

Mastering Complex Endgames

Daniel Naroditsky



With a preface by four-time US Champion Yasser Seirawan

Practical Lessons,
Critical Ideas & Plans

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My brother Alan for his unremitting devotion and for enriching and editing this book.

Preface by Yasser Seirawan

It is a great delight to write a preface for Daniel Naroditsky's work *Mastering Complex Endings*. In early August 2012 Daniel, somewhat shyly, asked if I'd consider writing a preface for a new book that was nearing completion. I jumped at the opportunity and eagerly started to devour his text. Immediately, something stood out: Daniel had worked extremely hard on a subject that is difficult to study and, even more so, to relish. Quite clearly, Daniel had thrown himself into a very difficult subject. To say the least. Let me step back for a moment to offer an insight into my own evolution as a chess player.

When I first began to play chess, as a complete beginner, I lost game after game after game. It must have been out of deep sympathy for my plight that a class player, Jeffrey Parsons, offered me a pearl of wisdom: 'Yasser, if you ever want to get good at chess, you are going to have to learn the endgame.' No wiser chess words had ever been spoken to me. Jeffrey would then sit me down for numerous sessions and show me a large number of *endgame studies*, some of which he had composed himself, infecting me with his own passionate interest in them. In no time, my game was improving by leaps and bounds. (Of course, the cynic might add that my game had no direction to go except upwards.)

Endgame knowledge is simply essential for becoming a successful chess player. What good does it do if you play a fine game, steering your way into a superior rook ending two pawns to the good, if you are unable to win? Endgame technique is an absolute requirement for the skilled player. However, knowing this truth and actually doing something about it are two entirely different things. Studying endgames is certainly difficult even at the best of times. Here the expression, 'no pain, no gain' comes to mind. When we do come across a work that makes the hard task of acquiring endgame knowledge more agreeable we should jump at the opportunity to apply ourselves and study hard.

While reading *Mastering Complex Endings* I was thrown back to memories of my own youth. I have an absolute conviction that to become good we must analyze our own games as deeply as we dare and *write our thoughts down*. It was my own willingness to do precisely that which made me the player I am today. But in my career I had something else going for me: I was *lucky*. At the time when I started tournament play, adjournments existed. I liked adjournments. Many of my adjournments are quite memorable and had a marked positive influence on my career. Accidentally, a game might be stopped just at a moment of enormous complexity. Forcing me to take an evening, a day or sometimes longer, to analyze a given position at great length to try to get to the truth of what was going on. I credit adjournments with making me analyze hard and appreciate the beautiful complexity of chess. Without question I was rewarded for my efforts.

For example, I can still vividly recall playing in the 1979/80 Hastings tournament and having an adjournment of rook versus rook and bishop. My opponent, Israel Zilber, held the superior side. In truth, I had played a miserable game and desperately wanted to save the adjournment as redemption for my previous play. I spent the entire evening, and much of the early morning, learning this ending thoroughly. Confident that I was properly armed with the intricate knowledge needed for this tricky endgame, I easily saved the adjournment. Furthermore, throughout my career, from that point onwards, I'd always achieve the maximum result: winning when the superior side, drawing with the inferior side. Adjournments could be vexing, annoying to the point of total anguish, yet revealing, enchanting, enjoyable, exhausting and, above all, rewarding for my new-found knowledge. Thanks to adjournments and having to study complex endings, I became a far better player.

Another adjournment memory that always brings a smile to my face is a game that involved a player from Columbia, Luis Hoyos Millan. It was at the Biel Chess Festival in 1985. Luis was a master player and had one of the most harrowingly complex adjourned positions that I can remember. The grandmasters Ljubomir Ljubojevic, Ulf Andersson and I were enchanted. Analysis carried on and on for hours. Somehow late at night we all ended up sitting on a park bench in Biel underneath a street lamp arguing on a well-used pocket chess set which plan was best. (The light- and dark-square borders had begun to fade, and it wasn't so easy keeping sight of the central squares.) Luis was overwhelmed by all the helping hands. All our efforts went for naught, however, for the simplest of reasons: the next day, Luis overslept.

It would seem that Daniel has taken a great deal of the above and gone much further in the journey of self-discovery of complex endings than I ever did. Indeed, while he has studied and annotated, for himself, his own games, he has also realized that much could be gained if he applied himself to studying complex endings of other players as well. The result, this work, may be described as a collection of adjourned endgame positions featuring some recent games where adjourned play is no longer practised.

This book is therefore like a throw-back experience for me. Adjourned positions can sometimes be compared to a 'photo'. When we see a familiar old photo we can be immediately transported back to another time and space, when the photo was taken. Experienced players see a diagrammed position and are similarly transported back to when the game was played. Adjournments, like a photo, have a habit of evoking memories of a distant moment. Sometimes the memory is funny, with amusing anecdotes, recall of the lines, and analysis which is joyous at times but on occasion painful. Always productive, always rewarding for those who make the effort to study the material.

In this work I particularly like the way Daniel has done his best to guess at and articulate the 'thoughts' of the players as they might be imagined. This verbalization of how ideas and plans are conceived by the players, together with the author's hindsight and foresight, is extremely valuable, making study of the subject-matter far more useful and easy for the reader. For this we should be grateful, and Daniel can be proud.

Yasser Seirawan, September 2012

Chapter 1

What Are Complex Endings?

What exactly is this book about? Are complex endings queenless positions where there are many pieces on the board, or are they endgames with many tactical possibilities?

In truth, complex endings are **positions in which neither side can depend entirely on endgame theory and common themes in order to find ideas.**

Consider the following example:



1. Sandipan-Hertneck

German Bundesliga 2002/03

The position on the board looks rather mundane – White will simply consolidate his pieces, and his material advantage coupled with the awkward placement of Black's king should tell.

Yet a seasoned reader will notice that there is much more here than meets the eye – in fact, it is even hard to provide a definitive assessment of the position. White is already faced with a nagging dilemma: whether to opt for the materialistic b2-b4, keeping his material advantage intact, or to choose a more active move such as $\mathbb{Q}d1$, giving up the b2-pawn but activating the rook in return. Note the two fundamentally opposite approaches here: **whether to attack, or to defend.** This vital

theme will be covered in great detail later on, but for now, let's try to reconstruct Sandipan's train of thought:

'Clearly, I can't dillydally. Black has countless annoying moves at his disposal, including ... $\mathbb{R}c8$ and ... $\mathbb{K}h6$. I would love to play b2-b4 and keep my material advantage, but what would I do after, say, ... $\mathbb{K}h6$ followed by ...e6-e5-e4? My pawn majority on the queenside will not go anywhere without the support of another rook. Let's take a look at the other option – $\mathbb{Q}d1$. If ... $\mathbb{Q}xb2$, I'll reply $\mathbb{Q}d4$, and there's just no way Black can consolidate his pieces in time to defend his king. On the other hand, I'll be threatening $\mathbb{Q}h4\#$ and on ... $\mathbb{K}h6$, I can at least play $\mathbb{Q}e5$ or $\mathbb{Q}g3$, when Black will clearly be in serious trouble. Something like ... $\mathbb{R}c8$ after $\mathbb{Q}d1$ is also harmless, as I can simply reply $\mathbb{Q}g3$, and Black's pieces are tangled up. So, $\mathbb{Q}d1$ it is!'

Note the logic here: just because an endgame is complex **does not mean** deep calculation is required. A player who has a vast and easily accessible arsenal of ideas will thrive in even the thorniest positions, while an inexperienced player will attempt to solve everything by means of brute-force calculation – a method which often leads to calamitous consequences.

Mastering Complex Endgames

Of course, this is certainly not to say that one can get by in every position without calculation! In fact, whether to calculate or to reason in general, positional terms will be an over-arching theme in the following pages. In this case, it is vital to determine that due to the passive and weak placement of Black's pieces, it is necessary to take immediate action and not worry about material losses.

1. $\mathbb{B}d1!$ $\mathbb{Q}h6!$

Hertneck stays on top. After 1... $\mathbb{Q}xb2$ 2. $\mathbb{B}d4$ $\mathbb{B}f6$ (2... $\mathbb{Q}h6$ 3. $\mathbb{B}g3$ $\mathbb{B}f5$ 4. $\mathbb{B}dg4!$ and following 5. $\mathbb{B}g8$ Black will not survive for long) 3. $\mathbb{B}h4+$ $\mathbb{B}h5$ 4. $\mathbb{B}b4!$ Black's position collapses. Note that 4. $\mathbb{B}xh6+$ $\mathbb{Q}xh6$ 5. $\mathbb{B}e5$ $\mathbb{Q}c4$ 6. $\mathbb{B}xe6+$ $\mathbb{Q}g5$ is much less clear.

2. $\mathbb{B}g3$ $\mathbb{Q}c5!$

Yet again, Hertneck makes the right decision. Of course, 2... $\mathbb{Q}xb2$ still fails to 3. $\mathbb{B}d4$. Hertneck realizes that the only way he can keep his position together is by re-routing the knight to the wonderful square e4. If White allows Black to further tighten the screws, the tables will turn rather quickly. Therefore, Sandipan immediately activates his sleeping d1-rook.

3. $\mathbb{B}c1$ $\mathbb{Q}e4$ 4. $\mathbb{B}g4$ $\mathbb{Q}h5$ 5. $\mathbb{B}g7$



As a result of his fine play, White has made serious inroads into Black's position. Playing Black in this position is no easy task, and yet **being able to defend bad endgame positions is just as important as being able to realize an advantage**.

In this case, Black needs to understand that saving the b-pawn is pointless, as White will still be able to create a passed pawn. Fatigued and in time trouble, Hertneck nevertheless manages to come up with the right move.

5... $\mathbb{Q}g5!$

An excellent practical chance. From an objective point of view, this move might not be the best, but this is not important. However, Hertneck is willing to take a risk and his valiance will certainly not go unrewarded.

This leads us to another recurring theme that we will discuss later on: **passive vs. active defense**. A computer almost always prefers the former, but this is solely due to its infinite patience. You often have to place yourself in your opponent's shoes and think about what will be unpleasant for him.

6. $\mathbb{B}xb7$ $\mathbb{Q}g4$ 7. $\mathbb{Q}e1$ $\mathbb{Q}f4$



White now is an exchange up, but Black has succeeded in activating his pieces.

Clearly, one misstep could equal a draw or even a loss for White!

8.a4?*

Natural but incorrect. At this point, I encourage the reader to pause and try to find the correct move.

In order to discover the right plan, it is vital to understand what Black's idea is. This is not too hard to see: Black will play ... $\mathbb{Q}e4$ and ... $\mathbb{B}h8$, when his threats along the back rank will become very serious. Then, think about ways you can stop this idea.

In this case, White has only one logical way to parry Black's threats: 8. $\mathbb{B}bc7$!. This outwardly awkward move contains many ideas. White doesn't burn any bridges, and 8... $\mathbb{Q}e4$ 9. $\mathbb{B}c8$ $\mathbb{B}f5$ 10. $\mathbb{B}h8$ leads to an advantageous position for White. The computer shows near equality after 10... $\mathbb{B}g5$ 11. $\mathbb{B}h1$ $\mathbb{B}g2$, but after 12. $\mathbb{B}f1$ it is clear that White is the only one who has chances. Did such a strong player as Sandipan overlook this idea? No! He simply could not resist the understandable temptation to parry Black's threats by means of active play. However, in this specific case, White's counterplay will be too slow.

8... $\mathbb{B}h8$

Black doesn't tarry and pounces on his opportunity. As a result of Black's bravery and White's imprecise handling of the position, Hertneck now has serious winning chances. Undeniably, the position is objectively slightly better for White, but in this case, objective evaluations could not matter less. In fact, trying to evaluate a position from a computer's point of view (during a game) is a major cause of endgame errors.

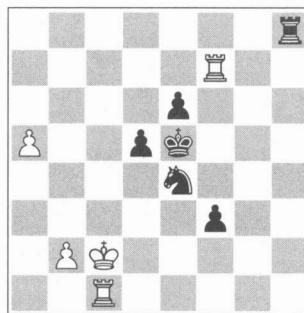
9.a5 $\mathbb{Q}e4$

The tension escalates with every move. Black is now threatening mate in one, and White's next moves are forced.

10. $\mathbb{B}f7+$ $\mathbb{Q}e5$ 11. $\mathbb{Q}d1$

Of course, 11. $\mathbb{B}xf3$ lost after 11... $\mathbb{B}h1+$, winning the rook.

11... $\mathbb{Q}xf2+$ 12. $\mathbb{Q}c2$ $\mathbb{Q}e4$



13.b4!?

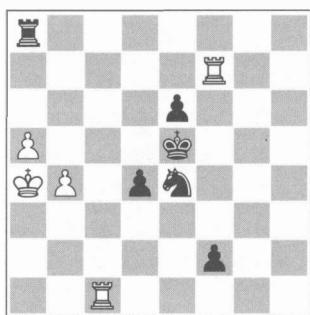
A brave decision, and once again, one that should not have gone unrewarded. Unfortunately for White, 13. $\mathbb{B}xf3$ is met by 13... $\mathbb{B}h2+$, when White has to give up the b2-pawn in view of the knight forks: 14. $\mathbb{Q}d1$ $\mathbb{B}h1+!$? 15. $\mathbb{Q}c2$ $\mathbb{B}h2+$ with a draw by perpetual (Hertneck).

13...f2 14. $\mathbb{Q}b2$??

Natural, yet inaccurate. White evidently refrained from 14. $\mathbb{Q}b3$ on account of 14... $f1\mathbb{Q}$, but in fact the position after 15. $\mathbb{B}cx1$ $\mathbb{Q}d2+$ 16. $\mathbb{Q}a4$ $\mathbb{Q}xf1$ 17. $\mathbb{B}xf1$ is winning for White, as his pawns are very far advanced and Black's pawns are tangled up and immobile. Note that further analysis here is unnecessary – it is clear that in a practical game, with the clock mercilessly ticking and fatigue

starting to settle in, Black will never be able to save this position.

After 14.♔b3, Black would have had to find 14...♜a8! (14...♝h3+, the move I preferred in my original analysis, is much less precise. Following 15.♕b2 ♜d4 16.a6 ♜h2 White has the dagger 17.♗c2!) in order to draw. If 15.♔a4, Black plays 15...d4, and we reach an intriguing position.



Analysis diagram

At first sight, Black seems to be losing, but in fact things are far from simple. The most natural and best for White here is to play 16.b5, but then Black replies 16...d3. During my analysis, I came upon the following unbelievable variation: 17.♗b4 ♜c8!! 18.♗d1 (18.♗xc8 loses after 18...d2 19.♗d8 ♜d6!) 18...♜c2 19.a6 ♜b2+ 20.♔c4 ♜d6+ 21.♔c3 ♜xb5 22.♗xf2. Once again, it seems as though Black is in trouble, but after 22...♝e4+ 23.♔c4 he has the neat intermezzo 23...♜c5+!. After 24.♔b4 ♜xf2 25.♗xc5 ♜xd1 26.a7 d2 27.a8♝ ♜f2 (or 27...♝c3), White has no way to win the d2-pawn! In fact, it is White who has to initiate the draw after 28.♗h8+ ♜e4 29.♗d4+ (time to resign for Black?) 29...♔f3 (no!) 30.♗xd2 ♜e4+ 31.♔d4 ♜xd2 32.♔e5 and the game finally ends in a draw!

So, endgames ain't so boring, are they? What's unique about endgames is that quite often, the evaluation of the position will depend upon a minuscule detail that can only be unearthed through careful and sometimes tedious analysis. However, as we have just seen, this analysis can be quite rewarding! Nothing rivals the feeling of getting to the bottom of a complex position!

14...♜b8 15.♔a3 ♜g8?!

Natural, logical, but inaccurate! Of course, I am no one to reprimand Hertneck here, as I have made far worse endgame blunders in much better situations, but it is important to note that natural moves are often the hidden culprit.

It was necessary to activate the king with 15...♜d4, and after 16.a6 ♜b6 17.a7 ♜a6+ 18.♔b2 ♜d6 the game once again peters out into a draw.



16.♗f3?!

White misses his chance. Following 16.♗f1!, with the possible intention of taking on f2, Black's position would have grown rather shaky. In fact, Black should still be able to save the draw, but it was better to keep the rook on b8, where it constantly restrains White's

passed pawns, thereby untying Black's hands for further action in the center.

16...♝g1 17.♚b2 ♚d6!

Black plays this stage of the game excellently. He realizes that White has defended against his onslaught, and that it is time to leave unrealistic dreams alone and draw the game. White will still have a symbolic advantage, but the draw will not be hard to make.

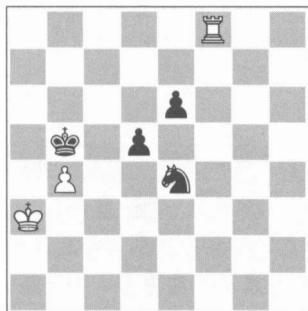
18.♖a6 ♜xc1 19.♗xc1 ♜c7 20.♖f7+ ♜b6 21.a7f1♛+

An important idea. Notice that if White's king had been on c2, this move would have failed on account of a8♛+!

22.♖xf1 ♜xa7 23.♗b2 ♜b6

The endgame is drawn. Black's king safely restrains White's passer, and Black's own pawns tie down White's rook. Of course, Black still needs to remain vigilant.

24.♖f8 ♜b5 25.♔a3



25...d4??

An unfortunate blunder.

It's likely that Black was simply exhausted here, and didn't have the strength to finish the job. In any case, there is no need to make committal moves here – the simple 25...♝d6 or the more adventurous 25...e5 (when 26.♜e8 is met by 26...♝d2) drew the game easily.

26.♖f4

Black does not have a good knight retreat, since his king is blocking the important b5-square. Black will lose the d4-pawn, and with it, the game.

26...♞c3 27.♖xd4 e5 28.♖d3 ♜c4 29.♖xc3+!

An awesome way to end the game. White calculates until the very end.

29...♝xc3 30.b5

1-0

After 30...e4 31.b6 e3 32.b7 e2 33.b8♛ e1♛ 34.♛b4+ White wins the queen.

What can we take out of this rich and well-played game? First of all, notice that both players consistently made strong moves. Taking into account the complexity of the position and the fact that both Sandipan and Hertneck were probably exhausted, this is quite a formidable achievement.

How does one come about finding strong moves in muddy and tricky endgames? This question obviously cannot be answered immediately. In fact, we will spend the rest of the book trying to discover why and how strong players make powerful moves.

One important rule of thumb is **never to calculate what you don't need to**. In the heat of the battle, it is often quite tempting to look at catchy lines that are unlikely to occur in the game or arise from a line that you have already discarded. When faced with an important decision, you have to evaluate the nature of the position and decide whether calculation is at all necessary. If yes, start calculating immediately. Create a list of candidate moves and examine them systematically.

It is vital to realize that strong moves cannot be made without hard work – it might seem that grandmasters play effortlessly, but in fact they work like lions during the game! At the end of the game, Hertneck probably relaxed – once again, considering his fatigue and the fact that he had played the whole game on a very high level, this is completely forgivable. And yet, the most important and basic rule for playing all endgames that we take out of this game is **never to relax and work hard at every critical juncture**.

All mistakes – whether it's over-aggressiveness or blunders, usually stem not from a player's inability to understand or comprehend ideas, but because of an innate reluctance to work hard at the board.

But if endgames are only about working hard and not about knowing ideas, what's the point of this book?

This is an excellent question. I mentioned at the beginning of the chapter that a player with a vast arsenal of ideas will be much more successful in the endgame than a player whose arsenal is practically empty. It is quite true that an inexperienced player can produce a masterpiece, but it is very important to note that **the knowledge of ideas will decrease the necessity to calculate and start back from the beginning at every critical moment**.

If you know, for example, that a certain position is winning, you will be able to end your calculations in that position, instead of calculating until the end every time. This will not only save you time and energy, but also decrease the chance for a mistake! The longer one calculates, the higher the chances for an error!

All of this may sound a bit vague – and understandably so.

Hopefully, the following game will clear things up. An attentive reader will pay attention not only to the variations, but also to the way in which the white player balances the use of endgame ideas with sharp, accurate calculation.



2. Suetin-Gufeld

Tbilisi 1969

I first discovered this gem in IM Mikhail Shereshevsky's wonderful book *Endgame Strategy*. However, in order to retain as much originality as possible, I've analyzed this game without looking at his book! The temptation when reading excellent endgame manuals is to quote all of the analysis and not examine the game yourself.

The position on the board looks drawish. White is clearly the one who is holding all the cards, but it isn't even remotely clear how White will break through. Of course, there is absolutely no need to agree to a draw before all the resources have been exhausted. At the very least, White can try to break with b3-c4 and see if Black panics. For now, White improves the position of his king.

**1.♔d4 ♜h8 2.♕d2 ♜hd8 3.♔e3
♜h8 4.♗f1 ♜he8**



So far, so good. But what now? White has improved his position to the maximum, but it still is not clear how to make even the slightest progress.

In my view, there is no such thing as a drawn endgame! Even if the position is objectively drawn, you might have excellent practical chances to win the game. Realizing this, Suetin decides on a very tricky and potentially rewarding move.

5.c4!

While this move should not have presented Black with many problems, its practical value is very high. In fact, White could have played 5.b3 first, but this was almost certainly what Black was expecting. Black can simply reply 5...♝d8 and after 6.c4 ♔e7 White cannot make any progress.

5....♝f8?!

Imprecise. Even in the most innocuous-looking positions, one minuscule inaccuracy can be the difference between a draw and a loss. Gufeld was probably under the impression that everything draws here, but as Suetin demonstrates, this is far from the case.

In fact, both 5...dxc4 and 5...bcx4 seem to do the job. After 5...bcx4 6.b3 cxb3 7.♗xa6+ ♔c7 8.♗xb3 ♜eb8 I can't see a way for White to improve his position. Note that 9.♗c3, with the idea of 10.♗d4, even loses after 9...♝xc5+.

The other move, 5...dxc4, looks a bit more dubious but once again I cannot find a way for White to make inroads after 6.♗g2 ♜ed8 7.♗xe4 ♜e8. White might try for g3-g4 at some point, but Black should be able to defend, since White cannot abandon the a-file completely on account of ...a6-a5.

So what should White do now? As we have done in the previous game, let's try to reconstruct Suetin's train of thought here:

'If I somehow don't open the a-file to my advantage, I might as well agree to a draw. After 6.cxb5 axb5, I obviously cannot trade rooks because the ensuing endgame will be dead drawn. But how about 7.♗xb5 ?'



Analysis diagram

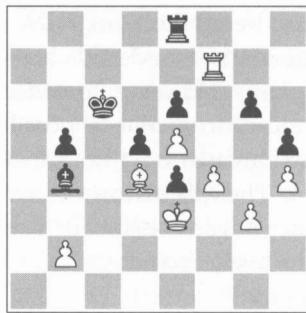
Now, 7...cxb5 fails to 8.c6+, while on 7... $\mathbb{E}xa3+$ I will be able to play 8. $\mathbb{E}xa3$ cxb5 9.c6+, and now if 9... $\mathbb{Q}xc6$ I'll win the bishop back with 10. $\mathbb{E}a6+$ $\mathbb{Q}b/d7$ 11. $\mathbb{E}a7+$. In the ensuing endgame, I should have serious winning chances, since my king is restraining his passed pawn while Black's own pawns are very weak. In any case, there is no other way to go besides agreeing to a draw!

Sure enough, Suetin plays

6.cxb5 axb5 7. $\mathbb{Q}xb5!$

A beautiful move and a wonderful practical chance. And yet, an inaccuracy from an objective point of view! In order to prosper in complex endings, it is vital to note that computer evaluations **do not matter at all** during the game. It is true that Fritz or Rybka would draw this position without any effort, but that doesn't matter! Many players will refrain from playing ambitious moves because they entail risk and might be objectively wrong. But who cares? You're playing a human, not a computer (most of the time, at least!), and the only way to beat strong players is by taking risks.

**7... $\mathbb{E}xa3+$ 8. $\mathbb{E}xa3$ cxb5 9.c6+ $\mathbb{Q}xc6$ 10. $\mathbb{E}a6+$ $\mathbb{Q}b7$ 11. $\mathbb{E}a7+$ $\mathbb{Q}c6$
12. $\mathbb{E}xf7$ $\mathbb{Q}xb4$**



After a series of forced moves, the position has completely transformed. At first, it might seem as though White is completely winning due to Black's weak pawns, but in fact things are far from clear.

For now, Black is a pawn up. Of course, White will win it back, but this will give Black ample time to consolidate his pieces and organize counterplay. Black's e4-pawn is safely restrained for now, but if Black can get his rook to c2, White's king will suddenly start feeling a bit uncomfortable!

Overall, the arrows all point one way: White has to play dynamically and he simply cannot afford to waste time on the improvement of his position.

13. $\mathbb{E}f6$ $\mathbb{Q}d7!$ 14. $\mathbb{E}xg6$ $\mathbb{E}c8$

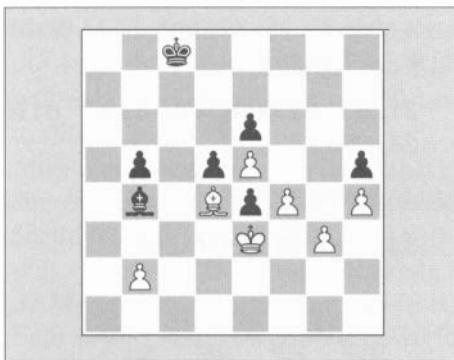
Suddenly, Black starts playing like a machine and a single inaccuracy by White could result in a loss! Luckily for Suetin, the game was only recently adjourned, and he therefore had time to thoroughly analyze this position. Even without much calculation, however, it is quite clear that White has no choice but to trade rooks.

15. $\mathbb{E}g7+$

The only other possible alternative, 15.g4, fails to impress after 15... $\mathbb{E}c2$

16.f5 ♖d2+ 17.♔e2 ♖f4+ 18.♔f1 ♜c4! (an important move: White's threatening-looking pawn armada is completely restrained by Black's king) 19.♕b6 and Black can either draw with 19...♜c1+ 20.♔e2 ♜c2+ or go for the throat with 19...hxg4, when the computer shows an advantage for Black!

15...♔e8 16.♗g8+ ♔d7 17.♗g7+ ♔e8 18.♗g8+ ♔d7 19.♗xc8 ♔xc8



Have White's resources been exhausted? Is it time to play 20.♔f2 and offer a draw? Such pessimism is rarely the recipe for success in a chess game. Whether it's getting yourself together after an error, or trying to win an objectively drawn position, you have to remain optimistic.

A common misconception is that optimism and overconfidence are synonyms. In my view, this is quite untrue. Remaining upbeat and optimistic during a game will allow your mind to search for risky, but sometimes rewarding continuations. If you constantly reprimand yourself and do not even think about winning the game, you will often find yourself drifting into passivity and giving your opponent an easy point. Overconfidence is simply the tendency to over-

estimate your chances in a given position. Yes, you have to remain realistic, but that does not mean you can never go for a risky and possibly unsound continuation; as mentioned in the comment to White's sixth move, those that do not risk do not beat strong players!

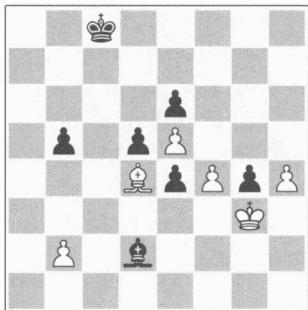
With that in mind, I recommend for the reader to pause and try to find a good move for White. The first that came to my mind when looking at this position were the moves 20.f5 and 20.g4. Both are an attempt to clear the path for White's king and make use of the temporary passivity of the enemy monarch. However, I quickly discovered that 20.f5 failed after 20...exf5 21.♔f4 ♖d2+! (this move can be easy to miss!) 22.♔xf5 e3 and although White still has some drawing chances, it is clear that he will not be able to win the game.

This left the other alternative, 20.g4. White's idea is simple: he sacrifices a pawn, but in turn creates a powerful outside passer. Giving up a pawn in an endgame is no minor investment, but dealing with a far-advanced passer isn't an easy task either! Suetin pounces on his opportunity:

20.g4! hxg4 21.♔f2!?

Objectively speaking, this might be a slight inaccuracy, but in fact, after the 'correct' 21.h5 Black draws easily following 21...♗f8 22.♔f2 ♗h6 23.♔g3 ♖d7 24.♔xg4 ♔e8 25.f5 ♔f7, and White cannot break through Black's rock-solid defensive bastions.

21...♔d2 22.♔g3



22...e3??

Black finally errs! Of course, this is far from coincidental. White took risk after risk, forcing Black to constantly be on the lookout for threats and find only moves. Evidently, Black thought that he had no way to stop White's pawn and therefore panicked, trying to promote his own passer. Instead, the cold-blooded 22... $\mathbb{Q}d7$ would have drawn the game. For example, after 23. $\mathbb{Q}xg4$ $\mathbb{Q}e8$ 24.h5 $\mathbb{Q}f7$ we reach a position analogous to the one in the comment to White's 20th move. He cannot obtain even a sliver of winning chances.

**23.h5 e2 24. $\mathbb{Q}f2$ e1 \mathbb{Q} 25. $\mathbb{Q}xe1$
 $\mathbb{Q}xe1+$ 26. $\mathbb{Q}xg4$**



Amazingly, Black is still able to stop White's pawn, but in the ensuing tactical skirmish White will wind up on top!

**26... $\mathbb{Q}b4$ 27.h6 $\mathbb{Q}f8$ 28.h7 $\mathbb{Q}g7$
29. $\mathbb{Q}g5$**

Of course, White has no time to waste. Note the accuracy and depth of White's tactical abilities; when playing $\mathbb{Q}f2$, he had to see all this! One slight error and the tables can turn instantaneously.

29...d4 30. $\mathbb{Q}g6$ $\mathbb{Q}h8$ 31.f5!

Another great move. Note that 31. $\mathbb{Q}f7$ loses after 31...d3 32. $\mathbb{Q}g8$ d2 33. $\mathbb{Q}xh8$ d1 \mathbb{Q} 34. $\mathbb{Q}g8$ $\mathbb{Q}g4+$.

**31...d3 32.fxe6 d2 33.e7 d1 \mathbb{Q}
34.e8 \mathbb{Q} +**

Just in time!

34... $\mathbb{Q}d8$ 35. $\mathbb{Q}c6+$ $\mathbb{Q}b8$



36. $\mathbb{Q}f7!$

The only winning move. White now threatens 37. $\mathbb{Q}d6+$, winning instantly. However, Black *still* doesn't give up. If you turn on a computer here, it will show a gigantic advantage for White, but in fact winning the position isn't as easy as might seem. It is vital to remain vigilant until the end and never relax until the scoresheets are signed.

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

Of course, 36... $\mathbb{Q}xe5$ failed to 37. $\mathbb{W}xb5+$ and White picks up the bishop.

37. $\mathbb{W}d6?$

Fatigued and fed up with constant calculation, White commits a serious error. Even grandmasters are human, and no human has an infinite amount of energy. Instead, the subtle 37. $\mathbb{W}c5+!$ won immediately, as 37... $\mathbb{Q}a6$ loses to 38. $\mathbb{W}d6+$ while 37... $\mathbb{Q}b7$ loses following 38. $\mathbb{W}xb5+$ $\mathbb{Q}a7$ 39. $\mathbb{W}c6!$ and Black will either lose the bishop or will have to allow a queen trade.

After comparing my analysis to that of Shereshevsky's, I found that both he and Suetin considered 37. $\mathbb{W}d6$ to be the only move. Shereshevsky looked at 37. $\mathbb{W}c5+ \mathbb{Q}b7$ 38. $\mathbb{W}xb5+ \mathbb{Q}a7$, but both he and Suetin missed the powerful 39. $\mathbb{W}c6$, winning immediately. They might have failed to spot that 39... $\mathbb{W}b8$ loses after 40. $\mathbb{W}a4+ \mathbb{Q}b7$ 41. $\mathbb{W}b3+$, and *Rybka* proudly proclaims that White has mate in 12!

As the book was first published in 1985 (chess engines were still in their baby stages), this mistake is quite understandable, and in no way detracts from the overall brilliance of Shereshevsky's groundbreaking work. However, the unfortunate truth is that few endgame books written before the computer era can be trusted verbatim – it's practically impossible to successfully analyze the inordinate amount of variations that arise in tactical endings! When flipping through such books, my advice is to focus on the overall ideas and motifs, and not on specific analysis; a valuable endgame tip can be of much more help than pages of exhaustive analysis.

37... $\mathbb{W}c8! 38.e6 \mathbb{W}c2!$

Of course, White is still better – probably even winning. However, all of White's previous work has been nullified, and he will have to start all over again.

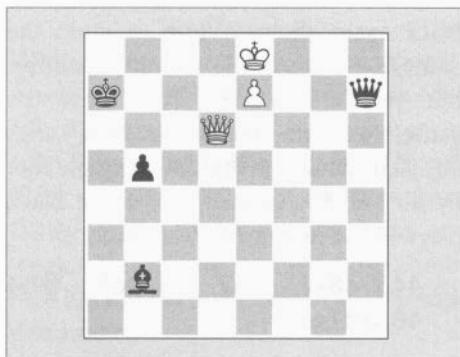
39.e7

White correctly asserts that pawns could not matter less here; White would much rather advance his passed pawn one square closer to promotion than defend the h7-pawn, thereby giving Black valuable time to consolidate his pieces.

39... $\mathbb{W}xh7+ 40.\mathbb{Q}e8$

40. $\mathbb{Q}e6$ looks good, but Black has the strong 40... $\mathbb{W}h3+!$, drawing on the spot!

40... $\mathbb{Q}xb2$



An incredible position has arisen on the board. Black is a whole piece up, and yet he is on the verge of losing. Fortunately for White, his pieces are optimally placed to support the e7-pawn while Black's own queen and bishop are completely uncoordinated.

41. $\mathbb{Q}d8 \mathbb{W}h4$

Mastering Complex Endgames

Black finds the only move! Note that White's excellently placed queen on d6 prevents the deadly ... $\mathbb{Q}f6$.

42. $\mathbb{Q}c8?$!

The real mistake will come on the next move, but already White takes a step in the wrong direction. The correct move was 42. $\mathbb{W}d7+$, and after 42... $\mathbb{Q}b6$ 43. $\mathbb{W}e6+$ $\mathbb{Q}b7$ 44. $\mathbb{W}d5+$ $\mathbb{Q}b6$ 45. $\mathbb{Q}d7$ White has serious winning chances, although the position should be objectively drawn after 45... $\mathbb{W}h7$.

42... $\mathbb{W}e4!$

The only move, but a strong one!

43. $\mathbb{W}c5+?$

Tempting, but erroneous. In fact, it was not too late to repeat moves with 43. $\mathbb{Q}d8$ and get back on the right track.

43... $\mathbb{Q}a6?$

Black again allows White to undo the damage. Instead, the counter-intuitive but very strong 43... $\mathbb{Q}a8!$ drew the game. 44. $\mathbb{Q}d8$ leads nowhere after 44... $\mathbb{Q}f6$ while 44. $\mathbb{W}xb5$ is strongly met by 44... $\mathbb{W}e6+$ 45. $\mathbb{Q}d8$ and again Black plays 45... $\mathbb{Q}f6$, drawing the game.

**44. $\mathbb{W}d6+! \mathbb{Q}a7 45. \mathbb{Q}d8 \mathbb{W}h4$
46. $\mathbb{W}d7+!$**

Back on track! With the position nearly lost and exhaustion invading his mind, Black was simply unable to put up much of a resistance. As mentioned in the note to White's 41st move, the position should be objectively drawn, but actually defending it is quite a daunting task.

46... $\mathbb{Q}b6 47. \mathbb{W}e6+ \mathbb{Q}b7 48. \mathbb{W}d5+ \mathbb{Q}b6 49. \mathbb{Q}d7 \mathbb{W}h7 50. \mathbb{W}e6+ \mathbb{Q}a7?$

The decisive mistake. After 50... $\mathbb{Q}b7$ 51. $\mathbb{W}c6+$ $\mathbb{Q}a7$ 52. $\mathbb{W}xb5 \mathbb{W}g7$ I can't see a clear-cut way for White to make progress, but I would certainly love to see how any human would defend this position for 50 more moves!

51. $\mathbb{Q}c8! \mathbb{W}c2+ 52. \mathbb{Q}d8$

White finally promotes!

52... $\mathbb{Q}b7$

52... $\mathbb{W}d2+$ lost immediately after 53. $\mathbb{W}d7+$, interposing with a deadly check.

**53. $\mathbb{W}d7+ \mathbb{Q}b6 54. \mathbb{W}d6+ \mathbb{Q}b7$
55. $e8\mathbb{W} \mathbb{Q}f6+$**



56. $\mathbb{Q}d7!$

1-0

A fitting end to an incredible game. As Shereshevsky notes, Suetin was awarded 'a special prize for the best endgame of the tournament' – and quite deservedly so.

What stood out for me when I looked through this game was the unbelievable quality of it. Yes, mistakes were made, but taking into account the fatigue of the players and the complexity of the ending itself, the game was played on an insanely high level. Gufeld defended like a lion, but Suetin pressed on with merciless precision.

Having said all of this, a fundamental question arises: ‘How did the players find all of these moves?’ I cannot emphasize enough the importance of knowing endgame ideas. A player with limited endgame knowledge would have spent much more time on 19.g4 than one who has studied endgames. However, without sharp analytical abilities, one would have never been able to correctly assess the consequences of the sacrifice. One slight miscalculation, and White would have lost the game on the spot.

All of this comes to show that two fundamental skills are **required** to master the art of the endgame: **the ability to calculate long (possibly unforced) lines and evaluate the resulting position, and the ability to apply general endgame ideas to a specific position**. Generic knowledge of common endgame themes is not enough; it is only through the careful examination of countless complex endings that one is truly able to imbibe the elusive liquid of strong endgame technique.

This brings us to another important point: **Stereotyping in the endgame is a major cause of mistakes**. As an example, let’s take the queen + knight vs. queen + bishop tandems. It is quite true that as a rule, the queen and knight work better together than the queen and bishop – we will later examine the specific reasons behind this pattern. However, one should never make decisions based on a general pattern; every concrete game should be considered separately. Yes, statistics do prove that the side with the queen and knight wins more games than the side with the queen and bishop, but this does not mean there aren’t exceptions to the rule!

This might seem rather obvious to the seasoned reader, but in the heat of the battle, thinking rationally can be much more challenging. Usually, such stereotyping occurs at a subconscious level.

Consider the following game as an illustration of the above:



3. Naroditsky-Sandberg

San Francisco 2008

The opening was a complete debacle for me, but I managed to recover and found myself faring rather well.

White’s queen and bishop are coordinated perfectly. They dominate the board and attack Black’s weak queen-side pawn chain. On the other hand, Black’s queen and knight are mere spectators. White doesn’t really have any weaknesses in his position, and therefore his king is quite safe from any sudden attacks.

1... ♜b7?

Quite probably, Black was under the **mistaken impression that the queen and knight are superior to the queen in bishop in practically any position**. My opponent is an aggressive young player, and therefore his judgment might have been a little over-ambitious. Had he looked at the position from an

unprejudiced point of view, the drawing move 1...a3! would not have been hard to find. After 2.bxa3 $\mathbb{W}xa3$ Black holds without trouble.

2. $\mathbb{Q}e2$

Preparing the pawn storm g4-h4, and practically forcing Black's next weakening move. Being greedy with 2. $\mathbb{W}c5$ would have given Black a chance to activate his pieces by means of 2... $\mathbb{W}d7$ 3. $\mathbb{W}xb5$ $\mathbb{W}d2!$ 4. $\mathbb{W}e2$ $\mathbb{W}c1$, when the position is completely unclear.

2...h5



After my opponent had played this move, I settled into a long think. White has a few logical plans:

A) Place the king on e1, from where it will defend the important d2-square and thus give the white queen more freedom.

B) Insist on playing g3-g4 by means of $\mathbb{Q}g2$ (since h2-h3 immediately is thwarted by ... $\mathbb{W}c7$ and ...h5-h4, with great counterplay), and follow it up by h2-h3 and g3-g4, trying to open up the position of Black's king and possibly utilize the a2-g8 diagonal.

I was leaning towards plan A before I realized that after the king is placed on e1, Black will constantly have the

nagging idea ...h5-h4, and if g3-g4, ... $\mathbb{W}c7$, attacking the important h2-pawn and forcing a weakening of the g3-square. This left me with plan B – it was logical, and wasn't all that risky.

3. $\mathbb{Q}g2!$ $\mathbb{Q}g4!?$

This sets a trap, but the move in and of itself is completely useless.

4.h3

If White had played 4. $\mathbb{Q}xg4$ $hxg4$ 5. $\mathbb{W}d8+$ $\mathbb{Q}h7$ 6. $\mathbb{W}h4+$ $\mathbb{Q}g8$ 7. $\mathbb{W}xg4$, Black would achieve drawing counterplay by means of 7... $\mathbb{W}d7$, forcing White to play 8. $\mathbb{W}e2$, when the position after 8... $\mathbb{W}xf5$ is drawn.

4... $\mathbb{Q}f6$ 5.g4 $hxg4$ 6. $hxg4$ $\mathbb{Q}d5!$

Black finds a nice defense, setting a cool trap along the way. If White plays 7. $\mathbb{W}xe4??$, hoping for 7... $\mathbb{Q}xe3+$ 8. $\mathbb{Q}f3$ $\mathbb{W}xe4+$ 9. $\mathbb{Q}xe4$ with a winning endgame, Black plays 7... $\mathbb{Q}f4+!$ 8. $\mathbb{Q}f3$ $\mathbb{W}xe4+$ 9. $\mathbb{Q}xe4$ $\mathbb{Q}xe2$ with an extra piece.

7. $\mathbb{Q}f2$ b4!



Again, Black finds the objectively strongest defense. The point of this move is to confront White with a dilemma – he could risk it with c3-c4, hoping that his

pawn will be faster than Black's (after ...a4-a3), or he could choose the safe option with ♜c4 or cxb4, although it probably won't give more than a draw. At first, I was leaning towards 8.♕c4, but after calculating that Black isn't in much danger if he plays carefully, I started to doubt the fact that Black can generate counterplay connected with a passed pawn before White tears the monarch's residence apart with g4-g5 and c4-c5 followed by ♜c4+. Even if Black does get ...a4-a3 in, he will need at least two more moves before his threats become real, thus giving White ample time to organize a mating attack. Therefore:

8.c4!

I later discovered that my calculations were right; both 'safe' alternatives give White nothing if Black plays carefully:

A) 8.cxb4 ♜xb4 9.♕c4 ♜d3+ 10.♕xd3 exd3 is a draw.

B) 8.♕c4?! is a much better try, forcing Black to come up with a series of strong moves: 8...bxcc3! 9.♕xd5 (9.♕xd5?? ♜xd5 10.♕xd5 c2+) 9...♜xb2+ 10.♔g3 ♜b8+! (10...♜d2 is tempting, but after 11.♕xe4 c2 12.♜e8+ ♔h7 13.♕xf7! c1♚ 14.♕g8+ ♔h6 15.♕h8+ ♔g5 16.♕xg7# White delivers mate before Black) 11.♔g2 ♜b2+ and White cannot avoid perpetual check.

8...♜e7

On 8...♜f6, White wins very nicely: 9.g5 ♜d7 10.♕d6 a3 11.c5 axb2 12.c6 ♜b6 13.♕xd7! b1♚ 14.c7 and despite having a huge material advantage at the moment, Black cannot stop White from promoting.

9.♕d6!

It's important to combine defense with attack. White improves the position of his queen and stops ...a4-a3 at the same time. The rash 9.c5? would have lead to dire consequences after 9...a3 10.bxa3 bxa3 11.♕a1 ♜b2 12.♕d1 ♜c6! (12...a2?! 13.♕d8+ ♔h7 14.♕xe7 a1♚ 15.♕h4+ is only a draw) 13.♕d5 a2 and Black even wins.

9...♜c6?

Finally, after coming up with some very nice defensive resources, Black collapses. I think that Black simply underestimated the strength of the deadly g5-g6 advance, forcing Black to open up the a2-g8 diagonal. However, it's hard to recommend a good defense for Black. The most testing is probably 9...a3?! 10.bxa3 b3, but White gets a winning endgame after 11.♕d1 b2 12.♕c2 ♜xf5 13.gxf5 b1♚ 14.♕d8+ ♔h7 15.♕xb1 ♜xb1 16.♕d4 and I can't see a solution for Black.

10.g5



10...♜a8?!

This makes the job easier for White, but none of the other three options saved Black:

A) 10...a3 11.bxa3 b3 12. $\mathbb{Q}d1$ $\mathbb{Q}a5$ (12...b2 13. $\mathbb{Q}c2$ b1 \mathbb{W} 14. $\mathbb{Q}xb1$ $\mathbb{W}xb1$ 15. $\mathbb{W}xc6$ $\mathbb{W}b2+$ 16. $\mathbb{Q}g3$ $\mathbb{W}e5+$ 17. $\mathbb{Q}g4$ and White escapes perpetual check) 13. $\mathbb{W}d8+$ leads to a position where White has numerous ways to finish off the black monarch.

B) 10...f6 loses immediately after 11.c5 fxg5 12. $\mathbb{Q}c4+$ $\mathbb{Q}h7$ 13. $\mathbb{W}g6+$ $\mathbb{Q}h8$ 14. $\mathbb{W}h5\#$.

C) 10... $\mathbb{W}c8$ is certainly the best of the defenses, but White needs to make only one good move, namely 11. $\mathbb{Q}e1!$, and Black is lost. For example, after 11...a3 12.bxa3 b3 13. $\mathbb{Q}d1$ b2 14. $\mathbb{Q}c2$ $\mathbb{W}xf5$ 15. $\mathbb{W}xc6$ $\mathbb{W}xg5$ 16. $\mathbb{W}e8+$ $\mathbb{Q}h7$ 17. $\mathbb{W}xe4+$ Black loses.

11.g6 fxe6 12. $\mathbb{W}e6+$!

This is the fastest and easiest continuation.

12... $\mathbb{Q}f8$ 13.fxg6 $\mathbb{W}e8$ 14. $\mathbb{W}f5+$ $\mathbb{Q}g8$ 15.c5 $\mathbb{Q}e5$ 16.c6!

The last finesse. Both the c6- and the g6-pawns are untouchable.

16...a3

All other moves lost just as quickly: 16... $\mathbb{Q}xg6$ 17. $\mathbb{Q}c4+$ $\mathbb{Q}h8$ 18. $\mathbb{W}h5\#$; 16... $\mathbb{W}xg6$ 17. $\mathbb{Q}c4+$ $\mathbb{Q}h7$ 18. $\mathbb{W}h3+$ $\mathbb{W}h6$ 19. $\mathbb{W}xh6+$ $\mathbb{Q}xh6$ 20.c7.

17.c7 $\mathbb{Q}d7$ 18. $\mathbb{Q}c4+$

1-0

What should we take out of this game? First of all, note that Black's position started rapidly deteriorating after his first error. What is the reason for this? After all, Black's position looked rather plausible, and White's king was not too safe in its own right. All of these factors probably played a key role in Black's overestimation of his chances and subsequent errors.

Having said all of this, however, it is still not clear *how* to evaluate these types of positions. How should one decide whether to attack or defend? And how do different tandems fare in different types of positions? Once again, all of these questions cannot be answered without spending hours and hours studying a multitude of complex positions. In the following pages, I will attempt to answer these questions through the analysis of fascinating and yet infinitely tricky games.

The examples above were mainly designed to give you a sneak preview of the themes and quandaries which will be covered in this book. Here is a short recap:

- A) Complex endgames are endgames where the evaluation isn't immediately clear and there is no short and obvious path to a result. Usually, a complex endgame will be multi-piece and will revolve around one or more fundamental ideas. This stretches from something as seemingly minuscule as control of a file to a much more encompassing and over-arching theme, like the fight to stop or promote a passed pawn.
- B) Very often, as a result of a middlegame sacrifice, the game transforms into an endgame in which one side has unbalanced, dynamic compensation for a certain material loss. In those cases, both sides often have to make a lot of decisions. The side with the material disadvantage sometimes has to decide

whether to win the material back, or continue with the attack. If you are in time trouble in an endgame, it's important to look out for simple but hidden tactical dangers.

- C) Complex endgames don't have to contain many tactical variations.
- D) Very often, unusual endings arise when one tandem, which is statistically worse than another, prevails. If, for example, you have a knight and queen vs. a bishop and queen, you cannot assess the position based on the general rule that one tandem is 'better' than another. You have to look at the concrete situation on the board, and only then evaluate the position. In Naroditsky-Sandberg, Black probably felt he was better because he knew that the Knight + Queen tandem was statistically better than the Bishop + Queen tandem. Instead of making the correct decision and going for a draw, he played for a win, ignoring the fact that in the concrete situation, the bishop and queen were working together much more productively than the knight and queen.

The great English physicist Isaac Newton once said that 'I do not know what I may appear to the world, but to myself I seem to have been only like a boy playing on the sea-shore, and diverting myself in now and then finding a smoother pebble or a prettier shell than ordinary, whilst the great ocean of truth lay all undiscovered before me.'

Well, dear reader, buckle your seatbelts and hold on tight, for we are about to sail and possibly conquer the infinitely dangerous and mind-bendingly thorny ocean of complex endings.

Chapter 2

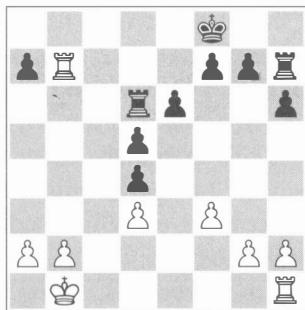
Rook Endgames

First and foremost, it is vital not to underscore the importance of knowing theoretical endings. Whether it's being able to save a rook and pawn vs. rook ending in time trouble or drawing a four on three, it's simply vital to memorize a certain amount of theoretical positions. With that being said, however, there is no shortage of excellent books on theoretical rook endings – a week or two spent on theoretical endings should be more than enough for the enthusiastic and keen reader. However, non-theoretical and practical rook endings arise much more often in real games. It is crucial not only to memorize the Philidor position, but to understand the complex interrelations between the rook(s), pawns and king and be able to successfully implement subtle ideas in practical endings.

The goal of this chapter is therefore to equip the reader with many ideas that are present in rook endgames (both single and double rook ones), so that the ideas can be utilized by the reader in similar positions. As the reader probably knows, the activity of your pieces is the most important rule of thumb in rook endgames. For example, having two passive rooks can spell big trouble, even if the side with the passive rooks has a substantial material advantage. Just as the middlegame, rook endings contain both beautiful tactics and subtle positional ideas. I hope that most of the ideas and games presented in this chapter will enhance the reader's endgame understanding and assist in real games.

Double Rook Endgames

Double rook endgames are typically more complicated and full of ideas than single rook endgames, but this is not always the case. There are a lot of interlacing ideas between double rook and single rook endgames, but usually double rook endgames resemble a middlegame struggle more than single rook endgames. Rook endgames contain an abundance of tactics, sacrifices, positional subtleties, and nuances. In fact, two rooks are more than enough mating material, and as we shall see, dazzling attacks can be created with no more than two seemingly innocuous rooks! Sometimes, you have to calculate a huge amount of variations in order to evaluate a position and come up with a good move. Also, you sometimes have to choose from a wealth of plans and ideas, all of which seem equally appealing. Analogously to single rook endings, the activity of the rooks and king is probably the number one priority in almost all positions. That is why I would like to start the chapter with a few positions where players needed to activate their pieces, but had to decide how and whether it was worth sacrificing material in order to improve them.



4. Reprintsev-Grigoriants

Russia Cup, Moscow 1999

In the double rook endgame shown, Black is a pawn up, but the extremely passive position of the h7-rook and the precarious placement of Black's monarch guarantee White good compensation. Obviously, White threatens to take on a7 and push the connected queenside passers to the 8th rank. Black has to make a hard decision: should he defend the a7-pawn and allow White's rooks to activate even further, or should he try to improve and activate his pieces by means of ...g7-g5, ...g7 and ...h8? When faced with the common decision of whether or not to sacrifice material for activity, you need to consider the following in order to make your decision:

A) Think logically. If you keep the material, will your pieces have another chance to get activated? Will your opponent obtain a strong attack that you won't be able to defend against because your pieces are completely passive? But if you do sacrifice material, will you really get your money's worth, or just hand your opponent an even bigger advantage?

B) Calculate concrete variations in order to see if there are any hidden resources or nuances that are difficult to find when simply assessing the position.

After mulling this over, make your decision. If it's still not totally obvious which decision you should make, use your intuition. If keeping the material is extremely dangerous but you can't find a way for your opponent to win, chances are that you're missing something. **Choose the continuation that gives you the most practical chances, not the continuation that forces you to defend passively for a long time.**

In the position on the board, Black has two options: he can keep the a7-pawn and try to defend against White's doubling along the 7th rank, or he can try to improve the position of his pieces by means of ...g7-g5, ...g7, and ...h8.

In the first case, the position after 27...a6 28.♖c1 g5 29.♖cc7 certainly looks scary (White can also try to win material with 29.♖c8+ ♔g7 30.♖a8, but here Black successfully activates his pieces after 30...h5! 31.♖ba7 ♖h6 32.♖xa6 e5! and Black's own pawn armada will save the day). However, if you forget about generalizations and ask yourself what White's next move is, the only thing you can come up with is the slow plan of pushing the pawn majority on the queenside. A possible variation is 29...h5 30.b4 e5 31.a4 g4 32.b5 axb5 33.axb5 (33.a5 gxf3 34.gxf3 h4 35.♖b6 ♖hh6) 33...f6 and the position is totally unclear. Calculating further is useless – it's clear that Black has major counterplay and it is unclear who has the advantage.

On the other hand, trying to improve the position of the king and the h7-rook with 27...g5 looks extremely slow, and the straightforward variation 28.♖xa7 ♔g7 29.♖c1 followed by ♖c7 proves that the 'improvement' of Black's

pieces is simply an illusion. Nevertheless, for some reason, Black played:

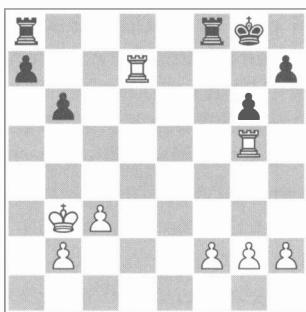
**27...g5? 28.♖xa7 ♜g7 29.♖c1 ♖h8
30.♖cc7 ♖f8 31.b4**

And now, of course, Black realized that his pieces are just as ‘active’ as they were before he sacrificed the a7-pawn. Actually, the position is almost the same except for the fact that Black is helpless against White’s monstrous connected passers.

This is a textbook case of an unsuccessful endgame pawn sacrifice; Black did not think the consequences through enough, and now he pays the price! The rest is just pure agony. Black’s counterplay comes when White is one move from promotion!

**31...♗b6 32.a3 ♜g6 33.♗b2 h5
34.♗b3 f6 35.a4 ♖fb8 36.b5 ♜f5
37.g3 h4 38.♗b4 hxg3 39.hxg3
e5 40.♖c5 ♖d6 41.a5 g4 42.fxg4+
♗xg4 43.b6 e4 44.♖c1 ♜f3
45.♖e7 e3 46.♗c5 ♖dd8 47.♗xd4
♖e8 48.♖xe8 ♖xe8 49.b7**

1-0



5. Van der Wiel-Ernst

Dutch Championship, Rotterdam 1998

White outplayed Black in a complicated middlegame struggle, but Black man-

aged to liquidate into the double rook endgame on the board.

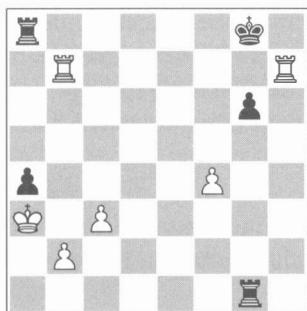
At first glance, White seems completely winning – not only is he a pawn up, but his pieces are extremely active, while Black’s are all on the 8th rank and are merely spectators to White’s complete domination.

However, it takes just two moves, ...♖f7 and ...♖e8, and Black’s pieces are suddenly alive. The arising four pawn vs. five pawn endgame is probably winning as we shall see, but Black certainly has good chances to hold in a real game. Another important factor is time – if the f2-pawn wasn’t hanging, White would simply have played 1.♖e5, with the idea of answering 1...♖f7 with 2.♖ee7, and the a8-rook cannot activate without weakening the a7/b6-pawns by means of ...a7-a6 or ...a7-a5, when the b6-pawn will be attacked from the rear. However, it does not take long to see that White can indeed sacrifice the f2-pawn and double on the 7th rank.

As in the last game, White has to make the same decision: should he sacrifice for further activity, or should he keep the material? Again, calculation is required. After 1.f3, Black’s best bet is to stop the transfer of the g5-rook to e7 by means of 1...♖fe8! (1...♖f7?! is much worse: 2.♖gd5 ♖xd7 3.♖xd7 ♖e8 4.h4! ♖e2 5.g4 ♖e3 6.g5 and Black cannot defend the a7- and b6-pawns) and here White has a choice:

A) 2.h4!? is an attempt to establish a stronghold on g7 by means of pushing the pawn to h6. Black’s only way to obtain counterplay is by pushing his pawn to a4 and penetrating to the 1st rank with the e8-rook. For example: 2...a5

3.h5 $\mathbb{H}e6$ 4.h6 a4+ 5. $\mathbb{Q}a2$ $\mathbb{H}e1!$ 6. $\mathbb{B}g7+$ $\mathbb{Q}h8$ 7. $\mathbb{B}b5$ $\mathbb{H}h1$ (the h6-pawn is the root of Black's troubles, so Black needs to eliminate it before attacking the g2-pawn) 8. $\mathbb{B}xb6$ $\mathbb{H}xh6$ 9. $\mathbb{B}bb7$ $\mathbb{H}h2$ 10. $\mathbb{Q}a3$ $\mathbb{B}xg2$ 11. $\mathbb{B}xh7+$ $\mathbb{Q}g8$ 12.f4 $\mathbb{B}g1!$



Analysis diagram

and although White should eventually win, it will take a very long time to rid Black of counterplay and win one of his pawns.

B) 2.f4 seems similar to 2.h4, but it has a hidden idea: after f4-f5, Black cannot defend the g6-pawn by means of ... $\mathbb{B}e6$. However, since the h-pawn hasn't yet moved, he can obtain good counterplay by means of 2... $\mathbb{B}ad8$ 3. $\mathbb{B}xa7$ $\mathbb{B}d2$, when already it's Black who's threatening to double on the 2nd rank, forcing White to make the awkward move 4. $\mathbb{Q}a2$. The position after 4... $\mathbb{B}ee2$ 5. $\mathbb{B}b5$ $\mathbb{B}xg2$ 6. $\mathbb{B}xb6$ $\mathbb{B}d8$ is far from clear. White has connected passers, but after Black takes on h2, his own passed h-pawn is no less dangerous.

Overall, White should be winning, but Black always achieves annoying counterplay, making it very difficult for White to make progress. Therefore, White continued to calculate, this time

looking at the sacrifice 1. $\mathbb{B}e5$: Black is forced to take the pawn with 1... $\mathbb{B}xf2$, and White doubles on the 7th rank with 2. $\mathbb{B}ee7$. After 2... $\mathbb{B}xg2$ 3. $\mathbb{B}g7+$ and 4. $\mathbb{B}xh7$ Black's position is critical – his pieces are totally scattered, and the rooks on the 7th rank should quickly become a deadly force. Intuition-wise, it really seems as though 1. $\mathbb{B}e5$ is the correct move – the weakness of Black's king will be a static factor, making it very hard for Black to find any counterplay. Therefore:

1. $\mathbb{B}e5!$ $\mathbb{B}xf2$ 2. $\mathbb{B}ee7$ $\mathbb{B}xg2$

As GM Victor Mikhalevski notes on *ChessBase*, 2...h5 loses after 3. $\mathbb{B}g7+$ $\mathbb{Q}f8$ 4. $\mathbb{B}xg6$.

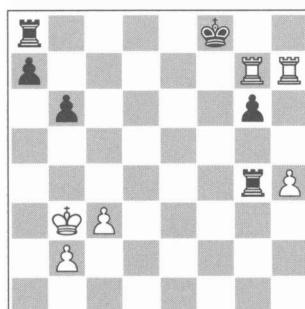
3. $\mathbb{B}g7+$ $\mathbb{Q}h8$

3... $\mathbb{Q}f8$ also loses after 4. $\mathbb{B}df7+$ $\mathbb{Q}e8$ 5. $\mathbb{B}f4$ $\mathbb{B}d8$ 6. $\mathbb{B}g8+$ $\mathbb{Q}d7$ 7. $\mathbb{B}d4+$ and White wins Black's rook (Müller & Lamprecht, *Fundamental Chess Endings*).

4. $\mathbb{B}xh7+$ $\mathbb{Q}g8$ 5.h4

The h-pawn will soon deliver the final blow. Black is helpless since he cannot activate any of his pieces.

**5... $\mathbb{B}g4$ 6. $\mathbb{B}dg7+$ $\mathbb{Q}f8$ 7. $\mathbb{B}b7$ $\mathbb{Q}g8$
8. $\mathbb{B}bg7+$ $\mathbb{Q}f8$**

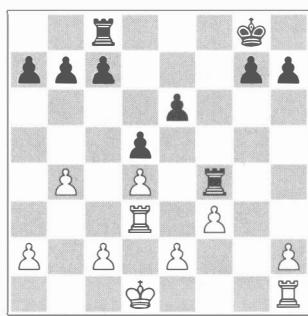


9.h5!

The last finesse. The pawn is untouchable because of 9...gxh5 10. $\mathbb{E}xg4$ hxg4 11. $\mathbb{E}h8+$, when White wins Black's rook.

Sometimes, in order to exploit weaknesses in your opponent's camp, you need to open up the position. Almost always, weaknesses cannot be attacked unless the position is open. In single rook endings, a weakness is often not too bad, as both the rook and king can defend it. On the other hand, in double rook endings, two rooks can switch from weakness to weakness, and the defending side will have an extremely hard time defending all of them.

The following position illustrates this idea:



6. Rudyak-Naroditsky

San Francisco 2008

The position on the board looks pretty balanced. It seems that White's strange-looking b4-pawn is compensated by the weak e6-pawn. However, if Black manages to open up the position, the weakness of the a2- and c2-pawns will become serious. This can be done in two ways: Black can try for ...e6-e5, or can play ...b7-b6/...c7-c5.

I liked the first idea, but the problem was that there would be only one weakness I could try to exploit – e2. After ...c7-c5, both the c2- and a2-pawns

9... $\mathbb{E}h4$ 10. $\mathbb{E}xg6$ $\mathbb{E}e8$ 11. $\mathbb{E}h6$ $\mathbb{E}e5$
 12. $\mathbb{E}c6$ $\mathbb{E}b5+$ 13. $\mathbb{Q}c2$ $\mathbb{E}h2+$
 14. $\mathbb{Q}d3$ $\mathbb{E}c5$ 15. $\mathbb{E}xc5$ $bxc5$
 16. $\mathbb{E}xa7$ $\mathbb{E}xh6$ 17. $\mathbb{Q}c4$ 1-0

Black cannot defend the c5-pawn.

would be under attack. Therefore, without much calculation, I chose:

1...b6!

It's clear that White cannot stop ...c7-c5, after which all of his weaknesses will be exposed. If the Black f4-rook had been, say, on f8, it would have been much harder to execute ...c7-c5, as ...b7-b6 would be met by $\mathbb{E}c3$. Since the d4-pawn will be hanging if White plays it now, he has to allow the breakthrough.

2. $\mathbb{Q}d2$ c5 3. $\mathbb{E}xc5$ $bxc5$ 4. $dxc5$
 $\mathbb{E}xc5$ 5. $\mathbb{E}b1$ $\mathbb{E}fc4$ 6. c3?!

When defending such positions, you shouldn't make additional concessions when you aren't forced to. In this case, the move c2-c3 locks out White's rook, making it practically impossible for White to defend the a2-pawn.

After 6. $\mathbb{E}b1$!, White's position would have been much tougher to crack. Black's winning plan should have consisted of pushing the a-pawn to a3, thus forcing White to play c2-c3 at some point. After 6...a5! 7. e4! g5 (7...dxe4?! leads to a drawn position after 8. fxe4

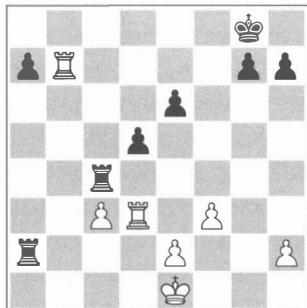
$\mathbb{H}xe4$ 9. $\mathbb{H}d8+$ $\mathbb{Q}f7$ 10. $\mathbb{H}b7+$ $\mathbb{Q}f6$ 11. $\mathbb{H}f8+$ $\mathbb{Q}e5$ 12. $\mathbb{H}xg7$ h6 13. $\mathbb{H}g3=$) 8. exd5 exd5 9. c3, White's position is considerably better than in the game, since the d5-pawn is now much weaker. Still, after 9... $\mathbb{H}h4$ 10. $\mathbb{Q}e3$ $\mathbb{Q}f7$ Black should slowly win by centralizing his king, when White eventually should collapse.

Also interesting is 6. $\mathbb{H}b8+!?$, and after 6... $\mathbb{Q}f7$ 7. $\mathbb{H}b7+$ $\mathbb{Q}f6$ 8. $\mathbb{H}xa7$ $\mathbb{H}xc2+$ 9. $\mathbb{Q}e3$ $\mathbb{H}b2!$ an intriguing position arises. White is very close to a draw, and yet he has to give up a pawn: 10. $\mathbb{H}b3+$ $\mathbb{H}xb3$ 11. axb3 $\mathbb{H}c3+$ 12. $\mathbb{Q}f4$ $\mathbb{H}xb3$ and Black has great winning chances in this endgame.

6... $\mathbb{H}a5$ 7. $\mathbb{H}b7!?$

A good practical try – White wants to activate his rooks, but in this case, Black's king isn't really in any danger, so the 'attack' does not cause Black any real trouble. However, trying to defend the pawn by means of 7. $\mathbb{H}b2$ leads to a lost endgame after 7... $\mathbb{H}ca4$ 8. e4 $\mathbb{H}xa2$ 9. $\mathbb{H}xa2$ $\mathbb{H}xa2+$ 10. $\mathbb{Q}e3$ dx e 4 11. fxe4 $\mathbb{H}xh2$ 12. $\mathbb{H}d8+$ $\mathbb{Q}f7$ 13. $\mathbb{H}d7+$ $\mathbb{Q}f6$ 14. $\mathbb{H}xa7$ g5 and Black's connected passers should decide the game.

7... $\mathbb{H}xa2+$ 8. $\mathbb{Q}e1$



8... $\mathbb{H}c2?$

I have no idea what ran through my mind when I made this move, but it certainly was completely irrational. The a7-pawn should have been the key to Black's victory – since White's rook was locked out, the a-pawn was a deadly weapon – a potential queen. Playing ... $\mathbb{H}c2$ is like trading a queen for a pawn! Instead, Black would have been winning almost immediately after 8... $\mathbb{H}h4$ 9. $\mathbb{Q}e3$ $\mathbb{H}a6$ 10. $\mathbb{Q}d2$ $\mathbb{H}xh2$, and Black's passers are deadly.

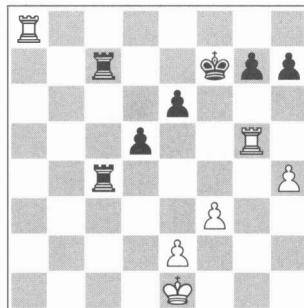
9. $\mathbb{H}e3!$

Before taking the a7-pawn, White first improves the position of his rook.

9... $\mathbb{H}c6$ 10. $\mathbb{H}xa7$ $\mathbb{H}2xc3$ 11. $\mathbb{H}e5$ $\mathbb{Q}f8$ 12. h4 $\mathbb{H}3c4$ 13. $\mathbb{H}g5?$

Returning the favor! I think that White forgot that the single rook ending after 13... $\mathbb{H}c7$ 14. $\mathbb{H}xc7$ would have been lost for White because of his terrible pawn structure. White should have drawn without much difficulty after 13. h5!. For example, 13... h6 14. $\mathbb{Q}f2$ $\mathbb{H}f4$ 15. $\mathbb{H}d7$ and Black cannot make progress.

13... $\mathbb{H}c7$ 14. $\mathbb{H}a8+$ $\mathbb{Q}f7$



15.h5

This move only throws more oil into the fire, but White had practically no saving chances anyway. He would have lost his rook after 15... $\mathbb{R}h5$ $\mathbb{Q}g6$ 16... $\mathbb{R}g5+$ $\mathbb{Q}f6$ 17... $\mathbb{R}h5$ g6 18... $\mathbb{R}h6$ $\mathbb{Q}g7$.

15...h6 16... $\mathbb{R}e5$ $\mathbb{R}h4??$

I completely forgot that on the 18th move I wouldn't have ... $\mathbb{Q}f6$ because of 19... $\mathbb{R}xd5!$ Although it might seem that Black should still be winning after this move, the damage is done and White again can draw without difficulty. The simple 16... $\mathbb{Q}f6$ won on the spot after 17... $\mathbb{R}e3$ $\mathbb{R}h4$ 18... $\mathbb{R}e8$ $\mathbb{R}c6$ and the h5-pawn cannot be saved.

17... $\mathbb{R}a6$ $\mathbb{R}e7$ 18.e3?

The game develops into a complete tragicomedy. White forgets about the safety of his own king, giving Black just enough counterplay to force White's pieces from their active posts. After 18... $\mathbb{Q}f2$, Black cannot make any progress, as my intended 18... $\mathbb{Q}f6$ fails to 19... $\mathbb{R}xd5$, with an immediate draw.

18... $\mathbb{R}h2!$ 19... $\mathbb{Q}f1$ $\mathbb{R}b7$

Black's sudden attack is deadly for White – in order to defend, he has to give up all of his pawns, which were barely defended anyway.

20... $\mathbb{Q}g1$ $\mathbb{R}c2$ 21... $\mathbb{R}a1$ $\mathbb{Q}f6$ 22... $\mathbb{R}f4$
 $\mathbb{R}b3$ 23... $\mathbb{R}e1$ $\mathbb{R}bb2$ 24...e4 d4
25... $\mathbb{R}d1$ d3 26... $\mathbb{R}a5$ $\mathbb{R}e2$ 27... $\mathbb{R}e5+$
 $\mathbb{Q}f5$ 28... $\mathbb{R}a3$ d2 29... $\mathbb{Q}f1$ $\mathbb{R}e4$
30... $\mathbb{R}g3$ $\mathbb{R}xf4+$ 31... $\mathbb{Q}e2$ $\mathbb{R}e4+$
32... $\mathbb{Q}f1$ $\mathbb{R}g4$ 0-1

Although the game contained many mistakes, it was still instructive to see

how Black combined constant mating threats with the attack of White's numerous weaknesses.

In the next position, Black again has to take advantage of his positional pluses and the weaknesses of White's pawns.

While looking at the position, it's interesting to compare the following game to the game that you have just seen – note the interlacing techniques, and also the more accurate way in which Black realizes his active pieces. Of course, since the next position didn't arise in a game, Black's technique is much more polished, but that factor makes it even easier to see how Black completely outplays White, whose position collapses like a rundown building.



7. Capablanca

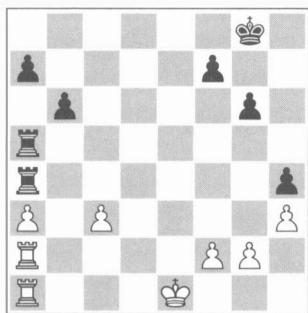
Study position

Unlike the last game, White's weaknesses are already exposed, and Black's rooks are placed optimally in order to exploit them. White, on the other hand, has absolutely no chances to activate any of his pieces; he simply has to wait and defend passively.

Black's first step should be to push the pawn to h4, where it would fix the potential weakness on g2.

1... $\mathbb{E}e4+$ 2. $\mathbb{E}e2 \mathbb{A}a4$

Note that Black forced the rook to e2 (after 2. $\mathbb{Q}f1$ $\mathbb{A}a5$ White would have had an even worse version of the game due to the passive king) before playing ... $\mathbb{A}a4$, thus giving White no choice but to defend the a3-pawn (he had the additional c3-c4 if Black had played ... $\mathbb{A}a4$ immediately).

3. $\mathbb{A}a2 h5$ 4. $\mathbb{E}d1 \mathbb{A}da5$ 5. $\mathbb{E}da1 h4$ 

The first step of Black's plan has been achieved. The g2-pawn is now stuck, and becomes a weakness as well. With three weaknesses, it's almost impossible for White to defend.

6. $\mathbb{Q}d2 \mathbb{Q}g7$ 7. $\mathbb{Q}c2 \mathbb{E}g5$

Both of these endgames had very similar themes – since one side had so many weaknesses, he had to make concessions in order to defend them, resulting in either a loss of material or a mating attack on his king.

However, you might ask what such simple endgames are doing in a book about complex endings. Despite the fact that one side wins without any extraordinary play, this study serves as a great introduction to the following games, in which one side, in order to realize a positional advantage, has to execute extremely complicated plans, and only after very subtle play does the opponent's position split. I decided to start with a classic position, one in which the Cuban genius demonstrates impeccable technique.

As soon as White's king moves away from the kingside, Black switches to the attack of the kingside pawns. Since only White's rooks can now defend the f2- and g2-pawns, White will become over-extended very quickly.

8. $\mathbb{E}g1$

The late GM Alexander Panchenko gave 8. $\mathbb{Q}b3$ $\mathbb{A}aa5$ 9.f3 as an improvement in *The Theory and Practice of Chess Endgames*, but after the better 8... $\mathbb{E}e4!$ White gets in trouble very quickly: 9.f3 $\mathbb{E}b5+$ 10. $\mathbb{Q}c2$ $\mathbb{E}e2+$ 11. $\mathbb{Q}d3$ $\mathbb{B}bb2$ and Black wins one of White's pawns, after which he should claim victory without much difficulty.

8... $\mathbb{E}f4$ 9. $\mathbb{Q}d3 \mathbb{E}f3+!$

An important nuance which wins the game. Whether or not White takes the rook, he will end up losing material:

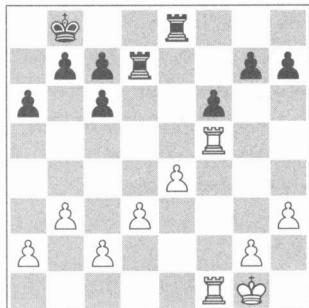
10. $\mathbb{Q}e2$

The alternative 10.gxf3 $\mathbb{E}xg1$ 11.a4 $\mathbb{E}h1$ 12.a5 $\mathbb{E}xh3$ 13.axb6 axb6 loses without a fight – the passed h-pawn is deadly for White.

10... $\mathbb{E}xh3$

0-1

Black wins without much difficulty.



8. Capablanca-Janowski

New York 1913

It's clear that White has an advantage – Black's pawn structure is weak, while the f6-pawn will serve as a hook, making the g4-g5 advance much more effective than if the pawn were on f7.

However, although Black's prospects may seem grim, his position isn't all that bad. White can easily play g4-g5, but after Black takes, White doesn't have anything concrete. It's also hard to take advantage of Black's crippled queen-side pawns. In order to win, White must patiently execute a series of mini-plans, all of which make Black's position harder and harder to defend.

When deciding which move to start with, always choose the most non-committal move. In this position, Capa chooses the move that cannot harm White's position:

1.g4!

The problem for the defending side is that he has to choose a way to proceed, and here, almost all of Black's moves lead to other weaknesses. Black makes the only move that doesn't make his position even worse:

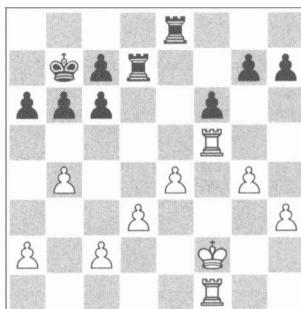
1...b6!

Before we move on, I'd like to draw the reader's attention to an important factor: Janowski knew that he had very little chance of defending the position, yet he didn't stop searching for options until the very end. Even such endgame virtuosos as Capablanca err; the mistakes are just covered up by the overall masterful play of these greats.

2.b4!

Before doing anything concrete, White first stops any ...c6-c5 ideas. The impatient 2.g5?! fxg5 3.♖xg5 g6 4.♗f6 c5 would have gotten White nowhere.

2...♕b7 3.♕f2



3...b5?!

It's understandable that Janowski wants to achieve counterplay, but this move just makes things worse – the c5-square is hopelessly weakened, and the c6-pawn becomes much harder to defend. Black could only have fought for a draw by means of 3...♜a8!, preparing ...a6-a5. White would then have had to make a few strong moves to stop Black's ideas – 4.♗b1! a5!? (an interesting practical try; otherwise, the move ...♜a8 would have been useless) 5.bxa5 b5 6.a3! (6.a4!? leads to a forced draw after 6...♜xa5 7.axb5 ♜a2 8.♖c5 ♜xd3 9.bxc6+ ♔a6 and White has no chances to win)

6... $\mathbb{R}xa5$ 7. $\mathbb{B}b3$ $\mathbb{R}d8$ 8.g5 and White retains an advantage. However, this was the best practical try for Black – even though White could have kept a clear advantage, he would first have had to find a series of strong only moves.

4.a4!?

White pushes his pawn to a5 in order to stop any possible counterplay connected with Black playing ...a6-a5 himself. Although this move certainly doesn't harm White's position, the straightforward 4. $\mathbb{Q}e3$ would also have left Black without many chances for counterplay – if 4... $\mathbb{R}a8$ White would have replied with 5.g5 fxg5 6. $\mathbb{B}xg5$, and 6...a5 doesn't give Black any counterplay: 7.a3 axb4 8.axb4 $\mathbb{R}a2$ 9. $\mathbb{R}c5$ with a clear advantage since White's rook on c5 cements his position and at the same time ties Black's king to the defense of the c6-pawn.

4... $\mathbb{R}d4$ 5. $\mathbb{B}b1$

Janowski can only wait for White to slowly prepare g4-g5 and gradually win the game – it's extremely unpleasant to defend such positions, especially when the best endgame player who ever lived is sitting across from you.

5... $\mathbb{R}e5$ 6. $\mathbb{Q}e3$ $\mathbb{R}d7$ 7.a5 $\mathbb{R}e6$
8. $\mathbb{B}bf1$ $\mathbb{R}de7$



9.g5!

The time has come for White to start pressuring Black's g-pawn. Since Black has to keep the passed e4-pawn under control, he has almost no chances of saving the game.

The good thing about playing White in this position is that it's practically impossible to make a mistake – his advantage is static, meaning that Black can't fix the weakness of his pawns. Had the a-pawn been on a2, Black could have tried for counterplay connected with the ...a6-a5 advance.

9...fxg5 10. $\mathbb{B}xg5$ $\mathbb{R}h6$ 11. $\mathbb{R}g3$
 $\mathbb{R}he6$ 12.h4 g6 13. $\mathbb{R}g5$ h6

It's hard to call this move a mistake, but this makes White's job even easier. If he had waited with 13... $\mathbb{Q}c8$, White would have had to find the winning plan, but it's rather easy to discover – White simply trades the g-pawn for his h-pawn, when the h7-pawn will be too weak for Black to defend: 14. $\mathbb{R}f8+$ $\mathbb{R}e8$ 15. $\mathbb{R}xe8+$ $\mathbb{R}xe8$ 16.h5 gxh5 17. $\mathbb{R}xh5$ $\mathbb{R}e7$ 18. $\mathbb{R}h6+-$ and White should win quickly.

14. $\mathbb{R}g4$ $\mathbb{R}g7$ 15.d4 $\mathbb{Q}c8$ 16. $\mathbb{R}f8+$
 $\mathbb{Q}b7$ 17.e5 g5 18. $\mathbb{Q}e4$ $\mathbb{R}ee7$
19.hxg5 hxg5 20. $\mathbb{R}f5$ $\mathbb{Q}c8$
21. $\mathbb{R}gxg5$ $\mathbb{R}h7$ 22. $\mathbb{R}h5$ $\mathbb{Q}d7$
23. $\mathbb{R}xh7$ $\mathbb{R}xh7$ 24. $\mathbb{R}f8$ $\mathbb{R}h4+$
25. $\mathbb{Q}d3$ $\mathbb{R}h3+$ 26. $\mathbb{Q}d2$ c5 27.bxc5
 $\mathbb{R}a3$ 28.d5 1-0

One of the important things that Capablanca did in this game was to remain extremely patient. If your opponent doesn't have counterplay, improve your position to the maximum before going in for the kill.

In the next game, although the players weren't as strong as the ones in the game shown above, the theme was the same: Black had a few weaknesses, and White was trying to attack them while also restricting Black's counterplay. The following is also a model of how one should defend in such positions. I decided to include the whole game because of White's instructive play in the opening.

9. Varavin-Ozolin

Russia Cup, Perm 1997

Sicilian Defense, Paulsen Variation
(B49)

**1.e4 c5 2.♘f3 e6 3.d4 cxd4
4.♗xd4 a6 5.♗c3 ♜c7 6.♗e2 ♘f6
7.0-0 ♘c6 8.♗e3 ♜b4 9.♗a4 0-0**

9...♗xe4 is premature: 10.♗xc6 ♜xc6 11.♗b6 ♜b8 12.♗d4 ♜f8 13.♗f3 f5 14.♗ad1 was horrible for Black in Frander-Kovacs, Hungarian Team Championship 2000/01. After 14...d6 15.♗h5+ ♜e7 16.♗xe4!! (a flashy sacrifice; 16...♜xe4 meets 17.♗g5#) 16...♜xb6 17.♗h4+ and Black obviously resigned.

The more 'civilized' 9...♗d6 also leads to a slightly better position for White after 10.g3 b5 11.♗b6 ♜b8 12.♗xc8 ♜xc8 13.a4 ♘xd4 14.♗xd4 e5 15.♗e3 ♜c5 16.♗xc5 ♜xc5 17.axb5 axb5 18.♗a5 with an edge in Yagupov-Landa, Tomsk 1999.

10.c4

The other main move in this position is 10.♗xc6. However, I can't find a concrete advantage for White; for example, after 10...bxcc6 11.♗b6 ♜b8 12.♗xc8

♗fxc8 13.♗xa6 ♜f8! (Ribli) 14.♗d3 ♜d6 and the position is approximately equal. White's two-bishop advantage is compensated by Black's dynamic pawn center.

10...♗xe4?!

This move seems to lead to a worse position for Black by force. The typical Hedgehog position that arises after 10...♗e7 11.♗c3 b6 12.♗c1 ♘xd4 13.♗xd4 d6 14.f3 ♜d7 is about equal (Landa-Macieja, ACP blitz 2004).

11.♗f3



11...f5

Later, the German GM Henrik Teske revived this variation by playing 11...d5! in his game against Mastrovasilis in Chalkidiki 2002. The game continued 12.c5 ♜d2! 13.♗xe4 ♜xe3 14.fxe3 dxe4 15.♗xc6 bxc6 16.♗d6 ♜a7=, and soon ended in a draw. However, 12.♗c2! is much stronger; after 12...♗a5 13.cxd5 exd5 14.b4! White has a strong initiative. Therefore, Black has practically no chances to equalize in this variation if White plays correctly.

12.♗xe4

Meulders gives 12.c5 as a good alternative, citing the variation 12...♗a5?

13. $\mathbb{Q}b3$ $\mathbb{Q}f6$ 14. $\mathbb{Q}xa5$ $\mathbb{Q}xa5$ 15. $\mathbb{Q}b6$ with a clear advantage, but Black is certainly not forced to play 12... $\mathbb{Q}a5$ – after 12... $\mathbb{Q}e5$, I don't see a concrete way for White to prove an advantage. Deep Fritz 10 gives the completely crazy line 13. $\mathbb{Q}b6$ $\mathbb{B}b8$ 14. $\mathbb{Q}xf5!?$ $\mathbb{Q}xf3+$ 15. $gxf3$ $\mathbb{Q}xc5$ 16. $\mathbb{Q}d5$ $exd5$ 17. $\mathbb{W}xd5+$ $\mathbb{Q}h8$ 18. $fxe4$ $d6$, when Black has an entirely satisfactory position.

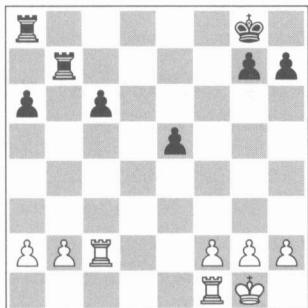
**12...fxe4 13.c5 d6 14. $\mathbb{Q}xc6$ bxc6
15. $\mathbb{W}c2$**

Although Black is a pawn up, his position is very precarious; the b4-bishop is in danger, while Black's e4-pawn is completely dead. Black is forced to weaken his structure even further in order to save his bishop:

15... $\mathbb{Q}xc5$ 16. $\mathbb{Q}xc5$ dxc5 17. $\mathbb{Q}xc5$ e5 18. $\mathbb{E}ac1$ $\mathbb{Q}f5$ 19. $\mathbb{Q}xe4$ $\mathbb{W}f7$ 20. $\mathbb{Q}d6!?$

White liquidates into a better endgame, but the position after 20.b3 was also very pleasant for him.

20... $\mathbb{Q}xc2$ 21. $\mathbb{Q}xf7$ $\mathbb{E}xf7$ 22. $\mathbb{E}xc2$ $\mathbb{E}b7$



The endgame might seem totally hopeless for Black, as his pawn structure is in

complete ruins. However, as we shall soon see, things aren't so one-sided. First of all, even if White wins one of the pawns, Black will still have drawing chances, since the endgame 3 vs. 2 pawns on the same flank is a dead draw in almost all situations. Secondly, White has to find a way to repel Black's play against the b2-pawn; if White chooses to play b2-b3, Black will play ...a5-a4. In Capablanca-Janowski, Black had no counterplay whatsoever, making White's life much easier. Therefore, White has to combine the attack of the e5- and c6-pawns with the defense of the b2-pawn. First, White activates his f1-rook:

23. $\mathbb{E}e1$ $\mathbb{E}b5$

Unfortunately, many players are influenced by a rule that they probably heard many times: it never hurts to be slow in an endgame where you are pressuring your opponent. In my opinion, this rule should be completely disregarded. Yes, when your opponent has no counterplay, you have all the time in the world, but you don't *need* to be slow. If, in a position where your opponent has potential counterplay, you see a good idea that plugs the holes, you don't need to first improve your position to the maximum, as you often simply won't have time. There is a big difference between prophylaxis and wasting time; it is vital to distinguish moments where you are actually stopping threats from moments where you are fearing ghosts! Influenced by this 'rule,' White played:

24. $\mathbb{E}ee2?!$

In this case, this move is a total waste of time, as White will soon play $\mathbb{E}e4$ any-

way. Had White not thought in terms of general rules, he would have played 24.b3 $\mathbb{B}ab8$ 25. $\mathbb{B}e4$ immediately, saving an important tempo.

24... $\mathbb{B}ab8$ 25.b3 a5

On *ChessBase*, Meulders gives the variation 25... $\mathbb{B}d5$ 26.f3 c5 27. $\mathbb{B}cd2$ $\mathbb{B}bd8$ 28. $\mathbb{B}xd5$ $\mathbb{B}xd5$ 29. $\mathbb{B}f2$ $\mathbb{B}f7$ 30. $\mathbb{B}e3$ $\mathbb{B}e6$ 31. $\mathbb{B}d2$ as much better for White, but when analyzing pawn endgames, you always need to calculate until you reach a definite conclusion; seemingly winning pawn endgames might actually be drawn or even lost.

However, before we delve deeper into the analysis of the pawn endgame after 31... $\mathbb{B}xd2$, I would like to say that 31... $\mathbb{B}d4$ equalizes on the spot – Black's active pieces guarantee him a draw. Therefore, White will have to look for something else, but more about that later. After 31... $\mathbb{B}xd2$ 32. $\mathbb{B}xd2$, Black's best bet is to simply wait and not move any pawns by means of 32... $\mathbb{B}d5$ (although as I later found out, the endgame after 32...g5?! 33. $\mathbb{B}d3$ $\mathbb{B}d5$ 34. $\mathbb{B}e3$ $\mathbb{B}d6$ 35. $\mathbb{B}e4$ $\mathbb{B}e6$ 36.g4 h6 37.h3 $\mathbb{B}d6$ 38. $\mathbb{B}f5$ $\mathbb{B}d5$ 39. $\mathbb{B}g6$ $\mathbb{B}d4$ 40. $\mathbb{B}xh6$ $\mathbb{B}e3$ 41. $\mathbb{B}xg5$ $\mathbb{B}xf3$ 42. $\mathbb{B}h5$ e4 43.g5 e3 44.g6 e2 45.g7 e1 \mathbb{B} 46.g8 \mathbb{B} $\mathbb{B}e5+$ is only slightly better for White – I don't see a way for him to make progress), when I can't find any win for White: 33. $\mathbb{B}e3$ $\mathbb{B}e6$ 34. $\mathbb{B}e4$ $\mathbb{B}d6$ and the game ends in a draw.

Therefore, White has to find something else. As it turns out, simply playing the pawn one square further with 26.f4! achieves a clear advantage: 26...exf4! 27. $\mathbb{B}xc6$ $\mathbb{B}a5$ 28. $\mathbb{B}c7$ and White will soon double on the 7th rank, which will not be pleasant for Black.

26.h3!



Very subtle play by White – grabbing the c6-pawn leads to a drawn endgame after 26... $\mathbb{B}xc6$ a4 27.h3 axb3 28.axb3 $\mathbb{B}xb3$ 29. $\mathbb{B}xe5$ $\mathbb{B}3b6$ (Meulders). Now, since White's king has the h2-square, ...a5-a4 is rendered harmless.

26... $\mathbb{B}8b6$ 27. $\mathbb{B}e4$

As a result of White's accurate play (after 24. $\mathbb{B}ee2$), Black's position is now critical. If he doesn't do anything, White will simply win material after $\mathbb{B}ec4$. Therefore, Black is forced to try to trade off the a2- and b3-pawns for the a5- and c6-pawns by sacrificing the e5-pawn. This is obviously the best practical chance, but it still shouldn't have given Black many saving opportunities had White played correctly.

27... $\mathbb{B}b4$ 28. $\mathbb{B}xe5$ a4 29.bxa4 $\mathbb{B}xa4$ 30. $\mathbb{B}e7!$

White cannot play slowly here, as Black will force White to trade the a2-pawn for the c6-pawn. White now wants to play the deadly $\mathbb{B}d2$, threatening both $\mathbb{B}d8\#$ and $\mathbb{B}dd7$, both of which win the game immediately.

30... $\mathbb{B}d4$ 31. $\mathbb{B}a7$

White plays extremely accurately, not giving Black any chances. The a2-pawn is no longer in any danger, and will soon become Black's worst nightmare. Black cannot generate any counterplay, as White's c2-rook controls the important 2nd rank, not allowing Black to penetrate.

**31...h6 32.a4 $\blacksquare b1+$ 33. $\diamond h2 \blacksquare a1$
34.a5**

Black's pieces are helpless – they cannot stop the vicious pawn, which should have turned into a queen in a matter of moves.

**34... $\blacksquare d5$ 35.a6 c5 36. $\blacksquare e2 \blacksquare d6$
37. $\blacksquare e7 \blacksquare g6$**

After some great and extremely accurate endgame play, White has to deliver the finishing blow. The win could have been easily achieved by means of 38. $\blacksquare a8+!$, for example: 38... $\diamond h7$ 39.a7 $\blacksquare g6$ 40.f4 c4 41.f5 c3 42. $\blacksquare e8$ and Black has no defense against 43. $\blacksquare h8\#$. However, Varavin, thinking that every move won in this position, threw away all of his efforts:

38.h4??



I think that Varavin quite simply forgot that the a6-pawn was hanging, as a

player of his caliber would easily have found the win.

38...c4??

I don't know what's going on! Black also forgets that the a6-pawn is hanging. The position after 38... $\blacksquare a6!$ 39. $\blacksquare xg7$ $\blacksquare xg7$ 40. $\blacksquare x a6$ $\blacksquare c7$ 41. $\blacksquare a3$ c4 42. $\blacksquare c3$ $\diamond g7$ is close to a draw – White can certainly try to get his king to d4, but it would be hard to do so without giving up one of his kingside pawns.

39.h5?

Not as bad as the previous move, since the a6-pawn cannot be taken anymore, but White misses the same win he had a few moves ago, namely 39. $\blacksquare a8+$ $\diamond h7$ 40.a7++ and White either mates or promotes.

39... $\blacksquare g5$ 40.f4 $\blacksquare xh5+$ 41. $\diamond g3$



41... $\blacksquare a3+??$

Black completely loses the thread and makes yet another grave error. It is quite clear that Black was reprimanding himself for his previous mistakes, but such criticism is almost never constructive (at least during the game) and only serves to hamper a player's thinking. The correct defense lay in the subtle 41... $\diamond h8!$, with the idea of meeting

42. $\mathbb{B}xg7$ with 42... $\mathbb{B}xa6$. Although White is still better after 43. $\mathbb{B}h7+$ $\mathbb{B}g8$ 44. $\mathbb{B}ag7+$ $\mathbb{B}f8$ 45. $\mathbb{B}c7$ $\mathbb{B}g8$ 46. $\mathbb{B}he7$, the fight is certainly still ahead after 46... $\mathbb{B}f5$.

**42. $\mathbb{B}g4$ $\mathbb{B}h2$ 43. $\mathbb{B}xg7+$ $\mathbb{B}h8$
44. $\mathbb{B}g6?$**

What needs to be said? This time, White misses an even easier win with 44. $\mathbb{B}h7+$ $\mathbb{B}g8$ 45. $\mathbb{B}hc7$, for instance after 45... $\mathbb{B}xg2+$ 46. $\mathbb{B}f5$ $\mathbb{B}h8$ 47. $\mathbb{B}a8+$ $\mathbb{B}g8$ 48. $\mathbb{B}xg8+$ $\mathbb{B}xg8$ 49. a7 White wins on the spot (Hecht on *ChessBase*). Unfortunately for Black, White was already so completely winning that even this lemon doesn't throw it away, although Black does come close to drawing.

44... $\mathbb{B}xg2+$ 45. $\mathbb{B}f5$ $\mathbb{B}xg6$ 46. $\mathbb{B}xg6$

However, the way White realized his advantage shouldn't be the main point of the game – White played the start of the endgame very well, highlighting some important techniques when pressuring your opponent's weaknesses, namely:

- Try not to let your opponent liquidate into a drawn endgame by sacrificing a pawn and trading off all of his other weaknesses; almost all 3 pawn vs. 4 pawn and 4 pawn vs. 5 pawn endgames are drawn if the defending side plays accurately.
- You don't need to search for extravagant ways to win the game – if you see a simple win, you don't need to search for any brilliant combinations. I'm sure you would rather win the game by simple means than lose it while trying to win the brilliancy prize.
- If you made a mistake, it's extremely important to recuperate quickly. **If you know that you missed an easy win, erase all of the thoughts about the previous moves from your mind.** It won't help if you keep criticizing yourself for missed wins during a game; it will only hamper your thought process.
- If your opponent is completely tied up to the defense of his weaknesses, focus on your opponent's king, as it will be completely undefended.
- Controlling the 7th rank, with one or both rooks, is extremely important in double-rook endgames, and very often it is worth a pawn sacrifice to accomplish this.
- Pinning the opponent's king to the back rank (or getting your own king stuck there) often has grave implications. It very often leads to mating threats that the stronger side can exploit if he is alert.

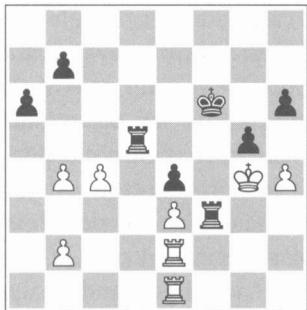
White's pawns are unstoppable, and although Black tries to generate counterplay, White still wins the game.

**46... $\mathbb{B}g3+$ 47. $\mathbb{B}xh6$ $\mathbb{B}h3+$ 48. $\mathbb{B}g6$
 $\mathbb{B}g3+$ 49. $\mathbb{B}f6?!$ $\mathbb{B}a3$ 50. $\mathbb{B}g6$
 $\mathbb{B}g3+$ 51. $\mathbb{B}f5$ $\mathbb{B}a3$ 52. $\mathbb{B}e4$ $\mathbb{B}g8$
53. f5 $\mathbb{B}f8$ 54. $\mathbb{B}d4$ c3 55. $\mathbb{B}d3$ $\mathbb{B}a5$
56. $\mathbb{B}xc3$ $\mathbb{B}c5+$ 57. $\mathbb{B}b4$ $\mathbb{B}c6$
58. $\mathbb{B}b5$ $\mathbb{B}f6$ 59. $\mathbb{B}c7$ $\mathbb{B}xf5+$
60. $\mathbb{B}b6$ $\mathbb{B}f1$ 61. a7 $\mathbb{B}b1+$ 62. $\mathbb{B}c6$
 $\mathbb{B}c1+$ 63. $\mathbb{B}b7$ $\mathbb{B}b1+$ 64. $\mathbb{B}c8$ $\mathbb{B}a1$
65. $\mathbb{B}b8$ $\mathbb{B}b1+$ 66. $\mathbb{B}b7$ 1-0**

The game should have ended 30 moves before, but due to both sides' sloppy play it kept going – first White missed a win, then Black missed a draw, then White missed another win, then Black missed another draw, and so on and so forth.

After familiarizing ourselves with the principles of playing against weaknesses and realizing a positional advantage, I would like to show the reader some ideas pertaining to the other side of double rook endgames: the tactical side. Unlike single rook endgames, double rook endgames can be extremely sharp, with one side trying to mate the other while the defending side tries to find shelter for his monarch.

First, a simple example:



10. Sahovic-Kortchnoi

Biel 1979

It doesn't take long to see that White's king is in grave danger. However, it also isn't totally clear how Black can make immediate use of that fact. The straightforward $1 \dots \mathbb{R}d8$ achieves nothing after $2. \mathbb{R}xg5+ \mathbb{R}xg5 3. \mathbb{R}h1=$ with an approximately equal position.

The key to finding the win in this position is to think logically – since White is threatening $\mathbb{R}xg5+$ and $\mathbb{R}h2$ on almost all of Black's moves ($\dots \mathbb{R}f5$ is met by $h4-h5$), Black has to play energetically. The only way is to move $\dots h6-h5+$, but what does Black do after $\mathbb{Q}xh5$? Besides being the only move that doesn't allow White to immediately control the h-file, $\dots h6-h5+$ also forces White's king to occupy a temporarily awkward position, thus allowing Black to quickly transfer his rook to h8.

If you have a similar position in a real game, you have to calculate concretely. If the dynamic move doesn't lead to clear dividends, don't go for it in hopes of finding something – a half point is better than a loss. However, if you think the move does lead to success, you have to believe in yourself. A human is not a computer, and there inevitably will be positions in which you will not be able to calculate every single variation. If you reach such a position, calculate as much as you can and rely on your intuition to make the final decision.

In this case, Black wins easily, so using intuition isn't necessary. As we shall see, however, intuition will be an extremely powerful tool in the following games.

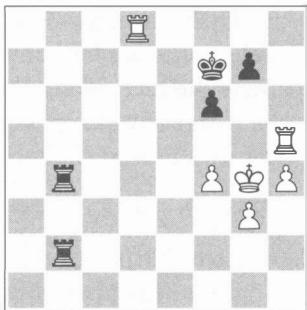
1...h5+! 2.Qxh5 Rd8 3.Rxg5+

The move $3. \mathbb{Q}g4$ also didn't bring any relief after $3 \dots \mathbb{R}xh4 4. \mathbb{Q}xh4 \mathbb{Q}f5$ and $5. \mathbb{R}h8\#$.

**3...Qf5 4.Qh6 Rh3+ 5.Qg7 Rd7+
6.Qg8 Qg6 7.Rf2 Rg7+ 8.Qf8
Rh8#** 0-1

A simple but nice attack which shows that two rooks are more than enough to mate a king.

The following game is also rather simple, but it does require the use of intuition:



11. Petrosian-Larsen

Biel Interzonal 1976

The fact that White is playing for a win is crystal clear; however, since material on the board is very limited, it's extremely hard to obtain winning chances – Black's king is very close to his pawns. The only winning strategy is to immediately switch to an attack of the king, since Black's rooks cannot do anything to help the monarch find shelter.

1. $\mathbb{R}h8!$ $\mathbb{R}b7$

Black defends the important 7th rank, as White had unpleasant ideas of f4-f5 and $\mathbb{R}d7\#$.

2. $\mathbb{R}hf8+$ $\mathbb{K}e7$



The critical position has arisen. White has activated his rooks and trapped Black's king, but it's unclear how to

continue the onslaught. Since Black's king is now cut off from the pawns, White has to grab the chance if he wants to play for a win. Unfortunately, penetrating with the king also has a drawback – the king is the only piece which is defending White's own pawns, and moving it leaves the pawns totally undefended. In such cases, it's hard to calculate every single variation, as Black has a lot of ways to attack the pawns.

Therefore, White has to use his intuition – when players are inexperienced, they rely less on intuition, as their arsenal of ideas is much less developed than those of experienced players. Petrosian obviously had played and analyzed so many games in his life that his intuition was practically perfect.

However, a common misconception amongst chess players is that intuition is synonymous with laziness. This is not true – intuition is simply the feel for ideas without concrete calculation. Petrosian sensed that Black's king would be in trouble once White reached g6 – of course he had calculated variations, but picture-perfect intuition had led him to search for mating ideas *in the first place*. Since Black's king is extremely weak, he was sure that moving the king forward is completely safe; Black cannot concentrate on White's pawns because of his ailing king.

3. $\mathbb{K}f5!$ $\mathbb{R}2b3$

Relatively best. All of Black's other options lead to quick failure:

A) 3... $\mathbb{R}g2?$ lost immediately after 4. $\mathbb{R}de8+$ $\mathbb{K}d7$ 5. $\mathbb{R}e3$ $\mathbb{R}d6$ 6. $\mathbb{R}g6+-$ and Black has no defense against $\mathbb{R}f7$.

B) 3... $\mathbb{H}d2?$ meets 4. $\mathbb{Q}g6!$ $\mathbb{H}xd8$ 5. $\mathbb{H}f7+$, when all Black can do is resign.

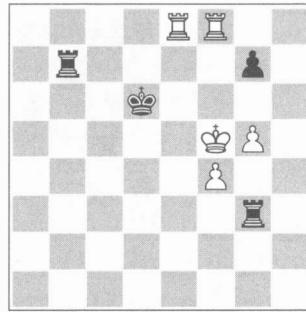
4.g4 $\mathbb{H}g3$

Black already threatens ... $\mathbb{H}b5+$ followed by ... $\mathbb{H}xg4$, so White has to be very careful. Of course, Petrosian finds the fastest way to victory.

5. $\mathbb{H}de8+$

Notice that before making obvious moves, Petrosian improves his position to the maximum. Of course, as I said before, this shouldn't be done if your opponent has strong counterplay, but here, White improves his position and worsens his opponent's simultaneously.

5... $\mathbb{Q}d6$ 6.g5 $\mathbb{H}xg5$ 7.hxg5



7... $\mathbb{H}b5+?!$

This loses immediately, but Black had no chances to save the game anyway. After the relatively best 7... $\mathbb{H}a3$, White wins easily by means of 8. $\mathbb{Q}g6$, i.e. 8... $\mathbb{H}f3$ 9. $\mathbb{H}d8+$ $\mathbb{Q}c5$ 10. $\mathbb{H}f7$ $\mathbb{H}xf7$ 11. $\mathbb{Q}xf7$ $\mathbb{H}xf4+$ 12. $\mathbb{Q}xg7$ with a theoretically won position.

8. $\mathbb{Q}g6$

1-0

Although intuition was certainly required, White was never in any real danger to lose; if things went wrong, he would always have a draw. It's much harder to decide on a risky continuation in a better position when you burn all the bridges.

In order to limit mistakes, I offer the reader the following questions that he or she should ask when deciding whether or not to go for a risky continuation:

- A) Is there anything safer that I can choose that gives me real winning chances?
- B) Does my opponent have a wealth of attractive and dangerous-looking options after the continuation in question? If the answer is yes, then chances are he will have an unpleasant counter to your idea.
- C) If things go completely wrong, will I have any saving chances in the resulting type of position?

Of course, these questions aren't engraved in stone, and even if you're leaning towards 'yes' in question B and 'no' in C, you shouldn't totally rule out the option. If you do not have enough time to calculate to the end, it's obviously best to judge the options intuitively and calculate at least some lines.

Question A is probably most important; if the answer is 'yes', then you probably should choose the safe option unless you're practically positive that your risky option works.

Take a look at the following position (next page):



12. I.Polgar-Minev

Asztalos Memorial, Baja 1971

At first sight it might seem that Black has a menacing position, since his passed e-pawn looks very intimidating. However, White is in fact in no danger at all, and can obtain a better endgame by means of 1. $\mathbb{R}f1$ $\mathbb{R}xf1+$ 2. $\mathbb{Q}xf1$ a5 3. $\mathbb{Q}e2$. Polgar (who's not related to the more famous Polgar sisters, by the way), being a strong player, obviously saw the tempting and safe continuation. However, he asked himself just how dangerous the e-pawn really is. If it moves to e2, White will simply block it by means of $\mathbb{R}e1$. Otherwise, it just isn't that threatening.

However, before we take a look at Polgar's decision, let us ask ourselves the three important questions I mentioned above:

A) Do I have a safer option that gives me winning chances? Yes – $\mathbb{R}f1$, and although Black should hold with very good play, White's winning chances are quite real.

B) Does my opponent have a lot of dangerous and attractive looking moves after the move in question? The answer is harder to determine – one

needs to look at the concrete variations. Of course, the straightforward ...e4-e3 is not hazardous. Therefore, Black has only one or two options – ... $\mathbb{R}d5$, controlling the d-file, and ... $\mathbb{R}fe5$, overprotecting the passed pawn. Thus, the answer to the question is 'no'.

C) If everything goes wrong, will I have saving chances in the resulting type of position? Here, the answer is clearly 'no', as the resulting type of position might mean Black promoting his pawn or White getting under a deadly attack.

Thus, we are analyzing only the answers to two questions. The fact that White has a great alternative makes it tempting to go for the safe option, but the answer to question B means that $\mathbb{R}xa7$ is much easier to calculate.

Since we haven't gotten a definite conclusion from the questions, it's important to immediately switch to calculation. White was probably in time trouble here (33rd move), and that would mean picking the safe option would have been practically better. White, however, was probably afraid that the position resulting after $\mathbb{R}f1$ would have been too drawish, and chose:

1. $\mathbb{R}xa7!?$

First of all, I would like to say that this move is no worse than the safe continuation, and if two computers were playing, I would have given it an exclamation mark. Before we move on, however, let's take a look at the position arising after 1. $\mathbb{R}f1$ $\mathbb{R}xf1+$ 2. $\mathbb{Q}xf1$ a5 3. $\mathbb{Q}e2$



Analysis diagram

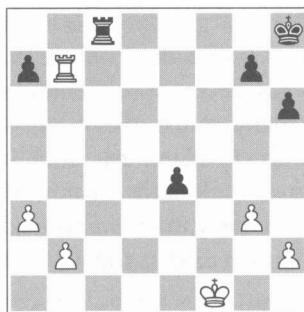
The position seems extremely unpleasant for Black since his king is very far away. Unfortunately for White, the position isn't one-sided. Black's passed pawn looks weak, but because the a5-pawn is defending the crucial b4-square, winning it is not easy. Also, White cannot move the king too far away from the pawn. Black understandably has a few choices in this position, all of which lead to similar types of positions, albeit with different nuances in each:

A) 3... $\mathbb{R}e5?$ is too straightforward. The position after 4. $\mathbb{Q}e3$ $\mathbb{R}h7$ 5. $\mathbb{R}b6!$ (not letting the king out of his cage!) 5...g5 6.b4! axb4 7.axb4 is clearly better for White, if not winning. Black has no way to defend against the plan $\mathbb{R}d6-d4xe4$, winning Black's important pawn.

B) 3... $\mathbb{R}c8!$ is a much better move. Black occupies the important c-file, forcing White's king to a more passive position. After 4. $\mathbb{Q}d2$ $\mathbb{R}c5$, it's not too clear how White can break up Black's fortress. 5. $\mathbb{R}e7$ looks dangerous, but Black has the nice resource 5... $\mathbb{R}h5$ 6.h4 $\mathbb{R}d5+$ 7. $\mathbb{Q}c2$ $\mathbb{R}d4!$ (7... $\mathbb{R}d3$ 8.g4 is worse), intending to meet 8. $\mathbb{Q}c3$ with ... $\mathbb{R}d3+$. After 8.b3 $\mathbb{Q}g8$ Black should hold his own.

Even though Black did have a way to save himself after 1. $\mathbb{R}f1$, humans are playing the game, and humans are always fallible. Besides, finding every one of these moves in time trouble would have been no trivial thing. Overall, the conclusion is clear: 1. $\mathbb{R}f1$ was a safe, risk-free move which forced Black to find a series of tough moves, only to get a position in which White can still push for the win.

In a few days, however, I came back to the position before 2...a5. Something kept telling me that Black had other resources. I soon found out, with the help of my silicon friend, that Black had another defense, based on an entirely different approach: 2... $\mathbb{R}c8!?$. Instead of trying to build a fortress, Black utilizes the temporarily awkward position of White's king and tries for dynamic counterplay.



Analysis diagram

Of course, 3. $\mathbb{R}xa7$ leads to a draw after 3... $\mathbb{R}c1+$ 4. $\mathbb{Q}e2$ $\mathbb{R}c2+$ 5. $\mathbb{Q}e3$ $\mathbb{R}xb2$ 6. $\mathbb{Q}xe4$ $\mathbb{R}xh2$, but White has the extremely strong and subtle move 3.b4!. The problem with Black's position is that the e4-pawn cannot create many problems for White, while White's connected passers can turn into queens in a matter of moves. Therefore, Black has to

use what I call the Kamikaze method: in order to spoil the position of your opponent, you sacrifice an already doomed pawn or piece.

After 3...a6 4. $\mathbb{B}b6 \mathbb{B}c1+$ 5. $\mathbb{Q}g2$, Black's best bet is to utilize the method by means of 5...a5!. Since 6.b5? is useless on account of ... $\mathbb{B}a1$ with a dead draw, White has to ruin his pawns: 6.bxa5. Here, Black has to eliminate the a3-pawn in order to hold the a5-pawn, and although the position after 6... $\mathbb{B}c3$ 7.a4 $\mathbb{B}c4$ 8.a6 $\mathbb{B}xa4$ 9. $\mathbb{Q}f2$ is better for White, I cannot find anything concrete after ... $\mathbb{B}a3$. Here, the e4-pawn saves Black, as White's king is tied up. Of course, White can try some tricks here (i.e. h4-g4-g5-g6), but if Black plays carefully, he should be able to draw.

Despite the fact that Black has a slight improvement, the conclusion stays the same: although Black can probably draw with perfect play, practically, the move $\mathbb{B}f1$ is a great try: you guarantee yourself at least a draw, while your opponent has to keep concentrating and finding many only moves in a row.

After 1. $\mathbb{B}xa7$, Black has much easier play; he doesn't have that much of a choice, so he can move quickly and without much calculation.

1... $\mathbb{B}d8!$

In order to achieve counterplay, Black has to activate his pieces to the maximum. As I said before, pushing the pawn with 1...e3 is ineffective – after 2. $\mathbb{B}e1 \mathbb{Q}h7$ 3. b4± White will slowly push his connected passers.

2. $\mathbb{B}c2$

White cannot allow Black's rook to penetrate to the 2nd rank for obvious rea-

sons – large-scale disaster after allowing the rook to penetrate into the second rank is a theme we have seen many times in this chapter!

2... $\mathbb{B}d1+$ 3. $\mathbb{Q}g2 \mathbb{B}fd5$

This move isn't really a mistake, but 3...e3! was stronger. White has an assortment of different moves, but all lead to similar positions. For example, after 4.b4 $\mathbb{B}e5$ 5. $\mathbb{B}e2 \mathbb{B}b1$, it's extremely hard for White to make progress. 6. $\mathbb{B}b7$ meets 6... $\mathbb{B}a1$ and after the relatively best 7.g4 Black simply waits with 7... $\mathbb{B}b3$ 8. $\mathbb{Q}g3 \mathbb{Q}g8$ 9. $\mathbb{Q}f4 \mathbb{B}e6$, and I cannot see anything concrete.



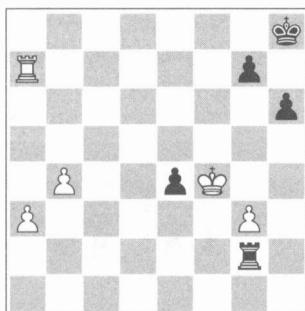
4. $\mathbb{B}e2!$

This move might have come as a surprise for Black, who was entertaining prospects of playing for a win. In situations like this, it is vitally important to keep your cool and calmly find the best defense.

4... $\mathbb{B}b1!$

And keep his cool Black does! Black could have also held on with 4... $\mathbb{B}5d2!?$. Of course, the only way for White to avoid a draw is to play 5. $\mathbb{Q}f2!$, when Black is practically forced to reply 5... $\mathbb{B}xe2+$ 6. $\mathbb{Q}xe2 \mathbb{B}h1$. The position

seems hopelessly lost for Black due to White's passed pawns, but in truth, the position is not all that clear. After 7.b4 $\mathbb{R}xh2+$ 8. $\mathbb{Q}e3$ $\mathbb{R}g2$ 9. $\mathbb{Q}f4$ Black is at a crossroads:



Analysis diagram

A) 9... $\mathbb{Q}g8?$ loses after 10.b5!. Now, if 10...g5+, White wins after 11. $\mathbb{Q}xe4$ $\mathbb{R}xg3$ 12.b6 $\mathbb{R}b3$ 13.b7, while 10... $\mathbb{R}b2$ promises no relief either after 11.a4 $\mathbb{R}b4$ 12. $\mathbb{R}e7!$ $\mathbb{R}xa4$ (12...e3+ 13. $\mathbb{Q}xe3$ $\mathbb{R}xa4$ 14.b6 is bad as well) 13. $\mathbb{Q}xe4$ and White's rook gets behind the passer.

B) 9...e3? is too impatient. White wins after 10. $\mathbb{Q}f3!$ e2 11. $\mathbb{R}e7$ and the connected passers will decide the game.

C) 9...g5+! is the best try. Now, 10. $\mathbb{Q}f5$ seems very strong but the position after 10... $\mathbb{Q}g8$ 11. $\mathbb{Q}g6$ $\mathbb{Q}f8$ 12. $\mathbb{Q}xh6$ $\mathbb{R}xg3$ is actually drawn, as Black's pawns will promote faster than White's! However, 10. $\mathbb{Q}xe4$ $\mathbb{R}xg3$ 11. $\mathbb{Q}f5$ is a better try. After 11... $\mathbb{Q}g8$ 12. $\mathbb{Q}g6$ $\mathbb{Q}f8$ 13. $\mathbb{Q}xh6$ $\mathbb{Q}e8$ I still believe Black can draw, but White can certainly push for many more moves.

In conclusion, we can see that the obvious move should have held as well but Minev is looking to activate his rooks – and rightly so.

5. $\mathbb{R}e7$ $\mathbb{R}d4$ 6. $\mathbb{Q}f2$ $\mathbb{Q}g8$ 7. $\mathbb{Q}e3?$

Probably exhausted, White misses Black's reply. However, even after 7.g4 $\mathbb{Q}h7$ 8. $\mathbb{R}c2$ $\mathbb{Q}g6$ Black still holds his own.

7... $\mathbb{R}d3+$ 8. $\mathbb{Q}xe4$ $\mathbb{R}b3$ 9. $\mathbb{R}a7$ $\mathbb{R}1xb2$ 10. $\mathbb{R}xb2$ $\mathbb{R}xb2$ 11.h4 $\mathbb{R}g2$ 12. $\mathbb{Q}f3$ $\mathbb{R}c2$



White obviously has winning chances here, but I'm pretty sure that with correct play, Black should draw in almost all cases. Black's defense from now on is very instructive to follow – he doesn't give White any chances, and at the moment when White missed a tactical resource, Black immediately pounced. I decided not to make too many comments, since I simply have nothing to criticize in Black's play.

13. $\mathbb{R}e7$ $\mathbb{R}a2$ 14. $\mathbb{R}e3$ $\mathbb{Q}f7$ 15. $\mathbb{Q}e4$ $\mathbb{Q}e6$ 16. $\mathbb{Q}d4+$ $\mathbb{Q}d6$ 17. $\mathbb{Q}c4$ $\mathbb{R}a1$ 18. $\mathbb{Q}b4$ $\mathbb{R}b1+$ 19. $\mathbb{R}b3$ $\mathbb{R}f1$ 20. $\mathbb{Q}b5$ $\mathbb{R}f8$ 21.a4 $\mathbb{R}b8+$ 22. $\mathbb{Q}c4$ $\mathbb{R}c8+$ 23. $\mathbb{Q}d4$ $\mathbb{R}a8$ 24. $\mathbb{R}a3$ $\mathbb{R}a5$ 25. $\mathbb{Q}c4$ $\mathbb{Q}c6$ 26. $\mathbb{Q}b4$ $\mathbb{R}e5$ 27. $\mathbb{R}c3+$ $\mathbb{Q}b6$ 28.g4 g6 29. $\mathbb{R}c4$ $\mathbb{R}e1$ 30. $\mathbb{R}f4$ $\mathbb{R}b1+$ 31. $\mathbb{Q}c4$ $\mathbb{Q}a5$ 32. $\mathbb{Q}d5$ $\mathbb{R}h1$

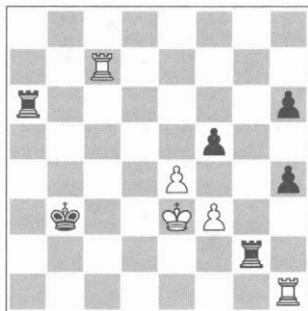
1/2-1/2

White loses one of his pawns, so the players decided to call it a day.

Mastering Complex Endgames

I really hope that the analysis of all the games (and especially this one) gave the reader many ideas that he or she will utilize during their chess careers. There are many more topics to discuss in double rook endgames, but I decided that the thorough analysis of a dozen games is much better than the careless analysis of many more.

If you want a self-evaluation, try to solve the following exercises. They aren't simple, so don't get too upset if you can't solve one, but try your best to utilize the rules and ideas mentioned in the chapter so far.



2.1 Shirov-Adams

Tilburg 1996

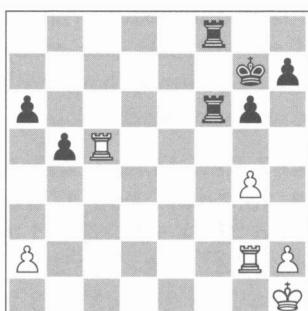
You're in big time trouble, and need to use your intuition – should White play e4-e5 or exf5?



2.2 Naroditsky-Rensch

Philadelphia 2009

White threatens to queen his pawn, and you're desperate to find counterplay. How should you proceed?



2.3 Lautier-Piket

3rd match game, Monaco 1996

Black is a pawn up, and White's g4- and a2-pawns are extremely weak. Is there a way to take advantage of these weaknesses?

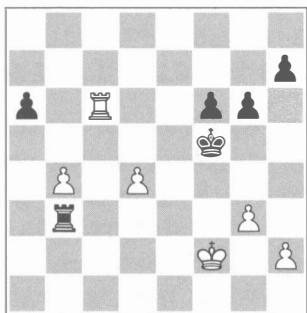
Single Rook Endgames

When I started working on this book, I had no idea how I would cover single rook endings. Studying single rook endings is like walking through a never-ending desert. There are hundreds, if not thousands, of theoretical positions that one needs to study and understand, and an almost infinite amount of practical material. No matter how many books are written on the topic, it cannot be fully covered.

Therefore, my goal in this chapter is to give the reader as many *ideas* as possible, and to show endgames which can actually arise on the board. As you shall soon find out, none of the endgames shown in this part have any resemblance to theoretical positions; I tried to pick the most instructive games and show the reader how to think in positions that most commonly arise in games.

There are many topics in single rook endgames: defense, attack, positional play, calculation, searching for counterplay, playing with and against passed pawns, and much, much more. I have decided to pick out only some of those topics, and equip the reader with enough ideas so that he or she won't feel too uncomfortable in unfamiliar endgames.

The first topic that I would like to cover is defense. Defending a long rook endgame is almost always extremely boring and difficult. You need to avoid many traps, search for counterplay, calculate variations, and defend against constant threats while often being in time trouble. The following game shows how exactly to think when defending a statically bad endgame:



13. Naroditsky-Aliyev

Philadelphia 2007

After missing numerous previous draws, I had allowed Black to obtain winning

chances and to transfer his king from g8 to f5. After a long battle, the position on the board was reached. At first glance, the position seems to be a dead draw, since White's active rook ties down Black's king to the defense of the f6-pawn. However, White's d4 pawn is very weak, and Black has constant ideas of ... $\mathbb{R}b2+$ followed by ... $\mathbb{Q}g5$, ...f6-f5, and ... $\mathbb{Q}g4-f3$ or ...h5-h4-h3. Before moving on to calculation, it's important to make the forced moves first. White's first few moves are practically forced:

1. $\mathbb{R}xa6$ $\mathbb{R}xb4$ 2. $\mathbb{R}d6$ $\mathbb{R}b2+$ 3. $\mathbb{Q}g1$
 $\mathbb{R}d2$



Mastering Complex Endgames

Both sides have made their obligatory moves and the game has reached its climax. Black wants to execute the aforementioned plan with ... $\mathbb{Q}g5$, ...f6-f5, and ... $\mathbb{Q}g4-f3$. White, on the other hand, cannot use his rook to help the king, as it is tied down to the defense of the weak d4-pawn. I could have played 3... $\mathbb{R}a6$, but after 3... $\mathbb{R}xd4$ 4. $\mathbb{R}a3$ $\mathbb{Q}g4+$ White gets an inferior version of the 2 vs. 3 pawn endgame.

After eliminating the sacrifice of the d4-pawn, I wasn't left with much of a choice: I could either allow ... $\mathbb{Q}g5$ and ...f6-f5 or stop this plan immediately with h2-h3. Being in time trouble, I could not calculate both lines, and had to rely solely on my intuition. The reason I didn't like Plan A (allowing ... $\mathbb{Q}g5$ and ...f6-f5) was because I couldn't see a clear-cut way to stop ... $\mathbb{Q}f3$ or ... $\mathbb{Q}h3$. Plan B seemed much more appealing to me as I couldn't see a way for Black to attack the g3- and h3-pawns. On one hand, they will be weak, but on the other, they control the crucial squares h4, g4, and f4, not allowing Black to break through with his king. Therefore, I quickly played:

4.h3! h5!?

A good practical try, but White could now have drawn immediately. Instead, however, attempting to execute the same plan as before with 4... $\mathbb{Q}g5$ would have brought Black nowhere after 5. $\mathbb{Q}f1$ f5 6.d5 h6 7. $\mathbb{R}d8=$ with a dead draw.

5. $\mathbb{Q}f1$!?

I'd completely forgotten that after 5.g4+! $\mathbb{h}xg4$ 6. $\mathbb{h}xg4+$ $\mathbb{Q}g5$ White simply waits: 7. $\mathbb{Q}f1$ $\mathbb{Q}xg4$ 8. $\mathbb{R}xf6$ g5 9. $\mathbb{R}f2$ with a draw. The text doesn't give the draw away, but makes matters a bit more complicated for White.

5...g5 6. $\mathbb{Q}g1$ $\mathbb{R}e2$

6...h4 was relatively best, but after 7. $\mathbb{g}xh4$ $\mathbb{g}xh4$ 8.d5 $\mathbb{Q}g5$ 9. $\mathbb{R}d8$ f5 10.d6= Black cannot make any progress.

**7. $\mathbb{Q}h1$ $\mathbb{R}f2$ 8. $\mathbb{Q}g1$ $\mathbb{R}f3$ 9. $\mathbb{Q}g2$ $\mathbb{R}a3$
10.g4+!**



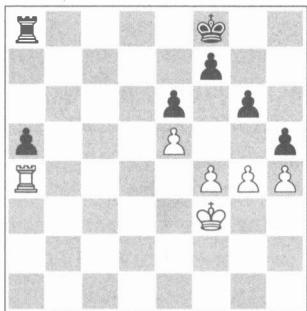
Finally! Black is forced to give away his f6-pawn, and White will have no difficulty achieving the Philidor position.

**10... $\mathbb{h}xg4$ 11. $\mathbb{h}xg4+$ $\mathbb{Q}xg4$ 12. $\mathbb{R}xf6$
 $\mathbb{R}d3$ 13. $\mathbb{R}a6$ $\mathbb{R}d2+$ 14. $\mathbb{Q}g1$ $\mathbb{R}xd4$
15. $\mathbb{R}a3$ $\mathbb{Q}f4$ 16. $\mathbb{R}b3$ $\mathbb{R}a4$ 17. $\mathbb{R}c3$ 1/2-1/2**

The draw wasn't too hard to hold, but accuracy and precision were nevertheless required from White. It's much harder to defend a position where you're objectively lost. It is especially annoying when your opponent can't find the win immediately; you know that he'll find it eventually.

As you probably know, it is important to fight until the very end. You'll be surprised to learn how many games were drawn when one side missed a simple win, sometimes repeatedly in a single game. Occasionally, even very strong players miss easy wins.

I found the following position rather amusing:



14. Lasker-Levenfish

Moscow 1925

The position looks totally hopeless for White. As if being a pawn down wasn't enough, White's rook is completely tied up; it simply cannot leave the a4-square. Black's winning plan seems very simple: transfer the king to b5 by means of ... $\mathbb{e}7-d7-c6-b5$. Since Black's pawns are all connected, there seems to be no way that White can hold the position. Moreover, it appears that White cannot even obtain a single chance for counterplay. Levenfish, probably without much thought, played:

1...hxg4+?

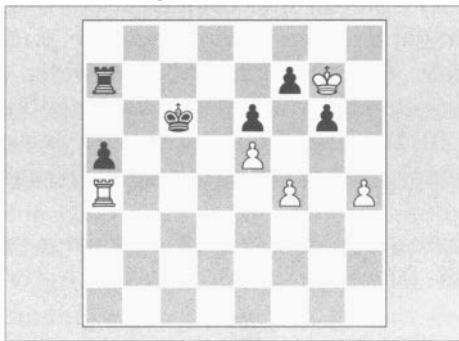
The Russian grandmaster Grigory Levenfish was one of the strongest players in the world in the early 20th century. He played many brilliancies, and had there been no Alekhine, I wouldn't have been surprised if Levenfish would have become World Champion.

There seems to be nothing wrong with 1...hxg4+. This move weakens White's h4-pawn, creating even more trouble for him. Levenfish, in his happiness, completely disregarded any ideas his

opponent had, telling himself that there is no way that White can save a position like this. Little did he know that this natural-looking move should have given the win away.

In his *Endgame Manual*, Dvoretsky shows that Black could have won without many difficulties: 1... $\mathbb{e}7$ 2. $\mathbb{g}xh5$ $\mathbb{g}xh5$ 3. $\mathbb{e}4$ $\mathbb{d}7$ 4. $\mathbb{f}5$ $\mathbb{c}6$ 5. $\mathbb{f}6$ $\mathbb{b}5$ 6. $\mathbb{a}1$ $a4$ 7. $\mathbb{f}4$ $\mathbb{g}8+$. The problem was, Lasker himself thought that he had no chances to draw, and didn't even look for counterplay. It's important that you don't repeat his mistake – never stop searching for counterplay. Even in the most hopeless positions, chances can often be found.

**2. $\mathbb{g}xg4$ $\mathbb{e}7$ 3. $\mathbb{g}5$ $\mathbb{a}7$ 4. $\mathbb{h}6$
 $\mathbb{d}75.$ $\mathbb{g}7$ $\mathbb{c}6$**



The obligatory moves have been made, and both sides were convinced that White was lost. However, had Lasker been a little more optimistic, he would have found the drawing counterplay without a doubt: 6.f5!. The problem is, White achieves a passed pawn no matter how Black plays. After 6...exf5 7.e6! $f \times e6+$ 8. $\mathbb{g}xg6$ $\mathbb{b}5$ 9. $\mathbb{a}1$, Black has no way to win:

A) 9... $\mathbb{b}4$ 10.h5 $\mathbb{a}8$ 11.h6 $a4$ 12. $\mathbb{h}1!$ leads to a quick draw: 12... $a3$ 13.h7 $a2$ 14. $\mathbb{g}7$ $f4$ 15.h8 \mathbb{w} $\mathbb{x}h8$

16. $\mathbb{Q}xh8$ e5 17. $\mathbb{Q}g7$ e4 18. $\mathbb{Q}f6$ $\mathbb{Q}b3$
 19. $\mathbb{Q}e5=$ with a draw.
 B) 9...a4 10. h5 $\mathbb{R}a8$ 11. h6 a3
 12. $\mathbb{R}a2=$ draws immediately.

6. $\mathbb{Q}f6?$

After this lemon the game can't be saved, even if White plays f4-f5 on move 8.

**6... $\mathbb{Q}b5$ 7. $\mathbb{R}a1$ a4 8. f5 exf5 9. e6
 $\mathbb{Q}xe6$ 10. $\mathbb{Q}xg6$ f4 11. h5 f3 12. h6
 $\mathbb{Q}e5!$ 13. $\mathbb{R}e1$**

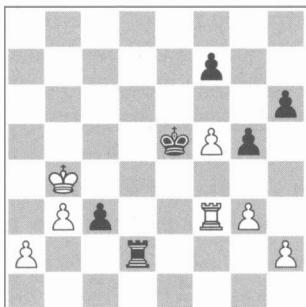
13. h7 also loses after 13... $\mathbb{R}xh7$
 14. $\mathbb{Q}xh7$ e4 15. $\mathbb{R}f1$ a3 16. $\mathbb{Q}g6$ a2
 17. $\mathbb{Q}f5$ e3—+ (Dvoretsky).

In the following example, Black's clumsy play not only gives White enough counterplay to hold, but enough to win the game! Before we take a look at the next example, however, I would like tell the reader a few things about defending lost positions:

A) You can find counterplay in almost all positions, no matter how lost they might be. In the previous example, Black was a pawn up, and seemed to have a plan that White couldn't stop. However, as we saw, White could have obtained counterplay, which, despite looking absurd, achieved a draw!

B) Don't lose hope just because your opponent is a strong player; if strong players didn't make mistakes, they would be unbeatable.

Take a look at Black's self-destruction in the following game:



15. Dvoiry-M.D.Tseitlin

Beer-Sheva 1997

**13...a3 14. $\mathbb{R}xe5+$ $\mathbb{Q}c4$ 15. $\mathbb{R}e1$ a2
 16. h7 $\mathbb{R}a8$ 17. $\mathbb{Q}g7f2$ 18. $\mathbb{R}f1$ a1 $\mathbb{Q}+$
 19. $\mathbb{R}xa1$ $\mathbb{R}xa1$ 20. h8 \mathbb{Q} $\mathbb{R}g1+$ 0-1**

Despite the result of this game, the fact that Levenfish missed relatively simple counterplay shows that even the strongest players can miss simple things. Lasker, on the other hand, lost hope of drawing the game and completely overlooked his only chance for counterplay. I cannot emphasize enough how important it is to never lose hope, even against extremely strong players.

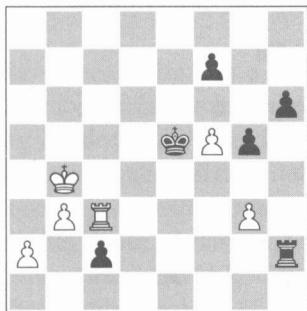
Black played the whole game brilliantly and achieved a clear advantage in a rook endgame. Right now, he could have placed White on the verge of losing by means of the simple 1... $\mathbb{R}xa2!$ 2. $\mathbb{R}xc3$ $\mathbb{R}xh2$ and I don't think that White can save the position even with best play. Deep Fritz 10 gives 3. $\mathbb{Q}a3!$ as the best move, but after 3... $\mathbb{Q}xf5$ 4. b4 $\mathbb{R}d2+$ Black's passed pawns should eventually bring Black the full point. Instead, Black, wanting to win the game immediately, played:

1...c2?

I simply cannot see how Black came to this move. It locks out Black's rook, thus

giving White's passed a-pawn an unobstructed path to the 8th rank. Analysis shows that the position is drawn, but White has to be very careful.

2. $\mathbb{H}c3 \mathbb{H}xh2$



3.a4!

White has to play extremely actively, or else Black will promote faster. Now, instead of playing the obvious 3...h5, Tseitlin made the rather weird move

3... $\mathbb{Q}xf5?!$

Technically, this move isn't worse than 3...h5, but I see no point in complicating things. After 3...h5 4.a5 $\mathbb{H}d2$ 5.a6 $\mathbb{H}d4+$ 6. $\mathbb{Q}b5$ $\mathbb{H}d5+$ 7. $\mathbb{Q}b4$ $\mathbb{H}d4\pm$ White cannot avoid a repetition of moves.

It's interesting that Tyomkin on *ChessBase* 'awards' the text move two question marks, calling it the decisive mistake. It's obvious that his annotation was influenced by the result of the game. In truth, the game should have still ended in a draw.

So far, we have been looking at endgames where one didn't need a lot of patience to defend; after a few moves, the result of the game was clear. It's much more difficult when you need to passively defend for a long time. Players often get tired of playing passively, and want to obtain counterplay, which is understandable. However, since the counterplay can often be refuted, they lose quickly.

4.a5 $\mathbb{Q}g4?!$

Black keeps complicating matters! The simple 4... $\mathbb{H}d2$ lead to a draw: 5.a6 $\mathbb{H}d4+$ 6. $\mathbb{Q}a5$ $\mathbb{H}d5+$ 7. $\mathbb{Q}b6$ $\mathbb{H}d6+=$.

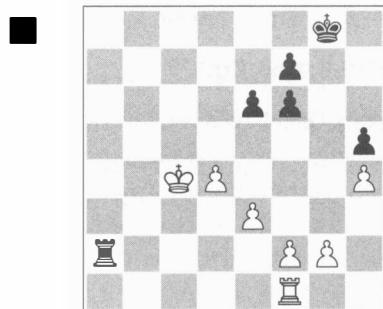
5.a6 f5 6. $\mathbb{Q}b5 \mathbb{H}g2??$

Most likely, Black was busy criticizing himself for his previous play, and didn't really concentrate on making a logical move. Instead, Black could still have achieved an easy draw with 6... $\mathbb{H}e2$ 7.a7 $\mathbb{H}e5+$ (not Tyomkin's 7... $\mathbb{H}e8?!$ 8. $\mathbb{H}xc2$ f4?? (8... $\mathbb{Q}xg3$ still achieved a draw: 9. $\mathbb{H}c3+$ $\mathbb{Q}g2$ 10. $\mathbb{H}c2+$ $\mathbb{Q}g3$ 11. $\mathbb{H}c3+$ $\mathbb{Q}g2=$) 9.gxf4 gxf4 10. $\mathbb{H}a2$ f3 11.a8 \mathbb{Q} $\mathbb{H}xa8$ 12. $\mathbb{H}xa8$ followed by $\mathbb{Q}c5$ with a win) 8. $\mathbb{Q}c6$ $\mathbb{H}e6+$ 9. $\mathbb{Q}b7$ $\mathbb{H}e7+=$ with an already familiar to us repetition of moves.

7.a7 c1 \mathbb{Q} 8. $\mathbb{H}xc1 \mathbb{H}a2$ 9. $\mathbb{H}c4+$ 1-0

If one were to draw an evaluation chart for this endgame, it would have been a line, starting at a big advantage for Black, and going down steadily until ending at a complete win for White. Dvoirys didn't lose hope of finding counterplay and got his reward; it's really unpleasant when your opponent keeps finding nagging ideas, keeping him alive and prolonging the struggle. Such irritation often leads to mistakes, giving the defending side enough counterplay for a draw, or, as we saw from this game, for a win!

The following position shows that defending passively is often better than seeking dubious counterplay.



16. Kramnik-Ivanchuk

Linares 1998

Such a position is extremely unpleasant to defend, especially against someone like Kramnik. Ivanchuk probably had a big temptation to play for reckless counterplay with 1...e5, but then he realized: 'why do I have to search for hasty counterplay when I can simply wait, making White try to search for a plan?'

1...f5!

Black's only drawing chance is to be patient and not make any committal moves. Going all in with 1...e5? would have backfired quickly after 2.♔d3 ♜a5 3.♗c1 ♜a2 4.♗c2 e4+ 5.♔c3 ♜a7 6.d5 and Black is completely lost. Ivanchuk knew that a boring, long defense lay ahead, but he also understood that waiting and defending passively posed White many more problems. Kramnik made a move which seems like a mistake, but in truth contains a lot of poison:

2.d5!?

Now, Black has to choose from a multitude of options, all of which lead to po-

sitions that aren't easy to assess. Other moves gave White some winning chances, but in all lines Black achieved a draw with accurate play. For example, after 2.♔b3 ♜e2 3.♔c3 ♜g7 4.♔d3 ♜a2 5.g4 ♔f6, White cannot play 6.f3, as 6...♜a3+= draws immediately.

2...♔f8!

Again, Ivanchuk waits, not committing to any specific plan. The problem with facing such moves is that you have to choose a plan, thus making your opponent's counter-plan much more effective. Instead, Black could have easily gone astray:

A) 2...exd5+? irreparably weakens the kingside pawns. After 3.♔xd5 ♜a5+ 4.♔d6 ♜a6+ 5.♔e5 ♜a5+ 6.♔f6 I doubt that the game can be saved.

B) 2...f4? is way too rash. After 3.dxe6 fxe6 4.♔b3! ♜e2 5.exf4, Black has no way to regain his lost material.

C) 2...♜c2+!? seems to be the only good alternative. The position after 3.♔d3 ♜a2 4.dxe6 fxe6 is similar to the one that arose in the game.

3.dxe6

Instead, 3.d6 brought White nowhere after 3...♔e8 4.♔d4 f6= (Kostakiev).

**3...fxe6 4.♔d4 ♔e7 5.♔e5 ♜a4
6.f3**



Psychologically, a very strong move. At first sight, Black seems to be in Zugzwang, as 6... $\mathbb{H}xh4$ loses immediately to 7. $\mathbb{H}a1$. However, a closer look reveals that after Black's next move, the f6 square will open up for Black's king.

6... $\mathbb{H}a5+$! 7. $\mathbb{Q}f4$ $\mathbb{H}a2$ 8. $\mathbb{H}b1$

Kostakiev gives 8. $\mathbb{Q}g3$ as a slight improvement, but Black can draw immediately with 8... $\mathbb{H}e2!$: 9. $\mathbb{H}f2$ $\mathbb{H}xe3$ 10. $\mathbb{Q}f4$ $\mathbb{H}d3$ 11. $\mathbb{Q}g5$ $\mathbb{H}d8=$. White already has practically no winning chances, but Kramnik keeps playing in hopes that Ivanchuk will blunder, or give White winning chances.

8... $\mathbb{Q}f6$

This is the most precise move, although 8... $\mathbb{H}xg2$ also drew: 9. $\mathbb{Q}e5$ $\mathbb{H}e2$ 10. $\mathbb{H}b7+$ $\mathbb{Q}d8$ 11. $\mathbb{Q}xe6$ $\mathbb{H}xe3+=$.

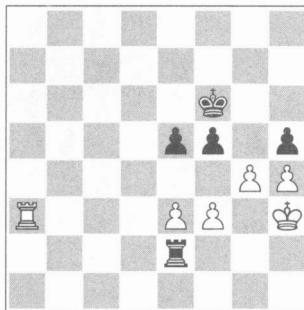
9. $\mathbb{Q}g3$ $\mathbb{H}e2$ 10. $\mathbb{H}b3$ $\mathbb{Q}e5!=$

Now, White doesn't even have the f4-square for his king. Since his rook cannot leave b3, the game is a dead draw.

11. $\mathbb{H}b6+$ $\mathbb{Q}g7$ 12. $\mathbb{H}b3$ $\mathbb{Q}f6$ 13. $\mathbb{H}a3$ $\mathbb{Q}g6$ 14. $\mathbb{Q}h3$ $\mathbb{Q}f6$ 15.g4!

After looking at this example, one may say: 'Yes, Ivanchuk defended this endgame, but I'm not Ivanchuk and I don't have the patience and skill to defend such a bad position!' True, Ivanchuk is a phenomenal endgame player, but he didn't really do anything so extraordinary in this game: he simply waited and didn't blunder anything. All you need to be able to defend such endgames is *patience*. If you are playing a strong opponent and are defending a bad rook endgame (which happens rather often) you need to be patient. You might think that he or she will easily realize the advantage, but the truth is totally different. Even Kramnik couldn't find a single chance in the seemingly winning position. Had Ivanchuk committed to careless counterplay, Kramnik would have won the game with ease.

In the following game, Black defended an unpleasant endgame without difficulty and forced me to look for winning chances. Again, the key to the defense of the position was patience. The result: White achieving a worse position.



Kramnik makes Ivanchuk work hard for the half point. Black still has to be careful, but a player like Ivanchuk has no difficulties defending the arising endgame.

15...$\mathbb{H}xg4+$	16.$\mathbb{F}xg4$	$\mathbb{F}xg4+$
17.$\mathbb{Q}xg4$	$\mathbb{Q}g6$	18.$\mathbb{H}5+$
19.$\mathbb{H}a6+$	$\mathbb{Q}h7$	20.$\mathbb{H}a3$
21.$\mathbb{Q}f5$	$\mathbb{Q}h6$	22.$\mathbb{Q}xe4$
e4	$\mathbb{Q}xh5$	23.$\mathbb{Q}f5$
24.$\mathbb{Q}e6$	$\mathbb{H}f2+$	25.$\mathbb{Q}f5$
$\mathbb{H}g6$	26.$\mathbb{Q}e5$	27.e4
27.e4	$\mathbb{H}b2$	28.$\mathbb{H}a7$
28.$\mathbb{H}b5+$	$\mathbb{H}b5+$	29.$\mathbb{Q}e6$
29.$\mathbb{Q}e6$	$\mathbb{H}b6+$	30.$\mathbb{Q}e7$
31.$\mathbb{H}a6+$	$\mathbb{Q}g5$	32.$\mathbb{H}e6$
$\mathbb{Q}h5$	$\mathbb{Q}f4$	33.$\mathbb{Q}f6$
		1/2-1/2

Finally, after forcing Ivanchuk to make precise moves, Kramnik accepted the draw.



17. Naroditsky-Nip

San Francisco 2007

Black was already worse after the opening. After a grueling middlegame struggle, he managed to liquidate into the endgame on the board. Black's position is obviously unpleasant: the d5-pawn is very weak, while White's pieces are placed very well. If White sinks a rook on g6, Black's position will become critical. Here, many players would immediately panic. My opponent, however, patiently waited, pushing me to play overly active moves.

1... $\mathbb{Q}e6!$

I was very surprised that my inexperienced opponent resisted the temptation to seek unsound counterplay. $1...\mathbb{M}e7?$ would have forced White to find the correct continuation: $2.\mathbb{M}xd5 \mathbb{M}e2$ $3.\mathbb{M}f5+$ $\mathbb{Q}e6$ $4.\mathbb{M}f2 \mathbb{M}e3+$ $5.\mathbb{Q}g2\pm$ with a healthy extra pawn.

2. $\mathbb{M}d1 \mathbb{M}f7$ 3. $\mathbb{M}e1+$ $\mathbb{Q}d6$ 4. $\mathbb{M}e8 \mathbb{M}f6$

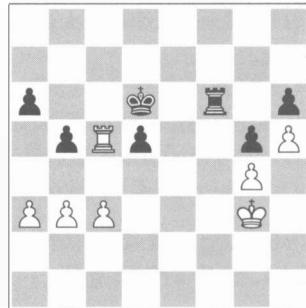
White's strong, active rook cannot do anything: Black's pieces defend all of his weaknesses, and without his king, White cannot obtain a single winning chance. I simply couldn't believe that my opponent had built a fortress, and decided to try for a dubious winning attempt.

Latvian GM Vladimir Bagirov once said that in a blitz game, the player defending a rook endgame always wins, as the attacking side, in an attempt to win the game, tends to burn all his bridges too soon. In a serious game, the same event often takes place: the attacking side, out of pure inertia, tries to convert an advantage which he or she no longer has, thus giving the defending side winning chances. We encountered this phenomenon in Dvoiryts-Tseitlin, and it almost repeats in this game.

**5.b3 $\mathbb{Q}d7$ 6. $\mathbb{M}e3$ $\mathbb{Q}d6$ 7.a3 $\mathbb{Q}c5$
8. $\mathbb{M}e8 \mathbb{Q}d6$**

Patience!

**9. $\mathbb{M}g8$ $\mathbb{Q}e7$ 10. $\mathbb{M}c8$ $\mathbb{Q}d7$ 11. $\mathbb{M}c5$
 $\mathbb{Q}d6$**



12.b4?

This error should have given Black an advantage and a probable win – I completely forgot that after Black's next move, my rook would be trapped! White should have repeated moves with 12. $\mathbb{M}c8$. After

12... $\mathbb{M}f8$

I immediately offered a draw, which my opponent happily took – $\frac{1}{2}-\frac{1}{2}$. However, if Black had declined, it would have been White who needed to draw

the game. After 13.♕g2 (13.a4? loses to 13...bxa4 14.♖a5 ♜c8 15.♖xa6+ ♜e5 16.♖xa4 ♜xc3+) 13...♜f4 14.♕g3 ♜e5, White would have had to find 15.♖c7! ♜c4 16.♖xc4! dxc4 17.♔f3= in order to draw.

In every game that we have analyzed so far, patience paid off, sometimes giving the defending side a full point! In conclusion, I think that it's important to sum up a few rules and ideas that we have seen in this section:

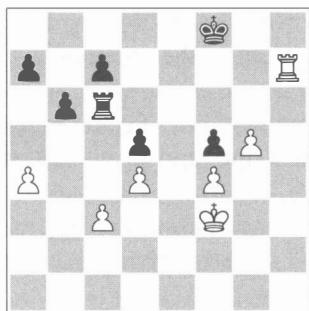
- A) Never give up hope; totally hopeless positions can sometimes be saved by means of paradoxical counterplay. Even the strongest players often miss simple counterplay (Lasker-Levenfish).
- B) When defending a statically worse endgame, never go for unsound counterplay unless you have to. No matter how boring defending a bad endgame might be, it almost always pays off, even against the strongest players (Kramnik-Ivanchuk).
- C) Sometimes, after you have defended, your opponent, out of pure inertia, tries one final winning attempt. This attempt is often unsound, and may even lead to a loss! (Dvoiryts-Tseitlin).
- D) Don't hurry to accept a draw; after you have defended a worse endgame, your opponent may be demoralized, and might make a mistake, giving you winning chances (Naroditsky-Nip).
- E) Be vigilant and precise until the very end; a strong endgame player might set up constant traps, which are easy to fall into. Never make automatic moves when defending a worse endgame (Naroditsky-Aliyev).

The Russian master and endgame specialist Orest Averkin once said that endgames were 90% tactics. At the surface, rook endgames seemed to be all about boring positional chess, but one almost never pays attention to the constant tactical ideas supporting positional motives. Attack in single rook endgames is a concept that is rarely covered, but often seen. Tactical rook endgames arise frequently, and when they do, it's important to understand ideas that can be used to successfully play these types of endings. A king, rook, and pawns can easily mate a king. However, when attacking in such an endgame, it's easy to go overboard and start sacrificing everything, in hopes of achieving some kind of study-like mate.

Using intuition in order to make committal attacking moves is a recipe for disaster. The only situation in which one should use intuition to conduct a rook-ending attack is when your opponent is in big time-trouble or when the positions resulting from the attack are too complicated to calculate.

I really didn't want to start with very complicated positions, illustrating some basic topics first. The most important mini-theme in the successful attack of an opponent's king is to activate your own king. A king can be surprisingly strong in rook endings, and without the monarch, an effective attack is very rarely conducted.

The following game, played by one of the best endgame players (if not the best) of all time, shows that a king's activity is often more valuable than material; when a player's king is mated, nobody counts the material on the board! Before looking at the text of the game, I recommend the reader to play out a few variations on the board and try to find the correct plan, only then matching it with the course of the real game.



18. Capablanca-Tartakower

New York 1924

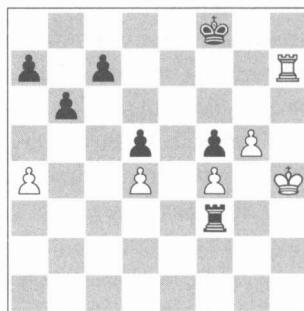
White has a powerful rook and a defended passer on g5, but it's completely unclear how to defend the c3-pawn. Unfortunately for White, Black will be able to achieve immediate counterplay with ...c7-c5 (after ...Rxc3+). Therefore, White has to search for a dynamic solution to the problem.

Capablanca noted that Black's king was cut off on the last rank. Unfortunately, White's king does nothing to support a possible attack on the opponent's king, rendering any g5-g6 ideas useless. Capa immediately realized that there was indeed a way to transfer the king to g6; despite the fact that Black is able to grab many of White's pawns, his king will be completely undefended.

1. Kg3!

Had White's king been on e3, the march of the king to h5 would have been impossible, as after 1.Qf3 Rxc3+ the king has to retreat to the 2nd rank. Notice how Capa plays Kg3 without any hesitation; he was known to be a rather lazy calculator, and most of his moves were based on intuition. In this case, however, calculating the consequences after 1...Rxc3+ isn't too hard.

1...Rxc3+ 2. Qh4 Rf3?



This looks tempting, but in fact loses the game immediately. My guess is that Tartakower underestimated White's chances after Capa's fifth move. Black's only opportunity was in the active 2...c5!, after which Black would have had reasonable chances to hold. After 3.g6 cxd4 4.Qg5 a6 5.Qd7 Rc1? 6.Rxd5 Re7 7.Re5++— White wins right away, but Black has the better 5...b5!, and White will have to be very careful in order to win. After 6.axb5 axb5 7.Rxd5 d3, the tempting 8.Rd8+?! Re7 9.g7? allows a surprising draw after 9...d2!! 10.Rxd2 Rf7=. Therefore, White must play 8.Qh6! and the position after 8...d2 9.g7+ Rf7 10.Rxf5+ Re7 11.g8=Q Rh3+ 12.Qg7

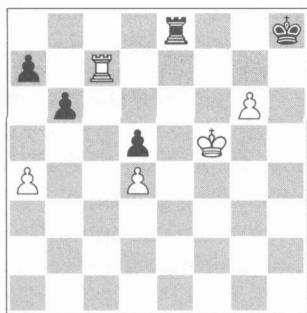
$\blacksquare g3+$ 13. $\blacksquare g5$ $\blacksquare xg5+$ 14. $f x g 5$ $d1\blacksquare$ 15. $\blacksquare f7+$ $\blacksquare d8$ 16. $g6+-$ is completely winning for White, since Black cannot move his b-pawn.

In his *Endgame Manual*, Dvoretsky gives 2... $a6!?$ as the best defense, when White wins by means of a nice tactical resource: 3. $\blacksquare h5$ $b5$ 4. $a x b 5$ (Zaitsev gives 4. $\blacksquare g6$ on *ChessBase*, but I see no reason to allow complications with 4... $b x a 4$) 4... $a x b 5$ 5. $\blacksquare g6!$ $\blacksquare g8$ 6. $\blacksquare g7+$ $\blacksquare f8$ 7. $\blacksquare f7+$ $\blacksquare g8$ 8. $\blacksquare f6+-$ and Black has no defense against 9. $\blacksquare a6$ or 9. $\blacksquare c6$ (Zaitsev). Therefore, Capablanca's move was completely sound and couldn't have been refuted.

3.g6!

Tartakower had evidently overlooked this simple idea. Black cannot stop White's king from marching to f6 with a mating attack. Notice that after Black's next move, he will have two extra pawns, but since Black's king will be under a deadly mating attack, the extra material won't matter!

- 3... $\blacksquare x f 4+$ 4. $\blacksquare g 5$ $\blacksquare e 4$ 5. $\blacksquare f 6$ $\blacksquare g 8$
6. $\blacksquare g 7+$ $\blacksquare h 8$ 7. $\blacksquare x c 7$ $\blacksquare e 8$ 8. $\blacksquare x f 5$



Black has defended against immediate mate, but loses all of his pawns.

- 8... $\blacksquare e 4$ 9. $\blacksquare f 6$ $\blacksquare f 4+$ 10. $\blacksquare e 5$ $\blacksquare g 4$
11. $g 7+!!$

Capablanca displays impeccable winning technique, not giving Tartakower any chances.

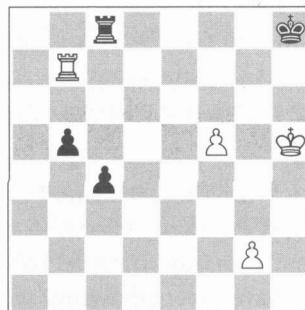
11... $\blacksquare g 8$

11... $\blacksquare x g 7$ lost immediately after
12. $\blacksquare x g 7$ $\blacksquare x g 7$ 13. $\blacksquare x d 5$ $\blacksquare f 7$ 14. $\blacksquare c 6$.

12. $\blacksquare x a 7$ $\blacksquare g 1$ 13. $\blacksquare x d 5$ $\blacksquare c 1$
14. $\blacksquare d 6$ $\blacksquare c 2$ 15. $d 5$ $\blacksquare c 1$ 16. $\blacksquare c 7$
 $\blacksquare a 1$ 17. $\blacksquare c 6$ $\blacksquare x a 4$ 18. $d 6$ 1-0

Despite the fact that there were a few long variations, the attack starting with 1. $\blacksquare g 3$ could have been calculated without much difficulty. Even if there were many more variations, Capa didn't have much of a choice; he had to go for the attack, or he would lose material without any compensation.

It's much harder to make committal decisions when you have a safer option. In those cases, you have to calculate if you have time, especially if the committal option involves the sacrifice of material. Take a look at the following study:



19. Naroditsky

Study position 2009

Imagine that you're playing White in a real game and you have a lot of time on the clock. You have two options: you can play it safe and choose 1. $\blacksquare x b 5$, or

Mastering Complex Endgames

go for the throat with f5-f6 and g3-g4. How would you come about deciding which of the options to choose?

The key to solving such dilemmas is to *stop generalizing* and *start calculating*. Thinking in terms of 'I don't like this move because it doesn't look good' will lead to calamity nine out of ten times.

The move 1. $\mathbb{B}xb5$ guarantees White at least a draw, but not more. After 1...c3 2. $\mathbb{B}b1$ c2 3. $\mathbb{B}c1$ $\mathbb{Q}g7$ 4. $\mathbb{Q}g5$ $\mathbb{B}c4=$ White cannot make any progress. Pushing the g2-pawn with 1.g4 is clearly way too slow and loses immediately after 1...c3 2.g5 c2 3.g6 c1 \mathbb{Q} 4. $\mathbb{B}h7+$ $\mathbb{Q}g8+-$. This leaves the third move 1.f6. Black now has three viable moves: pushing the c-pawn with ...c4-c3, distracting the b7-rook with ...b5-b4, or counterattacking with the rook by means of ... $\mathbb{B}f8$.

A) 1...c3? gets Black nowhere after 2. $\mathbb{Q}h6$ c2 3. $\mathbb{B}h7+$ $\mathbb{Q}g8$ 4.f7+ $\mathbb{Q}f8$ 5. $\mathbb{B}h8+$ $\mathbb{Q}xf7$ 6. $\mathbb{B}xc8+-$.

B) 1...b4 is a better try. After 2. $\mathbb{B}xb4$, Black's idea is to play 2...c3. However, White now controls the h4-square and after 3. $\mathbb{Q}g6$ c2 4. $\mathbb{B}h4+$ is deadly: 4... $\mathbb{Q}g8$ 5. f7+ $\mathbb{Q}f8$ 6. $\mathbb{B}h8+$ $\mathbb{Q}e7$ 7. $\mathbb{B}xc8$ and White wins.

C) 1... $\mathbb{B}f8!$ is the best defense. Black's idea is to counterattack with the rook, forcing White to defend his pawn. After 2. $\mathbb{Q}g6$ $\mathbb{B}g8+$ however, White plays 3. $\mathbb{Q}f7$, and Black cannot move his pawns and loses. 3. $\mathbb{Q}h6$ $\mathbb{B}xg2$ 4. $\mathbb{B}b8+!$ (4. $\mathbb{B}xb5$ $\mathbb{Q}g8!=$) 4... $\mathbb{B}g8$ 5. $\mathbb{B}b5$ also wins.

Therefore, there is no reason for White to choose the safe option:

**1.f6! $\mathbb{B}f8$ 2. $\mathbb{Q}g6$ $\mathbb{B}g8+$ 3. $\mathbb{Q}f7!$
 $\mathbb{B}xg2$ 4. $\mathbb{B}xb5$**

1-0

If White had used generalizations and intuition, solving the study would have been very difficult, as superficially the position after 1...c3 looks good for Black.

Remember:

If you aren't in time trouble and are faced with a decision in which you have one safe and one committal option, you cannot use intuition. You have to forget about all generalizations and start calculating. Even if you cannot calculate all variations, you will highly decrease the chances of making a mistake.

However, many endgames are reached after a long struggle, and the players don't have much time to calculate. Despite the fact that completely relying on intuition isn't safe, it's the only choice in time trouble. If, for example, you have a few minutes to make an important decision, ask yourself the following question:

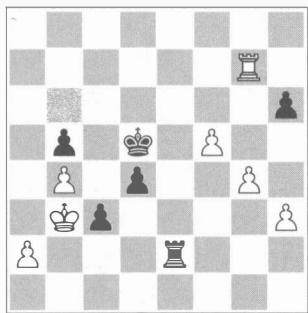
- A) Do I have a lot of drawing/winning chances if I choose the safe option?
- B) If I choose the committal option, does my opponent have a lot of candidate moves?
- C) If I choose the committal option and miscalculate, will I still have any drawing/winning chances in the resulting type of position?

These three questions won't tell you the right move, but at least they'll decrease the chance of making a mistake. Of course, if you need a draw to win the tournament and the safe option guarantees you one, you should obviously choose the safe option. It's also important to understand that unless you're in huge time trouble, it is

almost always possible to calculate at least some lines. If, for example, the evaluation in the lines that you have calculated is the same, then there are higher chances that the committal option works. Another advantage of choosing the committal, attacking option is that it aims directly for the king, and no matter what material you might give up, mate is all that counts. Another important recommendation is to decide before the game how you will think in such situations.

The best way to analyze the following positions is to first set two minutes on your clock and make a decision purely by intuition, and only then set thirty minutes on your clock and calculate concretely. After you come up with a definite answer, match it with the text. If your answers were different, determine which was incorrect (intuition or calculation). That way, you will determine which part you would need to work on more.

The first position is rather simple but nice:



20. Gutman-Hertneck

German Championship, Bremen 1998

Although Black won the game anyway, it's important to understand that sometimes, one cannot get away with such a slip. In the next study, a single inaccuracy will be the difference between a win and a draw. Unfortunately, the fact that the position is a study helps the reader make decisions, but the position could have arisen in a real game. It's also important that you try your best not to make any moves on the board; moving the pieces simplifies your task and completely nullifies the point of the problem, which is to make you think as if you were playing a real tournament game.

The position is obviously winning for Black, since his passed pawns are much more mobile and further advanced than White's lone passer. However, it isn't totally clear how to proceed. When I first came across this position, I wondered what White would do if Black chose the risk-free and prudent 1...c2. It turns out that White loses immediately: 2. $\mathbb{R}c7$ d3 3. f6 $\mathbb{R}f2$ 4. f7 $\mathbb{R}xf7$ and Black wins. Therefore, there is no reason to calculate any further variations and certainly no reason to make any decisions. Hertneck, despite having time on his clock, chose a completely unnecessary committal move. Despite being another winning option, it gave White counter-chances which Black could have easily avoided.

1... $\mathbb{R}b2+?!$ 2. $\mathbb{Q}a3$ $\mathbb{R}b1$ 3. $\mathbb{R}c7$ d3! 0-1

Black wins, but barely:

- A) 4. $\mathbb{R}xc3$ loses to 4... $\mathbb{Q}e4!$ 5. $\mathbb{R}c7$ d2.
- B) 4. f6 loses after 4... c2 5. f7 $\mathbb{R}f1$ and Black wins easily (not 5... c1 $\mathbb{Q}+??$ 6. $\mathbb{R}xc1$ $\mathbb{R}xc1$ 7. f8 \mathbb{Q} d2 8. $\mathbb{Q}d8+$ and White wins!).



21. Naroditsky

Study position 2009

It's clear that White is striving for a win; he is two pawns up and Black's king has no squares. However, White has to do something about the h2-pawn. The first choice is obvious: 1. $\mathbb{R}a1$, stopping the promotion and threatening to win the pawn by means of $\mathbb{R}h1$ and $\mathbb{R}xh2$. The second option is also not too hard to see: 1. $b7$, forcing the rook to move and also threatening $\mathbb{Q}a8$.

Since you already know that in the safe option, White would be better (even though it's not clear if he can win), you need to intuitively judge the risky continuation if you have limited time to make a decision.

After 1. $b7$, it's clear that Black has to play 1... $\mathbb{R}f8+$, or he loses immediately. Now, let's try to model the correct train of thought in this position:

'After 1. $b7$, my opponent has to play 1... $\mathbb{R}f8+$, after which I take the rook and promote. My opponent's king will have

no squares, making stalemate ideas possible, but since my opponent cannot force me to take his queen immediately, chances are he won't have a drawing resource.' Again, using this approach won't always work, but it'll highly increase the chances of making the correct decision.

After you have set 30 minutes on your clock, you can start calculating. After the safe 1. $\mathbb{R}a1$ $\mathbb{R}b8$ 2. $\mathbb{R}b1$ $\mathbb{R}b7+$ 3. $\mathbb{Q}e6$ $\mathbb{Q}g8$ 4. $\mathbb{Q}d6$ $h1\mathbb{W}$ 5. $\mathbb{R}xh1$ $\mathbb{R}xb6+$ 6. $\mathbb{Q}c5$ $\mathbb{R}xg6$ 7. $\mathbb{Q}xc4$ $\mathbb{Q}f7$, it isn't completely clear if White can win this endgame. Black's king is close to the c-pawn, and his rook will check from either the side or the back.

1. $b7$ forces Black to play 1... $\mathbb{R}f8+$ 2. $\mathbb{Q}xf8$ $h1\mathbb{W}$. White now has to play 3. $b8\mathbb{W}$ (3. $b8\mathbb{R}$ also works!), since 3. $\mathbb{R}a8??$ leads to a draw after 3... $\mathbb{R}xb7$ 4. $\mathbb{Q}e8$ $\mathbb{W}d7$. Since White is threatening both 4. $\mathbb{Q}f7$ and 4. $\mathbb{Q}e7$ mate, Black has to attack the queen directly. This can be done by either 3... $\mathbb{R}b7$ or 3... $\mathbb{R}a8$.

The straightforward 3... $\mathbb{R}b7$ loses immediately after 4. $\mathbb{Q}e8$. Much better is 3... $\mathbb{R}a8!!$. Taking the queen leads to stalemate, so White has only one move: 4. $\mathbb{Q}e8!!$. Black is forced to play 4... $\mathbb{R}xa4$, but then White can force a pawn ending that is completely winning for him.

So the main line runs:

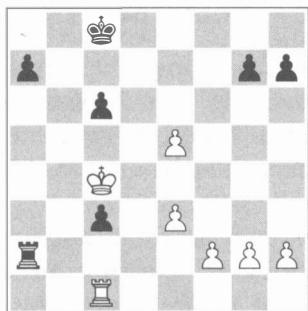
1. $b7!$ $\mathbb{R}f8+!$ 2. $\mathbb{Q}xf8$ $h1\mathbb{W}$ 3. $b8\mathbb{W}$ $\mathbb{R}a8!$ 4. $\mathbb{Q}e8!!$ $\mathbb{R}xa4$ 5. $\mathbb{Q}e7/f7+!$ $\mathbb{R}xe8+$ 6. $\mathbb{Q}xe8$ 1-0

As you can see from these two games, it's almost always possible to calculate until you reach a certain conclusion, or, in time trouble, use intuition to come up with a clear evaluation of the choices available. I can certainly find more similar games, but I think that the reader understands the point that I'm trying to make.

Reiterating the main rules about attack in rook endings, I can say the following:

- A) If time permits, you need to stop generalizing and start calculating variations, as this will highly decrease the chances of making a mistake (Capablanca-Tartakower)
- B) When deciding between a committal and a safe move, it's extra important that you don't rely exclusively on general rules (Naroditsky Study position 21)
- C) If you're in time trouble and need to make a decision whether to make a safe or committal move, ask yourself:
 - A1) Do I have any drawing/winning chances in the safe line?
 - A2) If I choose the committal option, does my opponent have a lot of candidate moves?
 - A3) If I choose the committal option and miscalculate, will I still have any drawing/winning chances in the resulting type of position? (Gutman-Hertneck & Naroditsky Study position 21)

One of the reasons strong players are so strong is because they have good endgame technique. Endgame technique is important because often times, as a result of one player outplaying another, an endgame arises in which the attacking side has a positional advantage. Those endings can be completely different, but many of them are single rook endgames. My goal in this sub-section is to show the reader some ideas that are important to know and understand when realizing a positional advantage. I decided to start with a game which clearly demonstrates a perfect realization of a positional advantage.



22. Rubinstein-Réti

Berlin 1928

Although Black's rook occupies an active post and threatens to take most of White's pawns, Black's own pawns are very weak, guaranteeing White a static positional advantage. However, before White can start playing against Black's weaknesses, he has to do something about his pawns. The straightforward

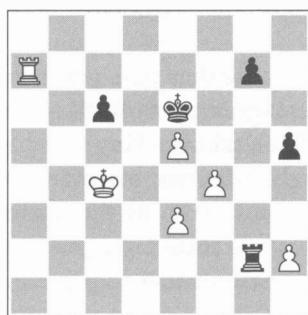
1. $\mathbb{R}f1$ looks good at first, since Black cannot defend his pawns, but after 1... $\mathbb{Q}d7!$ 2. $\mathbb{Q}xc3$ $\mathbb{Q}e6$ 3. $f4$ $\mathbb{R}xg2$, White is forced to burn all his bridges with 4. $\mathbb{Q}d4$ $\mathbb{R}xh2$ 5. $f5+$, when the position after 5... $\mathbb{Q}e7$ is completely unclear. Rubinstein, being a great endgame player, finds another idea: instead of passively defending his pawns, he lets Black take them. Meanwhile, Rubinstein will activate his rook and king, and it will be Black who will have to think about defending his pawns.

1.f4! $\mathbb{R}xg2$ 2. $\mathbb{Q}xc3$ $\mathbb{Q}d7?$

Réti cracks under the pressure, making Rubinstein's job much easier. My guess is that Réti wanted to transfer his king to f5, underestimating the strength of the passed pawn. It was of paramount importance to play 2... $\mathbb{R}xh2$, when White would have had to work hard in

order to win. After 3. $\mathbb{H}a3$ $\mathbb{H}c2+$ 4. $\mathbb{Q}d3$ $\mathbb{B}b2$ 5. $\mathbb{H}xa7$ $\mathbb{B}b7$, White needs to be careful. 6. $\mathbb{H}xb7??$ loses after 6... $\mathbb{Q}xb7$ 7. $\mathbb{Q}e4$ h5, when White cannot stop both passed pawns. Instead, White should play 6. $\mathbb{H}a8+!$ $\mathbb{B}b8$ 7. $\mathbb{H}a6$ $\mathbb{B}b7$ 8. $\mathbb{H}a2$ $\mathbb{B}e8$ 9. $\mathbb{Q}c4$, and I cannot imagine Black drawing the game.

3. $\mathbb{H}a3$ $\mathbb{Q}e6$ 4. $\mathbb{H}xa7$ h5



5. h4!

Rubinstein converts his advantage with great accuracy. The less precise 5. $\mathbb{H}c7??$ would have allowed 5... $\mathbb{Q}f5$, when Black would suddenly have counterplay.

5... $\mathbb{H}g4$ 6. $\mathbb{Q}d4$ g6

6... $\mathbb{H}xh4$ brought no relief as well: 7. $\mathbb{H}xg7$ $\mathbb{H}g4$ 8. $\mathbb{H}h7$ h4 9. $\mathbb{Q}e4$.

7. $\mathbb{H}g7$ $\mathbb{H}g1$ 8. $\mathbb{Q}e4$ $\mathbb{H}g2$ 9. $\mathbb{H}c7??$

It's curious that both Rubinstein and Portisch in his book *600 Endings* missed the simple 9. $\mathbb{H}xg6+!$, which was winning on the spot: 9... $\mathbb{H}xg6$ 10. f5+ $\mathbb{Q}f7$ 11. fxg6+ $\mathbb{Q}xg6$ 12. $\mathbb{Q}f4!$ c5 13. $\mathbb{Q}e4$ and White wins.

9... $\mathbb{H}c2$ 10. $\mathbb{Q}d3$

White could still have repeated moves with 10. $\mathbb{H}g7!$ $\mathbb{H}g2$ and played 11. $\mathbb{H}xg6+$.

10... $\mathbb{H}c1$ 11. e4 $\mathbb{H}d1+$ 12. $\mathbb{Q}e2$

White is completely winning, since Black cannot defend all of his weaknesses while simultaneously guarding the e5-pawn. Réti does his best to prolong the game, but he cannot find a speck of counterplay. It's interesting to watch how accurately Rubinstein converts his advantage into a full point.

**12. $\mathbb{H}c1$ 13. $\mathbb{Q}d2$ $\mathbb{H}c4$ 14. $\mathbb{Q}d3$ $\mathbb{H}c1$
15. $\mathbb{H}g7$ $\mathbb{H}d1+$ 16. $\mathbb{Q}e3$ $\mathbb{H}e1+$
17. $\mathbb{Q}d4$ $\mathbb{H}d1+$**

17... $\mathbb{H}g1$ loses to the already familiar to us 18. $\mathbb{H}xg6+!$ $\mathbb{H}xg6$ 19. f5+ $\mathbb{Q}f7$ 20. fxg6+ $\mathbb{Q}xg6$ 21. $\mathbb{Q}c5$ $\mathbb{Q}f7$ 22. $\mathbb{Q}d6$.

**18. $\mathbb{Q}c5$ $\mathbb{H}c1+$ 19. $\mathbb{Q}b6$ c5
20. $\mathbb{H}xg6+$ $\mathbb{Q}e7$ 21. f5 $\mathbb{H}e1$ 22. $\mathbb{Q}c6$
 $\mathbb{H}xe4$ 23. $\mathbb{Q}d5$ $\mathbb{H}xh4$ 24. $\mathbb{H}g7+$ $\mathbb{Q}f8$
25. f6 $\mathbb{H}f4$ 26. $\mathbb{Q}e6$ $\mathbb{H}a4$ 27. $\mathbb{H}c7$
 $\mathbb{H}a6+$ 28. $\mathbb{Q}f5$ h4 29. $\mathbb{H}c8+$ $\mathbb{Q}f7$
30. e6+! 1-0**

It's interesting that Rubinstein, who was certainly the best endgame player of his days, never became World Champion.

As you could see from this game, one or two pawn weaknesses can be fatal. Fortunately for Rubinstein, his pieces were located optimally to realize his positional advantage: his king was centralized and his rook was ready to jump into the attack at any point. Black's pieces, on the other hand, were located in the worst possible places: his rook couldn't come into the defense and his king was overextended. It's much harder to realize a positional advantage when your opponent has well-placed pieces.

In the following game, White masterfully demonstrates how to take advantage of weak squares and overextend the opponent's pieces, ultimately forcing him to make concessions.



23. Shipman-Naroditsky

Berkeley 2007

At first sight the position seems about even. Had it been Black's move, the players could have agreed to a draw after 1...f5. However, the fact that it is White's move changes the evaluation of the position. White can now play 1. $\mathbb{R}f6$, cutting off Black's pieces and making the unpleasant idea g4-h4-h5 possible. However, that in itself isn't too hard to deal with for Black: he will simply transfer his king to e8 and play ... $\mathbb{R}e6$. Therefore, White first creates another weakness:

1.a4!

Had Black's pawn been on c5, this move would have been completely useless. Because the pawn is on c4, Black is forced to play ...a7-a6, creating a second weakness.

1...a6 2. $\mathbb{R}f6 \mathbb{R}b7$ 3. a5!

Now Black's king is tied up to the defense of the a6-pawn, making the idea

of h4-g4-h5 very effective. Black is still not completely lost, but the position is rather unpleasant. Black's only chance is to wait passively.

**3... $\mathbb{R}d7$ 4. $\mathbb{Q}e1$ $\mathbb{R}e7+$ 5. $\mathbb{Q}d2$ $\mathbb{R}a7$
6. h4 $\mathbb{R}b7$ 7. g4**

Black's position is critical – White threatens to make an unstoppable passed pawn, and in order to parry the threat, Black has to give away a pawn.

7... $\mathbb{R}e4$ 8. $\mathbb{R}xf7+?$

This rash move should have given Black excellent drawing chances.

Always remember:

Never make moves quickly in rook endgames, no matter how obvious or natural they might seem.

In this concrete situation, White shouldn't have taken the pawn immediately, because he will not be able to move to h6 without placing his rook on a7, which is a serious concession.

After the subtle 8.h4!, Black would have been in major trouble. For example, after 8...gxh5 9.gxh5 $\mathbb{R}h4$ 10.h6! Black is completely lost because of the weaknesses of the f7- and a6-pawns. He cannot allow White to take on f7 with check, but playing 10... $\mathbb{R}b8$ would allow White to create another passed pawn after 11. $\mathbb{Q}e3$ and $\mathbb{R}xa6$.

However, Black's most resilient option is 8... $\mathbb{R}xg4$!, when White still has to play precisely in order to win. After 9. $\mathbb{R}xf7+$ $\mathbb{Q}c6$ 10. $\mathbb{R}f6+$ $\mathbb{Q}c5$ 11. $\mathbb{R}xg6$ b4, White has the strong 12. $\mathbb{R}b6$!, and the position after 12... $\mathbb{R}xc3$ + 13. $\mathbb{Q}xc3$ $\mathbb{R}g2$ 14. b4+ $\mathbb{R}xb3$ 15. $\mathbb{Q}xb3$ is lost.

**8... $\mathbb{Q}b8$ 9.h5 $\mathbb{Q}xh5$ 10. $\mathbb{Q}xh5$ $\mathbb{R}h4$
11. $\mathbb{R}h7$**

On h7, the rook is placed much worse than on f6 (as in the aforementioned variation). Although White still has good winning chances, Black's drawing chances are very real.

11... $\mathbb{R}h2+$ 12. $\mathbb{Q}c1?$

The more aggressive 12. $\mathbb{Q}e3!$ posed many more practical problems for Black than the passive text move. However, after the precise 12... $\mathbb{R}xb2$ 13. $\mathbb{Q}d4$ $\mathbb{R}h2!$ White has to play extremely accurately in order to win.



Before we analyze this position, let's take a look at Black's other possible 13th move alternatives:

A) 13... $b4$ comes close to drawing, but White seems to win in every line. After the only winning move 14. $h6!$ (14. $cxb4?$ draws after 14... $\mathbb{R}xb4$ 15. $\mathbb{R}h6$ $c3+!$ 16. $\mathbb{Q}xc3$ $\mathbb{R}h4$ 17. $\mathbb{R}h7$ $\mathbb{Q}c8$ 18. $\mathbb{Q}d3$ $\mathbb{Q}d8$ 19. $\mathbb{Q}e3$ $\mathbb{Q}e8$ 20. $\mathbb{Q}f3$ $\mathbb{Q}f8$ and Black is just in time!), Black does not make it. After 14... $bxh3$ 15. $\mathbb{Q}xc3$ $\mathbb{R}h2$ 16. $\mathbb{Q}xc4$ $\mathbb{R}h5$ 17. $\mathbb{Q}d4$ $\mathbb{Q}c8$ 18. $\mathbb{Q}e4$ $\mathbb{Q}d8$ 19. $\mathbb{Q}f4$ $\mathbb{Q}e8$ 20. $\mathbb{Q}g4$ White wins (in the 14. $cxb4$ line, Black's king was on f8).

B) 13... $\mathbb{R}g2$ transposes after 14. $\mathbb{Q}c5!$. Following 14. $\mathbb{Q}c5$ $\mathbb{R}e2$, Black seems to be on the verge of holding, but White has the very strong 15. $\mathbb{R}d7!$, after which Black cannot save the day. For example, after 15... $\mathbb{Q}c8$ 16. $\mathbb{R}d6$ $\mathbb{R}e3$ 17. $\mathbb{R}xa6$ $\mathbb{R}xc3$ 18. $\mathbb{R}c6+$ White's double passers are unstoppable, while Black's own pawns cannot move. As we could see from the above analysis, White could have won even after his mistake. After the text move, however, I already doubt that White can win if Black plays precisely.

**12... $\mathbb{R}h1+$ 13. $\mathbb{Q}c2$ $\mathbb{Q}a8$ 14. $h6$
 $\mathbb{Q}b8?$**

After this slip, Black's position will quickly go downhill. It was necessary to play 14... $\mathbb{R}h2+$, and only after 15. $\mathbb{Q}b1$ play 15... $\mathbb{Q}b8$. Unfortunately, White still seems to be winning after 16. $\mathbb{Q}a3$, but after 19... $\mathbb{R}h2!$ White still has a long way to go and I doubt that he would have won this position in time trouble.

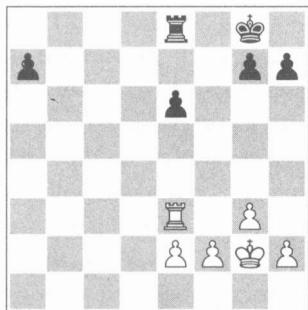
15. $\mathbb{Q}d2$

Now, Black has no chances – the h-pawn is too far advanced and Black's rook cannot leave the h-file.

**15... $\mathbb{R}h3$ 16. $\mathbb{Q}e2$ $\mathbb{Q}a8$ 17. $\mathbb{Q}f2$ $\mathbb{Q}b8$
18. $\mathbb{Q}g2$ $\mathbb{R}h5$ 19. $\mathbb{Q}g3$ $\mathbb{Q}a8$ 20. $\mathbb{Q}g4$
 $\mathbb{R}h2$ 21. $\mathbb{Q}g5$ $\mathbb{R}g2+$ 22. $\mathbb{Q}f6$ $\mathbb{Q}b8$
23. $\mathbb{Q}g7$ $\mathbb{R}f2+$ 24. $\mathbb{Q}e6$ $\mathbb{R}e2+$ 25. $\mathbb{Q}d5$
 $\mathbb{R}d2+$ 26. $\mathbb{Q}c5$ $\mathbb{R}h2$ 27. $h7$ 1-0**

Although White's technique wasn't completely perfect, the first part of the game (executing a4-a5 and $\mathbb{R}f6$) was played very nicely by White.

In the next game, one of the best end-game players of all time demonstrates impeccable technique.



24. Karpov-Hort

Waddinxveen 1979

The position on the board looks drawish. Although Black's a7- and e6-pawns are weak, the limited material makes it hard for White to exploit the weaknesses. But Karpov doesn't lose hope – moreover, he plays as if the position is completely winning for White. The main problem with Black's position is that the a7-pawn restricts his rook. Had it been on c7, the result would probably have been different. Furthermore, White will have the opportunity to place his pieces optimally, while Black will have no such chance. These factors combined give White excellent play.

1. $\mathbb{R}a3!$ $\mathbb{R}e7$ 2. $\mathbb{R}a5!$

Karolyi and Aplin write in *Endgame Virtuoso Anatoly Karpov*: 'Karpov plays more prosaically, and still it is very powerful chess – he stops ...h7-h5.' It truly is amazing that such a quiet and harmless-looking move as $\mathbb{R}a5$ can give Black so many troubles. I should add that also the straightforward 2.f4!? deserves attention. Black is best advised to play 2...e5, but after 3. $\mathbb{R}f3$! it isn't completely clear what he should do:

A) 3...e4+? loses a pawn after 4. $\mathbb{R}e3$ $\mathbb{R}f7$ 5. $\mathbb{R}a4$ and 6. $\mathbb{R}xe4$.

B) 3...exf4 is, along with 3... $\mathbb{R}f7$, the best try. After 4.gxf4 $\mathbb{R}d7$ 5.e4 $\mathbb{R}f7$ 6.e5 White has made significant inroads into Black's position – his passed e-pawn is restricting Black's pieces, and Black's a-pawn is sticking out like a sore thumb. For example, after 6... $\mathbb{R}b7$ 7. $\mathbb{R}e4$ $\mathbb{R}b4+$ 8. $\mathbb{R}d5$ $\mathbb{R}xf4$ 9. $\mathbb{R}xa7+$ $\mathbb{R}g6$ 10. $\mathbb{R}d6$ White's passed pawn is unstoppable.

C) 3... $\mathbb{R}f7$ 4.e4! $\mathbb{R}xf4$ 5. $\mathbb{R}gf4$ transposes into line B after 5... $\mathbb{R}d7$, as the reckless 5...g5? only throws more oil into the fire after 6.f5.

Thus, the alternative 2.f4 seems to lead to a great position for White also, but Karpov's move is certainly not worse.

2... $\mathbb{R}f7$ 3.h4 h6 4.g4 $\mathbb{R}f6$ 5.f4

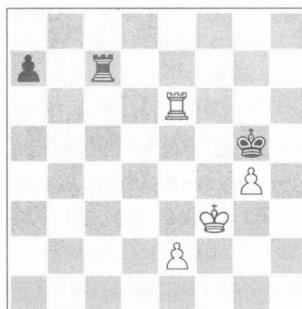
Grabbing space and preventing a possible ...e6-e5. Such play is typical for Karpov: simple and surprisingly strong.

5... $\mathbb{R}b7$ 6. $\mathbb{R}f3$ $\mathbb{R}c7$ 7. $\mathbb{R}a6$

I see no point in allowing ...g7-g5. It seems that 7.h5 or 7.e4 are a bit better.

7...g6?!

7...g5! seems to be the best try. After 8.hxg5+ $\mathbb{R}xg5$ 9.fxg5+ $\mathbb{R}xg5$ 10. $\mathbb{R}xe6$ an interesting position arises.



Analysis diagram

The position might seem drawn at first due to the awkward placement of White's

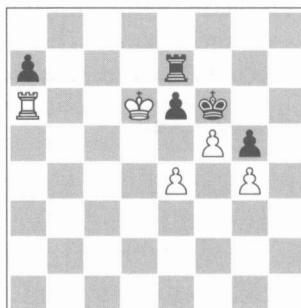
pawns, but that is only an illusion. In fact, White's pawns are located optimally, restricting Black's counterplay and threatening to move forward. Black's a-pawn, on the other hand, presents no danger. After 10... $\mathbb{B}c3+$ 11.e3 $\mathbb{B}a3$ 12. $\mathbb{B}e5+$ $\mathbb{Q}f6$ 13. $\mathbb{Q}f4$ an important position arises. I found this type of ending (without the a7-pawn) in Müller and Lamprecht's book *Fundamental Chess Endings*, the evaluation being a win for White (they give Fischer-Geller, Curaçao 1962, as the stem game). However, the a-pawn does make a difference in the position. Without it, White could safely have blocked a check with his rook, not fearing the trade. In this case, a rook trade does not guarantee a win.

Therefore, it certainly isn't completely clear whether White is winning here. Let's take a look: after 13... $\mathbb{B}a1$ 14. $\mathbb{B}f5+$ $\mathbb{Q}g6$ 15. $\mathbb{B}c5$. White is threatening to make progress with $\mathbb{B}c6+$, so Black is forced to play 15... $\mathbb{B}f1+$. Unfortunately for White, after 16. $\mathbb{Q}e5$ $\mathbb{B}a1$ it isn't clear how he can make further progress. Deep Fritz 10 gives 17. $\mathbb{B}c8!$ as best – indeed, after 17...a5 18.e4 it's clear that White has made progress, but is that progress enough for a win? Unfortunately, I'm afraid that the answer is no. After the active 18...a4! 19. $\mathbb{Q}e6$ $\mathbb{Q}g5$ 20.e5 $\mathbb{Q}xg4$ 21. $\mathbb{B}g8+$ Black has the brilliant 21... $\mathbb{Q}h3!!$ (the problem with 21... $\mathbb{Q}f4$ is that the f-file will be blocked!), when Black seems to be holding. For example, 22. $\mathbb{Q}e7$ a3 23.e6 a2 24. $\mathbb{B}a8$ $\mathbb{Q}g4$ 25. $\mathbb{B}a5$ $\mathbb{Q}h3!$ and Black draws.

Truly an amazing endgame! I couldn't believe that Black was surviving, so I tried to find improvements along the way. I first tried the straightforward 15.e4, but after 15...a5 16. $\mathbb{B}b5$ a4

17. $\mathbb{B}b6+$ $\mathbb{Q}f7$ 18. $\mathbb{B}a6$ a3 19. $\mathbb{Q}e5$ a2 Black reaches a similar position as in the previous example (remember target positions; there's no point in analyzing further as we already know the assessment of the type of position that will arise).

Next in line was 15.g5. This is slightly more dangerous for Black than 15.e4, but he again reaches 'the position' after 15... $\mathbb{Q}f7$ 16. $\mathbb{B}f5+$ $\mathbb{Q}g7$ 17.e4 a5 18. $\mathbb{B}f6$ $\mathbb{B}f1+$ 19. $\mathbb{Q}e5$ $\mathbb{B}g1!$ (19... $\mathbb{B}xf6??$ loses after 20.gxf6+ $\mathbb{Q}f7$ 21. $\mathbb{Q}d6!$) 20. $\mathbb{Q}f5$ $\mathbb{B}f1+$ 21. $\mathbb{Q}e6$ $\mathbb{B}g1$ 22.e5 a4 (22... $\mathbb{B}xg5$ is equally good) 23. $\mathbb{B}f4$ a3 24. $\mathbb{B}a4$ $\mathbb{B}a1$ 25. $\mathbb{Q}e7$ $\mathbb{Q}g6$ with a draw! Realizing that this type of endgame is drawn (!), I tried to find an improvement in the very beginning: the first thing that came to mind was 8.hxg5 hxg5 9.f5!?. White declines the sacrificed pawn, preferring piece activity instead. Black is forced to play 9... $\mathbb{B}e7$, and after 10.e4 $\mathbb{Q}f7$ 11. $\mathbb{Q}e3$ $\mathbb{Q}f6$ 12. $\mathbb{Q}d4$ $\mathbb{B}d7+$ 13. $\mathbb{Q}c5$ $\mathbb{B}e7$ 14. $\mathbb{Q}d6!$ it's clear that White has made serious progress.



Analysis diagram

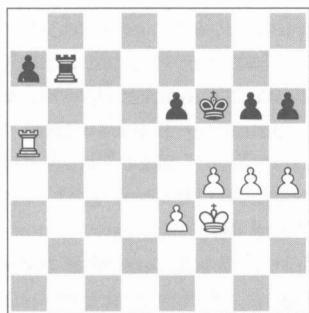
This time, Black's problems are very serious. Of course, 14...e5? loses after 15. $\mathbb{Q}d5+$ $\mathbb{Q}f7$ 16. $\mathbb{B}g6$, so Black has to play 14...exf5. The position after 15. $\mathbb{Q}d5+$ $\mathbb{Q}f7$ 16.gxf5 looks completely winning for White, but things aren't so simple! Unfortunately for White, his king

is driven backward after 16... $\mathbb{R}d7+$ 17. $\mathbb{Q}e5$ $\mathbb{R}e7+$ 18. $\mathbb{Q}d4$ $\mathbb{R}d7+$ 19. $\mathbb{Q}e3$, but White's passed pawns remain very dangerous. Black's best try is to play 19... $\mathbb{R}e7$, but after 20. $\mathbb{R}g6!$ $\mathbb{R}e8$ 21. $\mathbb{R}xg5$ White's pawns are better placed than in the last variation! Another try is 19... $\mathbb{R}b7$, but following 21.e5! $\mathbb{R}b3+$ 22. $\mathbb{Q}d4$ Black has no defense to $\mathbb{Q}d5-d6$.

I have to say that the simple-looking position after 7...g5, which is given neither by Karolyi and Aplin nor by Timman in his *The Art of Chess Analysis*, contains a huge amount of brilliant subtleties which I really enjoyed uncovering. Despite the fact that White seems to be winning after 9.f5, 7...g5 certainly was the best practical try: first of all, Karpov would have had to find 9.f5, and second, he would have had to play very accurately in order to convert his advantage.

After the co-operative text move, Karpov leaves Hort no more chances.

8. $\mathbb{R}a5$ $\mathbb{R}d7$ 9.e3 $\mathbb{R}b7$



10.h5!

Karpov's play is beyond reproach – all of his moves are simple, strong, and effective!

10...g5 11. $\mathbb{R}a6$ $\mathbb{R}xf4$

After 11... $\mathbb{R}b3$, I quote Karolyi and Aplin's excellent analysis:

'12.fxg5+ (12.f5 $\mathbb{R}b6$ 13. $\mathbb{R}xb6$ axb6 14.e4 $\mathbb{Q}e5$ (!) 15. $\mathbb{Q}e3$ exf5 16.exf5 $\mathbb{Q}d5$ 17. $\mathbb{Q}d3$ b5 18. $\mathbb{Q}c3$ $\mathbb{Q}c5$ 19. $\mathbb{Q}b3$ $\mathbb{Q}d5$ 20. $\mathbb{Q}b4$ $\mathbb{Q}c6$ 21.f6 $\mathbb{Q}d6$ 22. $\mathbb{Q}xb5$ $\mathbb{Q}e6$ 23. $\mathbb{Q}c5$ $\mathbb{Q}xf6$ 24. $\mathbb{Q}d6$ $\mathbb{Q}f7$ 25. $\mathbb{Q}e5$ $\mathbb{Q}e7=)$ 12...hxg5 13. $\mathbb{R}xa7$ $\mathbb{R}b4$ 14. $\mathbb{R}h7$ e5 15. $\mathbb{R}h6+$ $\mathbb{Q}f7$ 16. $\mathbb{R}g6$ e4+ 17. $\mathbb{Q}e2$ $\mathbb{R}b5$ 18. $\mathbb{Q}d1$ $\mathbb{R}c5$ 19. $\mathbb{Q}d2$ $\mathbb{R}d5+$ 20. $\mathbb{Q}c2$ $\mathbb{R}d3$ 21. $\mathbb{R}xg5$ $\mathbb{R}xe3$ 22.h6' and White wins.'

These lines clearly illustrate the helplessness of Black's position.

12.exf4 $\mathbb{R}b3+$ 13. $\mathbb{Q}g2$ $\mathbb{R}b7$ 14. $\mathbb{Q}g3$ $\mathbb{Q}f7$ 15. $\mathbb{R}a4$ $\mathbb{Q}g7$ 16.g5 $\mathbb{R}c7$

16...e5 brought no relief after 17.fxe5 hxg5 18. $\mathbb{Q}g4$.

17. $\mathbb{R}a5$ $\mathbb{Q}g8$ 18. $\mathbb{R}b5$ $\mathbb{Q}f7$ 19. $\mathbb{Q}g4$ a6 20. $\mathbb{R}b8$ $\mathbb{R}c1$ 21.g6+

Domination!

21... $\mathbb{Q}g7$ 22. $\mathbb{R}b7+$ $\mathbb{Q}f8$ 23. $\mathbb{R}b6$ $\mathbb{Q}g1+$ 24. $\mathbb{Q}f3$ $\mathbb{R}f1+$ 25. $\mathbb{Q}e4$ $\mathbb{R}e1+$ 26. $\mathbb{Q}d4$ $\mathbb{Q}e7$ 27. $\mathbb{R}xa6$ $\mathbb{Q}f6$ 28. $\mathbb{R}a7$ e5+ 29.fxe5+ $\mathbb{R}xe5$ 30. $\mathbb{R}a6+$ 1-0

Recapping the ideas we have learned in this mini-section, we can state the following important rules and ideas:

A) **Don't hurry with the execution of a plan. Improve your position to the maximum before deciding on any particular strategy.**

In Shipman-Naroditsky, White gave Black drawing chances when he grabbed the f-pawn. Had he first improved his position, Black wouldn't have had a single chance.

B) **Don't be afraid to sacrifice for activity!**

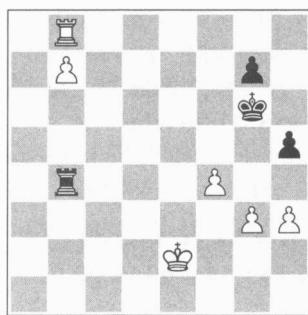
Mastering Complex Endgames

In Rubinstein-Réti, Rubinstein didn't hesitate to sacrifice his kingside pawns for excellent piece placement – he understood that a king is more important than pawns!

C) When playing against weaknesses, try to keep as many pawns on the board as possible.

The more pawns there are in the position, the harder it will be for your opponent to defend his weaknesses. As we saw in Karpov-Hort, as soon as Karpov relinquished the grip on Black's position, Hort had a chance to come very close to a draw by trading a pair of pawns.

Practically every tournament player has been swindled in a completely winning rook endgame at one time or another. After slowly setting the board back up, the victim probably wonders how his opponent tricked him. In the final mini-section, my goal is to show the reader some useful swindling ideas, which I'm sure will save him or her many points! Let's start with a simple example.



25. Naroditsky-Martinez

US Chess League 2008

White has two extra pawns and can win in many ways. In fact, I was waiting for my opponent to resign. Black, however, was searching for swindling ideas while I was rejoicing. He came up with:

1...Rb3!

No matter how winning the position is, White still has to actually win it! In such positions, it's very important to set as many hurdles and traps for your opponent as possible. In this game, I was so frustrated that my opponent wouldn't give up that I made a series of horrible and illogical moves.

2.f5+ ♔h7 3.h4?!

Needless to say, White is still completely winning after this move, but I had a much quicker win at my disposal starting with 3.g4!. After 3...hxg4 4.hxg4 Rb4 5.g5, I was afraid of 5...g6, when if 6.f6 Black plays 6...Re4+ 7.Qd3 Rd4+! 8.Qc3 Rc4+! and Black's rook is untouchable because of stalemate! However, White doesn't have to hurry with g4-g5. After the simple 5.Qd3 Rb1 6.Qc3, Black cannot stop White's king from penetrating Black's camp. For instance, 6...Rb6 7.Qc4 Rb1 8.Qd5 Rb2 9.Qe6 Rb6+ 10.Qe7 Rb1 11.g5 g6 12.Qf7 and Black is toast.

Even though I was sure that there was a win after 3.g4, I wanted to minimize the risk and win without any adventures. This made me choose strange continuations that were based purely on calculation. As it often happens, I completely miscalculated and gave my opponent a chance to execute a stunning drawing combination.

3...Rb5 4.Qe3 Rb4



At this point I realized that I could have won immediately if I had played 3.g4. Not even thinking about the position on the board, I played:

5.g4?

Even now I have no idea how I could possibly have played this move. Yes, I was a bit unlucky that I didn't find the win here, but I have to say that I certainly deserved to draw this game. Instead, as IM Levon Altounian noted, White could have won very easily by transferring the king to g5 and only then playing g3-g4. For example: 5.Qf3 Bb1 6.Qf4 Bb3 7.Qg5! Bxg3+ 8.Qxh5 Bb3 9.Qg4 followed by h4-h5. Before we move on, I'd like to share with you a great comment made by Altounian:

'The rest of the game was an example of how in losing positions to never give up, no matter who you play or how bad it is. Create problems for the opponent on every step of the way and hope for a miracle, fatigue, time pressure or simply bad technique by the opponent (it's amazing how some great players can play below their level in winning positions). White missed a win probably on every move until his last mistake with g4?? (King advance to the Kingside was still a relatively easy win). Leo (my opponent – D.N.) then defended it perfectly and White had to agree to a draw.'

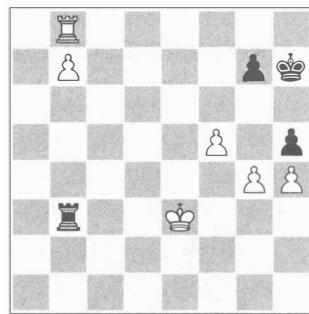
Altounian is completely correct – no matter how strong or talented your opponent might be, he or she is human, and if you keep setting hidden traps, the chances of a mistake at some point are reasonable.

What none of us saw was that White can *still* win here (that's why I put only one question mark to this move). Black played:

5...Bb3+!

Only now did I come to grips with what had just happened.

6.Qe2 Bb2+ 7.Qe3 Bb3+



8.Qd2??

At this point I was still thinking that my position was completely winning. In fact, my opinion remained the same until I saw my teammates looking at me as if I had just grown a third hand. Before we see Black's elegant drawing combination, let's take a look at the correct plan: 8.Qe2 Bb2+ 9.Qe1 Bb1+ 10.Qd2 and Black is forced to play 10...hxg4. White wins easily by means of 11.Qe3 followed by h5 and h6.

8...hxg4 9.Qe2 Bb5 10.h5 g3!

Suddenly, I realized the truth: I cannot stop the pawn without sacrificing my

Mastering Complex Endgames

own f-pawn, which is the pride of White's position.

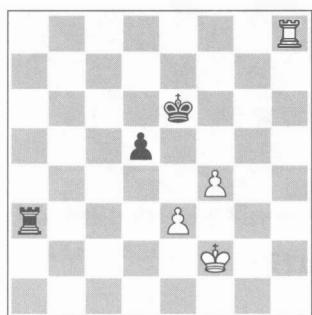
Out of inertia, I continued playing, but of course the result of the game is clear.

11.h6 g2 12.♔f2 ♘xf5+ 13.♔xg2
♗b5 14.hxg7 ♖xg7 15.♔f3 ♗b3+
16.♔e4 ♘b4+ 17.♔d5 ♗b1 18.♔c4
♗c1+ 19.♔b3 ♗b1+ 20.♔a3 ♖h7
21.♔a2 ♗b6 22.♗c8 ♖xb7 ½-½

One might think that such a scenario happens very rarely, especially to strong players. However, that is completely untrue. Strong players blunder a lot, especially in rook endings. In order to choose the best practical defense, ask yourself these questions:

- A) What move poses the biggest *practical* problems for your opponent?
- B) How hard will it be for your opponent to win or draw after each of the moves you are considering?

If you see a tempting move that sets your opponent a subtle trap, ask yourself: are there really any chances that my opponent will fall into it? Of course, if there is nothing better, you should certainly set the trap. However, if there is a move that poses more practical problems for your opponent, almost always choose the latter. Take a look at the following position:



26. Young-Galofre

US Chess League 2008

After some very precise defense by Black, the position on the board was reached. White is a pawn up, but he cannot make any progress, as 1.♔f3 is thwarted by means of 1...d4. Even if

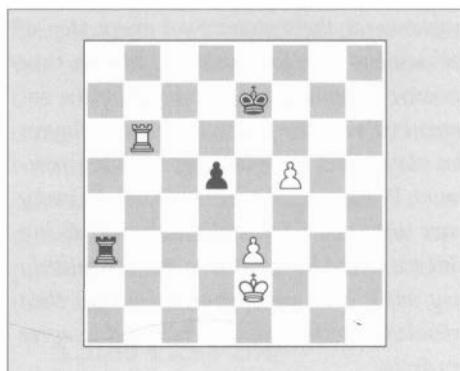
White does get his king to f3, he won't really have any prospects there either. All Black has to do is keep his d5-pawn defended – if he can, White won't have any chances to win whatsoever. Before

agreeing to a draw, White decided to set one last trap.

1.♗h6+! ♖e7!

Frustratingly for White, Black doesn't play 1...♖f5??, after which White would have won by means of 2.♔e2!, and Black is in Zugzwang! For example, 2...♗a1 3.♗d6 ♗a5 4.♔f3 ♗b5 5.♗xd5+ ♗xd5 6.e4+ and White wins.

2.♗b6 ♗c3 3.♔e2 ♗a3 4.♗b5 ♗e6
5.♗b6+ ♖e7 6.f5



At first sight, the position might seem slightly dangerous for Black because his king is cut off, but that is merely an illusion. Had Black played 6... $\mathbb{K}a2+$ 7. $\mathbb{Q}f3$ (7. $\mathbb{Q}d3$ $\mathbb{K}f2$ 8.f6+ $\mathbb{K}xf6$ 9. $\mathbb{K}xf6$ $\mathbb{Q}xf6$ 10. $\mathbb{Q}d4$ $\mathbb{Q}e6=$) 7... $\mathbb{K}d2$ 8. $\mathbb{Q}f4$ $\mathbb{K}d3$, the players would have probably agreed to a draw. Black, on the other hand, chose a slightly less precise approach.

6... $\mathbb{K}c3?$!

This doesn't give away the draw, but the above-mentioned variation drew the game with greater ease.

7. $\mathbb{Q}e6+$

I remember watching this game live and thinking, 'Black just plays 7... $\mathbb{Q}d7$ and it's a dead draw!' To my utter amazement, Black soon played:

7... $\mathbb{Q}f7??$

An inexplicable blunder which loses the game. After the simple 7... $\mathbb{Q}d7$!, White would have had nothing better than to repeat moves after 8. $\mathbb{K}e5$ $\mathbb{Q}d6$ 9. $\mathbb{K}e8$ $\mathbb{Q}d7$ with a dead draw. However, this is only the beginning...

8. $\mathbb{K}e5??$

Incredible! None of the spectators could believe their eyes when they saw 8. $\mathbb{K}e5$ played! After 8. $\mathbb{K}d6!$ $\mathbb{K}c5$ 9. $\mathbb{Q}d3$ $\mathbb{Q}e7$ 10. $\mathbb{Q}e6+$ $\mathbb{Q}d7$ 11. $\mathbb{Q}d4$ Black would have had nothing better than to resign.

Now we can formulate a couple of important rules for defending hopeless positions:

- A) Never lose hope; even though you might be playing a strong player, there still is a chance of a mistake if you defend tenaciously.
- B) If you are trying to win a drawn position and your opponent blunders, don't celebrate before you win the game – often, one side checks out early and gives up the win.
- C) Don't give away your evaluation of the position with gestures or emotions – keep a straight face at all times, and your opponent won't have any psychological help.

Remember:

When your opponent commits an error and you have a few seemingly good ways to capitalize on it, don't rush, and weigh your options carefully before choosing.

In this game, Black made *another* error, but in most cases, you won't get a second chance.

8... $\mathbb{K}c5$ 9.e4 $\mathbb{K}c4??$

For the second time, Black misses an easy draw. Had Black played 9... $\mathbb{Q}f6$, the game would have ended in a draw after 10. $\mathbb{K}e6+$ $\mathbb{Q}f7$ 11.e5 $\mathbb{K}c4$ 12. $\mathbb{Q}e3$ $\mathbb{K}e4+$ and White cannot make any progress.

10.exd5 $\mathbb{Q}f6$ 11. $\mathbb{Q}d3!$

White finally wakes up from his day-dream and starts to play well. From now on until the end of this game, Black doesn't get any chances to draw.

11... $\mathbb{K}a4$ 12. $\mathbb{K}e4$ $\mathbb{K}a3+$ 13. $\mathbb{Q}d4$ $\mathbb{Q}xf5$
 14. $\mathbb{K}e1$ $\mathbb{K}a2$ 15.d6 $\mathbb{K}d2+$ 16. $\mathbb{Q}c5$ $\mathbb{Q}f6$
 17. $\mathbb{Q}c6$ $\mathbb{K}c2+$ 18. $\mathbb{Q}d7$ $\mathbb{Q}f7$ 19. $\mathbb{K}f1+$
 $\mathbb{Q}g7$ 20. $\mathbb{Q}d8$ $\mathbb{K}c3$ 21.d7 $\mathbb{K}c4$ 22. $\mathbb{K}f2$
 $\mathbb{Q}g8$ 23. $\mathbb{K}f5$ $\mathbb{Q}g7$ 24. $\mathbb{Q}e7$ 1-0

In this game, both sides made mistakes after mistake, resulting in what Dvoretsky calls a 'tragedy'. In the previous game, it was the winning side that made a series of serious errors, which eventually resulted in Black holding the draw.

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'Only twenty-odd pages on double-rook endings?' you might ask. Unfortunately, the problem with books on many types of endings is that you cannot spend too much time studying one type, no matter how important. Despite the fact that there were countless other instructive rook endings that I could have included, I think that the games featured above will give the reader enough ideas to start playing rook endgames at a higher level.

Before we move on to the exercises, I think it would be a good idea to mention some great books on rook endings that will improve your play exponentially not only in rook endings, but in other endings as well:

The Survival Guide to Rook Endings, John Emms (Gambit 2008)

Practical Rook Endings, Edmar Mednis (Chess Enterprises 1982)

Take a look at the following exercises:



2.4 Naroditsky-Gutman

Western Class Championship 2008

What is the fastest way to win for White? (Hint: make a plan first.)



2.5 Karpov-Kamsky

FIDE World Championship, Elista 1996

In this tough position Kamsky erred with 1... $\mathbb{B}b7$. Do you see a better defense?



2.6 Cheparinov-Yakovenko

Jermuk 2009

Try to use the awkward position of the a4-rook.

Chapter 3

Rook + Minor Piece(s) vs Rook + Minor Piece(s)

When I first started writing this chapter, I had no idea how I would cover such a vast topic. After all, there were many tandems that needed to be covered, and a huge number of ideas and topics to discuss in every single one. Therefore, in the following sections, I had to limit the amount of space that one theme takes up.

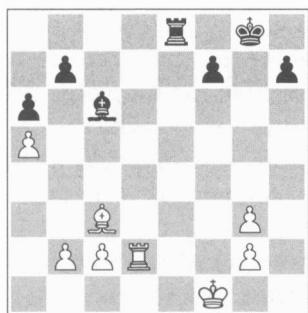
This should by no means, however, disappoint the reader. I have tried to pack the following sections with as many helpful tips and ideas as I could, and mainly I have tried to make the comments and analysis of the examples *useful*. First, we will start with a tandem that many players don't know how to combat.

Rook + Bishop vs. Rook + Bishop

Opposite-Colored Bishops

Many inexperienced players (and experienced ones as well!) are under the impression that rooks do not change the highly drawish character of opposite-colored bishop endgames. This is, however, completely untrue! From my personal experience, I can safely assure you that rook and opposite-colored bishop endings can be extremely sharp and complicated! As always, we shall first start with defense.

Even without rooks, opposite-colored bishop endings (I will refer to them as OCB from now on) are often very tricky. Well, I'll tell you something – it's not easier to defend when rooks are added on the board. I got my first taste of defense against a strong, experienced Fide Master:



27. Getz-Naroditsky

Philadelphia 2007

After pressuring my opponent for most of the game, I blundered away a pawn and the rather unpleasant position above arose on the board. White is a pawn up, Black's king is weak, and his f7- and h7-pawns are isolated and defenseless. In such positions, it is important to understand that piece activity can compensate for material losses, no matter how significant they may be. First, I make a hole for my monarch:

35...h6 36.Qf2 Be4!

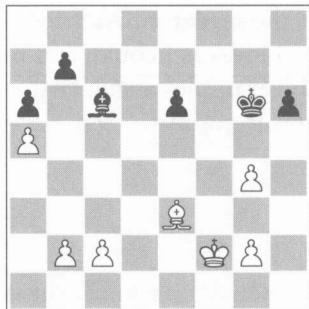
Activity, activity, and activity! Black's rook is located ideally on this post – it is

cutting off White's king and is ready to jump to any front.

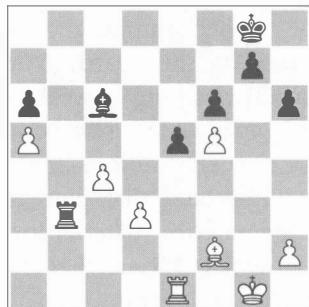
37.♕d4 ♜h7 38.♖e3 ♜g6 39.♖d6+

Realizing that Black's rook is simply too active, White decides to transform the game into an OCB. However, the chronic weakness of the g2-pawn guarantees Black great drawing chances.

39...♜e6 40.♜xe6+ fxe6 41.g4!



However, **an OCB is often reached as a result of a previous attack**. For example, if your opponent develops an attack, and you simply can't bear the onslaught, **an OCB with rooks may be the only way out**. Despite the difference between endings with rooks and plain OCB endings, there are still many tricks hanging in the air in both cases. Often, even strong players get tricked into allowing their opponents to draw. In the following game, I nearly managed to save a terrible version of a rook OCB.



28. Naroditsky-Ondondo

Reno 2007

The only chance – White tries to free his g2-pawn, but after g2-g3, the g4-pawn will be weak!

**41...♚e4 42.♗c3 ♜d5 43.♗f4 ♜e4
44.g3 ♜c2 45.♗g2 ♜d3 46.♗f3
♗c2 47.♗e2 ♜b3 48.♗d2 ♜d5
49.♗e3 ♜b3 50.♗d2**

This is equivalent to a draw offer, but the more ambitious 50.♗d4 also did not give White anything after 50...♜d1! 51.♔c5 ♜xg4 52.♔b6 ♜f3 53.b4 h5 54.c4 ♜f5 55.♗c7 ♜g4 with an easy draw.

50...♜d5

1/2-1/2

Of course, defending this position was not too difficult. Black's pieces were already placed optimally to defend against White's onslaught.

After trying unsuccessfully to defend against pressure all game long, I finally found a way out. In the above position, material is equal, but White's pawns are placed terribly and his pieces are as passive as they can be. However, White is by no means lost. In fact, as we shall see, White's counterplay will grow rather menacing.

When we reached this position, the first thing I tried to find was a way to **free my pieces**. I cannot emphasize enough the importance of piece activity, especially in such positions.

Remember:

Piece activity can be worth as much as three pawns, or even more. When you are defending, activating your pieces will increase your saving chances exponentially.

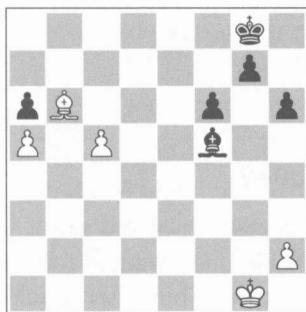
In this position, I didn't really have much of a choice!

1.d4!

Suddenly, White's position comes alive. Not only will my pieces be activated, the passed pawn on c4 will become much more powerful! Passed pawns are always very difficult to play against, and this ending is not an exception! Of course, Black will win a pawn, but a passed pawn and piece activity are more than enough compensation.

1...exd4 2.♗xd4 ♜b4 3.♝c1 ♔e4 4.♝c3?!

This is unnecessary. Frankly, I was slightly afraid of the ending arising after 4.♗b6 ♜b1 5.♝xb1 ♔xb1 6.c5 ♔xf5.



Analysis diagram

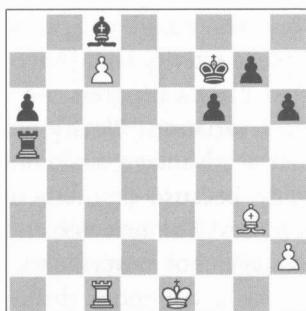
Of course, this fear was in part caused by yours truly losing a very similar ending about a year prior. Undoubtedly, with some accurate play White holds rather easily, since he will always be able to trade h-pawns and sacrifice his

bishop for Black's remaining passers, leaving Black with the 'wrong' corner pawn. After 7.c6 ♔f7 8.c7 g5 9.♗g2 Black cannot make any progress.

Therefore, 4...♜b1 is totally harmless. Black's best try lies not in pawn grabbing with 4...♔xf5, but in **piece activity** (sound familiar?) with 4...♝b2!. White is forced to transfer the bishop to g3 by means of 5.♗c7, and after 5...♝g2+ 6.♔f1 ♜a2 an interesting position arises. In order to obtain the best chances, White must push the pride of his position. Following 7.c5 ♔xf5 8.c6, Black has a choice: he can either play for creating a passed pawn with 8...g5, or bring his king closer to the c6-pawn with 8...♔h3+ and 9...♔f7. Let's examine both alternatives:

A) 8...g5 looks rather tempting at first, but it is much too slow and cumbersome. After 9.♔g1 ♜d2 10.♗g3 followed by 11.c7 I cannot see how Black makes any progress (...h6-h5 can even be met by h2-h4).

B) 8...♔h3+ 9.♔e1 ♔f7 is a more serious try. White's pieces are located awkwardly, while Black's are coordinated perfectly. However, White has the excellent resource 10.♗g3!. After 10...♜xa5 11.c7 ♜c8 an intriguing position arises.



Analysis diagram

It looks like Black is completely winning – he is two pawns up and White's c-pawn is safely restrained. Remove the pair of rooks, and this evaluation would be correct. However, after the banal but effective 12... $\mathbb{B}d1!$ it suddenly turns out that it's not at all easy for Black to untangle his pieces. For example, after 12... $\mathbb{B}c5$ 13. $\mathbb{B}d8$ $\mathbb{A}e6$ 14. $h4!$ $g5$ 15. $\mathbb{B}h8!$ the computer is quite optimistic about Black's chances, but I simply cannot see a way for him to make headway after 15... $\mathbb{B}c3$ 16. $\mathbb{B}f2$ $\mathbb{B}g7$ 17. $\mathbb{B}e8$. This hard-to-believe situation leads to another vital principal:

In ROCB endings, it's not about who has the greatest number of passers; it's about who has the strongest passer.

This might seem quite obvious to the seasoned player, but in fact it is often quite tempting to go for material as opposed to activity – especially in ROCB and OCB endings. Even connected passers are often no match for a far-advanced and well-defended passed pawn – after all, the bishop is very adept at holding back even the most menacing of connected passers.

Of course, the above variations are not forced and the principal is not carved in stone, but we could clearly see that White's piece activity could have hugely obstructed Black's progress. As we saw in the last variation, Black's considerable material advantage could not be realized only because of the activity of White's pieces! The text does not spoil the advantage, but nevertheless makes White's task a tad more difficult (although Black's error nullified the negative effects of 4. $\mathbb{B}c3$).

4.... $\mathbb{Q}xf5$ 5. $\mathbb{Q}b6$ $\mathbb{Q}d7?$

A very strange move – Black evidently wanted to be able to block the pesky c-pawn with ... $\mathbb{Q}c6$, but White will be able to attack the bishop with great effect on d6 or e6. The correct approach lay in activating the rook (surprise, surprise) and achieving a quick initiative: 5... $\mathbb{B}b1+$! 6. $\mathbb{B}f2$ $\mathbb{B}b2+$ 7. $\mathbb{B}g3$ $\mathbb{A}e4!$ 8. $\mathbb{B}f4$ $\mathbb{Q}c6$. With his pieces coordinated optimally, Black is finally ready to start pushing his kingside pawns. Of course, we could go on and on discussing this position, but I believe that it would suffice to say that White's position is rather dangerous even if it is defendable. I cannot imagine anyone below the super-GM level successfully drawing it.

6.c5 $\mathbb{Q}c6$ 7. $\mathbb{B}d3$ $\mathbb{Q}b5$



8. $\mathbb{B}d8+?$

Losing the thread of the game. It's understandable that I wanted to maneuver my rook to c8, but after Black's rook moves to the c-file, White will not be able to make any progress with the c-pawn! After 8. $\mathbb{B}c3$, Black would have been practically forced into repeating moves with 8... $\mathbb{Q}c6$.

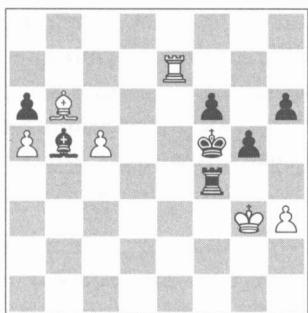
8... $\mathbb{Q}f7$ 9. $\mathbb{B}c8$ $\mathbb{B}c4$ 10. $\mathbb{B}c7+$ $\mathbb{B}g6$ 11. $\mathbb{B}e7?!$

This should have gone down without much of a fight, but White's position was extremely difficult to defend. Something like 11... $\mathbb{Q}f2$ would have prolonged the battle, but Black should eventually win by pushing his kingside pawns.

11... $\mathbb{Q}g4?$

This allows White to hugely increase his drawing chances. The clean 11...h5 followed by 12...h4 guaranteed Black an almost certain win – White simply cannot move the c-pawn, and thus cannot achieve any counterplay.

**12. $\mathbb{Q}f2$ $\mathbb{Q}f5$ 13.h3 $\mathbb{Q}f4+$ 14. $\mathbb{Q}g3$
g5**



15. $\mathbb{Q}c7?$

After this blunder, Black will be able to safely restrain White's passed c-pawn. 15... $\mathbb{Q}f7$ was the only opportunity to draw, as 15... $\mathbb{Q}c4$ fails to 16. $\mathbb{Q}d8$.

One should try to avoid pawn weaknesses. In rook OCB endings, a pawn weakness can be the difference between life and death for a defending side. If you are the defending side and have a weak complex of squares and/or pawns, you should attempt to create complications as quickly as possible. For example, a passed pawn can divert the attention of the attacker, thus giving you chances to muddy the water and force a mistake from your opponent.

In the following rather unknown game, Black turns an almost certainly lost position into a wild flurry of tactics, in which either side could have prevailed.

White will constantly threaten to push the c-pawn, but following 15...h5 16. $\mathbb{Q}h2$ h4, Black should still gradually win. Anyhow, after 17. $\mathbb{Q}g2$ Black's job will not be as easy as in the game.

**15... $\mathbb{Q}c4$ 16. $\mathbb{Q}d6$ h5 17. $\mathbb{Q}b7$ h4+
18. $\mathbb{Q}f2$ $\mathbb{Q}c2+$ 19. $\mathbb{Q}e3$ $\mathbb{Q}c3+$
20. $\mathbb{Q}d2$ $\mathbb{Q}d3+$ 21. $\mathbb{Q}c2$ $\mathbb{Q}xh3$
22. $\mathbb{Q}xb5!?$**

My 15th and 16th moves were based solely on this combination (which I actually thought was winning during the game), but unfortunately Black has a nice refutation that I had completely overlooked.

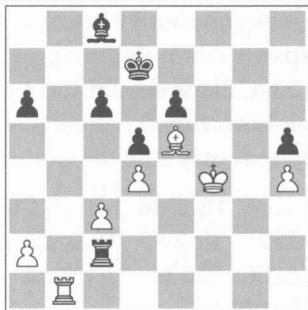
**22... $\mathbb{Q}xb5$ 23.c6 $\mathbb{Q}e6$ 24. $\mathbb{Q}b4$
 $\mathbb{Q}h2+$ 25. $\mathbb{Q}b3$ $\mathbb{Q}e2!!$**

This is the brilliant move that I missed. Black will transfer his rook to the optimal e8-square, where it will defend against both of White's passed pawns.

**26.a6 $\mathbb{Q}d5$ 27.c7 $\mathbb{Q}e8$ 28. $\mathbb{Q}e7$ $\mathbb{Q}c8$
29. $\mathbb{Q}xf6$ h3 0-1**

I cannot stop the h-pawn, and therefore I threw in the towel.

A great game, which clearly illustrates the value of piece activity in endgames. Of course, we saw that there was no forced way to draw for White, but I certainly had great chances to save the game.



29. Löwe-Deacon

London 1851

In all honesty, the position looks completely hopeless for Black (despite his material advantage). The h5-pawn is dead, while Black's king and bishop are ludicrously placed. On the other hand, White's pieces are in perfect harmony: his bishop is dominating the position, his king is ready to support the will-be-passed h4-pawn after the elimination of h5, and White's rook can jump to g7 whenever needed. White chooses the most natural and best continuation:

1.♗g5

The other tempting move in this position 1.♗g1, achieved nothing after 1...♝xc3, when I cannot see how White makes progress. His best bet is to repeat moves with 2.♗g7+ ♔e8 3.♗g8+, but of course White is striving to win, not to draw.

1...♝xa2!

Creating a passed pawn is, in this case, Black's only chance for counterplay. White's pawn will get a head start, but by maneuvering his c8-bishop to d3, Black can stop the advance of White's h-pawn.

2.♔xh5 ♘g2

Again, Black finds the best chance. By cutting off White's king, Black prevents the extremely dangerous maneuver ♘g6-f7 followed by ♖f6, when the position of White's pieces will simply be dominating.

3.♗b8!

A great practical chance. After Black plays ...a6-a5 (in order to get the bishop to a6), White will always have the irritating ♜a8, attacking the pawn and stopping ...♜a6. In truth, the position is probably drawn with very precise play, but remember:

Search for moves that cause your opponent the most practical problems. For example, if your opponent is in time trouble, a quiet, non-forcing move can be much more effective than a forcing one.

3...♝g1

Black prefers to wait passively – as we saw in some games before, this is often a good strategy, but in dynamic endgames where tempi play a big role (like this one), it can easily backfire. However, in this concrete endgame, passively waiting is a completely viable option – Black waits for a comfortable moment to activate his bishop or play ...c6-c5.

The main problem with playing such positions as the defending side is that you simply have no respite – you have to continue being on top and calculate variations. Yes, easier said than done, but if you *force* yourself to focus on the task at hand and concentrate, a saved

half-point will bring you a lot of pleasure and may also play a big role in your tournament result.

In this position, before deciding on waiting passively, Black had to calculate the immediate 3...a5. Of course, White needs to impede the mobilization of Black's bishop by means of 4. $\mathbb{B}a8$. Now, Black's only choice is to defend his passed pawn by means of 4... $\mathbb{B}a2$ (otherwise, he will have no counterplay). Unfortunately for Black, White now liberates his king with 5. $\mathbb{Q}g6!$, and chasing him around brings Black no relief: 5... $\mathbb{B}g2+$ 6. $\mathbb{Q}f7$ $\mathbb{B}f2+$ 7. $\mathbb{Q}f6$.

Before we move on to see the rest of the game, I'd like to bring up an important point which is unique to this type of endgame.

Usually, in opposite-colored bishop endings with rooks, you cannot afford to give up a passer, even for piece activity or an initiative.

In rook endings, you often give up a pawn for activity, be it a passed pawn or an isolated pawn. In other words, passed pawns can very often be weak in rook endings, precisely because the pawn can frequently be attacked without trouble.

On the other hand, in OCB endings with rooks, if a pawn is defended by a bishop and is on a square of opposite color than the opponent's bishop, it is invincible and therefore very dangerous. It can tie down all of your opponent's pieces, and can save the day in the event of an attack on your king. In the present game, we see a prime example of this. Had Black weakened his passed pawn with ...a6-a5, White would im-

mediately attack it, and Black's obligation to defend it gave White a chance to fully mobilize his king. Therefore, when you are playing such endings, be wary about giving away passed pawns for activity or even weakening them.



4. $\mathbb{Q}h6$ a5?

Deacon simply could not resist the temptation to try to push the passed pawn and activate his bishop. It seems like 4...c5!? is a good drawing chance. If white plays 5.h5 immediately, Black will have 5...cxd4 6.cxd4 a5! (only now does he play ...a6-a5, when material has been limited) 7. $\mathbb{B}a8$ $\mathbb{B}a1$ 8. $\mathbb{B}a7+$ $\mathbb{Q}e8$ and Black has good practical chances to defend the position. Of course, the text doesn't lose immediately, but it gives White very easy play.

5. $\mathbb{B}a8$

Now, Black's rook will have the extremely cumbersome task of defending the a-pawn. On the other hand, after Black's next move, he will be prepared to push the a-pawn further.

5... $\mathbb{B}a1$?

Black's rook cannot afford to leave g1. The position was already quite unpleasant, but 5...c5! would have seriously prolonged the fight. For example, after

6. $\mathbb{H}a7+$ $\mathbb{Q}e8$ 7. $dxc5$ $\mathbb{Q}d7$ 8. $\mathbb{H}xa5$ $\mathbb{H}e1$
 9. $\mathbb{Q}d6$ $e5$ White should be able to win,
 but Black can put up a very serious
 fight.

6. $\mathbb{H}a7+?$

White returns the favor. After 6. $h5!$,
 Black would have been in dire straits.



Analysis diagram

When your opponent makes a committal move in a sharp ending, it is always necessary to determine the drawbacks of that move. By playing ... $\mathbb{H}a1$, Black is leaving White's king and pawn alone, thereby allowing ... $a6-a5$. White will always be able to play $\mathbb{H}a7+$, and therefore there is absolutely no sense in playing it immediately.

After 6... $a4$ 7. $\mathbb{Q}g6$ $\mathbb{H}g1+$ 8. $\mathbb{Q}f7$ $\mathbb{H}f1+$ 9. $\mathbb{Q}f6$ White's win is only a matter of time, since the deadly threats 10. $\mathbb{H}a7+$ and 10. $h6$ cannot be stopped.

6... $\mathbb{Q}e8$ 7. $h5$ $c5?$

Emotions take over. Tired of defending passively, Black resorts to active defense. Unfortunately for Deacon, he chose the worst moment to play ... $c6-c5$. Had White made one strong move, Black's position would completely crumble. After 7... $\mathbb{Q}d7$, a familiar position would arise; White has no direct way to

win, but the probability of Black making a mistake is so huge that the position is almost impossible to defend.

8. $\mathbb{Q}h7?$

White misses his golden opportunity. After the simple 8. $dxc5$, White's two passed pawns would simply crush Black's position – the threats of $\mathbb{Q}f6$, $c5-c6$ and $\mathbb{H}a8$ are simply deadly. It seems like the only feasible defense is 8... $\mathbb{Q}d7$, but 9. $\mathbb{H}a8+$ $\mathbb{Q}f7$ 10. $\mathbb{Q}d6$ (threatening $\mathbb{H}f8$ mate) puts a quick end to any resistance.

However, the question is, why did White not find such a simple win? I think the answer is clear: for many moves, ... $c6-c5$ was a completely feasible defense. In this position, White saw no difference and probably did not think twice about the correctness of ... $c6-c5$. Yet it is the mark of a strong and experienced player to check for any unexpected blunders that the opponent might make. After the text move, Black again will have good drawing chances.

8... $\mathbb{Q}d7?$



Black seems to be rapidly losing the thread of the game. Of course, Black should have immediately exchanged pawns with 8... $cxd4$ 9. $cxd4$, and only

then should have played 8... $\mathbb{Q}d7$. There is simply no reason to give White additional possibilities!

9.h6!

Now Black's position is critical. He has allowed the h-pawn to advance too far, and has not managed to organize any kind of counterplay. Unfortunately, in OCB + Rook endings, the defending side almost always has defensive opportunities, even in seemingly hopeless positions. Black, however, rattled by the sudden course of events, gives up any hope of resistance.

9... $\mathbb{Q}a4?$

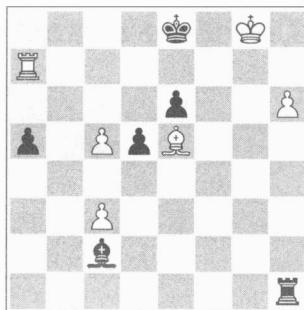
Pointless and very weak. In one move, Black nullifies everything: he voluntarily *blocks* his own passed pawn, opens up the 7th rank, and does nothing against the impending promotion of the h-pawn. It was of paramount importance to play 9...a4, when Black would at least have a chance to draw, although the position after 10.dxc5 $\mathbb{R}g1$ 11. $\mathbb{Q}h8$ is probably lost anyhow.

10. $\mathbb{Q}g8!$

This is by far the best – White's king will be covered from any checks by his personal bodyguard (the e5-bishop), and the throne has already been prepared for the h6-pawn. Black tries his best, but White's position is completely winning.

10... $\mathbb{Q}c2$ 11.dxc5 $\mathbb{R}h1?$

This should have lost immediately, but there was simply no way to put up any resistance. Now, just at the moment when Black was probably preparing to resign, White committed a major howler.



12.. $\mathbb{Q}g7??$

Incredible – White misses such a simple win. After 12.c6, White promotes in two moves. For example, 12... $\mathbb{R}xh6$, 13. $\mathbb{R}a8+$ $\mathbb{Q}e7$ 14.c7 and White queens. After the text, White will have to win all over again.

12...e5!

One has to give credit to Black for pouncing on the first opportunity to cloud the skies. Now, Black suddenly has drawing chances again, due to the irksome e5-pawn and Black's sudden piece activity. The bad news for Black is that with a few strong moves, White could have achieved a winning position. Now, White suddenly starts playing impeccably again – and in a few moves, he will have an easy win again!

13.c6 $\mathbb{Q}f5$ 14. $\mathbb{R}xa5$

White demonstrates a clear will to win. When you have missed a simple win, it's of vital necessity to start the game over again and not try to change the past. When such a thing happens in my game, I tell myself: *a time machine is not yet invented, and you will not be able to change your mistake!* White re-starts the game, and soon finds himself in a winning position.

14... $\mathbb{Q}e6+$ 15. $\mathbb{Q}h8$ e4 16. $\mathbb{M}a8+$ $\mathbb{Q}f7$



Since his mistake, White has been playing flawlessly and again has reached a totally winning position. Now, the easiest way to win is to play 17. $\mathbb{M}a7+$, and on 17... $\mathbb{Q}e8$ White has 18. $\mathbb{Q}d4!$. Note that the h-pawn is untouchable because of 18... $\mathbb{M}xh6+$ 19. $\mathbb{Q}g7$ $\mathbb{M}h3$ 20. $\mathbb{M}a8+$ $\mathbb{Q}e7$ 21. $\mathbb{Q}c5$ mate! This kind of ‘surprise mate’ is a benefit of active piece play, and it is also a recurring theme in multiple-piece endgames, as we saw in the chapter on double-rook endgames. Human players (unlike computers) are prone to overlooking these ‘surprise mate’ possibilities. White, however, commits another terrible mistake.

17. $\mathbb{M}f8+??$

Another bad blunder, but this time, it is clearly based on an oversight. Here, I doubt that White has a clear win if Black plays accurately. After

17... $\mathbb{Q}e7$

White, to his utter horror, realized that 18.c7 fails to 18...e3 19.c8 \mathbb{W} $\mathbb{Q}xc8$ 20. $\mathbb{M}xc8$ e2 and it is Black who wins! Now, White has to settle for a position in which I can see no clear win. However, one has to give credit to both opponents for fighting for their respective goals – Black, with his practically impeccable defense, prevailed.

**18. $\mathbb{M}f2$ $\mathbb{Q}d6$ 19. $\mathbb{Q}f8+$ $\mathbb{Q}xc6$ 20. $\mathbb{M}f6$
 $\mathbb{Q}d7$ 21. $\mathbb{Q}c5$ $\mathbb{M}h3$ 22.h7 $\mathbb{M}g3!$
23. $\mathbb{Q}f2$ $\mathbb{M}g2$ 24. $\mathbb{M}f8$ $\mathbb{Q}c7$**

Black is playing extremely accurately and instructively – by placing his pieces on active squares, he has completely locked in White’s king in a self-made prison, thus stopping the passed pawn at h7.

**25. $\mathbb{Q}d4$ $\mathbb{M}g5$ 26. $\mathbb{M}f1$ $\mathbb{M}g6$ 27. $\mathbb{M}g1$
 $\mathbb{M}xg1$ 28. $\mathbb{Q}xg1$ $\mathbb{Q}f5$ 29. $\mathbb{Q}g7$ $\mathbb{Q}xh7!$**

The finishing touch. Now the game is completely drawn.

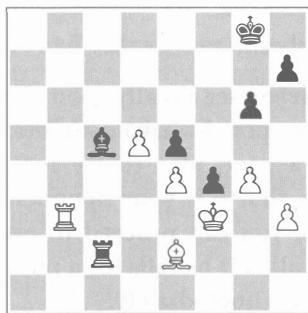
30. $\mathbb{Q}xh7$ $\mathbb{Q}c6$ 31. $\mathbb{Q}g6$ $\mathbb{Q}b5$ ½-½

What can we learn from this mistake-filled game? First of all, one needs to note Black’s tenacity. Although it is true that Black committed many tactical errors, Black did find very strong defenses. Yes, you can find many more question marks than exclamation points, but the important factor in this game is that no matter how lost an OCB endgame might look, there are almost always defenses. Let us sum up the main rules we should follow when defending Rook OCB endings:

- A) Look for ways to trade rooks and liquidate to a drawn OCB ending (in some cases, you may even have to sacrifice two pawns in order to achieve your goal, but OCB endings two pawns down are very often still drawn).
- B) Always try to activate your pieces. You cannot afford to have a passive bishop, especially if your opponent has a passed pawn.

C) Create passed pawns. In rook OCB endings, passed pawns play a very important role, as they are often invincible.

Now, let us change to the opposite side – how do you win these types of endings? As an introduction, let's turn to the following game:



30. Lee-Naroditsky

Los Angeles 2006

When I first showed this position to a friend, his response was, ‘well, isn’t this a dead draw?’ Take away the rooks, and he would have been completely right. Yet in this position, the amount of hidden tactics is simply through the roof. For a computer, the position is very easy to calculate, but for a human, it is quite the opposite! First of all, Black has to decide how to preserve his initiative – if it fizzles out, White’s d5-pawn may prove very unpleasant.

First of all, Black has a draw with 1... $\mathbb{Q}d4$!?. 2.d6 $\mathbb{R}c3$ + 3. $\mathbb{R}xc3$ $\mathbb{Q}xc3$ 4.d7 $\mathbb{Q}a5$ and Black’s bishop arrives just in time to stop the d-pawn. The question is, however, should Black go for a quick draw? As I pondered, another move struck me: 1... $\mathbb{R}c1$. In fact, had I played the move, it would have been White who would find himself fighting for a draw. After 2.g5! $\mathbb{R}g1$, White has to find 3. $\mathbb{R}c4$!, which draws,

as 3... $\mathbb{R}xg5$?? even loses after 4.d6+ $\mathbb{R}f8$ 5. $\mathbb{R}b8+$ and 6.d7 to follow.

1... $\mathbb{Q}g7$?

This is completely useless; moreover, it invites White to make the correct move.

2.g5! $\mathbb{Q}g8$?

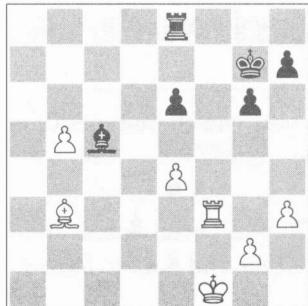
Again, a completely unnecessary waste of time, as $\mathbb{R}c7+$ was not a threat. Black’s inaccurate play could have ultimately lead to major trouble, but White’s intentions were aimed towards saving the game.

3.h4 $\mathbb{Q}g7$ 4. $\mathbb{R}d3$ $\mathbb{R}d4$ 5. $\mathbb{R}b3$ $\mathbb{R}c1$?
1½-1½

Realizing my inaccuracy, I immediately offered a draw, which was gladly accepted. After the game, my opponent realized that he should have at least tested Black after 6. $\mathbb{R}b7+$ $\mathbb{R}f8$ 7.d6 and now Black has to find 7... $\mathbb{R}c3$ + 8. $\mathbb{Q}g2$ $\mathbb{R}c2$!, not fearing 9. $\mathbb{R}b8+$ $\mathbb{R}f7$ 10.d7, as Black has the strong defense 10... $\mathbb{R}b6$!, drawing.

A sloppy game by both players, but it clearly illustrates the fact that even in the most innocuous-seeming positions, many traps and potholes are hiding beneath the surface.

Now, let’s delve a bit deeper and see how an endgame expert realizes a small advantage, bit by bit. He wins because of one factor: a passed pawn!



31. Müller-Heinemann

German Championship, Altenkirchen 1999

It doesn't take long to discover that White has a clear advantage. Black's king is cut off from White's extra passed pawn on b5, and Black has a very weak pawn on e6. In addition, White's excellently positioned pieces guarantee him a long-term initiative. Having said all of that, White needs to construct a plan. If he waits, Black will trade rooks (even at the cost of another pawn). Therefore, White needs to take quick action.

1. $\mathbb{R}c3!$

Well begun is half done! Already, White's rook repositions itself to an ideal square. It controls an open file, attacks the bishop, and can trampoline to the other flank if needed. Black tries his best to set up defensive bastions.

**1... $\mathbb{R}f8+$ 2. $\mathbb{Q}e2$ $\mathbb{R}d4$ 3. $\mathbb{R}c7+$ $\mathbb{R}f7$
4. $\mathbb{R}c6$**

Of course, trading is out of the question.

4... $\mathbb{R}b7!$ 5. $\mathbb{Q}c4$ $e5$

Very resilient. Black's idea is to stop b5-b6 at all costs. Unfortunately for him, White now slowly switches attention to the other flank.

6. $\mathbb{Q}d3$ $\mathbb{Q}h6$ 7. $\mathbb{R}d6$

Before White starts his plan of infiltrating on the kingside, he first tries for some tricks. As of now, he is threatening $\mathbb{R}xd4$, and this forces Black to find an adequate defense.

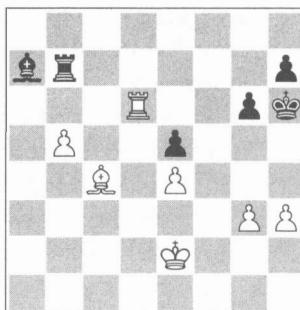
Remember:

When you see a really good plan but your opponent has no counterplay, it is a good idea to try for some tricks first – if your opponent defends, you can proceed to execute your plan. If he falls for a trick, you will win immediately!

7... $\mathbb{Q}f2$

On 7... $\mathbb{Q}g5$, Müller gives the following variation: 8. $\mathbb{R}xd4!$ $exd4$ 9. $\mathbb{Q}xd4$ $\mathbb{Q}f4$ (9... $\mathbb{Q}f6$ 10. $e5+$ $\mathbb{Q}e7$ 11. $\mathbb{Q}c5$ $\mathbb{R}c7+$ 12. $\mathbb{Q}d5$ $\mathbb{R}d7+$ 13. $\mathbb{Q}c6+-$) 10. $e5$ $\mathbb{R}b8$ 11. $e6$ $\mathbb{Q}f5$ 12. $b6$ $\mathbb{Q}f6$ 13. $\mathbb{Q}c5$ $\mathbb{Q}e7$ 14. $\mathbb{Q}a6$ $\mathbb{Q}xe6$ 15. $\mathbb{Q}c6$ and wins.

**8. $\mathbb{R}d5$ $\mathbb{R}e7$ 9. $\mathbb{R}d8$ $\mathbb{R}b7$ 10. $\mathbb{Q}e2$
 $\mathbb{Q}a7$ 11. $\mathbb{R}d5$ $\mathbb{R}e7$ 12. $\mathbb{R}d6$ $\mathbb{R}b7$
13. $\mathbb{R}a6$ $\mathbb{R}d4$ 14. $\mathbb{R}d6$ $\mathbb{R}a7$ 15. $g3$**



This is the prelude to the final infiltration. Before White starts, he restricts Black's king to complete passivity.

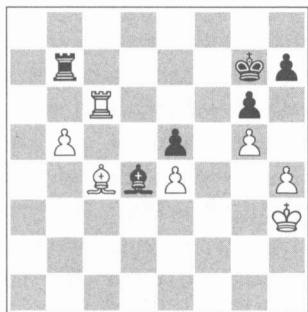
**15...♔g5 16.♕f3 ♔h6 17.h4 ♔h5
18.♕g2**

Note the patience with which White improves his position. Instead of immediately going for the kill with something like 18.♖d8 (which allows counterplay after 18...♜c7), White carefully and slowly builds up the pressure.

18...♝c5 19.♜c6 ♜d4

The game is also very instructive from Black's point of view – Black does not give up until the very end and defends very carefully.

20.♕h3 ♔h6 21.g4 ♔g7 22.g5



The first step of White's plan has been achieved. Black's king is now boxed in,

As we could see in this example, White realized his advantage step-by-step, and instead of going all-out, he took minimal risks. We can learn from this game that constructing a multi-step plan really helps. It might seem tiresome and useless to construct a detailed plan, but in truth it's very similar to writing an outline for an essay: if you immediately start writing, you will not know what to write and what to include. If you outline it first, you will know exactly what information you want to use and how you want to use it.

In our next game, we will see how White creates chances in an objectively drawn position. Although the game is far from flawless (and actually ends in a draw!), it demonstrates very well how you can create winning chances from scratch.

and White's space advantage and piece domination have grown substantially. Nevertheless, in order to win, White needs to demonstrate impeccable technique. First, White must wrest the 7th rank from Black's rook.

22...♝e3 23.♞d5!

Tactics immediately come to the aid of strategy. Now, 23...♜xb5 fails to 24.♜c7+ ♔f8 (24...♔h8 25.♜c8+ ♔g7 26.♜g8#) 25.♜f7+ ♔e8 and now either 26.♜xh7 or 26.♜f3! wins quickly.

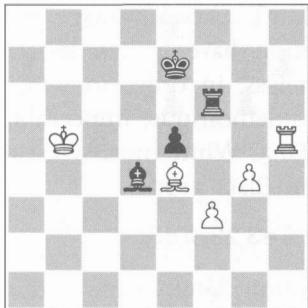
23...♜b8 24.♜c7+ ♔h8 25.♜c6

The final step in White's plan will be to combine the threat of pushing the b-pawn with the attack on the e7-pawn. In a short amount of time, Black will simply have no adequate moves.

**25...♜f8 26.♜e7 ♜d4 27.♞d5 ♜f3+
28.♔g2 ♜f2+ 29.♔g3 h6 30.gxh6
♜f4 31.♚e6 ♔h7 32.b6 ♜f8 33.b7
♚a7 34.h5!**

The finishing touch. Black is helpless against White's onslaught.

**34...gxh5 35.♔h4 ♜f1 36.♔xh5
♜g1 37.♚e7+ ♔h8 38.♚xe5 1-0**



32. Yermolinsky-Naroditsky

Las Vegas 2009

When we reached this position, I was convinced that it was an easy draw. Little did I know that I hugely underestimated White's chances. There are a few factors that give White good winning opportunities:

- A) White has a protected passed pawn on g4 which significantly restricts the mobility of Black's pieces.
- B) Black's weakness on e5 ties up his pieces even further, making it practically impossible to activate them for good.
- C) White's pieces are located ideally, controlling key squares and dominating the center.

Each single factor does not promise White much, but together they give White excellent winning chances. Coupled with White's huge endgame experience and my fatigue, White's practical winning chances are more than 50%!

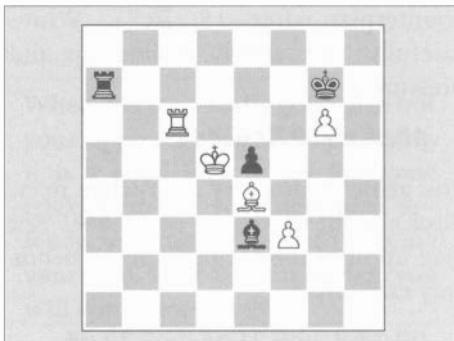
1.g5 ♜f7 2.♗c4 ♜g7 3.g6!

White starts off strongly. Already, he advances his passed pawn to an even stronger square. On g6, it completely ties down Black's rook and gives White the freedom to execute an unpleasant idea.

3...♝f6 4.♜h8 ♜a7

I desperately try to activate my g7-rook, but I have one problem: I cannot move it off the 7th rank for long, as White will simply promote his far-advanced passer.

5.♜c8 ♜a4+ 6.♚b5 ♜a7 7.♜c6+ ♜g7 8.♚c4 ♜e3 9.♚d5



9....♝f4?

This is the culprit. It was of paramount important to leave the bishop on e3 and play 9...♜e7!, when there is no easy way for White to win.

Clearly, Black's main idea in this position is to cut off White's king from access to the other flank. However, White is still not out of ideas. After 10.♝c2! ♜d2 11.♚e4 he will bring his bishop to f7 and his rook from c8 to g8, driving Black's king out of his comfortable nest on g7. Let's see how this would look: 11...♜a5 12.♝b3 ♜b7! 13.♝f7 ♜c7!. Not allowing White's rook to access g8 is Black's only chance, but now White switches to an even more deadly idea: 14.♚f5! ♜d8 (Black is in Zugzwang!) 15.♜c8 ♜d7 16.♚xe5 and there is no way Black can salvage a draw out of this position.

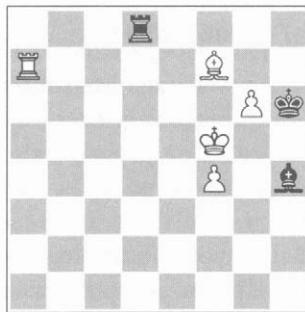
Already, we can see the hidden dangers in this paradoxical endgame – every black move allowed White to improve his position even further!

10.♕e6! ♜b7 11.♗d6?

This gives Black unnecessary chances. Going for mate won immediately: 11.♖a6! ♜c7 12.♗d6 ♜c8 13.♖a7+ ♔h6 14.♗h7+ ♔g5 15.g7 and White wins. Notice that Black's king obstructs his own rook, forcing it to move from the 7th rank.

**11...♜c7 12.♗a6 ♔h6 13.♗f6 ♜g5+
14.♗xe5 ♔g7 15.f4 ♜h4 16.♗d5**

Here, both players stopped recording, as White had under five minutes. Amazingly, the stalemate swindle I used to draw the game (!) was somehow salvaged by USCF TD Chris Bird and published on www.uschess.org. Here it is:

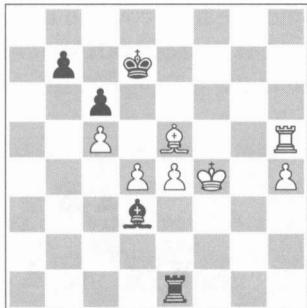


Here, my opponent can win in many different ways (including 1.♔e8), but he fell for

**1.♗e6?? ♜f8+ 2.♗g4 ♔xg6 3.f5+
♔h6 4.♗xh4 ♜xf5!!**

with a theoretical draw. White played on for 50 moves, but to no avail.

Finally, I feel that it is vital to touch upon another aspect in OCB endings: the concept of attack. Since the bishops control diagonals uncontested, it is often possible to organize a quick attack on the opponent's king.



33. Larsen-Lengyel

Amsterdam Interzonal 1964

White is up two pawns, but it is not clear how to defend the e4-pawn. Even if White wins the b7-pawn by means of ♜h7+, Black will establish a strong square on d5 and White's winning chances will be in serious question. Here,

Larsen utilizes the active position of his pieces and converts it into an attack. Remember:

In a position where all of your pieces are placed optimally and your opponent's king is undefended, look for sudden attacking opportunities.

Even in positions where you can quietly convert your static advantage, it is often a good idea to go in for an attack, especially if it is not 'do-or-die'. If, for example, you decide to go for the safe win, you might find yourself in a position where it's very hard to win! In this case, the only way White can convert his advantage is to try for an immediate attack.

1. $\mathbb{B}h7+$ $\mathbb{Q}e6$ 2. $d5+$!

The start of a well-calculated and deadly assault on Black's pieces. 2. $\mathbb{B}xb7$ $\mathbb{B}xe4+$ 3. $\mathbb{Q}g5$ $\mathbb{B}e2$ probably also wins eventually.

2... $cxd5$ 3. $exd5+$ $\mathbb{Q}xd5$ 4. $\mathbb{B}d7+$ 1-0

After 4... $\mathbb{Q}c4$ 5. $\mathbb{B}d4+$ $\mathbb{Q}c3$ 6. $\mathbb{B}e4+$ $\mathbb{Q}d2$ 7. $\mathbb{Q}c3+$ Black's king escapes, but he now loses the rook and the game. Let's summarize what we have learned:

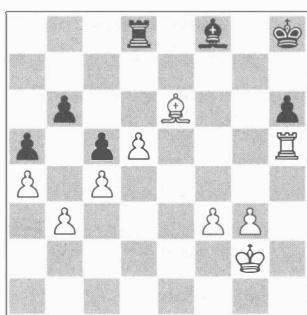
A) Whether you should attack or win quietly depends on the situation. With a defended extra pawn, you can often win by improving your pieces and slowly pushing your opponent off the board (Müller-Heinemann & Yermolinsky-Naroditsky)

B) Always think ahead when trying to win in these kinds of endings. For example, if you can win a pawn at the cost of trading rooks, you have to ask yourself whether you will have chances in the arising endgame.

C) Try to eliminate your opponent's counterplay before proceeding to the final invasion. That way, even in case of a failure you can withdraw your pieces and start over.

D) Be attentive to tactical threats with the combined rook and bishop. These may be used to immediately win the game (as in Larsen-Lengyel) or merely as threats to compel the opponent to make concessions (Müller-Heinemann). We have seen numerous examples: mate threats to a poorly placed king (Löwe-Deacon, Müller-Heinemann), threats to win material due to a discovered attack on an unprotected piece (Müller-Heinemann, Larsen-Lengyel), and threats to sacrifice an exchange and go into an advantageous bishop + pawns vs. rook endgame (Müller-Heinemann). But watch out for erroneous exchange sacs as in Naroditsky-Ondodoo!

E) As always, piece activity is as important (or more important) than pawn count. Finally, here are a few exercises on the two main topics we have covered in this section. Take into account the summaries mentioned at the end of both sections, and don't hurry with your answer: there are often hidden traps!



3.1 Khachiyan-Naroditsky

Reno 2007

White is obviously winning, yet it is not very clear how to utilize the advantage. Can White improve his position further?



3.2 Planinec-Rajkovic

Skopje 1971

Should Black trade rooks? Provide a few concrete variations supporting your argument.

Same-Colored Bishops

Rook endings with same-colored bishops are extremely commonplace in both grandmaster and amateur games. Usually, such endgames revolve around a few points:

- Each side has to constantly decide whether a piece trade (either a bishop or a rook) will be good for them.
- Passed pawns often have a bad side, as they can often be subject to attack if they are too far advanced. Therefore, a player must think twice before creating a passed pawn.
- King activity makes a huge difference in these types of endings. Therefore, a player has to decide if he will make any sacrifices in order to activate his king.

First, let's take a look at some illustrative examples to highlight each of the points above.



34. Naroditsky-Stein

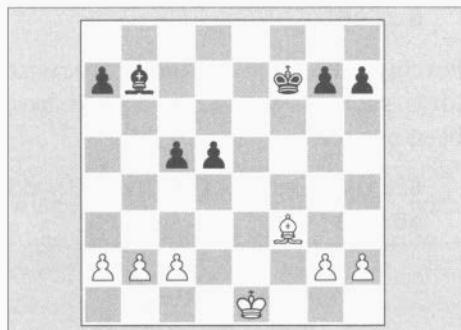
Los Angeles 2006

Clearly, Black's weak central pawns guarantee White an advantage. However, it isn't clear how to use it! First of all, ...d5-d4 is looming in the air, when the rook ending will be extremely tough to win. Secondly, if Black brings his king to d6, he will be completely fine. Therefore, White has to take action.

Here is the first question that you have to ask yourself in such positions: '*Is it possible to trade rooks, and if yes, is doing so advantageous for me?*' In this case, White can trade rooks with 1. $\mathbb{R}e1$. After establishing that, I started thinking whether

the trade would lead to dividends. In this case, Black's rook supports his pawns, and therefore, White certainly should trade rooks – that way, the weakness of the d5 and c5 pawns will be highlighted.

1. $\mathbb{R}e1 \mathbb{R}xe1$ 2. $\mathbb{Q}xe1 \mathbb{Q}f7$



For the second time, White has to decide on a course of action. Yes, he has traded rooks, but Black is preparing to play 3... $\mathbb{Q}e6$ and draw the game without too much difficulty. Therefore, White has to think of a way to throw more oil into the fire.

Clearly, since Black's b7-bishop is undefended, White has a nice resource, which I immediately pounced on:

3. $c4!$ $\mathbb{Q}e6$

But now what? Yes, White can transpose into a pawn ending, but is it really

winning? Let's take a look: 4. $\mathbb{Q}xd5+$ $\mathbb{Q}xd5$ 5. $cxd5+$ $\mathbb{Q}xd5$ 6. $\mathbb{Q}d2$ and after 6... $\mathbb{Q}d4$ I don't see how White can make any progress.

My next step was to ask myself: '*What factors allowed Black to hold the ending?*' Of course, reason number one is the activity of Black's king, which I can do nothing about. Number two however, is the annoying ...c5-c4 idea, grabbing space and opening the c5-square for Black's king. Therefore:

4. $\mathbb{Q}e2 \mathbb{Q}d6$ 5. b3!

Such moves can be made without the calculation of a single variation. If you can improve your position without any concessions, why deliberate?

5... $\mathbb{Q}c6!$

Forcing the liquidation. Otherwise ideas such as $\mathbb{Q}c2-b2-a3$ would have been possible.

6. $\mathbb{Q}xd5$ $\mathbb{Q}xd5$ 7. $cxd5$ $\mathbb{Q}xd5$ 8. $\mathbb{Q}d3$ a6 9. a3



This time, it is Black who has to make an important decision. Which pawn should he push? First of all, one needs to consider what happens if the king-side pawns become deadlocked: 9...g5 10.g4 h6. After 11.h3 (forcing Black to remove his king from the optimal posi-

tion) 11... $\mathbb{Q}e5$ it suddenly turns out that 12. $\mathbb{Q}c4$ leads nowhere after 12... $\mathbb{Q}d6$. White is therefore forced to acquiesce to a draw after 13. $\mathbb{Q}e3$.

A puzzled reader might ask: '*So why did White even bother to "improve" his position with 5.b3 if Black could draw without much difficulty?*' Of course, the fact that Black could have drawn by rather prosaic play is true, but **that should never stop you from improving your position to the maximum**. Black, on the other hand, starts playing what I call 'borderline chess'. He makes a few inaccurate moves, but does not give away the draw.

9...a5?!

Why?

10. $\mathbb{Q}c3$ g5 11. g4

Despite Black's slight inaccuracy on move 8, the position still remains drawn. Here, Black commits a very common mistake: thinking that everything should draw, he makes a move that seems completely fine on the surface, but in truth is a major blunder. Black's following carelessness leads us to a very important point:

Any player who wishes to play the endgame well should never lose his full concentration. Even in seemingly dead drawn positions, tricks and traps almost always hide below the surface.

11...h6??

As soon as my opponent made the move on the board, he immediately realized that he had just made the biggest blunder of the game. Keeping

the pawn on h7 would have allowed Black to always have an extra move at hand, thus averting Zugzwang. Now, that extra move belongs to White.

12.♔d3 ♔d6 13.♕c4 ♕c6 14.a4 1-0

A very instructive game which teaches us many lessons.

Let's summarize:

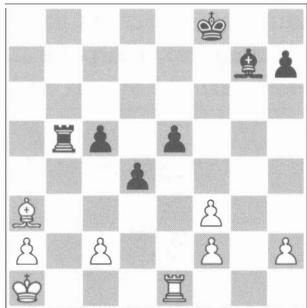
A) If your opponent has a weak pawn structure in a rooks + same-colored bishop ending (from now on, referred to as SCB), trading rooks can often increase the pressure on the pawns. If your opponent is on the defensive side, he can often use his rook to his advantage – first of all, he will always have the idea of trading bishops. Second of all, if the rook will become too active, your opponent might develop his own counterchances.

B) Pawn endings are almost always very tricky. Even in dead drawn endings where anything seems to do the job, never relax, and if you're on the defending side, look for the best ways to draw, not allowing your opponent any chances.

We will now take a look at the second point on the initial list which talks about passed pawns. Although they often promise a big advantage, SCB endings are quite unique; yes, there are obviously many cases in which passed pawns decided the game, but in many instances seemingly dangerous passed pawns can be very weak and subject to attack.

Take a look at the following:

1...d3?!



35. Ziatdinov-Homs

Zwolle 1995

An opening inaccuracy has turned into a major disaster for White, and his pawn structure is in ruins. However, if allowed some time, White can easily consolidate and equalize.

Black, probably without much thought, made the most obvious move:

Not only will this create a far-advanced passer, Black is threatening mate with 2...e4! What more can one ask from a move? Unfortunately for Black, the dream position that he has on the board will turn into dust soon enough.

However, why is 1...d3 such a weak move? There is one main reason: Black's passer on d3 will look very strong, but the rook will be tied down to defending it, and White's a4-pawn will easily help White hold the position. In other words, Black initiates a trade that has more disadvantages than advantages!

What should Black have done here instead? I admit, after a long look at the position I still couldn't find a way to adequately fight for the advantage. Suddenly, I realized the correct idea: Black already had it! With 1...e4, Black is

threatening mate with 2...d3, but is not making any concessions. After the forced 2.♗b2 exf3, Black has a dominating position. 3.♗d1, stopping ...c5-c4 for the moment, is a good defensive try, but then the cold-blooded 3...♔e7 is very unpleasant. White should sacrifice his passer with 4.a4 (what else?) 4...♗b4 5.♗d3 ♗xa4+ 6.♔b1 in order to strengthen his fortress. However, I would certainly hate to have to defend the position after 6...c4 7.♗xf3 ♗a8. White certainly has his share of chances, but Black's c4-d4 group and piece activity should decide the game in his favor.

2.♗b2 c4 3.cxd3 cxd3



Everything has gone as planned for Black, but an experienced player might quickly say, *something is wrong here*. Yes, Black's d3-pawn is annoying to face, but how strong is it? Located on a light square, it cannot be reinforced by Black's bishop, and can be easily attacked by White's monarch. Ziatdinov plays:

4.♗d1!

And the reality of the position comes crashing down: White is simply not worse! Deep Fritz 10 points out the incredibly cold-blooded 4.f4!, when

Black is forced to yield a draw after 4...exf4 5.♔xg7+ ♔xg7 6.♗d1 ♗e5 (note that is Black looking for a way to defend!) 7.♗xd3 ♗e1+ 8.♔b2 ♗e2+ with a draw. Ziatdinov's option, however, is no worse.

4...♗d5 5.♗c3

Simple and strong. White controls the d2-square and releases his king.

5....♔h6 6.♔b2 ♔e7 7.♔b3

And now, White is even slightly better! At any point, his a-pawn can come charging forward, while Black's d-pawn is a stray bullet that is harming no one. Compare this position to the one seven moves prior: what a reversal!

7...♔d6 8.a4?!

After playing perfectly for the previous seven moves, White finally commits an inaccuracy. Although he is by no means worse after this, he could have fought for an advantage by means of 8.♗d2!.



Analysis diagram

If Black retreats with 8...♗g7, the position after 9.♗e3 will be very dangerous for him – he will have no defense against 10.♔c4, winning the d3-pawn. Therefore, he is practically forced to trade bishops with 8...♗xd2 9.♗xd2.

Again, ♜c3 or ♜c4 is threatened. Black can hold only by very accurate play: 9...♝d4! (preparing to play ...♝h4, attacking h2) 10.♛c3 ♜e6 11.♝xd3 ♜h4 and Black should hold a draw, although the game is by no means over.

8...♜c5

With Black's king activated, the position balances out once again.

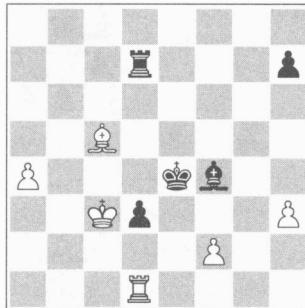
**9.♝b4+ ♜d4 10.♝c3+ ♜c5
11.♝b2**

Encouraged by the sudden reversal of fortune, White starts to play for a win. However, he simply doesn't have enough firepower to win Black's passed pawn.

**11...♝f4 12.h3 ♜d7 13.♝c3 e4!
14.♝a3+ ♜d5 15.fxe4+?**

Excited and unable to completely concentrate, White commits a major error. Now, Black's passed pawn grows dangerous and his pieces become way too active. The simple 15.♝b4 drew on the spot.

15...♛xe4 16.♝c5?



As it often happens, one mistake follows the next. After this, White should have come very close to losing! In order to hold, it was necessary to play 16.♛c4!. After 16...d2 17.♝c5! (only now!) 17...♞f3 18.♝b4! ♜e2 White has the astonishing 19.♝xd2!!, and he should hold after 19...♜xd2 20.♝a1. However, the resulting ending would require accuracy and cold-bloodedness in order to hold.

**16...♝c7 17.♝b4 d2 18.a5 ♜d3 19.a6
♜e2 20.♝b1 d1♚ 21.♝xd1 ♜xd1
22.a7 ♜c8 23.♝b5 ♜e2 24.♝b6 ♜f3
25.♝b7 ♜g8 26.a8♚ ♜xa8 27.♝xa8
h5 28.♝b7 ♜g2 29.h4 ♜h3 30.♝e7
♜g2 31.♝c5 ♜h3 32.♝c6 ♜xh4
33.♝d5 ♜g4 34.♝e7h4**

1½-1½

A very fun game to analyze and watch, and a fabulous illustration of the aforementioned point about passed pawns in SCB endings. Clearly, we could see that Black's impulsive plan to create a far-advanced passer backfired and even turned over the advantage to White for some time.

We can glean from this game that even the most dangerous-looking passers often have a weak side to them.

Now, on to our third main point. King activity is important in practically all endings, and SCB endings are no exception. An active king can decide a game, save a game, and perform miracles.

The following is an amazing example – the king can do everything!



36. Asztalos-Hajdu

Hungarian Championship, Heviz 1998

After seeing that the result of this game was '1-0', I thought, *something has to be wrong here*. First of all, Black's rook is a monster. It can move to b1 or a2, and practically dominates the position. Second of all, Black has no weaknesses that can be accessed, or so it seems. Yes, White should hold, but how can he win the game?

The answer lies in two words: king activity! First, White deploys his king from his post.

1.♔f1 ♜b1 2.♔e2 h5?

Black hugely underestimates the danger. It was necessary for him to liquidate into a drawn ending with 2...b4 3.cxb4 ♜xb4 4.♕d1 ♜f8 5.♕d3 ♜a1 6.♕c2 ♜a5. However, it still seems as though Black can't be worse!

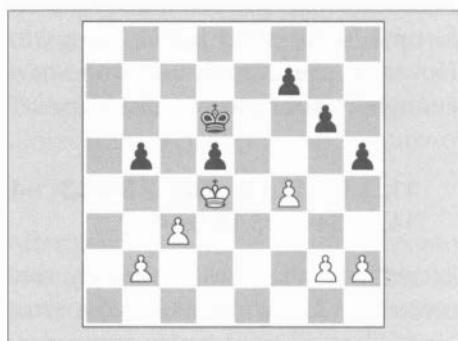
3.♕d3 ♜h6?

Black pays no attention to the impending danger. Although White's king was already dangerously placed (for Black), it was still not too late to liquidate with 3...b4. Now, White has a whole array of strong ideas.

4.♔c2!?

Although not the strongest move, this is a great practical idea. However, trading into a rook ending with 4.♕e8+! ♜g7 5.♕xh6+ ♜xh6 6.♕e2 was even better. Now, White's king becomes a major threat. Black is forced to play 6...♜d1+!, but the strong 7.♕d2! repels Black's rook away. Following 7...♜g1 8.f4!, I see no adequate defense to the imminent ♜d4 (notice the contrast between the kings!).

**4...♜xc1+ 5.♕xc1 ♜xc1 6.♕xc1
♚f8 7.♕d2 ♜e7 8.♕d3 ♜e6
9.♕d4 ♜d6 10.f4**



White has built up a great position, centered around the activity of his king. Placed on an ideal square, White's king threatens to travel to either c5 or e5 if his colleague moves. Black does have his share of chances, but after some impeccable play by White, Black soon finds himself in Zugzwang.

**10..f6 11.g3 ♜c6 12.h3 ♜d6
13.g4 h4 14.b3! ♜c6 15.g5!**

Opening up a pathway for White's king.

15..f5 16.♔e5 ♜c5 17.♔e6 1-0

Clearly, during the course of the game and in most variations, we could see the impact White's king created on the whole position. Ultimately, his activity won the game for White!

Now, let us delve deeper into some of the main points in SCB endings. Unlike most other rook + piece endings, SCB endings usually revolve around weaknesses and static factors rather than dynamics. Therefore, our next few games will address how to defend and attack weak pawns and squares.

Let's start with attack. In SCB endings, you should always try to create weaknesses in the opponent's camp. Often, if you create a weakness, you will find it much easier to find the winning idea. Take a look at the following example:



37. Geske-Zilka

Czech Open, Pardubice 2009

Black is clearly better. He has a big space advantage and all of his pieces are on optimal squares. However, the forecast is not too grim for White at the moment. First of all, he has set up a fortress that is very hard to break through. Secondly, and most importantly, for the moment he *does not have any major weaknesses*. Yes, f3 is weak, but it is reliably defended by the king. At first sight, 1...g5 might seem strong, but the simple 2.♖d6 ♜b6 3.b3 equalizes without any trouble. Let's try to reconstruct Black's thought process:

How can I win here? White has everything defended and no weaknesses. But maybe there is a way to create a weakness on the queenside – after all, I do have a pawn majority there. 1...b4 doesn't seem like a good idea, but what if 1...a3? Then, after 2.b3 the a2 pawn will be very weak. Otherwise, White will be forced to create two isolated pawns.

So, in positions where your opponent is barely holding, **always create weaknesses**. If by doing so you make too many concessions, you can always settle for a draw. But if you can try to create weaknesses with minimal risk, why not?

1...a3 2.bxa3

White is forced to make a major concession. Obviously, the main alternative was 2.b3, which had to be considered when Black made his choice on the first move. However, Black has a cold shower waiting for White: 2...g5 (only now!) 3.♕d6 ♜xd6 4.♖xd6 ♜h2+ 5.♔d1 cxb3 and it suddenly turns out that White cannot retake the b3-pawn. Notice how strategy and tactics are intertwined here – as a result of White weakening his queenside statically, Black immediately gets a dynamic opportunity to make use of the weaknesses.

**2...♜xa3 3.♕d6 c3! 4.♖d1 ♜xd6
5.♖xd6 ♜h2+ 6.♔d1 ♜h1+ 7.♔e2
♜h2+ 8.♔d1 ♜c7 9.♖d3 b4**



After a series of forced moves, an important position has arisen. Black has to make a plan of action. Yes, he has weakened c2 and a2, but for the second time White has set-up rock-solid defensive bastions. ‘How’, a reader might ask, ‘does Black think of a good plan here?’ Actually, in such positions, a plan that is already familiar to us can often be utilized – the mobilization of the king. If Black can transfer his king to c4, everything will fall apart. In fact, Black’s plan is simple and brutal – he will play ...c6-c5 and transfer his king to c4! White is defenseless.

Another idea that you should try to utilize when trying to win SCB endings is the restriction of your opponent’s bishop.

Remember:

If you can immobilize your opponent’s bishop,
you will be playing with an extra piece!

In the following game, White will gradually trap the opponent’s bishop and proceed to win material.



38. Shulman-Sosa Harrison

Continental Cup, Buenos Aires 2003

White has a dominant position in view of his wonderfully placed pieces, and Black’s position is a jumble of weak pawns and squares. In addition to the

10.♗d4?!

This only makes things worse, but what else can White do?

**10...c5 11.♗d5 ♕c6 12.g5 ♕b5
13.f4 ♕c4 14.g6 ♘h1+ 15.♔e2
♘c1 16.♗d7 ♘xc2+ 17.♔d1 ♘g2
18.♗xg7 c2+**

0-1

In the above game, the ‘weakness factor’ is beautifully illustrated. As soon as Black created weaknesses in the opponent’s camp, White’s position fell apart like a house of cards.

Another idea that you should try to utilize when trying to win SCB endings is the restriction of your opponent’s bishop.

In the following game, White will gradually trap the opponent’s bishop and proceed to win material.

Having said all of this, White has to actually win the game! Yes, Black’s position is very weak, but how to make use of all this? Shulman, a wonderful end-game player, immediately senses what to do. First of all, Black’s weaknesses aren’t easily approachable. In addition, Black’s bishop is still free. Therefore, in order to attack Black’s weaknesses, White has to further restrict Black’s bishop. This is achieved rather easily:

1.♕b4 a5+!

Otherwise, White penetrates to c5.

2.♕c3

Also good, as GM Hecht points out, was the direct 2.♕c5!? ♘d7 3.♗b6 ♘c8+

4. $\mathbb{Q}xd5$ $\mathbb{A}e6+$ 5. $\mathbb{Q}e5$. winning. However, a slight improvement for Black is 3... b4, when he can try to put up a fight.

2... $\mathbb{B}b8$ 3. $b4!$ $a4$

Compare this position with the one we started with – a big difference, don't you think? Now, Black's bishop is a big pawn, and all of Black's pawns stick out like sore thumbs. For Shulman, winning this game isn't too hard, but his technique is still very instructive.

4. $\mathbb{B}c5$ $\mathbb{A}d7$ 5. $\mathbb{B}xd5$ $\mathbb{A}c6$ 6. $\mathbb{B}c5$ $\mathbb{Q}d6$ 7. $g3$ $h5$ 8. $h4$ $\mathbb{B}b7$ 9. $\mathbb{B}xc6+!$

You might ask: '*What if it isn't so easy to take advantage of my opponent's weaknesses? How do I construct a good plan in more complicated positions?*' In truth, when your opponent's bishop is weak, winning the game is often not too hard, even when it takes a long time. Here's an excellent example:



39. Rozentalis-Glek

European Cup Final, Budapest 1996

Compared to the last position (Shulman-Sosa Harrison), Black's prospects aren't nearly as grim. Not only does he have the possibility of creating a passed pawn, but also his bishop is not at all badly placed. If he can play ...c5-c4 and ... $\mathbb{B}b6$, White's advantage will shrink sizably and Black will have great drawing chances. In these types of positions, it's important to realize that

Alertness at all times! This wins the game immediately.

9... $\mathbb{Q}xc6$ 10. $\mathbb{B}e4+$ $\mathbb{Q}b6$ 11. $\mathbb{B}xb7$ $\mathbb{Q}xb7$ 12.d5 $\mathbb{Q}c7$ 13. $\mathbb{Q}d4$ $\mathbb{Q}d6$ 14.f3 f6 15.g4 g5 16.gxh5 1-0

Simple, but aesthetic and instructive.

We can glean from this game that restricting the opponent's bishop is an extremely effective tool in winning games. Immediately, Black's weaknesses could not be defended, and Black fell apart.

there is no need for deep calculation. Instead of trying to mathematically figure out your chances of winning, use your intuition and ask yourself, '*What move looks the best?*' Since Black wants to play ...c5-c4, why not restrict Black's bishop and play c3-c4 yourself?

1.c4!

Not only is White limiting Black's bishop, he is improving his own! Now, the c5-pawn will be weak and White's position will grow even more dominating.

1... $\mathbb{B}c6$ 2. $\mathbb{B}d5$

Not wasting any time, White immediately starts attacking Black's weaknesses. Note that no calculation is needed so far – White is playing simply and powerfully.

2... $\mathbb{Q}e7$ 3. $\mathbb{Q}f4$

Of course, White doesn't want to trade bishops.

3...♔f7 4.♕d3

White continues to play well. Why not improve the king and simultaneously control the center?

4...♚e6 5.♛e3 ♜c8



Although White has improved his position, Black has set up his own fortress and it's completely unclear how to break it!

First of all, White has to ask himself, '*Is there anything else in my position that I can improve?*' In this case, it turns out he can – there is something in chess called 'pawns'.

6.f4! ♜d6 7.f5+ ♔e7 8.b3

Note White's patience. He doesn't immediately go in for the kill, but rather waits and makes final preparations.

8...a5 9.a4!

Now Black has another weakness, while White's pawn on b3 can easily be defended by his king or rook.

**9...♜c6 10.♕e4 ♜c8 11.♔f2 ♜c6
12.♗d3 ♜c7 13.♗f3 ♜b6 14.♗g3!**

Brilliant play by White! Now, everything is prepared for the final invasion by the king. Take a look at Black's bishop; essentially, White is playing with an extra piece.

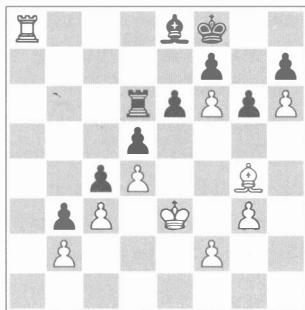
**14...♝a7 15.♕d5 ♔d7 16.♗e3
♝b6 17.♗f4 ♜b7 18.♗d6 ♔d8
19.♗d3 ♔d7 20.♗xc5 ♜xc5
21.♗xc5+ ♔c7 22.♗e3 ♔d7
23.♗d4 ♜b8 24.♗c3 g6 25.♗d3+
♔c7 26.fxg6 ♜g8 27.♗d5 ♜xg6
28.♗xa5 ♜xg4 29.♗f5 ♜g6 30.a5
♔d6 31.a6**

1-0

As we could see, by executing a simple step-by-step plan White won the game without any trouble. Of course, the man playing White wasn't just anybody, but the plan Rozentalis executed doesn't require any calculation – you simply need to have faith in yourself and never hurry. The more you restrict your opponent's bishop and the more weaknesses you create, **the easier it will be for you to win.**

The next point that we will examine is the so-called 'combination method'. Often, by combining tactical ideas with positional ones, you can achieve great effect. For example, your opponent's king might be placed on an optimal square, but by using tactical motifs you can often drive him away or even utilize an unexpected tactic to achieve greater results.

Take a look at the following game:



40. Tkachiev-Hoffman

Villa Martelli 1997

At first sight, the position seems totally won for White. Black is paralyzed, and White can do anything he wants. After a lengthy look at the position, however, I couldn't help but ask myself, '*How does White win here?*' White can even place his king on e5, but what comes next?

Tkachiev, a great endgame player, realizes that without the help of dynamics, the position cannot be won.

Before we take a look at his plan, let me emphasize the following important point:

Whenever you are on the brink of winning but cannot find the final blow, look at ways to open up the position and start an attack on your opponent's king if his position is paralyzed.

1.♔f4 ♜b6 2.♕g5 ♜b7 3.f4

Tkachiev begins his plan. By executing f4-f5, White will open up new fronts, and Black's position will quickly collapse. He simply doesn't have enough pieces in the defense.

3...♜d7 4.♗f3 ♜d6 5.g4 ♜d7 6.f5 exf5 7.gxf5 ♜d6 8.♗g4

1-0

Black is in Zugzwang, as 8...♝b6 is met by 9.fxg6 fxg6 10.♗d7, winning a piece. A very simple game, but one that illustrates 'combinational play'.

In our final example, White will combine subtle positional play, tactical nuances, and powerful moves to win.



41. Nielsen-Hillarp Persson

Copenhagen 1997

Currently, White is a pawn up, but it's unclear how to defend b3. If White allows Black to take and play ...a7-a5, the only side that will have winning chances will be Black – after all, White has weak kingside pawns and Black's passed pawn will be easier to advance. Realizing that he has to take immediate action, Nielsen activates his pieces.

1.♗d7! ♜xb3 2.♗d5 a5?!

Surprisingly, this natural-looking move is an error. GM Igor Stohl points out the following variation: 2...♝c8! 3.♗xf7 (3.♗xf7+ ♚h6 4.♗xa7 ♜xc4=) 3...♚h6! (the obvious 3...♚f6? meets 4.♗d5! and it transpires that Black can't take on c4 because of 5.♗f7 mate! Black would have to play 4...♝f8 but then White plays 5.♗xa7 and wins with two extra pawns. Once again, it's vital not to

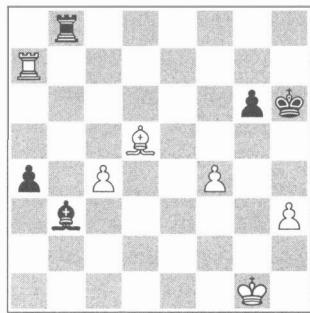
forget the possibility of ‘surprise mates’ in multi-piece endgames) 4. $\mathbb{R}d6$ $\mathbb{Q}xc4$ 5. $\mathbb{Q}xg6$ $\mathbb{R}g8$ 6. f5 $\mathbb{Q}f7$ and Black draws. Of course, playing 4. $\mathbb{R}xa7$ also leads nowhere after 4... $\mathbb{Q}xc4$ 5. $\mathbb{Q}xc4$ $\mathbb{Q}xc4$ with a dead draw.

‘Why,’ a reader might ask, ‘am I showing this game if Black had a draw?’ True, Black could have drawn with accurate play, but in chess you have to be willing to take a risk! If your opponent finds the correct way to play, hats off to him. But in this game, Black, a very strong grandmaster, failed to find the path to a draw!

3. $\mathbb{R}xf7+$ $\mathbb{Q}h6$ 4. $\mathbb{R}a7$ a4

Black misses another opportunity to draw. Following 4... $\mathbb{R}c8$ 5. $\mathbb{Q}e6$ $\mathbb{R}c5$ 6. $\mathbb{Q}g8$ g5! (Stohl), White has no way to stop the liquidation of material.

5. $\mathbb{Q}f2$



White plays accurately and systematically. After improving the placement of his pieces, Danielsen now **activates his king**. As we shall soon see, the strong position of the king will create such discord in Black’s position that Hillarp Persson will be forced to make serious concessions.

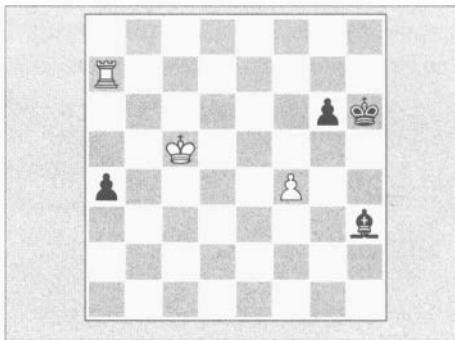
5... $\mathbb{R}c8$ 6. $\mathbb{Q}e6$ $\mathbb{R}c5$

Better was 6... $\mathbb{R}e8$. Stohl ends his variation after 7. $\mathbb{R}a6$ $\mathbb{Q}g7$, giving White a slight edge. However, the position after 8. $\mathbb{Q}g3$ (king activation!) 8... $\mathbb{R}e7$ 9. $\mathbb{Q}h4$ $\mathbb{R}c7$ 10. $\mathbb{Q}g5$ is rather dangerous for Black, as 10... $\mathbb{R}c5+$ is met by the strong 11. f5!, when 11... gxf5 fails to 12. $\mathbb{R}a7+$ $\mathbb{Q}f8$ 13. $\mathbb{Q}f6$, mating.

7. $\mathbb{Q}e3$ $\mathbb{Q}xc4$

Hillarp Persson acknowledges the direness of the situation and sacrifices an exchange in order to liquidate the dangerous c4-pawn.

8. $\mathbb{Q}d4$ $\mathbb{Q}xe6$ 9. $\mathbb{Q}xc5$ $\mathbb{Q}xh3$



White is down to only one pawn, and ...g6-g5 is a threat. In order to play for a win, he has to think of something. Obviously, the first move that should be considered is 10. $\mathbb{R}xa4$. After 10... g5, White has the strong 11. $\mathbb{R}a8!$. Stohl gives 11... $\mathbb{Q}h7$ as best, but the paradoxical 11... $\mathbb{Q}g6!$ draws: 12. $\mathbb{R}g8+$ $\mathbb{Q}f5$ 13. fxe5 $\mathbb{Q}g4$ 14. $\mathbb{Q}d6$ $\mathbb{Q}h5$ 15. $\mathbb{Q}e7$ $\mathbb{Q}g6$.

So White has to find another way to defend against ...g6-g5. Since White’s king is blocking access to the 5th rank (for White’s rook), it would make sense for White to move his king away. Danielsen, using a nice tactical nuance, plays:

10. $\mathbb{Q}d4!$

The fine point of White's move is that 10...g5 is met by 11.♖a6+ ♖h5 12.♗a5, winning the g5-pawn.

**10...♝f5 11.♜xa4 ♖h5 12.♜a1 ♖g4
13.♝e3**

White has successfully retained the last pair of pawns and now masterfully converts his material advantage.

**13..♝e6 14.♝e4 ♜f5+ 15.♝e5
♛f3 16.♞c1 ♖g3 17.♜g1+ ♛f3**

Let's summarize what we have learned in this section:

- A) In same-colored bishop endings, passed pawns can often be very weak. Therefore, before creating an advanced passer, think twice and weigh the pros and cons.
- B) Always try to activate your king. Without king activity, many winning positions cannot be won.
- C) Don't be afraid to use tactics. Often, a plan can only be achieved by means of a tactical resource.
- D) Seize any opportunity to create pawn weaknesses or to restrict the activity of your opponent's bishop.

Now, on to our second section: defense. When defending SCB endings, many players tend to underestimate the opponent's winning chances. Before we go any further, I think that it's important to note that it is much better to overestimate your opponent's winning chances than to underestimate them. Often, material is even, and pawns are rapidly being traded off. Even then, you have to be extremely careful when defending. Consider the following position:



42. S. Atalik-Khomyakov

Alushta 1999

**18.♜a1 ♖g3 19.♜a3+ ♖g4 20.♜a4
♝c2**

20...g5? runs into 21.♜a1! gxh4 22.♜g1+, separating the king from the bishop.

21.♜b4 ♜f5 22.♝f6 ♖h4 23.♝b5 1-0

During the course of this game, we could clearly see how White first activated his pieces, proceeded to mobilize his king, and finally used tactical resources in order to force Black to sacrifice material.

Black is down a pawn, but his position is very solid. He has a passed pawn on a6 (often a liability, but in this case placing a bishop on b5 would secure its safety), and White's bishop is hemmed in by his own pawn on d5.

However, in reality, Black's position is critical. There are a few hidden reasons:

A) Black has a very weak square on e6 and isolated pawn on d6. As soon as he removes his bishop from the c8-h3 diagonal, White's rook might penetrate to e6.

B) White's king is placed optimally. He defends the bishop, and can transfer

to g5 at any moment. On the other hand, Black's king is very passive.

C) White has a big space advantage. His pieces can move freely, while Black can barely budge.

Under the mistaken impression that he had great drawing chances, Black played:

1...a5?

This loses without much of a fight. As Atalik demonstrates, it was necessary for Black to activate his rook at all costs. After 1... $\mathbb{R}f8$ 2. $\mathbb{E}e7$ $\mathbb{R}f7$ 3. $\mathbb{R}xf7$ $\mathbb{Q}xf7$ 4. $\mathbb{Q}f4$ $\mathbb{Q}f6$, a critical position arises.



Analysis diagram

Usually, a material advantage in such an endgame should be decisive. However, in this case, Black has activated his pieces and the e6-square can no longer be used. In order to win, White must construct a plan. Unfortunately for him, it's extremely tough to win the a6-pawn. However, White's pawn majority on the queenside allows him to create a passed pawn.

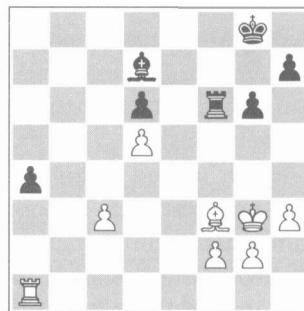
Remember:

Passed pawns supported by one's king are usually much stronger and more dangerous than passers on their own.

After 5. $\mathbb{Q}e4!$ (Atalik), White's idea of $\mathbb{Q}d4$ -c4-c5 cannot be stopped. The best try seems to be 5... $\mathbb{Q}a4$ 6. $\mathbb{Q}d4$ $\mathbb{Q}b3$, with the intention of quickly advancing Black's own passer. Unfortunately for Black, the calm 7.c4 a5 8. $\mathbb{Q}e4!$ a4 9. $\mathbb{Q}c3$ stops all threats.

As we can see, White's central pawn majority cannot be utilized immediately, but after the trade of rooks, the idea of creating a passed pawn becomes much more dangerous. On the other hand, one sole bishop is not nearly enough for Black to support his own pawn.

2. $\mathbb{R}a1$ a4



3. $\mathbb{Q}g4!$

Simple and strong. Trading would be capitulation, while if Black retreats, White will occupy the e6-square and easily penetrate.

3... $\mathbb{Q}e8$ 4. $\mathbb{Q}e6+$ $\mathbb{Q}g7$ 5.f4 $\mathbb{Q}b5$ 6.c4!

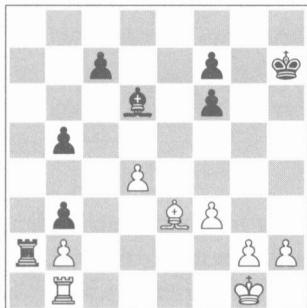
Now, taking with 6... $\mathbb{Q}xc4$ would lose immediately after 7. $\mathbb{R}xa4$ and $\mathbb{R}a7+$.

6... $\mathbb{Q}e8$ 7. $\mathbb{R}b1$ $\mathbb{R}f8$ 8. $\mathbb{R}b7+$ $\mathbb{Q}f6$ 9. $\mathbb{R}a7$ h6 10. $\mathbb{Q}f3$ g5 11.f5 $\mathbb{Q}e5$ 12. $\mathbb{Q}e3$ h5 13.g3 1-0

A very subtle and inspirational game.

It's crucial to understand that in an endgame, one weakness can be much more serious than in the middlegame. When you have a chronic weakness in an endgame (like the e6-square in the above example), you simply cannot take it lightly. Khomyakov allowed Atalik easy access to the e6-square, instead of going for counterplay.

In the next game, Black will have a similar problem, but instead of succumbing, will seek refuge in active countermeasures.



43. Hübner-Portisch

Palma de Mallorca Interzonal 1970

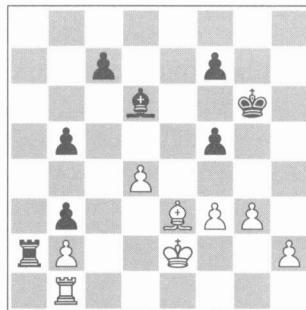
Material is equal, and Black's pawn structure is ruined. In addition, White has the h2-pawn, which can become dangerous very quickly. Two words, however, can sum up White's immense difficulties – the b2-pawn. White's rook is tied to its defense, and Black's rook is placed on an optimal square – it cannot be repelled from a2, where it eternally attacks b2. Also, Black's bishop might transfer to a3 or c3 at some point with unpleasant consequences (on bxc3 or bxa3, ...b3-b2 might be very strong). If White tries organizing counterplay on the kingside, Black will attack the d4-pawn.

Hübner understands his problems, and immediately **starts activating his pieces**. First comes the king – on g1, it does absolutely nothing, passively watching the onslaught.

1.♔f1!

White makes use of a small tactical nuance – the rash 1...♝xh2?? is met by 2.f4 ♚g3 3.♔e2, winning a piece.

1...f5 2.♔e2 ♚g6 3.g3



3...f4!

Portisch does not make life any easier for White. With his last move, he opens up the f5-square for his king and grabs even more space.

4.♗d2 fxg3 5.hxg3

As if all other advantages of 3...f4 weren't enough, White is also robbed of the only pride of his position – the passed pawn!

5...♞a4 6.♔d3

Step one of White's plan has been achieved. His king is now placed actively: it is defending d4 and is right in the center of the board. White's problems, however, are still far from being solved. Black now switches his attention to the d4-pawn, and again White must be very careful in defending.

**6...♝c4 7.♝c3 ♜a4 8.g4 ♜f4
9.♔e4! ♜d6 10.♔d3 ♜a8**

Finally, Black admits that White has completely defended – his b2 pawn is now protected by the c3-bishop, and White's king is in perfect harmony with the rest of his pieces. Now, it's time for White to play for a win!

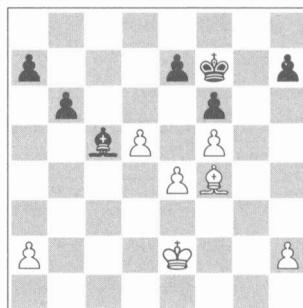
11.♝h1 ♜a2 12.d5! f5 13.♝h8±

And it is White who has the edge. The game was drawn after 34 more moves.

In the starting position, White's pieces were all extremely passive. He simply did not have enough firepower to withstand the attack on the b2 pawn. As soon as White's king was activated, Black's pressure fizzled out.

In the following game, Black will again have an unpleasant position. With cold-blooded and subtle play, however, he manages to render White's initiative completely harmless.

ment via the g-file. Let's see what would happen if the rooks came off the board:



Analysis diagram

White has an extremely dangerous threat – the transfer of his king to a6. Passive defense does not work: 1...♚e8 2.♔d3 ♚d7 3.♔c4 ♚c8 4.a4! ♚b7 5.a5 and Black is overextended. Therefore, he must stop the progress of White's king with 2...b5!. Since 3.♔e3 does not work after 3...♜xe3 4.♔xe3 ♚d7 5.♔d4 ♚d6, White must agree to a draw.

'Well, how does this help White?', you might ask. The main point is not that White wins in every case the rooks are traded – it is that if White had one extra move, he would win immediately (after ♚c4 in this case). This factor alone forces Black to calculate every trade after White plays ♜g2. Understandably, Black is unsatisfied with this constant threat. As in the previous example, Black first activates his king and places it on a better square.

1...♜g8 2.♝g3 ♚e8! 3.♔f3 ♚d7

With his king centralized, Black no longer has to worry about the rook trade and can concentrate on his queenside pawn majority. White, however, has an ingenious idea up his sleeve.



44. Vaisser-M.D.Tseitlin

Novosibirsk 1971

Although Black has no immediate weaknesses, White has one major advantage: he can trade rooks at any mo-

4. $\mathbb{E}c4 \mathbb{E}c8$



5. $e5!$

Suddenly, it becomes clear that Black's h7-pawn will be the target of White's assault. Note how White doesn't succumb to a draw; before admitting that Black has defended, he exhausts all of his possibilities. In this case, as we shall see, his idea is double-edged, as Black will also get counterplay and chances for a win.

5... $fxe5$ 6. $\mathbb{E}h4 \mathbb{Q}d4$ 7. $\mathbb{E}xh7 \mathbb{E}c3+$!

Activity above everything! In order for Black to successfully achieve counterplay, he must activate his pieces to the maximum.

8. $\mathbb{Q}g4 \mathbb{Q}d6$ 9. $h4 \mathbb{E}c8?$

Not a terrible mistake, but suddenly retreating is simply not in the spirit of the position. The best move was 9... $\mathbb{E}c1$, further activating his pieces. Following 10. $h5 \mathbb{E}g1$ 11. $\mathbb{Q}h3$, Black draws without any difficulty after 11... $\mathbb{E}f1$ 12. $\mathbb{Q}g4 \mathbb{E}g1$. After Black's slight inaccuracy, he will have to show careful technique for a few more moves.

10. $h5 \mathbb{E}g8+$ 11. $\mathbb{Q}h4 \mathbb{Q}xd5?$

Suddenly, Black goes astray. He had the right idea, but he first had to defend the e7-pawn by means of 11... $\mathbb{E}e8$!. Now,

things really become unpleasant for Black; after all, facing two advanced passers is much tougher than facing one.

12. $\mathbb{E}xe7 \mathbb{Q}e4$ 13. $f6 \mathbb{Q}f3??$

It's hard to believe, but this seemingly natural and drawing move actually loses! Yes, activity is often the key to a successful defense, but if your opponent has two far-advanced passers, you simply cannot ignore them! Black had to play 13... $\mathbb{Q}f5$, and after 14. $f7 \mathbb{E}f8$ 15. $\mathbb{E}xa7 \mathbb{Q}c5$ White has no clear-cut way to win the game.



14. $f7??$

Incredible! After playing a great game, White, instead of going for a simple win, blunders into a draw! It is understandable that White feared Black's activity, but after the simple 14. $h6$ White wins, as 14... $\mathbb{E}xg3$ fails to 15. $h7$.

14... $\mathbb{E}g4+$

Immediately, Black pounces on his opportunity.

15. $\mathbb{Q}h3 \mathbb{E}xg3+$ 16. $\mathbb{Q}h2 \mathbb{E}g2+ 1/2-1/2$

A rather tragicomic ending, but a very instructive game. As we could see, there was no immediate threat to Black, but activating his pieces greatly improved his drawing chances.

Mastering Complex Endgames

So far, we have seen examples with even material. Often, the most unpleasant positions are ones in which you are down a pawn or even more. These positions, however, can often be saved. Even when one side is down material and has a very bad position, a half-point can be salvaged by means of ingenious play. Take a look at the following position:



45. Horvath-Gretarsson

European Cup Final, Lyon 1994

Black's position is very tough to defend. White is up a passed pawn, and it's unclear how to take advantage of White's weak pawn structure. In such cases, it's very important to remain calm and not make desperate, irrational decisions. Yes, you might have to defend such a position for 40 moves or more, but if you remain tenacious and do everything possible, you will draw many more games than if you simply give up hope.

Gretarsson starts with a technique which is already familiar to us: he improves his pieces to the maximum.

1... $\mathbb{Q}f5$ 2.b5 $\mathbb{Q}d6$

Already, it's very difficult for White to make inroads into Black's position. However, it's precisely in this stage of the game that a lot of inexperienced defenders make the most mistakes. Tired of constantly being on the lookout for threats, they immediately start making

rash decisions. If they kept their cool, they would have probably saved the game.

3.a4 $\mathbb{R}c2$

Every move made by Black is completely natural and rational. First, he improved his king and bishop. Now, the rook is transferred to a more active square.

4. $\mathbb{Q}e3$



Black has achieved his plan: all of his pieces are fully activated. White, however, does not lose hope. He now threatens a4-a5, after which he will create another passed pawn. Again, Black remains calm and defends carefully.

**4... $\mathbb{R}a2$ 5. $\mathbb{R}d4$ g5 6.h4 $\mathbb{Q}c5$ 7. $\mathbb{R}e4$
 $\mathbb{Q}xe3$ 8. $\mathbb{R}xe3$ $\mathbb{R}xa4$**

Black has equalized the material, and the rest is simple technique.

**9. $\mathbb{R}d3$ $\mathbb{R}c4$ 10.d6 $\mathbb{R}c8$ 11.hxg5
 $\mathbb{R}d8$ 12.f4 $\mathbb{Q}xf4$ 13. $\mathbb{R}f3+$ $\mathbb{Q}xg5$
14. $\mathbb{R}xf7$ $\mathbb{R}xd6$ 15. $\mathbb{R}xh7$ $\mathbb{R}d5$ ½-½**

Unfortunately, cases in which you must defend for a very long time do occur. For example, if you are down a pawn for little compensation, your opponent will not concede the draw, even if you defend well. You have to have stamina and perseverance.

In the following game, White does not give up hope and defends a seemingly lost ending.



46. Dus Chotimirsky-Rabinovich

Russian Championship, Kiev 1903

Black has an extra pawn, and White's kingside pawn structure is ruined. Clearly, White has a very long road ahead of him. I simply cannot emphasize enough the importance of making calm, thought-through decisions even in cases where the position might seem hopeless.

In this case, Black wants to transfer his king to d6, play ... $\mathbb{E}e8$, and trade rooks. In order to avoid this, White has to take immediate action.

1.f4! $\mathbb{E}e8$

Black proceeds with his plan. Now, his immediate threat is 2... $\mathbb{Q}d7$, practically forcing the trade of rooks.

2. $\mathbb{Q}g1!$

Very instructive. Instead of panicking, White makes an extremely cold-blooded decision. Now, after 2... $\mathbb{Q}d7$, White is forced to take. Following

3. $\mathbb{B}xe8+$ $\mathbb{Q}xe8$, a bishop ending arises.



Analysis diagram

On the one hand, this endgame is exactly the position Black was aiming for. With the rooks off, Black's extra pawn becomes much more pronounced. However, White's king has access to the ideal square e3, where it will support White's weak f4-pawn. Here's a sample variation: 4. $\mathbb{Q}f2$ f6 5. $\mathbb{Q}e3$ $\mathbb{Q}g6$ 6.f5!. White's pawn will block his own bishop, but as GM Mihai Suba once said, 'bad bishops defend good pawns!' 6... $\mathbb{Q}f7$ 7. $\mathbb{Q}f4$ and hats off to anyone who can find a way to make inroads into White's position.

2... $\mathbb{Q}f8$ 3.h4 h6 4. $\mathbb{Q}f2$ $\mathbb{Q}d7$ 5. $\mathbb{B}g1!$

Oops! Just at the moment when it seemed that Black had forced the rook trade, it turns out that White's king is defending the e3-square! If White had traded with 5. $\mathbb{B}xe8+$, the position after 5... $\mathbb{Q}xe8$ 6. $\mathbb{Q}e3$ $\mathbb{Q}e7$ would have been critical for him. In comparison with our previous analysis of this endgame, Black has a much better placed king and now has the very unpleasant threat of ...g7-g5. In addition, White cannot play f4-f5.

5...f5!?

A committal move. Black stops f4-f5 and secures the e4-square. However, he does severely restrict his own bishop. Unfortunately, playing ...f7-f5 seems like the only normal way to free Black's king (...g7-g6 would simply be too weakening).

6.a4!

White continues to play very accurately. Although it usually is not a great idea to make too many exposing pawn moves in the endgame, this game is an exception. While White would also have great drawing chances after, say, 6.Bg6, he plays *actively*, thus restricting Black's winning chances. The main idea of 6.a4 is to grab space on the queenside before Black can organize pawn pressure. As we shall soon see, Black switches his attention to the kingside, thus allowing *White* to start his own pressure on the queenside.

6...Bf7 7.b4

Continuing in brave style. The c3-pawn is weakened, but Black now will have a tough time achieving ...c6-c5. Understanding that he cannot organize a breakthrough on the queenside, Black switches his attention to the ...g7-g5 break.

7...Bf6 8.Bf3Bg8



9.c4!

White crashes through just at the right time. Had White made a waiting move, Black would have taken the initiative on the kingside by means of 9...g5.

9...Be6?!

This allows White to organize his own counterattack. The best winning chance for Black lay in 9...dxc4! 10.Qxc4 Be6, when White is practically forced to trade bishops. After 11.Qxe6 Qxe6 12.Rxe1+ Qd5, it seems as though Black is practically winning, but White's rook comes to the rescue. Instead of the rash 13.Re7, which would have been met by 13...b5, White has 14.Re5+!, and the position after 14...Qxd4 15.Rxf5 Qc4 16.Rf7 Rb8 17.a5!! (threatening 17.a6, thus slowing down Black's progress) 17...a6 18.Rxg7 Rxh4 19.Rh7 Rxa5 20.Rxh6 is a complete mess. Black has three connected passers, but White's king is very close to them. On the other side of the board, White's two passed pawns should be enough to hold the draw.

10.c5! Bf7 11.b5 Rh5+ 12.Qf2

Now, things become much easier for White. He has succeeded in organizing his own pawn pressure, and Black is forced to abandon his ambitious plans.

12...Rc8 13.Rb1 Re7 14.b6!

Another great decision from White. He understands that after Black's next move, the b7-pawn will be very weak and might be subject to moves such as Ra6.

14...a5 15.Rc1

Black cannot take the rook as the threat of $\mathbb{Q}a6$ will prove very dangerous.

15... $\mathbb{E}d7$ 16. $\mathbb{E}e5$



It's clear that White has made huge progress. The position is practically locked, and all of White's pieces are placed optimally. However, White is still far from being out of the woods. First of all, the b7-pawn is safely defended by Black's rook. Secondly, and most importantly, Black's main idea is ...g7-g5, which can hardly be stopped. In order to prepare for the break, White activates his rook even further.

**16... $\mathbb{Q}g4$ 17. $\mathbb{E}e8$ g5 18.fxg5+
 $\mathbb{H}xg5$ 19.hxg5+ $\mathbb{Q}xg5$ 20. $\mathbb{E}c8$ $\mathbb{H}h7$
21. $\mathbb{E}c7!$ $\mathbb{E}xc7?$!**

A very instructive game. We could see how White switched from active defense in the beginning to passive defense in the end – as we know, active defense is not the only way to save a game!

Summing up, we can say the following about defending SCB endings:

- A) Don't underestimate your opponent's chances. If you always think that the position can easily be defended, you will be irritated by your opponent's constant winning attempts.
- B) Always look for active counterplay. When you have a chronic weakness in your position, the best cure might be the mobilization of your forces instead of the passive defense of the weakness.
- C) When you're down a pawn or even more, it's crucial not to lose hope. Often, a position might look desperate, yet with accurate and active play you can save the game.

After this trade, White will have no problems drawing the ensuing endgame. Black's best winning chance was 21... $\mathbb{H}h2+$!, when White would have needed to be extremely careful. The position after 22. $\mathbb{Q}g1$ $\mathbb{E}d2$ 23. $\mathbb{Q}f1$ $\mathbb{E}d1$ 24. $\mathbb{Q}f2$ $\mathbb{E}xd4$ 25. $\mathbb{E}xb7$ $\mathbb{E}xa4$ is very messy. White does have his own winning chances, but the onus is on him to sidestep the many tactical nuances hidden in Black's moves. After 26. $\mathbb{E}c7!$ $\mathbb{H}a2+$ 27. $\mathbb{Q}e3!$ (activity over everything!) 27...f4+ 28. $\mathbb{Q}d4$ $\mathbb{E}a4+$ 29. $\mathbb{Q}c3$ $\mathbb{E}b4$ 30. $\mathbb{E}xc6$, White certainly has great chances to promote one of his pawns.

22.bxc7 f4 23. $\mathbb{Q}e2$ $\mathbb{Q}c8$ 24. $\mathbb{Q}f3$

Black simply cannot make any progress. White draws without any trouble.

**24... $\mathbb{Q}f6$ 25. $\mathbb{Q}g2$ $\mathbb{Q}e7$ 26. $\mathbb{Q}f3$ $\mathbb{Q}d7$
27. $\mathbb{Q}xf4$ $\mathbb{Q}xc7$ 28. $\mathbb{Q}e5$ $\mathbb{Q}g4$
29. $\mathbb{Q}f4$ $\mathbb{Q}d1$ 30. $\mathbb{Q}e3$ $\mathbb{Q}xa4$ 31. $\mathbb{Q}d2$
 $\mathbb{Q}b5$ 32. $\mathbb{Q}c3$ b6 33.cxb6+ $\mathbb{Q}xb6$
34. $\mathbb{Q}b2$ $\mathbb{Q}c4$ 35. $\mathbb{Q}a3$**

Black's two pawn advantage means nothing – he cannot penetrate with his king and ...c6-c5 leads to a quick draw:

35...c5 36.dxc5+ $\mathbb{Q}xc5$ 37. $\mathbb{Q}xd5!$ 1/2-1/2

D) Evaluate piece trades carefully. If you are down a pawn, rook endgames might offer more drawing chances than bishop endgames, but there are so many exceptions that you can't count on this as a rule. Concrete details of the position are paramount, and a favorable trade can turn unfavorable (or vice versa) in just a few moves.

E) Pawn trades can be helpful, especially if you can get to a “book draw” like R+B vs. R (as in Yermolinsky-Naroditsky).

Now, you can try your luck at the following exercises. If you’re unsure about a move or idea, consult the corresponding section in the chapter.



3.3 Arakhamia Grant-Smyslov

Veterans-Woman, Copenhagen 1997

Should Black trade bishops with 1...♝e3? Support your argument with a concrete variation.

3.4 Gild.Garcia-Zapata

Yopal 1997

Clearly, Black has very strong pressure on White's position. Is there a way to neutralize it? Hint: *Activity is the best cure for passivity!*

Rook + Bishop vs. Rook + Knight

Which pair is better? Although this fundamental question can hardly be answered, one can certainly learn the intricacies of the endgames arising with these two ageless tandems. Before we proceed to specifics, let's talk a little bit about the pros and cons of each.

R + B Pros:

- Often work together very well. Can dominate the whole board.
- ‘Weakness dominators’. The rook + bishop tandem can often attack weaknesses better than the rook + knight tandem.
- Support passed pawns very effectively. When a passed pawn crosses the enemy line, the rook and bishop can almost always support the pawn until it promotes.

R + B Cons:

- D) Rarely can organize direct attacks on the king.
- E) Easy to attack. In Rook + Knight vs. Rook + Bishop (hereafter referred to as RNRB) endings, the rook and knight can often create tactics where either the rook or bishop become the subject of the offensive.

R+N Pros:

- A) Great attackers – can organize mating attacks without any help.
- B) Very elusive – the knight can often escape extremely perilous situations.

R + N Cons:

- C) Often cannot successfully support passed pawns. A bishop and rook can easily overpower a knight and rook in the attack of a passed pawn.
- D) Cannot work together on exploiting weaknesses. A knight is often very easy to repel from its post.

Let us start from the Rook + Bishop side. When pressuring a rook and knight, players often tend to get carried away and want to win very quickly. However, as mentioned above, the rook and knight pair can be very slippery! Take a look at the following game:



47. Rensch-Naroditsky

US Chess League 2009

In addition to Black's material advantage, he has a dominating position. The b2-rook is located optimally, pinning the knight and creating chaos in White's position. Moreover, Black's king is defending b6 and can leap into White's camp at any point. I decided to start the final assault with an even further cramping of White's position:

1... $\mathbb{Q}b4+$ 2. $\mathbb{Q}c1 \mathbb{Q}c3$ 3.h5!

At this point, I realized that things were not going to be so simple. First of all, White's knight is extremely irritating. It defends the a1-square and brings a bit of discord into Black's piece coordination. Secondly, and most importantly, White is threatening to win the g6-pawn after $h\text{x}g6$ and $\mathbb{Q}h6$. I was still very confident in my winning chances – and rightly so. In order to create his own passed pawn, White needs to make three preliminary moves. In that time, my b6-pawn will already promote!

3... $b5$ 4. $h\text{x}g6$ $h\text{x}g6$ 5. $\mathbb{Q}h7+$

This is White's only chance. On 5. $\mathbb{Q}h6$, Black won after 5... $b4$ 6. $\mathbb{Q}xg6$ $\mathbb{Q}a2$ with ... $b4-b3$ to follow.

5... $\mathbb{Q}b6$ 6. $\mathbb{Q}g7b4$

Things are going as planned. White hasn't even created his passed pawn, and mine is already on its way. The battle, unfortunately, is far from over.

7. $\mathbb{R}xg6+$ $\mathbb{Q}b5$ 8. $\mathbb{R}g8$



The culmination point has been reached. White has succeeded in creating his own passed pawn, and wants to promote it as quickly as possible. On the other hand, I was debating whether to go in for the kill with my king or push my pawn. Thinking that there was no difference, I played

8...b3??

and committed a terrible mistake. First of all, let's see how I could have won.

Following 8... $\mathbb{Q}c4$ 9. $\mathbb{R}c8+$ $\mathbb{Q}d3$ 10. $\mathbb{Q}e1+$ $\mathbb{Q}xe3$ 11. g6 (I was worried about this move), Black has the simple 11... $\mathbb{R}e2!$, and White cannot save himself. The position after 12. g7 $\mathbb{R}xe1+$ 13. $\mathbb{Q}c2$ $\mathbb{R}g1$ 14. g8 \mathbb{Q} $\mathbb{R}xg8$ 15. $\mathbb{R}xg8$ $\mathbb{Q}f2$ is completely hopeless for White. Although my mistake was partly complete miscalculation and partly a blank-out, the unique cooperation of the rook and knight played a big part in my error. As we shall soon see, White succeeds in somehow saving and even *winning* this hopeless-seeming position.

9. $\mathbb{R}b8+$!

Only now did I realize the dire consequences of my previous move. Not only is Black not winning, but he also has to fight for a draw! I had mainly been relying on the variation 9. $\mathbb{Q}e1$, when 9... $\mathbb{R}e2$ wins easily. To my utter shock, it turns out that White had *another* draw, namely: 9. $\mathbb{Q}a3+?$ $\mathbb{Q}b4$ 10. $\mathbb{Q}b1$, and 10... $\mathbb{R}c2+$ 11. $\mathbb{Q}d1$ $\mathbb{R}b2$ is harmless after 12. $\mathbb{Q}d2$. Looking at the position after 8...b3, I find it amazing that White can save the position – Black's king has direct access to d3, and White's rook and knight are in complete separation. After my opponent produced his simple but strong refutation, panic immediately struck. What took place next is a debacle that can hardly be described.

9... $\mathbb{Q}a6??$

I simply cannot explain why I didn't draw with 9... $\mathbb{Q}a4$, when White can 'only' repeat moves after 10. $\mathbb{R}a8+$. After my blunder, White will be on the verge of winning the game.

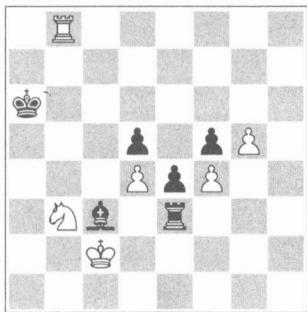
10. $\mathbb{Q}a1?!$

But White gives me another chance to save the day. Had he chosen the more active 10. $\mathbb{Q}b4+$, my position would have been hopeless. Following 10... $\mathbb{Q}a5$ (10... $\mathbb{Q}a7$ 11. $\mathbb{R}c8!+-$) 11. $\mathbb{Q}xd5$ $\mathbb{R}c2+$ 12. $\mathbb{Q}d1$ $\mathbb{R}d2+$ 13. $\mathbb{Q}e1!$, Black has nothing better than to transpose into a completely lost rook ending with 13... $\mathbb{R}d3+$.

10... $\mathbb{R}e2!$ 11. $\mathbb{Q}xb3$ $\mathbb{R}xe3$

White is still clearly better, but at least Black now has his own passed pawn.

12. $\mathbb{Q}c2$



12...Bg3??

An old chess proverb states that mistake follows mistake. Well, from firsthand experience, I can tell you that it is true! Unable to ‘regain consciousness’, I produce a blunder far worse than all the previous ones combined. The only move was 12...Bc1!, when the position would have been far from clear. Still, after 13.Qc5+ Ka7 14.Bb3 Bf3! 15.Bxf3 exf3 16.Qd1 White should prevail.

13.Qd8??

Inexplicably, White misses the ultra-simple win. After 13.Qc5+ Ka7 14.Bb3 White wins a piece for no compensation. White not only misses his easy win, but he also gives Black a chance to draw the game instantly.

As the reader can probably guess, I missed that chance as well.

13...Bb4?

Again, I simply cannot give a rational explanation for why I missed the simple draw 13...Bb5. Even now, however, the position is not completely hopeless.

**14.Bxd5 Bg2+ 15.Qd1 Bg1+
16.Qe2**



16...Be1+?

Just at the point where I could have saved the position, I lose hope. If instead I had chosen 16...Bg2+, the game would have still probably ended in a draw following 17.Qf1 Bg3 18.Qc5+ Bxc5 19.Bxc5 Bf3+ and 20...Bxf4.

**17.Qf2 e3+ 18.Qf3 Qd2 19.Bxf5
Bf1+ 20.Qe2 Bf2+ 21.Qd3 1-0**

Many readers (including me) are probably thinking, ‘*What’s your point here?*’ True, the game was not of the highest quality, yet the pattern of committing many mistakes when facing the rook and knight tandem is recurrent. While looking through games featuring this pair, I discovered that even the strongest grandmasters make a lot of mistakes. The cure to this ‘illness’ is much easier said than done: be careful! You will be much more successful in defeating the rook + knight pair if you consider the counterplay possibilities your opponent has **on every move**. In the above game, I completely disregarded my opponent’s possibilities and played extremely recklessly.

The following game is a model of how one should think in such positions:



48. Karpov-Debarnot

Las Palmas 1977

Clearly, it is White who is pushing for the win. Black has weak pawns on d5 and a7, and White's king will support an f-pawn breakthrough. However, things are far from one-sided. First of all, White's rook is placed awkwardly. It has practically no squares and can become the victim of an unpleasant attack. Secondly, White has a backward pawn on g3, which can be easily threatened by Black's rook. Finally, Black's king is also located very well. Centralized and ready to support the ...d5-d4 breakthrough, it can be a very valuable asset in the struggle to come. Let's try to model Karpov's train of thought:

'Clearly, my position is better, but how can I utilize my advantage? I can't attack the d5- or a7-pawn because they are well defended by Black's pieces. I can only try to press on the kingside. I can play 1...e8, but after 1...e7 I will simply have to retreat. I can also break through with h4-h5 or f4-f5. That seems like a more realistic idea. On 1.h5, however, Black has the unpleasant 1...f5+. On 1.f5, the move 1...h5+ can be easily parried by 2.g4. Overall, 1.f5 seems like the best idea.'

1.f5!

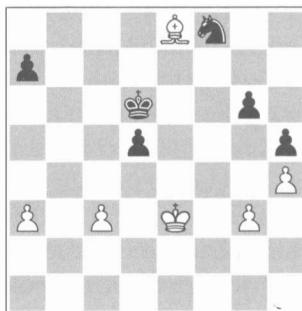
This move is the key to the position. By creating a weakness on g6, Karpov forces Black to transfer his attention to the kingside. It is precisely in the defense of the weakness that Black's rook and knight cannot work together well.

1... $\mathbb{Q}e5$

Obviously not the only option. In *Endgame Virtuoso*, Karolyi & Aplin analyze two alternatives, 1...h5+ and 1...gxf5+. Let's take a look:

A) 1...h5+. The idea of this move is to fix the weakness on g3 and take the initiative. White now has to be careful and play 2. $\mathbb{Q}f4$ – the obvious 2. $\mathbb{Q}g5$ does not win after 2... $\mathbb{R}g1$ 3.fxg6 $\mathbb{R}xg3+$ 4. $\mathbb{Q}xh5$ fxg6+ 5. $\mathbb{Q}h6$ $\mathbb{R}g4$ 6. $\mathbb{B}b4$ $\mathbb{Q}c4!$ 7.b3 $\mathbb{R}xh4+$ 8. $\mathbb{Q}g5$ $\mathbb{R}h3$ 9.bxc4 $\mathbb{R}xc3$ and Black transposes into a theoretically drawn endgame (Karolyi).

Black must now try to achieve piece coordination with 2... $\mathbb{Q}a4!$. Notice that White's rook is in the midst of the turmoil – Black now has the very unpleasant threat 3... $\mathbb{Q}c5$. White's bishop, however, comes to the rescue. After 3.fxg6 fxg6 4. $\mathbb{Q}e8!$, the significance of Karpov's first move becomes clear. With g6 very weak, Black must trade into a bishop vs. knight endgame after 4... $\mathbb{Q}c5$ 5. $\mathbb{R}a3$ $\mathbb{R}xa3$ 6.bxa3 $\mathbb{Q}e6+$ 7. $\mathbb{Q}e3$ $\mathbb{Q}f8$.



Analysis diagram

Black's knight is currently completely passive, but Black is threatening to free it with 8... $\mathbb{Q}e7$. In order to win, White must be subtle. The best way to achieve winning chances is to play 8. $\mathbb{Q}f7!$, when Black cannot play ... $\mathbb{Q}e7$. After 8... $\mathbb{Q}e5$ 9. $\mathbb{Q}d3!$, Black is in Zugzwang, as 9... $\mathbb{Q}d6$ 10. $\mathbb{Q}d4$ $\mathbb{Q}e6+$ loses after 11. $\mathbb{Q}xe6$ $\mathbb{Q}xe6$ 12. $\mathbb{Q}c5!$.

Overall, 1...h5+ is a good practical chance, but should lose with correct play from White.

B) The move 1...gxf5+!?, which attempts to change the position, is a great practical chance. On 2. $\mathbb{Q}xf5$, Karolyi recommends either 2... $\mathbb{Q}c5$ or 2... $\mathbb{Q}g1$, which both lead to positions in which White has a small edge. However, even stronger is 2...a5!, and the position after 3. $\mathbb{Q}f6$ a4 4. $\mathbb{Q}a3$ $\mathbb{Q}b1$! (not 4... $\mathbb{Q}xa3$ 5.bxa3 $\mathbb{Q}c5$ 6. $\mathbb{Q}d3$, when White has the very dangerous idea g3-g4) 5. $\mathbb{Q}xa4$ $\mathbb{Q}xb2$ 6. $\mathbb{Q}e8$ $\mathbb{Q}g2$ should end in a draw, although I would certainly prefer White after 7. $\mathbb{Q}a6$. The attempt to improve on this variation with 2. $\mathbb{Q}h5$?! leads nowhere after 2... $\mathbb{Q}g1$, when it is Black who has the pressure.

Overall, Black should be able to draw with very accurate play. However, it's extremely tough to find strong move after strong move – especially 2...a5. Again, the fact that Black can hold the draw certainly does not mean the position is drawn!

2.fxg6 fxg6 3. $\mathbb{Q}b4!$

White pounces on the first opportunity to activate his rook, and along the way prevents the annoying breakthrough 3...d4. Note how Black is faced with a very unpleasant decision on every move

– there are simply too many possibilities for him to consider.

3... $\mathbb{Q}e1?$!

After this error, White starts closing in on Black's weaknesses. As Karolyi & Aplin correctly mention, Black could have saved the day with the active 3...a5!. After 4. $\mathbb{Q}d4$ a4! 5.h5 g5 6. $\mathbb{Q}d2$ a3 7.bxa3 $\mathbb{Q}xa3$ the position is completely equal. Karolyi, however, mentions an interesting possibility: 4. $\mathbb{Q}b3$!?. Still, after 4...a4 5. $\mathbb{Q}a3$ $\mathbb{Q}xa3$ 6.bxa3 $\mathbb{Q}c4$ (6... $\mathbb{Q}e4$!? 7. $\mathbb{Q}c6$ $\mathbb{Q}d3$ 8.h5 gxh5+ 9. $\mathbb{Q}xh5$ is also a draw) the game should end in a quick draw (Karolyi).

Again, the fact that Black *could have* drawn means very little. In the heat of the battle, with the clock ticking and your opponent staring at you from across the board, it simply is very difficult to find a subtle drawing resource.

4. $\mathbb{Q}d3$



4... $\mathbb{Q}f6$

After this move, Black will fall into passivity until the end of the game. It was vital to change the course of events with 4...g5!. Following 5.hxg5 hxg5 6. $\mathbb{Q}d4$ $\mathbb{Q}e3$ 7. $\mathbb{Q}b5$ White has an advantage, but I can't see a clear-cut way to at-

tack the multiple weaknesses in Black's position. I'm certain, though, that had Karpov reached this position he would have found some way to achieve winning chances!

5. $\mathbb{K}f4 + \mathbb{Q}g7$ 6. $\mathbb{Q}f3$

The smoke has cleared, and White has an undisputable advantage. So far, Black could not find a way to coordinate his knight and rook. Unfortunately for him, his multiple weaknesses ($g6$, $d5$, $a7$) do not allow him to organize any counterplay.

It is precisely in this stage of the game when many mistakes are made. As we have seen in the above example, the knight and rook can create counterplay extremely quickly. Therefore, on every move, you have to ask yourself, '*What does my opponent want?*'

6.. $\mathbb{K}e5$ 7. $\mathbb{K}b4$ $\mathbb{K}e7$



8. $\mathbb{K}b5!$

White further restricts Black's knight and threatens the maneuver $\mathbb{K}c5-c6$, winning material. Now, the attempt to achieve counterplay by means of 8... $\mathbb{Q}c4$ is parried by 9. $\mathbb{K}xc4$ $\mathbb{D}xc4$ 10. $\mathbb{K}c5$ $\mathbb{K}b7$ 11. $\mathbb{K}xc4$ $\mathbb{K}xb2$ 12. $\mathbb{K}c7+$ and White should win the endgame.

8... $\mathbb{K}c7?$

As Karolyi states, this is simply too passive and allows White to carry out his plans without disturbance. Black could still have put up a fight after 8... $\mathbb{Q}f6$!. After 9. $\mathbb{K}c5$ $g5$, White's position is far from winning. Let's take a look at his options:

A) 10. $h \times g5 + h \times g5$ 11. $\mathbb{Q}g4$ is an attempt to win material quickly. However, after the strong 11... $\mathbb{Q}d7!$ Black succeeds in utilizing the awkward placement of White's king. The position after 12. $\mathbb{K}c6 + \mathbb{Q}g7$ is very drawish.

B) 10. $b3!$. I was surprised that *Deep Fritz 10* liked this rather subdued and subtle move. White's idea is simply to restrict Black's knight and not allow annoying sorties like ... $\mathbb{Q}a4$ or ... $\mathbb{Q}c4$. After 10... $g \times h4$ 11. $g \times h4$ $\mathbb{Q}e5$ 12. $\mathbb{K}c6$ Black's position slowly starts crumbling.

9. $\mathbb{Q}e3$ $\mathbb{Q}f6$ 10. $\mathbb{Q}d4$

White has transferred his king to an optimal position. Black tries to achieve counterplay, but Karpov does not allow Black even a sliver. The final stage of the game is very instructive.

10.. $g5$ 11. $h \times g5 + h \times g5$ 12. $\mathbb{K}a5$ $\mathbb{Q}e6$ 13. $b3$ $\mathbb{Q}f6$ 14. $\mathbb{K}a1$ $\mathbb{Q}d7$ 15. $\mathbb{K}a5$ $\mathbb{Q}b6$ 16. $g4$ $\mathbb{Q}e6$ 17. $c4!$

Continuing to slowly push Black off the board. Soon, Black's pieces will be even further restricted by the rapidly advancing passed pawn.

17.. $d \times c4$ 18. $b \times c4$ $\mathbb{K}d7 +$ 19. $\mathbb{Q}c3$ $\mathbb{Q}g7$ 20. $\mathbb{Q}f5 +$ $\mathbb{Q}f6$ 21. $\mathbb{Q}d4$ $\mathbb{K}e7$ 22. $c5$ $\mathbb{K}e5$ 23. $\mathbb{Q}e4$ 23... $\mathbb{Q}d7$ 24. $\mathbb{K}a6 +$ $\mathbb{K}e6$ 25. $\mathbb{K}xe6 +$ $\mathbb{Q}xe6$ 26. $\mathbb{Q}f5 +$ $\mathbb{Q}e7$ 27. $c6$ 1-0

An astounding display by Karpov.

In this game, we could clearly see how Karpov patiently restricted Black's counterplay and only then proceeded on to attack Black's weaknesses. It's very important to remember that rook and knight have trouble defending when they are restricted. In order to successfully attack Black's weak pawns, Karpov always had to consider the knight escapades.

In our next game, we will see the inability of the rook and knight to defend weaknesses when the tandem is restricted.



49. Sandberg-Naroditsky

San Francisco 2008

When looking at this position, the first thing one notices is White's dangerous pair of passed pawns on the queenside. Uncontested and ignored, they can quickly become much more than pawns. Naturally, I was a bit worried about the passed pawns myself. However, I understood that the knight and rook are often inefficient in defending weak pawns. In this case, the g2-pawn is clumsily protected by White's rook, but as of now cannot be attacked further. I also understood that given time, White's seemingly passive rook and knight can become a very dangerous force. In this case, White needs only three moves – $\mathbb{R}d1-e2-f3$, and White's tandem will be liberated. Therefore, I cannot tarry:

1...g4!

The main idea of this move is not so much to threaten ... $\mathbb{R}g5$, but to transfer

the bishop via g5 to f4, where it will attack the knight and force it to even greater passivity. White doesn't have much of a choice:

**2. $\mathbb{B}c2$ $\mathbb{R}g5$ 3. $\mathbb{E}e2$ $\mathbb{R}f4$ 4. $\mathbb{Q}f1$ $\mathbb{B}h1$
5. $\mathbb{Q}d2$ $\mathbb{B}g1$ 6.a4**



White has managed to set up another defensive bastion and is starting to push his own passed pawns. At first, I was leaning towards 6...f5, but could not find a good response to 7.b4. Therefore, I decided to establish the f2-square for my rook.

6...g3!? 7. $\mathbb{Q}f3$ $\mathbb{R}f1$ 8. $\mathbb{Q}d2$ $\mathbb{B}a1$
9. $\mathbb{Q}b3$

Another important position has arisen. White has blocked his own passed pawn, but has set up a sturdy fortress. The knight on d2 is very passive, but it does its job – preventing my rook from penetrating into the f2-square. In such cases, you always have to consider simply eliminating the defensive piece. I

can trade the d2-knight – rather counter-intuitive, but the ideas of ...f7-f5 and ... $\mathbb{K}f1-f2$ are simply very strong.

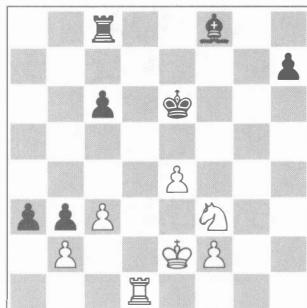
9... $\mathbb{Q}xd2!$ 10. $\mathbb{B}xd2$ f5 11. $\mathbb{K}e2$ f4

White cannot stop the mass of pawns rolling effortlessly into his camp.

12. $\mathbb{Q}b4$ $\mathbb{K}f1$ 13. $\mathbb{Q}c3$ $\mathbb{K}f2$ 14. $\mathbb{Q}d3$

White has yet again built a fortress. This time, however, tactics come to help.

Unfortunately, however, things are often not as one-sided. In many cases, you have to take big risks in order to successfully attack weaknesses and achieve good winning chances. The following game is a great example:



50. Gdanski-Anand

World Junior Ch, Baguio City 1987

At first sight, Black seems to be on the verge of winning. He can take on b2 or push the pawn to a2, where it will be about to promote. However, a closer look reveals that things are far from clear. First of all, White's rook on d1 defends the back rank and does not allow any quick promotion threat. Secondly, and most importantly, White has the extremely irritating threat of 2. $\mathbb{Q}d4+$. In such cases, it's vital to consider the non-obvious moves. Yes, 2. $\mathbb{Q}d4+$ is threatened, but one has to see that after $\mathbb{Q}xb3$, Black has the strong ... $\mathbb{K}b8$.

14... $\mathbb{f}3!$ 15. $\mathbb{K}e1$

This is capitulation, but the pawn was taboo – 15.gxf3 lost after 15...g2! and the pawn is unstoppable.

**15... $\mathbb{K}xg2$ 16. $\mathbb{K}f1$ f2 17. $\mathbb{K}e2$ $\mathbb{K}g1$
18.b4 $\mathbb{K}b6$ 19.b5 $\mathbb{K}c5$ 0-1**

White started with the g2-weakness, and simply could not get rid of it until the end of the game!

1...a2! 2. $\mathbb{Q}d4+$ $\mathbb{K}f7$ 3. $\mathbb{K}a1$



White cannot take the b3-pawn: 3. $\mathbb{Q}xb3$ $\mathbb{K}b8$ 4. $\mathbb{Q}d2$ (4. $\mathbb{Q}d4$ $\mathbb{K}xb2+$ and 5... $\mathbb{K}b1$) 4... $\mathbb{K}xb2$ 5. $\mathbb{K}a1$ $\mathbb{K}h6$, winning.

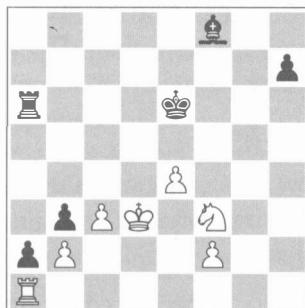
3... $\mathbb{K}b8!!$

A very subtle move. Instead of rushing with 3... $\mathbb{K}a8$, after which White would have drawn with 4. $\mathbb{Q}xb3$ $\mathbb{K}b8$ 5. $\mathbb{Q}c1$ $\mathbb{K}xb2+$ 6. $\mathbb{K}d1$, Black first provokes White into taking the c6-pawn.

4. $\mathbb{Q}xc6$ $\mathbb{K}a8$ 5. $\mathbb{K}d3$

Very tenacious defense by White. Now, the unpleasant threat of 6. $\mathbb{K}c4$ forces Black to play actively.

5...♝a6 6.♞e5+ ♕e6 7.♘f3



A critical position has arisen. White threatens to take over the initiative. At this point, many players would panic. Yet it is the mark of a strong, experienced player to maintain his cool and find strong resources. In this case, White's rook on a1 and pawn on b2 are very weak. Black uses his bishop to produce a typical albeit powerful tactical motif.

7...♝a3!

Again and again, tactics come to the aid of subtle positional maneuvering.

White cannot accept the Trojan horse because of 8...b2, but he also has no way of defending the hopelessly weak b2-pawn. However, Gdanski finds another strong defensive resource.

**8.♘d4+ ♕e5 9.♘xb3 ♕xb2
10.♖h1**

This is White's point. Now, promoting with 10...a1♛ would promise nothing after 11.♘xa1 ♕xa1 12.♖xh7 with a drawn endgame. Fortunately for Black, the b2-pawn held everything together. Now, Black can take advantage of White's weak c3-pawn.

**10...♜a3! 11.♘a1 ♜xc3+ 12.♔d2
♜xa1! 13.♘xa1 ♜a3**

Very instructive. Now, the outside passed pawn on h7 will be completely unstoppable.

**14.♔c2 h5 15.♔b2 ♜a8 16.f4+
♚xe4 17.♖e1+ ♜xf4 18.♔a1 h4
19.♖e7 ♜h8**

0-1

A very instructive game.

The main idea we can take from this game is that risks are often required in order to successfully attack weaknesses. Black was on the verge of giving away his advantage, yet a strong tactical shot (...♝a3) won the game.

Let's summarize what we have learned in this section:

A) The Rook and Knight pair can be extremely slippery. Even in positions that seem completely winning, be careful not to allow the rook and knight too much activity.

B) Usually, weaknesses can easily be attacked. The rook and knight are simply not great defenders.

Now, let's move on to defense. As I said in the introduction to this section, the rook and knight are often weak in creating positional pressure. In other words, you can often find a liberating breakthrough when your position is cramped. Let's take a look at the following position:

(see next page)



51. Feiff-Svensson

Gothenburg Open 2001

Black is a pawn up, and has an ingrained knight on c4. Furthermore, White has a very weak pawn on c5, which can only be supported by his bishop. Overall, prospects look bleak for White. Yet a closer look at the position reveals that White has great drawing chances. The following reasons account for this:

A) Black has two hidden weaknesses: a5 and d5. These weaknesses force his pieces to constantly be on guard for sudden attacks.

B) White's pawn on c5 is weak, but it is passed. Therefore, rook sorties to the 2nd rank can be very dangerous for Black.

C) White has a very solid position. His bishop, when stationed on d4, will cement White's weaknesses and provide a great foundation for White's fortress. White's king, on the other hand, will be positioned splendidly on f2, where it will protect the e2-square and prepare a possible $\mathbb{E}e1$.

Overall, Black is hard-pressed to find a viable plan.

1. $\mathbb{R}d4$ $\mathbb{R}f8$ 2. $\mathbb{K}f2$

The first goal has been achieved. White's king and bishop are now located on optimal squares, guarding White against

any possible attacks. All White has to do now is to further cement his position by transferring the king to d4. Black, on the other hand, has no way to stop White's drawing plan.

2... $f6$ 3. $\mathbb{K}e2$

Note how White accomplishes his plan without distraction.

Remember:

A strong, experienced endgame player will try to trick you in drawish positions. If you do not see any threats, continue with your plan and do not fear ghosts.

3... $\mathbb{R}e7$ 4. $\mathbb{R}d3$ $\mathbb{R}a8$ 5. $\mathbb{R}c3$

White seizes the opportunity to transfer his king to d4. Already, Black has to be careful not to allow White serious counterplay.

5... $a4$

Black could also have tried 5... $\mathbb{R}d7$. In that case, following 6. $\mathbb{K}d4$ $\mathbb{R}c6$ 7. $\mathbb{R}e1$ $\mathbb{R}b5$ 8. $\mathbb{R}e7$ $a4$ 9. $\mathbb{R}xg7!$, Black cannot make progress as 9... $a3$ fails to 10. $bxa3$ $b2$ 11. $\mathbb{R}xb2!$ and White wins!

6. $\mathbb{K}d4$ $\mathbb{R}d7$ 7. $\mathbb{R}e1$ $\mathbb{R}c6$ 8. $\mathbb{R}e6+$ $\mathbb{R}b5$ 9. $\mathbb{R}e7$ $\mathbb{R}c6$ 10. $\mathbb{R}e6+$ $\mathbb{R}b5$ 11. $\mathbb{R}e7$ $\frac{1}{2}-\frac{1}{2}$

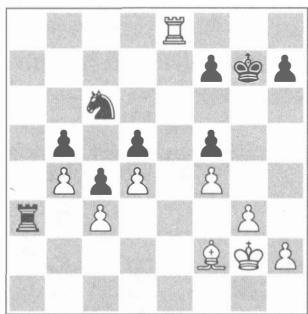
A great example of how the rook and bishop can work together very well to stop threats. We could clearly see how White's tandem simply could not generate any long-lasting threats.

In the following game, the rook and knight will create far more dangerous threats. Before we move on, however, a few words about piece placement when defending with the rook and bishop.

First of all, it's important to note that the king is often the centerpiece of the defense. Therefore, you have to spend time deciding where you're going to place it. There are a few criteria to help you decide:

- A) Your king has to be placed on a square where it is safe from attack. If you place your king on a vulnerable square, you will have to spend a lot of time parrying threats against it.
- B) Your king should be placed close to the center of action. For example, if your opponent is trying to convert an advantage on the queenside, try to find a place for your king so it can be easily transferred there.
- C) It is preferable if your king defends important squares in your camp. In the above game, White's king, when placed on f2, was defending the e2-square, thus freeing his other pieces from this task.

With the above criteria taken into account, note White's subtle thinking in the following position:



52. Riediger-Christensen

Germany tt 1998/99

White has a chronically weak pawn on c3 and an extremely tender spot on c4. If Black's knight can transfer there, White will be in deep trouble. However, for the moment, it's not clear how exactly Black can achieve this. In any case, it's clear that White's position is very unpleasant. In such cases, try to think rationally and make objective decisions. It's easy to get irritated at your opponent's constant winning attempts, but many points will be saved by full concentration, even in the toughest positions.

In this case, White's c3-pawn is under a direct attack. Since White can never fix this weakness, he will be forced to defend for many more moves. First, White defends the pawn with his bishop.

1.♗e1

As mentioned before, GM Mihai Suba once said that 'bad bishops defend good pawns'. In this case, the bishop on e1 is passive, yet it does a vital job in defending the c3-pawn, which, despite being weak, is holding White's position together. The awkward 1.♗e1?! would have been inferior due to 1...♘d8! followed by ...♗e6, ...♗g7 and ...♗g7-h5-f6-e4. Although it's a bit cumbersome, White has no good way to parry this plan.

1...♞a2+ 2.♔g1 ♔f6



An important position has arisen. By playing ... $\mathbb{Q}f6$, Black creates many possible future threats. In addition, White is in a rather unpleasant situation; almost every move creates concessions. Again, it's very easy to panic, but Riediger cold-bloodedly finds the best response.

3. $\mathbb{B}c8!$ $\mathbb{Q}e7$ 4. $\mathbb{B}b8$ $\mathbb{E}e2$ 5. $\mathbb{Q}f1$!

Here, the importance of the king position comes in. Had White's king been on h1, his bishop would have been trapped! Now, Black is the one who has to make a decision. White is threatening to take on b5, and if Black does not play carefully he might turn over the initiative!

5... $\mathbb{E}xh2$ 6. $\mathbb{Q}f2$ $\mathbb{E}h1+$ 7. $\mathbb{Q}g1!$ $\mathbb{E}h3$ 8. $\mathbb{Q}g2$ $\mathbb{E}h6$ 9. $\mathbb{E}xb5$



Now, it is White who is in the driver's seat. While Black is not in a lot of real danger, White certainly has recovered and taken over the initiative. Again, note the position of White's king. On g2, it does not permit Black's rook to penetrate into his camp.

9... $\mathbb{Q}g7$ 10. $\mathbb{Q}e3$ $\mathbb{E}d6$ 11. $\mathbb{B}b8$ $\mathbb{Q}g8$ 12. $\mathbb{B}b5$ $\mathbb{Q}f6$ 13. $\mathbb{Q}c1!$ $\mathbb{Q}e4$

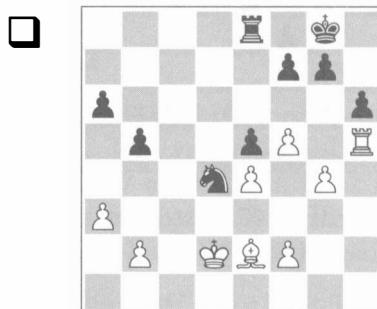
Black has finally transferred his knight to the dream square, but he has done so a bit too late! White now transfers his

bishop to a much more appetizing square, and secures the easy draw.

14. $\mathbb{B}a3$ $\mathbb{E}e6$ 15. $\mathbb{B}b4$ $\mathbb{Q}d2$ 16. $\mathbb{B}b6$ $\mathbb{E}e2+$ 17. $\mathbb{Q}g1$ $\mathbb{Q}f3+$ 18. $\mathbb{Q}f1$ $\mathbb{E}d2$ 19. $\mathbb{Q}g8+!?$ 1½-½

A great game which combines the defensive techniques we learned about. We could clearly see how Black's perfectly co-ordinated pieces could not generate an attack on the extremely weak c3-pawn. By means of cold-blooded defense, White not only parried any threats Black had but also overtook the initiative!

In our final game, White will incorporate all of the defensive techniques we have learned. Mainly, however, she will make the right decisions at critical junctures. Take a look:



53. Vasilevich-E. Atalik

Russian Championship (Women),
Dagomys 2010

White's position is rather miserable. She has weaknesses all over the board, and the d-file belongs to Black. Unlike the last game, Black has an entrenched knight on d4 – one which simply cannot be evicted. However, the position is certainly not lost. A few reasons contribute to White's defensive chances:

A) Although White has many weaknesses, none are easily accessible.

B) The king is placed in the center of the board, where it can help with the defense.

C) White has many thrusts in the position, all of which can quickly turn the tables. For example, if White can achieve f2-f4, her weaknesses will evaporate and the position will become approximately equal.

Yes, these factors combined do not guarantee White a draw, but White has many more drawing chances than it might seem.

1.f6!

First, White stops the unpleasant threat of ...f7-f6, locking in White's weaknesses. In addition, Black is faced with a dilemma: to ignore the pawn or take on f6?

1...gxsf6

Also interesting was 1... $\mathbb{H}d8$. However, White is not forced to play 2. $\mathbb{A}e3$, and after 2.fxg7! (discovered by *Rybka*) 2... $\mathbb{A}xg7$ 3. $\mathbb{A}f1$, the tempting 3... $\mathbb{A}e6+$ leads nowhere after 4. $\mathbb{A}e3$ f6 5. $\mathbb{A}e2!$ $\mathbb{A}f4$ 6. $\mathbb{H}h1$ and Black's advantage is evaporating by the move.

2. $\mathbb{H}xh6$ $\mathbb{H}c8$ 3. $\mathbb{A}d3$ $\mathbb{A}g7$ 4. $\mathbb{H}h1$ $\mathbb{A}g6$ 5. $\mathbb{A}e3$ $\mathbb{A}e6$



Black has finally started to make progress. The threat of ... $\mathbb{A}g5$ and possibly ... $\mathbb{A}f4$ forces White to think of a defensive plan. However, it's unclear what White can do in this situation. In order to construct a successful plan, it's crucial to try to incorporate all of your pieces in the defense.

In this case, White's bishop can be defending the g4-pawn, while White's rook can be occupying an open file – either the h- or the d-file. The first move that comes to mind is the immediate 6. $\mathbb{A}e2$. Unfortunately, Black then has the strong 6... $\mathbb{H}c2$, and following 7. $\mathbb{H}b1$ $\mathbb{A}f4$ White is in trouble. Therefore, White has to prepare $\mathbb{A}e2$, but how? The only way to directly parry ... $\mathbb{H}c2$ is to play 6. $\mathbb{A}d2$, but following 6... $\mathbb{A}g5$ 7. $\mathbb{A}e2$ $\mathbb{A}f4$ Black penetrates into White's position.

Another idea would be to meet ... $\mathbb{H}c2$ with $\mathbb{A}d2$ or possibly $\mathbb{A}d6$. In the latter case, White's activity would clearly guarantee him enough counterplay for a draw. Therefore, White plays:

6. $\mathbb{A}d1!$ $\mathbb{A}g5$

The alternative, 6... $\mathbb{H}d8$, would have been well met with 7. $\mathbb{H}c1!$. For example, after 7... $\mathbb{A}f4$ 8. $\mathbb{A}f1$ $\mathbb{A}g5$ 9.f3 $\mathbb{A}h4$ White has the terrific 10.a4!, when the position suddenly becomes rather double-edged.

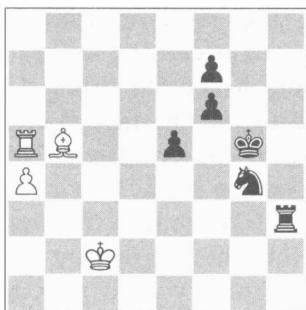
7. $\mathbb{A}e2$ $\mathbb{H}c2$ 8. $\mathbb{A}d6!$

This is the fine point of White's plan. Now, the a6-b5 pawn chain is attacked, and Black has to spend time defending the b5-pawn. In that time, White will be able to achieve a simple draw.

8... $\mathbb{H}xb2$ 9. $\mathbb{H}xa6$ $\mathbb{H}b3+$ 10. $\mathbb{A}d2$ $\mathbb{A}c5$

At first sight, it seems as though material losses are inevitable for White. However, after White takes the b5-pawn, his outside passer on a3 will guarantee him great counterplay.

11. $\mathbb{B}a5$ $\mathbb{B}b2+$
12. $\mathbb{K}e3$ $\mathbb{B}b3+$
13. $\mathbb{K}d2$ $\mathbb{Q}xe4+$
14. $\mathbb{K}c2$ $\mathbb{B}h3$
15. $\mathbb{Q}xb5$ $\mathbb{Q}xf2$
16. $a4$ $\mathbb{Q}xg4$



A paradoxical position has arisen. Black is two pawns up, and has connected passed pawns in the center. Yet White is in absolutely no trouble. The main reason is the fundamental superiority of the bishop against the knight when supporting passed pawns. White can simply push his pawn and not worry about an attack. On the other hand, Black cannot advance either of his passed pawns without making many preliminary preparations.

17. $\mathbb{B}a7$ $e4$
18. $a5$ $\mathbb{Q}e5$
19. $a6$ $\mathbb{Q}d3$
20. $\mathbb{Q}xf7$ $\mathbb{Q}b4+$
21. $\mathbb{K}d2$ $\mathbb{Q}xa6$
22. $\mathbb{Q}xa6$ $f5$
23. $\mathbb{Q}c8$ $\mathbb{B}d3+$
24. $\mathbb{Q}e2$ $\mathbb{B}d5$
25. $\mathbb{Q}e3$ $\mathbb{B}d3+$
26. $\mathbb{Q}f2$ $\mathbb{B}d2+$
27. $\mathbb{Q}e3$ $\mathbb{B}d3+$
28. $\mathbb{Q}e2$ $\mathbb{B}d5$
29. $\mathbb{Q}f8$ $\mathbb{Q}f4$

$1\frac{1}{2}-\frac{1}{2}$

Summarizing, we can clearly see a recurring pattern: the rook and bishop pair often defend weaknesses much better than a rook and knight can attack them.

So what happens if you're trying to defend or attack with a rook and knight?

First of all, don't get discouraged by the previous section! While outplaying a rook and bishop with knight and rook can often be difficult, it is certainly possible! Rule number one is to keep your pieces active. If you want to successfully attack weaknesses, you have to try to coordinate your pieces at least to some degree. Otherwise, your opponent will have an easy time defending his position. First, let's take a look at how Karpov uses the rook and knight to his advantage and successfully realizes an advantage.



It doesn't take long to see that the onus is on White to defend the position. Black's king is placed superbly in the center, while his knight, a great blocker, can leap to e5 at any moment. Yet Black is still not fully mobilized. His rook on b8 supports a possible ..b7-.b5 but is not active at the moment. In order to successfully attack the d6 weakness, Black must activate all of his pieces.

- 1... $\mathbb{B}c8!$

Another possibility was 1...b5. However, following 2.axb5 (2.b4? fails to

54. Spassky-Karpov

6th match game, Leningrad 1974

2...bxa4 3.bxa5 $\blacksquare b3+$, winning a piece) 2... $\blacksquare xb5$ 3. $\blacksquare d3$ $\blacktriangle e5$ 4. $\blacksquare c3$ $\blacksquare d5$ 5. $\blacksquare e3$ there is no clear-cut way for Black to realize his advantage. As a famous chess proverb goes, ‘the threat is more dangerous than the execution.’ In this case, by keeping the b-pawns on the board, Karpov will always have the possibility of playing ...b7-b5.

2. $\blacksquare d3$ g5

Freezing the weakness on g4. Now, following ... $\blacktriangle e5$, Black will have the possibility of winning the g4-pawn. Karpov also fixes the f4-square for his knight, which might prove to be helpful later in the game.

3. $\blacksquare b2$ b6

In his excellent book *Endgame Virtuoso Anatoly Karpov*, IM Karolyi considers this move dubious, citing 3... $\blacksquare c6$ as an improvement. After the variation 4. $\blacksquare a3?$ $\blacktriangle e5$ 5. $\blacksquare e3$ $\blacksquare c2$ (Karolyi) White is in big trouble, but a possible improvement is 4. $\blacksquare c3?$! with the idea of trading the queenside pawns. After 4...b6 5. $\blacksquare e3+$ Black is at a crossroads:

A) 5... $\blacksquare xd6$ is the most straightforward approach, but following 6.b4 axb4 7. $\blacksquare xb4+$ $\blacksquare c7$ 8.a5! White has good drawing chances.

B) 5... $\blacktriangle e5$ is well met by 6.d7!, and after 6... $\blacksquare d6$ 7. $\blacksquare f2$ $\blacksquare xd7$ 8. $\blacksquare xe5!$ fxe5 9. $\blacksquare h3$ I cannot see how Black wins this position.

C) 5... $\blacksquare d5$! seems to be the best approach. On 6. $\blacksquare d3+$, Black has 6... $\blacksquare e4$ 7. $\blacksquare d4+$ $\blacksquare e3$ 8. $\blacksquare c4$ $\blacksquare xc4$ 9.bxc4 $\blacksquare d3$, winning. However, following 6. $\blacksquare f3$ $\blacksquare xd6$ 7.b4 White again succeeds in exchanging the queenside pawns. Of course, in all three variations Black has

his share of chances, but certainly the position is far from clear. Karpov’s move, however, does not really solve the problem of the b3-b4 idea.

4. $\blacksquare d4?$

White misses his opportunity and embarks on a losing approach. It was of paramount importance to achieve b3-b4 at all costs. This could have been done by means of 4. $\blacksquare c3$! (Karolyi). If Black replies with 4... $\blacksquare xc3+$, then following 5. $\blacksquare xc3$ $\blacksquare xd6$ 6.b4 axb4 7. $\blacksquare xb4+$ $\blacksquare d5$ 8.a5 White draws. However, in his book, Karolyi finds an amazing resource for Black: 6...b5!! The main idea is to keep at least one queenside pawn. White cannot avoid giving Black an outside passer. Following 7.bxa5 (7.axb5 is met by 7...a4 followed by ... $\blacksquare c7$ -b6, winning) 7...bxa4 Black has great winning chances. Karolyi’s extensive analysis proves that it is difficult for Black to win, but personally, I would love playing this position with Black!

4... $\blacksquare c6$ 5. $\blacksquare c3$!



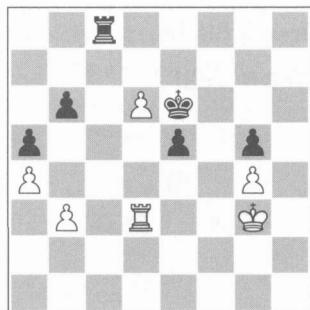
White has realized his mistake and now wants to break through with b3-b4. In cases where your opponent sacrifices material, the first thing you need to do (provided you have time) is to calculate the most straightforward variation – the

acceptance of the sacrifice. Had Karpov looked at 5... $\mathbb{B}xd6$, he would have certainly discovered that White had no time to achieve a4-a5 after 6. $\mathbb{B}xd6+\mathbb{Q}xd6$ 7.b4 axb4 8. $\mathbb{Q}xb4+\mathbb{Q}c6!$ as 9.a5 is met by 9... $\mathbb{Q}b5$, winning the pawn and the game. Therefore, Black could have safely taken the sacrifice. Instead, Karpov opted for a more subtle approach; one that certainly does not let go of the advantage, but makes the win a bit more complicated.

5... $\mathbb{B}c5$ 6. $\mathbb{Q}g2$ $\mathbb{B}c8$ 7. $\mathbb{Q}g3$ $\mathbb{Q}e5?$!

Karpov has found an interesting plan. After the forced trade, Black will win the d6-pawn, and defense will be extremely hard for White. However, as Karolyi proves, the rook endgame is far less clear than it might seem. It was still not too late to transpose into the previous plan (7... $\mathbb{B}c6$).

8. $\mathbb{Q}xe5$ fxe5



Although not everyone can play like Karpov, his technique demonstrated the ability of the rook and knight to work marvels when activated. Inexperienced players will often go for material instead of activating the knight and rook. While this approach might work in rare cases, it's of paramount importance that you mobilize your tandem to the fullest extent. It is also no less important to keep the rook and bishop at bay. If you allow the bishop to occupy an open diagonal and a rook to occupy an open file, the tables can turn quickly.

The following game is very instructive: by not allowing White's tandem to activate, Black successfully attacks the many weaknesses in White's position.

9.b4?

Spassky, faced with the rather sour prospect of defending this ending, collapses and makes a fatal error. Karolyi, in another extensive and fascinating analysis, proves that 9. $\mathbb{Q}f2!!$ (note the subtlety!) draws the game.

Does this mean Karpov's play was dubious? No. While White could have drawn with extreme precision, even the strongest grandmasters probably wouldn't have found the many computeresque moves needed in order to draw the game.

9...e4

This is what Spassky had missed. Although he can still try to defend, the thought of Karpov grinding you down in a rook ending did not seem appealing to Spassky. In agony, he tries to create counterchances, but Karpov's extraordinary technique does not allow even a sliver of counterplay.

10. $\mathbb{B}d4$ $\mathbb{Q}e5$ 11. $\mathbb{B}d1$ axb4 12. $\mathbb{B}b1$ $\mathbb{B}c3+$ 13. $\mathbb{Q}f2$ $\mathbb{B}d3$ 14.d7 $\mathbb{B}xd7$ 15. $\mathbb{B}xb4$ $\mathbb{B}d6$ 16. $\mathbb{Q}e3$ $\mathbb{B}d3+$ 17. $\mathbb{Q}e2$ $\mathbb{B}a3$ 0-1

A superb example of a rook and knight triumphing against a rook and bishop.



55. Naroditsky-Friedel

Tulsa 2008

White's position is in ruins. His pawns on c3 and a4 are beyond repair, and his bishop is closed in by his own pawns. In addition, White has the gaping hole f4 in his position. Black's knight certainly wouldn't mind sinking its teeth into the square. Yet Black's position is far from winning. First of all, White's weaknesses are defended. Second of all, White's bishop can quickly relocate to the much better c4-square. If he can achieve a5-a6, the position will suddenly become close to a draw. Therefore, Black has to play energetically and *not allow White's pieces to activate*.

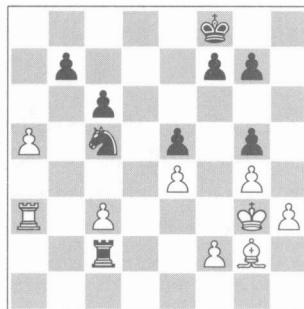
1...♝c5 2.♜a3 ♜c2

Already, step one of Black's plan has been achieved. White's rook is now completely tied down, and his bishop cannot leave his passive post due to the weakness of the e4-pawn. Now, Black needs to mobilize his king and bring it to the center of action.

3.a5 ♕f8 4.♝g2

Trying to get air for my pieces. My idea in this position was to transfer my bishop to f1 by means of ♜g2 and f2-f3, and then achieve the thrust

a5-a6. Again, it is up to Black to parry the idea.



4...♝b2!

Black finds the key to the position: he can trade rooks whenever he wants, as White's queenside weaknesses will fall in the ensuing ending.

5.f3 ♜b3 6.♜a2

After 6.♜xb3 ♜xb3, White had no way of building a fortress. For example: 7.♔f2 ♜xa5 8.♗e3 ♔e7 9.♔d3 ♔d6 10.♗f1 b5 11.♗e3 ♔c7 12.♔d2 ♔b6 followed by ...c6-c5 and ...b5-b4 with an easy win.

6...♜xc3 7.♔f2 ♜c4 8.a6!

As I mentioned, a rook and a bishop can activate very quickly. By sacrificing a pawn, that's exactly what I did here. However, the trade-off is good for Black; he will be two passed pawns up and such a big material gain will be decisive in the endgame.

**8...bxa6 9.♔f1 ♜a4 10.♜c2 ♜a5
11.♜b2**

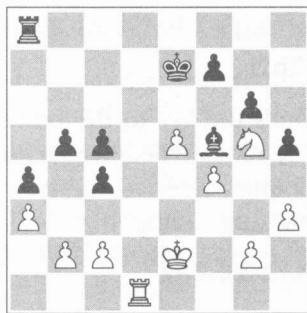
Black simply has to bring his king over to c7, and he will be free to move his knight from its awkward post. I try to achieve counterplay, but to no avail.

11... $\mathbb{Q}e7$ 12. $\mathbb{B}b8$ $\mathbb{R}a2+$ 13. $\mathbb{Q}g3$
 $\mathbb{R}a3$ 14. $\mathbb{Q}g2$ a5 15. $\mathbb{R}a8$ f6
16. $\mathbb{R}a7+$ $\mathbb{Q}d6$ 17. $\mathbb{R}xg7$ $\mathbb{R}c3$ 18. $\mathbb{R}f7$
 $\mathbb{Q}d7$ 19. $\mathbb{R}a6$ a4 20. $\mathbb{R}c8$ $\mathbb{Q}b6$

21. $\mathbb{R}f5$ a3 22. $\mathbb{R}xf6+$ $\mathbb{Q}c5$ 23. $\mathbb{R}f7$
 $\mathbb{Q}c4$ 24. $\mathbb{R}a7$ $\mathbb{R}c2+$ 25. $\mathbb{Q}g3$ $\mathbb{Q}e3!$
26.f4 $\mathbb{Q}f1+$ 27. $\mathbb{Q}f3$ gxf4 0-1

White cannot avoid mate on h2.

In this instructive game, we could see how useless a passive rook and bishop tandem can be against a fully mobilized, active rook and knight. Unfortunately, you often don't get a chance to fully restrain your opponent's tandem. In such cases, you have to be very careful. First of all, many tactical tricks can arise, and in order not to fall for them, you have to spend time calculating. Take a look at the following game:



56. Nijboer-Kritz

European Championship, Istanbul 2003

Black's mobilized bishop in conjunction with his pawn mass on the queen-side looks rather intimidating. Black's rook is supporting a possible ...a4-a3 in the future. In such positions, it's crucial to retain your concentration and not collapse under pressure. Yes, Black does have an initiative, but in order to defend against it, you need to continue calculating variations. Nijboer, rattled by Black's sudden initiative, played:

1. $\mathbb{B}d5?$

At first sight, this move looks rather natural. Yet a closer look reveals that Black has an impressive tactical shot; one which highlights the potential of his position.

1...c3!

Suddenly, everything comes crashing down. The position of the rook on a8 now makes perfect sense; White cannot stop Black from creating a deadly passed pawn along the a-file. Yet a question arises: '*Could White have stopped this threat?*' Certainly, the answer is yes. After 1.c3! $\mathbb{Q}d3+$ 2. $\mathbb{Q}e3$ b4! (Wedberg) we reach an intriguing situation:



Analysis diagram

Black is threatening to create two weaknesses in White's camp by means of 3...bxa3 and 3...bcx3. Black will then infiltrate into b3 or b2, creating havoc in White's position. In order to defend, White needs to be cold-blooded and perform rational calculations. As I mentioned before, the first thing you should

consider after a sacrifice is accepting it. Following 3.cxb4 cxb4 4.axb4 $\mathbb{B}b8$, Black again creates rather dangerous threats. However, this time, Black cannot create a passed pawn.

Following 5. $\mathbb{B}d2$ $\mathbb{B}xb4$ 6. $\mathbb{Q}d4$ Black's advantage is purely symbolic.

Remember:

Do not fear ghosts. In dynamic endings where your opponent has an active rook and bishop, you cannot afford to waste time on passive, unnecessary defense.

2.bxc3?!

White continues to play inaccurately. 2. $\mathbb{B}xc5$ was called for. After 2...b4! (Wedberg) 3. $\mathbb{B}c7+$ $\mathbb{Q}e8$ 4. $\mathbb{B}c4$ $\mathbb{B}b8$ 5.bxc3 b3 6.cxb3 axb3 7. $\mathbb{Q}f3$ b2 8. $\mathbb{Q}d2$ White still has drawing chances.

**2...b4 3.cxb4 cxb4 4. $\mathbb{B}c5$ bxa3
5. $\mathbb{B}c7+$ $\mathbb{Q}d7$ 6. $\mathbb{B}c3$ $\mathbb{B}c8!$**

A picturesque finale. In a flurry of activity, Black's pieces completely triumph over White's uncoordinated and useless forces.

**7. $\mathbb{Q}d2$ $\mathbb{B}xc3$ 8. $\mathbb{B}xc3$ h4 9. $\mathbb{Q}f3$ $\mathbb{Q}c6$
10. $\mathbb{Q}xh4$ $\mathbb{Q}e4$ 11.g4 g5! 12.fxg5
 $\mathbb{Q}e6$ 13. $\mathbb{Q}f5$ $\mathbb{Q}xf5$ 14.gxf5+ $\mathbb{Q}xf5$
15.h4 $\mathbb{Q}g6$ 0-1**

The main problem for White was that he simply could not restrain the immense activity of Black's tandem coupled with his dangerous pawn armada. Nijboer quickly lost the thread of the game and allowed Black's pieces to dominate the board. If you can manage to restrict the rook and bishop, you will have a much easier time converting your advantage.

Taking the above into account, consider the following endgame masterpiece:



57. Karpov-Kramnik

Vienna 1996

Black's weak pawns on the kingside guarantee White a long-lasting advantage. However, Black's rook prevents White's knight from moving to a more active post on f5. In addition, a bishop on b6 would not be too bad. Let's try to reconstruct Karpov's train of thought:

'My opponent's pieces are rather active, but his pawn structure is very weak. I really want to play $\mathbb{E}e7$, but my opponent has the annoying ... $\mathbb{Q}d1+$. Therefore, I can create a hole on g2 for my king. 1.g3 looks like a good way to achieve this. I not only vacate the g2-square for my king, but also I contain the c7-bishop.'

1.g3!

Already, White has killed two birds with one stone, and threatens both $\mathbb{E}e7$ and $\mathbb{Q}h4-f5$. Note that in one move, White has completely changed the flow of the game. If before White had to think of a way to achieve his plans, it is now Black who has to think of a way to defend.

1... $\mathbb{Q}d7$ 2. $\mathbb{E}e2$

Karpov shows his usual patience and methodical technique. Instead of the

rash 2. $\mathbb{Q}h4$, Karpov first stops any possible ... $\mathbb{R}d2$ sorties. One might argue that ... $\mathbb{R}d2$ wasn't dangerous after $\mathbb{Q}h4$, but why calculate these lines if you can easily stop ... $\mathbb{R}d2$? This argument alone can help you make decisions. If you are unsure whether to go for a dynamic approach or a more patient one, ask yourself, '*Do I have time to further improve my position?*' Unless there is some mitigating factor that forces you to take action, you can usually *take your time* and improve your position to the fullest extent.

2... $\mathbb{Q}g7$ 3. $\mathbb{Q}h4$

Now White has absolutely nothing to worry about.

3... $\mathbb{R}d5$

Instead, GM Ftacnik (*ChessBase*) recommends 3... $\mathbb{Q}e5$ as an improvement. However, in such positions, one move usually cannot change the flow of the game. Following 4. $\mathbb{Q}g2$, White can evict the bishop at any moment with f2-f4 or possibly $\mathbb{Q}f3$.

4. $\mathbb{R}e7!$ $\mathbb{R}c5$ 5. $\mathbb{R}d7$

This forces Black's rook to take a rather awkward post. Again, note Karpov's patience. As soon as Black's rook leaves the 7th rank, Karpov pounces on his opportunity.

5... $b5?!$

Both Karpov and Ftacnik seem to be of the opinion that this is an error. Let's take a look at their suggestions:

A) 5...a5 (Karpov) stops the unpleasant b2-b4 idea but makes Black's position even more fragile. Following 6. $\mathbb{Q}g2$ b5, Karpov recommends 7. $\mathbb{Q}f3$,

but Black has 7...f5!, and after 8. $\mathbb{Q}g2$ $\mathbb{Q}f6$ Black gets too active. Instead, White can play 6. f4!, when he should eventually take advantage of Black's weaknesses.

B) 5... $\mathbb{Q}f8$ (Ftacnik). Black's idea is prosaic yet effective: he is 'threatening' to evict White's rook from its comfortable position by means of 6... $\mathbb{Q}e8$. However, following Ftacnik's 6. b4! $\mathbb{R}c1+$ 7. $\mathbb{Q}g2$ $\mathbb{Q}e8$ 8. $\mathbb{R}d3$ the threat of 9. $\mathbb{Q}f5$ is practically unstoppable. Anyhow, it's pretty clear that Black has no way to change the course of the game. Kramnik's move, however, allows Karpov to even further restrict Black's position.



6. b4! $\mathbb{R}c2?!$

A major inaccuracy which allows White to gain an almost decisive advantage. Black had to try to repel White's rook from the 7th rank by means of 6... $\mathbb{R}c1+$ 7. $\mathbb{Q}g2$ $\mathbb{Q}f8$. Yes, after 8. $\mathbb{Q}f5$ White still has a clear advantage, but at least Black can still try for activity. Now, all of his pieces will be forced into passivity.

7. $\mathbb{Q}f5+$ $\mathbb{Q}g6$ 8. $\mathbb{Q}e3$ $\mathbb{R}c1+$ 9. $\mathbb{Q}g2$ $\mathbb{Q}e5$ 10. $\mathbb{R}a7$

Karpov continues to play accurately and does not give Kramnik any counter-

chances. Now, the attempt to transpose into a rook ending leads nowhere, as 10... $\mathbb{Q}d4$ 11. $\mathbb{B}xa6$ $\mathbb{Q}xe3$ 12. $fxe3$ $\mathbb{B}c2+$ 13. $\mathbb{Q}h3!$ wins for White.

10... $\mathbb{B}c6$ 11. $\mathbb{Q}d5$ $\mathbb{Q}d6$ 12. $a3!$

These moves are what separate Karpov from everyone else. Instead of going in for the immediate kill, he realizes that there is no hurry and hammers in the loose nails first. Now, his knight will be free to move.

12... $\mathbb{Q}f5$ 13. $\mathbb{Q}e3+$ $\mathbb{Q}g6$ 14. $\mathbb{Q}f3$ $\mathbb{Q}e5$ 15. $\mathbb{Q}d5$ $\mathbb{Q}g7$ 16. $\mathbb{Q}e7$

This marks the beginning of the end. With Black's king restricted and out of good moves, White can push his own king into Black's camp.

16... $\mathbb{B}c3+$ 17. $\mathbb{Q}g4$ $\mathbb{B}xa3$ 18. $f4$ $\mathbb{Q}c3$ 19. $\mathbb{Q}h5!$



A very notable position has arisen. Black's pieces are hopelessly cut off on the queenside, and his king is facing a rather intimidating army of white forces. Kramnik puts up formidable resistance, but winning a better ending for Karpov is like solving a tactical combination for Tal – he does not relinquish his grip.

19... $\mathbb{Q}xb4$ 20. $\mathbb{Q}f5+$ $\mathbb{Q}g8$ 21. $\mathbb{B}a8+$ $\mathbb{Q}h7$

21... $\mathbb{Q}f8$ also loses: 22. $\mathbb{Q}xh6+$ $\mathbb{Q}g7$ 23. $\mathbb{B}a7$ $\mathbb{Q}h8$ 24. $\mathbb{Q}xf7+$ $\mathbb{Q}g8$ 25. $\mathbb{Q}g6$ (Ftacnik) and Black has no defense.

**22. $\mathbb{B}a7$ $\mathbb{Q}g8$ 23. $\mathbb{Q}xh6+$ $\mathbb{Q}f8$
24. $\mathbb{B}xf7+$ $\mathbb{Q}e8$ 25. $\mathbb{Q}g6$ $\mathbb{Q}c3$
26. $\mathbb{Q}f5$ $b4$ 27. $\mathbb{B}b7$ $\mathbb{B}a2$**

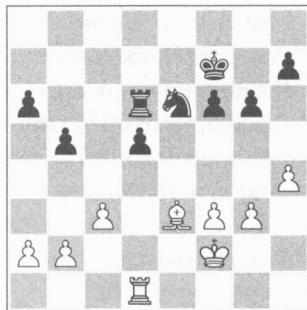
Kramnik is still trying to create counterplay, but to no avail. Also losing was 27... $b3$ 28. $\mathbb{Q}d6+$ $\mathbb{Q}d8$ 29. $\mathbb{Q}f5$ followed by $\mathbb{Q}e6$ with mate.

**28. $h4$ $a5$ 29. $h5$ $a4$ 30. $h6$ $\mathbb{B}h2$
31. $h7$ $\mathbb{Q}d8$ 32. $\mathbb{Q}h4$ $f5$ 33. $\mathbb{B}xb4!$
 $\mathbb{B}h3$ 34. $\mathbb{B}xa4$ $\mathbb{B}xg3+$ 35. $\mathbb{Q}xf5$ 1-0**

One has to give credit to Kramnik for defending brilliantly; not everyone could have survived move than 30 moves in such a position against Karpov.

Now, on to defense. ‘I’ve lost so many games trying to defend against a rook and a bishop!’, I hear you say. It is often very tough to defend against a perfectly coordinated rook and bishop tandem. Yet it is certainly possible, and knowing defensive techniques can save you many points. Defending with a passive rook and knight can be extremely frustrating, but it’s important to persevere and try to think of the correct move in every position.

We will now take a look at a game which we have already examined in Chapter 2. Here, however, we will take a look at an earlier stage of the game, in which Black managed to defend against a perfectly coordinated rook + bishop tandem.



58. Naroditsky-Nip

San Francisco 2007

White is clearly better. Black's weak pawn on d5 and the superiority of the bishop against the knight are clearly visible. Honestly, I already smelled a rather easy win. By achieving a2-a4, I would slowly attack my opponent's weaknesses until progress would be made. Unfortunately, things are far from simple. First of all, Black's weaknesses are under control. The d5-pawn is defended by his rook, and the a6/b5 pawn chain cannot be easily attacked. In addition, if White's rook leaves the d-file, Black can play the liberating ...d5-d4.

1...♜d7

The first step in a successful defense is almost always the neutralization of your opponent's plans. Here, Black prepares ...♝b7 as an antidote to the a2-a4 idea.

2.♜a1 ♜b7

Instead, the rash 2...d4? would have been met by 3.cxd4, when ...♝xd4 loses a piece to 4.♞d1.

3.♞d1 ♜d7 4.g4

I continue to improve my position and grab space along the way. Many players would get fed up with passive defense and play something like ...f6-f5 here. It

is the mark of strong, experienced players to defend with patience and resourcefulness.

4...♝d6 5.h5 g5!

Black makes the right decision. The idea of f3-f4 is simply too far-fetched for White, while the f4-square might prove very useful for Black's knight. Had Black allowed me to open a second front along the h-file, life would have been much harder for him.

6.♝g3 h6 7.f4!?

I saw no other way to play for a win. However, Black's rock-solid position does not allow me to penetrate.

7...♜d7 8.fxg5

Black is now faced with a dilemma. He can take a total of three ways, and all of them seem viable. Let's take a look:

A) 8...♝xg5. Although the knight is activated, Black simply should not create two more weaknesses. Following 9.♞f1 and ♜d4 Black will be in trouble.

B) 8...hxg5 is certainly an option. Black's idea is to keep the f-file closed. The h-pawn cannot be supported and will not go anywhere. However, the main drawback is the weakness of the f6-pawn. Following 9.♞f1 ♜g7 10.♞f2 Black is in a rather unpleasant situation.

8...fxg5!

The best recapture. Black does not create any additional weaknesses, and correctly judges that I cannot create any play along the f-file. With the game rapidly nearing a draw, I try to drastically change the character of the position.

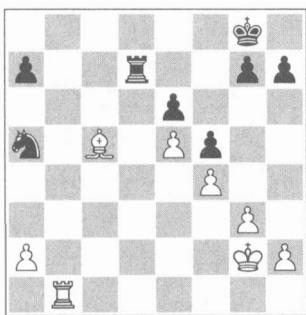
9.♞d4 ♜xd4!

Black realizes that the rook ending will be easily defensible and trades his knight. My idea was to somehow pene-

trate to the 8th rank, but my dreams were all skillfully parried. (*The rest of the game, with comments, is given in Chapter 2*)

Clearly, in this game, we could see that Black's patience and careful defense was rewarded. Yes, you will still lose games if you defend well, but if you persevere and try hard to draw every time you have a bad ending, you will gain many more points.

In the next game, Black will show a strong desire to save the game and will demonstrate patient and accurate defense:



59. Cherepkov-Aronin

USSR Championship, Leningrad 1957

Black's rather cramped position and the weak d6-square guarantee White a long-lasting advantage. The materialistic 1... $\mathbb{Q}d2+$ fails to 2. $\mathbb{Q}h3$ $\mathbb{Q}xa2$ 3. $\mathbb{Q}b8+$ $\mathbb{Q}f7$ 4. $\mathbb{Q}f8+$ $\mathbb{Q}g6$ 5. $\mathbb{Q}e8$ and 5... $\mathbb{Q}f7$ is met by 6. $\mathbb{Q}e7+$, winning the crucial e6-pawn. Therefore, Black has to settle for a more restrained defensive approach.

Let's try to understand what Black's main goals are. First of all, 1. $\mathbb{Q}d6$ is a possible threat, as 1... $\mathbb{Q}b7$ is met by 2. $\mathbb{Q}b8$. The d6-square can be defended by 1... $\mathbb{Q}c4$, but obviously this move is extremely awkward and can be met by the simple 2. $\mathbb{Q}b4$. Black can also try a more indirect approach: after 1. $\mathbb{Q}d6$, White severely restricts Black's rook. Therefore, if Black can free his rook from the bishop's line of fire, Black will have much more breathing room for his pieces.

1... $\mathbb{Q}c7!$ 2. $\mathbb{Q}b8+$ $\mathbb{Q}f7$ 3. $\mathbb{Q}d6$ $\mathbb{Q}c2+$

Black doesn't fear ghosts. Instead of the awkward 3... $\mathbb{Q}d7$, he activates his pieces, not afraid of losing the e6-pawn.

4. $\mathbb{Q}f3?$!

This makes Black's life much easier. In order to play for a win, White had to play 4. $\mathbb{Q}h3!$. In this case, Black is at a crossroads:

A) 4... $\mathbb{Q}c6$ is a direct attempt to set up an attack, but it unfortunately backfires after 5. $\mathbb{Q}b7+$ $\mathbb{Q}g6$ (5... $\mathbb{Q}g8$ 6. $\mathbb{Q}c7$) 6. $\mathbb{Q}f8!$ $\mathbb{Q}d4$ 7. $\mathbb{Q}xg7+$ and wins.

B) 4... $\mathbb{Q}xa2!$? seems to fail after 5. $\mathbb{Q}f8+$ $\mathbb{Q}g6$ 6. $\mathbb{Q}e8$, but Black has the incredible resource 6... $\mathbb{Q}c6!!$, and 7. $\mathbb{Q}xe6+$ loses after ... $\mathbb{Q}f7$. White should therefore settle for 7. $\mathbb{Q}c5$ with a drawish position.

C) 4... $h6$! is even better. Black has the dangerous idea 5... $g5$, forcing White to make concessions. After 5.a3 $g5$ 6.fxg5 $hxg5$ 7. $\mathbb{Q}f8+$ $\mathbb{Q}g7$ 8. $\mathbb{Q}e8$ $\mathbb{Q}c6!$ Black has a very good position. Therefore, we can see that Black still had no problems after $\mathbb{Q}h3$. Now, however, achieving a draw will be much easier.

4... $\mathbb{Q}c6$ 5. $\mathbb{Q}b7+$ $\mathbb{Q}g8$

5... $\mathbb{Q}g6$ was met by 6. $\mathbb{Q}f8$, winning the g7-pawn.

6. $\mathbb{B}c7 \mathbb{Q}d4+$

Before transforming into a bishop v. knight ending, you always have to double-check the resulting position. In this case, White's king seems rather close to the weak a7-pawn, but concrete calculation shows that Black has absolutely nothing to fear. Note that without ... $\mathbb{Q}d4+$, Black's position would have been in dire straits. '*Isn't it purely by chance, though, that Black had this resource?*' At first, ... $\mathbb{Q}d4+$ might seem like a coincidental 'lucky' idea. However, since Black made no mistakes in his defense, there is no way that White could have played prosaically and gained a decisive advantage. If you take a look at successful defenses in such positions, you will see that in almost all of the cases, the defender has a great drawing resource at a culminating point.

7. $\mathbb{Q}e3 \mathbb{B}xc7 8. \mathbb{Q}xc7 \mathbb{Q}c2+!$

This is the key. After 9. $\mathbb{Q}d2 \mathbb{Q}b4$ 10. a3 $\mathbb{Q}d5$, Black has a solid position and will build a fortress after ... $\mathbb{Q}f7$ -e8-d7-c6. Therefore, White has to go for activity.

9. $\mathbb{Q}d3 \mathbb{Q}b4+$ 10. $\mathbb{Q}c4 \mathbb{Q}xa2$ 11. $\mathbb{Q}a5!$

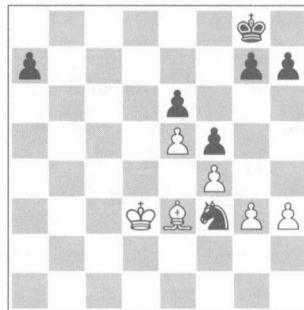
Trying to trap the knight, which is placed rather awkwardly on a2. Unfortunately for White, Black has a rather unexpected rendezvous point: f3!

11... $\mathbb{Q}c1$ 12. $\mathbb{Q}d2$

12. $\mathbb{Q}d4??$ loses to 12... $\mathbb{Q}b3+$, while 12. $\mathbb{Q}e1!?$ $\mathbb{Q}e2$ 13. $\mathbb{Q}f2$ is met by the

sudden 13...g5!, and the position after 14. $\mathbb{Q}e3$ $\mathbb{Q}xf4$ 15. $\mathbb{Q}xf4$ $\mathbb{Q}f7$ 16. $\mathbb{Q}d3$ $\mathbb{Q}xf4+!$ 17. $\mathbb{Q}xf4$ $\mathbb{Q}g6$ cannot be won(!). Again, notice that White reaches the brink of victory, but a great resource allows Black to escape.

12... $\mathbb{Q}e2$ 13. $\mathbb{Q}d3$ $\mathbb{Q}g1$ 14. $\mathbb{Q}e3$ $\mathbb{Q}f3$ 15. h3



A sad necessity. Otherwise, White could have won Black's knight after $\mathbb{Q}e2$.

15...g5!

This is the drawing idea. White cannot take on g5 because of the weakness of the e5-pawn, but following ...g5-g4 the position will be dead drawn. White decides to acknowledge Black's great defense and goes for the bail-out.

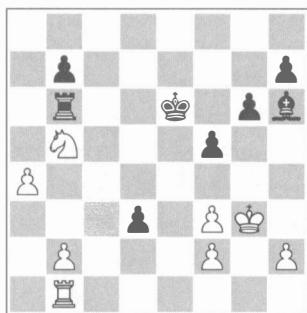
16. $\mathbb{Q}xa7$ $\mathbb{Q}xf4$ 17. $\mathbb{Q}xf4$ $\mathbb{Q}h4$ 18. $\mathbb{Q}f2$ $\mathbb{Q}g6$ 19. $\mathbb{Q}g3$ $\mathbb{Q}f7$ 20. $\mathbb{Q}c4$ $\mathbb{Q}e7$ 21. $\mathbb{Q}b5$ $\mathbb{Q}d7$ 22. $\mathbb{Q}c5$ $h5$ 23. $\mathbb{Q}b5$ $\mathbb{Q}e7$ 24. $\mathbb{Q}e1$ $\mathbb{Q}d5$ 25. $\mathbb{Q}d2$ ½-½

Black is precise until the very end. A great defensive display, highlighting the importance of patient and careful defense coupled with precise calculation.

If one had looked at this game quickly, Black's ideas and resources might have seemed very hard to find and 'accessible' only to strong, experienced defenders. Yet this is completely false. If you are determined to save a game, you have to forget about the objective evaluation and the difficulty of the defense. You simply have to

think clearly. At critical junctures, you can calculate variations to help your decisions. In Aronin's case, all Black had to do before trading rooks was to calculate a few variations in the ensuing ending and check if the knight gets out. Many players would have acquiesced to a more passive and inferior defense.

Another important concept in the defense of RN v. RB endings is **permanent v. temporary activity**. Understanding this concept will enormously help with making decisions at turning points in the game. Sometimes, when you are presented with an opportunity to mobilize your passive forces, it's very tempting to go for it without much thought. Yet the activity you achieve can often be temporary. For example, a knight on d4 and a rook on c4 which are very active can be immediately sent into passivity with a simple move like ♘d3. Take a look at the following example:



60. Naroditsky-Ayers

Los Angeles 2005

White's position is in ruins. His kingside pawn structure is devastated, and Black's pawn is itching to reach the first rank. In addition, White's king is completely cut off from the main front. White's b5-knight, however, holds his position together. Not only does it not allow Black's rook to access d6, it can also jump to c3 in case Black's pawn will threaten to promote. Therefore, Black's winning plan is not exactly clear-cut. White's first step in achieving a draw is to activate his king. A king on f3 or e3 would be *permanently active*, as it cannot be easily evicted. The faster White can transfer his king to the center, the less dangerous the d3-pawn becomes.

1.f4!

In addition to opening a route for White's king, the h6-bishop is blocked. Black, however, does not lose his calm and activates his own king.

1...♘d5 2.♔f3 ♘c4!

I had missed this strong idea. Black provokes White into playing b2-b3+, severely weakening squares c3 and a3.

3.b3+?

I was under the impression that this was the only way I could defend against ...♘b3. However, following 3.♗d1! White protects himself against all threats. If Black tries 3...♗e6, White can defend with 4.♗c1+. Therefore, it's completely unclear how Black can make progress.

3...♗b4

Now, White's position is critical. The c3- and a3-squares are gaping holes, and the whole kingside complex is weaker than ever. Black masterfully makes use of his advantage.

4.♗e3 d2! 5.♗xd2 ♗xf4+ 6.♗c2 ♗c6+ 7.♗b2?

This loses immediately, but White was completely lost anyway.

7...♕e5+

0-1

Mastering Complex Endgames

The time has come to draw some final conclusions about defending with a rook and knight. Let's summarize:

A) Your rook and knight must remain active at all costs. A passive rook and knight are not the best defenders. Remember *Permanent v. Temporary Activity*.

B) Keep your cold-bloodedness. Often, threats can be created that seem deadly, but the rook and knight can make miracles.

C) Be careful! This tip is great in all kinds of endings, but in this type of ending, you have to be extra aware in order to parry every single threat. In Naroditsky-Nip, Black patiently defended against all threats until I had to concede a draw.

Now, try your hand at the following exercises. As usual, they are very challenging, so take your time and don't be worried if you make mistakes.



3.5 Krum Georgiev-Poley

Thessaloniki Open 2010

White's connected central passers look extremely dangerous. Can you find a good way to stop them? *Hint:* Concrete calculation is essential!



3.6 Berkes-Acs

György Marx Memorial, Budapest 2009

Black's central pawn mass looks rather intimidating. Is there a way White can create a path for his king and destroy the pawn armada?



3.7 Naroditsky-Zhong

San Mateo 2007

Black seems to be on the verge of victory. Following ... $\mathbb{R}c1+$ the passed pawn on e4 will be unstoppable. Can you find the best defense?

Chapter 4

Queen Endgames

Here we go again – the vast, endless debate about queen endgames. ‘*Is queen and f-pawn v. queen winning? How about queen and g-pawn? And, with best play, is queen and 4 pawns v. queen and 3 pawns winning?*’

All of these questions can only be answered by scrutinizing hundreds of games and analyzing many positions for days or even months at a time. In this book, however, I will attempt to take a more practical approach to the analysis of queen endgames. First of all, (and be honest!), how many of you have ever had queen and pawn v. queen endgames? Out of the approximately 700 tournament games that I have played so far, I have had one such endgame. By taking any endgame manual and reading through the section devoted to queen endgames, you will familiarize yourself with the common theoretical positions. As you know, this book is more about *playable* endgames than theoretical endgames.

Let’s first talk about the general characteristics of these endgames.

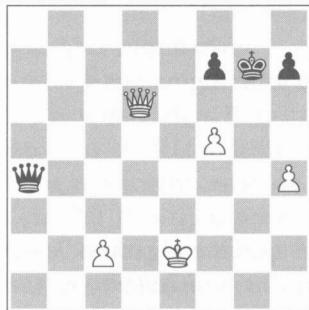
First of all, the queen is a piece that needs activity in order to flourish. For example, a queen locked on the 8th rank, trying to defend a weak pawn, is simply useless and even a major liability. On the other hand, a centralized, supported queen can often dominate the game.

Another interesting characteristic of queens is that they are very weak versus passed pawns. The main problem is that a queen is simply not a good blockader, and a supported passer is usually a major advantage in queen endgames.

The third important characteristic of queens is their ‘fighting spirit’. While they are often hopeless in battles against a passed pawn, they can often force perpetual check or organize a sudden and often deadly counterattack on the opponent’s king. This ‘fighting spirit’ is precisely why so many won positions are drawn or even lost in these types of endings.

As always, we start with attack. In queen endings, as in other endings, there are material and positional advantages. Let us begin with material advantages. Alright, I have good news and bad news. The good news is that if your king is safe, converting a material advantage is often not a hard task. However, the bad news is that an exposed king can often spell serious trouble, even with a substantial material advantage. It is the mark of experienced endgame players to be able to both safeguard their king and find time to make progress in the realization of their advantage.

Take a look at the following example:



61. Naroditsky-Zhurbinsky

Orlando 2004

White is a pawn up, but both his h4- and c2-pawns are currently under attack. In addition, Black's queen has many unpleasant checks, including on e4, winning the f5-pawn. Therefore, White has to find a way to defend against all threats and protect his pawns at the same time. First, I decide to improve the position of my queen.

1. $\mathbb{Q}e5+$ $\mathbb{Q}f8?$

This allows White to make serious progress. After 1... $\mathbb{Q}g8$, White simply cannot defend all of his weak pawns. We can clearly see that the position of White's king allows Black's queen to

demonstrate 'fighting spirit' and check until White loses one of his pawns. Now, achieving the draw becomes much more problematic.

2. $\mathbb{Q}c5+!$

This faces Black with serious problems. The machine recommends 2. $\mathbb{Q}h8+$, but after 2... $\mathbb{Q}e7$ 3.f6+ $\mathbb{Q}e6$ 4. $\mathbb{Q}xh7$, it turns out that White cannot escape the checks following 4... $\mathbb{Q}g4+$ 5. $\mathbb{Q}e3$ $\mathbb{Q}g1+$ 6. $\mathbb{Q}e4$ $\mathbb{Q}g4+$ 7. $\mathbb{Q}d3$ $\mathbb{Q}f3+$ 8. $\mathbb{Q}c4$ $\mathbb{Q}d5+$ 9. $\mathbb{Q}c3$ $\mathbb{Q}c6+$.

2... $\mathbb{Q}g7$ 3.c4

This is what Black had evidently missed. White sends his king to the queenside, where it will easily escape the checks. Demoralized by the sudden course of actions, Black does not find the best way to defend and quickly succumbs.

3... $\mathbb{Q}c2+$ 4. $\mathbb{Q}e3$ $\mathbb{Q}c3+$ 5. $\mathbb{Q}e4$ $\mathbb{Q}e1+$ 6. $\mathbb{Q}d5$ $\mathbb{Q}h1+$ 7. $\mathbb{Q}d6$ $\mathbb{Q}h2+??$

A bad blunder. Black's best bet was to play 7... $\mathbb{Q}xh4$. However, after 8. $\mathbb{Q}e5+$ $\mathbb{Q}g8$ (8... $\mathbb{Q}f8??$ 9. $\mathbb{Q}h8\#$) 9.f6 Black should be lost.

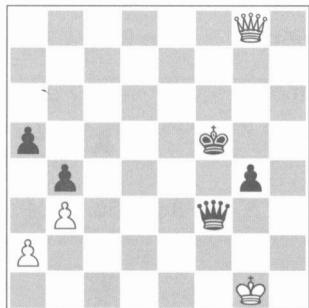
8. $\mathbb{Q}e5+$ $\mathbb{Q}xe5+$ 9. $\mathbb{Q}xe5$ h5 10.c5 1-0

Clearly, we could see the 'fighting spirit concept' in this game. With White's king naked, White could not defend his pawns. As soon as White's king was transferred to safety, Black's queen lost its 'fighting spirit' and could not hold the passed pawn. Black's blunder is not a coincidence: when trying for perpetual check, it is very easy to miss a sudden interjection.

You need to try to find a safety path for the king when your opponent is checking you. Instead of aimlessly wandering around, trying to secure a safe zone is a much more effective method.

The following game is a great example:

(see next page)



62. Sherzer-Almasi

Hungarian Team Ch, Budapest 1995

Again, Black is up a pawn, but his king will be subject to seemingly never-ending checks regardless of how he plays.

In order to be successful in such positions, Black has to think of a path for his monarch. It doesn't take long to see that the a3-square will equal freedom for Black's king. Although this might be surprising, you do not need to calculate too many variations. White simply cannot stop Black's king from traveling to a3.

It's vital not to lose patience when fighting against checks. It may take long, but do not succumb to a draw until your opponent proves that the position is completely drawn.

Now, let's see how much easier it is to realize a material advantage (especially with a passed pawn) when your monarch is protected by pawns.



63. Naroditsky

Study position 2010

So Black can safely improve his position.

1...g3! 2.Qc8+

White will barrage Black with many checks, but freedom is within sight!

2.Qe4 3.Qe6+ Qd3 4.Qc4+ Qd2 5.Qd4+ Qc2 6.Qc5+ Qb2 7.Qe5+ Qc3 8.Qe2+ 8...Qa3

Black's king is now unreachable, and White's queen is absolutely helpless against the far-advanced passer on g3.

9.Qe6 Qa1+ 10.Qg2 Qxa2+ 11.Qh3 Qh2+ 12.Qg4 g2 13.Qf3 g1Q+!?

A funny idea, but the straightforward 13...g1Q won on the spot also, as White has no checks.

14.Qe4 Qe2+ 15.Qf5 Qxe6+ 0-1

Had Black's king wandered without direction, it probably would have never found the shelter on a3.

It's vital not to lose patience when fighting against checks. It may take long, but do not succumb to a draw until your opponent proves that the position is completely drawn.

Now, let's see how much easier it is to realize a material advantage (especially with a passed pawn) when your monarch is protected by pawns.

Out of all queen endgames, this type of position will probably arise the most. White is up a passed pawn on b2, but for now it cannot advance due to the position of Black's queen on b6. White's main trump, however, is the position of his king. The monarch is in complete safety, and Black cannot give more than one check.

In such positions, all you have to do is carefully advance your passed pawn and watch out for sudden counterplay.

1.Qc3+

The first step is to establish a sturdy square for White's queen. Along the c-file it will support the passed pawn and can jump to any square on the board.

1... $\mathbb{Q}h7$ 2.b4

Step one has been achieved. White now threatens 3. $\mathbb{Q}c5$, and White's queen will not only support the passed pawn but also defend f2!

2... $\mathbb{Q}b7+$ 3. $\mathbb{Q}h2$ $\mathbb{Q}d5$

Black's only hope is to somehow organize counterplay, but the position of White's king does not allow him any activity. The ...g6-g5 break is absolutely useless and way too time-consuming.

4. $\mathbb{Q}c5$ $\mathbb{Q}f3$

After 4... $\mathbb{Q}xc5$ 5.bxc5 $\mathbb{Q}g7$ 6.c6 $\mathbb{Q}f6$ 7.c7, Black cannot stop White's pawn.

5.b5

Not fearing ghosts.

Of course, in many cases, the pawn structure in front of your king might be compromised, and the win will be very tough (if you can win at all). In the following game, the position is far less clear because of the weakness of White's king.



64. Alekhine-Reshevsky

AVRO Tournament, Amsterdam 1938

5... $\mathbb{Q}g5!?$



Passive defense was no better: 5... $\mathbb{Q}g7$ 6.b6 $\mathbb{Q}h7$ 7. $\mathbb{Q}d4!$ and Black is in Zugzwang; $\mathbb{Q}f4$ is threatening, but after 7... $\mathbb{Q}b7$ White wins with 8. $\mathbb{Q}f6$.

6. $\mathbb{Q}e3!$

This is the safest and most effective move. Black cannot trade queens, so he loses the pawn on g5 without compensation. 6.hxg5 h4 was much less clear.

6... $\mathbb{Q}b7$ 7. $\mathbb{Q}xg5$

1-0

The position is very similar to the last one. However, there is one major difference: White's pawn is on f3 now! Although to an untrained eye this difference might seem minuscule, the position of the pawn determines the result of the game. With White's pawn on f2, he could have safely moved his queen around, supporting the passed pawn. Now, Black has ... $\mathbb{Q}d2+$, when White's king will be hard-pressed to avoid perpetual check. Certainly, White still has winning chances, but objectively the position should be drawn.

1. $\mathbb{Q}a2 \mathbb{Q}g8$ 2. $a4$

So far, so good. White advances his passed pawn in hopes of restricting Black's queen.

2... $\mathbb{Q}c6$ 3. $a5 \mathbb{Q}a6$ 

This is where the trouble starts. From a6, Black's queen blocks the passed pawn *and* has access to the e2-square. White simply cannot regroup his pieces to ensure the safety of his king.

4. $g4?!$

In my opinion, this only makes Black's job easier. The best winning chance was 4. $\mathbb{Q}d2$. Actually, White's plan is rather straightforward and effective: transfer the king to a3! From there, it can be safeguarded by the queen, and any checks can be easily blocked.

However, this is much easier said than done! Let's take a look: 4... $h5$ 5. $\mathbb{Q}f2$ $\mathbb{Q}a7+$ 6. $\mathbb{Q}e2$ $\mathbb{Q}a6+$ (this is the first roadblock. How does White transfer his king?) 7. $\mathbb{Q}e3!$ $\mathbb{Q}e6+$ 8. $\mathbb{Q}d3$ $\mathbb{Q}d5+$! 9. $\mathbb{Q}c2$ $\mathbb{Q}xf3$ and although White can still try for a win, the position should be objectively drawn. All in all, White gets rather close to achieving substantial chances, but each time the weakness of the f3-pawn does not allow White to carry on with his plan. In the game, White also tried to transfer his king, but to no avail.

4... $g5$ 5. $\mathbb{Q}f2$ $\mathbb{Q}d6$ 6. $\mathbb{Q}f1$ $\mathbb{Q}a6+$ 7. $\mathbb{Q}g2$ $\mathbb{Q}g7$ 8. $\mathbb{Q}b2+$ $\mathbb{Q}g8$ 9. $\mathbb{Q}b8+$ $\mathbb{Q}g7$ 10. $\mathbb{Q}e5+$ $\mathbb{Q}g8$ 11. $\mathbb{Q}f2$ $\mathbb{Q}a7+$ 12. $\mathbb{Q}e2$ $\mathbb{Q}a6+$ 13. $\mathbb{Q}d2$ $\mathbb{Q}c4$ 14. $\mathbb{Q}f5$

14. $\mathbb{Q}b8+$ $\mathbb{Q}g7$ 15. $\mathbb{Q}b6$ might have been the best winning try, but after 15... $\mathbb{Q}f4+$ 16. $\mathbb{Q}e2$ $\mathbb{Q}xh2+$ 17. $\mathbb{Q}d3$ $\mathbb{Q}h1$ I cannot see a way for White to evade perpetual.

14. $\mathbb{Q}d4+$ 15. $\mathbb{Q}e2$ $\mathbb{Q}b2+$

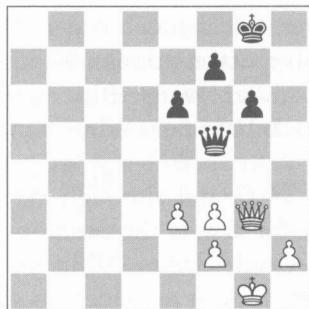
And White simply cannot avoid the checks!

16. $\mathbb{Q}d3$ $\mathbb{Q}b3+$ 17. $\mathbb{Q}e2$ $\mathbb{Q}b2+$ ½-½

Although this game highlighted the defensive potential of the queen in some situations, it certainly should not discourage you from trying to win! First of all, your opponent, in almost all cases, will not be of Reshevsky's strength. By trying to transfer your king, you can beat many opponents who will not understand the nuances of such a position and maybe give an erroneous check.

Unfortunately, you don't always have a passed pawn! As we know, the queen fares much better when you do not have the potential of creating a passer. In those cases, you often need to win positionally and by making slow progress.

Let's take a look at the following position (see next page):



65. Naroditsky

Study position 2010

White is up a pawn, but he has absolutely no prospect of creating a passed pawn. With his pawn structure ruined, he will have a hard time converting his advantage. However, this does not mean that White has no chances to win. White's main plan in this position should be slow pawn pressure. Coupled with a strong, active queen, White should be able to achieve ample winning chances.

First, White should start by mobilizing all of his pieces.

1.♔g2 ♔g7 2.♕g4! ♕b5

Because of the threat of exchanging queens, Black has to choose an awkward square for his queen. In the event of 2...♕d5, White would have had a winning pawn endgame following 3.♕d4+ ♕xd4 4.exd4 ♔f6 5.f4! ♔f3 and Black is out of good moves.

3.f4

Step one has been achieved, and it's time for White to start his pawn assault. In addition to White's dangerous plan, he also exerts strong psychological pressure on Black; often, an inexperienced player will think that such a

position is a dead draw, and this plan will come as a major cold shower.

3...♕d5+

Here the queen certainly has 'fighting spirit'. It is crucial to ensure that your opponent's queen will never achieve permanent activity and hamper your plan.

4.♔f3 ♕d3!

Taking the queen is suicide: 4...♕xf3+ 5.♔xf3 f5 6.♔g3! ♔f7 7.♔h4 ♔f6 8.f3 with 9.e4 to follow, winning.

5.e4

A committing move; if White will not make quick progress, Black might be able to establish a blockade by means of ...f7-f5 or ...e6-e5. However, without risk, there are no rewards!

5...♕d4

Again, taking the queen loses: 5...♕xf3+ 6.♔xf3 ♔f6 7.♔g4 e5 8.fxe5+ ♔xe5 9.f3.

You should always calculate the ensuing pawn endings, no matter how winning they might seem.

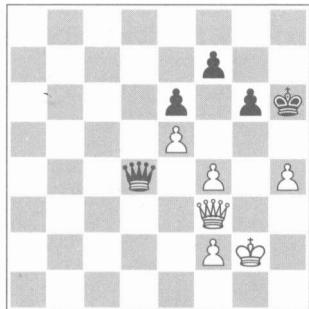
6.h4!

An important idea. White uses the h-pawn as a battering ram. If Black allows White to play h5, his position will become very dangerous.

6...♔h6!

A very important defensive move. 6...f5 was worse: 7.e5 ♕d7 (7...♔h6 8.♕g3 ♕e4+ 9.♔h2 with ♕g5+ to follow) 8.h5! with a clear advantage.

7.e5!



It's clear that White has made big progress. Black's dark squares are very weak, and White wants to play $\mathbb{W}g4-g5+$ with a clear advantage. Note that by playing slowly, steadily, and logically, White has made major inroads into Black's position. However, Black is by no means lost. He tries to destroy White's monopoly on the dark squares:

7...f6!

So despite a weak and compromised pawn structure and no passed pawn, White can still pressure Black's king. The h-pawn was used as a battering ram to shatter the king's defenses. Of course, you will not always win these positions, but by patient pressure and careful improvement of your pieces, you will achieve the best chances.

Another method of converting material advantages is a direct attack on the king. Often, your king will be much better placed than your opponent's and you can safely attack. The following game is a fantastic illustration:



66. Kholmov-Geller

USSR Championship, Kiev 1954

The more pawns are traded, the higher Black's drawing chances.

8. $\mathbb{W}g3$

8. $\mathbb{W}e3$ was very tempting, but after 8... $\mathbb{W}xe3!$ 9. $fxe3$ $fxe5$ 10. $fxe5$ $\mathbb{Q}h5$ 11. $\mathbb{Q}h3$ $g5!$ 12. $hxg5$ $\mathbb{Q}xg5$ it is a draw.

8...f5 9. $\mathbb{W}g5+$ $\mathbb{Q}h7$ 10. $\mathbb{W}e7+$ $\mathbb{Q}h6$ 11. $\mathbb{W}f6!$

An important resource which brings White even closer to victory. Now, $\mathbb{W}h8\#$ is threatened, forcing Black to compromise his position.

11... $\mathbb{W}d5+$ 12. $f3$ $\mathbb{Q}h7$ 13. $\mathbb{W}f7+$ $\mathbb{Q}h8$

On 13... $\mathbb{Q}h6$, White wins with 14. $\mathbb{W}g8$.

14. $h5!$ $gxh5$ 15. $\mathbb{W}xh5+$ $\mathbb{Q}g8$ 16. $\mathbb{Q}g3$ $\mathbb{W}d2$ 17. $\mathbb{W}g6+$ $\mathbb{Q}h8$ 18. $\mathbb{W}h6+$

1-0

White is a pawn up and Black's pawns are both isolated and weak. In addition, *White's king is much safer than Black's*, allowing him to conduct an almost risk-free attack on Black's king.

1. $g4 \mathbb{W}d2$

On 1... $e4$, Dvoretsky gives 2. $\mathbb{Q}g3$ $e3$ 3. $\mathbb{W}h5+$ $\mathbb{Q}g8$ 4. $\mathbb{W}e8+$ $\mathbb{Q}h7$ 5. $\mathbb{W}xe3$ and wins.

2. $\mathbb{Q}g3$ $\mathbb{W}c3+$ 3. $\mathbb{Q}h4$ $\mathbb{W}d4$ 4. $\mathbb{W}f5+$ $g6$ 5. $\mathbb{W}f7+$ $\mathbb{Q}h6$ 6. $\mathbb{W}f16$

Unfortunately, White cannot play 6.g5# because of the pin! However, White is still completely winning.

6... $\mathbb{Q}h7$ 7. $\mathbb{Q}g5$ $\mathbb{W}d2+$ 8.f4!

The last finesse. Black is left without chances.

Finally, we have one more big question: ‘What if *my opponent* has a passed pawn?’ A material advantage may not be effective against a dangerous passed pawn. Yes, passed pawns may often be very tough to stop, especially in a queen v. queen ending. This certainly does not mean, however, that all passed pawns are invincible. If you can manage to restrain the passed pawn, your king can often come to the rescue, or you could put your material advantage to good use.

First, let’s take a look at the following endgame:



67. Onikienkoo-Podolchenko

Geller Memorial, Odessa 2007

Black’s far-advanced passer on a4 makes White’s material advantage close to unnoticeable. At first sight, the pawn seems completely unstoppable. As we know, the queen’s ‘fighting spirit’ greatly decreases when it fights a passed pawn. Yet the spirit does not decrease when attacking a lone king! In a situation such as this, the easiest thing to do is to panic – which is exactly what happened in the game. Immediately, White started to rapidly head down the primrose path.

8... $\mathbb{W}xf4$ 9. $\mathbb{W}f7+$ $\mathbb{Q}h8$ 10. $\mathbb{Q}h6$

Black resigned, as 10...f3+ loses to 11.g5.

A simple game, but one that illustrates the concept of attack very well.

1.f5+?!

This does not lose, but it makes the draw much harder to achieve. Had White retained his cool, he would have certainly found the simple yet strong 1. $\mathbb{W}d7!$, with the idea of giving perpetual check. Following 1...a3 (forced, as Black cannot move his queen) 2. $\mathbb{W}e8+!$ Black cannot avoid perpetual – on 2... $\mathbb{Q}h7$ there follows 3. $\mathbb{W}h5+$, while 2... $\mathbb{Q}h6$ is met by 3. $\mathbb{W}h8+$. This draw seems very simple and easy-to-find, but White simply could not think rationally; panic is a chess player’s worst enemy!

1... $\mathbb{Q}h7$ 2.h4?!

Even after this move, the draw is within reach. However, White still had a chance to force a draw by means of 2. $\mathbb{W}c4!$, when 2... $\mathbb{W}d6+$ is met by 3. $\mathbb{Q}c3$, and Black simply cannot make progress.

2...a3!

Black pounces on his opportunity. Now, the draw will be much harder to achieve.

3. $\mathbb{W}f7 \mathbb{W}b5+$



In this critical moment, White had to think rationally. He has a dilemma; he can either stay close to the passed a3-pawn, or stay away from it. Without calculation, White's move seems completely natural – he stays near the vital e4 pawn *and* the passer.

4. $\mathbb{Q}d2??$

Had White calculated variations, however, he would have immediately found the flaw in this move.

As you could see, no deep calculation or thinking was required to find the right way to restrain the passed pawn. Although this game can also be included in the defense section, the point of the game is to show that if you do restrain the passed pawn, you will usually have an advantage. In this case, White's pawn structure on the kingside was ruined, not allowing him to produce counterplay.

Let us now summarize what we have observed in this section:

- A) Create passed pawns when you can! Remember the concept of '**fighting spirit**'. A queen is often a very bad blockader, especially when it comes to far-advanced passers.
- B) You do not always have to have a perfect pawn structure to convert a material advantage. Isolated and weak pawns can be used as bettering rams to shatter the opponent king's defenses.
- C) Never panic when you are facing a far-advanced passer. If you calculate calmly and manage to restrain the pawn, you can often use your material advantage to produce an attack or pressure on the other side of the board.
- D) Don't forget that you can always switch to attack mode! In Kholmov-Geller, White suddenly produced an unstoppable pawn using **both his pawns and his king**.

Let's take a look at White's options:

A) 4. $\mathbb{Q}c3$ is not much better: following 4... $\mathbb{W}a4$ 5. $\mathbb{W}a2$ (the queen has lost all 'fighting spirit'!) 5... $\mathbb{W}xe4$ Black has an easy win.

B) 4. $\mathbb{Q}e3!$. This is the key! White *has* to defend the e4-pawn. After 4... $\mathbb{W}a4$ 5. $\mathbb{W}a2$, Black can hardly make progress. Now, White's material advantage comes in; Black cannot create a passer on the kingside, and White's c-pawn will restrain Black's b-pawn if need be.

4... $\mathbb{W}a4!$

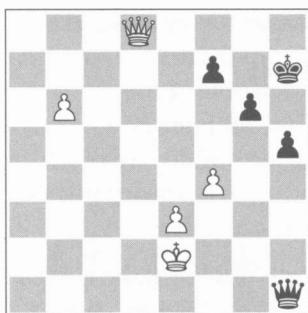
After this, White is lost. With the e4-pawn dreadfully weak and White's king and queen uncoordinated, White cannot restore order.

5. $\mathbb{W}a2 \mathbb{W}d4+!$ 6. $\mathbb{Q}c3 \mathbb{W}c3$ 7. $\mathbb{Q}d1$
b5 8. $\mathbb{W}e6 \mathbb{W}d4+$ 9. $\mathbb{Q}e1 \mathbb{W}b4+$
10. $\mathbb{Q}d1 \mathbb{W}b1+$ 11. $\mathbb{Q}d2$ **a2** 0-1

The desperado 12. $\mathbb{W}f7?$ is met by 12... $\mathbb{W}b4+$ 13. $c3 \mathbb{W}d6+$, winning.

Frequently, you are not so fortunate as to gain a material advantage! In many top level grandmaster games, a queen endgame arises in which both sides have chances and it is up to each player to use precise calculation in order to win the game. It is also important to know techniques for ‘squeezing the life’ out of your opponent (but more about that later).

First, let us take a look at some examples where the position is very double-edged and calculating a myriad of variations is required to win the game.



68. Ashley-De Firmian

New York 1996

The position seems to be practically hopeless for Black at first sight. White's pawn is far advanced, and White will need only three moves to promote. However, a closer look reveals that things are far from simple. First of all, Black needs no more than four moves to promote (...h5-h4-h3-h2, ... $\mathbb{W}g2+$ and $h1\mathbb{W}$). White's king is also much weaker than Black's, and therefore Black can choose to go for perpetual whenever he wants. If he wants to win, however, he has no time to waste! In a pawn race such as this one, speed is almost always the key.

1...h4! 2. $\mathbb{W}d7 \mathbb{W}g2+$ 3. $\mathbb{W}d3 \mathbb{W}f1+$

What follows is a series of checks that lure White's king further into Black's

territory, until it finally has to seek refuge on b7, where it will impede its own passed pawn. White can agree to a perpetual, but he is fooled by the illusion that he is easily winning.

4. $\mathbb{W}c3 \mathbb{W}c1+$ 5. $\mathbb{W}b4 \mathbb{W}b2+$ 6. $\mathbb{W}c5 \mathbb{W}c3+$ 7. $\mathbb{W}b5 \mathbb{W}b2+$ 8. $\mathbb{W}a6 \mathbb{W}a3+$ 9. $\mathbb{W}b7 \mathbb{W}g7$

The position both sides have been aiming for has been reached. White's king is now in relative safety, and he looks to quickly promote his passed pawn. This, however, is much easier said than done! First of all, White's king has to step aside in order for the pawn to promote. Then, Black will have the option to start checking again. On the other hand, White's weak e3/f4 pawn chain is already the subject of an unpleasant attack. White's queen can hardly multi-task, as defending the chain would let the h-pawn pass.

White embarks on a dubious course of action which eventually backfires. Again, we can see that White's fundamental problem is the difference in king position. In a medieval war, if one side's castles were on the verge of collapse, the other side would have a big advantage! The same is seen in this position. White tries to bring Black's pawns forward, thus weakening the king, but Black's monarch simply repositions to h6.

**10. $\mathbb{W}d4+$ f6 11. $\mathbb{W}d7+$ $\mathbb{W}h6$
12. $\mathbb{W}d8 \mathbb{W}g7$**



Another important position has arisen. Again, the first thought that comes to mind is the fact that White's passed pawn is much further advanced than Black's.

What does not come to mind immediately is the stark difference in king position, which will play a major role in the ending of the game. White is by no means lost and can draw without too much difficulty, but again he is deceived by the illusion that he can easily promote.

13.♔b8?!

No permanent damage will be done even after this move, but White should have drawn immediately with 13.♕d7+ ♔h6 14.♕d8 (Müller & Lamprecht). White takes advantage of the position of Black's king and forces a repetition, as 14...♕xe3?? is met by the simple 15.♕h8 mate!

13...♕xe3 14.b7

White sacrifices all of his pawns in order to advance his passer. The tactical justification of White's idea is that 14...♕xf4+ fails to 15.♕c7+ ♕xc7+ 16.♔xc7 and White promotes first.

White understands that his strategy is risky, but he underestimates the amount of 'fighting spirit' Black's queen has. He

also underestimates Black's own passer, which needs merely three moves to promote now.

14...h3 15.♕d7+ ♔h6 16.♔c8?

Faced with a difficult dilemma, White loses the thread. White had many options, but the most effective was 16.♕d6!, as given by Müller & Lamprecht. Their line runs: 16...f5 17.♔a8 ♕e4 18.♔a7 ♕a4+ 19.♔b6 ♕b3+ 20.♔a7 and Black cannot make progress.

16...h2 17.b8♕ h1♕

Shockingly, White cannot give a single check! Black's king resides peacefully in his impenetrable palace, while White's king will soon become the subject of a merciless, deadly attack.

**18.♔d8 ♕he4 19.f5 ♕xf5
20.♕h2+ ♕h5 21.♕hc7 ♕he5
22.♕b7 ♕e4 23.♕bc7 ♕a8+
24.♕dc8 ♕d5+ 25.♕7d7 ♕g8+
26.♔c7 ♕c5+ 0-1**

White cannot avoid the mass trade of queens, so he resigned.

A terrific example which shows that concrete calculation can be combined with subtle thinking to produce a great endgame display. Yes, White could have drawn, but that does not change the evaluation of the position! Certainly, the onus was always on White to find ways to keep Black's pawn from promoting. Ashley chose to go for the win, and was quickly punished. Simply speaking, the position of White's king did not allow him to play for the win; even in the worst case scenario, Black could have easily drawn by means of perpetual.

In some cases, you have to slowly and patiently grind down your opponent. This skill is best developed by means of experience, but by looking at games of endgame specialists you can certainly learn a lot. The fundamental weakness of inexperienced players is that when faced with an endgame in which they are better but have no clear-cut way to win, they will often try to go for forced lines, which result in the defending side achieving counterplay and drawing the game.

You have to be very patient when converting these advantages. A famous quote about Alexander Alekhine goes, ‘In order to beat Alekhine, you have to beat him three times: in the opening, middlegame, and endgame!’ In the abovementioned endgame scenario, you also have to beat your opponent at three stages: the positional stage, the execution stage (where you follow the plan you have conceived), and the technical stage.

The following endgames will be divided into the three sections mentioned above. In each, we will look at techniques that the winning side utilizes in order to achieve progress.



69. Naroditsky-Bok

World Youth Chess Championship,
Vung Tau 2008

It is not hard to see that Black is on the defending side of this ending. Besides the dangerous possibility of creating an outside passer with h2-h4, White also has the possibility of attacking the f6-pawn and dominating the light squares. The fact that Black’s weaknesses are chronic forces him to look for ways to unbalance the position.

Consequently, White’s job in these types of positions is to *stop* any immediate ideas while also maintaining control over the game. In this position, it is blatantly clear that Black wants to acti-

vate his queen with ... $\mathbb{Q}a3$. A nonchalant move such as 1. $\mathbb{Q}c1$ would technically stop ... $\mathbb{Q}a3$, but would allow Black to restrain White’s kingside pawn majority with ...g5-g4. After a long think, I concluded that the best way to discourage Black from playing 1... $\mathbb{Q}a3$ was to set my sights on the backward f6-pawn:

1. $\mathbb{Q}f3?$!

From a purely positional standpoint, this move is entirely justified. However, when considering the implications of a committal decision it is necessary to take into account both static *and* dynamic factors. In my infinite laziness, I hadn’t stopped for a moment to consider what would actually happen if Black played 1... $\mathbb{Q}a3$. Sure enough, Black picked up his queen and placed it on a3.

1... $\mathbb{Q}a3$!

It suddenly became glaringly clear that my intended 2. $\mathbb{Q}xf6$ was utterly ineffective. After 2... $\mathbb{Q}xa2+$ 3. $\mathbb{Q}f3$ $\mathbb{Q}xb3$ White will be the one fighting for a draw after 4. $\mathbb{Q}d8+$ $\mathbb{Q}a7$ 5. $\mathbb{Q}xc7$. In such cases, it is vital to remain clear-

headed and make a rational, logical decision. Fortunately, I was still under the illusion that I would have the possibility of playing h2-h4 or penetrating along the light squares, and therefore made the relatively best move.

Before we move on, however, a question begs to be asked: *What should White have done?* After all, the computer gives a dead draw and it might just be that White's advantages are not enough for anything tangible. Although it is hard to deny that Black should draw with correct play, the tricky 1.a4! forces Black to find a move. First of all, 1... $\mathbb{Q}a3$ fails on account of 2. $\mathbb{W}d8+$ $\mathbb{Q}a7$ 3. $\mathbb{W}xc7$, and a better choice such as 1...b6 can be met with 2.h3, when White keeps his advantages intact. Once again, Black should draw by being vigilant but at least White can keep pushing.

2. $\mathbb{W}e2$ $\mathbb{Q}c1?$

This natural-looking move is a major mistake. At first sight, it seems as though Black has made significant inroads into White's position and his queen is active enough to draw the game. We shall soon see why this is not true. The draw could have been achieved by means of 2...g4!, stopping White's plans in their tracks.



Analysis diagram

The point of this move is to stop White from creating a passed pawn with h2-h4. White simply cannot evict Black's queen from its active post. The only try is 3.h3, but White's advantage in that case will be merely symbolic.

3.c4!

Straightforward but strong. Black's queen is stuck in White's camp and cannot prevent White from executing his main idea of h2-h4. In addition, the path h3-g4-f5 has opened for the White king, and if Black does not take action this transfer can be deadly.

3...b6?

This is the fatal error, which allows White to carry out his king transfer without problems. In order to achieve defensive chances, it was necessary to play 3... $\mathbb{Q}c8$, when the line 4. $\mathbb{Q}h3$ $\mathbb{Q}d7$ 5. $\mathbb{Q}g4$ $\mathbb{Q}e6$ is not as clear. Still, following 6. $\mathbb{W}d3$ White has a clear advantage.

4. $\mathbb{Q}h3$

This marks the start of the second end-game stage – the execution of the plan. White has improved his position to the fullest extent and can now comfortably begin executing the decisive plan. Note that Black's queen can do absolutely nothing to stop White's deadly king sortie.

4... $\mathbb{Q}c8$

One move too late! Black's king arrives in time to defend the f6-pawn, but not to stop White's king from further infiltrating Black's position.

5. $\mathbb{Q}g4$ $\mathbb{Q}d7$ 6. $\mathbb{Q}f5$ $\mathbb{Q}e7$ 7. $\mathbb{Q}g6$

In order to reach White's king, Black's queen needs four moves (... $\mathbb{Q}a3-d6-d8-g8$)!

It's incredible that Black's queen, which has penetrated White's camp, can do absolutely nothing to stop the impending doom.

7... $\mathbb{Q}h1$ 8. $\mathbb{Q}g7$

White has a multitude of threats, none of which Black can parry. All White has to do is to carefully convert his winning advantage.

8...g4 9. $\mathbb{Q}xg4$ $\mathbb{Q}xh2$ 10.a4

White is in no hurry, and can therefore afford such niceties.

Despite a major mistake in the beginning, we can see that patience and careful planning is important. If you try to win immediately (i.e. by playing h2-h4 early on) your opponent will not have much of a choice. You want to confront him or her with dilemmas so that he or she will have more of a chance to make a mistake. Black went for ... $\mathbb{Q}c1$, and could do absolutely nothing against the monarch's decisive march.

The technical stage of the game is no less important than the other two stages. A rash decision can ruin all of your work, and therefore, if your opponent has no counter chances, take time to further improve your position.

A seasoned endgame player knows that converting a positional advantage in a queen endgame often involves serious risks. The main question is, '*Should I play it safe or take a risk?*' The answer to this question always has to be carefully considered. If the most promising plan involves giving your opponent counter-chances, so be it! However, if the safe option also promises you ample winning chances, there is no reason not to choose it. However, the excuse '*I did not want to lose*' can never be used. You have to make an objective decision; either you take a risk and achieve winning chances, or you play conservatively and give your opponent good drawing chances.

Remember that in a tactical queen endgame you still have to understand which stage of the endgame is taking place and make a plan. Aimlessly calculating variations is almost never the recipe for success.

Take a look at the following position:

(see next page)

**10... $\mathbb{Q}f2$ 11. $\mathbb{Q}g6$ $\mathbb{Q}d7$ 12.g4 $\mathbb{Q}g3$
13. $\mathbb{Q}f5+$ $\mathbb{Q}c6$ 14. $\mathbb{Q}xf6$ $\mathbb{Q}xb3$
15.g5 $\mathbb{Q}b7$ 16.g6 $\mathbb{Q}xc4$ 17.g7 $\mathbb{Q}a2$
18. $\mathbb{Q}e6$ $\mathbb{Q}f2+$ 19. $\mathbb{Q}e7$ $\mathbb{Q}h4+$
20. $\mathbb{Q}f8$ $\mathbb{Q}f4+$ 21. $\mathbb{Q}f5$ $\mathbb{Q}h6$ 22. $\mathbb{Q}f7$
 $\mathbb{Q}e3$ 23.g8 \mathbb{Q} $\mathbb{Q}b3+$ 24. $\mathbb{Q}g7$
 $\mathbb{Q}g3+$ 25. $\mathbb{Q}g6$ $\mathbb{Q}a3$ 26. $\mathbb{Q}d5+$
 $\mathbb{Q}a7$ 27. $\mathbb{Q}xe5$ $\mathbb{Q}b7$**

Shockingly, Black continues to play on. Suddenly, I realized that this was the opportune moment to produce the first queen sacrifice of my life!

28. $\mathbb{Q}c6+$! $\mathbb{Q}xc6$ 29. $\mathbb{Q}d5#$ 1-0

I had to double check this line about five times, in case I was missing something!



70. Stefansson-Bosnjak

Bosna Open, Sarajevo 2010

White is faced with a dilemma: he can take on e6 or retreat to d1. On 1. $\mathbb{Q}xc5$, Black has 1... $\mathbb{Q}xb3$ and if 2. $\mathbb{Q}xa5$ Black draws with 2... $\mathbb{Q}d1+$ 3. $\mathbb{Q}e1$ $\mathbb{Q}xa4$. Clearly, 1. $\mathbb{Q}d1$ involves certain risks. First of all, White's king and queen will be temporarily passive, and Black will constantly have ideas connected with ...c5-c4 and ... $\mathbb{Q}b4+$. The other, more tempting option would be to take on e6 and try to win the resulting pawn ending. Many players would make this decision without too much thought. First of all, taking the queen is safe – White will either win or draw. Following 1. $\mathbb{Q}d1$, a loss is completely possible.

In order to make the correct decision, however, you have to calculate concretely. It's fine if you cannot see everything to the end, but in the context of specific variations, it's much easier to make the right decision. After 1. $\mathbb{Q}xe6$ $f\times e6$ 2. $\mathbb{Q}e2$ $\mathbb{Q}f6$ 3. $\mathbb{Q}d2$ $\mathbb{Q}e5$ 4. $\mathbb{Q}c3$ $\mathbb{Q}d5$ Black draws easily. Another attempt is 3.f4. In this case, however, Black has the simple 3... $\mathbb{Q}e7$ (not 3... $\mathbb{Q}e5!?$, when 4. $\mathbb{Q}d2$ $exf4$ 5. $exf4$ is less clear) 4. $\mathbb{Q}d2$ $\mathbb{Q}d6$ 5. $\mathbb{Q}c3$ $\mathbb{Q}c6$ 6. $\mathbb{Q}c4$ $\mathbb{Q}b6$ and Black draws. Therefore, 1. $\mathbb{Q}xe6$ does not give White any win-

ning chances. If he wants to go for a win, he must take a risk.

1. $\mathbb{Q}d1!$ $\mathbb{Q}a6+$ 2. $\mathbb{Q}e1$ $\mathbb{Q}b6$ 3. $\mathbb{Q}d5$

White brings his queen into the action once again. Now, Black must defend e4, creating additional weaknesses which White can attack.

3...f5 4.g4 $\mathbb{Q}f6$ 5. $\mathbb{Q}f1!$

White improves the position of his king. Note that Black is clearly overextended: his pieces barely manage to defend the weaknesses on f5 and c5.

5...h5!

Black finds the best defense. By repelling the annoying pawn on g4, Black increases his piece mobility. Now, the first reaction is to play 6.gxf5, creating an additional flaw on h5. However, after 6...gxf5 7. $\mathbb{Q}g2$ h4! 8. $\mathbb{Q}g8$ $\mathbb{Q}d6$, White has no clear-cut way to continue. He can try 9. $\mathbb{Q}h8+$, but there is no way to win the h4-pawn after 9... $\mathbb{Q}g5$, e.g. 10. $\mathbb{Q}g7+$ $\mathbb{Q}h5$ 11. $\mathbb{Q}h7+$ $\mathbb{Q}g5$ and Black's king manages to defend both f5 and h4. Therefore, White has to look for a better response. White's main problem following 6.gxf5 is that his king will be exposed on g2. Therefore:

6. $\mathbb{Q}g2!$ h4 7. $\mathbb{Q}g8$

Now Black is facing real problems. The threat of 8. $\mathbb{Q}h8+$ followed by 9. $\mathbb{Q}e5$ cannot be easily parried, so Black must exchange on g4. Although this looks like a big concession, Black will have his own trumps and in order to make progress, White will have to play very carefully.

7...fxg4 8.hxg4 $\mathbb{Q}e6!$

This is Black's point. Now, 9. $\mathbb{W}h8+$ is met by 9... $\mathbb{Q}g5$, when White has no effective checks. Also bad is 9. $\mathbb{W}xe6+??$, when Black wins after 9... $\mathbb{Q}xe6$ 10. $\mathbb{Q}h3$ g5. Thus, White must check on d8.

**9. $\mathbb{W}d8+$ $\mathbb{Q}e5$ 10. $\mathbb{W}b8+$ $\mathbb{Q}f6$
11. $\mathbb{Q}h3$ g5**



The first stage of the endgame has been completed. Clearly, White has consolidated his position. It is now time to attack Black's weaknesses. This, unfortunately, is much easier said than done. White's king on h3 is secure for the moment, but Black's queen wouldn't mind sinking its teeth into the f3-square, when White will be in big trouble. Therefore, the daring 12. $\mathbb{W}d8+$ followed by 13. $\mathbb{W}xa5$ has to be carefully scrutinized first. Before we look at 12. $\mathbb{W}d8+$, let's take a look at the alternatives:

A) 12. $\mathbb{W}f8+$ is an attempt to win the c5-pawn and keep the queen centralized. Following 12... $\mathbb{Q}g6$ 13. $\mathbb{W}xc5$ $\mathbb{W}f6$ 14. $\mathbb{W}c2!$ $\mathbb{W}f3+$ 15. $\mathbb{Q}h2$ $\mathbb{W}xg4$ (not 15...h3?, which loses after 16. $\mathbb{W}c6+$ $\mathbb{Q}g7$ 17. $\mathbb{W}c7+$ and 18. $\mathbb{W}g3$) a position arises that is almost identical to the game, with the only difference that White does not have a passed pawn. Certainly, this continuation is viable, but it is better to take the a5-pawn and have an outside passer.

B) 12. $\mathbb{W}h8+$ seems interesting at first sight, but Black defends without too much trouble. After 12... $\mathbb{Q}f7$ 13. $\mathbb{W}h7+$ $\mathbb{Q}e8!$, 14. $\mathbb{W}h5+$ is well met by 14... $\mathbb{W}f7!$, and White cannot avoid the perpetual after 15. $\mathbb{W}xg5$ $\mathbb{W}f3+$ 16. $\mathbb{Q}xh4$ $\mathbb{W}h1+!$ 17. $\mathbb{Q}g3$ $\mathbb{W}f3+$. Therefore, White's best idea is to eliminate the a5-pawn and bring the queen to d2 in time to defend against ... $\mathbb{W}f3+$. Certainly, this involves risk, but as we know, risk is the key to victory!

**12. $\mathbb{W}d8+$ $\mathbb{Q}g6$ 13. $\mathbb{W}xa5$ $\mathbb{W}f6$
14. $\mathbb{W}d2$ $\mathbb{W}f3+$ 15. $\mathbb{Q}h2$**

White is hanging over the precipice! Black cannot play 15...h3 because of the already familiar maneuver 16. $\mathbb{W}d6+$ and 17. $\mathbb{W}g3$, when Black loses the h3-pawn. Black is therefore forced to take on g4, giving White the initiative. Note the a4-pawn – it might seem harmless as of now, but we will see what will happen in ten moves!

**15... $\mathbb{W}xg4$ 16. $\mathbb{W}d6+$ $\mathbb{Q}h5$ 17. $\mathbb{W}f6$
 $\mathbb{W}d7$ 18. $\mathbb{W}h8+$ $\mathbb{Q}g4$ 19. $\mathbb{W}e5$ $\mathbb{W}c6$**

19... $\mathbb{Q}f3$ was tempting, but after 20. $\mathbb{W}xg5$ $\mathbb{Q}xf2$ 21. $\mathbb{W}f4+$ $\mathbb{Q}e2$ 22. $\mathbb{W}xe4$ $\mathbb{W}d6+$ 23. $\mathbb{W}f4$ White defends against the checks.



20.a5

Finally, White starts pushing his passed pawn. Of course, on a4 the pawn was much safer, but if White wants to win, he has to start pushing it! Note the weakness of Black's e4-pawn – he cannot play 20... $\mathbb{W}b5$ due to 21. $\mathbb{W}xe4+$, winning. Black tries to create counterplay, but he cannot stop the passed pawn.

**20... $\mathbb{Q}h5$ 21. $\mathbb{W}h8+$ $\mathbb{Q}g4$ 22. $\mathbb{W}e5$
 $\mathbb{Q}h5$ 23. $\mathbb{W}f5!$**

Note the clear divisions between the three endgame stages: in the beginning, White had to slowly improve his position, and try to restrict Black's pieces. After he had made clear progress, he had to execute his plan while also defending his king. However, as soon as White started pushing his passer, Black's queen lost her fighting spirit and could not find counter play against White's king. The final position is a picturesquesque one: Black's queen cannot escape!

In many cases, you have an initiative, but it threatens to fizzle out if decisive action is not taken. In those cases, it's important to retain your calm. An initiative is like a fire: if you throw wood onto it, it will expand. If you splash it with water, it will eventually fizzle out. The key to converting an initiative into a tangible advantage is to play actively and forcefully. The following game is a great demonstration:



71. Rogovoi-Tunik

St Petersburg 2000

Clearly, Black has an initiative. He is attacking the b3-pawn, but cannot take immediately because of 2. $\mathbb{W}d8+$. Unfortunately for Black, allowing $\mathbb{W}d8+$ would mean giving away the advantage, as White will also have the possibility of taking on a5. However, it isn't clear how

Restricting Black's king even further. Black is completely paralyzed and he cannot do a thing to take advantage of White's vulnerable king.

**23... $\mathbb{W}c7+$ 24. $\mathbb{Q}h3$ $\mathbb{W}b7$ 25. $\mathbb{W}g4+$
 $\mathbb{Q}g6$ 26. $\mathbb{W}e6+$ $\mathbb{Q}h5$ 27.a6 $\mathbb{W}a7$
 28. $\mathbb{W}e8+$ $\mathbb{Q}h6$ 29. $\mathbb{W}c6+$ $\mathbb{Q}h5$
 30. $\mathbb{W}b7$ 1-0**

A terrific display by Stefansson.

Black can energize his position. Of course, something like 1... $\mathbb{W}c7$ can hardly be considered. Therefore, Black has to find a more active way to parry 2. $\mathbb{W}d8+$. The only way this can be achieved is by advancing the king!

1... $\mathbb{Q}f7!$

A brave and strong move. The fact that White cannot immediately draw probably came as a shock to him. Black's king is completely exposed, yet the d7- and g7-pawns control vital squares on f6 and e6. Now, Black's king is involved in the offensive and can travel as far as b2 if needed!

2. $\mathbb{W}f4+$ $\mathbb{Q}e6$ 3. $\mathbb{W}g4+$ $\mathbb{W}f5$

This is the only way to continue the game. With Black's queen jumping all

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over the board and attacking White's weaknesses, it will be very hard for White to successfully defend.

Of course, 3... $\mathbb{Q}xe5$ led to a draw after 4. $\mathbb{W}xg7+$.

4. $\mathbb{W}xg7 \mathbb{W}xh3$ 5. $\mathbb{W}f6+ \mathbb{Q}d5$

Black burns all his bridges and tries to take advantage of his great piece coordination. On the other hand, White's queen is struggling to restrict Black's king. As we know, in a queen endgame with an open board, the king can hardly be stopped!

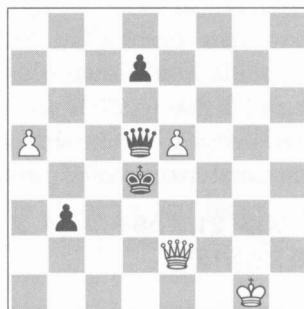
6. $\mathbb{W}b6 \mathbb{W}xb3$

Black's initiative has been converted into a tangible advantage in the form of the passed b3-pawn. Of course, things are still far from clear but Black's progress is clear!

7. $\mathbb{W}xa5+ \mathbb{Q}e4$ 8. $\mathbb{W}a8+ \mathbb{W}d5$

A major blow. From the dominating square on d5, Black's queen manages to guard the king and support the b4-pawn, while White's own passed pawn is far too slow.

9. $\mathbb{W}a6$ b3 10. $\mathbb{W}e2+ \mathbb{Q}d4$ 11. a5



11... $\mathbb{W}e4!$

Black does not pay attention to White's pawn and proceeds to push his own. White was hoping for 11... $\mathbb{W}xa5?$ when the position will be far less clear after 12. $\mathbb{W}d1+ \mathbb{Q}c4$ 13. $\mathbb{W}e2+$ (Ribli).

12. $\mathbb{W}b5$ $\mathbb{W}b1+$ 13. $\mathbb{Q}g2$ $\mathbb{W}c2+$
14. $\mathbb{Q}g1$ b2 15. $\mathbb{W}xd7+$

Of course, Black will have no trouble safeguarding his king.

15... $\mathbb{Q}c3$ 16. $\mathbb{W}c6+$ $\mathbb{Q}b3$ 17. $\mathbb{W}d5+$ $\mathbb{Q}a3$ 18. $\mathbb{W}d6+$ $\mathbb{Q}b3$ 19. $\mathbb{W}d5+$ $\mathbb{W}c4$ 20. $\mathbb{W}f3+ \mathbb{Q}a2$

0-1

In the above game, we could see how Black converted his shaky initiative into a tangible advantage (the passed b-pawn) by means of energetic play.

In our final game, both sides play incredibly well. White finds blow after blow, getting closer and closer to the win, while Black finds amazing defensive resources, making the win harder for White. Just when White could have made one of the best all-time endgame moves ever, he went astray, allowing Black to *mobilize his pieces* and draw the game.

While playing through the game, note the tenacity of both players. At the moment when White's initiative seems to have fizzled out, he finds fresh wood to throw into the fire. On the other hand, when Black seems to be completely lost, he finds ways to use tactics to his favor and produce many great resources.



72. Adorjan-Orso

Hungarian Championship, Budapest 1977

At first sight, the endgame might seem rather drawish. Although White's queen is centralized, its counterpart can leap into action by means of ... $\mathbb{Q}f1+$. However, one major factor is hard to notice immediately. Namely, the h7-square is very weak and White's queen would love to establish its base there. Therefore, it is White who has the advantage. First, he must restrict Black's queen.

1.c4!

Black is now faced with serious difficulties. If he allows White to play b2-b3, $\mathbb{Q}h7$ will become a dangerous threat.

1... $\mathbb{Q}a5!$

Orso finds the correct defense. Now, on 2. $\mathbb{Q}xb7$, Black plays 2... $\mathbb{Q}e1+$. The only, drawback, however, is that Black is not threatening anything!

2.f4

Note that White pounces on the opportunity to improve his position. Black will soon be forced to retreat to c7 with his queen.

2... $\mathbb{Q}c8$ 3. $\mathbb{Q}e3$ $\mathbb{Q}c7$

In three moves, White has achieved major progress. He has grabbed space and strengthened his pawn structure. Black, however, does not lose his cool.

4. $\mathbb{Q}b1$ $\mathbb{Q}c6$ 5. $\mathbb{Q}a2$ $b6$ 6. $\mathbb{Q}d3$

White centralizes his queen and threatens to infiltrate Black's camp by means of 7. $\mathbb{Q}h7$. Note that h7 is a structural deficiency in Black's position – since it is the only means by which White can penetrate, it is crucial that White keep the square under firm control. By playing 6. $\mathbb{Q}d3$, ... $b5$ is also parried.

6... $\mathbb{Q}h1!$

This is the only viable defense. The queen has to be kept on the kingside, as otherwise White will invade by means of g4-g5 or f4-f5.

7. $\mathbb{Q}h7$ $\mathbb{Q}xh5$ 8. $\mathbb{Q}xg7$ $\mathbb{Q}g6$ 9. $\mathbb{Q}f8+$ $\mathbb{Q}b7$ 10.g4!



This is the only way to keep the initiative going. Otherwise, Black would have played ...h6-h5, with an impenetrable fortress. Now Black is faced with a most unpleasant question: '*What to do?*' Although we are considering this example from White's standpoint, it is certainly instructive to follow Black's train of thought in this position. First of all, Black has to identify whether or not White has

any major threats. A brief look at the position reveals that White does not have any direct threats. Unfortunately, Black is not in complete Zugzwang, but if he wants to make waiting moves, he has to make concessions.

Instead of calmly finding the correct defense, Black panicked and played:

10...h5?

Black's main mistake was to think in general terms and not to calculate concrete variations. In this unbalanced position, calculation is the key to identifying the correct plan. Let's take a look at the alternatives:

A) 10... $\mathbb{W}xg4?$ loses by force after 11. $\mathbb{W}xf7+$ $\mathbb{Q}a6$ 12. $\mathbb{W}f8$ h5 (12... $\mathbb{W}h3$ 13. $\mathbb{W}c8+$ $\mathbb{Q}a5$ 14. $\mathbb{W}d7$ followed by f4-f5, winning) 13. $\mathbb{W}c8+$ $\mathbb{Q}a5$ 14. $\mathbb{W}d7$ $\mathbb{Q}a6$ 15.b4! and Black has no defense (Dvoretsky).

B) 10... $\mathbb{Q}c7?!$, not mentioned by Dvoretsky, is a risky but interesting alternative. White has a multitude of responses, but none of them seem to win by force. Let's take a look:

B1) 11. $\mathbb{W}a8$ is the most straightforward approach. After 11... $\mathbb{W}xg4$ 12. $\mathbb{W}xa7+$ $\mathbb{Q}c6$ White has 13. $\mathbb{W}b8!$, threatening $\mathbb{W}c8\#$. However, Black's resources are still not exhausted: 13... $\mathbb{Q}d7$ 14. $\mathbb{W}d6+$ $\mathbb{Q}e8$ 15. $\mathbb{W}c6+$ $\mathbb{Q}e7$ 16. $\mathbb{W}xb6$ $\mathbb{W}xf4$ 17. $\mathbb{W}xc5+$ $\mathbb{Q}d7$ and the position is not as clear as it seems. White has three connected passers, but Black's own passed h-pawn is very tough to stop. Nevertheless, after 18.a4 it seems as though White will have the edge in the pawn race.

There is, however, another resource for Black: 11... $\mathbb{W}c2?!$. This seems absurd at first, but how does White win after

12. $\mathbb{W}xa7+$ $\mathbb{Q}c8$ 13. $\mathbb{W}a6+$ $\mathbb{Q}c7$? It's very tough to break through with a4-a5, as Black's queen can simply reposition to d2. Overall, the position is very tricky but tough to win for White.

B2) 11. $\mathbb{W}e7+?!$ leads nowhere after 11... $\mathbb{Q}b8$, and White should repeat moves with 12. $\mathbb{W}e8+$.

B3) 11. $\mathbb{W}d6+$ might seem tempting at first, but after 11... $\mathbb{Q}c8!$ 12. $\mathbb{W}c6+$ $\mathbb{Q}b8$ White cannot evict Black's king from its post.

C) 10...a5 is mentioned by Dvoretsky as the best move. On 11. $\mathbb{W}e8$, the tempting 11... $\mathbb{W}xg4$ fails after 12. $\mathbb{W}xf7+$ $\mathbb{Q}a6$ 13. $\mathbb{W}f8!$ $\mathbb{W}f3$ 14. $\mathbb{W}c8+$ $\mathbb{Q}a7$ 15. $\mathbb{W}d7+$ $\mathbb{Q}a6$ 16. $\mathbb{W}xe6$ $\mathbb{W}xf4$ 17. $\mathbb{W}d5$ (Dvoretsky), but Black has the familiar 11... $\mathbb{Q}c7!$ and White cannot make progress. White can also try 11. $\mathbb{W}e7+$ $\mathbb{Q}a6$ 12. $\mathbb{W}e8$, but Black has 12... $\mathbb{W}e4!$, drawing. Unfortunately for Black, White is still not out of resources. On 10...a5, he has the astounding 11. $\mathbb{Q}a1!!$



Analysis diagram

The idea of this paradoxical idea is simply to force Black to make a move. In the position after 10...a5, White has no good waiting moves. At first sight, 11. $\mathbb{Q}a1$ seems innocuous. However, Black does not have a good move in the

position! On 11... $\mathbb{Q}a7$, White has the incredible triangulation maneuver 12. $\mathbb{W}e7+$ $\mathbb{Q}a6$ 13. $\mathbb{W}e8$ and in order to avoid mate, Black has to play 13... $\mathbb{Q}b7$, which allows the breakthrough 14.f5!. The best defense is 11... $\mathbb{W}xg4$, but after 12. $\mathbb{W}xf7+$ $\mathbb{Q}a6$ 13. $\mathbb{W}e8$ Black has to play 13... $\mathbb{Q}b7$, which loses following 14. $\mathbb{W}e7+$ $\mathbb{Q}a6$ 15. $\mathbb{W}f8$ and in order not to lose material, Black must play 15... $\mathbb{W}f3$, allowing 16. $\mathbb{W}c8+$ followed by 17. $\mathbb{W}xe6$ with a won endgame. The e-pawn will be unstoppable.

An amazing endgame! The best defense is ... $\mathbb{Q}c7$, but even there White has ample opportunities to play for a win.

11.f5!

The idea of this move is not to allow Black's king to access the 8th rank after $\mathbb{W}e7+$. Also, the f5-pawn will block Black's queen in the ensuing attack.

11...exf5 12. $\mathbb{W}e7+$ $\mathbb{Q}a6$

In case of 12... $\mathbb{Q}c8$ (or 12... $\mathbb{Q}c6$) Black loses after 13. $\mathbb{W}e8+$ $\mathbb{Q}c7$ 14.gxh5 $\mathbb{W}xh5$ 15.e6.

13.b4! cxb4 14.axb4 b5



Black has defended against the immediate mate, but has made serious concessions in return. The black king is very weak, and Black is hanging over the

precipice. Instead of taking his time and finding the right winning approach, however, White played the tempting:

15. $\mathbb{W}d6+?$ $\mathbb{Q}b7!$

Now White realized what had just happened. He had been counting on 15... $\mathbb{W}xd6$, when 16.exd6 wins easily. After 15... $\mathbb{Q}b7$, White no longer has an advantage. In his excellent *Endgame Manual*, Dvoretsky correctly states that the nice resource 15.e6! wins on the spot. After 15... $\mathbb{W}xg4$ (15...fxe6 16. $\mathbb{W}d7!$ leads to a picturesque position where Black's queen is completely locked in by his own pawns, and 15... $\mathbb{W}xe6$ loses to 16. $\mathbb{W}xe6+$ fxe6 17.gxh5 f4 18.h6 f3 19.h7 f2 20.h8 \mathbb{W} f1 \mathbb{W} 21. $\mathbb{W}c8+$ $\mathbb{Q}b6$ 22.c5#) 16. $\mathbb{W}d6+$ $\mathbb{Q}b7$ 17. $\mathbb{W}d7+$ $\mathbb{Q}b8$ 18. $\mathbb{W}xb5+$ $\mathbb{Q}c7$ 19. $\mathbb{W}d7+$ White wins. After 14...b5, Black's position is on the verge of collapse. In such positions, look for ways to deliver the knockout punch. It might be hard to find, but it is almost always there.

16. $\mathbb{W}d7+$ $\mathbb{Q}b8$ 17. $\mathbb{W}xb5+$ $\mathbb{Q}c8$ 18. $\mathbb{W}e8+$ $\mathbb{Q}c7$

White desperately tries to find a win, but Black defends tenaciously and does not give White even a sliver of hope.

19. $\mathbb{W}e7+$ $\mathbb{Q}c8$ 20. $\mathbb{W}e8+$ $\mathbb{Q}c7$ 21. $\mathbb{W}e7+$ $\mathbb{Q}c8$ 22.g5 f4 23. $\mathbb{W}e8+$ $\mathbb{Q}c7$ 24. $\mathbb{W}e7+$ $\mathbb{Q}c8$ 25. $\mathbb{W}c5+$ $\mathbb{Q}b7$ 26. $\mathbb{W}d5+$ $\mathbb{Q}b8$ 27. $\mathbb{Q}a3$ $\mathbb{W}xg5$ 28. $\mathbb{W}d6+ \mathbb{Q}c8$ 1/2-1/2

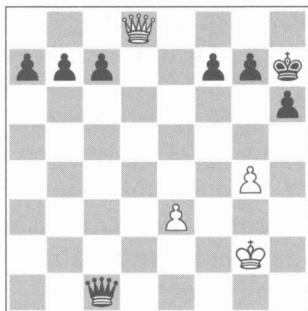
An astounding game. In a seemingly mundane position, there were countless incredible resources. I encourage the reader to play through the game more than once and maybe find his or her own improvements on my analysis!

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Let's sum up what we have learned in this section:

- A) If you have time to improve your position, don't hurry. Make sure to improve the position of all of your pieces and only then proceed to execute your plan.
- B) Calculation is very important. When the position contains tactical ideas (i.e. Ashley-De Firmian), calculate concrete variations. This greatly decreases the chance of a blunder.
- C) In positions where your opponent is on the edge of defeat, try to find the knockout blow. In Adorjan-Orso, Black's position was like a stack of cards. Adorjan relinquished his grip, allowing Black to defend. If he had looked for a knockout blow, the result of the game would have probably been different.

Now, on to defense. I can spend a whole day talking about my tortures with defending these endgames! It's probable that many of you have had demoralizing queen endgame experiences. You can always try to defend a queen endgame! Don't believe me? Alright, look at this!



73. Naroditsky-Rudyak

San Francisco 2006

Don't worry, you're looking at the right position. White is *four* pawns down. Three of them are connected passers, looking to devour my king's flesh. White's position is so hopeless that any experienced player would resign. Yet I decided, 'Why not play on?'

1. $\mathbb{W}d3+$ $g6$ 2. $\mathbb{W}b3$ $\mathbb{W}d2+$ 3. $\mathbb{W}h1$
 $\mathbb{W}e1+$ 4. $\mathbb{W}g2$ $\mathbb{W}d2+$ 5. $\mathbb{W}f1$ $\mathbb{W}g7!?$

Black decides to sacrifice his three connected passers on the queenside for three connected passers on the kingside!

6. $\mathbb{W}xb7$ $\mathbb{W}xe3$ 7. $\mathbb{W}xc7$ $\mathbb{W}f3+$
8. $\mathbb{W}g1$ $\mathbb{W}xg4+$ 9. $\mathbb{W}h1$

White's position looks even more miserable than it did in the beginning. Simply speaking, I had *never* had a worse position! Black still has four extra pawns, and all of them are passers.

9... $\mathbb{W}d4$ 10. $\mathbb{W}c2$ $a5$ 11. $\mathbb{W}f2!$

Hoping my opponent will be greedy...

11... $\mathbb{W}e4+!$ 12. $\mathbb{W}g1$ $\mathbb{W}e5$ 13. $\mathbb{W}a2$
 $g5$ 14. $\mathbb{W}h1$ $g4$ 15. $\mathbb{W}g2$ $g3??$

Interestingly, my opponent had just avoided the same trap he falls into now. Of course, almost anything won, ranging from 15... $h5$ to the simple 15... $\mathbb{W}e1+$ followed by 16... $g4-g3+$, forcing the queen trade.

16. $\mathbb{W}xg3+!$

Black is still completely winning, but the victory is now much more problematic! Also, Black already had less than five minutes. Ample time to finish me off, it would seem...

16... $\mathbb{Q}g5$ 17. $\mathbb{Q}c3+$ $\mathbb{Q}g6$ 18. $\mathbb{Q}d3+$
 $\mathbb{Q}f5$ 19. $\mathbb{Q}g3+$ $\mathbb{Q}h7$ 20. $\mathbb{Q}f2$ $\mathbb{Q}h5+$
21. $\mathbb{Q}g1$ $\mathbb{Q}g6+$ 22. $\mathbb{Q}h1$ a4 23. $\mathbb{Q}a2$
 $\mathbb{Q}e4+$ 24. $\mathbb{Q}g1$ $\mathbb{Q}e3+$ 25. $\mathbb{Q}h1$
 $\mathbb{Q}b3$ 26. $\mathbb{Q}f2$ $\mathbb{Q}b1+$ 27. $\mathbb{Q}h2$ $\mathbb{Q}g6$

28. $\mathbb{Q}a2$ $\mathbb{Q}h5+$ 29. $\mathbb{Q}g1$ $\mathbb{Q}d1+$
30. $\mathbb{Q}h2$ $\mathbb{Q}b3$ 31. $\mathbb{Q}f2$ a3 32. $\mathbb{Q}f5+$
 $\mathbb{Q}g7$ 33. $\mathbb{Q}e5+$ 1½-½

And, with about thirty seconds left on the clock, my opponent had to agree to a draw.

So now do you believe me when I tell you that any queen endgame can be saved? Let's address the rather psychological concept of stamina. Take a look at the top players: Anand, Carlsen, Kramnik, etc. While conducting a sacrificial attack is a lot more appetizing than defending a boring, lost queen endgame, every world-class player shows great tenacity when defending such endgames. You have to be able to tell yourself, '*I am not ready to resign. My opponent has to prove to me that he can win this position.*' Usually, in passive defense, you do not need to calculate too many variations. You simply need to be very careful and avoid a blunder. If your opponent manages to win, hats off to him. If you succumb quickly and without a fight, you will regret that you didn't play on. It doesn't matter for how long you defend; if you're tired, suck it up!

It is extremely hard to show tenacity until the end, but in order to improve, you have to try. One of the keys to a successful defense is to imagine that *you* are the head of an army and it is up to you to hold the gates to your castle.

In the following game, Anand makes great move after great move. Finally, after a marathon, nearly 100-move game, Topalov is forced to cede the draw. This draw propelled Anand forward in the tournament and inspired him to overcome his fatigue.



74. Topalov-Anand

Candidates' Tournament, San Luis 2005

Black has been pushed to the brink of a loss. White is up two pawns and has a multitude of threats against Black's king.

Anand, however, has one major valuable asset: the b2-pawn. While it is completely restrained by the white queen, White has to pay a lot of attention to sudden tactics and counterplay involving the passer. After 62 moves of intense defense, Anand found in himself the will to fight.

1... $\mathbb{Q}b6!$

Anand finds the right continuation. He has to force White's queen into passivity. Otherwise, Black's king will be completely decimated.

The greedy 1... $\mathbb{Q}xh6?$ backfires after 2. $\mathbb{Q}c4+$! (not 2. $\mathbb{Q}d5+?$ $\mathbb{Q}h8!$)

(2... $\mathbb{Q}g7$ 3. $\mathbb{W}b7++-$; 2... $\mathbb{Q}f8$ 3. $\mathbb{W}a8+$ $\mathbb{Q}e7$ 4. $\mathbb{W}b7++-$) 3. $\mathbb{W}a8+$ $\mathbb{Q}h7$ and Black retains the b2-pawn!) 2... $\mathbb{Q}g7$ 3. $\mathbb{W}c7+$ $\mathbb{Q}g8$ 4. $\mathbb{W}b8+$ and White wins the all-important b2-pawn.

2. $\mathbb{W}c4+!$

Topalov does not succumb to the passive 2. $\mathbb{W}b1$ and finds a very nice tactical resource.

2... $\mathbb{Q}h7$ 3. $\mathbb{W}g5!$

This is the idea. On 3... $b1\mathbb{W}$, White wins with 4. $\mathbb{W}f7+$ $\mathbb{Q}h8$ 5. $\mathbb{W}g7\#$.

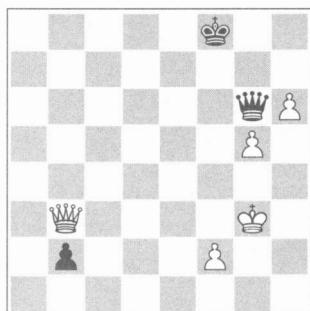
3... $\mathbb{W}g6$ 4. $\mathbb{W}c7+$ $\mathbb{Q}g8$

Anand points out that 4... $\mathbb{Q}h8?$ lost to 5. $\mathbb{W}b8+$ $\mathbb{Q}h7$ 6. $\mathbb{W}b7+$ $\mathbb{Q}g8$ 7. $h7+!$. Again, note the persistence: Anand does some quick calculation and makes the right move, not falling into a trap.

5. $\mathbb{W}b8+$ $\mathbb{Q}f7$

Anand defends with precision. 5... $\mathbb{Q}h7?$ was met by the same idea: 6. $\mathbb{W}b7+$ $\mathbb{Q}g8$ 7. $h7+$ and wins.

6. $\mathbb{W}b7+$ $\mathbb{Q}f8$ 7. $\mathbb{W}b8+$ $\mathbb{Q}f7$ 8. $\mathbb{W}b3+$ $\mathbb{Q}f8$



Clearly, we can observe that Black's defense leads to White not knowing how to continue. Irritated by Anand's razor-sharp calculation and terrific defense,

Topalov makes Anand's job slightly easier.

9. $\mathbb{W}f3+$ $\mathbb{Q}e7$ 10. $\mathbb{W}e3+$ $\mathbb{Q}d7$

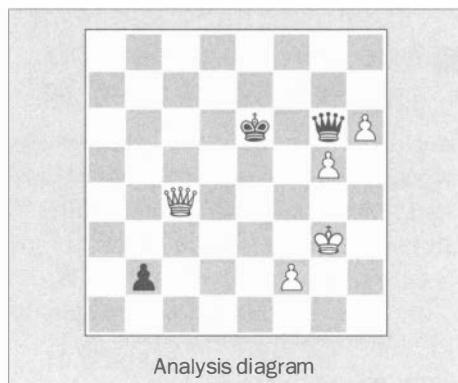
Inaccurate. After Anand's variation 10... $\mathbb{Q}f8$ 11. $\mathbb{W}c5+$ $\mathbb{Q}g8!$ 12. $\mathbb{W}d5+$ $\mathbb{Q}h8$ 13. $\mathbb{W}d4+$ $\mathbb{Q}g8$ 14. $\mathbb{W}c4+$ $\mathbb{Q}h7$ Black cannot make progress. This would have been a great end to the game, but Anand is not a machine!

11. $\mathbb{W}d4+$ $\mathbb{Q}e6$

Again, Anand misses a draw in the form of 11... $\mathbb{W}d6+$ 12. $\mathbb{W}xd6+$ $\mathbb{Q}xd6$ 13. $h7$ $b1\mathbb{W}$ 14. $h8\mathbb{W}$ $\mathbb{W}g1+$ 15. $\mathbb{W}f3$ and now Black *does not take on g5* but plays the almost inhuman 15... $\mathbb{W}d1+!!$, and White cannot escape perpetual (Anand). Again, an amazing resource, but 15... $\mathbb{W}d1+$ can hardly be found by a human, especially on the 72nd move of a game after an exhausting defense.

12. $\mathbb{W}xb2?!$

This gives Black much-needed respite. More testing was 12. $\mathbb{W}c4+!$.



Black is now faced with a hard decision: whether to play 12... $\mathbb{Q}e7$ or 12... $\mathbb{Q}d7$. Let's take a look at both responses:

A) 12... $\mathbb{Q}d7?!$ is Anand's recommendation. Following 13. $\mathbb{W}d5+$ $\mathbb{W}d6+$

Black achieves an already familiar position. Another attempt is 13... $\mathbb{W}b5+$, but Black draws with 13... $\mathbb{Q}e7$ 14. $\mathbb{W}e5+$ $\mathbb{Q}d7$ 15.h7 b1 \mathbb{W} 16.h8 \mathbb{W} $\mathbb{W}g1+$ 17. $\mathbb{Q}f4$ $\mathbb{W}xf2+$.

B) 12... $\mathbb{Q}e7$! is also interesting. However, in this case, White has the additional option 13. $\mathbb{W}c7+$ $\mathbb{Q}e8$ 14. $\mathbb{W}e5+$ $\mathbb{Q}d7$ 15. $\mathbb{W}g7+$ $\mathbb{W}xg7$ 16.hxg7. Still, Black should draw with the same technique: 16...b1 \mathbb{W} and ... $\mathbb{W}g1+$.

12... $\mathbb{W}xg5+$ 13. $\mathbb{Q}f3$ $\mathbb{W}h5+$ 14. $\mathbb{Q}e4$ $\mathbb{W}f5+$?

Finally, Anand commits a serious error. The simple 14... $\mathbb{W}g6+$ drew on the spot. Simply speaking, it's almost impossible to conduct such a tough defense without erring. Topalov, however, does not pounce on his opportunity.

15. $\mathbb{Q}e3$ $\mathbb{W}g5+$ 16.f4!

Now White is objectively winning, although the win is very hard to achieve even now.

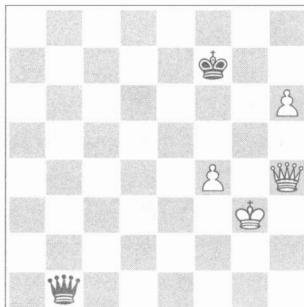
16... $\mathbb{W}g3+$ 17. $\mathbb{Q}e4$ $\mathbb{W}e1+$ 18. $\mathbb{Q}f3$ $\mathbb{W}f1+$ 19. $\mathbb{Q}g3$ $\mathbb{W}g1+$ 20. $\mathbb{W}g2$ $\mathbb{W}b1$ 21. $\mathbb{W}c6+$ $\mathbb{Q}f7$ 22. $\mathbb{W}d7+$ $\mathbb{Q}f6$

Yes, Black made mistakes, but so does every human! First of all, your opponent will not be of Topalov's strength (sorry, but he or she won't!) and in the worst case scenario, you will walk out of the hall with the feeling that you put all of your blood, sweat and tears into the defense.

Strangely, it can often be much tougher to defend against positional pressure rather than against a material advantage. The main problem is that when your opponent's king is safe and you have to resort to passive defense, you can often easily falter. When you're defending such positions, try not to think about the objective evaluation. Getting right to the point, just defend! The more you think about evaluation, the more your decisions will be influenced. You want to think of the objectively best move at all times.

First, however, let's take a look at one more heroic defense; White will be two pawns down, and yet will show seemingly infinite determination to draw the game.

**23. $\mathbb{W}g7+$ $\mathbb{Q}e6$ 24. $\mathbb{W}e5+$ $\mathbb{Q}f7$
25. $\mathbb{W}h5+$ $\mathbb{Q}f6$ 26. $\mathbb{W}g5+$ $\mathbb{Q}f7$
27. $\mathbb{W}h5+$ $\mathbb{Q}f6$ 28. $\mathbb{W}h4+$ $\mathbb{Q}f7$**



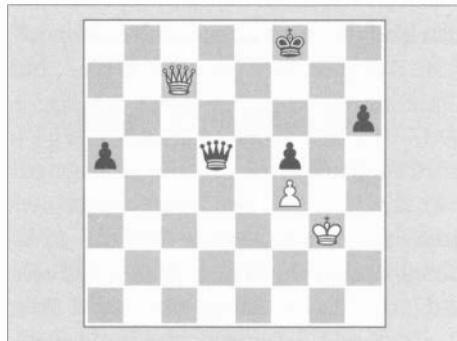
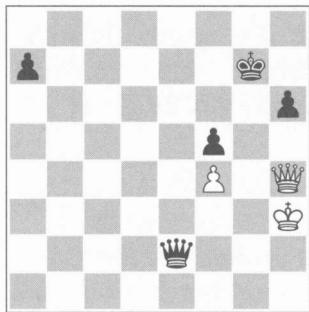
29.h7?

Now, it's Topalov's turn to err. The win could have been achieved only by the subtle 29. $\mathbb{W}g4$, and following 29... $\mathbb{W}e1+$ 30. $\mathbb{Q}g2$ $\mathbb{W}c3$ 31. $\mathbb{W}f5+$ White wins.

29... $\mathbb{W}e1+$ 30. $\mathbb{Q}g4$ $\mathbb{W}d1+$ 31. $\mathbb{Q}g5$ $\mathbb{W}d8+$ 32. $\mathbb{Q}h5$ $\mathbb{W}d5+$ 33. $\mathbb{W}g5$ $\mathbb{W}h1+$ 34. $\mathbb{Q}h4$ $\mathbb{W}d5+$ 35. $\mathbb{Q}g4$ $\mathbb{W}d1+$ 36. $\mathbb{Q}g3$ $\mathbb{W}e1+$ 1/2-1/2

Finally, after an epic struggle, Topalov acquiesces to a draw.

A terrific defensive performance.



75. Elbilia-Skripchenko

Czerniak Memorial, Tel Aviv 1998

Not only is White down material, it seems as though he cannot stop the exchange of queens. However, there is still one resource left!

1. $\mathbb{W}f2!$

Seem familiar? After this strong move, Black has no way to force the exchange of queens. Such a move probably came as a surprise to Black.

1... $\mathbb{W}h5+$

As in the last game, good defense leads to irritated ‘offense’. Skripchenko misses the best way to win the game. GM Avrukh points out that 1... $\mathbb{W}g4+$ 2. $\mathbb{Q}h2$ a5 3. $\mathbb{W}d4+$ $\mathbb{Q}g6$ 4. $\mathbb{W}b6+$ $\mathbb{Q}h5$ would have won.

**2. $\mathbb{Q}g3$ $\mathbb{W}g6+$ 3. $\mathbb{Q}h2$ $\mathbb{W}b6$ 4. $\mathbb{W}d2$ $\mathbb{Q}g6$ 5. $\mathbb{W}a2$ $\mathbb{Q}f6$ 6. $\mathbb{W}a1+$ $\mathbb{Q}f7$ 7. $\mathbb{W}a2+$ $\mathbb{Q}e7$ 8. $\mathbb{W}e2+$ $\mathbb{W}e6$ 9. $\mathbb{W}b5$ a6 10. $\mathbb{W}c5+$ $\mathbb{Q}e8$ 11. $\mathbb{W}c7$ $\mathbb{Q}f8$ 12. $\mathbb{Q}h1$ $\mathbb{W}d5+$ 13. $\mathbb{Q}h2$ a5
14. $\mathbb{Q}g3$**

White has defended extremely well for the past 14 moves. Now, the win is not easy at all to achieve despite Black’s extra material. As it happened in the last game, Black gets annoyed and commits a grave blunder, leading to White achieving perpetual check.

14... $\mathbb{W}e4?$

Instead, Rybka gives the following long variation: 14... $\mathbb{W}d3+!$ 15. $\mathbb{Q}h4$ $\mathbb{W}e4$ 16. $\mathbb{Q}g3$ and now Black has the extremely subtle 16... $\mathbb{Q}g8!!$, putting White in Zugzwang. Following 17. $\mathbb{W}d8+$ $\mathbb{Q}f7$ 18. $\mathbb{W}d7+$ $\mathbb{Q}f6$ 19. $\mathbb{W}d8+$ $\mathbb{W}e7$ 20. $\mathbb{W}b6+$ $\mathbb{W}e6$ Black escapes perpetual. White can still fight on, but objectively Black should be winning.

15. $\mathbb{W}xa5$

Now, the game is drawn.

15... $\mathbb{W}e3+$ 16. $\mathbb{Q}g2$ $\mathbb{W}xf4$ 17. $\mathbb{W}d8+$ $\mathbb{Q}f7$ 18. $\mathbb{W}d7+$ $\mathbb{Q}g6$ 19. $\mathbb{W}e8+$ $\mathbb{Q}g5$ 20. $\mathbb{W}e7+$ $\mathbb{Q}h5$ 21. $\mathbb{W}e8+$ $\mathbb{Q}h4$ 22. $\mathbb{W}e1+$ $\mathbb{Q}g4$ 23. $\mathbb{W}e2+$ $\mathbb{Q}g5$ 24. $\mathbb{W}e7+$ $\mathbb{Q}g6$ 25. $\mathbb{W}e6+$ 1½-½

Black’s king cannot escape the checks!

We see a similar pattern in this game: resilient and careful defense irritates your opponent and makes your job much easier. With the above examples in mind, take a look at the next game:



76. Matulovic-Savon

Skopje/Ohrid 1968

Black clearly has the advantage. His passed pawn is restrained by White's queen, but White's position is simply passive and immobile. On the other hand, Black's pieces occupy dominant positions: his queen is perfectly centralized, and his king can quickly come into action. This cannot be said about White's king because of the weakness of g2.

How do you defend such positions? First of all, it's important to realize that White cannot activate his pieces for the moment. He cannot produce something out of nothing; if his queen has to stay on d3, let it stay on d3. Black, if given many moves in a row, would still not be able to produce anything clear-cut. However, the only unpleasant idea Black has is to play ...f7-f5 and ... $\mathbb{Q}e4$. Thus, White should bring his king to at least e2. In order to do this, White has to make concessions, but such is the art of defense!

1.g3!

Such a move is very hard to make if you do not reason logically. 1... $\mathbb{Q}h1+$ looks scary, but following 2. $\mathbb{Q}e2$, the d4-pawn will be hanging. Again, notice the concept of *concrete calculation*. When defending, you can't say, 'Oh, this move

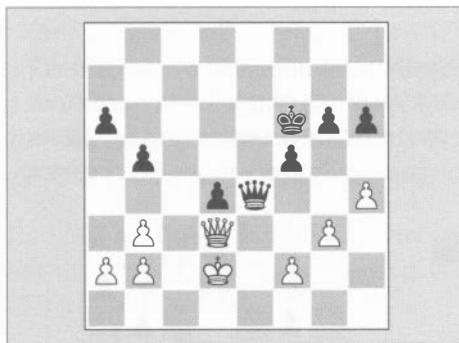
looks really scary, so I'm not going to conduct this plan.' Even the scariest looking moves can pay dividends.

1... $\mathbb{Q}g7$ 2. $\mathbb{Q}e2$ f5 3.h4!

In his spare time, White improves his pawn structure. Now, ... $\mathbb{Q}g2$ will be completely harmless. Note also that White is very patient and does not make unjustified ventures.

Curiously, when I first saw this position, I wondered, 'Why not 3. $\mathbb{Q}f3$?' On this tempting move, Black has the devastating 3... $\mathbb{Q}e4+!!$, and after 4. $\mathbb{Q}xe4$ fxe4 White cannot break the central pawn barrier. Black wins by transferring his king to b4, and playing ...a5-a4-a3.

3... $\mathbb{Q}e4+$ 4. $\mathbb{Q}d2$ $\mathbb{Q}f6$



Black is looking to slowly grind down White's defenses. First, ... $\mathbb{Q}xd3+$ is looming in the air. Second, Black's plan might be to play ... $\mathbb{Q}e5$, and break through with ...g6-g5/f5-f4.

The key to defending this position is, as always, not to panic. Think of it this way: you have absolutely nothing to lose. Why not try to save the game? The first thing that comes to mind is 5.f3, repelling Black's queen from its annoying post. Unfortunately for White, though, following 5... $\mathbb{Q}e5$ he will eventually have to make the even more

weakening move f3-f4, and Black's queen will then permanently ingrain itself on the dominant e4-square. White can play 5.♘c2, but this does nothing to stop Black's plan. This leaves us with queen moves. Since 5.♕e2 is met by 5...♗b1, the only move is...

5.♗f1!!

One of my favorite defensive moves! Not only is ♗f1 an incredibly difficult move to make, Black's progress is suddenly halted! ...g6-g5 can be met by ♘c1, and it is not clear what to do. GM Vladimir Savon, a great endgame player in his own right, finds a way to fuel his pressure despite Matulovic's terrific idea.

5...f4!

Finally, we will look at a defense that brings everything together. Black will start off with a seemingly hopeless queen and bishop v. queen and knight endgame. However, by deftly maneuvering his pieces and by finding merciless defensive resources on practically every move, Black manages to draw the game.



77. Naumann-Glienke

German Championship, Heringsdorf 2000

White has a very strong position, and Black's king is practically naked. In addition, Black has to find a way to save his piece. While this can be done in a multitude of ways, all but one lose quickly.

Black tries to weaken White's pawn structure and achieve material gains. At first sight, White's position seems to be on the brink of collapse. However, Matulovic finds yet another fantastic defensive move. Namely, he uses the weakness of the king to his favor.

**6.gxf4! ♕xf4+ 7.♔d3 ♕xh4
8.♗g2**

The position Matulovic had been striving for – Black cannot avoid perpetual check.

**8...h5 9.♕c6+ ♔g5 10.♕c5+ ♔f6
11.♕f8+ ♔e5 12.♕e8+ 1/2-1/2**

An excellent example of stubborn defense. Even after ...f5-f4, White did not panic and found a cold-blooded defensive resource.

Try not to think about how a computer will evaluate the position. Who cares if *Fritz* or *Rybka* will find a win? You are playing a human, and no matter what his or her strength is, a human will make mistakes!

1...♘d3!

Other defenses lost quickly: 1...♗e6 2.♕e5 ♕f7 3.♕xa5, or 1...♗xe4 2.♕f8+ ♔d7 3.♕xc5 ♕e5+ 4.♕g1 ♕e1+ 5.♕f1 and Black can resign in both cases.

2.♗g3

On 2.♕xe7, Bangiev gives 2...♗xf4 3.♕c5 ♘d3 4.♕b6 c5 5.♕xa5 ♘xb2 as unclear. On the tempting 6.♕b6, Black

has the great response 6... $\mathbb{Q}xa4!$, and it is White who has to look for a draw, as 7.bxa4 b3 loses!

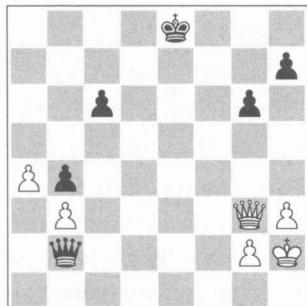
2... $\mathbb{W}xe4$ 3. $\mathbb{Q}c7$

At first sight, it seems as though Black has completely recovered from White's assault. Yet a closer look at the position reveals that Black is still faced with many problems. The main chronic issue for Black is the weakness of his king. While White can hardly organize an attack, he can use mating threats to win material or force Black's pieces into passivity. The queen and knight, similarly to the rook and knight, have to be kept active in order for them to be successful. Therefore, moves such as ... $\mathbb{Q}xb2$ should be the last you consider. Black keeps his pieces active while also defending his weaknesses.

3.. $\mathbb{W}d5$

Certainly, Black could have played 3... $\mathbb{Q}xb2$ 4. $\mathbb{Q}xa5$ c5. But why discompose his pieces when he can easily keep his tandem connected? In this concrete case, Black's position holds, but he may not be so lucky in another position! White is now forced to transpose into a queen endgame – a major relief for Black.

**4. $\mathbb{Q}xa5$ $\mathbb{W}xa5$ 5. $\mathbb{W}xd3$ $\mathbb{W}e5+$
6. $\mathbb{Q}g3$ $\mathbb{W}xb2$**



A very interesting position has arisen. On the one hand, Black's queen is very active and it can use the c3-square as a springboard for further activity. On the other hand, White's a4-pawn significantly restrains Black's activity. In order to draw, Black must be very careful not to fall for a tactic. A passed pawn supported by an active queen can be a naked king's worst nemesis!

7.a5 $\mathbb{Q}d7$

Black systematically improves his position. Now, the king will no longer be subject to numerous checks and is very close to the passed pawn. Above all, remember:

A queen is a very bad piece to halt the progress of a passed pawn. Therefore, you almost always need to include your king in the fight, no matter how many sacrifices are made.

In this case, Black's kingside pawns are left unattended, but he has to stop the a5-pawn at all costs.

**8. $\mathbb{W}b8$ $\mathbb{W}a1$ 9. $\mathbb{W}b7+$ $\mathbb{Q}d8$
10. $\mathbb{W}xb4$ $\mathbb{W}e5+$ 11. $\mathbb{Q}g1c5!$**

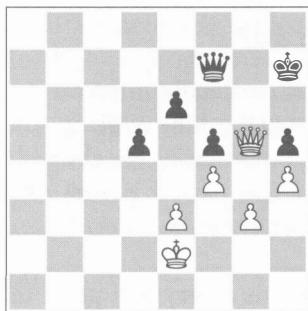
A crucial move which draws the game. Now White will not be able to move his b-pawn and his permanently weak king will not allow him to activate his queen. Of course, Black still needs to be careful.

**12. $\mathbb{W}b6+$ $\mathbb{Q}c8$ 13. $\mathbb{W}c6+$ $\mathbb{Q}b8$
14. $\mathbb{W}b5+$ $\mathbb{Q}a7$ 15. $\mathbb{Q}f2$ $\mathbb{W}f4+$
16. $\mathbb{Q}e2$ $\mathbb{W}e4+$ 17. $\mathbb{Q}d1$ $\mathbb{W}d4+$
18. $\mathbb{Q}e2$ $\mathbb{W}e4+$ 1/2-1/2**

Mastering Complex Endgames

Let's sum up what we have learned in this section:

- A) While passive defense can often be very boring, it can be the key to a draw.
 - B) Use your king in the defense. A queen is a weak blockader, and therefore, it often needs the support of the king.
 - C) If your opponent's king is weak, use your queen to the fullest extent! Often, a seemingly hopeless position can be saved by means of perpetual check.
- In the following exercises, remember the rules from all of the types of queen endings we have looked at. Calculation will never do you any harm, so take your time and use both your imaginative and analytical mind to try to think of the solutions.



4.1 Ossipov-A.Naroditsky

Reno 2008

Should Black defend passively or actively? Support your answer with concrete reasoning. Hint: Should Black defend against the king's sortie to e5?



4.3 Petrik-Barczay

Trencianske Teplice 1981

How can Black obtain the most winning chances? Hint: Construct a plan step-by-step.



4.2 Kasparov-Vallejo Pons

Linares 2005

What is the most efficient way for White to convert his material advantage?



4.4 Ten Vergert-Piasetski

Groningen 2009

Is there a way for Black to convert his initiative? If yes, give a concrete variation.

Chapter 5

Queen + Minor Piece(s) vs Queen + Minor Piece(s)

We are again faced with a challenging task. Just as in rook and minor piece endgames, queen and minor piece endgames contain many secrets, principles, and ideas. I really feel that endgame books do not devote enough attention to these types of endings. The main reason is that they are simply very complex! In an endgame manual, covering these types of endgames will take up the entire book. My goal is not to cover everything, but to simply help the reader improve his or her play in such endgames.

Queen + Bishop vs. Queen + Bishop

Opposite-Colored Bishops

In order to successfully understand these types of endings, it is important to note that Queen + OCB endings (from now on referred to as QOCB endings) have very little in common with Rook + OCB endings (from now on referred to as ROCB endings). First of all, the queen and bishop tandem can be used to produce incredible attacks in a matter of moves, so activating the king is a very difficult task. The passed pawn can still be dangerous, but the queen + bishop tandem can fight the passer much more successfully than a rook and a bishop. I could have included the following game in the end of this section, but in my opinion, analyzing it in the beginning will make it much easier to comprehend the ideas and principles that follow.



78. Smejkal-Karpov

Leningrad Interzonal 1973

The position is very double-edged. White has a far-advanced passed pawn

on a5, but it will not be able to move further than a6.

White's main drawback is his weak king on g2. If Black can manage to place a queen on f2, White will have to switch his attention to the defense of his king. If it were White's move, however, he would play 1. $\mathbb{W}d3$ and on 1... $\mathbb{Q}c5$ reply 2. $\mathbb{W}f3$. Therefore, Black has no time to waste:

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

Of course, Black will not be able to achieve a winning attack after 2... $\mathbb{W}f2+$, but at least White's king will

be precariously placed and the passed a-pawn will be restrained.

2.♕g4 ♕f2+ 3.♔h3 d6

The position has become even sharper. Black has abandoned his own king, but it is not clear how to make use of this factor. Smejkal played the tempting:

4.♖d7?

This move does not drastically change the evaluation of the position, but White had a very strong alternative: 4.♕e6!.



Analysis diagram

At first sight, Black seems to be losing. In fact, some commentators proclaimed that Karpov could have resigned had White played 4.♕e6. Of course, this is not true. The only testing response is 4...g6, after which White's best bet is to play 5.♖e7! (Karolyi & Aplin), when Black is at a major crossroads (I will quote Karolyi & Aplin's outstanding analysis as well as some of my own):

- A) 5...h6 is too weakening. After 6.♖e6 d5 7.♕e8+ and 8.♕xg6 Black is lost.
- B) 5...♗e3!? is very interesting, but loses to a study-like refutation. Let's take a look at White's responses:

B1) 6.♕xd6? leads to a draw after 6...♕f1+ 7.♔h4 g5+ 8.♔h5 ♕f7+ 9.♔h6 ♕g7+.

B2) 6.a6 is no better: 6...♕f1+ 7.♔h4 and now 7...h6! draws. For example, 8.♕e8+ ♔g7 9.♕d7+ ♔h8 10.♕c8+ ♔g7 and in order to avoid mate, White is forced to give perpetual.

B3) 6.♗e2! is the only winning response. Black cannot throw more oil into the fire. After 6...h5 7.♗c4 ♕f3 8.♗e6! White seems to have parried the counterplay. Karolyi gives an extensive analysis proving that White does indeed win.

C) 5...♕f1+! is in fact the only way to draw. After 6.♔h4 ♗e3 7.♕xd6 Black draws with 7...g5+ 8.♔h5 ♕f7+. However, since Karpov did not find ...♕f1+ even in his analysis, it is doubtful that he would have found it during the game!

4...g6 5.♖xc6 ♔g7

In two moves, Karpov has drastically improved the position of his king. Now, in case of an assault by Black on White's king, White will not have the additional opportunity of creating counterplay against Black's king.

6.♗b5 ♕b2 7.a6 ♗g1 8.♕e2



8...♕xc3!

Karpov makes the correct decision and keeps the queens on the board. The

ending arising after 8... $\mathbb{W}xe2$ 9. $\mathbb{Q}xe2$ is very unpleasant for Black due to the passed a6-pawn, which ties down Black's bishop.

9. $\mathbb{Q}c4$ $\mathbb{W}c1$ 10. $\mathbb{W}f1?$

In time trouble, Smejkal throws his advantage away. After something along the lines of 10. $\mathbb{Q}g2$, White would have had a long-lasting advantage. However, I think one could safely say that Karpov would have saved this position!

10... $\mathbb{W}h6+$

This sudden shot is easy to miss, especially in time-trouble. With the game adjourned, Smejkal had a chance to think of the right defensive approach, but the great Soviet players assisting Karpov had no trouble spotting the best winning chance.

**11. $\mathbb{Q}g2$ $\mathbb{W}xh2+$ 12. $\mathbb{Q}f3$ $\mathbb{W}h5+$
13. $\mathbb{Q}g2$ $\mathbb{W}h2+$ 14. $\mathbb{Q}f3$ $\mathbb{Q}d4!$**

Black centralizes his bishop and prepares to execute his plan. Because Black has won the pawn on h2, he can now advance his g- and h-pawns with impunity, which will not only torture the white king but also threaten to promote. Note that while White's passed pawn is under total control, Black's g- and h-pawns will be a formidable force once they get in motion.

A demoralized Smejkal failed to see the correct plan. Instead of waiting for Black to start pushing his pawns, White had to stop Black's idea at all costs.

**15. $\mathbb{Q}d5?$ $\mathbb{Q}c5$ 16. $\mathbb{Q}c6$ $\mathbb{Q}d4$
17. $\mathbb{Q}b7?$**

After this error, White's position becomes critical. The correct move was

17. $\mathbb{Q}d7!$. It will now be much harder for Black to push his pawns. Nevertheless, he should still eventually execute his plan.

17... $\mathbb{g}5$



18. $\mathbb{Q}g4?$

The decisive error. White only pours more grist into the mill and loses another pawn. It was still not too late to switch plans with 18. $\mathbb{Q}c8$.

**18... $\mathbb{h}5+$ 19. $\mathbb{Q}f5$ $\mathbb{W}xg3$ 20. $\mathbb{Q}e6$
 $\mathbb{W}f2$ 21. $\mathbb{W}b5$ $\mathbb{W}f6+$ 22. $\mathbb{Q}d5$ $g4$
23. $\mathbb{Q}c8$ $\mathbb{W}e7$ 24. $\mathbb{Q}f5$ $\mathbb{Q}h6$ 25. $\mathbb{W}f1$
 $\mathbb{W}c7$ 26. $\mathbb{W}e2$ $\mathbb{W}c5+$ 27. $\mathbb{Q}e6$ $\mathbb{Q}g5$
28. $\mathbb{W}f1$ $\mathbb{W}a3$ 29. $\mathbb{W}e2$ $\mathbb{Q}c5$
30. $\mathbb{W}d2+$ $\mathbb{W}e3$ 31. $\mathbb{W}a5$ $\mathbb{Q}b6$
32. $\mathbb{W}a2$ $\mathbb{W}f2$ 33. $\mathbb{W}b1$ $g3$ 34. $\mathbb{Q}h3$
 $\mathbb{Q}h4$ 35. $\mathbb{Q}g2$ $\mathbb{W}g1$ 36. $\mathbb{W}xg1$ $\mathbb{Q}xg1$
37. $\mathbb{Q}xd6$ $\mathbb{Q}d4$ 38. $a7$ $\mathbb{Q}xa7$
39. $\mathbb{Q}xe5$ $\mathbb{Q}g4$ 40. $\mathbb{Q}d5$ $h4$ 41. $e5$
 $h3$ 42. $\mathbb{Q}xh3+$ $\mathbb{Q}xh3$ 43. $e6$ $\mathbb{Q}c5$ 0-1**

This game was instructive from both the attacking and defensive standpoint. In the first critical position, Smejkal chose to win the c6-pawn instead of going for an attack against Black's king. Usually, if the king is so perilously placed as in Karpov's case, it is a good idea to attack it before the king flees to safety.

Karpov then instructively maneuvered his queen in such a way that it stopped both the passed a-pawn and threatened White's king. In time trouble, Smejkal

missed a tactical shot (... $\mathbb{W}h6+$) and, disheartened, failed to put up a good resistance. On the other hand, Karpov gave Smejkal no chances.

We will start out our analysis of QOCB endings with the attacking side.

As we already know, the queen and bishop can work extremely well to attack a king. In the game analyzed above, Smejkal could have put Black in serious trouble by means of 4. $\mathbb{W}e6$. Note that the opponent's bishop might often be completely useless in the defense! In the following game, by creating threats against Black's king, White manages to paralyze Black's pieces.



79. Gerusel-Schubert

German Bundesliga 1981/82

White is clearly better. His bishop is ingrained on the excellent square e6, and Black's g5-pawn sticks out like a sore thumb. In addition, White can use the f5-square as a base for his pieces. However, it's not entirely clear how White can make use of this. If White allows the transfer ... $\mathbb{Q}c1-f4$, Black's bishop will keep his position together and defend the g5-pawn. Therefore, White has to act fast.

Remember:

Playing impatiently and making use of an initiative are two different things.

In this case, in order to prevent Black from playing 1... $\mathbb{Q}c1$, White has to

threaten Black's king. This can be done only one way.

1. $\mathbb{W}f5!$ $\mathbb{W}e7$ 2. $h6!$

White paralyzes Black's queen. Due to the multitude of threats against Black's king ($\mathbb{W}f8+$, $\mathbb{W}f6+$, $\mathbb{W}f7$, etc.) Black will not be able to move his queen anytime soon. White also indirectly prevents 2... $\mathbb{Q}c1$, as after 3. $\mathbb{W}c2$ Black loses a piece due to the threat of 4. $\mathbb{W}c8+$. Black is forced to plug the c-file, thus paralyzing his bishop as well.

2. ... $\mathbb{Q}c5$ 3. $\mathbb{Q}f7$

White initiates the decisive attack. Black has too many weaknesses, and is forced to overextend. On the other hand, White continues to further compromise Black's position.

3. ... $\mathbb{Q}b6$

The alternative was 3... $\mathbb{W}d8$. However, after 4. $\mathbb{Q}h5$ $\mathbb{Q}d4$ 5.b4 a6 6.a4 (this seems strange, but the idea will be understood in a move!) 6...b6 and now White has a series of tactical blows to win the game: 7. $\mathbb{Q}e8!$ $\mathbb{W}e7$ 8. $\mathbb{Q}b5!$ and White wins the a6-pawn and the game.

4. $\mathbb{W}c8+$ $\mathbb{Q}d8$



5. ♔e6?!

White misses the most efficient winning plan. After 5. ♔f2 ♕c7 6. ♔xc7!

A simple yet nice game. White showed that an attack doesn't necessarily have to result in a mate. It can be used to compromise the opponent's position and make the win much easier.

The next game is much more complicated. The attack on Black's king will not come easily, and in order to make progress, White will have to combine the attack with subtle maneuvers.

□



80. Kholmov-Baikov

Moscow 1988

The position seems drawish. Black's pawn structure is not ideal, but he has the terrific e5 square for his pieces. In addition, the weakness of Black's king cannot be easily exploited. Kholmov, however, is undeterred by these factors. First of all, Black's king is located on a much more precarious square than

♔xc7 7. ♔e3, Black would have been completely lost as his king cannot leave the prison!

6... ♕c7 6. ♕a8

Now, 6. ♔xc7?! also wins, as 6... ♔xc7 7. ♔f2 ♔d8 8. ♔e3 ♔e7 9. ♔e4 ♔f8 is met by 10. ♔f5! ♔xh6 11. ♔f6 and Black cannot save the d6-pawn.

6... ♕c2+ 7. ♔g3 ♕c7 8. ♕xa7 1-0

Now, the win after 8... ♕b6 9. ♕xb6 ♔xb6 is even more convincing, as White has an extra pawn.

A simple yet nice game. White showed that an attack doesn't necessarily have to result in a mate. It can be used to compromise the opponent's position and make the win much easier.

The next game is much more complicated. The attack on Black's king will not come easily, and in order to make progress, White will have to combine the attack with subtle maneuvers.

it might seem. If White gives Black a chance to play ... ♔e5, he can safely agree to a draw. Therefore...

1. ♔d3!

Now, Black cannot play 1... ♔e5 because the bishop will block Black's queen. Black therefore has to allow White's queen to penetrate.

1... ♕f8!

Black finds the best response. On 1...b4?, White wins by 2. ♔e6+ ♔h7 3. ♔c4! and 4. ♕g8+.

2. ♔e6

It's crucial to keep the f5-pawn on the board, as it controls the key e6- and g6-squares. Now, Black is in serious trouble. Already, ♔e4-d5 can be very dangerous.

2...♝e7 3.♛d7!

Again, White uses the weakness of Black's king to gain material. Black's queen has to stay on c5 in order to defend the c8-square, and therefore Black must give up a pawn.

3...b4 4.axb4 axb4 5.cxb4 ♛d6

On 5...♝xb4, White wins with 6.♛c8+ ♚f7 7.♝c4+.

6.♛c8+ ♚d8 7.♝c4

Clearly, Black still has a very solid position. White cannot push the passed b-pawn further than b5, and therefore must also pressure Black's king. This is not very hard to do, as Black's bishop cannot impede its counterpart!

**7...♝b6 8.♝c2 ♛d4 9.♛e6 ♛e3
10.♛d6+ ♚g8**



11.♔a2!

A very strong move. White's king plays a major part in the attack. As I've mentioned, grandmaster Mihai Suba once said that bad bishops defend good pawns. Well, in this case, the bad king defends the good bishop!

11...♚h7 12.♝b3

In order to defend against ♜f8(♛b8) followed by ♜g8#, Black must embark

on a dangerous king sortie. White will use the unfortunate position of Black's king to win material.

**12..h5 13.♜f8 h4 14.♜g8+ ♚h6
15.♜h8+ ♚g5 16.♜xg7+ ♚xf5
17.♜g4+ ♚e4 18.♜xh4**



White has won a second pawn and Black's king is only obstructing his own pieces. Black tries to put up a resistance, but White wins without any trouble. I strongly recommend that the reader takes a look at Kholmov's polished technique.

**18..♚d3 19.♜xf6 ♚e2 20.♜c3
♚f2 21.♜c2+ ♚g3 22.♜d5 ♚d4
23.b5 ♚h2 24.♜f3 ♛e6+ 25.♚a3
♚g3 26.b4 ♛e1 27.♚a4 ♛a1+
28.♚b3 ♛a7 29.♚d3 ♛e3
30.♜g6+ ♚f2 31.h4 ♛b8 32.♜c6
♜g8+ 33.♚c4 ♛d8 34.h5 ♛d6
35.♚c2+ 1-0**

From this game, we learn that an attack does not have to result in a mate or substantial material gains. White did win a pawn, but the main point of his attack was to weaken the black position. In order to defend against mate, Black had to lose a second pawn and place his king in a dangerous situation.

In QOCB endings, a queen + bishop battery can be very effective, especially when threatening a king. In the following study position, White is dominant but it is not entirely clear how to win.



81. Naroditsky

Study position 2010

White's pieces are excellently coordinated, while Black's position is a jumble of weak pawns and gaping holes. Yet his position is very tough to break. With a queen and bishop alone, White cannot forcefully gain a material advantage. For example, after 1.♕g6 ♕g7 2.♗e8+ ♔f8 White cannot make progress. Therefore, the king is needed.

In situations where the opponent's pieces are tied up, don't be afraid to use your king to penetrate into the opponent's camp.

If White can get his king to h5, Black will simply be overextended. However, getting the king there is not an easy task! First of all, White has to consider ...h6-h5. For example, after 1.g3 ♕g7 2.♔g2 h5, White has no way to penetrate with his king. However, 2...h5 has created an additional weakness and White can use the passivity of Black's pieces to exploit it: 3.h4! (more effective than 3.♔d1?! h4!) and 3...♗g8 fails to 4.♗e6+. Otherwise, White is threat-

ening the simple but deadly 4.♔d1. Therefore, we can see that White *can* get his king to h5 without trouble.

**1.g3! ♕g7 2.♔g2 ♕e7 3.♔h3 ♕g7
4.♔g4 ♕e7**

5.♔h5.



Analysis diagram

Black has two ideas: he can either force a queen trade with 5...♗f7+ (since 6.♔xh6?? fails to 6...♗f8#) or can continue the passive defense with 5...♕g7. However, on 5...♕g7 White can play 6.♗g6 which leads to practically the same situation as after 5...♗f7+. We will therefore look only at the latter. I advise the reader to follow the extensive analysis. Although there are many variations, they are extremely entertaining and rich with astounding resources.

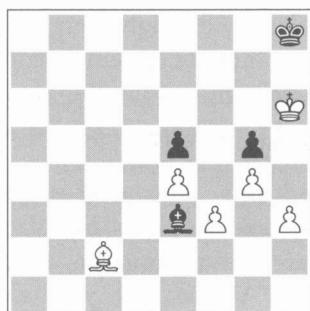
Analysis: 5...♗f7+

The endgame after 6.♗g6 ♕xg6+ 7.♔xg6 looks hopeless for Black, but things are not as simple as they look. Obviously, White will win a pawn. Since the f6-pawn is holding Black's position together, he can try to defend it with 7...♔e7. On 8.♔f7 ♔d8 9.♔e8

$\mathbb{Q}a5$ 10. $\mathbb{Q}e7$ Black holds with 10... $\mathbb{Q}g7$. However, the more straightforward 8. $\mathbb{Q}xh6!$ seems to win. For example, after 8... $\mathbb{Q}g8$ 9. $\mathbb{Q}g6$ $\mathbb{Q}d8$ 10. $h4$ (the point – White advances the pawn to h7, where it will trap the black king. Only then will White proceed to win the f6-pawn) 10... $gxh4$ 11. $gxh4$ $\mathbb{Q}h8$ 12. $h5$ $\mathbb{Q}g8$ 13. $h6$ $\mathbb{Q}h8$ 14. $\mathbb{Q}f7$ and wins.

Nevertheless, Black has the amazing idea 11... $f5!!$, and White cannot win! For example, following 12. $\mathbb{Q}xf5$ $\mathbb{Q}xh4$ 13. $f3$ $\mathbb{Q}f2$ Black holds. Therefore, White first needs to play 10. $\mathbb{Q}f5!$ and only then advance the h-pawn.

Black's resource highlights the importance of being patient when winning such endings. But this is not all! In my joint analysis with *Fritz*, I found the incredible defensive resource 7... $\mathbb{Q}b4!!$. Now, the straightforward 8. $\mathbb{Q}xf6$ draws after 8... $g4!$ and 9... $\mathbb{Q}e1$. A better idea is 8. $e4$. First, let's see White's ideal set-up. After 8... $\mathbb{Q}c5$ 9. $f3$ $\mathbb{Q}g1$ 10. $h3$ $\mathbb{Q}f2$ 11. $g4$ $\mathbb{Q}g8$ 12. $\mathbb{Q}xf6$ $\mathbb{Q}d4$ (on 12... $\mathbb{Q}h7$, White wins the h6-pawn by means of $\mathbb{Q}b3-f7-g6-f5$ and $\mathbb{Q}g6$) 13. $\mathbb{Q}g6$ $\mathbb{Q}e3$ 14. $\mathbb{Q}xh6$ $\mathbb{Q}h8$ the following position arises:



Analysis diagram

The position looks dead drawn. After placing a bishop on f4, Black can safely play ... $\mathbb{Q}g8-h8-g8$ or ... $\mathbb{Q}e3-f4-e3$, etc. Of course, White would love to play $h3-h4$ and promote the g-pawn. This, unfortunately, is easier said than done. In order to play $h3-h4$, White must first place the bishop on f1, from where it will be able to block Black's h4-pawn by means of $\mathbb{Q}h3$. This is done by 15. $\mathbb{Q}d3$ $\mathbb{Q}f4$ 16. $\mathbb{Q}f1$ $\mathbb{Q}g8$ 17. $\mathbb{Q}g6$ $\mathbb{Q}h8$ and now following 18. $h4!!$ $gxh4$ 19. $\mathbb{Q}h3$ White wins without difficulty.

Unfortunately, Black doesn't need to be so cooperative! On move 9, he has the incredible 9... $h5!!$. The idea is that after 10. $\mathbb{Q}xh5$ $\mathbb{Q}g7$ White will not be able to evict Black's king from g7. On 10. $\mathbb{Q}xf6$, Black draws with 10... $\mathbb{Q}g1$.

In situations where you cannot execute your plan, ask yourself, '*Is there a way to foil the opponent's antidote before embarking on the plan?*' Since Black has no counterplay in the position before $\mathbb{Q}h5$, the natural question is, can White set-up the e4-f3-g4-h3 pawn structure before trading queens? Clearly, the answer is yes. After 5. $h3$ $\mathbb{Q}g7$ 6. $f3$ $\mathbb{Q}e7$ 7. $\mathbb{Q}h5!$ $\mathbb{Q}f7+$ 8. $\mathbb{Q}g6$ $\mathbb{Q}xg6+$ 9. $\mathbb{Q}xg6$ $\mathbb{Q}c5$ 10. $e4$ $\mathbb{Q}f2$ 11. $g4$ $h5$ 12. $\mathbb{Q}xf6!$ $hxg4$ 13. $h4$ Black can still play 11... $h5$, but the move loses its effectiveness. After 12. $\mathbb{Q}xf6$ Black cannot defend both g5 and e5. Therefore, the winning line is:

**5. $h3$ $\mathbb{Q}g7$ 6. $f3$ $\mathbb{Q}e7$ 7. $\mathbb{Q}h5$ $\mathbb{Q}f7+$
8. $\mathbb{Q}g6$ $\mathbb{Q}xg6+$ 9. $\mathbb{Q}xg6$ $\mathbb{Q}c5$ 10. $e4$
 $\mathbb{Q}f2$ 11. $g4$ $h5$ 12. $\mathbb{Q}xf6!$ $hxg4$
13. $h4$** 1-0

An amazing endgame which contains seemingly endless resources for both sides.

The main lesson we learn is that patience might be the difference between a win and a draw! The process for finding the correct plan is to first think of the ideal position you want to achieve and then *identify the obstructing factor(s)*. In this case, the thrust ...h6-h5 did not allow White to win the game. By improving his pawn structure first, White foiled the ...h6-h5 attempt and won without trouble. If you've ever wondered how strong players find a very complex winning plan, now you know!

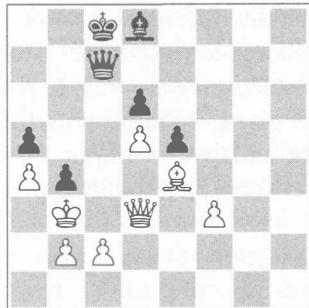
The three-part method of A) Finding the ideal position you want to achieve, B) Identifying what is not allowing you to achieve this position, and C) Eliminating the 'what', is very effective. That is the fundamental difference between the technique of experienced endgame masters and 'endgame rookies' (no pun intended!). Experienced players will take the time to find the obstructing factor and eliminate it, while an inexperienced player will immediately try to achieve the winning plan without making any improvements. In fact, this difference can be applied to chess in general! The reason many players lose winning positions is because they are not patient and burn all their bridges instead of improving the position first.

A common misconception, in my opinion, is that you need experience to master endgame technique. In other words, you need to play many endgames in order to master the art of realizing an endgame advantage. While experience cannot hurt, endgame technique depends on one main factor: patience. If you cannot make an idea work (i.e. the queen trade followed by a timely h3-h4 thrust), you have to resist the temptation to tell yourself, '*Oh, I'll trade and then find something along the way*', and instead find the right way to improve your position first. This bit of endgame psychology might seem general, but the specific three-step method of finding the correct winning plan should be very effective.

'Okay, I get the general psychology part, but let's get to specifics. How do I try to win an end-game if I cannot find a winning plan?'

I have heard many players ask the above question. The truth is that not every end-game advantage can be converted! In QOCB endings especially, a dominating position does not necessarily mean that the side with the advantage can transform it into a tangible one. Yet the fact that the position is objectively drawn does not mean you should offer a draw. You can always try to trick your opponent. In other words, everyone is human, so the harder you make the draw for him, the bigger a chance he will make a mistake. The main mistake of players when discovering that there is no concrete winning plan is to panic and make an irrational decision, thus making the draw easier for the opponent.

The following game is very instructive. Upon discovering that he has no concrete win, White commits exactly the sin I just described. In truth, he could have muddied the water and significantly increased the chance of Black making a mistake.



82. Vardanyan-Naroditsky

Los Angeles 2006

White is a pawn up, but Black has built a sturdy fortress. All of his pawns are defended and White cannot create a passer. Clearly, White's pieces are all placed optimally. However, White still has a hard time breaking through Black's fortress.

White, discouraged by Black's rock-solid position, made the draw very easy for Black:

1. $\mathbb{Q}b5 \mathbb{Q}b6$ 2. $\mathbb{Q}xb6 \mathbb{Q}xb6$ 3. $\mathbb{Q}c4 \mathbb{Q}b7$ 4. $\mathbb{Q}b5 \mathbb{Q}d4$ 5. $c3$ $bxc3$ 6. $b3$ $c2!$ 7. $\mathbb{Q}xc2 \mathbb{Q}c3$ 8. $\mathbb{Q}c4 \mathbb{Q}b4$ ½-½

Of course, White did not have to trade queens! Interestingly, though, White was not far from the correct approach. Following 1. $\mathbb{Q}b5 \mathbb{Q}b6$, much more tricky was 2. $\mathbb{Q}c6+$.

In order to fool your opponent, you have to 'help him make a mistake'. This is done most effectively by giving him a choice of moves at critical junctures. In the situation after 2. $\mathbb{Q}c6+$, Black has three moves, all of which need to be considered. We shall take a look at all three:

A) 2... $\mathbb{Q}xc6$ is the most straightforward response. After 3. $dxc6$, the tempting 3... $\mathbb{Q}b6$ seems to draw after 4. $\mathbb{Q}c4$

$\mathbb{Q}c7$, but Black cannot find a move after 5. $\mathbb{Q}b5!$.

The right defensive approach is the counter-intuitive 3... $\mathbb{Q}c7$! 4. $\mathbb{Q}c4 \mathbb{Q}b6$. However, White still wins after 5. $\mathbb{Q}d5 \mathbb{Q}c7$ 6. $\mathbb{Q}e6 \mathbb{Q}b8$ 7. $\mathbb{Q}d7 \mathbb{Q}c7$ 8. $\mathbb{Q}c8$ $d5+$ 9. $\mathbb{Q}xd5 \mathbb{Q}d6$ and White now has the very nice idea 10. $c3!$ $bxc3$ 11. $bxc3$ and Black cannot stop $c4-c5+$, winning. I guarantee you that many players would have immediately taken the queen! We can already see the advantage of making the draw tougher for your opponent.

B) 2... $\mathbb{Q}c7$ is an attempt to keep Black's fortress as it is. The ending after 3. $\mathbb{Q}xc7+$ $\mathbb{Q}xc7$ 4. $\mathbb{Q}c4 \mathbb{Q}b7$ is drawn, as Black's king will not give ground. Therefore, White's best bet is to try to penetrate through Black's fortress with the queens on the board.

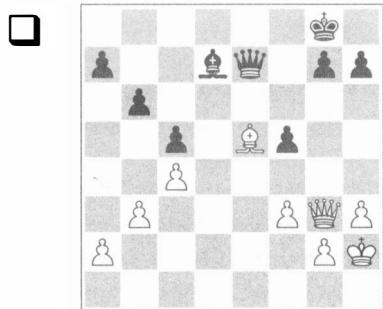
In such positions, you do not need to think of any extraordinary plans. Simply play naturally! Following 3. $\mathbb{Q}c4 \mathbb{Q}b8$ 4. $\mathbb{Q}f5$ Black is in a very tough situation, as after 4... $\mathbb{Q}e7$ 5. $\mathbb{Q}b5 \mathbb{Q}d8$ 6. $\mathbb{Q}xc7+$ $\mathbb{Q}xc7$ 7. $\mathbb{Q}c6$ Black is in Zugzwang yet again. Note that because Black is so cramped, White can often put him in Zugzwang and force either material losses or major concessions.

C) 2... $\mathbb{Q}c7!$ is the only correct move, although White certainly has good winning chances here as well. Black's main idea is to keep the queen on $b6$ and not concede any further space. The most testing response is 3. $\mathbb{Q}c4$, when the tempting 3... $\mathbb{Q}d4+?$ is useless after 4. $\mathbb{Q}b5$. In order to draw, Black has to find an array of accurate moves. After 3... $\mathbb{Q}b8$ 4. $\mathbb{Q}xb6+$ $\mathbb{Q}xb6$ 5. $\mathbb{Q}b5$ (Diagram), the position looks hopeless for Black.



Analysis diagram

Overall, we can clearly see that even though the endgame was objectively drawn, White could have made the draw very difficult for Black to achieve. It's important to understand that in chess, many objectively drawn games are lost because the attacking side *makes the draw as difficult as possible for the opponent*. As the following game shows, a draw may be so hard to reach that even a strong player can easily slip up:



83. Ibrahimov-Dziuba

European Championship, Warsaw 2005

White is obviously better, but Black has a solid position that is hard to breach. If Black plays very carefully, he should be able to draw the game. Instead of giving up hope, however, Ibrahimov found the best way to make the draw difficult for Dziuba.

In order to try to win, White has to attack the a7-b6-c5 pawn chain, which is currently undefended. A queen would be the best piece to attack these pawns. In order to attack Black's camp, White's bishop must leave its post on e5.

However, 5... $\mathbb{Q}b7!$ saves the day. Note that 5... $\mathbb{Q}a7$ 6. $\mathbb{Q}c6$ $\mathbb{Q}c5$ 7. $\mathbb{Q}d3$ b3!? 8.c3! wins for White.

After 5... $\mathbb{Q}b7$, it turns out that White cannot win, for example: 6. $\mathbb{Q}f5$ $\mathbb{Q}c7$ 7. $\mathbb{Q}d7$ $\mathbb{Q}b6$ 8. $\mathbb{Q}c6+$ and now Black has 8... $\mathbb{Q}a7!$, when 9.c3 bxc3 10.bxc3 $\mathbb{Q}c5$ establishes an impenetrable fortress.

1. $\mathbb{Q}c3!$

Defending this endgame with black is not an experience one wants to have! The common misconception is that grandmasters somehow find the fun in defending endgames where they have no chance to win. This is untrue! Simply speaking, *there is no fun* in defending these types of endings! In this particular case, dealing with the weakness of the a7-pawn is not the most entertaining task for Black. Therefore, instead of dwelling on the objective evaluation of the position, think about how hard it is for Black to defend. Then ask yourself, '*Is there a way to make that defense even harder?*'

1... $\mathbb{Q}e8$ 2. $\mathbb{W}b8$ $\mathbb{Q}f7$ 3. $\mathbb{Q}e5$

Already, White has made progress. His queen has found its way into Black's camp, and the threat of 4. $\mathbb{Q}c7$ is very annoying. The bottom line is – *If your opponent manages to draw, hats off to him. But why make life easy for him?* If you gain

a reputation as someone who fights to the last drop of blood, you will gain a big psychological edge when trying to convert an endgame advantage. If you will be known as someone who agrees to a draw without trying to win, players will not be reluctant to transform the game into a tough-to-defend endgame.

3...a5?

Immediately, Black makes a serious error which should have lost quickly. The only defense was 3... $\mathbb{Q}c6!$. Black probably feared 4. $\mathbb{Q}c7$, but the game is drawn after 4... $\mathbb{W}e2$ 5. $\mathbb{W}xa7$ $\mathbb{Q}xf3!$ 6. $\mathbb{Q}e5+$ $\mathbb{Q}e6$ 7. $\mathbb{W}xg7$ $\mathbb{W}xg2+$ 8. $\mathbb{W}xg2$ $\mathbb{Q}xg2$ 9. $\mathbb{Q}c7$ $\mathbb{Q}e4$ 10. $\mathbb{Q}xb6$ $\mathbb{Q}d6$.

4. $\mathbb{Q}d6!$

The right move played with the wrong idea! White's point was simply to repel the black queen from its post on e7. The correct strategy, however, is much more simple: $\mathbb{Q}d6$ is played so that after $\mathbb{W}xb6$, the bishop will be defended!

4... $\mathbb{W}d7$ 5. $\mathbb{Q}c7?$

Why not 5. $\mathbb{W}xb6$? Interestingly, this move is not mentioned by GM Müller in his annotations in *Fundamental Chess Endings*. Since White has destroyed the base of Black's pawn chain, a second pawn on c5 also falls. The connected passers will be unstoppable.

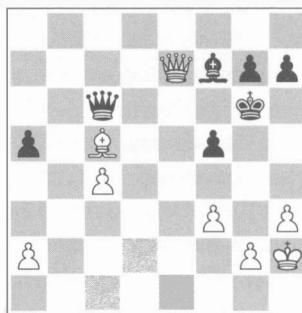
5...b5! 6. $\mathbb{W}a7$ bxc4 7.bxc4 $\mathbb{W}c6$

Finally, we will take a look at a game in which the knockout punch will come very unexpectedly. An attentive reader may ask, '*How do I know when to look for a knockout punch?*'

In a position where your opponent has no real weaknesses, being able to deliver a knockout punch is highly unlikely. A weak king is a big *alert* sign. If your opponent has a chronically weak king that is being defended by both the queen and bishop, you always should look for a decisive blow. A weak pawn or square is

Black finds the right defense. There is no effective discovered check. White had probably relied on the idea that follows, but Black defends without too much difficulty.

8. $\mathbb{Q}d6+$ $\mathbb{Q}g6$ 9. $\mathbb{W}e7$ $\mathbb{Q}f7$ 10. $\mathbb{Q}xc5$



10... $\mathbb{Q}xc4??$

Black probably grabbed the pawn happily, thinking that the game was drawn. Such optimistic thinking often results when a lost position is defended. If you have made a mistake and let your opponent out of the hole, do not lose control and preferably set a trap that doesn't harm your position. Your opponent, in the euphoria of the moment, can miss a simple tactical refutation.

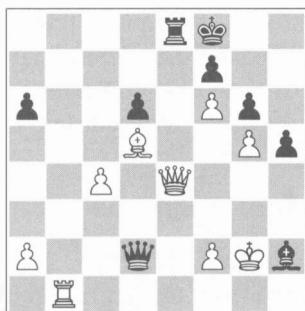
11. $\mathbb{Q}d4$ $\mathbb{Q}f7$ 12. $\mathbb{W}e5!$

1-0

Black had missed this deadly resource and threw in the towel. 12... $\mathbb{W}f6$ loses after 13. $\mathbb{W}g3+$ $\mathbb{W}g5$ 14. $\mathbb{W}d6+$ $\mathbb{Q}h5$ 15.g4+ fxg4 16.fxg4+ $\mathbb{Q}h4$ 17. $\mathbb{W}g3#$ (Müller).

harder to use for immediate dividends, but being able to somehow win material by means of a sudden tactic is also a very real possibility.

In the following two positions, the attacking side will have a dominating position. Yet the defending side will be holding. My advice is to cover up the text and try to find the crucial move by yourself, only then consult the game score.



84. Filippov-Van Wely

FIDE World Championship, Tripoli 2004

Clearly, White has a dominant position. The f6-pawn is controlling the important e7- and g7-squares, and White's bishop on d5 is ruling over the whole position. On the other side, Black's pieces are all scattered. Unfortunately, it looks as though Black is holding. For now, he is attacking White's queen and the g5-pawn is weak.

Instead of immediately playing $\mathbb{W}f3$, White asked himself, '*Can I use the position of Black's precariously placed king to my favor?*' When you have a pawn such as the one on f6, the chances that there will be a strong tactic are very high; Black's position is simply too fragile. In this case, White has the sudden shot

1. $\mathbb{B}b8!$

This seems to win immediately. After 1... $\mathbb{B}xb8$, White mates with 2. $\mathbb{W}e7+$ $\mathbb{Q}g8$ 3. $\mathbb{W}xf7+$ $\mathbb{Q}h8$ 4. $\mathbb{W}g7\#$. However, Black finds a strong resource:

1... $\mathbb{Q}e5!$

This blocks White's queen and renews the threat of 2... $\mathbb{W}xg5+$. Again, White has to find a way to continue his initiative. After

2. $\mathbb{W}xe8+$ $\mathbb{Q}xe8$

an important position arises. Of course, White can draw easily with 3. $\mathbb{W}e3$, but White's goal is to win, not draw.

Despite the fact that Black's e5-bishop is holding the e-file, it's important to understand that the position of Black's king is not improved. If White can somehow get his queen to a8 or b7, Black would hardly be able to defend. Since the f6-pawn controls the important e7-square, White did not hesitate much in playing:

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

A terrific blow which leads to forced mate. Black cannot take the bishop because of 3... $\mathbb{Q}xf7$ 4. $\mathbb{W}b7+$ $\mathbb{Q}e6$ 5. $\mathbb{W}c8+$ $\mathbb{Q}f7$ 6. $\mathbb{W}d7+$. Therefore, Black has to embark on a rather dangerous king adventure. Of course, White can always win with $\mathbb{W}xg6$ if there will not be forced mate.

3... $\mathbb{Q}d8$ 4. $\mathbb{W}a8+$ $\mathbb{Q}c7$ 5. $\mathbb{W}a7+$ $\mathbb{Q}d8$ 6. $\mathbb{W}b8+$ $\mathbb{Q}d7$ 7. $\mathbb{Q}e8+$ 1-0

A great game which highlights the fact that a knockout blow might come at an unexpected moment.

Finally, we will look at a game in which Black's position will be clearly worse but defendable. White checks for a quick knockout blow and finds one out of the blue!



85. Lenderman-Holt

Chicago Open 2010

White is two pawns up. Moreover, *both* of these pawns are passed. The d6-pawn threatens to advance at any moment, but for now Black's position holds. In addition, the irksome threat of ... $\mathbb{W}e4+$ is looming in the air.

The first move that comes to mind is the natural 1. $\mathbb{Q}e5$. Of course, this move cannot be bad; White defends against ... $\mathbb{W}e4+$ and prepares $\mathbb{W}d4$ followed by d6-d7. However, after 1... $\mathbb{W}h1$ Black gets *unnecessary chances*. Yes, White should still win after 2. $\mathbb{W}e2 \mathbb{Q}g8$ 3.c4,

Let us sum up what we have learned in this section:

- A) If you can manage to keep your queen and bishop active, your opponent will often have a hard time making moves!
- B) Remember the three-step process you can use in order to find the right plan: first, you determine the ideal position you want to have. Second, you determine what is obstructing you from achieving the position, and third, you try to find ways to remove the obstruction.
- C) A knockout blow can come at a completely unexpected moment. In positions where your opponent's pieces are holding by a hair's breadth, look for knockout blows!

but the win will be slow and cumbersome. In such positions, it's always a good idea to look for a faster win.

If White could somehow trade queens, his passed pawn on d6 would be unstoppable. Immediately, the move 1. $\mathbb{Q}xg7+$ comes to mind. However, things are not as simple as they seem. In order to be sure that a sacrificial knockout actually works, you have to calculate. In the game, White found the continuation:

1. $\mathbb{Q}xg7+! \mathbb{Q}xg7$

The alternative, 1... $\mathbb{W}xg7$, leads to a worse version of the game continuation after 2. $\mathbb{W}c8+ \mathbb{Q}h7$ 3. $\mathbb{W}c7$.

2. $\mathbb{W}c7+ \mathbb{W}xc7$ 3.dxc7 e5!

This move is easy to miss when calculating 1. $\mathbb{Q}xg7$. However, Black cannot stop White's armada of passed pawns.

4.fxe5 h5 5. $\mathbb{Q}d4$

White's plan is simple and deadly: He will transfer his king to b7 or b8.

5... $\mathbb{Q}f7$ 6. $\mathbb{Q}c5$

1-0

A very nice game which teaches us that a knockout blow does not have to win immediately: it can simply transform the position into a winning endgame.

Now, on to defense. While defending QOCB endings can often be a tedious task, knowing how to defend these endgames can save you many points. First of all, when defending QOCB endings, you can often turn the tables and start a counter-attack.

You have to remember that space is vital in QOCB endings. If you are completely restricted, your opponent will have an easy time taking advantage of your weaknesses. On the other hand, if you have space, you can set up a fortress and your opponent will have a harder time breaking through.

First, let's take a look at what can happen if you give up too much ground without putting up a fight.



86. Yusupov-Timman

Candidates' Match, Linares 1992

White has a clear-cut initiative and a long-lasting advantage at the same time. The dark squares (especially d4) are completely in White's hands, while Black's queen and bishop are not coordinated and thus cannot organize counterplay along the light squares. However, winning the game will be very tough. Timman plays the most obvious move:

1... $\mathbb{Q}e6?$

This move looks completely natural; White stops the e5-pawn and plugs the a1-h8 diagonal. However, Dvoretsky captures the essence of the position in two thoughtful and instructive sentences: 'In these types of positions, it's crucial not to defend passively. Instead,

creating your own threats is often a much more effective way to defend.' Of course, this 'rule' is not engraved in stone. In this particular case, however, White will slowly push Black off the board if he does not contest White's plans.

Therefore, the active and testing 1... $\mathbb{Q}f4!$ (Dvoretsky) is the best defense. In fact, White also needs to be careful, as 2.e6? $\mathbb{Q}g4!$ is bad for White. As it often happens, the problems occur after a quiet continuation, namely 2.h3!. Black is now at a crossroads:

A) 2... $\mathbb{Q}b3$ is the most tempting response. Black cuts off White's queen and tries to take the initiative. However, after 3.e6! $\mathbb{Q}e4$ 4. $\mathbb{Q}h8$ d4 5. $\mathbb{Q}xd4$ $\mathbb{Q}xd4$ 6. $\mathbb{Q}xd4$ White retains winning chances. Still, after 6... $\mathbb{Q}f8$ Black should draw with careful play.

B) 2... $\mathbb{Q}d7?$ loses after 3. $\mathbb{Q}xb6$ $\mathbb{Q}c1+$ 4. $\mathbb{Q}h2$ $\mathbb{Q}xc3$ (Black does not have a perpetual because f2 is defended!) 6. $\mathbb{Q}d8+$ and White should win the ensuing endgame.

C) 2... $b5!$ is the most accurate. Compared to line A, Black will not have to waste time on playing ...b6-b5. Following 3.e6 $\mathbb{Q}e4$ 4. $\mathbb{Q}h8$ d4 5. $\mathbb{Q}xd4$ $\mathbb{Q}xd4$ 6. $\mathbb{Q}xd4$ $\mathbb{Q}f8$, Black draws without difficulty.

The analysis clearly proves that active defense is much more effective than passive defense in this case. Generally speaking, it's easier to defend when you have the possibility of turning the tables. If you are playing for two results, it's more likely that you will lose patience and make a mistake.

2. $\mathbb{Q}d4$

In one move, White has made major progress. A queen does not belong on the square e6; generally speaking a queen is not a good blockader and this position is not an exception. Already, it is too late to activate the queen and Black will slowly get pushed off the board.

2... $\mathbb{Q}b3$ 3.h3 h5?!

This makes the job easier for White. Note that Black already loses patience and creates another serious weakness (the g5-square). Instead, 3...b5 was a more tenacious defense. A possible line is: 4. $\mathbb{W}d2$ $\mathbb{Q}f7$ 5. $\mathbb{W}h6$ $\mathbb{Q}g8$ 6. $\mathbb{W}g5$ $\mathbb{Q}f7$ 7.g4! $\mathbb{Q}c2$ (note that once you have started to defend passively, it's very tough to mobilize your pieces. Black needs to try and stop the opponent's threats, not create his own) 8.f4 $\mathbb{Q}e4$ and Black's position is defendable. However, after White plays $\mathbb{Q}f2-g3-h4$, $\mathbb{W}d8$ and $\mathbb{Q}g5$, Black's position will become even more cramped. Overall, White should win even after good defense from Black.

4. $\mathbb{W}d2$ $\mathbb{Q}a4$ 5. $\mathbb{W}g5$ $\mathbb{Q}f7$ 6.g4

The idea of this move is not so much to achieve f4-f5 but rather to take away the f5-square from Black's queen. After the trade on g4, the g6-pawn will become weak (as a result of 3...h5!).

6... $\mathbb{h}xg4$ 7. $\mathbb{h}xg4$ $\mathbb{Q}e8$ 8. $\mathbb{Q}g2$ $\mathbb{Q}d7$
9. $\mathbb{Q}g3$ $\mathbb{Q}d1$ 10.f3 $\mathbb{Q}c7$



11. $\mathbb{W}f6!$

A very strong move which literally pushes Black off the board. Black is forced to trade queens, when White's far advanced passed pawn will be much more effective than Black's connected passers, which are completely restrained by the bishop.

11... $\mathbb{W}xf6$ 12.exf6 $\mathbb{Q}d7$ 13. $\mathbb{Q}xb6$

Dvoretsky draws our attention to a very interesting factor: 'White's isolated passed pawns are a much more dangerous force than Black's connected ones. This is often the case in OCB endings.' The main problem with having connected passers in OCB endings is that the bishop can often easily restrain them! On the other hand, when there are passed pawns on different flanks the bishop cannot stop them on its own.

13...c3 14. $\mathbb{Q}d4$ c2 15. $\mathbb{Q}b2$ $\mathbb{Q}e6$
16.g5 $\mathbb{Q}e2$ 17. $\mathbb{Q}f2$ $\mathbb{Q}b5$ 18. $\mathbb{Q}e3$
 $\mathbb{Q}e8$ 19. $\mathbb{Q}d3$ $\mathbb{Q}a4$ 20. $\mathbb{Q}c3$ $\mathbb{Q}d6$
21. $\mathbb{Q}c1$ $\mathbb{Q}e6$ 22. $\mathbb{Q}b4$ 1-0

A very nice game which shows that passive defense can often be very tough to carry out.

While seeking counterchances might not always be the objectively correct option, it's important to understand that defending passively can cause the player on the weak side to become impatient and make a mistake. It is the mark of very experienced endgame players not to lose their cool when defending tough endings.

Now, let's talk about what you *should* do when defending! QOCB endings are very unique in the sense that you can whip up a deadly attack on the king seemingly out of the blue. Since the bishops are located on diagonals of the opposite color, the queen and bishop can operate against the opponent's king unperturbed. Occasionally, your opponent might have what I call a 'chronic attack'. Most of the time, an attack either fizzles out or brings major dividends. Sometimes, however, the attack is long-lasting. For example, if you have a weak pawn on g7 and a king on g8, a queen on e5 and bishop on d4 would be very effective in attacking it. You will not be able to repel the queen or the bishop, and passive defense will be the *only* option.

Like in any other endgame, passive defense is never fun. However, the harder you make it for your opponent to make progress, the more drawing chances you will have.

You might think that defending passively is something you can master by experience and experience only. As is often the case, this is only half-true. With experience, you polish out your defensive technique and make fewer mistakes. However, by looking at the techniques of very strong endgame players, your defensive prowess will drastically improve. In other words, you do not need to defend 100 bad endgames in order to master endgame technique!

The following game is a great illustration. Instead of going for an obviously unsound counterattack, Black patiently waited and defended against White's chronic attack. When an opportunity to force a draw arose, Black immediately pounced on it.



87. Kasimdzhanov-Adams

FIDE World Championship, Tripoli 2004

Material will be equal if Black takes on a3, but Black has a permanently weak pawn on f7. White's bishop on a2 cannot be repelled, and it's clear that Black

is faced with a long and tough defense. 1... $\mathbb{Q}xa3$ is the most tempting option and has to be considered. Unfortunately for Black, his king will be undefended and White will easily take advantage of the f7-pawn: 2.e6! fxe6 3. $\mathbb{W}xe6+$ $\mathbb{Q}g7$ 4. $\mathbb{W}b3!$ $\mathbb{Q}c1$ 5. $\mathbb{W}c3+$ and White wins the bishop.

Another try is 1... $\mathbb{W}d4$. However, after 2. $\mathbb{W}f3$ $\mathbb{W}d7$ 3. $\mathbb{W}f6$ Black is forced into passivity. Instead of seeking unsound tactical chances, Adams comes to grips with the fact that in order to draw the game, he will *have to* defend passively. Black first has to protect the ailing f7-pawn.

1... $\mathbb{W}e7! 2.e6$

Kasimdzhanov tries to obtain chances by opening Black's king position. White had a couple of alternatives, but in all variations Black draws with good play:

A) 2. $\mathbb{Q}a8+$ $\mathbb{Q}g7$ 3. $\mathbb{Q}xa6$ $\mathbb{Q}xe5$ 4. $\mathbb{Q}b7$ $\mathbb{Q}f4$ (Ftacnik) is an easy draw, as Black has managed to activate his pieces and keep f7 under control.

B) 2. f4 looks dangerous, but after 2... $\mathbb{Q}xa3$ 3. $\mathbb{Q}a8+$ $\mathbb{Q}g7$ 4. $\mathbb{Q}xa6$ $\mathbb{Q}xb4$ White has to force perpetual with 5. $\mathbb{Q}f6+$ $\mathbb{Q}h6!$ 6. $\mathbb{Q}h4+$, as after 6. g5+? $\mathbb{Q}h5$ it is White who has to look for a draw!

2...fxe6 3. $\mathbb{Q}a8+$ $\mathbb{Q}f7$

It looks like Ftacnik's recommendation of 3... $\mathbb{Q}g7$! 4. $\mathbb{Q}xa6$ e5! was even better. After 5. $\mathbb{Q}a8$ e4 6. $\mathbb{Q}d5$ Black has not solved his problems, but I cannot see a way for White to take advantage of them. For example, after 6...g5 7. $\mathbb{Q}d2$ $\mathbb{Q}f6$ 8. $\mathbb{Q}d7+$ $\mathbb{Q}h6$ Black's position looks rather scary, but White cannot make any clear progress.

4. $\mathbb{Q}xa6$ $\mathbb{Q}d7$



Black continues to hold tight. It might seem that Black's position is close to lost, as the e6- and b5-pawns are very weak. However, White's king is not ideally placed in its own right and Black has ... $\mathbb{Q}d5+$ ideas looming in the air.

Slowly, White becomes impatient with Black's methodical and precise defense. Instead of trying to slowly improve his position, Kasimdzhanov makes drastic changes which should have led to a sudden and incredible reversal of fortune.

5.g5

A double-edged idea. White fixes the h7- and g6-pawns, but weakens his own pawn in the process.

5... $\mathbb{Q}e7$ 6. $\mathbb{Q}a8$ $\mathbb{Q}d4$

Finally, Kasimdzhanov grows very impatient. In the position before 1... $\mathbb{Q}e7$, he was probably looking forward to pushing Adams off the board. Yet Adams did not give any ground and defended very carefully. This finally pays off.



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

Kasimdzhanov forgets all about the weakness of his own king! It was necessary to keep the queen on the long diagonal in order to prevent unpleasant checks on b7, c6, and d5. Ftacnik and Adams suggest a multitude of moves, all of which lead to a clear advantage for White (according to them). However, I'm not so sure White can be so optimistic! Let's take a look:

A) 7.h4 is an attempt to kill two birds with one stone; White waits for Black to commit and improves his position as well. While Black cannot force a draw, he certainly can make the win very tough for White (if there even is one!): 7... $\mathbb{Q}e5$ 8. $\mathbb{W}e4$ $\mathbb{Q}b2$ (note that Black patiently waits and keeps nagging White with annoying ideas; in a real game, your opponent might not be so resilient) 9. $\mathbb{W}c2$ $\mathbb{W}d4$ and I simply cannot see how White can make inroads into Black's position.

B) 7. $\mathbb{Q}b3$ is a direct attempt to put Black in Zugzwang. However, Black has the strong 7... $\mathbb{Q}xf2!$, and after 8. $\mathbb{Q}xf2$ $\mathbb{W}d2+$ White cannot avoid perpetual. Still, White has 8. $\mathbb{W}h8!$ and it's not easy to think of a continuation for Black. His position threatens to fall apart, but Black can once again use the weak position of White's king: 8... $\mathbb{Q}d4$! 9. $\mathbb{W}xh7+$ $\mathbb{Q}d6$ and White has to trade queens with 10. $\mathbb{W}xd7+$ $\mathbb{Q}xd7$, when an interesting position arises.



Analysis diagram

Fritz jumps to conclusions (+1.78), but the win is quite difficult to achieve. The main problem is that the a3- and b4-pawns can easily be attacked by Black's bishop. After 11. $\mathbb{Q}c2$ $\mathbb{Q}b2$ 12. $\mathbb{Q}xg6$ $\mathbb{Q}xa3$ 13. $\mathbb{Q}d3$ $\mathbb{Q}xb4$

14. $\mathbb{Q}xb5+$ $\mathbb{Q}e7$ Black draws rather easily. For example: 15.h4 $\mathbb{Q}f7$ 16. $\mathbb{Q}g3$ $\mathbb{Q}f8$ 17.h5 $\mathbb{Q}h6!$ and after 18.g6+ $\mathbb{Q}g7$ White cannot make progress.

When trying to win a position such as the diagrammed one above, it is very easy to become frustrated and embark on a risky and unjustified attempt to trick your opponent. It is absolutely paramount to retain your cold-bloodedness and come up with a *plan*. Whether or not this plan is objectively winning is immaterial; simply coming up with the most irksome and clever strategy can confuse your opponent and induce an immediate blunder.

In this case, White is fortunate enough to have a powerful plan at his disposal: after 11. $\mathbb{Q}c2$ $\mathbb{Q}b2$, White plays 12.a4!. Black is forced to take 12...bxa4, and after 13. $\mathbb{Q}xa4+$ $\mathbb{Q}e7$ 14. $\mathbb{Q}c2$ $\mathbb{Q}f7$,



Analysis diagram

White will bring his king to g4 and create a passer with h4-h5. After securing the g-pawn on g6, White will bring his king over to the other flank and force Black to give up material.

Sounds simple, right? Of course, coming up with such a plan is much more difficult during the game, but having in your endgame arsenal the idea of two passers on opposite flanks overwhelm-

ing the defense will certainly do no harm. Note that no illustrative variations are needed; Black cannot do *anything* to stop White's deadly plan.

We can still see, however, that with careful defense Black could have caused many problems for White. In a rapid game with a chance to play Kasparov for the World Championship on the line, Kasimdzhanov would have been hard-pressed to find every one of the resources necessary to garner the full point. The text move, however, should have lost the game!

7...♛c6+ 8.♝g3



8...♞xf2?

Adams fails to pounce on his opportunity. While this move leads to a draw, Black had a chance to win the game!

The next topic that we have to address is how to decide when to defend passively and when to try for a counterattack. While the answer to this question might seem rather complicated, determining what kind of defense you need to 'use' is actually a rather simple task! The main mitigating factor is certainly whether you have any clear-cut weaknesses. In the above position, Black simply *could not* defend actively because his queen was tied down to the defense of e6. On the other hand, if you have, for example, a weak square or a weak pawn that is not easily accessible, you can certainly consider active defense.

We will take a look at two games. In each, the defending player will have to decide whether to try for counterplay or to wait and defend passively. My recommendation to the reader is to try to determine which type of defense is the correct one to utilize.

The main problem in this position is that White's pieces are temporarily uncoordinated, and as we know, the queen and bishop can create a deadly attack in a matter of moves. Had Adams found 8...♛e4!, he might have become FIDE World Champion! After 9.♜xh7+ ♚f8 White simply cannot safeguard his king:

A) 10.f3 loses after 10...♛e5+ 11.♚g2 ♛xg5+ 12.♚f1 ♛d2 and Black mates (Adams).

B) 10.♝d7 does not help either: 10...♛e5+ 11.f4 ♛xf4+ 12.♚f2 ♛e3+ and Black wins.

C) 10.♝h6+ is the best chance, but Black wins here as well after 10...♛e8 11.f3 ♛c2 12.♝xe6 ♛e5+ 13.f4 ♛d3+ 14.♚g4 ♛e2+ 15.♚g3 ♛e3+ 16.♚g2 ♛e4+ 17.♚f2 ♛d4+ 18.♚g3 ♛e3+ and Black mates. It's interesting that White's pawns can do nothing against the formidable force of the queen and the bishop. Adams makes a very common mistake: he sees a way to end his troubles, and immediately cashes in. If your opponent makes a precarious-looking move which puts his king in danger, always look for a win, even if you see a forced draw.

9.♝xf2 ♛c2+ 10.♚e3

½-½



88. Shirov-Adams

Candidates' Tournament, Elista 2007

White is a pawn up and has a solid position. His king is safely tucked away, and Black cannot take advantage of the backward g3-pawn. In order to successfully defend this position, Black has to decide whether to wait patiently or to immediately try to seek counter-chances. Let's try to determine what the main aspects of the position are.

First of all, there is the backward pawn on g3 that I just mentioned. Given the chance to penetrate into White's position, Black can use it to his favor. Secondly, there is White's extra pawn. With time, White will slowly lock out Black's bishop with c4-c5 and proceed to take advantage of the isolated c7-pawn. However, it will take a while for White to make use of the c7-pawn, and therefore Black can use the time to create counterchances.

In this case, we used a two-step plan to determine which kind of defense to use: first, we determined what White's plan was (c4-c5 followed by an attack on c7). Then, we determined whether passive defense could stop the plan. Of course, if Black simply waits, White will continue with his plan unhindered. Therefore, Black has to take action.

However, this is much easier said than done! Clearly, Black's only chance is to somehow get to White's king. Black first has to freeze White's weak pawn structure on the kingside. Unfortunately, Black weakens his own pawns in doing so, but sometimes you have to make concessions!

1... ♕e6

Amazingly, NM Dana Mackenzie pointed out another way to successfully counter White's threat: 1... ♕a7!. The idea of this mysterious-looking move is to place the queen on b6 and penetrate White's camp via the a7-g1 diagonal. 2.c4 meets with 2... ♕d4, while something like 2. ♕d7 ♕b6 3. ♕d5 lets Black off the hook after 3... ♕f2+ 4. ♕h3 ♕f1+ 5. ♕g2 ♕c4. White's resources are far from exhausted after 1... ♕a7, but Black should be able to draw with accurate play.

2. ♕c2 f5! 3. ♕f3



3... ♕e3!

Black grabs his opportunity and already starts to make threats. White still tries to carry out his plan, but this is much harder to do when his pieces are tied down to the defense of the king.

4.c4 ♕d4

Black is careful not to allow his bishop to get locked in. Of course, the ending after 5. $\mathbb{W}e2$ $\mathbb{W}xe2+$ 6. $\mathbb{B}xe2$ $\mathbb{Q}c3$ 7. $b5$ $\mathbb{Q}d4$ presents no trouble for Black.

5.c5 $\mathbb{Q}g7$

Only now does Black wait. White simply cannot safeguard his king. This is the power of the queen and bishop battery: White's bishop cannot do anything to stop its counterpart, while White's queen loses all of its 'fighting spirit' when defending a weak square.

6. $\mathbb{W}a2$ $\mathbb{Q}h6$ 7. $\mathbb{W}a8!$



This is the only way to put Black's strategy to the test. White tries to activate his queen while simultaneously preventing perpetual check. In doing so, however, White has left the b4/c5 pawn chain undefended and Black immediately pounces on his chance.

7... $\mathbb{W}d2+$ 8. $\mathbb{Q}h3$ $\mathbb{W}xb4$ 9. $\mathbb{W}f8+$ $\mathbb{Q}g7$ 10. $\mathbb{W}e7$ $\mathbb{W}c3$ 11. $\mathbb{B}d5$ $\mathbb{Q}f6$
12. $\mathbb{W}f8+$

Notice that 12. $\mathbb{W}xc7$ fails to impress after 12... $\mathbb{Q}xh4!!$ 13. $\mathbb{Q}xh4$ $\mathbb{W}d2$ and Black reclaims the lost piece due to the threat of mate on h2. Although such an idea does not occur commonly, the sheer multitude of tactical nuances in QOCB endings demonstrate the abso-

lute necessity of remaining focused throughout the whole game.

12... $\mathbb{Q}g7$ 13. $\mathbb{W}e7$

1/2-1/2

Note that no calculation was needed in order to determine which type of defensive technique to utilize.

Remember:

Another major endgame mistake players often commit is to try to determine the essence of the position by calculation alone. This is often an unnecessary waste of time and only serves to confuse the defender. You simply need to determine the major factors in the position (i.e. weaknesses) and decide whether or not these factors preclude you from defending actively.

In the following game, the same two-step method can be used to determine whether or not active defense is possible.



89. Nguyen Thien Viet-Cao Sang
Ho Chi Minh City 2010

White's position is miserable: Black has a dominating queen + bishop tandem, White has a very weak square on f3,

and Black constantly has ...f5-f4 looming in the air. Yet as we know, losing hope is the worst thing one can do when trying to defend an endgame.

First of all, Black does not have any concrete threats as of now. However, it's not clear how White can play! For example, on 1.♗c3, Black wins with 1...♗f3+ and ...f5-f4. On 1.♗c1, Black plays 1...♗f3+ 2.♔e1 ♗d3 and the c4-pawn will be lost.

White therefore has to somehow improve his position. But should this be done using patient, restrained maneuvering or should White try to seek counterplay? The problem with trying to seek active counterchances is that White's king is *chronically* weak. In addition, White has no way to permanently stop ...f5-f4. Clearly, the safe option would be to try to improve the position by means of careful maneuvering. Active defense, however, has to be considered.

White has a multitude of ways to try and achieve counterchances:

A) 1.♗d6?? loses after 1...♗f3+ 2.♔d2 ♗d1+ 3.♔c3 ♗b3+ 4.♔d2 ♗xb2+ 5.♔e1 ♗e2#.

B) 1.♗b4 looks plausible, but does nothing to prevent ...f5-f4: 1...♗f3+ 2.♔d2 f4 3.gxf4 exf4 4.♔c5 ♗d3+ and Black mates.

C) 1.c5 (this was the move played in the game, but in this case White has a different idea) 1...♗c6 2.♗b4 seems viable, as White has now prevented ...f5-f4. However, White leaves his king unattended and pays the price after 2...♗f3+ 3.♔d2 ♗d1+ 4.♔c3 ♗e4 5.♗b6 ♗c2+ 6.♔b4 ♗xb2+ and now 7.♔xa4 loses to 7...♗c6+, while 7.♔a5 ♗xa3 is clearly lost for White.

D) 1.♗xh6!? is a very creative idea and nearly works. After 1...gxh6? 2.♗d7+ ♔g6 3.♗e8+ White has perpetual, but Black has the neat 1...♔f3+ 2.♔e3 and now 2...♔xh6 3.♗d6+ gives White chances, but Black has the beautiful 2...♗b1!! and White cannot take the bishop because of 3...♗e4#.

Overall, we can see the recurring pattern: White's king is the culprit when White tries to activate his pieces. It would be great to somehow reposition the king, which is currently disrupting the coordination between its own pieces. If White can move it to c3, the evaluation of the position would drastically change. Right now, it is the e4-bishop that is obstructing White from achieving his plan (notice the three-step method for determining how to improve your position!). Therefore, White needs to find a waiting move which will invite Black to remove his bishop from its dominant post. There is only one way to do this:

1.c5!!

The move itself seems rather mundane, but after some thought one can truly understand its beauty. White voluntarily weakens the important a6-f1 diagonal and blocks in his own bishop. This move is very tough to make.

Black cannot resist the temptation:

1...♗c6?!

While one cannot criticize the correctness of this move, White can now execute his plan without any problems. Ideally, Black would love to make a neutral waiting move, when White would be hard-pressed to find a good continuation. Unfortunately for him, however,

all waiting moves make concessions! The ‘best of the worst’ is 1...h5, which weakens the g5-square and the h-pawn but keeps the grip on White’s position. Interestingly, the computer likes this move as well, but for a very different reason – it simply cannot see another one!

The human way of arriving at this move, on the other hand, is much more logical. Clearly, White is inviting Black into playing ... $\mathbb{Q}c6$, when the hold on his position would be released. By playing 1...h5, Black maintains the tension and increases the chance for a mistake. The most accurate here is 2. $\mathbb{W}c1!$, and following 2... $\mathbb{W}f3+$ 3. $\mathbb{Q}e1$ White need not fear 3...f4!? (3... $\mathbb{Q}d3$ leaves Black nowhere after 4. $\mathbb{W}d1!$ $\mathbb{W}e4?$! 5. $\mathbb{W}xh5+$ with an immediate draw), after which White draws with 4.gxf4 exf4 5. $\mathbb{W}xf4$ $\mathbb{W}h1+$ 6. $\mathbb{Q}d2$ $\mathbb{W}xh4$ 7. $\mathbb{Q}e3!$ and with careful play White should hold this position easily.

After the text move, White does not have a choice: the only move is a good one!

2. $\mathbb{Q}d3$ $\mathbb{W}f1+$ 3. $\mathbb{Q}c3$

White’s plan has been achieved and a lion’s share of Black’s advantage has been eliminated. In order to draw the game, White has to be very careful and watch out for ideas such as ...f5-f4.

3... $\mathbb{W}b5$

Black tries his best to create problems for White, but the latter defends very accurately.

4. $\mathbb{W}d1$ $\mathbb{W}a5+$ 5. $\mathbb{Q}c2$ $\mathbb{Q}e4+$ 6. $\mathbb{Q}c1$
 $\mathbb{W}b5$ 7. $\mathbb{W}d2$



White has built an impenetrable fortress. Note how White’s pawn on h4 stops ...g7-g5 once and for all. Since ...g7-g5 is Black’s only winning chance, the game is drawn.

Sang finds an ingenious idea connected with opening White’s king and trying to find mating or double attack ideas, but White continues to defend with precision.

7... $\mathbb{W}f1+$ 8. $\mathbb{W}d1$ $\mathbb{W}b5$ 9. $\mathbb{W}d2$ $\mathbb{W}c4+$
10. $\mathbb{W}c3$ $\mathbb{W}f1+$ 11. $\mathbb{Q}d2$ f4! 12.gxf4
exf4 13. $\mathbb{Q}d4$ $\mathbb{Q}g6$ 14. $\mathbb{W}f3$

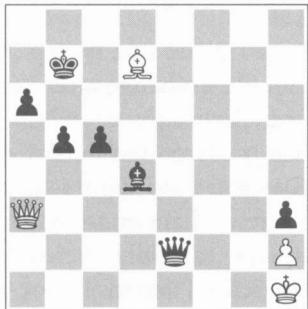
It turns out that Black has no threats, and he has nothing better than to move his pieces around and hope for a blunder. White is precise until the very end.

14... $\mathbb{W}b1$ 15. $\mathbb{W}xf4$ $\mathbb{W}c2+$ 16. $\mathbb{Q}e1$
 $\mathbb{W}b1+$ 17. $\mathbb{Q}d2$ $\mathbb{W}d3+$ 18. $\mathbb{Q}e1$ $\mathbb{Q}h5$
19.f3 $\mathbb{Q}xf3$ 20. $\mathbb{W}e5$ $\mathbb{W}g6$ 21. $\mathbb{Q}c3$
 $\mathbb{W}g4$ 22. $\mathbb{Q}d2$ $\mathbb{Q}e4$ 23. $\mathbb{Q}e3$ $\mathbb{W}f3+$
24. $\mathbb{Q}d2$ $\mathbb{W}f2+$ 25. $\mathbb{Q}d1$ $\mathbb{Q}c2+$
26. $\mathbb{Q}c1$ $\mathbb{W}g2$ 27. $\mathbb{W}xg7+$ $\mathbb{W}xg7$
28. $\mathbb{Q}xg7$ $\mathbb{Q}e4$ 29. $\mathbb{Q}f6$ $\mathbb{Q}g6$
30. $\mathbb{Q}d8$ $\mathbb{Q}f5$ 31. $\mathbb{Q}d2$ $\mathbb{Q}e5$ 32. $\mathbb{Q}c3$

1½-1½

A very instructive game. White figured out that the passive defense was the right way to go, and played very carefully for the whole game.

Summing up, we can clearly see that one of the biggest (if not the biggest) questions while defending QOCB endings is whether to defend actively or passively. This is a life-or-death question, as a mistake can lead to a quick loss. We could see that the choice has to be based on a careful appraisal of the aspects of the position. For example, if you have a very weak king, as in the above game, defending actively and seeking counter chances is almost always too risky. In Shirov-Adams, Black's king was relatively safe, and given time, White would lock out Black's bishop with c4-c5. Therefore, defending actively was the correct choice.



5.1 Naroditsky

Study position 2010

White is down three pawns and Black is one step away from delivering mate. Can you find the defense?



5.2 Melkumyan-Ghader Pour

Abu Dhabi 2009

The Armenian GM played the tempting $\mathbb{W}d5$. First of all, provide a good plan considering White has played $\mathbb{W}d5$. But maybe you can find something better?

Same-Colored Bishops

Same-colored bishop endings with queens (from now referred to as QSCB) are, as a rule, more quiet than QOCB endings. Since opposite colored bishops move along different diagonals, the chances of tactical opportunities arising are higher. QSCB endings are often more about pawn pressure, creating, supporting, and moving a passed pawn, and space than attacking the king. Defensive techniques are also very different in these types of endings. The possibility that the bishops will be traded and a queen ending will arise is also very high. Therefore, trades have to be considered carefully. As we usually do, we will start out from the attacking side's point of view and later move on to the defending side's point of view.

Often, QSCB endings are a direct result of the defending side fighting off an attack or strong positional pressure in the middlegame. If you make a generic search of games which ended in either a White or Black win in *Mega Base 2010*, you will see that in many endings one side's pawn structure is ruined or the pieces are very passive.

We will examine the following game in full, as it is instructive to see how White's QSCB advantage came as a direct result of strong central pressure in the middlegame.

90. Naroditsky-Gurtovoy

San Francisco 2006

Caro-Kann Defense, Classical Line (B19)

1.e4 c6 2.d4 d5 3.♘c3 dxe4
4.♗xe4 ♕f5 5.♗g3 ♕g6 6.h4 h6
7.♗f3 ♘d7 8.h5 ♕h7 9.♕d3 ♕xd3
10.♕xd3 ♘gf6 11.♕d2 e6
12.0-0-0 ♘d6

This move has been played by many grandmasters, but I don't think it's best. In the Caro-Kann, the bishop is usually placed on e7. On d6, it will be subject to attack after c4.

13.♗e4 ♘xe4 14.♕xe4 ♘f6
15.♕e2 ♕c7 16.♗b1 0-0-0 17.c4
♖he8 18.♘c3



White has a pleasant edge. His pieces are placed excellently, and he has much more space to maneuver his pieces. Black's d6 bishop blocks the d8 rook, and White has the terrific e5 square for his knight. Grandmasters such as Adianto and Mchedlishvili have played this line with Black, but without success.

18...♘d7?!

Passively retreating is not the path to equality. Black tries to place a grip on e5, but White can still play ♘e5!.

Instead, in Gild. Garcia-Adianto, Thessaloniki Olympiad 1988, Black tried 18...♕e7, but was blown off the board after 19.♕a5! ♕c7 20.♕xc7 ♕xc7 21.♘e5 ♖d6 22.♖h3! ♖ed8 23.♗g3 ♘e8 24.♗gd3 f6 25.c5 ♖d5 26.♗g6 and Black was busted. He had to give up the exchange after 26...♕f7, but lost quickly.

The main problem with ...0-0-0 lines in the Classical Caro-Kann is that Black has very few chances to win, and if White plays carefully, he can force Black to defend passively for a very long time.

19.♘e5

Why not?

19...♖e7 20.♖he1 c5 21.♘xd7 ♕exd7 22.dxc5 ♕xc5

Time and again, Black's problem in these lines is the weakness of the g7/h6 pawn chain. Black barely manages to win the pawn back, but the weakness of the h6-pawn will cause Black major troubles later on.

23.♗xg7 ♕g5 24.♘c3 ♕xg2
25.♕f6 ♕b4!

A nice defensive resource, but Black's weaknesses still remain!

26.♕xd8 ♕xe1 27.♖xd7 ♕xd7
28.♕h4 ♕a5 29.♗g3 ♕h1+
30.♔c2 ♕c6

The smoke has cleared and an important position has arisen.



White's position is terrific: his king is safe, his queen and bishop are beautifully coordinated, while Black's king will be subject to unpleasant checks and his queen and bishop are not coordinated at all. Having said that, White has to find a good move!

In this type of position, you have to *identify your opponent's main weakness*. What is the Achilles Heel in Black's position? One could argue that Black's king is weak, but how do you attack it? Clearly, the h6-pawn is the weakness that White has to attack. It is isolated from Black's pieces and fixed in place. White's bishop can easily attack it. Note that if there were opposite-colored bishops, White would have no chance to win, as Black would immediately counterattack the h5-pawn. Here, Black's bishop cannot defend h6.

Therefore, the logical and correct move would have been the powerful 31.♕f4!. During the game I feared 31...b5, but the simple 32.b3 bxc4 33.♗xc4 repels any threats, and Black is again faced with the threat of ♕xh6. 33...♗f3 is relatively best, but after 34.♗d3+! ♗xd3+ 35.♗xd3 Black is busted. White will win the h6-pawn and then create yet another passed pawn on the queenside. It's interesting to note how such a quiet-looking

move can cause so much disarray in Black's army.

So how do you find these types of moves? During the game, I thought that I had to somehow use the position of Black's king, and that my king was too weak to allow moves such as ♔f4. Of course, I had no idea how to think in these types of positions!

In order to find the right plan, you first have to determine the main, over-arching aspects of the position. For example, here Black is worse because his h6-pawn is weak and his uncoordinated pieces will have a hard time defending this pawn if it is attacked directly. You then have to look for ways to simply threaten the weak pawn. If the main weakness is a square, look for ways to transfer your pieces there. If you find such a move (in this case ♔f4), you then have to look for counterthreats. In this case, Black's only option is to play ...b7-b5. If your opponent has counterplay, try to find a good response and calculate the arising variations. Yes, easy to say, but precise calculation will help you immensely in figuring out the correct approach.

In the game, I played the completely pointless:

31.♗d3+?

Now Black will be able to defend against ♔f4 with the unpleasant ...♗g2!.

Isn't it purely by chance that White had ♔f4? A great question, and it indeed seems that in any other case, such a strong move would not exist and Black would be able to draw. However, if you play well and build up a strong position, the only way your opponent can defend is through vigilant defense.

31... $\mathbb{Q}e8$ 32.b3 $\mathbb{W}c5$ 33. $\mathbb{W}d6$

This draws immediately, but it was already *Black* who was attacking the h-pawn.

**33... $\mathbb{W}xh5$ 34. $\mathbb{W}b8+$ $\mathbb{Q}d8$ 35. $\mathbb{Q}c7$
 $\mathbb{W}e2+$ 36. $\mathbb{Q}c3$ $\mathbb{W}e1+$ 37. $\mathbb{Q}d3$
 $\mathbb{W}d1+$ 38. $\mathbb{Q}e3$ $\mathbb{W}c1+$ 39. $\mathbb{Q}f3$
 $\mathbb{W}h1+$ 40. $\mathbb{Q}e3$**

1½-1½

White cannot avoid the perpetual.

A very instructive game which shows that you need to look out for sudden chances to convert your positional advantage into a material one!

Tactical opportunities are plentiful in QSCB endings, especially when the defending side's king is weak. A blunder can often lead to a sudden turn of the tables. Take a look at the following position (hopefully, it will not epitomize the utter failure of the author to make even the slightest attempt to create a realistic-looking study):



91. Naroditsky

Study position 2010

Material is equal, but king position is not. Black obviously threatens 1... $\mathbb{Q}f3\#$, but it is not clear how on earth to prevent this deadly threat. If White could promote his own h-pawn with check, the tables would turn instantly. However, for the moment, Black's king is as safe as can be.

Or is it?

When faced with a deadly threat that you can't seem to parry, do not despair and try to find ways – no matter how ridiculous-seeming – to create your own counterchances. In this specific position, White has to force Black's

queen off of its dominant post, and the only way to do that is by sacrificing the bishop in desperado-like fashion.

1. $\mathbb{Q}e6+!!$

Very little calculation is needed to play this move – White simply has no other choice, and the process of elimination can be a very powerful tool in a chess game. Already, Black is faced with an unpleasant choice: with which piece should he accept White's desperado bishop sacrifice? The tempting option is 1... $\mathbb{Q}xe6$, and its not clear what White has achieved. A closer look reveals that Black's king is now exposed, and White's queen has a chance to awaken from its doldrums: 2. $\mathbb{W}c4+!$ and after 2... $\mathbb{Q}d7$ (forced, since 2... $\mathbb{Q}f6$ allows White to promote with check) 3. $\mathbb{W}b5+$ Black cannot stop the deadly 4. $\mathbb{W}f5+$, forcing the trade of queens and subsequently promoting. Therefore:

1... $\mathbb{W}xe6$

White has succeeded in loosening the noose on his king, and 2.h8 \mathbb{W} seems to

be the reward for White's efforts. However, after 2... $\mathbb{Q}f3+$ 3. $\mathbb{Q}xh2$ $\mathbb{Q}a2+$! it turns out that Black has just enough board space to win the game. After 4. $\mathbb{Q}h3$ $\mathbb{Q}g2+$ Black gives mate in one move.

White can prolong the inevitable with moves like 2. $\mathbb{Q}e3$, but such attempts are not serious. It is clear that White needs nothing less than a miraculous combination, but there doesn't seem to be even a scintilla of counterplay.

A seasoned tactician will have noticed the possibility of playing d4-d5 followed by $\mathbb{Q}c6+$, but Black will simply take on e4. It is therefore clear that White *has* to play with gain of tempo, but what can he do? Kudos to any reader who finds

2. $\mathbb{Q}c6+!!$

A shattering blow that wins the game immediately – White gives up his only other piece, but forces Black into allowing a 'trade' of queens.

2... $\mathbb{Q}xc6$

Forced, as 2... $\mathbb{Q}d8$ loses immediately after 3. $h8\mathbb{Q}+$.

3.d5+

This is the main point! White has lured Black's king and queen to awkward positions through the sacrifice of two pieces, and the reward is now clear. Black must give up his queen, but he will not be able to stop the - pawn from promoting.

3... $\mathbb{Q}b6$ 4. $dxe6$ $\mathbb{Q}f3+$ 5. $\mathbb{Q}xh2$ 1-0

Of course, you will not always get a chance to execute such a brilliant combination, but in a game, you will often

have opportunities to cash in your advantage by means of a tactic.



92. Tymrakiewicz-McNab

Uxbridge 2010

White has a very dangerous passed pawn on a5. However, for the moment, Black's c6-bishop is defending the crucial a8-square and Black's position remains solid. His d4-pawn ties down White's own bishop, and White's king is not very safe. Therefore, Black was probably optimistic about his chances. But using the plan outlined in the comments to the above game, we see that Black's main weakness is the gaping hole on g5, temporarily defended by his queen. The c5-square is also uncontrolled and can be used as an outpost for White's queen. For now, White sees nothing wrong in advancing his passed pawn in order to further restrict Black's position.

1.a6! $\mathbb{Q}d6$

Black cannot let White place his queen on c5 as it will support the passed pawn and White will promote without trouble. Note that Black's queen is now preoccupied with the a-pawn, and White can safely switch his sights to Black's king, which is left unattended.

2. $\mathbb{Q}g5!$

Logical and strong. Defending this position as Black is not a very pleasant job. Black is simply overworked. He cannot spend all of his time on the a5 pawn since his king is weak. However, he also cannot ignore the pawn or defend it with a sole bishop.

2... $\mathbb{Q}c5$



Yet again it seems as though Black has defended. It is in precisely these situations, where your opponent is hanging on the precipice, in which the opportunity for a tactical shot or a combination may arise. In the last example, we have seen that even the most ridiculous-looking tactics can be effective. Here, White's king on g1 is not completely safe either, but in the current position Black does not have a single check. He cannot move the queen from c5 to a better square, so White can safely attack Black's king. Tymrakiewicz pounced on his opportunity:

3.g4!!

If this were a game between Rybka and Fritz, I wouldn't award a single exclamation mark! But in this case, completely opening up your king in

this type of position is a hard thing to do.

Before we move on, a bit of chess psychology:

You will often reject good moves not because you don't see them, but because your 'chess brain' simply refuses to look at such strange, counter-intuitive moves. It is the mark of a strong player to convince himself that there is nothing to fear. In this case, White doesn't fear ghosts. Yes, his king is undefended, but Black cannot make use of this.

If you analyze games where you were winning but missed a rather simple win, you will often see that you didn't miss the winning move because it was hard to find, but because it was hard to play.

3... $\mathbb{h}xg4$

Forced. On 3... $\mathbb{Q}c3$, White wins with 4.gxh5 $\mathbb{Q}e1+$ 5. $\mathbb{Q}f1$ and Black has no perpetual.

4.h5 $\mathbb{Q}e8$ 5.a7!

Overextension in its purest form! Black's position collapses like a house of cards. When White played h4-h5, Black was forced to switch his attention to his king once again, leaving the a6-pawn free.

5... $\mathbb{Q}xa7$ 6. $\mathbb{Q}xe5+$ $\mathbb{Q}h6$ 7. $\mathbb{Q}xe8$

The win is now elementary.

7... $\mathbb{Q}a1+$ 8. $\mathbb{Q}g2$ $\mathbb{Q}xh5$ 9. $e5$ $\mathbb{Q}b2+$
10. $\mathbb{Q}g3$ $\mathbb{Q}b6$ 11. $\mathbb{Q}h8+$ $\mathbb{Q}g5$
12. $\mathbb{Q}h4\#$ 1-0

Mate!

Converting a material advantage can be pretty tough in QCSB endings, especially when your opponent's pieces are active. The way to play is almost always to try to distract your opponent with your extra material and take advantage of his weakened king. The last example we looked at modeled this plan.

In the next game, White will be on the verge of winning, but Black keeps finding pesky defensive resources. In order to win, White will have to masterfully maneuver his pieces and eventually force Black into passivity.



93. Bologan-Ponomariov

Poikovsky 2006

White has a far advanced, extra passed pawn which ties down Black's bishop. In addition, Black's king is located in the line of fire of both White's queen and bishop. Clearly, White's advantage is overwhelming, but how to win?

GM Ftacnik, in his annotations to the game, makes a very instructive point: 'The spare pawn on the c6 square is [a] huge force and [any] queen endgames are hopeless for the defender. The next phase is the fight for space, White needs to combine the attack with actions against the Black king.'

White's first step is to try and evict Black's bishop from its annoying blocking post.

1. $\mathbb{Q}b4+$ $\mathbb{Q}g8$ 2. $\mathbb{Q}d6$ $\mathbb{Q}b6!$

As Ftacnik states, trading into a queen endgame is hopeless (remember 'fighting spirit'!)

3. $\mathbb{Q}c5$ $\mathbb{Q}a5$

3... $\mathbb{Q}c7$ is suicide: 4. $\mathbb{Q}d7$ $\mathbb{Q}b8$ 5. $\mathbb{Q}g2$ and Black is completely tied up. On 5... $\mathbb{Q}h7$ White has the crushing 6. $\mathbb{Q}f8!$. Notice that as soon as Black's position becomes compromised, White has an easy win. It's interesting to see how in the ensuing battle both sides fight for their own goal: White tries to paralyze Black's pieces while Black tries to throw more wood into the fire and keep his activity going.

4. $\mathbb{Q}d6$ $\mathbb{Q}f7$ 5. $\mathbb{Q}b8+$ $\mathbb{Q}h7$ 6. $\mathbb{Q}b7$

White is on the verge of winning, but Black finds yet another terrific resource.

6... $\mathbb{Q}c7!$

It seems like Black has defended against the onslaught, but Bologan uses every aspect of the position to his favor and produces a beautiful maneuver.

7. $\mathbb{Q}b1+$



A truly astounding idea: it's hard to imagine, but in two moves White transfers his queen from b7 to e4. The effect on Black's position is shattering: his queen will be forced to remain on the passive square c7, and sooner or later Black's defenses will crumble.

In addition, it is worthwhile to note that Bologan correctly eschewed the tempting 7... $\mathbb{Q}a7$ (with the idea of 8... $\mathbb{Q}b8$) in view of 7... $\mathbb{W}e5$, when Black obtains too much counterplay. Note the textbook example of cause and effect: the centralization of White's queen forces Black to abandon all hopes of counterplay and defend passively.

7... $\mathbb{Q}g8$

On 7... $\mathbb{Q}g8$, White makes the incredible move 8... $\mathbb{W}b7!!$ and Black is in serious trouble. The threat is 9... $\mathbb{Q}d6$, and if Black plays 8... $\mathbb{Q}g8$ to break the pin, White can simply answer with 9... $\mathbb{Q}h2$ $\mathbb{Q}h8$ 10... $\mathbb{Q}e7$ and Black's position falls apart. Such is the beauty of the endgame!

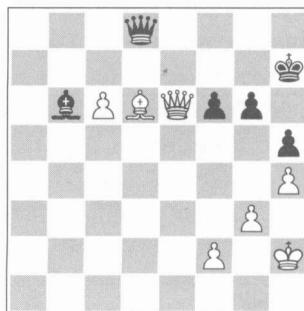
8... $\mathbb{W}e4$ $\mathbb{Q}d8$ 9... $\mathbb{W}e6+$ $\mathbb{Q}h8$ 10... $\mathbb{Q}d6$

Black is literally getting pushed off the board. He has no space, and it will now be merely a matter of time before Black has to make a fatal concession.

10... $\mathbb{Q}b6$ 11... $\mathbb{Q}h2$ $\mathbb{Q}h7$ 12... $\mathbb{Q}h4$ $\mathbb{Q}h5$

This is forced, as White was threatening to cripple Black's light squares with 13... $\mathbb{Q}h5$.

13... $\mathbb{W}f5+$ $\mathbb{Q}g6$ 14... $\mathbb{W}e6!$



Reminiscent of Capablanca or Rubinstein at their best. By means of terrific, extremely precise maneuvers, Bologan makes more and more inroads into Black's position. Eventually, Black will overextend and collapse.

**14... $\mathbb{Q}g7$ 15... $\mathbb{Q}g2$ $\mathbb{Q}a5$ 16... $\mathbb{Q}e7$
 $\mathbb{Q}d4$ 17... $\mathbb{Q}d7$**

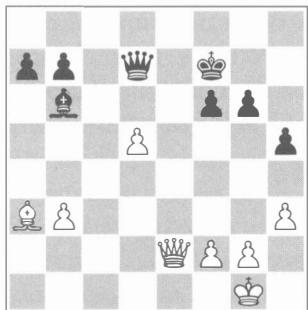
The culmination of White's strategy. Black is forced to let the c-pawn through.

**17... $\mathbb{W}e4+$ 18... $\mathbb{Q}h2$ $\mathbb{Q}c2$ 19... $\mathbb{Q}c5+$
 $\mathbb{Q}h6$ 20... $\mathbb{Q}f8\#$**

A fitting end to an amazing game. White combined tactics with subtle maneuvering.

How do you convert a static advantage? What if your opponent has set up strong defensive bastions and you cannot find a way to make progress?

In the previous section (QOCB endings), I mentioned that if the position is objectively drawn, you can still try to win! I cannot emphasize more that your opponent is human and will make mistakes if you play well and set up traps. In the following position, by means of very tricky play, Black manages to squeeze out a win in a position that looks very drawish.



94. Bacrot-Morozevich

Biel 2004

At first sight, Black's position looks rather dangerous. His kingside is weak, and White's passed pawn looks menacing. But a closer look at the position reveals that things are more double-edged than they seem! First of all, Black's king defends the kingside well, and all of the vital squares in Black's camp (e6, e7, d6, etc.) are protected. Also, it's not entirely clear what White should do. Black's bishop is very well placed and White cannot get reckless because the f2-pawn will be undefended. Morozevich makes an interesting move:

1... ♜e8!?

Bacrot probably expected 1...♜xd5, when 2.♕e7+ ♔g8 3.♕xf6 ♜f7 is drawn. However, Morozevich understands that in this position, White will have to make a tough decision. He can trade queens and draw the ensuing ending, but Bacrot wants more and embarks on a very risky path that eventually leads to White becoming overextended.

2.♗d1 ♜e5

From White's point of view, a very important position has arisen. White's fundamental choice is whether or not

he wants to push his passed pawn. Something along the lines of 3.♗d2 (Ftacnik) should draw quite easily, but Bacrot overestimates his chances. Let's try to imagine Bacrot's train of thought: '*I have a strong passed pawn on d5, his king-side is weak, and f2 is safely defended. There's no reason to go for a draw. Why not push my pawn, when Black will have a hard time stopping it? Eventually, after tying down Black's pieces, I will either win the queenside pawns or simply launch an attack against Black's king.*' Full of confidence, White played:

3.d6?

and committed a grave mistake. If Black can find a way to effectively block the pawn, it will become very weak and tough to defend. Black will have the unpleasant idea of ...♝c5, after which the onus will be on White to find a good counterchance. Morozevich finds the best move:

3... ♜e8!

It quickly becomes clear that the d6-pawn is not going anywhere, and Black will eventually win it. Bacrot tries to fish for counterchances but Morozevich plays precisely.

**4.♗b4 a5 5.♗a3 ♔d7 6.♗f3
♛a1+ 7.♔h2 ♛xa3 8.♗xb7+**



From many moves ago, Bacrot had probably evaluated this position as drawn. But Morozevich has seen further and produces a very strong move:

8... $\mathbb{B}e6!$

Now, the bishop is taboo because of 9... $\mathbb{W}xd6+$ and the pawn endgame is hopeless for White since Black wins b3.

**9. $\mathbb{W}e7+$ $\mathbb{Q}d5$ 10. $\mathbb{W}b7+$ $\mathbb{Q}e6$
11. $\mathbb{W}e7+$ $\mathbb{Q}f5!$**

Into the fire! This move looks risky, but White cannot make use of the exposed king.

**12.g4+ $\mathbb{H}xg4$ 13.hxg4+ $\mathbb{Q}g5$
14.f4+ $\mathbb{Q}xg4$ 15. $\mathbb{W}e6+$ $\mathbb{Q}f3$ 0-1**

White resigned as he will not be able to keep checking Black's king for long. A terrific game illustrating the fact that if you play fearlessly and set traps, even the strongest players can make mistakes!

Finally, you always have to consider queen or bishop trades carefully before trading! The following game is instructive.



95. Borgo-Drasko

Cutro 2001

Summing up, we can state a few important things one has to keep in mind when trying to win QSCB endings:

Black is two pawns up and completely winning. White's only chance is his queen on d4, but by itself it presents no danger. 1... $\mathbb{W}f5$ wins, but

1... $\mathbb{W}d3$

wins more easily, right? Wrong! Black probably played 1... $\mathbb{W}d3$ without much thought, as the endgame looks completely winning. This is the danger of playing a move without considering it!

2. $\mathbb{W}xd3$ cxd3 3. $\mathbb{Q}f2??$

White misses the simple 3. $\mathbb{Q}b3!$ (stopping 3... $\mathbb{Q}a6$) and Black has to give up d5 to avoid losing d3, but the resulting endgame will be drawn easily. White commits an understandable mistake: thinking that the position is completely lost, he does not seriously consider his options and makes the most obvious-looking move.

3... $\mathbb{Q}a6$

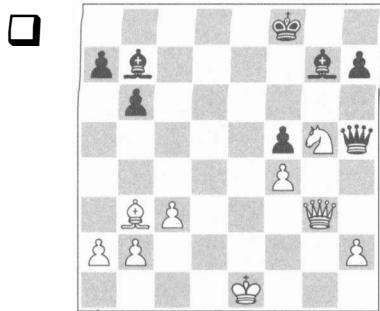
Now, the win is simple.

**4. $\mathbb{Q}e3$ $\mathbb{Q}c4$ 5. $\mathbb{Q}g4$ g6 6. $\mathbb{Q}d4$ $\mathbb{Q}g7$
7. $\mathbb{Q}d1$ $\mathbb{Q}f6$ 8. $\mathbb{Q}g4$ $\mathbb{Q}e7$ 9. $\mathbb{Q}f3$ $\mathbb{Q}e6$
10. $\mathbb{Q}g4+$ f5 11. $\mathbb{Q}f3$ g5 12. $\mathbb{Q}e3$
 $\mathbb{Q}e5$ 13. $\mathbb{Q}d1$ f4+ 14.gxf4+ gxf4+
15. $\mathbb{Q}f3$ $\mathbb{Q}b5$ 16. $\mathbb{Q}b3$ $\mathbb{Q}e8$ 17. $\mathbb{Q}f2$
 $\mathbb{Q}h5$ 18. $\mathbb{Q}e1$ $\mathbb{Q}e4$ 19. $\mathbb{Q}d2$ f3 0-1**

Black played an obvious-looking move, but who wouldn't trade queens with two extra pawns? Had White carefully considered the resulting endgame, he would have no doubt seen 3. $\mathbb{Q}b3$, drawing immediately. Instead, he returned the favor and Black won without trouble.

- A) Tactical opportunities often arise when your opponent is over-extended and is hanging over the precipice.
- B) Even though some moves look very risky, they are often the strongest! (c.f. Tymrakiewicz-McNab)
- C) Even though a position might be objectively drawn, you can still try to win! Even the strongest players often succumb under pressure.
- D) If you have a chance to make your opponents' pieces passive and 'push him off the board', do it! The queen is not good as a passive defender, so if you can force your opponent's queen into that role, you are a step closer to victory.

Now, on to defense! I think you know what I'm about to say: not very fun. Similar to any other endgame, being able to defend will save you wagonloads of points. First of all, an inspirational example.



96. Macieja-Spasov

Greek Team Championship, Halkidiki 2003

Black is completely, utterly, totally lost. White is up a pawn, and Black's king is simply too weak. In addition, his pieces are in complete disarray. But Black does not give up hope!

1...♝f6 2.♞d2

This isn't a mistake by any means, but 2.♝e6+ ♛e7 3.♝d3! (Macieja) looks like a more convincing win.

2...♜a6 3.♞d1

Understandable but inaccurate. In acute time trouble, GM Macieja wants to secure his king and crack down on any possible counterplay before proceeding with the decisive invasion. However,

the cold-blooded 3.♛c1! was stronger. 3...♝e2 is out of the question since the h-pawn is hanging, and otherwise White should win quickly as he has managed to bring his king to a safer place while keeping his pieces on their excellent posts. The main issue with Macieja's move is that it deactivates the beautiful bishop on b3 and gives Spasov a chance to catch his breath.

3...♝g6 4.♝g2 ♜e7?! 5.♛c2

Once again, White's move is completely understandable yet a serious inaccuracy. The banal 5.♛a8+ ♛g7 6.♞b3 won outright since Black cannot coordinate his pieces in time; for example, he loses quickly after 6...♞xg5 7.♝g8+ ♛h6 8.♝f8+ ♛h5 9.♞f7 with a deadly pin.

5...♛g7 6.♞e6+ ♜f7 7.♞g5+

Clearly irritated with Black's resilient defense, White misses another win. The beautiful 7.♞d5! would have been lethal, as 7...♝xe6 fails to 8.♞h5+ ♛f6 9.♞d4+ with mate to come.

7...♝g7 8.♞h4 ♜d6!

Not fearing ghosts. Black makes the job hard for White, and he is rewarded.

9.♘e4+ ♕g6 10.♘g5 ♕d6
 11.♗g3 ♕d5 12.b3 h6 13.♗f3+
 ♖f8 14.♗e5 ♕e4+ 15.♔b2 ♕h1



A desperate chance.

16.♖h5??

A painful oversight; the straightforward 16.♕g6 won immediately. After we have seen all of White's missed opportunities, though, a logical question arises: *'In this game, White was just out of form. But in any other game, one will of course find at least one of these wins!'* If a strong GM missed so many wins, then the chances that your opponent will miss these wins is high as well! Spasov seizes his opportunity and muddies the waters.

16...♗d6 17.♗f2

Now, 17.♕g6? fails to 17...♖h2+ 18.♔b1 ♖h1+ 19.♔c2 ♖h2+ 20.♔c1 ♖h1+ and White cannot escape perpetual.

17...♗f1 18.♗d2

Macieja gives 18.♗c2 as winning, but instead of the cooperative 18...♗e7 Black has 18...♗c8! and the game continues.

18...♗e7 19.♗d1?

After this error, White will no longer be able to win. 19.♗f3! won quickly, i.e. 19...♗xe5 20.♗e3 (Macieja) with an elementary win.

19...♗xe5 20.fxe5 ♕d3 21.♗e1

Trading queens is tantamount to a draw offer, as White cannot hold the e5-pawn and a2-pawn simultaneously, i.e. 21.♗xd3 ♗xd3 22.c4 ♔e6 23.♔c3 ♗b1 and Black draws.

21...♗e6?



After an incredible job holding a completely lost position, Spasov gives Macieja yet another chance. 21...♗f1 drew on the spot, as White cannot avoid a queen trade.

22.♗c2?

It's not Macieja's day! The powerful 22.♗g1 allowed White to make decisive inroads into Black's position, as 22...♖d2+ is useless due to 23.♗c2, when 23...♗d3 is met by 24.♗g8+ ♗xe5 25.♗h8+, winning the bishop (Macieja).

**22...♗e2 23.♗g3 ♕g4 24.♗e1
 ♕e2 25.♗c1?**

After this, White will have no more chances. 25.♗g3, as pointed out by Macieja, still should win, as 25...♗xe5

is met by 26. $\mathbb{W}g8+$ and 25... $\mathbb{W}g4$ meets with the strong 26. $\mathbb{W}e3!$.

25... $\mathbb{Q}xe5$ 26. $\mathbb{W}xh6$ $\mathbb{Q}d3$ 27. $\mathbb{W}g7+$ $\mathbb{Q}f4$ 28. $\mathbb{W}g5+$ $\mathbb{Q}f3$ 29. $\mathbb{W}h5+$ $\mathbb{Q}f4$ 30. $\mathbb{W}g5+$ $\mathbb{Q}f3$ 31. $\mathbb{W}h5+$ $\mathbb{Q}f4$ 32. $\mathbb{W}xe2$ $\mathbb{Q}xe2$ 33. c4 $\mathbb{Q}g4$

White has no chances to win this end-game, as he cannot make any progress

while Black's king is far from the queenside.

34. h5 $\mathbb{Q}xh5$ 35. $\mathbb{Q}xf5$ $\mathbb{Q}g5$ 36. $\mathbb{Q}b1$ $\mathbb{Q}f6$ 37. $\mathbb{Q}c3$ $\mathbb{Q}e5$ 38. $\mathbb{Q}b4$ $\mathbb{Q}d6$ 39. $\mathbb{Q}b5$ $\mathbb{Q}c7$ 40. $\mathbb{Q}c2$ $\mathbb{Q}f3$ 41. b4 $\mathbb{Q}b7$ 42. $\mathbb{Q}a4$ $\mathbb{Q}c7$ 43. $\mathbb{Q}b3$ $\mathbb{Q}d6$ 44. $\mathbb{Q}c3$

1/2-1/2

Hats off to Spasov for not losing hope.

Before we move on, I would like to mention that analyzing these games (from White's point of view) is not pleasant. But by looking at games where you played badly and by identifying the type of mistakes you make, you will be able to identify your weaknesses and fix them. Analyzing your games and figuring out your weaknesses *by yourself* is already a major achievement. If you know exactly in what type of positions you make mistakes, you will be able to choose the right book to help you improve your play. Also, when defending QSCB endings, try to provoke mistakes. Remember:

The more resistance you put up, the more irritated your opponent will become. An irritated opponent can miss even the easiest wins, thus increasing your chance for a draw.

Always keep your hopes up. Instead of thinking, “*My position is completely lost, so I might as well resign, but since it's only move 25 I better make a few moves,*” you should think, “*How can I make the win as tough as possible for my opponent?*” If you lose, you lose. But you want to make your opponent sweat! The only way to become a strong player is to persevere in tough endgames. Often, you can lure your opponent into trying to attack your king, thereby either distracting him from your own weakness or giving you a chance for counterplay. Take a look at the following position.



97. Ilja Schneider-Litwak

Czech Open, Pardubice 2010

White is clearly winning. He is two pawns up and Black's a5-pawn is very weak. White's king is safe for the moment. (We will later see that Black does have potential to develop counterplay based on White's slightly flimsy king-side pawn structure, but for now there doesn't seem to be a concrete way to build up anything specific.) White will eventually create a passed pawn on the queenside, and Black's pieces will simply not be able to hold.

Many players would have probably resigned in this position. Simply speak-

ing, Black has very few chances in the long-term. The chances of White (a strong IM) blundering are very low! However, Black's *only* chance lies in trying to provoke a mistake – he had nothing to lose here. If worse comes to worst, one can always resign! Black starts out by centralizing his queen – always a good idea in queen endgames!

**1... $\mathbb{Q}e5!$ 2.a3 $\mathbb{Q}a1$ 3. $\mathbb{Q}xa5$ $\mathbb{Q}b2+$
4. $\mathbb{Q}g3$ $\mathbb{Q}xb3$ 5. $\mathbb{Q}b4$**

White was probably very happy with the turn of events, and rightly so. He has succeeded in creating a passed pawn, and his king can hardly be harmed by Black's sole queen. Therefore, if Black does not look for some type of active counterplay, White's material advantage will speak its word. In this case, White might be tempted by $\mathbb{Q}b8+/\mathbb{Q}f8$ ideas. While White's queen will be busy grabbing pawns, Black's queen and bishop can organize a sudden assault on White's king.

5... $\mathbb{Q}d1$ 6.a4 $\mathbb{Q}d3$ 7. $\mathbb{Q}h2?$

Unnecessary. 7.a5 is better.

7... $\mathbb{Q}c2!$



A terrific move which invites White to go for the aforementioned idea. White

is best advised to play 8. $\mathbb{Q}g3$ followed by a4-a5, but White is unwilling to admit his inaccuracy on the previous move and plays:

8. $\mathbb{Q}b8+?$

A step in the wrong direction.

8... $\mathbb{Q}h7$ 9. $\mathbb{Q}e8?$

Black's strategy has succeeded! White could not resist trying to win the f-pawn. Black now has a golden opportunity to muddy the waters. White could still have undone the damage with 9. $\mathbb{Q}f4$.

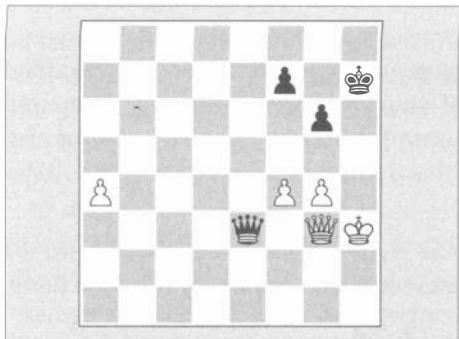
9... $\mathbb{Q}f2!$

Uh-oh! Now Black has the threat of forcing perpetual with 10... $\mathbb{Q}h4+$ and 11... $\mathbb{Q}e1+$. Note that 10... $\mathbb{Q}f1$ is not currently threatened due to 11. $\mathbb{Q}e4+$ followed by 12.f4. If Black tries 11...f5, White counters with 12. $\mathbb{Q}xf5+$ and after 12...g6 13. $\mathbb{Q}f7+$ $\mathbb{Q}h8$ 14. $\mathbb{Q}e8+$ $\mathbb{Q}h7$ 15. $\mathbb{Q}d7+$ $\mathbb{Q}h6$ (forced, as after 15... $\mathbb{Q}h8$ 16. $\mathbb{Q}c8+$ $\mathbb{Q}h7$ 17. $\mathbb{Q}c7+$ White's queen returns to g3) 16.g5+! $\mathbb{Q}xg5$ 17.f4+ $\mathbb{Q}f6$ 18. $\mathbb{Q}c6+$ followed by 19. $\mathbb{Q}f3$ White wards off Black's attack.

10. $\mathbb{Q}h3$ $\mathbb{Q}f1!$

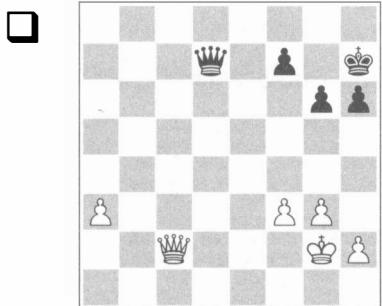
White had probably missed this dagger, after which White's win will be in serious jeopardy. It's incredible how only five moves ago, White was probably thinking how to win in the quickest possible way. Now, he's thinking about how to avoid perpetual check!

**11. $\mathbb{Q}e4+$ $g6$ 12.f4 $\mathbb{Q}xg2+$
13. $\mathbb{Q}xg2$ $\mathbb{Q}xe3+$ 14. $\mathbb{Q}g3$**



The game has transformed into a queen ending. White is now only one pawn up, but as we have seen, having an extra pawn in a queen ending is often decisive.

Let's take a quick detour and look at the following game, analyzed in depth in the queen endgame section:



Alekhine-Reshevsky

AVRO Tournament, Amsterdam 1938

The position above looks very similar to the current game we are analyzing, with the only difference being that there are three pawns on the kingside, something that obviously favors White, as he wants his king to be as safe as possible.

A few years ago, my former coach GM Gregory Kaidanov told me one of the best pieces of chess advice I have ever heard: 'If someone's winning, the thing he hates the most is when the opponent nags him with threats. However ridiculous these

Amazingly, this position is *still* drawn. Black places a queen on a6, and every time White moves his queen away from the second rank, Black's queen penetrates into e2. White was unable to make any progress. The game we are currently analyzing is obviously drawn as well! It soon becomes clear that White's queen can hardly leave the king without allowing perpetual check.

14...♛e4! 15.♕a3?!

White decides to sacrifice the f4-pawn and push his passer, but Black will achieve perpetual check without trouble. 15.a5 was a better chance, but after an accurate series of moves, Black manages to hold: 15...♚h1+! 16.♚h2 ♛d5! 17.a6 ♛d3+ and Black draws.

15...♛xf4

Now the draw will be simple. White gives away the g4-pawn as well, but cannot escape the perpetual.

**16.a5 ♛f1+ 17.♔g3 ♛e1+ 18.♔f3
♛d1+ 19.♔e4? ♛xg4+ 20.♔d5
♛e6+ 21.♔d4 ♛f6+ 22.♔c4
♛e6+ 23.♔b5 ♛d7+ 24.♔b6
♛d8+ 25.♔c6 ♛c8+ 26.♔b6
♛b8+ 27.♔c6 ♛c8+ 28.♔b5
♛d7+ 29.♔b4 ♛d4+ 30.♔b3
♛d3+ 31.♔a4 ♛d7+ 32.♔b4 ½-½**

Black didn't draw the game by means of some miraculous blunder by White. Black *tempted* White into playing ♛b8+, and achieved very strong counterplay.

threats might seem, they are often the only way to scare your opponent. Often, you will get a chance to execute a tactic which saves the day. Bottom line: don't be afraid to use tactics to your favor! For example, if your opponent is pushing connected passers that are impossible to stop, throw yourself at his king! Look for counterplay. Your opponent's king might seem safe, but that doesn't mean it *is* safe! The following game elucidates this concept.



98. Makk-Kummer

Oberwart Open 2010

Black is in deep trouble. It doesn't take very long to see that White's passed pawns are simply unstoppable. If White at least had a pawn on h4 instead of g2, Black would have had chances to organize quick counterplay. However, White's king is tucked away safely, with a defensive cocoon all around him. The more one looks at this position, the worse it seems, but Black has nothing to lose! Why not try for desperate counterplay?

1...h5!

It is *these* kinds of moves that your opponent will hate the most. Black doesn't have any real threats, but the idea of ...h5-h4-h3 is looming in the air, and Black will also have moves such as ... $\mathbb{W}d1$. White comes to realize that winning this position will not be easy!

2.a4

On 2.g3??, Black has 2... $\mathbb{W}d1$!, and if I were Black I'd be playing for a win here!

2...h4

Black sticks to his strategy. White needs only four moves (not counting a5-a6, which forces the bishop back) to shut out Black's bishop, but in those four moves Black manages to create counterplay!

3.a5 $\mathbb{W}d1$!

Why not? Black stops a5-a6 and already has very annoying ideas such as ...h4-h3.

4. $\mathbb{W}b5$ $\mathbb{Q}d5$ 5. $\mathbb{W}d3$ $\mathbb{W}e1$ 6. $\mathbb{W}d4$



At this point, White probably breathed a sigh of relief. Black cannot break through with ...h4-h3, and White's plan is simple but brutal: a6-a7 followed by $\mathbb{W}xd5$!. However, Black's attempts for counterplay have not been in vain. Just at the point when it seems as though White has defended, Black uncorks:

6.... $\mathbb{Q}xg2$!!

A terrific tactical idea, after which the win is already in question. Obviously, this move would have been impossible had Black not played ...h5-h4. It's funny how a move with one idea (Black played ...h5-h4 mainly to try for ...h4-h3 ideas) acts as a base for another (after 7.♕xg2, Black now has 7...h3+!). As in the last example, White will try to avoid perpetual in the ensuing endgame, but will fail.

**7.♕xg2 h3+ 8.♔xh3 ♕xf1+ 9.♕g3
♚e2 10.♚e3 ♕c4 11.♚c5 ♕d3+**

Remember ‘fighting spirit’? With White’s king practically naked, Black’s queen becomes a powerful force. White never gets a chance to push his passed pawns either due to the threat of perpetual or due to a tactical refutation (i.e. Black wins one of the pawns).

12.♕g2 ♕e4+ 13.♔f1



13...e5!

Since White cannot push his passed pawns, Black decides to push his own pawns. If White plays slowly and allows Black to advance his f-pawn as well, White may get himself into a fair amount of trouble!

**14.♕d6 ♕b1+ 15.♔e2 ♕c2+
16.♔e3 ♕h7 17.a6 f5! 18.♕xe5?!**

Tempting, but Black will now be able to draw without difficulties. White’s best chance was to consolidate with 18.♕d7+! ♔h6 19.♕d3. After 19...f4+ 20.♔e4 ♕xf2, however, I cannot see a way for White to make progress, e.g. 21.♔xe5 ♕e1+ 22.♔xf4 ♕xb4+ and Black draws.

**18...♕c1+ 19.♔f3 ♕a3+ 20.♔f4
♕c1+ 21.♔g3 ♕g1+ 22.♔f3 ♕d1+
23.♔g2 ♕g4+ 24.♔g3 ♕xb4
25.♔f3 ♕a4 26.♔b7+ ♔h6 27.f3
♕c2+ 28.♔g3 ♕c5 29.♔g2 ♕c2+
30.♔f1 ♕d1+ 31.♔f2 ♕d2+ 32.♔g3
♕g5+ 33.♔h2 ♕d2+ 34.♔g1 ½-½**

White cannot avoid perpetual check and concedes the draw.

Whether or not White had a way to escape the checks *is not important*. Trying to achieve perpetual was Black’s only chance, so why not try it?

In our final game, White will defend against titanic pressure, making only move after only move. When Black commits an inaccuracy, White (the defending player) immediately pounces and achieves perpetual check.



99. Govciyan-Cossin

French Team Championship 2010

White's position is on the verge of collapse. Although he has managed to weaken Black's king, it is not clear how to make use of this factor. In addition, Black is a pawn up. White's only chance is to combine threats against Black's king with the defense of his own monarch.

1.♔h5+ ♔e6 2.♕d2

The endgame after 2.♕e3? ♕xe3+ 3.fxe3 ♔e4 is hopeless for White. Black's plan will be to trade the e-pawn, and play ...f5-f4, when White will not be able to stop the penetration of Black's king into his camp.

2...♔d6 3.♕d8!

A terrific move. Since White's king is temporarily protected, he can seek counterchances.

3...a5 4.♕b6+ ♔c6



5.a3!

Yet again, White finds the best defense. 5.♕xa?? would have been a grave mistake, since after 5...♕d4! White's queen is too passive. After 6.♕xf5 ♕xb2+ 7.♔e3 ♕c1+ 8.♔d4 ♕c3+ 9.♔e3 d2+ 10.♔d3+ (forced, as after 10.♔e2 Black wins with 10...♔d5!) 10...♔c5 I cannot see a good defense against 11...♔b5.

5...bxa3 6.bxa3 ♕a4

Renewing the threat against White's king. Now, 7.♔xd3 is bad because of 7...♕xa3+. However, White finds an unexpected idea.

7.♕b8+ ♔e7 8.♕e5+!



And it turns out that perpetual cannot be avoided!

8...♔d8 9.♕b8+ ♔e7 10.♕e5+ ♔d8

½-½

Let's reiterate some of the key points we have learned in this section:

Attack:

- A) Be careful when attacking an opponent's weakness. If you give your opponent too much counterplay (as I did in Naroditsky-Gurtovoy) your advantage can be nullified quickly.
- B) Use tactics to your favor. In Tymrakiewicz-McNab, Black was hanging on, but by using a very nice tactical motif White was able to make inroads into Black's position.

Defense:

- A) Always remain hopeful, no matter how lost the position is. In Macieja-Spasov, Black kept creating annoying problems for White, and eventually managed to achieve a draw.
- B) If your opponent has unstoppable passers (as in Makk-Kummer), try to create threats against his king to *divert his attention*. This is also a tip which can be applied in QOCB endings.
- C) Always consider a trade into a queen ending. In Ilja Schneider-Litwak, White was careless and by trading into a queen ending Black was able to obtain great drawing chances.



5.3 Nguyen Duc Hoa-Tu Hoang Thai

Ho Chi Minh City 2010

Clearly, Black is in big trouble. White threatens to annihilate Black's whole queenside and simply promote his passed pawns. Is there a way to defend?

Queen + Bishop vs. Queen + Knight

Jose Raul Capablanca once remarked that as a rule, the queen + knight tandem is superior to the queen + bishop tandem. This 'rule' has been the subject of much heated debate. In this section, I will attempt to explain the basic ideas behind each tandem, and also establish a more concrete, experience-based answer to this question.

Let us start out by making some general observations. In a tactical, double-edged position, the queen and knight usually cooperate much better than the queen and bishop, as they can whip up deadly threats very quickly. Also, it is much easier to create annoying tactical threats with the queen and knight because the knight can join the attack with a deadly fork.

However, in positions where the kings are safe, the queen and bishop are usually superior as they can control a larger amount of space. Also, a passed pawn is a knight's worst enemy. In the game Naroditsky-Sandberg (in Chapter 1), we could see that White's passed pawn forced Black to remain passive.

5.4 Lasker-Pillsbury

New York 1893

The time seems ripe for the players to call it a day. But is there a way to renew the struggle?

Mastering Complex Endgames

As we look at more and more games, we will have a better understanding of why and how the queen + knight are usually superior to the queen + bishop.

Let's start out from the point of view of the queen and knight. As an introduction, we turn to Anatoly Karpov.



100. Ljubojevic-Karpov

Linares 1981

Clearly, White is slightly better. In addition to having a space advantage, Black has a weakness on d6 and White has the potential to pressure Black on the queenside. However, things are not so simple! First of all, the black player is named Karpov (what else needs to be said?). Second of all, it's not entirely clear how White should play. Given time, Black will activate both his queen and his knight, neutralizing White's advantage. Naturally, Ljubojevic plays actively.

1. $\mathbb{Q}d3$

As Karolyi & Aplin prove in an extensive, meticulous, and entertaining analysis in their book, this is an error. Basically, White should not allow Black to play ...g7-g6 (improving his pawn structure) without concessions. Karpov recommends 1.g4! instead. I will give some of K & A's analysis, and add some of my own thoughts as well.

A) 1... $\mathbb{Q}c6$ is the most natural move.

Analysis diagram

Black establishes a firm grip on the d4-square and will counter White's kingside play with central pressure. Black also parries 2. $\mathbb{Q}d6$, as after 2... $\mathbb{Q}xd6$ 3.exd6 f5! White loses the d6-pawn. White has a few interesting moves:

A1) 2. $\mathbb{Q}d3$ (unmentioned by the annotators) is a dangerous move. White now threatens 3. $\mathbb{Q}h7$, forcing Black to make a sequence of strong defensive moves. 2... $\mathbb{Q}b4!$ (Black has to defend actively) 3. $\mathbb{Q}h7$ $\mathbb{Q}xa2+$ (3... $\mathbb{Q}d7$ 4.a3! is good for White) 4. $\mathbb{Q}b1$ $\mathbb{Q}b4$ and now White must bail out with 5. $\mathbb{Q}d2$ since 5. $\mathbb{Q}xg7?$ loses to 5... $\mathbb{Q}d8!$, with the deadly threats of 6... $\mathbb{Q}d3+$ and 6... $\mathbb{Q}d1+$.

However, that is not all! I later realized that White does not have to play 4. $\mathbb{Q}b1$; 4. $\mathbb{Q}d1!$ is much better. Now, the draw is not so simple, but after 4... $\mathbb{Q}c6!$, I can't find a way for White to avoid the perpetual check.

A2) 2.g5 hxg5 3.fxg5 $\mathbb{Q}xe5$ 4. $\mathbb{Q}f3$ $\mathbb{Q}d4!$ (Karolyi & Aplin) 5. $\mathbb{Q}f2$ $\mathbb{Q}c8$ with dynamic equality.

A3) It seems to me that the best way to try for an advantage is to play the quiet 2.b3!. White's idea is simple: he will improve his position before taking any kingside action. However, after 2... $\mathbb{Q}e7$ 3.g5!? $\mathbb{Q}c7$ (3...hxg5 4.fxg5 $\mathbb{Q}xe5$ 5.h6 is too dangerous for Black) now White has the incredibly subtle 4. $\mathbb{Q}d2!!$ with the idea of forcing a concession such as 4...a6, after which White moves $\mathbb{Q}d2-d1-d2$ until Black finally plays ... $\mathbb{Q}c8$. Therefore, it makes sense to play 4... $\mathbb{Q}c8$ immediately. After 5. $\mathbb{Q}d6!$ $\mathbb{Q}xd6$ 6.exd6 $\mathbb{Q}d7$ 7. $\mathbb{Q}d2$ (this endgame is drawn, but Black has to find some accurate moves!) 7... $\mathbb{Q}xd6$ 8.gxh6 gxh6 9.f5! exf5 10. $\mathbb{Q}xh6$ $\mathbb{Q}e6$ 11. $\mathbb{Q}g7$ f6! White cannot make any progress.

Overall, 1... $\mathbb{Q}c6$ should draw, although Black has to play carefully.

B) 1... $\mathbb{Q}b7$ (Karolyi & Aplin) seems to be the shortest path to a draw, i.e. 2. $\mathbb{Q}d6+$ $\mathbb{Q}c8$ (not 2... $\mathbb{Q}c7$?! when the ending after 3. $\mathbb{Q}xc7+$ $\mathbb{Q}xc7$ 4. $\mathbb{Q}d2$ is clearly better for White) 3.b3 $\mathbb{Q}f3$! 4. $\mathbb{Q}d2$ $\mathbb{Q}c6$! (4... $\mathbb{Q}h1+$ is mentioned by Karolyi & Aplin, but after 5. $\mathbb{Q}b2$ $\mathbb{Q}g2$ 6. $\mathbb{Q}a3$ Black still has to make some precise moves in order to draw) 5. $\mathbb{Q}f8+$ $\mathbb{Q}d8$ and Black establishes an impenetrable fortress, i.e. 6. $\mathbb{Q}xg7$ $\mathbb{Q}h1+$ 7. $\mathbb{Q}b2$ $\mathbb{Q}g2$ with a forced repetition of moves or perpetual after 8. $\mathbb{Q}c2$ $\mathbb{Q}e4+$.

All in all, Black should be able to draw without too much trouble after both 1... $\mathbb{Q}c6$ and 1... $\mathbb{Q}b7$. Notice that the knight functions best in role of the defender, while the queen is the attacker, always looking for perpetual check.

1...g6!

Ljubojevic had underestimated this key move. As we shall soon see, Black establishes a stronghold on f5, and it will be White who will have to equalize.

2. $\mathbb{Q}xg6$ $\mathbb{Q}xg6$ 3.a3

Or 3.g4 h5! with equality.

3...a5 4.b3 h5

Another important part in Black's plan. Now, White cannot stop the e7-knight from occupying the f5-square.

**5. $\mathbb{Q}e4$ $\mathbb{Q}f5$ 6. $\mathbb{Q}f2$ $\mathbb{Q}d7$ 7.a4 $\mathbb{Q}c7$
8. $\mathbb{Q}c2$ $\mathbb{Q}d8!$**

A tricky move. Ljubojevic, lulled by his rock-solid position, played:

9. $\mathbb{Q}c1?$

White could have drawn by means of 9. $\mathbb{Q}g2$!. Now, if 9...g5, White draws with 10.fxg5 $\mathbb{Q}xg5$ 11. $\mathbb{Q}a8$ and Black cannot avoid the perpetual.



9...g5!

'Uh-oh,' Ljubojevic must have thought! Notice that as soon as Black activates his queen and knight, White's position completely falls apart.

**10.fxg5 $\mathbb{Q}xg5+$ 11. $\mathbb{Q}c2$ $\mathbb{Q}e7$
12. $\mathbb{Q}h7$ $\mathbb{Q}d7$ 13. $\mathbb{Q}e4$ $\mathbb{Q}f5$
14. $\mathbb{Q}d3+$ $\mathbb{Q}c6$ 15. $\mathbb{Q}xf5$ exf5**

The endgame is winning for Black, as White cannot defend his weak pawns. Karpov's play is still instructive though!

**16.♕e3 ♜g6 17.e6 ♔d6 18.♕g5
♚xe6 19.♔d3 f4! 20.gxf4 h4
21.♔e3 h3 22.♔f3 ♕f5 23.♔g3**

**23...♞xf4 24.♔d8 ♜e2+ 25.♔xh3
♞d4 26.♔xb6 ♜xb3 27.♔d8 ♜e4
28.♔g4 ♔d3 29.♔f4 ♔xc4
30.♔e4 ♔c3 31.♔f6+ ♔c2
32.♔e5 c4 33.♔e3 c3 34.♔f6 ♜c5
35.♔e2 ♔b3**

0-1

So what exactly do we learn from this game? First of all, Karpov demonstrated that activity is of paramount importance when playing with a queen and knight. Given an opportunity, you should find the best accessible square for your queen and preferably establish a solid outpost for the knight. This certainly doesn't mean, however, that when given a chance you should lunge at your opponent, burning all the bridges. A knight can also be a very strong piece in closed positions, especially when the bishop is passive.

In the following game, subtle maneuvering leads to a strong attack. Since the game is very instructive, let's start from the beginning.

101. Najdorf-Gligoric

Saltsjöbaden Interzonal 1948

Dutch, Stonewall Variation (A95)

**1.d4 e6 2.c4 f5 3.g3 ♜f6 4.♕g2
♚e7 5.♘c3 0-0 6.♘f3 d5?!**

The main drawbacks of the Stonewall variation are the gaping weaknesses (e5, f4, c5) that Black creates when setting up the Stonewall pawn structure. Keeping that in mind, the bishop is more logically placed on d6 in this variation. However, at the time the game was played, the ...♔d6 set-up was very unpopular. Since Black has already committed himself to playing 4...♚e7, it made sense to go into the Ilyin-Zhenevsky variation with 6...d5.

7.0-0 c6 8.♗g5!

A sensible and dangerous (for Black) move. White aims to eliminate the f6-knight, which is often very irritating, as it can jump to the stronghold e4.

**8...♝bd7 9.cxd5 exd5 10.e3 h6
11.♔xf6 ♜xf6 12.♗b1 ♜e4 13.♗e5
♔d6 14.f4**



Clearly, White has won the opening battle. He has a beautiful knight on e5, while Black's knight on e4 does not exert any pressure on White's position and can be traded off at White's convenience. Playing such a position from Black's point of view is extremely unpleasant, since he has very few prospects to equalize and White will slowly but surely push Black off the board.

**14...♝e6 15.♛e2 ♞xe5 16.fxe5
♚e7 17.♝bc1 ♜ac8 18.a3 c5?**

Black tries to liberate his position, but does so at a wrong time. Black's best bet was to try for counterplay on the other side of the board with something like 18...♝g5.

19.♞xe4!

Now, taking with the d-pawn is impossible in view of 19.d5, so Black must settle for an inferior endgame.

**19...fxe4 20.♝xf8+ ♜xf8 21.♝f1
♝xf1+ 22.♛xf1 cxd4 23.exd4**



An interesting and enlightening endgame has arisen on the board. Since the position is closed, Black is obviously worse. White is already threatening ♜b5, forcing Black to play ...a7-a6 (restricting the bishop even further). But if you are White, how do you win this position? Do you try for a direct attack on the opponent's king, or should you try to win Black's queenside pawns? Of course, this question cannot be answered by pure calculation. When making decisions like these, you have to take into account all of the aspects of the position. Here, an attack on the black king is impossible because it is completely safe and White cannot ne-

glect his d4-pawn or his own king. An attack on Black's queenside pawns is a more reasonable idea, but owing to the constant threat of ...♝g5, White cannot directly attack Black's pawns.

So, does that mean the position is drawn? No! One of the marks of experienced endgame players is that they can *combine two plans*. If White can keep Black's attention on his king, and penetrate with his knight, progress will be made. White starts out by improving the position of his pieces.

23...a6 24.♞a4

Note that this move isn't necessarily played with a direct, specific idea in mind (although ♜c5 could be unpleasant). Instead, White is probing Black's position and inviting him to lunge forward without justification. But, as we shall see later, this move is in fact a mistake!

24...♝g5 25.♛f4 ♜h5

I imagine that Gligoric played this quickly, but is the ending after 25...♜xf4 26.gxf4 all that bad for Black?



Analysis diagram

At first sight, due to the multitude of unpleasant ideas White has (i.e. ♜c5, ♜b6, f4-f5, etc.), the position seems rather hopeless for Black. However, af-

ter something like ...g7-g6, how exactly does White win? Certainly, White has a wagonload of plans, but none of them seem to win directly.

In this position, Black has two main defensive plans: one is to try for activity with 26...g5, and the other is to defend passively with 26...g6. We will take a look at both of them:

Plan A: 26...g5

This move seems a bit risky, but if Black manages to place his king on f7 and bishop on c8, how does White win? After 27.fxg5 hxg5 28.Qf2 Qf7 29.Qe3 Qd7 30.Qc5 Qc8, White's best bet is to plant a pawn on b5 or a5 and then try to force a concession. Following 31.b4, however, Black does not allow White to play b4-b5 and plays 31...b6.

Rybka thinks the position is drawn, but I still had a last-ditch hope: after 32.Qb3 Qh3 33.a4 Qe7 34.a5 bxa5 35.bxa5 I was hoping to somehow plant a knight on c5 and induce Zugzwang, but all my dreams were silenced immediately after Rybka resoundingly played 35...Qf1. I could almost hear that little metal demon snickering at my futile efforts, and in disbelief, I spent a good part of an hour experiencing first-hand the frustration of trying to find a win when Rybka is defending.

By the time I was finished, one could fill a book by listing the expletives that I had shouted at the computer in my irritation. But then, I remembered something Bent Larsen had said: 'If you want to find an improvement in a long variation, analyze in the beginning of the variation, since that's where the mistake is usually made.' Sure enough, after 26...g5, White

has a much better way of playing for a win: 27.Qc5 Qc8 28.f5!.



Analysis diagram

An interesting situation arises on the board. The point of White's idea is that after 28...b6 he plays 29.Qa4, keeping material equality. Taking on f5 is very unfavorable for Black, as in the resulting endgame he will have no way to stop White from gradually pushing his queenside pawn majority.

Rybka, however, can still see light at the end of the tunnel for Black. After 28...Qf7! (notice that Black is unfazed by the connected passers) making progress is very tough. In order to win, White must make a plan. In this case, if he can plant a pawn on f6 (this time, Black cannot stop him) Black will have one piece constantly tied down. White will then switch his attention to the queenside. In the words of GM Lev Psakhis, 'Something will happen. I don't know when, or how, but something will.'

Unfortunately, I spent another 30 minutes analyzing, but *again* could not find a single way to make progress. For example, 29.f6 h5 30.Qa4 Qh3 31.Qc3 Qe6 32.Qf2 Qf8 33.b4 Qf7 34.a4 Qf8 and again, Black is completely unfazed by White's play on the queenside:

35.b5 axb5 36.axb5 36...g4!, and due to the threat of ...h5-h4 and ...g4-g3 the white king cannot move forward.

Amazing! In every variation, Black hangs on by a hair's breadth. Interestingly, in *Bishop v. Knight*, Mayer doesn't even consider this queen trade; something I find rather disturbing considering that this book is about the battle between the bishop and knight!

As a result of this analysis, it becomes clear that ♜a4 was indeed an inaccuracy. Although I was rather upset to find that White had no win in this endgame, it's always pleasing to find out that a move that looks extremely natural is in fact a mistake.

Let's take a look at Black's second defensive option.

Plan B: Passive Defense with 26...g6

Now, White needs to try for queenside counterplay again: 27.♔f2 ♔f7 28.♕b6 (freezing Black's queenside pawns in case White will advance his own later) 28...♔e7 29.♕e3 ♔d8.



And now, White has a very interesting idea: to switch his attention to the kingside! 30.h4! ♔c7 31.♕a4 ♔c6 32.♕c3 a5 33.♕e2 ♕h3 34.♕g3 ♕g4, and unfortunately, Black is just in time to prevent h4-h5.

Therefore, passive defense is also a viable option. Overall, we can see that carelessness should have cost White the game! Even more curious is that this draw was completely missed in Mayer's annotations!

So what should White have done instead of ♜a4? In my view, it was necessary to play 24.h4, stopping ...♕h4 forever.

26.♕c3 ♕h7 27.h4 ♕g8 28.♔f2



From now on, Najdorf plays with great precision, *nourishing his positional advantage until a chance to launch an attack arises*.

28...♗e8 29.♘e2 ♗c8 30.♔e1 ♗e8?

Black misses his chance. After 30...♗c2! 31.♗c1 ♗xc1+ 32.♘xc1 ♔f7 33.♘e2 g5!? an endgame arises almost identical to the one we have looked at. Of course, defending the endgame is very unpleasant, but if Black stays calm and doesn't blunder, I don't see how White can make progress.

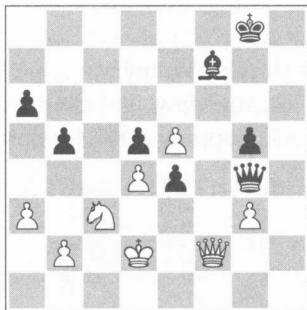
31.♗c1! ♗g6 32.♗c3 ♗g4 33.♗b3

Forcing a weakness in Black's camp.

33...b5 34.♘f4 ♔f7 35.♗e3 g5

Throwing more oil into the fire, but since the knight vs. bishop endgame is now lost, Black can hardly defend passively.

36.hxg5 hxg5 37.Qe2 Kg7
 38.Qf2 Qe6 39.Qc3 Qg8 40.Qd2
 ♜f7



41.Qd1!

A terrific maneuver. Since Black's king is now very weak, White can switch from maneuvering to attack. Note how quickly White's knight and queen come alive!

Let's recap the main lessons we have learned from this game.

A) Remember:

In QBQN endgames, consider all queen trades carefully. While the resulting endgame might seem winning for the knight, bishops are often resilient.

B) Once either a knight or a queen become active, the opponent's position often quickly collapses. More specifically, we could see that by creating a strong outpost for the knight (first f4, then f5) and keeping his queen *active* and *mobile*, White eventually managed to shatter Black's defenses.

Tactical opportunities may arise when you least expect them. One of the best things about playing with the queen and knight is that they have an almost infinite amount of fighting spirit.

So, when do you look for tactics? The answer is quite simple: on every move! Even if your position is under pressure, look for unexpected tactical opportunities. These might involve a queen sacrifice in order to fork the king and queen, or something as simple as a sacrifice which creates major attacking chances.

In the following game, Black discovers an amazing tactic out of the blue to turn the game from an almost sure loss into a win.

41...Qe6 42.Qe3 Qb6 43.Qf5 b4
 44.a4



With White's knight located on an optimal square, Black can hardly put up a serious defense.

44..b3 45.Qe3 Qb4+ 46.Qe2 Qc4+
 47.Qe1 Qb4+ 48.Qf1 Qf8 49.Qxg5
 Qe8 50.Qd6+ Qd7 51.Qg7 1-0

Overall, a very interesting game.



102. Petrov-Kempinski

European Championship, Ohrid 2001

Clearly, Black is objectively lost. Black has a passed pawn on c3, but for now it is safely restrained by White's queen. Black's king, on the other hand, is a different story. Not only is White up two pawns, but Black's king is in a very weak spot, defended only by the queen. However, Kempinski finds a terrific resource and manages to complicate matters.

1...c2!

This probably came as a big surprise to Petrov, who was lulled by the apparent passivity of Black's position. Suddenly, he had to find a way to play! When your position is lost, it's great to create tactical counterplay because your opponent will have to start calculating again, something he really doesn't want to do. Petrov could not regain his concentration and played the obvious-looking

2.♔f2

What could possibly be wrong with this move? Since Black's queen is tied down to the defense of g7, the c2-pawn is harmless. If 2...c1♕, then the position after 3.♕xc1 gx5 4.exf5 is hope-

less for Black; i.e. 4...♝xd5 5.e4+ and Black loses his knight.

In positions like these, it's important to identify what exactly is not permitting you to play the move you want; in this case, Black would love to play ...♗b2, but unfortunately the g6-pawn is too weak! You should then look for ways to somehow make your move possible. Petrov must have been horrified when Kempinski unleashed

2...♝c4!!

A beautiful move, made all the more effective by the fact that White cannot decline the sacrifice. Is this move really hard to find after you've been told that there is a tactic in this position? Obviously not. But it is the mark of good players to *allow themselves to look for tactics*. Despite the apparent hopelessness of the position, Kempinski *did not lose hope*. Instead, he searched for any ways to make the win harder for his opponent, and his efforts were rewarded.

Stunned by the sudden course of events, Petrov resigned. White had no way to fight on:

A) On 3.♕xc4 ♗b2 wins immediately;

B) 3.♗xg6!? is a desperate attempt to obtain counterplay, but after 3...c1♕ White has no effective discovered check.

So what should White have done? GM Rogozenco demonstrates the right way to play: 2.e5! (now, White will be able to take on c2 with the bishop) 2...♝xd5 (2...c1♕+ is a good try, but White should still win after 3.♕xc1 gx5 4.a5!) 3.♗xc2 ♜b4 4.♕c4 ♜xc2 5.♕xc2 ♜xe5 6.e4 ♜d4+ 7.♔f1 and White should eventually win, although

Black can certainly put up a major fight (White had a much more convincing win earlier in the endgame). Clearly, we

can see that even an uncoordinated knight and queen can generate deadly counterplay in under five moves!

The saying ‘tactics support strategy’ is a cliché, but it is true! Often, in order to win, your play will need to be based on a tactical justification. Therefore, you have to combine the right amount of calculation with the right amount of positional reasoning. The following game is a good illustration:



103. Naroditsky-Pinto

Los Angeles 2009

White's queen and knight are coordinated perfectly (note the two key ingredients here: an unassailable outpost for the knight and a beautiful, dominating square for the lady) and Black's b6-pawn is very weak. However, for now, Black is holding his position together. After some thought, I found an interesting idea:

1.b5!?

My plan is simple: to win the b6-pawn after $\mathbb{Q}c6$. However, as I realized in my analysis, my opponent could obtain some very interesting counterplay. After a thorough examination of this position, I came to the conclusion that 1. $\mathbb{Q}b5!$ is the best way to play. Black has a couple of responses:

A) 1... $\mathbb{Q}b2?$ loses to the devastating 2. $\mathbb{Q}d4!$, and Black's queen is locked in;

the dual threats of 3. $\mathbb{Q}xb6$ and 3. $\mathbb{Q}e5$ force desperation.

B) 1...h5! is much better, but after 2. $\mathbb{Q}c3$ $\mathbb{Q}a8$ 3. b5 White's concept becomes clear: he is not aiming to win the b6-pawn immediately, instead trying to improve his position to the fullest extent first. After 3...h4 4. $\mathbb{Q}c4$ $\mathbb{Q}e5$ (4... $\mathbb{Q}f8$! is Rybka's recommendation, but after 5. $\mathbb{Q}b4+$ $\mathbb{Q}e8$ 6. $\mathbb{Q}a3$ $\mathbb{Q}b7$ 7. $\mathbb{Q}e2$ $\mathbb{Q}d7$ 8. $\mathbb{Q}a7$ Black's position starts falling apart) 5. $\mathbb{Q}d4!$ $\mathbb{Q}xd4$ 6. exd4 the threat of $\mathbb{Q}a4-\mathbb{Q}xb6$ is devastating.

1...h5!

Black finds the right way to play.

2. $\mathbb{Q}c6$

I played this move quickly and confidently. After all, White's king looks completely safe and there is no defense against 3. $\mathbb{Q}xb6$. However, I had not considered the tactical consequences carefully enough. In time trouble, Black played the tempting:

2... $\mathbb{Q}a1+?$

which allowed me to bring my king into complete safety. Had Black played 2... $\mathbb{Q}b2!$, winning would have been much harder! After 3. $\mathbb{Q}d4!$ (the obvious 3. $\mathbb{Q}xb6$ is met by the very strong 3... $\mathbb{Q}xc6!!$ 4. $\mathbb{Q}xc6$ $\mathbb{Q}a1+$ 5. $\mathbb{Q}h2$ $\mathbb{Q}e5+$ 6. g3 and now the point of

Black's first move is revealed: 6...h4! and it's not clear how to avoid perpetual and hold the b5-pawn at the same time) 3... $\mathbb{Q}a1+$ 4. $\mathbb{Q}h2$ $\mathbb{Q}a2$ (not 4... $\mathbb{Q}b2??$ 5. $\mathbb{Q}e5++-$) 5. $\mathbb{Q}xb6$ $\mathbb{Q}xf2$ an interesting position arises.



Analysis diagram

Material is equal, but Black has no way to stop White's passer. Therefore, Black must seek dynamic counterplay on the kingside. The following variation is very instructive: 6. $\mathbb{Q}c5$ h4! (Black uses *tactics* to help him defend) 7. $\mathbb{Q}c2!$ (a strong idea; White stops ... $\mathbb{Q}e1+$ after ... $\mathbb{Q}g3+$ $\mathbb{Q}g1$) 7... $\mathbb{Q}b7$ 8. $\mathbb{Q}e5+$ $\mathbb{Q}h7$ 9. $\mathbb{Q}c7$ (very subtle maneuvering; White freezes Black's kingside play) 9... $\mathbb{Q}d5$ 10.b6 g5 11. $\mathbb{Q}d4!$ and White's knight and queen come together in devastating fashion. Now, it is White who uses tactics to help him attack. 11... $\mathbb{Q}xe3$ 12. $\mathbb{Q}f5$ and now the deadly threat of $\mathbb{Q}e5$ forces Black to play 12... $\mathbb{Q}f4+$. However, after 13. $\mathbb{Q}xf4$ gxf4 the win is anything but simple. I spent quite a while trying to get to the bottom of this mess, and I believe that White should indeed win with precise play. However, clearly 2... $\mathbb{Q}b2$ was a great chance from a *practical* point of view, and whether or not the move should lose in the long run is unimportant!

3. $\mathbb{Q}h2$ $\mathbb{Q}h7?!$

Now, White will have no problems winning.

4. $\mathbb{Q}xb6$ $\mathbb{Q}f1$

Now 4... $\mathbb{Q}xc6$ is ineffective in view of 5.bxc6 $\mathbb{Q}e5+$ 6.g3 h4 7. $\mathbb{Q}b3!$ and White wins.

5. $\mathbb{Q}c5$ $\mathbb{Q}e6$ 6. $\mathbb{Q}e5$ $\mathbb{Q}xf2$

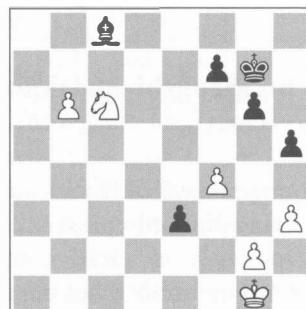
The desperate 6... $\mathbb{Q}xh3$ loses after 7. $\mathbb{Q}xh3$ $\mathbb{Q}h1+$ 8. $\mathbb{Q}g3$ h4+ 9. $\mathbb{Q}g4$ $\mathbb{Q}xg2+$ 10. $\mathbb{Q}xh4$ $\mathbb{Q}xf2+$ 11. $\mathbb{Q}g4$ and Black will run out of checks soon.

7.b6 $\mathbb{Q}c8$ 8. $\mathbb{Q}f4?$

A major inaccuracy which could have resulted in Black acquiring significant drawing chances. 8. $\mathbb{Q}g3!$ won easily; i.e. 8... $\mathbb{Q}b2$ 9. $\mathbb{Q}c7$ and Black can resign.

8... $\mathbb{Q}a2?$

In huge time trouble, Black misses his chance. After 8... $\mathbb{Q}xf4+!$ 9.exf4 e3 10. $\mathbb{Q}g1$ (10. $\mathbb{Q}g3??$ loses to 10...h4+ 11. $\mathbb{Q}f3$ $\mathbb{Q}b7$; this is Black's tactical justification!) 10... $\mathbb{Q}g7$



Analysis diagram

White seems to be easily winning, but in chess, anything can happen. In this position, White has two ways to play:

he can go for the e-pawn with $\mathbb{Q}a5-\mathbb{Q}c4$, or can win Black's bishop with $\mathbb{Q}d8$ (or $\mathbb{Q}a5$). Let's examine both continuations:

A) 11. $\mathbb{Q}d8$ is very tempting; after all, why not win the bishop? However, after 11... $\mathbb{Q}f6$ (Black goes for activity!) 12. $b7$ $\mathbb{Q}xb7$ 13. $\mathbb{Q}xb7$ $\mathbb{Q}f5$ 14. $\mathbb{Q}d6+$ (14. $g3$ $\mathbb{Q}e4$ is drawn) 14... $\mathbb{Q}xf4$ 15. $\mathbb{Q}xf7$ $\mathbb{Q}g3$ Black's king is way too active.

B) 11. $\mathbb{Q}a5!$ $\mathbb{Q}f6$ 12. $\mathbb{Q}c4!$ is the best way to play. First of all, this plan is extremely tough to find, considering that White can win a bishop instead. It turns

out that Black cannot hold the b6-pawn and his kingside pawns simultaneously; for example, 12... $\mathbb{Q}e7$ (12... $\mathbb{Q}f5$ loses immediately after 13. $\mathbb{Q}d6+$) 13. $\mathbb{Q}xe3$ $\mathbb{Q}d6$ 14. $\mathbb{Q}c4+$ $\mathbb{Q}c5$ 15. $\mathbb{Q}e5$ $f5$ 16. $\mathbb{Q}xg6$ $\mathbb{Q}xb6$ 17. $\mathbb{Q}f2$ $\mathbb{Q}c5$ 18. $\mathbb{Q}g3$ $\mathbb{Q}b7$ and now 19. $\mathbb{Q}h4!$ wins, since 19... $\mathbb{Q}e4$ 20. $\mathbb{Q}f3$ is hopeless for Black.

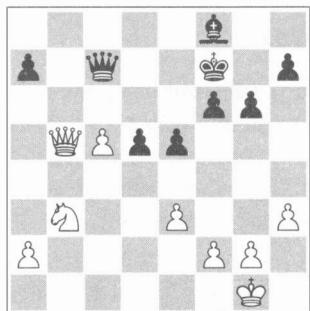
9. $\mathbb{Q}d8!$

1-0

Black lost on time, but the bishop cannot be saved anyway.

A very interesting game, with many tactical opportunities for both sides.

In our final two games, the player with the queen and knight will combine profound positional thinking with razor-sharp tactical precision. While looking at the games, pay close attention to the quickness with which the queen and knight can come together with devastating effect.



104. Bu Xiangzhi-Malakhov

Russia vs China rapid, Ningbo 2010

Due to the weakness of Black's king and White's far-advanced passer on c5, White's position is clearly superior. However, as I mentioned before, the defensive ability of the bishop should not be underestimated!

Right now, it's not entirely clear how White can make progress. One of the first moves that comes to mind is 1.c6.

White gains space, advances his passer, and threatens d4-d5. This all sounds good, but after 1... $\mathbb{Q}e6$ White again has to find a way to make inroads into Black's position. 2. $\mathbb{Q}a5$ looks interesting, but after, say, 2... $f5$ 3. $\mathbb{Q}b7$ $\mathbb{Q}d6!$ White cannot break through Black's fortress. Therefore, White has to look for something more cunning. In positions like these, it's important to understand the concept of **creating weaknesses** in your opponent's camp. In this case, White would love to sink his queen into b7 without playing c5-c6. Quickly, it becomes clear that in order to create a weakness in Black's camp, White will have to plant a pawn on a6.

1.a4!

A terrific move; not hard to find, but nevertheless very strong. Since Black

cannot obtain any serious counterplay, White doesn't have to immediately advance his pawn to a6. If he wants, he can first improve his position.

Often, if you see a good plan, it's tempting to execute it right away. But you have to understand that if your opponent has no counterplay, there is no need to hurry. You can simply take every move as a separate position and look for alternative ways to improve it. It is this aspect that separates strong players from less experienced ones. Watch what happens in this game.

1...♝e7 2.a5 ♚e6



It's very tempting to immediately play 3.a6, but Bu Xiangzhi does not hurry, and asks himself, '*Maybe there is something better?*' The obvious idea in this position is the penetration of White's queen into Black's camp with 3.♕e8. Since Black's position is extremely fragile, there is no reason why the queen sortie shouldn't win.

3.♕e8!

As soon as White's queen enters Black's camp, it creates huge disarray there. Note how Black's bishop only obstructs Black's king, taking away an important square at e7. In order to save his d5-

and h7-pawns, Black must embark on a dangerous king walk.

3...♚f5

Alternatively, 3...♝d7 4.♕g8+ ♚f5 5.♕xh7 d4 6.h4 ♚g5 7.♕g2! wins for White, as Black cannot stop 8.♕g3 (!).

4.♕f7 ♚e4 5.♘d2+!

After this move, Black's resistance comes to an end. As soon as the knight and queen start working together, Black's position collapses like a house of cards.

5...♚f5

Obviously, 5...♝d3 6.♕xd5+ is hopeless for Black.

6.g4+ ♚g5 7.♕xh7 f5 8.♘f3+

8.♕g7 is even better.

8...♚f6 9.g5+



Black will lose g6, f5, e5, and d5. Therefore, he decided to resign!

Note that White didn't do anything extraordinary. First, he found a strong plan which forced Black to open up the e8-square. Immediately, White pounced on the opportunity. After the queen infiltration, Black's king was hanging on the precipice, but after the knight joined in Black had no chance.

Finally, we will look at a game which nearly mirrors the last one (played in the same event as well!). However, finishing White off will be a much more difficult task than in the last game.



105. Ni Hua-Rublevsky

Russia vs China rapid, Ningbo 2010

Black is dominating on both sides of the board. White has a very weak square on b4, and a queen jump to h2 is looming in the air. However, White has the bishop pair, and for now it's not clear how exactly Black can penetrate. He starts out by eliminating the bishop pair.

1...♝b4+! 2.♝c3

Forced, since otherwise White would have had to deal with ...♝e1 for the rest of the game.

2...♝xc3+ 3.♝xc3

Black has succeeded in eliminating White's bishop pair, but what now? By itself, ...♜h2 is not that much of a threat, since ♜f1 defends easily. On the other hand, White will eventually try for f2-f3, liberating his position.

Therefore, unlike in the last game, Black will have to do something! He

starts out by stopping the pawn break f2-f3:

3...♜h2 4.♜f1

Black has prevented the f2-f3 idea, but the question of what to do is renewed. Clearly, in order to penetrate further Black will have to open up the position. This can be done by means of ...g7-g5/f5-f4. or ...e6-e5. The main problem with the first plan is that the e4-pawn will be hanging after ...f5-f4, and even if Black does succeed in playing ...f5-f4, the complications after exf4 and ♜h3 will not be to Black's liking.

This leaves the plan of ...e6-e5.

Before we look at the game, some quick advice on playing positions like these against strong opponents. Often, you will have a great game against a significantly stronger opponent. In the opening and the middlegame, you held your ground, and in a similar endgame as the one above he offers you a draw. I have accepted such an offer on many occasions, but, simply speaking, nothing rivals the feeling after you have beaten a strong player. Therefore, you sometimes have to take some risks in order to win.

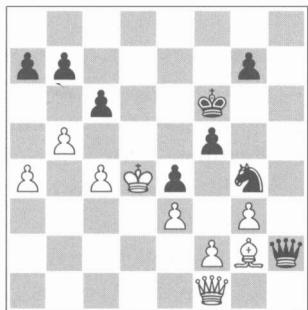
In this case, you cannot win without opening a file.

4...♞f6 5.b4 e5 6.b5!

Hats off to White for trying his best to achieve counterplay.

6...exd4+ 7.♝xd4

White's king is located very insecurely, but Black's queen is currently located about as far away from White's king as...



7... $\mathbb{Q}h8!!$

Never mind! A brilliant move. Suddenly, White's king is not feeling as comfortable at the center of the board! As soon as the position opens up, Black wastes

no time. Now, White's weaknesses will be completely exposed.

8. $bxc6 \mathbb{W}d8+$ 9. $\mathbb{Q}c3 bxc6$ 10. $\mathbb{W}h1$

Desperately, White tries to obtain counterplay. Unfortunately, too little, too late.

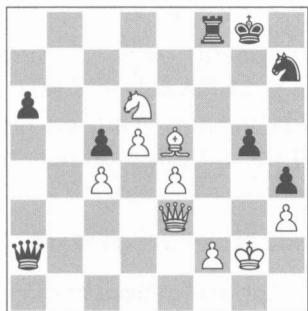
**10... $\mathbb{W}d3+$ 11. $\mathbb{Q}b4 \mathbb{W}d2+$ 12. $\mathbb{Q}c5$
e6!**

In the final position, every piece plays a huge role: Black's knight freezes White's whole kingside, Black's king covers the important d6-square, and Black's queen will actually mate White!

So what do we learn about attack with the queen and the knight? A few important points:

- A) Once the queen and knight coordinate, they are often an unstoppable force.
- B) Carefully consider queen trades, as the resulting endgame may be drawn!
- C) In dynamic positions, calculate as much as you can, but also spend some time thinking about your general strategy.

Now, on to defense. As we already know, the knight and queen can switch from complete passivity to complete activity in a matter of moves. However, this doesn't mean that you always have a chance to start a counterattack and mate your opponent. For inspiration, take a look at the following position:



106. Akopian-Naroditsky

US Open, Irvine 2010

Black is in dire straits. Although material is technically equal, it doesn't take a

rocket scientist to see that White's e- and d-pawns are unstoppable. In addition, the threat of $\mathbb{Q}f5$ is hanging over Black's position like the Sword of Damocles. Naturally, I was a bit worried about my position! In such situations, it's vital to try to achieve counterplay at any cost. Don't let your opponent have an easy life!

1...g4!

This is Black's only chance. By creating action on the board, I force White to calculate variations, something he really doesn't want to do, considering he

spent his energy outplaying me in the middlegame.

2.♘f5!

White finds the best continuation. After 2.hxg4 h3+! 3.♕xh3, amazing complications arise. The human move would be to grab the queen after 3...♞f3+?!, but it turns out that the position after 4.♗xf3 ♜g5+ 5.♗g2 ♜xf3 6.♗xf3 is actually very dangerous for Black! In truth, Black should be able to draw after 6...♝b3+ and 7...a5, but why not play 3...♞xf2!, when it is *White* who has to bail out? After 4.♗g3 ♜f3! 5.♗h6 ♜f6 the game should end in a draw.

2...♞xf5 3.exf5 ♛xc4

Frankly, I had considered this position to be drawn, but the passivity of my knight gives White great winning chances.

4.d6

Note that a passed pawn, especially a far-advanced one, is a knight's worst enemy. In this case, Black has few chances to successfully block the d-pawn, and even if Black does position a knight on d7, it will still be very passive! Therefore, my only chance is to use my queen in order to obtain counterplay.

4...♛d5+ 5.♗h2 g3+



At this point, my opponent sank into a deep think. At first, his hand hovered over the f-pawn, but after about two minutes, he withdrew it and continued thinking. Fortunately for White, we had just made the time control, which meant that he had a whole hour to work out the complications arising after 6.fgx3. Incredibly, though, after about 35 minutes, my opponent played:

6.♗g1?

Getting too fancy! After 6.fgx3, Black would soon run out of effective checks: 6...♝a2+ 7.♔h1 ♛b1+ 8.♗g2 ♛c2+ 9.♗f1! ♛xf5+ 10.♗e2 and Black has to play something like 10...♜g5, since 10...♛c2+ loses after 11.♗e1 ♛b1+ 12.♗d2 ♛a2+ 13.♗c1 ♛c4+ 14.♗c3 ♛f1+ 15.♗b2 and the king escapes to a3. Following 11.♗f4 or 11.d7 Black's position is nearly falling apart.

The text move set a camouflaged trap, but with correct play Black manages to level the swaying boat.

6...♛d1+ 7.♗g2 ♜xf2!

My opponent was hoping for 7...♛d5+, which fails to 8.♗f3! ♛xe5 9.d7 ♛d4 and now White has the lethal 10.♗g4+!, and Black cannot stop the d7-pawn.

8.♗xf2 ♛c2+ 9.♗g1 ♛xf5

At this point, I breathed a big sigh of relief. Black is still not out of the woods, but at least White has no direct win and the d7-pawn is stopped (at least for now).

10.♗b3+ ♛f7 11.♗d1



The type of move that looks scarier than it is. It seems as if White is threatening d6-d7 and $\mathbb{W}g4+$, but Black easily parries both threats.

11... $\mathbb{W}g6+$ 12. $\mathbb{Q}h2 \mathbb{W}e6$

Often, it's much tougher to defend against a static advantage than against a dynamic one. In the above game, White didn't have a long-lasting advantage: Black either would win the f5 pawn and survive, or he wouldn't. If, however, White would have had a static advantage, defending would have been a significantly longer and extremely tedious task. As we already know, in order to successfully defend against a static advantage, you have to be patient and careful. If you manage to defend and activate your knight and queen, your opponent may suddenly stop feeling so comfortable! The following game is a great illustration.



107. Naroditsky-Yap

Las Vegas 2007

I had been pressuring my opponent for most of the game, but he skillfully defended, and I could not find a knockout blow. However, when this position was

Unfortunately for White, he has no win after 13. $\mathbb{W}g1+$ $\mathbb{Q}f8$ 14. $\mathbb{W}g7+$ $\mathbb{Q}e8$.

My opponent spent almost all of his remaining time, and with three minutes left and no win in sight, played:

**13.d7 $\mathbb{W}xe5+$ 14. $\mathbb{Q}h1 \mathbb{W}e4+$
15. $\mathbb{Q}h2 \mathbb{W}e5+$ 1/2-1/2**

An interesting game, featuring a rather unique endgame. The main message is that the queen and bishop are often hopeless in delivering a final blow. Take a look at the position in the note to Black's 12th move: Black's king is naked, and White still cannot win! Therefore, in positions like these, don't fear ghosts.

reached, I was happy with my efforts. There are a couple of factors that account for White's advantage:

A) His queen and bishop are perfectly coordinated, having set their sights not only on the black king but also on the numerous weaknesses.

B) The d5-pawn is tying down Black's queen.

C) For the rest of the game, Black will have to watch out for sudden, deadly moves such as $\mathbb{W}c8$.

As you watch the events unfold, note how Black systematically solves every problem he is presented with.

1... $\mathbb{Q}g7$ 2. $\mathbb{W}c8+$ $\mathbb{Q}h7$ 3. $\mathbb{Q}c3$

Preparing b4-b5, grabbing space and further restricting Black's already cramped position.

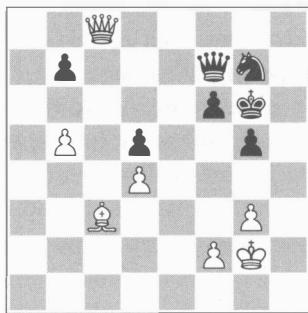
3...a6 4.b4 ♔g6!

A great move. Black's king will now cement the f6/g5 pawn chain. Black may now switch his attention to the other flank.

5.b5

I didn't see a way for Black to defend against the idea of b5-b6 followed by ♕c7.

5...axb5 6.axb5



6...♘f5!

Black starts out by improving the position of his knight. Now, if he manages to get to e4 or c4 via d6, the position will suddenly become unclear. Already, I was getting rather worried about this idea, but was still confident that with good play I could safeguard my king and get my queen to c7.

An interesting comparison would be to think of my position (queen + bishop) as a dam which holds back the queen and knight, ensuring that they do not break free from White's clamp. The more active Black becomes, the closer the dam gets to collapsing. In this case,

Black has already activated his knight. If he manages to penetrate with his queen, White will be in serious trouble.

7.♗d8 ♕e6!

Black continues to systematically improve his position.

8.♔g1?

Panic! Now, Black suddenly wrests the initiative from White's hands. The correct move was 8.b6, and although Black has already completely equalized, he doesn't have an advantage, as he did in the game.

8...♗d6

In eight moves of play, four things have happened. First, Black has eliminated any possible play on the queenside. Second, and most importantly, he has activated both his queen and knight. Third, he has safeguarded his king from any unpleasant attacks. Finally, Black has rid himself of the weakness on d5, which cannot be effectively attacked now.

9.b6 ♘c4 10.♗b8

Otherwise, Black would have won the b6-pawn.

10...♗xb6

On 10...♗xb6?, White plays 11.♗g8+ ♔h6 12.♗xd5 with an advantage.

11.♗xb7 ♘c4 12.♗b1+ ♔g7

The last move was accompanied by a draw offer, which I happily took. However, Black can certainly play for a win after 12...f5, since the tempting 13.g4 is met by 13...♗e4!, and White is suddenly in big trouble!

In order to successfully defend an inferior QBQN position, you have to understand *why* you are defending. Before making a plan, identify the main aspects of the position. This sounds a bit vague, but in a real game you will obviously know what aspect of the position forces you to defend. It might be permanent piece activity, or even a weak square. *Why does this help?* Usually, when trying to win, your opponent will have some type of a plan. If he doesn't, you should wait! In order to successfully parry that plan, it's vital to know what it is! In the last game, White's plan was to advance the b-pawn to b6. Black managed to regroup his pieces in such a way that b5-b6 could effectively be met by ... $\mathbb{Q}c4$.

In more complex cases, you will often have to regroup your pieces many times in order to defend against a plan.



108. Leko-Grischuk

Linares 2001

The position is wide open, which is already a big advantage for the queen and bishop. Black's knight is currently pinned, and his queen defends the weak c7-square. In addition, White has the deadly threat of advancing pawns on the kingside, not even mentioning the idea of b4-b5, creating an outpost on c6. Black also has practically no winning chances, since White doesn't have any defects in his position.

If you are on the weak end of such a position, keep your calm and come to terms with the fact that you have been outplayed. Forget about what happened earlier in the game, and **concentrate on the task at hand**. You won't be able to win. Period. It's important to be opti-

mistic, but if you have a realistic objective in mind, it will be much easier to draw.

Black starts out by trading a pair of pawns.

1...g5!

An instructive idea. GM Golod writes: '[The] less pawns [there are], the better for the defending party.' However, doesn't Black create *two* more weaknesses with this move (the g-pawn and the f5-square)? The answer is simple: yes. However, you have to examine each move in a specific way in addition to verbal thinking. In this case, the queen's penetration to f5 can be met by ... $\mathbb{W}e6$. Black's king can defend the g5-pawn from both g6 and h6.

2.hxg5 hxg5 3. $\mathbb{Q}g2$ $\mathbb{Q}g6$ 4. $\mathbb{W}c2+$ $\mathbb{Q}h6$ 5. $\mathbb{W}c3$ $\mathbb{Q}g6$ 6.a4

Clearly, Black cannot continue waiting, since the idea of a4-a5 followed by a trade on b6; b4-b5, and $\mathbb{W}c6$ is very unpleasant. Black needs to regroup his pieces so that Black's knight will occupy a more active post. The e5-square immediately comes to mind. Once you identify an ideal square for a piece, look for any traps your opponent might have

set. Often, the way players miss simple tactics is to become too preoccupied with their position and miss a simple flaw in their plan.

6...♞d7 7.♕c8!



An annoying move to face. White's queen can now jump to both g8 and f5. Grischuk, however, is undeterred.

7...♞e5!

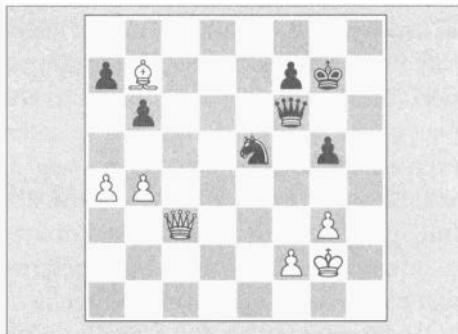
Note that Black's moves are all based on a concrete evaluation of the position. Grischuk sees no danger after 8.♕g8+ or 8.♗e4+, so he plays 7...♞e5, no matter how scary White's attack might seem.

If a move looks very risky but you cannot see a way to refute it, don't play another move and tell yourself, 'Well, the move I had in mind first probably works but it just looks too risky.'

8.♗e4+ ♔g7 9.♕c3

White continues to probe Black's position, looking for ways to make inroads. Unfortunately for White, Black's set-up is completely watertight.

9...♔f6 10.♗b7



When you are defending positions like these, look for ways to forcefully draw the game or reach a drawn position on every move. Right now, Black could continue defending in the same waiting fashion as earlier in the game, but that is not fun! Instead, Grischuk realizes that White has let him off the hook and activates his knight:

10...♞g4! 11.♕xf6+

Or 12.♕d2 ♞e5 and White cannot make any progress (Golod).

**11...♞xf6 12.♔f3 ♔f8 13.♔e3 ♔e7
14.f4 gxf4+ 15.♔xf4 ♞e8 16.♔e5
♞c7 17.g4** 1½-½

Black's fortress is unbreakable.

A terrific performance by Grischuk, who carefully and systematically neutralized White's advantage. When given the chance, he pounced on his opportunity to reach a drawn bishop v. knight endgame. In the above game, the main aspect of the position was the overall flimsiness of the position. White's pieces had room to maneuver and his king was completely safe. Black worked hard to improve his piece placement and finally succeeded in constructing a fortress.

In the following game, Black will be dealing with a nagging space disadvan-

tage and a very active White queen. However, once Black manages to mobilize his pieces, White's worst nightmare comes true!



109. Savchenko-Kamsky

President's Cup, Baku 2010

White has a nagging and long-lasting edge in the form of an active bishop and queen, and a weakness on b7. *How is the b7-pawn weak when it is defended by both of Black's pieces?* True, for now, the b7-pawn cannot be attacked. However, if Black tries to activate his queen and knight, he will have to abandon b7. In this position, White doesn't have any concrete ideas, but still, who would want to defend such a position? Through very careful play, Kamsky manages to repel White's pieces from their great posts.

1...♞e4!

A terrific move. Black improves the position of his knight, and now, White already has to deal with ideas such as ...♛h4.

2.♝c8+

Obviously, the knight vs. bishop end-game after 2.♝xe7+ ♛xe7 presented no problems for Black.

2...♚g7 3.♝d3 ♞d6

Black wisely declines the trade into a queen ending, where White's active queen would promise him great winning chances.

4.♛c5 ♛d8 5.♚f1?!



An interesting situation has arisen on the board. Currently, White has no direct winning plan, but he wants to play a4-a5, freezing the b7-pawn and further increasing his space advantage. Kamsky understands that if he sits and waits passively, White will find a way to pressure him even more. For example, the f2-f3/e3-e4 idea might be very unpleasant. Therefore, Kamsky does everything he can to fight for maneuvering space.

In retrospect, it would have been a better idea to play 5.a5 immediately, thereby stopping Black's next.

5..b6!

A tough move to play, since White's queen will get a chance to ensconce itself onto the terrific c6-square. Two factors make Kamsky's move correct. First, after ...♛c6, White will not be able to attack the b6-square. Black will also be able to play ...♛e8 at some point, when

Mastering Complex Endgames

White will have to liquidate the queen-side pawns.

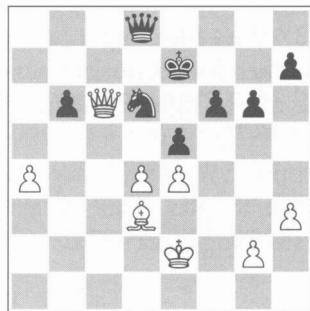
6. $\mathbb{W}c6 \mathbb{Q}f8$

Systematic and strong play. Black will transfer his king to e7, and then play ... $\mathbb{W}e8$, forcing a tradeoff of the queen-side pawns. As a rule, when a bishop is battling a knight in an open position, the more pawns there are on *both* flanks of the board, the better. The bishop can switch from one flank to another very quickly, and therefore, if there are pawns on only one flank, the knight will do a much better defensive job.

7. f3!

Savchenko finds the only way White can make progress. If White succeeds in playing e3-e4, followed by either e4-e5 or d4-d5, Black will get pushed off the board. Therefore, Kamsky prepares a timely ...f7-f6/e6-e5.

7... $\mathbb{Q}e7$ 8.e4 dxe4 9.fxe4 f6!
10. $\mathbb{Q}e2$ e5



11. dxe5

Instead, 11.d5, creating a protected passer, was tempting. *Didn't I say that a passed pawn was often a knight's worst enemy?* That is true, but in this case, the knight has a very good blockading

square on d6, and White cannot make any progress after, say, 11... $\mathbb{W}d7$. If the queens were traded and White's king could penetrate to c6, then the story would have been different. Here, however, the bishop v. knight endgame will obviously be drawn.

11...fxe5 12. h4?!

Savchenko starts to get carried away. It was time to bail out with something like 12. $\mathbb{W}d5$, after which White would still have minimal pressure. White creates an unnecessary weakness on g4 – something that will play a major role later in the game.

12... $\mathbb{W}d7$ 13. $\mathbb{W}xb6$ $\mathbb{W}xa4$ 14. $\mathbb{W}c5$
 $\mathbb{W}a2+$ 15. $\mathbb{Q}e3$ $\mathbb{W}e6$ 16. g4 h6



At this point, Kamsky must have been very satisfied that he managed to defend this very unpleasant endgame. Savchenko, on the other hand, must have been rather irritated that he couldn't make any progress. Often, a player will become so upset with the fact that he failed to win a better position that he will start burning bridges and doing anything to try to win. In this game, this phenomenon manifests itself in its purest form. Savchenko commits a real howler.

17. g5??

On the surface, this move might seem fine. White gains space and suddenly Black has to find a good move. Kamsky found a good move indeed!

17...hxg5 18.hxg5 ♕h3+!

The flaw of White's previous move becomes clear. The g5-pawn is undefended, and suddenly it's Black who will be trying to win the resulting endgame.

19.♔d2 ♕g2+ 20.♔c3 ♕xg5

When defending bad endgame positions in general, it's important to evaluate the position, at least roughly. You have to determine how serious your opponent's advantage is. This will tell you whether drastic measures are required. Of course, if your opponent has a long-lasting positional advantage, the main decision you have to make is whether to defend passively or actively. In the next game, we will take the defender's standpoint, and try to decipher his train of thought, step-by-step.



110. Miroshnichenko-Korobov

Kharkov 2004

White is clearly better. His queen and bishop are coordinated brilliantly, and Black's position is tied up. The following annotations are an attempt to reconstruct Black's train of thought.

'My opponent is clearly better, but should I try for desperate activity? After all, White doesn't have any winning threats so far. For now, I should probably wait for White to

Kamsky converted his advantage impeccably and didn't give Savchenko a single chance to save himself. However, the game continued for another 40 moves, so we will stop right here! (0-1)

Again and again, we notice a similar pattern: Black wasn't really making any extraordinary, impossible-to-find moves. Instead, Black remained very careful for the whole game. His efforts were finally rewarded!

show his cards, and then decide whether or not to continue defending passively.'

1...♕a7 2.♕d6

If White had tried for 2.a4, Black's position after 2...bxa4 3.bxa4 a5 would have been impossible to crack.

'My opponent is still not threatening anything concrete, but maybe he wants to pressure my position with h4-h5. I'm all tied up, so I have to active my pieces in order to put up any resistance. My queen is frozen to its spot, but is the knight transfer to f6, stopping h4-h5, possible? After 2...♘d7, White might play 3.♕e7, threatening ♘c6, but then I play 3...♗c7, and I can't see a concrete way for White to make progress. I might play ...♗g7, and then untangle my pieces with either a check on c1 or ...♗e5, attacking the bishop.'

2...♘d7 3.h4

'Well, I can't really switch to another plan now!'

3... $\mathbb{Q}f6$ 4. $\mathbb{Q}f3$

'It seems like my opponent still wants to play h4-h5. Now that I have the possibility to transfer into a queen ending after ... $\mathbb{Q}xh5$, is h4-h5 really that dangerous? But what if White plays g3-g4 first, keeping the pressure intact? Then, I will never be able to play ...h7-h5, and White will slowly push me off the board. Therefore, I have to stop g3-g4. The only way to do that would be to play ...h7-h5. I weaken g5, but there is nothing else I can do!'

4...h5

Black is being practical, something which is vital when defending very tough endings. Yes, ...h7-h5 further weakens Black's dark square complex, but should he allow White to crush him with g3-g4 instead?

5.b4



Now White is using the power of his bishop to switch to the other flank! He might play $\mathbb{Q}e2$ and a3-a4, or, even better, $\mathbb{Q}d1$ and a3-a4. 'Then, if I take, he takes with the bishop and my knight is cut off from the queenside. Therefore, I need to bring my knight closer to the queenside immediately. But if I play ... $\mathbb{Q}d7$, White will be able to play g3-g4. He will then try to destroy the

pawns protecting my king. However, in that case I will be able to transfer my knight back to f6, and, I have to stop the $\mathbb{Q}d1-a4$ idea, so I don't really have a choice.'

5... $\mathbb{Q}d7$

Notice that Black sets priorities for himself. This is another important factor when you're defending. If, by parrying an immediate threat, you make a concession, so be it!

6. $\mathbb{Q}g2$

'Well, since I'm given the time, why don't I improve my position a bit?'

6... $\mathbb{Q}g7$ 7. $\mathbb{Q}g4$

'Clearly, White wants to annihilate any cover my king has. Of course, I must trade pawns and then try to improve my position so that I can meet h4-h5 with ...g6-g5, keeping my cover intact.'

7...hxg4 8. $\mathbb{Q}xg4$

'Since, for the moment, White's king is exposed, I can transfer my queen to a more active square with the maneuver ... $\mathbb{Q}b7$ - $\mathbb{Q}c8$. I can also try ... $\mathbb{Q}f6$, but then White has the extremely unpleasant $\mathbb{Q}e5$, pinning my knight. If I play ... $\mathbb{Q}e7$, White will succeed in his plan with h4-h5.'

8... $\mathbb{Q}b7+$ 9. $\mathbb{Q}f3$ $\mathbb{Q}c8$

Yet again, Black finds the right continuation. Just like in the last game, Black is not making any amazing moves, but he is being very careful and not giving White an easy life! Slowly, White starts losing patience, giving Black more and more chances to untangle his position.

10.h5 g5 11. $\mathbb{Q}d4+$ $\mathbb{Q}h7$ 12. $\mathbb{Q}d6$ $\mathbb{Q}g7$ 13. $\mathbb{Q}e2$

'It looks like White is beginning to run out of ideas. Right now, I can force the bishop back to f3.'

13...♝b7+ 14.♗f3 ♜c8 15.♗d4+ ♜h7 16.♗a7



'White now has annoying ideas like ♜b7. It seems like the only way to play would be to activate my knight, and if White starts grabbing pawns on the queenside, I will develop a strong attack on his king.'

16...♞e5?

Black's thinking is very logical, but it contains a major flaw. As Ribli correctly mentioned, either 16...♜h6 or even 16...f6 should have drawn pretty easily.

17.♗e4+?

White misses his chance, and suddenly, Black's mistake on the previous move becomes more than justified. Instead, 17.♗e7! was deadly. Black needs to resort to desperate measures with 17...♝c2, but after 18.♗xg5 ♞xf3 19.♔xf3 ♜c1 20.♗g2 (Ribli) White has a healthy extra pawn and terrific winning chances in the endgame.

Of course, defending such an endgame correctly for an extended period of time is tough, but 17.♗e7 wasn't that difficult to spot, so if Black had managed to retain his concentration, he

would have no doubt found one of the correct, drawing moves. *'Well, if a GM makes a mistake after five moves when defending such a position, then I'll probably make a mistake on the very first move!'* Yet again, this paradox of brilliant defense without finding a single great, extraordinary move recurs. If you continue defending and climbing the slippery slope, you will succeed in drawing even the toughest position. In this case, Black made a mistake, but White suddenly lost the thread of the game and the tables turned in an instant!

17...♚h6 18.♗c5 ♜b8



Unexpectedly, Black's pieces become extremely active! His queen defends the perfectly centralized knight, and Black's king is more than safe – it has become a monster, attacking the weak h5-pawn. However, Black is still not out of the woods. With his next move, White makes another attempt to steal the initiative from Black's hands.

19.f4!?

Now, Black must be very careful and play accurately. White's idea is simple and deadly: if Black's knight moves away, the g5-square will be his, resulting in rather unpleasant consequences.

Black finds a nice Zwischenzug which neutralizes all threats.

19...gxf4 20.exf4 ♜g8+! 21.♔f1 ♜c4 22.♗d4 ♜g7

Ribli mentions 22...e5!? 23.fxe5 ♜g4 as an interesting way to fight for the

Again, we can see that if you defend carefully for a long period of time, your opponent might go too far and try to win an unwinnable position, thus giving you chances for victory.

Finally, a nagging question: '*What if I am losing? How do I defend in that case?*' Unfortunately, if you are losing, you are losing! Sometimes, you simply can't stop your opponent from outplaying you. But the great thing about defending with a queen and knight is that there are a huge amount of traps that you can set. In the following game, Kasparov, in a hopeless position, tries his best to find ways to continue the fight. He is eventually rewarded.



111. Kramnik-Kasparov

BGN World Championship, London 2000

Kramnik had been pressuring his opponent for the whole game. Things are not looking good for Black. White has a monstrous passer on c5, his king is completely safe, and Black has no piece coordination at all. The question therefore becomes, *can Black put up any resistance at all?* To understand the reasoning behind Kasparov's choice, let's try to model his train of thought:

'I know that I have to coordinate my pieces very quickly. If White can play c5-c6 followed

initiative. Black opts for a safer approach, which promises him at least a draw.

**23.♗xg7+ ♔xg7 24.♗b7 ♜xa3
25.♕xa6 ♔h6**

and after another 23 moves White held the draw.

by ♔b6 or ♜d7, my position will collapse. I would like to play 1...♜c7, stopping c5-c6 and attacking the a5-pawn, but it seems as though after 2.♗d6 I cannot stop the pawn after 2...♜xd6 3.cxd6 followed by 4.♔b6. I would therefore have to bring my king closer to the passed pawn if I were to have any chances of saving myself, and the only way to do that is 1...♔g6+. I will unfortunately lose my e4-pawn, but I have no other way to go.

1...♔g6+!

Such a move is very difficult to find if you do not think rationally and logically. The key to playing bad positions, however, is your ability to forget the strength of your opponent and focus on improving practical chances to draw the game.

**2.♔g1 ♜c7 3.♗g8+ ♔f5 4.♗d5+
♔g6 5.♗xe4+**

The alternative, 5.♔d4!?, looks plausible, but after 5...♝c6 6.♔c3 Black suddenly gets a lot of activity with 6...♝f4!! and the knight is untouchable

because of perpetual on the squares c1 and f4.

5...g7



Kasparov had been aiming for this – Kramnik's position only looks terrific (he even has an extra pawn), but in reality, things are far from simple. Kramnik must have relaxed at this point, thinking that the win was not far away. He played the tempting

6.Qa8?

What can possibly be wrong with this move? White penetrates with his queen, attacking a6 and bringing further disarray into Black's army. First of all, let's take a look at the correct approach. After the positional 6.Qd5!, Black would not have had chances to activate his pieces:

A) 6...Qxa5 is possibly what Kramnik had feared. However, after the pretty 7.c6! Qc7 8.Qb6! (Kramnik) Qxb6 9.Qd7+, White wins. Remember that far-advanced passed pawns, coupled with a bloodthirsty queen, are like kryptonite to knights (no pun intended!).

B) 6...Qc6 puts up a much more serious resistance. Now, 7.Qd4 is given by the annotators, but after 7...Qxd4! 8.Qxd4 Qxa5 9.c6 Qe1+ 10.Qh2 Qe7 White has no forced win, since 11.Qd7 is met by 11...Qf7!. More ac-

curate is Kramnik's suggestion, 7.Qe6. Black will now get pushed off the board. For example, 7...Qb7 8.f4! and Black is overextended.

6...Qd7!

A subtle little move after which things start to get very complicated. Black has lured White's queen into his camp, and now White's king is starting to feel a bit uncomfortable without its main defender.

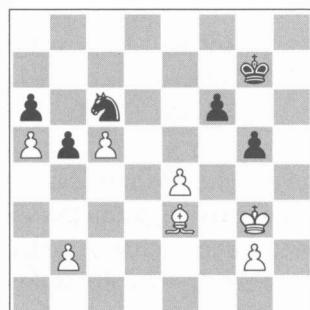
7.Qh2?!

A further inaccuracy, after which Black will be able to draw practically by force. There were many alternatives, but as Kramnik shows, only one was correct.

A) 7.Qxa6? Qd1+ 8.Qh2 Qh5+ and White cannot avoid perpetual, since 9.Qg3 f5! is good for Black.

B) 7.g3 is met by the strong 7...Qd3! (Kramnik) and White cannot win: 8.Qxa6 Qb1+ 9.Qh2 Qh7+ 10.Qg2 Qe4+ with perpetual.

C) According to Kramnik, 7.f3! is the only way to retain a big advantage. The point of this move is that after 7...Qd1+ White has 8.Qf2, and there is no perpetual after 8...Qc2+ 9.Qg3. However, after 9...Qc4 (threatening mate on h4) 10.Qe4 Qxe4 11.fxe4 Qc6 an interesting endgame arises.



Analysis diagram

Kramnik stops here, with no evaluation of the position. Of course, the question is whether or not Black can salvage a draw. 12.♕d2 is forced, when Black's best bet is to play 12...b4!. White can now transfer his king to c4. After 13.♔f2 ♔f7 14.♔e2 ♔e6 15.♔d3, Black has the strong 15...g4!, and White cannot play 16.♔c4 due to 16...♔e5!, and it is already unclear who is better! I spent a while trying to break through with other methods, but Black seems to hold in every line.

As we can see, even in the most hopeless-looking endgames, a sudden queen trade may save the day!

7...♛d3!



Black activates his queen. Now, all that is left is to mobilize the extremely passive knight.

8.g3

White had a couple of alternatives, but none of them achieved the desired effect:

Let's sum up what we have learned in this section:

A) When passive, a queen and knight have almost no defensive potential. Therefore, given a chance, activate your queen or knight at all costs! The true strength of the Q+N combo lies in their ability to conjure up mating threats almost out of thin air, so you should attempt to utilize this ability whenever possible.

A) 8.g4!? is an interesting attempt to improve on Kramnik's play. After 8...♝d7!, attacking the pawn, White has a further dilemma:

A1) 9.♛xa6?! allows Black to draw through very subtle and beautiful play after 9...♝xg4 10.♛d6 ♜c6!! 11.♛xc6 ♜h5+ with perpetual.

A2) 9.♛e4! is much better, but after 9...♜c6 10.b4 ♔f7 11.♛h7+ ♔e6 it is not clear how White can make progress, since the ending after 12.♛xd7+ ♔xd7 is obviously drawn.

B) 8.♛xa6 is given by Kramnik, but after 8...♝h7+ 9.♔g3 ♛h4+ 10.♔f3 he misses 10...♝h5+!, which leads to a perpetual.

8...♞f7 9.♛b7

Stopping the very dangerous 9...♝e5.

9...♚g6!

Kasparov activates his knight at all costs. With his queen and knight fully mobilized, it will be a question of time before a draw will be agreed.

10.♛xa6	♝e5	11.♛a8	♝g4+
12.♔h3	♞f5	13.♛g8+	♚h6
14.♛h8+	♚g6	15.♛e8+	♚h6
16.♛h8+			1½-1½

An amazing defensive job by Kasparov, who found great move after great move and held a completely hopeless-looking position.

B) Look for ways to lure your opponent into a tempting trap. In Kramnik-Kasparov, Black lured White's queen away from his king, and this resulted in White's king becoming the subject of a sudden attack.

C) Try to remain vigilant throughout the entire game. In Savchenko-Kamsky, Black's immense efforts were rewarded. White overpressed, and at the critical moment blundered away a pawn, allowing Black to obtain winning chances.

Now, we switch to the queen and bishop standpoint. We already know that the queen and knight are lethal attackers, and can also be slippery defenders. Having said all this, one should not underestimate the attacking power of the queen and bishop. Take a look at the following game:



112. Naroditsky-Krasnov

San Francisco 2007

Black is up a pawn, and, on the surface, his pieces seem mobilized. He could have repeated moves with 1... $\mathbb{Q}g8$, but decided that extra material and a superior tandem would be enough to win.

1... $\mathbb{Q}g6$

Not a mistake, but Black will now have to play carefully in order to draw.

2. $\mathbb{Q}c3 \mathbb{Q}a8?$

Hugely underestimating the power of the queen and bishop in these types of positions. After 2...a4!, the position would have remained equal.

3.a4!

Halting the a5-pawn. With Black's knight temporarily frozen and his queen

tied to the defense of the a5-pawn, Black has no chance against White's excellently coordinated queen and bishop.

3... $\mathbb{Q}d5$ 4. $\mathbb{Q}d2!$

Killing three birds with one stone! White defends g5, attacks a5, and further activates his queen.

4... $\mathbb{Q}e7$ 5. $\mathbb{Q}xa5$

Material equality is temporarily restored, but that is not important. What is important is that White has established connected passers, which will be completely unstoppable.

5... $\mathbb{Q}g6!$

Black's only chance to fight on. He will create his own passers and try to distract White's attention.

**6. $\mathbb{Q}b4$ $\mathbb{Q}e5+$ 7. $\mathbb{Q}c3$ $\mathbb{Q}xg5$
8. $\mathbb{Q}xg5+$ $\mathbb{Q}xg5$**



Mastering Complex Endgames

An interesting position has arisen on the board. Black has three connected passers, but his position is still hopeless. The bishop is great at holding back passed pawns, while the knight is no match against two connected passers.

9.a5

Obviously, nobody cares about the g7-pawn!

The center does not have to be closed for a bishop and queen to prevail over a knight and queen. Much depends on the king position and the pawn structure. In the following game, Black systematically eliminates White's chances for counterplay and pushes him off the board.



113. Karpov-Anand

Linares 1991

Black's is clearly better. Although White has a well-positioned knight on d5, his pawn structure is very weak, and on its own the d5-knight does not cause Black much trouble. At this moment, however, White is threatening the extremely unpleasant 2... $\mathbb{W}e6+$. Anand remains calm.

1... $\mathbb{Q}f7!$

An instructive move. Black covers the e6-square, eliminating any counterplay White might have hoped for.

2. $\mathbb{W}d2$

9...f5 10.a6 $\mathbb{Q}c6$ 11. $\mathbb{Q}d4!$

The last finesse. Black loses his knight.

**11...e5 12. $\mathbb{Q}xe5$ $\mathbb{Q}a7$ 13. $\mathbb{Q}xg7$ f4
14. $\mathbb{Q}d4$**

1-0

An interesting game, which highlights the fact that in an open position with no central pawns, a queen and bishop can be clearly superior to a queen and knight.

Karpov wants to trade the dark-squared bishops, after which he will be able to put up some stubborn resistance. The prophylactic 2. $\mathbb{Q}g2$ made sense, but after 2... $\mathbb{Q}d4$ 3. $\mathbb{Q}d2$ $\mathbb{W}e8!$ White cannot stop the deadly 4... $\mathbb{W}e4+$. Before trading the bishops, Anand manages to drastically improve his position and force White into utter passivity.

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

A terrific move which pushes the annoying knight back. Now, 3. $\mathbb{Q}b2?$ would lead to a lost ending after 3... $\mathbb{Q}xb2$ 4. $\mathbb{W}xb2$ $\mathbb{Q}xd5$ 5.cxd5 $\mathbb{W}e8$, and the black queen penetrates.

3. $\mathbb{Q}e3$ $\mathbb{Q}e4$ 4. $\mathbb{Q}b2$ $\mathbb{Q}xb2$ 5. $\mathbb{W}xb2$



5... $\mathbb{Q}f6!$

Another excellent move, facing White with a no-win decision. He will either cede the vitally important h8-a1 diagonal to Black, or trade queens, when the ...d6-d5 breakthrough will prove deadly. Karpov, presumably tired of defending for the whole game, decided to trade queens.

6. $\mathbb{Q}xf6+?$

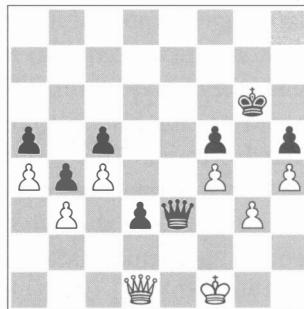
It's understandable that Karpov wanted to end his misery, but after 6. $\mathbb{Q}e2!$ winning the game would have been much more difficult. Black should defend his pawn with 6... $\mathbb{Q}g6$, when White has three defensive plans:



Analysis diagram

A) 7. $\mathbb{Q}d1$, with the idea of $\mathbb{Q}f2$, looks very logical. However, after 7...d5 8. $\mathbb{Q}f2$ $\mathbb{Q}d4$ (8... $\mathbb{Q}c3$ 9.cxd5! $\mathbb{Q}f3$ 10. $\mathbb{Q}a6+$ is a perpetual) 9. $\mathbb{Q}xe4$ $\mathbb{Q}xe4$ (but not 9...fxe4? 10.f5+! $\mathbb{Q}h6$ 11.f6 with a draw) 10. $\mathbb{Q}d1$ d4 White's position becomes critical. To any human, this position would look completely lost – Black wants to play ... $\mathbb{Q}e3$, ...d4-d3, and White's position will collapse. Unfortunately, Rybka is not human, and Rybka's primary intentions are certainly *not* to make players feel good about themselves.

After a lengthy period of scoffing at Rybka's evaluation of \mp (0.38, which is very little for this position), I set about proving to the silicon monster why exactly Black is winning. After 11. $\mathbb{Q}g1$ $\mathbb{Q}e3+$ 12. $\mathbb{Q}g2$ d3, Rybka played 13. $\mathbb{Q}f1$, at which point I started to wonder whether Rybka was playing a joke on me.



Analysis diagram

Suddenly, White's idea became clear: after 13... $\mathbb{Q}xg3$, White has the astounding 14. $\mathbb{Q}xh5+!!$ and 14... $\mathbb{Q}xh5$ leads to an incredible, jaw-dropping stalemate position. Please note that Rybka does take any accusations personally! Of course, Black doesn't have to take on g3, but there is no other way to achieve progress. On 13...d2, White has the cold-blooded 14. $\mathbb{Q}e2$, and 14... $\mathbb{Q}xg3$ leads to perpetual after 15. $\mathbb{Q}e8+$. Amazingly, I could not find *any* other way to achieve progress!

An interesting idea would be to play 8...d4, intending to meet 9. $\mathbb{Q}xe4$ with $\mathbb{Q}e6$. However, after 9. $\mathbb{Q}d3!$ $\mathbb{Q}xd3$ 10. $\mathbb{Q}xd3$ Black again cannot achieve progress. A nice variation is 10... $\mathbb{Q}e6$ 11. $\mathbb{Q}d2$ $\mathbb{Q}e4$ 12. $\mathbb{Q}g1!$ $\mathbb{Q}b1+$ 13. $\mathbb{Q}f2$ $\mathbb{Q}xb3$ 14. $\mathbb{Q}e2!$ and Black cannot avoid the perpetual, since after 14... $\mathbb{Q}e3+$ 15. $\mathbb{Q}xe3$ dxe3+ 16. $\mathbb{Q}xe3$ White is just in time to stop the b-pawn!

Therefore, it turns out that by means of some incredible ideas, White can build a fortress! A possible improvement over Anand's previous play would be 3... $\mathbb{W}f6$, stopping $\mathbb{Q}b2$. However, it's hard to criticize Anand or Karpov for missing the stalemate idea. After 3... $\mathbb{W}f6$, Steve Mayer writes in *Bishop v Knight: The Verdict*: 'Even without the bishop pair, he is able to challenge Karpov for the long diagonal. If it should be ceded to him, he will quickly play his queen into White's position and use his bishop to team up on the fixed b-pawn.' This sounds very good, but there is one major problem: Black cannot leave the d-pawn, as this will lead to perpetual. Mayer likely missed the subtle Zwischenzug 14. $\mathbb{W}e2!$, forcing Black's king into an inferior position.

For the sake of completeness, let's take a look at White's other defensive options:

B) 7. $\mathbb{W}d2??$ loses to the brilliant move 7... $d5!!$. Now, 8. $\mathbb{Q}xd5$ loses to 8... $\mathbb{W}a1$, and 8.cxd5 loses after 8... $\mathbb{W}a1$ 9. $\mathbb{Q}g2$ $\mathbb{W}d4!$ 10. $\mathbb{W}xd4$ cxd4 11.d6 $\mathbb{W}f6$. Note that the immediate 7... $\mathbb{W}a1$ was impossible due to 8. $\mathbb{W}xd6+$ (White captures with check), drawing.

C) 7. $\mathbb{W}d1$ puts up more resistance, but White should still lose after 7... $\mathbb{W}d4$.

6... $\mathbb{W}xf6$ 7. $\mathbb{W}g1$ $\mathbb{Q}b1!$

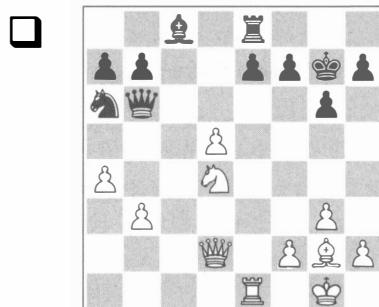


A very nice idea which forces White's knight into complete passivity.

**8. $\mathbb{Q}f1$ $\mathbb{Q}c2$ 9. $\mathbb{Q}d2$ $\mathbb{Q}e6$ 10. $\mathbb{Q}f2$ d5
11.cxd5+ $\mathbb{Q}xd5$ 12. $\mathbb{Q}e3$ $\mathbb{Q}d1$
13. $\mathbb{Q}d3$ $\mathbb{Q}xb3!$ 0-1**

A great game, which contains many more subtleties than might seem at first sight! Anand's moves were all natural, but even he underestimated the defensive power of the queen and knight! Curiously, this example is part of a sub-section about the superiority of the bishop (in Mayer's book), but from the defensive plan $\mathbb{W}e2-\mathbb{Q}d1$ we can see that even in the most hopeless-looking positions, a queen and knight can be devilishly tricky!

In the following game, White plays in textbook fashion. He eliminates any counterplay Black hopes for, and trades queens at exactly the right moment. Because of Aronian's instructive play, I am giving part of the middlegame as well as the endgame.



114. Aronian-Miroshnichenko
Antalya 2004

White is clearly better, but Black's position seems playable. Given time, he will activate his sleeping knight on a6 and

develop the bishop on c8. A move like $\mathbb{Q}b5$, preparing d5-d6 and $\mathbb{W}c3+$, would certainly maintain the advantage and force Black to find accurate moves in order to survive. Aronian, however, wants more.

27.d6!!

A beautiful move which highlights the awkwardness of Black's pieces. Now, 27... $\mathbb{W}xd6$ fails to 28. $\mathbb{Q}f5+!$ $\mathbb{Q}xf5$ 29. $\mathbb{W}xd6$ exd6 30. $\mathbb{M}xe8$ and White wins. However, Miroshnichenko stays calm and finds the best way to defend.

27... $\mathbb{W}d8!$

The strongest resistance. The position now becomes messy, but when the smoke clears, Aronian winds up on top.

28. $\mathbb{Q}b5!$ f6

28... $\mathbb{Q}g8$, trying to take the king off the long diagonal, was no better: 29.b4! (immobilizing Black's a6-knight) 29...exd6 30. $\mathbb{M}xe8+$ $\mathbb{W}xe8$ 31. $\mathbb{Q}xd6$ $\mathbb{W}d8$ 32. $\mathbb{Q}d5!$ and White is close to winning (Ftacnik on *ChessBase*).

29. $\mathbb{Q}xa7$ exd6 30. $\mathbb{Q}xc8$ $\mathbb{W}xc8$ 31. $\mathbb{M}xe8$ $\mathbb{W}xe8$ 32. $\mathbb{W}xd6$



Finally, the tactical skirmish is over, and an interesting endgame has arisen. White is up a pawn, and his bishop and

queen tandem is coordinated perfectly. Black's a6-knight, on the other hand, is immobilized. In order to win, **White will have to remain vigilant and keep the a6-knight out of play.**

Black tries to activate his knight, but Aronian plays in textbook fashion.

32... $\mathbb{W}e1+$ 33. $\mathbb{Q}f1$ $\mathbb{W}b4$ 34. $\mathbb{W}d7+$

Black would have had good drawing chances after 34. $\mathbb{W}xb4$ $\mathbb{Q}xb4$, since Black's knight is optimally located.

34... $\mathbb{Q}h6$ 35. $\mathbb{W}f7!$

Black's king is now in serious trouble, and Black must make serious concessions.

35...f5 36.h4!

Continuing the assault against Black's king. Black now tries to activate his knight.

36... $\mathbb{Q}b8$



If Black is given time, he will play ... $\mathbb{Q}c6$, and follow up with either ... $\mathbb{Q}e5$ or ... $\mathbb{Q}d4$. With Black's position compromised even further, Aronian trades queens at exactly the right moment.

37. $\mathbb{W}c4!$ $\mathbb{Q}c6$

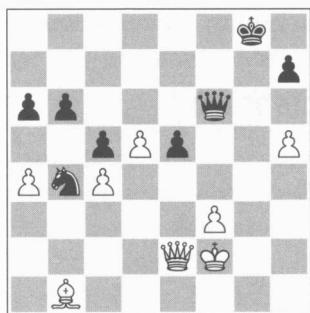
On any queen retreat, the move 38. $\mathbb{W}f4+$ will win either the knight or the b-pawn.

38. $\mathbb{W}xb4 \mathbb{Q}xb4$ 39.a5!

Brilliant play by Aronian. Now, $\mathbb{Q}g2$ is threatened, and Black's knight must leave its active post.

39... $\mathbb{Q}c6$ 40.b4!

Even when a queen and knight are more or less active (and material is equal), they are often no match for a well-coordinated queen and bishop. The following game is a great illustration.



115. Kudryavtsev-Naroditsky

Las Vegas 2008

White is clearly better due to his protected passer and the precarious position of Black's king. However, the queen and knight are tough defenders, and currently, Black's tandem is not too passive. In order to win, White will have to be very careful, and at the critical moment, he will have to perform some sharp calculation and not fear the seemingly active b4-knight.

1. $\mathbb{W}e4!$

It's always pleasing to play such a move. White cements his position, attacks the h7-pawn, and defends the h4-square.

Aronian forces Black's knight back to b4, from where it will not be able to safeguard b7.

40... $\mathbb{Q}xb4$ 41. $\mathbb{Q}g2$ b6 42. $a.xb6$ $\mathbb{Q}g7$ 43. $\mathbb{Q}f1$ $\mathbb{Q}c6$ 44. $\mathbb{Q}b5$ $\mathbb{Q}d8$ 45. $\mathbb{Q}c4$ $\mathbb{Q}c6$ 46. f4 $\mathbb{Q}f6$ 47. b7 h6 48. $\mathbb{Q}f2$ g5 49. $\mathbb{Q}b5$ $\mathbb{Q}b8$ 50. $h.xg5+$ $h.xg5$ 51. $\mathbb{Q}e3$ $gxf4+$ 52. $\mathbb{Q}xf4$ 1-0

A great display by Aronian!

Black is now in serious trouble, since 1... $\mathbb{Q}g7$ is met by 2. d6, and Black cannot stop the d-pawn.

1... $\mathbb{Q}f8?$

This is probably the best defense. My idea was to lure White's queen into Black's camp, thus giving me a chance to activate my own queen. Black has a few alternatives, one of which is tricky:

A) 1... b5!? is an attempt to create counterplay. However, with the precise 2. $a.xb5$ $a.xb5$ 3. $c.xb5$ $\mathbb{Q}f8$ 4. b6! (4. $\mathbb{W}xh7$ allows Black to create counterplay with 4... $\mathbb{Q}xd5$) 4... $\mathbb{W}xb6$ 5. $\mathbb{W}f5+!$ White tears Black's position apart.

B) 1... h6 is an interesting and thorny defense. In order to win, White will have to swap queens with 2. $\mathbb{W}g6+!$. Unfortunately for Black, the endgame after 2... $\mathbb{W}xg6$ 3. $h.xg6$ is hopelessly lost; i.e. 3... a5 4. d6 $\mathbb{Q}c6$ 5. d7 $\mathbb{Q}f8$ 6. $\mathbb{Q}e4$ $\mathbb{Q}d8$ 7. $\mathbb{Q}e3$ $\mathbb{Q}e7$ 8. $\mathbb{Q}f5$ $\mathbb{Q}f6$ 9. $\mathbb{Q}e4$ h5 10. $\mathbb{Q}d5!$ and the bishop is taboo. We can see the timely trade of queens used as a dangerous weapon both here and in the previous example!

2. $\mathbb{W}xh7!$

Not fearing ghosts. As we will see, Black's queen and knight will not be able to stop White's king from penetrating into Black's position.

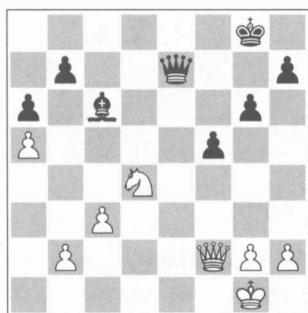
2... $\mathbb{W}h4+$ 3. $\mathbb{Q}g2 \mathbb{W}xc4?$

This is the decisive mistake, after which White will be able to centralize his queen with great effect. Instead, 3... $\mathbb{W}g5+$ 4. $\mathbb{Q}h3 b5!$, trying to activate the knight, was the best defense. After 5. $a xb5$ $a xb5$, White can choose between 6. $d6!$ $\mathbb{W}f6$ 7. $\mathbb{Q}f5!$ $\mathbb{W}xf5+$ 8. $\mathbb{Q}xf5$ $bxc4$ 9. $\mathbb{Q}e4$ (and White's passers are unstoppable) and 6. $\mathbb{W}f5+!?$ $\mathbb{W}xf5+$ 7. $\mathbb{Q}xf5$ $bxc4$ 8. $d6$ $\mathbb{Q}c6$ 9. $h6$, and White's pawns will decide the issue.

Now, White demonstrates the true power of the queen and bishop when they are well-coordinated.

4. $\mathbb{W}h8+$ $\mathbb{Q}e7$ 5. $\mathbb{W}xe5+$ $\mathbb{Q}d8$

The queen and bishop can also be superior in an open position. In the following game, White's queen and knight are coordinated well, but they are no match for the queen and bishop.

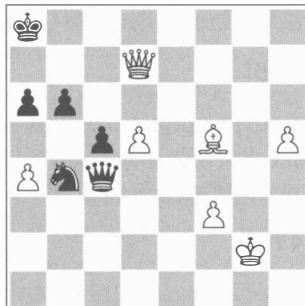


116. Solleveld-Dvoirys

Dieren Open 2000

6. $\mathbb{W}d6+$ $\mathbb{Q}c8$ 7. $\mathbb{Q}f5+$ $\mathbb{Q}b7$

8. $\mathbb{W}d7+$ $\mathbb{Q}a8$



9. $\mathbb{Q}e4!$

Black cannot prevent the devastating $d5-d6+$, and is not able to activate his pieces in time to organize any real counterplay.

9... $\mathbb{W}e2+$ 10. $\mathbb{Q}g3$ $\mathbb{W}e1+$ 11. $\mathbb{Q}g4$ $\mathbb{W}g1+ 12. \mathbb{Q}f5$ 1-0

A picturesque final position showing the complete triumph of queen and bishop over queen and knight.

At first sight, the position seems equal. The tandems of both colors are well-coordinated. In addition, it's not entirely clear what to do with the $c6$ -bishop. However, there are a few subtle factors that tip the scales to Black's favor. Firstly, Black's king is much safer than White's. This might seem paradoxical, since Black does not have a single pawn protecting the king, while White has the $g2$ - and $h2$ -pawns. However, the presence of the black bishop on the long diagonal spells trouble, since Black will later be able to place a queen on $e4$,

Mastering Complex Endgames

with multiple threats. Also, the e1-square is very weak, so White's queen will not be able to roam freely. Dvoiryš starts out by centralizing his queen.

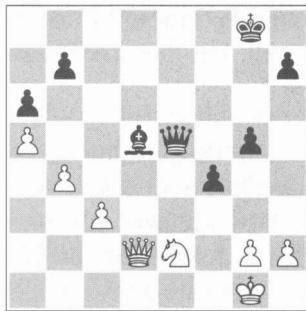
1... $\mathbb{W}e5!$

The tactical justification of this move is that White will lose material after 2. $\mathbb{Q}xc6$ bxc6, since 3. $\mathbb{W}b6$ fails to 3... $\mathbb{W}e1\#$.

2.b4?

Now, the c4-square will be weak. Black starts a very dangerous pawn majority attack on the kingside, which will force White's pieces into utter passivity. Instead, it was of paramount importance to play 2. $\mathbb{W}e2!$, when Black must trade queens with 2... $\mathbb{W}xe2$ (2... $\mathbb{W}xa5$ fails to 3. $\mathbb{W}e6+$). The endgame after 3. $\mathbb{Q}xe2$ $\mathbb{Q}f7$ 4. $\mathbb{Q}f2$ $\mathbb{Q}f6$ followed by 5... $\mathbb{Q}e5$ is certainly better for Black, but after 5.g3 White should be able to hold with correct play.

2... $\mathbb{Q}d5$ 3. $\mathbb{W}d2$ f4! 4. $\mathbb{Q}e2$ g5



Mission accomplished. Now, White's pieces are very passive, while Black's queen and bishop occupy menacing positions.

5. $\mathbb{W}d3$ $\mathbb{Q}g7$

Holding the tension and not fearing 6.c4, since after 6... $\mathbb{Q}c6$ the b4-pawn

will be weak. White tries to build a defensive line, but Black keeps tightening the noose.

**6.h4 h6 7.hxg5 hxg5 8. $\mathbb{Q}f2$ $\mathbb{Q}f6$
9.c4 $\mathbb{Q}c6$ 10. $\mathbb{Q}d4$**

It seems like White has succeeded in activating his pieces, but that is an illusion. White's king is now completely undefended, and Dvoiryš continues the pawn storm.

10... $\mathbb{Q}e4$ 11. $\mathbb{W}c3$ g4 12.b5?

This impatient move loses quickly. It would have been better to swap queens with 12. $\mathbb{Q}e2$. Now, the tempting 12... $\mathbb{Q}xg2?$ allows 13. $\mathbb{W}d2!$, with counterplay. In order to win, Black will have to trade queens and bring his king over to the queenside: 12... $\mathbb{W}xc3$ 13. $\mathbb{Q}xc3$ g3+ 14. $\mathbb{Q}g1$ $\mathbb{Q}d3!$ 15. $\mathbb{Q}d5+$ $\mathbb{Q}e5$ 16. $\mathbb{Q}b6$ $\mathbb{Q}d4$ and Black wins.

12...g3+ 13. $\mathbb{Q}f1$ $\mathbb{Q}g6$ 14.bxa6



14... $\mathbb{W}h5!$

White will lose the g2-pawn, and with it, the game.

**15. $\mathbb{Q}e1$ $\mathbb{W}h1+$ 16. $\mathbb{Q}d2$ $\mathbb{W}xg2+$
17. $\mathbb{Q}e2$ f3** 0-1

Very well played by Dvoiryš.

Sometimes, you cannot stop your opponent from activating his queen and knight. In that case, you should not despair. In the following game, Black manages to keep his queen and knight active, but with some incredible, cold-blooded maneuvering White is able to restrain the deadly tandem and convert his material advantage.

Of course, the White player was none other than Anatoly Karpov!



117. Karpov-Quinteros

Linares 1981

White has a clear-cut edge due to the openness of the position. If there were White pawns on d3 and e4 and Black ones on e5 and d4, the position would have been superior for Black. In this case, the true power of White's bishop can be demonstrated. Unfortunately for White, Black has pieces too! His knight and queen are coordinated well, and Black doesn't have any obvious weaknesses. Karpov starts out by making his intentions very clear.

1.♗d7!

In order to win this type of position, White will have to play aggressively and carefully at the same time. His bishop is located perfectly on g2, where it fulfills a defensive job and can, if necessary, jump to the dangerous square e4 or d5. Quinteros decides to trade a pair of pawns.

1...a5

The main alternatives, according to Karolyi, are 1...♔g8 and 1...♔g6, defending the f7-pawn. In case of 1...♔g8, 2.♗xa7 fails to 2...♗b1+ 3.♔h2 ♗xb4 and Black maintains the balance. Karolyi's line runs 2.♗c8+ ♔h7 3.♗b7! and Black has two ways to defend:



Analysis diagram

A) 3...♗b1+ 4.♔h2 ♗xb4 5.♗xf7 is lost for Black (Karolyi), but Black can try to improve upon this variation with 4...♔g8. After 5.a3 ♗e1 6.♗xa7 ♗xf2 Black seems to be holding the balance, but White can create a deadly passed pawn with 7.♗a8+ ♔h7 8.a4, and the win is a matter of time.

B) 3...♔g8 is Black's best chance. White then should play 4.a3, and after 4...♗b1+ White has a further choice: B1) 5.♗f1 is the move recommended by Karolyi, but after 5...♗d4 6.♗d5 ♗a1 7.♗g2 ♗c3 8.♗c4 ♗e6 9.♗a8+ Black has 9...♗f8! (instead of 9...♔h7) and White will have a very hard time winning this position.

B2) 5.♕h2! forces Black to play 5...♚a2, since 5...♝d4 loses after 6.♛a8+ ♔h7 7.♔e4+. After 6.♛xa7 ♛xf2 7.♛a8+ ♔h7 8.a4 an already familiar position arises in which White should have no trouble promoting his passed pawn.

1...♜g6, defending the f7-pawn from the other side, seems more natural. Then, Karolyi recommends 2.♗f1!, threatening ♜d3. After 2...♝b1 3.a3 ♜g5! 4.♗d6+ f6 Black seems to hold the balance. However, I must disagree with Karolyi's assessment that the position is equal. Following the more subtle 4.♗c6+ f6 5.♗e8+ ♔h7 6.♗e3, White certainly has an advantage. Now, the brazen 6...♝xh3+?! 7.♔g2 f5 is well met by 8.f4!, and Black's knight is stuck in enemy territory.

Black certainly does not have to take on h3, but it is clear that White is *in control* of the game – and having the initiative is often much more important than being objectively better.

2.a3 axb4 3.axb4



3...♜g6?

Karolyi correctly mentions that this is the decisive mistake. We will examine two alternatives: 3...♝b1+ and 3...g6, which, according to Karolyi, holds.

A) 3...♝b1+! and again, White can cover the check in two ways:

A1) 4.♔h2 is the most straightforward option, but instead of 4...♛xb4?, which loses after 5.♛xf7, Black has the improvement 4...♛f5!, attacking the f2-pawn. White must now play 5.f4, but now Black plays 5...g6. White is obviously better and can try to squeeze Black after something like 6.♗d2, but if Black is careful he should draw. Instead, the ambitious 6.♗b7 is met by the sudden 6...♝xf4!, and White cannot avoid perpetual after 7.gxf4 ♛xf4+ 8.♔g1 ♛e3+ 9.♔f1 ♛c1+.

A2) 4.♗f1! is the best way to play for a win. However, Black then activates his knight with 4...♞g5!, and White has nothing better than 5.♗d3+. An interesting endgame arises after 5...♛xd3 6.♗xd3+ g6. If there were no pawns on b4 and b6, the game would be dead drawn, but the presence of the queen-side pawns gives White some winning chances. Still, after 7.♔g2 f5! 8.h4 ♜f7 9.h5 ♜e5 Black should hold. Therefore, it turns out that Black can draw the game after 3...♝b1+.

B) 3...g6 is given by Karolyi as the best and only saving move. Following 4.♗b7 b5 Karolyi analyzes three options, but he doesn't analyze 5.♔e4!, which is the most testing continuation. Luckily for Black, he has 5...♝d8, which keeps him in the game. However, White should still win after 6.♗xf5 ♜xb7 7.♔d3 ♜d6 8.f4 and Black cannot stop the decisive march of White's king to c5.

4.♗d6!

Now, Black will not be able to hold b6. Note that as soon as White managed to

restrain Black's knight and queen, Black's position immediately collapsed.

4... $\mathbb{W}b1+$ 5. $\mathbb{Q}h2$ $\mathbb{W}f5$ 6. $\mathbb{W}xb6$

Karpov now demonstrates his impeccable, machine-like technique.

The queen and knight can often be helpless when trying to defend a weak square. In our final example, Black will try to activate his pieces, but a fragile pawn on f7 will prove deadly.



118. Naroditsky-Casella

US Chess League 2010

Due to his pawn on e5, White has a big space advantage. In addition, Black's knight on f8 is immobilized, since it has to hold the h7-square. I decided to eliminate Black's only active piece.

1. $\mathbb{Q}d4$

In retrospect, this might not have actually been the best choice! The tempting 1. $\mathbb{Q}h2?$! is met by the simple 1... $\mathbb{Q}g6$!, when 2.e6 is ineffective in view of 2... $\mathbb{Q}g7$. However, the move 1. $\mathbb{Q}g1$!? certainly deserved attention. $\mathbb{Q}h2$ is an unpleasant threat, and White keeps the option of trading with $\mathbb{Q}d4$ open. In any case, defending this position would not have been pleasant for Black.

1... $\mathbb{Q}xd4$ 2.cxd4

**6...h5 7.h4 $\mathbb{Q}f6$ 8. $\mathbb{Q}h3$ $\mathbb{W}e4$
9. $\mathbb{Q}xe6$ $\mathbb{W}xe6$ 10. $\mathbb{Q}c5$ e5 11.b5
 $\mathbb{W}b7$ 12. $\mathbb{W}d6+$ $\mathbb{Q}f5$ 13.b6**

Black resigned.

A very interesting game!

There is no question that White is better in this endgame. Black's knight will not be able to move for a while, and White's pieces are perfectly coordinated. However, with all that said, it's still not clear how to squeeze a win out of this position. After the moves

2...c6 3. $\mathbb{Q}c4$

My opponent settled into a deep think. White has no risk of losing, but of course I wanted to win! My plan was to slowly consolidate my position with a2-a3 and $\mathbb{Q}g1$ and at some point play either h3-h4 or d4-d5. After 15 minutes, Black lashed out with

3... $\mathbb{W}b4$?

A step in the wrong direction. Black was already in serious time trouble and was unwilling to defend this position for many more moves. Instead, a move such as 3...a5 would have presented White with more difficulties. A sample line is: 4.a3 $\mathbb{Q}g7$ 5. $\mathbb{Q}g1$ $\mathbb{W}e6$! 6. $\mathbb{Q}a2$ $\mathbb{W}d7$ 7. $\mathbb{W}f5$! $\mathbb{W}e7$ 8. $\mathbb{Q}b1$ $\mathbb{Q}f8$ 9. $\mathbb{Q}h2$! a4 10. $\mathbb{Q}d3$ (amazingly, Black now is in a Zugzwang of sorts and has to trade queens) 10... $\mathbb{W}e6$ 11.h4 $\mathbb{W}xf5$ 12. $\mathbb{Q}xf5$ $\mathbb{Q}e6$! 13. $\mathbb{Q}xe6$ $\mathbb{W}xe6$ and unfortunately for White, the pawn ending is completely drawn. Another attempt is

Mastering Complex Endgames

5.d5!?, but then Black holds with 5...cxd5 6.Qxd5 Qc5!

Overall, it seems like Black should survive with accurate play. However, in cases where your opponent objectively defends, don't hesitate to try and provoke an error!

4.Qb3 Qd2?

Black completely forgets about his weakness on f7 and burns all his bridges. Instead, I was expecting 4...c5?!, which also loses after 5.e6! Qxe6 6.Qxe6 fxe6 7.Qxe6+ Qg7 8.Qe5+ and 9.dxc5. It was still not too late to play 4...Qe7, and White has not made any significant progress with the move Qb3.

5.Qf5!

Summing up, there are a few guidelines you should follow when trying to win with a queen and bishop against queen and knight:

A) Try your best to keep the queen and knight immobile. As we know from the previous section, the queen and knight can be a deadly force when active.

B) When there is a weak point in your opponent's camp, try your best to concentrate all of your pieces on attacking it. This will often keep the queen and knight completely tied down.

C) Understand the reasons for the generic rules! The *reason* Q + N are so often better than Q + B is that they are so good at organizing mating attacks or threats. If you have a very safe king position (e.g. with a fianchettoed bishop), this often negates the strength of the Q + N, and then you can play with the Q+B with some confidence.

Finally, we switch to defending against queen and knight. Frankly, there is not much you can do when trying to protect your king against a fully activated queen and knight. Still, not much does not equal nothing! The following crazy game is an illustration.

Evidently, Black had missed this simple move. Black is forced to transpose into a hopelessly lost queen endgame.

5...Qe6

Otherwise White mates quickly.

**6.Qxe6 fxe6 7.Qxe6+ Qg7
8.Qf6+ Qh7 9.e6!**

The fastest way to win. Black is not able to organize any serious counterplay in time.

**9...Qxf2 10.Qf5+ Qg7 11.Qe5+
Qh7 12.e7f3**

Black had pinned his hopes on this move, but now White promotes with mate!

**13.Qf5+ Qg7 14.Qf8+ Qh7
15.Qf7+ Qh8 16.e8Q# 1-0'**

1 A few days before I played against Casella in the US Chess League (The US Team Championship, played between teams from major cities over the Internet), I was playing a 5-minute game on ICC. I had a similar situation where I promoted with mate, and when I played e7-e8, the usual promotion bar appeared, asking me which piece I would like. I was playing on a mouse pad, and accidentally clicked knight instead of queen! This time, I took extra care to promote to a queen.



119. Naroditsky-Engle

Western States Open 2005

After defending against a fearsome attack for most of the game, I had been ready to breathe a sigh of relief before my opponent played 24... $\mathbb{Q}f3$. Knowing the dangers of having a naked king against a fully activated Q + N tandem, I started looking for ways to bring my pieces to the defense of my king. First, though, I had to take the bishop.

25.gxf3 $\mathbb{Q}xf3+$ 26. $\mathbb{Q}g1 \mathbb{Q}f2$



My opponent was probably awaiting resignation here. Indeed, there seems to be no defense against the threat of ... $\mathbb{Q}h3\#$.

From the above game, we could see that the queen and knight aren't always as powerful as they seem. However, it may be very frightening to face this tandem, and therefore it's vital to keep calm.

The bishop, when centralized and active, is often a terrific defensive piece. In the next game, Black keeps his pieces mobile and carefully defends against all threats.

However, White's resources are not yet exhausted.

27.h3?!

The right idea, but the wrong execution! On ... $\mathbb{Q}xh3+$, White's king will escape to h2, and Black will have no mate in sight. However, h2-h4 would have been better. It's amazing that Black doesn't have a single way to fuel the attack here. Black does find a way out of his troubles, but at least White's king will be safe.

27... $\mathbb{Q}xh3+$ 28. $\mathbb{Q}h2 \mathbb{Q}f4+!?$

Black plays for a win. 28... $\mathbb{Q}f4$ would have drawn immediately after 29. $\mathbb{N}c2$ $\mathbb{Q}h3+$ 30. $\mathbb{Q}g1 \mathbb{Q}g4+$.

29. $\mathbb{Q}xh3 \mathbb{Q}xc1$ 30. $\mathbb{Q}e3$

At first sight, White seems to be completely winning due to his far advanced passer on c6 and active pieces. However, Black finds a way to eliminate the c6-pawn and quickly force White's king onto an unfavorable position.

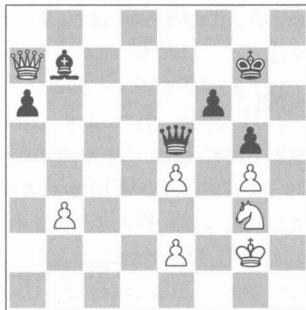
30... $\mathbb{Q}h1+$ 31. $\mathbb{Q}g3 \mathbb{Q}xc6$ 32. $\mathbb{Q}f5$

Now my own knight and queen become active!

32... $\mathbb{Q}g6+$ 33. $\mathbb{Q}f4 \mathbb{Q}g1$ 34. $\mathbb{Q}d6?!$

After 34. $\mathbb{Q}e2$ White could still have played for a win.

**34... $\mathbb{Q}f2+$ 35. $\mathbb{Q}g4 \mathbb{Q}g2+$ 36. $\mathbb{Q}f4$
 $\mathbb{Q}f2+$ 37. $\mathbb{Q}g4 \mathbb{Q}g2+$** $\frac{1}{2}-\frac{1}{2}$



120. Malakhov-Grischuk

World Cup, Elista 2007

Black is down a pawn and has two gaping holes on f5 and h5. In order to defend, Black will have to **keep his queen and bishop centralized**.

1... $\mathbb{R}c7$ 2. $\mathbb{Q}h3$

White transfers his king to a safer spot. Now, $\mathbb{Q}f5+$ and $\mathbb{Q}h5+$ become serious threats.

2... $\mathbb{Q}g6!$

Excellent defense! Black stops $\mathbb{Q}f5$ or $\mathbb{Q}h5$ ideas, and moves his own king to a safer square. In addition, Black prepares the nice idea ... $\mathbb{W}h7+$.

3.e3 $\mathbb{W}h7+$ 4. $\mathbb{Q}h5$

On 4. $\mathbb{Q}g2??$ Black wins White's queen with 4... $\mathbb{W}xe4+$ and 5... $\mathbb{W}xa7$.

4... $\mathbb{W}e7$

Black systematically attacks the e4-pawn. Now, 5... $\mathbb{W}xe4$ is a threat and White must retreat.

5. $\mathbb{W}d4$ $\mathbb{Q}c8!$

Black does an amazing job of keeping White's pieces at bay. Black prepares an eventual ... $\mathbb{W}h7$, after which Black will threaten ... $\mathbb{W}xh5+$.

6. $\mathbb{W}d5$ $\mathbb{Q}e6$ 7. $\mathbb{W}d1$ $\mathbb{W}h7$ 8. $\mathbb{Q}g2$ $\mathbb{W}xg4!$

Black remains vigilant and finds a simplifying tactic. Again, Black did nothing extraordinary while defending, and yet he managed to ward off White's pressure in eight moves! The main secret in defending endgames is not to look for some kind of amazing or paradoxical plan, but rather to remain careful and wary.

**9. $\mathbb{Q}f4+$ $\mathbb{Q}h6$ 10. $\mathbb{W}xg4$ $\mathbb{W}xe4+$
11. $\mathbb{W}f3$ $\mathbb{W}xf3+$ 12. $\mathbb{Q}xf3$ $gxf4$
13. $\mathbb{Q}xf4$ $\mathbb{Q}g6$ 14. $\mathbb{Q}e4$ a5 15. $\mathbb{Q}f4$
 $\mathbb{Q}f7$ 16. $\mathbb{Q}f5$**

1/2-1/2

A terrific defensive display by Grischuk!

Finally, we will look at a game in which the legendary German maestro Adolf Anderssen showed his wonderful endgame technique (at least, up to a certain point!). When White's position was on the verge of collapse, Anderssen managed to rally his troops and draw the game.



121. Anderssen-Lange

Breslau 1859

At first glance, it might seem that White is better. After all, his queen and bishop

are fairly active and it looks like 1. $\mathbb{Q}e7$ may be a very powerful move. However, a closer look reveals that things are far from simple. First of all, and most importantly, White has a very weak pawn on d3 which cannot be defended by the bishop. In addition, 1. $\mathbb{Q}e7$ is not possible due to 1... $\mathbb{Q}e5$, and 2. $\mathbb{Q}xc5$ loses after 2... $\mathbb{Q}b1+ + 3. \mathbb{Q}f2 \mathbb{Q}xd3+$.

Of course, White's position is far from hopeless, but he will have to demonstrate good defensive technique in order to draw the game.

1.h3!

A great move. Since Black doesn't have any concrete threats, Anderssen opens up the h2-square for his king. Now, ... $\mathbb{Q}b1+$ ideas will not be as effective.

1... $\mathbb{Q}e5!$

Lange centralizes his queen. Due to the weakness of the d3-pawn, 2. $\mathbb{Q}xe5$ is not possible.

2. $\mathbb{Q}f2$ h6

Lange must have felt confident in his chances here. Given time, Black will sink a knight onto b4 or start attacking the f5 pawn.

When your opponent has a clear and unpleasant plan that you cannot directly defend against, try your best to play dynamically and activate your pieces at all costs.

In the current position, White's bishop and queen are rather passive, and therefore, Black will easily be able to tighten the screws.

3. $\mathbb{Q}f3!$

Forcing Black to retreat, since 4. $\mathbb{Q}b7$ and 4. $\mathbb{Q}a8+$ are threatened.

3... $\mathbb{Q}b8$ 4. $\mathbb{Q}f4!$

Anderssen continues to play actively. He sacrifices the a2-pawn, but in return will get major piece activity.

4... $\mathbb{Q}b1+$ 5. $\mathbb{Q}h2$ $\mathbb{Q}xa2$ 6. $\mathbb{Q}d6$ $\mathbb{Q}a6$ 7. $\mathbb{Q}d5?$

Careless play. Instead, Anderssen had an opportunity to draw the game with 7. $\mathbb{Q}a8! + \mathbb{Q}h7$ and only then 8. $\mathbb{Q}d5$, attacking c5 and f7 simultaneously. These tactical finesse are easy to miss.

7... $\mathbb{Q}c8$



It looks as if Black has consolidated. He will start pushing the a-pawn, seriously compromising White's pieces. Clearly, White cannot let that happen, so what can White do? Black has a weak c5-pawn, but White cannot win it. Neither can White stop the a-pawn directly. However, it is precisely in these open positions that the queen and bishop can be really powerful. Anderssen understands that the static features of the position favor Black since he has no serious weaknesses (besides c5, which is safely defended). Therefore, White's only real hope lies in dynamic play.

Anderssen is not discouraged by his mistake on the previous move and finds a beautiful way to continue his attack.

8.f6!!

A real bolt from the blue! Of course, Black cannot take on f6 with the knight, since White will recapture on c5. The straightforward 8...gxf6 is met by 9.♘f3 or 9.♗e4, and Black will not be able to avoid perpetual. Lange finds the only way to play for a win.

8...g6 9.h4?

Anderssen starts losing the thread. Of course, from an objective standpoint Black is clearly better, but after the correct 9.♗e4!, Lange would have had to play with razor-sharp precision in order to win. First of all, let's take a look at White's other alternatives.

A) 9.♘f4 looks natural, but after 9...♘xf6 10.♗d6 ♘d7 11.♕xh6 Black has 11...♗b8!, and the endgame is winning for him: 12.♗xb8+ ♘xb8 13.♗g3 a5 14.♗f3 ♘c6 15.g4 f6 16.♗c1 ♘f7 17.♗e2 f5! 18.gxf5 gxf5 and White is overextended.

B) 9.♗f3?! is interesting.



Analysis diagram

White attempts to keep his pieces active and for the moment forgets about the

a-pawn. The question is, will White be able to achieve enough activity to counterbalance the rapidly advancing a-pawn? After 9...a5 10.♗f4 a4 11.♗xh6 ♘xf6 12.♗g5 (or 12.♗e5 ♗e6 13.♗g5 ♘e8) 12...♗d7 White's only chance is to fuel the battle with 13.h4!, but Black relentlessly pushes his a-pawn: 13...a3! After 14.h5 ♘c6! (certainly, finding all these moves is extremely tough in a real game) 15.♗e7 ♗g7! (another terrific move, which takes the sting out of hxg6) 16.♗e5+ (this is the only way to continue the fight. Otherwise, Black simply promotes) 16...♗xe5 17.♗xe5+ ♘h7 18.hxg6+ ♘xg6 19.♗b8 ♘f5! and Black should win.

Of course, 9.♘f4 would still have been a wonderful practical chance.

C) 9.♗e4! is an even better practical chance. White sacrifices the f6-pawn in order to keep the a-pawn immobilized. 9...♘xf6 (9...a5 meets with the powerful 10.♗e1!, when 10...♗a8? fails to impress after 11.♗e7!) 10.♗e7 ♘d7 11.♗h4 and now:



Analysis diagram

On 11...♗g7 12.♗e1! ♘c6 White has the excellent move 13.♗e5+!!, and after 13...♗f8 14.♗g3 I can't see how Black can make progress. In such a posi-

tion, with a rather weak king and the idea of $\mathbb{Q}d6+$ hanging in the air, it's very easy to blunder!

In addition, you should *not* pay attention to the computer's assessment of a complete win for Black; remember that we are talking about obtaining the most practical chances – naturally, a computer should win this position as Black but that shouldn't discourage you from going for these types of positions when defending.

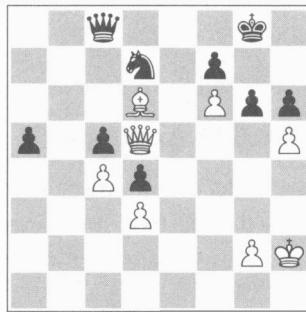
Black's best chance seems to be the move 11...a5!. However, in a tournament game, this move is very hard to make. After 12. $\mathbb{W}xh6$ $\mathbb{W}a6!$ the already familiar race begins: who will be first? Following 13. $\mathbb{Q}f4$ a4 White has the subtle 14. $\mathbb{W}h4!$, but then Black has the strong reply 14... $\mathbb{W}f6!$. White is forced to transpose into the endgame after 15. $\mathbb{W}xf6$ $\mathbb{Q}xf6$, but now White can create a fortress with 16. $\mathbb{Q}c1!$ $\mathbb{Q}d7$ 17. $\mathbb{Q}a3$. Nevertheless, Black should still win (eventually) after transferring his king to d6 and playing ... $\mathbb{Q}e5$.

However, after analyzing this position for some time I could still not find a forced way to break through White's defenses. I will not spend another few pages analyzing this endgame, as it is way beyond the scope of this book. It is clear that the queen and bishop can defend even the most hopeless-looking positions.

9...a5!

Here comes the a-pawn! Now, White is in serious trouble, as his counterplay is way too slow.

10.h5



10... $\mathbb{Q}xf6?$

After playing very well for a long time, Lange falters at the critical moment. He should have chosen the relatively simple 10...g5!, when White has no way of penetrating Black's solid bastions.

I feel that it is a good time to talk about objectivity v. practicality. You have to understand that in a real game, with time ticking away, repeatedly finding the best moves (or even average moves) is extremely difficult. As could be seen from the Kramnik-Kasparov game, even the top players often err when they are on the verge of winning.

In this section, my point is not to sugar-coat things. It is true that the queen and knight work superbly together. However, the fact that your opponent is objectively winning doesn't mean that you shouldn't be tenacious! If you surf through IM or GM games on ChessBase, you will see how many winning positions are not won, and even sometimes lost!

In this case, Max Lange, one of the top players of his time, started hyperventilating after h4-h5 and decided to transpose into a 'risk-free' endgame. This cost him dearly, as the power of the passed a-pawn is significantly decreased.

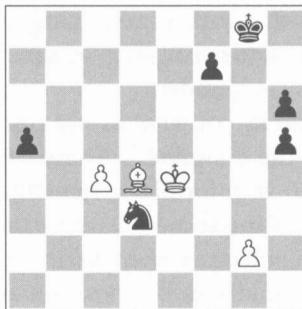
11. $\mathbb{W}xc5$

Now the win will be harder to achieve.

11... $\mathbb{W}xc5$ 12. $\mathbb{Q}xc5 \mathbb{Q}g4+?$

A further inaccuracy. After 12... $\mathbb{Q}xh5$ Black would still have probably been winning. For example, 13. $\mathbb{Q}xd4 \mathbb{Q}f4$ 14. $\mathbb{Q}f6 \mathbb{Q}xd3$ 15. $\mathbb{Q}g3$ (White's only chance is to activate his king before Black consolidates his pieces) 15... $\mathbb{Q}f8$ 16. $\mathbb{Q}f3 \mathbb{Q}e8$ 17. $\mathbb{Q}e3 \mathbb{Q}b4$ and although the win will take time, Black should eventually created connected passers on the kingside.

13. $\mathbb{Q}g3 \mathbb{Q}e5$ 14. $\mathbb{Q}xd4 \mathbb{Q}xd3$
15. $\mathbb{Q}f3 gxh5$ 16. $\mathbb{Q}e4$



Now, White's pieces become active and he obtains excellent drawing chances.

The rest of the game contains many errors and is beyond the scope of the book; after many strange adventures, however, White did manage to draw the game.

'So that's all? You've analyzed only two knight vs. bishop examples in this section?' True, I could have provided more cases in which queen and bishop defended against queen and knight, but since there are no specific rules you have to follow when defending against a knight and queen (besides remaining vigilant and careful), I decided that two interesting examples were enough.

Finally, let's revisit Capablanca's postulate which states that as a rule, the queen and knight are superior to the queen and bishop.

In my view, statistics are a bit unreliable, as there is no real way to control the strength of the players, time left on the clock, etc. However, it's clear that as a rule, it is easier to play with a queen and knight, as they are easier to manage and can put up an amazing defense even in the most miserable-looking positions. This is also true with the queen and bishop, but they often take longer to coordinate and can rarely organize a significant attack. Both Watson and Mayer are of the opinion that the queen and knight is an indisputably better tandem than the queen and bishop. In my opinion, however, one could only say that the queen and knight are usually **easier to control** and not necessarily better. Again, statistics are not very reliable and are not very convincing anyway – only 54% of decisive games end in favor of the queen and knight. Therefore, when you are playing from the point of view of queen and bishop or queen and knight, forget about statistics and concentrate on the game itself!

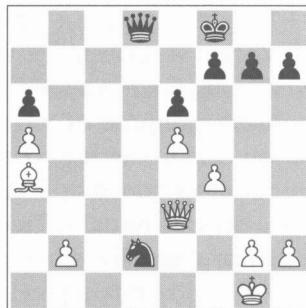
To conclude this lengthy and hopefully entertaining section, here are a few exercises. As usual, they are not easy, but are instructive.



5.5 Barua-Thipsay

Asian Championship, Calcutta 2001

Black clearly has the initiative, but is there a way to achieve counterplay?



5.6 Krasenkow-Markowski

Polish Championship, Warsaw 2002

What is the quickest way to end the game?



5.7 Efimenko-Lahno

Rivne 2005

It seems like Black has succeeded in setting up a fortress, but is there a way to make progress?

Queen + Knight vs. Queen + Knight

Queen + Knight vs. Queen + Knight endgames have two main defining characteristics. First of all, there is a very high probability that the game will transform into either a queen endgame or a knight endgame. Before you trade either queens or knights, you have to carefully consider the implications of such a trade. As we shall see, trading into a queen or knight endgame may seem like a good idea but turn out to be a serious mistake. The second defining characteristic of a QNQN endgame is its sharpness. The queen and knight is a vicious pair, and combining two of these tandems is like mixing fuel and oxygen! We will also see how in many games, an ultra-aggressive skirmish will decide the winner.

We will start out from the attacker's point of view. Just like in QBQN endgames, it's vital to mobilize your tandem as quickly as possible. An active tandem combined with, for example, a passed pawn, can be a formidable force. As an introduction, we turn to the following entertaining endgame battle:



122. Zukertort-Hein

Barmen 1869

Black was pressured throughout the whole game and through resilient defense he has managed to reach a very defendable position. First of all, the unpleasant move 27... $\mathbb{Q}e1+$ is threatened, and Black has succeeded in trading rooks, so his weaknesses are not felt as much. Zukertort, however, is way ahead of Black. He switches from his characteristic subtle, positional chess, to rapid, aggressive, and dynamic chess.

27.♘e4 ♔g7 28.h4!

Spectacular chess! White does not give Black even a moment to catch his

breath. Not only does White make a hole for his king on h2, he also attacks Black's pawn chain on the kingside, and forces him to make a difficult decision: whether to play ...h7-h6 or take on h4.

28...gxh4

Hein finds the only way to achieve serious drawing chances. After 28...h6?!, White could have played 29.♔f1!, freeing his knight and eventually forcing Black to take on h4.

**29.♗g4+ ♗g6 30.♗d7+ ♔h6
31.♘d6**

White finds a way to tighten the screws. Now, Black's king is in serious trouble. Hein finds the only way to defend: counterattack!

**31...♘f4! 32.♘f5+ ♔h5 33.♘e3
♘e2+ 34.♔h2 ♗e4**

It looks like Black is taking over the initiative, but this is purely an illusion.

35.♗f7+ ♗g6?

Black finally collapses, and makes the obvious-looking move. In order to

draw, Black would have had to play the brave 35... $\mathbb{Q}g5!$, and after 36. $\mathbb{W}g7+$ $\mathbb{Q}h5$ White has nothing better than to repeat moves after 37. $\mathbb{W}f7+$ (37. $\mathbb{W}xf6?$ is met by 37... $\mathbb{W}f4+!$, drawing, but not 37... $\mathbb{Q}xd4?$ 38. $\mathbb{W}f7+$ and $\mathbb{W}xa7$, with a large advantage).

A reader might ask, ‘But you’ve praised White’s play so much, and criticized Black’s – how is it that Black has such an easy way to draw?’ Often, one mistake or a few inaccuracies will not be enough to lose a game.

One has to give credit to Hein for finding some good defensive moves. It is not often that a player defends precisely for a very long time – a mistake usually comes sooner or later. In this case, it turned out that Black can hang on the precipice and draw, but he was so fed up with defending that he made a serious mistake. This is so often the case that objective evaluations are not always as important as they might seem!

36. $\mathbb{W}c4!$



A terrific move after which it suddenly turns out that Black loses the c6-pawn. Finally, Black’s mistake ...b7-b6 comes back to haunt him!

In the introduction to this chapter, I stated that the two most important factors in QNQN endgames were the likeliness of a trade to either a queen or a knight end-

36... $\mathbb{Q}g3!$

Black defends tenaciously. Of course, the knight is untouchable, but since White’s knight and queen are so well coordinated, White need not worry about the weakness of his king. White can finally start collecting the harvest.

37. $\mathbb{W}xc6 \mathbb{Q}h6 38.\mathbb{W}f3$

Get out of there, knight!

38... $\mathbb{Q}h5 39.d5$

As if Black’s position wasn’t bad already, White also starts advancing his central passed pawn, which is excellently supported by his pieces. Such a move is extremely unpleasant to face, needless to say.

39... $\mathbb{W}g5 40.d6 \mathbb{W}f4+$

Black eliminates any possibility of an attack, but now White’s passed pawn will decide the game.

41. $\mathbb{W}xf4+ \mathbb{Q}xf4 42.d7 \mathbb{Q}e6 43.\mathbb{Q}f5+$

White wins another pawn by force, and with it, the game.

43... $\mathbb{Q}g5 44.\mathbb{Q}d6 \mathbb{Q}d8 45.\mathbb{Q}c8 \mathbb{Q}f5 46.\mathbb{Q}xa7 \mathbb{Q}e6 47.\mathbb{Q}c8 b5 48.\mathbb{Q}b6 \mathbb{Q}d6 49.\mathbb{Q}h3 \mathbb{Q}c6 50.\mathbb{Q}c8 \mathbb{Q}xd7 51.\mathbb{Q}a7 b4 52.\mathbb{Q}xh4 \mathbb{Q}e6 53.\mathbb{Q}h5 \mathbb{Q}f7 54.f4 \mathbb{Q}g7 55.f5 \mathbb{Q}g8 56.a4 bxa3 57.bxa3 \mathbb{Q}b7 58.a4 \mathbb{Q}a5 59.\mathbb{Q}c8 \mathbb{Q}c4 60.\mathbb{Q}e7+ \mathbb{Q}f7 61.\mathbb{Q}c6 1-0$

White loses one passed pawn, but the other one delivers the final blow!

game and the possibility of many tactical opportunities. We will take a look at these factors one by one.

In QNQN endgames, the possibility of a trade is very high.

Therefore, accurate evaluation of the resulting Q-vs-Q or N-vs-N endgames is of paramount importance. You should watch out for disadvantageous trades and look for opportunities to force a favorable trade. Note that even the *threat* to trade can be a useful tool for improving your position.

As I was surfing through QNQN endgames, I noticed that in the majority of them the players traded either into a knight endgame or into a queen endgame. If you are on the attacking side, you have to analyze the trade very carefully – sometimes, there is more than meets the eye.

This all sounds a bit vague, but the following example should clear things up.



123. Naroditsky-Bok

World Youth Chess Championship,
Vung Tau 2008

White is clearly better, from a static and a dynamic point of view. First of all, he is in complete control of the light squares (f5 and d5, to name a few!). Also, Black has a very weak backward pawn on f6, and his knight is being completely restricted by the g3-pawn. In addition, White's king is safer than Black's, since Black cannot activate his knight.

Having said all that, it's still not entirely clear how White can make progress. If Black is given some time, he will improve his position, at least to a certain extent. Therefore, White has to play actively.

I was very satisfied with my position, and played:

1.♘d5?

I had not calculated a single variation before playing this move! On the surface, ♘d5 looks like a completely natural move: it solidifies White's position and attacks the f6-pawn. However, there is one major flaw, which I had completely failed to anticipate. If instead I had played 1.♗d8+!, and only after 1...♔a7 2.♘d5, Black would have been in serious trouble. His only chance is to sacrifice a pawn and seek counterplay after 2...♗c5+ 3.♔g2 c6, but after 4.♘xf6 ♗e3 (otherwise White consolidates with ♔d2 and ♘g4, or even ♘d7) 5.♗xa5+ ♔b8 White has the tremendous move 6.♗c5!!, and he wins since 6...♗xc5 fails to 7.♘d7+, winning the queen back. This variation really highlights the importance of being able to calculate precisely when needed. One might think that in the endgame, it's much more important to be aware of general ideas, but when it comes to the realization of an advantage, you will have to calculate sharply in order to

avoid making careless mistakes, which is precisely what I did in this game.

1...♞e7!

This came as a huge shock to me. On the previous move, I was enjoying a terrific advantage, and was preparing to win the f6-pawn. Suddenly, I cannot avoid the trade! Black uses an amazing tactical opportunity to force the trade of knights.

2.♝xe7 ♜c5+ 3.♛g2 ♜xe7



A very interesting position has arisen. Of course, Black has made considerable defensive progress, since his f6-pawn is now relatively safe, and so is his king. In addition, White has a very annoying weakness on a3. He cannot stop Black's queen from moving there, after which White's own queen will be tied to the defense of a2. White still has some advantage due to the weakness of Black's light squares, but of course the trade of knights has considerably facilitated the defense.

It's easy to start relaxing prematurely, especially in a position where your king is completely safe and there seems to be no danger whatsoever. It is the mark of good players never to relax, even in the most promising positions.

In this case, I relaxed and allowed Black to trade knights, after which a lion's share of my advantage disappeared.

This game is also instructive from Black's point of view. He did not lose hope and found a very nice tactical solution to all of his problems at the least likely moment!

4.♚f3 ♜a3!

Black continues his precise play. Now, White's queen is forced back, when White's advantage will be purely symbolic.

5.♛e2

5.♛xf6 would have been an interesting try. However, Black has no problem holding the draw after, for example, 5...♜xa2+ 6.♚f3 ♜xb3 7.♛d8+ ♚a7 8.♛xc7 and now he can even go for the win with 8...♚a6!? (of course, 8...♛d1+ leads to perpetual).

5...♜c1 6.c4

At first sight, it seems that Black has gone wrong, since White threatens to penetrate with his king via h3. Had Black delved more deeply into the intricacies of the position, he would have probably found the very strong 6...g4!, when White cannot make any progress. For example, 7.♛xg4!? ♛d2+ 8.♚h3 ♜xa2 9.♛f3 b6 with a dead draw.

Black can also draw by means of a very subtle resource: 6...♜c3!, and if 7.♚h3 then ♛d4, when White cannot play 8.♚g4 due to 8...♛d7+ with a draw.

Black started losing the thread of the game, and when he could finally make the drawing move, he lost the thread once more!

6...b6?

A serious error after which White will obtain significant winning chances.

7.♔h3!

Of course! Now Black cannot stop White's king from infiltrating deep into Black's camp.

7...♕c8 8.♕g4 ♕d7 9.♕f5

Black's problem is that White will eventually create an unstoppable passed pawn with h2-h4. In addition, White's queen will invade Black's camp via h5.

9...♕e7 10.♕g6?!

I got a bit carried away here! The more natural 10.♕h5 was more forceful and led to a winning position.

10...♗h1



11.♕g7?

In Russian, there is a phrase 'Once you say A, you have to say B!' In this case, I was already attacking with my king, so why not penetrate completely?

Of course, such thinking is extremely superficial. Amazingly, I relax yet again and allow Black to obtain good drawing chances. Instead, White had the very strong move 11.♕g4!, and after

11...♗xh2 White plays 12.♕c8!, when Black is clearly losing, i.e. 12...♗xg3 13.♕xc7+ ♔e8 14.♕c6+ ♔e7 15.♕b7+ ♔e8 16.♕xf6 and Black will either get mated or lose all of his pawns.

11...g4!

Now, White will not be able to create a passed pawn *or* break in with his queen! It's incredible that I missed such an easy opportunity, especially considering that I had many ways to stop the threat!

12.♕xg4 ♗xh2

Now, White has his own weakness (pawn on g3), and in order to win, very careful play will be required. Black was under the mistaken impression that White had an easy win, and after

13.a4



he played

13...♗f2?

This makes White's life considerably easier. You always want to create practical difficulties for your opponent, even if the position is objectively winning. After the brave 13...♗d6!, Black's king will make its own journey into the heart of White's position. Now, White has to find the precise 14.♕h4!, and after 14...♗g1

Chapter 5 – Queen + Minor Piece(s) vs Queen + Minor Piece(s)

15. $\mathbb{Q}xf6+$ $\mathbb{Q}c5$ 16. $\mathbb{Q}xe5+$ $\mathbb{Q}b4$
17. $\mathbb{Q}b5+$ $\mathbb{Q}a3$ 18. e5 White will eventually win, since his queen occupies a terrific position, where it defends b3 and supports the e-pawn.

14. $\mathbb{Q}g6$

Now, Black will not be able to put up any real resistance.

14... $\mathbb{Q}d7$ 15. g4 $\mathbb{Q}g3$

If instead 15... $\mathbb{Q}h4$, White wins by means of 16. $\mathbb{Q}h5$.

**16. $\mathbb{Q}f5+$ $\mathbb{Q}c6$ 17. $\mathbb{Q}xf6$ $\mathbb{Q}xb3$
18. g5 $\mathbb{Q}b7$ 19. g6 $\mathbb{Q}xc4$**

Of course, Black's material advantage is completely meaningless.

**20. g7 $\mathbb{Q}a2$ 21. $\mathbb{Q}e6$ $\mathbb{Q}f2+$ 22. $\mathbb{Q}e7$
 $\mathbb{Q}h4+$ 23. $\mathbb{Q}f8$ $\mathbb{Q}f4+$ 24. $\mathbb{Q}f5$ $\mathbb{Q}h6$
25. $\mathbb{Q}f7$ $\mathbb{Q}e3$ 26. g8 \mathbb{Q} $\mathbb{Q}b3+$
27. $\mathbb{Q}g7$ $\mathbb{Q}g3+$ 28. $\mathbb{Q}g6$ $\mathbb{Q}a3$**

Here I could not stop myself from cracking up when I found the 'winning combination':

29. $\mathbb{Q}c6+!!!?$ $\mathbb{Q}xc6$ 30. $\mathbb{Q}d5#$

A funny final position. I was debating for quite some time whether or not to sacrifice the queen, but finally decided to punish Black for not resigning!

The main lesson we learn from this game is that in QNQN endgames, tactical opportunities are almost always present, and sometimes, these opportunities can completely change the course of the game. In addition, this game reinforces the importance of never relaxing until the scoresheets are signed.

In the following game, White is presented with a very tough question: whether to trade queens, or not. Because of White's instructive play in the opening, I give the game in full.

124. Cohen-Naroditsky

San Jose 2007

Sicilian Defense, Najdorf Variation
(B99)

**1.e4 c5 2. $\mathbb{Q}f3$ d6 3. d4 cxd4
4. $\mathbb{Q}xd4$ $\mathbb{Q}f6$ 5. $\mathbb{Q}c3$ a6 6. $\mathbb{Q}g5$ e6
7. f4 $\mathbb{Q}e7$ 8. $\mathbb{Q}f3$ $\mathbb{Q}c7$ 9. 0-0-0 $\mathbb{Q}bd7$
10. g4**

A very sharp line, which often leads to crazy positions. In order to maintain the delicate balance, Black has to play very carefully, something that I did not do in this game!

**10... b5 11. $\mathbb{Q}xf6$ $\mathbb{Q}xf6$ 12. g5 $\mathbb{Q}d7$
13. h4?!**



This is not in the spirit of the position. White has to play the more aggressive 13. f5!. The latest verdict on the variation seems to be that White obtains an edge with accurate play, but of course there is still a lot of unexplored territory in these lines.

13... $\mathbb{Q}c5$ 14.f5 b4 15. $\mathbb{Q}ce2$ $\mathbb{Q}b7?$

This fails to a nice tactical resource. Instead, after 15...e5! Black takes the initiative. The stem game Mokry-Ftacnik, Bratislava 1983, continued 16. $\mathbb{Q}b3$ and now the Najdorf expert played 16... $\mathbb{Q}xe4!$. After 17. $\mathbb{W}xe4$ $\mathbb{Q}b7$ 18. $\mathbb{M}d5$ $\mathbb{Q}c8!$ 19.c3 $\mathbb{W}c4$ 20. $\mathbb{W}xc4$ $\mathbb{M}xc4$ 21. $\mathbb{Q}g2$ $\mathbb{Q}xd5$ 22. $\mathbb{Q}xd5$ Black found the elegant 22... $\mathbb{M}xh4!$, with a clear advantage which Ftacnik mercilessly drove home.

16. $\mathbb{Q}g3$ e5

A day late and a dollar short. Amazingly, Ljubomir Ljubojevic won not one but two games here! Both of his opponents played 16...d5, but after 17.fxe6 fxe6 18.exd5 $\mathbb{M}f8$ 19. $\mathbb{W}h5+$ g6 20. $\mathbb{W}xh7$ $\mathbb{W}xg3$ 21. $\mathbb{W}xg6+$ $\mathbb{Q}d8$ 22. $\mathbb{Q}h3$ (Ljubojevic-Browne, Manila 1976 and Ljubojevic-Bouaziz, Praia da Rocha Zonal 1978) White's attack was unstoppable. Ljubojevic crushed both opponents in a matter of moves.

17.f6!

The relatively quiet 17. $\mathbb{Q}b3$ is also not bad. Pähtz-Mikhailchishin, Lvov 1983, continued 17... $\mathbb{M}c8$ 18. $\mathbb{M}h2$ d5 19.f6! $\mathbb{Q}xb3+$ 20.axb3 gxf6 21.gxf6 dxe4 22. $\mathbb{W}g4$ $\mathbb{Q}c5$ 23. $\mathbb{Q}f5$ $\mathbb{M}d8$ 24. $\mathbb{Q}g7+$ $\mathbb{Q}f8$ 25. $\mathbb{Q}e6+$ and Black resigned! Clearly, if Black does not play precisely in this variation, the consequences are pretty severe!

17...gxf6

17...exd4 was a better defense. After 18.fxe7 $\mathbb{W}xe7$ 19. $\mathbb{M}xd4$ (19. $\mathbb{Q}f5$ is not good: 19... $\mathbb{W}e5$ 20. $\mathbb{M}xd4$ 0-0 21. $\mathbb{Q}g2$ $\mathbb{M}ae8$ with the initiative) 19... $\mathbb{W}e5$

20. $\mathbb{M}xb4!$ 0-0 21. $\mathbb{Q}c4$ Black cannot create enough play on the b-file.



18. $\mathbb{Q}df5?!$

Admittedly, this is a brave move and not a bad practical chance, but there is no need to sacrifice. After the simple 18.gxf6 White retains a clear edge.

18...0-0-0?

Returning the favor. Instead, after the correct 18...fxg5! we had both missed that 19. $\mathbb{Q}xe7$ $\mathbb{W}xe7$ 20. $\mathbb{Q}f5$ is met by 20... $\mathbb{Q}xe4!$. Instead, White should prefer 20. $\mathbb{W}e3$, but Black is certainly not worse after 20...0-0-0.

**19. $\mathbb{Q}xe7+$ $\mathbb{W}xe7$ 20.gxf6 $\mathbb{W}c7$
21. $\mathbb{Q}c4$**

Although I gave this move an exclamation mark in my original analysis, it is in fact inaccurate. 21. $\mathbb{Q}h3+$ followed by 22. $\mathbb{Q}b1$ was better, with an advantage. The main problem for Black is that he isn't able to break through with ...d6-d5, and his overall position is awkward and weak.

21... $\mathbb{Q}b8?$

Cooperative play. Instead, 21... $\mathbb{Q}xe4!$ was much better, and the position is once again unclear (for example, 22. $\mathbb{Q}xa6$ $\mathbb{Q}xa6$ 23. $\mathbb{Q}xe4$ $\mathbb{Q}b7$ and

Black's powerful bishop compensates for his weaknesses).

22.♗d5! ♜c8

From a static point of view, Black's position is close to lost. However, he does have some dynamic counterplay along the c-file. White tried to nip any resistance in the bud and played:

23.♖h2?

Too slow. Steinitz said that the player with the advantage has to attack and play aggressively, or the advantage will evaporate. This could not have been more true in this case: if instead White had played 23.♗f5, he would have had a clear advantage. The fact that Black has to play 23...♝xd5 24.♜xd5 ♜b7 in order to defend says a lot about his position!

23...♝e6?

It's amazing how naively both opponents are playing the middlegame. I actually gave 23.♖h2 an exclamation in my analysis (of course without giving a single variation). However, had Black played 23...♝xd5, White would have been faced with serious difficulties. The problem is that 24.♜xd5 is strongly met by 24...♝hg8, and White has difficulty holding his position together. On 25.♞d1, Black replies 25...d5!, and if 26.♜xd5 ♜a5! 27.♝b1 Black has the sudden 27...b3!! and he wins the g3-knight after 28.axb3 ♜e1+. Therefore, White must take on d5 with a pawn, but of course Black is completely fine then.

**24.♝xb7 ♜xb7 25.♗f5 ♜cd8
26.♗xd6?!**

A bit premature. 26.♖hd2 was better.

26...♛c7 27.♗f5

Another inaccuracy. 27.♖hd2! was better, and if 27...♝d4 White plays 28.♜xd4! exd4 29.e5 with a clear advantage.

27...♝c5?!

Yet again, I return the favor. 27...♛c4! was stronger, when Black has some counterplay.

**28.♖hd2! ♜xd2 29.♜xd2 ♛g8
30.♜g2?!**

A cowardly decision. Had White played the simple consolidating move 30.♞d1, he would have been a pawn up and would have had a dominating position.

30...♜d8 31.♞d2?

Blundering away a pawn!

**31...♜xd2 32.♝xd2 ♛d8+ 33.♝c1
♛xf6**



And so, after many mistakes and interesting moments, a QNQN endgame has arisen. White's advantage is indisputable; Black has many weaknesses and his position is not consolidated. However, White bases his moves on a very superficial plan, and quickly starts losing the thread of the game.

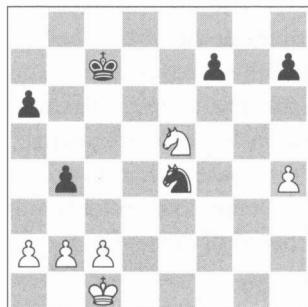
34.♛e3?

The first error. White allows Black to consolidate his tandem and attack the e4 pawn. Instead, 34.a3! was strong, opening up the position. White has a clear initiative and Black has to play very carefully to draw: 34... $\mathbb{W}c6!$ (A hard-to-find move; Black refuses to voluntarily open up the position) 35.axb4 $\mathbb{W}xe4$ 36. $\mathbb{W}xe4$ $\mathbb{Q}xe4$ and although White has a minimal advantage, Black should be able to draw without too much trouble.

34... $\mathbb{W}c6$ 35. $\mathbb{Q}e7?$

White played this move after a long think. First of all, I should say that White had to go for perpetual with 35. $\mathbb{W}g5$. He might have been discouraged by the line 35... $\mathbb{W}xe4$ 36. $\mathbb{W}d8+?$ $\mathbb{Q}a7$ 37. $\mathbb{W}c7+$ $\mathbb{Q}b7$, but instead he has the simple 36. $\mathbb{W}g8+!$ $\mathbb{Q}a7$ 37. $\mathbb{W}xf7+$ $\mathbb{Q}b7$ 38.b3 with a draw after 38... $\mathbb{W}e1+$ and ... $\mathbb{W}c3+$. In fact, as NM Dana Mackenzie pointed out, White can also draw with the calm 35. $\mathbb{Q}g3$, and after 35...a5 36. $\mathbb{W}g5$ Black must again accept the perpetual or a dead drawn knight endgame after 36... $\mathbb{Q}b7$ 37. $\mathbb{W}e7+$ $\mathbb{W}c7$ 38. $\mathbb{W}xc7+$ $\mathbb{Q}xc7$ 39. $\mathbb{Q}d2$. However, what can be wrong with the text?

35... $\mathbb{W}xe4$ 36. $\mathbb{W}xe4$ $\mathbb{Q}xe4$
 37. $\mathbb{Q}c6+$ $\mathbb{Q}c7$ 38. $\mathbb{Q}xe5$



A very interesting and unusual end-game is on the board. Black does have a passed f-pawn, but it's hard to say whether the pawn is a weakness or a strength! In addition, if White can transfer his king to d4 or c4, the weakness of the b4-pawn will cause Black serious problems.

However, there is more to this endgame than meets the eye. First of all, the passed pawn is not really a weakness, since Black can play ...f7-f6, and the pawn will be practically impossible to attack. Eventually, the passed pawn will tie down White's knight, thus forcing White's king to defend the queenside all by itself. Secondly, and most importantly, Black's knight on e4 dominates the whole board! It hampers the path of White's king, prevents White from activating his kingside pawns, and eyes from a distance the weak h4-pawn. In fact, Black's knight isn't actually attacking anything for the moment, but it will eventually say its word.

However, it is also important (as usual) to consider this position from a concrete point of view. *What should be Black's plan in this position?*

The first thing I realized was that if I played ...a5-a4-a3, a huge weakness on c3 (for White) would be created. This is quite hard to do, however. In order to start advancing his a-pawn, Black will first need to improve the position of his king.

38..f6 39. $\mathbb{Q}d3$ a5 40. $\mathbb{Q}d1$ $\mathbb{Q}g3!$

Transferring the knight to d4, from where it will dominate the board and exert pressure on the c2-pawn.

41. $\mathbb{Q}e1$ $\mathbb{Q}f5$ 42.h5 $\mathbb{Q}d6$ 43. $\mathbb{Q}f2$
 $\mathbb{Q}d5$ 44. $\mathbb{Q}f3!$ $\mathbb{Q}d4+$ 45. $\mathbb{Q}f4$ $\mathbb{Q}c4$

Of course, 45... $\mathbb{Q}xc2$ failed to 46. $\mathbb{Q}f5$.

46. $\mathbb{Q}e1\ a4!$

Due to the deadly threat of ...a3, White panicked and played:

47. $\mathbb{Q}e4?$

It's understandable that White lost his cool, but again, it's the mark of strong endgame players to remain calm even in the most unpleasant situations. White could have drawn by means of 47.b3+!, inviting Black's king forward but eliminating the a4-pawn. After 47...axb3 48.cxb3+ (but not 48.axb3+?? because of 48... $\mathbb{Q}c3$) 48... $\mathbb{Q}c3$ 49.h6! $\mathbb{Q}b2$ 50. $\mathbb{Q}e4$ $\mathbb{Q}c6$ 51. $\mathbb{Q}d3+$ $\mathbb{Q}xa2$ 52. $\mathbb{Q}d5$ White draws. Finding such a defense is rather difficult, especially considering that White did not spot Black's main plan.

47...a3!



In the above game, we could see that deciding whether to trade or not is often a very important and difficult decision to make. The best way to decide whether to trade queens or knights is simply to evaluate the resulting endgame. In the game Naroditsky-Bok, I had hugely overestimated my chances in the queen endgame, and therefore carelessly played $\mathbb{Q}d5$. However, had I carefully evaluated the consequences, I would certainly have played the correct $\mathbb{Q}d8+$.

Finally, we will take a look at a model game played by Karpov.

A real dagger, after which White's position becomes critical. The idea of ...a4-a3 is quite simple: Black opens up a path for his king to b2. Note that Black's king and knight work perfectly to restrict White's own king and knight.

48.bxa3

48.b3+ would also have lost: 48... $\mathbb{Q}c3$ 49.h6 (if 49. $\mathbb{Q}d3$ $\mathbb{Q}xc2$ followed by ...f6-f5+, winning a piece) 49... $\mathbb{Q}xc2$ 50. $\mathbb{Q}xc2$ $\mathbb{Q}xc2$ 51. $\mathbb{Q}f5$ $\mathbb{Q}b2$ 52. $\mathbb{Q}xf6$ $\mathbb{Q}xa2$ 53. $\mathbb{Q}g7$ $\mathbb{Q}xb3$ 54. $\mathbb{Q}xh7$ a2 and Black promotes way before White does.

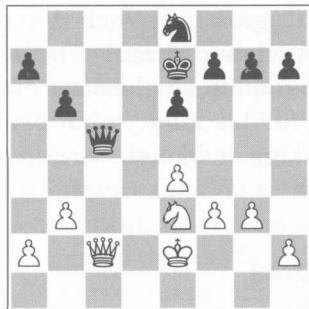
48...bxa3 49. $\mathbb{Q}g2\ \mathbb{Q}xc2$

Now, White will not be able to stop Black's a-pawn from promoting.

**50. $\mathbb{Q}f5\ \mathbb{Q}b4\ 51.\mathbb{Q}xf6\ \mathbb{Q}xa2$
52. $\mathbb{Q}e3+$ $\mathbb{Q}b3$**

Even without the a2-knight White would be lost!

**53. $\mathbb{Q}f5\ \mathbb{Q}b4\ 54.\mathbb{Q}d4+\ \mathbb{Q}b2$
55. $\mathbb{Q}g7\ a2\ 56.\mathbb{Q}xh7\ a1\mathbb{Q}\ 57.h6$
 $\mathbb{Q}a7+ 58.\mathbb{Q}g8\ \mathbb{Q}d5!$ 0-1**



125. Gheorghiu-Karpov

Lucerne Olympiad 1982

The position looks dead equal. In truth, Black has a slight space disadvantage. Certainly, after 1... $\mathbb{W}xc2+$ Karpov could have easily drawn the game. However, he decides to play on and tries to take advantage of White's weak kingside pawn structure.

1... $\mathbb{W}h5!$

No way Jose! By keeping the queens on the board, Karpov forces White to be on the alert and constantly defend his feeble kingside pawns.

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

As Karolyi mentions in *Endgame Virtuoso Anatoly Karpov*, White has no intentions to win and continues his passive play. He suggests 2.h4! as an improvement. In case of the tempting 2...g5, White simply plays 3.hxg5 $\mathbb{W}h2+$ 4. $\mathbb{Q}d3$ $\mathbb{W}xg3$ 5. $\mathbb{W}c6!$ $\mathbb{W}xg5$ 6. $\mathbb{W}b7+$ and White should draw easily.

Gheorghiu was probably thinking that Karpov would soon agree to a draw, and therefore did not consider his moves too closely. However, Karpov slowly starts building up an initiative.

2... $\mathbb{Q}d7$

A good and solid move. Black defends the key points c6 and c8, and does not fear a check along the d-file.

3. $\mathbb{W}c3$

As Karpov points out, it was in fact best for White to play 3. $\mathbb{W}d3+$. After 3... $\mathbb{Q}d6$ 4. $\mathbb{W}a6$ $\mathbb{W}b5+$ 5. $\mathbb{W}xb5+$ $\mathbb{Q}xb5$ Black's advantage is purely symbolic. Of course, Gheorghiu is not a bad endgame player; on the contrary, he had many nice endgame wins. However, he feared Karpov so much that he could not bring himself to play a single active move! In addition, he was confident that his structure was watertight and that Karpov could not make any progress. As we shall see, he was proven wrong!

3...f6

Otherwise, Black's knight would be tied down to the defense of g7. As we know, it's vital to activate both your knight and your queen as quickly as possible.

4.h4!

After all, Gheorghiu is a grandmaster! His idea is clear: he will free the f1-knight from the defense of the h2-pawn. In such situations, when your opponent is defending well, it's vital not to be discouraged and to continue foraging for chances. Contrary to many opinions, Karpov is not a magician and he cannot create chances where there are none. What he *can* do, though, is to urge his opponent to create chances *for* him. In other words, try to make moves which induce a mistake. What Karpov does here is truly amazing.

4... $\mathbb{Q}d6$

He starts out by improving the position of his own knight. His ultimate goal is to transport the knight to d4, from where it will truly dominate the game.

5.♘f2 ♗b5 6.♗d3+ ♖e7 7.♘e3 ♖c5



8.♗d2

It's hard to call this move a direct error, as White does nothing to change the character of the position. However, as Karolyi correctly mentions, 8.♗c4! led to a forced draw. For example: 8...♗xc4 (8...♗e5 9.a4! ♘c3 10.♗g4 with a draw – Karolyi) 9.♗xc4 ♘c3 10.a4 and Black can make no progress whatsoever. A reader might ask: '*How did Gheorghiu miss such a simple opportunity to draw?*' The answer is simple: Gheorghiu was afraid to change the character of the position! He thought that his current position was completely impenetrable, and therefore sat and waited for Karpov to offer him a draw. If you are on the defending side, never sit and wait for your opponent to concede the draw, unless the situation is desperate.

Here, passive defense is bound to lead to failure since Black's pieces are so active. White *must* trade queens, simply because Black's queen will be the main reason for White's subsequent problems.

8...a5 9.♗d3 ♘d4

With seemingly straightforward play, Karpov has achieved his goal. Now, his advantage seems to be indisputable, but our friend Rybka seems to dispute even that.

Now is a good opportunity to talk about using computers in the endgame. Remember the game Karpov-Anand? In cases like those, where you are trying to corroborate your analysis and double-check for any mistakes, using a computer, especially Rybka, is a great idea. However, in endgames where there are no concrete ideas or weaknesses for either side, using a computer is often not a great idea, since the computer's evaluations will often be distorted. In this case, Rybka says the position is dead equal (0.00), but this is obviously untrue since any *human* would prefer to play Black, *although the position might be objectively drawn with best play*. As long as the position is drawn, the computer will not give an advantage to either side, so be cautious when using a computer in these types of positions!

10.♔g2?

Way, way too passive. Gheorghiu must have been petrified with fear here – otherwise his move is inexplicable. Again, Black's queen is the cause of most of Black's troubles and therefore 10.♗c4 was called for. In order to keep the pressure going, Black should play 10...♗d6, and now White continues to play actively with 11.♗a6!. Now Black probably should go for a move repetition with 11...♘c2 12.♗d3+ ♘d4, but he can also try the risky but interesting 11...♘c6??. Karolyi then correctly gives

12. $\mathbb{Q}c8!$ with the following line: 12... $\mathbb{Q}d4$ 13. $\mathbb{Q}f8+$ $\mathbb{Q}d7$ 14. $\mathbb{Q}xg7+$ $\mathbb{Q}e7!?$ (14... $\mathbb{Q}d6!?$) 15. $\mathbb{Q}h6$. Now Karolyi gives 15... $\mathbb{Q}d2+$, but it seems like 15... $f5$ is even better. In any case, Black still easily draws after 15... $\mathbb{Q}d2+$ 16. $\mathbb{Q}f1$ $\mathbb{Q}xa2$ 17. $\mathbb{Q}g4$ $\mathbb{Q}xb3$, although the position is more unbalanced here.

10... $\mathbb{Q}c6$

Karpov does not relinquish the pressure. Now, it's not exactly clear what White should do. Currently, Karpov has no concrete plan, but this does not preclude him from making life difficult for Gheorghiu.

11.a4?



A serious error after which White's position quickly starts going downhill. Instead, the simple enough 11. $\mathbb{Q}c4$ (Karolyi) holds easily, since Black will not be able to safeguard his king after 11... $\mathbb{Q}xe3$ 12. $\mathbb{Q}xc6$.

11... $\mathbb{Q}e5!$

A terrific move which highlights Karpov's immense endgame knowledge. Instead, Karolyi and Karpov analyze the alternative 11... $\mathbb{Q}d4$, which looks completely natural. Let's take a closer look:

A) Black's point is that after 12. $\mathbb{Q}xd4$ $\mathbb{Q}xd4$ 13. $\mathbb{Q}c4$ $\mathbb{Q}xb3$ 14. $\mathbb{Q}xb6$ $\mathbb{Q}d6$

Black wins easily, because White cannot hold the a4-pawn.

B) 12. $\mathbb{Q}c2$ is much better. Now, Black has a further choice: he can either trade knights, or leave them on the board:

B1) 12... $\mathbb{Q}xe3$ 13. $\mathbb{Q}xc6$ $\mathbb{Q}e2+$ 14. $\mathbb{Q}h3$ $\mathbb{Q}xf3$ 15. $\mathbb{Q}c7+$ $\mathbb{Q}f8$ 16. $\mathbb{Q}d8+$ $\mathbb{Q}f7$ 17. $\mathbb{Q}d7+$ $\mathbb{Q}g6$ and now both Karolyi and Karpov give 18. $\mathbb{Q}xe6$, which can be met by 18... $h5$. White can still hold, but there is no need to go for this, since the intermediate move 18. $\mathbb{Q}e8+$ draws, as after 18... $\mathbb{Q}h6$ 19. $\mathbb{Q}xe6$ Black's king blocks his own h-pawn.

B2) 12... $\mathbb{Q}d7$ is given by Karpov as a strong move, but Karolyi correctly notes that 13. $\mathbb{Q}c4$ draws without much trouble.

12. $\mathbb{Q}d2$ $\mathbb{Q}d6!?$

From a practical point of view, a great move. However, as our subsequent analysis will show, everything is not as clear as it might seem. Black offers a queen exchange. Of course, taking the queen right now would be tantamount to suicide, since White's king will not be able to arrive on the queenside in time. The question is whether White should put his queen on c2 or on c3. Gheorghiu played the obvious move:

13. $\mathbb{Q}c3?!$

Now, White will be forced to trade queens. Instead, 13. $\mathbb{Q}c2!$ was much better, when after 13... $\mathbb{Q}d3$ White doesn't have to trade queens:

A) 14. $\mathbb{Q}f2$ is well met by 14... $h5!?$, and White is in dire straits. For example, 15. $\mathbb{Q}b2$ (15. $\mathbb{Q}c7+$ is given by Karolyi; after 15... $\mathbb{Q}d7$ 16. $\mathbb{Q}c4$ $\mathbb{Q}c2+$ 17. $\mathbb{Q}g1$ $\mathbb{Q}xb3$ 18. $\mathbb{Q}d6+$ $\mathbb{Q}d8$

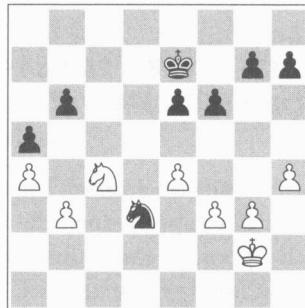
19. $\mathbb{W}xe6 \mathbb{W}xf3$ Black wins) and now Black should refrain from the impulsive 15... $\mathbb{W}xe4?$, which might actually lose after 16. $fxe4 \mathbb{Q}d3+$ 17. $\mathbb{Q}e2 \mathbb{Q}xb2$ 18. $\mathbb{Q}d2$, and instead play the subtle 15... $g6!$, forcing 16. $\mathbb{W}c2$. Black now plays 16... $g5!$, and White is on the verge of collapse.

B) 14. $f4?$ is an interesting attempt to defend. After 14... $\mathbb{W}xc2+$ 15. $\mathbb{Q}xc2 \mathbb{Q}d7!$ (Karolyi's 15... $\mathbb{Q}d3$ is also viable: 16. $\mathbb{Q}f3 \mathbb{Q}c5$ and after 17. $\mathbb{Q}d4$, Black should resist the tempting 17... $\mathbb{Q}d6$, since after 18. $g4 g6 19. \mathbb{Q}e3! e5 20. \mathbb{Q}b5+ \mathbb{Q}c6 21. f5! gxf5 22. exf5 h6 23. \mathbb{Q}c3$ White draws, because the b3-pawn is untouchable, and play 17... $e5! 18. \mathbb{Q}f5+ \mathbb{Q}d7 19. \mathbb{Q}xg7 \mathbb{Q}xb3 20. \mathbb{Q}h5 \mathbb{Q}e7$ and Black will soon promote on the queenside) 16. $\mathbb{Q}d4 \mathbb{Q}d6$ and now Black does have very good winning chances.

13... $\mathbb{W}d3$

So how did Karpov come up with the idea to trade queens? After all, such a decision is rather risky, because in the ensuing endgame Black either wins, or White sets up a fortress. Karpov could certainly have kept the queens on the board and tried to induce an error, but he understood that in this case, White's king is far away from the queenside and therefore a queen trade would cause White immense difficulties. Yes, White might still be able to draw, but by keeping the queens on the board Karpov would have implied that he is now trying to trick Gheorghiu and cannot make progress, thereby motivating the defender even further.

14. $\mathbb{W}xd3 \mathbb{Q}xd3 15. \mathbb{Q}c4$



15... $\mathbb{Q}c1!$

Ouch! Now, White will be left with a sole a-pawn, which he will be unable to defend.

Notice how Karpov, throughout the whole game, did not give Gheorghiu any respite. He just kept making threats and tightening the screws; eventually, the Romanian grandmaster simply collapsed.

16. $\mathbb{Q}xb6$

Clearly, 16. $\mathbb{Q}d2 \mathbb{Q}d6$ does not bring White any relief.

16... $\mathbb{Q}xb3 17. e5!$

Gheorghiu finds the best way to prolong the battle.

Karolyi gives the nice and simple line 17. $\mathbb{Q}c4 \mathbb{Q}d7 18. \mathbb{Q}f2 \mathbb{Q}c6 19. \mathbb{Q}e3 \mathbb{Q}c5 20. \mathbb{Q}d3 \mathbb{Q}b4$, when Black wins easily.

17... $fxe5 18. \mathbb{Q}c4 \mathbb{Q}d7$

In the long run, it is clear that Black's king cannot be stopped.

19. $\mathbb{Q}f2 \mathbb{Q}c6 20. \mathbb{Q}xe5+ \mathbb{Q}d5 21. \mathbb{Q}d3 \mathbb{Q}c5!$

The deadly exchange! Gheorghiu cannot trade knights, but if he doesn't he will lose the a4-pawn.

22.♔e3 ♔xa4 23.♘f4+ ♔e5
 24.♘d3+ ♔d6 25.♘d4 ♔b6
 26.♘e5 h6 27.♘f7+ ♔e7 28.♘e5

28...a4 29.♔c3 ♔d6 30.♘d3
 ♔d5+ 31.♔b2 ♔e3

0-1

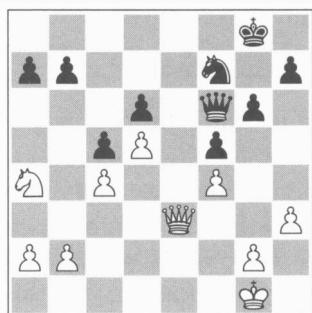
A wonderful game!

Let's draw some conclusions. First of all, it's crucial to understand that the trade can be a powerful weapon, especially in QNQN endgames. In other words, you can often trick your opponent into thinking that you will not be able to make further progress, and then suddenly trade knights, or queens, when your opponent will not be ready to defend in the resulting endgame. In the above game, Gheorghiu was already preparing to write 'draw' on his score sheet, but suddenly, out of the blue, Karpov traded queens, and White's king was too far away to defend the queenside.

We now switch to the second factor.

In QNQN endgames, the game often takes on a dynamic, tactical character. Therefore, tactical opportunities and sudden combinations can often arise at unexpected moments.

At first, this might sound a bit vague and obvious. In fact, Dutch Correspondence Chess Master Van Perlo has written a whole book on endgame tactics. However, in QNQN endgames, the game can often transform from a positional struggle into a tactical battlefield. In the following example, we will see how a player deals with this sudden transformation and also how sudden tactics are found.



126. Imada-Naroditsky

Reno 2005

The position looks very drawish, and not without reason. Black has a weak square on e6, but his active queen compensates. Black can also use the d4-square as a base for his queen. Both kings are out of danger, at least for the

moment. However, first looks are often deceiving, especially in chess, and this position is not at all clear.

1...a6

A logical move that cannot be bad. Black prepares a rapid queenside expansion with ...b7-b5.

2.♘c3 b5!?

In two moves, the position has become very unbalanced. Obviously, Black's aim is to create tension on the queenside, but I had underestimated White's attacking possibilities. Instead, the game would have been drawn after 2...♕f8, or any other waiting move. Whether or not you should create fire on the board or keep the game in its present state de-

pends on objective factors. Risks, especially in chess, are often rewarded, and therefore I decided to go all in, even though, objectively speaking, White could have obtained an edge.

3.cxb5 axb5 4.Qxb5 Qxb2



5.Qe8+?

And Black *does* get rewarded! After this impulsive move, White will find himself in dire straits. Instead, the subtle 5.Qc7! would have forced Black to play very accurately. If 5...Qxa2?, White wins by 6.Qe7!, with too many threats (Qe8 and Qe6). A better attempt is 5...Qb1+ 6.Qh2 Qe4, but then Black will not have an easy life after 7.Qxe4 fxe4 8.Qg3. Therefore, Black should play 5...Qb8! 6.Qe7 Qd8, forcing the queen trade. It's hard to give a watertight evaluation after 7.Qxd8+ Qxd8, but White certainly does have some winning chances due to his outside passer.

You have probably heard the phrase ‘Don’t rely on your opponent making a mistake’ many times, but this is not completely true. If you always think of your opponent as a chess computer, then you will never convince yourself to take a risk, and will rarely win good games. True, if you take a risk, you will

lose some games, but you will lose more games if you wait passively!

5...Qg7 6.Qc7 Qc1+ 7.Qh2 Qxf4+

Thank you for the pawn!

8.Qh1



My opponent later told me that he thought Black needs to force a perpetual, but this is far from the truth. Amazingly, though, I completely trusted my opponent and played

8...Qf1+?

A very impulsive reaction and a result of very superficial analysis. In sharp positions, you must think in terms of concrete variations, and not fear ghosts. After the very simple 8...Qe5, White doesn't have any attacking chances. Following 9.Qe6+ Qf6, Black is nearly winning, since the f7-knight safeguards everything!

9.Qh2 c4

Of course I should have repeated moves with 9...Qf4+, but I was already cowing in fear of White's alleged attack.

10.Qe6+ Qf6 11.Qf8 Qe1 1/2-1/2

White will force perpetual with Qg7+ and Qf8+.

Mastering Complex Endgames

So what should we learn from this mistake-riddled game? First and foremost, there is the question of when to take risks. GM Hikaru Nakamura once said that ‘The biggest risk is not taking one.’ In my opinion, this is a very deep and correct thought. You will not be able to win many games against strong players if you do not force them to think. You *must* confront them with difficulties, especially in the endgame.

We have examined countless endgames where one side lost after being forced to defend passively. In order to win games, it’s vital to take away that safety net from your opponent, and to create *tension* on the board.

Somehow, it’s tempting to play quickly in the ending, and this is what my opponent did when he played 5. $\mathbb{W}e8+$. If there is one universal rule in the entire endgame, it is to **never rush, and never make moves just because they seem obvious**. Had White played 5. $\mathbb{Q}c7$, Black would have been faced with major difficulties. Instead, White played a very impulsive move, relying on an unjustified and unsound attack. Had I not rushed myself, I would have easily found 8... $\mathbb{W}e5$ and won the game.

Chapter 6

Conclusion

Congratulations! We have officially finished our study of dealing with complex endgames. However, I can still feel the question on the tip of your tongue: *What do I make of all this?* In other words, how is it possible to retain and access such a vast range of ideas during a game?

Although this question can hardly be answered in a single sentence, hard work certainly has a lot to do with true endgame mastery and a systematic study of end-game ideas will no doubt bring you much closer to a comprehensive and deep understanding of the endgame. To conclude the book, I felt that it was of paramount importance to reiterate the main themes that we have observed throughout the book. In the heat of the battle, nothing is as important as feeling *confident* in one's abilities, and I feel that a summary of important points will not be amiss.

I decided to choose five endgame themes, and have tried my best to provide a detailed yet concise summary of the nature of these themes and their implications in a practical game. Each discussion will be supplemented by an additional game that will hopefully elucidate any ambiguities in the text.

Theme 1: Weaknesses

I hear you. I'm tired of hearing this word too. And yet the ability to take advantage of weak squares in the opponent's camp goes hand in hand with the ability to seamlessly convert a material or positional advantage in the endgame. Recall, for example, the game Savchenko-Kamsky which we examined in Chapter 5.



127. Savchenko-Kamsky

President's Cup, Baku 2010

White has a small edge due to the excellent placement of his pieces and...Black's *weakness on b7!* Although the pawn is safely protected for the moment, it forces Black's knight to remain on d6 and Black's queen, in turn, cannot leave the knight! Paradoxically, a pawn which isn't even being attacked is the bane of Black's existence.

In the game, Kamsky masterfully maneuvered his pieces until he had an opportunity to push the pawn one square forward (to b6). The pawn seems to be

as weak (if not weaker) on b6 as it is on b7, but a pawn on b6 ‘forces’ White’s queen to remain on c6 to stop the activation of Black’s pieces. In turn, Black is given the opportunity to slowly work around White’s queen and eventually

push it back. If you look at the game once more, you will notice that the battle revolves solely around this weakness – when Black is given a chance to push White’s queen away, he activates his pieces and wins the game!

Flipping through different chapters will reveal many more battles revolving around weaknesses in one or both opponents’ camps. In a nutshell, **weaknesses often force you to remain utterly passive.** Although passive defense isn’t always bad, the realization that you will never have a chance for counterplay again can be quite defeating and in the majority of cases can lead to a grave error. The following game is a model illustration (unsurprisingly, I found this position in Shereshevsky’s gem *Endgame Strategy*, to which I referred back in the first chapter!).



128. Fischer-Reshevsky

US Championship, New York 1962/63

After a very interesting opening and middlegame struggle, the above position was reached. Clearly, White’s position is superior. He has a rook ingrained on d5, and mainly, Black’s d6-pawn is very weak. In addition, Black’s rook is tied down to the defense of the h7-pawn, while White’s h1-rook can either stay on h1 or move to d1, attacking d6. All of this sounds good, but how is White to make any clear progress in this position? Black will place a bishop on e7, and will move his king to e6, thus safeguarding the d6-pawn. The

h7-pawn also cannot be easily attacked – in the worst case scenario, Black will add a second rook to the defense of the pawn.

Fischer understood that in order to make any progress in such a position, he will have to *induce a concession in Black’s position*. Black has two weaknesses here, but they cannot be easily exploited. Therefore, White will have to open up a second front on the queen-side, thus forcing Black to overextend and eventually make a serious compromise. Fischer starts out by cementing the weakness on h7.

1.g5! ♜e7 2.♗e2

White is in no hurry, and therefore improves the position of his pieces to the fullest extent before making any commitments.

2...♝af8 3.♗e3 ♜c8 4.b4

Shereshevsky writes: ‘White’s pressure grows with every move. He threatens both b4-b5, and also the simple strengthening of his position by 5.♗d3

followed by c3-c4. Black therefore decides to upset his opponent's plans, even at a cost of weakening his own position.' For Reshevsky, the question becomes whether to weaken his own position, or to wait passively.

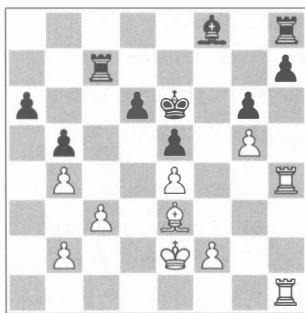
4...b5

In retrospect, this seems to be the best defensive chance. Let's take a look at what would have happened had Black ignored White's threats: 4... $\mathbb{Q}e6$ 5. $\mathbb{Q}d3$ (certainly, 5.b5 is also possible, but there is no need to hurry!) 5... $\mathbb{M}a8$ 6.b5 (6. $\mathbb{M}a1$ is less convincing: 6... $\mathbb{M}hc8$ 7.b5 axb5 8. $\mathbb{M}xa8$ $\mathbb{M}xa8$ 9. $\mathbb{M}xb5$ $\mathbb{M}b8$ 10. $\mathbb{Q}a7$ $\mathbb{M}h8$!) 6...axb5 7. $\mathbb{M}xb5$ and Black cannot hold his position together for much longer.

5. $\mathbb{M}dd1!$

Fischer does not give his opponent any time to catch his breath. Now, $\mathbb{M}a1$ followed by a rapid doubling on the a-file becomes a serious threat.

5... $\mathbb{Q}e6$ 6. $\mathbb{M}a1$ $\mathbb{M}c6$ 7. $\mathbb{M}h3!$ $\mathbb{Q}f8$
8. $\mathbb{M}ah1$ $\mathbb{M}c7$ 9. $\mathbb{M}h4$



A beautiful position has arisen on the board – every single move except for ...d6-d5 loses a pawn. It is amazing that Black has h7 safely defended, and White isn't even attacking the a6-pawn,

and yet a move such as 9... $\mathbb{M}d7$ loses after 10. $\mathbb{M}a1$!

An interesting question: *is this a coincidence?* The answer is clear: No! By playing systematically and not rushing, Fischer slowly pushes Black off the board until he must make a huge concession. In this position, Black has nothing he can do, and certainly there is no way he can improve his own position. Therefore, there is absolutely no need to immediately make serious commitments. In fact, Fischer seemed to aimlessly move his pieces around and suddenly, Black found himself in Zugzwang!

In order to be a strong endgame 'technician', you have to enjoy winning. Fischer probably could have played c3-c4 immediately, and he still probably would have won. But is there any need to take serious risks when he can simply improve his position?

Now, Reshevsky must open the d-file, after which White's pieces will infiltrate with great effect.

9...d5 10. $\mathbb{M}a1$ $\mathbb{M}c6$ 11.exd5+ $\mathbb{Q}xd5$
12. $\mathbb{M}d1+$ $\mathbb{Q}e6$ 13. $\mathbb{M}d8$



Now, Black is completely tied up. Eventually, he will have to play ... $\mathbb{Q}g7$, giving up the pawn on h7.

13... $\mathbb{Q}f5$ 14. $\mathbb{B}a8$ $\mathbb{Q}e6$ 15. $\mathbb{B}h3$ $\mathbb{Q}g7$
16. $\mathbb{B}xh8$ $\mathbb{Q}xh8$ 17. $\mathbb{B}xh7$

Now, White is completely winning. He will place his king on e4, and Black's position will collapse like a house of cards. The rest is agony, although Fischer's technique is impeccable.

17... $\mathbb{E}e8$ 18. $\mathbb{B}f7+$ $\mathbb{Q}g4$ 19. $f3+$ $\mathbb{Q}g3$
20. $\mathbb{Q}d3$ e4+ 21. $fxe4$ $\mathbb{B}d8+$
22. $\mathbb{Q}d4$ $\mathbb{Q}g4$ 23. $\mathbb{B}f1$ $\mathbb{Q}e5$ 24. $\mathbb{Q}e3$
 $\mathbb{Q}c7$ 25. $\mathbb{B}g1+$ $\mathbb{Q}h4$ 26. $\mathbb{Q}f3$ $\mathbb{B}d7$
27.e5 $\mathbb{B}f7+$ 28. $\mathbb{Q}e4$ $\mathbb{B}f5$ 29.e6

29... $\mathbb{Q}d8$ 30. $\mathbb{Q}f6$ $\mathbb{Q}xf6$ 31. $gxsf6$
 $\mathbb{Q}xf6$ 32. $\mathbb{Q}d5$ $\mathbb{B}f2$ 33. $\mathbb{B}e1$ 1-0

A wonderful game. Notice how Fischer never made any binding decisions. He slowly improved the position of his pieces until Reshevsky's position collapsed.

As we could see, Black's main problems all stemmed from his weak pawn on d6 and gaping hole on d5 – Fischer had all the time in the world to improve his position while Reshevsky could not find even an iota of counterplay.

If you find yourself with a position full of weaknesses, your top priority *must* be to try to liquidate them as quickly as possible. A strong player may not allow you to do that, but you must play as cleverly as possible, setting traps and forcing your opponent to be on the lookout for liberating breakthroughs.



129. Naroditsky-Zavadsky San Francisco 2010

After an awfully played middlegame, White stands clearly worse in the endgame. My bishop is very passive, while Black's pieces occupy commanding central posts. Most importantly, however, White's position is full of weaknesses – ranging from the gaping e5 hole to the b2-pawn, which White now has to defend. As in Savchenko-Kamsky,

the e4-pawn is safely defended for the moment but will become much more difficult to defend as White's defenses are stretched to the limit.

1. $\mathbb{B}c3$

The only way to avoid making fatal positional concessions; the bishop endgame is drawn. But Black finds another way to keep the pressure.

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

Somehow, this move had completely escaped my attention. It is hard to find a square past the fifth rank that isn't weak! Black threatens to penetrate with his queen, and all the while e4 is still attacked.

2.g3!

The only move, but a strong one. When defending very unpleasant positions

(with no chances for counterplay), it is vital to remain cold-blooded and look for the best defense on every move. Frustration will lead nowhere.

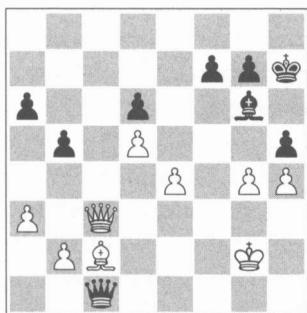
2... $\mathbb{W}c1+$ 3. $\mathbb{Q}g2 \mathbb{Q}h7!$

Such moves can be mind-bendingly annoying for the defender. Black simply improves his position, and tries to induce a mistake. The correct strategy for White would be to wait, but my reservoir of patience is gone.

4.h4 h5 5.g4?!

Luckily enough, this move doesn't lose immediately. In general, such moves should **never** be played unless your only chance is desperation. White's position is quite viable, and after 5. $\mathbb{Q}f2$ Black is hard-pressed to find any penetrable holes in White's position. 5... $\mathbb{W}h1$ meets with 6. $\mathbb{W}f3$, and 5...a5 leads nowhere after 6. $\mathbb{Q}d3!$ $\mathbb{W}h1$ 7. $\mathbb{W}xa5$.

However, my opponent was visibly shocked at my reply and fortunately did not find the hidden dagger.



5... $\mathbb{W}f4?!$

After 5... $\mathbb{Q}h6!$ White's desperation sacrifice would have been refuted on the spot. After 6.g5+ $\mathbb{Q}h7$ White creates an additional gaping weakness on h4, and he will simply have too much too de-

fend. After 7.b4 $\mathbb{W}f4$ White can try to defend with 8. $\mathbb{W}e1$, but in a practical game it will be extremely difficult not to blunder. After the relatively best 6.gxh5 $\mathbb{Q}xh5$, on the other hand, White can push Black's king back with 7. $\mathbb{W}f3+$ $\mathbb{Q}h6$, but once again his position is close to lost.

Of course, the text move is not all that bad and Black at least doesn't fall into the trap 5...hxg4?? 6.h5! followed by the devastation 7.e5+.

6. $\mathbb{W}f3!$

My opponent had clearly missed this saving grace. Now, 6... $\mathbb{W}xg4+$ 7. $\mathbb{W}xg4$ hxg4 8. $\mathbb{Q}g3$ is a draw and Black just couldn't make himself go back to c1.

6... $\mathbb{W}e5?$

This relinquishes the grip for good. Although after 6... $\mathbb{W}c1!$ White replies 7. $\mathbb{W}f2!$, Black would still have had significant winning chances after 7... $\mathbb{Q}g8$ (escaping the pin).

7.gxh5 $\mathbb{Q}xh5$ 8. $\mathbb{W}c3$

This draws, but 8. $\mathbb{W}f5+$ was more accurate.

8...f6 9. $\mathbb{W}xe5$ fxe5 10. $\mathbb{Q}d3$



White's weak pawn on e4 remains, but he has built an impenetrable fortress.

10... $\mathbb{Q}d1$ 11.b4 $\mathbb{Q}h6$ 12. $\mathbb{Q}g3$ $\mathbb{Q}h5$
13. $\mathbb{Q}f1$ $\mathbb{Q}g4$ 14. $\mathbb{Q}d3$ $\mathbb{Q}d1$ 15. $\mathbb{Q}f1$
 $\mathbb{Q}g4$ 16. $\mathbb{Q}g2$ g5 17.hxg5 $\mathbb{Q}xg5$
18. $\mathbb{Q}f1$ $\mathbb{Q}d7$ 19. $\mathbb{Q}e2$ $\mathbb{Q}c8$ 20. $\mathbb{Q}f3$
 $\mathbb{Q}d7$ $\frac{1}{2}-\frac{1}{2}$

Not a perfect game, but one that hopefully illustrates the inescapable importance of remaining vigilant and resilient even when you find yourself in the worst of situations.

Overall, we can derive a few pointers on taking advantage of and playing with weaknesses.

- 1) If you are trying to win a weak pawn, it is often a very good idea to blockade the square in front of the pawn in order to put a permanent lid on any possible breakthroughs (c.f. Fischer-Reshevsky).
- 2) Nimzowitsch famously stated that creating one weakness in the opponent's camp isn't enough; one must create at least two. Although this is often true, it is important to note that a weakness often engenders more than just a weak pawn or square; in Savchenko-Kamsky, we could see that Black's weak pawn on b6 forced his pieces to remain passive as well; so even if your opponent is safely protecting his weakness, remember that his pieces are tied up to its constant protection.
- 3) Sometimes, it is better to keep a weak pawn on the board rather than eliminate it. This might seem a bit far-fetched, but eliminating a weakness too quickly can give your opponent a chance to activate his pieces and obtain counterplay.
- 4) If you find that you have weaknesses in your camp, **do not panic** and remain cold-blooded. Do not go for desperation 'cheapos' unless you are completely lost; in Naroditsky-Zavadsky, White's position was rather miserable but he could have kept the boat balanced with passive defense; instead, I went for a *desperado* and could have been punished severely!
- 5) On the defending side, look for liberating maneuvers. Very often, securing control of the square in front of the weakness is very important, as that forces your opponent to constantly be on the lookout for breakthroughs.

Theme 2: Passed Pawns

If you somehow find a way to scan this book onto your computer and search for the words 'passed pawn' or 'passer', I'm willing to bet that you will find at least 10 mentions of this phrase in every chapter! Like isolated pawns, passers can be both a huge trump card and a shackling liability. To evaluate the strength of a passed pawn, it is vital to understand how each piece deals with an outside passer.

Hopefully, the examples in chapters three and five have made it clear that a bishop is usually much more adept at dealing with passed pawns than a knight. This isn't a rule, but I have never seen a case where a knight successfully controls a passed pawn (especially a corner one) supported by a bishop.

To help us recall why this is the case, we turn to the following illustrative game.



130. Sabria Battle-Naroditsky

Benasque 2011

Black is clearly better for a few reasons:

1) His bishop sits smugly on the long diagonal and pierces White's position, forcing his king and knight to remain passive.

2) Black's pawn superiority on the kingside is much more weighty than White's majority on the queenside. Even if White manages to play b2-b3 and a3-a4, Black will simply counter with ... $\mathbb{Q}c6$ and White will have no chance to create a passed pawn. On the other hand, Black's pawn armada on the kingside can run White off the board in a matter of moves.

In such positions, where all improvements have been made, there is no need to wait; given time, White could play $\mathbb{Q}e2$ and eventually f3-f4, when Black's dreams of promotion on the kingside will be shattered.

1...h5!?

It might have been better to play 1...f4+ first, but from a practical standpoint it is very difficult to play 2.gxf4 and I wanted to tempt White into playing his next move.

2.h3?!

An unnecessary concession that brings White a step closer to defeat. Although it looks scary, 2.f4! is perhaps the only clear way to a draw. After 2...exf4+ 3.gxf4 g4, White plays 4. $\mathbb{Q}e2$ and after 4...h4 5. $\mathbb{Q}d4+$ $\mathbb{Q}f6$ 6. $\mathbb{Q}e2$ I can't see a way for Black to break through. He can try for tricks related to ...g4-g3 and ...h4-h3, but the immediate 6...g3 does not work because of 7.hxg3 h3 8. $\mathbb{Q}f3$.

2...f4+! 3. $\mathbb{Q}f2$ fxg3+ 4. $\mathbb{Q}xg3$ $\mathbb{Q}f5$

The fearless computer shows only a small advantage for Black, but in a practical game that is hogwash! White's position might not seem all that bad at first sight, but Black has a deadly plan: he will play ...e5-e4, force the trade, and create a passed h-pawn. If White allows this, his knight will be helpless against the passer (sound familiar?) and Black will win easily. White's only hope is to somehow preclude or slow down Black's plan.

5. $\mathbb{Q}f2$ e4 6.fxe4+ $\mathbb{Q}xe4$ 7. $\mathbb{Q}e2$?

This obvious is the decisive mistake. 7.a4! was relatively best, forcing Black to play 7... $\mathbb{Q}c6$. I won't go into too much detail here – suffice it to say that after 8.axb5 axb5 followed by ...h5-h4 a draw would be next to impossible to obtain in a practical game, and objectively speaking I am not even sure White *can* hold.

7... $\mathbb{Q}e5$ 8. $\mathbb{Q}g3$!?

With seconds left, White loses immediately. The only way to put up some resistance was the inhuman 8. $\mathbb{Q}e3$! $\mathbb{Q}g2$ 9. $\mathbb{Q}g1$, trying to prevent the creation of a passed h-pawn. However, after 9... $\mathbb{Q}d5$! 10.b3 $\mathbb{Q}e5$ (this isn't computer chess; Black simply creates another weakness on b3) 11. $\mathbb{Q}e2$ $\mathbb{Q}d4$ White loses as well.

8...h4+ 9.♔f2 ♔f5 10.♘g1 g4
11.hxg4 ♔xg4



This is the ultimate superiority of bishop and passed h-pawn over knight! If only the knight on g1 would be a bishop...

12.♔e3 h3

0-1

Although White's position was very difficult to begin with, the utter helplessness of the knight in dealing with a far-advanced passed pawn is truly highlighted.

To recap previous examples dealing with passed pawns, we can state the following:

1) Knight vs. far-advanced passer = 0-1! Once again, there are exceptions but as a rule you should try to prevent the creation of an outside passer at all costs if you have the knight in a knight vs. bishop endgame, and vice-versa.

2) Usually, rooks are best situated *behind* a passed pawn. That way, they will have at least some freedom to maneuver. If you place a rook in front of a passer and your opponent supports it with a rook from behind, your rook will be forced to remain paralyzed in the square in front of the passed pawn. In any rook endgame, a paralyzed rook often means immediate defeat.

3) In an endgame involving queens, the strength of the passed pawn varies. **Usually, it is best to create passed pawn when your king is safe. That way, you will be able to push the pawn without worrying about perpetual check or about losing the passer to a double attack.**

A queen's 'fighting spirit' (remember?) goes down exponentially when a passed pawn is pushed forward and is supported by a well-placed queen. On the other hand, if your king is not well sheltered by your pawns, think twice before creating a passed pawn!

4) As is the case with weaknesses, the result of a game might well depend on whether or not you will manage to successfully advance or restrain a passed pawn. If you find yourself in a situation with a passed pawn, or are playing against one, do not waste time and **calculate specific lines**. General logic works better when playing against weaknesses; with passed pawns, the game is often decided by a single nuance, so sharp calculation is crucial.

Theme 3: Passive vs. Active Defense

To defend passively, or to defend actively – that is the question. While it is difficult to provide over-arching guidelines to answer this age-old conundrum, one can certainly come closer to an understanding by examining many thematic positions; hopefully, this book helped you to do just that. To unify and help us recall some general principles of decision, we turn to the following intriguing endgame.



131. Turov–Naroditsky

Benasque 2010

Due to Black's weak pawn on c6 and hole on c5 (sound familiar?), the onus is certainly on Black to find a path to equality. During the game, I agonized for quite a while over two tempting moves: solid defense with 1... $\mathbb{R}d7$ or a risky attempt at full equality with 1...b4.

To make the correct decision, it is crucial to couple general thinking with specific analysis. After 1... $\mathbb{R}d7$ 2. $\mathbb{R}xd7$ $\mathbb{Q}xd7$, Black's position is rock-solid and if White does have an edge it is very small. Black's plan is clear as well: he will try to transfer his king to the center and eventually break through with ...c6-c5.

During the game, I didn't like 3.f4?!. After 3...exf4 4.gxf4 White can bring his own king to e3 and start pressing Black's position with e4-e5 and $\mathbb{R}c5$. Discouraged by Black's prospects, I switched to the calculation of 1...b4 – and in doing so, committed a grave mistake that could have cost me the game.

Allow me to explain. If you have enough time on your clock, you should strive not only to calculate specific variations when making a decision, but also to evaluate the arising positions as thoroughly as possible. After spotting White's plan of $\mathbb{Q}f2-e3$ and e4-e5 (in

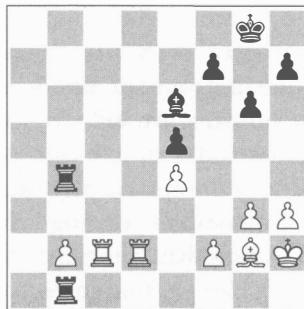
the line above), I didn't bother to truly evaluate the position *or* calculate any other variations. Had I done so, I would have no doubt seen 4...b4!, which draws immediately after 5.axb4 $\mathbb{R}a4$ 6. $\mathbb{R}c4$ $\mathbb{R}a2$ and White has nothing better than to repeat moves, since his own pawn structure on the kingside is fractured. However, even without playing 4...b4, the position is still a dead draw. For example, after 4... $\mathbb{Q}f8$ 5. $\mathbb{Q}f2$ $\mathbb{Q}e7$ 6. $\mathbb{Q}e3$ f6 7. $\mathbb{Q}d4$ g5! Black's position comes to life and it is White who will have to tread carefully.

I chose this game mainly because of this moment: laziness in calculation caused me to overlook 4...b4, and a misvaluation of the position led me to believe that White had winning chances when in truth the position is dead drawn.

1...b4?!

If you turn on the Silicon Monster in the starting position, you will find that he gives 1...b4 as... the best move! However, we will soon see why I still consider this move to be highly dubious and, most importantly, *unnecessary*.

**2.axb4 $\mathbb{R}b7$ 3. $\mathbb{R}xc6$ $\mathbb{R}xb4$ 4. $\mathbb{R}d2$
 $\mathbb{R}a1+$ 5. $\mathbb{Q}h2$ $\mathbb{R}b1$ 6. $\mathbb{R}cc2$**



A critical position has been reached. At first sight, the position seems as drawn

as can be... White's rooks are immobilized, his bishop is passive, and Black's pieces are placed perfectly. And yet, at this point I started experiencing 'active defense syndrome'. In an instant, I realized that, given time, White will play f2-f3, $\mathbb{B}cd2$ and eventually f3-f4, when his pieces will suddenly come alive and the extra pawn will remain. I knew that the position is still a complete draw, but I spent an inordinate amount of time scolding myself for not playing ... $\mathbb{B}d7$, thereby committing a grave psychological mistake.

6... $\mathbb{B}g7$ 7.f3 $\mathbb{B}b3!$

Realizing that the tide is turning, I forced myself to concentrate on the task at hand and managed to find the best move. In order to draw, however, Black will still have to make a handful of very accurate and brave moves.

8. $\mathbb{B}c5$ $\mathbb{B}c4?!$

Relinquishing the easy draw. In order to win the b2-pawn, it was of paramount importance to play 8... $\mathbb{B}f6!$, when White has no way to stop ... $\mathbb{B}a4$ followed by ... $\mathbb{B}4xb2$. 9.f4 is relatively best, but after 9...exf4 10.gxf4 $\mathbb{B}a4$ 11.e5+ $\mathbb{B}g7$ Black wins the b2-pawn. Yet again, the underlying cause of my inaccurate play is an unwillingness to release the baggage of previous mistakes. As humans, we will always make inaccuracies and it simply isn't possible to develop a foolproof algorithm for success in complex endings. It goes without saying that you must make an attempt to choose the correct option when confronted with a dilemma, but mistakes should be analyzed *after* the game!

9.h4 $\mathbb{B}b5?$

Yet another mistake, simply giving up the e5-pawn without a fight. The position with four pawns against three will still be theoretically drawn, but Black will be forced to conduct an agonizingly difficult and long defense. It was not too late to play 9... $\mathbb{B}f6$, and after 10.g4 h6 11.g5+ $\mathbb{B}xg5$ 12.hxg5+ $\mathbb{B}xg5$ 13. $\mathbb{B}d4!$ $\mathbb{B}c1!$ Black holds by a hair's breadth, but White has no way to make further progress. For example, after 14.b3 $\mathbb{B}e6!$ 15. $\mathbb{B}xe5+$ $\mathbb{B}f4$ 16. $\mathbb{B}xb4$ $\mathbb{B}xe5$ Black draws easily.

10. $\mathbb{B}xe5$

Thank you very much!

10... $\mathbb{B}4xb2$ 11. $\mathbb{B}ed5$ h5 12. $\mathbb{B}h3?!$



At this point, I finally stopped killing myself over my previous mistakes and focused on drawing this position. Yet again, Black can defend actively by keeping his pieces on their active posts, or he can try to hold the position by trading rooks, keeping his bishop on c4 and the rook on the 7th rank. Determined to make the correct decision, I began calculating variations and weighing the pros and cons of both options. I started by considering the line 12... $\mathbb{B}c4$ 13. $\mathbb{B}d4$ $\mathbb{B}xd2+$ 14. $\mathbb{B}xd2$ $\mathbb{B}b7$.

Black's position is rock-solid and moves like 15.e5 or 15.f4 lead nowhere, but after 15.♔g1 I began doubting the true solidity of Black's position. If I allow White to bring his king to f4, White will have the annoying possibilities of ♜d7 or g3-g4. Although the position should still be drawn, I didn't look forward to wallowing in utterly passive defense for another 70 moves. Black can try 15...♜b3 16.♔f2 ♔f6, but here again, after 17.♝c2 ♔e6 18.♔f1 White begins to improve his position and Black will have to tread very carefully. Objectively speaking, Black should certainly be able to hold after 18...♝e5 19.♝d2 ♜a3, but in an actual game it is often difficult to defend these types of positions.

Realizing I could not allow White to untangle himself, I started looking for ways to induce weaknesses or force passivity. Because of the terrific placement of Black's pieces, the time is ripe to take advantage of White's precarious piece placement. Annoyed with the activity of the h3-bishop, I found an attractive way to force it back to passivity.

12...♝e2?!

The right ideological decision, but the wrong specific execution! Had I more

closely considered the nuances of the position, I would have no doubt found the elementary move 12...f5!, after which the game liquidates into a more easily drawn endgame. For example, after 13.exf5 ♔c6 14.♝d6 ♜xd2+ 15.♝xd2 ♔xf3 Black wins the f5-pawn due to the threat of 16...♝h1#.

We can therefore see that ♔h3 is inaccurate and I could have drawn the game immediately had I more deeply considered the specific ways in which Black can take advantage of White's temporary passivity.

13.♔g2 ♔b5 14.♝d6!

White doesn't repeat the same mistake twice!

14...♜xd2 15.♝xd2 ♔f1 16.♔xf1 ♜xf1 17.♔g2 ♜b1

The game has transformed into a theoretically drawn endgame, but in the heat of the battle, with time-trouble rearing its ugly head, it is often remarkably difficult to play accurately in these types of positions. Nevertheless, I managed to keep calm and didn't give White any significant chances, although 35 more uninteresting moves were made – ½-½.

Although the end result of all Black's incorrect decisions was still a theoretically drawn endgame, we can still learn a couple of very valuable lessons from this game:

- 1) When trying to decide whether to defend passively or actively, it is important not only to calculate specific variations, but also to evaluate the resulting positions carefully.
- 2) When you have committed a mistake, try your best not to kill yourself during the game. Even after my rash decision on the first move, I still had a relatively easy draw, but made a second psychological mistake and gave White significant winning chances.
- 3) Try to always approach the position from a practical point of view. When making a tough decision, always try to take into account your preferences and time. If you are patient and experienced, passive defense may often be a suitable option, while if you are in significant time trouble, active counterplay is often best.

Theme 4: Deep Calculation

It is always much easier to make a decision based on general reasoning than specific calculation. As chess players, we are inherently lazy, but as you will have hopefully noted throughout the course of this book, it is often simply impossible to get by without sharp and efficient calculation. Of course, calculation is a skill that can be developed using a variety of techniques, but it is vital to note that a correct decision in a given position can often be made only through a *combination* of general and specific reasoning. The following game is certainly full of errors, but clearly illustrates the importance of calculation in sharp endgame positions.



132. Naroditsky-Van Overdam

Leiden 2008

After a wild middlegame struggle, the above position was reached. Black is up a pawn, but White's bishop and rooks dominate the board. For the moment, Black's knights are out of the game, but given time, Black will slowly neutralize White's activity and the presence of his extra protected passer on a5 will begin to tell.

Realizing that White must take advantage of the temporary awkwardness of Black's pieces, I started by making a list of candidate moves.

I started with the tempting 1.♘b5, with the idea of opening the c-file after 1...♗xb5 2.cxb5. However, Black simply plays 2...♜d8 and White's rook will go nowhere from c1. The desperado attempt 3.h6 is interesting, but should also lead nowhere after 3...gxh6

4.♗g4 a4 and White is in serious trouble.

I next looked at the immediate 1.f6, taking advantage of Black's back rank weakness. Since 1...gxsf6 fails to 2.♗g8#, Black must play 1...♝dxf6, and after 2.♗xe5 ♚g8 White has a wealth of tempting options. Notice that general reasoning is of no use here; to correctly evaluate the position, calculation is crucial. At first, I thought 3.c5 was very strong, but Black simply replies 3...b5 and I saw no way to make progress. Relatively best is 4.♗e8+, but after 4...♝f8 5.♗e7 ♚8f7 I saw nothing better than 6.♗e8+ with a draw by repetition.

With time running low and nothing in sight, I began to reason logically. I realized that White simply doesn't have enough firepower to truly take advantage of Black's weak king. However, my only piece that isn't located on an ideal square is the a3-knight. I had already considered 1.♘b5, and 1.♘b1 is way too slow. Of course, the ideal square for the knight would be c4, but that is nothing but a dream...

1.c5!

Or is it? In an instant, Black's position begins to fall apart and White activates his a3-knight with great effect. Notice

that I was able to find 1.c5 only through the use of both logical reasoning *and* deep calculation. It isn't really necessary to calculate c4-c5; Black will be forced to take the pawn, and after $\mathbb{Q}c4$ White's position cannot be worse than it was a move ago!

1... $\mathbb{b}xc5$ 2. $\mathbb{Q}c4$ $\mathbb{M}a6?$!

Allowing a beautiful rebuttal. Better was 2... $\mathbb{M}df6$ – we shall see why in a moment.

3. $\mathbb{Q}xe5?$!

Rash. I was attracted by a spectacular continuation on the next move, but White should have played the no less spectacular 3.f6!!.. Following 3... $\mathbb{M}xf6$ 4. $\mathbb{M}xe5$, a very interesting position arises. Of course, this position is much better for White as compared to the one after 1.f6. White's knight is positioned ideally, and Black's pawn structure is in ruins. Notice the power of the e4-bishop in the open board: Black's knights are useless, and White's bishop dominates. A probable continuation is 4... $\mathbb{Q}g8$ 5. $\mathbb{M}xc5$ a4 6. $\mathbb{M}a5$ $\mathbb{Q}ac6$ 7. $\mathbb{M}xa4$ and I don't envy Black here!

3... $\mathbb{M}e7?$!



At this point, my opponent unwrapped and wolfed down a monster sandwich, and followed it up with a coke – a clear

sign of relief. Before we move on, suffice it to say that the rook would have been much better placed on c7 and after 3... $\mathbb{M}c7$ Black's position would still have been very much playable. After my opponent finished slurping down his coke, I myself could barely contain my excitement. After five minutes of checking and double-checking variations, I produced one of the most spectacular moves I had ever played:

4. $\mathbb{Q}c6??!$

The question marks are for the objective value of this move, and the exclamation mark is for the bravery! My opponent was visibly baffled by this brazen sacrifice, but quickly came to his senses.

First of all, let's consider the correct move. Instead of 4. $\mathbb{Q}c6$, White should have preferred the relatively calm 4. $\mathbb{Q}g4$, threatening f5-f6, when Black is in deep yogurt. After 4...h6 5.f6! (again, calculation is the key here!) it looks like Black simply plays 5... $\mathbb{G}xf6$, but White has the beautiful 6. $\mathbb{M}g8+!!$ and he mates after 6... $\mathbb{Q}xg8$ 7. $\mathbb{Q}xh6+.$ Instead, Black should prefer 5... $\mathbb{M}xf6$, but after 6. $\mathbb{M}xc5$ White retains a clear advantage and a powerful initiative.

At first, though, it isn't at all clear how Black survives after the text move.

4... $\mathbb{Q}axc6$ 5.f6!

Now, 5... $\mathbb{G}xf6$ is impossible because of 6. $\mathbb{M}g8\#$, and Black cannot make a move such as 5... $\mathbb{M}f7$ either, because of 6.fxg7+ $\mathbb{Q}g8$ 7. $\mathbb{Q}xh7+$ and wins. However, Black finds the one continuation which keeps the fire going.

5... $\mathbb{M}xe4!$

Eliminating the voracious bishop. In the heat of the battle, I had simply overlooked this move.

6.dxe4

Forced, since 6. $\mathbb{B}xg7$ fails on account of 6... $\mathbb{B}h4+$.

6... $\mathbb{B}a7$ 7. $\mathbb{B}xg7+$ $\mathbb{Q}g8$



An intriguing position has arisen on the board. Black has two knights for a rook, which by itself constitutes a substantial material plus. However, White has a far-advanced passer on g7. Ideas such as $\mathbb{B}f5-f8$ loom in the air, and Black's knights are somewhat awkwardly placed. Having said that, White does not have much time to waste, since Black threatens to simply push the c- and a-pawns.

8.h6

Threatening 9. $\mathbb{B}f5$ (or $\mathbb{B}f1$) and forcing Black's next move.

8... $\mathbb{B}f7$ 9. $\mathbb{B}xc5$

A very entertaining game that is filled to the brim with invaluable lessons:

- 1) When you've reached a critical endgame position, make a rough list of candidate moves before beginning calculation. This method, developed by GM Alexander Kotov in his book *Think Like a Grandmaster*, ensures that you will not become confused in your own calculations!
- 2) Do not make impulsive decisions when calculating. After seeing 1. $\mathbb{Q}b5$, I was tempted to immediately play it, but quickly realized that impulsiveness leads nowhere.

I played this move without thinking twice. However, White had a much more dangerous move at his disposal: 9. $\mathbb{Q}g2!$, threatening $\mathbb{B}f1$. For instance, on the mindless 9...c4 White replies 10. $\mathbb{B}f1!$ and wins after 10... $\mathbb{B}xf1$ 11. $\mathbb{Q}xf1$ $\mathbb{Q}e7$ 12. $\mathbb{B}xa5$ (note the clumsiness of the two knights: Black cannot defend the vital a8-square) 12...c3 13. $\mathbb{Q}e1$ $\mathbb{Q}f7$ 14. $\mathbb{B}a7!$ $\mathbb{Q}c6$ 15. $\mathbb{B}a8$ and Black will have to give up a knight. Black can still draw after 9... $\mathbb{Q}e7!$, defending the g8-square, but such a move would have been tough to find in time pressure.

9... $\mathbb{B}f6!$

A great move; White's rook is forced into inactivity.

10. $\mathbb{B}h5$ a4??

A horrid blunder, possibly the result of nervousness and time pressure. The simple 10...d3! promises Black at least a draw: 11. exd3 $\mathbb{Q}xd3$ 12. $\mathbb{B}b1$ $\mathbb{Q}f2+$ 13. $\mathbb{Q}g2$ $\mathbb{Q}g4$ and White will have to work for a draw.

11. $\mathbb{B}a1!$

1-0

Amazingly, Black's excellently placed knights cannot defend against the simplest threat! The a4-pawn cannot be defended, and White will penetrate along the a-file. Stunned, Black resigned while letting his time run out.

3) If you cannot see a way to take advantage of dynamic, temporary factors, try switching to logical reasoning. This isn't a *substitute* for calculation; rather, you should only use general, positional thinking if you've refuted all of your candidate moves. By reasoning positionally, I noticed that in order to truly take advantage of Black's awkward piece placement, I would have to activate my a3-knight. I then switched back to calculation and found 1.c5.

4) Bravery is not always rewarded. Winning the brilliancy prize is always great (incidentally, I did end up winning the brilliancy prize in Leiden, although for another game ☺), but you should strive to make the move that causes the most problems for your opponent. 4.♘c6 was pretty, but Black was 'forced' into making the correct move and after 5...♜xe4 the tables turned to Black's favor. Had I chosen the practical 4.♘g4, I would have won much more smoothly.

Theme 5: King Activity

We end our conclusion on a particularly important theme that we have observed countless times throughout the book: king activity. In almost every type of multi-piece ending, your capacity to successfully use your king will lie hand-in-hand with your ability to realize endgame advantages and defend difficult positions. In the following brilliant game, White activates his king at all costs and is rewarded for his bravery.



133. Shahade-Zenyuk

Manhattan Open 2011

After misplaying the middlegame, White finds himself in a rather difficult situation. He is down an exchange for a pawn, and 1.exd6 isn't possible due to 1...♝xb2. In addition, Black's rook is optimally placed and threatens to penetrate White's camp via a2.

IM Greg Shahade, a tremendous end-game player, realized that passive moves such as 1.d4 or 1.♘g4 would entail a

long and tedious defense. Instead of panicking, though, he noticed that Black's king is far away from the center of battle while White's king is rather close to the dream square c6. If White's king was at least on d5, then 1.exd6 would certainly become a dangerous threat as a passed pawn on the 7th rank could be well-supported by a king on c6 or d6. In fact, if Black's rook got tangled up on the 2nd rank, a far-advanced passer supported by an active king could quickly become deadly. Without hesitation, Shahade activated his king.

1.♘e4!

An excellent and fearless advance. Sensing the danger, Zenyuk mobilizes her rook, but she misses a crucial detail.

1...♜a2?!

To keep any winning chances, it was best to play 1...♝g8!, activating Black's

own king and forcing White to make a decision. In fact, although the most prudent reply is the simple 2... $\mathbb{Q}g4$, White can play 2. $\mathbb{Q}d5$ and the position after 2...dxe5 3. $\mathbb{Q}c6!$ $\mathbb{R}f8$ 4. $\mathbb{Q}g4$ e4 5. $\mathbb{Q}xg7$ $\mathbb{Q}xg7$ 6.dxe4 is still a dead draw, as 6... $\mathbb{R}f4$ is met by 7. $\mathbb{Q}e3!$ $\mathbb{R}xe4$ 8. $\mathbb{Q}d5$ $\mathbb{R}xc4+$ 9. $\mathbb{Q}b7$ and White wins both pawns. However, there is no need for extravagancies and after 2. $\mathbb{Q}g4$ dxe5 3. $\mathbb{Q}xe5$ $\mathbb{Q}xe5$ 4. $\mathbb{Q}xe5$ followed by $\mathbb{Q}d5$ and $\mathbb{Q}c6$ White constructs an impenetrable fortress.

2.exd6!

In time-trouble, Shahade has the wherewithal to rest all his hopes on his active king. Zenyuk, on the other hand, keeps believing in her bishop and rook, both of which will be dangerously caught up on the second rank.

2... $\mathbb{Q}xb2??$

As Zenyuk notes in her excellent chess.com annotations, it was still possible to hold with 2...cxd6, undoing the damage made by the previous move. For example, after 3. $\mathbb{Q}xg7+$ $\mathbb{Q}xg7$ 4. $\mathbb{Q}h3$ $\mathbb{R}h2!$ 5. $\mathbb{Q}f4$ $\mathbb{R}h4$ Black holds easily as 6. $\mathbb{Q}d5$ will be met with 6... $\mathbb{R}d4$.

3.dxc7 $\mathbb{R}a8$

Summing up, we can say the following:

- 1) Before bringing your king in the endgame, check if ‘the coast is clear’. This might sound vague and obvious, but in the heat of the battle it is easy to miss dangers that may await the king in the center.
- 2) On a central square such as e4, the king contests 7 squares. We could see from Shahade-Zenyuk that while the king’s mobility is limited, it can control pivotal squares.
- 3) Very often, a king is the optimal piece to control weak squares. If you see an undefended complex of squares in your opponent’s camp, consider occupying one of them with your king.



Now, after 3... $\mathbb{R}c8$ White can resign. However, White’s **active king**, centralized and ready to help the ailing c7-pawn, makes all the difference. Kudos to the reader that sees White’s next move:

4.c5!!

A real dagger... White’s king protects the pivotal d4-square, thereby making c4-c5 possible and hugely restricting the scope of Black’s bishop. Place White’s king on g2, and c4-c5 would have been met with the counter-dagger 4... $\mathbb{Q}d4$. Such is the power of the active king!

4... $\mathbb{R}bc5$ 5.b6 $\mathbb{R}e8+$ 6. $\mathbb{Q}d5$

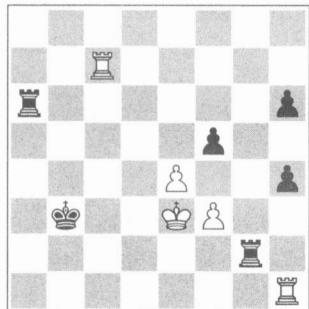
The king finally joins the party himself. Black’s rook and bishop are no match for White’s king and connected passers.

6... $\mathbb{Q}e5$ 7. $\mathbb{Q}e4$ c4

1-0

A simple and excellent illustration of the king’s power in the endgame.

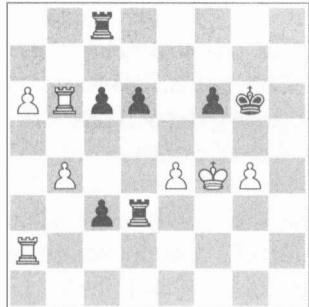
Solutions to Exercises



2.1 Shirov-Adams

Tilburg 1996

In the game, Shirov chose 1.exf5, and that is... the correct move! Kudos to any reader who finds that 1.e5 is significantly worse on account of 1... $\mathbb{H}a5!$. In time trouble, 2.f4 might seem appealing, but after 2... $\mathbb{H}a4!$ (aiming for e4) Black draws on the spot. Shirov ended up winning the game, although the position after 1.exf5 is still far from winning.



2.2 Naroditsky-Rensch

Philadelphia 2009

An attentive reader would have noticed that this game appeared in the prologue

as well! White is threatening 2.a7, and so it is vital to take immediate action. After 1...d5! 2.a7 Black has the incredible 2... $\mathbb{H}e8!!$. If you've found both of these moves, give yourself a pat on the back! Black threatens mate, and therefore promotion is impossible. After 3. $\mathbb{H}e2$ Black has at least a draw with 3... $\mathbb{H}d2$, although I did manage to lose the game (see the prologue for the complete score).



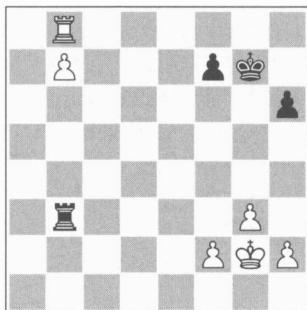
2.3 Lautier-Piket

3rd match game, Monaco 1996

Black is up a pawn, but it is far from clear how to proceed. Piket, probably in time pressure, played the lackluster 1... $\mathbb{H}d6?!$ and Lautier leveled the boat with 2. $\mathbb{H}e2!$ followed by 3. $\mathbb{Q}g2$.

Pop open the champagne if you see that 1... $\mathbb{H}f1+!$ 2. $\mathbb{H}g1$ $\mathbb{H}xg1+$ 3. $\mathbb{Q}xg1$ $\mathbb{H}f4!$ 4.h3 (4.g5 may be more tenacious) 4... $\mathbb{H}a4!$ 5. $\mathbb{H}c2$ $\mathbb{Q}f7$ gives Black excellent winning chances due to the passivity of White's rook and the weakness of the g4-and a2-pawns. Notice that the solution to this tricky puzzle isn't an

immediate win; yet it is the ability to see these seemingly innocuous moves that separates strong endgame players from inexperienced ones.



2.4 Naroditsky-Gutman

Western Class Championship 2008

Although White should be able to win in more than one way, it is still of paramount importance to find the easiest and most efficient way to win. Kudos to any reader who found the following plan:

1.g4!

White begins by restricting the movement of Black's remaining pawns. Black can do nothing but wait.

1...♔h7 2.h4 ♔g7 3.g5 h5 4.f4!

The beginning of the end.

4...♔h7 5.f5 ♔g7 6.f6+!

Counter-intuitive but deadly. White could probably win by moving his king to c2 and eventually penetrating Black's fragile defenses, but this move wins instantly.

6...♔h7 7.g6++!

As the Russian expression goes, 'all of the salt is contained in this move.' 7...♔xg6 is impossible due to 8.♖g8+, while 7...fxg6 8.f7 is curtains as well. Black chose not to prolong the agony and resigned.



2.5 Karpov-Kamsky

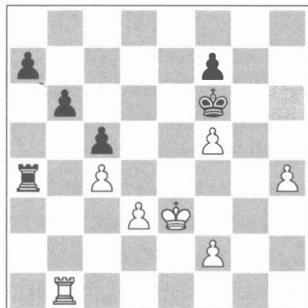
FIDE World Championship, Elista 1996

It doesn't take too long to see that Black's position is on the verge of collapse. White's queenside pawns are extremely far advanced, Black's pawn structure is in total ruins, and Black's king is out of place.

Kamsky played the natural 1...♜b7? and found himself in a grave situation after 2.f3 ♔e6 3.b6! axb6 4.♜b5 h3+ 5.♔xh3 ♜h7+ 6.♔g4. He eventually drew the game, but only through a titanic effort.

Instead, the easiest path to a draw would have been to play 1...♔e4!, activating the king and taking the sting out of White's queenside pawn pressure. After 2.b6 axb6 3.axb6 ♜b7 4.f3+ ♔d4 5.♜b5 e4! 6.♜b4+ ♔c5 7.♜xe4 ♜xb6 8.gxh4 gxh4 9.♜xh4 ♜f6 the position is a dead draw in spite of White's extra pawn.

This line was not easy to calculate, so give yourself a lengthy pat on the back if you've found it and don't hang your head if you didn't find the correct path; as noted by Richard Nelson, 'there may be more to learn from climbing the same mountain a hundred times than by climbing a hundred different mountains.'



2.6 Cheparinov-Yakovenko

Jermuk 2009

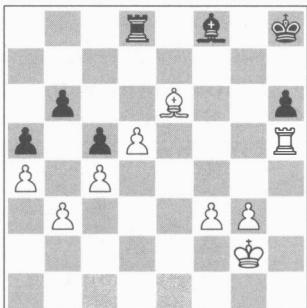
Hopefully, you will have correctly asserted that energetic and dynamic play is the only way to take advantage of the a4-rook's horrible placement. In fact, a healthy mix of concrete calculation and intuition is often the only way to play in these positions.

The correct move – and one that isn't too hard to find if you rely mostly on your intuition – is 1.h5!. The difficulty arises after Black's natural reply, 1...g5.

What now? Moves such as 2.Rh1 ♔h6 are spiritless, so White must continue to play with gain of tempo.

Congratulations to any reader who found the hidden motif: 2.Rg1+ and Black must play 2...♔h6 since 2...♔xh5 3.♔f4 (threatening 4.Rh1#) 3...♔h6 4.♔e5 loses immediately, as Black will not be able to activate his rook in time to prevent the promotion of the f-pawn. But the text move promises little relief either:

3.f6! Ra2 4.Rg7 ♔xh5 5.f4! 1-0
 Black's resignation might be a bit premature, as 5...♔h6 still puts up a fight, but after 6.♔e4 followed by ♔f5 and Rxf7, Black will once again be unable to stop the f-pawn from promoting.



3.1 Khachiyan-Naroditsky

Reno 2007

White can certainly win more than one way, but 1.Rf5!, activating the rook and paralyzing Black's position, is most effective. If Black does nothing, White will penetrate to b7 via f7 and then bring his king to h5. I tried 1...♝g7 2.Rf7+ ♔g6, but lost quickly after 3.Rb7 Rd6 4.f4! h5 5.♔f3 ♔h6 6.♔f7+!.

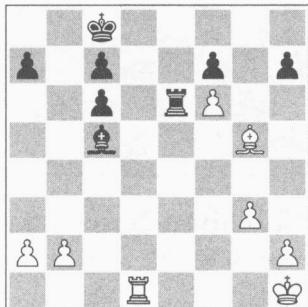


3.2 Planinec-Rajkovic

Skopje 1971

White's passed pawn looks extremely dangerous. Although a move like 1...Rd2 should hold, 1...Rd1+! is much cleaner. After 2.Rxd1 Rxd1, White saw nothing better than to play 3.♔g2 ♔b3 4.♔f3, and Black drew easily after 4...Rd5+ 5.♔e3 f6 6.♔d4 ♔g2 7.♔c5 ♔g6! 8.♔d6 ♔f5. By the time White

comes to b8, Black will either obtain winning chances by penetrating into h3 or trade off all the pawns, with a draw.



3.3 Arakhamia Grant-Smyslov

Veterans-Women, Copenhagen 1997

Yes, he should trade bishops with 1... $\mathbb{Q}e3!$. Although White's bishop is tied down to the defense of the f6-pawn, Black manages to win the pawn after 2. $\mathbb{Q}xe3 \mathbb{M}xe3$, and White has no way to defend against both 3... $\mathbb{M}e2$ and 3... $\mathbb{M}f3$. The game went 3. $\mathbb{M}d2 \mathbb{M}f3$ 4. $\mathbb{Q}g2 \mathbb{M}xf6$ with a dead draw, although Smyslov uncharacteristically lost later on.

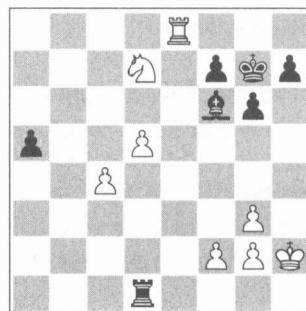


3.4 Gild. Garcia-Zapata

Yopal 1997

White's position is on the verge of collapse, and drastic measures are required

to right the swaying ship. Kudos to any reader who finds the terrific liberating blow 1.f4!! . Immediately, White's bishop comes alive and Black is forced to liquidate into a dead drawn position. The game went 1...exf4 2.exf5! $\mathbb{Q}d5$ 3. $\mathbb{Q}xd5 \mathbb{M}xd5$ 4.c4 $\mathbb{M}d2$ 5.cxb5 cxb5 6.b3 fxg3 7.hxg3 $\mathbb{M}d3$ 8. $\mathbb{Q}g2 \mathbb{M}xb3$ 9. $\mathbb{M}c6!$ with a complete draw in spite of Black's extra pawn.



3.5 Krum Georgiev-Poley

Thessaloniki Open 2010

To correctly solve this difficult exercise, it is crucial to combine logical thinking with specific calculation.

Experienced master Vladimir Poley correctly realized that Black must keep his bishop in order to deal with White's connected passers. This lead him to find 1... $\mathbb{Q}d4!$, threatening to develop a sudden attack on White's king. Georgiev fearlessly advanced with 2.c5, and now it would have been easy to chicken out with 2... $\mathbb{Q}xc5?$ 3. $\mathbb{Q}xc5 \mathbb{M}xd5$. However, this ending is lost after 4. $\mathbb{M}c8$ and Poley stuck to his strategy with 2... $\mathbb{Q}xf2!$.

Georgiev, probably thinking that he was completely winning, advanced his c-pawn with 3.c6, but Poley had calculated a step ahead.

Congratulations to any reader who finds the cold-blooded **3... $\mathbb{E}xd5!$** and sees that **4.c7** is impossible due to **4... $\mathbb{E}h5$... mate!** In addition, the tempting **4. $\mathbb{E}g8+$** leads absolutely nowhere after **4... $\mathbb{B}h6$** , so Georgiev kept the fire going with **4.g4**. However, Poley is on top yet again, and this time he finds the brilliant **4... $\mathbb{A}c5!$** , when **6.c7** is impossible on account of **6... $\mathbb{A}d6+$** . Georgiev saw nothing better than to liquidate with **5. $\mathbb{Q}xc5$ $\mathbb{E}xc5$ 6. $\mathbb{E}a8$** , and after **6... $\mathbb{E}xc6$ 7. $\mathbb{E}xa5$** it was White who had to draw the ensuing endgame.



3.6 Berkes-Acs

György Marx Memorial, Budapest 2009

As we know, a mobile pawn mass coupled with an active knight often spells trouble for a rook and a bishop. In this position, Black's rook and knight are tied down to the defense of the b8-square, but it is very unclear how to make any progress with white.

To win the game, he must take advantage of Black's passivity and create weaknesses in Black's camp with **1.g4!**. This move is not easy to find, so give yourself a round of applause if you've discovered it! Acs tried to defend with **1...fxg4 2.fxg4 $\mathbb{Q}d6$** , but his resistance crumbled after **3. $\mathbb{Q}e4$ $\mathbb{F}f8$ 4. $\mathbb{Q}e3$ $\mathbb{B}b8$**

5. $\mathbb{Q}d2$ $\mathbb{Q}d5$ 6. $\mathbb{Q}d3$ $\mathbb{Q}d6$ 7. $\mathbb{Q}e3$ $\mathbb{Q}d5$ 8. $\mathbb{Q}c1!$ (hard-pressed to make further progress, White finds an excellent and decisive regrouping) **8... $\mathbb{Q}b4$ 9. $\mathbb{Q}f1$ $\mathbb{Q}d6$** (**9... $\mathbb{Q}xb7$** is impossible in view of **10. $\mathbb{Q}g2+$**) **10. $\mathbb{Q}g2$ $\mathbb{Q}d5+$ 11. $\mathbb{Q}xd5$ $\mathbb{Q}xd5$ 12. $\mathbb{Q}b1$** and Black soon resigned.

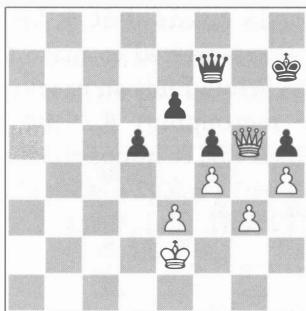


3.7 Naroditsky-Zhong

San Mateo 2007

Resignation seems to be a viable option on account of Black's superior bishop and deadly connected passers, but a keen reader will have discovered the surprising weakness in Black's position: the e6-square.

After the correct **1. $\mathbb{Q}d4!$** Black's position suddenly threatens to fall apart, as White attacks both the f5-pawn and threatens **2. $\mathbb{Q}e6+$** , winning the bishop. Unable to gather himself, Black erred after **1... $\mathbb{E}c1+$ 2. $\mathbb{E}xc1$ $\mathbb{E}xc1+$ 3. $\mathbb{Q}a2$** and played **3... $\mathbb{F}f1?$** instead of the correct **3... $\mathbb{Q}f7$** , retaining the initiative. After **4. $\mathbb{Q}e6+$! $\mathbb{Q}f7$ 5. $\mathbb{E}b7+$** Black's only chance would have been to play **5... $\mathbb{Q}e8$** , but he chose **5... $\mathbb{Q}g8??$** and was mated after **6. $\mathbb{E}xg7+$ $\mathbb{Q}h8$ 7. $\mathbb{E}f7$ $\mathbf{h}6$ 8. $\mathbf{g}6!$ 1-0**. The final position highlights the rook and knight tandem at its best!



4.1 Ossipov-A.Naroditsky

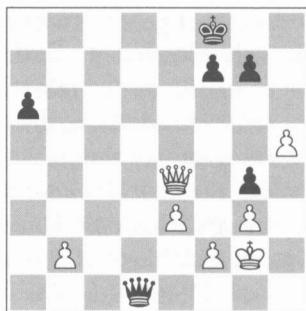
Reno 2008

It isn't difficult to determine that Black cannot allow White to place a king on e5, but it is very difficult to find an actual way to prevent him from getting there.

A move such as 1...d4 is very tempting, and Black obtains excellent drawing chances after 2.exd4 $\mathbb{W}b7$ 3. $\mathbb{W}xh5+$ $\mathbb{g}7$ 4. $\mathbb{f}2$ $\mathbb{W}b2+$ followed by ... $\mathbb{W}xd4$ and Black should hold with careful play.

However, Black correctly realized that there is simply no need for flare and calmly played 1... $\mathbb{W}g6!$. The main point of Black's waiting strategy only becomes clear after 2. $\mathbb{d}3$ $\mathbb{W}f7$ 3. $\mathbb{d}4$; kudos to any reader who finds the terrific defensive resource 3... $\mathbb{W}g7+!$, halting any White progress in its tracks. Since 4. $\mathbb{W}xg7+$ $\mathbb{xg}7$ 5. $\mathbb{e}5$ $\mathbb{f}7$ 6. $\mathbb{d}6$ $\mathbb{f}6$ is a draw, White saw nothing better than to return to d3 with 4. $\mathbb{d}3$, and after 4... $\mathbb{W}f7$ the game was soon drawn.

Notice how a game's outcome can often hang on one single idea; in this case, Black's position seemed very precarious but White had no way to penetrate into e5 without allowing a preliminary ... $\mathbb{W}g7+$.



4.2 Kasparov-Vallejo Pons

Linares 2005

Again, calculation is required to convert the material advantage. Kasparov realized that Black might have unpleasant checks if he wins the a6-pawn, but also that these can be neutralized with $\mathbb{W}f1$, when Black's activity will end. If you've come to the same conclusion and decided on 1. $\mathbb{W}a8+!$, then you've really mastered the topic of activity! After 1... $\mathbb{e}7$ 2. $\mathbb{W}b7+$ $\mathbb{e}8$ 3. $\mathbb{W}xa6$, Vallejo saw nothing better than to play 3... $\mathbb{W}d5+$ 4. $\mathbb{g}1$ $\mathbb{W}xh5$, and Kasparov found the excellent 5. $\mathbb{e}4!$, preparing $\mathbb{W}d5+$ and forcing resignation in a few moves.



4.3 Petrik-Barczay

Trencianske Teplice 1981

Objectively speaking, the position is obviously drawn. White's pawn forma-

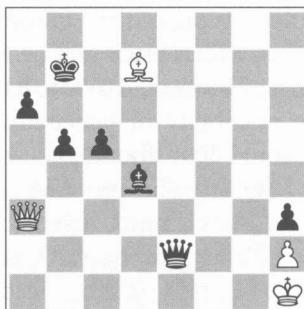
tion is perfect and his queen is active. However, objectively drawn does not mean practically drawn, and Black has a hidden way to generate winning chances. Calculation here is useless, but using logical thinking it is possible to find the correct path.

To obtain winning chances, Black must either create a passed pawn or weaken White's impeccable kingside pawn structure. To this end, 1...e4 is tempting but leads nowhere after 2. $\mathbb{W}c3$. Therefore, Black must revise this idea and aim for ...f5-f4, which will both weaken White's king and create a passed e-pawn after ...fxg3. Black played 1...f5! and after 2. $\mathbb{W}c3$ $\mathbb{W}f6$ 3. $\mathbb{W}c7+$ $\mathbb{W}h6$ 4. $\mathbb{W}b7$ f4! White was forced to tread very carefully. White found the correct 5. $\mathbb{W}e4!$, and now instead of 5... $\mathbb{W}e6?$ Black could have kept the fire going with 5...fxg3 6. fxg3 $\mathbb{W}f5$ with excellent chances to advance the passed pawn and obtain winning chances. The computer gives this position as drawn, but in a real game, with the clock ticking, Black has excellent practical chances.

he does nothing, found the tremendous tactical shot 1...f3!.

The key to finding this move is to realize that White's pawn superiority will lead nowhere, as after a future b3-b4 Black doesn't have to respond and White will not be able to make any progress.

After 2. $\mathbb{W}xf3+$ $\mathbb{W}xf3$ 3. gxf3 $\mathbb{W}g5!$ 4. $\mathbb{W}f2$ $\mathbb{W}f4$, White will have to let Black's king penetrate his camp. He lost quickly after 5. h4 h5 6. $\mathbb{W}g2$ g5! 7. hxg5 $\mathbb{W}xg5$ 8. $\mathbb{W}g3$ h4+ 9. $\mathbb{W}h3$ $\mathbb{W}f4$ and Black's king will take every single one of White's queenside pawns.



Clearly White's only chance is stalemate, but it isn't as clear how to achieve that. On 1. $\mathbb{Q}c6+$ Black replies 1... $\mathbb{W}b8$ and the position after 2. $\mathbb{W}g3+$ $\mathbb{W}e5$ is hopeless. It is clear that White must find a way to give up his queen (with check), but 1. $\mathbb{W}f3+$ is not the way to do it! Give yourself a round of applause if you've discovered 1. $\mathbb{W}xa6+!!$ $\mathbb{W}xa6$ 2. $\mathbb{Q}xb5+$ and Black must take the bishop with stalemate, since any other king move leads to a dead draw after 3. $\mathbb{W}xe2$. Note that the 'ingenious' 1... $\mathbb{W}c7$ actually loses after 2. $\mathbb{Q}c6+$ $\mathbb{W}d8$ 3. $\mathbb{W}c8+$ $\mathbb{W}e7$ 4. $\mathbb{W}e8+$ and White wins the queen!

4.4 Ten Vergert-Piasecki

Groningen 2009

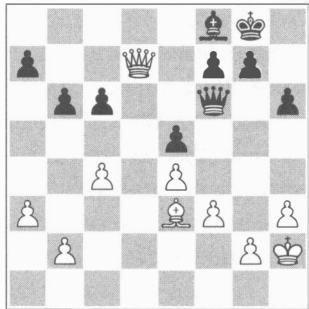
Canadian IM Leon Piasecki, realizing that White will obtain an easy draw if



5.2 Melkumyan-Ghader Pour

Abu Dhabi 2009

1. $\mathbb{W}d5$ is certainly sensible, and after the forced 1... $\mathbb{W}f6$ White's best bet is to play 2. $\mathbb{A}c4$ and support his queen with e3-e4, after which Black will be in serious trouble. However, if White had realized the possibility of penetrating into e8, he would have found the winning dagger 1. $\mathbb{W}e4!!$. The problem isn't so much that Black cannot defend against mate, but rather that he can't save the d8-bishop. 1... $\mathbb{Q}f8$ 2. $\mathbb{A}b5$ leads nowhere, and neither does 1... $\mathbb{W}c1+$ 2. $\mathbb{Q}g2$. Therefore, Black would have to resign.



5.3 Nguyen Duc Hoa-Tu Hoang Thai

Ho Chi Minh City 2010

Black's position is far from pleasant, but an attentive reader will have no-

ticed White's extremely weak king. If Black can eliminate White's e3-bishop, White will be forced to either give up perpetual or keep his queen in passivity.

This trade can be achieved by the cold-blooded 1... $\mathbb{A}c5!!$. Since 2. $\mathbb{A}d2$ fails to impress after 2... $\mathbb{W}d6$, White is best advised to take with 2. $\mathbb{A}xc5$, but after 2... $bxc5$ 3. $\mathbb{W}c8+$ $\mathbb{Q}h7$ 4. $\mathbb{W}f5+$ Black draws without trouble after 4... $\mathbb{W}xf5$ 5. $exf5$ $g6!$ 6. $fxg6+$ $\mathbb{Q}xg6$.



5.4 Lasker-Pillsbury

New York 1893

Yes there is a way to renew the struggle! White's queen is very active, but Black's pawn formation on the kingside seems rock-solid.

Nevertheless, there is a way to break through: congratulations to any reader who finds the crushing 1. $\mathbb{A}xg5!!$. Black must take with 1... $fxg5$, and after 2. $f6+$ $\mathbb{Q}g8$ (2... $\mathbb{W}xf6$ loses after 3. $\mathbb{W}h6+$ followed by $\mathbb{W}h7+$, while 2... $\mathbb{Q}g6$ 3. $\mathbb{W}h5+$ transposes to the first line) 3. $\mathbb{W}h6!$ Black's position collapses despite his extra piece.

The game went 3... $\mathbb{W}f7$ 4. $\mathbb{W}xg5+$ $\mathbb{Q}h8$ 5. $\mathbb{W}f5$ $\mathbb{Q}f8$ 6. $g5$ $\mathbb{W}h5$ 7. $\mathbb{W}xe5$ and in a few more moves Black threw in the towel.



5.5 Barua-Thipsay

Asian Championship, Calcutta 2001

White's queenside is under attack, and if White defends passively with 1. $\mathbb{W}c1$, Black will have all the time in the world to improve his position by advancing his queenside pawns.

Experienced Indian GM Dibyendu Barua assessed the situation accurately but played the unnecessary risky and weakening 1. $b4?!$, and after 1... $\mathbb{W}xa3$ 2. $b5$ $\mathbb{W}a1+$ 3. $\mathbb{Q}h2$ $\mathbb{Q}d8!$ it turned out that the follow-up 4. $\mathbb{Q}e5$ $\mathbb{Q}e6$ didn't give White enough for the pawn.

Instead, kudos to any reader who has found the seemingly unremarkable but extremely powerful 1. $c3!$.

It is easy to be afraid of 1... $\mathbb{W}b1+$ 2. $\mathbb{Q}h2$ $d3$, but in that case White draws easily after 3. $\mathbb{W}e3!$ $\mathbb{W}c2$ 4. $\mathbb{W}e8+$ $\mathbb{Q}h7$ 5. $\mathbb{W}d7$ with the threat of perpetual check.

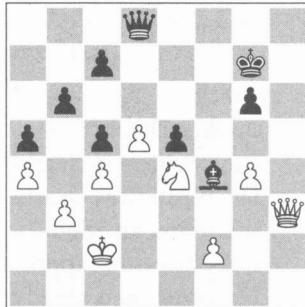
As we can see from this example, it is crucial not only to find the ideologically correct plan of action, but to find the most accurate execution of this plan as well!



5.6 Krasenkow-Markowski

Polish Championship, Warsaw 2002

A lot of moves win, but 1. $\mathbb{W}b6!!$ is most accurate. Black cannot decline the trade due to the threats of 2. $\mathbb{W}b8+$ and 2. $\mathbb{W}b4+$, but after 1... $\mathbb{W}xb6+$ 2. $axb6$ he will not be able to stop the pawn.



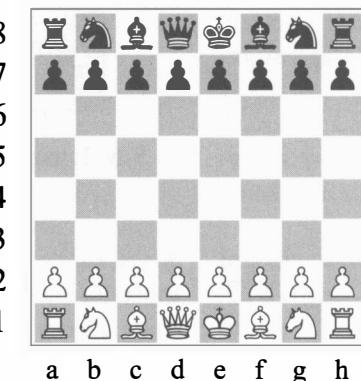
5.7 Efimenko-Lahno

Rivne 2005

An excellent tactician, Ukrainian GM Zahar Efimenko found the breakthrough 1. $d6!$ and after 1... $cxd6$ 2. $\mathbb{W}d3$ $\mathbb{W}a8$ 3. $\mathbb{W}d5!$ $\mathbb{W}b8$ 4. $\mathbb{W}xd6$ $\mathbb{W}b7$ 5. $\mathbb{W}d3$ White was able to penetrate into Black's camp and win. Breakthroughs such as d5-d6 are common in these types of positions. It is worthwhile to keep them in your long-term memory!

Symbols

The chess board
with its coordinates:



- + Check
- ++ Double Check
- The position is clearly winning for White.
- ± The position is clearly better for White.
- ⊟ White has an edge.
- = The position is approximately equal.
- + The position is clearly winning for Black.
- ±+ The position is clearly better for Black.
- ⊟+ Black has an edge.
- ! Strong move
- !! Brilliant move
- ? Weak move; mistake
- ?? Blunder
- !?! Interesting move; deserving attention
- ?! Dubious move
- 1-0 Black resigns.
- 0-1 White resigns.
- # Mate

Diagram highlighted in grey: A critical position.

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