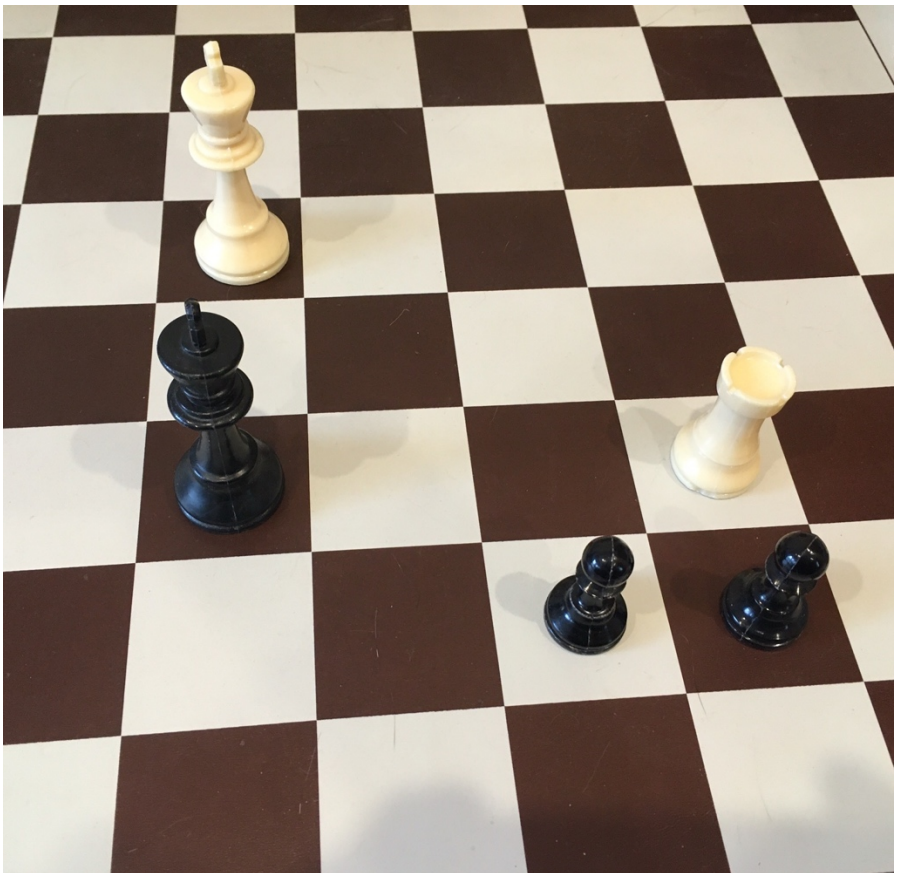
Patzer

The magazine for the club chess player



Rook versus two pawns

volume 3 number 4
June 2021

Patzer

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editor Derek Roebuck derek_roebuck@hotmail.com

✉ Patzer Chess
P O box 957
Subiaco 6904
Australia

ABN 81 316 037 926

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Unsurprisingly, this is not the first magazine of this name. In London, the Bayswater Chess Club had a periodical called *Patzer* in the early 1970s and the junior chess association of the German state of Schleswig-Holstein produced *Der Patzer* from 1977 to at least 1999. We appear to be the only active **Patzer**, however. The publication schedule looks to be settled for at least the remainder of this year, with a total of eight normal issues and a few supplements, but contributions from our readers are, of course, still very welcome.

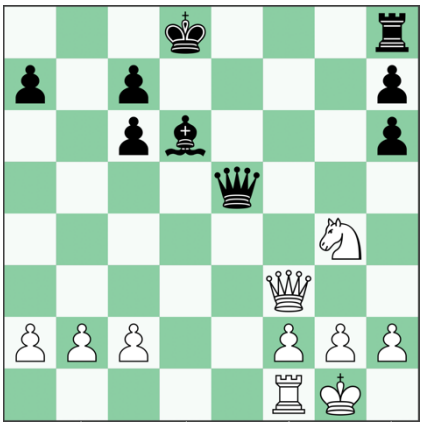
I was sitting at the next board when Julian Rodriguez played 16. ♗e7!! (see page 154). I hope you enjoy it as much as I did at the time.

In the next article in this year's end-game series we move on to positions where a rook is pitted against two connected pawns. This issue's cover illustrates one of the tactical themes in these endings, the *check behind the pawns* (pages 156 to 166).

In this issue's Outrageous openings we examine Damiano's defence (1. e4 e5 2. ♘f3 f6?). This aberration does turn up from time to time at patzer level, but would you have the guts to play it against a grandmaster?

Ilya Smirin – Sam Sloan
USA ("World Open") 2012

1. e4 e5 2. ♘f3 f6? (Smirin's "face turned beet red", says the confirmed patzer Sloan.) **3. d4?! d5 4. exd5 e4 5. ♘fd2 ♕xd5 6. ♘c3 ♕xd4 7. ♘cxe4 ♗f5 8. ♕f3?! ♗xe4?! 9. ♘xe4 ♘c6 10. ♗b5 0-0-0?** [10…♕d5! is fine] **11. ♗xc6 bxc6 12. 0-0 ♘h6 13. ♗xh6 gxh6 14. ♖ad1 ♕e5 15. ♖xd8+ ♔xd8 16. ♘xf6 ♗d6 17. ♘g4**



▶17

17…♕xb2 ("This, I think, was my fatal error. [17…♕f4] forcing a trade of queens … would have made it difficult for him to win" claims Sloan optimistically. *Stockfish 13* disagrees, and says black has been totally lost for some time!) **18. ♘xh6 ♖f8 19. ♘f7+ ♔d7 20. ♕f5+ ♔e8 21. ♘xd6+ cxd6 22. ♖e1+** 1:0

Derek Roebuck

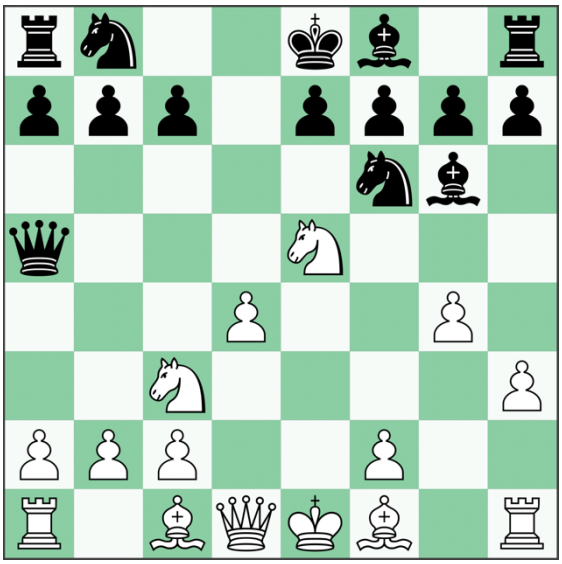
Beating the 3...♕a5 Scandinavian defence

B 01

Part 4: Move 8 options

Derek Roebuck

1. e4 d5 2. exd5 ♕xd5 3. ♘c3 ♕a5 4. d4 ♘f6 5. ♘f3 ♗g4 6. h3 ♗h5 7. g4 ♗g6 8. ♘e5



▶8

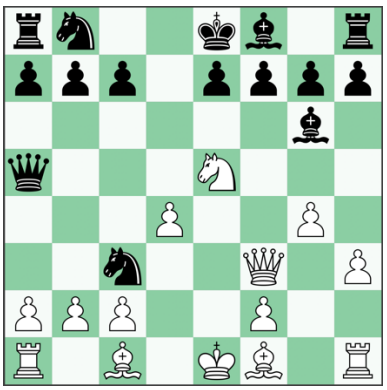
Now 8...e6 is the main line. We will look at this in part 5. First, however, we must learn how to deal with black's other eighth moves: 8...♘e4, 8...♗e4, 8...♘bd7 and 8...c6.

8...♘e4?

This is the kind of move you might well see at club level. White has a straightforward tactical refutation:

9. ♕f3 ♘d6

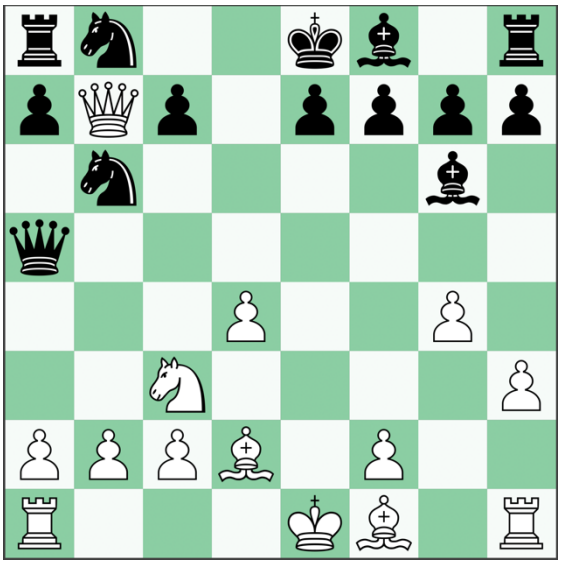
White was threatening ♘xg6 followed by ♕xe4. The obvious alternative is 9...♘xc3?!



analysis

10. ♕xb7! The problem for black is that there is no useful discovered check. (If you forget this and play 10. bxc3?! you will still have a big advantage.)

10. ♘c4! ♘xc4□ 11. ♕xb7 ♘b6 12. ♗d2



▶12

The threat of ♘b5 is unstoppable, and black does best (least worst?) to ignore it.

12...e6 13. ♘b5 ♗b4 14. ♘xc7+

Next white will play 15. c3, with a crushing advantage, unless of course black blunders with 14...♔e7??, allowing 15. ♘d5+!

8...♗e4?

Another poor move that you might come across from time to time.

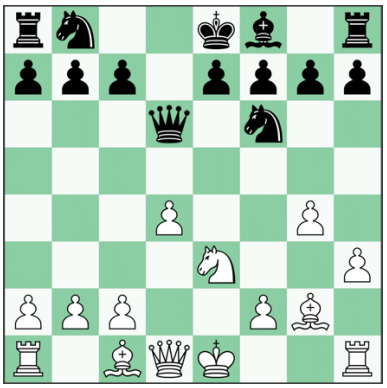
9. ♘c4 ♕a6□ 10. ♘e3!? ♕e6

(1) 10...♕b6 11. ♘xe4 ♘xe4 12. ♗g2 ♘f6 [the tactical point of white's last move is evident after 12...♘d6?? 13. ♘d5 ♕c6 14. ♘f6+] 13. g5 ♘fd7.

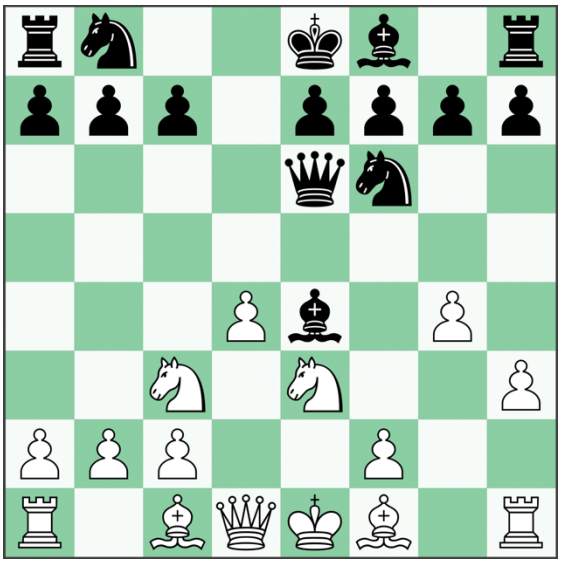
analysis

14. 0-0!? [now 14. ♘d5 is not as good, because black has 14...♕e6+] e6 15. ♖e1! White's plan is to push d5 and/or c4-c5, with a massive advantage.

(2) 10...♕d6 is most simply met by 11. ♘xe4 ♘xe4 12. ♗g2, when black will probably play 12...♘f6.


analysis

As long as white avoids 13. ♗xb7?? ♕b4+, and plays 13. 0-0! instead, he or she has a great position, as seen after 13...c6 14. g5 ♘d5 15. ♘xd5 cxd5 16. c4! e6 17. cxd5 exd5 18. ♕b3.

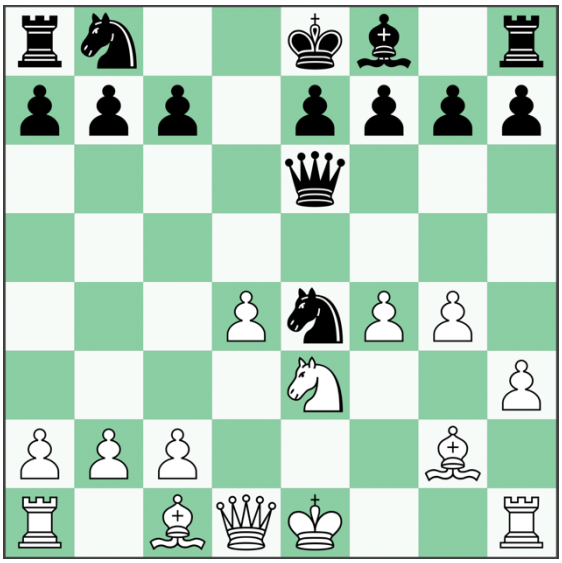

▷11

11. f3!? ♗g6

11...♗c6 12. d5 and 11...♗d5 12. g5 both lose material immediately, but are arguably slightly better for black than what follows...

12. f4 ♗e4 13. ♘xe4 ♘xe4 14. ♗g2

This is obvious and strong.



▶14

14...♘d6

White is going to play f5, and even 14...g6 15. f5! gxf5 16. gxf5 ♕h6 doesn't defuse the threat, because white can continue with 17. ♕g4!

analysis

17...♘f6 18. ♕g3 ♘c6 19. ♘d5 ♖g8 20. ♘xf6+!

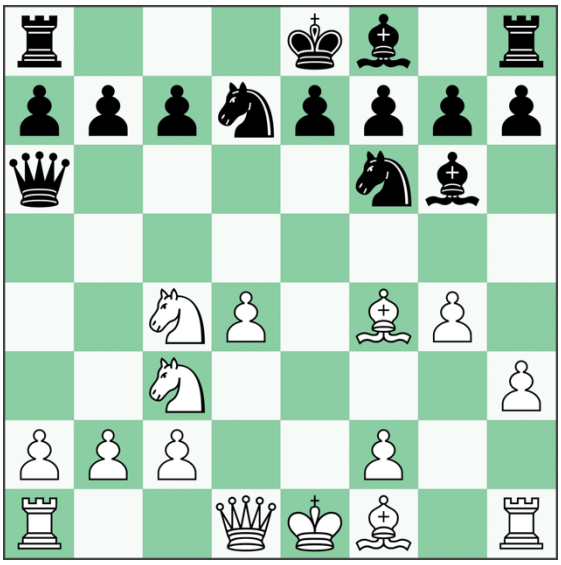
15. f5!? ♕d7 16. c4 c6 17. 0-0

This is a nice position for white, who can advance the queenside pawns, beginning with c5, or even b4, supported by ♖b1 if necessary. Although material is currently level, *Stockfish 13* gives white an advantage of about five pawns.

8...♘bd7?!

This plausible move allows white a nice initiative with the obvious...

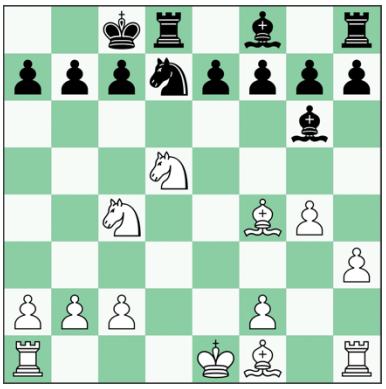
9. ♘c4 ♕a6□ 10. ♗f4!



▶10

10...♕e6+□

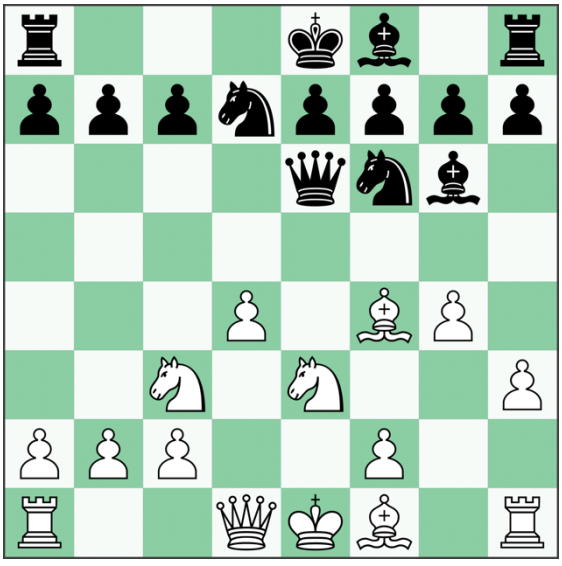
(1) Black can't play 10...e6? because of 11. ♘d6+, which is just a win.
(2) 10...e5? is also horrible for black after 11. ♘xe5 ♕b6 [11...♕e6 is best met with 12. ♗c4 and 13. ♕e2] 12. ♘xg6 hxg6 13. ♕e2+ ♗e7 [13...♕e6 14. g5 ♘h5 15. ♗xc7] 14. 0-0-0!, when white is winning.
(3) 10...♕c6!? requires a precise reply: 11. d5! ♘xd5 12. ♕xd5 ♕xd5 [if 12...♗xc2 then either 13. ♖c1!? or 13. ♕xc6 should win] 13. ♘xd5 0-0-0. White is clearly winning, but how should he or she best proceed in this position?


analysis

14. 0-0-0!? [14. ♘xc7 is probably also good for a full point] e5!? 15. ♗e3 [white can even afford to blunder material with 15. ♘xe5? ♘xe5 16. ♗xe5 ♖xd5 17. ♖xd5 ♗e4 18. ♖d4 ♗xh1 19. ♗d3! and still be on the way to a big endgame advantage] ♔b8 16. ♗d3. White is a knight for a pawn up and should win easily from here.

11. ♘e3!?

11. ♘e5 is also good, but here you must remember that our mission as a true patzer is to give black the most possible options to go wrong. Our chosen move does this very nicely.

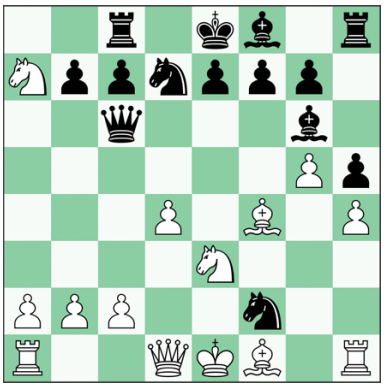

▶11

11...♕b6!

Black has numerous options here, but this is definitely the best of a bad lot.
(1) 11...0-0-0 must be met with an immediate 12. d5!, when 12...♕b6 was briskly despatched by a former world champion after 13. ♘c4 ♕b4 14. a3 ♕c5 15. ♗e3 1:0 A. Alekhine – A. Schroeder, New York (simul) 1929*. 12...♘xd5 is better, but after 13. ♕xd5! ♕xd5 14. ♘cxd5! white is once again a piece for a pawn up and black has no compensation.
(2) 11...c6 12. ♗c4 ♘d5 13. ♘xd5 cxd5 14. ♗xd5, and white was a pawn up in a great position in G. Malbran – P. Lopez Rebert, Argentina 2003*.
(3) 11...♘b6 12. ♗xc7! leaves black in a very difficult position, in which the blunder 12...♕c6?? (hoping to fork the bishop on c7 and the h1 rook) would not help.

* It is traditional to cite the game that a variation arises from in this manner, but it is not obvious why this is of any value to the reader. These days you can usually find the rest of a game fragment in a database if you really want to, but if the game given in the text is already complete you could argue that listing the players, the venue and the date is just a waste of space. Please let us know if you have a strong opinion on this, one way or the other.

(4) If black plays 11...♘e4 then white has 12. ♘b5!, honing in on the weak pawns on a7 and c7. After 12... ♖c8 13. h4 h5 14. g5 black can't play 14...c6 because of 15. ♗c4, so has to settle for 14...♕c6 15. ♘xa7 ♘xf2!?


analysis

Now 16. ♕d2! ♕xh1 17. ♕xf2 gives white a great game.

(5) 11...♕c6?! is similar to the other lines, with the disadvantage that it allows white to play 12. ♗g2 with tempo.

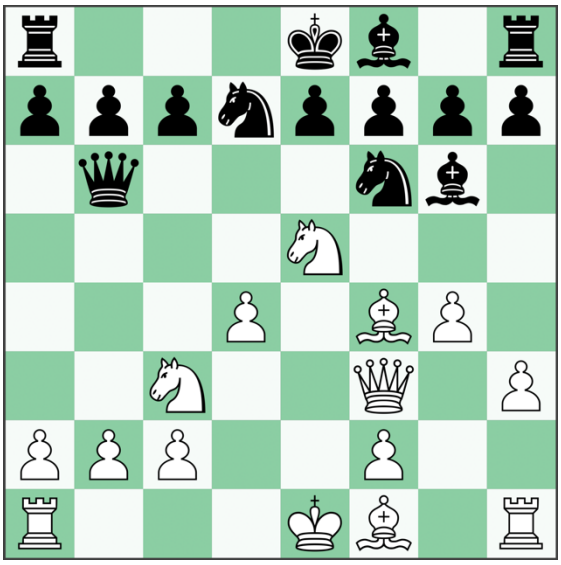
12. ♘c4! ♕e6+

Black's alternatives are 12...♕c6? 13. d5 ♘xd5 14. ♕xd5 and 12...♕a6 13. ♘d6+!

13. ♘e5!

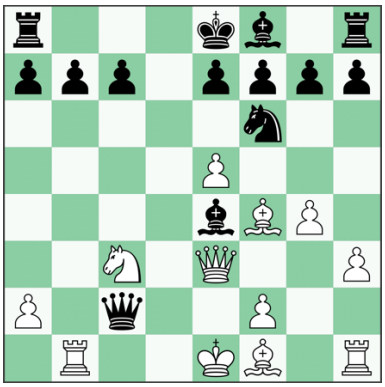
Having given black a couple of big opportunities to go wrong, white switches to plan B. Of course if you want (or for some reason need) a draw here you can probably get one by repeating moves with 13. ♘e3 ♕b6 14. ♘c4?!

13...♕b6 14. ♕f3!?


▶14

14...0-0-0

(1) Black must avoid 14...♕xb2?? 15. ♖b1 ♘xe5!? [15...♕xc2 16. ♖xb7] 16. dxe5 ♗e4!? 17. ♕e3 ♕xc2.


analysis

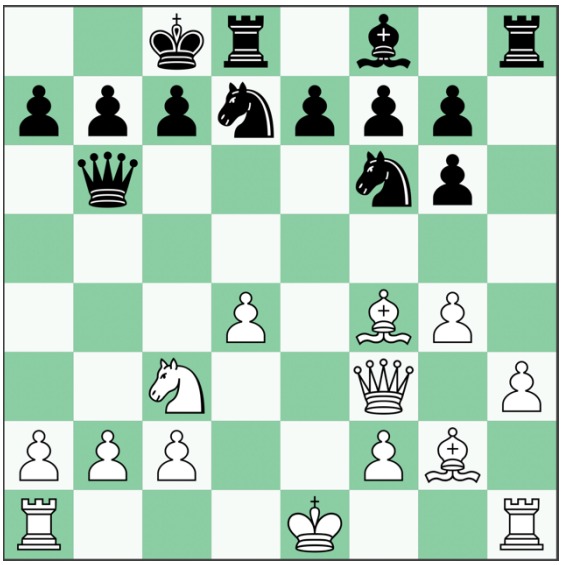
18. ♗b5+! c6 19. ♗a4 ♕d3 20. ♕xd3 ♗xd3 21. ♖xb7 0-0-0 22. ♗xc6, when white wins a lot of material.

The two other reasonable alternatives lead to positions with quite different characteristics:

(2) 14...e6 lets white simplify to a favourable queenless middlegame with 15. ♘c4 ♕c6□ [15...♕xd4 16. ♗e3 ♗e4 doesn't work because white simply plays 17. ♕g3] 16. ♕xc6 bxc6 17. ♗xc7.

(3) 14…c6 looks superficially like some of the other variations we have seen after 3…♕a5, but white will get a clear advantage after 15. ♘c4 ♕d8 16. h4, when 16…h6 17. g5! hxg5 18. hxg5 ♖xh1 [if black tries 18…♘h5 white will capitalise on his opponent's unfortunate king position with 19. d5!] 19. ♕xh1 leaves black struggling to deal with the dual threats of d5 and ♗e2.

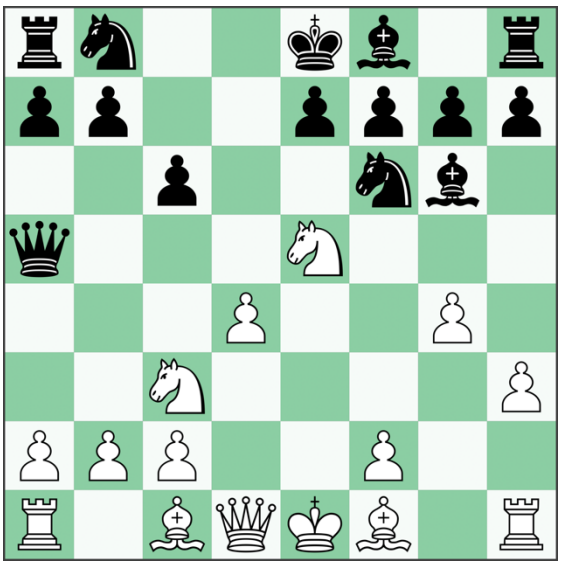
15. ♘xg6! hxg6 16. ♗g2



▶16

Black obviously cannot take on d4 or b2, but none of the alternatives comes close to equalising. 16…e5!?, for example, meets with 17. dxe5 ♘xe5 18. ♗xe5 ♖e8 19. 0-0-0 ♖xe5 20. h4!, when white has an extremely attractive position. It's not a forced win, but it's certainly much better than the position he had after 1. e4.

8…c6



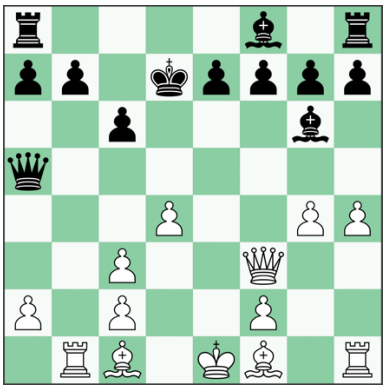
▷9

9. h4!

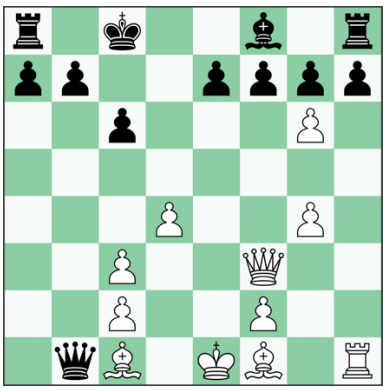
This is the move to remember. Alternatively, white can play 9. ♘c4 ♕c7 10. ♕f3, hoping for 10…♗xc2? 11. ♗f4 ♕d8?! 12. ♕e2 ♕xd4 [you will of course remember the cheap trick: 12…♗g6? 13. ♘d6+] 13. ♗h2 ♗g6? 14. ♖d1, which is crushing, but I don't think many Scandinavian addicts are going to fall for this rather obvious c-pawn "sacrifice".

9…♗e4

(1) 9…♘e4 10. ♕f3! You should remember this idea – it's much better than 10. ♗d2?! Now black has an unappealing choice: 10…♘d6 11. ♗d2 f6 [12…♗xc2? 13. ♘b5! ♕d8 14. ♘xd6] 12. h5 ♗xc2 13. ♘c4 ♘xc4 14. ♗xc4 looks bad, because the bishop on c2 is doomed, but 10…♘xc3 11. bxc3 ♘d7 12. ♘xd7 ♔xd7 is met by 13. ♖b1!


analysis

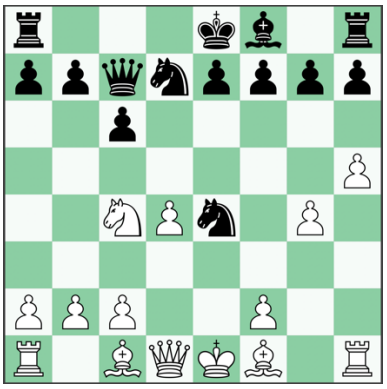
White has a sneaky plan in mind: 13…♔c8 [13…b6? 14. ♗b5!! wins on the spot] 14. h5!? ♕xa2 [14…♗xc2 15. ♖b2 ♗a4 16. ♗c4, with castling to follow must be very good for white] 15. hxg6 ♕xb1.


analysis

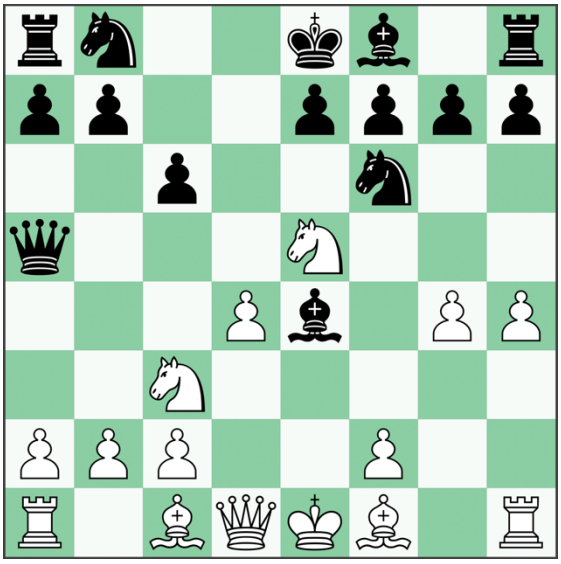
16. ♔d2 fxg6 17. ♗c4. White will get his dark-squared bishop into the action by playing ♗a3 or ♔d3, with a ferocious initiative.

(2) 9…♘fd7?? lost a piece and the game after 10. ♘c4 1:0 J. Loberg – F. Breuer, Austria 2013.

(3) 9…♘bd7 10. ♘c4 ♕c7 [if black tries the other retreat 10…♕d8 white will play 11. ♕e2!, when black cannot save the g6 bishop in view of the threat of ♘d6+] 11. h5 ♗e4 12. ♘xe4 ♘xe4.


analysis

13. ♕f3! ♘d6 14. ♗f4 0-0-0 15. 0-0-0 [white can't win a pawn with 15. ♗xd6 exd6 16. ♕xf7 because after 16…d5 black has more than adequate compensation due to the precarious position of the white king and queen] e6 16. ♗g3!? White will play ♔b1 and ♖he1, with a definite advantage.


▷10

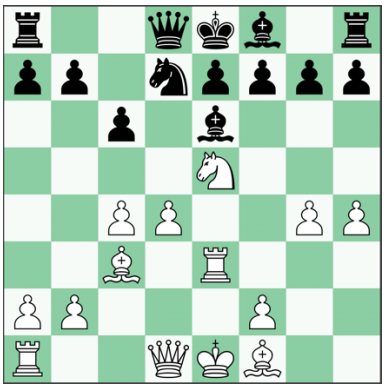
10. ♖h3!

Christof Sielecki[1] goes for 10. ♘c4 here, but that's not going to be anywhere near trappy enough for us.

10…♗d5

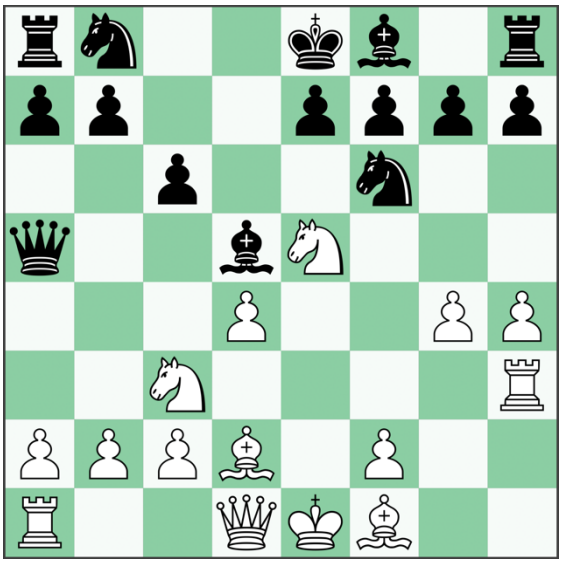
[1] Sielecki C. *Keep it simple: 1. e4*. New in Chess, 2018

10…♘d5 11. ♗d2! ♘xc3□ 12. ♖xc3! ♕d8 [if black plays 12…♕c7 white will try the usual plan of 13. ♗c4 e6 14. ♕e2, eyeing the pawns on e6 and f7] 13. ♖e3 ♗d5 [now if 13…♕xd4 white wins with 14. ♗a5!] 14. c4 ♗e6 15. ♗c3!? ♘d7.


analysis

Now 16. ♘xc6!! bxc6 17. d5 is very good for white.

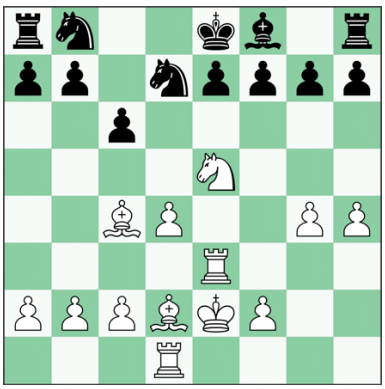
11. ♗d2



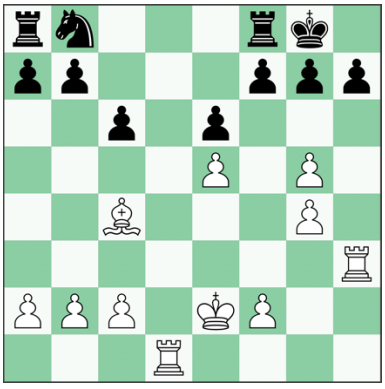
▶11

11…♘bd7

(1) 11…♘fd7 allows white a long forcing continuation: 12. ♘xd5 ♕xd5 13. ♗c4 ♕e4+□ 14. ♖e3 ♕h1+□ 15. ♔e2 ♕xd1+□ [15…♕xh4 16. ♗xf7+ ♔d8 17. ♗e6 is hopeless for black, especially after 17…♘xe5?? 18. ♗a5+ b6 19. dxe5+] 16. ♖xd1.


analysis

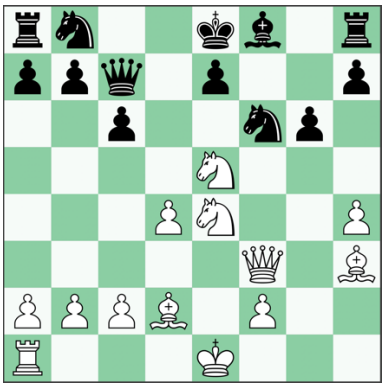
16…♘xe5 [16….e6 17. ♘xf7! ♔xf7 18. ♗xe6+ ♔e8 19. d5! c5 20. ♗c3 looks very promising for white] 17. dxe5 e6 18. ♖d3! and the threat of ♗g5 is surprisingly difficult to counter, for example 18…♗c5 19. ♗e3 ♗e7 20. ♗g5 ♗xg5 21. hxg5 0-0 [21…♔e7 22. f4] 22. ♖h3! with ♖dh1 to come.


analysis

This position is strong, and easy to play for white, who is going to win a pawn on the kingside. Also, at some point black will need to play …♘a6, allowing ♗xa6, which will cripple black's pawn structure on the queenside.

(2) 11…♗e6 12. g5!? [12. ♘e2 is possibly better, but this is definitely trappier] ♗xh3 [black's prospects of survival might be a little better after

12…♘fd7 13. ♖e3] 13. ♗xh3 ♘d5 [13…♘fd7 14. ♘xf7!! ♔xf7 15. ♕f3+ ♔e8 16. ♗e6 ♘a6 17. ♘e4 ♕c7 18. ♕f7+, with the plan of 0-0-0 and ♗f4] 14. ♕h5!? g6 15. ♕f3 f6 16. gxf6 ♘xf6 17. ♘e4 ♕c7

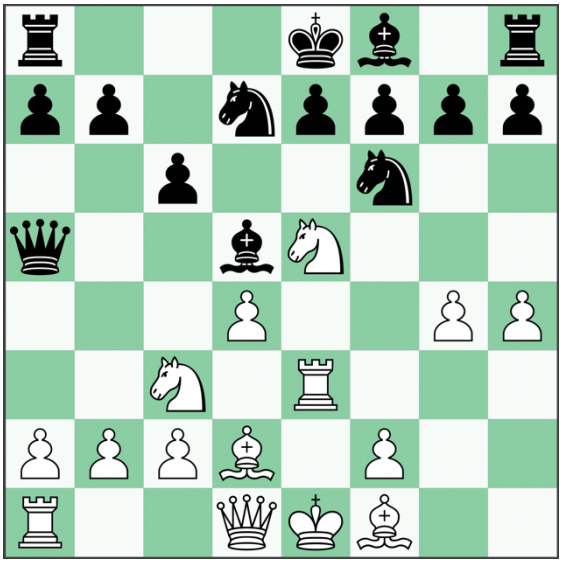


analysis

18. ♘c5! b6 19. ♘e6 and black is practically paralysed.

12. ♖e3

White is setting up another one of those ♘xf7 ideas.

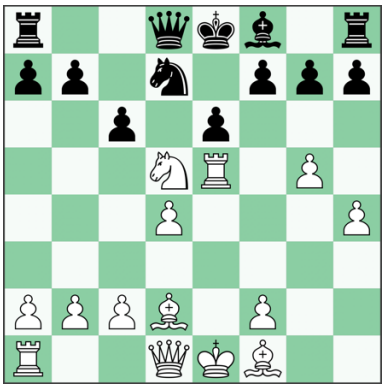


▶12

12…♗e6

(1) It's probably more likely that black will play 12…♘xe5 here, but he will still be hard pressed to find an adequate defence after 13. dxe5 ♘d7□ 14. ♘xd5 ♕xd5 15. e6!

(2) 12…e6 13. g5! ♘xe5 [13…♘g8 14. ♘xd7 ♔xd7 15. ♘xd5 ♕xd5 16. c4! followed by 17. d5 is crushing] 14. ♖xe5! ♘d7 15. ♘xd5 ♕d8, and again black's position is falling apart.

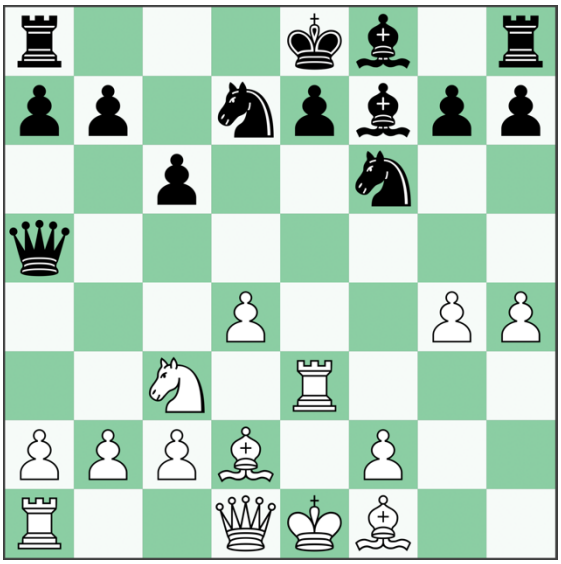


analysis

16. ♖xe6+! fxe6 17. ♘f4 ♕e7 [17…♗d6 18. ♕h5+ ♔e7 19. ♘xe6] 18. ♗h3 0-0-0 19. ♘xe6! ♖e8 20. ♕f3 ♕d6 21. 0-0-0 ♖xe6 22. ♗f4 ♕e7 23. d5! looks like a win.

13. ♘xf7!? ♗xf7

If black tries 13…♔xf7? he or she will be crushed after the "magnet" move 14. ♖xe6!

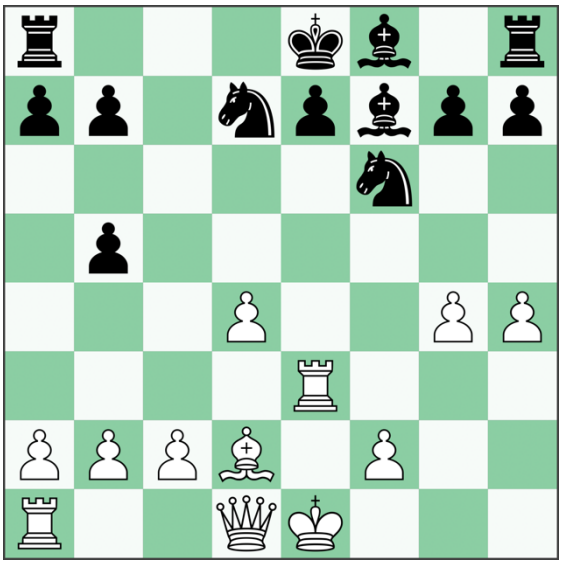


▷14

14. ♘b5! ♕xb5

(1) 14…♕b6 is the only retreat [you can probably spot white's reply to 14…♕d8??] but it's all over after 15. ♘d6+ ♔d8 16. ♘xf7+ ♔e8 17. ♘xh8.
(2) 14…♕xd2+ 15. ♕xd2 cxb5 16. ♗xb5 ♘xg4 17. ♗xd7+ ♔xd7 18. ♕b4!? is likely to be a simple win for white.

15. ♗xb5 cxb5



▷16

16. a4!?

White has to be extremely careful in this position. Although *Stockfish 13* says the advantage is more than three pawns, white's pieces are very poorly coordinated, and black has a strong outpost for a knight on d5. It would be easy for white to go wrong.

16…b4

The computer's choice, but black has alternatives:

(1) If black plays 16…♘d5 straight away white has 17. ♖f3, when the threat of ♖xf7 and ♕f3+ is quite tricky to defuse.
(2) 16…bxa4 17. ♖xa4!? ♘d5 18. ♖f3 ♘5b6 19. ♖a5! sets up 19…♘c4 20. ♖xf7!! ♔xf7 21. ♕f3+ ♔e8 22. ♕xb7 ♖b8 23. ♕a6 ♘xa5 24. ♗xa5, with the idea of playing ♗c7 next.
(3) 16…e6 17. ♕f3 wins the pawn on b7, or even more if black tries to keep it, for example 17…0-0-0? 18. axb5 or 17…♘d5?? 18. ♕xd5.

17. ♗xb4

White has a big advantage, and a boring draw is the least likely result.

Summary

All of black's eighth move alternatives to next issue's 8…e6! give him or her a very difficult game.

After **8…♘e4?!** you must remember to play 9. ♕f3! and not the weak 9. ♗d2? Superficially, **8…♗e4?!** looks active, but it can be strongly met with 9. ♘c4 ♕a6□ 10. ♘e3!? ♕e6 11. f3!? ♗g6 12. f4 ♗e4 13. ♘xe4 ♘xe4 14. ♗g2. After **8…♘bd7** white has 9. ♘c4 ♕a6□ 10. ♗f4!, threatening ♘d6+, and black will struggle after 10…♕e6+□ 11. ♘e3 ♕b6 [11…0-0-0 12. d5!] 12. ♘c4! ♕e6+, when white can repeat moves or go for more with 13. ♘e5! ♕b6 14. ♕f3!? Black's best is **8…c6**, but white has a strong rook lift with 9. h4 ♗e4 10. ♖h3! ♗d5 11. ♗d2 ♘bd7 12. ♖e3, when you should be looking for chances to sacrifice on f7 or e6.

The ideas behind the Jobava-Prié attack

D 00

Part 3: 3...♗f5

Tim Spanton

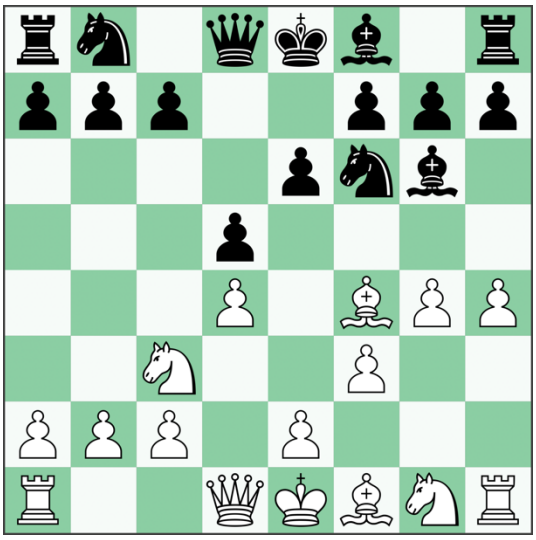
One of black's most-popular responses to **1. d4 d5 2. ♘c3 ♘f6 3. ♗f4** is to, somewhat provocatively, ignore what white is up to. Instead, black gets on with his own development with **3...♗f5**. As in the Veresov, 3...♗f5 cries out for the response **4. f3**, and that has been the choice of Baadur Jobava, Hikaru Nakamura, Arkadij Naiditsch and many other grandmasters. This move scores a much-higher percentage in ChessBase's 2020 Mega database than the marginally more-popular 4. e3.

1. d4 d5 2. ♘c3 ♘f6 3. ♗f4 ♗f5 4. f3

The main line after 4. f3 continues…

4...e6 5. g4 ♗g6 6. h4

Now opinion sharply divides.



▶6

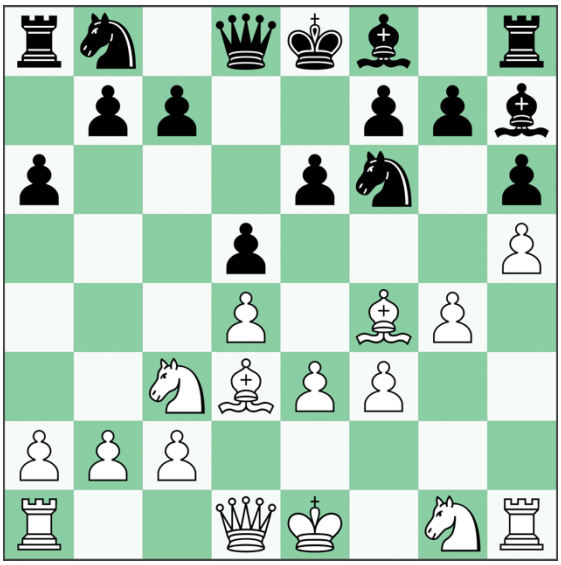
6...h6

Almost as popular is 6...h5 – grandmasters have played both moves. For what it is worth, the analysis engines *Stockfish 10* and *Komodo 10* prefer the text.

7. e3 a6

Sooner or later, in many lines of the Jobava-Prié, Black feels the need to spend a tempo on ...a6.

8. h5 ♗h7 9. ♗d3



▶9

9...c5!?

The capture 9...♗xd3 is more-or-less automatic in a somewhat similar position in the classical Caro-Kann, and was played by Nepomniachtchi in a 2014 World Rapid Championship loss to Baadur Jobava. The text is preferred by *Stockfish 10,* but *Komodo 10* rates the two moves equally.

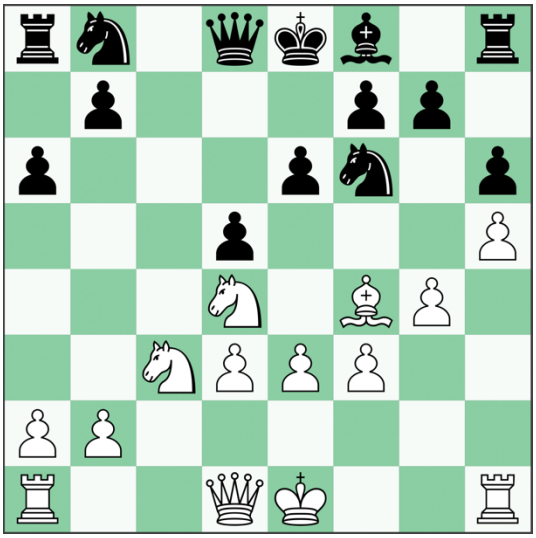
10. ♘ge2 ♗xd3

The engines say 10...♘c6!? is better. T. Spanton – K. Kalavannan, Southend 2016, continued 11. ♕d2 b5 12. a3 ♕a5 13. ♔f2!? ♕b6 14. ♗xh7 ♘xh7 15. ♔g2 cxd4 16. exd4 ♗e7, when the engines slightly prefer black (½:½, 38 moves).

11. cxd3!?

We have seen this idea before, in Part 1 of this series.

11...cxd4 12. ♘xd4



▶12

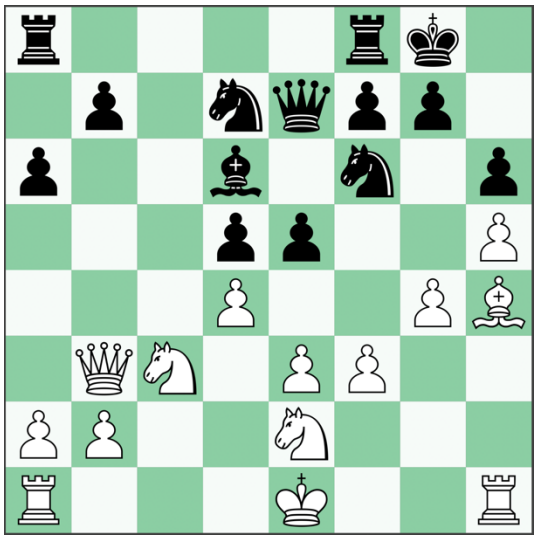
12...♘bd7

12...♘c6!? 13. ♘xc6 bxc6 14. d4 is probably nothing for black to worry about.

13. ♘de2 e5 14. ♗g3 ♗d6 15. d4 0-0 16. ♕b3!?

16. 0-0 would have been more solid.

16...♕e7? 17. ♗h4



▶17

17...exd4?

Better is 17...♗b4. The text loses a pawn.

18. ♘xd5 ♕e5 19. ♘xf6+ ♘xf6 20. ♘xd4

Black tries to win the pawn back…

20...♘d5 21. ♘f5 ♘xe3

22. ♘xe3 ♖fe8 23. 0-0-0 is winning for white. Instead the game saw...

22. ♕xe3?? ♕xb2

We have been following **B. Jobava – R. Hovhannisyan,** Yerevan (EU Championship) 2014. Black is slightly better, although the game was drawn.

Damiano's defence

C 40

Derek Roebuck

After 1. e4 e5 2. ♘f3 black has a few good moves (2…♘c6, 2…♘f6 and 2…d6) and a few that are probably not very good (2…f5, 2…d5 and 2…♕e7).

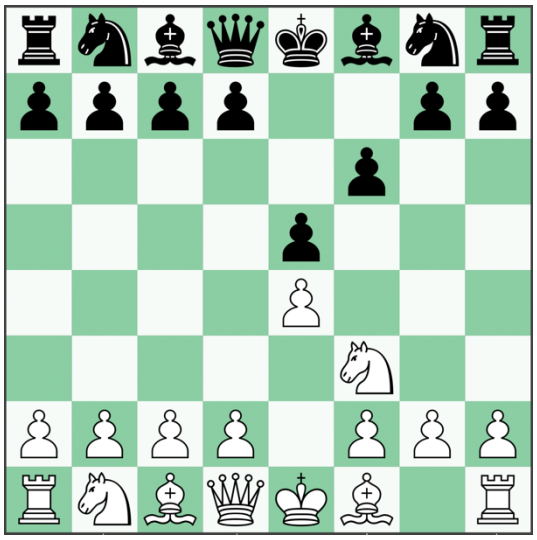
But what can we make of 2…f6? This defence of the e-pawn is named after Pedro Damião, the author of one of the earliest chess books, *Questo libro e da imparare giocare a scachi et de li partiti* (Rome, 1512). This attribution is definitely unfair to Damião, who correctly identified 2…f6 as poor, and clearly inferior to 2…♘c6 and 2…d6.

LIBRO DA IM-
PARARE GIOCARE A SCA-
chi: Et de bellissimi Partiti: Reuisti, & Re-
corretti. Con somma diligẽtia emẽdati,
da molti famosissimi Giocatori. In
lingua Spagnola, & Taliana.
Nouamente Stampato.

Pedro Damião (1475-1544)

2…f6 doesn't actually protect the e-pawn, because white can just play 3. ♘xe5! Another problem is that any other sensible third move by white (such as 3. d4, 3. ♗c4 or 3. ♘c3) will also lead to a comfortable advantage. But having said all that, you wouldn't want to mess things up if you ran into this defence as white, would you?

1. e4 e5 2. ♘f3 f6?

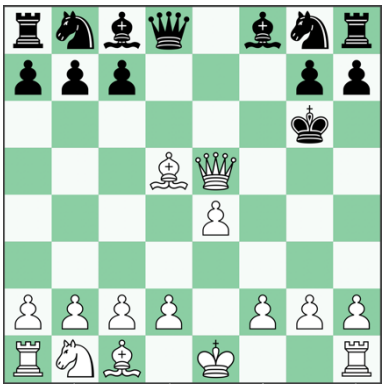


1 ▷3

3. ♘xe5! ♕e7

This is the move you are likely to face in practice. *Stockfish 12* says it is only slightly better than accepting a worse position a pawn down with 3…♘e7, but it does give black the chance that white will go wrong. If black blunders with 3…fxe5?? you have a win with 4. ♕h5+, after which black has only two legal moves.

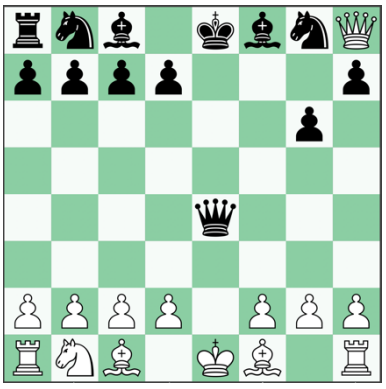
(1) 4…♔e7 5. ♕xe5+ ♔f7 6. ♗c4+ d5 7. ♗xd5+ ♔g6



variation

8. h4! h6 9. ♗xb7! ♗d6 10. ♕a5. Black can't play 10…♗xb7 because of 11. ♕f5#, so after 11. ♗xa8 white will be the exchange and a few pawns up, still with an attack on the black king.

(2) 4…g6 5. ♕xe5+ ♕e7 6. ♕xh8 ♕xe4+



variation

7. ♔d1! ♘e7 8. ♘c3. White is a rook and a pawn up, and should win easily.

4. ♘f3!

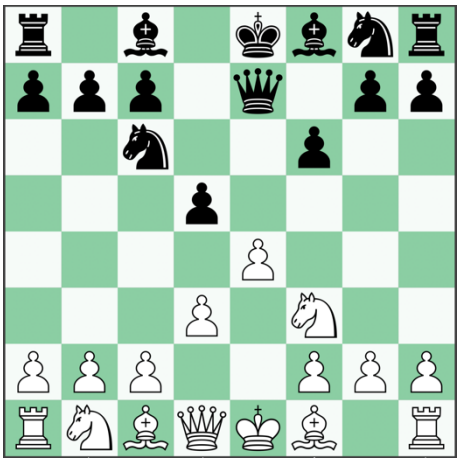
White has to avoid 4. ♕h5+?? g6 5. ♘xg6 ♕xe4+, which is losing! At first glance, 4. ♘c4?! looks good, but after 4…d5! white must play 5. ♕h5+! [5. ♘e3?? d4, and black is right back in the game] g6 6. ♕xd5. Developing the kingside pieces will be tricky, but black can play on after 6…♘c6!?

4…d5!?

4…♕xe4+ 5. ♗e2, with 0-0 and ♖e1 to come, is equally bad.

5. d3 ♘c6!?

5…dxe4 6. dxe4 ♕xe4+ 7. ♗e2 is the main line, and it is dire for black.



2 ▷3

6. ♘c3!

Now white has a dominant position after 6…♗e6 7. ♗e3, or 6…d4 7. ♘d5 ♕d8 and now 8. ♗e2 or 8. c3!?

Conclusion

2…f6? is a bad move, and as long as white plays sensibly he or she can obtain a comfortable advantage.

Games

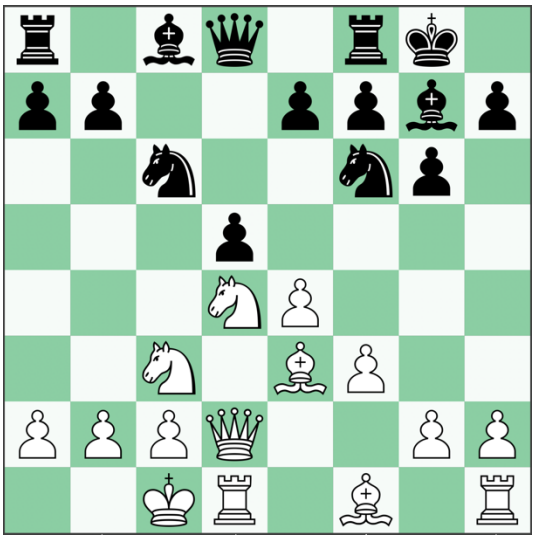
David Barry (ACF 1838)
Iker Hernandez Mendez (ACF 1419)
Australia (Perth CC Championship) 2021
Sicilian, Dragon variation (B 76)

[Barry]

1. e4 c5 2. ♘f3 d6 3. d4

A stronger player once told me that he liked to play closed, more strategic positions against young juniors. I will play open Sicilians against anyone, and even more stubbornly so against juniors. I out-rated this 12-year-old by 400 points! Of course I can out-calculate him.

3...cxd4 4. ♘xd4 ♘f6 5. ♘c3 g6 6. ♗e3 ♗g7 7. f3 0-0 8. ♕d2 ♘c6 9. 0-0-0 d5



▷10

10. ♕e1

It took me a few minutes – at the time I was unsure if I'd confused move orders – to remember this move, which prevents black from taking the pawn on e4 immediately, because of the possibility of a discovered attack against the queen.

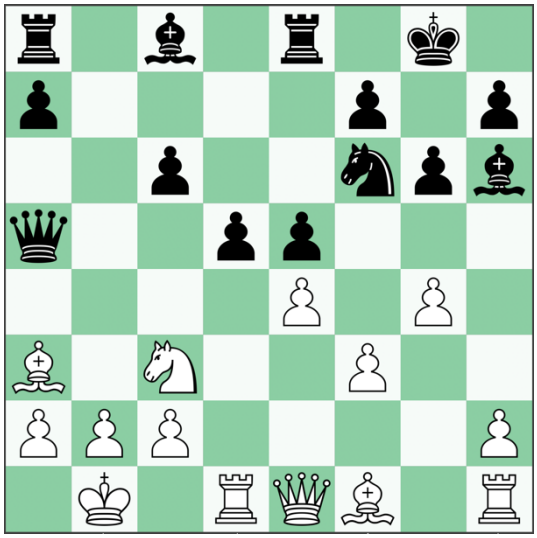
10...e5 11. ♘xc6 bxc6 12. ♗c5?!

12. exd5 is the more common move.

12... ♖e8 13. g4

This attack never gets going in "sac, sac, mate" style.

13...♕a5 14. ♗a3 ♗h6+ 15. ♔b1

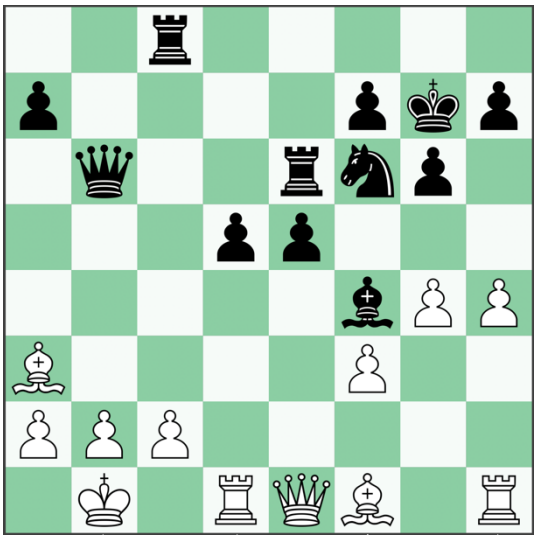


▶15

15...♔g7

If, for example, 15...dxe4 then 16. ♘xe4 ♕xe1 17. ♘xf6+, and this *zwischenzug* wins a piece. Black moves the king away from g8 to avoid tactics associated with this intermediate check.

16. exd5 cxd5 17. ♘b5 ♕b6 18. ♘d6 ♖e6 19. ♘xc8 ♖xc8 20. h4 ♗f4



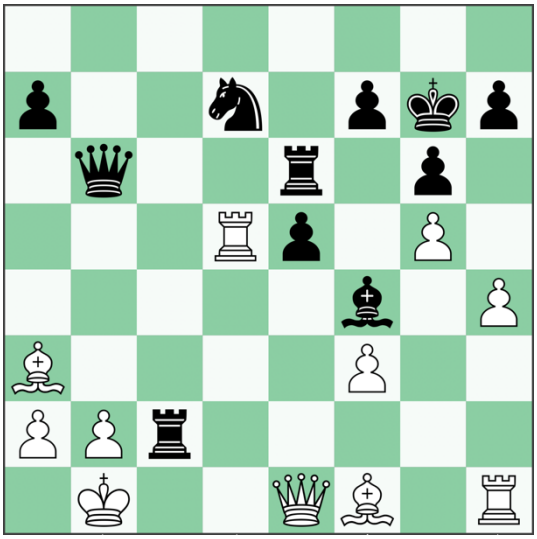
▷21

21. g5 ♘d7 22. ♖xd5

Collecting a pawn, and feeling like I was winning.

22... ♖xc2?!

The first unsound sacrifice of this game, which I was unable to refute over the board. Psychologically I felt like I was losing from here on.



▷21

23. b3

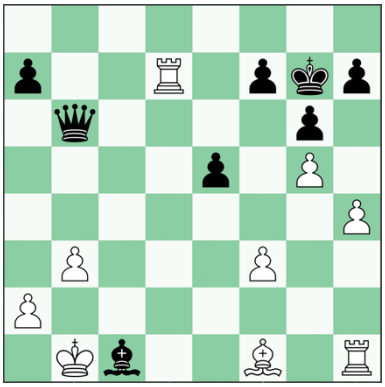
This is OK, and white is objectively better, but with best play the rook can be taken, with 23. ♔xc2 ♕c6+ 24. ♕c3! ♕xd5 25. ♗c4 winning the exchange by a skewer.

23... ♖ec6?!

The second unsound sacrifice, which I was unable to refute over the board. Black's attack felt monstrous, and I expected the game to be over soon.

24. ♖d1

The knight also can be taken: 24. ♖xd7 ♖c1+ 25. ♗xc1 ♖xc1+ 26. ♕xc1 ♗xc1.

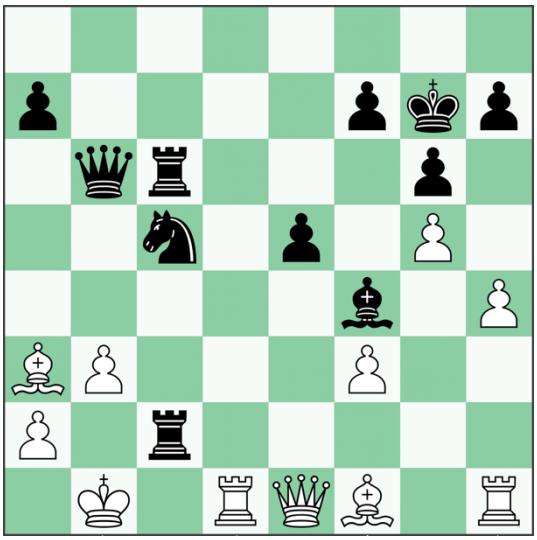


variation

Now 27. ♗c4!, the move I didn't spot, when white has two rooks for the queen, and will take on f7 next move with a winning attack. I had calculated instead the losing 27. ♔xc1? ♕c6+ and 28...♕xd7.

24...♘c5!?

At least I saw this sacrifice coming, so I wasn't jolted for a third time.

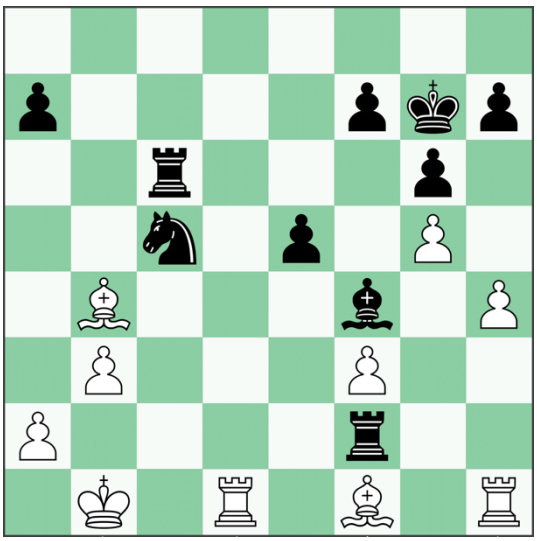


▷25

25. ♕b4!

The only move that doesn't lose; black threatened to sacrifice on b3. The rook can't be taken: 25. ♔xc2?? ♘d3+, and white can't save the queen without getting mated: 26. ♔xd3 ♕d4+ 27. ♔e2 ♕e3#.

25...♕xb4 26. ♗xb4 ♖f2



▷27

27. ♗b5?

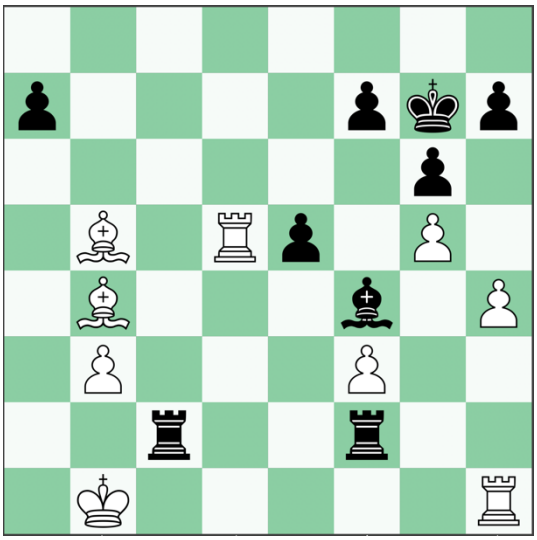
The computer finds 27. ♗e1!, when black has to exchange a pair of rooks with 27... ♖h2, because 27... ♖xf3? allows 28. ♗g2, with a skewer.

27... ♖c8 28. ♖d5 ♘xb3!

The sacrifices keep coming!

29. axb3 ♖cc2

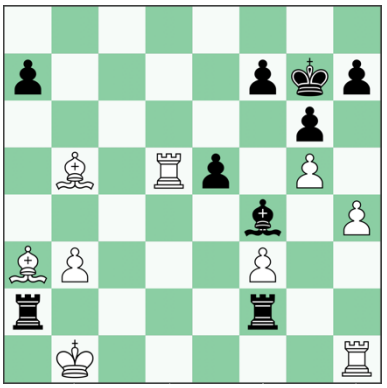
Black is threatening mate in three, starting with 30... ♖b2+.



▷30

30. ♖d2?

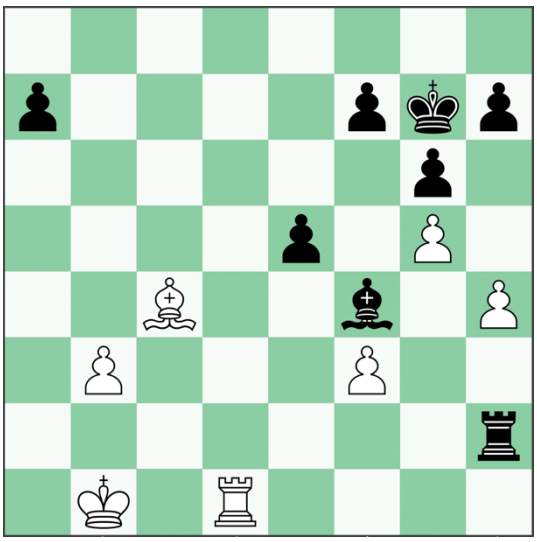
Objectively, the only move to hold the draw is 30. ♗a3. White has two choices after the obvious reply 30... ♖a2.



variation

One idea would be to play (in some order) ♗c4 and ♖d7, giving up the a3 bishop for a perpetual check against black's king, with potentially tricky complications for both players), or 31. ♖f1!, when black can't take on f1 because the a2 rook falls, leaving white a piece up. Instead, there's a "mad rook": 31...♖h2 32. ♖h1 ♖hf2 33. ♖f1 ♖g2 34. ♖g1 ♖gf2 35. ♖f1 etc. Not seeing either of these ideas, I exchanged into a pawn-down ending in which black has established a rook on white's second rank.

30...♖fxd2 31. ♗xd2 ♖xd2 32. ♗c4 ♖h2 33. ♖d1

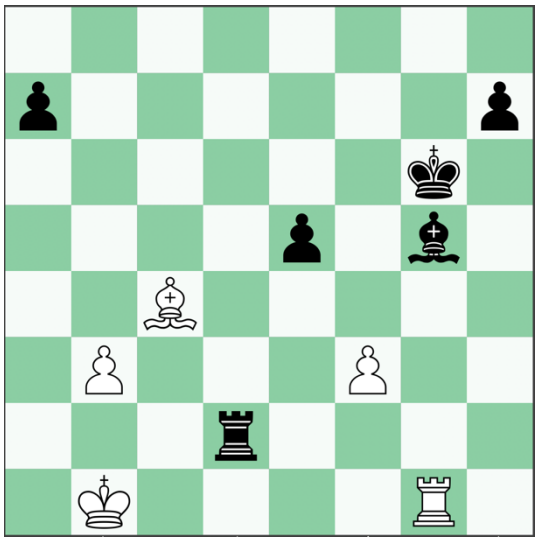


▶33

33...♖d2

33...♖xh4? 34. ♖d7 and it's white who has an active rook on the seventh.

34. ♖h1 f5 35. gxf6+ ♔xf6 36. h5 ♔g5 37. hxg6 ♔xg6 38. ♖g1+ ♗g5

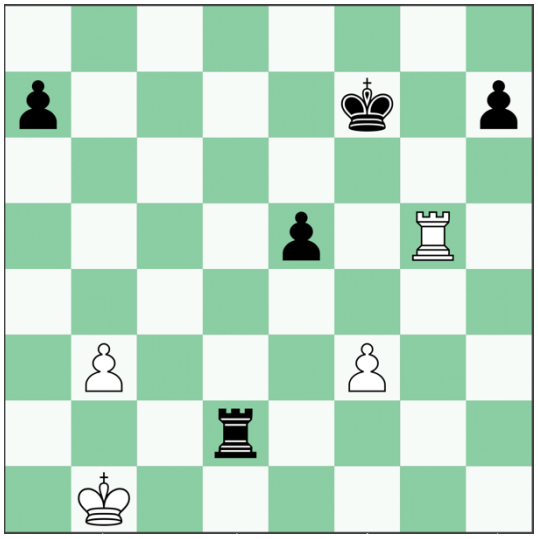


▷39

39. ♗f7+?!

I wanted to exchange one pair of pieces into a drawish ending with either rooks or opposite-coloured bishops. I was very unsure about trading the bishops (which is not actually forced here, since black can play ...♔f6), and *Stockfish* disagrees with my decision.

39...♔xf7 40. ♖xg5

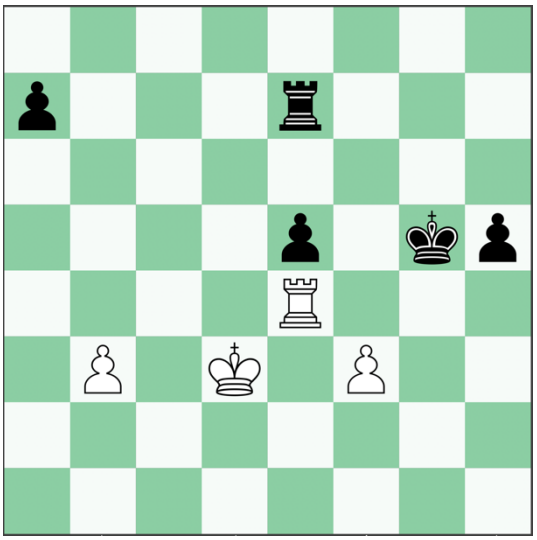


▶40

40...♔f6?

Play from both sides in this rook ending was imperfect, and I don't feel bad about the trade of bishops as a practical matter. *Stockfish* says that black should protect the e-pawn with the rook: 40...♖d5 41. ♖h5 [41. f4 h6!] ♔g6 42. ♖h1. White's rook is the more passive, and black is ready to start pushing the passed h-pawn.

41. ♖h5 ♖d7 42. ♔c2 ♖e7 43. ♔d3 ♔g6 44. ♖h4 ♔g5 45. ♖e4 h5



▷46

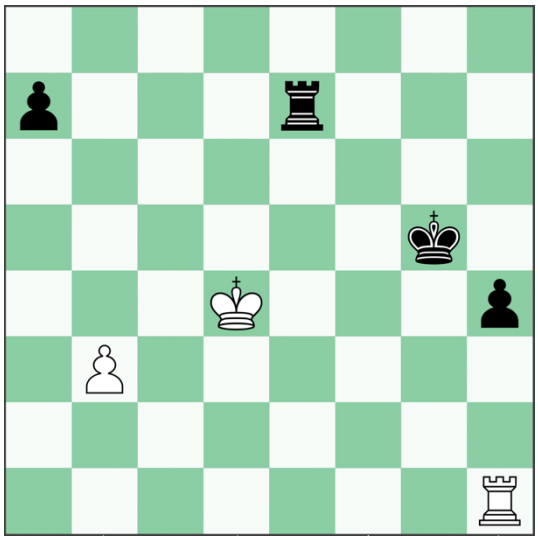
46. f4+?

Losing. White should leave the fourth rank clear for the rook to cut off black's king. It is better to move the king to e3 or e2, ready to run to the h-file and intercept the pawn if black tries to advance it.

46...♔f5 47. fxe5 ♖xe5

Now we're in tablebase[2] territory, and black is objectively winning. Note that without the a- and b-pawns, the game would be a draw, since white could trade rooks and reach the well-known h-pawn draw.[3]

48. ♖h4 ♔g5 49. ♖h1 h4 50. ♔d4 ♖e7



▷51

51. ♖g1+

My hope was to lure black's king in front of the h-pawn, so that I could cut it off along the g-file and prevent promotion. Without the a- and b-pawns, that would be a draw, since white's king is (just!) close enough to the pawn: the Lucena position with a rook-pawn is only winning if the defending king is cut off by four files or more.

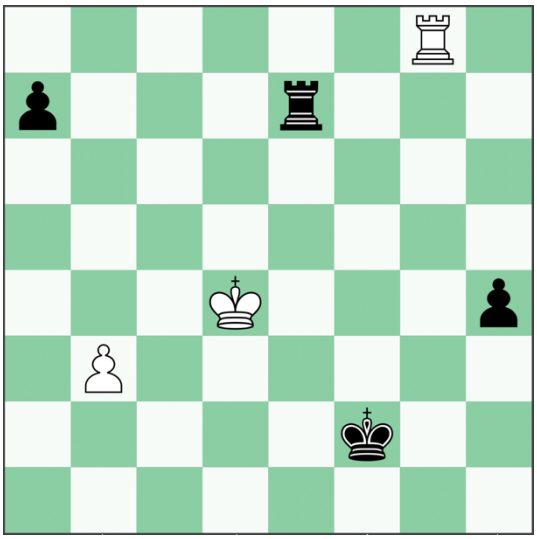
---

[2] Endgame tablebases are precalculated analyses that give a definite result (win, draw or loss) for any position with sufficiently few pieces. Currently, complete 7-piece tablebases are freely available online. See for example www.lichess.org.

[3] **Patzer** 2019; **1**(2): 44-47

With the a- and b-pawns on, however, the evaluation depends on the relative positions of the pieces and pawns. I don't pretend to know the intricacies even now, with the tablebase guiding the way, and I certainly had no idea during the game.

51...♔f4 52. ♖f1+ ♔g3 53. ♖g1+ ♔f2 54. ♖g8



▶54

54... ♖h7

If 54...h3 55. ♖f8+ ♔e2 56. ♖h8, then 56... ♖e3! is the only move to win. My chess abilities never feel so inadequate as when I click through tablebase lines.

55. ♖f8+ ♔g3

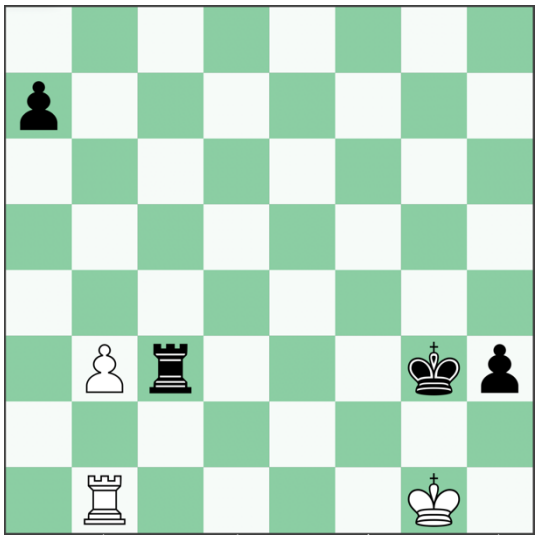
Not giving up the win yet, but the tablebase says black should hide the king from checks by going to the d-file. Once the king is safe, the pawn can be pushed to h3. White's rook can try to block the pawn, but then black's king can chase it away:

55...♔e2 56. ♖e8+ ♔d2 57. ♖f8 h3 58. ♖f2+ ♔e1 59. ♖h2 ♔f1 60. ♔e3 ♔g1 61. ♖a2 h2 62. ♖a1+ ♔g2 63. ♖a2+ ♔g3 and black wins.

56. ♖g8+ ♔f4 57. ♖f8+ ♔g5 58. ♖g8+ ♔f6 59. ♖g2 h3 60. ♖h2 ♔g5 61. ♔e3 ♔g4 62. ♔f2 ♖f7+ 63. ♔g1 ♔g3 64. ♖c2 ♖f3 65. ♖b2 ♖c3

Threatening mate.

66. ♖b1

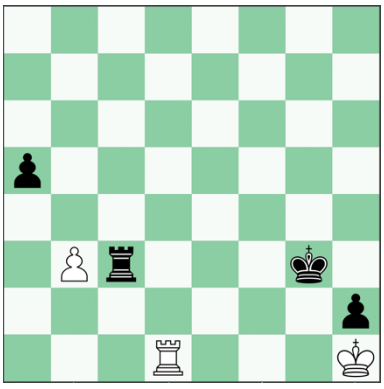


▶66

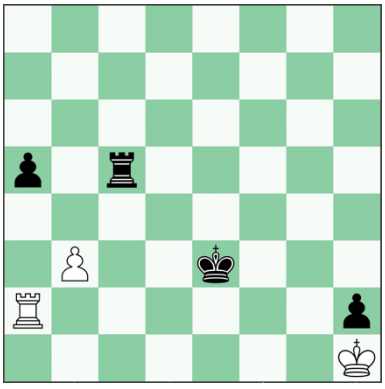
66... ♖c2?

This move draws. Only two moves win, and in neither case is the win simple. The non-comprehensive analysis that follows is mostly of the "clicking on tablebase options" variety, and serves as yet another reminder that chess is very hard.

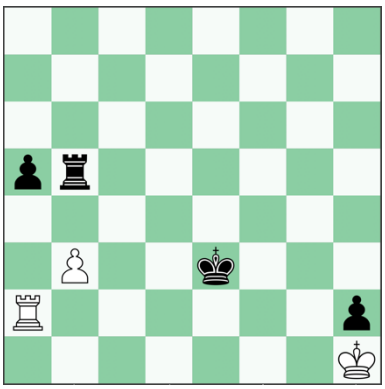
(1) 66...a5 67. ♔h1 h2 (not the only choice) 68. ♖d1.


variation

68... ♖c5 [and not 68... ♖xb3?? 69. ♖d3+, with a draw] 69. ♖a1 ♔f2 70. ♖a2+ ♔e3.

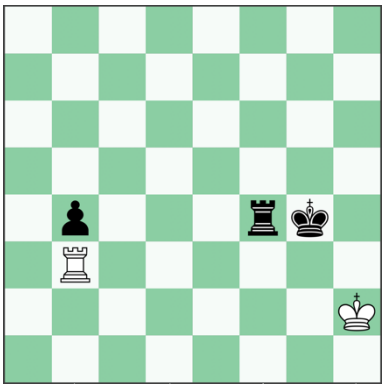

variation

Now both captures of the h-pawn are hopeless: 71. ♖xh2 ♖c1+ 72. ♔g2 ♖c2+, and black will win the pawn ending, or 71. ♔xh2 ♔d3 72. ♖a1 ♔c2, and there is no way to protect the pawn on b3. White could instead try 71. ♖g2 ♖b5 72. ♖a2.


variation

72... ♔d3 [72... ♖xb3? 73. ♖xa5 draws] 73. ♖a1 ♔c2 74. ♖a3 ♖c5 75. ♖a2+ ♔xb3 76. ♖xh2 ♖c1+ 77. ♔g2 ♖c2+, and white's king will be much too far away to help stop the a-pawn.

(2) 66...h2+. That this move wins surprised me, since it seems so similar to the drawn ending seen in the game. Now the stalemate trick doesn't work, because black can give up the h-pawn: 67. ♔h1 a5! (the only winning move) 68. b4 axb4 69. ♖b3 ♖f3! (another only winning move) 70. ♖b1 ♖f4 71. ♖b3+ ♔g4 72. ♔xh2.


variation

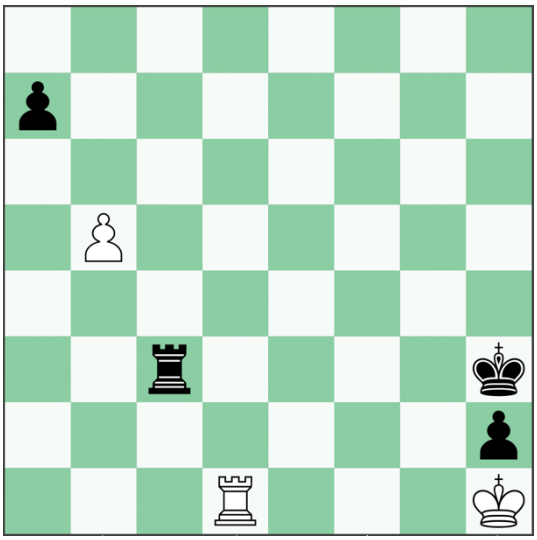
72... ♖c4! With white's king cut off along the c-file, black can chase white's rook away by getting his king to a4 via b5, eventually reaching the Lucena position.

67. b4

The only move to draw, but not hard to find: I wanted to threaten a check along the third rank.

67...h2+ 68. ♔h1 ♖c3 69. b5 ♔h3 70. ♖d1

Not yet thinking of stalemate.



▶70

70...♖g3

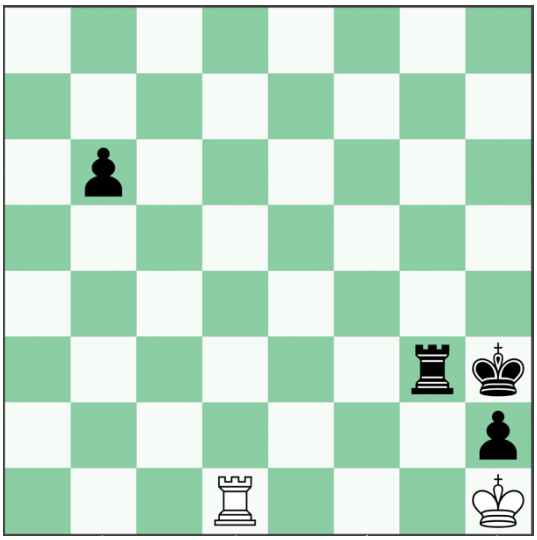
70...♖b3 might have tricked me. 71. ♖c1 ♖xb5 72. ♖a1 ♖b3 73. ♖a3! draws, but I had planned 71. ♖a1?, which allows 71...♔g3!, another only winning move, forcing my rook away from the a-file (where it could give a check before taking on a7) and allowing black to win the b-pawn.

71. b6

Now I see the stalemate trick.

71...axb6

Over the board I was horrified that I'd blundered, hallucinating that black would have a win with the opposition after 71...♖g1+ 72. ♖xg1 hxg1♕+ 73. ♔xg1 axb6. Presumably, if we had reached this position, then I would have realised that my king would be able to leave the first rank.



▷72

72. ♖d3!

Four years after studying some rook endings, one of the rook-pawn stalemate themes finally nets me a half point.

72...♔h4 73. ♖xg3 ♔xg3

½:½

I have never felt so triumphant at drawing against someone rated 400 points below me.

Gerald Parfett (ECF 117, FIDE 1629)
Geoffrey Cooper (ECF 116 ≈ FIDE 1570)
England (Middlesex – Essex U120) 2020
Queen's gambit, Slav defence (D 15)

[Parfett, Morton]

1. d4

I started my chess adventure by playing the Torre attack.[4] I was impressed by Carlos Torre's efforts at Moscow and Baden-Baden in 1925, and I was encouraged by Bob Wade[5] at Morley College[6] and the Nautical School where he ran chess classes. He kindly photocopied games from both the Moscow and the Baden-Baden tournament books at the Christmas party he held for his students. There was also a Torre attack played by Kasparov that I saw when he had a chess column in a short-lived daily newspaper.

1...♘f6 2. ♘f3

For an interesting debate on the use of ♘f3 in queen's pawn openings see Reti.[7]

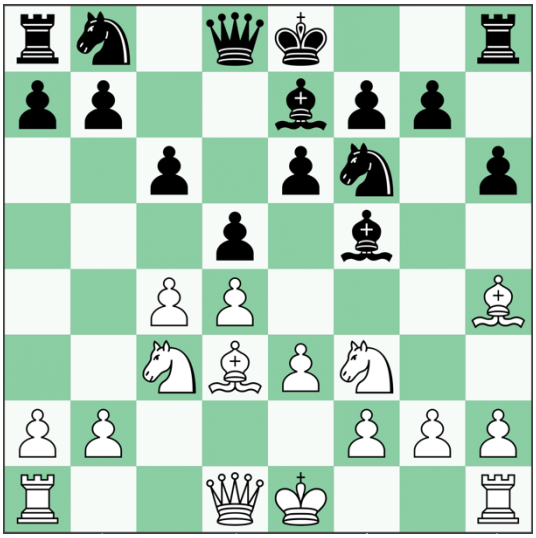
2...d5 3. c4

I've essayed various attempts at the Queen's gambit, influenced by Mathew Sadler's "Queens gambit declined"[8] and Bogdan Lalic's "Queen's gambit declined: Bg5 systems".[9]

3...c6

So it's to be a Slav. Anything I know about this opening is by studying Botvinnik's "100 selected games"[10] and John Shaw's "Starting out: the Queen's gambit".[11]

4. ♘c3 ♗f5 5. ♗g5 e6 6. e3 h6 7. ♗h4 ♗e7 8. ♗d3



▶8

8...♗xd3 9. ♕xd3

I used to feel uncomfortable giving up my light-squared bishop, but not after reading Sadler and Regan's

---

[4] 1. d4 ♘f6 2. ♘f3 e6 3. ♗g5 (A 46) or 1. d4 d5 2. ♘f3 ♘f6 3. ♗g5 (D 03).

[5] Robert Wade (1921-2008) was a famous New Zealand international master who lived and played in the United Kingdom for much of his life.

[6] Morley College CC are still playing in the London League, or would be if not for COVID-19.

[7] Reti R. *Masters of the chessboard*. Russell Enterprises, 2012, pp.161-166.

[8] Sadler M. *Queen's gambit declined*. Everyman Chess, 2000.

[9] Lalic B. *Queen's gambit declined: Bg5 systems*. Everyman Chess, 2000.

[10] Botvinnik MM. *One hundred selected games*. MacGibbon & Kee, 1951.

[11] Shaw J. *Starting out: the Queen's gambit*. Everyman Chess, 2002.

"Chess for life"[12] and Thomas Kuhn's "The Copernican revolution"![13]

9...♘bd7 10. cxd5 exd5

See Alekhine's "Best Games"[14] for his games in the Carlsbad tournament.

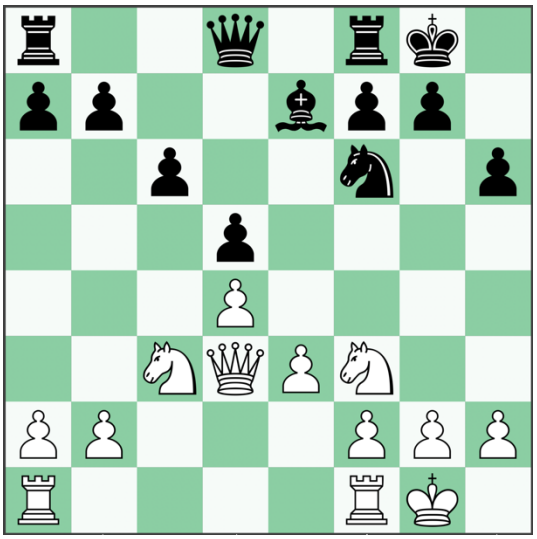
11. 0–0 0–0

This position occurs 273 times in the database (as of April 2021), but white has mostly gone for 12. ♖ab1 or 12. a3 here.

12. ♗xf6

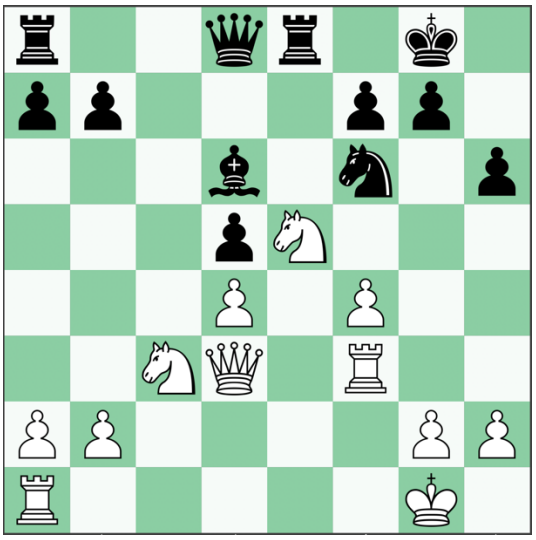
The seventh most popular move.

12...♘xf6



▷13

13. ♘e5!? ♖e8 14. f4!? c5 15. ♖f3 cxd4 16. exd4 ♗d6



▷17

17. ♖af1

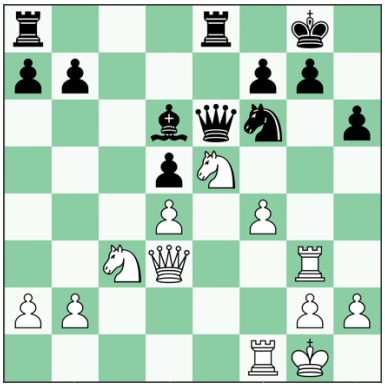
Doubling the rooks on the f file is usually a reasonable idea.

17...♕c8

I didn't really understand this, but my next move threatens ♘xf7 and ♕g6.

18. ♖g3 ♖e6?

Black could have defended here with 18...♕e6.



variation

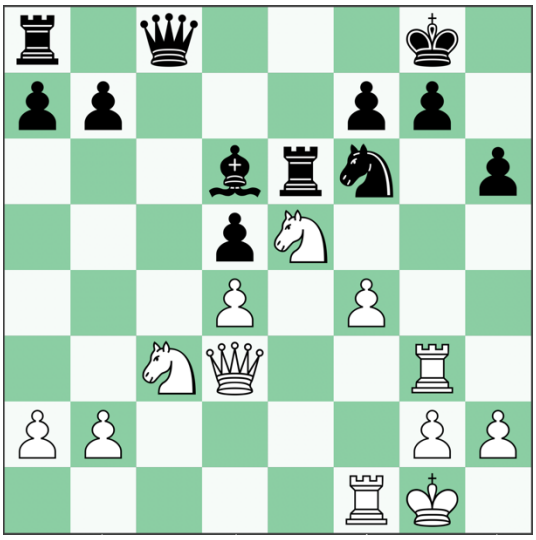
[12] Sadler M, Regan N. *Chess for life*. Gambit Publications, 2016.

[13] Kuhn T. *The Copernican revolution*. Harvard University Press, 1957.

[14] Alekhin A. *My best games of chess 1908-1923*. G. Bell and Sons, 1927.

(1) 19. ♘g4!? ♘xg4 20. f5 is a computer suggestion, but not something that club players tend to play

(2) White would probably have to change plans and double rooks on the e-file: 19. ♖e3 ♖ad8 20. h3 and ♖fe1, with a balanced position.



▷19

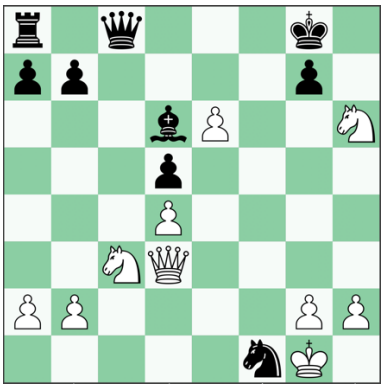
19. ♘xf7!

I calculated I was gaining two pawns for the piece and an exposed king. All I had to do was stay cool, double the rooks etc.

19...♘e4

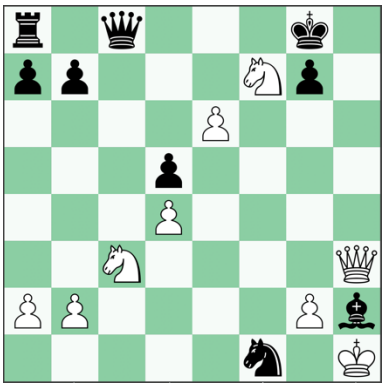
After 19...♘h5 [19...♔xf7 20. ♕g6+ ♔e7 21. f5! is crushing] 20. f5! black has a choice of two unpalatable options:

(1) 20...♘xg3 21. fxe6 ♘xf1 [or 21...♕xe6 22. hxg3, when white is a piece up] 22. ♘xh6+.



variation

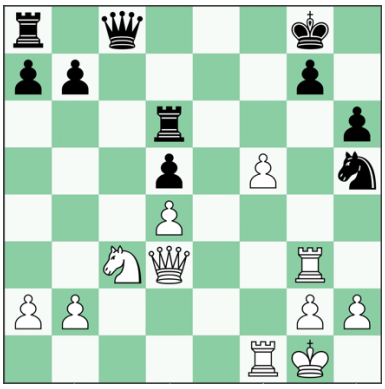
White is winning. 22...♔h8 [the only other way to avoid forced mate is 22...gxh6, which loses to 23. ♕g6+ ♔h8 24. ♕xh6+ ♔g8 25. ♘xd5, with the unstoppable threat of ♘f6+] 23. ♘f7+ ♔g8 24. ♕h3 ♗xh2+ 25. ♔h1!



variation

25...♘g3+ [25...♔f8 26. ♘xd5] 26. ♔xh2 ♘h5 27. ♘xd5 ♕b8+ 28. g3 ♕xg3+ 29. ♕xg3 ♘xg3 30. ♘e7+ ♔f8 31. ♘g6+ ♔g8 32. ♔xg3 ♔h7 33. e7 ♔xg6 34. ♘d8! promotes the e-pawn.

(2) 20... ♖f6 21. ♘xd6 ♖xd6.



variation

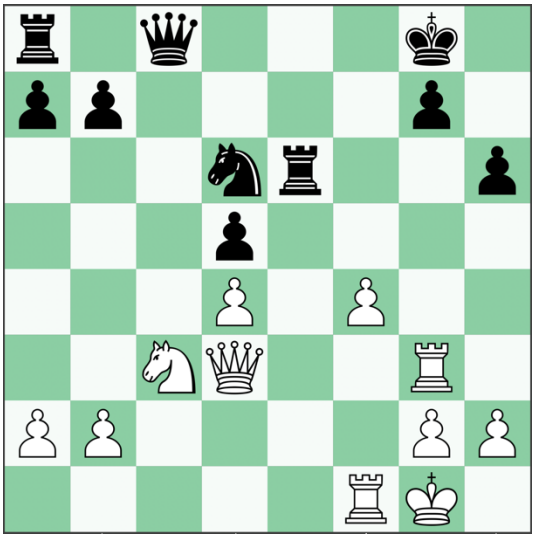
Now 22. ♖h3! ♘f6 23. ♖xh6 ♕c4 [23...gxh6 24. ♕g3+ picks up the rook on d6] 24. ♖h3 wins.

20. ♘xd6

20. f5! is also strong: 20…♗xg3 [20...♖f6 21. ♘xd6 ♖xd6 22. ♘xd5! ♖xd5 23. ♕xe4] 21. fxe6 ♗xh2+ 22. ♔xh2 ♕xe6 23. ♘e5 should win.

20...♘xd6?

After 20...♖xd6 white can keep a big advantage with 21. ♘xd5 ♖xd5 22. ♕xe4 or 21. ♘xe4 dxe4 22. ♕xe4.



▷21

21. f5!

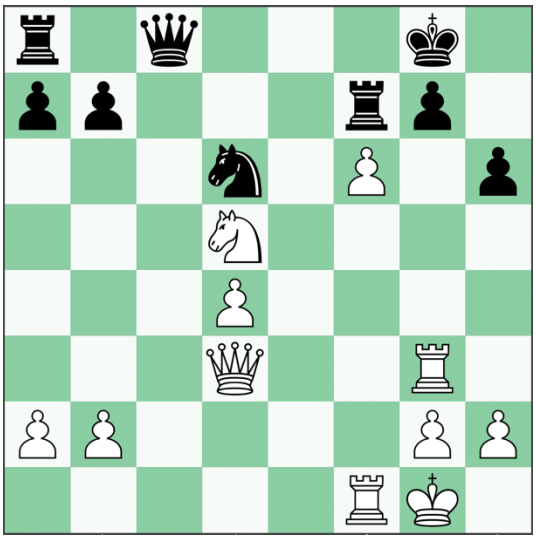
In Reti's annotation of a game between Tarrasch and Alekhine, played at the 1922 tournament at Piešťany (Bad Pistyan) he writes: "The progress of the attack thus far shows how difficult it is to storm a position without the aid of pawns".[15]

I had not seen this continuation when I played 19. ♘xf7!

21...♖f6 22. ♘xd5

Black's position is falling apart.

22...♖f7 23. f6!



▶23

23...♕d7?

23...♕e6 fails after 24. ♕b3!? ♖e8 25. ♖e3 ♕d7 with ♘e7+ to come.

24. ♕g6!?

24. ♖xg7+ ♖xg7 25. fxg7 ♕xg7 26. ♖f6! ♘f7 27. ♖g6 also wins.

24...♘e8 25. ♘e7+ ♔f8 26. fxg7+

1:0

A reward, perhaps, for studying the games of Alekhine, Botvinnik and Spassky amongst others. And of course eternal gratitude to Andrew Whiteley[16] for his classes (1985-88).

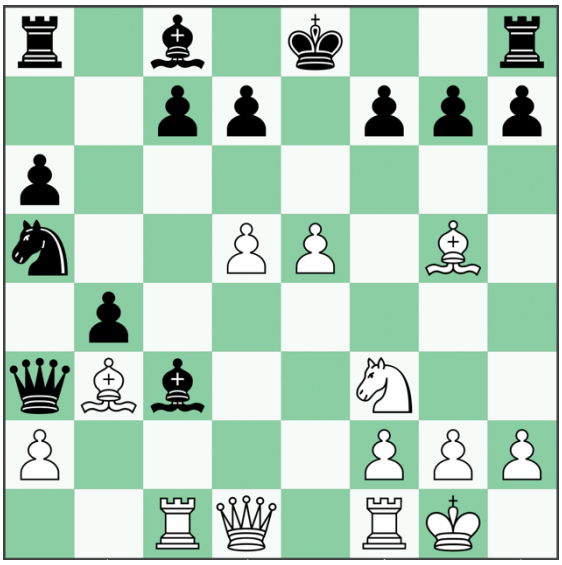
[15] R. Reti. *Masters of the chessboard*. Russell Enterprises, 2012, p.197.

[16] Andrew Whiteley (1947-2014) was an English international master who was a very popular member of the Kings Head CC in London.

My best move

Julian Rodriguez

Australia (ACF 1646)



▷16

Julian Rodriguez – Sophie Crofts
Australia (Dick Lilly Swiss) 2020

16. ♗e7!!

Other moves are probably winning, but the engine agrees that this is by far the best. The problem with 16. d6?, intending ♕d5, is that black has time to take on b3. Instead, white prevents black from castling in a wonderfully simple manner. This move would be a lot easier to see if black had a piece on e7, and it was a capture!

Julian explains his thoughts like this:

When I played 15. d5 on the previous move I didn't have anything concrete in mind, but it seemed like the only way to proceed at the time. I had been thinking about an exchange sac for the c3 bishop, but I noticed that if I could put my queen or bishop on c5 the b-pawn would be pinned. Since I didn't have time to do this, 16. ♗e7 was the only way to take the a3-f8 diagonal. Calculating out 16...♔xe7 17. d6+ ♔e8 18. ♕d5, hitting the a8 rook seemed favourable. 16...♘xb3 leaves black in a terrible position after the 17. ♖xc3 tactic that happened in the game. I wasn't actually sure this move worked, as during this game I had a migraine, which was growing worse and affecting my ability to calculate. I usually never play moves unless I'm sure of them, so when I found 16. ♗e7 and played it over the board, it certainly felt like a very special moment, even before I knew it worked. Funnily enough, Sophie and I exchanged looks of confusion over it.

16...♘xb3 17. ♖xc3! ♔xe7

The computer favours 17...♕a5, but white can answer with 18. ♖xb3 or even 18. ♖c4!?, given that the black knight has no escape route.

18. ♖xb3

This is a better option for a human player than the engine moves 18. ♖xc7 or 18. d6+.

18...♕a5

18...♕xa2 19. ♘g5! h6 20. d6+ ♔f8 21. ♘xf7! is fatal for black.

19. ♕d2 ♖b8 20. ♕g5+ ♔f8

20...♔e8 loses after 21. d6 cxd6 22. ♕xg7 ♖f8 23. exd6.

21. ♕d8#

When did you start playing chess?

I started playing chess when I was three or four – my grandmother and former Metro club member Gerard Sainsbury taught me.

When did you first join a club?

I joined Lathlain Junior Chess Club, headed by Robert Pilgrim, in 2008, and participated in its events intermittently until around 2012.

I kind of restarted chess all over in 2018, when I hadn't played for many years, and just watched videos for the entirety of 2018 until I started playing again when I joined the Metropolitan Chess Club (Perth, Australia) in 2019.

What type of events do you most enjoy playing in?

I have only played in rapid and classical time formats, but I tend to find online blitz chess the most fun, although relatively I perform better in the other time formats. I can't help but favour play that rewards barbaric attacks like blitz.

Do you have an especially memorable tournament?

The 2019 Metropolitan Chess Club Championship "D" Division was really special for me. After not having played chess for years I joined a legitimate club and won my first tournament almost perfectly, winning every game and only losing in the final round after blundering to a mate in two from a winning position, which I found quite funny.

Is your rating going up or down, and do you care?

Recently, my rating seems to be increasing more than ever, as I'm defeating strong players that I probably would have been destroyed by six months ago. I don't really care about my rating though, I just want to win!

Do you study chess, and if so, what aspects?

Currently, all I study is opening theory, as although in my opinion it's less important than chess principles, middlegame strategy and endgame theory, I am much further behind on it than the other areas. All I've known up to this year was the Sicilian and a little bit of Ruy Lopez theory, only sticking to principled play otherwise.

Do you have any goals in chess?

I had wanted to become a candidate master, just so I could have some title of mastery next to my name in regards to chess. But with my recent rapid increase in prowess, I think that sets the bar far too low – I want to be a grandmaster!

Julian Rodriguez

Rook versus two connected pawns

♖ 0/c1, ♖ 0/c2

Derek Roebuck

Rook versus two connected pawns is quite difficult to play for the side with the rook (arbitrarily white, once again, in this article). It is important to note that all three results are possible.

In some positions it is not obvious whether the side with the rook should play for a win or a draw, so we must look for some guidelines to help us.

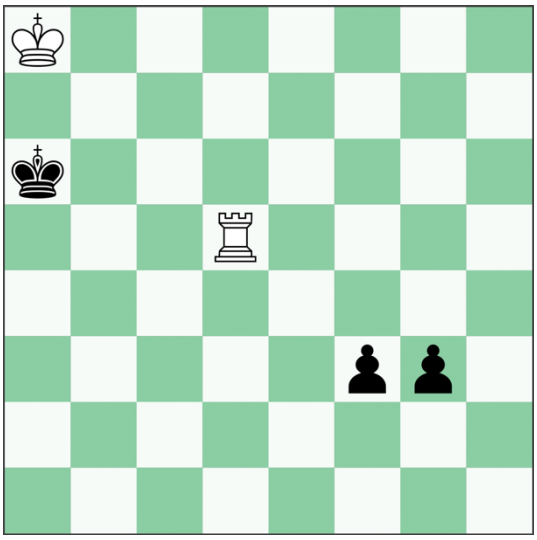
In general, if the pawns have not advanced past the fifth rank, white should win.

If both pawns are on the sixth rank, however, they will usually beat the rook if the white king is not able to approach them (diagram 1). The only exceptions occur when white has mating threats (diagram 2) or some kind of forced repetition of position (diagram 3).

If both kings are close to the pawns, then every move counts, and precise calculation becomes very important (diagram 4). Black will draw when white can win the first pawn but must give up his or her rook to capture the second. If white captures one pawn but the other promotes, we reach the ending of queen versus rook. This is a forced win for black, but there are not many club players who know how to convert it, so at our level it is still possible that white will escape with a draw.

In this article I will show you some tactical ideas for the player with the rook (*the check behind the pawns*), and also some methods for ensuring a draw (*Dvoretsky's tailhook*). But first let's look at a classic position that every chess player should know.

Connected pawns on the sixth rank



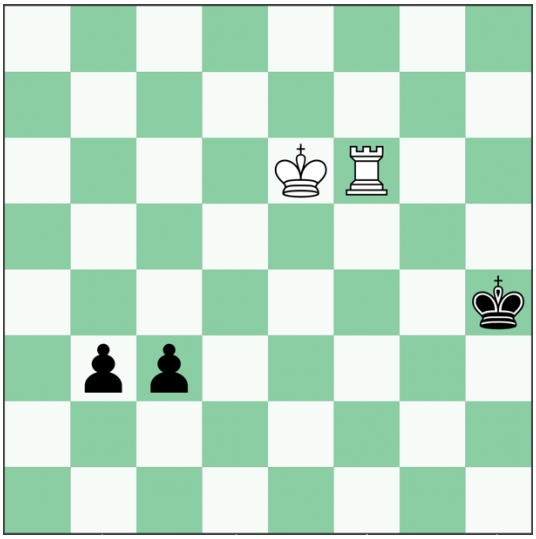
1 Connected pawns on the sixth ▷

White will run out of rook checks very soon, and at some point has to try to do something about the pawns.

1. ♖f5 g2

1…f2, with the idea of…g2, also wins. The rook can take one of the pawns, but the other will promote. Check for yourself that this doesn't work with connected pawns on the fifth rank.

Exceptions to the sixth rank rule

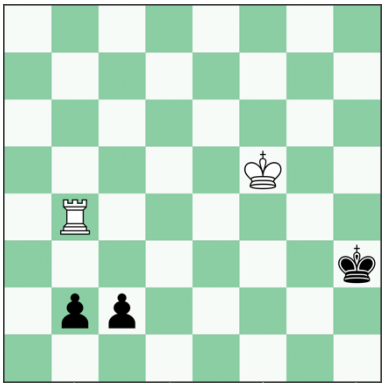


2 J. Moravec 1928 ▷

White can escape with a draw here, but only by using mating threats:

1. ♔f5! ♔g3!?

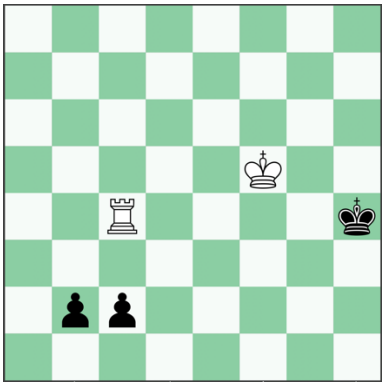
(1) After 1…b2 2. ♖b6 c2 3. ♖b4+ ♔h3 [3…♔h5?? 4. ♖xb2 c1♕ 5. ♖h2#] we need to know a useful little trick.



variation

4. ♖b3+! is the *check behind the pawns* (see diagram 5). Now black has to repeat moves in order to avoid 4…♔h2?? 5. ♖xb2, pinning and winning the c-pawn.

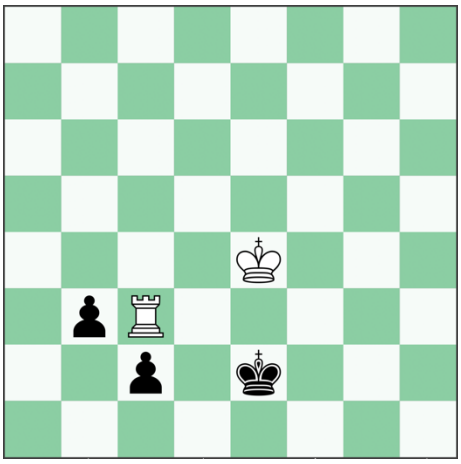
(2) 1…c2 2. ♖c6 b2 3. ♖c4+! draws.



variation

If the black king tries to escape back down the board with 3…♔h5, then 4. ♖c3 ♔h6 [as before, 4…♔h4 5. ♖c4+ repeats moves] 5. ♔f6 ♔h7. 6. ♖c7+! keeps it under control. After 3…♔h3 4. ♖c3+ black must repeat moves with 4…♔h4 or lose the second pawn to a fork after 4…♔h2?? 5. ♖xc2+.

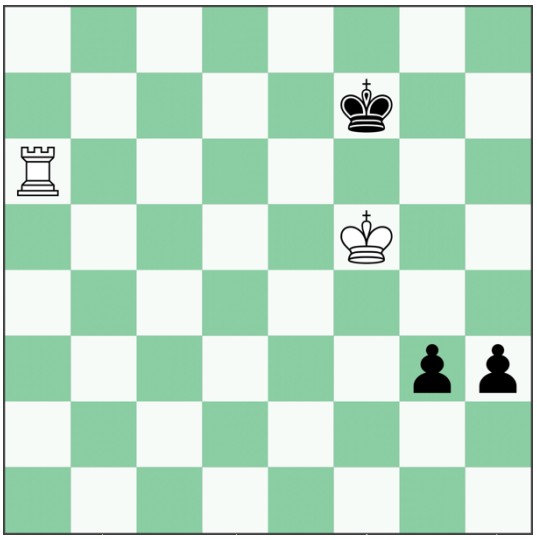
2. ♖c6 c2 3. ♖c3+ ♔f2 4. ♔e4 ♔e2



2a ▷5

5. ♖e3+ ♔d2 6. ♖d3+ ♔c1 7. ♖xb3

Now it is safe to capture the b-pawn, because the black king is obstructing the c-pawn.



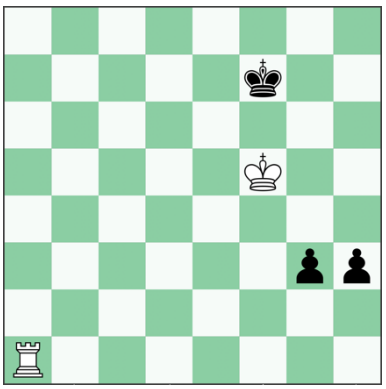
3 Repetition of position ▷

White has to be very careful here, because he or she can easily lose.

1. ♖a7+!

(1) 1. ♔g4? is obviously a bad idea, because after 1…g2 white runs out of lateral checks, and must retreat the rook to a1, after which …h2 will be decisive.

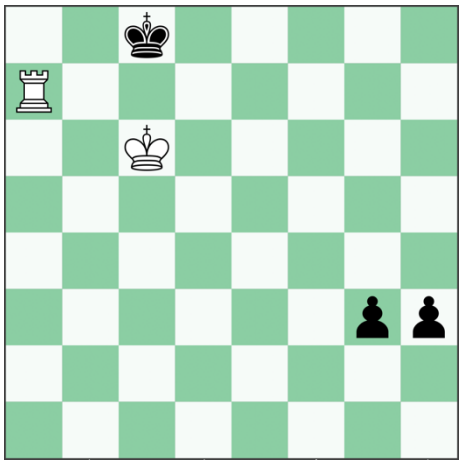
(2) 1. ♖a1? also loses if black plays correctly.



variation

1…h2! [1…g2? allows 2. ♖a7+! ♔e8 3. ♔e6 ♔d8 4. ♔d6 ♔c8 5. ♖a1 h2 6. ♔c6 ♔b8 7. ♖b1+ ♔a8 8. ♖a1+ ♔b8 9. ♖b1+ ♔c8 10. ♖a1, with a draw] 2. ♖a7+ ♔f8 3. ♖a1 [3. ♔f6 h1♕ would cover white's intended mating square] ♔e7! 4. ♖a7+ ♔d6 5. ♖h7 g2. This leads to the ending of queen versus rook, and although this is a forced win for black there are not many club level players who know how to convert it, so it is still possible that white will escape with a draw.

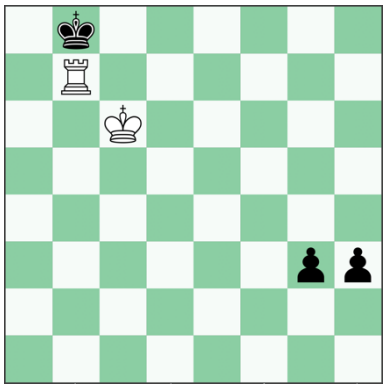
1…♔f8 2. ♔f6 ♔e8 3. ♔e6 ♔d8 4. ♔d6 ♔c8 5. ♔c6



3a ▶5

5…♔d8

Black has to acquiesce to the draw, because 5…♔b8?? 6. ♖b7+ wins for white.



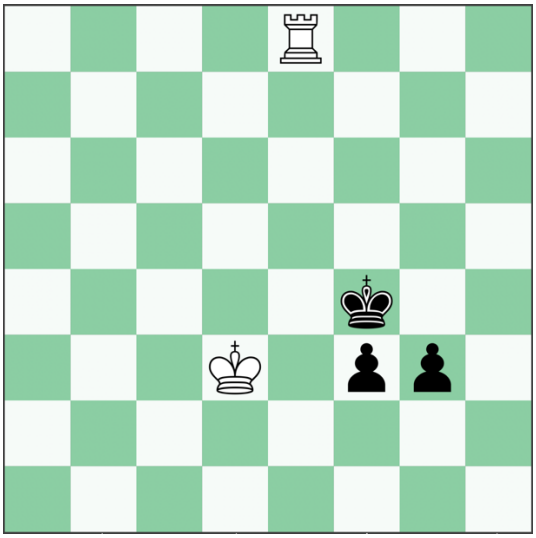
variation

6…♔c8 [6…♔a8 7. ♔b6 g2 8. ♖g7] 7. ♖g7! ♔d8 8. ♖xg3 h2 9. ♖h3.

6. ♔d6

White can repeat moves indefinitely.

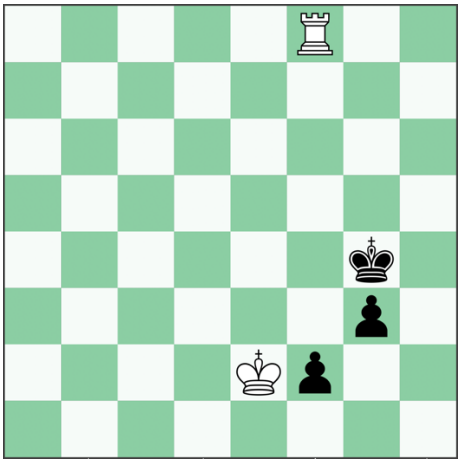
The borderline case



4 ▷▶

Here white to move can win, and the method is not particularly difficult.

1. ♖f8+ ♔g4 2. ♔e3 f2 3. ♔e2



4a ▶3

3...♔h3

3...♔g5 4. ♔f1 ♔h4 5. ♖g8 is a transposition.

4. ♔f1 ♔h4 5. ♖g8 ♔h3 6. ♖g7 ♔h4 7. ♔g2

White wins easily.

But what happens if it is black to move in diagram 4?

1...g2!

It turns out that this is winning for black.

2. ♖f8+ ♔e5

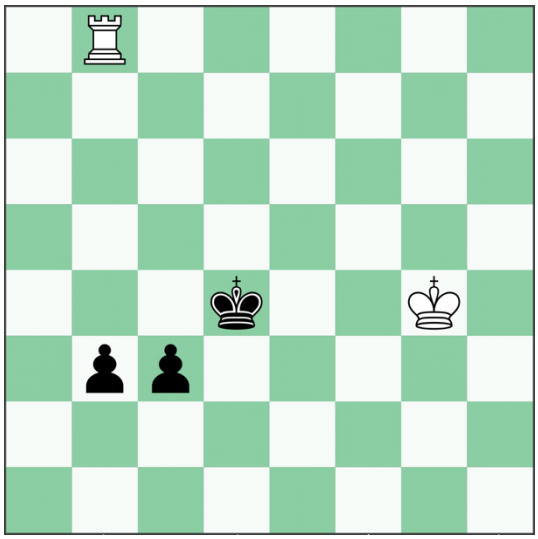
Although this is the fastest method, actually every black move wins.

3. ♖e8+

3. ♖g8 loses to 3...f2.

3...♔d5 4. ♖d8+ ♔e6 5. ♖e8+ ♔f7

The check behind the pawns



5 ▷60

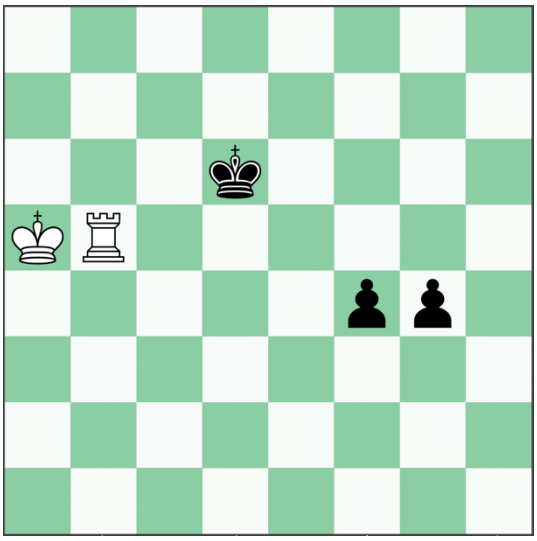
White resigned here in G.S. Fridstein – A.S. Lutikov, USSR 1954, when he could have drawn with a simple idea.

60. ♖b4+

Wherever the black king moves, white will be able to capture both pawns.

Dvoretsky's rule[17]

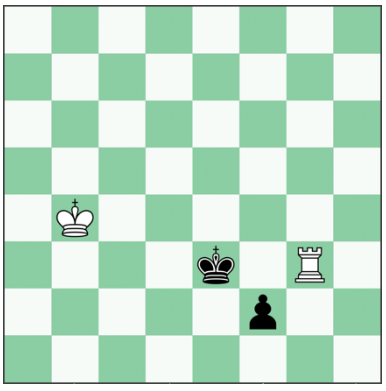
The best position for the rook is behind the more advanced pawn. This makes sense, because in the absence of the kings the pawns are then paralysed (diagram 6).



6 Dvoretsky's rule ▷

1. ♖f5 f3 2. ♔b4 ♔e6 3. ♖f8!

White sticks with Dvoretsky's rule: the rook attacks the more advanced pawn from behind. 3. ♖f4?? loses a tempo, and the game after 3…♔e5 4. ♖f8 ♔d4! 5. ♖f4+ ♔e3 6. ♖xg4 f2 7. ♖g3+.



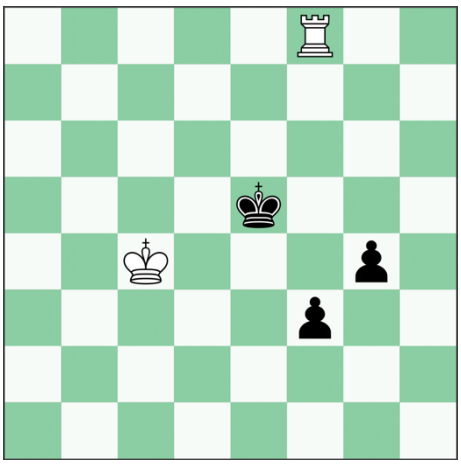
variation

7…♔e4! [7…♔e2?? 8. ♖g2 is an automatic draw] 8. ♖g4+ ♔e5! [remember the skewer: 8…♔f5?? is at best a draw after 9. ♖g8! and then 10. ♖f8] 9. ♖g5+ ♔f6 10. ♖g8 ♔f7.

3…♔e5

3…♔e7 doesn't help, because now 4. ♖f4! wins both of the pawns.

4. ♔c4



6a ▶4

4…f2

4…♔e4 5. ♖e8+ ♔f4 6. ♔d3 g3 is diagram 4 with white to move. 7. ♖f8+ wins.

5. ♔d3!!

5. ♖xf2? ♔e4 is only a draw.

5…g3 6. ♔e3 ♔d6

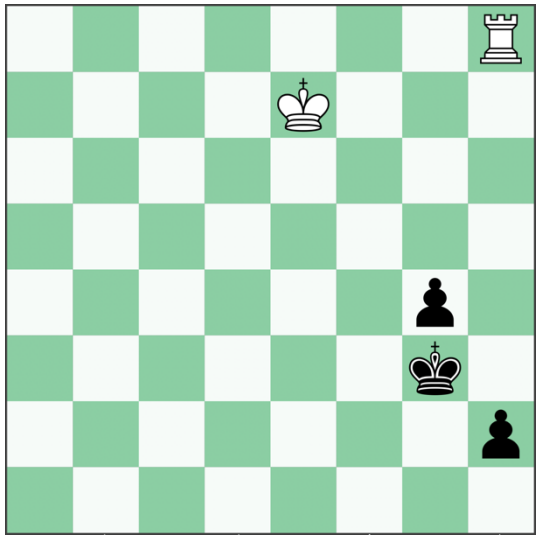
If 6…♔e6, 7. ♖f3 followed by ♔e2 lets white capture the pawns.

7. ♖d8+ ♔c5 8. ♖d1 ♔c4 9. ♔f3

White wins.

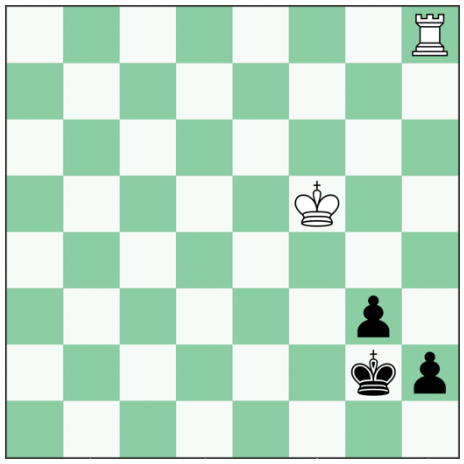
[17] We reviewed the fourth edition of Mark Dvoretsky's masterpiece *Dvoretsky's endgame manual* in **Patzer** 2019; **1**(2): 57. The fifth edition is now available.

Dvoretsky's tailhook



7 Dvoretsky's tailhook ▷

1. ♔e6 ♔g2 2. ♔f5 g3



7a ▷3

The white king needs to latch onto the rear black pawn:

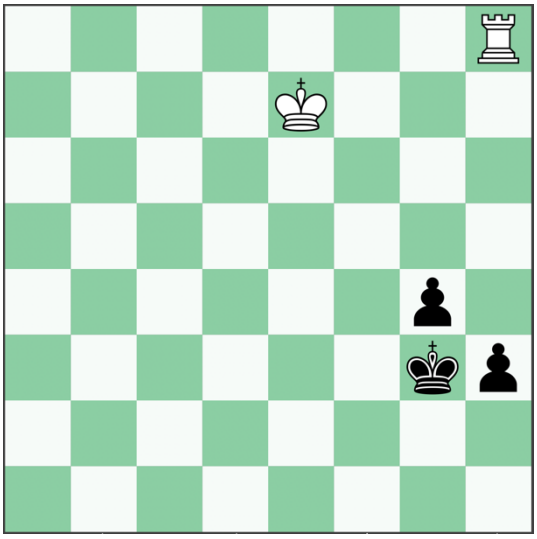
3. ♔f4

This is the "tailhook". 3. ♔g4 also works, for the same reason.

3...h1♕ 4. ♖xh1 ♔xh1 5. ♔xg3

It's a dead position draw.

The change of the leader



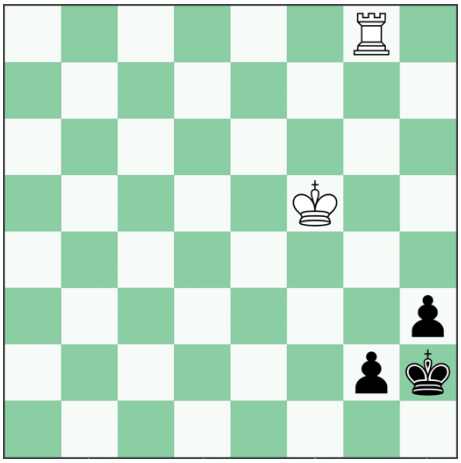
8 The change of the leader ▶

If the rook has to take the g-pawn, however, the h-pawn will be out of the king's reach. Black can exploit this with a *change of the leader*.

1...♔h2!! 2. ♖g8

2. ♔f6 g3 3. ♖e8 g2 3. ♖e2 ♔h1 is obviously not going to work either.

2...g3 3. ♔f6 g2 4. ♔f5



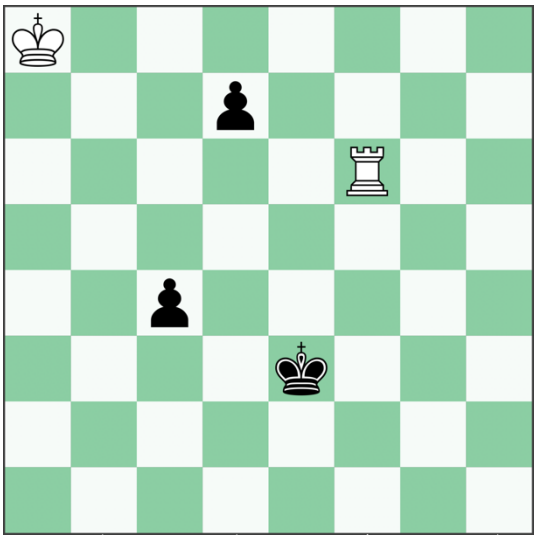
8a ▶4

4...g1♕ 5. ♖xg1 ♔xg1 6. ♔g4 h2

Black promotes the second pawn.

Solo runner

Sometimes it is better for black to push one of the pawns and leave the other behind. Diagram 9 is a study, with the colours reversed from the original version.

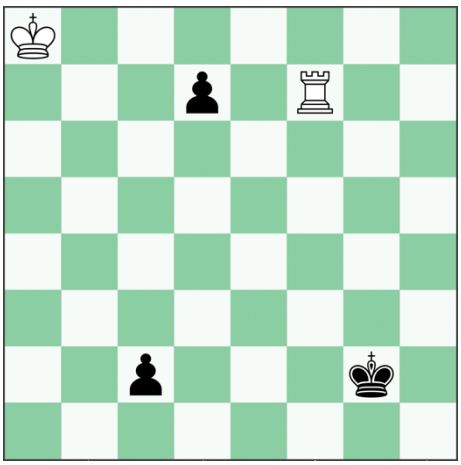


9 V. Halberstadt 1962 ▶

1...c3!

Here the d-pawn is ideally placed to prevent the rook from getting behind the c-pawn. 1...d5? only draws.

2. ♖f7 c2! 3. ♖e7+♔f2 4. ♖f7+ ♔g2

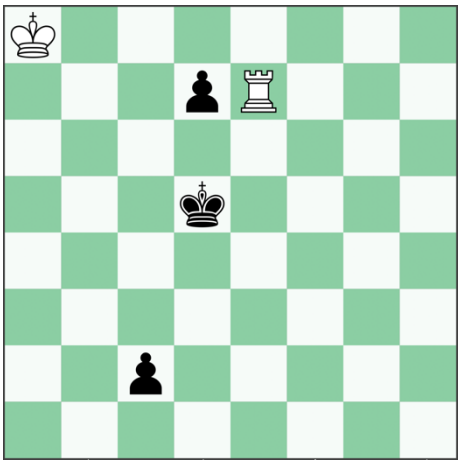


9a ▷5

5. ♖g7+

5. ♖xd7 c1♕ is queen versus rook.

5...♔f3 6. ♖f7+ ♔e4 7. ♖e7+ ♔d5

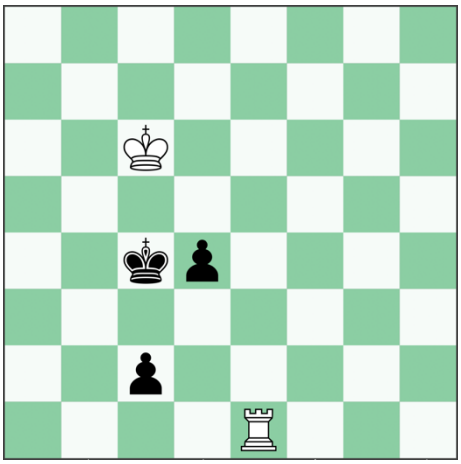


9b ▷8

8. ♖e1

8. ♖xd7+ ♔c6 9. ♖d8 (white's only chance is to go for the swindle) ♔c7! and black wins.

8...♔c4 9. ♔b7 d5 10. ♔c6 d4



9c ▷11

11. ♖e5

White has no good king move, and no better rook move.

11…d3

Obviously not 11…c1♕??

12. ♖c5+ ♔b4 13. ♖b5+ ♔c3 14. ♖c5+ ♔d2

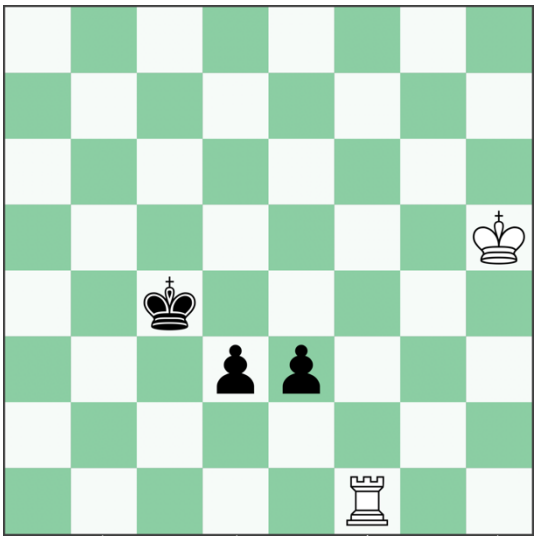
Black will promote both pawns and win.

Very advanced pawns

This subject was reviewed in a very interesting article in the British Chess Magazine in 1995.[18] Let's look first at the remarkable drawing resource known as the Prokeš manoeuvre.

Ladislav Prokeš (1884-1966)

Ladislav Prokeš was a famous Czech study composer and player. He played for Czechoslovakia in three chess Olympiads.

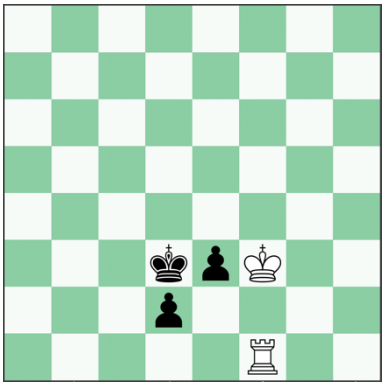


10 L. Prokeš 1939 ▷

White appears to be in serious trouble here.

1. ♔g4 e2

1…d2 2. ♔f3 ♔d3



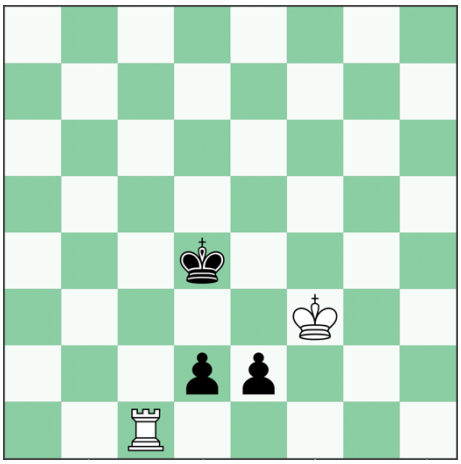
analysis

3. ♖a1 e2 4. ♖a3+ ♔c2 5. ♖a2+ and now that the king can capture the e-pawn white can keep checking, with a certain draw. This is an important trick to remember.

2. ♖c1+ ♔d4 3. ♔f3 d2

What can white do now?

[18] de Zeeuw M, Cifuentes R. The ending of rook v two connected passed pawns on the 7th rank. *Br Chess Mag* 1995; **115**(3): 145-151



10a ▷4

4. ♖c4+!

Prokeš's tactical strike may be a very unpleasant surprise for black, whose pawns do, after all, appear to be on the cusp of promotion.

4...♔d3

4...♔xc4 5. ♔xe2 ♔c3 is just a transposition to the main line.

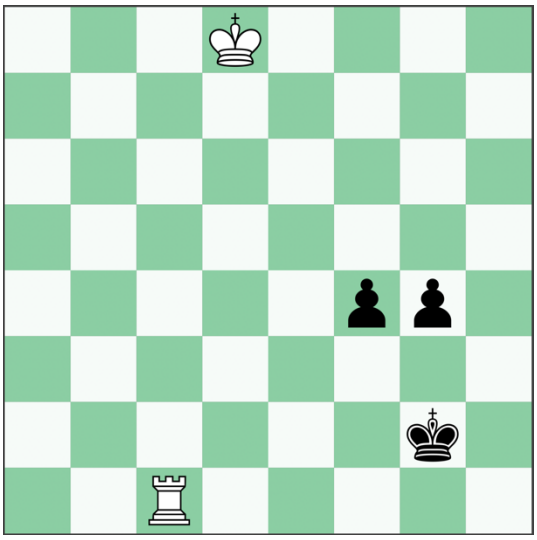
5. ♖d4+ ♔xd4 6. ♔xe2

The pawn ending is, of course, a draw.[19]

6...♔c3 7. ♔d1 ♔d3

Stalemate.

If white's king is distant, but black's pawns are not too advanced, then white can draw by carefully planning the king's approach.



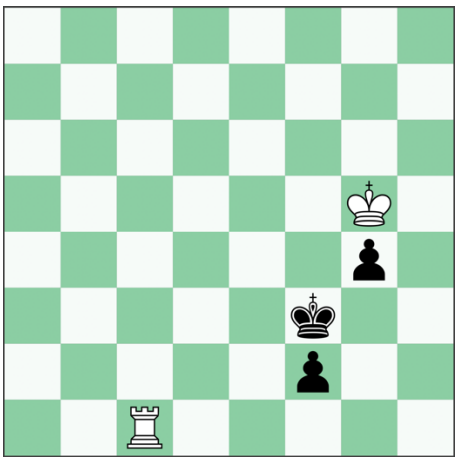
11 ▷1

1. ♔e7 f3 2. ♔f6 f2!?

White draws after 2...g3 3. ♔f5 f2 4. ♔f4 f1♕+ 5. ♖xf1 ♔xf1 6. ♔xg3.

3. ♔g5 ♔f3!?

Black's best chance for a win. White has an obvious draw after 3...g3 4. ♔g4 f1♕ 5. ♖xf1 ♔xf1 6. ♔xg3 (*Dvoretsky's tailhook*).



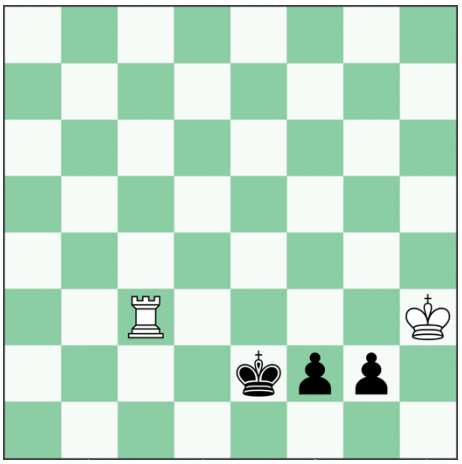
11a ▷4

4. ♔h4!!

[19] **Patzer** 2019; **1**(1): 11

Black was hoping for 4. ♖c3+? ♔e4! 5. ♖c4+ ♔e3 6. ♖c1 g3 7. ♖c3+ ♔e4, which is a win.

4...g3 5. ♔h3 g2 6. ♖c3+ ♔e2



11b ▷7

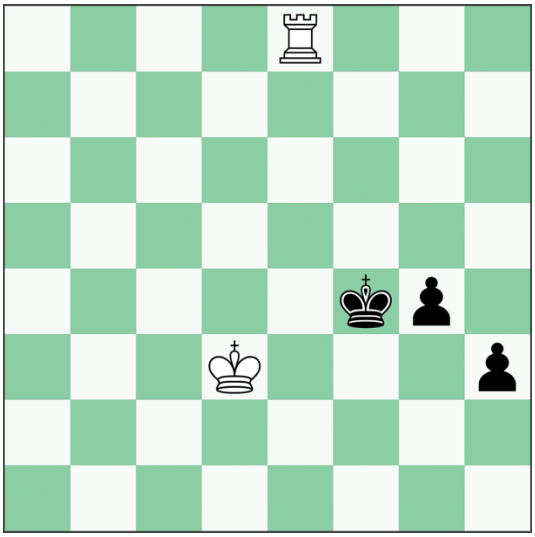
7. ♖c2+ ♔e1

7...♔d1!? would work if white plays 8. ♖xf2?? instead of 8. ♔xg2!

8. ♖c1+ ♔d2 9. ♔xg2

White draws.

The critical position (g- and h-pawns)



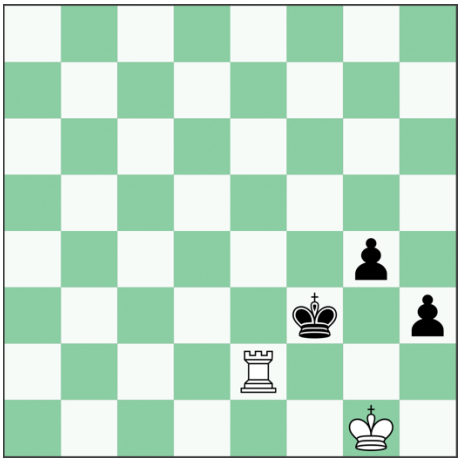
12 ▷▶

This position is on a knife edge. If it is white to move, he wins by getting his king in front of the pawns:

1. ♔e2! ♔g3 2. ♔f1 ♔h2

If black pushes the pawn with 2...h2 the obvious reply is 3. ♖h8, putting him or her in *zugzwang*.

3. ♖e2+ ♔g3 4. ♔g1 ♔f3



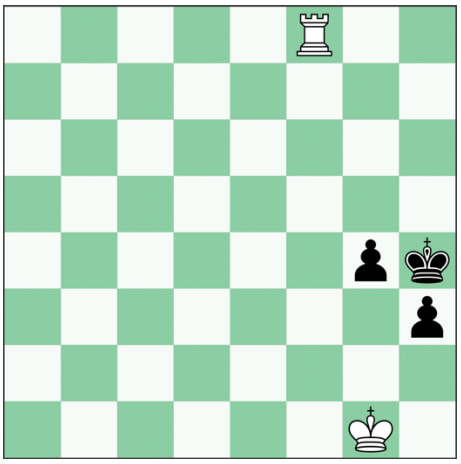
12a ▷5

5. ♖f2+

5. ♖e8 and 5. ♖a2 also win, but this is the easiest. Now if black plays 5...♔e3 white has 6. ♖f8. The pawns are cut off from the king, and white picks them off after 6...g3 7. ♖h8 h2+ 8. ♔g2 ♔f4 9. ♖h4+, and wins.

5...♔g3 6. ♖f8 ♔h4!?

Black should try this because if he separates his pawns with 6...h2+ 7. ♔h1 ♔h3 white can prevent him from reconnecting them, and win after 8. ♖a8 ♔g3 [8...g3 9. ♖g8] 9. ♖a3+ and 10. ♔xh2.



12b ▷7

7. ♔f2!

7. ♔h2 also wins, but this is more fun. Now black must prevent white from getting his king between the pawns with 8. ♔g3.

7...g3+ 8. ♔g1 h2+ 9. ♔g2 ♔g4 10. ♖h8 ♔f4 11. ♖h4+ ♔g5 12. ♔xg3

If it is black to move in diagram 12, however, the result is reversed:

1...g3

1...h2 also wins, but this method shows the power of connected pawns on the sixth rank.

2. ♖f8+ ♔e5!

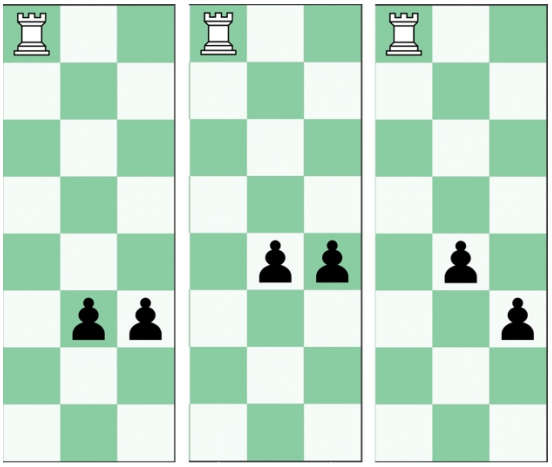
2...♔g4? is only a draw after 3. ♔e4.

3. ♖e8+ ♔d6 4. ♖d8+ ♔e7

White's checks will run out, and one of the pawns will promote.

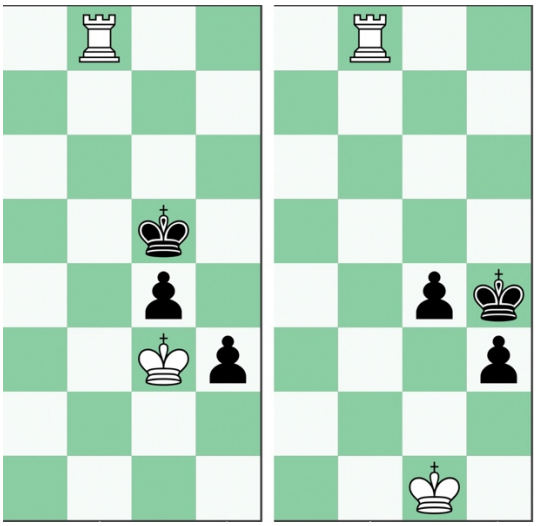
Summary

With connected pawns the relative positions of the kings is crucial. When both kings are remote, black usually wins if both pawns can safely reach the sixth rank, and loses if they can not (test yourself with diagram 13).



13a 13b 13c

When the white king can get in front of or "between" black's pawns, their advance can be halted, and they will fall (diagram 14).



14a 14b

When the king has to approach the pawns from behind, white may need to use *Dvoretsky's tailhook* to force a draw.

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