

Opposite-Colored Bishop Endings

174 Master Classes

Alexey Bezgodov

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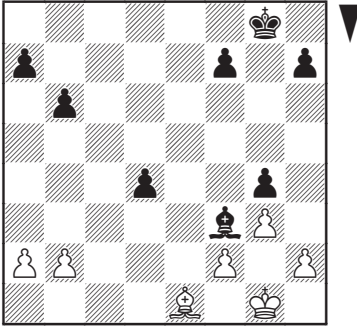
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Position 50

Hikaru Nakamura – Magnus Carlsen,
Moscow, 2011

The champion pushes the rook pawn



A few moves earlier, there were rooks on the board. However, Carlsen preferred to remove all rooks, and as quickly as possible. But was the bishop endgame won? It definitely was!

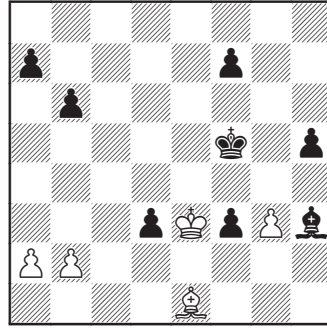
33...♙e2

Practically forcing white's next move. The bishop maneuver is not the only way to win. White could no longer hold the position after the simple journey of the black king: 33... ♖g7 34. ♖f1 ♖f6 35. ♙b4 ♖e5 36. ♖e1 ♙d5 37. a3 ♖e4 38. ♖d2 a5 39. ♙e7 b5 40. ♙d8 a4 41. ♙f6 ♙c4! What should white do?

The variations 42. ♙g7 d3 43. ♖c3 ♖f3-+ and 42. ♖c2 d3+ 43. ♖d2 ♖f3 44. ♖e1 ♖g2-+ are hopeless for white.

42. f3+!? A forced sacrifice. 42... gxf3 43. ♖e1 ♖e3 44. ♙g5+ ♖d3 45. ♙f6 ♙d5 46. g4 ♖c4 47. ♖d2 d3-+

34. f4 gxf3 35. ♙f2 d3 36. ♙e1 ♖g7 37. ♖f2 ♖f6 38. ♖e3 ♖f5 39. h3 h5 40. ♙d2 ♙f1 41. ♙e1 ♙xh3



42. ♖xd3

The continuation 42. ♖xf3 ♙f1 43. ♙d2 ♙e2+ 44. ♖e3 ♖g4 45. ♙e1 f5 46. ♙f2 ♙f3 47. ♖xd3 f4 48. gxf4 h4 was more stubborn, but will still not help to get white out of trouble. Black's task is completed – the most dangerous rook pawn has become a passed pawn! 49. ♙g1 ♖g3 50. f5 ♙d5 51. a4 h3 52. ♙d4 ♖f4 53. ♙g1 ♙e4+ 54. ♖c4 ♙xf5 55. ♙h2+ ♖e4 56. ♖b5 ♖d5 57. ♖a6 ♙c2 58. ♖xa7 ♖c6 59. ♖a6 ♙xa4 60. ♖a7 ♙d1-+

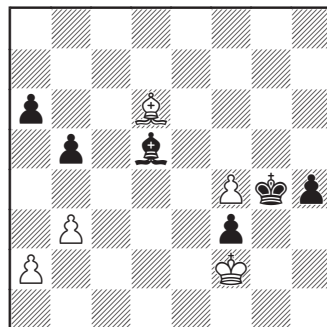
42... ♙f1+ 43. ♖e3 ♖g4

Black's aim is quite simple – to create passed pawns along the f- and h-files. This is an elementary task for Carlsen.

44. ♖f2 ♙b5 45. ♙c3 ♙c6 46. ♙e5 b5 47. ♙b8 a6 48. ♙c7 f5 49. b3 ♙d5 50. ♙d6 f4! 51. gxf4

White could resign immediately after 51. ♙xf4 h4-+

51...h4



52.f5 ♔xf5 53.♔e3 ♔g4 54.♔f2 h3
55.♔e3 ♙e4 56.♔f2 ♙b1 57.a3 ♙a2
58.b4 ♙f7

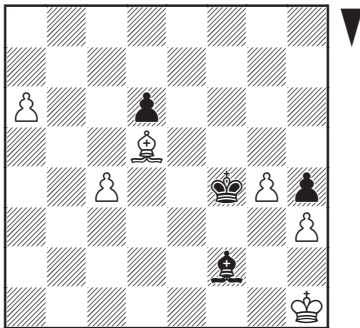
White resigned. The black bishop moves to h5, while the king moves to the queenside.

Position 51

Igor Polovodin – Lev Psakhis, 1980

Freedom to the white king!

With subtle play, white will convert his material advantage. For this, he has just made the paradoxical yet powerful move 1.g2-g4!. At the cost of losing one of his extra pawns, Polovodin creates a passed pawn on g3 for his opponent. However, in return, he rescues his king from the “box” and gains a passed pawn on h3. The interaction between his other pieces and the a6 pawn together with this extra passed pawn brings white victory.



1...hxg3

If black rejects capturing, then, with the support of the white king, the passed a6 and g4 pawns quickly decide the outcome of the game.

2.♔g2 ♙c5 3.♙f3 ♙b6 4.h4 ♙f2
5.♙d1 ♔e5

Or 5...♔f5 6.♙e2 ♔f4 7.♙h5! ♔f5
8.♙f3 ♔e5 9.♙g4+-

6.♙g4! ♔f4

Not even 6...d5 7.cxd5 ♔xd5 8.h5
♔e5 9.h6 ♔f6 10.♙h5!+- will help
black to get out of trouble.

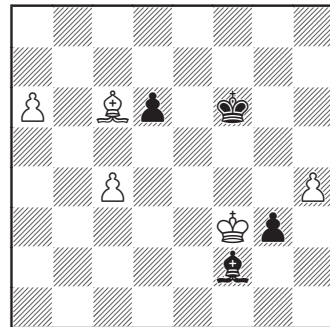
7.♙d7! ♔e5

Or 7...♔e4 8.h5 ♔e5 9.h6 ♔f6
10.♙e8! Zugzwang.

8.♙f3 ♔f6.

The move 8...d5 doesn't work in view
of 9.cxd5 ♔xd5 10.h5 ♔e5 11.h6 ♔f6
12.♙e8+-

9.♙c6



9...♔g6

The continuation 9...♔f5 10.♙e4+
♔f6 (or 10...♔e5 11.h5 ♔f6 12.h6+-)
11.♔g4+- was also hopeless.

10.♔g4 ♔h6 11.♙e4 ♔g7 12.♔f5
♔h6 13.♙f3 ♙c5 14.♔f4!

14.♔f6 ♔h7 15.♔e6? ♔g6 16.♔d7
♔f5 17.♔c6 ♔f4 18.♙g2 ♔g4 19.♔b7
♔xh4= led to a draw.

14...♙f2 15.♔e4!

And black resigned in view of the
continuation:

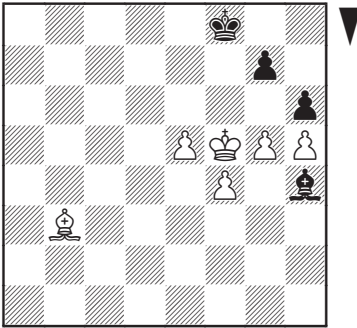
15...♔g6 16.♔d5 ♙c5 17.♔c6 ♔f5
18.♔b7 ♔f4 19.♙g2 ♔g4 20.a7 ♙xa7
21.♔xa7 ♔xh4 22.♔b6 ♔g4 23.♔c6
♔f4 24.♔xd6+-

Position 52

Zoltan Ribli – Lutz Espig, 1975

Keep in mind the color of the corner!

In this position, the pawns are positioned on one flank, and, what is more, the corner has the “wrong color”. This makes it difficult to convert the advantage, so it is necessary to play accurately.

**1...hxg5**

The variation 1...♔g3 2.gxh6 gxh6 3.♔e4 ♔h4 4.f5 ♔e7 5.♔f4 ♔g5+ 6.♔g4+- will not help either. The main focus for white is to prevent the sacrifice of the black bishop for the central pawns.

2.♔g4!

A great resource! Perhaps black hoped for 2.fxg5? ♔e1 3.h6 gxh6 4.gxh6 ♔d2 5.♔g6 ♔f4=

2...♔e1

The move 2...♔e7 loses in view of 3.f5 ♔f8 4.f6 gxf6 5.exf6 ♔e1 6.h6+-

3.♔xg5 ♔d2 4.♔f5 ♔c1 5.♔c4 ♔d2 6.♔e4 ♔c1

7.h6!

By sacrificing this pawn, white gains a victorious pair of connected passed pawns that can be blocked only temporarily.

7...gxh6

Or 7...g6 8.♔f3 ♔b2 9.♔g4 ♔c1 10.♔g5 ♔d2 11.♔d3+-

8.f5 h5

The continuation 8...♔g7 9.♔e2 ♔g5 10.♔d5 ♔f7 11.♔d6! ♔h4 12.♔h5+ ♔f8 13.♔e6 ♔g5 14.f6 ♔c1 15.♔f5+- was also hopeless.

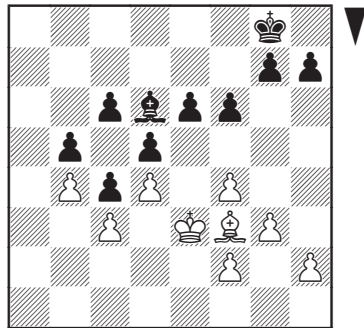
9.f6 h4 10.e6 ♔a3 11.♔f3!

Black resigned in view of the continuation:

11...♔e8 12.♔g4 ♔b4 13.♔xh4 ♔a3 14.♔g5 ♔b4 15.♔b5+! ♔f8 (15... ♔d8 16.♔g6+-) 16.♔f5 and then ♔e4-d5-c6+-

Position 53

Vladimir Kovacevic – Zoltan Ribli, 1984

Guys, create a pair of pawns without the fear of being mocked**1...♔f7 2.♔g4**

The continuation 2.h4 ♔e7+- was no better.

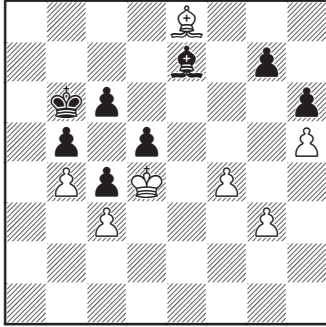
2...♔e7 3.h4 h6 4.h5 e5!

The avalanche of black pawns is now set in motion.

5.fxe5

5.♔f5 exd4+ 6.♔xd4 ♔d8 7.♔e3 ♔b8+- . After that, black easily creates a pair of victorious passed pawns.

5...fxe5 6.f4 exd4+ 7.♔xd4 ♔d8
8.♙e6 ♔c7 9.♙f7 ♙e7 10.♙e8 ♔b6!



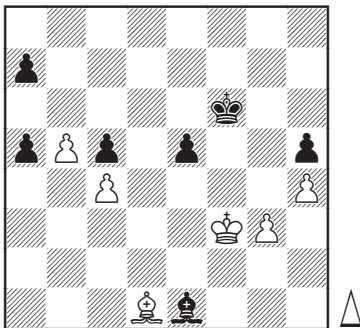
White resigned. The move 11.♔e3 would be met by 11...♙f6 12.♔d2 c5 13.bxc5+ ♔xc5, followed by b4 or d4.

Here are three examples on the subject of “Piece sacrifice for the success of pawns”.

Position 54

**Alexey Shirov – Ulf Andersson,
Biel, 1991**

The game was drawn, the game was drawn. But suddenly, the powerful bishop got involved



Alexey Shirov clearly did not fully imagine how his opponent intended to win. The idea of the piece sacrifice turned out to be a disturbing surprise for him.

43.g4

It was also possible to just wait: 43.♙c2. However, black would still have won: 43...e4+ 44.♔xe4 ♙xg3 45.♙d1 ♔g6 46.♔d5 ♙xh4 47.♔xc5 ♙f2+ 48.♔d5 h4 and the black king heads at a modest pace for g1.

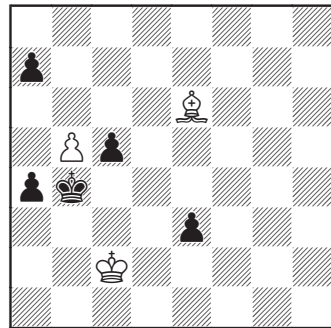
43...hxg4+ 44.♔xg4 ♙xh4!!

Awesome! If the bishop is captured, the black king will move closer to his (and white’s) pawns.

45.♔xh4

White can no longer escape via 45.♙c2 ♙f2 46.♔f3 ♙d4 47.♙d1 ♔g5 48.♔e4 ♔h4 49.♔f3 ♔h3 50.♙c2 ♔h2 51.♙a4 ♔g1 52.♔e2 ♔g2—+

45...♔f5 46.♔g3 ♔e4 47.♔f2 ♔d3 48.♔e1 ♔xc4 49.♔d2 ♔b4 50.♔c2 e4 51.♙g4 a4 52.♙f5 e3 53.♙e6



The only bishop on the board is helpless.

53...c4

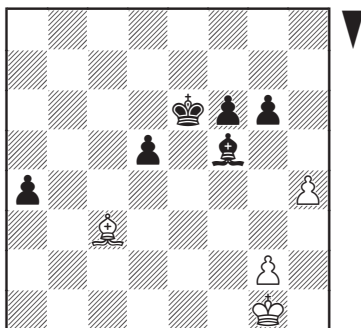
White resigned.

In the past, commentators considered this position a draw, but in fact they were wrong.

Position 55

Veselin Topalov – Alexey Shirov,
Linares, 1998

An immortal masterpiece!



47...♗h3!!

Alexey Shirov's powerful winning move is a kind of revenge for his old defeat against Andersson! This time, Shirov became the author of the sensational piece sacrifice, rather than the victim. In fact, this move was the only way to victory.

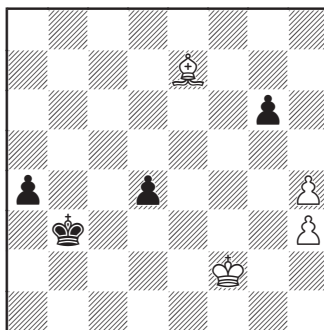
Note that the variation 47...a3 48.♔f2 ♗e4 49.g3 ♔f5 50.♗a1 a2 51.♗b2 ♗b1 52.♔e3 ♔g4 53.♗xf6 ♔xg3 54.♔e2 ♔f4 55.♗b2 ♔e4 56.♔d2 d4 57.♗a1 ♗d3 58.♗b2 ♗c4 59.♗a1 ♗e6 60.♗b2 ♗f5 61.♗a1 d3 62.♗b2 ♔f4 63.♗a1 ♔g4 64.♗f6 a1=♚ 65.♗xa1 ♔xh4 66.♗f6+ g5 67.♔e3= would only lead to a draw.

48.gxh3

The black king gets to e4 just in time, after which the black passed pawns quickly win.

The continuation 48.♔h2 wouldn't save white either. The black bishop runs to g4 and if necessary to h5, after which the black king nevertheless makes it to e4.

48...♔f5 49.♔f2 ♔e4 50.♗xf6 d4
51.♗e7 ♔d3 52.♗c5 ♔c4 53.♗e7 ♔b3



The bishop cannot hold back both pawns – either the a4 pawn or the d4 pawn promotes to a queen.

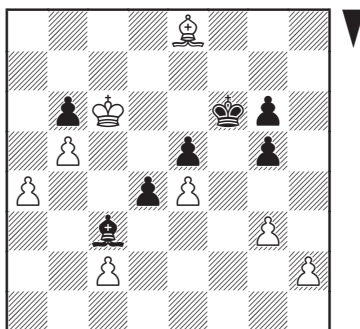
White resigned.

Here is another classic example when a piece sacrifice is the only way to victory.

Position 56

Mikhail Botvinnik – Ludek Pachman,
Leipzig, 1960

Why did you resign, Mr Pachman?

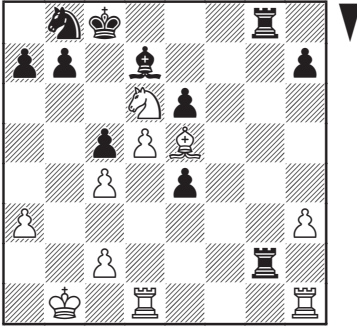


Black resigned in this position. Perhaps too early. There may be a way to victory for white, but it is not that simple

Position 142

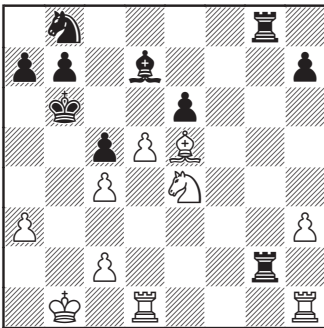
Bobby Fischer – Wolfgang Uhlmann,
Rovinj-Zagreb, 1970

The attack is led
by an especially nimble knight



A simple but beautiful fragment from
a Fischer game.

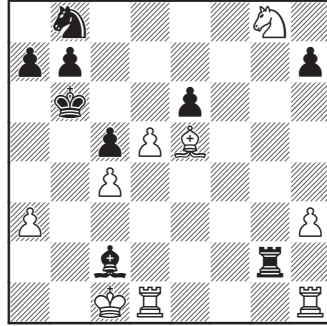
26...♔c7 27.♞xe4+ ♔b6



28.♞f6

Another way to win was 28.dxe6
♙a4 29.♞d6+ ♞c6 30.♞c1 ♞e2 31.♞f6
♞gg2 32.♞d5+ ♔a6 33.♞f4+- the
knight fork resolves the situation.

28...♙a4 29.♞xg8 ♙xc2+ 30.♔c1



30...♞d7

This loses immediately, however, in
any case, the outcome of the game was
negative for black.

Uhlmann didn't fancy the variation
30...♙xd1 31.♞f6 ♙b3 32.♙xb8 exd5
33.cxd5 ♞f2 34.♞d7+ ♔b5 35.♙xa7
♙xd5 36.♞d1 ♙g2 37.♞d3 ♞f1+
38.♔b2 ♞f2+ 39.♔c3+-

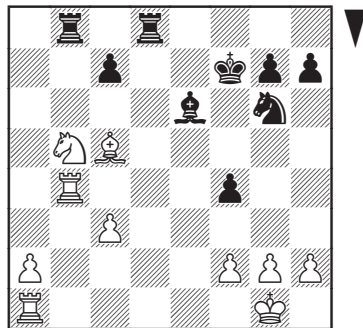
31.♞dg1

Black resigned.

Position 143

Bobby Fischer – Lajos Portisch,
Havana, 1966

Mating attack without queens



This is one of Fischer's most famous
games.

22...♙xa2

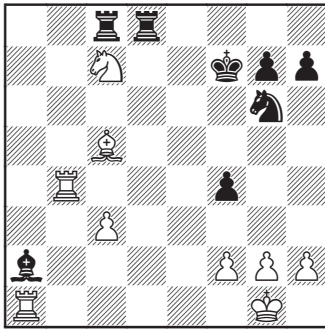
Black temporarily wins back the pawn, but his position does not improve.

23. ♖xc7

The continuation 23.h4!? ♕c4 24.♖xc4 ♖xb5 25.h5 ♖f8 26.♖xf4+ ♔g8 27.♕xf8 ♖xf8 28.♖c4± was also very strong.

23... ♖bc8

Playing 23... ♖xb4 24.cxb4 ♖e5 25.♖b5± did not provide sufficient protection.



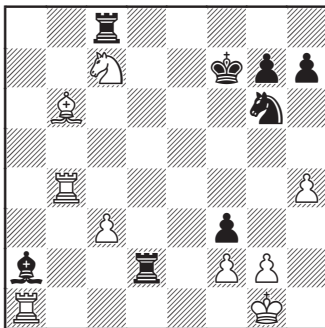
24.h4!

Not only creating a luft for his king, but also strengthening the attack.

24... ♖d2

The naïve 24... ♖xc7 25.♕b6+- led to a loss of both the exchange and the game.

25. ♕b6 f3

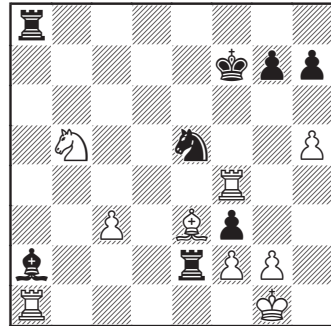


26. ♕e3

The move 26.♖b5!? was also fine.

26... ♖e2 27. ♖b5 ♖a8 28.h5

There was also the following winning variation available that led to an opposite-colored bishops ending with rooks: 28.♖d6+ ♔g8 29.♖f5 ♖f8 30.gxf3 ♖c2 31.♖b7 ♖e6 32.♖d4 ♖xd4 33.♕xd4+- **28... ♖e5 29.♖f4+**

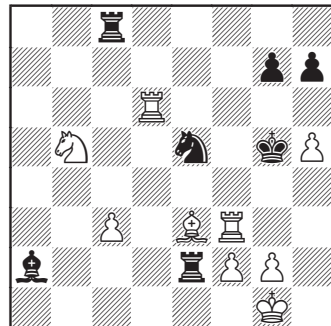


29... ♔e7?

Portisch, one of the world's best players in those years, moves his king into the mating net. Obviously, he was greatly shocked by the formidable American's offensive.

A more stubborn, but ultimately futile continuation was 29... ♔g8 30.♖d4 ♖b2 31.♖xf3 ♖xf3+ 32.♖xf3 ♖b1+ 33.♖xb1 ♕xb1 34.♖f4+- . With two extra pawns, white would certainly have won.

30. ♖d1 ♖c8 31. ♖e4 ♔f6 32. ♖d6+ ♔f5 33. ♖f4+ ♔g5 34. ♖xf3+

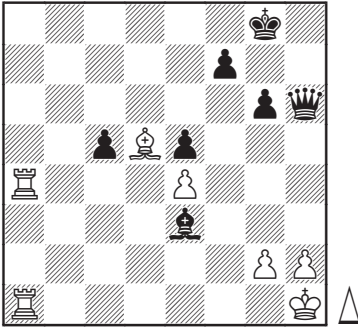


Black resigned.

Position 144

Bobby Fischer – Fridrik Olafsson,
Bled, 1961

The rooks are on the attack, while the
queen is locked out of the game

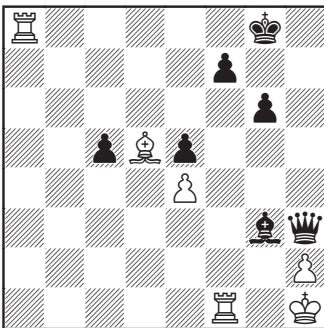


The approximate material equality should not mislead you – black is defenseless against mating threats. Note how useless the black bishop is.

35. ♖f1 ♙f4 36. g3 ♚h3 37. ♖aa1!
♙xg3

37... g5 38. ♖f2!+– and then the
other rook moves to a7.

38. ♖a8+

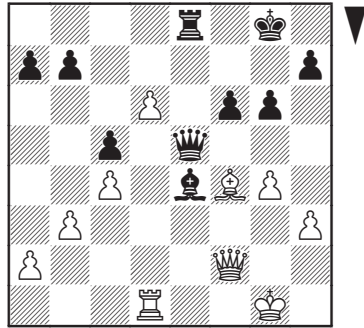


White easily takes the queen, so
black decides to resign.

Position 145

Bobby Fischer – Hans Berliner,
New York, 1960

The panic sacrifice



This fragment shows how important it is to keep a cool head. Many of Fischer's opponents lacked this ability.

32... ♚c3??

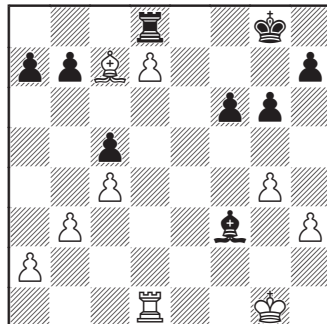
A nervous decision.

It was necessary to sacrifice not the rook, but the pawn: 32... ♚e6 33. ♚xc5 ♙c6 34. ♚e3 ♙f7!+ with counterplay opportunities. We have already encountered similar ideas in this book.

33. d7 ♖d8 34. ♚e2

34. ♙c7 ♚xh3 35. ♚e2! led to a quick victory. However, Fischer was pragmatic and never went for long calculations if there was a simple solution.

34... ♚f3 35. ♚xf3 ♙xf3 36. ♙c7



Black resigned.