

Bishop versus Knight

The Eternal Battle

Volume 2

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Bishop Versus Knight
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Volume 2

Boroljub Zlatanovic

Thinkers Publishing 2022



*Thanks to my lovely wife Marijana
for her wholehearted support*

Key to Symbols

!	a good move
?	a weak move
!!	an excellent move
??	a blunder
!?	an interesting move
?!	a dubious move
□	only move
N	novelty
⊙	lead in development
⊕	zugzwang
=	equality
∞	unclear position
∞̄	with compensation for the sacrificed material
±	White stands slightly better
∓	Black stands slightly better
±	White has a serious advantage
∓	Black has a serious advantage
+−	White has a decisive advantage
−+	Black has a decisive advantage
→	with an attack
↑	with initiative
↔	with counterplay
Δ	with the idea of
⊃	better is
⊆	worse is
+	check
#	mate

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Foreword

In his new endgame series, Boroljub Zlatanovic shows a profound understanding of the most common material imbalance in chess: that of the bishop against the knight. The didactic concept of the book is admirable as well as the detailed explanations of the typical characteristics of this endgame. Despite the importance of this subject, it has received very little detailed coverage in chess literature and this encyclopedic work will definitely fill this gap and offer a lot of useful tips for practical play.

Alexander Delchev

March 2021

Preface

Dear Chess Friends,

Welcome to my new book. If you are already familiar with the concepts presented in Volume 1 (or, even better, if you have already read Volume 1) I am sure you will seriously upgrade your knowledge with Volume 2. You will find often here the same principles in action, but there will be a lot of new principles as well!

The material is divided into four chapters, and two parts, depending if we have an endgame with queens or rooks on the board. I have decided to keep the focus on endgames because in middlegames, some other factors may simply prevail. In endgames, the importance of having a knight against a bishop just increases! For easier understanding, I suggest that before studying any example, you should determine which side will prevail and you can find the solutions yourself. Of course, you can work directly from the book and even skip some examples, and you can analyze them in random order.

In the book, you will find Capablanca's famous postulate about the queen and knight cooperating better than the queen and bishop, and some exceptions as well. For first time, you will hear of my audacious "postulate" that a rook and knight will "more often" prevail over a rook and bishop combination. I know this may sound absurd. I know Tal and Fischer would have disagreed and probably would have been indignant to hear this. I know many strong players would rather have a rook and bishop combination, basing their approach on the past masterpieces of these giants. But what about Rubinstein, and especially Karpov and Andersson – these masters had a great influence on my style and my coaching methods. Furthermore, I have based my "postulate" on statistics that I obtained after deeply searching for examples for this book. I hope it will reopen a debate about this material balance. My opinion is made, and I would like to apologize to all "bishop fans".

I have decided to use actual words instead of symbols to explain my ideas, methods and plans. I think that it should be right in this computer era that is full of numbers, digits, etc. that words and sentences from the coach are simply irreplaceable to explain strategy and endgames.

I am sure that this book will demystify that "eternal battle" and help you to broaden your horizons. I am sure you will find a lot for yourself in this book.

I would be so grateful if you could send your reviews, suggestions, ideas about this book to my mail borzlat@gmail.com.

I wish you pleasure in your work and many wins in future with implementing the principles from this book.

Boroljub Zlatanovic
November 2021

Part I

Endgames with Rooks on the Board

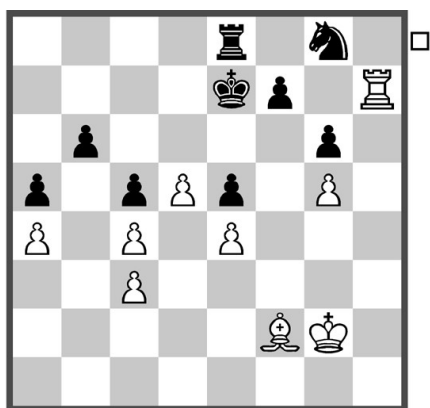


When the Bishop Is Superior

It's very common to say that a bishop is slightly better than a knight in the endgame, thanks to his long-range, and its capacity to play on both aisles at the same time. With the addition of the rooks on the board, we are going to have a look at some cases where this is true! In order to do so, and it will be true for the whole book, we will have a look at several games showing the decisive ideas.

Game 1

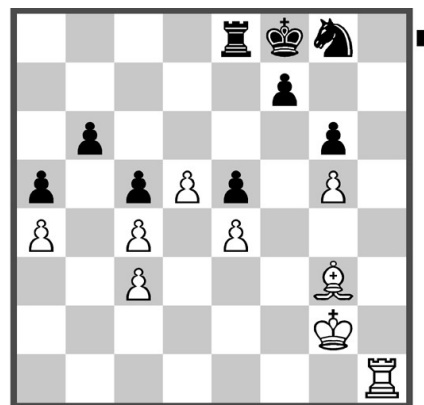
♁ Gunina, Valentina (2528)
 ♀ Efroimski, Marsel (2313)
 🌐 Olympiad 2018



This endgame perfectly explains the problems with a knight without an outpost and with pawns which are targets for the bishop. Despite the fact that the position may look blocked, White wins because Black simply cannot protect all the exposed pawns.

37. ♗g3 ♔f8 38. ♖h1!

The knight is out of play, together with the king. The rook alone cannot protect all the weak pawns on b6, e5 and finally c5.



Position after: 38. ♖h1!

38... f6

This desperate try will give nothing.

38... ♔g7 39. ♖b1 wins.

39. ♖b1 fxg5 40. ♖xb6 ♔f7

Now, several different moves can win for White, he just needs to pick one.

41. ♖b7+ ♔f6 42. ♖b5

The game is over. Black played on, but with inertia.

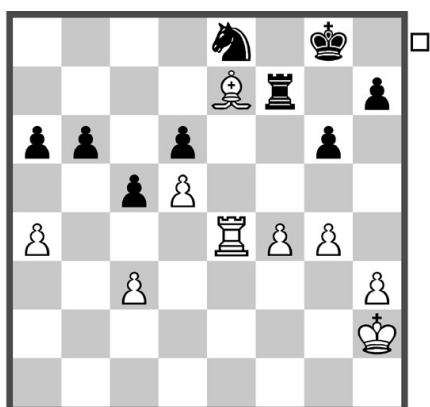
42... ♖c8 43. ♖xa5 g4 44. ♖a6+ ♔g5
 45. ♗xe5 ♖e8 46. d6

Black resigned.

1-0

Game 2

♙ Zhou, Jianchao (2597)
 ♚ Wen, Yang (2605)
 🌐 China 2017



The black knight is practically useless in this endgame and White should definitely fix the pawn structure to make the knight bad.

47. c4! ♞f6 48. ♖e6

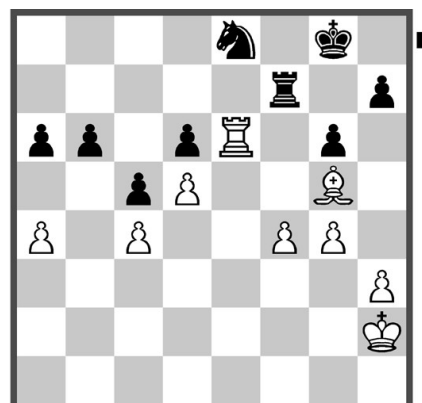
Of course, White is not interested in exchanging material – his active pieces dominate.

48... ♞e8 49. ♙g5

(see diagram opposite column)

49... ♞g7

49... ♖f8 50. ♙h6+



Position after: 49. ♙g5

50. ♖xd6 ♖b7 51. a5!

Definitely crushing Black's queenside.

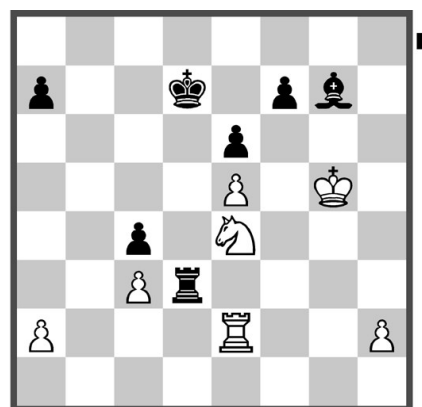
51... bxa5 52. ♖xa6 ♞e8 53. ♖xa5 ♖c7 54. ♙d8

The c5-pawn falls, and Black resigned.

1-0

Game 3

♙ Lee, Qing Aun (2297)
 ♚ Agopov, Mikael (2447)
 🌐 Olympiad 2018



Black is better due to the more compact pawn structure. White's active pieces compensate a little but nevertheless, with the pawn defects, reason must prevail. With his next move, Black avoids the fork and sets up an additional threat to the e5-pawn.

36... ♖f3

Alternatively, 36... ♔c6 is also good, and probably even more principled.

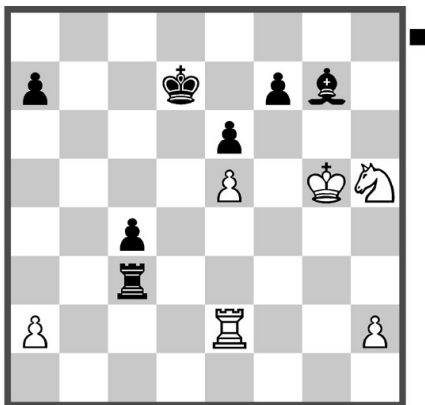
37. ♘g3

37. ♔g4 is more resistant but leads to a clear endgame after 37... ♖f5 38. ♘f6+ ♙xf6 39. exf6 ♖xf6.

37... ♖xc3

37... ♔c6 is also a good move. The idea would be to capture the e5-pawn, not the one on c3.

38. ♘h5



Position after: 38. ♘h5

38... ♙f8

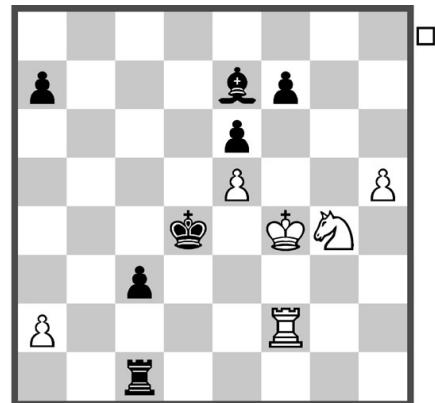
This move has the idea of supporting the passed c-pawn.

38... ♙h8 keeps the e5-pawn attacked. Thus, that would have been a good choice.

39. ♘f6+ ♔c6 40. h4 ♖c1

Everything is ready for an advance of the c-pawn.

41. h5 c3 42. ♘g4 ♔c5 43. ♖f2 ♙e7+ 44. ♔f4 ♔d4



Position after: 44... ♔d4

Of course, the king's role in the endgame is very important.

45. h6 ♖h1 46. ♘h2 ♙f8 47. ♔g5

47. h7 ♙g7

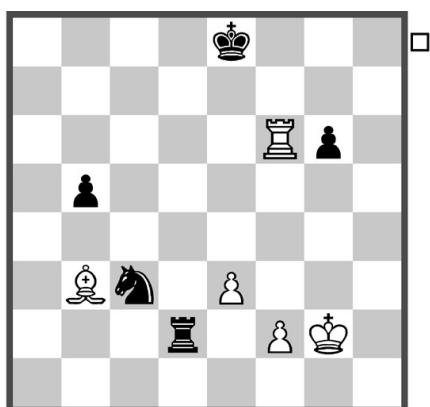
47... ♔xe5 48. h7 ♙g7 49. ♖xf7 c2 50. ♘g4+ ♔d6

The primitive threats have disappeared.

0-1

Game 4

♁ Artemiev, Vladislav (2696)
 ♀ Mikaelyan, Arman (2503)
 🌐 Chigorin Memorial 2017



The position is extremely open and clearly in favor of the side having the bishop. But the pawn material is so reduced that it is not easy to convert. Black has some unpleasant moves such as ...♘e4 and ...♖b2. White starts well by playing as follows.

49. ♖c6

49. ♖xg6 ♖b2 50. ♙e6 ♞d1 This leads to an evident draw.

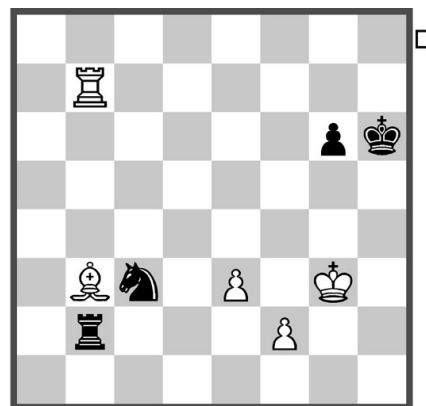
49... ♖b4

49... ♞e4?? 50. ♖e6+

50. ♖b6 ♖b2 51. ♖xb4

White has captured the pawn, but still it is not easy to convert.

51... ♙e7 52. ♙g3 ♙f6 53. ♖b6+ ♙g7
 54. ♖b7+ ♙h6



Position after: 54... ♙h6

55. f3

55. ♙d5 ♖xb7 56. ♙xb7 ♙g5 This may complicate White's task. In any case, the rook will collaborate well with the bishop and Black would be happy to exchange rooks.

55... ♞e2+ 56. ♙g4 ♞c1 57. ♙d5

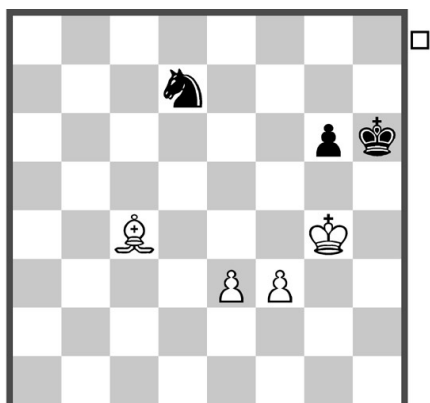
At this moment, White is forced to exchange, but the knight is misplaced and Black's king cannot come to the g5-square.

57... ♖xb7 58. ♙xb7 ♞d3 59. ♙a6
 ♞c5 60. ♙c4 ♞d7

(see diagram next page)

61. ♙e6?

A good idea but not the correct move order.



Position after: 60... Nc5

61. Kf4! Kg7 62. Bb5 Nc5 63. Ke5
The king invades.

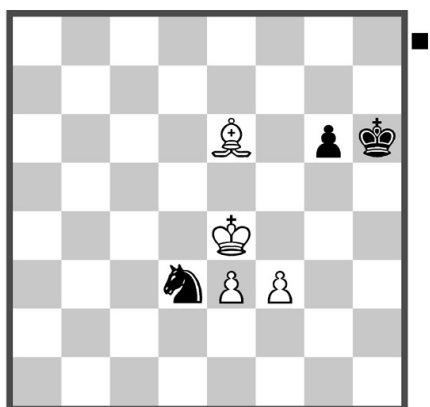
61... Ne5+ 62. Kf4

White has found a good moment to transfer the king to the center with the idea of supporting the passed e-pawn.

62... Nd3+

This is the point. Black disturbs the white king, preventing an immediate invasion.

63. Ke4 Nc5+ 64. Kd5 Nd3 65.
Ke4?!



Position after: 65. Ke4?!

The "don't rush!" principle, but at the wrong moment.

Instead, 65. Bc8! would prepare an imminent advance.

65... Nc5+?

65... Ne1! Paradoxically, this would present a good chance. Now, after 66. Bb3 [66. f4 g5 67. f5 g4 68. Kf4 Ng2+ leads to a draw] 66... g5 White's advance looks to be stopped. Surprisingly, a draw is the probable result.

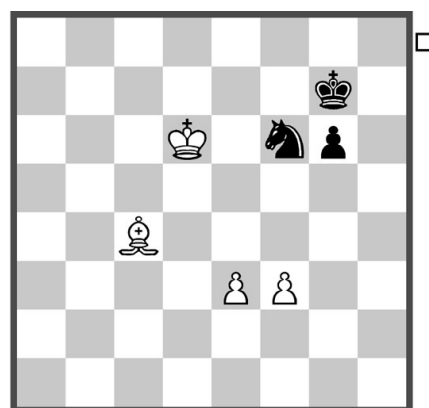
66. Ke5 Kg7 67. Bc4

The bishop tries to restrict the knight.

67... Nd7+ 68. Kd6

White has finally prepared everything for an advance – the result is already decided.

68... Nf6



Position after: 68... Nf6

69. e4

This advance is well-prepared and the game is over.

69... ♖h5 70. e5

Black is unable to organize a blockade.

70... g5 71. e6 ♔f6 72. e7 ♘g7 73. ♙e6
♘e8+ 74. ♔d7 ♘g7 75. ♙g4

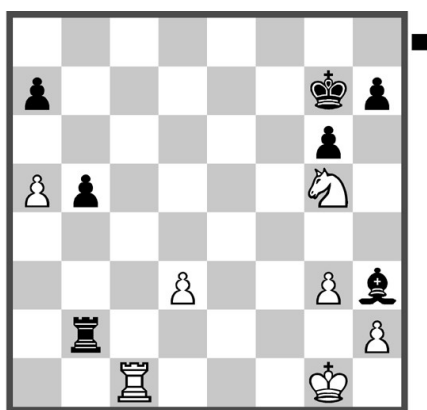
Zugzwang! Black resigned.

75. ♙g4 ♔f7 76. ♙h5+ ♔f6 77. e8=♚
♘xe8 78. ♙xe8 ♔f5 79. ♙h5+–

1-0

Game 5

♙	Norwood, David	(2545)
♜	Nunn, John DM	(2630)
♁	Bundesliga 1995	



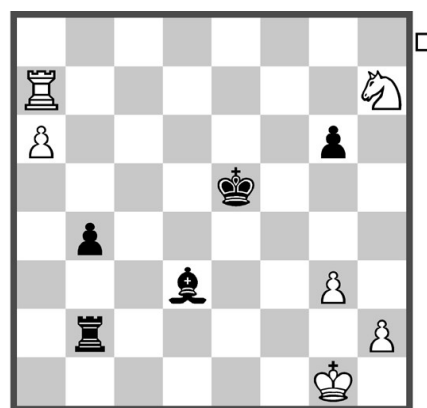
The bishop is evidently better than the knight. White's threat of ♖c7 looks dangerous but actually, it is not. Still,

White is not worse, but accuracy is needed. Black retreats the bishop with an attack at the same time.

36... ♙f5 37. ♖c7+ ♔f6! 38. ♘h7+
♔e5 39. ♖xa7

With extra material, White must still play precisely. His troops are scattered, and his king may be in danger. In addition, there is a dangerous b-passer.

39... ♙xd3 40. a6 b4



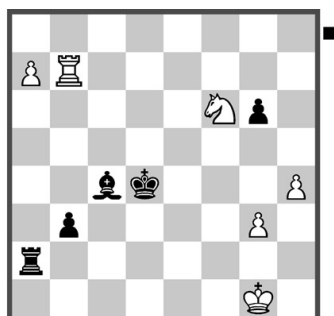
Position after: 40... b4

41. ♖a8?

The key mistake in this endgame. Of course, it was not easy to foresee that this would be the case.

41. ♖e7+! was a must. After 41... ♔d4
42. a7 ♖a2 43. ♘f6 b3 44. ♖b7 ♙c4
45. h4, there is no visible way for Black to improve.

(see diagram next page)

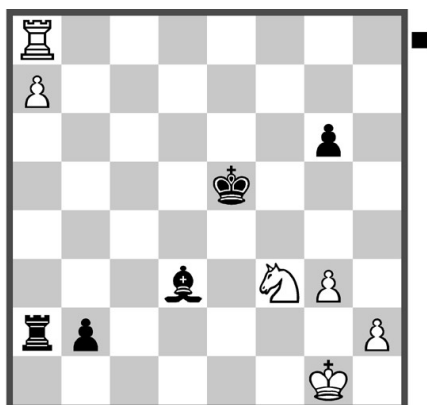


Position after: 45. h4

41... b3! 42. Ng5

42. a7 Rg2+!!→ White probably missed this!

42... Ra2 43. a7 b2 44. Nf3+



Position after: 44. Nf3+

White gives his best to save the game.

44... Ke4 45. Nd2+ Ke3 46. Rb8 Ra1+ 47. Kg2 Kxd2 48. Rxb2+ Ke3 49. g4

49. Kh3 Rxa7 50. Kh4 Ra5!→

49... Kf4 50. h3 Be4+ 51. Kf2 Rxa7

Comments for the rest are redundant.

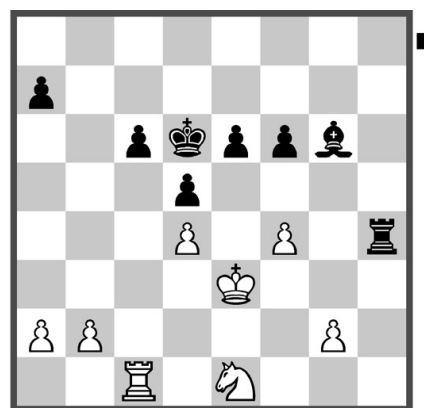
52. Rb3 Ra2+ 53. Kf1 Bf3 54. Rb6 Kg3

White resigned.

0-1

Game 6

♂ Sieiro Gonzalez, Luis (2365)
 ♀ Gurevich, Mikhail (2510)
 🌐 Cuba 1986



Black is evidently better. His bishop comes to the e4-square, paralyzing the knight and controlling both flanks.

30... Be4

Black threatens to advance ...e5. The c6-pawn is safe in view of the advance ...d4 winning the rook.

31. Rc3?

White collapses immediately.

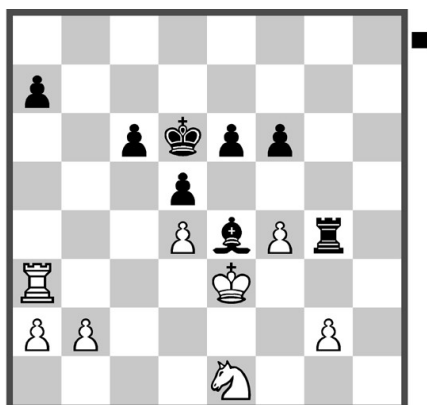
31. Nf3 is a better choice, although

after 31... ♖g4 32. ♖g1 c5 Black would soon create two connected dangerous passed pawns in the center with great influence on any subsequent play.

31... ♖g4

Collecting the material. Black is winning.

32. ♖a3



Position after: 32. ♖a3

White's plan is definitely too slow. Black easily converted his advantage as follows.

32... ♖g3+! 33. ♖f3

33. ♖f2 ♖xa3 34. bxa3 c5 This eventually leads to a winning pawn endgame.

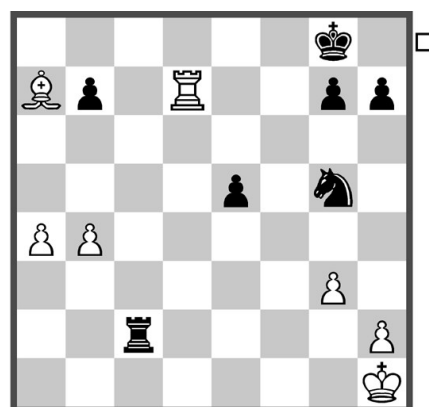
33... ♖xg2 34. ♖d2 ♖g3+ 35. ♖e2 ♖xa3 36. bxa3 c5

White resigned.

0-1

Game 7

♀ Naiditsch, Arkadij (2700)
♂ Sipos, Istvan (2468)
🌐 Hungary 2017



In this position, White should be preferred – the bishop is traditionally more valuable than the knight, but in this position, Black has a dangerous rook and knight set-up. First, White's task is to eliminate the threat of ...♖f3.

40. ♖c5

At the same time, this liberates the path for a potentially passed a-pawn.

40. ♖g1 ♖f3+ 41. ♖f1 ♖xh2+ 42. ♖e1 ♖f3+ 43. ♖d1 ♖a2 This looks like a drawish endgame.

40... e4?!

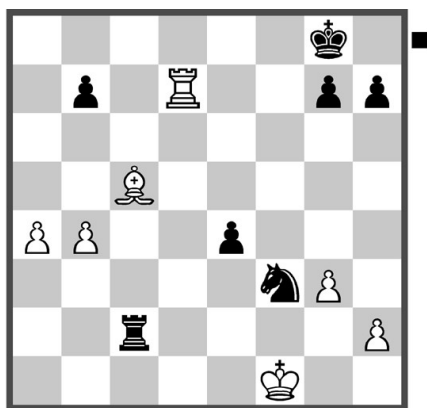
A) 40... ♖f3? 41. ♖d8+ ♖f7 42. ♖f8+

B) 40... h5! 41. ♖d8+ ♔h7 42. ♜f8 ♔g6 This looks to be a better option for Black in comparison to the played line.

41. ♔g1

The king must do some walking, for many reasons.

41... ♞f3+ **42.** ♔f1



Position after: 42. ♔f1

42... h5?!

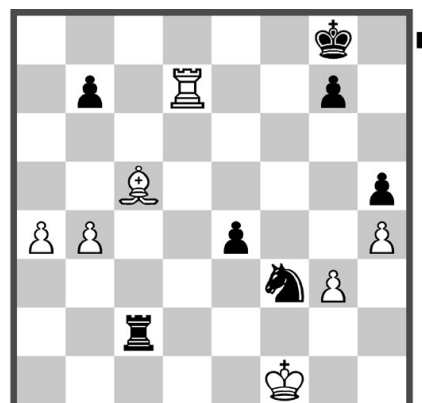
Black goes for kingside counterplay, but it looks as if White is faster.

A) 42... ♞xh2+ 43. ♔e1 ♞f3+ 44. ♔d1 This brings serious benefits to White after 44... ♜a2 45. ♜xb7 ♜xa4 46. ♜e7.

B) 42... ♜d2!? 43. ♜xd2 ♞xd2+ 44. ♔f2 ♞c4 This creates a good barrier, making White's task almost impossible to achieve.

43. h4?

(see diagram next column)



Position after: 43. h4?

White eliminates Black's counter-chances on the kingside, but this is simply not direct enough.

43. ♜xb7! ♞xh2+ 44. ♔e1 ♞f3+ 45. ♔d1 ♜d2+ 46. ♔c1 g5 47. ♜b8+! ♔h7 48. b5 This must be winning for White.

43... ♔h7?

Instead, 43... ♜d2! Threatening perpetual check is a line suggested by the computer which should hold the game. Indeed, after 44. ♜xd2 ♞xd2+ 45. ♔e2 ♞c4 46. ♞d4 ♔f7 Black is safe. Of course, it is so difficult in tense moments to find such a solution.

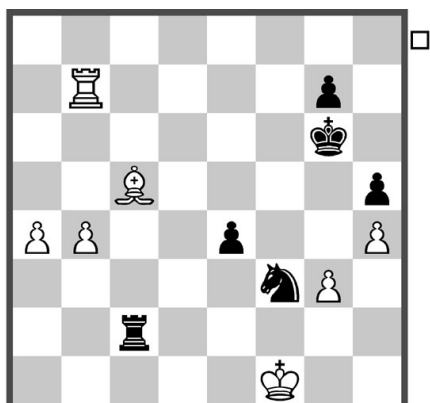
44. ♜xb7 ♔g6

(see diagram next page)

44... ♜d2 loses after 45. ♜f7! ♔g6 46. ♜f4!.

45. ♞e3!

Eliminating the threat of a perpetual.



Position after: 44... Kf6

45... Ra2 46. a5 Kf6 47. Ra7

With the idea of advancing the b-pawn.

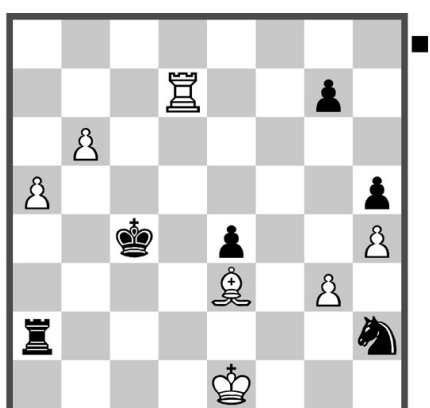
47... Ke6

Black's king is so far unable to help.

48. b5 Kd5 49. Rd7+

49. b6 Kc4 50. Rd7 transposes.

49... Kc4 50. b6 Nh2+ 51. Ke1



Position after: 51. Ke1

51... Ng4

51... Nf3+ 52. Kd1 Ra1+ 53. Kc2 Ra2+ 54. Kb1 Kb3 55. b7 This gives nothing to Black.

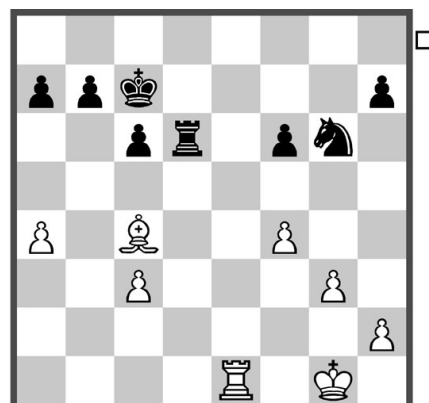
52. b7 Ra2 53. Kb6

Black resigned.

1-0

Game 8

- Alekhine, Alexander
- Euwe, Max
- World Championship 1937

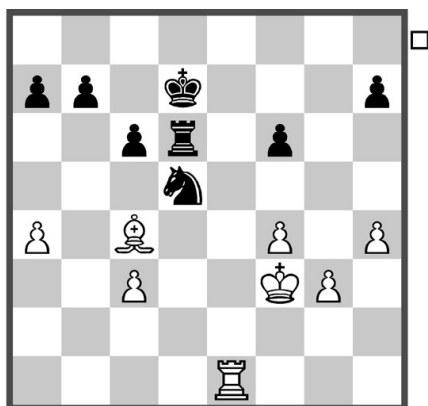


This is a famous endgame found in many books. But, how to evaluate it? There are pawns on both flanks, and the structures are equally damaged. Open positions with many targets and pawns on both flanks are clearly in favor of the side having the bishop. Alekhine's play is very instructive. First, he kicks the black knight back, at the same time launching a majority – play on the side where you have the advantage!

29. h4 ♔d7

Controlling the e7-square.

30. ♔f2 ♞e7 31. ♔f3 ♞d5



Position after: 31... ♞d5

Black has closed the bishop's diagonal and attacked the c3-pawn. How should White react? The rook endgame is drawish and it is evidently bad to waste time on defending the c-pawn. Alekhine foresaw that he would have an excellent move as a resource.

32. ♞d3! h6

32... ♞xc3 33. ♞xh7 ♞xa4 34. h5 This is hopeless for Black – White is much faster.

33. ♞f5+ ♔d8 34. ♔g4

White does not care about the c3-pawn at all.

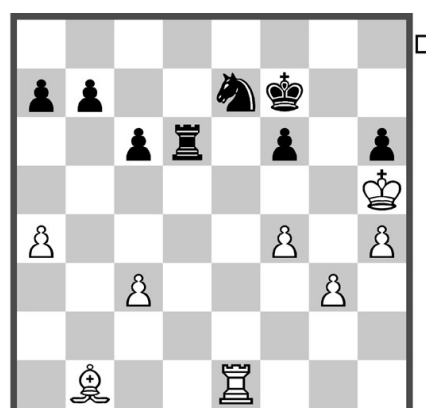
34... ♞e7

If 34... ♞xc3 then 35. ♔h5 wins easily.

35. ♞b1 ♔e8 36. ♔h5

The active king gives a decisive advantage for White.

36... ♔f7



Position after: 36... ♔f7

37. ♞a2+!

37. ♔xh6 ♞d8 38. ♞a2+ ♞d5 39. ♔h7 This also wins but is clearly less methodical.

37... ♔f8

37... ♞d5 38. c4+–

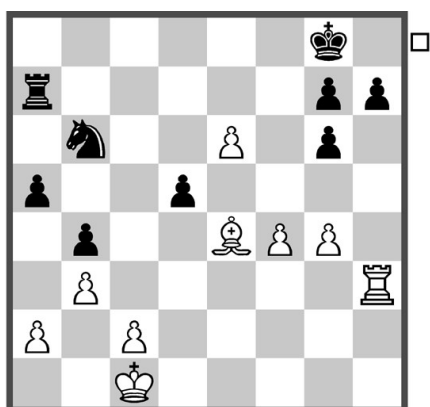
38. ♔xh6 ♞d2 39. ♞e6 ♞d3 40. g4 ♞xc3 41. g5

Black resigned.

1-0

Game 9

♁ Edouard, Romain (2607)
 ♀ Boensch, Uwe (2563)
 🌐 Bundesliga 2018



Black has some problems because his knight is not impressive on the b6-square (Tarrasch once said that the knight is always badly placed on the b6-square). Also, the strong passed e6-pawn is dangerous. White retreated as follows.

31. ♖d3 ♜e7

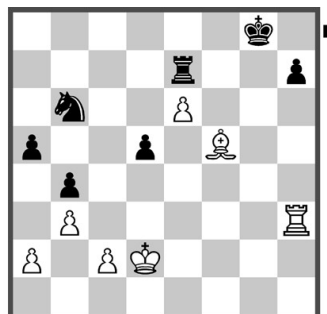
Black is ready to protect the e6-pawn.

32. f5 gxf5 33. gxf5 ♞c8?!

Black wants to get the knight back into play.

33... g6! was practically a must. 34. ♔d2 gx5 35. ♘xf5

(see diagram next column)



Position after: 35. ♘xf5

This would give Black some small hope of surviving after 35... ♞a8. In any case, 36. ♜g3+! ♔f8 [36... ♜g7? 37. e7 ♞c7 38. ♜e3! wins] 37. ♔d3 ♞c7 38. ♔d4! ♞xe6+ 39. ♔xd5 looks winning for White as the bishop is clearly dominant and the black queenside pawns are so weak.

34. ♔d2!

As the other pieces are active, it is time to activate the king. It's important to feel when there is nothing better to do.

34... g6

Desperately trying to organize something.

35. ♜g3

Getting the pawn and it's time to get the king closer to the center.

35... ♞d6

35... ♔g7 36. fxg6 h6 37. ♜e3+-

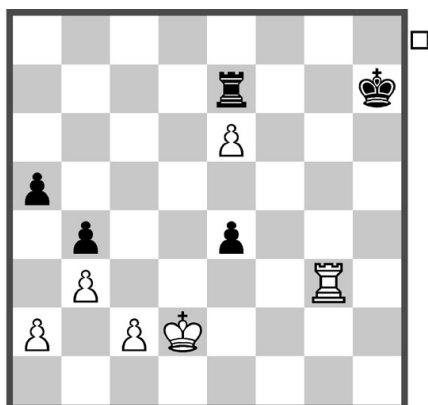
36. fxg6

White can wait to capture with 36. ♔e3 which would perhaps be more methodical, but it is a matter of style.

36... ♞e4+

Alas, there is no escape from a clear rook endgame.

37. ♞xe4 dxe4 38. gxh7+ ♔xh7



Position after: 38... ♔xh7

39. ♖g5!

The e4-pawn will fall later.

39... ♜xe6 40. ♜xa5 e3+ 41. ♔e2 ♜c6
42. ♔xe3 ♜xc2 43. ♜a4

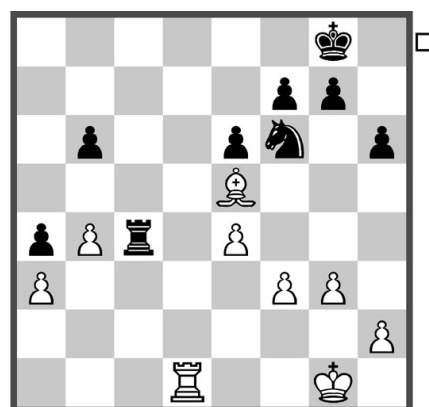
Black resigned.

43. ♜a4 ♔g6 44. ♔d3 ♜c3+ 45. ♔d2
♜h3 46. ♜xb4 ♜h2+ 47. ♔c3 ♜xa2
48. ♜f4 This is finally winning for White.

1-0

Game 10

♟ Georgiev, Kiril (2590)
♞ Bacallao Alonso, Yusnel (2588)
🌐 Olympiad 2018



White is slightly better due to his active bishop. But this advantage is levelled by the problems with his queenside pawns being fixed on the color of his bishop. Also, Black has active pieces, so it is not easy for White to improve.

28. g4

First, White gets space on the kingside and fixes Black's structure.

28... ♜c8?!

Securing the eighth rank.

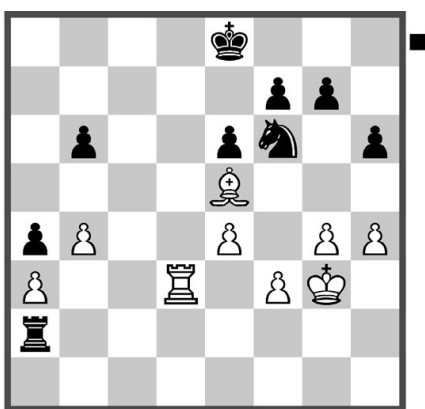
28... b5!? Clearly, this will be on the agenda sooner or later, so it should be a logical move.

29. h4 ♔f8 30. ♖d6 ♔e8 31. ♔g2

White plans to place the king on the safe g3-square.

31. ♔f2 gives more options and is evidently more precise.

31... ♖c2+ 32. ♔g3 ♖a2 33. ♖d3



Position after: 33. ♖d3

33. ♖xb6? ♘d7! 34. ♖b5 ♘xe5 35. ♖xe5 ♖xa3=

33... ♔e7?

33... b5! was a must here. After 34. ♗d4 or 34. ♔f4 there is still nothing apparent for White.

34. h5

Fixing Black's kingside pawns and making them targets for the bishop.

34. b5! This is a more energetic move leading this time to a win. Both of Black's queenside pawns will be in danger. There will be an evident threat

of ♗d6-b4 with ♖d6 next.

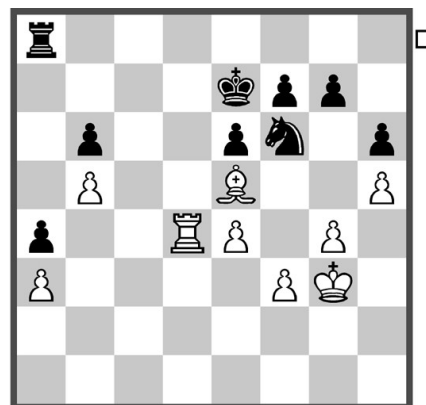
34... ♖c2?

34... b5!

35. b5!

Finally. That pawn is safe and the b6-pawn looks like falling soon.

35... ♖c8 36. ♖d4 ♖a8



Position after: 36... ♖a8

What else?

37. ♖c4

Finally infiltrating.

37... ♖a5 38. ♖c7+ ♔e8 39. ♗d6 ♘d7?

39... ♖xb5 40. ♗b4 locks the rook with an easy win for White.

40. ♖c8#

1-0