

Michael Prusikin

Attacking Strategies for Club Players

How to Create a Deadly Attack on the Enemy King

New In Chess 2021

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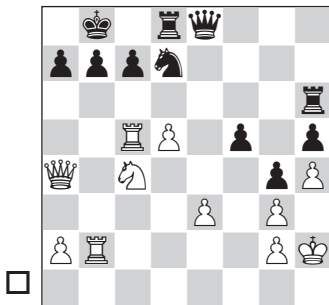
Foreword by Alexander Khalifman

The attack on the king is one of the most attractive elements of the game of chess. The attack itself and the combinations and material sacrifices that often go hand in hand with it provide broad scope for demonstrating imagination and strengthens the belief in the inexhaustible wealth of ideas concealed within the 64 squares. Classical players regard it as the best evidence for the victory of intellect over material and I see no reason to contradict them.

For most chess players, from amateurs to grandmasters, their love affair with this ancient game started when they became acquainted with the masterpieces played by Paul Morphy and Adolf Anderssen in the romantic period. The desire to create something similarly wonderful just once in your life takes hold and prompts further progress. I'll let you in on a secret at this point. Even those proponents of a dry technical and positional style of play are generally proud of their tactical shots above all:

Alexander Khalifman 2645
Grigory Serper 2575

St Petersburg 1994 (6)



28. ♖xb7+! ♔xb7 29. ♖xc7+! ♔xc7 30. ♗xa7+ ♔c8 31.d6 1-0

Of course, this important aspect of the game has always attracted the attention of chess theoreticians and authors. Out of all the books written about this topic, I would like to highlight the classic work by Vladimir Vukovic entitled *The Art of Attack*. Even though this book was

written in the middle of the last century, it remains an undisputed and timeless masterpiece. Of course, some of Vukovic's evaluations have been superseded and some variations do not stand up to (computer-assisted) analysis, but even so the author has subjected the topic of the attack on the king to a thorough analysis.

Admittedly, the attack on the king is an almost inexhaustible theme, and that's why several dozen books on the topic have appeared in recent decades. Of course, I haven't had the chance to read them all, but those that I have invariably display the following defects, either individually or in different combinations:

1. Lack of originality

Sometimes almost bordering on clear plagiarism, sometimes quite skilfully done, yet reading the text brings on a feeling of *déjà vu*. Collections of basic attacking motifs appear in abundance.

2. Exaggerated sensationalism

Of course there are numerous spectacular attacking games; every year sees new jewels of attacking chess and of course studying a collection of forcefully pursued king hunts is both interesting and impressive. But from a methodological perspective, the educational value of such an approach is not particularly high, quite frankly. You don't learn anything about physics or chemistry by watching a fireworks display.

3. Complication

Of course, chess isn't a simple game. There are no easy and universal algorithms and nor can there be. But too much is too much. Many authors genuinely try to convey to the reader something astute and important, but what that is exactly remains completely unclear.

4. Subjectivity

This is a typical vice of authors who like to include a lot of games. After studying such books, the reader knows exactly how grandmaster NN goes about attacking and how he approaches the game in general, but he is none the wiser about how he can apply what he has read to his own games.

It's possible, dear reader, that I am also subjective in my assessments, but I always try to assess chess books that come my way not as a stern critic and reviewer but as a practicing trainer. I'm not interested in their weaknesses, rather in the rational core that could be useful for the further development of my students. But most of what I've seen hasn't been very

inspiring. Hence at some point I came to the conclusion that Vukovic had already said everything there was to say about attacking the king, and had exhausted the topic.

After reading the present book I realised I was wrong: the topic is truly inexhaustible and its treatment was far from over with the publication of Vukovic's work.

The book by Prusikin deals primarily with the question 'how?'. How do I set up an attack? What are the necessary prerequisites? The vast majority of attacking patterns are presented with strikingly clear logic. I wouldn't want to say that I learnt a lot that was new to me, but the simplicity and the clarity with which the author articulates his thoughts leave a powerful impression.

It's not my intention to pick out a specific chapter, as they are all excellent in my opinion, but I do believe that the neglected topic of attacking the king in the endgame and in queenless middlegames deserves particular attention.

It seems to me to be equally important that most examples come from modern practice. This increases the likelihood that the same types of positions will appear on the board in your own games.

Prusikin's approach to include in the concluding exercises not just examples with a direct tactical solution but also ones that involve seeking out the correct strategic idea to launch an attack on the king is both interesting and very unusual.

In my opinion, this is the correct idea, and one worth copying – ultimately while playing through the game you aren't given any hints as to the type of solution required in the respective situation.

As I mentioned above, the game of chess is too complex for a single book, even one as good as this, to be able to contain universal answers to every question. There are dozens of exceptions to every general rule in chess.

Nevertheless, I believe that any reader who studies this book, almost irrespective of their playing strength, will come away with new ideas for conducting an attack on the king in particular and about chess understanding in general.

Attack and seize victory!

Alexander Khalifman,
October 2020

Introduction

The subject of attacking the king is certainly a rewarding one, both for the author and for the reader, as attacking the king is associated (not entirely incorrectly) with spectacular tactical twists, and tactics is the aspect of chess with the highest aesthetic value – at least according to the majority of chess players, completely regardless of their playing strength. Whether it's the 'Evergreen game', the 'Immortal game' or the Steinitz rook perambulating on the seventh rank as though it were quite at home – these are the games that both amateurs and professionals know and love, and they are characterised by tactical fireworks, an extravagant approach to sacrificing material and an unswerving attack on the king.

To believe that the ability to produce such 'games for eternity' is something that only a few lucky individuals are born with is a major and widespread error. Certainly, innate talent for the game of chess plays a role and possibly defines the limits we could reach with maximum effort, but it is above all hard work and the amount of time invested in learning the secrets of chess that are crucial for tournament success and creative flights of fancy.

In some ways, learning how to play chess is like learning a foreign language. Both chess and languages are comprised of blocks of information, so-called 'chunks', that we memorise and then must put together/apply correctly on the board (or when speaking). In chess we generally talk in this connection about 'patterns', a typical example being the different mating motifs such as the back-rank mate, smothered mate etc. Of course, there are also corresponding chunks for the topics of strategy and the endgame. A strong chess player differs from one less strong primarily by the greater number of chunks that he has internalised. Talent and creativity have an impact when the player, in a tournament situation, 'digs out' from his memory the right chunks at the right time and puts them together. As useful as general rules and strategic explanations may be, the number of internalised tactical and strategic patterns is, as already mentioned, the crucial factor when it comes to playing strength. That's why the individual chapters in this book only contain what is absolutely necessary in terms of introductory text and much more in the way of annotated games.

However, the theme of this book is not basic attacking motifs. I assume you are already familiar with these or I would recommend that, if so

inclined, you read the classic *The Art of Attack* by Vladimir Vukovic or its modern counterpart *Essential Chess Sacrifices* by David LeMoir. In this book we shall address the strategic requirements for a successful attack on the king and some lesser-known attacking motifs, though no less relevant in practice. I hope this will be both interesting and useful for players with an Elo rating between 1500 and 2300.

Despite the numerous diagrams that accompany the annotated games, I would recommend to all players who are serious about improving their chess and would like to derive the maximum benefit from this book that they use a chessboard to play through the games. To benefit even more, stop before each diagram and try to work out the next move. But even simply using the book for a spot of bedtime reading will not only provide aesthetic enjoyment but should also yield some rating points.

Have fun!

Michael Prusikin
Parsberg, Germany
June 2021

CHAPTER 1

Prerequisites and rules for attacking the king

As already discussed in the introduction, familiarity with typical attacking motifs and ideas is crucial for a successful attack on the king. However, there are of course a few general rules that you should know to significantly increase your chances of toppling your opponent's king from his throne.

Here's a list of tips relevant to practical play:

Prerequisites for successfully attacking the king

1. Lead in development/uncastled opposing king

The well-known maxim of the very first World Champion, Wilhelm Steinitz, that 'Whoever has the advantage must attack', refers above all to dynamic advantages such as a lead in development. These dissipate very quickly if the better developed player does not act quickly enough. More on this can be found in the chapter 'King in the centre'.

2. Space advantage on the side of the board where the opposing king is located

You should attack where you stand stronger. And you are stronger where you have more space, as a space advantage allows us to accumulate more attacking pieces on the relevant side of the board than our opponent can muster defenders. Which brings us to the next point:

3. Few defensive pieces around our opponent's king

I came across a valuable idea many years ago in the game annotations of Garry Kasparov: we often completely fail to notice that our opponent's king is denuded of defenders. But if we divide the board into two halves in our mind, this deficiency becomes much more obvious. If the queen has abandoned her consorts and is far away from her king, this also increases our chances of launching a resounding attack – this is a special case of the rule under discussion.

4. Lack of/weakened pawn protection for the king

This point might seem self-explanatory. The last bastion of a king's protection is always the pawn wall. If some of the pawns are missing, or the pawn protection is damaged, this represents a danger to the king.

Tips for successfully attacking the king

1. The most important rule for the attacker, which we will repeat time and time again throughout the book, was put very memorably by US grandmaster Yasser Seirawan:

'Everyone must be invited to the party!'

Another way of putting it, which I also really like, is:

'Attack with as many pieces as possible, defend with as few as necessary.'

2. Open lines!

In most cases, there comes a point when the attacker cannot avoid advancing pawns to use them as levers to open lines for his major pieces. This applies both to positions with kings castled on the same side and with kings castled on opposite sides.

3. Have the courage to sacrifice!

There regularly comes a point during an attack when progress can only be made by sacrificing material. Don't be stingy when this point arrives. If a sacrifice can be calculated exactly through to the end, there's no real risk anyway. If the consequences of the intended sacrifice cannot be calculated exactly, a decision should be made based on a combination of calculation and intuition.

To freely adapt the old proverb: it is better to sacrifice and regret it than to not sacrifice and regret it. If you timidly decline a promising sacrifice because the consequences cannot be foreseen exactly, then you pass up the opportunity of adding another jewel to the treasure trove of chess masterpieces.

4. Time is key!

Time is the decisive factor especially when it comes to exploiting a lead in development and with reciprocal attacks when the kings are castled on opposite sides. The attack should – bearing in mind the three points above – be pursued rapidly, purposefully and straightforwardly.

CHAPTER 4

Attacking the king without the queen

The Soviet master and theoretician Sergei Belawenets, largely unknown in the west, wrote in one of his books that, after exchanging queens, every player should take the time to switch from thinking in concrete terms (calculating variations) to general terms (formulating plans).

In actual fact, the exchange of by far the strongest pieces generally changes both the rhythm of the game and the assessment of the position, primarily because king safety becomes far less important.

However, it would be a serious error to automatically equate exchanging queens with a transition into the endgame and to completely disregard king safety thereafter, which is something that happens frequently in practice nevertheless.

Positions in which only the queens have left the board, or perhaps also one or two pairs of minor pieces, often still have the character of a middlegame, and the king can still stumble into a mating net even in positions than can justifiably be assigned to the endgame phase.

Let's summarise and try to formulate a few recommendations for practical play:

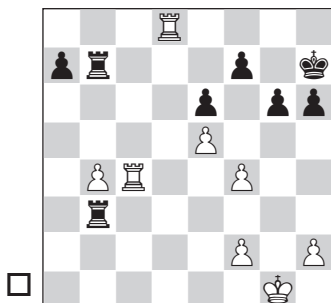
1. Chess literature contains neither a clear definition of the term 'endgame' nor a clean demarcation with the middlegame.
2. The decision to exchange queens is always to be taken only after careful and sensible consideration – the reason being that it completely changes the assessment of the position, and can even reverse a previous assessment.
3. The absence of the queens does not automatically mean that king safety can be disregarded.
4. Factors such as a concentration of forces in one part of the board, better development, or better coordinated pieces also favour an attack on the king in the absence of the strongest pieces.

We'll start with two examples, which resemble twins. The difference between them is that the first is a game from practical play while the second is a study (with very much a practical orientation).

Game 14

Alexander Berelowitsch**Lothar Vogt**

Leipzig 2003 (7)



A dull double-rook endgame which will soon send in a draw?

30.h4!!

Not quite! Suddenly the black king is ensnared in a mating net. The idea of the move 30.h4!! is to cut off the black king's escape routes.

30.♖cc8 g5=.

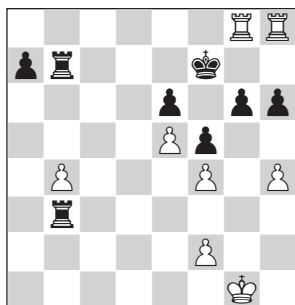
30...♔g7!

The best defence!

A) 30...♖h3 31.♖cc8 g5 32.f5!! exf5 33.h5!! (there it is, the point of 30.h4!!)

33...♖xh5 34.♖h8+ ♔g6 35.♖cg8#;

B) 30...h5 31.♖cc8 g5 32.f5!!+-.

31.♖cc8 f5! 32.♖g8+ ♔f7 33.♖h8**♔g7 34.♖cg8+ ♔f7**

And now what? Is there something more for White in this position other than perpetual check?

35.h5!!

The idea of this astonishing move is to regroup the rooks, namely to double them vertically instead of horizontally:

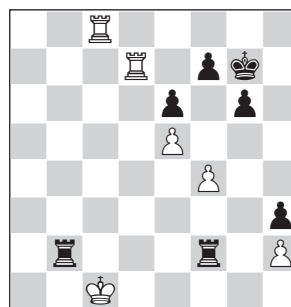
35...gxh5 36.♖g2! 1-0

Black is completely powerless to prevent 37.♖hg8 followed by 38.♖1g7#.

Game 15

V.Evreinov

1967

**1.♖dd8 g5**

The only way to continue the fight.

2.f5!

A familiar motif, wouldn't you say?

2...g4

2...exf5 3.♖g8+ ♔h7 4.♖h8+ ♔g7

5.♖cg8#.

3.♖g8+

3.♖h8? ♖bc2+!.

3...♔h6 4.♖xg4

Mate in one is threatened.

4...♔h7!

4...♔h5 5.♖g3+-.

5.♖c3!

5.f6? ♖g2 and White would still have to fight for a draw.

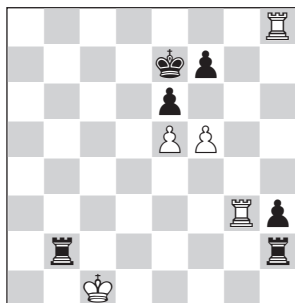
5...♗xh2

Again, Black's choices were rather limited.

6.♗h4+ ♔g7

6...♔g8 7.f6.

7.♖g3+ ♔f8 8.♗h8+ ♔e7



The black king has had to take a lot of punishment and, most to its dislike, has been pushed from pillar to post over the last few moves. But where is the mate?

9.♗d3!!

10.f6# is threatened, but the main idea of this quiet move is to regroup the rooks once again.

9.f6+? ♔d7 10.♗d3+ ♔c7=.

9...exf5 10.♗dd8

Sets up a new mating threat and continues to eye up the square d2 so that Black would only have one check on c2 and no more.

10...f6

Forced again.

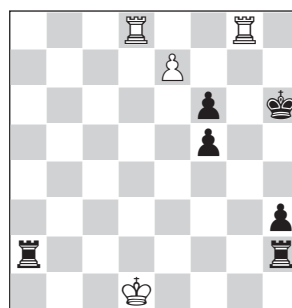
11.♗he8+ ♔f7 12.e6+

White gains a new trump card – the far-advanced passed e-pawn.

12...♔g6 13.♖g8+ ♔h6 14.e7!

14.♖g3? ♗b7! is a blind alley.

14...♗bc2+ 15.♔d1 ♗a2



16.♖g6+!! ♔h7 17.♗h8+! 1-0

The passed pawn promotes with check, so further resistance is pointless.

Game 16

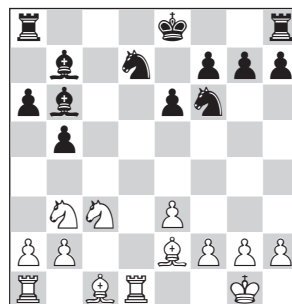
Klaus Bischoff

2541

Igor Stohl

2534

Austria Bundesliga 2001/02 (2)



A position that couldn't be more innocuous: symmetrical pawn structure, both sides have the same pieces and queens have already been exchanged. Black has still to castle, admittedly, but the white bishop on c1 is also still undeveloped. A draw can't be far away?

13.a4!

Klaus has seen a few unobvious weaknesses in Black's position: the

queenside is somewhat vulnerable and the dark-squared bishop has become slightly displaced. It would be better situated on e7.

13...b4

13...bxa4 is no better either. After 14.♖xa4 ♕a7 15.♗a5 ♕d5 16.♗c3±, for example, Black would have great difficulties to contend with, as the pawn on a6 is weak and the bishop pair is lost.

14.a5!

The point of the last move. Retreating the knight was out of the question, of course: 14.♗b1? a5 and Black is even slightly better.

14...bxc3?

Igor accepts the pawn sacrifice and underestimates the associated difficulties. Necessary was 14...♕c7 15.♗b1 0-0 (15...♕e4 16.♕d2! ♕c2 17.♖c1 ♕xb3 18.♖xc7+–) 16.f3!. A typical course of action: the ‘breakwater’, the g2/f3/e4 pawn chain, is installed in order to restrict Black’s minor pieces (♗f6, ♕b7): 16...♖fc8 17.e4 ♕e5 18.♗1d2±. The pawns on a6 and b4 are weak, Black’s minor pieces are more passive than their white counterparts. The first player enjoys a large strategic advantage.

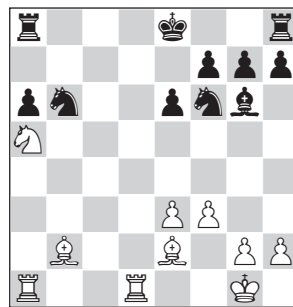
15.axb6 cxb2 16.♕xb2 ♗xb6

As desirable as castling would be, the passed pawn on b6 had to be eliminated: 16...0-0 17.♕xf6! ♗xf6 18.♗c5+–.

17.♗a5 ♕e4

17...♕d5 18.♕a3 would not have changed much.

18.f3 ♕g6



19.♕a3

A remarkable position: the queens have long since left the board, play is concentrated on one side and yet White is winning – because Black cannot connect his rooks or move his king from the centre!

19...♗fd5 20.♗b7!

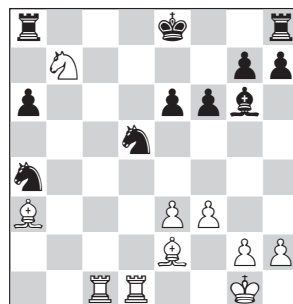
20.e4 ♗c3 21.♖d2 also won, but the move played in the game is more energetic.

20...f6

The pawn is taboo: 20...♗xe3 21.♗d6+ ♖d7 22.♗c4+ ♗xd1 23.♗xb6+ ♖c6 24.♗xa8 ♗e3 (24...♗c3 25.♖c1+–) 25.♖c1+ ♖b7 26.♗c7+–.

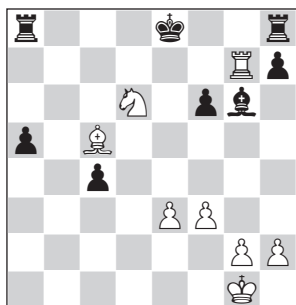
21.♖ac1 ♗a4

21...♗xe3 22.♗d6+–.



The white position is already an easy win, but once again Klaus opts for the most spectacular method:

**22. ♖xd5! exd5 23. ♖c7 ♘b6 24. ♖xg7
 ♘c4 25. ♕c5 a5 26. ♕xc4 dxc4
 27. ♘d6+ 1-0**



Mate cannot be avoided: 27... ♖f8
 (27... ♖d8 28. ♕b6#) 28. ♘f5+ ♖e8
 29. ♖e7+ ♖d8 (29... ♖f8 30. ♖c7+! ♖e8
 (30... ♖g8 31. ♖g7#)) 31. ♘g7+ ♖d8
 32. ♘e6+ ♖e8 33. ♖e7#) 30. ♕b6+
 ♖c8 31. ♘d6+ ♖b8 32. ♖b7#. There's
 something magical about the
 perfect interaction between the
 three remaining white pieces.

Game 17

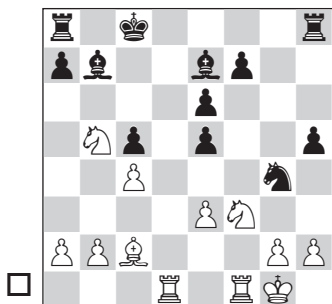
Dmitry Chuprov

2477

Denis Khismatullin

2583

Kazan ch-RUS sf 2005 (3)



With his last move, 19... ♘f6-g4,
 Black guarded the pawn on e5
 and the g5-square and also set up

the threat 20... ♘xe3. On the other
 hand, his rooks are once again
 unconnected and he will need a
 few more moves to complete his
 development. How should White
 react?

20. ♘g5!!

Even so!

20... ♕xg5?

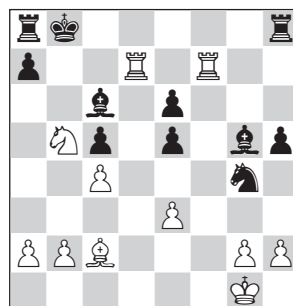
As in the previous game, the second
 player cannot resist the temptation
 to grab material. He didn't see the
 coming variation which admittedly
 was not very obvious.

20... f5! 21. ♘xe6 ♘xe3 22. ♕xf5 a6!!
 would still keep the game equal.

21. ♖xf7 ♖b8?

This second mistake in a row loses
 on the spot. With 21... ♕c6 22. ♘d6+
 ♖d8 (22... ♖b8 23. ♖d3 ♕xe3+
 24. ♖f1+—) 23. ♘e4+ ♖e8 24. ♘xg5
 ♖g8 25. ♖c7 ♘xe3 26. ♖d2 ♖xg5
 27. ♖xc6±, Black could have still put
 up some resistance.

22. ♖dd7 ♕c6



23. ♘d6!

A familiar motif: we already saw
 this mating idea in the Bischoff-
 Stohl game.

**23... ♕xe3+ 24. ♖f1 ♕xd7 25. ♖xd7
 ♖f8+ 26. ♖e1 1-0**

CHAPTER 6

Pawn storm with same-side castling

In contrast to positions with castling on opposite sides, where the pawns can be 'let loose' against the opposing king without any great misgivings, unleashing a pawn storm with kings castled on the same side must be well prepared and well thought out as doing so takes away one's own pawn protection.

The most important requirement for a successful pawn storm is central stability. This is because if the centre collapses, our opponent's forces can quickly swarm round our king via the centre and we are outcountered even before our own attack really gets going.

The centre needs not necessarily be closed off with pawn chains; it's completely sufficient that the attacker can adequately control the centre with pawns and pieces and penetration of the opposing pieces via the central files is ruled out.

Otherwise, the usual attacking rules apply for using a pawn storm with kings castled on the same side. It requires speed, accurate calculation, imagination and awareness of the endgames that may ensue.

Game 29

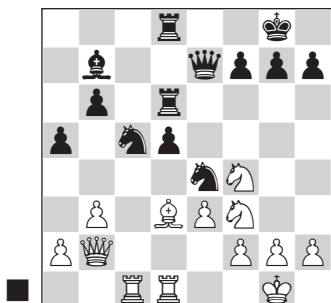
Alexei Gavrilo

2456

Radek Londyn

2404

Prague 2016 (9)



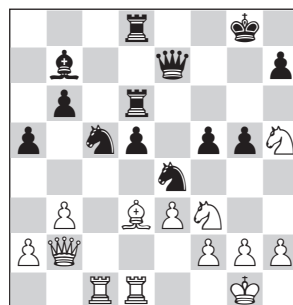
Assessing this position is no trivial matter. At first glance, White has a very favourable version of the isolani structure: the white pieces are well positioned, the dark-squared bishops have been swapped off, which has provided the first player with secure control over the important blockading square d4, and on the kingside it looks as though Black has no counterplay (one of the reasons being the lack of the dark-squared bishop). However, a second look reveals that the black army is also perfectly mobilised, the isolani is not blockaded (or in the words of Nimzowitsch, ‘a criminal who is NOT under lock and key’) and the second player can obviously assemble more pieces on the kingside than his opponent. But in concrete terms, how does Black achieve counterplay? Londyn puts forward a convincing solution:

19...g5!

The stable centre and Black’s active pieces allow him to get things moving in front of his own king.

20. ♖h5!

The other retreat would have resulted in a typical sacrifice: 20. ♖e2 d4!!. ‘Jettisoning’ the pawn liberates the black rooks and above all the bishop on b7, e.g. 21. ♖exd4 (21. ♖fxd4 ♗xf2! 22. ♖xf2 ♖xd3+ 23. ♖xd3 ♖e4 gives Black a monstrous attack for minimal material investment; 21. exd4 ♖f6! 22. ♖xe4 ♖xe4 with full compensation for the sacrificed pawn) 21... ♖xd3 22. ♖xd3 ♖f6 23. h3 h5 24. ♖h2 g4!. Here, the computer insists as usual that the position is equal, but over the board I would have considerable reservations about defending this position as White.

20...f5

The threat of mate on g7 had to be attended to.

21. ♗d4

White had two viable alternatives here, but both, just like the text move, lead to equality:

- A) 21. ♖e5 ♖e6!! 22. ♖xf5 ♖xd3 23. ♖xd3 ♖f8 24. ♖g4 ♖c8! 25. h3! ♖c6 26. ♖xc6 ♖xg4 27. hxg4♘;
- B) 21. ♗g3! ♖f8 22. ♖b5 ♖h6=.

21...♖f8 22.♙e2?!

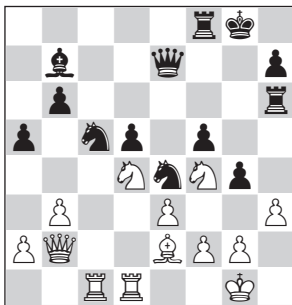
Objectively speaking, this move is still OK, but it leads to a position in which White must find some very difficult moves to maintain equality.

Simpler would have been the retreat 22.♘g3.

22...♖h6 23.h3?

This loses immediately, but the only sequence of moves to keep White in the game was, to put it diplomatically, not easy to find: 23.♖f1! (to cover the sensitive f2-square as a precaution) 23...f4 24.g4!.

23...g4! 24.♘f4



24...♘xf2!—+

This is why White's rook needed to be on f1! A square that is only defended by the king always tends to be weak.

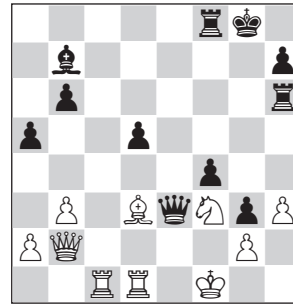
25.♙xf2 g3+! 26.♙f1

Somewhat more tenacious, but still ultimately hopeless, was 26.♙xg3 ♖xe3+ 27.♙h2 ♖xf4+ 28.♙h1 ♘e4 29.♙f3 ♗g6—+.

26...♖xe3 27.♘d3 f4!

The threat is 28...♘xd3 followed by 29...f3.

28.♘f3 ♘xd3 29.♙xd3



29...♖xh3! 30.gxh3 ♖xf3+ 31.♙g1 ♖e3+ 32.♙f1 f3! 33.♙xh7+!

This counterstrike (and above all a suitable reply to it!) had to be seen by Black far in advance.

33...♙f7!

But not 33...♙xh7?? 34.♖c7+ and White mates first.

34.♖c7+ ♙e6 35.♖d2 ♙a6+ 0-1

Game 30

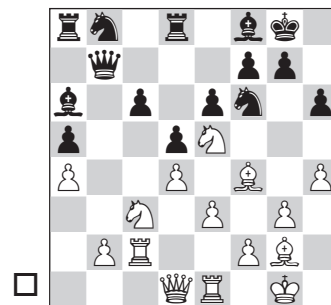
Alexander Kovchan

2575

Anton Korobov

2698

Kiev ch-UKR 2018 (1)



With his last move, 17...h7-h6, Black imperceptibly weakened his kingside, a fact that Kovchan tries to exploit immediately:

18.g4! ♘bd7!

In answer to the logical 18...♟fd7, so that after any exchange on e5 the knight on f6 is not immediately attacked again by the pawn, Kovchan had surely planned 19.♟xf7! ♟xf7 20.g5 with a strong, although perhaps not decisive, attack on the king. The black army assembled on the queenside would scarcely have been able to come to the aid of its king.

19.♟xf7!?

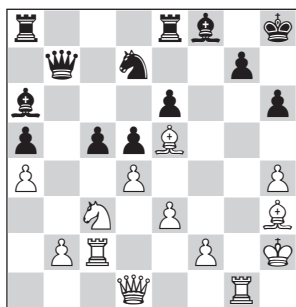
Similar to the variation above, but here Black is better prepared to counter this strike. The piece sacrifice is still correct, but the second player stands no worse afterwards.

19.g5 hxg5 20.hxg5 ♟xe5! 21.♟xe5 ♟d7 22.f4 ♟xe5 23.fxe5 ♟e7=.

19...♟xf7 20.g5 ♟g8?!

Korobov was certainly in a position to display a healthy degree of greed: 20...♟e8 21.e4 ♟g8 22.♟g4 ♟b6 led to a position with equal chances.

21.♟h3! ♟e8 22.gxf6 ♟xf6 23.♟h2 c5 24.♟g1 ♟h8 25.♟e5 ♟d7



26.♟g3?!

Kovchan had no luck with this bishop either now or as the game progressed. A logical continuation

was 26.f4! ♟xe5 27.fxe5 cxd4 28.exd4 ♟f7 29.♟g4, with a substantial positional advantage for White.

26...♟ac8 27.♟d2 ♟f6?! 28.♟e5 ♟d7 29.♟f4?!

29.♟h5 ♟xe5 30.dxe5+–.

29...cxd4 30.exd4 ♟c6 31.♟h5 ♟f6?!

Allows the bishop to return to e5.

By playing 31...♟e7 Black could have maintained equality.

32.♟g6 ♟d6 33.♟e5 ♟f8 34.f4 ♟e7?!

34...♟f7 fails to 35.♟xe6!+–, but

34...♟b6! would still have kept Korobov in the game.

35.♟dg2

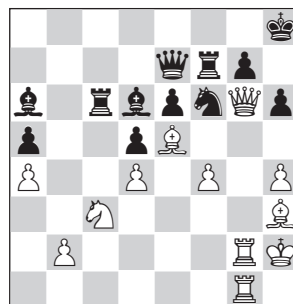
Thus, White achieves a dream position: all his pieces are now perfectly positioned. A sure sign that from now on strikes that could decide the game hang in the air.

35.♟xe6? would be disastrous here:

35...♟xe5! and Black wins.

35...♟f7?!

With 35...♟c7 or 35...♟b6 Korobov could have avoided the worst, although his position would still have caused him problems.



36.♟xd5!!

Initiates a wonderful climax.

36...exd5 37.♟xh6+

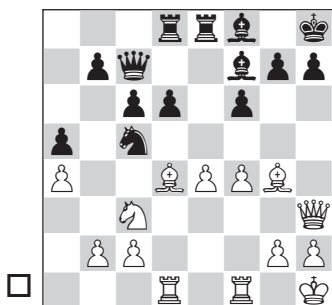
Anton resigned in view of 37...gxh6
38. ♖g8+ ♔h7 39. ♕f5#.

Game 31

Vitaly Tsherkovsky 2600

Vladimir Karasev 2383

Zvenigorod ch-RUS sr 2005 (3)

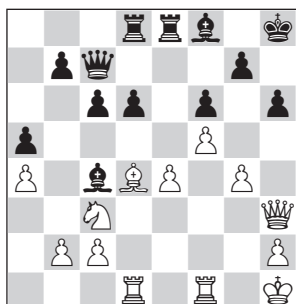


By way of an exception, evaluating this position is easy: White has a solid advantage due to his space advantage and the resulting active locations of his minor pieces. But Black's position is also sturdy. Tsherkovsky's creative mind finds a way to quickly disrupt the fortress:

21. ♕f5! h6

21... ♕g8 22. ♕g6 ♖e7 23.g4!+- would have been even simpler.

22.g4! ♖e6 23. ♕xe6! ♕xe6 24.f5! ♕c4



25.g5!!

Forward march, regardless of losses! Sometimes this simple strategy works.

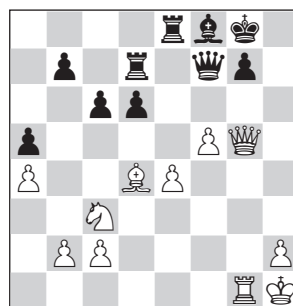
25. ♖g1? ♕g8 would have allowed Black to consolidate, after which he would have started a counterattack with ...d6-d5.

25... ♕xf1 26. ♖xf1 fxg5

26... ♔h7 27.gxf6 gxf6 28. ♖g1+- is completely hopeless.

27. ♖xh6+ ♕g8 28. ♖xg5 ♖f7

29. ♖g1 ♖d7



With a pawn for the exchange and an excellent position, White can certainly look to the future with optimism, but is his compensation sufficient for more than equality? And above all – how can he increase the pressure on Black's position?

30.b3!!

According to the engine, this move, both surprising and strong, is the only way to maintain White's advantage. The idea is primarily prophylactic in nature: counterplay by way of ...♖c4 is prevented, which also allows the white rook to leave the first rank.

30...c5?

30... ♖de7 31. ♖g4 d5 was the only way to offer resistance, even though

there is no question that White has the advantage after 32.f6 ♖xe4 33.♗xe4 ♖xe4 34.♖xe4 dxe4 35.♔g2.

31.♗d5

31.♔f6!+–.

31...cxd4 32.♗f6+ ♖xf6 33.♖xf6

Once again Black misses the right time to resign the game.

33...♖e7 34.♖g5 ♖e5 35.♖g4 ♖f7

36.♖f1 b5 37.axb5 ♖xb5 38.f6 ♖e5

39.♖f2 d3 40.cxd3 ♖c5 41.d4 ♖cc7

42.♖e6 gxf6 43.♖xf6 ♖ce7 44.♖d5

♖a7 45.♔g2 ♔g7 46.♖xf7 ♖xf7

47.♖xd6 ♔f8 48.♖e6 ♔b4 49.h4

♔g7 50.h5 ♖f6 51.♖e5 ♔f7 52.♔h3

♖e6 53.♖f5+ ♔e7 54.♔g4 ♔d2

55.♖c5+ ♔f7 56.d5 ♖f6 57.♖c7+

♔f8 58.d6 1-0

Game 32

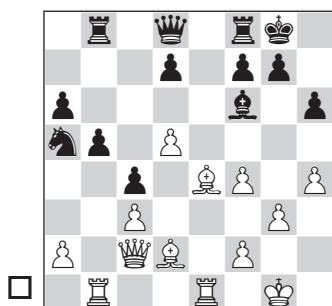
Vladimir Tukmakov

2574

Florin Gheorghiu

2462

Crans Montana 2000 (6)



We have a position before us which is very unbalanced, and is not easy to assess as a result. The pair of white bishops do not seem particularly threatening, and White's pawn structure is weakened. However, the decisive

factor is the offside black knight. It needs a couple of moves to get back into the game. Two tempi – that's all that White has to organise an attack on the black king, but luckily the pawn on h6 offers a point to attack.

21.♔g2! ♗b7 22.g4! ♔xh4

Accepting the pawn sacrifice was pretty much forced.

23.g5 f5

23...hxg5? 24.♔h7+ ♔h8 25.fxg5

♔xg5 26.♖h1 ♔h6 27.♖c1 loses

outright, but the best defence,

23...♗d6!, deserved closer

examination. After the forced

sequence 24.♔h7+ ♔h8 25.♖h1

f5! 26.♖xh4 ♔xh7 27.♖bh1 ♖e7

(27...♖e8 28.♖d1! (28.♔e3? ♖xe3!

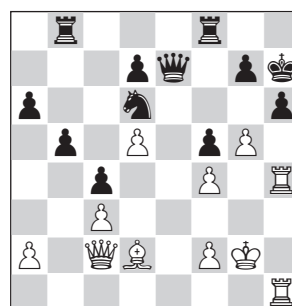
29.fxe3 ♗e4) 28...♗f7 (28...♖b6

29.♖xh6+ gxh6 30.♖h5 ♗e4

31.♖f7+ ♔h8 32.g6+–) 29.♔e3 ♖xe3

30.fxe3±), the critical position

arises, which superficially appears to quite OK for Black:



analysis diagram

28.♔e3!! brings the last dormant piece into the game. We will return to this move later in the game. But can't Black simply rescue himself by exchanging queens? 28...♖e4+

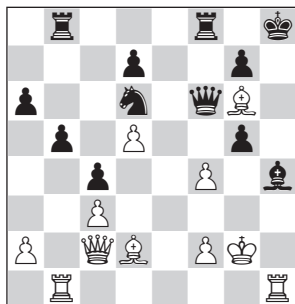
29. ♖xe4 ♜xe4 (29...fxe4 30. ♖xh6+ gxf6 31. ♖xh6+ ♝g8 32. ♖g6+ ♜f7 33. ♖xd6±) 30. ♙d4. A fascinating position has arisen. Not only have the queens been exchanged but there are hardly any pieces left on the board, Black is to move but still has no good way of parrying the obvious threat of 31. ♖xh6+, e.g. 30... ♖fe8 (30...b4 31.f3!! ♜xc3 32. ♖xh6+ gxf6 33. ♖xh6+ ♝g8 34.g6+-) 31. ♖xh6+ gxf6 32. ♖xh6+ ♝g8 33.g6 ♜f8 34.d6 ♜xd6 35. ♙f6+-.

24. ♙xf5 ♜d6

24...hxg5 25. ♙h7+ ♜h8 26. ♖e5! ♜d6 27. ♖h1 ♖f6 28. ♙e3 b4□ 29. ♖xg5 ♙xg5 30.fxg5 ♖f3+ (30...♖xc3 31. ♖d1+-) 31. ♜g1 b3 32.axb3 cxb3 33. ♖b1 ♖f4 (33...♖g4+ 34. ♜f1 ♖a4 35. ♖d1+-) 34. ♙e4+ ♖xh1+ 35. ♙xh1 ♖g4+ 36. ♜h2 b2 37. ♙f3 ♖h4+ 38. ♜g3 ♖a4 39. ♙d4 ♜g8 (39...♖a1 40. ♖g6 ♜f5+ 41. ♖xf5 b1 ♖ 42. ♙e4 ♖g1+ 43. ♜h3+-) 40.c4 ♖a1 41. ♖g6 ♜f5+ 42. ♖xf5 b1 ♖ 43. ♖e5+-.

25. ♙h7+ ♜h8 26. ♖h1 hxg5 27. ♙g6 ♖f6

27...♜g8 28. ♖d1! gxf4 29. ♖g4+-.



28. ♙e3!!

The belated party guest will immediately raise spirits! But only for the first player.

28...♜g8

28...gxf4 leads to another study-like variation: 29. ♖xh4+ ♖xh4 30. ♖h1 ♖xh1+ 31. ♜xh1 fxe3 32.f3!! (only this way! It's not sufficient for the queen to access the h-file, it must be via h2!) 32...♜f7 33. ♙xf7 (33. ♖h2+?? ♜h6) 33... ♖xf7 34. ♖h2+--. This double attack explains why White's 32nd move is so important.

29. ♙h7+! ♜f7

29...♜h8 30. ♖h3+-.

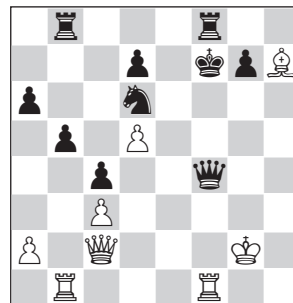
30.fxg5 ♙xg5 31.f4

31. ♙d4+-.

31... ♙xf4

31... ♙h6 32. ♙d4+-.

32. ♙xf4 ♖xf4 33. ♖hf1+-



The game is decided. Why the Romanian didn't resign at this point is a mystery to me.

33...♜e7 34. ♖e2+ ♜d8 35. ♖xf4

♖xf4 36. ♖e5 ♖f6 37. ♖f1 ♜c7

38. ♖xf6 gxf6 39. ♖xf6 ♖b6 40. ♖d4

♜b7 41. ♜f2 ♖h6 42. ♖f4+ ♖d6

43. ♜e3 ♜c5 44. ♙f5 ♜a4 45. ♜d4

♜b6 46. ♜c5 ♜a4+ 47. ♜b4 ♜b6

48. ♙e4

And finally Black resigned.

CHAPTER 16

Breakthrough on the strong point

The subject of breaking through is old hat, of course, but all the authors that I'm aware of only look at breaking through with pawns in the endgame, with the aim of promoting one of the resulting passed pawns into a queen.

Back in 2004, grandmaster Igor Zaitsev, a well-known analyst and second to Anatoly Karpov, wrote a small but notable book with the title that I have used as the name for this chapter.

In this book, Zaitsev made the interesting observation that when a point is excessively protected, the surrounding points are automatically somewhat neglected. I initially found his conclusion surprising, to put it mildly: according to Zaitsev, the best thing to do is to utilise the aforementioned weak points by breaking through at the best defended point. However, the longer I thought about it, the more sense Zaitsev's proposition made. Over the years I have gathered together or produced some examples that support it.

The first position is from Zaitsev's book, with his comments not referring to Pavel Smirnov's victory, but to the game Kramnik-Polgar mentioned in the notes, in which Big Vlad missed the correct continuation.

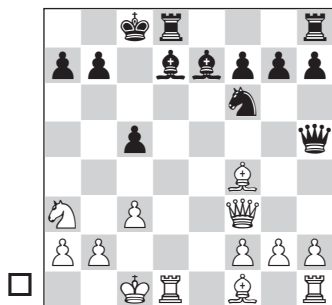
Game 85

Pavel Smirnov

Dmitry Batsanin

2245

Arkhangelsk ch-RUS 1996



The endgame would be completely equal. But can White plausibly avoid the exchange of queens?

13.g4!!

The 14-year-old future grandmaster Pavel Smirnov answers this question with a resounding ‘yes’, and in a way that is as spectacular as it is effective! Two years previously, no less a player than Vladimir Kramnik had failed to find the solution, although admittedly in rapid chess: 13.♘b5? ♙xb5 14.♙xb5 ♚xf3 15.gxf3± Kramnik-Polgar, Paris rapid 1994.

13... ♚xg4

Nothing can be done, the pawn sacrifice cannot be accepted, but nor can it be refused: 13... ♙xg4 14.♚c6+!! bxc6 15.♙a6#; 13... ♘xg4 14.♙a6+-; 13... ♚g6 14.♙g2 (14.♙a6? ♚e4) 14... ♙c6 15.♘b5!!+-.

14. ♘b5!! ♙xb5 15. ♙h3

Black could have spared himself the rest.

15... h5 16. ♙xg4+ hxg4 17. ♚e3 ♘h5 18. ♚xe7 ♘f4 19. ♚xc5+

♙c6 20. ♚f5+ ♘e6 21. ♚xd8+ ♚xd8 22. ♚d1 1-0

Game 86

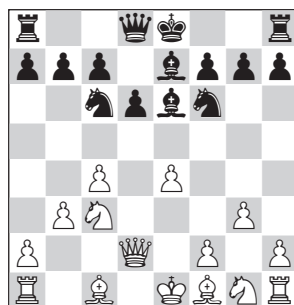
Pal Benko

Lev Psakhis

2415

2605

Aruba 1992 (3)



The thematic 8...d5 clearly doesn't work straightaway. But that's no reason to discard the idea completely!

8... ♘e4!! 9. ♘e4 d5 10.cxd5?!

10. ♙g2 was somewhat more tenacious, but the position after something like 10...dxe4 11.♚xd8+ ♚xd8 12.♙xe4 ♘b4 doesn't look pleasant for White.

10... ♙b4

10... ♙xd5 11.f3 ♙b4 would just be a transposition.

11. ♘c3 ♙xd5 12.f3 ♚f6! 13. ♙b2 0-0-0!

White is completely powerless against the perfectly mobilised black forces.

14. ♙e2

14.0-0-0 ♙xf3+-.

14... ♙xf3 15. ♘xf3 ♚xd2 16. ♘xd2 ♚d8+ 17. ♘c2 ♚g6+ 18. ♘c1 ♙c5 19. ♘d1 ♚e4 20. ♚e1 0-1

Game 87 Réti Opening

Vladimir Kramnik

2730

Alexander Beliavsky

2650

Belgrade 1995 (11)

1. ♖f3 d5 2.g3 c6 3. ♘g2 ♘g4 4.0-0
 ♟d7 5.d4 e6 6. ♞bd2 f5?



It looks logical to try the Stonewall set-up with the bishop OUTSIDE the pawn chain, but the idea has a serious flaw: the e6-square becomes very weak.

7.c4 ♘d6

I've already had some positive experiences with this position as White: 7...♞gf6 8.♖b3 b6 (8...♖b6 9.♖e3!) 9.♞g5 ♖e7 10.f3 ♘h5 11.e4+- Prusikin-Lipok, Augsburg 2014.

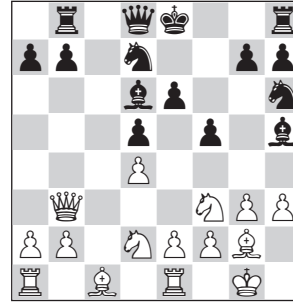
8.♖b3 ♖b8 9.♖e1 ♞h6

9...♞gf6 10.♞g5 f4 (10...♖e7 11.f3 ♘h5 12.e4+-) 11.e4! dxe4 12.c5 ♞d5 13.♞dxe4 ♘e7 14.♞xe6 ♘xe6 15.♞d6+ ♘xd6 16.♖xe6+ ♘e7 17.♘xd5 ♞f8 18.♘xf4 cxd5 19.♖xe7+ 1-0 Prusikin-Krejci, Merlimont 2011.

10.cxd5 cxd5 11.h3 ♘h5

11...♘xf3 12.exf3! ♖e7 would have been much more tenacious, but for one thing Black's position is rather

dismal due to the weakness on e6, and for another, Kramnik's idea after the text move wasn't easy to see.

**12.e4!!**

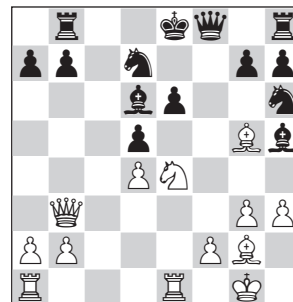
Here it is, the thematic breakthrough at the strongpoint! The black position quickly collapses.

12...fxe4 13.♞g5!

13.♞xe4 dxe4 14.♖xe6+ ♖e7 15.♖xe4! ♖xe6 16.♖xe6+ ♘e7 17.♘h6 gxh6 18.♖ae1 also won, but in fact Kramnik's move is even stronger.

13...♘f7

Black can certainly accept the piece, but cannot retain it: 13...♖xg5 14.♞xe4! ♖e7 15.♘g5 ♖f8 (15...♞f6 16.♞xf6+ gxf6 17.♘h6+-)



analysis diagram

16.♖xd5!! exd5 17.♞xd6#.

14. ♖dx4! dx4 15. ♗xe6 ♕xe6
16. ♖xe6+ ♖e7 17. ♜xe4 ♔d8
 17... ♖xe6 18. ♜xe6+ ♕e7 19. ♕xh6
 gxh6 20. ♜ae1+- . We are already
 familiar with this motif, see the
 comment to White's 13th move.
18. ♖d5
 18... ♗f6 fails to 19. ♜xe7 ♗xd5
 20. ♜e6! so Black resigned.

Game 88

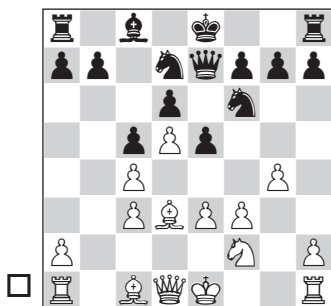
Igor Khenkin

2590

Michael Prusikin

2542

Switzerland tt 2010 (7)



12. ♖c2?!

Igor fails to sense the impending danger. With the prophylactic 12. ♕c2 he would have retained a slight advantage.

12...e4!!

Thematic and incredibly strong. From the freed-up e5-square, the black knight can keep tabs on all the weak squares in White's camp.

13. ♕xe4

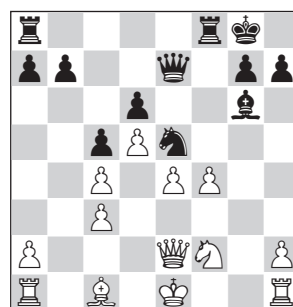
Suddenly White is in serious difficulties. The black pieces swarm out and start stinging like a provoked swarm of bees: 13. ♗xe4 ♗e5 and now:

A) 14. ♕e2 ♗xe4 15. ♖xe4 f5!
 16. gxf5 0-0 17. ♖f4 ♕xf5 18. e4
 (18. ♖g3 ♕d3+-) 18... ♕g4+-;
 B) 14. 0-0 h5! also looks dangerous for the white king;
 C) 14. ♗d2 ♗xd3+ 15. ♖xd3 ♗d7
 16. ♖e2 (16. f4 ♖h4+-) 16...h5 with tremendous compensation for the sacrificed pawn.

13... ♗e5 14.g5

Good advice was already in short supply:

A) 14. 0-0 0-0! 15. ♔h1 ♗xe4
 16. ♖xe4 f5+-;
 B) 14. ♖e2 ♗xe4 15. ♗xe4 f5 16. gxf5
 ♕xf5 17. ♗f2 0-0 18. e4 ♕g6 19. f4



analysis diagram

19... ♖h4!! 20. fxex5 ♜xf2 21. ♖xf2
 ♖xe4+-+.

14... ♗xe4 15. ♖xe4 f5! 16. gxf6 ♖xf6
17.f4 0-0 18. ♕d2

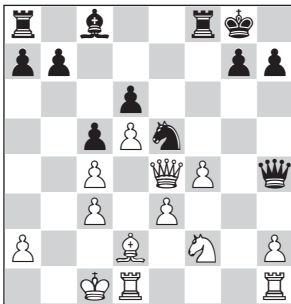
A) 18. 0-0 ♗g4 (18... ♗g6 19. ♖d3!
 ♕d7) 19. ♗xg4 ♕xg4 20. ♖g2
 ♖h4±;

B) 18. ♖c2 ♗g4! 19. ♗xg4 ♕xg4+-+.
 The white king is hopelessly weak and the black bishop is clearly superior to its white counterpart.

18... ♖h4! 19.0-0-0??

After deliberating for 30 minutes, White curtails his suffering.

- A) 19. ♖g1 ♔f5 (19... ♕g4??
 20. ♜xg4 ♜xg4 21. ♖e6+ ♖h8
 22. ♖xg4+-) 20. ♖g2 ♜d3+ 21. ♖f1
 (21. ♖e2 ♖h5+ 22. ♖f1 g6 23. e4
 ♜ae8) 21... ♜f7+ (21... ♖xf2+ 22. ♖xf2
 ♜xf2 23. ♖xf2 ♜ae8+);
 B) 19. ♖g2 ♜xc4 20. 0-0-0 ♕d7-+.



19... ♕f5

Igor missed a good time to resign here, but who resigns as White on the 19th move?

20. ♕e1

20. ♖g2 ♖xf2-+.

- 20... ♕xe4 21. ♜xe4 ♖e7 22. fxe5 ♖xe5
 23. ♜g3 ♖xe3+ 24. ♖c2 ♖f4 25. ♖b3
 b5 26. cxb5 a6 27. ♕d2 ♖h4 0-1

Game 89

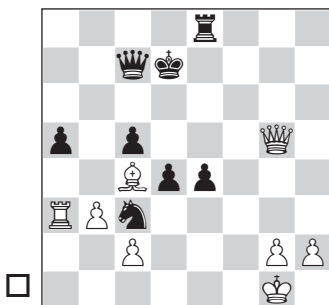
Michael Prusikin

2529

Wolfram Heinig

2328

Saarbrücken ch-GER 2009 (5)



A very interesting position. What is more important, the better position of the white king or the mobile black centre, supported by the mighty knight on c3?

30.b4!!

The quick way to bring the white problem child, the rook on a3, into the game.

30...cxb4

Best.

30...axb4 opens the a-file: 31. ♖f5+ ♖c6 32. ♖f6+ ♖d7 33. ♜a6+-.

31. ♖f5+!!

The real point of the spectacular 30th move.

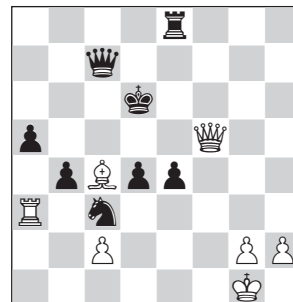
A) 31. ♜xa5? ♖xc4 32. ♜a7+ ♖c6 33. ♖g7! ♜b5! 34. ♜a6+ ♖c5 35. ♖d7! ♖d5 36. ♖xe8 d3= doesn't win;

B) Nor does the obvious 31. ♜xc3? bxc3 32. ♕b5+ ♖c8 33. ♕xe8 d3=.

In both cases, Black's passed pawns ensure sufficient counterplay.

31... ♖d6

31... ♖c6 32. ♜xa5 was also hopeless.

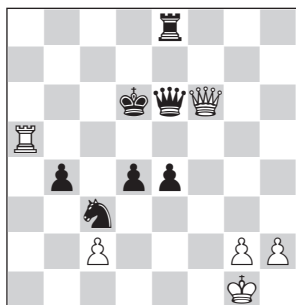


32. ♜xa5! ♖xc4 33. ♖f6+!

Now there's no escape for the black king.

33... ♖e6

- A) 33...♖e6 34.♗d8+ ♔c6
 35.♜c8++-;
 B) 33...♔c7 34.♞a7+ ♔c8 35.♞a8+
 ♔d7 36.♜g7++-.



34.♜xd4+!

The last finesse! In contrast, winning the queen is not enough to win the game: 34.♞a6+? ♔d5 35.♞xe6 ♞xe6 and the mighty central passed pawns save the day for the second player.

34...♔c7 35.♞c5+

35.♜c5+!+-.

35...♔b7 36.♜xb4+ ♜b6 37.♜xb6+ ♔xb6

38.♞xc3 e3 39.♔f1
 Black resigned here. The rook endgame after 39...♞f8+ 40.♔e2 ♞f2+ 41.♔xe3 ♞xg2 42.h3 is an easy win for White.