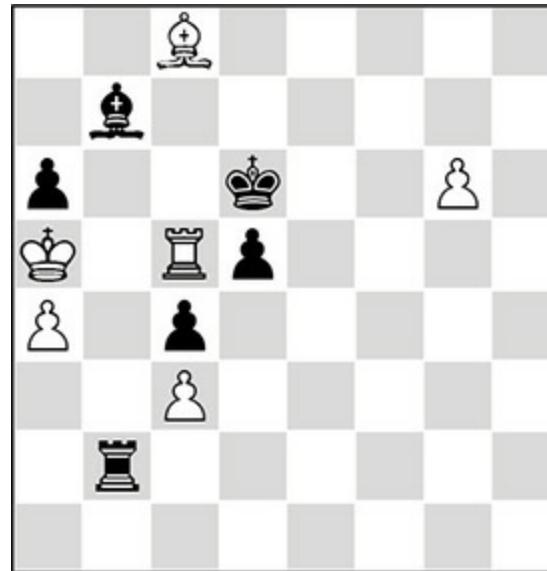
47. $\mathbb{Q}c8!!$

Blunder?

47... ♜ b2+??

The cautious 47...a5+! would have won on the spot.

48. ♛ a5!

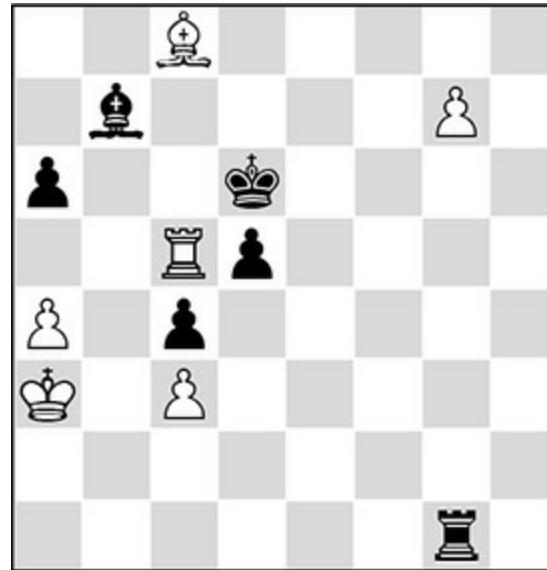


Swindle!

48... ♜ xc5?

Black could have still kept pressing with the unintuitive 48... ♜ c2! (but not 48... ♜ g2 49. ♜ xc4!!, or 48... ♜ b1 49. ♜ h3! ♜ c1 50.g7 ♜ g1 51. ♜ b6 ♜ xg7 52. ♜ f1!!, in both cases leading to a draw)

49. ♜ b4 (49.g7? ♜ g2) 49... ♜ c1!!, though after 50.g7 ♜ b1+ 51. ♜ a3 ♜ g1

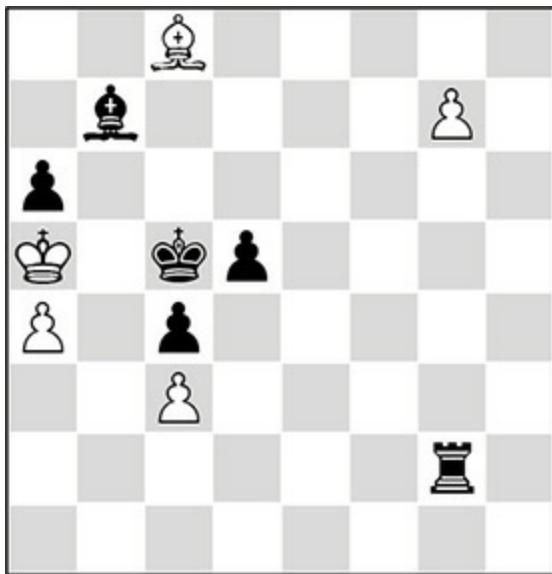


analysis diagram

52. ♜ xc4!! dx_c4 53. ♜ xb7 a5 54. ♜ a6. White has set up an unusual fortress and I believe he can hold the draw. But naturally, this was not Black's intention when choosing his 47th move.

49.g7! ♜ g2

The faint wisps of a stalemate have begun to assemble into something more familiar.



50. $\mathbb{Q}g4!! \mathbb{R}xg4$ 51. $g8\mathbb{Q}! \mathbb{R}xg8$ $\frac{1}{2}-\frac{1}{2}$

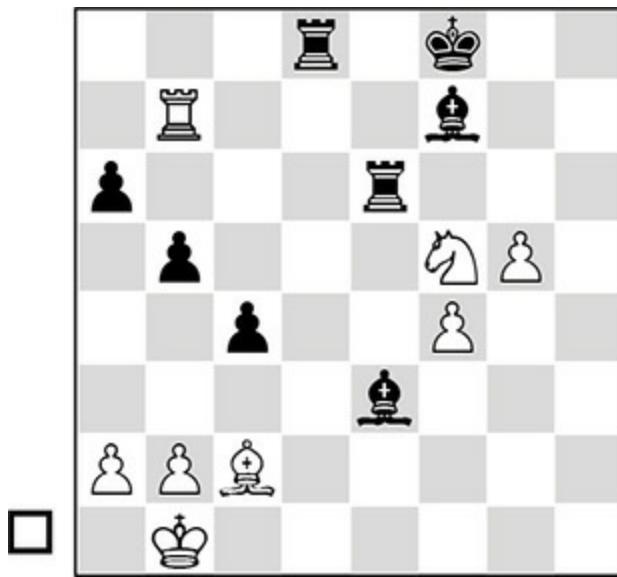
A well-executed swindle based on a long-range stalemate.

Unfortunately, there is no easy way to train yourself in spotting stalemates in advance. The best we can do is to expose our minds to as many illustrative examples as we can. Here is a particularly prescient case by one of the most imaginative grandmasters around.

Tiger Hillarp Persson

Per Vernersson

Elitserien 1997 (4)

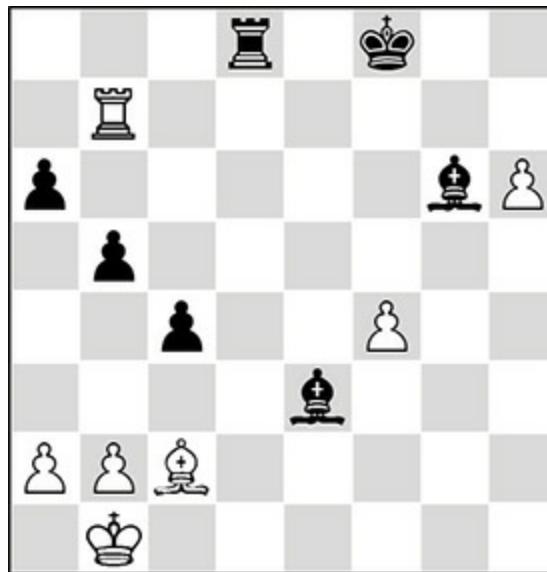


The Swedish grandmaster's sacrificial creativity is legendary, but a consequence of Tiger's enviable style is that occasionally the pieces just get taken...! Here, White is a rook down for no tangible compensation and could resign with a clear conscience (mate in 23, according to my engine). Instead, he conjures up a remarkable stalemate from long range. The first step is to invite Black to simplify the position:

34. $\mathbb{R}h6!$ $\mathbb{R}xh6$

Clearing away some material.⁴⁰

35.gxh6 ♜ g6



An apparently clean finish, as 36. ♜ xg6?? ♕ d1+ mates. White is forced to make *luft* for his king, which will cost him another piece.

36.b3! ♕ d1+ 37. ♔ b2 ♕ d2



Now Tiger goes into full swindle mode:

38.f5! ♜ xf5 39.h7! ♕ xc2+ 40. ♔ a3!



Slowly, the blurry chunks of a stalemate are beginning to fall into place. The savvy 40... \mathbb{Q} xh7! would put all counterplay to bed, but Black, on the notorious fortieth move, is determined to weave his mating net. He confidently plays the killer blow:

40... \mathbb{Q} c5+ 41.b4 \mathbb{Q} d4??



Unusually, the real blunder comes on the 41st move – perhaps Black moved more or less instantaneously after the time control, reasoning that ... \mathbb{Q} b2+ cannot be prevented. And in a sense, that is correct; the only prevention is in the laws of chess.

42.h8 \mathbb{Q} +! \mathbb{Q} xh8 43. \mathbb{Q} f7+! ½-½

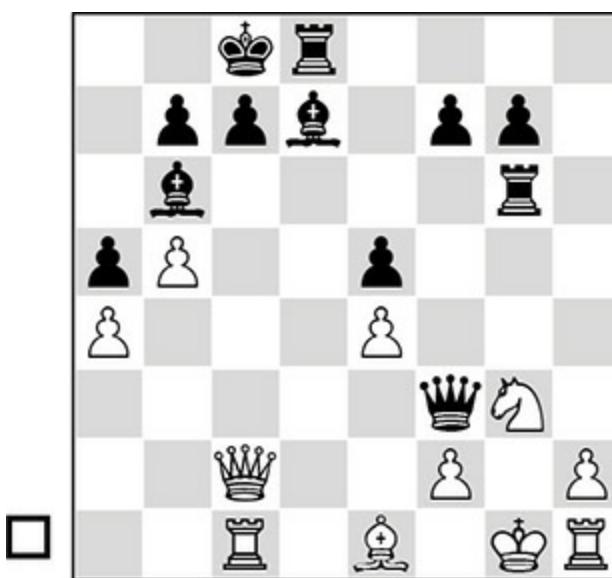
With never-ending checks. White has created the impossible!

Stalemates feature in many of the examples throughout this book, and I have also provided several exercises involving stalemates for your self-study. But we round off this chapter with entertainment rather than education, because I cannot resist showing you my all-time favourite stalemate.

Alexey Troitzky

Vogt

St Petersburg 1896



From an uncharacteristically cluttered position comes one of the most unusual swindles ever seen. There seems to be not even a whiff of counterplay for White in this middlegame. His forces are so tied up that they can barely move. In fact, several of them can't move at all...

1. ♕d1! ♜h3??

Such an obvious reply, with an ‘inevitable’ – there’s that word again – checkmate on g2. But White has seen further.

2. ♕xd8+ ♜xd8 3. ♜d1+!! ♜xd1 ½-½



An astonishing position. I’ve never come across a stalemate with as many pieces still on the board, at least not without it being created as a practical joke. One can’t help but feel pity for Black, who can hardly be blamed for not suspecting a middlegame stalemate. And yet, behind every glass of sympathy is a drop of Swindler’s Schadenfreude. And it tastes sweet.

Perpetual Check

O speculators about perpetual motion, how many vain chimeras have you created in the like quest? Go and take your place with the seekers after gold. – Leonardo da Vinci

From time to time, journalists and analysts in other fields, such as politics, business and sport, employ chess metaphors in their commentary, presumably because it signals intelligence. ‘It’s like a game of chess out there,’ said one commentator of a particularly dry soccer game. ‘The Chinese are like grand chess masters and we’re playing checkers’, stated Donald Trump before initiating a trade war between the superpowers. ‘We’re in the endgame now,’ remarked a political journalist in regard to the Syrian refugee crisis. And practically every major source used the term ‘stalemate’ at some point while covering the Brexit saga.

The use of ‘stalemate’ is typically meant to refer to an impasse in which progress cannot be made without one side giving concessions to the other. But the chess rule doesn’t fit well with this (neither, for that matter, with any realistic military scenario, as we have discussed). What pundits mean by their use of ‘stalemate’ is actually most closely analogous to the *perpetual check*: a situation in which neither side can avoid the back-and-forth without conceding ground to the opponent. As a measure of last resort regardless of material disadvantage, it can also be a powerful swindling tool.

We have already seen several examples, such as Smerdon-Aabling. A more recent example evokes shades of Gareyev’s psychological absurdism earlier in this book:

Maxime Vachier-Lagrave	2715
Wang Hao	2731

Wijk aan Zee 2011 (1)



Black’s pieces are uselessly stranded on the queenside while his king is under an enormous attack.

White threatens both 32. ♜e7 (followed by ♜g5 and mate on h7) and 32. ♜g1 (followed by ♖h3 and mate on h8). There is no defence without heavy material loss; for example, the engine suggests prolonging the resistance with 31... ♜c6 to stop 32. ♜e7, but after 32. ♜g1! f5 (the only move to stop mate) 33. exf6 gxf6 34. ♜xf6 ♖h7 35. ♜g5 (threatening 36. ♖h3) 35... ♜f7 36. ♖xb7+ and everything is falling apart.

The problem for the would-be Swindler is that White's attack is so clear and straightforward that it basically plays itself. The situation is similar to the one facing Black in Gareyev-Sevian at the start of this book. And as was the case there, Wang Hao tries to distract White by placing one of his own pieces in a ridiculous position on the other side of the board.

31... ♜b5!!



Wang Hao moves his best defensive piece AWAY from the queenside and self-pins his own knight as well. It's as if Black's forces have given up on their monarch and run for the hills.

Maxime really should have been suspicious of a player of Wang Hao's calibre making such an absurd move. White has several winning moves, including the 'business as usual' retreat 32. ♜g1! followed by 33. ♖h3.⁴¹ But, perhaps distracted by the new pin on the knight on b4, he instead chooses a more domineering continuation:

32. ♜e7??

As if to highlight Black's stupidity, White penetrates on the newly unguarded e7-square, simultaneously cutting off the black king's escape, attacking b4 and preparing ♜g5, with checkmate to follow. If Black's position was hopeless before, it seems almost offensively so now. And yet, this move, vacating the defence of the f4-square, is exactly the one Black was counting on.



32... ♜ d3!!

A savage unpinning. The black pieces explosively break free from their shackles.

33. ♖ xb5

White has to take the queen. If 33. ♜ g5?? Black weaves a sudden mating net: 33... ♜ f4+ 34. ♛ g3 ♕ xb3+ 35. ♛ xf4 ♜ d2#.

33. ♖ xd3? looks better, intending 33... ♜ xd3 34. ♜ g5!. However, Black has a second unexpected resource: 33... g5!!



analysis diagram

with the point that after 35. ♜ xg5 ♜ xd3, the pawn sacrifice has cleared the way for black's queen to cover h7. Incredible stuff.

33... ♜ f4+ 34. ♛ g3 ♜ e2+ 35. ♛ h3 ♜ f4+ 36. ♛ g3 ♜ e2+ 37. ♛ g2 ♜ f4+



and the players agreed a draw. White was not obliged to acquiesce, but it was probably the correct decision, both practically and psychologically. If 38. $\mathbb{Q}h1$ (and not 38. $\mathbb{Q}f1?? \mathbb{N}c1+$ 39. $\mathbb{Q}e1 \mathbb{N}xe1\#$) White is temporarily a queen ahead, but after 38... $\mathbb{N}c1+$ 39. $\mathbb{Q}g1 \mathbb{Q}e2!$



analysis diagram

he would have had to shed a lot of his remaining army to stave off mate. For instance: 40. $\mathbb{Q}g2 \mathbb{N}xg1+$ 41. $\mathbb{Q}f3 \mathbb{Q}xd4+$ 42. $\mathbb{Q}e3 \mathbb{Q}xb5$ and White is even behind on material. Instead, the entertaining forced sequence 40.h3 $\mathbb{N}xg1+$ 41. $\mathbb{Q}h2 axb5$ 42. $\mathbb{Q}g5! \mathbb{N}b1!$ 43. $\mathbb{Q}e3 \mathbb{N}xb2$ 44. $\mathbb{Q}a3 \mathbb{Q}c3$ 45. $\mathbb{Q}a8+ \mathbb{Q}h7$ 46. $\mathbb{Q}f8 \mathbb{Q}xd4$



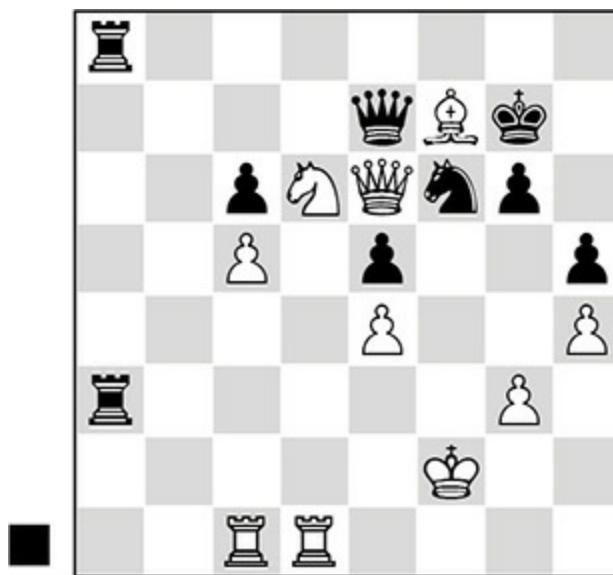
analysis diagram

47. $\mathbb{Q}f6!!$ $gxf6$ 48. $\mathbb{Q}xf7+$ $\mathbb{Q}h6$ 49. $\mathbb{Q}f8+$ $\mathbb{Q}h7$ 50. $\mathbb{Q}f7+$ means it is actually White who delivers perpetual check this time.

Perpetual check also played a large role in the so-called ‘Swindle of the Century’, which neatly combines the themes of stalemate and perpetual check:

Alexander Beliavsky	2630
Larry Christiansen	2575

Reggio Emilia 1987/88 (2)



One of the great swindles of all time, between two heavyweights of the 1980s. Black, a piece down, starts his final swindling attempt with

32... $\mathbb{Q}a2+!$

An uncomfortable move to face. Beliavsky knows that the ending after 33. $\mathbb{Q}xa2$ is technically winning, but material inequality with pieces versus a queen can be tricky, particularly in the lead-up to the time control. Who wants to allow such complications if they can avoid it?

33. $\mathbb{Q}g1$ $\mathbb{Q}8a3!!$



The first trick. 34. ♜xe7? ♛xg3+ allows an unlikely perpetual check by the black rook along White's third rank. Beliavsky sees through this, making sure his queen keeps an eye on the h3-square. But the swindle has a second layer...

34. ♜e8+! ♛h6!

The only chance.

34... ♜xe8 35. ♜xe8 and the queen's defence of h3 prevents the perpetual check, while 34... ♜xe8 35. ♛xg6+ delivers mate next move.

35. ♜xf6!

Again making sure that h3 is covered, even in the event that Black exchanges queens on e6.

35... ♛xg3+ 36. ♛h1



36... ♜xf7!!

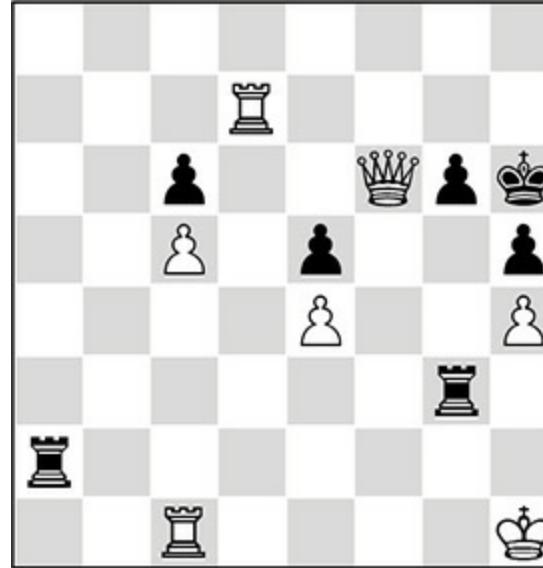
A second shocking queen sacrifice. Black tries to resurrect his perpetual check theme. Note that both players had precious few seconds to make the time control at move 40, a difficult task compounded by the fact that White has so many possibilities to calculate.

In fact, there are a couple of winning moves here. The cleanest is 37. ♜g4+!, followed by capturing the black queen. But to choose this, White needs to spot not only Black's perpetual check theme, but also his unexpected stalemate idea. With only seconds to make it to move forty, it's understandable that White missed this, choosing instead a simpler – and still winning – continuation.

37. ♕ d7 ♜ xf6!

The last of three sacrificial punches in the set-up, though White mistakes it for something else. In any normal situation, Beliavsky would be highly suspicious as to why a grandmaster would bother to play such a move instead of simply resigning. He would have taken a few seconds to spot the hidden idea, and perhaps another couple to realise that 38. ♕ h7+! finishes the contest: 38... ♔ xh7 39. ♜ xf6 ♕ h3+ 40. ♔ g1 ♕ g3+ 41. ♔ f1 and there is no stalemate. However, in this game Christiansen had a big advantage in that, with White's flag hanging, this move could be seen as nothing more sophisticated than a cheap attempt to win on time. Thus, without pausing, White plays the obvious:

38. ♜ xf6??



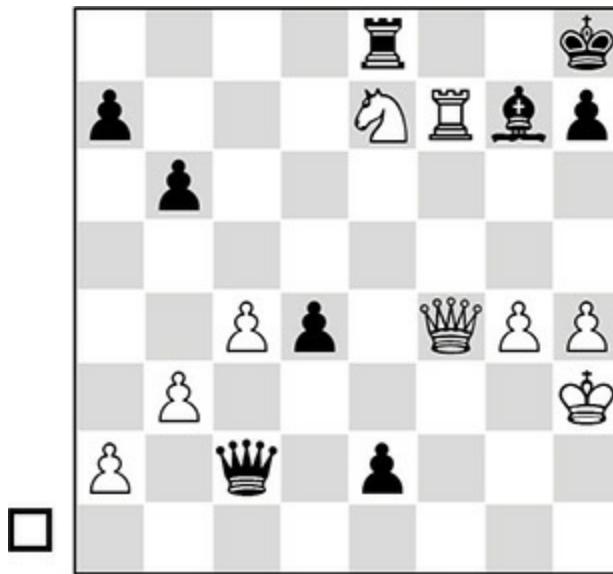
38... ♕ h2+!!

From perpetual check to an unexpected stalemate. After 39. ♔ xh2 ♕ g2+, White has to acquiesce to one of the drawing motifs. Fortune favours the brave!

Lucky escapes through perpetual check are often connected to stalemating ideas, as we saw not just in the game above but also in the examples of 'rampant rooks' earlier in this book. Perpetual checks are most prevalent, however, with queens on the board. With so many checking possibilities, the Swindler should seek to bamboozle his opponent by aiming to present him with as difficult choices as possible. The next example is an excellent case in point.

Jonathan Grant 2179

Bedri Sadiku 2213



Material is equal, but the engines give Black a massive advantage.⁴² The pawn on e2 cannot be stopped; if 41. $\mathbb{Q}f2$, 41... $\mathbb{Q}c3+$ followed by promotion. White's only hope lies in a counterattack. The first move is clear.

41. $\mathbb{Q}xg7!$ $\mathbb{Q}xg7$ 42. $\mathbb{Q}g5+$ $\mathbb{Q}f7$



An instructive moment. So, the black king has been stripped of its chief defender. But now what? The most tempting option is to keep checking in the hope of conjuring a perpetual. White may reason that the maze of variations is too dense for his opponent to calculate correctly, and he is probably right. But still, a check is a bad practical choice.

The reason is that even if Black chooses the wrong sequence to avoid the checks, he can always retrace his steps and try a different path, eventually stumbling on one of several winning routes.⁴³ The easiest of these is seen after 43. $\mathbb{Q}f4+$ $\mathbb{Q}xe7$ 44. $\mathbb{Q}e5+$ $\mathbb{Q}f8$ 45. $\mathbb{Q}d6+$ $\mathbb{Q}e7$ 46. $\mathbb{Q}d8+$ $\mathbb{Q}f7$ 47. $\mathbb{Q}d5+$ $\mathbb{Q}e6$ 48. $\mathbb{Q}d7+$ $\mathbb{Q}f6$ 49. $\mathbb{Q}d8+$ (49. $\mathbb{Q}xd4+$ $\mathbb{Q}e7$ 50. $\mathbb{Q}g7+$ $\mathbb{Q}e8$ 51. $\mathbb{Q}g8+$ $\mathbb{Q}d7$ 52. $\mathbb{Q}f7+$ $\mathbb{Q}e7$ 53. $\mathbb{Q}d5+$ $\mathbb{Q}c7$ and the checks run out) 49... $\mathbb{Q}e5$ 50. $\mathbb{Q}g5+$ $\mathbb{Q}e4!$ 51. $\mathbb{Q}f5+$ $\mathbb{Q}e3!$



analysis diagram

and Black wins.

Note that although this variation is long, Black's king is virtually forced to stumble upon the correct path thanks to being funnelled by the white queen's checks. The only real way of a draw resulting from this situation is if Black accidentally allows a threefold repetition – a slight chance, at best. White thinks he can do better, and so he delays pulling the trigger for now.

43. ♔ f5!!



As opposed to the previous note, in which a black victory was almost inevitable, this fantastic 'quiet move' is a much better practical try. Black has three alternatives: promoting to a new queen, or giving a check with his 'old' queen on c3 or d3. One of these moves wins quite easily, though it is not at all clear why; one is rather perilous; and one draws on the spot. Much better odds!

43... ♕ c3+

The perilous option: still winning, but Black is now walking a fine line.

43... ♕ d3+! is better, for the unfathomable reason that it keeps c3 free for the black king! 44. ♔ h2 e1 ♕ 45. ♔ h6+ (45. ♕ g7+ ♔ e6 46. ♔ h6+ ♔ e5 47. ♕ g7+ ♔ f4 48. ♔ h6+ ♔ f3 49. ♔ c6+ ♕ ee4 and the checks dry up; note that, as mentioned before, Black can 'stumble' into this winning line without really having to calculate accurately) 45... ♕ e6 46. ♔ d5+ ♕ e7 47. ♔ b7+ (47. ♔ f5+



analysis diagram

and now all moves are winning, but the easiest is simply 47... $\mathbb{Q}xf5!$, demonstrating a different advantage of having the queen on d3) 47... $\mathbb{Q}d6$ 48. $\mathbb{N}f7+$ $\mathbb{Q}c5$ 49. $\mathbb{N}d5+$ $\mathbb{Q}b4$ 50. $\mathbb{N}b5+$ $\mathbb{Q}c3$



analysis diagram

and White's fun is over.

On the other hand, 43...e1 $\mathbb{Q}??$ allows an immediate draw: 44. $\mathbb{N}g7+$ $\mathbb{Q}e6$ 45. $\mathbb{N}xd4+$ $\mathbb{Q}d6$



analysis diagram

and now not 46. $\mathbb{Q}xc2??$ $\mathbb{Q}f1+$ 47. $\mathbb{Q}g3$ $\mathbb{Q}d3+$, but instead 46. $\mathbb{Q}b5+!$ $\mathbb{Q}e6$ (46... $\mathbb{Q}c6$ 47. $\mathbb{Q}c7\#$ or; 46... $\mathbb{Q}c5$ 47. $\mathbb{Q}d4+$ $\mathbb{Q}b4$ 48. $\mathbb{Q}d6+$ $\mathbb{Q}a5$ 49. $\mathbb{Q}a3\#$, a theme we will see again) 47. $\mathbb{Q}d4+$ with a draw by perpetual check.

Back to the game, in which Black is still winning, but where the winning margin has been significantly squeezed.

44. $\mathbb{Q}h2 e1\mathbb{Q}$



45. $\mathbb{Q}h6+!!$

The best check. Black is presented with a branch of king moves at every move, but only one path leads to victory.

Other moves offer much less chance of a swindle: 45. $\mathbb{Q}d6+$ $\mathbb{Q}e6$ 46. $\mathbb{Q}d5+$ $\mathbb{Q}e7$ 47. $\mathbb{Q}f5+$ and now both 47... $\mathbb{Q}f6$ and 47... $\mathbb{Q}f8$ win, while after 45. $\mathbb{Q}g7+$ $\mathbb{Q}e6$ 46. $\mathbb{Q}h6+$ $\mathbb{Q}e5$ 47. $\mathbb{Q}d6+$ $\mathbb{Q}e4$ 48. $\mathbb{Q}c6+$ $\mathbb{Q}d3$ Black completes another successful king march down the board.

45... $\mathbb{Q}e6$ 46. $\mathbb{Q}d5+ \mathbb{Q}e7$

46... $\mathbb{Q}f6$ 47. $\mathbb{Q}g5+$ repeats the position.



47. ♕b7+!

Again, White chooses the move that maximises Black's chances of going wrong.

After 47. ♕f5+ Black wins without having to calculate anything. For example, after 47... ♛f6 almost all of Black's moves are forced: 48.g5+ ♛g6 49.h5+ ♛xh5 50. ♕f7+ ♛xg5 51. ♕g7+ ♛xf5. If Black wants to avoid even a sniff of a swindle, he could also choose the clinical 47... ♛f8 48. ♕d6+ ♜e7!.

As opposed to the variations above, here Black faces a critical decision with genuine chances to blunder. Three of the five possible moves are easy to dismiss: on d8 or f8 Black is mated in one move, while 47... ♜e6 only repeats the position. But the decision between the d6- and f6-squares is difficult to calculate. Black chooses using his intuition, reasoning that if most of White's remaining pieces are on the kingside, he should run the other way.

47... ♜d6??

The wrong choice!

The win was 47... ♛f6, even though it seems to invite 48.g5+. But after 48... ♜e5 49. ♕d5+ ♛f4 50. ♕f7+ ♜e3 51. ♕xe8+ ♜d2



analysis diagram

the black king has made it to safety, and two queens are too many.

48. ♜ f7+!



Again, Black finds himself at a dangerous crossroads. But whereas the last decision meant the difference between a potential win and a draw, here the possible outcomes are exactly a half point less.

48... ♛ c5??

Wrong again!

One has to feel for Black's bad 'luck'. Too late, he spots that 48... ♛ e6 49. ♜ g5+! ♔ f6 50. ♜ f7+ ♛ e5 51. ♜ c7+ is a perpetual, and so instead he heads further to the queenside. But while the king successfully marched down the centre of the board in other variations, here the decision to head west will be fatal.

49. ♜ d5+ ♔ b4



50. ♜ d6+!!

The *coup de grâce*. With the c3-square blocked by one of his extra queens, Black's king has no choice but to continue to its doom.

50... ♛ a5 51. ♜ a3# 1-0



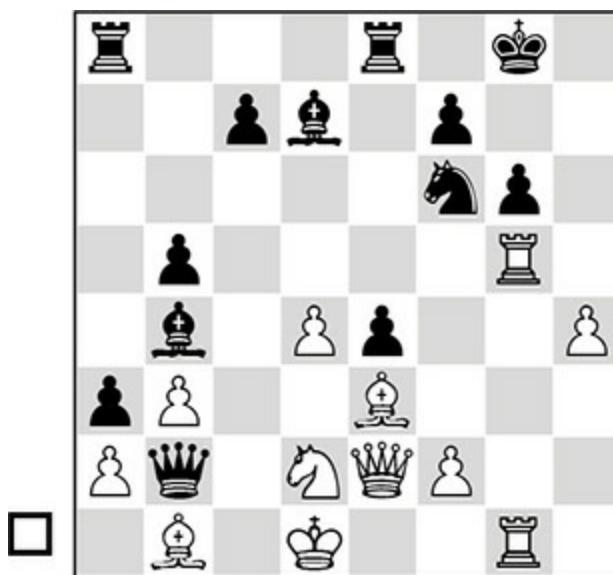
In the end, the game surprisingly finishes with checkmate rather than perpetual check. But the theme played a large part in the success of White's swindle.

With her powerful, unrivalled ability to switch from file to diagonal, it is little wonder that the queen most often plays the central role in a perpetual check. Even just the hint of a barrage of queen checks can strike fear into the mind of the superior side – and fear, as we have learned, can be a powerful weapon.

Walter Gaier 1750

Matt Chapman 1937

London 2019 (9)



Things are not going at all well for White, who faces a deadly threat of 26... $\mathbb{Q}xd2$ followed by 27... $\mathbb{Q}xb1+$. This is absolutely the right moment to pull the trigger for swindle mode, and White takes his chance:

26. $\mathbb{Q}xg6+!$ $f \times g6$ 27. $\mathbb{Q}xg6+$ $\mathbb{Q}f7$ 28. $\mathbb{Q}xf6+!!$

In for a penny...

28... $\mathbb{Q}xf6$ 29. $\mathbb{Q}h5$

An exposed king and active queen are often all the ingredients one needs for an onslaught of checks. Add in a dash of fear and a pinch of panic, and the swindle is on.



While it is true that a perpetual is threatened (e.g. 29... \mathbb{Q} xd2?? 30. \mathbb{B} g5+), the truth, as you might have guessed, is that it is easily parried. But calculation is required, and Black is forced to change his mindset from obvious-attacking-plan to check-avoidance. The fear starts to creep in as he realises that a perpetual is threatened, and then builds when he fails to spot an obvious defence. He looks at the clock and starts to worry about his time, which compounds his panic about the board, then catches himself in a miscalculation, tries to start again, looks back at the clock, then back at his king... I believe most of us have been in such ‘fear spirals’ before. It’s a horrible feeling with a powerful effect that creates panic and totally irrational desperation, which is the only explanation I can give for Black’s next move.

29... \mathbb{Q} g4+??

Black inexplicably gives up a piece, possibly in the vain hope of creating an escape path to the queenside (but no such path exists). The bishop was desperately needed to keep some control over the kingside squares, but now the perpetual check is really there.

30. \mathbb{B} xg4 \mathbb{Q} xd2 31. \mathbb{B} g5+ \mathbb{Q} e6 32. \mathbb{B} e5+ \mathbb{Q} d7 33. \mathbb{B} d5+!



Possibly the move Black missed. Now it's a draw.

33... ♕ e7 34. ♕ e5+ ♔ d7 35. ♕ d5+ ♔ e7 36. ♕ e5+ ½-½

The final example in this chapter is extremely rich, moving from a lost rook-and-bishop ending into a complicated pawn ending that can branch into one of several distinct queen endgames. I have thoroughly annotated it because the whole example is very instructive and worth your time to study, even though some of the variations fall outside the scope of swindling.

In Australia, Stephen ‘Solo’ Solomon has achieved legendary status for his swindles. It has been said that spectators should always keep watching his board when he reaches a lost endgame, because ‘strange things can happen’.⁴⁴

Stephen Solomon 2385

Spartaco Sarno 2410

Yerevan ol 1996 (10)



Black has four pawns for a bishop, with a menacing mass in the centre. The plan for Black is straightforward, so, as we know, White needs to disrupt the trend. Rather than patiently await his fate, Solomon takes drastic measures.

45. ♕ b1!

Shunned by the engine, swapping off the rooks is White’s only practical chance. Rather than progress without resistance, Black is now forced to calculate concretely.

45... ♕ b6 46. ♕ xb6 ♔ xb6 47. h4! ♔ c5 48. ♕ e8! d4+ 49. ♔ d2!

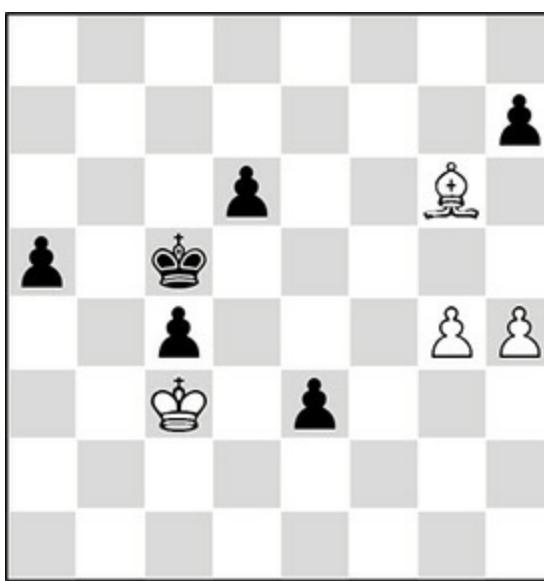


Here Sarno sunk into a deep think, as White's counterplay with 50. $\mathbb{Q}xg6$ is surprisingly fast. More importantly, the variations in the forthcoming pawn endgame are thick and tangled, and the consequences of a miscalculation could be fatal. This is a state of affairs in which the Swindler can operate.

49...e4?!

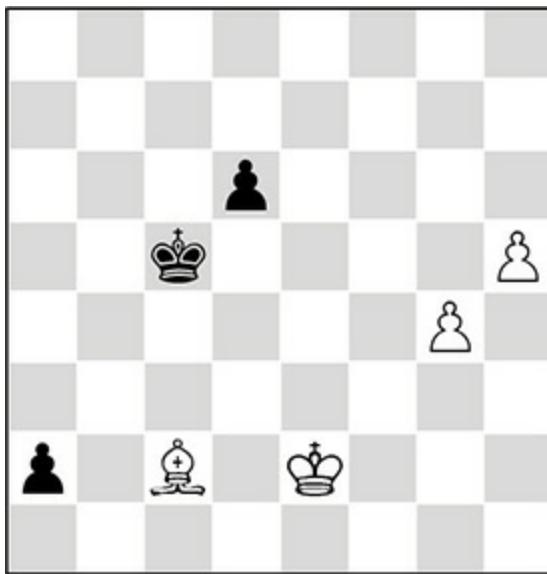
One of several tempting moves, and a winning one, but not the cleanest.

49...dxc3+ wins (as does 49...d5+), and the variations are very interesting: 50. $\mathbb{Q}xc3$ (50. $\mathbb{Q}d1!?$ e4 51. $\mathbb{Q}xg6$ and again, the simplest way to win is to ignore the bishop and simply push on: 51...d5!):
a) 50...e4! (the most practical method) 51. $\mathbb{Q}xg6$ e3!!.



analysis diagram

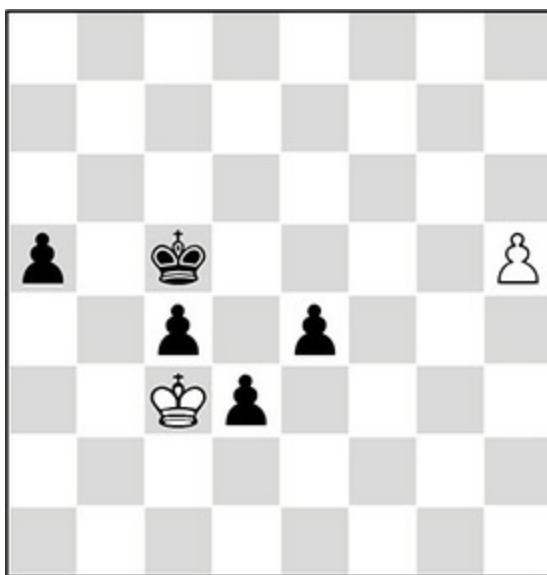
Other commentators have followed the computer's suggestion to take the bishop, but I think this approach makes much more sense. Black ignores the material and instead focusses on the race to promotion – every tempo counts! 52. $\mathbb{Q}xh7$ a4 53. h5 a3 54. $\mathbb{Q}b1$ e2 55. $\mathbb{Q}d2$ c3+ 56. $\mathbb{Q}xe2$ c2 57. $\mathbb{Q}xc2$ a2



analysis diagram

with an easy win;

b) 50...d5 also wins, and in fact wins faster, but the calculations are much more complex. Still, it makes for a very interesting and instructive endgame exercise, which I encourage you to try. I have included the main variations for your reference: 51. $\mathbb{Q}xg6$ d4+ 52. $\mathbb{Q}c2$ d3+! 53. $\mathbb{Q}c3$ (53. $\mathbb{Q}xd3$ cxd3+ 54. $\mathbb{Q}xd3$ $\mathbb{Q}d5$ (54...a4 also wins, as students of king-and-pawn endgame books will know) 55.g5 $\mathbb{Q}e6$ and Black is easily inside the queening ‘square’) 53...hxg6 54.h5 gxh5 55.gxh5 e4



analysis diagram

56.h6 e3 57.h7 e2 58. $\mathbb{Q}d2$ c3+! 59. $\mathbb{Q}xd3$ e1 \mathbb{Q} 60.h8 \mathbb{Q} $\mathbb{Q}d2+$ 61. $\mathbb{Q}e4$ c2.



analysis diagram

Black's king will find a snug hiding place on a3, where his queen can interpose diagonal checks by giving her own check on b4: 62. ♔f8+ ♕c4 63. ♔f7+ ♕b4 64. ♔e7+ ♕a4 65. ♔e8+ ♕a3 66. ♔e7+ ♔b4+ and wins.

Back to the game:

50. ♔xg6! e3+

50...dxc3+ would likely transpose into the previous note.

51. ♔e2



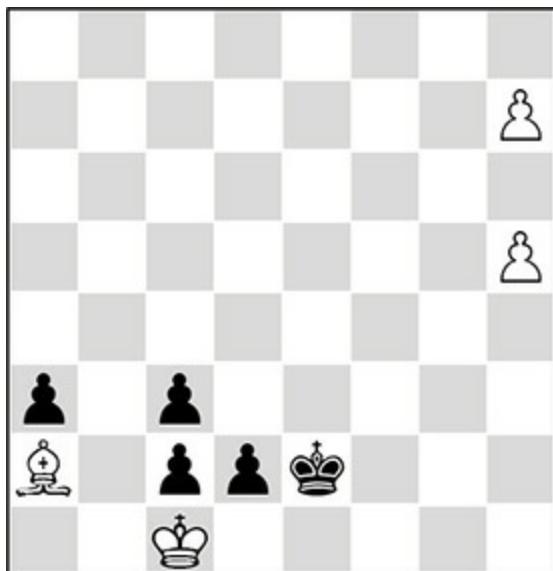
51...hxg6??

'Automatic' recaptures such as this can occasionally backfire. Here, Black should have again preferred to kickstart his race with 51...a4! (51...dxc3 52. ♔c2 ♕b4!! also wins after an unfathomably complicated sequence – worth checking with your engine). Black is just in time: 52. ♔b1 dxc3 53. ♕xe3 a3



analysis diagram

54. $\mathbb{Q}a2$ $d5$ 55. $g5$ $d4+$ 56. $\mathbb{Q}e2$ $d3+$ 57. $\mathbb{Q}d1$ $c2+$ 58. $\mathbb{Q}d2$ $\mathbb{Q}d4$ 59. $h5$ $c3+$ 60. $\mathbb{Q}c1$ $\mathbb{Q}e3$ 61. $g6$ $\mathbb{Q}e2$ 62. $gxh7$ $d2+$



analysis diagram

and Black wins by a single tempo.

52. $h5!$



52...gxh5??

Another automatic recapture, but this one throws away all remaining winning chances.

Notice how Solomon has transformed his opponent's game from one of long-term planning and control into one of long variations and complex calculations. Black's blunder is White's reward. Sarno should have played 52...a4 53.h6 (53.hxg6 dxc3! 54.♕xe3 a3 55.g7 c2 56.♕d2 a2 57.g8 ♜c1 ♜+! (the only way to avoid perpetual check – Black must queen with check) 58.♕xc1 a1 ♜+)



analysis diagram

and Black retains good winning chances. Actually, in this day and age, we can be more precise with our tablebase evaluations, and here the verdict is 'Black mates in 58'. But if you've learned anything from this book, it's that there is much more to an evaluation than the computer's digits) 53...dxc3 54.♕xe3 a3 55.h7 c2 56.♕d2 c3+!! 57.♕xc2 a2 58.h8 ♜ a1 ♜.



analysis diagram

And the king-and-pawn endgame is lost after 59. $\mathbb{Q}xc3+$, while the advantage of keeping the g-pawns on the board is revealed in the variation 59. $\mathbb{Q}c8+$ $\mathbb{Q}d4$ 60. $\mathbb{Q}h8+$ $\mathbb{Q}e4!!$ 61. $\mathbb{Q}e8+$ $\mathbb{Q}f4$ 62. $\mathbb{Q}f7+$ $\mathbb{Q}g3$



analysis diagram

and Black uses the pawns as an effective shield, winning.

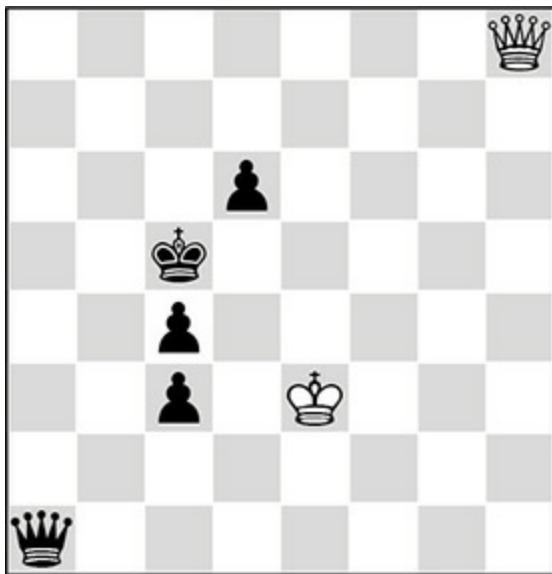
53.gxh5

After the exchange of the g-pawns, the swindle has been successfully executed. Let's see why:

53...dxc3 54. $\mathbb{Q}xe3$ a4 55. h6 a3 56. h7 a2

With the g-pawns gone, 56...c2 57. $\mathbb{Q}d2$ c3+ 58. $\mathbb{Q}xc2$ a2 59. h8 \mathbb{Q} a1 \mathbb{Q} allows White to draw by perpetual check with 60. $\mathbb{Q}c8+$, or get there even more quickly with 60. $\mathbb{Q}xc3+$.

57.h8 \mathbb{Q} a1 \mathbb{Q}

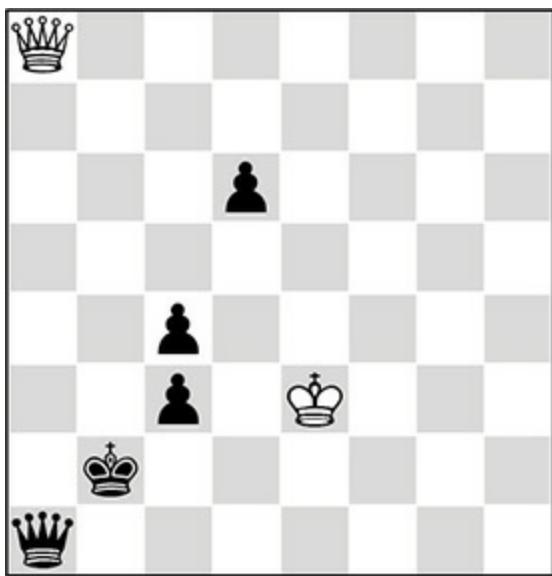


According to GM Ian Rogers, Sarno looked quite pleased with himself at this point, and was visibly shocked when Solomon's next move was accompanied by a draw offer!

58. $\mathbb{Q}c8+$! $\mathbb{Q}b4$

There is no cover for the black king on the kingside, but neither is there shelter this way.

59. $\mathbb{Q}b7+$ $\mathbb{Q}a3$ 60. $\mathbb{Q}a8+$ $\mathbb{Q}b2$



61. $\mathbb{Q}b7+$! $\mathbb{Q}a2$ 62. $\mathbb{Q}a8+$ $\mathbb{Q}b1$ 63. $\mathbb{Q}h1+$

And the draw was finally agreed. An enthralling and entertaining contest.

CHAPTER 19

Creativity

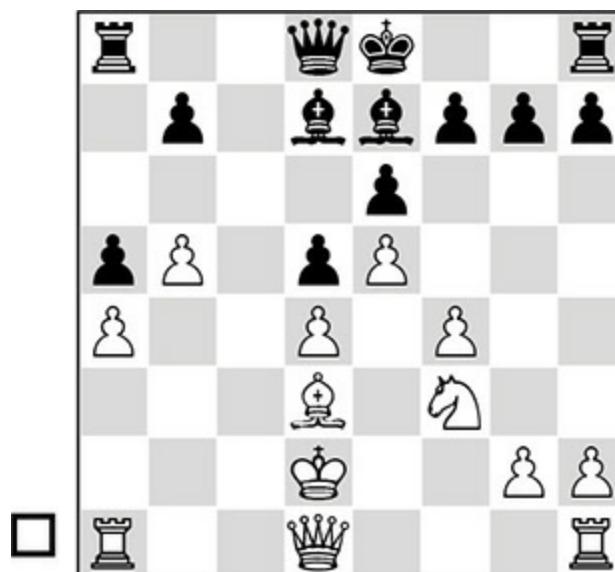
Chess is the art that expresses the science of logic. – Mikhail Botvinnik

In 2016, the world's strongest chess program, *Stockfish*, played a 100-game match against a new type of program called *AlphaZero*, designed by Google's artificial intelligence team. There are plenty of newcomers coming and going in chess computing, but this time the world sat up and took notice: *AlphaZero* finished the match with 28 wins, 72 draws, and not a single loss.

While the rise of chess computers may have stifled the art of swindling, it has also certainly produced many benefits, especially an appreciation for creativity. This has never been more important than today, thanks to the rise of machine-learning algorithms. Like all chess engines before it, *Stockfish* is guided by a set of human-written heuristics, or rules, about how to play better chess. These general principles have been tweaked by programmers for each iteration, which, combined with opening books, endgame tablebases and general hardware advancements, have led to chess computers completely surpassing human abilities over the past decades. But *AlphaZero* has no human guidance beyond the parameters of the game. Before the match, it played millions of simulations against itself, essentially 'teaching' itself chess from scratch. A study of its games reveals fascinating ideas and brilliantly counter-intuitive motifs that fly in the face of classical chess wisdom – and yet, somehow, win games.⁴⁵

AlphaZero Stockfish

AlphaZero vs Stockfish m 2017 (9)



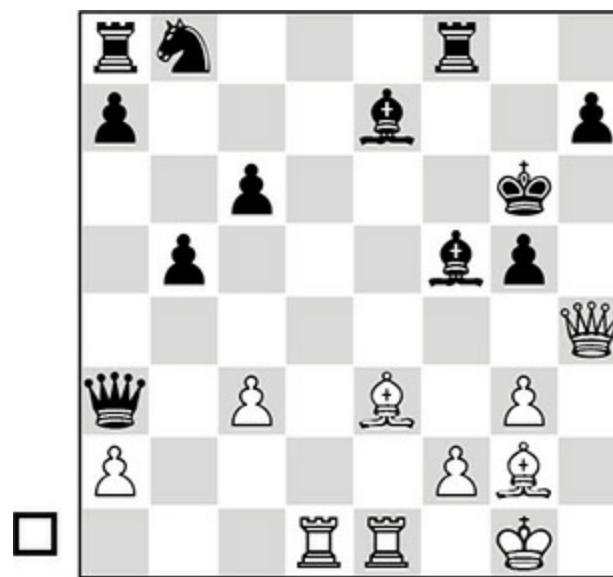
AlphaZero's handling of the French structure has been excellent, already shutting out Black's main queenside play and preparing a slow kingside crush. The only point of concern seems to be its slightly exposed king.

17. ♔ e3!!

Paradoxically powerful. Deeper reflection reveals that not only is the king perfectly safe in the centre, but it can also earn its keep by making itself useful during the middlegame, adding extra defensive power to the white centre (1-0, 36 moves).

AlphaZero Stockfish

AlphaZero vs Stockfish m 2017 (10)



26. ♕ h1!!

A beautiful concept. Despite being a piece and a pawn down, *AlphaZero* retreats its queen to the corner. But again, there is logic behind the creativity. The queen move performs two key roles: it targets c6, which ties down the black queenside pieces, and it prepares ♔e4, swapping off Black's key defensive piece (1-0, 56 moves).

We can learn from these machines. They show that the rules we have been taught can be broken; indeed, *AlphaZero* would be the ultimate rule-breaker, except that it never knew the rules to begin with! Using computers in our training teaches us that unusual and unorthodox moves can be very powerful. General principles are of course useful, but we should not stick too dogmatically to them; rather, we should try to keep our minds open to considering unorthodox possibilities.

And there is one more very important benefit to training your chess creativity, beyond that of computer comprehension, and beyond just finding strong moves. For the Swindler, that element is the element of surprise.

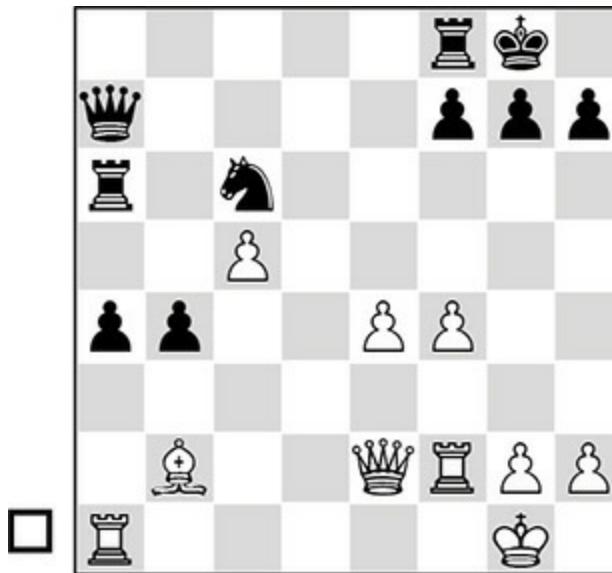
Surprise is a powerful weapon in any contest situation. In chess, the best way to surprise your opponent is through your creativity; the two elements go hand in hand. As we have previously discussed, surprise has the power to unnerve and to distract, to create fear and doubt. When the game feels like it is slipping away and the Swindler desperately needs to change the status quo, it can be very helpful to free your mind of your chess education and start thinking outside of the box.

Detlev Birnbaum

2190

Eloi Relange

2420



Black's two pawns are unstoppable on the queenside, and meanwhile c5 is also about to fall. With nothing left to lose, White embarks on an all-or-nothing push on the kingside:

26.♘g4!

Threatening mate in one, just in case.

26...f5! 27.exf5 a3 28.♗e5 b3



In such situations, with your back against the wall and playing an opponent over 200 points higher, it pays to take a deep breath and ask yourself: what's good about my position? Here, White has some slight pressure against g7, as well as a kingside majority. Of note, also, is that while White may have lost the queenside, at least his play is on the side of the board with the kings – meaning that, at least geometrically, he's a little closer to mate. It's not much, but it's something.

29.f6!

A desperate but necessary Berserk Attack.

29...b2 30.♖d1! ♗xe5!

Eliminating White's nice bishop, which was simultaneously involved in defence and attack.

31.fxe5 ♔f7



Now White finds a really remarkable resource:

32. ♔e2!!

An unexpected backwards move. White voluntarily removes his most active and strongest piece from the kingside. And yet, just like *AlphaZero*'s queen retreat, there are multiple points of logic. First, the huge threat of ...a3-a2 is temporarily stopped because White can now take on b2 with his queen. Second, the rook on a6 is under attack. And third, White supports the e5-e6 push. Not bad for a retreat! But perhaps the most important point of ♔e2 is that it is seemingly refuted by a very natural, strong-looking reply... which, as you will have guessed by now, turns out to be a blunder. This Trojan Horse is the essence of the swindle.

32... ♕b3??

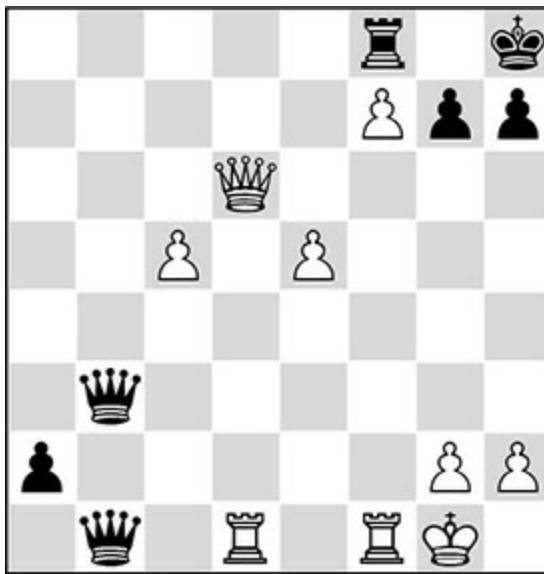
Extremely tempting, but objectively throwing away the win. Black attacks d1 and re-threatens ...a3-a2, while creating a new threat of ...b2-b1 ♔. What more could you want?

33. ♕ff1 a2 34.f7+!



A fine intermediate move. 34... ♕xf7 loses to 35. ♕d8+, while 34... ♔xf7 promises a draw at best. Remarkably, this is what Black should do.

34... ♔h8? 35. ♔xa6! b1 ♔ 36. ♔d6!!



White ignores the fact that his opponent has two queens and may soon get a third, and resumes his kingside attack. We can now recognise the importance of White's play being on the side of the kings, an advantage often exploited by Black in the King's Indian Defence. The immediate threat is mate in one!

36... ♕ b8



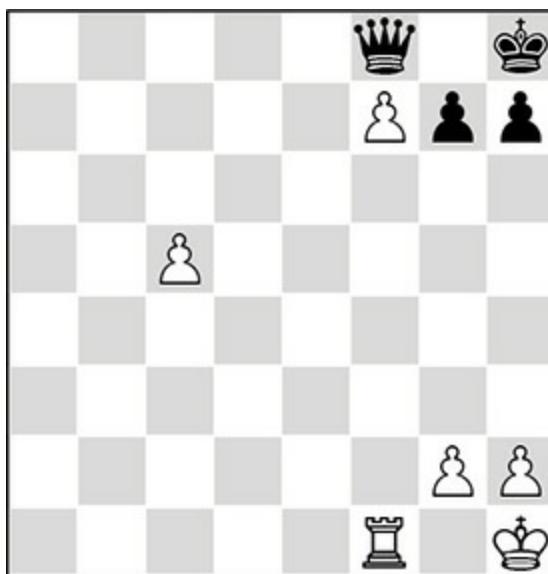
37.e6

Astonishingly, White had the chance to win here in a study-like manner that you'll never see on the board again. For that reason and for its beauty, I will present the main variation in full: 37. ♔ h1!! (threatening e5-e6 without allowing a future ... ♕ d4+; see the note below) 37... ♕ xd6 38.exd6 ♕ b5 39.d7! a1 ♔ 40. ♕ x a1 ♕ xd7



analysis diagram

41. $\mathbb{Q}a8!! \mathfrak{Q}e7$ 42. $\mathbb{Q}xf8+$ $\mathfrak{Q}xf8$



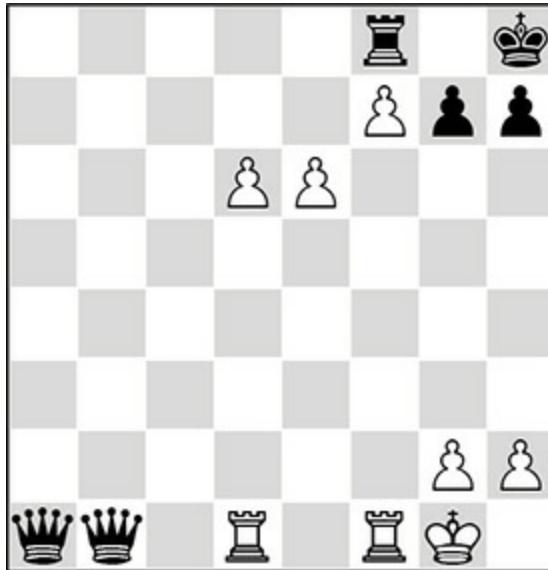
analysis diagram

43.c6! g5 44.c7 $\mathfrak{Q}g7$ 45. $\mathbb{Q}f3$ g4 46. $\mathbb{Q}f2$ h6 47. $\mathfrak{Q}g1$ h5 48.g3.



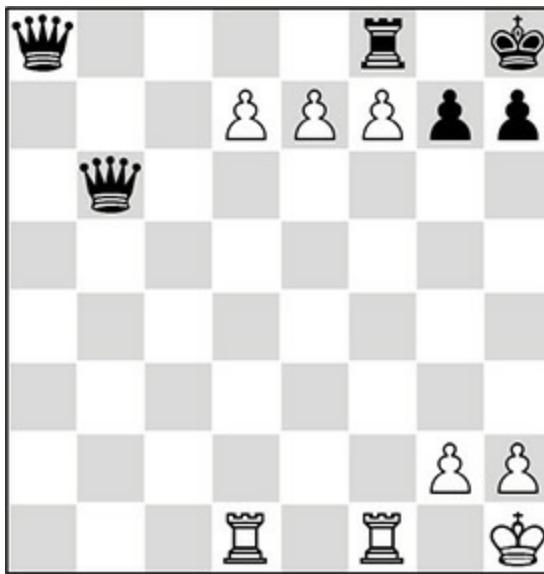
analysis diagram

A beautiful zugzwang: 48... $\mathbb{Q}g6$ 49.c8 $\mathbb{Q}xc8$ 50.f8 \mathbb{Q} and wins.
37... $\mathbb{Q}xd6$ 38.cxd6 a1 \mathbb{Q}



Another queen appears!

39.e7!
39. $\mathbb{Q}xb1$ $\mathbb{Q}d4+$ is the key reason why 37. $\mathbb{Q}h1$ was the winning move.
39... $\mathbb{Q}b6+$ 40. $\mathbb{Q}h1$ $\mathbb{Q}a8$ 41.d7!



Have you ever seen a position like this? Well, in fact there was one that came close:

Alexander McDonnell

Louis De Labourdonnais

London 1834 (m 4)



In this famous example, White resigned after 37...e2.

Check back to where we first picked up our game and you will appreciate the sheer scale of White's recovery (diagram top). It's almost a crime that Black has a saving resource:

41... \mathbb{Q} xg2+ 42. \mathbb{Q} xg2 \mathbb{Q} g6+ 43. \mathbb{Q} h1 \mathbb{Q} e4+

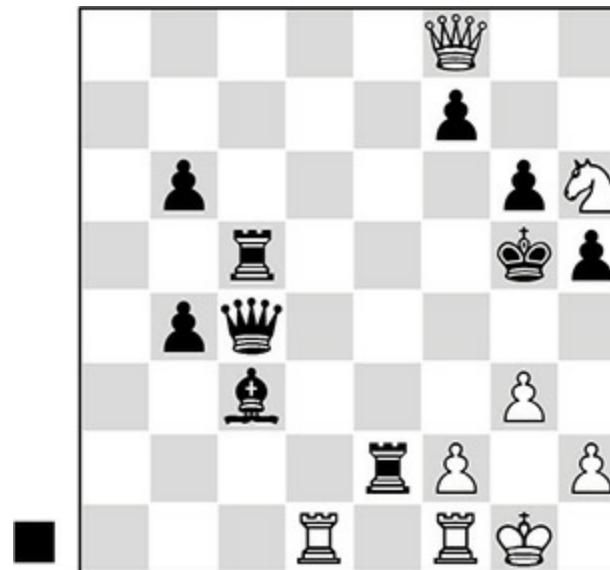
And the players agreed to a magnificent draw.

In common parlance, creativity is often used as an obscure, intangible concept, hard to define and even more difficult to measure. But as an element of chess, creativity is actually not as vague as it might appear. In his excellent book *Creative Chess*, the psychologist Amatzia Avni breaks down creativity over the board into its central characteristics, of which several are especially useful for surprise:

1) Unusual positioning or functioning of the pieces, such as moving pieces backwards while having the initiative, or using the king as an attacking piece.

Iztok Jelen	2370
Bent Larsen	2615

Ljubljana/Portoroz 1977 (11)



Larsen, one of the most imaginative chess players of the Fischer era, needs to muster every ounce of creativity to stay alive. His king is hopelessly exposed and mate appears to be – and in fact is – imminent. By a process of elimination, however, Larsen searches for the most practically resilient defence. Just as when solving a checkmate puzzle, one can start by identifying White's threat and gradually eliminating Black's possible tries. Here, the killer threats are 33.f4+ or 33.h4+, followed by meeting 33... ♕f6 with 34. ♖d6+ and 35. ♜xf7 mate.

What are Black's tries?

- a) 32...h4? 33.f4+ ♔h5 34.g4# doesn't help;
- b) Covering d6 with 32... ♜e6? runs into 33.f4+ ♔f6 34. ♜h8+ ♔e7 35. ♜d8#;
- C) 32... ♖c6? is another try, but it fatally leaves g5 unprotected: 33. ♜xf7+ ♔g4 34.f3+ ♔h3 35. ♜g5#;
- D) 32... ♜d4? loses to the pretty 33.h4+ ♔f6 34. ♖xd4! ♜xd4 35. ♜h8+;
- E) Finally, 32... ♖d2 blocks the d-file but at the expense of vacating the e-file, and so 33.h4+ ♔f6 34. ♖fe1! prepares the unstoppable 35. ♜h8+.

Truly, Black seems out of luck! Still, this is a perfect example of applying what we have learned so far. What's good about Black's position? We can immediately notice that he has pieces in attacking positions, which may one day even include his own king. The next step is to find a move that doesn't lose immediately or obviously. By a process of elimination, Larsen finds one move that at least stops White's main threat, and while it also loses, it does introduce an appealing 'fake win' into the mix: White can win Black's queen, but the story continues...

32... ♖d2!! 33. ♜xf7+?

Tempting, but wrong. White spots a flashy combination based on familiar themes, which is too juicy to resist. However, Black's defence required White to come up with new patterns to those of the previous variations, which is already a small practical achievement. Nonetheless, moves such as

33. ♜ h8! or 33. ♜ g7! would have preserved the win.

33... ♜ g4 34. ♜ xd2 ♜ xd2 35. f3+ ♛ h3 36. ♜ c8+



The point. White wants the brilliancy prize. And perhaps one was awarded... but to his opponent.

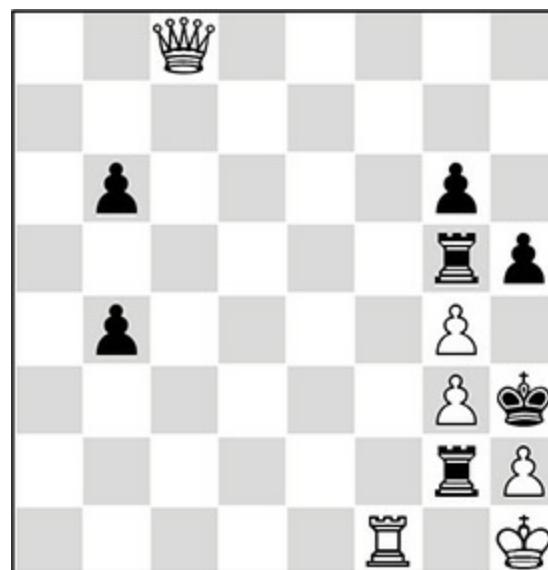
36... ♜ g4!!

An unbelievable counterblow.

37. ♜ g5+

37. fxg4? loses to 37... ♜ g2+! 38. ♜ h1 ♜ xh2+ 39. ♜ g1 ♜ xc8 40. ♜ g5+ ♛ xg3 41. ♜ e4+ ♛ h3 42. ♜ g5+ ♛ xg4 and Black wins. But not 37... ♜ xc8?? 38. ♜ g5+ ♛ xg4 39. ♜ e4!! and the twin threats of ♜ xd2 and ♜ f4+ win White a rook.

37... ♜ xc8 38. fxg4 ♜ g2+ 39. ♜ h1



39... ♜ c5!!

With the draw already secured, Larsen, sensing blood, decides to play for more. His decision was likely influenced by the fact that White has one more move to make to reach the time control, and it is a critical one. Black's intuition is rewarded, as White immediately stumbles.

40. ♜ d8??

40. ♜ e6! ♜ xh2+ 41. ♜ g1 g5 42. gxh5+ g4 43. ♜ f6! draws.

40... ♜ xh2+ 41. ♜ g1



41...g5!!

Study-like. Black creates an impenetrable hiding place for his brave king and prepares to bring his second rook to the second rank, with decisive effect. White played

42. ♜ b1

and resigned without waiting for 42... ♛ cc2, with mate. An incredible transformation brought forth through Larsen's imaginative genius.

2) Violation of general principles, such as voluntarily entering a pin, exchanging pieces when down on material, or weakening one's own structure.

Konstantin Maslak 2548

David Smerdon 2461

Pardubice 2007 (9)

1.e4 d5 2.exd5 ♜ f6 3. ♜ f3 ♜ g4 4. ♜ e2 ♜ xd5 5. ♜ c3 ♜ f5 6.h3 ♜ xf3 7. ♜ xf3



7... ♜ c6!

A novelty of which I was very proud at the time, although it hasn't been repeated since. I discuss it at length in my book *Smerdon's Scandinavian*, where I name this variation the Celeryc because the

move and the vegetable share two things in common: they are both ugly and they are both underappreciated. Incidentally, today's engines suggest 7... $\mathbb{Q}c6$ as the best move.

8. $\mathbb{Q}xc6+$ $bxc6$ 9. $\mathbb{Q}e2$ $e6$ 10.0-0 $\mathbb{Q}d6$ 11. $\mathbb{Q}c4$



11... $\mathbb{Q}d7!$

This is the key idea. It's not quite at *AlphaZero* levels, but the concept is the same. Black uses his mangled pawns as a central shield for his king, and meanwhile prepares a flash attack on the kingside.

12.d3 $\mathbb{Q}ab8$ 13.a3 $g5!$ 14. $\mathbb{Q}e4$ $g4!$ 15. $\mathbb{Q}xd6$

White decides to eliminate one of Black's attacking pieces at the expense of correcting Black's structure.

15... $cxd6$ 16.h4 $\mathbb{Q}d5$ 17. $\mathbb{Q}d4$ $a6$ 18. $\mathbb{Q}a4$ $\mathbb{Q}c7$ 19. $g3$ $\mathbb{Q}b5$ 20.c4 $\mathbb{Q}b7$ 21. $\mathbb{Q}c2$ $e5$ 22.b4 $\mathbb{Q}e6$ 23. $\mathbb{Q}b2$ $h6$ 24. $\mathbb{Q}fe1$ $\mathbb{Q}bb8$ 25.c5



25... $\mathbb{Q}g5!!$

Black needs to keep the fire burning, and I was more than willing to sacrifice my knight to do so.

26.cxd6!?

A good practical choice.

If 26.hxg5 hxg5 27. $\mathbb{Q}e2$ (27. $\mathbb{Q}e3$ $\mathbb{Q}h3$ 28. $\mathbb{Q}g2$ $d5!$ 29. $\mathbb{Q}xe5$ $d4!$ is most unpleasant) 27... $\mathbb{Q}f3!!$ 28. $\mathbb{Q}xf3$ $gxf3$



analysis diagram

and White can only stave off mate with 29. $\mathbb{R}xe5!$ $dxe5$ 30. $\mathbb{Q}xe5$, leading to a drawn ending.
 26... $\mathbb{Q}f3+$ 27. $\mathbb{Q}f1$ $\mathbb{Q}xe1$ 28. $\mathbb{Q}xe1$ $\mathbb{Q}b5$



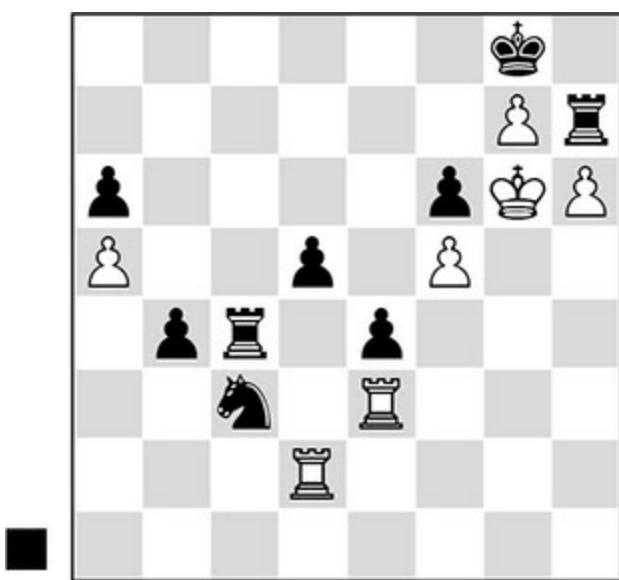
My unorthodox play had netted me the exchange, although my opponent obtained decent compensation and later capitalised when I blundered in time trouble.⁴⁶

3) Absurd moves that defy chess logic, such as placing a piece where it can be taken or playing a ‘quiet’ move in a sharp position.

Huub van Dongen

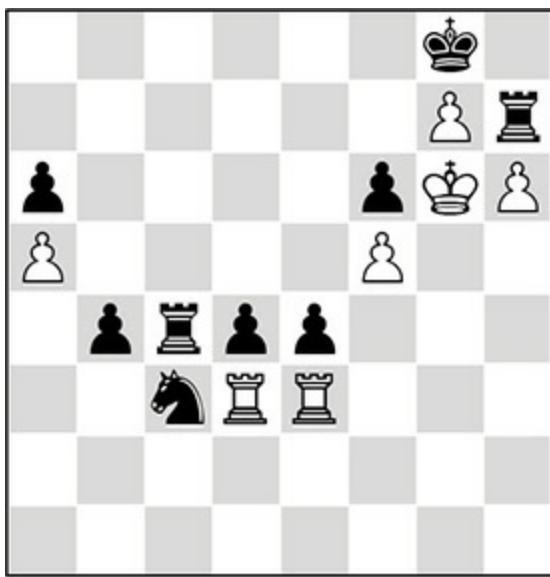
Eric Wijsman

Eindhoven 2005



As Tim Krabbé describes it: ‘After an abominable game, Van Dongen was completely lost, and in fact he had been contemplating resignation for a long time. Almost every black move wins, but strongest is 73...b3. But when Black chose the most obvious move, this presented Van Dongen with an unheard-of opportunity.’

73...d4? 74. ♜ dd3!!



Outstanding creativity. White not only ignores one attacked rook, but even places his other rook in harm’s way, side by side. Incredibly, Black is in *zugzwang*! Of his active pieces, Black’s d- and e-pawns are pinned, while the other three units are completely occupied on defensive duties. In fact, Black only has one narrow route to a draw. However, Wijsman was understandably rattled and quickly collapsed:

74...♝ b5?

74...b3! is the only move: 75. ♜ xd4 ♜ xd4 76. ♜ xc3 ♜ d8 77. ♜ xb3 ♜ e8! (again the only move, else White plays ♜ b3-b6-e6) 78. ♜ e3 ♜ e7 79. ♜ c3 ♜ e8 80. ♜ e3 with a draw.

75. ♜ xe4 ♜ d6 76. ♜ e6 ♜ c6 77. ♜ xd4 ♜ xh6+ 78. ♛ xh6 ♜ xf5+ 79. ♛ g6 1-0

Creativity is, above all, about searching for the unexpected. When the chips are down and you have nothing to lose, start looking around for moves that you would never normally consider, because chances are that your opponent isn’t considering them either. Bonus points if you can spot the creative

idea in advance, like in the next impressive amateur example.

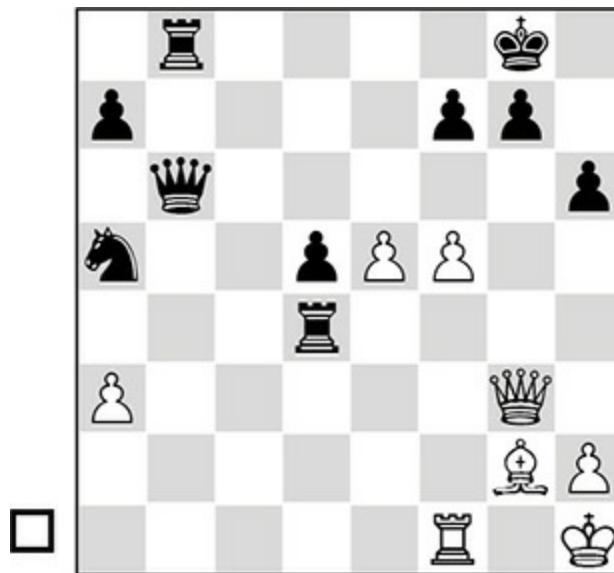
Mihai-Ionut Deaconu

1957

Hans-Jörg Cordes

2188

London 2019 (3)



White is a rook down against an opponent who outrates him by several hundred points. True, he can do some chest-beating on the kingside, but nothing that seems too worrisome. At what point did Deaconu spot his impressive 36th move, I wonder? Was it already here?

33.f6 g6 34.e6!

Preying on Black's fear, if nothing else. There is no real threat to speak of, but Black understandably wants to shore up the kingside and get some clarity about that pawn structure. Alas, his desire for control will be his undoing.

34... ♕f8??

A horrible blunder!

35.e7 ♕e8??

... followed by another! Amazingly, only 35... ♕e6! would have held for Black. But he senses no danger, having failed to consider the most unexpected of replies.



36. ♕ xg6+!!

Shocking, brilliant, creative. Black's rock-solid kingside is blasted open in spectacular fashion.

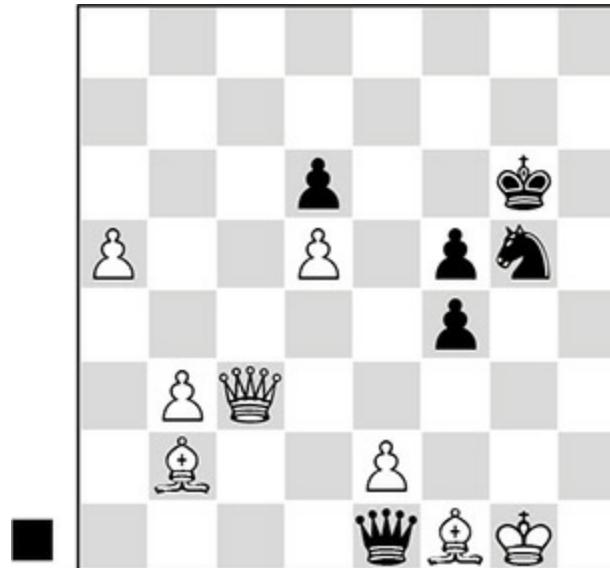
36...fxg6 37.f7+ ♔ h7 38.fxe8 ♕

And mate will follow. Black resigned.

Creativity is often found in relation to stalemates. Themes such as deliberately boxing in one's own king or pinning one's own pieces are rarely found in any setting other than the formation of a stalemate – and their effectiveness again relies on freeing your mind of its chess heuristics and searching for the unexpected. In the following example, Black creates beauty from absurdity.

Colin McNab	2475
Attila Groszpeter	2495

Norresundby 1992 (4)



In such a position between two grandmasters, '49... resigns' seems the obvious move. But Black spots one last trick.

49... ♕ d1! 50. ♕ g7+ ♔ h5 51. ♕ f6

McNab, a strong tactician, hammers home the point that 51... ♕ h3+ 52. ♕ h2 ♕ xf1 53. ♕ h7+ ♔ g4 54. ♕ h4 is a forced checkmate. It probably only took him seconds to calculate the mate after the obvious knight check – but oh how valuable would have been another second spent considering the other one!

51... ♕ f3+!!



Intending 52.exf3 ♜xf1+! with stalemate to follow. It is possible, indeed likely, that McNab had seen this far ahead and concluded that the stalemate was easily avoided by leaving the knight be.

52. ♔g2

Now either knight check is met by 53. ♔f2 and a swift checkmate. By not capturing, White reasons that stalemate motifs are now impossible, as Black has too many remaining pieces in addition to an unblocked f-pawn. But there is an unexpected flaw in this reasoning that could only have been circumvented by an equally creative mind.

52... ♜xe2+!!

A rude awakening. Desperately resourceful and brilliantly creative, Black conjures up his stalemate after all!

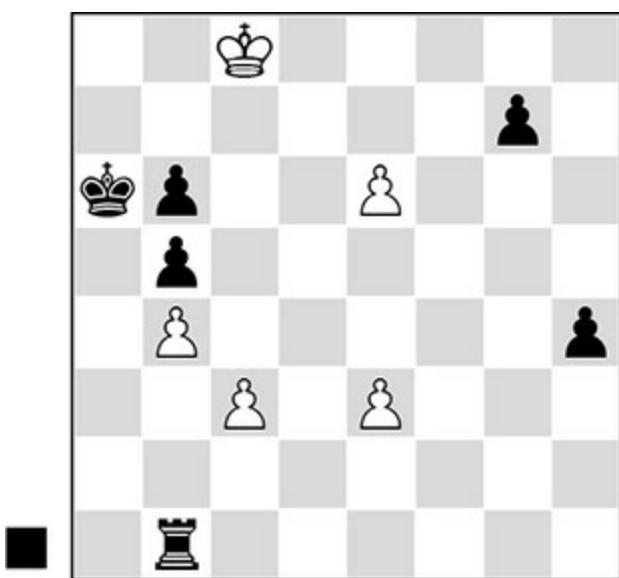
53. ♜xe2 ½-½



And finally, an example of correspondence creativity featuring a deadly underpromotion. One can only imagine the surprise on Black's face when he opened the final envelope:

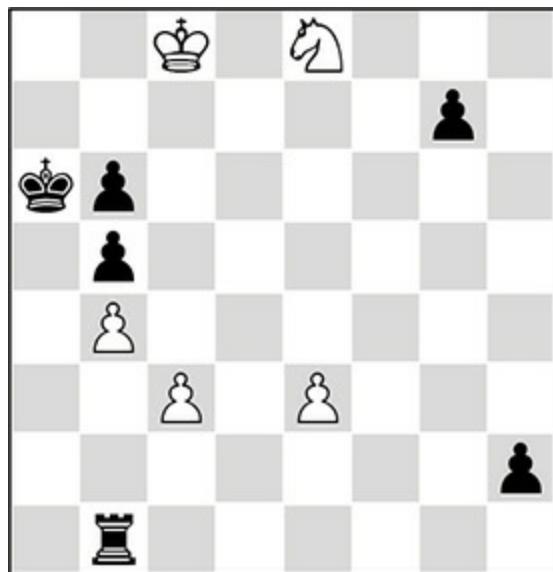
**Babushkin
Postnikov**

cr 1970



1...h3?? 2.e7 h2

Anticipating 3.e8♕ h1♕ with an easy win. But instead, the postman delivered a shock:
3.e8♘ !! ½-½



A freakish perpetual check arises after 3...h1♕ 4.♘c7+ ♕a7 5.♘xb5+.

Gamesmanship

Why must I lose to this idiot? – Aron Nimzowitsch⁴⁷

This chapter is not designed to be educational, but rather a bit of light entertainment before we get on to the illustrative games. I considered omitting it entirely, but there's no denying that there are some who consider gamesmanship to be a legitimate part of swindling – and this is, after all, supposed to be a 'complete' guide. If you have picked up this book to study serious chess, you might want to skip this chapter and power on to the next one. Otherwise, make yourself a drink and find a comfy chair, because it's time for a storytelling interlude.

The spectrum of psychological types in our game is vast. At one extreme are the engines – cold, emotionless machines that care only about objective evaluations and ignore chess psychology entirely – closely followed by those players who seek to emulate them. At the other extreme are people willing to bend or even break the rules for the sake of a psychological advantage. Within the extreme bounds of machine and cheat lies a wide range of views over where the line is drawn between acceptable psychological play and unsportsmanlike conduct over the board.

For all my talk of chess psychology, my personal 'line' is rather conservative. I believe in trying to gauge my opponent's strengths and likely biases not only from the position, but also from their rating, the time on their clock, their demographic, the tournament situation, and even their body language (see Part II). Figuring out what my opponent wants, as well as what might make them feel uncomfortable, then feeds into what sort of tricks and tools I might employ (see Part III). But personally, anything further in terms of actively influencing their psychological state is just not my cup of tea.

But there are others, particularly for whom chess is one's livelihood, who have different lines. Chess is hardly unique in this respect. A soccer player who fakes being fouled risks receiving their own yellow card, but it's perfectly within the rules to exaggerate a fall after a slight contact – in fact, many managers encourage it. A tennis player who constantly argues with close line calls knows that the umpire is statistically more likely to favour him on genuine 'line balls', a tactic used to good effect by, among others, John McEnroe.⁴⁸ In cricket, the so-called 'gentlemen's game', some players will literally spend hours at a time insulting an opposing batsman in order to break their focus. Is it then really so bad for a chess player to bang down a move with confidence, even if he has calculated that it loses by force? And if that's acceptable, then what about other ploys to influence the opponent's beliefs?

The philosophy of ethics is not my strong suit. Instead, I present to you a selection of entertaining examples of gamesmanship for your amusement and consideration. Each involves the use of psychology to gain an advantage *within the bounds of the rules*; blatant cheating is excluded, so you won't find the touch-move episodes of (for example) Kasparov-Polgar, Nakamura-Aronian, and Kasparov-Nakamura (!), or the notorious 'J'adoubovic' story. I have also left out the famous cases of World Championship Matches that have been well-covered by other sources, such as the Karpov-Kortchnoi match of 1978 (think chairs, yoghurt and parapsychologists) or the 'Toiletgate' saga of 2006.⁴⁹ Those that remain are lesser-known but amusing tales of behaviour where I have reserved

judgement. I leave that, and any subsequent line-drawing, to you.

Time, both its use and abuse, is a frequent topic in gamesmanship. A common situation is when a player finds himself in a worse position but with his opponent in time trouble. Several authors have suggested the *barrage technique*, a term coined by Simon Webb in his excellent book *Chess for Tigers*. The idea is to spend some time planning your next few moves in advance, and then, once you begin the sequence, reply instantly to your opponent's moves. 'Barraging' works particularly well when you can reliably predict your opponent's first reply (for example, an exchange of pieces) and when your second move in the sequence is unusual or unexpected. This technique, with the aim of shocking your opponent into a nervous error, falls very much on the tame side of the gamesmanship line. As Webb argues, 'Your opponent started off with plenty of time. If he chooses to use it in such a way that he has hardly any left, that's his own fault.'

But, in addition to being able to calculate a barrage sequence in advance, there are other advantages to having a long think when one's opponent is short on time. GM Pal Benko writes that the waiting can play on a player's nerves, causing impatience, interfering with his concentration, and leading him to focus on other things – such as whether he should get up from the board, or drink any more liquid – rather than his planned responses. The Australian grandmaster Ian Rogers once took this effect to its extreme in what should be called the original Toiletgate episode. His opponent, GM Dragan Barlov, refused to agree to a draw in a textbook rook-and-pawn endgame, instead taking the game into a second adjournment on the rest day and forcing both players to miss the tournament excursion and lunchtime buffet. Annoyed, Rogers played the next forty moves quickly, while Barlov inexplicably used up almost all of his time, so that by move 99 the clock times read two hours remaining versus one and a half minutes. Still, even with the rooks exchanged, Barlov refused the draw. So, for his 100th move, Rogers began to think.

After 15 minutes' thought, Rogers ordered a cup of tea, and Barlov did the same. After another 15 minutes, Rogers ordered a cup of coffee, as did Barlov – before soon realising what was going on and cancelling his order. A further 15 minutes expired, and Barlov started to cross his legs. After an hour, GM Willie Watson approached Rogers' wife in the audience and said 'Ian wouldn't do that, would he? He wouldn't! ... he is doing that!'

After 90 minutes' thought, Rogers made his 100th move. Barlov replied instantly and raced off to the toilet. When he returned, Barlov immediately offered a draw.

I don't know how Rogers knew of his opponent's condition during the game, but I did ask him what he was thinking about for 90 minutes. 'I wrote my next chess article in my head,' was the reply.

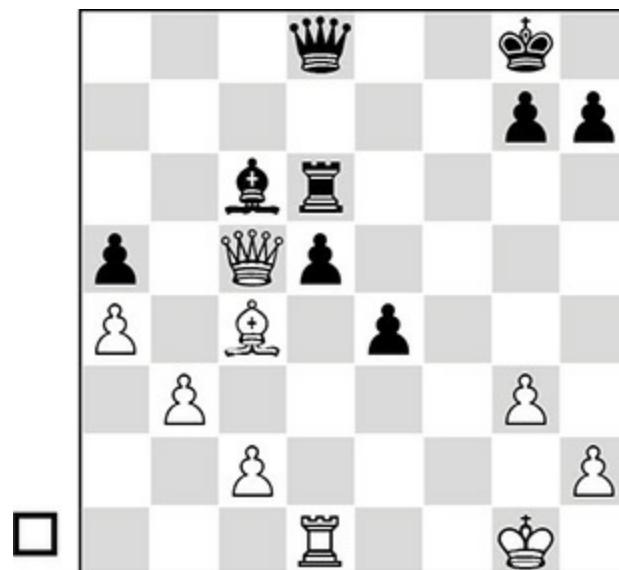
For all my talk of my personal ethics, I was once guilty of a similar case of 'delaying' – though I was 10 years old at the time. The first round of a weekender in my home town took place at 6pm on a Friday night, and the former Australian Olympiad captain, FM Manuel Weeks, no doubt expected an easy pairing. He had presumptuously arranged a date for 8pm, unaware that his young opponent was significantly underrated. Despite losing a pawn in the opening, I dug my heels in and defended grimly. My ten-year-old self was so intent on saving the game that I was oblivious to everything else around me, including both my opponent's exasperated expressions and the well-dressed but slightly disgruntled woman who had arrived at the venue and now stood by our board. The endgame was

hopelessly lost, but I stubbornly pressed on, fuelled by the optimism (and naivety) of youth. At some point, my opponent seriously considered offering me a draw as he weighed up his priorities. After almost four hours, I eventually resigned, and as we shook hands and my exasperated opponent joined his date, I enquired sweetly, ‘Would you like to analyse?’ Bemused, Manuel could only reply, ‘Maybe another time.’⁵⁰

A more sophisticated use of time was seen in Goh Wei Ming-Duda at the 2016 Olympiad, which, although not technically a swindle, is too good a story to omit.

Kevin Goh Wei Ming	2444
Jan-Krzysztof Duda	2675

Baku ol 2016 (9)



The position is balanced, and White is the one in time trouble. As Kevin later told me, he let his clock run down to its final three seconds before frantically bashing out

30. ♔g2!!

By pretending to be flustered and moving the piece closest to the clock⁵¹, he convincingly sold his move as a harmless time-trouble pass. And it worked, because, after only a few minutes’ thought, Duda tried to take advantage of the situation with

30...e3??



In any other situation, Duda would have assumed that a player of Kevin's strength had spotted this strong-looking reply – unless, that is, Kevin had missed it in his desperate, self-inflicted time-trouble. Instead, Duda fell for White's theatrics, hook, line and sinker.

31. ♜ xc6!!

With the beautiful point that after 31... ♜ xc6 32. ♜ xd5!,



analysis diagram

Black, with a queen for a bishop, is lost! For example, 32... ♛ b6 33. ♜ d8+ is checkmate, while 32... ♛ f8 33. ♜ f5+ ♜ xc4 34. ♜ xf8+ ♛ xf8 35. bxc4 leads to a hopeless pawn endgame. Black in fact transposed into this endgame via

31... ♛ f8 32. ♜ xd5 ♜ xc6 33. ♜ d8+ ♜ xc4 34. ♜ xf8+ ♛ xf8 35. bxc4

and the game finished

35... ♛ e7 36. ♛ f3 ♛ d6 37. ♛ xe3 ♛ c5 38. ♛ d3 ♛ b4 39. g4!?

39. ♛ d4 ♛ xa4 40. c5 won much faster.

39... ♛ xa4

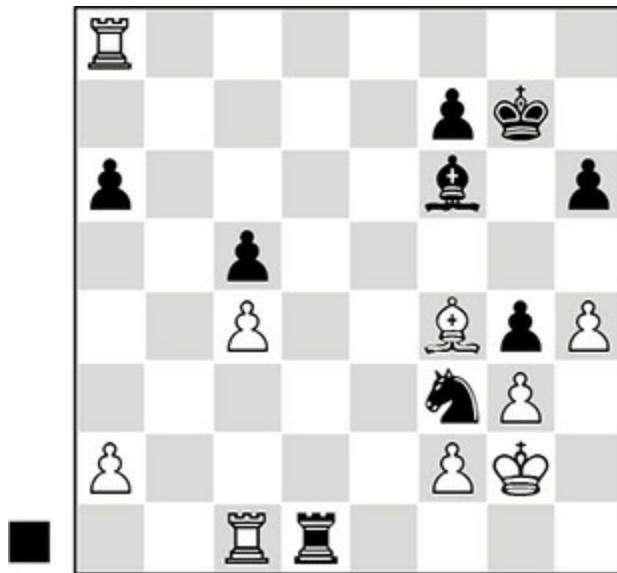


40.c3 h6 41.♕c2 g6 42.h4 g5 43.h5 1-0

A less sophisticated ‘think’ was that by Black in Avrukh-Rudolf.

Boris Avrukh	2668
Henrik Rudolf	2353

Ohrid tt 2009 (2)



The famed chess author and grandmaster, Boris Avrukh, had just played 34.♖c3-c1 and sat waiting for his lower-rated opponent to resign. As he tells it, ‘My opponent was looking desperate and thought for over five minutes. Suddenly, he pointed to the clock and told me that I had lost on time... it transpired that I had pressed the clock on the board next to us!’

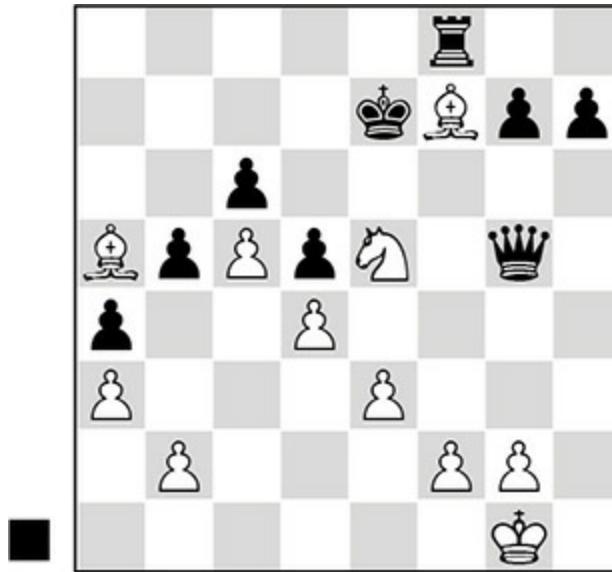
Letting your time run down is just one way to distract your opponent from the board and shift his

focus to your own capabilities of resistance. The famous chess writer GM Alexander Kotov tells a story involving a more direct signal.

Golubev

Alexander Kotov

Soviet Union 1939



Frustrated that his opponent was still playing despite being a rook down for most of the game, Kotov knew the end was nigh when his opponent wrote ‘RESIGNS’ on his scoresheet, folded it in half and put it in his pocket, ‘with an air of hopelessness that seemed to express with his whole demeanour that as soon as I made my move he would resign.’ An Oscar-winning performance! Kotov, cooperatively, continued with the obvious rook-captures bishop,

1... ♕xf7??

Almost any move would have been better; in fact, there are fourteen winning moves in the position! But the text is not one of them. Kotov’s opponent immediately dropped the act and bashed out the reply

2. ♗d8+!!



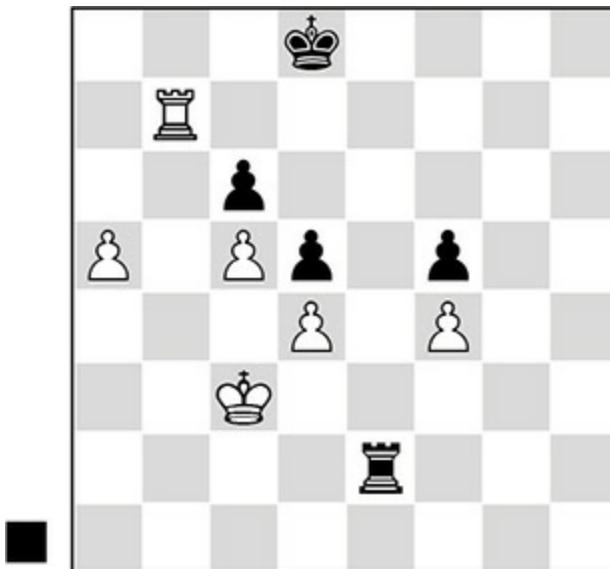
After watching helplessly while his opponent retrieved his scoresheet from his pocket and crossed out the word ‘RESIGNS’, Kotov recounts forlornly, ‘I was the one who had to resign!'

In his World Championship rematch with Tal, the great Mikhail Botvinnik demonstrated a rather more refined approach to signalling an imminent capitulation. Before the resumption of play in Game 20 after a second adjournment, Botvinnik conceived a plan to lure his opponent into complacency. He writes, ‘After two days of play and two sleepless nights I was thoroughly tired out, yet I did not take my usual thermos flask of coffee with me to the adjournment session – this would be the most weighty proof that I would make just a few more moves and then resign the game. It was during these few moves that Tal had to miss the stalemate.’

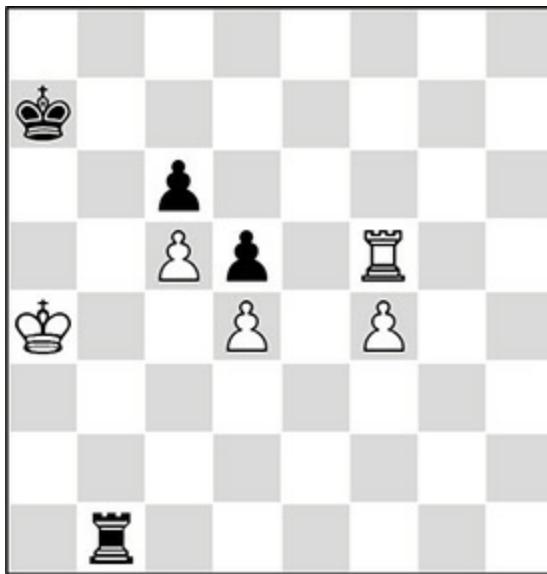
Mikhail Tal

Mikhail Botvinnik

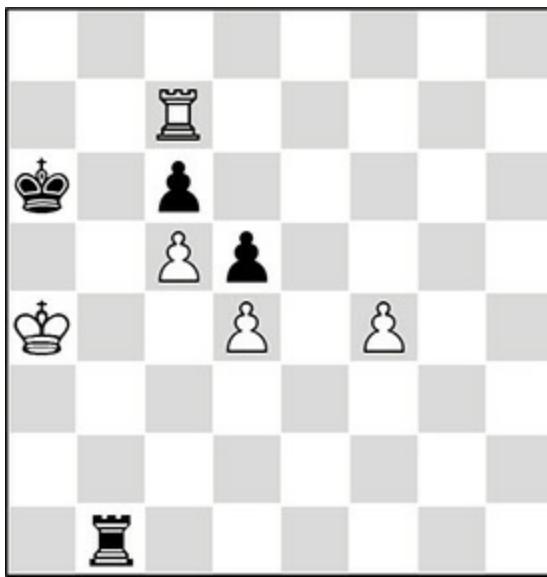
Moscow Wch m 1961 (20)



75... $\mathbb{Q}a2$ 76. $\mathbb{Q}b6$ $\mathbb{Q}c7$ 77. $a6$ $\mathbb{Q}a1$ 78. $\mathbb{Q}b2$ $\mathbb{Q}a4$ 79. $\mathbb{Q}b3$ $\mathbb{Q}a1$ 80. $\mathbb{Q}b7+$ $\mathbb{Q}c8$ 81. $\mathbb{Q}b6$ $\mathbb{Q}c7$ 82. $\mathbb{Q}b7+$ $\mathbb{Q}c8$ 83. $\mathbb{Q}a7$ $\mathbb{Q}b1+$ 84. $\mathbb{Q}c3$ $\mathbb{Q}a1$ 85. $\mathbb{Q}a8+$ $\mathbb{Q}c7$ 86. $\mathbb{Q}b3$ $\mathbb{Q}b1+$ 87. $\mathbb{Q}c3$ $\mathbb{Q}a1$ 88. $\mathbb{Q}b3$ $\mathbb{Q}b1+$ 89. $\mathbb{Q}a2$ $\mathbb{Q}b5$ 90. $a7$ $\mathbb{Q}a5+$ 91. $\mathbb{Q}b3$ $\mathbb{Q}b7$ 92. $\mathbb{Q}f8$ $\mathbb{Q}b5+$ 93. $\mathbb{Q}a4$ $\mathbb{Q}xa7$ 94. $\mathbb{Q}xf5$ $\mathbb{Q}b1$



Botvinnik's caffeine-based ruse was successful: far too late, Tal realised that his intended 95. $\mathbb{Q}f7+$ $\mathbb{Q}a6$ 96. $\mathbb{Q}c7$?

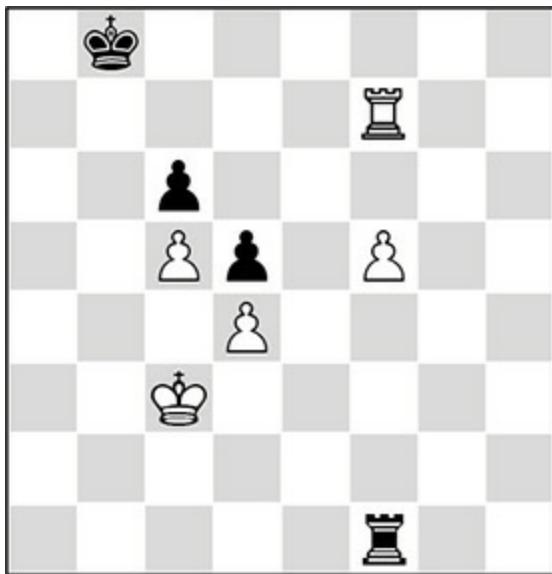


analysis diagram

allows the now-familiar trick 96... $\mathbb{Q}b4+!!$, after which 97. $\mathbb{Q}xb4$ is stalemate, while 97. $\mathbb{Q}a3$ $\mathbb{Q}xd4$ also forces an immediate draw.

By missing this trick, Tal let the win slip. Botvinnik went on to convincingly claim back the title.⁵² (Nowadays, with the assistance of engines, we can be more precise than Botvinnik about where exactly the victory gave way to a draw. For instance, 81.- or 83. $\mathbb{Q}f7!$ wins easily, while 90.a7?? should throw away the win entirely (90. $\mathbb{Q}f8!$), but only if Black continues 92... $\mathbb{Q}xa7$! 93. $\mathbb{Q}xf5$ $\mathbb{Q}a6$!).

Instead, after 92... $\mathbb{Q}b5+??$, 93. $\mathbb{Q}c3!$ is the last winning chance, keeping the king flexible with an eye both to the kingside and the b4-a5 queenside path. After 93... $\mathbb{Q}xa7$ 94. $\mathbb{Q}xf5$ $\mathbb{Q}b1$ 95. $\mathbb{Q}f7+!!$ $\mathbb{Q}b8$ (95... $\mathbb{Q}a6$ 96. $\mathbb{Q}c7!$ – this time, Tal's idea does work) 96.f5! $\mathbb{Q}f1$



analysis diagram

97. ♜b4!, and as opposed to the game (compare move 112), Black cannot simultaneously keep an eye on both sides of the board. One of either White's king or f-pawn has to be allowed to advance. Oh Holy Silicon Monster, how you spoil us!)

The days of adjournments and their complex rules allowed for other forms of gamesmanship as well. For example, it used to be the case that sealing an illegal move meant that the offender was forced to move his king upon resumption. The punishment was later changed in the FIDE laws to an immediate forfeit, and legend has it that GM Akiba Rubinstein is to blame. In a tricky king and pawn ending and with his clock ticking, Rubinstein correctly guessed that his next king move would be crucial, perhaps the difference between a win and a draw. What to do? Rather than make that key decision over the board, the great Polish master cunningly sealed an illegal move. Upon the game's resumption and being forced by the arbiter to move his king, he confidently played the winning move, which he had analysed at home at his leisure.

Another common form of gamesmanship is distraction. Article 11.5 of the FIDE laws of chess states that 'It is forbidden to distract or annoy the opponent in any manner whatsoever' – but this leaves a fair degree of wiggle room. An arbiter must interpret the intent of the behaviour, whether harm has been caused, and also to what extent the actions in question are within a player's control. At the strong Tilburg tournament of 1985, the English GM Tony Miles played several games lying face-down on a massage table, having injured his back. Several players complained that they had found this distracting, and that this had given Miles, who later tied for first, an unfair advantage. Whether fair or not, Miles received his comeuppance some years later in a game against the Croatian grandmaster Davorin Komljenovic. At the start of the game, Miles followed his usual custom of placing his wrist watch next to the board. Komljenovic answered by placing a comically oversized alarm clock on his side of the board. Miles protested, but quid pro quo, and the two timepieces remained in their

standoff. Miles later blundered in a drawn rook ending.

Opinions of what is and isn't generally considered distracting have also changed over time. There are several stories about players using cigarettes to their advantage when smoking was permitted. My favourite tale involves the great masters Aron Nimzowitsch and Milan Vidmar at the New York tournament of 1927. Nimzowitsch, who abhorred smoking, managed to convince his opponent before the game to agree not to smoke at the board. But by force of habit, Vidmar absent-mindedly took out his cigar case in preparation and laid it by the board. Nimzowitsch at once protested to the arbiter, who replied that an unopened cigar case was not the same as smoking. 'I know,' replied Nimzowitsch, 'but as an old chess player yourself, you must know that the threat is stronger than the execution.'

The threat was apparently too much to bear in the 1998 South Australian Championships. Former state champion Robert Cowley, aged 50, lost the final to Nhan Phan-Koshnitsky, aged 24. Cowley lodged an official appeal on the basis that Nhan's clothing revealed too much of her cleavage, which distracted him. He claimed that he had tried to avert his eyes, 'but it was very hard not to see. I put my hands across my forehead but that didn't work very well, so now I may consider wearing a wide-brimmed hat,' adding that 'chess is difficult enough as it is without extra problems.' Cowley's appeal was rejected, his threats of a lawsuit ignored, and the story naturally went viral in the mainstream press, with Nhan reportedly turning down an offer to pose for Playboy. I doubt many players of either gender would be sympathetic to Cowley's plight.⁵³

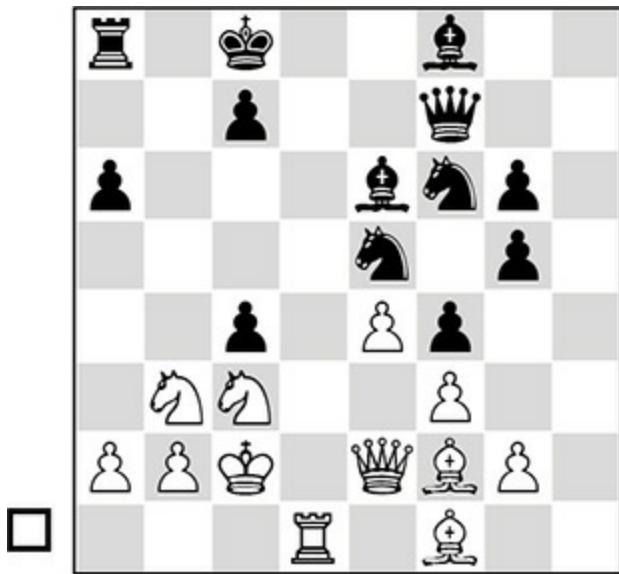
While the legality of distractions at the board is subject to interpretation by the arbiter, there are of course a litany of examples of flagrant cheating, which fall outside the scope of this book.⁵⁴ Breaking the rules to gain an advantage goes beyond 'gamesmanship', and so I have chosen not to include the famous touch-move episodes mentioned at the start of this chapter. But one example of touch-move *does* fit into the category of gamesmanship, precisely because it exploits a dogged adherence to the rules of the day.

The 19th-century master Daniel Harrwitz found himself in the following position in a London league match.

Daniel Harrwitz

NN

London tt 18??



A pawn down and with his knight under attack, Harrwitz suddenly spotted the possibility of a cunning swindle, beginning with the retreat of his king. However, his opponent, also a master, would surely be suspicious of such a blatant piece offer. Harrwitz came up with a devious solution. He played the illegal move 1. ♜b3-d5(!?!), to which his opponent immediately objected. The punishment at that time for an illegal move was to be forced to move, not the same piece, but rather one's king. Despite his protestations and remonstrations, Harrwitz was forced by his indignant opponent to replace his knight and instead, forlornly, played 1. ♛b1. His opponent, thinking it an unlikely windfall, swiftly took the knight with 1... cxb3?? – whereupon Harrwitz's expression changed as he loudly announced checkmate in four moves!



After

2. ♜xa6+!!

the game ended with

2... ♜xa6 3. ♜xa6+ ♛b8 4. ♜d8+ ♜c8 5. ♜xc8# 1-0



Usually, a player's attempts to 'sell' a swindle are far more primitive than Harrwitz's performance. I have often witnessed juniors (and occasionally adults) play a deliberate move and then extravagantly pretend that they had just blundered, usually with the most Razzie-worthy acting skills. I have little time for such theatrics, which are usually at best ineffective and at worst pathetic. Still, Miguel Najdorf once showed off his thespian skills with success. His game against Svetozar Gligoric in the 1952 Helsinki Olympiad seemed destined for a draw, before a dramatic final scene just before the time control.

Miguel Najdorf Svetozar Gligoric

Helsinki ol 1952 (5)



39... ♜ xe4?? 40. ♜ e3! ♜ e6 41. ♜ xe4 1-0

As Gligoric tells it: 'Najdorf, as if in a trance, sat down, played his move offering me a pawn and then at once slapped his forehead as if realising he had just made a blunder. Being in time pressure, I naively grabbed the pawn after which Najdorf grabbed a whole piece. Even the conservative Paul

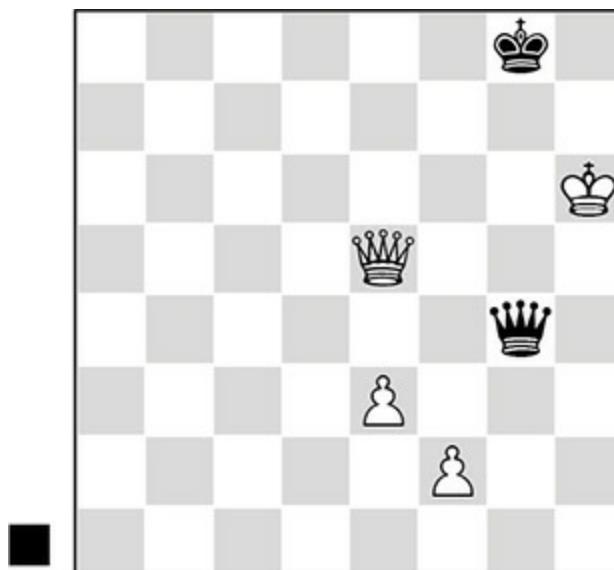
Keres, who watched the whole scenario, couldn't stop himself from laughing, and perhaps I would have seen the funny side, too – since the bubbly Najdorf's childish pranks were in a way cute – if it hadn't been me who had just been defeated!'

Finally, the Dutch chess collector G.C.van Perlo tells the story of an outrageous swindle that simultaneously features the very best and worst of gamesmanship. In this book, we have discussed bluff, creativity and stalemate, but rarely will you see all three combined to reap immediate dividends with such success as in the following example:

Erno Gereben

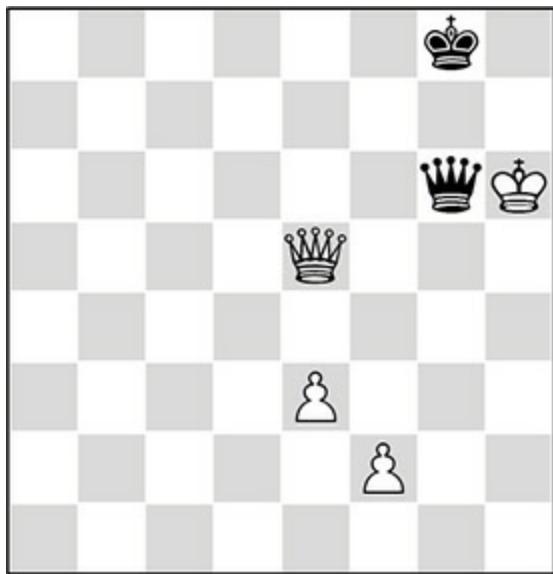
Haji Ardiansyah

Siegen ol 1970 (7)



As Van Perlo tells the story: 'The Swindler spotted a possibility that hardly anyone could have conceived of. Triumphantly he grabbed his queen, planted it on g6, crying "Stalemate!" and threw the pieces back in the box. Flabbergasted, Gereben accepted the draw, only to discover later how he had been bamboozled.'

71... ♕g6+!?!? ½-½



Take a deep breath and try to clear your conscience, as we hastily leave this ethical quagmire and head for the purer pastures of illustrative games.

PART V

Swindles in Practice

I am convinced, the way one plays chess always reflects the player's personality. If something defines his character, then it will also define his way of playing. – Vladimir Kramnik

Having broken down the building blocks of the chess swindle, we turn now to some illustrative games. I've allowed myself to annotate these games in full, so if you'll indulge me, there will be some 'regular' chess annotations before we get to the real swindling excitement. I have mainly chosen examples that encompass a combination of the themes we have discussed so far in the book, though some of the swindles also have a degree of notoriety.

First, we will look at some grandmaster examples, followed by a few amateur gems, before finishing with my all-time favourite swindle.

CHAPTER 21

Master Swindles

Game 1

Vadim Malakhko	2600
Gawain Jones	2562

Canberra 2008 (7)

Far too often, I see players failing to take account of practical considerations when making key decisions, instead blindly striving to find the ‘best’ move at every turn. This is true at all levels, but especially for amateurs. On the other hand, the unforgiving world of professional competition forces grandmasters to be clinically self-aware to their own practical strengths and weaknesses, as well as those of their opponent. The first of our illustrative games sees the strong British grandmaster Gawain Jones demonstrate this point.

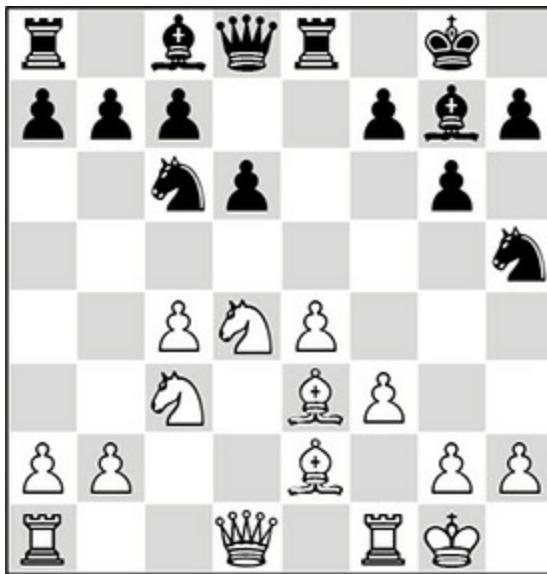
1.c4 ♜f6 2.♘c3 g6 3.d4 ♜g7 4.e4 d6 5.♗f3 0-0 6.♗e2 e5 7.0-0



7...exd4

A rare choice these days at grandmaster level, dwarfed not only by the hugely popular 7...♝c6 but also 7...♝bd7, 7...♝a6 and even the recently trendy 7...c6!?. Still, the capture served as the backbone of GM Dejan Bojkov’s 2014 repertoire book. It leads to positions very different from the other lines of the classical King’s Indian, with the fight focussed around the semi-open centre. Curiously, it is also the engine’s top choice – but engines are notoriously bad at evaluating King’s Indian positions.

8.♗xd4 ♜e8 9.f3 ♜c6 10.♗e3 ♜h5



11. ♔d2

The main line.

White can also first capture on c6 and only after 11. ♕xc6 bxc6 play 12. ♔d2, which has the advantage of ruling out 12... ♜f4 but instead allows 12... c5. On the other hand, the principled 11.f4 gains space and attacks the knight on h5, but after the retreat 11... ♜f6! Black puts uncomfortable pressure on the newly weakened e4 and g4 points.

11... ♜f4!



This strategically desirable idea makes the whole line playable for Black. Having chosen to open up the position on move seven, Black now goes hunting for White's bishops.

12. ♜fd1

Again, the most popular move.

12. ♜xc6 must of course be met by the *zwischenzug* 12... ♜xe2+!, where-upon the middlegame after 13. ♜xe2 bxc6 14. ♜d4 ♜xd4+ 15. ♜xd4 c5!



analysis diagram

is considered roughly equal (Van Wely-Mamedyarov, Bastia rapid 2010 (1-0, 70)). As opposed to the main game, here Black controls the d4-square and can make use of the semi-open b-file to start a minority attack with his a-pawn.

It is also possible to try to hang on to the bishop pair by 12. ♘xf4 ♕xd4 13. ♘d3, but Black's knight is very imposing and after 13... ♘e6, intending ...c7-c6, ...a7-a6 and ...b7-b5, White's position comes under surprisingly strong pressure.

12... ♕xd4 13. ♘xd4 ♕xd4+ 14. ♘xd4 ♕xe2+ 15. ♘xe2 b6 16. ♘c3 ♘b7



This has all been seen many times before. As opposed to the scintillating attacking variations of the Mar del Plata King's Indian (after 7... ♘c6), Black has taken a more conservative approach. Rather than burning his bridges for an all-out attack, he is prepared to accept a modest disadvantage in order to reach an endgame with excellent chances to draw – which, more often than not, he will achieve. On the other hand, White faces no real risk and is already ‘playing for two results’, as the saying goes.

17. ♘ac1

17. ♘d5 is the alternative, heading straight for a major piece endgame. After 17... ♘xd5 18.cxd5 ♘g5 19. ♘ac1



analysis diagram

White has a slightly more pleasant structure, but Black has only one real weakness (the pawn on c7), and generally speaking in these sorts of endgames, one weakness is not decisive. My database reports dozens of drawn games from here, including one of the many notorious Mamedyarov-Radjabov games to finish '½-½' (Shamkir 2017).

17... ♕g5 18. ♖d2!?

White decides to keep the minor pieces on and swap the queens off instead. Technically speaking, Black has a 'good' bishop, but modern strategic thinking has come a long way since the days of just checking the colours that the pawns sit on. White's central bind does an excellent job of restricting the bishop's scope, as is often seen in the similar structure of the Maroczy Bind.

18... ♛h5?!

A somewhat useless square for the queen, from which she will soon have to relocate. Either 18... ♔e5 or trading on d2 was better.

19.b4



White's plan is to use his queenside minority to create, and win, a weak black pawn on that side of the board.

19... ♔e7?!

19...a5! was better, either forcing White to give up on the c4-c5 plan by pushing 20.b5, or else at least giving Black the a-file after 20.a3.

20.♘ e2 ♘ e5

It is already too late for 20...a5?: 21.c5! and Black's pawn structure collapses.

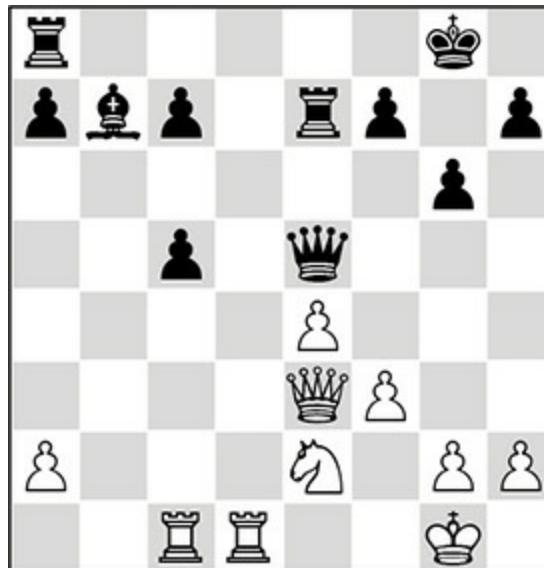
21.c5

All part of the plan!

21...dxc5 22.bxc5 bxc5

22...♝ ae8 would preserve Black's structure, but at the cost of further constrictions to his bishop after 23.c6!, followed by transferring the knight to d5. Still, this was probably the lesser evil.

23.♘ e3

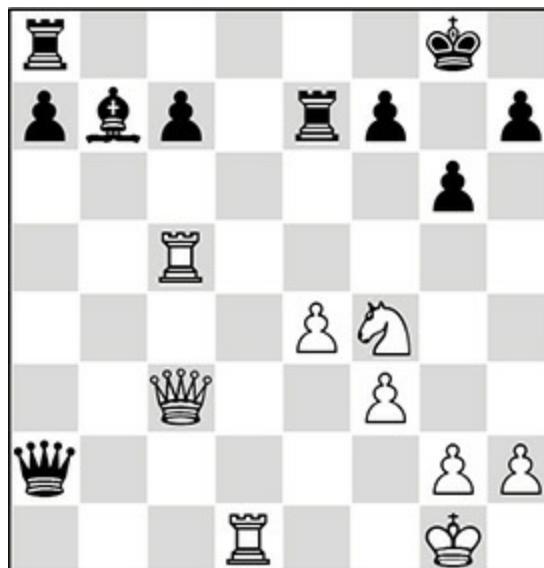


White now has a clear advantage. The pawn on c5 is clearly doomed, but his colleague on c7 is not much better off, being next in the firing line of White's major pieces. Black is already forced to play for tricks.

23...♝ e6 24.♞ f4 ♘ a6?

Presumably missing White's 26th move, though 24...♚ xa2 25.♝ xc5 is also clearly better for White.

25.♝ xc5! ♚ xa2? 26.♝ c3!!



Black is temporarily a pawn ahead, but his queen is suddenly trapped far from home and must deal

with 27. $\mathbb{Q}a1$ somehow. Meanwhile, White is also threatening the deadly 27. $\mathbb{Q}h5!$ with a swift mating attack.

26... $\mathbb{Q}a6$

The only move. Black gives up his queen as dearly as he can.

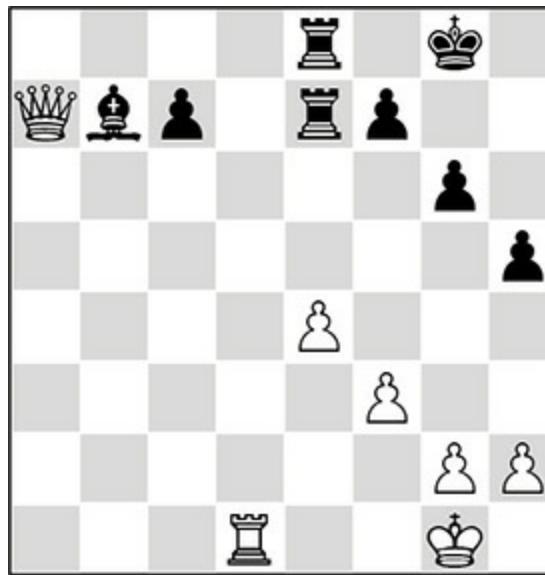
27. $\mathbb{Q}h5!$



27... $g \times h5$ 28. $\mathbb{Q}g5+$ $\mathbb{Q}g6$ 29. $\mathbb{Q}xg6+$ $h \times g6$ 30. $\mathbb{Q}c5$

A final touch, winning a pawn.

30... $\mathbb{Q}ae8$ 31. $\mathbb{Q}xa7$



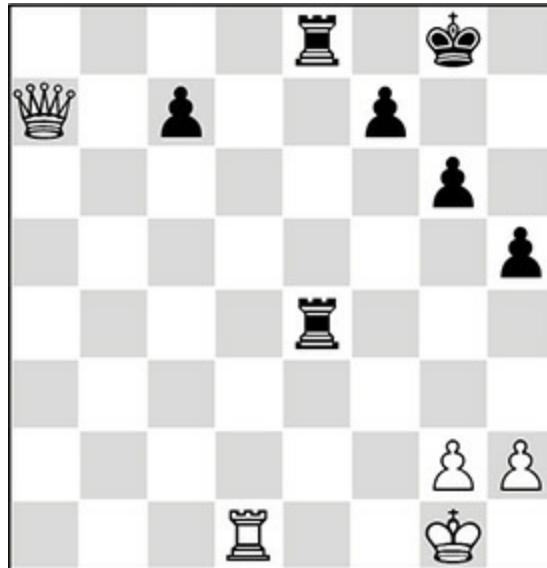
And so, the dust has settled, and Black is in big trouble. The c-pawn will soon fall, and even if he manages to swap a pair of rooks in the process, his remaining pieces will not be able to hold the kingside. In this ' $\mathbb{Q} + \mathbb{R} + \mathbb{B} + \mathbb{N} + \mathbb{P}$ vs $\mathbb{Q} + \mathbb{R} + \mathbb{B} + \mathbb{N} + \mathbb{P}$ ' scenario, Black's middlegame woes regarding his bishop would have continued. It would be unable to find a safe outpost anywhere; for example, placing the bishop on e6 will leave it vulnerable to an eventual f3-f4-f5. It is time to enter swindle mode.

An important point to note is that this tournament was played at the modern FIDE time control of 90 minutes plus 30 seconds per move, and both players were already rapidly approaching the pure increment stage. Jones correctly assesses that the endgame mentioned above would be extremely

difficult for Black, who must take care on every move that he doesn't drop a piece to a queen fork. White, on the other hand, can move relatively quickly, prodding and probing without risk while building up significant reserves on the clock.

Practically speaking, this is a very bad situation, and Jones decides that the chances of holding under such circumstances are too low. Instead, he violently turns the tables, entering an endgame where White has to do the serious thinking, while Black's moves are relatively easy (and quick) to make.

31... ♕xe4!! 32.fxe4 ♕xe4

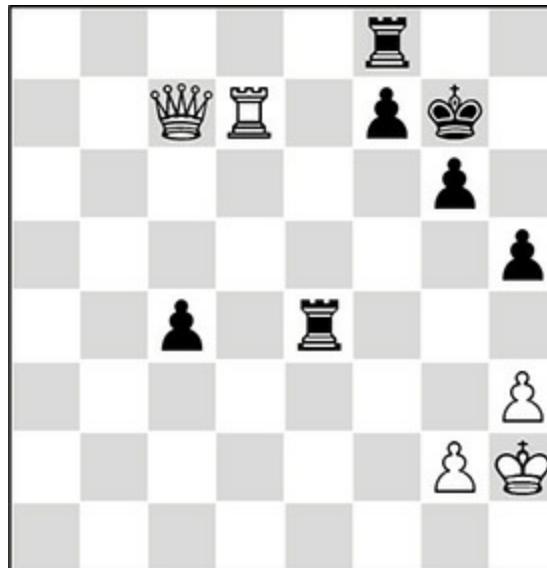


A cunning sacrifice. Black is angling for a ‘ $\text{R} + \text{P} + \text{P} + \text{P}$ vs $\text{R} + \text{P} + \text{P}$ ’ ending after 33. ♕xc7 ♕e1+, where Black now has the e6-square well and truly secured for his rook. White tries to avoid this by keeping one pair of rooks on, but Jones again finds the most tenacious set-up.

33. ♕a1 c5! 34.h3 c4 35. ♕h2 ♕e3 36. ♕a7 ♕3e7 37. ♕c5 ♕e4

Note that Black's choices are straightforward; he simply has to react to White's transparent threats, one move at a time. White, on the other hand, needs to come up with a long-term winning plan, and this requires larger investments of time and energy.

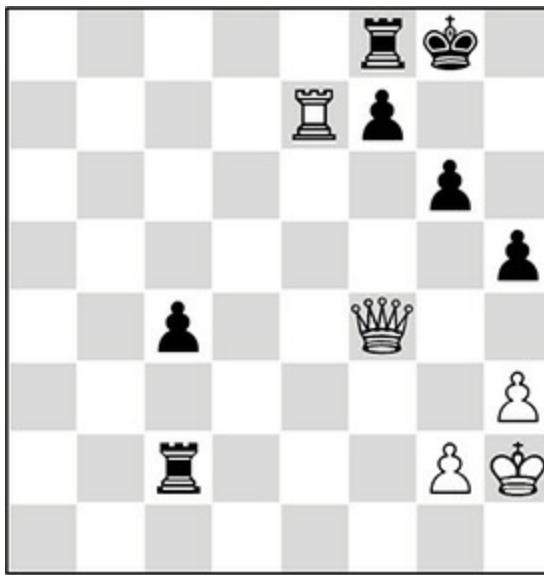
38. ♕d7 ♕g7 39. ♕c7 ♕f8!



A passive yet necessary position. The rook holds f7 fast and can only be dislodged by an exchange. Meanwhile, Black's other rook roams around causing mischief, making it as difficult as possible for

White to collect the c-pawn without exchanges.

40. ♔ g3 ♕ e3+ 41. ♔ f2 ♕ d3 42. ♕ e7 ♕ d2+ 43. ♔ g1 ♕ c2 44. ♔ h2 ♕ g8 45. ♔ f4



White has made some progress, isolating the black rooks and taking control of the central files. Still, the black kingside defences are solid, while White doesn't have enough forces to hunt the roaming black rook to extinction.

45... ♕ c3 46. ♕ c7 ♕ c2 47. ♔ f6 ♕ c1 48. ♔ g3 ♕ c2 49. ♔ h2 ♕ c1 50. ♔ g3 ♕ c2 51. ♔ f3 ♕ c1 52. ♔ f2 c3

Giving White another chance to allow an exchange of rooks.

53. ♔ g3 ♕ c2 54. ♔ f4!



Excellent play by Malakhatko. His careful manoeuvring has meant that he can finally collect the c-pawn. However, the exertion has cost him valuable time, and now, with only 30 seconds for every move, he still has to break through Black's final line of defence.

54... ♕ d2

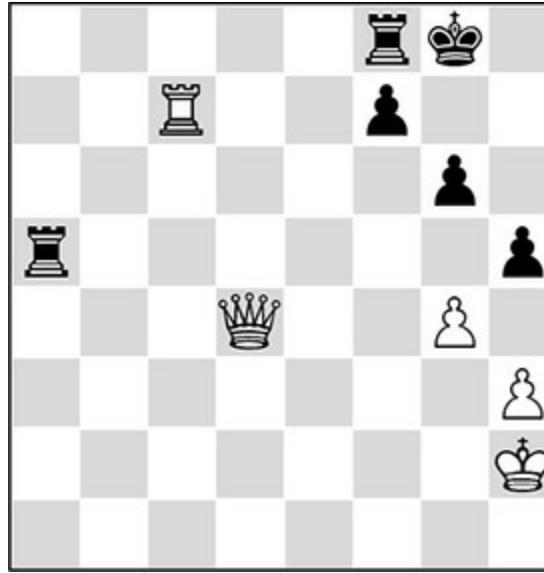
Should Black try to hold on to his material with 54... ♔ g7, White continues with 55. ♔ e4 ♕ c1 56. ♔ d4+ ♔ g8 57. ♔ h4!. Then Black had better jettison his c-pawn or else he would be embarrassingly checkmated once the white king makes its way to h6.

55. ♕ xc3 ♕ d5! 56. ♕ c7 ♔ g7 57. ♔ h2 ♕ f5

So, White has won another pawn, and the black rook is forced to retreat to the inner walls.

58. ♜ d4+ ♔ g8 59. g4 ♕ a5!

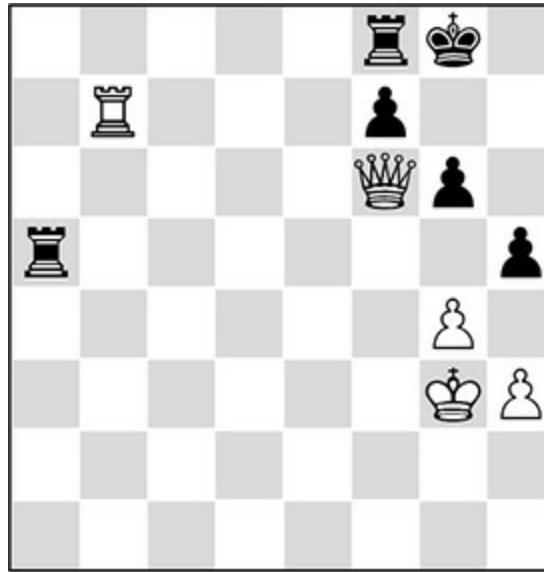
And definitely not 59...hxg4? 60.hxg4, where White can make use of the h-file to create checkmate threats on h8. Instead, Jones tries to keep the kingside as closed as he possibly can. To do this, he must maintain his active rook on the fifth rank, where it both covers h5 and also prevents the white king from infiltrating via g5.



60. ♜ f6 ♕ d5 61. ♜ g3 ♕ b5 62. ♜ f2 ♕ d5 63. ♜ e2 ♕ b5 64. ♜ f2 ♕ d5 65. ♜ g3 ♕ b5

Further repetitions from Black's side.

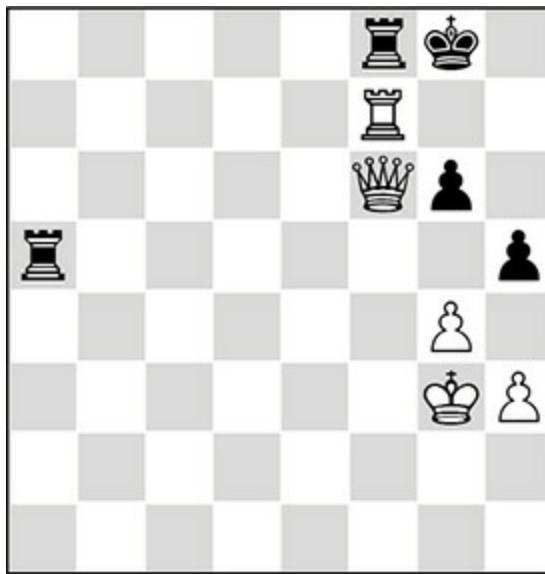
66. ♔ h4 ♕ d5 67. ♕ b7 ♕ c5 68. ♔ g3 ♕ a5



Gritty defence. It's once again worth noting that, as a result of his practical decision to give up his bishop, Jones could play the last 15 moves more or less instantly. White, on the other hand, has been trying to work out a convincing breakthrough plan in a difficult endgame. The win is there, and no doubt Malakhatko would have found the accurate implementation with more time on the clock. But playing on increments, and no doubt frustrated with Black's resilience, he spots the right idea at the wrong moment:

69. ♕ xf7??

The engine innocently offers 69. ♜ d4! ♕ a3+ 70. ♔ h4 ♕ a5 71. ♕ xf7! as winning.

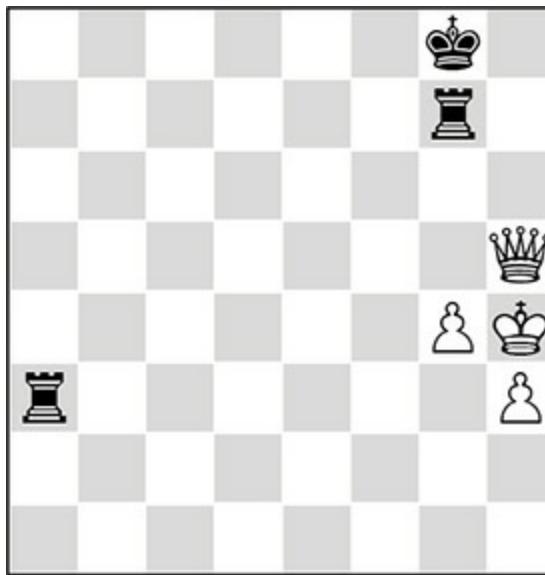


69... ♜ a3+!

A horrible shock, highlighting the difference with the previous note. This remarkable oversight from a strong grandmaster is the culmination of Black's grit, fortitude and, most of all, practical decisions over the past 40 moves.

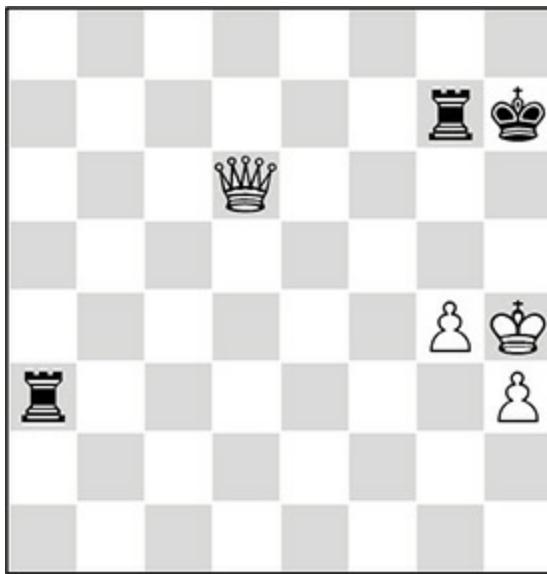
Malakhatk had foreseen only 69... ♜ xf7?? 70. ♔ d8+ ♕ g7 71. ♜ xa5 and White wins easily.

70. ♔ h4 ♜ xf7 71. ♜ xg6+ ♕ g7 72. ♔ e8+ ♕ h7 73. ♜ xh5+ ♕ g8



The situation has changed remarkably. White is still materially ahead and, just as after the opening, he is the only player who can play for a win. But Black's drawing chances have considerably increased after White's blunder.⁵⁵

74. ♔ e8+ ♕ h7 75. ♔ h5+ ♕ g8 76. ♔ d5+ ♕ h8 77. ♔ d8+ ♕ h7 78. ♔ d6



78... ♕ ga7!

Again showing his understanding of practical chess, Jones immediately connects his rooks, limiting the possibilities of a time-induced blunder.

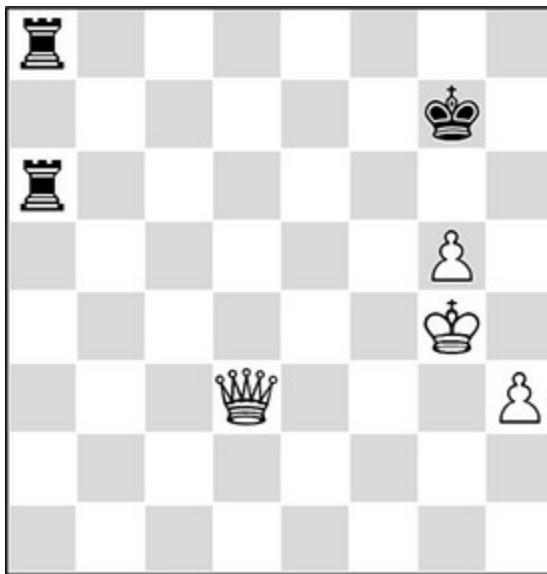
79. ♜ e6 ♕ 3a6 80. ♜ f5+ ♔ g8 81. ♜ d5+ ♔ f8 82. ♜ d8+ ♔ g7



83.g5?

White would have had to push his pawns sooner or later. But this timing is unfortunate, as White's king will sorely miss the cover from checks from both directions.

83... ♜ a8! 84. ♜ d4+ ♔ g6 85. ♜ d3+ ♔ g7 86. ♜ h5 ♜ h8+! 87. ♜ g4 ♜ ha8! 88. ♜ c3+ ♔ g6 89. ♜ d3+ ♔ g7



Now the position is a trivial draw. White cannot both advance his pawns and find shelter for his king, and normally we would conclude at this point that the swindle has been successful. But there is a further twist to this story.

90. ♕d7+ ♔g6 91. h4 ♜a4+ 92. ♕g3 ♜a3+ 93. ♕f2 ♜8a4 94. ♕e8+?

The start of a dubious strategy to drive the black king forwards. This would almost certainly not have been Malakhatko's choice if he were to be randomly given this position, but the frustrations of letting the win slip away over the past few hours have begun to cloud his judgement.

94... ♔f5 95. ♕f7+ ♔g4!



Desperate for the win, Malakhatko takes extreme risks. The position should still be drawn, but by using the white pawns as a shield for his king, Black can create some remarkable, study-like mating threats. At this point, most likely both players were thinking about winning...

96. ♕e2 ♜a2+ 97. ♕d1 ♜d4+ 98. ♕c1 ♜dd2 99. g6 ♜dc2+



100. $\mathbb{Q}d1?$

The only winning try, but a clear sign that White has lost his grip on the position. After 100. $\mathbb{Q}b1$, the players could have shaken hands. But now the danger is very real, and surprisingly, White must tread a narrow path to hold the draw.

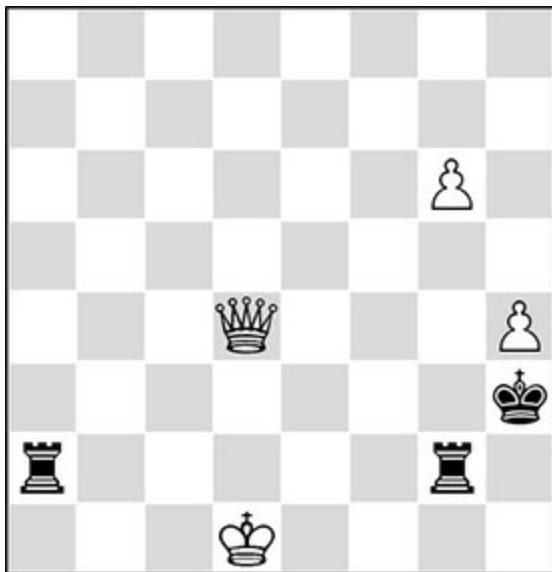
100... $\mathbb{R}g2!!$ 101. $\mathbb{Q}e6+$ $\mathbb{Q}h5$ 102. $\mathbb{Q}e5+$ $\mathbb{Q}g4$



103. $\mathbb{Q}d4+??$

But this is really too much. Unwilling to acquiesce to the draw with 103. $\mathbb{Q}e6+$, White makes one last winning attempt, and allows a beautiful finish.

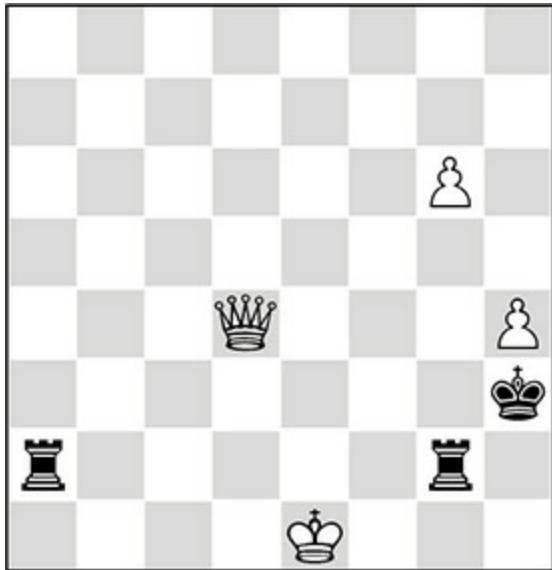
103... $\mathbb{Q}h3!!$



Presumably, Malakhatko missed that 104.g7 is answered by 104... $\mathbb{R}g1+!!$ 105. $\mathbb{Q}xg1$ $\mathbb{R}a1+$ 106. $\mathbb{Q}e2$ $\mathbb{R}xg1$, when the queening square is covered.

Without his pawns, White could still draw by giving checks. But as it stands, his own forces are working against him by providing cover for the black king.

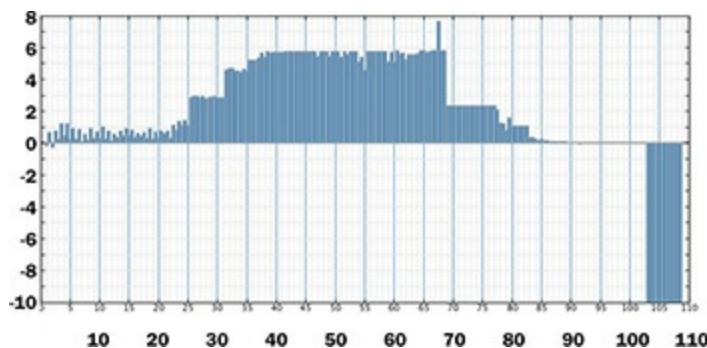
104. $\mathbb{Q}e1$



104... $\mathbb{R}a1+!!$ 105. $\mathbb{Q}xa1$ $\mathbb{R}g1+$ 106. $\mathbb{Q}f2$ $\mathbb{R}xa1$

Almost 80 moves of perseverance and practicality have paid dividends in full.

107. $h5$ $\mathbb{R}a2+$ 108. $\mathbb{Q}f3$ $\mathbb{R}g2$ 0-1



(As an economist, I couldn't write a book without including some graphs. After each illustrative

example you will see the evaluation graph for the game. It gives a quick snapshot of which side was winning during the game, for how long, and by how much. The horizontal axis is the move number and the vertical axis is the computer evaluation measured by Stockfish at depth 22. Most online chess platforms and commercial chess software can make the same sort of graphs for you; I used SCID⁵⁶ for this book.)

Game 2

SP Sethuraman	2618
Anish Giri	2772

Tbilisi 2017 (3)

Both of the players in the next game are renowned Swindlers in their own right. Giri, with black, needed to hold a draw to take their World Cup knockout match to tie-breaks.

1.e4 c5 2.♘f3 d6 3.d4 cxd4 4.♘xd4 ♘f6 5.♘c3 a6 6.♗e2 e5 7.♗b3 ♘e7 8.♗e3 ♘e6 9.♗d3 0-0 10.0-0 ♘bd7 11.♘d5 ♘xd5 12.exd5 ♜c8 13.c4



A well-debated variation has arisen. As is so often the case with the Najdorf, the early stages are essentially a battle of memories, and here Anish mixes up his moves.

13...g6?!

A common idea in this variation, but better was 13...♗e8!.



analysis diagram

a move Black will have to play anyway to create counterplay, but now he may be able to do without ...g7-g6 in some lines. For example, if 14. $\mathbb{Q}ac1$ then the immediate 14...f5! and Black's counterplay is slightly sped up when compared to the game.

Instead, White has usually played 14. $\mathbb{Q}d2$ here, intending to meet 14...f5 with 15.f4. Magnus Carlsen suffered a rare defeat after 14...b6!? 15. $\mathbb{Q}ac1$ a5 16. $\mathbb{Q}a1$ g6 Carlsen- Grischuk, St Louis 2015 (0-1, 66). Recently, Grischuk faced the more conservative 14.f3!? and again got a fine position out of the opening, though the result was ultimately less successful: 14...g6 15. $\mathbb{Q}h1$ $\mathbb{Q}g7$ 16. $\mathbb{Q}g1$ $\mathbb{Q}g5$ 17. $\mathbb{Q}ad1$ h5 18. $\mathbb{Q}d2$ f5 19.b4 h4 and Black was slightly better in Karjakin-Grischuk, Paris blitz 2018 (1-0, 45).

14. $\mathbb{Q}ac1$ $\mathbb{Q}e8$ 15. $\mathbb{Q}d2$ $\mathbb{Q}g7$ 16. $\mathbb{Q}a5!$



Giri: ‘A standard move, which I missed.’ Black can defend the pawn on b7, of course, but then after $\mathbb{Q}d3$ and b2-b4, White has a much better version of normal positions in this variation. You can't just give away tempi for free in the Najdorf, and at the elite level, Black's position is already strategically lost. This provokes Giri to begin thinking about the best psychological approach to create chances. He decides on a strategy of Window-Ledging combined with a Berserk Attack, practically giving up

on the entire queenside in order to rapidly conjure up a kingside assault.

16... \mathbb{Q} f5!? 17. \mathbb{Q} xb7 \mathbb{Q} c7 18. \mathbb{Q} a5 \mathbb{Q} xe3 19. fxe3 \mathbb{Q} g5!



Having swapped off White's dark-squared bishop, Black's counterplay naturally should revolve around the dark squares. The next step is to target the main defender of those squares, which is the pawn on e3.

20.b4!

Securing the knight and also covering the c5-square.

20... \mathbb{Q} b6 21. \mathbb{Q} f3 f5! 22. \mathbb{Q} c6 f4!

The exclamation marks are not because the moves are objectively good, but rather because the engine hates them! However, passive defence offers no practical chances; Black simply must roll the dice and take the fight into a tactical skirmish, hoping that White falters.

23. \mathbb{Q} c2!!



An excellent move, refuting Black's bravado by highlighting that Black's king isn't that safe either. Giri notices too late that his planned 23...fxe3 runs into 24. \mathbb{Q} g3! with a deadly sacrifice on g6 to follow. But by this stage, Black's bridges are burned, and any objectively stronger moves are hardly appealing from a practical standpoint. For example, the engine's recommendation of 23...e4 24. \mathbb{Q} xe4 \mathbb{Q} ce8 only succeeds in forcing White to find some obvious (and obviously good) moves:

25. ♜d4 ♜xd4 26. ♜e5 27. ♜e6 and the endgame is trivially winning at grandmaster level. Without a realistic alternative, Giri sticks with Plan A.

23...fxe3! 24. ♜g3! ♜h4 25. ♜xg6+



Giri, in his trademark waggish style, provides a small insight into his thoughts with his post-match remarks: ‘I was thinking about resigning immediately. But then I remembered that Sethuraman had previously had a +11 game against Ponomariov that he didn’t win, and though I didn’t hope for anything, I thought it would be stupid to resign here.’

As is typical with Giri’s commentary, once you can sift through the flippancy, you’ll often find a nugget of wisdom. Sethuraman had recently shown himself vulnerable to swindling, a recollection that Giri used to stay optimistic, ‘play the player’ and start looking for practical chances. He starts by trying to keep the position as murky as possible.

25... ♛h8!

25...hxg6 simplifies things in the sense that the lines are quite forcing. 26. ♜xg6+ ♛h8 27. ♜h5+ ♛g8 28. ♜g4+, picking up both the knight and the bishop, is just too easy.

26. ♜xd6 ♜f6

26... ♜f2+ 27. ♛h1 ♜f6 28. ♜f5! ends the attack and the game.

27.g3



27... ♜ c7!!

And not 27... ♜ g5? 28. ♛ f1, winning. White has succeeded in keeping the bishop out of f2 and the queen from advancing forwards, so Black finds a different way to bring his forces across. It is clear that Black's only hope rests with using his brave e-pawn to create some threats around the white king.

28. ♞ e6



+6, says my engine. White is threatening to consolidate, and so Giri seeks to create confusion and fear at all costs.

28... ♜ xg3!!

A move that White certainly didn't want to see, regardless of its objective merit.

29. hxg3 ♜ g7



For the first time in the game, Black has a serious threat. Giri is a piece and a pawn down, but White is running out of dark-square defenders on his kingside.

30. ♜ f3

A natural move, intending to bring the queen to the kingside's defence. But there was a stronger win, though difficult to spot, with 30.g4 ♜ xg4 31. ♛ g6!!.. We'll forgive Sethuraman for missing this.

Instead, after the text, White intends to meet 30... ♜ xg3+ 31. ♛ g2 ♜ f4 with 32. ♜ xe5!!, preventing 32... ♛ g8 on account of 33. ♜ f7#. Giri needs to find more creativity to keep the game going.

30...e2!!



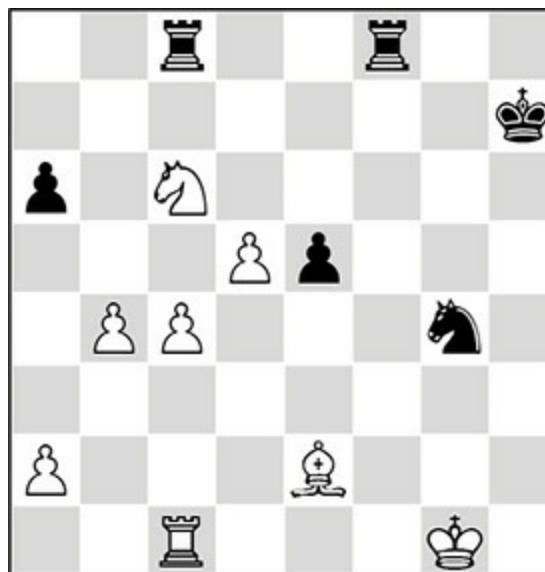
The brave e-pawn is willing to sacrifice itself for the cause, clearing the c1-h6 diagonal for its queen.

31.g4!?

The point is that 31. $\mathbb{Q}xe2?$ $\mathbb{Q}xg3+$ 32. $\mathbb{Q}g2 \mathbb{Q}f4!$ threatens the rook on c1, so there's no time for White to prevent ... $\mathbb{Q}g8$. Still, White's position is so good that he can hold the draw with 33. $\mathbb{Q}c2!$ $\mathbb{Q}g8$ 34. $\mathbb{Q}xe5$, pocketing a bunch of pieces for the queen.

31... $\mathbb{Q}xd5!$

White's last move obviously invites the tempting 31... $\mathbb{Q}xg4$, so what's the catch? Looking a bit deeper, we might be able to spot Sethuraman's cunning idea: 32. $\mathbb{Q}e7 \mathbb{Q}h6$ 33. $\mathbb{Q}xh7+!$ $\mathbb{Q}xh7$ 34. $\mathbb{Q}xh7+ \mathbb{Q}xh7$ 35. $\mathbb{Q}xe2$



analysis diagram

when material is equal but White's massive knight on c6 and his horde of connected pawns guarantee a winning position.

Still, the move 31.g4 is a good sign for Giri. It sends a signal that his opponent is looking for ways to bail out of the tactics and simplify the position, rather than search for a clinical win. In other words, it hints that Sethuraman is nervous. Giri's move is designed to amplify that feeling.

32. ♕xe2!

A good response, again aiming for simplifications.

32.cxd5?? ♜xf3 and 32. ♜xd5?? ♜xg4+ won't do, but there is certainly some relief in finally eliminating that impudent e-pawn. However, note two consequences: first, Black's knight has finally gotten into the hunt, and second, White's queen's rook is, for the moment, undefended.

32... ♜f4 33. ♜xe5 ♜xe6

There is nothing better, but at least Giri has managed to keep the queens on in addition to clawing back a little of his material deficit.

34. ♜xe6 ♜ce8

Bringing his last piece into the attack.

35. ♜d5 ♜f4! 36. ♜f1



The board has rapidly cleared, and White can be reasonably happy with this transformation. His advantage is still well and truly in the decisive range (+3 according to my engine), and Black's attacking resources have been severely depleted. Still, the white king isn't completely safe yet, and move forty is a few torturous moves away. Black must keep the pressure on until then.

36... ♜e3!

Even after the exchanges, Giri continues to hammer away at the dark squares. Note the precise placement of his pieces, which both loom around the white king and simultaneously prevent the knight from returning to the defence.

37. ♜d8+ ♜f8 38. ♜d5

An understandable repetition given the approaching time control. White would like nothing more than to make two 'pass' moves to reach the time control without any more action, but alas, he needs to make a critical decision in order to avoid the threefold repetition.

38... ♜f4



39. ♕f2??

A natural move, preventing 39... ♕xg4+ on account of being able to capture and then interpose his rook on g2. But this move is in fact a horrible blunder.

White certainly can't afford to dither, as Black has serious threats. E.g. 39.b5?? ♕exf3!! 40. ♕xf3 ♕xg4+ 41. ♔f2 ♕b2+ and Black has enough threats to force a perpetual check. For instance: 42. ♔e3 ♕c3+ and White has to retreat his king because 43. ♔d3?? runs into 43... ♕e1+ 44. ♔e2 ♕e4+!!.

The cleanest of the winning moves is 39. ♔h2!, deftly side-stepping any future checks on the g-file. After 39... ♕xg4 40. ♕xg4 ♕xg4 41. ♕d8+!, suddenly White is the one giving checkmate. Instead, Black can threaten a check on h4, but after 39... ♕f6 40. ♔g3! (40. ♔g2 is also good), there is no way through and, having defended his bishop, White is now finally threatening to swap the queens with 41. ♕d8+.



39... ♕e1+??

Mutual blindness! Having forced the error with his persistent aggressiveness, Giri misses his first chance. He would later remark, 'I was praying, and God sent me a boat, so I was lucky he decided to send me a second one.'

39... ♕exf3! is the move that both players missed, and that White's last move failed to prevent. After

40. ♜xf3 ♜xg4+ 41. ♔f2 ♜b2+ we transpose into the previous note, which leads to a draw by perpetual check.

40. ♜h2!

40. ♜g2?? leads to a razor-sharp sequence of only moves: 40... ♜xg4+! 41. ♔h3! ♜f4! 42. ♜e2! ♜h6+ 43. ♔h5 ♜xe2 44. ♜d8+ ♜g7 45. ♜d7+ ♜g8 46. ♜c8+, when Black can play for a win with the amazing 46... ♜e8!! 47. ♜xe8+ ♜f8 48. ♜e5 ♜xc6, although White is close to saving the draw.

40... ♜h6+ 41. ♜g2 ♜h4!

41... ♜h1+?? 42. ♜g3 loses material.



The first time control has been reached, and White has dodged a huge bullet (or boat), but he is not out of the woods yet. His king remains exposed and his pieces lack coordination, despite an overwhelming material advantage.

42. ♜d7

Not a bad move, but I would certainly have preferred to try and simplify the position.

It is true that the ending after 42. ♜d8+ ♜xd8 43. ♜xd8 ♜xc4 is a little tricky, especially with the immediate pressure on b4. But 42. ♜h5! is stronger. Although the endgame after 42... ♜xh5 43. gxh5 ♜xc4 also requires some technical work, White's task is risk-free and should not be too onerous for a player of Sethuraman's skills, especially after 44. ♜d5!. Perhaps, having reached the time-control, Sethuraman underestimated the remaining dangers and so resumed his search for a clinical win.

42... ♜xc4

'Show me what you've got.'

43. ♜c8+ ♜g7 44. ♜d7+ ♜h8 45. ♜d4



After a long absence from the fray, White's knight finally makes a return.

45...h5!

Black continues to pile on the pressure, removing the last remnants of White's pawn guard. The pawn cannot be captured because of the hanging knight on d4.

46.♘ f1?!

A natural attempt to swap off some pieces, but if Sethuraman wanted simplifications, he should have made them a few moves ago. While this move finally repels Black's attack, it also allows Giri to throw all his weight behind one final, all-or-nothing swindle:

46...hxg4 47.♗ xg4 ♘ xf1 48.♕ xf1 ♗ f6+!!



Losing on the spot, and yet I shamelessly award it two exclamation marks. Other moves only delay the inevitable defeat, while instead, Giri bets everything on the shock of this fork fogging Sethuraman's otherwise razor-sharp tactical skills. The board has rapidly emptied and Sethuraman would have been counting on the win being just a matter of securing his material advantage – which is why the effect of Giri's move is so venomous. Surprised and exhausted, fearful and perhaps reaching the limits of his patience, Sethuraman plays the apparently only move to save his pieces – and throws away the win.

49.♗ f3??

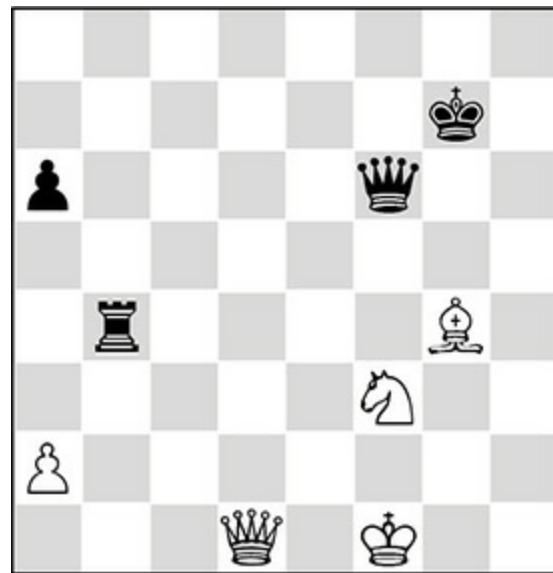
The unintuitive 49.♗ f5!! would have finished things, as after 49...♖ c1+ 50.♔ e2 ♕ e5+ 51.♔ d3

g3+ 52. e4 White's king proudly marches up the board to safety.
49... xb4!



Finally reaching a sort of endgame parity. White is still up on material, but the reduced pawns coupled with the permanently exposed kings mean that a draw is the most likely result. It is fitting that the end of the tactical melee should be a black capture on a dark square.

50. c8+ g7 51. c7+ h6 52. h2+ g7 53. c7+ h6 54. c1+ g7 55. d1?



Setting a trap – but Giri sees further.

55... xg4! 56. d7+ f8 57. c8+ e7 58. xg4 a1+!

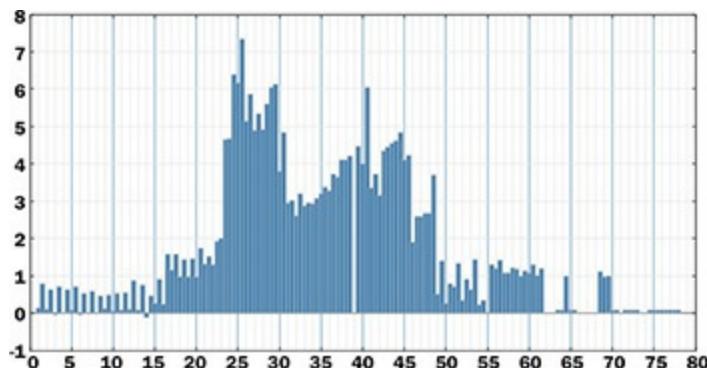


59. ♜ g2 ♕ xa2+

Reaching a textbook drawn endgame. Sethuraman goes through the motions for a few moves, but the result is never in doubt.

60. ♜ g3 ♕ e6 61. ♜ g7+ ♛ d6 62. ♜ a7 ♕ g6+ 63. ♜ f4 ♕ f6+ 64. ♜ e3 ♕ c3+ 65. ♜ e4 ♕ b4+ 66. ♜ d4 ♕ e1+ 67. ♜ d3 ♕ d1+ 68. ♜ c3 ♕ a1+ 69. ♜ c2 ♕ a2+ 70. ♜ d3 ♕ b1+ 71. ♜ e3 ♕ g1+ 72. ♜ d2 ♕ f2+ 73. ♜ c3 ♕ e1+ 74. ♜ b2 ♕ b4+ 75. ♜ b3 a5 76. ♜ a6+ ♕ c7 77. ♜ xa5+ ♕ xa5 78. ♜ xa5 ½-½

A remarkable escape against a strong grandmaster, allowing Giri to save and eventually win the match, and showcasing the powerful relationship between emotions and swindles even at the highest level.



As a little bonus, here is my favourite ‘Giri Swindle’. Anish has managed to swindle many a top grandmaster over his career, including this game against Wesley So back in their younger days.

Game 3

Wesley So	2656
Anish Giri	2588

Wijk aan Zee 2010 (11)



Down a pair of bishops, Giri concocted a hostile hoax with

34... ♕d1!!

threatening 35... ♖f1+. White is so far up on material that it was even possible just to give up the queen with 35. ♖xd1 ♖f1+ 36. ♛xf1, with an overwhelming advantage. But instead, the game concluded

35. ♛c1? ♜g3 36. ♜e2??

36. ♜xd1 ♖f2 37. ♖f1! still wins.



36... ♖f1+!! 0-1

It's mate on f2 next move.

Game 4

Anthony Miles

Nigel Short

London 1980 (4)

Tony Miles was not only one of Britain's best players, but also one of the most creative geniuses in the modern age. He was also very well versed in chess psychology, in all of its forms. In his infamous obituary of Miles, Short wrote: 'Tony was not above a spot of gamesmanship. Players complained of

him burping at the board or blowing his nose loudly. Occasionally he would deliberately (and illegally) disturb his opponents by repeatedly offering them draws. [...] But to be fair, it was his great ability, and not the odd dodgy practice, that accounted for his success.'

In the following game from one of England's strongest tournaments, Miles puts his adeptness of chess psychology to good effect against his long-standing adversary.

1.d4 e6 2.♘f3 ♘f6 3.c4 b6 4.a3 ♘a6 5.e3

These days, the main line is 5.♗c2, after which thousands of games have continued with 5...♝b7 6.♗c3 c5 7.e4 cxd4 8.♗xd4.

5...d5 6.♗bd2 ♘e7 7.b4 0-0 8.♗b2 c5



A standard reaction. White is behind in development and his king is still in the centre, so Black tries to open things up.

9.dxc5 bxc5 10.b5 ♘b7 11.♗e2 ♘bd7 12.0-0 ♘e4

12...a6 13.a4 ♘d6 is a more cautious way to play, preparing ...♘c7 to keep an eye on the white queenside pawns, and then ...♗e7 with a view to playing in the centre.

13.cxd5

13.♗xe4! dxe4 14.♗e5 would have given White the advantage, securing the more flexible pawn structure. Note the idea of f2-f4 to gain some space on the kingside.

13...♗xd2 14.♔xd2 exd5 15.a4 ♘f6 16.a5 ♘e4 17.♗c2 ♘c8



An unusual hanging-pawns structure.

In principle White must be a bit better because of this, but Black has more space and the prospect of a kingside attack.

18. $\mathbb{Q}d2$ $f5!$ 19. $\mathbb{Q}fd1$

Nowadays, we appreciate how dangerous Black's attacking prospects can be in these sorts of positions. White should have preferred something like 19. $\mathbb{Q}xe4$ $fxe4$ 20. $f3!$ $exf3$ 21. $\mathbb{Q}xf3$, when the small weakness on e3 is outweighed by White's new activity on the f-file and kingside.

19... $\mathbb{Q}d6?$

Sensibly bringing the queen to the kingside, though 19... $\mathbb{Q}e8!$ was stronger.

20. $f3$ $\mathbb{Q}h6?$ 21. $\mathbb{Q}f1?$

After this move, White is in for some suffering. Safer was 21. $\mathbb{Q}xe4$ $fxe4$ 22. $f4!$, locking up some lines.

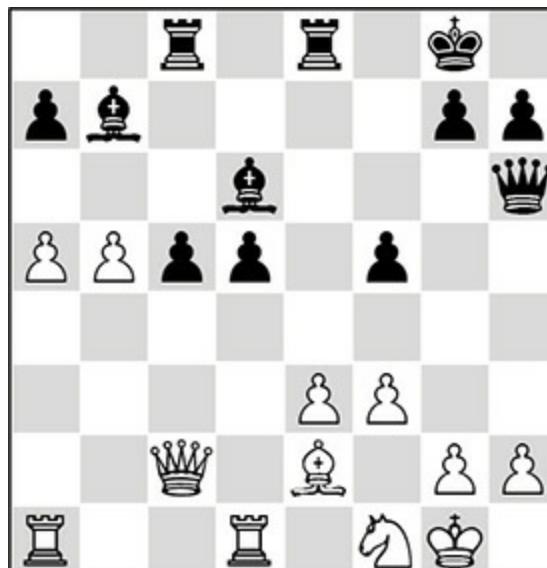
21... $\mathbb{Q}d6$ 22. $\mathbb{Q}e5$ $\mathbb{Q}fe8!$

Setting a lovely trap.



Apparently, Black is willing to pay a pawn in order to eliminate White's dominant bishop. Searching for more than the small edge promised by 23. $\mathbb{Q}d3$ or 23. $\mathbb{Q}ab1$, Miles considers this proposal and decides to accept the offer...

23. $\mathbb{Q}xd6?$ $\mathbb{Q}xd6$



... only to realise that he has been duped! If now White continues with his planned 24. $\mathbb{B}xf5$, there follows 24... $\mathbb{Q}xh2+!!$ 25. $\mathbb{Q}xh2$ $\mathbb{Q}xe3+$ 26. $\mathbb{Q}h1$ $\mathbb{Q}xe2$ and Black recovers the material with interest. Having swapped off his prized bishop for ‘free’, Miles has to quickly shift gears.

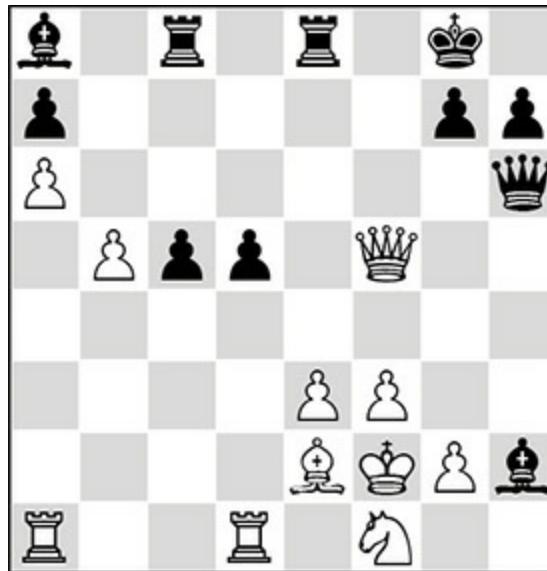
24.a6 $\mathbb{Q}a8$ **25. $\mathbb{B}xf5!$?**

A practical decision. White could instead have swallowed his pride with a move like 25.f4, but with the two bishops, more space in the centre and a clear target on e3, Black has a strategically winning game. The objective evaluation is the same after Miles’ choice, too, but the struggle becomes more volatile, for both players. And uncertainty, as we know, favours the Swindler.

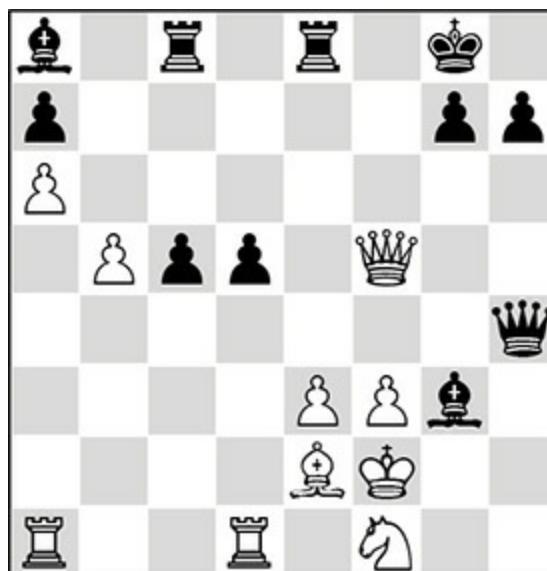
25... $\mathbb{Q}xh2+$ 26. $\mathbb{Q}f2!$

The riskier but ultimately more practical choice.

As in the note to White’s 24th move, 26. $\mathbb{Q}xh2$ $\mathbb{Q}xe3+$ 27. $\mathbb{Q}h1$ $\mathbb{Q}xe2$ gives Black a safe extra pawn as well as the better position.



26... $\mathbb{Q}h4+$ 27.g3 $\mathbb{Q}xg3+$

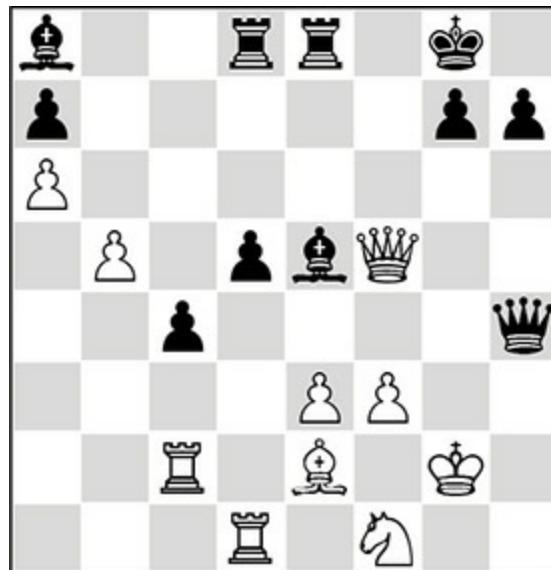


28. $\mathbb{Q}g2!$

Excellent Window-Ledging. Miles again plays to keep his chances alive.

The engine’s recommendation of 28. $\mathbb{Q}xg3$ $\mathbb{Q}h2+$ 29. $\mathbb{Q}f1$ $\mathbb{Q}xg3$ would practically force White to exchange queens in order to prevent a quickfire mating attack. And any endgame is hopeless.

28... ♜ e5 29. ♕ ac1 c4 30. ♕ c2 ♕ cd8

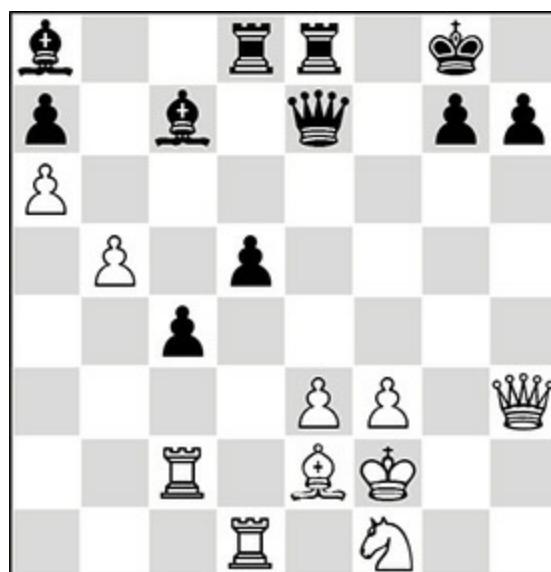


An instructive moment. With a pawn down and an open king, there is little to cheer about in White's position. Perhaps the only point in his favour is that the black bishop on a8 is restricted, at least for now.

31. ♜ h3!!

Very good! Only a few moves earlier, I commented that endgames are hopeless for White. But there is a key difference now: Black has played ...c5-c4, fixing the central pawns, making the ...d5-d4 push much more difficult to execute, and therefore reducing the chances that the a8-bishop sees daylight. The endgame after 31... ♜ xh3+ is still theoretically winning for Black, but it is much more technically difficult than it was a few moves ago. This move is thus an excellent practical shot, but Short, correctly, declines the trade.

31... ♜ e7! 32. ♜ f2 ♜ c7!



A clever regrouping. Soon, in addition to being a pawn ahead, Short will have all of his pieces well aimed against White's king. The most stubborn resistance against this according to the computer comes from 33. ♜ d4 ♜ b6 34. ♜ h4!, giving up an exchange in order to blockade the d4-square and keep Black's other bishop out of the game. But ultimately, this approach would only prolong the end, and the engines offer a pessimistic outlook of -5.

Instead, Miles concocts one of the most shocking moves I have ever seen played by a grandmaster. He doesn't have much to cling to in the position, and so he focuses on psychological factors instead. In particular, he identifies two factors to exploit. The first is the fast time control, and the second is Short's reputation of thoroughly calculating variations to the end. Miles thus embarks on a risky strategy of offering the chance to calculate a forced win, gambling that Short will run his clock dangerously low.

Step one of the strategy is playing a move that, for lack of a better description, is obscene.

33.e4!!



Pure madness! Instead of trying to erect a dark-square blockade, Miles opens up diagonals of BOTH colours, as well as his own defences, placing his king at the mercy of Black's army. My engine almost had a stroke at this point, maniacally pronouncing that White has no less than 28(!) better alternatives, including nonsensical blunders such as $\mathbb{Q}d3$ or $\mathbb{Q}xc4$. Nonetheless, there is something emotionally logical about brazenly rolling out the welcome mat to Black's pieces. Short figures, again correctly, that there must be a concrete sequence to mate. But finding it takes time...

33... ♕ b6+ 34. ♔ e1 dxe4

Evaluation: -20, if you're interested.

35.  xc4+  h8 36.f4!



The e-file must stay closed.

36... b4+

36...e3! is the fastest route to victory, though, as Short no doubt guessed, practically anything wins at this point. White could try the ‘cheapo’ 37.f5,



analysis diagram

preparing 38. xh7+!, but this really is very cheap. Unfortunately for White, all of Black’s natural moves also happen to stop the mating trick (such as 37... b4+, which checkmates in nine moves).

37. e2! xd1 38. xd1 a5 39. e3!



Hanging on by the skin of his teeth. A pawn ahead with a raging attack, Short finds the knockout blow to be frustratingly elusive, and he spends more valuable seconds searching for it.

39... d8+ 40. c1 b6 41. c3!



For the second time, White offers a cheeky queen exchange. Again, both players are well aware that the resulting endgame is winning for Black. But, once again, Miles rightly predicts that Short would prefer to finish the game as clinically as possible.

41... ♕d6?!

41... ♕xc3 42. ♖xc3 would require Black to grind out the win with moves like 42...g6 and bringing the king up. This would have been a decent practical choice, as it snuffs out almost all of White's counterplay. But 41... ♕a4! was the clinical win, keeping the pressure on and threatening 42... ♖d4 or 42...e3.

42. ♖e3 ♔d4 43. ♖b3 ♕xf4



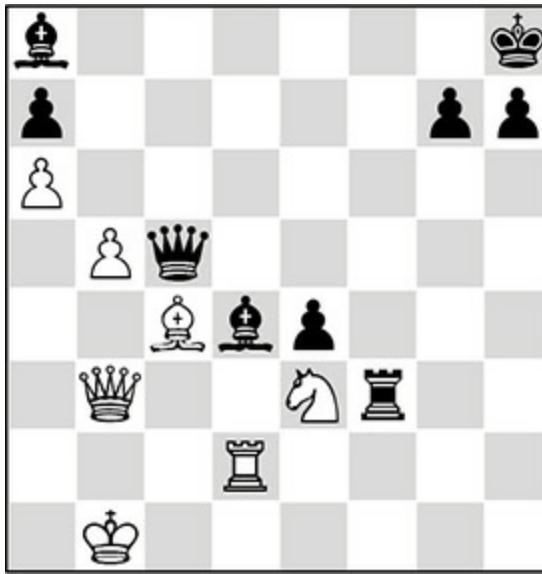
That's two pawns now. But for the first time, the white king is actually looking a little bit safer.

44. ♖e2 ♖e5 45. ♖b1 ♖f8 46. ♖d1 ♖c5 47. ♖b3



Notice that White makes sure to keep the d5-square under control, so that the black bishop on a8 never has a chance to enter the fight. The evaluation is still in the vicinity of -9, but White has the easier task of playing reactive moves, just as we saw Black do in Malakhatko-Jones.

47... ♕f3 48. ♕d2!



Another unexpected trick! The knight is indirectly defended – for now.

48...g6

If 48... ♕xe3?? 49. ♔xe3 ♔xe3?? 50. ♕d8 mates.

49.b6!

White offers a third pawn to buy some chaos. It is true that he allows the a8-bishop a free square for the first time in a while. But, for the sacrifice, Miles gains a passed pawn and also opens up some possibilities for his own queen to create threats against the black king.

49...axb6?

There was nothing wrong with 49... ♕xe3!, winning a piece as all of the tactics work out in Black's favour. But we are now in the second session of play following the adjournment, and fatigue has started to set in.

50. ♔a4



50... ♜f8

If 50... ♜c6 then 51.a7 is annoying. It's been a while since Black has had to play a defensive move. This is a good sign for Miles.

51. ♜c2 ♜g7

Another clever relocation, preparing a battery on the long diagonal.

52. ♜b3 ♜c6

After what feels like years of captivity, Black finally liberates his queen's bishop.

53. ♜d1 ♜e5



54.a7

Well, why not? It's the only pawn Miles has left!

54... ♜a4 55. ♜a3 ♜c8 56. ♜e3 ♜a5 57. ♜c1!

Once again finding the most tenacious move. White is still so, so lost – my engine still says -10 – and yet he has managed to prevent Black from sounding the death knell. He also sets another mini-trap: if 57... ♜xa7 58. ♜b5! ♜xc1+? 59. ♜xc1 ♜c7+ 60. ♜b1!



analysis diagram

and the bishop on a4 is lost because of a killer back-rank check on a8.
Correspondingly, among the winning moves, dodging the discovered attack with 57... $\mathbb{Q}d8!$ is the simplest, intending to take on a7 on the next move if undisturbed. Short's move is also winning, but it narrows the margins for error.

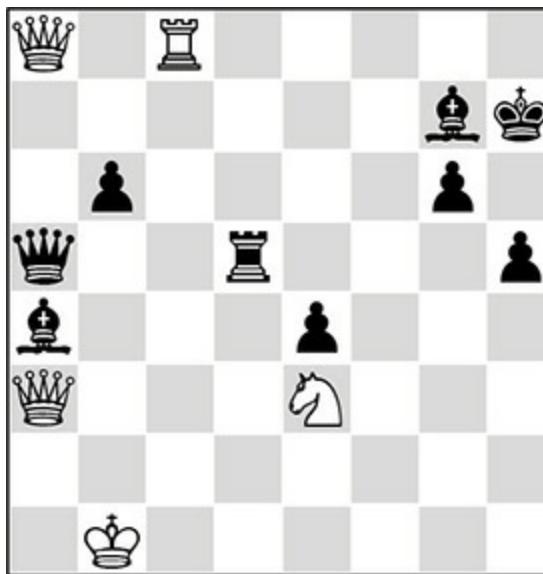


57...h5?! 58. $\mathbb{Q}d5!$



At long last, a threat! White unleashes a discovered attack on the c-file while simultaneously threatening to queen.

Black can still win with 58... $\mathbb{Q}d8$, intending to sacrifice the exchange. For example: 59. $\mathbb{R}c7!$ (59.a8 \mathbb{Q} $\mathbb{Q}xa8$ 60. $\mathbb{Q}xa8$ $\mathbb{Q}xa8$ is too easy for Black) and now there is a complicated but beautiful win on offer after 59... $\mathbb{Q}xd5!!$ 60. $\mathbb{R}c8+$ $\mathbb{Q}h7$ 61.a8 \mathbb{Q} .



analysis diagram

Here Black wins with 61... $\mathbb{Q}b5+!!$ 62. $\mathbb{Q}a2$ $\mathbb{Q}b3+!$ 63. $\mathbb{Q}b1$ $\mathbb{Q}e1+$ 64. $\mathbb{R}c1$ $\mathbb{Q}c2+!$ 65. $\mathbb{Q}a2$



analysis diagram

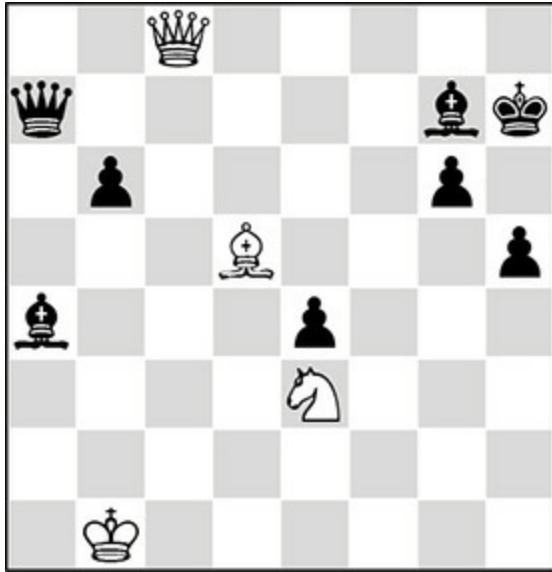
65... ♕b1+!! 66. ♖xb1 ♕xb1#.

This is exactly the sort of brutal, forcing variation at which Short typically excels with time on the clock. But the situation has now become a quickfire skirmish, and nerves count even more than calculations. Short has successfully navigated Miles' hocus-pocus until this point, but with precious time remaining, finally succumbs to a trick.

58... ♖xc1+?? 59. ♜xc1 ♕xa7

That's four pawns – but, finally, White finds some activity of his own.

60. ♜c8+ ♔h7



It seems that Black has navigated the pitfalls, as his king will sit snugly on h6 after either check on g8. However, Miles has a final ace up his sleeve.

61. ♜f5!!

A brilliant sacrifice. White threatens mate on g8, and the knight can't be taken without allowing a perpetual check. Despite having no pawn shelter whatsoever, the white king is, surprisingly, safer than its counterpart for the moment, allowing this remarkable counterattack.

61... ♜e8!?



A nice try, as 62. $\mathbb{Q}xe8??$ allows 62... $\mathbb{Q}a1+!$ and Black will pick up the knight with his queen in a few more moves. But having hooked a swindle, Miles is in no mood to let Short wriggle free.

62. $\mathbb{Q}xg7!! \mathbb{Q}d7 63. \mathbb{Q}xe8!! \mathbb{Q}xd5 64. \mathbb{Q}e6!!$

Five tricky only moves in a row by Miles, and now Short has no choice but to acquiesce to the draw.

64... $\mathbb{Q}b3+$ 65. $\mathbb{Q}c1 \mathbb{Q}c3+$ 66. $\mathbb{Q}d1 \mathbb{Q}f6$

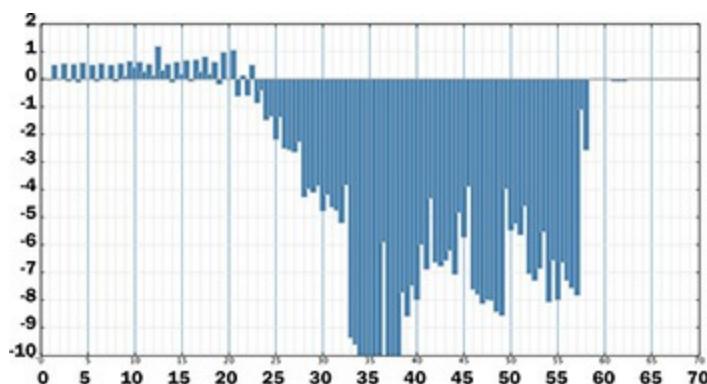


67. $\mathbb{Q}g5+!$

A fitting finish.

67... $\mathbb{Q}xg5 68. \mathbb{Q}f7+ \mathbb{Q}h8 69. \mathbb{Q}f8+ \mathbb{Q}h7$

And the draw was agreed.



Game 5

Slim Bouaziz

Anthony Miles

2560

Riga izt 1979 (6)

Of all the players I came across in my research, Miles stood out as the most impressive Swindler. The following is one of the greatest swindles by one of the greatest Swindlers.

1.e4 c5 2.♘f3 e6 3.d4 cxd4 4.♗xd4 a6 5.♗d3 ♘f6 6.0-0 d6 7.c4 ♗e7 8.♗c3 0-0 9.♗e3 ♘bd7



10.f3

Nowadays, most players don't bother to secure e4 in this particular variation and instead play more ambitiously with 10.f4!. Then a common line goes 10...♝c5 11.♞c2 e5! 12.♗f5 ♘xf5 13.exf5 exf4 14.♘xf4 when White has the bishop pair but Black has some nice squares for his knights (Quesada Perez-Grandelius, chess.com rapid 2018 (0-1, 37)).

10...♝e8 11.♗d2 ♘f8 12.♗fd1 b6 13.♗f1 ♘b7 14.♗ac1 ♘c8 15.♗f2



Now we are back in a typical hedgehog structure, which often leads to dense complications. In these sorts of positions, both players should constantly be on the lookout for a central break by Black's pawns, and here Black could have played 15...d5! 16.cxd5 exd5 17.exd5 b5! with good play.

15... ♜ c7 16.b3 ♜ b8 17. ♜ c2 ♜ a8

Again, 17...d5! was strong.

18. ♜ h1 ♜ cd8 19. ♜ c1 ♜ e5 20. ♜ b2 d5!



Third time lucky.

21.cxd5 exd5 22.exd5 b5! 23. ♜ f5 b4 24. ♜ a4 ♜ xd5??

A horrible blunder. After either alternative capture on d5, Black was doing just fine.

25. ♜ cd2!



Placing Black in an awkward pin, because the black queen and the rook on e8 are both overworked in defending pieces on d8 and e5. This means that Black can't move his bishop on d5 for now, and meanwhile White threatens to attack it with moves like ♜ e3 and ♜ b6. Black's knight on e5 is also 'pinned' to its partner on f6, a key defender of d5. Miles must lose material.

25... ♜ c7

- a) 25... ♜ ed7 is the engine's suggestion, but of course 26. ♜ xd5 ♜ xd5 27. ♜ xd5 is lost;
- b) 25... ♜ eg4!? is trickier, but again the tactics favour White: 26.fxg4 ♜ e4 27. ♜ h4!



analysis diagram

27... ♘xd2 28. ♖xd2 ♕e6 29. ♘xg7! ♘xg7 30. ♔g5 and White wins.

26. ♘e3 ♕a7!

Miles starts to play for tricks, laying a pin of his own.

27. ♘d4 ♖b7 28. ♘xe5 ♖xe5 29. ♘c4



29... ♖h5!

I like this move a lot. Miles knows he cannot save the material, so he signals his intentions on the kingside and hopes to provoke a weakness or two.

30. ♘xd5 ♕xd5 31. g4 ♖e5 32. ♘b6 ♕xb6 33. ♖xd8



Miles is a clear exchange down with a worse position as well. His back rank is horribly weak and his forces are split in two by White's complete domination of the d-file. Clearly, Bouaziz hopes to convert his material advantage without distractions or disturbances, and it looks like that shouldn't be a problem. Nonetheless, Miles resolves to create every last chance of a swindle. He starts by asking himself what is good about his position, and what is weak in his opponent's.

33...h5!

If there's one flaw in White's position, it's the slight vulnerability of his king's defences. Miles seeks to loosen them.

34.h3 ♜ xc4 35.bxc4 ♜ e7

At least now Black can point to the newly-weakened dark squares as a factor in his favour, and hope that his far-fetched Berserk Attack can provoke some rash or fearful responses. He immediately gains a small success: the direct threat is 36...♜e2, and although Bouaziz should stay active, he is worried enough to retreat his well-placed rook.

36.♜ 8d2 ♜ e3 37.♜ c2 ♜ e5 38.♜ d5 ♜ a1+! 39.♜ g2 ♜ e1!



Passive defence would objectively have held on for longer against best play, but also would have failed to set White any real problems. With his opponent's clock now starting to factor into the equation, Miles instead starts concocting a brilliant plan to weave a mating net with his queen and rook. Still, most motifs with these pieces are well-known, and any real threat seems a distant

possibility at this stage.

40.c5 ♕ h1 41.c6 h4!!

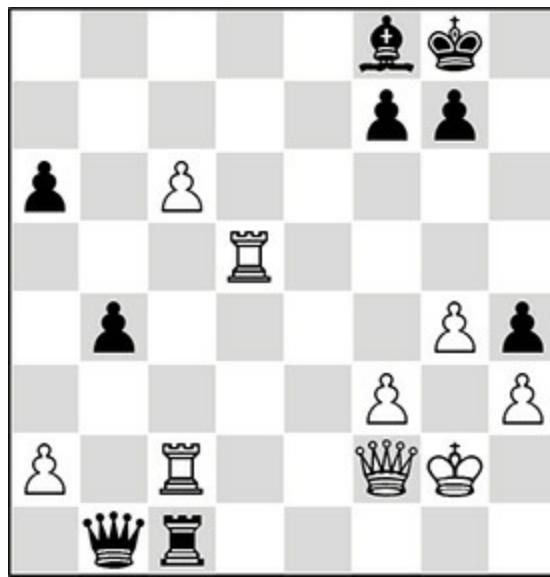


Bluff, or brilliance? In swindling parlance, the two are not mutually exclusive, as is the case here. The threat almost appears too obvious, and White indeed spots 42.c7 ♕ xh3! 43.♔ xh3 ♔ h1+ 44.♗ h2 ♗ xf3+, with a mess. Note that White's rook on d5 hangs in this line. Keen to avoid any semblance of trickery, White retakes control of the d-file.

42.♕ cd2

Intending 42... ♕ xh3 43.♕ d1!.

42... ♕ c1! 43.♕ c2 ♗ b1!?



What madness is this?! Miles eschews a repetition, knowing that his opponent would himself choose a different path after 43... ♕ h1. He gives White the option of bailing out with 44.♕ xc1 ♗ xc1 and 45... ♗ xc6, after which he can set White technical problems to convert the extra exchange. White correctly senses that more is on offer, but keeping the pieces on also is not without side-effects.

44.♕ dd2 ♕ h1! 45.c7??

'Enough,' says White. With his rook no longer hanging on d5, he decides to finish things once and for all, assuming that the material advantage of two rooks and an about-to-be-promoted pawn for a bishop should be more than enough. After all, what could possibly go wrong?



45... ♜ xh3!!

Now the sacrifice works.

46. ♛ xh3??

Tragedy. Bouaziz goes from winning to drawing to losing in just two moves.

The last chance to split the point was 46. ♔ f1! ♜ g3+ 47. ♔ f2 ♜ xf3+ 48. ♔ xf3 ♔ xf1+ 49. ♔ e3, when the game ends by perpetual check.

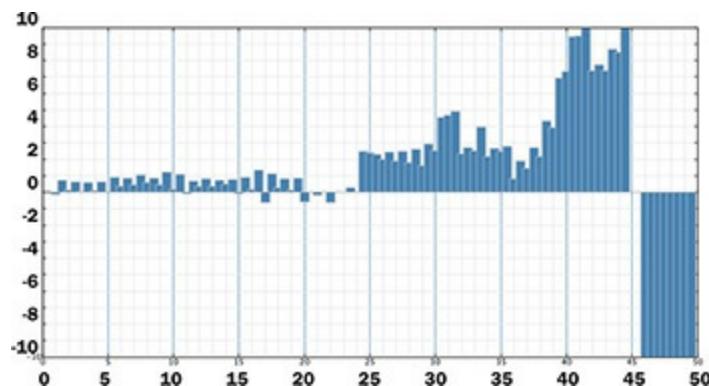
46... ♜ h1+ 47. ♜ h2 ♜ xf3+ 48. ♛ xh4 ♔ e7+ 49.g5



Ironically, with a ‘hanging’ rook on d5 (as in the note to move 41), White would be winning. In chess, as in life, small differences can be everything.

49... ♔ xg5+!!

White resigned without waiting to see either of the twin mates-in-two after 50. ♔ xg5 f6+ appear on the board. A tremendous masterclass in chess psychology and swindling.



Game 6

Frank James Marshall

N Halper

New York 1941

There was a period in chess history when Frank Marshall was considered to be the greatest Swindler of all, although I can think of several qualified rivals in modern times (such as the protagonist of the last two games). Still, so often did he manage to magically escape from lost positions that he even published an entire book of his own swindles. The following game sees Marshall lose a piece after seven moves, and yet before the game has reached move 15, his opponent could already resign!

1.e4 e5 2.♘f3 ♘c6 3.d4 exd4 4.c3

This old-fashioned gambit is actually not as bad as it appears. In modern times, though, it's hard to come up with surprises so early on in the opening.



Many grandmasters these days decline the gambit and prefer to settle for an easier game with 4...d5 5.exd5 ♘xd5 6.cxd4 ♘g4 7.♗e2 ♘b4+ 8.♗c3 ♘xf3! 9.♗xf3 ♕c4!.



analysis diagram

This is an excellent move, keeping the pressure on d4, threatening to win a pawn on c3 and, most importantly, preventing White from castling.

If Black is given one more move to castle queenside himself, White would be in all sorts of trouble. Consequently, almost all games have continued with 10. ♜xc6+ bxc6! 11. ♜e2+ ♜xe2+ 12. ♜xe2, with an equal ending.

Recently, however, Nepomniachtchi tried a more ambitious approach with white, albeit in a blitz game: 10. ♜e2!? ♜xd4 (10... ♜xc3+ 11. bxc3 ♜xc3+ 12. ♜d2 ♜xd4 13. ♜b1 gives White an insufficient but interesting degree of compensation for the two pawns – Marshall would be proud) 11. ♜b3 ♜ge7 12. 0-0 0-0 13. a3 ♜xc3 14. bxc3 ♜b6 15. ♜c2



analysis diagram

with sufficient compensation for the pawn due to the pair of bishops on the open board. His success came against a former World Blitz Champion: 1-0 (58) Nepomniachtchi-Grischuk, chess.com blitz 2018.

4...dxc3 5. ♜c4!



Putting us somewhere at the intersection of the Goering Gambit, the Danish Gambit and the ‘true’ Scotch Gambit – ah, to live in the days before the Berlin Defence!

5...d6?!

A bit passive.

What theory there is on this position recommends that Black be very brave and play 5...cxb2 6.Qxb2 Qb4+ 7.Qc3 Qf6, with the engines claiming an advantage of roughly -0.50. However, it should be noted that in practice, White has done excellently from here. One high-quality example continued: 8.Qc2 d6 9.0-0-0 Qxc3 10.Qxc3 Qe6 11.Qhe1 Qxc4 12.Qxc4 0-0 13.e5! Qd7! 14.Qg4! f6! 15.exd6 Qf7! 16.Qb1 cxd6 17.Qxd6 Qc8! and Black was better in D.Mastrovasilis-Graf, Fürth 2002 ($\frac{1}{2}-\frac{1}{2}$, 49).



6.Qb3?!

The right idea, but the wrong move-order. White should play 6.Qxc3 Qf6 and only then 7.Qb3!, after which his sacrifice is fully compensated by his active development.

6...Qd7! 7.Qxc3??

An incredible blunder for a player of Marshall’s calibre. Perhaps he had missed Black’s last move, or perhaps he missed Black’s next. In any case, 7.Qxc3 Qa5 8.Qb4 was to be preferred, when White still retains some compensation, although the trade on c4 is definitely some achievement by Black.

7...d5!



One of America's great chess legends suddenly finds himself lost with the white pieces after only seven moves, and against a rank amateur! Black threatens both the bishop on c4 and a deadly pin with 8...♝b4. Faced with the greatest of embarrassments, Marshall goes into his trademark swindle mode. The best continuation is a depressing endgame with 8.♝e5, but with very little risk of Black going wrong. After 8.♝e5 dxc4! 9.♝xd7 ♝b4 10.♝c5 b6 11.♝a4 ♝xc3+, White is a pawn down with a much worse position to boot.

Instead, Marshall asks himself the question: what sequence will make my opponent the most uncomfortable? What gives him chances to make mistakes? Above all: what will annoy him the most? At the moment, all White has going for him is a lead in development. Marshall decides that this is worth preserving – even at great cost.

8.exd5!!



A daring queen sacrifice that immediately sharpens the fight.

8...♝b4 9.dxc6 ♝xc3+ 10.♝xc3



White has only two pieces for a queen, but he has increased his lead in development – in fact, Black's queen is his only developed piece! After the sacrifice, Marshall sets the first ‘mini-swindle’: 10... ♕xc6?? is met by the counterpin 11. ♜b5!. This is a little too transparent for Black to fall for, but like any good decoy-swindle, there’s a second point. The best move for Black is 10... ♜e7+!, slowing down White’s rook’s route to the e-file for just a move. Halper instead plays the natural move, but the path to victory instantly becomes more treacherous.

10...bxc6? 11.0-0!



White is still materially lost, but suddenly the beginnings of compensation are appearing. In terms of classical chess principles, at least, he's doing quite well: a huge lead in development, active pieces, and the far safer king. Black is still a few moves away from consolidating but is also facing pressure on the e-file. These factors combine to lead him astray, as what could be more natural than the developing move:

11... e7?

11... ♜e7! was again called for, or even moving the queen to d6 or f5, in all cases intending 12... ♜e6. Black is understandably desperate to develop his other pieces, but, suddenly and explosively, Marshall takes his chance:

12. xf7+!!



Ripping apart Black's defences. An elementary tactic, but one grown from White's shrewd practical decision on move eight.

12... ♕f8

Sadly necessary, as if 12... ♛xf7 13. ♜e5+ pockets the queen.

13. ♜b3



13... ♜b7?

We can again be sympathetic to Black's desperate attempts to develop his minor pieces. However, 13... ♜b8! was his last chance, intending a relieving exchange sacrifice on b3. After 14. ♜e3 ♜xb3! 15.axb3 ♛g8, Black has decent chances to fight, although White is for choice.

14. ♜e3! ♜f5 15. ♜c5+ ♜d6 16. ♜d4!



How quickly the tide has turned. Marshall's queenless forces swarm all over Black's position. The black monarch is caught in the firing lines of White's bishops, the white rooks are prepared to rake along the open central files, and the knight now eyes the juicy e6-square. Marshall does not conduct the attack in the most clinical fashion, but he never lets go of the advantage from here.

16... ♕e8 17. ♕fe1! h5?

Losing quickly, but even after the more resilient 17... ♕c8 there would be no salvation. White has the luxury of choosing between keeping the pressure on with 18. ♕ad1, or entering a technically winning endgame with 18. ♕e6+ ♕xe6 19. ♕xe6 ♕xe6 20. ♕xe6 ♕xe6 21. ♕xa7.

18. ♕e6+ ♕xe6



19. ♕xe6

A slight inaccuracy. White could have finished the game at once with 19. ♕xe6 ♕h6 20. ♕e3!, with the unstoppable plan of ♕ae1, ♕e4 and ♕f3+.

19... ♕d8 20. ♕e5!

This is good enough. Black is help-less.

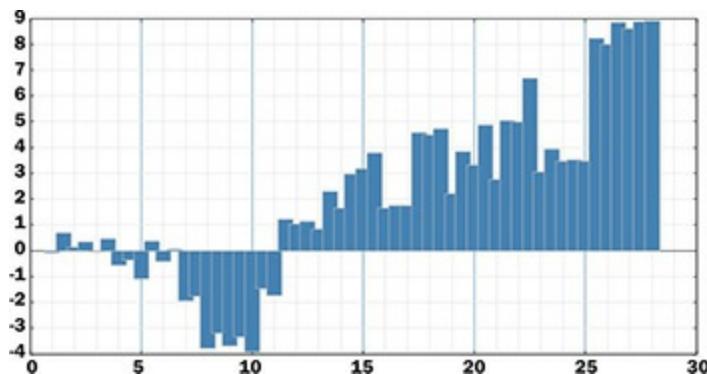
20... ♕h6 21. ♕ae1 ♕c8 22. ♕b3! ♕d7



23. $\mathbb{Q}e3$

Again, 23. $\mathbb{Q}e4$ was a quicker win, but there is no saving Black in either case.

23... $\mathbb{Q}f5$ 24. $\mathbb{Q}xh6$ $gxh6$ 25. $\mathbb{Q}e4$ $\mathbb{Q}g7$ 26. $\mathbb{Q}c5$ $\mathbb{Q}f6$ 27. $\mathbb{Q}xd7+$ $\mathbb{Q}xd7$ 28. $\mathbb{Q}e6$ 1-0



Game 7

Dmitrij Jakovenko	2738
Boris Gelfand	2744

Khanty-Mansiysk 2015 (9)

This game was played towards the end of the final Grand Prix event in the cycle, with both players needing a win to have a realistic chance of qualifying for the 2016 Candidates tournament.

1. $e4$ $c5$ 2. $\mathbb{Q}f3$ $d6$ 3. $d4$ $cxd4$ 4. $\mathbb{Q}xd4$ $\mathbb{Q}f6$ 5. $\mathbb{Q}c3$ $a6$ 6. $h3$ $e5$ 7. $\mathbb{Q}de2$ $h5$ 8. $g3$ $b5$

Gelfand's pet line, planning to meet White's kingside fianchetto with his own ... $\mathbb{Q}b7$. Putting the bishop on e6 is much more popular, and Jakovenko immediately exploits the open d5-square.

9. $\mathbb{Q}d5$ $\mathbb{Q}bd7$ 10. $\mathbb{Q}g5$ $\mathbb{Q}b7$ 11. $\mathbb{Q}ec3$ $\mathbb{Q}c8$ 12. $\mathbb{Q}g2$ $\mathbb{Q}e7$ 13. $\mathbb{Q}xe7$ $\mathbb{Q}xe7$ 14. 0-0 $\mathbb{Q}e6$ 15. $\mathbb{Q}e1$ $b4$



16. ♜ d5

So far the players have followed the game Leko-Mamedyarov, Beijing 2013, which continued 16. ♜ a4 ♛ c4! 17. f3 h4 18. g4 d5 19. b3, and now Black's position would have been quite acceptable after 19... ♜ c7. Instead, 19... ♜ d4? 20. ♔ xd4!! exd4 21. exd5 ♜ xd5 22. ♜ xe6+ fxe6 23. ♜ d1 e5 24. f4 was a neat transformation into a better endgame ($\frac{1}{2}-\frac{1}{2}$, 51).

16... ♜ xd5

One other game has reached this position, which continued 16... ♜ xd5 17. exd5 ♜ f5 18. ♜ d2 ♜ xc2 19. ♜ xb4 ♜ xd1 20. ♜ axd1 ♜ e7 21. f4 and White was a little better in Baklan-Morchiashvili, Cesme 2017 ($\frac{1}{2}-\frac{1}{2}$, 98).

17. exd5 ♜ f5 18. ♜ d2! ♜ xc2 19. ♜ c1! ♜ xc1 20. ♜ xc1



Winning back the pawn, which would leave White with the advantage of the bishop pair if it wasn't for Black's next manoeuvre.

20... ♜ c5! 21. ♜ xb4 ♜ d3 22. ♜ c6+ ♜ d7 23. ♜ a8+ ♜ d8 24. ♜ c6+



Both players have played excellently, and a draw here would be a fair and fully justified result. But it suits neither of them given the stakes, and Gelfand blinks first.

24... ♜ d7??

Played after half an hour of agonising. I suspect Gelfand knew it was a blunder, but decided there was no point in accepting a failed qualification bid.

25. ♜ e4 f5 26. ♜ c4 e4 27. ♜ xa6

White has won a pawn and will soon capture d6 as well. Black's position is deplorable, but he fights on.



27... ♜ xb4 28. ♜ xd6! ♜ d3 29. ♜ e6+ ♛ f8 30. ♜ xf5+ ♛ g8 31. ♜ e6+ ♛ f8 32. ♜ d6+ ♛ g8 33. ♜ e6+ ♛ f8 34. ♜ xe4

This time, Jakovenko blinks – a much easier decision given that his position is completely winning.

34... ♜ 3e5 35. ♜ f5+ ♛ g8 36.d6!



Opening the path for the bishop to enter the attack. White has four pawns for the knight, but more significant are Black's complete lack of coordination and his exposed king. The engine claims the advantage is roughly +3.

36... ♜h6 37. ♜e4?

37. ♜d5+ ♔h8 38. ♜a4!, threatening 39. ♜a8, was simply winning because 38... ♜b6 39. ♜e4! ♜xd5 40. ♜xe5 ♜f6 41. ♜d3 leaves Black completely devoid of counterplay.

37...h4?

Both players were in time trouble, which explains how they could mis-assess the natural 37... ♜xd6! 38. ♜xe5 (38. ♜xh5 ♜f7 is slightly better for White) 38... ♜xe5 39. ♜xe5 ♜d1+ 40. ♔h2 ♜d2 with equal chances.

38. ♜xh4 ♜xh4 39. gxh4 ♜xh4 40. ♜d5+ ♔h8 41. ♜h1!!



Having reached the time control, Jakovenko spends 15 minutes to work out the best move. Side-stepping the check on g5 means he is now threatening 42. ♜e6. In addition, he has four pawns for the piece, beautifully centralised pieces and a monster passer on d6. Gelfand, however, refuses to go quietly.

41... ♜h6!?

The best practical try.

41...g6 42. ♜e6 ♔g7 43. ♜g8+ ♔h6 44. ♜h8+ ♔g5 45. ♜xh4+ ♔xh4 46.a4 is easy for White to

win.

42.f4

Blocking the check on c1 and targeting the loose knights.

42...g6! 43.♘e6 ♘f8!



Gelfand continues to find creative solutions to his problems. White's one positional weakness is his airy king, and Gelfand is desperate to get his queen behind enemy lines.

44.♗b3?

An understandable retreat, but it was better to be brave and play 44.h4! with the point that 44...♕c8 45.fxе5 ♕c1+ 46.♔h2 ♕f4+ 47.♔g2 ♕d2+ 48.♔f3 ♕d1+ 49.♔g3 ♕e1+ 50.♔h2 ♕d2+ 51.♔g2 ♕f4+ 52.♔g1 ♕e3+ 53.♔f1 ♕d3+ 54.♔f2 ♕d4+ 55.♔g3 finally escapes the checks: 55...♕e3+ 56.♔f3 ♕e1+ 57.♔g2 ♕d2+ 58.♔h3 and wins. Of course, this line was very difficult to calculate.

44...g5!!

After 25 minutes' thought, Gelfand brings his last foot soldier into the game.

45.f5



45...♙d3!?

Brilliant berserkism. Black is prepared to give up a knight, and perhaps two, in order to penetrate the white defences.

The very un-human 45... $\mathbb{Q}g7!$ is an amazing computer suggestion. After 46. $\mathbb{Q}e7+$ $\mathbb{Q}xe7$ 47. $dxe7$ $\mathbb{Q}f6$ Black will play 48... $\mathbb{Q}e8$, 49... $\mathbb{Q}c6$ and grab the e-pawn, with good chances to hold.

46. $\mathbb{Q}xd7$ $\mathbb{Q}a8+$ 47. $\mathbb{Q}g1$ $\mathbb{Q}f4!$ 48. $\mathbb{Q}f2$



Black has finally created some counterplay, but the natural 48... $\mathbb{Q}g2+$ goes nowhere: 49. $\mathbb{Q}e3$ $\mathbb{Q}e2+$ (49... $\mathbb{Q}g1+$ 50. $\mathbb{Q}e4$ $\mathbb{Q}g2+$ 51. $\mathbb{Q}d4$ $\mathbb{Q}f2+$ 52. $\mathbb{Q}c4$ is similar) 50. $\mathbb{Q}d4$ $\mathbb{Q}xb2+$ 51. $\mathbb{Q}c5$ $\mathbb{Q}d3+$ 52. $\mathbb{Q}b6$ $\mathbb{Q}d4+$ 53. $\mathbb{Q}c7$ $\mathbb{Q}a7+$ 54. $\mathbb{Q}d8$ $\mathbb{Q}a8+$ 55. $\mathbb{Q}c8$ $\mathbb{Q}a5+$ 56. $\mathbb{Q}e7+$ and it's White's turn to start checking.

48... $g4!!$



An unpleasant move to face, raising the complexity of the position as well as disguising a fiendish swindle.

49. $hxg4?$

White falls for the bait! Jakovenko makes an excusable capture given the fresh threats of 49... $\mathbb{Q}f3+$ and 49... $g3+$, but this relinquishes the advantage. To win, he needed to be fearless and start marching his king up the board to e3 or g3, with variations similar to those in the notes to 48... $\mathbb{Q}g2+$. But this natural reply, capturing one of Black's few remaining pieces, is a terrible blunder. Note that Black's king is devoid of squares, which should by now sound warning bells in your head.

49... $\mathbb{Q}g2+$ 50. $\mathbb{Q}e3$ $\mathbb{Q}d5+!!$



Making White an offer that he cannot refuse, no matter how hard he tries.

51. ♜d4

51. ♜xd5 ♜d2+ 52. ♛e4 ♜e3+ 53. ♜xe3 is stalemate, while 51. ♜d3 ♜f3+ 52. ♜c2 ♜f2+ 53. ♜c1 ♜e3+ is a draw by perpetual check.

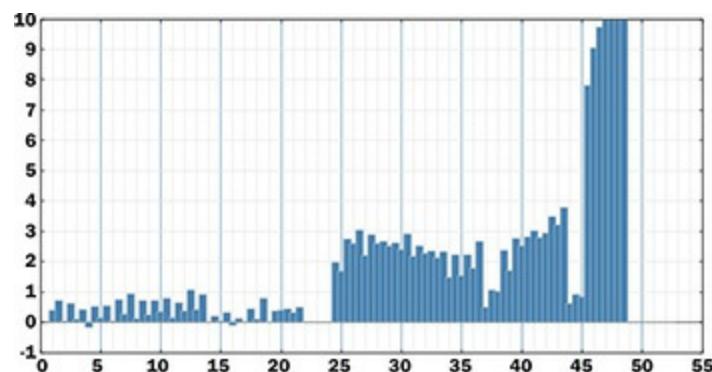
51... ♜f2+!

Forcing White to take the knight or allow a perpetual check. Note that the c4- and e4-squares are mined due to knight forks. The draw that Gelfand eschewed 30 moves earlier is now inevitable.

52. ♜xd5 ♜d4+! 53. ♜xd4 ½-½



A surprising final position for a 2700+ contest.



Anastasia Bodnaruk	2449
Valentina Gunina	2528

Porto Carras tt W 2018 (1)

1.e4 c6 2.d4 d5 3.e5 ♜f5 4.h4 a6!?

4...h5 is the main move, and now I like the sideline 5.♗g5!?, which is actually the highest scoring move. The point is that after 5...♝b6 6.♗d3! ♜xd3 7.♗xd3 it is risky to try to capture the rook after 7...♝xb2 because of 8.e6!. Most players instead prefer the safer 7...e6, but White keeps a large lead in development and a great overall score after 8.♗d2!, of which I too have partaken (Smerdon-Kosteniuk, Gatwick 2016 (1-0, 42)).

5.h5 h6 6.g4 ♜d7 7.f4 c5 8.c3 e6

We have reached a strange sort of French Advance where Black claims that White's two extra tempi are actually weakening moves on the kingside. Bodnaruk solves the unspoken issue of where to place her king with a solution of which AlphaZero would be proud.

9.♗f3 ♜b6 10.♕f2! ♜c6 11.♕g3!? 0-0-0 12.♖h2

12.dxc5! was strong here, intending 12...♜xc5 13.b4 and 14.a4.

12...g6 13.hxg6 fxg6 14.♘d3 cxd4 15.cxd4 g5??

After 15...h5 16.g5 ♜ge7 the game would have been level.

16.♘xg5?

The players trade errors; 16.fxg5! would have avoided the next note.

16...♜ge7?

16...hxg5! was a strong exchange sacrifice, because after 17.♖xh8 ♜ge7 White has no good way to defend the d4-pawn: 18.♕e3? gxf4+ 19.♕xf4? (19.♕xf4 ♜g6! 20.♖xg6 ♜xb2 is unclear) 19...♝xb2 20.♗c3 ♜xc3 21.♗xc3 ♜g6+.

17.♗f7 ♜g8 18.♕h3 ♜xd4?! 19.♕e3



It's not looking good for Black, whose knight (pinned!) and rook (trapped!) are both under attack. Something has to fall, and, with an engine evaluation of +4, some would argue that the position is resignable. But not me, not you, and certainly not Gunina! She asks herself 'What's bad about my opponent's position?' The answer, of course, is White's king. Gunina immediately seeks to increase his discomfort.

19... ♜ ef5!!

Rather than trying to save either piece under attack, Gunina puts a third *en prise*! White must take, but this opens the g-file and removes a valuable defender of his majesty.

20.gxf5

20.♘xd8 is possible, but after 20... ♜b5! 21.♕c3+ ♔b8! Black has the initiative. For instance: 22.♗xb5 ♕xd8 23.♗f2 ♜xb5! with serious compensation for the exchange.

20... ♜b5!



21.♕ c2+!

A strong counter-sacrifice, both objectively and practically.

21.♕xd4? ♜xf1+ 22.♕h4 ♜c7!



analysis diagram

gives Black dangerous practical chances, with White's king precariously cut off by the open g-file. For example: 23.fxe6?? ♜e7+! or 23.♕c3 ♜c4 24.♘xd8?? ♜g7!, in both cases winning for Black. There is a path to victory, although I'd argue that 23.f6!! is not the most natural move that comes to mind. After 23...♝xf7 24.♖c2+! ♜c4 25.♘d2!! the engine proudly awards the point to White.

21...♝xc2! 22.♝xc2+?

This is also the best move according to my engine, but 22.♝xb6! ♜xd3 23.♝xd3 was a much safer route to victory. Black has no hope in the ensuing endgame. Though the engine's advantage for White is colossal after the text move, this is quite an instructive 'human' moment of the game.

22...♜c5!!



Absolutely forced, but still a beautiful move to play.

23.♝xb5?

Again, giving back some material was a much better practical approach: 23.♝xc5+! ♜xc5 24.♝xc5 ♜xf1+ 25.♚h4! with a winning endgame.

23...d4!

Full speed ahead!

24.♘xd8 ♜xd8 25.♝a4

Keeping an eye on the c6-square and intending 25...dxe3 26. ♔c3, with an overwhelming advantage. But, already two pieces down, Gunina has no intention of stopping to pick up material.

25... ♕c7!!



Objectively, White's play has been perfect over the past few moves, but she has eschewed several practical alternatives that would have reduced the risks of falling victim to a swindle. The result of these misses is a chaotic mess with definite chances to blunder. Black's last move is a deceptively quiet one for such a sharp position, but still it threatens to bring the queen to the kingside and penetrate on the g-file. White is currently two pieces ahead, but the path to victory is becoming narrower and narrower.

26.f6!

Keeping the black queen at bay, for now.

26. ♔xd4?? ♕g7! forces checkmate in three.

26... ♕f7 27. ♔h4!



Excellent defence. Black has done all she can to manufacture an attack, but White is entirely focussed on guarding the entry points on the kingside. Gunina needs to create a diversion.

27...dxe3!

Apparently creating ideas with the passed pawn – but this is actually a decoy. The real point is to

open up the g1-square as an entry point.

28. $\mathbb{Q}xc5$

Another ‘best’ move according to the engines, but 28. $\mathbb{Q}a3!$ or even 28. $\mathbb{Q}d2!$ was safer; covering g1 is critical.

28... $\mathbb{Q}g1!$ 29. $\mathbb{Q}d6+$ $\mathbb{Q}c8$



For the last 10 moves, White has played the computer’s first choice at every step. And yet, despite her material advantage, the position balances on a knife’s edge. As the time control looms and her kingside evaporates, White starts to show the first real signs of nerves, beginning with an unwarranted repetition.

30. $\mathbb{Q}c5+$ $\mathbb{Q}b8!$ 31. $\mathbb{Q}d6+$ $\mathbb{Q}a7!$

White has shown her desire to repeat moves, most likely just to get closer to move 40. Many players on the black side would immediately repeat, but Gunina senses her opponent’s true motives and deviates first, as we also saw in Miles-Bouaziz. She offers a different sort of repetition, but one in which the winning continuation is harder to find.

32. $\mathbb{Q}d4+$ $\mathbb{Q}a8$ 33. $\mathbb{Q}d8+$ $\mathbb{Q}a7$ 34. $\mathbb{Q}d4+$ $\mathbb{Q}a8$ 35. $\mathbb{Q}d8+$ $\mathbb{Q}a7$



Now White must deviate or else acquiesce to a third repetition. This is the crucial moment of the game, and since 36. $\mathbb{Q}d4+$ allows a draw claim, only two moves win. But both involve a large

material sacrifice, which White has neither the time nor appetite to calculate. This is precisely the kind of practical dilemma that a Swindler loves to orchestrate!

36. ♜e8??

Sacrificing a rook with 36. ♜c3!! ♕xa1 37. ♜d4+ ♔a8 was the way to go, and here the startling 38. ♜c6!! is the simplest win (note that the bishop controls h1), because 38... bxc6 39. ♜d8+ ♔b7 40. ♜e7+ is a trivially won endgame. Additionally, there was another pretty but somewhat inhuman winning continuation involving a queen sacrifice: 36. ♜d1!.

36... ♜c7?

Mutual time trouble. In fact, 36... ♜h7! draws at once, though in that case we would have all missed out on the spectacular finale.

37.f7?

Returning the favour and allowing one last twist. White has correctly calculated that 37... ♜c1? 38. ♜c3!! wins on the spot. However, as so often happens in the final moves before a time control, she overlooks a crucial tactic.

37... ♜h1+! 38. ♜g4 ♜c4!!

Gunina doesn't let the draw slip a second time. 39... ♜e2 is a huge threat, and White has only one way to prevent it. But what is the problem after the obvious

39. ♜c3?



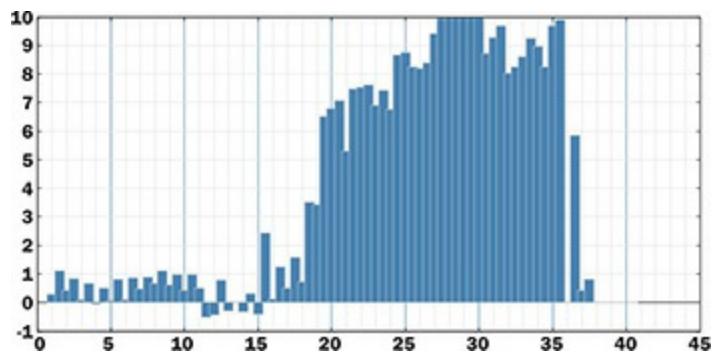
39... ♜h4+!!

A final heroic sacrifice. How many did Black make in this game? I've lost count.

40. ♜xh4 ♜xf4+



And on exactly move forty, and despite a material imbalance of a rook and two pieces for a sole pawn, the players agreed to a draw. Would you dare to call it undeserved?



Game 9

Justin Tan	2407
David Smerdon	2521

England 4NCL 2014/15 (10)

My opponent – not the same Justin Tan of my first swindle! – is one of Australia's most talented young players, and recently became a grandmaster. Creative, resourceful and incredibly gritty, he is often the last to finish in the tournament hall, as was the case in this game.

1.e4 c5 2.♘f3 g6 3.d4 cxd4 4.♗xd4 ♘c6 5.c4 ♗g7 6.♗e3 ♘f6 7.♗c3 d6 8.♗e2 0-0 9.0-0



9...♝xd4

Playing this before 9...♝d7 is a suggestion of Tiviakov's, with the idea of avoiding White's 10.♝c2 lines. There is one small problem:

10.♝xd4 ♚d7 11.♝d3!

This move, rarely played, is the issue with Black's move-order. It is not too serious, but it does allow White to get in f2-f4 quickly, rather than the more conservative f2-f3 that Black was hoping to encourage.

11...♝c6

This position has actually been reached almost as often with Black to move. Usually this happens because White plays an early ♜d2, then meets ...♝c6 with ♜d2-d3. But it can also come about through some strange King's Indian move-orders, e.g. 1.d4 ♜f6 2.♝f3 g6 3.c4 ♜g7 4.♝c3 d6 5.e4 0-0 6.♝e2 ♜c6 7.d5 ♜b8 8.♝d4 c5 9.dxc6 ♜xc6 10.♝e3 ♜d7 11.0-0 ♜xd4 12.♝xd4 ♜c6 13.♝d3, as in Menkhaus-Perk, Binz 2015.

12.f4

12.b4! is strong here.

12...a5 13.♛h1 ♜d7 14.♝xg7 ♜xg7 15.♝g4 ♜c5 16.♝d4+ ♛g8 17.f5!?

Very aggressive and true to Justin's style. The downside is that this critically weakens the dark squares in the centre.

17...♝b6



18.f6?!

Consistent, but dubious. White sacrifices a pawn to break open the position, but he would sorely like to have another minor piece or two in the attack.

18...exf6 19.♘xf6 ♘xb2 20.♗d1 ♘ae8! 21.♗f3 ♘e6 22.♗xe6 ♗xe6 23.♗f6 ♗b4! 24.h4?!



Persistent. White tries to target Black's dark squares through any means necessary. But the attack is easily parried.

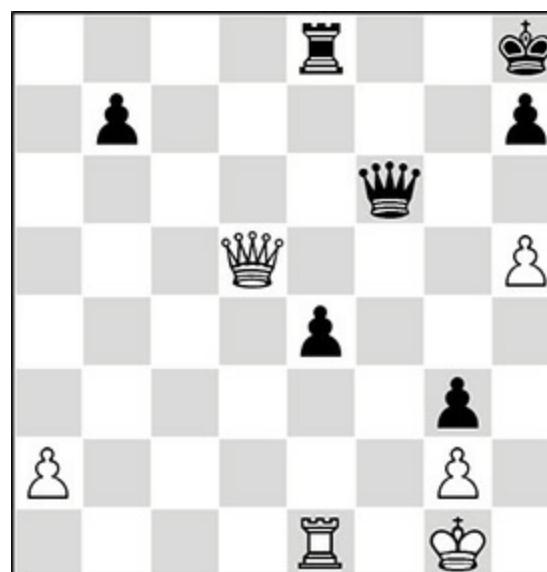
24...♗xc4 25.♘xd6 ♘e8 26.♗d1

26.h5 ♔c5!.

26...♗c5 27.h5 ♘e6 28.♗h4 ♗xe4 29.♗xe4 ♗xe4 30.♗e1 f5

The attack is over and Black has won two pawns.

31.♗g3 ♘e5 32.♗g5 ♘e7 33.♗f4 g5 34.♗d2 g4 35.♗xe4 fxe4 36.♗xa5 g3 37.♗d5+ ♔h8 38.♗g1 ♘f6



And so, we reach the start of the swindling phase. Justin is totally lost, two pawns down and now on the receiving end of an attack. In fact, Black can force mate in 19 moves from here, but we will see that the game will go much longer than that.

Justin starts to dig deep. Each of his coming moves follows the Swindler's motto of last resort: 'At least this move doesn't lose immediately.'

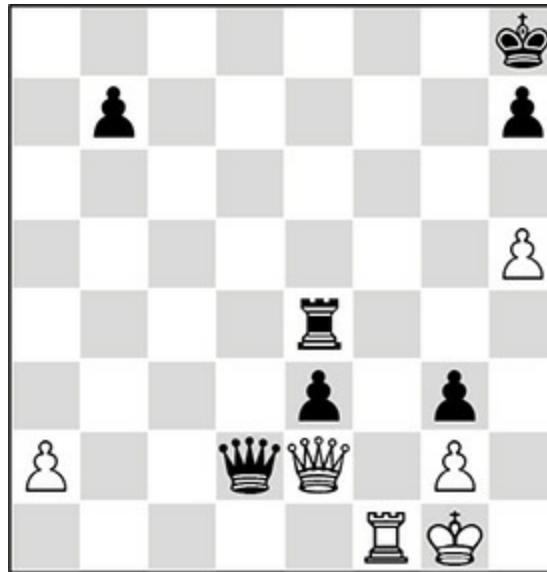
39.♗f1 ♘b6+ 40.♔h1 e3

40... ♕d8! was an immediate win, threatening to play ... ♕h4+. If 41. ♕xd8 ♕xd8 42. ♕e1 then 42... e3! 43. ♕g1 e2!.

41. ♕f3! ♕d6 42. ♕e2!

Gritty.

42... ♕e4 43. ♕g1 ♕d2

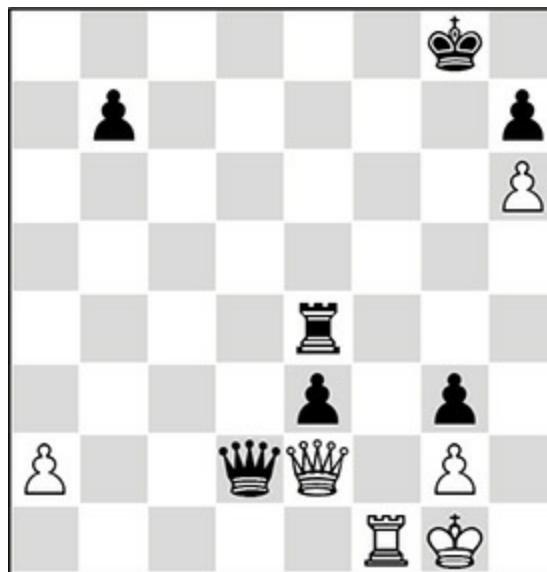


Here I had prepared a little trap of my own: 44. ♕f3?? ♕f2+!! 45. ♕xf2 exf2+ and wins.

44.h6!

White's first real threat of the game, but mate-in-one isn't a bad one to start with!

44... ♕g8



45. ♕f8+!

Justin is no one-trick pony. He recognises that his only practical chance is to transpose into a queen ending and hope that my exposed king gives him something to bite at.

45... ♕xf8 46. ♕f3+ ♕e7 47. ♕xe4+ ♕d6 48. ♕f4+ ♕c6 49. ♕xg3 ♕d1+ 50. ♕h2 ♕h5+ 51. ♕g1 ♕d1+ 52. ♕h2 e2



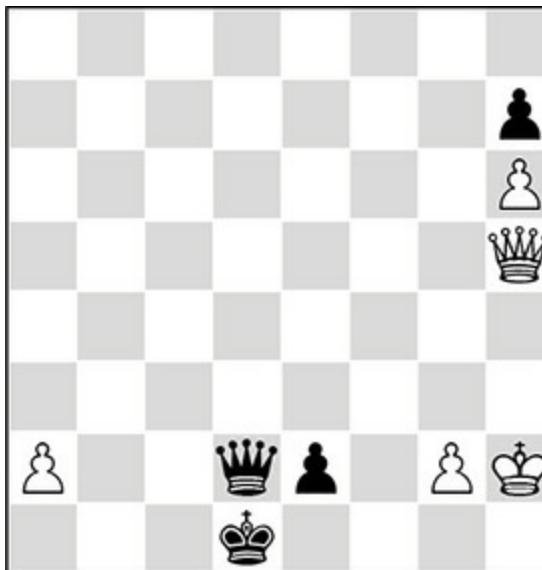
Played with the (correct) intuition that the black king can eventually escape the checks. Little did I realise that my e-pawn would be stuck on e2 for over 30 moves...

53. $\mathbb{Q}c3+$ $\mathbb{Q}d5$ 54. $\mathbb{Q}f3+$ $\mathbb{Q}c5$ 55. $\mathbb{Q}c3+$ $\mathbb{Q}b6$ 56. $\mathbb{Q}e3+$ $\mathbb{Q}a6$ 57. $\mathbb{Q}e6+$ $\mathbb{Q}a7$ 58. $\mathbb{Q}e3+$

Having been up on the clock all game, I now found myself down to 30 seconds per move, along with my opponent. This was no accident. Justin's excellent practical decision on move 45 has transformed the game into one where I needed to calculate variations on every move, while he could choose simply between the two or three available checks on each of his turns, a strategy we saw earlier in Malakhatko-Jones. Now that the clock times have equalised, White's chances of a swindle have significantly improved.

The next phase of the game is marked by inaccuracies by both players, which is to be expected in these sorts of complicated queen endgames. Black has a clear plan of getting his king to the defences of his queen, which I managed to achieve after some time.

58... $\mathbb{Q}a6?$ 59. $\mathbb{Q}e6+$ $\mathbb{Q}a5$ 60. $\mathbb{Q}e5+$ $b5$ 61. $\mathbb{Q}c7+$ $\mathbb{Q}a4$ 62. $\mathbb{Q}a7+$ $\mathbb{Q}b4$ 63. $\mathbb{Q}e7+$ $\mathbb{Q}c4$ 64. $\mathbb{Q}c7+$ $\mathbb{Q}d4$ 65. $\mathbb{Q}d6+$ $\mathbb{Q}c4$ 66. $\mathbb{Q}c7+$ $\mathbb{Q}d4$ 67. $\mathbb{Q}d6+$ $\mathbb{Q}c3$ 68. $\mathbb{Q}c5+$ $\mathbb{Q}d2$ 69. $\mathbb{Q}g5+$ $\mathbb{Q}c2$ 70. $\mathbb{Q}c5+$ $\mathbb{Q}b1$ 71. $\mathbb{Q}xb5+$ $\mathbb{Q}c1$ 72. $\mathbb{Q}c5+?$ $\mathbb{Q}c2$ 73. $\mathbb{Q}e3+$ $\mathbb{Q}d2$ 74. $\mathbb{Q}c5+$ $\mathbb{Q}d1$ 75. $\mathbb{Q}h5!$

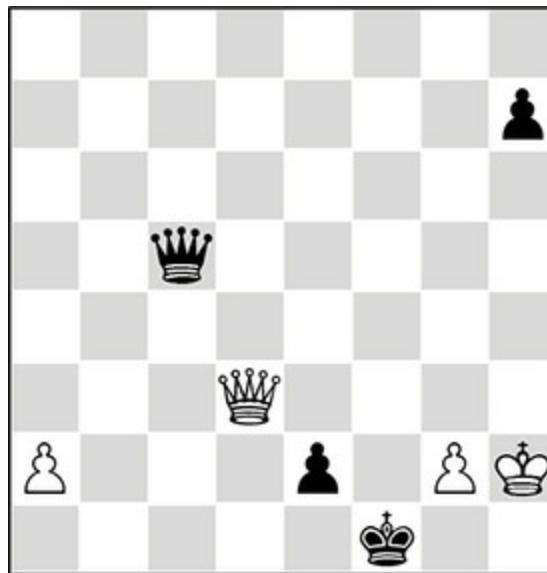


Finally, after 22 checks in a row, White plays something else – but again, this is the most stubborn defence.

75... $\mathbb{Q}f4+$ 76. $\mathbb{Q}h1$ $\mathbb{Q}e3$ 77. $\mathbb{Q}d5+$ $\mathbb{Q}e1$ 78. $\mathbb{Q}f5$ $\mathbb{Q}xh6+$ 79. $\mathbb{Q}g1$ $\mathbb{Q}e3+$ 80. $\mathbb{Q}h2$ $\mathbb{Q}h6+$ 81. $\mathbb{Q}g1$ $\mathbb{Q}c1?$

81... ♕e3+ 82. ♔h1 ♕d4! wins.

82. ♕d3 ♕c5+ 83. ♔h2 ♕f1



Black's king has found shelter deep in the white territory. I remember sitting back in my chair and resting my hands behind my head – not as a show of confidence, but because I genuinely believed that the struggle was over. (Sometimes the best form of acting is ignorance!) Indeed, the struggle should now be over, but not in the way that I thought.

Fortunately for me, with a mixture of exhaustion and disappointment, Justin blitzed out 84.g4??

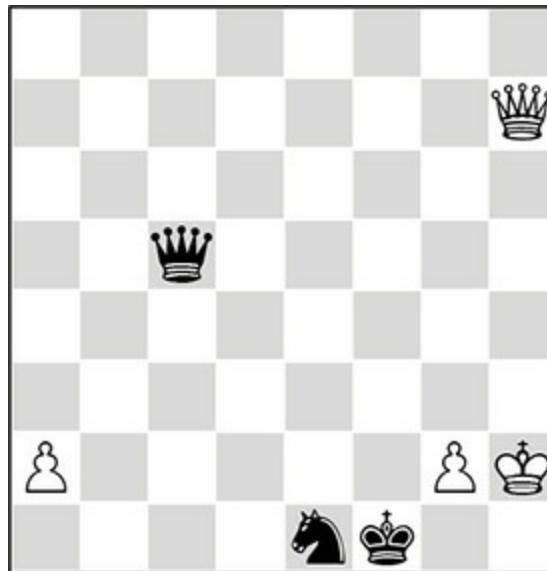
and the game concluded

84... ♕f2+ 85. ♔h3 ♕g1 0-1

It was only after I got back to my room that my computer revealed the shocking truth about the diagrammed position.

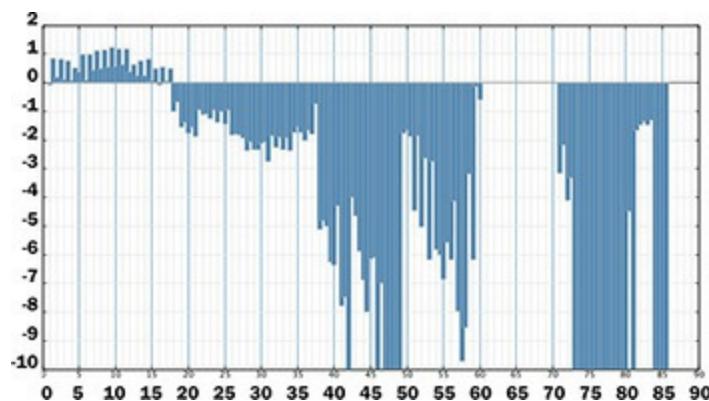
White can save the game in a remarkable fashion: 84. ♕b1+!! Now if 84...e1 ♕ 85. ♕d3+, Black must concede a perpetual, because 85... ♕f2?? 86. ♕f3 is mate, as is 85... ♕e2 86. ♕b1+ ♕f2?? 87. ♕g1#!

There's one more twist in the story. Black can still try 84...e1 ♕ !? (covering d3) 85. ♕xh7



analysis diagram

85... ♜ f3+!, hoping for 86.gxf3 ♕ g1+!. But the sober 86. ♕ g3! ♜ f2+ 87. ♕ f4! holds the draw, reaching the same endgame we saw in Sethuraman-Giri. An astonishing ‘invisible sequence’ that would have justly rewarded Justin’s defensive efforts. But while the final swindle never saw the light of day, there is still a lot we can learn from this game.



CHAPTER 22

Amateur Swindles

Game 10

Niels Piepho	2284
Olaf Steffens	2251

Germany tt 2008/09 (8)

1.c4 ♜ a6!?



We briefly met Olaf Steffens before in the chapter on Window-Ledging. Steffens is a popular and venerable character in the chess scene of Bremen, Germany. He is known both for his eccentric openings (note how the current game begins!) and his warm, unshakeably positive demeanour. He is someone who loves the game of chess in all its facets, as a player, an organiser and a writer. This often transforms into unfounded, relentless optimism over the board. A true lover of chess often makes for the most infuriating of opponents!

Don't be fooled by the opening moves into thinking we are looking at a casual game, by the way; Steffens and his wonderful club Werder Bremen play in the second Germany Bundesliga and take their matches very seriously, as do their opponents. But this doesn't dissuade him from playing in his trademark style right from the first move, as we saw in his game against Gavin Wall.

For Steffens, chess is both sport and art: every game is not only a battle of wits, but also an opportunity to create something original. Typically, and much to his teammates' chagrin, he begins this creativity from the first move.

2.♘ c3 ♘ h6!? 3.d4 g6



4.  f3

Amazingly, only this move is a novelty!

A Canadian amateur called Kosta Elieff has had this position twice with the black pieces, facing 4.e4 on both occasions. 4... $\mathbb{Q}g7$ (4...f6!? 5. $\mathbb{Q}f3$ $\mathbb{Q}f7$ 6. $\mathbb{Q}e2$ c6 7.0-0 $\mathbb{Q}g7$ 8. $\mathbb{Q}f4$ $\mathbb{Q}c7$ actually transposed to the so-called ‘Drunken Roo’ variation, coined by – who else? – the legendary Swindler Tony Miles⁵⁷⁾ 5. $\mathbb{Q}e3$ d6 6.f3 f5! 7. $\mathbb{Q}d2$ $\mathbb{Q}f7$ 8. $\mathbb{Q}c1$ 0-0 and Black had a decent position akin to the Leningrad Dutch in Van der Velde-Elieff, London (Canada) 1994 (0-1, 29).

Having inexplicably just discussed the opening theory of this position, let's return the game.

4...d6 5. ♕g5

With the idea of 5... $\mathbb{Q}g7$ 6. $\mathbb{Q}d2!$, embarrassing the knight on h6. But with this in mind, White should have preferred to put his bishop on f4, because Steffens is certainly not afraid to push his f-pawn (or any pawn for that matter).

5...f6! 6. ♕d2 e5 7.e3 ♔g7



Naturally, White must be better in this position – Black's knights are ‘dim on the rim’, while his various pawn pushes will inevitably leave behind some weak squares in the future.

On the other hand, Black has also achieved one of his aims: reaching a position where both players must think for themselves, rather than recite variations and follow well-trodden paths. And in fact, White immediately errs.

8. $\mathbb{Q}d3?$

8.c5! was strong, making way for the bishop to come to c4 or perhaps even further to capture on a6. If 8...dxc5 then 9.dxe5! fxe5 10. $\mathbb{B}b3!$ gives White more than enough compensation for the pawn.

8...f5!

A natural response, threatening to win a piece with 9...e4, and so White has to waste time.

9. $\mathbb{Q}c2?$

9.c5! was still possible, as 9...e4 10. $\mathbb{Q}xa6!$ exf3 11. $\mathbb{B}xf3!$ favours White.

9...e4 10. $\mathbb{Q}g1$ $\mathbb{B}g5!?$

Active play.

A more restrained approach would be to try to force White to play d4-d5, opening up the long diagonal for Black's fianchettoed bishop. He can initiate this plan by 10... $\mathbb{Q}e6!$, provoking d4-d5. White can defend the pawn by 11. $\mathbb{B}e2$, but then e2 is no longer available for his knights, meaning the pawn on d4 is even more vulnerable.

There could follow 11... $\mathbb{B}b4$ 12. $\mathbb{Q}b1$ c5!? 13.d5 $\mathbb{Q}d7$



analysis diagram

with an excellent position for Black. Steffens' choice is truer to his style, but the queen will eventually be forced to retreat after a future $\mathbb{Q}h3$.

11.g3 $\mathbb{B}b4$ 12. $\mathbb{Q}b1$ 0-0 13. $\mathbb{Q}h3$ $\mathbb{Q}e7$ 14. $\mathbb{Q}f4$



14...c6

Again, Black should have preferred to put pressure on the centre via 14...c5! before White can finish his development. It is true that White can then claim the outpost on d5, but after 15.♘cd5 ♘xd5 16.♘xd5 ♕f7 17.♗c3 Black can immediately undermine it with 17...b5!, blowing up the position in his favour.

15.h4!

White finally decides to remind Black of his own weaknesses.

15...♝g4 16.a3 ♞a6 17.♗a2 ♜e6?!



A positional mistake. All the pawns may still be on the board for now, but Black will soon miss having his light-squared bishop.

18.♗xe6 ♜xe6 19.♗e2 c5 20.♗c3 ♛h8?! 21.♗f4! ♜e8 22.♗d2 cxd4



23. ♕xd4!?

An interesting decision. Clearly, White wants to open the position. This allows Black to swap the queens, but White correctly deduces that his better minor pieces, coupled with the weak pawn on d6, give him an advantage.

23... ♕xd4 24. ♙xd4+ ♔e5 25. ♖d1 ♔c5?

Black tries to solve his positional shortcomings through tactical means, but this will backfire. Better was to grovel with 25... ♔c7.



26.b4! ♖d3+ 27. ♖xd3 ♕xd4 28.exd4 exd3



29.0-0!

Black was perhaps counting on 29. $\mathbb{Q}xd3?$ $\mathbb{Q}ae8+$ 30. $\mathbb{Q}f1$ $f4!$, when he has very serious counterplay. Instead, White plays it safe, reckoning that the d3-pawn is not going anywhere.

29...a5 30.b5 f4 31. $\mathbb{Q}xd3$ $\mathbb{Q}f6$ 32.c5!



White has carefully won his pawn and has begun to get his queenside majority rolling; in fact, he is only a few moves away from making a new queen. Black's forces are in disarray, with every piece objectively inferior to its opposite number. The only factor in Black's favour is the makings of a desperate kingside attack, perhaps justified by White's bishop being a few moves away from the defence. With this in mind and with no realistic chance of stopping the queenside onslaught, Steffens makes a daring attempt at conjuring up counterplay against the white king.

32... $\mathbb{Q}af8!$

With only a few pieces left, it's hard to believe Black is doing anything on the kingside other than tilting at windmills.

33. $\mathbb{Q}d5!$

A dominant position for the bishop, supporting both the queenside pawns and the kingside defence. 33. $gxf4?$ $\mathbb{Q}xf4$ threatens 34... $\mathbb{Q}xf2$, and if 34. $f3$ then 34... $dxc5$ 35. $dxc5$ $\mathbb{Q}e5!$ wins the pawn after all.

33... $fxg3$ 34. $\mathbb{Q}xg3$ $\mathbb{Q}xf2$ 35. $\mathbb{Q}g2!$



Ruling out ideas of ... ♜ h3+. Now Black is faced with the uncomfortable prospect of a rook exchange, or otherwise finding his knight immobilised by the pin on the f-file. Meanwhile, White's queenside pawns are just a few moves from touching down. Black needs to be creative, and fast.

35...dxc5! 36.dxc5 ♜ d8!

Sacrificing another pawn in order to switch the angle of attack.

37.♘ xb7

If I'm being honest, I would probably have played the engine's fifth-best move 37.♕ xf2!?, both because it simplifies the position and because the resulting variation is forced and therefore straightforward to calculate: 37... ♜ xf2+ 38.♕ xf2 ♜ xd5 39.♕ g5 ♜ d3 40.♕ e5 ♜ c3 41.♕ e2 ♜ g7 42.♕ e7+ ♔ f6 43.♕ c7 ♔ e5 44.♕ d2 ♜ c4 45.♕ d3 ♜ c1 46.a4

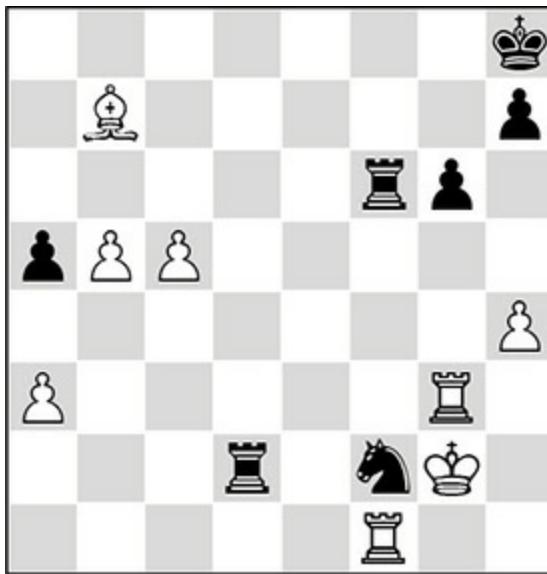


analysis diagram

with an easily winning rook ending. I would have played this way not only because the variation tree is so straight, but also because I'm very comfortable in converting this rook endgame, which may not have been the case for Piepho.

Know thyself!

37... ♜ d2



White now has two connected passed pawns and his objective advantage is colossal, but Black at least has a threat: 38... \mathbb{Q} e4+.

38. \mathbb{Q} g1! \mathbb{R} c2 39. \mathbb{R} g2!

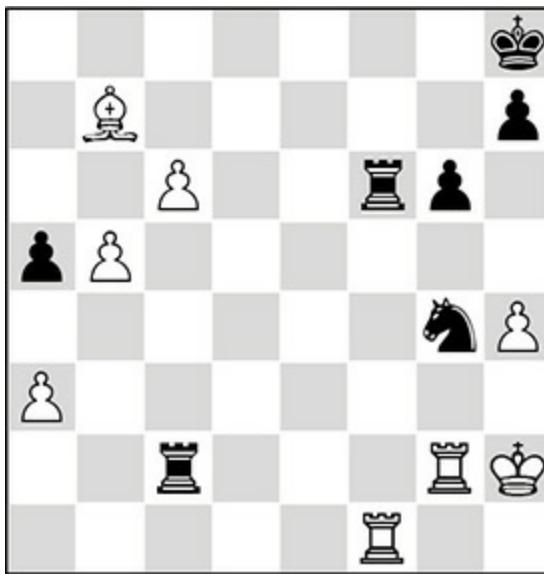
A clever move, provoking Black to simplify the position into the endgame after 39... \mathbb{R} xc5 40. \mathbb{R} gxf2 \mathbb{R} xf2 41. \mathbb{R} xf2 \mathbb{R} xb5 42. \mathbb{Q} e4. We have previously seen that Swindlers often use the prospect of the $\mathbb{Q} + \mathbb{Q}$ vs \mathbb{R} endgame to steal half-points, but here Black's chances of eliminating White's a-pawn are almost zero.

With no practical hopes in the technical endgame, Steffens tries to keep the pieces on the board.

39... \mathbb{Q} h3+! 40. \mathbb{Q} h2 \mathbb{R} f2!



An irritating repetition. White would now like to play 41.c6, but first he needs to calculate the consequences (and avoid the pitfalls) of 41... \mathbb{Q} g4+!:



analysis diagram

- a) 42. $\mathbb{Q}g1??$ won't do: 42... $\mathbb{R}xf1+$ 43. $\mathbb{Q}xf1$ $\mathbb{B}e3+$ and Black wins;
- b) 42. $\mathbb{Q}g3?$ $\mathbb{R}c3+!$ 43. $\mathbb{Q}xg4$ $\mathbb{R}xf1$, and now White must avoid 44. $b6??$ $h5+$ 45. $\mathbb{Q}g5$ $\mathbb{Q}g7!$



analysis diagram

with a cute checkmate for Black. Instead, 44. $\mathbb{R}g3$ $h5+$ leads to an equal endgame in which a draw is the most likely result;

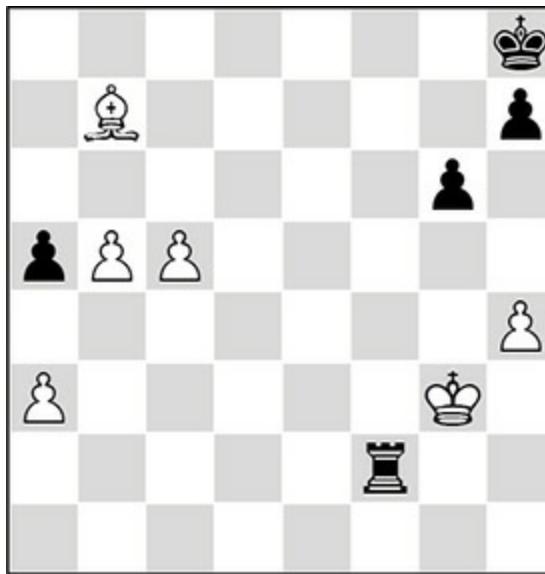
C) 42. $\mathbb{Q}h3!!$ $\mathbb{R}c3+$ 43. $\mathbb{Q}g3$ $\mathbb{R}xg3+$ 44. $\mathbb{Q}xg3$ $\mathbb{R}xf1$ 45. $\mathbb{Q}xg4$ and with a little more care, White should win.

Faced with this jungle of traps, White understandably chooses a calmer, clarifying choice.

41. $\mathbb{R}fxf2!$ $\mathbb{R}fxf2$ 42. $\mathbb{R}xf2$ $\mathbb{R}xf2+$ 43. $\mathbb{Q}g3$

So far, White has played very well, and has managed to successfully diffuse the situation without falling for any of Black's tricks. The position now looks even more hopeless for Black than before, in the face of the unstoppable march 44. $c6$, 45. $b6$ and 46. $c7$.

I invite you to carefully study the position and see if you can find any way for Black to create some swindling chances.



Black to move and swindle

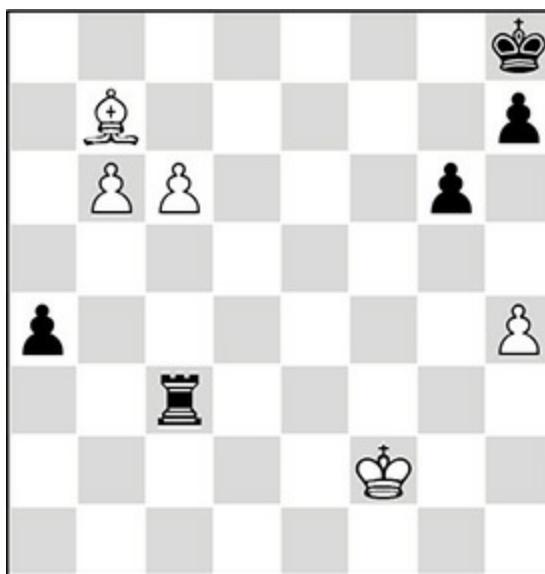
I imagine that many players would resign here, while the rest would seriously consider it. In fact, the truth is that there is no way for Black to avoid losing his rook or allowing White to get a new queen in the next few moves.

The unflappably optimistic Steffens, however, remains unfazed, and we should all be thankful that he chooses to play on – for we are about to witness one of the most incredible swindles I have seen.

43... ♜ a2!

Allowing White to force checkmate in 18 moves or less, according to my engine. But with no other sources of counterplay, Black may as well create his own passed pawn.

44.c6 ♜ xa3+ 45.♔ f2 ♜ c3 46.b6 a4!

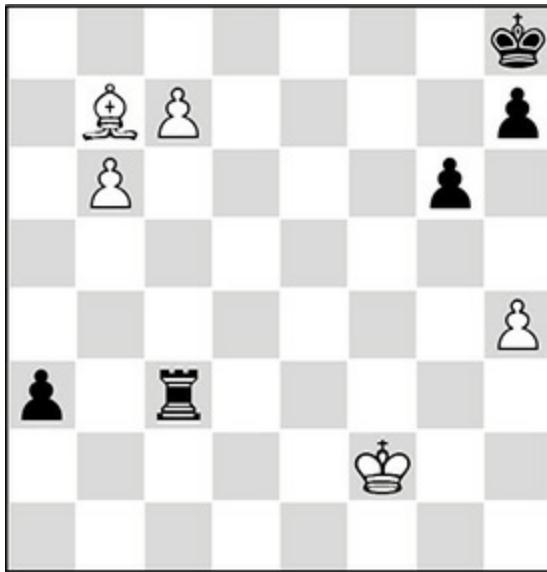


Passed pawns must be pushed, as they say, though surely Black's a-pawn is far too slow to factor into the equation.

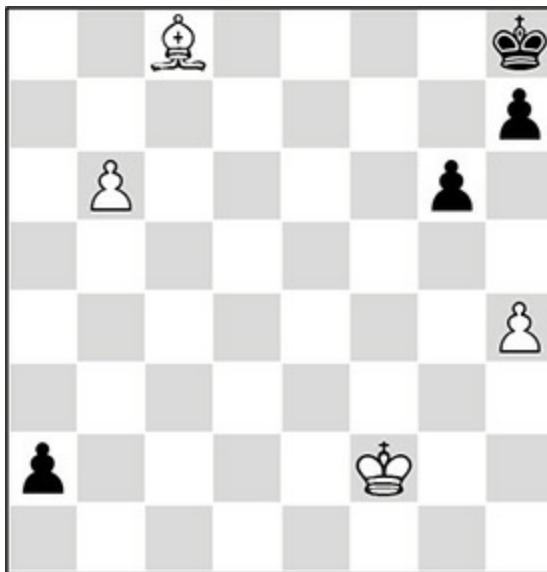
47.c7

Good enough, but 47.♕ a8!, clearing the path for the b-pawn, forces mate in 17.

47...a3



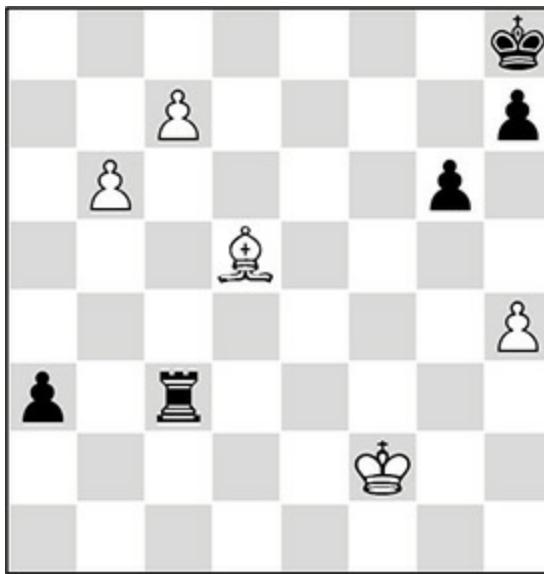
The foot soldier arrives just in time to give White pause for thought, which is at least a small achievement. Specifically, after the natural continuation 48.c8♕+? ♜xc8 49.♕xc8 a2!



analysis diagram

White will get a new queen, but so will Black! After 50.b7 a1♕ 51.b8♕ ♕d4+ the game would end by perpetual check. White spots this trap and again manages to avoid it, but nerves are starting to set in. Why won't this guy just resign?!

48.♕d5

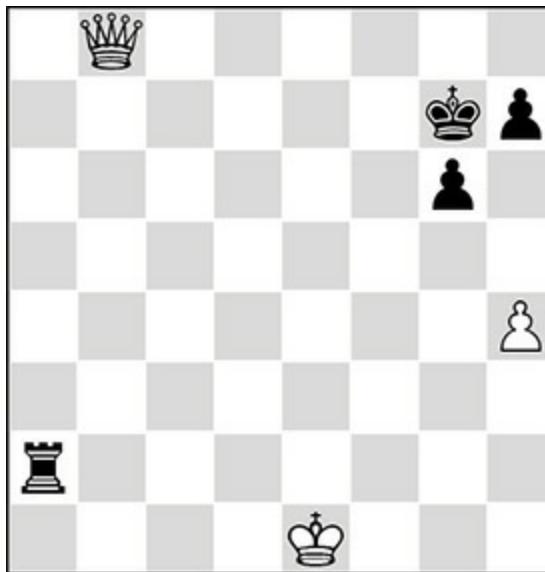


Very tempting. The bishop returns to its commanding central outpost, where it again multi-tasks by supporting b6-b7 while preventing ...a3-a2. There was a cute shortcut to victory on offer with 48. $\mathbb{B}c6!!$. Still, the text spoils nothing and seems, once more, to be completely convincing. Surely the Bremen Magician's hat is now empty.

48... $\mathbb{Q}g7!$ 49. $b7$ $a2!!$



Sorcery! Black's little pawn bravely marches on. To White's horror, he realises that the clear waters have been well and truly muddied. After 50. $\mathbb{B}xa2$ $\mathbb{R}xc7$ 51. $b8\mathbb{Q}$ $\mathbb{R}c2+$ 52. $\mathbb{Q}e1$ $\mathbb{R}xa2$

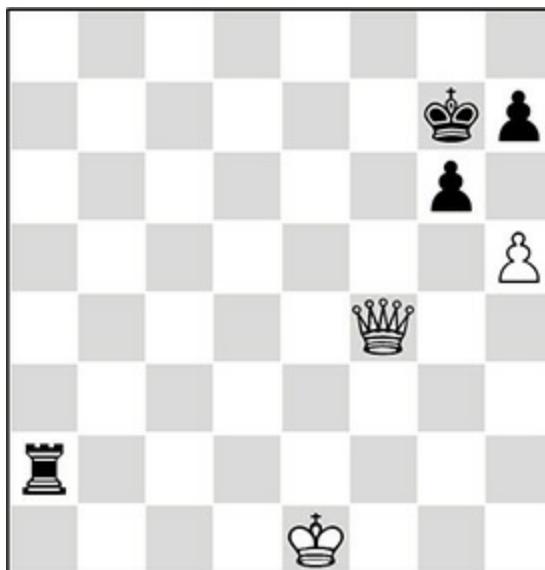


analysis diagram

the game will have sensationally transformed from a sure thing into a messy endgame. Every player is aware of the potential fortresses that a king, rook and pawns can create against an enemy queen – and who on earth can ever remember which ones are winning and which are not? We have already seen several successful defences by the queenless sides in this book, such as Lupulescu-Navara, Morozevich-Jakovenko and Malakhatkko-Jones.

The cold truth of the matter, though, is that the endgame in the diagram IS winning, but only if White finds a precise sequence of moves.

It turns out that White cannot win the rook by force so long as Black is careful and shuffles his king to and fro between g7 and h6. However, after 53. $\mathbb{Q}e5+$ $\mathbb{Q}h6$ 54. $\mathbb{Q}f4+$ $\mathbb{Q}g7$ 55. $h5!$



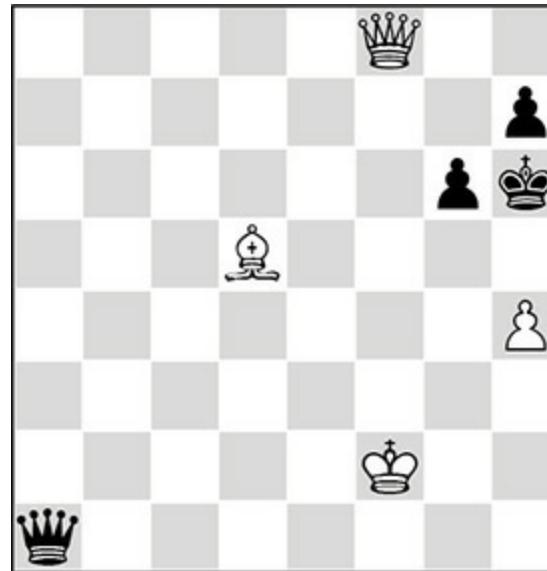
analysis diagram

Black cannot keep his rook safe and also prevent h5-h6+, after which Black's kingside falls apart. Had the game continued this way, we would surely have applauded the white player for his brilliance and composure. But one can sympathise with White's trepidation at this point, and, perhaps in an effect to avoid the humiliation of a textbook queen-versus-rook fortress, he again seeks a simpler solution – and throws away the win entirely.

50.c8 ♕ ??

A blunder, to be sure, but one borne out of nerves and perhaps even disbelief at Black's ingenuity.

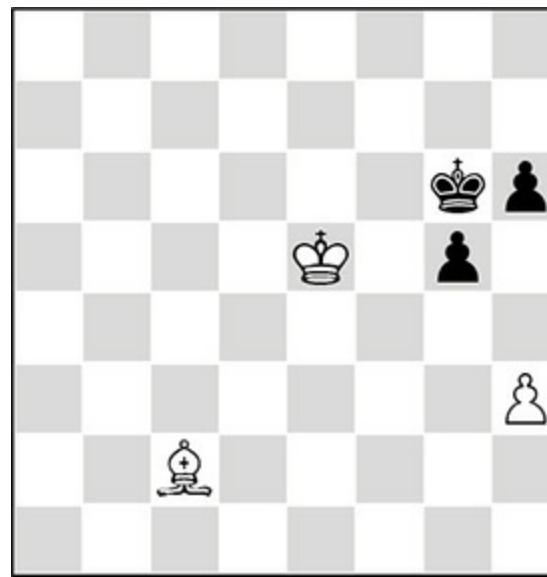
50... ♕ xc8 51.bxc8 ♕ a1 ♕ 52. ♕ g8+ ♔ h6 53. ♕ f8+



53... ♕ g7!

Perhaps White was only counting on 53... ♔ h5?? 54. ♕ f3+ ♕ xh4 55. ♕ h6#, assuming that the exchange of queens was also trivially winning. But, too little too late, White realises that the endgame after the queen exchange is a draw thanks to the wrong-coloured rook's pawn.

(Though, that's not to say that this endgame is drawn 100% of the time in practice. Witness the tragicomical ending to Watu Kobese-Hoang Thai Tu in the 1996 Olympiad:



63... ♔ h5 64. ♕ d1+ ♔ h4??.

Just retreating the king and playing ...h6-h5, ...g5-g4 at the first opportunity was an easy draw. Black doesn't mind losing both of his pawns. Instead, however, there followed 65. ♕ g4!! h5 66. ♕ f5!



and Black resigned.)

Back to the game after 53... ♕g7:



54. $\ddot{\text{R}}$ f4+ g5 55. $\ddot{\text{R}}$ d6+ $\ddot{\text{K}}$ h5!

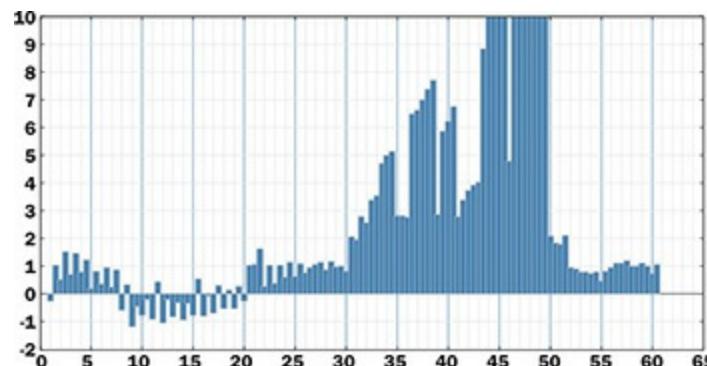
55... $\ddot{\text{R}}$ g6?? 56. $\ddot{\text{R}}$ f8+ $\ddot{\text{K}}$ h5 57. $\ddot{\text{R}}$ f7 (or 56... $\ddot{\text{R}}$ g7 57. hxg5+) loses the queen.



Having finally run his king out of danger, Black has escaped the worst of things, and White can no longer avoid the exchange of his last remaining pawn.

56.hxg5 ♕ xg5 57.♘ g3+ ♔ h6 58.♘ h4+ ♔ g6 59.♘ e4+ ♔ f7 60.♘ h5+ ♔ e7

And White, traumatised, decided to call it a day: ½-½



A spellbinding swindle, helped along its way by the subconscious power of Steffens' sanguine psyche. Had White found the win on move 50, then Steffens would no doubt have smiled, shaken hands and slept soundly, accepting that he could have done no more than create the chances he had. No-one would have paid the game any more attention. But as it happened, this was that one-in-a-hundred case where the swindle was successful, and now it is immortalised in print.

Game 11

R Vaishali 2376

Nathalie Pellicoro 1967

London 2019 (1)

1.e4 c5 2.♘ f3 e6 3.d4 cxd4 4.♘ xd4 ♜ c6 5.♘ c3 ♜ c7 6.g3 ♜ f6 7.♘ g2 a6 8.0-0 ♜ e7 9.♘ e1



The fianchetto system is a lot more poisonous than it first appears against Black's set-up.

9...d6?!

The most commonly played move, but a mistake.

The theory goes 9...0-0! 10.♘ xc6 dxc6 11.e5 ♜ d8! 12.♘ f3 ♜ d5, though these days Black has been having a hard time against the crude 13.h4! (Wang Hao-Andreikin, China tt 2019 (1-0, 60)).

10.♘ xc6! bxc6 11.e5 dxe5 12.♘ xe5!



The point of White's play. The rook is immune thanks to a countercheck on c6, which means that Black's structure is permanently compromised in addition to White's lead in development.

12... ♜ d5?

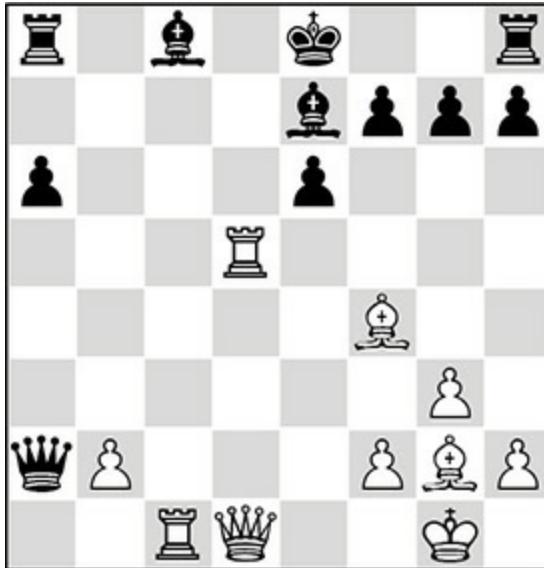
12...0-0 is best, when after 13. ♜ f4! Black needs to avoid the obvious but disastrous 13... ♜ d6??

14. ♜ xe6!! in favour of the clunky 13... ♛ b7, with a slight disadvantage.

13. ♜ xd5 cxd5 14. ♜ f4 ♜ c5?

14... ♜ d6? 15. ♜ xd5 would be a catastrophe, but the text is not much better. White's forces are swarming all over the black queen.

15.c4 ♜ xc4 16. ♜ c1 ♜ xa2 17. ♜ xd5!



You can feel a sacrifice coming. Black is again given no respite in which to castle, because 17...0-0 18. ♜ d2! ♜ a7 19. ♜ e3 wins serious material.

17... exd5 18. ♜ xd5 ♜ a5 19. ♜ c6+! ♛ f8 20. ♜ xa8 ♜ e6 21. ♜ c7



The smoke has cleared, and although Black has managed to maintain material equality, her position is in tatters. There is an immediate threat of 22. $\mathbb{Q}d6$, which wins on the spot, and while this can be prevented by making some air on the kingside, it's clear that Black cannot hold out for long. For example, 21...h6 22. $\mathbb{Q}e4$ (22. $\mathbb{Q}d5!$ and 22.b4! are both stronger, but the text is clean and natural) centralises the bishop, cuts off the escape route on h7 and renews the threat of $\mathbb{Q}d6$. Black's only move is 22... $\mathbb{Q}f6$ but then 23.b4 (again, other moves are objectively stronger) highlights just how uncoordinated the black forces are.



analysis diagram

The queen cannot move to the b-file on account of 24. $\mathbb{Q}b7$ followed by 25. $\mathbb{Q}b8+$, but after 23... $\mathbb{Q}a1$ 24. $\mathbb{Q}xa1$ $\mathbb{Q}xa1$, there follows 25.b5!.



analysis diagram

A lovely variant on the same back-rank theme. After 25...axb5 26.Qa7 there really is nothing left for Black.

Sensing her utter helplessness, Pellicoro correctly reckons that it is time to lash out:

21...g5!

The advantage of Black's desperado is that it narrows down the paths to White's victory, as opposed to the plethora of winning continuations in the previous note. Now only two moves win: 22.b4 and 22.Qd6. For instance: 22.Qd6! Qxd6 23.Qxd6+ Kg7 24.Qd4+! (the only winning move) 24...Kg8 25.Qb7! and there is no defence to 26.Qb8+.

But fortune sides with the underdog on this occasion, as the women's grandmaster with the white pieces tries too hard to maintain control of the position. Her next move looks completely crushing:

22.Qd4?? Qe1+ 23.Qg2



What now?

23...Qh3+!!

A spectacular shot. Suddenly, Black's impotent forces spring to life.

24.Qxh3

24.Qf3?? g4# is a cute checkmate.

24... ♜ f1+



Amazingly, White must now acquiesce to a draw with 25. ♛ g4 ♜ e2+! 26. ♛ h3, as any other move runs into 26... ♜ e6+ and a swift checkmate. Spotting this variation, but unable to accept the reality of a half-point stolen, Vaishali tries another route – and ends up losing it all.

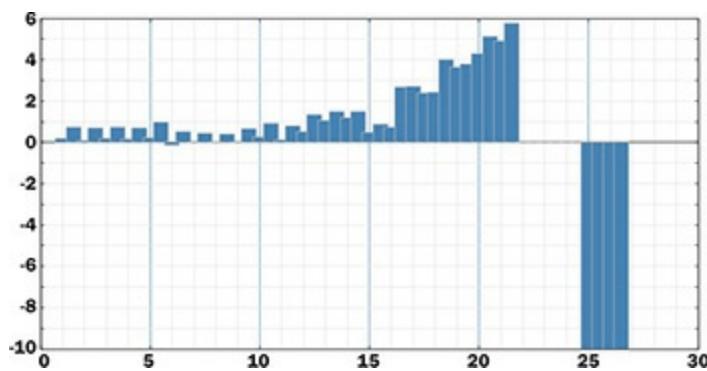
25. ♜ g2?? g4+ 26. ♛ xg4



White threatens all of Black's pieces at once, and neither 26... h5+ 27. ♛ h3 nor 26... ♜ g8 27. ♛ h3 help at all. But there is one more check to consider, and it is deadly.

26... ♜ e2+!!

Black creates an unexpected checkmate on the light squares, because the bishop on g2 blocks a key path of retreat. If 27. ♛ h3 ♜ h5#, while 27. f3 ♜ e6+ 28. ♛ h5 ♜ g6# or 27. ♜ f3 ♜ e6+ 28. ♛ h5 ♜ g6# are dealt with in the same manner. White resigned, concluding a remarkable swindle by the black player (who was rated over 400 points below her).



Game 12

Erik Fossan	2315
Oliver Reeh	2435

Gausdal 1993 (5)

1.e4 c5 2.♘f3 d6 3.d4 cxd4 4.♗xd4 ♗f6 5.♘c3 ♗c6 6.♗g5 e6 7.♗d2 ♗e7

The old line.

7...a6 is more popular. After 8.0-0-0 the move 8...h6 was quite popular around the turn of the millennium, but these days most grandmaster games continue with 8...♗d7 and now White must choose where to place his f-pawn.

8.0-0-0 0-0 9.♗b3

Not a bad move, but 9.f4 is significantly more popular in practice.



9...♝b6

9...a5!? 10.a4 d5 is more dynamic, though 11.♗b5! ♗b4 12.e5 ♘d7 13.♗xe7 ♗xe7 (Caruana-Vishnu, Douglas 2017) and now 14.♗e3! would have been better for White.

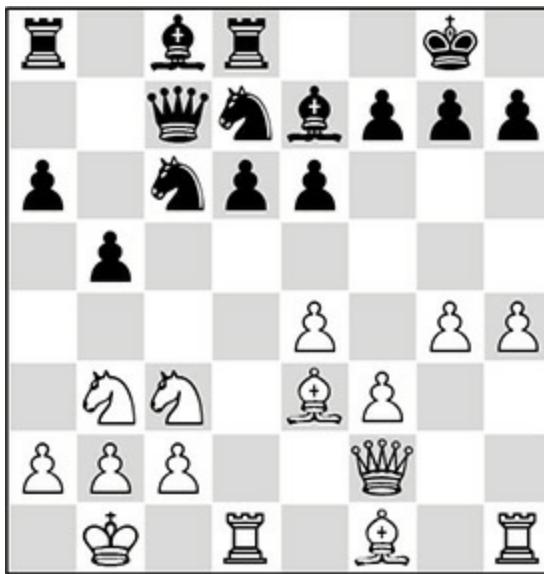
10.f3 ♘d8 11.♗b1 a6?! 12.♗e3! ♗c7 13.♗f2!

Sizing up the tender dark squares on the queenside, but more importantly, forcing Black to move a key defender away from his king.

13...♝d7 14.h4

And the race is on!

14...b5 15.g4



15...♝ce5 16.g5 b4 17.♝e2 ♜b7?!

The consistent 17...a5! was stronger.

18.♛c1?!

And similarly, 18.h5! was the way to go.

18...♝c5 19.♝xc5 dxc5 20.♞xd8+?!

White starts to go off track. Ceding the d-file was unnecessary; it was time to start thinking about equalising with 20.♞h3.

20...♞xd8 21.h5 c4



Black has complete control over the centre and his attack is subsequently the more dangerous. 22...b3 is a big threat, and Black has a large advantage after the computer's suggestions of 22.♝g2 or 22.♞h3. This is definitely not the way to create swindling chances; there is no way back for White now, and he presses on, sacrificing a pawn to start some counterplay.

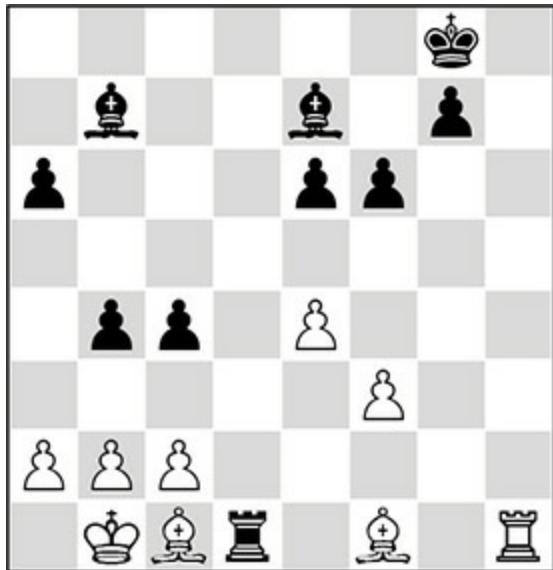
22.g6! hxg6 23.hxg6 ♜xg6 24.♝f4!!



This shouldn't work, but practically speaking, it shows great creativity. The attack must go on.

24... ♜xf4 25. ♜h2 f6

Averting mate, and inviting White to simplify the position with 26. ♜xf4 (but not 26. ♜xf4?? ♛d1+ 27. ♜c1 ♛xh2 28. ♛xh2 ♛xf1) 26... ♛xf4 27. ♜xf4 ♛d1+ 28. ♜c1



analysis diagram

and the bishop endgame after 28...f5 29. ♜g2 ♛xh1 30. ♜xh1 ♛f7 is easily winning. But Black can do even better with 28... ♜c5! 29. ♜g2 ♛g1!!.

26. ♜h3!?

A brave try.

26... ♜d6



Black has consolidated his extra piece and is now clearly winning. White can regain a pawn with 27. $\mathbb{Q}xf4$ $\mathbb{Q}xf4$ 28. $\mathbb{Q}xe6+$, but the resulting lines are relatively forced and simplify Black's task. Instead, White appeals to Black's greed.

27. $\mathbb{Q}g4!$ $\mathbb{Q}f7$

Not in itself a mistake, but showing that Black indeed is trying to make his life easier rather than focussing on securing the win. For example: 27... $\mathbb{Q}e5$ 28. $\mathbb{Q}h7+$ $\mathbb{Q}f8$ 29. $\mathbb{Q}h8+$ $\mathbb{Q}f7$ and White has nothing.

28. $\mathbb{Q}h7!$

Hinting he might be threatening 29. $\mathbb{Q}xf4$ followed by $\mathbb{Q}h5+$, picking up g7. White has been courageously following his strategy of all-or-nothing attack for some moves, and finally he launches his queen into the black camp. But the real point of the swindle set-up is noticing Black's pattern of adopting conservative defence over the past passage of play – a policy that now needs to change.



28... $\mathbb{Q}f8??$

The move White was hoping to provoke. White's kingside threats are more bark than bite, and many active moves were winning for Black, such as 28... $\mathbb{Q}c8$, 28... $\mathbb{Q}c6$ and 28... $\mathbb{Q}e5$. But the move Black chooses looks super-safe and is perfectly in keeping with his previous prosaic play. And it is a blunder.

29. $\mathbb{Q}xf4!$ $\mathbb{Q}xf4?$



30. ♔ g8+!!

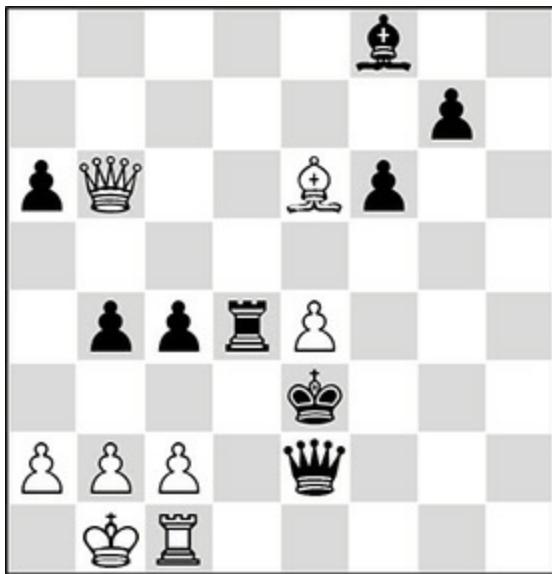
A brilliant queen sacrifice. Out of nowhere, White conjures up a beautiful mating net. 30... ♕xg8 31. ♜xe6# is mate, as is 30... ♛e7 31. ♜xe6# or 30... ♛e8 31. ♜xe6+ ♚e7 32. ♖h8#. Black resigned, presumably out of shock, concluding a wonderful swindle.

But perhaps even more shocking is that, despite the turnaround, Black's position was still salvageable: 30... ♛g6!! is the only move to avoid mate, but surprisingly it is not at all bad. Now, 31. ♜h5+? ♛g5 doesn't lead anywhere, but White had likely planned 31. ♜xe6 (31. ♖g1 is better, but after 31... ♛g5! the game goes on) which threatens 32. ♜f7+, 32. ♜f7+ and 32. ♖g1+. Black's position still looks completely hopeless, but there is a fantastic resource:



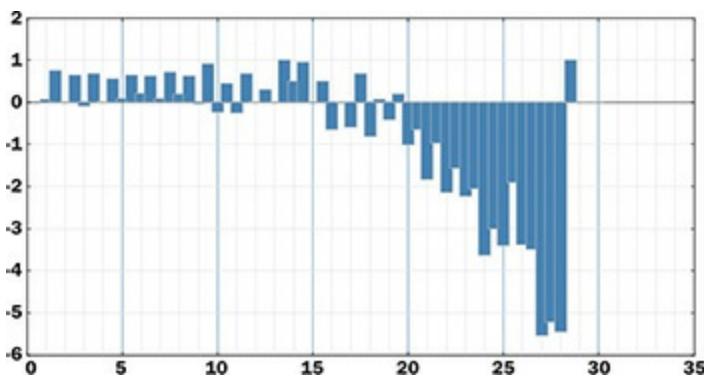
analysis diagram

31... ♜h2!! This splendid twin queen sacrifice exploits White's back rank and simultaneously avoids White's checkmating threats. In fact, White is lucky to be able to escape at all: 32. ♜f7+ ♛g5 33.f4+! ♛xf4 34. ♖f1+ ♛e3 35. ♜xb7 ♜e2! 36. ♜b6+! ♖d4 37. ♖c1



analysis diagram

with an unclear game.



Game 13

Stefan Blaas

Paul Pancras

Haarlem 1996 (2)

Our final amateur game is the lowest-rated example in this book, but features a truly remarkable swindle. White is roughly a 1600 player, and Black is around 1800.

1.e4 e5 2.♗f3 ♗c6 3.♗c4 ♗f6 4.♗g5

At the time the Fried Liver Attack was considered to give Black a good game, although in recent years it has made a small comeback, even at grandmaster level.

4...d5 5.exd5 ♗a5 6.♗b5+ c6 7.dxc6 bxc6 8.♗f3

8.♗d3 is the current trend. One recent high-level game continued 8...♗d5 9.♗f3 ♗d6 10.0-0 ♗f4 11.♗c3!? ♗xd3 12.cxd3 with a complex struggle in Wang Hao-Tari, St Petersburg blitz 2018 (½-½, 112).

8...♗b8 9.♗d3 h6

These days, players don't kick the bishop, and instead both 10...♗d6 and 10...♗e7 give Black a great game.

10.♗e4 ♗d5 11.b3 ♗f4 12.♗b2



12... ♜xd3+?

It is tempting to mess up White's structure, but the exchange just eases the pressure. Much better was 13...f6!, with good compensation for the pawn.

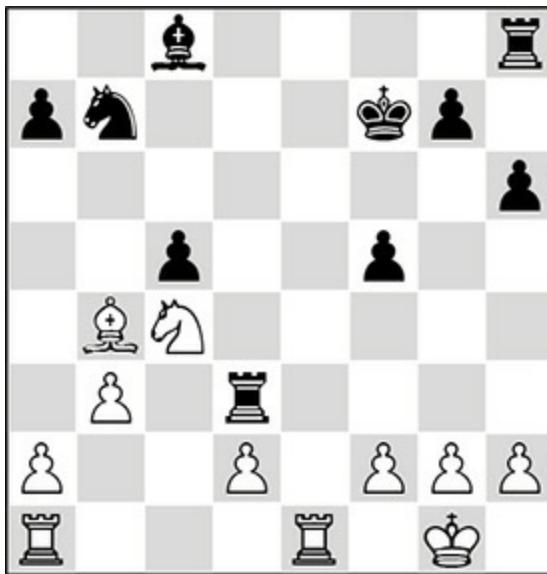
13. ♜xd3 ♜xd3 14.cxd3 f5?

A blunder.

15. ♜xe5!



15... ♜b5 16. ♜d6+ ♜xd6 17. ♜xd6 ♜d5 18. ♜b4 ♜b7 19.0-0 ♜xd3 20. ♜e1+ ♜f7 21. ♜a3 c5 22. ♜c4!



From their initial passivity, the white queenside pieces burst into action. In addition to being a pawn up, White has all the threats.

22... \mathbb{Q} e8 23. \mathbb{Q} xe8 \mathbb{Q} xe8 24. \mathbb{Q} e1+ \mathbb{Q} f8 25. \mathbb{Q} c3 \mathbb{Q} d6? 26. \mathbb{Q} e5!



Winning more material.

26... \mathbb{Q} d5 27. \mathbb{Q} g6+ \mathbb{Q} f7 28. \mathbb{Q} f4! \mathbb{Q} d4 29. \mathbb{Q} xd4 cxd4 30. \mathbb{Q} c1 g5 31. \mathbb{Q} c7+ \mathbb{Q} f6!

Black's position has been resignable for a while now. But where's the fun in that? So far there don't seem to be any concrete chances for a swindle, so Pancras flings his king down the board while he waits for one to appear.

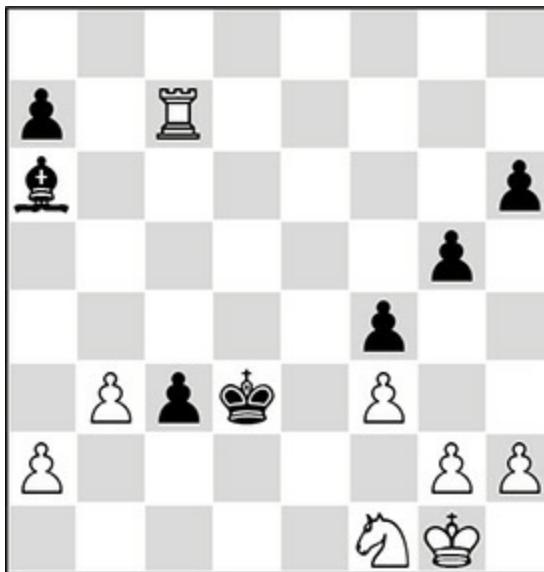
32. \mathbb{Q} e2 \mathbb{Q} e5! 33. \mathbb{Q} c5+ \mathbb{Q} e4!



34. $\mathbb{Q}c6$ $\mathbb{Q}d5$ 35. $\mathbb{Q}c7$ $\mathbb{Q}a6$ 36. $\mathbb{Q}g3$
36. $\mathbb{Q}xd4!$ $\mathbb{Q}xd4$ 37. $\mathbb{Q}c6$ wins quickly.
36... $\mathbb{Q}b5$ 37. $\mathbb{Q}h7$ $f4$ 38. $\mathbb{Q}f1$



Facing an impossible endgame, Black comes up with a brilliantly creative concept:
38... $\mathbb{Q}c3!!$
With sinister intentions on e2. But of course, the knight can simply be taken. How dangerous can that pawn really be?
39. $dxc3$ $dxc3$ 40. $\mathbb{Q}c7$ $\mathbb{Q}d4$ 41. $f3$ $\mathbb{Q}d3!!$



A bluff of outrageous proportions. Black's conception is not about promotion, but rather about locking up the white pieces. A rook ahead, White is hypnotised into believing that his rook must stay on the c-file and that his other pieces are incarcerated on the kingside. From the ashes, Black has somehow created a powerful illusion.

A calm reflection on the position reveals that the idea has no real substance, and White can safely take on a7. But in an amateur contest, it can be psychologically difficult to move a rook away from the file of a passed pawn. Instead, White follows the natural course of playing it safe and bringing the king to the queenside, with the intention of preventing any c-pawn shenanigans.

42. ♔f2 ♕c2! 43. ♔e1

Again, 43. ♕xa7!.

43... ♕b2 44. ♕c6 ♔xf1?!

Very committal. My preference as a would-be Swindler would be to keep the tension with 44... ♔d3!?, asking White how he intends to release his pieces.

45. ♕xf1 c2



If you look at this diagram for the first time, it seems simply incredible that any result other than a white win is possible. You'll no doubt calculate in no time that 46.b4! leads to promotion.

But it is important to realise that White has been under an uncomfortable amount of pressure over the past few moves, thanks to Black's shocking sacrifice. White, likely in time trouble as well, continues

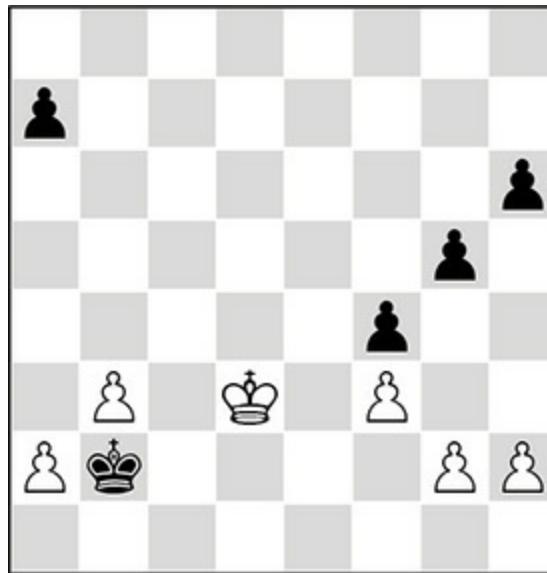
with his unfortunate plan of bringing his king to the centre – an admirable general principle for the endgame, but no substitute for cold calculation.

46. ♕ e2?? c1 ♕ 47. ♜ xc1 ♕ xc1 48. ♕ d3 ♕ b2!

Black's king has certainly stolen the show in this endgame, and suddenly it's White who has to be careful.

Counterplay is essential: White should play 49.g4! ♕ xa2 50. ♕ c2! with a draw.

Blaas, however, falls apart.



49.b4?? ♕ xa2 50.b5 ♕ b3 51. ♕ d4 ♕ b4 52. ♕ d3 ♕ xb5 53. ♕ c3 ♕ c5 54.g3 fxg3 55.hxg3 h5 56.f4 gxf4 57.gxf4 h4 58.f5 h3 59.f6 ♕ d6

White resigned.

A complete turnaround, and a testament to the power of psychological factors, particularly in amateur games.

The quality of play in this game was not of a high standard compared to the rest of the examples in this book. But that's why I wanted to include it. Even though swindles occur in all grades, at lower levels it's especially important to keep on the lookout for swindling opportunities. Tactical oversights are more common, and most players have not learned to identify or overcome their natural biases at the board. Apply the lessons from this book, and your chances of saving points will grow.

CHAPTER 23

My Favourite Swindle

Earlier in this book, I asked you to remember the name ‘Junta Ikeda’. We have seen all manner of trickery throughout the chapters so far, but I promise that you have never seen anything like what is coming up. In Australian chess circles, this swindle has become legendary.

Game 14

Junta Ikeda	2261
Saptarshi Roy Chowdhury	2469

Canberra 2009 (6)

1.e4 b6 2.d4 ♜b7 3.♗d3 e6 4.♘f3 d6 5.0-0 ♜d7 6.♘e2 g6 7.c3 ♜g7

The Hippopotamus Defence, so called because Black keeps his pieces ‘under the surface’ within his first three ranks, preparing to strike later when the moment is right. Initially thought of as a beginner’s opening, it has recently been given more respect by grandmasters, partially on account of GM Tiger Hillarp Persson’s assessment in his excellent books on the Modern Defence.

8.b4 ♜e7 9.b5 0-0 10.a4 ♜e8 11.♘bd2 e5!?



White’s treatment of the opening has been conservative, to say the least. Black takes this moment to strike (the first move beyond his third rank!), and poses a difficult question. The principled response is 12.d5, but then Black has a free hand to build up an attack on the kingside King’s-Indian style. Junta decides against this, but must allow Black to blast open the centre for his eager minor pieces.

12.♘b2 exd4

There was a surprising alternative here: 12...♘d5!!, threatening to jump into f4. The knight is unexpectedly immune, because 13.exd5? exd4 14.♘e4 dxc3 15.♘c1 f5 wins for Black.

13.cxd4 ♜f8 14.♖fe1 ♜e6 15.♗b3 ♜f4 16.♗d2 ♜xd3 17.♗xd3 d5



Having claimed White's d3-bishop, Black naturally seeks to open the position. But 17...f5! was an even stronger way to go about it, softening up those light squares.

18.e5 c6 19.Qc1 a5 20.Qf4 cxb5 21.axb5 Qc8 22.Qd2 Qg4 23.Qe3 Qd7 24.Qe2 Qf5 25.Qd3 Qxb5 26.h3 Qxf3
27.Qxf3 a4 28.Qd2 Qd7



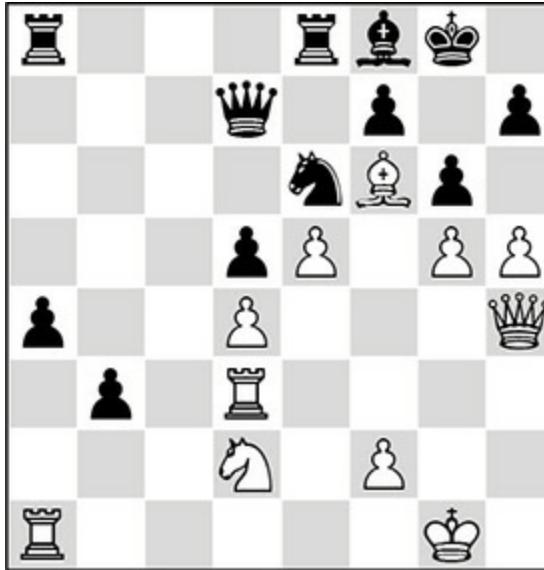
A pawn up with an unstoppable roll on the queenside, Black is completely dominating. But Ikeda, daunted by neither his position nor his grandmaster opponent, launches a groundless Berserk Attack on the kingside.

29.g4! Qe7 30.h4 b5 31.Qg5 b4 32.Qf4 Qc6 33.Qf6 Qf8 34.h5! Qd8 35.g5



White's kingside pawns mirror Black's pair on the queenside, but it is inconceivable that White's attack could be in time.

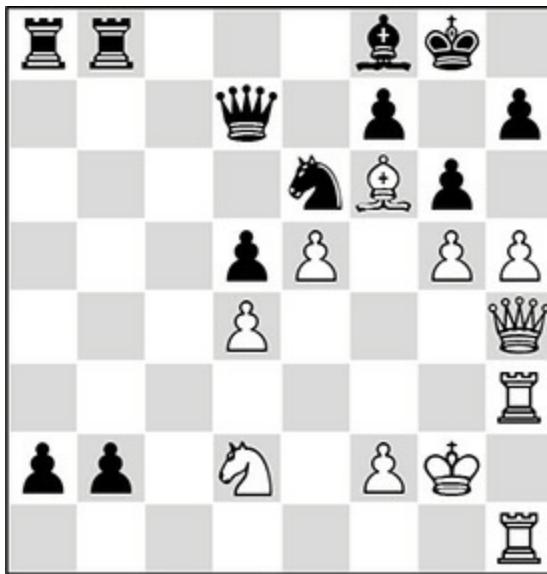
35... ♜ e6 36. ♜ h4 b3



37. ♜ b1!

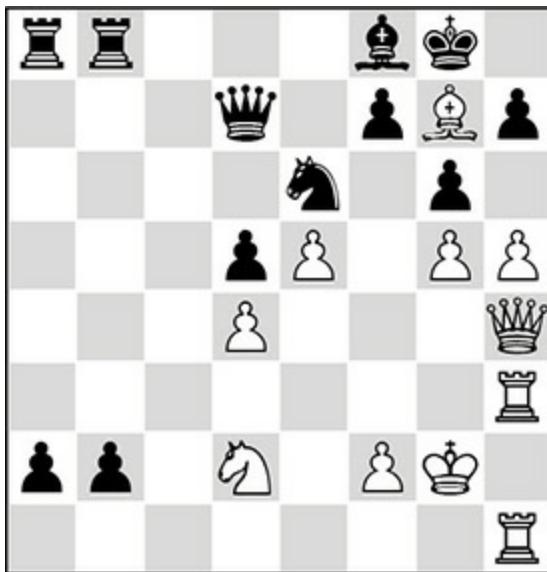
A really clever move. While White's entire hopes lie with his kingside attack, Ikeda is shrewd enough to take a moment to slow down his opponent's play on the other side of the board. This move not only gains him some time to prepare his trap, but also encourages Black to move another piece away from the defence of the king.

37... ♜ eb8 38. ♜ g2 b2 39. ♜ h1 a3 40. ♜ dh3 a2



It seems that White's attack has come to a halt. Black's king is amply defended, and 41.hxg6 fxg6 promises nothing. Meanwhile, Black threatens to promote, twice! With nothing left to lose, Ikeda reaches into his bag of tricks to create an illusion of breath-taking proportions.

41...g7!!



One of the most audacious moves I have ever seen, which caused at least one grandmaster-spectator to laugh out loud. And yet, it's a pure bluff.

In fact, if one were so inclined (and I was), one can confirm that Black has no less than 47 (!) winning moves in this position, including all eight promotions.

(see Figure)

I am sure this is some sort of record. Still, at least 41. $\mathbb{Q}g7$ has a point: White cuts off the black queen's defence of h7 in the crudest of fashions. But of course, its main purpose is simply to create indecision and doubt in Black's mind. The decoy trap, 41... $\mathbb{Q}xg7??$ 42.hxg6!, is easily avoided. The hidden point of the swindle, however, will soon be revealed.

41... ♕ xg7 42. hxg6

And now there are a further 46 winning moves for Black. What makes this swindle successful, however, is that Black's previous move, and the blunder to follow, are two of the most obvious and apparently cleanest choices. But while Black may have clearly won the battle on seven of the files over the board, White is more than content to settle for winning the eighth.

42...hxg6??

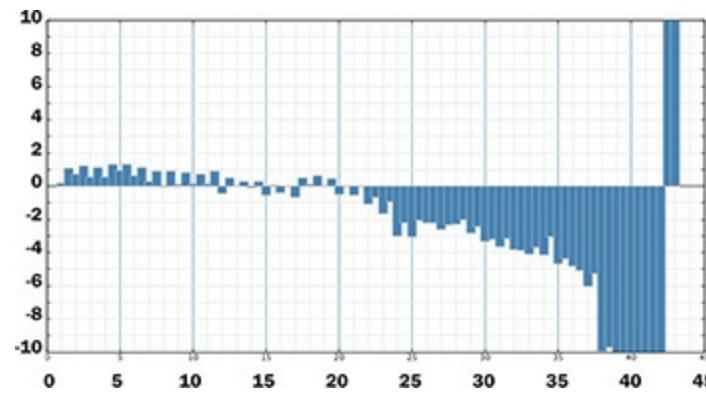


Smoke and mirrors

43. ♔ h8+!

And it's mate in two on the h-file. Extraordinary.

1-0



Part VI

Exercises

A bad position does not discourage me. Everybody gets into a bad position once in a while, so that's not a reason at all to simply lose them. You also have to find a way to save lost positions. – Tony Miles

Now you have an opportunity to train your swindling skills. The exercises below are designed to help you think like a Swindler, developing and combining the different techniques from this book.

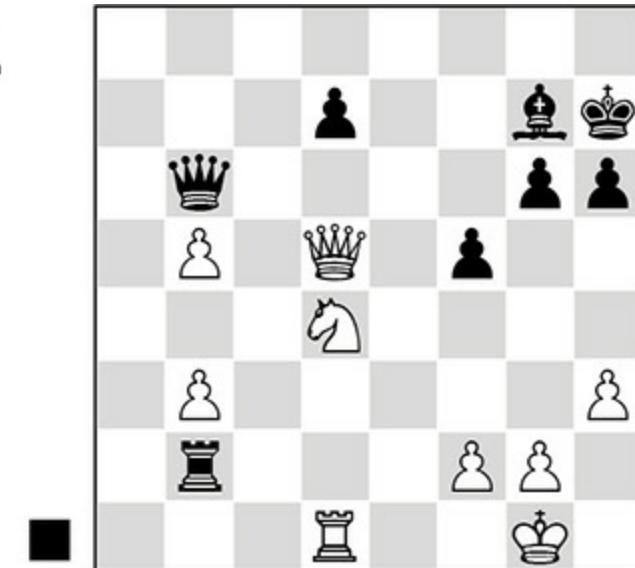
Some of the problems look like the ones you would find in any regular chess puzzle book, but some of the others are very different indeed. ‘How do you think the game finished?’ might sound like guesswork, but these sorts of questions will help you to free your mind of classical heuristics and instead fire up your creative motor.

There are three batches of questions, roughly increasing in difficulty. Happy swindling!

Test 1

Exercises 1

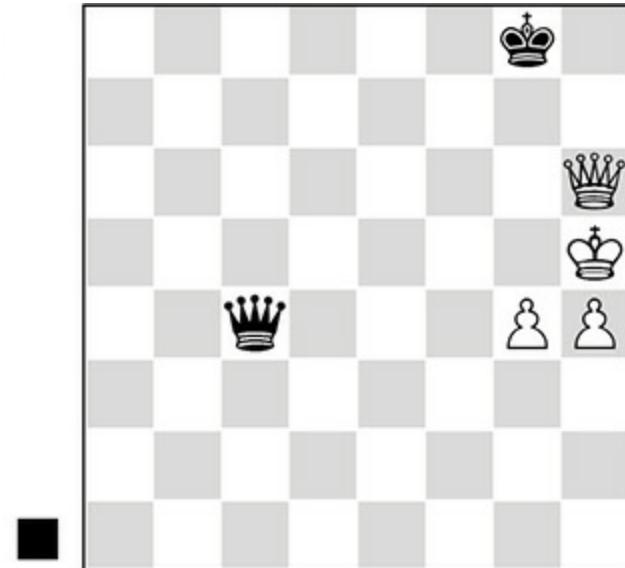
1



In this game, a young Judit Polgar, down a pawn, played the puzzling 28... $\mathbb{Q}c7!?$, to which White responded with the principled 29.h4??. What was Black's trap?

Exercises 2

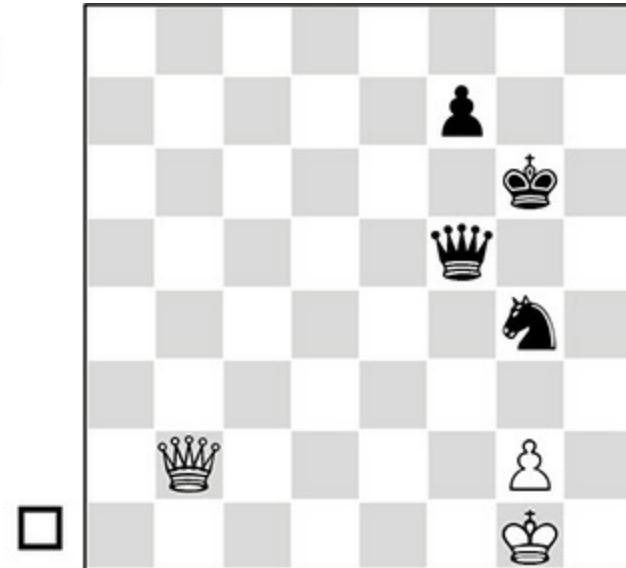
2



The dreaded queen-and-two-pawns versus queen endgame returns. Black should draw this with some careful suffering after 77... $\mathbb{Q}e2$, but can you find a shortcut?

Exercises 3

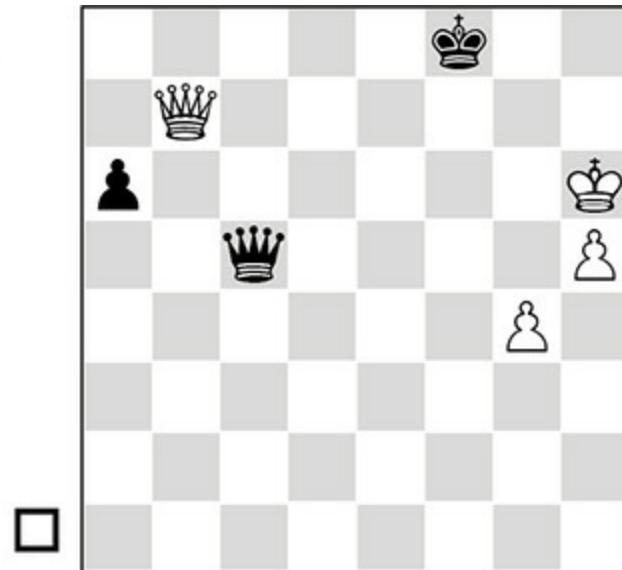
3



White to move. Set up a swindle.

Exercises 4

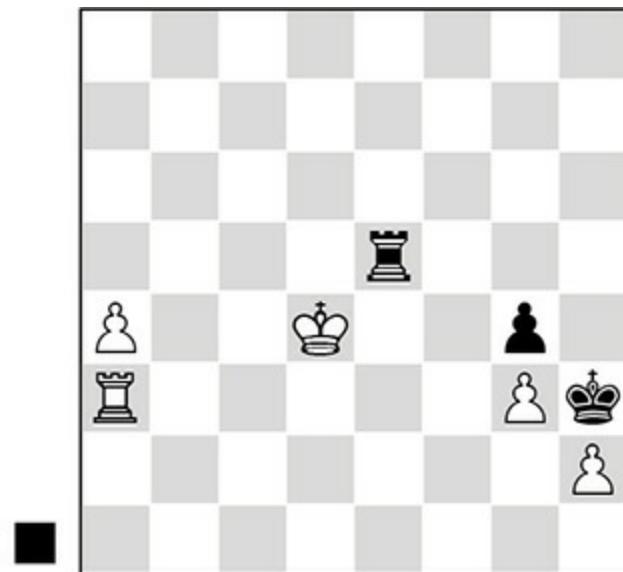
4



Your move with the white pieces. Can you take on a6?

Exercises 5

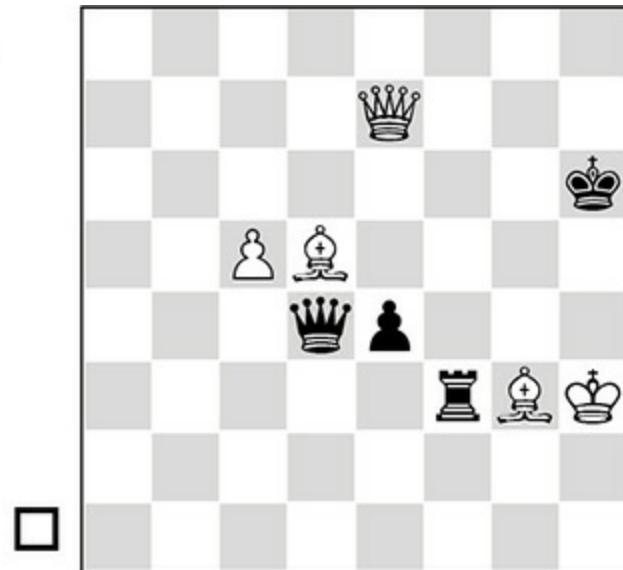
5



Find a stalemate idea.

Exercises 6

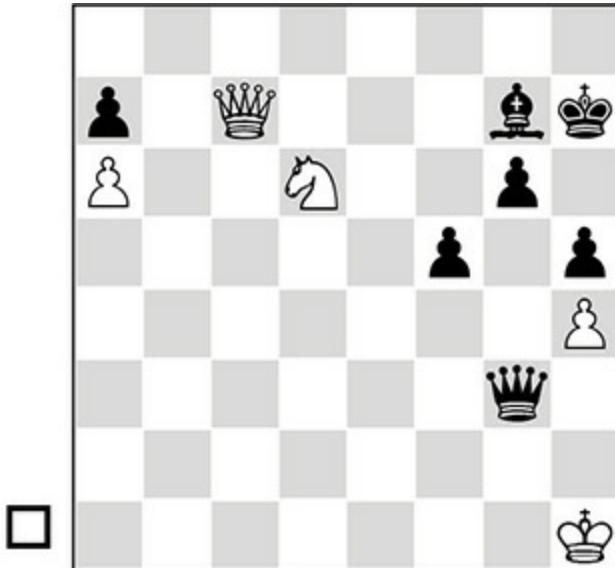
6



A rare example of one of the world's greatest players getting swindled. What is wrong with Kasparov's 54. $\mathbb{Q}xe4$?

Exercises 7

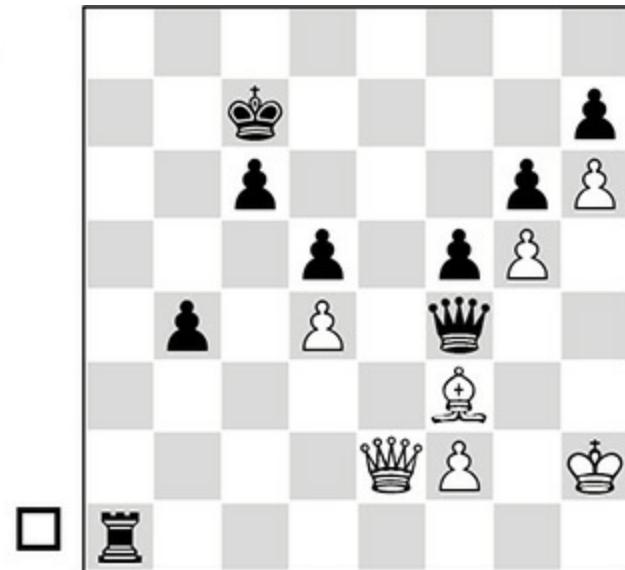
7



Here White, a strong grandmaster, played 76. $\mathbb{N}xa7?$ $\mathbb{N}xd6$ 77. $\mathbb{N}b7$ $\mathbb{N}d1+$ and resigned. What did he miss?

Exercises 8

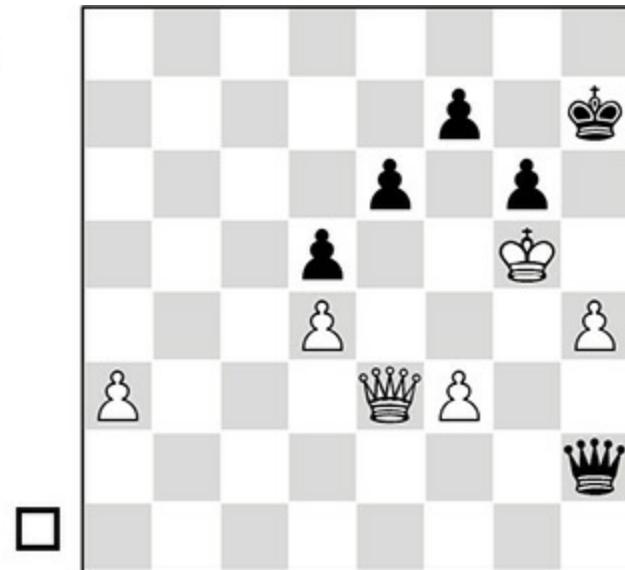
8



It's the last-chance salon. 76. ♔ g2 or 76. ♔ h3 ?

Exercises 9

9



You, playing as White, calculate that ♔ f6 leads to a draw by perpetual check after ... ♕ d6!. Can you do better?

Exercises 10

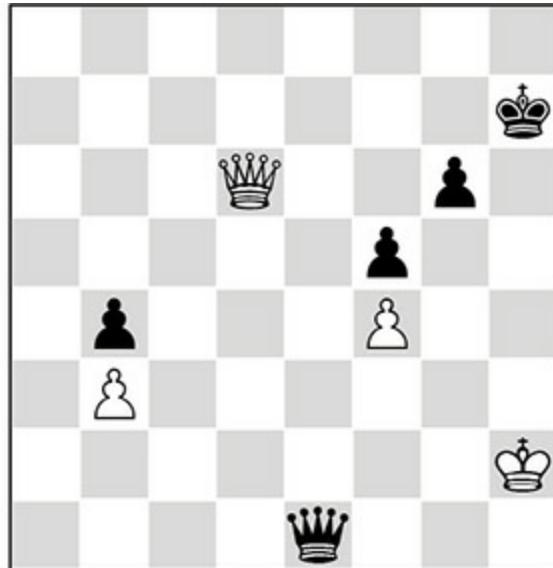
10



These should be as easy as bread-and-butter for you now. Black to play and draw.

Exercises 11

11



What do you think about running the king down the board with 56... ♔h6 ?

Exercises 12

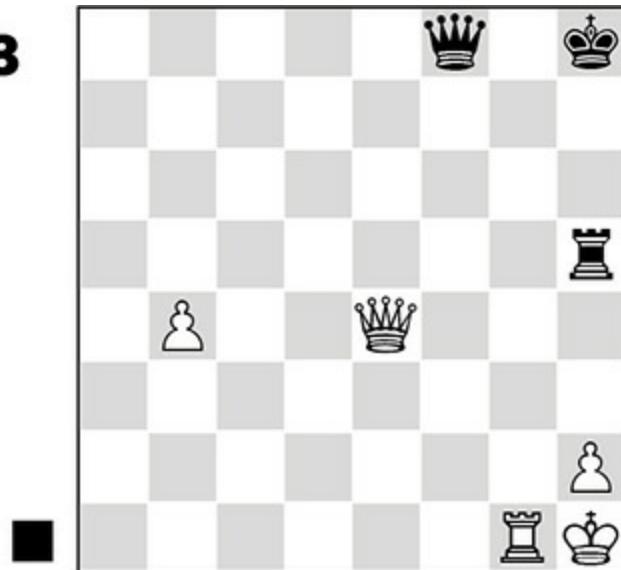
12



In the 1985 Candidates tournament in Montpellier, former World Champion Spassky has been suffering for some time in this difficult endgame. Ribli has just pushed 83.h6, a pawn that cannot be taken: 83... \mathbb{N} xh6+?? 84. \mathbb{N} h4! with a winning pawn ending. Instead, the game continued 83... \mathbb{N} b2 84. \mathbb{N} h4?, and then what?

Exercises 13

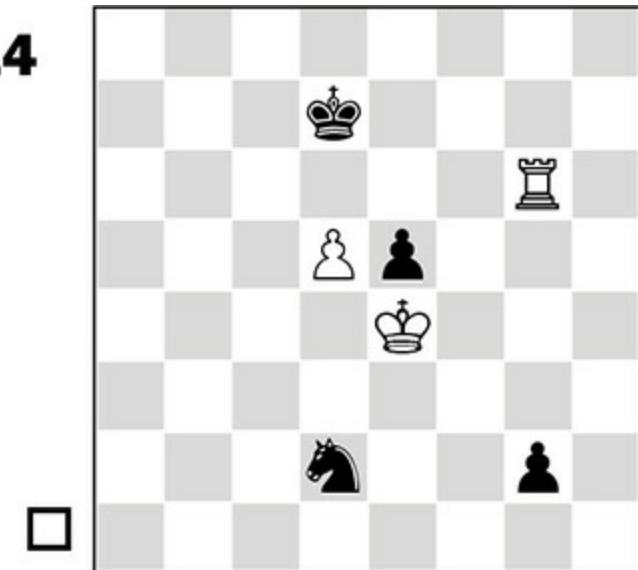
13



In this correspondence game, how did Black elegantly save the draw?

Exercises 14

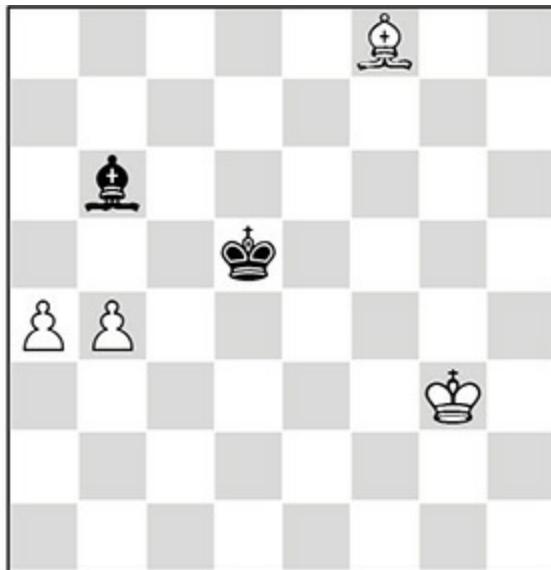
14



Quick! Black has banged out a check on d2, using your time pressure to cause panic. Can you avoid a swindle?

Exercises 15

15



It's not often you get the chance to swindle the World Champion. Okay, to be fair, Carlsen was only twelve years old at the time... but that's not the way you'd tell the story! Black to play and draw.

Exercises 16

16



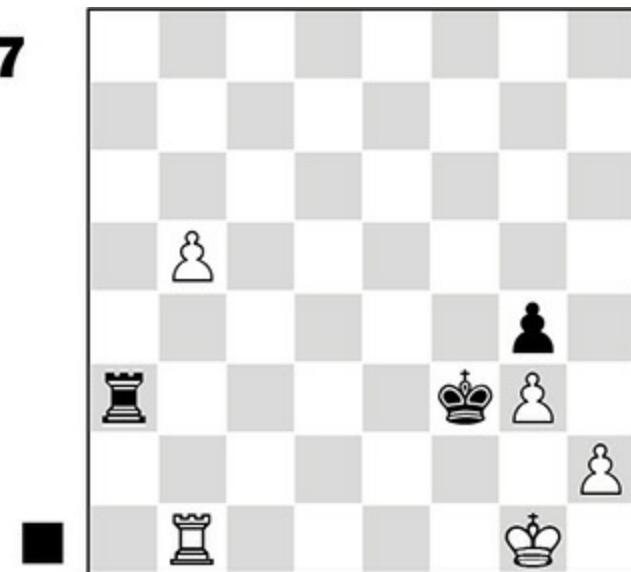
A simple one. Black played

42... $\mathbb{Q}x\mathbb{C}5$ 43. $\mathbb{Q}h6$ $\mathbb{Q}c4$

to set White up in a fatal zugzwang. What did he miss?

Exercises 17

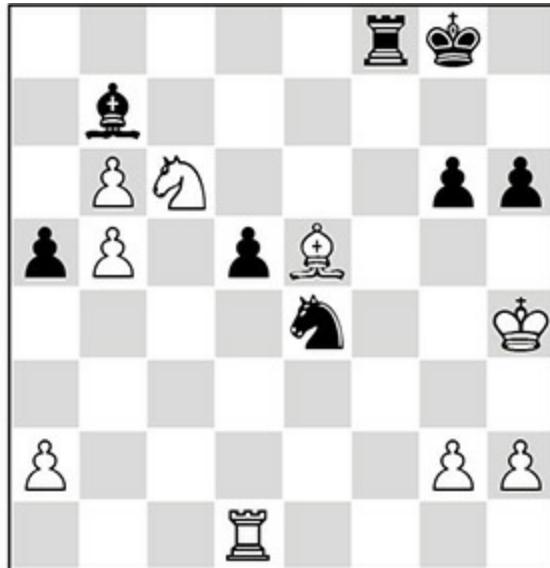
17



Should you resign?

Exercises 18

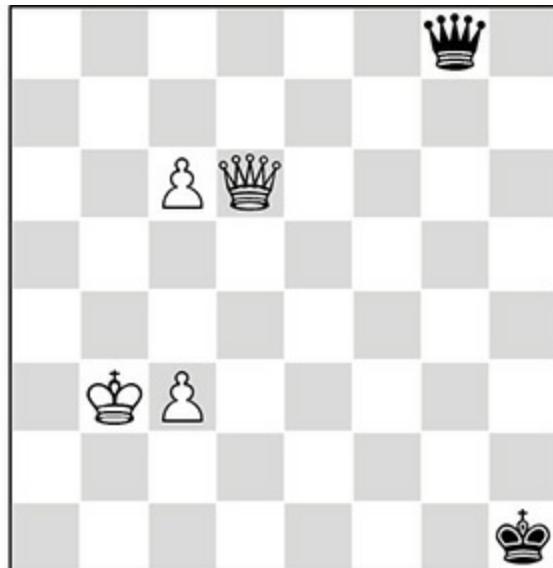
18



White plans to take on d5 next move. Knowing this, can you create a swindling opportunity for Black?

Exercises 19

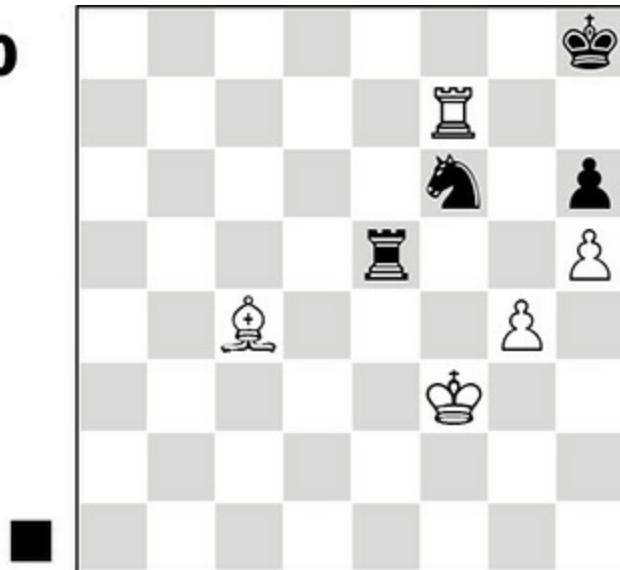
19



White to move and blunder the win.

Exercises 20

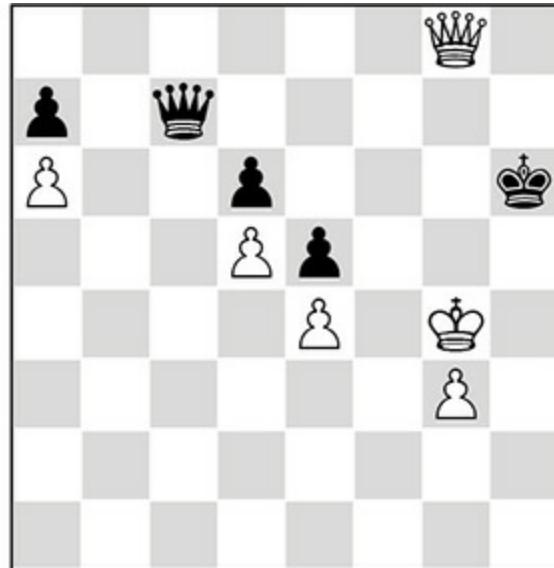
20



In the quarterfinals of the 2017 World Cup, White had been pressing for some time against stoic defence. Now he offers Black the option of entering the notorious $\text{Q} + \text{B}$ vs Q endgame after 69... Qxh5 . While technically drawn, many a grandmaster has failed to hold it, and Black would have suffered greatly under the pressure of this rapid tiebreak. But instead, he found a cute solution to his problems. Can you?

Exercises 21

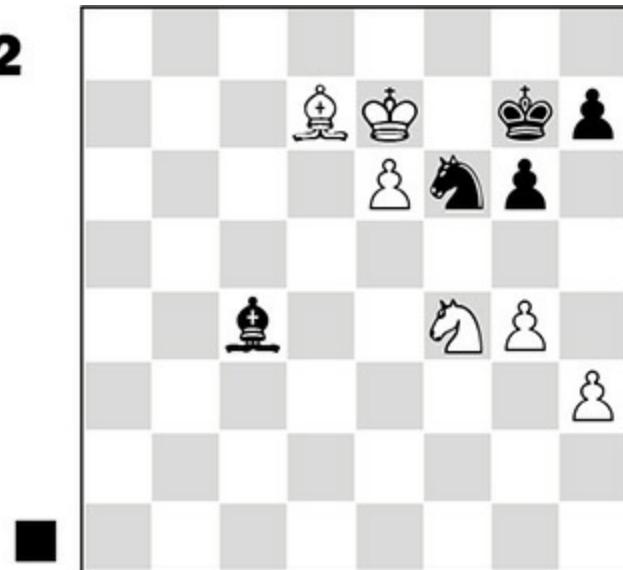
21



What's the easiest way for White to convert his advantage?

Exercises 22

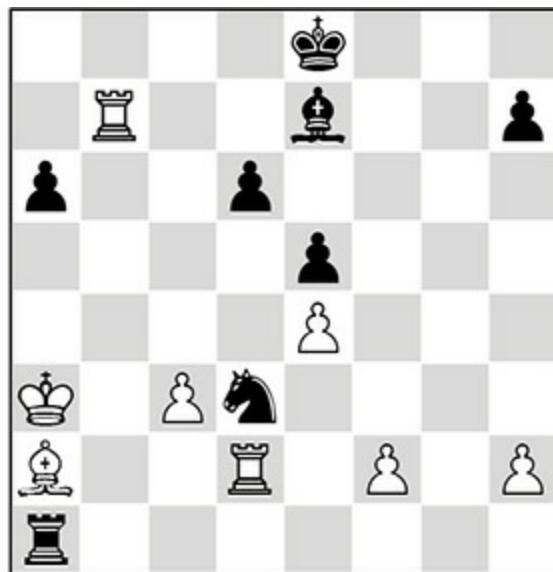
22



Mir Sultan Khan managed to swindle the great Dutchman Max Euwe twice in the early 1930's. Can you spot from afar the fortress he saw?

Exercises 23

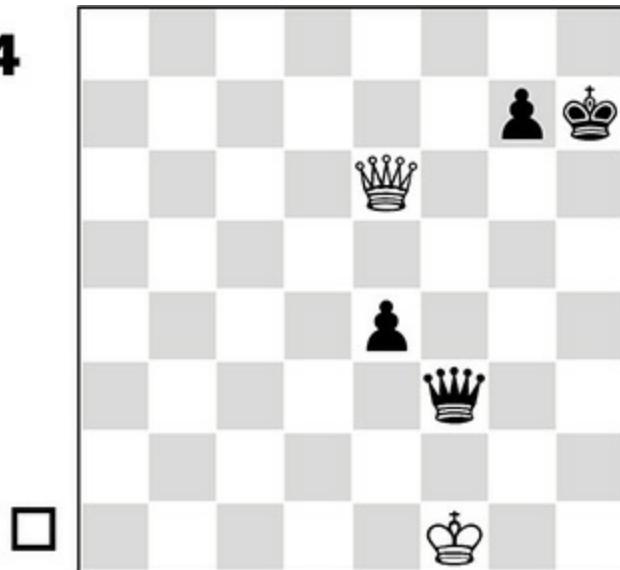
23



Set a trap.

Exercises 24

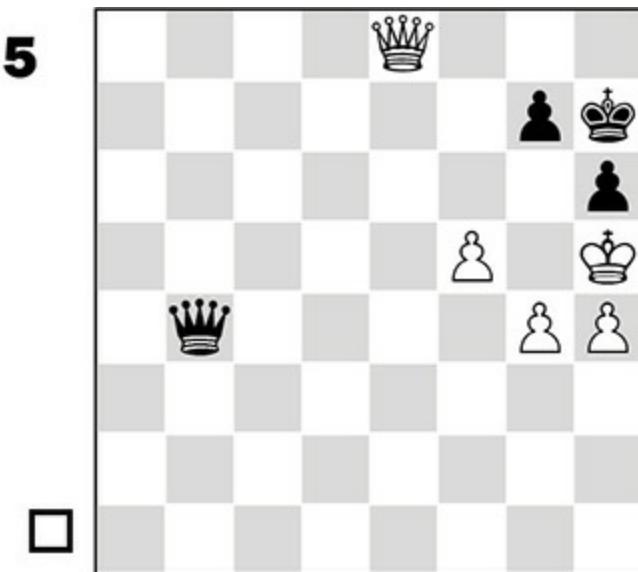
24



Where should your king go?

Exercises 25

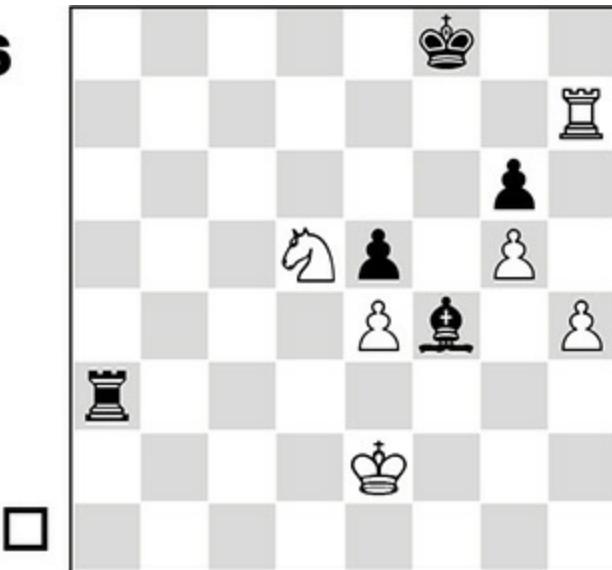
25



White to move and lose.

Exercises 26

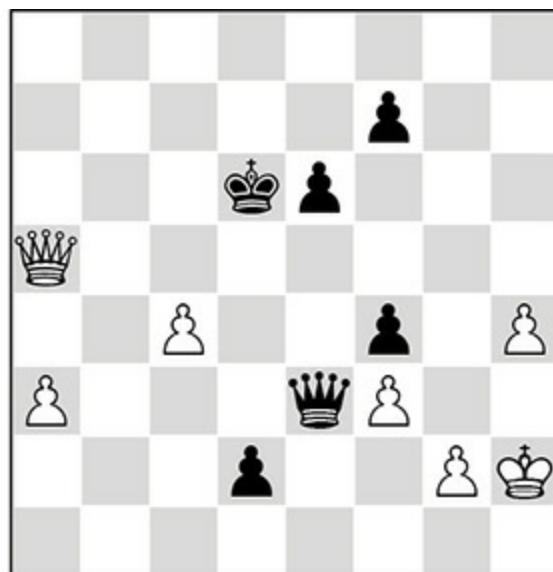
26



White to move to allow a swindle.

Exercises 27

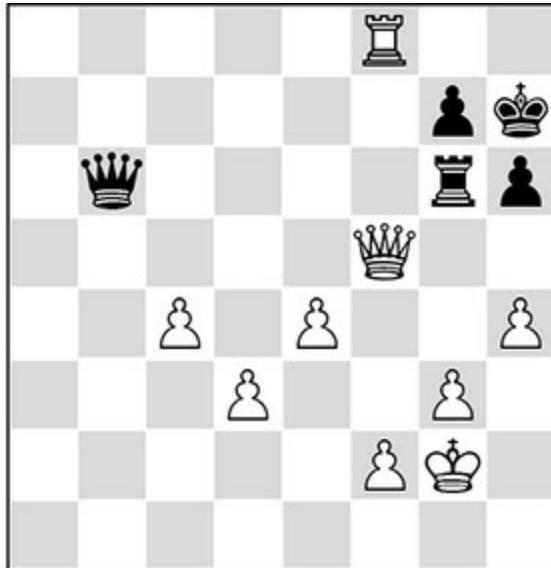
27



Analyse Kortchnoi's 83... $\text{Qd}4$.

Exercises 28

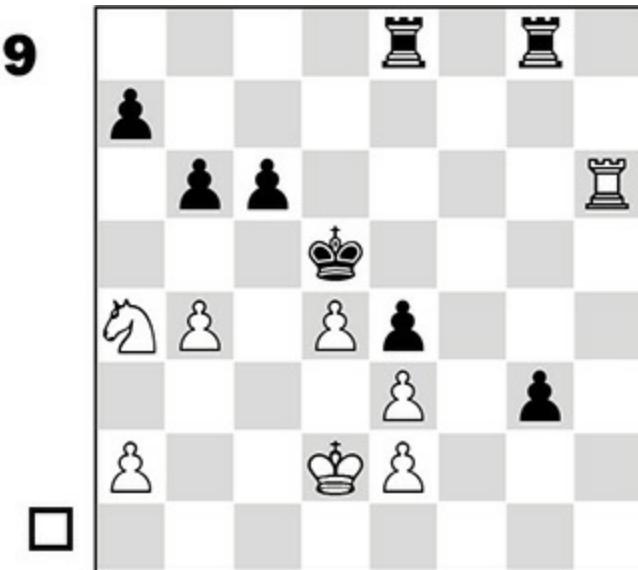
28



You, rated 1600, are Black against the great Anatoly Karpov in a simul. You are four pawns down and about to lose your rook. What do you play?

Exercises 29

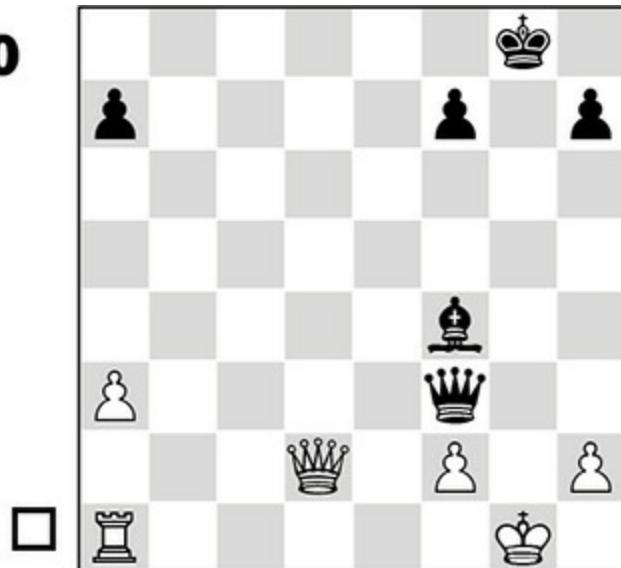
29



From a game between two 1600s. Find one final trick for White.

Exercises 30

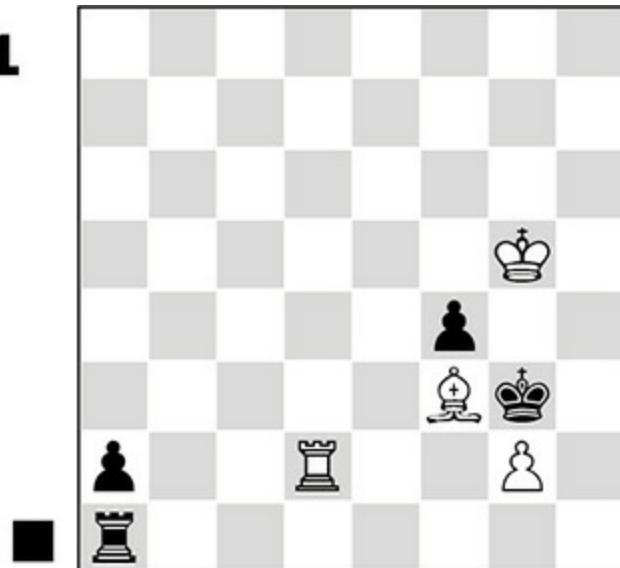
30



Some engines suggest 37. $\mathbb{Q}d8+$ and some suggest 37. $\mathbb{Q}d1$. Which do you choose?

Exercises 31

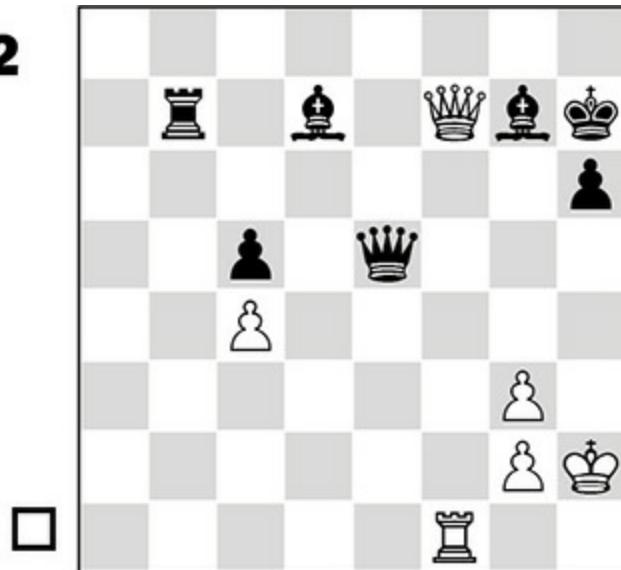
31



Black tried an outrageous bluff in this position, which was successful against his 2600+ opponent. Can you find it?

Exercises 32

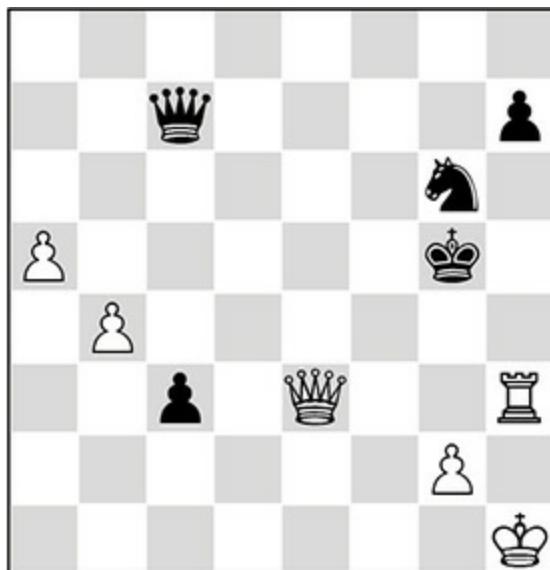
32



Hard as it is to believe, Black can force mate in 19 moves from the diagrammed position. And speaking of things that are hard to believe in, how did White draw this against a grandmaster?

Exercises 33

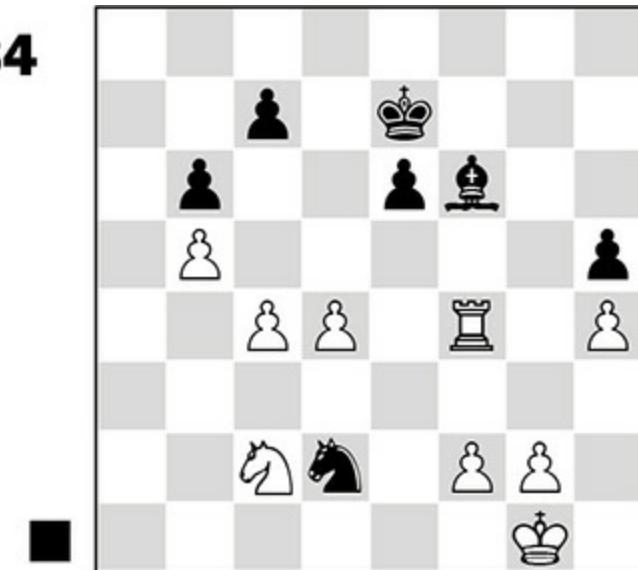
33



Find a sneaky little Trojan Horse trap.

Exercises 34

34



60... ♜xc4 61. ♜b4 is hopeless for Black. Can you find a trick instead?

Exercises 35

35



Black played 33... $\mathbb{R}d7$ and won quickly after 34. $\mathbb{R}c5?$ $\mathbb{N}xc5$ 35. $\mathbb{Q}xe8$ $\mathbb{R}d8$, etc. What did White miss?

Exercises 36

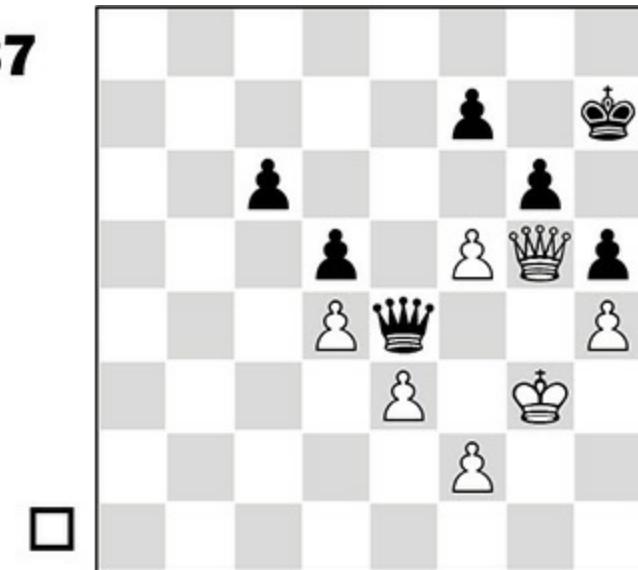
36



Mamedyarov launched an impressive berserk attack here that ended up fooling his strong opponent. Can you play like the Azeri grandmaster?

Exercises 37

37

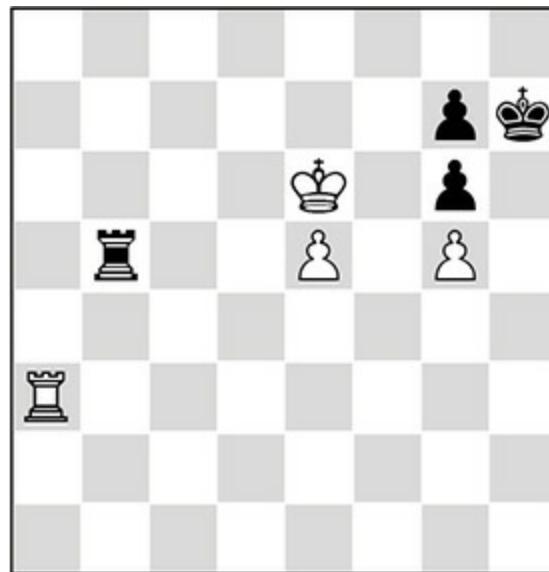


A real-life helpmate. White moved, Black replied, White moved again, and Black played checkmate. Can you work out how the game ended?

Test 2

Exercises 38

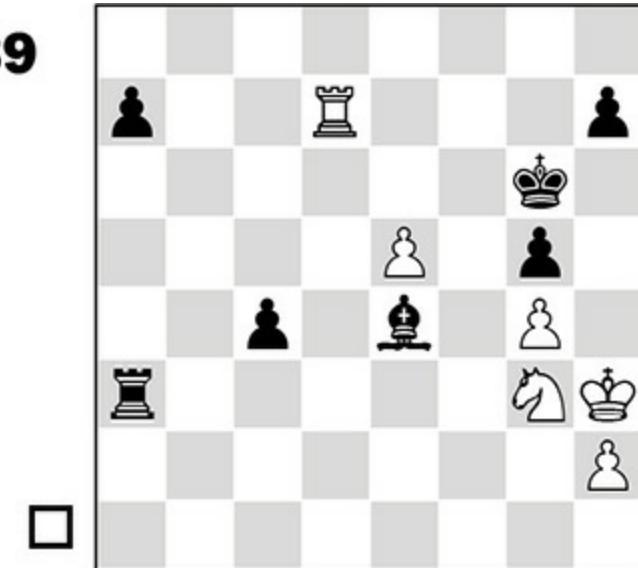
38



The makings of a swindle are in the air. How can you encourage White to comply?

Exercises 39

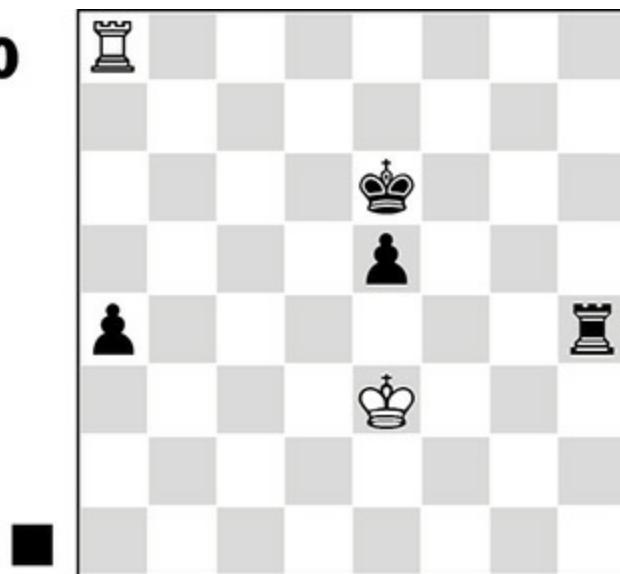
39



White to move. Create a swindle.

Exercises 40

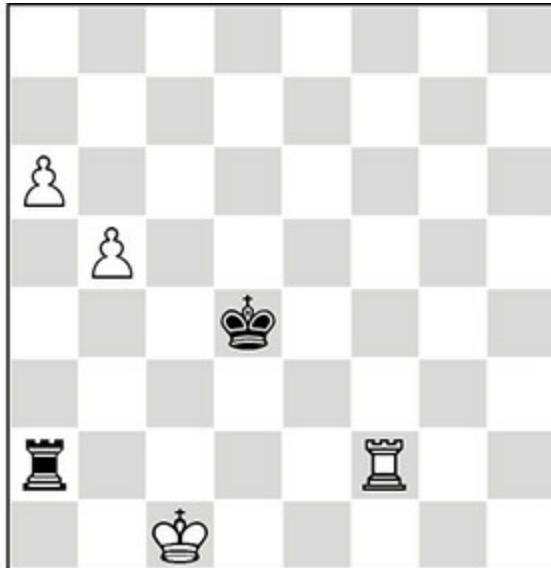
40



How does Black win this?

Exercises 41

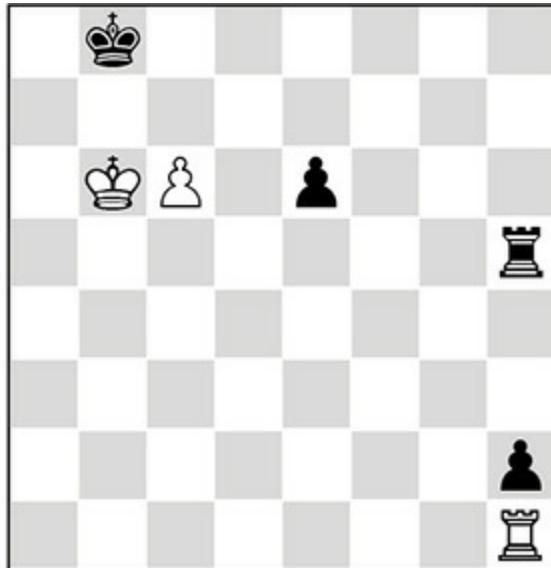
41



Both players had played for this position after a difficult rook endgame. The Estonian legend, who would later win the World Championship, had expected 52... $\mathbb{R}xf2$ 53.a7 to lead to a swift victory. But his Argentinian opponent had prepared a study-like escape path. Can you spot it?

Exercises 42

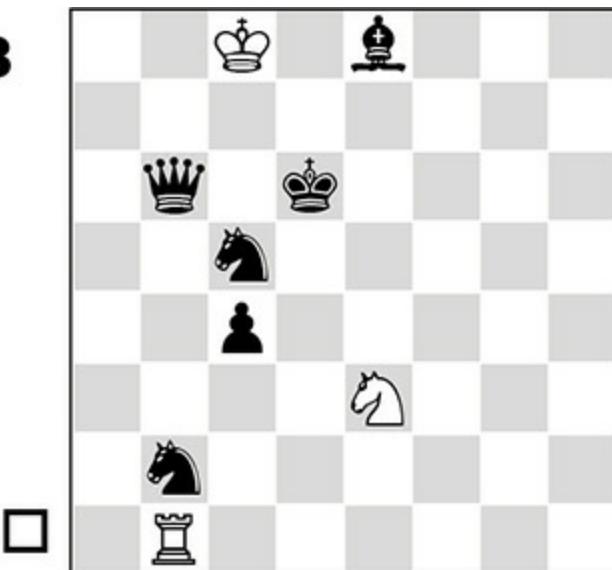
42



Can you find one last swindle for White?

Exercises 43

43



Study time. White to play and draw.

Exercises 44

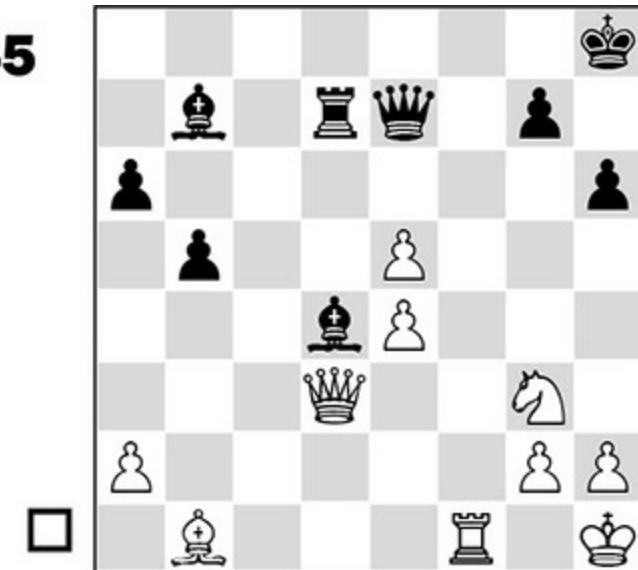
44



White has played a brilliant attack and now threatens to rip Black's kingside apart, as soon as he can escape the checks. But, unbeknownst to White, Black had been setting up for exactly this position. Can you spot the drawing idea?

Exercises 45

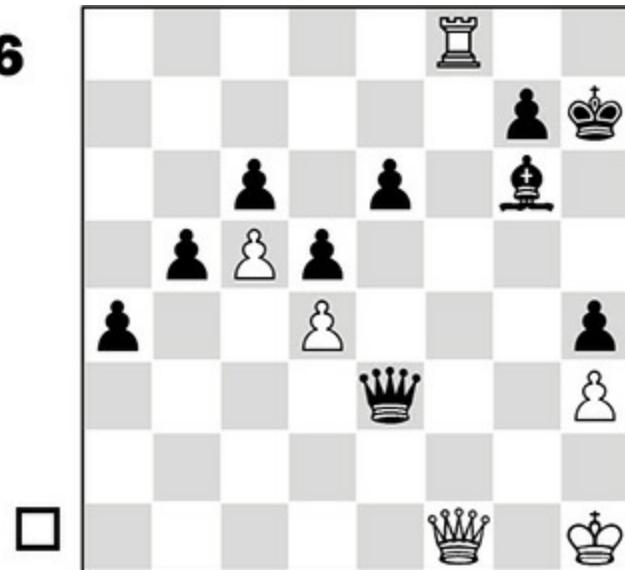
45



White has played a nice attacking game and now looks for the cleanest victory. 35.e6!? is one route to victory, though the variations are complicated. White thinks he has found a simpler path with 35.♘f5!?, and indeed it does win. Can you finish Black off after 35...♝xe5 ?

Exercises 46

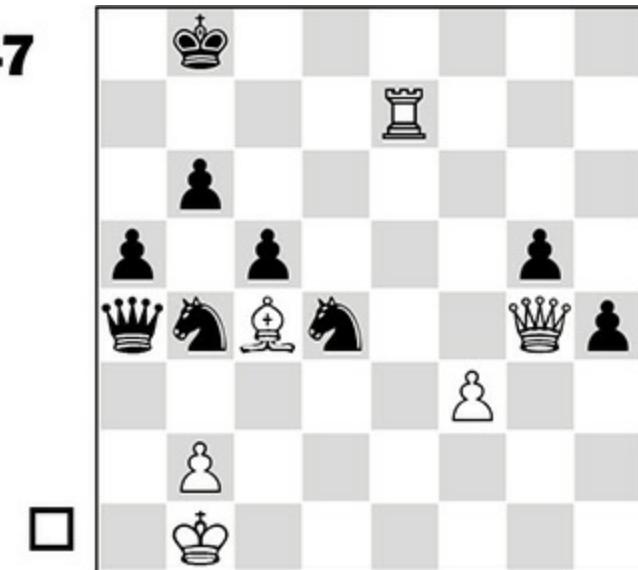
46



It's all over for White. Last call, anyone?

Exercises 47

47



A rare computer swindle! Spoilt for the choice of winning lines just a few moves earlier, Black fails to engage his (her?) stalemate defenses, and has just blundered. Set your human engine to ‘swindle mode’!

Exercises 48

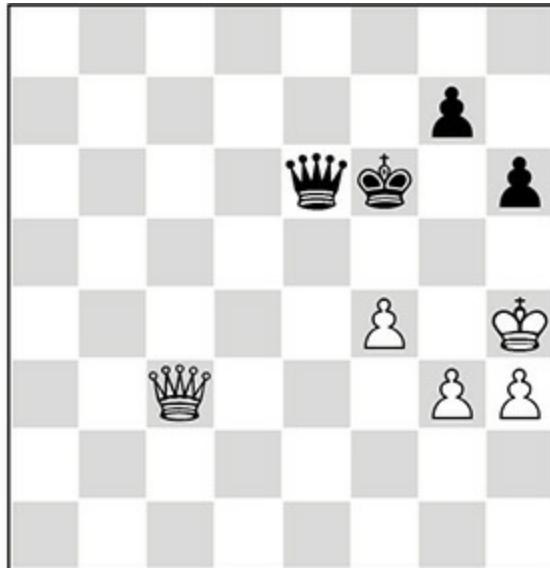
48



In the game, Black played 41... \mathbb{Q} e4 42. \mathbb{N} x f 5 and soon lost. What chance did he miss?

Exercises 49

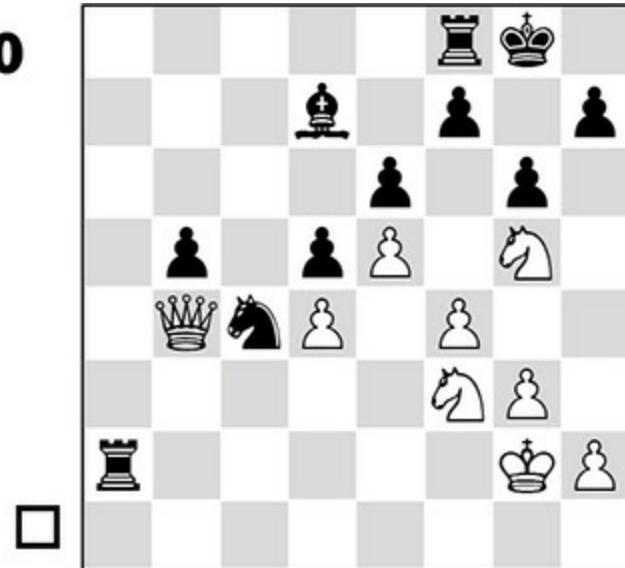
49



Think about what White's intention with 60. $\mathbb{Q}c3+$ might be, and you will be on your way to creating the swindle. White wants to swap the queens off on e5, and indeed 60... $\mathbb{Q}g6$ 61. $\mathbb{Q}e5$ puts Black under pressure. But instead, the many-time British Champion – who would eventually win the Championship again in a tie-break, so the importance of this swindle cannot be overstated – sets a cunning trap.

Exercises 50

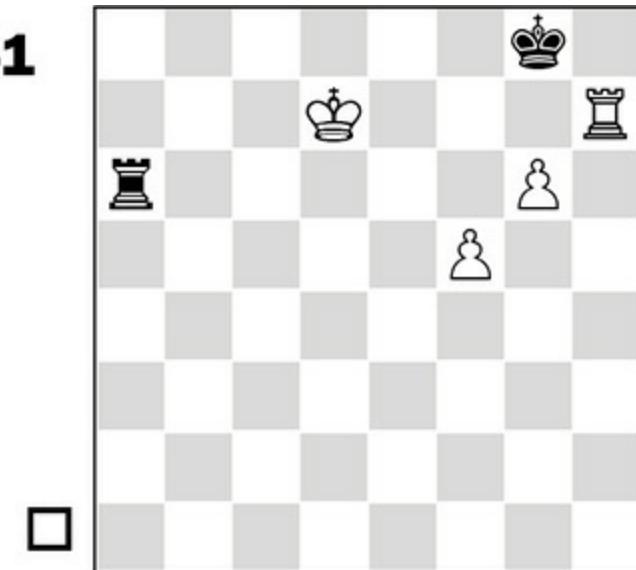
50



Black has just played 27... ♕a2+. Where should your king go?

Exercises 51

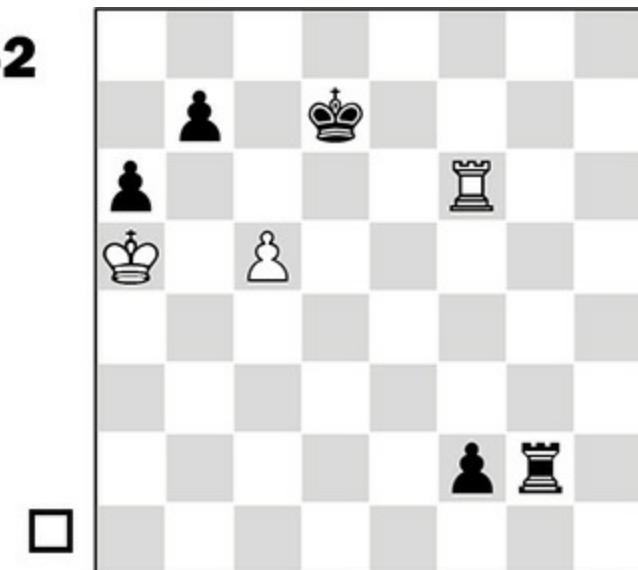
51



What should White NOT play?

Exercises 52

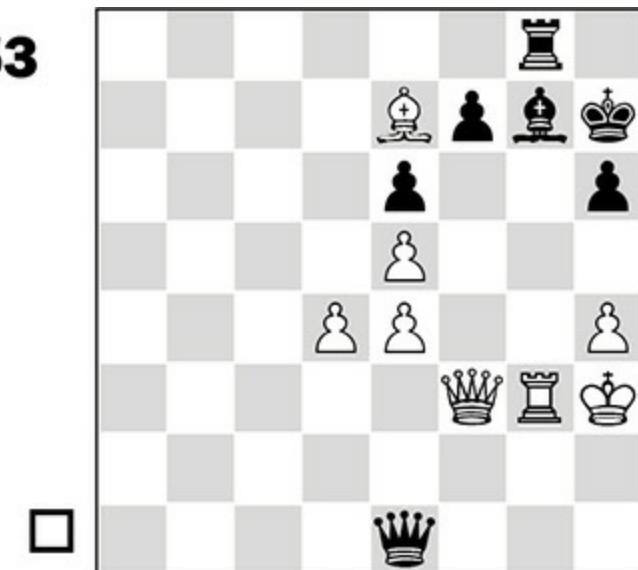
52



Find a final trick to salvage this sinking ship.

Exercises 53

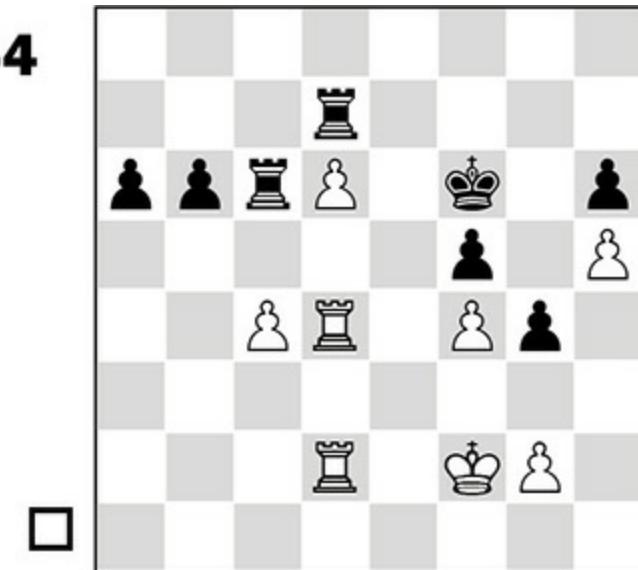
53



Why is 52. $\mathbb{Q}g2$ a horrible blunder?

Exercises 54

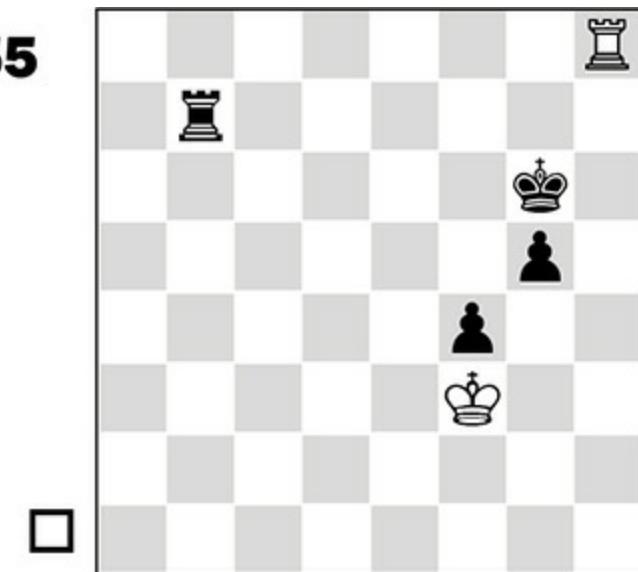
54



White should be able to hold this endgame with normal play, though only Black can press. Can you find a creative way to force an immediate draw?

Exercises 55

55



White to move and swindle.

Exercises 56

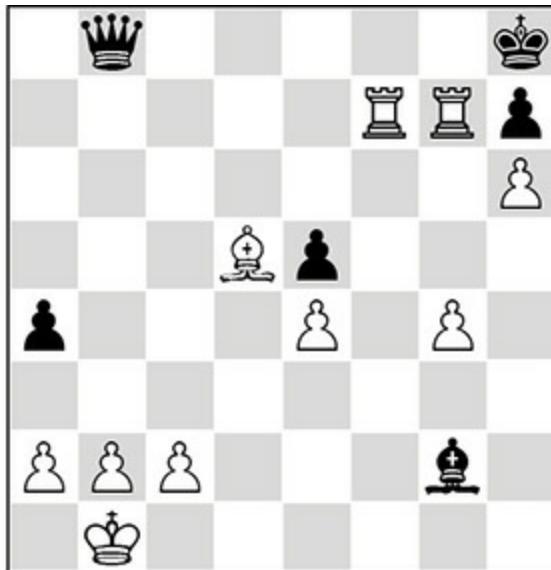
56



Find Black's best chance.

Exercises 57

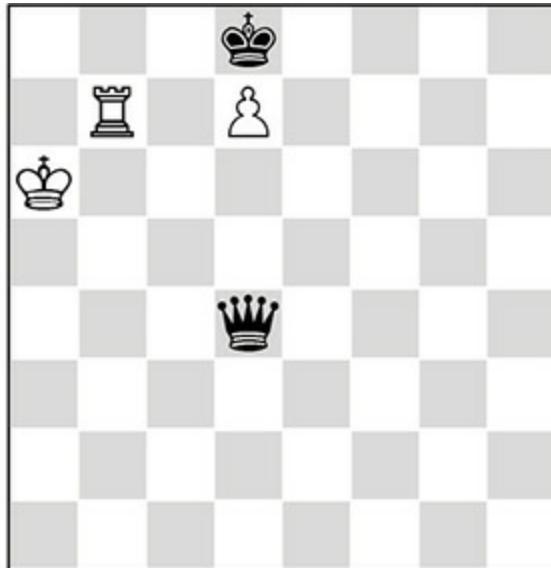
57



A rare occasion in which Tal (White) was on the receiving end of a swindle. On his birthday at a blitz event at the 1960 Olympiad, Tal was forced to agree to a draw in just three more moves from the diagram. What did Black play, and how did the game finish?

Exercises 58

58



Black has done everything right in this $\text{Q} + \text{R}$ vs $\text{Q} + \text{P}$ ending and is only a few moves away from winning the pawn. However, as we are all taught as juniors, one should be wary of cutting a king off with your queen from the third rank or file. What was wrong with 105... Qc5 ?

Exercises 59

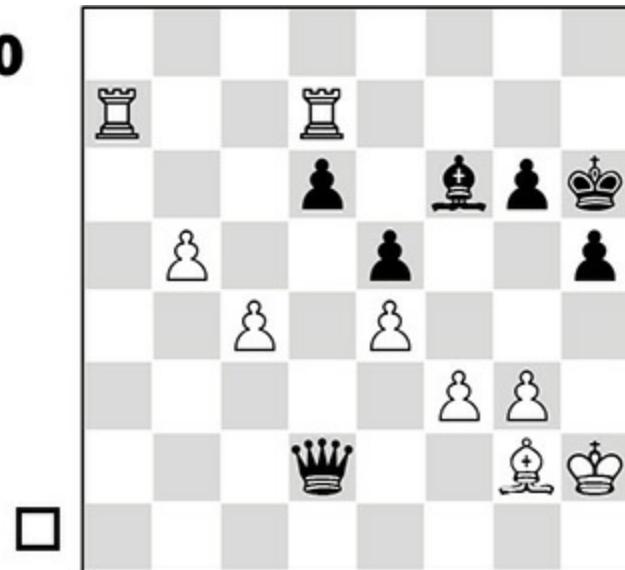
59



Can you find a fortress idea?

Exercises 60

60



□

Spoilt with a choice of seven winning moves White continued with 44. \mathbb{Q} a6?? with the intention of 44...h4 45. \mathbb{Q} xd6 hxg3+ 46. \mathbb{Q} h3 winning. What did he miss?

Exercises 61

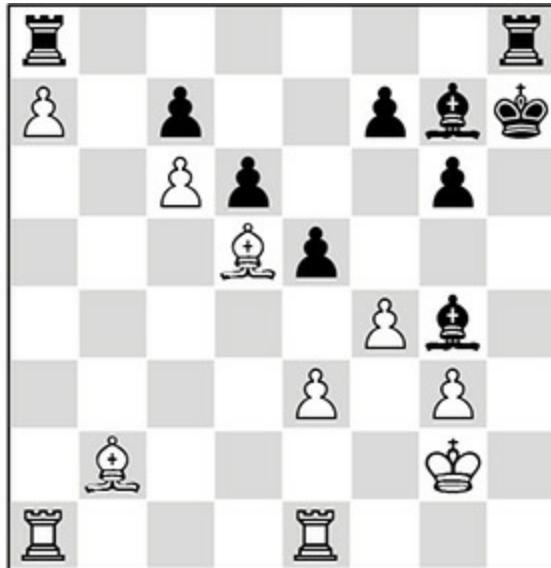
61



The game finished 67... $\mathbb{Q}f7$ 68. $\mathbb{Q}xg5!$ $f \times g5$ 69. $h7$ and White soon won. What did Black miss?

Exercises 62

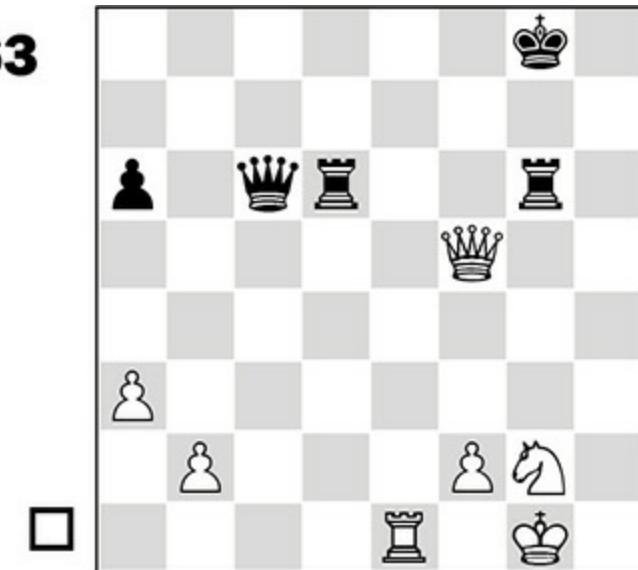
62



White was down to only two minutes on his clock. What venomous trap did Black set?

Exercises 63

63



Black has a won game, though it will be a laborious technical conversion after 46. $\mathbb{Q}e4$. Instead, White offered a cunning Trojan Horse against his Greek opponent. Can you replicate the irony?

Exercises 64

64



Black played the valiant $35 \dots \mathbb{R}g1+!?$ and White, perhaps fearful of allowing a perpetual check after $36. \mathbb{K}xg1 \mathbb{N}g5+$, thought he had seen further with $36. \mathbb{K}e2??$. How could Black have now drawn the game?

Exercises 65

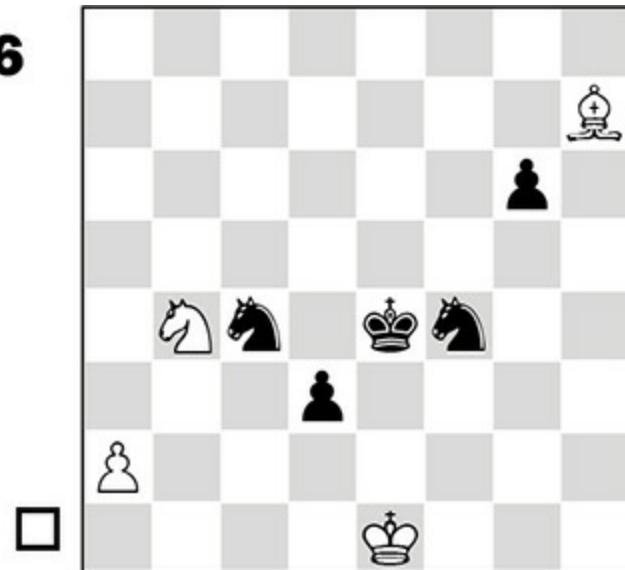
65



Moiseenko (Black) found a cunning move here that tempted the great Ivanchuk into spoiling the win.
What was the idea?

Exercises 66

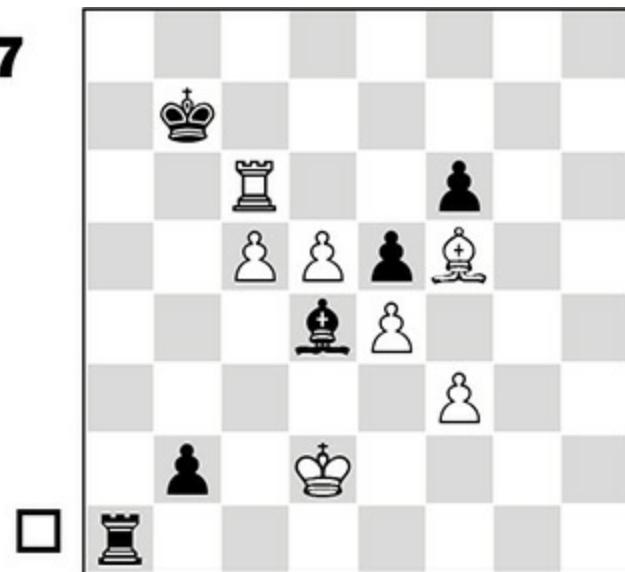
66



Weaker engines are actually more useful to you here than stronger ones. What is the best human move?

Exercises 67

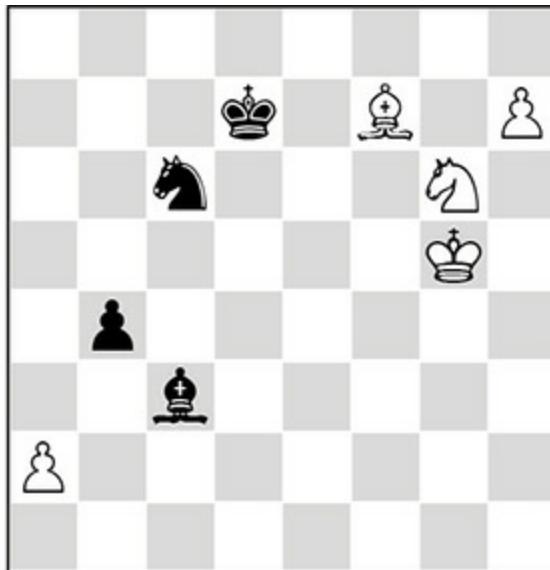
67



How should the game finish?

Exercises 68

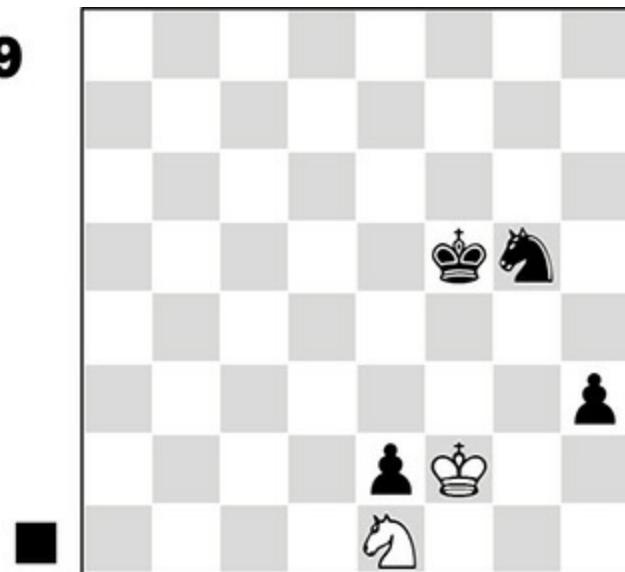
68



What is Black's best practical try?

Exercises 69

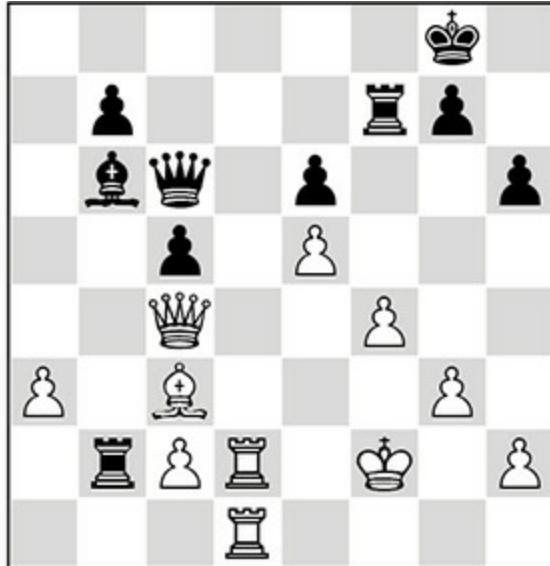
69



Does 87...h2 88. ♔g2 ♔e4 win?

Exercises 70

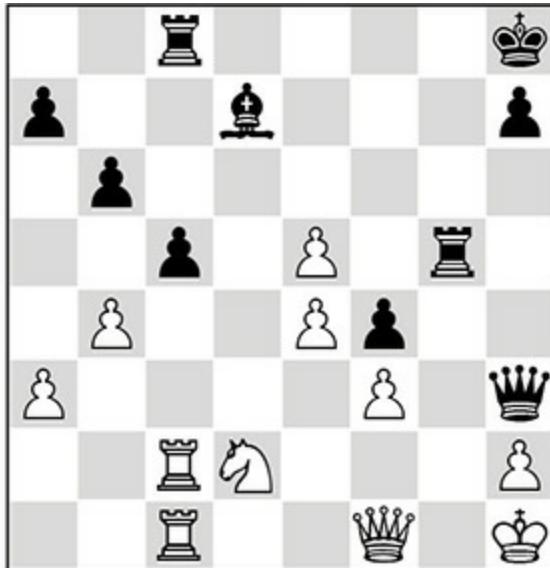
70



The strong grandmaster playing with the white pieces had trapped the black rook, and he won easily after 35... $\mathbb{Q}b5$ 36. $\mathbb{Q}xb5$ $\mathbb{R}xb5$ 37. $a4!$ $c4+$ 38. $\mathbb{Q}e2$ $\mathbb{R}c5$ 39. $\mathbb{R}d6$. Did Black have anything better?

Exercises 71

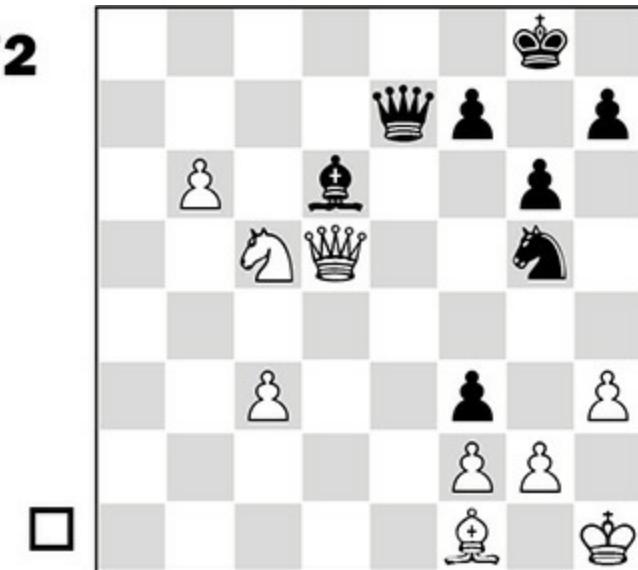
71



Black has conducted a swashbuckling attack and finished things off in fine style with 35... $\mathbb{Q}xh2+$ 36. $\mathbb{Q}xh2$ $\mathbb{N}cg8$, upon which White resigned and congratulated his opponent on a fine brilliancy. Anything funny going on here?

Exercises 72

72

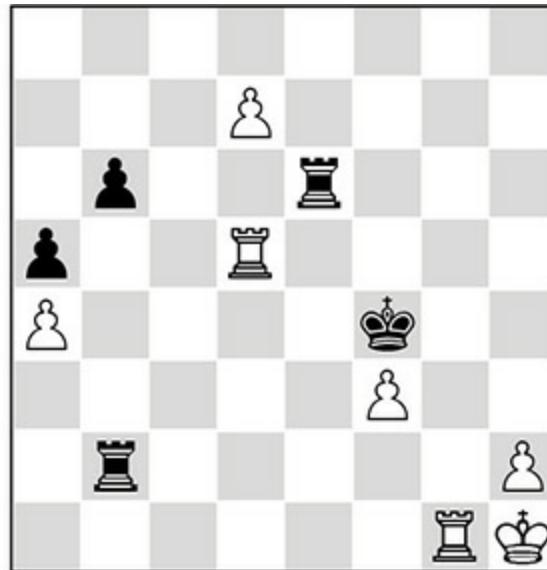


White decided to push his past pawn, calculating that 35.b7 ♔e1 36.♔g1 should be safe enough. What did he miss?

Test 3

Exercises 73

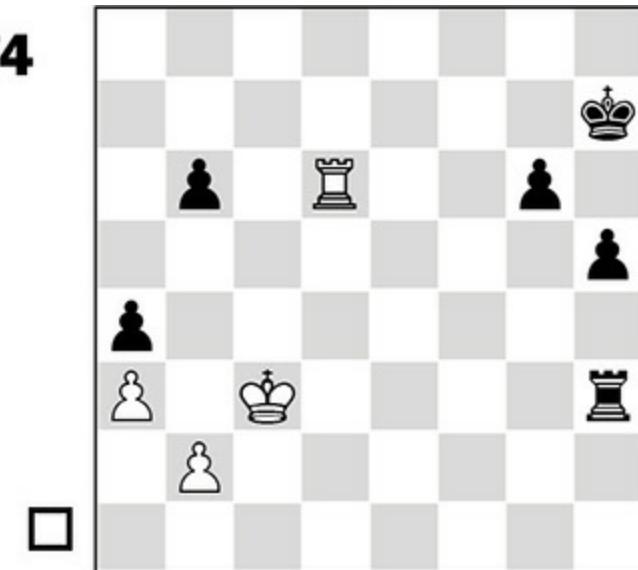
73



White is about to queen. Can you concoct one final trick?

Exercises 74

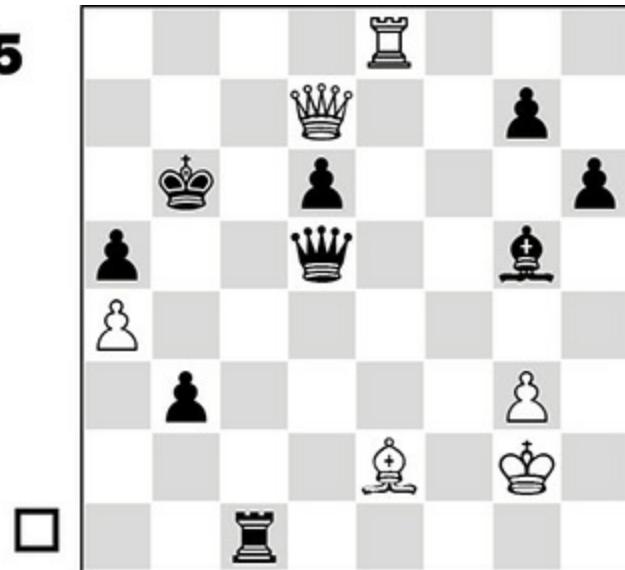
74



Black intends 58... ♕b3 followed by the inevitable kingside march. Knowing this, can you find an idea?

Exercises 75

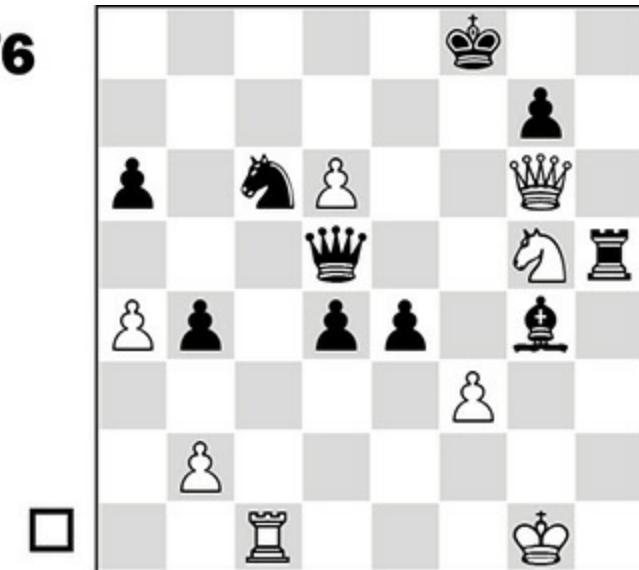
75



The situation looks desperate, but White has a hidden stalemate motif. Can you find the saving continuation?

Exercises 76

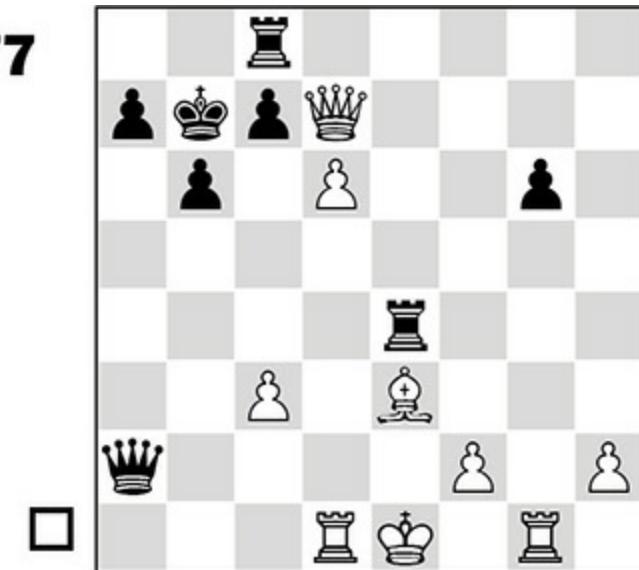
76



There are only a few moves until the time control. Your opponent, a strong 2600+ grandmaster, is leading the British Championship, has thoroughly outplayed you, but is starting to feel the pressure of the situation. Despite being a piece down, can you play on your opponent's fear?

Exercises 77

77



White has an overwhelming material advantage as well as a superior position. Black has just left his g6-pawn *en prise*. Can White take it?

Exercises 78

78



White has just freed his bishop with 55. $\text{B}^{\text{a}2-\text{a}3}$, threatening 56. $\text{B}^{\text{b}3}$. Black spots one last trick. Can you?

Exercises 79

79



Black appears completely tied up. Moving his rook along the b-file allows White's king to leisurely stroll to c8. Retreating his king is met by $\mathbb{R}c8+$. And any pawn move is captured, as happened in the game: 48...h5+? 49. gxh6+ $\mathbb{Q}xh6$ 50. $\mathbb{R}xf7$ and White soon won. All of the statements above are correct. But one of them is misleading. Can you see how Black could have saved the game?

Exercises 80

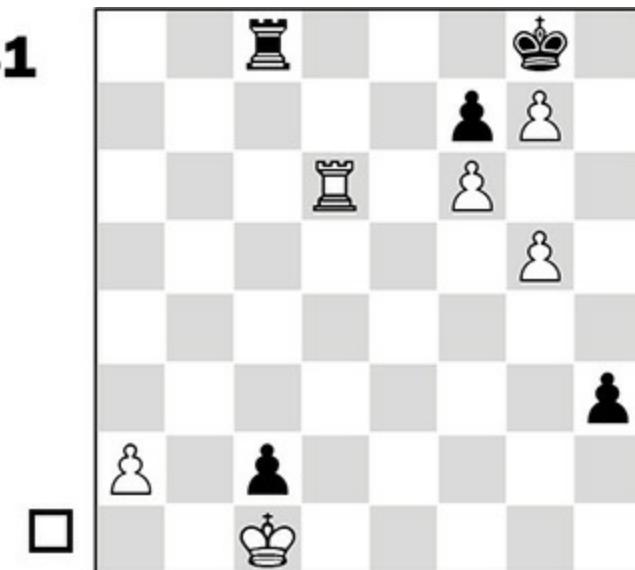
80



Black seems to be in a desperate situation against a former World Champion. White's pieces are closing in around the black king; for example: 61... \mathbb{Q} b7+ 62. \mathbb{Q} f8! mates immediately. And yet, there is a surprising resource that would have earned Blackstock a famous draw. Can you spot it?

Exercises 81

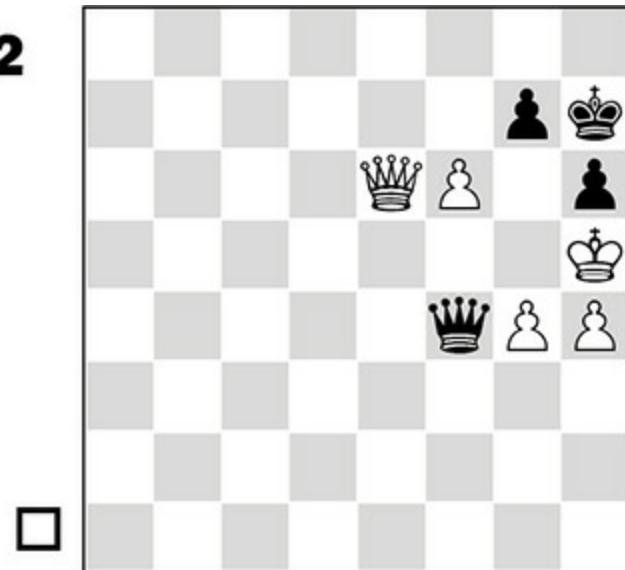
81



White to move and win.

Exercises 82

82

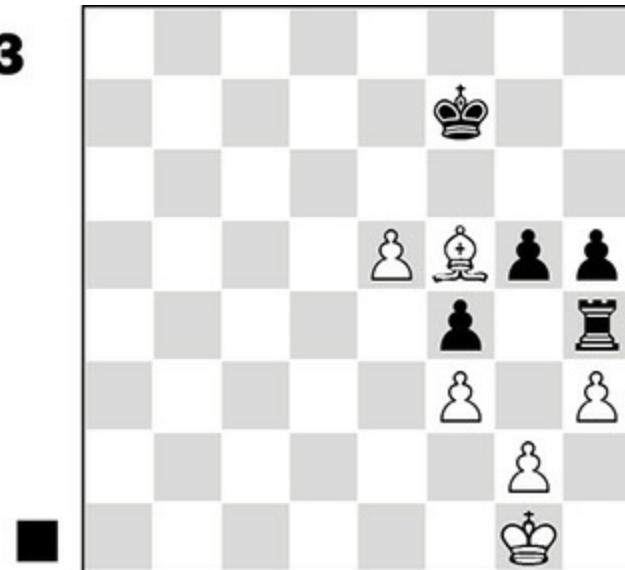


A classic titbit found by G.C.van Perlo. Your questions:

- 1) In the game, White moved, Black replied, and the players agreed a draw. Can you guess what happened?
- 2) Can you find a winning continuation for White instead?

Exercises 83

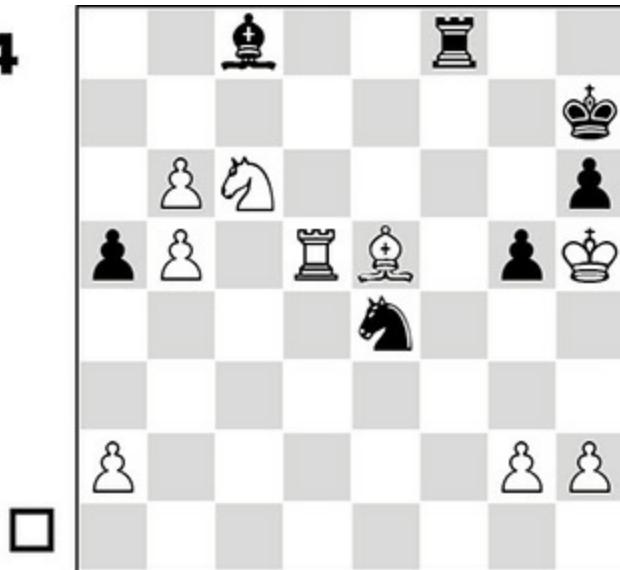
83



White has just played 61. ♚h1-g1 , planning to march his king all the way to d5. And just look at your pitiful rook on h4! What are you going to do?

Exercises 84

84



The game continuation from puzzle 18 in Test 1, where White has unexpectedly found himself in a mating net. He could try the engine's suggestion of 40. $\mathbb{Q}d6$, but after 40... $\mathbb{B}xd6$ 41. $\mathbb{Q}xd6$ $\mathbb{R}f2$ the endgame is hopeless. One cute line is 42. $\mathbb{Q}xa5$ $\mathbb{R}xa2$ 43. $b7$ $\mathbb{R}a4!$. Can you think of a better try from the diagram?

Exercises 85

85



Anything wrong with 1... ♕e4 ?

Exercises 86

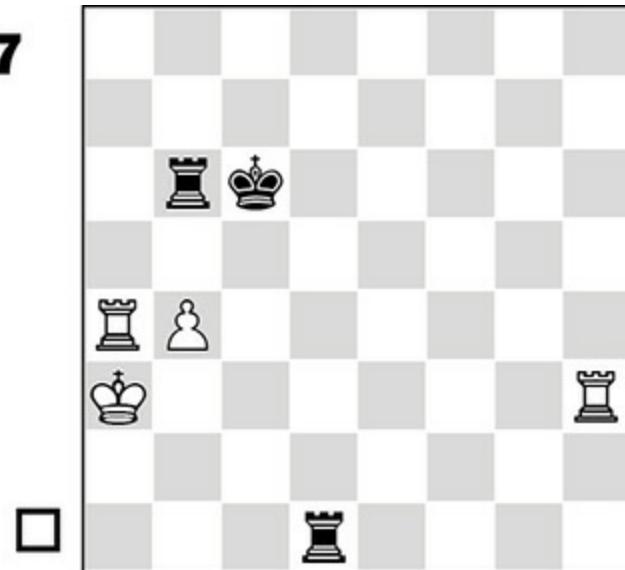
86



The great Israeli composer Yochanan Afek found a study-like solution to his problems with 47...h4! here. His unsuspecting opponent blissfully replied 48.g4??, anticipating 48... \mathbb{Q} a1+ 49. \mathbb{Q} f1 with an easy win. What, instead, was Black's real plan?

Exercises 87

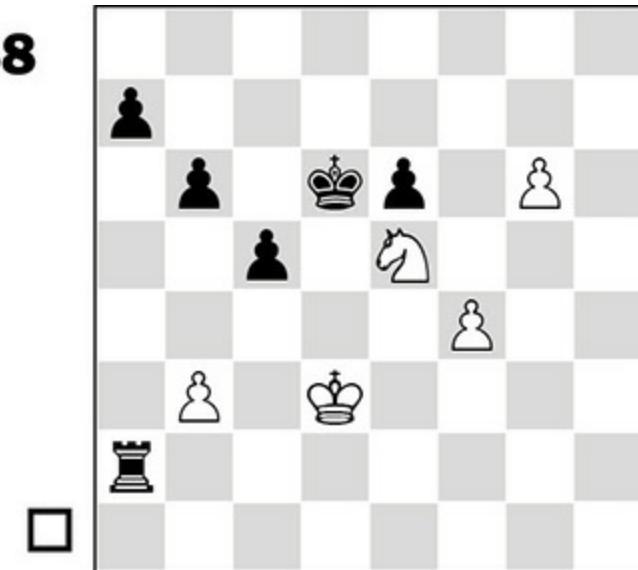
87



A test of your creativity. In this position from the second Chess Olympiad, White is trying to squeeze a win from a stone-cold draw. He tried 65. ♔b3!?, inviting Black to force the draw with 65... ♕b1+. Four moves later, Black resigned. Can you guess how the game continued?

Exercises 88

88



Black has had an extra exchange for 15 moves, but the strong knight on e5 has frustrated his efforts for an easy conversion. Can you use this fact to set up a swindle?

Exercises 89

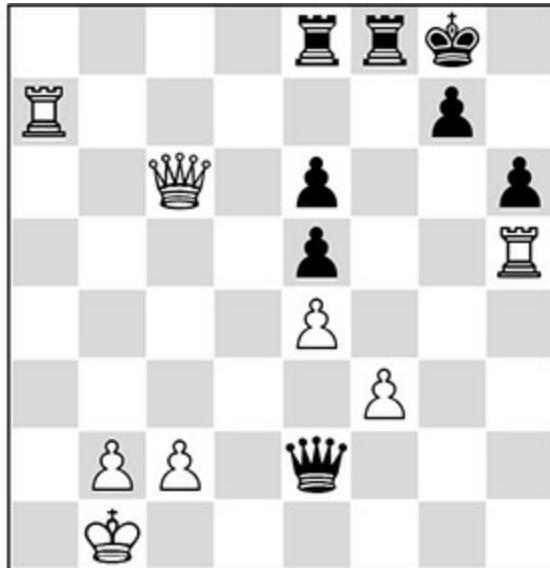
89



Black resigned in the diagrammed position. Though both players were down to increments of 30 seconds a move, that was enough for them to see that White's next move would be 54.b6, picking up everything. Still, was it really time for Black to resign?

Exercises 90

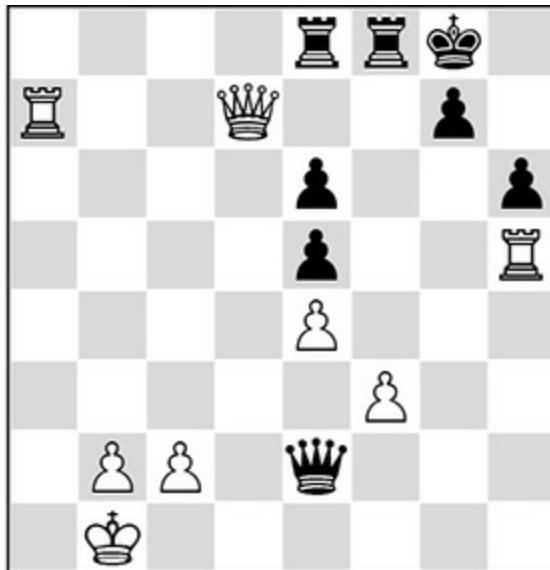
90



A delightful two-part puzzle. Question 1: how could White have won on the spot?

Exercises 91

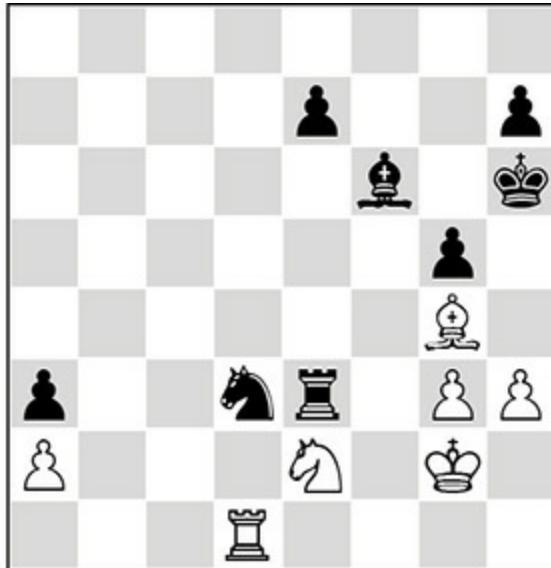
91



The game continued 35. $\mathbb{Q}d7?$ and now, instead of taking the immediate draw with 35... $\mathbb{Q}f1+$, Giri set a nasty swindle. It relied both on Nijboer's attacking prowess to 'spot' the tactic for White, and on his time pressure to fail to see one move deeper. Question 2: can you play like Giri?

Exercises 92

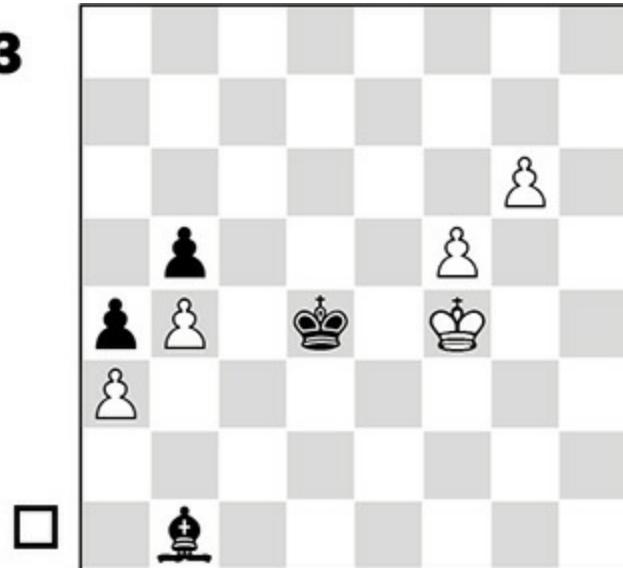
92



After 37... $\mathbb{Q}e5$ 38. $\mathbb{Q}d4$, Black can force a winning endgame with 38... $\mathbb{Q}xg4$ 39. $hxg4$ $\mathbb{Q}xd4$ 40. $\mathbb{Q}xd4$. Correct?

Exercises 93

93



Black may have thought this endgame was winning, but in fact White has a very creative, though difficult, route to a draw. Your move.

Exercises 94

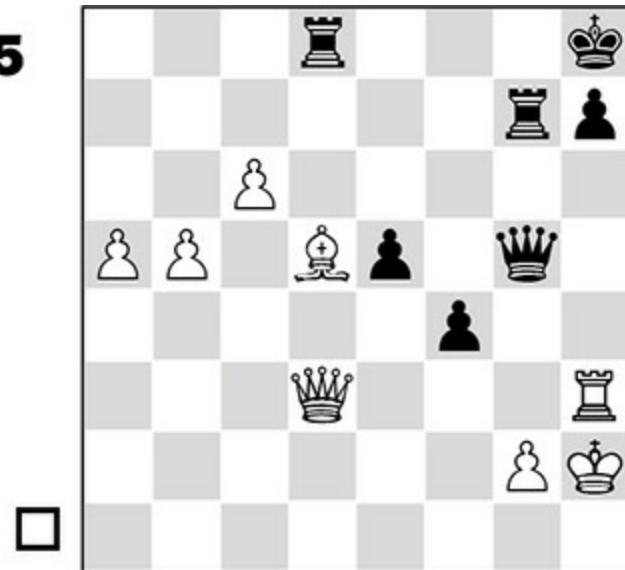
94



Objectively best for Black is the depressingly lost endgame after 23... $\mathbb{Q}g3$ 24. $\mathbb{Q}xg4$. Liu Wenzhe was understandably unenthusiastic about this prospect, and instead found an ingenious trap. Can you?

Exercises 95

95

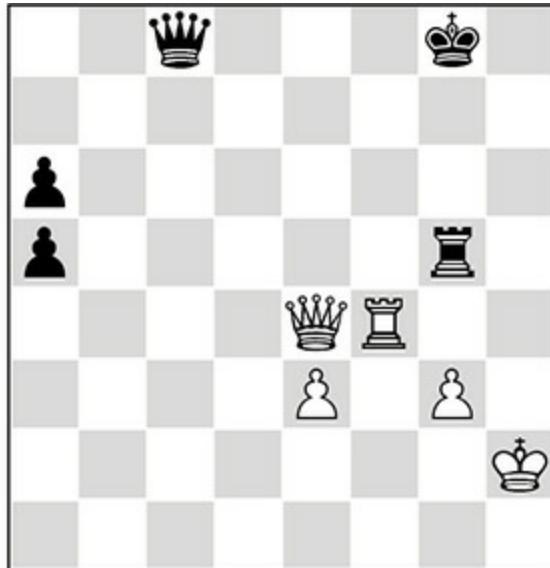


Black, facing an avalanche of white pawns on the queenside, has just played the tricky 39... $\mathbb{R} f8-d8!$. Your task is to answer:

- 1) What is wrong with 40.b6, as played in the game?
- 2) What should White play instead?

Exercises 96

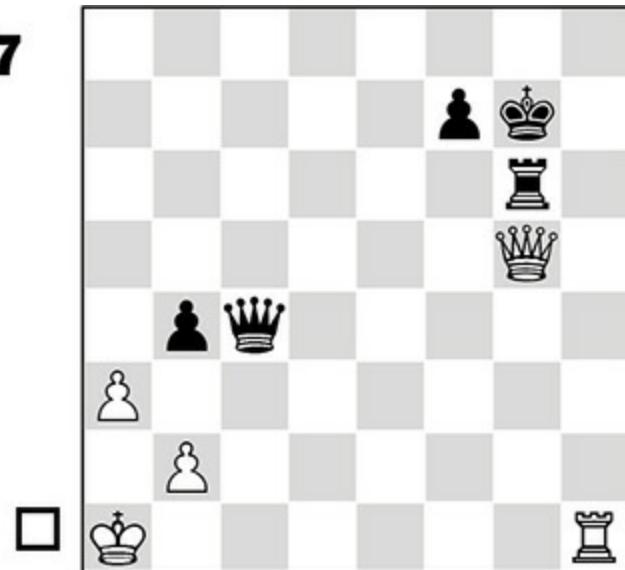
96



It's extremely rare to find a swindle in correspondence chess, particularly in the modern age in which engine assistance is allowed. In this game both White and Black had played for this exact position: White because he believed it to be winning, and Black because... well, that's the puzzle, isn't it? Black to move and draw. You can also use your own engine, if you like. (It won't help.)

Exercises 97

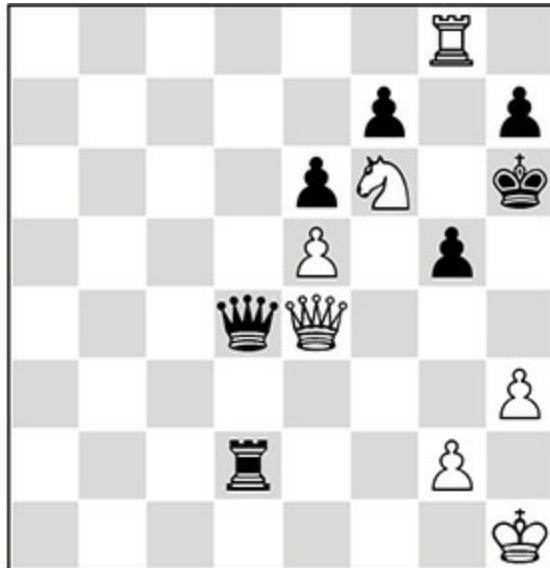
97



Black, a strong 2600+ grandmaster, resigned in this position on account of 62. $\mathbb{N}e5+$ $f6$ (or 62... $\mathbb{Q}g8$ 63. $\mathbb{N}h8\#$; or 62... $\mathbb{Q}f8$ 63. $\mathbb{N}h8+$ $\mathbb{N}g8$ 64. $\mathbb{N}d6+$; or 62... $\mathbb{N}f6$ 63. $\mathbb{N}g1+$) 63. $\mathbb{N}e7+$ $\mathbb{N}f7$ 64. $\mathbb{N}h7+$, winning the queen. What did he miss?

Exercises 98

98



White has just played the appealing 36. $\text{Q}^{\text{e}1-\text{e}4}$, threatening mate as well as a trade of queens. Can you see how Black stole half a point?

Exercises 99

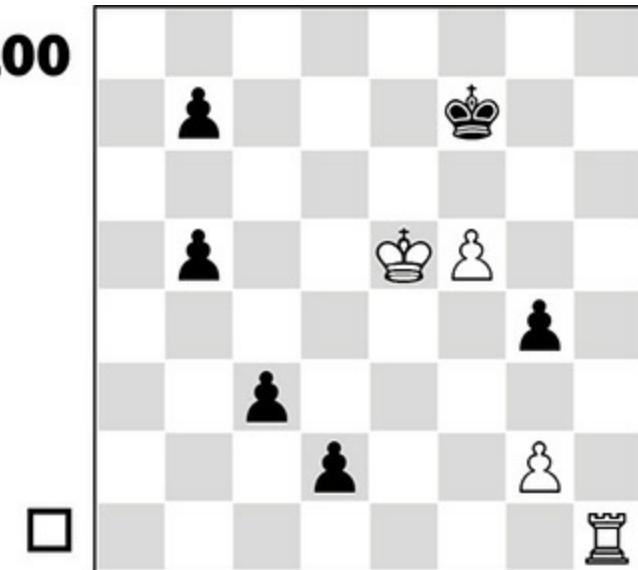
99



A variation from a puzzle we saw earlier (No. 27). In his comments to the game Rogers-Kortchnoi (1986), the usually faultless annotator Dolmatov suggested 83... \mathbb{Q} e7 84. \mathbb{Q} c7+ \mathbb{Q} f6 85. \mathbb{Q} d8+ \mathbb{Q} e5 and Black wins. What drawing resource for White did he miss in this line?

Exercises 100

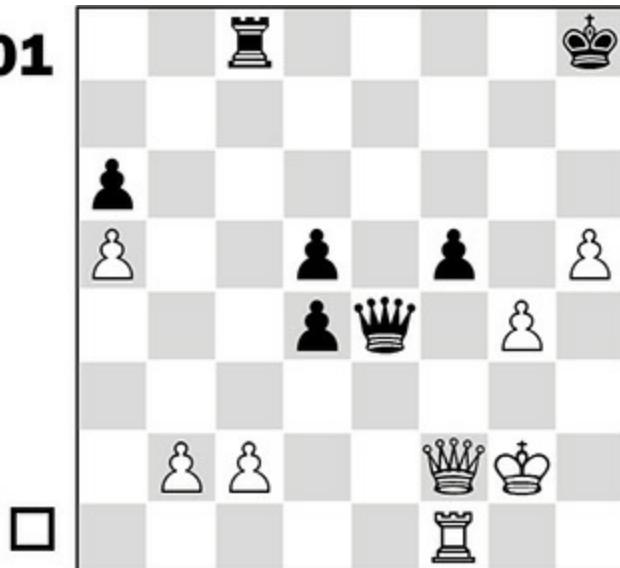
100



In this pivotal game from the 2018 Kenyan Championships, White quickly gave up the fight after 52. $\mathbb{R}h7+$ $\mathbb{Q}g8$ 53. $\mathbb{R}d7$ $c2!$ and Black went on to win. What hidden swindling opportunity did White miss?

Exercises 101

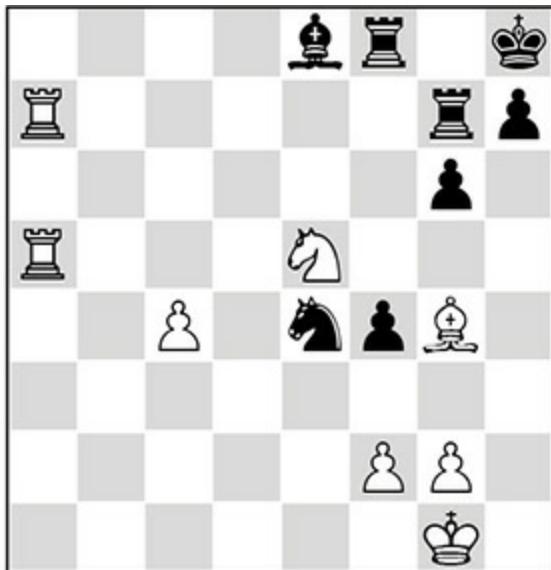
101



What's White's best practical chance?

Exercises 102

102



A swindle in correspondence chess is nearly impossible to pull off, but here Black does have one advantage compared to over-the-board players: to fall for the swindle, White only needs to follow the computer's suggestions. How did the game finish?

Exercises 103

103



The World Champion has been comprehensively outplayed. Black has no satisfactory defence to the immediate threat of crashing through the h-file. How did Carlsen step out onto the ledge?

Exercises 104

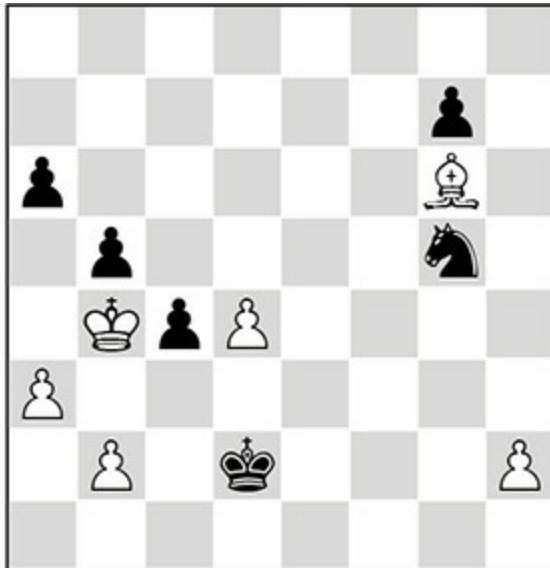
104



The continuation of the previous test. Here, Carlsen played the brilliantly psychological 35... $\text{Qb6}!$ 36. Nh3 Qg6! , apparently highlighting that Black is essentially in *zugzwang*. His queen is tied to defending h7, his rook to e7 and his knight to preventing d5-d6. What was Carlsen trying to provoke?

Exercises 105

105



One of my favourite contemporary Swindlers is the Indian grandmaster Baskaran Adhiban. In this endgame, he is lost, but managed to force his IM opponent to resign in just five moves. Can you guess how the game finished?

Exercises 106

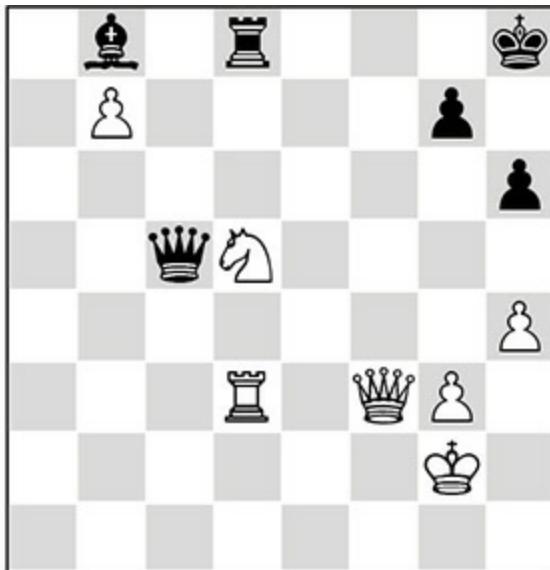
106



Black, a strong grandmaster, decided to finish things off with the pretty 38... $\mathbb{Q}g2!!$, having calculated 39. $\mathbb{Q}xg2$ $f3+$ 40. $\mathbb{Q}g3$ $\mathbb{R}f5$ 41. $\mathbb{Q}xg4$ $\mathbb{R}g5$, winning. What did he miss?

Exercises 107

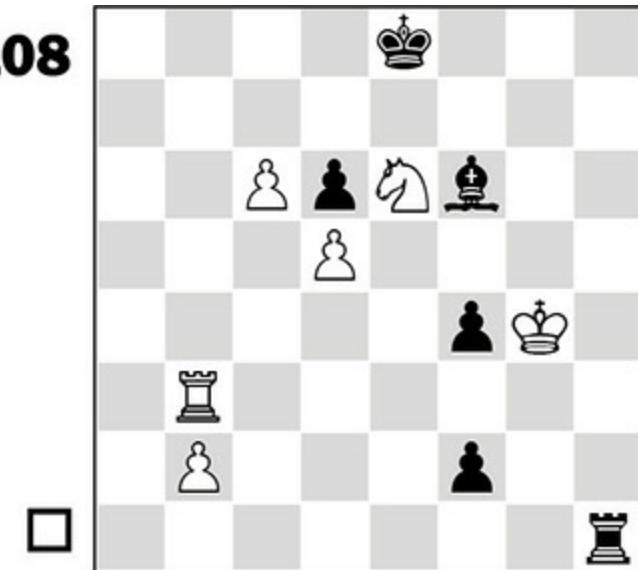
107



Black played the clever 42... \mathbb{Q} f8 What shortcut-to-victory did this invite, and then how did Black execute the swindle?

Exercises 108

108



A hideously complicated position to analyse. White played the brilliantly desperate 45. $\hat{\square}$ f5!!.. Your task is to choose between 45... $\hat{\square}$ d8, 45... f1 $\hat{\square}$ and 45... $\hat{\square}$ f7.

Exercises 109

109



Leko, having just played 56. ♔e6-f8?, won the rook endgame after 56... ♕e4 57. ♔xd7 ♕xd7 58. ♕xh4. What did both grandmasters miss?

Exercises 110

110



In an online game featuring two of the world's best blitz players, the situation for the young Iranian prodigy Alireza Firouzja looks pretty desperate. Having sacrificed the exchange, Firouzja's queenside attack has almost run out of steam. Can you spot Black's key defensive ideas and then find a way to exploit them?

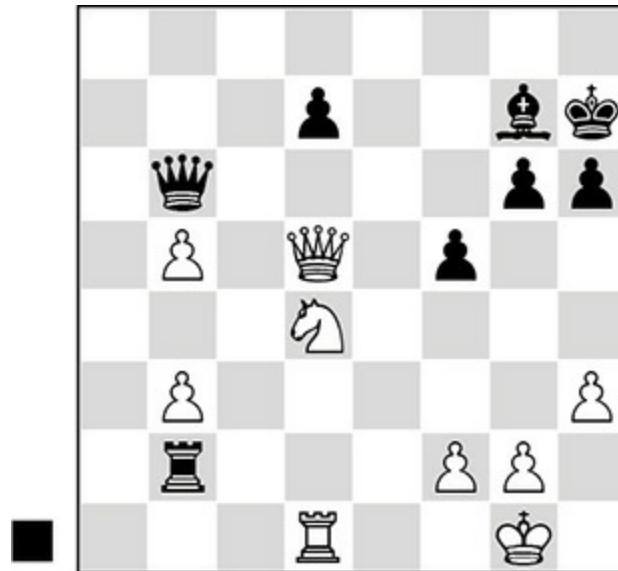
Solutions to exercises

Solution 1

Alon Greenfeld

Judit Polgar

Haifa Ech-tt 1989 (2)



After

28... ♕ c7!? **29. h4??**

Black played

29... ♔ d2!,

winning a piece (0-1, 40).

Solution 2

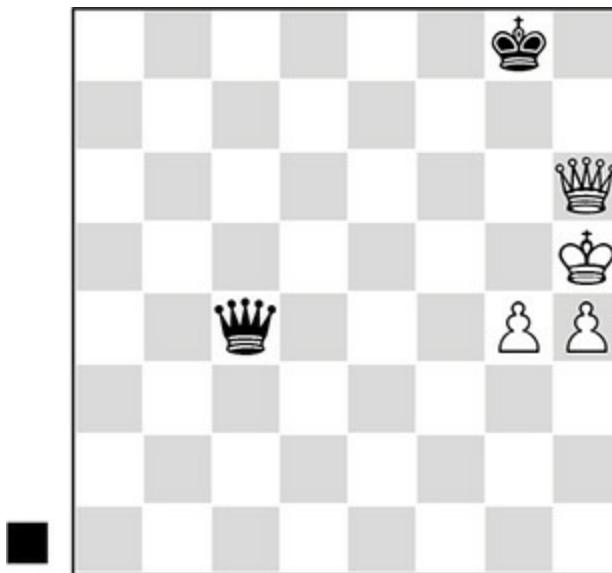
Petko Atanasov

2275

Nikola Spiridonov

2390

Ruse 1978 (4)



77... ♕ f7+! 78. ♕ g6+

78. ♔ g5 ♔ d5+=.

78... ♔ h8! 79. ♔ g5 ♕ f4+ ½-½

Solution 3

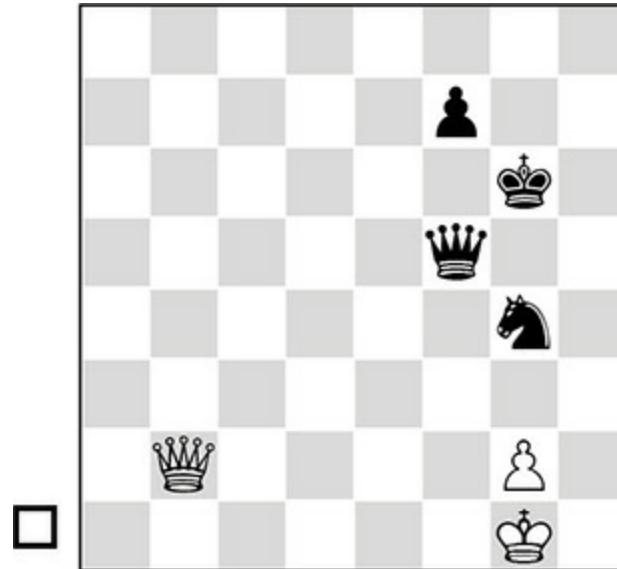
Khanim Balajayeva

2326

Anna Sargsyan

2331

Batumi ol W 2018 (10)



59.g3! ♜ f3??

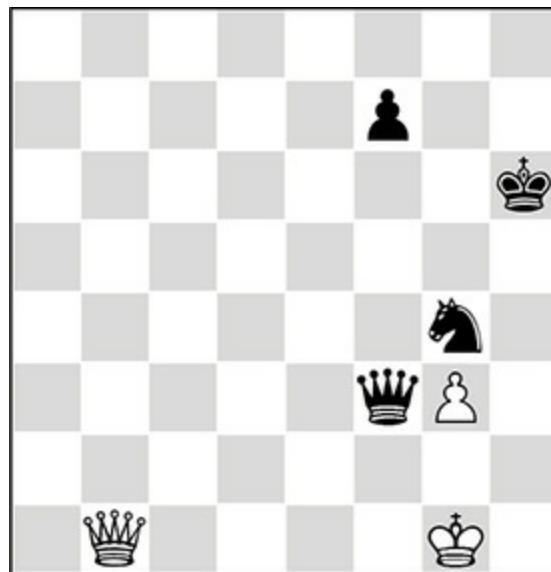
Seemingly crushing.

60.♘ b1+??

Missing 60.♘ g7!.

60... ♛ h6??

Unbelievable charity! Black's last chance was 60... ♜ f5.



61.♘ g6+!

White finally spots the stalemate idea.

61... ♛ xg6 ½-½

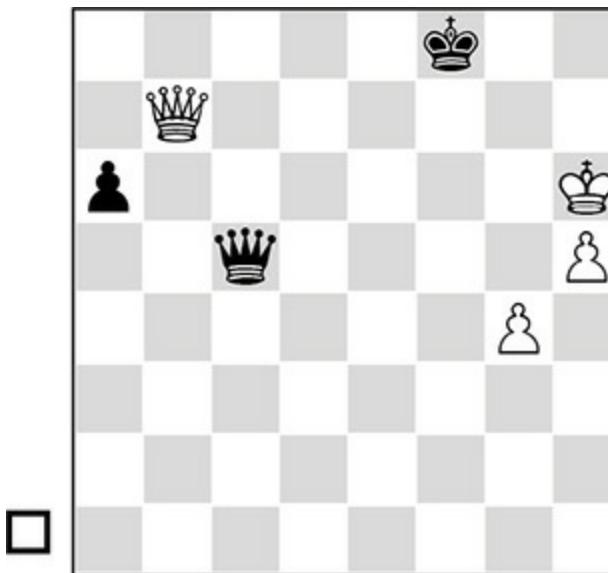
Solution 4

Dejan Bozkov

Jonathan Parker

2390

Szeged Wch U18 1994 (8)



76. ♕xa6?? ♔e3+ 77. g5 ♔e6+

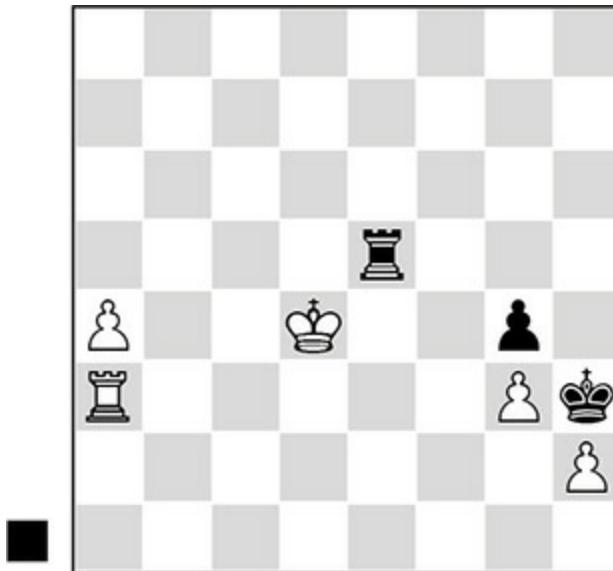
with stalemate to follow: ½-½.

Solution 5

Ruben Alejandro Felgaer 2574

Tomas Oral 2543

Ourense 2007 (7)



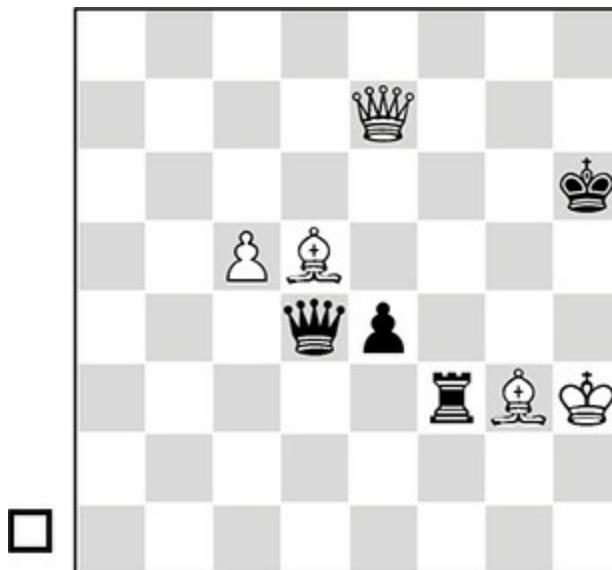
60... ♜ e2 61.a5?? ♜ a2! 62. ♜ xa2

Solution 6

Garry Kasparov

Neil McDonald

Uppingham simul 1986



□

54. $\mathbb{Q}xe4?$ $\mathbb{R}xg3+!$ 55. $\mathbb{Q}xg3$ $\mathbb{R}e5+$ $\frac{1}{2}-\frac{1}{2}$

Solution 7

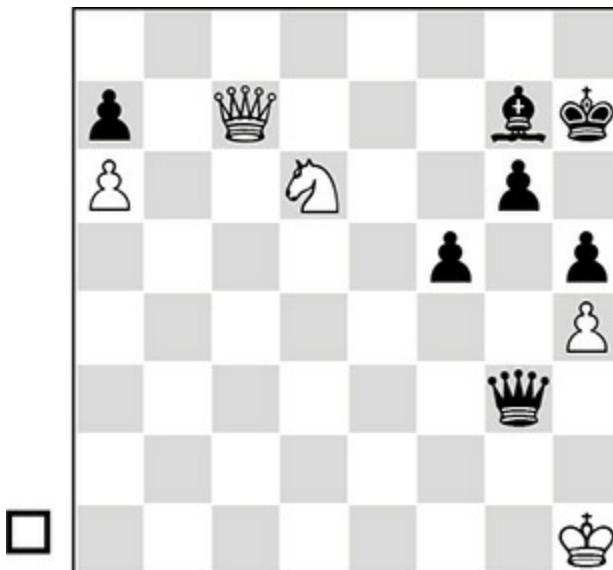
Johann Hjartarson

2550

Petar Popovic

2560

Belgrade 1987



76. ♕ xg7!!+ ♔ xg7 77. ♜ xf5+ gxf5

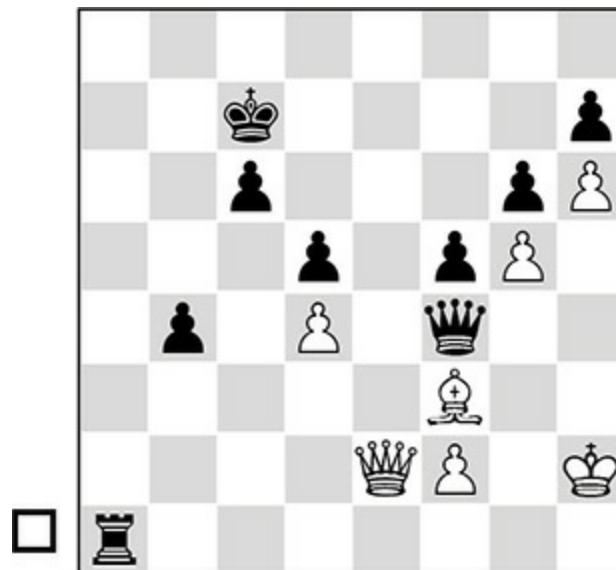
Stalemate.

Solution 8

Israel Horowitz

Max Pavey

New York ch-USA 1951 (8)



76. ♔ h3!?

You never know...

76... ♕xf3+??

Too tricky for his own good!

77. ♔ xf3 ♕ a3 78. ♔ h4!! ♕ xf3 ½-½

Solution 9

Matokhin

Kuzmin

Mingara 1970



1. ♜ f4??

The correct answer was ‘No’!

1...f6+!!

A surprising mating net emerges.

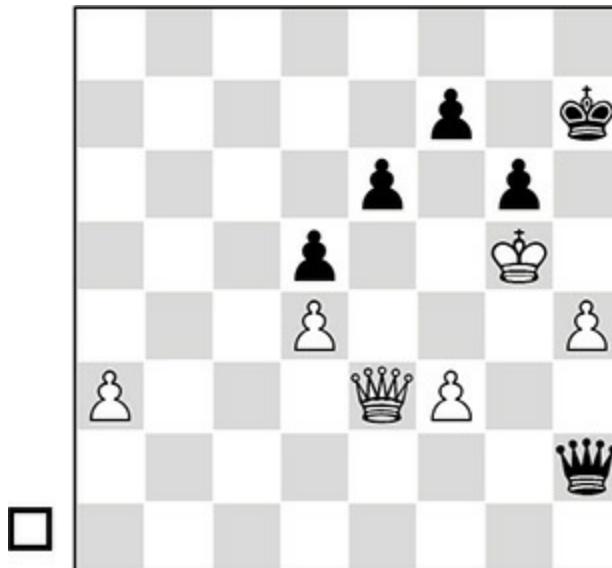
2. ♛ g4 ♜ g2+ 3. ♜ g3 f5+ 4. ♛ f4 e5+ 5. dx5 ♜ d2#

Solution 10

Max Walter

Geza Nagy

Györ 1924



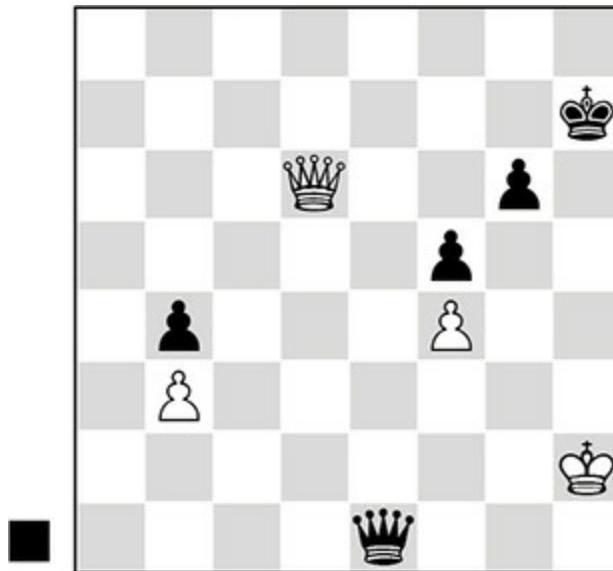
57... ♜ xh3+ 58. ♛ xh3 ♕ e6+ 59. ♔ xe6 ½-½

Solution 11

Yuniesky Quesada Perez 2630

Varuzhan Akobian 2661

St Louis 2017 (9)



56... ♕ h6? 57. ♖ f8+ ♔ h5 58. ♖ h8+ ♔ g4 59. ♖ h3+! ♔ xf4 60. ♖ f1+! ♖ xf1 ½-½

Solution 12

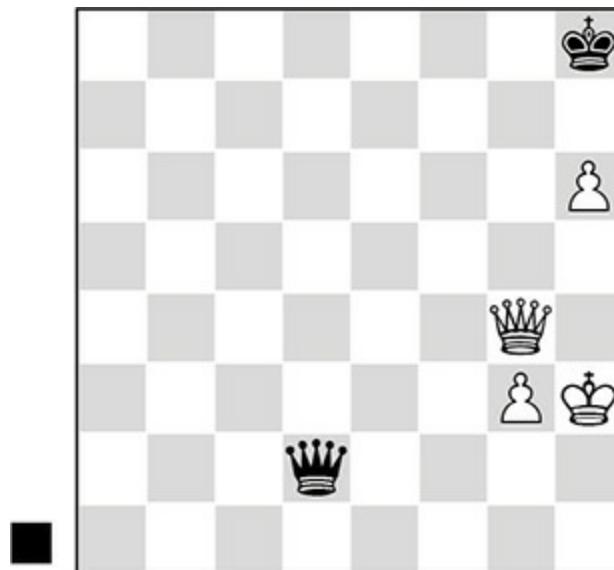
Zoltan Ribli

2605

Boris Spassky

2590

Montpellier ct 1985 (4)



After

83... ♕ b2 84. ♔ h4?

Spassky found a cute way to end his suffering.

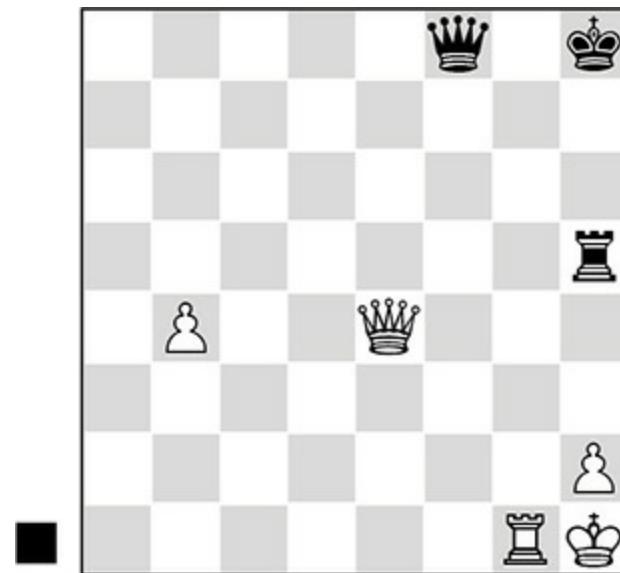
84... ♕ h2+ 85. ♕ g5 ♕ xh6+ 86. ♕ xh6 ½-½

Solution 13

Ruster

Busch

cr



1... ♕ xh2+! 2. ♔ xh2 ♖ h6+ 3. ♔ g3 ♖ h2+! ½-½

Solution 14

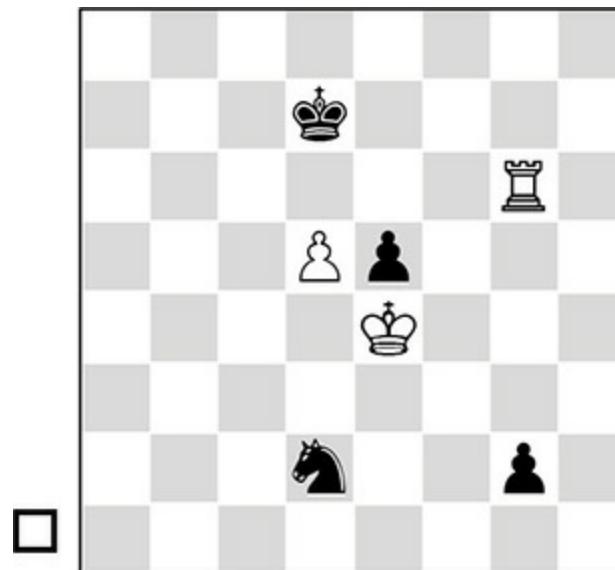
Anton Smirnov

2529

Neil Wright

2125

Sydney 2018 (7)



56. ♔ e3!! ♕ b3 57. ♔ d3!!

is the route to victory. For example:

57...g1♕ 58. ♕ xg1 ♕ d6 59. ♕ b1! e4+ 60. ♕ c3! ♕ c5 61. ♕ d4+-

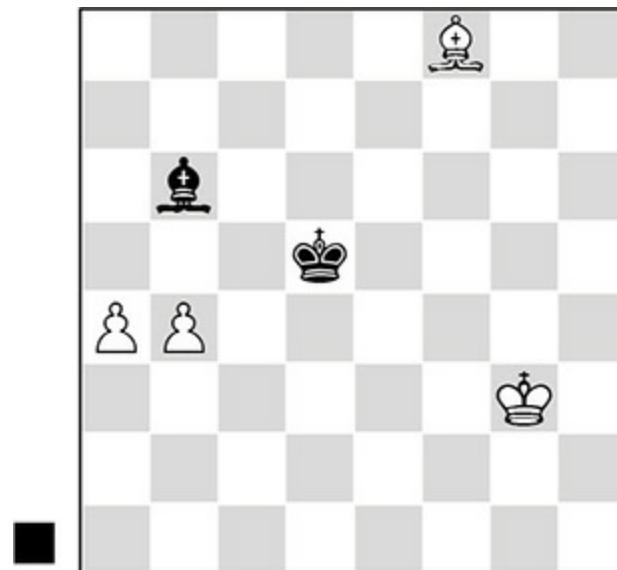
Instead, the game continued 56. ♔ d3?? ♕ f3! and White had to concede the draw.

Solution 15

Magnus Carlsen

Stein Arild Aarland

Norway tt 2002 (3)



52... ♕ a5!! 53. bxa5

53. b5 ♔ c4=.

53... ♕ c6 54. ♕ f4 ♕ b7 ½-½

Solution 16

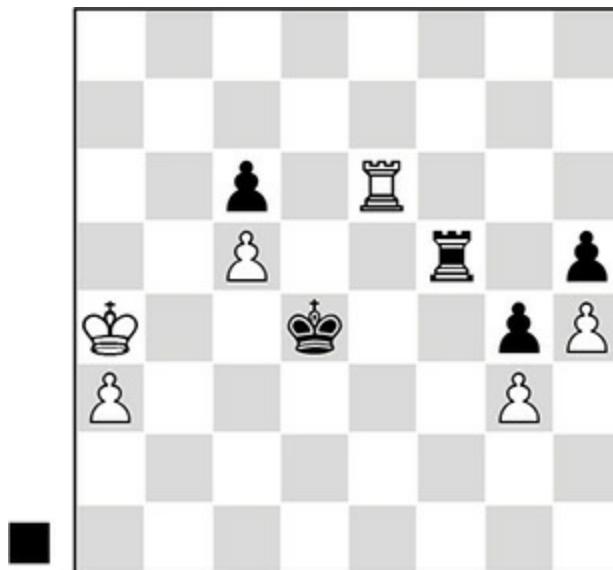
Stephen Solomon

2400

Zong Yuan Zhao

2398

Adelaide ch-AUS 2003 (3)



After

42... \mathbb{Q} xc5 43. \mathbb{Q} h6 \mathbb{Q} c4

White forced a draw with

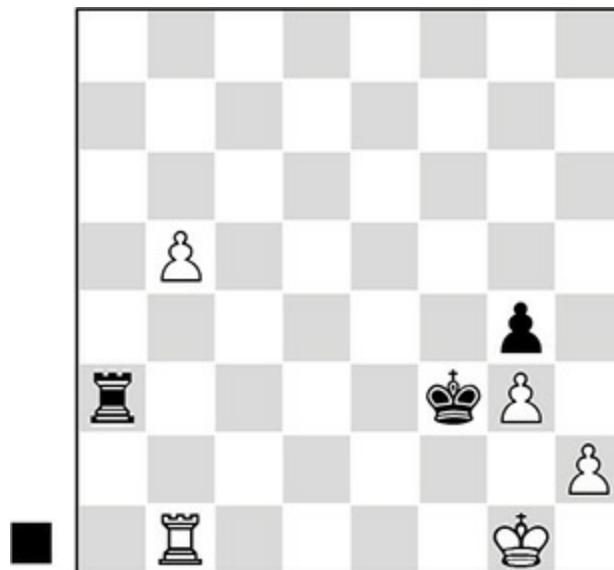
44. \mathbb{Q} xh5!! \mathbb{Q} xh5 ½-½

Solution 17

Carl Schlechter

Heinrich Wolf

Nuremberg 1906 (11)



54... ♜ e3

One more move!

55.b6?? ♜ e1+ 56. ♜ xe1

Stalemate.

Solution 18

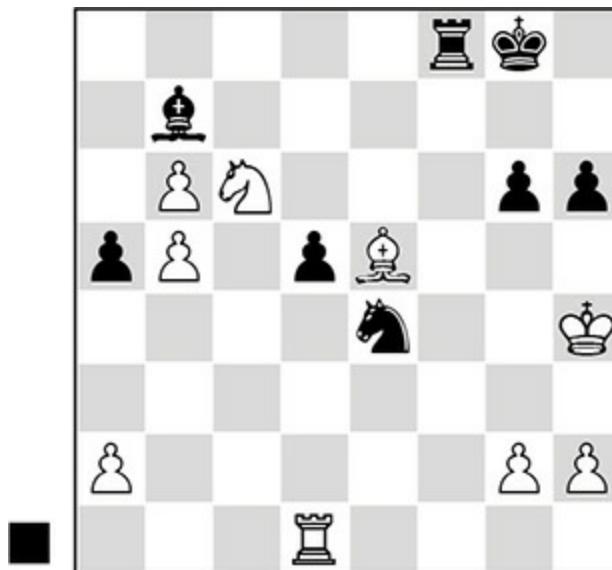
Alexander Chua

2250

Daniel Schwarz

2250

Chicago 2006 (6)



37... ♕ h7! 38. ♖ xd5? g5+

And Black has escaped with a draw, as now White should have acquiesced to a perpetual with

39. ♔ h3 ♕ f2+ 40. ♔ g3

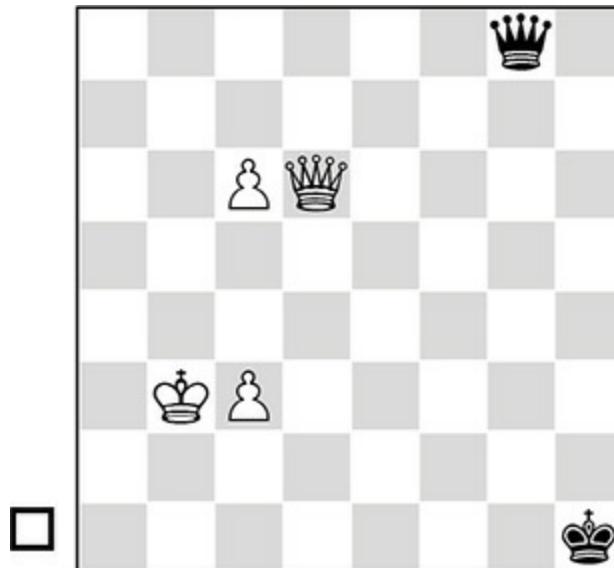
Instead, the game continued 39. ♔ h5??, about which you will be asked in Test 3.

Solution 19

Istvan Bilek

Wolfgang Heidenfeld

Lugano ol 1968 (1)



128.c4?

128. $\mathbb{Q}b4$ $\mathbb{Q}g4+$ 129. $\mathbb{Q}b5$ wins.

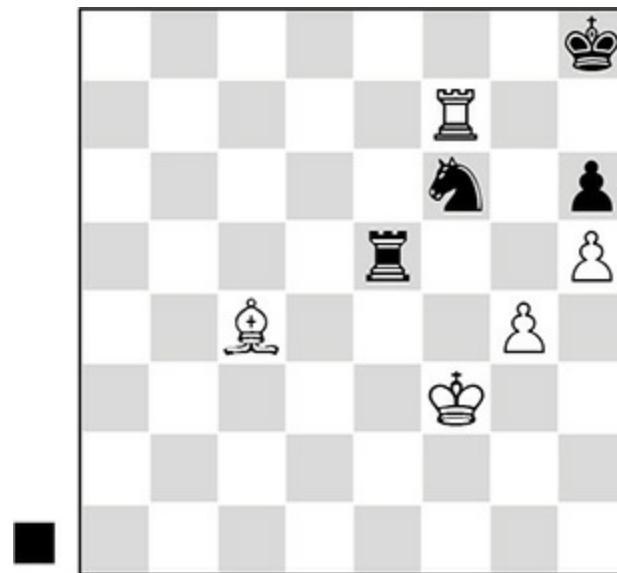
128... $\mathbb{Q}g3+!!$ $\frac{1}{2}-\frac{1}{2}$

Solution 20

Maxime Vachier-Lagrave 2804

Peter Svidler 2751

Tbilisi rapid 2017 (1)



69... ♜ xg4! 70. ♛ f8+ ♕ h7 71. ♛ f7+ ♕ h8 72. ♕ xg4 ♛ e4+ 73. ♛ f4 ♛ xf4+ 74. ♕ xf4 ♕ g7

With the famous drawn endgame.

75. ♕ f5 ♕ h8 76. ♕ g6 ½-½

Solution 21

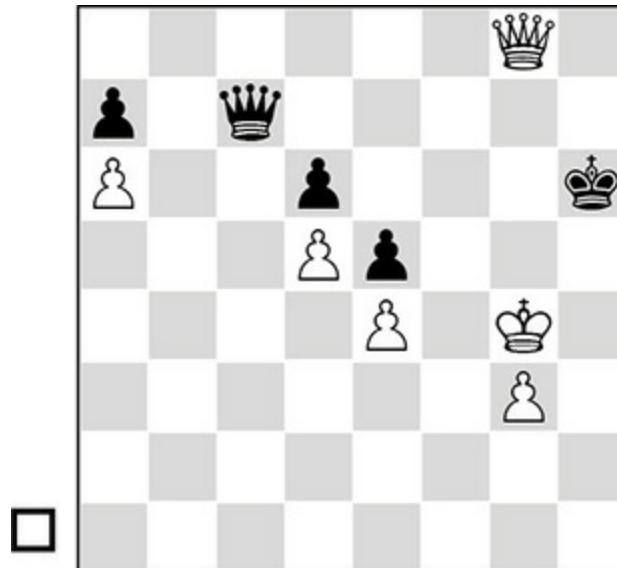
Stelios Halkias

2550

Martijn Dambacher

2297

Amsterdam 2002 (1)



66. ♜e6+! ♔h7 67. ♔h5

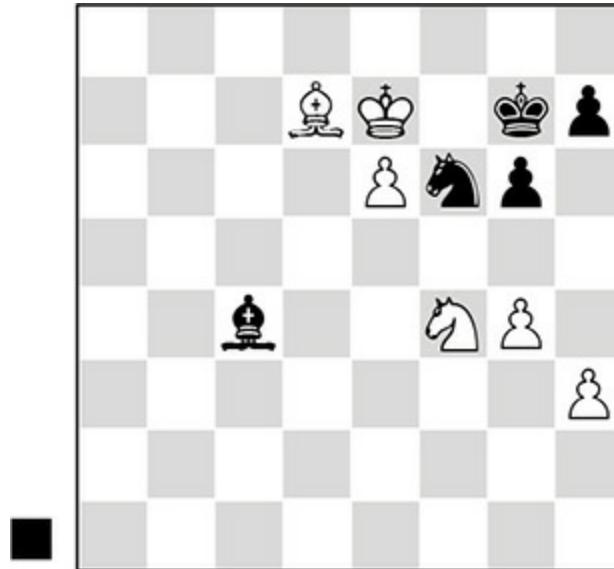
wins quickly, while eliminating the stalemate traps. But in the game, White was impatient: 66. ♔f5??
♜f7+ 67. ♔xf7 ½-½.

Solution 22

Max Euwe

Mir Sultan Khan

Bern 1932 (8)



56...g5! 57.♘ h5+

57.♗ g2 ♗ d5+ 58.♔ d6 ♔ f6 is an easy draw.

57...♗ xh5 58.gxh5 h6! 59.♔ d6 ♗ xe6 60.♔ xe6 ♔ h8!! ½-½

A lovely variant of the wrong-rook's-pawn fortress.

Solution 23

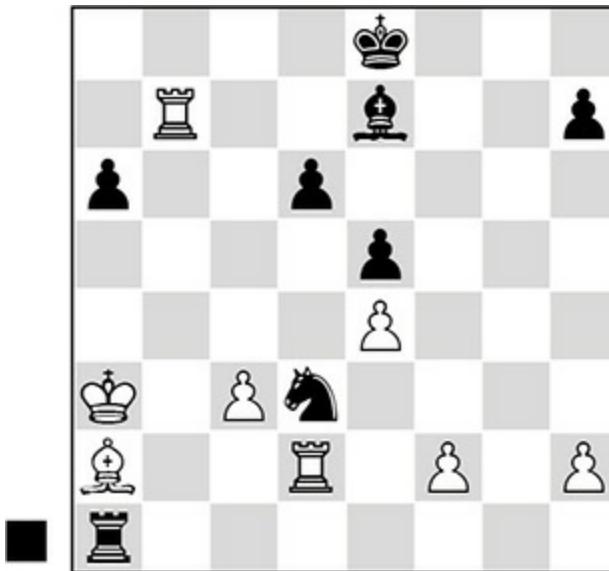
Neil Wright

2152

Irene Sukandar

2419

Canberra 2017 (8)



35... ♜ c1! 36. ♛ b2?? ♜ xa2+ 37. ♛ xc1 ♜ g5! 38. ♜ g7 ♜ xd2+ 0-1

Solution 24

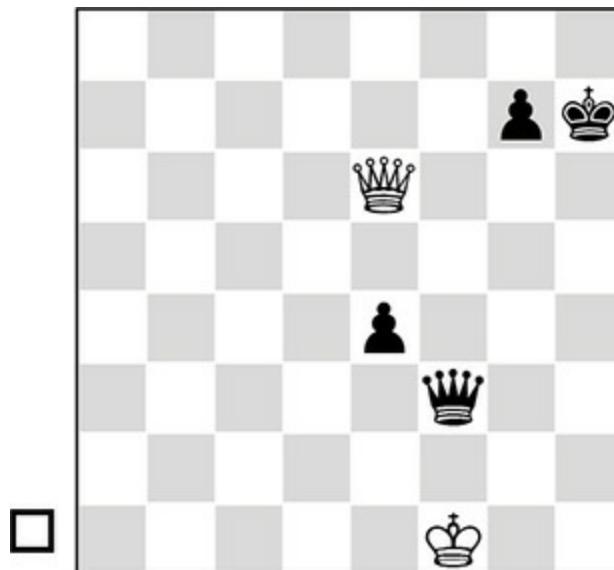
Michael Adams

2630

Vladimir Dimitrov

2525

Elenite 1993 (6)



68. ♕g1!

68. ♔e1 e3?? 69. ♔g6+ is a more transparent trap, because Black might immediately see that the white king is without squares after he pushes to e3. Adams' move is much more subtle.

68...e3?? 69. ♔h3+ ½-½

Solution 25

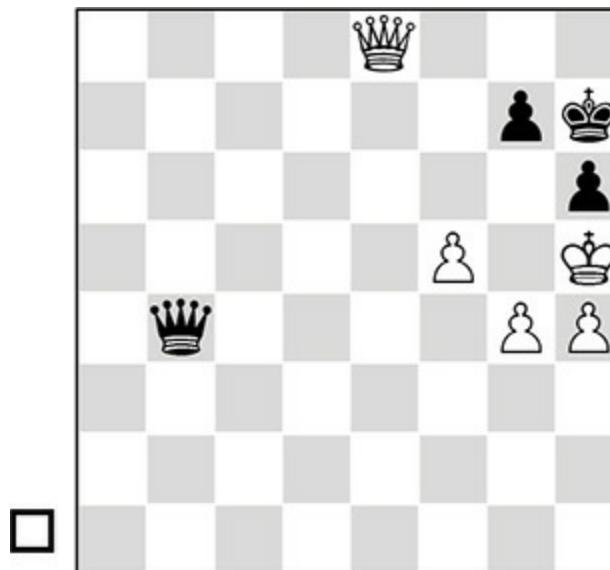
Carissa Yip

2311

Sabina Francesca Foisor

2369

St Louis 2017 (7)



59.f6??

59.g5 is mate in six.

59... ♕ b5+!! 60. ♔ xb5 g6#

Solution 26

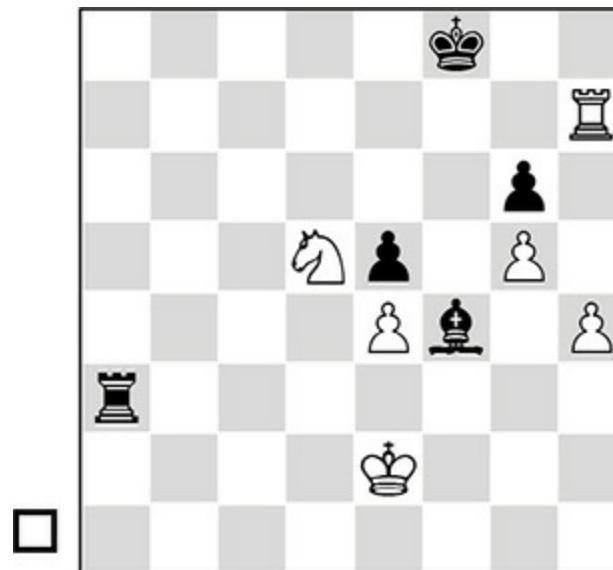
Gerald Hertneck

2508

Robert Ris

2381

Germany Bundesliga 2007/08 (6)



56. ♕ f6?? ♜ xg5!! 57. hxg5 ♛ e3+ 58. ♔ f2 ♛ f3+ 59. ♔ g2 ♛ g3+ 60. ♔ h2 ♛ g2+ 61. ♔ h3 ♛ g3+ 62. ♔ h4 ♛ h3+ 63. ♔ g4 ♛ g3+ 64. ♔ xg3 ½-½

Solution 27

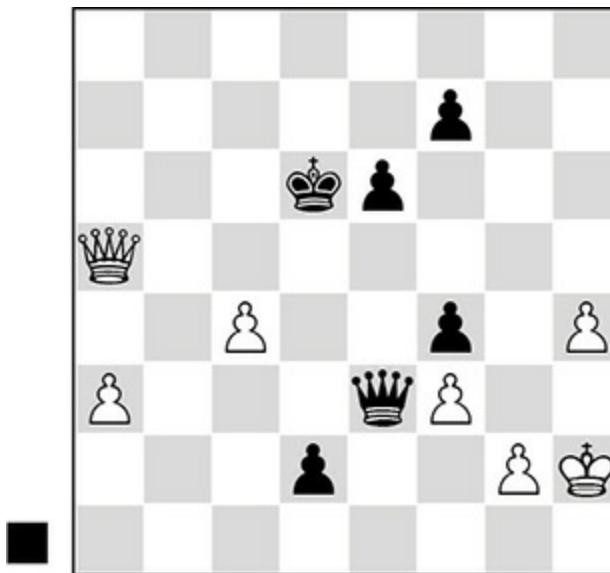
Ian Rogers

2515

Viktor Kortchnoi

2650

Biel 1986 (4)



83... ♕ d4 84. ♕ d8+!

And now 84... ♔ e5 85. ♕ g5+ is a perpetual. Instead, the game finished differently:

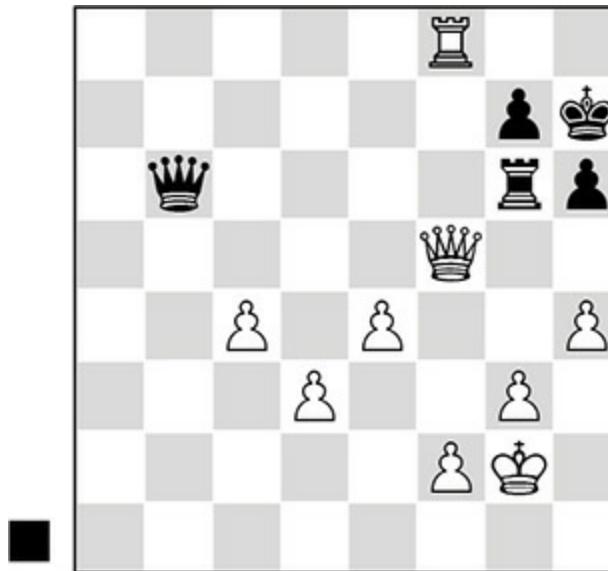
84... ♔ c5?? 85. ♕ c7#

Solution 28

Anatoly Karpov

Jacob Edwards

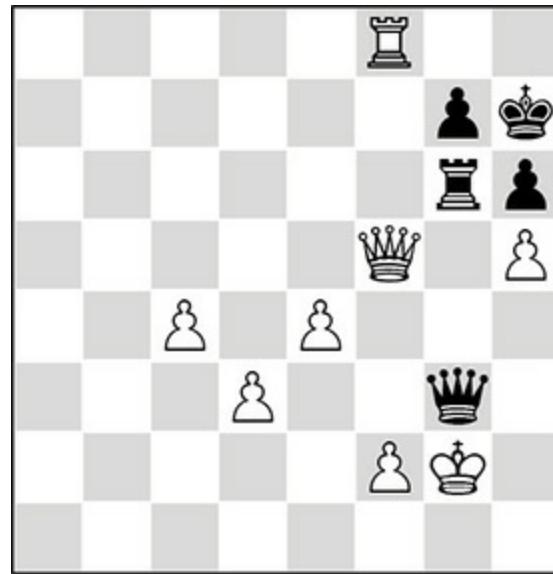
Expo simul 1988



38... ♕ d6!

Granted, this would never work against Karpov outside of a simul. But the advantage of the situation is that Karpov could believe that his weaker opponent had genuinely missed the threat of

39.h5? ♕ xg3+



Edwards writes, ‘I would argue in turn that no chess memory could be worth more to me than that of Karpov snorting in mild self-admonishment, extending his hand and proclaiming, in his thick Russian accent: “Draw”.’

Solution 29

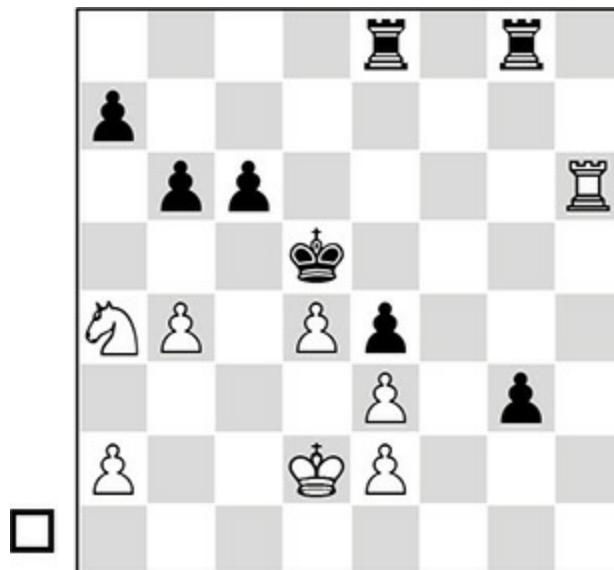
Anthony Fikh

1648

Daniel Poberezovsky

1615

Swinburne jr 2018 (3)



32. \mathbb{Q} c3!

The game saw an incredible finish:

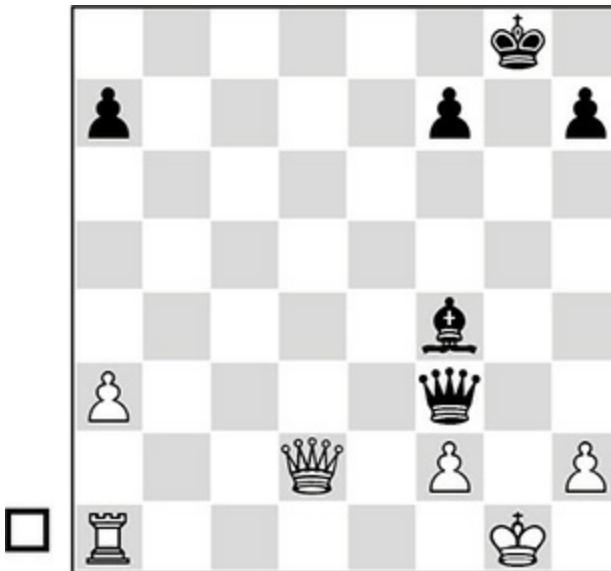
32...g2 33. \mathbb{Q} b3 g1 \mathbb{Q} ?? 34. \mathbb{Q} c3#

Solution 30

Daniel Howard Fernandez 2400

Peter Wells 2455

Cardiff 2014 (6)



37. ♜ d1??

Stockfish recommends the prudent 37. ♜ d8+! ♛ g7 38. ♜ d4+!, transferring the queen with tempo in order to protect f2. Black has no chances after 38...f6 (38... ♛ g6 39.h3!) 39. ♜ d1!, when all of White's pieces are defended and the white king can walk to the queenside if necessary. Interestingly, some other engines prefer 37. ♜ d1??, failing to appreciate the perpetual check even at high depth.

37... ♜ xh2+!! 38. ♜ xh2 ♜ xf2+ 39. ♜ h1 ♜ h4+ 40. ♜ g2 ♜ g5+ 41. ♜ f3 ♜ f5+ 42. ♜ e3 ♜ e5+ 43. ♜ d3 ♜ d5+ 44. ♜ c2 ♜ c5+ 45. ♜ b1 ♜ b6+ 46. ♜ c1 ♜ c5+ 47. ♜ c2 ♜ g1+ 48. ♜ b2 ♜ b6+ 49. ♜ a2 ♜ e6+ 50. ♜ b1 ♜ b6+ 51. ♜ b2 ♜ g6+ 52. ♜ c2 ♜ b6+ 53. ♜ c1 ♜ g1+ 54. ♜ d1 ♜ c5+ 55. ♜ b1 ♜ b6+ 56. ♜ c2 ♜ c5+ 57. ♜ b3 ♜ b6+ 58. ♜ c4 ♜ c6+ 59. ♜ d4 ♜ d6+ 60. ♜ e4 ♜ e6+ 61. ♜ f4 ♜ f6+ 62. ♜ g4 ♜ e6+ 63. ♜ h4 ♜ e7+ 64. ♜ g3 ♜ e3+ 65. ♜ g2 ♜ g5+

And on move 82, White finally accepted that there was no escape to the checks.

Solution 31

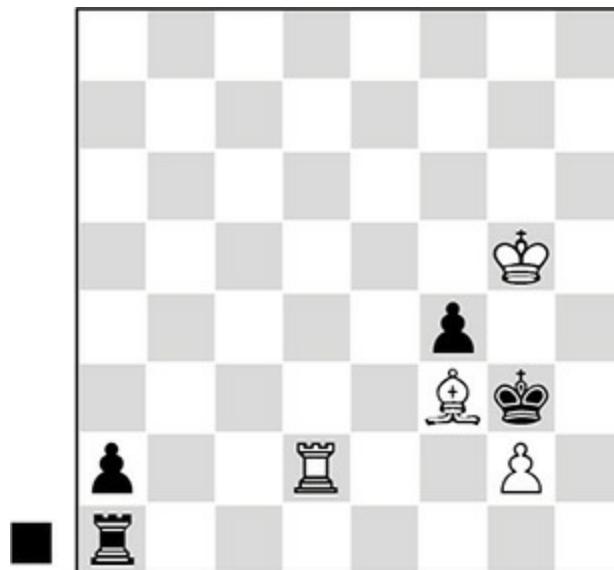
Martyn Kravtsiv

2626

Andrei Volokitin

2687

Kiev ch-UKR 2013 (1)



83... ♕ h2!! 84. ♕ xf4 ♖ d1! 85. ♖ xd1??

85. ♖ xa2 ♖ a1 86. ♖ d2 wins.

85... a1♕ 86. ♖ xa1

Solution 32

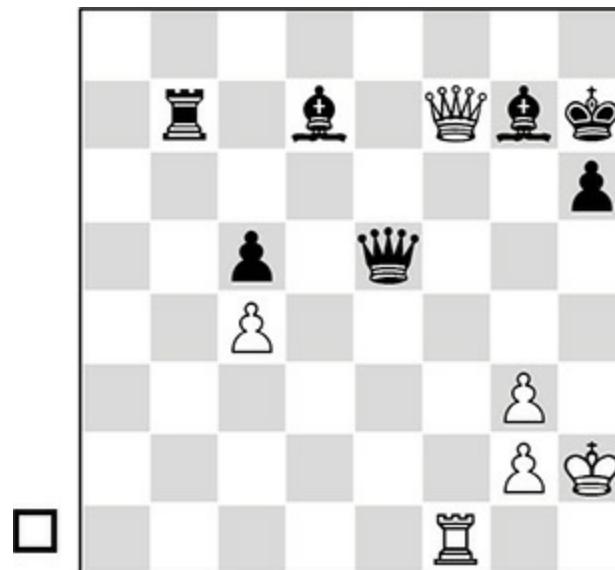
Peter Sowray

2353

Simon Williams

2512

Gatwick 2011 (4)



37. $\mathbb{Q} b1!?$ $\mathbb{Q} xb1??$

One that I'm sure Black would rather forget. Sorry if you're reading this, Simon.

38. $\mathbb{Q} g6+$ $\mathbb{Q} g8$ 39. $\mathbb{Q} f7+$ $\mathbb{Q} h7$ 40. $\mathbb{Q} g6+$ $\mathbb{Q} h8$ 41. $\mathbb{Q} h7+$

Solution 33

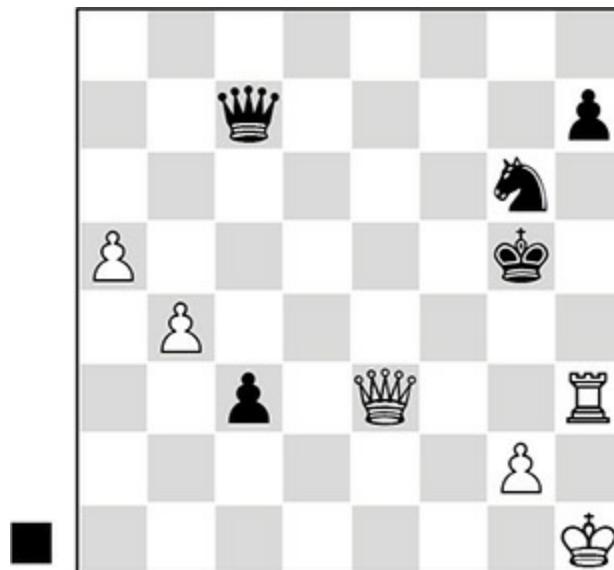
Fred Hedke

2323

Tiger Hillarp Persson

2567

Hoogeveen 2007 (4)



58... ♜ f4! 59.g3?? ♕ c6+

Solution 34

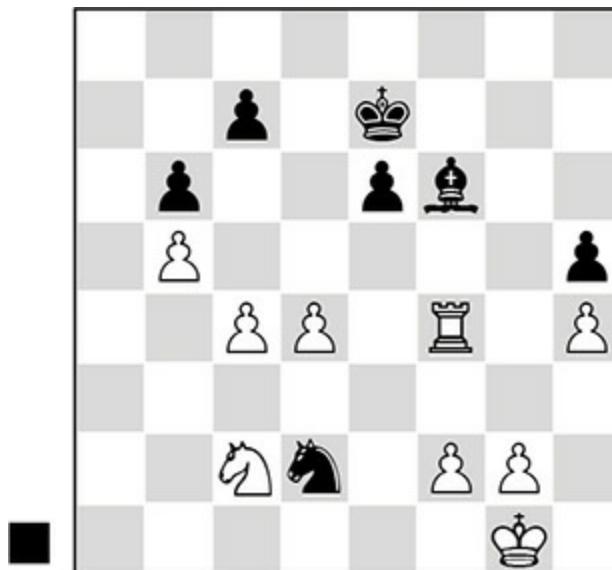
Nikita Maiorov

2519

Zhen Yu Cyrus Low

2415

Roquetas de Mar 2020 (9)



60... ♜g7!

Threatening 61... ♜h6. White should stop this with 61. ♜b4 or 61.g4, but instead the game finished 61.d5?? ♜e5! 62. ♜f3??

62. ♜d4! and White is still better.

62... ♜xf3+ 63.gxf3 exd5 64.cxd5 ♛d6

And Black eventually won the endgame.

Solution 35

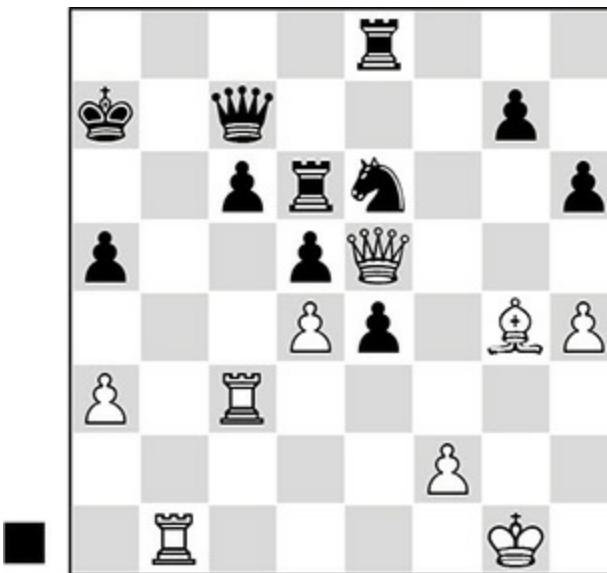
David Anton Guijarro

2709

Nikita Petrov

2543

Moscow Wch Rapid 2019 (4)



33... ♕ d7? 34. ♛ xe6!! ♜ xe5 35. ♛ xd7! ♜ xd4 36. ♜ xc6 ♕ f8 37. ♜ c7+ ♔ a6 38. ♜ c6+

With a perpetual check.

Solution 36

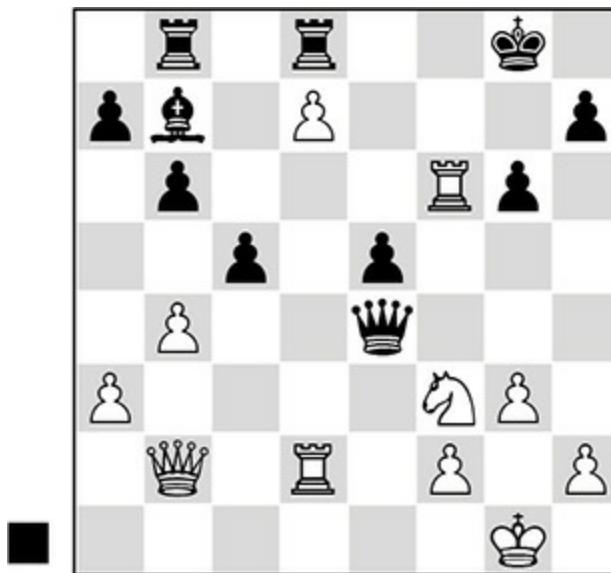
Robert Ruck

2530

Shakhriyar Mamedyarov

2752

Moscow Wch Rapid (1)



33... ♜ f8!! 34. ♜ xf8+ ♜ xf8 35.d8 ♜ ♜ xf3!

Now only 36. ♜ a2+ ♛ g7 37. ♜ d7+ ♛ h8 38. ♜ xf8+ wins. Instead, the game continued with a few more dramatic twists:

36. ♜ f1? ♜ h1+ 37. ♜ e2



37... ♜ e4+?

37... ♜ f3+!.

38. ♜ d1 ♜ h1+ 39. ♜ c2 ♜ e4+ 40. ♜ b3 ♜ xd8 41. ♜ xd8+ ♛ f7 42. bxc5? ♜ d5+ 43. ♜ c2 ♜ e4+?

43... ♜ f3=.

44. ♜ d2 ♜ f3 45. ♜ xe5? ♜ xf2+ 46. ♜ c3? ♜ e1+? 47. ♜ b2?? ♜ b1+ 48. ♜ c3 ♜ a1+

And White resigned.

Solution 37

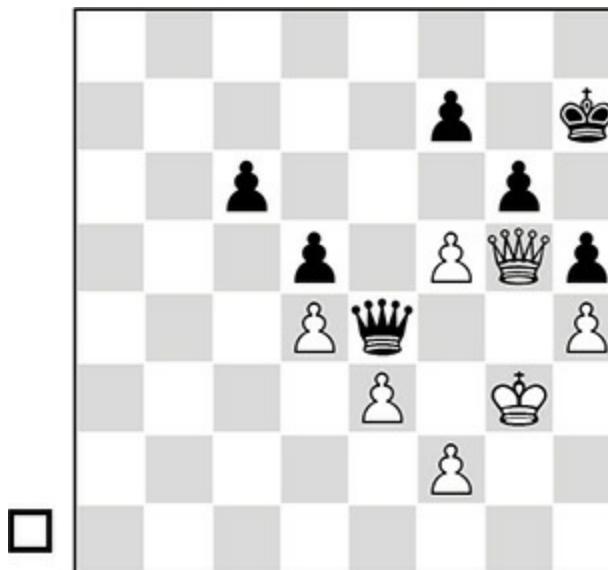
Alexander Beliavsky

2649

Leif Erlend Johannessen

2427

Linares 2002 (2)



68.f3?! ♕ b1 69. ♕ f4?? ♕ b8#

Solution 38

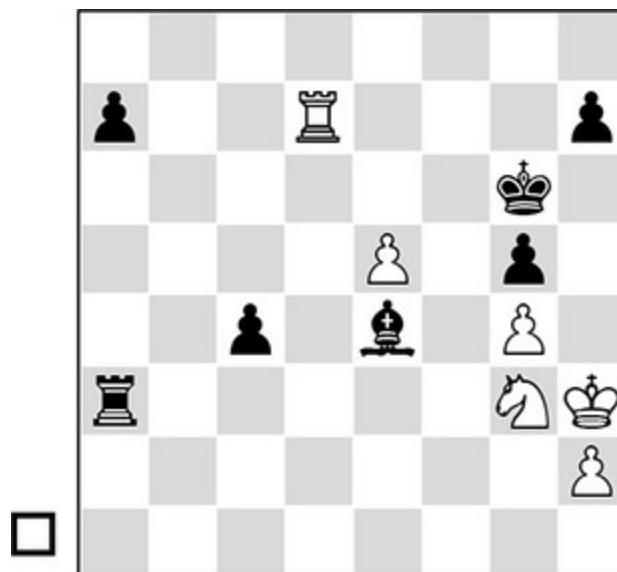
Vladimir Burmakin

2504

Boris Grachev

2648

Voronezh 2017 (4)



52... ♕ g8! 53. ♛ a8+

‘Cutting off’ the king – which is exactly what Black wants...

53... ♙ h7 54. ♔ d6?? ♜ d5+! 55. ♗ xd5 ½-½

Solution 39

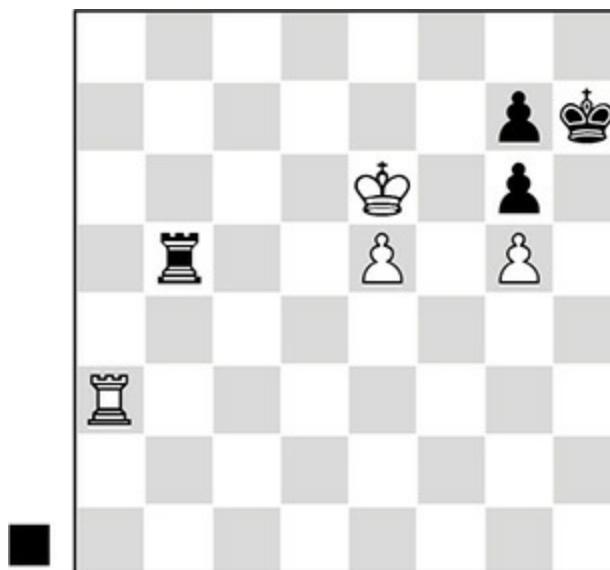
Ari Dale

2333

Tim Reilly

2166

Wellington 2017 (5)



40.e6! ♕f6??

40... ♛f3!+.

41.♕ f7+ ♔ xe6 42.♕ e7+ ♔ xe7 ½-½

Solution 40

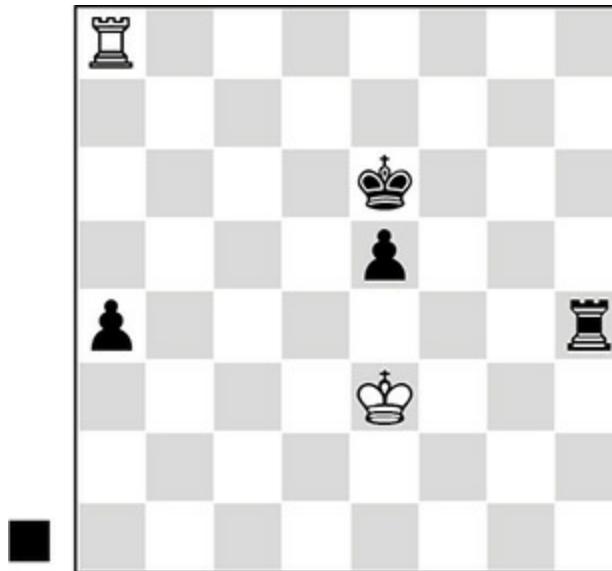
Viktor Erdös

2628

Bassem Amin

2680

Tbilisi 2017 (1)



The correct technique is

67... ♜ h3+ 68. ♛ e4 ♜ d6! 69. ♜ a6+ ♜ c5 70. ♜ xe5 a3!

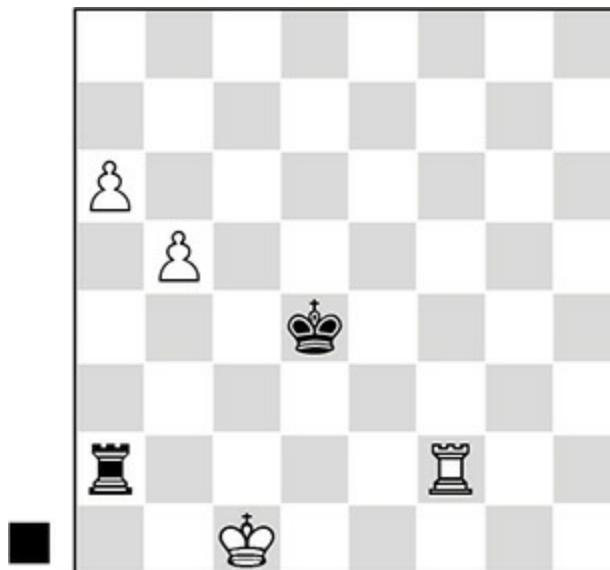
Instead, the game finished 67...a3?? 68. ♜ xa3! ♜ h3+ 69. ♛ e4 ♜ xa3 ½-½.

Solution 41

Paul Keres

Erich Eliskases

Noordwijk 1938 (4)



52... ♜ xf2 53.a7 ♜ a2 54.b6 ♛ c3 55. ♛ b1 ♜ a6 56.b7 ♜ b6+ 57. ♛ c1 ♜ h6!

And the game was drawn on account of

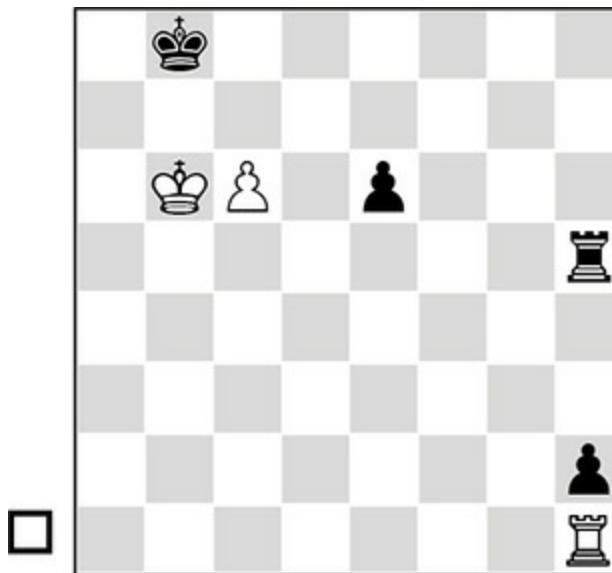
58. ♛ d1 ♛ d3 59. ♛ e1 ♛ e3 60. ♛ f1 ♛ f3 61. ♛ g1 ♜ g6+!

Solution 42

Ratmir Kholmov

Jaan Ehvest

Volgodonsk 1983



1. c7+ ♜ c8 2. ♕ a1!

2. ♕ f1 ♕ h8 gives White nothing.

Now in the game, Black played 2...h1 ♔! and won. But many a player would have played the obvious
2...h1 ♔ ??

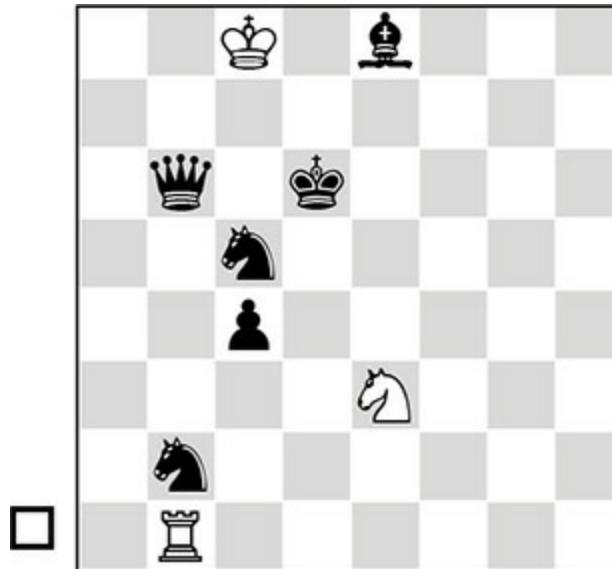
due to the queen covering the a8-square. Indeed she does, but nevertheless,

3. ♕ a8+!! ♜ xa8

is stalemate!

Solution 43

Rhine



1. ♜ xc4+! ♜ xc4 2. ♛ xb6+ ♜ xb6+

2... ♔ e7 is a theoretical draw.

3. ♔ d8!

And stalemate or the ♔ + ♜ + ♝ vs ♔ endgame is inevitable.

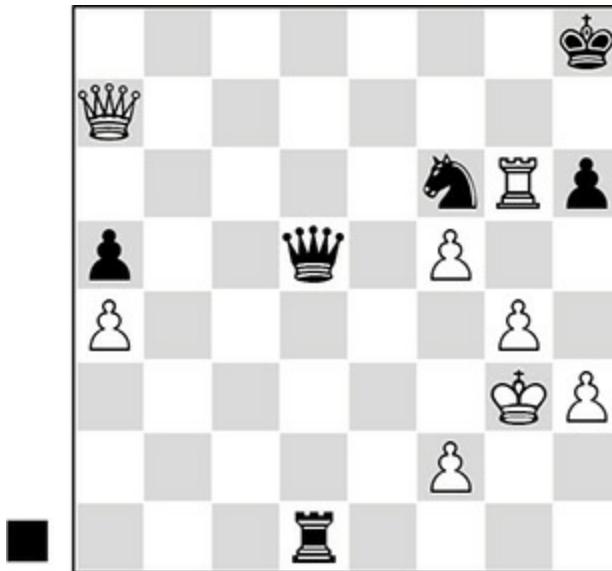
Solution 44

Stephen Boyd
Torbjorn Glimbrant

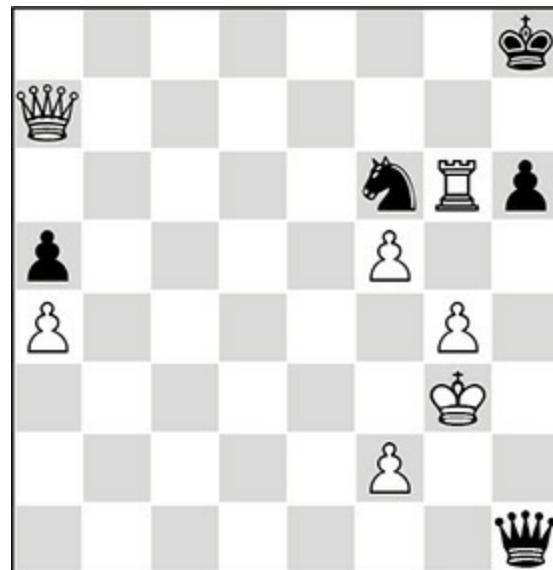
2265

2235

Alicante 1992 (7)



40... ♜ d3+ 41. ♛ h4 ♜ xh3+! 42. ♛ xh3 ♜ h1+ 43. ♛ g3



43... ♜ h5+! 44. gxh5 ♜ f3+ 45. ♛ h2 ♜ g2+ 46. ♛ xg2

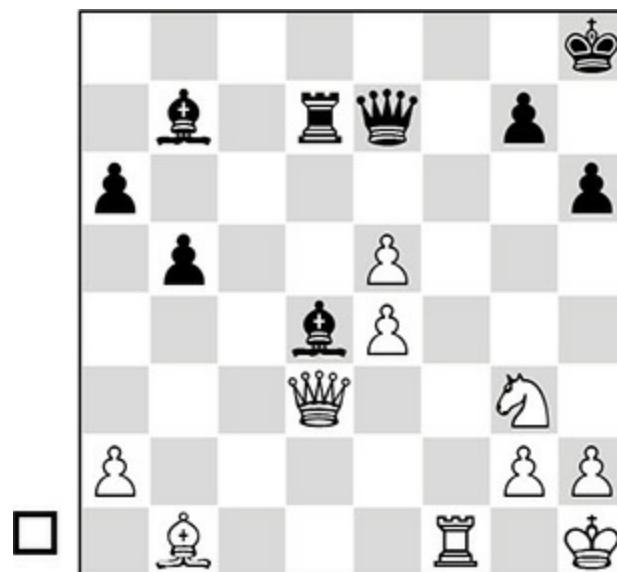
With a draw.

Solution 45

Ignatz Von Popiel

Georg Marco

Monaco 1902 (1)



35. ♕ f5!? ♜ xe5?

Careful now! The win is

36. ♕ h4!,

intending

36... ♜ h7 37. ♕ f3!

The game instead finished much quicker, for after 36. ♕ d1?? Black... resigned! Instead, Black could have won on the spot with the spectacular counter-thrust 36... ♜ g1!!.

Solution 46

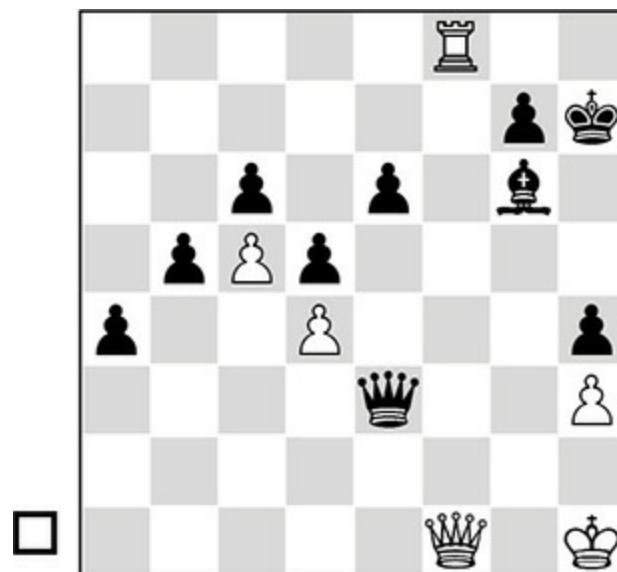
William Fuller

2138

Leonid Basin

2489

Detroit 1992 (2)



37. ♔ f2!?

Inviting Black to ‘play it safe’ and get the queens off, just in case.

37... ♕ xf2?? 38. ♖ h8+! ½-½

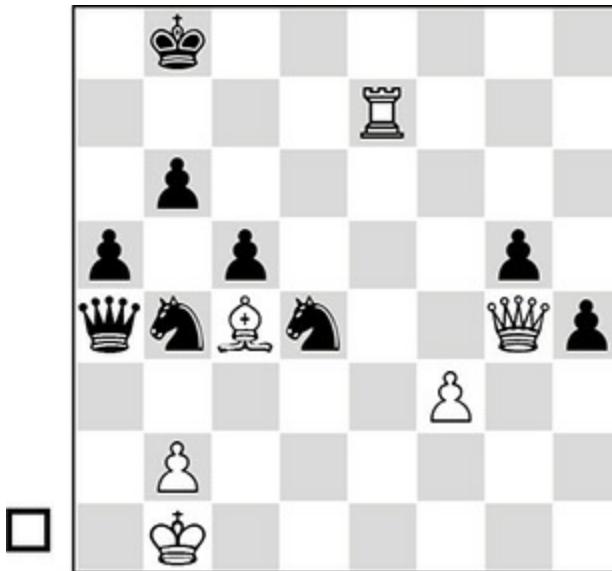
... ‘in case’.

Solution 47

Shredder (Computer)

Gull (Computer)

www.tcec-chess.net 2013 (14)



46. $\mathbb{Q} b3!! \mathbb{Q} xb3$

46... $\mathbb{Q} xb3??$ 47. $\mathbb{R} e8+$ $\mathbb{Q} c7$ 48. $\mathbb{R} c8+$ wins for White, while 46... $\mathbb{Q} b5$ 47. $\mathbb{Q} c4!!$ is also a draw.

47. $\mathbb{Q} f4+ gxf4$ 48. $\mathbb{R} b7+ \mathbb{Q} c8$ 49. $\mathbb{R} c7+ \mathbb{Q} d8$ 50. $\mathbb{R} d7+ \mathbb{Q} e8$ 51. $\mathbb{R} e7+ \mathbb{Q} f8$ 52. $\mathbb{R} f7+ \mathbb{Q} g8$ $\frac{1}{2}-\frac{1}{2}$

Solution 48

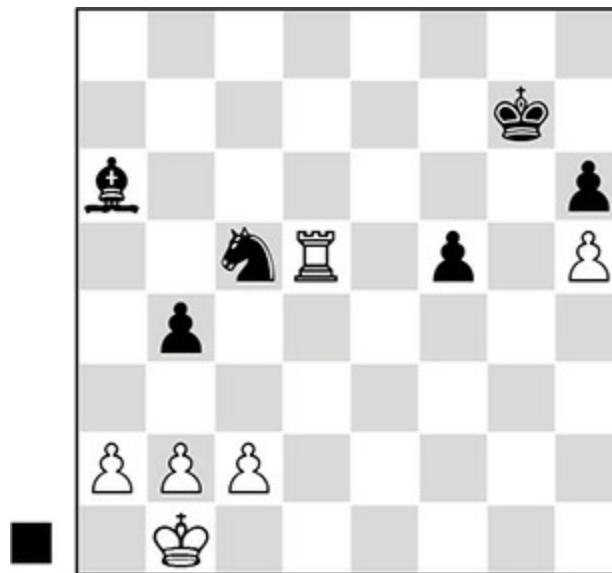
Evgeny Najer

2633

Ilya Smirin

2644

Yerevan Ech 2014 (4)



41...f4!! 42. \mathbb{Q} xc5 \mathbb{Q} f6 43. \mathbb{Q} c6+ \mathbb{Q} e7 44. \mathbb{Q} xa6 f3 45. \mathbb{Q} a5 \mathbb{Q} e6

With equality.

Solution 49

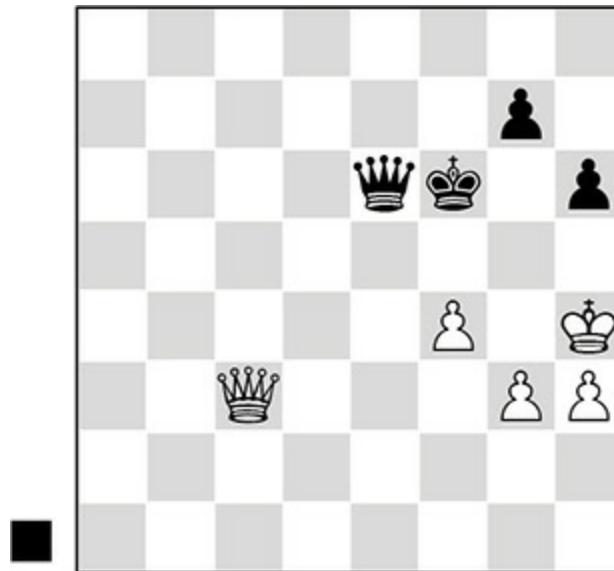
Tamas Fodor Jr

2506

Michael Adams

2706

Hull ch-GBR 2018 (3)



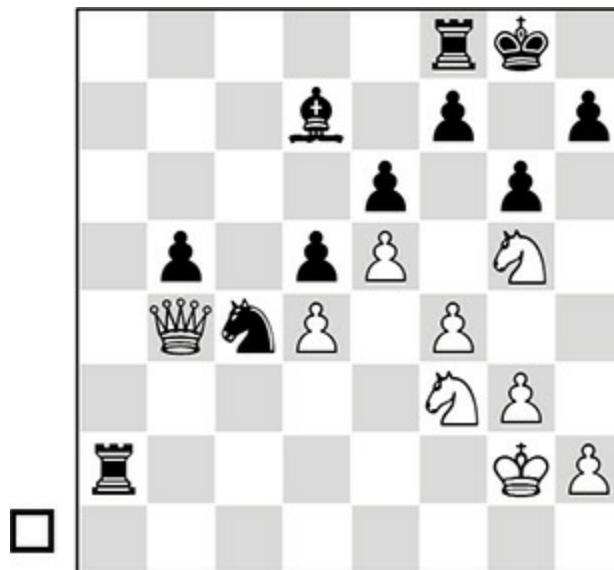
60... ♔ f7! 61. ♔ e5?? g5+!! 0-1

White must lose his queen or allow mate.

Solution 50

Patrick Gong 2286
Christopher Wallis 2380

Adelaide 2017 (3)



28. \mathbb{K} h3!

It appears that White must retreat his king to the back rank, as now he seems to trap his own knight on g5. And indeed, in the game that's exactly what Black thought too:

28...h6?? 29. \mathbb{N} h7!

Turning the tables. White won a piece after

29... \mathbb{R} d8 30. \mathbb{N} e7! \mathbb{R} a8 31. \mathbb{N} f6+

and went on to convert.

Solution 51

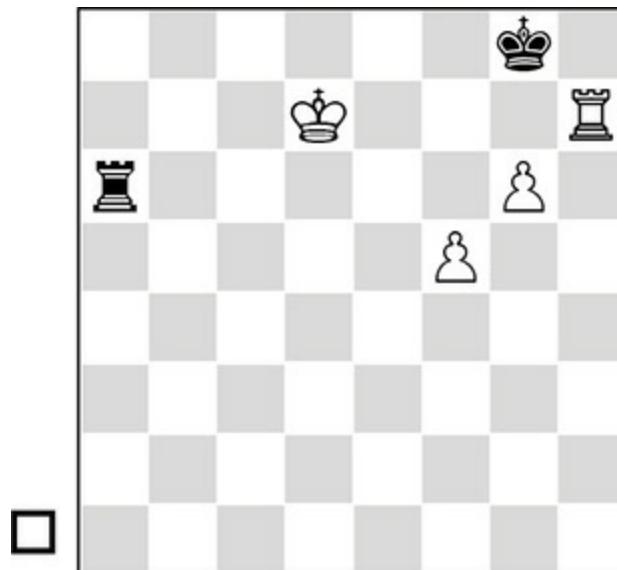
Albert Blees

2310

Jan Plachetka

2440

Brøndby 1985 (5)



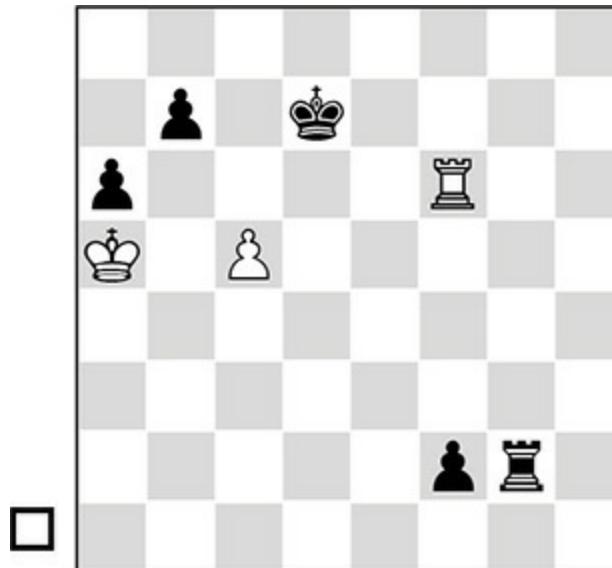
In the game, White played 70. $\mathbb{Q}e7??-$ and Black resigned! Instead, 70... $\mathbb{R}xg6!$ draws.

Solution 52

Lodewijk Prins

Heinz Lehmann

Leipzig ol 1960 (11)



50. ♔ b6!

A lovely Trojan Horse.

50... ♕ g6?? 51. c6+! bxc6 52. ♕ xf2 ♔ d6 53. ♕ d2+ ♔ e5 54. ♕ c2 ½-½

Solution 53

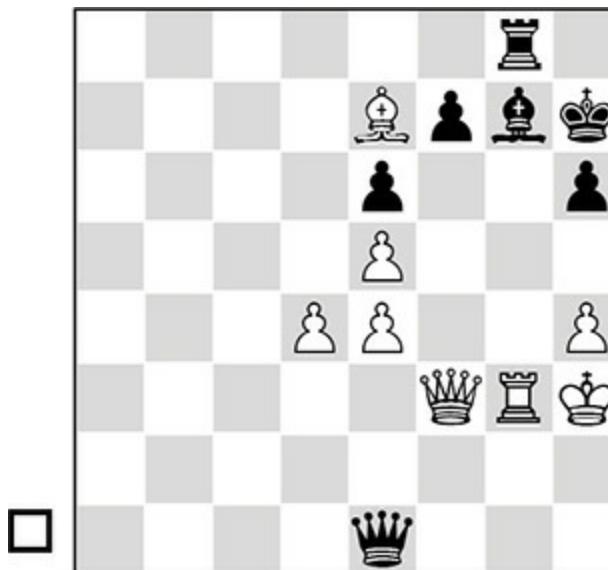
Zoltan Ribli

2590

Oleg Romanishin

2580

Novi Sad 1982



52. ♕g2 ♖f6!! 53. ♖xf6

53. ♜xg8 ♜xh4#; 53.exf6 ♜xg3+ 54. ♕xg3 ♜h1+.

53... ♜xg3+ 54. ♕xg3 ♜h1+ ½-½

Solution 54

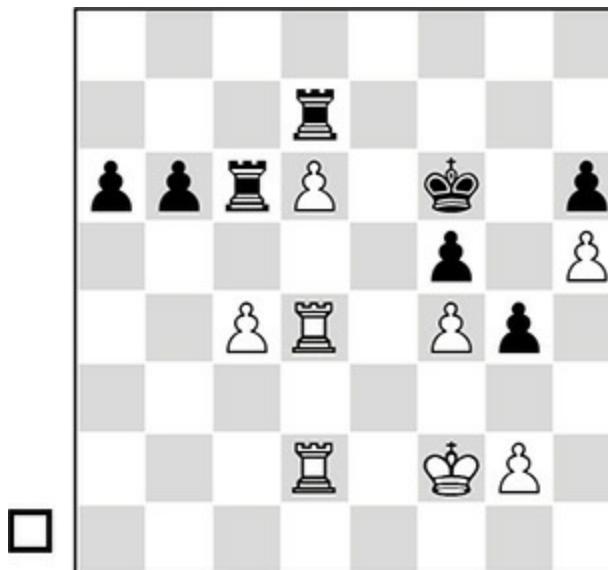
David Smerdon

2460

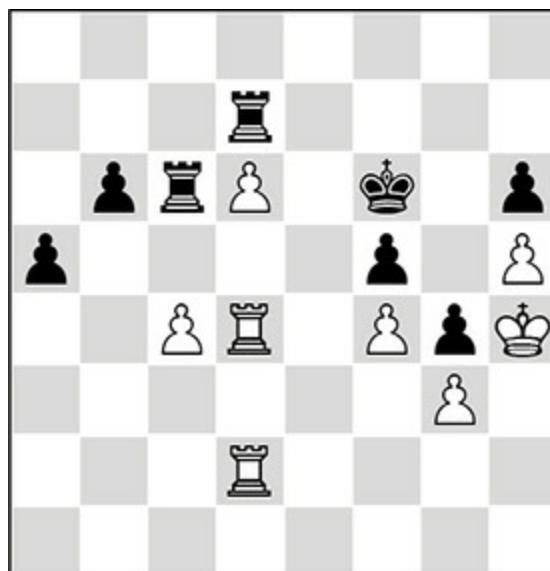
Sune Berg Hansen

2555

Turin ol 2006 (4)



39. ♕ g3! a5 40. ♕ h4! ♔ e6 41. g3 ♕ f6



42. c5! ♜ xc5 43. ♜ d5 ♜ c6 44. ♜ e5 ♜ c1 45. ♜ ee2 a4 46. ♜ c2 ♜ a1 47. ♜ a2 ♜ xa2 48. ♜ xa2 ♜ xd6



49. ♕ d2 ♕ e6 50. ♕ d6 a3 51. ♕ xe6+ ♔ xe6 ½-½

Solution 55

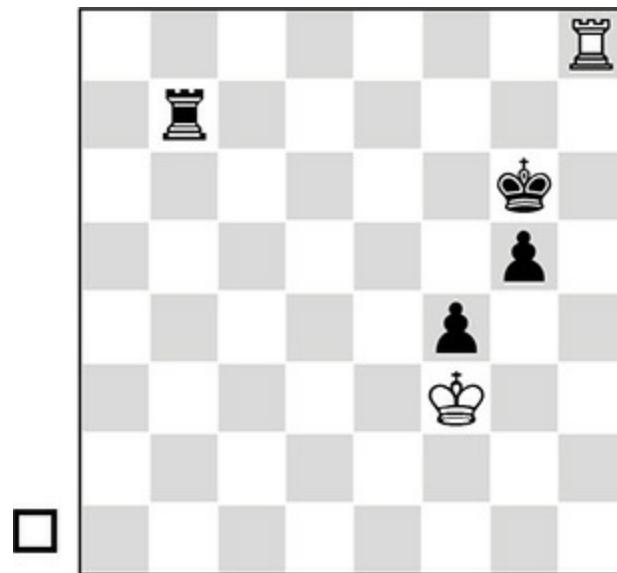
Jörg Hickl

2430

Stephen Solomon

2265

Thessaloniki ol 1988 (2)



63. $\mathbb{Q}g4!$

A nice decoy trap – if White had meant it! After

63... $\mathbb{R}b3??$ 64. $\mathbb{R}g8+$ $\mathbb{Q}f6$

Black had assumed White was intending 65. $\mathbb{R}xg5?$ when 65... $\mathbb{R}g3+$ wins the rook. But of course, you see it by now:

65. $\mathbb{R}g6+!$

draws, although this was missed by both players! Hickl played

65. $\mathbb{R}f8+??$

and there is an amusing story of what happened next. In those days, Olympiad games went to adjournment after the second time control, and Solomon, in an effort to safely analyse the win at home, wished to repeat moves and so sealed 65... $\mathbb{Q}g6??$. The game was adjourned, and the Australian team captain quietly told Solomon to maintain a satisfied expression and return immediately to his hotel room. For his part, Hickl assumed that Solomon had sealed either of the two winning moves (65... $\mathbb{Q}e7$ or 65... $\mathbb{Q}g7$) and resigned the next morning at breakfast, without resuming play. I suppose we must conclude that this is a case of a player swindling himself!

Solution 56

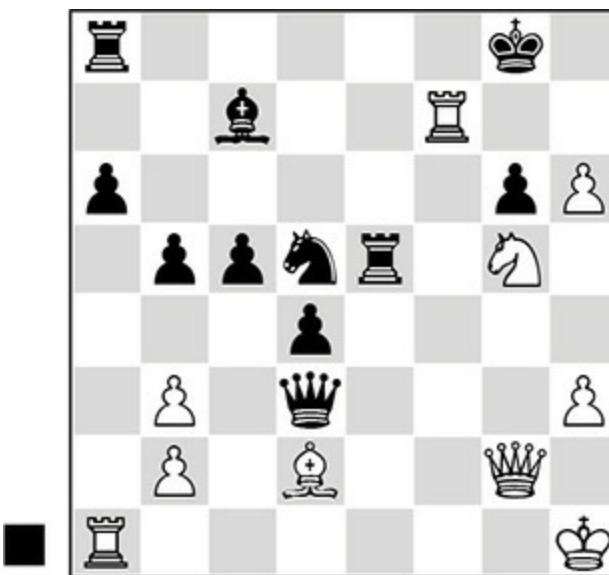
Jeff Britt

1841

Daniel Parmet

1889

Worral 2009 (4)



37... $\mathbb{Q}xg5!$ 38. $\mathbb{Q}g7+??$

Natural, but 38. $\mathbb{Q}xg5!$ $\mathbb{Q}xf7$ 39. $\mathbb{Q}xd5+$ is a clean win.

38... $\mathbb{Q}h8$ 39. $\mathbb{Q}xg5$ $\mathbb{Q}f8!$

Threatening ... $\mathbb{Q}f8-f3-h3$. Now 40. $\mathbb{Q}d7!$ wins, with the idea that 40... $\mathbb{Q}f3$ can be met by 41. $\mathbb{Q}e1!$.

Instead, the game continued

40. $\mathbb{Q}e1?$ $\mathbb{Q}g3!$ 41. $\mathbb{Q}xd5?$

41. $\mathbb{Q}e4!$

41... $\mathbb{Q}f1+!!$ 42. $\mathbb{Q}g2$ $\mathbb{Q}c2+!!$

42... $\mathbb{Q}f2+??$ 43. $\mathbb{Q}g1.$

43. $\mathbb{Q}xg3$ $\mathbb{Q}f2+$ 44. $\mathbb{Q}g4$ $\mathbb{Q}g1+$

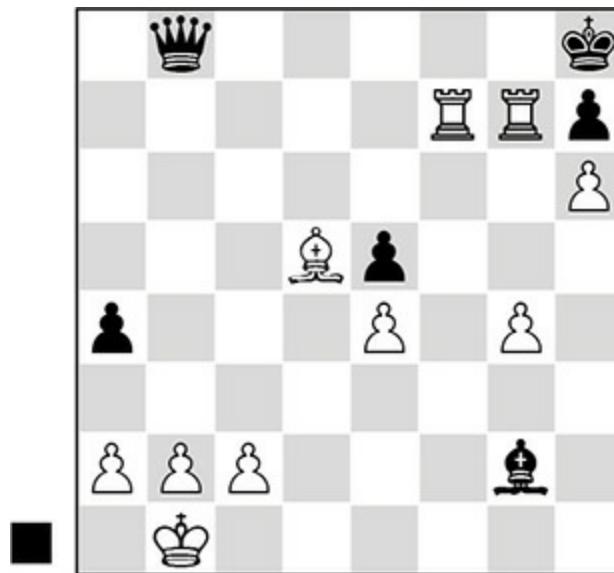
with a miraculous perpetual check.

Solution 57

Mikhail Tal

Manuel Aaron

Leipzig ol blitz 1960



42... ♜ xe4!

And now White wins with almost any move, such as 43. ♛ b7 or 43. ♛ a7. But the game finished

43. ♜ xe4?? ♜ xb2+! 44. ♜ xb2 a3+

with an unavoidable stalemate.

Solution 58

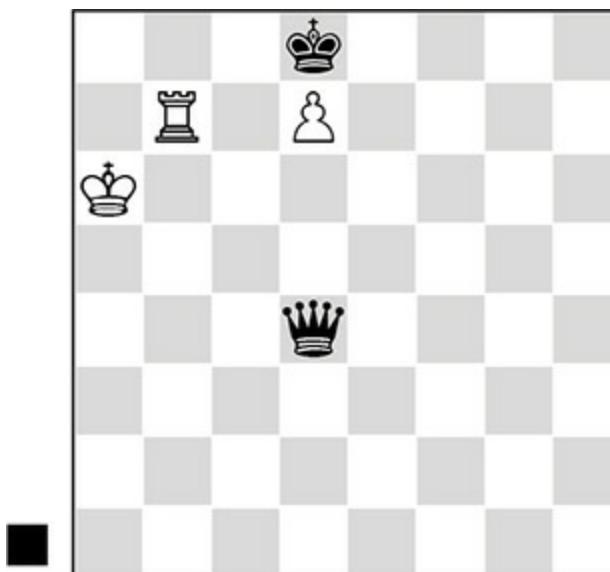
Le Quang Liem

2714

Fernando Peralta

2580

Douglas 2019 (4)



105... ♕c5?? 106. ♜b8+! ♔xd7 107. ♜b7+!

With a well-known drawing position. White will keep checking with his rook along the b-file, meeting ... ♕c8 with ♜b8+!! or ... ♕c6 with ♜c7+!!.

Peralta conceded to the draw immediately.

107... ♕c7 ½-½

Solution 59

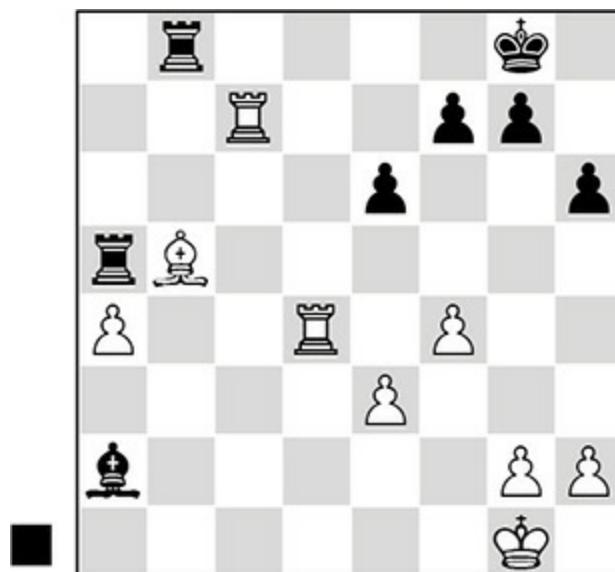
Adhiban Baskaran

2671

Jorden van Foreest

2609

Hoogeveen m 2017 (1)



27...e5!! 28.fxe5 ♕ axb5 29.axb5 ♕ xb5 30.♕ d8+ ♔ h7 31.♕ e7 ♔ e6

And the game was eventually drawn ($\frac{1}{2}-\frac{1}{2}$, 40).

Solution 60

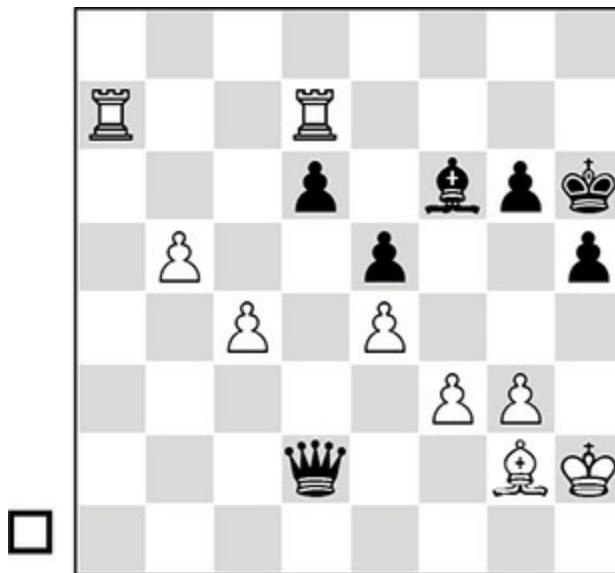
Bruce Holliday

1903

Hughston Parle

2054

Queensland 2017 (5)



After

44. \mathbb{Q} a6?? $\mathbb{h}4$ 45. \mathbb{Q} dxd6 $\mathbb{h}xg3+$ 46. \mathbb{Q} h3

The game continued

46... \mathbb{Q} g5! 47. \mathbb{Q} xf6 \mathbb{Q} h5! 48. \mathbb{Q} h1 \mathbb{Q} h4+ 49. \mathbb{Q} g2 \mathbb{Q} h2+ 50. \mathbb{Q} f1 \mathbb{Q} f2#

Solution 61

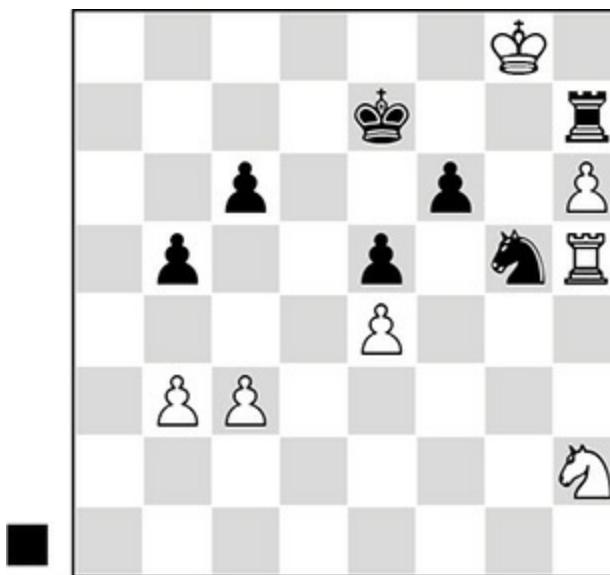
Claudiu Dobre

2387

Lucian Miron

2502

Calimanesti Caciulata ch-RO 2017 (4)



67... ♜ e6!! 68. ♛ xh7 ♕ f7 69. ♕ h8 ♜ f8 70. ♛ f5 ♜ g6+

With a surprising perpetual check.

Solution 62

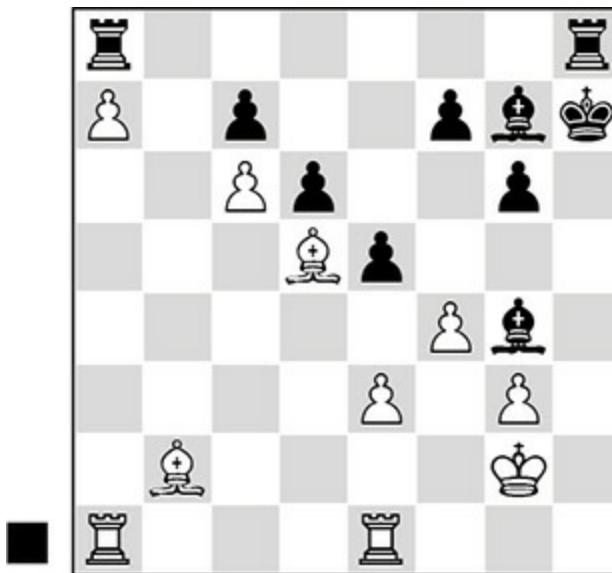
Weiliang Tan

2221

Junior Tay

2230

Melbourne rapid 2016



31...e4!!

An excellent practical try. Only 32. $\mathbb{Q}h1+$ wins for White. Instead, White instantly replied with the natural

32. $\mathbb{Q}xg7?$

and the game finished after

32... $\mathbb{Q}f3+!!$ 33. $\mathbb{Q}f2$ $\mathbb{Q}xg7$ 34. $\mathbb{Q}eb1?$

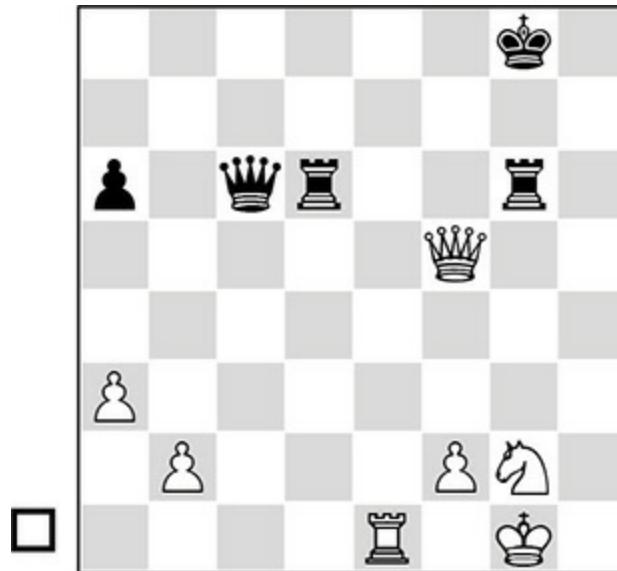
34. $\mathbb{Q}g1!$ offers the best survival chances.

34... $\mathbb{Q}h2+$ 35. $\mathbb{Q}f1$ $\mathbb{Q}ah8!$ 36. $\mathbb{Q}xe4$ $\mathbb{Q}xe4$ 37. $a8\mathbb{Q}$ $\mathbb{Q}h1+$ 38. $\mathbb{Q}e2$ $\mathbb{Q}8h2\#$

Solution 63

Constantin Lupulescu 2594
Stelios Halkias 2584

Dresden ol 2008 (10)



46. ♜ h3! ♕ xg2+?

Too impatient!

47. ♜ xg2+ ♕ g6 48. ♜ xg6+ ♕ xg6+ 49. ♜ f1 ♜ d3+ 50. ♜ g1 ♜ d2 51. ♜ e3 ♜ xb2 52. ♜ g2!

White's fortress is actually impregnable. Black tried for over 70 more moves, but White's defence held firm.

52... ♜ f7 53. ♜ g1 ♜ f6 54. ♜ g2 ♜ f5 55. ♜ g1

And drawn on move 124.

Solution 64

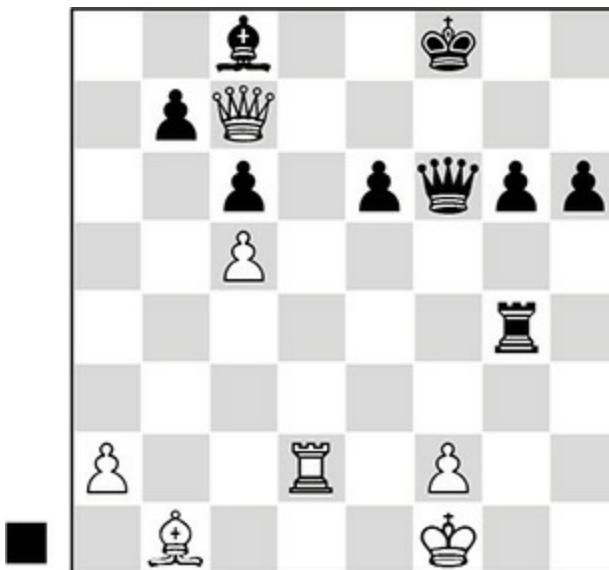
Arik Braun

2475

Sebastian Siebrecht

2487

Vienna 2005 (2)



35... ♕ g1+!? 36. ♔ e2?? ♜ d7!! 37. ♕ xd7 ♖ b2+ 38. ♕ d2 ♜ e1+!!

The game finished 38... ♜ b5+?? 39. ♔ f3 ♜ xb1 40. ♕ d8#.

39. ♔ xe1 ♜ xb1+

With a perpetual check.

Solution 65

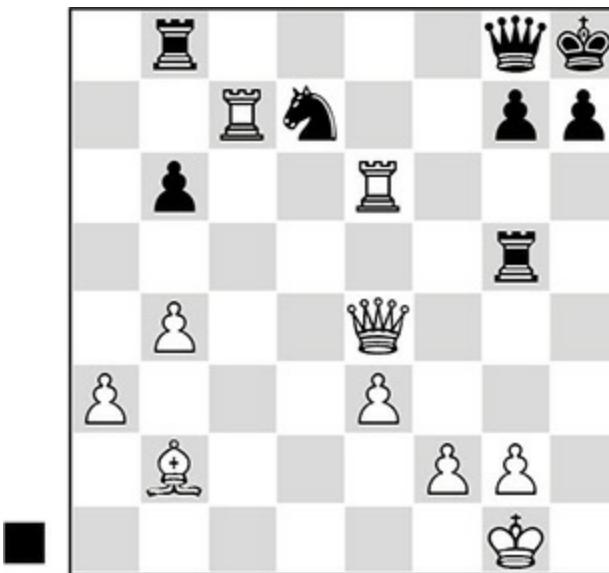
Vasily Ivanchuk

2739

Alexander Moiseenko

2665

Russia tt 2005 (9)



29... ♕ d8! 30. ♛ b7??

30. ♔ c2! stops all of Black's tricks.

30... ♜ f8!!

Introducing a perpetual-check motif via ... ♕ d8-d1+-h5+.

31. ♛ h6

31. ♔ d4 ♜ xe6 32. ♛ xb8 ♜ xb8 33. ♜ xe6 is roughly equal. 31. ♛ xb8 ♜ d1+ 32. ♜ h2 ♜ h5+ 33. ♜ g1 ♜ d1+ is the main idea.

31... ♛ xb7 32. ♜ xb7 ♜ d1+ 33. ♜ h2 ♜ h5+ 34. ♛ xh5 ♜ xh5+ 35. ♜ g3 ♜ g5+ 36. ♜ f3 ♜ f5+ ½-½

Solution 66

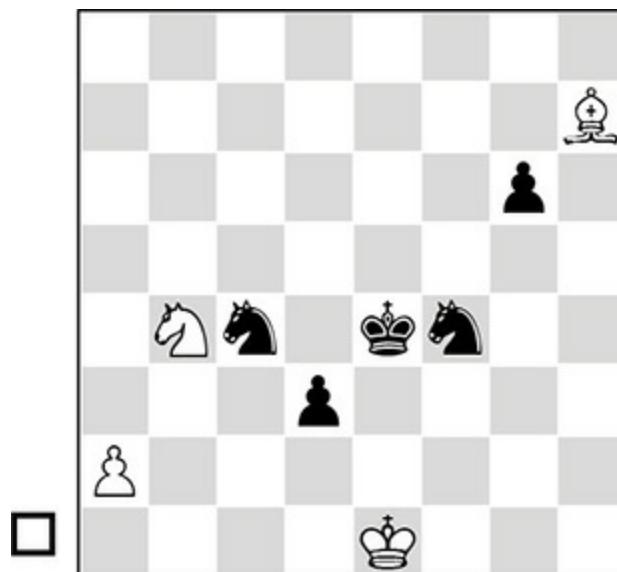
Tomas Sosa

2508

Pablo Cruz Lledo

2452

Roquetas de Mar 2020 (4)



47. ♜ xd3!!

47.a4? ♛ e3 48. ♜ xd3 ♜ xd3+ 49. ♜ f1 g5 is the engine's suggestion, but Black wins with care.

47... ♜ xd3

47... ♜ xd3+ 48. ♜ f1 ♜ de5 49.a4!.

48.a4 ♜ a5 49. ♜ f2 ♛ e4 50. ♜ g3 ♛ f5 51. ♜ f3 ♜ d5 52. ♜ xg6+ ♛ xg6 53. ♜ e4

And Black, understandably, was unable to win the tablebase endgame. The game was drawn in 49 more moves.

Solution 67

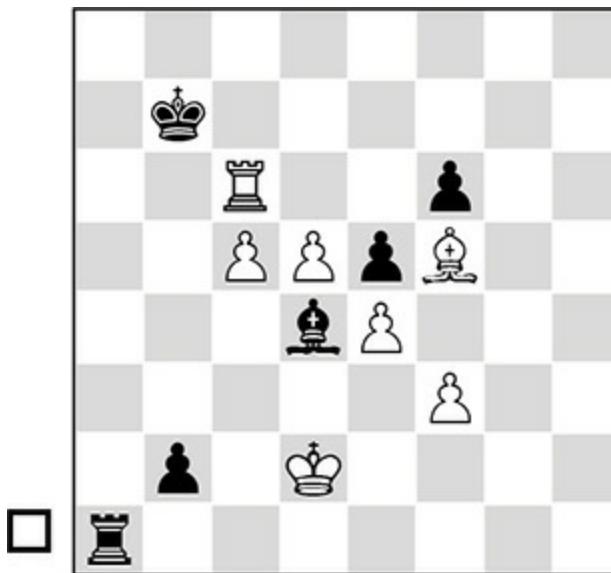
Stjepan Draganic

2112

Zdenko Plenkovic

2348

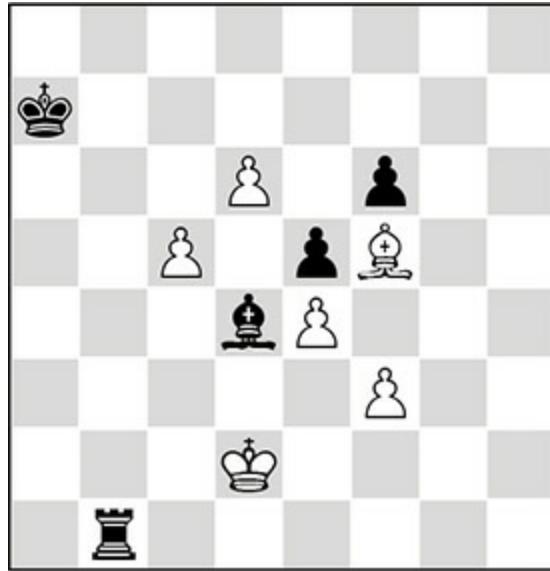
Bosnjaci 2020 (6)



73. $\mathbb{Q} b6+$!

The actual game went 73. $\mathbb{Q} c8+$ $\mathbb{Q} b8$ and White resigned.

73... $\mathbb{Q} a7$ 74. $d6$ $b1\mathbb{Q}$ 75. $\mathbb{Q} xb1$ $\mathbb{Q} xb1$



76. $c6!$

And Black must take a draw:

76... $\mathbb{Q} b2+$ 77. $\mathbb{Q} d3$

77. $\mathbb{Q} c1??$ $\mathbb{Q} b6$ 78. $c7$ $\mathbb{Q} c6+$ 79. $\mathbb{Q} d2$ $\mathbb{Q} b7$.

77... $\mathbb{Q} b3+$ 78. $\mathbb{Q} d2$

(78. $\mathbb{Q} e2??$ $\mathbb{Q} c3$ 79. $c7$ $\mathbb{Q} b7$) with a perpetual check, because

78... $\mathbb{Q} c3??$ 79. $d7!$

wins for White.

Solution 68

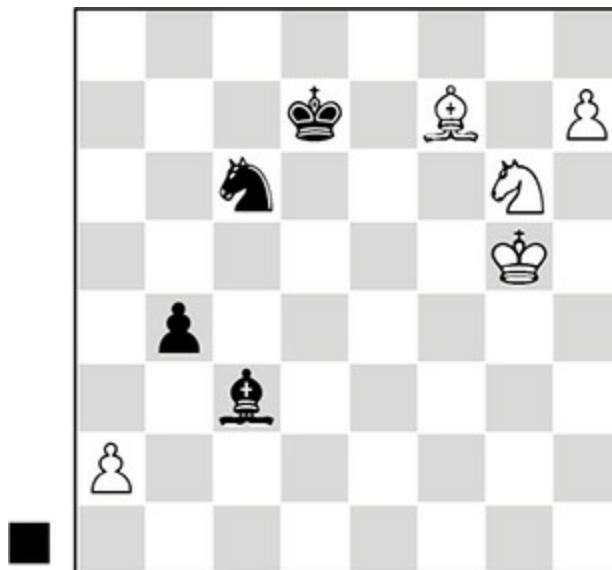
Sergei Zhigalko

2699

Vladislav Kovalev

2597

Moscow Wch Rapid 2019 (4)



56... ♕ e5!! 57. h8♕ ?

57.h8♕ ?? ♕ xf7+. But 57. ♕ e8+!! wins: 57... ♔ d6 58.h8♕ ♕ f3+ 59. ♔ f4 ♕ xh8 60. ♕ xh8 and the best Black can hope for is ♕+ ♕+ ♕ vs ♔.

57... ♕ xf7+ 58. ♕ xf7 ♔ e6!

And Black drew after

59. ♕ d8+ ♔ d5 60. ♕ b7 ♕ d2+ 61. ♔ f5 ♔ c4 62. ♕ e5+ ♔ c3 63. ♔ e4 b3 64. axb3 ♕ xb3

Solution 69

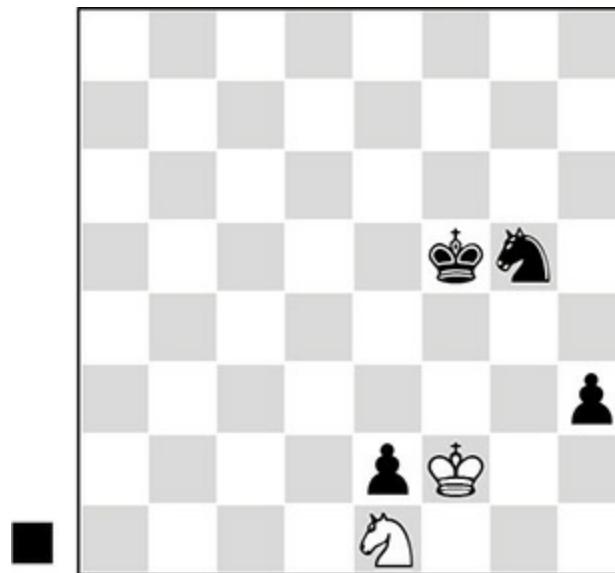
Mikhail Kobalia

2578

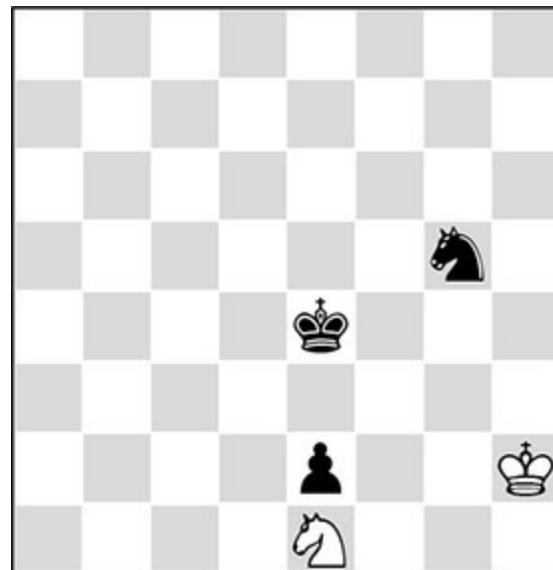
Bibek Thing

2026

Moscow Wch Rapid 2019 (1)



The answer is ‘Yes’, but only if Black is careful. In the game, White managed to escape after
87...h2 88.Qg2 Qe4 89.Qxh2



89...Qf3+??

89...Qe3!..

90.Qg3! Qxe1 91.Qf2! ½-½

Solution 70

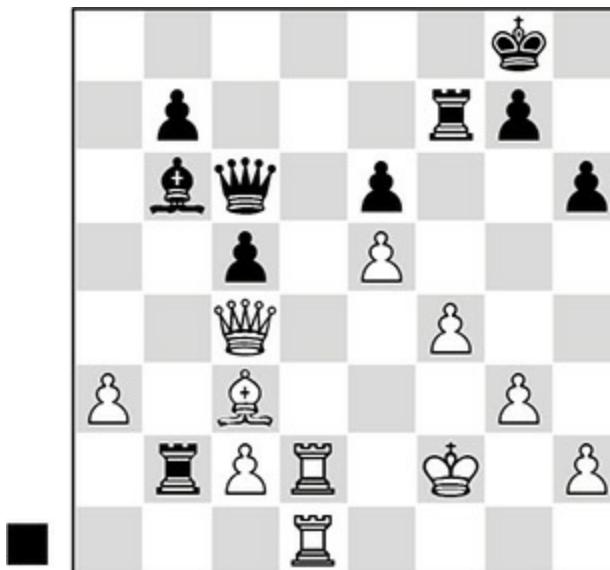
Vadim Moiseenko

2596

Diogo Duarte Guimaraes

2286

Moscow Wch Rapid 2019 (1)



35... ♜ b4!! 36. ♔ e2

36.axb4?? cxb4+ wins the white queen.

36... ♜ e4 37. ♔ f3 c4+ 38. ♔ g2

And now

38...g5!

with good compensation for the pawn.

Solution 71

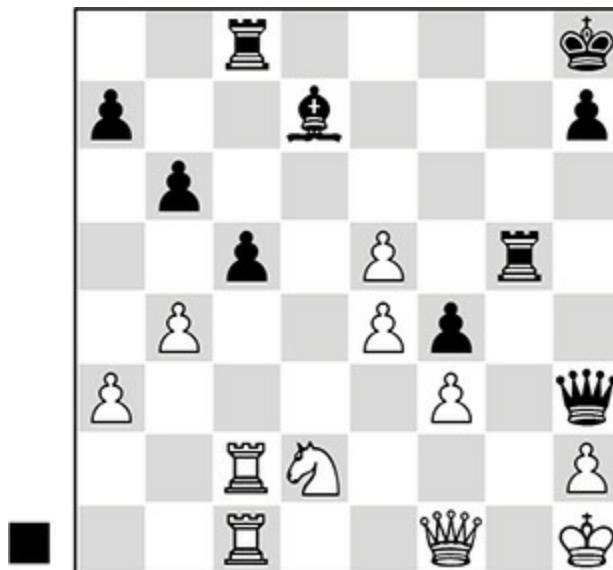
Igor Samarin

2355

Vladimir Antoshin

2340

Berdiansk 1985 (5)



35... ♜ xh2+ 36. ♛ xh2 ♕ cg8

Instead of resigning, White could have turned the tables with

37.e6! ♜ xe6 38. ♜ xc5!! bxc5 39. ♜ xc5 ♕ 5g6 40. ♜ h5

and White wins.

Solution 72

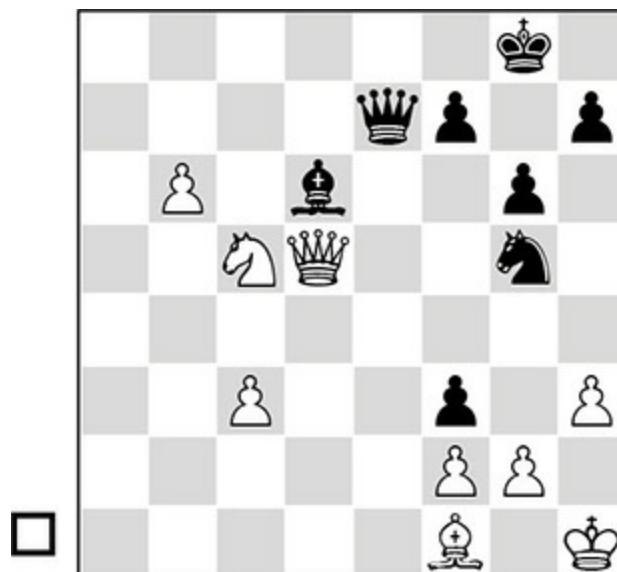
Evgeny Alekseev

2617

Rauf Mamedov

2709

Batumi Ech 2018 (11)



35.b7 ♕e1 36.♕g1 ♜xh3+!

And White resigned on account of

37.gxh3 ♜h2+!! 38.♕xh2 ♜xf2+ 39.♕h1 ♜xf1+ 40.♕h2 ♜g2#

Solution 73

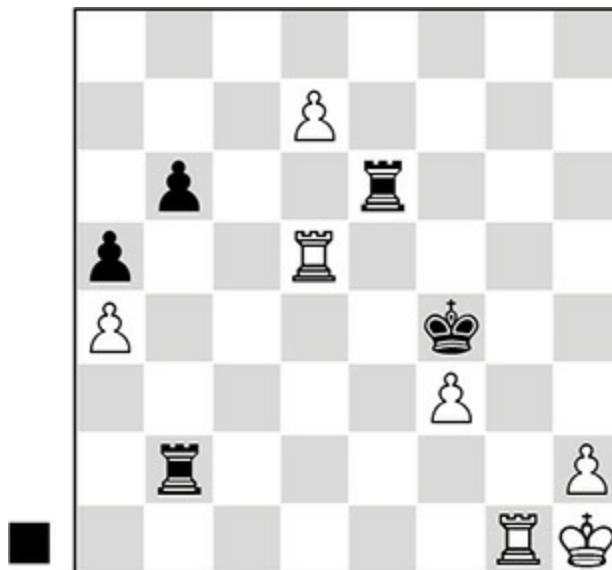
Alexandre Danin

2543

Romain Edouard

2640

Minsk Ech 2017 (9)



You may well have thought to threaten checkmate on h2, but this is rather obvious and, more importantly, is met by even more obvious refutations. In fact, both 60... $\mathbb{Q}e2$ and 60... $\mathbb{Q}h6$ lose to BOTH of White's natural responses (61. $\mathbb{Q}d4+$ or 61. $\mathbb{Q}g4+$) with minimal calculation required. Instead, Edouard tried

60... $\mathbb{Q}xf3!$

with the more subtle point that

61.d8 $\mathbb{Q}??$



loses to

61... $\mathbb{Q}xh2+!!$ 62. $\mathbb{Q}xh2$ $\mathbb{Q}h6+$

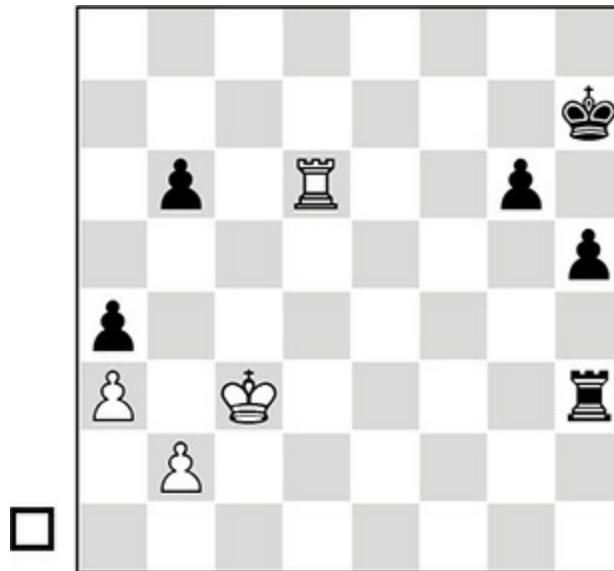
In the game, Danin was alert, and after 61. $\mathbb{Q}d3+$ Black resigned.

Solution 74

David Janowski

Ernst Grünfeld

Marienbad 1925 (9)



58. $\mathbb{Q} b4!$ $\mathbb{R} b3+$ 59. $\mathbb{Q} xa4$ $\mathbb{R} xb2??$ 60. $\mathbb{R} d7+$ $\mathbb{Q} h6$ 61. $\mathbb{R} h7+$ $\mathbb{Q} g5$ 62. $\mathbb{R} xh5+$ $\mathbb{Q} f6$ 63. $\mathbb{R} f5+$ $\mathbb{Q} g7$ 64. $\mathbb{R} f7+$ $\mathbb{Q} h6$ 65. $\mathbb{R} h7+$ $\mathbb{Q} g5$ 66. $\mathbb{R} h5+$ $gxh5$ $\frac{1}{2}-\frac{1}{2}$

Solution 75

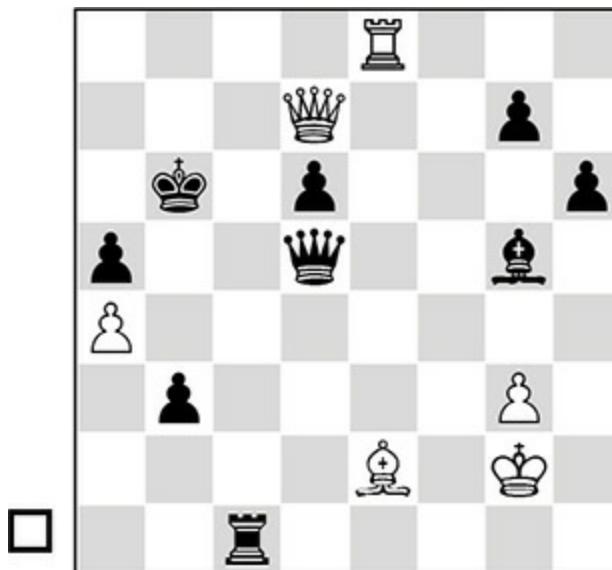
Dmitry Frolyanov

2587

Ian Nepomniachtchi

2706

Irkutsk 2010 (7)



45. $\mathbb{Q}f3!$ $\mathbb{R}c2+$ 46. $\mathbb{Q}h3!$ $\mathbb{Q}xf3$ 47. $\mathbb{Q}b5+$

47. $\mathbb{R}b8+$ $\mathbb{Q}c5$ 48. $\mathbb{R}b5+$ $\mathbb{Q}d4$ 49. $\mathbb{Q}xd6+$ $\mathbb{Q}c3$ 50. $\mathbb{R}xb3+!$ $\mathbb{Q}xb3$ 51. $\mathbb{Q}a3+$ also draws.

47... $\mathbb{Q}c7$ 48. $\mathbb{R}c8+$ $\mathbb{Q}xc8$ 49. $\mathbb{Q}d7+$ $\mathbb{Q}b8$ 50. $\mathbb{Q}a7+$ $\mathbb{Q}c8$ 51. $\mathbb{Q}d7+$ $\mathbb{Q}xd7$ $1\frac{1}{2}-1\frac{1}{2}$

Solution 76

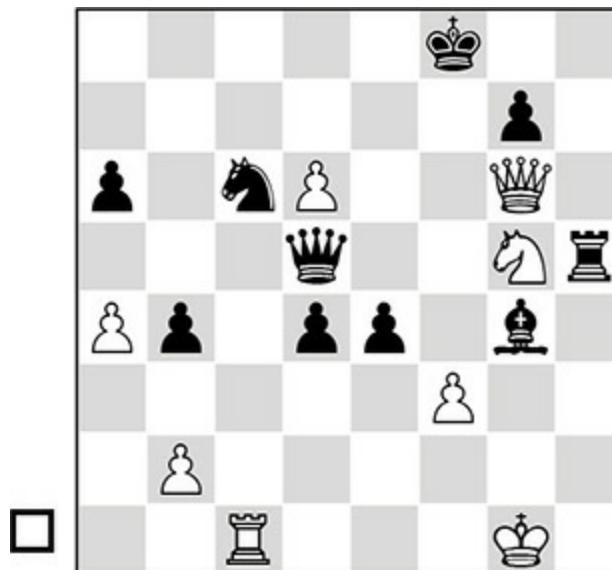
Mark Hebden

2585

Matthew Sadler

2650

Torquay ch-GBR 1998 (10)



In the game, Hebden found the creative

35. $\mathbb{Q}h7+!! \mathbb{N}xh7$ 36. $fxe4!$

leading to a situation where Sadler's nerves could play a role. And as history will tell us, that's what happened:

36... $\mathbb{Q}e5??$

Black could have won in different ways, including 36... $\mathbb{Q}e5!$ 37. $\mathbb{N}f1+$ $\mathbb{Q}f3$ and 36... $\mathbb{Q}h5$ 37. $\mathbb{N}f1+$ $\mathbb{Q}g8.$

37. $\mathbb{N}f1+$ 1-0

Solution 77

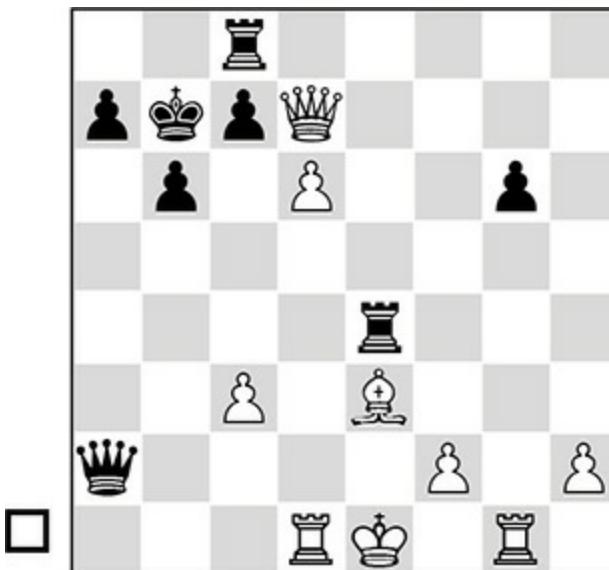
Le Quang Liem

2488

Maxim Rodshtain

2494

Budapest 2006 (11)



28. $\blacksquare xg6?!$ $\blacksquare xe3+!$ 29. $f \times e3$ $\blacksquare f8!$



An attack out of nowhere. It's not enough to save the game, but such shocks can have a lasting effect on an opponent's psyche. Le Quang Liem regathered to find the only winning continuation:

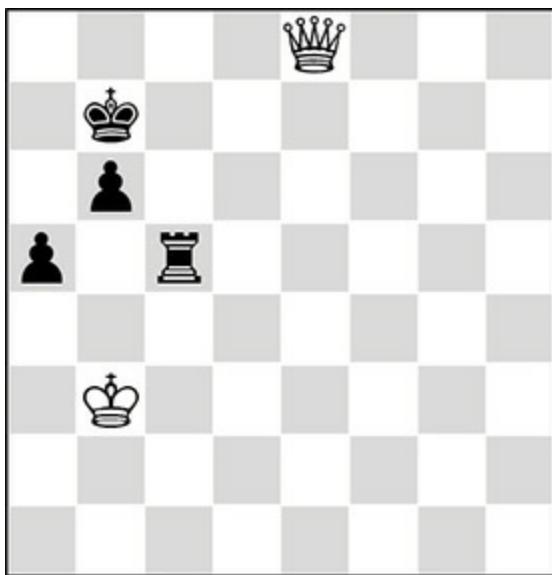
30. $\blacksquare xc7+!$ $\blacksquare a6$ 31. $\blacksquare g2!$ $\blacksquare xg2$ 32. $\blacksquare c4+$ $\blacksquare b7$ 33. $\blacksquare d5+$ $\blacksquare xd5$ 34. $\blacksquare xd5$

But the psychological after-effects persisted in this technical ending and Rodshtain managed to hold the draw with a second swindle later in the game:

34... $\blacksquare c6$ 35. $\blacksquare d4$ $\blacksquare d7$ 36. $\blacksquare e2$ $a5$ 37. $h4$ $\blacksquare f5$ 38. $\blacksquare d3$ $\blacksquare h5$ 39. $c4$ $\blacksquare h8$ 40. $\blacksquare c3$ $\blacksquare h5$ 41. $\blacksquare b3$ $\blacksquare e5$ 42. $e4$ $\blacksquare h5$ 43. $\blacksquare a4$ $\blacksquare c5$ 44. $\blacksquare b3$ $\blacksquare h5$ 45. $\blacksquare d5$ $\blacksquare xh4$ 46. $e5$ $\blacksquare e4!$ 47. $\blacksquare a3??$



47... ♜ xc4!! 48.e6+ ♛ xe6 49.d7 ♛ xd5 50.d8♕+ ♛ c6! 51.♕ e8+ ♛ b7 52.♕ b3 ♜ c5



And Black's fortress held:

53. ♔ e7+ ♛ b8 54. ♔ a4 ♛ a8 55. ♔ d8+ ♛ b7 56. ♔ d7+ ♛ b8 ½-½

Solution 78

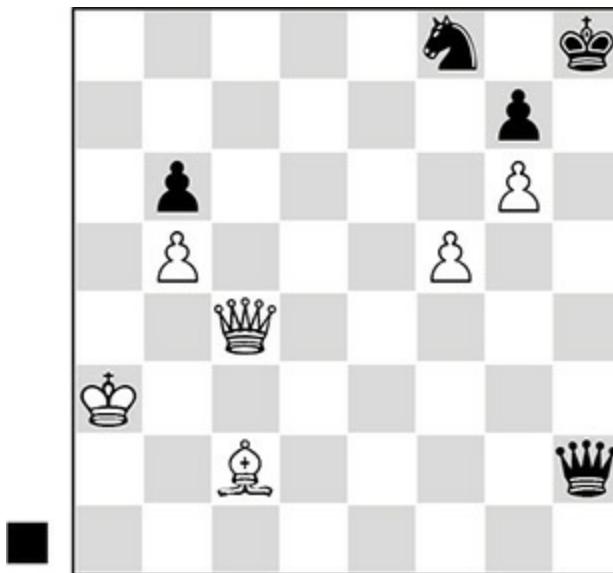
Mads Andersen

2499

Robin van Kampen

2618

Warsaw Ech-tt 2013 (4)



55... ♜ d6+!

55... ♜ xg6? 56. ♜ c8++-.

56. ♜ a4??

56. ♜ b4! wins slowly but surely. White, however, is too impatient.

56... ♜ xg6!!

Now that f8 is covered, the stalemate trick works.

57. ♜ e4

57. fxg6 ♜ a3+=.

57... ♜ e5 58. f6 g6 59. ♜ f4 ♜ g8 60. ♜ b3+ ♜ f8 61. ♜ h6+ ♜ e8 62. ♜ h8+ ♜ d7 63. ♜ g7+ ♜ d8 64. ♜ g8+ ♜ d7 65. ♜ h7+ ♜ d8 66. ♜ h8+ ♜ c7 67. ♜ g7+ ½-½

Solution 79

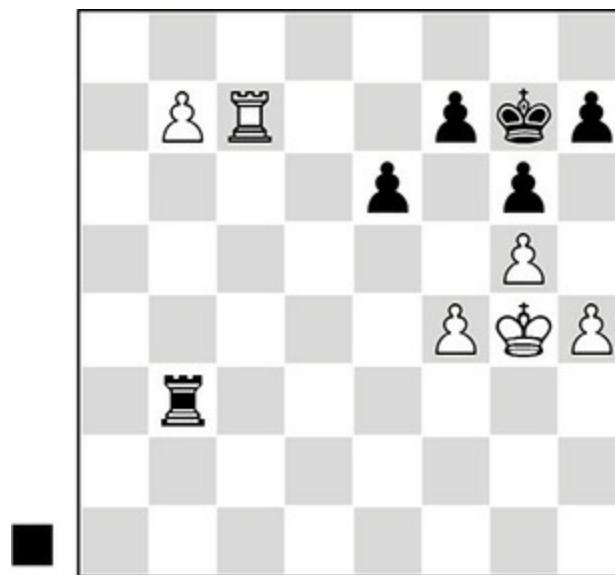
Ian Rogers

2540

Fabio Bellini

2280

Mendrisio 1988 (8)



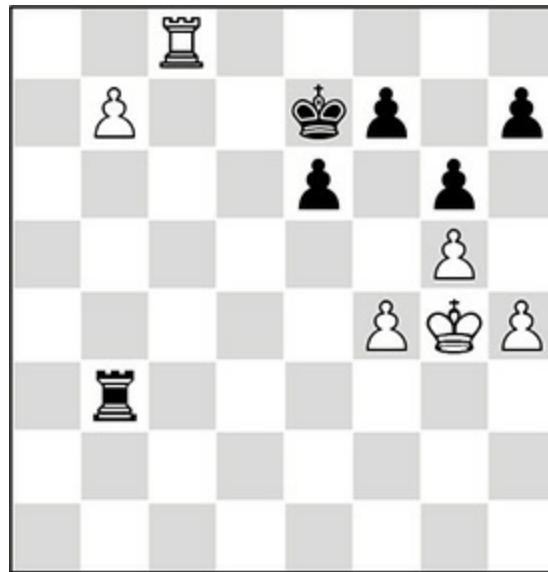
48... ♕ f8!!

As stated, this can be met by the apparently decisive

49. ♖ c8+

but there is more to this story:

49... ♕ e7!!



Would Rogers have realised in time that his best here is 50. ♖ c7+ with a draw? I suspect so. But many a player would surely have been less astute and reached out for a new queen, suffering years of therapy bills as a result.

50.b8♕ ?? h5+ 51.gxh6 f5+ 52.♕ g5 ♖ g3#

Solution 80

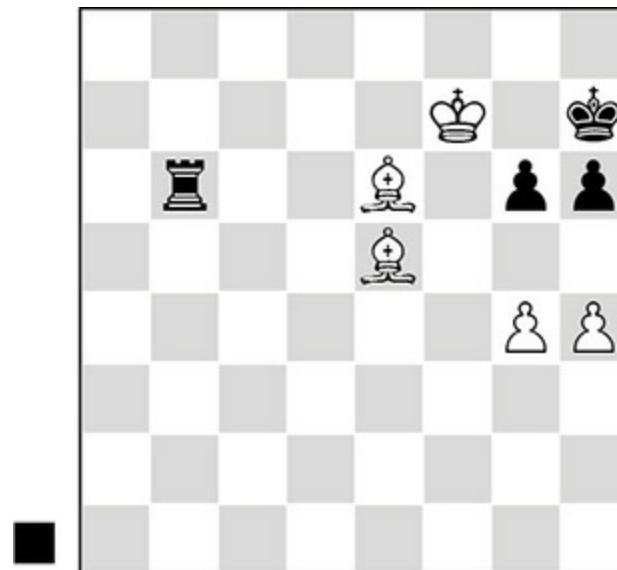
Vasily Smyslov

2550

Leslie Blackstock

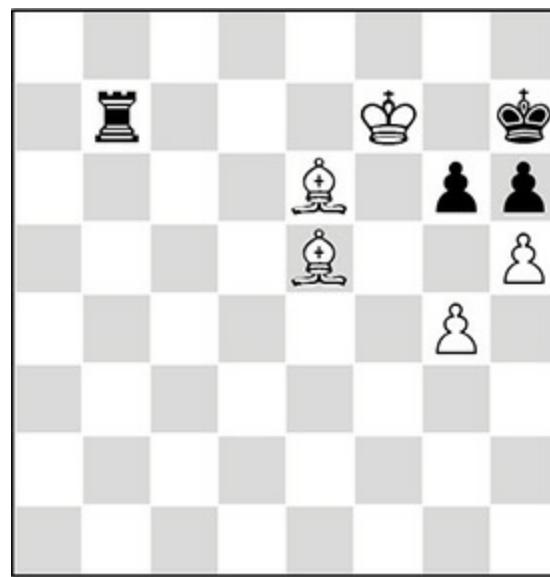
2260

London 1988



61...h5!!

The game continued 61... $\mathbb{R}b5$ 62.h5! $\mathbb{R}b7+$ and Black resigned.



analysis diagram

Suddenly, stalemate and fortress possibilities are in the air.

62.gxh5

62.g5 $\mathbb{R}b7+$ 63. $\mathbb{Q}f8$ $\mathbb{R}f7+!$ 64. $\mathbb{Q}e8$ $\mathbb{R}e7+!$.

62... $\mathbb{R}b7+!$ 63. $\mathbb{Q}f6$ gxh5

And thanks to the presence of rook-pawns coupled with some neat stalemate themes, Black holds the draw. For example:

64. $\mathbb{Q}g5$

64. $\mathbb{Q}f5+$ $\mathbb{Q}g8$ 65. $\mathbb{Q}g6$ $\mathbb{R}b6+$ 66. $\mathbb{Q}f6$ $\mathbb{R}xf6+=$; 64. $\mathbb{Q}d4$ $\mathbb{R}b4$ 65. $\mathbb{Q}f5+$ $\mathbb{Q}g8$ 66. $\mathbb{Q}f2$ $\mathbb{R}f4$ and

Black will continue to chase the dark-squared bishop.

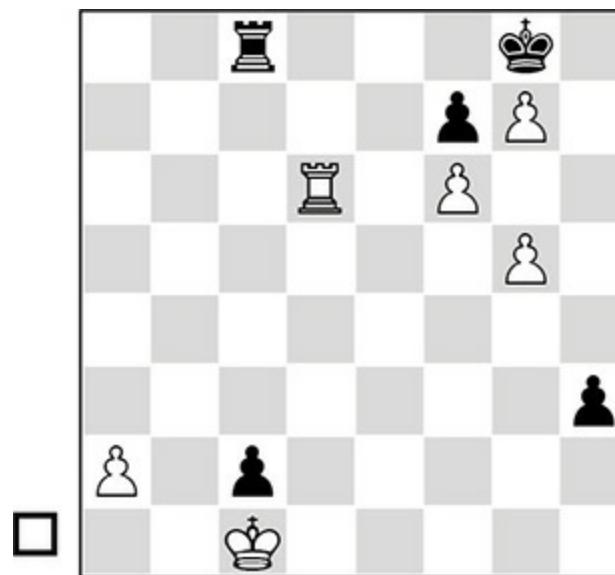
64... ♕ g7+!! 65. ♘ xh5 ♕ g5+!=

Solution 81

Zherdev

Baranov

Moscow 1950



48. ♜d4!,

intending ♜d4-h4-h8#. E.g.

48...h2 49. ♜h4

and 50. ♜h8#.

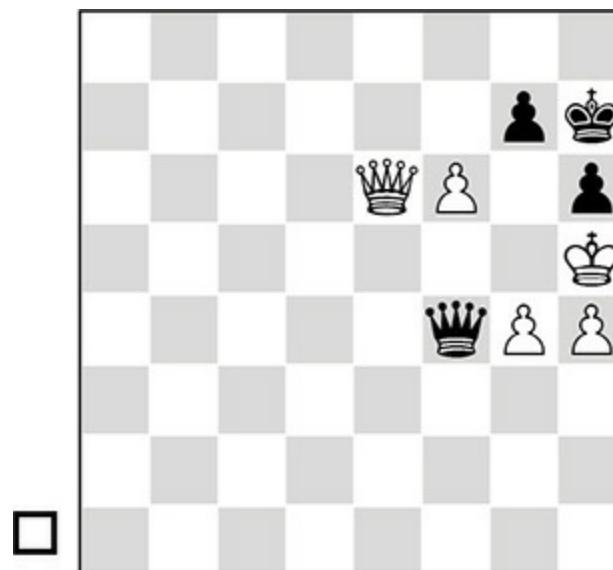
The game continued 48. ♜d3? ♜b8 49. ♛xc2 (49. ♜xh3 ♜b1+ 50. ♛xc2 ♜b2+ (50... ♜c1+? 51. ♛b3 ♜b1+ 52. ♛a3 ♜b3+ 53. ♜xb3) 51. ♛c3 ♜b3+) 49...h2! 50. ♜h3 h1†! 51. ♜xh1 ♜b2+!. This activates the desperado rook. White cannot take the rook on account of the stalemate and so it follows the king all over the board, endlessly offering itself up as a sacrifice.

Solution 82

Scherbakov

Arlazarov

Mingara 1972



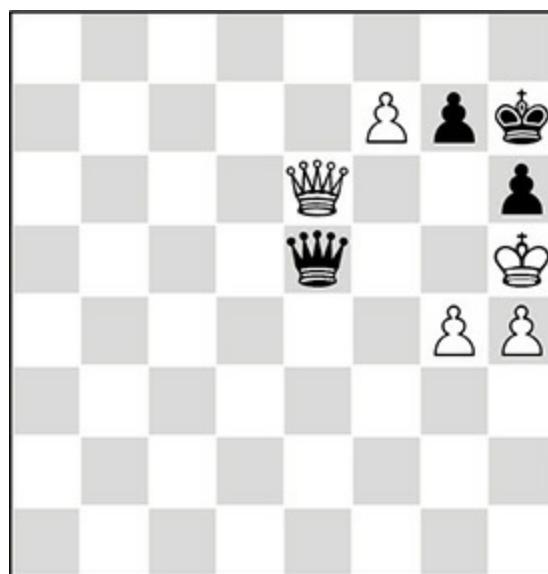
1.fxg7??

was the game continuation, and after

1... ♕f7+!!

White had to cede the draw.

Instead, there were two wins available. Boo to you if you found the prosaic 1. ♔f5+! ♕xf5+ 2. gxf5 gxf6 3. ♔g4, with a textbook win. You've earned your point, but you missed the brilliancy prize on offer after 1.f7!! ♕e5+! (did you spot this?)



analysis diagram

2.g5!! (2. ♔xe5 g6#) 2... ♕xe6 3.f8♕+!!, with thundering applause.

As Van Perlo wrote in his annotations to this missed opportunity, ‘It’s enough to lie awake for weeks!’

Solution 83

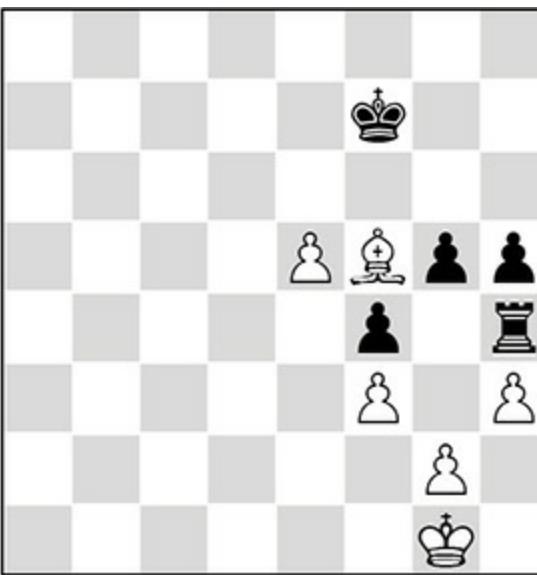
Ari Dale

2061

Junta Ikeda

2309

Golden Coast 2012 (4)



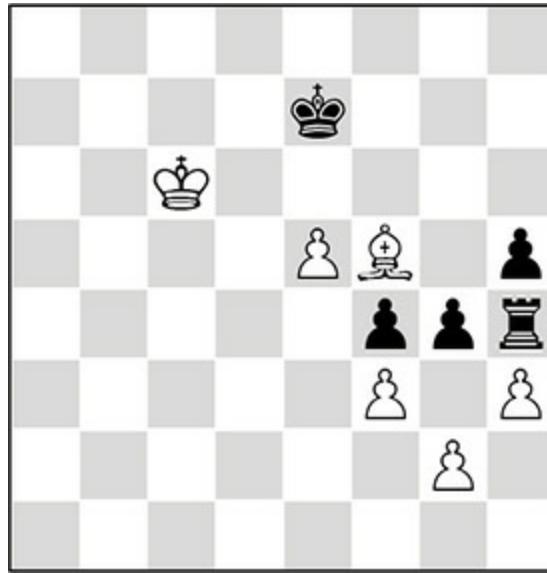
61... \mathbb{Q} e7 62. \mathbb{Q} f2 \mathbb{Q} d8 63. \mathbb{Q} e2 \mathbb{Q} e7 64. \mathbb{Q} d3 \mathbb{Q} f7 65. \mathbb{Q} e4 \mathbb{Q} e7 66. \mathbb{Q} d5

Impressive patience by Black. And now the game can be saved.

66...g4!

A draw should now result after 67.hxg4 hxg4 68. \mathbb{Q} xg4 \mathbb{Q} h8!. But White sees no reason to let Black's rook out of his cage.

67. \mathbb{Q} c6??



67... \mathbb{Q} xh3!

A dramatic reversal. The rook breaks free with devastating effect.

68.fxg4 \mathbb{Q} c3+ 69. \mathbb{Q} d5 f3 70.gxf3 h4 71. \mathbb{Q} e4 h3 72.f4 \mathbb{Q} g3 73.g5 \mathbb{Q} g4 74.g6 \mathbb{Q} xf4 75.e6 \mathbb{Q} xe4 76. \mathbb{Q} xe4 h2 77.g7 h1 \mathbb{Q} + 78. \mathbb{Q} f5 \mathbb{Q} h7+ 0-1

Another Ikeda Special.

Solution 84

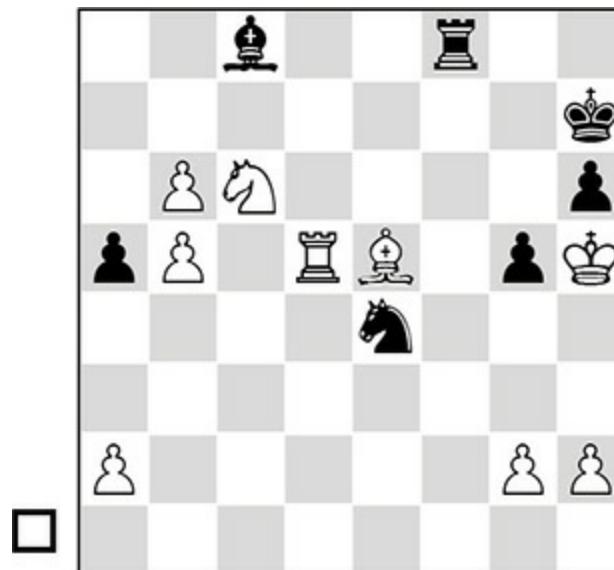
Alexander Chua

2250

Daniel Schwarz

2250

Chicago 2006 (6)



40.b7!?

Black now has one, but only one, path to victory: the spectacular 40... $\mathbb{Q}f4!$, with mate to follow. If the game had ended this way, White could be satisfied that at least he took his chance. A better outcome would have been if Black had been scared into taking a perpetual with 40... $\mathbb{Q}e6$ 41.b8 $\mathbb{Q}f7+$. But as it transpired, however, White got even more than that.

40... $\mathbb{Q}f5??$

Setting his own trap: 41.b8 \mathbb{Q} $\mathbb{Q}g6+$ 42. $\mathbb{Q}g4$ h5 mates. But...

41. $\mathbb{Q}d6!!$

And from winning to losing just a few moves ago, White has finally swindled his way back to victory. The game finished

41... $\mathbb{Q}xd6$ 42. $\mathbb{Q}xd6$ $\mathbb{Q}d3$ 43. $\mathbb{Q}xf8$ $\mathbb{Q}e2+$ 44.g4 $\mathbb{Q}c4$

One last trick!

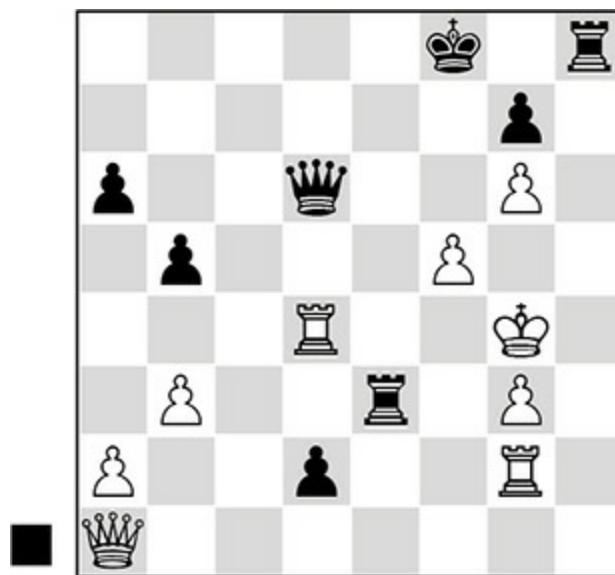
45. $\mathbb{Q}xh6$ 1-0

Solution 85

Demina

Rozenfeld

Soviet Union 1985



1... ♕e4+?

1...d1 ♔+! 2. ♔xd1 ♕e4+ 3. ♕xe4 ♔xd1+ 4. ♕ge2 ♔d7.

2. ♕xe4 d1 ♔ + 3. ♕ge2!!

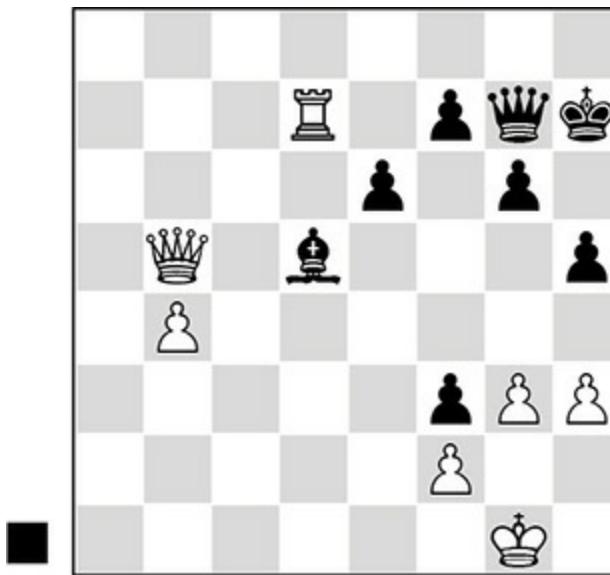
And White wins.

Solution 86

Vahagn Voskanyan

Yochanan Afek

Paris 1994 (9)



47...h4! 48.g4?? ♜ c6!! 49. ♜ xc6 ♜ a1+ 50. ♜ d1

Or 50. ♜ h2 ♜ e5+ 51. ♜ g1 ♜ e1+ 52. ♜ h2 ♜ xf2+ 53. ♜ h1 ♜ g2#.

50... ♜ xd1+ 51. ♜ h2 ♜ e2 53. ♜ c5 ♜ f1

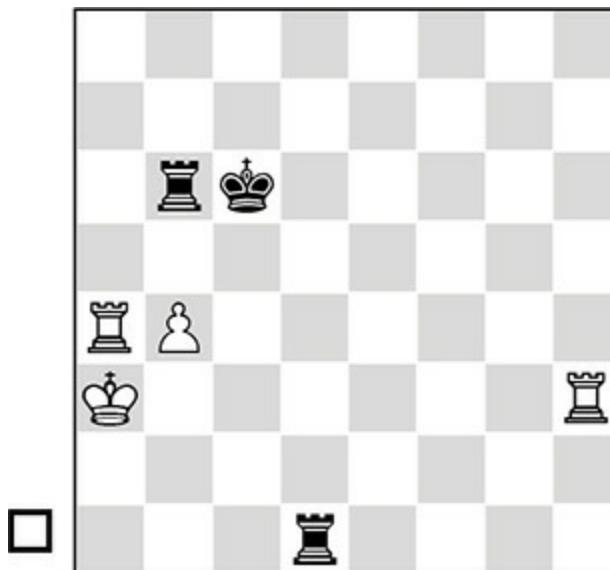
And White cannot avoid mate.

Solution 87

Ladislav Prokes

Janos Balogh

The Hague ol 1928 (3)



65. ♕ b3 ♜ b1+ 66. ♕ c3 ♜ c1+ 67. ♕ b2 ♕ b5 68. ♜ a5+! ♕ xb4 69. ♜ ha3!! 1-0

Solution 88

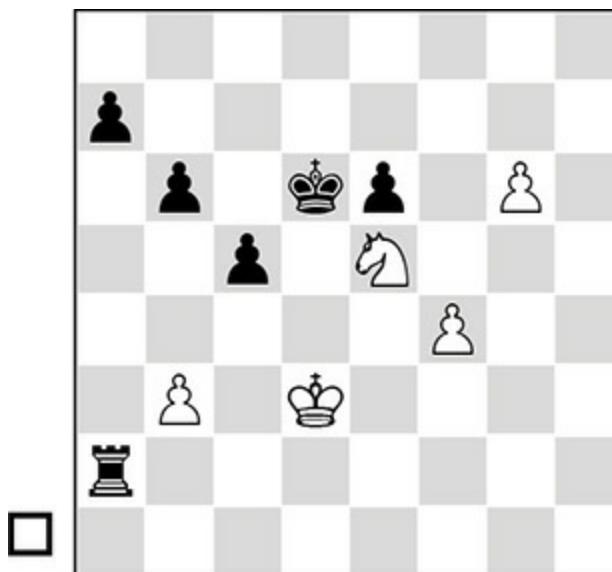
Mihail Saltaev

2484

Stefan Docx

2334

Belgium tt 2003/04 (6)



45. ♜ e4!

Clever. Black spots the option to eliminate the thorn on e5 and save himself some work.

45... ♜ e2+?? 46. ♜ f3 ♜ xe5

Expecting 47. fxe5+ ♜ e7, which is trivially won.

47. g7!!

Turning the tables.

47... ♜ d5 48. g8 ♜ d3+ 49. ♜ e4 ♜ xb3 50. ♜ b8+ ♜ c6 51. ♜ xa7 ♜ b1 52. ♜ e7 ♜ e1+ 53. ♜ d3 ♜ d1+ 54. ♜ e3 ♜ d6
55. ♜ e4 1-0

Solution 89

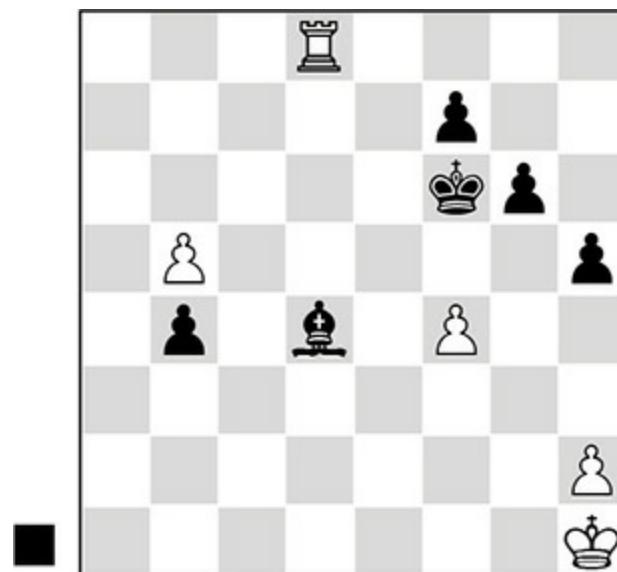
Shardul Gagare

2470

Wei Yi

2730

Doha 2015 (1)



Wei Yi could have caused his lower-rated opponent at least a few palpitations with 53... $\mathbb{Q}b6!!$, forcing White to calculate. There's still a win with 54. $\mathbb{R}c8$ or 54. $\mathbb{R}d1$, though with a bit more technical work to be done. Instead, the natural

54. $\mathbb{R}d6+$ $\mathbb{Q}e7$ 55. $\mathbb{R}xb6??$ b3!

leads to a comical scenario in which White's own pawn combines with the black forces to block the white rook's retreat. White has to take a perpetual:

56. $\mathbb{R}b7+$ $\mathbb{Q}d6$ 57. $\mathbb{R}b6+$ $\mathbb{Q}d7$

Solution 90

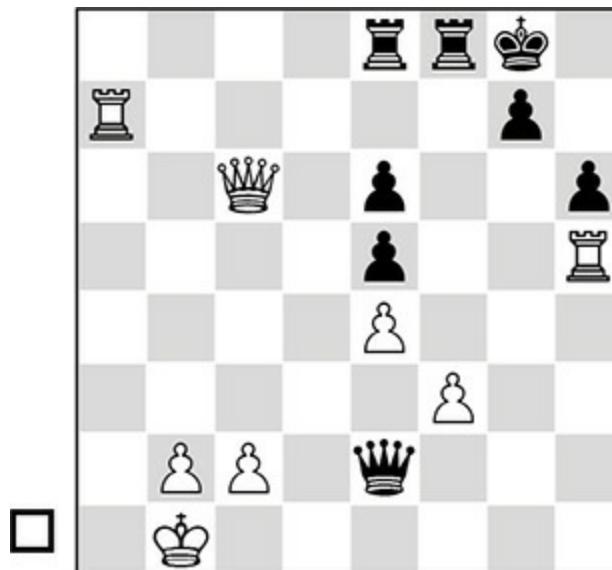
Friso Nijboer

2540

Anish Giri

2466

Groningen 2008 (8)



35. $\mathbb{R} g5!!$ $\mathbf{hxg5}$ 36. $\mathbb{R} c7!$
is a lovely winning tactic.

Solution 91

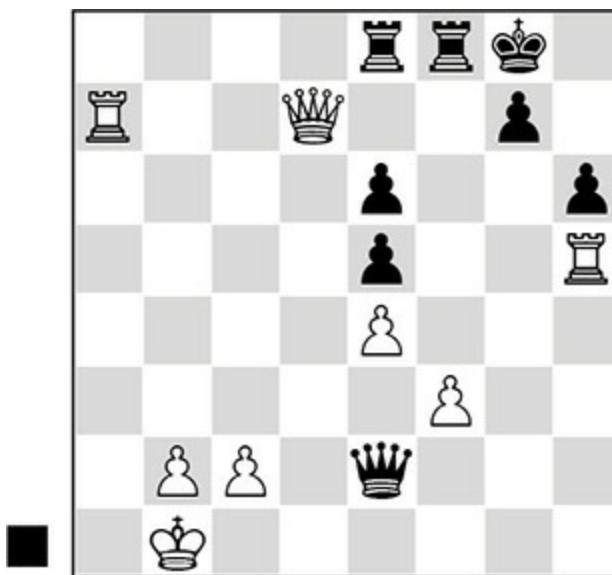
Friso Nijboer

2540

Anish Giri

2466

Groningen 2008 (8)



35... ♜g2!

Now White can draw with 36. ♜xe5, but Nijboer thinks he sees a better capture.

36. ♜xh6?? ♜g1+ 37. ♜a2 ♜xa7+!

And White resigned without waiting for 38. ♜xa7 ♜a8!.

Solution 92

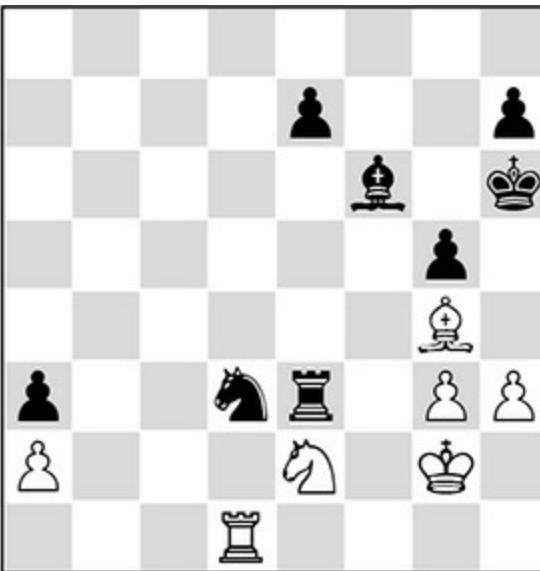
Alexander Betaneli

2252

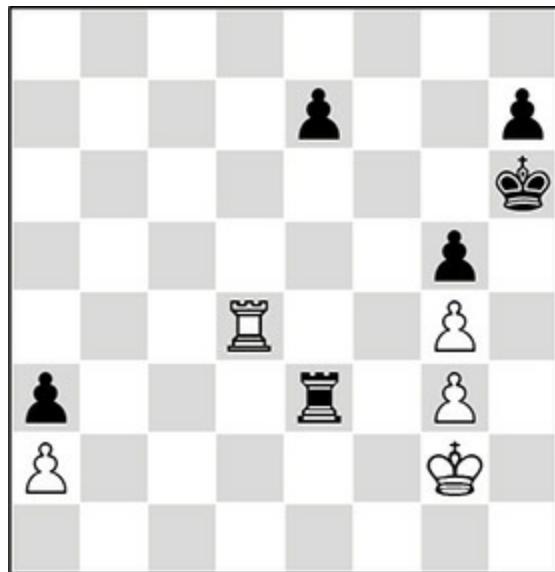
Gata Kamsky

2661

Sitges 2016 (1)



37... ♜ e5 38. ♜ d4 ♜ xg4 39. hxg4 ♜ xd4 40. ♜ xd4



Indeed, it is winning, but only if Black carefully continues with
40... ♛ g6!

Instead, in the game Black fell for the natural 40... ♜ e2+?? and only after White's surprise reply 41. ♛ h3!! did the multiple-time US Champion realise he'd been swindled. After 41... ♜ xa2 42. ♜ d6+ ♛ g7 43. ♜ g6+!, the rampant rook secures the draw. Kamsky instead tried 41... ♜ e3 but after 42. ♜ d2! ♛ g6 43. ♜ e2! he had to concede the draw anyway.

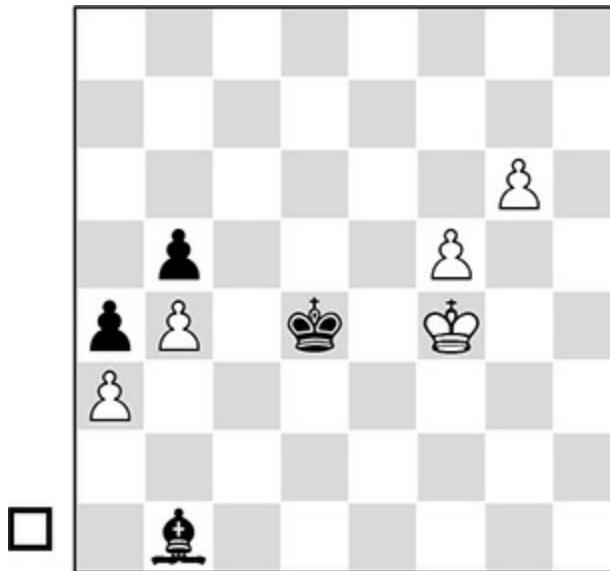
Solution 93

Amatzia Avni

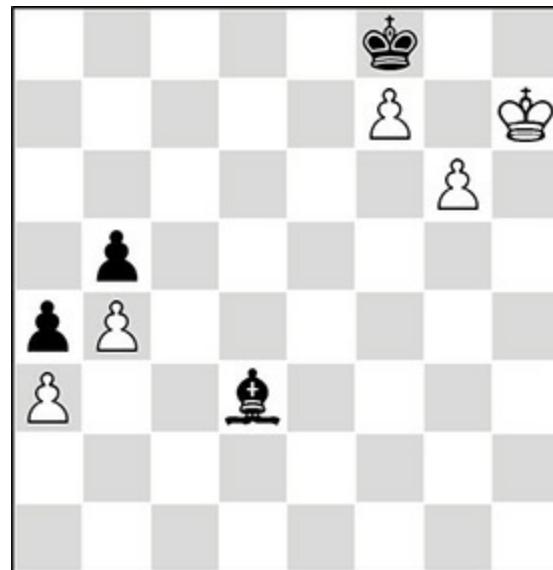
Itchak Radashkovich

2425

Tel Aviv ch-ISR 1978 (9)



48. ♔ g5! ♕ e5 49. f6 ♕ e6 50. f7 ♕ e7 51. ♔ h6 ♕ f8 52. ♔ h7 ♙ d3



53. ♔ h8!! ½-½

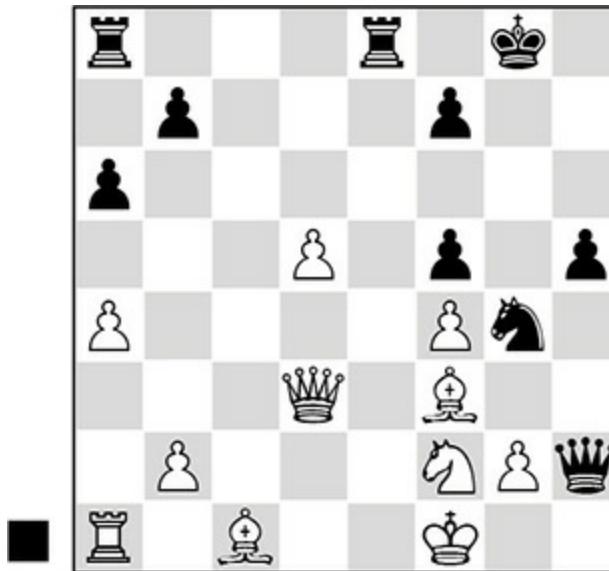
Solution 94

Florin Gheorghiu

2550

Liu Wenzhe

Lucerne ol 1982 (5)



23...h4!

Now the calm 24. ♕d2 is best, but a cursory calculation reveals that White can snatch the pawn on f5 and force an end to the game. A deeper calculation would also reveal the end of the game, but not the way White planned...

24. ♔xf5?? ♔g1+!!



White resigned. It's mate after 25. ♔xg1 ♕e1#.

Solution 95

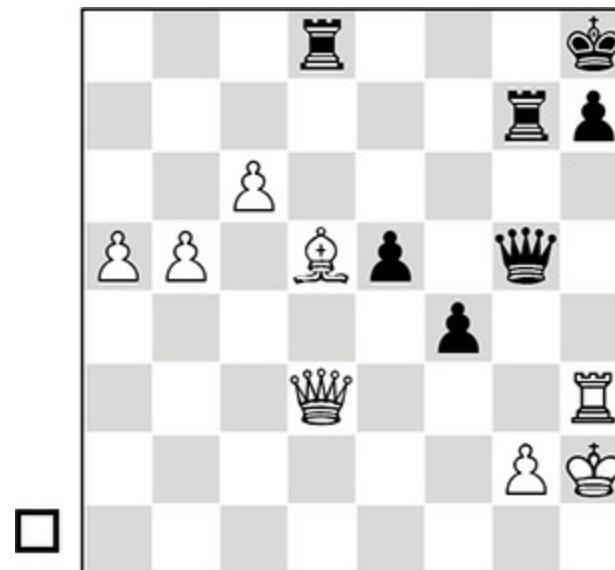
Pavel Eljanov

2755

Radoslaw Wojtaszek

2750

Wijk aan Zee 2017 (8)



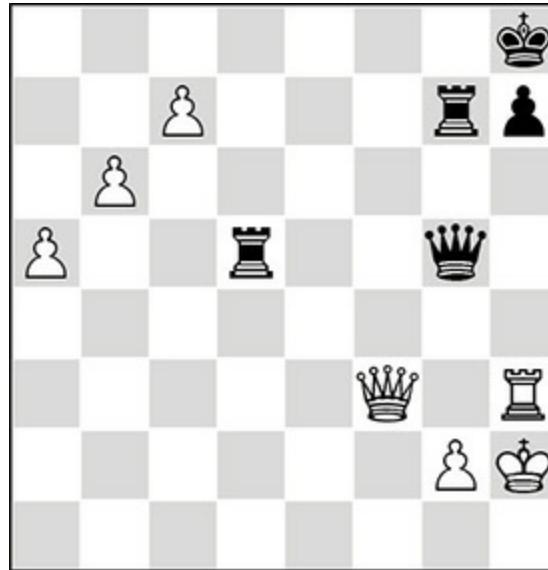
40.b6??,

allowing an unexpected perpetual check after Black cleared the diagonals from his own pawns:

40...e4!! 41.♕ xe4 f3!!

Not 41...♚xd5?? 42.c7! or 41...♝xd5?? 42.c7!.

42.♕ xf3 ♜ xd5 43.c7



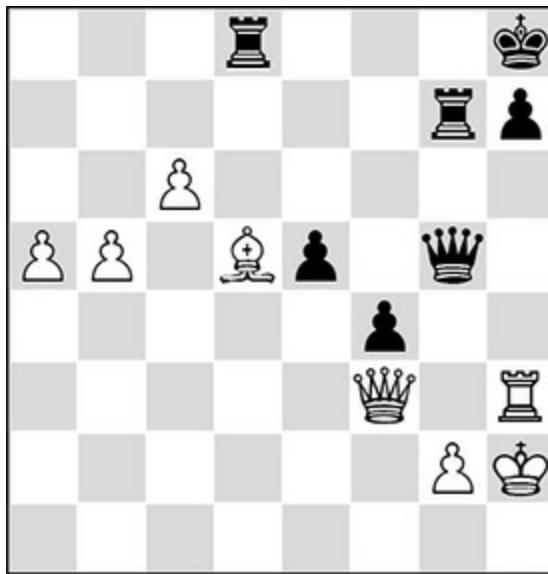
43...♝ e5+! 44.♜ g3 ♜ xg3! 45.♝ xg3

45.c8♛+?? ♜ g8+ is check!

45...♚ h5+ 46.♝ h3 ♚ e5+

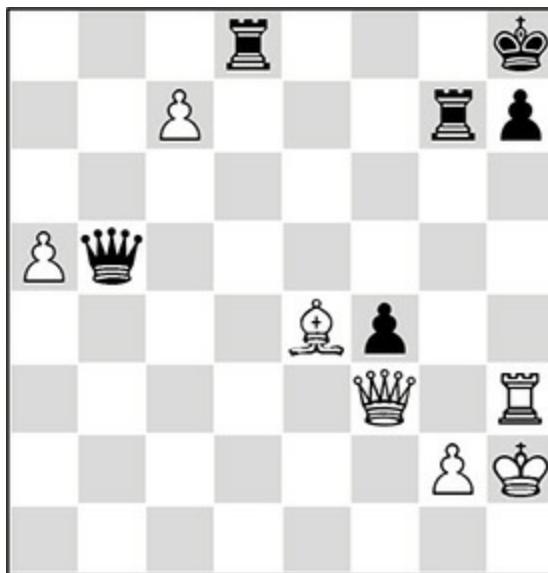
with a draw by perpetual check.

Instead, White should have securely blockaded Black's pawns with 40.♝ f3!.



analysis diagram

True, Black can shatter White's queenside pawn phalanx with 40...e4, but only at the cost of fatally exposing his own king: 41. \mathbb{Q} xe4 \mathbb{N} xb5 42.c7!



analysis diagram

42... \mathbb{R} xc7 (42... \mathbb{R} c8 43. \mathbb{Q} xh7! \mathbb{R} xh7 44. \mathbb{R} xh7+ \mathbb{Q} xh7 45. \mathbb{N} h3+) 43. \mathbb{N} xf4 \mathbb{R} g7 44. \mathbb{Q} xh7 \mathbb{R} xh7 45. \mathbb{N} f6+ and wins.

Solution 96

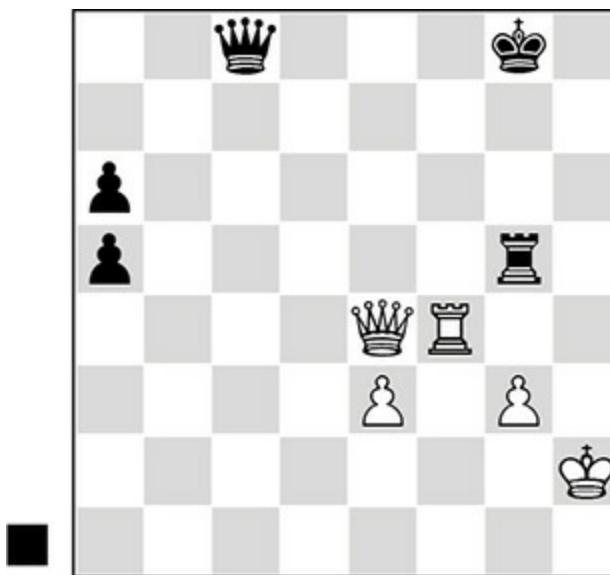
Paul Timson

2511

Rene Freydl

2515

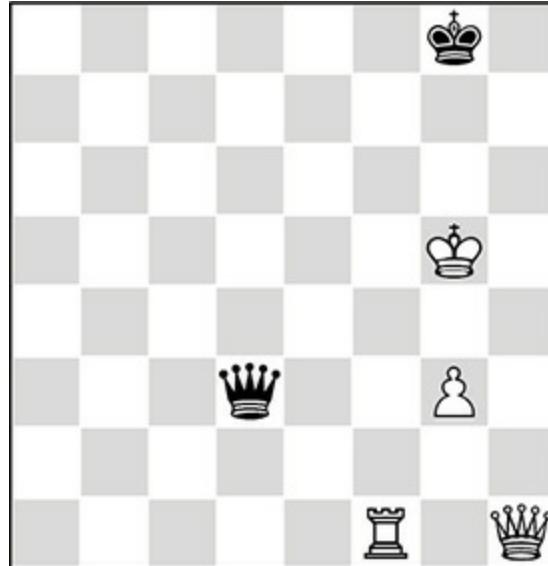
cr 2005



48... ♜ h5+ 49. ♛ g1 ♜ c1+ 50. ♜ f1 ♜ h1+!!

'+4.71', says my engine. But Freydl has seen further than the computer. White cannot escape the checks.

51. ♜ xh1 ♜ xe3+ 52. ♜ h2 ♜ h6+ 53. ♜ g2 ♜ c6+ 54. ♜ h3 ♜ h6+ 55. ♜ g4 ♜ g6+ 56. ♜ f4 ♜ f6+ 57. ♜ e4 ♜ e6+ 58. ♜ d4 ♜ b6+ 59. ♜ e5 ♜ b8+ 60. ♜ e6 ♜ e8+ 61. ♜ d6 ♜ d8+ 62. ♜ c5 ♜ e7+ 63. ♜ b6 ♜ b4+ 64. ♜ xa6 ♜ d6+ 65. ♜ xa5 ♜ c5+ 66. ♜ a6 ♜ d6+ 67. ♜ b5 ♜ d3+ 68. ♜ c5 ♜ c3+ 69. ♜ d5 ♜ d3+ 70. ♜ e6 ♜ e3+ 71. ♜ f5 ♜ d3+ 72. ♜ g5



72... ♜ g6+

A picturesque finish.

73. ♜ xg6

And draw agreed.

Solution 97

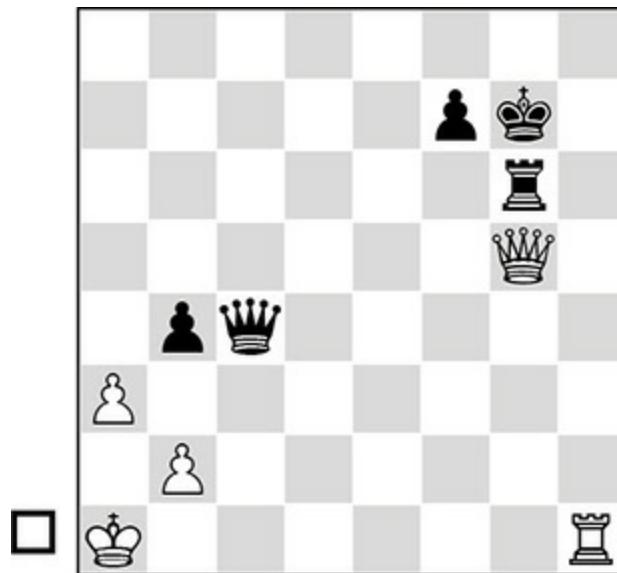
Oleg Korneev

2601

Evgenij Miroshnichenko

2634

Khanty-Mansiysk 2005 (1)

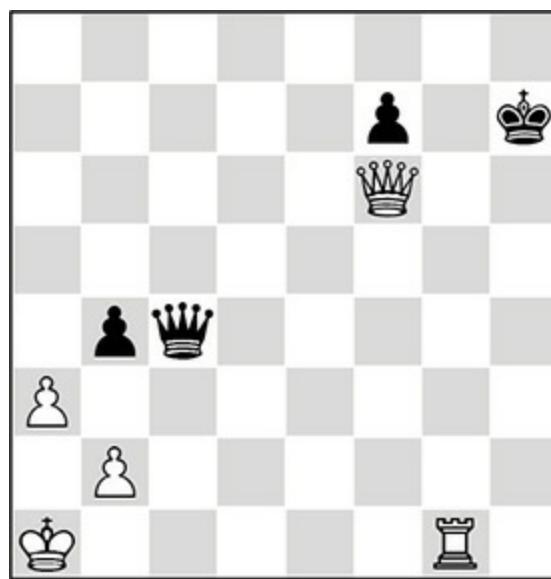


62. ♜ e5+ ♛ f6! 63. ♜ g1+ ♛ h7!!

Delightful!

64. ♜ xf6

There's no progress to be made after 64. ♜ h5+ ♛ h6 65. ♜ f5+ ♛ g6.



64... ♜ a2+!! 65. ♜ xa2 b3+ 66. ♜ xb3

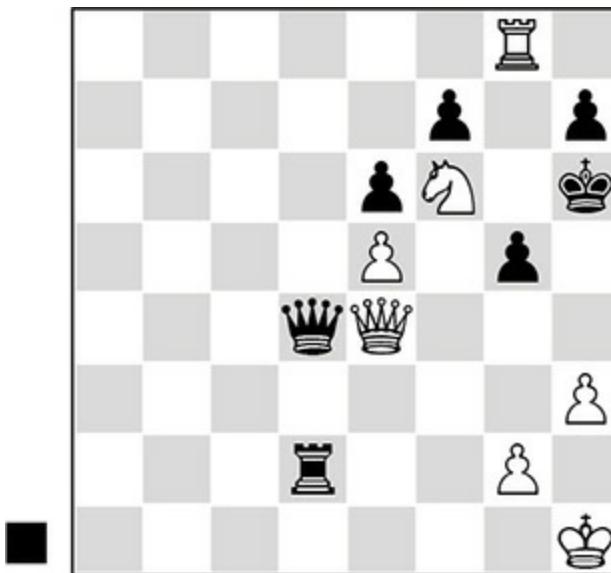
An unexpected stalemate.

Solution 98

Gogolev

Varshavsky

Aluksna 1967



36... ♜ d1+ 37. ♛ h2 ♜ g1+ 38. ♛ g3 ♜ d3+!! 39. ♜ xd3



39... ♜ e3+!

A miraculous self-pin to force stalemate, very much in the spirit of McNab-Groszpeter.

40. ♜ xe3 ½-½

Solution 99

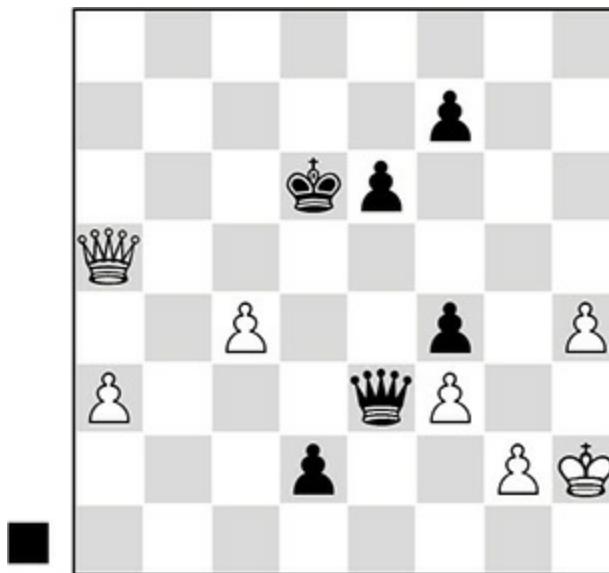
Ian Rogers

2515

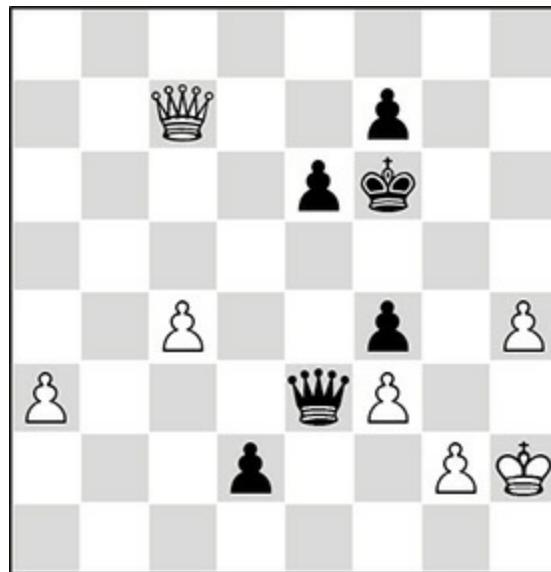
Viktor Kortchnoi

2650

Biel 1986 (4)



83... ♜ e7 84. ♜ c7+ ♜ f6



85. ♜ a5!!

is what Dolmatov missed in the pre-engine age.

85...e5

85...d1 ♜ ?? 86. ♜ g5#.

86. ♜ d8+ ♜ e6 87. ♜ e8+ ♜ d6 88. ♜ d8+ ♜ c5 89. ♜ d5+ ♜ b6 90. ♜ d6+

With a perpetual.

Solution 100

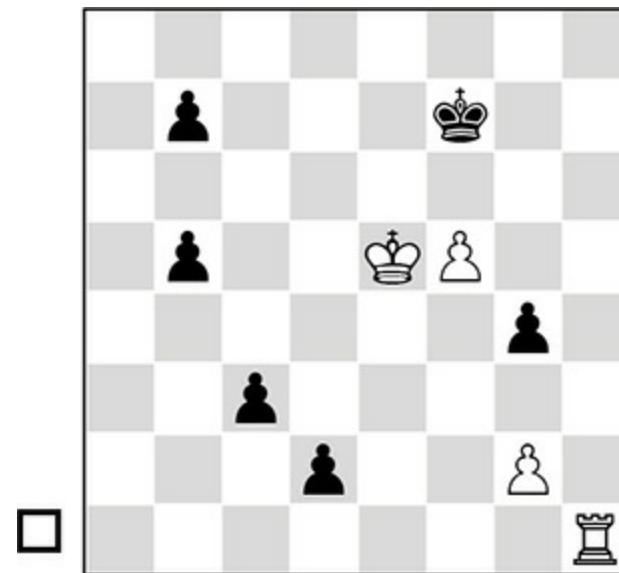
Kuritto Douglas

1714

Kanegeni Matthew Kamau

2150

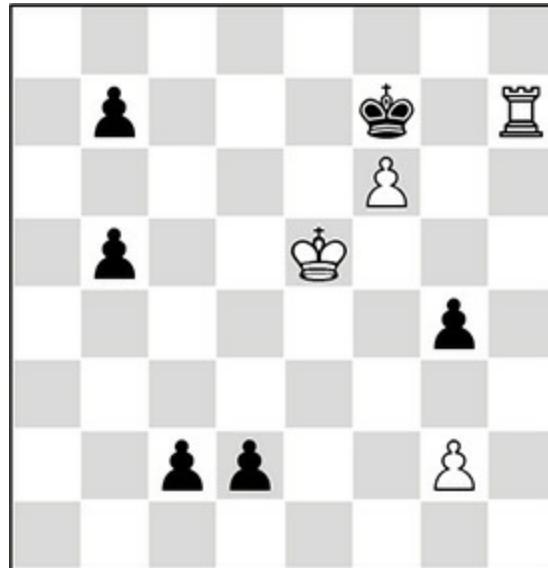
Nairobi 2018 (7)



52.f6!! c2??

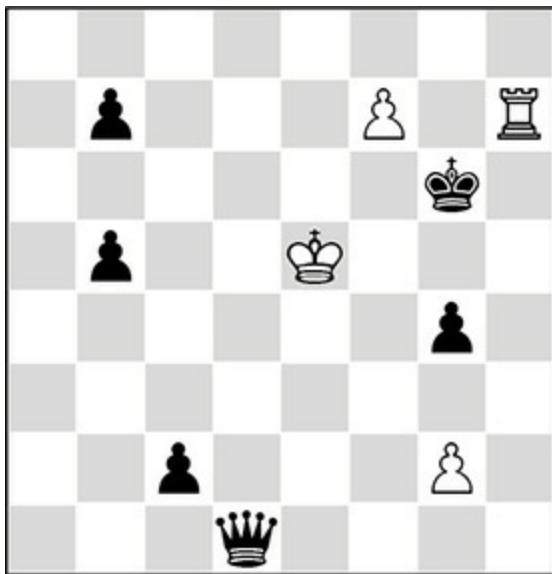
is the natural reply, made all the more likely if Black only sees up until White's decoy swindle (52...
♕g6! wins, though after the forced 53.♖f1 c2 54.f7 c1♕! 55.f8♕ ♕e1+! 56.♖xe1 dxel♕+
57.♕d5 Black still has to show his technique to earn the full point):

53.♖h7+!



And herein lies the point. Black may have noticed in advance that 53...
♕g8 allows a draw by perpetual check after 54.f7+ ♕xh7 55.f8♕ d1♕ 56.♕f7+ ♕h6 57.♕f6+ ♕h5 58.♕h8+. It looks like he can save a tempo with

53...
♕g6 54.f7 d1♕



and now 55.f8 ♜ e1+ leads to a winning endgame for Black if he plays with care. A likely continuation is 56. ♛ d5 ♜ d2+ 57. ♛ e4 ♜ xg2+! 58. ♛ d4 ♜ d2+ 59. ♛ e4 ♜ e2+ 60. ♛ d4 and now, having removed the g-pawn so that f3 is available to the black king, it's finally safe to take the rook: 60... ♜ xh7! and the black king will find refuge down the board.. Instead, White dutifully promotes, but grabs a difference piece:

55.f8 ♜ +!! ♛ g5 56. ♜ e6+ ♛ g6 57. ♜ f8+=

Solution 101

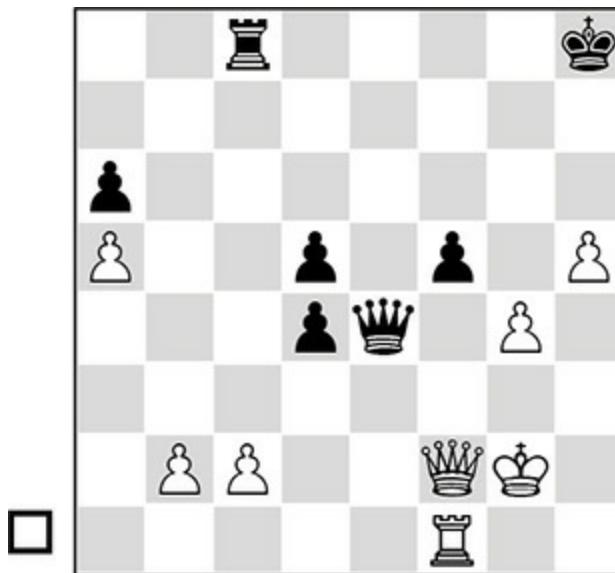
Yu Yangyi

2759

Peter Svidler

2753

Shenzhen m blitz 2018 (10)



44. ♜ g3!

Highly provocative. 44. ♜ f3 is ‘only’ clearly better for Black, according to the engines. But Black will play a sequence of obvious moves, with very few chances to go wrong: 44...fxg4 45. ♜ xe4 dx e4 46. ♜ d1 ♜ xc2+ 47. ♜ g3 d3 48. ♜ f4 ♜ e2 49. b4 (other moves lose trivially) 49... ♜ h7! 50. b5 axb5 51. a6 ♜ a2 52. ♜ xe4 ♜ xa6 53. ♜ xd3 ♜ f6 54. ♜ g3 ♜ c6 and the endgame is completely lost. Both sides would likely have realised this in their calculations, which motivates Yu Yangyi’s game choice.

44... ♜ xg4+ 45. ♜ h2 ♜ xh5+ 46. ♜ g3 ♜ g8+ 47. ♜ f4 ♜ g4+

47... ♜ g4+ wins quickly, but requires sacrificing two pawns under precise calculation: 48. ♜ e5 ♜ e8+! 49. ♜ d6 ♜ g6+ 50. ♜ xd5 ♜ c6+ 51. ♜ xd4 ♜ d6+ 52. ♜ e5 ♜ d5+ 53. ♜ f4 ♜ e4+ 54. ♜ g3 ♜ g4+ 55. ♜ h2 ♜ h6+. Easy once you see it!

48. ♜ e5 ♜ e4+ 49. ♜ d6 ♜ g6+ 50. ♜ c5 ♜ e7+ 51. ♜ xd4



Up to here, Svidler has kept his nerve, correctly trusting his intuition. But with his flag hanging, he falters, first letting the win slip, followed by, tragically, the full point.

51... ♜ e4+??

51... ♜ g7+! was the only winning move, though things were already quite complicated: 52. ♛ xd5 ♜ d7+ 53. ♛ c4 ♜ a4+! 54. b4 ♜ c6+ 55. ♛ d3 ♜ d6+ 56. ♛ c4 ♜ a2+ 57. ♛ c3 ♜ c6+.

52. ♛ c3= d4+??

A gross blunder, in both the English and the German sense of the word. Only 52... ♜ g4! holds the draw. After his move, Svidler resigned without waiting for 53. ♜ xd4+.

Solution 102

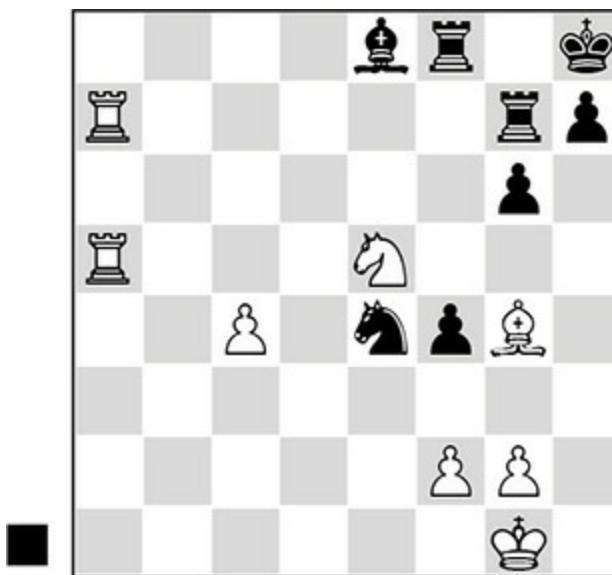
Stoyan Petkov

2389

Wolff Morrow

2510

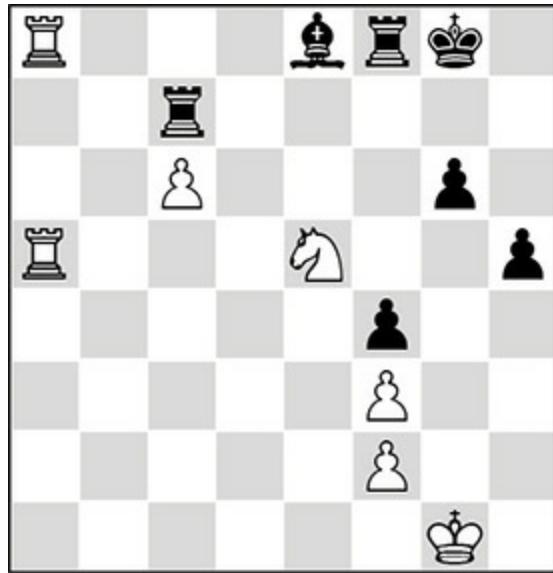
cr 2016



39...h5!

The start of an incredibly deep concept.

40. $\mathbb{Q}f3 \mathbb{Q}g5$ 41. $\mathbb{Q}a8 \mathbb{Q}xf3+$ 42. $gxf3 \mathbb{Q}g8$ 43. $c5 \mathbb{Q}c7$ 44. $c6$



Counting on the fact that 44... $\mathbb{Q}xc6$ 45. $\mathbb{Q}xf8+$ $\mathbb{Q}xf8$ 46. $\mathbb{Q}c5$ is winning. But Black has seen further.

44... $\mathbb{Q}xc6!!$

44... $\mathbb{Q}xc6$ 45. $\mathbb{Q}xf8+$ $\mathbb{Q}xf8$ 46. $\mathbb{Q}c5$ $\mathbb{Q}e7$ 47. $\mathbb{Q}xc6$ $\mathbb{Q}xc6$ 48. $\mathbb{Q}xc6+$.

45. $\mathbb{Q}xc6$ $\mathbb{Q}xc6$ 46. $\mathbb{Q}xf8+$ $\mathbb{Q}xf8$ 47. $\mathbb{Q}a6$ $\mathbb{Q}e8!$ 48. $\mathbb{Q}f6+$ $\mathbb{Q}g7$ 49. $\mathbb{Q}xf4$ $\mathbb{Q}d7!$



The culmination of Black's strategy. A remarkable fortress that had to be seen and evaluated many moves ago.

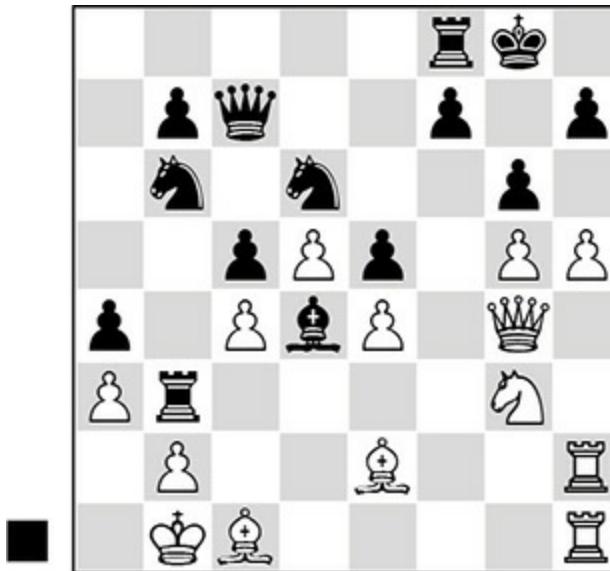
50. \mathbb{Q} g2 \mathbb{Q} f5 51. \mathbb{Q} b4 \mathbb{Q} f6 52. \mathbb{Q} g3 ½-½

Solution 103

Hikaru Nakamura

Magnus Carlsen

Zurich 2014 (3)



26... ♜xb2!!

Switching the focus to the queenside, where Black has – by appearances, at least – superior forces. The sacrifice is of course wildly unsound, but at least White's natural momentum is halted. The computer's advice is to bail out with 26... ♔d7, when in addition to the powerful 27. ♔h4, White can also choose the somewhat easier 27. ♕xd7, reaching a winning endgame after 27... ♕xd7 28.hxg6 ♕xg3 29. ♕xh7 fxg6 30. ♕xd7. Understandably unimpressed by these options, Carlsen decides that White cannot be allowed to continue his kingside play undisturbed – even if it costs him material.

27. ♜xb2

A not-insignificant point is that the sacrifice really can't be ignored: 27.hxg6? ♜xc1+ 28. ♕xc1 ♕bxc4 29. ♕xh7?? loses to 29... ♕c3+ 30. ♕d1 ♕e3+ followed by 31... ♕xg4, and there is no mate.

27... ♕bxc4 28. ♜xc4 ♕xc4 29.hxg6

With the bishop defended 'remotely' by the rook on h2, and now also a piece up, it seems that White is cruising. However, his king has become rather exposed and ... ♔b6 is a surprisingly hard threat to meet. White, correctly, decides to get back to the job of checkmating.

29... ♔b6!

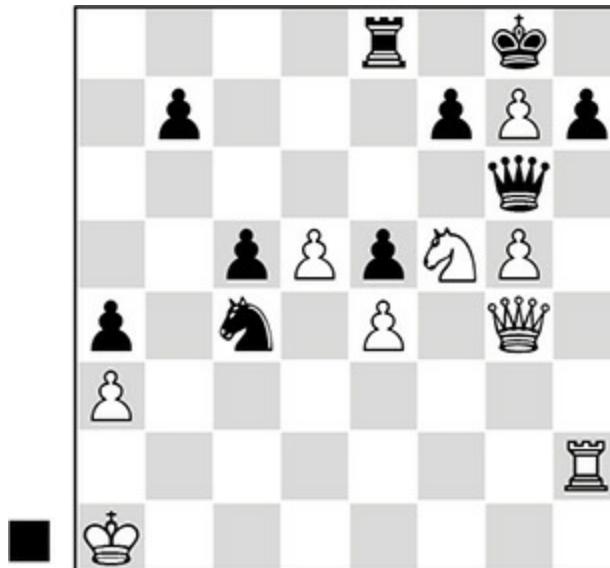
And Carlsen's investment has generated fear and uncertainty in the position, as well as concrete problems for his opponent to solve. Most importantly, Carlsen has created several opportunities for White to go wrong. For example: 30. gxh7+?? ♔h8 is immediately winning for Black, whose king feels quite snug using white's pawn as a shield. A slightly trickier trap is 30. ♕xh7?? ♕xb2+ 31. ♕a1, when White would be winning if it were not for 31... ♕a2+!! and Black mates next move. Nakamura played 30.g7!, which takes us to the next exercise.

Solution 104

Hikaru Nakamura

Magnus Carlsen

Zurich 2014 (3)



35... ♜ b6! 36. ♜ h3 ♜ g6! 37. d6?? ♜ xd6 38. ♜ xd6 ♜ d8!

For the second time in the game, White finds himself a piece ahead but under attack from the depleted yet remarkably coordinated black forces. The point is that here 39. ♜ f5?? would be crushing if it were not for 39... ♜ d1+ 40. ♜ b2 ♜ b6+!, which completely turns the tables.

39. ♜ c4 ♜ xe4 40. ♜ h5??

40. ♜ e3!.

40... ♜ d3! 41. ♜ h4

Nakamura implicitly offers a draw after 41... ♜ d1+ 42. ♜ xd1 ♜ xh4 43. ♜ d8+, but Carlsen correctly senses that the full point is available.

41... ♜ f5! 42. ♜ e2 b5! 43. ♜ d2 ♜ xg5 44. ♜ xd3 ♜ xh4

The full swindle is complete. After this, Carlsen's victory is never in doubt and the rest of the game is uninteresting, save for the remarkable fact that Carlsen's technique is flawless while playing a queen ending on increments.

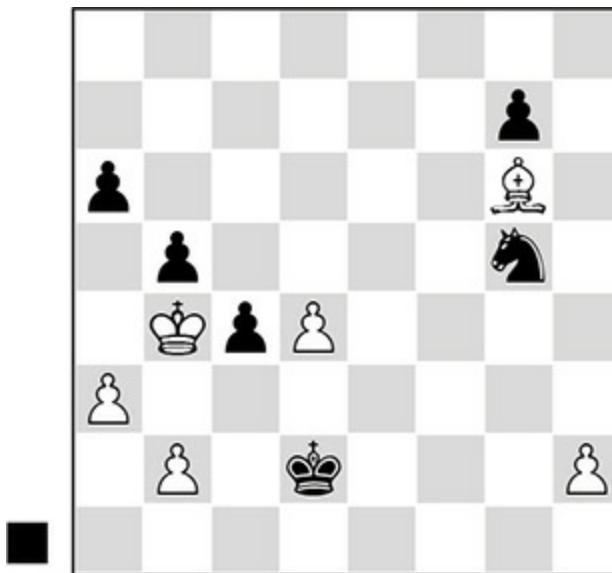
45. ♜ e4 ♛ xg7 46. ♜ f3 ♜ f4 47. ♜ g2+ ♛ f8 48. ♛ b2 h5 49. ♜ d2 h4 50. ♛ c2 b4 51. axb4 cxb4 52. ♜ a8+ ♛ g7 53. ♜ xa4 h3 54. ♜ b3 h2 55. ♜ d5 e4 56. ♜ h5 e3 57. ♜ f3 e2 58. ♛ b3 f6 59. ♜ e1 ♜ g3+ 60. ♛ a4 ♜ g1 61. ♜ xe2 ♜ a7+ 0-1

Solution 105

Subramanian Arun Prasad 2423

Adhiban Baskaran 2401

Chennai ch-IND 2008 (5)



56... ♜ c1!! 57. ♜ c3?

In hindsight, this move already throws away the win (57.b3!).

57... ♕ e6! 58.d5 ♕ f4 59.d6?? a5!!



A remarkable concept, the product of Black's previous, deliberate play. Black suddenly conjures an extremely powerful threat of mate in one!

60. ♛ d4

60. ♜ h5 ♕ xh5 61.d7 ♕ f4! changes nothing.

60... ♕ xg6 61.d7 ♕ f8

White resigned, as 62.d8 ♕ xb2 is hopeless.

Solution 106

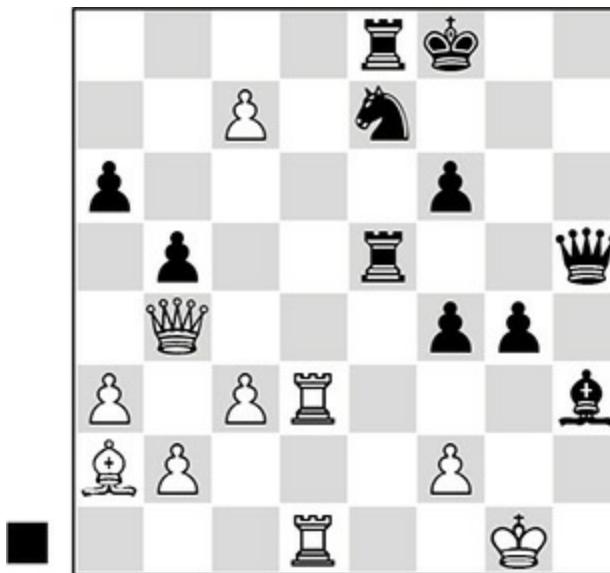
Ernesto Inarkiev

2681

Murtas Kazhgaleyev

2619

Moscow 2008 (6)



38... ♜ g2!! 39. ♛ xg2 f3+ 40. ♜ g3 ♖ f5

Black's 38th move was correct, and 40...Qh3+! would have forced checkmate in at most seven more moves. But instead, Black's 40th move was a terrible blunder. White capitalised with 41. ♜ xe7+!! ♛ xe7 42. ♖ d7+ ♛ f8 43. ♖ h1!! ♛ xh1 44. ♖ f7+ ♛ g8



45. ♖ e7+ ♛ h8 46. ♖ xe8+ ♛ g7 47. ♖ g8+!! ♛ h7 48. ♖ h8+!! ♛ xh8 49. c8♛ + ♛ g7 50. ♖ g8+ 1-0

Solution 107

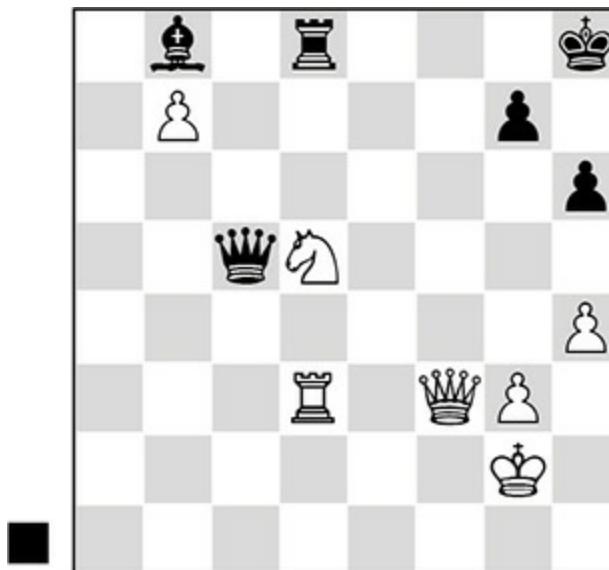
Igor Naumkin

2435

Matthieu Cornette

2447

Montecatini Terme 2006 (5)



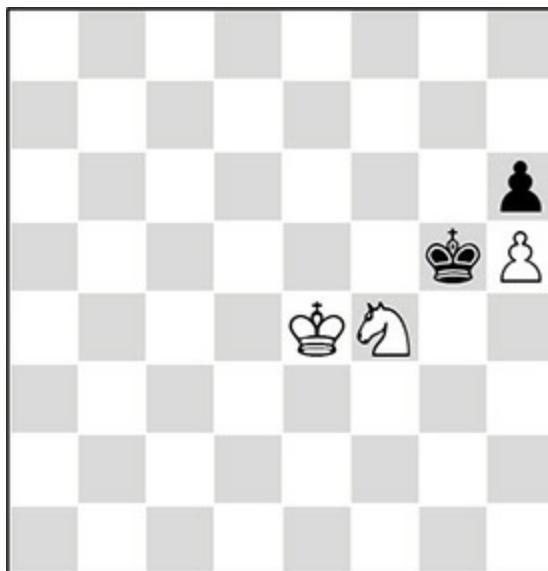
42... ♜ f8! 43. ♜ c3?? ♜ xf3 44. ♜ xc5 ♜ xg3+ 45. ♛ f2 ♜ d6! 46. ♜ c6 ♜ b3 47. ♜ xd6 ♜ xb7 48. h5 ♜ f7+

Surprisingly, this seems to be a fortress. I doubt Cornette realised this at the time, but rather thought that the endgame presented his opponent with difficult technical challenges. In any case, practically speaking, the swindle is already a success at this point.

49. ♛ g3 ♜ f5 50. ♜ d8+ ♛ h7 51. ♜ f4 ♜ g5+ 52. ♛ h4 ♜ a5 53. ♜ e6 ♜ a4+ 54. ♛ g3 ♜ a3+ 55. ♛ f4 ♜ a4+ 56. ♛ f3 ♜ a3+ 57. ♛ e4 ♜ a4+ 58. ♛ e5 ♜ a5+ 59. ♜ d5 ♜ xd5+! 60. ♛ xd5 g6 61. ♜ f8+ ♛ g7 62. ♜ xg6 ♛ f6!

Now the draw really is clear.

63. ♜ f4 ♛ g5 64. ♛ e5 ♛ g4 65. ♛ e4 ♛ g5



66. ♛ f3 ♛ h4 67. ♛ f2 ♛ g4 68. ♛ e3 ♛ g5 69. ♛ f3 ♛ h4 ½-½

Solution 108

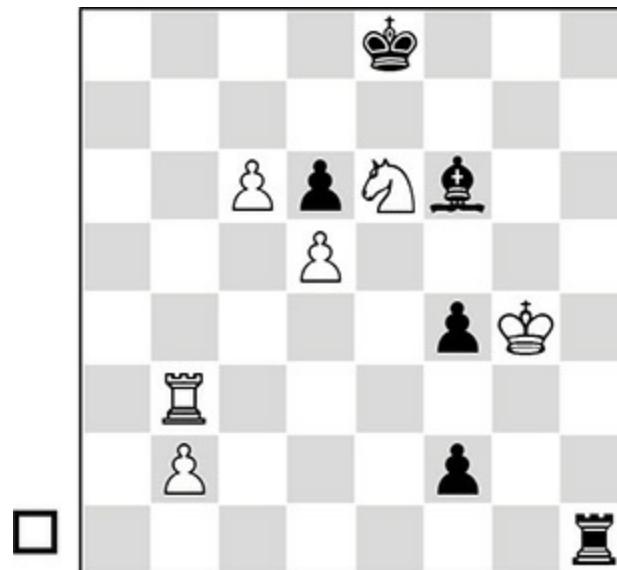
Peter Acs

2525

Emil Sutovsky

2665

Paks 2005 (3)



45. ♔ f5!! ♔ f7!

The cleanest winning move.

a) 45...f1 ♕? 46. ♕xf6! ♕h6+ 47. ♕g7 ♕g2+ (47... ♕xe6 48. ♕b8+ ♔e7 49. ♕b7+ ♕d8 50. dxе6! ♕e2 51. ♕d7+ ♕c8 52.e7 and Black has nothing better than a draw by perpetual check) 48. ♕xh6 with a likely draw;

b) The strong grandmaster with the black pieces, who is usually razor-sharp in tactical complications, faltered with 45... ♕d8?. This allows a nice drawing pattern after 46. ♕b8 f1 ♕ 47. ♕xd8+ ♔f7 48. ♕d7+ ♕g8 49. ♕d8+ ♕h7 50. ♕g5+ and the players agreed a draw after 50... ♕g7 51. ♕d7+ ♕f8 52. ♕e6+ ♕g8 53. ♕d8+ ♕h7 54. ♕g5+ ♕g7 55. ♕d7+ ♕f8 56. ♕e6+ ♕g8 57. ♕d8+ ♕h7 58. ♕g5+.

46. ♕b7+ ♔e7 47. ♕g5+ ♔f8 48. ♕e6+

48.c7 ♕c1 wins; 48. ♕b8+ ♕g7 49. ♕e6+ ♕f7 50. ♕g5+ ♕xg5 51. ♕xg5 f1 ♕ 52. ♕b7+ ♕e8 53. ♕b8+ ♕e7 54. ♕b7+ ♕d8 also wins.



48... \mathbb{Q} e8!

But not 48... \mathbb{Q} g8? 49.c7 \mathbb{R} c1 50. \mathbb{Q} g6! \mathbb{R} g1+ 51. \mathbb{Q} g5! and White wins!

49.c7 \mathbb{R} c1 50. \mathbb{R} b8+ \mathbb{Q} f7 51. \mathbb{R} h8 f1 \mathbb{Q} 52. \mathbb{R} h7+ \mathbb{Q} g8 53. \mathbb{R} g7+ \mathbb{Q} h8 54. \mathbb{R} xe7 \mathbb{Q} h3+ 55. \mathbb{Q} g6 \mathbb{R} g1+ 56. \mathbb{Q} g5 \mathbb{Q} c8!!
57. \mathbb{R} h7+ \mathbb{Q} g8 58. \mathbb{R} g7+ \mathbb{Q} f8 59. \mathbb{R} f7+ \mathbb{Q} e8 60. \mathbb{R} g7 \mathbb{Q} b7

And Black wins.

Solution 109

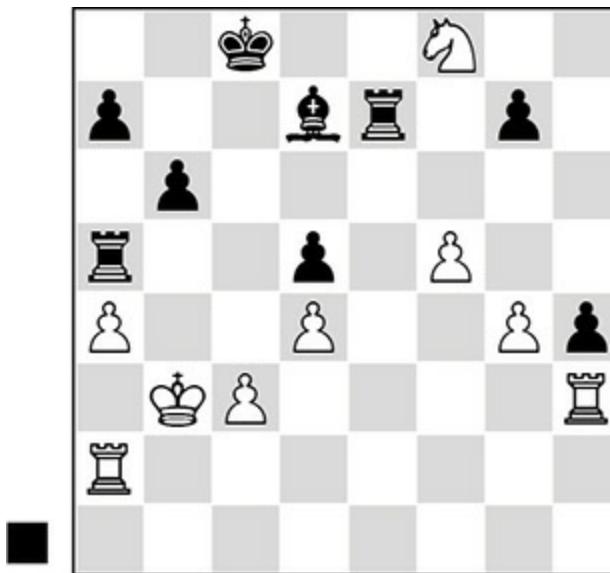
Peter Leko

2743

Alexander Khalifman

2667

Istanbul ol 2000 (3)



56... ♜ b5!! 57. axb5

57. ♕ a1 ♜ c4+ 58. ♔ a3 ♜ b5=.

57... ♕ xb5+

And White needs to accept a perpetual check with 58. ♔ a4, because 58. ♕ c2?? ♕ e2+ and 58. ♕ a3?? ♕ e1 both win for Black.

Solution 110

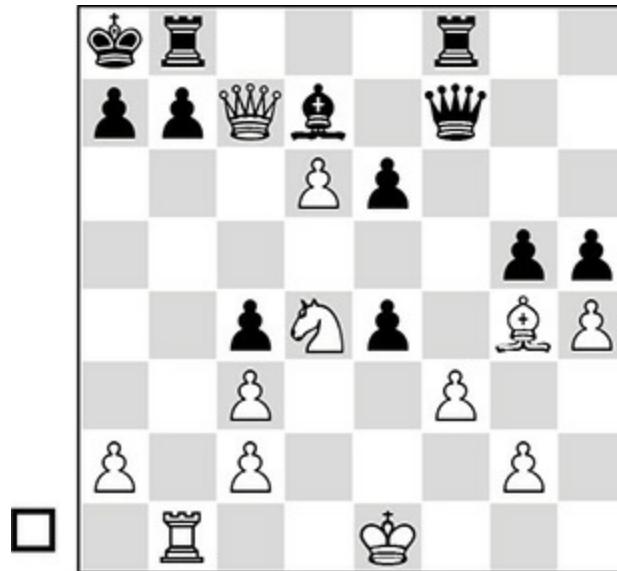
Alireza Firouzja

3009 (bullet)

Hikaru Nakamura

3110

Chess.com bullet m 2019



30.  xe6!!

The engine's suggestion 30. $\mathbb{Q}b5$ $\mathbb{Q}fc8!$ forces a queen exchange after 31. $\mathbb{Q}xe6$ $\mathbb{Q}xe6$ 32. $\mathbb{Q}xf7$ $\mathbb{Q}xf7$, while 30. $\mathbb{Q}b5?$ $a6!$ also wins for Black. Firouzja, spotting that ... $\mathbb{Q}fc8$ and ... $a7-a6$ are the key defensive patterns for Black, finds an ingenious swindling idea:

30... ♕xe6 31. ♔b5!!



Firouzja violently sacrifices another piece in order to clear the way for his knight. Now 31... ♕xb5 is impossible, while 31...a6??, which was winning after 30. ♔b5, loses to 32. ♔b6!! axb5 33. ♔a5#. And, of course, 31... ♕xc7?? 32. ♔xc7# was never going to happen, though psychologically speaking, this is quite a nifty ‘decoy trap’. Having successfully navigated all but one of White’s traps, Nakamura plays the most natural defensive move on the board.

Anticipating 31. $\mathbb{Q}a5$ b6! and Black's king is as safe as Fort Knox. But alas, Nakamura is about to be robbed.

The right way to implement the same idea was to use the other rook: 31... $\mathbb{R}bc8!$, and White's out of tricks.

32. $\mathbb{Q}b6!!$



Worthy of its own diagram. After the forced 32... axb6 33. $\mathbb{Q}b4!$, Firouzja, a queen and a rook down, will give mate on the next move. A swindle of exquisite beauty!

1-0

Epilogue

Since then I have never prepared for a game while lying in a hot bath. – Mikhail Tal⁵⁸

What can be said about Mikhail Tal that has not already been written? In his editor's forward to *The Life and Games of Mikhail Tal*,⁵⁹ John Nunn writes of the 8th World Champion:

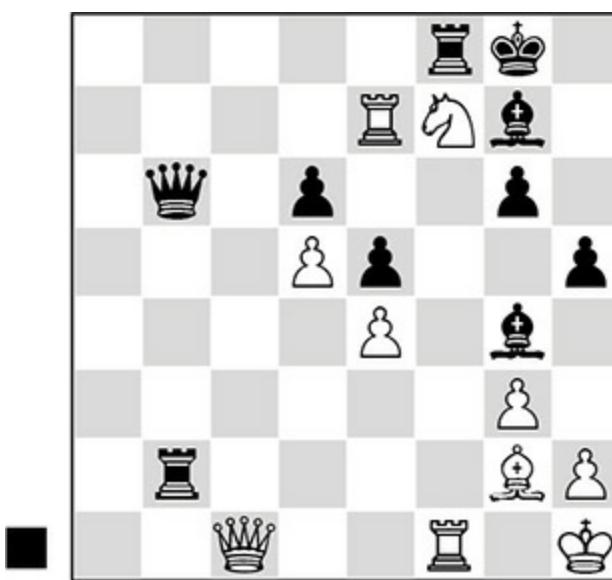
Mikhail Tal was a remarkable man. His brilliant successes in the years leading up to his World Championship victory excited the chess world; his very name became synonymous with brilliance and attacking flair.

It was not just Tal's tactical prowess that inspired a generation of chess fans, and a new breed of Swindlers. His nickname 'the Magician from Riga' is fitting, for only Tal could conjure up such marvellously convincing tricks and illusions to successfully escape against the greatest legends of our game, such as his famous swindles against the World Champions Botvinnik and Smyslov. He expressed a willingness to take risks and was driven primarily by his pursuit of creating beauty on the chessboard, rather than purely the result of each game. It is to Tal that we attribute the infamous quote 'Chess, first of all, is art.'⁶⁰

The feeling of playing through Tal's brilliancies is the same as watching Roger Federer hit the impossible winner or seeing Zlatan Ibrahimović kick the unthinkable goal. These moments of wonderment bring positive inspiration to young tennis and football fans around the world, and so too are the lasting positive effects of Tal's legacy on chess lovers. We don't just want to play *through* those games, we want to be able to play those games ourselves.

I have been trying to play a Mischa brilliancy for over thirty years – sadly, as you might recall from the start of this book, without success. One is never too old to keep hoping, of course, and I continue to enjoy my failed attempts. Only once can I say that I truly played like Tal, though it was not exactly what I had in mind.

Donald Mason	2222
David Smerdon	2498



In this British league match, I had been steadily outplaying my opponent to the point where we both felt that the end was imminent.

I saw that my opponent's rook on f1 was overworked in defending the knight on f7 and preventing ...
Rb1, so I took the chance to finish things off:

28... ♕e2

The rook cannot move for the reasons mentioned above, so my opponent forlornly continued

29. ♜h6+ ♔xh6

and resigned on account of 30. ♜xh6 ♜xf1+ 31. ♜xf1 ♔f3+ 32. ♜g2 ♔xg2#. A routine win against a lower-rated player that helped my team to victory.

That evening at dinner, one of my friends said to me with a cheeky grin, 'I see you played like Tal today.' This friend is not known for dishing out compliments so freely, and so I thanked him warily. Sure enough, he immediately pulled out his phone and showed me a pre-loaded game on the screen.

Lars Schneider	2435
Mikhail Tal	2605

Lucerne ol 1982 (13)

1.e4 c5 2. ♘f3 d6 3.d4 cxd4 4. ♘xd4 ♘f6 5. ♘c3 a6 6.f4 ♗c7 7. ♘d3 g6 8.0-0 ♗g7 9. ♘f3 ♘bd7 10. ♘h1 e5 11. ♘e1 b5 12.fxe5 dxe5 13. ♘h4 h6 14.a4 b4 15. ♘d5 ♘xd5 16.exd5 ♗b7 17. ♘d2 ♘xd5 18. ♘xb4 ♘c5 19. ♘ad1 ♘e6 20. ♘e4 ♘c8 21. ♘d5 0-0 22. ♘xe6 fxe6 23. ♘xc5 ♘xc5 24. ♘g4 ♔h7 25. ♘xe6 ♘c6 26. ♘h3 ♘xc2 27. ♘d7 e4 28. ♘g5+ ♔h8 29. ♘f7+ ♔g8



30.g3 h5 31.♕ g5 ♜ xb2 32.♕ e6 ♜ xf1+ 33.♗ xf1 ♔ f6 34.♖ d8+ ♔ f7 35.♗ g5+ ♔ e7 36.♗ xe4 ♔ xd8
White resigned.

‘Do you know that Tal should have lost?’ my friend asked with an evil grin. He brought up the position after 29...♔g8 and switched on the pocket engine. The evaluation immediately went crazy:
30.♗xh6!!.



analysis diagram

A shocking sacrifice. The queen is untouchable on account of 30...♝xh6 31.♛xh6+ ♔h8 32.♜xf8#. 30...♜xf7 31.♖d8+ is no better, while after a nondescript continuation like 30...♝e2, the true brilliancy is revealed: 31.♝h8+!!



31... ♜xh8 32. ♜h6#!.



Position after 28... ♜e2?? in Mason-Smerdon

My friend looked up expectantly, but I was already running through the variations of my own game in my head, and coming to the same astonishing conclusion:

29. ♜h6!!.

Tal-like brilliance – or should that be un-Schneider-like misery? The queen and knight are invulnerable to the same checkmating patterns, while the threat is, again, the deadly 30. ♜h8+!!.. There is no defence.

The similarity between the two games is uncanny. My friend was right: Tal and I had played just as badly as each other, and yet both of us had somehow emerged unscathed.

At the hotel breakfast the next morning, I eagerly looked out for my affable opponent from the day before, who, coincidentally, was on the look-out for me. Donald and I found each other at the buffet and the excited conversation went something like this:

‘Did you see...’

‘Yes! ♜h6!! And then...’

‘Right, and ♕h8+!!, and...’

‘... mate on h6 with...’

‘... with the knight! Just like...’

‘... like TAL!!’

We practically shouted the name together, as if summoning forth the ghost of the Magician himself. Neither of us was thinking about the actual result of the game; we were both exuberant about having discovered this hidden historical diamond forged with our own hands.

I’m sure you are expecting a moral to this tale. There isn’t one. Sometimes chess is just a game, and sometimes a story is just a story.

Notes

- ¹ At the time I suggested the inverted move-order 39.g6 ♕e7+ 40.♕g7 fxg6 41.♖e2+ ♔d6 42.♖f2, but the irrepressibly thorough Belgium FM Helmut Froeyman, who often comments on my blog, later pointed out that the ending after 42...g5!! 43.♖f8 ♖xf8 44.♕xf8 c2 45.h8♕ c1♕ leads to mate in 57 moves!
- ² Though, see the Endgames chapter.
- ³ This is true of engines that use alpha-beta pruning algorithms, which includes most engines such as Stockfish, Fritz etc. But this is not exactly true of the new generation of engines that use Monte Carlo tree search, such as AlphaZero, Leela Chess and its commercial clone Fat Fritz. In fact, these engines spit out evaluations in terms of percentages that are much more similar to how humans think about evaluating a position than the cold ‘0.00’ we are all used to seeing.
- ⁴ Not a good personality trait for a researcher.
- ⁵ A significantly more useful personality trait for a researcher.
- ⁶ Jonathan Rogers, writing in *Kingpin* magazine, calls it ‘Perhaps the best example of an abused chess word’.
- ⁷ Speaking of grammar: I have capitalised ‘Black’ and ‘White’ when these words refer to the generic players, while the corresponding adjectives are not capitalised (as in ‘the black queen’). I generally stick to the present tense when annotating a game, except when it seems to make more sense to tell an anecdote or a story in the past tense, like in the above examples.
- ⁸ It was a swindle, though my active contribution was even smaller and more embarrassing than in the previous example. Faced with unstoppable mate in one on h7, I (Black) moved my queen from d8 to a8. My opponent played ♗xh7 and announced checkmate... upon which I captured his king on h1 with my queen.
- ⁹ By the way, and speaking of butterflies and hurricanes, you might wonder what happened to my young opponent. Perhaps being on the receiving end of my swindle led him to give up chess and take up boxing. Or perhaps the trauma led him to a life of drugs, crime and eventually a sordid end as a politician. As it happens, Justin Tan is now better known as ‘JannLee’, his online chess moniker, and is the World Champion at Crazyhouse – ironically, a chess variant full of tricks, traps and swindles.
- ¹⁰ Biting words from a guy who also named his first book after him-self.
- ¹¹ In *Kingpin*, Jonathan Rogers gives perhaps the best definition I’ve read: ‘When a player plays a move which is designed to (and does) provoke an error from his opponent, and this error makes possible a profitable combination, that player has swindled his opponent.’
- ¹² Available at youtu.be/MVYJWTmTm8s?t=12494
- ¹³ On a less traumatic day, perhaps Sevian would have found an incredible counter-rook-sacrifice that would have drawn in a most unusual way: 33.♕g5+! hxg5 34.♖xb2 ♖xc4+ 35.♕e3 ♖h4 36.♖xd6!! An exchange sacrifice that leaves White three pawns down, but with enormous promotional potential on the kingside: 36...cxd6 37.♖b7+ ♕f8 38.♖f7+ ♕g8 39.♖d7 ♕f8 40.♖d8+!! ♕e7 41.♖xd6!! (a lovely echo to ten moves earlier. White exploits the fact that the black pawn on g5 blocks the g-file for his own rook) 41...♖xh5! 42.f6+! gxf6 43.♖d8!! White persistently forces the g-pawn through. Luckily for Black, the price is just high enough: 43...♗xd8 44.g7 ♖h3+ 45.♗e2 ♖xa3 46.g8♗+ ♕e7! and an unusual endgame with a queen against a rook and six (!) pawns arises. Importantly, Black can hold his kingside, meaning that White has no real winning chances. What richness in this game!
- ¹⁴ At the time of writing, Gareyev is the world record holder for simultaneous blindfold games. In 2016, he played 48 games at once, scoring over 80%.
- ¹⁵ The game finished 56...c5 57.♗g2 c4 58.♗f3 c3 59.♗d3 ♕c4 60.♗e1 ♕d6 62.g4 ♕e7? (62...♕e5=) 63.g5 ♕e5 64.♗g4 ♕f8 65.♗c2 ♕e4? (65...♕e6=) 66.h5 ♕d3 67.♗a1 ♕e4 68.h6 ♕e5 69.♗h5 ♕f5 70.♗c2 ♕d6 71.♗d4+ ♕e4 72.♗e2 c2 73.g6 ♕a3 74.g7 ♕d3 75.g8♗ ♕xe2 76.♗a2 1-0.
- ¹⁶ So, is 52.♗d5 really a swindling attempt, or simply the best move? It turns out that there is a quicker, study-like win for Black after 54.gxh7 ♕a7!! 55.♗g6 ♕aa4!!, and because of the various mating threats, White has to break his fortress with 56.♗f7. Then 56...♗dd7! 57.♗f3 ♕xh7 allows Black to keep his g-pawn, with an easier win. But the point of this example is that while 52.♗d5 may not be objectively better than other moves, it is certainly practically the best chance.
- ¹⁷ See the chapter on Gamesmanship.
- ¹⁸ There is a large economics literature on gender differences in confidence, risk and competitiveness. See, for example, Barber and Odean, ‘Boys Will be Boys: Gender, Overconfidence, and Common Stock Investment’ (2001, *The Quarterly Journal of*

Economics).

- 19 The game finished: 39. ♕f1 ♔g8 40. ♕e1 ♗f3 41. ♘c6 ♘f6 42. ♗e5 ♘d5 43. ♘d4 ♗g2 44. h4 g6 45. ♘e5 ♘b4 46. ♘d2 ♘d5 47. ♘e2 ♘f6 48. ♘e1 ♘d5 49. ♘d2 ♘f8 50. ♘c2 ♘e7 51. ♘b3 ♘e6 52. ♘c4 ♘f6 53. ♘c3 ♘e8 54. ♘c6 ♘d6+ 55. ♘c5 ♘f5 56. ♘b4 ♘h6 57. ♘d5 ♘h1 58. ♘f6 ♘f5 59. ♘xh7 ♘g4 60. ♘e1 ♘e5 61. ♘g5 ♘d3+ 62. ♘d4 ♘xe1 63. ♘g4+ ♘xg4 64. ♘xe4 ♘f3+ 65. ♘d3 ♘e5+ 66. ♘d4 ♘c6+ 67. ♘d3 ♘e5+ 68. ♘d4 ♘f3+ 69. ♘d3 ♘e1+ 70. ♘d4 ♘xe4 71. ♘xe4 ♘f3 72. ♘d3 ♘f5 73. ♘e2 ♘e4 74. ♘f1 ♘xh4 75. ♘e2 g5 76. ♘f1 ♘f3 77. ♘g1 ♘f5 0-1.
- 20 The USSR Championship of 1966-7. Smyslov shared tenth place.
- 21 Recalling his loss to Deep Blue some two decades ago, Kasparov recently stated, ‘I’m a sore loser. I still am.’
- 22 A survey in Japan found ‘Effort’ to be the favourite word, while in England, ‘Mother’ tops the list. In the United States, ‘Whatever’ was voted Most Annoying Word for nine years in a row.
- 23 Women’s Grandmaster Elisabeth Pähzt related to me some advice she was given by her trainer: ‘Every game is five Elo points.’ In essence, this means that if you play someone of equal strength and you win, then (assuming a k-factor of 10) you gain five rating points.
- 24 White can actually force mate in 15 moves from the diagram, though such mathematical evaluations are rarely useful.
- 25 During a game with the World Champion Max Euwe, Bogoljubow was heard to remark to a spectator: ‘He stands a little better, but I think I shall win.’
- 26 Yes, I do like creative names. I make no excuses.
- 27 Actually, it was ‘Play the board, not the man!’. But come on, it’s 2020.
- 28 But no longer true for Giri at the time of publishing.
- 29 Here, Giri is a notable exception – see below.
- 30 For example, *The Definitive Book of Body Language* cautions that folded arms and crossed legs can also be a sign of feeling cold!
- 31 This means that there are some omissions that are common occurrences in practice. These are still very much worth studying, of course, but they are less likely to be used in a swindling motif. ♕+♖+♗ vs ♕+♘ is one example; this is a core endgame and, while relatively easy to draw, has famously been lost by strong grandmasters against both Kasparov and Carlsen. Still, it is rarely useful for a swindle, as is the case for other fundamental endgames such as ♕+♖ vs ♕+♗ and ♕+♘ vs ♕+♗.
- 32 After failing to win his crucial endgame against Peter Svidler at the 2016 Candidates tournament, Fabiano Caruana remarked: ‘I’ve solved this Philidor position so many times, and I just forget every time during a game. what I’m supposed to do.’
- 33 Surely having multiple common endgame positions named after yourself is the height of greed, or at least suggests a serious lack of imagination.
- 34 Though he said this at the press conference after Game 4 of his World Championship Match with Sergey Karjakin, after an endgame that, as far as anyone else can tell, was an impenetrable fortress.
- 35 At least, not by chess standards...
- 36 Pun intended.
- 37 In other words, White has an expected score of about 0.8-0.9 points, assuming Black’s chances of winning are close to zero.
- 38 It is also the means of drawing that is least consistent with the military warfare on which our game is based. In the opinion of GM Nigel Short, it is ‘a stupid rule’.
- 39 As recounted by Horowitz and Reinfeld in *Chess Traps, Pit-falls and Swindles*.
- 40 The computer unhelpfully announces mate in 16 after 34... ♗g6.
- 41 Postny also points out the very elegant 32. ♗f6!.
- 42 In fact, Black has a forced mate in 32 moves, in case you care about such things.
- 43 This reminds me of the quaint mathematical fact that one can eventually escape almost any physical maze by keeping one hand on the wall and walking forwards (the creatively named wall follower algorithm).
- 44 A quote from IM Robert Jamieson.
- 45 For further reading, see Matthew Sadler and Natasha Regan’s fascinating book *Game Changer: AlphaZero’s Groundbreaking Chess Strategies and the Promise of AI* (2019, New In Chess).
- 46 Even so, my opponent’s rating meant that the loss still earned me my final grandmaster norm, so it wasn’t all bad news in my camp.

- 47 Nimzowitsch stood up from the board and shouted these words before resigning a game against Fritz Sämisch that cost him first prize in the tournament.
- 48 ... though later negated by the use of Hawkeye technology.
- 49 All of these stories are definitely worth searching for online. Put the kettle on.
- 50 Twenty years later, I was the best man at his wedding.
- 51 In team events, the clocks are usually positioned to face the same way, so that on half the boards, the clock will be on White's right.
- 52 Tal attributed the lost match to Botvinnik's 'home cooking' – presumably referring to his opening preparation rather than his coffee.
- 53 This story reminds me of the World Junior Championships I played in the Indian state of Goa, famous for its beaches and nightlife. The venue had no air conditioning, and temperatures in the one large playing hall rose above 40 degrees Celsius during the games. By the second day, with no solution in sight, several of the players decided to play shirtless (males) or in bikinis (females). On the third day, the organisers decided to move the girls' competition to a separate room, citing distractions for the players as the reason. Strangely, none of us knew of any player who had complained.
- 54 For references, one might consider *The Complete Chess Addict* and its sequel, as well as the websites of historians such as Edward Winter, and of course *How to Cheat at Chess* by Bill Hartston.
- 55 In fact, the position is already theoretically a tablebase draw, although Black's task is quite difficult.
- 56 scid.sourceforge.net/
- 57 Miles developed it with his Australian friend Aleks Wohl – the same player from the second example in this book, and who used the opening to beat many grandmasters such as Yermolinsky, Nogueiras and Delchev. Miles later honoured his mate by dubbing the opening the 'Holy Wohly' in *Kingpin* magazine.
- 58 Tal was referring to his disastrous opening against Gipslis in the 1958 Latvian Championship.
- 59 'Quite probably the greatest chess book ever written' is GM Murray Chandler's humble assessment in the acknowledgements.
- 60 *The Mammoth Book of the World's Greatest Chess Games* features more games by Tal than by any other player.

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