



Modern Chess Magazine

Issue 20

Caro-Kann on the Olympiad

Opening Review

Tactical Rook Endings



Understand the Najdorf Structures - Part 1

**Endgame Series 20:
Active Rook in the
Endgame**

**French Structures -
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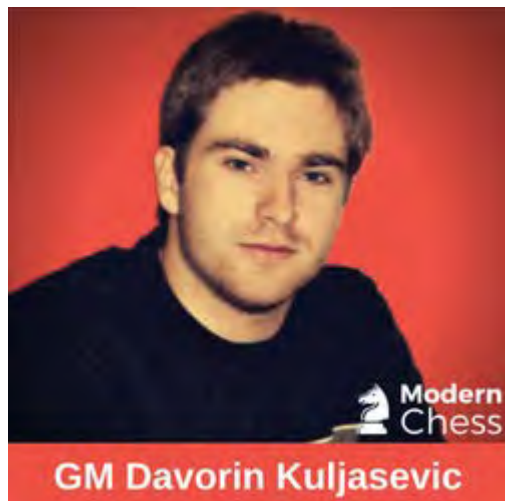
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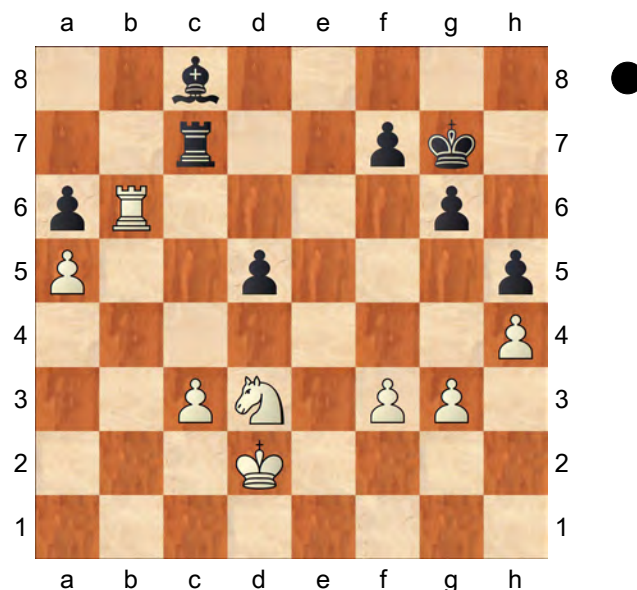
Endgame Series 20: Active Rook in the Endgame



Hello, Dear chess friends! In the new issue of Endgame series, we will cover an important endgame principle: rook activity. Rook is a piece that often shows its greatest strengths in the endgame, when most of the pawns and pieces disappear and it can move freely across the board. According to the statistics published by Mueller and Lamprecht in 2011, the most common type of endgame is exactly rook vs. rook endgame (8.45% in all games played), while endgames involving at least one rook appear in approximately 37% of all games played. So, when you sit at the board, there is more than one in three chance that you will play a rook endgame on that day! I do not think that we need to give further reasons why it is important to have a good understanding of rook's capabilities in the endgame. Now, a well-known rule of thumb says that active rook in the endgame is worth a pawn. This does not apply to all

positions, but in many of them, this is indeed the case. Our goal in this survey is to explore exactly such endgames where activation of the rook is the best strategy, even at the cost of a pawn. We start with a grandmaster encounter from the recently finished Russian Higher League:

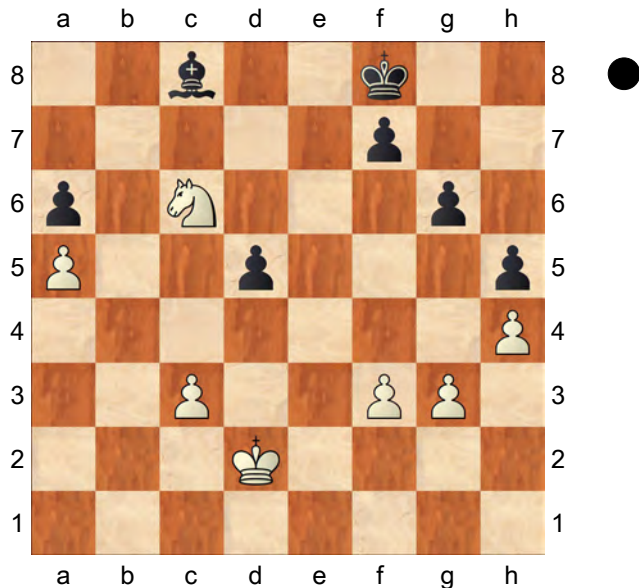
Sarana,A. **2573**
 Zvjaginsev,V. **2633**
 71st ch-RUS HL 2018 (7.1) 03.07.2018



White has a strong pressure in this endgame. Not only does Black have two isolated pawns on the same color as his bishop, but his pieces are also very passive. Black's position looks hopeless on the surface; however, experienced grandmaster Zvjaginsev finds a nice maneuver to activate his rook: **41...Rc4!** reminding White that he has a weak pawn, as well.

[Other moves are too passive:
41...Kf8 42.Nb4 Rc5 and here White forces a favorable rook trade: 43.Rc6! Rxc6 44.Nxc6

[Other moves are too passive:
41...Kf8 42.Nb4 Rc5 and here White
forces a favorable rook trade: 43.Rc6!
Rxc6 44.Nxc6



In this endgame, Black is lost because his pawn structure violates Capablanca's rule. Bb7 45.Nb4 Ke7 46.Kd3 Kd6 47.Kd4+- and Black will soon get into zugzwang.]

[or 41...Rd7 42.Nb4 d4 43.c4+- when White gets a passed pawn.]

42.Ne5 White wins a pawn with this move, but, as we shall see, this also allows Black to activate both his rook and bishop.

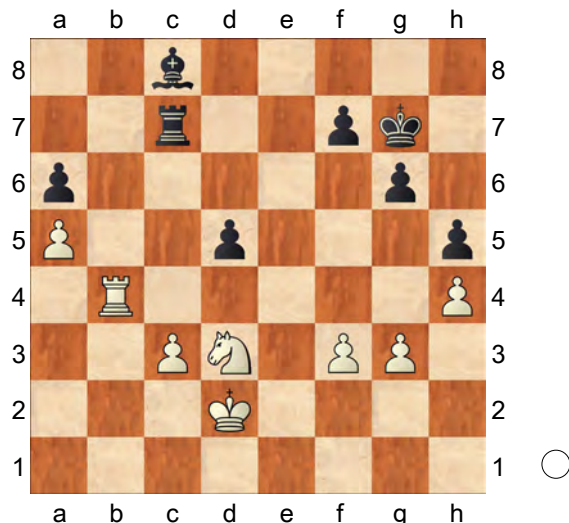
[White had many other possibilities at this point: 1) 42.Rd6 is another way to win a pawn, but after Ra4 43.Rxd5 Bb7 44.Rd7 Bc6! (an important intermezzo) (44...Bxf3? 45.Ne5) 45.Rc7 Bxf3 46.Ne5 Bd5=

Black returns it, with a great position.]

[2) 42.Nb4 stopping Rc4-a4 maneuver, but here Black has d4

43.cxd4 Rxd4+ 44.Ke3 Rc4 45.Nxa6 Ra4=]

[similar is 3) 42.Rb8 Bf5 43.Nb4 Rc5=]
[Finally, the most stubborn option was
4) 42.Rb4!? Black retreats Rc7

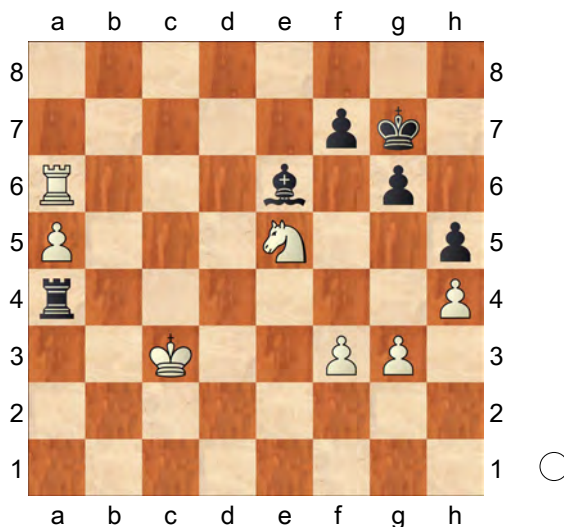


and surprisingly, White does not have a good way to improve his position. Both his c3- and a5-pawns are a burden, so it is difficult to rearrange his pieces in a better way. For example: 43.Rd4 (43.Rb8 Rc4↔; 43.Nf4 Rc5↔) 43...Be6 44.Nc1 Rc5 45.Nb3 Rc7 and White's positional advantage may just prove insufficient to win the game.]

42...Ra4 43.Rc6 Be6

[Of course, not 43...Bb7? 44.Rc7+-]

44.Rxa6 d4! This simplifying move makes Black's life much easier. **45.cxd4 Rxd4+ 46.Kc3 Ra4**

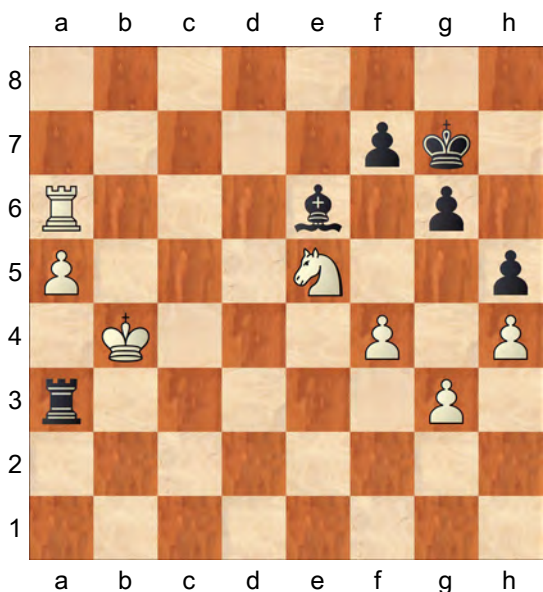


What a transformation! Just a few moves ago, black pieces were stuck on last two ranks. Now black rook is more active than the white one, while the bishop can operate on the whole board. Black has a completely adequate compensation for the pawn, which was proved in the game: **47.Kd3 Bd5** It is important to put pressure on White's kingside pawns.

48.Ra7

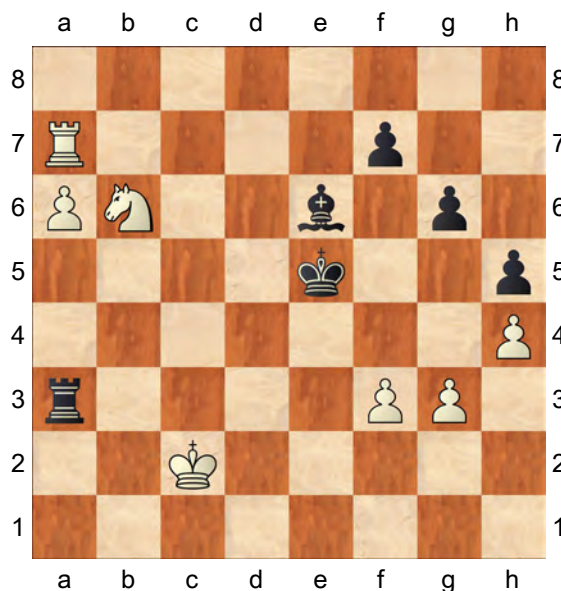
[48.Kc3!? may have been more precise, not allowing a black king to activate.]

[On the other hand, 48.f4 leaves the g3-pawn exposed and after **Be6 49.Kc3 Ra3+ 50.Kb4**



Rb3+! (**50...Rxc3?! 51.Rc6 Rb3+ 52.Kc5 Ra3 53.a6**) **51.Kc5 Rc3+!** (the purpose of these checks was to drive white king to a worse position) **52.Kd6 Rxc3 53.Rb6 Ra3=** Black is in time to stop the a-pawn.]

48...Kf6! 49.Nd7+ Kf5 50.Nb6 Ra3+ 51.Kc2 Be6 52.a6 Ke5



Now Black king is active as well. **53.Ra8 Kd4! 54.a7 Ke3** Black's counterplay comes just in time. **55.g4 Kxf3 56.gxh5 gxh5 57.Kb2 Rb3+!?**

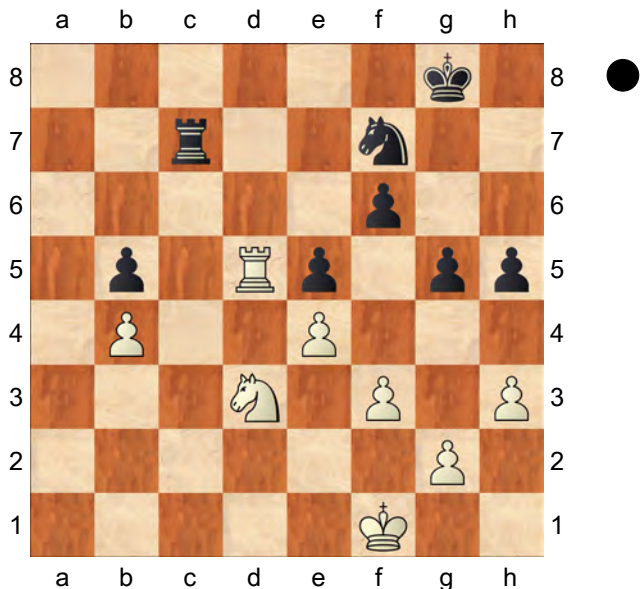
[57...Ra5= does not allow the pawn promotion, but why complicate matters. The bishop vs rook endgame is a dead draw.]

58.Kc1 Rxb6 59.Rd8 Ra6 60.a8Q+ Rxa8 61.Rxa8 Kg3 62.Kd2 Kxh4= 63.Ra3 Kg4 64.Ke2 h4 65.Kf2 f5 66.Ra6 Bd5 67.Rh6 Be4 68.Rh7 Bd5 By activating his rook and putting it behind the a-pawn, Zvjaginsev followed the well-known Tarrasch rule that states: ⇔↗The Rook's place is behind the passed pawn; behind the enemy pawn in order to hold it up, behind one's own in order to support its advance.↗↗ One should remember this rule because it holds true in most cases. Let us see another instance where the defender employed this endgame strategy.

1/2

Wojtaszek,R. **2738**

Demchenko,A. **2672**
 19th ch-EUR Indiv 2018 (8.2) 25.03.2018

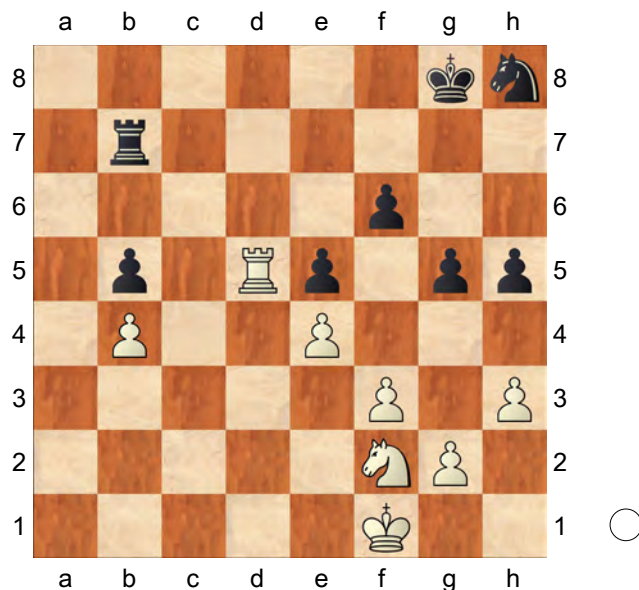


White has a slight initiative in this symmetrical endgame. His rook is dominant on d5-square, from where it puts pressure on the b5-pawn. Black's dilemma, typical for many endgames, is: defend actively or passively?

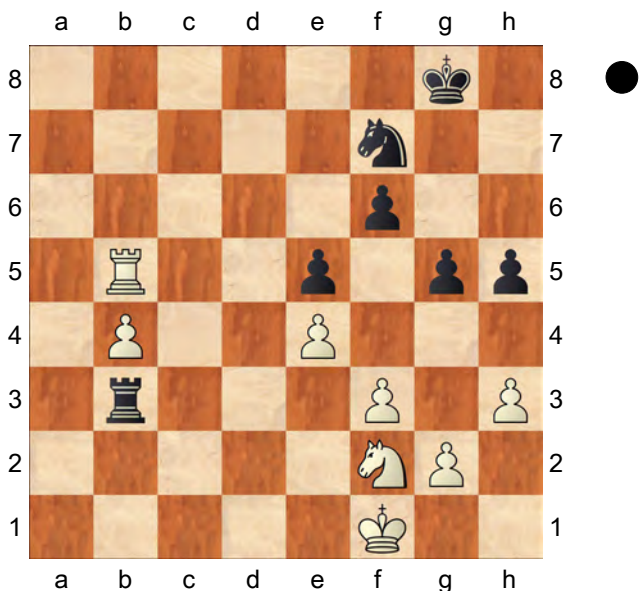
Grandmaster Demchenko chooses the latter: **44...Rc3!?** Most modern grandmasters, your author included, prefer to defend actively without a pawn, then passively with equal material. It is just more natural and easier to play that way. Of course, whenever material is sacrificed, some long-term risk is involved, but who says that the risk of going wrong while defending passively is not greater?

[That being said, there was nothing wrong with the passive defense, either: 44...Rb7 Here, the only constructive plan I see for White is 45.Nf2 targeting the b5-pawn via d1-c3

(45.Nc5 brings no improvement: Ra7 46.Nb3 Rb7= and Black will slowly activate his kingside pieces.)
 However, Black also has his racing horse: 45...Nh8!

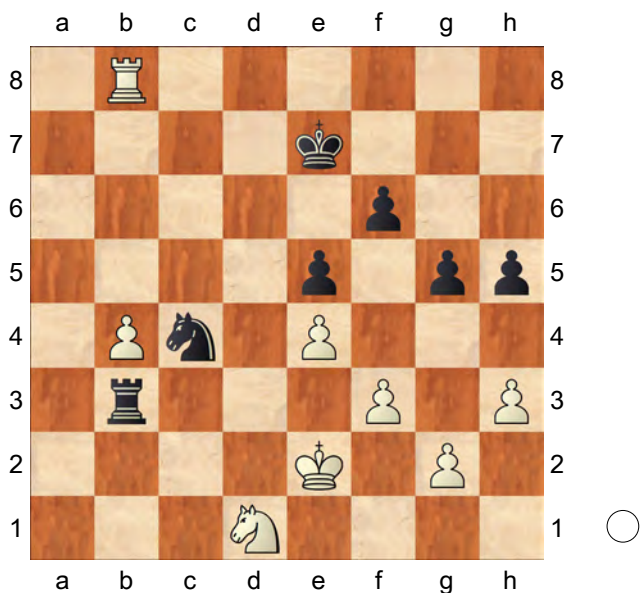


First, it takes one step back, but then... 46.Nd1 Ng6 47.Nc3 (47.g3 h4=) 47...Nf4 48.Rxb5 Rxb5 49.Nxb5 Nd3= ...it gets to the finish line just in time.]
45.Nf2 Rb3 46.Rxb5



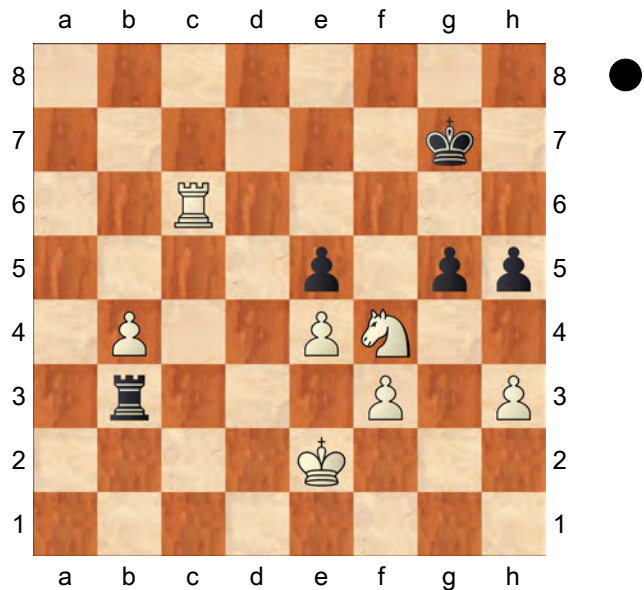
Demchenko followed Tarrasch's rule, and now his rook is in an excellent position. It not only defends against the passed pawn but may also be used actively along the b-file to target White's kingside. Here, Demchenko rushed to activate his knight, as well: **46...Nd6!?** This implies that Black is ready to give up his f6-pawn.

[It was also possible to protect that pawn first: 46...Kf8 47.Rb8+ Ke7 48.Nd1 and only then play Nd6 Now after 49.Ke2 Black is just in time to deny the e3-square to white knight: Nc4☞



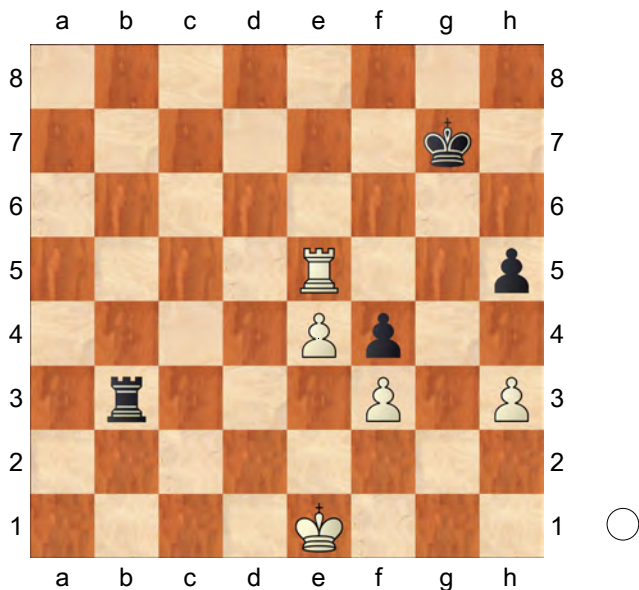
Black's activity is fully sufficient to hold the balance. For example: 50.h4 gxh4 51.Rb7+ Ke6 52.Rh7 h3 53.gxh3 Rxb4 54.Rxh5 Rb3 55.Rh8

Nd6 56.h4 f5=]
47.Rb6 Wojtaszek's logical move instigates a forced sequence: **47...Nc4 48.Rxf6 Kg7 49.Rc6 Ne3+ 50.Ke2** [50.Kg1 Rb1+ 51.Kh2 Nf1+ 52.Kg1 Ne3+=]
50...Nxc2 51.Nd3 Nf4+ 52.Nxf4



Everything was forced up to this point. Black has an important decision to make: capture with the e-pawn to have an option of g5-g4 breakthrough, or keep the structure blocked with ... gxf4? Demchenko's choice **52...exf4?!** is not wrong, but it is practically more complicated

[than 52...gxf4 White has two options now, but none of them is sufficient to win: 1) 53.Rc5 (2) 53.Rb6 h4 54.b5 Re3+ 55.Kf2 Rb3=)
 53...Rxb4
 54.Rxe5 Rb2+ 55.Ke1 Rb3



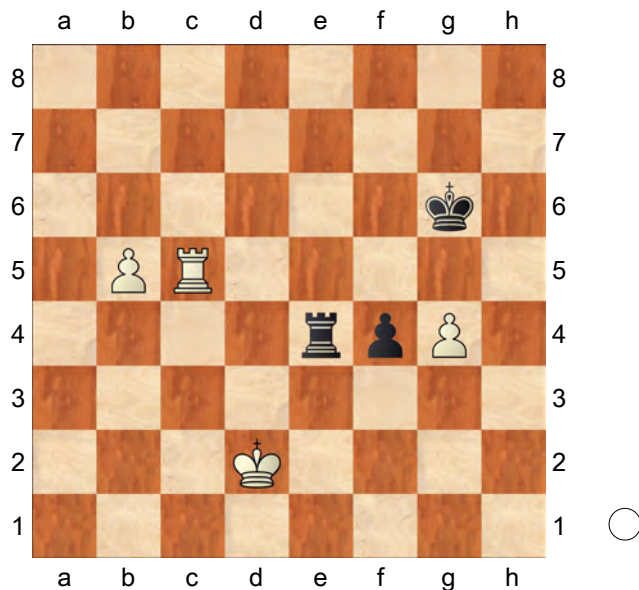
Black draws thanks to his active rook.
56.Rxh5 Rxf3=]

53.Rc5 Kg6

[Black can not afford to take the b-pawn 53...Rxb4? , like in 52...gxf4 variation. After 54.Rxg5+ Kh6 55.Rf5 Rb2+ 56.Ke1 The f4-pawn is hanging, so there is no time to play ...Rb2-b3. Rb1+ 57.Kd2 Rb2+ 58.Kc3 Rh2 59.Rxf4 Rxh3 60.Kd4+-]

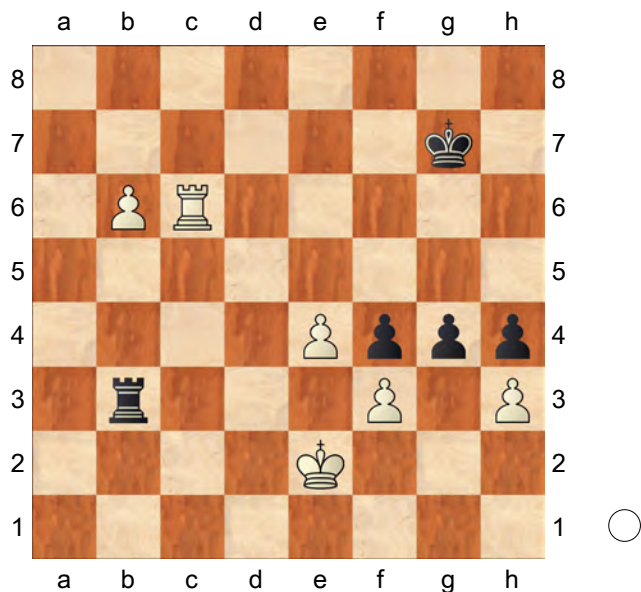
54.b5 Rb2+?? I imagine that Demchenko was already in time trouble at this stage of the game and just had to play something, because this move loses quite trivially.

[Instead, Black should have proceeded with his breakthrough plan 54...g4 and after a few pawn trades: 55.hxg4 hxg4 56.fxc4 Re3+ 57.Kd2 (57.Kf2 Rxc4 58.Kf3 Rb4=) 57...Rxc4



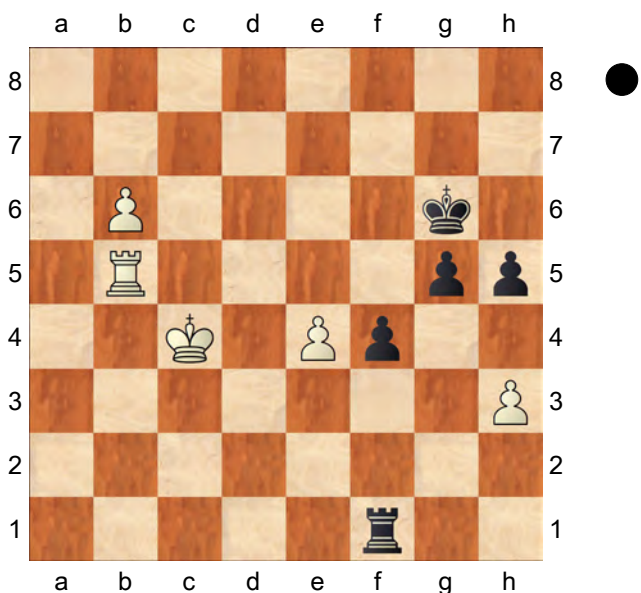
we would reach 2 vs 1 rook endgame where the extra pawn is not of much importance. The g-pawn is safely blocked by the Black king, so this position is drawn. A likely variation would be: 58.Rf5 Rb4 59.Kc3 Rb1 60.Kc4 Rc1+ 61.Kd5 Rb1 62.Kc6 Rc1+! (a necessary intermediate check to force White king in front of his pawn) 63.Kb7 Rf1 64.b6 f3 65.Kb8 f2 66.b7 Kg7 67.Kc7 Rc1+ 68.Kd6 Rb1=]

[Another, albeit more complex, way to reach a draw is: 54...h4!? 55.Rc6+ Kg7 56.b6 g4!=



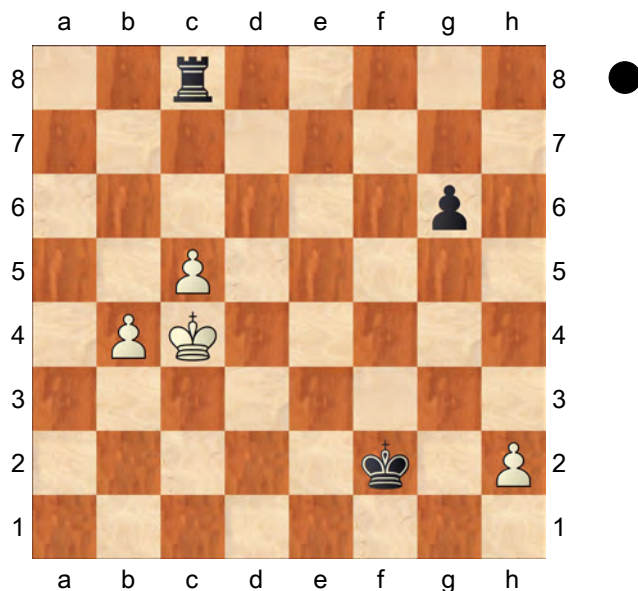
and, again, the g5–g4 breakthrough saves the day. I suggest the reader figure out how exactly on his own.]

55.Kd3 Rb3+ 56.Kc4 Rxf3 57.b6 Rf1 58.Rb5+–



It is white rook that is behind the passed b–pawn now, which is bad news for Black. His connected pawns on the kingside are no match for it. **58...Rc1+ 59.Kd5 Rd1+ 60.Kc6 Rd8 61.b7 g4 62.hxg4 hxg4 63.Rf5 g3 64.Rxf4 Kg5 65.Rf1 1–0**

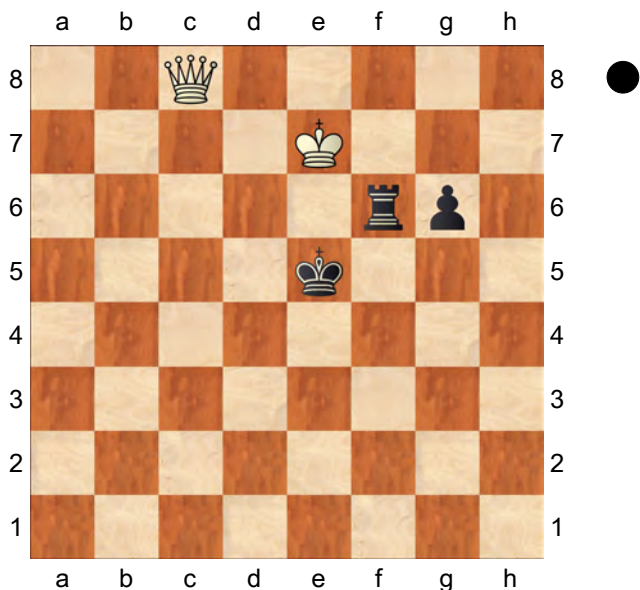
Vitiugov, N. **2726**
 Valsecchi, A. **2500**
 43rd Olympiad 2018 (9.6) 03.10.2018



In sharp rook vs. pawns endgames, Tarrasch rule holds true as well. The rook is usually the most effective behind the pawns. An instructive application of this can be seen in the following game: This game was played in the last Chess Olympiad, in the match between Italy and Russia. The Italian player defended a worse endgame for a long time and, at the very end, he could have succeeded in his efforts if he had found: **43...Rh8!** In the light of Tarrasch rule, this is the most principled move. However, working out the exact variations is the more difficult part, especially since the rook maneuver seems to slow with the Black king so far away.

[In the game, Valsecchi decided to bring the king closer first: 43...Ke3? but after 44.b5 Ke4 (It is too late to activate rook now 44...Rh8 because of 45.b6 Rh4+ and the White king can hide on 46.Kb5 Rxh2 47.c6+–) 45.c6 Ke5 46.Kc5 and at this point, it becomes obvious that Black king is being shouldered away from White's pawns.

Rh8 (46...Ke6 47.b6 Rh8 48.b7 Rh5+ 49.Kb6+-) 47.c7 Rxh2 48.Kc6 Rc2+ 49.Kd7 Rd2+ 50.Ke7 Rc2 51.b6 Rc6 52.Kd7 Rd6+ 53.Ke8 Rxb6 54.c8Q Rf6 55.Ke7



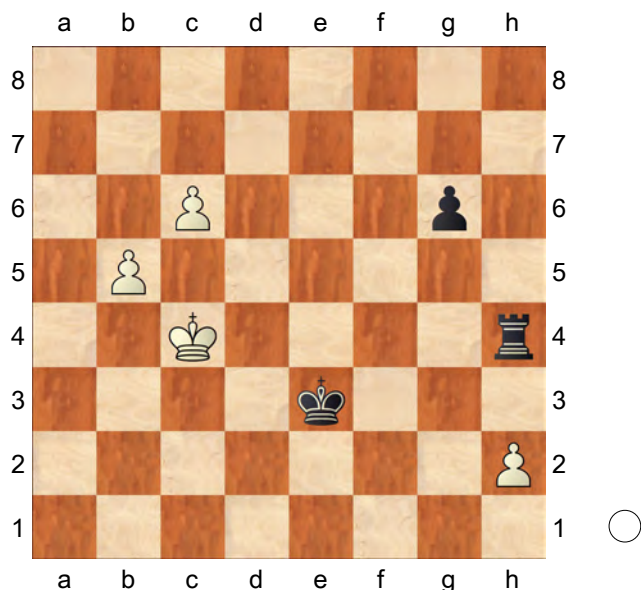
This queen vs rook and pawn endgame is lost. Tablebase announces checkmate in 32 moves. Vitiugov converted smoothly: Rf5 56.Qe6+ Kf4 57.Qxg6 Re5+ 58.Kf6 Re2 59.Qd3 Re3 60.Qd4+ Kf3 61.Kf5 Re2 62.Qd3+ Kf2 63.Kf4 Re8 64.Qa3 Re2 65.Qb4 Kg2 66.Qd4 Rf2+ 67.Kg4 Kh1 68.Kg3 Rg2+ 69.Kf3 Kh2 70.Qd5 Kg1 71.Qe5 Kh1 72.Qe4 Kh2 73.Qe1 The final theoretical position, in which Black resigned, can be found in 10th issue of Endgame series. 1-0 (73) Vitiugov,N (2726)-Valsecchi,A (2500) Batumi GEO 2018]

44.c6 It is logical to push the more advanced pawn first.

[If White pushes the other pawn: 44.b5 Black draws with Rh4+ 45.Kd5 Ke3 46.b6 Rb4!=]

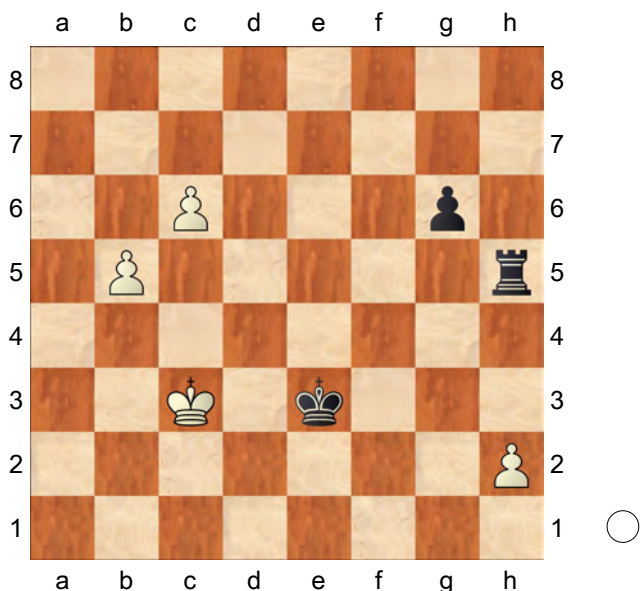
44...Ke3 45.b5 Rh4+!

[45...Rxh2? does not work, because after 46.b6 White gets both his pawns on the sixth rank, which means that they do not need the help of the king anymore. Rc2+ 47.Kd5 Rd2+ 48.Ke5+-]



Such checks are usually harmful because they help the opponent's king to move closer to its pawns. However, in this particular position, this counter-intuitive check is necessary to chase white king away from the center, so that Black can put his rook behind the pawn. Truth be told, Black's successful defense hinges upon one tactical detail that we will see shortly. **46.Kc5**

[Besides this, 46.Kc3 is also possible, when Rh5!]



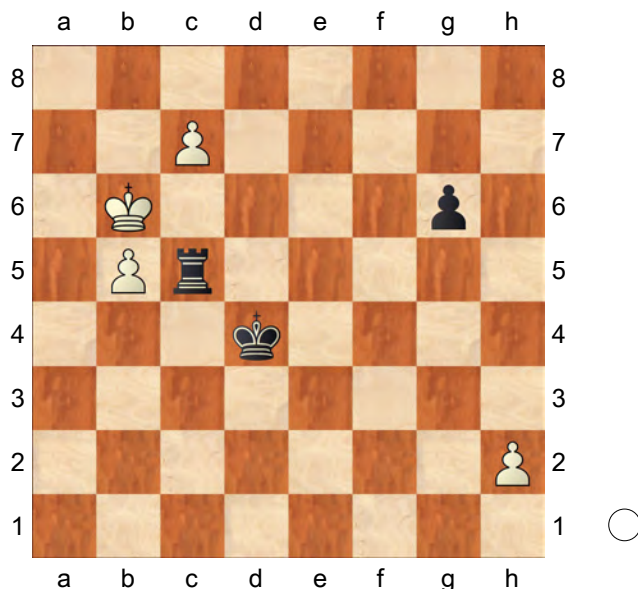
stops white's pawns in a nice way. White can push the king down the board: 47.Kb4 Rh4+ 48.Ka5

but then the rook finally comes behind the passed pawn: Rc4 49.Kb6 Kd4 50.Kb7 and here the standard drawing method is Kc5! 51.b6 Kd6 52.c7 Kd7=]

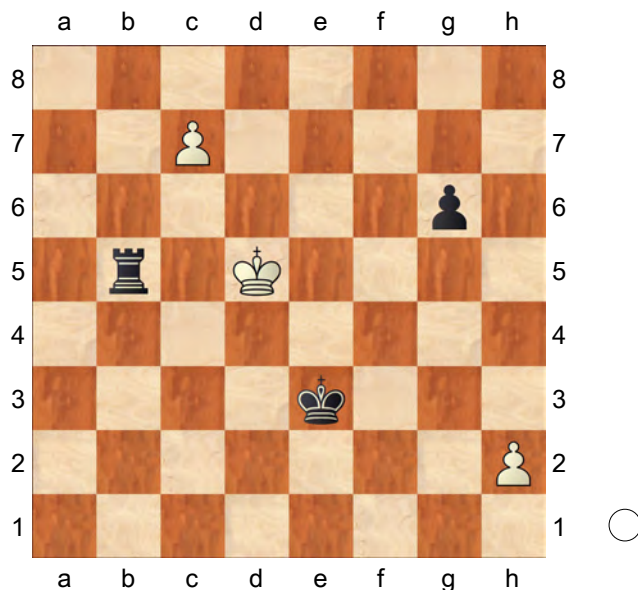
[Likewise, 46.Kb3 is met by Rh5!= and if 47.c7?? Rxb5+ 48.Kc4 Rb1+]

46...Rh5+! Another essential check. White king can now move even closer to its pawns, but Black will be just in time to stop them. **47.Kd6**

[The other way is 47.Kb6 Kd4 48.c7 Rc5=]



47...Rxb5 48.c7 Normally, this should be enough for victory, but... **48...Rb6+ 49.Kd5 Rb5+**



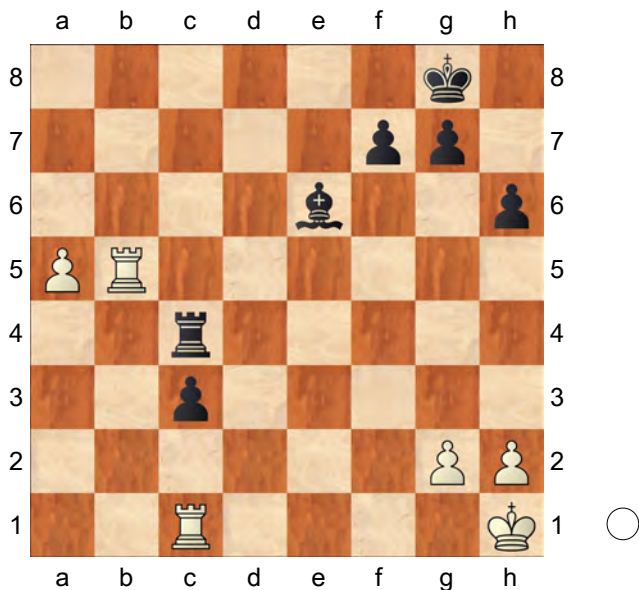
...because of the position of Black king on e3, White king can not go to d4, so the position is drawn! **50.Kd6**

[or 50.Kc6 Rb1=]

50...Rb6+=
1-0

Analysis

□ Tomashevsky-
 ■ Dubov,2018



The other feature of the Tarrasch rule is putting the rook behind your own passed pawn. We already saw that this was the winning maneuver in Wojtaszek-Demchenko game. Let us see another example: This position has been slightly modified from the game Tomashevsky – Dubov, Russia–ch, 2018., 1–0, for instructive purposes. The idea is to demonstrate that the only clear way to win this double rook vs. rook and bishop endgame is to utilize Tarrasch's rule. Thus, White wins only with: **31.Rbb1!+-** preparing 32.Ra1 and preventing Black from getting behind the a–pawn with his rook.

[White would be too slow with 31.Kg1?! c2 32.Kf2 g6! 33.Ke3 Bf5± when Black's activity gives him very good drawing chances.]

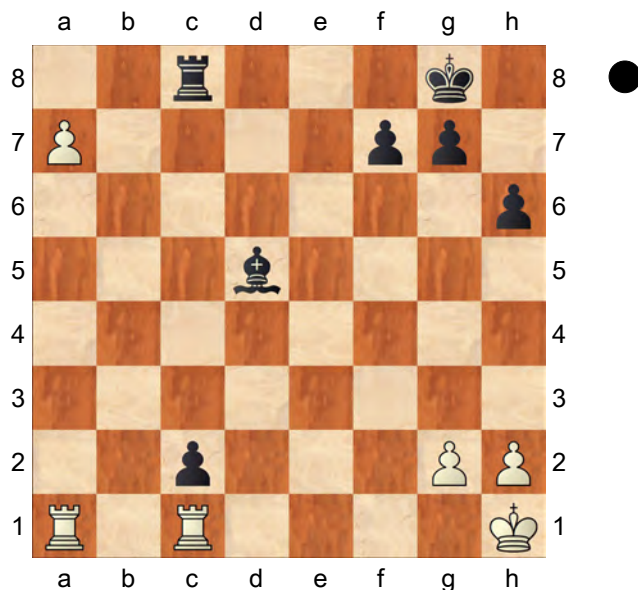
[while 31.Rb8+? Kh7 32.a6 Ra4 33.Rb6 Bc4=]

[and 31.Rb7? Ra4= are just inadequate.]

31...c2

[31...Ra4 is also met by 32.Ra1 Rxa1 33.Rxa1+-]

32.Ra1 Bd5 33.a6 Rc8 Black rook is forced into passivity. **34.a7**



and with a pawn on the seventh rank and an active rook, White's win should be a matter of time. For example:

34...Kh7 35.Kg1 f5 36.Ra4 Ra8 37.Kf2 Be4 38.Ke3 g6 39.Kd2+-

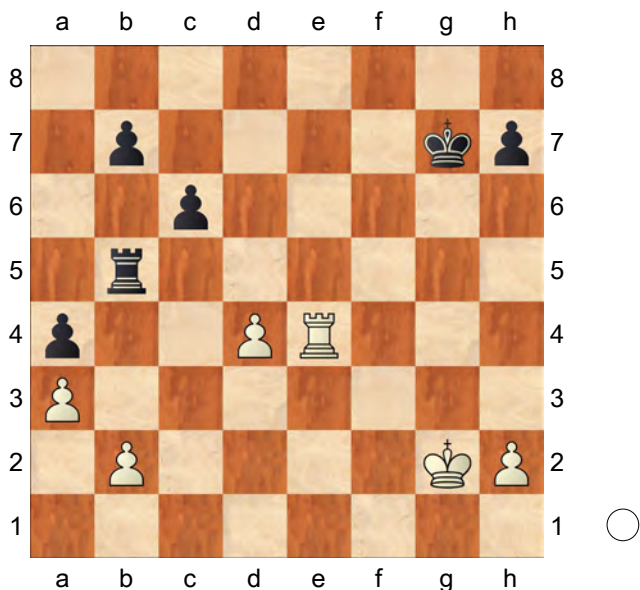
White blocks the pawn with his king and sets the c1–rook free.

☐ Smyslov, Vassily

■ Keres, Paul

Leningrad/Moscow (1)

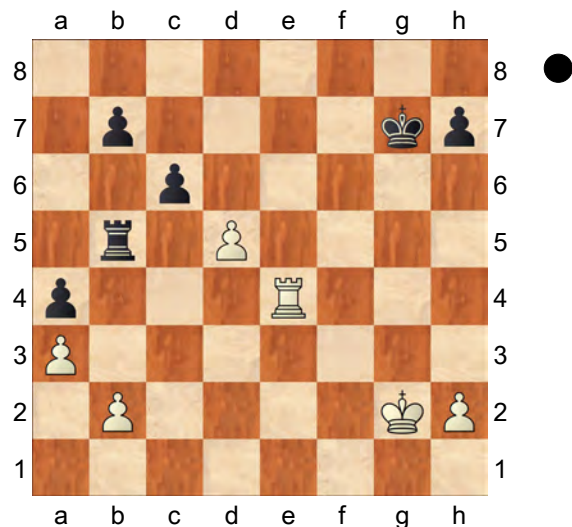
1941



Following the Tarrasch rule is just one way to make sure that our rook is active in the endgame. There are various other ways in which the rook can be useful. We can activate the rook on the seventh rank, an open file, or generally wherever there are pawns that can be attacked. One of the worst things you can do is leave your rook in a passive position – if you have a choice, of course. With this in mind, let us look at one example where the ex-World champion did not follow this advice, remained passive with his rook, and rightfully lost the game. The rook endgame that was reached in the game of two chess legends is difficult for White. He has many weak pawns and if he wants to defend them all, he needs to bring his rook to the second rank – a very passive position. Smyslov decided to defend like that: **35.Re2?** which turned out to be a decisive strategic mistake.

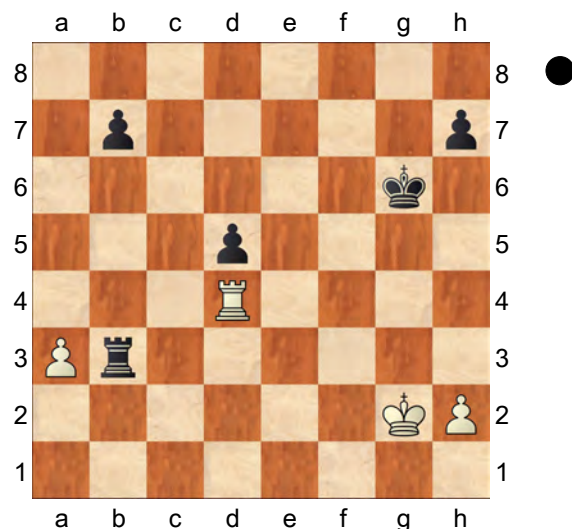
[Here is another idea; why do we need to defend our pawns passively if we can attack opponent's pawns actively?

35.d5!

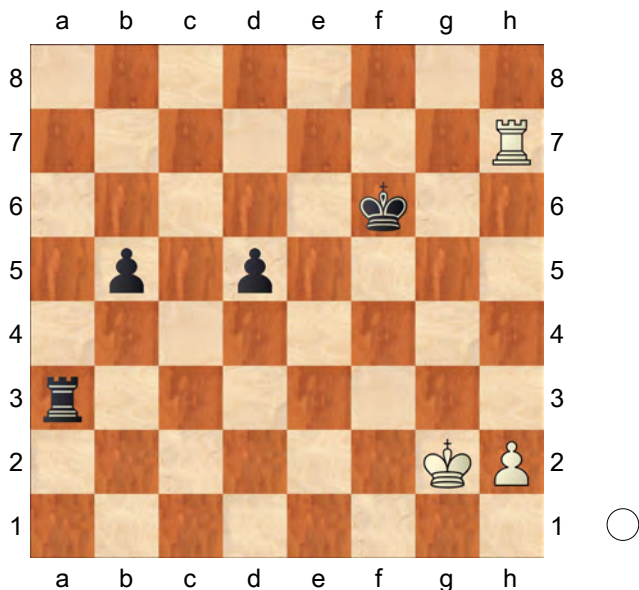


White sacrifices his pawns to keep the rook active. Black has several reasonable continuations, but none of them lead to a clearly winning endgame. 1)

A) 2) 35...cxd5 36.Rxa4 Rxb2+ 37.Kg3 Rb3+ 38.Kg2 Black is up a pawn, but his problem is that his pawns are exposed to attack by the active white rook. If he tries to centralize his king with **Kf6** White immediately targets the h7-pawn: **39.Rh4! Rxa3** (Alternatively, after **39...Kg6** he changes the target: **40.Rd4**



We can see from this how important it was to keep the rook active on the fourth rank. Its quick lateral mobility is the main reason why rook is such a powerful endgame piece. Black can not coordinate his pieces well, so conversion of the extra pawn is not going to be possible with White's best play. For example: *Rb5 41.a4 Rc5 42.Kf3 Kf5 43.Rh4 Rc3+ 44.Ke2 Kg6* and now the rook finds another target: *45.Rb4! Rc2+ 46.Kd3 Rxh2 47.Rxb7=* with an easy draw, since the d-pawn is blocked by the king.) *40.Rxh7 b5*



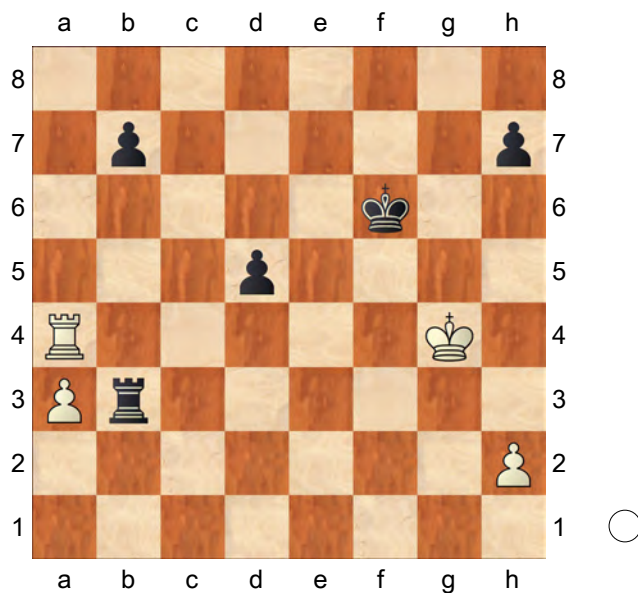
and now we apply the Tarrasch rule: *41.Rb7! Rb3 42.h4*
 The h-pawn will be used as a distraction for a black king: *d4 43.h5 Kg5 44.Kf2 Kxh5*

and with Black king far away from the center, Black's pawns don't stand a chance. *45.Rd7! d3 46.Ke3=;*

B) 3) 35...Rxd5?! 36.Re7+ Kg6 37.Rxb7=;

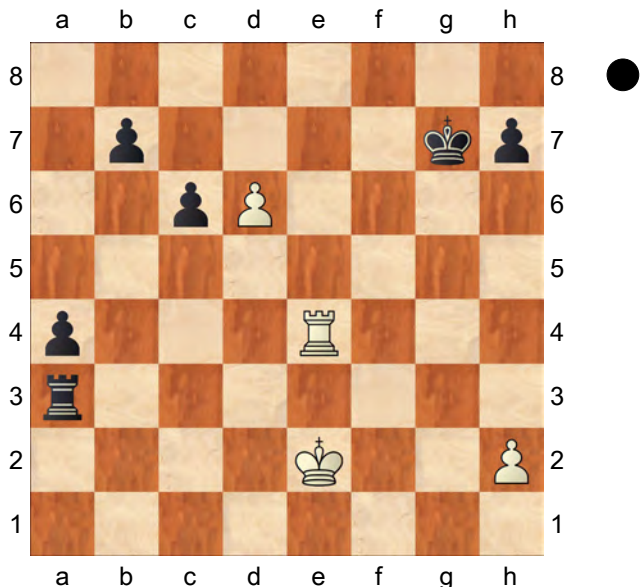
C) 35...Rxb2+ 36.Kf3!

All of White's pawns are hanging – a curious position! Yet, Black can capture only one of them. For White, the most important thing is to remain active and attack opponent's pawns. (In case of *36.Kg3? Rb3+ 37.Kg4 cxd5 38.Rxa4 Kf6*

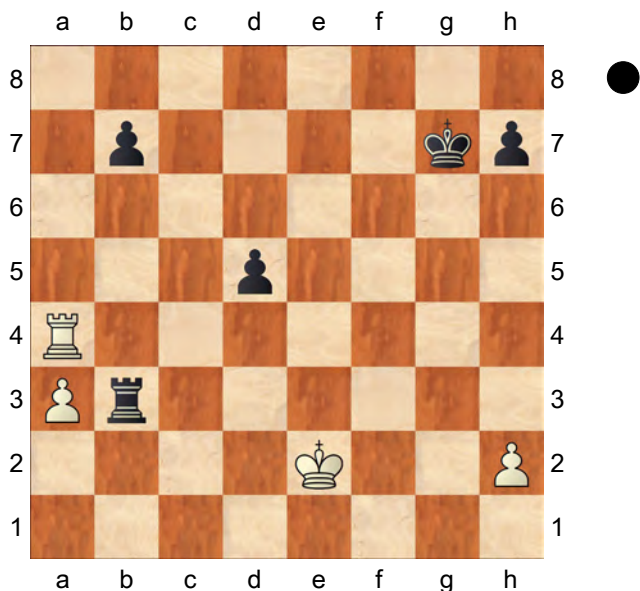


White's own king would interfere with his rook, so it would not be possible to swing it across to h4. After *39.Kf4 Ke6 40.Ra8 Kd6 41.Rh8 Rh3--+* Black defends all his pawns and achieves a winning position.) *36...Rb3+ 37.Ke2!*

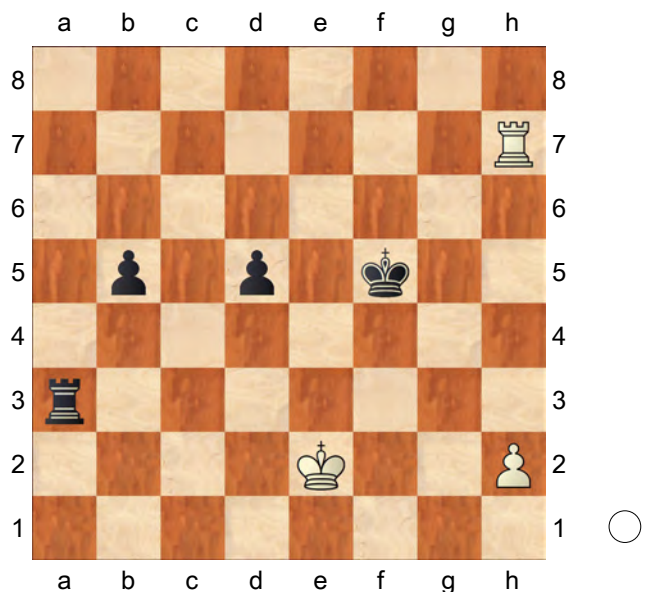
The king needs to get exactly here, to take away the d3-square from the rook (see variation 37...Rxa3). cxd5 (As usual, correct ideas are based on tactical nuances that work in one's favor. If Black takes the second pawn: 37...Rxa3 White responds 38.d6!



and due to the threat of pawn promotion, Black has to hold the perpetual with: Ra2+ 39.Ke1 Ra1+ 40.Ke2 Ra2+=) 38.Rxa4

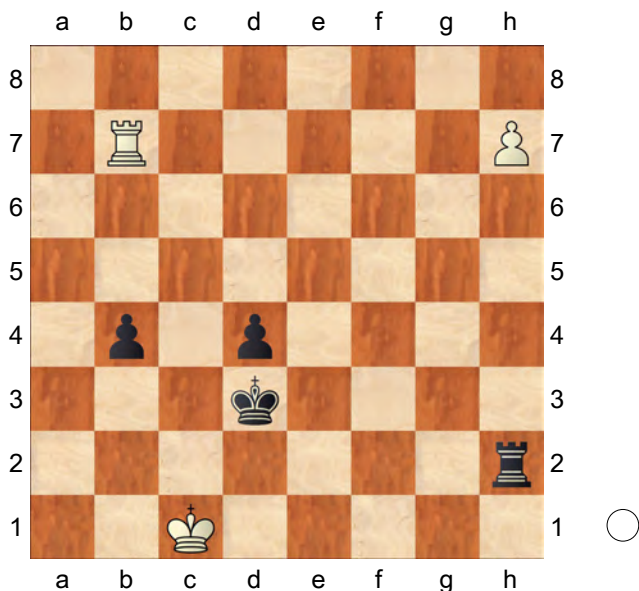


Black is up a pawn and he can take another one on h2. But White holds on thanks to his active rook and centralized king. Possible continuations are: 1) Kg6 (and 2) 38...Rb2+ 39.Kd3 Rxh2 40.Rb4 Rh3+ 41.Kd2 Rxa3 42.Rxb7+ Kg6 and now 43.Rb5! forces a drawn rook endgame with the h-pawn: d4 44.Rb4 Re3 45.Rxd4 Re6 46.Rd3 h5 47.Re3=) 39.Rg4+! we have seen in several instances so far, how an intermediate check can be useful to disrupt the trajectory of the opponent's king. Kf5 40.Rh4 Now the h7-pawn falls. Rxa3 41.Rxh7 b5



This is a slightly improved version of the variation 35...cxd5 for Black, since his king is more active here. The endgame is drawn,

nevertheless, if Black uses the same defensive strategy: follow the Tarrasch rule and push his passed pawn. 42.Rb7 Rb3 43.h4 Ke4 44.Kd2 Kd4 45.h5 b4 46.h6 Rb2+ 47.Kc1 Rh2 48.h7 Kc4 49.Rc7+ Kd3 50.Rb7 d4



and here White can just sit and wait. Black can not do anything with his disconnected pawns. 51.Ra7 b3 52.Rc7 b2+ 53.Kb1=]

35...Rb3 Keres has not noticed the move 35.d5! in his analysis. He thought that White had no choice, but to enter this passive position where he has no active counterplay. **36.Kf2 Kf6 37.Ke1 h6!** With this quiet move, Keres put Smyslov in zugzwang. **38.Rg2** The rook has to leave the e-file and let black king through,

[since 38.Kd1 loses the d4-pawn, in the view of Rd3+ 39.Rd2 Rxd2+ 40.Kxd2 Ke6 41.Kc3 Kd5 42.Kd3 h5 43.h4 b5--]

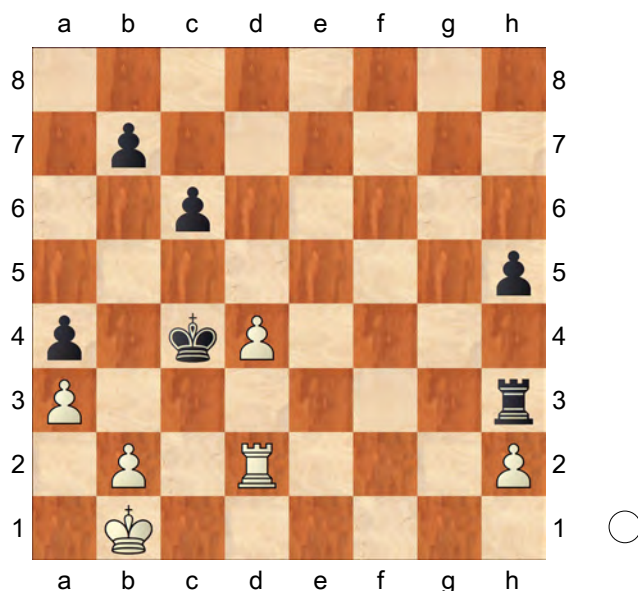
38...Ke6 39.Kd1

[39.Rg6+ Kd5 40.Rxh6 Rxb2--]

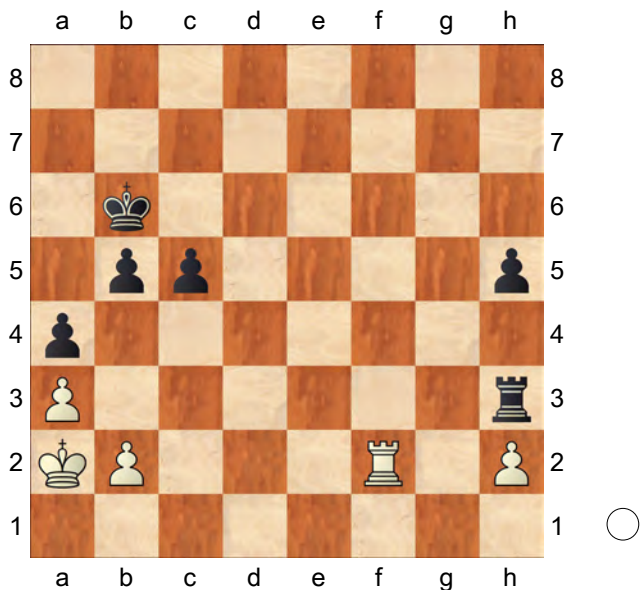
39...Kd5 40.Kc2 Rh3! White has protected the b2-pawn, so Keres finds another target, making sure that white rook remains passive.

[It would be a big mistake to rush with taking the weak d4-pawn: 40...Kxd4? because it would allow white rook to reactivate via the fourth rank: 41.Rg4+ Ke5 42.Rh4=]

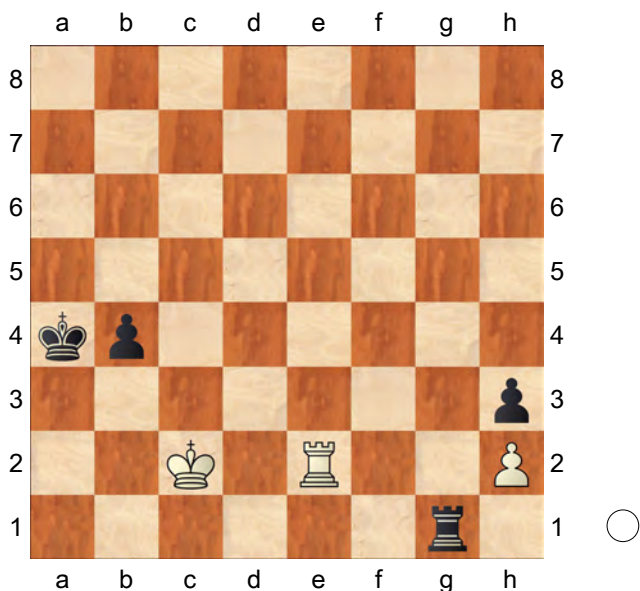
41.Rd2 Kc4 42.Kb1 h5!



Once he maximized the activity of his rook and king, Keres finds another way to improve his position gradually. This is an important method in similar endgames: Black plans to move his rook from h3 at some point, push his pawn to that square, and then bring his rook to the g-file, threatening Rg2 – finally winning the h2-pawn. **43.Ka2 Rh4 44.Rf2 Kxd4 45.Rf7 b5 46.Rf2 Rh3 47.Rd2+ Rd3 48.Rf2 Kc4 49.Rc2+ Kd5 50.Rg2 Rh3 51.Rd2+ Kc5 52.Rc2+ Kb6 53.Rf2 c5**



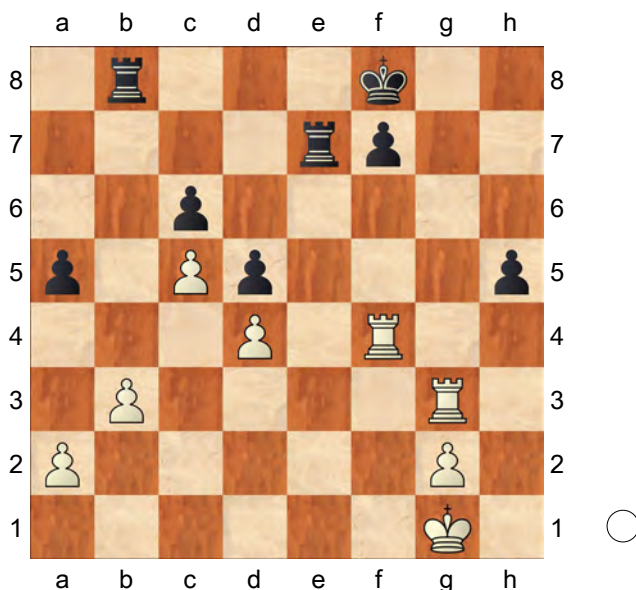
The next step in Black's plan is to push this pawn to c3, open up the second rank and complete the plan with the h-pawn in perfect circumstances. Keres converted his advantage with authority:
54.Rf6+ Ka5 55.Rf2 c4 56.Rg2 c3 57.b4+ axb3+ 58.Kxb3 c2+ 59.Kxc2 Rxa3 60.Kb2 Rf3 61.Re2 h4 62.Rd2 h3 63.Re2 Ka4 64.Kb1 Rf1+ 65.Kc2 b4 66.Kd3 Rd1+ 67.Kc2 Rg1!



and Black finally completed his long-prepared plan, so Smyslov resigned. An excellent piece of endgame technique by Keres! However, Smyslov could have avoided the torture if he had played the active 35. d5!

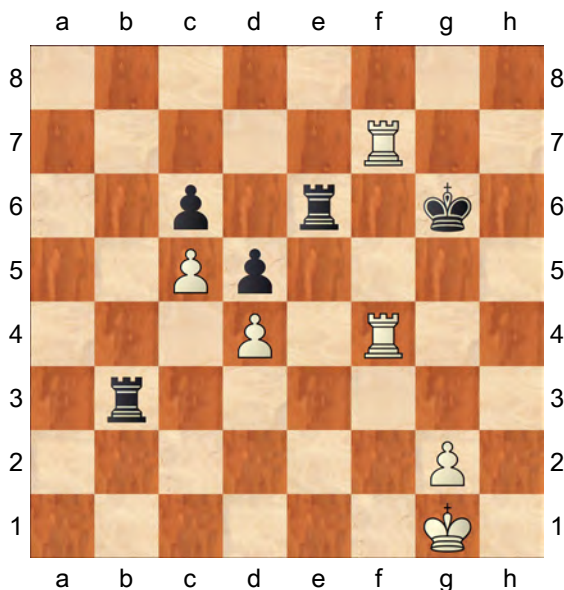
0-1

Najer, E. 2668
 Popov, Iv RUS 2608
 71st ch-RUS HL 2018 (2.1) 27.06.2018



Now that we know the right strategy for the defending side in rook endgames, let us see how to apply it in the following position: This is not the actual position from the game, but rather analysis of an interesting alternative that existed instead of the game move 31.Rg5. The position of interest arises after **31.Rg6!**? attacking the weak c6-pawn. How should Black react to this?

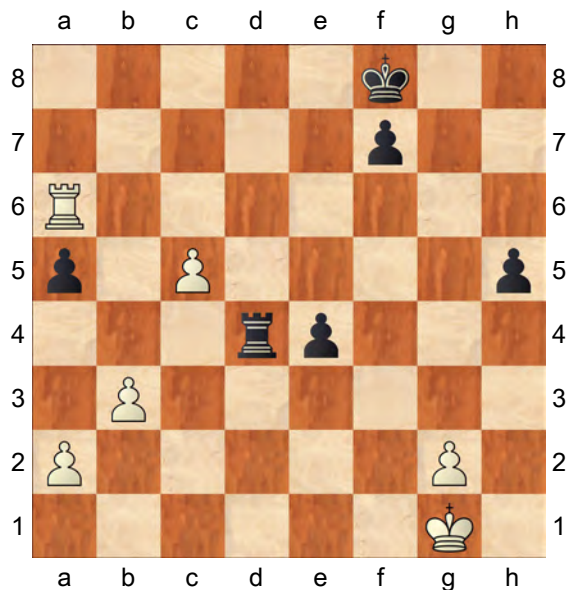
[The game saw 31.Rg5 Rb4!±
32.Rxh5 a4 33.Rh8+ Kg7 34.Rc8
axb3 35.axb3 Re6! 36.Rc7 Rxb3
37.Rcxf7+ Kg6



and Black's activity was sufficient for a draw. 38.Rf8 Kg7 39.R8f7+ Kg6 40.Rf8 Kg7 41.R4f7+ Kg6 42.Rd7 Re4 43.Rd6+ Kg5 44.Rxc6 Rb1+ 45.Rf1 Rxf1+ 46.Kxf1 Rxd4 47.Ke2 Rc4 We have seen a similar scenario with 2 vs 1 pawn before: Black rook gets behind one pawn, while White's other pawn is blocked by the king, so the endgame is drawn. 48.Rc8 Rc3 49.c6 Kg6 50.Kd2 d4 51.g4 Kf7 52.Ke2 Kg7 53.Kd1 Rd3+ 54.Kc2 Rc3+ 55.Kd2 Kf7 56.g5 1/2–1/2 (56) Najer,E (2668) –Popov,I (2608) Yaroslavl RUS 2018]

Of course, actively! **31...Re1+!**
However, this check is also a precise intermediate move

[that improves on the immediate 31...Re4?! when 32.Rxe4 dxe4 (32...fxg6 33.Re6±) 33.Rxc6 Rd8 34.Ra6 Rxd4



makes a big difference compared to the main variation, where the king is on h2. Now ...e4–e3 is not a threat, so White can take the pawn 35.Rxa5 e3 36.Kf1 Rd2 and an extra tempo makes a huge difference. White should be winning after, for example: 37.c6+– etc.]

[As you might have guessed, passive defense with 31...Rc8?! 32.Rh6 Kg7 33.Rxh5± (33.Rff6±)]

[or 31...Rc7?! 32.Rh6± is the inferior way to handle this position with Black.]

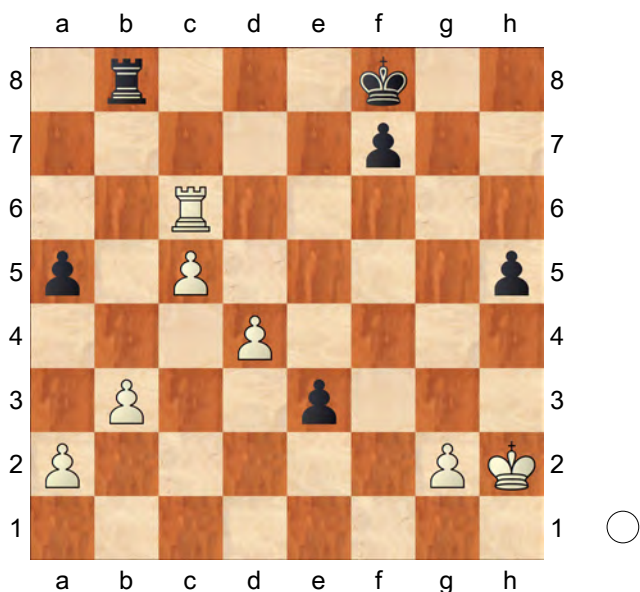
32.Kh2

[If the king goes toward the center 32.Kf2 , Black obtains timely counterplay with Ra1 33.Rxc6 Rxa2+ 34.Kg1 Rxb3 35.Rc7 Rg3 36.Rxf7+ Ke8 and draw is inevitable. After 37.Rf2 Rxf2 38.Kxf2 Rd3 39.Ra7 Rxd4 40.Rxa5= everything clears up.]

32...Re4± Now this move gains in strength, because the e–pawn becomes more dangerous. **33.Rxe4**

[White can also keep both rooks on the board with 33.Rf3 but then the active rook on e4 would be a clear improvement for Black, compared to the starting position. After Rc8 34.Rh6 Kg7 35.Rxh5 Rxd4= Black would have no reason for concern.]

33...dxe4 34.Rxc6 e3!

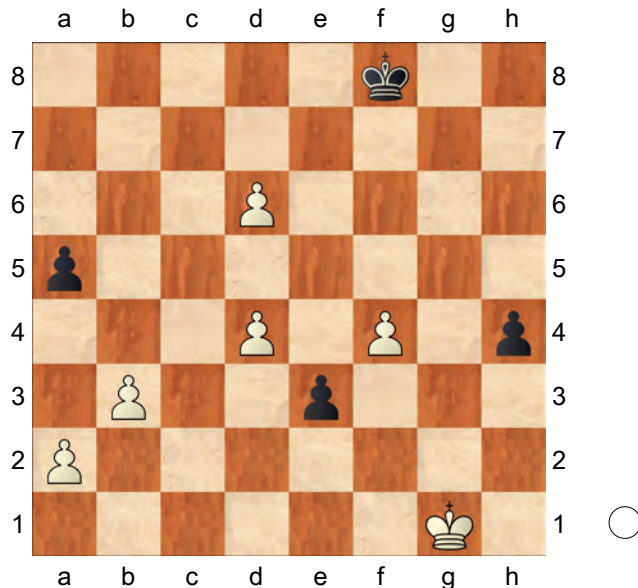


This tempo-move is the key. White rook is completely out of position to catch the passed pawn, so the White king has to step in: **35.Kg1**

[but not 35.Kg3?? Re8-- and the pawn can not be stopped.]

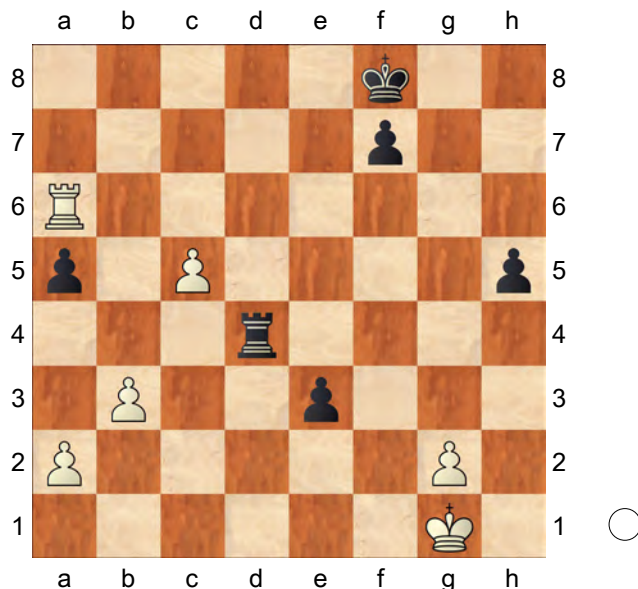
35...Rd8 36.Ra6

[It is also important that the pawn endgame after 36.Rd6 Rxd6 37.cxd6 f5 is drawn. 38.Kf1 (38.g3?? would be terrible. f4! 39.gxf4 h4--



and, as we discussed in the third issue of Endgame series, the common square of Black's two pawns reaches the 1st rank, so one of them promotes without king's help.) 38...f4 39.Ke2 Kf7 40.a3 Ke6 41.b4 axb4 42.axb4 Kxd6 43.b5=]

36...Rxd4



Here, we can see the difference that allows Black to win the key tempo compared to 31...Re4. White does not have time to capture the a5-pawn. He has to stop the e-pawn: **37.Kf1**

[37.Rxa5?? Rd1+ 38.Kh2 e2-+]
37...Rd2 The second (seventh) rank is heaven for rooks, especially if they cut off opponent's king at the same time.

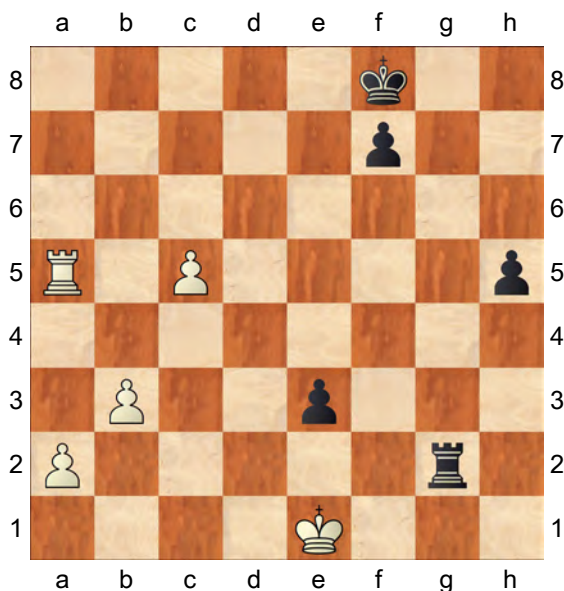
[Alternative way to a draw was 37...Rd1+ 38.Ke2 Rd2+ 39.Kxe3 Rxa2 40.Ke4 Rxc2 41.Rxa5 h4= although I would prefer to contain white king's activity.]

38.Rxa5 Rf2+ A useful check to drive white king to a less favorable square.

39.Ke1

[or 39.Kg1 Rc2 when the king has to return 40.Kf1 Rf2+=]

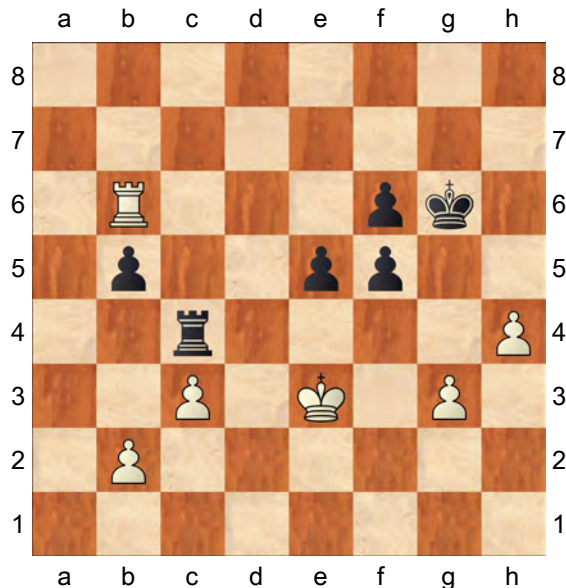
39...Rxc2=



Black has retrieved sacrificed material and I think that it is safe to say that we have reached the position of dynamic equality.

1/2

□ **Ni,Hua** 2696
 ■ **Ding,Liren** 2781
 Shenzhen Celebrity 5th rapid (4)



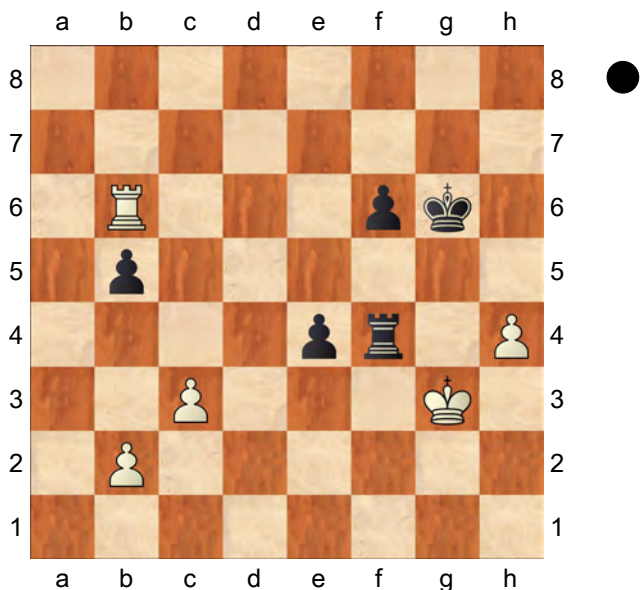
Rook's activity often enables us to take over the initiative in the endgame. In the next two examples, we will see how two of the world's leading players have sacrificed a pawn to activate their rook and took the initiative in an equal endgame. In this 4 vs. 4 rook endgame, a draw seems like the most likely result. White just attacked the weak b-pawn. Black can, of course, protect it with 45...Rc5, but Ding Liren found a more active idea: **45...Rg4!**

[In case of the passive 45...Rc5 46.Rb8= it would be difficult to make progress for either side.]

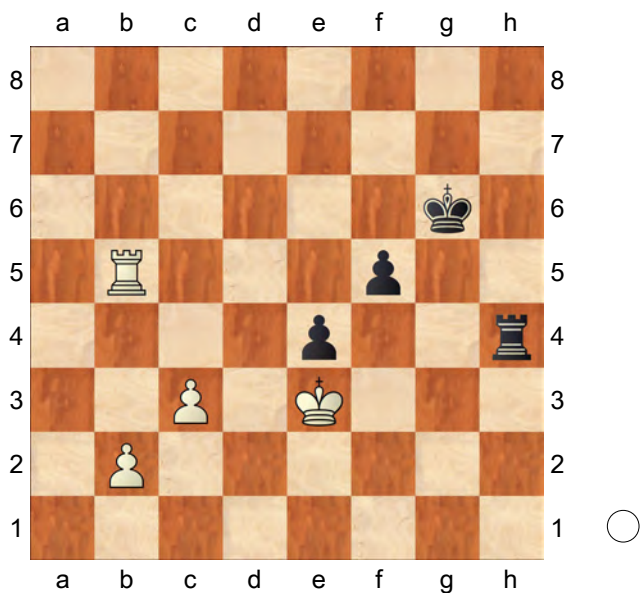
46.Kf2 This was the first important decision for White.

[The alternative was 46.Kf3 e4+ 47.Kf2 f4 48.gxf4 Rxf4+ and here,

again, White has to make a responsible decision. If he blocks the e-pawn with 49.Ke3 he loses the h-pawn. (On the other hand, if he goes with his king to 49.Kg3

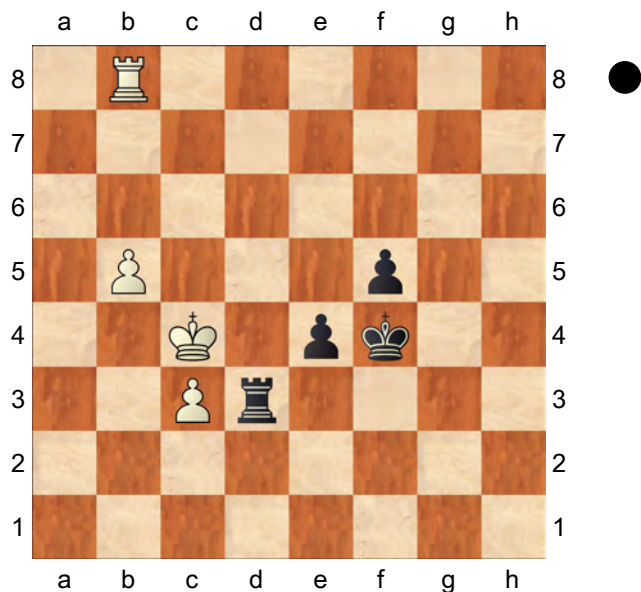


he allows Black to make use of the Tarrasch rule: *Rf5 50.Kg4 Re5↑* With the rook behind the pawn, Black's initiative is clearly unpleasant.) 49...Rhx4 Then, after 50.Rxb5 f5

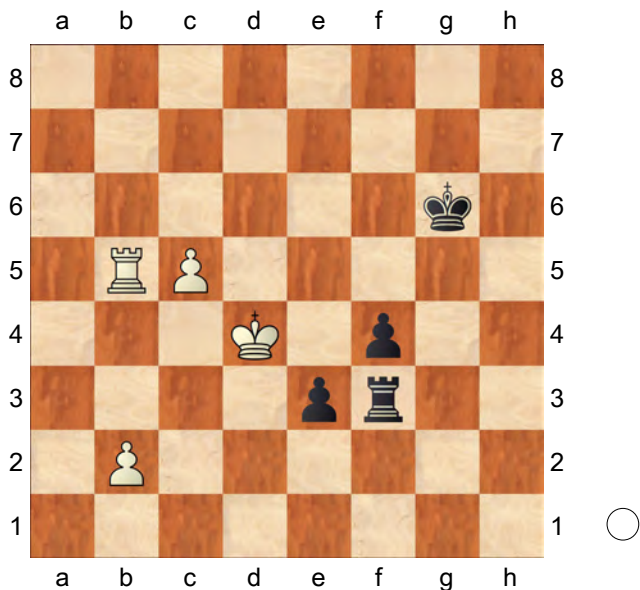


the initiative is clearly on Black's side and White would need to find the only move to save the game: 51.c4!

(Pushing the other pawn 51.b4? loses to *Rh3+ 52.Kd4 Kg5 53.Rb8 Kf4 54.b5 Rd3+ 55.Kc4*



Rd7! 56.b6 Re7 57.b7 e3 58.Kd3 e2 59.Rh8 e1N+! It is always cool to promote a knight with a check. Here it wins, too. *60.Kd2 Nf3+ 61.Kd3 Rxb7-+) 51...Rh3+ 52.Kd4 Rd3+ 53.Ke5* We have a tense pawn race now. *Rf3 (53...e3 54.Kf4 e2 55.Re5=) 54.c5 e3 55.Kd4 f4 (55...e2 56.Rb6+ Kf7 57.Rb7+ Kf8 58.Rb8+=)*

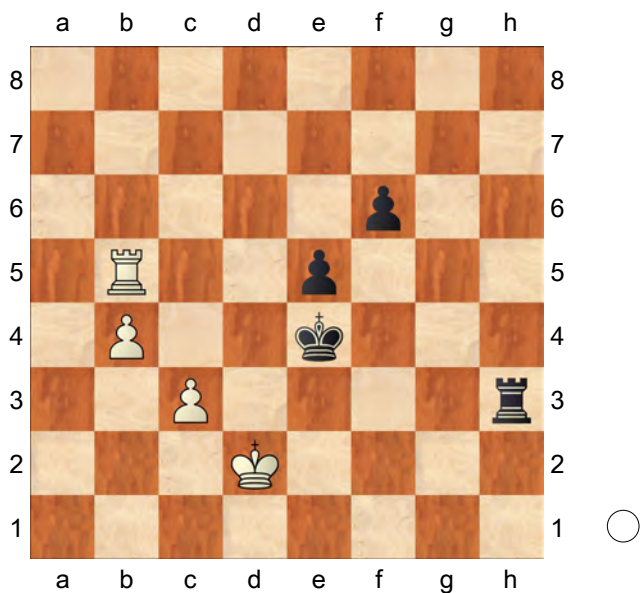


56.c6! opens up the fifth rank at the same time, securing a draw. e2 57.Re5 Re3 58.Rxe3 fxe3 59.c7 e1Q 60.c8Q=]

46...f4 47.gxf4 Rxf4+ 48.Kg3

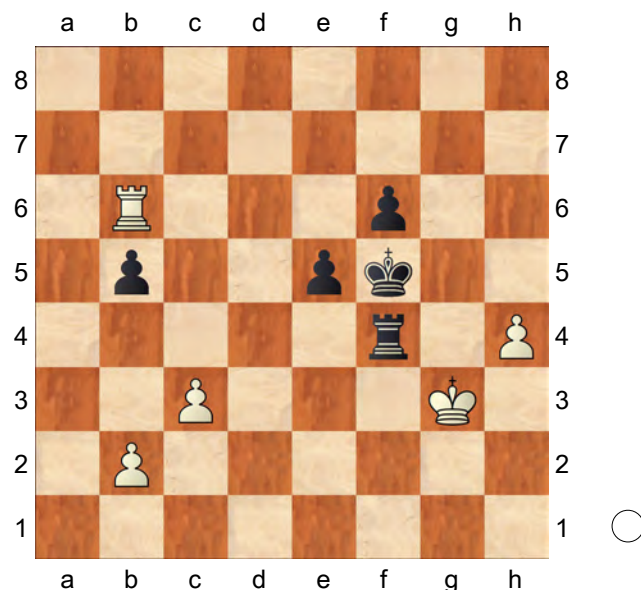
Ni Hua decides to keep the h-pawn, but that comes at a price of decentralizing his king.

[The alternative 48.Ke3 Rxh4 49.Rxb5 Kf5 50.b4 Rh3+ 51.Kd2 Ke4↑



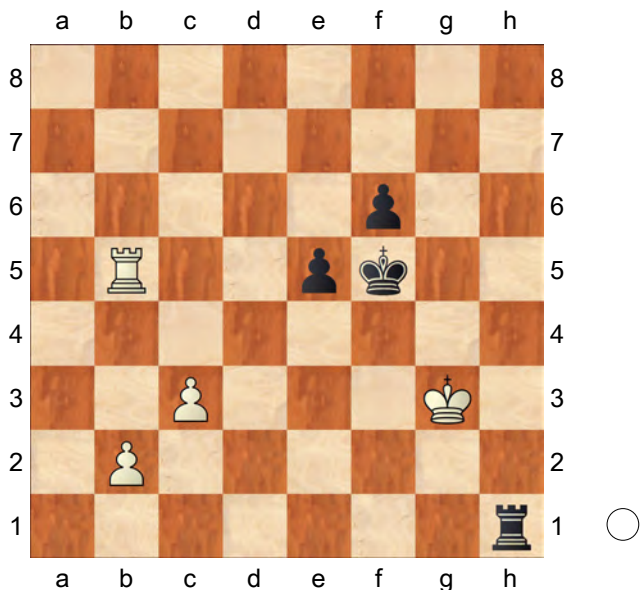
Black king is more active than its counterpart, so White would have to play very precisely to hold a draw.]

48...Kf5!



The point of Ding Liren's small combination. He sacrifices a pawn to cut off White king from his passed e-pawn. At the same time, white rook will also be somewhat misplaced on b5. I find this endgame concept very reminiscent of the sixth game of Anand-Carlsen match in 2013. **49.Rxb5 Rg4+** With this 'informative' check Ding gives his opponent another tricky puzzle to solve – where to go with the king? **50.Kh3?!** Ni Hua chooses a much more risky continuation, hoping that he will be able to distract Black with his h-pawn. This may be possible, but only with very precise play.

[It was more practical to give up the h-pawn 50.Kf3 Rxh4↑ but even then White would have to find only moves to keep drawing chances: 51.Kg3 Rh1

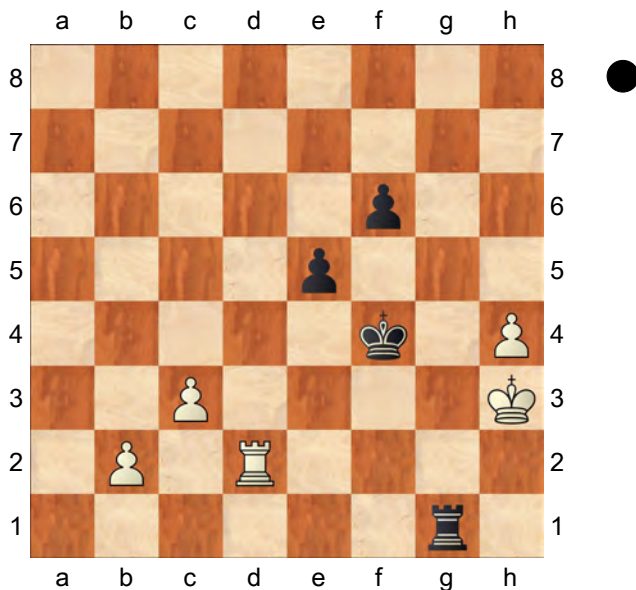


52.Kg2! (52.c4? loses after Ke4 53.c5 f5 54.c6 f4+ 55.Kf2 Rh2+ 56.Ke1 Rc2-+) 52...Rd1 (52...Rc1 53.Kf3!=) 53.Kf3 Rd3+ 54.Ke2 with this move White wins the crucial tempo. Rh3 55.c4 Ke4 56.c5 Rh2+ 57.Kd1 Kd5 58.b4 e4 59.Rb6= and he is just in time with counterplay.]

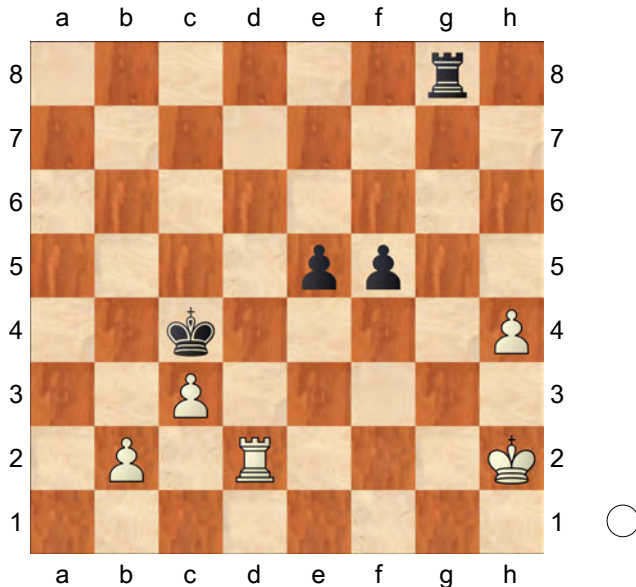
50...Rg1 Now the White king is cut off on the h-file, which makes his position critical, despite the extra pawn. Black's pieces just coordinate much better.

51.Rd5 Bringing the rook back into the game is a good idea. **51...Kf4 52.Kh2?** White wastes a valuable tempo.

[The logical continuation of the previous move was 52.Rd2!



and, as far as I can tell, White holds with precise play. f5 53.Rf2+ Ke4 54.Kh2! Rg8 55.Re2+ Kd5 56.Rd2+ Kc4



and here we can see White's key defensive idea: 57.Rg2! Rh8 58.Rg5! Rxh4+ 59.Kg3 Rf4 60.b4! Kxc3 61.b5=]

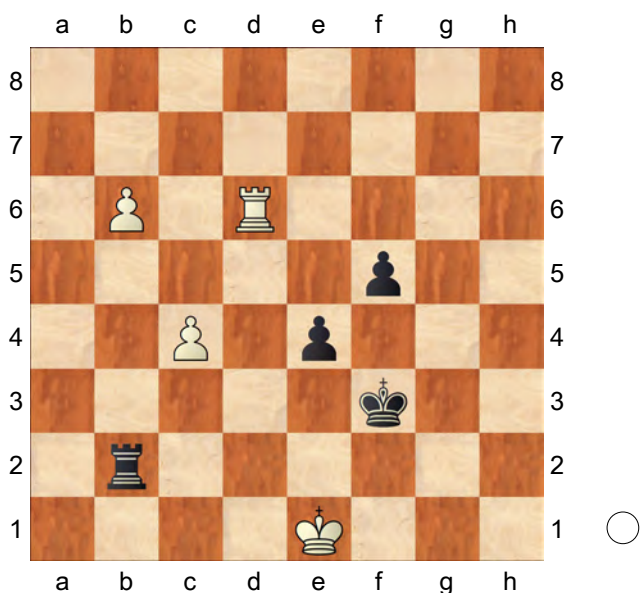
52...Rg4?! After such a nice display of endgame technique, Ding Liren shows

that he is only human, after all. There was no need to go after this pawn.

[He should have focused on the promotion of the e-pawn with: 52...Rg8! and nothing could stop him. For example: 53.Rd1 (53.b4 e4 54.b5 e3-+; 53.h5 e4-+) 53...e4 54.Rf1+ Ke5 55.Rg1 Rh8 56.Kg3 f5-+ and so on.]

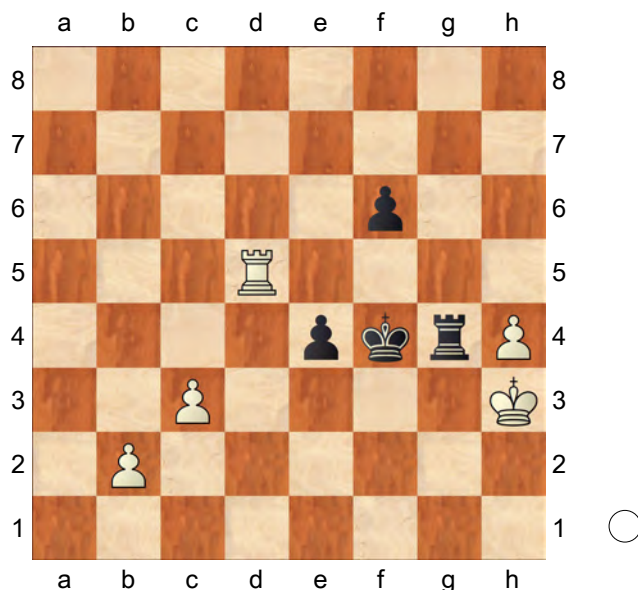
53.Kh3? White has been consistently holding on to this pawn throughout the endgame.

[But, if he had finally pushed his pawn forward, 53.b4! Rxh4+ 54.Kg2 Rg4+ 55.Kf1 this would be a huge improvement for White because his king would return to the center and his queenside pawns would be in motion. Still, he would need to play very precisely to save this endgame. One possible variation is Rg3 56.c4 Rb3 57.b5 Rb2 58.Rd6 f5 59.b6 Kf3 60.Ke1 e4



when 61.Rd5! saves the day: Rb1+ (61...f4 62.Rb5=) 62.Kd2 e3+ 63.Kc2 e2 64.Re5! e1Q (64...Rxb6

65.Rxf5+ Ke4 66.Rf8=) 65.Rxe1 Rxe1 66.b7 Re2+ (66...Re8? 67.c5+-) 67.Kc3 Re3+ 68.Kc2 Re2+ 69.Kc1 Re1+=]
53...Rg1 54.Kh2 Rg4 55.Kh3 e4!-+



Ding Liren finally realizes that pushing the e-pawn is the right way to proceed.

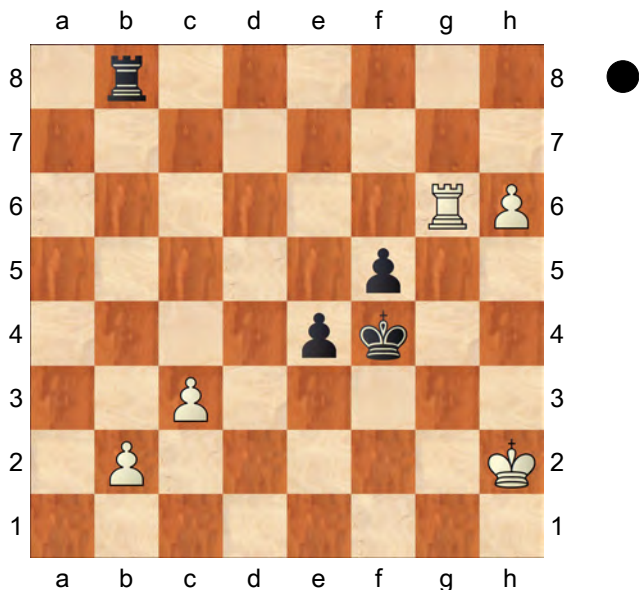
56.h5 Rg3+ 57.Kh2 Rg8 58.Rd6

[It is too late for 58.Rd1 Rh8 59.Rf1+ Ke5 60.Kg3 Rxh5-+ because Black has several extra tempi compared to similar drawn positions that we have seen earlier.]

58...f5 59.Rg6 This does not really work, but at least it is White's only chance.

[The other option is 59.h6 e3 60.h7 Rh8 61.Kg2 but this also comes too late as after Rxh7 62.Rd4+ Kg5 63.Kf3 Black has Rh3+! 64.Ke2 f4-+]

59...Rb8 60.h6

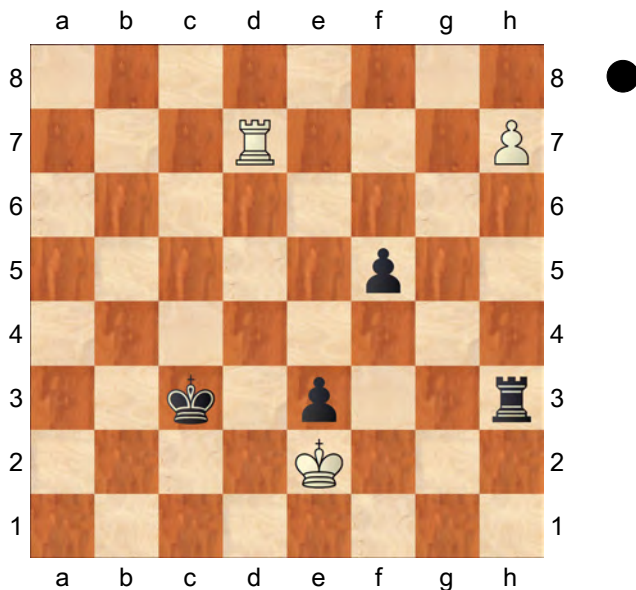


Rxb2+?? This was a rapid game, so I imagine that players were in serious time trouble at this point. Still, this move was uncalled for.

[Why not simply 60...e3-+ ?]

61.Kg1 Rb7 Black was forced to retreat with the rook, but this loss of time could have proved very costly. **62.Rg7 Rb6 63.h7 Rh6 64.c4??** Only a severe time trouble can justify such a miscalculation. However, time on the clock is also a part of the game. White was under pressure throughout the whole endgame, so it is not too surprising that he did not manage to find the saving move with little time to think.

[If White had secured the f3-square with 64.Kf2 he could have held a draw. The game could continue: e3+ 65.Kg2 Ke4 66.Re7+ Kd3 67.Rd7 + Kxc3 68.Kf3 Rh3+ 69.Ke2



and White achieves the blockade.

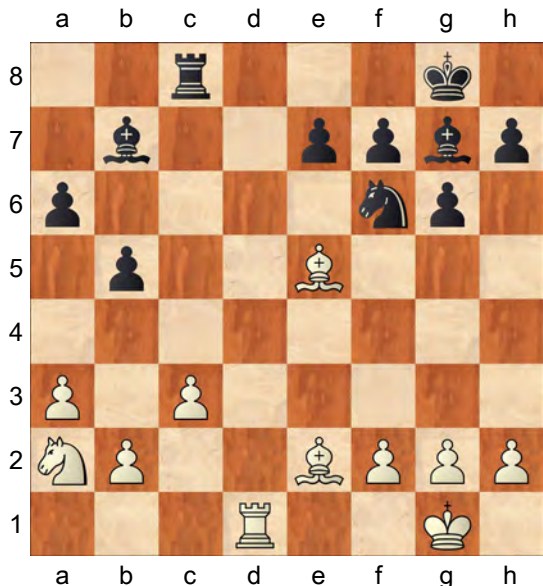
The position is drawn thanks to the threat of h7-pawn promoting, as in the following line: f4 70.Rf7 Rh2+ 71.Kf3 Rf2+ 72.Ke4=]

64...Kf3 Now Black is winning again. His pawns are more dangerous. **65.c5 e3 66.Rb7 f4 67.c6 Rg6+ 68.Kh2 Rh6+ 69.Kg1 e2 70.Rb3+ Kg4 71.Kf2 Rh2+ 72.Ke1 f3 73.Re3 Rxh7 74.Kd2 Kg3**

The game we just saw was not a smooth win – there were missed opportunities for both sides. But what decided it, I think, was more enterprising play by Ding Liren. His decision to activate the rook by sacrificing the b5-pawn promised him an initiative. White's defense was unpleasant, and he could not cope with the task in the limited time. **0-1**

Anand, V. **2782**

Carlsen, M. **2837**
 World Blitz 2017 (8.1) 29.12.2017

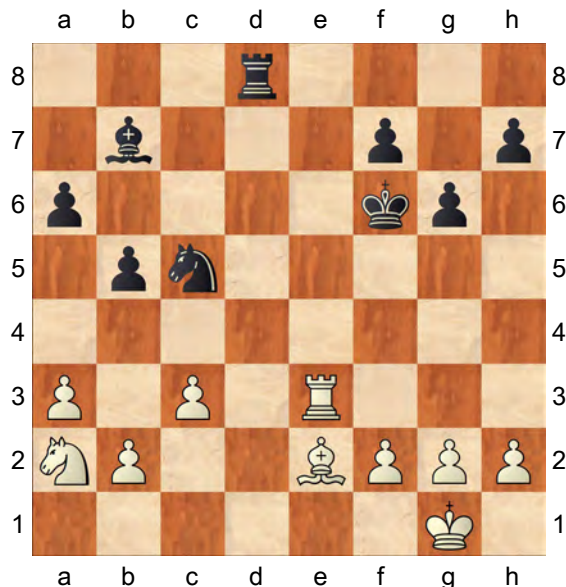


Finally, let us see how Magnus Carlsen, arguably one of the best endgame players in history, follows the unwritten rule that active rook is worth a pawn. Mind you, this was a blitz game and some mistakes crept in on both sides, but generally, it is easy to see how it was easier to play with Black as his pieces were more active. The position is balanced. In this pawn structure, control of the d-file is quite important and right now Anand is the one in control. However, this changes after Carlsen's bold idea: **23...Ne4!**

[Black could have also played more conservatively: 23...Ne8 24.Bxg7 (or 24.Bg3 Nf6 25.Be5=) 24...Kxg7 25.Rd7 Rc7= neutralizing white rook.]

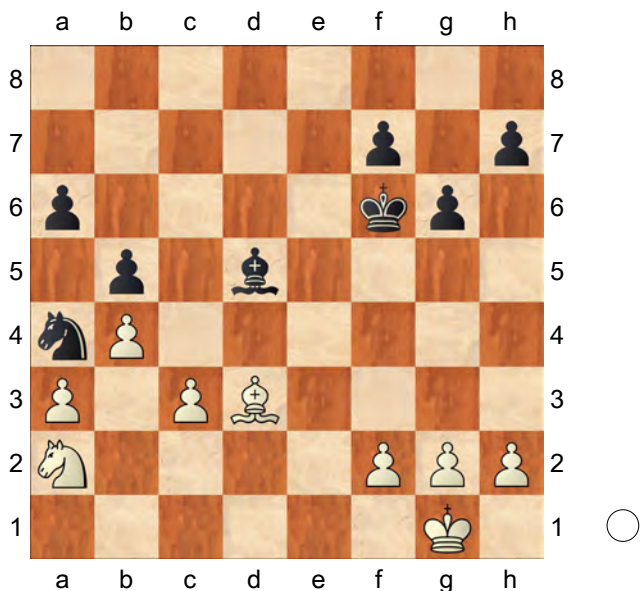
24.Bxg7 Kxg7 25.Rd7 Nc5!
Carlsen anticipated invasion of the seventh rank and prepared this move.

He will play without a pawn, but his knight gets a commanding outpost on c5 with a tempo. **26.Rxe7 Kf6**
Another useful tempo move. White rook is kicked away from the seventh rank and the king gets one step closer to the center. **27.Re3 Rd8**



Just a few moves ago, White had undisputed control of the d-file, but the tables have turned and it is now Black rook that threatens to penetrate to the 2nd rank of his opponent using the d-file. Also, please pay attention to the difference between the coordination of white and black pieces. I have always admired Carlsen's ability to arrange his army harmoniously. This becomes particularly obvious in endgames. **28.c4!**
Anand realizes that his greatest problem is the misplaced knight on a2, so he clears the c3-square for it.

[Alternatives would allow Carlsen to develop his initiative: 28.b4 Na4 (also possible is 28...Rd2 29.bxc5 Rxa2↑) 29.Rd3 Rxd3 30.Bxd3 Bd5!↑



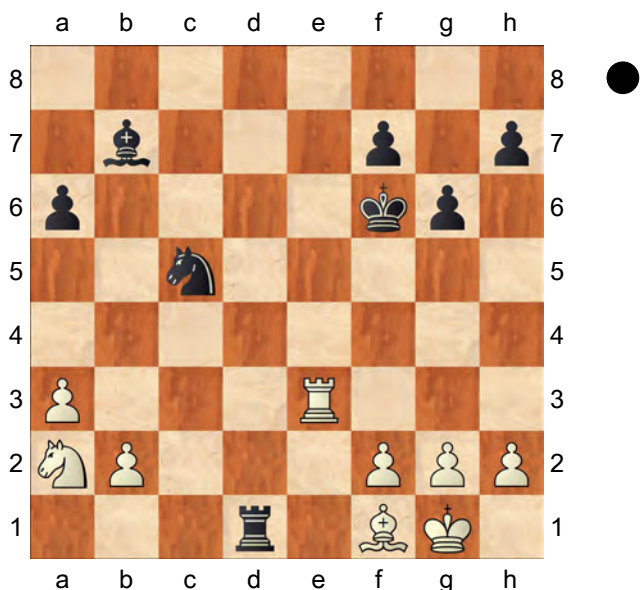
and knight's misplacement becomes painfully obvious. In addition, the black king is much closer to the center than white one.]

[or 28.Bf1 Rd1 29.Nb4 Rb1 30.Re2 a5]

28...bxc4

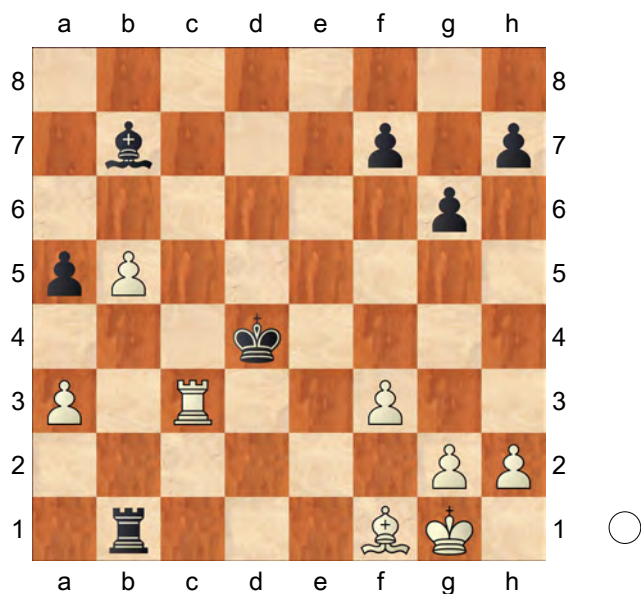
[Taking the second rank with 28...Rd2 is not the best solution, due to 29.cxb5 Rxb2 30.Nc3 axb5 31.Bxb5±]

29.Bxc4 Rd1+ 30.Bf1



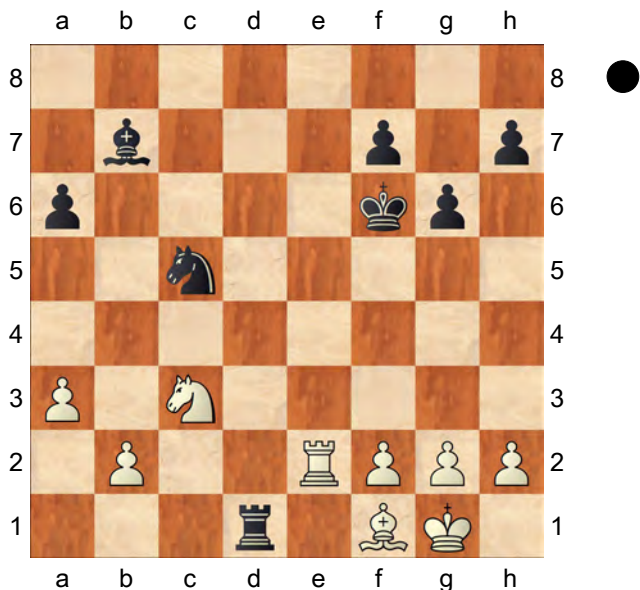
Carlsen obtained full compensation for the pawn. His pieces, especially the rook, are more active than white's. In a blitz game, this can be quite important because it is easier to make attacking than defensive moves. However, Carlsen makes a pretty big mistake at this point: **30...Rd2?**

[Instead, 30...Rb1 would allow him to keep the kind of counterplay he 'subscribed for' when he sacrificed the pawn. After 31.b4 Ne4 32.Nc3 Nxc3 33.Rxc3 a5! Presumably, Carlsen missed this unexpected resource. Black threatens to win the bishop with 34... Ba6, so White's answer is forced: 34.b5 and now Ke5 35.f3 Kd4!



gives Black a flurry of activity. His king is dominant in the center, while the rook is in the most active possible position – giving him a very comfortable compensation for the pawn. For example: 36.Rc7 Bd5 37.Kf2 Rb2+ 38.Kg3 Rb1 39.Be2 Rb2= and White should just repeat the position.]

31.Re2 In all likelihood, Carlsen had missed this move. **31...Rd1 32.Nc3**



White won two tempi to activate his pieces due to Carlsen's mistake on move 30. Yet, Black still has some compensation thanks to his active rook and White's problems with coordination.

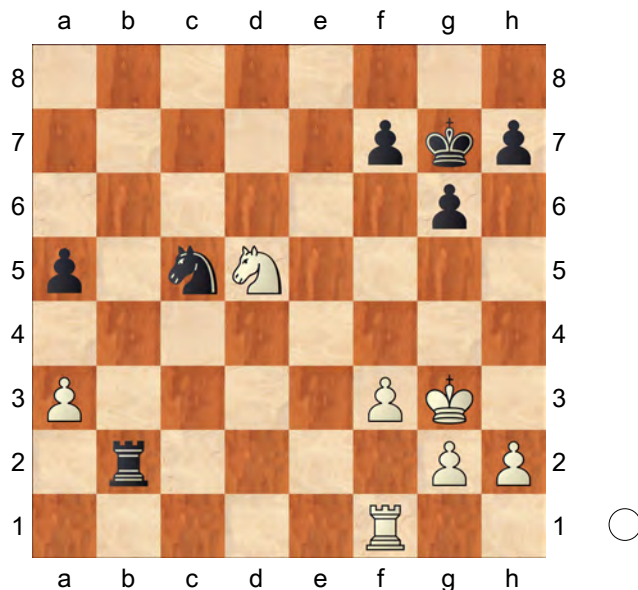
32...Rc1 33.f3 Anand hurries to unpin the bishop by getting his king to f2.

[However, the other way to unpin was better: 33.Rd2 a5 34.Rd1 Rc2 35.Rb1± and Black still keeps some compensation, though it would be a serious fight for a draw at this point.]

33...a5 34.Kf2?! Maybe Anand just assumed that Carlsen played 33...a5 to prevent b2–b4.

[Again, better was 34.Rd2 and after Ba6 35.Rd1 Rxd1 36.Nxd1 Bxf1 37.Kxf1 a4≙ Black would have sufficient compensation in the knight endgame thanks to his activity.]

34...Ba6 This is the main point behind the previous move. Now Black is back in the game. **35.Re1 Rc2+ 36.Kg3 Bxf1 37.Nd5+ Kg7 38.Rxf1 Rxb2↑**



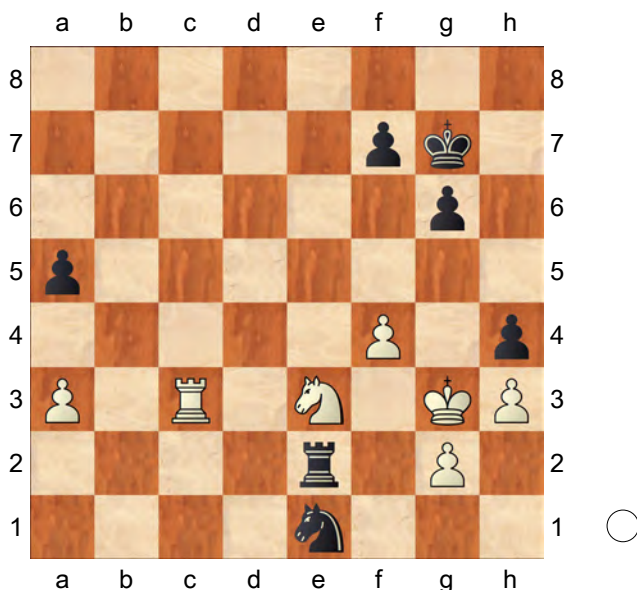
While the position is objectively equal, it is clearly easier to play with Black due to his more active rook. Rook and knight are especially tricky tandem when the game is played on seconds. The rest of the game is marred by mistakes on both sides, but that is normal or blitz, so we will not put much emphasis on it. Suffice it to say that Black was nearly winning within 5–6 moves. **39.Rc1 Nd3 40.Rc3 Ne1 41.Ne3 Re2**

[41...a4!? as in Smyslov–Keres, was another playable option.]

42.f4?! This weakens the king unnecessarily.

[42.h4= was still fine for White.]

42...h5 43.h3? Perhaps missing tactic on the next move. **43...h4+!**



Carlsen is extremely strong in positions that contain knight geometry. **44.Kg4**

[44.Kxh4 Rxe3 45.Rxe3 Nxd2+-+]
 [44.Kh2 Nf3+ 45.Kh1 Re1+-+ with checkmate.]

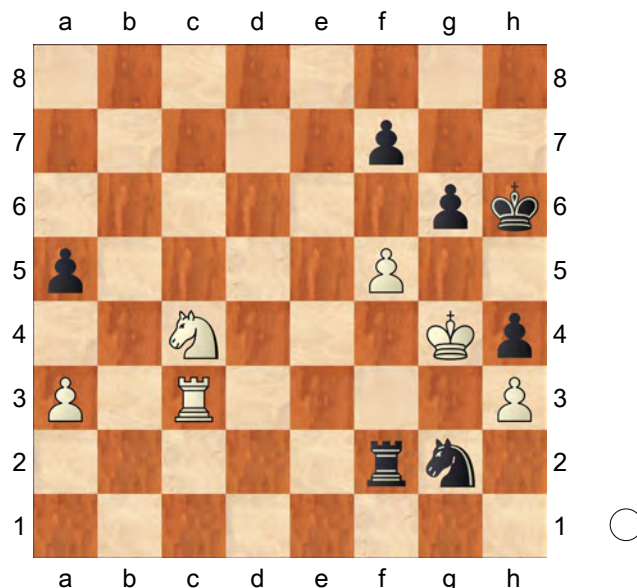
Carlsen is extremely strong in positions that contain knight geometry.

44.Kg4

[44.Kxh4 Rxe3 45.Rxe3 Nxd2+-+]
 [44.Kh2 Nf3+ 45.Kh1 Re1+-+ with checkmate.]

44...f5+? Only one mistake was enough for Black to spoil his advantage.

[Instead, 44...Kh6! 45.f5 Nxd2
 46.Nc4 Rf2→



would lead to a strong attack with an extra pawn in the pocket. White could hardly survive this.]

45.Kg5 Suddenly the weak king becomes an attacking piece. **45...Kf7 46.a4 Nxd2 47.Nxd2 Rxd2+ 48.Kxh4**

Conclusion: Endgames involving at least one rook are by far the most common type of endgame, so it is very important to know how to handle them Rook is a piece that usually shows its greatest strengths in endgames An active rook in the endgame is often worth a pawn Tarrasch rule says that: ⇔↗The Rook's place is behind the passed pawn; behind the enemy pawn in order to hold it up, behind one's own in order to support its advance. ↗↗ Seventh (second for Black) rank is one of the favorite avenues for the rook Unless it is absolutely necessary, it is best not to leave the rook in a passive position in the endgame Sometimes a pawn sacrifice with the goal to activate the rook is a good way to obtain initiative in the endgame

1/2

French Structures - Closed Center



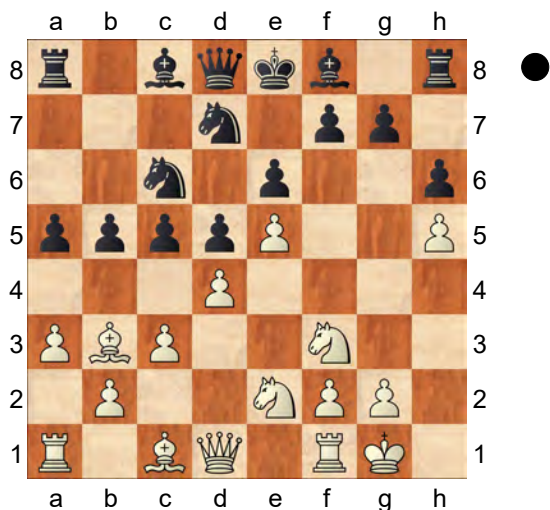
Despite the large variety of plans for both sides, one structure is by far the most typical one for the French Defence: The blocked centre, arising after White's e4-e5 at an early stage of the game. Phillidor's principle "Pawns are the soul of chess" applies in this type of position better than anywhere else, as the structure defines both sides' plans rather clearly. On a most basic level, Black should attack on the queenside, starting with ...c7-c5 and ...Nc6, followed by either increasing the pressure on d4 with ...Qb6 or a massive pawn attack with ...c5-c4, ...b7-b5-b4 and so on. There are lines in which White cannot consolidate his d4-pawn with c2-c3 due to his knight standing on c3, when the exchange of the d4- and c5-pawns could lead to a white blockade on d4, but also to the activation of Black's

d7-knight with ...Nc5-e4. Due to his space advantage there, White's main chances lie on the kingside. He can prepare a piece attack by regrouping, for instance with Nf3, Bd3, Nf4 and possibly Qg4, or launch a pawn offensive with f2-f4, g2-g4, f4-f5. Strategically the latter plan looks more consistent, but if Black manages to slow down the pawns' advance with ...h7-h5, Nf5 and possibly ...g7-g6, White's minor pieces will find themselves restricted by the f4-pawn. But that's not all to it. Both players can also display ambitions on the respective other side of the board, especially in positions with white short castle and black long castle. White has the options to meet ...c7-c5 with c2-c4 or ...c5-c4 with b2-b3. Black on the other hand can question White's space advantage with ...f7-f6/f5 (this plan is popular irrespective of the kings' placement), and also consider a kingside counterattack with ...g7-g5-g4, ...h7-h5 and so on. For this article I have mainly chosen games featuring lines from the repertoire displayed in the theoretical databases. For instance, it would be of little practical use to include games from main lines like 3.Nc3 Bb4 4. e5 c5 5.a3 Bxc3+ 6.bxc3 or 3...Nf6, as both have certain particularities not to be found in this repertoire. Whenever playing this type of structure, I have a unique feeling about the depth of chess in general. Simply mentioning the main ideas above creates an image of complexity, as both sides have countless possibilities of combining attack with defence in the process of developing their plans. "Shall I evacuate the king from the centre with ...0-0-0 or

first defend g5 with ...h7-h6?" is the type of question arising virtually on every step in the late opening and early middlegame. It really feels like the "good old times" without computers and deep theory, when players would think independently move by move, without achieving absolute certainty about the correctness of their decisions. The main theme of this article will be precisely this psychological aspect, while the typical manoeuvres will be explained individually. Most probably both players shared my feelings during the following top level game:

Kasparov, Garry **2795**
 Ivanchuk, Vassily **2740**
 Horgen (6) 26.10.1995

1.e4 e6 2.d4 d5 3.Nc3 Bb4 4.e5 b6 5.a3 Bf8 6.Nf3 Since Black's main intention is to exchange his potentially bad bishop with ...Ba6, White delays Bd3 in order to gain a tempo. The last move is the start of a mutual waiting phase. **6...Ne7 7.h4 h6 8.h5 a5 9.Bb5+** Kasparov did not find any more useful half-waiting move so he decides to transfer his bishop away from the f1-a6 diagonal, thus avoiding the undesirable exchange. **9...c6 10.Ba4 Nd7 11.Ne2 b5 12.Bb3 c5 13.c3 Nc6 14.0-0**



So far both sides have played normal moves, but now we approach the moment when important decisions will have to be taken. **14...Qc7** This was intended as a flexible move, inviting White to show his intentions. Or it could be that Ivanchuk did not know yet what to do on the queenside. Fact is that the early queen move is an early commitment, as sometimes the control over the d8-h4 diagonal is important.

[The more straightforward 14...c4 15.Bc2 Bb7 was suggested by my former pupil Guido Caprio. The idea is simple: Black defends his rook and plans to play ...b5-b4 as soon as possible. 16.Nh2 It would be more desirable to play Nh4, but unlike in the similar game position after ... Qc7, this is impossible now. (Neither does 16.g3 Be7 look like an improvement for White.) 16...b4 17.axb4 axb4 18.Rxa8 Qxa8 Due to the vulnerability of his queenside, White faces problems launching his own attack.

A) 19.Be3 is a bit slow. Nb6 20.Qd2 (20.f4 b3 21.Bb1 Qa1 22.Qc1 Na4 dooms the b2-pawn while the black king could escape to the queenside in case things get tense after f4-f5.) 20...b3 21.Bb1 Qa1 In view of the threat ...Na4, White may well have to force a draw by repetition: 22.Bg6 Qa5 23.Bb1 Qa1;

B) 19.f4!? is more ambitious, aiming to give up the b2-pawn for the sake of a massive attack. Here are just some illustrative lines, without pretending to exhaust the position: 19...b3 20.Bb1 Qa1 21.Bd2 Qxb2 22.f5 exf5 23.Bxf5 Be7 White's attack surely looks

dangerous, but Black plans to consolidate by bringing one of his knights to e6. 24.Qe1 Nd8 25.Nf4 Nf8 26.Bc1 Qa2 27.Qg3 Nde6 28.Nxe6 Nxe6 29.Bxe6 fxe6 30.Qxg7 Rf8 31.Rxf8+ Bxf8 32.Qg6+ Kd7 33.Qf7+ Be7 34.Ng4 Qa1 35.Nf6+ Kc6 36.Qxe6+ Kb5 37.Qxe7 Qxc1+= with a draw by perpetual.]

15.Re1

[Since White is supposed to attack with f4-f5, Tischbierek's recommendation 15.Nh2 surely makes some sense. Indeed, the rook belongs on the f-file if the queenside is blocked, but the

way it is Black could change his plans: Ba6 16.Re1 (But now White should leave the pin as after the premature 16.f4 b4 17.axb4 cxd4 he would lose stability in the centre.) 16...cxd4 17.cxd4 Rc8 (Or maybe 17...a4!? 18.Bc2 b4 19.Bxa4 bxa3 20.bxa3 Nb6 with free piece play for the pawn.) 18.Nc3 (18.Be3 a4 19.Ba2 Nb6 followed by ...b5-b4 with systematic queenside counterplay.)

18...Qb6 19.Be3 b4 20.Na4 Qb5 Black has managed to distract his opponent from his main plan and has achieved certain queenside counterplay.]

[15.Bc2 is similar. Ba6 16.Re1 b4 17.axb4 cxb4!? 18.Be3 Nb6 19.Nd2 Bb5 followed by ...a5-a4.]

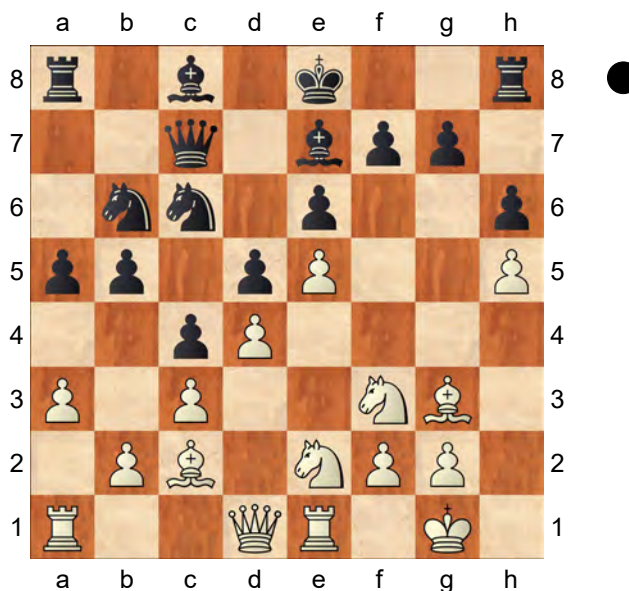
15...c4

[15...Ba6 makes less sense now, since White could change plans with 16.Nf4 My conclusion is that 15.Re1 was the most flexible move und undeservedly received critics.]

16.Bc2 Nb6 17.Bf4 Before starting his attack, Kasparov wants to develop properly.

[17.Nh2 Ra7! would lead to a familiar scenario: 18.f4 b4 19.axb4 axb4 20.Rxa7 Qxa7 , followed by ...b3 and ...Qa1. In this line the bishop is more useful on c8 than it was on b7 in the previous similar lines, as it defends e6 and f5.]

17...Be7 18.Bg3



Rb8?! There are two other ways to start the attack.

[18...Qb7?! has the drawback of taking the queen too far from the d8-h4 diagonal, allowing the active 19.Nh4!]

[But the alternative way of unpinning the a-pawn deserves attention as it keeps control over the a-file: 18...Ra7! 19.Rf1 (19.Nh2 b4 20.axb4 axb4 21.Rxa7 Qxa7; 19.Nh4 Qd8!) 19...b4 20.axb4 axb4 21.Rxa7 Qxa7 22.Nh4 This move arrives later than desired, in a moment when Black's counterplay is very strong already. Qa2 23.Qa1 There is no other way to slow down

Black's attack. Qxa1 24.Rxa1 b3 25.Bb1 Kd8 26.f4 Kc7 27.f5 Bg5 followed by ... Bd7, ...Kb7 and ...Ra8 soon.]

19.Nh2

[19.Nh4 Qd8!]

19...Qd8? Now that White has retreated with his knight, I do not see any point behind this voluntary retreat. As once written by Karpov, the axiom that in closed positions time is not important hardly applies here (if there really is any truth in it at all).

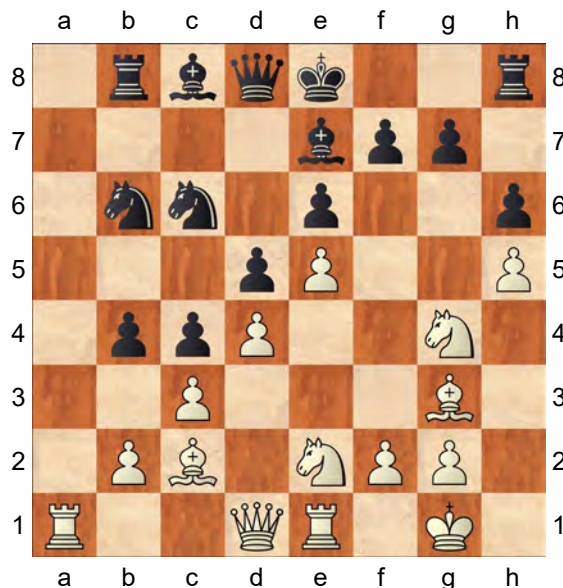
[As usual in positions with mutual attacks on the opposite wings speed

is essential, which suggests 19...b4! as a better continuation. 20.axb4 axb4 21.f4 b3 22.Bb1 Qb7 23.Rf1 Ra8 24.Rxa8 Qxa8 25.f5 Qa1 26.Qd2 Na4 27.f6 Another sharp line goes gxf6 (27...Qxb2!/? Sacrificing a piece for the sake of reducing the force of White's pawn attack is also worth mentioning.) 28.exf6 Bd8 29.Bf4 Qxb2 30.Bxh6 Qxd2 31.Bxd2 Rxb2 32.g4 Rh8 33.g5 e5 34.g6 f6 35.Bxg6+ Kf8 with very unclear play.]

20.Ng4?

[Same comment as on Black's last move. Why not simply 20.f4! b4 21.axb4 axb4 22.Rf1 . It is curious that such a brilliant attacking player would lose the game with his pawn on f2. ..]

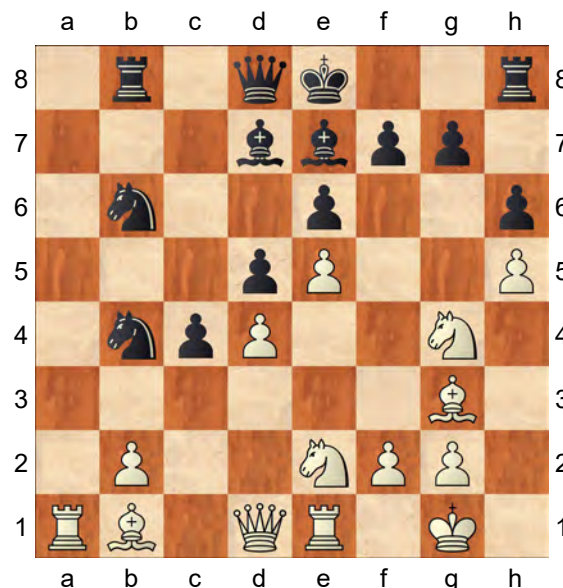
20...b4 21.axb4 axb4



22.cxb4?! This looks like strategic surrendering.

[Once again White should have started his attack: 22.f4! b3 23.Bb1 0-0 24.Rf1! (There is no need to rush in with 24.f5 exf5 25.Ne3 Bg5 26.Nxf5 g6 27.Nd6 Bg4 with kingside counterplay.) 24...Bd7 25.Ne3 Ra8 26.Rxa8 Qxa8 27.f5 , and White's attack looks consistent enough.]

22...Nxb4 23.Bb1 Bd7



24.b3? This just helps Black to activate his b6-knight.

[Even now, 24.f4! would have put up a real fight: Ra8 25.Rxa8 Qxa8 26.f5 exf5 27.Ne3 Bg5 28.Nf4, with certain compensation for the pawn.]

24...Ra8 25.Rxa8 Qxa8 26.bxc4 Nxc4 27.Nc1?

[An awfully passive move in comparison with the more natural 27.Nf4]

27...Ba4 28.Qe2 Qa7! Just as simple as that! The d4-pawn is impossible to defend, due to Black's massive queenside domination. **29.Ne3 Qxd4 30.Nxc4 dxc4 31.Qf1 0-0**

[31...0-0 The c-pawn is likely to decide the game quickly as 32.Re4 fails to retrieve it after Qb2.

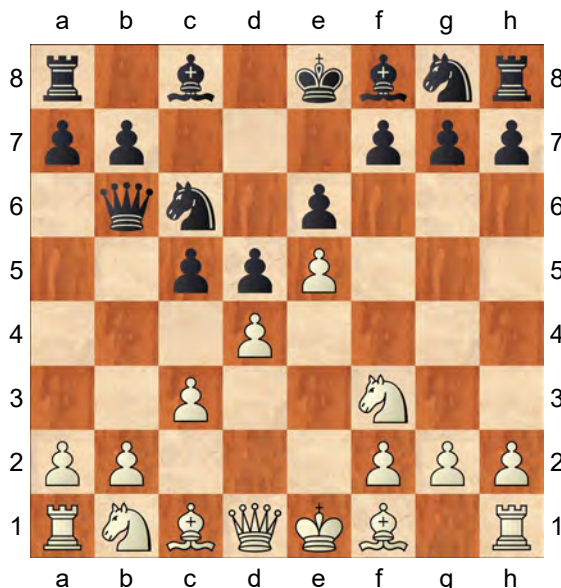
Obviously disgusted by his position, Kasparov decided to call it a day.]

0-1

Manea,Alexandru **2402**
 Marin,Mihail **2543**
 ROU-ch Men 2018 (3) 16.05.2018

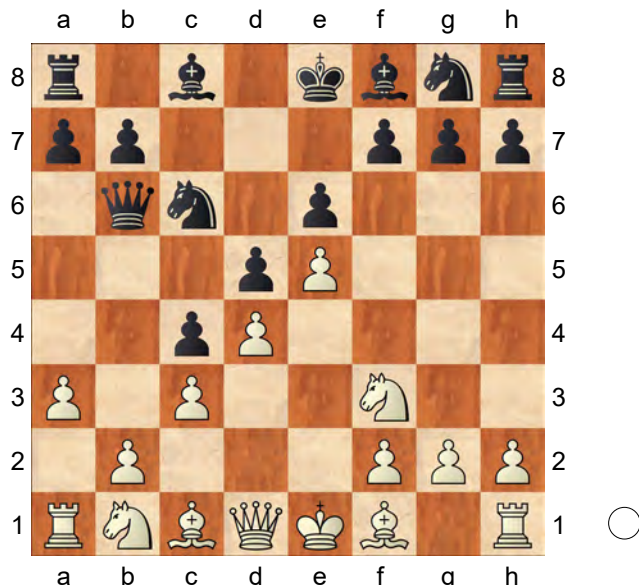
Although it appears quite frequently in the lines 3.Nc3 Bb4, 3.Nc3 Nf6 and 3.Nd2 Nf6, the blocked structure can be examined in its purest form in the Advance variation. Here is a recent game of mine featuring similar psychological elements as the previous example but completely different plans.

1.e4 e6 2.d4 d5 3.e5 c5 4.c3 Nc6 5.Nf3 Qb6

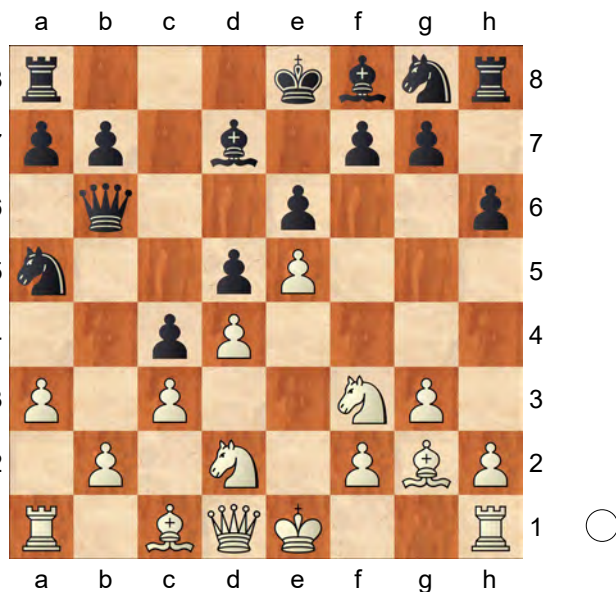


The classical main line and in my view the most principled one, even though moves like 5...Bd7 and 5... Nge7 are important alternatives in practice. By increasing his pressure on d4, Black causes White problems completing his development in the most desirable way, as after 6.Bd3 Bd7 the threat against d4 becomes real. Unlike in the lines with 3.Nc3/d2 Nf6 4.e5, the reserve knight is ready to join the attack on d4 with ...Ne7-f5, while not molesting the c8-bishop's development in any way. This is what abstractly makes 3.e5 a bit premature even though this system has every right to be considered as a main one. **6.a3** This is White's absolute main continuation. The threat is to fight for space with b2-b4 and after the obvious exchange on d4 consolidate the centre with Bb2.

6...c4



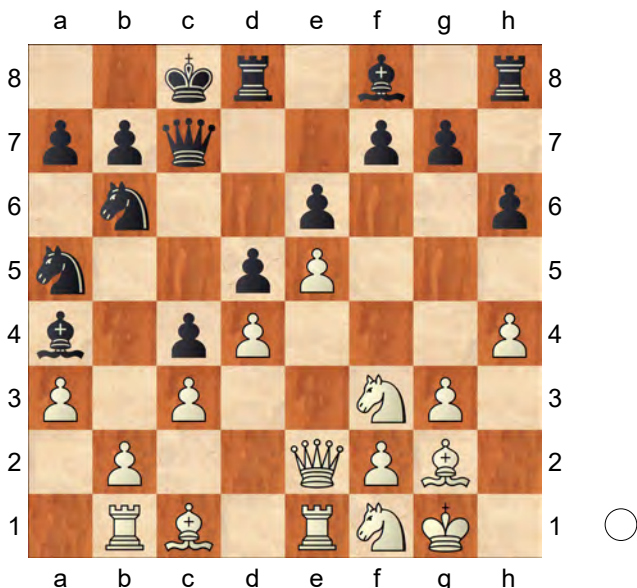
By far not Black's only move, but in my opinion the most principled one. White's last move has weakened b3, making the break b2-b3 less favourable (and soon even impossible!) than with the pawn on a2. This way, Black prepares a reliable hideaway for his king on the queenside, taking the steam out of White's attack on the kingside. True, Black will have to delay his thematic pawn attack for a long time, most likely until deep in the endgame, but he can consider to open the opposite wing where the white king will soon get castled. **7.g3** Since the d3 is not available anymore, White develops his bishop on a square where it will not stand in his colleagues' way. **7...Bd7** **8.Nbd2 Na5** Immediately taking measures against b2-b3. The knight is not needed on c6 in the near future, as d4 is solid as a rock. **9.Bg2 h6**



Since Black will not castle during the next few moves, he could have delayed this typical move, but without making a big difference, as play might have simply transposed later. To tell the truth, when advancing my h6-pawn I was not sure yet whether I would carry out the game regrouping at once or after ... **0-0-0** and ...**Kb8**. **10.0-0 Ne7 11.Re1 Qc7** Clearing the b6-square for the reserve knight. **12.Rb1 Nc8 13.h4** White decides to focus on the kingside and to keep the opposite wing blocked.

[If **13.b3 cxb3 14.Nxb3 Ba4 15.Nfd2 Nxb3** (**15...Qxc3** is also worth a try, but with incomplete development I might have been reluctant to grab the pawn.) **16.Nxb3 Nb6** After the exchange of one knight Black does not experience coordination problems anymore. All his minor pieces are perfectly placed to fight against the queenside weaknesses. Black would most likely proceed with ... **0-0-0**, ... **Kb8** and ...**Rc8**, but castling short remains an option in some cases, too, as the g2-bishop cannot be included into the attack easily.]

13...Nb6 14.Qe2 Ba4 The queenside is frozen now and Black can castle under conditions of absolute safety. **15.Nf1** Absolutely necessary in order to prevent the bishop's activation with ...Bc2. **15...0-0-0**

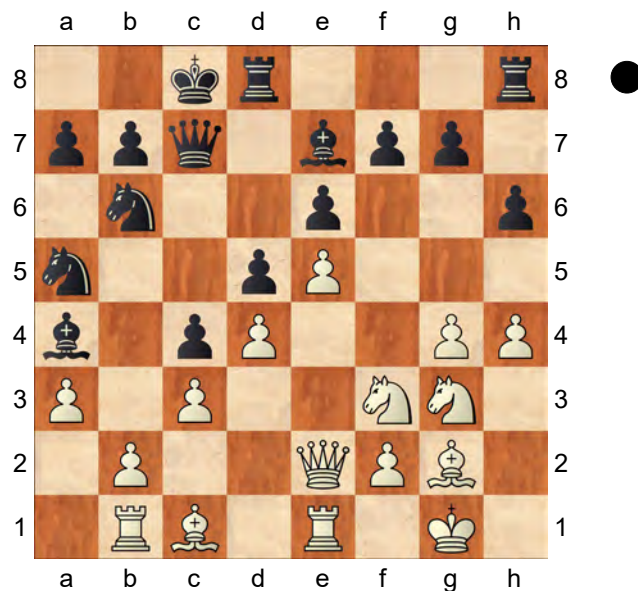


16.g4?! My opponent played this move relatively quickly (after just a bit more than a minute), with the obvious intention of reaching an optically harmonious regrouping with Ng3, in the spirit of the long closed Ruy Lopez lines. But the structure is different here and the French Defence has its specific subtleties. After weakening the f4-square and depriving his minor pieces of the g4-square, White does not have the least chance for an advantage anymore.

[The standard regrouping would start with 16.N1h2 Kb8 17.Ng4 Be7 18.Bf4 over defending e5 in order to inhibit ...f7-f6. For the time being Black's kingside structure is paralyzed as ...h6-h5 would chronically weaken g5 while ...Rdg8 followed by ...g7-g5 would increase the g4-knight's

stability after the exchange on g5. I would probably have played Qd7 followed by the queen's transfer to h7 with the threat ...Bc2. If White would prevent the latter with Rc1, then ...Nb3 might have forced a draw by repetition, even though Black can keep manoeuvring, too. I had this plan in mind during the next phase of the game, too, being inspired by an old game by Yussupov, but I did not find a concrete way to carry it out under the changed circumstances.]

16...Be7 17.Ng3



Nd7 This was also a quick decision, after just one minute. It is the kind of move I was talking in the introduction about. It is impossible to prove it right or wrong, but abstractly I felt the knight was not needed on b6 anymore and decided I could use it to support the break ...f7-f6 at a later stage.

[I could have immediately prepared ...g7-g5, which is the main plan after White's g3-g4: 17...Rdg8 I considered

18.h5 to be best, which explains my game move and the plan to get ready for ...f7-f6. But a closer look shows that Black is doing well here, too: g5 19.hxg6 fxg6 Planning ...g6-g5 followed by ... Nd7-f8-g6. 20.g5 Bd8! Restoring the queen's communication with the kingside. 21.Bh3 Qf7 22.Be3 (22.gxh6 g5+ offers Black a virtually decisive attack.) 22...h5 23.Nh4 Kb8 24.f4 Nc8 25.Kh2 Engines are claiming a clear advantage for Black, but this is highly exaggerated. Of course White can do little else than sit and wait, but due to the latent pressure on e6 and g6 and the virtual possibility of f4-f5, Black also has difficulties trying to create an active plan.]

18.Bh3 g6!? Black intends to prepare ... g5 with all the comfort.

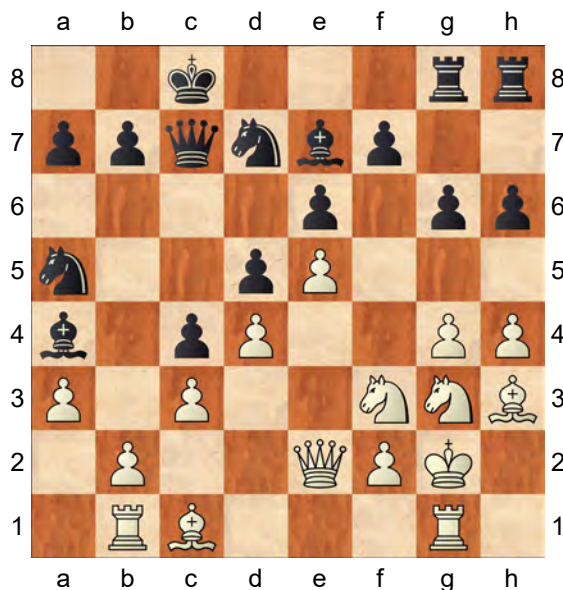
[I briefly considered the immediate 18...g5 but rightly decided it would lead to unnecessary complications: 19.hxg5 hxg5 20.Bxg5 Bxg5 (20...Nc5!/? is an interesting alternative I overlooked during the game. Black offers an unusual exchange of pieces and defends the e7-bishop on the way. 21.Bxe7 Qxe7 22.dxc5 Otherwise ...Nd3-f4 could be troublesome. Rxh3 23.Kg2 Rhh8 24.Nd4 Qxc5 with interesting play.) 21.Nxg5 Rdg8 22.Qd2 Rxc5 23.Qxc5 Rxh3 24.Qg8+ Qd8 25.Qxf7 I ended my line here, fearing that with my queenside minor pieces out of play White would have too much compensation for the piece. In fact, Black has good counterplay after Qh4 26.Kg2 Rh2+ 27.Kf3 Bc2] [I rejected 18...Rdg8 because of

19.h5 , but g5 20.hxg6 fxg6 21.g5 Nf8 would lead to a familiar scenario. If White manages to induce ...h6-h5 he will be basically out of trouble.]

19.Kg2

[Now or slightly later White could block the kingside with 19.g5 h5. But this is a much better situation for Black than without the h4- and f7-pawns. His kingside is stable and he has reasonable chances to launch his queenside attack with ...b7-b5 and ...a7-a5.]

19...Rdg8 20.Rg1



Qd8?! But this is asking too much from the position. From the perspective of the structural changes likely to happen soon, the queen was well placed on c7, so Black mainly loses two tempi.

[Everything was ready for 20...g5, when White is faced with serious strategical problems and dangers to his king. If 21.h5 Re8 22.Nh2 f6 23.exf6 Bxf6+, the imminent ...e6-e5 is likely to decide the game soon. The h3-bishop is awfully passive and the f4-square is weak.]

21.h5 g5 22.Nh2 f6! Better late than never. **23.f4?!** A curious decision, giving away the bishop pair.

[Better was 23.exf6 Nxf6 24.f4 (Against 24.Qxe6+ I planned Bd7 25.Qe2 Re8, with better development and a strong initiative.) 24...Nb3 25.Be3 Bd6 26.fxg5 hxg5 , with complex play and balanced chances. White's piece placement is anything but optimal, but the kingside structure may favour him in the long run.]

23...gxf4 24.Bxf4 fxe5 25.Bxe5 Nxe5 26.Qxe5 Bd7 Black's position is close to winning. White cannot stop ...e6-e5, the dark squares are weak and his king is likely to get into danger. **27.Rbf1 Nc6 28.Qf4 Rf8 29.Qe3 Bg5 30.Rxf8 Rxf8 31.Qe2 Qc7** Admitting that the queen retreat was a mere waste of time. **32.Nf3 Bf4 33.Nf1 Rg8?**

[This only offers White a tempo for his regrouping. 33...e5-+ was much stronger.]

34.Ne3 Qd6 35.Kh1 e5 36.dxe5 Nxe5 37.Nd4 Kb8 38.Nef5 Qf6 39.Qg2 White has managed to improve his piece placement, but is far from equality yet. **39...Rd8 40.Rf1 Qg5?**

[With just a few minutes to reach the time control I feared that the initially planned 40...Nd3 would expose me to big risks after 41.Rxf4 (A few moves earlier, when heading for this position, I had calculated only 41.Qxd5 Bxf5 42.Qxf5 Qh4 with a huge attack.)

41...Nxf4 42.Qg3 Qe5 But White does not have enough compensation for the exchange, as for instance 43.Nxh6 Re8 , unpinning the knight, offers Black a decisive attack.]

41.Ne2 Bxf5 42.gxf5 Qxg2+ 43.Bxg2 Bg5 44.Nf4!?

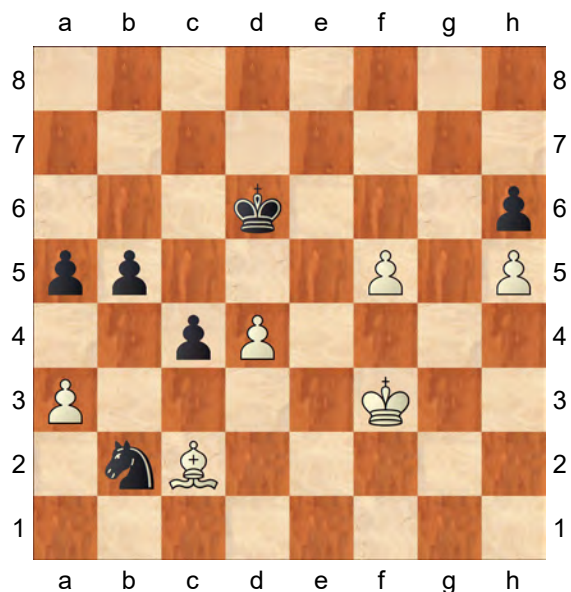
[My opponent suddenly starts playing for a win. He could have maintained a stable equality with 44.Nd4 Bf6 45.Ne6 Rd6]

44...Bxf4 45.Rxf4 Nd3 46.Rd4 Nxb2 47.Bxd5 In view of the threat f5-f6 the endgame looks dangerous for Black. But I had seen one move further... **47...Rd6!** Suddenly, the f-pawn is controlled and the relative pin along the d-file is annoying. Despite the 25 minutes spent on his next move, White failed to find one of the saving paths. **48.Kg2 b5** Finally the long awaited queenside attack, under different structural circumstances than usual though.

49.Be4

[49.Be6 Rxd4 50.cxd4 Kc7 51.f6 Kd6 52.d5 Nd3 53.Kf3=]

49...Kc7 50.Bc2 Rxd4 51.cxd4 Kd6 52.Kf3 a5



53.Be4? The decisive mistake. White wastes too much time.

[53.f6 Ke6 (53...b4 54.axb4 axb4 55.d5 b3? 56.f7 Ke7 57.Bg6+-) 54.d5+ Kxf6 55.Ke4 b4 (55...Nd3 56.Kd4 Nc1 57.a4=) 56.axb4 axb4 57.Kd4=]

53...b4 54.axb4 axb4 55.Ke3 b3
56.d5

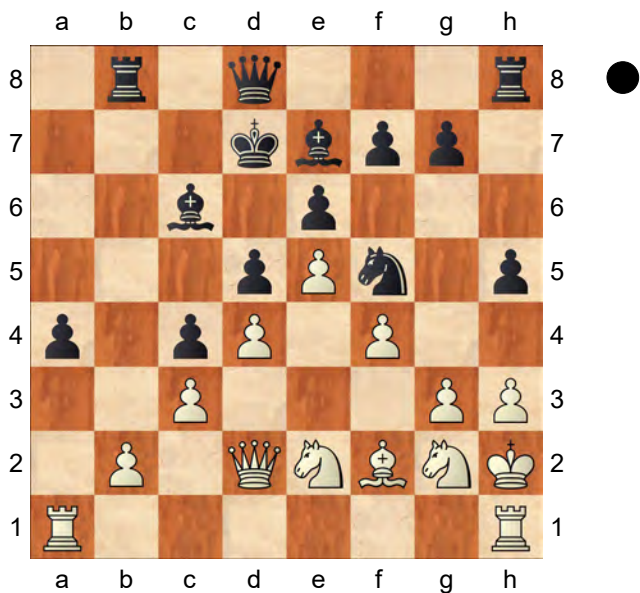
[56.Kd2 Na4 also wins.]

56...c3 57.f6 Nc4+ In view of 58...c2
White resigned.

0-1

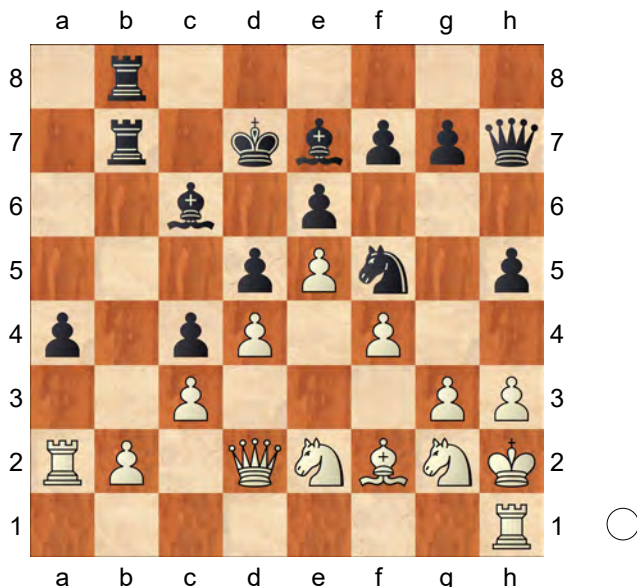
□ Machulsky, Anatoly D
■ Bronstein, David Ionovich
URS Cup Tbilisi (Georgia)

1974



Even though Black's queenside structure is not as compact as usual, his chances for a successful attack are entirely alive due to the potential threat ...a4-a3. Which regrouping would you suggest before undertaking concrete action?
22...Qg8!! The queen is heading for h7, putting the weakened light squares under pressure and eliminating the danger of g3-g4 after the rook's departure from h8.

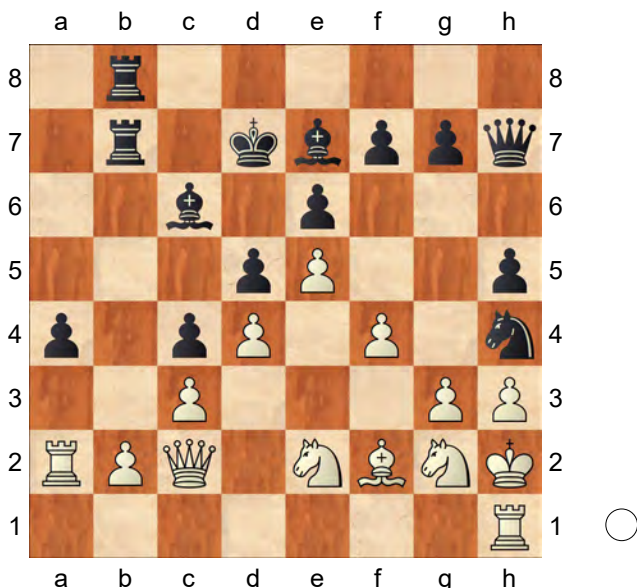
23.Ne3 Qh7 24.Ng2 Rb7 25.Ra2 Rhb8



26.Qc2?

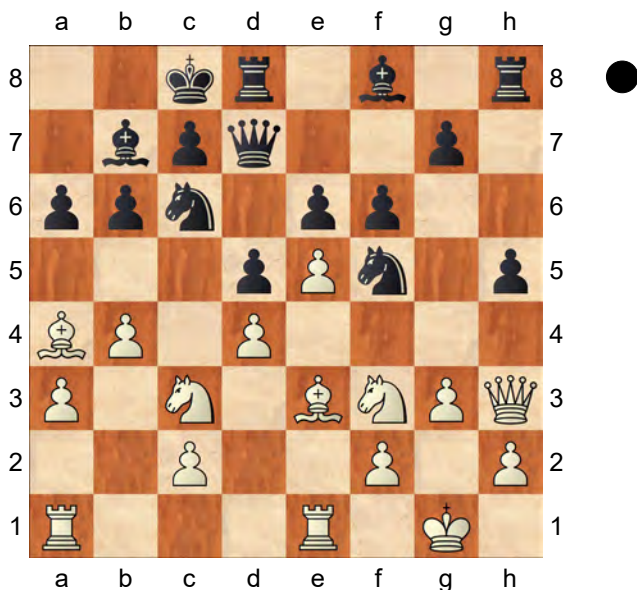
[A blunder, but Black would keep his advantage anyway after ..., Qg6, ...Ke8-f8, continuing to prepare ...a4-a3. For instance: 26.Rha1 Qg6 27.Ne1 Ke8 28.Nf3 White needs to keep the other knight on e2 in order to meet ...Rb3 with Nc1. Kf8 29.Ne1 Nh6 30.Nf3 Qe4±]

26...Nh4!



The queen is taboo in view of ..Nf3#.
27.Rc1 Nf3+ 28.Kh1 Qxc2 29.Rxc2
a3 30.bxa3 Ba4 31.Rc1 Rb2 32.Rca1
Rxa2 33.Rxa2 Rb1+ 34.Ng1 Nxc1
35.Bxg1 Rc1 and Black won.
0-1

□ **Chistiakov, Alexander Nikolaev**
 ■ **Petrosian, Tigran V**
 Moscow-ch34 Moscow (Russia) 1956



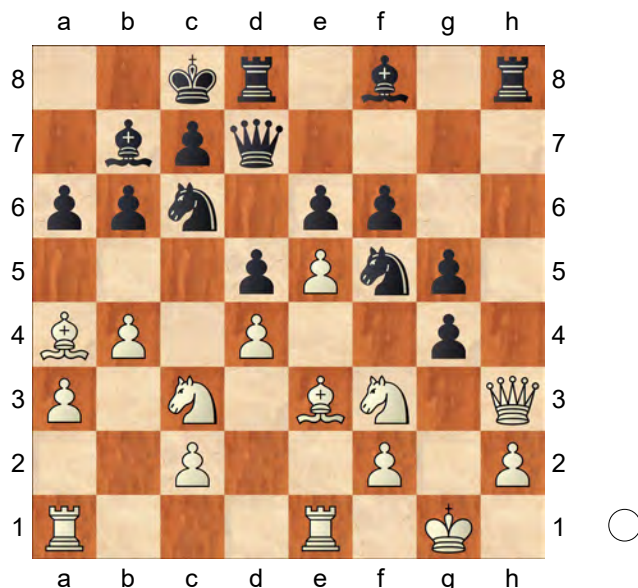
Black has refrained from both exchanging bishops with ...Ba6 and starting the central counterattack with ...c7-c5, preferring to put his king into safety as soon as possible. How could he now make use of his better coordination? **15...g5!?**

[Immediately shaking White's stability in the centre. 15...b5 16.Bb3 g5 would have been equally strong.]

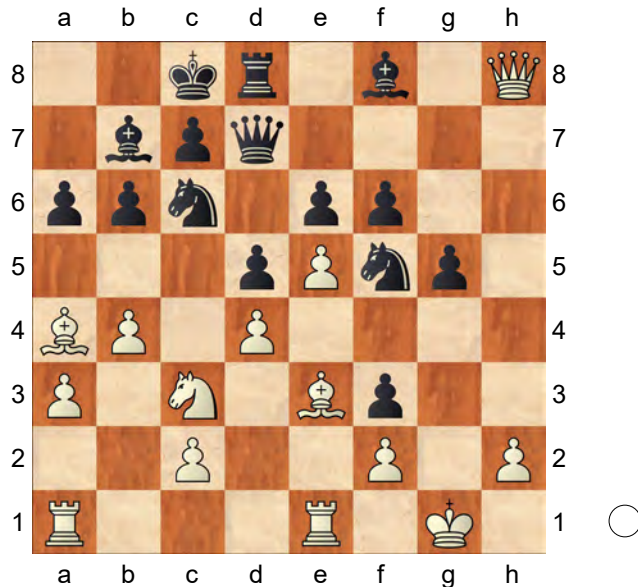
16.g4

[White relied on this counter blow in vain. If 16.Qg2 g4 17.Nd2 b5 18.Bb3, Black can choose whether to win a pawn on d4 or e5.]

16...hxg4!



A typical Petrosian exchange sacrifice.
17.Qxh8 gxf3!



18.Qh5

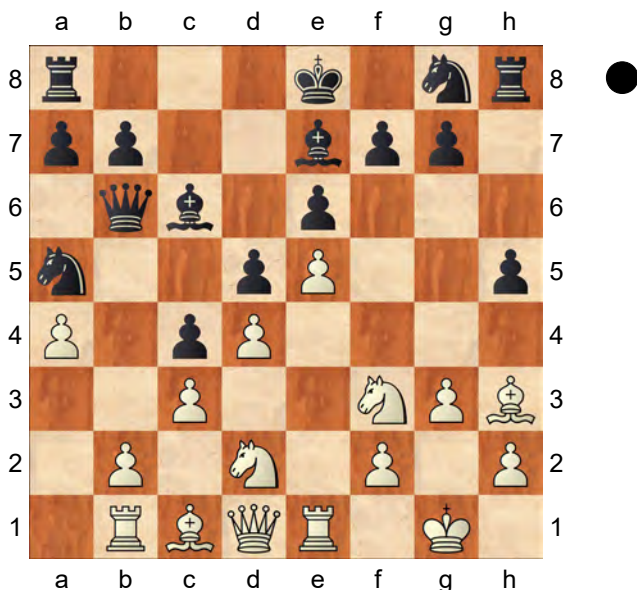
[18.Bxc6 Qxc6 19.Qxf6 Be7 20.Qg6 Kb8! attacks the c3-knight and prepares to meet Qxe6 with ...Bc8. 21.Nd1 Qxc2 22.Bxg5 Nxd4!-+]

18...b5 19.Nxb5

[Desperation, as after 19.Bb3 fxe5 the centre collapses.]

19...axb5 20.Bxb5 fxe5 and Black won. 0-1

Minasian, Artashes **2554**
 Kortschnoj, Viktor Lvovich **2643**
 EU-ch 2nd Ohrid (13) 14.06.2001



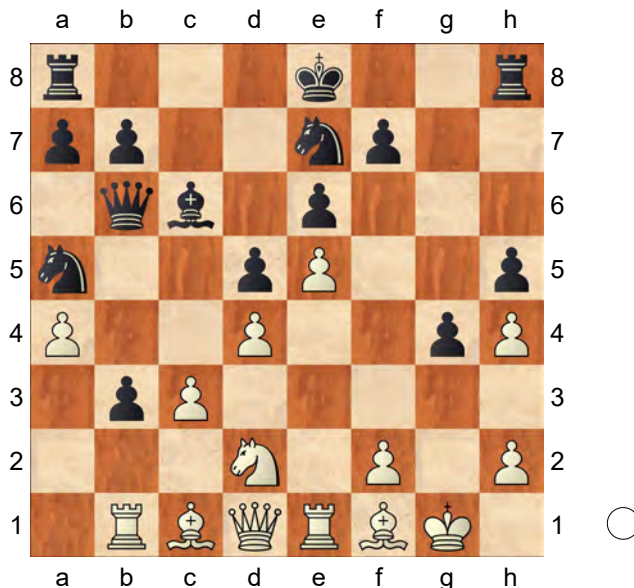
White did not play h2-h4. Can Black use this to his advantage? **13...g5!** Of course! Due to White's poor coordination, Black can start his attack with incomplete development.

14.Bf1

[14.g4? Nh6]

14...g4 15.Nh4 Bxh4 16.gxh4 Ne7

Planning ...Nf5. **17.b4** Desperately trying to change the unfavourable course of the game. **17...cxb3**



18.Bd3

[18.Nxb3? Bxa4 19.Nxa5 Bxd1 20.Rxb6 axb6 21.Nxb7 Bf3-+]

18...Ng6

[18...Bxa4 19.Ba3 Nec6!?, followed by Qd8 (Kortschnoj)]

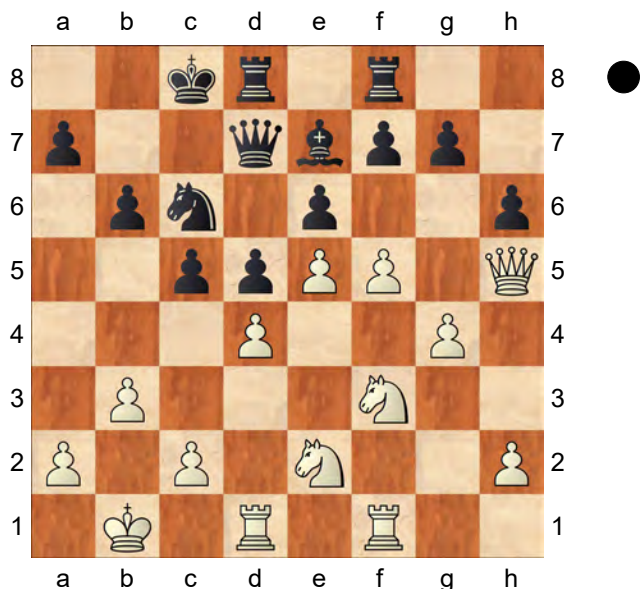
19.Bxg6 fxc6 20.Nxb3 Bxa4 21.Qd3 Bxb3 22.Qxg6+ Kd7 23.Qf7+ Kc8 24.Ba3 Qc6 25.Bb4 Bc2 26.Rb2 Bf5 27.Bxa5 b6 28.Bb4 Rh7 29.Qg8+ Kb7 30.Qg5 Rc8

With great play on the light squares for Black, even though in the end White managed to hold a draw.

1/2

Guliyev, Namig 2577

Marin, Mihail 2572
 Baku ol (Men) 42nd (6.4) 08.09.2016



How should Black meet the threat fxe6 followed by Qg6? **18...c4!** It is hard to say why I rejected this good move, which I actually saw in a flash. Black simply prepares ...Ba3, after which White's kingside threats are neutralized.

[The only alternative I considered to my passive move was 18...cxd4 19.Nexd4 Nxd4 20.Nxd4 Bc5 21.f6 gxf6 22.Rxf6 Bxd4 23.Rxd4 Qc7 followed by ...Kc8, ...Rc8, ...Qc3 with reasonable counterplay. I eventually decided to start with the king's move, missing White's simple plan.]

[The game went 18...Kb8?! 19.fxe6 fxe6 20.Qg6± cxd4? 21.Nexd4 and White won the e6-pawn.]

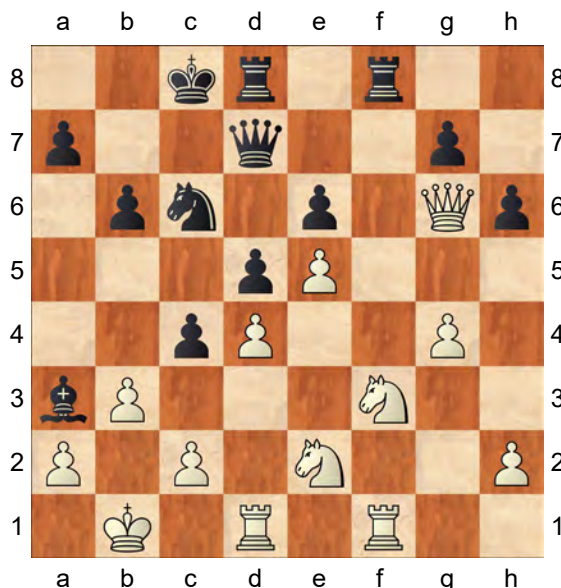
19.fxe6

[19.bxc4 Na5!±]

[19.f6 gxf6 20.exf6 Bxf6 21.Qxh6 Be7±]

[19.Nf4 Kb7 and White is stuck with his kingside play.]

19...fxe6 20.Qg6 Ba3!±

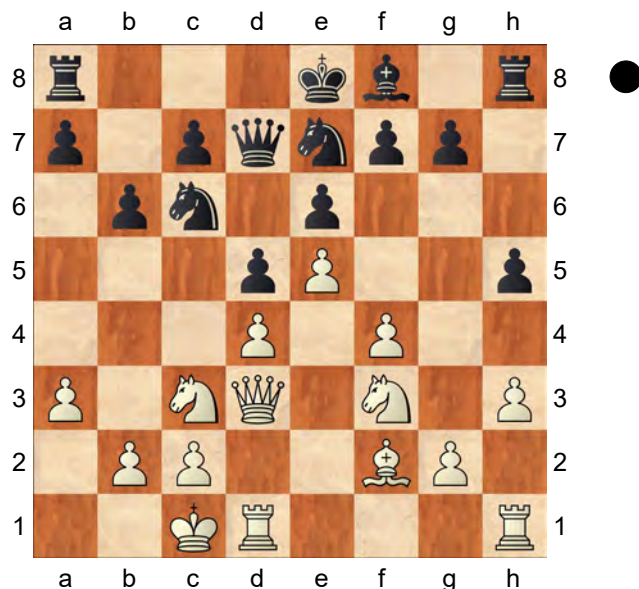


This is the point. Unlike in the game, the bishop has a perfect way of to clear the seventh rank. Suddenly it is mainly Black who benefits from the opening of the f-file since Nf4 is not possible and the f3-knight is slightly hanging, too.

1-0

Bassan, Remo 2272

Marin, Mihail 2547
 Panama Panama-Stadt (3) 29.11.2012



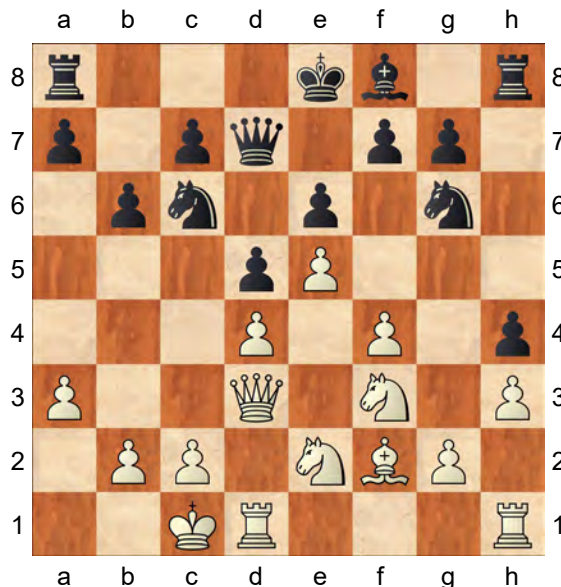
With his last move 13.h3 White has prepared a quick pawn attack based on g4 and f5. How can Black cross his intentions? **13...Ng6!** Attacking f4 and threatening the blockade ...h5-h4.

14.Ne2?

[I thought 14.g3!? to be even worse on account of h4, but the engines surprised me with 15.f5 exf5 16.g4! Nce7 (16...fxg4? 17.e6!+-) 17.Rdg1 Nf4 18.Qd2 Ne6 With such a blocking knight Black should be out of danger. 19.Bxh4 fxc4 20.hxc4 0-0-0 21.Ng5!? (21.Kb1 Kb7=) 21...Re8! This is an elegant and effective solution to the threat Nxf7: 22.Nxf7 Rxh4 23.Rxh4 Ng6]

[The previously played 14.Ng5!? did not cross my mind either: Nxf4 (14...Be7? 15.Nxe6! Qxe6 16.f5 Nf4 17.Qf3! Qxf5 18.Nxd5±) 15.Qf3 Ng6 16.Rhf1 Nd8 17.Bg3 h4 18.Bh2 c6 White has serious pressure, but in the absence of pawn breaks it is not obvious how he could make further progress. In fact, a positional draw (as they would call it in a study; in mortal terms, it would be "uneventful draw") is not improbable. One interesting aspect is that there is no simple way to double rooks on the f-file. 19.Rd2?! (Even if prepared with 19.Kb1, doubling rooks does not work: Rc8 20.Rd2?! Be7! 21.Nxf7 0-0 22.Qh5 Nxf7 23.Qxg6 Nh8) 19...Be7 20.Nxf7 0-0! 21.Qh5 Rxf7 22.Rxf7 Nxf7 23.Qxg6 Bg5-+ 0-1 (38) Larsen,K (2300) -Rustemov,A (2607) Copenhagen 2001]

14...h4



I suspect that Kortschnoj would attach an "±" or even "-+" and he may well be right. Actually, this is how I evaluated the position during the game. **15.Kb1 0-0-0 16.c4?!** Opening the centre only increases White's problems, **16...dxc4 17.Qxc4 Nce7 18.Be3 Nd5?!** This allows White some unnecessary activity.

[18...Nf5! 19.Bc1 Nge7±/±]
19.Bc1 Nge7 20.g4!? hxg3 21.Nxg3±
 And Black had to fight hard to win.
0-1

Tactical Rook Endings

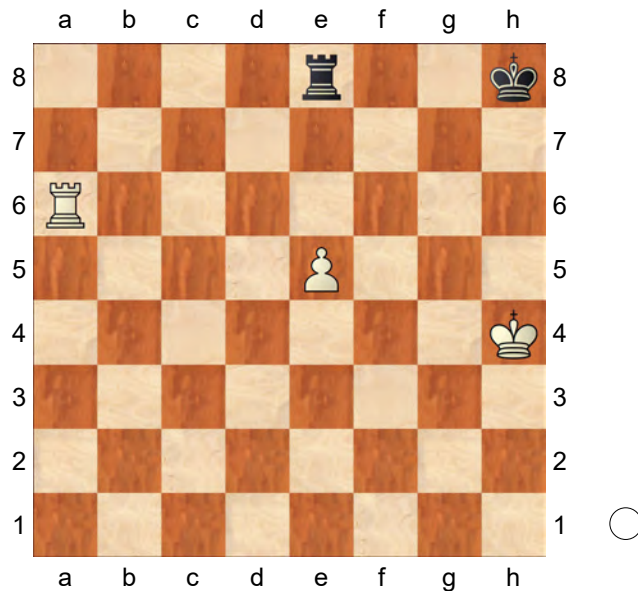


Introduction + example 1

Solving endgame studies is recommended by the world's leading trainers as the best method to improve one's creativity and endgame understanding as well as to polish one's tactical and calculative skills and to sense the full energy of the pieces. Let's take for example a frequent guest in chess practice - rook endings. They are often regarded as rather technical and lacking brilliancy. At the same time they are the most common type of endings thus they require a certain amount of knowledge and not always of the most exciting nature. Nevertheless, Chess composition proves time and again that rook endings might appear, contrary to their image, highly tactical and even most enjoyable! I have prepared for you a selection of 18 light and entertaining

rook miniatures to solve and enjoy. They all have not more than 7 pieces and display a variety of tactical motifs in their purest form. Not less important: they all contain a somewhat paradoxical highlight. Consider sensible moves but at the same time keep an open mind and be alert to unusual ones too. Let us first examine 4 attractive examples with their solutions:

J.Ulrichsen



A. White's last pawn is threatened. Any winning prospects left? Surprisingly yes but just by abandoning the pawn!

1.Kg5!!

[The extra pawn proves useless following 1.e6? Re7 2.Kg5 Kg7 3.Kf5 Rb7 is just a draw]

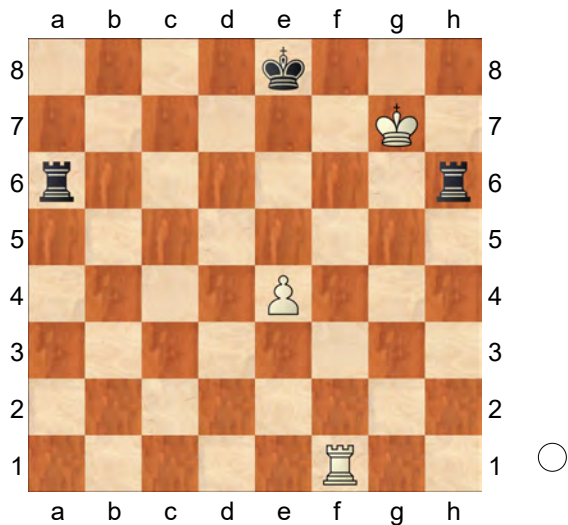
1...Rxe5+ 2.Kg6 Re8 3.Kf7!

The double threat is decisive. **3...Re1**

4.Rh6#

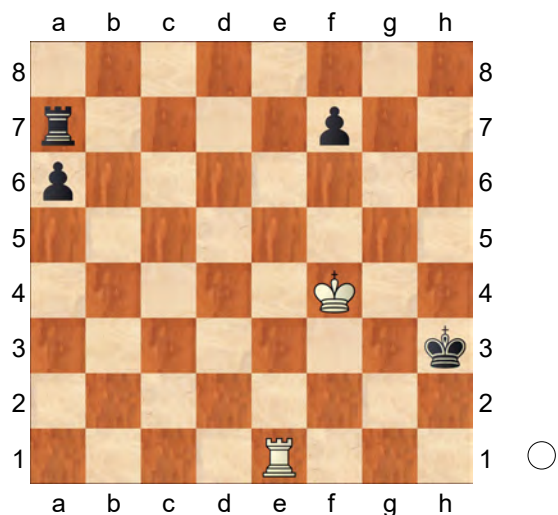
1-0

Example 2
S. Kozlowski



B. Any hope for white with a rook behind? No other choice but going for the forcing checks and then see further.
1.Rf8+! Kd7 2.Rf7+ Ke6 No checks anymore yet quiet moves often prove not less powerful **3.Rf5!!** Moving the attacked black rook is met by a skewer thus black has no better than to move his king **3...Ke7 4.Rf7+ Ke8 5.Rf8+ Ke7 6.Rf7+ Ke6 7.Rf5** A stunning positional draw!
1/2

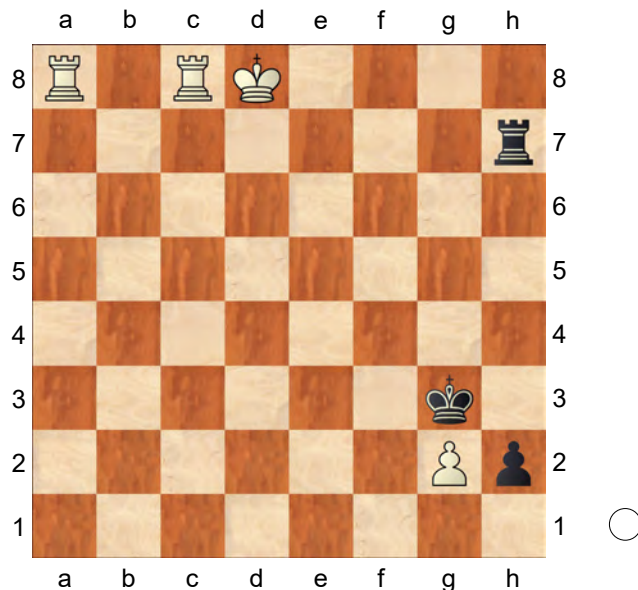
Example 3
A. Wotawa



C. With two pawns behind where lie White's drawing chances? Unexpectedly he can build up a stalemate position:
1.Kf3! Kh4 2.Kf4 Kh5 3.Kf5 Kh6 4.Kf6 Kh7 5.Re5! a5 6.Rh5+ Kg8 7.Rg5+ Kf8 8.Rxa5! Rxa5 The composers call it an ideal stalemate: Each square around the white king is attacked just once and all pieces take part in the final picture. A matter of aesthetics.
1/2

Example 4
V. Kalandadze

2000



D. Is there a way to restrain the black pawn? Attacking the king is naturally the key to success. **1.Rc3+!**

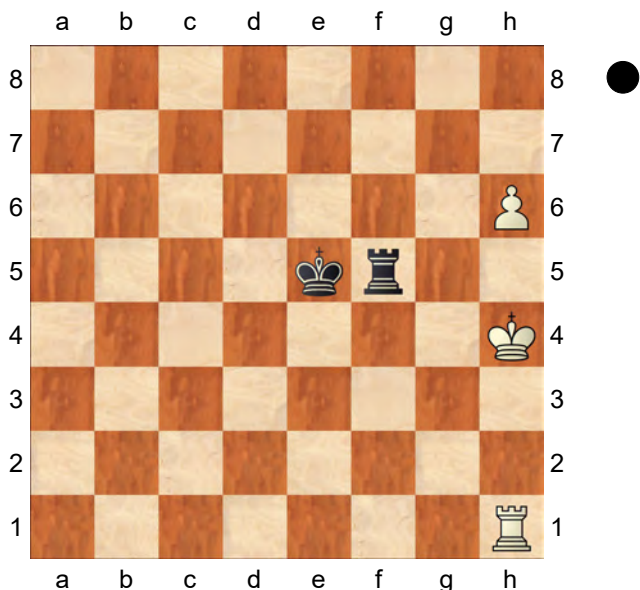
[Following the wrong check **1.Ra3+? Kf4 2.Rc4+ Ke5 3.Ra5+ Kd6!**Black runs out of useful checks.]

1...Kf4 2.Ra4+ Ke5 3.Rc5+ Kd6 Has white blundered? It seems that White's attack has reached a dead end as both his rook and his king are under attack. What went wrong? **4.Rh5!!**This sacrificial deflection turns the tables on as by now both black king and rook are under attack forcing the only response. **4...Rxb5 [4...h1Q 5.Ra6#] 5.Ra6+ Ke5! 6.Ra5+** The decisive

skewer. **6...Kf4 7.Rxh5 Kg3**
 Black is now just a small step from his goal however... **8.Rxh2! Kxh2 9.g4**
1-0

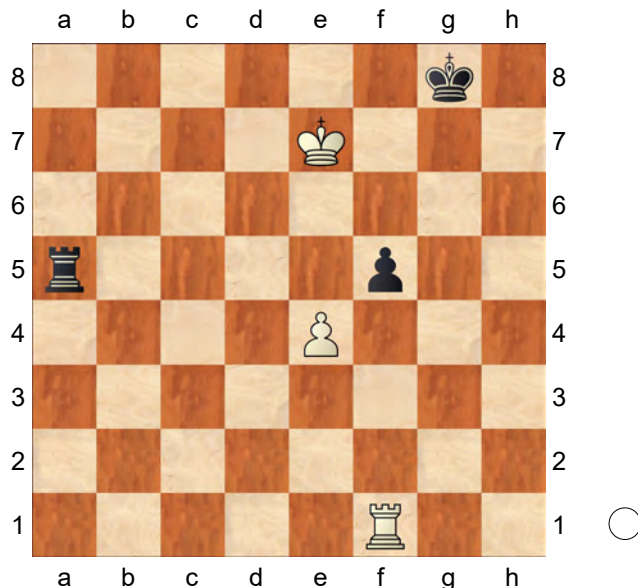
Exercise 1

And now it's your move, dear reader!
 18 exercises to your enjoyment :



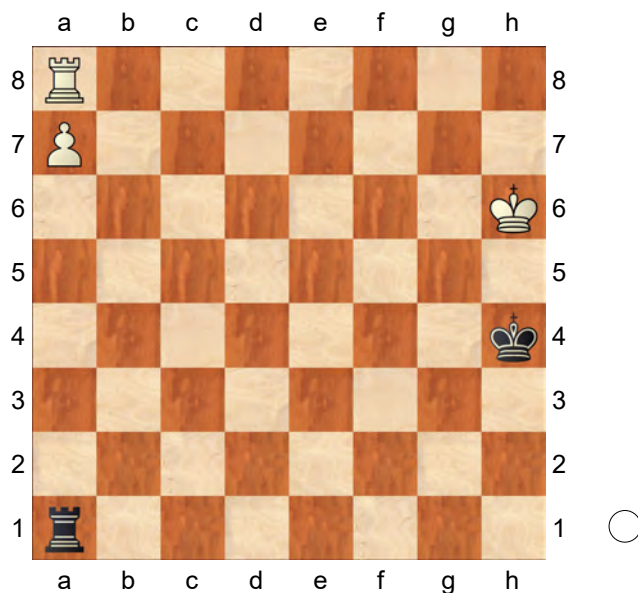
How can White benefit from his clumsy-looking pawn?

Exercise 2



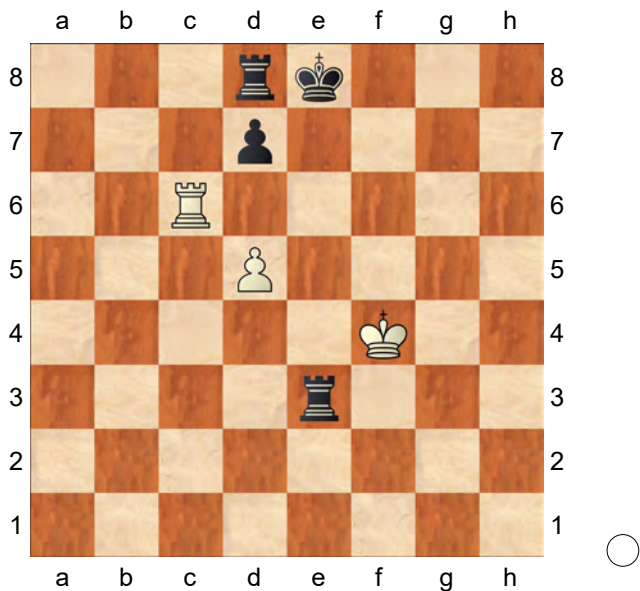
Which piece should capture the black pawn?

Exercise 3



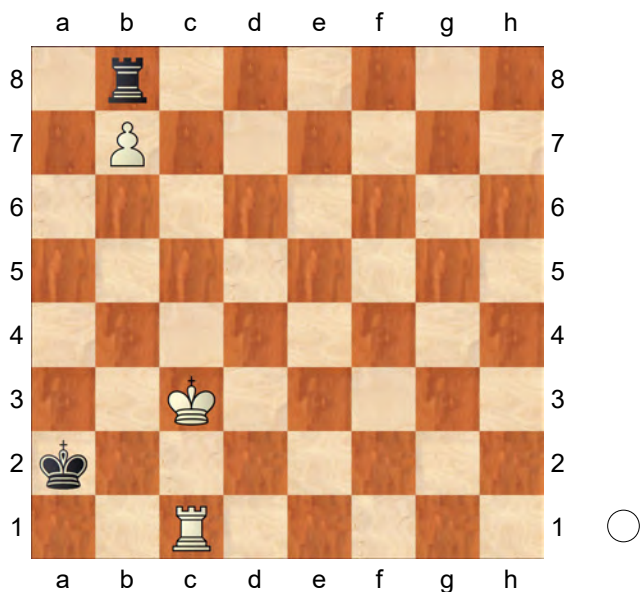
How should White force the promotion of his pawn?

Exercise 4



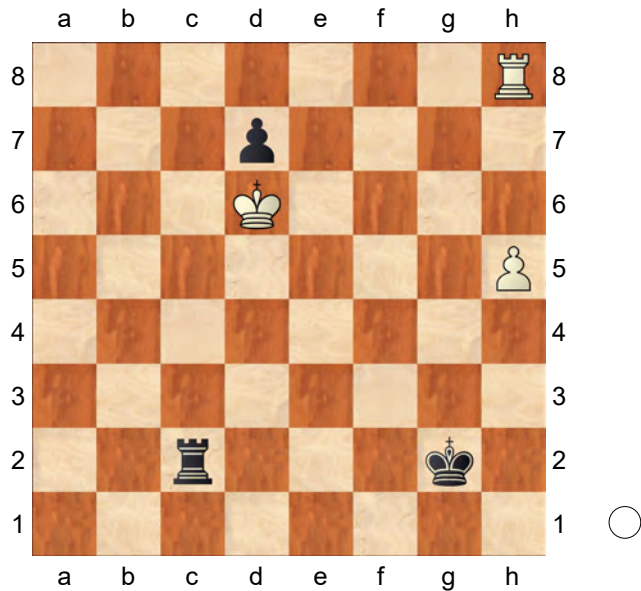
Here, again, a single rook confronts a pair of enemy ones. What are the surviving odds?

Exercise 5



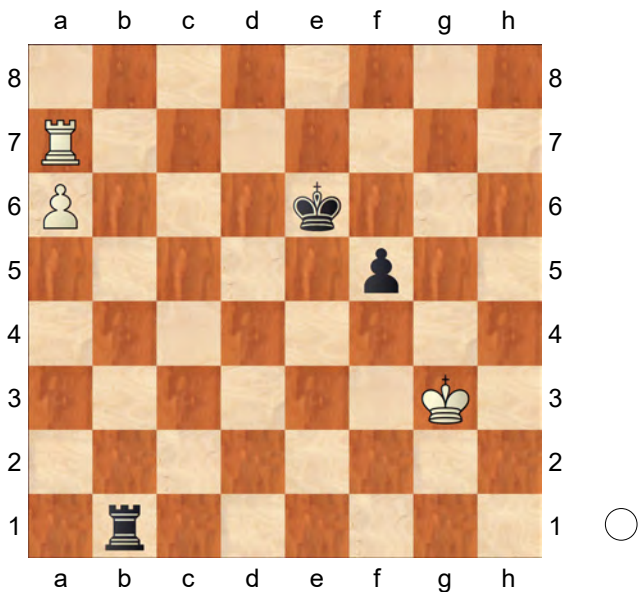
White should first protect his last pawn. And then what?

Exercise 6



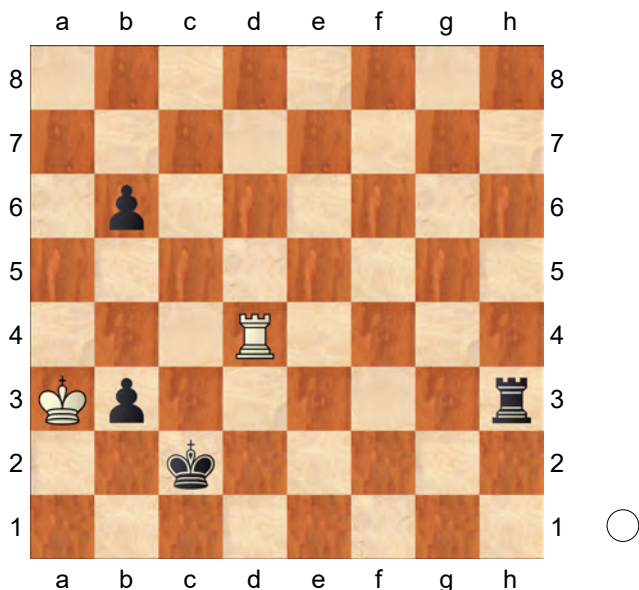
Could the white advanced pawn provide the desired point?

Exercise 7



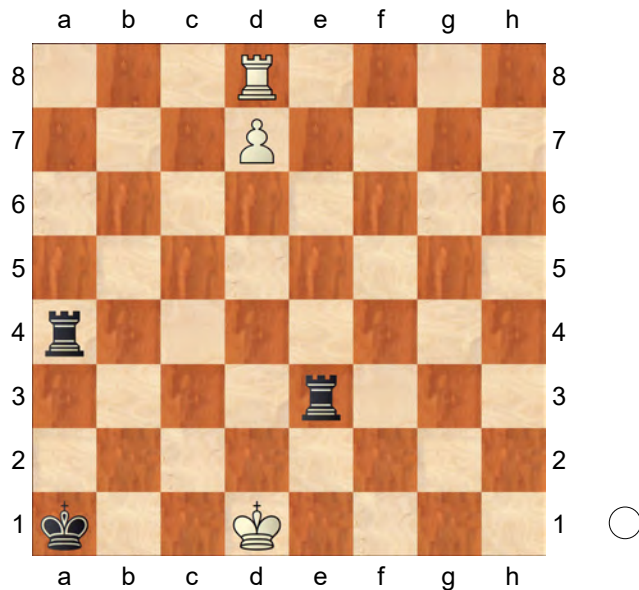
White should hurry but can he win?

Exercise 8



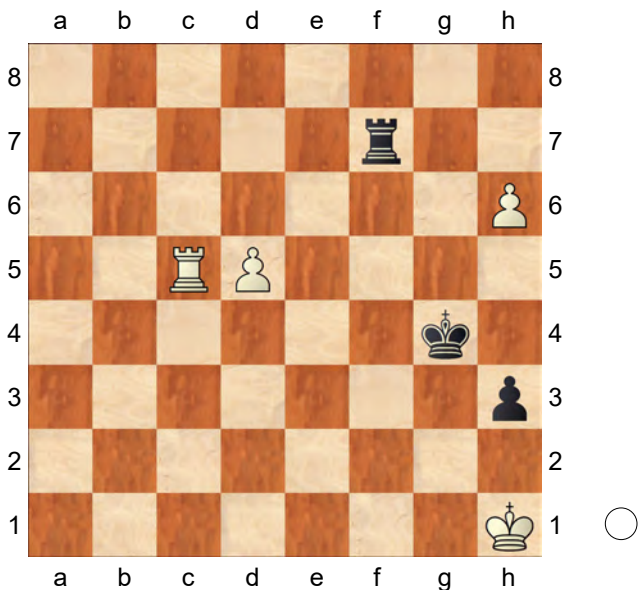
The black pawn seems highly dangerous. How should White handle it?

Exercise 10



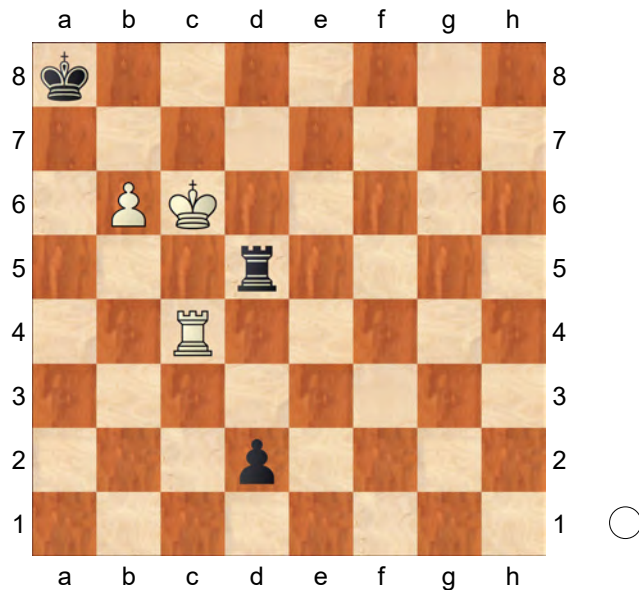
White's position looks totally lost but there is still a narrow escape. Can you spot it?

Exercise 9



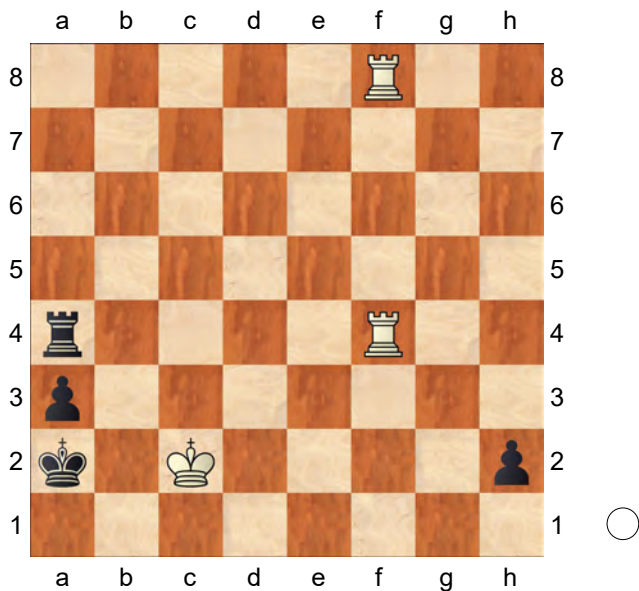
How can White profit from his pair of passed pawns?

Exercise 11



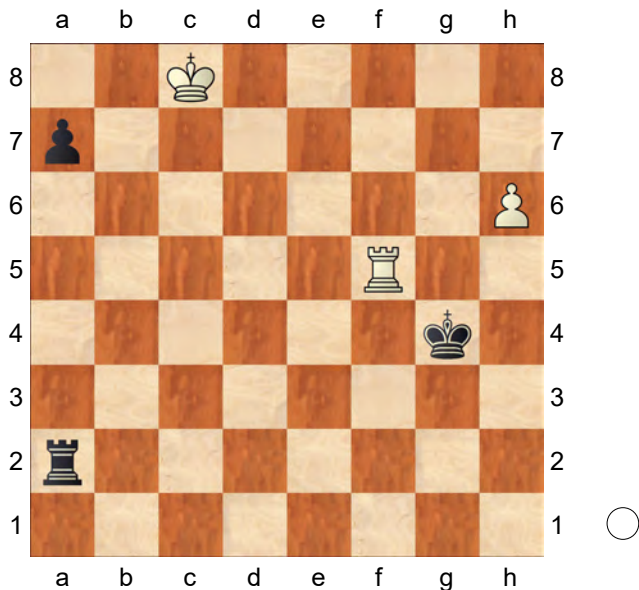
Any winning prospects despite the material equality? White to move.

Exercise 12



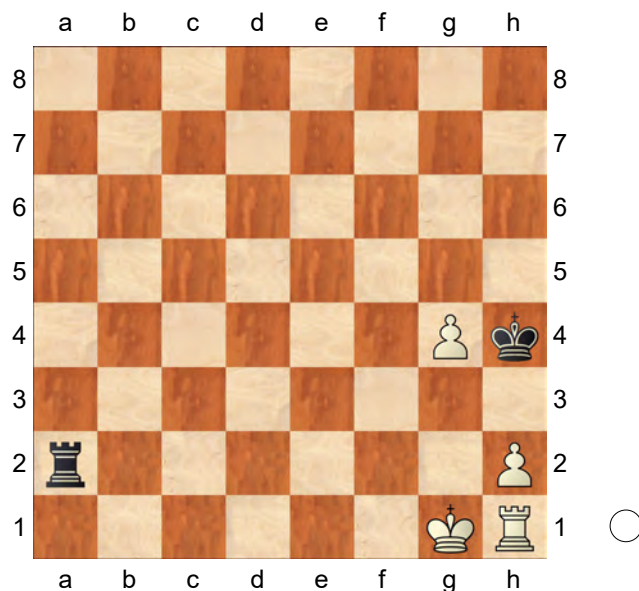
How to make the best out of the rook advantage?

Exercise 13



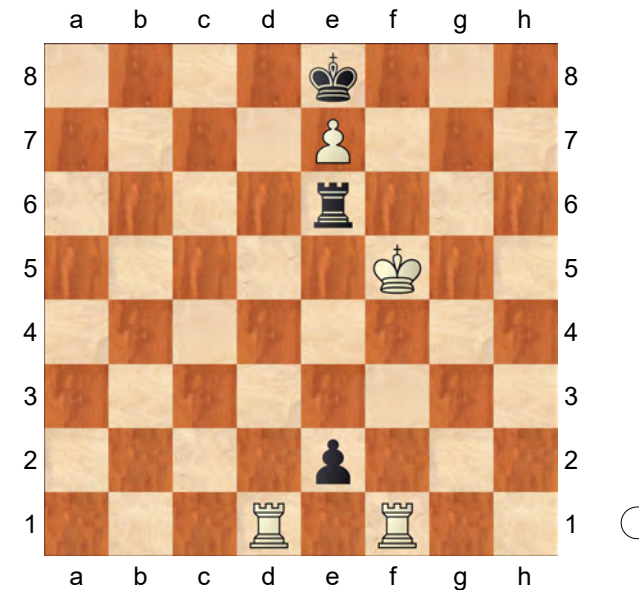
How to secure the promotion of the vulnerable white pawn?

Exercise 14



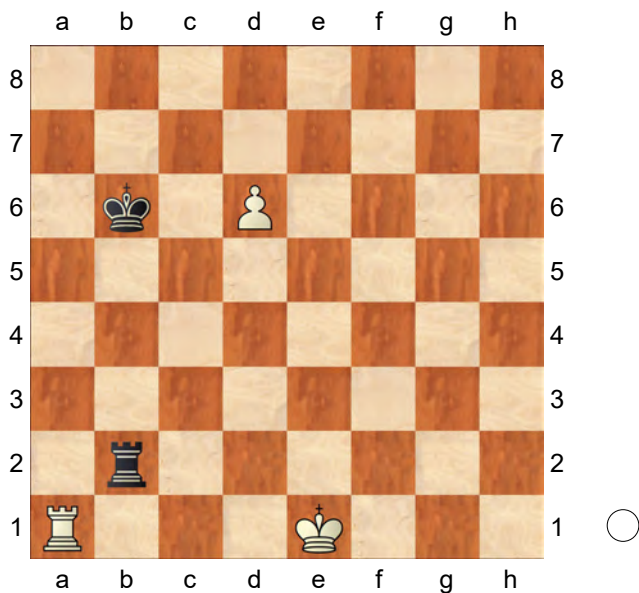
Despite his material advantage, White is in a serious trouble. Could you possibly save him?

Exercise 15



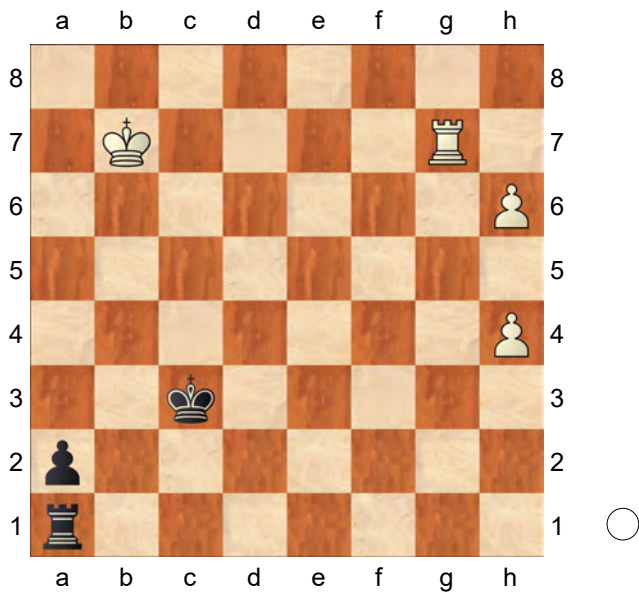
The white rooks are forked. Can you save them both to secure the win?

Exercise 16



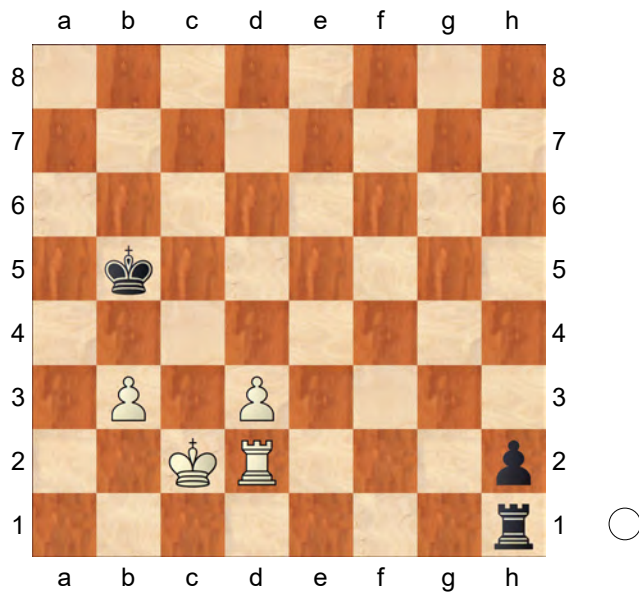
The pawn doesn't seem too menacing. Could you prove otherwise?

Exercise 17



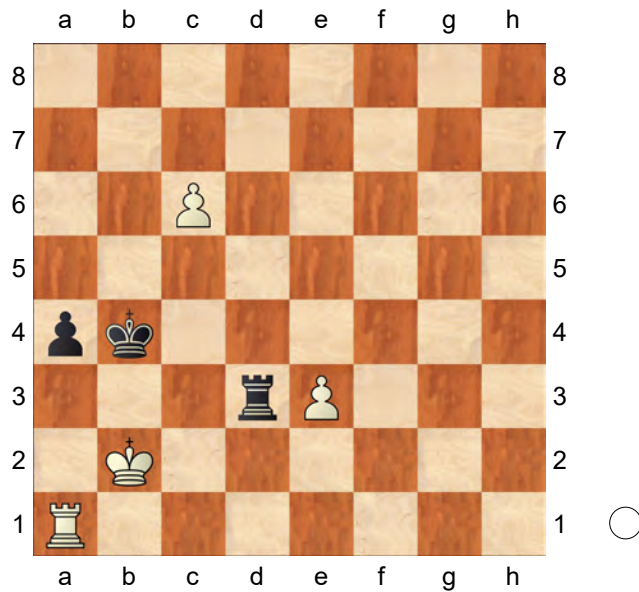
Both sides are about to promote. Who is first?

Exercise 18



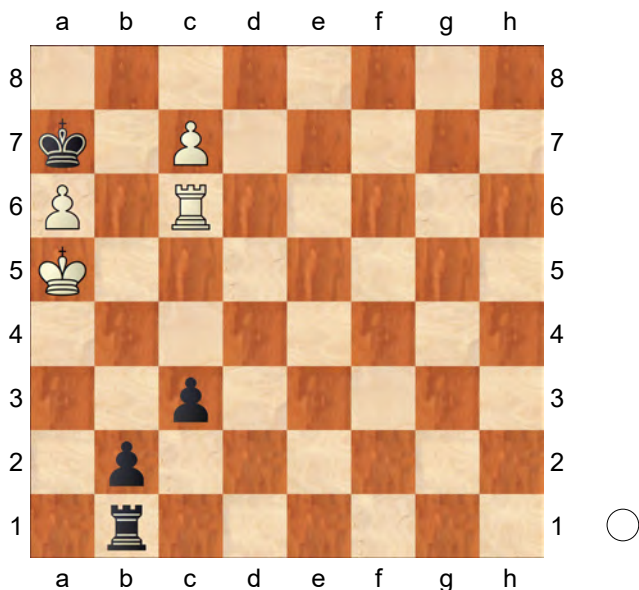
Can white avoid the black promotion?

Author's Study 1



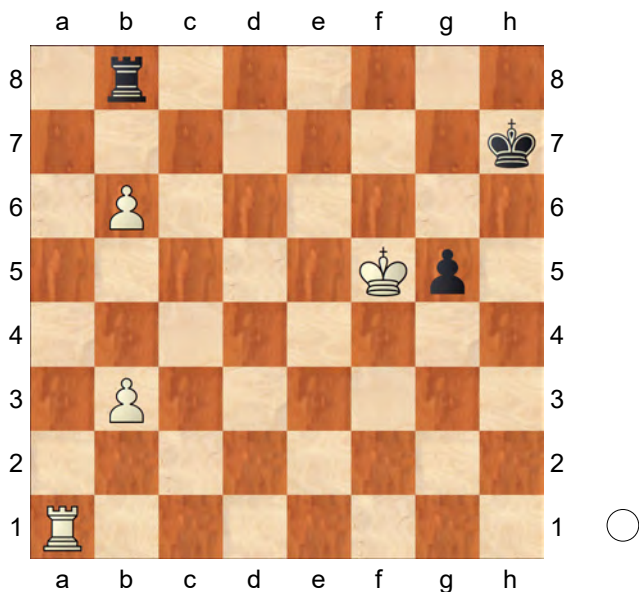
How should white take advantage of his extra pawn?

Author's Study 2



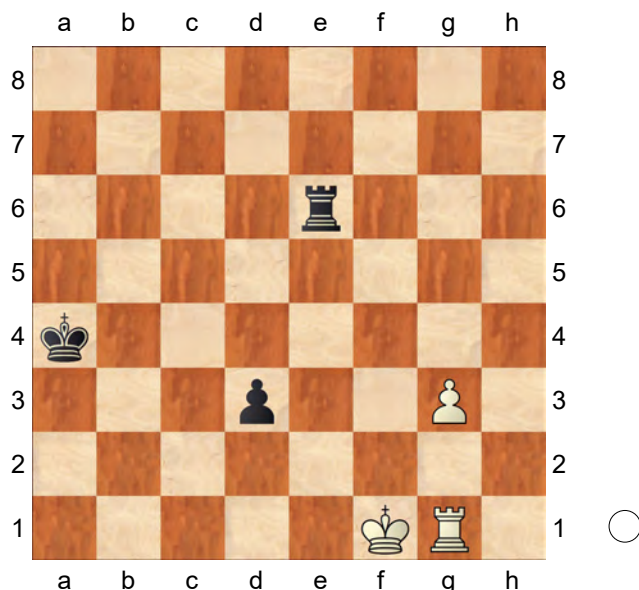
How should White face Black's deadly counter threat? No time for quiet moves. A vigorous action is called for!

Author's Study 3



What is the right way to get your king to the other side of the board? The rook should first improve its position.

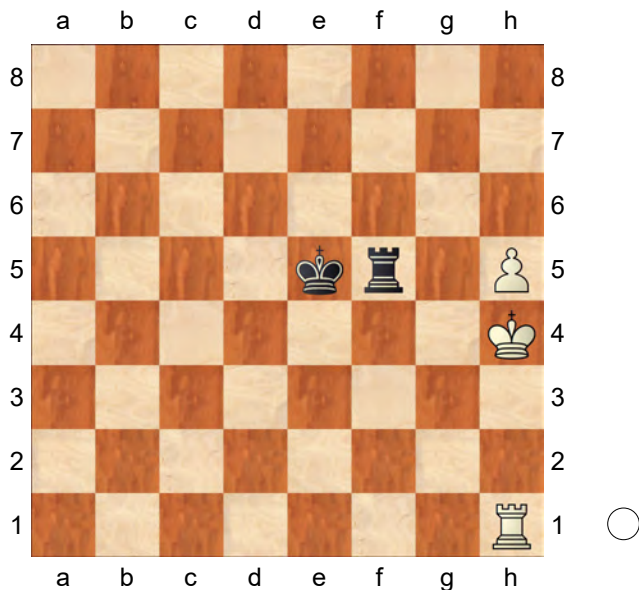
Author's Study 4



How should White face the mighty enemy pawn?

ANSWERS

A. Selezniev



How can white benefit from his clumsy-looking pawn? Solution: That all his pieces stand on the same file should provide the clue! **1.h6! Kf6**

[1...Rf8 2.h7 Rh8 (2...Kf6 3.Rf1+ wins.) 3.Kg5 wins.]

2.h7!

[2.Kg4? Not that fast with the battery!Rg5+ 3.Kf4 Rg8 draws.]

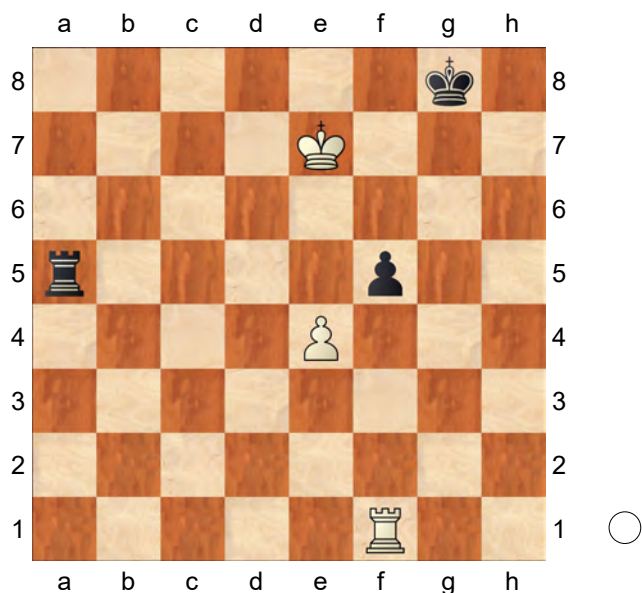
2...Kg7 And now what? **3.h8Q+!**

Deflecting the king into the battery

3...Kxh8 4.Kg4+ To win the rook by a discovered check.

1-0

A. Selezniev



Which piece should capture the black pawn? Solution: Neither of them! After

1.Rg1+!

[Neither 1.exf5? Ra7+]

[Nor 1.Rxf5? Ra7+ suggest more than a draw since the white king is exposed to check along the ranks.]

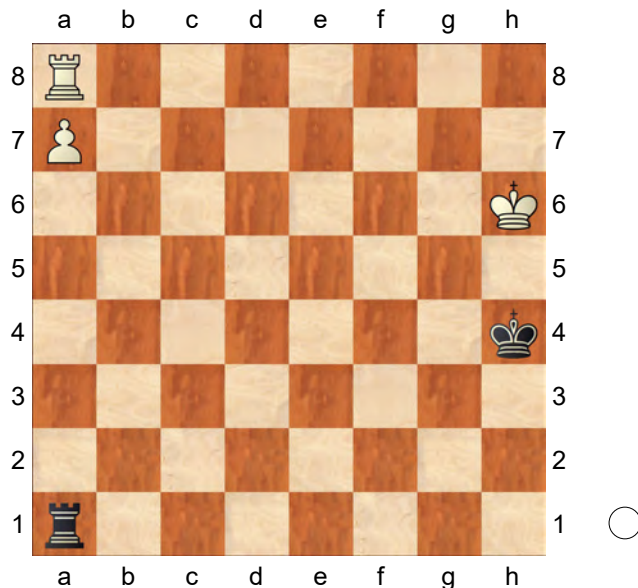
1...Kh7 The black king has been pushed to the edge of the board however the white pawn is gone! **2.e5!!** Gone with dignity! **2...Rxe5+**

[2...f4 fails to 3.Kf6 f3 4.e6 f2 5.Rf1 wins.]

3.Kf7 Threatening mate **3...Kh6! 4.Kf6!** In view of the double threat the rook is lost.

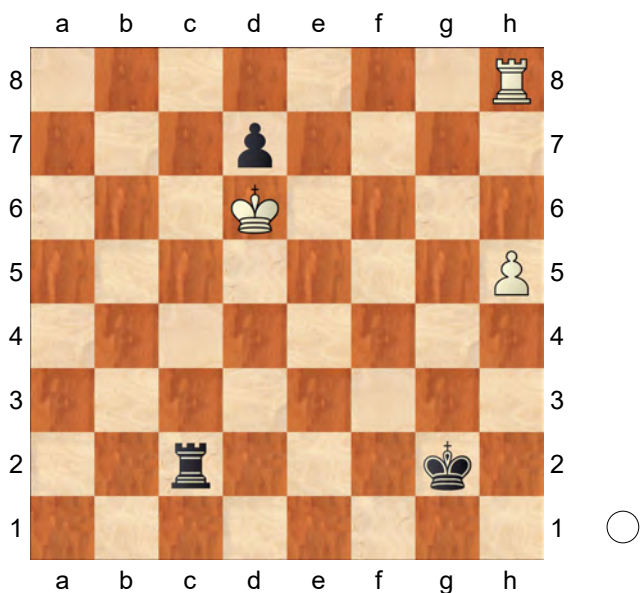
1-0

A. Troitzky



How should white force the promotion of his pawn? Solution: First he should make the journey to the other side of the board. **1.Kg6! Kg4** The black king should hide behind his counterpart against a lethal in-between check

D.Petrov



Could the white advanced pawn provide the desired point? Solution: Let's optimize our position first and hope it would: **1.h6! Rc6+!**

[The attempt to hide on the "h" file and to attack the white pawn from behind fails as follows: 1...Kh1 2.Kxd7 Rh2 with the king hiding from checks on h7, the rook moves to g6 then Kg7 and the pawn promotes. 3.Ke6]

2.Ke5!

[Important to leave the black pawn on the board as would later become apparent. 2.Kxd7? Ra6! 3.h7 Ra7+ (Not 3...Kh3 4.Rc8! wins.) 4.Ke6 Kh3 and the white king is unable to join his units due to endless checks along the ranks.]

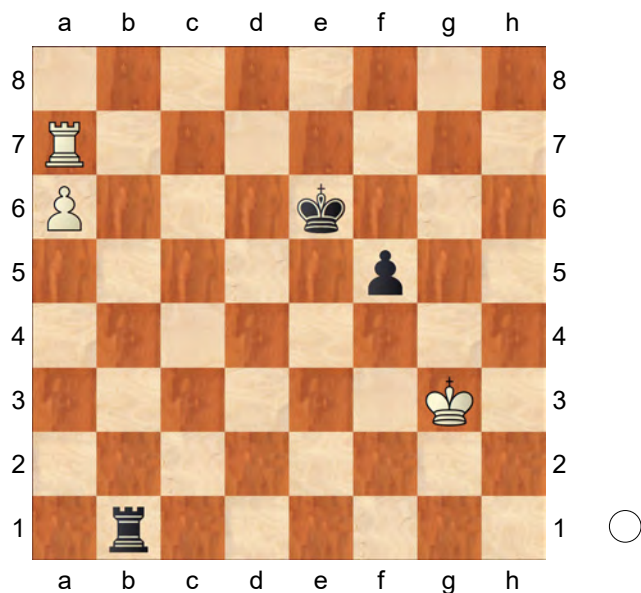
2...Kh3 3.Kf5 Kh4! 4.h7 Rh6

How can white make here any progress? The black pawn should give you a hint!

5.Re8!! Rxh7 6.Kg6! Rh5 The black rook is dominated! **7.Re4+** winning.

1-0

M.Matous



White should hurry but can he win?

Solution: Depends on creating a reciprocal zugzwang position with the right side being on move! **1.Ra8! Rg1+!**

[As after 1...Ra1 2.a7 Kf7 the king is just a square away from safety and White wins by 3.Rh8! Rxa7 and the skewer 4.Rh7+]

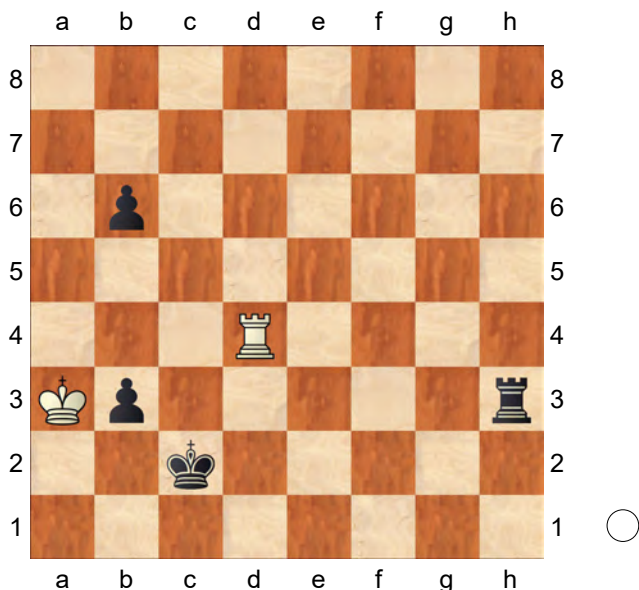
2.Kf3!!

[This is comparable to the thematic attempt 2.Kf4? Rg7! 3.a7 Re7! This is the critical mutual zugzwang position with white to play! 4.Kf3 Ke5 5.Ke3 Kf6+ (5...Kd5+) 6.Kf4 Ke6! And we have reached the key position again with white on move. Draw!]

2...Rg7 3.a7 Re7 4.Kf4! That's it! The very same key position, however, this time with black to play...and lose since any move is met by a check by the white rook and the pawn promotes.

1-0

A. Ornstein



The black pawn seems highly dangerous. How should White handle it? Solution: Curiously by a variety of stalemates! The first move is pretty much forced to restrain black's immediate threat. **1.Rb4! Rc3**

[A waiting move by the rook
1...Rg3 allows 2.Rxb6 Rc3 3.Rb4!
Rc8 4.Rc4+! Rxc4 Stalemate!]

2.Rb5!

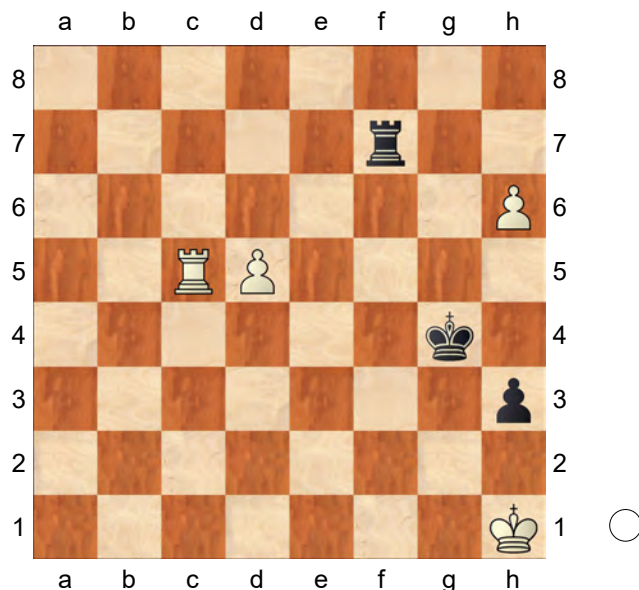
[keep the "b" file closed!: 2.Rxb6??
loses to Rc8 3.Rxb3 Ra8+
4.Kb4 Rb8+ wins.]

2...Rc5!

[Or 2...b2+ 3.Ka2 Kc1 4.Rxb2
Rc2 5.Ka1! Rxb2 A second
stalemate!]

3.Rxb3 Rc3 4.Ka4! Rxb3 The third
and final stalemate!
1/2

V. Bron



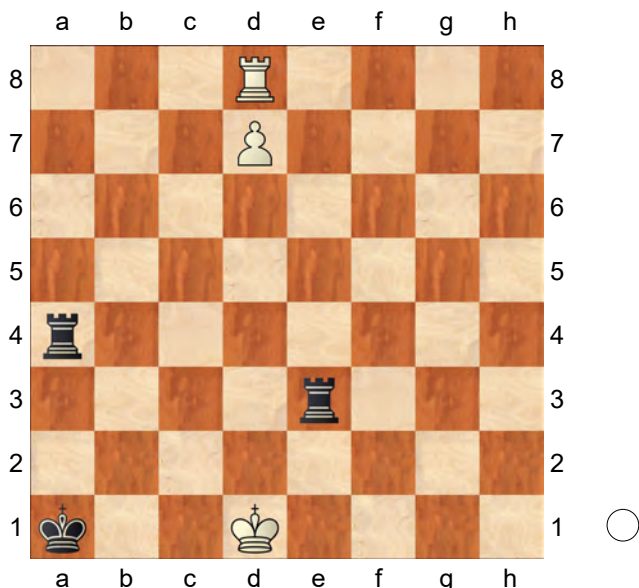
How can White profit from his pair of passed pawns? Solution: Pushing the pawns forward is a good start. **1.d6!** That means that black should seek counter chances somewhere else
1...Rf1+ 2.Kh2 Rf2+ 3.Kg1 h2+ 4.Kh1 Rf1+! Rushing to get rid of his own pawn...
5.Kxh2 Rf6! ...In order to leave the "h" file open for checks along it.
6.Rc4+! An important intermediate check
6...Kg5

[closes the file again 6...Kh5 7.h7
Rf8 8.d7 Rd8 9.Rd4 Kg5 10.Rd3
Kg6 11.Rh3 winning]

[6...Kf5 loses to 7.Rh4]
[while 6...Kf3 is met by 7.Rc3+ Kg4
8.Rg3+ Kf4 9.h7 Rh6+ 10.Rh3
winning.]

7.d7 Rxh6+ 8.Kg3 Rd6 9.Rc5+
forcing the king to the sixth rank **9...Kf6**
10.Rc6! Pinning and winning! **10...Rxc6**
11.d8Q+
1-0

Y. Hoch



White's position looks totally lost but there is still a narrow escape. Can you spot it? Solution: If worse come to worst we can give up or still seek a healthy stalemate! **1.Rb8!**

[Following 1.Re8? Rd3+ 2.Kc2 Rxd7 3.Kb3!? just Rad4 defeats the double threat.]

1...Rd4+

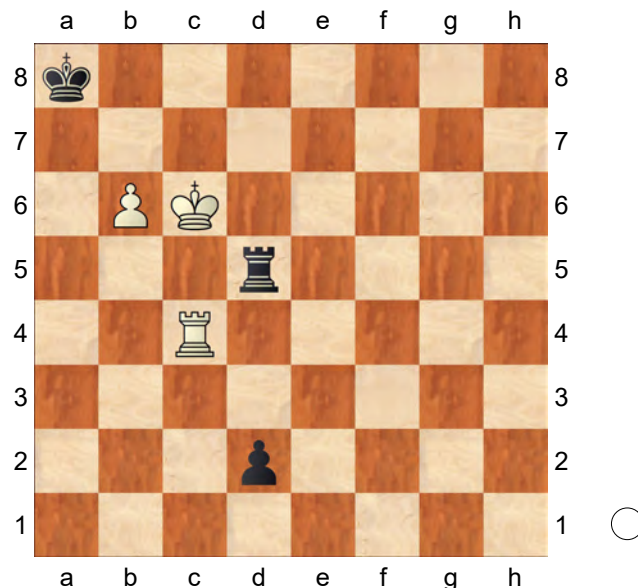
[The alternative is 1...Rd3+ 2.Kc2 Rxd7 3.Rb1+ Ka2 4.Rb2+ Ka3 5.Rb3+ is perpetual check.]

2.Kc2 Re2+

[Obviously not 2...Rxd7?? 3.Ra8+ mating.]

3.Kc1 Re1+ 4.Kc2 Re2+ 5.Kc1 Rxd7 6.Rb1+ Ka2 7.Rb2+! Rxb2 Stalemate!1/2

E. Pogosyants



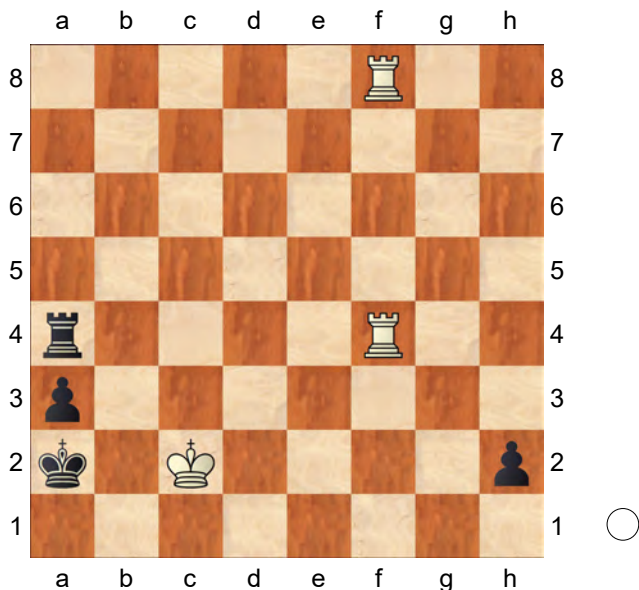
Any winning prospects despite the material equality? White to move. Solution: The black monarch is stuck in the upper corner makes the difference. By a well-coordinated attack of all his units White would achieve his goal.

1.Kc7! Both rook and pawn create deadly threats against which black should give away his rook. **1...Rd7+! 2.Kxd7 d1Q+ 3.Kc7!** Resuming the threats. Attention!

[3.Kc8? may be surprised by Qg4 +!4.Rxg4 stalemate!]

3...Qb3 against both resumed threats however the overloaded queen should give a clue for the rest **4.Ra4+!**Naturally! the queen is deflected thus she is forced to abandon her other duty. **4...Qxa4 5.b7+ Ka7 6.b8Q+ Ka6 7.Qb6# 1-0**

V. Khortov



How to make the best out of the rook advantage? Solution: White should act cautiously and accurately **1.Rf2!**

[The intuitive attempt 1.Rf1? Rf4! 2.R8xf4 h1Q 3.Rxh1 results in a stalemate!]

1...h1Q 2.Kc3+ Kb1 3.Rf1+ Qxf1 4.Rxf1+ Ka2 5.Rf2+ Kb1 6.Kb3

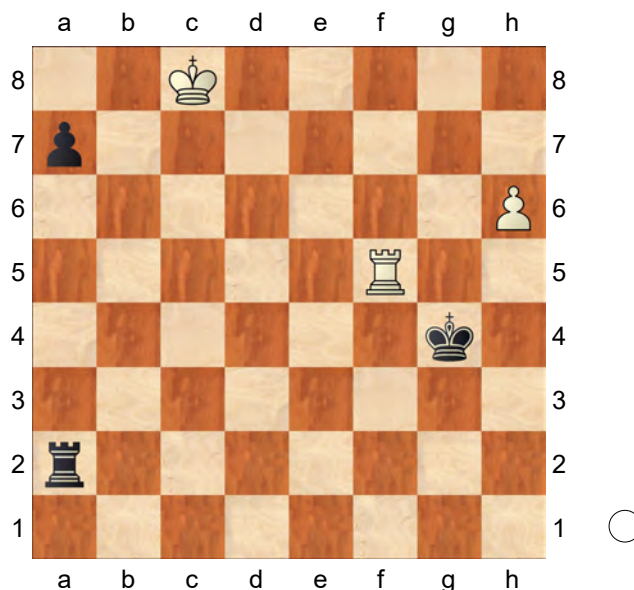
In view of the double threat black loses his rook. **6...Rc4!?** the last defending effort **7.Kxc4 a2 8.Kb3**

The mate threat forces an underpromotion

8...a1N+ 9.Kc3 Black, in zugzwang, loses his knight.

1-0

J.Hasek



How to secure the promotion of the vulnerable white pawn? Solution: Naturally by supporting it from behind!

1.Rh5! Rc2+

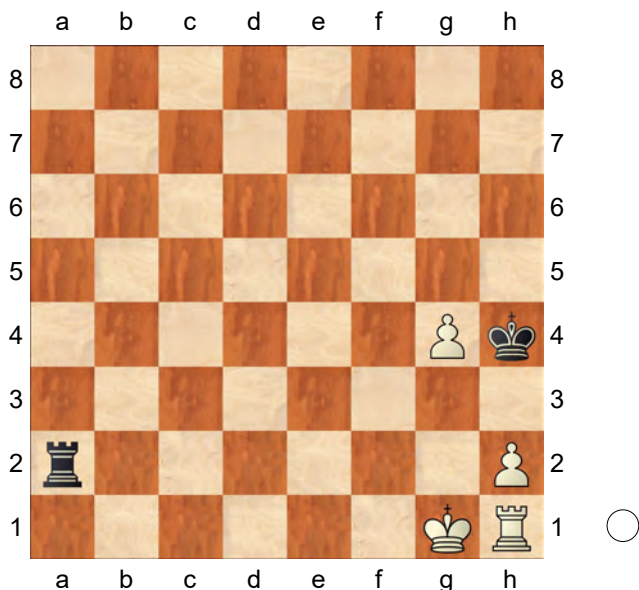
[Obviously 1...Kxh5 blocks the file and following 2.h7 Rc2+ 3.Kb8 Rb2+ 4.Ka8 even the king finds a shelter.]

[1...Rf2 allows 2.Rh1! Rf8+ 3.Kd7 Kg5 4.h7 Rh8 5.Ke6! Kg6 6.Rg1+ Kxh7 7.Kf7 Kh6 8.Rh1+ winning.]

2.Kd7! Rd2+ 3.Ke7 Re2+ 4.Kf7 Kxh5 5.h7 Rf2+ 6.Ke7 All the way back **6...Re2+ 7.Kd7 Rd2+ 8.Kc7 Rc2+ 9.Kb7 Rb2+ 10.Ka8!** wins.

1-0

V. Kovalenko



Despite his material advantage, White is in a serious trouble. Could you possibly save him? Solution: white's extra pawns are locking his pieces in. Get rid of them! **1.g5!** The active approach prevails! The logical attempt to rescue the king is doomed to failure:

[Following 1.Kf1? Kh3! 2.Rg1 Kxh2!

The white rook is trapped.]

1...Kh3!

[1...Kxg5 releases the other pawn
2.h4+ to let the rook out.]

2.g6! Ra1+ 3.Kf2 Rxh1 4.g7! Rxh2+

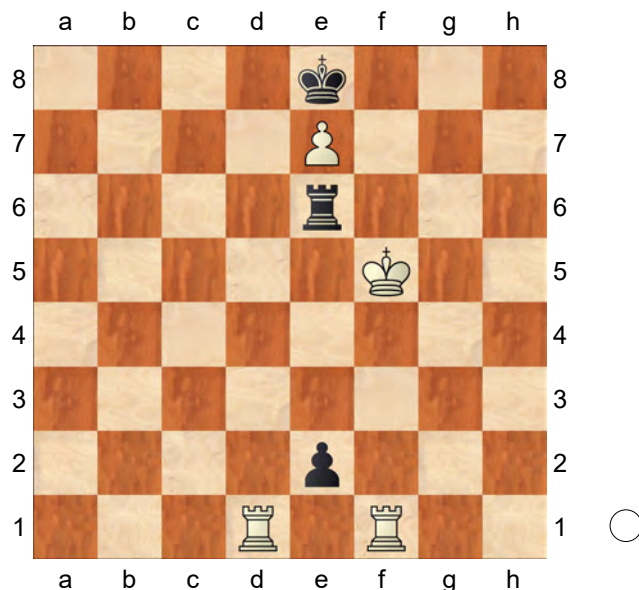
5.Kg1! Rg2+ 6.Kh1 Rh2+

[6...Rxg7 is stalemate.]

7.Kg1 Rg2+ 8.Kh1 it's either a positional draw or... **8...Rxg7** stalemate!

1/2

L. Prokes



The white rooks are forked. Can you save them both to secure the win? Solution: Lifting a rook all the way up and then all the way back does the trick and all in just 4 moves! **1.Rd8+!**

[1.Kxe6? is met by e1Q+ and stalemate!]

1...Kxe7

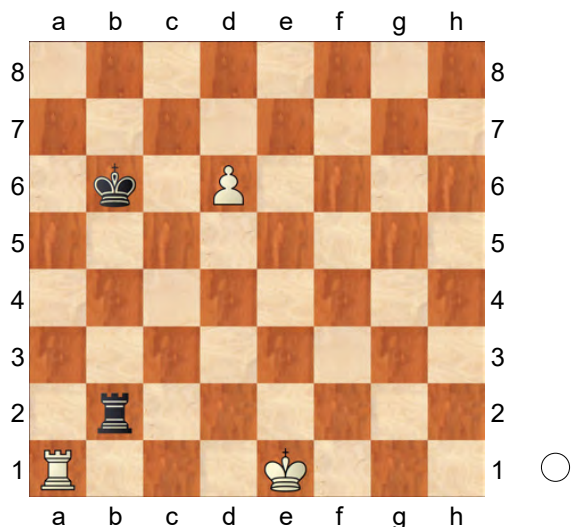
[1...Kf7 allows an extra tempo for an easy win 2.Re1 Rxe7 3.Rd2]

2.Re1 Rf6+ 3.Kg5 Rf1 Looks like black manage to get away with it however...

4.Rdd1! All the way back! but this time the black pawn is pinned and white wins.

1-0

A. Selezniev



The pawn doesn't seem too menacing . Could you prove otherwise? Solution:

The pawn is just the bait! **1.d7!**
 [Not 1.Rd1? Rh2! 2.d7 Rh1+ 3.Ke2 Rxd1 4.Kxd1 Kc7=]

[while 1.0-0-0? fails to Ra2! 2.d7 Ra1+ 3.Kc2 Rxd1 4.Kxd1 Kc7]

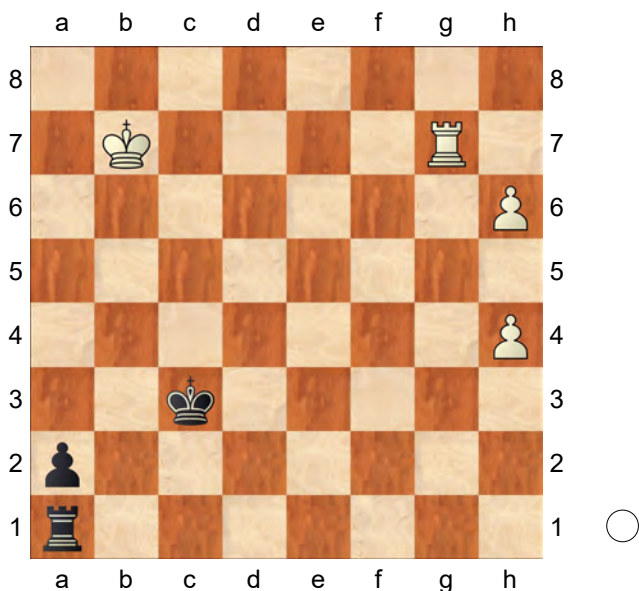
1...Kc7 2.d8Q+!! Just that! **2...Kxd8**

3.0-0-0+! Have you ever seen such a

fork? **3...Kc7 4.Kxb2**

1-0

L. Mitrofanov



Both sides are about to promote. Who is first? Solution: Paradoxically it's the second to promote who wins! **1.h7! Rb1 + 2.Ka8!** paradoxically allows the promotion with check! **2...a1Q+ 3.Ra7** Winning a vital tempo with a double threat. **3...Rb8+!**

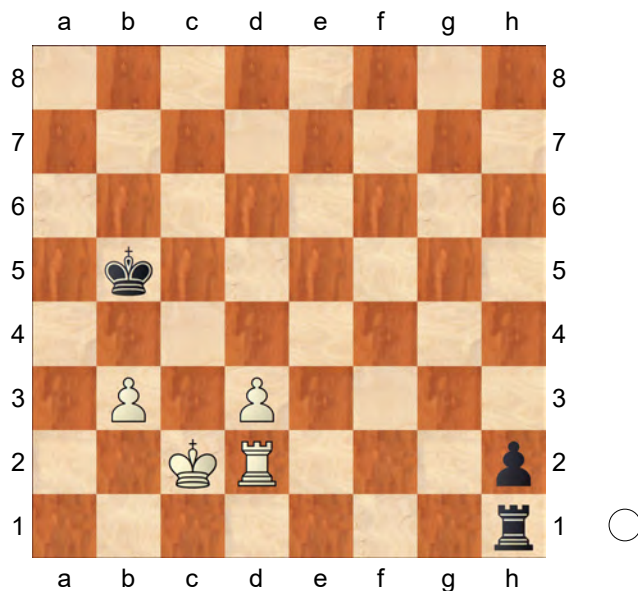
[Since 3...Qb2 fails to 4.h8Q+ Kc2 5.Qc8+ Kd2 6.Rd7+ winning.]

4.Kxb8 Qb2+ 5.Rb7 Qh2+ 6.Rc7+

A cross check securing the decisive promotion.

1-0

A. P.Kuznetsov



Can white avoid the black promotion? Solution: Naturally not but he can still

surprise the newborn queen: **1.Kb2! Rb1+ 2.Kxb1 h1Q+ 3.Kb2 Kb4! 4.Rc2! Qh8+ 5.d4!**

[5.Ka2? Qa8+ 6.Kb2 Qa3+ 7.Kb1 Kxb3 winning]

5...Qxd4+ 6.Ka2 Qa7+ 7.Kb2 Qa3+ 8.Kb1 Qa6

[8...Qxb3+ 9.Rb2 is draw by material or]

[8...Kxb3 9.Rc3+! Kxc3 is stalemate]

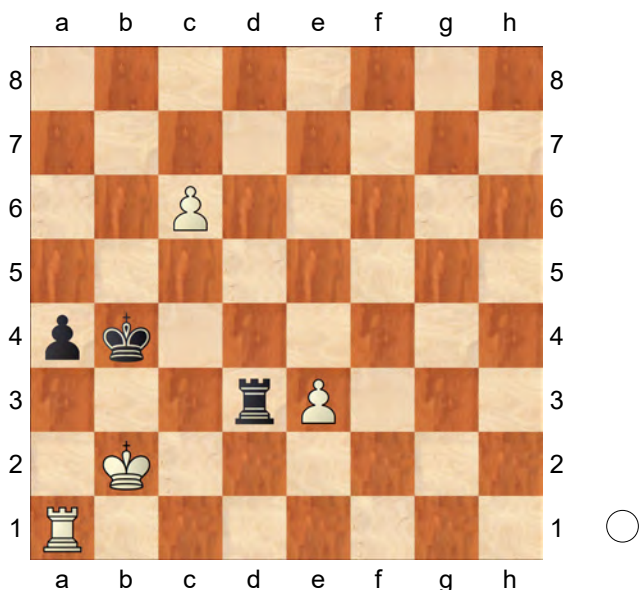
9.Kb2 Qf6+ 10.Ka2 Qa6+

[After 10...Qe5 or any other non-check move allows 11.Rc4+ and the resulting position after Kb5 is a fortress position: despite Black's considerable advantage, he is unable to make any further progress. White just moves his rook between the protected squares c4 and a4 or his king between a2 and b2.]

11.Kb2 Qa3+ 12.Kb1 and it's either a positional draw by repetition or any of the other 3 above mentioned sorts of draw

1/2

H. van der Heijden & Y. Afek
 Author's Study 1



How should White take advantage of his extra pawn? **1.Rxa4+!!**

[Not 1.Rc1? Rd8 2.c7 Rc8 3.e4 Kb5 4.e5 Kb6 5.e6 Rxc7 is draw, just in time.]

1...Kxa4 2.c7 Rb3+ 3.Kc2 Rb5

4.c8R!! The Phoenix theme: the captured white rook is reborn! Now it's a rook ending again!

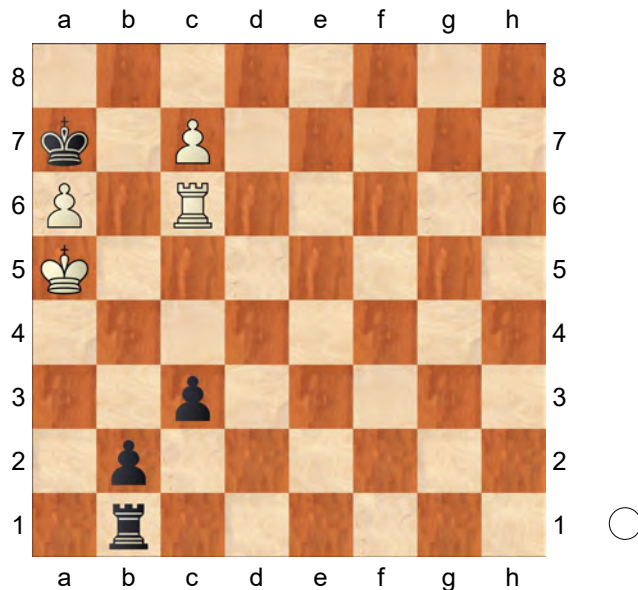
[While 4.c8Q? Rc5+ 5.Qxc5 is stalemate!]

4...Kb4 5.Kd3! Rb7 6.e4 Rd7+ 7.Ke3

The Black king is cut off and the remaining white pawn proceeds to promotion. It starts and ends as a rook ending however not with the same rook!

1-0

Y. Afek
 Author's Study 2



How should White face Black's deadly counter threat? No time for quiet moves. A vigorous action is called for! **1.c8N+!**

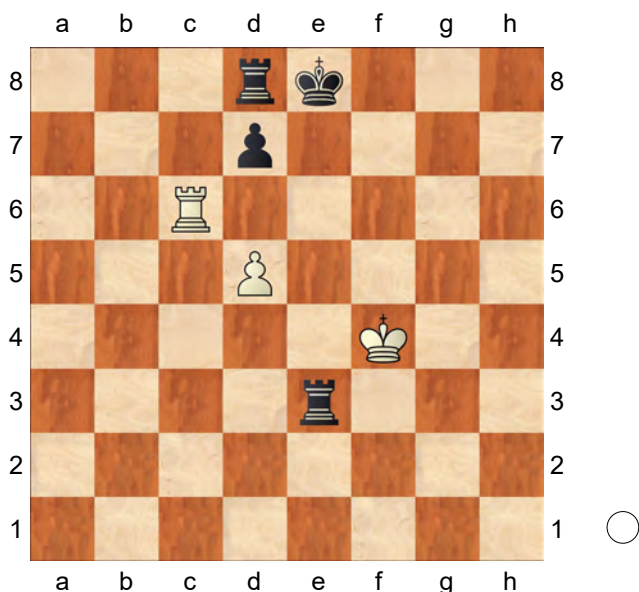
[1.c8Q? is defeated by Ra1+ 2.Kb5 b1Q+ 3.Kc5 Ra5+ 4.Kd6 Qg6+ 5.Qe6 Qxe6+ 6.Kxe6 Rxa6 pinning and winning.]

followed by promotion. **2.Kf6 Kf4 3.Ke6 Ke4 4.Kd6 Kd4 5.Kc6 Kc4**

[Checking the white king would leave the black king exposed. 5...Rc1+ 6.Kb5 Rb1+ 7.Ka4 Ra1+ 8.Kb3]

6.Rc8! Now! Here is where the deadly battery should be created! **6...Rxa7 7.Kb6+** The deadly discovered check finally traps the black rook. **1-0**

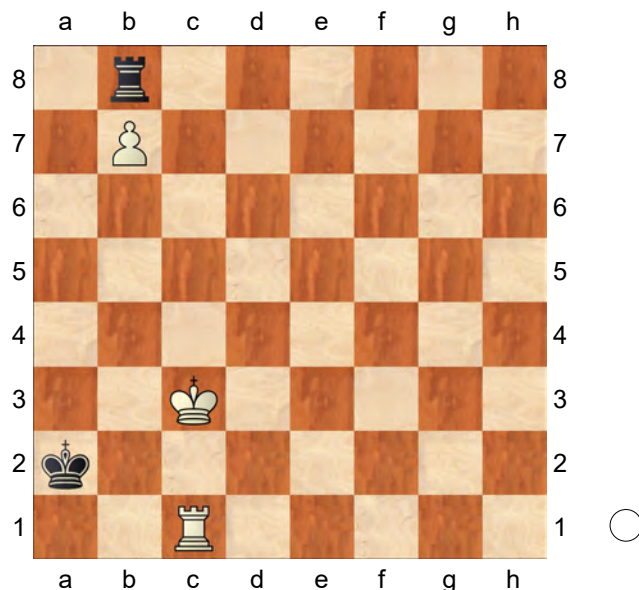
G. Zakhodyakin



Here again a single rook confronts a pair of enemy ones. What are the surviving odds? Solution: Depends on the ability to profit from the king's distress on the eighth rank. 1.Rh6! Rd3! Against the second threat 2. Rh8+ Ke7 3.d6+ winning the other rook. 2.Ke4! Rd2 3.Rh8+ Ke7 4.d6+! Rxd6 5.Rh7+ Ke8 6.Rh8+ Ke7 7.Rh7+ Ke6 8.Rh6+ Ke7 9.Rh7+ Draw by perpetual check!

1/2

G. Nadareishvili



White should first protect his last pawn. And then what? Solution: Then try to profit from the enemy king's position!

1.Rc2+! Ka1!

[1...Ka3 loses with no fight to 2.Rb2! Ka4 3.Kc4 etc.]

2.Rb2 Game over? not as yet! **2...Rc8+! 3.Kd2!**

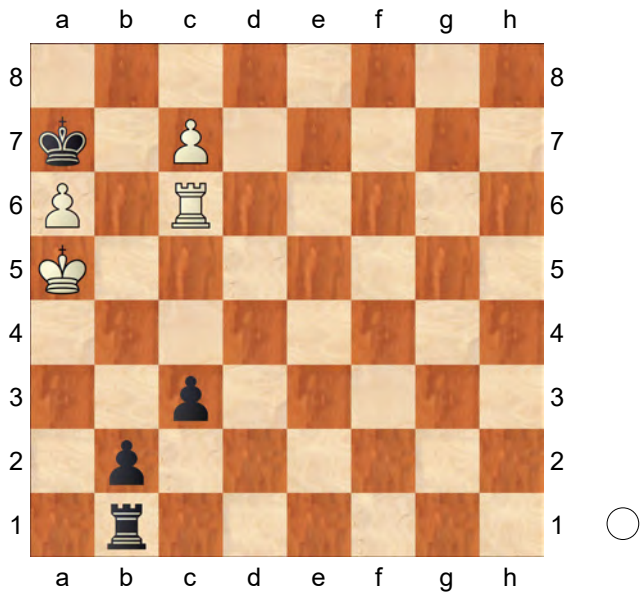
[3.Kb3? sees the mad rook in action by Rc3+! 4.Ka4 Ra3+! 5.Kb4 Kxb2 draw.]

3...Rd8+ 4.Kc1! Rc8+ 5.Rc2 Rb8

6.Rc8!

[But not 6.Rc7? Ka2 7.Kc2 Ka3 8.Kc3 Ka4 9.Kc4 Ka5 10.Kc5 Ka6 11.Kc6 Ka7 12.Rh7 Rg8 and there is nothing much to play for anymore.]

6...Rxb7 7.Ra8+ and mate next move. **1-0**



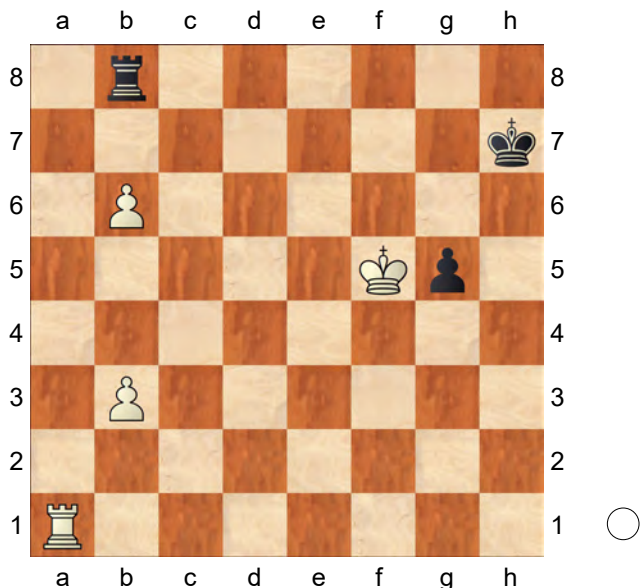
1...Kb8

[1...Ka8 is suicidal owing to 2.Nb6+ Ka7 3.Rc7+ Kb8 4.Rb7#]

2.a7+ Ka8 3.Nb6+ Kxa7 4.Rc7+ Kb8 5.Rc8+! Ka7 6.Rc7+ Kb8 7.Rc8+ Kb7
 Luring the Black king to the "b" file allows the final saving combination.
8.Rxc3! Ra1+ 9.Na4 b1Q 10.Rb3+!With a stalemate to follow.
1/2

Y. Afek

Author's Study 3



What is the right way to get your king to the other side of the board? The rook should first improve its position. **1.Ra7+!**

[But not 1.Ra6? g4! 2.Kxg4 Kg6 3.Kf4 Kf6 4.Ke4 Ke6 5.Kd4 Kd6 6.b7+ Kc7 draws]

1...Kh6

[1...Kg8 is rather passive allowing White a comfortable win by 2.Ra6 Kf7 3.Ke5 Ke7 4.Kd5 when the white king is ready to support his pawn.]

2.b7 g4!

[Active defence as after 2...Kg7 3.Ke6 g4 4.Kd7 g3 5.Kc7 g2 6.Ra1+- White is just in time.]

3.Kxg4 Kg6 4.Kf4 Kf6 5.Ke4 Ke6 6.Kd4 Kd6 7.Kc4 Kc6 8.Kb4 Rh8
 [8...Kb6 loses to 9.Ra5!+-]

9.Ka3!!

[but not 9.Ka5? Rh5+ 10.Ka6 Rb5 (10...Rh1 11.b8N+!) 11.Ra8 Rb6+ draws.]

9...Rb8 10.Ka4 Rh8

[10...Kb6 is strongly met again by 11.Ra5!]

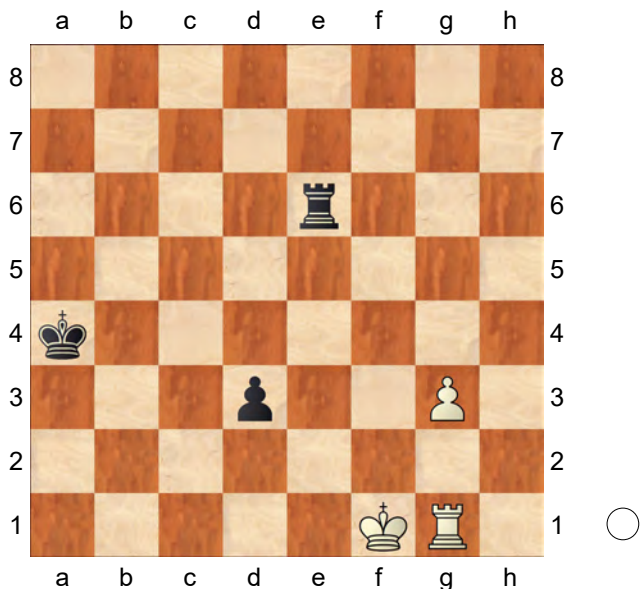
11.b4

[11.Ra8? fails, as earlier, to Rh4+!=]

11...Rb8 12.Ka5 Rxb7 13.Rxb7 Kxb7 14.Kb5 Finally seizing the opposition and wins.

1-0

Y. Afek
Author's Study 4



How should White face the mighty enemy pawn? **1.Kf2! Kb3 2.Rb1+!**
The only way is to get behind the pawn the fastest possible. **2...Kc2 3.Rb7!!**

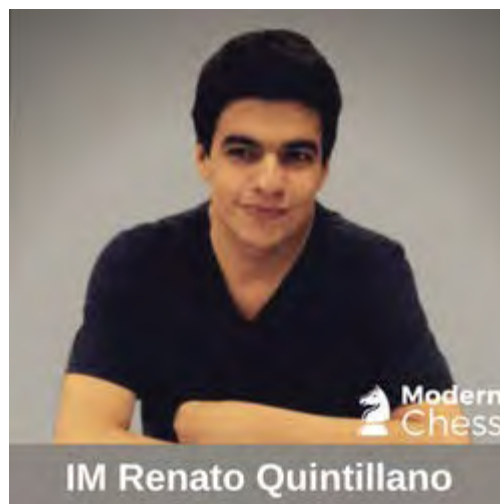
[A paradoxical decision. let us find out what's wrong with the natural **3.Rb8? Rc6! 4.Rd8 d2 5.Ke2 Re6+ 6.Kf3 Re8!!** the black rook gains a vital tempo to stay away of the white king in the upcoming K+P vs. K+R ending as follows: **7.Rd7 d1Q+ 8.Rxd1 Kxd1-+** where Black is winning owing to this extra tempo won earlier compared to the chosen line as will become apparent soon.]

3...Rc6 4.Rd7 d2 5.Ke2 Re6+ 6.Kf3 Re7! 7.Rd6! /d5!

[But again not **7.Rd8? Re8!!-+**]
7...d1Q+ 8.Rxd1 Kxd1 9.g4!
The white king will get to f6 in time to win a single tempo that saves the day!

[Precision to the very end! Not **9.Kf4? Rf7+! 10.Ke5 Rg7!** Forces the white king to retreat and Black takes over.]
1/2

Understand the Najdorf Structures - Part 1

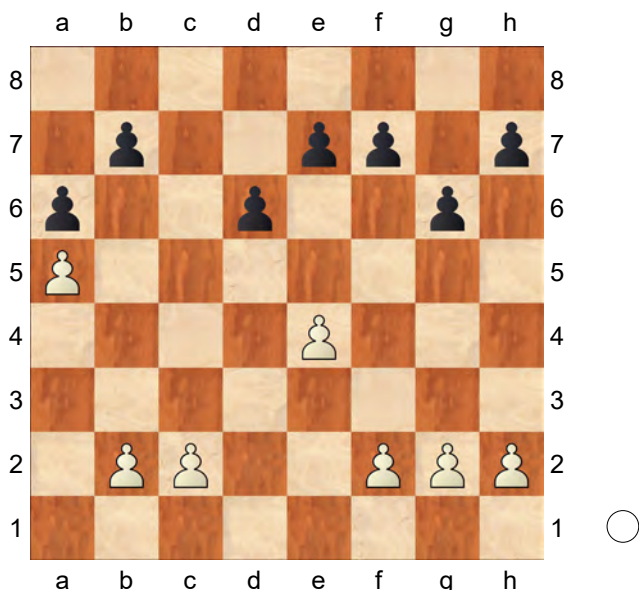


The Sicilian Najdorf is by far one of the most popular opening variations. This line combines complex positional ideas and endless tactical resources. That is why studying the Najdorf contributes to one's general chess understanding. In this article, I cover 8 of the most important Najdorf structures. It is important to point out that this survey deals with middlegame positions which arise out of White's positional lines against the Najdorf.

The material is structured in the following way:

- Explanation of the structure
- Model game
- Test

Structure 1



This structure arises in the variation 6. a4 g6!? as White usually plays a4-a5 at some point, cramping Black's queenside. Since White enjoys a small space advantage, Black needs to exchange some pieces in order to free his position. One common idea for White is to play Nd5. In this case, after Bxd5 exd5, he can put pressure along the e-file. Black should keep the knights on the board, as the squares c5 and e5 are very stable posts. In order to drive the knights back from these squares, White should go for some concessions. The best scenario for Black is leaving White with the light-squared bishop, as this bishop is his worse minor piece.

Geller, Jakov **2472**
 Sjugirov, Sanan **2678**
 Moscow op-A (6) 05.02.2015

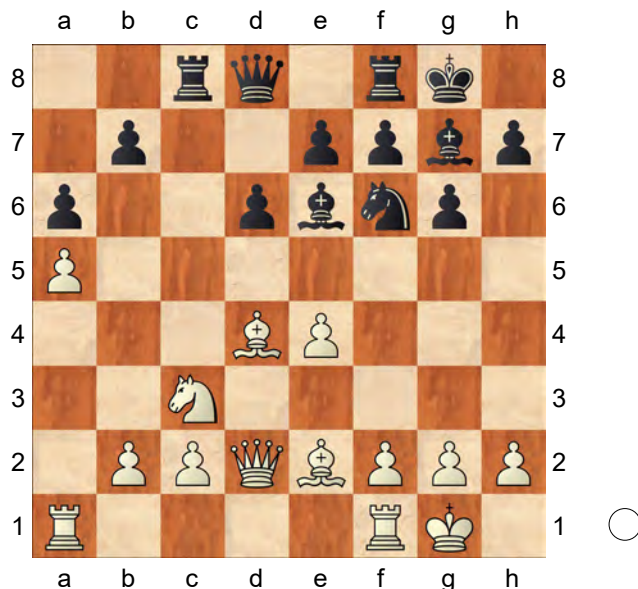
1.e4 c5 2.Nf3 d6 3.d4 cxd4 4.Nxd4 Nf6 5.Nc3 a6 6.a4 g6!? The practical advantage of this version of Dragon is that White is deprived of the aggressive lines with 0-0-0. **7.Be2 Bg7 8.0-0 0-0 9.Be3 Nc6 10.Qd2 Nxd4**

[10...Bd7 11.f3 Rc8 12.Nxc6 Bxc6

13.a5! Pichot, A (2556)-Asis Gargatagli, H (2526) Barcelona Rapid CAT-ARG 2018 (1.3) 1-0]

11.Bxd4 Be6 12.a5! The inclusion of a4/a6 gives White the opportunity of seizing space on the queenside.

12...Rc8



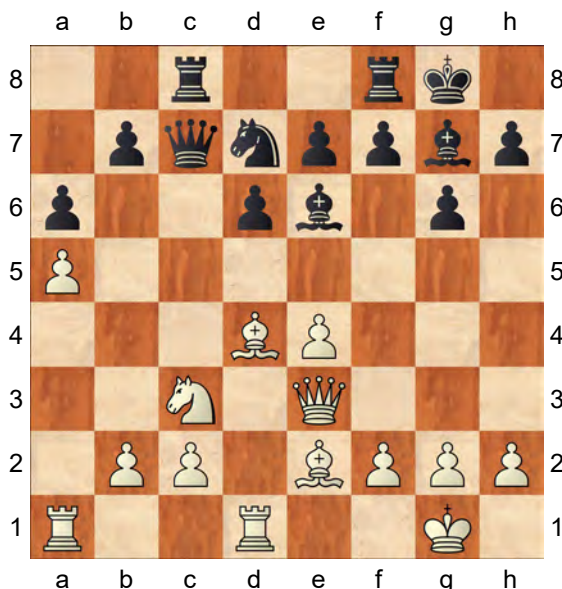
13.Rfd1

[13.Bb6 doesn't really disturb Black. Qe8! 14.Rfd1 Nd7 15.Bd4 Bxd4 16.Qxd4 Qd8=]

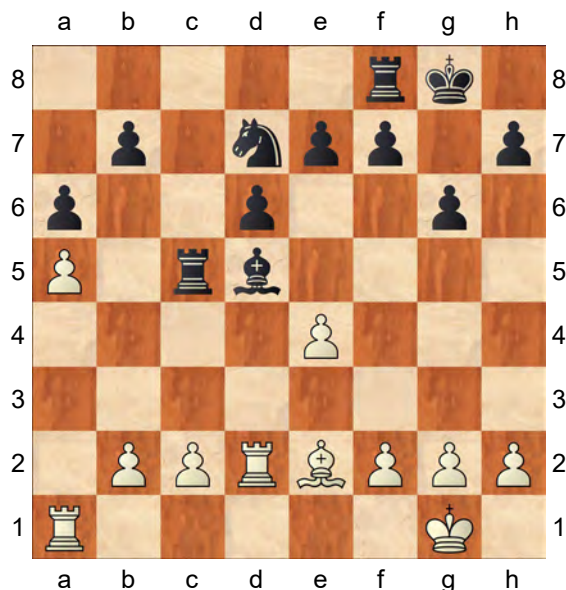
13...Qc7 14.Qe3 This kind of position is often chosen by technical players who like to keep a small edge in a risk-free position. He can keep improving his pieces step by step, waiting for his opponent to make a mistake.

[Another game went 14.h3 but Black followed with a plan which is similar to the text. Rfe8 15.Ra3 Nd7! 16.Bxg7 Kxg7 17.Qd4+ Kg8 18.Rd2 Qc5! 19.Qxc5 Rxc5= Adams,M (2715)-Nepomniachtchi,I (2729) 9th London Classic 2017 (6.4) 0-1]

14...Nd7!



Exchanges are welcome for Black as he has some lack of space. In such kind of positions, even the exchange of the dark-squared bishops is okay for Black. **15.Rd2 Bxd4 16.Qxd4 Qc5! 17.Qxc5 Rxc5 18.Nd5 Bxd5!**



The last important exchange. The endgame is equal. **19.exd5 Ne5 20.b3?!** This move is unnecessary and positionally bad. There's absolutely no reason for White to place his pawns on the same square as his bishop, leaving a lot of weak dark-squares on the queenside. This is the beginning of the problems.

[20.c3 was the right move Nc4 21.Bxc4 Rxc4 22.Re2 Re8 23.Re3 Rc5 24.Rd3 Rec8 25.Kf1=]

20...Rc3!

Blocking the queenside. [White was probably hoping for 20...Rfc8 21.f4 Nd7 22.c4 with nice prospects on the queenside.]

21.f4 Nd7 22.Re1

[22.Bc4 "traps" the rook, but White is not able to take advantage of it Rc8 23.Re1 Kf8 24.Kf2 Rc5 25.Ra1 b5! 26.axb6 Nxb6]

22...Rc5 23.Ra1 Rc3 24.Re1 Re8!

25.Bc4 Kf8! After defending e7, Black is ready to make progress in queenside.

26.Kf2

[26.Rde2 b5! 27.axb6 Nxb6 28.Bxa6 Nxd5 29.g3 Nb4]

26...Rc8 27.Re3

[The move 27.Rde2 doesn't work due to b5! 28.axb6 Nxb6 29.Bxa6 (29.Rxe7 Nxc4 30.bxc4 R8xc4) 29...R8c7 and Black regains the pawn keeping an annoying pressure on the queenside.]

27...Rxe3 28.Kxe3 Rc5 The pawn that once was the cause of White's easier play is lost. **29.Rd1 Rxa5** Sjugirov converts his advantage with an excellent play. **30.Kd4 b5 31.Be2 b4! 32.Kc4**

[32.Bc4 Nb6 33.g3 Rc5]

32...Rc5+! 33.Kxb4 a5+ 34.Ka4

[34.Ka3 Rxc2 35.Bf3 Nc5-+]

34...Nb6+ 35.Ka3 Nxd5-+ 36.g3 Ne3

37.Rc1 g5!? Black creates a passed pawn in the centre.

[37...Rxc2 38.Rxc2 Nxc2+ 39.Ka4 Nd4 40.Bc4 e6-+]

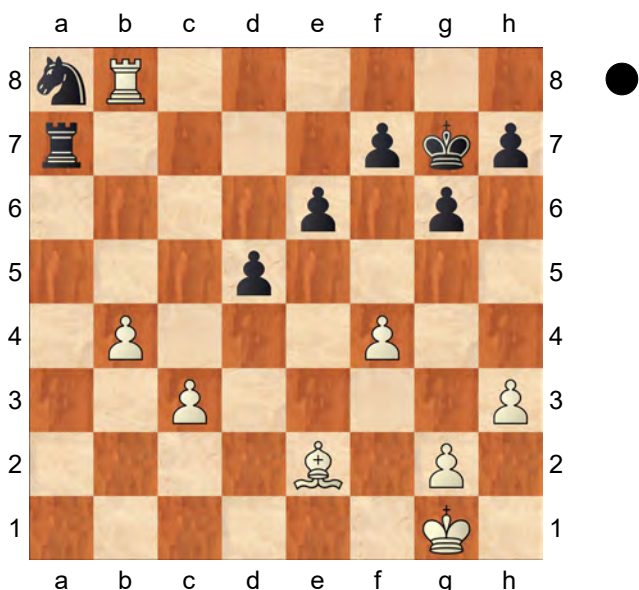
38.fxg5 Rxg5 39.c3 Rc5 40.Bf3 Ke8

41.Ka4 Kd8 42.Rb1? Rxc3 43.Kxa5

d5 44.Kb5 d4 45.b4 Nc4

0-1

Exercise



It seems that White has good prospects advancing the passed pawn. How should

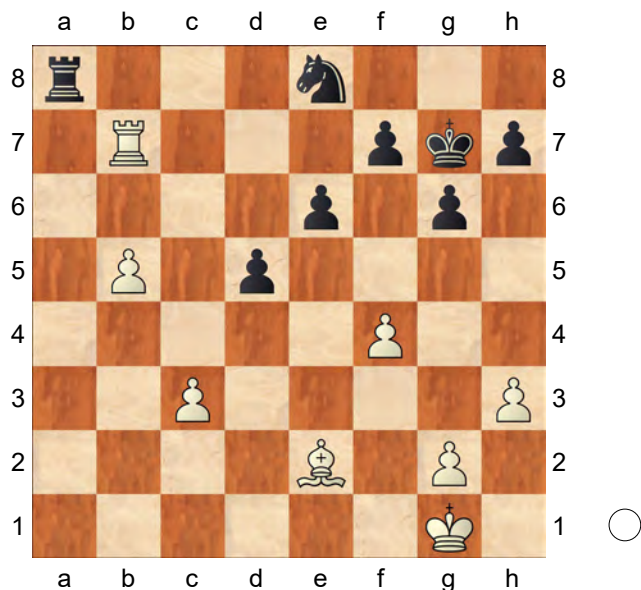
Black play? 33...Nc7! 34.b5

[34.Rc8 Rb7 35.Kf2 Kf6 36.Ke3 e5 seems holdable for Black]

34...Ra8! 35.Rb7

[35.Rxa8 Nxa8 and the knight blocks both pawns 36.c4 dxc4 37.Bxc4 Kf6 38.Kf2 Nb6 39.Bb3 Ke7 40.Ke3 Kd6 41.Kd4 f6=]

35...Ne8!



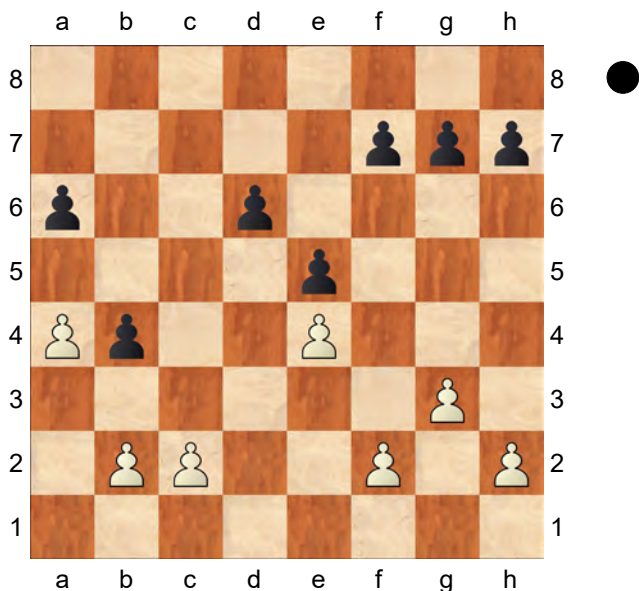
Black manages to nicely coordinate his pieces in this endgame. **36.c4?**

[36.b6 was better Ra1+ 37.Kf2 Rb1 38.Ke3 (38.Rb8 Nf6) 38...Rb3 39.Kd4 Nd6 40.Rb8 Nf5+ 41.Kc5 Rxc3+ 42.Kb4 Rc2∞ although things are very unclear now]

36...Nd6! 37.Rc7 dxc4 38.Bxc4 Ra1+ 39.Kf2 Rc1 and the only way to avoid big material losses for White is giving up the passed pawn:

40.b6 Nxc4 41.b7 Rb1 42.Rxc4 Rxb7 Adams, M (2715)-Nepomniachtchi, I (2729) 9th London Classic 2017 (6.4) 0-1 Black managed to win the rook endgame -

Structure 2



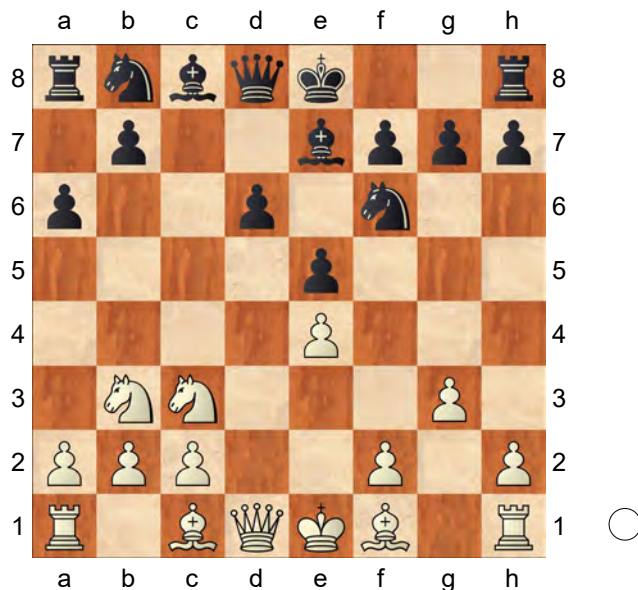
Now we have a typical Najdorf structure in which Black plays e7-e5 in order to get more space in the center and easier development. The main drawback of the advance e7-e5 could be explained by the weakness of the d5-square. In this particular case, White tried to exploit Black's b7-b5 by means of a2-a4 which provoked b5-b4. The position of White's g-pawn does not make a big difference from a structural point of view.

Nevertheless, White's light-squared bishop is not optimally placed on g2. Besides the usual pressure on d6 and playing for the d5-square, White can try f2-f4 to create some tension in the center or to provoke weaknesses in Black's camp. Black has counter chances as he can exert pressure along the c-file. Usually, f7-f6 is a good response to f2-f4, keeping the center solid and preparing to play a timely d6-d5, which would free his position. The a5-square is also important and both

sides know it: If White plays a4-a5, both Black pawns on queenside will be weak. On the other hand, if Black manages to play a6-a5, his queenside will be safe.

Hou, Yifan 2652
 Grischuk, Alexander 2750
 Moscow FIDE GP (5) 16.05.2017

1.e4 c5 2.Nf3 d6 3.d4 cxd4 4.Nxd4 Nf6 5.Nc3 a6 6.g3 e5 7.Nb3
 [7.Nde2 and]
 [7.Nf3!? are other options]
7...Be7



8.Bg2

[8.a4 prevents b7-b5 but gives Black another nice option of development Nc6! 9.Bg2 Nb4! This is a very important idea to remember. If White plays a2-a4 with the knight still on b8, Black can go for Nc6-b4, increasing the control over the d5-square. 10.Bg5 Be6! 11.0-0 Rc8! ;Guo,A (2219)-Quintiliano Pinto,R (2451) SPICE Cup

Open 2017 (4.18) 0-1 The quick development of Black's queenside gives him a nice position. The d5-square is well protected and Black retains his queenside pressure.]

8...0-0 9.0-0 b5!?

[9...Be6 is the most played]

10.a4! This is a typical way to exploit Black's overextended queenside. The advance a2-a4 works very well when Black is underdeveloped. **10...b4**

11.Nd5 Nxd5 12.Qxd5 Ra7 13.Be3 Be6!

[13...Rd7? 14.Na5!± leaves Black in an unpleasant position]

14.Qd3

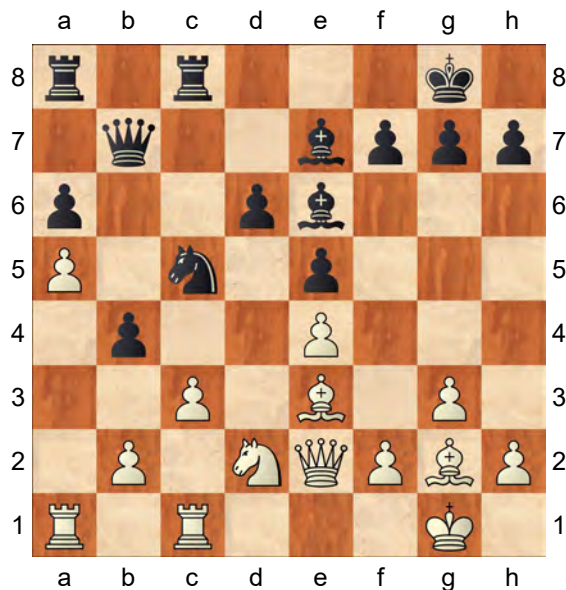
[14.Qd2 is not dangerous for Black Rb7 15.f4 Nd7=]

14...Ra8!? Maybe this is the simplest way to solve all the problems.

[14...Rb7 seems slightly inferior as Black has some problems to develop the b8-knight now. 15.Rfc1! Qc7 16.c3! a very strong move Bc4 (16...Bxb3 17.cxb4) 17.Qc2 Be6 18.Qd1 Qd8 19.Bf1! bxc3 20.Rxc3 Bg5? This usually favorable exchange does not work in the concrete position. 21.Bxg5 Qxg5 22.Bc4! Bxc4 23.Rxc4 Nd7 24.Rac1± ;Ponomariov, R (2734)-Safarli,E (2620) Istanbul ol (Men) 40th 2012 (10.2) 1-0 White has a pleasant edge due to Black's weaknesses.]

15.f4 The threat is f4-f5, disturbing the well placed bishop on e6.

[15.a5 seems natural and good, but since a6 is defended now, Black simply continues with Nd7 16.Nd2!?avoiding the forced exchanges after Nc5 Qc7 17.Rfc1 Rfc8 18.c3 Nc5!19.Qe2 Qb7= Atabayev,M (2493) -Keliros,A (2384) Budapest FS03 GM 2015



1-0]

15...Qc7 16.Nd2

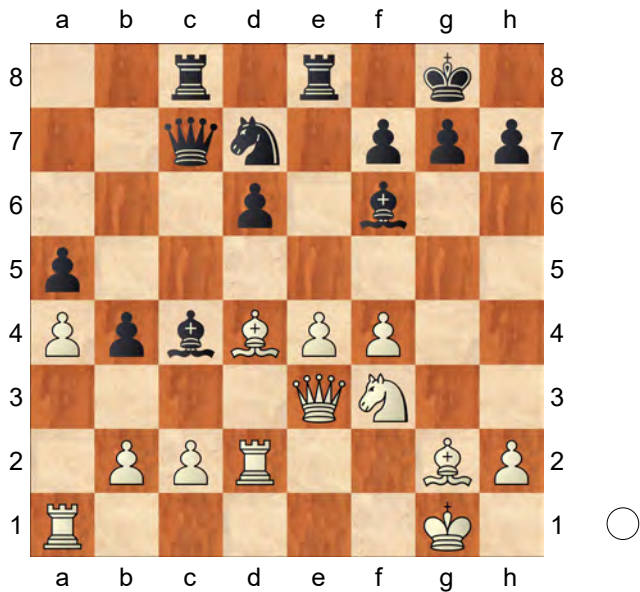
[16.Rfc1 Rc8! prevents the idea c2-c3.]

16...a5! Now the queenside pawns are safe. **17.Rf2!?** White keeps some pressure along the f-file and vacates the f1-square to execute the maneuver Nf1-e3.

[17.f5 Bc8!]

17...f6 This is the most solid way to keep the center intact.

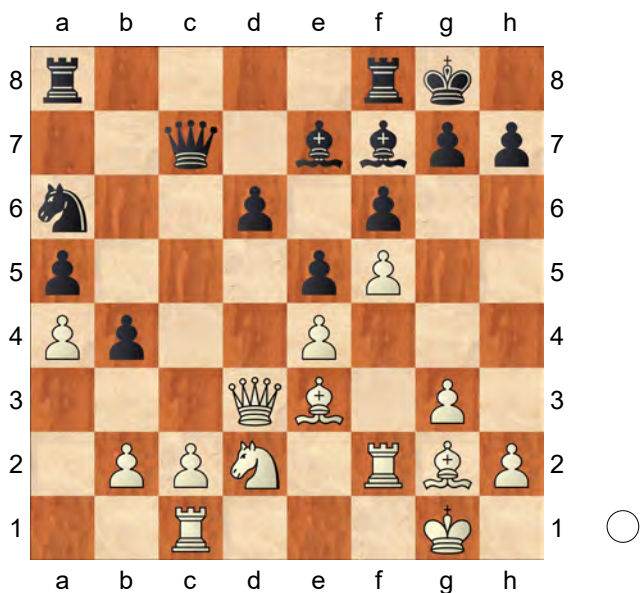
[17...exf4!? also gave Black a nice position 18.gxf4 Nd7 19.Bd4 (19.f5? Ne5) 19...Bh4! 20.Re2 Rac8 21.Nf3 Bf6 22.Rd2 Bc4 23.Qe3 Rfe8 Smirin,I (2637)-Belov,V (2561) Biel MTO op 41st 2008



0-1]
18.f5?! I don't like this decision. Now, Black enjoys a stability in the center. Later on, he can proceed with his queenside play.

[18.Bh3!? was an interesting idea Bf7 (18...Bxh3? 19.Qd5+) 19.Rd1 Na6 20.Nb3 with chances for both sides. The tension in the center makes difficult for Black to find a constructive plan]

18...Bf7 19.Rc1 Na6!



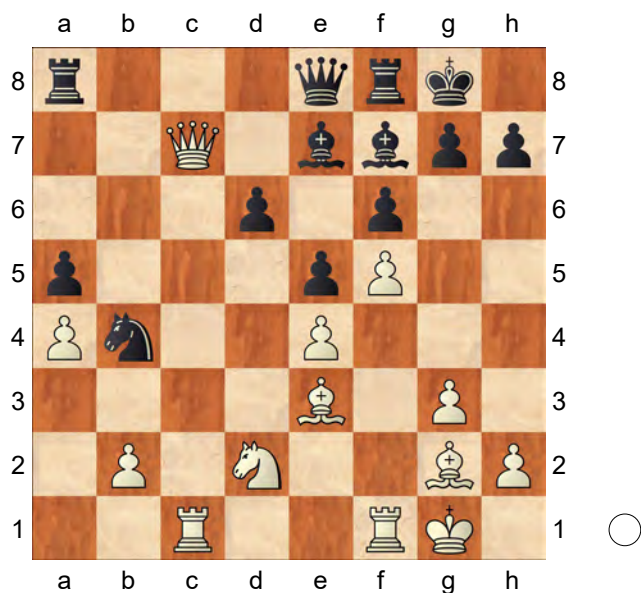
Black has a nice position and starts thinking about his own plans: Nc5 or a well prepared d6-d5 break. **20.c4 bxc3!?** The most ambitious.

[20...Nc5 is nice, but probably just equal]

21.Qxc3 Qb8 22.Rff1?!

[Δ22.Nc4 Nb4 23.b3 Rd8]

22...Nb4! Suddenly, Black has the threats of Na2 and d6-d5. **23.Qc7 Qe8!**



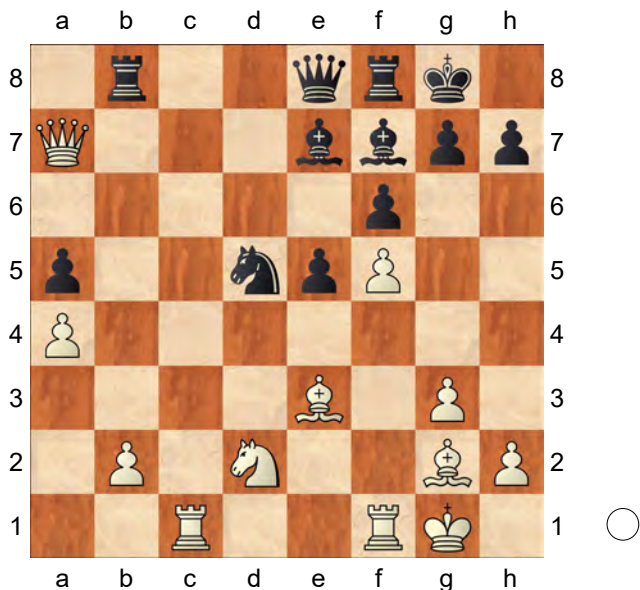
Grischuk keeps more pieces on the board in order to make White's decisions harder. **24.Qb7**

[24.Nc4? Rc8]

24...Rb8 25.Qa7 Ra8 26.Qb7 Rb8 27.Qa7 d5! Finally, Black opens the centre and takes the initiative. **28.exd5**

[28.Qxa5 d4 29.Bf2 Nd3 30.Rc2 Bd8! surprisingly, the queen has not squares 31.Qa6 Nb4-+]

28...Nxd5

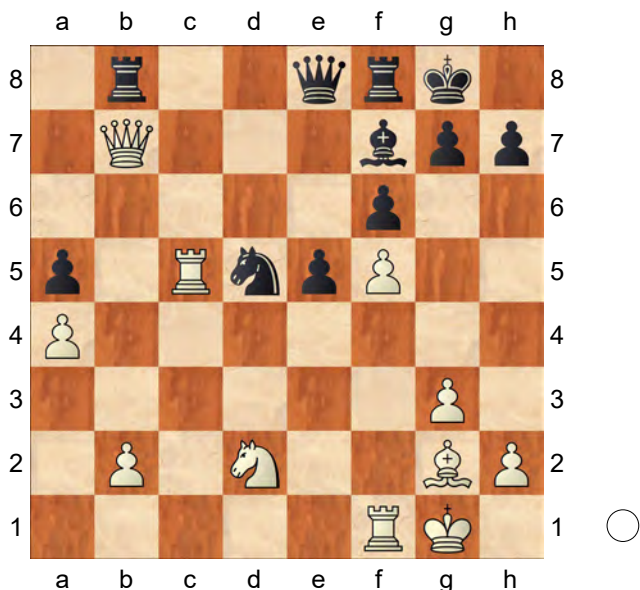


29.Bc5? Hou blunders in a position that was already difficult.

[29.Bxd5 was the best chance for White Bxd5 30.Qxa5 Ba8!

White will suffer trying to defend the light squares, but he has chances]

29...Ra8 30.Qb7 Rb8 31.Qa7 Ra8 32.Qb7 Bxc5+! 33.Rxc5 Rb8



34.Qxf7+ Desperate, but other options were not that impressive.

[For example 34.Qa7 Ne3! 35.Rf2 Rxb2 and Black is simply winning 36.Qxa5 (36.Rxa5 Nd1! 37.Re2 Qd8-+) 36...Nxb2 37.Kxb2 Ra2 38.Rb5 Qc6+ 39.Kh3 e4-+]

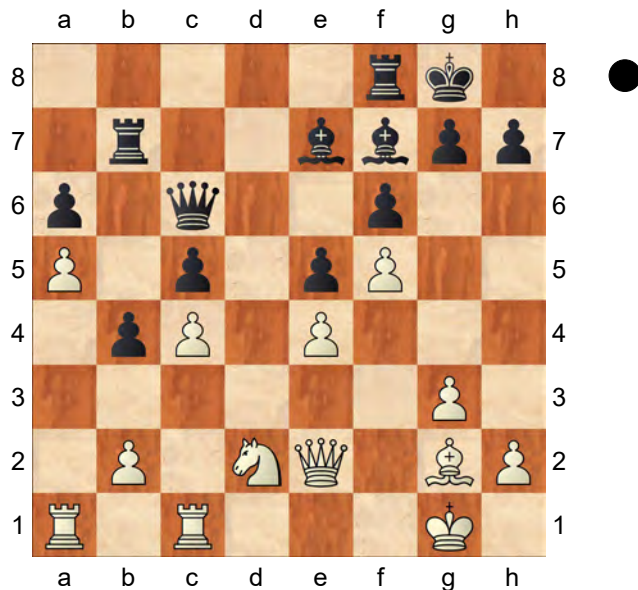
34...Rxf7 35.Bxd5 Kh8 36.Rfc1
[36.Bxf7 Qxf7 37.Rxa5 Qc7 38.Rb5 Rxb5 39.axb5 Qc2-+]

36...Rd7 37.Bc6 Qd8 38.Bxd7 Qxd7 39.Ne4 h5 An impressive win by Grischuk, showing that even in such apparently closed positions Black is able to take the initiative if White is not careful.

0-1

Exercise

White is planning to transfer his knight to the d5-square. How should Black react to this idea? **22...Rd8 23.Nf1**

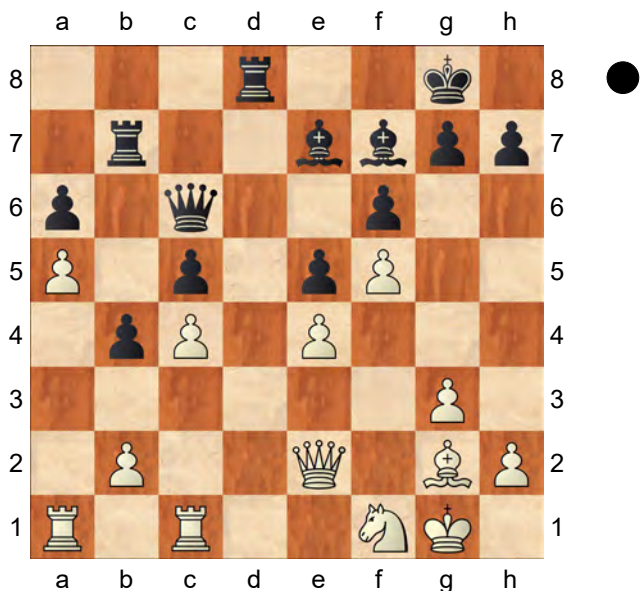


Rbd7! White has some problems with the second rank now. **24.b3**

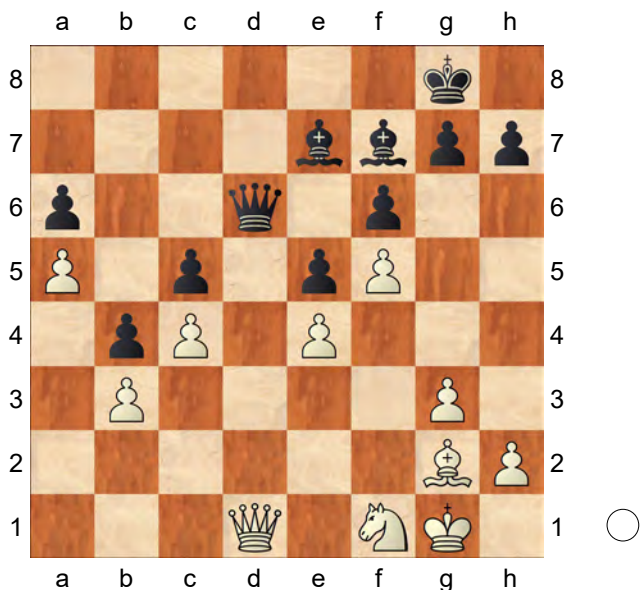
[24.Rc2 Bf8! 25.Ne3 b3! and Black manages to invade via d2.]

24...Rd3! and Black has an advantage. For example: **25.Rd1!?**
[25.Rcb1 Qd6-+]

25...Rxd1!

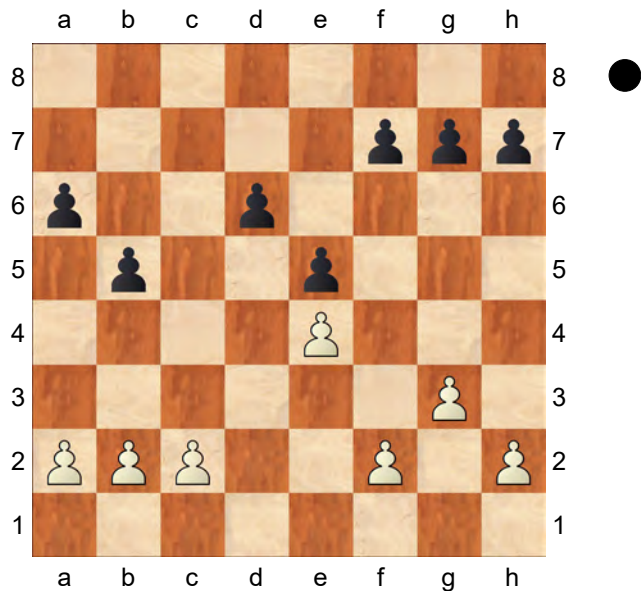


[25...Rxb3?? 26.Rxd8+ Bxd8
27.Qd1!+-]
26.Rxd1 Rxd1 27.Qxd1 Qd6!



The exchange of the queens is practically forced since the black queen is ready to invade White's camp.
28.Qxd6 Bxd6 and Black wins a pawn.

Structure 3



Compared to the previous structure, Blacks' queenside is safer now, but White has the option of playing a2-a4 with a transposition. Another possibility is to avoid the pressure along the c-file with c2-c3. The tournament practice has shown that Black should keep at least one minor piece on the board because positions with only major pieces tend to be more pleasant for White. In this specific structure, White will likely have a bishop on g2. That is why it is good for Black to keep his light-squared bishop on e6. The next game features an interesting resource for Black: sacrifice the d6-pawn in order to get a nice initiative.

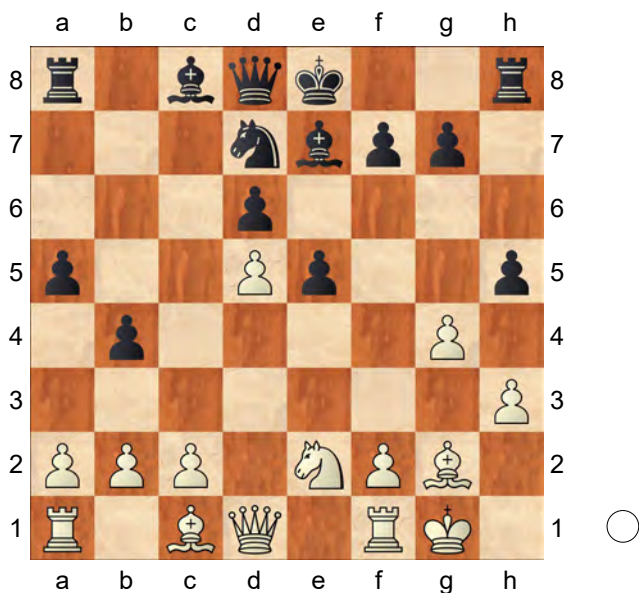
Navara,D... **2745**
 Wojtaszek,R... **2744**
 Vugar Gashimov Mem 2018 (3.1) 21.04.18

1.e4 c5 2.Nf3 d6 3.d4 cxd4 4.Nxd4 Nf6 5.Nc3 a6 6.g3 e5 7.Nde2 Be7 8.Bg2 b5 9.Nd5 A very simple way to occupy the d5-square and improve the e2-knight. This line promises a tiny advantage for White. As Wojtaszek shows, however, Black has sufficient counterplay.

[9.a4 is harmless here because after b4 10.Nd5 Nxd5 11.Qxd5 Ra7 12.Be3 Be6! 13.Qd2 Rb7

White does not have a good way to improve his e2-knight.]

[9.h3 used to be the main idea Nbd7! Black has a good reason to keep the c8-bishop on his initial square. 10.g4 b4 11.Nd5 Nxd5 12.exd5 (12.Qxd5 Qc7! and the rook is taboo) 12...a5 Now the bishop will occupy the diagonal a6-f1. After 13.0-0 h5! Alekseev, E (2708)-Dominguez Perez, L (2708) Biel GM 41st 2008

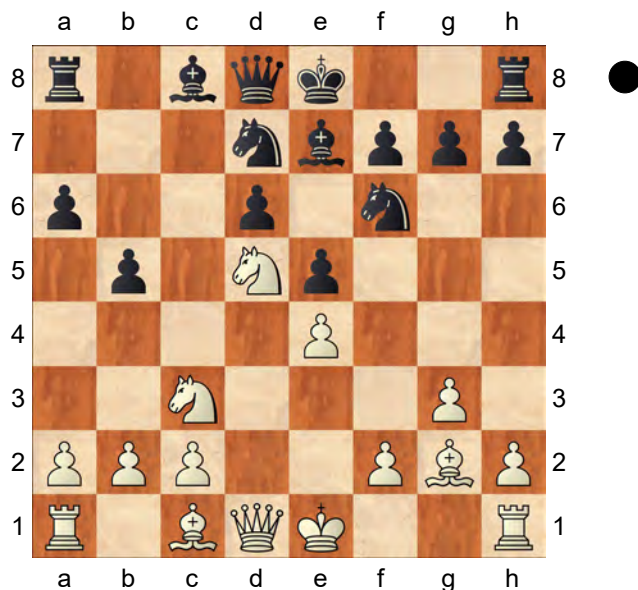


0-1 is an unexpected way to take the initiative for Black. I think this is a good reason to prefer the text instead of the old-fashioned h3-g4 plan. Black won a nice game in]

9...Nbd7!

[With a pawn on b5, the idea 9...Nxd5 10.Qxd5 Ra7 does not work very well since after 11.Be3 Rb7 12.Qd3! White can improve the knight]

10.Nec3



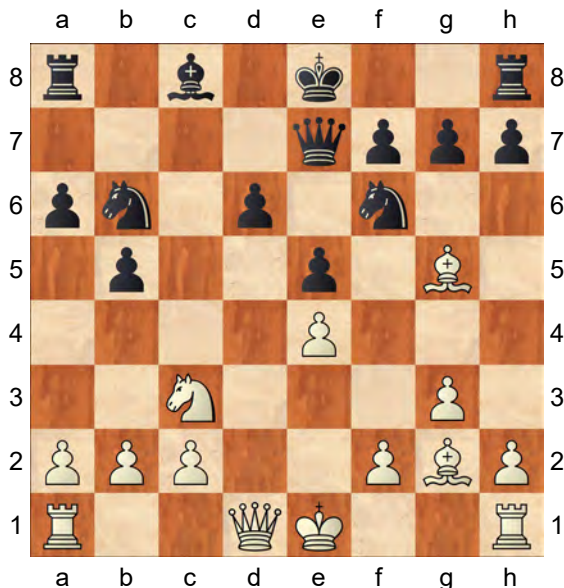
Nb6! Black is planning to exchange all the knights, thus making it harder for White to occupy the d5-square.

[10...Bb7 11.a4! gave White a pleasant edge in many games]

11.Nxe7

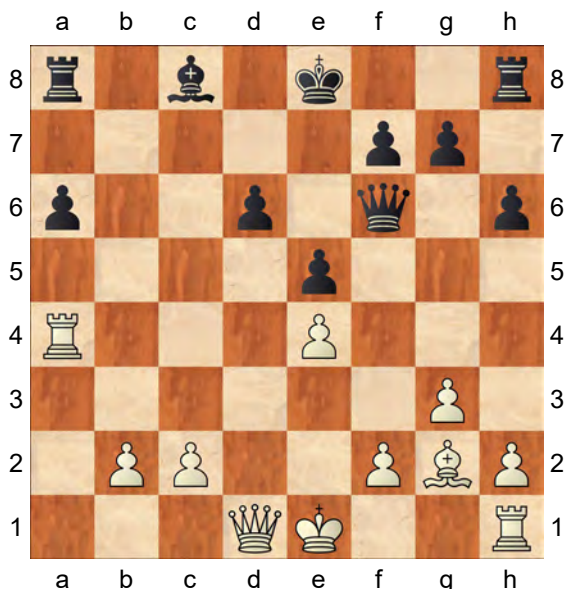
[11.Nxf6+ was played by Giri Bxf6 12.0-0 0-0 13.b3 Giri, A (2782)-Vachier Lagrave,M (2789) GCT Blitz YourNextMove 2018 (2.5) 0-1 Qc7 14.Qd2 Be6 15.Ba3 Rfc8!

with a nice counterplay for Black.]
11...Qxe7 12.Bg5



0-0 Again, the most precise move.
 Wojtaszek improves on his previous game against Giri.

[12...h6 13.Bxf6 Qxf6 14.a4! bxa4 (14...b4 15.Nd5 Nxd5 16.Qxd5 Ra7 17.Qc6+ Bd7 18.Qb6±) 15.Nxa4 Nxa4 16.Rxa4 ; Giri,A (2784)-Wojtaszek,R (2723) Qatar Masters op 2015

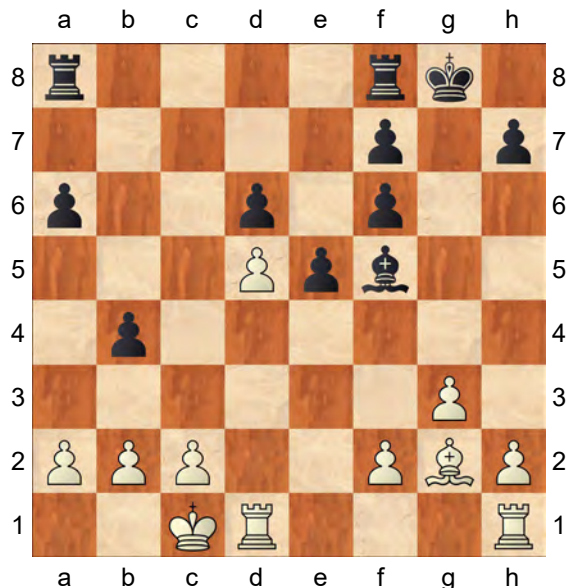


1-0 White's better pawn structure provides a small but long-lasting advantage -]

13.0-0

[13.a4 gives nothing for White now b4 14.Bxf6 Qxf6 15.Nd5 Nxd5 16.Qxd5 Bg4! and Black is fine]

[13.Qf3 Be6 14.Bxf6 Qxf6 15.Qxf6 gxf6 was also harmless 16.0-0-0 b4! 17.Nd5?! (Δ17.Ne2 Rfd8 18.b3 a5 19.Rd2 Kf8=) 17...Nxd5! 18.exd5 Bf5 ;Karjakin,S (2781) -Vachier Lagrave,M (2796) Norway Chess 5th 2017

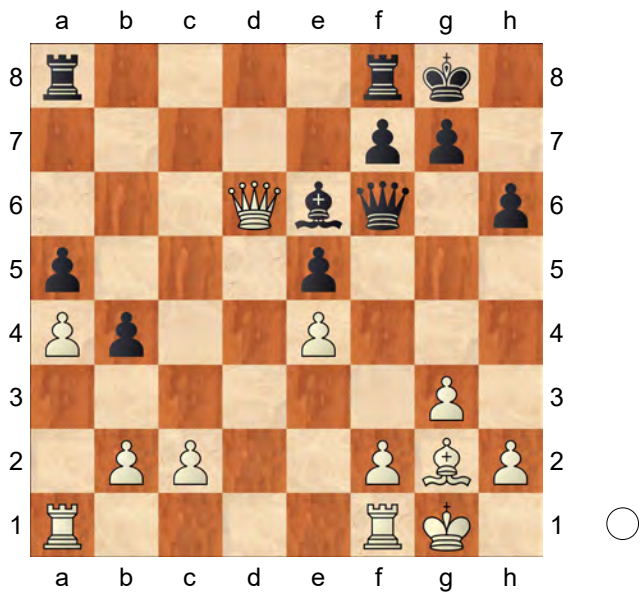


1/2 and Black had even an easier game due the pressure on c2 -]

13...h6 14.Bxf6 Qxf6 Black has no problems here, as his remaining minor pieces are ready to fight for the d5-square. **15.a4** It is difficult to imagine how can White create some unbalance without this move. Nevertheless, even this move does not give an advantage.

[15.b3 Bb7 16.Qd2 Rac8 seems totally fine for Black]

15...b4 16.Nd5 Nxd5 17.Qxd5 Black's idea now is very nice to remember: **17...Be6! 18.Qxd6 a5!♘**



I think that sacrificing the d6-pawn is a very interesting idea from a practical point of view: Instead of continuously caring about its defense, Black gives the pawn away in order to obtain open files and some tempos to attack the misplaced white queen. **19.Qb6**

Other options give Black good counterplay as well.

[19.Qd2 Rac8 20.Rac1 Rfd8 21.Qe3 Qe7! 22.f4!? (22.Qb6 Qc5! 23.Qxc5 Rxc5 regains the pawn at least) 22...Bd7! 23.b3 Bg4!

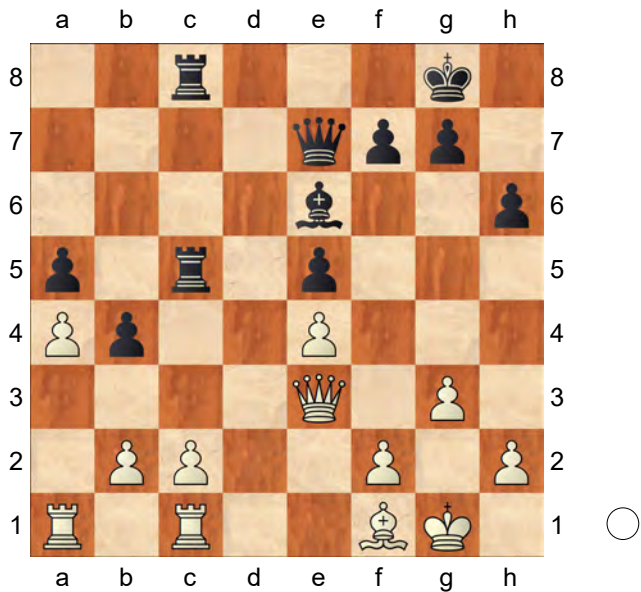
and White even has problems already 24.c3 bxc3 25.Rxc3 Qb4! 26.Rxc8 Rxc8 27.fxe5 Rc3 28.Qf4 Be6̄]

[19.c3 bxc3 20.bxc3 Rac8 21.Rfc1 Rfd8 22.Qb6 Rd2!̄]

19...Rfc8 20.Rfc1 Qe7! 21.Qe3

[21.h3 Qc5! and Black regains the pawn 22.Qxc5 Rxc5 23.Bf1 Rac8]

21...Rc5 The pressure on c2 will prevent White from making any progress. **22.Bf1 Rac8**

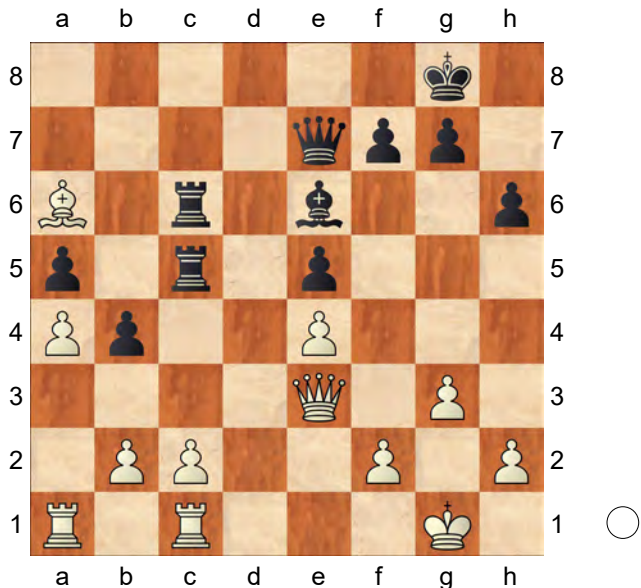


23.Ba6

[23.Bd3 Bc4! 24.Rd1 (24.Bxc4 Rxc4 25.c3 Qc7 wins the pawn back.) 24...Bxd3 25.cxd3 Rc2 26.d4!? (26.Rab1 Qe6; 26.Rac1 Qd7 27.Rxc2 Rxc2 28.b3 Qd4!̄) 26...exd4 27.Qxd4 R8c4! 28.Qd8+ Qxd8 29.Rxd8+ Kh7]

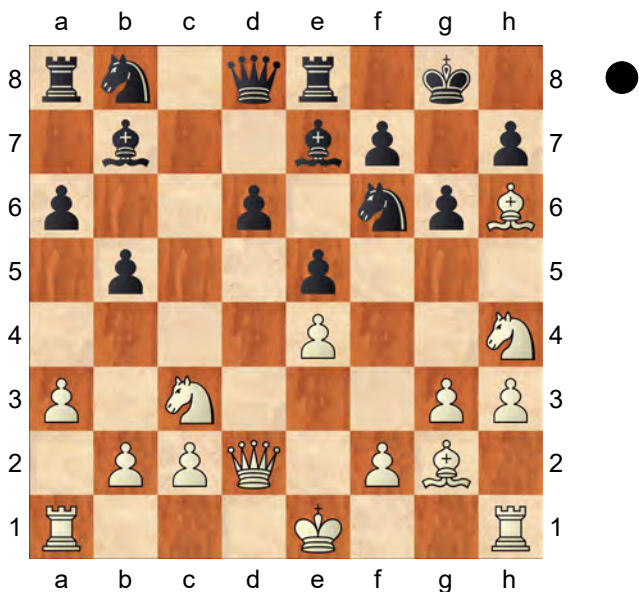
[23.c3 Qc7 24.Ba6 bxc3! 25.bxc3 (25.Bxc8? cxb2-+) 25...Ra8 26.Bb5 Rc8 27.Ra3 Bc4! 28.Bxc4 Rxc4 and Black has nice pressure.]

23...R8c6!



The c7-square should be available for the queen. Navara didn't find anything better than repeating the moves. **24.Bb5 Rc8 25.Ba6 R8c6 26.Bb5 Rc8 27.Ba6 1/2**

Exercise

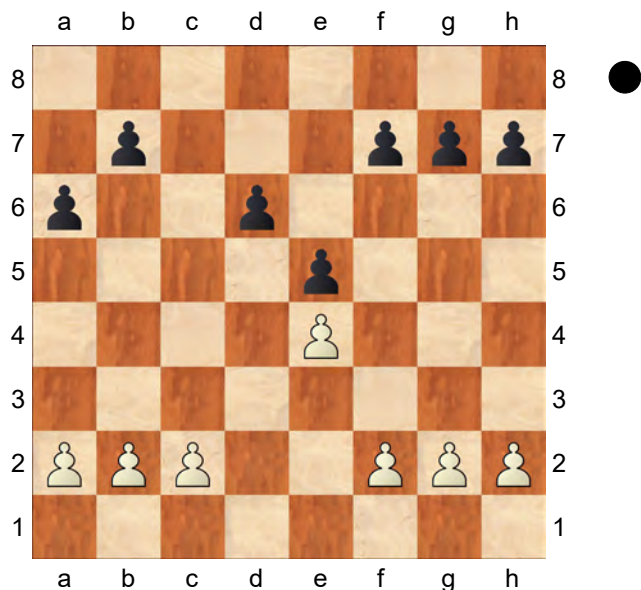


How should Black arrange his pieces in this position? **13...Nfd7!** Avoiding the threat of Nf5.

[13...Nbd7? allowed 14.Nf5! Nc5 15.Nxe7+ Qxe7 16.Bg5 Qe6 17.Qe3 and White had a small advantage Nh5?! 18.Rd1 f6 19.Bh6 Rac8 20.0-0 Rc7 21.Rd2± ;Safarli,E (2676)-Mansner,H (2278) 34th ECC Open 2018 (1.3) 1-0]

14.Nf3 Nb6 15.0-0 N8d7 16.Rad1 Rc8 White pieces are not well placed and Black has a more promising position.

Structure 4 - With 0-0-0



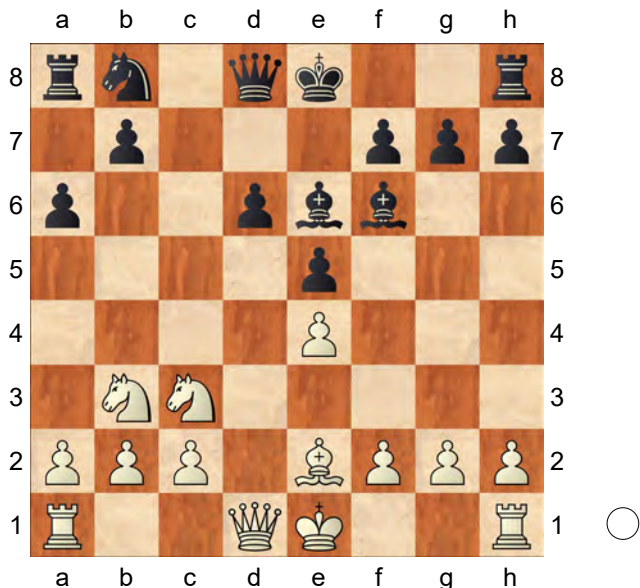
This is a regular structure that arises in the 6.Be2 line. The d5-square is, of course, a recurrent motif, but the main detail here is the king's placement. In the lines in which White plays 0-0-0, he has some additional ideas, as a pawn storm on the kingside or g2-g3 followed by f2-f4, thus exerting pressure in the center. In this structure, Black should focus on the queenside and look for a counterplay against the king. The queenside attack tends to be very annoying for White.

□ **Chirivi Castiblanco,Angie** 2037
Lizeth
 ■ **Rodriguez Rueda,Paula** 2183
Andrea
 COL-ch U20 Girls (3) 05.04.2013

1.e4 c5 2.Nf3 d6 3.d4 cxd4 4.Nxd4
 Nf6 5.Nc3 a6 6.Be2 e5 7.Nb3 Be7

8.Bg5 The main idea of this solid line consists of fighting for the d5-square.

8...Be6 9.Bxf6! White should play this before ...Nbd7, in order to make Black waste some time to organize his pieces again. 9...Bxf6



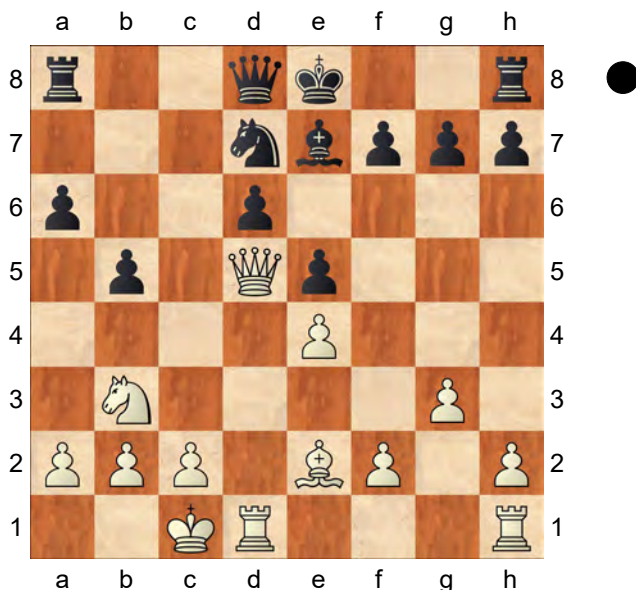
10.Qd3

[10.Nd5 This move removes the pressure from d6 and Black can continue with the development. Nd7 11.Qd3 Bg5! preventing 0-0-0 12.Rd1 0-0 13.c3 Kh8 14.0-0 Rc8 15.Bf3 g6 ;Kotsur,P (2548)-Gelfand,B (2738) Wch Blitz 6th 2012 (24) 0-1 and Black had good prospects on the kingside -]

10...Be7! 11.0-0-0 Nd7 12.g3

By means of f2-f4-f5 White wants to increase the control of d5. This idea is the main justification of White's 0-0-0.

Black should now organize counterplay on the queenside. **12...b5! 13.f4**
 [13.Nd5 Bxd5 14.Qxd5 Taghizadeh, R (2259)-Liang,A (2383) North American op 25th 2015



1/2 Ra7!? 15.Kb1 0-0 16.f4 Qb6 and Black is fine]

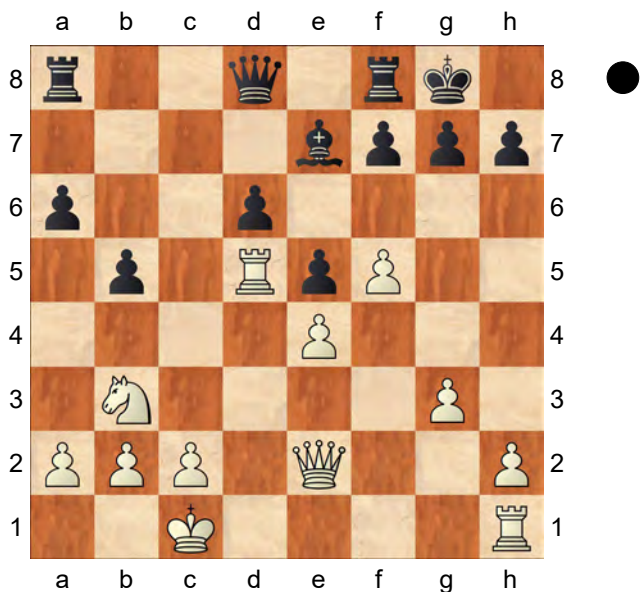
13...0-0

[Black could leave the king in the center and continue to concentrate forces on the queenside: 13...Rc8! 14.f5 Bc4 15.Qf3 Bxe2 16.Qxe2 (16.Nxe2 b4!) and here the thematic 16...Rxc3!? offers a typical compensation for Black 17.bxc3 Qc7 18.Rd3 Nb6 Black's play is very simple in such positions. He should follow with simple moves such as ... 0-0, ...Rc8, and ...Nc4 or ...Na4. There are no open files for the white rooks while the c1-king will be vulnerable in a long-term.]

14.f5 Bc4 15.Qf3 Bxe2

[15...Nb6 or]
 [15...Rc8 were more natural]

16.Qxe2 Nb6 17.Nd5 Nxd5 18.Rxd5



Strategically speaking, White reached the ideal piece configuration - good knight versus bad bishop. The only remaining task is maneuvering the knight from b3 to d5 after which White would be able to claim a clear advantage. But in practice, things are not so simple since the white king is vulnerable on the queenside. That is why Black's counterplay is very dangerous. **18...Qc7 19.Kb1**

[19.Nd2 Rfc8 20.Nf1 Bg5+! 21.Kb1 Qc4! is a nice example of White's practical difficulties]

19...Rfc8 20.h4 Rab8

[20...Qc4!? 21.Qxc4 Rxc4 22.Re1 g6≅]

21.Qd2 Qc4

[Δ21...Qb6]

22.Re1 Ra8 Black has also some difficulties to advance the pawns.

23.Rd3 Qc7 24.Rc3 Qb6 25.Rxc8+ Rxc8 26.Nc1 White starts the knight's journey. **26...a5! 27.Nd3** White clearly underestimated the counterplay.

[27.a3 b4 28.axb4 axb4 29.Qd3 Ra8 30.Qb3 Ra5!]

27...b4! While White wastes time maneuvering the knight, Black should take active actions on the queenside.

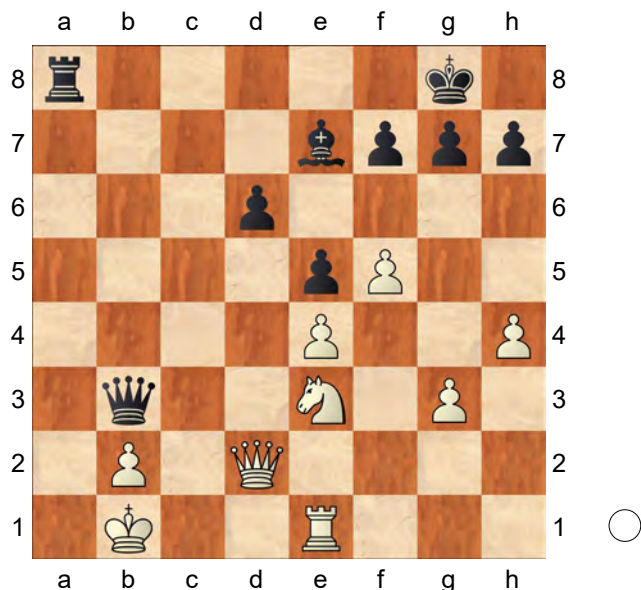
28.Nf2

[28.b3!? was a nice try to stop Black's queenside play. Rc3 29.Rd1 Qd4 30.Qg2 Qe3∞]

28...a4 29.Ng4 b3! The White's plan was too slow, and Black's counterplay made the position very unclear. **30.axb3**

[Δ30.Ne3 bxc2+ 31.Nxc2 d5! 32.exd5 Rb8 33.Qc3 Qb5↑ 34.Rd1 e4!]

30...axb3 31.cxb3 Qxb3 32.Ne3 Ra8↑



Black's initiative is actually very dangerous. **33.Nd5?!** Apparently White still doesn't understand the dangers of his position.

[33.Qd5! was the right move Qa4 34.Rc1! Qa1+ 35.Kc2 Rc8+ 36.Nc4 Qa6 37.Kb1 and White holds, despite the fact that his position is still risky.]

33...Bd8 34.Re3

[34.Nc3 Ba5! seems unpleasant for White]

34...Qa2+ 35.Kc1 Qa1+ 36.Kc2 Rc8+ 37.Rc3 Rb8 The defence seems

extremely unpleasant for White, and it forces him to expose his position even more. **38.b4**

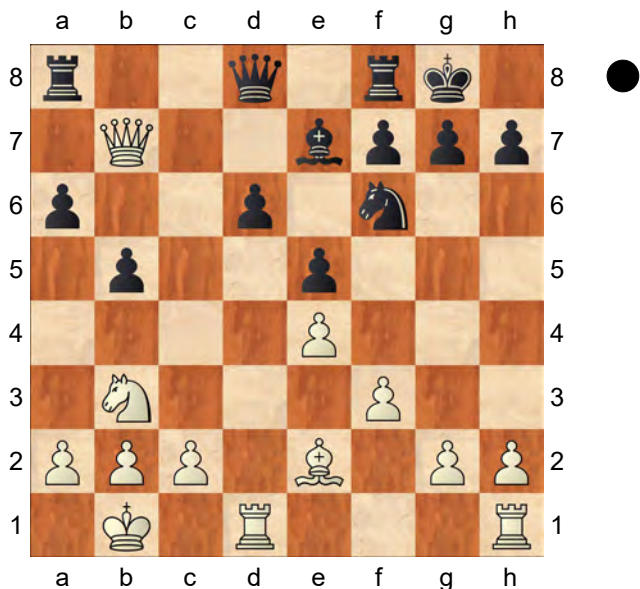
[38.Rb3 loses a pawn after Qa4 39.Qd3 Rxb3 40.Qxb3 Qxe4+]

38...Ra8! 39.Kd3 Qg1! The invasion of opponent's position is precisely conducted by Black. **40.Qe3 Qb1+ 41.Rc2?**

[41.Kc4 would have been the only chance, although it doesn't give many hopes.]

41...Ra3+ 42.Nc3 Qxb4+ 43.Ke2 Ba5 44.Qa7 Qc4+ 45.Kf2 h6 46.Rb2 Qxc3 0-1

Exercise



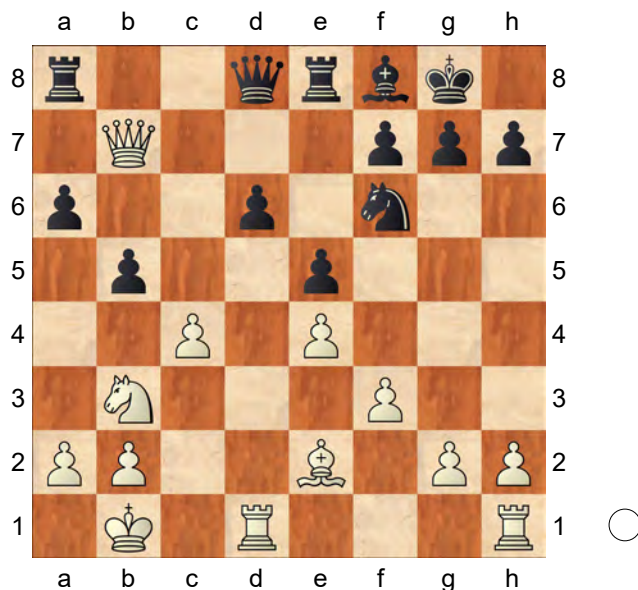
Black intends to play Qc7 in order to continue his development, with Rc8 and a possible initiative in queenside. Having this in mind White played White's queen disturbs the coordination of Black's forces. How should Black

solve this problem? **16...Re8!** Suddenly the queen is in trouble. **17.c4?** Overlooking the idea.

[17.a3 Bf8 18.Qc6 (18.Rd2 Re6! very subtle and yet a strong move) 18...Qb8 19.Qc3 Rd8∞]

[17. Qc6 Qb8 18.Qc3 Rc8 19.Qd3 Rd8∞]

17...Bf8!



18.Qc6?

[18.cxb5 Re7 19.Qc6 Rc7 20.Qb6 Rc1+!-+]

[18.c5 Re7 19.Qc6 (19.Qb6 Qxb6 20.cxb6 Rb7+) 19...Rc7 20.Qb6 Nd7+]

18...Qb8! 19.Na5 Qa7! The weak dark squares in White's camp start telling.

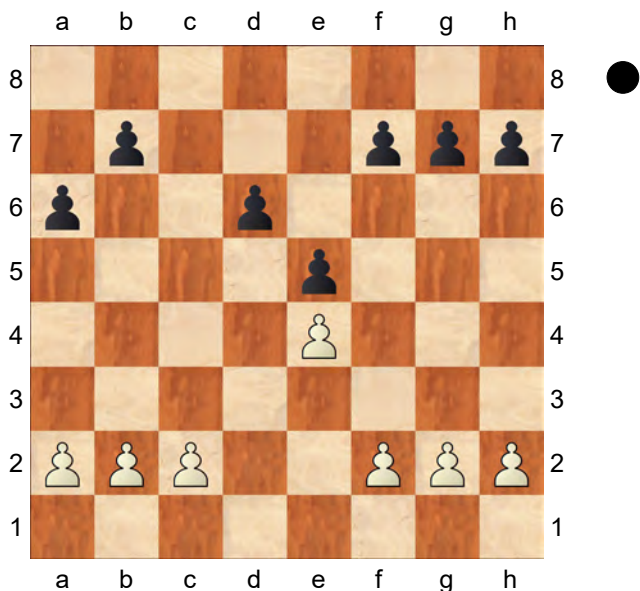
20.c5

[20.cxb5 axb5 21.b4 d5-+]

[20.Qb7 Qf2 21.Rd2 Rab8 22.Qxa6 Ra8 23.Qxb5 Reb8 24.Qa4 Qc5-+]

20...dxc5 Duda,J (2579) -Yu,Y (2668) Tromsø ol (Men) 41st 2014 (11.3) 0-1

Structure 5 - With 0-0



We have the same structure with only one important difference - the white king is on the kingside. Nevertheless, playing on the queenside remains Black's main plan. As mentioned in structure 3, Black should keep at least one minor piece on the board.

Nisipeanu,LD... **2672**
 Giri,A... **2782**
 46th GM 2018 (4.1) 18.07.2018

1.e4 c5 2.Nf3 d6 3.d4 cxd4 4.Nxd4 Nf6 5.Nc3 a6 6.Be2 e5 7.Nb3 Be7 8.Bg5 Be6 9.Bxf6! Bxf6 10.Qd3 Be7! 11.Rd1 White intends to play more solid with 0-0. **11...Nd7 12.Nd5!** This should be played now or Black would continue with ...Nf6 or ...Nb6 and the Nd5 jump would not be a serious worry anymore. **12...Bxd5 13.Qxd5 b5!?** N Giri's novelty,

aiming at a quick expansion on the queenside.

[13...Qc7 is the most played, also with good results for Black]

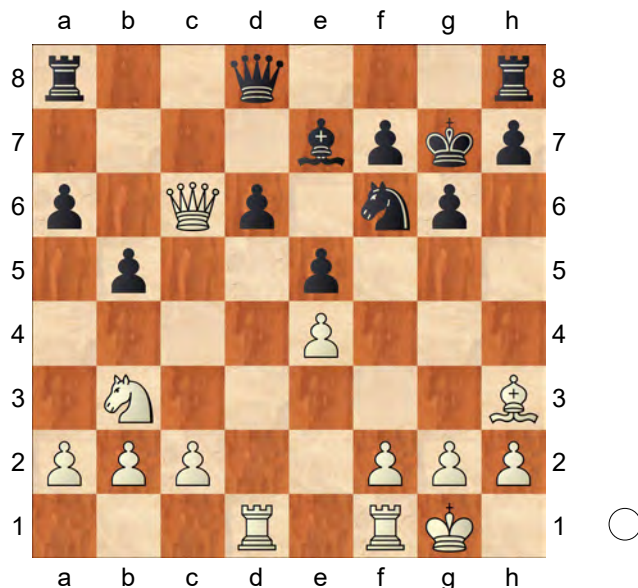
14.Bg4?! Trying to disturb Black's development, but as we'll see, White is the one who will end with badly placed pieces.

[14.0-0 0-0 15.Qb7 (15.c3 Qc7 16.Qd3 Rad8 seems equal) 15...Nf6! 16.f3 Re8! Played with the idea ...Bf8 followed by ... Re7 when the b7-queen would be in trouble.]

14...Nf6! As we know, it is advisable for Black to keep his knight on the board.

[14...0-0 15.Bxd7 Qxd7 16.0-0 it is simply unpleasant for Black]

15.Qc6+ Kf8 16.Bh3 g6 17.0-0 Kg7

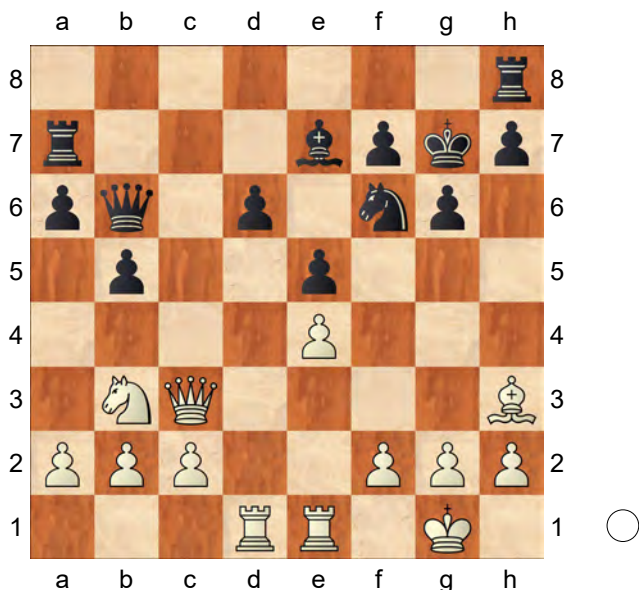


Black managed to establish a perfect coordination in his camp while White has a queen and a bishop which are misplaced. **18.Rfe1 Ra7!**

The c8-square is not available, but still Giri finds a nice way to put a rook on the c-file. **19.Qc3**

[19.Re2 Qb8 is also good for Black]

19...Qb6



20.Qe3 This is practically a confession that the opening didn't go well for White.

[Even after 20.Re2 White struggles to find a constructive plan. For example, Rd8 21.a3 a5 22.g3 b4 23.axb4 axb4 24.Qe1 h5 25.Bg2 Rc8 \bar{f}]

20...Qxe3 21.Rxe3 a5 Black is already playing for an advantage. **22.a3**

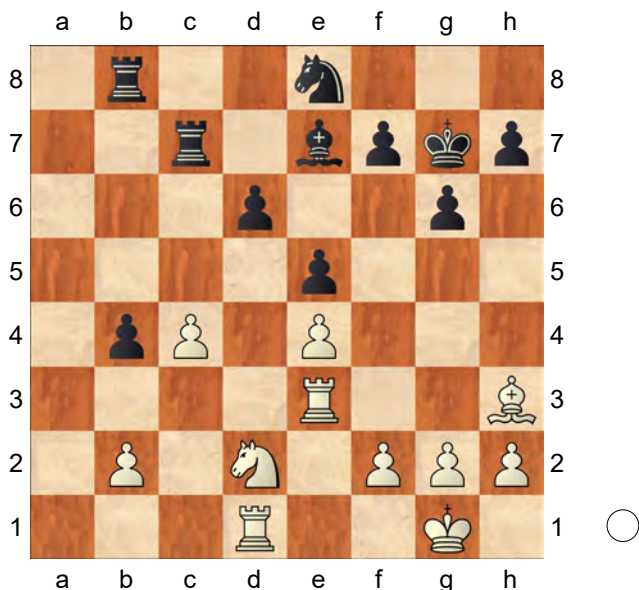
[22.g3 a4 23.Nc1 Rc7 24.c3 Rd8 25.Bg2 a3! 26.b3 Rdc8 27.Ne2 g5! 28.Red3 g4 \bar{f}]

22...Rb8 \uparrow It is quite impressive how easily Giri managed to neutralize White's play in the opening and get a nice initiative on the queenside. **23.c3**

[23.g3 a4 24.Nd2 b4 25.Nc4 bxa3 26.bxa3 Ra6 27.Bf1 Rc6 \bar{f}]

23...b4! 24.axb4 axb4 25.c4 Rc7

26.Nd2 This move is designed to stabilize the queenside by means of b2-b3. **26...Ne8!**



A very nice idea by Giri. With his last move, he is planning to improve the bishop. **27.Ree1**

[27.b3 Ra8 leaves Black with a great advantage. 28.Rd3 Nf6 29.f3 Rc6 30.g3 Bd8! \bar{f}]

27...Bg5 28.Nf3

[28.b3 Ra8 29.Nf1 Ra3 30.Rb1 Rca7 \bar{f}]

28...Bh6 Black has made the same maneuver with the bishop, but in this case, it was more successful as it forced new concessions by White. **29.b3 Ra8 \bar{f} 30.Rd5**

[30.Ra1 Rxa1 31.Rxa1 Nf6 32.Ra4 (32.Re1 Ra7) 32...Nxe4 33.Rxb4 Ra7 34.Ra4 Rb7 35.Ra3 Nc5-+]

30...Ra3 31.Rb1 Nf6! Precisely calculated by Giri. Black wins material now. **32.Rxd6 Nxe4 33.Rd8**

[33.Rb6 Nc3 34.Re1 e4 35.Nd4 Bd2! 36.Rf1 e3! 37.Bg4 exf2+ 38.Kxf2 Re7 39.Kg3 Be3-+]

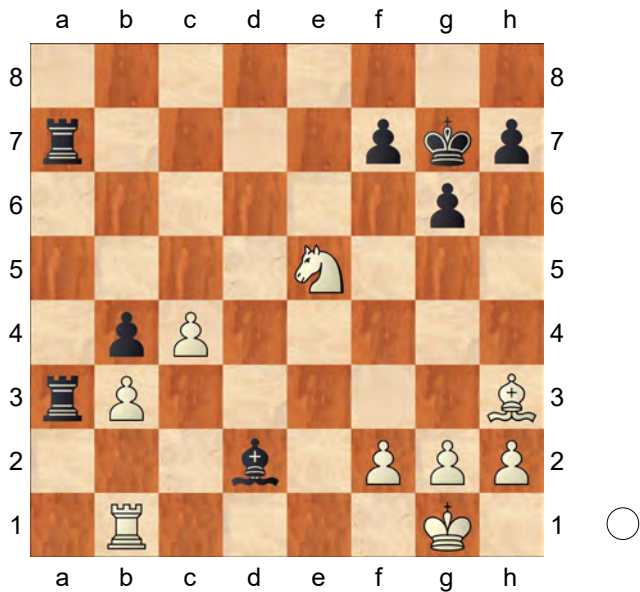
33...Rca7

[33...Nc3 34.Re1 Rxb3-+ would be already winning]

34.Nxe5 Nd2 35.Rxd2

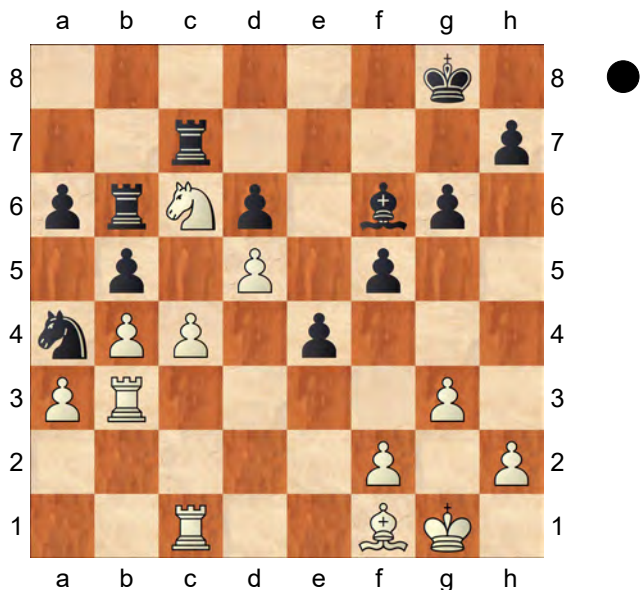
[35.Rd1 Ra1! 36.Bg4 Rxd1+ 37.Bxd1 Ra1-+]

35...Bxd2-+



The conversion of the advantage was not a problem for Giri. **36.Kf1 Ra1 37.Rxa1 Rxa1+ 38.Ke2 Re1+!** The most practical. **39.Kxd2 Rxe5 40.Bd7 Kf6 41.Bc6 Ke7 42.f4 Ra5 43.Kd3 Kd6 44.Bd5 Kc5!** Avoiding the activation of opponent's king. **45.Bxf7 Ra3 46.Bg8** [46.Kc2 Ra2+ 47.Kb1 Rxc2-+] **46...Rxb3+ 47.Kc2 Re3 48.Bxh7 Re2+ 49.Kb3 Rxc2 50.h4 Rg3+ 51.Kb2 b3 52.Ka3 Kxc4 53.Bg8+ Kc3 54.Bxb3 Kd4 55.Kb4 Rxb3+!** The pawn ending is a trivial win for Black. **56.Kxb3 0-1**

Exercise



What's the best idea for Black in this position? **37...Rbxc6!**

[37...Kg7?! 38.cxb5 axb5 39.f3↑ seems to offer some chances for White.]

38.dxc6 Rxc6 Black seems to have a nice compensation for the exchange, mainly due to the strong coordination of his pieces and to the possibility of advancing the central pawns. **39.Rbb1! Bg5!**

[39...Bb2? 40.Rc2 Bxa3 41.Rb3+-]

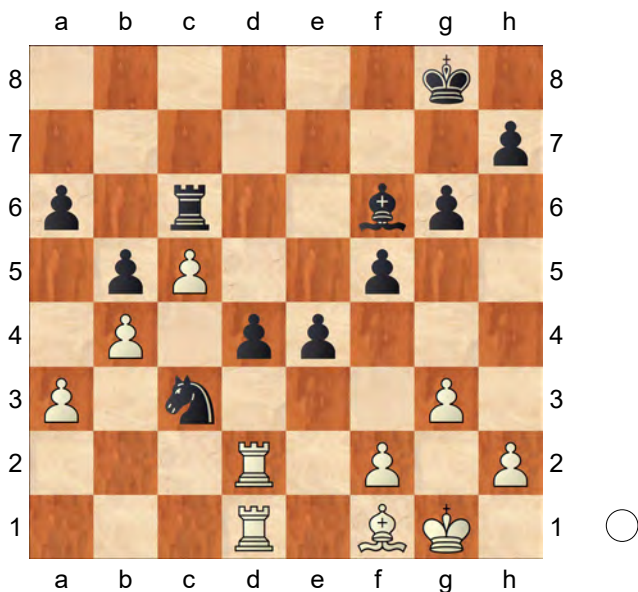
40.Rc2 d5 41.c5 d4 Black pawns seem very scary. **42.Rd1 Bf6!**

And for this reason, Black should keep them.

[42...d3? would be a mistake 43.Bxd3! exd3 44.Rxd3± and White has the advantage now.]

43.Rcd2 White understands the danger of these pawns, and plays solid.

43...Nc3



44.Rxd4!

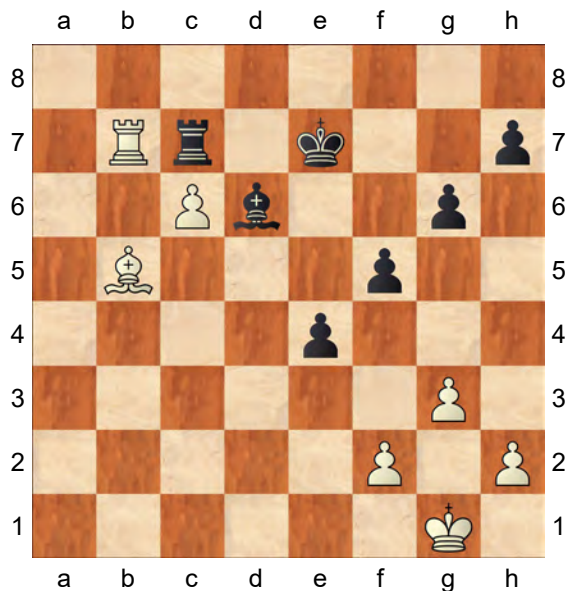
[44.Re1 Kf7± is simply much better for Black as he can keep improving his position by bringing the king towards the center. Later on, the central pawns will start rolling.]

44...Nxd1 45.Rxd1 The game followed a more or less forced path to the draw now. **45...Bb2 46.Rd8+**

[46.Rb1 Bxa3 47.Be2 the bishop seems trapped but White cannot win it. Kf7 48.Kf1 Ke6 49.Ke1 Rc7 50.Kd2 a5! 51.bxa5 b4±]

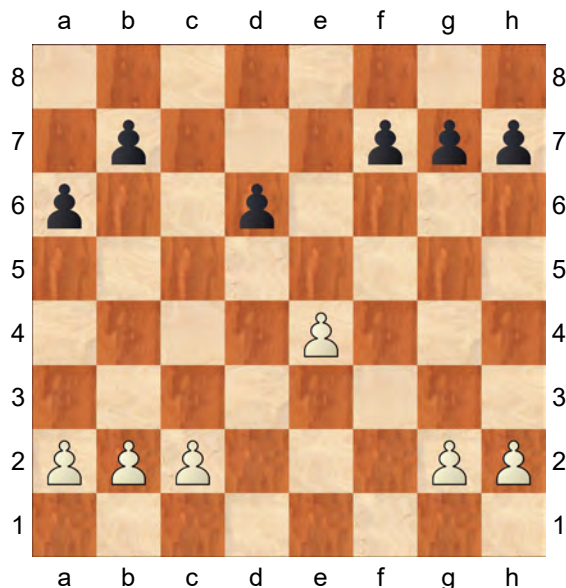
46...Kf7 47.Ra8 Bxa3 48.Bxb5! Rc7
[48...axb5 49.Rxa3±]

49.Rxa6 Bxb4 50.c6 Ke7 51.Rb6 Bd6 52.Rb7 Carlsen,M (2834)-Giri,A (2784) Qatar Masters op 2015



1/2

Structure 6



This structure arises when White tries to attack the center with f2-f4 and Black answers with exf4, thus changing the structure and the nature of the position. In this structure, besides the standard Nc3-d5, White can go for the maneuver Nd4-f5. In general, White is playing for a kingside initiative. Black's advantages are purely positional. He often uses the e5-square which is an excellent outpost for the knight (and sometimes for the bishop). Also, it is important to mention that the move f2-f4 exposes White's king and Black can take advantage of it. The d6-d5 advance is also an idea. Nevertheless, we should remember that even with pawns on d6 and e4, many endgames are fine for Black due to the vulnerability of the e4-pawn.

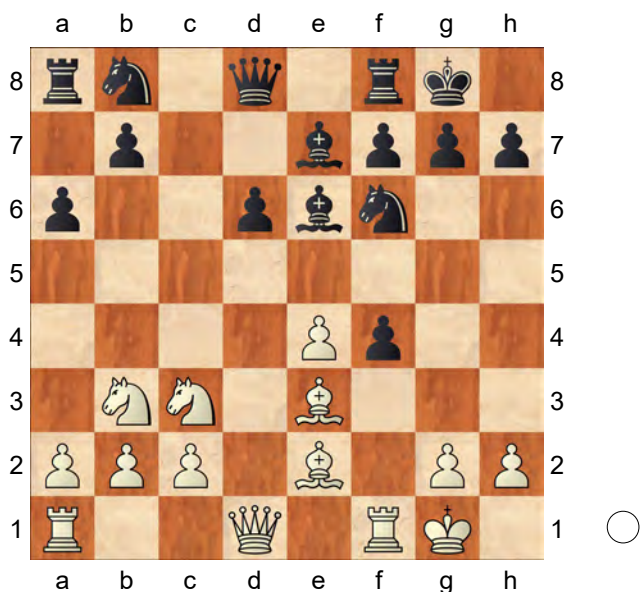
Mainka,Romuald **2476**

Pigusov,Evgeny **2609**
 MK Cafe Cup-A (6) 08.08.1999

1.e4 c5 2.Nf3 d6 3.d4 cxd4 4.Nxd4 Nf6 5.Nc3 a6 6.Be2 e5 7.Nb3 Be7 8.0-0 0-0 9.Be3 Be6 10.f4!?

This shows White's intentions of going for a dynamic battle, with attacking chances and fight for the initiative.

10...exf4



11.Bxf4

[11.Rxf4 is the other option Nc6 12.Nd5!? the only way of justifying White's last move Bxd5 13.exd5 Ne5 14.Rb4!? White aims to cramp Black's queenside, but this is not enough to achieve the advantage Qc7 15.a4 Nfd7 16.a5 Bf6= and Black is fine as all the important squares on the queenside are protected and there are no problems to finish the development.]

11...Nc6 White has some open lines on the kingside, but the capture exf4 also gives Black some trumps, like an easier development and the excellent e5-square. **12.Qe1** White plans to follow with Qg3 and Rd1, putting pressure on d6 and some threats on the kingside. I like Black's next move because although it is not the main move, it is directed against both plans.

[12.Kh1 is also played, then d5! gives Black good chances of equalize]

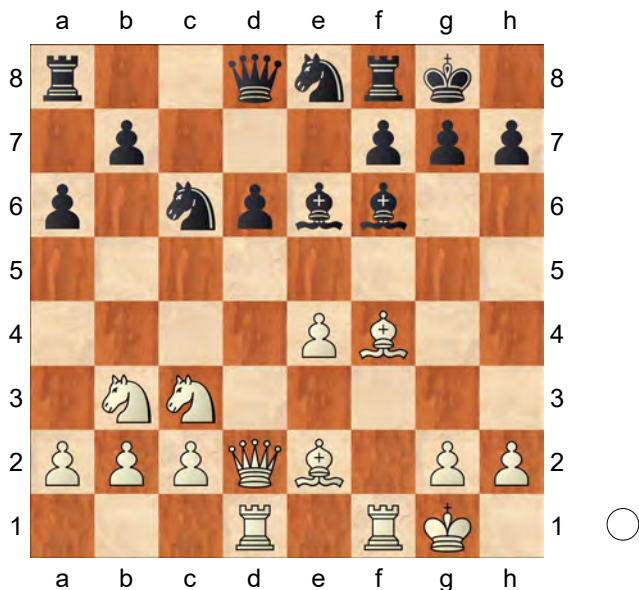
12...Ne8! This apparently modest move has many purposes: It overprotects d6, and at the same time, Qg3 does not seem so attractive anymore. Besides, Black can improve his dark-squared bishop via f6 and eventually e5.

[12...Ne5 is the most played, and it is, of course, ok for Black.]

13.Rd1

[13.Nd5 Bg5! this exchange would leave White with a lot of weaknesses on the dark-squares. 14.Bg3 Nf6! It is instructive how the Black pieces first seemed cramped, and now they become active again. 15.Nc3 Qe7 16.Rd1 Rad8 Black achieves the d5-advance, and is fine 17.Nd2 (17.Nd5 Bxd5 18.exd5 Nb4!) 17...d5 18.exd5 1/2-1/2 Arnason, J-Szekely,P/ Tallinn/ 1983/ (18)]

13...Bh4! First diverting the queen from g3. **14.Qd2 Bf6!**



The bishop aims for the nice square on e5. The pressure along the a1-h8 diagonal is also not without importance.

15.Nd5!? Looking for complications and to take over the initiative.

[15.Bxd6 Nxd6 16.Qxd6 Qxd6 17.Rxd6 Rfe8 offers nice compensation for Black in form of activity, for example 18.Bf3 (18.Nd5? Be5-+) 18...Be5 19.Rd2 Rac8 20.Rfd1 Bxc3! 21.bxc3 Ne5 \bar{f}]

15...Bxb2 16.c3

[16.Bg5 f6 17.Be3 Be5 18.c3 ∞ would offer White some compensation]

16...Ba3 White will play searching for compensations, but objectively Black is fine and keeps the extra pawn. **17.Bg5 f6**

[17...Qb8?! 18.Ne7+ Kh8 19.Nd4 \uparrow]
18.Be3 Bxd5!? A concrete approach.
 [18...b5 19.c4! bxc4 20.Bxc4 ∞]

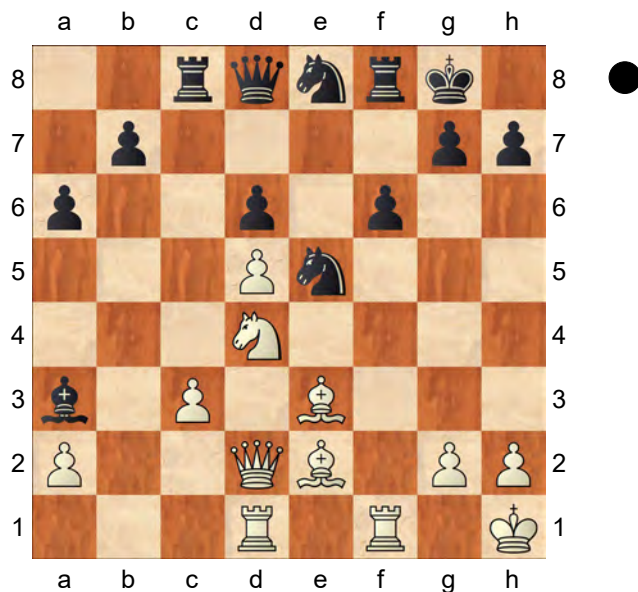
19.exd5

[19.Qxd5+ Kh8 20.Nd4 Bc5! 21.Rf2 Nc7 22.Qh5 Ne5 \bar{f} and Black consolidates the advantage]

19...Ne5 20.Kh1

[20.Nd4!/? Qa5! (20...Nc7? 21.Nc2! Bc5 22.Bxc5 dxc5 23.d6 Ne6 24.Qd5 Qd7 25.Ne3 \pm) 21.Ne6 Rf7 \bar{f}]

20...Rc8 21.Nd4



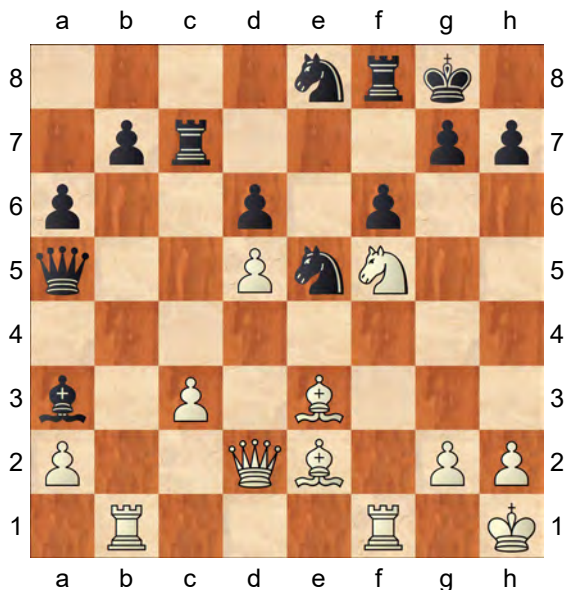
Qa5! White has some compensation for the pawn due to the weakness of the e6 square, but his pawns on the queenside also provide targets for Black.

[21...Nc7? 22.Nc2 Bc5 23.Bxc5 dxc5 24.d6 Ne6 25.Ne3 Qd7 26.Nc4 Nxc4 27.Bxc4 \pm with strong initiative for White]

22.Nf5

[22.Ne6 Rf7]

22...Rc7 23.Rb1



Bc5?!

[23...b5! 24.Rb3 Bc5 25.Bf4 g6! and Black has a great advantage, for example 26.Bxe5 dxe5! 27.d6 Rd7 28.Qd5+ Kh8 29.Qxc5 gxf5 30.Ra3 Qd8 31.Rxa6 Nxd6 32.Bxb5 Nxb5 33.Qxb5 f4⚡ White regained the pawn but his pieces are badly placed now]

24.Bf4!

[24.Bxc5 Qxc5 25.a4 g6⚡]

24...Rd7

[The threat was Bxe5 followed by d6 and Qd5, hence much a better prophylaxis was 24...Kh8! 25.Nd4 Bxd4 26.cxd4 Qxd2 27.Bxd2 Rc2! 28.Rfd1 Nc4⚡]

25.Nd4!

[25.Bg3 b5⚡]

25...Ba7

[25...Bxd4 was not possible now 26.cxd4! Qxd2 27.Bxd2 Nf7 28.Bg4 Rc7 29.Ba5↑]

26.Ne6 Rff7 27.Rb4 The position seems complicated now. **27...g6**

[27...Nc7? 28.Bxe5 dxe5 29.Nxc7 Qxc7 30.Bg4!±]

28.Rfb1 f5 29.h3? Too slow. White

probably missed or underestimated the activation of Black's most passive piece, the Ne8.

[29.Bg5!?]

29...Nf6! 30.Bxe5

[30.c4 Rfe7∞]

30...dxe5 31.c4 Ne4! Now White has big problems. **32.Qh6**

[32.Qb2 Bd4! 33.Nxd4 exd4 34.Bd3 Qc5⚡]

[32.Qe1 Bf2! 33.Qd1 Nc3-+]

32...Ng3+ 33.Kh2 Nxe2 34.Rxb7?

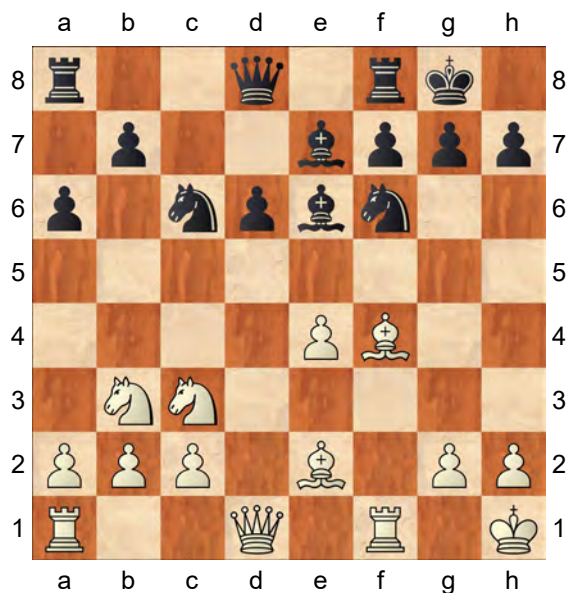
[34.R4b2 Nd4! (34...Nc3 35.Rxb7 Nxb1 36.Rxd7 Be3 37.Qxe3 Rxd7 38.Qb3!→) 35.Ng5 Rfe7 36.Nxh7 Rxh7 37.Qxg6+ Kf8-+]

34...Rxb7 35.Rxb7 Qe1! The last touch.

[35...Rxb7?? 36.Qf8#]

0-1

Exercise



How should Black play? **12...d5!**

Black tries to get rid of his only weakness.

[12...Rc8!? is an option to avoid simplifications or forced lines]

13.e5!? The only way to look for unbalances for White. **13...Ne4!**

[13...Nd7 14.Nxd5 Ndx5 15.c4 seems to offer good chances for White.]

14.Bd3

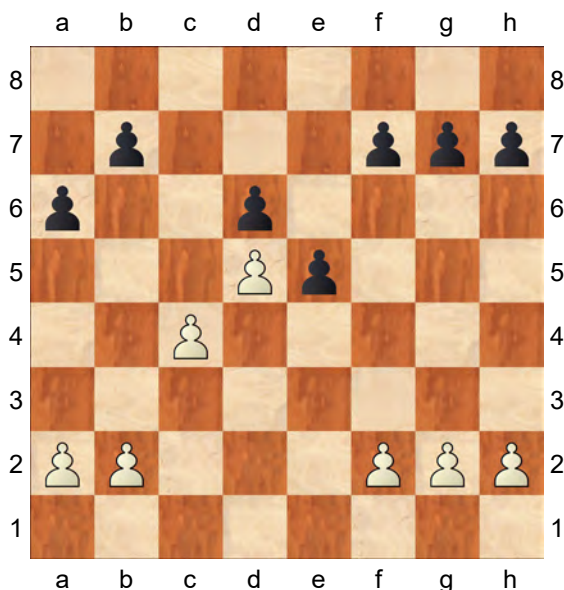
[14.Nxe4 dxe4 15.Nd2 is harmless due to Bg5!=]

14...Nc5!? An interesting attempt, aiming to create problems for White to defend the e5-pawn.

[14...Nxc3 15.bxc3 g6 is the theory]

15.Nxc5 Bxc5 16.Qf3 Bd4! 17.Rae1 Re8

Structure 7



A rather modern structure arises when White plays Nd5, forcing the exchange, and then recaptures with the e-pawn. This kind of cuts the board into two

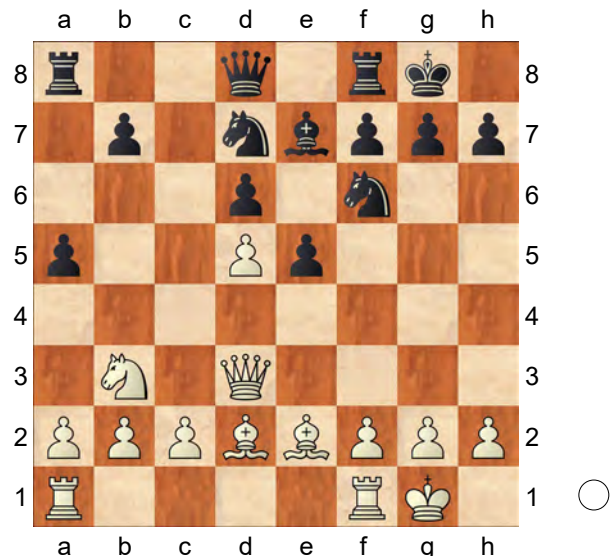
halves. White aims to advance his queenside majority in order to put Black under pressure, open lines on that side or to create a passed pawn. Black should look for counterplay with his own majority on the kingside. Black should remember some important ideas: 1- Exchange the knight on d5 by means of Bxd5, keeping the knights that will be much more useful in such structures; 2- Get rid of his dark squared bishop on the first opportunity, usually this is accomplished by means of Ne8-Bg5. It is a good operation because Black deprives White of the bishop pair and, at the same time, exchanges Black's worst minor piece; 3- Play the a6-a5 advance as soon as possible, as despite weakening the b5-square, it is an effective way of delaying White's advances on the queenside and gives the excellent c5-square to the knight, and 4- Be ready to play as actively as possible on the kingside, as the advances will force White to take some difficult decisions, as playing f2-f3 or f2-f4 to stop the pawns, would in any case expose some squares.

Georgiadis,N... **2526**
 Mamedyarov,S... **2801**
 51st Biel GM 2018 (6.2) 27.07.2018

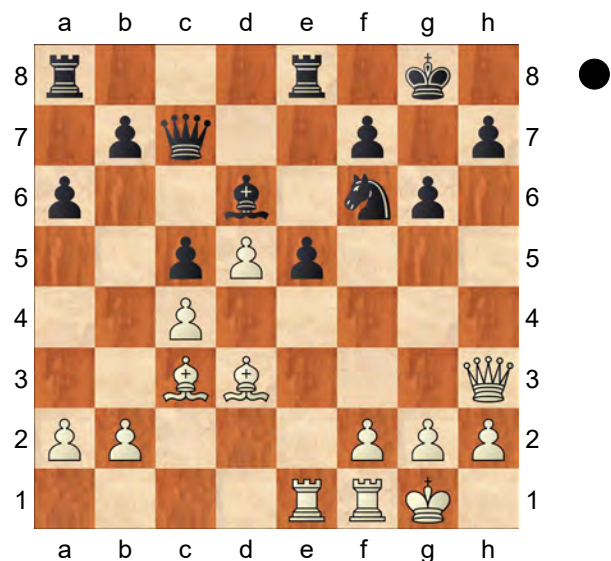
1.e4 c5 2.Nf3 d6 3.d4 cxd4 4.Nxd4 Nf6 5.Nc3 a6 6.Be2 e5 7.Nb3 Be7 8.Be3

[Recently, White players started to explore a different move order: 8.0-0 0-0 9.Qd3!? Be6 10.Nd5!? Nbd7 11.Bd2! and the bishop is apparently

better placed on d2 than on e3 for a couple of reasons: Bxd5 12.exd5 Nc5 (12...a5!? Hou,Y (2676)-Nepomniachtchi,I (2720) Dortmund SuperGM 43rd 2015



1/2) 13.Nxc5 dxc5 14.c4 Qc7 15.Rae1 Bd6 16.Qh3! the first point about 11.Bd2 is the queen has more mobility along the third rank Rfe8 17.Bc3! and the second is that the bishop can be improved via c3 to a more promising position on the diagonal. g6 18.Bd3 White is well developed and had a promising position in Nepomniachtchi, I (2751)-Gelfand, B (2724) Zuerich Chess Challenge 6th 2017



1-0]

8...Be6 9.Nd5!? Nbd7! 10.Qd3 Bxd5!

Black takes before White is able to reinforce the knight by means of c2-c4.

11.exd5 Rc8 Black's chances are on the kingside after the transformation in the structure, but it is important to take

some measures to face White's advances on the queenside, too. **12.c4**

0-0 13.0-0 Ne8! Black follows his plan to clear the path in order to advance the

f-pawn, but at the same time, he aims for a typical positional operation in this

structure: exchanging the dark-squared bishop in order to leave his opponent

with the bad bishop, and looking to explore the long-term weaknesses on the

dark-squares with the knights.

14.Qd2 Preventing Bg5 whilst simultaneously preparing the queenside expansion with Na5 and b4.

[14.Bg4 was played against me, but I found a nice idea now: e4!

forcing many exchanges 15.Qxe4 (15.Qe2 f5 16.Bh3 g6! 17.Nd4 Ng7

with a complex position, see the exercise) 15...Nef6! 16.Qd4 Nxg4

17.Qxg4 Ne5 the point of the 14th move 18.Qe2 Nxc4 19.Bd4 Re8=

Duran Vega,S (2287) -Quintiliano,R (2441) Continental das Américas -

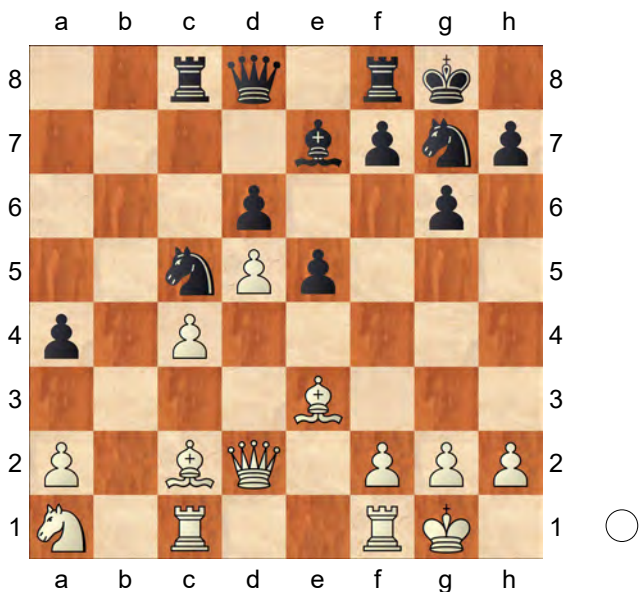
El Salvador (6.12) 0-1 and after the simplifications, Black is ok -]

14...b6!? A double-edged, ambitious

move. It restricts the Nb3 but the drawback is that the c6-square becomes vulnerable.

[14...f5 was played by another Najdorf expert. 15.f4 g6 16.Na5 exf4 17.Bxf4 Nef6! with good counterplay for Black - Hovhannisyan,R (2592)-Areshchenko,A (2701) Lake Sevan Martuni 2014 (7.2) 0-1]

15.Rac1! a5 16.Na1! White found a nice way to improve the knight. **16...f5** [Grishuk tried an original plan with 16...g6 17.b4! (17.Nc2 Ng7 18.Bh6 Re8 19.g4 f5![∞]) 17...Ng7 (17...axb4? would give Black problems after 18.Nc2! f5 19.Bh6 Rf7 20.Nxb4 Ndf6 21.Nc6±) 18.bxa5 bxa5 19.Bd3 Nc5 20.Bc2 (20.Bxc5 Rxc5 21.Nb3 Bg5![≠]) 20...a4!?) with a complex position, both sides have practical problems here, but Black managed to win after a complicated fight - Carlsen,M (2853)-Grishuk,A (2771) Sinquefeld Cup 3rd 2015



0-1]
17.f3

[17.f4 seems inferior in view of Nef6 18.Bf3 Nc5! and e4 is a nice outpost for the knights]

17...f4! 18.Bf2 Bh4! Mamedyarov shows in an instructive manner how to achieve a nice position with Black in this line: by exchanging the dark-squared bishops he obtained a lot of nice squares for the knights. **19.Bd3**

[19.g3? prevents the exchange but at a high price Bg5 20.g4 e4! and Black's initiative is very strong]

19...Bxf2+ 20.Qxf2 Nc5 Black managed to achieve his strategic ideas and, at the same time, he prevented White's initiative on the queenside. His position is already easier to play. **21.Bc2 g6** Now, it is time to improve the other knight. **22.Rfe1**

[White has no time to put the queenside in motion: 22.b3 Nf6! 23.a3 b5![↑]]

22...Ng7 23.Be4 Qd7 24.Nc2 Nf5 25.b3

[25.Bxf5 Qxf5+- does not make White's life easier.]

25...Kh8

[25...b5! was already very strong, maybe Mamedyarov was worried about 26.cxb5 Qxb5 27.Na3 Qb4 28.Nc4 but Black has Nxe4 29.Rxe4 a4 with strong pressure on the queenside. 30.Qb2 axb3 31.axb3 Qc5+-]

26.Rb1 Ng7

[26...b5! would be strong again]

27.Na3 Nf5 28.Nb5 White has improved his pieces a bit, but it is still difficult to see a clear plan for him.

28...Rf6 29.a3 g5?!

[29...a4! is usually a good move after a3, and was good here, too. 30.bxa4 (30.b4 Nxe4 31.Rxe4 Ne3 32.Qe2

g5↑; *30.Bxf5? gxf5-+) 30...Ne3!* and White is in trouble with many weak pawns]

30.Nc3? Georgiadis misses a great chance.

[*30.Bxf5! Qxf5 31.b4!* would give nice chances for White, for example *Nd3? (31...Nd7 32.Qe2∞) 32.Qc2! Nxe1 33.Qxf5 Rxf5 34.Nxd6±* and White regains the material with advantage]

30...Nd4! The knight is very strong on d4 and White's position becomes unpleasant. **31.b4**

[*31.Bc2 g4* Black has a crushing attack, for example *32.b4 gxf3! 33.bxc5 Rg8-+]*

31...axb4 32.Rxb4

[*32.axb4 Nxe4 33.Nxe4 Rg6 34.Rbc1 g4→* and the attack is too strong again]

32...g4→ The attack comes with full force. **33.Qh4?!**

[*33.Nb5* was a better try, but after *Nxb5 34.Rxb5 Rg8* White's position remains very difficult.]

33...Nxe4 34.Nxe4 Rg6 35.fxg4 Nc2-+

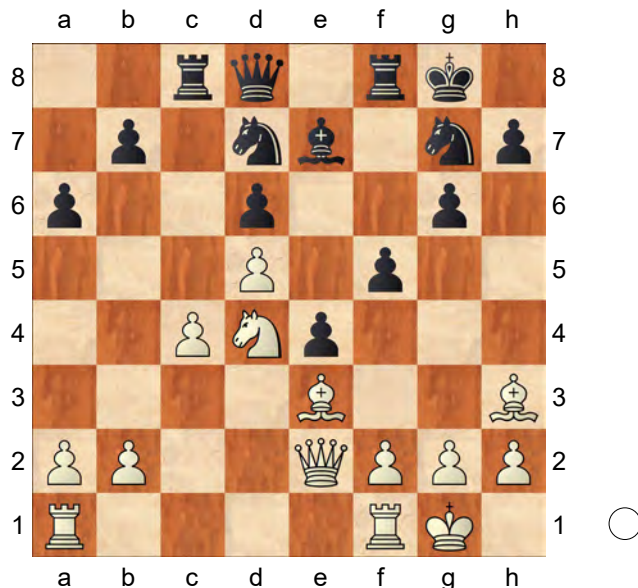
36.Rxb6 Nxe1 37.Nf6

[*37.Qxe1 Qa7! 38.Qf2 Rxc4-+]*

37...Qg7 38.Rxd6 Rh6 39.Qxe1 Rxf6

0-1

Exercise



A typical complicated struggle is taking place here, but apparently Black has some problems after **18.Bh6** Calculate what the best move for Black is and what is the evaluation of the position?

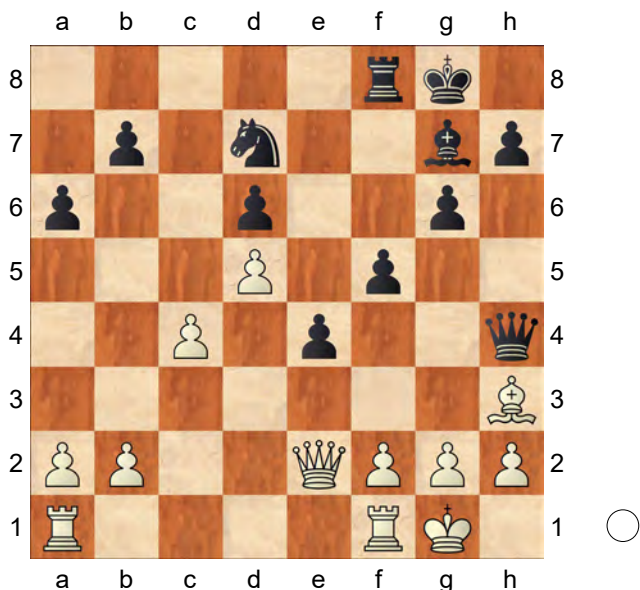
18...Bf6! The strongest idea for Black involves an exchange sacrifice.

[*18...Nc5?* on other hand, is just bad: *19.Bxg7 Kxg7 20.b4!* and Black loses material *Bf6 21.Qe3 Bxd4 (21...f4 22.Qd2!) 22.Qxd4+ Qf6 23.Qxf6+ Kxf6 24.bxc5+-]*

19.Bxg7

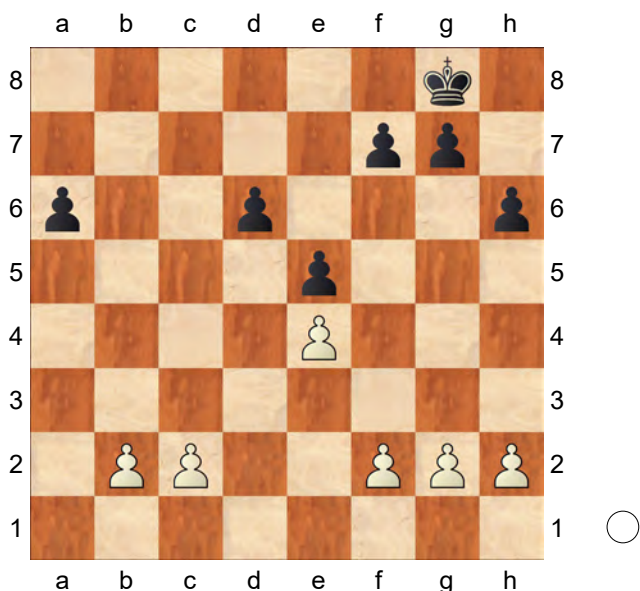
[Another way to win the exchange is *19.Ne6 Nxe6 20.dxe6 Nc5 21.Bxf8 Qxf8* and again Black has nice compensation, for example *22.Rad1 Nxe6*]

19...Bxg7 20.Ne6 Qh4! 21.Nxf8 Rxf8



Black has strong compensations for the exchange, and we can see it because he has easy moves to improve his position: Nc5, Ne5, and even g5-g4 is a dangerous threat as the Bh3 is a source of trouble. For example: **22.f3 exf3 23.Rxf3 Ne5** and Black is fine

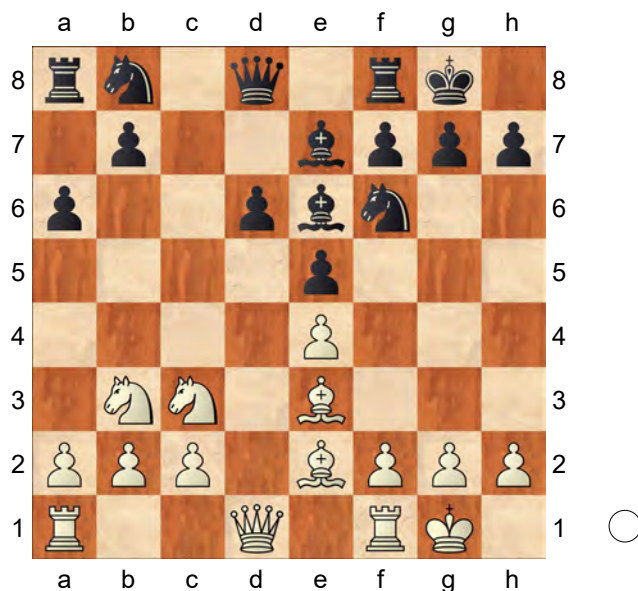
Structure 8



This sort of structure arises when Black meets the queenside restricting advance a4-a5 with the active idea b7-b5 which allows axb6. Normally, White plays such positions hoping that he can stop Black's activity on the open files and reach a favorable endgame in which he can combine the attack against the weak pawns on d6 and a6. Black should be cautious about the endgames, especially those with a few pieces, like 3 or less for each side. It means that Black should look for active play here in order to keep White busy with concrete threats, using the open files on the queenside and eventually prepare the advance d6-d5 which would give a nice initiative.

□ Nevostrujev, Vladimir 2495
 ■ Efimenko, Zahar 2594
 Chigorin Memorial 12th (8) 23.10.2004

1.e4 c5 2.Nf3 d6 3.d4 cxd4 4.Nxd4 Nf6 5.Nc3 a6 6.Be2 e5 7.Nb3 Be7 8.0-0 0-0 9.Be3 Be6



10.Qd2 There are some lines in which White plays in a slow way looking for a small advantage based on easier play and trying to slowly restrict Black.

[10.a4 allows Nc6 which can be a better development for the knight, seen in many similar positions 11.Bf3 Na5! 12.Nxa5 Qxa5 13.Qd2 Rfc8! and Black is fine 14.Rfd1 (14.Nd5?! Qxd2 15.Nxe7+ Kf8 16.Bxd2 Rxc2! 17.Bc3 Kxe7 18.Bd1 Rxc3! 19.bxc3 Nxe4) 14...Kf8! preventing Nd5 15.Qc1 Rc4! 16.Rd3 Rac8 and Black is at least ok - Kamsky, G (2705)-Gelfand, B (2733) Wch Candidates final 2007 (2.1) 1/2]

10...Nbd7 11.a4 When Black is deprived of the Nc6-b4 idea, White advances his a-pawn. **11...Rc8 12.a5** Black should be careful in such positions, as White plays with an easier game and a bit more space. It is important to not try to do anything drastically but instead to keep improving the pieces. **12...Re8**

13.Rfd1

[In a recent game White played 13.Bf3 and the continuation was very instructive: h6 14.Nc1 Nh7! a very nice idea 15.g3 Bg5! 16.Nd3 (16.Qxd6 Bxe3 17.fxe3 Ng5 18.Bg2 Nf6! gives Black a lot of activity for the pawn. 19.Qxd8 Rxd8 20.h4 Nh3+ 21.Kh2 Rd2!) 16...Nb8! now the knight is also improved 17.Bxg5 Qxg5 18.Qxg5 hxg5! 19.Rfd1 Nc6 20.Ne2 g4! 21.Bg2 Ng5 and Black obtained a clear advantage - Zhrebukh, Y (2633)-Xiong, J (2640) St Louis Spring A 2018 (1.4) 0-1]

13...h6 14.Nc1 A typical plan for White is to play Nd3-b4 trying to increase the control over d5.

[14.f3 is the most solid, but leads to positions in which both sides have difficulties to make progress. Qc7 15.Nc1 Bf8 16.Bf1 (16.Nd3 d5!)

16...Red8 17.Qe1 Qc6 18.Qd2 Qc7= Nakamura, H (2772) -Korobov, A (2720) FIDE World Cup 2013 (4.1) 1/2]

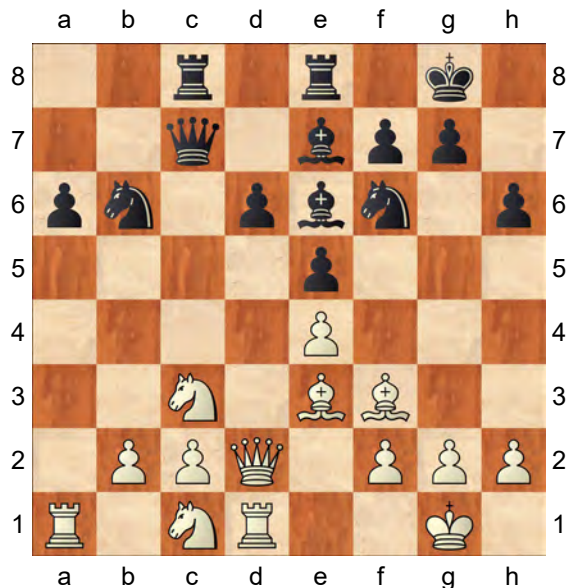
14...Qc7 15.Bf3 It is necessary to follow the plan.

[15.Nd3 d5! is a bit complicated, but Black manages to equalize. 16.exd5 Nxd5 17.Nxd5 Bxd5 18.Nxe5 Nf6! 19.Ng4!? Qxc2 20.Nxf6+ Bxf6 21.Qxd5 Qxe2 22.Rd2 Qc4 23.Qxb7 Rb8=]

15...b5! 16.axb6

[16.Nd3 again is bad due to d5! although this time it is a true pawn sacrifice 17.exd5 Bf5 18.Ne1 Bd6 19.g3 Qb7 and the fact that Black has many different ideas in this position says everything about his compensation.]

16...Nxb6



Black's active idea was very strong, but it is important to understand why: White has lost the coordination between his pieces in the last moves: first the knight went back, cutting the communication between the rooks, and then the bishop

left the e2-square, leaving c4 unprotected. Black players should understand that after b5-axb6 it is necessary to play for the initiative, as otherwise, White would achieve a favorable endgame. **17.Be2?!**

[17...Bxb6 Qxb6 18.N1e2 Rc6=]
17...Nc4 18.Bxc4 Bxc4 Black position seems already easier to play. **19.Qe1**

[19.f3 see the exercise]
19...Qb7! A consistent way to improve the position. **20.b3 Be6 21.f3 d5!** This advance activates the bishop pair as well as all Black's pieces, putting White under unpleasant pressure.

22.exd5 Bxd5
 [22...Nxd5 23.Nxd5 Bxd5 24.Qe2 seems less dangerous for White]

23.Nd3
 [23.Nxd5 Nxd5-+ with undefendable threats]

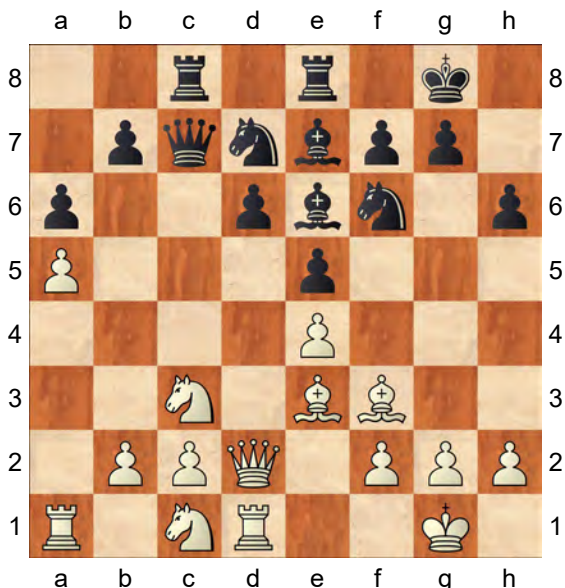
23...e4! Naturally, opening new lines is a good idea for Black. **24.fxe4 Bxe4**

25.Nxe4 Nxe4 It seems already difficult for White to avoid material losses.

26.Qa5
 [For example 26.Rac1 Nc3 27.Rd2 Bg5-+]

26...Bf6! 27.Qxa6 Qxa6 28.Rxa6 Nc3 29.Re1 Rxe3! 30.Rxe3 Bd4 31.Kf2 Re8-+ 32.b4 Rxe3 33.Kf1 Ne4 34.g3 Nd2+ 35.Kg2 Re2+ 36.Kh3 Nf1 37.Kg4 Rxc2 38.Rd6 Nxh2+ 39.Kf4 Rc4 40.Rd8+ Kh7 41.Rd7 Bc3+ 0-1

Exercise



Black now played **15...b5!? 16.axb6**
 [16.Nd3 d5! another thematic sacrifice 17.exd5 Bf5 18.Ne1 Bd6 19.g3 Nc5↑]

16...Nxb6 The threat Nc4 is very annoying. **17.Be2 Nc4 18.Bxc4 Bxc4** But after **19.f3** White thought he had good chances to reach some stability and play for the positional advantage in the endgame. How should Black play?

19...d5! This timely central break gives a strong initiative for Black.

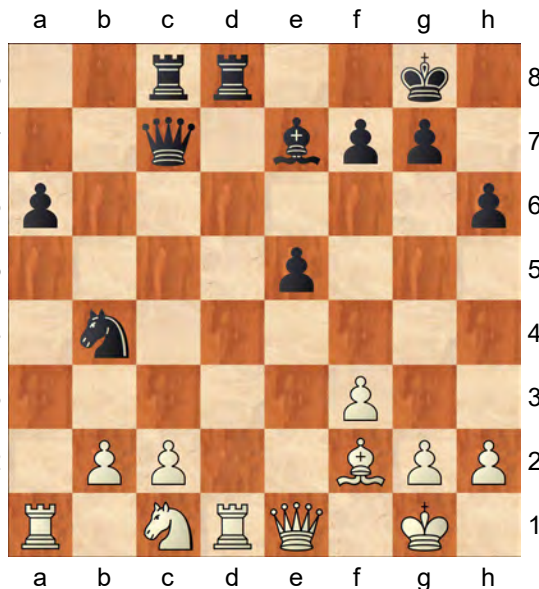
20.Nxd5 [20.exd5 Red8 21.Qf2 Qb7!↑]

20...Bxd5! 21.exd5 Nxd5 22.Bf2

[22.Qxd5? Rcd8-+]

[22.Rxa6? Nxe3 23.Qxe3 Bc5-+]

22...Red8 23.Qe1 Nb4!-+ Loskutov, O (2435)-Zakharov, V (2529) Alushta Autumn 4th 2005



0-1

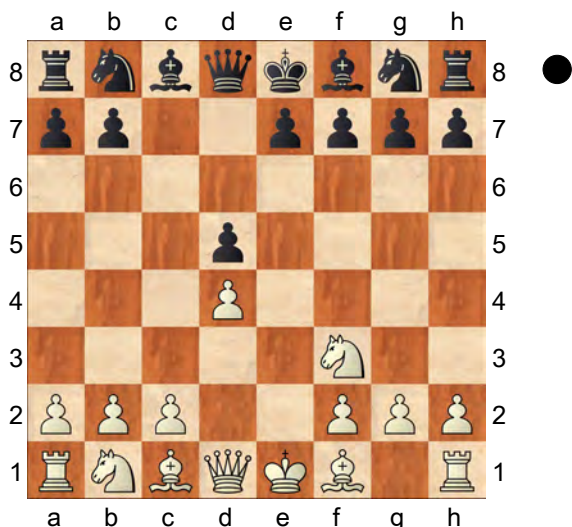
Caro-Kann on the Olympiad - Opening Review



GM Boris Avrukh

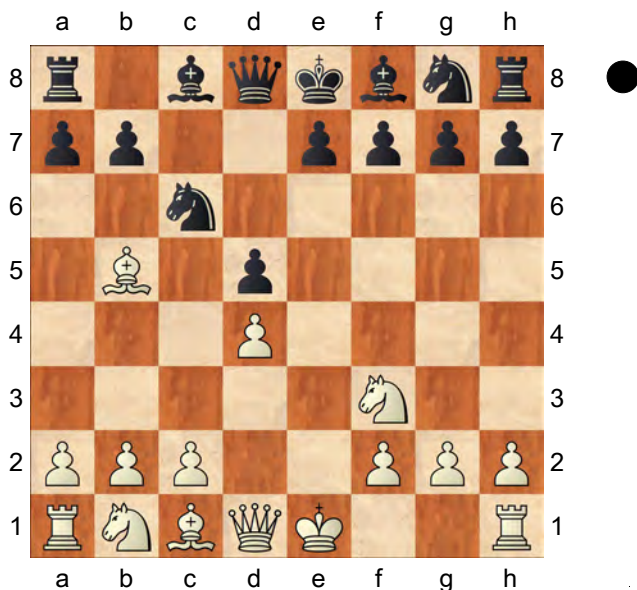
Dear Reader, In this article, I will present the latest developments in the currently topical Caro-Kann Defence. This survey is mainly based on the games played at the Chess Olympiad in Batumi this year. Of course, this article is not limited to the pure presentation of the games from Batumi. In a number of positions, I managed to come up with new ideas which may be useful for you.

1.e4 c6 2.Nf3 d5 3.exd5 cxd5 4.d4

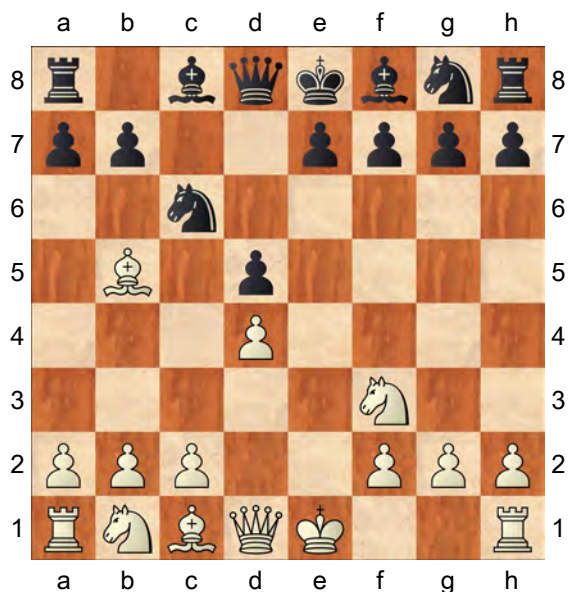


It's hard to believe, but this line appears to be not without venom. Moreover, it's been played a lot by top GM's including Carlsen, Kramnik, Anand, Caruana, and Grischuk. **4...Nc6 5.Ne5**

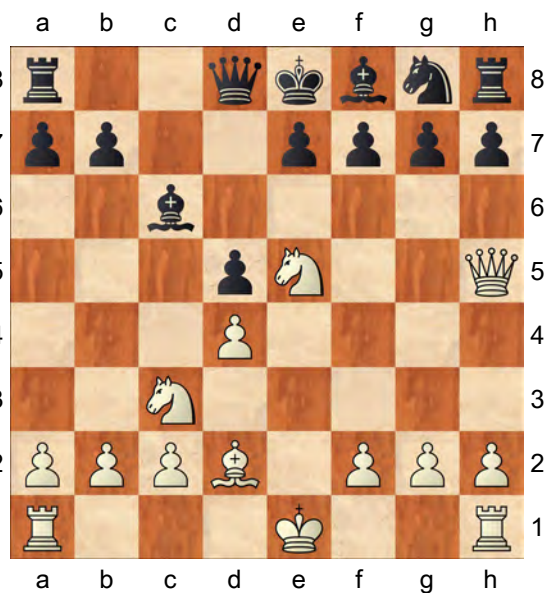
[The main alternative is 5.Bb5



This move was played in top match USA–Poland. Black's reaction was pretty unfortunate **Qa5+ 6.Nc3 Bg4 7.Bd2 Qd8?** This is a bad novelty. (It would be interesting to see what Shankland prepared against **7...Rc8** which has been scoring very well for Black so far. The key game here went **8.a4 Qd8 9.h3 Bxf3 10.Qxf3 e6** and Black easily solved his opening problems in Hovhannisyan, R (2625)



–Petrosyan, M (2551) Yerevan 2018)
 8.Ne5 Bd7 9.Bxc6 Bxc6 10.Qf3
 (10.Qh5!

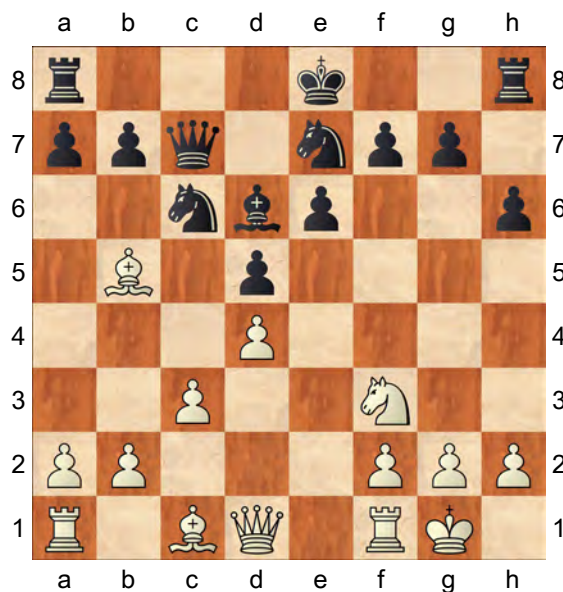


would have been even stronger g6
 11.Qf3 Nf6 12.g4 h6 13.h4
 with an improved version to compare
 with the game, due to the move g7–
 g6.) 10...Nf6 11.g4! h6 12.h4 e6
 13.0–0–0 Bd6 ½–½ (51) Shankland,
 S (2722)–Tomczak, J (2614) Batumi

2018 and now White should have
 played 14.Nxc6N bxc6 15.g5 Nd7
 16.Rde1 with a better game.]

5...e6 6.Bb5 Bd7 7.Nxd7 Qxd7 8.c3
 Interesting strategical position. White is
 trying to prove that his bishop pair is
 meaningful while Black enjoys a good
 pawn structure and an easy
 development. **8...Nf6** A solid approach.

[The more aggressive set-up would
 have been 8...Bd6 9.Nd2 Nge7
 10.0–0 Before this olympiad, this
 position has been played only once
 (10.Nf3 0–0–0 11.0–0 Kb8 12.a4
 Qc7 13.b4 e5 14.Bxc6! Nxc6 15.b5
 e4 16.bxc6 exf3 17.Qxf3 bxc6
 18.c4→ and White has a promising
 position in Schneider, I (2368)–Gomez
 Esteban, J (2486) Fuegen 2006)
 10...Qc7 11.Nf3 h6!



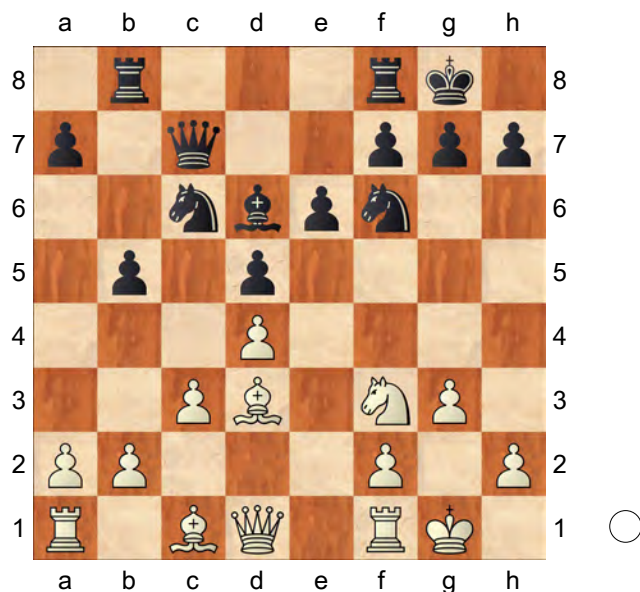
This is a more flexible approach.
 12.Re1 0–0–0 This double-edged
 position is easier to handle with Black.
 In the following game, White's play
 was very unfortunate 13.Qe2 g5
 14.Ne5? Bxe5 15.dxe5 d4! 16.cxd4?

Nxd4 17.Qf1 Nc2–+ and White was already lost in Godena,M (2501) – Tikkanen,H (2520) Batumi GEO 2018]

9.0–0 Bd6 10.Nd2 Qc7 11.g3 0–0 12.Bd3 Rab8 The minority attack is the only reasonable plan for Black in this position. Before Black tried a different move

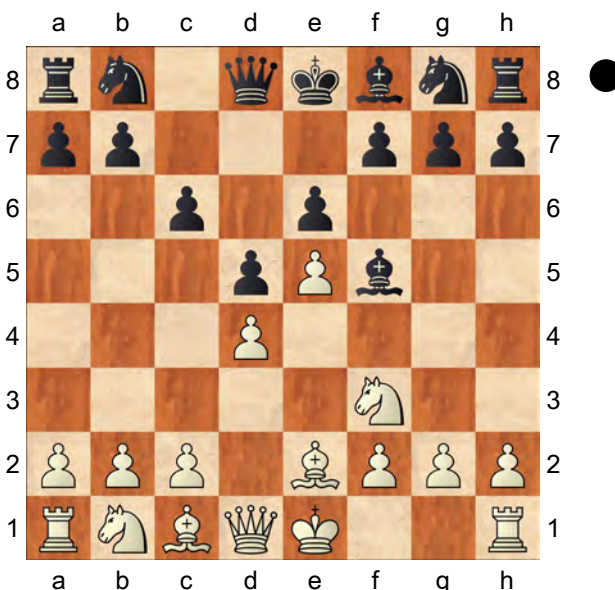
[12...a6 and equalized after 13.a4 Na5 14.f4 Rab8 15.Qe2 g6 16.Ra2 Be7 17.Nf3 Nc4 18.Bxc4 Qxc4 19.Qxc4 dxc4= 1–0 (53) Alekseev,E (2622)–Esipenko,A (2587) Sochi 2018]

13.Nf3 b5



Black's play in the opening is quite instructive **14.Bg5 Nd7 15.Qe2 Qb7 16.Rad1 Rfe8 17.Rfe1 a5 18.a3 h6 19.Bc1 b4 20.a4 bxc3 21.bxc3 Qc7 22.c4 dxc4 23.Bxc4 Nb6 24.Bb5 Rec8=** Black comfortably equalized in Bauer,C (2629)–Berkes,F (2678) Batumi GEO 2018

1.e4 c6 2.d4 d5 3.e5 Bf5 4.h4
[4.Nf3 e6 5.Be2



To my great surprise there were no significant developments in this topical tabya. I would rather mention one game by the Caro–Cann expert Pantsulaia: Nd7 6.0–0 Bb4

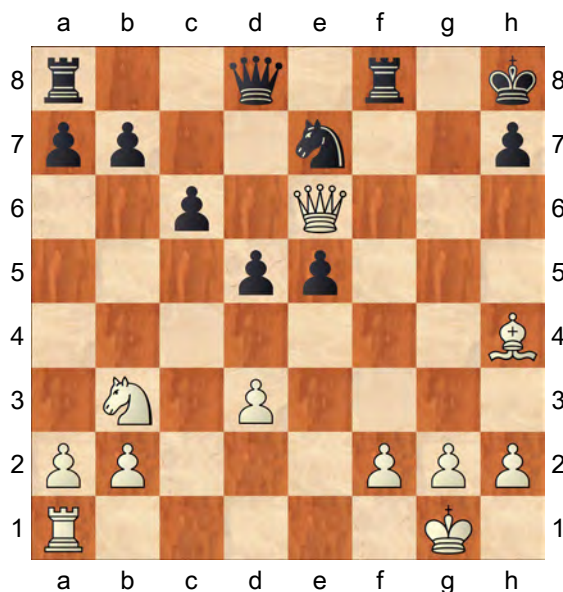
This move has been quite fashionable recently. 7.Nbd2 Ba5

A very ambitious idea. Black is planning to play ...Bc7 followed by f7–f6, thus undermining the e5–pawn. 8.Nb3 Bc7 9.Bg5!



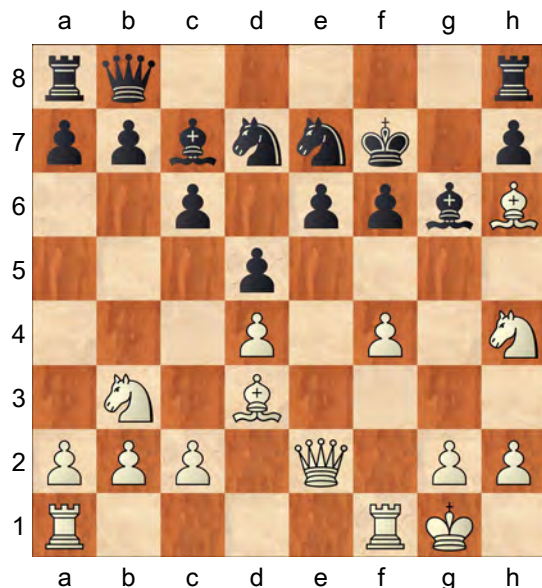
This line looks very problematic for Black. Ne7 it seems too early for (After 9...f6 , the following game looks very convincing 10.Bh4 Ne7 11.exf6! gxf6 12.Re1 0-0 13.Bd3

Bxd3 14.cxd3! and Black position collapsed quickly after e5 15.dxe5 Nxe5 16.Nxe5 Bxe5 17.Qg4+ Kh8 18.Rxe5 fxe5 19.Qe6+-



1-0 (19) Movsesian,S (2723)-Willemze,T (2398) Kallithea 2008) 10.Nh4 Be4 11.f3 Bg6 12.f4 f6N Levon is trying to improve on the previous game, but this novelty backfired badly (12...Be4 13.f5! exf5

14.Nxf5 Bxf5 15.Rxf5 h6 0-1 (30) Volokitin,A (2649)-Dubov,D (2660) Doha 2016 White could have played 16.Bh5!N hxg5 17.Bxf7+ Kf8 18.Rf2 Ng8 19.Be6+ Ngf6 20.Qe2! with a promising position for White.) 13.exf6 gxf6 14.Bh6 Qb8 15.Bd3 Kf7 16.Qe2+-



and Black ended up in a lost position in Svetushkin,D (2580) -Pantsulaia,L (2589) Batumi GEO 2018]

4...h5 5.Bd3 It goes without saying that recently this line has been quite popular. The following game was exciting and important for the development of this variation **5...Bxd3 6.Qxd3 e6 7.Nf3 Qa5+ 8.Nbd2 Qa6 9.c4 Nd7 10.0-0 Nh6 11.b3 Nf5 12.Qc3!? Be7 13.a4!?N**

[Very slow is 13.g3 0-0 (13...c5 looks even better for Black.) 14.c5 b6 15.b4 ½-½ (42) Shyam,N (2394) -Thejkumar,M (2500) Bhubaneswar 2018 In this position, the simplest solution would have been Qa4 followed by ...a7-a5 and ...Rfb8

undermining White's pawn structure on the queenside.]

13...Qb6 A good practical approach.

White would have a long-term compensation after both

[13...Bxh4 14.Nxh4 Nxh4 15.Ba3 Nf5 16.Nf3♞ and]

[13...Nxh4 14.Nxh4 Bxh4 15.Ba3♞]

14.a5!? A tricky idea, which appeared to be successful in the game. In the case of

[14.Ba3 Bxa3 15.Rxa3 a5

Black looks solid.]

14...Qd8? This leads to a passive position. Black should have accepted the sacrifice

[14...Bb4 15.Qd3 in case of (15.axb6?! Bxc3 16.Rxa7 Rb8 Black is better since White is losing d4-pawn.) 15...Bxa5 16.Ba3 Bb4! Important move. After (16...Qd8 17.g3 White has compensation.) 17.c5 Qa5 18.Bxb4 Qxb4 19.Ra4 Qb5 20.Qc3 b6 21.cxb6 Qxb6 22.Rc1 0-0 23.Qxc6 Qxc6 24.Rxc6 a5= with equality.]

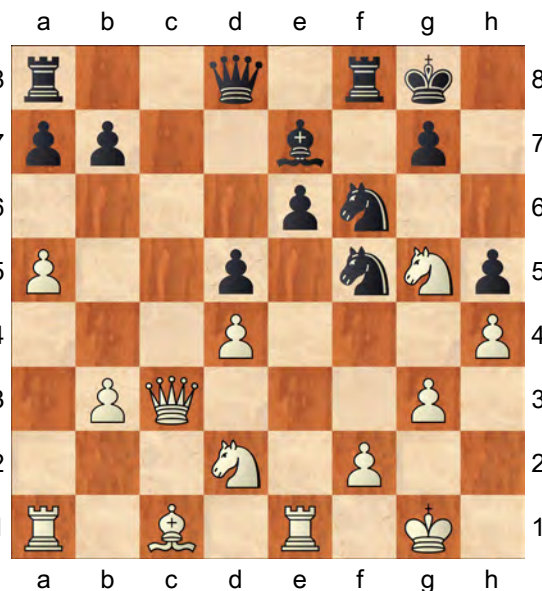
15.g3 0-0 16.Re1 f6?!

Quite understandably, Black is looking for a counterplay. This approach, however, backfires. **17.cxd5 cxd5**

18.exf6 Nxf6

[White is also better after 18...Bxf6 19.Qd3! Nc5 20.dxc5 Bxa1 21.a6 bxa6 22.Rxe6]

19.Ng5±



White achieved a clear edge in McShane, L (2672)–Fier,A (2558) Batumi GEO 2018

1.e4 c6 2.Nf3 d5 3.Nc3 Nowadays, this is a very fashionable variation.

3...Bg4

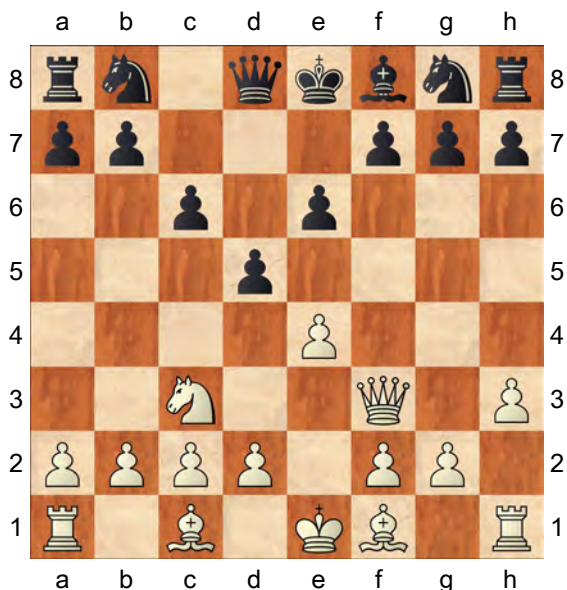
[3...dxe4



Equally playable and leads to more complex fight. At the olympiad, this line was played in the game Adams, M – Tari, A. The game followed
 4.Nxe4 Nf6 5.Nxf6+ exf6 6.Bc4 Bd6 7.Qe2+ Qe7 8.d4 White doesn't pretend for something significant in this line, but rather for a small, but long-lasting edge thanks to better pawn structure. Na6!?N This move failed to fully equalize after 9.0-0 Qxe2 10.Bxe2 Bf5 11.c3 Nc7 12.Nd2 Nd5 13.Nc4 Bc7 14.Ne3 Nxe3 15.Bxe3 0-0-0 16.b4 Rhe8 17.Rfe1± 1/2-1/2 (68) Adams,M (2712)-Tari,A (2618) Batumi 2018]

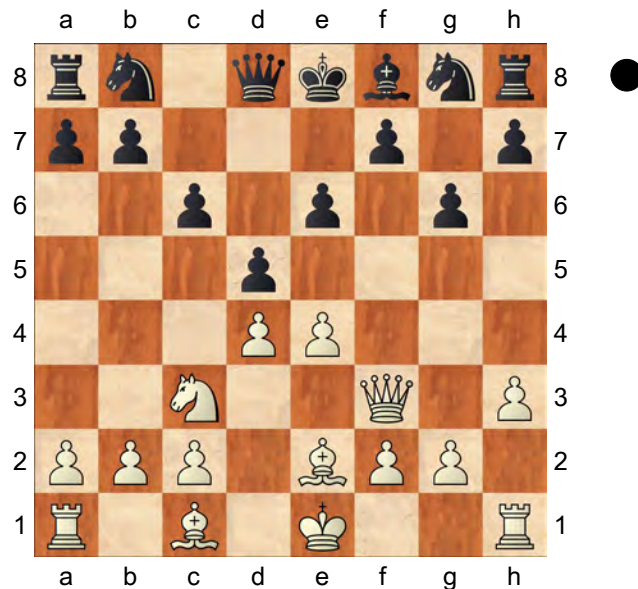
4.h3 Bxf3 5.Qxf3 Nf6

[The main alternative is 5...e6



A) Luke Mc Shane tried his pet move 6.Qg3 Black reacted very well in the following game Ne7 7.d3 Nd7!N (Black doesn't solve

his opening problems by means of 7...Ng6 8.h4! h5 Bartel,M (2653)-Ruck,R (2563) Katowice 2016 and now I would suggest the following improvement 9.d4!?N with the idea dxe4 10.Bg5! Bd6 11.Qe3 Be7 12.g3 with a promising position.) 8.Be2 g6! A nice and flexible set-up 9.0-0 Bg7 10.Kh1 0-0 Black is very comfortable. The play continued 11.f4 Kh8 (11...b5!?) 12.Bf3 b5 13.a3 a5 with a complicated middlegame McShane,L (2672)-Rodshtein,M (2674) Batumi GEO 2018; **B)** 6.Be2!? This is the latest attempt in this variation. 6...g6 7.d4



Otherwise, Black is doing pretty well. Bg7 8.Be3 Nf6 (Black has struggled with 8...Ne7 here the key game 9.h4 h5 10.0-0-0 Nd7 11.Bg5 Qb6 12.exd5 cxd5 13.Rhe1 Bh6 14.Bxh6 Rxh6 1/2-1/2 (23) Ragger,M (2644)-Jobava,B (2712) Austria 2017 and now White missed the

very powerful 15.Bb5!N Rh7
16.Nxd5 exd5 17.Qxd5 Rd8
18.Qg5 with an advantage.) 9.e5
Nfd7 10.h4

B1) Black also tried
10...a6 White scored a
convincing victory in the
following beautiful game 11.Bg5
Qb6 12.0-0-0 c5 13.h5 cxd4
14.hxg6 hxg6 15.Rxh8+ Bxh8
16.Rh1 Bxe5 (It seems that
Black holds after 16...Bg7!
17.Rh7 Nxe5 18.Qg3 dxc3
19.Rxg7 Qxb2+ 20.Kd1 Nec6!)
17.Rh7 f6 18.Nxd5 exd5
19.Qxd5 with a strong initiative in
Karthikeyan, M (2578)-Lalith,B
(2525) Patna 2017;

B2) 10...h5 11.g4 hxg4
12.Qxg4 c5 13.f4!N
Very important novelty which
clearly improves on the previous
game (13.Bg5 Qa5 14.Bd2
cxd4 15.Nb5 Qb6 16.f4 Nc6
17.0-0-0 Bf8 1/2-1/2 (41)
Vuckovic,B (2600)-Solak,D
(2583) Kragujevac 2009)
13...cxd4 (13...Nc6 seems like a
better try for Black.) 14.Bxd4
Nc6 15.Bf2! Qa5 16.0-0-0
0-0-0 1-0 (40) Ragger,M
(2686)-Kojima,S (2408) Batumi
GEO 2018 now the immediate
17.h5 would give White an
edge.]

6.d3 e6 7.Bd2 Qb6 This move has
been quite popular recently. **8.0-0-0 d4**
9.Ne2 a5!? Rare but interesting
approach.

[More common is 9...c5]

10.g4 Na6!N The key move. Black's
initiative on the queenside looks quite

interesting.

[Before, Black tried only 10...Bd6
11.g5 Nfd7 Bencheikh,I (2134)-
Fournier,D (1977) Issy les Moulineaux
2013 After the natural 12.h4
White has better chances.]

11.e5? This looks like a serious error. I
examined a possible development after
natural

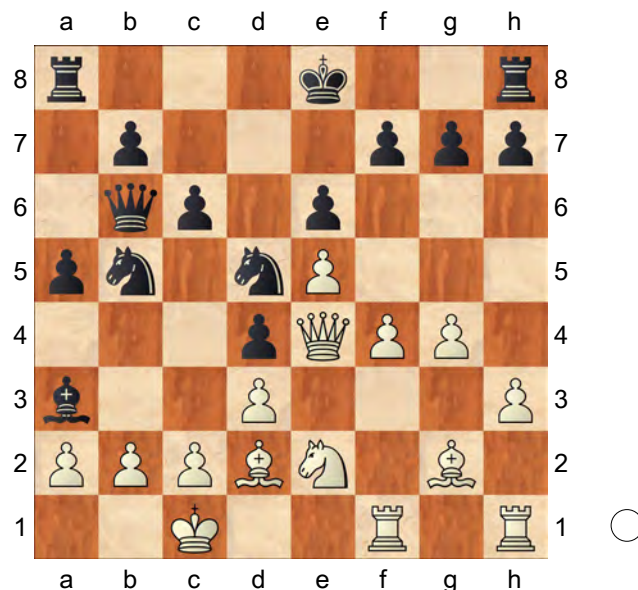
[11.g5 Nd7 12.h4 Nac5!? 13.Nxd4
Na4 14.Nb3 Nxb2 15.Kxb2 a4
16.Be3 Qb4 17.Qe2 axb3 18.cxb3
Rxa2+ 19.Kxa2 Qa3+ 20.Kb1
Qxb3+ 21.Ka1 Qa4+=]

11...Nd5 12.Qe4 Black's initiative on the
queenside looks decisive. It is not a
surprise that in the following game Black
got a decisive advantage fairly quickly

12...Bc5 13.f4 Nac7 14.Bg2 Nb5

[14...a4]

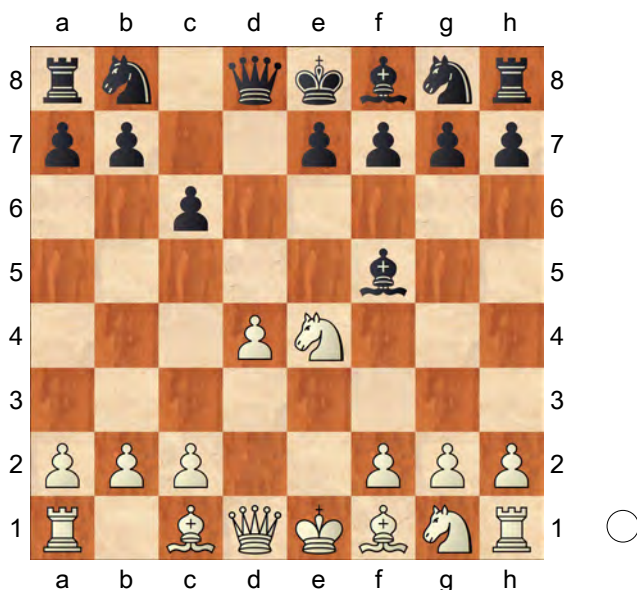
15.Rdf1 Ba3!



16.bxa3 Nxa3 17.Kd1 Qb1+ 18.Nc1
Nc3+ 19.Bxc3 Qxc2+ 20.Ke1 Qxc1+
21.Kf2 Qxc3-+ Lei,T (2468) -Girya,O
(2462) Batumi GEO 2018

1.e4 c6 2.d4 d5 3.Nd2 dxe4 4.Nxe4 Nf6 This move became quite popular recently. The arising positions are far from being standard. That is the reason why this line is a perfect weapon when Black is playing for a win. The theory is still developing here and there are a room for improvements practically at every moment.

[The traditional line is 4...Bf5

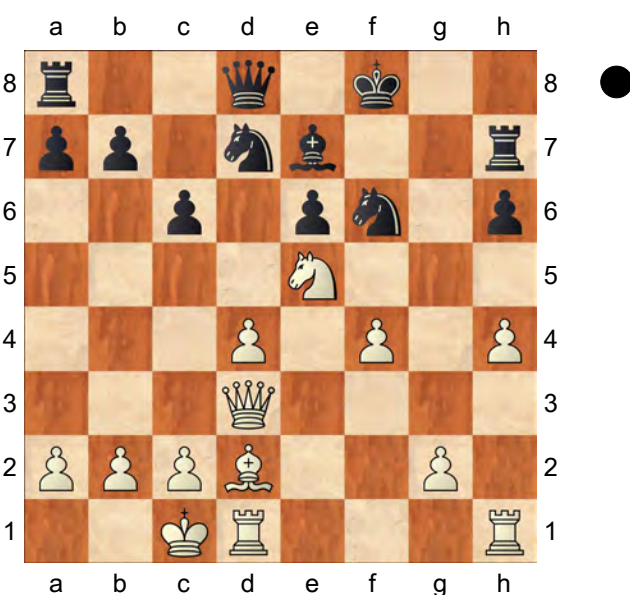


5.Ng3 Bg6 6.h4 h6 7.Nf3 e6!? it appears that Black is not obliged to play 7...Nd7. Indeed, the text has been very popular on grandmaster level, maybe even more popular than 7...Nd7. 8.Ne5 Bh7 9.Bd3 Bxd3 10.Qxd3 Nd7 Here we have two highly important games played at Batumi Olympiad

A) Another game went

11.f4 Be7 Black's latest word in this variation which has been very successful so far. 12.Nh5 Ngf6!

Probably the best continuation. It's quite dangerous to accept White's pawn sacrifice. Here is one model game, which ended badly for Black (12...Bxh4+ 13.g3 Bf6 14.Bd2 Qc7 15.0-0-0 Nb6 16.Qa3 Be7 17.Nxg7 + Kf8 18.Nxe6+ fxe6 19.Qd3 White's initiative was crushing in Savchenko,B (2550) -Evdokimov,A (2502) Moscow 2018) 13.Nxg7+ Kf8 14.Nxe6+ fxe6 15.Bd2 Rh7! this has been played before in two games, and Black was able to hold his own. 16.0-0-0N



A new attempt to challenge Black's position, which requires a very precise play from Black. Kg8

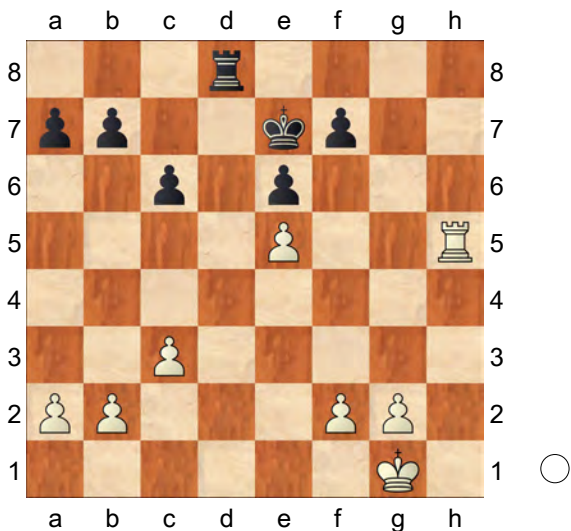
17.Qh3 Nf8 18.f5 exf5 19.Qxf5 Qd5 (19...Qc8 deserves serious attention.) 20.Rde1

(Another possible line was 20.Rh3 Qxa2 21.Rg3+ Kh8 22.c3 Qa1 + 23.Kc2 Qa4+ 24.Kc1 with repetition.) 20...Qxa2 21.c4 a5 22.Rh3 Rg7 23.Ree3 Qa1+ 24.Kc2 Qa4+ 25.Kc1 Qa1+ and it's ended with a repetition in Ivic,V (2472) -Svane,R (2595) Batumi GEO 2018;

B) 11.Bf4 Nxe5 (Another direction here is

11...Qa5+) 12.Bxe5 Qa5+ 13.c3 Nf6
14.0-0 Ng4 The critical variation
15.Rad1 Nxe5 16.dxe5 Rd8 17.Qxd8
+ Qxd8 18.Rxd8+ Kxd8 19.Rd1+ Kc7
20.Rd3N

A new try to squeeze something from
this seemingly harmless endgame.
(Previously, White tried 20.Nh5 but
Black comfortably equalized after *Kc8!*
21.Kf1 g6 22.Ng3 Bg7 23.f4 f5!
24.Rd3 Rd8 25.Ke2 Bf8 Oleksak,A
(2159)–De Homont,R (2216) ICCF email
2015) 20...Be7 21.Rf3 Rf8
22.Nh5 g6 23.Nf6 (23.Nf4 h5
24.g3 could be another try, although
it's hard to believe that Black can have
problems in this endgame.) 23...Bxf6
24.Rxf6 Kd7 25.h5 gxh5 26.Rxh6
Ke7 27.Rxh5 Rd8!

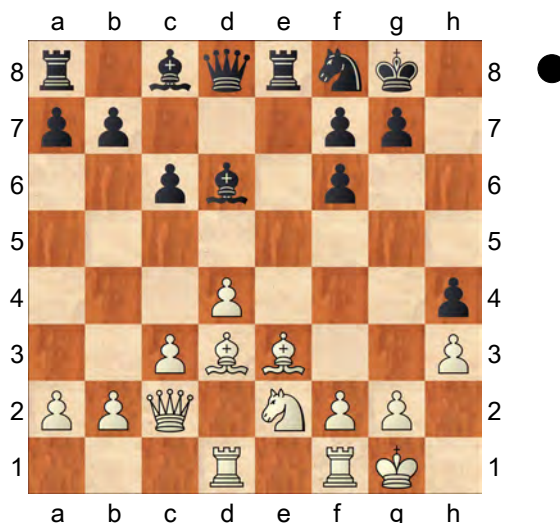


and Black's counterplay is sufficient
for equality – Sutovsky, E (2633)–
Shankland,S (2722) Batumi GEO
2018]

5.Nxf6+ exf6 6.c3 Bd6 7.Bd3 0-0
This line has become very fashionable
nowadays. I found three important games
for this variation played in Batumi
8.Qc2 Re8+ 9.Ne2 h5 10.0-0 h4
11.h3 Nd7 12.Be3

[White also tried 12.Bd2 Nf8 13.Rae1
Bc7! The most precise. (Black should
have faced serious problems after 13...Bd7
14.Kh1 Qc7 15.c4! Rad8 16.c5 Be7
Christiansen,J (2525)–Dragnev,V (2508)
Batumi GEO 2018 White missed the strong
17.Nf4N with the following point Ne6
18.Rxe6!Bxe6 19.Nxe6 fxe6 20.Bg6±
with clear advantage.) 14.Kh1 Qd6 15.Bf4
Qd8 16.Bd2 Qd6 17.Bf4 Qd8 and draw
agreed in Hracek,Z
(2557)–Adhiban,B (2668) Batumi GEO
2018]

12...Nf8 13.Rad1N



Strangely enough, this move hasn't been
played before **13...Bc7 14.c4 Qd6**

15.Bf4

[In my opinion, stronger would have
been

15.Nf4! Ne6 16.Rfe1! White enjoys
pleasant advantage.]

15...Rxe2! 16.Bxd6 Rxc2 17.Ba3
Bf5? An obvious mistake.

[Meanwhile Black had the strong
17...Be6! 18.Bxc2 Bxc4 19.Rfe1
Ne6± with a sufficient compensation.]

18.Bxf5± White was clearly better in
Abdumalik, Z (2482)–Garcia Martin,M
(2329) Batumi GEO 2018