

Karsten Müller

The Best Endgames of the World Champions

Volume 2

From Petrosian to Carlsen

JBV Chess Books

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Preface

Since the world chess champions excel in *all* areas of the game, it goes without saying that you can learn the most not only from their skills in the opening and the middlegame, but also from their superb handling of the endgame.

The individual chapters are divided into two parts.

– In the first part you find thoroughly annotated endgames on a special topic on which the respective world champion has produced many particularly impressive examples (followed by exercises on this subject).

My choice fell on Petrosian's unmistakable instinct in questions of the *right* exchange and his skills in the endgame '♖+♘ vs ♖+♙' (with the side with the knight in advantage), on Spassky's handling of the initiative, Fischer's precision in the so-called 'Fischer endgame' with '♖+♙ vs ♖+♘' (with the side with the bishop in advantage), on Karpov's dominance and restriction methods, Kasparov's attacks on the king with reduced material, Kramnik's strategic power play especially on a weakened color complex, on Anand's unrelenting pressure play and – last but not least – Carlsen's technique in the so-called 'Carlsen endgame' with rooks and same-colored bishops.

– In the second part you find particularly interesting endgames that can rightly be described as *classics* (followed by exercises on this subject). With regard to these instructive and inspiring evergreens, I was of course spoiled for choice, but I hope you like the selection.

And since I consider exercises to be important and useful to encourage the reader's active participation, additional exercises are included in the discussed examples. To deal with the various exercises, please note the information in the immediately following introductory remarks.

I would like to thank GM Mihail Marin for his excellent foreword and his analytical contributions – Rainer Woisin from ChessBase for the permission to use my DVD '*Endgames of the World Champions*' as the basis for this book and for the idea of working with QR codes – Robert Ullrich and Thomas Beyer for the layout, the selection of photos and the presentation – Georgios Souleidis for providing the photo of Magnus Carlsen – and Lothar Nikolai-zuk for the excellent work that went far beyond normal editing.

GM Dr. Karsten Müller
Hamburg, May 2021

Foreword



Mihail Marin

For people belonging to different cultures and living in remote geographic areas, chess has since always been a universal language. However, I cannot repress the feeling that, same as many important languages, it admits a wide range of "dialects". Depending on the chess circles one attends, one can hear debates, questions and assumptions about forced opening variations and stunning novelties, deep middlegame plans and brilliant tactics and last but not least about subtle endgames and technique.

During my frequent visits to Hamburg over the past years, usually involving my participation to Karsten Mueller's *Endgame Magic* shows, it was refreshing to discover that to both Karsten and me, using the "endgame dialect" provides no lesser delight than high class music or art and no lesser intellectual challenge than thorough calculating of long variations.

In the long and tortuous process of finding the truth, or to coming close to "solving" our favourite game, the endgame occupies a privileged place. It is precisely in this area where one should dig analytically if wishing to reveal little pieces of the global truth. Given the reduced number of pieces, one can be more confident about the own analysis. Unsurprisingly, many of the rules and conclusions established centuries before the computer era maintained their validity until today.

Switching to a less abstract theme, the endgame is the phase where many games are decided, making it an essential area of learning and training for players of all levels. World champions from different historic eras perfectly knew that. Some of them were renowned tacticians, others excelled at positional chess. Many of them analysed the opening in depth, while others played it by intuition. However, it is hard to think of a player reaching the supreme title without a deep mastering of the endgame phase.

If I needed to express the feelings raised by Karsten's last book in just one word, I would use "delight". I had, of course, seen and analysed a large number of the featured examples, but revisiting them was like an intellectual *caressing*. Those I knew only superficially entered now my must-analyse list. I found the frequent tests ideal for mental training, even when I was familiar with the positions.

I would like to conclude with a piece of warning. Reading a chess book does not automatically make you stronger. Keeping it under the pillow while sleeping, does not achieve that, either. A book should offer the reader a reliable starting point for independent work, analysis and thought.

I invite you to indulge yourself with examining the world champions' best endgame achievements.

Mihail Marin

Domnesti (Romania), April 2021

Two introductory remarks

1) The thematical exercises are marked 'E01.01' etc. – while the additional ones are simply identified as 'Exercise 1' etc. The solutions can be found after each chapter. The symbol '****' indicates that an exercise is more difficult. In this regard, however, the same piece of advice applies to all tasks: If the search for the solution threatens to turn into torture, take a look at the solution section.

2) The assignment of every single world champion to a certain 'playing style' goes back to my recently published book 'The Human Factor' (together with GM Luis Engel; Joachim Beyer Verlag 2020). Since I am of the opinion that this aspect plays an important and often clearly recognizable role also in the endgame, I will give a brief overview of the details that characterize the different types of players. Readers interested in this aspect can look up these explanations if a particular category is mentioned in the text.

Activists

World champions: Alekhine, Tal, Spassky, Kasparov, Anand

(As to the rare type of 'hyperactive player', all of the following characteristics are even more pronounced.)

Their strengths: They rate initiative and attacking options relatively high and material values lower. They often have a good sense for initiative and dynamics and are also ready to accept static weaknesses. One of their usual strengths is the concrete calculation of lines based on intuitive evaluation.

Their weaknesses: Sometimes they make pawn moves that look good at the moment, but do far more harm than good in the long run. They tend to overestimate their own attack on the king while underestimating the opponent's attack. They are significantly less good in defense, often take risks and as a rule try to keep the third result (meaning: their own victory) in the game.

Theorists

World champions: Steinitz, Botvinnik, Kramnik

Their strengths: They are extremely familiar with their structures and all the associated maneuvers and plans and can also rely on their sharpened intuition when using them. Their play is logical and systematic. Many representatives of this type are good at theoretical endgames and know the entire relevant endgame theory by heart.

Their weaknesses: They stick to their principles, even if they sometimes don't fit the position. Occasionally, they lack a sense of the limits of the respective area of application and also the flexibility required to switch to other approaches in a specific position if necessary.

Reflectors

World champions: Capablanca, Smyslov, Petrosian, Karpov, Carlsen

Their strengths: They have a very deep understanding of the game and recognize relevant patterns almost at first glance. They have a very fine feel for the harmony and coordination of the pieces. They are very good when it comes to restricting the opposing pieces more and more and disrupting their coordination. Therefore, active prophylaxis and strategies of dominance and restriction are typical for them. And they are also very good in strategic endgames, in which their strengths come into their own, because the dynamic potential of the queens no longer 'disturbs' and accordingly less dynamic chaos can arise.

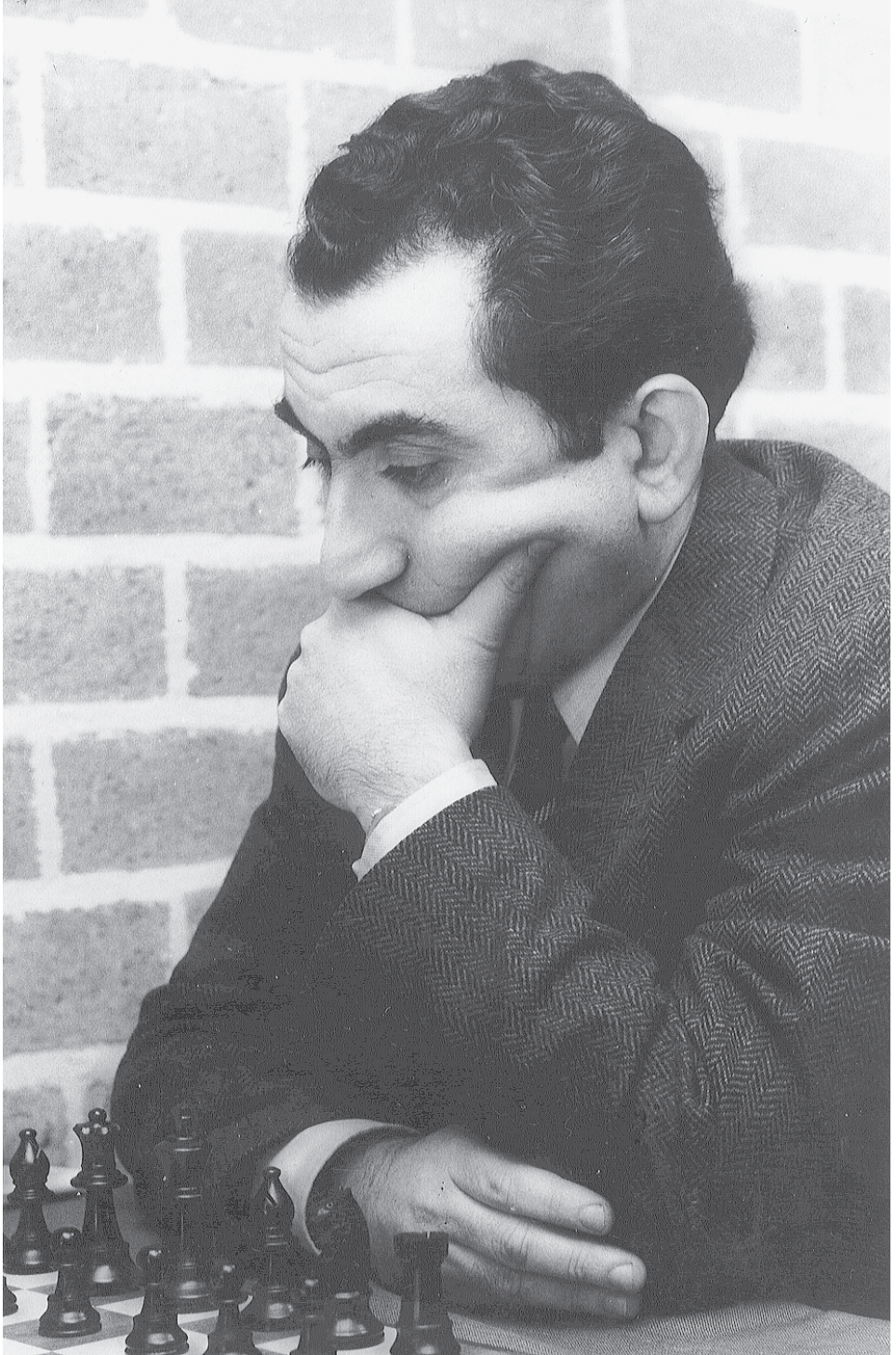
Their weaknesses: They are sometimes not so good when it comes to calculating concrete lines, which makes them vulnerable in the sense that the opponent can strive for concrete dynamic positions in which every single move is important and which require much concrete calculation.

Pragmatics

World champions: Fischer, Euwe, Lasker

Their strengths: They are characterized by the fact that they have a very concrete approach. They calculate long lines very accurately and rarely blunder. They incorporate many practically relevant factors into their decisionmaking and are often good at confronting opponents with problems that are unpleasant to solve in practice. Pragmatics can often defend themselves very tenaciously by using their precise calculation skills

Their weaknesses: The concrete approach can, however, turn out to be a weakness under certain circumstances. In strictly technical or positional situations a pragmatic occasionally feels a little bit insecure because he doesn't know what to calculate. In general, they may have difficulty recognizing long-term plans and taking them into account. Sometimes they are a little too materialistic (similar to theorists). Overall, however, they are relatively balanced and have hardly any weaknesses worth mentioning.



The ninth world champion – Tigran Petrosian

Tigran Vartanovich Petrosian (June 17, 1929 – August 13, 1984) was born to Armenian parents in the Georgian capital Tbilisi, where he spent a large part of his youth and only learned chess at the relatively late age of 12. In the 1963 match for the world championship he prevailed against Mikhail Botvinnik with 12.5–9.5 points, defended the title in 1966 against Boris Spassky (12.5–11.5), but then lost (10.5–12.5) to the same opponent in 1969.

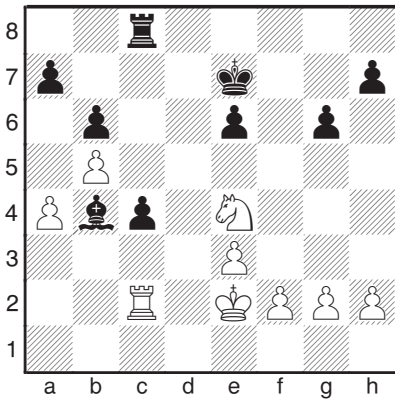
As a ‘reflector’ he had his very own style with the typical characteristics of this type of player (‘see also’ introductory remark 2 ‘on page 9). Because of his rather defensive approach and the great importance he attached to prophylaxis, he was given the respectful nickname ‘Iron Tigran’.

Furthermore, he is well known for his long-term positional exchange sacrifices and his endgame skills – especially the treatment of the constellation ‘♠+♘ vs ♖+♙’ with the side with the knight in advantage. This is sometimes referred to as the ‘Andersson/Petrosian’ endgame, because the Swedish world-class player Ulf Andersson has also contributed many instructive victories in this type of endgame.

For starters, here are some examples of the ‘Andersson/Petrosian’ endgame, in which the side with the knight usually strives for static control, so that the slowest of the light pieces has enough time for its often lengthy and time-consuming maneuvers.



09.01
Tigran Petrosian
Mikhail Botvinnik
Moscow 1963



29. ♖d2

It makes sense to provoke c4–c3, because this advance not only weakens the pawn, but also the white squares.

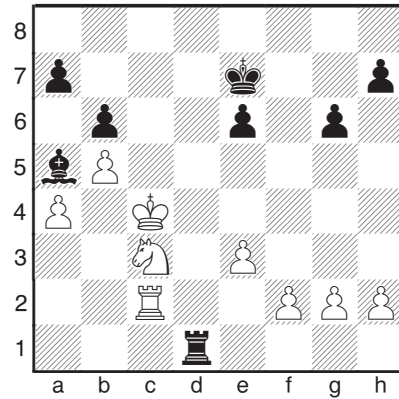
29... c3

The immediate transition to a rook ending with 29... ♙xd2 30. ♕xd2 ♖d8+ Δ31. ♕c3 ♖d1 makes no big difference to the later possible course of the game.

30. ♗e4 ♕a5 Δ♖c4 31. ♕d3 ♖d8+ 32. ♕c4 ♖d1

The trick 32... ♖d2!? would also result in the later possible game continuation by transposition of moves after 33. ♕b3 ♖d1 34. ♗xc3 ♕xc3 35. ♕xc3 g5.

33. ♗xc3



33... ♖h1?

At this point, Black absolutely had to break out of the ‘Andersson–Petrosian’ endgame with 33... ♕xc3! 34. ♕xc3 g5, as this was his best chance due to the drawish tendency of rook endings.

34. ♗e4!+- ♖xh2

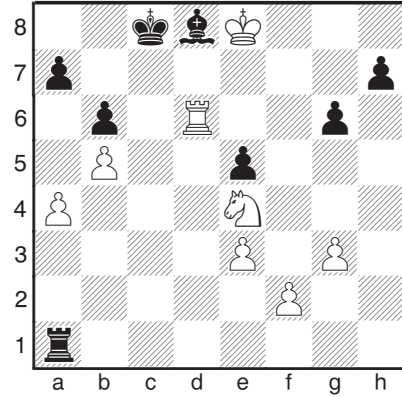
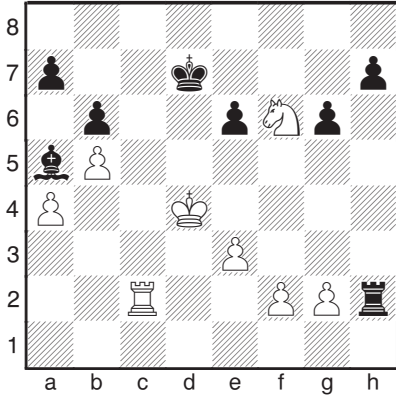
The return 34... ♖d1 doesn’t really make a better impression after 35. ♗g5 h6/h5 36. ♗f3 Δ♗d4.

35. ♕d4

The king begins his long march into the opponent’s hinterland.

35... ♕d7 36. g3

The more direct approach was 36. ♗f6+.



Exercise 1: How could the game continue?
(solution on page 37)

36...♙b4

36...♙e1 37.♜f6+ followed by ♜g4

37.♜e5 ♜h5+ 38.♜f6 ♙e7+ 39.♜g7 e5?!

This inaccuracy weakens the light squares even more, but Black is lost anyway.

40.♞c6

40.♞c1!? would have led to fatal zugzwang.

40...♞h1 41.♜f7 ♞a1 42.♞e6 ♙d8

42...♙c5 43.♜xc5+ bxc5 44.♞xe5 ♞xa4 45.♞xc5; 45.e4!?

43.♞d6+ 43.♞xe5!? 43...♜c8 44.♜e8 44.♜e6!?

The king has arrived at the destination of his journey.

44...♙c7 45.♞c6 ♞d1

45...♞xa4 fails to 46.♜c3 followed by ♜d5 – and after 45...♜b7/b8, White wins with 46.♜g5.

46.♜g5 ♞d8+ 47.♜f7 ♞d7+ 48.♜g8 1-0

In view of the possible continuation 48...h5 49.♞xg6 ♞d2 50.♞c6 ♜b7 51.♜e4 etc.

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