

Mikhail Shereshevsky

Endgame Strategy

The Revised and Expanded Edition of a Chess Classic

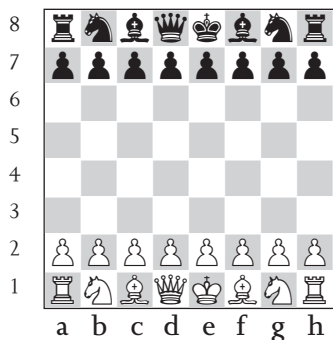
New In Chess 2022

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Explanation of symbols

The chessboard with its coordinates:



- White to move
- Black to move
- ♔ King
- ♚ Queen
- ♖ Rook
- ♗ Bishop
- ♘ Knight

- ± White stands slightly better
- ∓ Black stands slightly better
- ± White stands better
- ∓ Black stands better
- +− White has a decisive advantage
- −+ Black has a decisive advantage
- = balanced position
- ! good move
- !! excellent move
- ? bad move
- ?? blunder
- !?! interesting move
- ?! dubious move
- # mate
- ch championship
- zt zonal tournament
- izt interzonal tournament
- ct candidates tournament
- tt team tournament
- ol olympiad
- m match
- cr correspondence

From the editor

This expanded and updated edition of Mikhail Shereshevsky's classic features many modern-day examples and focuses on practical endgame play in the 21st century. These days, there is often less thinking time and there are no more adjournments in which endgame positions can be analysed. What this means for modern-day endgame chess is illustrated very elaborately by the author, who has adapted wonderfully well to the new situation, and presents a plethora of useful tips for you to do the same.

The Russian version of this book contained many long quotations from other works. In this English version, we have endeavoured to limit the text as much as possible to Shereshevsky's own findings and analyses, and have incorporated any quotes from others in the text as well as we could, with the consent of the author.

We are convinced that after reading this new classic work, the reader will be armed and ready to play high-level endgames in the 21st century setting!

*Peter Boel,
Alkmaar, the Netherlands,
January 2022*

Foreword by Vladimir Kramnik

Endgame mastery has two main components. The first is knowledge of a small number of theoretical positions, that is exact knowledge of their assessment and methods of play – how to win or how to draw, depending on which side you are playing. The more such positions a chess player remembers, the easier it will be for him later in tournament practice. There are some good books on this topic. And the second component is more complex and, perhaps, even more important. This is a kind of intuitive understanding of the principles that must be adhered to in practical endgames which do not have a clear final assessment.

Formulating these principles is much more difficult than learning or even calculating to the end some theoretical ending. Improving your understanding of how to play complex multi-piece endings is a difficult task and books where you can get really good advice on this topic are not easy to find.

In my youth, when I began to play chess, one of what one might call the ‘bibles’ of practical endgame play was the author’s *Endgame Strategy*. It was considered canonical and all of the trainers in the Soviet Union recommended this book to their pupils, saying ‘Read Shereshevsky!’ I myself studied it carefully and liked it a great deal. I have heard that, many years later, Magnus Carlsen also liked it, which is understandable. This new updated and expanded edition of the book *Endgame Strategy* continues the same line but of course it would be inappropriate to call it a second edition – there is too much in it that is new. This includes not just fresh examples (some 3-4 times as many as in the Soviet original of the older book), but also new original concepts and a new approach to studying the endgame. Over the thirty-odd years that have passed since the release of *Endgame Strategy*, chess has changed significantly, and in some ways even fundamentally. Our understanding of the game has expanded, we have begun to know much more and to better understand some nuances. But the most important thing is that modern chess has a different format; it has become, as Mikhail Shereshevsky rightly emphasizes, much more of a sport.

Adjournments disappeared long ago and very often one has to make decisions at the board, having almost no time to think, sometimes merely a few seconds’ increment. In addition, nowadays there is a lot of rapid chess and even blitz. I really liked the way the book takes all these circumstances into account. I think this is the first serious endgame book that does so. In addition, the author gives a lot of examples from modern practice, so I believe that the book is unique in many ways.

Of course, one should not look for any sensational discoveries here, since the laws and principles of chess, as you know, are quite conservative and do not change so much. But after reading this book, I saw a lot of extremely useful practical advice and recommendations, very successfully collected by the author. Some of them are given by the author himself, an experienced coach who continues to share his knowledge with the leading young chess players of Russia at the Sirius educational centre. Other life hacks (we use this buzzword) were found by him in the annotations of the leading modern grandmasters and trainers. All of them, of course, will help readers to noticeably improve their understanding of the principles of playing endgames, which means they will improve their play in this most important component of chess and achieve the best practical results.

The book will be useful for chess players of any level: both the young (especially them!), and strong amateurs, and even professionals. I noticed a long time ago that up to some fairly high level, it is the playing of – practical endings – not those susceptible to calculation, that is, perhaps, the weakest point of most chess players.

In short, I highly recommend studying this new edition of *Endgame Strategy*. I emphasize once again: understanding the principles of the practical endgame is one of the most difficult topics in chess, on which very few high-quality books have been written. By working on this problem, you will achieve the maximum effect in the matter of improving the class of your play.

Good luck, and may endgame play bring you many pleasant minutes and also valuable ‘bonuses’ in the tournament table!

Vladimir Kramnik,
14th World Chess Champion

Foreword by Evgeny Tomashevsky

How to improve your endgame play

In my home chess library there is an interesting and unusual book called *Endgame Contours*. I don't remember how and when I acquired it, but I do remember the first impressions connected with it. The book stood out sharply against the general background, not only with its bright orange cover, but also with its non-standard concept, and creative construction. I could not determine what it was: a textbook, a collection of games, an opening book? Or was it generally speaking about the middlegame as a connecting link between the initial and final stages of the game? Without fully understanding this for myself, I periodically returned to the mysterious work. Later I learned about its predecessor – *Endgame Strategy*. And by the time the modern capital work *My Methodology. From an amateur to a grandmaster* appeared, I was not only familiar with the author of all three books, Mikhail Israilevich Shereshevsky, but also proudly added to my library a copy with a dedication from the author.

I got to know Mikhail Israilevich several years ago in the Russian 'smithy' of chess and other talents – the Sirius educational centre. If you want to get to know a person, then there is no better way to do this than to visit his familiar, natural environment. Mikhail Israilevich was as 'at home' at Sirius as you can imagine. Largely thanks to him, the classes were held in excellent conditions and without the slightest delay and complaints. The pupils, among whom have been most of our brightest young hopes and with whom I sometimes have to compete with might and main in senior high-level tournaments, worked in a very collected, disciplined, organized way and, moreover, with great enthusiasm. The picture was completed by an excellent coaching staff represented by Konstantin Sakaev and Vladimir Belikov. Mikhail Israilevich acted as the key link in this system, which is not the simplest – he readily and with unflappable benevolence took up the solution of any problem facing the participants. I recall with interest our conversations on a variety of topics, mainly related to chess, but by no means limited to that. For example, in football, my interlocutor predicted the development of events in actual matches often more accurately than many experts in the field of sports predictions. And his stories from the chess and everyday life of the 1980s and 1990s deserve, in my opinion, to be published separately...

I would define the dominant views of Mikhail Israilevich very simply – common sense comes first! Any problem is subjected by him to a critical and impartial analysis, without dogmas and pre-prepared conclusions, but with a characteristic and unique soft irony. Common sense is also the main guiding thread of this updated and extended version of my book *Endgame Strategy* which you, dear reader, are holding in your hands. This major work on the endgame is not pure reference or textbook, despite its rather formalized structure. It teaches, first of all, the playing of endgames and is intended for practitioners of all levels, from amateurs to top grandmasters. Every chess player will be able to learn a lot of useful things for himself. Mikhail Israilevich emphasizes key ideas many times over, if necessary, to illustrate them. The main idea which runs through the entire book is to understand exactly how to improve your endgame play by studying the classical heritage and modern games, asking the right questions and finding answers to them, as well as learning general patterns of play and thinking. Literally the entire composition and every technique used by the author is subordinated to this.

By the way, the palette of these techniques is extremely diverse. Here is a kind of ‘shock therapy’ – for example, the book opens with a number of amazing examples of when very strong chess players did not achieve the logical result in seemingly simple endings. And throughout the story, the author constantly makes the reader think, reflect, empathize, periodically diluting the atmosphere of the ‘lesson’ with subtle irony, unexpected facts, even ‘lyrics’, which is why, as you get to know the book, the feeling of dialogue, interactive participation in the process does not disappear. In addition to unconventional moves, Mikhail Israilevich also uses unexpected, vivid terms. I myself learned a lot of new things, for example, the idea of ‘hugs’ (advancing the extreme pawns, i.e. the ones on the rooks’ files) as a way to use the advantage of two bishops. This was the first time I had seen this idea in such a bright and concentrated form. Now I specially follow the movements of the rooks’ pawns in the play of Magnus Carlsen! I think everyone reading this book will make a lot of similar discoveries for themselves.

It is important that in this book there is a very good balance of classical and modern games from the play of the best chess players in the world. We are studying textbook examples in the spirit of Capablanca-Ragozin, but at the same time there are a lot of very fresh ones, up to and including 2019. Moreover, all these fights are reconstructed precisely from the point of view of understanding how to think, in order to come to the right decision. This does not depend on when the game was played, be it, say, 1982 or 2017. Of the highest relevance are the general problems considered

in the book; for example, the role of the king in the endgame. The author is absolutely free from stereotypes, gives a lot of specifics, while, of course, not forgetting about the 'eternal' chess values (a vivid illustration – the notes to Black's 42nd move from the game Carlsen-Matlakov). This approach looks the most appropriate for the dynamic chess of the 21st century!

A special role in the book is played by the problem of choice: the course, the direction of thinking, the path, including in life itself. There are a number of excellent examples on this topic, in which the choice is considered in conditions of uncertainty, that is, as close as possible to OTB play. I very much remember the game Kamsky-Dominguez (Sochi, 2019). I remember watching it, and wondering how Leinier managed to confuse his rival, a great 'techie', in such a simple position. Mikhail Israilevich managed to shed a lot of light on this extremely important aspect of modern chess, by subtly illuminating the key points and posing the necessary questions. The choice is constantly made not only by chess players and books, the author regularly invites the reader to make it. 'To hurry or not to hurry?', to calculate or manoeuvre, to weigh or to act decisively? It's up to you to decide in each case.

There are also small elements in the book that I consider to be a kind of 'icing on the cake'. An obvious example is the endgame studies at the end of each chapter, perfectly selected and illustrating its main themes. In general, there are many beautiful tactics in the book, despite the fact that 'the analysis of sharp tactical endings is not the main idea of the work'. I would also like to note the author's mild humor, sometimes even light 'trolling'. It is especially amusing to trace with what warmth and at the same time irony Mikhail Israilevich comments on the duels of his young wards, their solution of problems and studies. And I invite readers to judge for themselves the splendid passage in the commentary to the study by David Przepiorka from the chapter 'Am I being a fool?'

I will conclude with a more serious topic. Another distinctive feature of the book is the author's periodic general reasoning, which goes beyond the considered narrower problem and touches upon fundamental issues of chess mastery, as well as important near-chess aspects of improvement. I recommend that you treat such 'lyrical digressions' very carefully. At times they may seem too general, but on their basis many significant conclusions can be drawn. For example, personally, in one of such descriptions of a portrait of a chess player, I practically recognized myself, and given that the wise advice and help of Mikhail Israilevich had already contributed to my victory in the Superfinal of the Russian Championship in 2019, I

am not going to ignore the shortcomings noted in this fragment and the recommendations given by the author!

I will not give any 'spoilers' and will not go into detail, but I would venture to suggest that the majority of attentive readers in the course of acquaintance with the book will certainly have a similar feeling. And, returning to the very beginning of my acquaintance with the work of M.I. Shereshevsky, I finally formulated for myself more precisely the theme of his works. They are not only about chess, but above all about the people who play chess and strive to comprehend the secrets of our great game. It is through the prism of attention to the reader, maximum focus on solving his chess problems, primarily when playing the endgame, and improving his practical results, that I see this book.

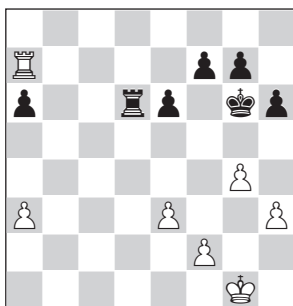
Evgeny Tomashevsky,
two-time Champion of Russia

From the author

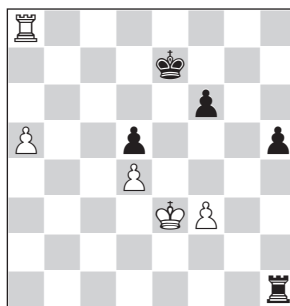
This book is about understanding modern play in complex practical end-games. When I published *Endgame Strategy* in the Soviet Union almost forty years ago, it was relevant as people played a different, pre-computer chess. Games were adjourned after move 40, i.e. in the initial stage of the endgame. The opponents were engaged in home analysis of the adjourned position, and the time-control during the resumption was very generous from today's point of view. One hour for 16 moves looks like a fairytale compared to the current 30 minutes in which to complete the game, albeit with the addition of 30 seconds for each move made.

Consequently, although the general principles and laws of the endgame remain unchanged, the approach to understanding and playing endgames has changed noticeably. In addition, with the help of the computer, major exceptions to the rules have been uncovered. So that this should not be just empty words, I will present a few examples from the 2019 World Cup in Khanty-Mansiysk.

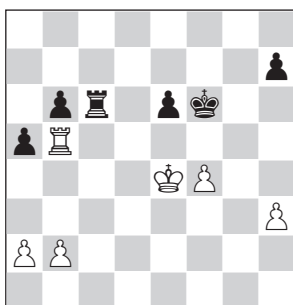
So-Vidit



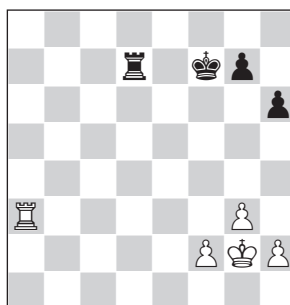
Xiong-Duda



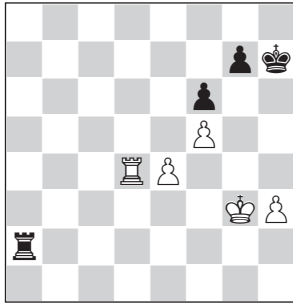
Ding Liren-Firouzja



Yu Yangyi-Vitiugov



Dominguez Perez-Wang Hao



All these games ended in wins for White. In all of them, both players were over 2700, i.e. in the top thirty in the world ranking. The position in the first diagram is from a game with a classical time control, the next two are from games in 'slow' rapid, the fourth diagram is from 'fast' rapid, and only the fifth game was played in blitz. All positions are absolutely drawn, and under a time control with adjournments in pre-computer times, none of them would have been won by White. This does not mean that today's endgame players are weaker than the previous generation or that they have forgotten how to defend. It's just that the approach to the game and the training process has changed.

This book has a large chapter devoted to defending inferior positions. In it, I give only two endings from games played in the pre-computer era with adjournments, the other twenty being taken from modern competitions. In chess history, you can find many examples of brilliant defence of inferior endings. In the books of Mark Dvoretsky, there are excellent reference examples of the work of Artur Jussupow and Sergei Dolmatov. But the psychological background of the game in them was completely different. The games were resumed after many hours of home analysis, and there was no question of an incorrect assessment of the position or exaggeration of the strength of the opponent's threats in the play of the great grandmasters of that time. And the players were rarely in panic, because they only had to hold out until the next time control or the next adjournment, when they had time to calmly figure things out.

Therefore, this book focuses on endgame fighting in today's harsh conditions, and psychological aspects play a much more significant role in it than in the chess of the last century.

How do today's youth act in such cases? Of course, they go to the Internet and look for an answer there. There is a half-forgotten expression: 'Against the young, head for the endgame!'. It was usually used at a time when chess was not so sporty, and blitz championships of countries,

continents and the world with serious cash prizes were not played. People simply relaxed, playing blitz without any material incentive, and this game was accompanied by a friendly 'banter'.

The expression implies that young chess players are fond of openings and attacks on the king. The endgame is not very interesting for them, therefore they do not like to study it, and they do not know how to play. At one time it was like that.

But chess has grown much younger. A grandmaster at 12-13 looks like a talent, but no longer a genius. The age of 33-35 has become the pre-retirement age for chess at the highest level, although not so long ago, this age was considered optimal for a fight for the title of World Champion.

Today, the young chess elite has a high endgame technique, and World Champion Magnus Carlsen is outstanding. 'Squeezing blood out of a stone' – that's him. Without the ability to play the endgame well in games with the current time control, there is no chance of success.

That is why for me the expression 'Against the young, head for the endgame' has a double meaning. On the one hand, most of the examples in this book are taken from the work of modern young chess players. On the other hand, when working with young Russian players at Sirius and in private Skype lessons, I have to devote a lot of time to developing positional skills and understanding endgame play. And this book was written, first of all, for young people who want to learn how to play the endgame well in modern, tough and very sporting chess competitions.

A little about the presentation of the material.

There are four basic principles in the endgame: centralization of the king, the principle of two weaknesses, 'do not hurry' and thinking in schemes. A small part of the book is assigned to all of them, except for the principle of 'thinking in schemes'. That is combined with such important elements of chess culture as assessing a position, drawing up a game plan, regrouping pieces, looking for critical positions, as well as some more specific formulations such as, say, 'changing the tail' in a rook ending. Most of this chapter is built around the study of complex rook endings, which, in my opinion, will be very useful for chess players and trainers of various qualifications. In the further presentation of the material, an emphasis is placed on the modern approach to the game, taking into account psychological aspects and the time control.

I drew attention to this deep thought in an original and interesting book *Mastering Complex Endgames* by the young American grandmaster Daniel Naroditsky: 'Valuable endgame advice is more useful than many pages of variations.' I adhere to the same opinion, and I hope that young

chess players, having studied this work, will receive plenty of valuable advice.

In conclusion, I would like to say a few more words about studying the endgame. In it, as in figure skating, there are compulsory and free programmes. This book is mainly devoted to the 'free programme'. But I would like young players to get an idea of the exact positions in the endgame i.e. about the 'compulsory programme'. Unfortunately, many chess players shirk such work, and I was no exception. Many chess players of my generation thought: why study and memorize, say, the rook ending with extra f- and h-pawns, if you can look it up in a handbook before playing an adjourned game?

Nowadays, this approach no longer works: when playing games out to a finish in one session, you can forget about the help of a reference book or a computer. In his class at Sirius, the fourteenth World Champion Vladimir Kramnik said that in his younger years he avoided going into this theoretically drawn ending with f- and h-pawns against Grandmaster Alexander Beliavsky, as he did not know the correct method of defence. As a result, he lost the game. Therefore, the more a chess player knows the exact positions and methods of playing them, the higher his prospects will be in practical play. The best book on this topic, beyond any competition, is Mark Dvoretsky's *Endgame Manual*. But it is very voluminous! You could describe the book at hand as more of a 'free programme'.

My daughter Maria does not play chess, but she is fond of languages. With her help, it was possible to correct a lot of stylistic and spelling errors in this book, for which special thanks to her.

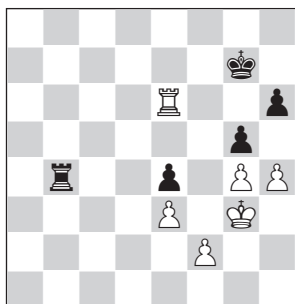
Mikhail Shereshevsky
January 2022



The author (far left) during a lecture by former World Champion Vladimir Kramnik (right).

the h6-pawn from the h7-square, which will be seen in the game.

50. ♖e6 ♜a4 51. ♔g3 ♞b4 52. h4



I think that Ulf Andersson had had this position in mind from afar. White creates a weak pawn for Black either on h6 or on g5, temporarily maintaining the pawn tension without advancing the h4-pawn to h5. Then Black's position is 'pulled apart' according to the principle of two weaknesses.

52...gxh4+

Let's analyse the attempt to adhere to wait-and-see tactics – 52...♞c4.

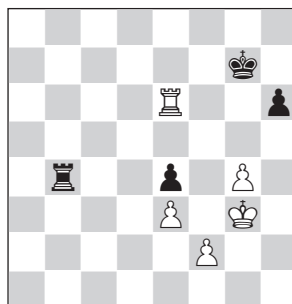
Now 53.h5? is unsuccessful: 53...♞b4 54.♞e7+ ♔f8 55.♞d7 ♞b6, and Black successfully fights back, since the weakness on h6 was fixed prematurely.

The whole point of White's attack is that he doesn't have to rush to change the position of the h4-pawn! Then Black needs to be ready for both h4-h5 and the h4xg5 exchange, and this clearly exceeds his capabilities. Therefore, 53.♞e7+! (instead of 53.h5?) 53...♔f6 54.♞h7 ♔g6 55.♞d7! ♞c6 56.♞e7 ♞c4 57.h5+ ♔f6 58.♞h7, and White wins.

53. ♔xh4

Now the white king has access to the square f4.

53...♞a4 54. ♔g3 ♞b4



It only remains to find the decisive regrouping of pieces and Andersson easily copes with this task:

55. ♞e5! ♔g6 56. ♞f5 ♞b8

Or else 57.♞f4 and 58.f3.

57. ♔f4 ♞e8 58. ♞e5! ♞xe5

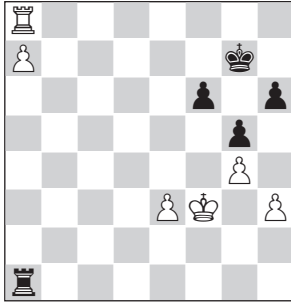
58...♞f8+ 59.♔g3.

59. ♔xe5 ♔g5 60. ♔xe4 ♔xg4

61. ♔d3

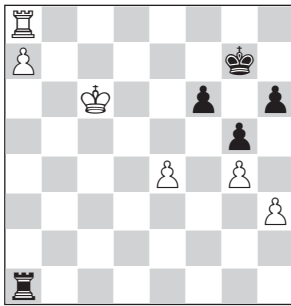
Black resigned. In the variation 61...♔f3 (61...h5 62.♔e2 ♔h3 63.♔f1) 62.e4 h5 (62...♔f4 63.f3) 63.e5 h4 64.e6 h3 65.e7 h2 66.e8♞ ♔xf2 67.♞e4 ♔g1 68.♞g4+ ♔f2 69.♞h3 ♔g1 70.♞g3+ ♔h1 71.♞f3+ ♔g1 72.♔e2 h1♞ 73.♞f2#, he is mated. After seeing the move 49...♞e7 and not being able to find a clear winning plan for White, I went back to the position after the move 47...♔h7 (previous page) and continued the analysis.

White does not have a huge choice. Apart from exchanging the pawns on a7 and f6, he can try to swap f2 for e4. First he needs to move his king from h2 to g2 – 48.♔g2 ♔g7 49.f3 exf3+ 50.♔xf3.



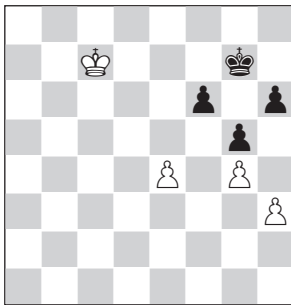
analysis diagram

Then play can develop as follows:
 50...♖a4 51.e4 ♗a3+ 52.♕e2 ♗a2+
 53.♕d3 ♗a3+ 54.♕c4 ♗a4+ 55.♕b5
 ♗a1 56.♕c6.



analysis diagram

Black cannot avoid the pawn ending, the point of which requires a verbal explanation: 56...♖c1+ (or else 57.♗d8) 57.♕d6 ♗a1 58.♖c8 ♗xa7 59.♖c7+ ♗xc7 60.♕xc7.

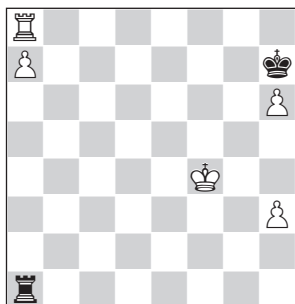


analysis diagram

In this ending, Black would not be losing if there were no h3- and h6-pawns on the board, and it was White's turn to move. Why? In this case, the black king has an additional vacant square on h6. The point is that when the white king attacks the f6-pawn, Black needs to be able to defend it, while maintaining the opposition. The corresponding squares are e6/g6, e7/g7, e8/g8, c7/g7, d7/h7. If the white king is on d7, from which the three most important squares e8, e7, e6 can be attacked, Black should be on h7 with White to move. If there are pawns on the h-file, the white king makes a move to the d6-square, but the black king does not have the square h6. He has to retreat to h8, but now after the moves ♕e6 ...♕g7 and ♕e7 Black gets into zugzwang and loses.

Black's attempt to exchange the h-pawns in the last diagram position does not bring success. After 60... h5 61.gxh5 (61.♕d7?? hxg4 62.hxg4 ♕h7!)=) 61...♕h6 62.♕d7 ♕xh5 63.♕e7 ♕g6 64.♕f8 White wins. I was confident that I had managed to find a clear path to the win. But International Master Vasily Gagarin, who took part in editing this book, made an important clarification, for which I am sincerely grateful. In the position of the above diagram after 50.♕xf3, the move 50...♗a4? is a mistake. Instead, correct is 50...h5! 51.gxh5 (else after the exchange of pawns on g4, Black no longer need fear the

pawn ending, as explained in the previous note) 51...f5!, and the best White can hope for is the following hard-won ending which is however completely drawn:



analysis diagram

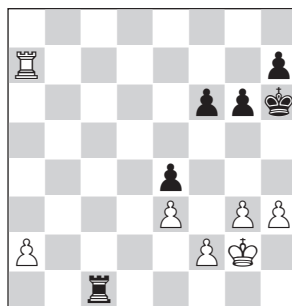
From a practical point of view, Ulf Andersson proved right in exchanging the a7- and f6-pawns. The likelihood of Black making a mistake was very high.

It would seem that everything is clear. The position after 38.g4 is drawn, but White has two roughly equal winning opportunities. One of them was demonstrated in the game by Ulf Andersson. Robert Hübner made a decisive mistake with the natural move 49...♔g7? instead of the unobvious 49...♖e7!. The second is the transition to a pawn ending. In it, as Vasily Gagarin pointed out, Black also achieves a draw by 50...h5!.

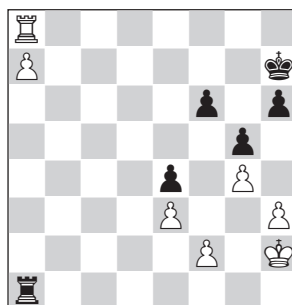
We were able to discover both of these defensive possibilities retrospectively by observing and studying the course of events in the game.

Great was my surprise when, after classes with a group called

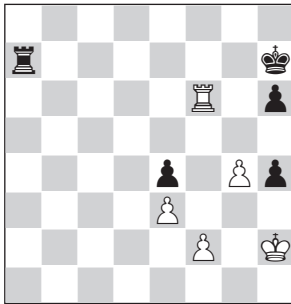
‘Vostok’, where youngsters from the Urals, Siberia and the Trans-Baikal Territory were gathered, the talented player Alexei Grachev from Novokuznetsk told me that he had analysed the endgame and had found two ways to win for White. I want to acquaint the reader with the basic ideas of Grachev’s analysis. As we have already seen in the game, White uses zugzwang to achieve the departure of the black king from the g7-square to h7. Then he can exchange his passed a7-pawn for the f6-pawn:



38.g4 g5 39.a4 ♖a1 40.a5 ♖a2 41.a6 ♔g6 42.♖a8 ♖a1 43.a7 ♔g7 44.♔g3 44...♔h2! 44...♖g1+ 45.♔h2 ♖a1 46.♔g2 h6 47.♔h2 ♔h7



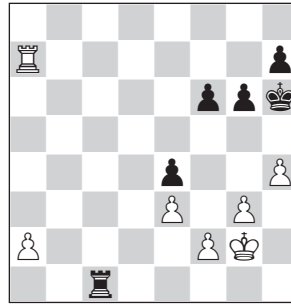
Here the Swedish grandmaster played **48. ♖f8**, whereas the correct decision was **48.h4!!**. Now White threatens to play **49.h5!**, fixing the black pawn on h6. In this way, he is going to secure the transition to a winning pawn ending. Black cannot prevent the subsequent undermining of the e4-pawn by the move **f2-f3**. The idea of Black's counterplay **...h6-h5**, proposed by Vasily Gagarin, will be removed from the agenda if the white pawn moves to the h5-square. Therefore Black is forced to take a pawn – **48...gxf4**. Only then does White play **49. ♖f8!**. After **49... ♗xa7 50. ♖xf6** the next position is reached.



analysis diagram

With a subtle order of moves, White has forced the opponent to take the g5-pawn to h4. Now, as we know from the game, White only needs to move the rook to f5 and take the h4-pawn with the king. Black is unable to prevent this, since **50... ♖a5** will still be met by **51. ♖f5!**, and the pawn ending after **51... ♖xf5 52.gxf5** is hopeless for Black.

Conclusion: In the position from which we began the analysis of the Andersson-Hübner ending, White has a clear path to victory. Of course, it was possible to find it only by carefully studying the events that happened in the game. Another thing is surprising. In the position of the initial diagram, Aleksey Grachev suggested that in addition to the move **38.g4!**, the move **38.h4!?** could have led to victory too.

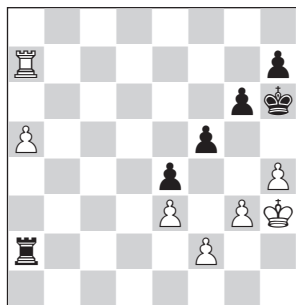


analysis diagram

White bases his play on the unfortunate position of the black king. Here we give the young player's analysis:

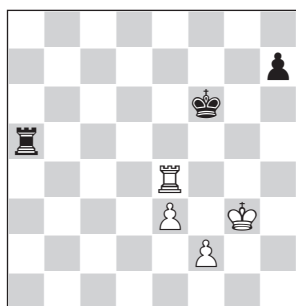
In response to **38.h4!?** Black has two main options at his disposal – **38... f5** and **38...g5**. Let's look at them in order:

Variation 1: **38...f5 39.a4 ♖a1** (no help is **39... ♖c4 40.a5 ♖c5 41.a6 ♖c6 42. ♖h3 g5 43.hxg5+ ♖xg5 44. ♖g7+ ♖h6 45.a7) 40.a5 ♖a4 (40... ♖a2 41.a6 ♖a1 42.g4 fxg4 43. ♖g3 ♖g1+ 44. ♖f4 ♖g2 45. ♖b7) 41. ♖h3 ♖a2 (41...g5 42.hxg5+ ♖xg5 43.a6 ♖a1 44. ♖a8 ♖h5 45. ♖g2 ♖g4 46.a7 ♖h5 47.f4!+-.**



analysis diagram

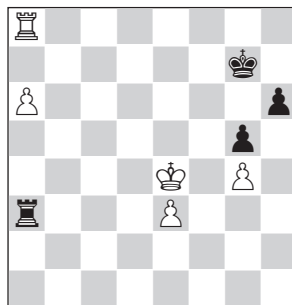
42.g4 fxg4+ 43.♔g3 g5 (or 43...♖c2
44.a6! ♖c6 45.♕f4 ♖e6 46.♕xg4 ♖f6
47.♕g3 ♖f3+ 48.♕g2 ♖f6 49.♕g1 ♖e6
50.♕h2 ♖f6 51.♕g2 ♖e6 52.♕g3 ♖f6
53.♕g4, and Black is in zugzwang.
On 53...♖d6 there follows 54.f3,
whilst after 53...♖e6 there is 54.♕f4)
44.hxg5+ ♕xg5 45.♖g7+ ♕f6
46.♖xg4 ♕f5 47.♖f4+ ♕e5 48.♖h4
♕f6 49.♖xe4 ♖xa5.



analysis diagram

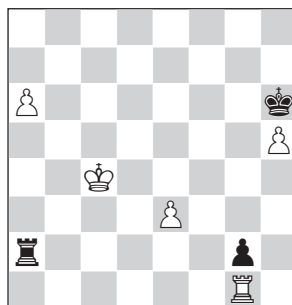
White should win, although he
needs to overcome certain technical
difficulties.

Variation 2: 38...g5 39.hxg5+ fxg5
40.♖a4 ♖a1 41.g4 ♕g6 42.♖a7 h6
43.a4 ♕f6 44.a5 ♕g6 45.a6 ♕f6
46.♖a8 ♕g7 (46...♕g6 47.f4 exf3+
48.♕xf3 ♖a3 49.♕e2 ♖a2+ 50.♕d3
♕h7 51.e4 ♖a3+ 52.♕c4+-) 47.f4
exf3+ 48.♕xf3 ♖a3 49.♕e4!



analysis diagram

49...♖a4+ (or 49...♖a2 50.♖a7+ ♕g6
51.♕d4 h5 (51...♖a4+ 52.♕c5 h5
53.gxh5+ ♕xh5 54.♕b5) 52.gxh5+
♕xh5 53.♖a8+-) 50.♕d3! ♖a3+
(50...♖xg4 51.e4! ♖g3+ 52.♕d4 ♖g1
53.a7 ♖d1+ 54.♕e3 ♖e1+ 55.♕f2 ♖a1
56.e5 h5 57.e6!) 51.♕c4 h5 (nor is
he saved by 51...♖a2 52.♕b5 ♖b2+
53.♕c5 h5 54.gxh5 ♖a2 55.♕b6
♖b2+ 56.♕c6 ♖c2+ 57.♕d5 g4
58.♖b8 ♖d2+ 59.♕c6 ♖c2+ 60.♕d7
♖a2 61.♖b6+-) 52.gxh5 g4 53.♕b5!
g3 54.♖d8 g2 55.♖d1 ♖a2 56.♖g1 ♕h6
57.♕b6 ♖b2+ (57...♕xh5 58.a7! ♖b2+
59.♕c6 ♖a2 60.♖xg2+-) 58.♕c5
♖c2+ 59.♕d5 ♖d2+ 60.♕c4 ♖a2



analysis diagram

61.e4! ♕xh5 62.a7! ♖xa7 63.♖xg2,
with a theoretically winning
position.

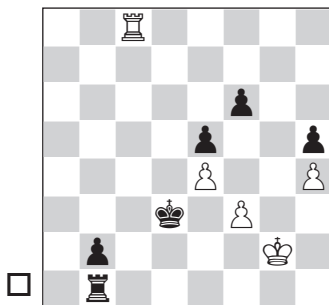
Grachev's variations after 38.h4!?, proving White's win, are more difficult to explain logically – complex, and requiring accurate calculation. Perhaps they can be challenged by a powerful engine. White's play associated with 38.g4!? is much more instructive and clear. And the idea to play 48.h4!! before the exchange of the a7-pawn for the f6-pawn is simply magnificent. Like the move 38.h4!?, it testifies to good logical thinking and the undoubted analytical talent of the young chess player.

This endgame is extremely important for understanding the play in rook endings with an extra pawn for one side. On this theme, we will now examine several endings from contemporary practice. Twenty years after Andersson-Hübner, a game for the World Rapid Championship reached the following position.

Game 52

Ernesto Inarkiev 2510
Sergey Karjakin 2748

Nazran rapid 2019 (4)



Not unlike the final phase of the previous ending, it is obvious that Black has no other way to achieve success than by going into a pawn endgame. Therefore, White had to calculate very accurately the consequences of the exchange of rooks, which is not always realistic in rapid chess.

64. ♖b8?

After 64.♖d8+! ♕e3 65.♗b8 ♖d1 (65...♗e1 66.♗b3+) 66.♗xb2 ♖d2+ 67.♗xd2 ♕xd2 68.♕h2! the position is drawn. The square h3 is available to the white king, as distinct from the previous example. Inarkiev's mistake led to immediate defeat:

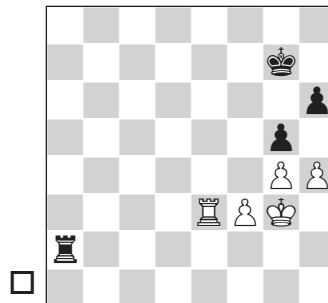
64... ♗e1! 65. ♗xb2 ♖e2+ 66. ♗xe2 ♕xe2 67. ♕g3 ♕f1 68.f4 ♕e2 69.fxe5 fxe5 70. ♕g2 ♕e3 71. ♕f1 ♕xe4 72. ♕e2 ♕f4 73. ♕f2 ♕g4 0-1

A situation similar to that in Andersson-Hübner occurred 22 years later in a tiebreak game in the World Cup quarterfinals.

Game 53

Yu Yangyi 2736
Nikita Vitiugov 2727

Khanty-Mansiysk 2019 (5.5)



The game was played at a fast time limit and if one can believe the website's live broadcast, White had just over seven minutes at this point and Black just one minute and 23 seconds.

59. ♖e7+

Now Black made a terrible blunder:

59... ♗g8?? 60.hxg5 hxg5 61. ♖e5 1-0

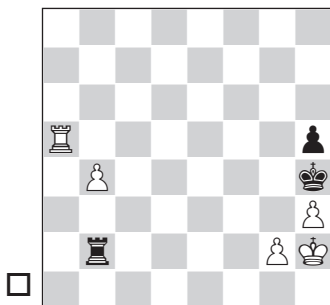
In the diagram position, after the rook check, the only correct king retreat was 59... ♗f6!. 59... ♗g6? loses because of 60.h5+ ♗f6 61. ♖h7, whilst after 59... ♗f8?! there is the unpleasant 60. ♖e5. Evidently the Russian GM was convinced that after 59... ♗f6 60. ♖h7 ♗g6 61. ♖c7 he had to take on h4. However, he had available the strong resource 61... ♖a6. After 62.h5+ ♗f6 63. ♖h7 ♗e5 Black easily holds the position.

And see also the following example:

Game 54

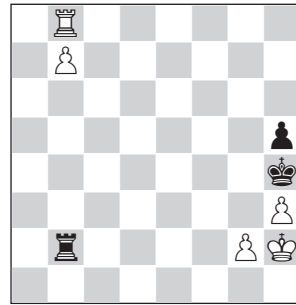
Alexandra Kosteniuk 2517
Koneru Humpy 2558

Skolkovo 2019



Let us think schematically about this position. Let us assume White

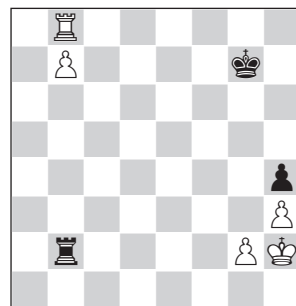
manages to put her rook on b8 and the pawn on b7.



analysis diagram

Then White frees her king with ♗g1, takes it close to the black rook and at the right moment plays g2-g4, winning the game.

Now let us assume that while the b-pawn advances, Black takes her king to g7 and puts her pawn on h4.



analysis diagram

In this position, White eliminates the h-pawn by means of ♖c8 ... ♖xb7 ♖c4 and wins.

However, in the initial position, White cannot play 45. ♖b5? because of 45... ♖xg2+ 46. ♗xg2, stalemate. She must remove her rook from the fifth rank with 45. ♖a6!. Now in case of 45... ♖xb4 Black loses the h5-pawn after 46.g3+! ♗g5 47.h4+

♔f5 48. ♖h6 ♔g4 49. ♗g6+ ♔f3
50. ♗g5 ♖b2+ 51. ♔h3 ♖b1 52. ♖f5+, or
else White plays 46. ♖b6, carrying
out the plan indicated above.

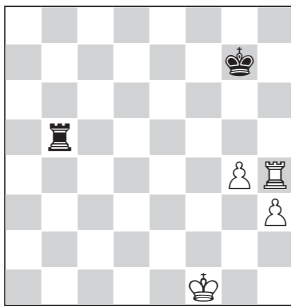
Instead of this, Alexandra played:

45.b5?

Now the white rook is extremely
passive.

45... ♔g5 46. ♔g3

Little changes after 46.b6+ ♔h4
47. ♖a6 ♖b4 48.g3+ ♔g5. Black only
needs to understand that without
the advance ...h5-h4 she most
probably loses. But after a line such
as 49. ♔g2 h4! 50. ♖a5+ ♔g6 51.g4
she needs to strive for the following
position:



analysis diagram

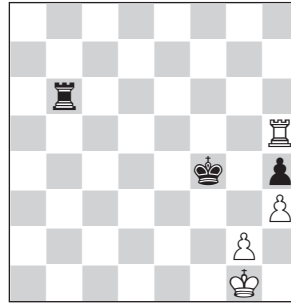
Black controls h5 with the rook,
whilst her king controls h6, h7 and
h8. Positional draw! Then (after
51.g4) possible is: 51... ♖b2+ 52. ♔f1
♖xb6 53. ♖h5 ♔g7 54. ♖xh4 ♖b5!,
and the aim is reached.

46... ♖b3+ 47. ♔h2 h4

A concrete path to the draw. This
move required accurate calculation.
It was possible simply to stand still
with 47... ♖b1 or 47... ♖b2.

48. ♔g1 ♔f4 49.b6 ♖xb6 50. ♖h5

Has White tricked her opponent?



No – the Indian player had seen
everything:

50... ♖b4! 51. ♔h2

On 51. ♖xh4+ there would have
followed 51... ♔g3, and White has a
sad choice between stalemate and a
drawn pawn ending.

51... ♔e3

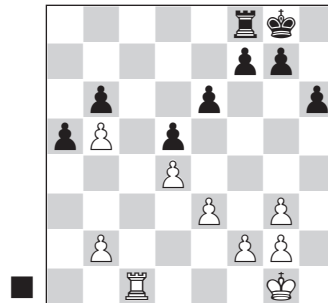
Black easily held this position and
the game ended in a draw.

Game 55

Vladimir Tukmakov

Mikhail Shereshevsky

Tbilisi 1980



White has the advantage. He
controls the only open file, Black
has a weak pawn on b6 and the
latter must now form a plan of
defence.

1...h5!

CHAPTER 8

The sense of contrariness

The following two small chapters – ‘The sense of contrariness’ and ‘Am I being a fool?’ – to a certain extent follow on from one another. They are united by the same question: ‘What does the opponent want to do, if it were his move?’

The feeling of contrariness is a curious feeling that chess players experience, rather, on a subconscious level in the process of struggle. Verbally it was described by Viktor Kortchnoi. In life, situations often arise when you must either agree with a proposal or refuse it. Some people are almost always determined to say yes, others no, and most are ready to make a decision only after careful thought. There are also extreme cases. The long-standing foreign minister of the USSR, Andrej Gromyko, was nicknamed in the West ‘Mr. Nyet’, whereas Mikhail Gorbachev’s constant ‘Yes’ led to huge losses for the country and, ultimately, to the collapse of the Soviet Union. Wars sometimes began with trivial confrontations between the masters of the ‘no’, which instantly grow exponentially. Nikolai Gogol sarcastically reflected such a phenomenon in his tale ‘How Two Ivans Quarreled’.

At its core, Stanislavsky’s famous expression ‘I do not believe!’ also stems from a sense of contrariness. In some film, where the action, if I recall, took place in the desert, one swindler suggested to another to make a decision as follows: ‘Let’s throw a coin. If it comes up tails, I win. If it comes up heads, you lose!’ The splendid reply was ‘I love a fair deal!’ The coin landed on its edge.

Thus it is in chess. At almost every move you are offered a ‘fair deal’. Therefore, in a game, a chess player often has to mentally say either ‘no’ or ‘yes’. The feeling of contrariness grows and sometimes allows you to exert psychological pressure on the opponent, reducing his will, thereby increasing the likelihood of a mistake on his part.

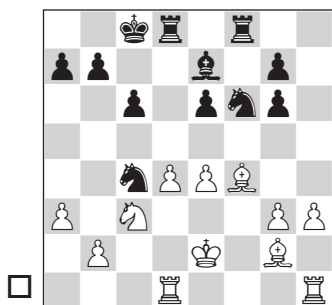
When analysing the next game, pay attention to Kortchnoi's italicized comments (from *My Best Games*, Volume 2) on White's 23rd move.

Game 132

Bent Larsen

Viktor Kortchnoi

Leningrad izt 1973 (8)



There is a sharp endgame position on the board, which it is now fashionable to describe as unbalanced. From a static point of view, White's advantage is indisputable. If two pairs of rooks were removed from the board, he would be better. Black's pawn defects on the kingside and the two strong bishops would easily allow White to win. But the initiative is on Black's side, the queenside and white centre are under pressure, the king is unsafe and difficult to defend.

21.h4!

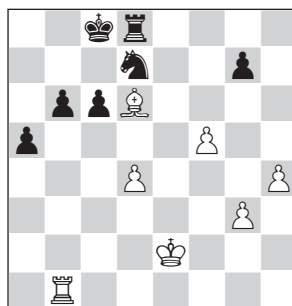
Larsen seeks salvation in a counter-attack. The appearance of the white bishop on h3 will allow him to attack the black king. Seizing the initiative without any significant

concessions to the opponent would practically guarantee him success, and therefore Kortchnoi is obliged to play resolutely:

21...♘h5!

Eliminating the dangerous bishop on f4 – a perfectly understandable human move.

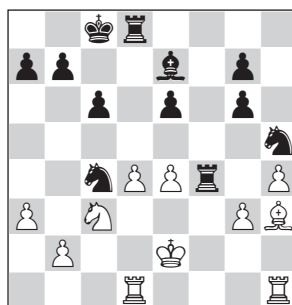
Today's computer gives variations such as 21...♘xb2 22.♙h3 ♘xd1 23.♙xe6+ ♘d7 24.♖xd1 ♙xa3 25.♖b1 ♖fe8 26.♙f7 a5 27.♙xg6 ♖f8 28.♙f5 ♙b4 29.♘b5 b6 30.♘d6+ ♙xd6 31.♙xd6 ♖xf5 32.exf5,



analysis diagram

assessing this position as slightly better for White. It also considers and regards as possible a move which makes no sense at all to humans: 22...♙d7.

22.♙h3 ♖xf4!



We humans should play like humans!

23. ♖xe6+?

Kortchnoi: ‘This move is made from a feeling of contrariness, well developed in many grandmasters. Effectively, we say: “I will not allow you, the enemy, to lead me along the path of your variation, I have my own path!” By the way, the “path” I proposed was hardly worse for White than the one chosen by Larsen: 23.gxf4 ♜xf4+ 24.♔f3. At the board I was considering the move 24...♞f8, and after 25.♔g3 it was not clear to me what to do next. After 25...♜xb2 26.♞df1 ♜bd3 27.♞f3 ♜h5+ 28.♔g2 ♜df4+ Black has the more pleasant prospects. I found the best way only many years after the end of the game: 24...♜xh3! 25.♞xh3 ♜xb2 26.♞d2 ♜c4 27.♞d1 e5! 28.dxe5 ♞f8+ and then ...♜xe5 with an advantage for Black. This variation rests on a tactical subtlety, due to which White’s immediate counterplay on the kingside turns out to be unconvincing: 26.♞g1 ♞xd4 27.♞xg6 ♔f6. Here 28.e5 ♔xe5 29.♜e4 looks the most active, but Black has the defence 29...♞d3+ 30.♔g4 ♞xh3 31.♔xh3 ♜d3 32.♞g5 b6, and White will not be able to win either the e6-pawn, or the g7-pawn.’

In the last variation, instead of 28.e5?! the computer simply recommends 28.♜e2 with chances of successful defence.

23...♔c7 24.♔xc4 ♜xg3+ 25.♔e3 ♞df8



His sense of contrariness has deceived Larsen. The pawn on h4 is lost and White faces an agonizing battle for a draw.

26. ♞hg1

Kortchnoi suggested 26.♞h2 here, to perhaps start a combat for the open f-file.

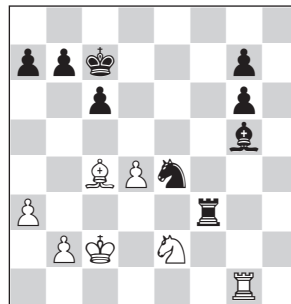
26... ♔xh4 27.♔d3 ♞f2 28.♞d2 ♔g5

The less flashy 28...b5 29.♔e6 ♞xd2+ 30.♔xd2 ♞f2+ 31.♔c1 a5 was even stronger.

29. ♞xf2 ♞xf2 30.♜e2

The only move.

30... ♞f3+ 31.♔c2 ♜xe4



‘The position is not yet technical in nature: Black needs to arrange his pieces so that nothing threatens them,’ wrote Kortchnoi. He suggested as most tenacious the move 32.♞g4!, in reply to which

Black's best chance of winning would have been 32...♖d6! (not 32...♗e3 33.♖c3!).

32. ♖d3 ♗e3 33. ♖c3

Here already 33.♗g4? would have been met by 33...♗xd3!.

33... ♖g3 34. d5 ♖f6 35. ♖d1 ♗f3

36. dxc6 ♖xc6 37. ♖xg6 ♖d6 38. ♗e1

♖f5 39. ♗e8 ♖d4+ 40. ♖d2 ♖g5+

41. ♖e1 ♖h4+ 42. ♖d2 ♗g3 43. ♖e4?

♖g5+ 0-1

White loses a piece after 44.♖e1 ♗g1+.

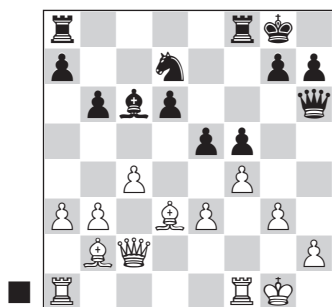
Viktor Kortchnoi described the feeling of contrariness no less clearly in his notes to his game with the sixth World Champion Mikhail Botvinnik in Volume 1 of his Best Games book:

Game 133

Viktor Kortchnoi

Mikhail Botvinnik

Moscow 1960 (2)



18... ♗ae8?

'In general, a chess game is a battle of characters. Does he want me to release the tension in the centre?

I won't give him this pleasure! But the rook move is still weak.'

In his notes, Kortchnoi suggested either 18...♖c5!? with the idea

19.♖xf5 ♖xb3 with the threat

20...♖d2, or 18...exf4 19.exf4 ♗ae8 as better.

To me, the second possibility looks the most unpleasant for White.

But it is instructive that just at

this moment, Botvinnik made the mistake 18...♗ae8?.

19. ♖xf5 ♖c5

'On 19...exf4 there would have

followed 20.♗xf4 ♗xe3 21.♗h4

♗xg3+ 22.hxg3 ♗e3+ 23.♗f2 ♗xf2+

24.♖xf2 ♗xf5+ 25.♗f4 ♗h5 26.♗d1!,

and White has winning chances.

And after 20...g5 the only move to

keep White's material advantage is 21.♖xd7!' (Kortchnoi)

After

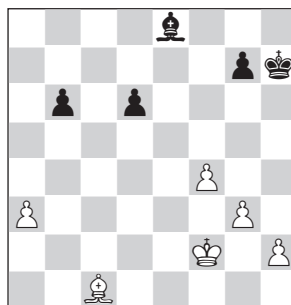
20. b4 ♖a4 21. ♖xh7+ ♗xh7

22. ♗xh7+ ♖xh7 23. bxc5 exf4

24. cxb6 axb6 25. exf4 ♗e4 26. ♗ae1

♗fe8 27. ♖f2 ♗xc4 28. ♗xe8 ♖xe8

29. ♗c1 ♗xc1 30. ♖xc1



... the opposite-coloured bishops ending a pawn down proved to be lost for Black.

Game 134

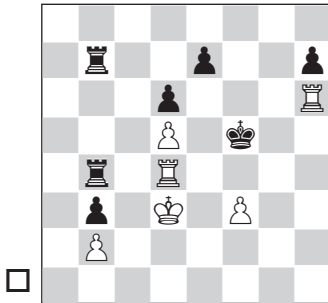
Alexei Shirov

2706

Veselin Topalov

2733

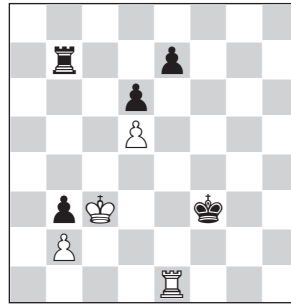
Moscow 2001 (4)



The game was played in the FIDE KO World Championship, i.e. in a mini-match of two games. Today, the World Cup is held according to this system, and the title of World Champion is determined in a full-fledged match of 12-14 games. In a match, and even more so in such a short match, it is very important to gain a psychological advantage over the opponent.

The position in the diagram is a draw. But both grandmasters are uncompromising players who don't like draws. If nothing else but a draw is expected, then a draw should be made from a position of strength, i.e. do not allow the opponent to feel even a grain of superiority over yourself.

After the natural move 35. ♖xb4, the draw appears in the following way: 35... ♗xb4 36. ♖xh7 ♗b7 37. ♔c3 (also possible is 37. ♖h4 ♔e5 38. ♗d4) 37... ♔f4 38. ♖h1 ♔xf3 39. ♗e1.



analysis diagram

There is nothing to be done here and a draw could be agreed. But Black has an extra pawn, and, for people with 'excessive ego', a psychological advantage.

'We ought to do something else,' Alexey Shirov decides and finds the move:

35. ♗e4!?

'One should be punished for such insolence,' is Veselin Topalov's main thought, and he plays

35... ♗4b5?

and makes a serious mistake.

36. ♔e3!

The king escapes check and it turns out that after 36... ♗xd5 White plays 37. ♖h5+, winning a rook. There is no way back: on 36... ♗b4, decisive is 37. ♗ee6 ♔g5 38. ♖xh7 with the threat of 39.f4+.

36... ♔g5?

Stunned by the course of events, Topalov loses at once. 36...e5 37. ♗eh4 ♖g7 38. ♗xd6 ♗c5 39. ♖h5+ ♗g5 40. ♖xh7 would have left him facing a tortuous battle for a draw, with only small chances of success.

37. ♗eh4! 1-0

But such a style of play, based on a sense of contrariness, is risky (if we are not talking about prophylactic thinking) and requires a quick and accurate calculation of variations, with an objective assessment of the position.

Game 135

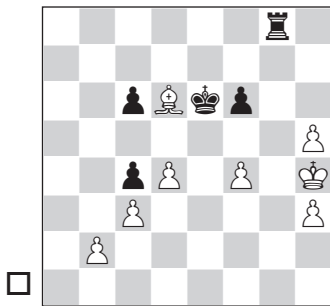
Alexei Shirov

2728

Levon Aronian

2741

Moscow 2006 (4)



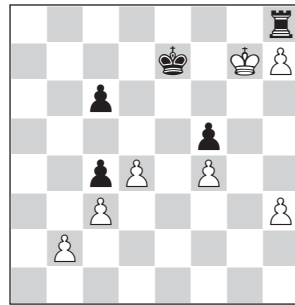
If 44. ♖a3 or another bishop retreat down the a3-f8 diagonal, Black after 44... ♗f5 45. ♕d6 has the more pleasant position, although it is a draw. Instead, there followed an ambitious pawn advance:

44.h6?

In reply, Levon Aronian tries a well-tested method, often seen in the games of Mikhail Tal. The essence is based on the feeling of contrariness. The thought runs as follows: ‘So, my friend, you are offering me a sharp and aggressive variation. But I don’t believe you! I will go down your variation and find a hole in it.’

44... ♗xd6!

It is only fair to point out that after 44... ♖d8 45. ♖h5 ♗f7 46. ♕a3 ♖d5+ 47. ♗g4 ♗g6 White has achieved nothing, but nor does he lose the game. But now it is all over for him: **45. ♖h5 f5 46.h7 ♖h8 47. ♗g6 ♗e7 48. ♗g7**



48... ♗e8!

A well-known study idea!

49. ♗g6

Hopeless was 49. ♖xh8 ♗f7.

49... ♗f8! 50.h4 ♗e7 51. ♗g7 ♗e8

52. ♗g6 ♗f8 and soon... 0-1

Game 136

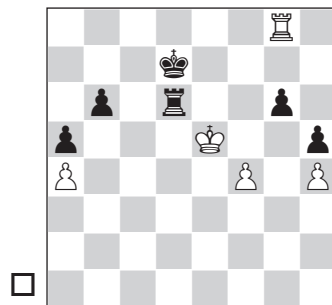
Teimour Radjabov

2757

Vladimir Fedoseev

2724

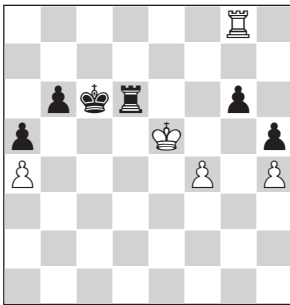
Wijk aan Zee 2019 (9)



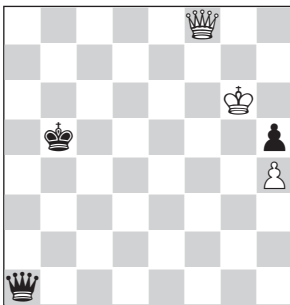
It is a dead draw after any sensible move by the white rook along the 8th rank, including 79. ♖e8.

In the variation 79. ♖h8 ♗e6+ 80. ♘d5 ♗f6 81. ♘e5 ♗f5+ 82. ♘e4 b5 83. axb5 ♗xb5 84. ♗a8 White makes a draw ‘from a position of weakness’. But here the feeling of contrariness played a cruel trick on Grandmaster Teimour Radjabov, and he found a way to secure an immediate draw, if not from a position of strength, then at least from a position of equality:

79. ♗g7+ ♘c6 80. ♗g8



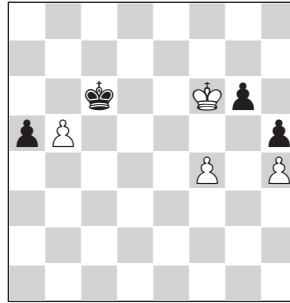
It turns out that Black should repeat moves. After 80... ♘c5 81. ♗c8+ ♗c6 82. ♗xc6+ ♘xc6 83. ♘f6 b5 84. axb5+ ♘xb5 85. ♘xg6 a4 86. f5 a3 87. f6 a2 88. f7 a1 ♖ 89. f8 ♗...



analysis diagram

... the h5-pawn is lost and it's White who can start playing for a win. But one's calculation needs to be not only deep, but also correct.

80... ♘c5 81. ♗c8+ ♗c6 82. ♗xc6+ ♘xc6 83. ♘f6 b5 84. axb5+



84... ♘d6!!

Here it is, Black's extra tempo. White resigned.

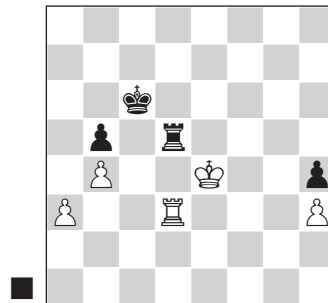
A very similar situation arose in the game between two talented young Russian chess players at the U10 World Championship, but this time it had nothing to do with a feeling of contrariness. Rather, there was a lack of proper knowledge and an inability to overcome stereotypes in thinking.

Game 137

Artem Pingin

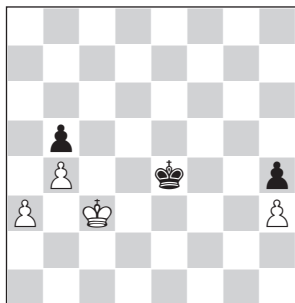
Maxim Volkov

Weifang WCh jr 2018 (10)



53...♖xd3?

After 53...♖g5 the position would have been drawn.

54.♙xd3 ♘d5 55.♙c3 ♙e4**56.a4?**

This move misses the win. Correct was 56.♙b3 ♙f3 (56...♙d5 57.a4 bxa4+ 58.♙xa4 ♙c6 59.♙a5) 57.a4 bxa4+ 58.♙a2!! (or 58.♙a3). We are not playing checkers and it is not necessary to take, as in the previous example. Now after 58...♙g3 59.b5 ♙xh3 60.b6 ♙g2 61.b7 h3 62.b8♖ h2, Black is ruined by his own pawn on a4. The white queen descends the ladder to g3 with the black king on g1, and ...♙g1-h1 is followed by ♖g3-f2 with mate on f1.

In the game there was:

56...bxa4 57.♙c4 a3 58.♙b3 ♙d5
59.♙xa3 ♙c6 60.♙b3 ♙b5 61.♙c3
♙c6 62.♙c4 ♙b6 63.b5 ♙c7
64.♙c5 ♙b7 65.b6 ♙b8 66.♙b5
♙b7 67.♙a5 ♙b8 68.♙a6 ♙a8
69.♙b5 ♙b7 70.♙c5 ♙b8 71.♙d5
♙b7 72.♙e5 ♙xb6 73.♙f5 ♙c6
74.♙g5 ♙d7 75.♙xh4 ♙e7 76.♙g5
♙f7 77.♙h6 ♙g8

Draw.

Game 138

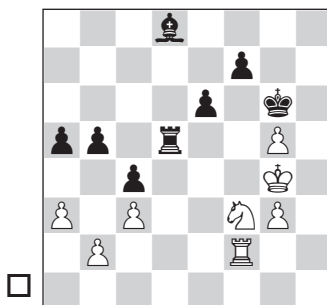
Magnus Carlsen

2842

Nico Georgiadis

2526

Biel 2018 (10)



The game has turned out badly for the World Champion. After 39 moves, White has an inferior endgame, in which he needs to defend accurately so as not to lose.

40.♘h4+ ♙g7 41.♘f3

Carlsen demonstrates his readiness to agree to a draw, although this is, of course, not the result he expected before the start of the game.

41...♙b6

If the Swiss chess player had been offered a draw with Black against Carlsen before the game, and from a position of strength, then I suppose he would have been happy. But then a feeling of contrariness began to raise its voice. Is it possible to play to win here or at least to torment the World Champion a little?

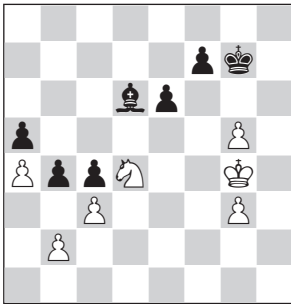
After serious consideration, Black refrained from the move 41...♙g6.

42.♞e2 ♙c7 43.♞e4 ♙d6 44.♞d4
♞xd4+ 45.♘xd4 b4



It is obvious that White has almost reached a draw. After 46.axb4 axb4 47.cxb4 ♖xb4 48.♗c6 ♖d2 49.♗e5 c3 50.bxc3 ♖xc3, it is possible to sign a peace agreement, but Carlsen did not want to do this at all. He accurately calculated the variations and found a way to keep fighting!

46.a4!



At this moment, Nico Georgiadis probably thought that he was winning against the World Champion. The black pawn moves to b3, the bishop removes the b2-pawn with ...♗a3, and that's it! Black wins! The adrenaline goes off the scale. Victory over Carlsen himself! It took the Swiss chess player four minutes to persuade himself.

He might have asked himself one of the main questions: 'Am I being a fool?', which we will talk about soon. But Black played

46...b3??

After 46...bxc3 47.bxc3 ♖e5 48.♗c2! the game ends in a draw.

47.♗f3!

Black probably considered only the squalid move 47.♗b5?. Then, after 47...♖c5 he quite reasonably expected to win. Now the knight from the d2-square not only controls the b-pawn's promotion square, but also attacks the c4-pawn, which has nothing to defend it. Black resigned.

Here I would like to make a digression. In the 4th volume of *School of Future Champions*, Dvoretsky makes the following remark: 'In the old books there are many positions in which one of the partners, sharply below the other in class, does not offer worthy resistance. In the comments, all the attention is usually paid to the play of the winner, and the possibilities of defence are not even mentioned. As a result of this approach, the game receives one-sided coverage and biased assessment. Probably, at some stage of studying chess, this has a certain pedagogical value. But when "in adulthood" you turn to them again, then, looking with completely different eyes, you can easily notice the naivety of such examples and the books' interpretation.'

In my opinion, it all depends on the balance between the verbal explanation and the number of variations. Chess has changed a lot with the advent of the computer, and it has become immeasurably easier to obtain specific variations than before. On the contrary, there is a certain tendency to get away from verbal explanations of what happened in the game.

Here is a quote from Vladimir Kramnik from his review of the results of the tournament in Wijk aan Zee 2013, where he compares the quality of the play of the world's leading grandmasters (top 20 in rating) and chess players of the 2700 level: 'It's just that there was some kind of failure lower down. Maybe this is due to excessive computerization. I watched the games, and I believe that it is not even a matter of blunders (there were also enough of them, but this happens to everyone). I was more amazed by the gross positional mistakes. I think this is due to the fact that people have begun to look at the position on a computer. The game is "move by move". Players have started to forget that there are some general principles of chess that it is better not to violate. I think that all 2700 players today are victims of the computer. But the players of the highest level are good at synthesis.'

Our work here teaches understanding and knowledge of the endgame. Chess has become

much more of a sport and 'falling asleep' for half an hour, pondering the scheme of action in the endgame, has today become an unaffordable luxury. To understand what to do in the endgame, one must be able to verbally explain it, first of all, to oneself. In this case, the calculation of variations must always be carried out, sometimes more intensively, sometimes less so. But in order to quickly outline the correct regrouping of figures, one can and should learn from the classic games, albeit with tendentious, and sometimes with self-praising comments. If we take the game Sämisch-Alekhine from the 'Principle of two weaknesses' chapter, then Alekhine would never have won this in 10 moves against a 2600 GM of today. After all, Sämisch did not see the opponent's plan and simply did not understand what Alekhine was trying to achieve. And when he began to understand, it was already too late. Mark Dvoretsky was a brilliant analyst, and his comments always strike the right balance between verbal explanation and variations. The latter are not overwhelming, like those of many modern commentators. This is largely due to the fact that he deepened Nimzowitsch's idea of the need for prophylaxis and coined a new term 'prophylactic thinking.' In my opinion, this term is based on the sense of contrariness, which we just talked about.

After all, the essence of the term lies in the fact that the chess player constantly asks himself the question: 'What would the opponent do, if it were his move?' and thinks about how to prevent this plan, i.e. to say 'No!'.

I want to briefly share with the reader the content of my old conversation with Mark Dvoretsky about the work of Keres. Mark told me that he and Artur Jussupow had carefully analysed Keres' games. Paul Petrovich was a concrete chess player and when analysing the position he tried to consider the

maximum number of possibilities for himself and for the opponent. While reviewing Keres' games with his comments, Jussupow and Dvoretsky tried to find inaccuracies and errors in numerous branches of the specific variations, and were surprised to find that they hardly ever managed to do so. But at the same time, the vague general reasoning of the great chess player, related to the assessment of the position and plans for the game, was often controversial. Obviously, prophylactic thinking was not Keres' strongest point either.