

**Tragicomedy
in the
Endgame**

Instructive Mistakes of the Masters

**by
Mark Dvoretsky**

**Foreword by
Karsten Müller**



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by
Mark Dvoretzky

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Signs & Symbols

!	a good move	zt	zonal tournament
!!	a brilliant or hard-to-find move	izt	interzonal tournament
?	a weak move, a mistake	ct	candidates tournament
??	a blunder	cm	candidates match
!?	a move worth considering	ch	championship
?!	a doubtful move	ch(1)	first league championship
□	the only move	wch	world championship
=	the position is equal	ech	European championship
±	White's position is somewhat better	f	finals
±	White has the advantage	sf	semi-finals
+−	White has a won position	qf	quarter-finals
∓	Black's position is somewhat better	ol	Olympiad
∓	Black has the advantage	tt	team competition
−+	Black has a won position	jr	junior or youth competition
∞	the position is unclear	sim	simultaneous exhibition
∞	with compensation for the material	W?	A position that may be used as a solving exercise, White to move
#	mate	B?	A position that may be used as a solving exercise, Black to move
○	<i>zugzwang</i>	(D)	See the next diagram
m	match		
wm	world championship match		

Foreword

Nowadays, many players neglect studying the endgame and focus mainly on opening preparation. I think that this approach is flawed, as time invested in studying the endgame will repay high dividends. The point is that not only will your technique improve – you will have the psychological advantage of looking forward to reaching and enjoying an endgame – but your overall understanding of the game of chess itself will improve, as in the last phase of the game, the real potential of every single piece may be seen much more clearly than in a complicated middlegame position.

So the real question is, in my opinion, how to navigate the expansive ocean of endgames, and how to learn the important positions, methods and principles which can act as lighthouses to guide you. The main approach is certainly to pick up a reference work like Dvoretsky's excellent *Endgame Manual* and study it thoroughly. Of course, without having studied the principles of endings, even strong players may find themselves adrift at sea, searching for the correct way to weather the storms. In fact this book is based on the well-known maxim that one can benefit from one's mistakes. And that also definitely applies to the mistakes made by others, as this book so aptly demonstrates.

Mark Dvoretsky is ideally qualified for this project because of his vast experience in this area and his large collection of excellent examples which have been tested with some of his exceptionally strong students. In this book, he deals mostly with rook endgames as they occur most frequently; many valuable half-points can be saved by being familiar with certain positions and methods in these endings. But an insight into the essence of the errors regarding theoretical aspects of the endgame is of course not all this work has to offer. Dvoretsky also looks at principles such as prophylaxis, whose importance can hardly be overestimated, or the question of the when and how to exchange – especially simplification into a pawn endgame – where many blunders often occur.

To get maximum benefit from this book, I advise you to just look at the diagrams first, contemplating the possible strategy and moves. Only read on when you have reached a conclusion about which move you would play and why. Then not only your understanding of the important final phase of the royal game will improve but so will your overall results as well.

Grandmaster Dr. Karsten Müller
Hamburg
October 2010

Tragicomedy in the Endgame

Introduction

Many chessplayers have read *Dvoretsky's Endgame Manual* ("DEM"). My new book will help them recall important theoretical positions and technical methods, as well as study several sections on endgame theory in depth (for example, rook and bishop versus rook, or rook endings with f- and h-pawns). It compels one to think about the reasons for endgame errors that everyone – from ordinary amateurs to prominent grandmasters – has made, with a view of avoiding similar mistakes.

For those who are not familiar with DEM, the present volume will serve as an introduction to the fascinating world of endgames and, possibly, prompt them to take up the systematic study of endgame theory. I am firmly convinced – contrary to popular opinion – that such an undertaking is much more effective than endless reworking and memorization of opening material. And, as a result, there will be a significant increase in rating and improved tournament results.

I have called those instances in which serious endgame errors occurred "tragicomedies" – sad for the chessplayers themselves, but amusing for spectators. As was noted in DEM, in which a "tragicomedy" section finished many chapters, such episodes will serve as an excellent warning against ignoring elementary theory. Moreover, they become etched into one's memory, thereby contributing to a better understanding of those endgame concepts.

In every tournament, and in fact in virtually every round, there are more and more new examples of instructive endgame errors. If desired, a multi-volume encyclopedia could be released on this theme. Several authors, for example Leonid Verkhovsky or Adrian Mikhalchishin, would specialize in these endings. I have not tried to familiarize the reader with fresh examples, although the book does contain a number of them – on the contrary, I have gladly made use of fragments which have been previously published. Neither the quantity nor newness of the material to be studied is that important. The level of comprehension that the reader acquires from the lessons in this book is much more critical. Therefore many insufficiently significant examples from my collection were not included in the book.

Let me note other self-imposed restrictions. Inasmuch as the book is basically an introduction (or, on the other hand, a supplement) to DEM, to avoid repetition, I have chosen not to include examples from the *Manual*. Preference was given to examples from practice by very strong, or at least rather well-known chessplayers.

With rare exceptions, fragments from games with rapid time controls or blitz games were not used, as chessplayers are capable of a lot of nonsense when their flag is hanging, and it is senseless to include it in the ideological base. However nowadays it is almost always necessary to play endings in severe time trouble. The principle reason for this is the radical change in the time controls as well as elimination of adjournments. This is further aggravated by FIDE's pernicious policy of having games played at as quick a pace as possible, which inevitably leads to superficiality and poorly reasoned decisions. This in turn results in the diminution of chess as an art, depriving the games played of both ideological and aesthetic value. But I should also note that under such difficult conditions, a good working knowledge and understanding of endings becomes especially important. In fact, in endgames played in time trouble, it will be possible to regularly outplay less experienced opponents.

The following material should be studied by actively trying to solve, on your own, the problems posed in these positions. Next to many diagrams appearing at a critical move you will find a question mark, indicating that it may be used as an exercise. The majority of exercises are elementary, but some will pose quite a challenge.

Mark Dvoretsky
Moscow
November 2010

Tragicomedy in the Endgame

important device in the next section) 76...a1♖ 77.♖×a1 ♖×a1 78.h5 ♖a5+ 79.♖g4!= (again, “shouldering”!).

However, the simplest way to resolve the problem was by 74.♖h6! g5 75.hg

♖h1+ 76.♖g7 a1♖ 77.♖×a1 ♖×a1 78.g6=.

74...♖f2? 75.♖×g6 ♖g1+ 76.♖f7 a1♖ 77.♖×a1 ♖×a1 78.h5 ♖h1 79.♖g6 ♖g1+ 80.♖f6 Draw.

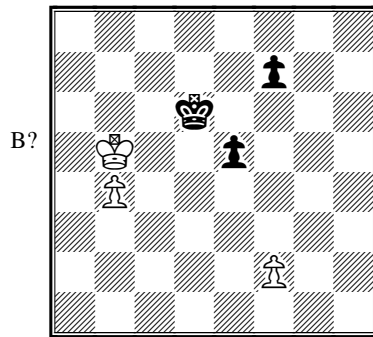
Shouldering

In the endgame it is important not only to activate your own king, but also limit the activity of the enemy king. For example, blocking the way with your own king. This method is called (analogous to hockey) “shouldering.”

The losing move, facilitating the attack on the pawn by his opponent’s king.

58.♖c4 ♖c6 59.♖d4 ♖b5 60.♖×e4 ♖×b4

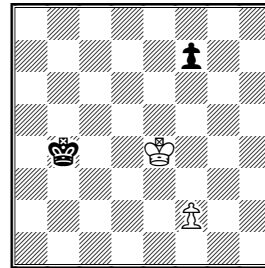
Malakhov – Najer
Moscow 2007



This game was played at the end of the tournament and had an effect on the distribution of prizes (when all was said and done, Evgeny Najer was the winner, sharing first place with Vassily Emelin).

The position is drawn. It was necessary to play 57...f5! 58.♖a6 ♖c7= or 58.♖c4 ♖c6 59.b5+ ♖d6! 60.b6 ♖c6 61.b7 ♖×b7 62.♖d5 e4 63.♖e5 ♖c6 64.♖×f5 ♖d5=.

57...e4??



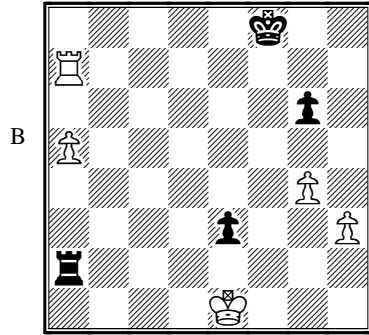
The standard technical device “shouldering” would lead to a win: 61.♖d4! ♖b5 62.♖d5 ♖b6 63.♖d6 and 64.f4.

61.♖e5?? ♖c5 62.f3 ♖c6 63.f4 (63.♖f6 ♖d5 64.♖×f7 ♖e5=) 63...♖d7 64.♖f6 ♖e8 65.♖g7 f5! 66.♖f6 Draw.

This method is often encountered not only in pawn endings, but also in rook-versus-pawn endings, as you may have been convinced studying that section. Let’s take a look at two examples with this material. However, in both instances the players began to go astray earlier, when a rook endgame was on the board.

The King in the Endgame

Damljanovic – R. Byrne
New York 1987



39...♖g8?!

Technically more correct is 39...g5!, blocking the white pawns.

40.h4 ♖a4?

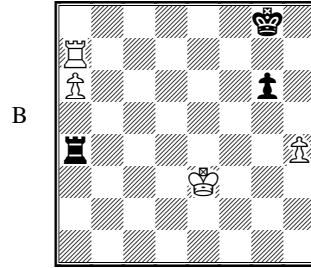
Black had to wait. White would advance the pawns to a6 and h6, but the attempt to make any further progress would result in stalemate. For example, 40...♖h8 41.h5 gh 42.gh ♖g8 43.h6 ♖h8 44.a6 (44.h7 ♖e2+! 45.♖d1 ♖d2+ 46.♖c1 ♖d1+ or 46...♖a2=) 44...♖g8 45.♖g7+ ♖h8 46.a7 ♖a1+ 47.♖e2 ♖a2+ 48.♖xe3 ♖a3+ 49.♖d4 ♖a4+ 50.♖c5 ♖a5+ 51.♖b6 ♖a6+ (a “desperado rook”).

41.♖e2! ♖xg4?

It was still not too late to return to “the true path:” 41...♖a3! =.

42.a6! ♖a4 (42...♖xh4 43.♖b7 ♖a4 44.a7) **43.♖xe3** (D)

Black is in a bad way. With the king cut off on the eighth rank, the h4-pawn is untouchable. White will soon approach the a6-pawn with his king and will hid from vertical checks on a8 or a7.



Black’s only slim hope is to march the king to the queenside.

43...♖f8 44.♖d3 ♖e8 45.♖a8+

The king has to be released from the edge of the board. After 45.♖c3? ♖d8 46.♖b3 ♖a1 (but not 46...♖xh4?? 47.♖g7+-) 47.♖b4 ♖c8 48.♖b5 ♖b8 Black should be able to save himself.

45...♖f7

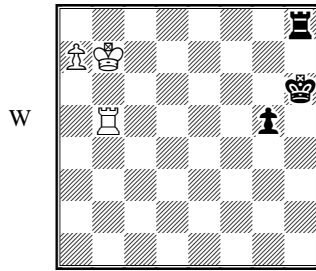
It is necessary to return to the kingside. 45...♖d7 46.a7 ♖c7 47.♖g8 ♖xa7 48.♖g7+ ♖b6 49.♖xa7 ♖xa7 50.♖d4 loses.

46.♖c3 ♖g7 (46...♖xh4 47.a7 ♖a4 48.♖h8+-) **47.♖b3 ♖a1 48.♖b4 ♖b1+ 49.♖c5 ♖c1+ 50.♖b6 ♖b1+ 51.♖a7 ♖b4 52.♖b8 ♖xh4 53.♖b5!**

In such cases, the rook is excellently placed on the fifth rank. It impedes the advance of the enemy king and pawns, while also (with the black rook in the a-file) creating the threat of covering on a5. However, also achieving the objective is 53.♖b7 ♖b4+ 54.♖a8 ♖a4 55.a7 g5 56.♖b6!+- or 55...♖f6 56.♖b5!+-.

53...♖h8 54.♖b7 ♖h6 55.a7 g5

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W

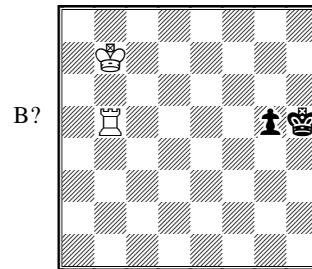
56.a8♖??

An absolutely illogical move! After 56.♖a6! ♜a8 57.♞b8 ♞x7+ 58.♖x7+- the same position has arisen as in the game, except the king is on a7 (instead of a8) which gives White a full extra tempo. Even the rook on the eighth rank is definitely better placed than on b5.

A significantly better situation for White, compared to the game (with the rook, instead of the king, on a8) arises in the line 56.♞a5! ♖h5 (or 56...g4, then 57.a8♖ ♞x7+ 58.♖x7+- and here **the king being cut off from the pawn makes the difference**) 57.a8♖ ♞x7+ 58.♞a8+-.

56.♞c5!? ♖h5 57.♞c8 ♞h7+ 58.♖b6 ♞x7 59.♖x7 led approximately to the same thing. On 59...♖g4 60.♖b6 ♖f3 White makes use of the well-known device – a *zwischenzschach* – to win a tempo: 61.♞f8+! ♖e3 62.♞g8! ♖f4 63.♖c5 g4 64.♖d4 ♖f3 65.♖d3 g3 66.♞f8+, etc. 59...g4 does not help: 60.♖b6 g3 61.♞g8! (but not 61.♖c5? ♖g4! =) 61...♖h4 62.♖c5 ♖h3 63.♖d4 g2 64.♖e3 ♖h2 65.♖f2+- . Those who have studied DEM will be familiar with all these concepts from the Balashov-Dvoretzky ending (9-70).

56...♞x7+ 57.♖x7 ♖h5 (57...g4?? 58.♖b7 g3 59.♞b3+-) 58.♖b7



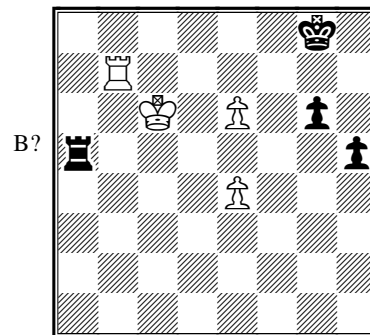
B?

58...♖h4??

Now the white king approaches the pawn without any difficulty. Black had to use “shouldering:” 58...♖g4! 59.♖c6 ♖f4 60.♖d5 g4 61.♖d4 g3=. In this variation the unfavorable position of the rook on the fifth rank is telling: if the rook were on b8, 61.♖d4 ♖f3 62.♖d3 g3 63.♞f8+ would win.

59.♖c6 g4 60.♖d5 g3 61.♖e4 g2 62.♞b1 ♖g3 63.♖e3 Black resigned.

I. Gruenfeld – Watson New York 1981



B?

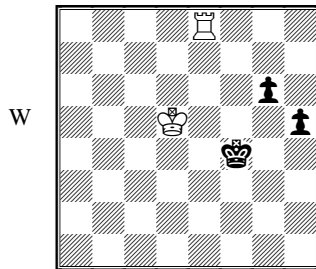
Black can draw by 84...♖f8! 85.♖d7 (85.♖d6 ♞a6+ 86.♖e5 ♞a1 87.♖f6 ♞f1+ =) 85...♞a8 86.e7+ ♖f7 87.e5 g5 (87...h4 is the same) 88.e6+ ♖f6=. With the pawn on e6, capturing the rook for

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the pawn does not work for White. The plan chosen by him in the game loses.

84...♖e5? 85.♔d6 ♜×e4 86.♞b8+ ♕g7 87.e7 h4

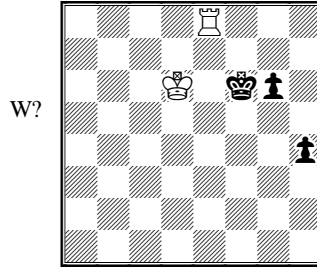
In Pal Benko's opinion, Black could have saved himself by immediately advancing the king: 87...♔f6!? 88.e8♖ ♞×e8 89.♞×e8 ♕f5! 90.♔d5 ♕f4



91.♔d4 h4 (91...♕f3 92.♞h8!?) 92.♔d3 ♕g3 (92...h3 93.♔e2+-), and the grandmaster further continues 93.♔e3? h3 94.♞g8 ♕g2! 95.♞×g6+ ♕f1!=. But it is not complicated to take the f1-square under control (again "shouldering!"): 93.♔e2! h3 94.♞g8 (also good is 94.♕f1) 94...h2 95.♞×g6+ ♕h3 96.♔f2+-.

There is still another way to win. In the position from the last diagram, Black "shoulders" the white king from the important squares e4 and e5. If check is given, one of these squares becomes accessible. So: 91.♞f8+!? ♕e3 92.♔e5 g5 93.♞a8 h4 94.♞a3+ ♕f2 95.♔f5+-, or 91...♕g3 92.♔e4 h4 93.♞f3+! ♕g4 (93...♕g2 94.♕f4 h3 95.♞g3+) 94.♔e3 h3 95.♔f2 h2 96.♞g3+ ♕h4 97.♞×g6+-.

88.e8♖ ♞×e8 89.♞×e8 ♕f6

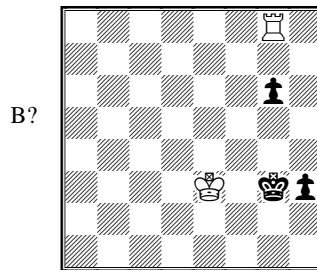


90.♞h8??

A loss of time! It is not certain that this move will be needed, but the king definitely should advance. Winning was 90.♔d5! ♕f5 91.♔d4 ♕f4 92.♔d3 (or 92.♞e3 g5 93.♔d3) 92...♕f3 93.♞f8+ ♕g2 94.♔e2 h3 95.♞f2+! ♕g1 (95...♕g3 96.♞f6!+-) 96.♞f4!+-.

There is another way to win, having to do with cutting off the king horizontally as shown by Benko: 90.♞e5! g5 (90...h3 91.♞e3 ♕f5 92.♞×h3 g5 93.♔d5 g4 94.♞h8 ♕f4 95.♔d4 ♕f3 96.♔d3 g3 97.♞f8+) 91.♔d5! g4 (91...h3 92.♞e3 g4 93.♔e4+-) 92.♔e4 g3 93.♕f4 h3 94.♞e1 g2 95.♔g3+-.

90...♕g5 91.♔e5 ♕g4 92.♔e4 ♕g3 93.♔e3 h3 94.♞g8



94...h2??

Tragicomedy in the Endgame

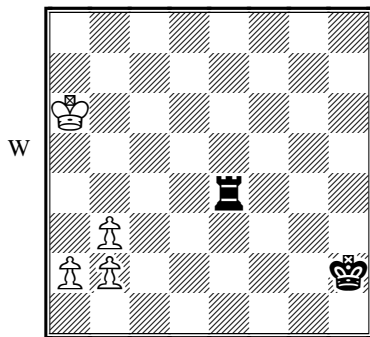
The very same error as in the game Tukmakov-Schneider in the “Rook versus Pawns” section. Necessary was 94...♙g2! 95.♜xg6+ ♚f1 96.♜h6 ♙g2 97.♙e2 h2 98.♜g6+ ♚h1!=.

95.♜xg6+ ♚h3 96.♙f2 h1♙+ 97.♙f3 ♚h2 98.♜g8 Black resigned.

Cutting Off the King

It is not only our king that has the ability to limit the activity of the enemy king. Other pieces, in particular the rook, are also capable. With its help the king can be, for example, squeezed against the edge of the board.

Smirnov – Korneev
Ekaterinburg 1997



The simplest way to draw was 51.♙b5 ♜e2 (or 51...♙g3) 52.a4.

Worse is 51.♙a5?! ♙g3 52.b4? (52.a4) 52...♙f4 53.b5 ♙e5 -+, however, possible is 51.a3 ♙g3 52.b4 ♙f4 53.b5 ♜a4+ 54.♙b7 ♙e5 55.♙c6(c7)! ♜c4+ 56.♙d7=.

In the game, Pavel Smirnov commits “hari-kari.”

51.a4?? ♜b4!

Now the a-pawn can only be advanced with the help of the white king, but this will be too slow. In this regard, with

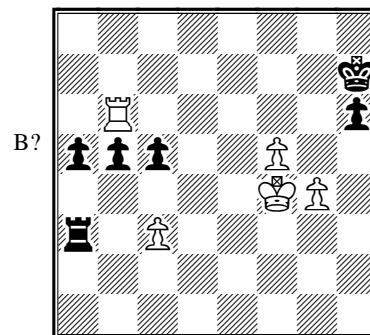
the king on a8 and the pawn on a7, Black will avoid stalemate by vacating b4 with the rook, thereby allowing the b-pawn to move..

52.a5 ♙g3 53.♙a7 ♙f4 54.a6 ♙e5 55.♙a8 ♙d6 56.a7 ♜b5

If there were no pawn on b2, this move would only lead to a draw. But in that case, Black would win by 56...♜b6!.

57.b4 ♙c7 58.b3 ♜h5 White resigned.

Sargissian – Inarkiev
Kemer tt 2007



Black has avoided the king being dangerously forced back to the eighth rank by 47...♙g7!? 48.♜xb5 ♜xc3 49.♜b7+ (49.♜xa5 ♜c4+ 50.♙e5 ♜xg4=) 49...♙f6 50.♜h7 ♜h3=. True, his opponent could escalate matters with 48.♜b7+!? ♙f6 49.♜h7, but this would hardly promise White any real chances of success. However, there was a quieter