

Adrian Mikhalchishin

Mastering essential rook endgames



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First edition 2018 by Chess Evolution

Mastering essential rook endgames
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ISBN 978-615-5793-10-3

All sales or enquiries should be directed to Chess Evolution
2040 Budaors, Nyar utca 16, Magyarorszag

e-mail: info@chess-evolution.com
website: www.chess-evolution.com

Printed in Hungary

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KEY TO SYMBOLS

=	Equality or equal chances
±	White has a slight advantage
∓	Black has a slight advantage
±	White is better
∓	Black is better
+ -	White has a decisive advantage
- +	Black has a decisive advantage
∞	unclear
∞̄	with compensation
↔	with counterplay
↑	with initiative
→	with an attack
Δ	with the idea
□	only move
N	novelty
!	a good move
!!	an excellent move
?	a weak move
??	a blunder
!?	an interesting move
?!	a dubious move
+	check
#	mate

INTRODUCTION

In our final book of the series we want to show the most entertaining elements of rook and pawn endgames, plus many of the most important practical cases. Additionally, we have included more than 100 of the most entertaining studies as well as 100 rook ending tests.

For practical rook endings we can study examples from the specialists such as Capablanca, Rubinstein, Smyslov and Botvinnik.

We also cannot forget the decisive role in theoretical research of rook endings by such giants as Nikolay Grigoriev, Andre Cheron and Nikolay Kopaev. Without them, the theory of rook endgames would not be so advanced as it is nowadays.

Every old master — Lucena, Ponziani, Lolli, Philidor and especially Siegbert Tarrasch — made important steps in the study of such endings. The first really big research on them was Andre Cheron's 1923 'Rook and pawn against Rook'. Later came the articles of Nikolay Grigoriev.

We should remember also Grandmaster Genrikh Kasparian, one of the greatest study authors, who practically alone created the theory of rook endgames involving two connected pawns.

There were a few other great study makers, such as the Georgians, Gurgenedze and Kalandadze.

Extremely important for the basic theory of rook endgames were the works of Henry Rinck and Artur Mandler. In modern times, fundamental work on these typical endgames was started by the rather 'less-strong' player Vadim Kantorovich, but his initial influence was enormous.

We have to know the methods of handling some typical positions, plus special pawn configurations. The most common rook endgame is a position with equal pawns on one flank and an extra passed pawn on the other side. Methods of handling all such positions are known and described in our books, but there are still so many mistakes here — almost too many to believe.

Anyhow, we have tried to make a rook endgames theory course, starting from basic positions and methods and then moving from different though typical material situations up to the most important practical situations. I hope that players of every level will reap real practical benefits from studying these books.

EDITORIAL PREFACE

In this series of eight endgame books, FIDE Senior Trainer Adrian Mikhalchishin, FIDE Senior Trainer Efstratios Grivas and IGM Csaba Balogh combine their experience as trainers and as practical players to create something very special.

The authors aim for very understandable explanations of every endgame position in each book.

The specification:

- ◆ 1st book — Queen and pawn endgames.
- ◆ 2–3 — Minor piece endgames (bishop and knight endgames).
- ◆ 4–5 — These will feature the fight between different material constellations.
- ◆ 6–8 — These books are going to focus on the most common endgames, which are of course rook endings.

The main concept of each book is to provide theoretical knowledge which can be used in practical games. It means the focus of the books will be on those positions which are most likely to occur — and the practical playing of them.

That's why you will firstly meet the theoretical part, and secondly the practical examples of how games actually continued in a particular endgame.

Yes, you're right, you won't find too many very complicated studies, stunning manoeuvres or rarely-appearing positions — and there is a simple reason why not!

How often do we see positions, for example two knights vs pawn where one knight is blocking the pawn and the other one tries to get the king to the corner before releasing the second knight for the mate? Or constellations with crazy material on the board? This might happen in one game out of 100! You could spend hundreds of hours working on something that might bring you “only” a single point more out of 100 games!

Our approach is quite different: let's make more points in the other 99 games! And who knows, we might also be lucky in the remaining one, but actually, statistically, it would almost not matter.

“The Modern Endgame Manual” will make an expert out of you in most of the endgames which are going to appear in your long career as a chess player!

CHAPTER 1

ROOK AGAINST PAWNS

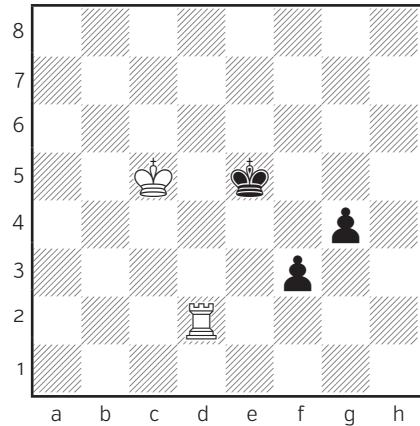
The greatest rook and pawn endgame specialist was the late Master Nikolay Kopaev, who wrote the rook endgames chapter in Yuri Averbakh's famous manual, 'Chess Endings: Essential Knowledge'. His analyses are still valid, especially the difficult one of rook against three pawns.

As we mentioned in previous books, at some moment one of the players must sacrifice his rook for the promoted pawn and the result of the game depends on how the king can fight the pawns on the other side, and how quickly and effectively the sacrificer is able to push his passed pawns.

As we will see, even the top players do not understand really basic things in such positions and the quantity of mistakes is thus huge. In any case, they are very instructive, as logical decisions can still help to avoid mistakes.

1

► L. Maizelis
1950



This was the author's solution...

1. ♖d8

But Kopaev found a manoeuvre that was named after him: 1. ♖d5+!! ♔f4 2. ♔d4 f2 3. ♖d8 ♔f3 4. ♖f8+ ♔e2 5. ♖e8+ ♔d2 6. ♖f8 g3 7. ♖f3!! ♔e2 8. ♖e3+ ♔d1 9. ♖d3+ ♔c1 10. ♖c3+ ♔b2 11. ♖f3 holding the draw.

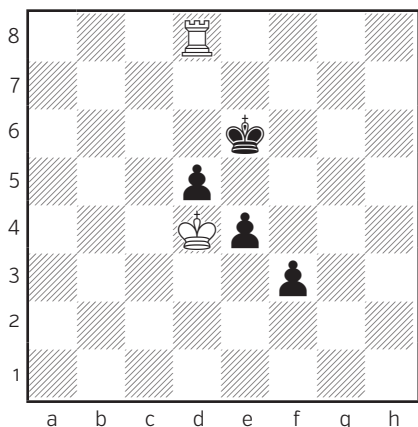
1...g3 2. ♖e8+ ♔f5 3. ♖f8+ ♔e4 4. ♖e8+ ♔d3 5. ♖g8 g2 6. ♔d5 ♔c3

7.♔c5 ♕d2 8.♔d4 ♕e1 9.♕e3 f2
10.♖a8 f1N+!!

...winning.

2

► N. Kopaev
1966



This is one of the greatest pieces of analysis in the history of endgames — and it was conducted without engines!

1.♕e3! ♕e5 2.♖e8+! ♔f5

2...♔d6 3.♔d4 ♕d7 4.♖e5 ♕c6
5.♖f5+–

3.♔f2!

Only this way — the active 3.♔d4 ♕g4 is wrong.

3...♔f6

With great rook manoeuvres White wins after 3...♔f4 4.♖e6 ♕f5 5.♖d6 ♕e5 6.♖d7! ♕e6 7.♖d8 ♕e5 8.♕e3! ♕e6 9.♔d4+–

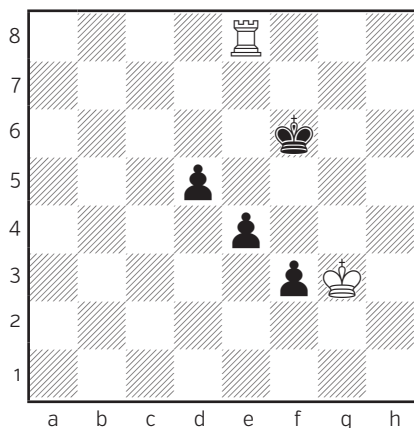
4.♔f1!

White starts a fantastic manoeuvre, with the idea of getting this position with Black to move. Nothing is promised by 4.♔g3 ♕f5 5.♖d8 ♕e5

4...♔f5 5.♔g1 ♔f4

Or 5...♔f6 6.♔h2! ♕f5 7.♖d8 ♕e5
8.♔g3 ♕e6 9.♔f2 ♕e5 10.♕e3

6.♔f2 ♕f5 7.♔g3 ♔f6



8.♔h2!

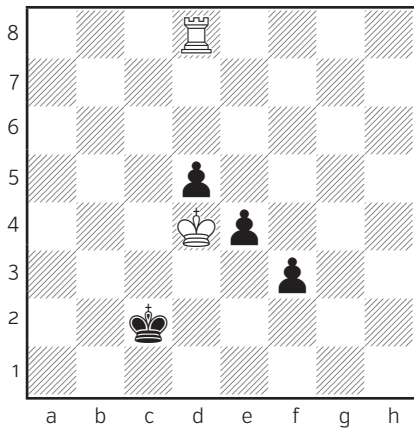
In my opinion this is one of the greatest manoeuvres in rook endgame history! Wrong was

8.♔g4 ♕g7! 9.♖e5 f2 10.♖g5+ ♔h6
11.♖h5+ ♕g6 12.♖h1 e3 13.♔f3 d4
14.♕e2 ♕f5=

8...♔f5 9.♖d8! ♕e6 10.♔h3! ♕e5
11.♕g3 ♕d4

We saw the position after 11...♕e6
12.♕f2 ♕e5 13.♕e3 ♕e6 14.♕d4 pre-
viously.

12.♕f2 ♕c4 13.♕e3 ♕c5 14.♖e8!
♕c4 15.♖c8+ ♕b3 16.♕d4 ♕b2
17.♖d8 ♕c2



18.♕e3!

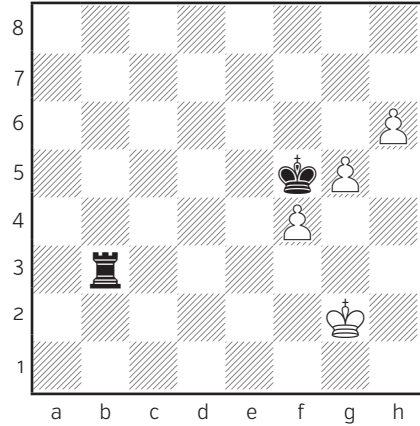
Once again — though mistakes lurk
nearby!

18.♖xd5? ♕d2! 19.♕xe4+ ♕e2=

1-0

3

▷ I. Manor
▶ B. Macieja
Bermuda, 2016



A typical example of a critical end-
game decision; there are two options,
one correct, the other wrong. But
which is which?

57.♕h2?

57.♕f2= ♖h3 58.♕g2 ♖h4 59.♕g3
♖h5 60.♕f3 ♖h4 61.♕g3 ♖g4+
62.♕h3 ♖g1 63.♕h2 ♖a1 64.♕g2 (64.
♕g3 ♖f1 65.♕h3 ♖f3+ 66.♕g2 ♖xf4
67.h7 ♖h4-+)

57...♕g4! 58.♕g2

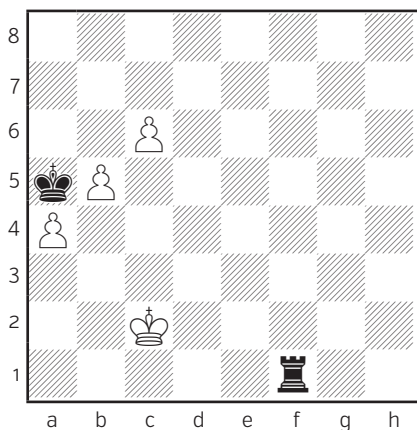
58.h7 ♖h3+

58...♖b2+ 59.♕g1 ♕f5 60.♕f1 ♖b4
61.♕g2 ♖xf4 62.h7 ♖h4

1-0

4

▷ C. S. Crouch
▶ L. J. McShane
England, 1999



A similar case involving two moves; one loses while another keeps the draw. And the game decision is clearly wrong!

80. ♖b3??

80. ♖b2 ♜h1 81. ♖c2 (81. ♖a2) 81... ♜a1
(81... ♜h5 82. ♖b3 ♜c5 83. ♖a3 ♜c3+
84. ♖b2 ♜g3 85. ♖a2) 82. ♖b3 ♜xa4
83. c7;

80. ♖d2 ♜f4

a) 80... ♜f5 81. ♖c3 ♖xa4 82. b6 (82.
♖c4 ♖a5-+) 82... ♜c5+ -+;

b) 80... ♜f8 81. ♖d3 ♖xa4 82. ♖c4
♖a5 83. ♖c5 ♜f1 84. ♖d6 ♖b6-+;

81. ♖d3 (81. ♖c3 ♖b6 82. ♖b3 ♖c5
83. ♖a3 ♜f3+ 84. ♖b2 ♜h3 85. ♖c2 ♖b4

86. ♖b2 ♜h2+ 87. ♖b1 ♖b3 88. ♖c1
♜c2+ 89. ♖d1 ♜c5 90. b6 ♜xc6 91. a5)
81... ♖b6

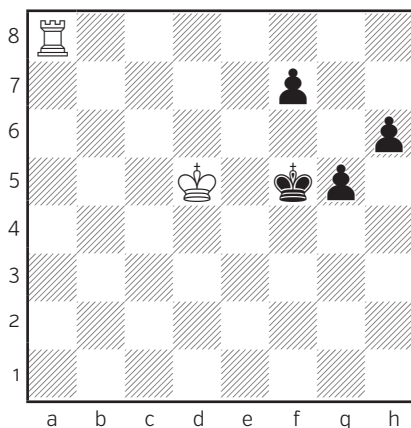
80... ♜a1 81. ♖c4

Now White is not saved by 81. ♖c3
♜a3+ 82. ♖c4 ♜xa4+ 83. ♖c5 ♜a1
84. c7 ♜c1+ 85. ♖d6 ♖b6

81... ♜xa4+ 82. ♖c5 ♜a1 83. c7 ♜c1+
84. ♖d6 ♖b6 0-1

5

▷ A. Mista
▶ B. Socko
Warsaw, 2018



When the pawns have not yet reached the drawing constellation, it is necessary to use the rook very actively...

63. ♜a1?

Correct was 63. ♜h8! ♖f4 (63... g4
64. ♖d4 ♖f4 65. ♖d3 ♖f3 66. ♜xh6 f5
67. ♖d2 g3 68. ♖e1 f4 (68... g2 69. ♜g6 f4

70. ♖g7 69. ♔f1 64. ♔d4 f5 65. ♗xh6
g4 66. ♔d3 ♔f3 67. ♔d2 f4 68. ♗f6+-
g3 69. ♔e1 g2 (69... ♔e3 70. ♔f1 ♔f3
71. ♗f8+-) 70. ♗g6+-

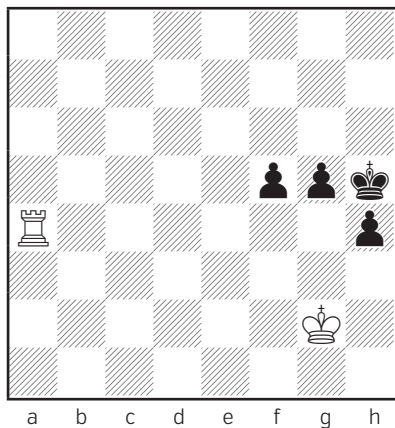
63... ♔f4?

63... h5 64. ♔d4 (64. ♗f1+ ♔g4 65. ♔e4
(65. ♗xf7 h4 66. ♔e4 h3 67. ♗h7 ♔g3)
65... f5+ 66. ♔e3 h4 67. ♗g1+ ♔h5
68. ♗a1 ♔g6 69. ♗a6+ ♔g7 70. ♗b6
h3 71. ♔f3 g4+ 72. ♔g3 ♔f7) 64... ♔f4
65. ♔d3 ♔f3 66. ♗f1+ ♔g2 67. ♔e2 h4=

64. ♗a4+! ♔f5

64... ♔f3 65. ♔e5 g4 66. ♗a3+ ♔g2
67. ♔f4

**65. ♔d4! ♔f4 66. ♔d3+ ♔f3 67. ♗a5
♔g4 68. ♗a4+ ♔f3 69. ♗a5 ♔g4
70. ♔e3 f5 71. ♔f2 h5 72. ♔g2 h4
73. ♗a4+ ♔h5**



74. ♗a5?

Now Black's king would be incorrect-
ly placed after 74. ♗a8! ♔g6

**a) 74... g4 75. ♗g8! ♔h6 76. ♔f2 ♔h5
77. ♔e3 h3 78. ♔f4 ♔h6 79. ♔xf5;**

b) 74... ♔g4 75. ♗a4+

**b1) 75. ♗h8 ♔f4 76. ♔h3 ♔f3
77. ♗g8 ♔f4 78. ♗g7;**

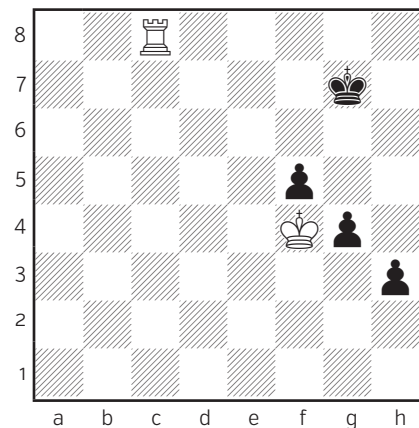
**b2) 75. ♗g8 ♔f4 (75... ♔h5 76. ♔f3
g4+ (76... ♔h6 77. ♔e3 (77. ♗h8+
♔g7; 77. ♗b8 ♔h5 78. ♗b6 g4+
79. ♔f4 h3; 77. ♗f8 ♔g6 78. ♔e3)
77... ♔h5 78. ♔d4 ♔g4) 77. ♔f4 h3
78. ♔xf5) 76. ♔h3 ♔e3 77. ♗xg5 f4
78. ♗e5+;**

75. ♗g8+ ♔h5 76. ♔f3 ♔h6 77. ♗f8
♔g6 78. ♔f2 g4 79. ♔e3 ♔g5 80. ♗g8+
♔f6 81. ♔f4

74... ♔g6

74... ♔g4 75. ♗a8+-

**75. ♔h3 ♔f6 76. ♗a6+ ♔f7 77. ♔g2 g4
78. ♔f2 ♔g7 79. ♔e3 h3 80. ♔f4 ♔f7
81. ♗h6 ♔g7 82. ♗h5 ♔g6 83. ♗h4
♔f6 84. ♗h8 ♔g7 85. ♗c8**



85...♔g6??

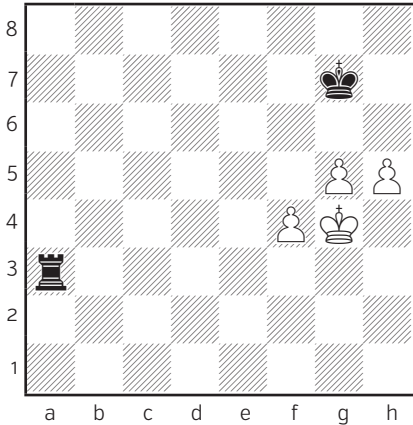
We have seen the correct place for the king before: 85...♔f7=

86.♖f8 ♔h6 87.♖f6+ ♔g7 88.♖xf5

1-0

6

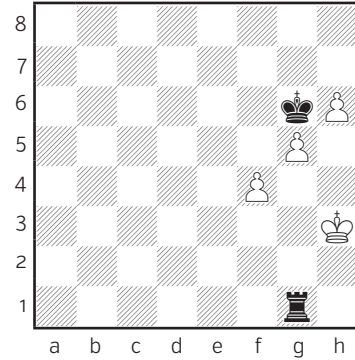
▷ E. Kovalevskaya
 ▶ C. Zhu
 Moscow, 1994



63.♔f5 ♔f7 64.♔g4 ♖a1 65.h6 ♔g6
 66.f5+??

It would seem that activity is the proper course, but this is a grave mistake. In this theoretical position it is necessary to simply keep the structure intact. Then it would be terribly difficult to win...

66.♔g3 ♖g1+ 67.♔h3

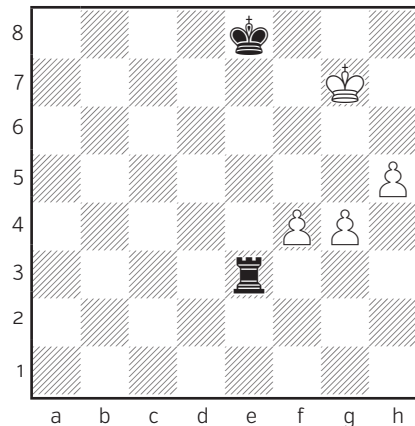


67...♔f7!! Starting a fantastic — and winning — triangulation manoeuvre (67...♔f5? 68.♔h2 ♖e1 (68...♖g4 69.♔h3 ♔xf4?? 70.h7) 69.♔g2 ♖e3 70.♔f2 ♖h3 71.♔g2) 68.♔h4 ♔e6 69.♔h3 (69.g6 ♖xg6 70.♔h5 ♖g1 71.h7 ♔f7-+) 69...♔e7 70.♔h4 ♔f7 71.f5 ♖h1+ 72.♔g4 ♔g8 73.♔f4 ♔h7 74.♔e5 ♖g1 75.♔f6 ♖g2-+

66...♔h7 67.♔f3 ♖g1 68.♔f4 ♖g2
 69.f6 ♔g6 70.h7 ♖h2 0-1

7

▷ F. Blohberger
 ▶ T. Nurzhanov
 Montevideo, 2017



Here White's king supports his pawns and Black is desperately trying to make a draw.

73... ♖e4?

Correct was the simple 73... ♖e7+ 74. ♔g8 ♖e4 75.g5 ♖xf4 76.h6 ♖g4

74.g5 ♖xf4 75.h6 ♖f7+ 76. ♔g6 ♔e7

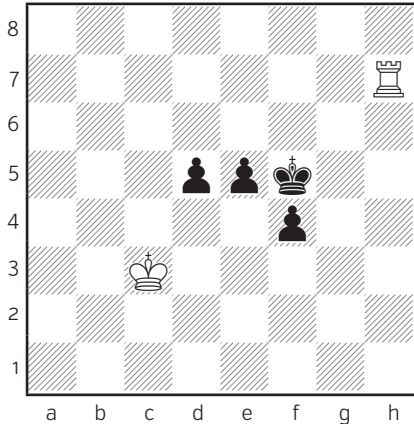
Now it would be too late for 76... ♔f8 77.h7 ♖g7+ 78. ♔h6

77.h7 ♖f8 78. ♔g7 ♖f7+ 79. ♔h6 ♖f8 80.g6

1-0

8

▷ P. Nikolic
▶ M. Gurevich
Moscow, 1990



70...e4

70...f3? 71. ♖f7+ ♔e4 72. ♔d2+-

71. ♖h5+

71. ♖e7 ◻

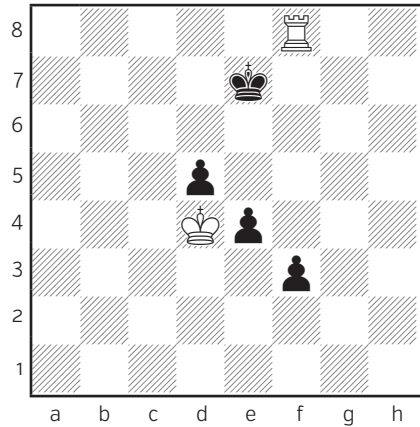
71... ♔e6 72. ♔d4 f3= 73. ♖h8 ♔f7

73... ♔d6? 74. ♖e8+- ♔d7 75. ♖e5 ♔c6 76. ♖xd5 e3 77. ♖c5+ ♔d6 78. ♖c1 e2 79. ♔e3

74. ♖h6 ♔e7 75. ♖a6 ♔d7 76. ♖b6 ♔e7 77. ♖b4

77. ♖b5 ♔e6

77... ♔e6 78. ♖b8 ♔e7 79. ♖c8 ♔d7 80. ♖f8 ♔e7



81. ♖b8

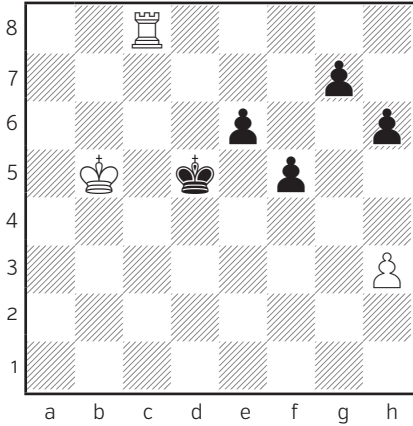
81. ♖f5 ♔e6 82. ♖f4 ♔d6 83. ♖f6+ ♔e7 84. ♔e5 d4! =

81... ♔d7 82. ♔e3

1/2-1/2

9

▷ I. Sokolov
▶ A. Riazantsev
Plovdiv, 2012



Here White cleverly cuts off his opponent's king and prepares a retreat of his own.

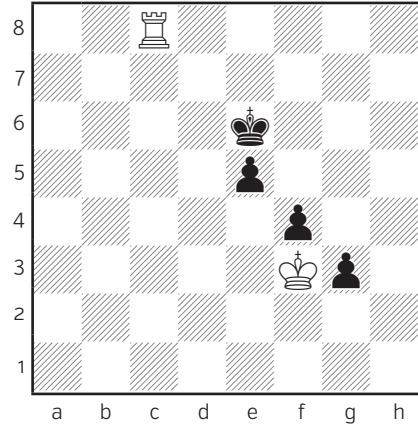
55. ♖c4!

Much more complicated would be 55. ♖b4 ♔d4 56. ♖b3 ♔d3 57. ♖d8+ ♔e4 58. ♖c2

55...g5 56. ♖b4 h5 57. ♖c3 g4 58. hxg4 hxg4 59. ♖d3 e5

Another possibility was 59...♔d6 60. ♖c8! (Not allowing Black to build a basic drawing position after 60. ♖e3 e5 61. ♖a4 g3 62. ♖f3 f4=) 60...♖e5 61. ♖e3 f4+ 62. ♖d3 ♖f5 63. ♖f8+ ♖g5 64. ♖e4 winning.

60. ♖c8 g3 61. ♖e3 f4+ 62. ♖f3 ♖e6



63. ♖f8!

A precise 'cutting' move.

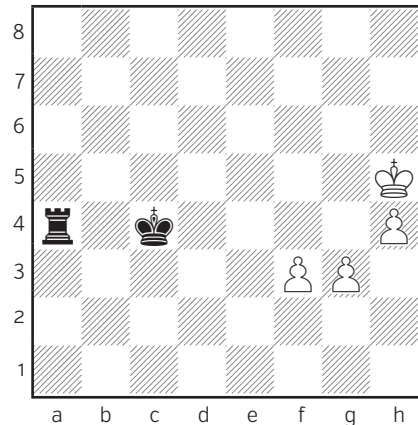
63...♔e7 64. ♖f5 ♔e6 65. ♖e4 ♔d6
66. ♖g5!

...not hurrying to win the pawn.

1-0

10

▷ P. Fogel
▶ O. Romanishin
Sunway Sitges, 2015



55...♔d4?

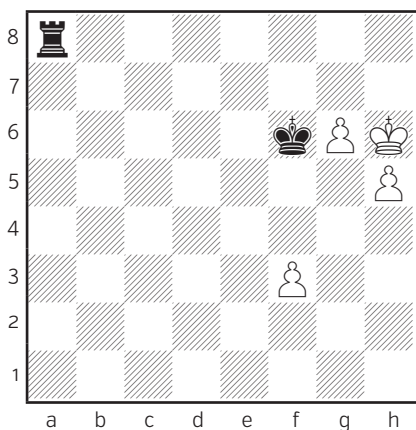
The wrong idea, which misses the win.

The shortest path to victory was 55...♔d5! 56.♔g6 (56.g4 ♔e6 57.♔g5 ♖a8-+) 56...♖a6+ 57.♔g7 ♔e5 although even then Black would have work to do: 58.g4 ♔f4 59.h5 ♔g5 60.f4+ ♔xf4 61.h6 ♔g5 62.h7 ♖a7+ 63.♔g8 ♔g6 64.h8N+ ♔f6 65.g5+ ♔xg5 66.♗f7+ ♔f6 67.♗d6 ♖a5 68.♗c4 ♖d5-+

56.g4?

Here there was a typical bodycheck manoeuvre, saving the game: 56.♔g6! ♖a6+ (56...♔e5 57.f4+) 57.♔f5!=

56...♔e3 57.g5 ♔f4! 58.♔h6 ♔f5 59.h5 ♖a8 60.g6 ♔f6

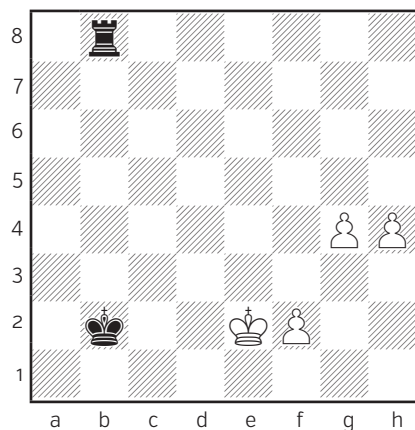


61.♔h7 ♖a7+ 62.♔h6 ♖a5 63.f4 ♖f5 64.g7 ♔f7

0-1

11

▷ A. Aleksandrov
▶ S. Sulskis
Bastia, 1999



When the king is not placed in front of the pawns, it is necessary to play very precisely to secure the draw.

9.♔d3

9.h5 ♔c3! 10.♔e3 ♖e8+ 11.♔f4 ♔d4 12.h6 ♖f8+ 13.♔g5 ♖xf2 14.h7=

9...♖f8! 10.♔e3

No winning chances were promised by 10.h5 ♖xf2 11.♔e4 (11.h6? ♖h2) 11...♖h2 (11...♔c3?! 12.h6) 12.♔f5 ♔c3 13.♔g6 ♔d4 14.h6 ♔e5=

10...♔c3 11.h5 ♖e8+ 12.♔f4 ♔d4 13.h6 ♖f8+ 14.♔g5

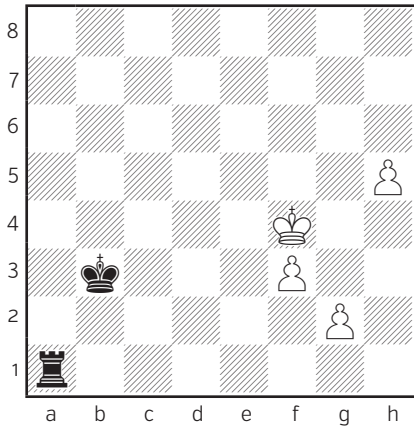
Very dangerous would be 14.♔g3? ♔e5

14...♖xf2= 15.♔g6 ♕e5 16.g5 ♕e6
 17.h7 ♖h2 18.♔g7 ♕f5! 19.g6⊕ ♖h1
 20.♕f7 ♖h6 21.g7 ♖xh7 22.♕f8
 ♖xg7

1/2-1/2

12

▷ T. Tolnai
 ▶ O. Romanishin
 Kecskemet, 1989



62.g4 ♕c4 63.g5 ♕d5 64.♔f5 ♖a8??

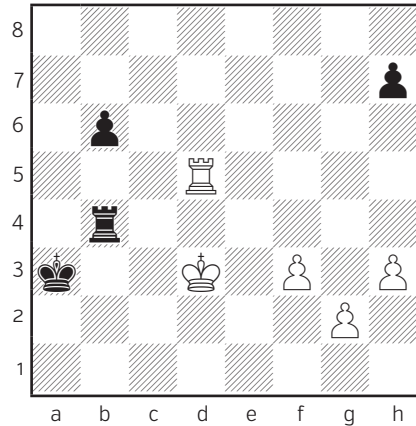
The correct way in such cases is to attack from the back: 64...♖h1 65.h6 ♖h3 66.f4 ♖h4 67.♔g6 ♖xf4 68.h7 (68.♔h7 ♖g4 69.g6 ♕e6 70.g7 ♕f7 71.g8 ♖+ ♖xg8=) 68...♖h4 69.♔g7 ♕e6 70.g6 ♕f5=

65.g6 ♖f8+ 66.♔g5 ♖xf3 67.h6 ♕e6
 68.h7 ♖g3+ 69.♔f4

1-0

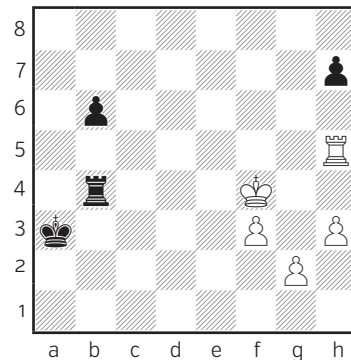
14

▷ P. Leko
 ▶ A. Jussupow
 Dortmund 1998



47.♖h5 ♖b3+ 48.♔e4 ♖b4+ 49.♔e3
 ♖b3+ 50.♔f4 ♖b4+ 51.♔g3

White did not calculate to the end what would have been a winning pawn endgame.



51.♔g5! ♖b5+ 52.♔h6 ♖xh5+
 53.♔xh5 b5 54.f4 b4 55.f5 b3 56.f6 b2
 57.f7 b1 ♖+ 58.f8 ♖+ ♕a2 59.♖a8+ ♕b2
 60.♖b7+-