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Sam Shankland

**Grandmaster Training Camp**

**Calculation!**

QUALITY CHESS



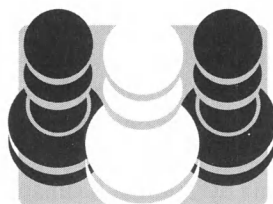


*Grandmaster Training Camp 1*

# Calculation!

By

**Sam Shankland**



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## **GRANDMASTER TRAINING CAMP 1 — Calculation!**

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# Contents

|  |     |
|--|-----|
| Key to Symbols used                    | 4   |
| Preface                                | 5   |
| Introduction                           | 7   |
| Chapter 1 Tactics                      | 13  |
| Chapter 2 Candidates                   | 25  |
| Chapter 3 Combinations                 | 37  |
| Chapter 4 Endgames                     | 49  |
| Chapter 5 Defense                      | 61  |
| Chapter 6 Deep Calculation             | 73  |
| Chapter 7 Solutions                    | 85  |
| <i>to Chapter 1 – Tactics</i>          | 86  |
| <i>to Chapter 2 – Candidates</i>       | 128 |
| <i>to Chapter 3 – Combinations</i>     | 168 |
| <i>to Chapter 4 – Endgames</i>         | 204 |
| <i>to Chapter 5 – Defense</i>          | 248 |
| <i>to Chapter 6 – Deep Calculation</i> | 343 |
| Chapter 8 – Conclusion                 |     |
| Name Index                             | 354 |

# Key to symbols used

|    |                                |
|----|--------------------------------|
| ±  | White is slightly better       |
| ∓  | Black is slightly better       |
| ±  | White is better                |
| ∓  | Black is better                |
| +− | White has a decisive advantage |
| −+ | Black has a decisive advantage |
| =  | equality                       |
| ≡  | with compensation              |
| ↔  | with counterplay               |
| ⊖  | unclear                        |
| ?  | a weak move                    |
| ?? | a blunder                      |
| !  | a good move                    |
| !! | an excellent move              |
| !? | a move worth considering       |
| ?! | a move of doubtful value       |
| †  | check                          |
| #  | mate                           |

# Preface

---

For my entire adult life, I have been both a professional chess player and a professional chess trainer. I have always had clear priorities, and my main ambitions lie behind the board. Playing comes first, training others comes second. In my early twenties, my main activity on training others was with helping private students. Every now and then, I would write a short article or record a brief video. But everything changed in late 2017, when I wrote my first book, *Small Steps to Giant Improvement*.

This book took me about six weeks to complete. That was all I did in this time, and I logged many hours every day. I did not keep a precise count of how the hours were proportionally spent. But I would estimate that it was about 90% on researching the topic of pawn play, looking for examples and trying to properly understand them; 10% on writing. I chose the topic because it was something I wanted to study. Most of the work I did towards completing the book was improving my understanding of chess. It did not feel like I was writing a book; rather, it felt like I was doing my normal training and inviting my readers to come along for the ride.

Perhaps it was just a coincidence, but right after doing my work on *Small Steps to Giant Improvement*, I experienced the biggest breakthrough of my adult life. In early 2018, I won the US Championship ahead of three top-ten players and followed it up with wins at the Capablanca Memorial and American Continental. I shot to 2730 and finally reached Super-GM status, after being stuck in the mid-high 2600s for the previous five years. Furthermore, I was seeing many themes that I had written about showing up in my tournament practice. I was handling the positions much better than I used to.

Ever since then, I have focused a lot on creating content. I wrote a follow-up book for Quality Chess on mastering passed pawn play, *Small Steps 2 Success*. I also published a full opening repertoire series on Chessable. Every single word I have written for both publishers has been done with the same stated goal in mind: to make myself a better player. Successful books that help supplement my income and help others improve their chess is just icing on the cake.

The writing process involves a lot of research. This deepens my understanding and forces me to organize my thoughts and newfound knowledge in a coherent manner. Writing both books helped me make better decisions with my pawns. Digging deep into many opening lines, while building my Chessable repertoire, developed my understanding of some of the common and important resulting middlegame structures. I was able to play my own analysis against countless 2700+ opponents and get good positions. *Grandmaster Training Camp 1* gave me an excuse to solve three hundred difficult exercises to continue the never-ending process of trying to improve my calculation.

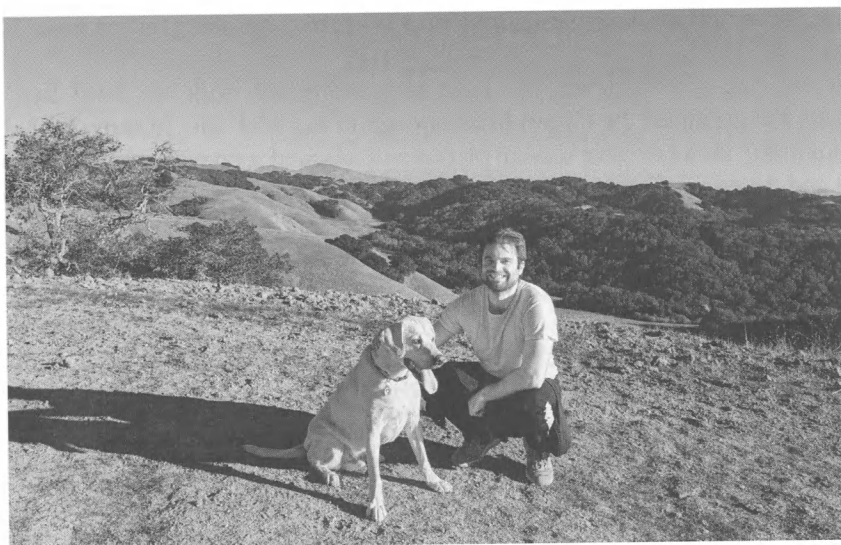
I have had nothing but positive experiences with both Quality Chess and Chessable. They both bring something unique to the table. Physical print books and online interactive e-books both have their advantages and disadvantages, their proponents and their critics. As far as I am concerned, Quality Chess is far and away the best chess publisher when it comes to print books, as Chessable is for online books (or courses as they are often called).

I am absolutely delighted that the work you are presently holding will be available on both platforms. It was first published as *Shankland's Chess Calculation Workbook* on Chessable in September 2022. It is now also released in book form as *Grandmaster Training Camp 1* with Quality Chess in February 2023. It is fully accessible to those who like all the bells and whistles of web-based training and the tools it has to offer, as well as all those who prefer the sight and feel of a quality physical book and board.

Whichever medium the reader prefers, it is my sincere hope that this work helps them reach further towards their chess goals.

Sam Shankland

Walnut Creek, November 2022



GM Tenor and GM Sam Shankland

# Introduction

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Welcome to *Grandmaster Training Camp 1 – Calculation!*

Before we get started, I would like to share a game of mine from 2013 where I calculated poorly. I was already around 2600, but still seriously lacking in many ways. Calculation was the largest hurdle in front of me, though I did not fully appreciate it at the time. When I was chosen as the 2013 Samford Fellow and had some money at my disposal for the first time in my career, I knew it was finally time to hire a coach. I had really enjoyed Jacob Aagaard's books, in particular the *Grandmaster Preparation* series. After I miscalculated painfully in multiple games that summer, I wrote to him. He agreed to do a session with me, and the rest is history.

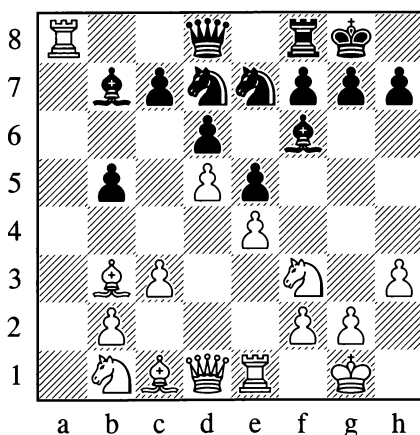
Before I arrived in Glasgow, I annotated a couple of my recent games, showing him the spots where I had miscalculated. This gave him a better sense of the kind of player he would be working with. The following notes are copied almost word for word from one of the games I had sent him nine years ago.

## Shankland – Ehlvest

---

New York 2013

1.e4 e5 2.♘f3 ♘c6 3.♙b5 a6 4.♙a4 ♘f6 5.0-0 ♙e7 6.♖e1 b5 7.♙b3 0-0 8.c3 d6 9.h3 ♘d7 10.d4 ♙f6 11.a4 ♙b7 12.d5 ♘e7 13.axb5 axb5 14.♖xa8



14...♙xa8

14...♙xa8 I knew that the computer recommended taking back with the queen. 15.♘a3 ♙a6! While my opponent was thinking after I played 14.♖xa8, I remembered the computer said

this was Black's only move, which led me to finding the ♖a3xb5 tactic. It kept puzzling me why 15...♞a5 was not good when it looked so much more natural than placing the bishop on a passive square. So, when the position in the game came, I had realized ♖a3xb5 was in the air.

### 15. ♖a3 ♞b8 16. ♖xb5!

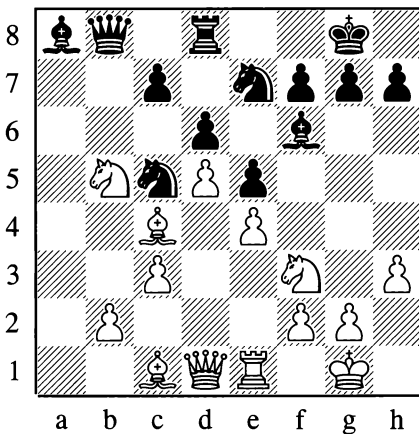
I thought I am already almost winning.

### 16... ♖c5

16...♞xb5 17.♙a4 wins the knight on d7, staying a pawn ahead.

### 17. ♙c4 ♞d8

White has an extra pawn. If he can consolidate his position, he should be winning easily. But Black has some threats in the center connected with ...♖xe4 and ...c7-c6. My play here left a lot to be desired:

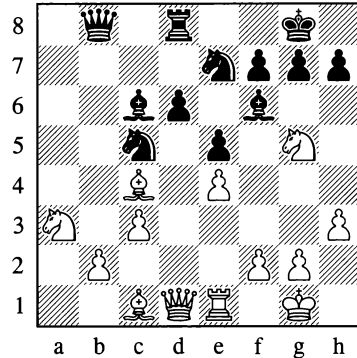


### 18. b4?

Played after twenty minutes thought. I had seen ...♖xe4 and thought that it was not working – if this had been correct, then b2-b4 would indeed be best, expelling the active knight.

18. ♖a3! was solid and strong. I considered the move but was worried about my center

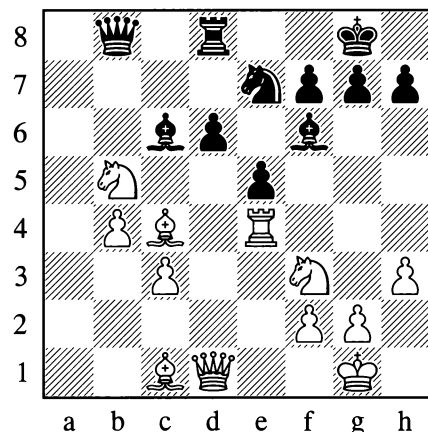
coming under siege with 18...c6. But I had overestimated Black's dynamic chances. Following 19.dxc6! ♙xc6 20. ♖g5!



The threat to the f7-pawn compels Black to push ...d6-d5. 20...d5 21.exd5 ♙xd5 22.♞c2 There is not much counterplay and White is a solid pawn up. In addition, he has two connected passed pawns. He should win.

### 18... ♖xe4! 19. ♞xe4 c6 20.dxc6 ♙xc6

I had seen all of this and realized that Black has a lot of threats here: ...♙xe4, ...♙xb5 and ...d6-d5 etc. I am definitely going to lose some material back. Still, my thought was that I am just winning after:



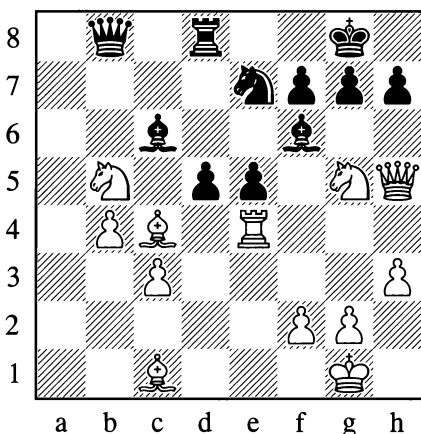
### 21. ♖g5! d5!

After 21...♙xg5 22.♙xg5, Black cannot stop ♙g5xe7.

Or 21...♙xb5 22.♙xf7† ♔f8 23.♚h5, with a winning attack.

## 22.♚h5!

I had seen this far when I played b2-b4 and assessed the position to be completely winning. My opponent spent thirty-five minutes here. I half expected him to resign! ♚xf7† and ♚xh7† are massive threats. Even while he was thinking, I still did not see Black's defensive resource just two moves away.



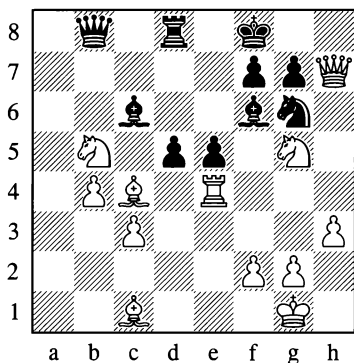
## 22...♙xg5!

Black found the best move.

The alternatives are worse:

After:

22...♙g6 23.♚xh7† ♔f8



Alternatively after 23...♙f8, 24.♙b3 wins as well. Following 24...♚xb5 (24...dxe4 25.♙xf7) 25.♙e1 ♚d3 26.b5!, White is ready for a deadly check on a3.

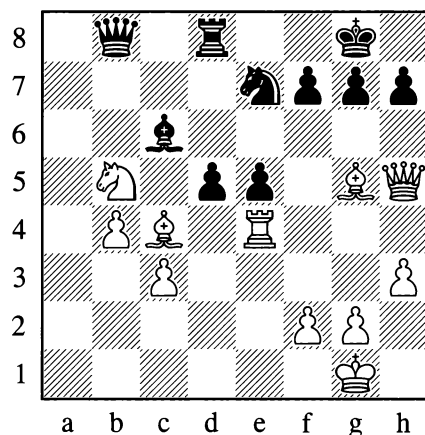
24.♙e3!

Black's king will perish after a coming ♙c5†.

After 22...♙xb5 23.♚xf7† ♔h8 24.♙h4 ♙xg5 25.♙xg5 ♙xc4, White would have 26.♙xe7 or 26.♙f6, winning.

## 23.♙xg5

At this point, I had noticed that 23...f6 loses, and otherwise there was no way to stop ♙g5xe7. But I had overlooked a simple move.



## 23...dxc4!

I had missed this move when I played b2-b4. At this point I spent forty minutes trying to make ♙e4-h4 work, but ultimately decided to make the draw instead. Even when the position after 23.♙xg5 was on the board, I still did not see this move until it was played. I quickly began kicking myself for overlooking it, as it dawned on me that I had squandered my advantage.

All other moves will not save the game:

23...dxe4 24.♚xf7† ♔h8 25.♙xe7, and White wins routinely.

23...g6 I was expecting this, although Black is obviously lost after: 24.♖e2 dxc4 (24...dxe4 25.♙xe7 ♖d7 26.♙c5) 25.♞xe5 ♙xb5 26.♞xe7, when White is a clean pawn up and has a much safer king.

23...f6 24.♙xf6!

This much I had seen. The line is very forcing and not hard to calculate:

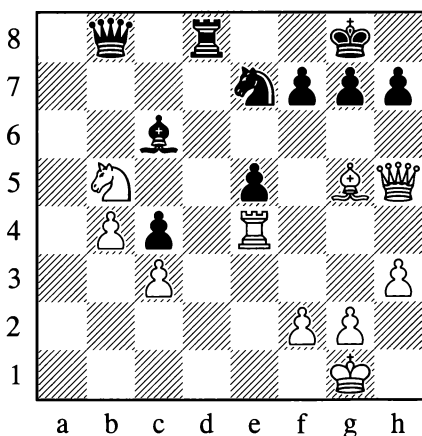
24...gxf6 25.♞g4† ♜g6

25...♙h8 26.♞h6 With mate on g7 or f6 to follow.

25...♙f8 26.♞xh7! dxc4 27.♞g7 Black is mated.

26.♞xg6† hxg6 27.♞xg6† ♙h8 28.♞xf6† ♙g8 29.♞xc6 dxc4 30.♞xc4†

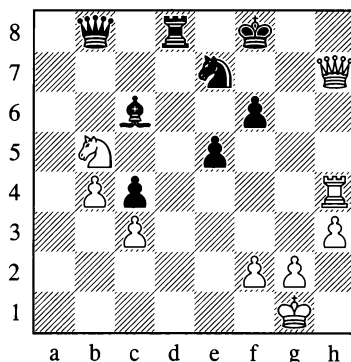
White's knight and armada of pawns will easily overpower Black's rook.



24.♙xe7

An implicit draw offer. As it turns out, White still had some chances, but it was not a clear position at all.

I could have pressed on, and the computer thinks I should have. But in human practice, the following lines are anything but convincing. 24.♞h4 f6 25.♙xf6 gxf6 26.♞xh7† ♙f8



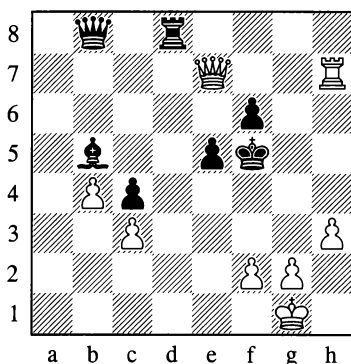
27.♞h8†

The engine finds some nasty moves for White, but this is hard to do over the board.

27...♙f7

27...♙g8!? is also quite tough. After 28.♞g4 ♙e7! (28...♙f7? 29.♙c7! ♙e7 30.♙a6 The knight will regroup to c5, and White should win.) 29.♞g7† ♙e6 30.♙c7† ♙d6, I thought I should be better here, but I could not find anything concrete. The computer points out my only move is the quiet 31.♞h5!, when White would still have winning chances.

28.♞h7† ♙e6 29.♞g7 ♙xb5! 30.♞xe7† ♙f5



I reached this far in my calculations, and I was unsure about this position. Black is not getting mated and his king running straight from f5-e4-d3-c2-b3 is concerning. It is certainly not risk-free, and eventually the computer claims that Black is only slightly worse. I should have tried this instead of just making a draw, but the real mistake was 18.b4.



24...♙xe4 25.♙xd8 ♖xb5  
1/2–1/2

I have had a seemingly infinite number of people come to me over the course of my career and ask me about being an adult student of the game. How was I able to improve as much as I did and reach the world elite? I had been constantly labelled as untalented and unpromising, going all the way back to my junior days. Indeed, I never won any youth championships until I was 17. I barely managed to be the fourth strongest junior in the US, lagging well behind Robert Hess, Ray Robson and Alex Lenderman. And that does not even mention the incredible talent pool in the rest of the world! At the time, I found it frustrating to be viewed as less promising. Now I proudly wear that badge with honor. Ratings do not lie. I think my perceived, and probably real, lack of talent compared with my peers speaks volumes. Both about my work ethic, and about the effectiveness of the training I have done throughout my professional career to ultimately reach the level I have.

The short answer to this question is that I learned to calculate properly. Calculation is the most important skill in all of chess. Nobody is that great at it naturally, and a player's calculating ability can be dramatically improved with proper training. Upon becoming a better calculator, I started leaving far fewer points on the table in the style of this game with Ehlovest. But it was not a short or easy journey.

Hiring Jacob was surely the best decision of my chess career. His method of working is not too complicated; he drills his students with calculation problems, over and over again. I have never known anyone to be able to come up with exercises as fast or efficiently as he does. They are always great training. I believe he is far

and away the best living trainer on the planet, and I have been putting my money where my mouth is for the last nine years. My work with him took me, from a struggling barely 2600 GM, to 2700 and beyond. For *Grandmaster Training Camp 1*, Jacob gave me three hundred exercises to solve. I did not choose a single position that went into this book!

Attempting to solve all three hundred exercises took me a little over a month. That is the time taken by a full-time professional player who calculates well and solves fast! For many, I suspect this could easily be a year's worth of calculation training, or even more.

I certainly failed a fair share of them. I am not perfect, Magnus Carlsen is not perfect, nobody ever will be. Failing the exercises can be frustrating. But constant work on exercises like these is what turns you into a better calculator, and by extension, a stronger chess player.

The puzzles are broken down into six sections of fifty puzzles each. I found sections 1 and 3 the easiest, and sections 4 and 6 the hardest. While they cover different kinds of positions, the general feel is the same – you try to solve each problem to the best of your ability. There is a wide range of positions. For example, I always prefer to train on a physical board to mimic the feel of a tournament game as much as possible. There were some positions that upon opening the ChessBase file, I saw the solution in just a few seconds and did not even bother setting up the pieces. Others left me completely flabbergasted, even upon seeing the solution. Most were somewhere in between. Throughout the book, I have made sure to include the key lines I saw. I showed my incorrect solution for every single problem I got wrong, why it was wrong and what I overlooked or misunderstood. I have explained the solutions to the best of my ability in the text.

The calculating abilities I had shown in this game with Ehlvest were not atrocious, but certainly insufficient for a strong grandmaster looking to make the leap towards the truly elite. The three hundred exercises in this book are the exact kind of training I consistently did for the next nine years. When you see the games in the Conclusion, it will be clear how much I managed to improve my calculation.

When solving the exercises, there are some things that you should keep in mind.

First, try to do more than one problem at a time before checking the solution. Training should mimic a tournament game as much as possible. During a game, you will not always know if your last move was a good one when deciding upon your next one. Additionally, I find that if I solve many positions correctly in a row, I often end up getting complacent and somewhat arrogant in subsequent problems. I play too fast; I lose focus or do not take them seriously enough. This is a natural

human emotional response and best avoided if possible. Conversely, if I get a string of problems wrong, I might get frustrated and call it quits. It is better to decide in advance how large a batch you want to do, try to solve them all and check the solutions when you are done. One page is a good batch size.

Secondly, write down your solutions. This will force you to slow down, and it will help make sure that you remember what you were thinking when you check the solutions.

Thirdly, I encourage you to set up the position on a physical board. Not having a computer on at all will obviously remove the temptation to turn on the engine at any moment, which would be the best possible way to ruin an exercise.

Speaking totally honestly, I did not feel like I am helping other people with this book, or even writing a book at all. Rather, I felt as though I am doing my normal training, and everyone else is welcome to come along for the ride. It is time for that ride to begin.

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# Chapter 1

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## Tactics





In Chapter 1, we are going to look at positions that fall into the category of strict tactics. The first few are easy and meant to be a warm-up, but rest assured, they get tougher very fast! Just like all the other sections, every single one of these puzzles was given to me by Jacob to solve. I have made sure to explain what I was thinking in each position, as well as how this measures up to the intended solution. Some of them seem like they should not be too hard. But most of the time, the player playing the game got it wrong, and we will see games from some pretty good players here! Your goal for this section should be to be as accurate as possible. I don't imagine anyone would score a perfect 50/50. I certainly did not! But a big part of becoming a better calculator is getting the easy positions right 90% of the time instead of 80%. This will make you better at punishing mistakes, and less prone to blunders of your own.

There are some key tenets of calculation that will be on display a lot throughout the book, though maybe especially in this section. I would recommend trying to work them into your thought process. They are:

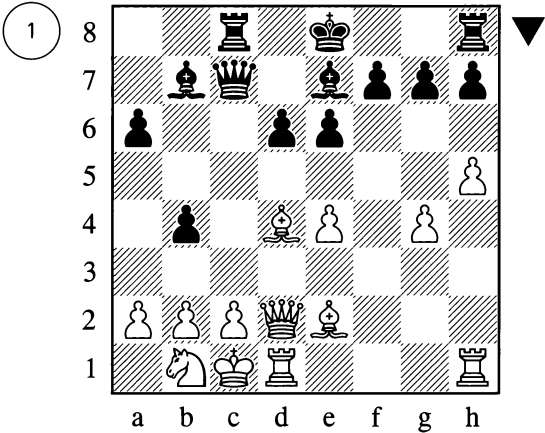
1. Always examine all *checks and captures*.
2. If there is a move that you really want to make, and your opponent is stopping you from making it, the first question you should always ask is "*What happens if I do it anyway?*"
3. Be very wary of *automatic moves* that are not 100% forced.
4. Always try to stretch your mind to consider *candidate moves* that you missed the first time around.

Frequently, that is all that is needed to solve a position if the resulting variations are not too complex. Additionally, Jacob's three questions will often help you if you are stuck. They are:

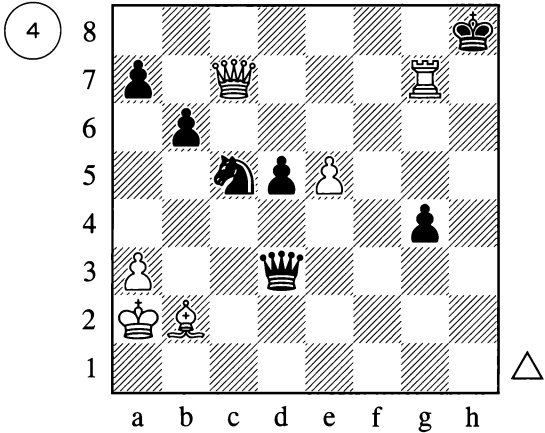
1. *Where are the weaknesses?*
2. *Which is my worst-placed piece?*
3. *What is your opponent's idea?*

Happy solving!

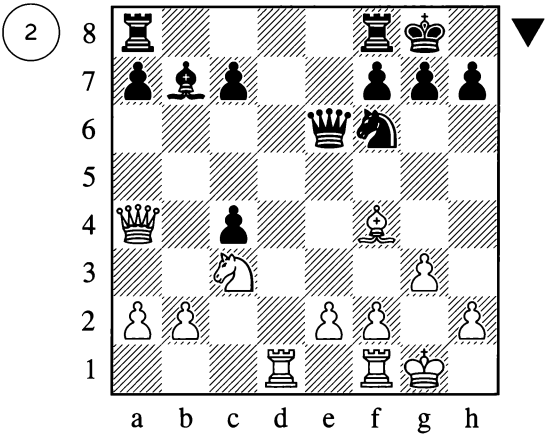
Cork – Morris, West Bromwich 2006



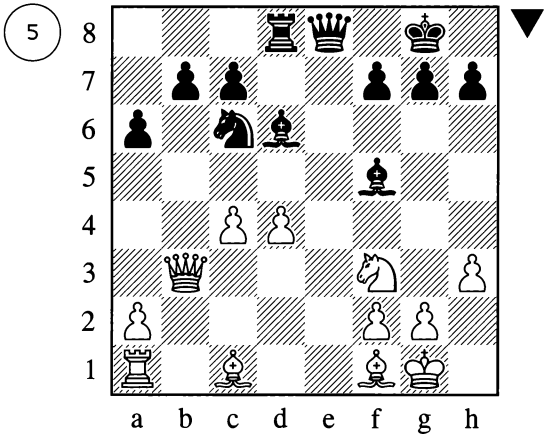
Levin – Maltsevskaya, Chelyabinsk 2022



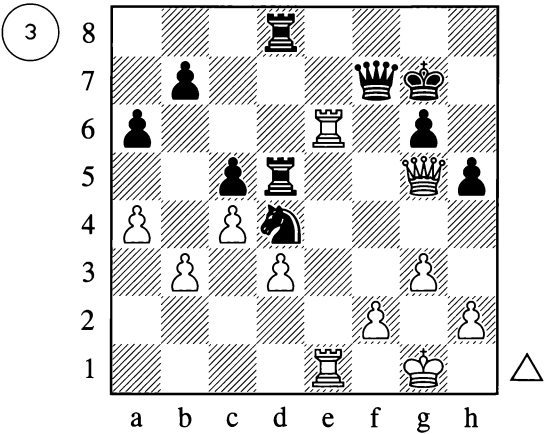
Morera Rodriguez – Campora, Malaga 2021



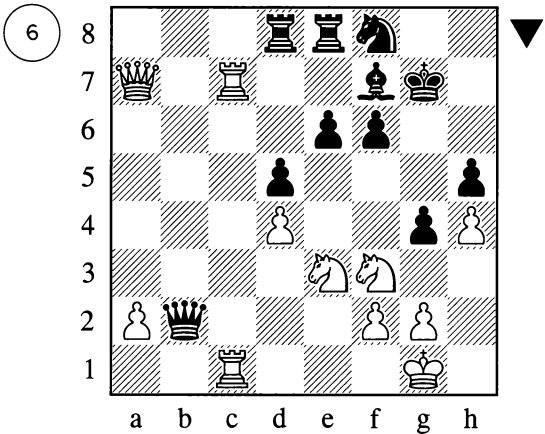
Van Osch – Heimann, Germany 2022



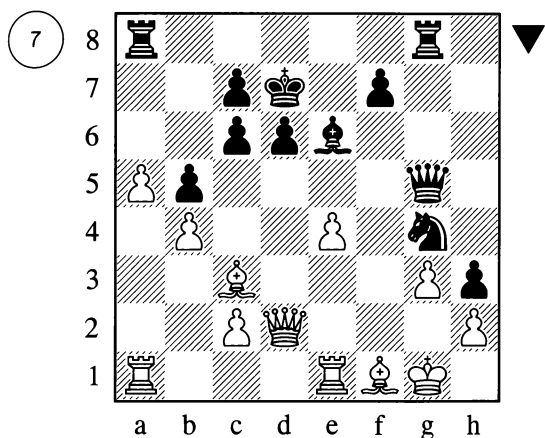
Kosakowski – Adly, Warsaw 2021



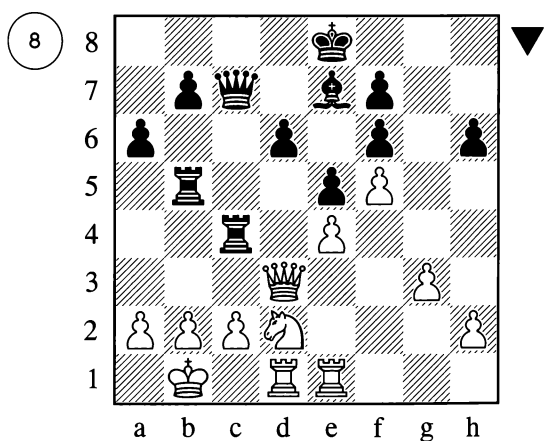
Blohberger – Christiansen, Warsaw 2021



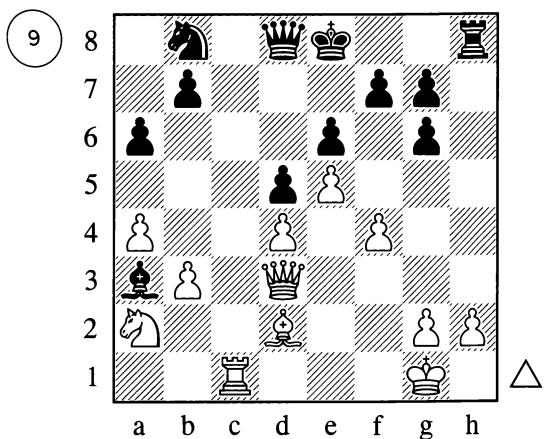
Carlsson – Cuenca Jimenez, Warsaw 2021



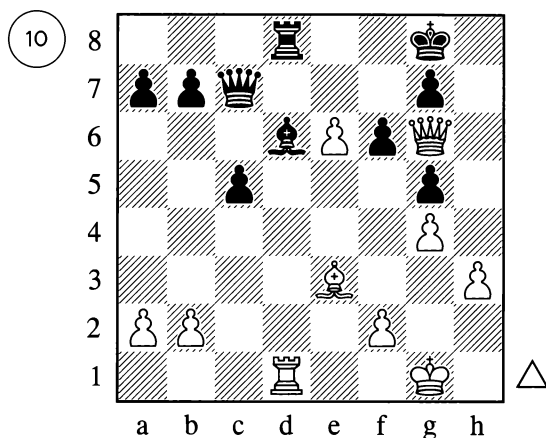
Aziz – Alekseenko, Warsaw 2021



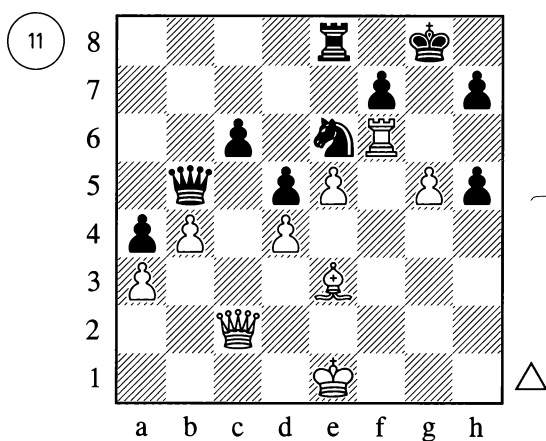
Anto Cristiano – Chitlange Sakshi, Sitges 2021



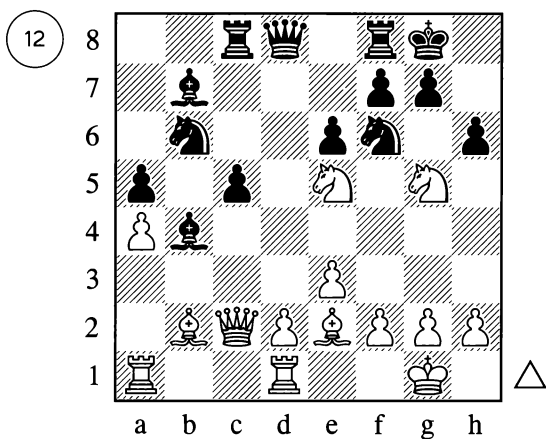
Duda – Hovhannisyan, Warsaw 2021



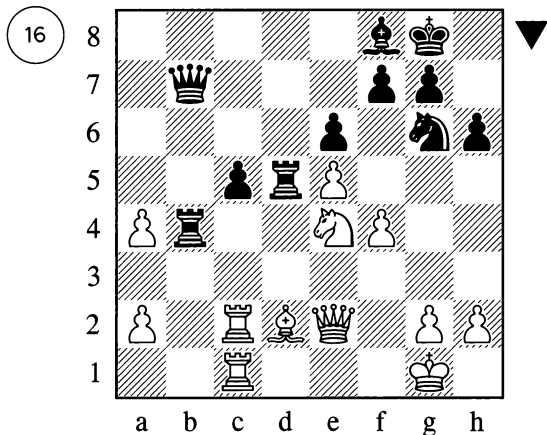
Krejci – Hollan, Czech Republic 2021



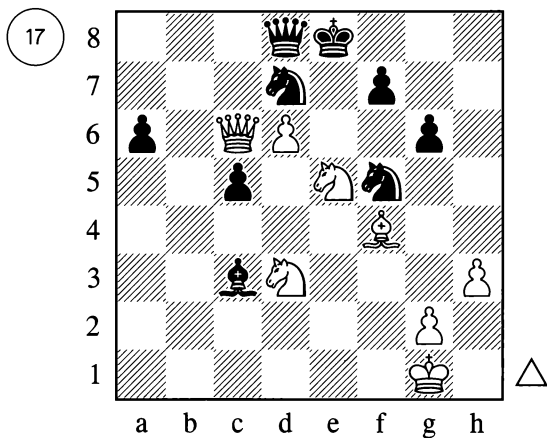
Muradli – Nareks, Terme Catez 2022



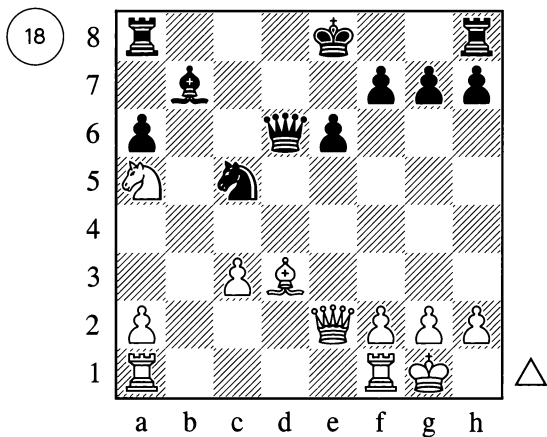
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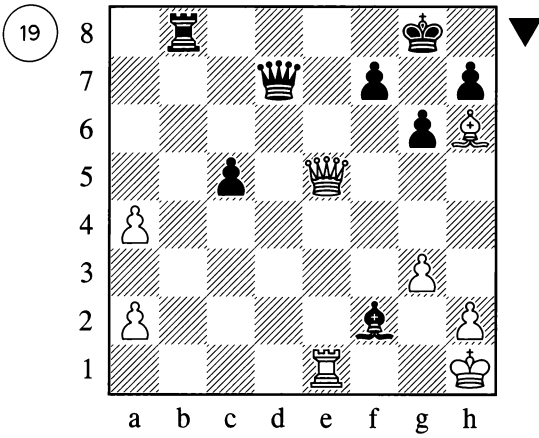
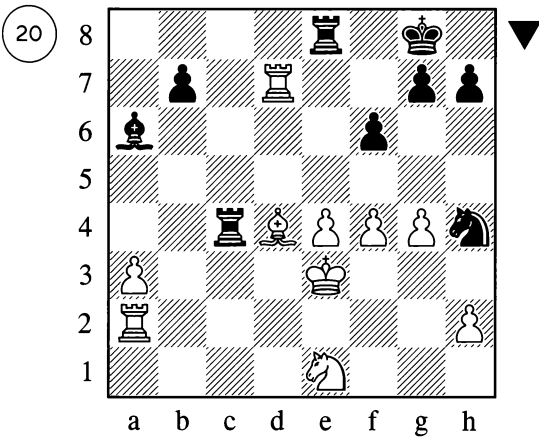
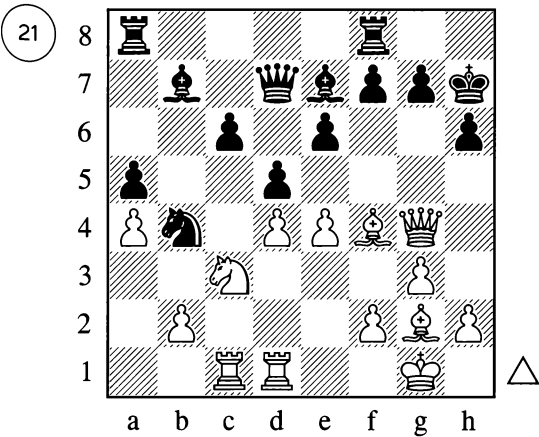
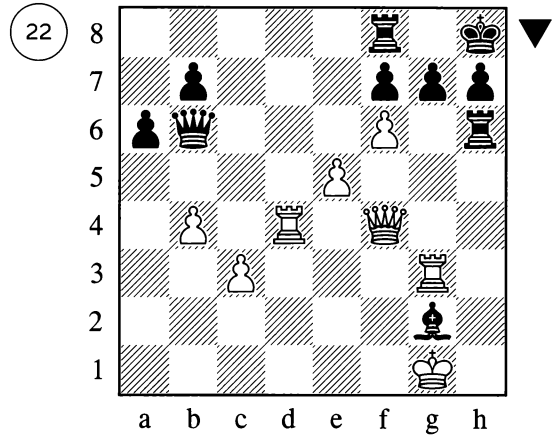
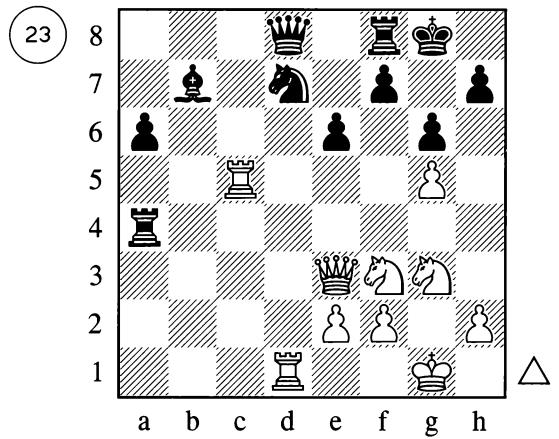
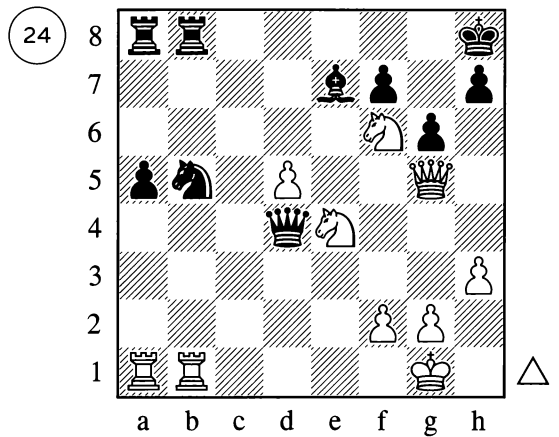
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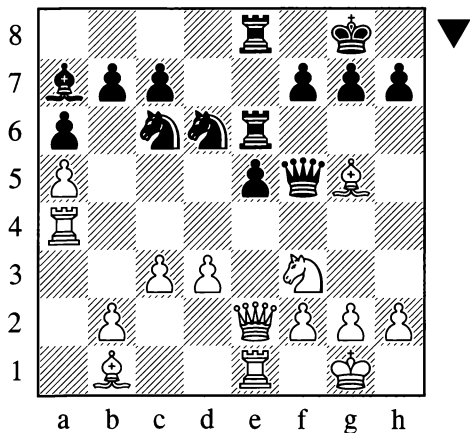
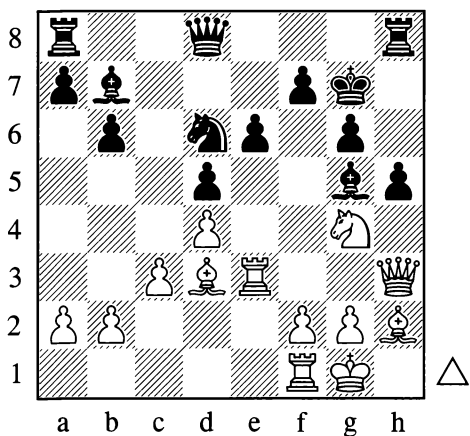
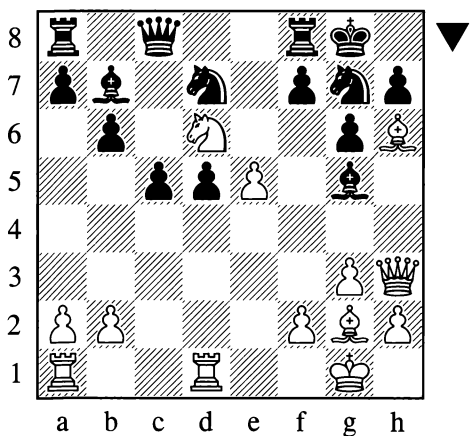
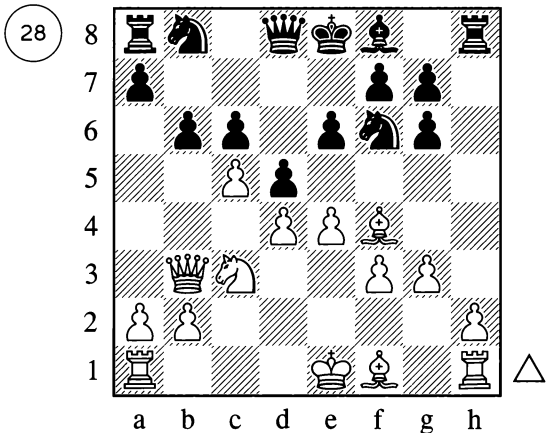
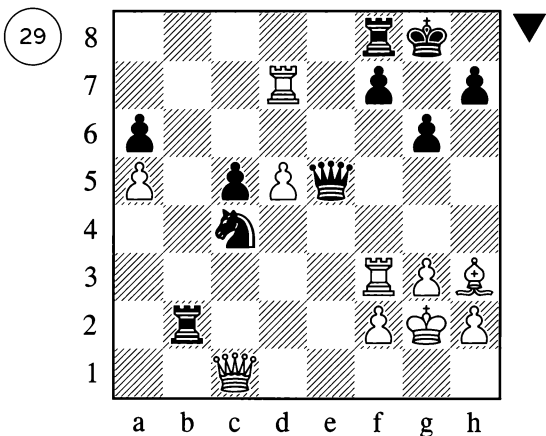
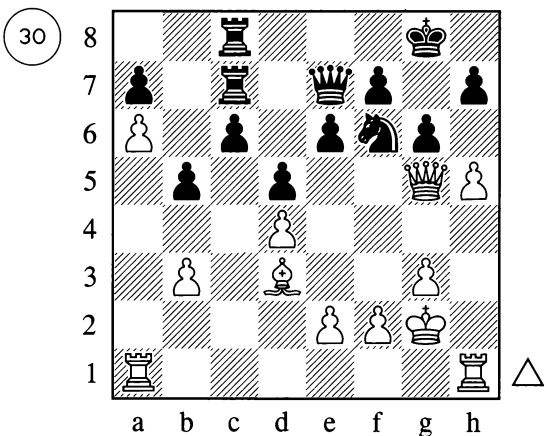


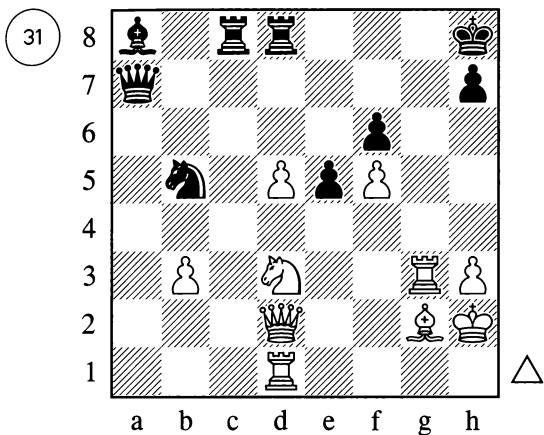
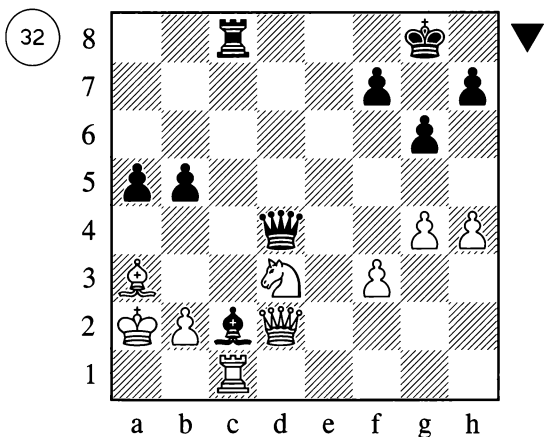
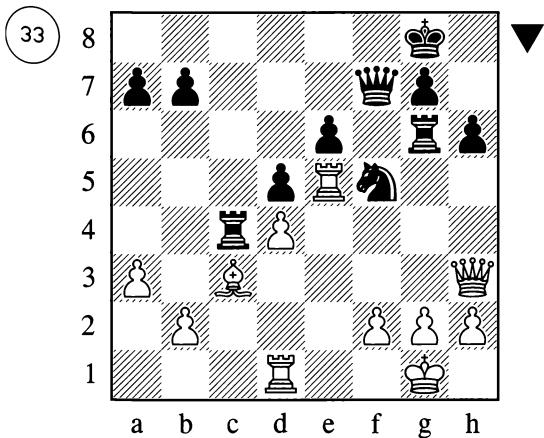
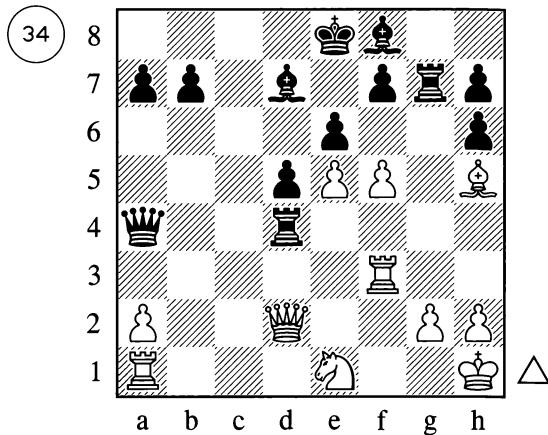
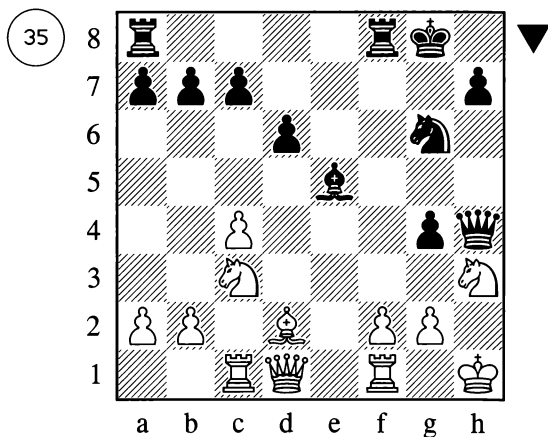
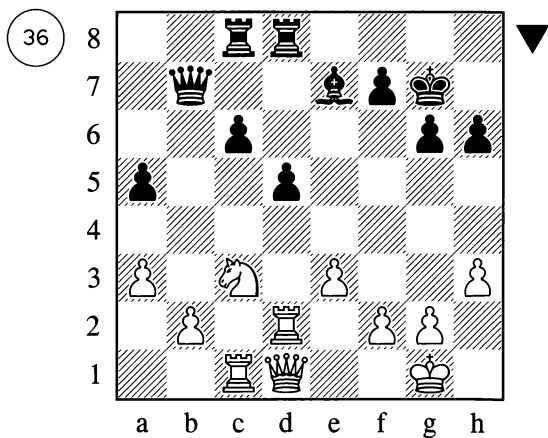
**Bindrich – Shytaj, Germany 2019**

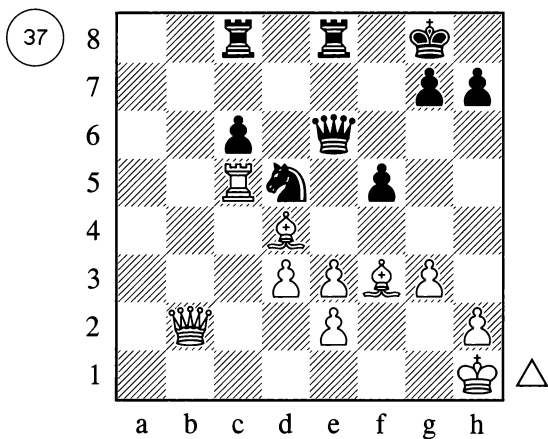
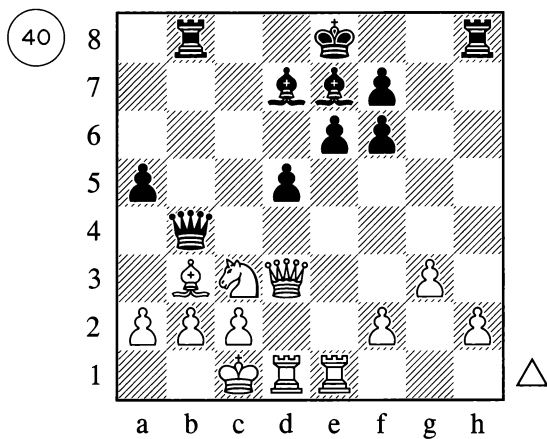
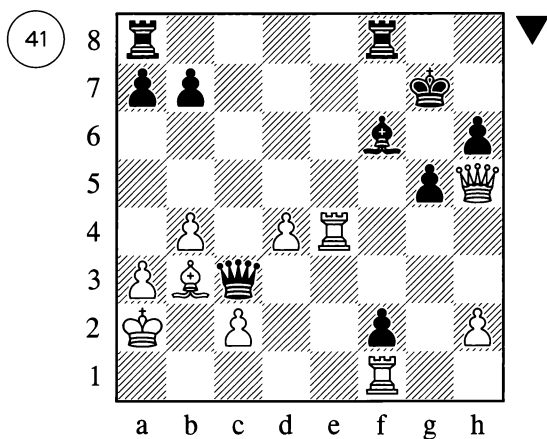
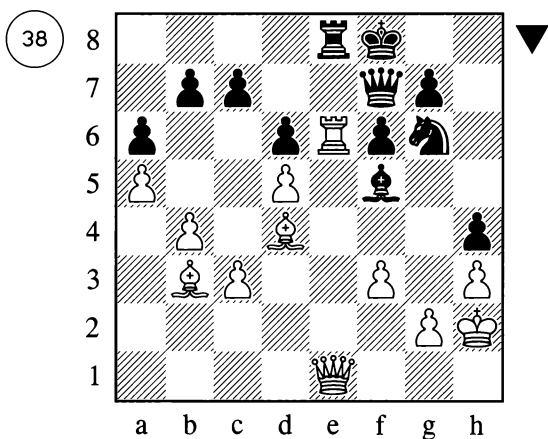
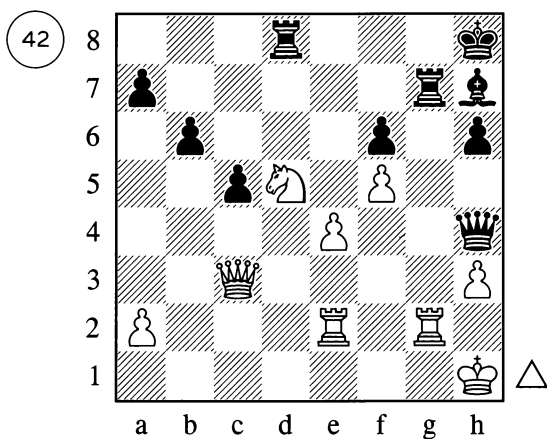
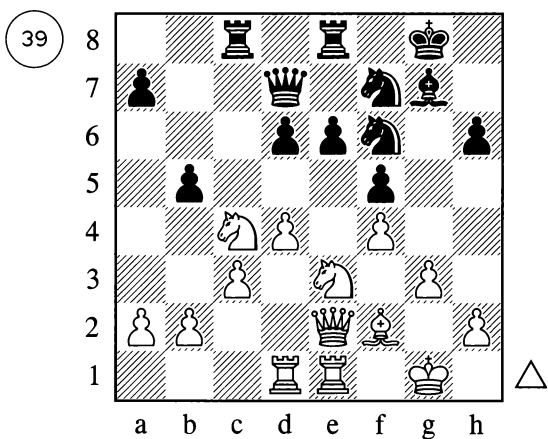




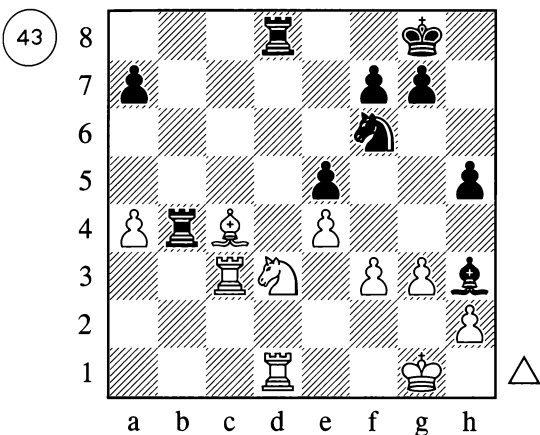
**Karjakin – Christiansen, Warsaw 2021****Ahn – Hector, Germany 2019****Kraemer – Levin, Germany 2019****Ponkratov – Vachier-Lagrave, Warsaw 2021****Malakhov – Almasi, Germany 2020****Walek – Nytra, Czech Republic 2022**

**Juhasz – Royal, Moscow 2021****Werle – Johansson, Germany 2021****Sargsyan – Alonso Rosell, Warsaw 2021****Samunenkov – Gabuzyan, Warsaw 2021****Buckels – Maiwald, Germany 2021****Vastrukhin – Vokhidov, Warsaw 2021**

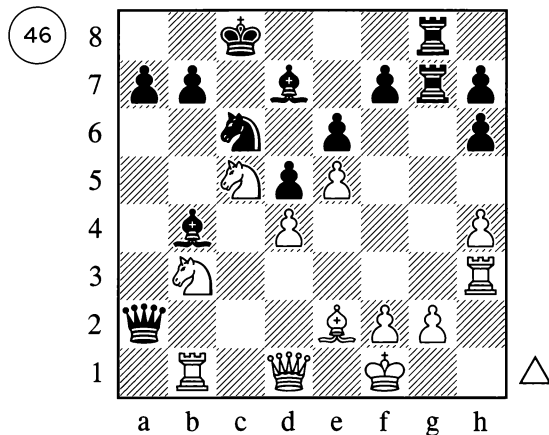
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**Zaragatski – Pajeken, Germany 2019****Pasztor – Zlatkov, Terme Catez 2022****Durarbayli – Mikhalevski, Warsaw 2021****Mladek – Simek, Czech Republic 2022**

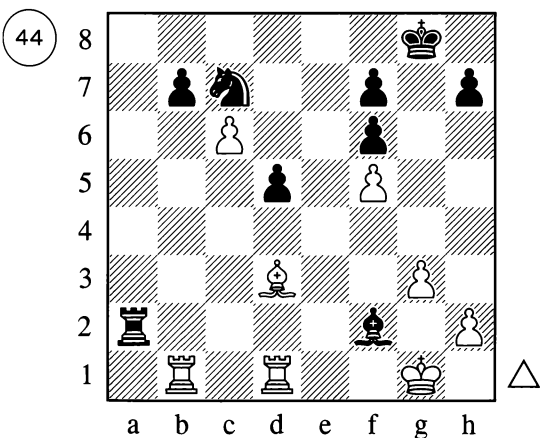
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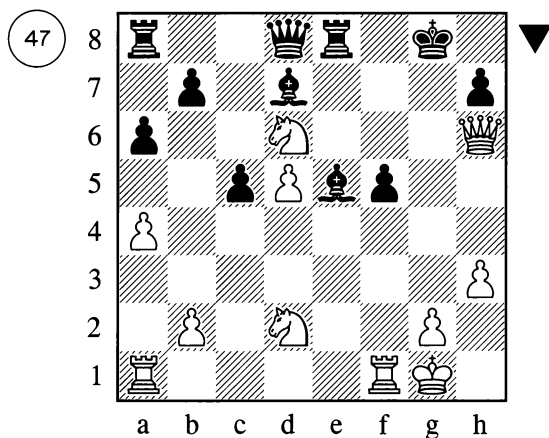
M. Brunello – Rajlich, Internet 2020



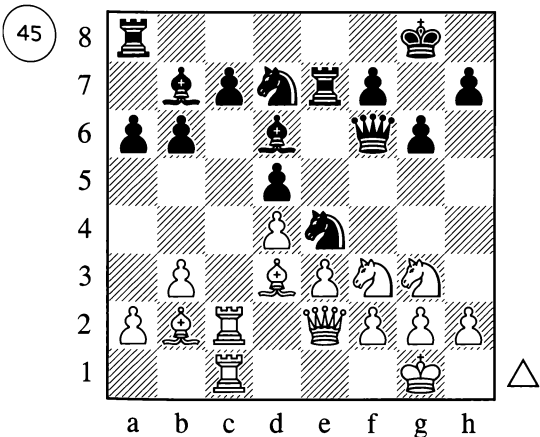
Krasenkov – Hausrath, Germany 2019



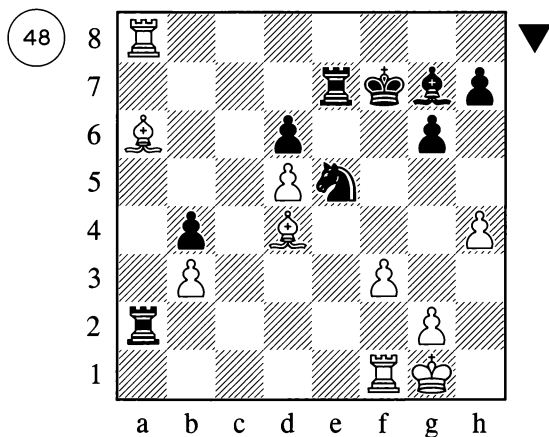
Ergaisi – Subramaniyam, Plovdiv 2021



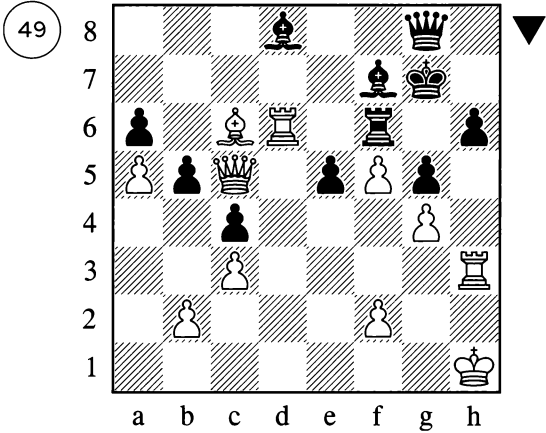
Prokofiev – Barbot, Terme Catez 2022



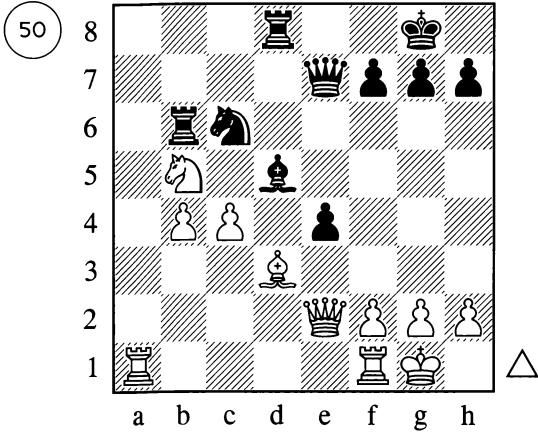
Lubbe – Payyappat, Reinstorf 2022



Paulus – Nytra, Czech Republic 2022



Efroimski – Gajcin, Bucharest 2021



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# Chapter 2

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## Candidates







Welcome to Chapter 2.

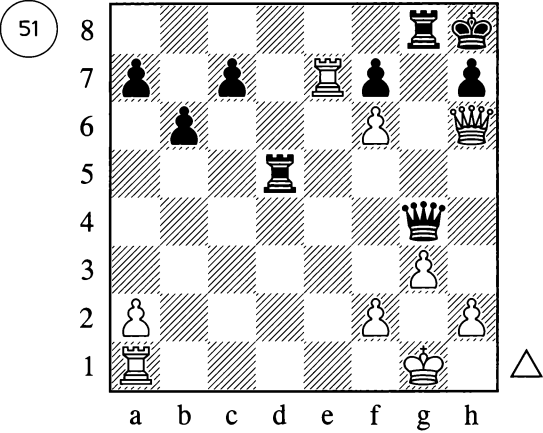
These fifty positions are all based on the concept of candidate moves. When we first learn to play chess, every legal move is a candidate move. As we improve, the list of candidate moves rapidly shrinks as our understanding allows us to dismiss most possibilities as poor with a quick glance. While it is always good to develop a better understanding and intuition, relying too much on this skill will lead you to missing important candidates. I find frequently that once a player reaches a certain level, they will start missing candidate moves that they really should be seeing.

Most of these exercises have one difficult move to see because it looks wrong or is not intuitive. But once you see it, the rest tends to be easy. This is important in broadening your mind, particularly for players like me who are far from creative geniuses! I thought this was one of the easier chapters, but I certainly did not score 100%. I doubt anyone will.

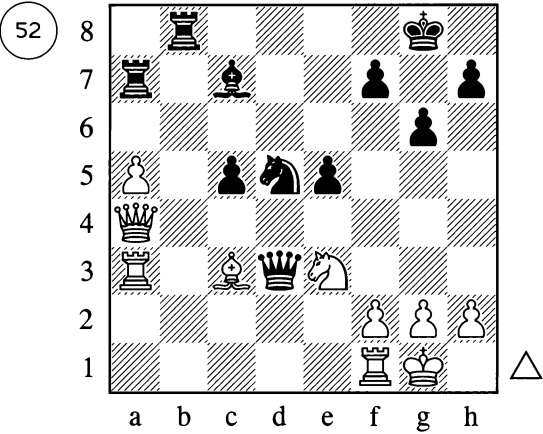
A final word of advice before we begin. If you are struggling deep into a variation, you are probably looking in the wrong place. I would not recommend making a habit of constantly doubling back to the start of a line whenever you run into trouble calculating a variation. But for training purposes, this chapter is all about seeing the possibilities within the first move or two of the position on the board.

Let's get to solving!

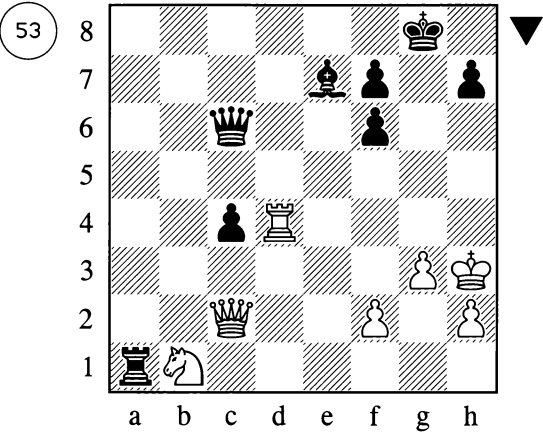
Saduakassova – Sharan, Sitges 2021



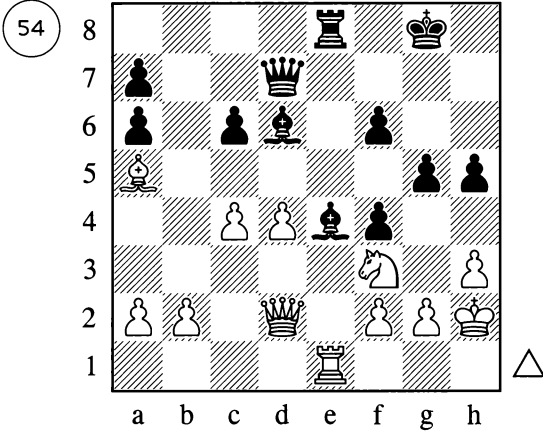
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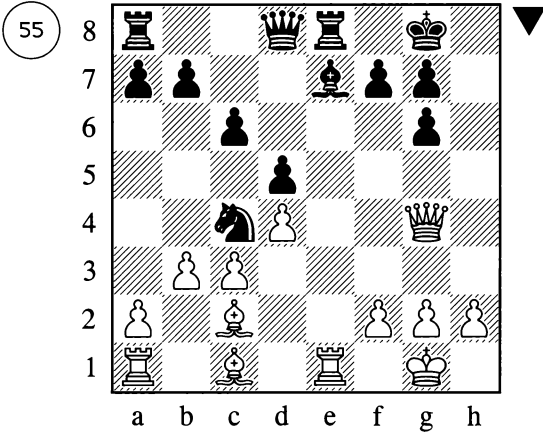
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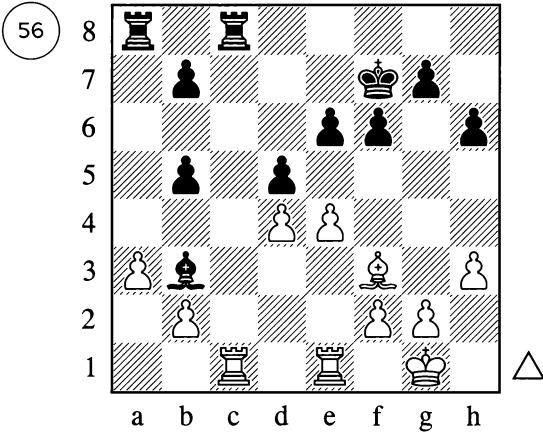
Sandhya – Martin Barcelo, Sitges 2021



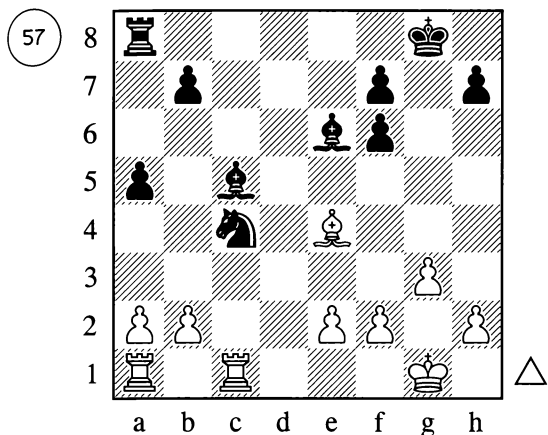
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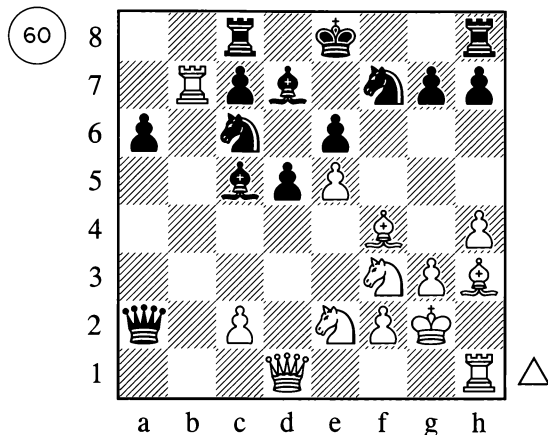
Zilka – Holm, Warsaw 2021



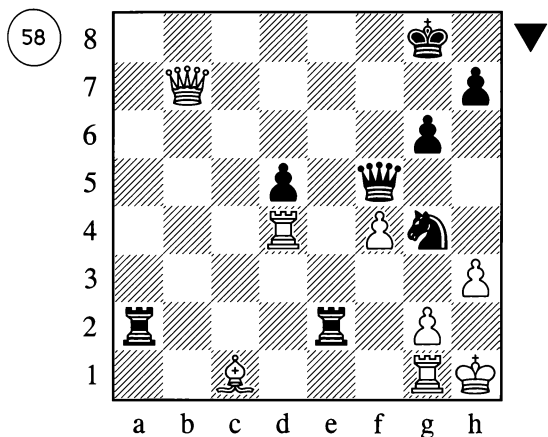
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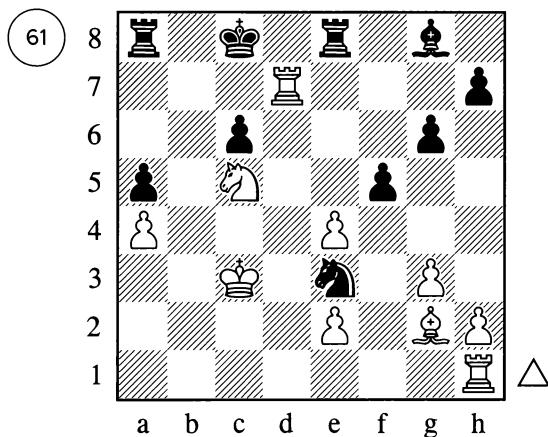
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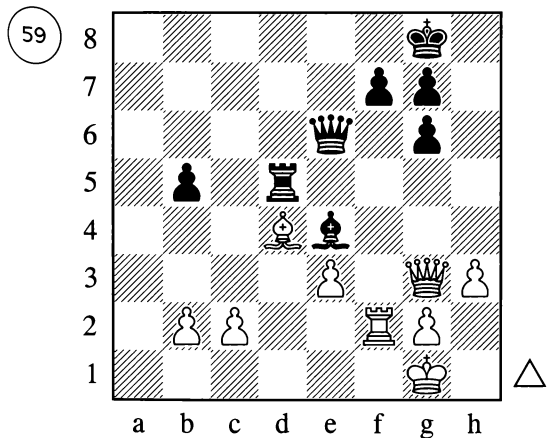
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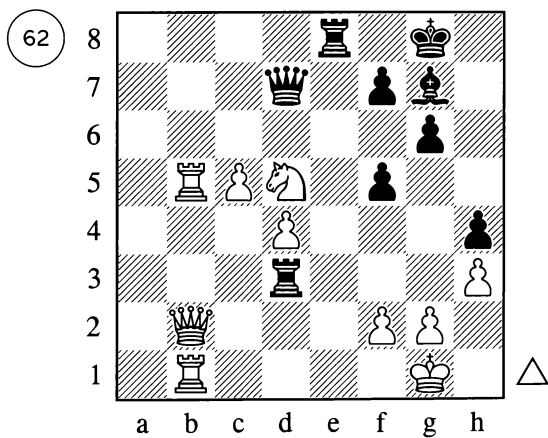
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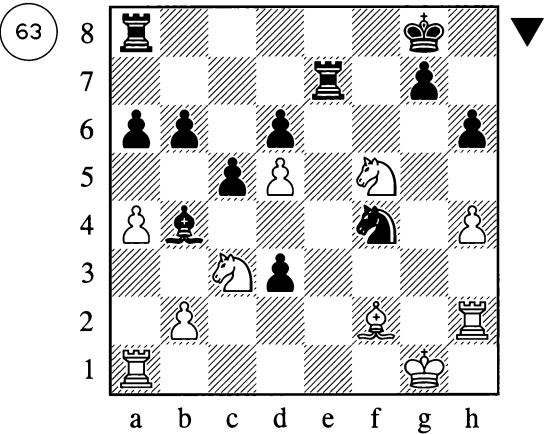
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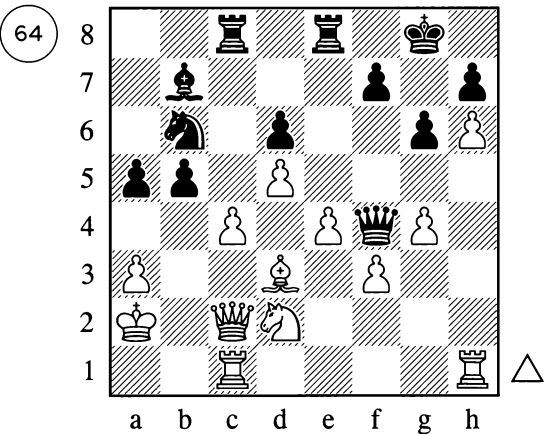
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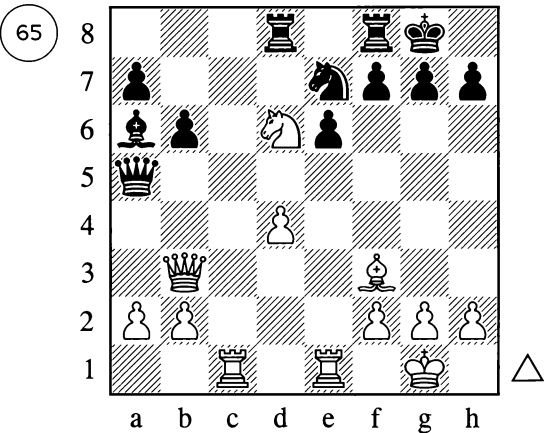
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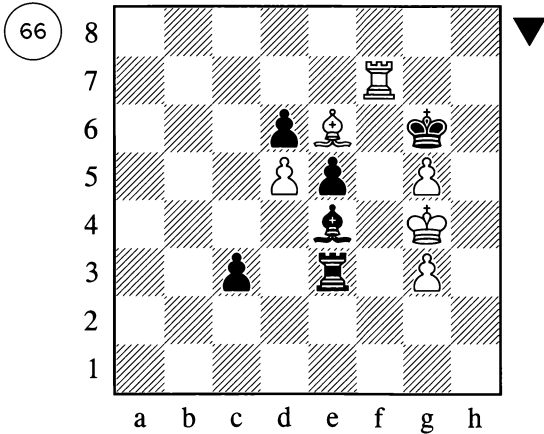
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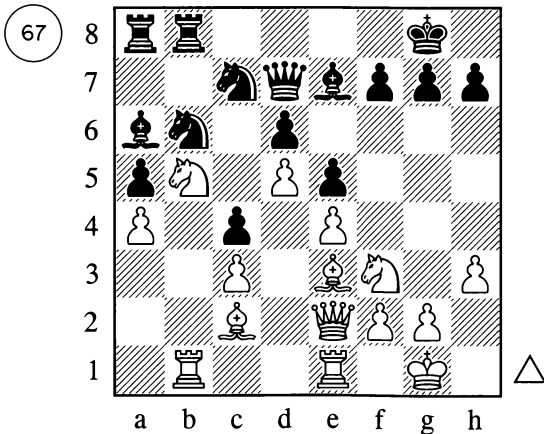
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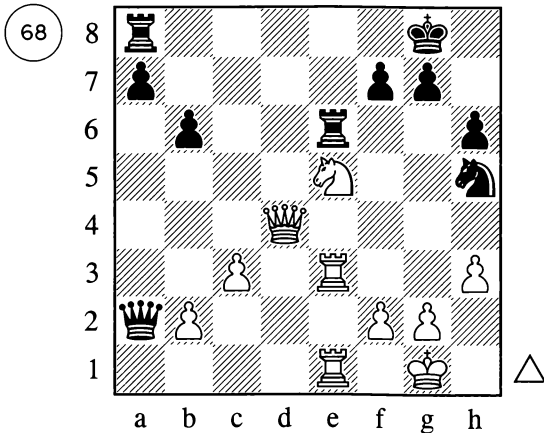
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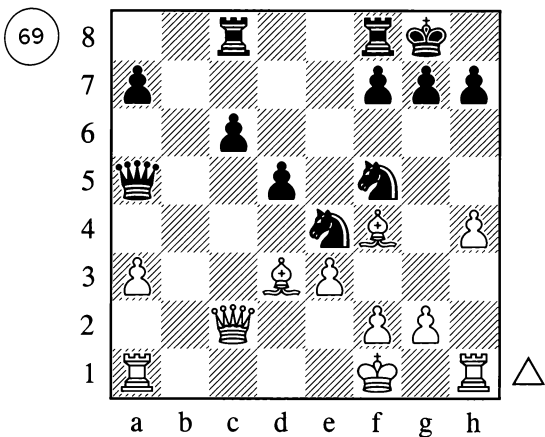
J. Van Foreest – Dubov, Warsaw 2021



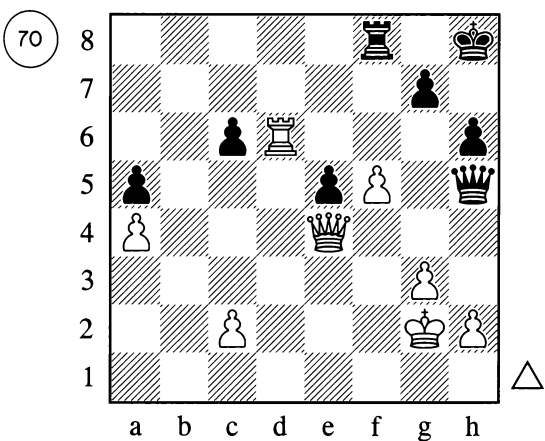
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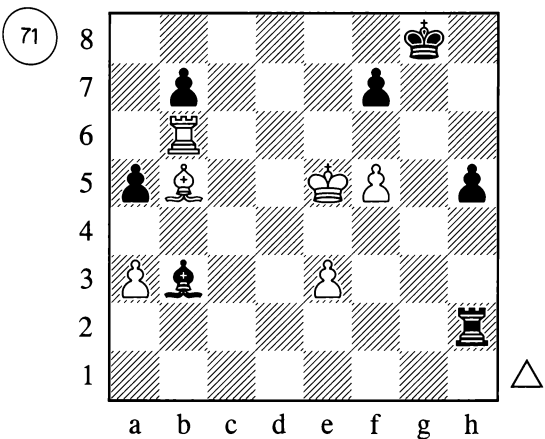
Sethuraman – Pranav Anand, Sitges 2021



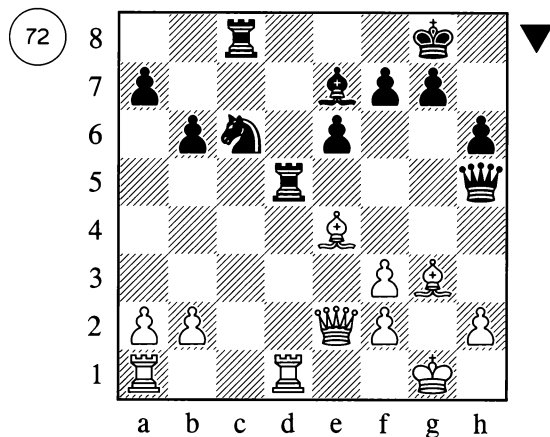
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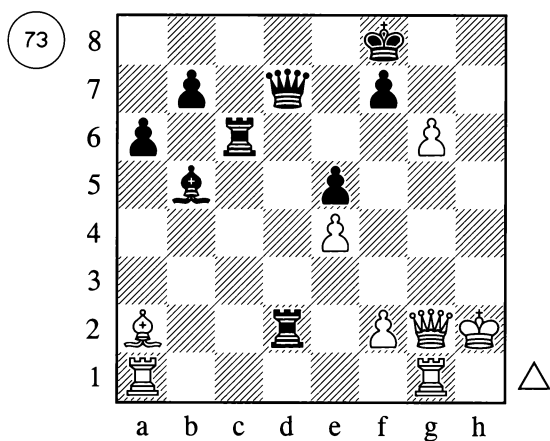
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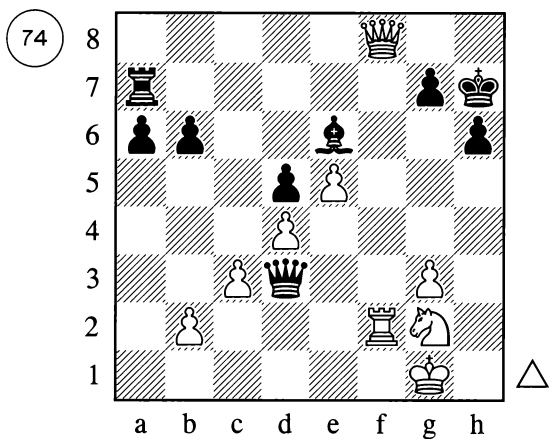
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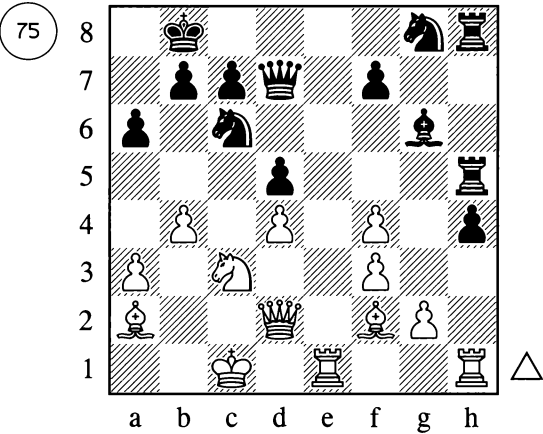
Parvanyan – Wong, Germany 2021



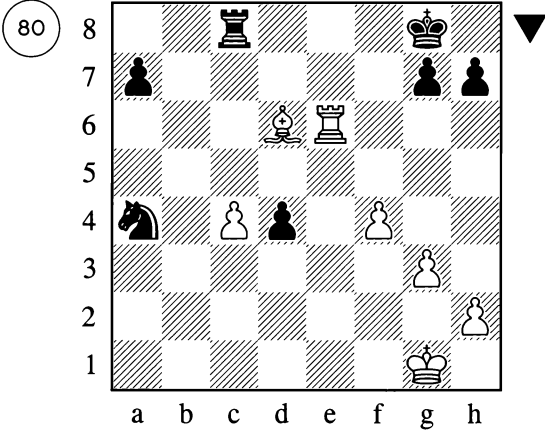
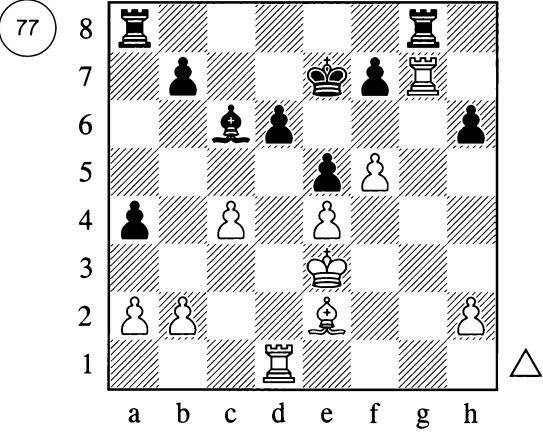
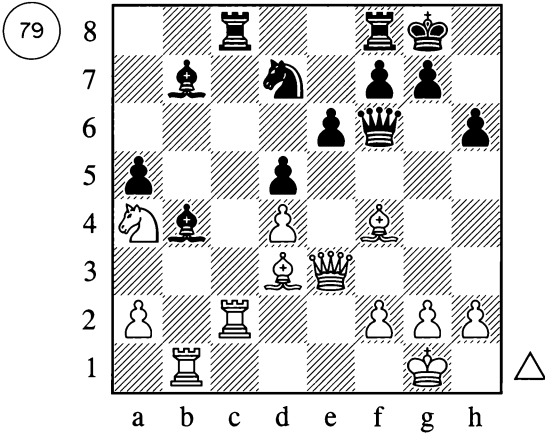
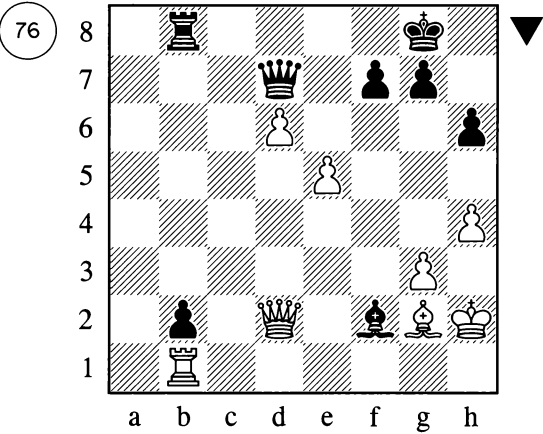
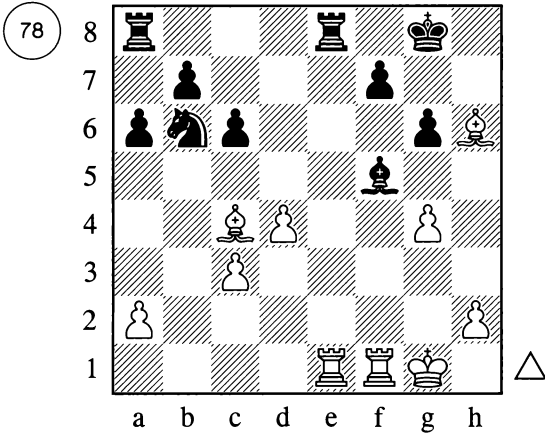
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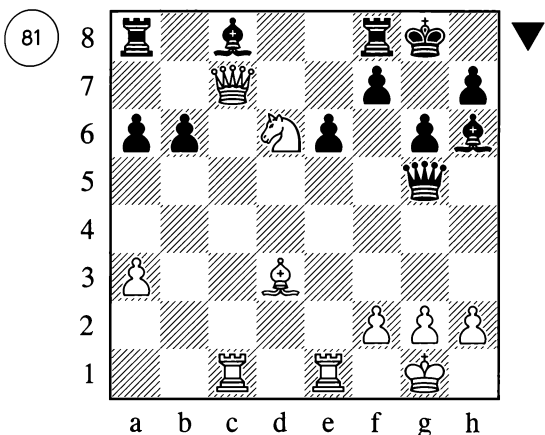
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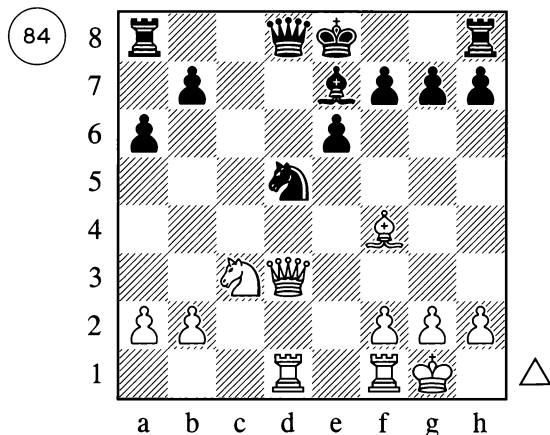
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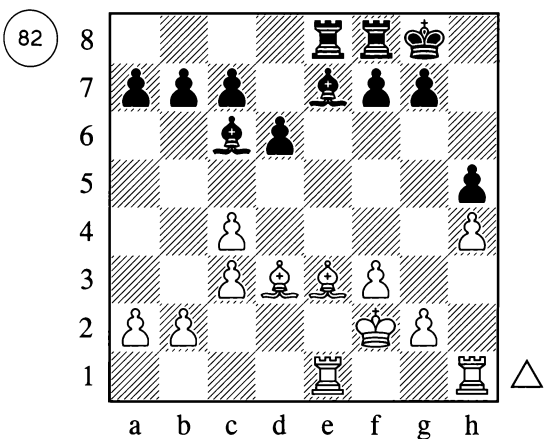
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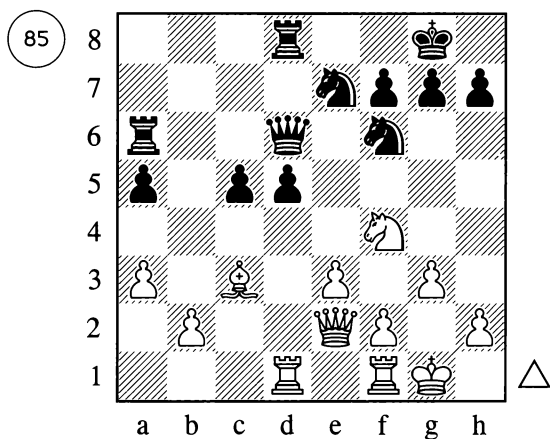
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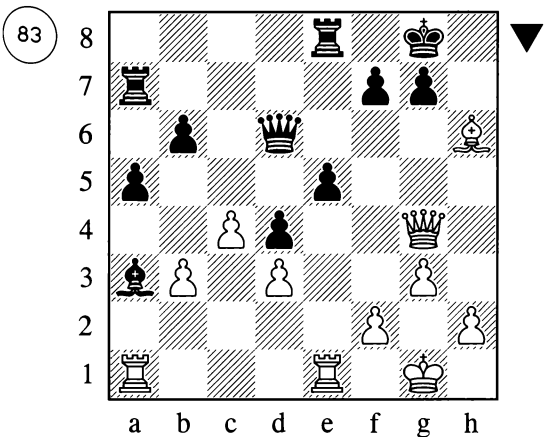
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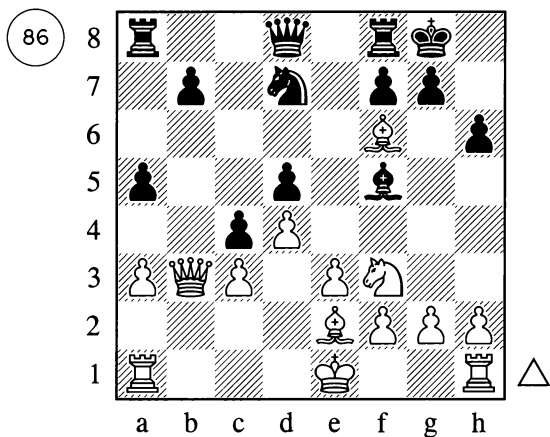
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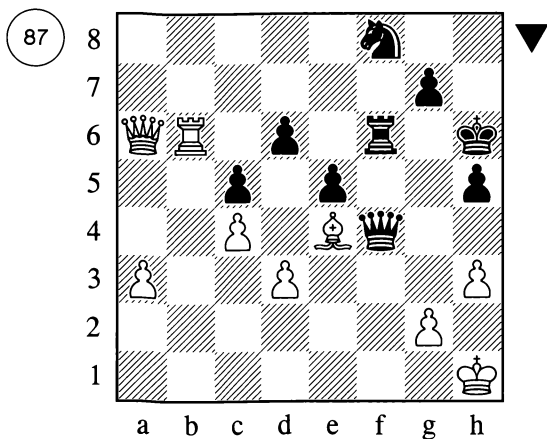
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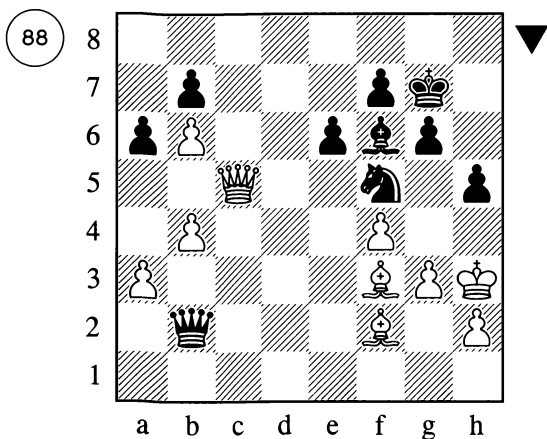
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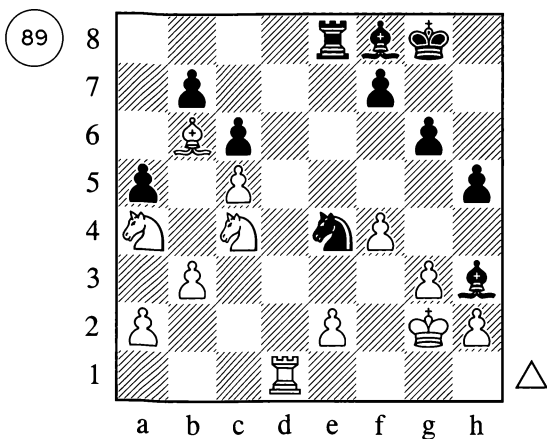
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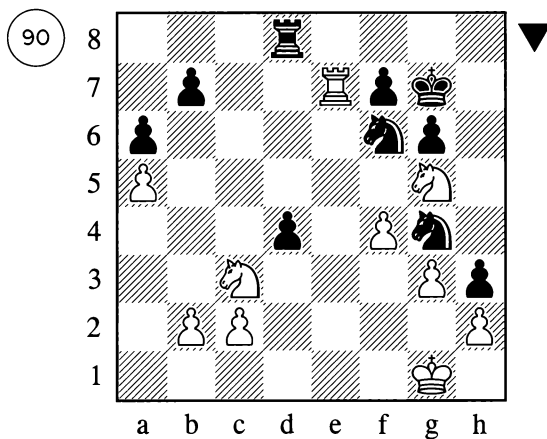
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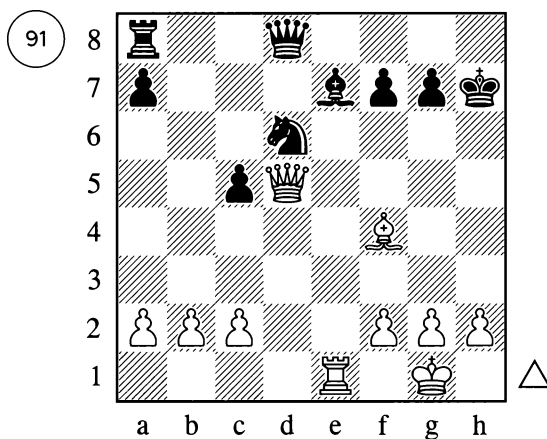
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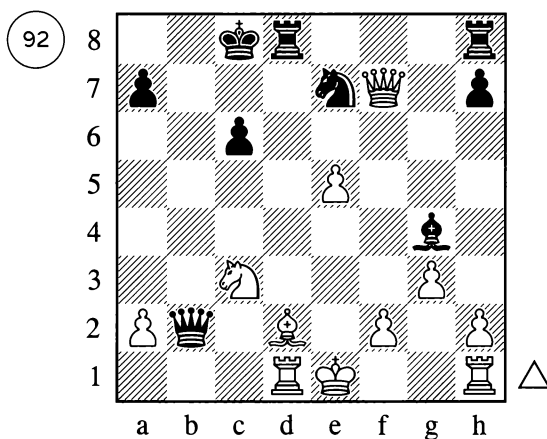
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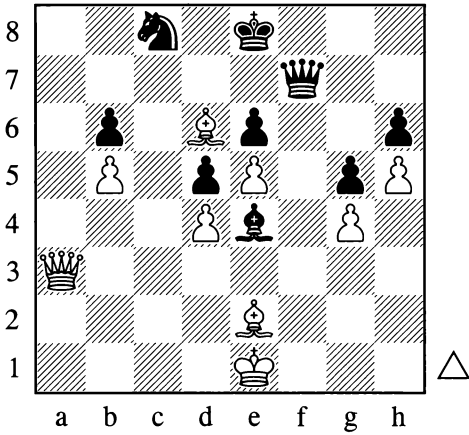
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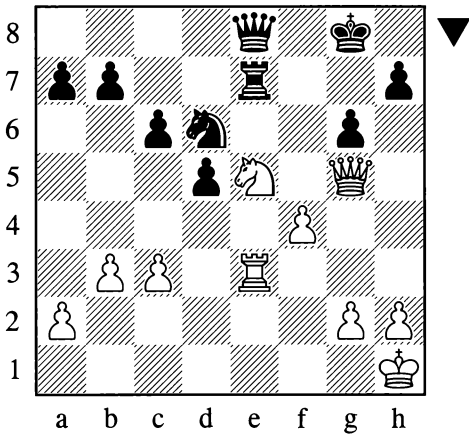


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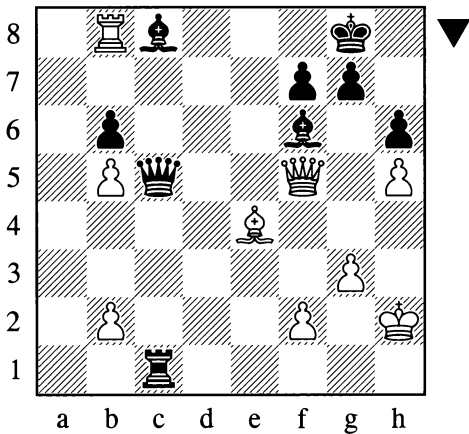
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**Poschadel – Hoffmann, Reinstorf 2022**

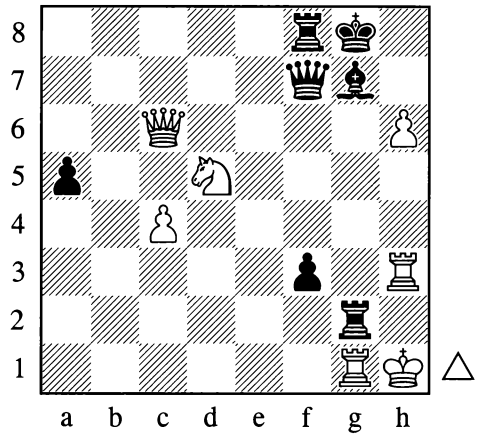
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**Socko – Alekseenko, Warsaw 2021**

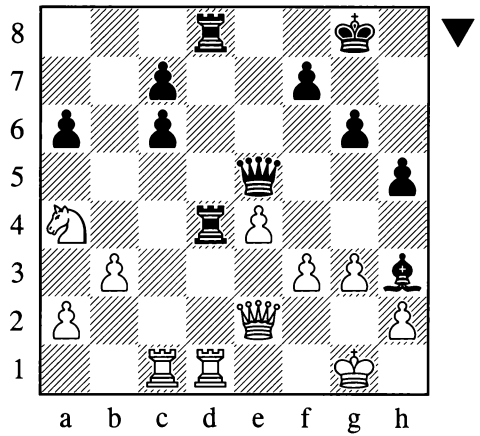
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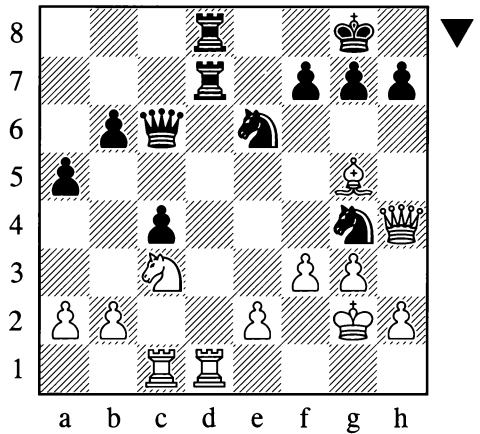
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**Lomaia – Ning, Internet 2020**

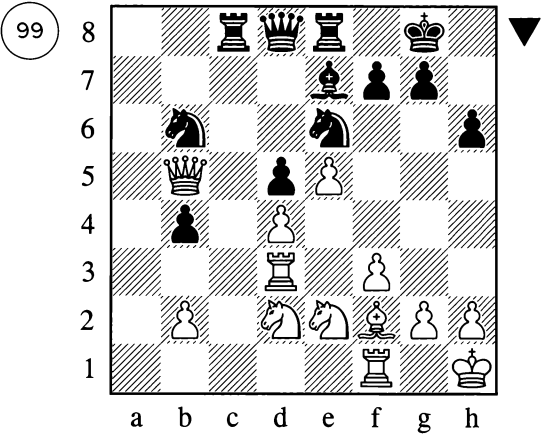
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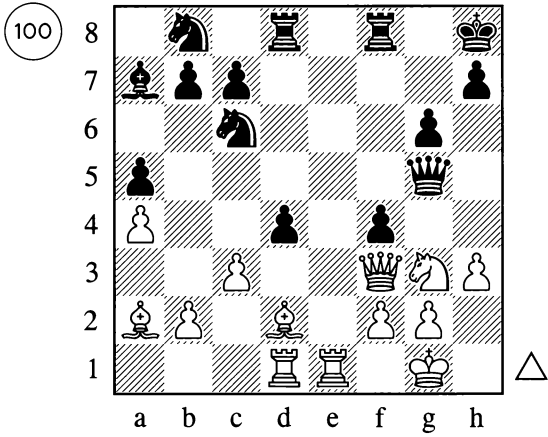
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Korobov – Goroshkov, Terme Catez 2022



Firouzja – Nakamura, Warsaw 2021



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# Chapter 3

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## Combinations





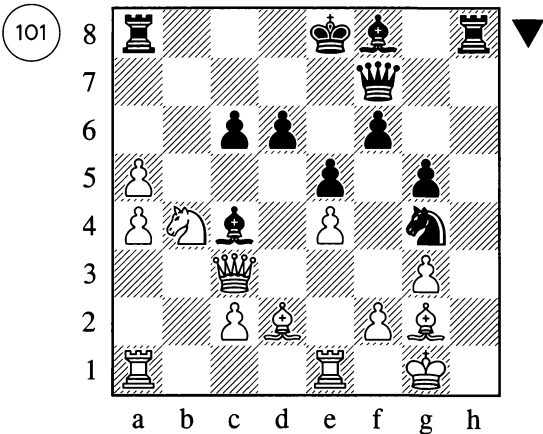
Next up is Chapter 3. I found this to be the easiest chapter of the book, alongside Chapter 1. This one is all about combinations. It really hammers home the number one rule of tactics and calculation: always examine all checks and captures! Nearly every single position sees a lot of them. This simple rule can really help your combinational vision.

In general, combinational vision is developed through repetition of themes. In some ways, this section feels like it is more about tactics than it is about calculation. But, while the positions may seem surface-level compared to what we will see later, having good combinational vision is critical for the foundation of great calculating ability. While I don't think these positions are too hard in general, a lot of strong players misplayed the positions in their real games!

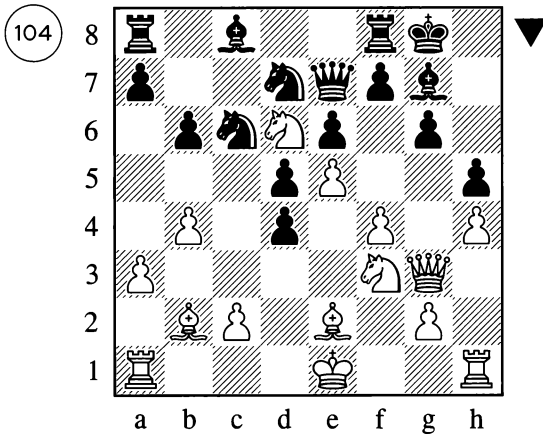
I did not score 100% in this section. I would be very surprised if anyone does. But that does not mean that you should not try! Being a skilled combinational player means getting the positions right 95% of the time rather than 90% of the time. Aim for perfection. Even though it will not come, by setting your sights high, you will be able to reach the maximum level that you are capable of.

Before we get started, I will reiterate one more time: always examine all checks and captures! I cannot possibly stress enough how much this rule will help you through the present section.

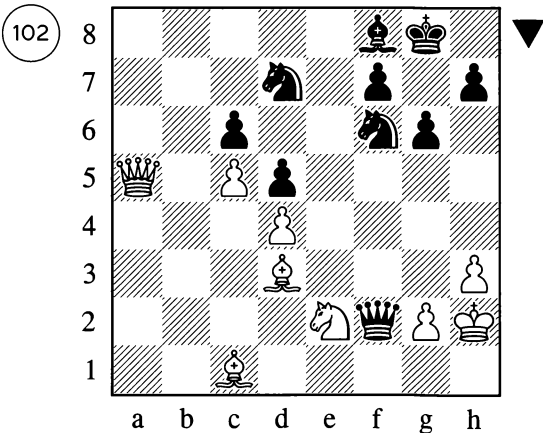
Bagrationi – Firouzja, Internet 2020



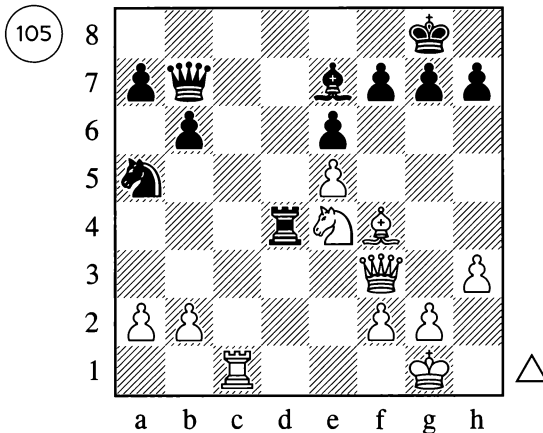
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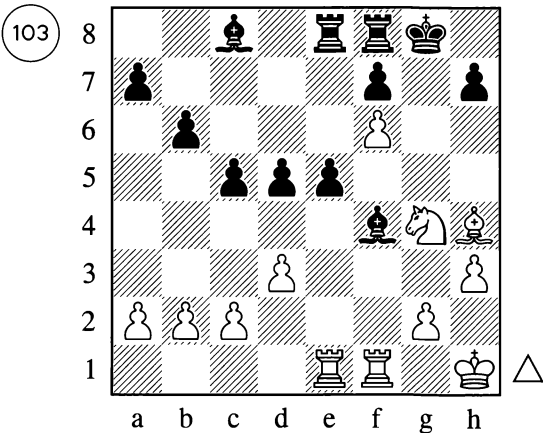
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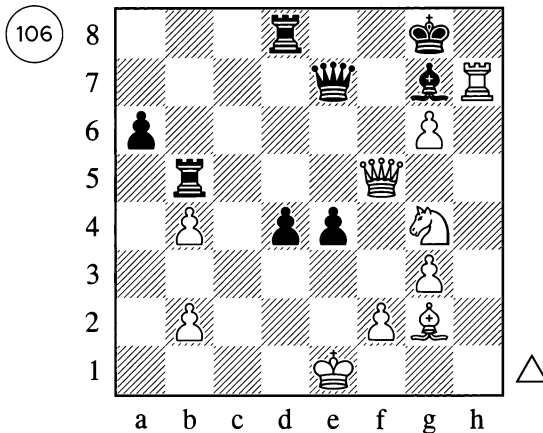
Vocaturu – Rios, Sitges 2021



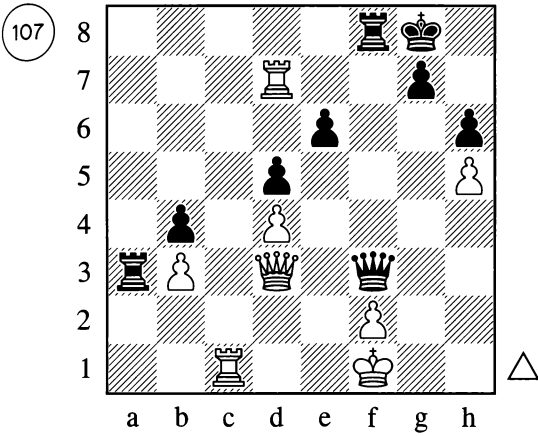
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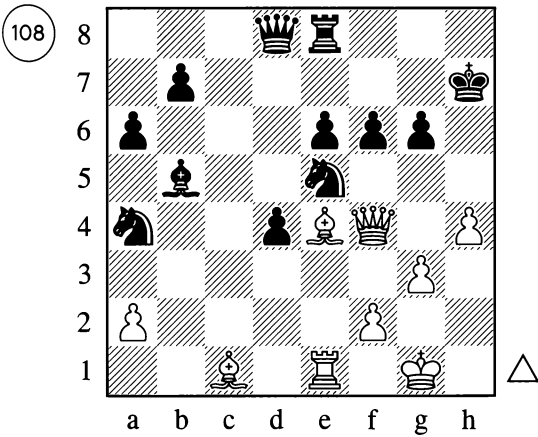
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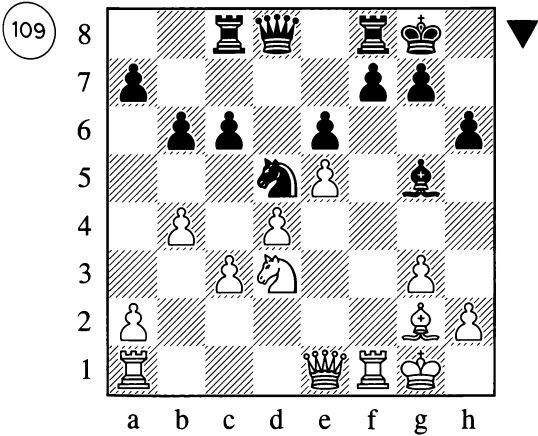
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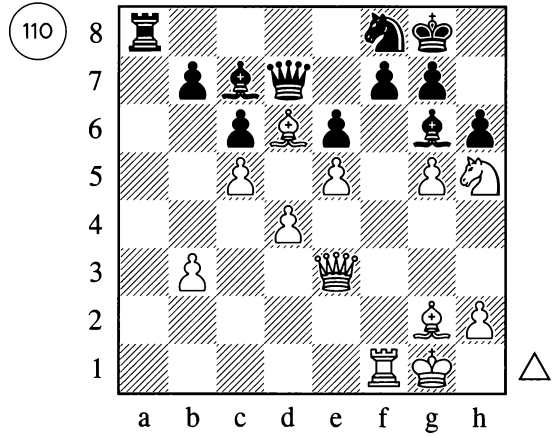
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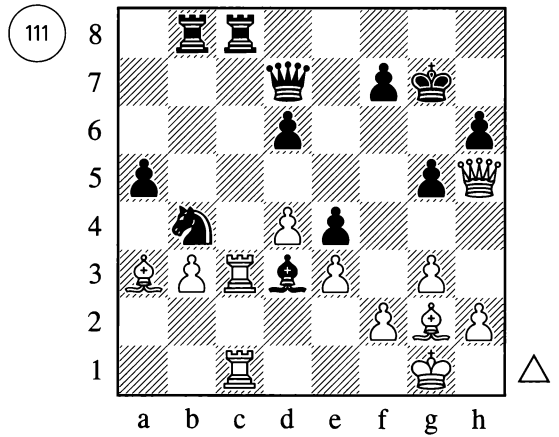
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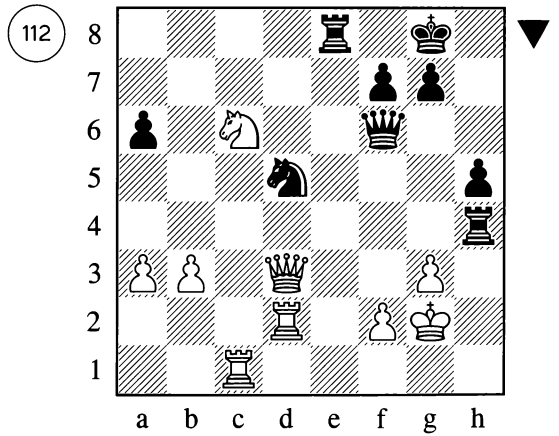
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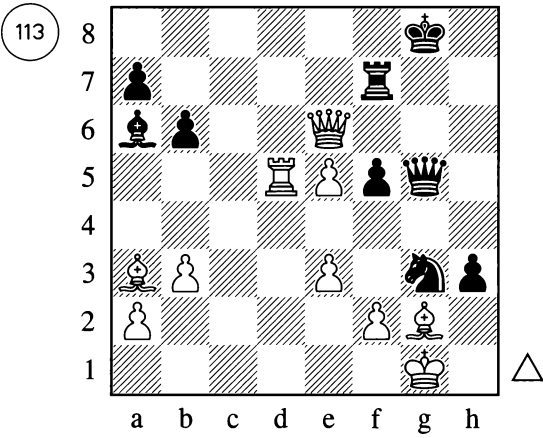
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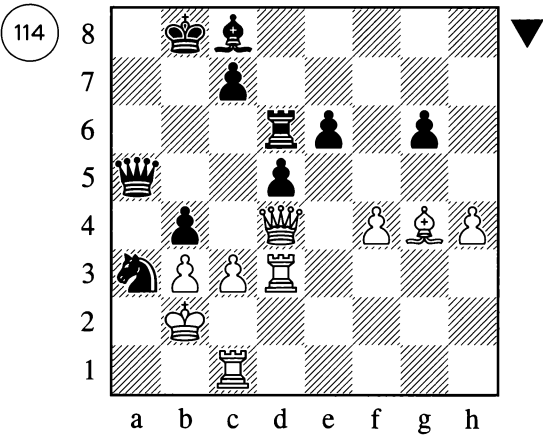
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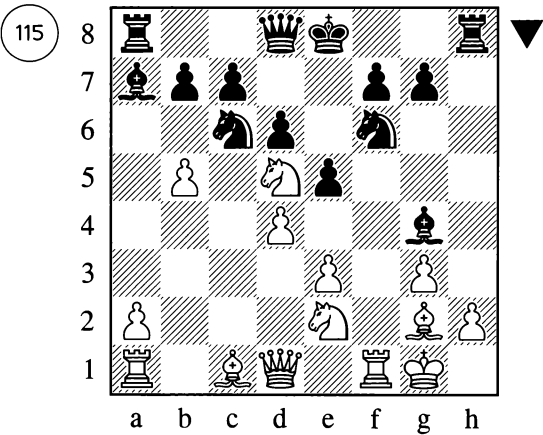
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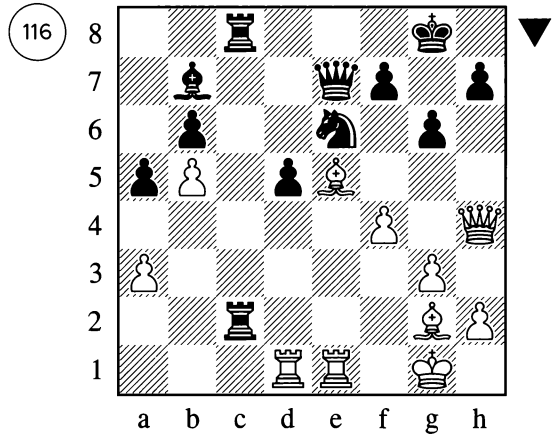
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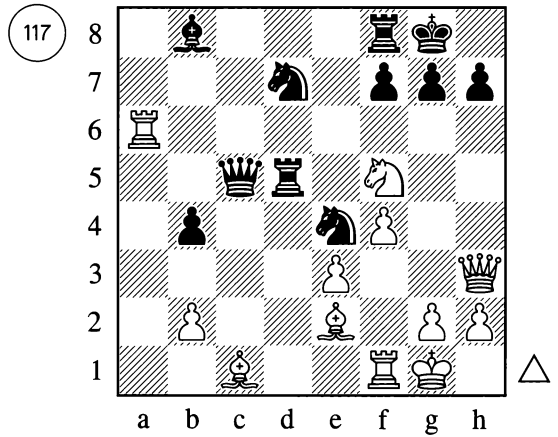
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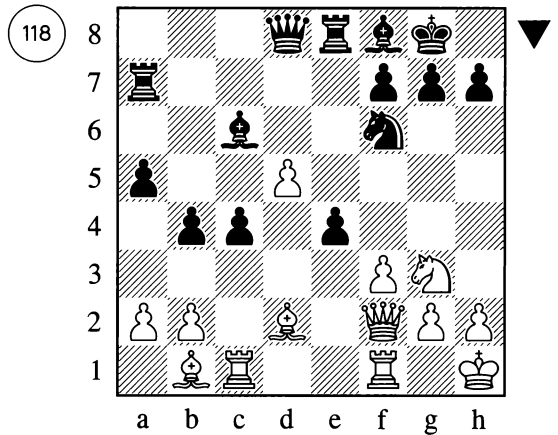
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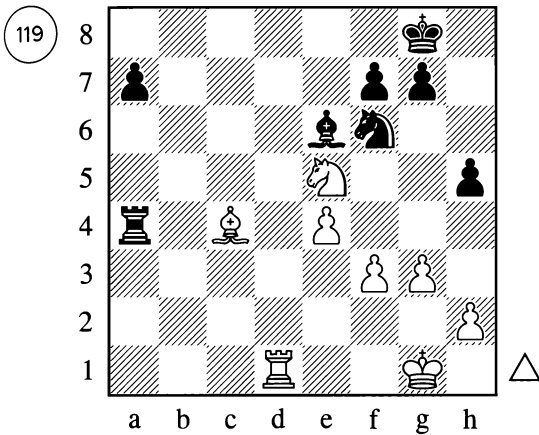
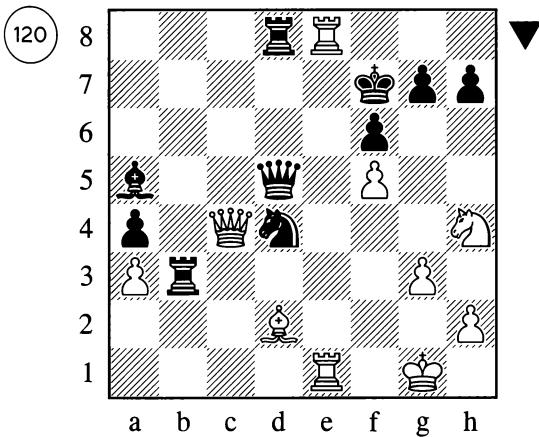
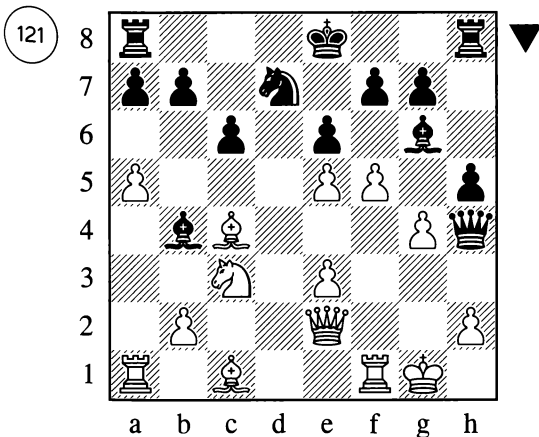
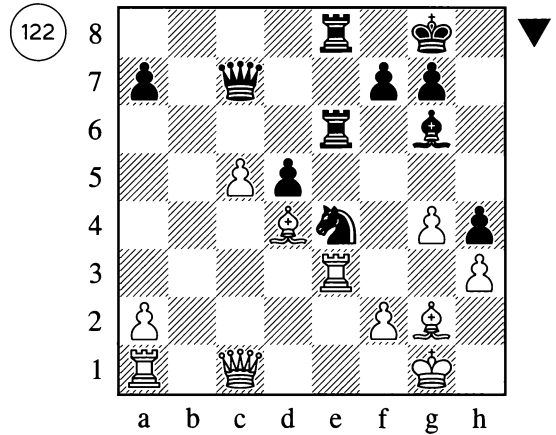
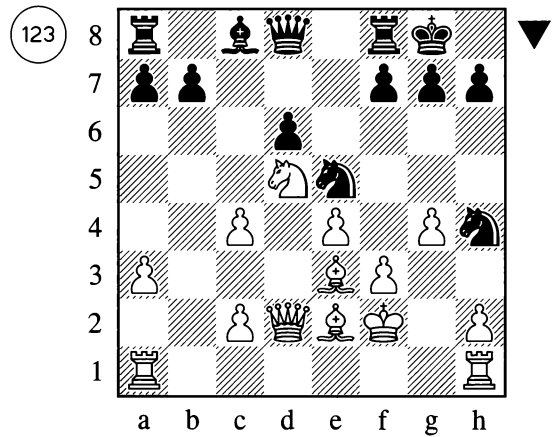
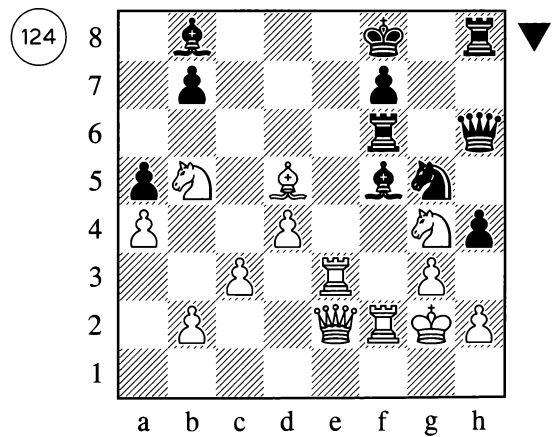
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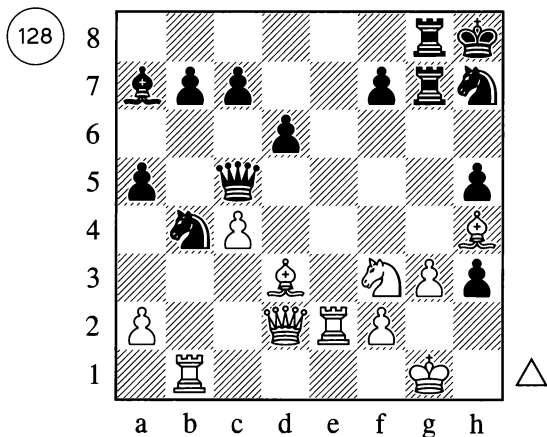
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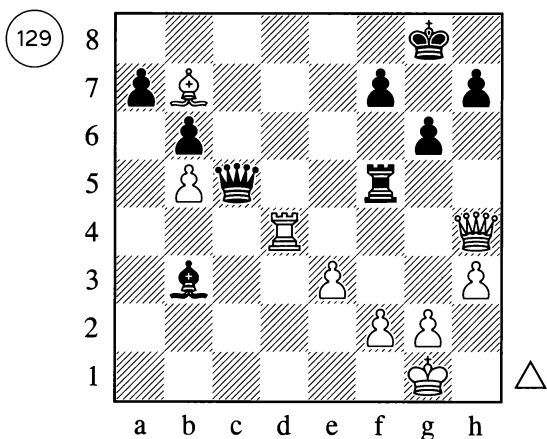


**Keymer – Aronian, Internet 2022****Zarubitski – Levin, Chelyabinsk 2022****Kozul – Loiseau, Terme Catez 2022****Hollan – Babula, Czech Republic 2021****Ahn – Hector, Germany 2019****Fedorov – Korpa, Czech Republic 2022**

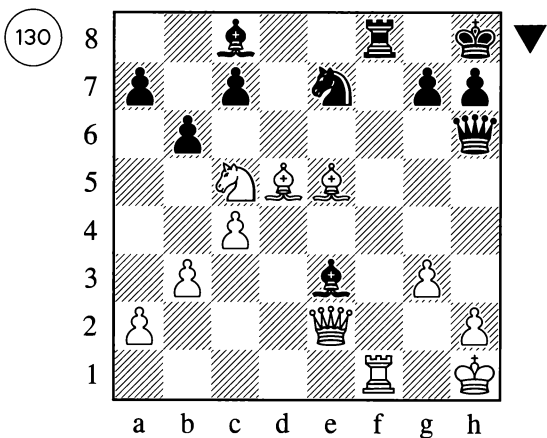
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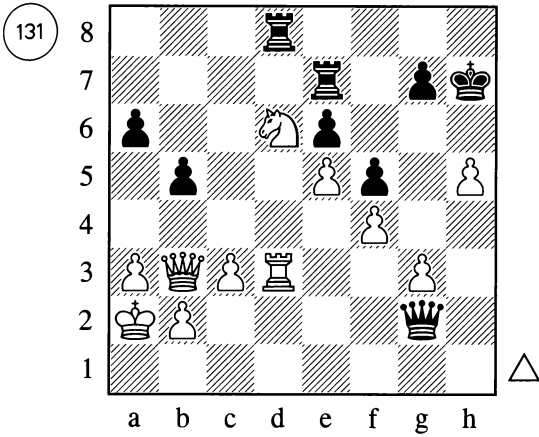
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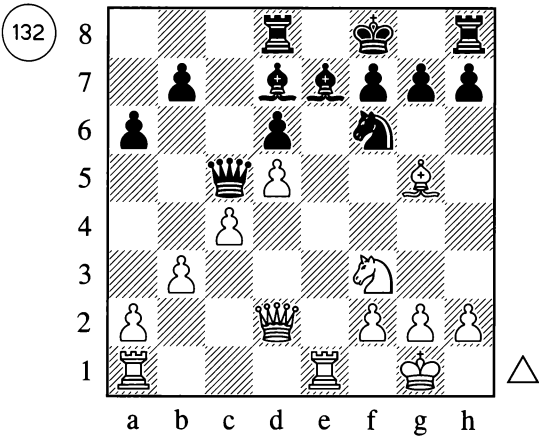
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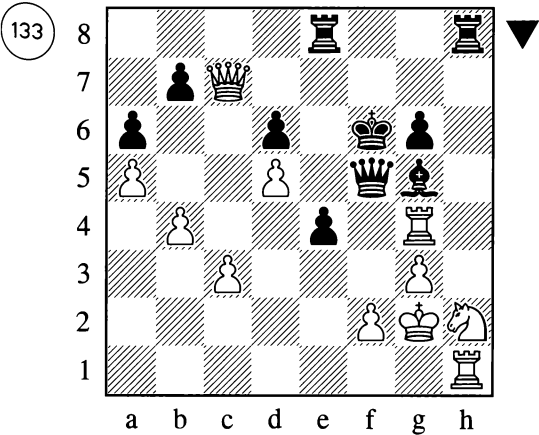
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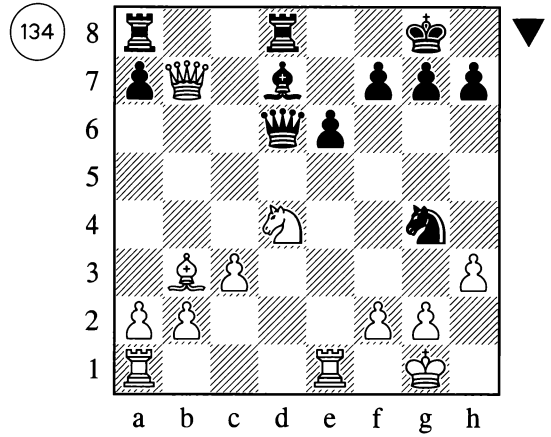
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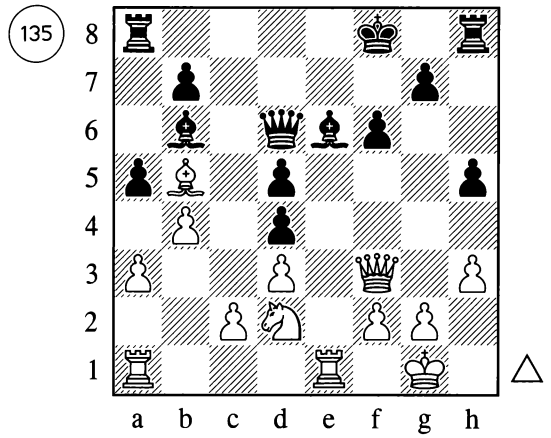
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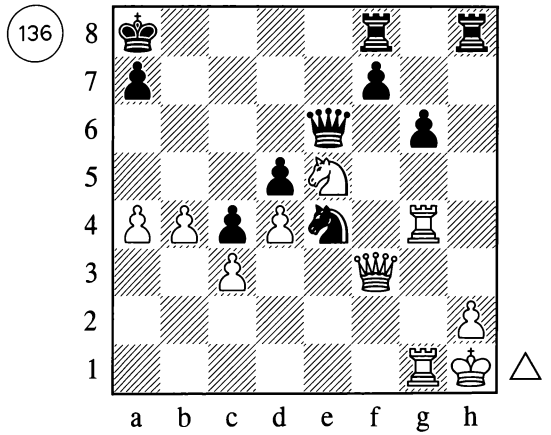
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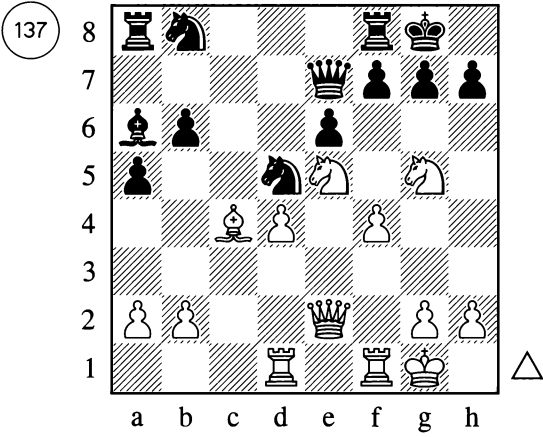
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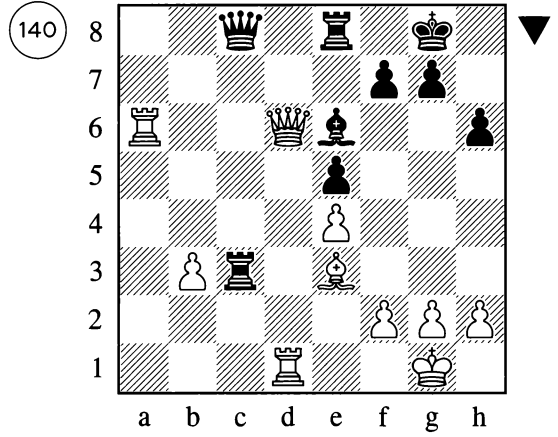
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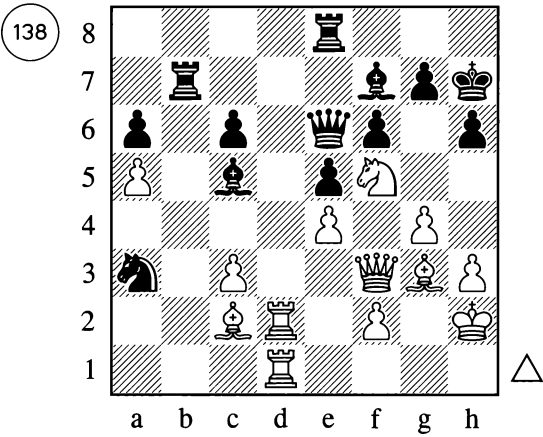
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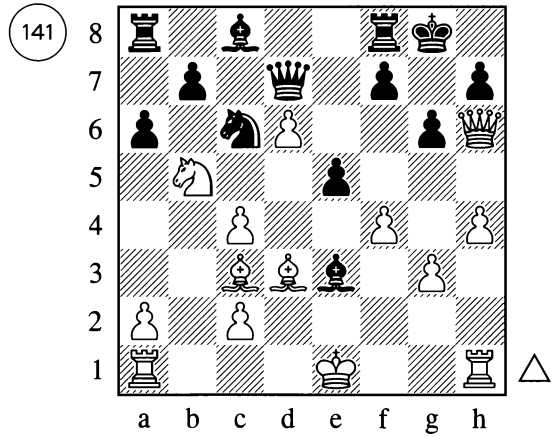
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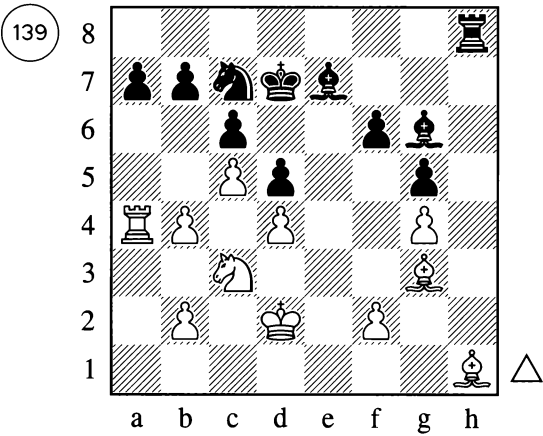
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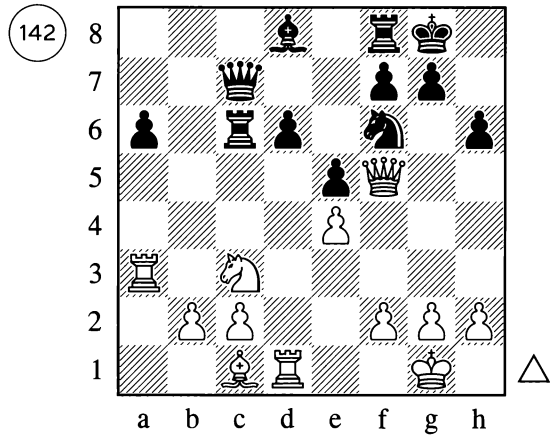
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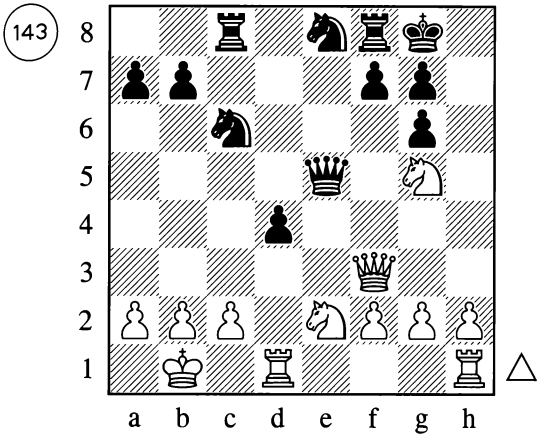
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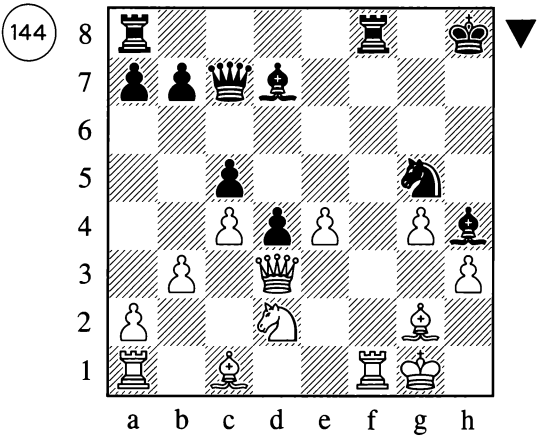
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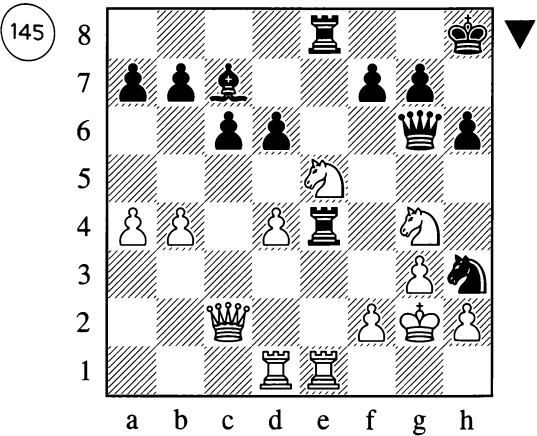
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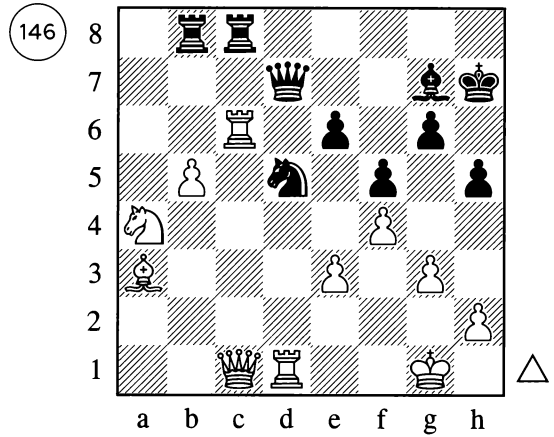
Sjugirov – L. Van Foreest, Warsaw 2021



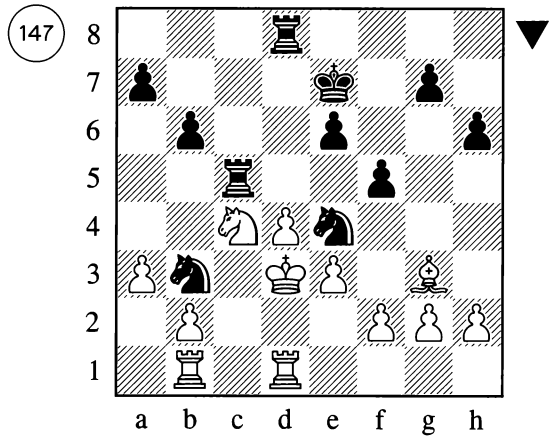
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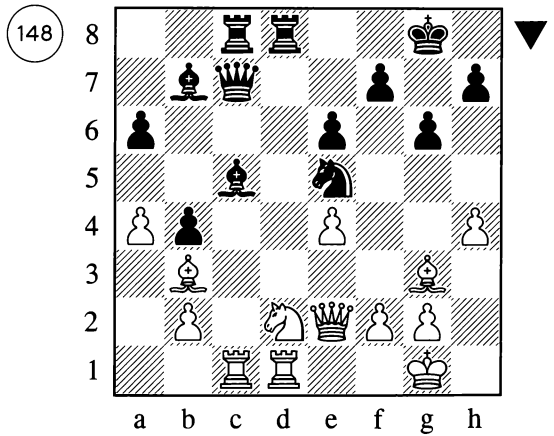
Gareyev – Nepomniachtchi, Warsaw 2021



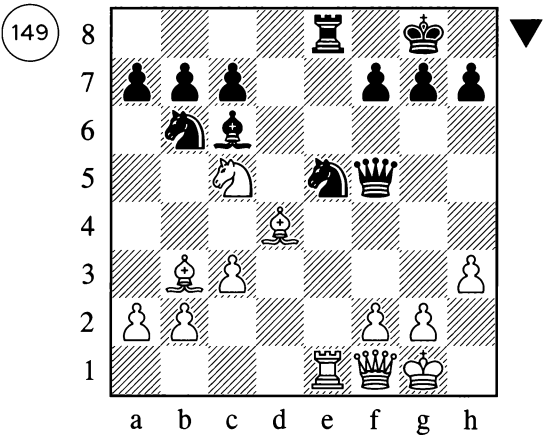
Vrolijk – Wojtaszek, Germany 2019



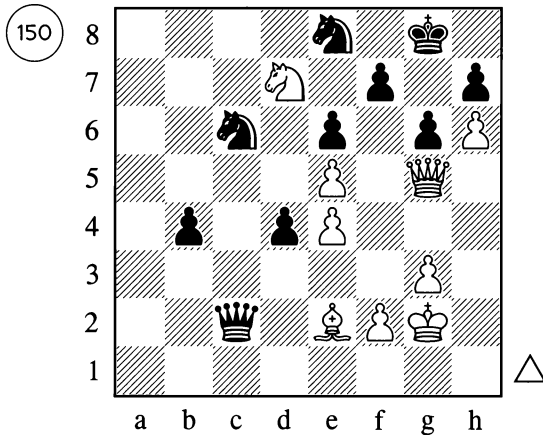
Moiseenko – Pajeken, Germany 2021



**Ragger – Vidit, Germany 2020**



**Vidit – Carlsen, Internet 2022**



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# Chapter 4

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## Endgames







*“Toto, I’ve a feeling we’re not in Kansas anymore” – Judy Garland*

With the first three sections of the book complete, we are now moving on to the second half. There is plenty of variance within the chapters, and every chapter will have a wide range of difficulties. But in general, I think chapters 1 to 3 mostly focus on more basic elements of calculation, and chapters 4 to 6 are much more advanced. The present chapter focuses on endgames. Endgame calculation is different from middlegame calculation. In the middlegame, you are generally looking to calculate until you reach a position that you understand and are happy with. In the endgame, the reduced material on the board means you can often calculate until you reach a known position, where you are 100% sure what the result should be!

In many ways, I find that this adds a new dimension to calculation. You should be looking for all the same things – tactics, combinations and tricks are always present. But you may also come across a position where there are no direct wins of material, and you must force your way through to a technical position with a known outcome.

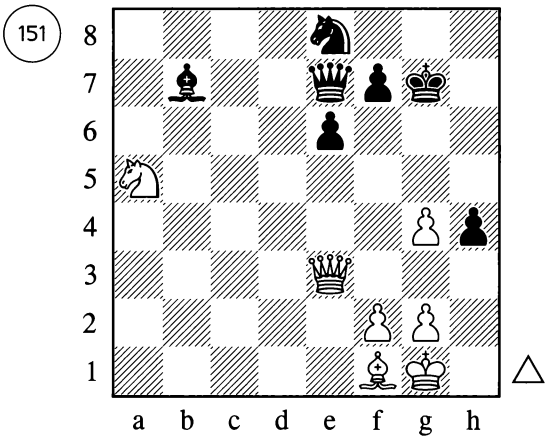
When calculating endgames, you should always ask yourself if you believe there is some direct way to change the character of the game. If the answer is no, then it will make a lot of sense to work backwards from the finish. Consider what you are aiming to ultimately reach. Then think of a step-by-step guide to which moves to make to reach that final goal.

While this book focuses solely on the calculation process, one way to help your endgame calculation is to increase your knowledge of technical positions. One of the biggest advances that AI engines such as Leela Chess Zero and Stockfish NNUE have shown, is that they no longer evaluate pawn up but clearly drawn endgames as advantageous. The most recent versions of these engines will evaluate a technically drawn four versus three rook endgame as 0.00, while previous versions would often offer +0.80 or similar evaluation. Essentially, by having some basic endgame knowledge of which positions are draws and which are wins, computers do not need to see as many moves ahead to know the result. This makes them considerably better calculators.

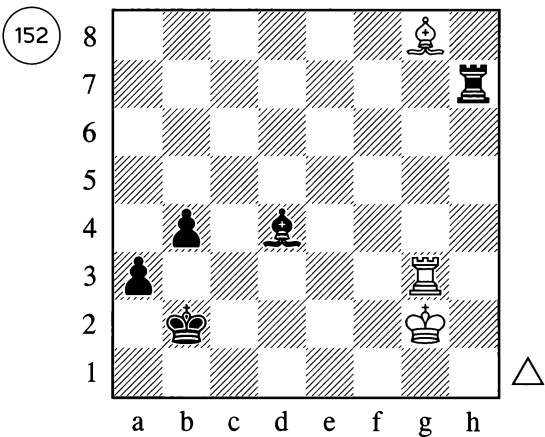
This book does not focus on adding to your theoretical endgame knowledge. I wholeheartedly recommend *Dvoretsky’s Endgame Manual*, *100 Endgames You Must Know*, *Grandmaster Preparation – Endgame Play*, *Fundamental Chess Endings* and *Technical Decision Making in Chess* as good places to look. Additionally, I expect to come out with *Theoretical Rook Endings* later this year.

Happy Solving!

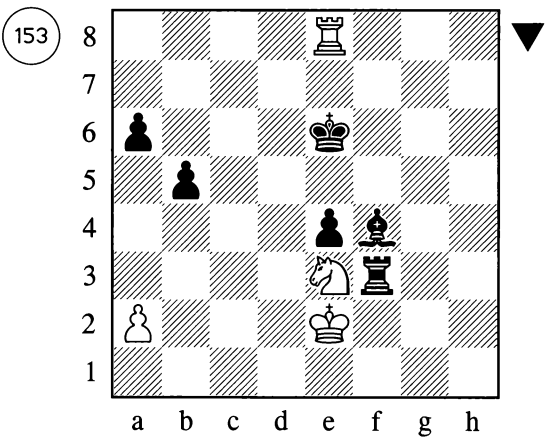
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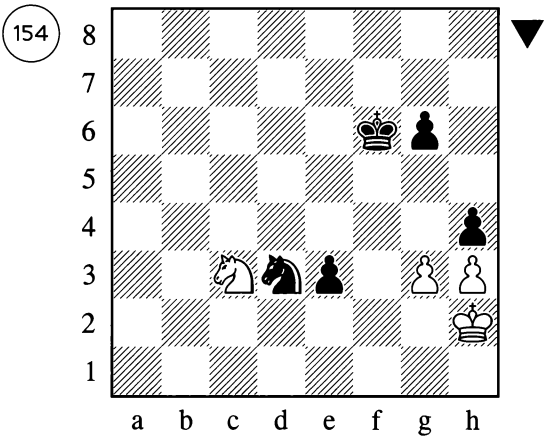
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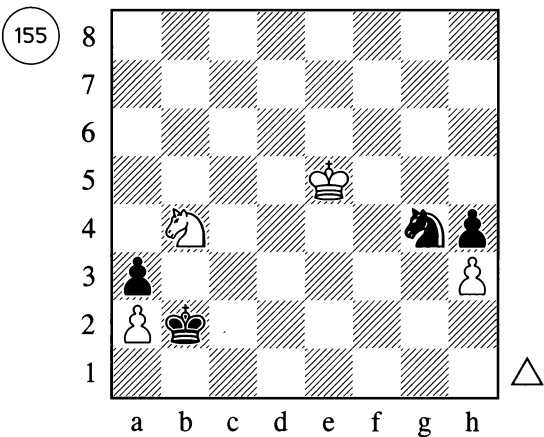
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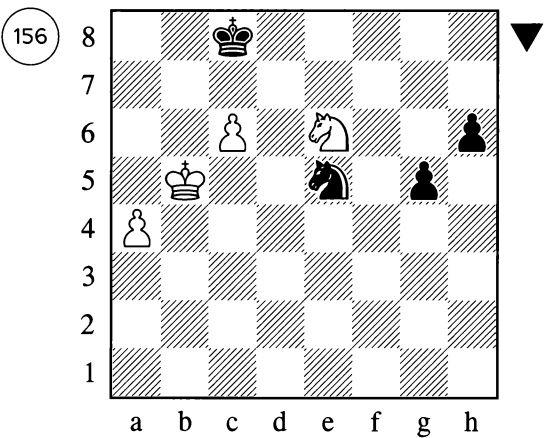
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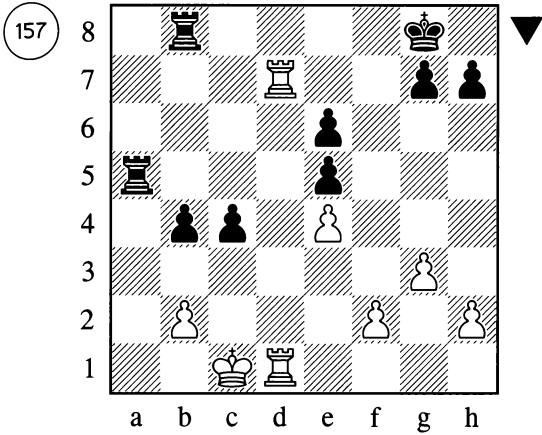
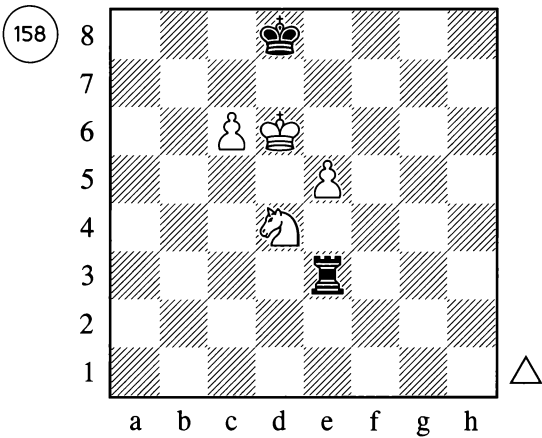
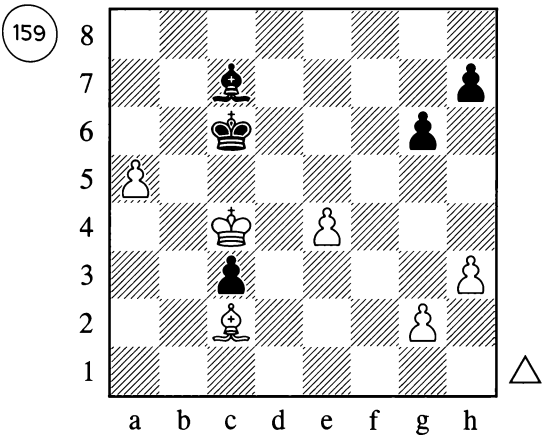
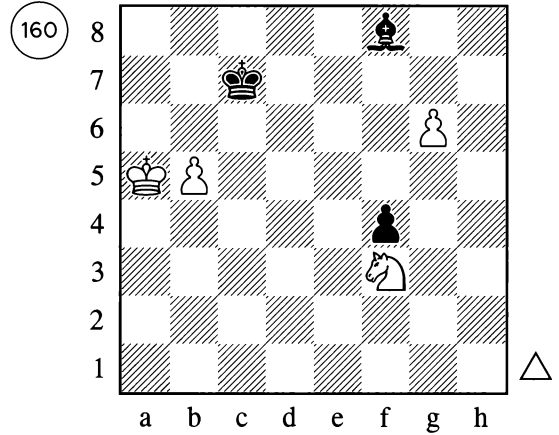
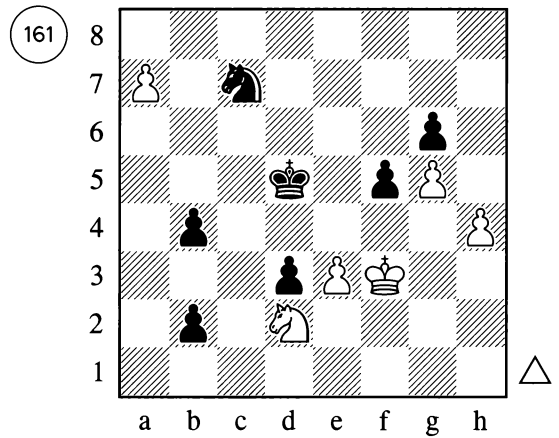
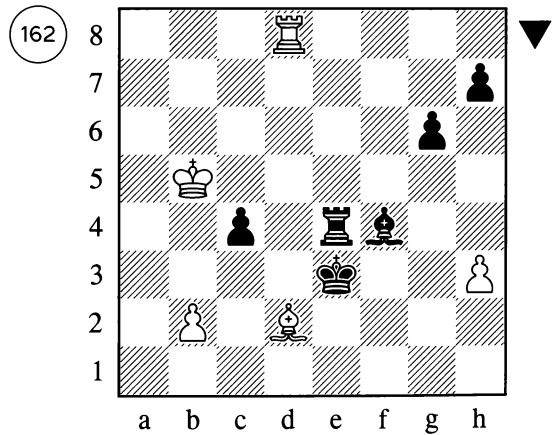


Vachier-Lagrave – Nepomniachtchi, Paris 2021

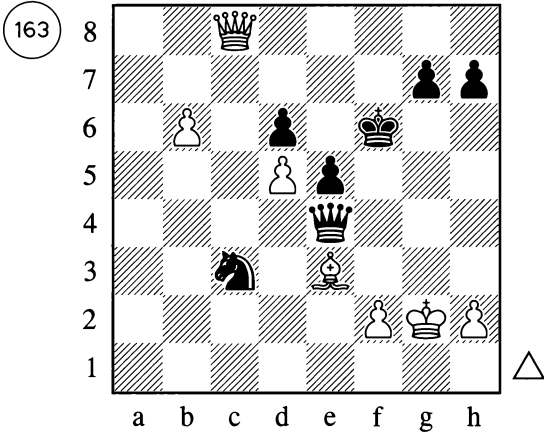


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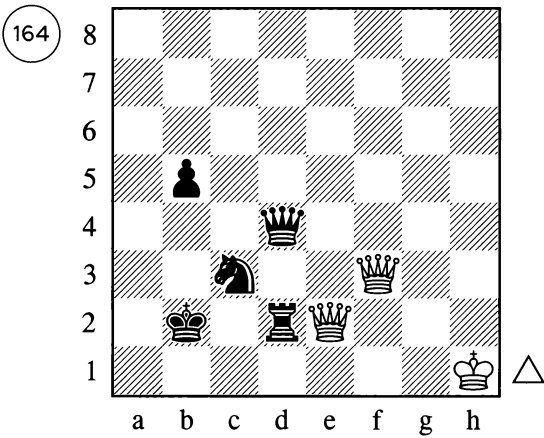


**Pubantz – Koellner**, Reinstorf 2022**Utsab Chatterjee – Molina**, Sitges 2021**Rios – Livaic**, Sitges 2021**Sahidi – Kempinski**, Czech Republic 2021**Adly – Gajewski**, Warsaw 2021**Kramnik – Nepomniachtchi**, Paris 2021

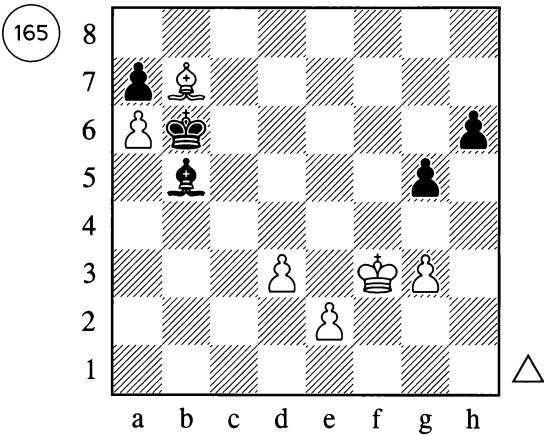
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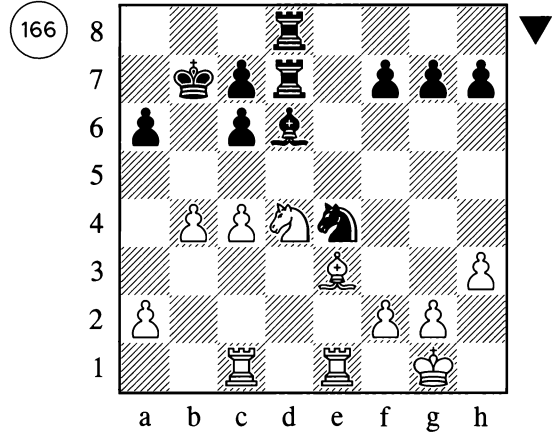
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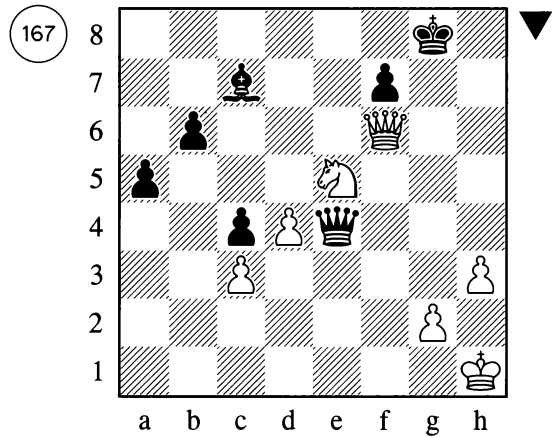
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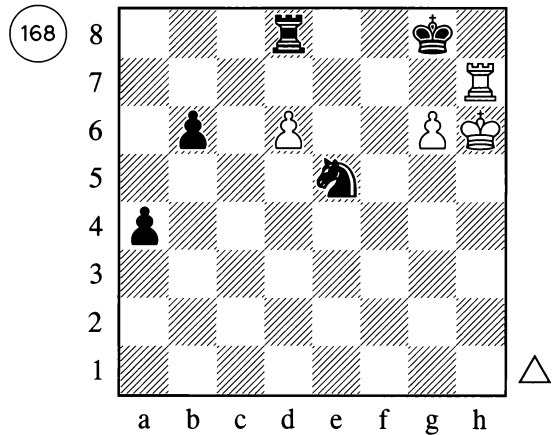
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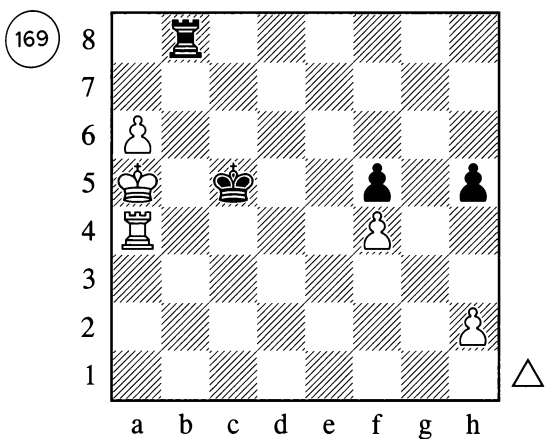
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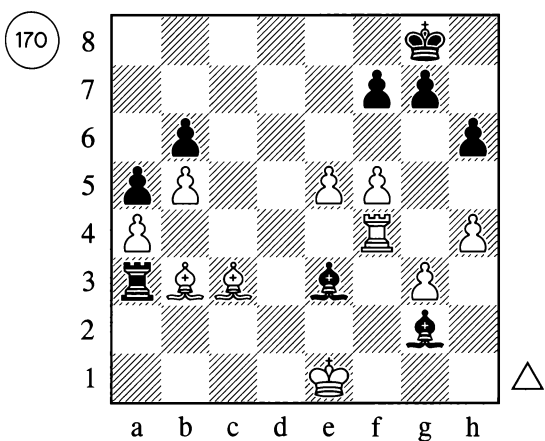
Jakubiec – Polak, Czech Republic 2021



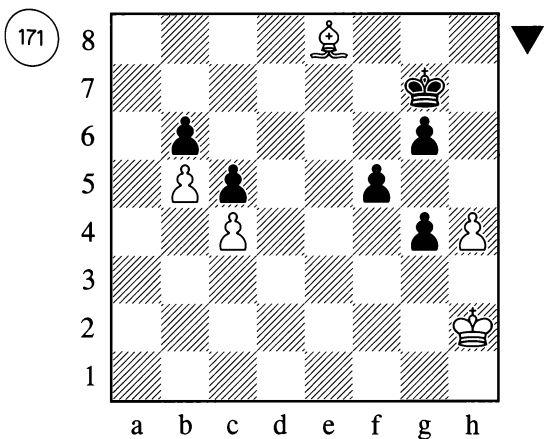
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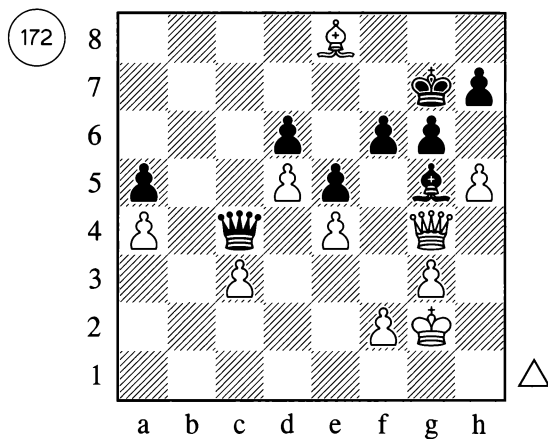
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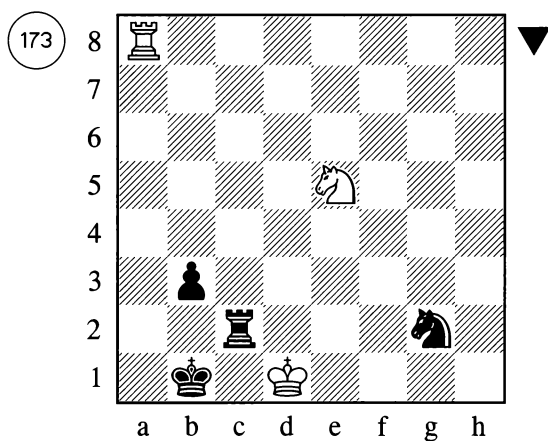
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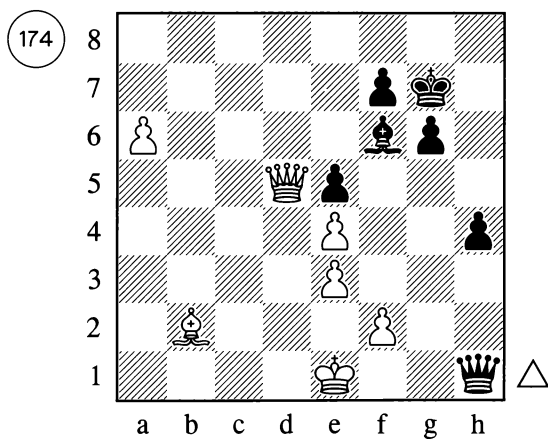
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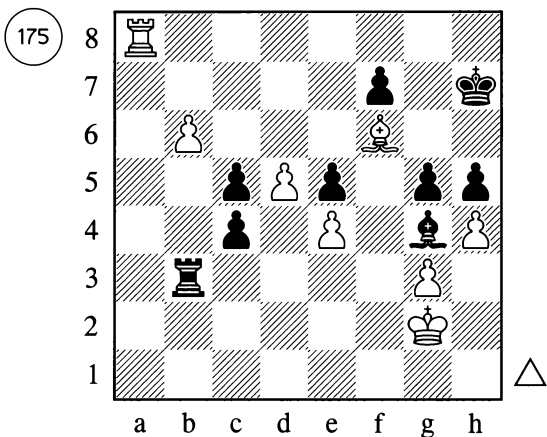
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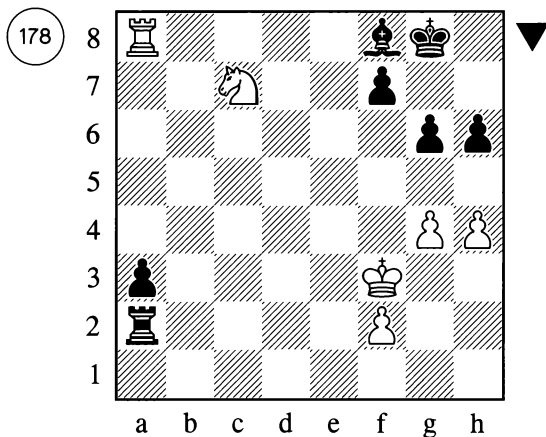
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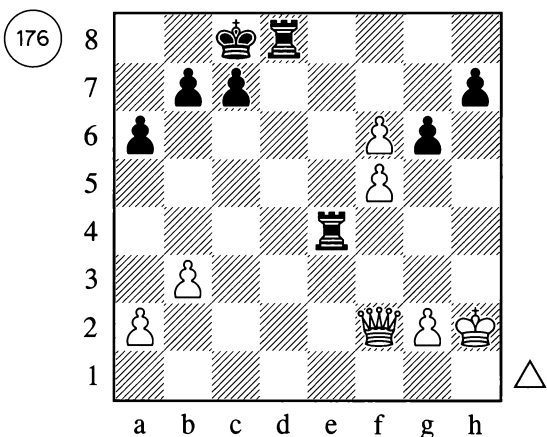
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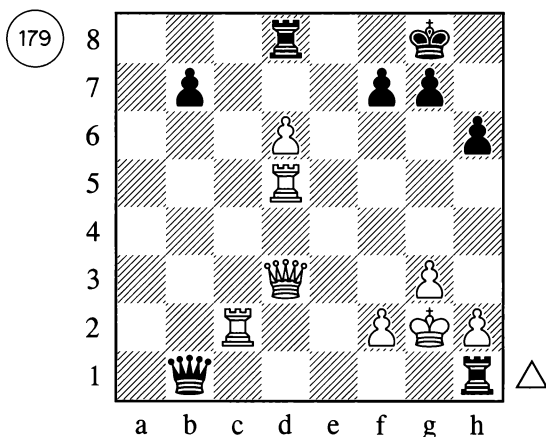
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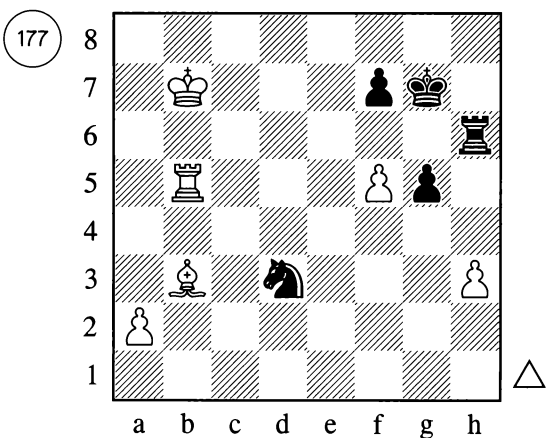
McShane – Mamedyarov, Germany 2021



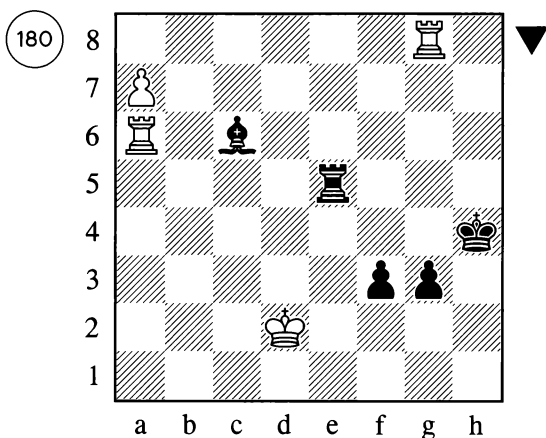
Markus – Navara, Belgrade 2022

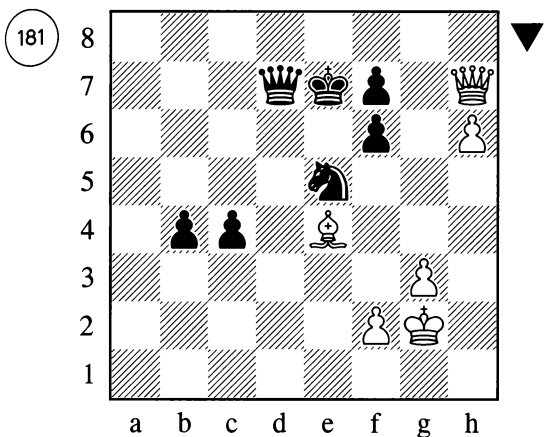
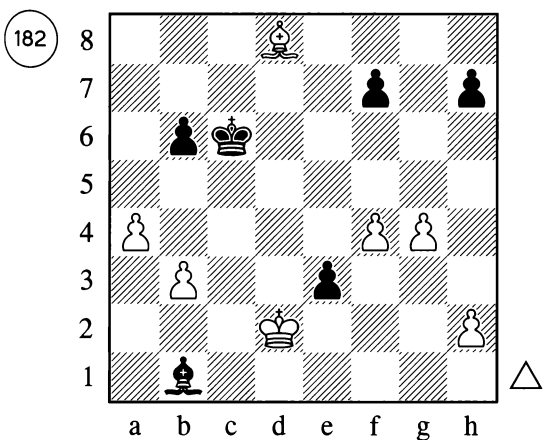
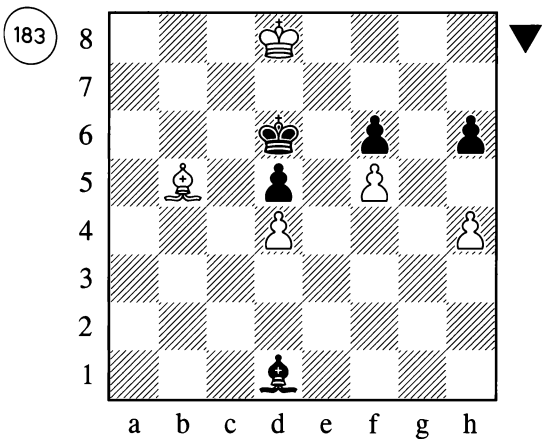
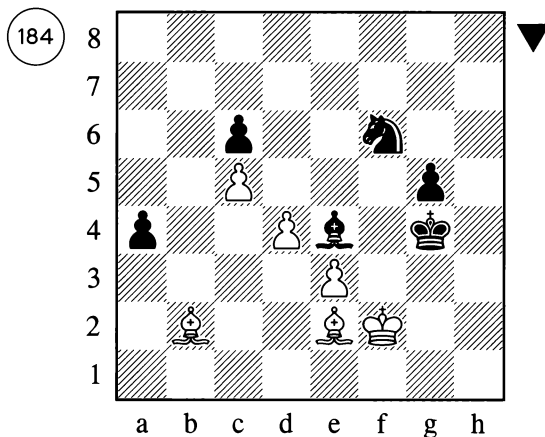
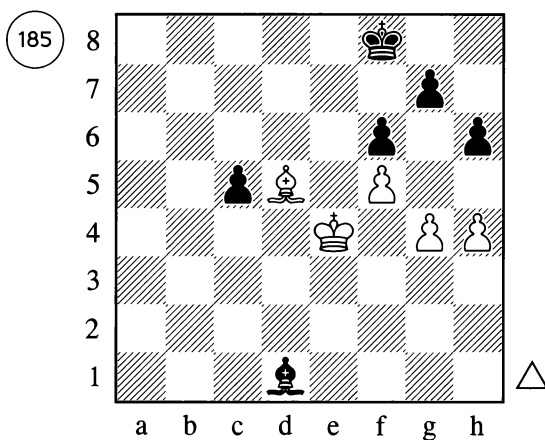
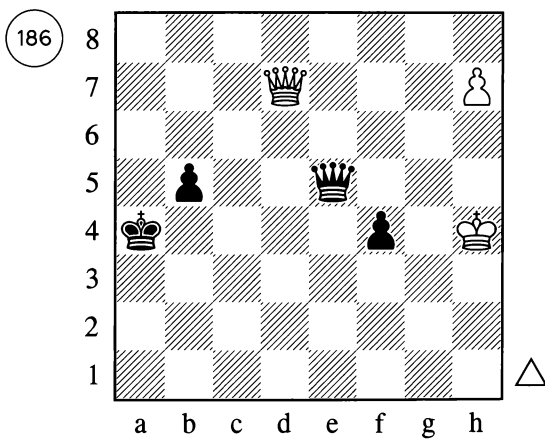


Najer – Mamedyarov, Warsaw 2021

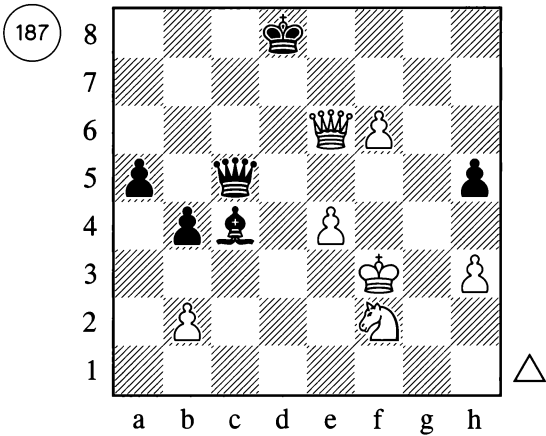


Le Quang Liem – Praggnanandhaa, Internet 2022

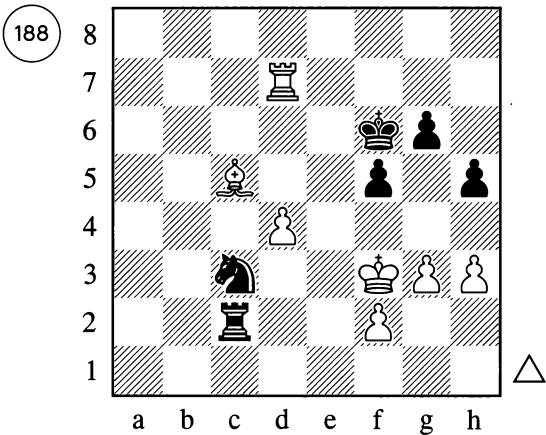


**Abdusattorov – Grischuk, Warsaw 2021****Kramnik – Rapport, Paris 2021****Hovhannisyan – Mamedyarov, Warsaw 2021****Moroni – Rapport, Warsaw 2021****Rapport – J. Van Foreest, Internet 2022****Abdusattorov – Carlsen, Warsaw 2021**

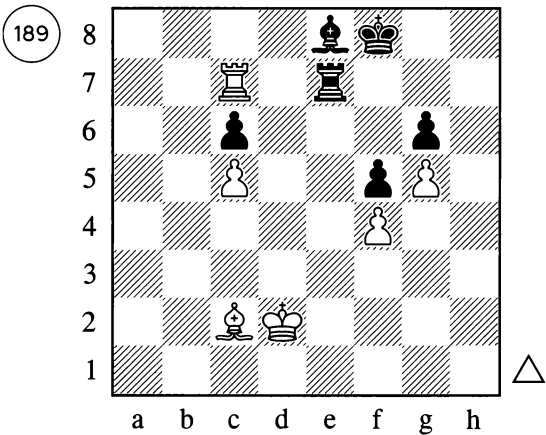
**Caletka – Cech, Czech Republic 2021**



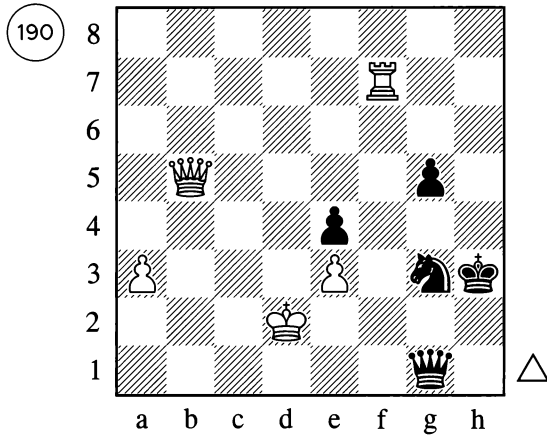
**Nakamura – Predke, Warsaw 2021**



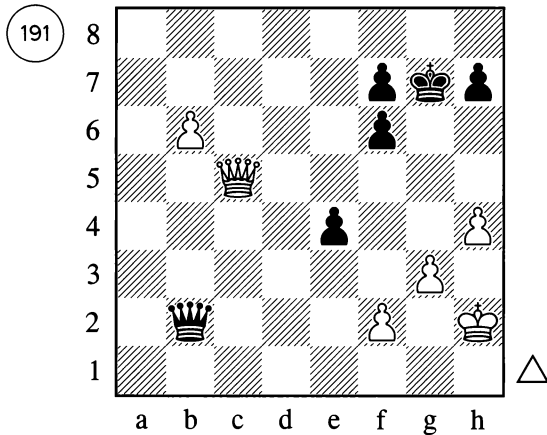
**Ponomariov – Gonda, Czech Republic 2021**



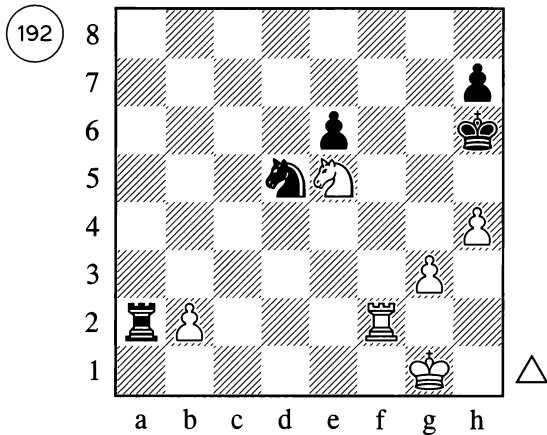
**Sarana – Indjic, Belgrade 2022**



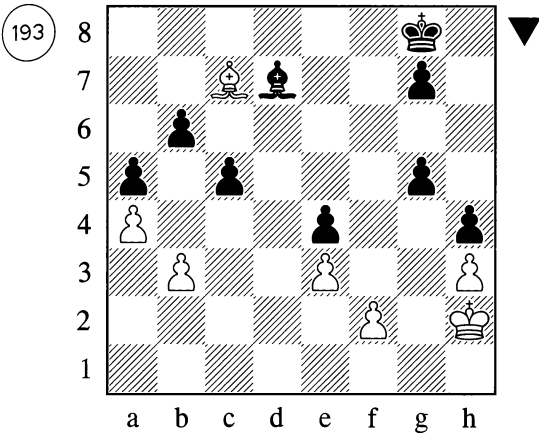
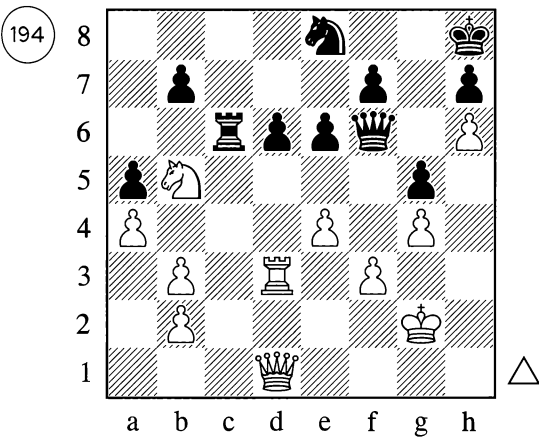
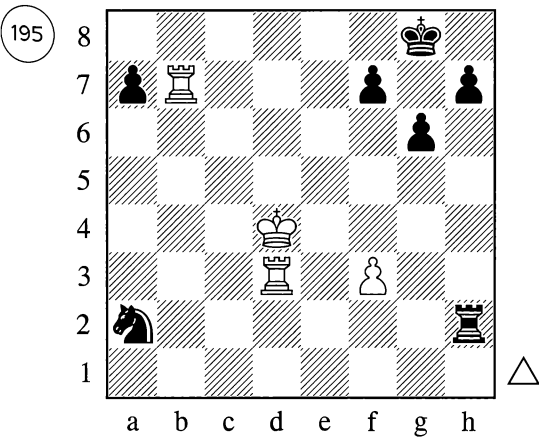
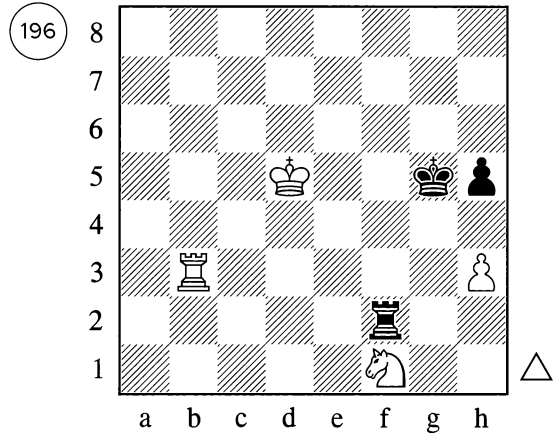
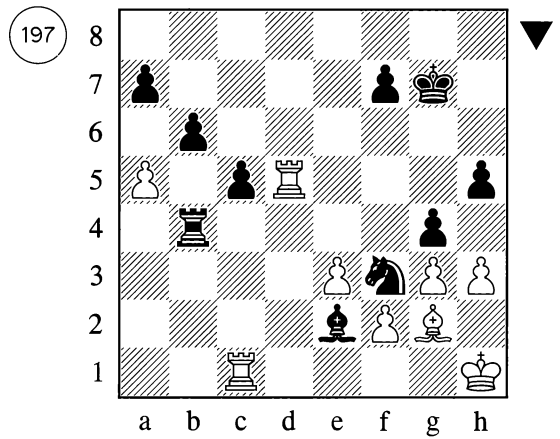
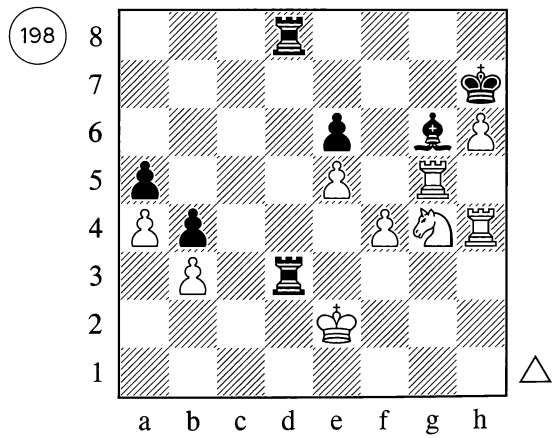
**Muradli – Boev, Plovdiv 2021**



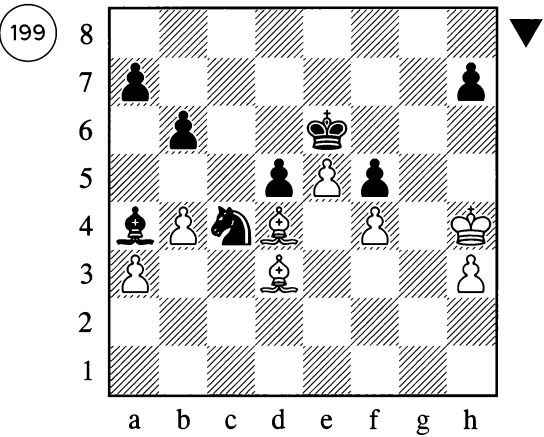
**Theodorou – Costachi, Warsaw 2021**



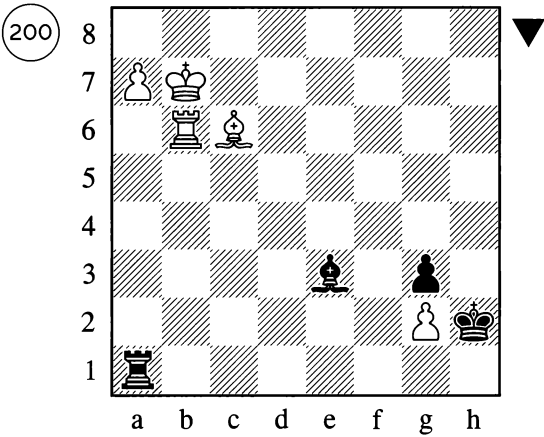


**Chigaev – Sargsyan, Warsaw (analysis) 2021****Kislinsky – Jirovsky, Czech Republic 2021****Karjakin – Firouzja, Warsaw 2021****Frank – Antoniewski, Czech Republic 2022****Buckels – Kollars, Germany 2022****Dreev – Demidov, Warsaw 2021**

So – Vachier-Lagrave, Paris 2021



Heimann – Malakhov, Germany 2021



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# Chapter 5

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## Defense





Off we go to the penultimate chapter! This one is all about defense.

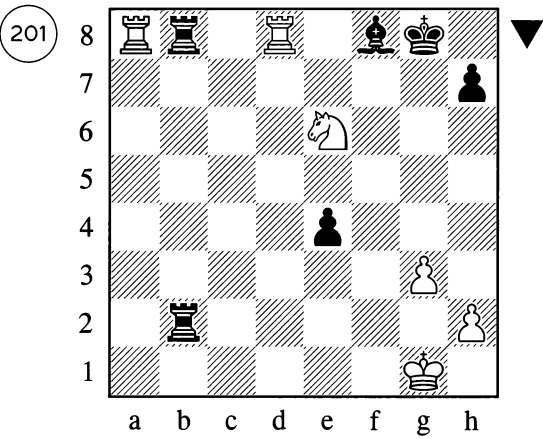
In a perfect world, we would never have to play bad or unpleasant positions. Ideally, as you get stronger, you will face this unfortunate situation less frequently. But no matter how strong you become, you will end up worse in a fair share of your games.

Being able to defend bad positions is an incredibly important skill. It extends far beyond saving a half point when it looks like you might lose. The confidence you gain from defending well, and the knowledge that you will not necessarily lose if a position goes south, enables you to take many more risks in your games. And as a wise man once said, you've got to risk it to get the biscuit! Being able to take more chances, aided by the confidence that you may not lose if it all goes wrong, means you will have more opportunities to score a full point.

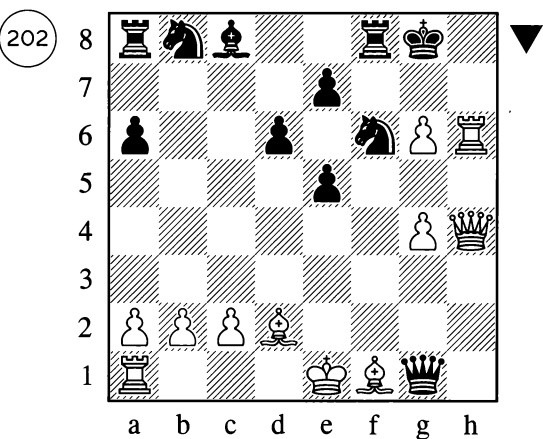
The chapter was designed to be hard, but I found the positions were a bit easier than in Chapters 4 or 6. In general, I am comfortable defending. Anyone who successfully plays the Sicilian for a long time should be familiar with containing activity and keeping attacks at bay.

That said, it is still a tough chapter, much harder than the first three chapters, and I certainly got some exercises wrong. There were a couple positions that I thought were impossible, and Jacob chided me that I was just inept! But how does the saying go? Just because you are right does not mean the other person is wrong. Perhaps we were both right.

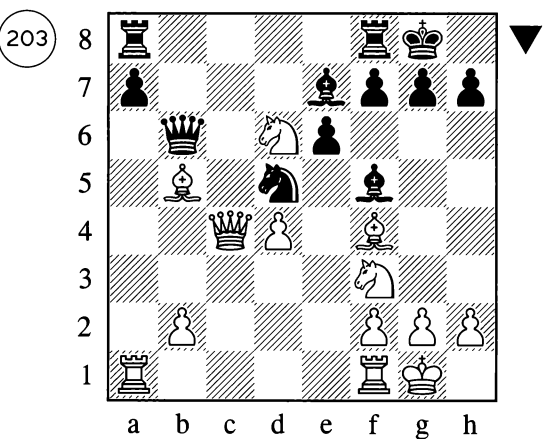
Nemeth – Sebastian, Germany 2021



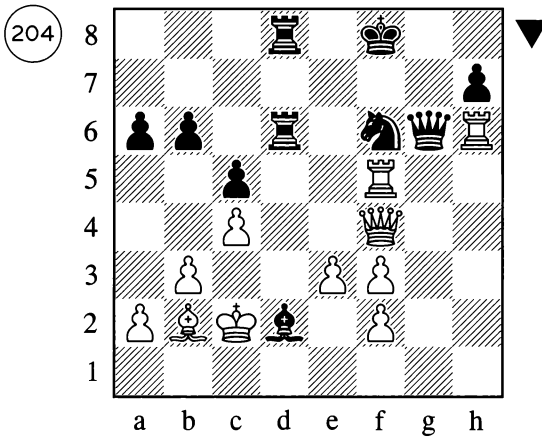
Agrest – Sankova, Bucharest 2021



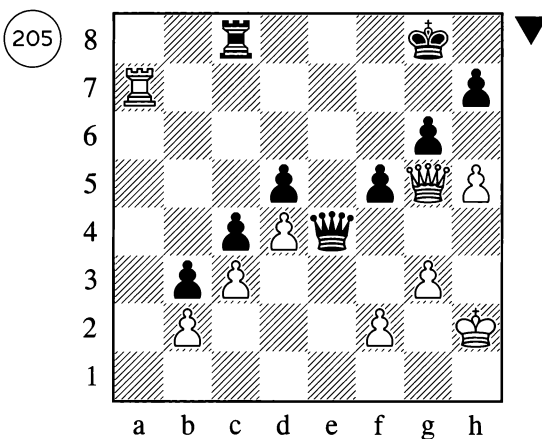
Tang – Kobalia, Warsaw 2021



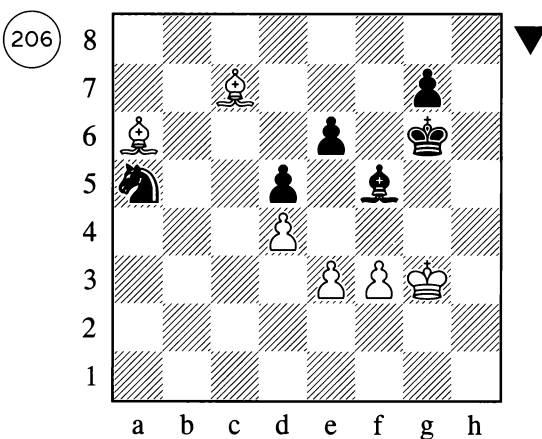
Bogner – Efimenko, Germany 2021



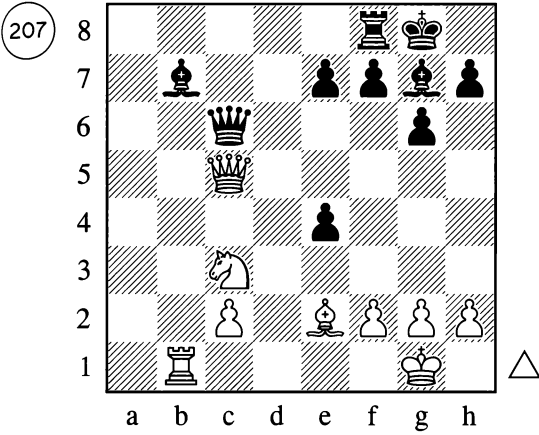
Grebeniuk – Varshini, Sitges 2021



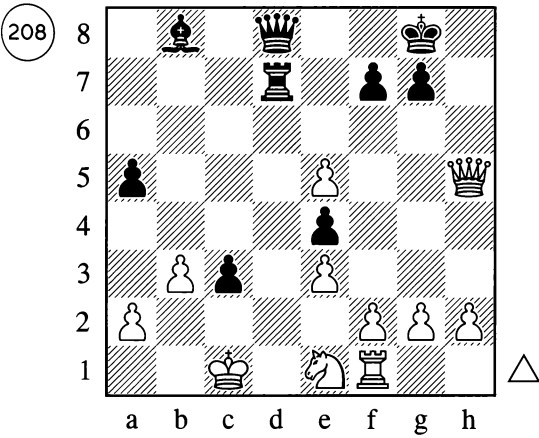
Bogner – Seel, Germany 2020



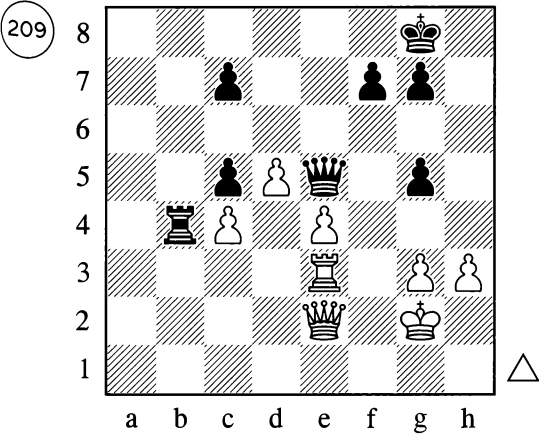
**Mahitosh Dey – Gokerkan, Plovdiv 2021**



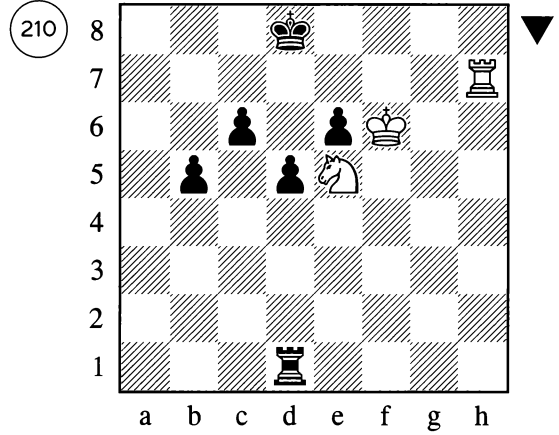
**Krasenkow – Kanarek, Warsaw 2021**



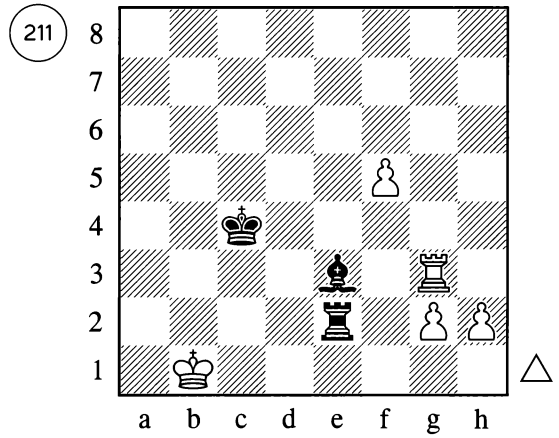
**Blahynka – Hracek, Czech Republic 2022**



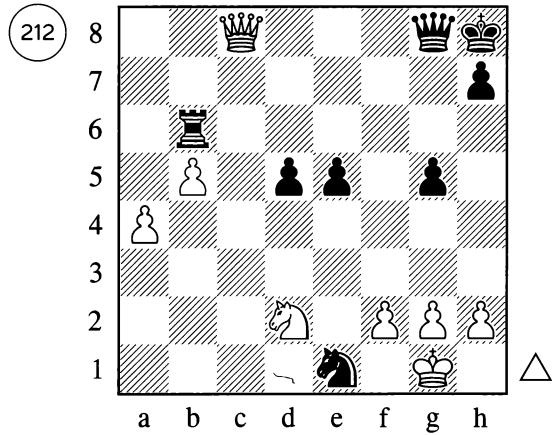
**Kolar – Caletka, Czech Republic 2021**



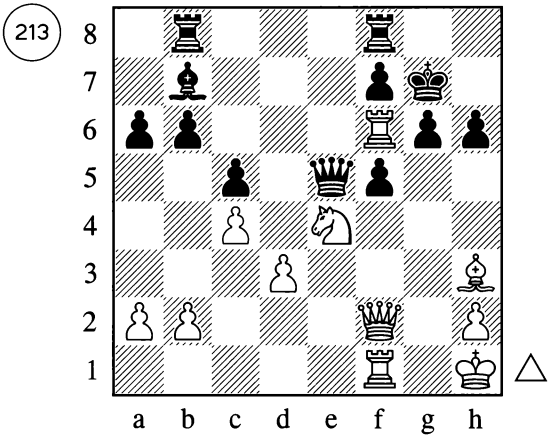
**Jafarli – Dardha, Sitges 2021**



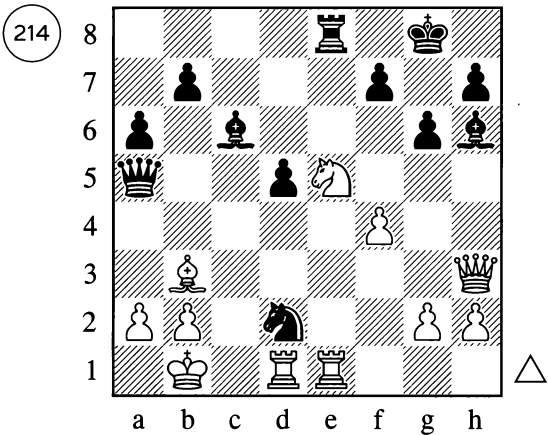
**Navara – Korobov, Czech Republic 2022**



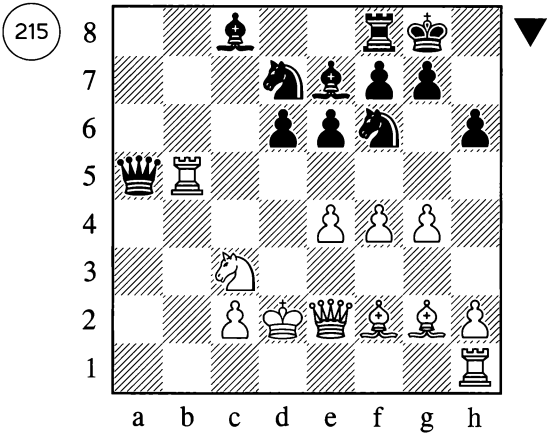
**Felecan – Rhine, Downers Grove 2001**



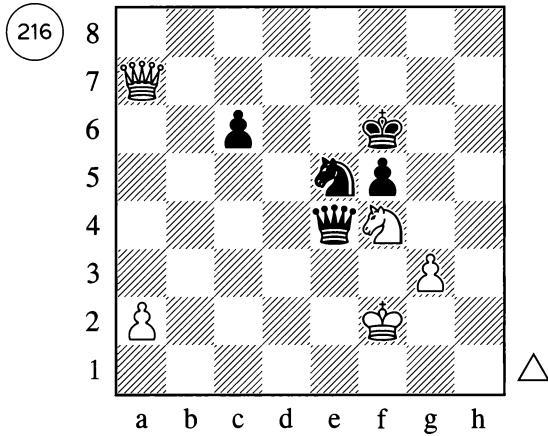
**Ivic – Korobov, Warsaw 2021**



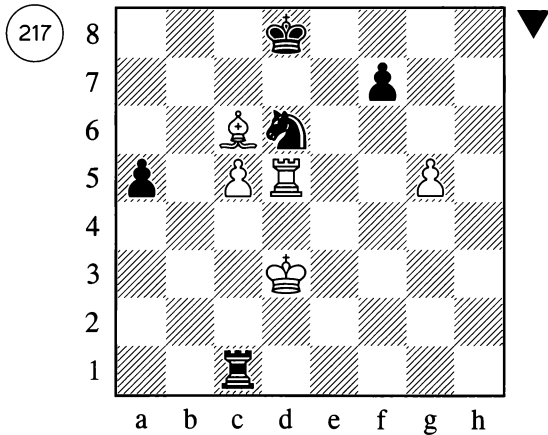
**Maghsoodloo – Sarana, Belgrade 2022**



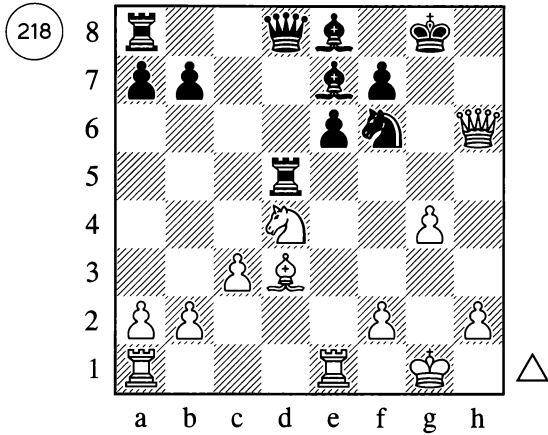
**Fruebing – Berchtenbreiter, Germany 2022**



**Artemiev – Nakamura, Internet 2021**

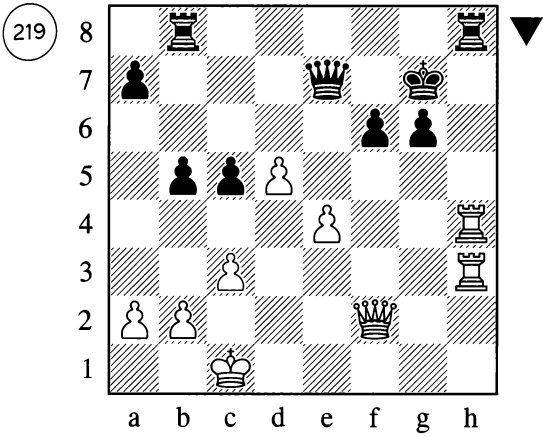


**Kostenko – Aitbayev, Almaty 2020**

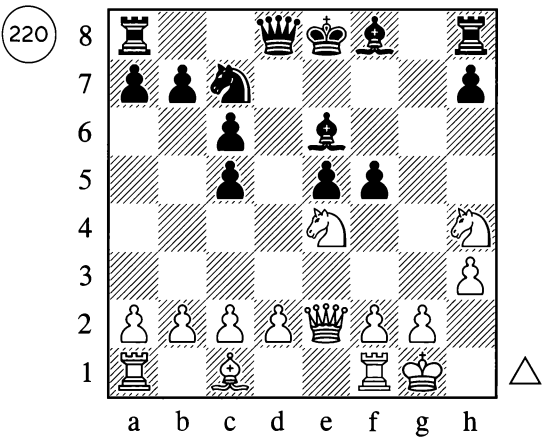




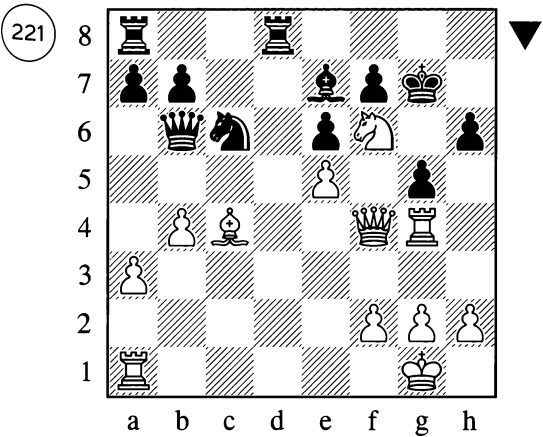
Frank – Sorm, Czech Republic 2021



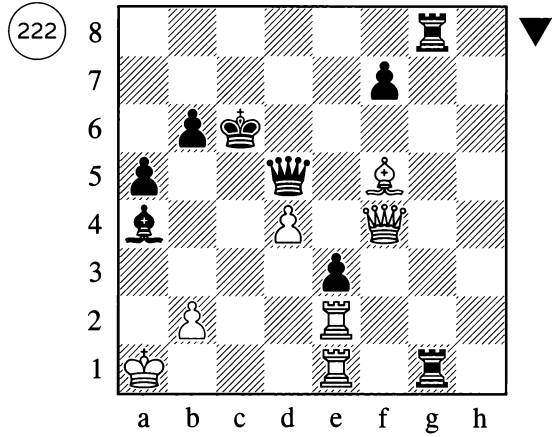
Madaminov – Vokhidov, Internet 2021



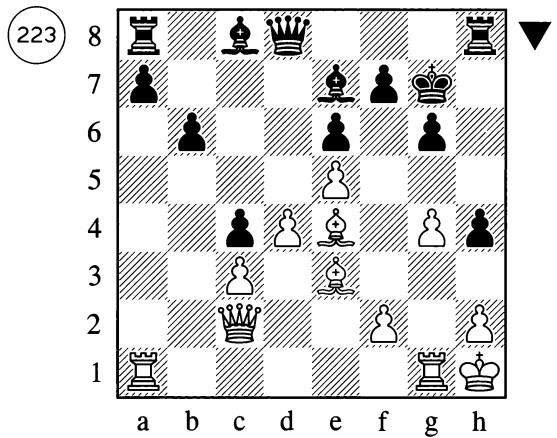
Mamedyarov – So, St Louis 2021



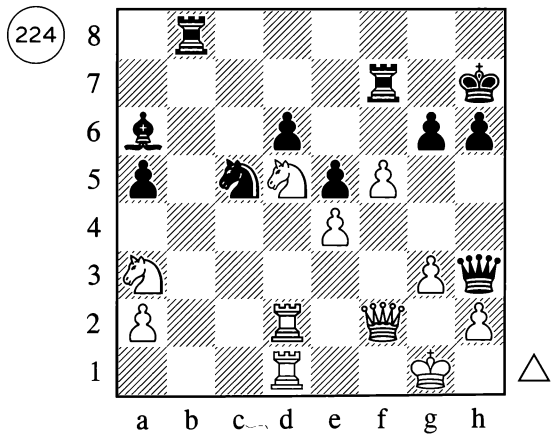
Seul – Donchenko, Biel 2021



Vujovic – Perazic, Podgorica 2021

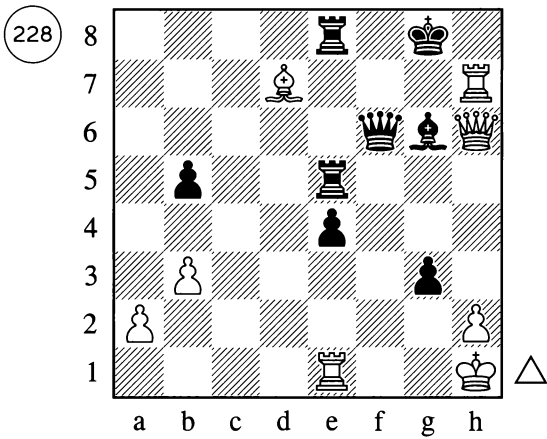
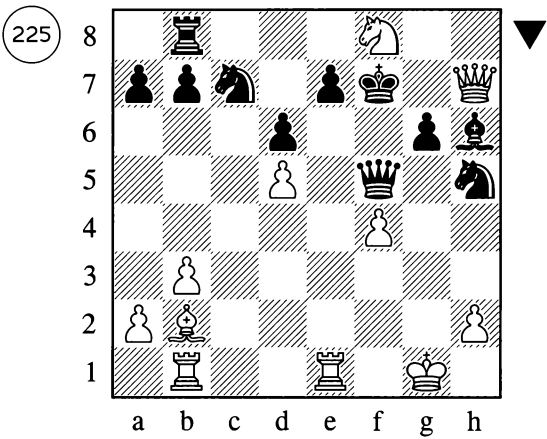


Dubinski – Moskvina, Pardubice 2021



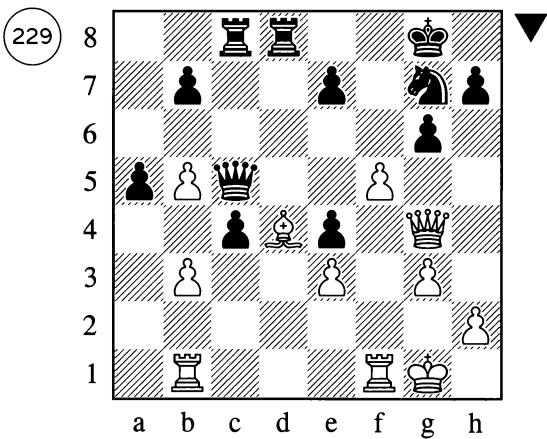
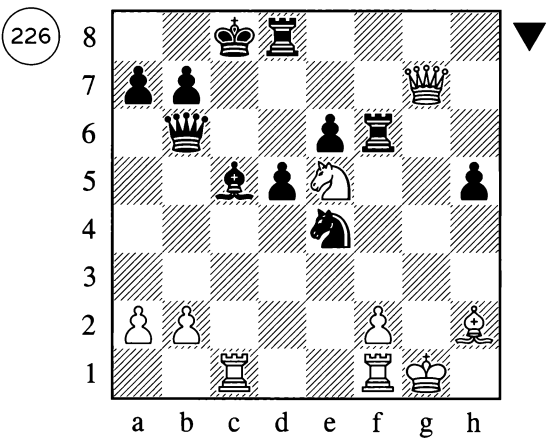
Rogozenko – Markgraf, Germany 2021

Daulyte-Cornette – Tanmay Chopra, Sitges 2021



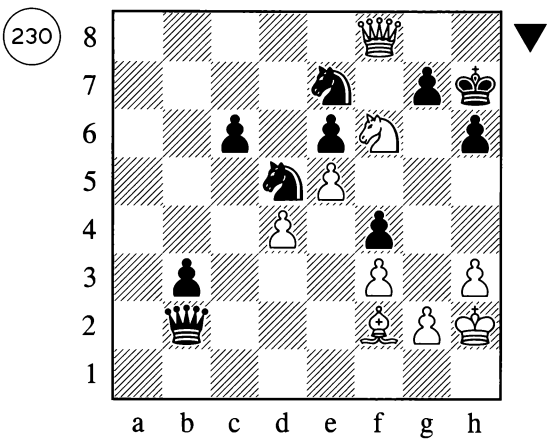
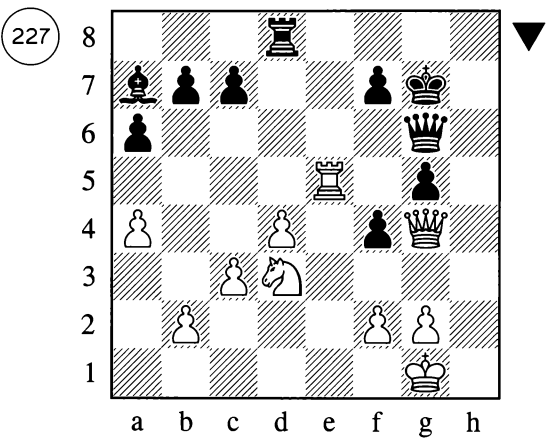
Vachier-Lagrave – Nepomniachtchi, Paris 2021

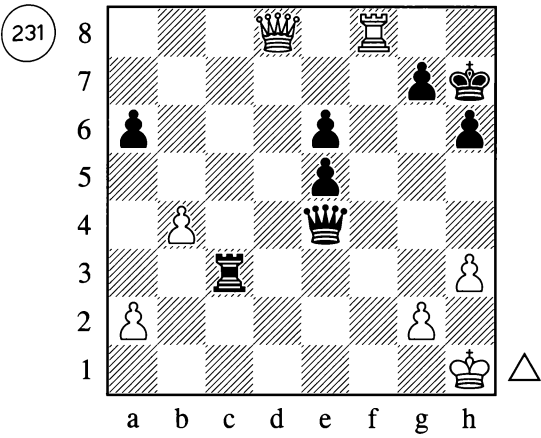
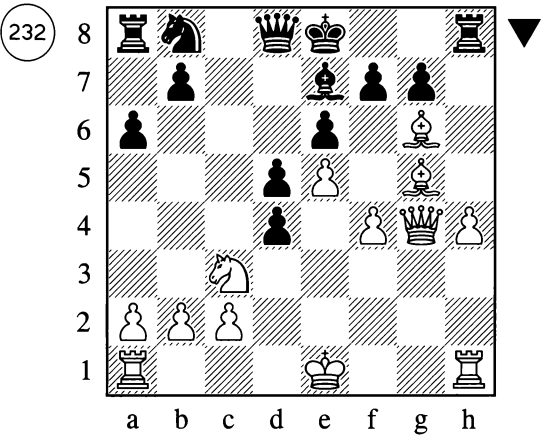
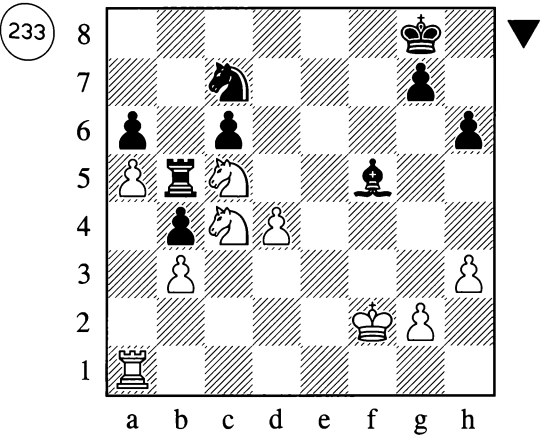
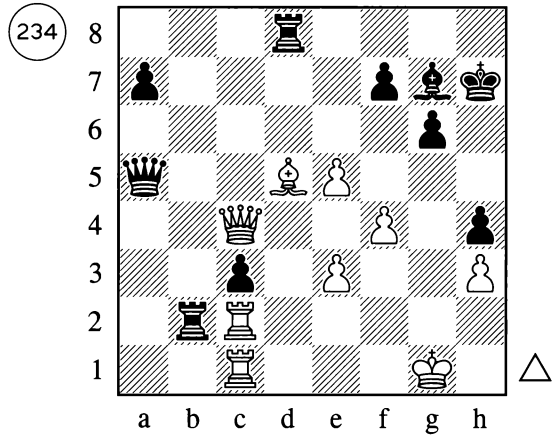
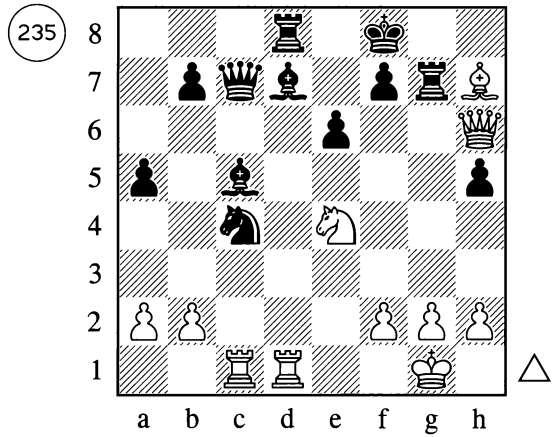
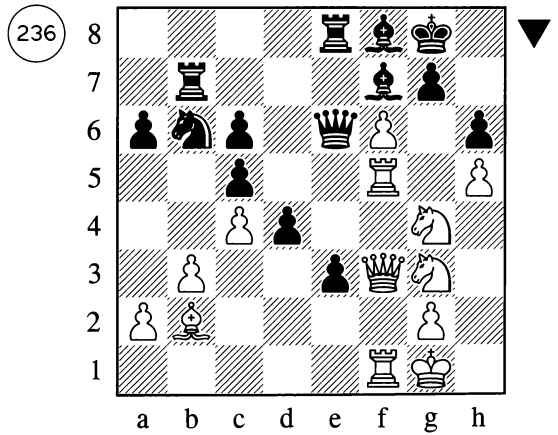
Efimenko – Van Wely, Germany 2019



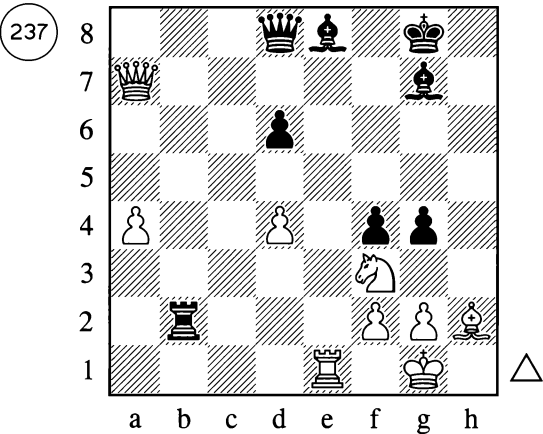
Dominguez Perez – Hansen, Internet 2021

Kozak – Teclaf, Warsaw 2021

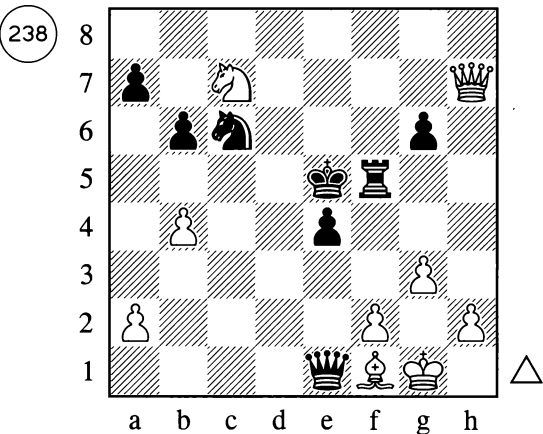


**Bashirli – Subramaniam, Plovdiv 2021****J. Van Foreest – Anton Guijarro, Internet 2022****Moussard – Dudin, Terme Catez 2022****Praggnanandhaa – Carlsen, Internet 2022****Kramnik – Radjabov, Paris 2021****Lagarde – Sonntag, Germany 2021**

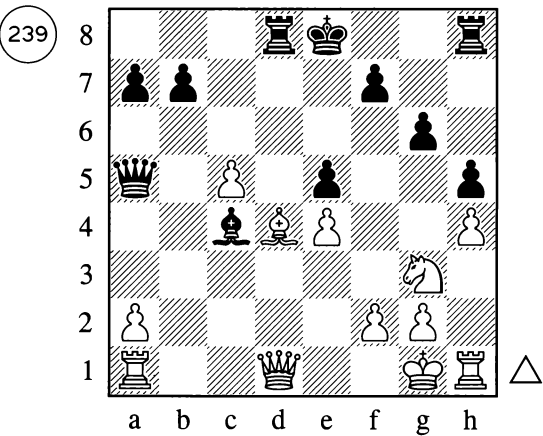
Novak – Frank, Czech Republic 2022



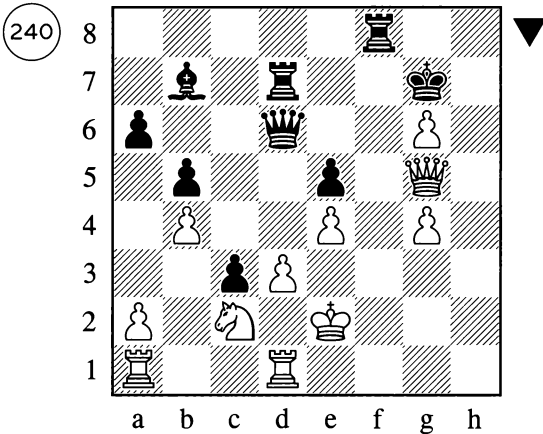
Shahinyan – Gabuzyan, Yerevan 2022



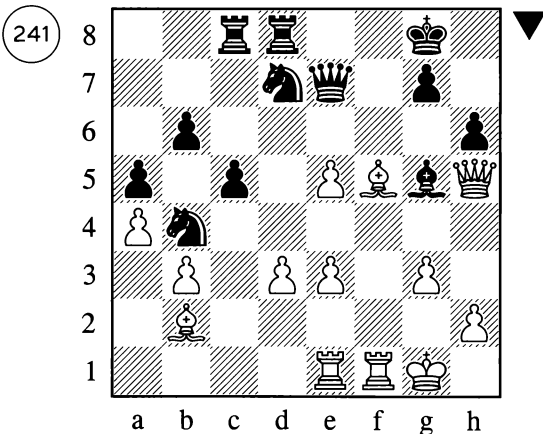
So – Svidler, Paris 2021



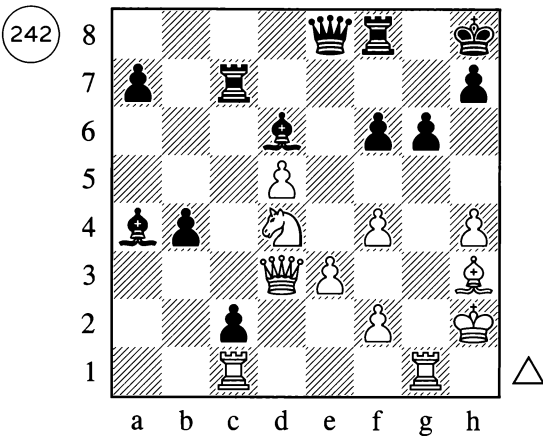
F. Svane – Wagner, Magdeburg 2021

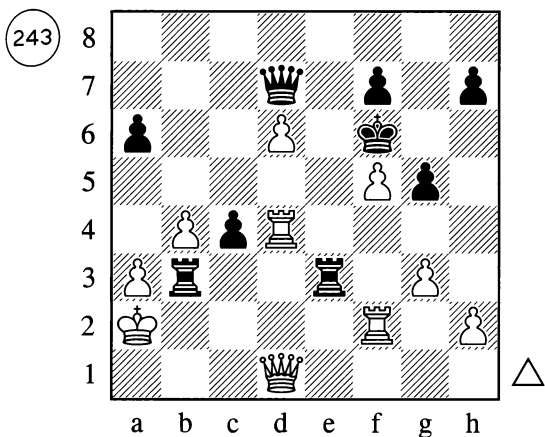
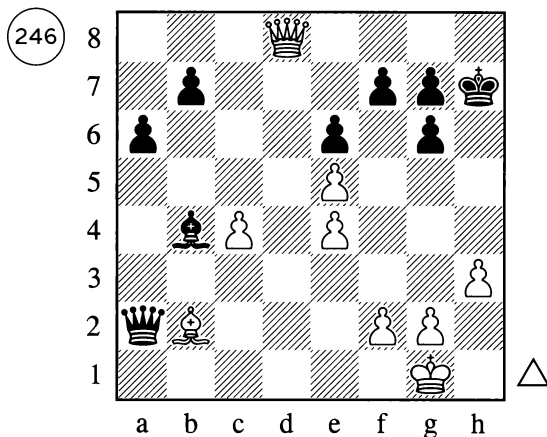
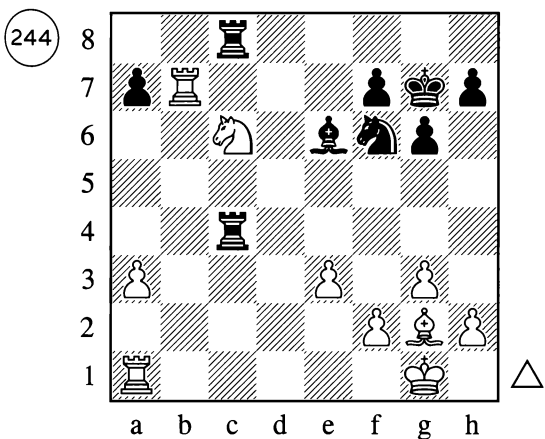
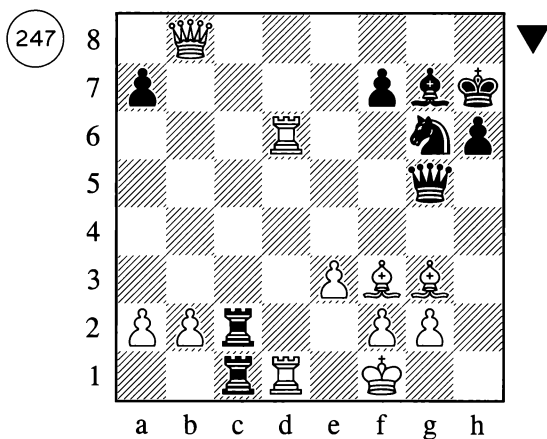
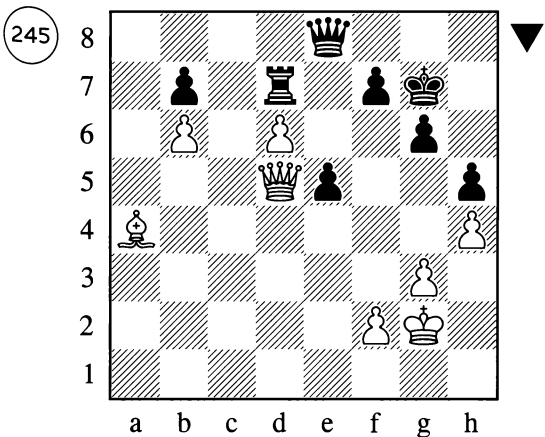
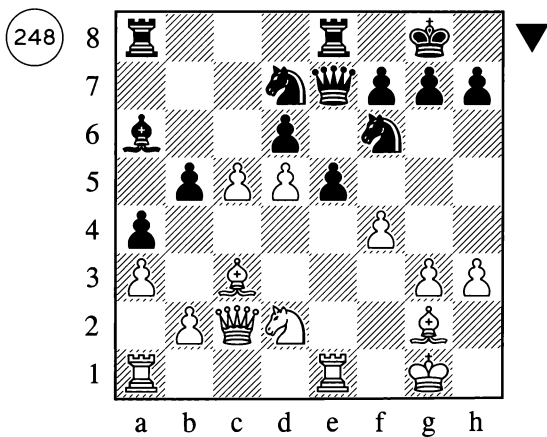


Liang – Yoo, Internet 2021

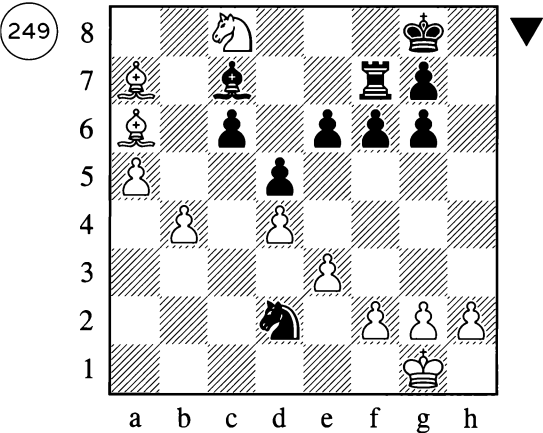


Baldauf – Dragnev, Germany 2022

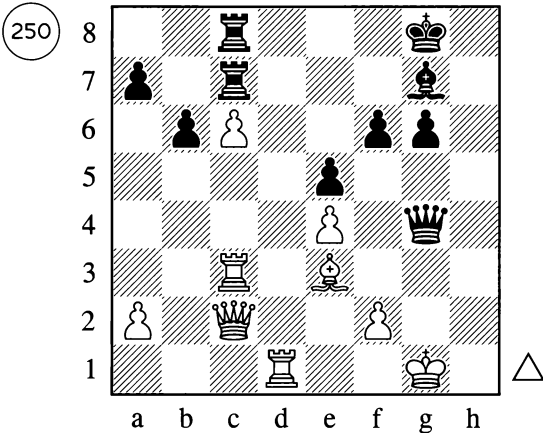


**Hrescak – Muradli, Plovdiv 2021****So – Svidler, Internet 2021****Santos Latasa – Fridman, Warsaw (var) 2021****Le Quang Liem – Mamedyarov, Internet 2022****Budisavljevic – Deac, Terme Catez 2022****Redzisz – Mis, Krakow 2020**

Abdusattorov – Sethuraman, Sitges 2021



Urh – Iniyany, Plovdiv 2021



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# Chapter 6

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## Deep Calculation







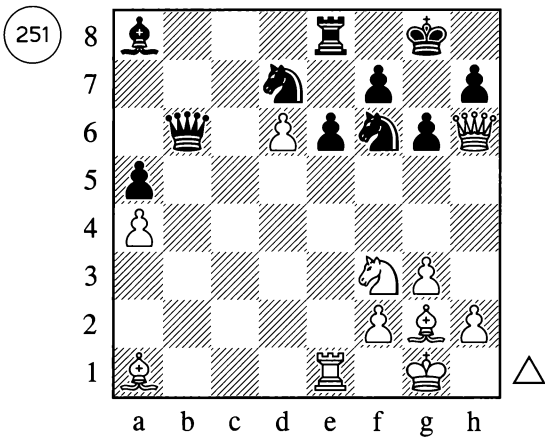
The final chapter was surely designed to be the ultimate test. Even the name *Deep Calculation* makes it sound like boss music should be about to start!

It is surely very difficult, but this is the kind of training I have grown used to doing for the last nine years. You will have to use all the skills you have already tested in previous chapters and put them all together. You may need to see a combination that starts several moves away from the original position. You may need to look for candidate moves deep into a variation rather than at the beginning. You may have to potentially calculate long lines that involve a middlegame transitioning into an endgame.

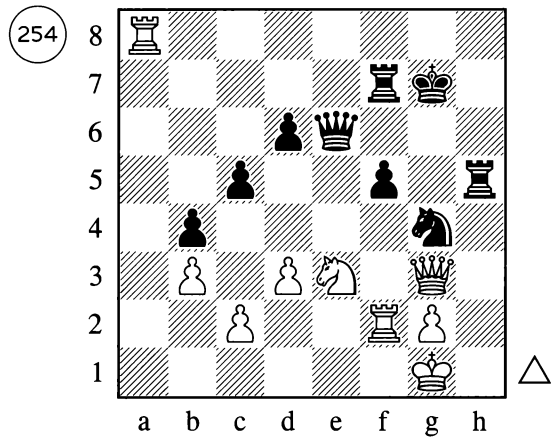
I would imagine that this might be the hardest chapter for some. Do not be discouraged. Chess is a difficult game. It is difficult for everyone, not just you. I was far from perfect here, as in every other chapter. The process of training tough positions like these is what pushes you to become a better chess player. As always, I did not get every problem right, and I will demand a thorough and deeply personal search for hidden machinery if anyone claims to do so!

Enough foreshadowing. With the ultimate test in sight, let's see what you've got!

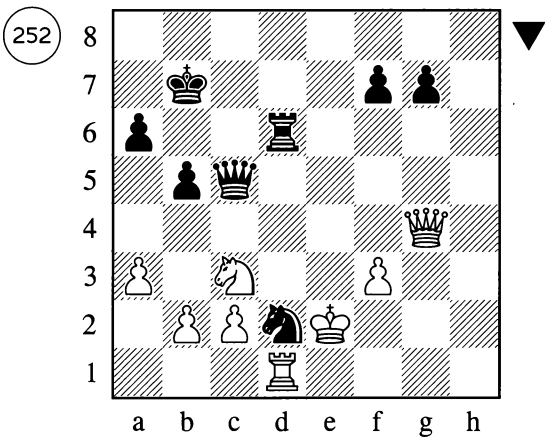
Pranav Anand – Dardha, Sitges 2021



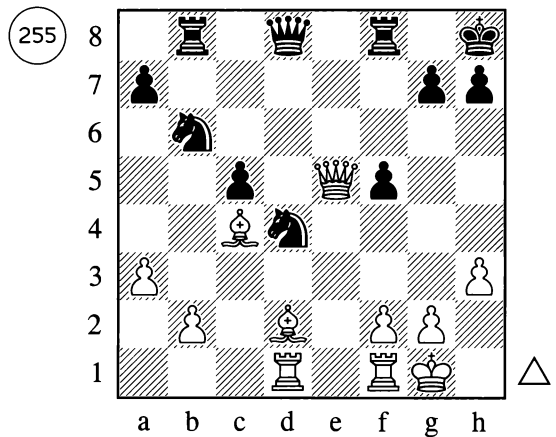
Durarbayli – Duda, Warsaw 2021



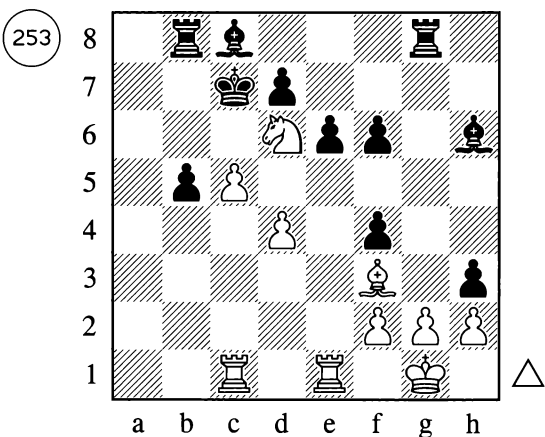
Gajewski – Spoelman, Germany 2020



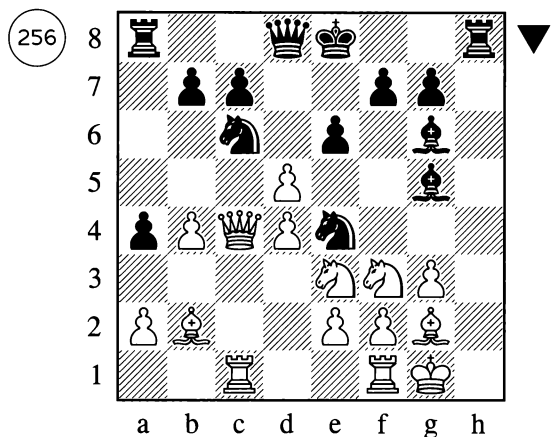
Kosteniuk – Hansen, Internet 2022



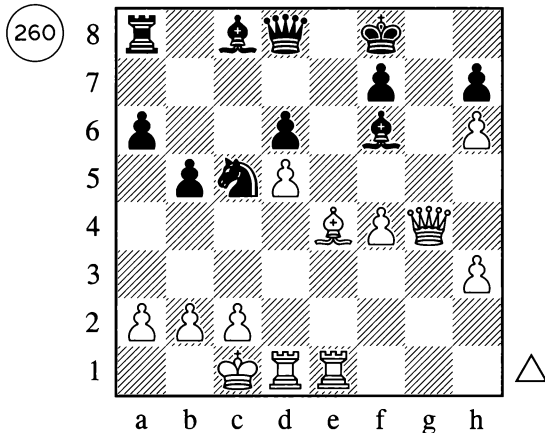
Ivanchuk – Kramnik, Internet 2020



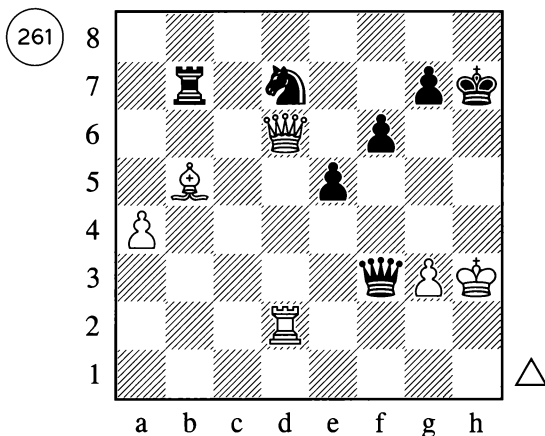
Malakhov – Esipenko, Bergen 2021



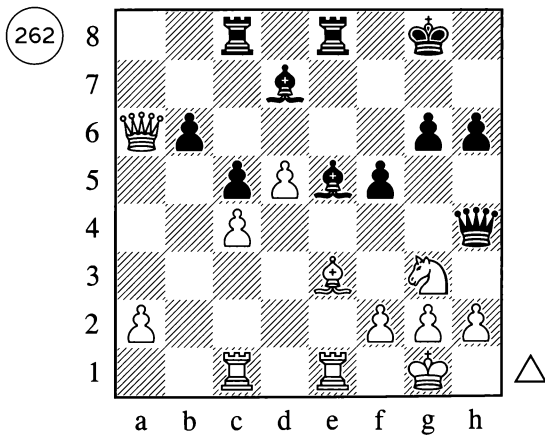
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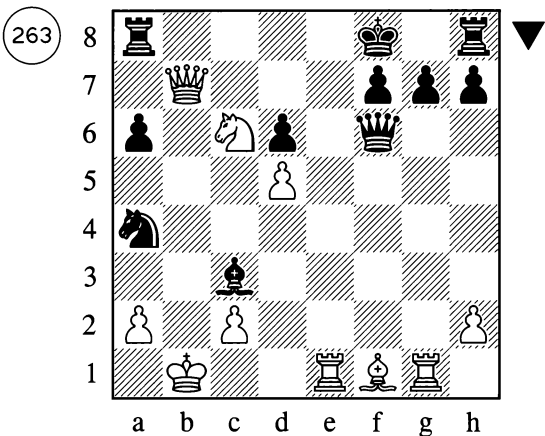
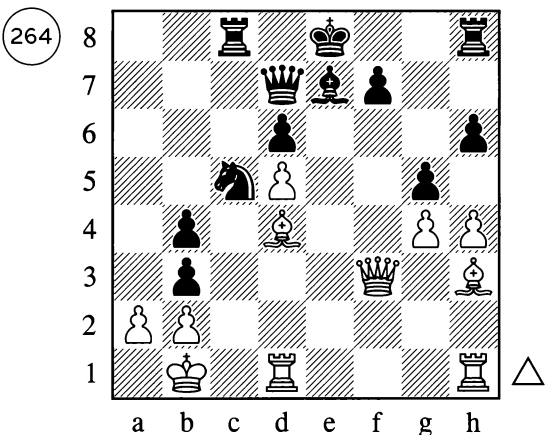
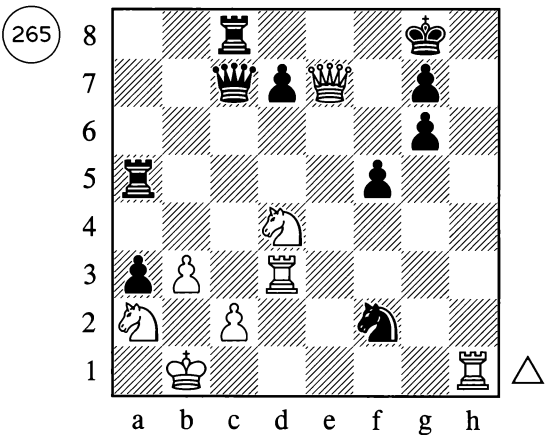
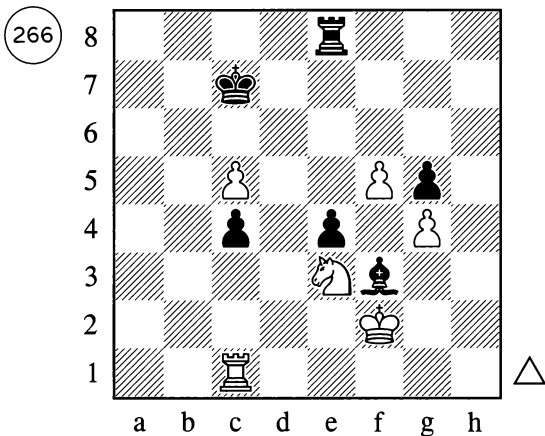
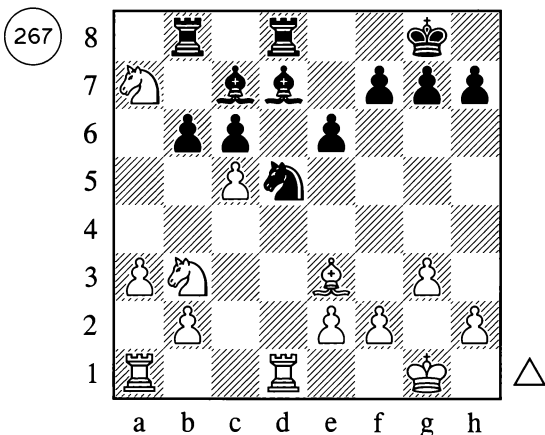
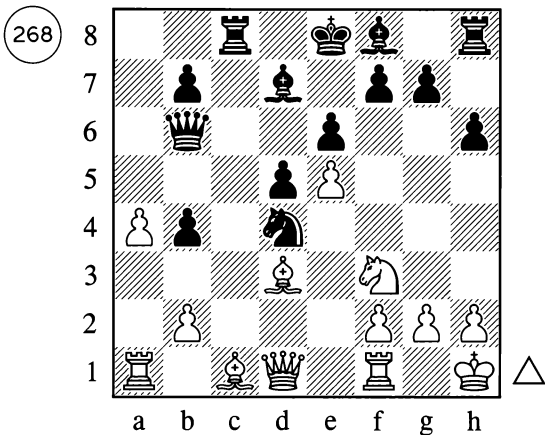


Risteski – Hovhannisyan, Terme Catez 2022

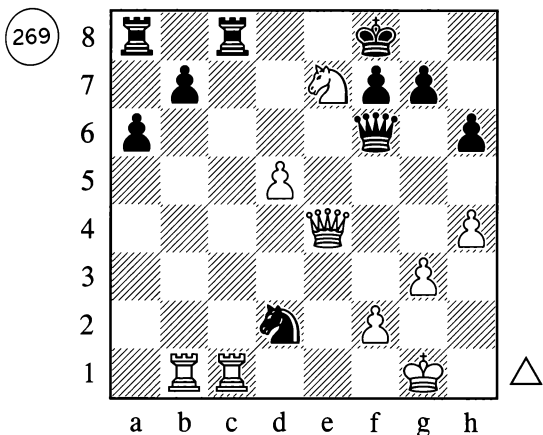


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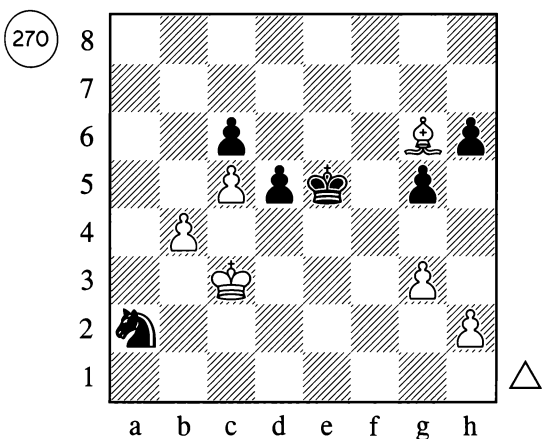


**Horvath – Anto Cristiano, Moscow 2021****Libiszewski – Naumann, Germany 2021****Ter-Sahakyan – Sychev, Warsaw 2021****Dreev – Sadhwani, Warsaw 2021****Maltsevskaya – Suleymenov, Chelyabinsk 2022****Guseinov – Juksta, Terme Catez 2022**

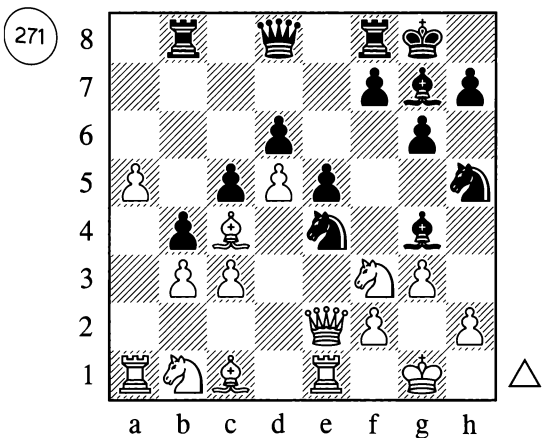
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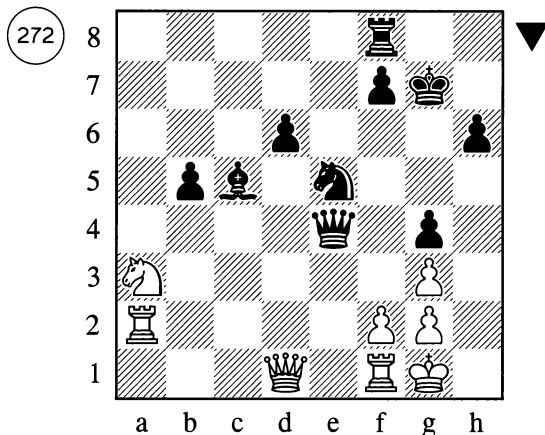
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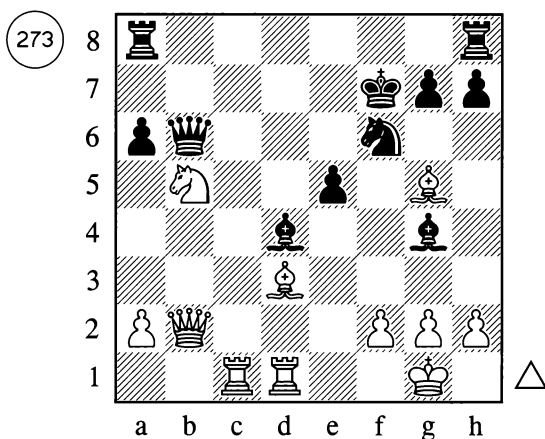
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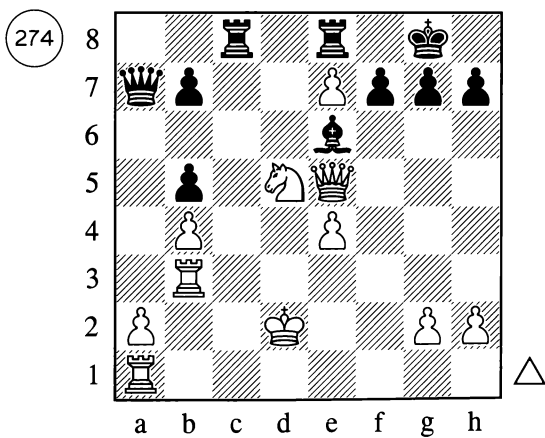
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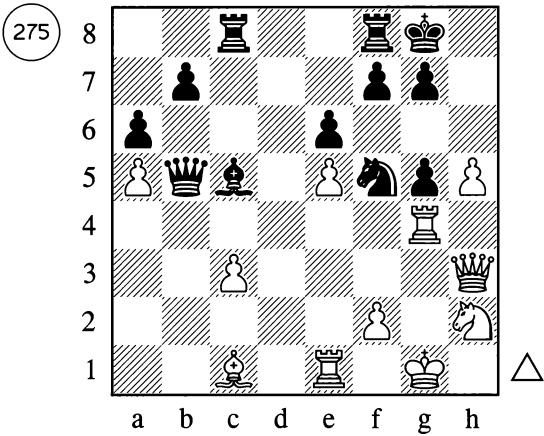
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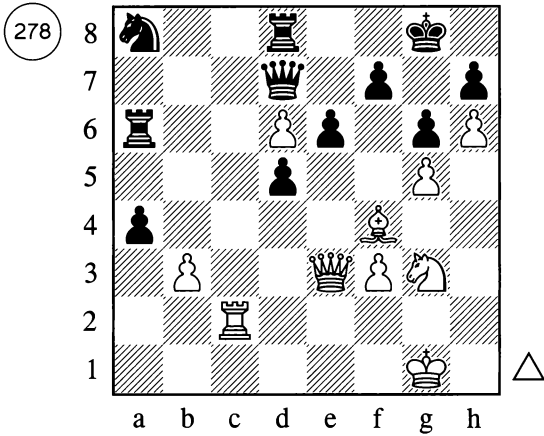
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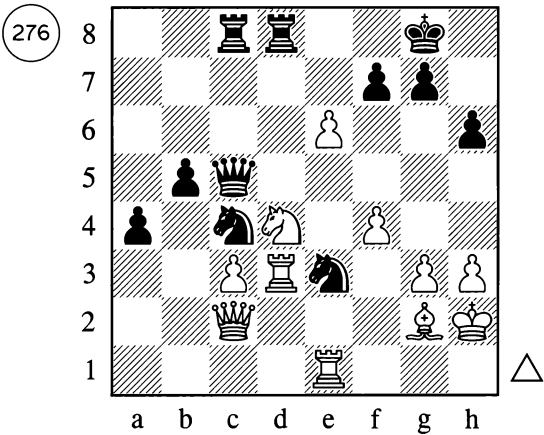
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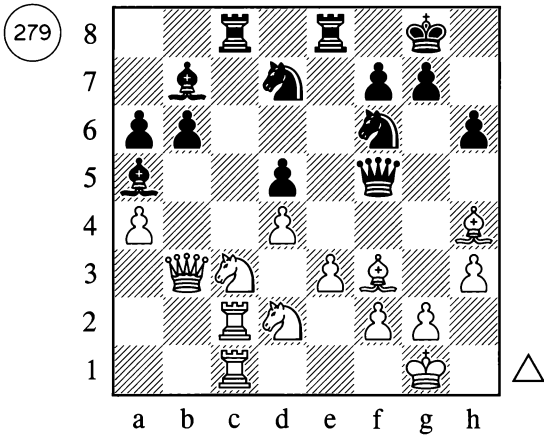
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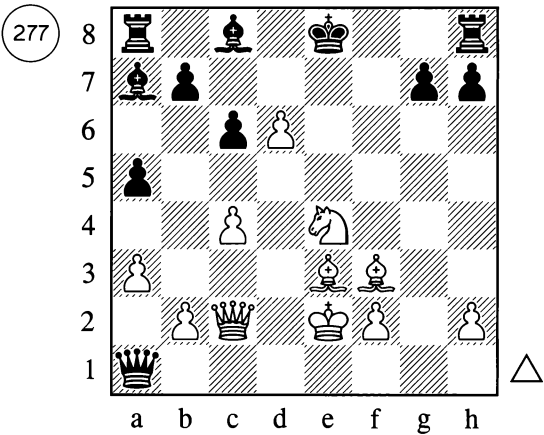
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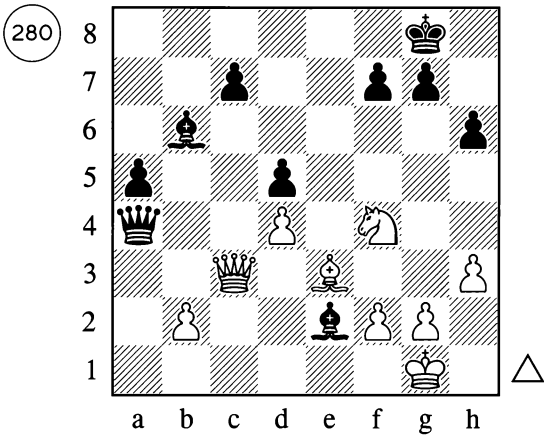
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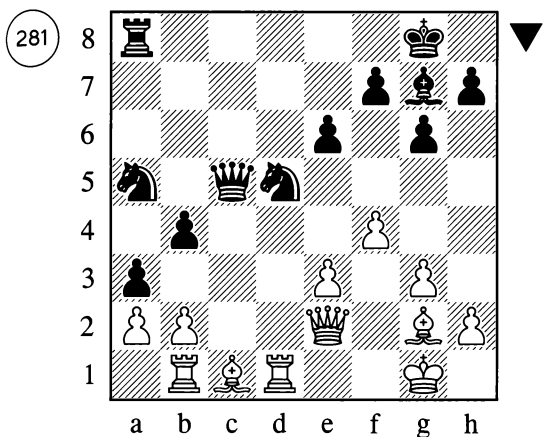
Bernadskiy – Petkov, Terme Catez 2022



Mekhitarian – Cuenca Jimenez, Floripa 2022

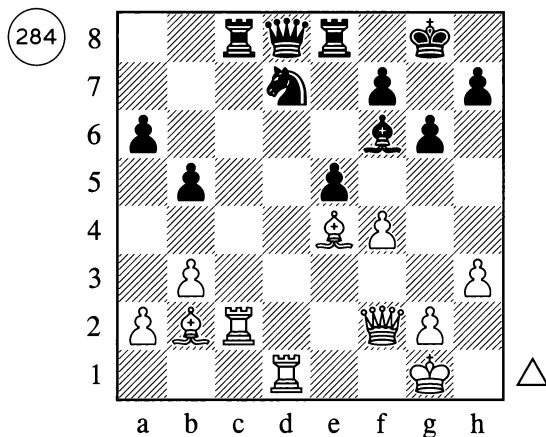


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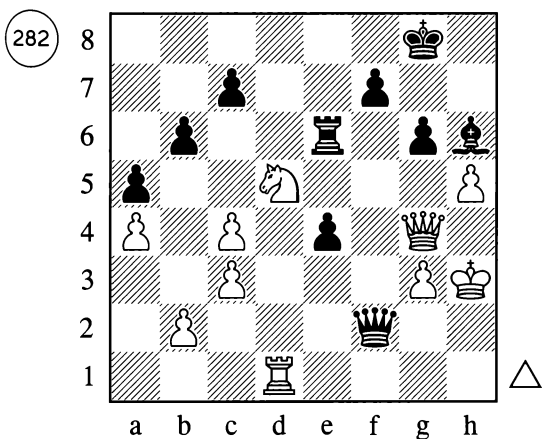


Baltic – Coenen, Germany 2021

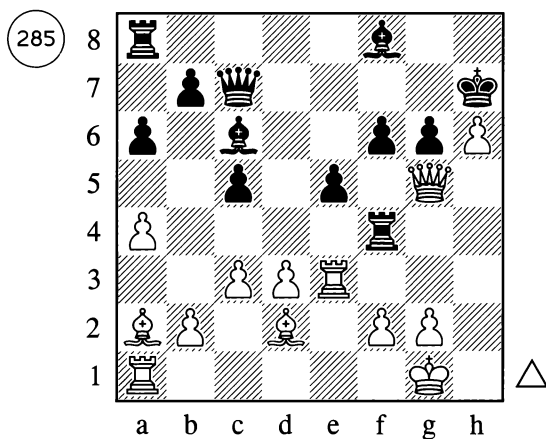
Schroeder – Neiksans, Germany 2021



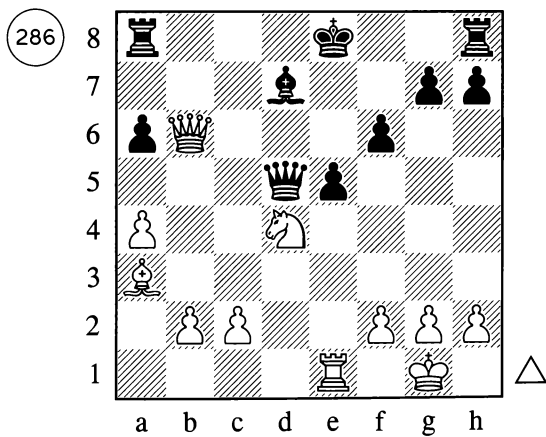
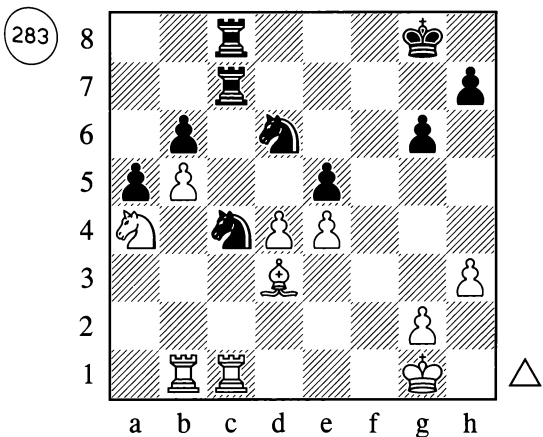
Kaasen – Melaa, Fagernes 2021



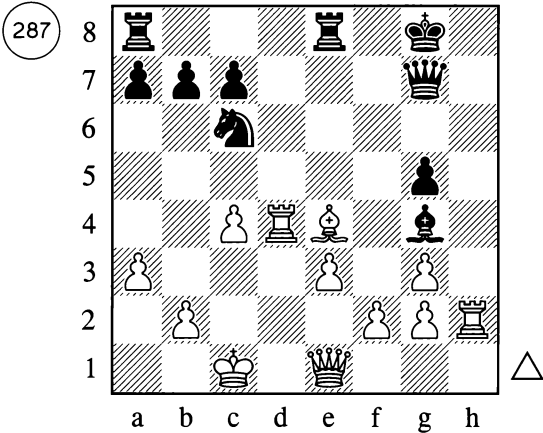
Dreev – Samunenkov, Warsaw 2021



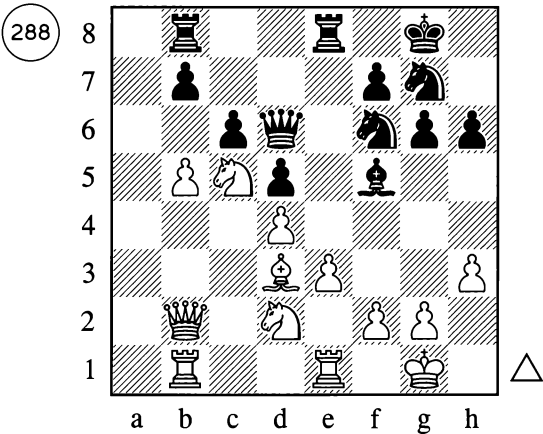
Zarubitski – Nikitenko, Tashkent 2021



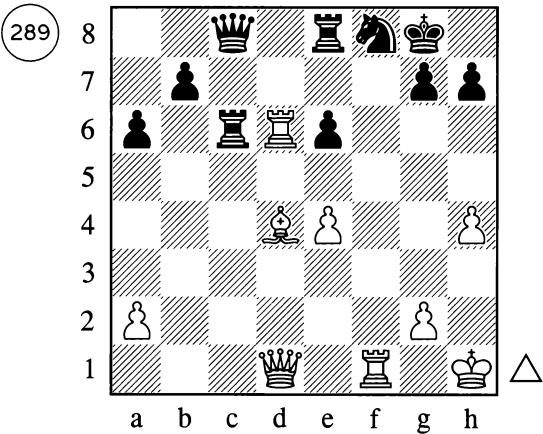
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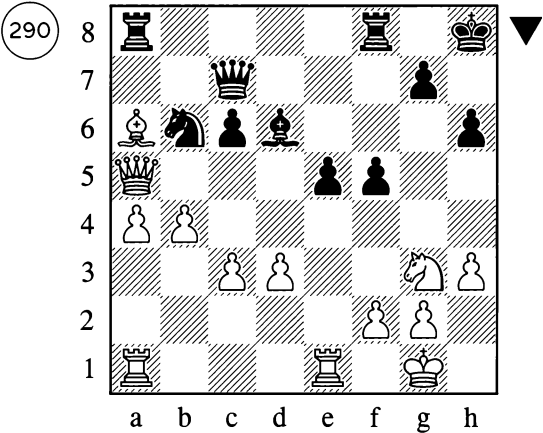
Le Quang Liem – Duda, Internet 2022



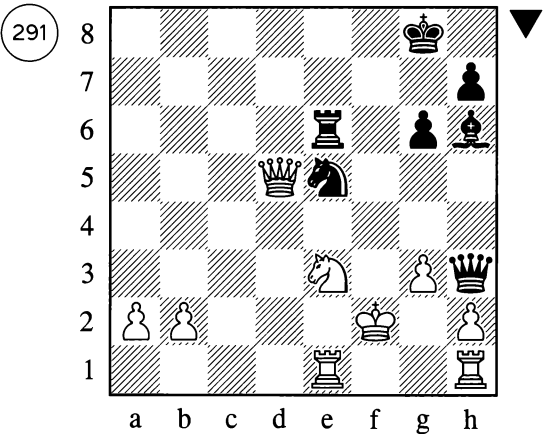
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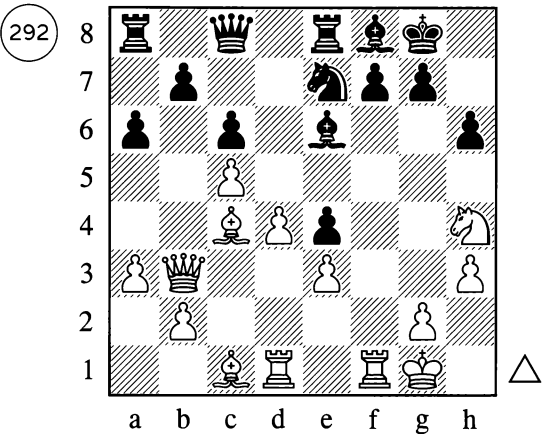
Navara – Niemann, Internet 2022



Shishkov – Haitin, Tallinn 2021

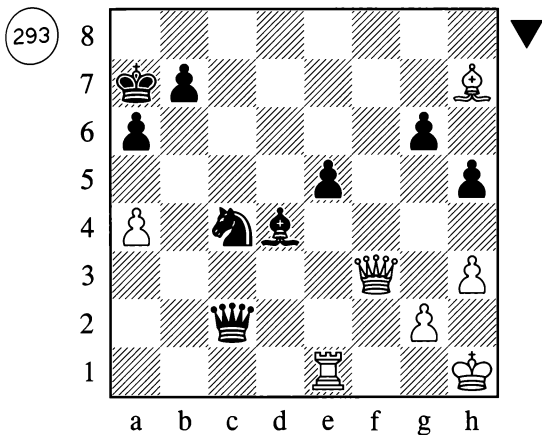


Keymer – Giri, Internet 2022

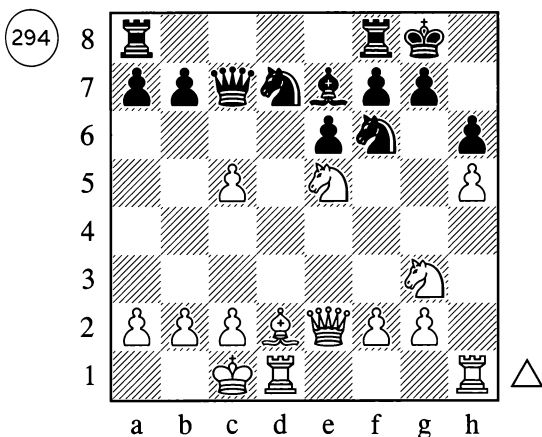




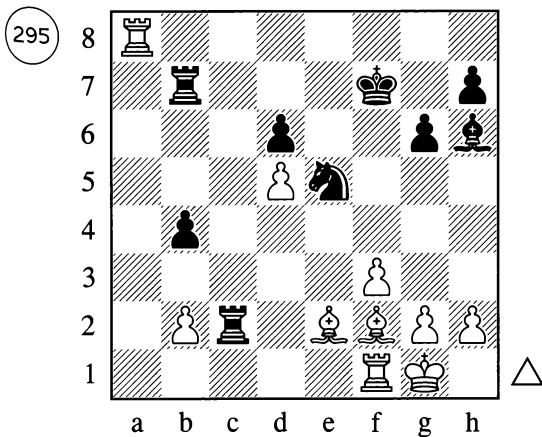
Grebnev – Sargsyan, Chelyabinsk 2022



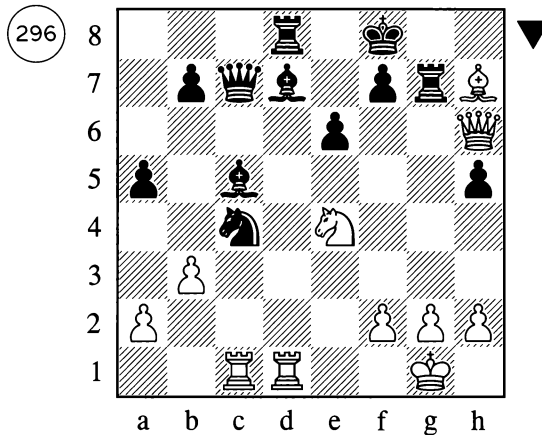
Petrovskiy – Socko, Warsaw 2021



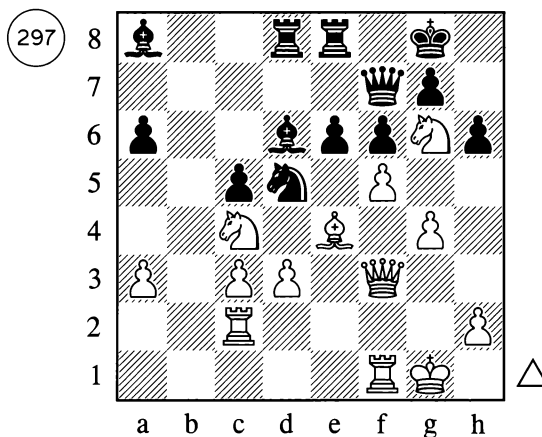
Lubbe – Payyappat, Reinstorf 2022



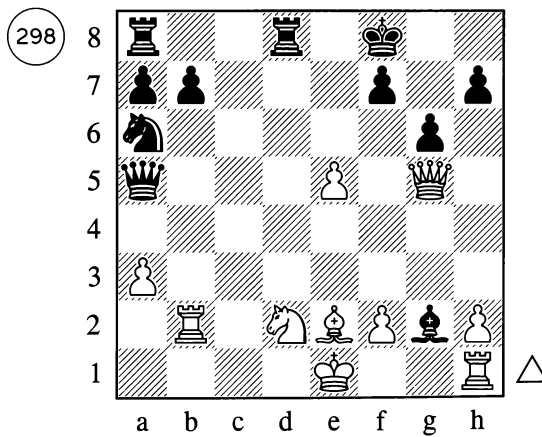
Kramnik – Radjabov, Paris 2021



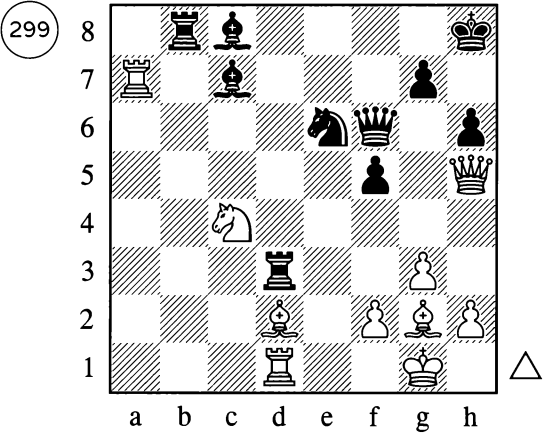
Tari – Kosakowski, Warsaw 2021



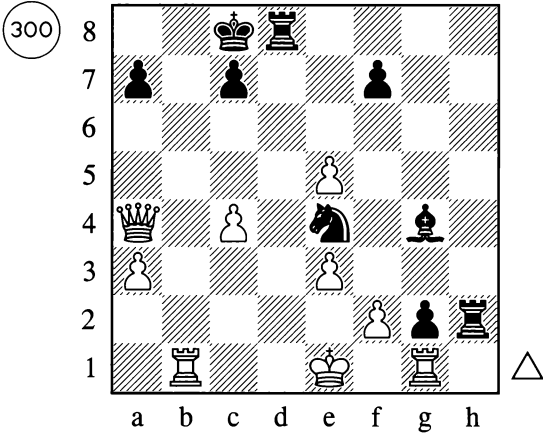
Rosen – Sebag, Gibraltar 2022



Abdusattorov – Kosteniuk, Internet 2022



Bykov – Drygalov, Yaroslavl 2019



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# Chapter 7

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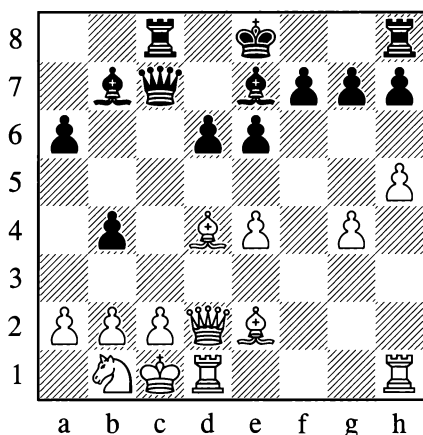
## Solutions



# Solutions to Chapter 1

## 1. David Cork – Graham Morris

West Bromwich 2006



The first one is certainly very easy. There is not much to see here, but Jacob always tells me that he likes to build up my confidence a little before tearing it down!

### 16...♙g5!

The bishop is immune from capture thanks to the mate on c2.

17.♙xg7 was the game continuation, which obviously did not influence the result, or even the length of the game after 17...♚xc2# 0–1. Taking the bishop would have been met with a similar response.

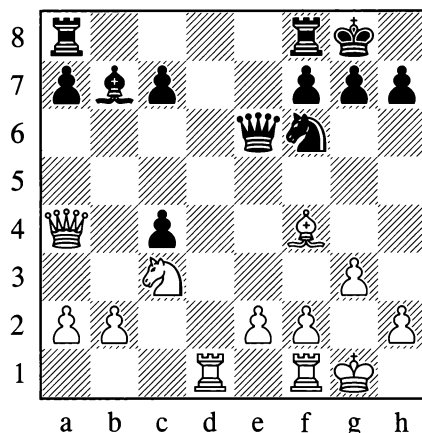
### 17.♚xc2#

Now that the queen has been distracted from c2, Black can deliver a quick mate.

### 17...♚xc2#

## 2. Ignacio Morera Rodriguez – Daniel Campora

Malaga 2021



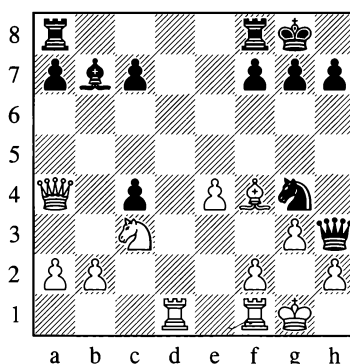
The second one is very straightforward as well. The most direct moves work.

### 15...♚h3!

Black threatens mate on g2.

### 16.f3

16.e4 ♘g4 is like the main line. White is promptly mated.



### 17.♙fe1 ♚xc2† 18.♙f1 ♚xf2#

After the text move, one key rule of calculation is on point. Whenever you have a move that you really want to play, but it seems like your opponent is stopping you from making it, the

first question you should always ask yourself is: *what happens if I do it anyway?* Here, Black would very much like to play ...♖g4 and give mate with ...♜xh2. This seems impossible because the f3-pawn is controlling the g4-square. But what happens if I do it anyway?

### 16...♘g4!

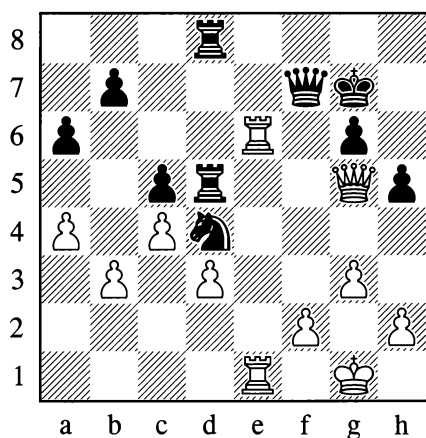
The knight is immune from capture and Black wins.

### 17.fxg4 ♜g2#

0-1

## 3. Jakub Kosakowski – Ahmed Adly

Warsaw (rapid) 2021



### 40.♞xg6†!

The third problem was a little harder than the first two. It was the first one that I actually had to slow down and think a little about. But I solved it fast. The first key tenet of calculation is: *always examine all checks and captures*. Being mindful of this tenet will lead White to a quick victory.

Tempting as it may be to take a loose rook with 40.cxd5?!, always examine all checks and captures! While the move should be examined, all of Black's follow-up checks and captures

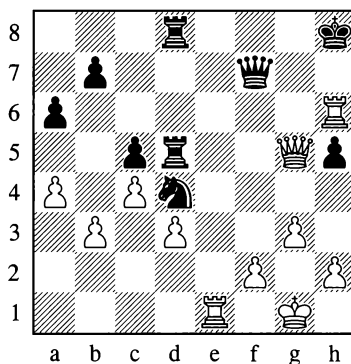
should be examined as well. After 40...♘f3†!, White loses his queen and the game.

### 40...♜xg6

Leaving the enemy rook alive would only make matters worse.

40...♖f8 41.♜h6†! and Black is mated.

40...♖h8 41.♞h6† Black is mated shortly here as well, as if losing a mountain of material was not enough.

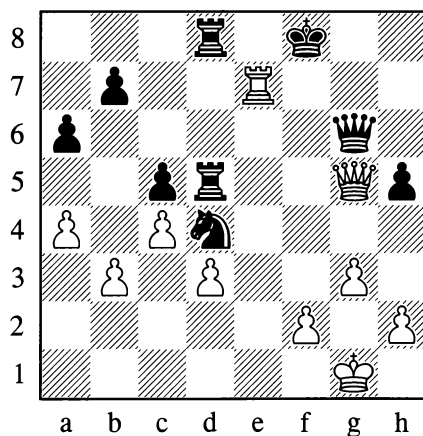


41...♜h7 42.♞xh7† ♖xh7 43.♞e7† ♖h8 44.♜g7#

### 41.♞e7†!

Again, always examine all checks and captures.

### 41...♖f8



**42. ♖xg6!**

Checks and captures...

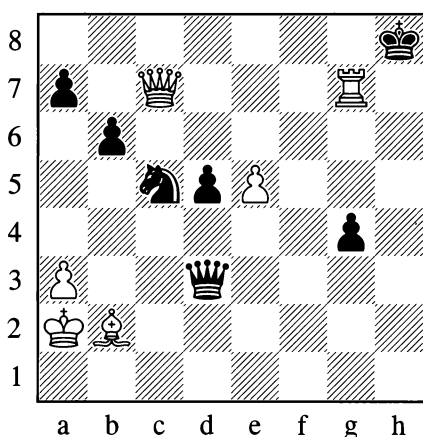
**42... ♕xe7 43. cxd5**

And more checks and captures!

This one was checks and captures all the way through. White is routinely winning with his extra material. He put the game away without much further discussion.

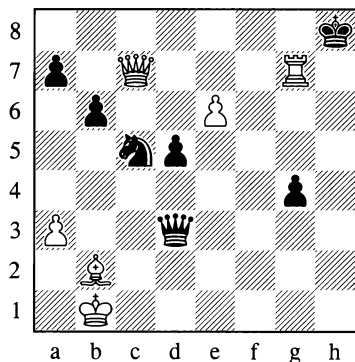
**4. Evgeny Levin – Aleksandra Maltsevskaya**

Chelyabinsk 2022



We had just seen a case of examining all checks and captures. Here we see another one.

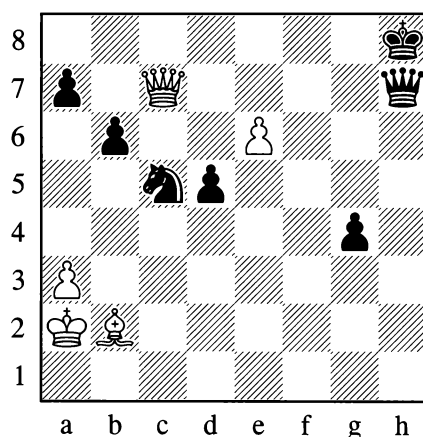
White needs to be direct, since Black is threatening a perpetual check. For example, 43.e6? would squander half a point: 41... ♖b3† 42. ♖b1 ♖d3† White is unable to escape the checks.

**41. ♖h7†!**

It might look wrong at first glance to leave the rook en prise, but when thinking of two key tenets of calculation it makes perfect sense. First, obviously examine all checks and captures. Second, ♖g7-h7† is clearly the move White really would like to make, but it seems as if he cannot because the rook is hanging. But what happens if I do it anyway? Black resigned rather than face the music.

1-0

Let's see how the game would have ended had she continued the game.

**41... ♖xh7 42.e6†!**

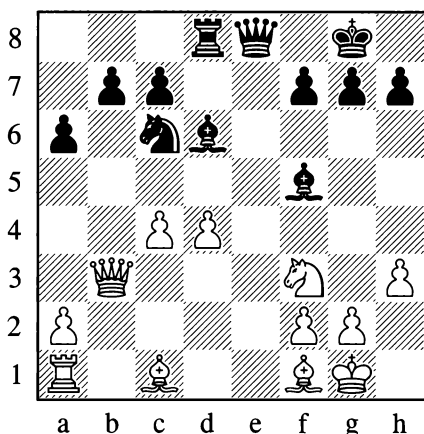
Checks and captures. After:

**42.. ♕g8**

Any queen move to the back rank will be mate.

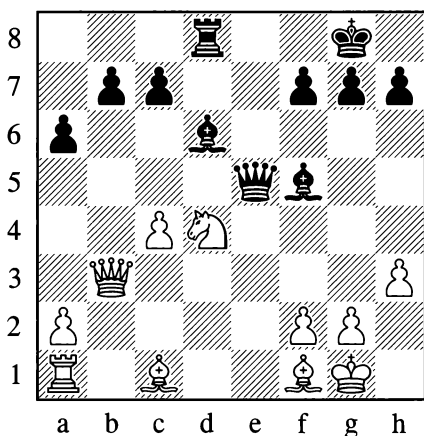
## 5. Mees van Osch – Andreas Heimann

Germany 2022



Black's position looks a little suspect thanks to White's central control. But again, always examine all checks and captures.

15...♖xd4! 16.♗xd4 ♔e5!



It transpires that due to the pin along the d4-a1 diagonal, White is unable to bring the knight back to f3, and as such cannot both prevent the threatened mate and save the d4-knight.

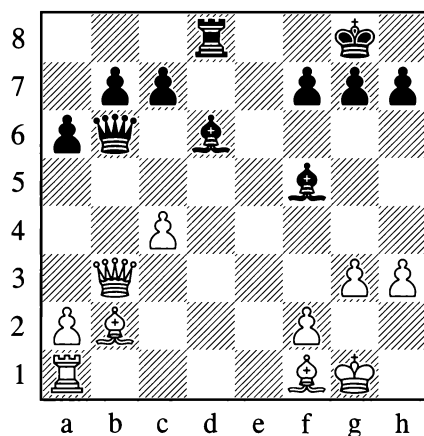
17.g3

17.♗f3 ♔xa1 leaves Black up an exchange and a pawn.

17...♔xd4

Black is a clean pawn up, and White is unable to take on b7, thanks to the loose rook on a1.

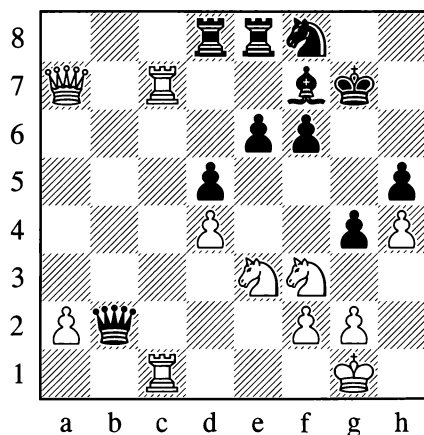
18.♗b2 ♔b6!



Black has other winning moves, but I like this one for its simplicity. No further calculation is needed. Black is a clean pawn up with no weaknesses whatsoever.

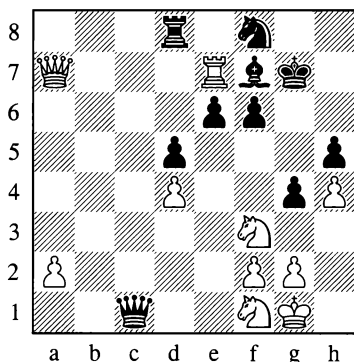
## 6. Felix Blohberger – Johan-Sebastian Christiansen

Warsaw (rapid) 2021



Black is facing some problems along the seventh rank, but he can solve them with a clever resource.

28...♖e7? When comparing this move to the solution, we see that once White takes on e7, the white rook will not hang down the road.  
29.♖xe7! ♜xc1† 30.♘f1



Black is now lucky to have 30...♘d7, with approximate equality. He could have, and did do, so much better.

28...♖d7!

The right rook. Now, Black has two large threats in ...♜xc1† and ...g4xf3. White is unable to prevent both.

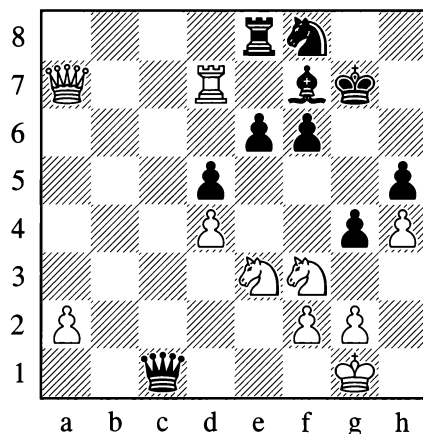
29.♖xd7

Other moves will not solve White's problems either.

29.♘h2 saves the knight but not the rook: 29...♜xc1†! 30.♖xc1 ♖xa7 and Black is winning.

29.♗a5 saves the rook but not the knight: 29...gxf3 and again Black is winning.

29...♜xc1†!

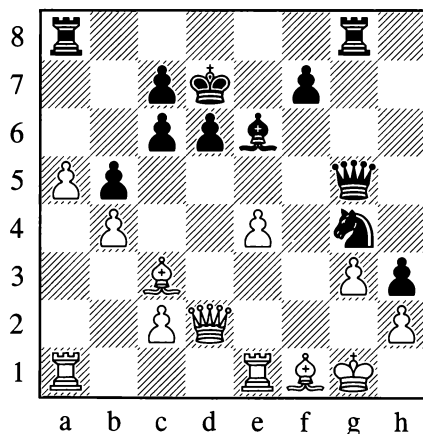


White resigned. After stepping out of check, Black is ready for ...♘d7, with a massive material advantage.

0-1

## 7. Pontus Carlsson – Jose Fernando Cuenca Jimenez

Warsaw (rapid) 2021



Here we see yet another case of examining all checks and captures.

32...♘h2!

It turns out the knight is immune from capture and taking on g5 allows Black a nice intermezzo. Black wins material.



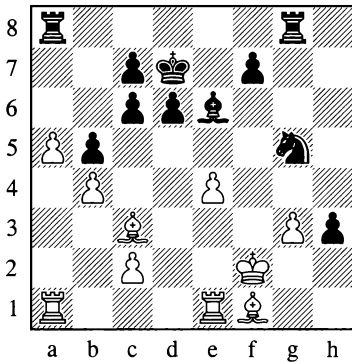
**33. ♖xh2?!**

White makes sure to defend g3, and he will avoid getting mated. But sadly, this drags the queen away from the defense of the c3-bishop.

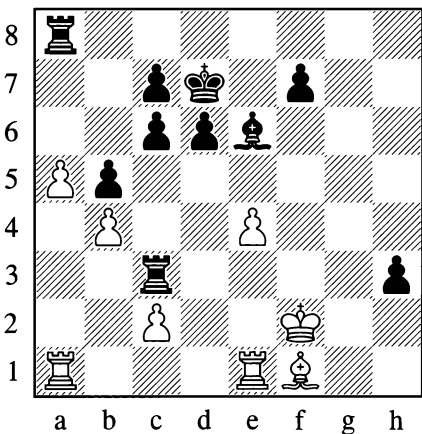
Taking with the king on h2 with 33. ♕xh2 leaves the c3-bishop defended, but after 33... ♖xg3†! 34. ♕h1 ♖g1, White is mated.

It is very important for Black not to take the queen back right away after 33. ♖xg5, as then the knight would hang: 33... ♖xg5? 34. ♕xh2 and White remains material up.

Black should instead play: 33... ♖f3†! 34. ♕f2 ♖xg5



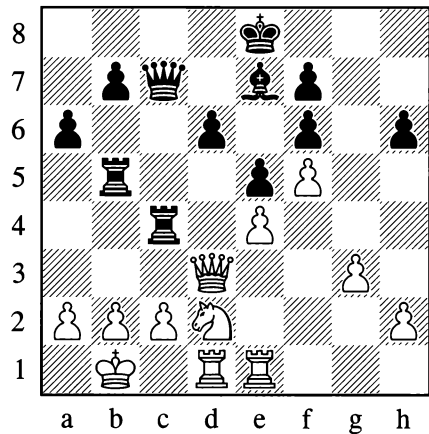
Black is a clean pawn up and has a much better structure. White is done for.

**33... ♖xg3†! 34. ♖xg3 ♖xg3† 35. ♕f2 ♖xc3**

Black is two pawns up and went on to win easily.

**8. Husain Aziz – Kirill Alekseenko**

Warsaw (rapid) 2021



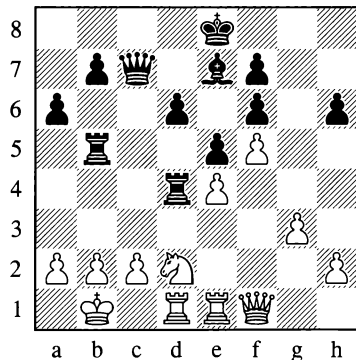
For this one, we finally have an example where a very strong player got it wrong! Of course, the game was played with a rapid time control, so mistakes are understandable.

**22... ♖c3!**

Black takes advantage of the pin on the b-file to kick White's queen away.

The game continuation was 22... ♖d4?, which left a lot to be desired. White responded with 23. ♖e3?!, and following 23... d5 24. c3 ♖a4 25. exd5 the game remains messy. Black did go on to win, but for our purposes this is no longer relevant to the exercise at hand.

Stronger was 23. ♖f1!.

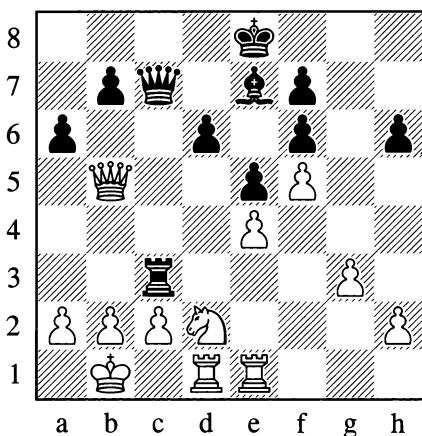


White is ready for c2-c3 next, and the rook on d4 is in trouble. This is because Black will be unable to play ...♖xc3 due to ♖xb5†. For example: 23...d5 24.c3 ♖a4 25.exd5 ♖xd5, and White is much better.

### 23. ♖xb5†

This is the critical move, and the reason I suspect Alekseenko avoided playing ...♖c3 in the first place. Black is winning but must see an important follow-up.

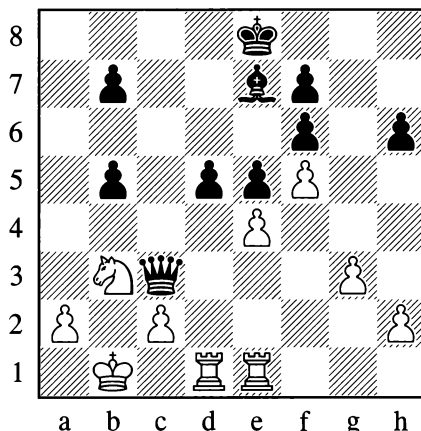
If instead 23.♖f1, Black wins a critical pawn with 23...♖xc2 and White's king is in huge trouble. The game is effectively over.



### 23...axb5 24.bxc3 ♖xc3 25. ♖b3

If White just had a single tempo to play ♖e1-e2 next, things would not be too clear. He could expel the queen with ♖d1-d3 to follow, and his position would be void of any major weaknesses. It would still be bad, but not totally over. However, Black is one move too fast.

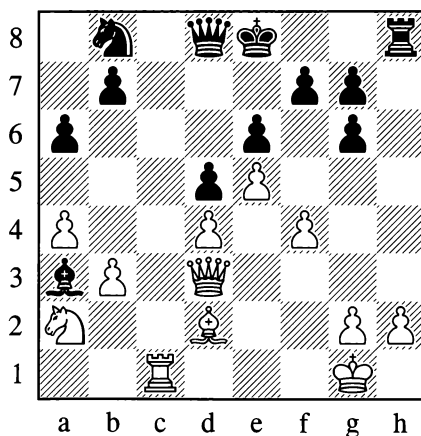
### 25...d5!



Since White's rook is still on e1, he is unable to remove Black's queen from c3 with ♖d1-d3. As such, Black's queen gets to stay put for just long enough for the bishop to make it to a3, and White is mated.

## 9. Manish Anto Cristiano – Chitlange Sakshi

Sitges 2021

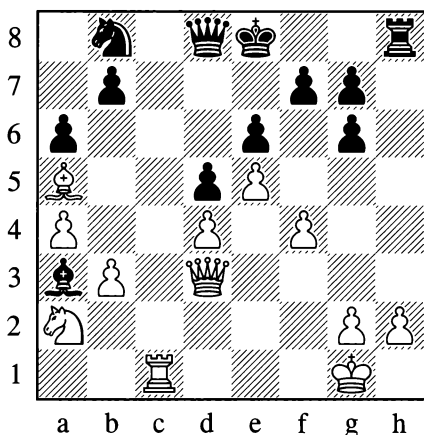


Here we have another example where a strong player did not see the key move, and this time in a classical game! The point here is all about candidate moves.

### 22. ♙a5!!

I suspect that Manish missed the move completely. Once you see it, there is not much to calculate.

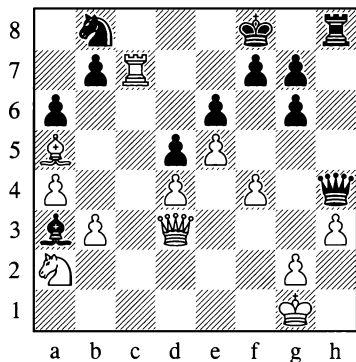
The game continuation was 22.♖c2. White missed his chance to strike and in fact, after 22...♙e7, Black is a little better! The game ended in a prompt repetition with White missing ♙c3-a5 once more a move pair later: 23.♖c1 ♙a3 24.♖c2 (24.♙a5! was again working) 24...♙e7 25.♖c1 ½-½



### 22...♖xa5

Trying to keep c8 secure with 22...♖d7 does not help. After 23.♖c7, Black's position collapses.

If White had seen 22.♙a5, I guess the move he would have been most scared of is probably 22...♖h4. But it is all over after a couple of checks: 23.♖c8†! ♙e7 24.♖c7†! White has moved his rook off the hanging c1-square with a gain of tempo. 24...♙f8 and since the rook is no longer hanging, White can simply stop Black's threat to take on h2 with 25.h3!.

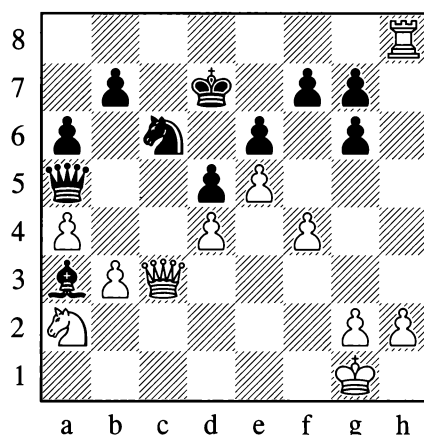


Black is crushed. The rook on c7 will destroy his position.

### 23.♖c8† ♙d7 24.♖xh8 ♙c6

Luckily for White, 24...♖e1† is not mate due to 25.♖f1!.

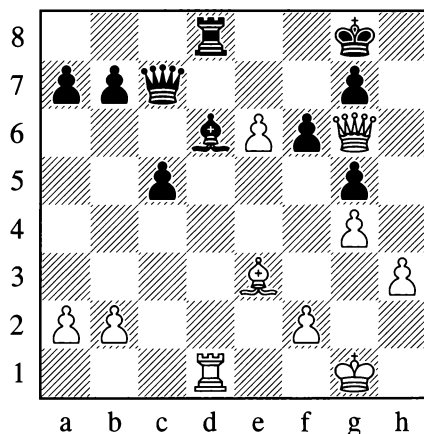
### 25.♖c3!



White is up a clean exchange. That is the end of the story.

## 10. Jan-Krzysztof Duda – Robert Hovhannisyan

Warsaw (rapid) 2021



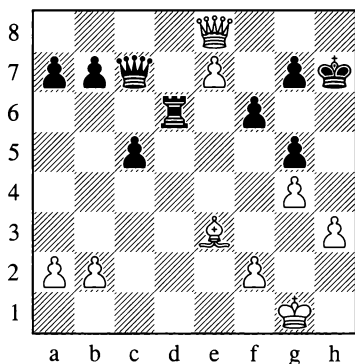
If I do not sound like a broken record yet, I certainly will by the time the book is over. Always examine all checks and captures!

### 28. ♖xd6!

White sacrifices an exchange. It turns out that Black has no good way to take the rook without allowing the e-pawn through. He must relinquish the defense of either e8 or f7.

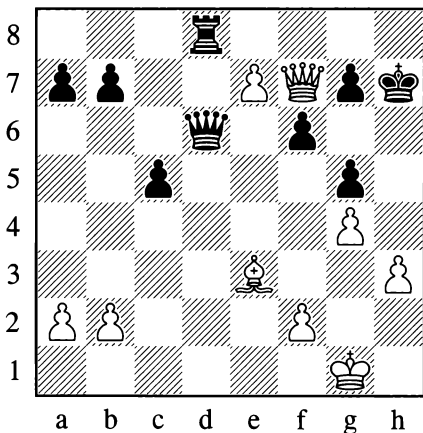
### 28... ♖xd6

28... ♖xd6 keeps f7 protected, but White has another check: 29. ♖e8†! ♔h7 30. e7



White is ready for ♖h5† with e7-e8=♖ to follow, and there is not a thing Black can do about it.

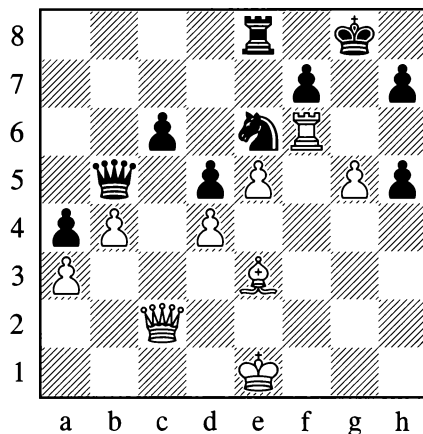
### 29. ♖f7† ♔h7 30. e7



The e-pawn will cost Black his rook. White went on to win easily with his extra piece.

## 11. Jan Krejci – Petr Hollan

Czech Republic 2021



When it comes to tactics, examining all checks and captures is nearly always a relevant factor. White has a tempting capture that wins easily once you see it.

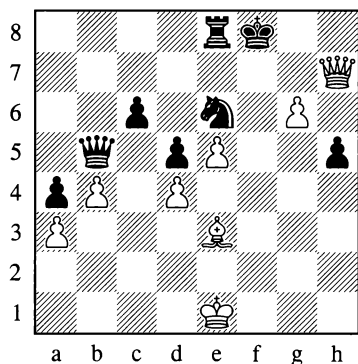
61. ♖h6? was the game continuation. After 61... ♖f8 62. ♖xc6 ♖e6! 63. ♖f2 h4, the position remained unclear. White eventually won anyway after mutual errors, but he missed a chance to end the game right here.

### 61. ♖xf7! ♖xf7 62. ♖xh7†!

This is easy enough, but then it gets a little tricky.

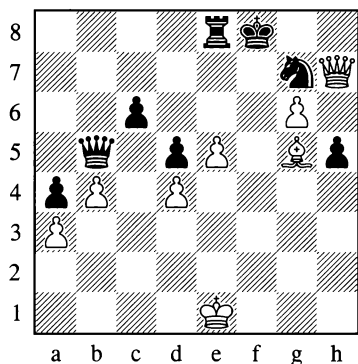
### 62... ♖g7

After 62... ♖f8, White doesn't have any more fruitful checks or captures, but a simple quiet move is quite enough to finish the game: 63. g6! White is threatening to give mate on both f7 and h6.



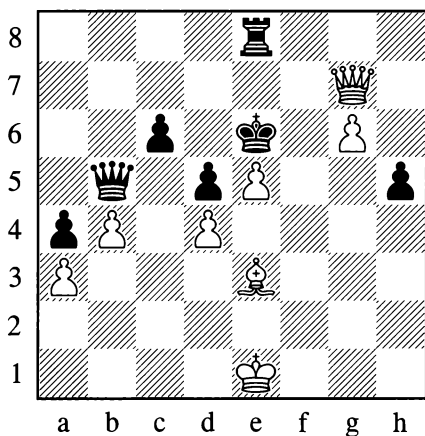
63. g6† ♔e6

After 63...♔f8 anything wins, but the simplest is the rather sadistic 64. ♕g5!.



White takes away the escape square and there is nothing Black can do about the mate on h8.

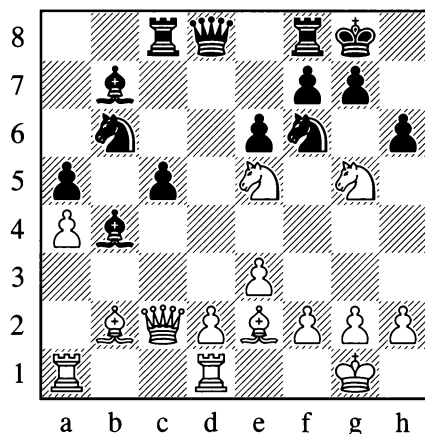
64. ♕xg7!



Black is hard pressed to stop the devastating threat of ♕f7#. My computer suggests that White has an advantage of +20!

## 12. Mohammad Muradli – Matic Nareks

Terme Catez 2022



Here we have another slightly tricky one. White would love to play ♕b2xf6, removing the defender of the mate threat on h7. He should look for a way to clear his e5-knight off the long diagonal.

17. ♖c6!

Due to the threat of ♕b2xf6, Black is unable to capture the knight.

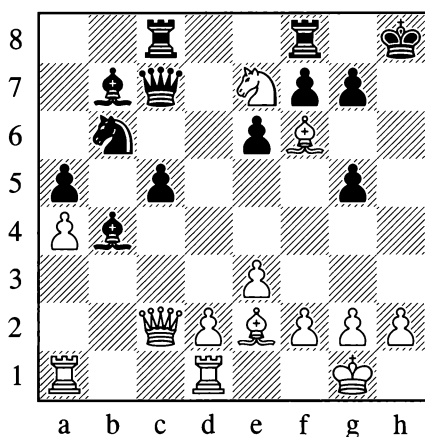
17. ♖exf7? is tempting but wrong, as now Black gets an escape square for his king on f8. Following 17...♜xf7 18. ♕xf6 ♜xf6 19. ♜h7†, the key difference between this line and the correct one is apparent; this is not mate! With 19...♔f8, Black escapes with his extra material.

17... ♜c7

17...♜xc6 is not playable due to 18. ♕xf6!. Black is unable to stop the twin threats of ♕f6xd8 and ♜c2-h7#, so he will lose his queen and the game.

**18. ♖xf6**

The alternative move order starting with 18. ♖e7† is also fine for White.

**18...hxf5 19. ♖e7† ♔h8****20. ♖xc8!**

The simplest and easiest. White grabs the loose rook and wins with his extra material.

20. ♖b2!? was played, but after 20...e5 the position is a little messier.

It is important to note that after:

**20...gxf6**

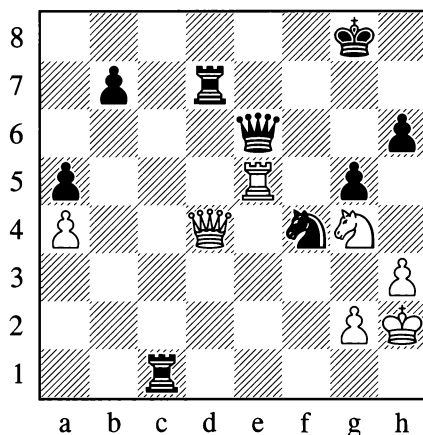
The knight on c8 is not trapped and can be traded for its black counterpart on b6.

**21. ♖xb6**

White is a clean exchange up and is winning.

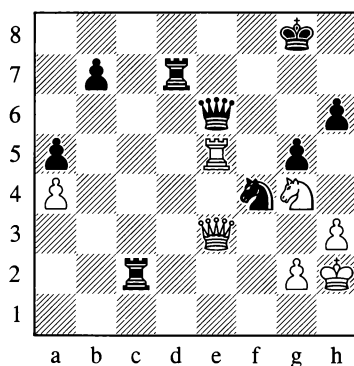
### 13. Radoslaw Wojtaszek – Matthias Bluebaum

Warsaw (rapid) 2021



Once again, we have an example of examining all checks and captures. This game was played under a rapid time control, so it is understandable that Wojtaszek missed the win.

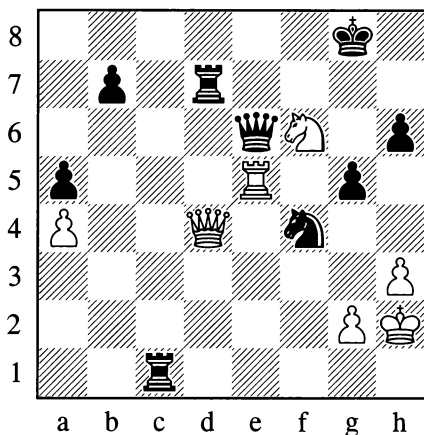
White is a rook down and has no time for slow moves. In the game he chose 47. ♖e3?!. Black is now winning after any number of strong moves, but I like the one Bluebaum chose for its simplicity. 47... ♖c2!



Black's only issue is that his king is a little open, and so giving up his extra rook to transpose to an endgame three pawns up is a perfectly good way to bring in the full point. 48. ♖xe6 ♖xg2† 49. ♔h1 ♖d1† 50. ♖e1 ♖xe1† 51. ♖e1 ♖g3 and Bluebaum won easily.

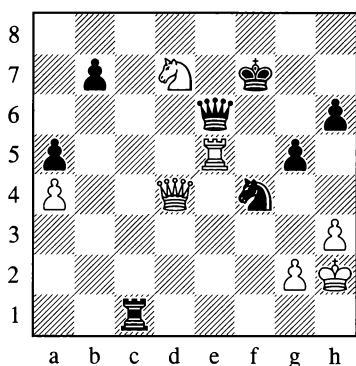
## 47. ♖f6†!

This clever check wins a rook, as Black is unable to take the knight.



## 47... ♙xf6

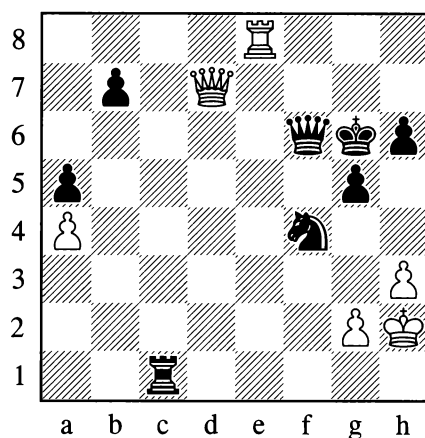
47... ♙f7 48. ♖xd7!



White is not a rook down anymore and Black is facing a vicious attack. White should be winning, although there is still some more work to do.

## 48. ♖e8†! ♙f7 49. ♙xd7† ♙g6

I suspect Wojtaszek saw the position to here and thought he was out of steam, since he cannot play 50. ♖e6. But, when we examine all checks and captures, we see that White can give mate.



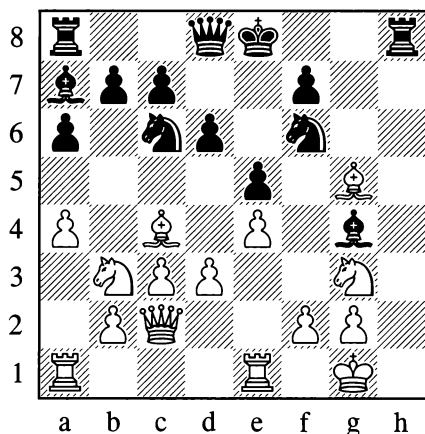
## 50. ♖g8†!

Black's h6-pawn is on just the wrong square. Had it been on h7, h5, h4 or even simply off the board, he would win routinely with 50... ♙h6. As is, his king has nowhere to go, and he is mated.

## 50... ♙h5 51. ♖g4#

## 14. Vladislav Nevednichy – Sanan Sjugirov

Warsaw (rapid) 2021



Black is a pawn down and must hope that his kingside initiative will become decisive. An invisible move turns out to be very powerful. When considering how to include all the pieces in the attack, we realize that the most

aggressive way Black can bring his forces to the kingside would be to move the knight on f6. This proves impossible since it would leave his queen en prise. But then we ask that same question: *what happens if I do it anyway?*

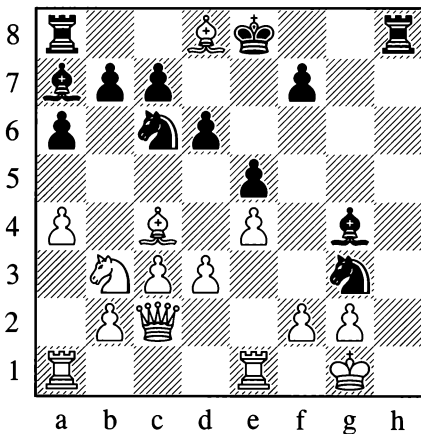
### 16...♖h5!

A bolt from the blue. This looks like it hangs the queen but should White take it, he is immediately mated.

### 17.♙xd8

17.♙e3 was played in the game, and I suppose it is the best move to try to keep the game going. But the attack is obviously decisive after 17...♞h4.

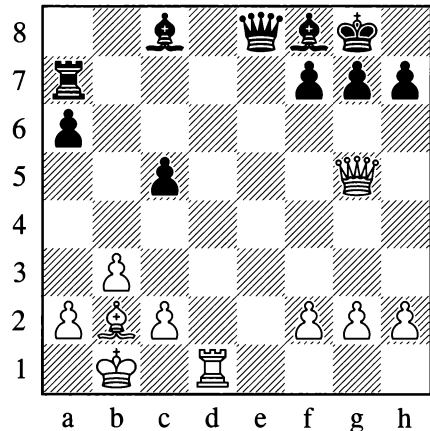
### 17...♞xg3



White cannot do a thing about the mate on h1.

## 15. Vince Angelo Medina – Jeremy Marticio

Internet 2021

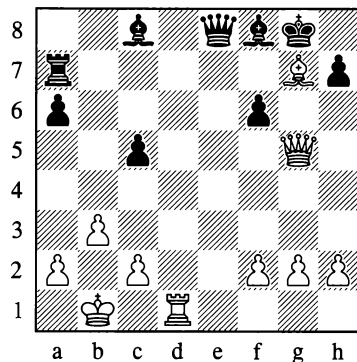


This problem introduces us to another key tenet of calculation from the introduction: always be careful about automatic moves! White has a move that looks obvious, but it just blunders the game away.

By far the most natural move is 23.♙xg7?. White grabs a pawn in front of the king, the bishop is immune from capture, and it looks like he is ready to move the bishop away next move to give a discovered mate.

Indeed, this worked well in the game. Black played the automatic 23...♙xg7? (did you make the same mistake?), after which 24.♞d8 was decisive.

However, Black can improve with 23...f6!.





Black brings his queen to g6 next. Suddenly, his king is completely safe.

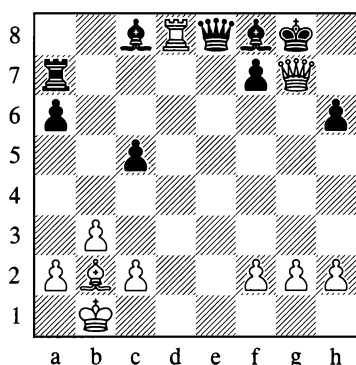
### 23. ♖d8!

White attacks the queen and the bishop, and if the queen moves off the back rank, ♜g5xg7 will be mate.

### 23... ♛e1†

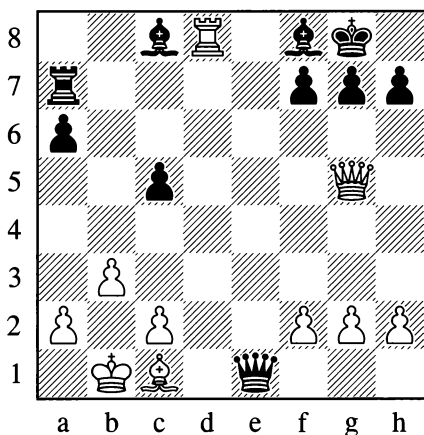
This check complicates matters a little.

After 23...h6, White has an aesthetically pleasing solution: 24. ♜xg7†!



This is the most sadistic. Simply taking on e8 and c8, with a healthy pawn up and dominating position, was certainly good enough as well. 24... ♙xg7 25. ♖xe8†, White takes on c8 next with two clean pawns up.

### 24. ♙c1!

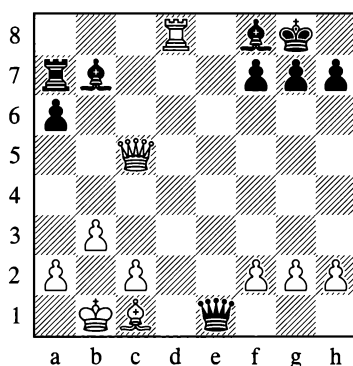


The point is revealed. Black is facing too many threats. His bishop on c8 is hanging and ♜g5xc5 is in the air as well.

### 24... ♖c7

This would be the best attempt to prevent both threats, but now the rook lands on an unfortunate square.

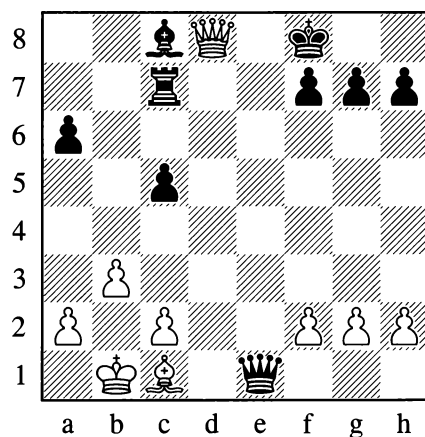
24... ♙b7 does not stop White's secondary threat. 25. ♜xc5



The fork on a7 and f8 ends the game.

Similarly, 24... ♙d7 is also met by 25. ♜xc5. White again wins by forking the rook and the f8-bishop.

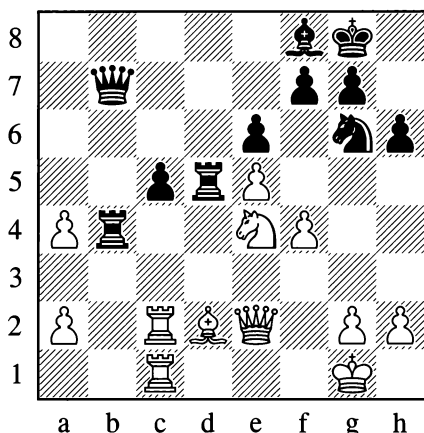
### 25. ♖xf8†! ♙xf8 26. ♜d8†



White picks up the loose rook on c7, and it's all over.

## 16. Hans Stefansson – Zala Urh

Terme Catez 2022



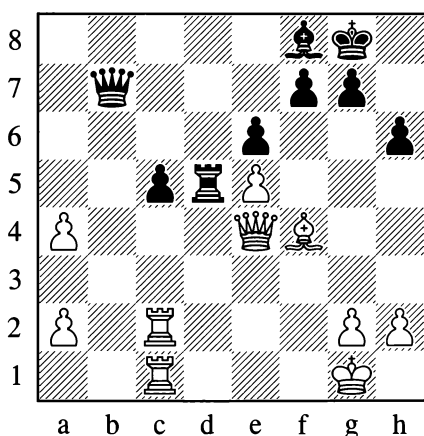
Another case of examining all checks and captures. Simple, but not necessarily easy!

Black missed her chance with 31...♖bd4?, which was met by 32.♘c3. White was fine and even went on to win.

**31...♘xf4!!**

Black lures the bishop off the d-file to gain access to the d1-square.

**32.♙xf4 ♖xe4! 33.♙xe4**



Now we see why it was so important to kick the bishop off d2.

**33...♖d1†!**

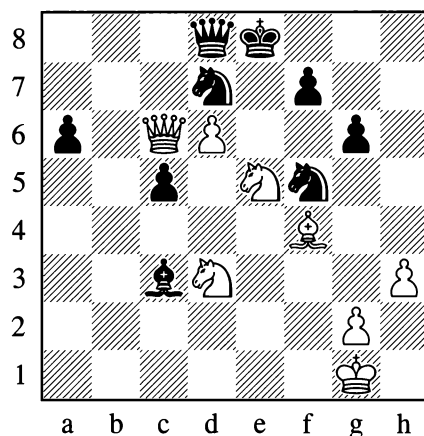
Checks and captures all the way through.

**34.♖xd1 ♜xe4**

Black wins.

## 17. Alexander Grischuk – Ivan Cheparinov

Warsaw (rapid) 2021



I suspect this game was affected by massive time trouble, as Grischuk missed a very easy win by removing the guard:

**43.♘h2?**

Grischuk's move was not dreadful, and Black is still in horrible shape. But if he finds a couple of tough moves, he can continue the game.

**43...♙xe5!**

43...♘d4? was Cheparinov's choice in the game. Considering both players were missing easy wins I would expect them to find every time if they had thirty seconds to think, I suspect they were both playing on the increment. 44.♙e4! and White won.

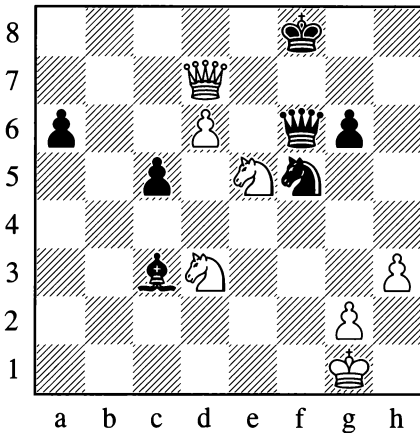
**44.♘xe5 ♘d4**

Black is still struggling, but he may save the game yet.

**43.♙g5!**

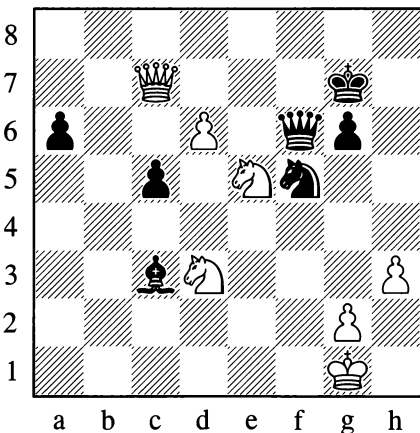
Nice and simple. White removes the guard of the d7-knight.

43...f6 44.♙xf6! ♚xf6 45.♚xd7† ♔f8



I suspect Grischuk found his way here and then got stuck and did not see a direct win. With the clocks ticking down, he just played 43.♔h2 to make a move. If we allow ourselves a little more time to solve the position than the players had, it is not too hard. Checks and captures.

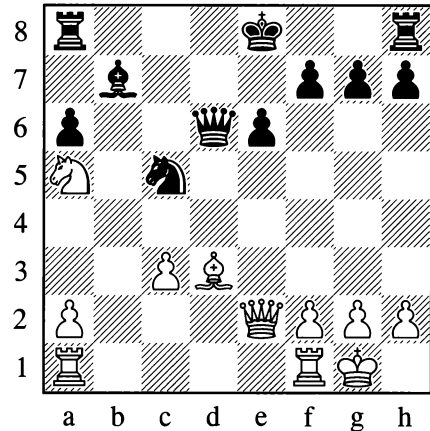
46.♚c8†! ♔g7 47.♚c7†!



Black's king cannot come to h6 on pain of a fork on g4, and once he retreats to the back rank, d6-d7 will lead to the pawn's promotion.

## 18. Falko Bindrich – Luca Shytaj

Germany 2019



The game continuation was 19.♙c2. Following 19...♚c7 20.♘xb7 ♘xb7, White was a little better and eventually won. He had a much stronger option.

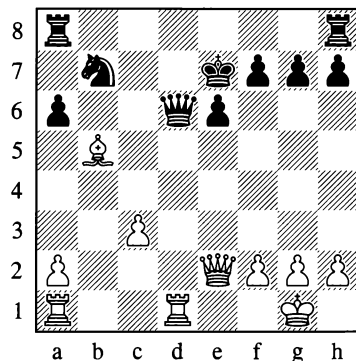
19.♙b5†!

This puzzle struck me as relatively straightforward. It is surprising that White missed it in a classical game.

19...♔f8

Black is not thrilled about moving his king, but what choice did he have?

19...♔e7 is an even worse version of the main line. 20.♘xb7 ♘xb7 21.♙fd1



White invades decisively on d7 next.

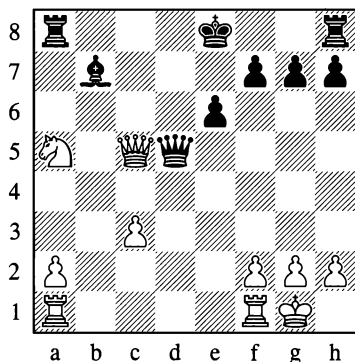
19...axb5

This was probably the move White misevaluated.

20.♖xb5† ♕d7

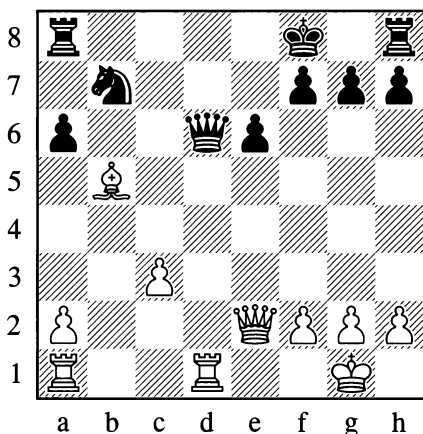
After 20...♗e7 21.♘xb7 ♘xb7 22.♖xb7†, Black will be unable to deal with White's two passed pawns on the queenside.

21.♖xc5 ♖d5



It looks like Black is almost surviving. But examine all checks and captures! 22.♘xb7!, and White wins with his two passed pawns.

20.♘xb7 ♘xb7 21.♗fd1



Black's inability to castle, the weak d7-square and the hanging pawn on a6 are too much for him to handle.

21...♖b6

21...♖c7 is met by 22.♗xa6, and White's queenside pawns will be decisive.

22.♖f3!

The strongest move, although others are good enough.

22...♖xb5

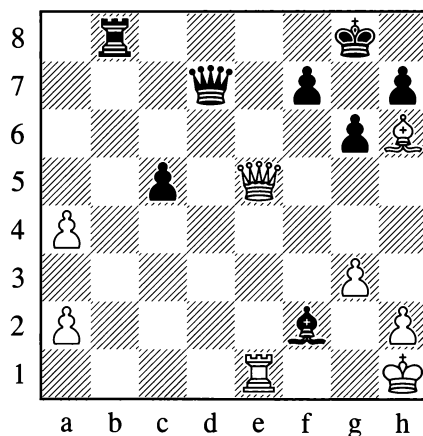
White is also winning after 22...axb5, with a double attack: 23.♗d7

23.♗ab1

It is time for Black to resign, as White regains his piece with deadly activity.

### 19. Sergey Karjakin – Johan-Sebastien Christiansen

Warsaw (rapid) 2021

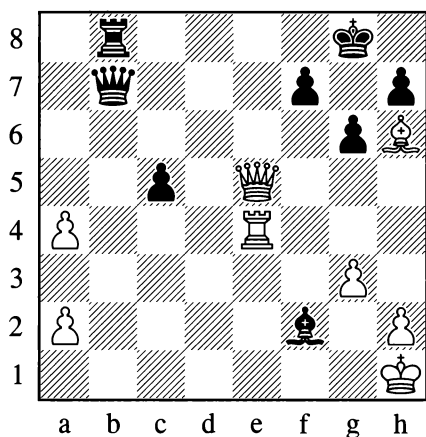


I must confess that this was the first puzzle I got wrong!

33...♖b7†

Black's first move is natural enough. But after:

34.♗e4

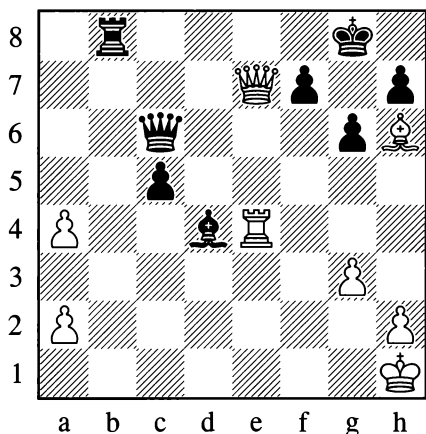


I wanted to force a draw and missed the winning move. If Black covers the g7-square with 34...f5?, White is able to force a draw with: 35.♖e6† ♔h8 36.♖f6† ♔g8 37.♖e6† ♔h8

### 34...♔d4!

Black takes advantage of the pinned rook. White is unable to deliver mate on e8.

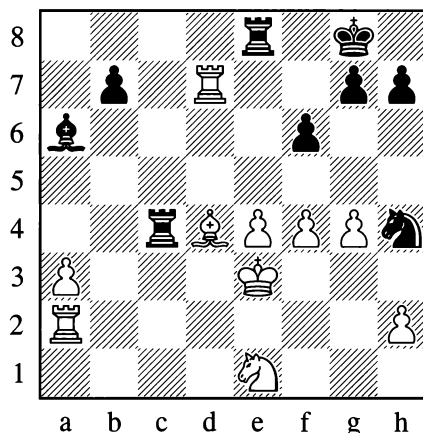
### 35.♖e7 ♖c6!



White is helpless to prevent ...♔f6 from coming next move. Surprisingly, he is losing an entire rook here!

## 20. Martin Ahn – Jonny Hector

Germany 2019



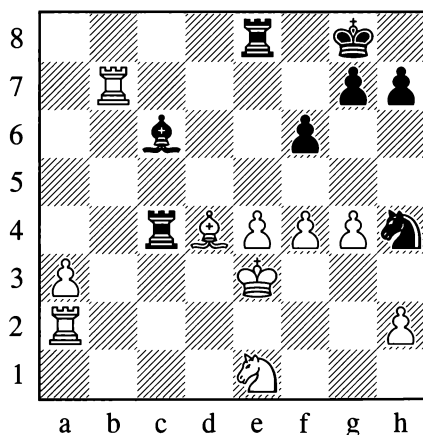
### 34...♔b5!

This is a hard move to consider since it hangs the pawn on b7, but once you force yourself to include it as a candidate move, the details are easy.

### 35.♖xb7

35.♖d6 f5! is the way now that the pawn on g7 is no longer attacked twice, and is similarly hopeless for White.

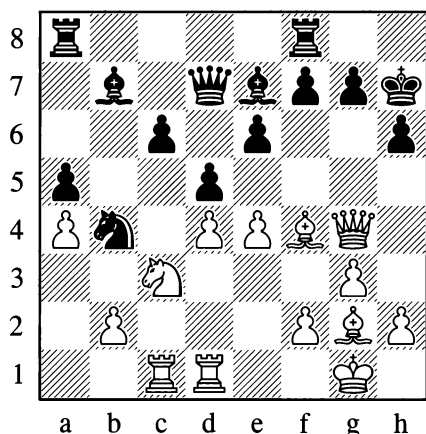
### 35...♔c6



...♖xe4† is on the way and Black has a decisive advantage.

## 21. Enrico Kraemer – Felix Levin

Germany 2019



Always examine all checks and captures. This is the kind of thing I used to be poor at before I started working with Jacob.

18.exd5 cxd5 was played. White is a bit better and eventually won. But he really missed a chance.

### 18. ♖xd5! f5

It is reasonable to imagine that this is what dissuaded White from taking with the knight on d5. But keep calculating and it all works out.

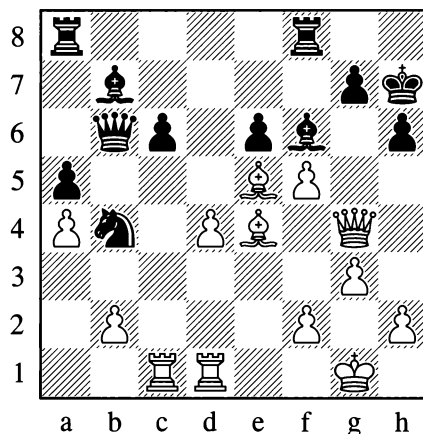
Black can resign immediately after 18...cxd5 19. ♖c7.

### 19. ♖b6! ♔d8 20. exf5! ♖xb6

20...exf5 also loses, as after 21. ♖e2, White hits the e7-bishop and remains ahead on material.

Now everything wins but bringing all the pieces into the attack makes a lot of sense.

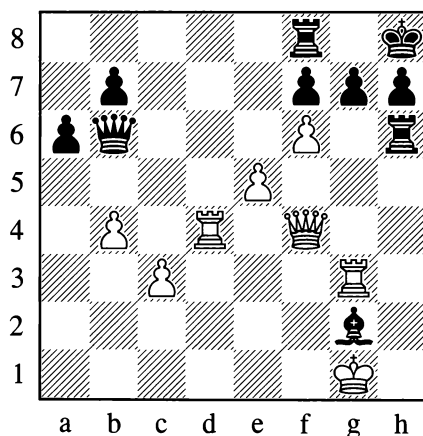
### 21. ♕e5! ♕f6 22. ♕e4!



Black will not stop the queen from reaching h7 and should be mated in short order.

## 22. Pavel Ponkratov – Maxime Vachier-Lagrave

Warsaw (rapid) 2021



This defensive tactic is not too hard, but if Maxime Vachier-Lagrave can miss it, anyone can! White is threatening to take on g7. Black must force himself to consider candidate moves.

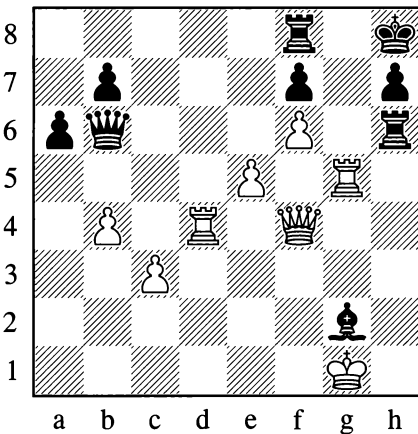
### 36...g5!

Black stops the biggest threat with a gain of tempo. Now he will have time to save his bishop.

36...♖g6? as played is a natural move but is much weaker. Following 37.♞xg6 fxg6 38.♕xg2, White is more or less okay and he eventually made a draw.

### 37.♞xg5

37.♞xg5 loses to 37...♖g6.



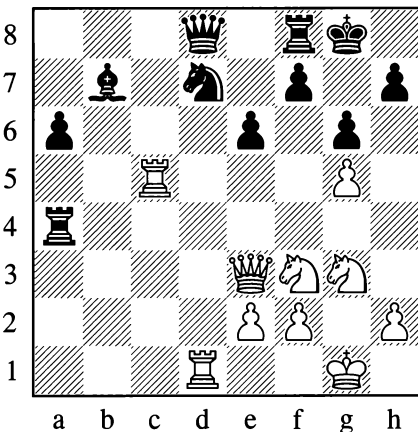
### 37...♕d5

Black has everything under control and should remain a piece ahead.

An alternative winning move was 37...♕c6.

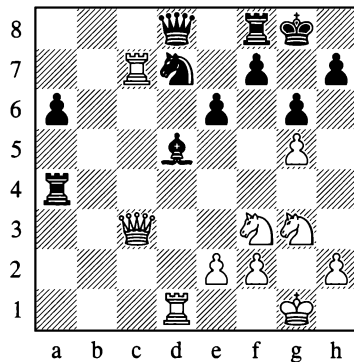
## 23. Vladimir Malakhov – Zoltan Almasi

Germany 2020



In this position, the most obvious and straightforward moves turn out to be strong.

The game continuation, 27.♞c3?, looks promising, but Black has a strong defensive resource in 27...♕d5 28.♞c7.



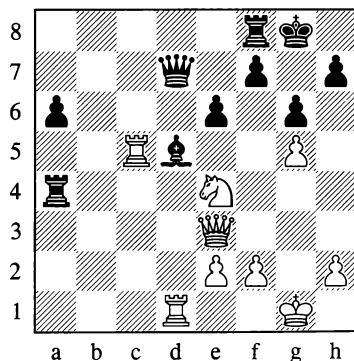
It looks like e2-e4 is coming next when Black is in massive trouble. But after 28...♞a3! 29.♞c1 ♞a1!, White's queen is unable to avoid annoying attacks. Black is fine.

White had a second tempting continuation. He should find it by spotting Black's key defensive resource above.

### 27.♞e5! ♞xc5

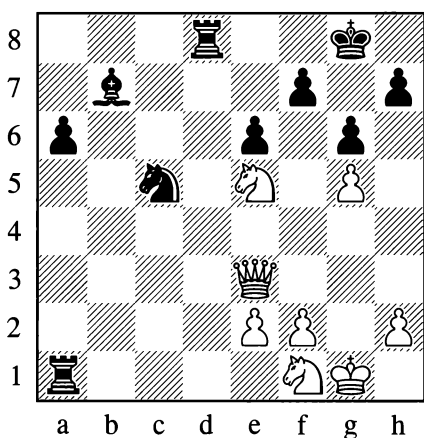
This move may have been what Almasi was worried about. Indeed, although he is winning, White does need to be careful.

27...♕d5? loses routinely to: 28.♞xd7! ♞xd7 29.♞e4!



Well spotted. If Black tries to prevent the knight coming to f6 with 29...♖xe4, White has 30.♗xe4. Due to the pin on the d-file, White remains an exchange ahead.

**28.♖xd8 ♖a1† 29.♘f1 ♖xd8**

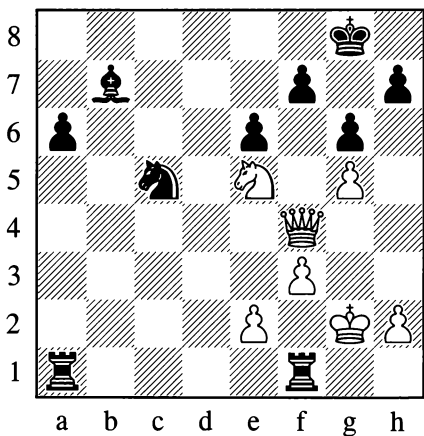


This looks scary, as ...♖xf1†, followed by mate, is a huge threat. White has only one winning move.

**30.f3! ♖dd1**

30...♘d7 does not help Black, as after 31.♗d4!, White wins a lot of material.

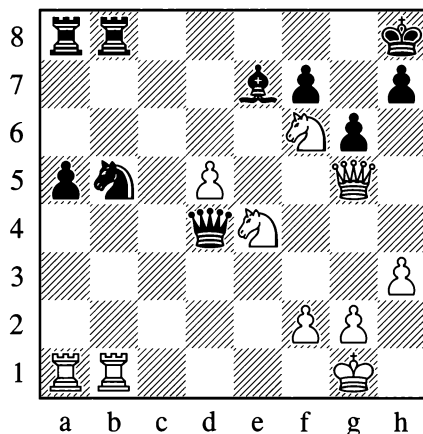
**31.♗f4! ♖xf1† 32.♔g2**



Black's lead in material does not matter. He will be mated.

## 24. Petr Walek – Ondrej Nytra

Czech Republic 2022



White played 35.♖d1, and the position was equal after 35...♗xe4 36.♘xe4 ♔xg5 37.♘xg5 ♕g7 (although it took until move 122 for the draw to be agreed!).

**35.♖a4!!**

A simple case of removing the guard. If White can drag the queen away from the f6-square, ♗g5-h6 will be mate in short order.

**35...♗d3**

This is Black's most resilient defense.

As explained above, 35...♗xa4 loses quickly to 36.♗h6.

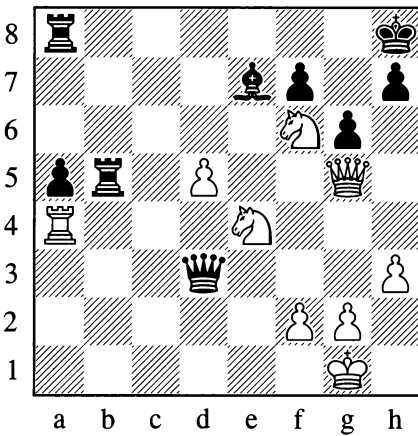
White is now winning in several ways, the simplest being:

**36.♖xb5!**

The rook was going to get taken with check anyway, so White may as well get a piece in exchange for it.

**36...♖xb5**





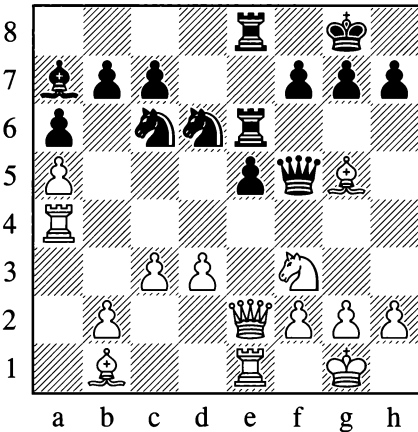
White can continue with the intended maneuver.

**37. ♖h6! ♙xf6 38. ♜xf6 g5 39. ♖e4!**

The final key move. White blocks the b1-h7 diagonal and Black loses.

### 25. Agostan Juhasz – Shreyas Royal

Moscow 2021

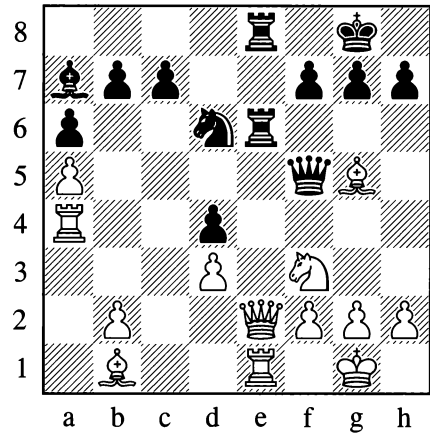


**19... ♜d4!!**

As soon as this enters one's mind as a candidate, there is almost nothing further to see.

Black missed his chance by playing 19... ♖g6. After 20. ♙d2, Black was slightly worse and eventually went on to lose.

**20. cxd4 exd4**



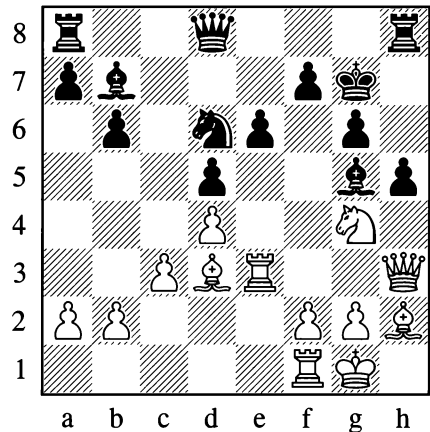
White is facing a deadly skewer down the e-file, and his queen will end up overworked.

**21. ♖d2 ♖xe1† 22. ♜xe1 ♖xg5!**

A final accurate move seals White's fate.

### 26. Jan Werle – Linus Johansson

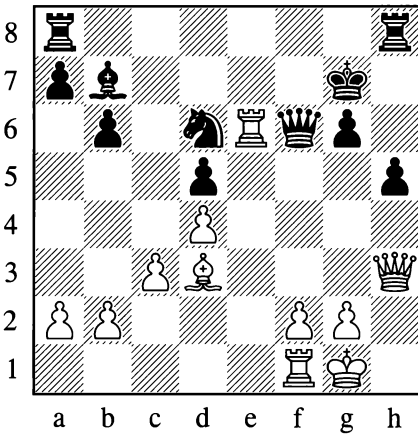
Germany 2021



This is checks and captures all the way through. Still, White did not find the right continuation and played 26. ♜e5?. Black is surely fine here after 26... ♜f5, and he even went on to win.

**26. ♖e5†! f6**

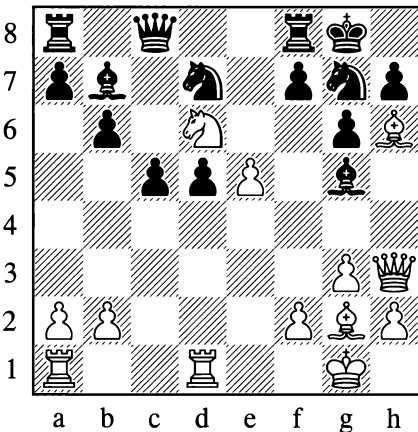
Black's problems are not solved by 26... ♖g8. After 27. f4! White's knight is immune from capture and Black is losing serious material.

**27. ♖xf6! ♙xf6 28. ♙xf6† ♚xf6 29. ♖xe6**

Black's position has collapsed.

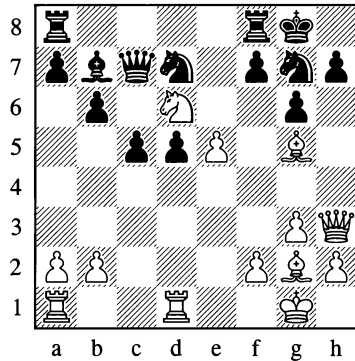
**27. Shant Sargsyan – Alvar Alonso Rosell**

Warsaw (rapid) 2021



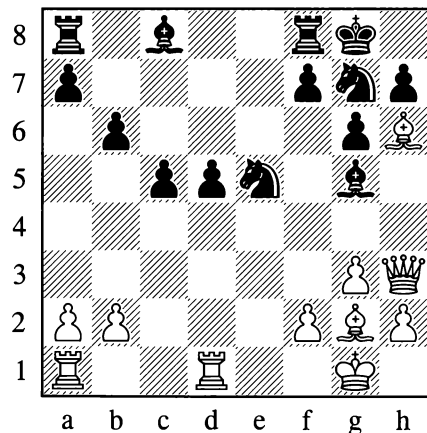
Black is a piece and a pawn up. But it looks like he is about to lose a massive amount of material as all his pieces are hanging.

21... ♚c7 does not work after the obvious 22. ♙xg5.



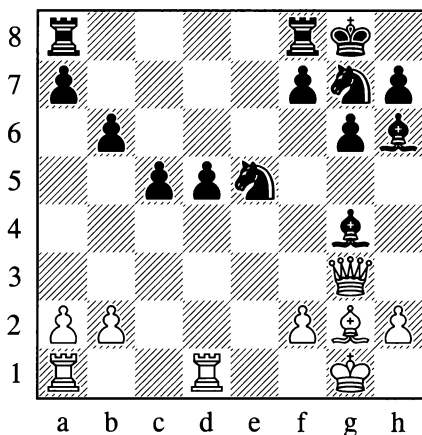
This looks unpleasant for Black. He must find the only move, 22... ♙c6, to not resign immediately. Even then, White is to be preferred, thanks to his impressive activity.

In fact, the threat to the queen turns out to be unimportant. Black can give her up to take even more white pieces.

**21... ♖xe5! 22. ♖xc8 ♙xc8!****23. g4**

This is a necessary evil as the white queen is out of squares, and otherwise White loses the queen back.

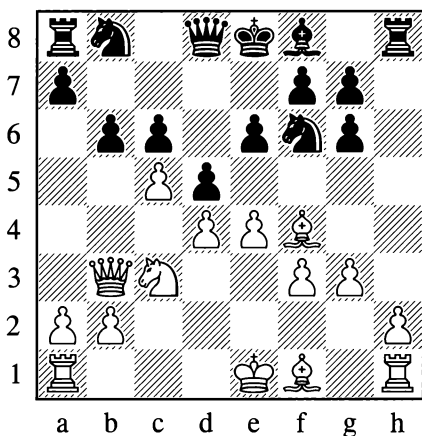
23...♙xg4 24.♔g3 ♙xh6



Black has quite an army for the queen! His advantage proved enough to win the game.

### 28. Ihor Samunenkov – Hovhannes Gabuzyan

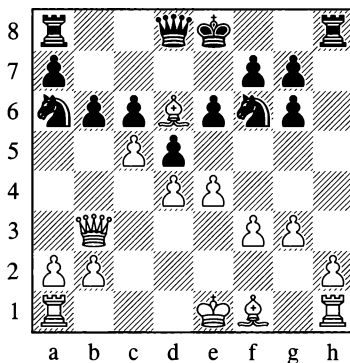
Warsaw (rapid) 2021



One should always look for direct moves. A key principle of calculation that I have often spoken of is the idea that: if you have a move you really want to play, but your opponent is stopping you from making it, the first question you should always ask is: *what happens if I do it anyway?*

13.♘b5!! ♙xb5

Black's position is too ugly to look at after 13...♘a6 14.♘d6† ♙xd6 15.♙xd6.

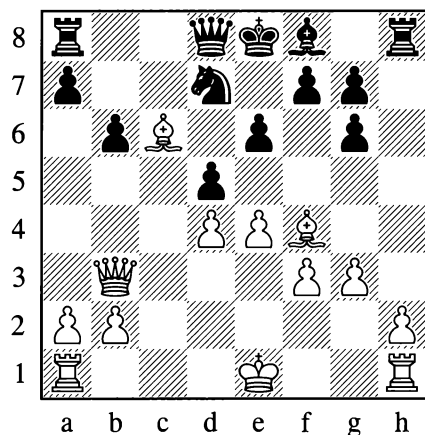


14.♙xb5† ♘fd7

Like the main line is 14...♘bd7 15.c6.

Black loses back his extra piece and is lost, due to his queenside weaknesses and White's active pieces.

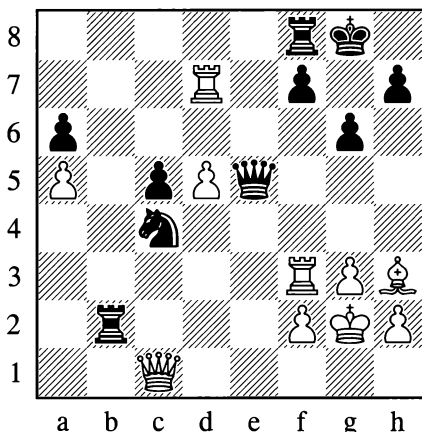
15.c6! ♘xc6 16.♙xc6



White is already winning, as Black loses either the pawn on d5 or the exchange on a8.

## 29. Valentin Buckels – Jens-Uwe Maiwald

Germany 2021



This was the second position I got wrong!

### 29...♞e2!

The alternatives are tempting but flawed.

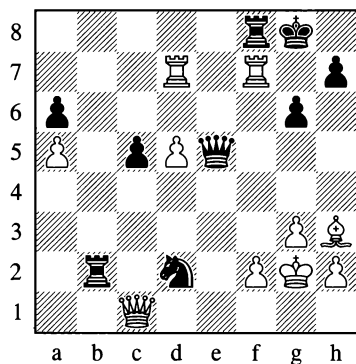
The pin can be broken easily after 29...♞e4? with: 30.♕f5! (30.♞f4!? is also equal) 30...gxf5 31.♞g5† ♖h8 32.♞f6† ♗g8 33.♞g5† ♖h8 White gives perpetual check.

I wanted to play the blunder:

29...♘d2?

The move is extremely attractive, but it gifts a full point to the opponent. Always examine all checks and captures.

30.♞xf7!



30...♞e4†

After 30...♞xf7 31.♕e6 ♞e4† 32.♗h3!, White escapes and wins.

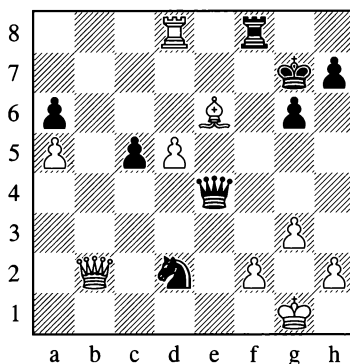
31.♗g1 ♞xf7

I had seen this far and I thought Black was winning. 32.♕e6 can be well met with 32...♘f3†, ending the game. But White has the strong intermediate check:

32.♞d8†!

♞c1xb2 will now come with check!

32...♞f8 33.♕e6† ♗g7 34.♞xb2†!



It is rather unfortunate for Black that this is check and that he is unable to give mate following ...♞e1†.

### 30.♕e6

Black wins easily after 30.♞f4 ♘d2.

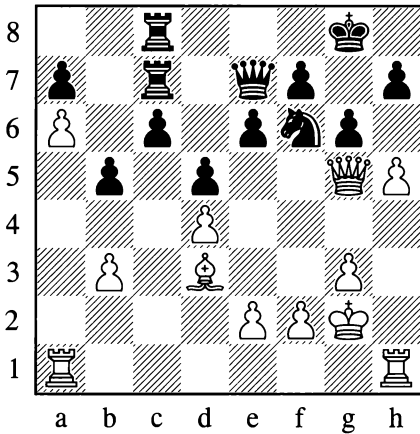
I had seen 29...♞e2, but 30.♕e6 scared me. Somehow, I missed the extremely natural reply:

### 30...♘e5!

Black wins as the knight does everything; f7 is safe and both rooks are hanging.

### 30. Oleg Vastrukhin – Shamsiddin Vokhidov

Warsaw (rapid) 2021



White let a chance slip with 26.♖h4?. After 26...♘e8! 27.♙h6 ♜f6!, Black's queen on f6 is a good defensive piece. Black eventually lost, but he was fine here.

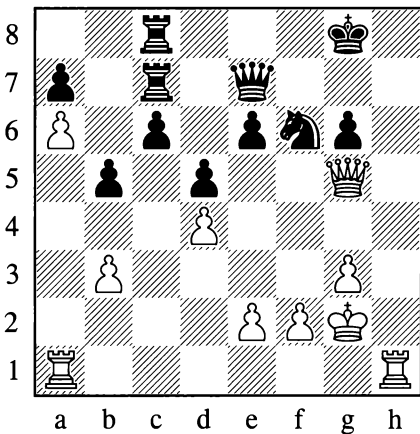
#### 26.hxg6!

The first couple of moves are obvious enough, but White needs to see a silent move down the road.

#### 26...fxg6

Black is mated immediately after 26...hxg6? 27.♙h6.

#### 27.♙h6! hxg6



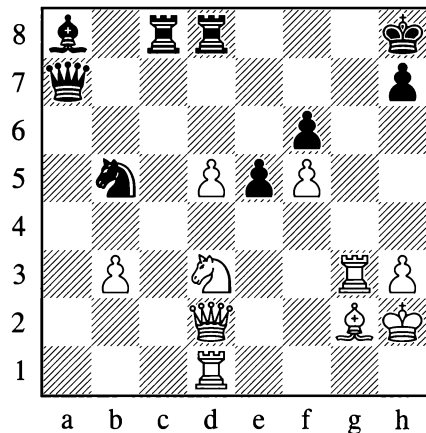
Now, another key tenet of calculation is on display: be very wary of automatic moves! 28.♙xg6† looks like the obvious follow-up, but then White is immediately out of steam following 28...♙g7. But rather than discard the line completely, we should look for another candidate move.

#### 28.♙h6!

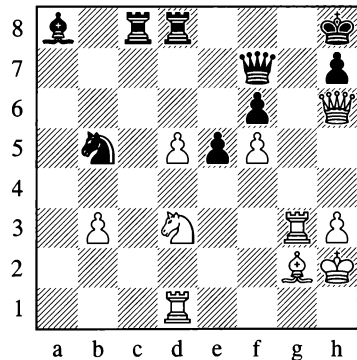
As soon as this move is seen, it is immediately clear that the game is over. Black is losing heavy material right away. The same winning move would be played in response to 27...♙g7.

### 31. Viktor Boev – Felix Blohberger

Plovdiv 2021



This was the third position I got wrong. I had wanted to play 36.♙h6?, with the idea to meet 36...♙e7 with 37.♘xe5, somehow totally missing the response 36...♙f7!.

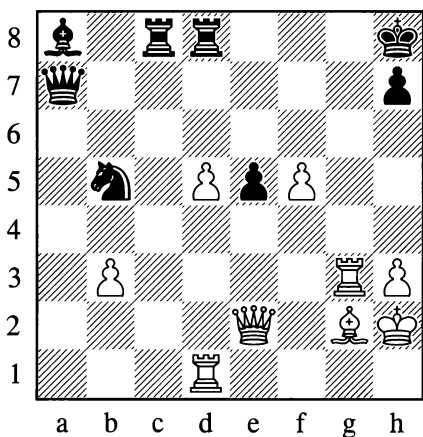


The position is still messy, but Black is more or less okay. This line was played in the game and Black even went on to win: 37.♖g1 ♘d6 38.♙e4?? ♘xe4 39.♖g7 ♖c2† 40.♙h1 ♘f2† 41.♘xf2 ♙xd5† 0-1

### 36.♘xe5!

Always examine all checks and captures!

### 36...fxe5 37.♖e2!



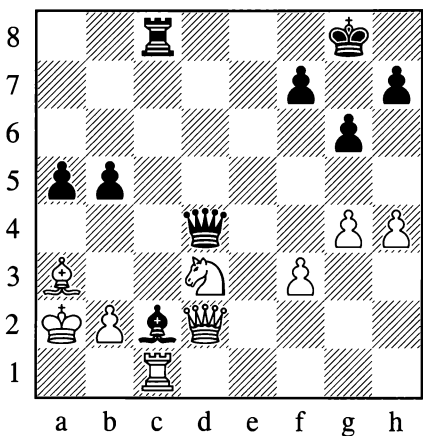
A simple double attack ends the game.

### 37...♖e7 38.♖xb5

White has a decisive material advantage.

## 32. Aleksandar Indjic – Kaido Kulaots

Terme Catez 2022



Here we have a case of two key principles of calculation on display. First, always examine all checks and captures, and second, be wary of automatic moves.

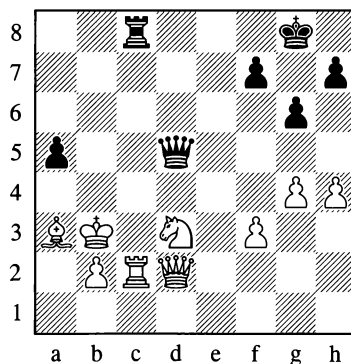
### 39...b4?

This was played and it looks obvious, trapping the bishop on a3. But it turns out to be ill-advised.

### 40.♖xc2!

40.♙a1 was the game continuation. It was not the best move, but even here White was still alive, and he eventually made a draw. 40...♖d8 41.♖xc2 ♖xd3 42.♖xd3 ♖xd3 43.♙a2 bxa3 44.♖c3 ♖d4 45.♙xa3 ♖f4 46.b3 ½-½

### 40...b3† 41.♙xb3 ♖d5†



We see a similar position to the main line, except that here the absence of the b5-pawn means White's king has access to the a4-square.

### 42.♙a4 ♖d7† 43.♙b3

Black has nothing better than a perpetual.

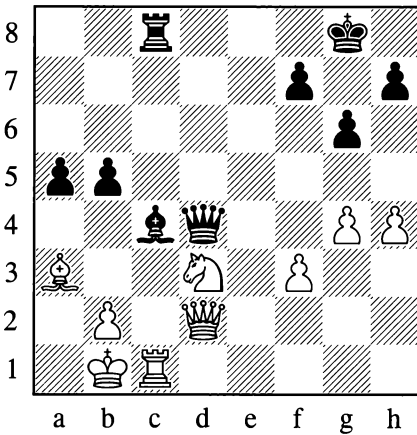
### 39...♙b3†!

The bishop is immune from capture.

### 40.♙b1

40.♙xb3 ♖d5† and White is mated after 41.♖c4 ♖xc4#.

### 40...♙c4



41. ♖d1

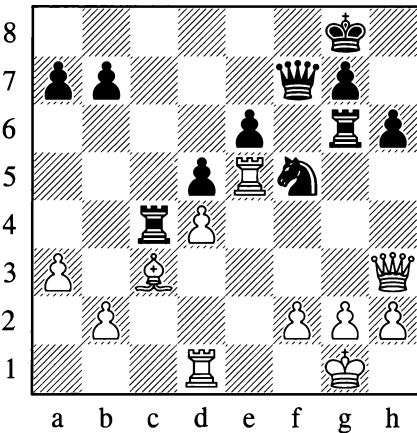
41.b3 loses to 41... ♙xd3† 42. ♕a2 ♜d8.

41... ♜d8

Black wins a piece and is winning, with an extra pawn and much safer king.

### 33. Mateusz Bartel – Vadym Petrovskyi

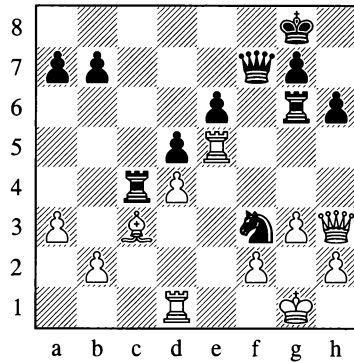
Warsaw (rapid) 2021



A case of candidate moves at its finest. As soon as you consider the best move, the calculation is easy.

30... ♖h4!! 31. ♖xh4

31.g3 fails to 31... ♖f3†.



Black wins an exchange, and the game shortly after.

31... ♖f3!

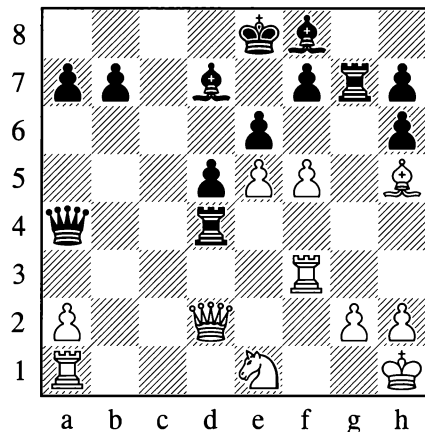
The fork is decisive.

32.g3 ♖xd1† 33. ♕g2 ♜f6

Black is again winning with an extra exchange.

### 34. Rustam Kasimdzhanov – Linus Johansson

Germany 2021



Here we see two tenets on display as well: always examine all checks and captures, and always ask: *what happens if I do it anyway?*

21. ♖xh6!

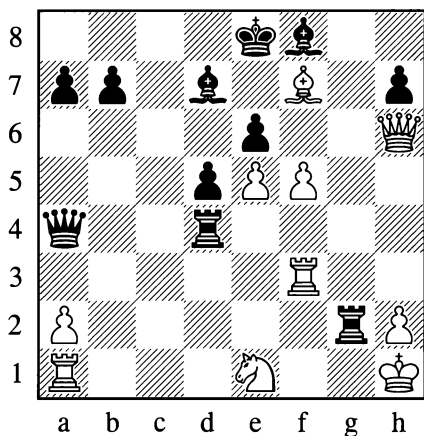
Of course, this is the move White would really like to make, but it looks like it walks straight into 21...♞xg2.

**21...♞xg2**

But...

**22.♙xf7!**

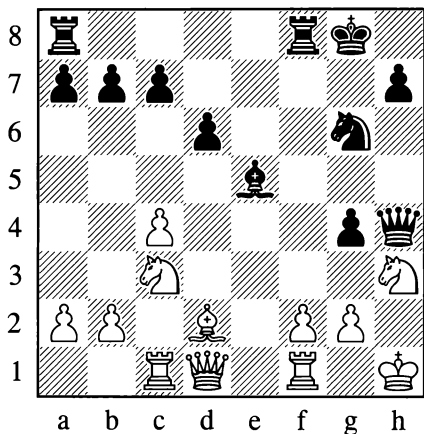
**1-0**



Well spotted. Black resigned. If 22...♙xf7, checkmate is quick to follow: 23.fxe6† ♔e7 24.♞f6† ♔e8 25.♞xf8#

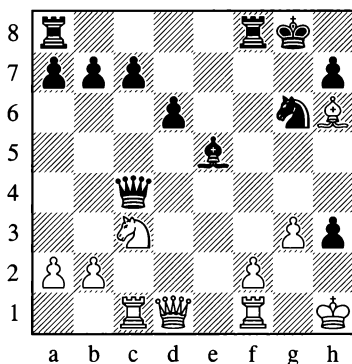
### 35. Gleb Dudin –Nikolas Theodorou

Warsaw (rapid) 2021



Again, we see the same few principles repeatedly. Here, always be wary of automatic moves.

19...gxh3? looks so natural and obvious, but it let a big chance slip. After: 20.g3 ♞xc4 21.♙h6

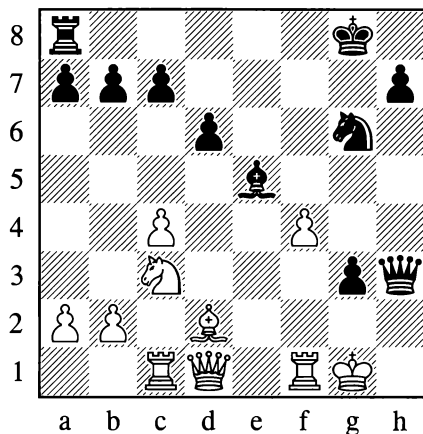


The position is unclear, and the game was eventually drawn some 30 moves later.

**19...♞f3!**

Rather than taking on h3 right away, Black can prepare to bring the rook there instead. As soon as you consider 19...♞f3 as a candidate move, there really is not that much more to it. White is mated on the spot.

**20.♙g1 ♞xh3 21.gxh3 ♞xh3 22.f4 g3**

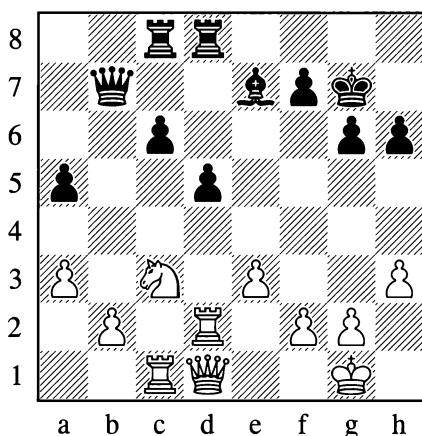


The twin threats of ...♞h2# and ...♙d4† cannot both be prevented. Time to resign.



### 36. Vitezslav Prichoda – Petr Simek

Czech Republic 2022



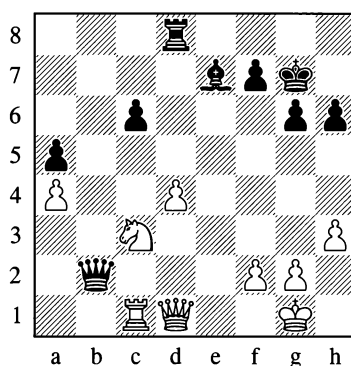
Black chose 28...♔f6 and eventually won after a very long fight, but I don't think he is better here.

Again, more of the same principles. What is the move Black really wants to make? The push ...d5-d4 would be very aggressive. It looks ridiculous because White has so many defenders of that square, but always ask: *what happens if I do it anyway?*

#### 28...d4!!

It turns out that taking the d4-pawn in either way would be ill-advised.

After 29.♖xd4 ♜xb2, White will struggle to defend all of his weaknesses, and the c3-knight is dominated by the c6-pawn. His only way not to lose the pawn on a3 directly is to advance it to a4, but following: 30.a4 ♖xd4 31.exd4 ♖d8



Black is much better, as the d4-pawn is coming under heavy fire very shortly once the bishop joins the attack from f6.

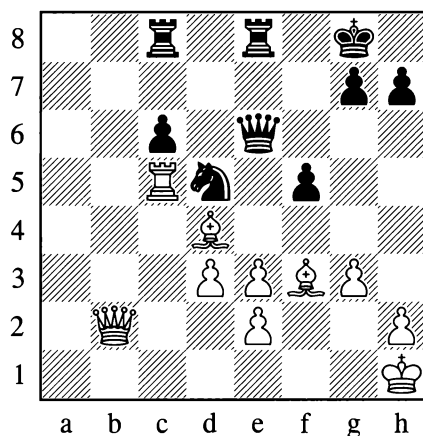
Alternatively, 29.exd4? loses the exchange to 29...♔g5.

#### 29.♘e4 c5

Black is expanding in the center and White is losing even more time with his knight.

### 37. Ilja Zaragatski – Jakob Leon Pajeken

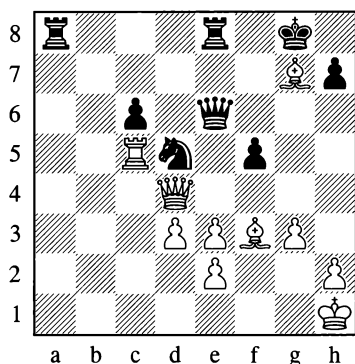
Germany 2019



Every now and then, I come across a problem of Jacob's that I do not love. It is not a common occurrence, but this is one of them. I had got three positions wrong up to this point, and my answers were undeniably incorrect,

as each one would have left at least half a point on the table. Here, what I came up with was certainly not best, but it may well have been good enough.

The move I wanted to play was the obvious 34.♙xg7. Indeed, White is much better after: 34...♜b8 35.♞a1! An important move. Black cannot be allowed to invade the back rank. 35...♜a8 36.♞d4



One metric I often use with my students if they play a second-best move, and then ask if it is good enough, is: *would you beat Magnus Carlsen from here?* If I were to ask myself the same question, honestly, I think very likely the answer is yes. But I would not be certain. While, after 34.♙xd5 instead, I would say yes, and I would be certain.

### 34.♙xd5!

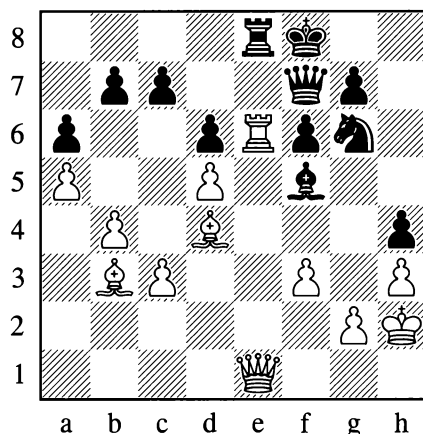
Always examine all checks and captures. This is a hard move to consider because the bishop was better than the knight, the weak c6-pawn comes to a safer square and the c-file opens for Black's rook. But as soon as you consider it, you realize the game is over.

34...cxd5 35.♞b7! ♞f7 36.♞xc8!  
1-0

It was clearly time to resign.

## 38. Training position

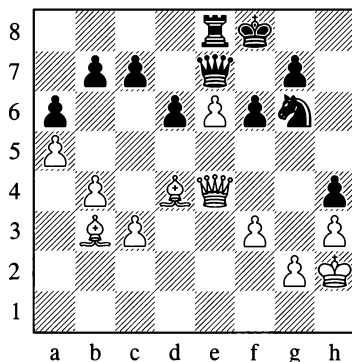
2021



Again, we see another case of: *what happens if I do it anyway?* It is not hard to see that the rook is hanging on e6, but after ...♙f5xe6 and d5xe6, the queen is hit and ♞e4-h7 could be on the way. But we know what to ask!

### 34...♙xe6! 35.dxe6

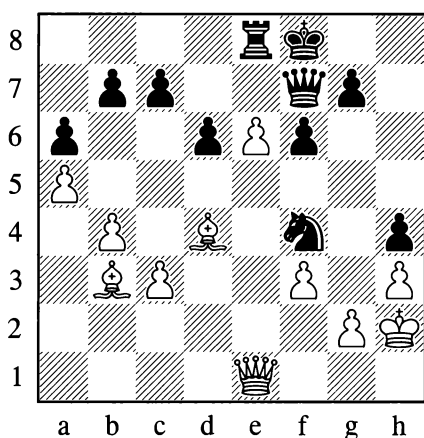
35...♞e7? would be met by 36.♞e4.



White's queen will land on h7, and Black will have a bad day.

But there is an important detail:

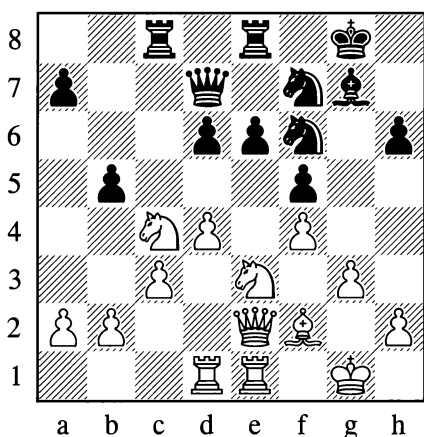
35...♙f4!



It turns out that e6xf7 was not actually a threat. Now Black takes on e6 and wins the game.

### 39. Krystian Kuzmicz – Li Min Peng

Warsaw (rapid) 2021

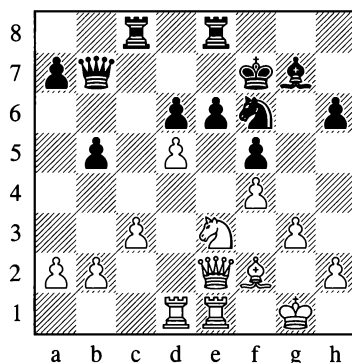


This is a case of simple candidate moves.

24.d2? was not bad, and White did go on to win. But applying the same principle as before, would you beat Magnus Carlsen from here? I suspect even for me the answer would often be “no”.

24.d5! dxe5

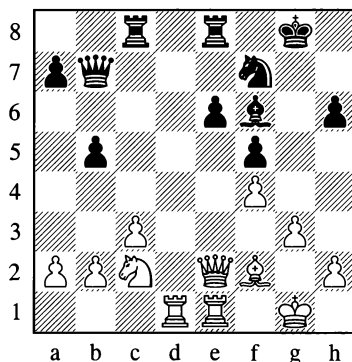
Moving the queen away instead does not help Black's cause. 24...♞b7 25.♠xf7 ♔xf7 26.d5!



Black's position collapses immediately.

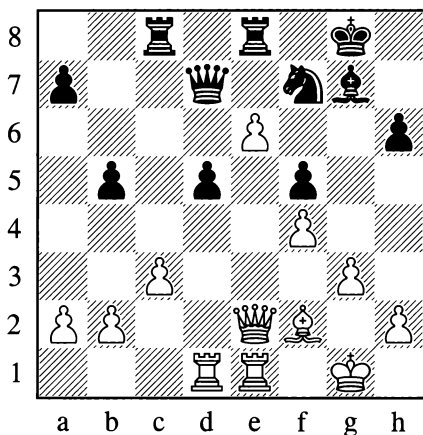
25.dxe5 ♖d5

A neat regrouping to finish the game would occur after: 25...♞b7 26.exf6 ♕xf6 27.♖c2!



White will play ♗f2-d4 next, get rid of the dark-squared bishops, and then Black will have weaknesses everywhere. Despite the equal material and the same pieces on the board, the engine claims this is +5!

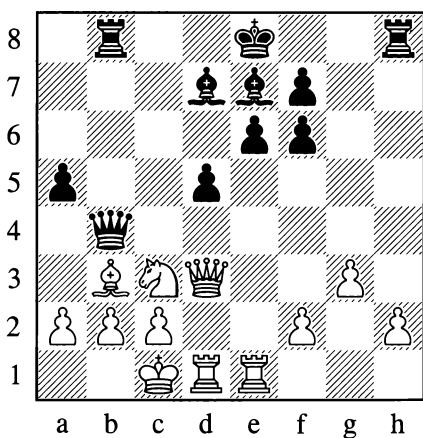
26.♖xd5! exd5 27.e6



White regains the piece on f7 with a won position.

#### 40. Balazs Pasztor – Anton Zlatkov

Terme Catez 2022

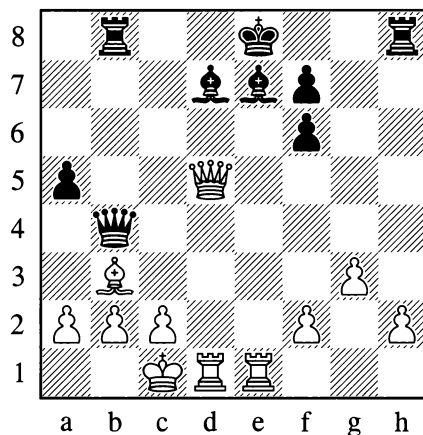


This one was fairly easy. Always examine all checks and captures.

#### 20. ♖xd5!

20.h4 was too slow and missed the key chance. After 20...♔f8!, Black had a safe king, the bishop pair and a massive center. He eventually won.

#### 20...exd5 21. ♖xd5

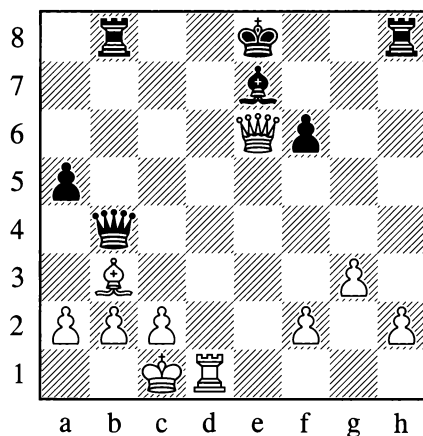


With both d7 and f7 hanging, Black's only try is:

#### 21...♔e6

Which is met with more energetic play:

#### 22. ♖xe6! fxe6 23. ♖xe6



Black is threatened with mate on f7 next, and either rook move which seeks to prevent this does not help.

#### 23...♖h7

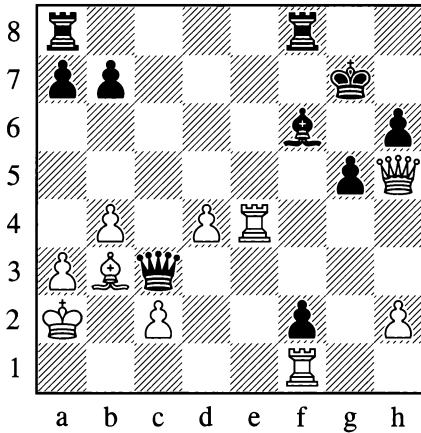
23...♖f8 24. ♖c6#

#### 24. ♖g8†

White wins.

**41. Vasif Durarbayli – Victor Mikhalevski**

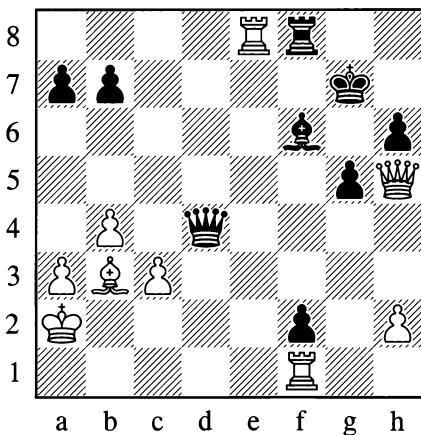
Warsaw (rapid) 2021



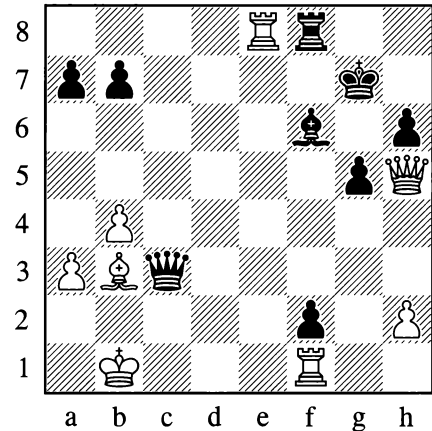
This one is another candidate move exercise, and two of Jacob's three questions are relevant: *where are the weaknesses?* and *what is my worst-placed piece?*

**33...♖ae8!!**

Very powerful. Black brings in his last piece and removes the defender of the d4-pawn, allowing him to ravage the long diagonal.

**34.♖xe8 ♖xd4 35.c3****35...♖d2†!**

An important intermediate move, as 35...♖xc3 would be met by the decisive 36.♖e2.

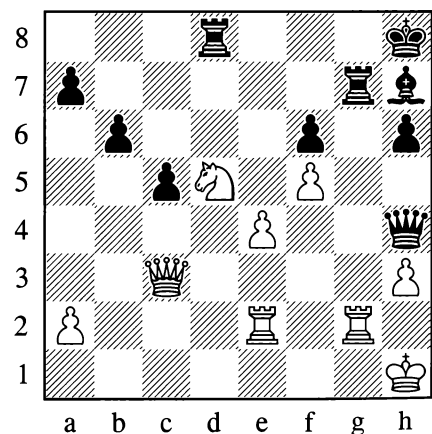
**36.♖b1 ♖xc3!**

White is collapsing. He kept playing because it was a rapid game, but presumably he would have resigned if there was any substantial time on the clock. The remaining moves were:

**37.♖xf2 ♖xb3† 38.♖c1 ♖xa3† 39.♖d2 ♖xb4† 40.♖c1 ♖a3† 41.♖d2 ♖c3† 42.♖e2 ♖a6† 43.♖e3 ♖b6† 44.♖d3 ♖d4† 0-1**

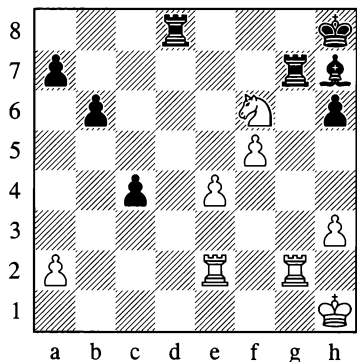
**42. Richard Mladek – Petr Simek**

Czech Republic 2022



Being move 41, White had probably just passed the time control. The win is not too tough to find, but it does require a silent move down the line.

Trading the queens with 41.♙xf6? was a very poor decision. Black's biggest problem was king safety, which is no longer a concern, and Black has his own passed pawns to work with. After: 41...♙xf6 42.♘xf6 c4



Black had a lot of counterplay, and he even went on to win.

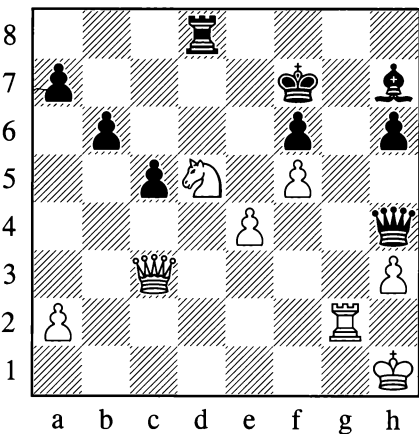
41.♙xg7!

Always examine all checks and captures.

41...♘xg7 42.♙g2!

Checks and captures...

42...♘f7

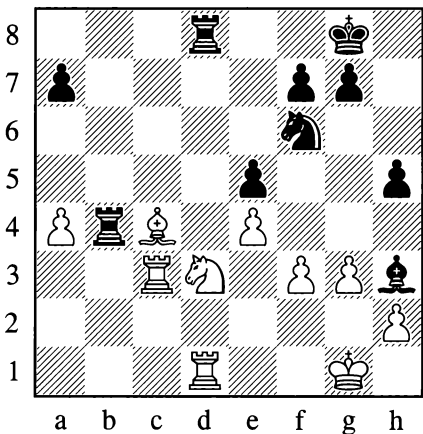


43.♙g4!

A silent move finishes the game. The queen is kicked off the h4-square, the pawn on f6 falls and Black is crushed.

43. Vincent Keymer – Levon Aronian

Internet 2022

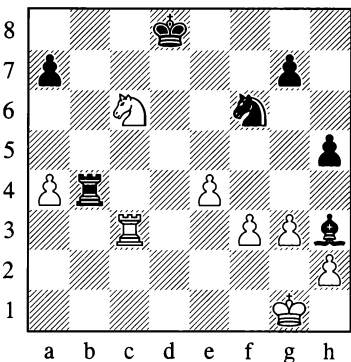


Always examine all checks and captures.

27.♙cc1?! was Vincent Keymer's choice and White is surely better. But after 27...♙xa4 28.♘xe5, the game goes on and Black eventually made a draw.

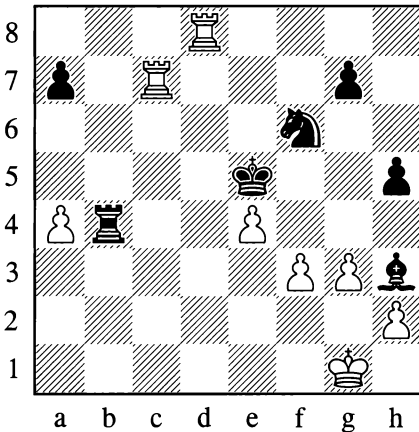
27.♙xf7+!! ♔xf7 28.♘xe5† ♔e6

The alternative king move also loses: 28...♔e8 29.♙xd8†! ♔xd8 30.♘c6†!



Always examine all checks and captures. White wins the rook on b4. Clearly the fork on c6 would come sooner after 28...♔e7.

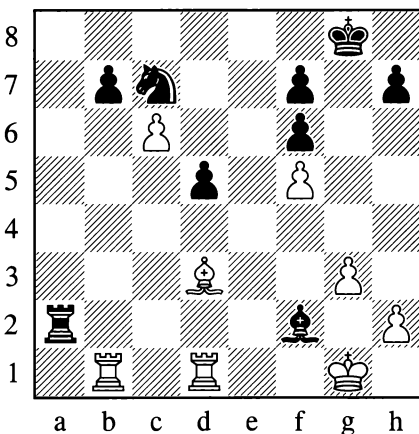
**29.♟xd8 ♕xe5 30.♞c7!**



White is winning. He is threatening both mate on e7 and two pawns on the seventh rank. To add to his trumps, two pawns and a rook for two minor pieces is an advantage in the endgame.

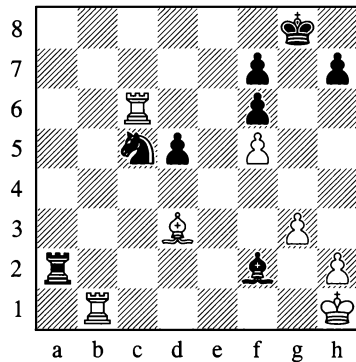
#### 44. Michal Krasenkow – Daniel Hausrath

Germany 2019



29.♕h1? was played. White is much better, but it is not so easy. He did eventually win,

but after something like: 29...bxc6 30.♞dc1 (30.♞b7 ♖a6! And Black is fine. The bishop on f2 is not hanging!) 30...♖a6 31.♞xc6 ♖c5 White is much better, but would you beat Magnus Carlsen from here? I'm not sure I would.



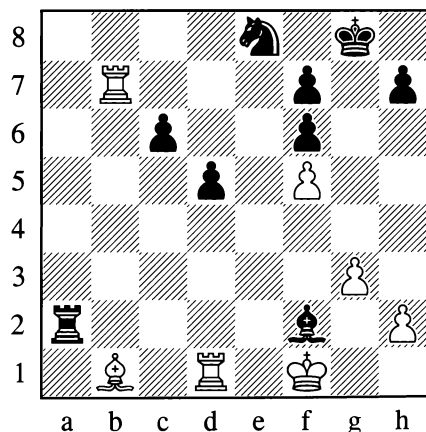
**29.♕f1!**

The right square for the king. It looks a little scary to move him towards the center when Black will have an annoying check on f2 sometime after the bishop retreats. But there is a very concrete reason to do so.

**29...bxc6 30.♞b7!**

Here we see the point. Because the bishop on f2 is hit by the king, Black's knight is unable to come to a6.

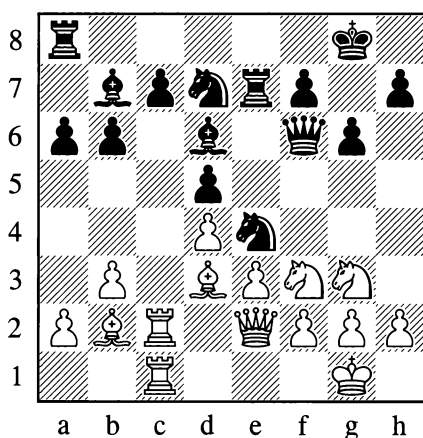
**30...♖e8 31.♕b1!**



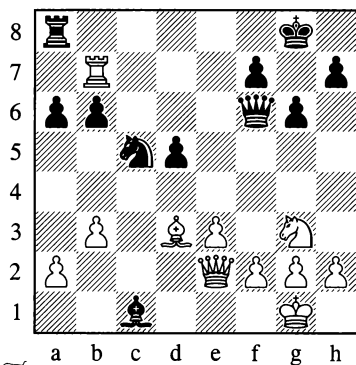
Again, we see the bishop on f2 being loose is Black's undoing. The rook must move off the second rank, and Black will lose a piece.

#### 45. Valenty Prokofiev – Pierre Barbot

Terme Catez 2022



18. ♖e5 was played and it is a serious miscalculation. After 18... ♜xe5 19. dxe5 ♙xe5 Black is slightly better. Presumably White had been banking on 20. ♖xc7?. This was a mistake. 20... ♙xb2! 21. ♖xe7 ♙xc1! 22. ♖xb7 ♜c5



The rook will be trapped and Black eventually won.

#### 18. ♙xe4!

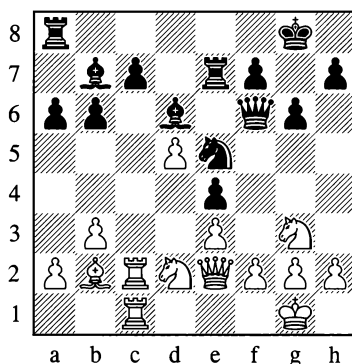
Checks and captures. Always.

#### 18... dxe4 19. d5!

Black's queen is lacking a square.

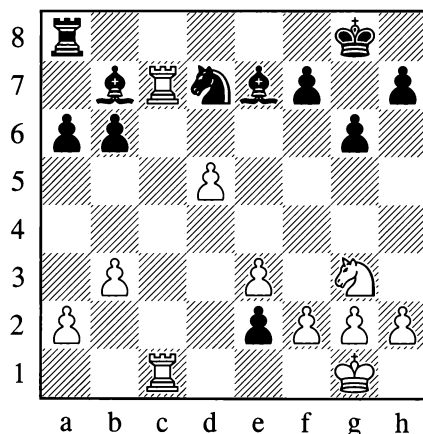
#### 19... exf3

19... ♜e5 does not work because of 20. ♜d2!.



The pawn on e4 falls next and Black loses.

#### 20. ♙xf6 fxe2 21. ♙xe7 ♙xe7 22. ♖xc7



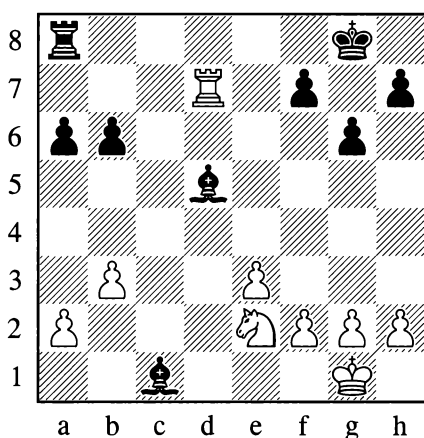
Checks and captures all the way to here. It is easy to get this far and think the game is over, but Black does have a resource. Luckily for White, it is nothing to be too concerned with.

#### 22... ♙a3 23. ♖xd7!

23. ♖xb7? shows that it is still not too late to screw it up! Black remains a piece up after 23... ♙xc1 24. ♜xe2 ♜c5!.

#### 23... ♙xc1 24. ♜xe2 ♜xd5





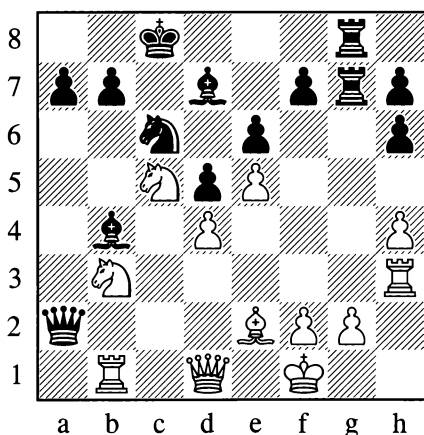
White still needed to be careful here. 25. ♖xc1? would give his opponent counterplay with 25... ♖c8.

### 25. ♖xd5!

White wins. It was a long variation to get here, but a very forced one without much of any sidelines along the way. I calculated all the way to here when solving it from the moment White took on e4.

## 46. Marina Brunello – Iweta Rajlich

Internet 2020



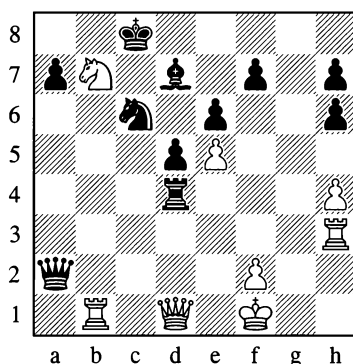
Here, it looks like White can trap the queen, but ... ♖xg2 is a huge issue.

### 18.g4?

In the game White paid too much respect to the threat to g2 with this move. She won anyway, but this position is unclear.

### 18... ♖xc5 19. ♖xc5 b6?

19... ♖xg4! would have kept things very messy. After: 20. ♖xg4 ♖xg4 21. ♖xb7 ♖xd4



Who knows what is going on? The computer gives 0.00 after more or less any move, but it looks like an unclear position rather than a drawn one.

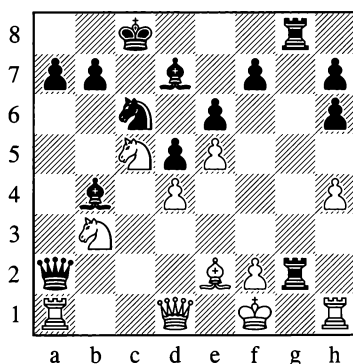
### 20. ♖hb3 bxc5 21. ♖a1

White won on the 28th move.

But always ask: *what happens if I do it anyway?*

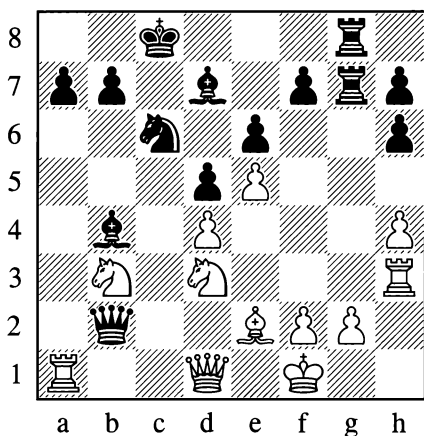
### 18. ♖a1! ♖b2

The key idea is that 18... ♖xg2 is neutralized with 19. ♖h1!.



This is similar to the main line, and White has everything under control here as well.

19.♘d3!

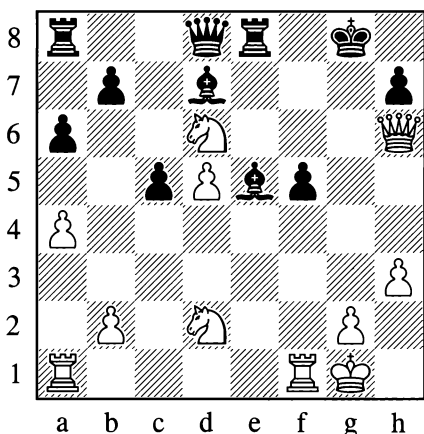


White traps the queen. If she always meets ...♙g7xg2 with ♖h3-h1, White will win. For example:

19...♙c3 20.♖c1 ♙xg2 21.♖h1

#### 47. Arjun Erigaisi – Bharath Subramaniyam

Plovdiv 2021



I got this one wrong as well.

Black missed the opportunity with 22...♖f8? 23.♘f3 ♙g7. The position is dynamically balanced and was eventually drawn on move 45.

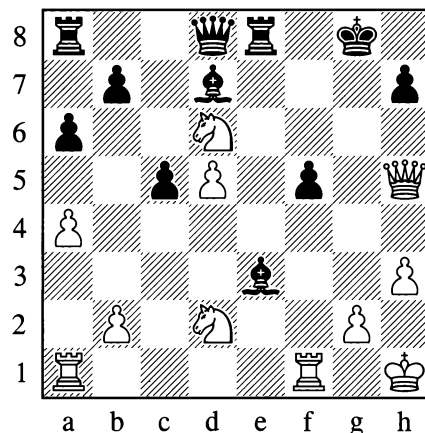
22...♙d4†!

Always examine all checks and captures!

23.♘h1

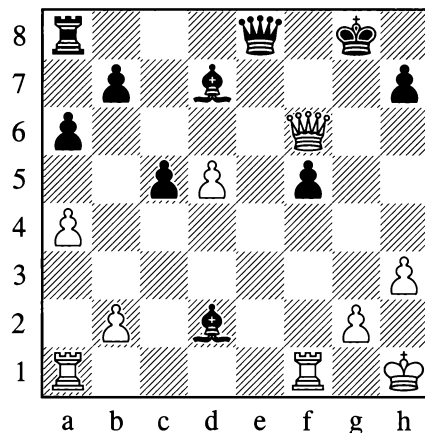
23.♘h2 is easy to refute: 23...♙g7! Black kicks the queen away and checks on e5 next, winning the knight on d6.

23...♙e3! 24.♖h5



It now looks scary to take the knight, but you need nerves of steel to beat a strong player.

24...♙xd2! 25.♖f7† ♘h8 26.♘xe8 ♖xe8 27.♖f6† ♘g8



I had seen this far and rejected the line on pain of ♖a1-a3, when the check on g3 looks like a major problem.

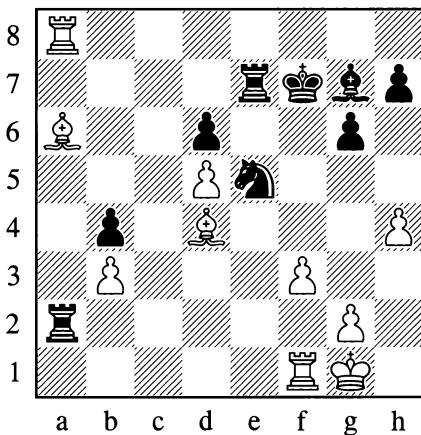
**28. ♖a3**

But Black has an obvious move after which he is winning:

**28... ♖g6! 29. ♖e7 ♖g7!**

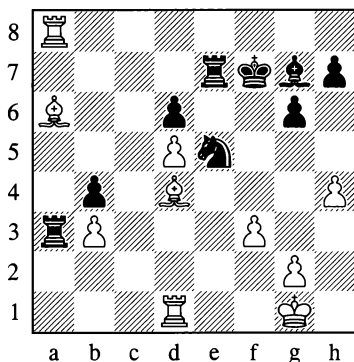
**48. Nikolas Lubbe – Sreyas Payyappat**

Reinstorf 2022



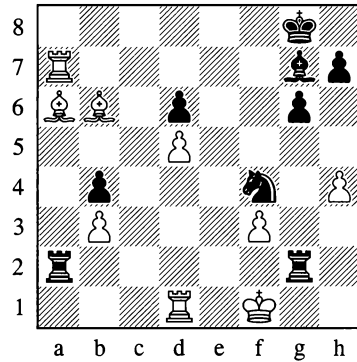
I did not love this exercise because my second-best move was probably good enough. But there is no doubt that the best move is stronger.

Black chose 36... ♖a3? in the game and let a big chance slip. The game is equal after 37. ♖d1 but there followed:



37... ♜xf3?? 38. gxf3 ♜xd4† 39. ♖xd4 ♖e1† 40. ♜f2 ♖e1 41. ♖a7† ♜f6 42. ♖e4! 1–0

The move I wanted to play has a similar idea to the main line: 36... ♜d3!? After 37. ♜b6! ♖ee2 38. ♖a7† ♜g8 39. ♖d1 ♖xg2† 40. ♜f1 ♜f4:



Apparently White can keep fighting here, although this time I do think I would beat Carlsen.

**36... ♜c4!!**

Black takes advantage of the pin on the a-file to cut off the a6-bishop. He is ready to invade on e2 next.

Black is winning in all lines:

37. bxc4 ♜xd4† 38. ♜h1 ♖ee2, with devastating activity of the black rooks.

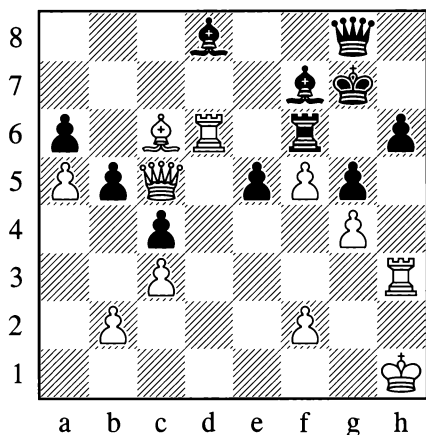
37. ♜xc4 ♜xd4†, followed by ... ♖xa8 simply wins a rook.

37. ♜f2 ♜d2 38. ♖d1 ♜xb3, and the passed b-pawn is too powerful for White to handle.

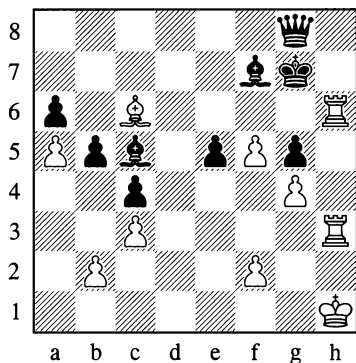
37. ♜xg7 ♖ee2! Catastrophe on g2 looms.

### 49. Vaclav Paulus – Ondrej Nytra

Czech Republic 2022



As always, be wary of automatic moves. 42...♙e7? looks so natural. 43.♞xf6! Always examine all checks and captures. 43...♜xc5 44.♞fxh6!



The machine claims it is a draw, but this is not clear at all. With f5-f6 and ♞h6-h8 hanging over Black's head, anything could happen.

Black has something stronger.

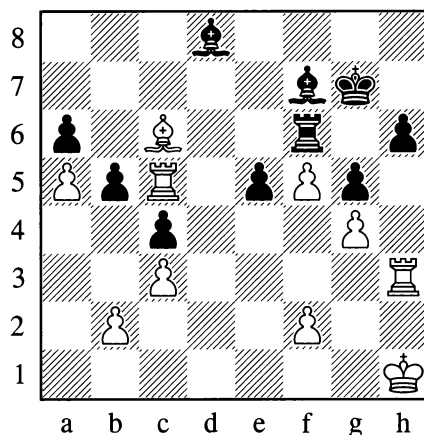
42...♞f8!

As soon as you consider this as a candidate move, it is not hard to see that it wins.

43.♞d5

43.♞xf6 is now not working. After 43...♞xc5 44.♞fxh6, the black queen is no longer in the way on the kingside.

43...♞xc5 44.♞xc5



44...♞xc6!

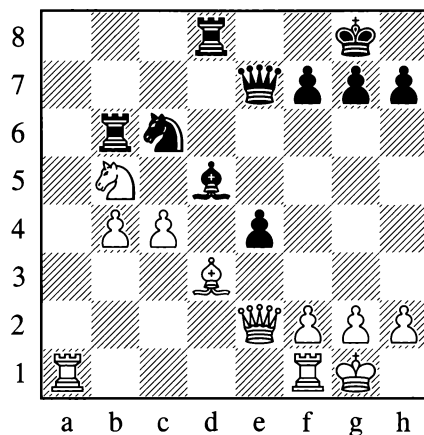
The key point. Always examine all checks and captures.

45.♞xc6 ♙d5†

Black is winning with two minor pieces for a rook.

### 50. Marsel Efroimski – Marina Gajcin

Bucharest 2021

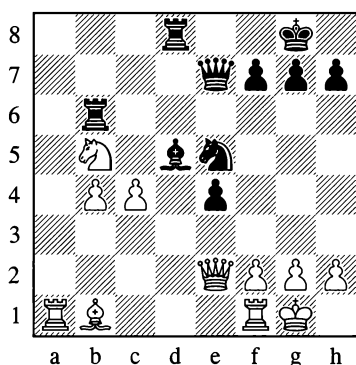


All White needs to do to reach a winning position is consolidate the position and not lose her bishop.

27.♖b1?

This was played in the game. White went on to win but Black could have improved with:  
27...♗e5!

Black played instead the ill-advised:  
27...♖xb5? 28.cxb5 ♗d4 29.♖e3 ♖e5  
30.♙a2 ♗c2 31.♖b6 ♖b8 32.♖xb8† ♖xb8  
33.♙xd5 1–0



Black is threatening a check on f3 with a massive attack to follow. White is lucky to be alive.

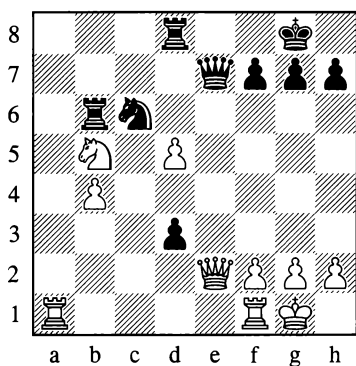
28.♗d4

Not 28.cxd5 ♗f3† 29.gxf3 ♖g6† 30.♙h1 ♖g5, with an unavoidable mate on g2.

28...♙xc4 29.♖xe4 g6 30.♖e1

With an equal position.

The move White would like to play is 27.cxd5, but sadly for her after: 27...exd3



The queen is hanging, leaving White no time to take on c6. 28.♖xd3 ♗xb4, and Black is obviously fine.

27.♖e3!

This move is powerful. It not only hits the rook on b6; it also gets the queen off e2 so that she will not be hanging after ...exd3.

27...♖b7

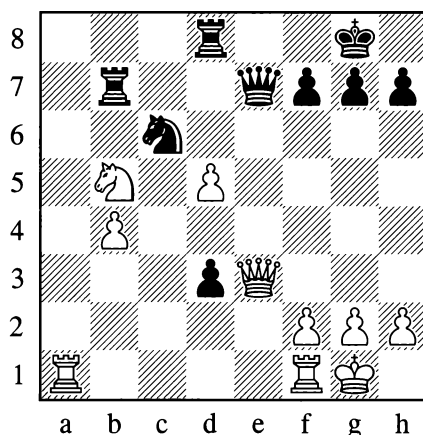
White clearly gains a decisive material advantage against the other tries:

27...exd3 28.♖xb6

27...♖xb5 28.cxb5 exd3 29.bxc6

27...♖db8 28.cxd5

28.cxd5! exd3



Now that White's queen is not hanging on e2, she can safely take on c6.

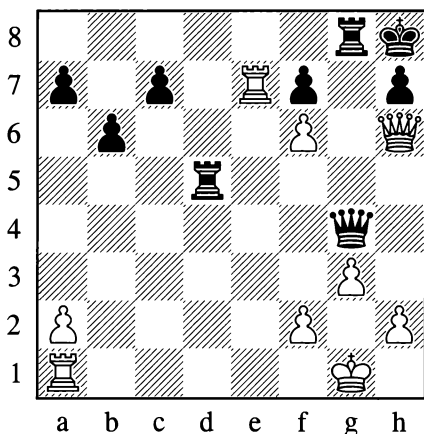
29.dxc6! ♖xe3 30.fxex3 ♖xb5 31.♖f4

The simplest of many winning moves. White's pawns should be decisive.

## Solutions to Chapter 2

### 51. Dinara Saduakassova – Rao Sharan

Sitges 2021



An opportunity was missed here with White playing 26. ♖e3?. Eventually Black won after a messy game, with both sides missing chances.

26. ♜xf7? is tempting but poor. The rook is undefended and lost after: 26... ♜d1† 27. ♜xd1 ♜xd1† 28. ♔g2 ♜d5†

#### 26.h3!

This is not the most obvious candidate move, as it seems to ignore all of Black's main ideas: ... ♜d1†, ... ♜h5, and ... ♜h5. But it wins on the spot.

#### 26... ♜h5

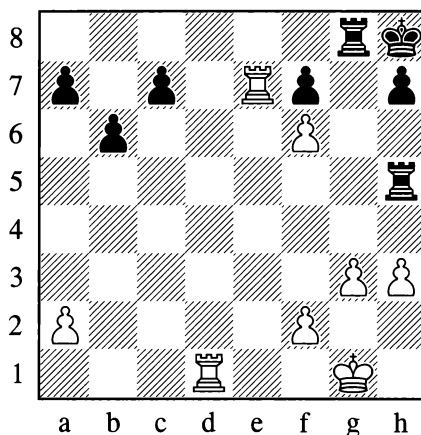
Black is not able to save himself with the following tries either:

26... ♜d1† 27. ♔g2 ♜d4 28. ♜xd1 ♜xd1 29. ♜e8, and Black is mated.

26... ♜h5 27. ♜xh7† ♜xh7 28. hxg4 ♜xg4 29. ♜d1, and White wins with his active rooks.

26... ♜g6 27. ♜xg6 White takes all the pawns and wins the endgame routinely.

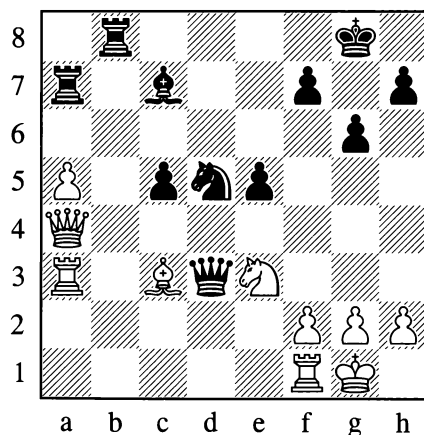
#### 27. ♜xh5 ♜xh5 28. ♜d1



Black is demolished along the seventh rank.

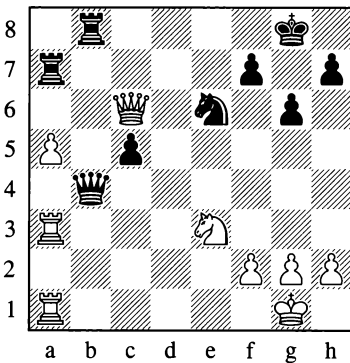
### 52. Ivan Saric – Oleg Boguslawski

Germany 2021



Black's position is asking for a tactical shot. White has a potential discovered attack with the bishop, and the knight on d5 is loose.

31. ♔xe5? was played. After 31... ♜d2 32. ♔xc7 ♜xc7 33. ♜c6 ♜b4 34. ♜fa1 ♔e6, Black had survived the worst of it, though he went on to eventually lose anyway.



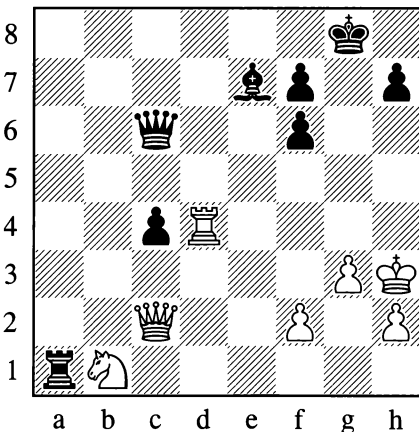
Accuracy is needed, and White should consider instead a less than intuitive move to win.

### 31. ♖e1!

Nice and simple. White moves the bishop to the only safe square that keeps d2 under control. Black loses a piece immediately. His queen is attacked and cannot remain in touch with the d5-knight.

## 53. Axel Bachmann – Robert Hungaski

Floripa 2022



It is very tempting to give a check to the king from the c8-h3 diagonal. But rather than the obvious 35... ♖e6†, which was played, Black could have done himself a favor by considering the less forward one.

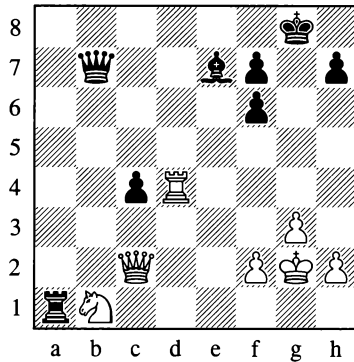
### 35... ♖c8†!

After 35... ♖e6†? 36. ♖g2, Black's only win is now 36... ♖c6†, repeating the position and then finding 37... ♖c8† the second time around. He did not, and the game ultimately finished in a draw.

### 36.g4

After 36. ♖g4† ♖h8, White cannot both prevent ...h7-h5 and continue to protect the knight on b1.

The point of the check being from c8 is that 36. ♖g2 is met by 36... ♖b7†.



The knight is lost.

### 36... ♖b7!

Anything wins, but this is the easiest.

### 37. ♖d2

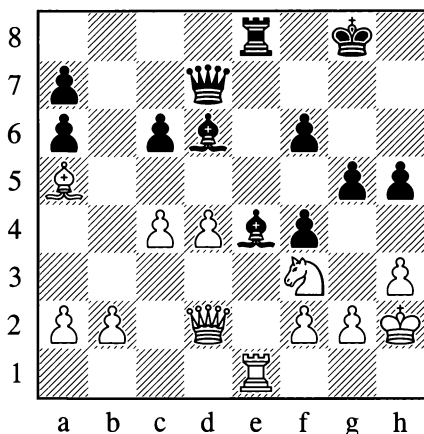
37. ♖c3 ♖f3† and mate soon follows.

### 37... ♖a3† 38. f3 ♖xf3†

White is either mated quickly or suffering heavy material losses after 39. ♖g2 ♖d3†.

## 54. Sandhya Goli – Martin Barcelo

Sitges 2021



White has the better long-term structure but is facing a vicious attack from the menacing bishop pair and kingside pawn mass.

25.d5?

The move played was an understandable but incorrect decision.

25...c5?

25...g4 would have put White in a bad way.

26.♖c3 ♜g7 27.♗g1

27.♗e5! Again best, as in the main line.

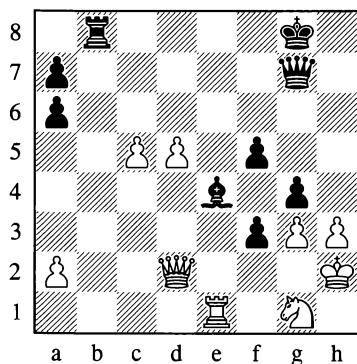
27...f3† 28.g3 g4

The attack rages on, and White is effectively down a piece due to the buried knight on g1.

The game is all but over.

29.b4 cxb4 30.♙xb4 ♙xb4 31.♜xb4 f5 32.c5 h4 33.♜d2 hxg3† 34.fxg3 ♜b8

Black wins.



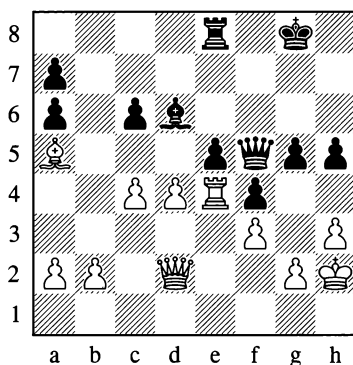
However, a simple search for candidate moves finds the route to survival.

25.♗e5!

This would have halved the bishop pair, ended the attack and completely changed the course and outcome of the game.

25...♙xe5

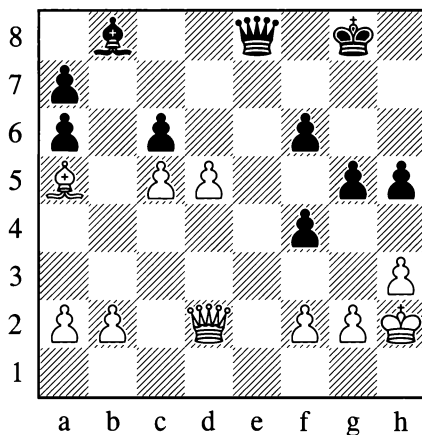
25...fxe5 does not work due to: 26.♜xe4 ♜f5 27.f3



The pin on the e-file is decisive. Pushing the central pawns, with c4-c5 followed by d4-d5, is on the way.

White was probably worried about 25...♜h7, but he remains on top after 26.f3!. The c6-pawn falls once the bishop runs away.

26.♜xe4 ♙d6 27.♜xe8† ♜xe8 28.c5 ♙b8 29.d5

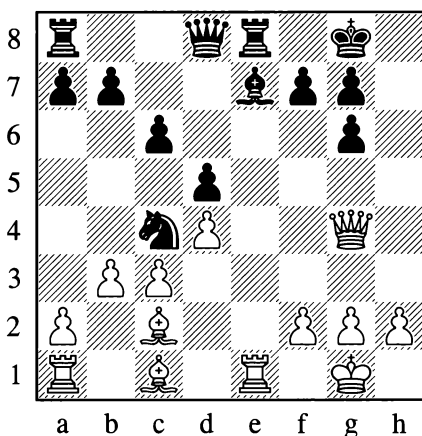




White's king is safe, and his pawn majority is mobilized. Black is lost.

### 55. Dominik Horvath – Martin Bruedigam

Germany 2022



Often the hardest tactics to find are the ones that come in quiet positions. It looks like they should not be present and only positional understanding should apply. But here, a simple search for candidate moves would allow Black to benefit from an extra option.

Black missed his chance with 18...♘d6?!. He was slightly worse thanks to White's bishop pair, though he did eventually make a draw.

Tempting but poor was 18...♙b4?!. After 19.♙g5!, Black has too many hanging pieces and may as well resign.

**18...♙a5!**

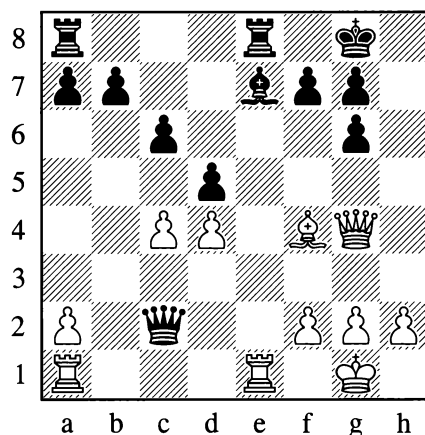
Out of nowhere, White lacks a good way to defend the c3-pawn and will be left with a lot of hanging pieces.

**19.bxc4**

19.♙g3? ♙h4! wins with a discovered attack.

19.♙f3 and 19.♙h3 are now able to be met with 19...♙b4, with advantage to Black.

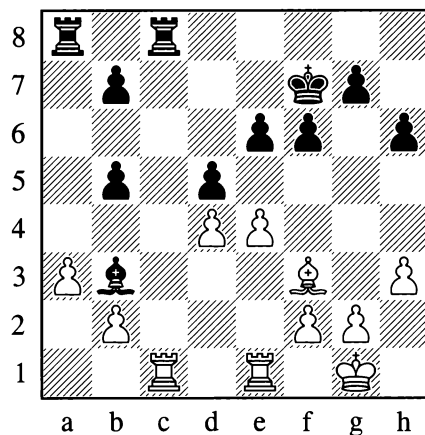
**19...♙xc3 20.♙f4 ♙xc2**



White is slightly worse provided he finds a couple of only moves. Clearly, this is a big improvement over the game continuation!

### 56. Stepan Zilka – Christian Stuvik Holm

Warsaw (rapid) 2021



White chose 24.g3 and a draw shortly followed. A chance was missed.

One hard kind of candidate move to find is exchanging rooks on an open file, leaving your opponent with full control over that file. In general, this is a stupid idea, but it is important to notice if it wins something.

24. ♖xc8! ♜xc8 25. ♜e3!

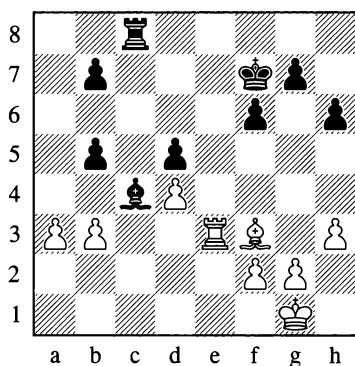
Suddenly, it turns out Black has trouble with his bishop and d5-pawn.

25... dxe4

The best try in a bad position, although Black should still lose.

The alternatives are:

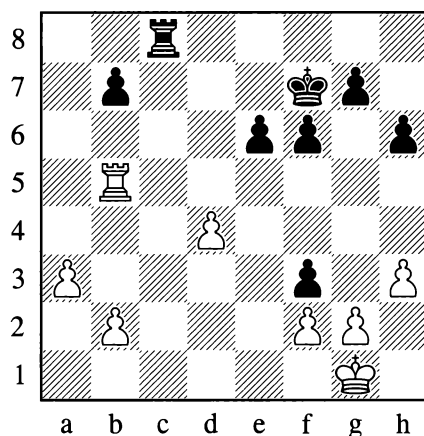
25... ♖c4 26. exd5! exd5?! (If 26... ♖xd5 27. ♖xd5 exd5 28. ♜b3!, White starts taking pawns.) 27. b3



The bishop is trapped.

25... ♖a2 26. exd5 ♖xd5 (After 26... exd5 27. b3, Black's bishop is locked out of play, his rook will get stuck on d8 defending the d5-pawn and he is too passive to fight for survival.) 27. ♖xd5 exd5 28. ♜b3 White wins with his pawn advantage on the queenside.

26. ♜xb3 exf3 27. ♜xb5

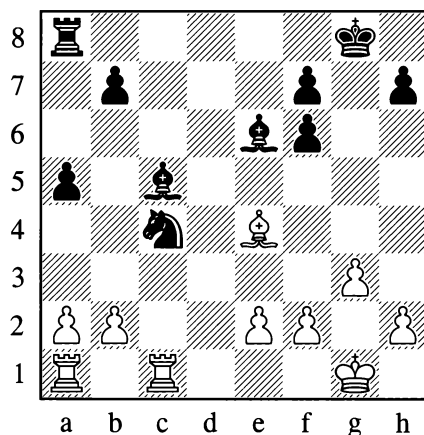


27... ♜c1† 28. ♖h2 fxg2 29. ♜xb7† ♖f8 30. ♖xg2

White should win with his queenside pawns.

## 57. Grigoriy Oparin – Stepan Zilka

Warsaw (rapid) 2021



It is natural to want to take back the piece right away. 24. b3 was played, but it is nothing special. After 24... ♖d4! 25. bxc4 ♖xa1 26. ♜xa1 ♖xc4, Black was fine and eventually made a draw.

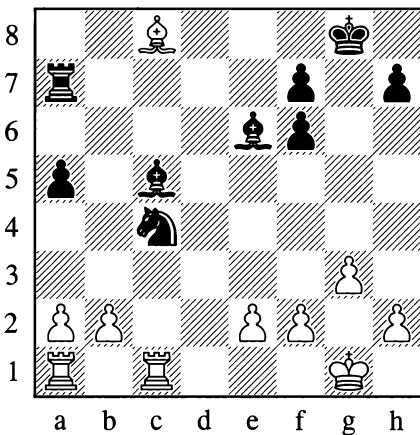
White missed a chance:

**24. ♖xb7!**

Always examine all checks and captures. White surely considered this, but missed the best follow-up after ...♖a7.

**24...♖a7**

24...♖b8 25.♖a6, and White's material advantage wins the day.

**25. ♖c8!!**

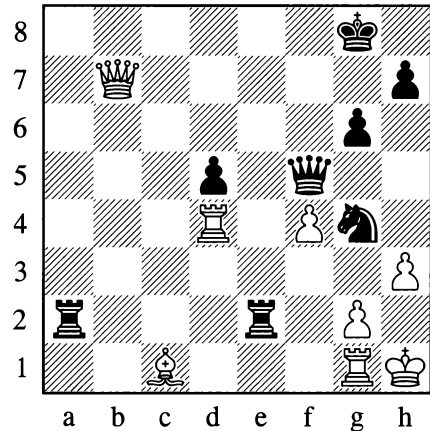
The key candidate to consider. Black's position crumbles immediately, and once ♖b7-c8 has been seen, there really is not even that much to calculate.

**25...♖c7 26. ♖xe6 fxe6**

White has a material advantage and Black's pieces are awkward on the c-file. White should win.

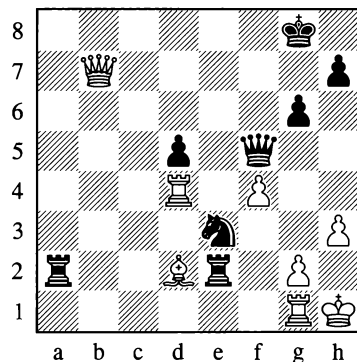
**58. Lukas Cernousek – Vojtech Zwardon**

Czech Republic 2021



The hardest part about candidate moves is frequently that they can come at any moment. Forcing yourself to find a candidate move in the position in front of you is often not that difficult. When they come somewhere down the line of a variation, they can be tougher to spot. Here, Black missed a candidate on move two.

31...♖e3? was played. White's defense is difficult, and Black did eventually win. But the saving move was available to him, if only he could find it. Surprisingly, Black has nothing special after: 32.♖d2!!



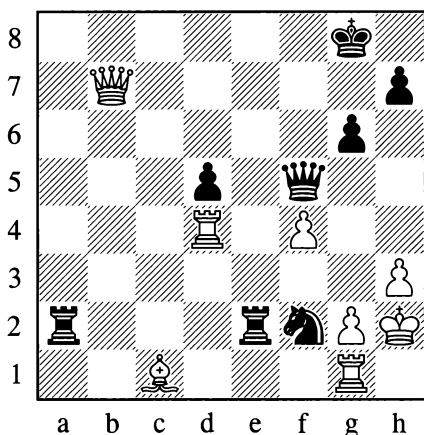
32...♖axd2 (32...♜xg2 33.♖c1! ♜xh3†  
34.♔g1 and White is winning, as he has too  
many threats) 33.♖xd2 ♖xd2 34.♖a1! With  
counterplay, as the black king is exposed.

31...♜f2†!

Black presumably saw this one, but missed  
the next move.

32.♔h2

Black is now able to finish the game in  
spectacular style.

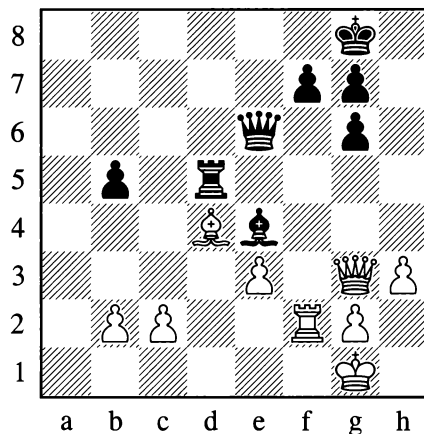


32...♜xh3†!! 33.gxh3 ♜e4† 34.♖g2  
Or 34.♔h1 ♖h2#.

34...♖xg2† 35.♔h1 ♜g3#  
0-1

## 59. Szymon Gumularz – Krzysztof Jakubowski

Warsaw (rapid) 2021



33.♜b8†!

Always examine all checks and captures!

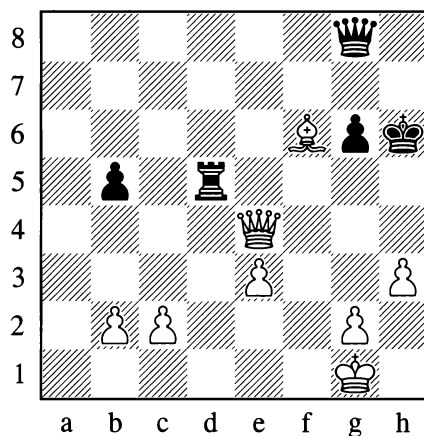
33...♔h7 34.♜f8!

The game saw: 34.♜f4 f6 Black eventually  
lost, but he should be fine here.

34...f6 35.♖xf6!

A case of examining all checks and captures  
again. White probably saw this but missed a  
detail down the road.

35...gxf6 36.♔xf6 ♜g8 37.♜e7†! ♔h6  
38.♜xe4!



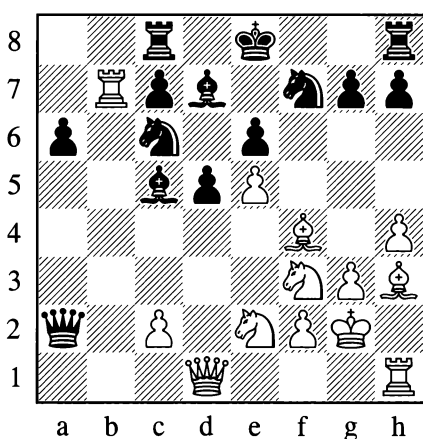
This is strong and simple. White doesn't mate directly, but grabbing the bishop is quite sufficient.

**38...g5 39.♙d4**

White is winning. An army of foot soldiers will soon be on the march.

### 60. Felix Klein – Maximilian Meinhardt

Germany 2021



This was the first exercise in the Candidates chapter that I got wrong.

I thought 16.♙b3, which was played in the game, was best. White is a bit better here, but the game goes on. Black eventually even won after 16...0-0 17.♙e1 ♜cd8. A real chance was missed.

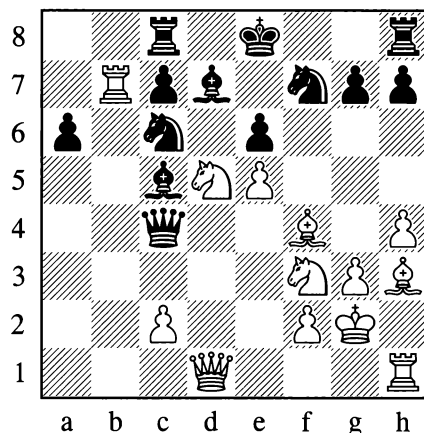
**16.♜c3!**

This is obvious enough, but again, candidate moves can come on move two just as easily as they can come on move one.

**16...♞c4**

A series of captures and checks follows the alternative queen move: 16...♞c4 17.♜xd5 exd5 18.♙xd7+ ♜xd7 19.♞xd5+ ♜e7 20.♙g5+ ♜xg5 21.♜xg5 Black's defenses have been decisively breached.

**17.♜xd5!!**



The point. White's knight is immune from capture thanks to e5-e6, and Black is in big trouble.

**17...0-0**

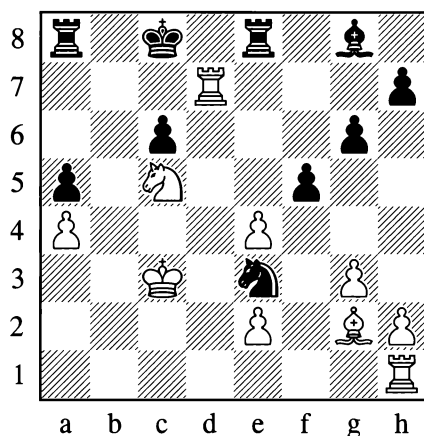
17...♞xd5 18.♞xd5 exd5 19.e6 results in a heavy loss of material for Black.

**18.♜f6+ gxf6 19.♞xd7**

White is winning. The pawn on e6 is falling and the black kingside is catastrophically weak.

### 61. Alexander Donchenko – Oleg Vastrukhin

Warsaw (rapid) 2021



Another difficult kind of candidate move is when one of your pieces is under attack. You have it in your power to save it, but the best option is to let it go for an even greater reward.

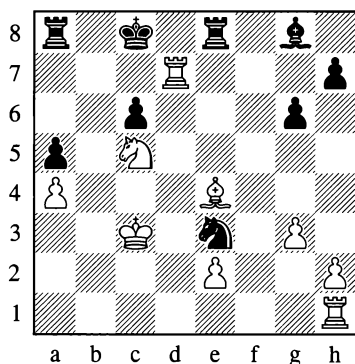
28.♙f3??

This was the move in the game. This seems natural enough, but it lets a key chance go by. Ironically, it does not even save the bishop!

28...fxe4! 29.♙xe4

It is too late for 29.♖b1, as Black gets the d5-square. 29...exf3 30.♖b6 ♜d5†, and Black wins.

The white knight is now overworked:

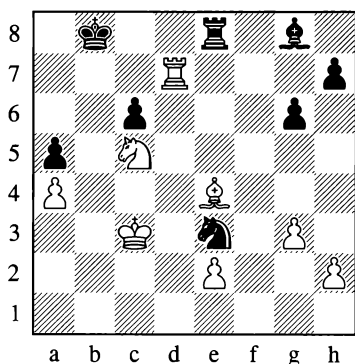


29...♖xe4! 30.♙g7 ♖e8

White resigned. 0–1

28.♖b1!! ♜xg2

28...♖b8 29.♖xb8† ♜xb8 30.♙f3 Now and only now, White saves his bishop. By dragging Black's king to b8, after: 30...fxe4 31.♙xe4



We see that the rook is not loose on d7 anymore. White should win with his superior activity.

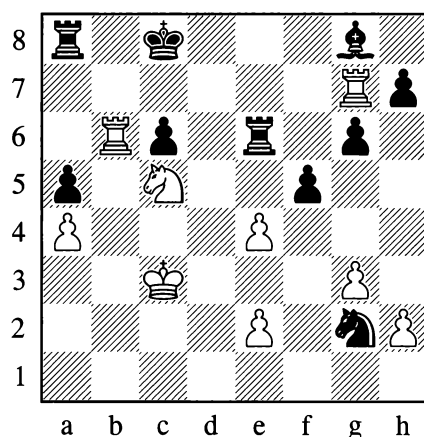
29.♖b6!

Black is crushed.

29...♖e6

The only way to avoid mate, though after:

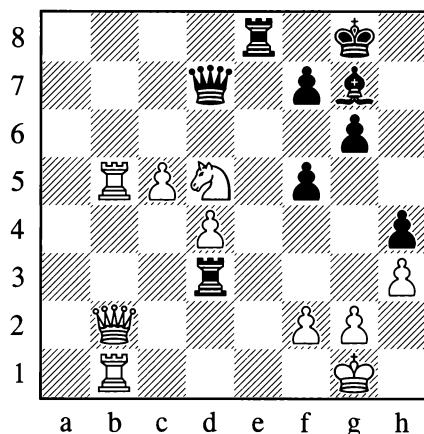
30.♙g7



Black may as well resign anyway. Loose pieces drop off.

## 62. Pere Garriga Cazorla – Johan Goormachtigh

Sitges 2021



28.♖b8?

This was too cooperative. White eventually won with this move anyway, but Black would have been fine with any number of moves.

28...♙xd4

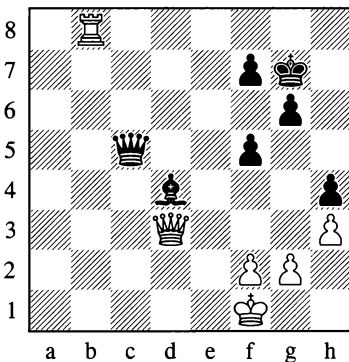
This looks the easiest to me.

28...♖xd4? was played, and now White did not miss his chance. 29.c6! The pawn is immune thanks to a check on e7.

29.♖e2 ♖xb8 30.♖xb8† ♔g7 31.♖xd3 ♖xd5  
Since Black is threatening 32...♙xf2†, picking up the queen, White loses the pride of his position on c5. After:

32.♔f1 ♖xc5

I cannot imagine Black losing this position if queens remain on the board. White's king is much more open.



Instead, all White needs to do to win is get his c-pawn moving. It is blocked for the moment, but that can be fixed with a small tactic:

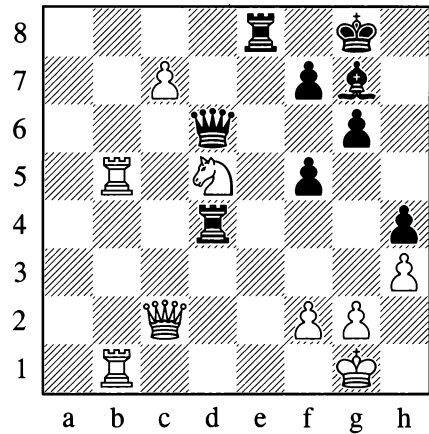
28.♖c2!

White wins a tempo on the rook.

28...♖xd4 29.c6

It is as simple as that.

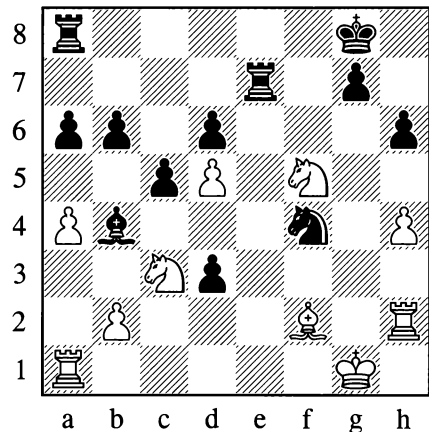
29...♖d6 30.c7



♖b5-b8 next decides the game quickly.

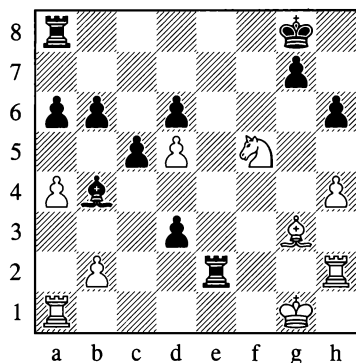
### 63. Dorian Rogozenco – Toms Kantans

Germany 2021



Seeing defensive candidate moves for the opponent is just as important as any other kind of candidate move.

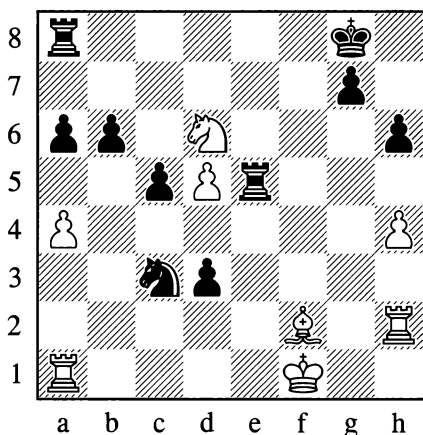
28...♙e2†? was played. After 29.♙xe2 ♖xe2, White's position does look miserable and he went on to lose, but had he found: 30.♙g3! Things would not have been so clear.



28...♖e5!

The only reason this move is remotely difficult is that ...♘e2† looks so tempting. But, once you see White's defense and look for other options, ...♖e5 starts to look very appealing.

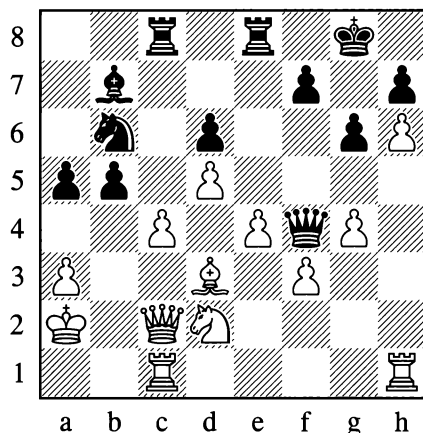
29.♘xd6 ♗xc3! 30.bxc3 ♘e2† 31.♙f1 ♘xc3



Black's d-pawn should decide the game in short order.

## 64. Maxim Matlakov – Bilel Bellahcene

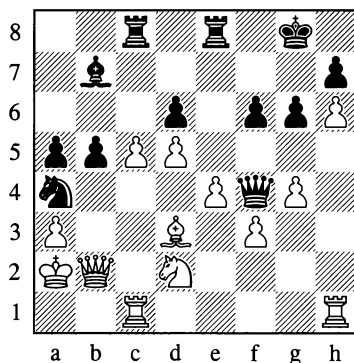
Warsaw (rapid) 2021



Structurally speaking, White would love to play c4-c5, force Black to take with the pawn and then take on b5. This would leave him with a monster passed pawn on d5 and prospects for tactics on the b-file. It would close the c-file, which is something of a nuisance for him. It might not look like we can play c4-c5, but always ask: *what happens if I do it anyway?*

26.c5!!

26.♙b2 was played in the game. It is not bad, but Black is still fighting after 26...f6. He eventually made a draw. The point is that c4-c5 is now not working. 27.c5? ♘a4! wins for Black.





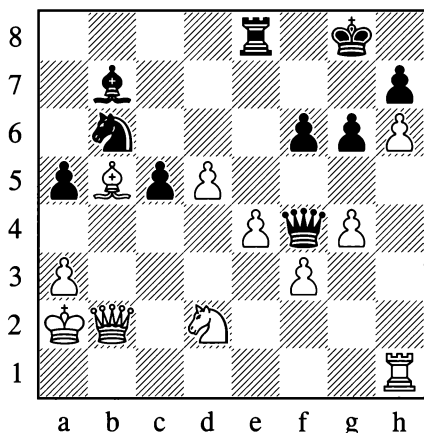
26...♖xc5

26...dxc5 27.♙xb5, and White has everything he wants.

27.♖b2!

Now and only now.

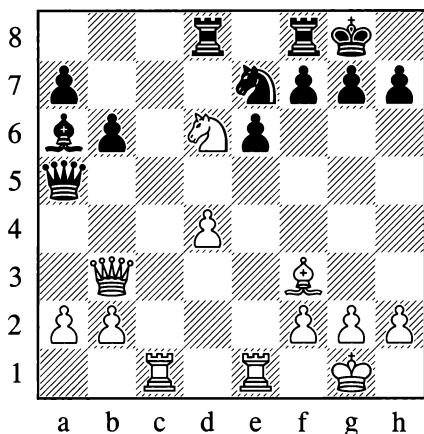
27...f6 28.♖xc5 dxc5 29.♙xb5



White is winning. His structural goals have been achieved.

## 65. Martin Hollan – Jiri Rydl

Czech Republic 2022



This exercise is also about defensive candidate moves.

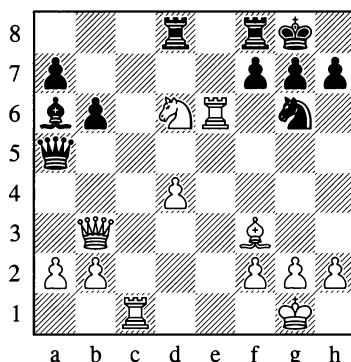
20.♖xe6?

This is crying out to be played, but is it best? White's idea is apparent after 20...fxe6 21.♖xe6+ ♔h8 22.♖xe7, followed by ♖c1-c7, winning.

Black immediately crumbled in the game with 20...♖g5? 21.♖e3! ♖xe3 22.♖xe3. White is a pawn up and eventually won.

But Black could have reversed the tables:

20...♙g6!



Ice cold. Now ...f7xe6 is a legitimate threat, and the rook cannot escape. Black wins a piece.

20.♖e5!

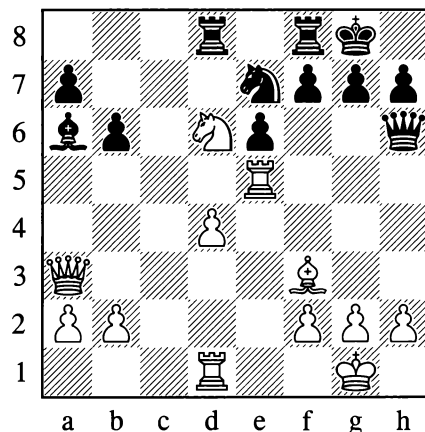
Black's queen is in trouble.

20...♖d2

20...b5 21.♙xb5 and White is a pawn up.

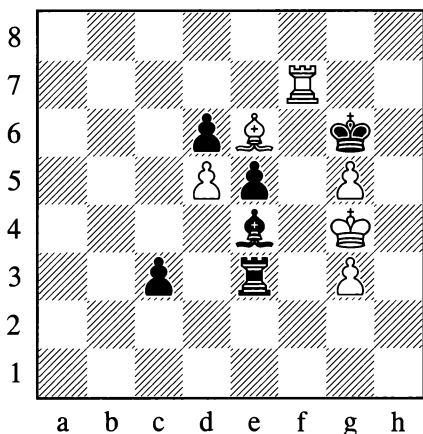
21.♖d1! ♖h6 22.♖a3

Black is facing direct threats and should drop some material.



**66. Gergely Kantor – Anton Demchenko**

Warsaw (rapid) 2021



Black's c-pawn should surely win him the game if he can avoid a perpetual check with ♖f7-f6-f7 etc.

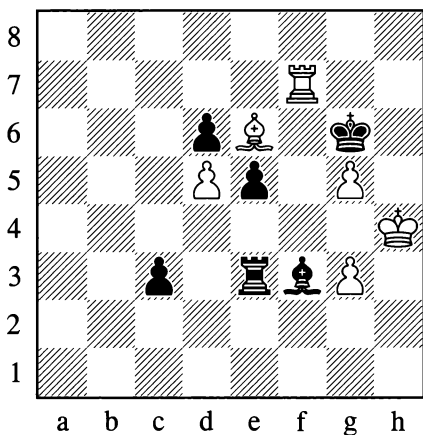
**45...♙f3†!**

An important check. White's king must be kicked away.

**46.♙h4**

The bishop is immune from capture: 46.♞xf3 ♞xf3 47.♙xf3 c2 Inevitable graduation.

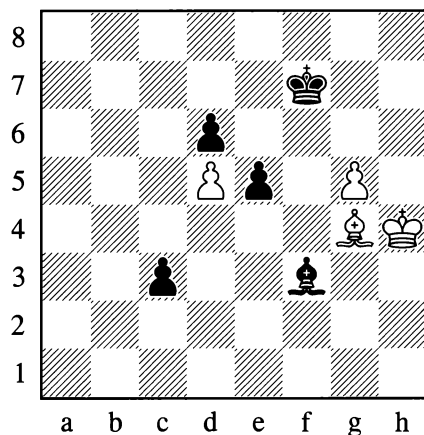
Now Black saw nothing better than allowing a perpetual: 46...c2? 47.♞f6† ♙g7 48.♞f7† ♙g6 49.♞f6† ♙g7 50.♞f7† ½–½ But examine all checks and captures:

**46...♞e4†! 47.g4**

47.♙h3 c2 48.♞c7 ♞e2 Game over.

**47...♞xg4†!**

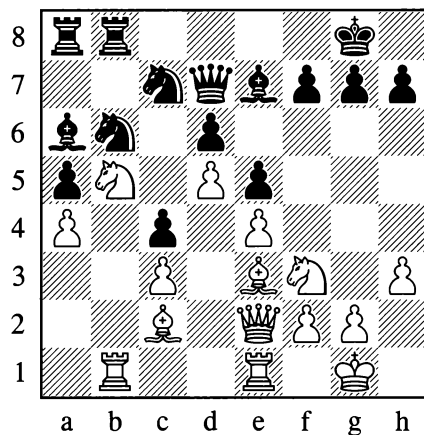
The point.

**48.♙xg4 ♙xf7**

The c-pawn is unstoppable.

**67. Jorden van Foreest – Daniil Dubov**

Warsaw (rapid) 2021



White should realize that if his b5-knight moves out of the way, then the b6-knight behind it will hang. It turns out that even if he does not take material right away, executing

this idea wins on the spot. I solved this one, but it took a lot of willpower once I saw Black's defensive idea.

## 22. ♖a7!!

The game ended in a draw after 45 moves following 22. ♖xb6?! ♜xb6 23. ♖a3.

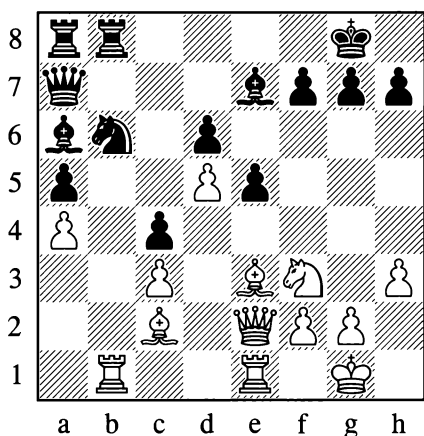
## 22... ♖cxd5!

I imagine this is what Van Foreest was worried about.

White wins routinely after 22... ♜xa7, with 23. ♖xb6 ♜ab7 24. ♖xa5.

## 23. exd5 ♜xa7

It looks like White has lost a pawn, but now Black's pieces are all sidelined on the queenside. Another candidate move wins the day.



## 24. ♖xe5!! dxe5 25. ♜h5! g6

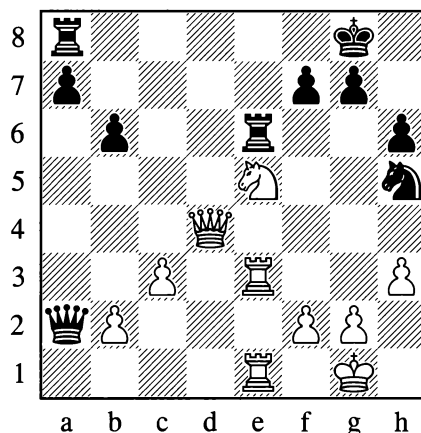
Similar to the main line is 25... h6 26. ♜f5 g6 27. ♜xe5.

## 26. ♜xe5

♞e3-d4 is coming and Black is crushed.

## 68. Dimitris Alexakis – Viktor Boev

Plovdiv 2021



One should always remember to use the whole board. It looks like all the action is happening on the kingside. In fact, White can disturb Black's defenses by making an unrelated threat on the other side of the board.

## 23. c4!

♞e3-a3 is a huge threat. Black's queen must evacuate.

## 23... ♜a5

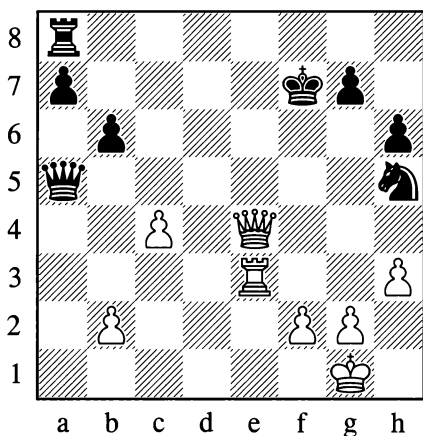
23... ♜ae8 allows the winning execution of the threat: 24. ♜a3

White missed a tactical candidate move with 24. ♜d7? ♜f8. Black was fine, though he eventually lost anyway.

## 24. ♖xf7!

Boom.

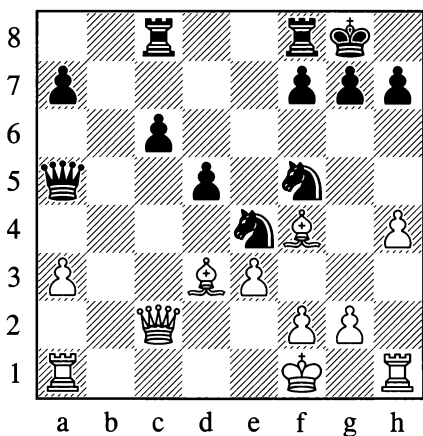
## 24... ♜xe3 25. ♜xe3 ♞xf7 26. ♜e4!



The final important detail. Funnily enough, Black is either mated or he loses his rook on the spot! There is nowhere for it to hide: 26...♖c8 27.♙e6†, 26...♘d8 27.♙e6† ♕f8 28.♙e7† or 26...♘b8 27.♙e6† ♕f8 28.♙d6†.

### 69. S.P. Sethuraman – Pranav Anand

Sitges 2021



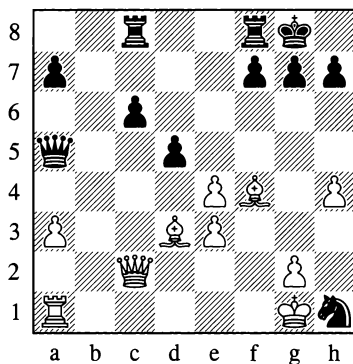
### 19.f3!

Candidate moves at their finest. This move looks ridiculous since it allows Black to use the g3-square. But once you consider it, the details are straightforward.

White eventually won anyway after 19.g4? ♖e7 20.f3 f5!, but the position is unclear.

### 19...♖eg3†

The other knight check also ends in misery: 19...♖fg3† 20.♔g1 ♖xh1 21.fxe4, and the knight is trapped in the corner.



### 20.♔g1 g6

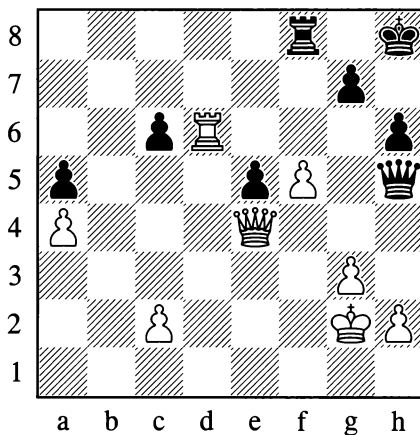
Taking on h1 allows ♖d3xf5, forking c8 and h7, while the knight on h1 remains trapped.

### 21.♖h3

A material harvest follows and White wins.

### 70. David Kanovsky – Jakob Roubalik

Czech Republic 2021



White can gain an extra pawn with 35.♙xe5?! ♖xf5 36.♖xh6† ♙xh6 37.♙xf5. White surely has practical chances here even when the machine claims equality, but he can do so much better.

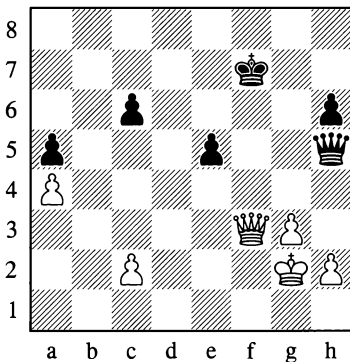
35.g4? was played. White is better here and went on to win, but would you beat Carlsen? He missed an immediate knockout.

White would love to tear open Black's king. It is impossible to play f5-f6 because Black has the square under control, but what is the first question we ask ourselves?

### 35.f6!! gxf6

Clearly, Black is mated after: 35...♖xf6 36.♞d8† ♜f8 37.♞xf8#

White wins the pawn endgame after: 35...♙g8!? 36.fxg7 ♕xg7 37.♞d7† ♜f7 38.♞xf7† ♕xf7 39.♙f3† The outside passed pawn will decide.



### 36.♞d7!

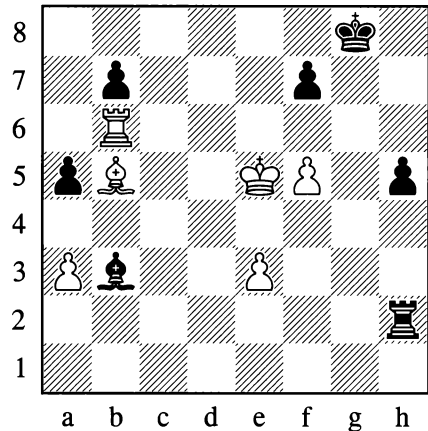
The mate threat on h7 cannot be effectively met.

### 36...♜f7 37.g4!

The point. Black loses material.

## 71. Mateusz Bartel – Lorenzo Lodici

Terme Catez 2022



A key tenet of calculation mentioned in the introduction was to be wary of automatic moves. The pawn on b7 looks so tasty, but patience is a virtue.

### 35.♞xb7?

This was played. It squanders a key tempo White could have used to keep Black's king in the box.

### 35...a4! 36.♙f6

It is too late for 36.♞d3. Black's king escapes with 36...♙g7!, and he should be fine.

36.f6 ♕h7! and again, Black's king can breathe.

### 36...♞d2 37.♙g5 ♜g2† 38.♙h6 ♕f8

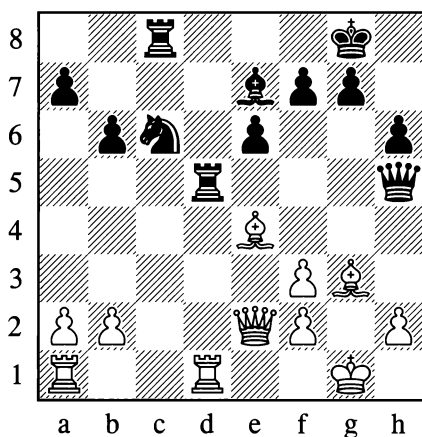
The game was eventually drawn.

### 35.♞d3! a4 36.f6!

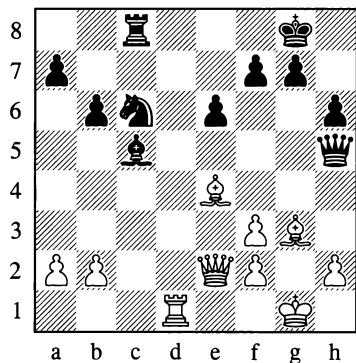
Black's king is in a mating net. There is nothing he can do about White's rook reaching the back rank.

## 72. Luka Paichadze – Novendra Priasmoro

Internet 2020



Black missed a chance here by playing 21...♖xd1?!. After 22.♖xd1 ♕c5, the position is not totally clear, but White did clarify it with his next move.



23.♞b5?? ♕xf2† 0-1

The move screaming to be played is 21...♗d4. If we have a little restraint, we notice that Black will have some problems to solve once White's queen moves. That said, we should always ask... well, you know the question by now.

21...♗d4!

Now, Black should be ready for both ♞e2-e3 as well as ♞e2-a6, but he is good to go in both cases.

22.♞a6

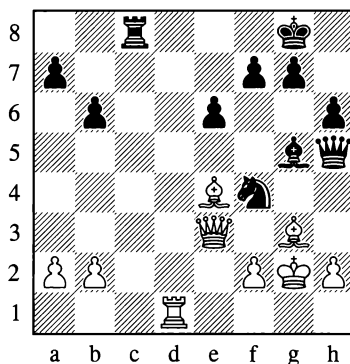
22.♞e3 ♕g5!

White's queen is short of squares and moving his f-pawn is fatal.

23.f4

23.♞a3 ♖d7 and Black is easily winning with his extra pawn.

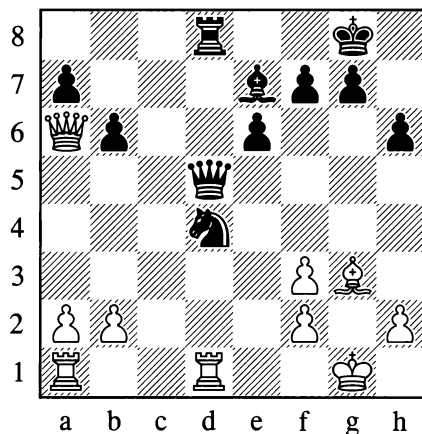
23...♗e2†! 24.♗g2 ♖xd1 25.♖xd1 ♗xf4†!



The loose rook on d1 proves to be White's undoing.

After 22.♞a6, Black's rooks are hanging 22...♖dd8 would be a grave error, as it would allow 23.♖xd4, when the rook on d8 will suddenly be overworked. This points to:

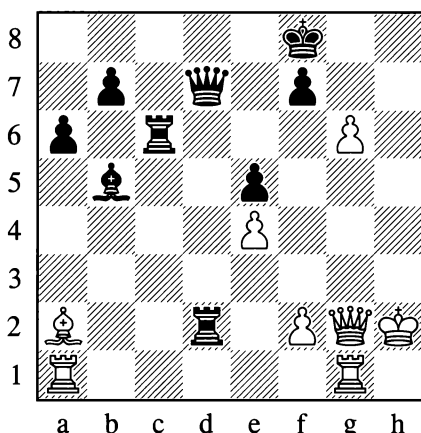
22...♖cd8! 23.♕xd5 ♞xd5



White's extra exchange is of no consequence. His king is too weak.

### 73. Ashot Parvanyan – Gengchum Wong

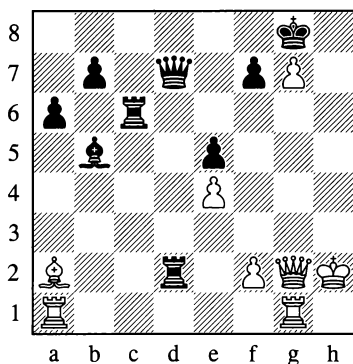
Germany 2021



Perhaps the hardest candidate moves to spot are quiet moves, in positions where it looks like something direct should be the way.

White played 35.♔xf7? and eventually won anyway, but this position is not clear. In fact, after 35...♖g7, he must find 36.♞g3! to not lose immediately.

35.g7† does not work just yet, since after 35...♖g8:



White is not ready to take on f7, and a check on h6 next will not feel great.

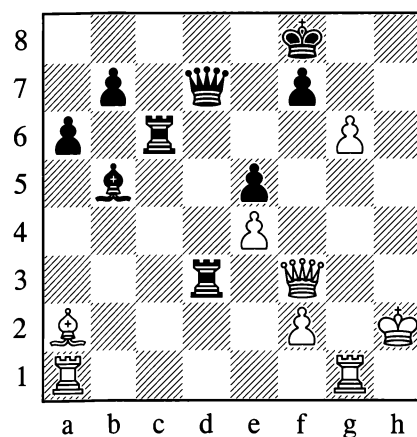
35.♞f3!!

Simple, calm, devastating. There is nothing Black can do about g6-g7† coming next, with a breakthrough on f7.

35...♞d3

35...♖e7 loses trivially to 36.♞xf7† ♔d8 37.♞f8† ♖c7 38.♔d5.

35...♖g8 would be a way to use prophylaxis against g6-g7. Indeed, that would not win. But more or less every other legal move does! For example, 36.♞xf7† ♞xf7 37.gxf7† ♖f8 38.♞g8† looks rather convincing.

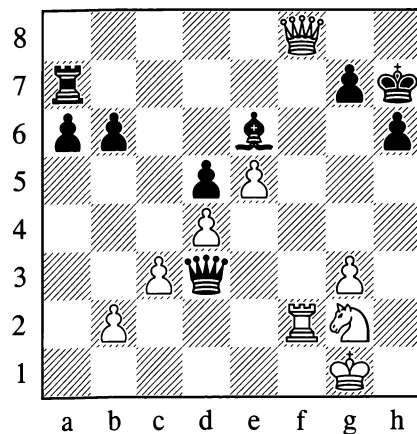


36.g7† ♖g8 37.♞xf7†

Game over.

### 74. Michael Adams – Luke McShane

Germany 2022



32.♔h2?

The move chosen looks natural, but Black now has one move to defend himself against the threat of ♖f8-e8 coming next. He found the only way.

32...♞d1! 33.♞e8 ♜f7!

The check on h5 saves the day. Black is fine here.

34.♘f4 ♞g4 35.♔g2 ♜xf4 36.♞xf4 ♞e2†  
37.♞f2 ♔h3† 38.♔xh3 ♞xf2

Black has enough counterplay against the white king to draw.

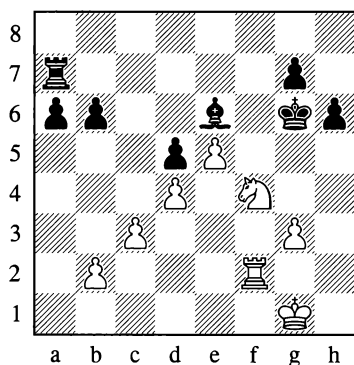
32.♞e8!

It is hard to leave something undefended when you have the power to save it. But that is exactly what White must do here.

32...♔f5

White wins the endgame easily after:

32...♞g6 33.♞xg6† ♔xg6 34.♘f4†



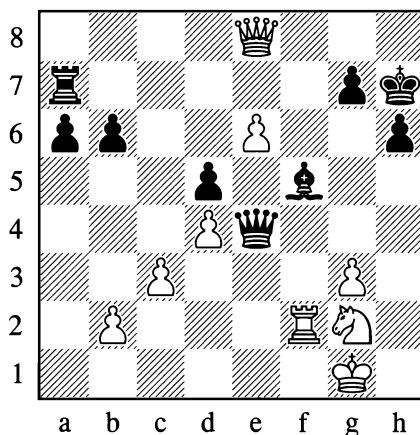
The pawn on d5 falls next.

33.e6!

Black's position is overloaded. He cannot defend against both the mate threats and the e-pawn at the same time. Adams may have seen this far and disliked:

33...♞e4

But then a very beautiful candidate move ends the game.



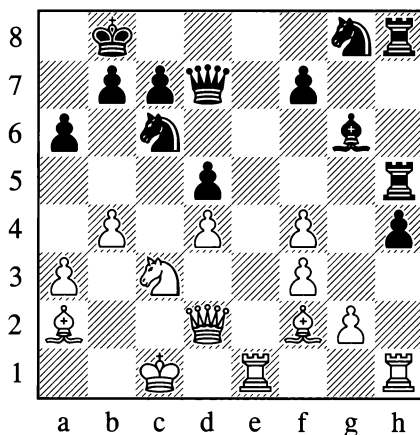
34.♞f7!!

To be fair, ♞e8-b8 does win too. I have never cared much about beauty points... but come on.

Beauty in the mirror arises after 33...♔g6 34.♞d7!.

## 75. Aleksandar Indjic – Parham Maghsoodloo

Belgrade 2022



White has a chance to strike while the iron is hot. He would love to push f4-f5 to gain space and destabilize Black's pieces, but this hangs the pawn in three different ways. What happens if I do it anyway?

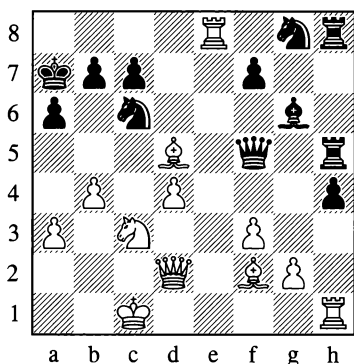
29.f5!!



There is no good way to take on f5. Taking with the rook drops h4, and otherwise, d5 drops. Maghsoodloo found the best response, but he was still clearly worse.

### 29...♖xf5

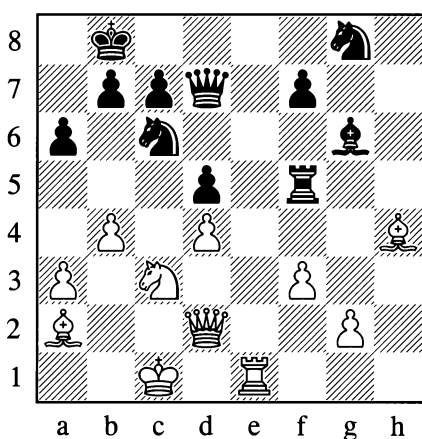
The worst of the three captures is 29...♝xf5. 30.♖e8†! ♕a7 31.♗xd5



Black will soon face d4-d5† and is immediately crushed.

29...♗xf5 is also unpleasant: 30.♖xd5!

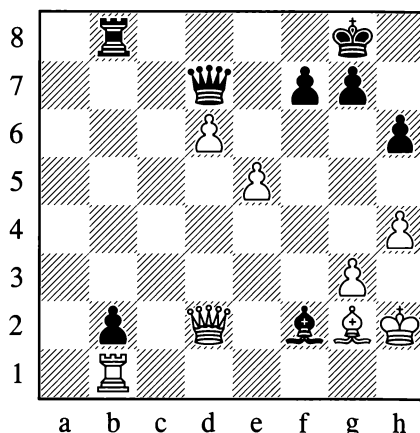
### 30.♖xh4 ♖xh4 31.♗xh4



White has fixed his semi-deficient pawn structure and has a very favorable position thanks to his bishop pair and more active pieces. He went on to win.

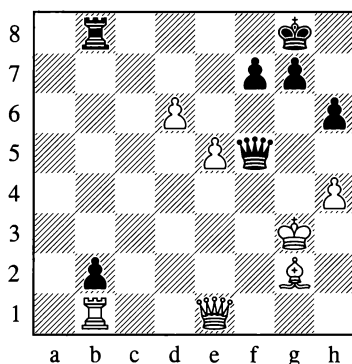
## 76. Vincent Keymer – Ding Liren

Internet 2022



Black has an obvious enough tactical idea, but it is important to get the move order right. Something even the second-best player in the world did not manage to do!

39...♗xg3†? is the right idea, wrong move order. 40.♕xg3 ♝f5 41.♝e1! It is good that this move is possible!



White is even a little better here, though he did eventually go on to lose.

By starting with ...♝f5, Black makes sure that White cannot play ♝d2-e1 in response:

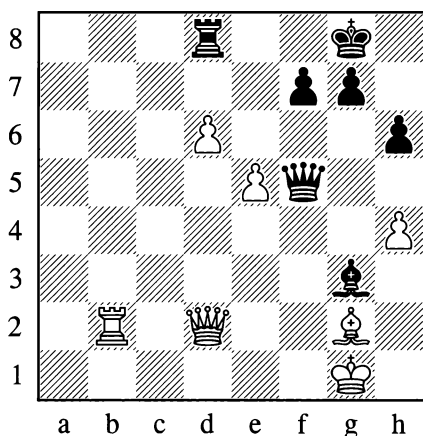
### 39...♝f5! 40.♖xb2

And now, examine all checks and captures.

40...♙xg3†! 41.♙g1

Black wins the rook after 41.♙xg3 ♜xe5†.

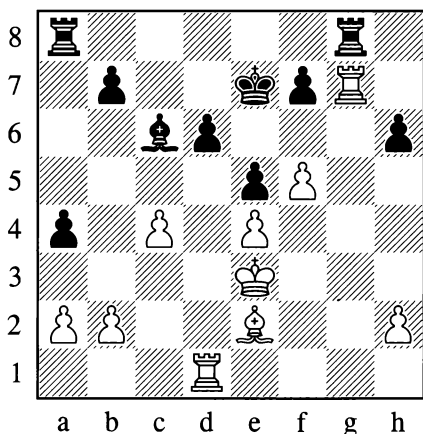
41...♞d8



It is likely that White will lose all three of his pawns in the next ten moves or so. He will be lucky to only lose two, which will certainly not save the game anyway.

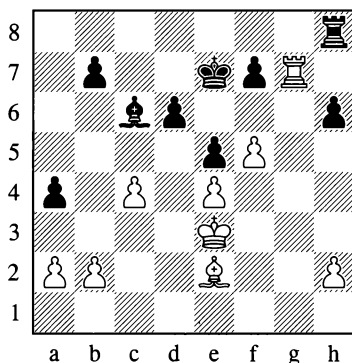
## 77. Boris Gelfand – Peter Svidler

Internet 2020



For the moment, it might look like White is unable to avoid the exchange of rooks. However, it turns out he can if he thinks a little creatively.

31.♞dg1? was played. A natural move, but not best. 31...♞xg7 32.♞xg7 ♞h8!



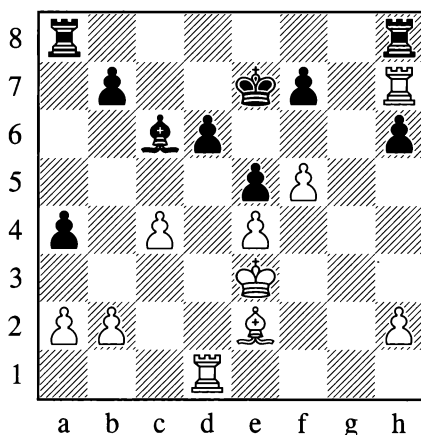
Black can always meet ♙h5 with ...♙e8, and is ready to expel the active rook with ...♙f6 next. White is marginally for choice, but Svidler had no trouble saving the game.

31.♞h7!

This move looks pointless as Black will obviously continue with ...♞h8. But always remember to look for candidate moves.

31...♞h8

Otherwise, Black loses his h-pawn. And now we see the idea.



32.f6†!

The right moment. If Black takes the pawn, ♞d1-f1† is immediately decisive, thanks in

no small part to the rook not being on the hanging g7-square!

31.f6? earlier was too soon. After 31...♔xf6!, the rook on g7 is loose and White lacks a check on f1. Black is fine.

### 32...♔xf6

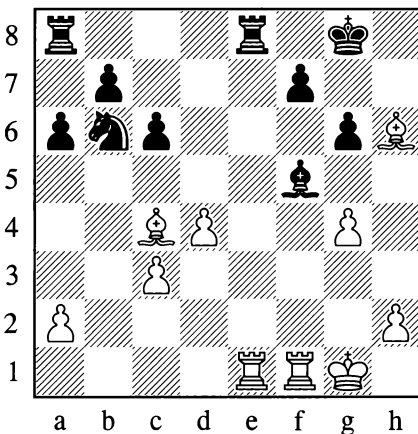
Everything wins after 32...♔e6, but the most sadistic is surely 33.♖f1!, when Black is immediately crushed by the threat of ♕g4.

### 33.♖f1+

White is ready to take on f7 next and is totally winning, thanks to his superior activity.

## 78. Craig Hilby – Borki Predojevic

Internet 2020



This one is a double candidate move, which makes it even harder!

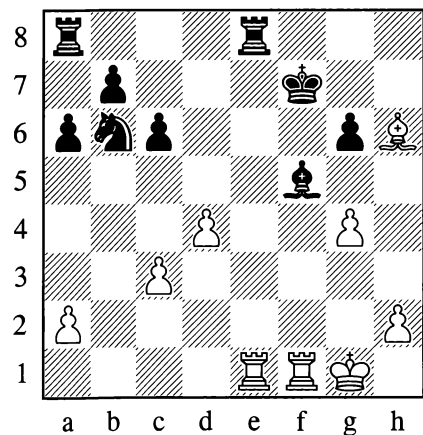
The game continuation, 20.♕b3?, was not inspiring. After 20...♞xe1 21.♞xe1 ♕xg4 22.♞e7 ♖d5 23.♕xd5, the position is equal, and in fact was agreed drawn right here.

### 20.♕xf7!

The start of a lovely combination. It is not so easy to consider a desperado, but this is the easy part which White probably did notice. The follow-up is harder.

### 20...♔xf7

White just gave up a piece. It seems obvious to take it back on f5, but always be wary of automatic moves and look for candidates!



### 21.♞b1!

Hitting the knight and leaving the bishop on f5 for the moment. White can take it at his leisure. Black should be okay after 21.gxf5 gxf5, as his king has an excellent square on g6.

### 21...♖d5 22.♞xb7!

We see that Black's position is falling apart because he does not have access to the g6-square for his king. White's reward for being patient about taking on f5!

### 22...♞e7

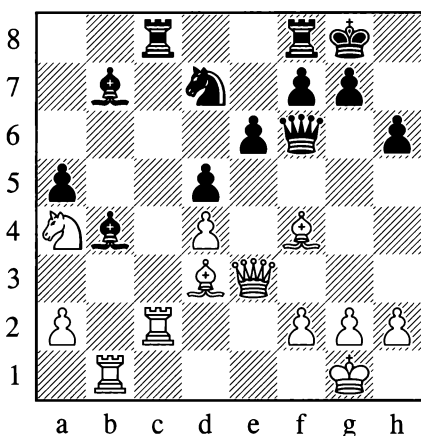
This is the best the machine can find.

### 23.♞xe7+ ♖xe7 24.♕g5!

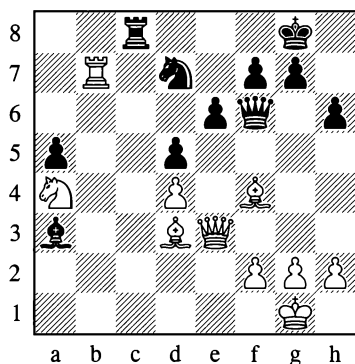
Patience to the end. White should win.

## 79. Santosh Gujrathi Vidit – Gleb Dudin

Warsaw (rapid) 2021



The tempting 21.a3 was chosen by Vidit in the game. It was my proposed solution as well. But Black had a surprising resource: 21... $\text{Bxc2!}$  22. $\text{Qxc2}$   $\text{Bc8!}$  23. $\text{Qd3}$   $\text{Qxa3!}$  And here, when calculating from afar, I had missed that after 24. $\text{Bxb7}$ :



24... $\text{Qc1!}$  Black was back in the game. I suspect Vidit missed the same thing. Eventually the game was drawn.

White is a pawn down and the inclination is to be as direct as possible. In fact, he can wait one move to shut down Black's pieces before he starts direct hostilities:

### 21. $\text{Qc7!!}$

Black can barely move and a2-a3 is a huge threat.

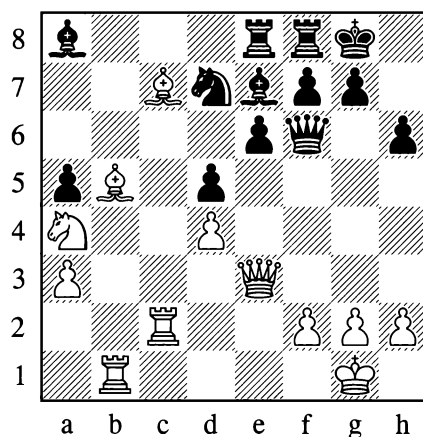
### 21... $\text{Qa8}$

What else? a2-a3 was threatened.

### 22. $\text{Qa6! Bce8}$

Best is 22... $\text{Bxc7}$ , but it is hard to imagine Black has enough for the exchange after 23. $\text{Bxc7}$ .

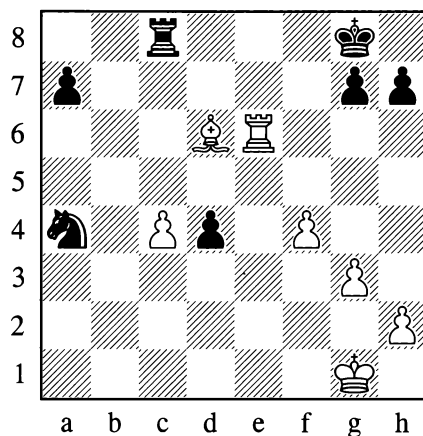
### 23. a3! $\text{Qe7}$ 24. $\text{Qb5!}$



White wins material.

## 80. Susanto Megaranto – Govindan Gogan

Sitges 2021



As we often see, one of the toughest types of candidate moves to find is avoiding the obvious.

35...♞xc4? was played in the game, and despite imperfect play from here, White saved it without much trouble: 36.f5 ♞c8 37.♔f2 ♖c5 38.♞e7 d3 39.♙xc5 ♞xc5 40.♞xa7 ♞xf5† 41.♔e3 ♞d5 42.♔d2 h6 43.♞a3 The game soon ended in a draw.

### 35...d3!

It looks so natural to take on c4, and it seems like White should have the d-pawn under control with his king. But if you force yourself to consider ...d4-d3, it turns out to work very well.

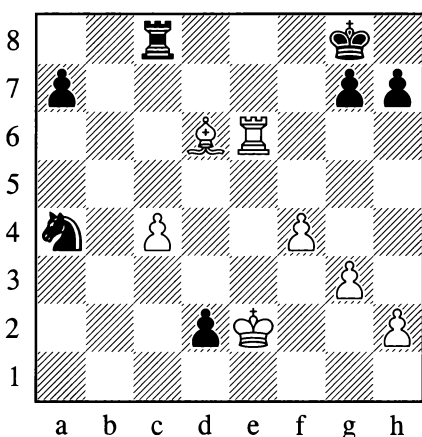
### 36.♔f2

This is the move one should fear when evaluating ...d4-d3.

36.♞e3 loses to 36...♖b2.

### 36...d2! 37.♔e2

Now the point is revealed:



### 37...♞d8!!

A difficult candidate move to spot from afar. Black wins after either plausible king move:

### 38.♔xd2

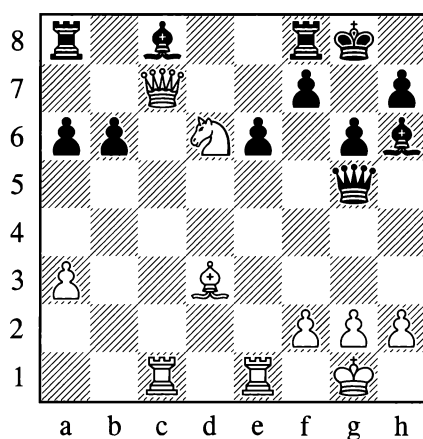
38.♔d1 ♖b2†! 39.♔xd2 ♞xd6† 40.♞xd6 ♖xc4† winning.

### 38...♖c5

White is completely helpless to avoid losing a piece.

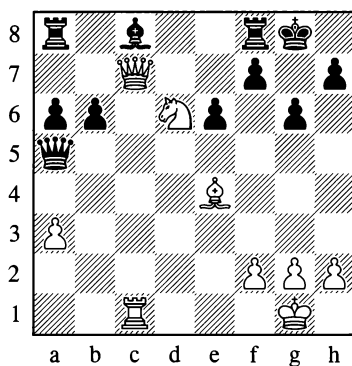
## 81. Pentala Harikrishna – Vahap Sanal

Warsaw (rapid) 2021



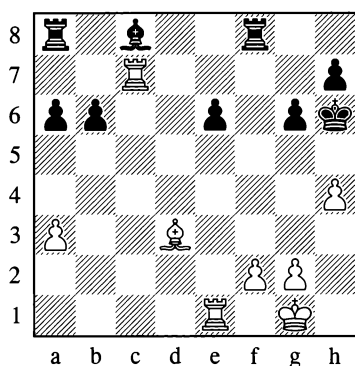
Black is two pawns up with a healthy bishop pair. If he can consolidate his position, he should win easily. But ♙d3-e4 is coming next and it is hard to find a move.

Black chose 26...♙a5? in the game. He eventually won, but here he was worse and he missed a chance. 27.♙e4! ♙xc1 28.♞xc1



Black must play ...♙b7, and White was slightly better with two good pieces for a rook.

The natural 26...♖d8? fails to a tactical response. Always examine all checks and captures! 27.♘xf7! ♜xc7 28.♘xh6† ♔g7 29.♝xc7† ♕xh6 30.h4!



Black will get mated.

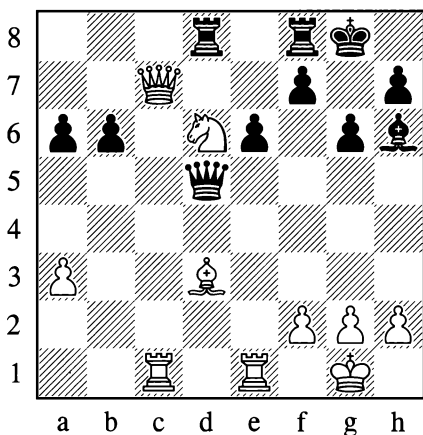
But remember, what is the move you really want to make, and what happens if I do it anyway?

### 26...♙d7!!

Black wants to move his bishop to develop it. It turns out it is safe to place it on d7, thanks to the tactics on the d-file.

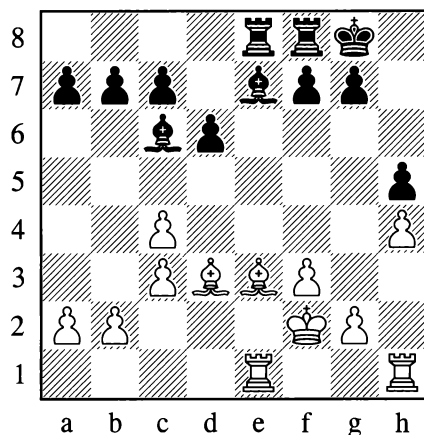
### 27.♖xd7 ♜ad8! 28.♖c7 ♖d5!

White loses the piece back and the game.



## 82. Nikola Nestorovic – Pavel Tregubov

Germany 2021



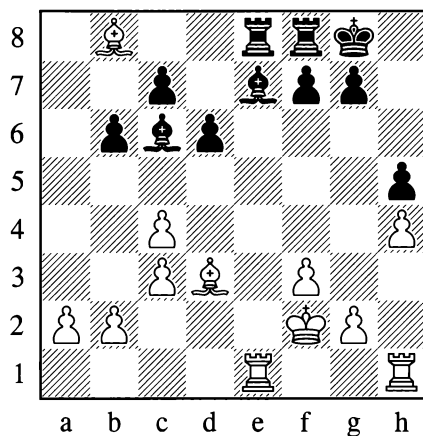
Now, a key tenet of calculation that we always see: examine all checks and captures!

### 17.♙a7

Anyone who was traumatized by Fischer's pawn grab on h2 should know this is a bad idea. Although if you force yourself to consider it, and to see the next move, White is in great shape.

Black was slightly better after 17.♙g5 ♙xg5 18.hxg5 g6, and the game was ultimately drawn.

### 17...b6 18.♙b8!



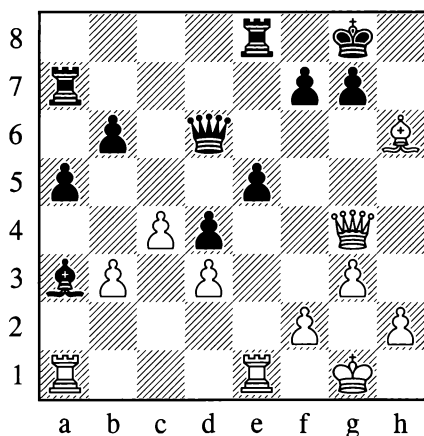
The whole point, and a pleasing candidate move. The bishop will not be captured.

18...♙d8 19.g3

White is much better. His bishop is clearly safe from any immediate attack, and Black's bishop on d8 does not look any better. In the meantime, White is a pawn up and can start a queenside advance to eventually break the bishop out of the pawn wall.

### 83. Vladislav Artemiev – Thai Dai Van Nguyen

Warsaw (rapid) 2021



This one is just a simple candidate move.

24...♜f5!

Not too hard. Black defends g7 with a gain of tempo and should win material.

Black chose 24...♞xh6 in the game which was nothing special. He eventually went on to lose this roughly equal position after 25.♞xa3.

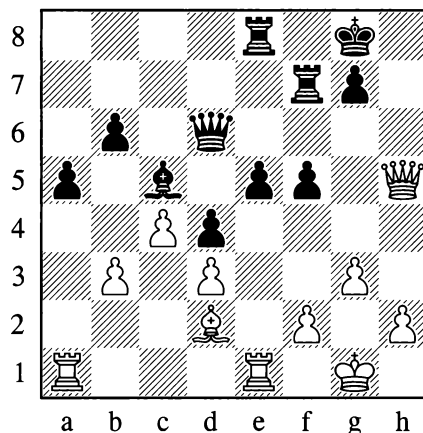
25.♞h5

Gaining a tempo on the rook on e8 is the best try, but still miserable.

25.♞xf5 ♙b4!

The point. White loses heavy material right away.

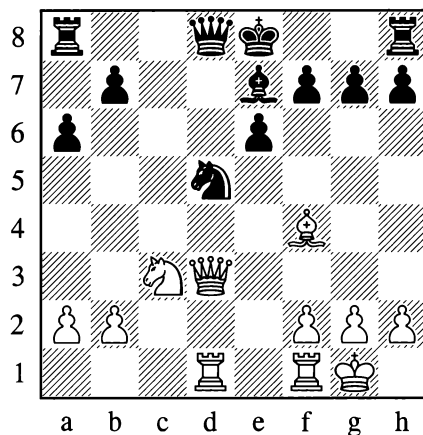
25...♞f7 26.♙d2 ♙c5



White managed to avoid losing material immediately. But he lost a lot of time, worsened his coordination, and ...e5-e4 is coming next. Black should win.

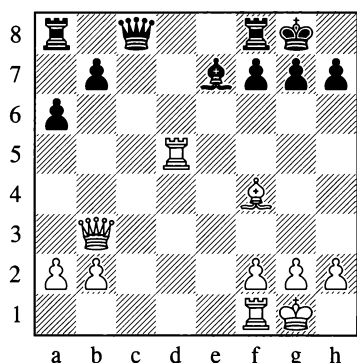
### 84. Vladislav Artemiev – Hikaru Nakamura

Internet 2021



When you have a guy as tricky and resourceful as Hikaru Nakamura on the ropes, trust me, you want to knock him out right away.

The game saw 17.♙xd5? exd5 18.♞b3 0–0 19.♞xd5 ♞c8!.

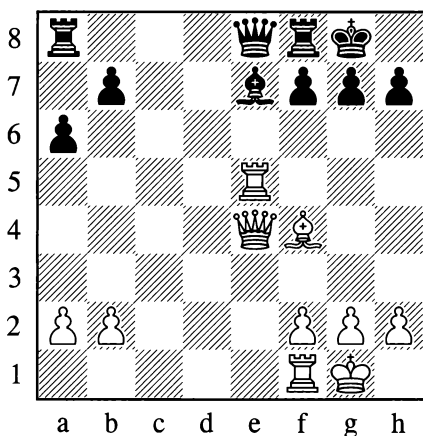


White was a little better here and eventually went on to win. But you cannot count on beating Nakamura from this position too often.

### 17. ♖e4!

Simple and devastating. White is ready to take on d5 next. Castling out of it does not do much for Black.

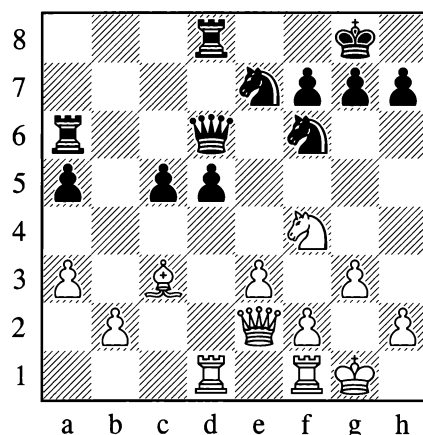
17...0-0 18. ♘xd5! exd5 19. ♗xd5! ♕e8  
20. ♗e5



White wins a piece, and the game. Here, you can count on beating Nakamura!

## 85. Gabriel Sargissian – Alexander Beliavsky

Terme Catez 2022



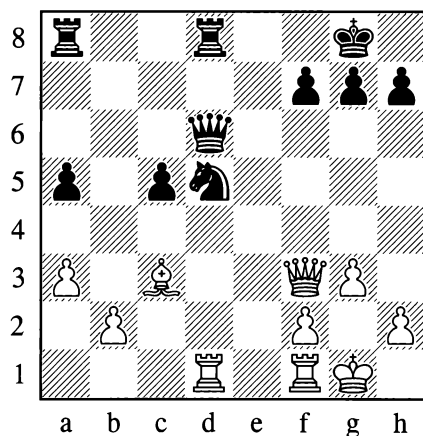
Always ask, what happens if I do it anyway?

### 21. e4!

There is not even that much to calculate. I am surprised Sargissian missed this in a classical game.

White was a little better after 21. ♖f3? and eventually won, but this was not too convincing after 21... ♖b6.

21... ♘xe4 22. ♘xd5 ♘xd5 23. ♖xe4 ♗aa8  
24. ♖f3!

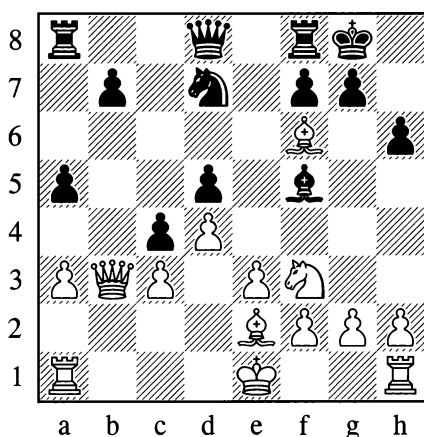




Black is in all sorts of ugly pins and has a crippled queenside structure. White is ready to double rooks on the d-file next. White wins.

### 86. Andreas Heimann – Arjun Erigaisi

Warsaw (rapid) 2021



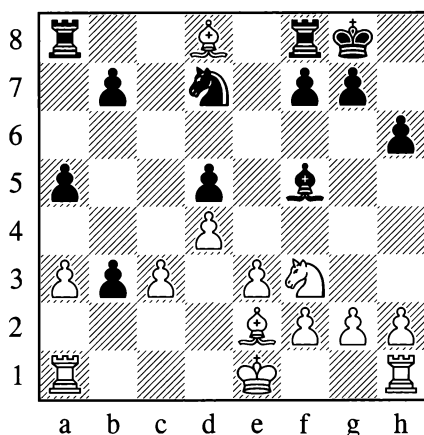
White is a piece up but will soon lose back some material. The question is, does he have to lose a full piece?

#### 14. ♖xd8!

White had other reasonable moves, but this one is clearly best.

#### 14...cxb3

And now we have to see a key candidate:



#### 15. ♜d2!!

White wins the b-pawn and remains a pawn up, after:

#### 15...♟fxd8

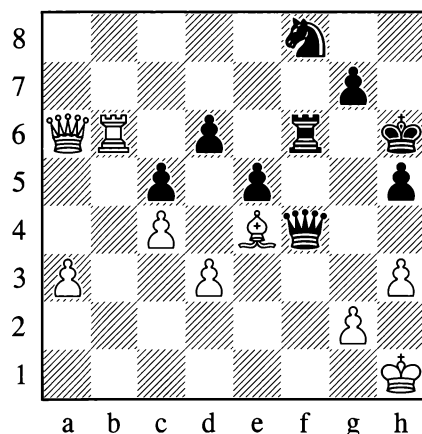
15...b2 16. ♖a2 also wins.

#### 16. ♜xb3

White wins.

### 87. Thibaut Vandenbussche – Martin Kraemer

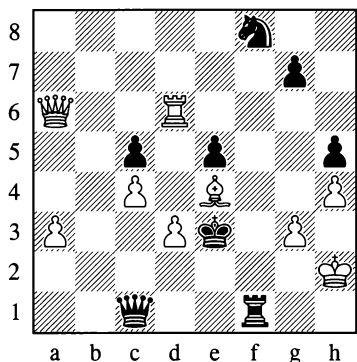
Germany 2020



With the clocks running down before the time control, Black forced a draw with ...♟f4-c1-f4. But he could have found more. This one was extremely difficult, and I must confess, I got it wrong as well!

#### 39...♟c1† 40. ♜h2

Now I wanted 40...♟f1?. It is tempting, but White escapes. 41. ♟xd6† ♜g5 42. h4†! ♜f4 43. g3† ♜e3

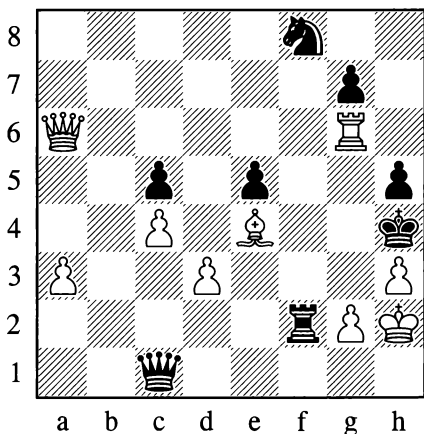


Sadly, Black has no major threat here. White is fine after more or less any move, such as 44. ♖c6!?. Black needs to be precise not to get into trouble.

#### 40... ♜f2!!

An incredibly difficult candidate move. Black is ready for ... ♜f4† back next and ... ♜f1, with mate to follow. It looks insane to allow ♜xd6†, but, as Mark Dvoretsky once defined tactics, if it works, it works!

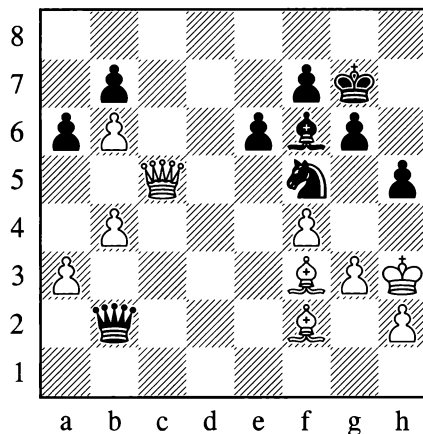
#### 41. ♜xd6† ♔g5! 42. ♜g6† ♔h4!



White is out of checks (the g-pawn is now pinned!) and cannot do anything about ... ♜f4† and ... ♜f1 mate. You need real veins of ice to play chess like this!

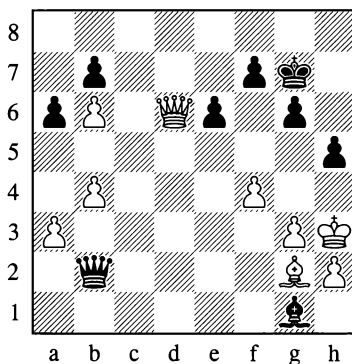
### 88. Jan Vrana – Jan Suran

Czech Republic 2021



With the clocks ticking down, Black chose the obvious move. This was another difficult one, and I got it wrong, wishing for the game continuation:

37... ♖d4? 38. ♜xd4 ♜xd4 39. ♜d6 ♜g1 40. ♜g2



This was quite equal, and the game was eventually drawn.

But Black had a stronger powerful move.

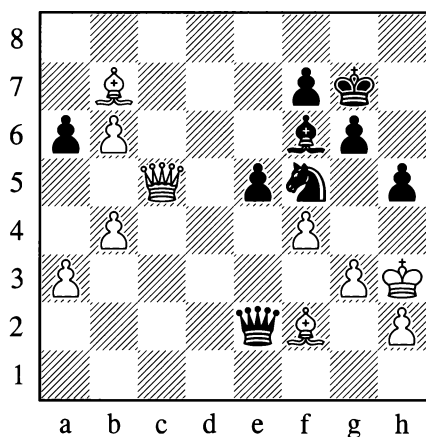
#### 37... e5!!

Black ignores the threat to b7.

#### 38. ♜xb7

38. fxe5 ♜e7 White loses his bishop. This much is easy to see.

38...♔e2!



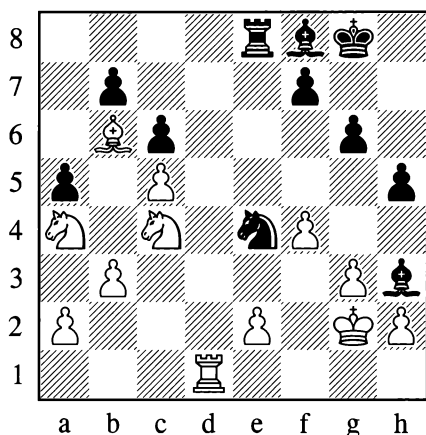
Surprisingly, White is more or less mated, even though Black does not have a direct threat just yet! Coming next is ...e5-e4, and then some combination of ...♔g4 and ...♖h4 should do the job. It helps that White still cannot take on e5:

39.fxe5 ♕e7

Black wins the bishop as before.

### 89. Mihnea Costachi – Jakhongir Vakhidov

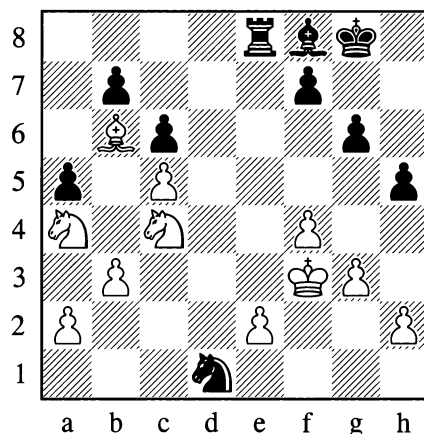
Warsaw (rapid) 2021



White eventually won after 30.♔g1? g5!, although he was only slightly better. He could

have been much more direct. Always examine all checks and captures.

30.♔xh3! ♖f2† 31.♔g2 ♖xd1 32.♔f3!



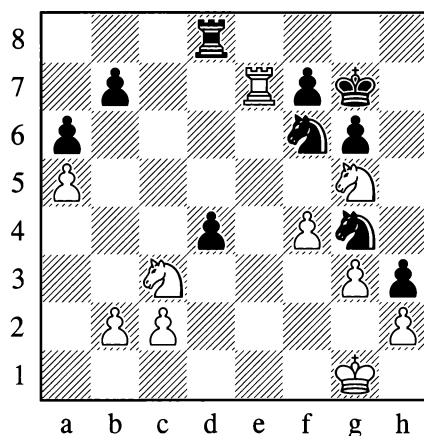
Black's knight is frozen and should get captured.

32...♕g7 33.♕xa5

The final important move, though not a hard one. Black's knight is not allowed to escape to c3. With approximate material parity on the board, the trapped knight should mean Black's demise.

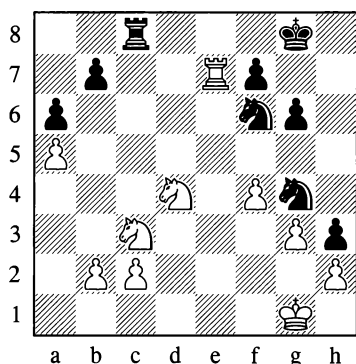
### 90. Annmarie Muetsch – Merab Gagunashvili

Terme Catez 2022



The obvious 30...dxc3? loses to: 31.♖e6† ♕g8 32.♘xd8 cxb2 33.♞xb7! White wins the pawn on b2.

Black eventually won after 30...♞c8? 31.♘e6†! ♕g8 32.♘xd4, but he was not better here.

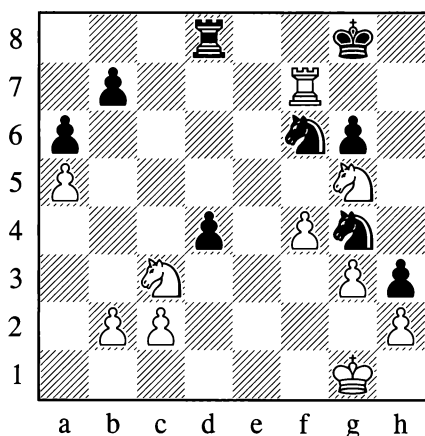


A big part of calculation is knowing some key motifs. Here, White's king is crushed the second Black can get his rook to either the first or second rank. So, he should push the rook off the e-file.

**30...♗f8!**

A tough candidate move, but once you see it, the game is over.

**31.♞xf7† ♕g8!**

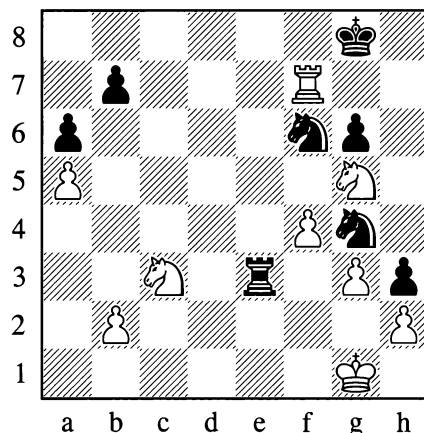


Now the knight is hit, and once it moves, Black's rook is free to exploit the newly-vacated e-file.

**32.♘e2 d3**

32...♞e8 works too.

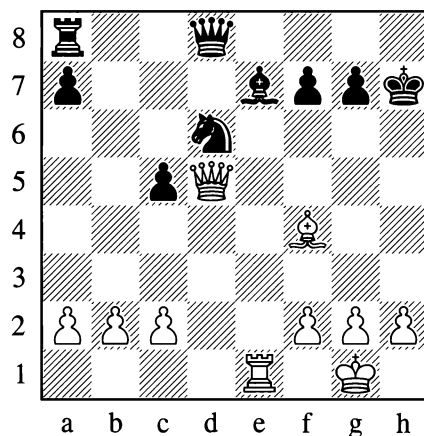
**33.cxd3 ♞xd3 34.♘c3 ♞e3**



Mate is coming.

## 91. Rasmus Svane – Luke McShane

Germany 2021



The simple 22.♘xd6 ♘xd6 23.♞d1 is met strongly by 23...♞b8!. Black is ready for ...♞b6 next, and he is counterattacking b2, so that ♞xd6 does not just force a winning endgame. He should be okay here.

Black can also defend against the natural 22.♞e3!?. 22...♞b8! 23.♞h3† ♕g8 24.♞h5 f6 is equal.

The point of White's best move is prophylaxis against ...♖b8, and ♖d1 can come next:

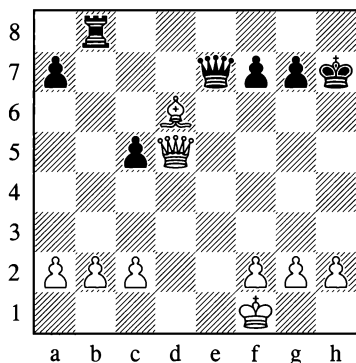
## 22.♔f1!!

This is a most difficult move. I did find it, but only after a long think!

## 22...♖c8

The difference made by one square in the king's position is shown in the following lines:

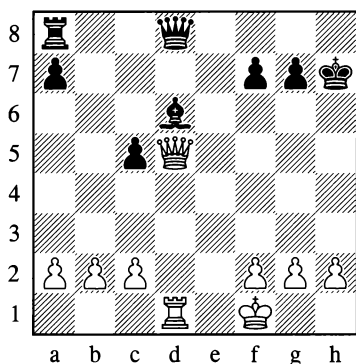
The move Black would like to play is 22...♖b8, but he no longer can. 23.♖xe7! ♜xe7 24.♙xd6 White wins.



The absence of a check on e1 changes the evaluation completely!

It is also helpful that the king is on f1 after 22...♔g8 23.♖xe7, winning.

22...♙f8 23.♙xd6! ♙xd6 24.♖d1

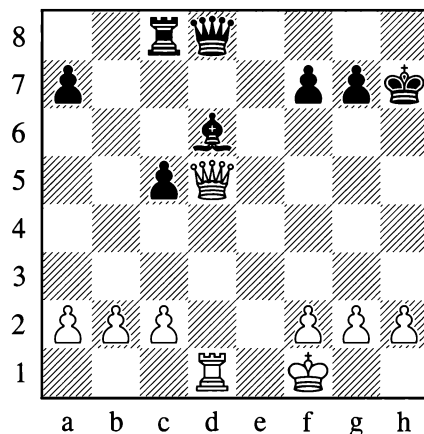


Since White's king is on f1 rather than g1, ...♖b8 is not as effective. 24...♖b8 25.♜xf7! No ...♙xh2† for you! In the meantime, ♖d1-d3 is coming soon, or just ♜f7-h5-d5 to win the bishop.

## 23.♙xd6! ♙xd6

23...♜xd6 24.♜f5† wins.

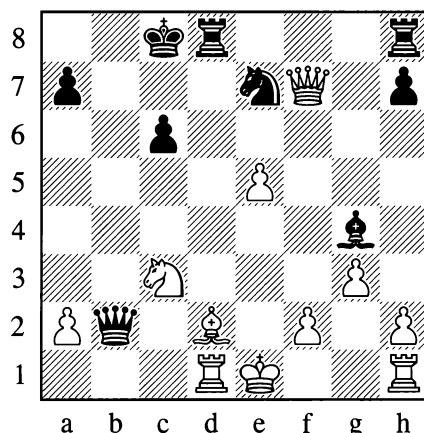
## 24.♖d1



Black loses material.

## 92. Michael Oratovsky – Ilan Manor

Israel 2021



The straightforward 21.♜xe7? is not clear after 21...♙xd1 22.0-0 ♙c2.

21.f3?

This was played in the game, and Black missed his chance.

21...♖hf8!

21...♖xd2? 22.♖xd2 ♜xc3 23.fxg4 ♖d8  
24.♞e6† 1-0

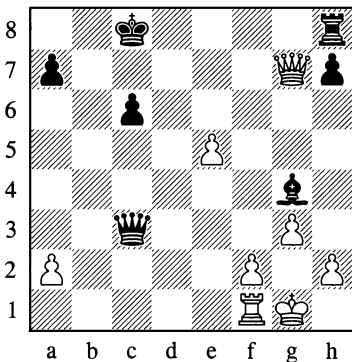
22.♞xe7 ♕xf3

The position is unclear and anything could happen.

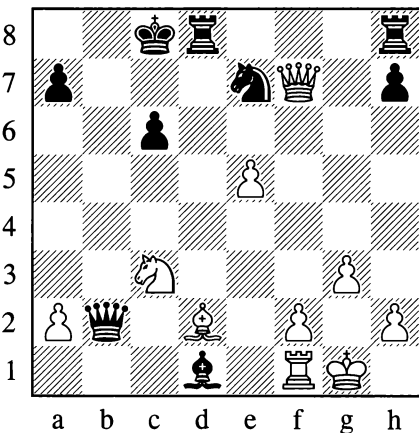
Even in positions where everything is hanging, simple principles can go a long way. The king is in the center, let's get him to safety!

### 21.0-0! ♕xd1

It is just checks and captures all the way through after 21...♖xd2. 22.♖xd2 ♜xd2  
23.♞xe7 ♜xc3 24.♞g7!



A final clever move ends the game:



### 22.♞e6†!

A well-timed check. Black's king lacks a decent square.

22.♖xd1? is the wrong move order. White should check before Black can make d8 available for his king. 22...♖xd2 23.♞e6† ♖d8! Black wins.

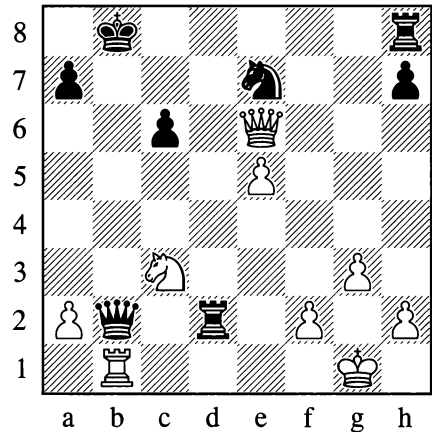
### 22...♔b8

White is also winning against the alternatives:

22...♔c7 23.♞xe7†

22...♖d7 23.♖e4! White has too many threats; ♖d6† followed by ♕a5, and ♖xd1. 23...♖hd8  
24.♖xd1

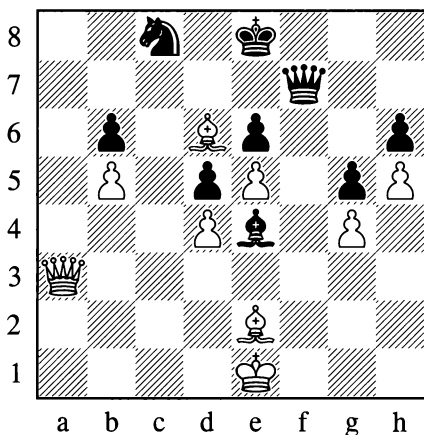
### 23.♖xd1 ♖xd2 24.♖b1



White wins material by taking advantage of the king being on b8.

**93. Aleksandar Indjic – Robert Markus**

Belgrade 2022

**52. ♖a8!**

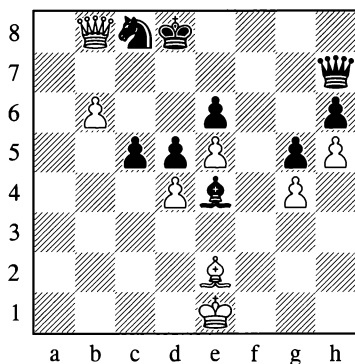
Here, the first move is natural enough, but the follow-up is tougher.

**52... ♕d8 53. ♖b8!!**

An important move. Black is paralyzed and cannot stop ♕d6-c5.

**53... ♗h7?!**

If 53... ♗d7!?, White makes sure to sideline the enemy queen before playing ♕d6-c5: 54. ♗f8! ♗h7 55. ♗c5! bxc5 56. b6



Black is facing deadly threats.

**54. ♗c5!**

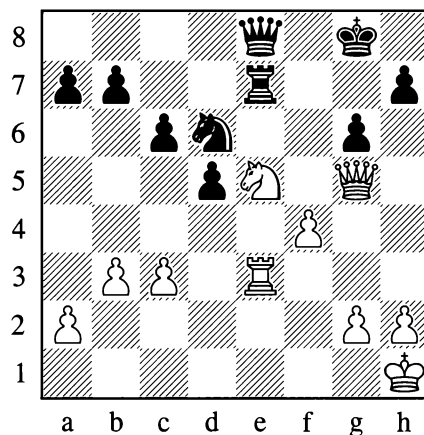
Do not allow your opponent counterplay. 54. ♗b4 ♗f4 is equal.

**54... bxc5 55. b6 ♗d7 56. ♗a6**

White wins.

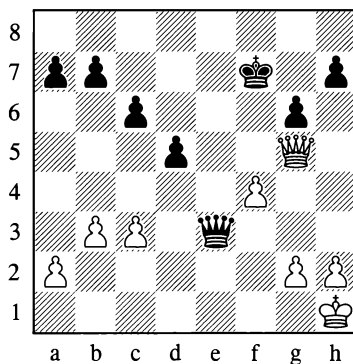
**94. Andreas Gregor Poschadel – Hendrik Hoffmann**

Reinstorf 2022



White's position is fundamentally fine but looks loose tactically. Black played an obvious move:

36... ♖f7? White took on f7 and lost as a result, but he would have been fine had he simply retreated his queen to g3. 37. ♖xf7? ♗xe3 38. ♖h6+ ♗g7 39. ♖f5+ ♗f7 40. ♖xe3 ♗xe3



Black's more active queen already won him at least a pawn. He went on to win.

Black had a much stronger move available:

**36...♘e4!**

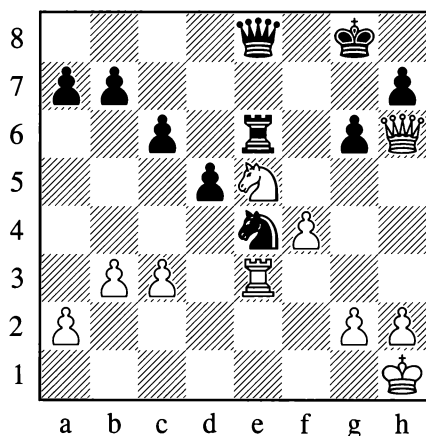
Black hits the queen with a gain of tempo. This is not too hard to see.

**37.♙h6**

37.♙h4 g5! wins.

Now a powerful candidate move is needed:

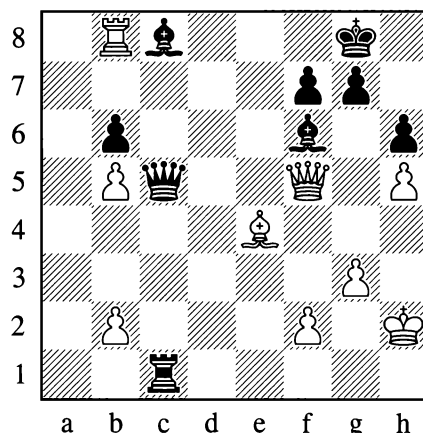
**37...♞e6!!**



This is not an easy move to see, but once you do, it is obviously devastating. There is nothing White can do about ...g6-g5 coming next, and he is about to lose a lot of material.

## 95. Bartosz Socko – Kirill Alekseenko

Warsaw (rapid) 2021

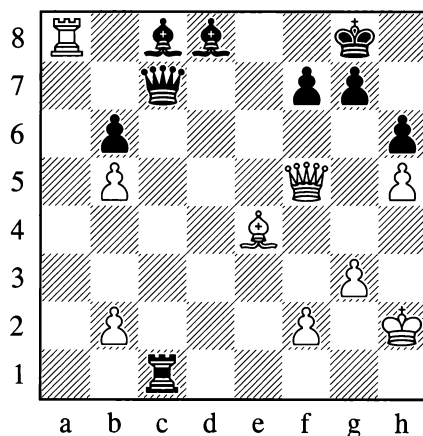


Black is a piece up, and only needs to stop the threats to win the game. It turns out that the check on h7 is of little consequence, and all he needs to do is break the pin on the back rank.

**42...♙c7!**

42...♙c7? 43.♙xc5+! ♞xc5 44.♙c6! White wins the bishop on c8, and he should draw easily.

**43.♞a8 ♙d8!**



Black artistically breaks the pin on the back rank.



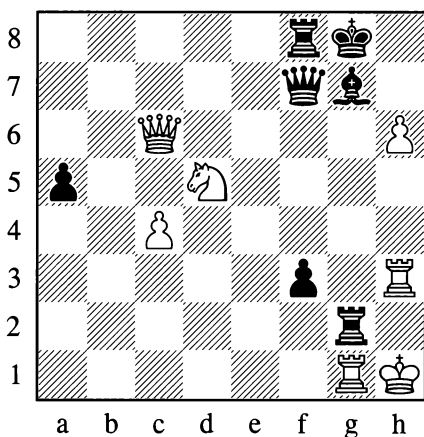
Unfortunate would be 43...♔f8?? 44.♙c6, and it is White who wins.

44.♞h7† ♔f8 45.♞h8† ♔e7

The king is safe as houses in the center, and the extra piece will play sooner rather than later.

## 96. Gevorg Harutjunyan – Nikita Matinian

Chelyabinsk 2022

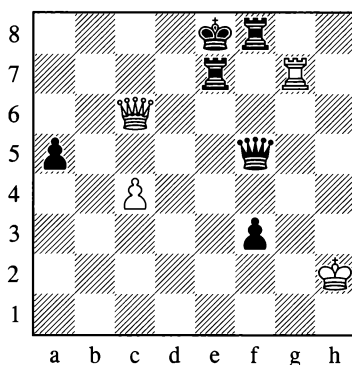


Every now and then, you get some uncommonly sharp and irrational position like this one. When this happens, no amount of strategic principles or understanding will offer much help. You just have to calculate which move works.

The position is very difficult, but I still imagine Harutjunyan was annoyed with himself for blundering one half point, and then another, on back-to-back moves.

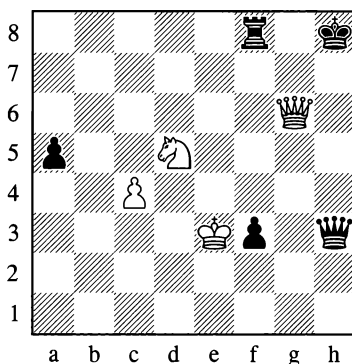
33.hxg7? ♖xg1† 34.♔xg1?

34.♔h2! and surprisingly, Black has nothing better than a draw. If he declines the repetition with ...♙g2-g1, White gets a great deal of counterplay. For example: 34...♖xg7 35.♞h6! ♞f5 36.♘e7†! ♞xe7 37.♙g3† ♔f7 38.♙g7† ♔e8 39.♞c6†



Black is lucky that all White has is a draw here.

34...♞xg7† 35.♔f2 ♞g2† 36.♔e3 ♞xh3 37.♞g6† ♔h8



White was out of checks and material down. He went on to lose.

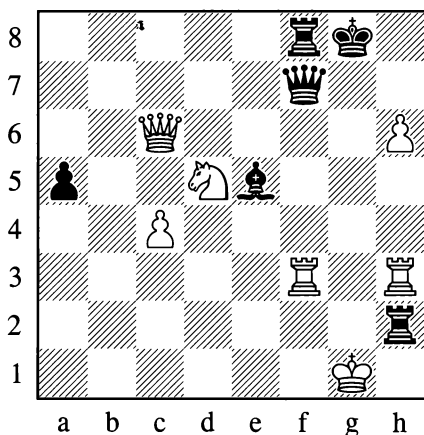
33.♞f1!

White needs to eliminate the f3-pawn. Black is facing too many threats and should promptly lose.

33...♙e5

33...♙g6 34.♞xg6! Always examine all checks and captures.

34.♞xf3! ♞h2† 35.♔g1!



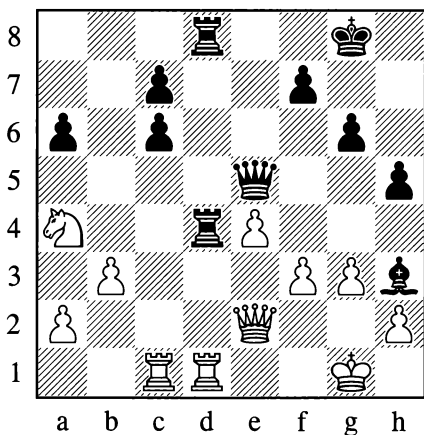
Black is out of checks and out of luck.

35...♖xh3 36.♖xf7 ♖g3† 37.♔f1 ♔xf7  
38.♕e2

The c-pawn will have a starring role in White's victory.

### 97. Diana Lomaia – Kaiyu Ning

Internet 2020



Black has a lot of promising continuations. But positions like this one are important as players get stronger. Black only has one way to convincingly end the game right away. The second or third best moves put White under a lot of pressure, but when you face strong opponents, they do not often buckle easily!

24...♜b5?

This is a case in point. White is fine if she finds an only move.

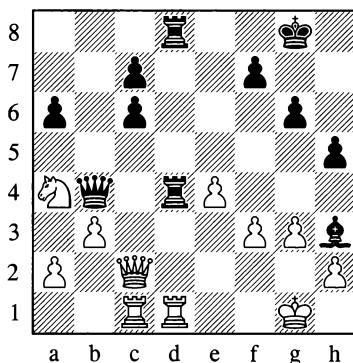
25.♜c2?

This is complacent.

25.♕f2! ♜b4 26.♖xd4 ♜xd4† 27.♜e3

White would have been safe enough, and Black would have missed her chance.

25...♜b4!



White cannot prevent an invasion on d2, or worse.

26.♖xd4 ♜xd4† 27.♔h1 ♜e3 28.♜c3 ♜f2

29.♖g1 ♖d1

0-1

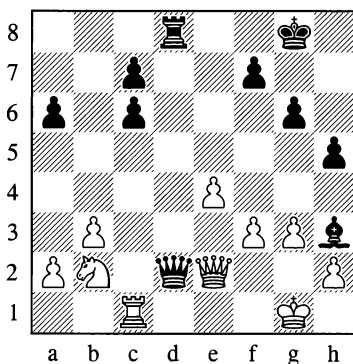
24...♜d6?

I proposed this. Again, it is a typical second-best move that would work against most but would not beat a very strong defender.

25.♔b2!

~ 25.♔c3 ♜c5 and Black's control of the d-file prevails.

25...♖d2 26.♖xd2 ♜xd2



I thought White was lost here, but I had missed that she can play 27.♖c2!. The game goes on, and she is only slightly worse.

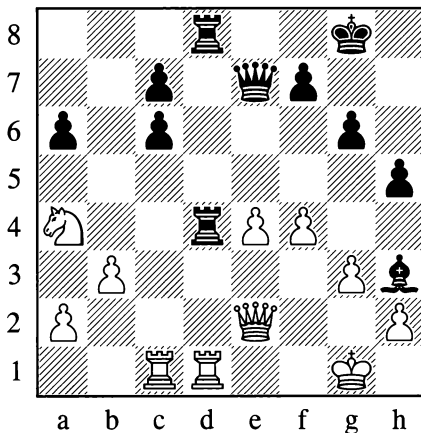
**24...♔g5!**

The best move by far. Black threatens ...♖d2 and forces White to play f3-f4, critically weakening the pawn cover around the king.

**25.f4**

25.♖xd4 ♔xc1† wins.

**25...♔e7**



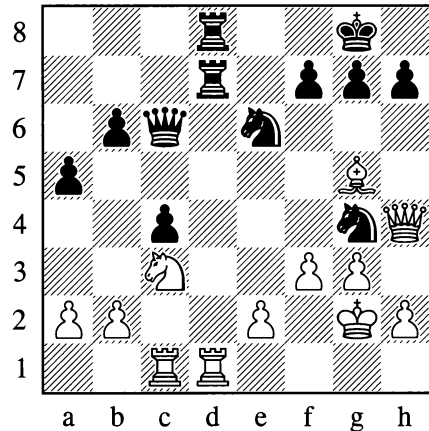
...♗g4 is not a small threat.

**26.♖xd4 ♖xd4 27.♘c5 ♔d6**

Black will invade decisively on d2 or d1 next.

## 98. Mahammad Muradli – Vugar Asadli

Plovdiv 2021



This one did not strike me as difficult, but Black did not find it in the game: 26...♖xd1 27.♖xd1 ♖xd1 28.♘xd1 White was fine here, and the game was eventually drawn.

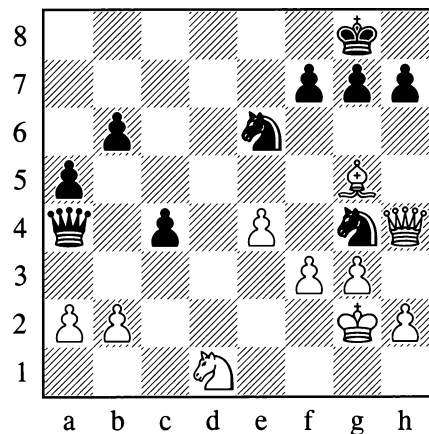
**26...♖d4!**

Simple and powerful. White is hard pressed to stop a check on e3.

**27.e4 ♖xd1!**

Now and only now. The point is that forcing White to push e2-e4 critically weakens the second rank.

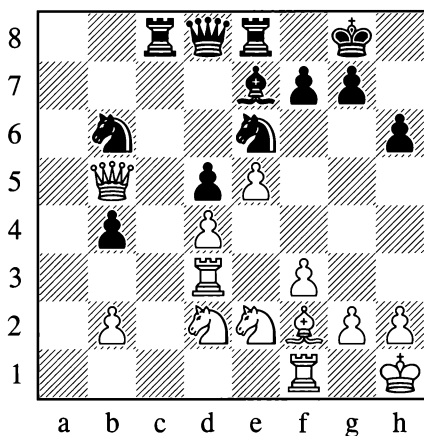
**28.♖xd1 ♖xd1 29.♘xd1 ♔a4!**



White is crushed. ...♔a4-c2† is coming, and he will badly miss the e2-pawn.

### 99. Anton Korobov – Maksym Goroshkov

Terme Catez 2022



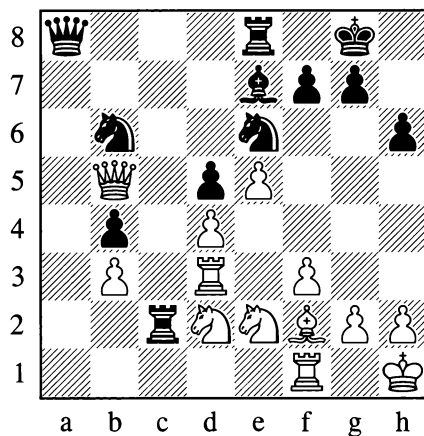
Black saw his chance at a quick repetition against a much stronger player, and took it: 24...♖b8? 25.♗c6 ♜c8 26.♗b5 ♜b8 27.♗c6 ♜c8

There was something stronger:

24...♜c2!

White faces total devastation on the second rank with ...♜c4 on the way. Goroshkov must have seen this move, but he likely rejected it due to the obvious b2-b3, saving the pawn and preventing ...♜c4.

25.b3 ♔a8!



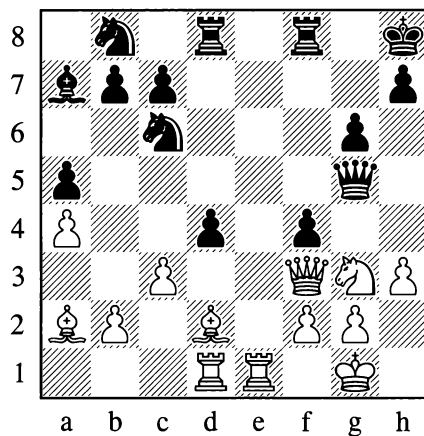
This is the point. Now White's queen gets trapped. Jacob describes this common theme as *big pieces in trouble* in one of his books.

26.♗xb6 ♜b8

Time to resign.

### 100. Alireza Firouzja – Hikaru Nakamura

Warsaw (rapid) 2021



White has two strong moves here, but one is stronger than the other.

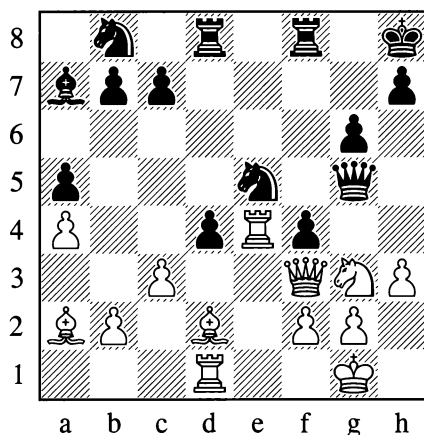
23. ♖e2?! is natural, and White is clearly better. But again, it missed the chance to knock the opponent out. Black is in trouble, but go beat Nakamura from here? Firouzja did not manage, and the game was eventually drawn.

### 23. ♖e4!

This is lights out on the spot.

Now 23...dxc3 24. ♕xc3+! is check! Black does not have time to take on d1 and he may as well resign. He has better:

### 23... ♖e5

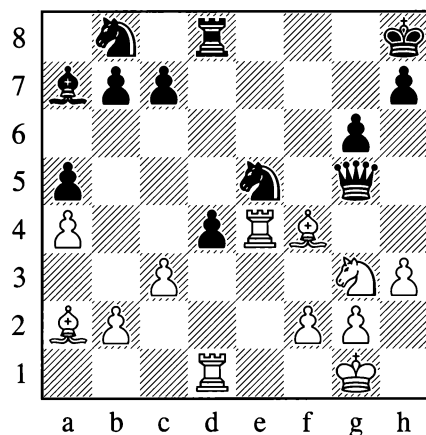


This looks like a huge issue. But always examine all checks and captures! It will help you find important candidate moves.

### 24. ♖xf4!

24. ♖e2? loses to 24...d3.

### 24... ♖xf4 25. ♕xf4!



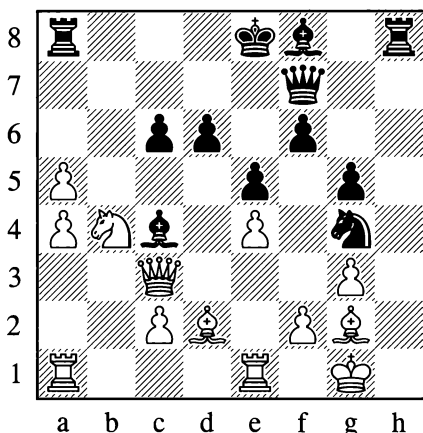
White wins the exchange and the game.

## Solutions to Chapter 3

### 101. Alexander Bagrationi – Alireza Firouzja

3

Internet 2020



Black played:

23...d5?

This is not a bad move, but Black missed a big chance.

24.♘xc6?

24.exd5 cxd5 25.♘d3 would have kept things messy, with chances for both sides.

24...♙h5!

White is mated on h2.

25.♙xc4 dxc4 26.♖ab1 ♔c5

0–1

Always examine all checks and captures.

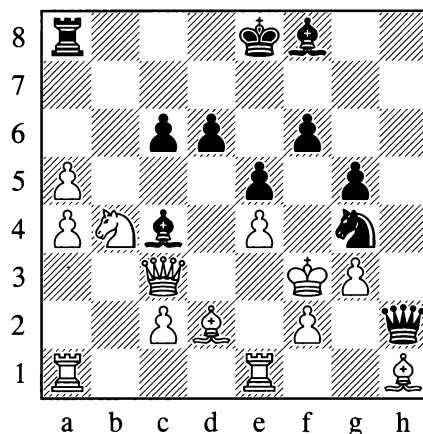
23...♖h1†!!

A simple candidate move. Once you see it, there is nothing much to calculate.

24.♔xh1 ♙h7

24...♙h5 is the same thing.

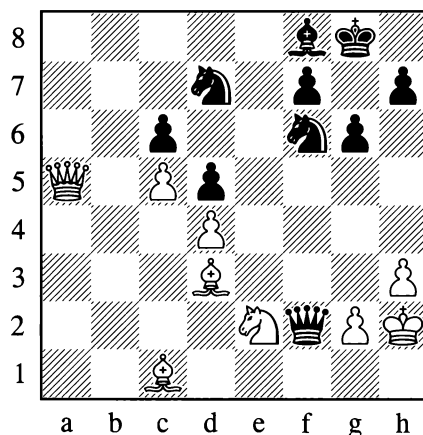
25.♔g2 ♙h2† 26.♔f3 ~



26...♙xf2† 27.♔xg4 ♔e6† 28.♔h5 ♙h2†  
29.♔g6 ♙h6#

### 102. Cristobal Jose Blanco Acevedo – Mukhammad Yunusov

Warsaw (rapid) 2021

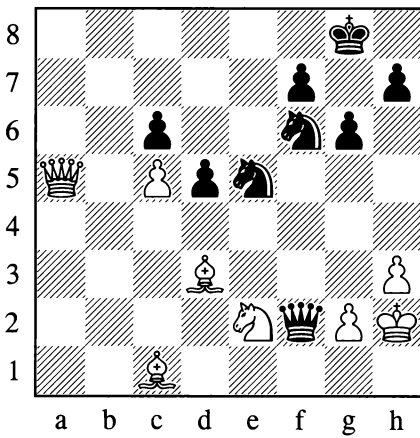


Always examine all checks and captures.  
Always!

27...♔xc5!

27...♘e4 was a reasonable move and Black was a little better, but he missed a chance to end the game right away. It was eventually drawn after 28.♔f4.

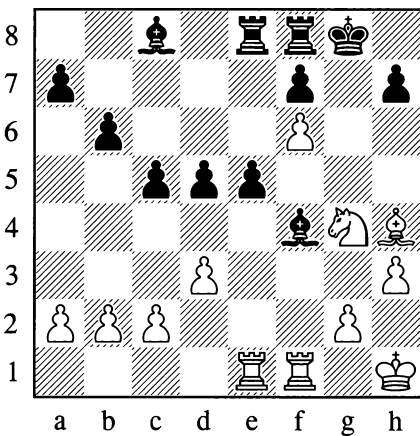
28.dxc5 ♘e5



White is incapable of meeting the twin threats of ... $\text{dxd3}$  and ... $\text{d3f3}\dagger$ . He may as well resign.

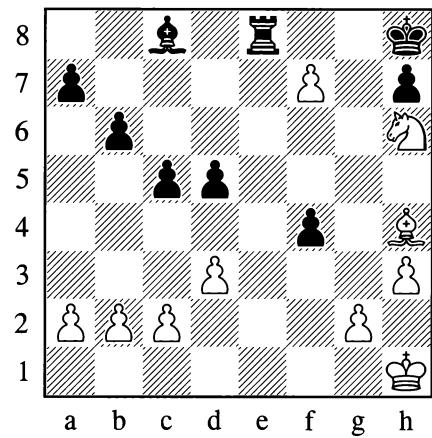
### 103. Fabien Libiszewski – Dietmar Fauth

Germany 2022



This one was easy. Checks and captures all the way through.

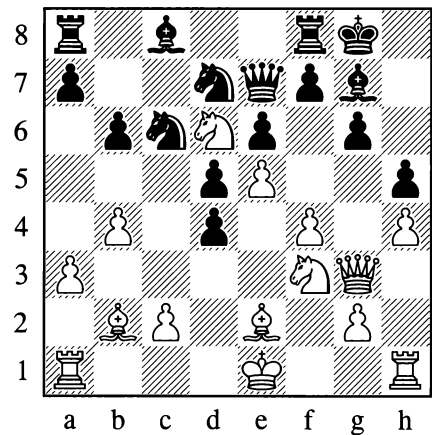
25.  $\text{Rxf4 exf4}$  26.  $\text{d6h6}\dagger$   $\text{Kh8}$  27.  $\text{dxf7}\dagger$   $\text{Kg8}$   
28.  $\text{d6h6}\dagger$   $\text{Kh8}$  29.  $\text{Rxe8 Rxe8}$  30.  $\text{f7!}$



$\text{d4-f6}$  is coming. Game over.

### 104. Alexander Finkel – Michal Lahav

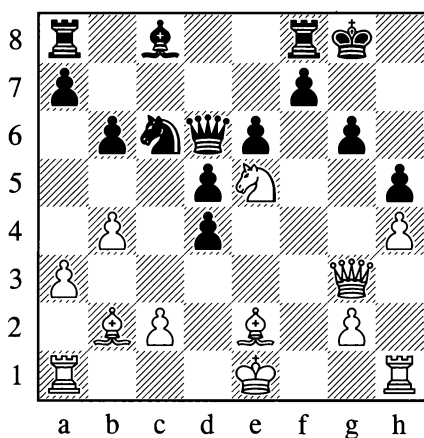
Israel 2021



Again, checks and captures.

Black chose the wrong knight in the game:  
18...  $\text{dxc5?}$  19.  $\text{fxe5 dxe5}$  20.  $\text{dxe5 Qxd6}$   
21.  $\text{dxd4!}$  It was a problem that this move was possible! Black needed his knight on c6 to defend d4. White wins.

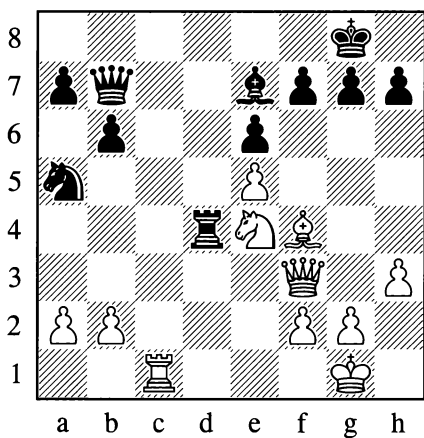
18...  $\text{dxc5!}$  19.  $\text{fxe5 dxe5!}$  20.  $\text{dxe5 Qxd6}$



Because Black kept his c6-knight alive, he takes on e5 next. He should win easily with his extra pawns.

### 105. Daniele Vocaturo – Cristhian Camilo Rios

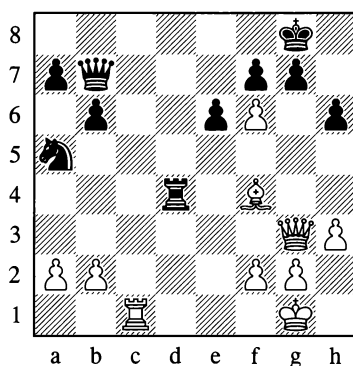
Sitges 2021



When it comes to combinations, checks and captures tend to cover most of what is needed.

#### 24. ♖f6! gxf6

Black is not saved by the other capture: 24...♙xf6 25.exf6 h6 (25...♞xf3 26.♝c8†) 26.♞g3



White wins.

Black also loses if he does not capture. 24...♙h8 25.♞xb7 ♖xb7 26.♙e3 ♜d8 27.♝c7, and White invades.

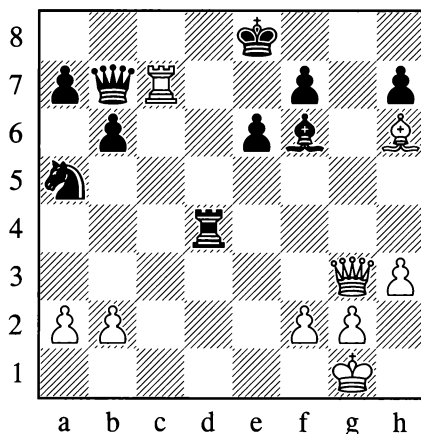
#### 25. ♞g3†

Black's king is forced into the center.

#### 25...♙h8

Black is mated on the spot after 25...♙h8 26.♙h6.

#### 26.exf6! ♙xf6 27.♙h6† ♙e8 28.♝c7!



There was not much reason to continue here. Black loses his queen, and the game.

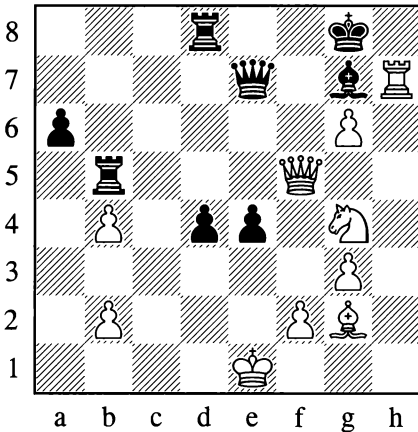
28...♞xc7 29.♞xc7 ♜d7 30.♞g3 ♙e7 31.♙g5 ♖b7 32.h4 ♙xg5 33.♞xg5† ♙f8



34. ♖e5 ♘g8 35. ♖g3† ♘f8 36. ♖c3  
1–0

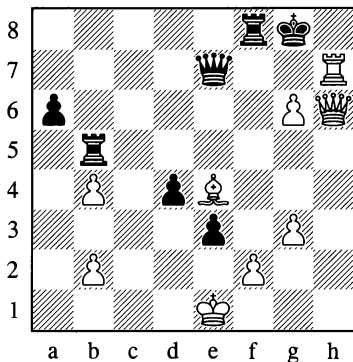
### 106. Ondrej Nytra – Jan Michalek

Czech Republic 2022



No matter how strong you get, you can always get better at combinations. I got this one wrong.

I thought 31. ♖f4? wins, keeping the queen and looking for ♘g4-h6 next. Not only does Black save the game, he has two ways to do so! 31... e3! (31... ♖b6!? was okay too) 32. ♙e4 ♖f8! 33. ♘h6† ♙xh6 34. ♖xh6

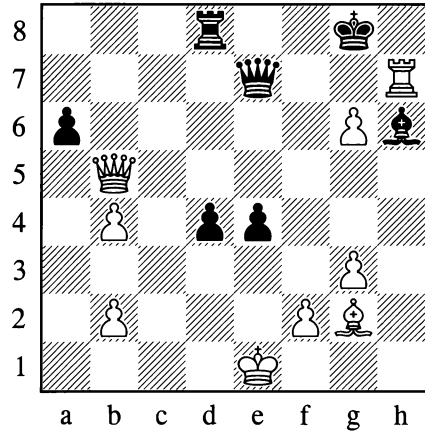


34... ♖xb4†! and mate. The move I missed.

31. ♘h6†!

Checks and captures always!

31... ♙xh6 32. ♖xb5!

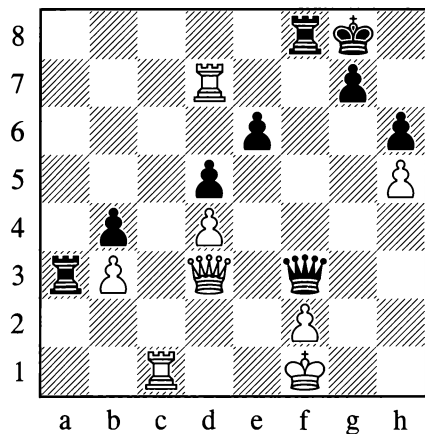


Well spotted. White was winning and his conversion was impeccable.

32... ♖e6 33. ♖h5 ♙g7 34. ♙h3 ♖e7 35. ♖a5 e3 36. ♙e6† ♘f8 37. ♖f5† ♘e8 38. ♙f7† ♘f8 39. ♙b3†  
1–0

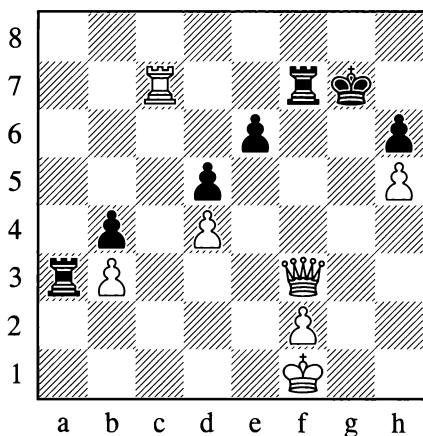
### 107. Andreas Ciolek – Mert Acikel

Germany 2022



Checks and captures.

41. ♙xg7†! ♘xg7 42. ♖c7† ♖f7 43. ♖xf3!

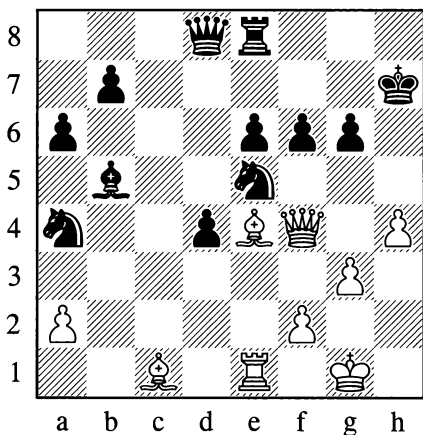


Black resigned. The writing was on the wall:  
43...♖xc7 44.♗g3†.

1-0

### 108. Ivan Ivanisevic – Ognjen Cvitan

Terme Catez 2022



I will sound like a broken record before long,  
but always, checks and captures!

26.♙xg6†!

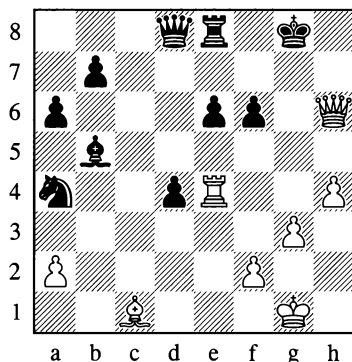
The most forceful.

26...♖g8

White also wins quickly against the  
alternatives:

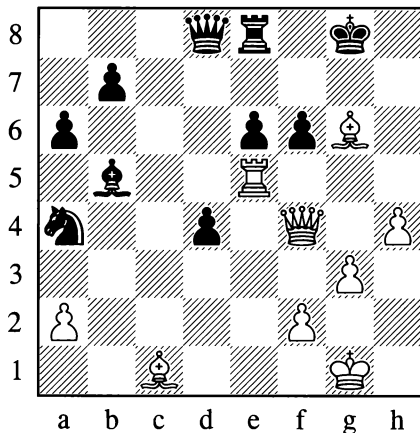
26...♖xg6 27.♗h6† ♖f7 28.♗h7† ♖f8  
29.♙h6#

26...♙xg6 27.♗h6† ♖g8 28.♗xg6† ♖h8  
29.♗h6† ♖g8 30.♙c4!



The rook lift should end things quickly.  
30...f5 What else? Black stops the check on  
g4 but weakens the g5-square. 31.♗g6† ♖h8  
32.♙g5 Dead.

27.♙xe5



Black is crushed.

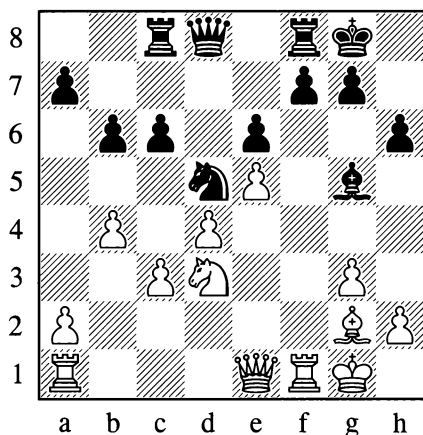
27...♗c7 28.♗xf6 ♗xc1† 29.♖h2 ♙f8  
30.♙h7†

Mate is coming.

1-0

**109. Kirill Burdalev – Richard Biolek Jr.**

Czech Republic 2021

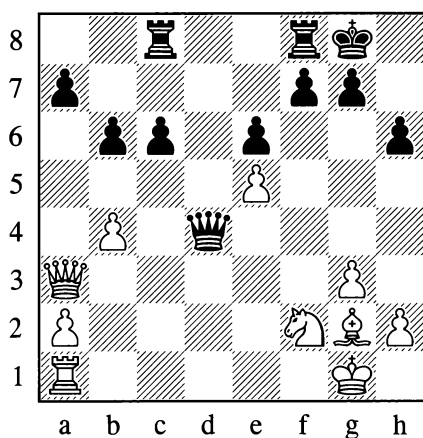


Always examine all checks and captures!

**24...♟xc3!**

Black missed a chance with 24...♟e3? 25.♟f2 ♟xg2 26.♟xg2 ♟d5. This was roughly balanced, and the game was drawn.

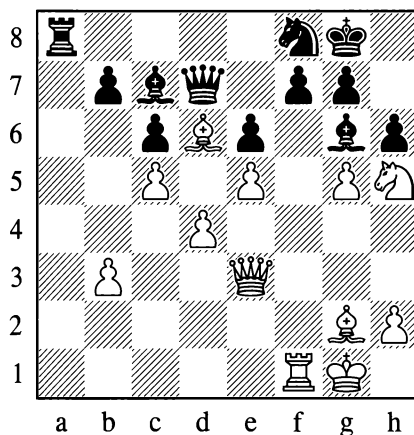
25.♟xc3 ♟e3† 26.♟f2 ♟xd4 27.♟a3 ♟xa1 28.♟xa1 ♟d4



White's pieces do not coordinate well, and Black is material up. ...♟d4xe5, ...♟f8-d8 and ...c6-c5 are on the way.

**110. Karolina Pilsova – David Barak**

Czech Republic 2021

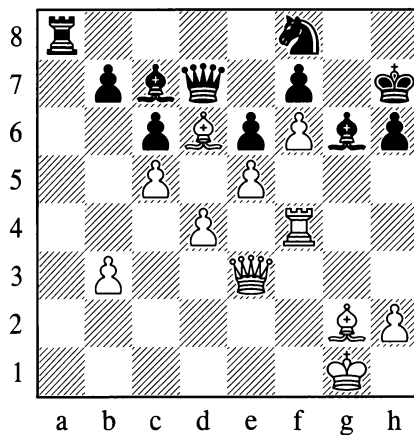


Always. Checks. And captures!

**32.♟f6!**

White missed her chance with 32.♟f3?. After 32...hxg5 33.♟xg5 ♟d8, Black was fine and the game was eventually drawn.

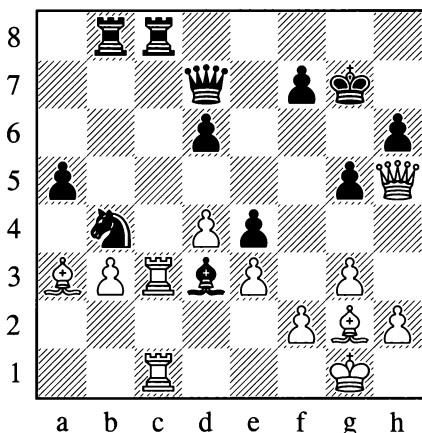
32...gxf6 33.gxf6 ♟h7 34.♟f4



This is mate with ♟f4-h4. It is not even close.

**111. Pascal Karsay – Alexandros Kotsinis**

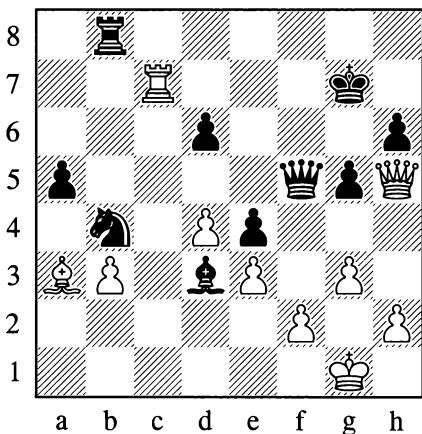
Terme Catez 2022



For once, we see one that is not all checks and captures. Well, it will be after the first move.

**29.♙h3! f5 30.♙xf5!**

The key point. White will invade on the seventh rank.

**30...♖xf5 31.♞c7† ♞xc7 32.♞xc7†**

Black is dead meat.

**32...♙f8**

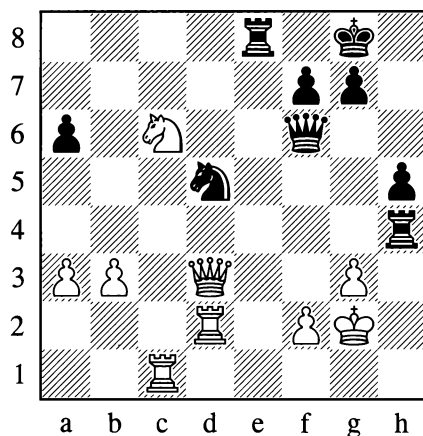
Mate also comes after 32...♙g8 33.♖xh6 or 32...♙f6 33.♖f7#.

**33.♖xh6†**

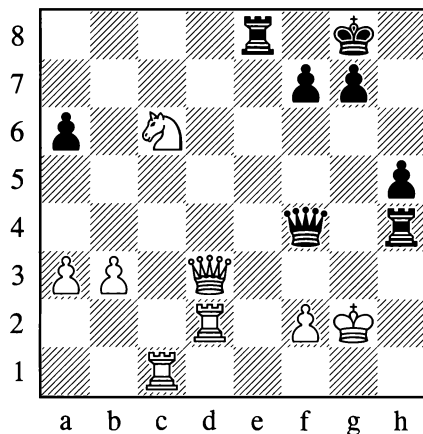
Black will be mated in the next few moves.

**112. David Howell – Michael Prusikin**

Germany 2020



Yet again, we see a lot of checks and captures. If this chapter does not hammer that point home, I do not know what will!

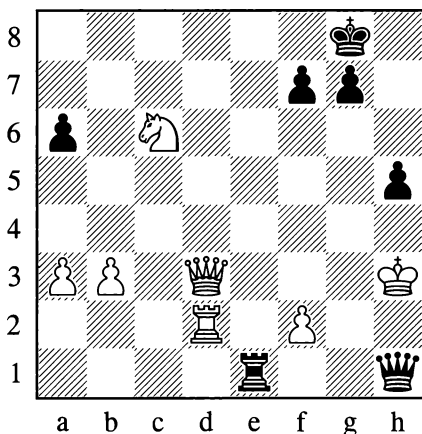
**30...♙f4†! 31.gxf4 ♖xf4**

White is facing massive threats. Howell played the most resilient defense, but it is still checks and captures all the way through.

**32.♞g1 ♞g4†! 33.♙h1 ♞xg1†! 34.♙xg1 ♞e1†**

35.♔g2 ♖g5† 36.♔h2 ♜h4† 37.♔g2 ♖g5†  
Repeating moves once.

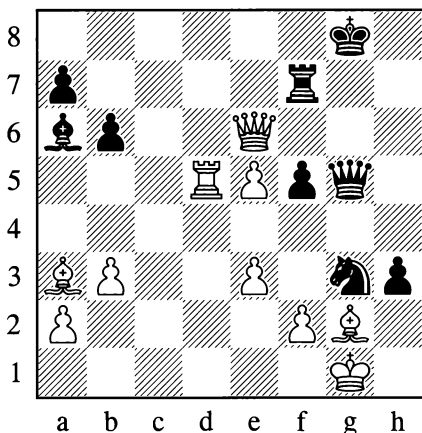
38.♔h2 ♜g1† 39.♔h3 ♜h1†



Black wins the knight, and it is all over.  
The passed h-pawn will decide matters.

### 113. Stellan Brynell – Gustavo Adolfo Cadená

Internet 2020



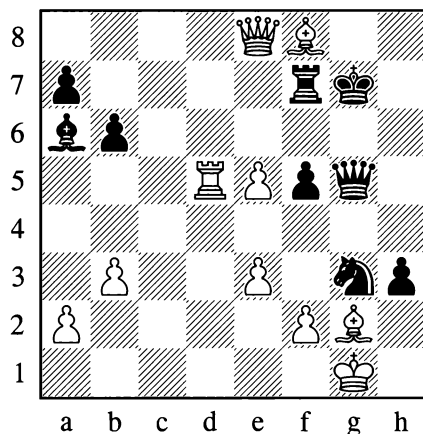
More checks and captures.

32.♜c8†!

32.fxg3? was good enough in the game, but  
Black could have saved himself with better  
defense. 32...♜xg3? (Black would be fine

with 32...hxg2!.) 33.♞d8† ♔g7 34.♞f8† ♞xf8  
35.♞d7† ♞f7 36.♞xf7† ♔h8 37.♞h7# 1–0

32...♔g7 33.♞f8†!!



The key point. Once you see this move,  
there is not much more to it.

33...♞xf8

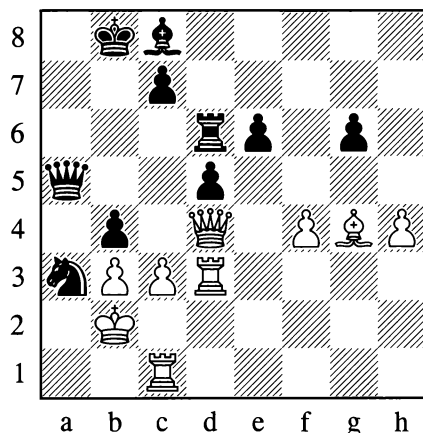
33...♔g6 34.♞d6† ends the discussion.

34.♞d7† ♔g8 35.♞d5†!

Mate is coming.

### 114. Evgeniy Najer – Volodymyr Onyshchuk

Warsaw (rapid) 2021



Checks and captures. Need I say more?

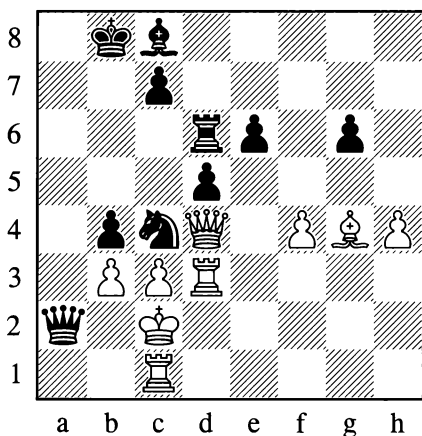
45...♖c4†! 46.♗c2

46.bxc4 is checks and captures until White resigns: 46...♜a3† 47.♗c2 ♜a2† 48.♗d1 dxc4

Mate comes after 46.♗b1 ♞a6.

46...♜a2†

46...c5!? was quite enough as well. 47.♞g7 ♜a2† 48.♗d1 ♖b2† 49.♗e2 ♖xd3† 50.♗xd3 bxc3, winning.



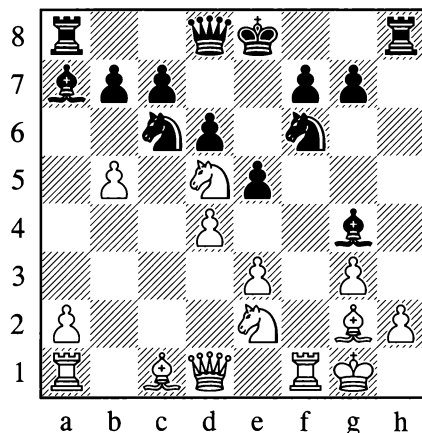
By some miracle White saved this position. After the forced move:

47.♗d1

The computer gives -4 after 47...g5, which is Black's sixth best move. Do not even get me started on the first five!

## 115. Denis Mager – Ivan Ivanisevic

Germany 2019



Checks and captures! I cannot possibly stress this enough.

13...♖xd4!

White had a nice position following 13...♖e7? 14.♖xf6† gxf6, after either the simple ♗c1-b2 or taking on b7. Eventually, the game was drawn.

14.exd4 ♗xd4† 15.♗e3

After 15.♗h1, taking on a1 is quite sufficient, but I like 15...♖h5!? for its savagery.

15...♗xa1! 16.♖xf6† gxf6 17.♞d2

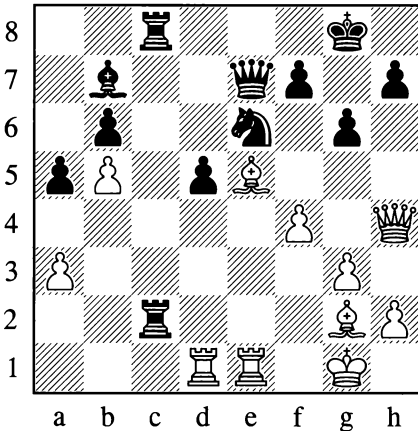
Blacks also gains too much material after 17.♞xa1 ♗xe2.

17...♗xe2! 18.♞xe2 ♗c3

Checks and captures all the way. Black is up material.

**116. Michael Fedorovsky – Rainer Buhmann**

Germany 2020



In general, I found this chapter much easier than the previous one, but I got some exercises wrong too. This was my second failed one.

I wanted the line:

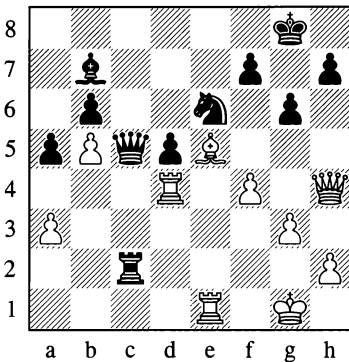
27... $\text{R}xg2$ ? 28. $\text{Q}xg2$   $\text{R}c2$ †

28... $d4$ † 29. $\text{Q}g1$  Black has insufficient compensation for the exchange.

29. $\text{Q}g1$   $\text{R}c5$ †

Missing the move White played in the game.

30. $\text{R}d4$ !!



A surprising defense, but an effective one. Black cannot take on d4 thanks to the queen landing on d8. He eventually won, but White is fine here.

30... $g5$  31. $fxg5$ ?

31. $\text{R}g4$  is equal.

31... $\text{R}c3$ !! 32. $\text{R}xh7$ †  $\text{Q}xh7$  33. $\text{R}h4$ †  $\text{Q}g6$

34. $\text{Q}xc3$   $\text{R}xc3$  35. $\text{R}h6$ †  $\text{Q}xg5$

Black was now winning.

27... $\text{R}c5$ †! 28. $\text{Q}h1$   $\text{R}xg2$ !

Now and only now.

29. $\text{Q}xg2$   $d4$ † 30. $\text{Q}h3$

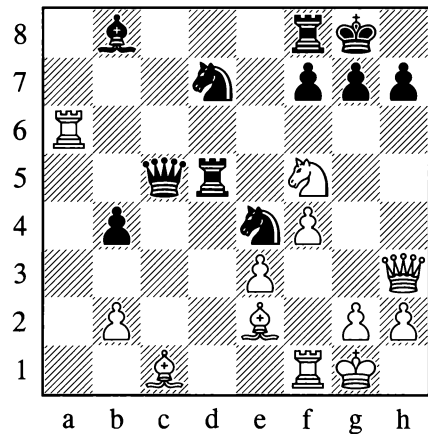
30. $\text{Q}g1$   $d3$ † (30... $\text{R}d5$  also works.) 31. $\text{Q}f1$   $\text{R}d5$  and mate.

30... $\text{R}c2$ !

The simplest of many winning moves, others being 30... $\text{R}d5$  and 30... $g5$ . White is mated.

**117. Salem Saleh – Aryan Tari**

Warsaw (rapid) 2021



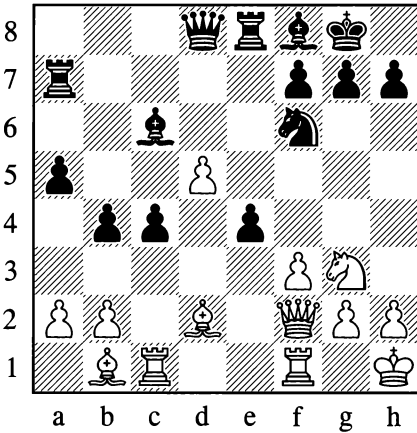
This one is straightforward. White wants a check on e7. So, remove the guard!

28. $\text{R}c6$ !  $\text{R}a5$  29. $\text{Q}e7$ †

White wins a lot of material. The game ended shortly.

### 118. Jan Marn – Paulius Pultinevicius

Terme Catez 2022



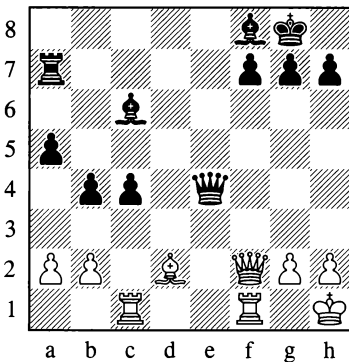
Black is a pawn up, although he looks to be in trouble with two hanging pieces. But always examine all checks and captures!

21...♞xd5!!

Black eventually won after 21...♞d7? 22.fxe4, but is probably not better here.

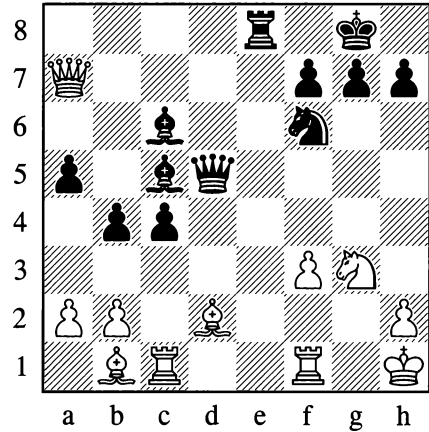
22.♞xa7?

22.♘xe4 was the lesser evil. After 22...♘xe4 23.♙xe4 ♞xe4 24.fxe4 ♞xe4



White's position is miserable, though at least not immediately hopeless.

22...exf3! 23.gxf3 ♙c5!

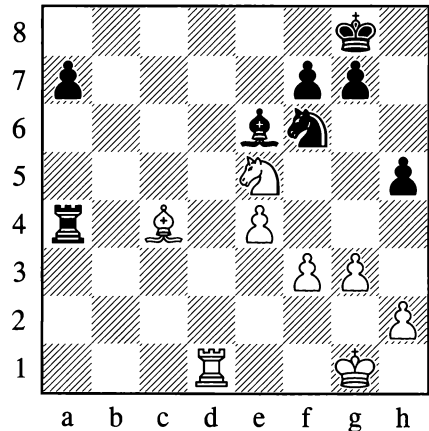


The point. White gets mated on the diagonals.

24.♞xa5 ♞xf3† 25.♞xf3 ♙xf3#

### 119. Vincent Keymer – Levon Aronian

Internet 2022



Checks and captures.

White was better after 30.♙xe6?! fxe6 31.♞d8† ♘h7 32.h4, with good winning chances, but it is not a clean win. Keymer did not manage to convert this one, but I think he would have won if he had found the best move:

30.♞d8† ♘h7 31.♘xf7!!

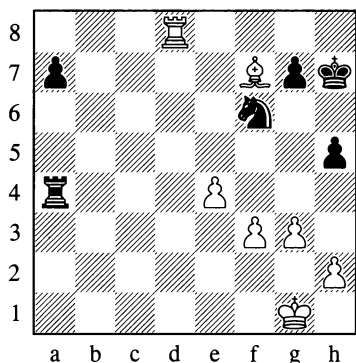
More checks and captures.



31...♙xc4

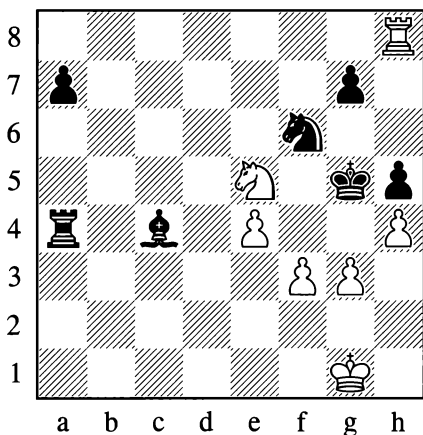
This is the only critical move, but Black is mated right away.

31...♙xf7 32.♙xf7



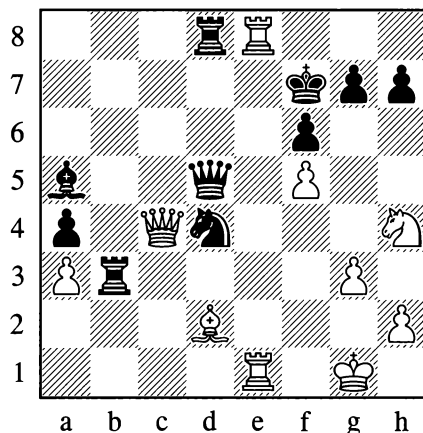
The e-pawn is coming, and Black is a clean pawn down with poor pieces. There is not much reason to continue the game.

32.♖h8† ♔g6 33.♘e5† ♔g5 34.h4#



## 120. Viachaslau Zarubitski – Evgeny Levin

Chelyabinsk 2022



Checks and captures.

36...♘e2†!

It turns out that White has no good way to take on e2.

37.♙xe2

The queen drops off after other moves:

37.♖8xe2 ♙xc4, and there is no mate on e7. The rook is no longer on e8.

37.♙f1 (37. ♖1xe2 ♙b6† 38.♙f1 is the same) 37...♙xc4 Again, no mate on e7.

37...♙b6† 38.♖e3

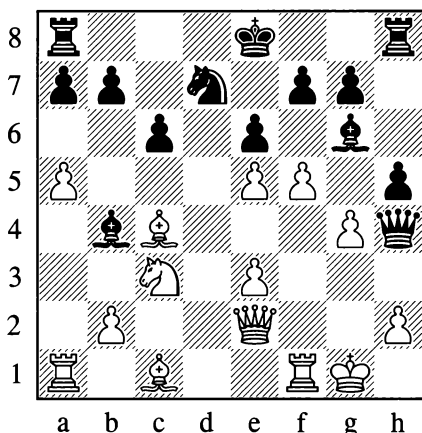
38.♙e3 ♖xe8 wins.

38...♙xd2!

Congestion at the crossroads. Black wins.

## 121. Zdenko Kozul – Quentin Loiseau

Terme Catez 2022



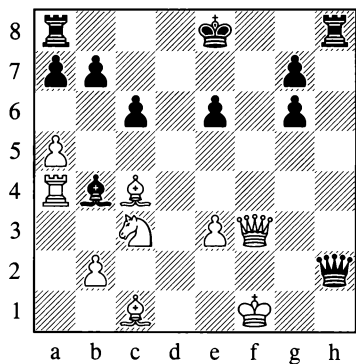
### 16...hgx4!

16...♖xe5!? is not bad, but it gives White an extra option of ♖a1-a4. It is much cleaner to take on g4 first, to be as forcing as possible. 17.♖a4! hxg4 18.♖xb4 ♖f3† 19.♖xf3 gxf3 20.♗f2 Black should win here, but the game continues.

Loiseau must have been kicking himself for playing 16...exf5 once he saw the machine's evaluation after the game. 17.gxf5 ♖xe5 18.fxg6 ♗xc4 19.gxf7† ♖e7 20.♗xc4 ♖xc4 21.♖a4! White is winning. 21...♗xc3 22.bxc3 ♖d6 23.♗a3 ♖e6 24.♗xd6 ♖xd6 25.♖e4, and White soon won.

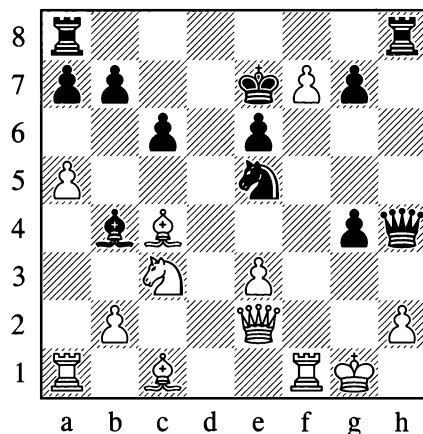
### 17.fxg6 ♖xe5! 18.gxf7†

18.♖a4 ♖f3† 19.♖xf3 gxf3 20.♗xf3 ♗xh2† 21.♖f1 fxg6



...♖f8 is coming. Black wins.

### 18...♔e7

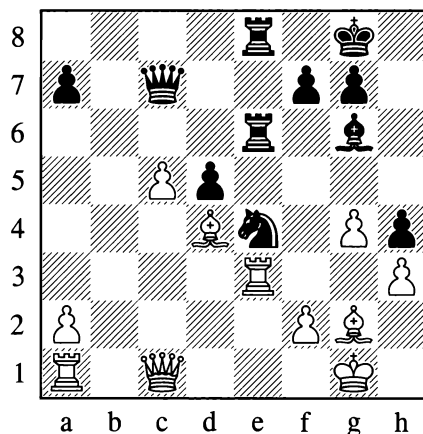


White cannot do a thing about ...♖f3† coming next, and he may as well resign.

19.♖a4 ♖f3† 20.♖xf3 gxf3 21.♗xf3 ♗xh2†  
The bishop is lost after ...♗h1†.

## 122. Martin Hollan – Vlastimil Babula

Czech Republic 2021



I struggled with this one, eventually managing to calculate it out. The first move is natural, but there is an important detail to see down the road.

26...♖xf2!!

Checks and captures!

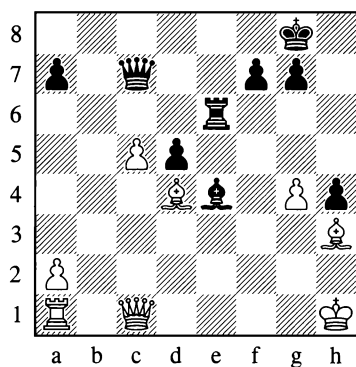
Black missed his chance with 26...f5?. White was safe enough after 27.♖b3! fxg4 28.hxg4, and even went on to win.

27.♖xe6

27.♖xf2 ♖f4† wins. 27...♖xe3 28.♙xe3 ♖g3† is also good enough.

27...♖xh3†! 28.♙xh3

28.♖h1 ♖xe6 29.♙xh3 ♙e4†



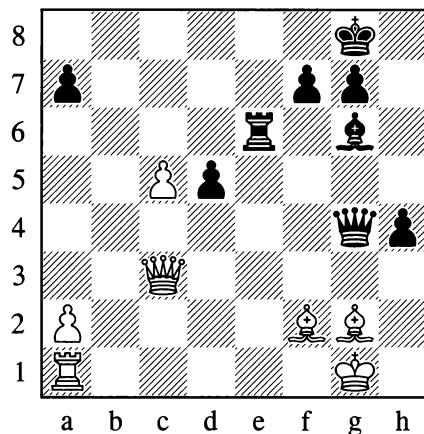
Black wins.

28...♖g3† 29.♙g2 ♖xe6 30.♙f2

This move bothered me when I was calculating the line, but I saw the light eventually.

Black is winning after both 30.♖d2 h3 and 30.♖h1 ♖e2 31.♖f1 ♖xg2 32.♖xg2 ♙e4.

30...♖xg4 31.♖c3



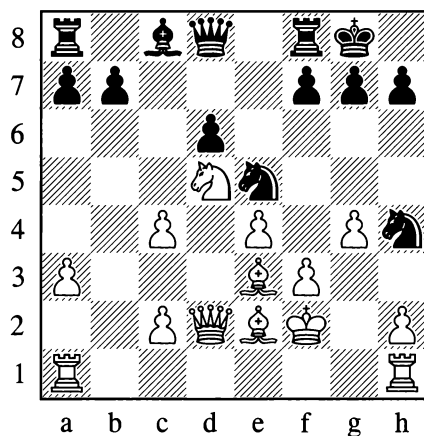
♖c3-h3 is coming next, which looks like the end to the attack. But:

31...♙e4! 32.♖h3 ♖g6!

Black wins, as g2 is falling.

## 123. Martin Ahn – Jonny Hector

Germany 2019



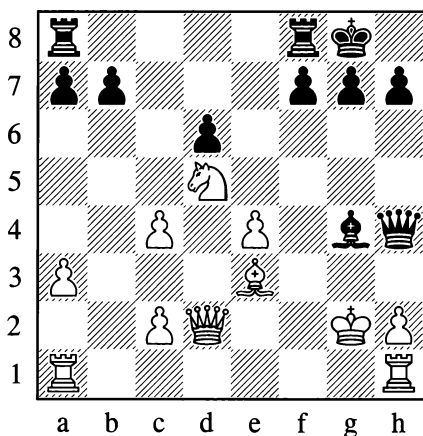
Jonny Hector is well known for being good at tactical tricks, so it is a bit surprising that he did not find this one. He eventually won anyway with 21...f6?. Although after 22.♖hd1, Black's position looks pretty miserable to me!

I solved this one almost immediately. Checks and captures all the way, and the most obvious moves are the good ones.

21...♖hxg3! 22.♙xf3 ♖h4†!

Making use of this square becoming available.

23.♙g2 ♖xf3! 24.♙xf3 ♙xg4†! 25.♙g2

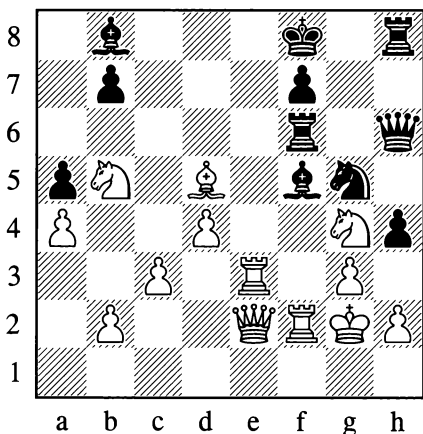


25...♙h3†! 26.♙g1 ♖g4†! 27.♙f2 ♖g2†  
28.♙e1 ♖xh1†

The a1-rook is history.

### 124. Alexei Fedorov – Bence Korpa

Czech Republic 2022



28...♙xg4? was the game continuation. Black overlooked a fantastic combination. 29.♖xg4 ♗xf2† 30.♙xf2 hxg3† 31.hxg3 The position is tense but balanced. The rest of the game was well played and eventually drawn.

28...hxg3!! 29.♖xh6

White had other moves, but they all lose. This was presumably the reason Black did not take on g3. But examine all checks and captures!

29...♙h3†!

The key candidate move to see. Once you see it, the rest is straightforward.

30.♙h1

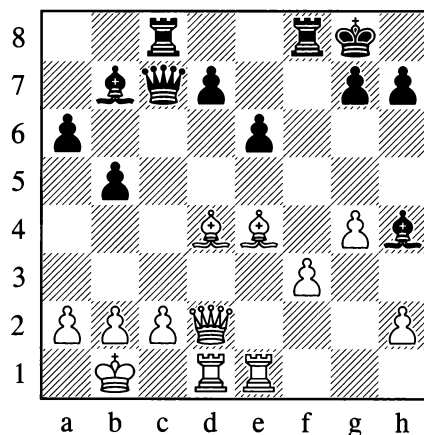
After 30.♙g1 gxf2† 31.♖xf2 ♗xf2 32.♙xf2 ♗xh6, Black has won his queen back and then some.

30...gxf2

The pawn graduates. White can resign.

### 125. Tamas Petenyi – Jan Bernasek

Czech Republic 2022



White played 19.♗e2 ♙xe4 20.fxe4 ♗f7. The position is around equal here. Black eventually won.

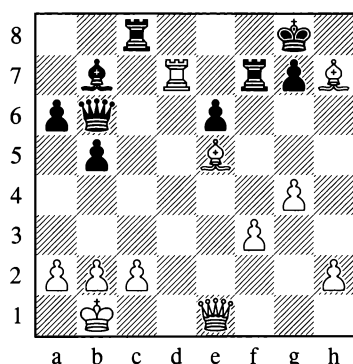
The first move of the solution is not too hard to spot. I suspect White saw it but missed the next one.

19.♙e5!! ♙xe1

19...d6 is clearly refuted by 20.♙xd6.

White now has two winning moves. I only saw 20. ♖xe1, although I suppose I could have found the alternative if it was necessary.

After 20. ♖xe1 ♜b6 21. ♝xd7 ♞f7 22. ♔xh7†

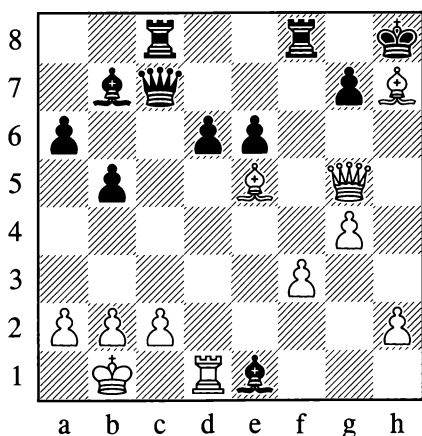


Black loses heavy material on the spot.

20. ♔xh7†!

But do not fall for 20. ♖g5? d6!. Tables reversed.

20... ♔h8 21. ♖g5! d6



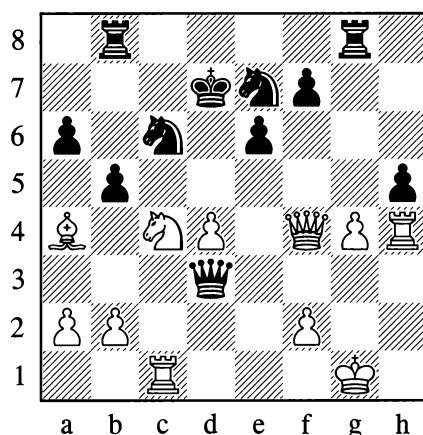
Since White had the good sense to flick in ♔e4xh7† before going for this line, he can now give mate however he wants.

22. ♖h5

White wins. 22. ♔g6 and 22. ♔d3 also score.

## 126. Richard Rapport – Aleksey Dreev

Warsaw (rapid) 2021



When you are about to lose a lot of material, do not be shy about throwing more! This is a simple candidate move.

28. d5!!

White blasts open some lines.

Black safely holds it all together after 28. ♖d6†? ♔e8 29. ♔e5 ♖xd4!.

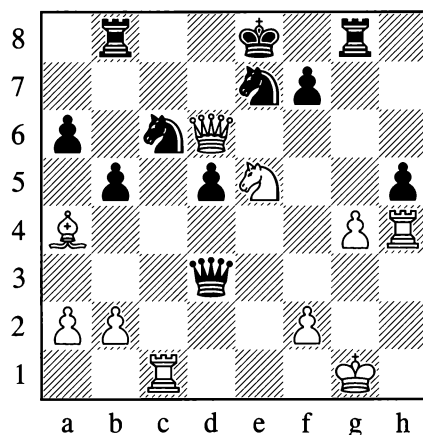
28... exd5

28... ♖xd5 loses the queen: 29. ♖d1

29. ♖d6†!

Now and only now.

29... ♔e8 30. ♔e5!



The key point is that if White checked on d6 without pushing d4-d5 first, Black would have had ...♙xd4 here. This saves the day as we have seen. As is, he is immediately crushed.

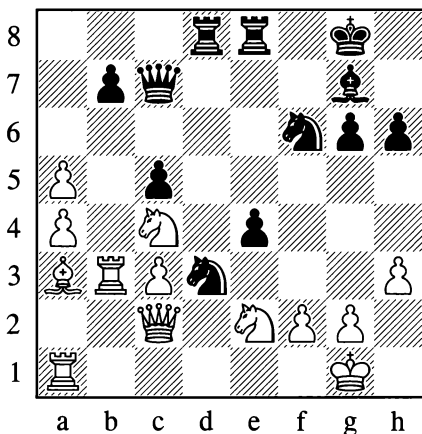
**30...♙d2**

30...♜xe5 is not possible due to 31.♙xb8†.

**31.♞xc6 ♞d8 32.♙f6 ♙e1† 33.♜h2 ♞f8  
34.♞c7 ♙b4 35.gxh5 ♙d6 36.♞xe7  
1-0**

### 127. Viktor Boev – Vugar Asadli

Plovdiv 2021



The game was uninspiring: 27...♙f7? 28.♜e3 ♜d5 29.♞f1!, with equality and a later draw.

27...♜xf2?! bags the f2-pawn, but it is of little consequence. Black should be much more interested in blasting through with ...e4-e3. This opens up his e8-rook and clears e4 for his f6-knight. 28.♞ab1! White ignores the knight and looks for counterplay. This is unclear.

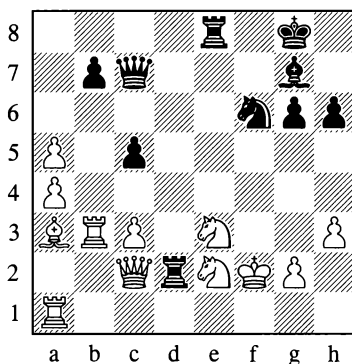
Black's pieces are in prime position to strike. Strike they can.

**27...e3! 28.fxe3**

28.♜xe3 ♜xf2!

28...♜e4? is again too slow. 29.♞ab1

29.♜xf2 ♞d2!



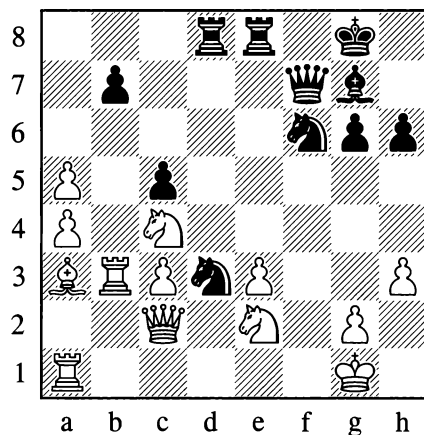
The most forceful and convincing. White is forced to take on d2 directly to avoid a check on f4 and is totally crushed.

30.♙xd2

30.♙xg6 ♙f4† wins.

30...♜e4† 31.♜e1 ♜xd2 32.♜xd2 ♙e5  
Black wins.

**28...♙f7!!**



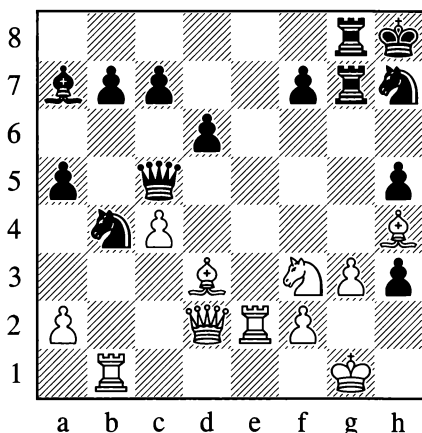
A difficult candidate move, although once you have seen it, the game is over. Now that White has been forced to occupy e3 with his pawn, the knight has nowhere sensible to go.

**29.♜b2 ♞xe3**

...♜f6-e4 or ...♙f7-e8 are coming. White is demolished.

**128. Martin Petrov – Hans Niemann**

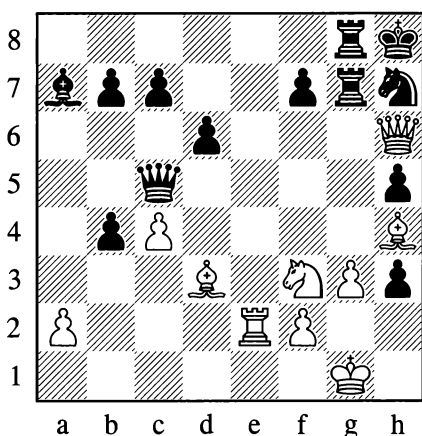
Plovdiv 2021



White is just about ready to give mate with ♖d2-h6. First he needs to make sure his d3-bishop stays alive.

**30. ♖xb4!**

30. ♖h2?, as played, was less than convincing. After 30...f5!? the game was unclear, and eventually drawn.

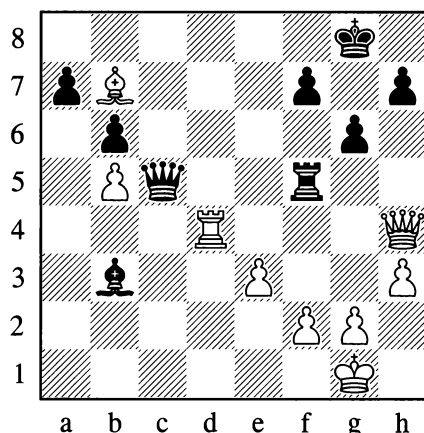
**30...axb4 31. ♗h6!**

There is nothing Black can do about the bishop landing on f6 next.

**31...♖g6 32. ♕f6† ♖xf6 33. ♖xh7#**

**129. Ding Liren – Jinshi Bai**

Hangzhou 2022



White should be looking for forcing moves to maximize his initiative. There is no other reason for him to be better.

**32. ♕e4! ♖e5**

32...♖h5 33. ♖f6, and the threat of ♖d4-d8† wins.

**33. ♕xg6!!**

Good spot. Always examine all checks and captures!

33. ♖f6 is met by back-rank protection: 33...♖e8, when White is only slightly better.

**33...fxg6**

Mate follows 33...hxg6: 34. ♖d8† ♖g7 35. ♖h8#

**34. ♖d7!**

The threats on the seventh and eighth ranks are too powerful.

**34...♕f7**

34...h5 35. ♖f6 mates.

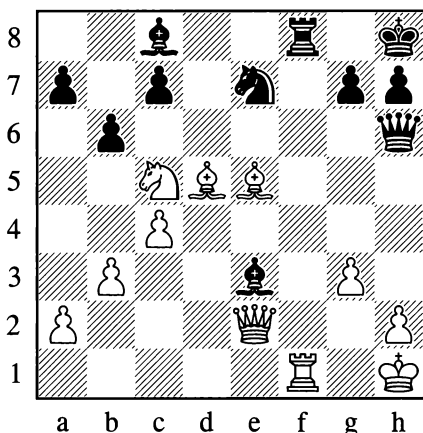
**35. ♖f6 ♖c1† 36. ♖h2**

Black resigned.

**1–0**

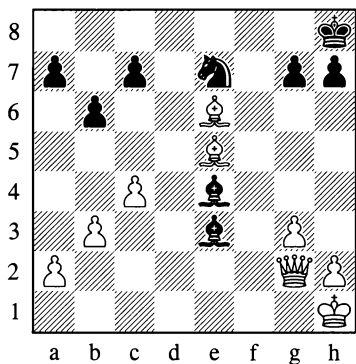
### 130. Martin Blahynka – Stepan Zilka

Czech Republic 2022



Black is facing trouble on the f-file. He has a natural move but must see the right follow-up.

27...♖xf1†? was Black's choice in the game. I assume he saw the first correct move but missed the follow-up. 28.♔xf1 ♕f5 29.♘e6! ♖xe6 30.♙xe6 ♙e4† 31.♗g2 ♖xf1#



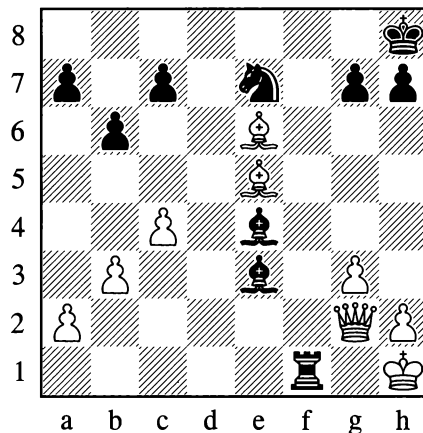
Black could have obtained this same position without swapping rooks. Then, ...♖xf1 would be checkmate! Here, he was hopelessly lost against the powerful bishop pair. 31...♙xe6 32.♘g2 c5 33.♙d7 ♘g6 34.♙b8 a5 35.♙c7 ♙d2 36.♙e8 ♘f8 37.♙xb6 ♙b4 38.♙f3 1-0

27...♙f5! 28.♘e6?

White should prefer 28.g4, although he is obviously worse: 28...♙xc5 29.gxf5 ♖xf5

28.♘e6? was probably the reason Black rejected the line. But examine all checks and captures!

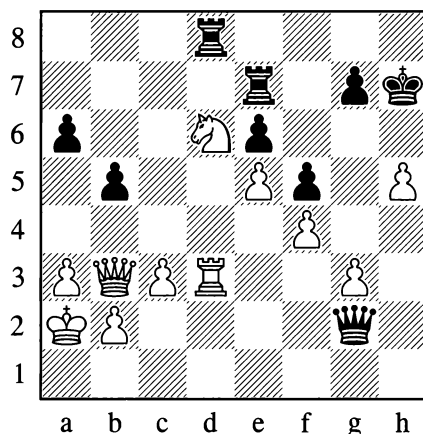
28...♗xe6! 29.♙xe6 ♙e4† 30.♗g2 ♖xf1#



Compare the diagrams!

### 131. Shakhriyar Mamedyarov – Eric Hansen

Internet 2022



White obviously has a lot of compensation for the exchange. He is better more or less whatever he does. But the first step towards not



winning the game is not flooring the opponent on the spot.

White was better after 34. ♖b4?! ♜dd7, but he lacked a final blow. He even went on to lose.

34. ♖xf5!

I am sure Mamedyarov saw this move but failed to examine all checks and captures later on.

34... ♜xd3 35. ♖xe7 ♜d2

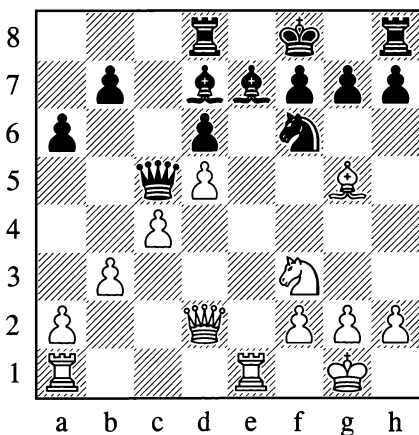
Mamedyarov probably saw this far and abandoned ship here, thinking that Black has annoying counterplay. The queen is stuck on b3, and the rook is active suddenly. But examine all checks and captures!

36. ♖xe6! ♜xb2† 37. ♖a1

Black has no more relevant checks and will be mated shortly.

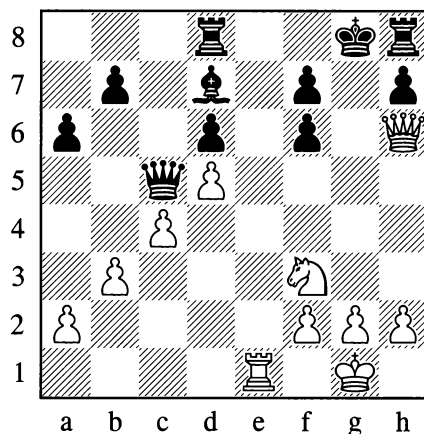
### 132. Ehsan Ghaem Maghami – Pavel Ponkratov

Tashkent 2021



White is a piece down and should be looking for energetic play, before Black can consolidate with a move like ... ♜e8. The following sacrifice will surely be natural for anyone who has played many games as White against the Sicilian.

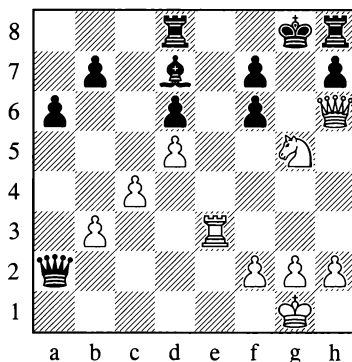
16. ♜xe7! ♖xe7 17. ♜e1† ♖f8 18. ♙xf6 gxf6  
19. ♖h6† ♖g8



Getting to here is pretty easy. Checks and captures all the way. Now White just needs to be careful, as he has three tempting moves, but only two of them win.

20. ♜e7 wins by pure prophylaxis. Black can hardly move. Black is mated after 20... ♖c8 21. ♖xf6. And 20... ♜e8 is prevented: 21. ♜xd7 ♖c8 22. ♜xd6 ♖f5 23. h3 wins.

The wrong direction is 20. ♖g5?. Black can just save himself: 20... ♖a5! 21. ♜e3? ♖xa2!



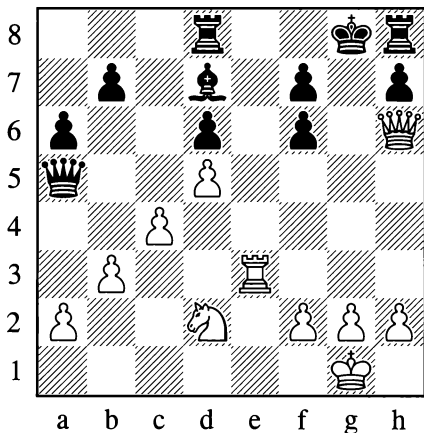
The knight on g5 turns out to be in the way. White is unable to deliver mate on g3, and he must lose a tempo guarding the back rank. In the meantime, Black is ready for ... ♖b1-g6, saving his king. Black is winning.

**20. ♖d2!**

More forceful than 20. ♖e7. The knight is coming to e4.

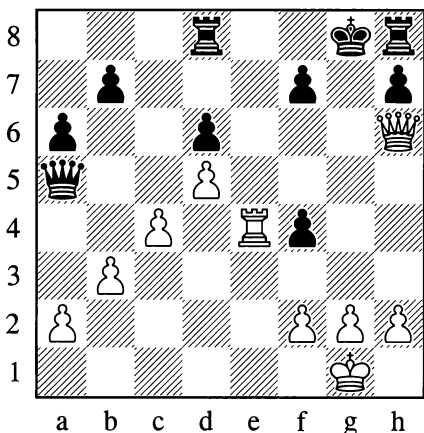
**20... ♖a5**

20... f5 loses the rook and the game: 21. ♖g5†

**21. ♖e3!**

In contrast to the position with the knight on g5, White is threatening mate on g3, and Black has no time for ... ♖xa2. White is winning.

**21... ♗f5 22. ♖e4! ♗xe4 23. ♖xe4 f5 24. ♖e3 f4 25. ♖e4**

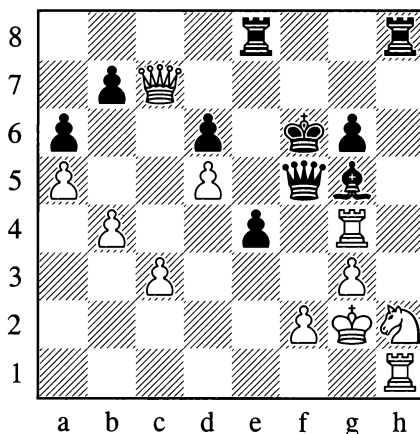


Black is paralyzed and cannot stop the basic threat of ♖h6-g5†xd8, ♖g5†-e7†, and ♖e4xf4.

**25... ♖a8 26. ♖g5† ♔f8 27. ♖e7† ♔g7 28. ♖xf4 1-0**

**133. Andrei Volokitin – Fabiano Caruana**

Warsaw (rapid) 2021



32... ♖xd5, as played, was obvious and natural. Black is better. Still, it let a chance slip, and the position is not that crushing. White even saved the game despite the rating deficit.

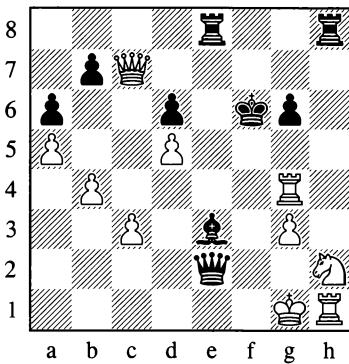
White's king is just asking to be opened up:

**32... e3!**

Devastating. It turns out the check on d6 is nothing to fear. The pawn cover around White's king is demolished; the engine even claims forced mate!

**33. ♖xd6†**

33.fxe3 Here we go: 33... ♖c2†! 34. ♔f1 ♖d1† 35. ♔g2 ♖e2† 36. ♔g1 ♗xe3#



33...♔g7 34.♖c7†

34.♖f1 loses material to 34...♖xh2† 35.♔xh2 ♖xg4.

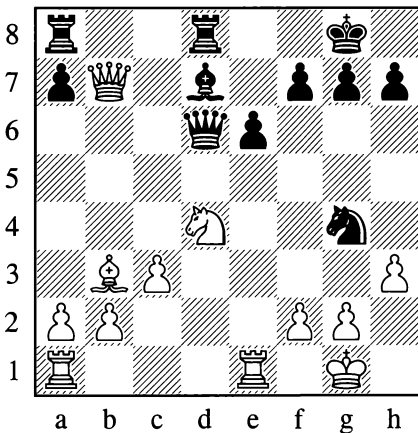
We have already seen what happens after 34.fxe3 ♖c2†.

34...♖e7

The queen is attacked and mate on f2 threatened. Black wins.

### 134. Gabor Papp – Maxime Vachier-Lagrave

Germany 2021



I must confess, I got this one wrong too. Having seen the solution, it does not seem that hard, though I can take some solace in Vachier-Lagrave having missed it in a classical game as well!

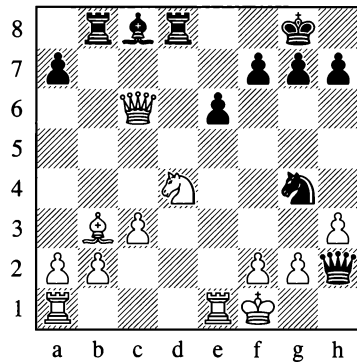
I proposed:

18...♔c8?

Of course, the rook cannot be taken, as the queen is lost after a couple of checks.

But White can just save himself:

19.♖c6! ♖h2† 20.♔f1 ♖b8



I had seen this far and thought that ...♔b7 would end the world next move. But, with veins of ice, the machine holds on. I imagine a strong player would too.

21.hxg4! ♔b7 22.♖c5! ♖xg2† 23.♔e2 ♖xg4† 24.f3! ♖g2† 25.♔e3

White is alive and kicking, and the position is unclear.

18...♖h2†

18...♖ab8!? transposes to the main line after 19.♖e4.

19.♔f1

Black played 19...♔e5? and eventually won, but here he is more or less lost after 20.♖ad1. White lost in the same way as the main line, after 20.♖e4? ♔c6!.

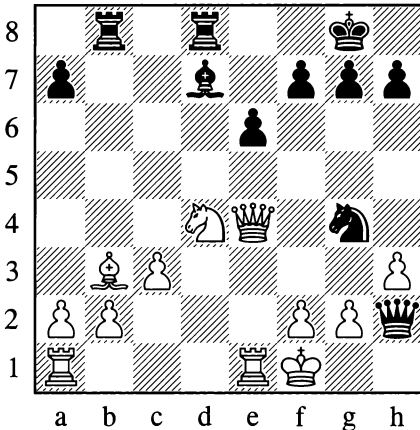
Time instead to kick White's queen off b7:

19...♖ab8!

There is nothing White can do about a check on b5 and then a rook landing on the second rank.

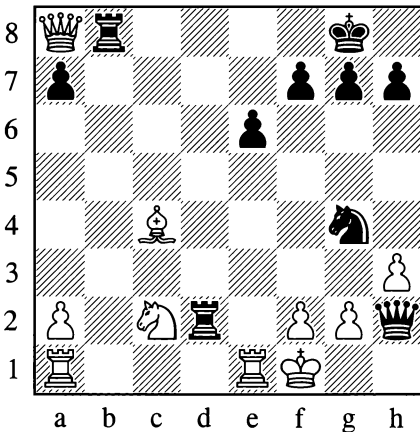
**20. ♖e4**

The alternatives are met with ...♞d2 and mate, after both: 20. ♖a6 ♕b5†! Anyway! 21. ♜xb5 and 20. ♖f3 ♕b5† 21. ♜xb5.



Now, Black needs to get a rook to the second rank. A little creativity gets us there.

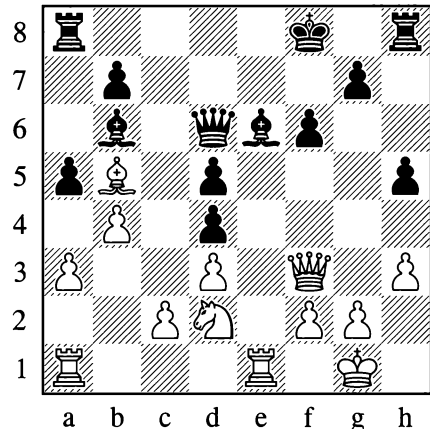
**20... ♕b5†! 21. c4 ♕xc4†! 22. ♕xc4 ♜xb2! 23. ♜c2 ♞d2! 24. ♖a8† ♞b8!**



Black's idea is finally realized. A beautiful variation!

**135. Nik Javornik – Marko Rubil**

Terme Catez 2022



19. ♞e2?! was the normal move played. The position is unclear, although Black eventually won. White should have looked for more creative solutions. Whenever there is a key move we really want to make, always ask: *what happens if I do it anyway?*

**19. ♜c4!! dxc4**

Now, examine all checks and captures.

**20. ♞xe6! ♖xe6 21. ♖xb7! ♞e8**

The most resilient, though Black still loses.

21... ♞c8 is easy. 22. ♕d7 wins.

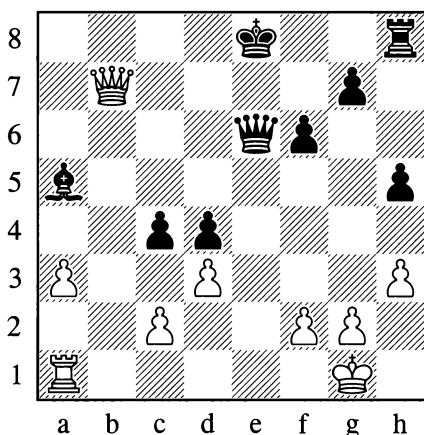
After 21... ♞d8 22. ♕xc4, Black's queen is hit, and she is unable to stay in touch with both b6 and f7. Following 22... ♖e7 23. ♖xb6, relative material parity has been restored; Black's position is a train wreck.

**22. ♕xe8!**

22. ♕xc4? is tempting, but Black can equalize with 22... ♞e7! 23. ♖a8† ♞e8!.

**22... ♜xe8 23. bxa5! ♕xa5**

Otherwise, the pawn would promote.



24. ♖b5†!

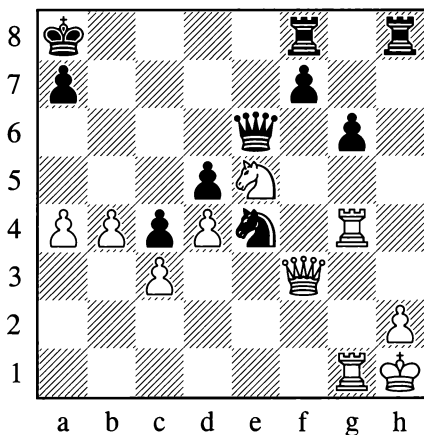
It is not too late to blunder: 24. ♖a8? ♕d8! Enough said.

24... ♔f7 25. ♖xa5

The a-pawn is going to be happy soon.

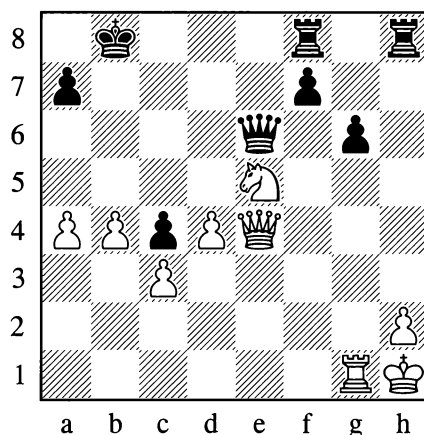
### 136. Mikhail Kobalia – Szymon Gumularz

Warsaw (rapid) 2021



White missed his chance with 41. ♔g2? and went on to lose eventually. Checks and captures, always.

41. ♖xe4! dx4 42. ♖xe4† ♔b8



It is easy to get to here and think White is out of steam. But again, always examine all checks and captures!

43. ♖xg6!

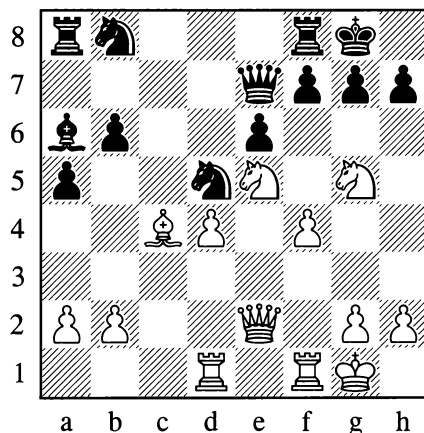
Devastating.

43... fxc6 44. ♕c6†

With the black king exposed the white queen is just too powerful.

### 137. Nurgyul Salimova – Lia-Alexandra Maria

Bucharest 2021



This one was fun. I saw it almost all the way to the end but got complacent at the final moment!

Hopefully in a game I would have slowed down and played something better.

18.♔c2 was played. White was much better, but it was far from a knockout blow. Black should have been happy to have 18...♖f6! available without her rook hanging in the corner. His position is bad, but would you beat Carlsen from here with White? I do not think I would. The game actually continued 18...g6? 19.♙xd5 exd5 20.♗fe1, and White soon won.

### 18.♔c4!

White threatens mate while pinning the knight to the rook on a8, avoiding ...♖f6.

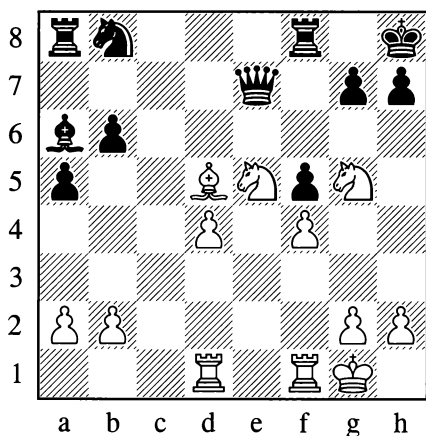
Everything wins now after 18...g6, but the easiest and most human is 19.♖xg6 hxg6 20.♙xd5. A clean extra pawn and a continued attack.

The key point is after:

### 18...f5

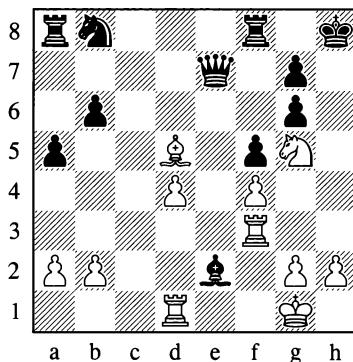
It looks like Black has survived the worst of it. But examine all checks and captures!

19.♔xd5! exd5 20.♙xd5† ♔h8



Don't be an idiot like me. I wanted 21.♖g6†??. I would hope that in a tournament game,

I would slow down here, making sure to double check myself. 21...hxg6 22.♗f3 It looks like Black is mated, but: 22...♙e2!!



The trap springs shut. Black wins.

### 21.♖ef7†

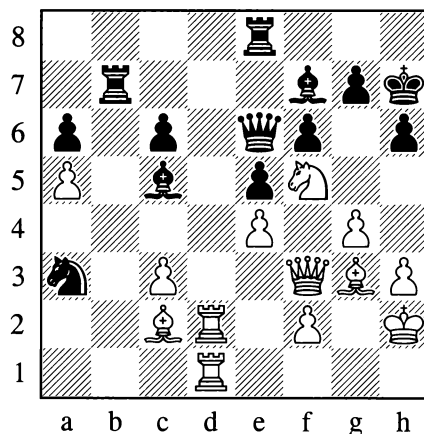
Also fine is 21.♖gf7†, which transposes. Even 21.♗fe1!? wins easily.

21...♗xf7 22.♖xf7† ♔g8 23.♗fe1 ♔d7 24.♖g5† ♔h8 25.♙xa8

The white pieces coordinate harmoniously and will win the day.

## 138. Maxime Vachier-Lagrave – Fabiano Caruana

Paris 2021



Vachier-Lagrave is normally the best player in the world at little tactical tricks; he was probably low on time here. Eventually he won anyway after 36.♔d3, but this is not totally clear.

### 36.♔d6!!

The most forcing moves all the way through lead to a quick victory.

### 36...♙xd6

36...♖c8 37.♜xg7! and the kingside crumbles.

### 37.♖xd6 ♖c8

The same idea after 37...♖c4: 38.♜xg7 ♜xg7 39.♖xf6† ♜g8 40.♙xe5 White wins.

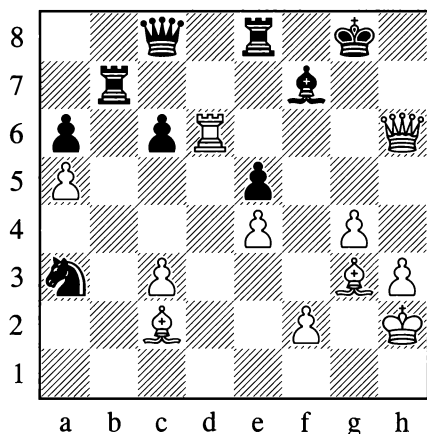
### 38.♜xg7!

Black's kingside is again collapsing.

### 38...♜xg7

White also wins after 38...♖g8 39.♖xf6 ♖xg7 40.♖xh6† ♜g8 41.♙xe5.

### 39.♖xf6† ♜g8 40.♖xh6!



The main point. White's initiative is so powerful that even a slow-looking move is more than sufficient. Black is unable to stop the basic threat of ♖h6-g5†, with ♔d6-h6 to follow.

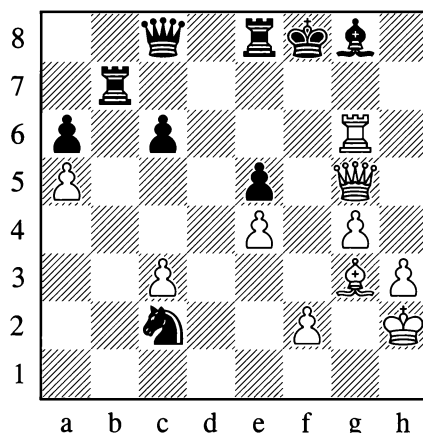
### 40...♜xc2

Or 40...♖c6 41.♖g5† ♜h7 42.♙xe5, and Black is mated.

### 41.♖g5† ♜f8 42.♖h6! ♙g8

The most resilient defense. One final accurate move finishes the game.

### 43.♖g6!!



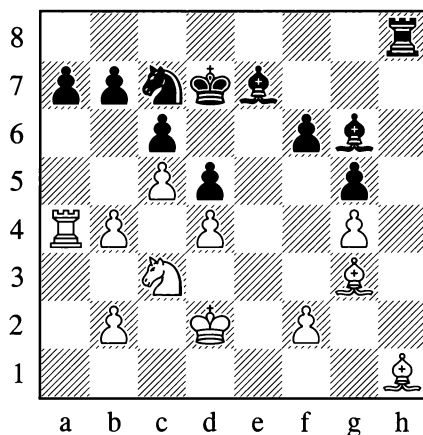
Silent but deadly. Black is mated, for example after:

### 43...♙f7 44.♖f6!

There is nothing he can do about ♙g3-h4 coming next, or even ♖g6-h6.

## 139. Kirill Burdakov – Stepan Zilka

Czech Republic 2021



Always examine all checks and captures.

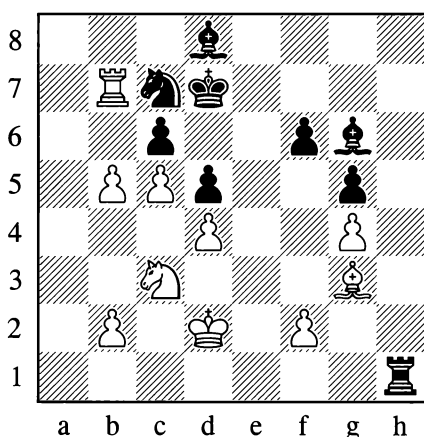
### 26. ♖xa7!

Complacent was 26. ♗g2?. After 26...a6, White had no active plan and was a bit worse. He was eventually ground down.

### 26... ♖xh1 27. ♖xb7 ♔d8

It looks like White is out of juice here. A piece down and ...♗d7-c8 is coming. But the initiative continues:

### 28.b5!



With the not-so-subtle threat of b5-b6.

### 28...cxb5

If 28...♗c8 29.bxc6, Black is unable to prevent ♖c3-b5 from coming next. Unstoppable mating threats.

### 29. ♖xb5 ♗c8

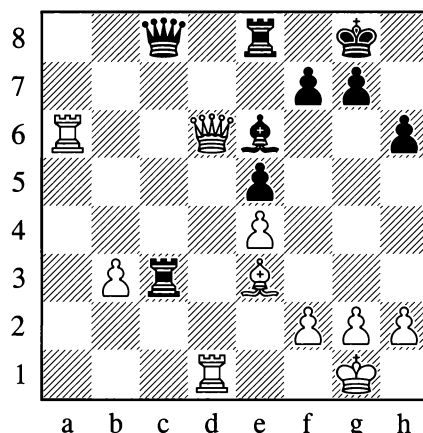
It is mate after 29...♗c6 30. ♖b6† ♗d7 31.c6† ♗c8 32. ♖d6#.

### 30.c6!

Black cannot take on b5 thanks to the mate on b8. He is otherwise facing threats such as ♖b5-d6, ♖b5-a7 or even just taking the knight with something. The machine claims mate in 4.

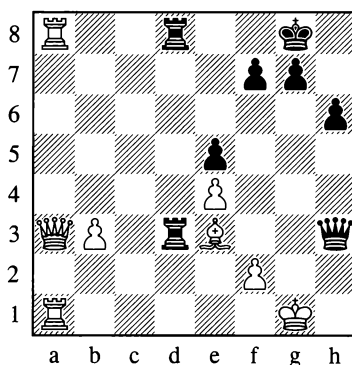
## 140. Anton Demchenko – Anish Giri

Moscow 2019



Black has an obvious idea of moving the bishop from e6 with a gain of tempo, to prepare for ...♗e6 next. He needs to be careful in his execution though.

I gave 32...♗g4?. It is similar to the winning line, but there is a key difference. 33. ♖da1 ♖d8 34. ♗a3! ♖cd3 I thought White should be mated here, but he has an escape. 35.h3! ♗xh3 36.gxh3 ♗xh3 37. ♖a8!



White trades off the attacking rook. Black has to settle for a perpetual.

### 32... ♗xb3! 33. ♖da1 ♖d8!

Giri missed a shot here with 33...♗e6?. By some miracle he eventually won, though at this

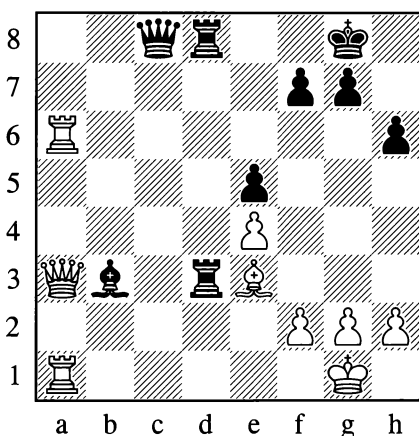


point a prompt draw should follow: 34.♚xe6 ♜xe6 35.♖a8

### 34.♚a3!

Weak back rank: 34.♚xe5 ♜c1† 35.♞xc1 ♚xc1† 36.♜xc1 ♞d1#

### 34...♞cd3!



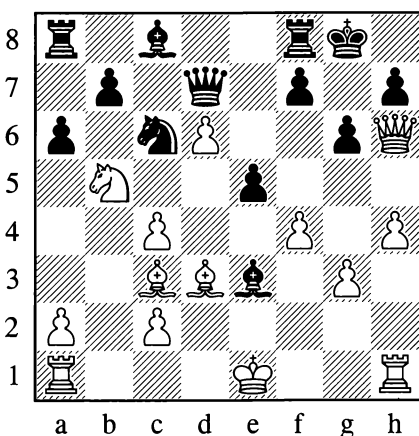
I got this far in my calculations and thought White saves himself with h2-h3. I chose to put the bishop on g4 instead, so that I could sacrifice. But here, Black gains decisive material instead of mating.

### 35.h3 ♜c4!

Black wins.

## 141. Jan Vykouk – Oliver Mihok

Czech Republic 2021



This one is tough to see to the end. Luckily, the most obvious moves are the best ones.

### 20.♜c7!

Make no mistake: White has no interest in the rook in the corner. He wants the knight to come to d5 to give mate on f6.

The game now continued:

20...♚xd6

White's play is easier here than in the main line.

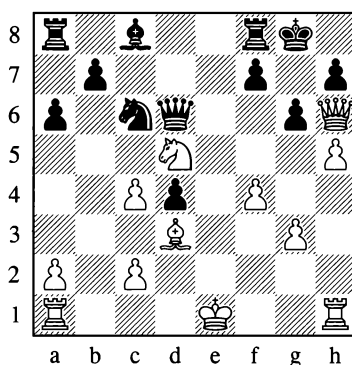
21.♜d5!

21.♜xa8? This rook is useless, and Black launches a decisive counterattack: 21...♚a3

21...♜d4 22.♜xd4 exd4

22...♜xd4 23.h5 wins.

23.h5



Black should be mated in short order. He lost in just a few more moves:

23...f5 24.♜f2 ♜f7 25.c5 ♚f8 26.hxg6 ♜g7

27.♜f6†

1-0

The toughest try to break down is:

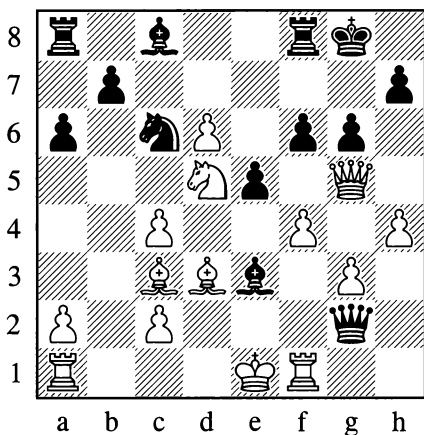
### 20...♚g4!?

If White calculates well, he gets there. Starting with finding two only moves to avoid getting mated.

21.♚g5! ♚f3 22.♜f1! ♚g2

White brings the knight in the right direction.

## 23. ♖d5! f6



It looks like White's queen is forced away from the defense of g3. But:

## 24. ♖xe3!

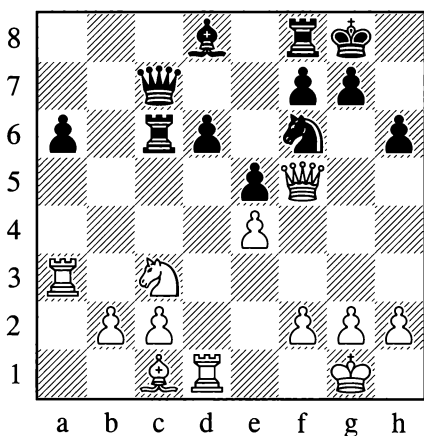
White counterattacks Black's queen instead.

## 24... ♖xf1† 25. ♕xf1 fxg5 26. hxg5

Despite the exchange less, White is winning due to his activity.

## 142. Husain Aziz – Semetey Tologontegin

Warsaw (rapid) 2021

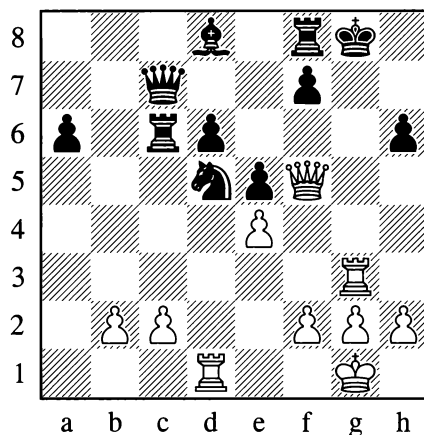


White has a pleasant position, but Black looks reasonably solid. The knockout blow should not be missed.

## 23. ♕xh6!!

White was better after 23. ♖f3 ♖c8 24. h3, and he eventually won. But would you beat Carlsen from here?

## 23... ♗gxh6 24. ♖d5! ♖xd5 25. ♖g3†!



## 25... ♕g5

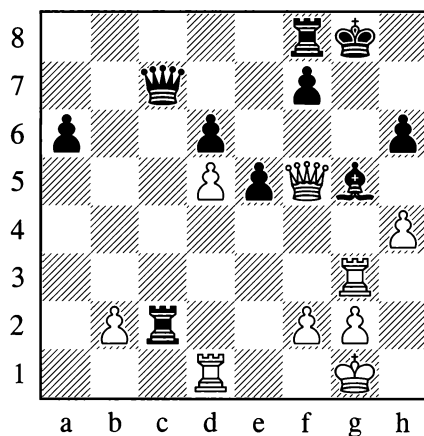
This is the hardest defense to break.

Black's king is not long for this world after: 25... ♖h8 26. ♖h5! ♕g5 (26... ♖h7 is met by 27. ♖h3) 27. ♖xg5 ♖h7 28. ♖xd5

## 26. exd5! ♖xc2

White is also mating after: 26... ♖c4 27. ♖xg5†! hxg5 28. ♖xg5† ♖h8 29. ♖d3!

## 27. h4!



White wins back his material and has a decisive attack. There is an important point that:

27...♖c1

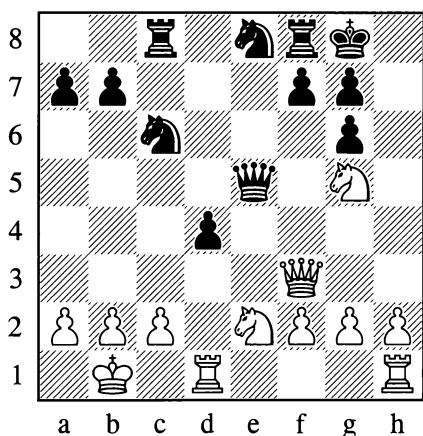
Fails to:

28.♖xg5†! hxg5 29.♖xg5†

With a deadly fork.

### 143. Alexander Krastev – Jiri Stocck

Terme Catez 2022



22.♖e4 was equal, and Black eventually won. Always look for candidate moves.

22.♖h7!

The rook is trapped on f8.

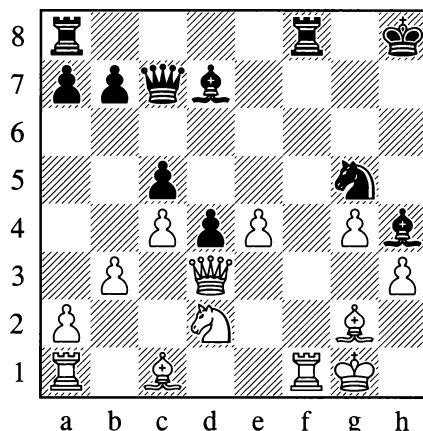
A similar idea is 22.♖h3?, forking mate on h7 and the rook on c8. But after 22...♖f6!, the tables are turned.

22...♖xh7 23.♖h3† ♖h5 24.♖xc8 ♖xe2 25.♖he1

White wins a piece on e8 and remains an exchange up. He should win.

### 144. Sanan Sjugirov – Lucas van Foreest

Warsaw (rapid) 2021

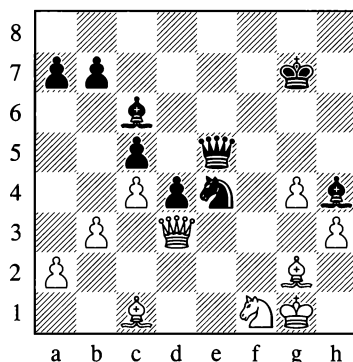


Black has a promising-looking initiative, but only one way to drive the point home.

24...♖f2†!!

Checks and captures.

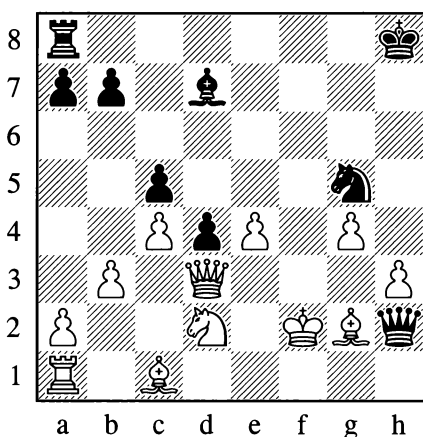
24...♖e5?! 25.♖b2 was played. Black eventually won anyway, but at this moment, the position is unclear. 25...♖g7?! 26.♖xf8 (26.b4! b6 27.bxc5 bxc5 28.♖b3, and White is better.) 26...♖xf8 27.♖f1 ♖xf1† 28.♖xf1, with equality. 28...♖c6 29.♖c1 ♖xe4



30.♖e2?? ♖f2† 31.♖h1 ♖g3† White resigned 0–1. 32.♖xg3 ♖xg2† 33.♖xg2 ♖xg3† 34.♖f1 ♖g1#

**25. ♖xf2**

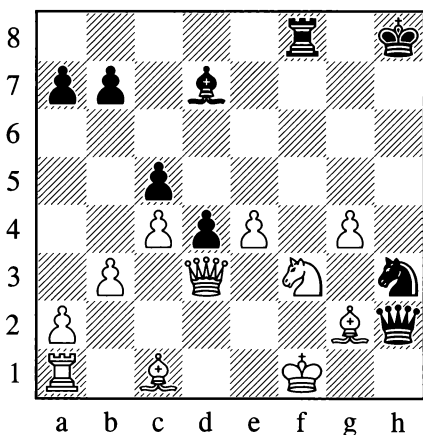
25. ♖h1 is met by ♗xg4!, as the bishop is immune from capture, due to ... ♖h7†. White is crushed.

**25... ♖xf2 26. ♖xf2 ♖h2!**

This is the key point that Black must see before checking on f2. White's king is frozen in the kill zone and unable to come back to g1. There is nothing he can do about ... ♖f8 coming next.

**27. ♖f3 ♖xh3†!**

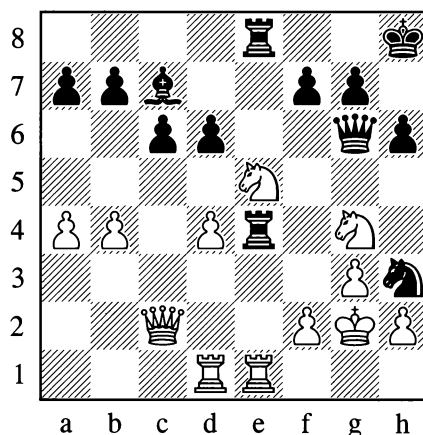
It was not too late to mess up: 27... ♖f8? 28. ♗xg5 wins – for White.

**28. ♖f1 ♖f8**

... ♖g1† coming next is a small problem for White to solve. Stopping the clock is a good place to start.

**145. Baadur Jobava – Aryan Tari**

Warsaw (rapid) 2021



Checks and captures. Again, and again!

**24... ♖f4†! 25. gxf4**

White cannot move his king: 25. ♖f3 dxe5! 26. ♖xe4 f5!, winning.

**25... ♖8xe5!**

White is demolished.

**26. dxe5 ♖xg4† 27. ♖f1 ♖xf4!**

Black forced a draw here, with 27... ♖h3† 28. ♖g1 ♖g4† ½–½. But he has every right to play for more.

**28. exd6 ♖h3†!**

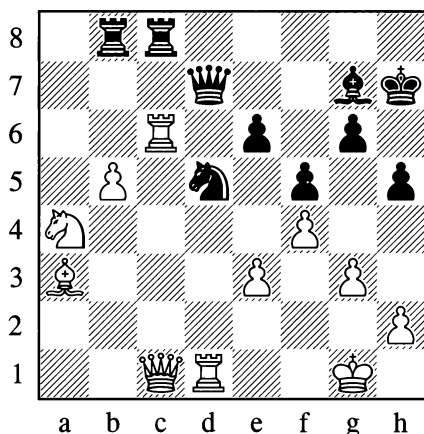
An important move. Black forces the king to e2, avoiding ♖e1–e8 mate.

**29. ♖e2 ♖b6!**

White will not survive the coming assault.

**146. Timur Gareyev – Ian Nepomniachtchi**

Warsaw (rapid) 2021



Black's position looks solid enough. A strong candidate move changes everything.

**29. ♕d6!**

The game saw 29. ♖c3? ♜xc6!? 30. bxc6 ♜xc3. Black is doing quite well here, and White needs to be precise to maintain the balance. He went down hard and fast. 31. ♔g2 ♜xd1 32. ♜xd1 ♜xc6 33. ♜d7 ♜c2† 34. ♔f3? ♜a8! 35. ♜d3 ♜c3 0–1

**29... ♜a8**

After 29... ♜xb5 30. ♜xc8 ♜xd6 31. ♖c3!, White consolidates his extra exchange. He should win. 31... ♜a5 32. ♜xd5 ♜xd5 33. ♜xd5 ♜xd5 34. ♔f2 does the job.

**30. ♕e5!!**

The key point. White does not need to fear for the knight on a4. He should instead focus on removing the defender of the seventh rank.

White is not ready for 30. ♜b6?: 30... ♜xb6, and Black wins.

**30... ♕xe5**

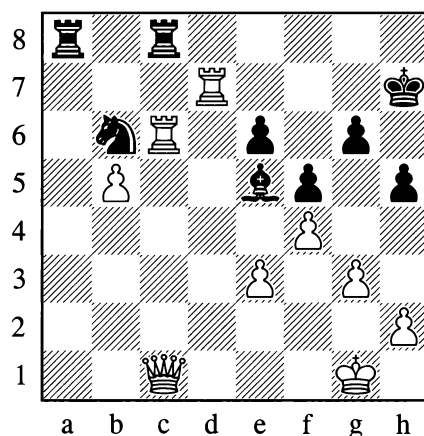
White is also winning against other tries: 30... ♜e7 31. ♜xc8, 30... ♜b7 31. ♕xg7 ♔xg7

32. ♜c5 and 30... ♜xc6 31. bxc6 ♜a7 32. ♜c5 ♜e7 33. ♕xg7 ♔xg7 34. e4.

**31. ♜b6!**

A final key move, winning material. Since Black's bishop has been dragged from g7, he cannot take on b6:

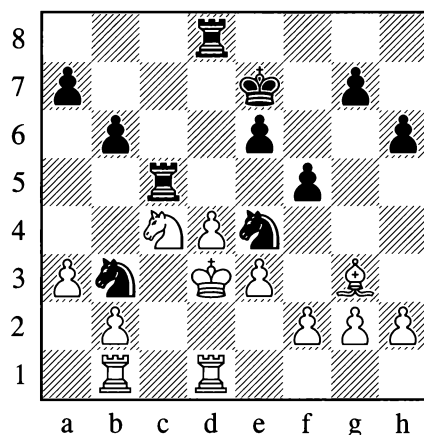
31... ♜xb6 32. ♜xd7†



Check!

**147. Liam Vrolijk – Radosław Wojtaszek**

Germany 2019



Black missed a powerful candidate move playing: 24... ♜c6? 25. ♜e5 ♜c5 26. ♜c4 ½–½

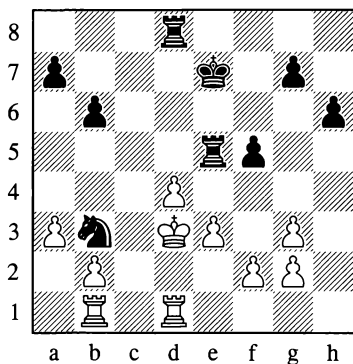
**24...e5!!**

Always ask: *what happens if I do it anyway?* Black forces White's bishop to occupy e5.

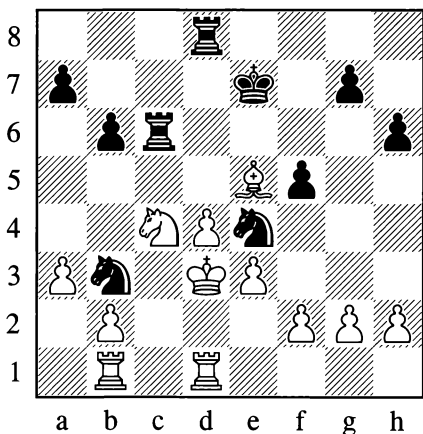
I put some effort into making 24...b5? work. White just hangs on. 25.♖d6! ♜xf2† 26.♙xf2 ♜xd6 The position looks scary for White. He can barely move and ...e6-e5 is coming, but: 27.♙e1 The threat of ♙e1-b4 is annoying to meet. 27...a5 28.♙xa5! ♜xa5 29.b4 White should not lose.

**25.♙xe5**

25.♙xe5 looks problematic, but Black has it all under control. 25...♜xg3! 26.hxg3 ♜xe5



Black is winning, as it turns out that White cannot trap the knight. 27.♙c4 ♜a5†!, 27.♙c3 ♜b5 or 27.♙c2 ♜b5.

**25...♜c6!**

Only now this move comes. White is unable to challenge the rook with ♖e5, and he cannot do a thing about ...♜d8-c8 coming next.

**26.♙c2**

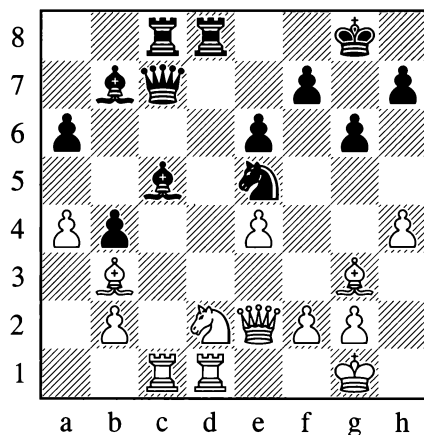
This is probably his best try, though after:

**26...♜a5 27.b3 ♜xf2! 28.♙f1 ♜g4!**

Black is clearly better.

### 148. Alexander Moiseenko – Jakob Leon Pajeken

Germany 2021



Black's position is under heavy pressure. Two of his minor pieces are pinned. The bishop on b7 does not inspire confidence. But no matter how much it looks like your opponent has the position under control, always examine all checks and captures!

**23...♜xd2!!**

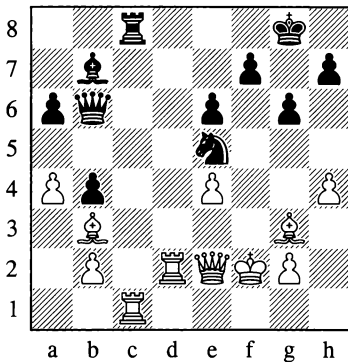
23...♜b8? was complacent. After 24.♜c4, Black is lost, and did not last much longer.

**24.♜xd2**

Surely the reason Black did not take.

Black wins material after: 24.♜xd2 ♜f3†! 25.♙h1 (25.gxf3 ♜xg3† wins) 25...♜xd2 26.♙xc7 ♜xb3! A significant detail to notice.

24...♙xf2† 25.♚xf2  
25.♘xf2 ♚b6†!

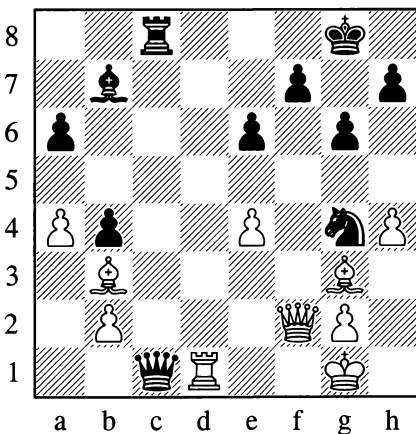


An important check, without which Black could resign. ...♚xc1 looks automatic and natural, but always examine all checks and captures! 26.♚e3 ♘g4†!

25...♚xc1† 26.♙d1

Now, if 26...♚c5? 27.♙d8†! ♘g7 28.♙xc8, White wins a piece and the game. Instead, Black probably missed:

26...♘g4!



White is a pawn down. He needs to be precise to only be a little worse.

27.♙xc1

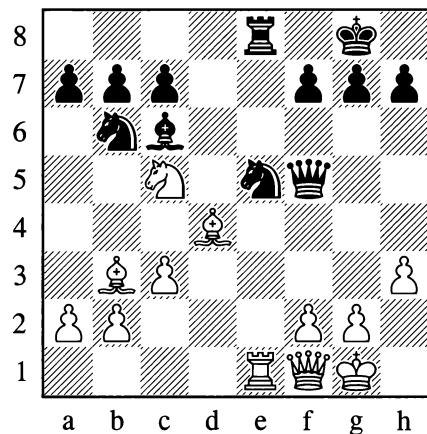
Black is also a little better after 27.♚f3 ♚e3†.

27...♙xc1† 28.♚e1 ♙xe1† 29.♙xe1 ♙xe4

With a small advantage to Black.

### 149. Markus Ragger – Santosh Gujrathi Vidit

Germany 2020



This was a tough one, that even Vidit managed to get wrong in a classical game!

22...♘f3†? was played, and the game drawn immediately: 23.gxf3 ♚g5† 24.♘h2 ♚f4† 25.♘g1 ♚g5† 26.♘h2 ♚f4† ½–½

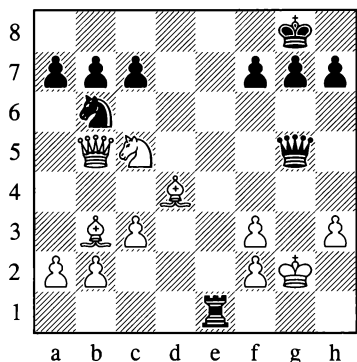
I solved it but aided by the knowledge that a win existed.

22...♙b5!!

White's queen is in trouble.

23.c4!

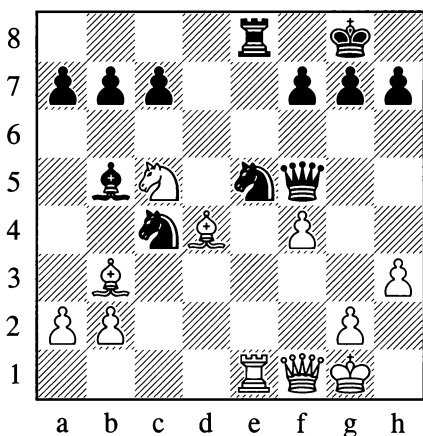
The obvious capture, 23.♚xb5?, is refuted by: 23...♘f3†! 24.gxf3 ♙xe1† 25.♘h2 ♚f4† 26.♘g2 ♚g5†



White is mated. 27.♔h2 ♚g1#

White is similarly mated after 23.♞xe5 ♞xe5  
24.♚xb5 ♞e1† 25.♔h2 ♚f4† 26.g3 ♚f3!.

23...♜bxc4 24.f4



It looks like all of Black's pieces are hanging, but the tactical energy favors him.

24...♜d2!!

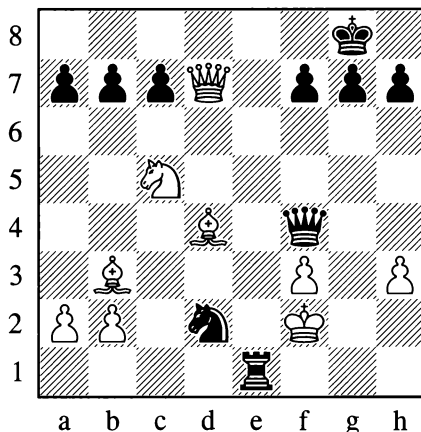
Aggressive and powerful.

25.♚xb5 ♜ef3† 26.gxf3

After 26.♔f2 ♞xe1 27.♙e3! ♜e4† 28.♔xf3 ♞xe3† 29.♔xe3 ♚xc5† 30.♚xc5 ♜xc5, the dust has settled and Black has a winning endgame.

26...♞xe1† 27.♔f2 ♚xf4!! 28.♚d7

28.♔xel is not possible: ...♜xf3† and ...♜xd4† is going to hurt.



I would not be surprised if Vidit saw to here and did not see the win at this point. But it is there.

28...♚h4†!

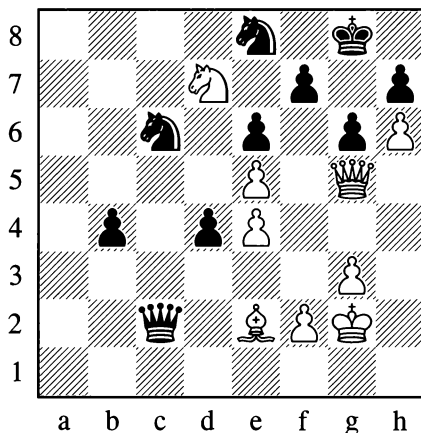
Always examine all checks and captures!

29.♔g2 ♚g5†! 30.♚g4 ♞e2† 31.♙f2 ♚xc5!  
32.♚c8† ♚f8

An impressive geometry lesson! Black wins.

## 150. Santosh Gujrathi Vidit – Magnus Carlsen

Internet 2022



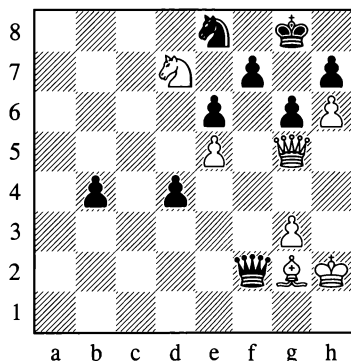


This one strikes me as impossible. I did not come close to solving it, not even considering the first move! I tip my hat to anyone who managed.

Vidit played what I gave as well:

54.♖b5?! ♜xe4† 55.♗h2 ♜f3!

55...f6? Carlsen's move should lose, though he always seems to find a way to save lost positions. 56.exf6 ♜f5 57.♜xf5 gxf5 58.♙xc6 White should be winning, but internet rapid leads to strange results now and then. The game was eventually drawn. 56.♙xc6 ♜xf2† 57.♙g2



I thought Black is resigning here, but he has a saving resource:

57...♜e3!

White's queen cannot make it to e7 or d8 without allowing a perpetual. After:

58.♜xe3 dxe3

White can keep pushing, but this should be a draw after a quick ...f7-f6 and ...♗f7.

Do not fall for 54.♗f6†. It is Black who wins after 54...♗xf6 55.♜xf6 ♜xe4† 56.♙f3 ♜xe5.

**54.♙h5!!**

The point of this move is that the bishop is safe for one key moment. White can then play ♜g5-f4, and Black cannot stop ♙h5xg6.

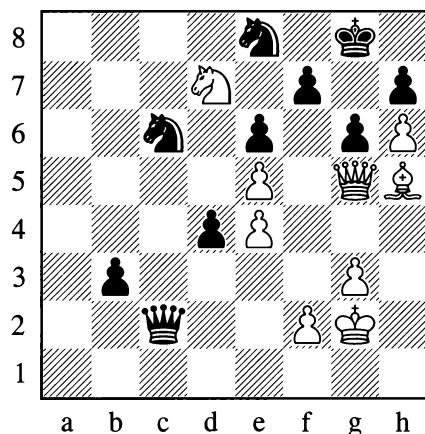
Now Black has a few alternatives:

54...♜xe4† 55.♙f3 ♜f5 (55...♜c2 56.♗f6† ♗xf6 57.♜xf6 wins) 56.♜xf5 gxf5 57.♙xc6 b3 58.♙a4 b2 59.♙c2 White wins

54...d3 55.♗f6† (55.♙xg6!?) 55...♗xf6 56.♜xf6 ♗f8 57.♙xg6! hxg6 58.h7, winning.

The main try is:

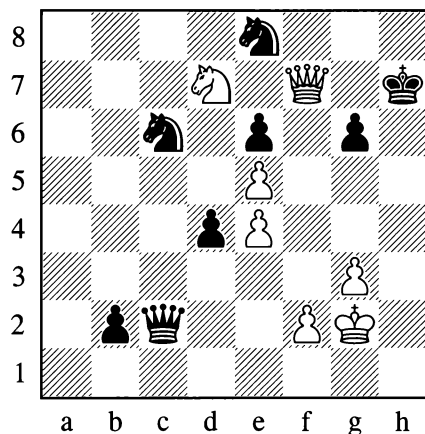
**54...b3**



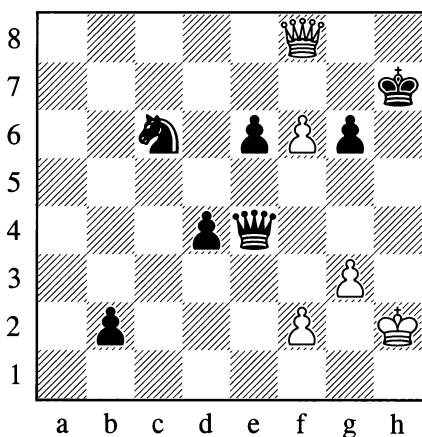
**55.♜f4!!**

Losing again is 55.♗f6†? ♗xf6 56.♜xf6 ♜xe4†.

**55...b2 56.♙xg6!! hxg6 57.h7† ♗xh7 58.♜xf7†**



58...♔h6 59.♚f8† ♔h7 60.♘f6† ♘xf6  
61.exf6 ♚xe4† 62.♔h2

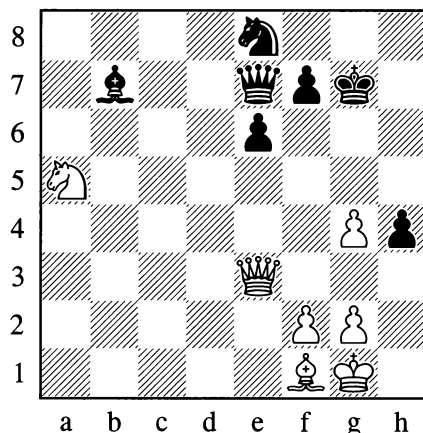


White mates. I think this was the hardest problem in the entire book, and the only one I felt completely flabbergasted by, even upon seeing the solution. It seemed totally inhuman.

## Solutions to Chapter 4

### 151. Fabiano Caruana – Levon Aronian

Paris 2021



The rapid time control surely had an impact, but White missed an opportunity to win a piece on the spot. You always need to look out for tactics, in endgames as well!

52.♚a7!

White won only a pawn with 52.♘xb7? ♚xb7. With all the pawns on one side, and an absence of weaknesses in Black's position, it is no surprise the game was drawn.

52...♘d6 53.♘xb7!

Checks and captures.

53...♚xb7

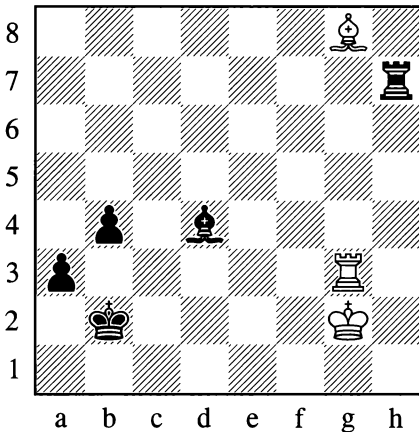
53...♘xb7 54.♔a6 also wins a piece.

54.♚d4†

White wins.

**152. Vladislav Artemiev – Ding Liren**

Internet 2022



White seems to be in huge trouble. With the clock ticking down in a rapid game, he did indeed lose. But he could have saved himself by examining all checks and captures.

**63. ♖b3†!**

The game saw 63. ♕xh7? a2 64. ♖d3 a1=♚. Black won without much further trouble.

**63... ♖c2**

Simplification to a draw arises after: 63... ♖c1 64. ♕xh7! a2 65. ♖xb4! a1=♚ 66. ♖b1†

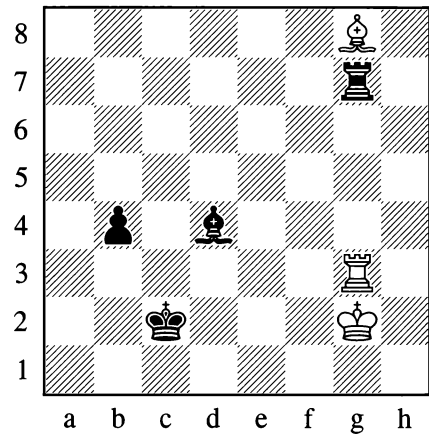
Or Black can choose to lose by blocking his a-pawn with 63... ♖a1.

**64. ♖xa3!**

The big point. White wins one of the pawns.

**64... ♖g7†**

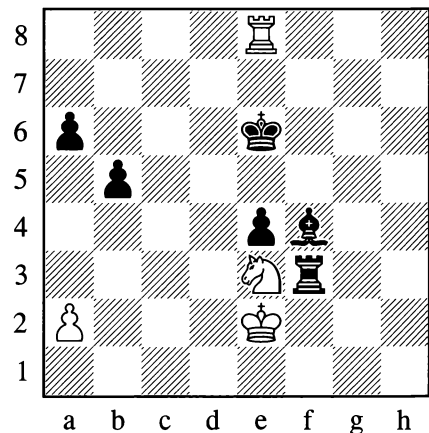
64... bxa3 65. ♕xh7† Check! White is in time to go back to g8 next.

**65. ♖g3**

The best Black can hope for is rook and bishop against rook. I doubt he will ever make it there. Even if he does, that is still a draw.

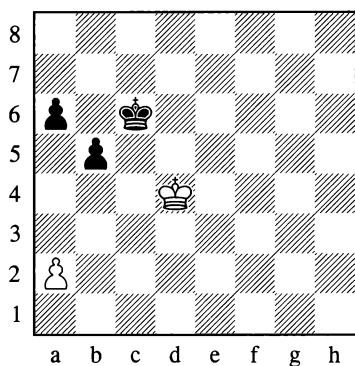
**153. Merab Gagunashvili – Jose Fernando Cuenca Jimenez**

Warsaw (rapid) 2021



This can be solved with elimination, if a key fortress is known.

Black should be careful not to allow a pawn endgame where White's king can make it to b2: 64... ♖d7? 65. ♖xe4! ♖xe3† 66. ♖xe3 ♕xe3 67. ♖xe3 ♖c6 68. ♖d4



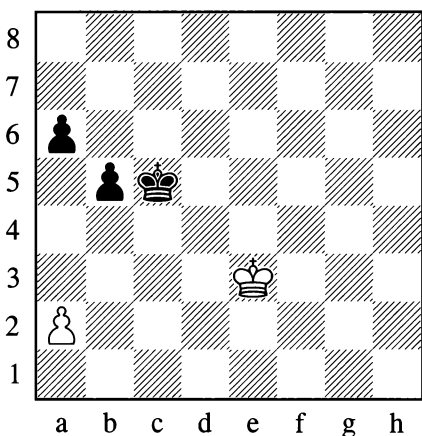
This pawn endgame is a well-known draw. Even when Black gets the opposition. As long as White's king can reach the b2-square, he will not lose. The game was drawn after: 68...a5 69.♔c3 ♔d5 70.♔d3 ♔c5 71.♔c3 b4† 72.♔b3 ♔b5 73.a3 a4† 74.♔b2 b3 75.♔c3 ♔c5 76.♔b2 ♔c4 77.♔b1 ♔d3 78.♔b2 ♔d2 79.♔b1 ♔c3 80.♔c1 b2† 81.♔b1 ♔b3 ½–½

Also drawn is 64...♔f6 65.♖xe4.

#### 64...♔d6! 65.♖xe4

Black is clearly winning after 65.♟f5† ♔d5.

#### 65...♖xe3† 66.♖xe3 ♔xe3 67.♔xe3 ♔c5!



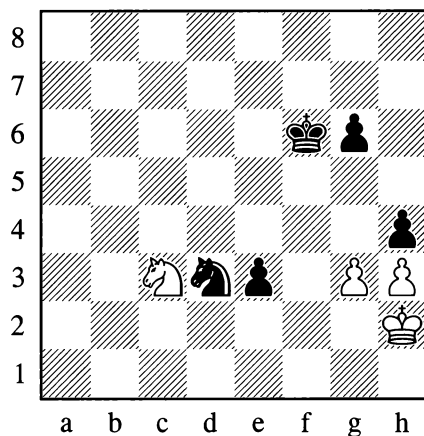
The difference. White's king does not make it to b2.

68.♔d2 ♔b4 69.♔c2 ♔a3 70.♔b1 b4 71.♔a1 a5 72.♔b1 a4 73.♔a1 b3 74.♔b1 b2!

Game over.

### 154. Marian Jurcik – Roman Slobodjan

Czech Republic 2022



This simplified position is drawish if White's king is allowed to reach the center.

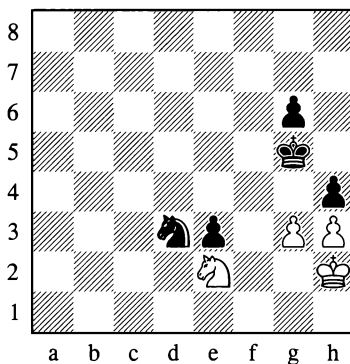
Black played:

53...♔g5?

This is bringing the king in the wrong direction.

54.♔g2?

54.♟e2!



This move saves the game. Black wants his king on e5 in this position, so that he can

get the king to e4 directly. 54...♔f5 55.♔g2! ♖e1† 56.♔f1 ♖c2 57.♔g2 draws.

54...♖e1† 55.♔f1 ♖c2 56.gxh4† ♔xh4?

56...♔f4! would have transposed to the solution. 57.♔e2 ♖d4† 58.♔d3 ♖f5 59.♖e2† ♔f3 60.♖g1† ♔f2 61.♖e2 ♖xh4 Black wins.

57.♔e2 ♔xh3 58.♔d3 g5 59.♔xc2 ♔g2 60.♔d3 ♔f3 61.♖e2 g4 62.♖g1† ♔f2 63.♖e2 ♔f3 64.♖g1† ♔g2 65.♔xe3 ♔xg1 66.♔f4 ♔f2 67.♔xg4

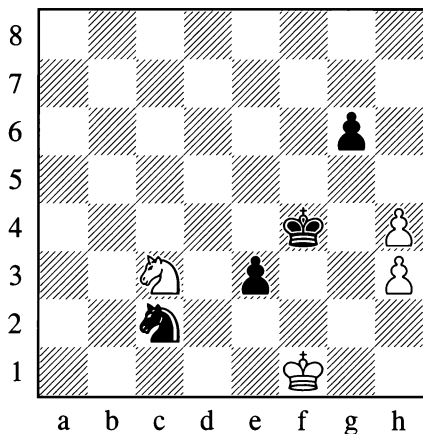
½–½

Black should rush in and promote his pawn before White's king can join:

53...♔e5 54.♔g2

54.gxh4 ♔f4! 55.♔g2 ♖e1†! Again, this move proves decisive. White's king is forced back. 56.♔f1 ♖f3 57.♔e2 ♖g1† 58.♔d3 ♔f3 winning.

54...♖e1†! 55.♔f1 ♖c2 56.gxh4 ♔f4!



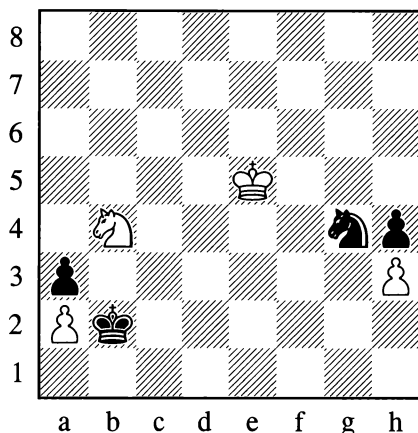
Black's king occupies the center, and White's is boxed out.

57.♔e2 ♖d4†! 58.♔d3 ♖f5! 59.♔e2 ♖g3† 60.♔d3 ♔f3

Black wins.

## 155. Maxime Vachier-Lagrave – Ian Nepomniachtchi

Paris 2021



Blitz games are often good places for trainers to look for exercises. They can have relevant themes. But the fast time controls provoke many mistakes and missed chances, that we can try to avoid when there is time on the clock. This one did not feel too hard.

64.♔d4!

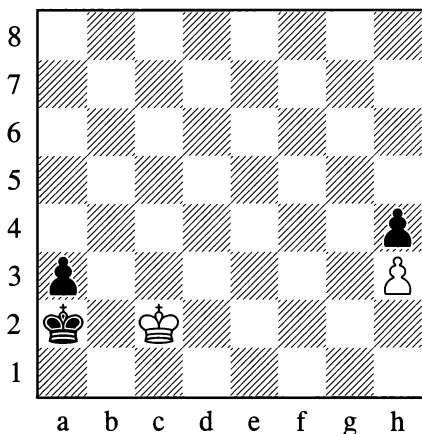
This can be solved with elimination. ...♖f2 wins the game against any move except this one, as now White has a saving resource.

64.♔f4? was played in the game. After the exchange of h-pawns, White's king was too far away, and Black won on the queenside. 64...♖f2 65.♔g5 ♖xh3† 66.♔xh4 ♖f2 67.♔g3 ♖d1 68.♔f3 ♖c3 69.♔e3 ♖xa2 70.♖c6 ♖c3 0–1

64...♖f2 65.♖d3†!

Always examine all checks and captures!

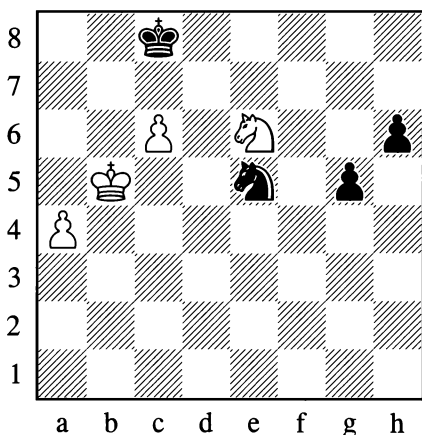
65...♖xd3 66.♔xd3 ♔xa2 67.♔c2



Draw.

### 156. Volodymyr Onyshchuk – Aryan Tari

Warsaw (rapid) 2021



The hardest endgames are ones where no principles or patterns help at all; the only thing you can do is calculate. This is one of those. Black needs to stop the pawns, and to find the only way.

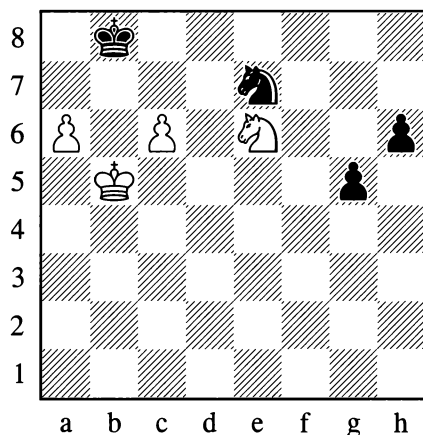
Black went astray with: 75...♖f7? 76.a5 ♜d6† 77.♙c5 ♜e4† 78.♙b6 The a-pawn goes through. 78...♜c3 79.a6 ♜d5† 80.♙c5 Black resigned 1–0.

There is a better route for the knight:

75...♜g6!

The knight makes a beeline for e7, keeping the c6-pawn under control, so the king can stop the a-pawn.

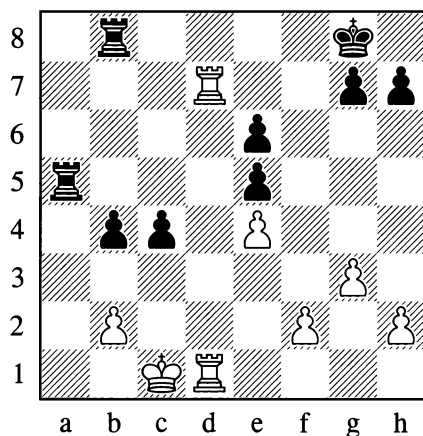
76.a5 ♜e7! 77.a6 ♙b8!



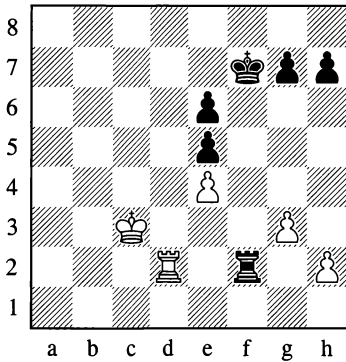
This draws. Black has the pawns under control.

### 157. Jan Pubantz – Aaron Noah Koellner

Reinstorf 2022



In the game Black was tempted by 26...c3?, but White has an important resource. 27.bxc3 bxc3 28.♞d8† ♞xd8 29.♞xd8† ♙f7 30.♙c2 ♞a2† 31.♙xc3 ♞xf2 32.♞d2



Black was only slightly better.

### 26...♖f8!

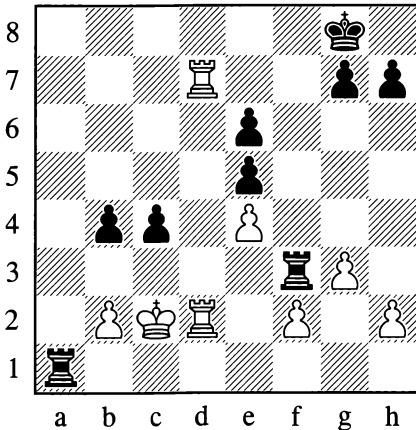
Black is just in time to take on f2 before he gets mated.

### 27.♖1d2

27.f4 exf4 28.♖c7 ♖a1† wins.

Similarly, 27.♖c7 ♖a1†!. White is too slow to get his rook to d7 and loses the house immediately.

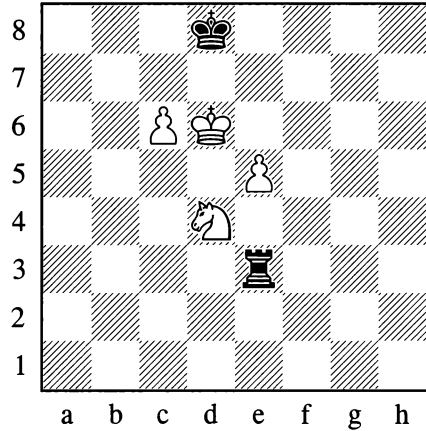
### 27...♖a1† 28.♔c2 ♖f3!



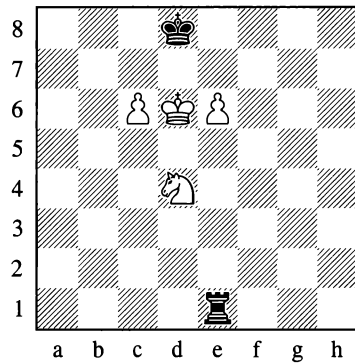
The threat of ...b4-b3 mate proves impossible to meet effectively.

## 158. Utsab Chatterjee – Roberto Junio Brito Molina

Sitges 2021



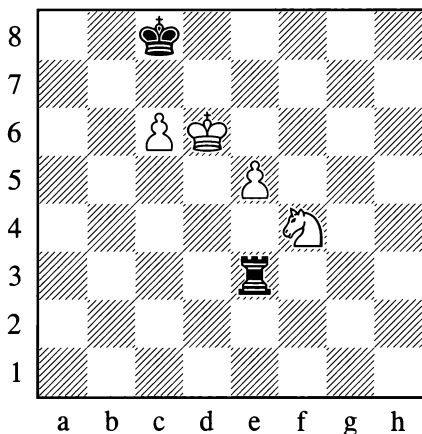
The knight is a short-range piece. It should be as close to the pawns as possible, to help ensure their advance. And close to the king to avoid harassment from the rook. 74.e6? ♖e1!



The checks started coming from behind. The knight is a much less secure blockader from d4, than it would have been from d5. Black made a draw: 75.♔b5 ♖d1† 76.♔c5 ♖c1† 77.♔d6 ♖d1† 78.♔c5 ♖c1† 79.♔d5 ♔e7 80.♔d4 ♖c3 81.♔f5† ♔f6 82.♔d4 ♔e7 83.♔f5† ♔f6 84.e7 ♔f7 85.♔d6 ♖d3† 86.♔e5 ♖c3 87.♔d5 ♖c1 88.♔d6 ♖d1† 89.♔c5 ♖c1† 90.♔b6 ♔e8 91.♔b7 ♖c5 92.♔b6 ♖c1 93.♔b5 ♖f1 94.c7 ♖c1 95.♔b6 ♔d7 ½–½

This explains:

74. ♖e6†! ♜c8 75. ♖f4!



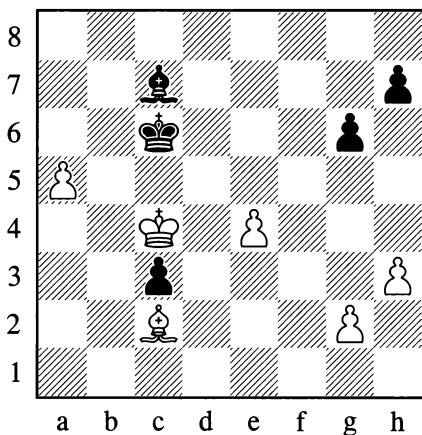
White transfers the knight to its ideal square on d5, and it is all over.

75... ♜e1 76. ♖d5 ♜d8 77. e6 ♜d1 78. e7† ♜e8 79. c7

White wins.

### 159. Cristhian Camilo Rios – Leon Livaic

Sitges 2021



White needs to think about the position schematically. His best plan is to push a5-a6, with the bishop on d3. This keeps Black's king boxed out of the game, allowing White's king to push the e-pawn through.

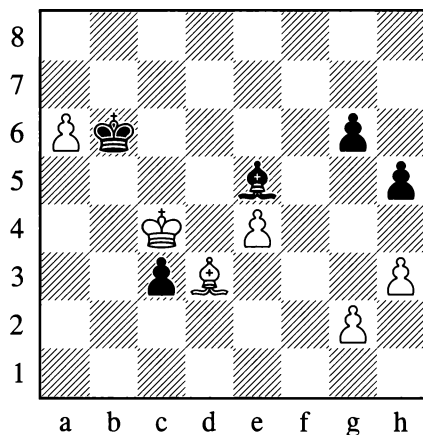
56. ♜b4!

56. ♜a4†?, as played, was the wrong place for the bishop. It belongs on d3, where it can control both a6 and c2. White eventually won after many mutual mistakes, but here the position was holdable with best play.

56... ♜e5

56... ♜b7 57. ♜d3 wins, as White is threatening both a5-a6† and ♜b4-c4-d5.

57. ♜d3 h5 58. a6! ♜b6 59. ♜c4!



The plan is set in motion. White's e-pawn will win the game.

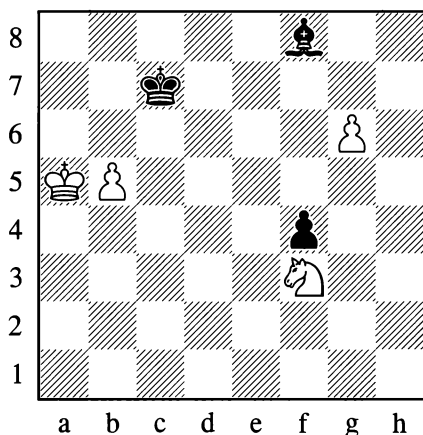
59... g5 60. ♜d5

White wins.



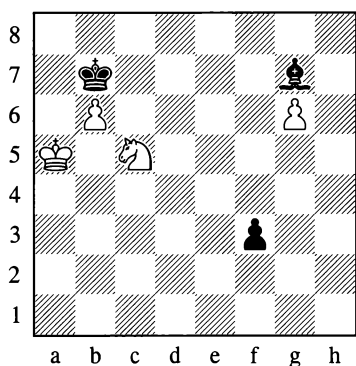
**160. Samir Sahidi – Robert Kempinski**

Czech Republic 2021



Simple principles can go a long way. Here, White should be careful to control the squares in front of his b-pawn.

66. ♖g5? ♜b7! White was unable to remove the king from b7. His knight is too restricted. Black held the draw, although he did give White a chance later on. 67. b6 ♙g7 68. ♜b5 ♙f8 69. ♖f3 ♙g7 70. ♖e1 ♙f8 71. ♖d3 f3 72. ♖f2 ♙g7 73. ♖e4 ♙f8 74. ♜a5 ♙g7 75. ♖c5†



75... ♜b8? (75... ♜c6! 76. b7 f2 77. b8=♙ f1=♙ was equal) 76. ♖d3? (76. ♜b5! f2

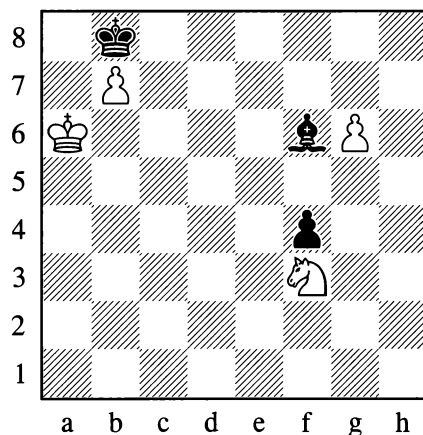
77. ♜c6 f1=♙ 78. ♖d7† ♜c8 79. b7† ♜d8 80. b8=♙† ♜e7 81. ♙d6† ♜e8 82. ♙e6† ♜d8 83. ♙g8† wins.) 76... ♜b7 77. ♖c5† ♜b8? 78. ♖e4? ♜b7 79. ♜b5 ♙f8 80. g7 ♙xg7 81. ♖c5† ♜c8 82. ♜c6 ♙e5 83. b7† ♜d8 84. ♖e4 ♙b8 ½–½

White wins routinely with:

**66. ♜a6!**

The pawn gets to b7. Then Black cannot hold both pawns back.

66... ♜b8 67. b6 ♙g7 68. b7 ♙f6



Now all there is to do is to bring the knight to a square that controls b8. This should not be hard since Black's bishop is tethered to the g7-square.

**69. ♜b6 ♙g7 70. ♖g5 ♙f6**

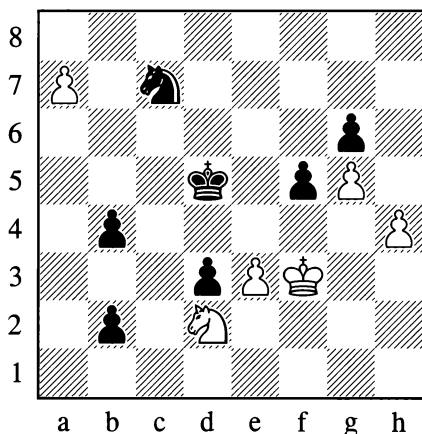
70... ♙d4† 71. ♜c6 ♙f6 72. ♖e6 f3 73. ♖c5 ♙e5 74. g7 ♙xg7 75. ♖d7† also wins.

71. ♖e4 ♙d4† 72. ♜c6 f3 73. ♖c5 ♙xc5 74. g7

The end.

**161. Ahmed Adly – Grzegorz Gajewski**

Warsaw (rapid) 2021



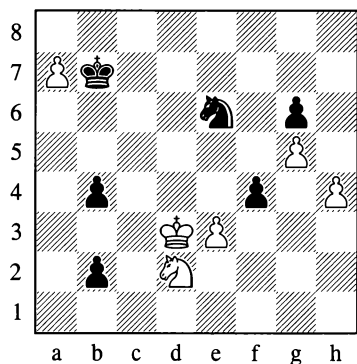
This one was tough. It was another case of all rules going out the window, and calculation is all that matters.

White squandered half a point with:

47. ♖f4? ♛c6! 48. ♖e5!

White prudently refuses to squander another half with:

48.h5 gxh5 49.g6 ♖b7 50.g7 Here we see why the king on f4 is misplaced: 50... ♜e6†! 48... ♖b7 49. ♖d4 ♜e6† 50. ♖xd3 f4



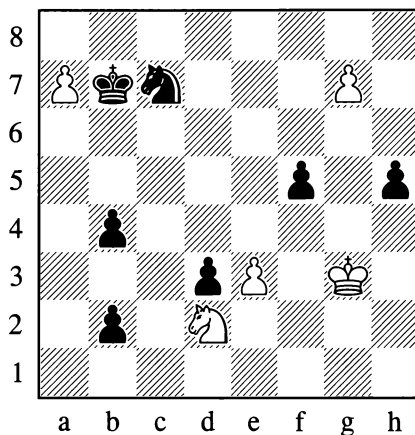
The pawns are rapidly coming off, and the game was eventually drawn.

47.h5 is not working: 47...gxh5 48.g6 ♖e6, and Black wins.

**47. ♖g3!**

The right square for the king. He should be as far away from the knight as possible, so that it will not be able to gain a tempo by checking at an inopportune moment. Then the g-pawn is coming.

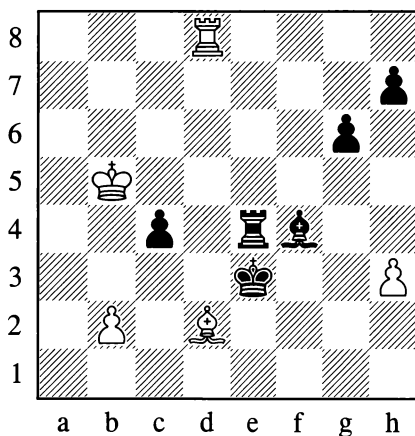
47... ♖c6 48.h5! gxh5 49.g6 ♖b7 50.g7



Black lacks a check on e6. White wins.

**162. Vladimir Kramnik – Ian Nepomniachtchi**

Paris 2021



This one was tough. It can be solved when Black realizes what White's best attempt to hold is.

54...♔f3?

This brought the king too far from the c-pawn. The game was fast enough that Kramnik faltered immediately, but I imagine he would hold here in classical chess.

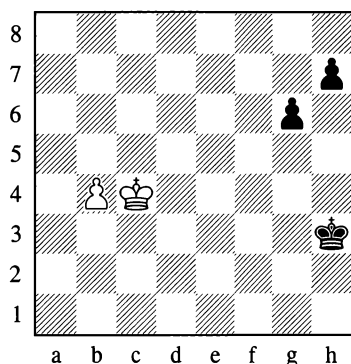
55.♙xf4!

55.♙c3? Now it is all over again. 55...h5 56.♙d4 g5 57.♔c5 g4 58.hxg4 hxg4 59.♖f8 g3 60.♔d5 g2 61.♖g8 ♜xd4† 62.♔xd4 ♙g3 63.♖f8† ♔e2 64.♖e8† 0–1

55...♖xf4 56.♖c8! ♔g2

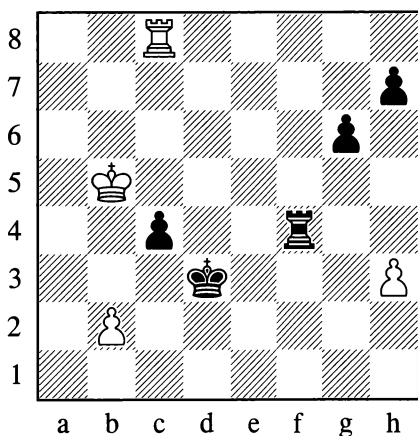
56...♖h4 57.♖xc4 ♖xh3 58.b4 Black's rook is too clumsy and White should hold.

57.♖xc4 ♖xc4 58.♔xc4 ♔xh3 59.b4



White will reach an unpleasant but drawn queen endgame. It will take some effort to hold, but it is a technical draw with best play.

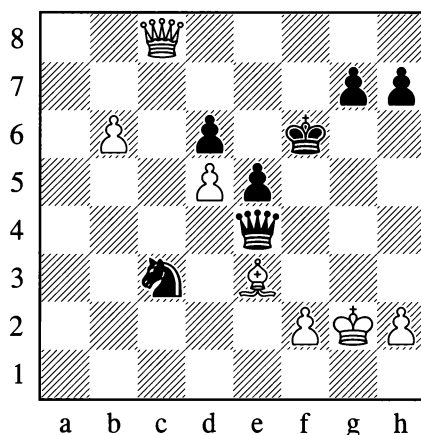
54...♔e2! 55.♙xf4 ♖xf4 56.♖c8 ♔d3!



Black keeps the c-pawn safe, denying White a passed pawn. And ...♖h4 is coming next.

### 163. Velimir Ivic – Sanan Sjugirov

Warsaw (rapid) 2021



White's b-pawn should win the game easily if he can exchange queens. It turns out this can be done by sacrificing the bishop.

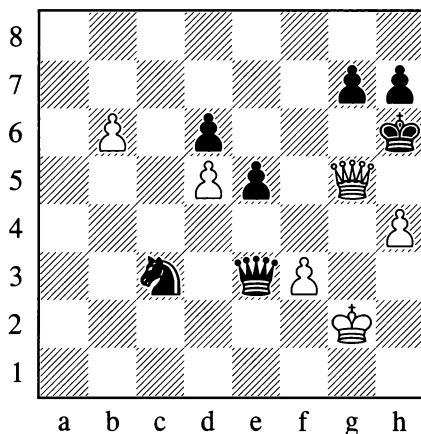
43.f3! ♖xe3

Queens are also decisively exchanged after 43...♖g6† 44.♔h1 ♔xd5 45.♖f8† ♔e6 46.♖g8†.

Now, checks and captures all the way.

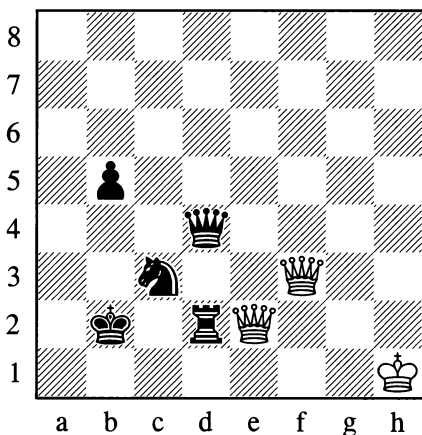
44.♖e6†! ♔g5 45.h4†! ♔h5 46.♖g4† ♔h6 47.♖g5†!

The final touch. The b-pawn wins.



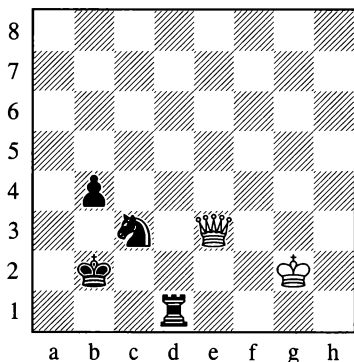
### 164. Marcel Kanarek – Igor Janik

Warsaw (rapid) 2021



Irrational positions are a pain for any chess player who relies more on study and understanding than raw talent. But they must be done all the same. White is in trouble here since Black's king is so much safer.

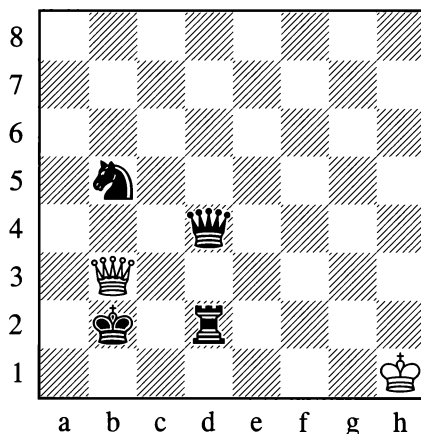
The game went 69. ♖ee3? ♜h8† (69... ♜xe3!? looks quite convincing too. Black's king is safe, and he should win with the b-pawn. 70. ♜xe3 ♜e2 71. ♜d4 ♜b3) 70. ♜h3 ♜a8† 71. ♜g1 ♜a1† 72. ♜f1 ♜xf1† 73. ♜xf1 ♜d1† 74. ♜g2 b4



It took a while, but Black unsurprisingly eventually won. His pieces coordinate well to keep the king safe and escort the b-pawn through.

But the piece constellation allows for a surprising stalemate trick:

69. ♜xb5†! ♜xb5 70. ♜b3†!



White has a suicide queen. 70. ♜a3† is fine too.

70... ♜a1

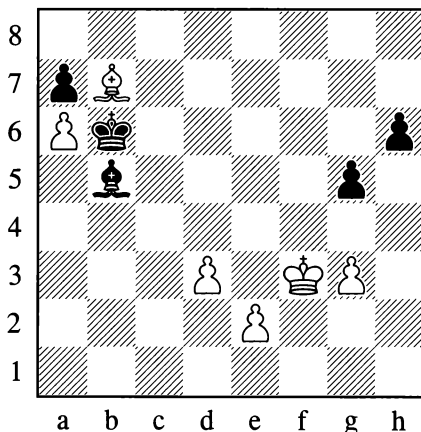
70... ♜c1 is met in the same way.

71. ♜b1† ♜xb1

Stalemate.

### 165. Jasper Timm – Fabian Stotyn

Reinstorf 2022



Another problem of pure calculation.

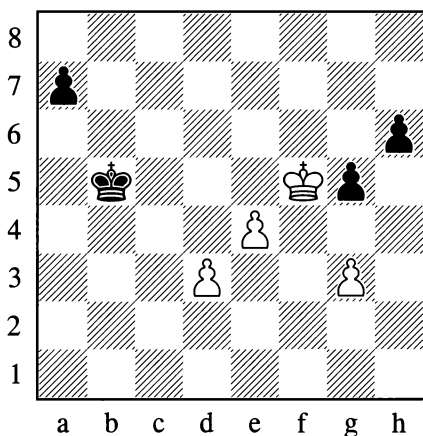
Any move that allows ...h6-h5 will draw the game. White chose 40.♔e4?. Eventually the game was drawn after 40...h5! 41.♕f5 h4 42.gxh4 gxh4 43.♕g4 ♔xa6! Black's a-pawn is fast enough to make counterplay. White's e-pawn is too slow to win the race.

Also drawing are 40.e4? h5! 41.d4 (41.e5 ♔xd3) 41...♔xa6 and 40.d4 h5!.

#### 40.♕g4!

This does the job. White keeps the kingside under control. He will win slowly with ♕g4-h5 and ♕h5xh6, if Black does not take on a6 to start the race. If he does start the race, he loses by a tempo.

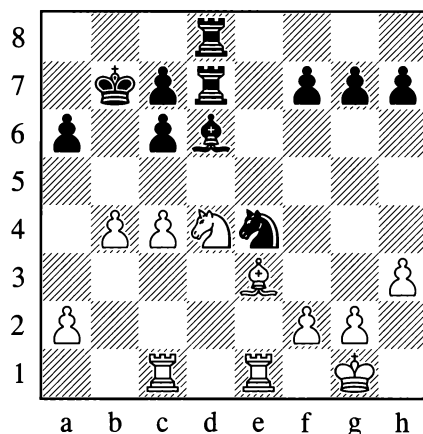
40...♔xa6 41.♔xa6 ♕xa6 42.e4 ♔b5 43.♕f5!



The final important move. White's e-pawn will get there first, and get there with check. The pawn is shepherded home in case of 43...♕c6: 44.♕f6 ♔d7 45.♕f7 and the pawn queens.

### 166. Piotr Bobras – Bartłomiej Heberla

Czech Republic 2021



22...♕f8? was Heberla's choice. It is pretty balanced and was eventually drawn.

Always examine all checks and captures:

#### 22...♕xb4!

This move looks like it is asking for trouble on the b-file. But Black has it all under control with some basic calculation.

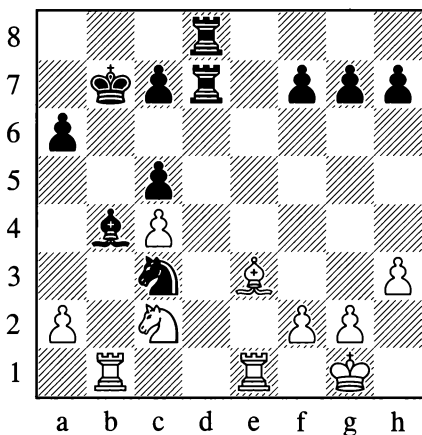
#### 23.♖b1 c5!

The point. Black saves his bishop with a gain of tempo and can look to break the pin next.

#### 24.♖c2

24.a3 cxd4 wins.

#### 24...♖c3!



The most precise. The threat to the rook can hardly be ignored.

### 25. ♖b3

25. ♖xc5 ♜xb1! 26. ♖xb1 It looks like White has renewed the pin, but: 26... ♞d1†! Time to resign.

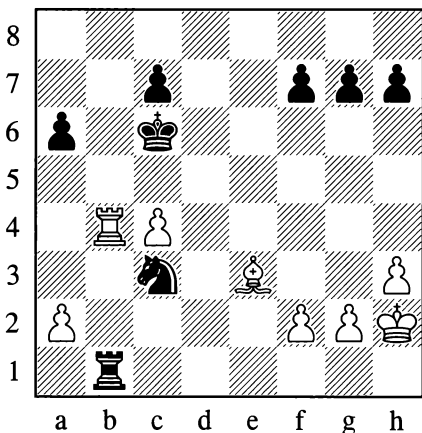
### 25... ♜c6! 26. ♜xb4†

Or else Black remains a pawn up.

### 26... cxb4 27. ♖xb4

White got his pawn back. But now Black can simplify the position to highlight how good his king is.

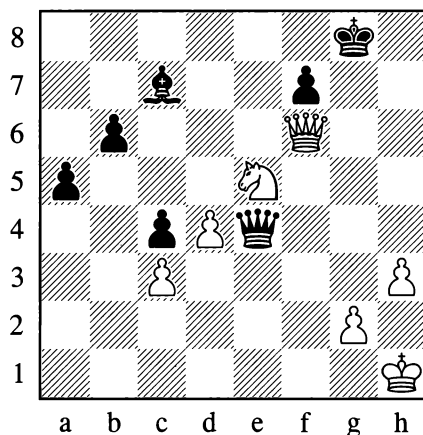
### 27... ♞d1! 28. ♖xd1 ♖xd1† 29. ♜h2 ♖b1!



The rooks come off, and White's king might as well be on another planet. Black is effectively playing with a piece up for the relevant future and will ransack the queenside.

## 167. Semetey Tologontegin – Mircea-Emilian Parligras

Warsaw (rapid) 2021



The game continued:

44... ♞xe5?

Natural but not best. White's queen remains on f6, where she can give a lot of annoying checks.

45. dxe5 a4 46. ♞d8† ♜h7 47. ♞e7?

White gave Black another chance here.

47. ♞f6! would have held. Black's queen cannot be allowed to come to f5. 47... ♞g6 48. ♞h4† ♜g7 49. ♞xc4 a3 50. ♞b3 is equal.

47... ♞b1†! 48. ♜h2 ♞f5

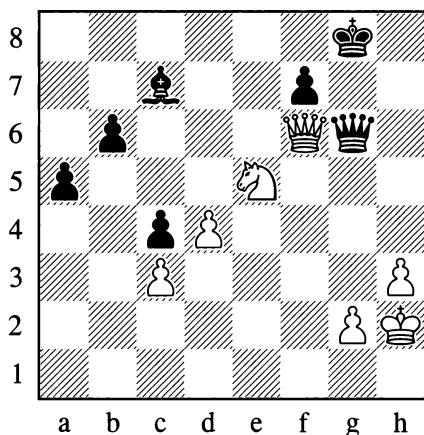
Black had a large advantage.

The a-pawn should easily win Black the game if he can keep his king safe. There is a strong resource that allows him to do just that:

44... ♞b1†!

The king is provoked to h2.

45. ♜h2 ♞g6!



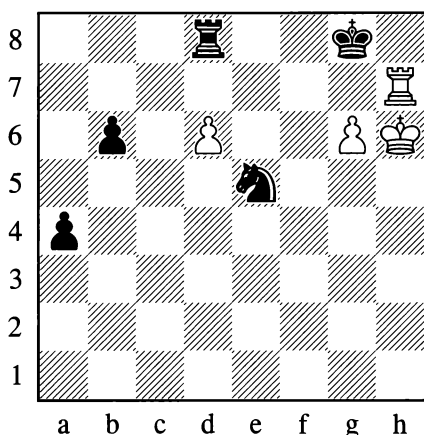
Black gets the queen back to the defense, and even manages to avoid exchanging minor pieces. This means White's pawn will not be dragged to e5, where it controls key squares. The long-range bishop can help the a-pawn through, while simultaneously keeping the king safe.

46.♖e7 ♘d6 47.♖e8† ♔g7 48.♔g1 ♜b1† 49.♕h2 ♞f5

Black wins easily. ...♞e6 might come next.

### 168. Artur Jakubiec – Tomas Polak

Czech Republic 2021



This was the first endgame problem I got wrong. I have always struggled with imagination in chess. Blame it on the lack of talent.

The game saw 64.♞e7? ♔xg6!, winning for Black. This was easy enough. 65.♞g7† ♕f8 66.♞xg6 b5 67.♕g5 a3 68.♞h6 ♕f7 0–1

My move was 64.♞a7, mainly just to make a move, but everything wins. 64...♔xg6 65.♕xg6 ♞xd6† 66.♕f5 b5 Black should win.

64.♞g7†!

This much I saw.

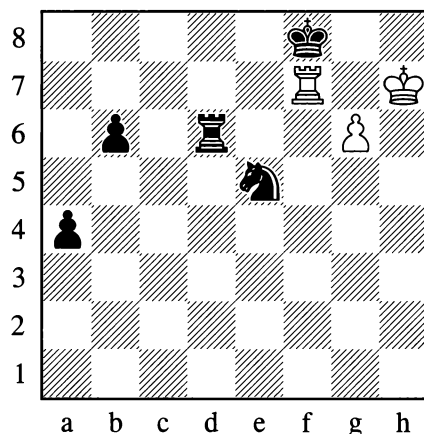
64...♕f8 65.♕h7!

This much I did not!

65...♞xd6

65...♔xg6 66.♞g8†! ♕f7 67.♞xd8 draws.

66.♞f7†!!

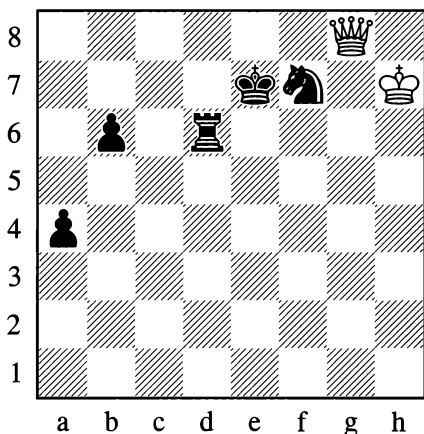


The important point. White makes a queen.

66...♔xf7

66...♕e8?! Black is only trying to lose with this move, but he will not manage. 67.g7 ♞g6 68.♞f5 ♞xg7† 69.♕xg7 ♔c4 is equal.

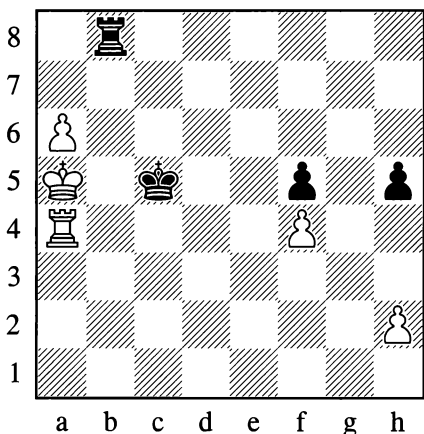
67.g7† ♕e7 68.g8=♞



In practice, White still has some problems to solve here. It reminds me of the supposedly drawn Carlsen – Nepomniachtchi endgame, which I always knew would end in a win. Still, this is better than resigning, and the machine claims the position is holding.

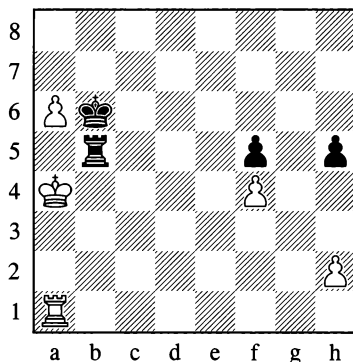
### 169. Viswanathan Anand – Nodirbek Abdusattorov

Internet 2020



This is a comparison problem. Black is threatening an immediate mate/perpetual with ...♖b5†. White has only two moves that get out of it. Finding the right one can be done by spotting the key difference.

59.♖a1? Anand is amazing at rapid and blitz. But nobody is so brilliant that their intuition can always give them perfect moves, in positions where calculation is the only relevant tool. 59...♖b5† 60.♔a4 ♕b6

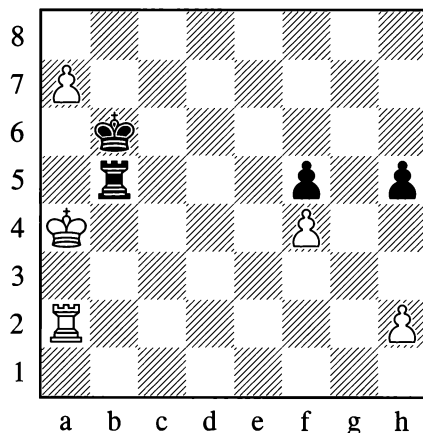


Now a6-a7 is not possible, since a check on a5 would hurt. His rook needs to be defendable. 61.♖g1 ♖b2 62.♖g6† ♔a7 63.♔a5 ♖a2† 64.♔b5 ♖b2† 65.♔a5 ♖xh2 66.♖g7† ♔a8 67.♖f7 h4 68.♖xf5 h3 69.♖f8† ♔a7 70.♖f7† ♔a8 71.♖h7 ♖h1 72.♔b6 ♖b1† 73.♔c5 ♖h1 74.♔b6 ♖b1† 75.♔c5 ♖h1 76.♔b6 ½-½.

### 59.♖a2!

The right square.

59...♖b5† 60.♔a4 ♕b6 61.a7!





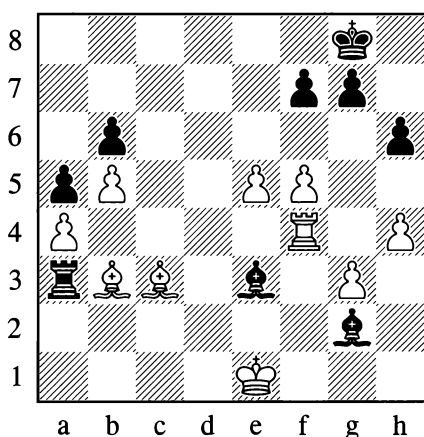
Now we see the difference. Black is unable to successfully skewer White's rook. White can force a won pawn endgame.

61...♖a5† 62.♙b3 ♜xa2 63.♙xa2 ♙xa7  
64.♙b3! ♙b6 65.♙c4! ♙c6 66.♙d4! ♙d6  
67.h4!

Black loses.

## 170. Richard Rapport – Hans Niemann

Internet 2022



All of White's pieces are hanging, and he will surely not save them all. So, he must make counterplay.

47.e6!

Nothing else makes any sense. It turns out Black is unable to stop the pawn.

47...♙c5!

Niemann found the best practical chance, but it did not save him. Rapport is a well-known rapid specialist, good at little tricks to get the point home. Precisely the skill set White needs here.

The e-pawn promotes after both: 47...♙xf4 48.e7 and 47...fxe6 48.fxe6 ♜xb3 49.e7.

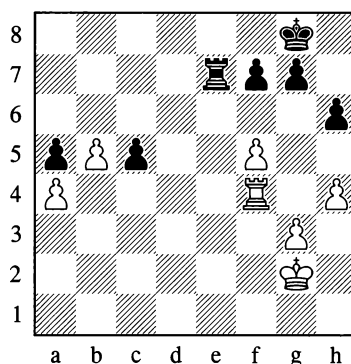
48.♙d4!

Flexible and strong. White might want to push the pawn to e7, rather than taking on f7.

Black has the pawn under control after 48.exf7† ♙f8, and White is lucky not to be lost.

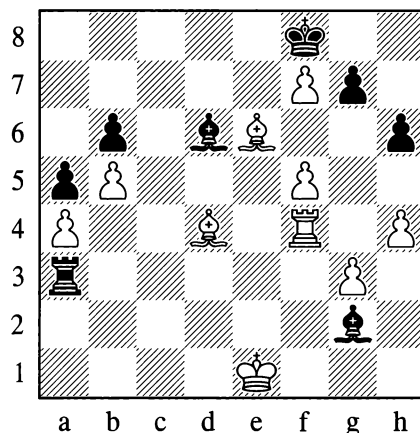
48...♙d6

Black can exchange all the bishops with: 48...♜xb3 49.♙xc5! bxc5 50.e7! ♜e3† 51.♙f2! ♜xe7 52.♙xg2



But White should win the rook endgame. His b5-pawn is too powerful.

49.exf7† ♙f8 50.♙e6!



**50...♞xg3**

If Black takes the offered exchange, 50...♞xf4 51.gxf4, he is powerless to stop ♞d4xb6 and ♞b6-c5†. He can control the c5-square with his rook, but then he loses his a-pawn as well. The queenside pawns are coming.

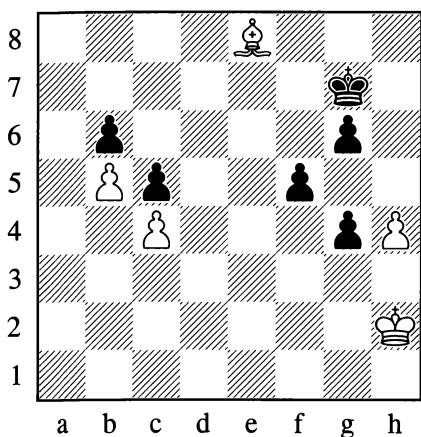
**51.♞xb6!**

It is all over.

**51...♞d3 52.♞c4 ♞b4† 53.♞xb4  
1-0**

### 171. Wesley So – Jorden van Foreest

Internet 2021

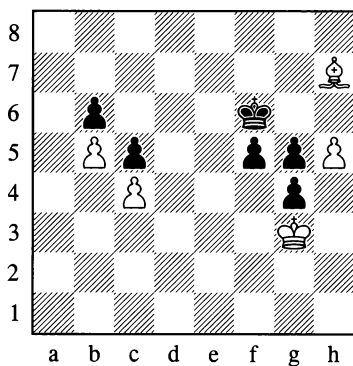


Black's position might look lost at first glance, but it is not as straightforward as it might seem. His queenside is safe from White's bishop. If he can keep White's king at bay, he should save the game.

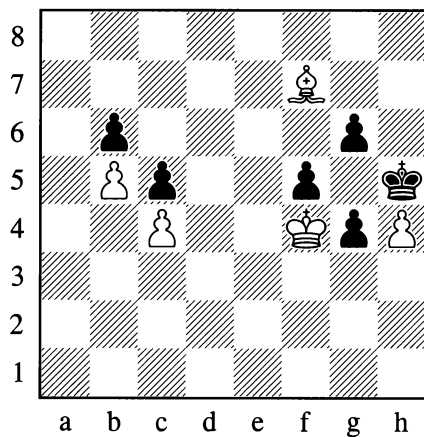
Given that this was an online rapid game, I suspect the advance 52...f4? was a product of time pressure. Now White won easily, by pushing the pawns onto dark squares and bringing his king in. 53.♞d7 g3† 54.♞g2 g5 55.hxg5 ♞g6 56.♞f3 ♞xg5 57.♞h3 ♞h4 58.♞f5 ♞g5 59.♞c4 1-0

**52...♞h6! 53.♞g3 ♞h5!**

Not 53...g5? 54.h5 ♞g7 55.♞g6. As soon as one of Black's pawns can be attacked, he will lose. 55...♞f6 56.♞h7



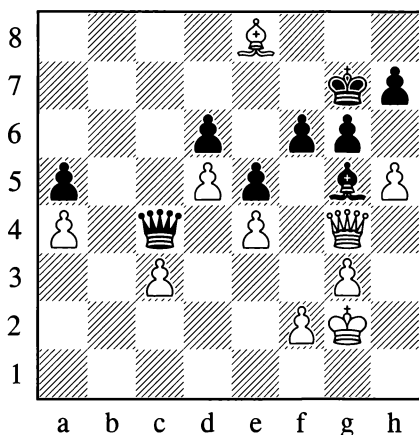
Zugzwang.

**54.♞f7 ♞h6 55.♞f4 ♞h5**

It transpires that White cannot win, as he has no plan against ...♞h6-h5 forever. If his king wanders too far, the kingside pawns will start running.

## 172. Jorden van Foreest – Daniil Dubov

Warsaw (rapid) 2021



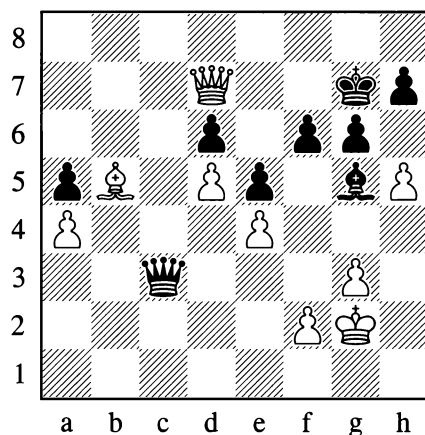
Opposite bishop positions, with heavy pieces on the board, are all about attacking and the initiative. It might look like White's pieces are ready to go. In fact, the top priority is to remove Black's queen from her active perch, where she is harassing the e4-pawn.

The game demonstrated this: 40. ♖d7†? ♔h6! 41. ♜xd6 ♜xe4† 42. ♔h2 ♜f3 Black was fine here. 43. ♜c5 e4 44. hxc6! ♜h5† 45. ♔g2 ½–½

## 40. ♔b5! ♜xc3

40... ♜c7 was prudent to avoid immediate mate, but Black should still lose. 41. hxc6 hxc6 42. f4! exf4 43. gxf4 ♔h6 44. ♔e8 Black is crushed.

## 41. ♖d7†!

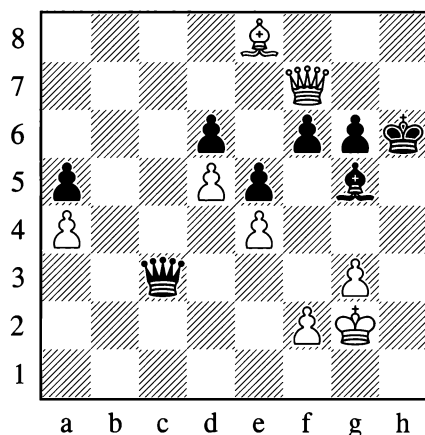


Only now. For one move only, Black has no threats. White can invade with tempo.

## 41... ♔h6 42. hxc6 hxc6 43. ♜d8!

43. ♜e8 is fine too.

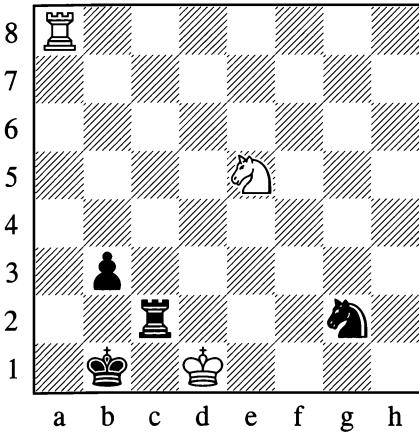
## 43... ♔g7 44. ♜e7† ♔h6 45. ♜f8† ♔h7 46. ♜f7† ♔h6 47. ♔e8



Mate is coming. It is helpful that Black cannot take on e4!

**173. Alexey Sarana – Ivan Cheparinov**

Warsaw (rapid) 2021

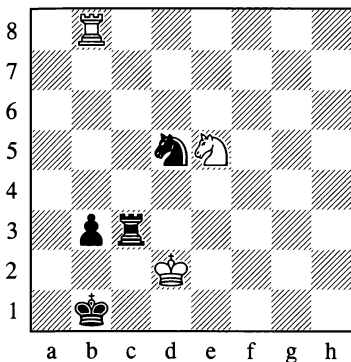


This one is extremely difficult. Black obviously has a simple goal: promote the b-pawn, without letting White sacrifice the knight for it. But executing that goal requires rough calculation, without many guiding principles to help find the moves.

**84...♖e3† 85.♔e1 ♜c7!!**

The right square for the rook. It is safe and will not be hit with tempo by either ♔e1-d2 or ♖e5-d3. Black is ready for ...♔b1-c2 next.

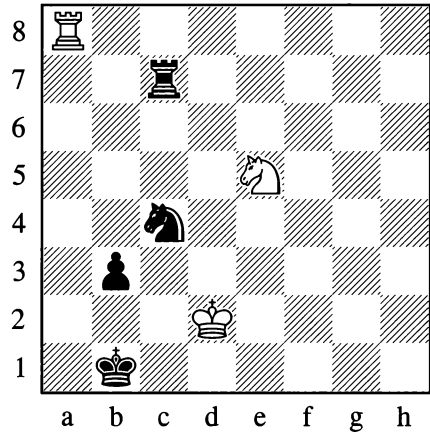
The game continuation, 85...♜c3? 86.♔d2 ♖d5 87.♜b8, was equal.



87...♜h3 88.♖c4 ♜h2† 89.♔d3 ♜h3† 90.♔d4 ½–½

**86.♔d2**

The black king comes decisively to c2 after either 86.♜b8 or 86.♖d3. White's best attempt to prevent that is the text move, but it allows an exchange of knights:

**86...♖c4†!**

Now, if 87.♖xc4 ♜xc4, Black reaches the Lucena position. A final tricky move:

**87.♔c3**

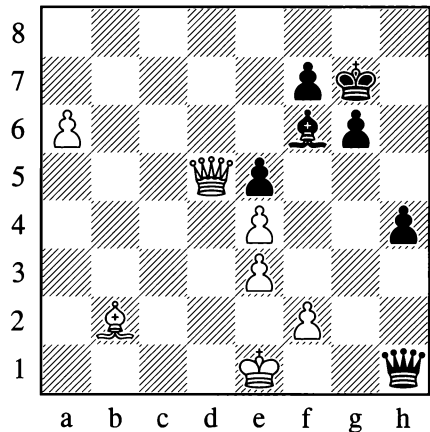
Is met with an elegant response:

**87...♖b6†!**

Black wins.

**174. Magnus Carlsen – Tingjie Lei**

Internet 2022



This is your chance to play better than the World Champion!

It looks like White is winning no matter how he plays, but clumsy was:

47.♔d2?

The king needs the option of going to f3 later.

47...♖b1!

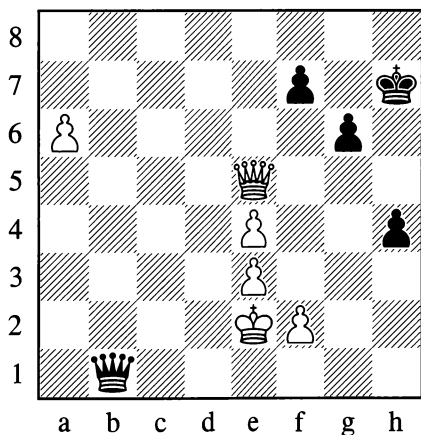
47...♖f1? Lei let him off the hook right away. The result might have been different if she had found the best move. 48.a7 ♖xf2† 49.♔d3 ♖f1† 50.♔c3 h3 51.a8=♖ h2 52.♖e8 ♔g5 53.♔b3 h1=♖ 54.♔xe5† 1-0 48.♔xe5 ♔xe5 49.♖xe5† ♔h7 50.♖f6 ♖a2†

White could have had this position with the king on e2, when he would win by hiding him on the kingside. As is, the king is too far away.

51.♔e1 h3

With an equal position.

47.♔e2! ♖b1 48.♔xe5 ♔xe5 49.♖xe5† ♔h7

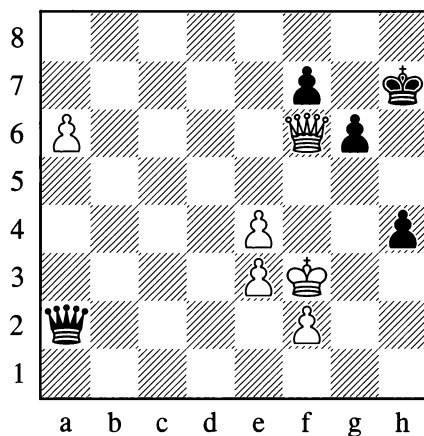


And now we see why the king is better on e2 than it would have been on d2.

50.♖f6

50.♖d5 also wins.

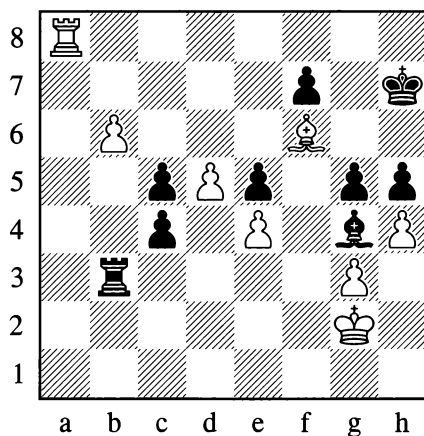
50...♖a2† 51.♔f3!



It is good that this move is legal! White's king escapes the checks and babysits the h-pawn at the same time. White wins.

### 175. Samy Shoker – Felix Blohberger

Warsaw (rapid) 2021



White's best hope in this position is to deliver mate. His passed pawns can be controlled.

56.♖h8†

Appealing, but the wrong move order. White ended up winning anyway, but Black could have saved the game. Rapid chess leads to such conclusions sometimes!

56...♔g6 57.hxg5 ♔f3† 58.♔h3

The game went: 58.♔f2 ♕xe4 59.d6 ♖d3? (59...♕c6 would have held.) 60.♕xe5 ♔f5 61.♕f4 c3 62.♖c8 ♗g4 63.♖xc5 h4 64.♖c4 ♖f3† 65.♗e1 hxg3 66.♕xg3 ♖e3† 67.♗f2 ♖f3† 68.♗e2 ♗xg3 1–0

Trying to play like the solution shows a key difference:

58...♕xe4

This is equal.

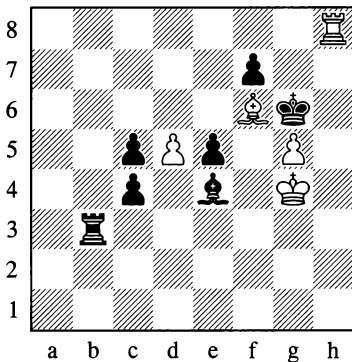
59.b7 ♖xb7 60.g4

Black is almost mated, but he is just in time to make room for his king.

60...♖b3†! 61.♗h4 hxg4

Black gets the f5-square.

62.♗xg4



Now, who is mating who? 62...♕f5† Black wins.

56.hxg5!

This is an important move, and an important move order! White clearly wants ♖a8-h8† and ♖h8-h6, with mate.

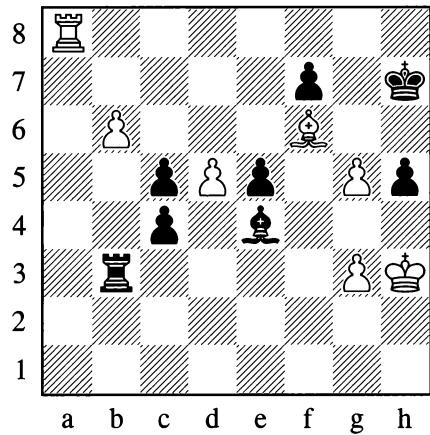
56...♕f3†

56...h4 does not prevent that threat.

57.♗h3!

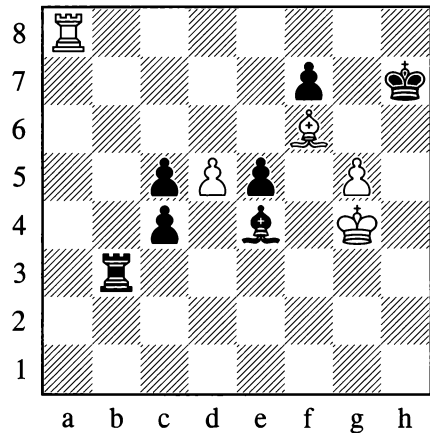
57.♗f2 ♕xe4 is only equal.

57...♕xe4



Now, it looks like White has no more cards, as Black's king can run to safety on f5. But, with some creative play, White is able to keep this square under control.

58.b7! ♖xb7 59.g4! ♖b3† 60.♗h4 hxg4 61.♗xg4



Black is unable to prevent the threat of ♖a8-h8-h6, with mate. It is important that White did not give a check on h8 earlier, as the king remaining on h7 to this point means that ...♕e4-f3 or ...♕e4-f5 are ineffective.

61...♗g6

61...♕f3† 62.♗f5! also closes the net.

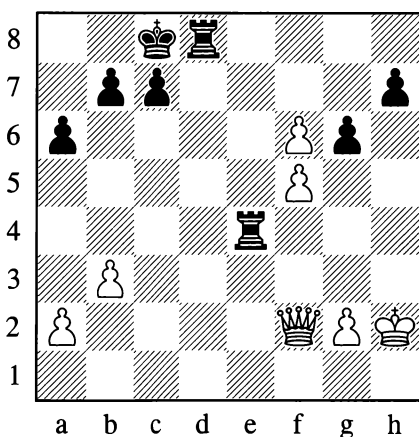
62.♞g8†!

Caution: 62.♞h8?? ♕f5†

62...♖h7 63.♞h8† ♖g6 64.♞h6#

### 176. Luke McShane – Shakhriyar Mamedyarov

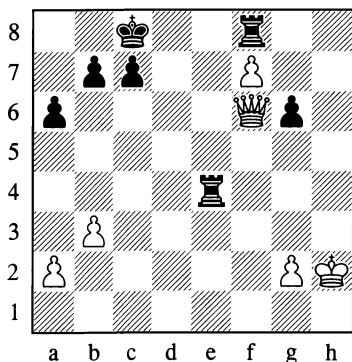
Germany 2021



I was feeling good about getting some hard positions right. This one I got wrong. So did McShane:

33.♞c5? ♞h4† 34.♖g1 ♞f4! The game was eventually drawn. Indeed, Black is surely fine here.

I wanted 33.fxg6?. After 33...hxg6 34.f7 ♞f8 35.♞f6, I thought White was winning. Somehow I missed the defensive resource:



35...♖d7!! Black is alive and kicking.

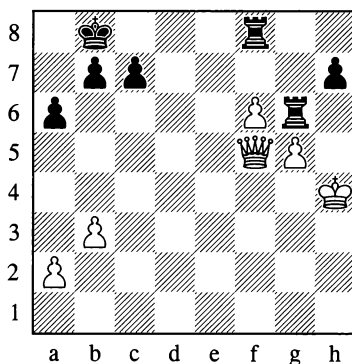
33.♞f3!

A very difficult move. The point is to take on g6 and then give a check on g4.

33...♞ed4

Black must maintain control of the g4-square, as shown by: 33...♞ee8 34.fxg6 hxg6 35.♞g4†, winning.

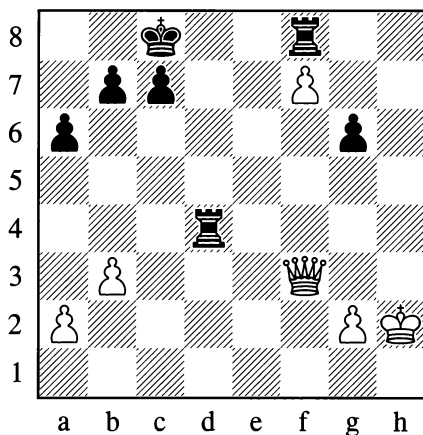
After 33...♞h4† 34.♖g3 ♞h5 35.fxg6 ♞g5† 36.♖h4 ♞xg6 37.♞f5† ♖b8 38.g4 ♞f8 39.g5



White is winning. For example, by successfully sacrificing his queen for rook and pawn on the kingside.

34.fxg6 hxg6 35.f7 ♞f8

Now, we see why deflecting the rook from the e-file was so important:



**36. ♖e3!**

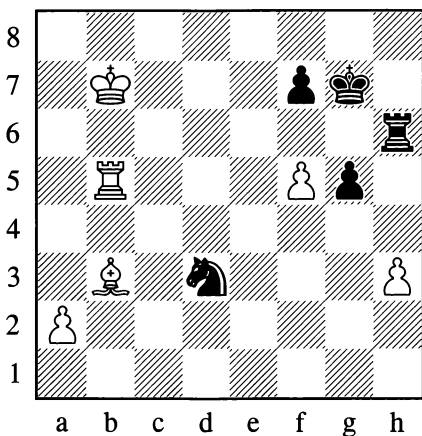
White uses it for himself!

**36... ♜d7 37. ♖e8† ♜d8 38. ♖e7**

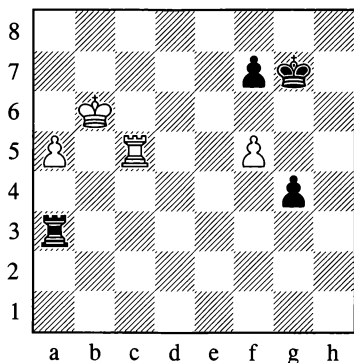
Black is paralyzed. He cannot stop the king from coming in to end the game.

**177. Evgeniy Najer – Shakhriyar Mamedyarov**

Warsaw (rapid) 2021



Najer's 56.a4? feels very human, but it missed the chance. 56... ♜xh3 57.a5 ♘c5†! 58. ♜xc5 ♜xb3† 59. ♖c6 ♜a3 60. ♖b6 g4



Black was fine here and held a draw shortly after.

Always examine all checks and captures!

**56.f6†!**

Without this move, White loses his important h3-pawn. After this move, the h3-pawn lives, the g5-pawn falls.

**56... ♜xf6**

White also wins against the alternatives:

56... ♖xf6 57. ♜b6†! ♖g7 58. ♜xh6 ♖xh6 59. ♜xf7 The a-pawn will win the game.

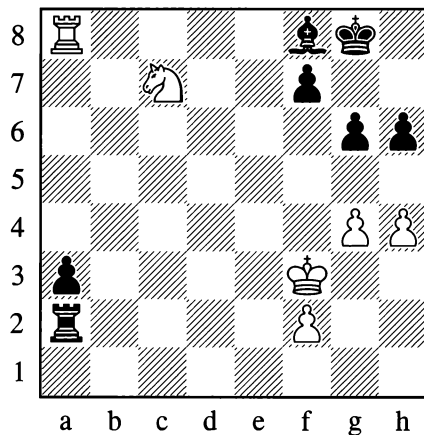
56... ♖g6 57. ♜c2! ♜xh3 58. ♜b3 The pin is decisive.

**57. ♜xg5†**

White's split passed pawns should win the game. Black needed his g5-pawn for counterplay.

**178. Eduardas Rozentalis – Michael Adams**

Germany 2021

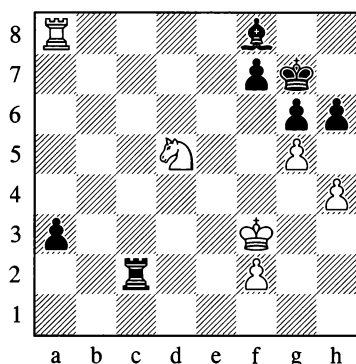


After some tough exercises, I thought this one was straightforward. That said, Adams got it wrong!

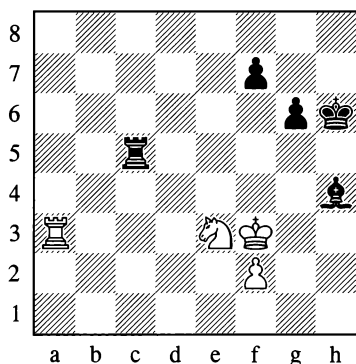
Adams' choice, 45... ♜c2?, was natural but not best. It allows the knight to return to its best square. 46. ♘d5! Now White has a simple



plan: ♖d5-f6 and g4-g5. Then, Black's king and bishop will be stuck forever. Black will be unable to use them to help push the a-pawn through. 46...♔g7 (46...a2 47.g5! is also roughly equal.) 47.g5



♖d5-f6 comes next, and Black is out of steam. 47...♞c5 (47...♙c5 48.♖f6 ♞xf2† 49.♕e4! hxg5 50.hxg5 ♞xf6!? 51.gxf6† ♕xf6 52.♕d5 ♙e7 53.♞a4 Black is only slightly better.) 48.gxh6† ♕xh6 49.♖e3 ♙e7 50.♞xa3 ♙xh4



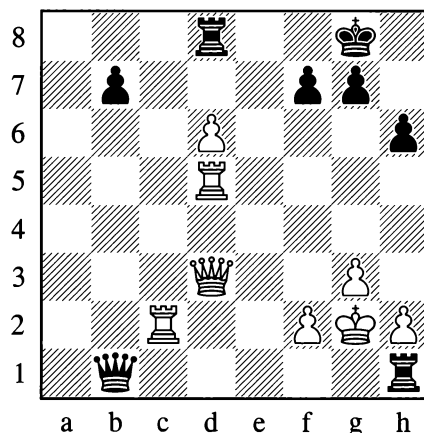
Adams pushed for 50 more moves to no avail. The position is drawn.

#### 45...♞d2!

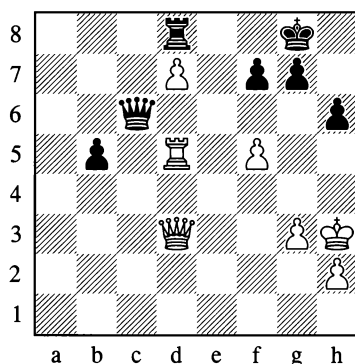
Black absolutely needs to prevent the knight from coming to d5. There is really nothing else to see here. Black avoids White's only trick and is completely winning.

### 179. Robert Markus – David Navara

Belgrade 2022



36.f4? weakened the second rank and made Black's activity scarier. It is unclear why White played it. 36...♞g1† 37.♕h3 ♞c1! 38.♞xc1 ♞xc1 39.d7 ♞c6 40.f5 b5



41.♞xb5 ♞xb5 42.♞xb5 ♞xd7 ½–½

What do they tell us when we are kids? Passed pawns must be pushed! Black's counterplay on the back rank is an illusion.

#### 36.d7! ♞g1†

The best try, but surely insufficient.

36...♞g1† 37.♕h3 Buenos NoChecks! I cannot begin to express how much I cringed

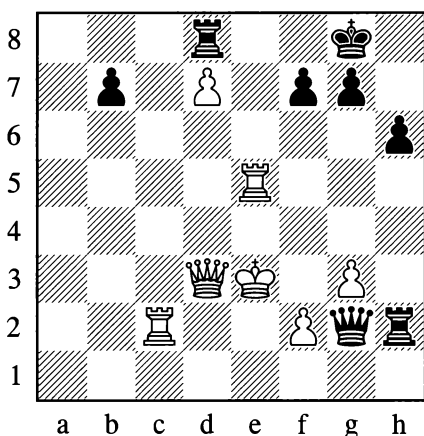
when I heard this phrase for the first time. But it does apply here.

36...♖c1 also loses. 37.♖c8

37.♕f3 ♖xh2 38.♖e5

Other moves win, but this is convincing.

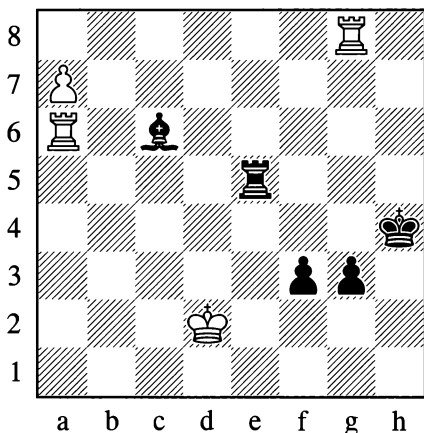
38...♗g2† 39.♕e3



No more checks. The winning ♖e5-e8† is on the way.

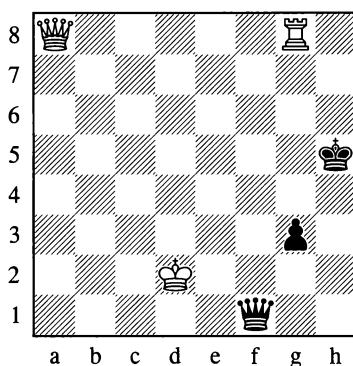
## 180. Le Quang Liem – Pragganandhaa

Internet 2022



The endgame is sharp but can be reasoned out. Black will not stop the a-pawn. He needs counterplay. At some moment, he will push ...f3-f2. Then will follow ♖xc6, ...f2-f1=♗, ♖h6†, ...♖h5, ♖xh5†, ...♕xh5, and a7-a8=♗. This will happen. But Black can decide when it happens, and under what circumstances.

Pragganandhaa chose 58...f2?. Natural but wrong. 59.♖xc6 f1=♗ 60.♖h6† ♖h5 61.♖xh5† ♕xh5 62.a8=♗



White's king was too close, and he had the g-pawn under control. Black could have had this same position with the king on a3! 62...♗f2† 63.♕d3 ♗f1† 64.♕e4 ♗c4† 65.♕f3 ♗d3† 66.♕f4 ♗d2† 67.♕xg3 ♗e1† 68.♕h3 ♗e6† 69.♕h2 ♗e5† 70.♖g3 Winning.

58...♖d5†!

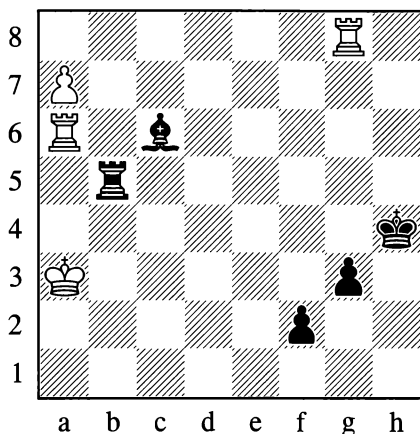
Black starts checking. It turns out to be hard to escape.

59.♕c2

59.♕e3 ♖e5† 60.♕d4 (60.♕f4 f2 Black will promote with check.) 60...♖d5† 61.♕c4? f2 62.♖xc6 f1=♗† 63.♕xd5 ♗f7† picks up the loose rook.

59.♕c3 ♖c5†! 60.♕b4 ♖b5†! White is forced to the a-file all the same, since 61.♕c4? is not to be recommended: 61...f2 Black promotes with check, and even wins.

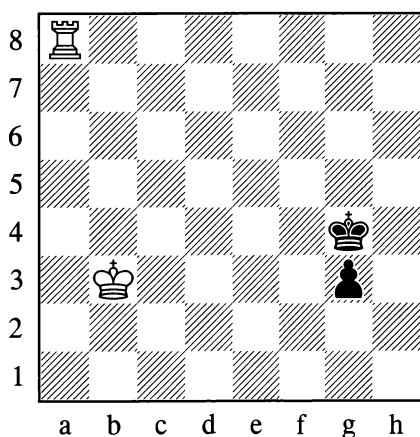
59...♖c5† 60.♔b2 ♜b5† 61.♕a3 f2!



Only now that White's king has been pushed all the way to the side of the board.

A valid drawing alternative is: 61...♕b7 62.♜b8 f2 63.♜xb7 f1=♚ 64.♜h7† ♔g4 65.♜g7† ♔h4

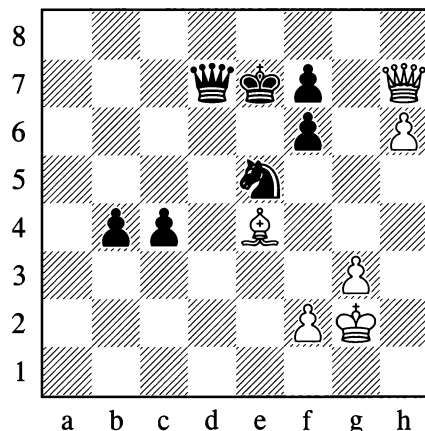
62.♜xc6 f1=♚ 63.♜h6† ♜h5 64.♜xh5† ♔xh5 65.a8=♚ ♚a1†! 66.♔b3 ♚xa8 67.♜xa8 ♔g4



White's king is too far away. Black makes a draw.

## 181. Nodirbek Abdusattorov – Alexander Grischuk

Warsaw (rapid) 2021



I never really understood why I am not so good at rapid. Even fantastic rapid players, like Grischuk, routinely make mistakes in easy positions they would solve with no trouble, given a couple of minutes rather than seconds to think. I guess I just play them even worse?

After 40...b3? 41.♚g8, White had the enemy pawns under control, and the h-pawn is coming. It is not clear, and eventually the game was drawn after 41...♚d4 42.♚a8.

40...♚g4 41.f3 ♚e6 42.g4 is equal.

### 40...c3!

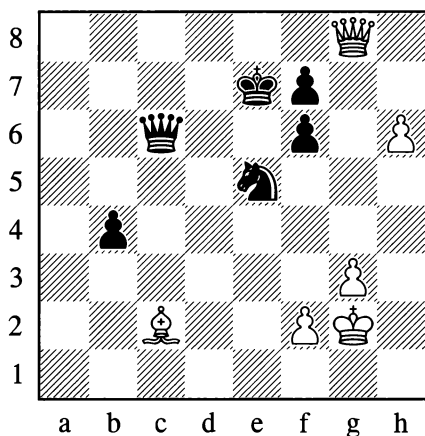
This is the move. White's queen will need to move away, and then ...c3-c2 comes with a check on c6. This was easy and I found it in about a minute, or maybe a little less. Rapid chess.

### 41.♚g8

41.♕c2 b3! Similar idea.

41.♚f5 ♚xf5 42.♕xf5 ♔f8! Black stops the h-pawn with his king and wins easily on the queenside after 43.♕c2 ♔c6.

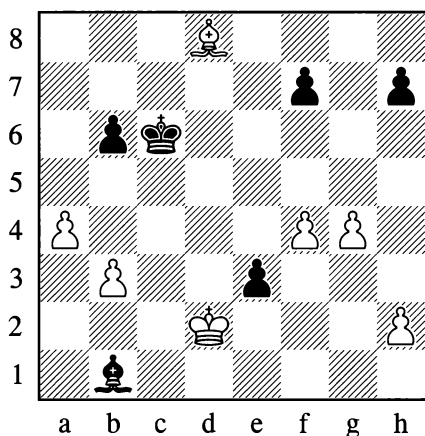
41...c2! 42.♙xc2 ♔c6†



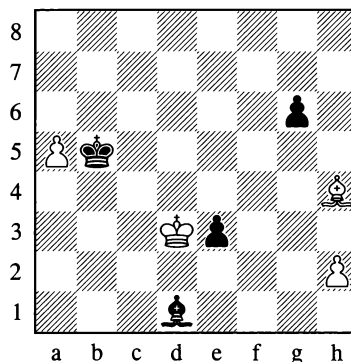
Black wins a piece. He can always bring the knight back to g6 to sacrifice for the h-pawn. Then the b-pawn wins the game.

## 182. Vladimir Kramnik – Richard Rapport

Paris 2021



Rapport held with no further issue after:  
 38.♙c3? ♙c4 Black's e-pawn is annoying,  
 and the bishop found a strong square on e4.  
 39.♙h4 ♙f3 40.g5 ♙d1 41.f5 ♙g4 42.g6 hxg6  
 43.fxg6 fxg6 44.b4 ♙d1 45.a5 bxa5 46.bxa5  
 ♙b5 47.♙d3



With a draw.

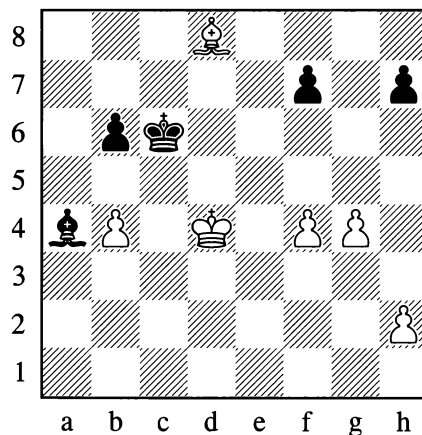
38.♙xe3!

This wins easily. Kramnik would have found it if he was not playing on a two-second increment.

38...♙c2 39.b4!

The key point. White needs to leave a pair of pawns on the queenside.

39...♙xa4 40.♙d4



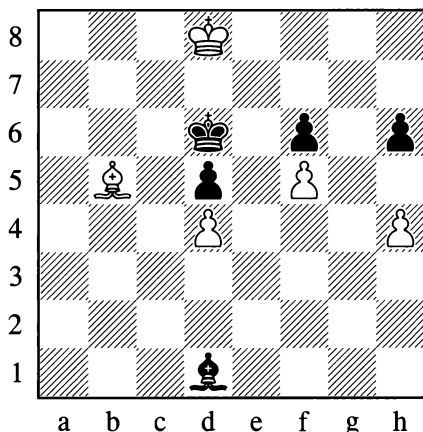
White's king charges to the kingside, and Black's king is unable to stop him. For one key move, he is tethered to the defense of the b6-pawn.

40...b5 41.♙e5 ♙d7 42.♙b6 ♙e7 43.♙c5†

White wins.

### 183. Robert Hovhannisyan – Shakhriyar Mamedyarov

Warsaw (rapid) 2021



Defending positions with no clear route to a draw is a thankless task. Fifty moves without flinching. Even the best players in the world fail. Rapid time controls make it even harder.

Black has only one priority. He must stop White's king from running to e8 and then f7. Mamedyarov's choice:

59...♙h5?

This might look tempting, but it fails quickly to zugzwang.

60.♙a4?

The rest of the game featured many mistakes due to the rapid time control. White eventually won.

60.♙d3! was the fastest win. 60...♙f7 What else? 61.♙e2! No more ...♙h5. Black is in zugzwang and loses.

60...♙g4 61.♙c2 ♙h5?

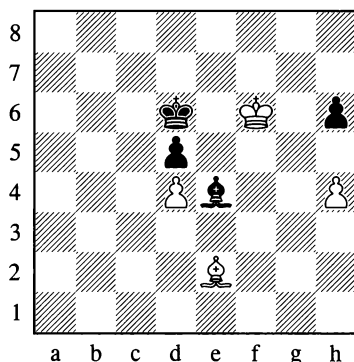
61...♙f3 62.♙d3 ♙e4 is equal.

62...♙d3 ♙f3 63.♙e8?

63.♙a6 ♙h5 (63...♙e4 64.♙c8 winning)

64.♙c8 ♙f7 65.♙d7 ♙h5 66.♙e6 wins.

63...♙e4 64.♙e2 ♙xf5 65.♙f7 ♙e4 66.♙xf6



66...♙c6?

66...♙c2 67.♙g7 ♙e6 68.♙xh6 ♙f5 is equal.

67.♙g7 h5 68.♙xh5 ♙b5 69.♙f6

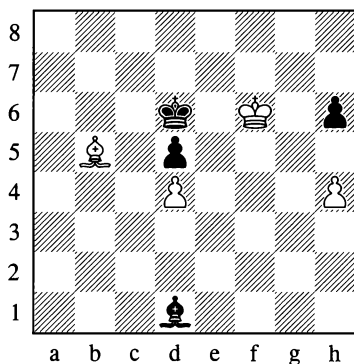
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59...♙c2!

The right direction.

60.♙d7

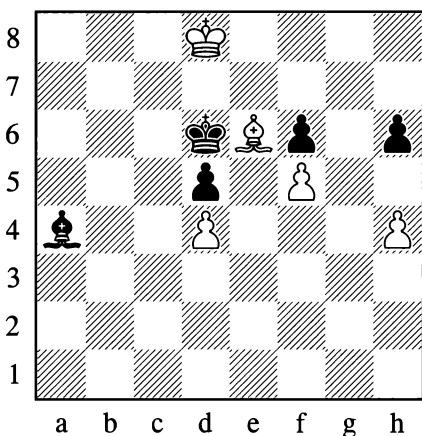
60.♙e8 is probably the best try. But when Black takes the f5-pawn, his defensive chances go up considerably. 60...♙xf5 61.♙f7 ♙g4 62.♙xf6 ♙d1



Although there is still some work to do, Black should save the game. White cannot get his king to the h6-pawn without allowing Black to respond with ...♙e6-f5. Meanwhile, Black can wait with ...♙f3-d1.

**60...♙d1!**

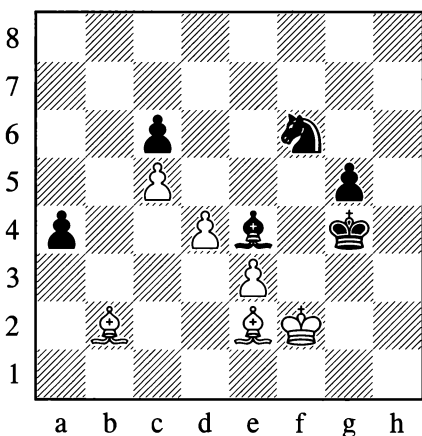
Black's point is revealed. White is unable to play ♖d8-e8, thanks to a check on h5.

**61.♙e6 ♙a4!**

A final accurate move secures the draw. This diagonal is longer than the h5-e8 one. Black can keep the king from e8 while avoiding zugzwang; his bishop has enough squares.

**184. Luca Moroni Jr – Richard Rapport**

Warsaw (rapid) 2021



To be honest, I did not see a significant difference between ...♖h3 and ...♖h4 in concrete moves. I put the king on h3 as a

matter of best practice. Why go further away from the queening square?

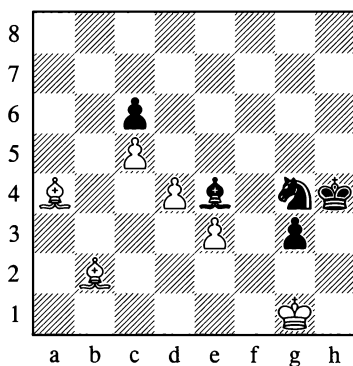
Rapport's choice leaves White in a tough spot: 49...♖h4?

Although with more time on the clock, he may have saved the game.

50.♙d1 g4 51.♙xa4

51.d5!? should draw easily. The bishop makes it to e5.

51...g3† 52.♖g1 ♖g4



53.d5?

Now it is too late for this.

53.♙b3!! ♖f2 (53...♖h2 54.♙d1 draws)

54.♙e6 is equal.

53...♖f2! 54.♙f6† ♖g4 55.♙xc6 ♖h3†  
0-1

**49...♖h3!**

The right square.

**50.♙d1**

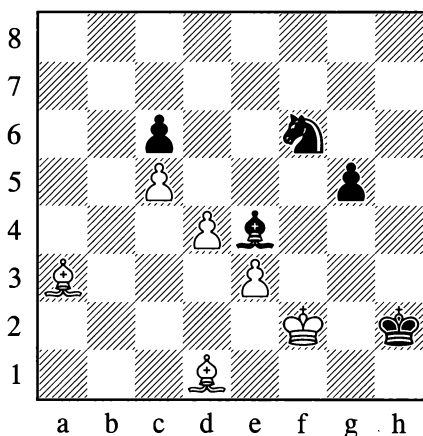
50.♖g1 ♙d5! 51.♙d1 ♙b3 52.♙f3 ♖d5 wins.

**50...a3!**

Not 50...♖h2?, as 51.d5! ♖xd5 52.♙xa4 is equal.

I wanted 50...♙d5!?, which also works. Black is careful not to allow d4-d5 to open the bishop. 51.♙xa4 (51.♖g1 ♙b3! wins) 51...♖h2! Again, this move proves decisive.

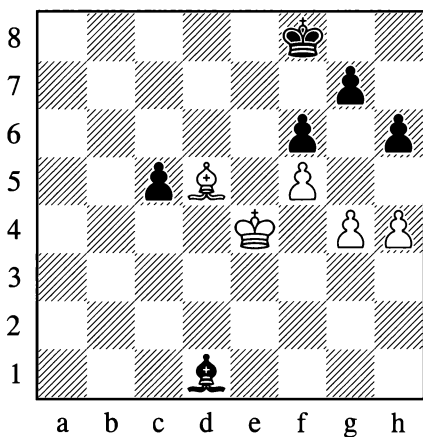
51. ♖xa3 ♜h2!



...♜h4-h2 would not be legal! The king was surely better on h3 than h4. Black wins.

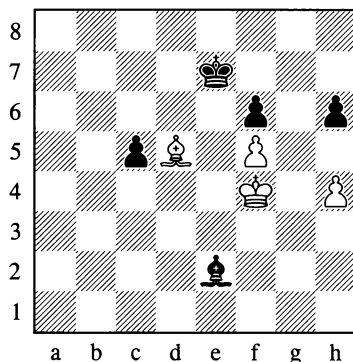
### 185. Richard Rapport – Jorden van Foreest

Internet 2022



White will not save this under normal circumstances. All of Black's pawns are fixed on dark squares, so there is no counterplay. The black king can come to d6. Blending threats of harassing the g4-pawn, and pushing the c-pawn, should stretch the defenses and win easily.

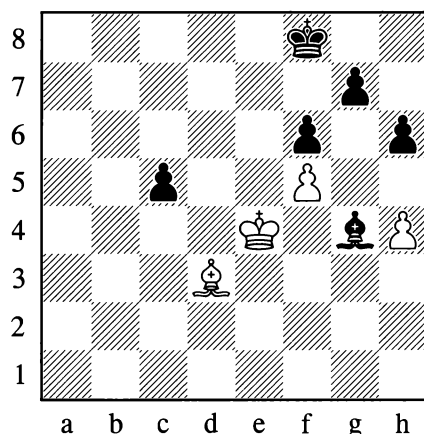
After 58. ♜f4? ♞e2 59. g5 ♜e7 60. gxh6 gxh6



Black won easily. White's king does not have the wingspan to both defend f5 and pay attention to the c5-pawn. 61. ♞g8 ♜d6 62. ♜e4 ♞d1 63. ♞c4 ♞c2† 64. ♜f4 ♞a4 65. ♞f7 ♞b5 66. ♜g4 ♜e5 67. ♜h5 c4 68. ♜xh6 c3 69. ♞b3 ♞d3 70. h5 c2 71. ♞xc2 ♞xc2 72. ♜g7 ♜xf5 73. h6 ♜g5 0-1

White should look for a direct solution:

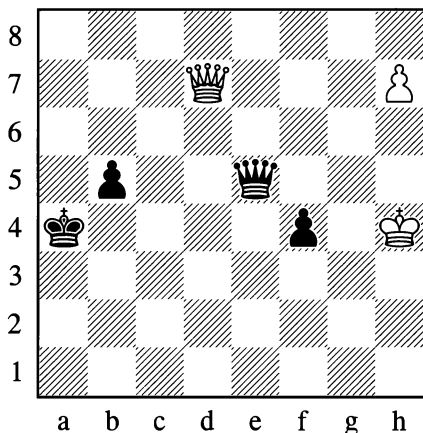
58. ♞c4!! ♞xg4 59. ♞d3!



White is safe enough and will gobble up c5 next. This should be a draw.

# 186. Nodirbek Abdusattorov – Magnus Carlsen

Warsaw (rapid) 2021

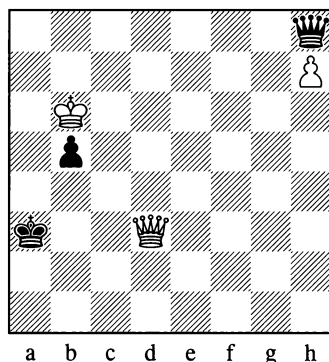


This one was very hard. Queen endgames on open boards often have no real principles. They just have to be calculated. It is hard to even know what the first move to consider is. I got it wrong and so did Abdusattorov:

65.♔g4?

Now the position is drawn, though the defense remains nearly impossible for a human in a rapid game. Even the GOAT was unable to hold. Still, for training purposes, we should try to find the best move; assume our opponents will have time and be able to defend.

65...f3 66.♔xf3 ♖f6† 67.♔e4 ♖h4† 68.♔d5 ♖h5† 69.♔c6 ♖g6† 70.♔c7 ♖g3† 71.♔b7 ♖f3† 72.♔a6 ♖f6† 73.♔a7 ♖f2† 74.♔b7 ♖f3† 75.♖c6 ♖f7† 76.♖c7 ♖f3† 77.♔a6 ♖a8† 78.♔b6 ♖h8 79.♖c2† ♔a3 80.♖d3†



Carlsen had defended valiantly to here, but now finally started to crack.

80...♔a2?

80...♔b2!

81.♔c5?

81.♖g6! ♖b8† 82.♔c5 ♖c7† 83.♔d5 ♖c4† 84.♔d6 ♖f4† 85.♔d7 ♖d4† 86.♔c6 ♖c4† 87.♔b6 ♖d4† 88.♔a6 ♔a3 89.♖f5 ♖d6† 90.♔b7 ♖e7† 91.♔c6 ♖e8† 92.♔c7 ♖e7† 93.♖d7 ♖h4 94.♖d3† ♔b4 95.♖b1† ♔c4 96.♖f1† ♔b4 97.♖f8† wins.

81...b4??

81...♖c8† drew.

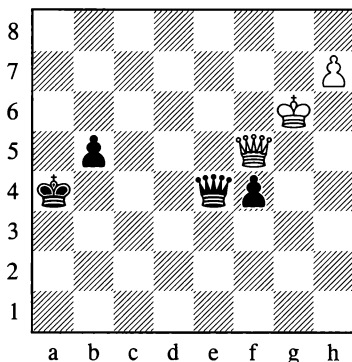
82.♖d2† ♔a1?!

82...♔b1 83.♖xb4† ♔c2 84.♖c4† ♔b1 85.♖e4† ♔a2 86.♔c4! and wins.

83.♖d4†

1-0

I proposed 65.♖d8. Apparently it is insufficient. 65...♖e1† 66.♔g5 ♖g3† 67.♔h5 ♖h3† 68.♔g6 ♖e6† 69.♖f6 ♖e4† 70.♖f5





I thought White might win here, but the computer hangs on.

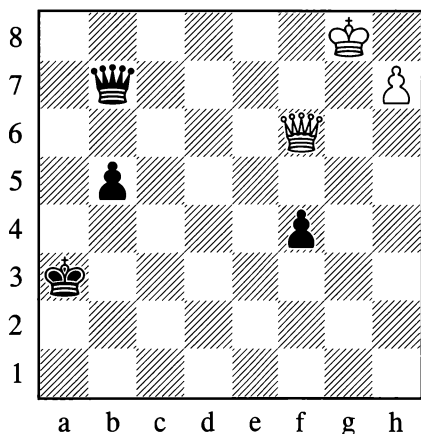
65. ♖d1†!

This was the winner. Black's king must be provoked to the a3-f8 diagonal.

65... ♔a3 66. ♖d8!

This works only now.

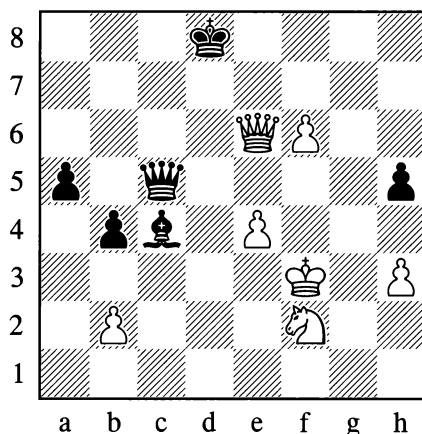
66... ♖e1† 67. ♔g5 ♖g3† 68. ♔h5 ♖h3†  
69. ♔g6 ♖e6† 70. ♖f6 ♖e4† 71. ♔g7 ♖b7†  
72. ♔g8



The main difference is seen between this line and ♖d7-d8 on the first move. Black's king on a3 means it will be vulnerable to ♖e7† or ♖f8†. White wins.

## 187. Radomir Caletka – Pavel Cech

Czech Republic 2021



Endgames can often be calculated to the end, but a lot of the normal rules of calculation still apply. Always look for candidate moves!

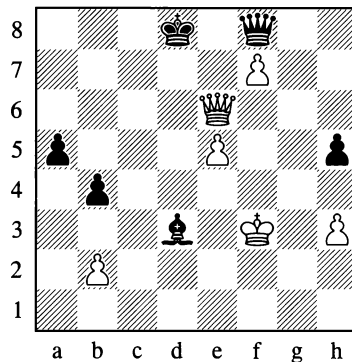
49. ♔d3!

This can be found with elimination. Everything else is horrible:

49. ♖f5?? ♖xf5† 50. exf5 a4 The a-pawn wins easily and White soon resigned. 51. f7 ♔e7 52. ♔e3 a3 0-1

49... ♖c7

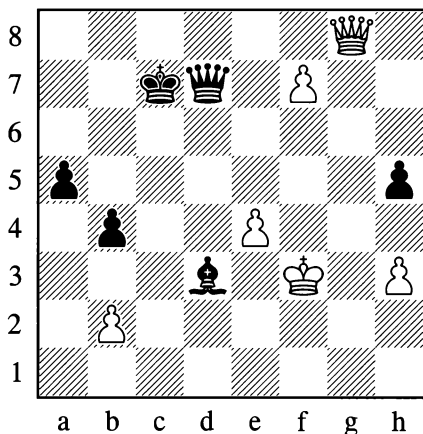
49... ♔xd3 50. f7 ♖f8 51. e5



White is threatening ♖e6-d6† and makes a new queen in short order.

**50. ♖f5! ♕xd3**

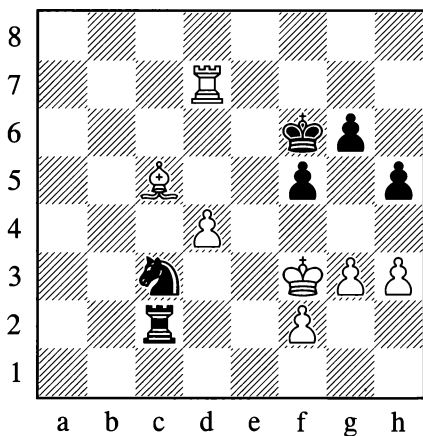
Now it is checks and captures all the way.

**51. ♖d5†! ♖d7 52. ♖g8† ♔c7 53. f7**

White promotes.

**188. Hikaru Nakamura – Alexandr Predke**

Warsaw (rapid) 2021



Nakamura's choice was natural but not best:  
50.d5?

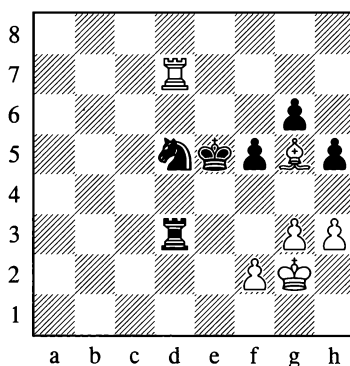
Black buckled immediately, but he only needed one good move to reach a defensible position.

**50... ♖d2!**

50... ♔e5? 51.d6! Now it was too late for the rook to come to d2. White was winning again, and Nakamura did not disappoint. 51... ♖e4 52. ♕e3?! (52. ♖e7† ♔d5 53.d7 wins.) 52... ♔e6 53. ♖g7 ♔xd6 54. ♖xg6† ♔e5 55. ♖h6 ♖c3 56. ♖xh5 ♖f6 57. ♖h8 ♖d5 58. ♖d8 ♔e6 59.h4 ♖f6 60. ♖a8 ♖h5 61. ♖a5 ♖b3 62. ♔g2 ♖f6 63. ♕d4 ♖e4 64. ♖e5† 1-0

**51. ♕e7†**

51.d6 ♖e4 Black takes back a pawn immediately.

**51... ♔e5 52. ♕g5 ♖d3† 53. ♔g2 ♖xd5**

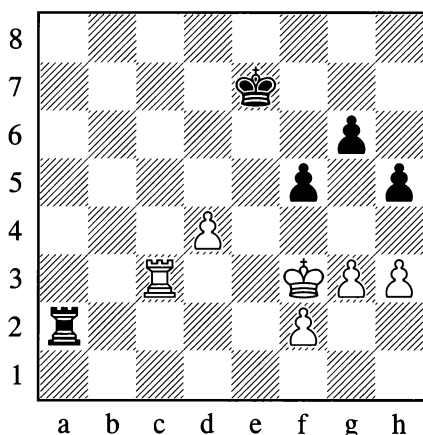
There is still some work to be done, but Black should make a draw here.

Instead, White has a strong move that leads to paralysis. Nakamura would surely have found it in a classical game.

**50. ♖c7!!**

Black is facing a deadly pin next with ♕c5-b4. Moving the knight fails to a check on e7.

**50... ♖a2 51. ♕e7†! ♔e6 52. ♖xc3 ♔xe7**



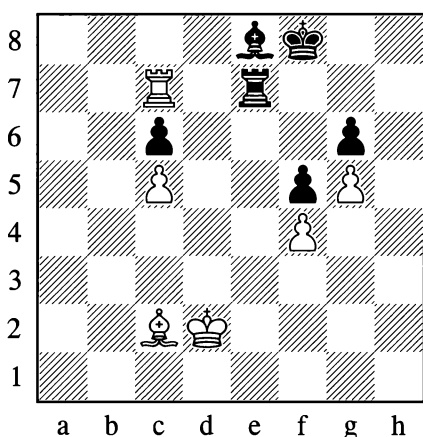
This four pawns against three position would be a draw if Black's structure was more solid. As it is, White wins easily by sending his king towards g5. Black's pawns are overextended. One weak square is all White needs.

### 53.h4

White will play  $\text{♔f3-e3}$ ,  $\text{f2-f3}$  to prevent the pawn from being lost and king to g5. There is nothing Black can do about it.

## 189. Ruslan Ponomariov – Laszlo Gonda

Czech Republic 2021



White should immediately think about trading rooks. The resulting same-colored bishop ending looks horrible for Black. So many weak pawns. Still, care must be taken.

### 51.♞xe7! ♔xe7

Black will draw if he can get his bishop to a square like d5. White should restrict its movement but must do so precisely.

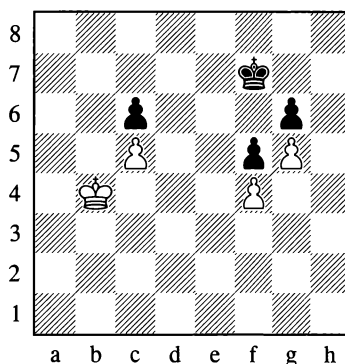
### 52.♙a4!

Black is stuck.

52.♙b3? ♙f7 draws.

### 52...♔d7

52...♔e6 allows 53.♙b3+, with check. The king must move, losing a critical tempo. 53...♔e7 54.♔c3 ♙f7 55.♙xf7 ♔xf7 56.♔b4!

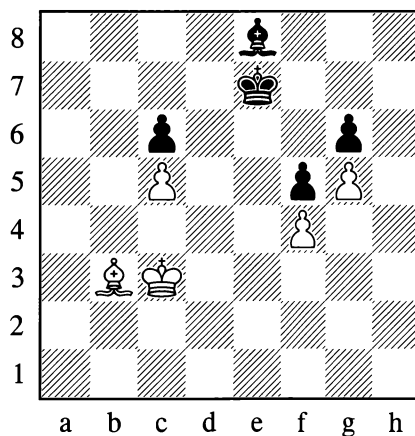


The lost tempo counts. Black loses.

### 53.♙b3!

Only now. Black is unable to play ...♙f7, and the king is coming.

53...♔e7 54.♔c3

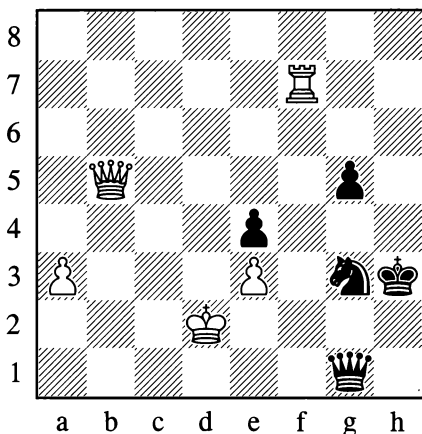


...♙e8-f7 leads to a lost pawn ending. Black resigned rather than let White bring his king to b6.

1–0

### 190. Alexey Sarana – Aleksandar Indjic

Belgrade 2022

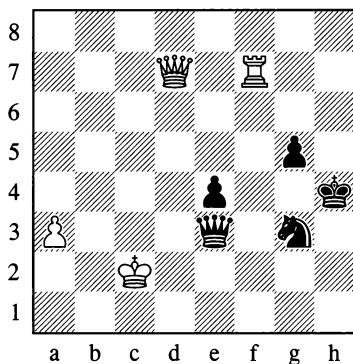


Like the Abdusattorov – Carlsen encounter, I found this one extremely difficult. I solved it, although it took me almost half an hour!

58.a4? and 58.♙c2? are both mistakes:

58.a4? ♖a1! 59.♖b3 g4 60.♙c2 ♜e2 61.♙d2 ♜g1 62.♙c2 ♜f3 63.♖c4 ♜e1† 64.♙d2 ♜f3† 65.♙c2 g3!? 66.♞h7† ♙g2 67.♖xe4 ♙f2 Black had sufficient compensation. The game was eventually drawn.

58.♙c2? is tempting but a poor move order. It gives Black an additional option. 58...♖xe3 59.♖d7† ♙h4!!



With an equal position.

And 58.♖xg5 ♜f1† would be embarrassing.

#### 58.♖d7†

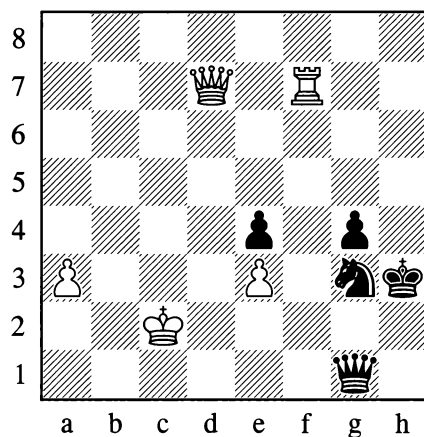
This check is not too hard to see, but the follow-up is critical.

#### 58...g4

58...♙g2 59.♙c2! Again, this move proves strong. White is looking for ♖d7-d2 next, and he steps out of the way of ...♜f1†.

58...♙h4? only works if Black has already taken on e3. 59.♞h7† ♜h5 60.♖f5 wins.

#### 59.♙c2!!

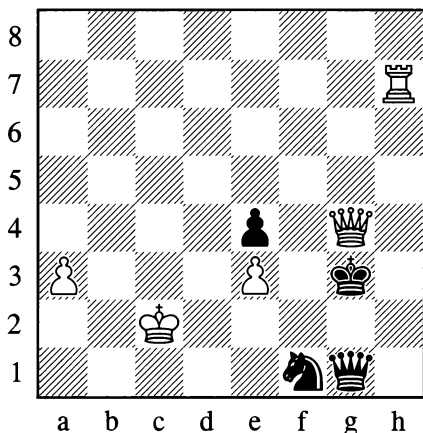


Pure prophylaxis against ...♜f1†, Black's best idea.

#### 59...♜f1

59...♖xe3 60.♞h7† ♙g2 61.♖d2 winning.

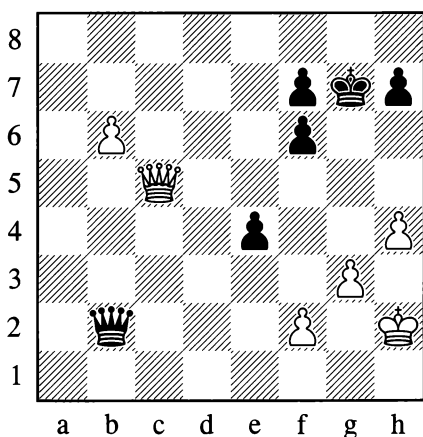
60.♖h7†! ♔g3 61.♗xg4†!!



The point. White wins.

### 191. Mahammad Muradli – Viktor Boev

Plovdiv 2021



White should be winning due to his b-pawn. Black cannot stop it. Instead, he can hope to give annoying checks with the queen and threaten perpetual.

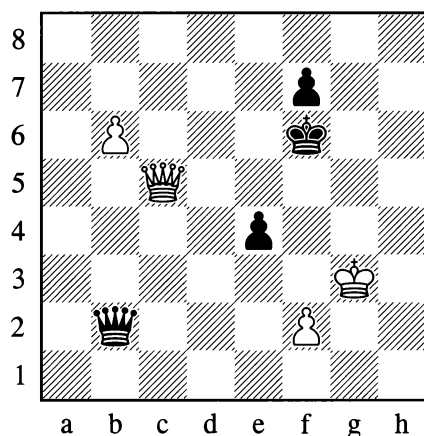
White eventually won after 40.♔g1? h5, but was only slightly better here.

White should make room for his king right away:

40.g4!

White prevents ...h7-h5 and ...f6-f5. He makes space for his king, and is ready to charge to the center, taking the e4-pawn while he is at it. Furthermore, he can push g4-g5, opening up Black's king slightly, to make him vulnerable to counter-checks. There is not much more to it than that. This was a strategic exercise more than a calculation one.

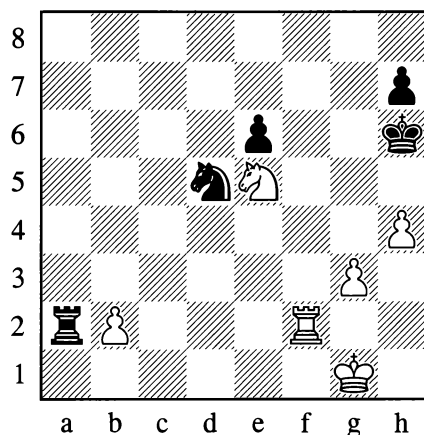
40...h6 41.g5! hxg5 42.hxg5 ♔g6 43.gxf6 ♔xf6 44.♔g3



White wins.

### 192. Nikolas Theodorou – Mihnea Costachi

Warsaw (rapid) 2021



This position is more about pattern recognition than anything else. It really looks like Black should be mated in the next couple of moves.

### 36.♟f7!

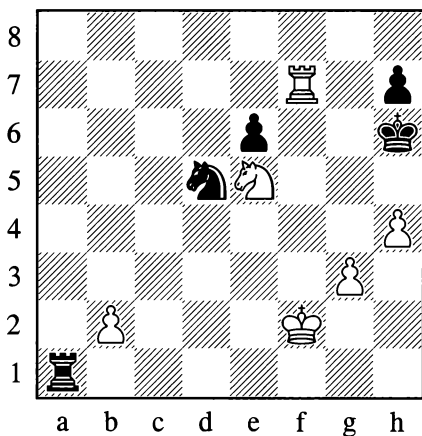
The king must not be allowed to return to g7. g4-g5 is incredibly hard to prevent.

36.g4? allowed Black to escape with his king back to g7. There followed 36...♞a1† 37.♞h2? (37.♟f1! wins) 37...♞e1, and the game was eventually drawn.

### 36...♞a1†

36...♞xb2 37.g4 wins.

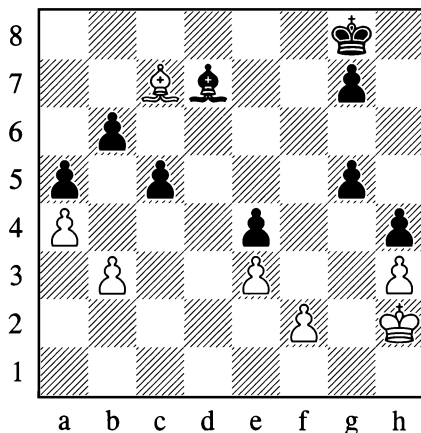
### 37.♞f2!



White prevents the rook from coming to e1. This would harass his e5-knight before he can give mate. Black is lost.

## 193. Maksim Chigaev – Shant Sargsyan

Warsaw (analysis) 2021



White obviously is pinning his hopes on the drawish nature of opposite-colored bishops. Indeed, he should hold if he can liquidate the queenside. But he cannot.

### 43...b5! 44.axb5 c4!!

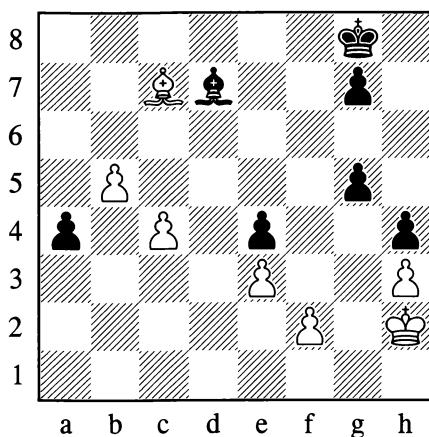
The point. Black needs to keep a passed pawn.

44...♞xb5 45.♞xa5 is only equal. White is ready for the bishop to come to b6 next, trading off the last pawn and saving the game.

### 45.bxc4

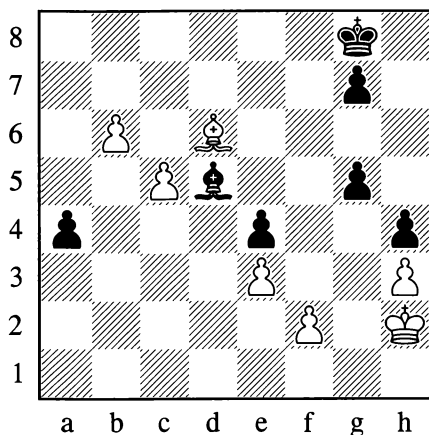
Black is clearly winning after both: 45.♞xa5 cxb3 46.♞c3 ♞xb5 and 45.b6 ♞c6 46.bxc4 a4 47.♞d6 ♞f7.

### 45...a4



It proves difficult to stop the a-pawn.

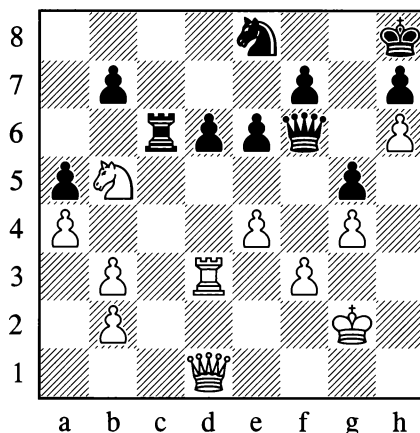
46.♔d6 ♕e6! 47.c5 ♕c4! 48.b6 ♕d5



White's pawns are forever held at bay. His king is always stuck, thanks to the threat of ...g5-g4 hanging over his head. Black wins by eventually bringing his own king to b3.

## 194. Alexey Kislinsky – Milos Jirovsky

Czech Republic 2021



White has a far-advanced pawn on h6. This cuts off Black's king from joining the game and leads to potential mating threats. But since the pawn is in danger, there is no time to mess around. He needs to make it count right away.

28.♔c3?

This was played in the game. It is second best, and it misses a clear chance. Black eventually held.

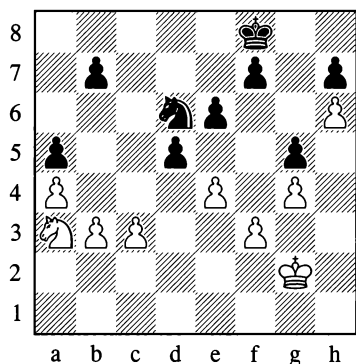
28...♕e5?

28...♔xc3! 29.bxc3 ♕xh6 30.♖xd6 ♖xd6 31.♕xd6 ♖g7 Black should not lose here.

29.♕d2 ♔xc3 30.bxc3 ♖g8

White needs to be very precise to win. He managed this for a few moves but missed a tough one down the road.

31.♕e3 ♖f8 32.♖a3 d5 33.♕c5† ♕d6 34.♕xd6† ♖xd6



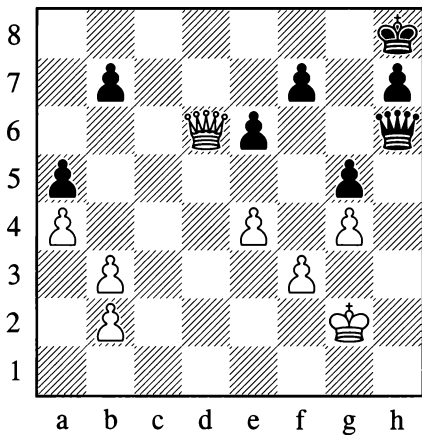
35.exd5?

35.c4!! wins. This is very difficult. 35...dxe4 (35...dxc4 36.e5!) 36.c5! The knight gets to c4.

35...exd5 36.♔f2 ♕e7 37.♕e3 f5 38.♕d4 fxg4 39.fxg4 ♖f7 40.♕xd5

Draw.

28.♖xd6! ♖xd6 29.♗xd6 ♗xd6 30.♙xd6 ♙xh6



31.♙e5†

Care is still required. 31.♙b8† ♕g7 32.♙xb7 ♙f6 is equal.

31...♙g7

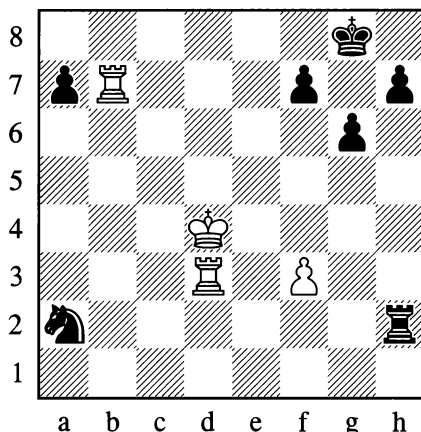
31...♕g8 32.♙xa5 ♙f6 33.♙c3 wins.

32.♙b8† ♙g8 33.♙xb7

White wins.

## 195. Sergey Karjakin – Alireza Firouzja

Warsaw (rapid) 2021

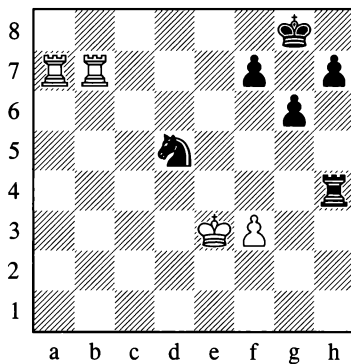


This one felt like a problem that should be solved given enough time. There is no real rule or reason to be used, just brute force. Look at every legal move until one looks good. Then find the best move. This cannot be done effectively in rapid chess.

33.♗a3 a5!

This would have held.

33...♗h4†?! 34.f4! Now things were hard again. Karjakin eventually won after mutual mistakes. Rapid chess. 34...♗xf4†?! 35.♕e3 ♗b4 36.♗c7? (36.♗bxa7! ♖c1 37.♕d2 ♗c4 38.♗f3 h5 39.♗xf7 ♖b3† 40.♕e3 wins.) 36...♗b2 The game was equal here. 34.♗xa5 ♗h4† 35.♕e3 ♖b4 36.♗aa7 ♖d5†





Black gets his rook to f4.

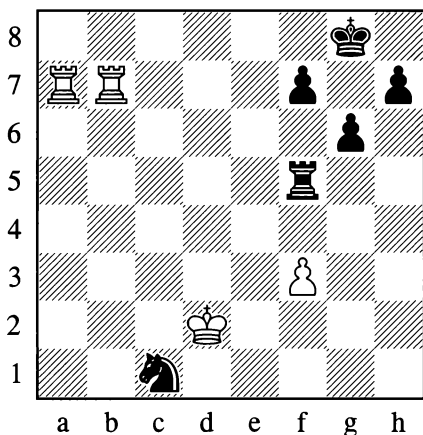
### 33.♔e3!

White prevents any hope of ...♘a2-b4, and he is ready for ♗d3-d7 next. There is not much more to it than that.

### 33...♖h5

Hoping to get the rook to f5. This is more resilient than other tries: 33...♖c2 34.♗dd7 ♖c3† 35.♔f2 winning, and 33...a5 34.♗dd7 ♘b4 35.♗xf7, also winning.

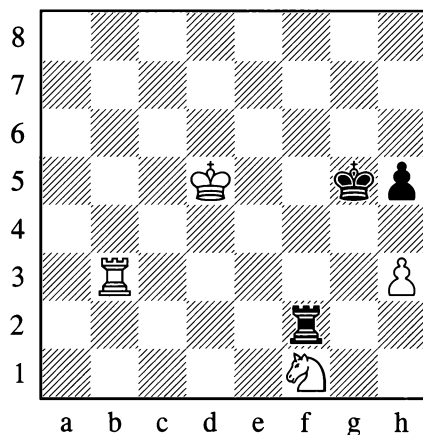
### 34.♖a3 ♘c1 35.♖axa7 ♖f5 36.♔d2



Black cannot save the knight without allowing a disaster on f7.

## 196. Adam Frank – Rafal Antoniewski

Czech Republic 2022

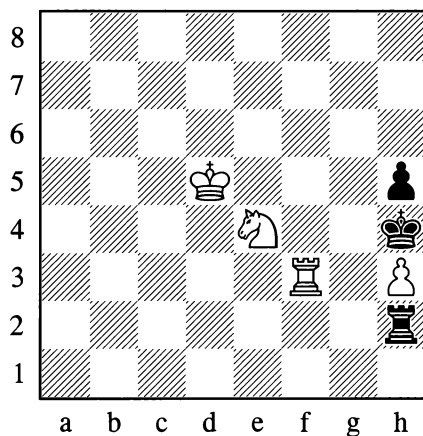


This one is simple. Not easy, but simple. White has only one goal: keep the h3-pawn alive. He can do this with a little mating trick. The position reminds me of how I beat Zhrebukh in 2018, en route to winning the US Championship.

### 68.♘g3! ♖h2 69.♘e4†!

69.♘f1? ♖f2 70.♘g3 ♖h2 71.♔d4 I am not sure if this move was actually played or not, but the score ends here with a draw.

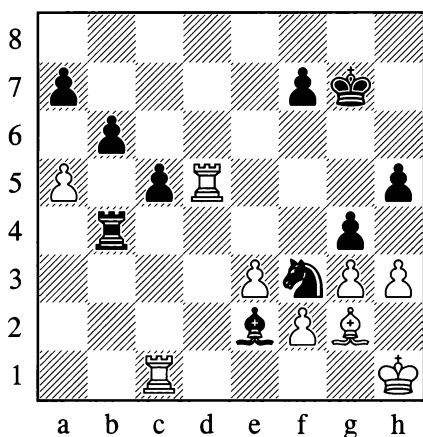
### 69...♔h4 70.♖f3!!



The point. Black is unable to take on h3 because of an epaulette mate on f4. Otherwise, ♖f2 comes next, consolidating. White wins.

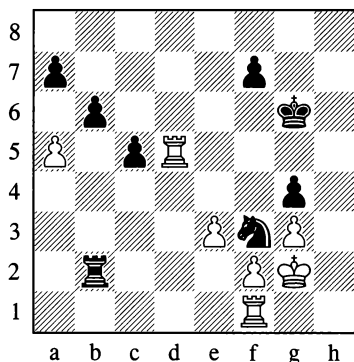
### 197. Valentin Buckels – Dmitrij Kollars

Germany 2022



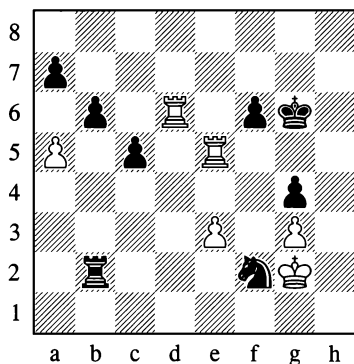
This was a classical game, but the position also comes on move forty. Kollars missed his chance by choosing an automatic move. He would surely have found the best move if it came on the forty-first.

40...♔g6? It seems so natural to guard the h-pawn, but this missed an opportunity. 41.hxg4 hxg4 42.♕f1! ♕xf1 43.♖xf1 ♖b2 44.♔g2



The white rooks were ready to start making counterplay. I would still take Black here and

he did go on to win, but the machine insists on dead equality. 44...♖d2 45.♖d1 ♖e4 46.♖e5 ♖xf2 47.♖d6† f6

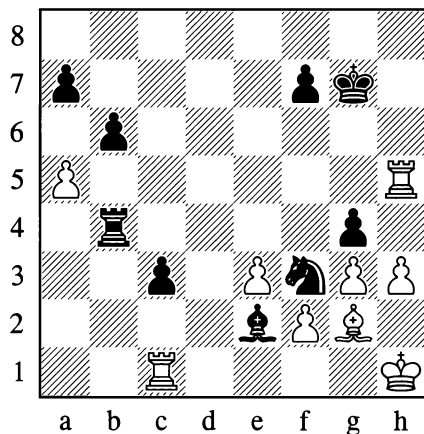


48.♔f1?! (48.♔g1! b5 49.♖c6 ♖d3 50.♖e6 is equal.) 48...♖h1! Well spotted. Black has sufficient compensation. 49.♖e6 ♖xg3† 50.♔g1 ♖e2† 51.♔f1 bxa5 52.♖xf6† ♔g5 53.♖g6† ♔h4 54.♖d5 ♖g3† 55.♔e1 ♖e4 56.♖e5 ♖f2 57.♔f1 c4 58.♖xa5 ♔g3 59.♖xa7 ♖d3 60.♖ag7 ♖e5 61.♖f6 ♖f3 0–1

#### 40...c4!

Passed pawns must be pushed. White is unable to stop it, and is not in time to take on h5:

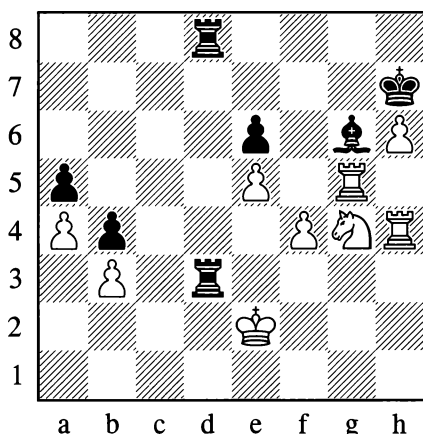
#### 41.♖xh5 c3



White can do nothing about ...c3-c2 and ...♖b4-b1 coming next.

**198. Aleksey Dreev – Mikhail Demidov**

Warsaw (rapid) 2021



The first move is obvious enough:

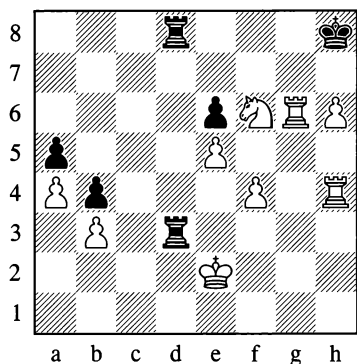
**46. ♖f6† ♕h8**

Then it gets tougher:

**47. ♖h1!!**

A cold-blooded and powerful move. The point, while deep, is very simple. White clears the h4-square for his king once the black rooks start chasing him.

Dreev made the obvious bishop capture:  
47. ♖xg6?

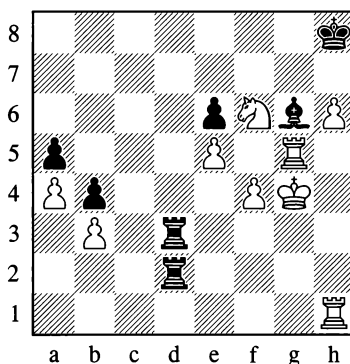


But Black was stalemated and could make a draw with two suicide rooks. 47... ♖e3†! Black equalized. 48. ♕f2 ♖d2† 49. ♕xe3 ♖d3† 50. ♕e4

♖d4† 51. ♕f3 ♖d3† 52. ♕f2 ♖d2† 53. ♕g3 ♖d3† 54. ♕h2 ♖h3† 55. ♕g1 ♖g3† 56. ♕f2 ♖f3† 57. ♕e2 ♖e3† 58. ♕d2 ♖d3† 59. ♕e1 ♖e3† 60. ♕f1 ♖f3† 61. ♕g1 ♖g3† 62. ♖xg3 ½–½

**47... ♖3d4**

47... ♖d2† 48. ♕f3 ♖8d3† 49. ♕g4

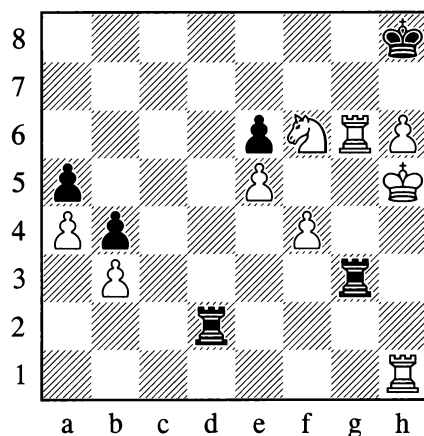


Now the point of ♖h4-h1 is on full display. 49... ♖g2† It is good that this move is not checkmate! (49... ♕f5† 50. ♕h5 wins) 50. ♕h4 White wins.

**48. ♖xg6!**

Now and only now.

48... ♖d2† 49. ♕f3 ♖8d3† 50. ♕g4 ♖g3† 51. ♕h5!



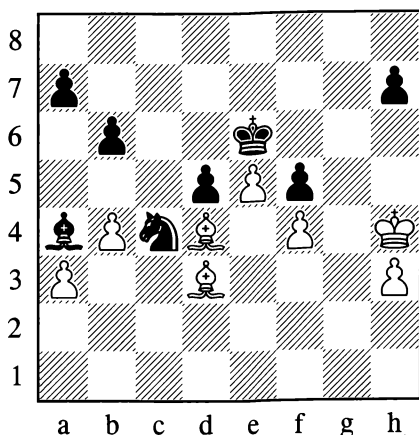
Again, running to squares on the h-file proves critical.

51...♖h2† 52.♖xh2 ♖h3† 53.♔g5! ♖g3†  
54.♔g4!

Time for ...♕e8!

### 199. Wesley So – Maxime Vachier-Lagrave

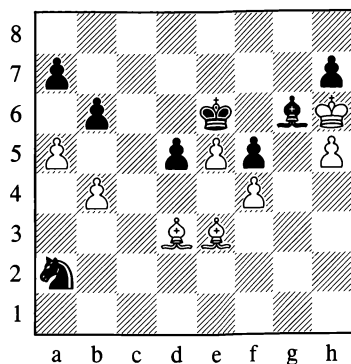
Paris 2021



Black is facing the colossal threat of ♔h4-g5. He will not save the game under normal means. Remember from previous chapters though, always examine all checks and captures!

43...♖xa3!

43...♕e8? was too passive in the game. 44.♔g5 ♕g6 45.a4 Black was facing threats on all sides, from a4-a5 to h4-h5. He did not manage to offer much resistance. 45...♖d2 46.♔h6 ♖f3 47.♕f2 ♖d2 48.h4 ♖e4 49.♕e3 ♖c3 50.a5 ♖a2 51.h5



51...♕e8 52.axb6 axb6 53.♔g5 h6† 54.♔xh6 ♖xb4 55.♕e2 b5 56.♔g7 ♕xh5 57.♕xh5 ♖c2 58.♕f7† ♔d7 59.e6† ♔d6 60.♕c5† ♔xc5 61.e7 1-0

44.♔g5 h6†!

I am sure this is the move Vachier-Lagrave missed. White's king is distracted from f5.

45.♔xh6

45.♔g6 ♕e8† 46.♔xh6 ♕b5 transposes.

45...♕b5!

Black halves the bishop pair. In fact, White should slam on the breaks and make sure not to lose!

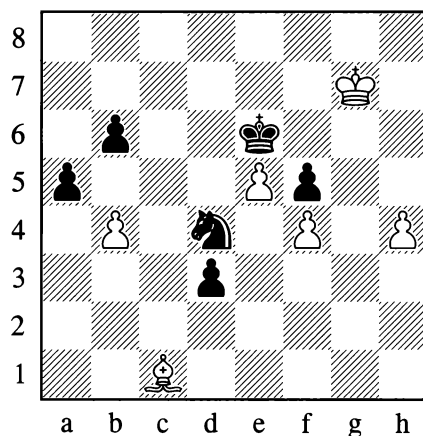
46.♕xb5?

46.♕b2 is equal.

46...♖xb5 47.♕b2 a5!

47...d4 48.♔g7 d3 49.♕c1 a5 transposes.

48.♔g7 d4 49.h4 d3 50.♕c1 ♖d4!!



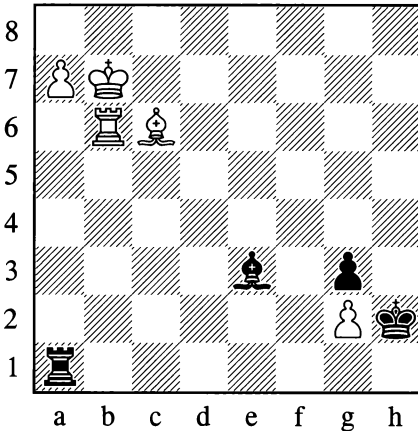
The great journey to f7 begins!

51.h5 ♖c6 52.h6 ♖d8 53.h7 ♖f7

Black wins.

**200. Andreas Heimann – Vladimir Malakhov**

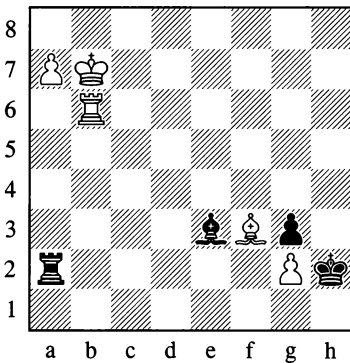
Germany 2021



This one struck me as impossible. I wanted the same move Black played in the game:

66...Ra2? 67.f3!!

White is winning.



Reciprocal zugzwang:

If the rook leaves the second rank, ♖b6-a6 will win. Black will not be able to take on g2 later.

If the rook leaves the a-file, then the pawn promotes.

After ...♙h2-g1, ♖b6-b1† is coming.

67...Ra3

67...♙g1 68.a8=♚ ♖xa8 69.♖b1† wins.

68.♖a6 ♖b3† 69.♙c6 ♙xa7 70.♖xa7

Black resigned. 1–0

70...♖b2 71.♙d5!

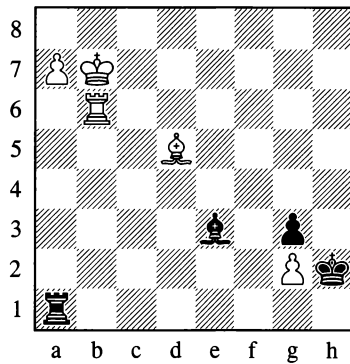
White is just in time to come back and stop the g-pawn.

71...♖xg2 72.♙xg2 ♙xg2 73.♙e4

White wins.

66...Ra3! 67.♙f3

67.♙d5 ♖a1!



As long as Black makes sure to only ever put the rook on a2 in response to ♙f3, he is good to go. 68.♙f3 ♖a2!

67...Ra2

Now, Black to move loses. But White does not have a move himself!

67...♙xb6!? is fine too. 68.♙xb6 ♖xf3! 69.a8=♚ (69.gxf3 g2 is drawing) 69...♙xg2 Black's g-pawn is too menacing and White's king is too far away. White will need to give a perpetual.

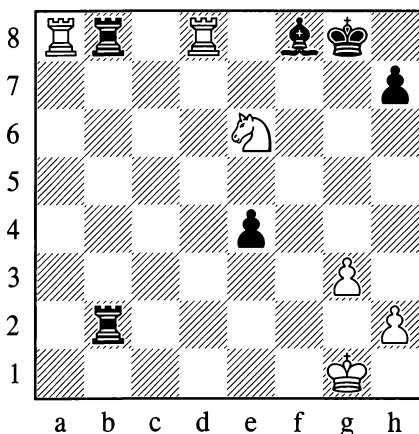
68.♖a6 ♖b2†! 69.♙c7 ♙xa7 70.♖xa7 ♖xg2!

With a draw.

## Solutions to Chapter 5

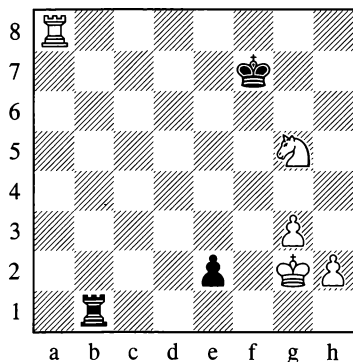
### 201. Miklos Nemeth – Dirk Sebastian

Germany 2021



Black seems in a bad way, since he is about to lose his bishop.

49...♖xa8? was chosen in the game. It does not allow a critical tempo to be won. 50.♖xa8 ♜f7 51.♜xf8 e3 52.♜xh7, and White eventually won. The point is that ...♖b1† and ...e3-e2 does not work: 52...♖b1† 53.♝g2 e2 54.♜g5†!



White's knight makes it back decisively to f3. Black cannot hit the rook on d8 with ...♝e7.

But there is a straightforward saving resource:

49...♖xd8!

This takes the right rook. Black needs the remaining rook to be close enough to the king.

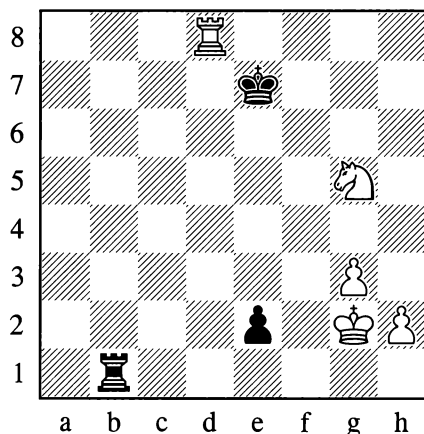
50.♖xd8 ♜f7 51.♜xf8

51.♖xf8† ♜xe6 is equal.

51...e3! 52.♜xh7

52.♜f1 ♖xh2 is again equal.

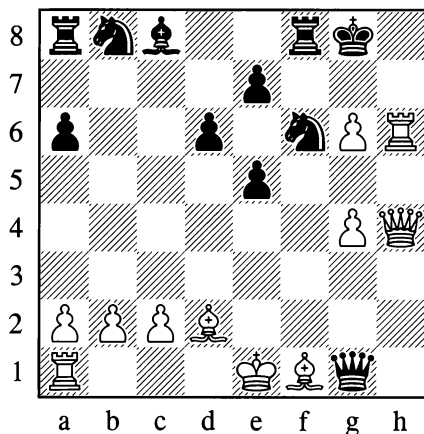
52...♖b1†! 53.♝g2 e2 54.♜g5† ♜e7!



This is why it was so important for the rook to be on d8 instead of a8. The rook is hit, and White is not in time to consolidate with ♜g5-f3. Black has equalized.

### 202. Inna Agrest – Stella Sankova

Bucharest 2021



White is threatening mate in two with ♖h6-h8† and ♜h4-h6, which significantly limits Black's candidate moves.

Black played:

24...♘h5?

This was the right piece, wrong square. It still allowed White to give a check on h8:

25.♖h8†! ♕xh8

25...♔g7 26.♜xe7† with a prompt checkmate.

26.♜xh5† ♕g7 27.♜h6† ♕f6 28.g7†

Black resigned.

1–0

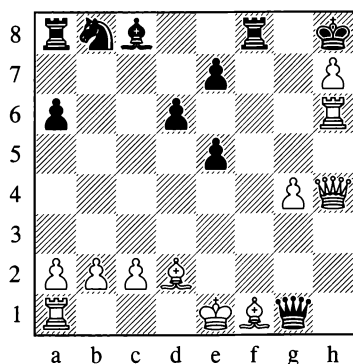
The right piece, right square was:

24...♘h7!!

Black blocks the h-file and makes a counterthreat on f1.

25.0–0–0

After 25.gxh7† ♕h8:



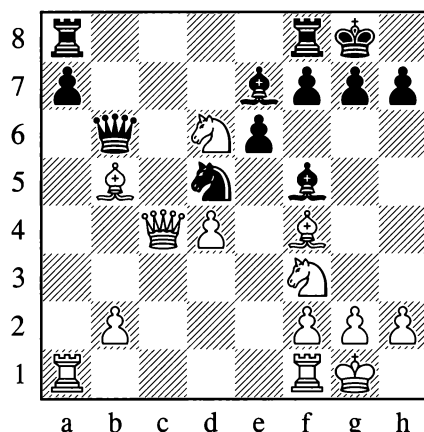
Black's king is safe for one move, and her counterattack is decisive.

25...♖xf1 26.♖e1! ♜f2 27.♜xf2 ♖xf2 28.♖xh7 ♘d7

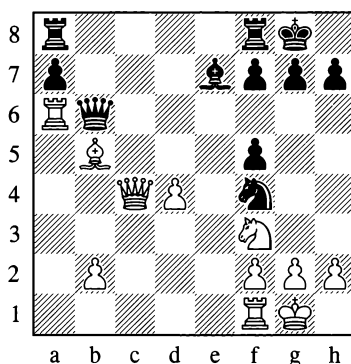
Black is very much alive. White needs to be precise and energetic not to lose immediately. She is a piece down after all.

## 203. Andrew Tang – Mikhail Kobalia

Warsaw (rapid) 2021



A key tenet of calculation is always to be wary of automatic moves. Black is a piece down and it is tempting to grab it back on f4: 20...♘xf4? 21.♘xf5 exf5 22.♖a6

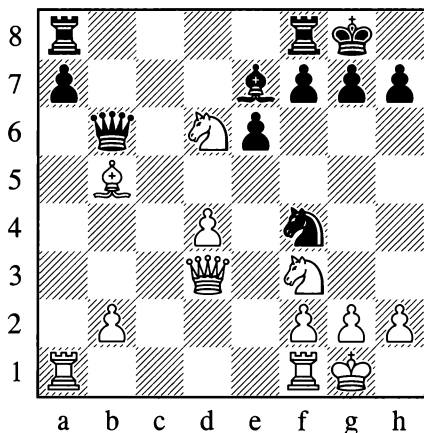


Material has been equalized, but White remains clearly better thanks to his activity. ♘f3-e5, g2-g3 and ♖b5-c6 are coming.

Black was slightly worse after 20...♘xd6? 21.♖a6! ♘xf4 22.♖xb6 axb6 23.♜e2. He held the game, but it would have been better to avoid this situation.

If you force yourself to search for candidates, it is not too hard to find the solution:

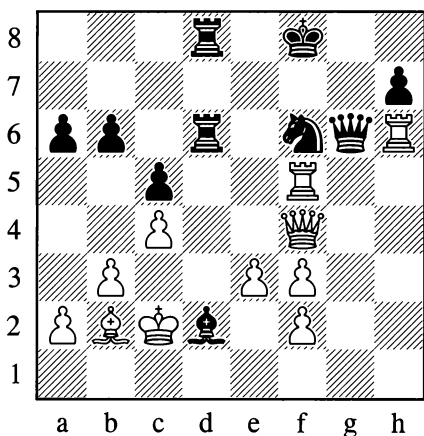
20...♙d3! 21.♚xd3 ♜xf4



Black takes on d6 next and is fine.

## 204. Sebastian Bogner – Zahar Efimenko

Germany 2021



It looks like Black is about to get crushed. For example, Black is mated after 30...♚g8 31.♞xf6†.

But what is it they say in the movies? The best defense is a good offense!

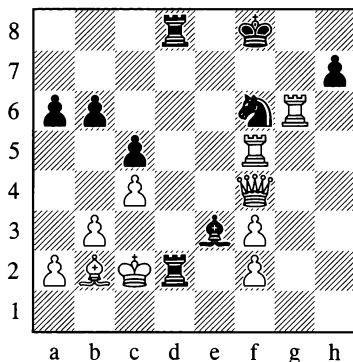
30...♙xe3!!

Black clears the d2-square. Suddenly, White's king is the one in danger!

31.♞xd6†

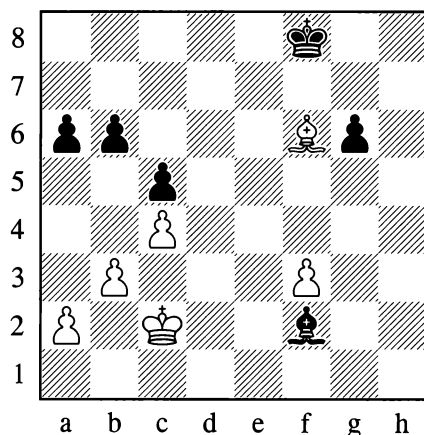
31.fxe3 ♚g2† and mate soon follows.

After 31.♞xg6 ♜d2†!



White is lucky not to be mated. An equal endgame arises after 32.♙b1 ♜d1† 33.♙c1 ♞xc1† 34.♙b2 ♙xf4! 35.♞xf6† ♙e7 36.♞xf4 hxg6 37.♙xc1 ♙e6.

31...♞xd6 32.♞xg6 hxg6 33.♞xf6† ♞xf6 34.♙xf6 ♙xf2

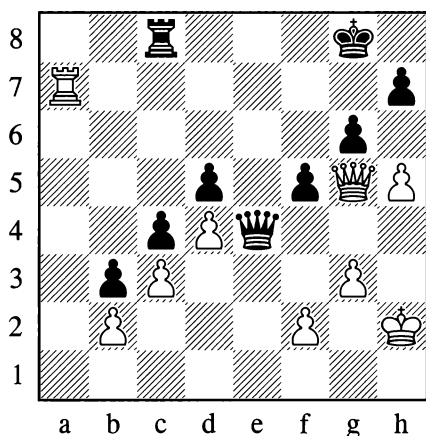


White kept pushing, but this was clearly drawn.



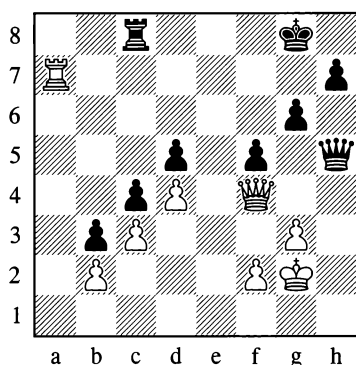
**205. Semen Grebeniuk – V. Varshini**

Sitges 2021



Black is facing massive threats around his king, and he cannot stop them. He can only look for counterplay, but it must be done in the right way.

36...♖e2? was played. It looks similar to 36...♖f3. But following 37.♗f4! White was able to defend f2, while keeping the queen on a reasonable square. Black was facing massive threats again. 37...♗xh5† 38.♕g2



White's king was safe enough and Black was promptly mated: 38...♗g4 39.♗h6 ♖e4† 40.♕h2 1-0

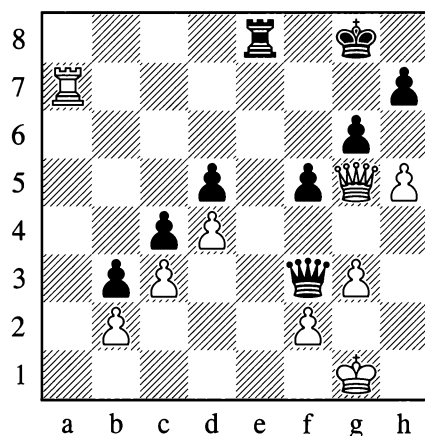
36...♗f3!

The right square. White cannot prevent a capture on f2 without becoming dreadfully passive.

37.♕g1

37.♗f4 ♖xf4! is equal.

37...♗e8!



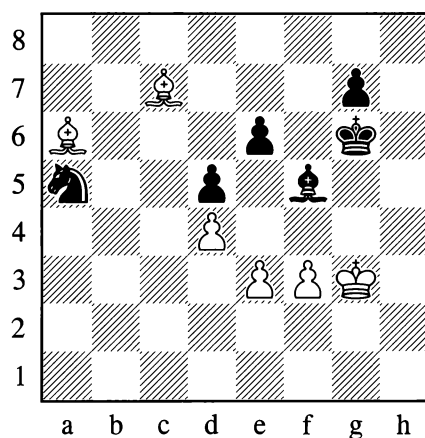
Black is just in time to make mating threats of his own.

38.♗e7 ♗xe7

Black is out of danger.

**206. Sebastian Bogner – Christian Seel**

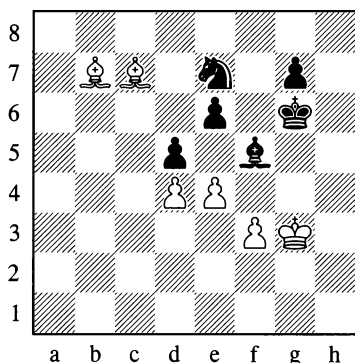
Germany 2020



This one was simple elimination. Play the move that does not lose a piece!

Black is lost after two of the available knight moves:

36...♖c6? was played. 37.♙b7 ♖e7 38.e4



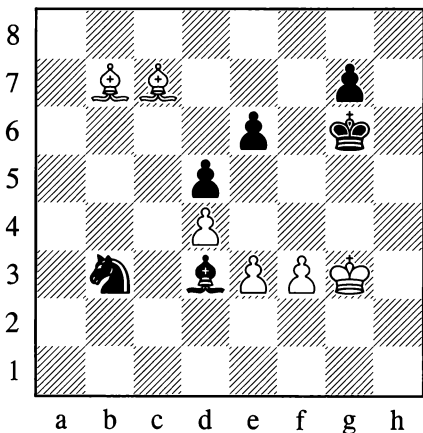
White won a piece, and the game. Amusingly, Black was able to trade off White's last pawn, but two bishops against a knight is a technical win. 38...dxe4 39.fxe4 ♖f7 40.exf5 ♖xf5+ 41.♖f4 ♖xd4 42.♖e5 ♖f5 43.♙c8 g6 44.♙xe6+, and White won in a few more moves.

36...♖c4? 37.♙xc4 dxc4 38.e4 also wins.

But Black is not lost after the third knight move:

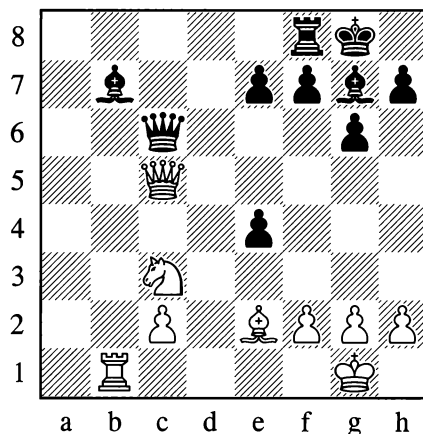
**36...♖b3! 37.♙b7 ♙d3**

Black is fine.



## 207. Mahitosh Dey – Cem Kaan Gokerkan

Plovdiv 2021



White is a pawn down and facing a menacing bishop pair. He should certainly lose under normal circumstances.

White played:

26.♙xe7? ♙a8

White was facing colossal threats and should lose.

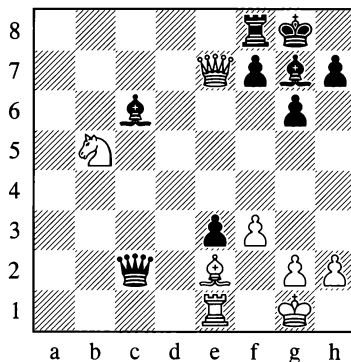
27.♖b5 e3!

An improvement on the game. By some miracle, White saved this lost position after 27...♙xc2.

28.f3

28.♙f3 exf2+ 29.♖f1 ♙xc2 30.♖a3 ♙c3 wins.

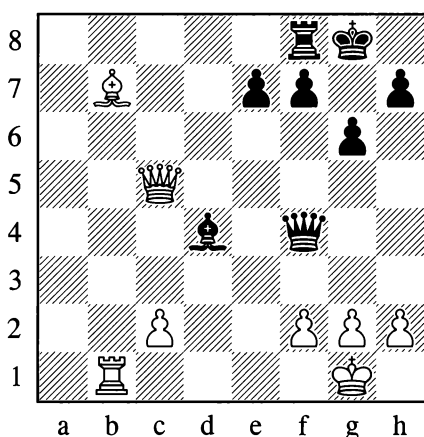
28...♙xc2 29.♙e1 ♙c6



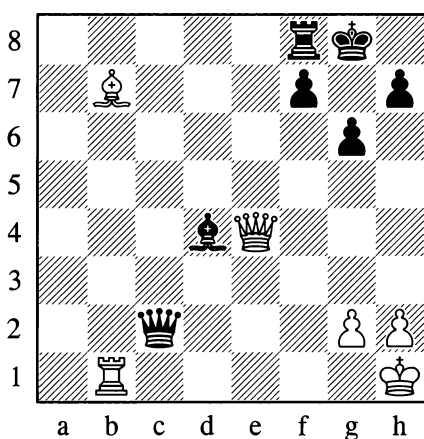
White is crushed. All the black pieces will be active once the rook joins the party.

But, as always, examine all checks and captures!

26. ♖xe4! ♜xe4 27. ♕f3! ♜f4 28. ♕xb7 ♕d4



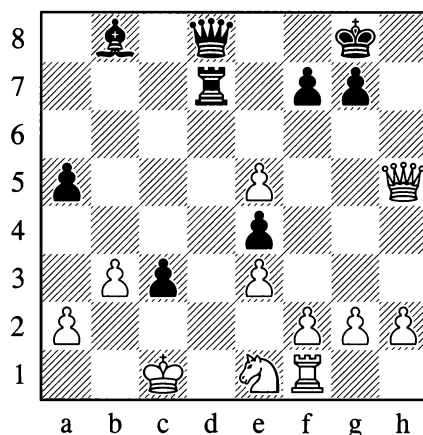
29. ♜xe7! ♜xf2† 30. ♖h1 ♜xc2 31. ♜e4



White has traded off some pawns and managed to end up just one pawn down, with no weaknesses and opposite-colored bishops. Black will push, but good defense should lead to a draw.

## 208. Michal Krasenkow – Marcel Kanarek

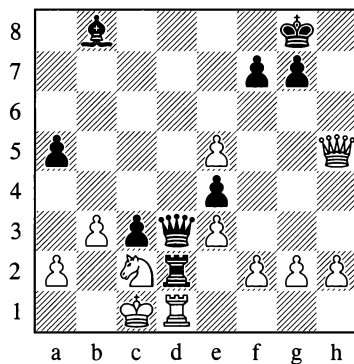
Warsaw (rapid) 2021



White is about to get demolished on the d-file, and he cannot stop it from happening.

This was shown by the game:

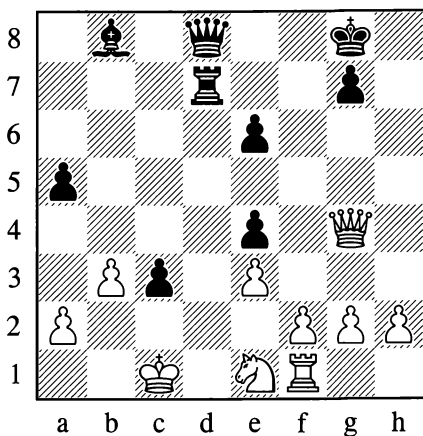
30. ♖c2? ♕d2 31. ♖d1 ♜d3



Unsurprisingly, White did not save the game from here: 32. ♖e1 ♜d5 33. ♖c2 ♕xe5 34. ♖d4? ♕d6 White resigned, 0–1. 35. ♜xd5 ♕a3† 36. ♖b1 ♕xd1† 37. ♖c2 ♜c1#

Instead, he needs to look for counterplay:

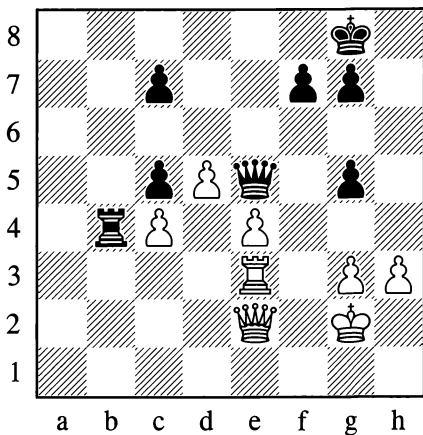
30.e6! fxe6 31. ♜g4



Black's king is too open to permit moves like ...♖d2 and ...♗d3 without allowing a perpetual. White is fine.

### 209. Martin Blahynka – Zbynek Hracek

Czech Republic 2022



This one is elimination again. Black cannot be allowed to give an unopposed check on b2.

The game continuation was:

36. ♖f1?

Black wins slowly after 36. ♗f3 ♖xc4.

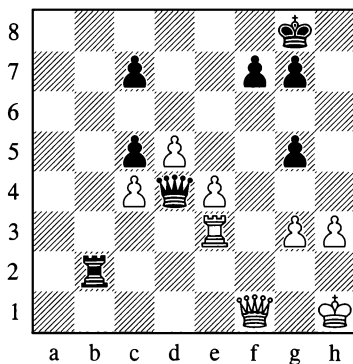
36... ♖b2†!

The game went 36...g6? 37. ♕h2? (37. ♗d3! ♖b2† 38. ♖e2 is equal) 37... ♗d4 38. ♖e2 ♗xc4, and Black eventually won.

37. ♕h1

37. ♖e2 ♗xe4† wins.

37... ♗d4



White is lost after:

38. ♗d3 ♗f6

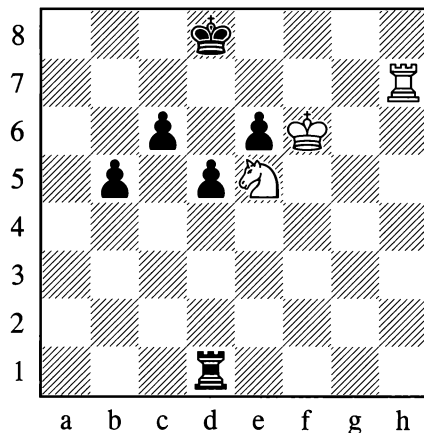
The right square is:

36. ♗d3!

White saves his c4-pawn and is ready for ♖e3-e2 next. He has it all under control.

### 210. Pavel Kolar – Radomir Caletka

Czech Republic 2021



Black is in serious danger. His pawns are merely providing cover for White's king, making it hard to avoid getting mated. He cannot give checks from behind. It is important to calculate well here.

Black chose:

62...♔c8?

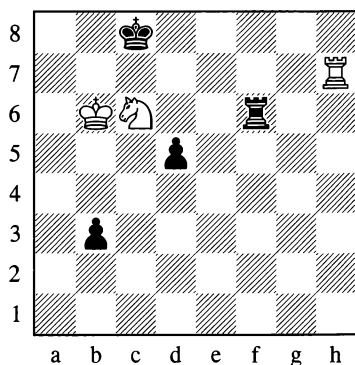
It is natural to try to run away, but it is only running closer to the danger zone. White can set up with ♕f6-e6-d6 and ♖e5-c6 and should be able to mate.

63.♕xe6 ♖f1

Black was mated in the game after: 63...b4

64.♕d6 b3 65.♖xc6 ♖g1 66.♖c7# 1-0

64.♖xc6 b4 65.♕d6 ♖f6† 66.♕c5 b3 67.♕b6



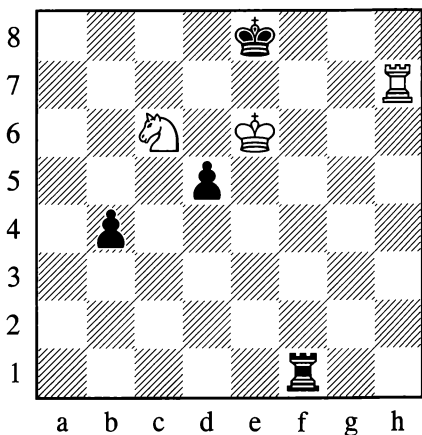
Black's pawns are his undoing. No stalemate tricks here. White wins.

Black needs to make sure the king can run towards the kingside:

62...♖f1†!

White's king will be much less secure on e6 than on d6.

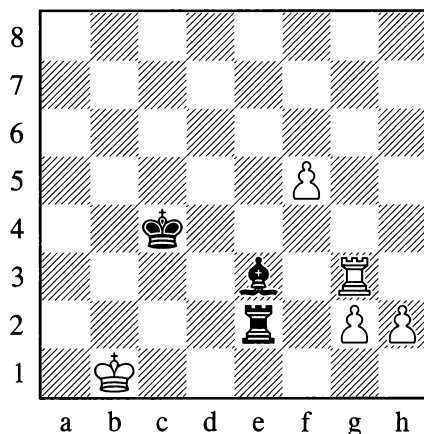
63.♕xe6 b4! 64.♖xc6† ♕e8!



The point, and the reason why 62...♖f1†! was important. Black cannot be mated by ♖h7-h8, and his king will escape to safety next.

## 211. Babak Jafarli – Daniel Dardha

Sitges 2021



This one I got wrong. If pawns are left, it is often much harder to defend rook against rook and bishop, or against rook and knight. Black was hoping to play ...♕f4 next, controlling the c7- and b8-squares, and making it hard to simultaneously keep the king off both b3 and c3.

55.♖g8?

I wanted this move. Apparently, it loses.

55...♕f4!!

This was a winner that I was not expecting. Suddenly, it is difficult to stop the king from landing on b3.

55...♕d4? was played. 56.h4 (56.f6! Pitch the pawns! All of them! As soon as possible! 56...♕xf6 57.♖g3 ♕d4 58.♖a3, and Black is only slightly better.) 56...♕b3 57.♖b8† ♕c3 58.♖g8 ♕e5 59.♖e8 ♖e1† 60.♕a2 ♕c2 61.♖c8† ♕c3 62.♖xc3† ♕xc3 63.h5 ♖e2† 0-1

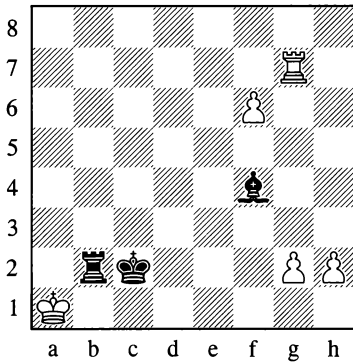
56.♖g7

56.g3 ♕b3 wins.

56...♔c3!

White will be mated as the bishop gradually gets close to the king's position.

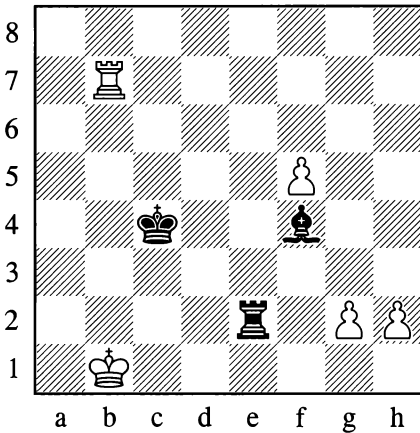
57.f6 ♖b2† 58.♕a1 ♕c2!



Case in point. Why does White not have a check on c7 here?

In order to keep the king off b3, White must play:

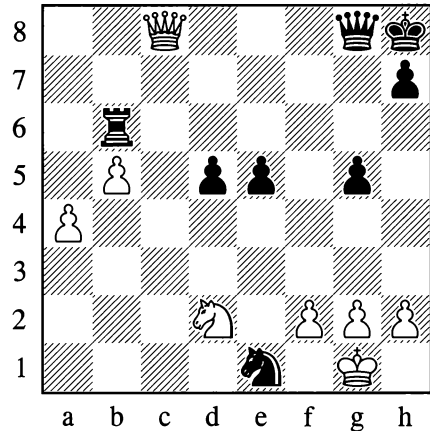
55.♖g7! ♕f4 56.♖b7!



White will suffer for 80 more moves but should hold.

## 212. David Navara – Anton Korobov

Czech Republic 2022



White is down a rook for a pawn. Indeed, after 36.♖c1?, White resigned before waiting for ...♕d3.

It will take a miracle to hold, but you have to believe:

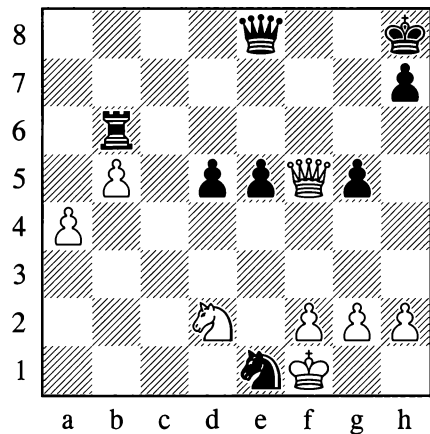
36.♖f5!

White threatens a perpetual check.

36...♖e8

White also draws against the alternative queen moves: 36...♖e6 37.♖f8† ♕g8 38.♖f5!, 36...♖g7 37.♖c8† ♕g8 38.♖f5! and 36...♖g6 37.♖xe5† ♕g8 38.♖xe1.

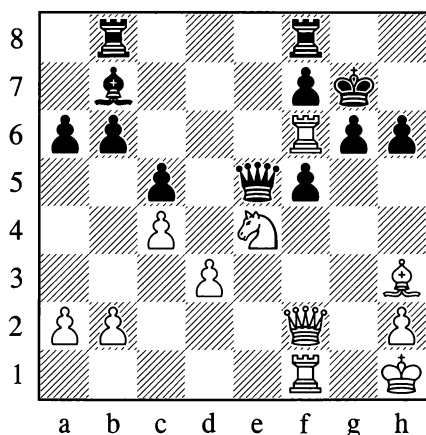
37.♕f1!



The knight is trapped, and the passed queenside pawns give sufficient play for the draw.

### 213. Florin Felecan – Frederick Rhine

Downers Grove 2001



In the game, White lost immediately with 1. ♖xf5 ♜xf6. White may as well have resigned here.

Indeed, his position looks hopeless. But examine all checks and captures!

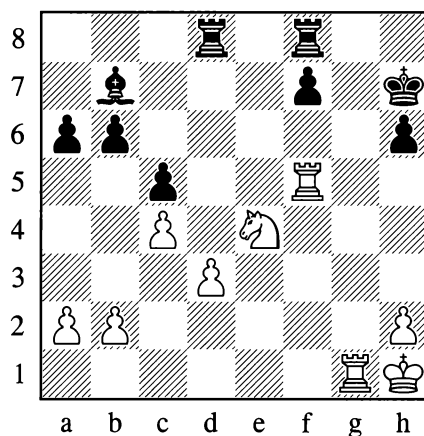
1. ♜xf5!! gxf5

1... ♜xf5 2. ♖xf5 gxf5 3. ♜1xf5 is equal.

2. ♜g1† ♔h7 3. ♖xf5† ♜xf5

Not 3... ♔h8 4. ♜xh6#.

4. ♜xf5 ♜bd8



White is fine in this ending, but he needs one more important move:

5. ♜g1!

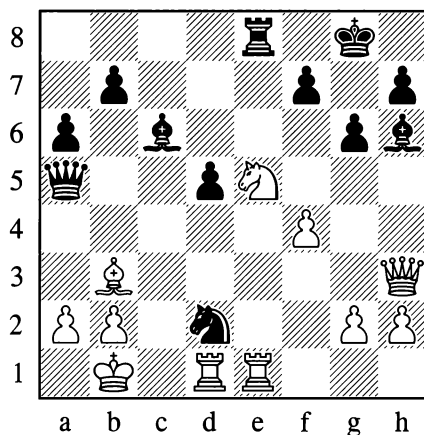
Not recommended is 5. ♜g3? ♜xd3, winning.

5... ♔g7 6. ♜g1† ♔h7

With equality.

### 214. Velimir Ivic – Anton Korobov

Warsaw (rapid) 2021



White's king is coming under heavy fire. But with accurate play, he should be at least fine.

White played:

24. ♔a1?

Natural as it may be to tuck the king away in the corner, this lost quickly. The point is that following:

24...♔xf4!

The knight is kicked from e5, and ...♖xb3 will come with check, leaving the rook on e1 free for the taking.

25.♖xc6 ♖xb3† 26.♗b1

26.♜xb3 ♜xe1! 27.♖b4 ♜e2 wins.

26...♖d2† 27.♗a1 ♜xe1 28.♜c8† ♗g7 0–1

Black even has to be precise to maintain the balance after:

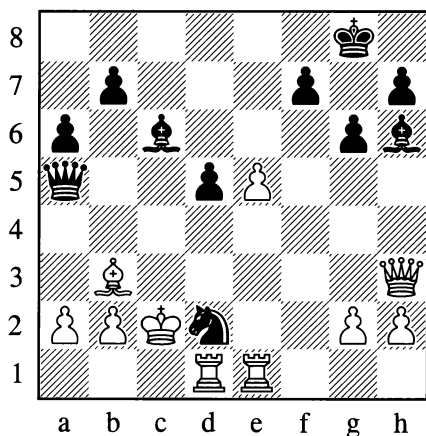
24.♗c2! ♜xe5

24...♔xf4 25.♖xc6 It is very important that ...♖b3 is not check! White wins here.

Now 25.♜xe5 is possible and the engine reads equal, but after 25...♔xf4 26.♜e2 ♖xb3 27.♖xb3, I would take Black in practice.

25.fxe5

This is a cleaner route to equality.



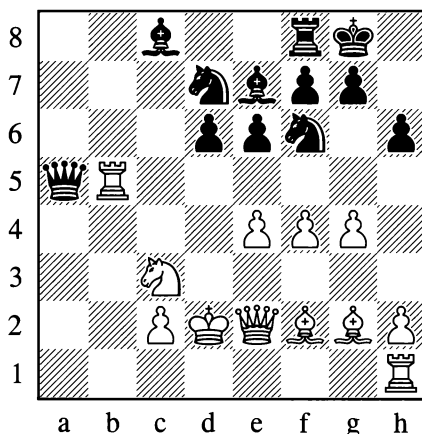
Black is two exchanges down. He needs to be precise not to lose on the spot.

25...♜c5† 26.♜c3 ♜f2 27.♜g3

White makes a draw.

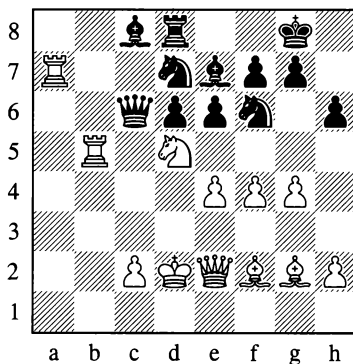
## 215. Parham Maghsoodloo – Alexey Sarana

Belgrade 2022



Black is an exchange down and facing some impressive activity. He needs to be accurate.

22...♜c7? was played in the game. The first rule of any exchange sacrifice is to always ask: *how good are the rooks?* As soon as White's rook became active, the compensation was insufficient: 23.♜a1! ♖d8 24.♜a7 ♜c6 25.♖d5!



Black resigned.

White is also much better after 22...♜a3 23.♜b3 ♜a5 24.♜b5 ♜a8 25.♜a4!.

22...♜a8!

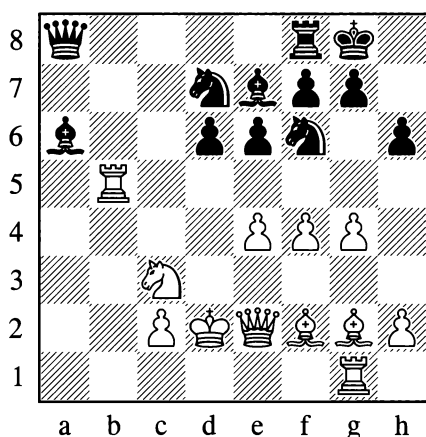
I knew this move already before solving the problem, but it is satisfying all the same.



Black prevents both ♖h1-a1 and e4-e5, and can look for ...♙b7 or ...♙a6 next. He has good counterplay.

### 23. ♖g1 ♙a6

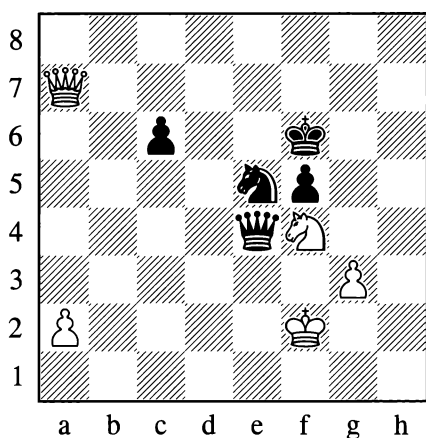
23...♙b7 is okay too.



Black gets his material back and should be at least fine.

### 216. Stefan Fruebing – Maximilian Berchtenbreiter

Germany 2022



White looks to be in a bad way. His king is coming under fire, while Black's is totally safe.

### 47. ♔g1?

This was played in the game, and now White should be mated.

### 47... ♖g4!

Black is threatening mate on e1, and since the king went to g1 instead of f1, ♖f4-e2 is not there to save the day.

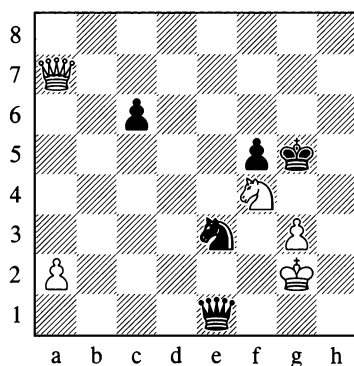
### 48. ♖h5†

48.♔f1 ♖f3† 49.♔e1 ♖xg3† wins.

### 48... ♔g5 49. ♖f4

Now White was promptly mated.

### 49... ♖e1† 50. ♔g2 ♖e3†



### 51. ♔h2

51.♔f3 ♖f1† 52.♔xe3 ♖g1† wins.

### 51... ♖f2† 52. ♔h3 ♖f1† 53. ♔h2 ♖g4#

White can hold by coordinating his pieces better:

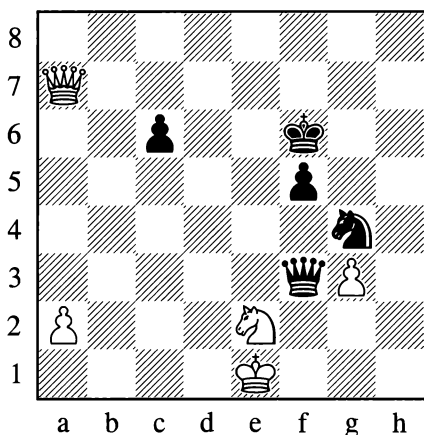
### 47. ♔f1!

An important move. The queen is coming back to f2. It is generally a good idea to put the king on the opposite-colored square to the knight (provided it is not illegally under a direct attack!).

### 47... ♖g4 48. ♖e2!

It is good that this move is possible! Putting the king on f1 helps a lot. Black has nothing here.

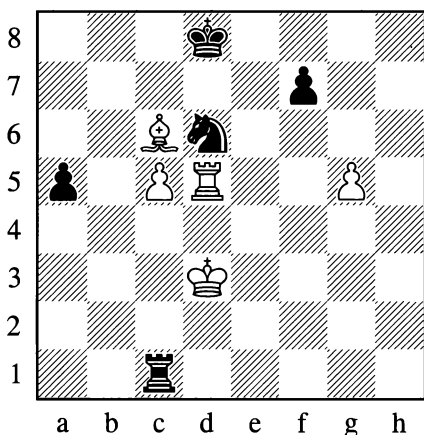
### 48... ♖f3† 49. ♔e1



White is holding.

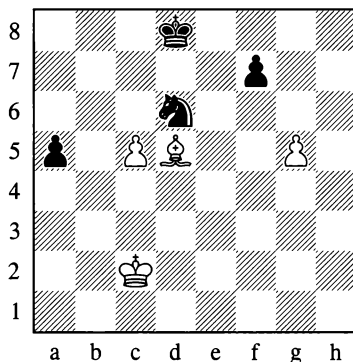
## 217. Vladislav Artemiev – Hikaru Nakamura

Internet 2021



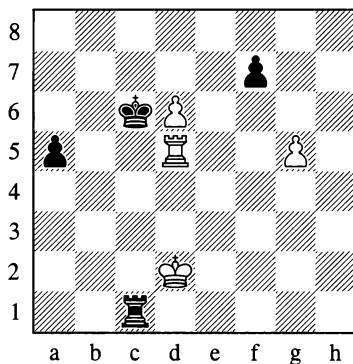
Black is facing a seemingly deadly pin, but a simple candidate move can save the day. Rapid chess tends to lead to many missed defensive chances. Nakamura would surely have found the right move with a thirty-second increment.

He played 54...Rd1+? 55.♔c2 ♖xd5 56.♕xd5.



Black saved his piece, but now f7 dropped and the split passed pawns were decisive: 56...♖f5 57.♕xf7 ♔c7 58.♕e8 ♔d8 59.♕a4 ♖d4+ 60.♔c3 ♖e6 61.g6 ♖xc5 62.g7 ♖e4+ 63.♔d4 ♖f6 64.♔e5 ♔e7 65.♕b3 a4 66.♕a2 1-0

Also bad is: 54...♔c7? 55.cxd6+ ♔xc6 56.♔d2!



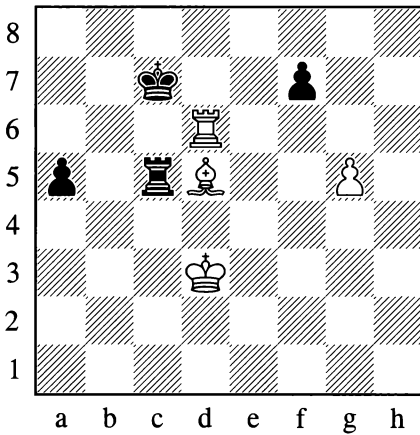
The d-pawn is coming. White wins.

Simple candidates. Get out of the pin!

54...♔c8! 55.♖xd6 ♖xc5

Black can take g5 next.

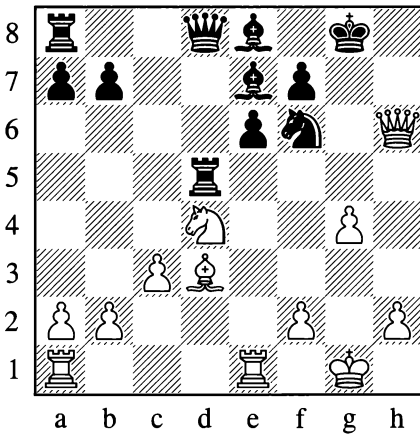
56.♕d5 ♔c7!



Black holds the draw.

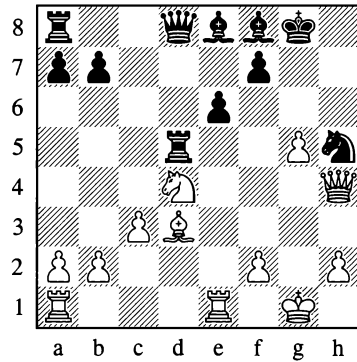
### 218. Petr Kostenko – Aslan Aitbayev

Almaty 2020



White has given up a piece for the attack, but it looks like it will fall short to ...♔f8 next.

20.g5?, as played, fell right into Black's main idea. 20...♔f8! 21.♖h4 ♘h5



Black remained a piece up and his king was safe. He won after 22.f4 ♖xd4 23.♔h7† ♘h7 24.♖h5† ♔g8 25.cxd4 ♖xd4† 26.♔g2 ♖c8 27.♖e2 ♖xf4 28.♔h3 ♖c4 0–1.

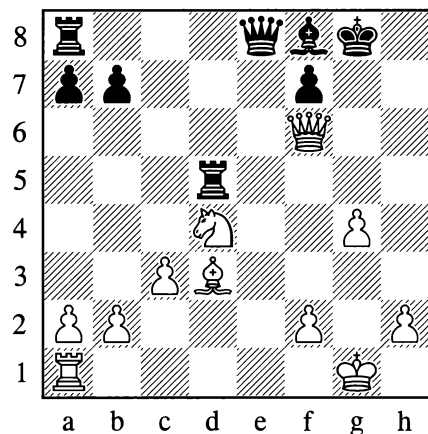
Now is not the time to be shy:

### 20.♖xe6! ♔f8

Black should prefer ...♖xd4, allowing a draw with ♖h6-g5-h6 etc. But the text was probably the move White feared.

20...fxe6? 21.♘xe6 ♔f7 22.♖e1 is curtains.

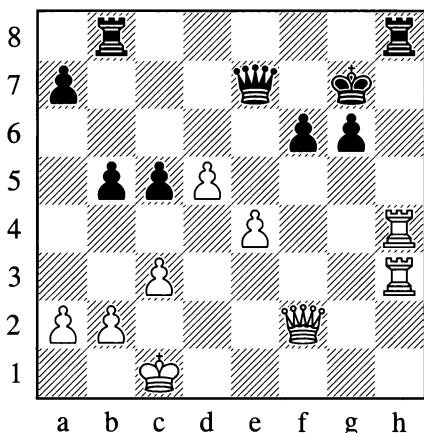
### 21.♖xe8! ♖xe8 22.♖xf6



White has a decisive material advantage.

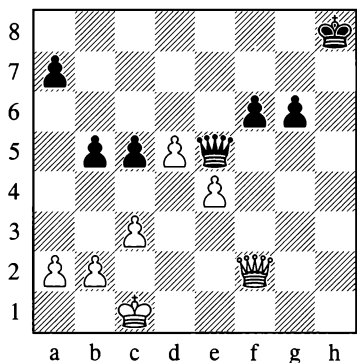
**219. Adam Frank – Daniel Sorm**

Czech Republic 2021



Black is facing serious pressure around his king. He would love to trade some pieces. But taking on h4 allows White to dominate the open h-file and probably give mate.

The game continued 29...♖e5? 30.♖xh8 ♖xh8 31.♖xh8 ♗xh8.



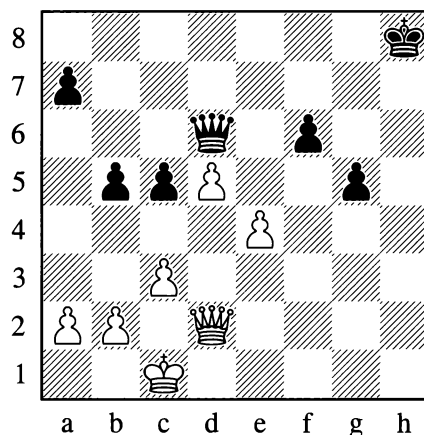
A draw was agreed after 32.♖xc5? ♖f4+! 33.♗d1 ♖f1+ 34.♗d2 ♖g2+ 35.♗c1 ♖f1+ 36.♗d2 ½-½. But White could have won with 32.♖d2! ♖xe4 33.d6 ♖h1+ 34.♖d1 ♖a8 35.♖e2.

Black could have forced the rooks off with:

**29...g5!**

Black should be fine.

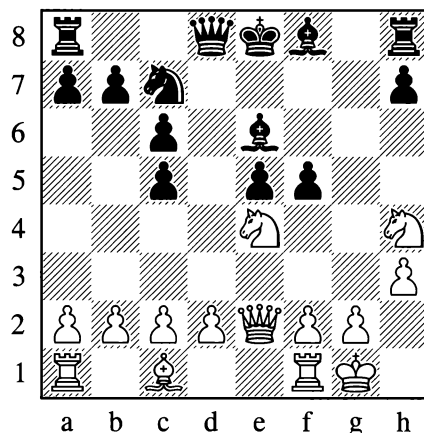
30.♖xh8 ♖xh8 31.♖xh8 ♗xh8 32.♖d2 ♖d6!



A final important move. Black secures the d5-pawn, is ready to bring his king back to the center and the g-pawn is coming. He is surely not worse.

**220. Mukhiddin Madaminov – Shamsiddin Vokhidov**

Internet 2021

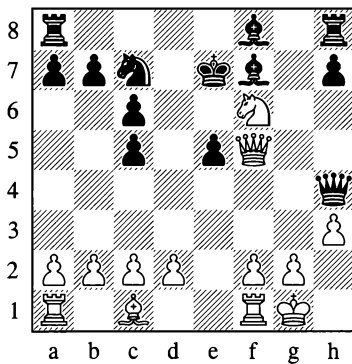


It looks like White is about to lose a piece. He can avoid such a fate if he is careful.

White has many plausible options, but only one gives him a playable game:

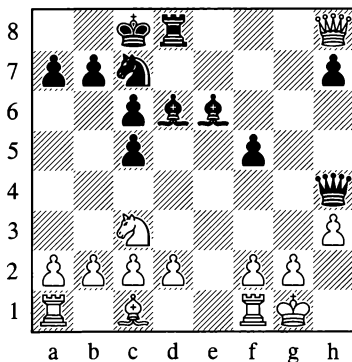
Black is slightly better with the two bishops after: 13. ♖xf5 ♙xf5 14. ♗h5† ♙g6 15. ♗xe5† ♗e7 16. ♗xh8 ♗xe4 17. d3 ♗d4 18. ♗xd4 cxd4 19. ♙d2 ♖d7

13. ♗h5†? was played in the game. It is natural, but Black was winning in cold-blooded style. 13... ♙f7! 14. ♗xf5 ♗xh4! 15. ♖f6† ♖e7!



Black's king was safe enough and the extra piece counted. 16. d4!? ♙e6! 17. ♗xe5 ♗xd4! This may have been the move White missed. 18. ♗xc7† ♖xf6, and Black later won.

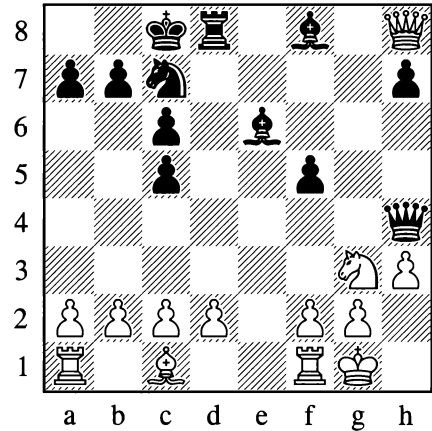
13. ♖c3? is also a mistake, as after: 13... ♗xh4 14. ♗xe5 0–0–0 15. ♗xh8 ♙d6



White loses his queen. The knight on c3 blocks her escape. 16. ♗g7 ♙g8 Black wins.

Her escape is not blocked after:

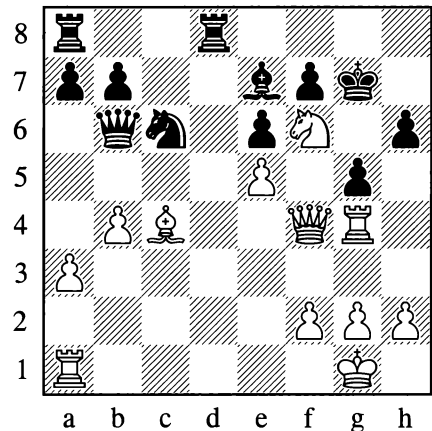
13. ♖g3! ♗xh4 14. ♗xe5 0–0–0 15. ♗xh8



Black has good compensation for the exchange. I would prefer his side of the board, but the game goes on.

## 221. Shakhriyar Mamedyarov – Wesley So

St. Louis 2021



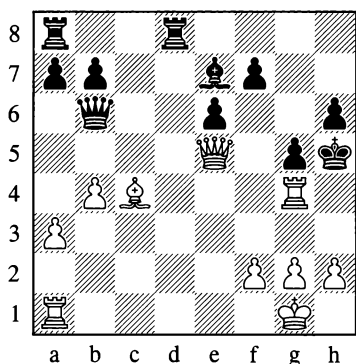
White is threatening to take on g5, with mate to follow. Black is fine if he is precise.

The following tries are not precise!

22... ♗d4 fails to the main idea: 23. ♙xg5† ♖h8 24. ♙g8† ♙xg8 25. ♗xh6#

Wesley So played 22...♖h8?. He eventually saved the game after 23.h4!?, even though White was much better. Black would have been in even worse trouble against best play: 23.b5! ♜a5 (23...♜xe5 24.♜h5† wins) 24.♙e2 ♜ad8 25.h4, and White is winning.

22...♜xe5? is tempting but poor. White escapes with a check on h5 and remains a piece up. 23.♜h5† ♜g6 24.♙xe5 ♜xh5



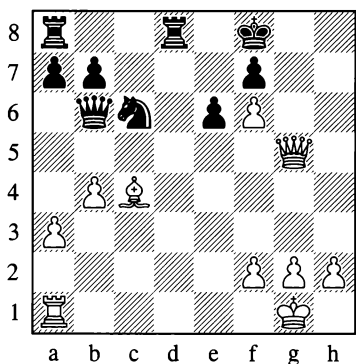
Black has to try this, but unsurprisingly he will be mated after: 25.♙g7!! ♜xg4 26.♙xf7

Black should get out of the way pre-emptively:

**22...♜f8! 23.h4**

23.♜h7† ♜g8 24.♜f6† ♜f8 merely repeats.

23.♙xg5 looks scary: 23...hxg5 24.♙xg5 ♙xf6 25.exf6

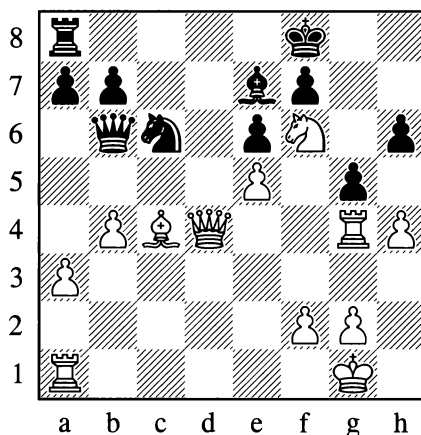


In fact, Black is winning. His king can run to the queenside, and White does not even have a threat: 25...♙d4! 26.♙g7† ♜e8 27.♙g8† ♜d7 28.♙xf7† ♜c8 Black wins.

**23...♙d4!**

This gets the pieces off and Black is good to go.

**24.♙xd4**



**24...♙xd4!**

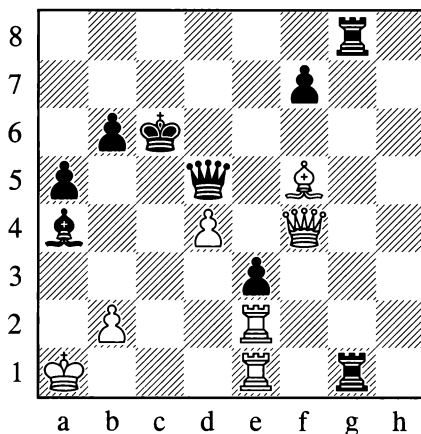
24...♜xd4? 25.♜d7† would be regrettable.

**25.♙xd4 ♜xd4**

The game is equal.

## 222. Georg Seul – Alexander Donchenko

Biel 2021



This one took me some time to solve, but ultimately the first move I considered turned out to be right. Black cannot stop the bishop from coming to e4. He should understand that this is coming and do his best to coordinate his pieces.

**65...♖c4!!**

Black played:

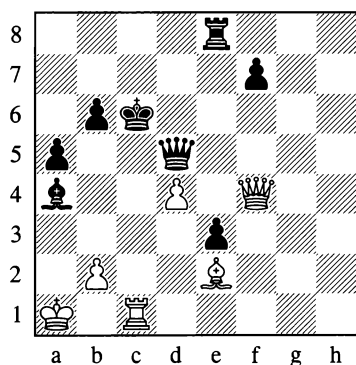
**65...♖xe1?**

It is natural to try to stop ♗f5-e4, but giving White the freedom to bring his rook to c1 is even worse.

**66.♖xe1 ♖e8 67.♗g4!**

After 67.♖c1†?, the game was equal. White went on to win, nonetheless.

**67...♖c4 68.♗e2 ♖d5 69.♖c1†**



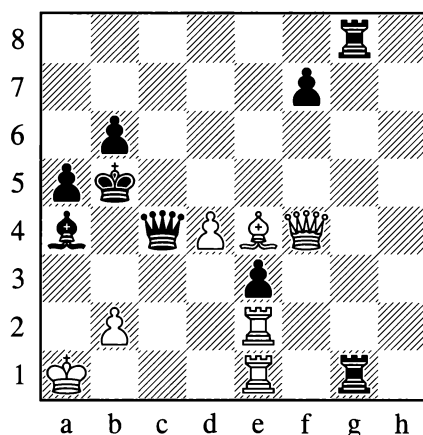
The king's palace is too draughty. White is winning.

**66.♗e4†**

66.♖xe3 ♗b3 gives sufficient counterplay to equalize.

66.d5† ♗c5 is also roughly equal. The king is safe in the middle of the board. There is no ♖e1-c1. 67.♖c7† does not offer much against Black's well-coordinated pieces.

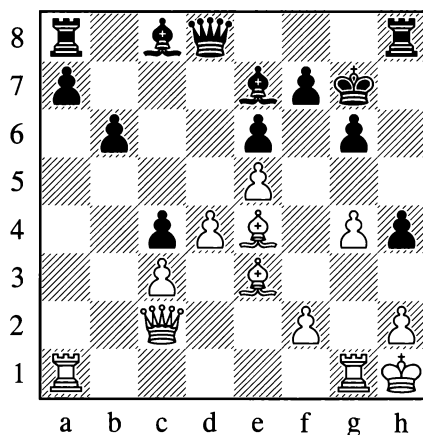
**66...♗b5**



Black is safe enough here. White is missing ♖f4-c7.

## 223. Savo Vujovic – Dragutin Perazic

Podgorica 2021



It seems obvious Black has to move the rook, but does he?

He moved it in the game. The difference in activity was decisive: 22...♖b8? 23.♖xa7 Black could do nothing about f4-f5: 23...b5 24.f4 g5 25.f5 f6 26.♗xg5 fxg5 27.f6† ♗h6 28.fxe7 ♖b6 29.e8=♖ 1-0

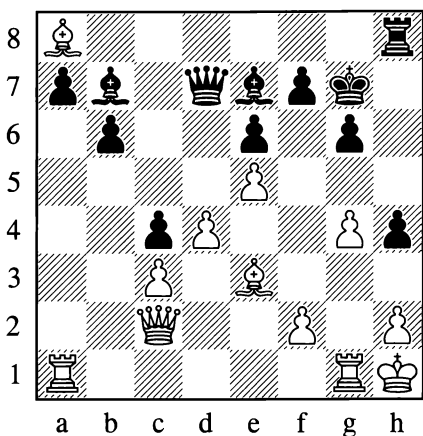
Similarly, f4-f5 is coming after 22...♗d7?. Black is in bad shape.

A better path for the c8-bishop is enabled by:

**22...♖d7! 23.♙xa8**

White has compensation for his missing pawn after 23.f4 ♙b7, but the game goes on. Black has a pawn for his suffering and does not let White's rook into a7.

**23...♙b7†!**



The point.

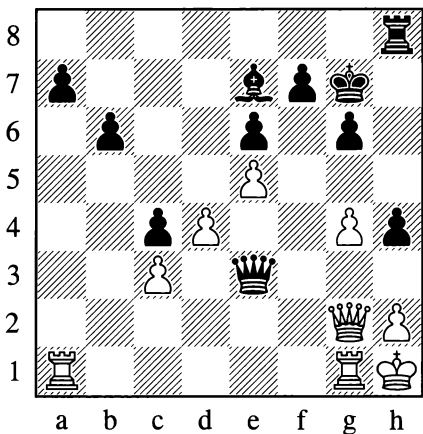
**24.♙b7 ♖xb7†**

White lacks a good way to defend the long diagonal.

**25.f3**

25.♙g2? h3 wins for Black.

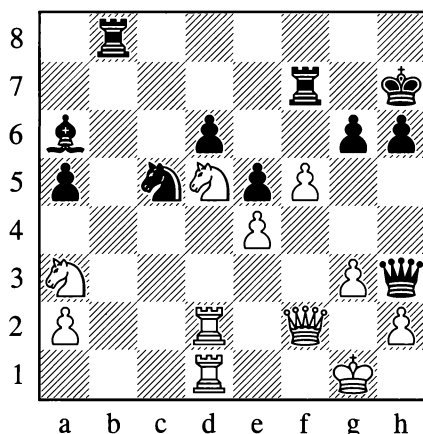
**25...♖xf3† 26.♖g2 ♖xe3**



Black is fine here. He has counterplay with ...h4-h3 coming next, and two good pawns for the exchange.

## 224. Mateusz Dubinski – Anatoly Moskvina

Pardubice 2021



White may have overvalued his d5-knight. It is indeed a fantastic piece, but the rest of his position is awful! He should be very careful not to lose immediately.

**37.fxg6†!**

White is demolished after 37.♖e3 gxf5 38.exf5 ♖xf5.

**37...♙xg6**

Now White played:

38.♙f4†?

Seeking counterplay. But the closed f-file meant that Black was perfectly safe and a healthy piece up.

38...exf4 39.♙xd6† ♙h7 40.e5

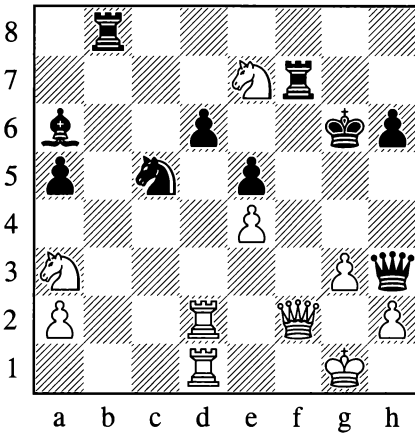
Taking on c5 would have led to a prompt mate after ...f4xg3.

40...♙b8 41.♖xc5 fxg3 42.♖c2† ♙h8 43.♙f6 ♙xf6 44.exf6 gxh2† 45.♖xh2 ♙g8†  
0-1

The counterplay White needs would have been given by:



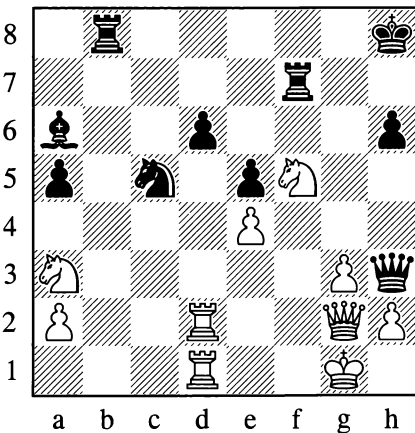
38. ♖e7+!!



38...♔g7

38...♖xe7? is not possible: 39. ♖xd6+! ♔h7  
40. ♖xc5, threatening ♖d6xh6+, is good for White.

39. ♖f5+ ♔h8 40. ♖g2!



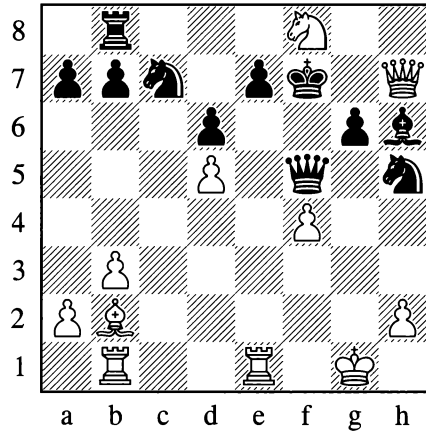
The final tough move. Queens come off and White will crash through on d6.

40...♖xc5 41. ♔xg2 ♖xe4 42. ♖xd6! ♖xd6  
43. ♖xd6

With an equal position.

## 225. Dorian Rogozenco – Alexander Markgraf

Germany 2021



Black does not have many candidate moves to consider. But it is still not an easy position!

The move played was:

25...♔g7?

This was tempting but poor.

26. ♔xg7 ♖g4+

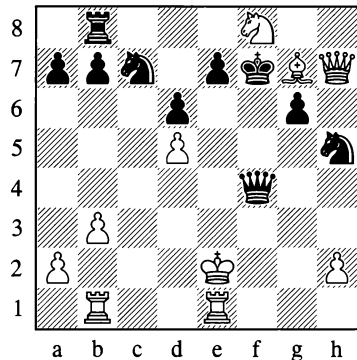
26...♖xg7 27. ♖xe7+! wins.

27. ♔h1 ♖f3+ 28. ♔g1 ♖g4+ 29. ♔f2!

White did not need to agree a draw here!

29. ♔h1? ♖f3+ ½–½

29...♖xf4+ 30. ♔e2



Black does not have a perpetual anymore, as the bishop on g7 is relevant. It will control d4 or it will block a check with a check.

30...♖g4† 31.♔d2

Case in point: Black lacks a check on d4.

31...♖f4† 32.♔d3 ♖f3† 33.♔c4 ♖xd5†  
34.♔c3

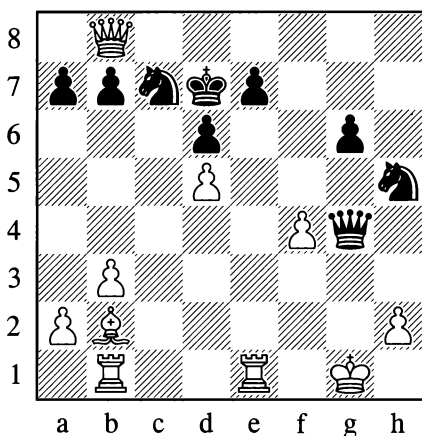
The king will be safe on a1. White wins.

Always examine all checks and captures:

25...♔xf8! 26.♖xh6†

26.♖xe7? ♔g8 Now who is attacking?  
Black wins.

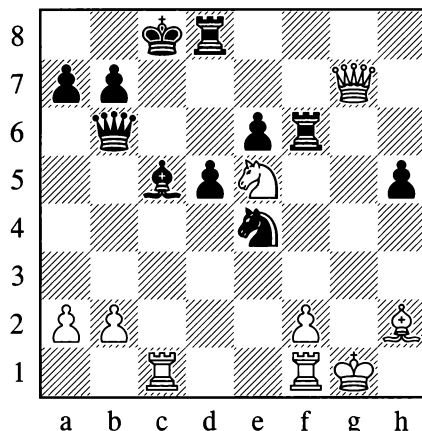
26...♔e8 27.♖h8† ♔d7 28.♖xb8 ♖g4†



The game ends with a perpetual check.

## 226. Maxime Vachier-Lagrave – Ian Nepomniachtchi

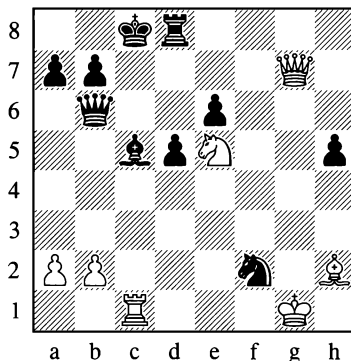
Paris 2021



I had seen a clip of this game on Twitter before solving the exercise, so I knew what to avoid!

24...♖xf2!

24...♖xf2? fell into a gorgeous trap. 25.♖xf2 ♖xf2 looked very tempting, but then came a Vachier-Lagrave special:

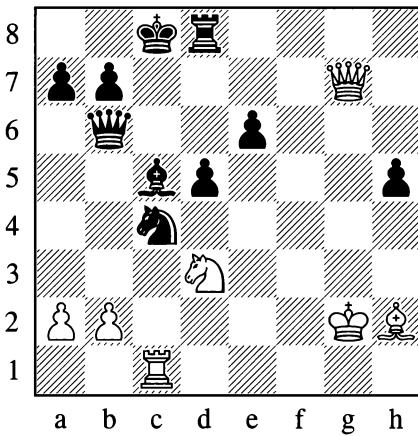


26.♖d7!! Black resigned. 1–0

25.♔g2 ♖e4!

Black has enough counterplay. It helps that White cannot take the rook on f6: 26.♖xf6? ♖xb2†! wins.

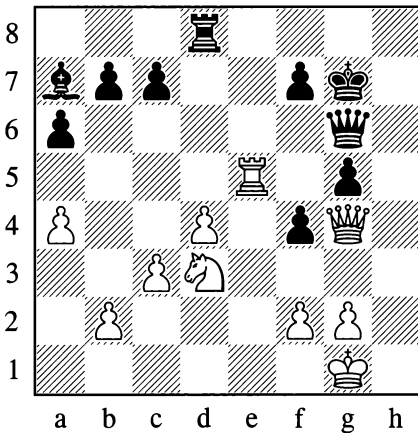
26. ♖d3 ♜xf1! 27. ♕xf1 ♜d2†! 28. ♔g2 ♜c4!



With an unclear position. This is a hard defensive sequence to find.

## 227. Leinier Dominguez Perez – Eric Hansen

Internet 2021



Black looks lost due to the significant difference in activity. In such situations, look for desperate moves; and remember, always examine all checks and captures!

32... ♜xd3!

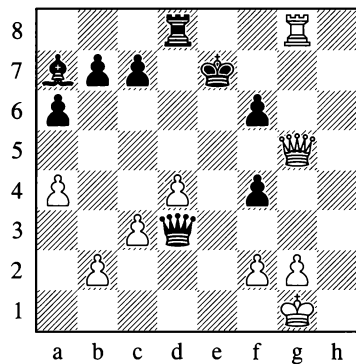
This move looks suicidal, but Black can just hang on.

32...f6? was too cooperative. Dominguez later won with no further trouble after 33. ♜e7† ♕f8 34. ♜xc7. 34... ♜xd3 was not possible due to 35. ♜h5!.

33. ♜xg5†

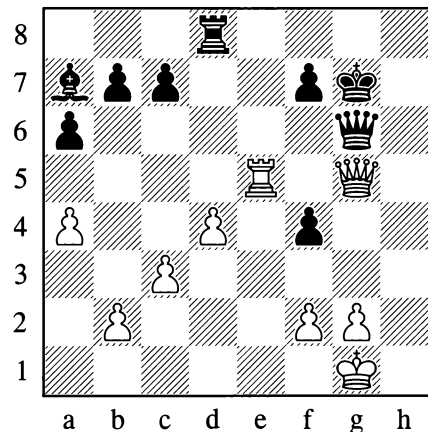
This was presumably the reason Hansen did not take the knight.

Black is safe enough after: 33. ♜xg5† ♕f8! 34. ♜g8† ♕e7 35. ♜g5† f6



36. ♜g7† (36. ♜g7† is also equal after 36... ♕e6 37. ♜g4† ♕d6 38. ♜xf4† ♕e6) 36... ♕e6 37. ♜xd8 ♜d1† 38. ♕h2 ♜h5†, with perpetual check.

33... ♜g6!

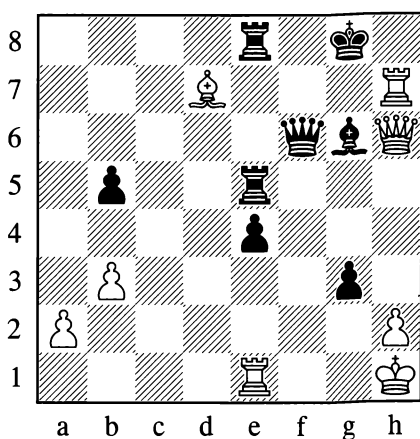


The point. Black's king has a good square on g7. When the rook is taken, perpetual check will follow.

34. ♖xd8 ♜b1† 35. ♔h2 ♜h7† 36. ♔g1 ♜b1  
Draw.

## 228. Deimante Daulyte-Cornette – Tanmay Chopra

Sitges 2021



The position is a mess. It is hard to use general rules to help find the best moves in irrational situations. Still, even here, examining all checks and captures would have done White a favor.

45. ♖h8†!

White is mated after 45. ♙xe8? ♜f3† 46. ♔g1 ♜f2† 47. ♔h1 g2#.

45... ♔f7

Now, the very tempting but poor move played was:

46. ♙xe8?

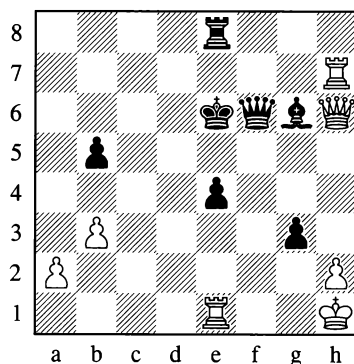
Black's king could escape via the e6-square.

46... ♙xe8 47. ♖h7† ♔g8 48. ♖h8† ♔f7 49. ♖h7†

Black repeated moves here with 49... ♔g8 50. ♖h8† ½–½.

He should have continued with:

49... ♔e6!



Black is safe enough. The twin threats of ... ♙xh7 and ... ♜f3 are decisive.

50. hxg3 ♙xh7! 51. ♜xh7 ♖h8

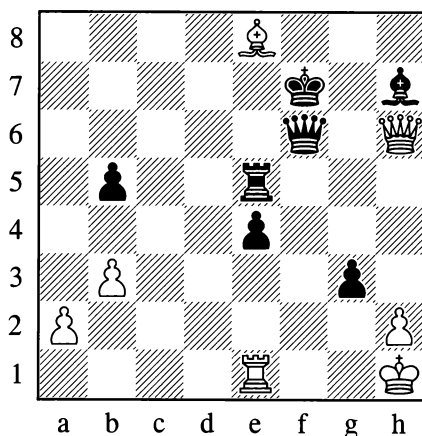
Black wins.

White should have played:

46. ♖h7†!

This is the key point. Again, checks and captures!

46... ♙xh7 47. ♙xe8†!



Only now. Black has been forced to capture the rook on h7 and not to escape with ... ♔e6.

47... ♖xe8

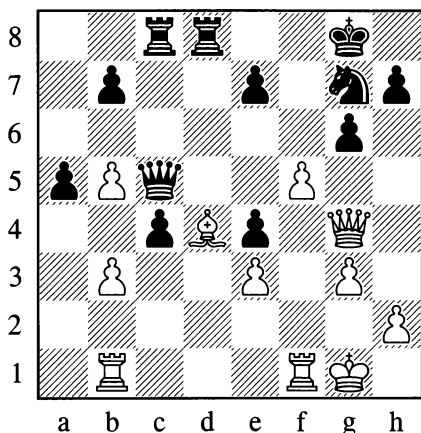
47... ♔e6? loses to 48. ♙d7†.

48. ♖xh7† ♔f8 49. ♖h3

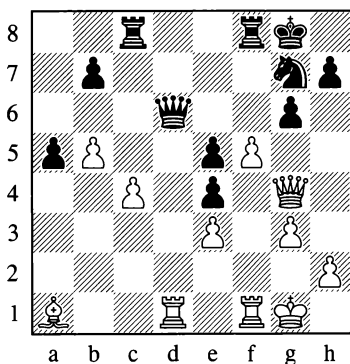
White should survive. 49. hxg3 is fine too.

## 229. Zahar Efimenko – Loek van Wely

Germany 2019



26... ♖d6? was played. Black was only one pawn up. White simply took back the pawn and continued his vicious attack with equal material: 27. bxc4! e5 28. ♕a1 ♖f8 29. ♖bd1



Unsurprisingly, Black was unable to save the game.

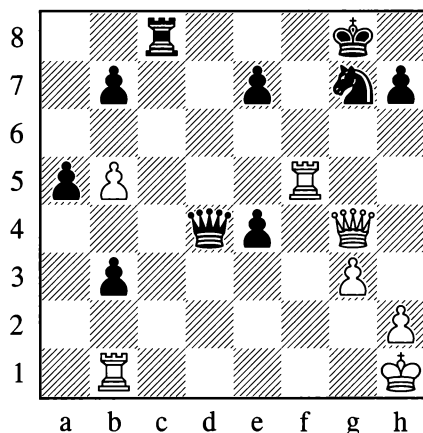
Black should realize here that his position is critical, and he has to do something direct:

26... ♖xd4! 27. exd4 ♖xd4† 28. ♔h1

It is easy to make it here and stop calculating, thinking Black is out of steam and the attack

is coming. But how serious are White's threats, really?

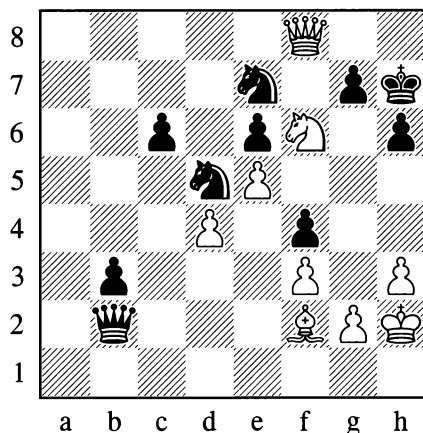
28... gxf5! 29. ♖xf5 cxb3!



White has no relevant checks and the knight on g7 keeps the king safe. The queenside pawn mass is starting to look threatening. Black is fine.

## 230. Adam Kozak – Pawel Teclaf

Warsaw (rapid) 2021



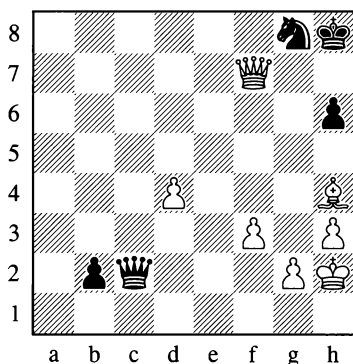
Black is facing a vicious attack. But with good calculation, he should be fine.

43... ♔g6 loses quickly to 44. ♖e8† ♔f5 45. ♖h5† g5 46. ♕e8, and mate comes on d6.

43...gxf6?

This was played in the game. Black should lose. But, by some strange chance, he ended up winning!

44.♖f7+ ♜h8 45.exf6 ♘xf6 46.♗xf6+ ♔g8  
47.♗xe6+ ♔f8 48.♙h4 ♘g8 49.♗xc6 ♖c2  
50.♗d6+ ♔g7 51.♗e5+ ♔h7 52.♗xf4 b2  
53.♗f7+ ♔h8



White played a fantastic game to this point and only needed one more good move.

54.♙f6+?

Mate was coming after 54.♙g3!

54...♘xf6 55.♗xf6+ ♔g8

White should have had a perpetual here, but he even ended up losing.

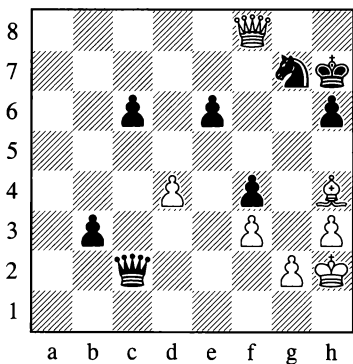
Black would have saved the game with:

43...♘xf6!

Black can be happy that he did not find the best move, given he eventually won!

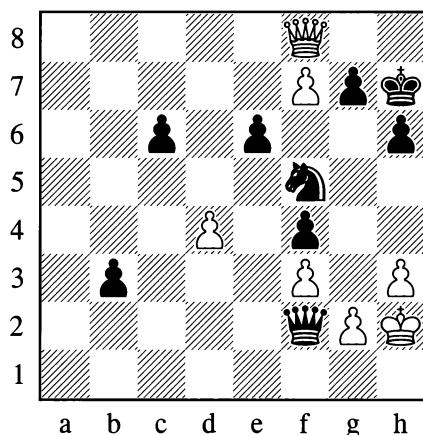
44.exf6 ♘f5! 45.f7

After 45.fxg7 ♘xg7! 46.♙h4 ♖c2!



Black's queen gets back to g6. His king will be safe enough and the b-pawn gives plenty of counterplay. 47.♙f6 ♗g6 is equal.

45...♗xf2!



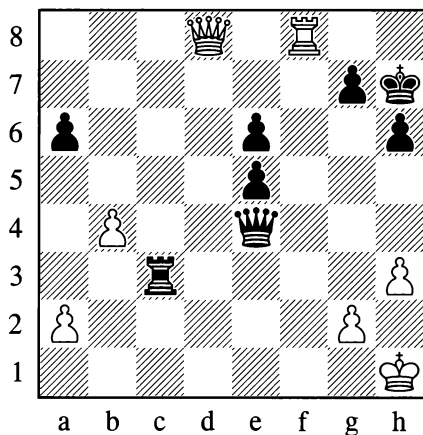
The point. Black is in time to make a perpetual.

46.♗g8+ ♔g6 47.f8=♖ ♗g3+

Drawing.

## 231. Nail Bashirli – Bharath Subramaniyam

Plovdiv 2021

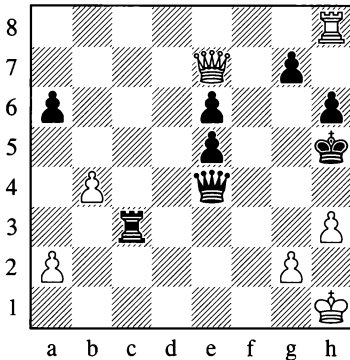


The game saw:

35. ♖h8?

White cannot mate, and he will soon regret losing control of the f4-square.

35... ♖g6 36. ♖e8† ♖g5 37. ♖e7† ♖h5!



Black is winning. It is a shame that White cannot play ♖h1-h2 anymore, since ... ♖f4† leads to mate. He needed his rook to remain on f8.

38. ♖f7†

Not 38. ♖xg7 ♖xh3† 39. ♖g1 ♖e1#.

38...g6 39. ♖h2 ♖c2

39... ♖f4† would have forced a totally winning endgame.

40. ♖f1 ♖f4† 41. ♖xf4 exf4

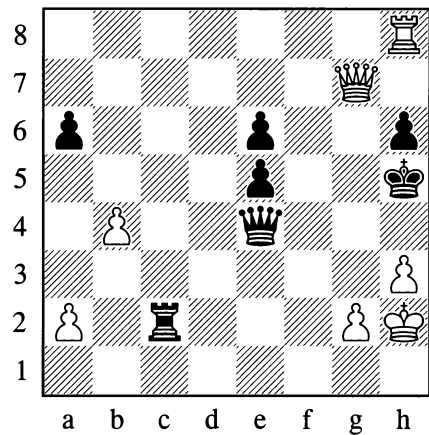
Black eventually won.

In queen and rook endgames with no direct mate, making the king safe first is often a good idea. I recently had a similar situation in a game against Salem at the Prague Masters.

35. ♖h2!

White stops the threats. He may want to check on h8 next, he may not. For now, the rook remaining on f8 means Black does not have a check on f4.

35... ♖c2 36. ♖h8† ♖g6 37. ♖e8† ♖g5 38. ♖e7† ♖h5 39. ♖xg7!



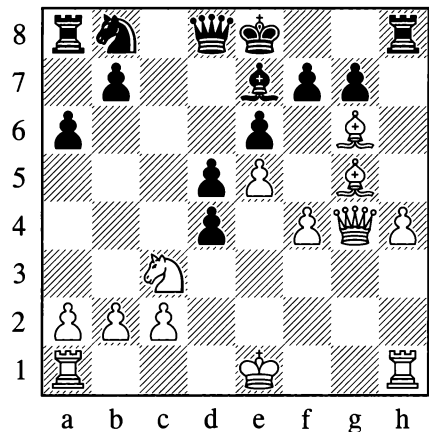
A final important move. Black's rook has been provoked to c2 so that White controls the g3-square.

39... ♖f4† 40. ♖g3

White holds.

## 232. Jorden van Foreest – David Anton Guijarro

Internet 2022



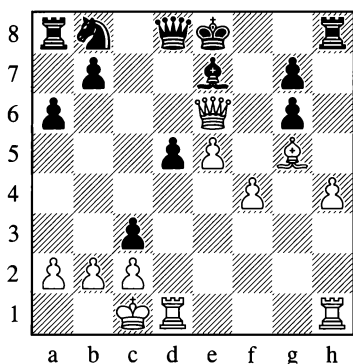
White is already up a piece and Black is facing a vicious attack. He needs to be precise to save himself. This was quite difficult, but I managed to solve it.

**15...dxc3!**

15...fxg6? 16.♖xe6! dxc3 17.0-0-0  
transposes to the game.

**16.♖xe6**

The game now went: 16...fxg6? 17.0-0-0



The queen on e6 was too powerful. Black's king was stuck in the center with ♖d1xd5 coming next. Black went down hard. 17...♗c6 18.♖xd5 ♖b6 19.♖xg6† ♗f8 20.♗xe7† ♗g8 21.♗a3 ♖e3† 22.♗b1 ♖h6 23.♖g4 ♗h8 24.♖d7 ♖g8 25.♖g1 ♖h7 26.bxc3 ♗a5 27.♗b4 ♗c4 28.♖d4 b5 29.♖d3 ♖b6 30.♗d6 ♖f2 31.h5 ♗e3 32.♖xe3 ♖xe3 33.e6 1-0

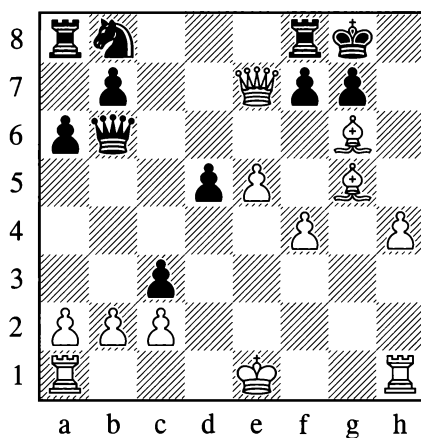
Black needs to take his one chance to get to safety:

**16...0-0! 17.♖xe7**

17.♗xe7 cxb2 18.♖b1 ♖a5† wins for Black.

**17...♖b6!!**

Not 17...♖xe7? 18.♗xe7 ♖e8 19.♗xf7† ♗xf7 20.♗a3. White remains a healthy pawn up and should win.



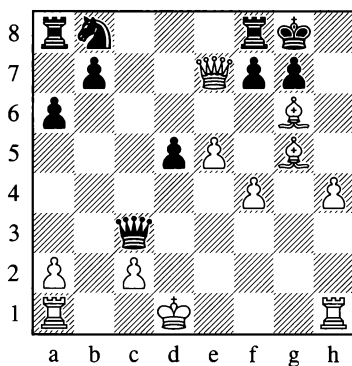
White is suddenly facing serious threats. Black should save the game.

**18.bxc3 ♖e3†**

White should not be too ambitious and should agree a draw here.

**19.♗f1**

19.♗d1?! ♖xc3!



White should be careful not to get crushed. ...♗c6 could come next if he is not careful. 20.♗xf7† is equal, 20.♖c1?! ♗c6 is not.

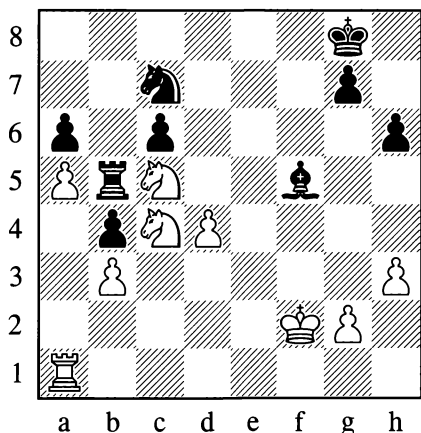
**19...♖f3† 20.♗g1 ♖g3†**

With perpetual check.



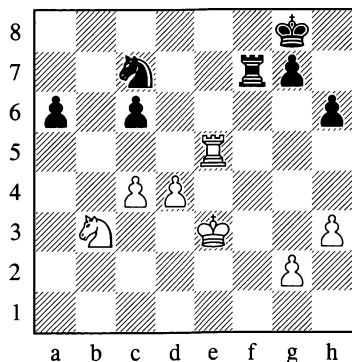
**233. Jules Moussard – Gleb Dudin**

Terme Catez 2022



On the last move before the time control, Black was unable to find the only move:

40...♙e6? White got more time here, and he found the best next few moves. 41.♖e1 ♙xc4 42.bxc4 ♖xa5 43.♙e7 b3 44.♘xb3 ♜f5† 45.♙e3 ♜f7 Now the imprecise 46.♙xf7?! was played. Moussard still won without much further trouble. Better was: 46.♙e5!



Going after the weak queenside pawns.

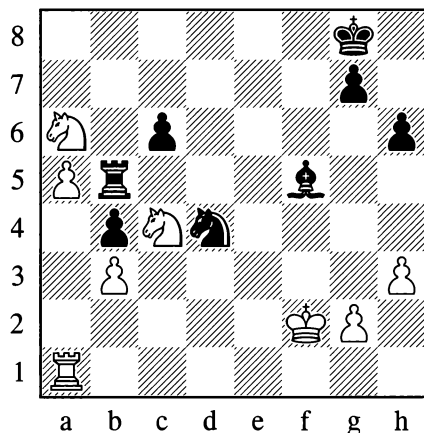
40...♘e6!

The c5-knight is too powerful and needs to be attacked. This looks risky since it allows White to take a6, but Black has it all under control.

41.♘xa6

41.♘xe6 ♙xe6 Black is ready for ...c6-c5 next and should be fine. 42.♙e3 c5 is equal.

41...♘xd4!



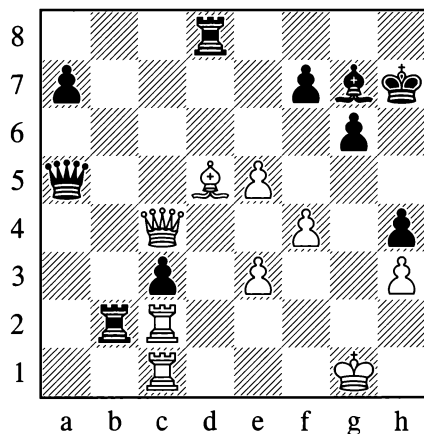
Black is counterattacking the b-pawn and has good counterplay. The knight on a6 is clumsy and hard to get out of the way.

42.♘c7 ♜b7! 43.a6 ♜a7

White should be careful not to become worse.

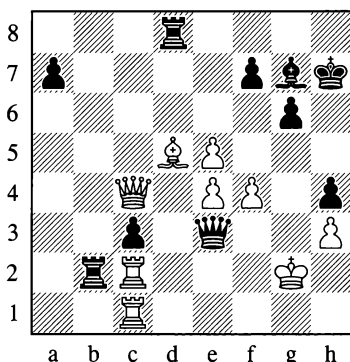
**234. Praggnanandhaa – Magnus Carlsen**

Internet 2022



This one is more about not falling for a trap than anything else. It is very hard to play rapid games with your king exposed. Pragganandhaa fell for the only idea:

34.e4? allowed Black's queen to invade:  
34...♖b6†! 35.♔g2 ♜e3



Pragganandhaa did not last long. The engine gives minus nineteen!

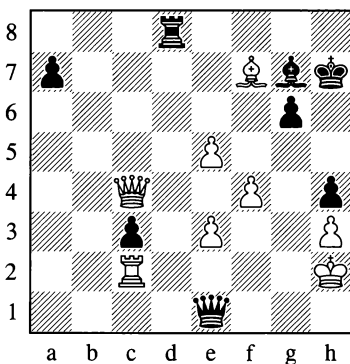
The intended solution was:

34.♔xf7!?

In my opinion, this is asking for trouble. White will have to be precise down the line to hang on.

34...♜xc2 35.♜xc2 ♖a1† 36.♔h2! ♜e1  
36...♜d2† is equal after 37.♜xd2 cxd2  
38.♔xg6† ♔xg6 39.♜e6†.

White can now defend actively with:



37.♔xg6†!! ♔h6

37...♔xg6? loses to 38.♜g2† ♔h7 39.♜f7.

38.♔d3! ♜g3† 39.♔h1 ♜f3† 40.♔h2

White holds.

34.♔f3 is also fine.

34.♔e4

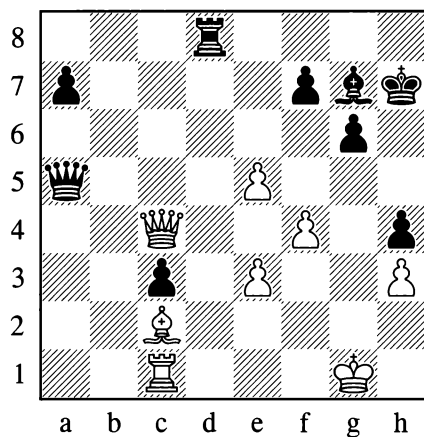
I wanted this move. It seemed the best solution to defend c2. Other moves are good, but this seems easiest to me.

34...♜xc2

Now not 35.♜xc2? ♖a1† 36.♔g2 ♜e1, as White will get mated.

The idea of 34.♔e4 is:

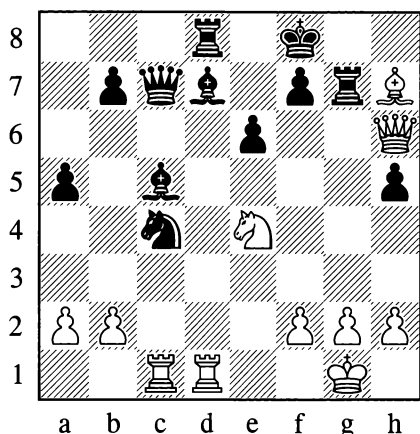
35.♔xc2!



White keeps out the queen. He can look for f4-f5 next, or ♜c4xf7. He should not be worse.

**235. Vladimir Kramnik – Teimour Radjabov**

Paris 2021



White is a piece down and it looks like his attack has run its course.

Kramnik's decision to play 24.b3? was understandable, but this should lose. Black is much better equipped to fight in the center. We will see this position with Black to move in the next chapter.

Always look for candidate moves before you resign!

**24. ♕g6!!**

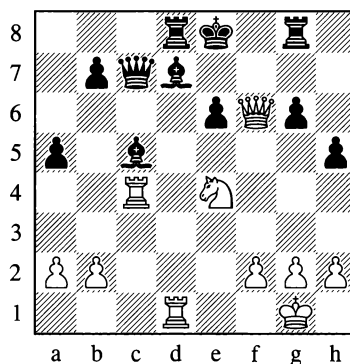
The bishop is immune from capture and White is ready for ♖h6-h8-h6 to force a perpetual.

**24...fxg6**

24...♕e7 25.♖xc4 ♗xc4 26.♖h8† ♖g8 27.♖h6† ♕e8 28.♖h7 is equal after 28...♖f8. But 28...♖xg6? loses to 29.♖h8† ♕f8 30.♔d6†.

**25. ♖h8† ♕f7**

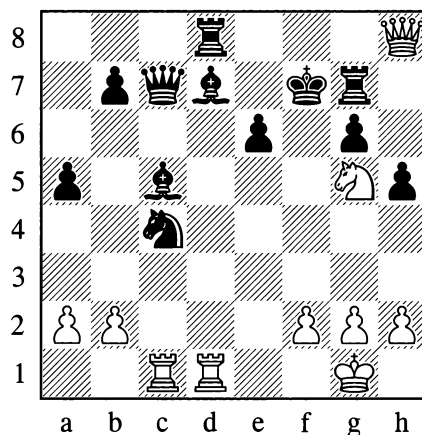
White is much better after: 25...♖g8 26.♖f6† ♕e8 27.♖xc4



Going after the weak queenside pawns.

**26. ♔g5†! ♕f6 27. ♔e4†**

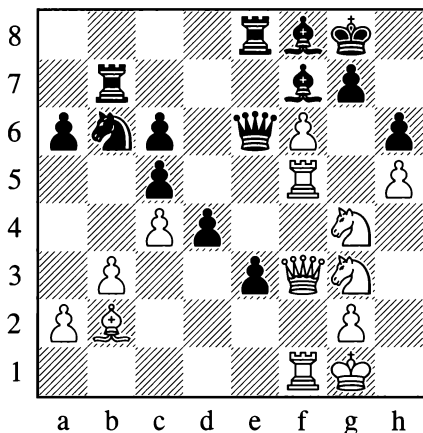
27.♔h7† is a valid alternative of course.

**27...♕f7 28. ♔g5†**

White has a perpetual check.

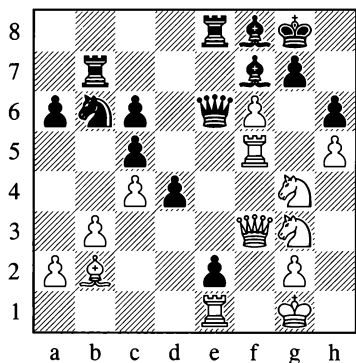
### 236. Maxime Lagarde – Hans-Hubert Sonntag

Germany 2021



This one requires nerves of steel. I wanted the move Black played, which loses:

29...e2? 30.♖e1



Nice. Simple. Sad. White's attack was over for the moment, but a new wave came when ♖e1xe2 was played next. Black was lost. 30...♟xc4 31.♞xe2 ♟e3 32.fxg7 1-0

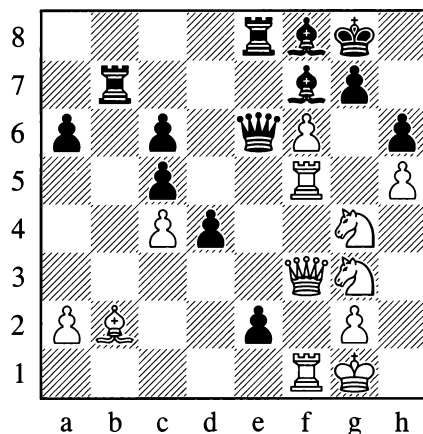
32.♟xe3 was even easier. 32...dxe3 33.fxg7 ♟xg7 34.♞g4! Black is crushed.

Black has one way to get the knight back into the game.

29...♟xc4!!

It takes a lot of courage to make a move like this one when you are getting throttled on the kingside.

30.bxc4 e2!!



The big point. Black needs to wait for b3xc4 to come, so that he can support the pawn on e2 once White plays ♖f1-e1.

31.♟xe2

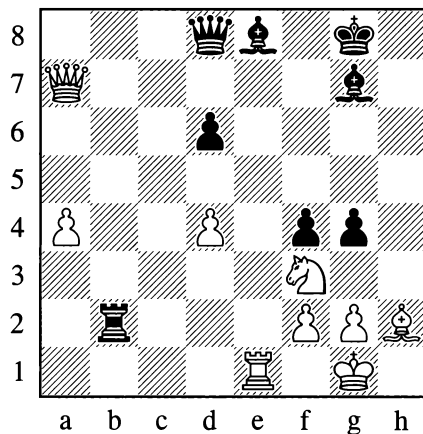
The idea is 31.♖e1 ♞xb2, with a large advantage.

31...♞xe2 32.fxg7 ♟xg7

Black is alive.

### 237. Pavel Novak – Adam Frank

Czech Republic 2022



White needs to look for candidate moves. The first move is easy to consider, but the second is not.

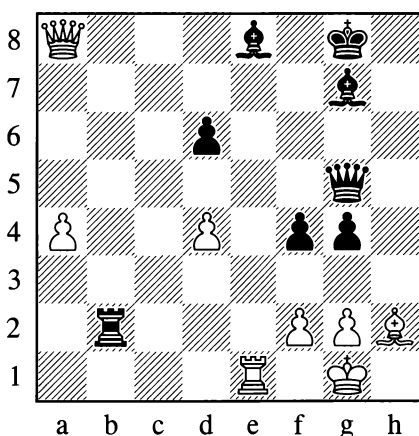
### 29. ♖g5!

29. ♕xf4? is insufficient. Black is winning after 29...gxf3 30.gxf3 ♕g6 (or 30...♕f7) 31.♖e7 ♕xd4 32.♖d7 ♖e8 0–1.

### 29... ♖xg5

It is easy to take automatically on e8 here, but then White loses: 30.♖xe8† ♖h7 31.♖e1 g3

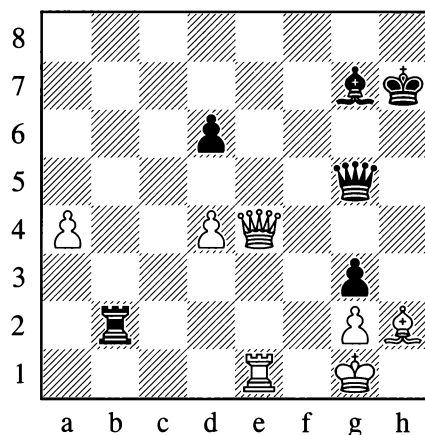
### 30. ♖a8!!



Once you see this as a candidate move, the rest is straightforward.

30...g3 31. ♖xe8† ♖h7 32.fxg3 fxg3 33. ♖e4† 33. ♕xg3 is fine too. 33... ♖xg3 34. ♖h5† ♖g8 35. ♖d5† is equal.

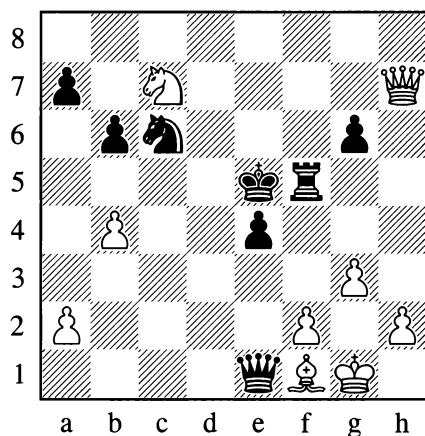
33... ♖h6 34. ♖e6† ♖h7 35. ♖e4†



White draws. The queen was much better placed on the light squares!

## 238. David Shahinyan – Hovhannes Gabuzyan

Yerevan 2022



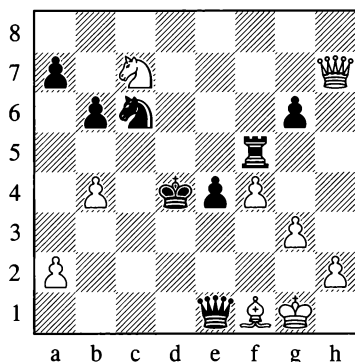
Black is about to give mate on f2, limiting our candidate moves.

White played 32. ♖h8†?. This allowed Black's king to escape to d6. 32... ♖d6 33. ♖e8† ♖e7 34.f4 exf3 35. ♖g7 f2† 36. ♖g2 ♖e4† 37. ♖h3 ♖f8, and Black later won.

Once we realize that White will run out of checks, we must understand that he will

have to push f2-f4 at some stage. We should consider carefully under which circumstances this will work.

32.f4†? is the right idea, wrong moment. Black's king can run away: 32...♔d4!

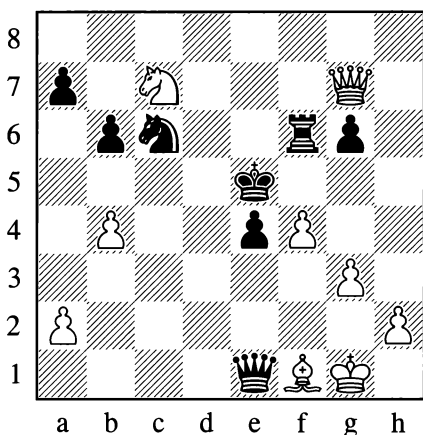


Black will find safety on e3, and his king will become a valuable attacking unit. White is mated.

32.♖g7†! ♜f6!

32...♔d6? 33.♘e8† Black's king is stuck in the kill zone, and it is all going wrong. 33...♔e6 34.♖xg6† ♔e5 (or 34...♔e7 35.♖xf5 and White is winning) 35.♖d6#

33.f4†!

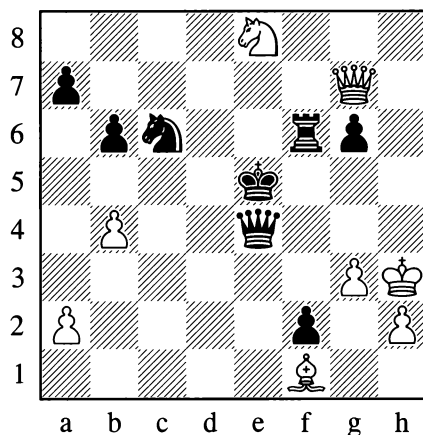


The right moment. Black's king is stuck, and his rook is pinned.

33...exf3

33...♔f5 34.♖d7† wins.

34.♘e8! f2† 35.♔g2 ♖e4† 36.♔h3



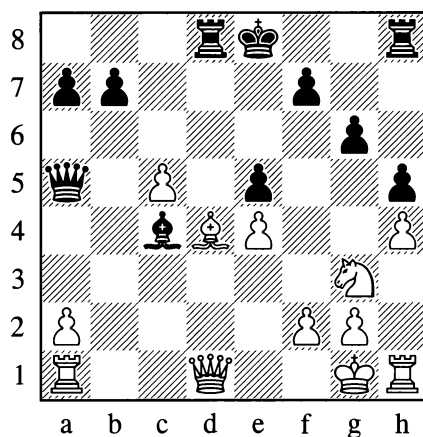
White is safe enough. Black needs to force a draw before it is too late.

36...♖f5† 37.♔g2

Black gives perpetual check.

## 239. Wesley So – Peter Svidler

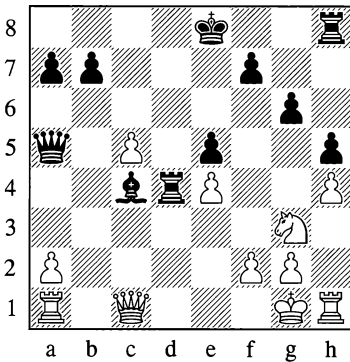
Paris 2021



White is a piece up but will soon lose it back on d4. He will potentially be left with a terrible position, due to Black's powerful d-pawn or rook and White's uncoordinated kingside.

The game continued:

20. ♖c1? ♜xd4



Just like that, White is lost. His position is a shambles, though he did manage to save the game.

21. c6 bxc6 22. ♖g5 ♜c7 23. ♖f6 0–0?

23... ♜f8 wins.

24. ♜xh5!

White has equalized.

24... gxf5 25. ♖g5 ♜h7 26. ♖xh5 ♜g8  
27. ♖g5 ♜h7 28. ♖f5 ♜h8 29. ♖h5 ♜g8  
30. ♖g5 ♜h7

½–½

The dark squares on the black kingside are weak:

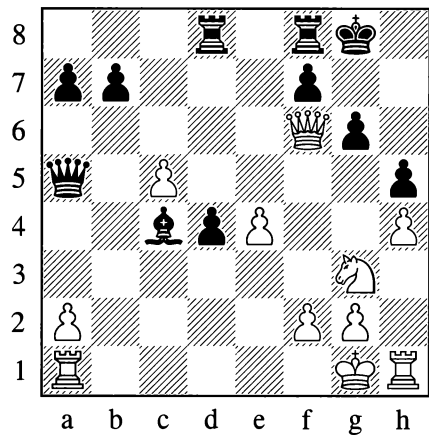
20. ♖f3!! exd4

20... ♜xd4? is ill-advised, as now the attack is even stronger. 21. ♖f6! 0–0 22. ♜xh5! gxf5 23. ♖g5 ♜h7 24. ♖xh5 ♜g8 25. ♖g5 ♜h7 26. ♖h3! White is much better.

21. ♖f6 0–0!

White enjoys a large advantage after 21... ♜f8 22. ♖e5 ♜e6 23. ♜h2.

White now maintains the momentum with:

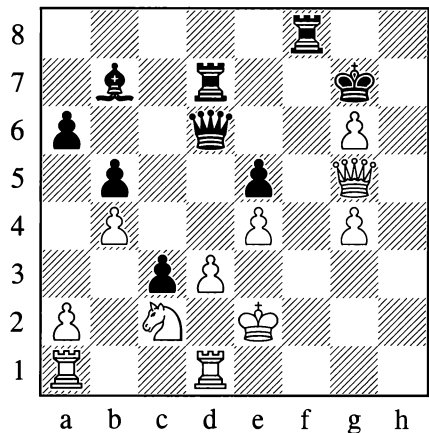


22. ♜xh5! gxf5 23. ♖g5 ♜h7 24. ♖xh5 ♜g8

White can choose between making a draw immediately and trying his luck with ♖h1-h3 at some point. Either way, he is fine.

## 240. Frederik Svane – Dennis Wagner

Magdeburg 2021



This one was difficult. I got it wrong twice! Black has many plausible moves.

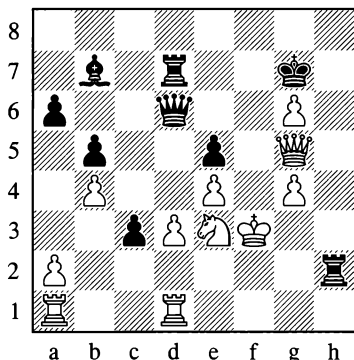
51... ♖xg6 was played. Black did not last long. 52. ♖xe5 ♜g8 53. ♜e3 c2 54. ♖h1 ♜df7 55. ♖h8# 1–0

The most tempting move is of course:

51...♖h8?

White's response is not hard to spot.

52.♘e3! ♖h2† 53.♙f3



White's king is safe, and the knight will land on f5 next.

53...♙g8

I wanted this, and I did not see a direct win for White. It is true there is no knockout blow, but White can just play simply.

53...♜xg6 54.♜xe5† ♜f6† 55.♘f5† Check!

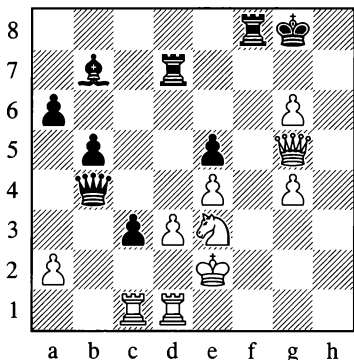
Though to be fair, White would have won by exchanging queens as well.

54.♖ac1

White takes the c3-pawn next, winning.

After 51...♖f6 52.♘e3 c2 53.♘xc2 ♜xg6 54.♜h4, White is winning. The black rooks are uncoordinated.

Upon failing to solve the problem once, I went in for a second bite of the cherry with 51...♙g8?. Wrong again! 52.♘e3! ♜xb4 53.♖ac1!



Again, the same move proves to be Black's undoing. White calmly stops any hope of a check on b2 and tethers the queen to the defense of the c3-pawn. ♖d1-h1 is coming next.

Black needs to coordinate his rooks:

51...♖dd8!!

It takes a cold heart to play chess like this. Black calmly anticipates that the rook will be better here, and that he can play for ...♖h8 at some point.

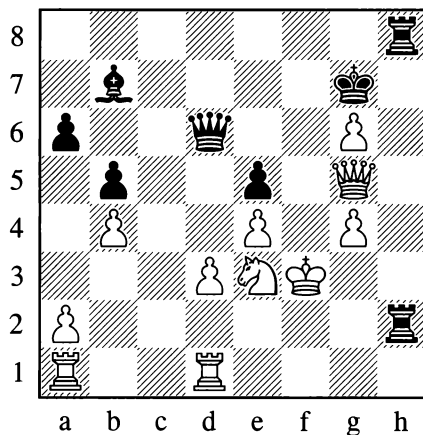
52.♘e3

Black also has sufficient counterplay after: 52.♖ac1 ♖h8 53.♘e3 ♖h2† 54.♙f3 ♖dh8 55.♖g1!

52...c2!

The point. White cannot play ♖d1-d2 on pain of e4 hanging. This complicates the game significantly.

53.♘xc2 ♖h8! 54.♘e3 ♖h2† 55.♙f3 ♖dh8!!



This feels impossible.

56.♖g1!

The only move, as after 56.♘f5† ♙g8, Black's queen is immune thanks to the mate threat on h3. 57.d4 ♖h3† 58.♘g3 ♜c6! 59.♜d8† ♙g7 60.♜e7† ♙xg6 Black wins.

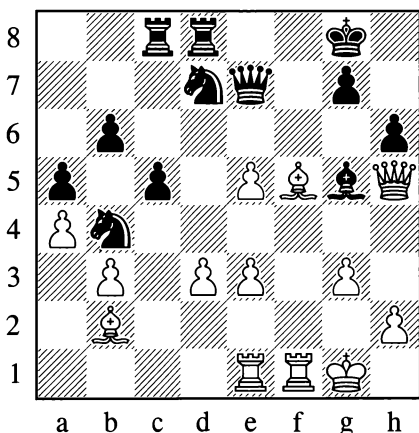


56...♖xd3 57.♗xe5† ♔xg6

White needs to take the perpetual.

## 241. Awonder Liang – Christopher Yoo

Internet 2021



Black is a piece up but facing a menacing attack.

Black played:

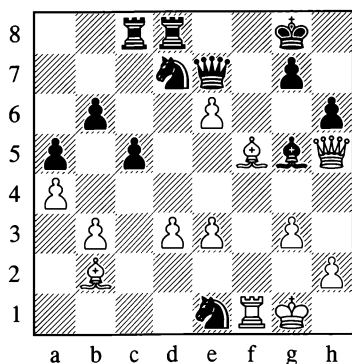
29...♘c2?

This was natural, but it allowed the attack to continue more forcefully.

30.e6! ♘xe1

30...♘f6 31.♙xf6 ♗xf6 32.♙h7† ♔xh7 33.♗xf6 ♙xf6 34.♗f1 would have been unclear.

Liang now should have played:



31.exd7!

31.♙h7†? ♔xh7 32.♗f7 ♘f6! The cleanest, though everything won. 33.♗h3 ♗e8

34.♗f5† ♔h8 35.♗g6 ♗g8 36.e7 ♗e8 0-1

31...♗c6 32.♗xe1

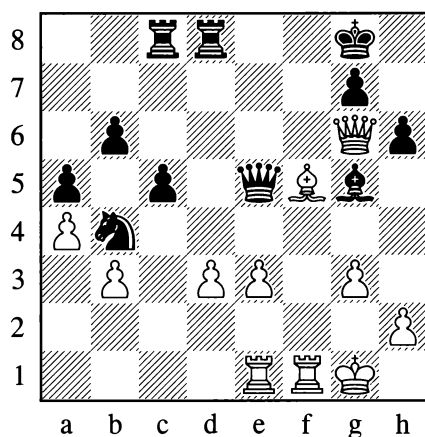
White is slightly better.

One of the best things you can do in defense is take away the attacking pieces!

29...♘xe5!

The e5-pawn was about to become a menace. Black certainly should not care about losing his c8-rook for the f5-bishop. To get the queen to g6, White must give up the b2-bishop, after which the g5-bishop is safe from h2-h4.

30.♙xe5 ♗xe5 31.♗g6



It is easy to get this far and stop calculating, assuming Black is mated. But is he?

31...♗c6!!

The big point of the exercise. Black's king can run. White has no good discoveries with the f5-bishop as the enemy pieces are mainly on dark squares, and ...♗f6 will come next.

32.♗h7† ♔f8!

As a matter of best practice, Black should be putting his pieces on dark squares to avoid double checks:

32...♔f7? 33.d4!

Now things get messier.

33...cxd4?

Better is 33...♙xe3† 34.♙g2 ♖xd4, which is unclear.

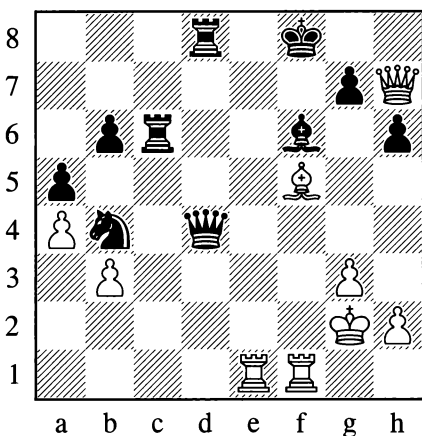
34.exd4 ♖xd4† 35.♙g2± ♙f6? 36.♙g6†

Why is our king on f7 and not f8?

36...♙f8 37.♖h8#

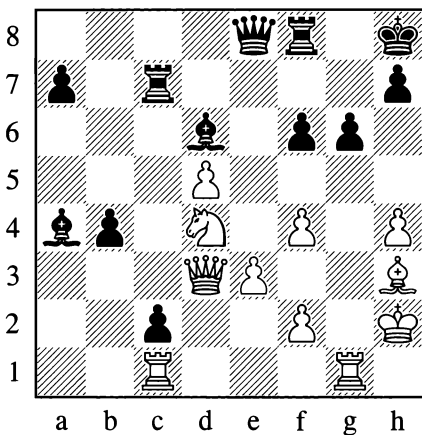
**33.d4 cxd4 34.exd4 ♖xd4† 35.♙g2 ♙f6**

Black is safe and a piece up. 35...♗f6 also wins.

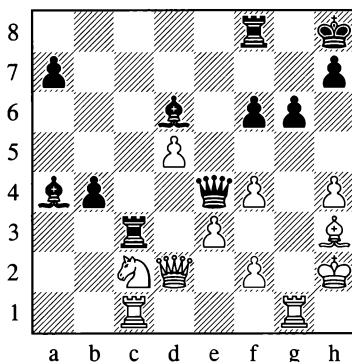


## 242. Marco Baldauf – Valentin Dragnev

Germany 2022



The game continued: 37.♙xc2? ♗c3!  
38.♖d2 ♖e4



Black's pieces jump to life, and it is all over.  
39.♙d4 ♗d3! 40.♖a2 ♙xf4† 41.exf4 ♖xf4†  
42.♙g2 ♗d2 0-1

White clearly will not stop the queenside pawn mass, and he needs to look for direct counterplay:

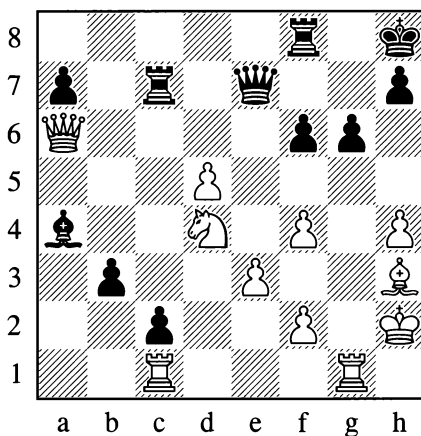
**37.♖a6!**

It turns out to be hard to defend the bishop on d6! White is winning a piece on the spot.

**37...b3**

White wins immediately after the alternatives: 37...♙c5 38.♙e6, 37...♖e7 38.♖xa4 and 37...♗d7 38.♖xa4.

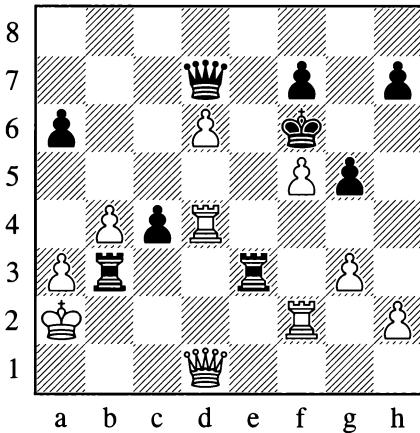
**38.♖xd6 ♖e7 39.♖a6!**



White is much better; d5-d6 is coming. Black needs to be extremely precise not to lose immediately.

### 243. Ivana Hrescak – Mahammad Muradli

Plovdiv 2021

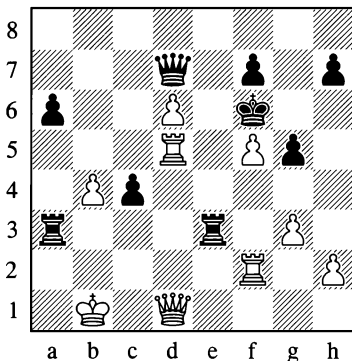


White played:

39.♖d5?

This is tempting, aiming for ♖d1-d4 with mate next, but Black is too fast. He ransacks the queenside and gets his rook to d3.

39...♜xa3† 40.♕b1



As long as Black at some point places one of his rooks on d3, the game is over. Muradli took his time but did do the job.

40...♜ab3† 41.♜b2 ♜ed3! 42.♜xd3 ♜xd3  
43.♞c1 c3 44.♜c2 ♞xd6 45.♞a3 ♜d1†  
46.♕a2 ♞d5†  
0–1

Again, this is a situation where the best defense is to take the attacking pieces:

39.♜xc4! ♜xa3† 40.♕b1!

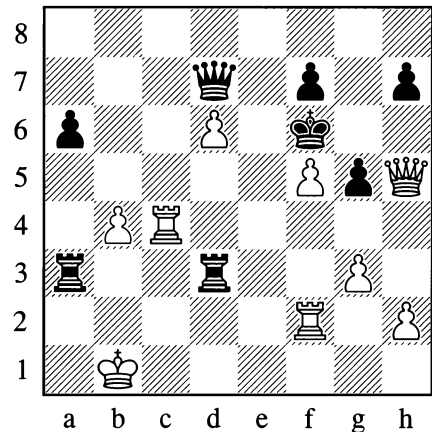
White's king is surprisingly safe here. It is helpful that a black rook coming to d3 does not attack a white rook on d5, as it did in the game. Both ♞d1-d4 and ♞d1-h5 are on the agenda. Black is not better.

40...♜ed3

40...♜eb3† 41.♕c2! is equal.

Now White must still be careful: 41.♜d2? ♜ab3† 42.♕c1 ♞a4!, and White is mated.

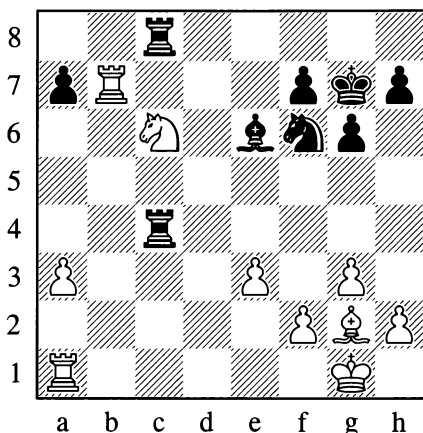
41.♞h5!



This is equal. Black has no useful checks and White has a lot of counterplay.

# 244. Jaime Santos Latasa – Daniel Fridman

Warsaw (var) 2021



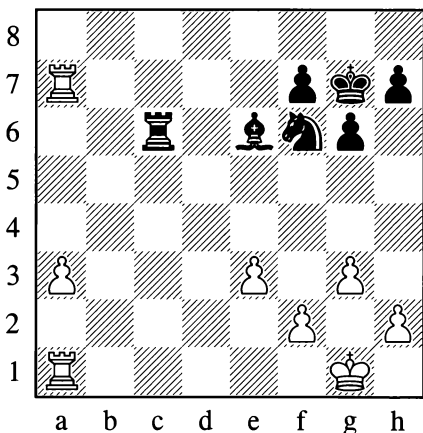
White is about to go down two pieces for a rook. It takes some effort, but he can find a way to survive.

Black wins after both 28. ♖d4 ♜c1† 29. ♜xc1 ♜xc1† 30. ♙f1 ♙h3, and 28. h4 ♜4xc6 29. ♙xc6 ♜xc6 30. ♜xa7 ♜c2!.

## 28. ♜xa7!

If we are losing material anyway, taking a pawn for the trouble is a good start.

## 28... ♜4xc6 29. ♙xc6 ♜xc6



Why is White in trouble? He is not material down. The problem is that Black's pieces are active. White will promptly get mated after ...♜c2 and a catastrophe on the second rank. But what if the rooks are exchanged? Problem solved!

## 30. ♜b7! ♜c2

30... ♙d5 allows White to equalize by protecting the second rank with 31. ♜b2.

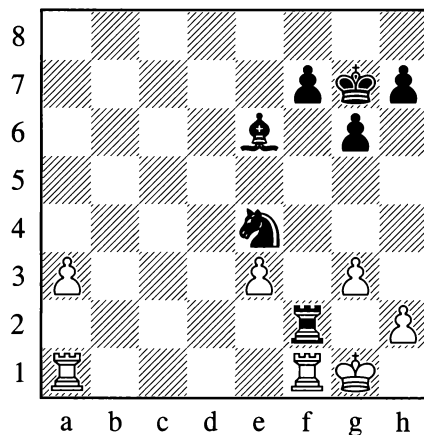
## 31. ♜bb1!

White will deliver a perpetual on the first rank to Black's rook.

## 31... ♙e4

After 31... ♙g4 32. ♜c1!, Black cannot play 32... ♜xf2 due to 33. h3?. So White makes a draw by endlessly chasing the rook.

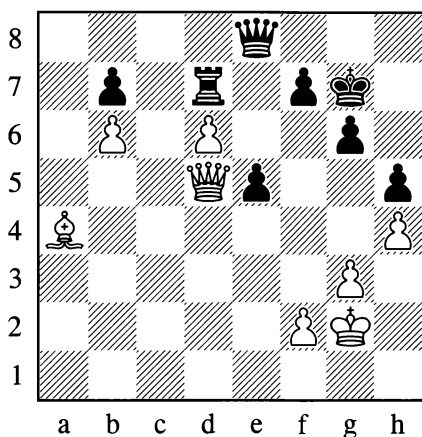
## 32. ♜c1! ♜xf2 33. ♜f1!



Black should allow the perpetual even when White loses f2. If White can force rooks off, his a-pawn will mean only he can be better.

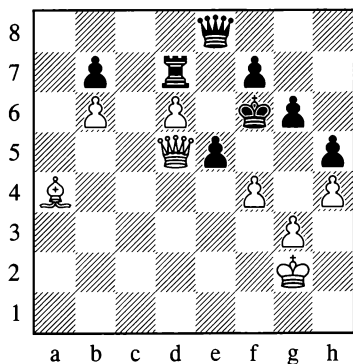
## 245. Luka Budisavljevic – Bogdan-Daniel Deac

Terme Catez 2022



I thought this one was incredibly difficult. It is not surprising to me that even a player as strong as Deac, after reaching the time control, got it wrong.

I wanted the move played as well: 41...♔f6? After 42.f4!



Black's king was opened up and he lost quickly. 42...exf4 43.♖d4† ♜e5 44.♖xe5† ♜xe5 45.♙xd7 ♜xd6 46.♙e8 fxg3 (46...♜e7 47.♙c6 wins) 47.♙xf7 ♜c6 48.♜xg3 ♜xb6 49.♜f4 ♜c5 50.♜e5 1-0

I saw the first few moves of the solution:

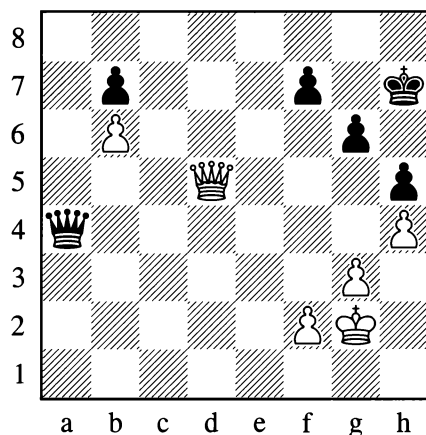
41...♜xd6! 42.♖xd6 ♜xa4 43.♖xe5†

Now any move is fine, as they all lead to the same position.

43...♜h7

43...♜f8 44.♖b8† ♜g7 45.♖xb7 transposes.

44.♖d5!



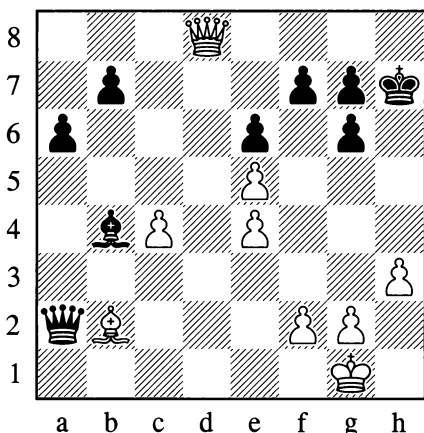
I got this far after less than a minute of calculating, and I decided Black is resigning. Shockingly, this is not the case.

44...♜g7! 45.♖xb7 ♜b5!!

Surprisingly, White is unable to make progress here. He can never move his king anywhere useful. He cannot get his queen off b7, while both holding onto the b6-pawn and stopping the perpetuals. I tip my hat to anyone who solved this one!

## 246. Wesley So – Peter Svidler

Internet 2021



White's bishop is hit. Where should it go? I got this one right, but only by luck. I guessed the best moves and missed some key ideas.

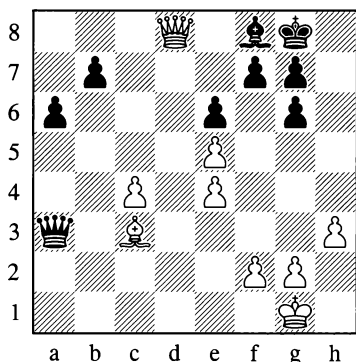
White played:

34. ♖h4? ♜g8 35. ♖d8†

Now Svidler made the draw: 35... ♜h7?

36. ♖h4† ♜g8 37. ♖d8† ½–½ He could have continued, and probably won, with:

35... ♜f8! 36. ♜c3 ♖a3!



Black gets his queen to the key diagonal and should win. The a-pawn is coming.

37. ♜a5

The same motif as the solution fails now. Bringing the bishop to d6 will only work if the e5-pawn lives.

37... ♖a1†! 38. ♜h2 ♖xe5†

Black wins.

The best move order is:

34. ♜c3!!

This prevents Black from getting his queen to a3.

34... ♖xc4

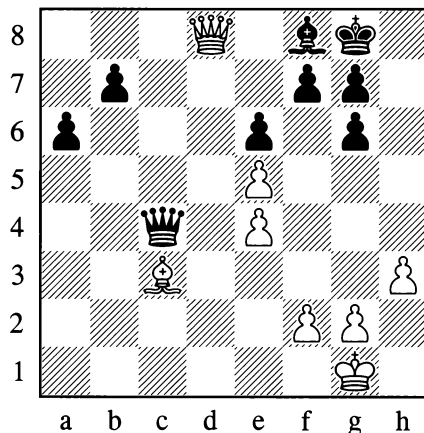
34... ♜xc3 35. ♖h4† draws, now the bishop has been deflected.

After 34... ♖a3 35. ♜xb4! ♖xb4 36. ♖h4† ♜g8 37. ♖d8† ♖f8 38. ♖c7, White should be active enough to save the game. Keeping his c-pawn alive means Black cannot simply abandon the b7-pawn.

35. ♖h4†!

Now and only now.

35... ♜g8 36. ♖d8† ♜f8



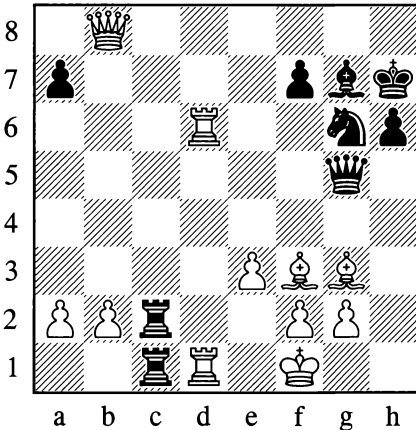
Here we see the point. Because Black was forced to take on c4 rather than place the queen on a3, White has a nice route for his bishop.

37. ♜a5!

The bishop is coming to d6, and White has some counterplay. Black is only slightly better.

## 247. Le Quang Liem – Shakhriyar Mamedyarov

Internet 2022



In the game, White won easily after 27...♖xb2? 28.♞xa7.

Black is down two pawns, has a horrible structure and is facing two good bishops. He needs to be direct to have any hope at all. The first move is easy to spot:

### 27...♙e5!

Presumably Mamedyarov saw it but missed an important detail down the line. Just like I did!

### 28.♙xe5

28.♞e8 ♙xd6 29.♞xf7† ♖h8 30.♙xd6 ♞h4 is equal.

Now my answer was the automatic recapture: 28...♞xe5

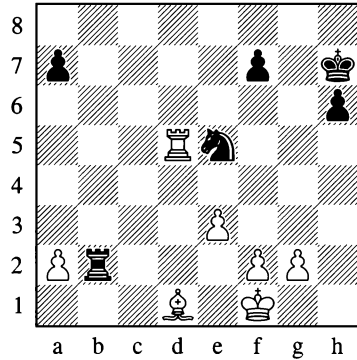
Hoping to slam to h2 next. It actually loses in two ways. 29.♞d8!

The simplest. White keeps the queen off h2. 29.♞b3!? wins too, but the text is more human: 29...♞xd6 30.♞xc2! ♞a6† 31.♙e2!

29...♞xd1† 30.♙xd1 ♞xb2 31.♞xe5 ♙xe5

I thought maybe Black has some holding chances here, but they are slim.

32.♞d5!



White should win the endgame with his extra pawn.

Always have more than one option at each move!

### 28...♞h4!!

Now best is:

29.♙g1

Although Black is surely fine here. Taking on f2 or e5 are both good. Mamedyarov was presumably only worried about 29.g3 instead.

29...♙xe5

29...♞xf2† 30.♙h1 ♙xe5 is also equal.

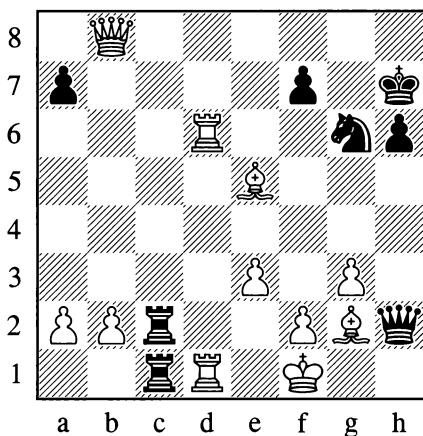
30.♞xh6† ♞xh6 31.♞xe5 ♞xd1† 32.♙xd1 ♞c1 33.♞d4 ♞b6

With an equal position.

### 29.g3

This is the move that bothered me. I thought Black has hit the buffers and is hopelessly lost. But he has a fantastic resource.

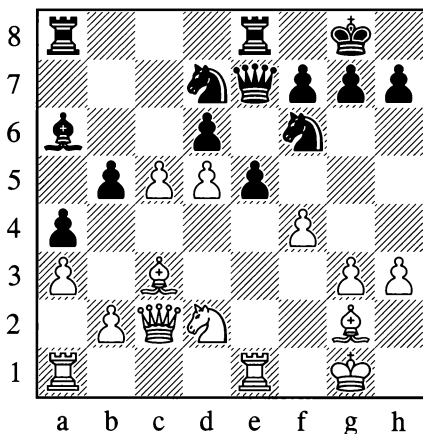
29...♞h2! 30.♙g2

**30...♖h5!!**

The move I missed. Silent and absurdly powerful. White cannot stop the twin threats of ...♖xd1† and ...♖e2† at the same time.

**248. Michal Redzisz – Mieszko Mis**

Krakow 2020



I thought this was pretty easy. Perhaps because I was traumatized by what came before!

Black played 19...♖ac8? 20.fxe5 dxe5. I find it surprising this game was eventually drawn. After 21.c6, Black can pack his things and go home.

**19...♖xc5!**

Good or bad, this move must be played. Black cannot allow a pawn to c6. He should lose routinely without any kind of a fight.

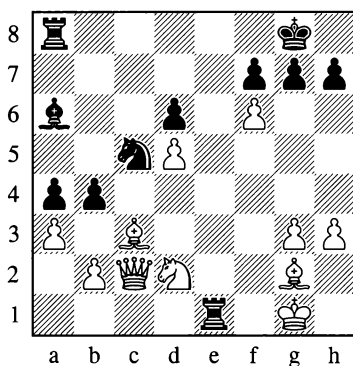
**20.fxe5 b4!!**

The key point. Black's knight will make it to d3, and White is unable to take on f6.

20...♖d3? 21.♖xd3 b4 22.♖f5 bxc3 23.exf6 ♖xe1† 24.♖xe1 ♖xe1† 25.♖h2 cxd2 26.♖g5 wins, due to the weakness of the black kingside: 26...♖f8 27.♖xg7† ♖e8 28.♖g8† ♖d7 29.♖xf7† ♖c8 30.♖g7 d1=♖ 31.f7

**21.♖xb4**

21.exf6? is a mistake: 21...♖xe1† 22.♖xe1 ♖xe1†



23.♖f1 A sad necessity to avoid losing the queen directly, as 23.♖h2 ♖d3! wins. 23...bxc3 24.♖xc3 ♖ae8 The difference in activity will cost White at least a piece. He is lost.

**21...♖d3!**

Black has good counterplay.

**22.♖h2 ♖xe1**

22...♖xe5 (as I wanted) is fine as well.

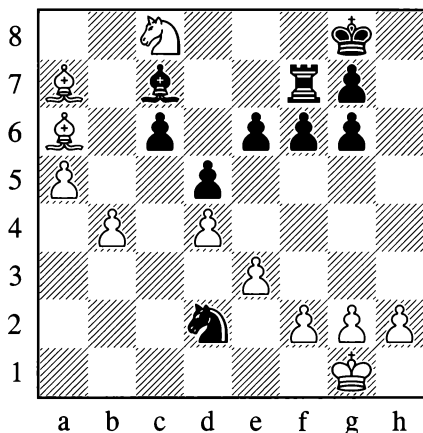
**23.♖xe1 ♖a7**

White has sufficient compensation but not more than that.



### 249. Nodirbek Abdusattorov – S.P Sethuraman

Sitges 2021



The big problem Black is facing is that the bishop on c7 is a horrible piece. Not only does it not do anything, it also blocks his rook from coming to the defense. The only good thing about Black's position is that he is an exchange up. If that rook is useless, it is surely lost.

White won the game easily after: 27...♖e4? 28.f3 ♜d6 29.♙c5 ♜c4 30.♜e7† ♔h7 31.♜xc6 ♙d6 32.♜f2 ♝c7 33.♙b5 ♙xc5 34.dxc5 ♜a3 35.♙a4 ♜c4 36.a6 1–0

Black can counterattack b4, and force White to allow a bishop trade:

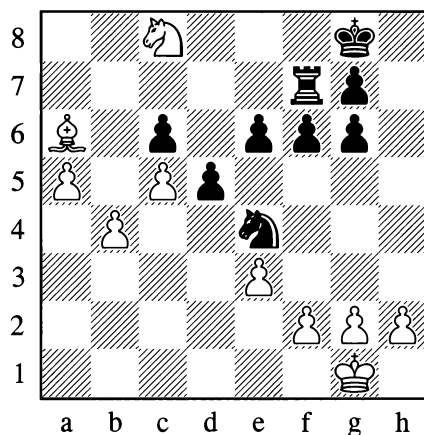
**27...♙d6!!**

An important resource.

**28.♙c5**

28.♜xd6 ♝xa7 29.♙c8 ♜f8 is equal.

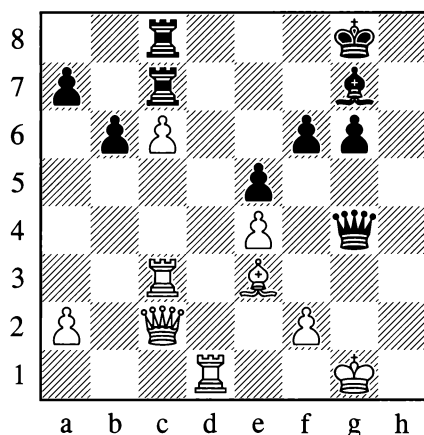
**28...♙xc5 29.dxc5 ♜e4**



Black's rook is given much more freedom by the exchange of dark-squared bishops. It will be excellent on c7, and the king is coming next. White should be worried about becoming worse.

### 250. Zala Urh – P. Iniyan

Plovdiv 2021



Jacob has always been mean to me (cruel to be kind I am sure!). Giving me an extremely difficult one for the last puzzle of the chapter is so him. I got it wrong, but hopefully you did better!

32.♜f1?

This was played in the game and what I wanted as well. It feels like the king should be running to the center. Sadly, Black wins now.

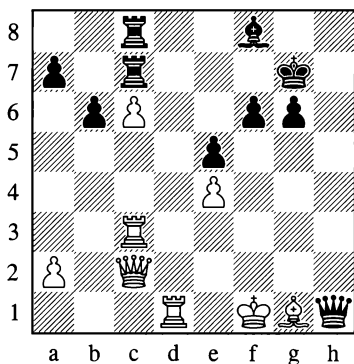
32...♔f8!

White felt the need to push f2-f3 here. It is obviously a worse version, since ...♞xf3 comes with check.

33.f3

33.♞b3† was what I liked, stopping the rook transfer, and getting the queen to d5. But, after the simple 33...♔g7 34.♞d5 ♔e7!, White will not survive. The rook will come to either d8 or h8.

33...♞xf3† 34.♔f2 ♞h1† 35.♔g1 ♔g7



Black should slowly but surely round up the c-pawn, with ...♞h1-h3† and ...♞h3-e6. He is winning.

36.♔d7† ♞xd7 37.cxd7 ♞d8 38.♞c7 ♞f3†  
39.♞f2 ♞xe4 40.♞xa7 ♔c5  
0-1

The king needs to go in the other direction:

32.♔h2!

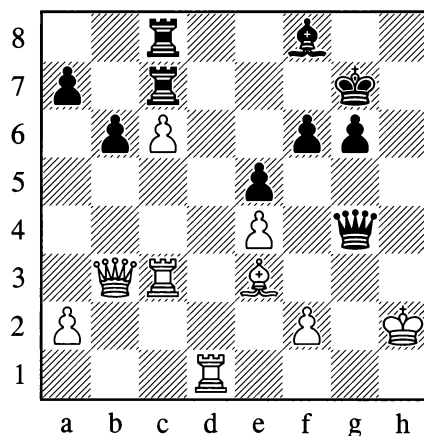
This is an incredibly hard move to even consider. It looks like White should be immediately mated on the h-file.

32...♔f8

After 32...♞e6 33.♔d7, White should survive: 33...♞xc6 34.♞xc6 ♞xc6

33.♞b3† ♔g7

33...♔h8 34.♔d7 is also equal.



It looks like White can resign immediately with ...♔e7 coming next. But now we see why the king is so good on h2.

34.f3!!

The point. Since ...♞xf3 does not come with check, Black's queen is forced away and White escapes.

34...♞h5†

34...♞xf3? is not advisable: 35.♔h6† wins.

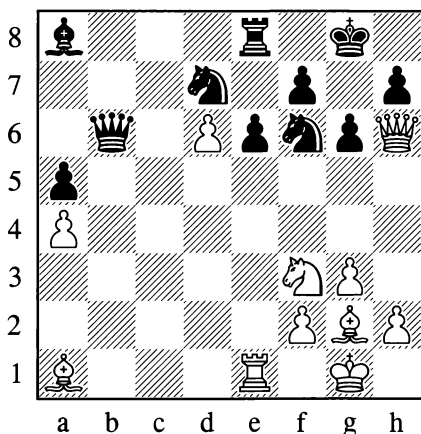
35.♔g2!

White is safe enough.

## Solutions to Chapter 6

### 251. Pranav Anand – Daniel Dardha

Sitges 2021



Although this chapter is titled *Deep Calculation*, the first few problems in it are easier. As in other chapters, the difficulty increases later. This one should be trivial enough.

#### 29. ♖e5!

This strikes me mostly as a candidate move. White wins immediately by blasting open the long diagonal.

White eventually won the game after 29. ♖f4, but would you beat Carlsen from here?

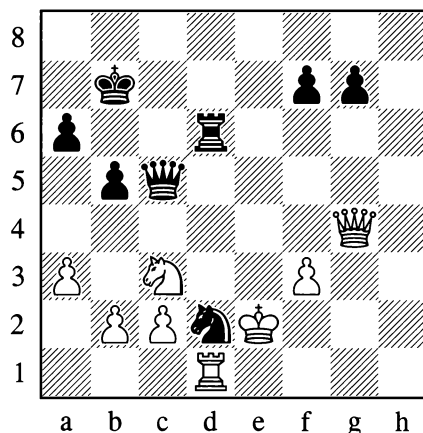
Also, Black is fine once he closes the diagonal: 29. ♜g5? e5!

#### 29... ♜xe5 30. ♙xe5

The open diagonal and the passed d-pawn win the day. For example: 30... ♜h5 31. d7, 30... ♖d8 31. ♙xa8 or 30... ♖xf2† 31. ♜xf2 ♜g4† 32. ♜g1 ♜xh6 33. d7 are all devastating.

### 252. Grzegorz Gajewski – Wouter Spoelman

Germany 2020



This is more about avoiding temptation than anything else:

The natural and obvious 32... ♖e6† gave White real saving chances: 33. ♖xe6 fxe6 34. ♖xd2 Black is obviously better, but could run into a fortress. Indeed, White eventually saved the game.

Black could have won with:

#### 32... ♖e5†! 33. ♜e4

Black wins directly after:

33. ♜f2 ♖h2†

33... a5!? also wins.

34. ♖g2

34. ♜e3 ♜f1† 35. ♖xf1 ♖d2 with a quick mate.

34. ♜e1 ♖e6† 35. ♜e4 (35. ♖xe6 ♜xf3†! is an important intermediate move.) 35... ♜xe4

36. fxe4 ♖xc2 wins.

34... ♜e4†! 35. ♜xe4

35. fxe4 ♖f6† is winning.

35... ♖xg2† 36. ♜xg2 ♖xd1

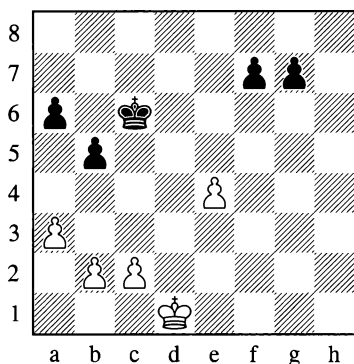
Black wins.

#### 33... ♜xe4!

White cannot avoid a lost pawn endgame.

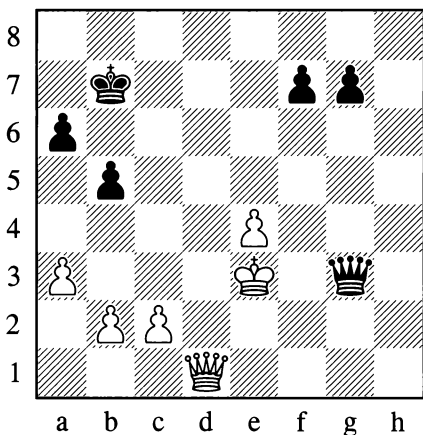
**34.fxe4**

34.♖xe4† ♜xe4† 35.fxe4 ♝xd1 36.♔xd1  
♔c6



Black wins here as well, due to the outside protected passed pawn.

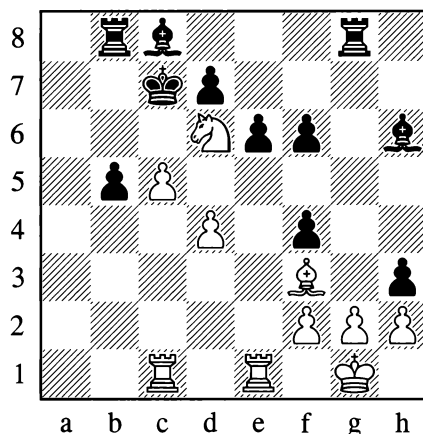
34...♖h2†! 35.♔e3 ♝xd1! 36.♖xd1 ♖g3†!



White cannot avoid a hopeless pawn endgame.

**253. Vasyl Ivanchuk – Vladimir Kramnik**

Internet 2020



White is a pawn down and facing a bishop pair. After 25.♖a1? ♔f8!, Black was alive and kicking. He even went on to win.

The white pieces are active and ready to strike. He should be looking for the most aggressive move possible:

**25.d5!**

Energetic and powerful. White blasts open the center for his e1-rook, his only passive piece.

**25...♔f8**

Everything else goes down even more routinely:

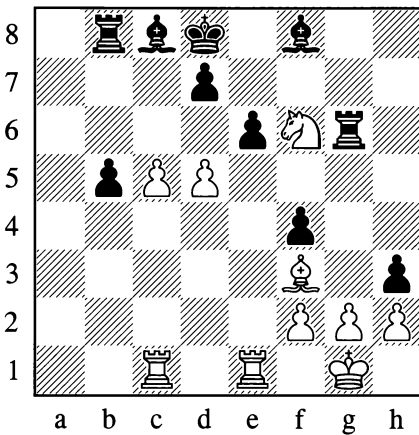
25...hxg2 26.dxe6 dxe6 27.♖a1 wins.

25...exd5 26.♔xd5 ♝g5 27.♘e8†! ♔d8 28.c6! (28.♘xf6 is also winning) 28...dxc6 29.♘xf6 ♝xd5 30.♖e8† ♔c7 31.♘xd5† ♔d7 32.♘f6† White wins.

**26.♘e8†**

26.dxe6 is a winning alternative.

26...♔d8 27.♘xf6! ♝g6



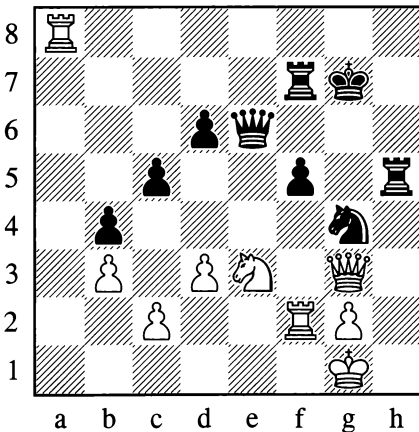
Now we see the point of pushing d4-d5 in the first place:

### 28.c6!

The passed c-pawn is too powerful. Game over.

## 254. Vasif Durarbayli – Jan-Krzysztof Duda

Warsaw 2021



This was not too hard, just checks and captures all the way through.

White played:

35. ♖xf5?

The blitz time controls were surely at play here. White was much better, but it was not over yet. Duda saved the game:

35... ♜xf5 36. ♜xg4† ♜hg5 37. ♜e2

37. ♜h3? ♜e1† wins.

37... ♜xe2 38. ♜xe2

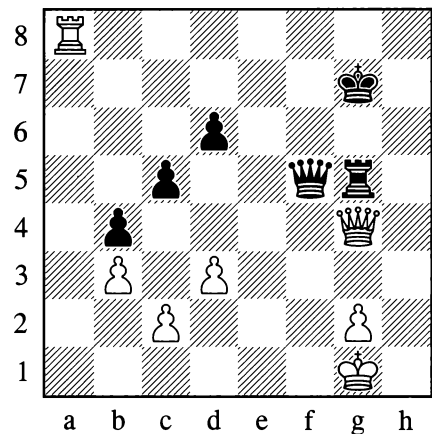
The game was eventually drawn despite White's advantage.

The correct way to capture was:

35. ♜xf5! ♜xf5

After 35... ♜xe3† 36. ♜xe3 ♖xe3 37. ♜xh5, White is up a clean exchange and winning: 37... ♖xc2 38. ♜d8

36. ♜xg4†! ♜hg5 37. ♖xf5† ♜xf5



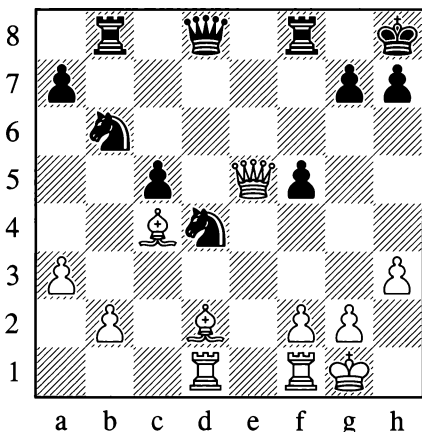
38. ♜h4

Black should be mated.

My solution, 38. ♜xf5, was dull. But the machine's plus four is enough for me! Remember, always ask: *would you beat Carlsen from here?* Yes, I would! 38... ♜xf5 39. ♜e8! Black's king is cut off. ♜e4-c4 followed by d3-d4 will win easily.

## 255. Alexandra Kosteniuk – Eric Hansen

Internet 2022



21. ♕h6!

This one is not too hard to find if you have time on the clock. In a rapid game, it is a different story:

White eventually won after 21. ♕a2. But Black is okay after 21... ♖d7!, with ... ♗xb2 to follow.

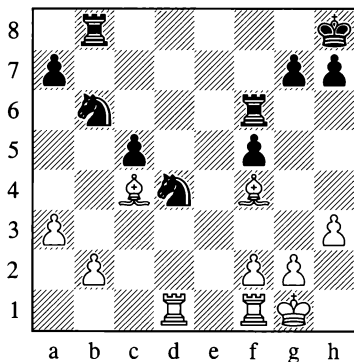
21. ♖xc5 loses to 21... ♗c8.

21... ♗b7

This is the scariest move, but White is good to go if she sees a key detail.

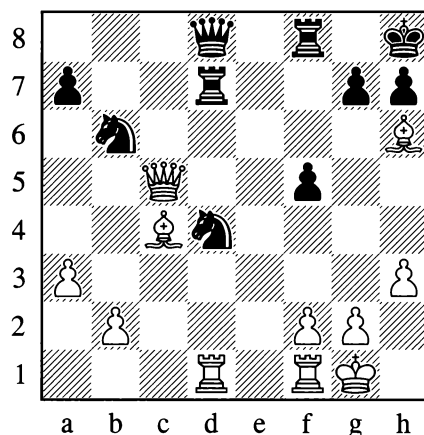
If 21... ♖d7, 22. ♖xc5 now works decisively.

After 21... ♖f6 22. ♖xf6 ♗xf6 23. ♕f4:



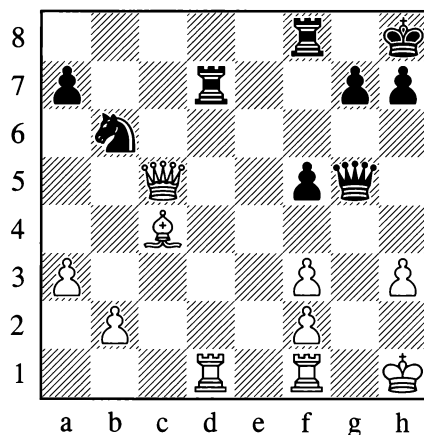
White consolidates the position without losing any material. She is winning, due to the bishop pair and Black's horrible structure: 23... ♗c8 24. ♕a6 ♗e8 25. ♗fe1

22. ♖xc5! ♗d7



The twin threats of ... ♖f3† and ... gxf6 are hard to meet. But there is a key idea:

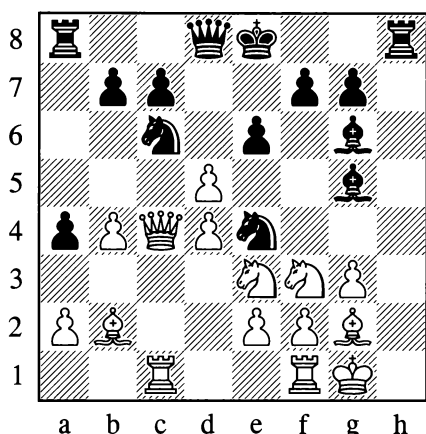
23. ♕g5! ♖f3† 24. gxf3 ♖xg5† 25. ♕h1



White is a reasonably healthy pawn up and her king is safe enough.

## 256. Vladimir Malakhov – Andrey Esipenko

Bergen 2021



Black is under pressure and facing many threats. He can keep things under control and take the upper hand with good calculation. Esipenko did not disappoint.

17...♙xc3!

17...exd5? is a mistake, as after 18.♘xd5! ♙xc1 19.♖xc1, White easily has enough for an exchange. Black is lucky to have a draw available with 19...♘d6 20.♗c5 ♘e4 21.♗c4.

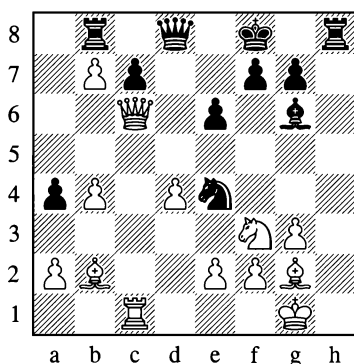
18.dxc6

18.fxe3 loses to 18...exd5.

18...b5!!

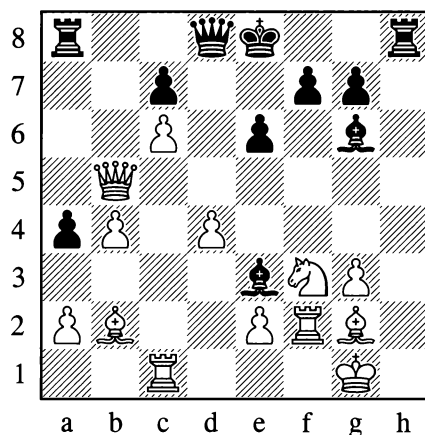
A typical motif and not too hard, but pleasing nonetheless.

The greedy 18...♙xc1? is met by: 19.cxb7 ♖b8 20.♗c6† ♘f8 21.♖xc1



The b-pawn easily wins White the game.

19.♗xb5 ♘xf2! 20.♖xf2



It is easy to get this far and think Black has ground to a halt. But he has a new wave of the attack coming if he sees a key candidate move, preferably from afar.

20...a3!

White loses the defender of his c1-rook, and Black was winning material on the spot. Esipenko went on to win after a couple of minor inaccuracies.

21.♙c3 ♖h5!?

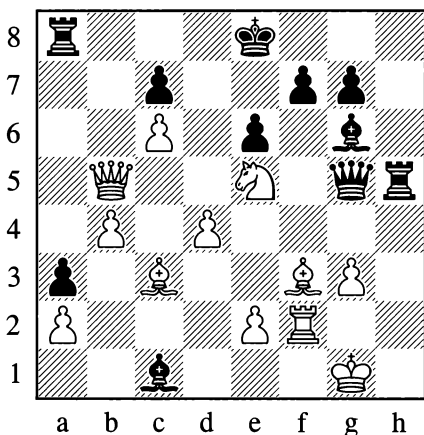
21...♙xc1! was winning.

22.♘e5 ♙xc1!?

22...♗g5! was stronger.

**23. ♖f3?**

Black would have been only slightly better after 23.g4 ♜h6 24.♞f3.

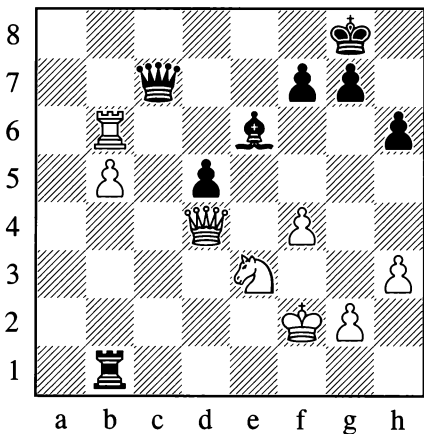
**23... ♞g5**

Black was winning again:

24.♙xh5 ♞xg3† 25.♔f1 ♞h3† 26.♙g1  
♙e3 27.♙e1 ♞xh5 28.♞b7 ♞d8 29.♘f3  
♞g4† 30.♔f1 ♙xf2 31.♙xf2 ♞f4 32.b5 ♙e4  
33.♙g2 g5 34.b6 cxb6 35.♙g1 ♞c1†  
0-1

**257. Ding Liren – Andrey Esipenko**

Internet 2022



Black eventually won after 49...♞c1?. But White's king is safe, as the knight on e3 is a good defender. 50.♞d3! ♞b2† 51.♙g3 ♞c7 52.♞c6 ♞a7 53.♞c2, and White should not have lost.

There is a tough candidate move. But once you see it, the position basically plays itself:

**49... ♞a7!**

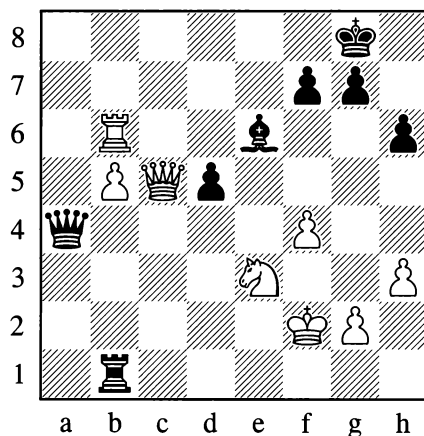
Very powerful. Black pins the rook and threatens to take on b5. This forces White's queen to c5 and allows an invasion.

**50. ♞c5**

50.♘c2 ♙f5!, with the idea ...♞a2, is decisive.

**50... ♞a4!**

50...♞b3 also wins.

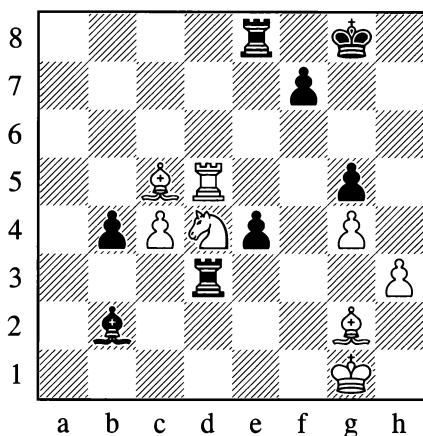


White is powerless to stop devastation on the fourth rank. Once his knight is kicked off e3 with ...d5-d4, his king will perish.



## 258. Abhimanyu Puranik – Pentala Harikrishna

Warsaw (rapid) 2021



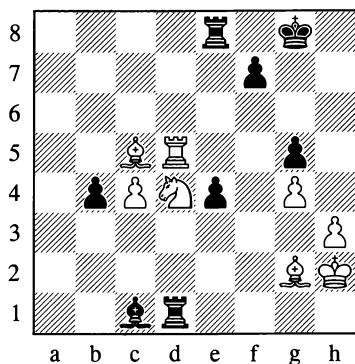
**38...♖d1!**

It is important to start with this check. White's king is forced to make up his mind on where he wants to go. Then Black will decide how to coordinate the rest of his pieces.

38...e3 39.♖xg5† ♔h7 40.♖h5† ♔g6 41.♜e2 is only equal.

**39.♜f1**

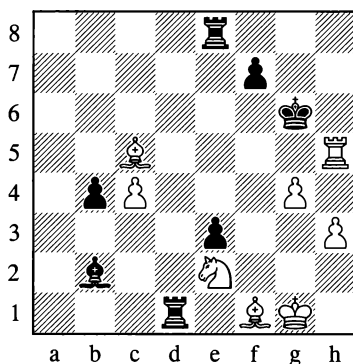
39.♔h2 ♜c1!



Black stops the threat to g5 and the bishop is on its way to f4. Black is much better.

Harikrishna pushed ...e4-e3 immediately:

39...e3? 40.♖xg5† ♔h7 41.♖h5† ♔g6 Now we see why taking d4 was so important. 42.♜e2!



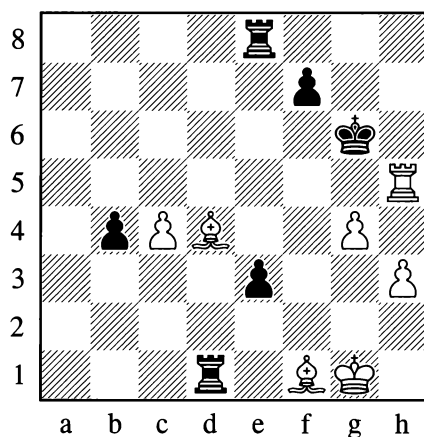
The e-pawn was under control and ♜e2-f4† with counterplay was coming. 42...b3 43.♜f4† ♔g7 44.♖d5 The game was eventually drawn.

Hard to see was:

**39...♜xd4!!**

The key point.

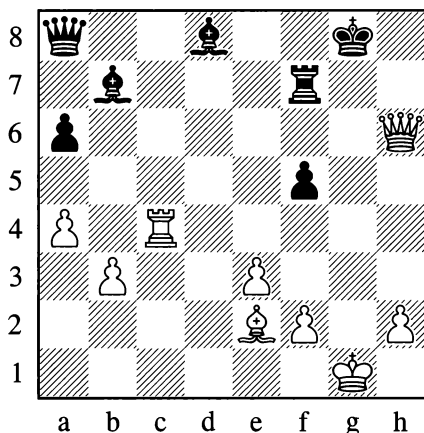
**40.♜xd4 e3 41.♖xg5† ♔h7! 42.♖h5† ♔g6!**



White is out of checks and out of luck.

## 259. Le Quang Liem – David Anton Guijarro

Internet 2022



Comparison. White clearly wants to move his rook to threaten ♔f1-c4 next. What is the right square?

For example, 34.♖c5? is wrong. After 34...♗d5!, Black has secured the key diagonal and should be okay.

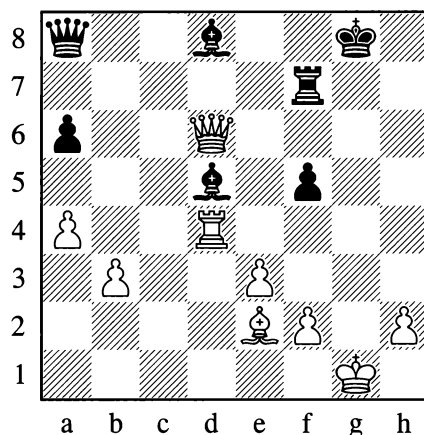
### 34.♖d4!

The point is that when Black plays ...♗d5, White will win a piece. Black hardly had a choice, as allowing ♗e2-c4 is not recommended.

### 34...♗d5

34...♗f6?! was played in the game. White won routinely: 35.♗c4 ♗xd4 36.♞g6† ♗g7 37.♞xf7† ♖h7 38.♞h5† ♗h6 39.♞xf5† ♖h8 40.♞f6† ♖h7 41.♗d3† ♗e4 42.♞e7† ♖h8 43.♗xc4 1–0

### 35.♞d6!

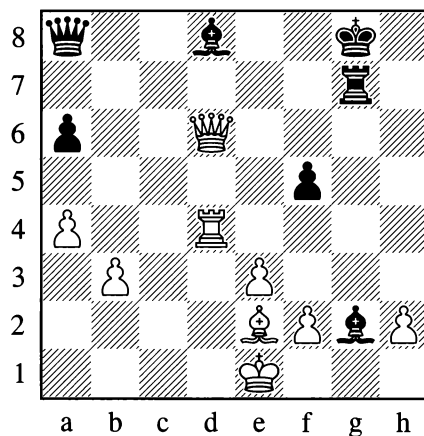


The black bishops are skewered.

### 35...♞g7†

This is the only way to avoid losing a piece directly. It does not help much.

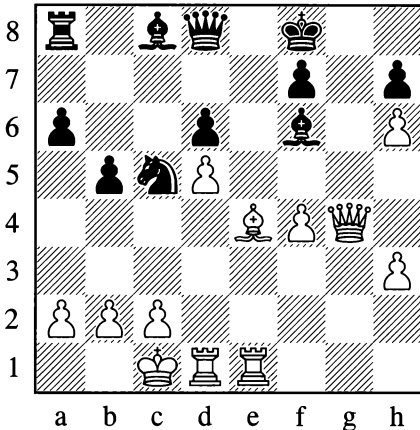
### 36.♗f1 ♗g2† 37.♗e1



The bishop is hit. Black has lost control of the a2-g8 diagonal. White should be able to mate.

## 260. Jan Michael Sprenger – Hou Yifan

Germany 2019



I found this one incredibly difficult. It was the first one I got wrong in this set.

Sprenger's choice in the game was easy to deal with:

23. ♕f5? ♖xb2†!

White is lost:

24. ♖b1

24. ♖xb2 ♖f6† Piece activity. Black wins.

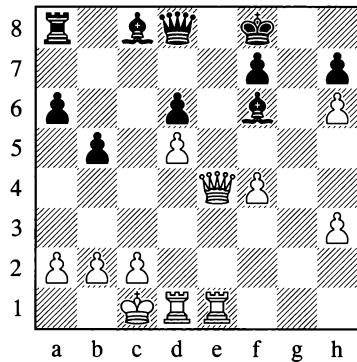
24... ♕xf5 25. ♖xf5 ♕c3 26. ♖e3

26... ♖xh7 ♖a5 is a knockout.

26... ♖a5 27. ♖xc3 ♖xc3 28. ♖xh7 ♖e8 29. ♖g1 ♖e1† 30. ♖xe1 ♖xe1† 31. ♖b2 ♖a4† 32. ♖b3 ♖c3#

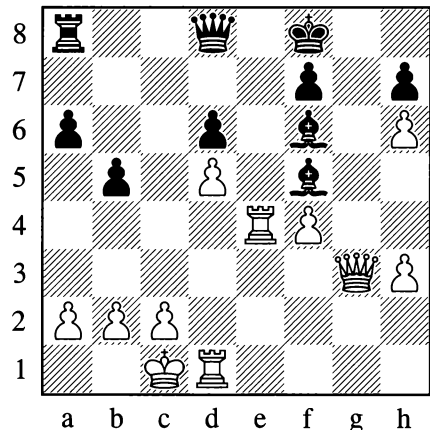
0–1

I wanted the natural 23. ♖g2?. It almost works, but Black just survives with perfect defensive moves. 23... ♖xe4 Now not 24. ♖xe4 ♕f5, when Black is much better, but 24. ♖xe4!.



Here I thought Black is lost, as she cannot prevent ♖e4xh7 and a disaster on the g-file. But after 24... ♕xh3!! 25. ♖xh7 ♖c8!, Black is ready to blockade with ... ♕g4: 26. ♖g1 ♕g4! ... ♖f5 comes next and Black is better.

23. ♖g3!! ♖xe4 24. ♖xe4 ♕f5



It is easy to get here and think Black is fine. I certainly did!

25. ♖e2! ♕g6 26. ♖de1!

It is surprising that White is winning here, but he is. The point is that Black will struggle to maintain the bishop on g6, thanks to f4-f5 or h4-h5.

26... ♖d7

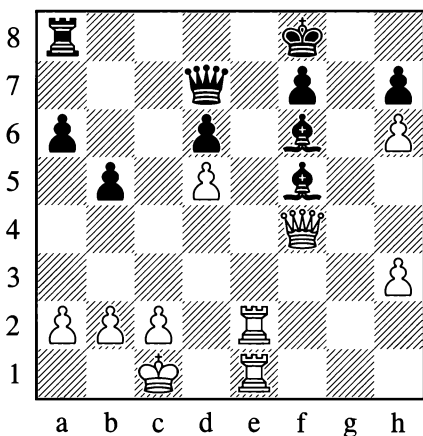
26... ♖c8 would see the h-pawn advance with 27. h4. Now 27... ♕xh4 would be met by 28. ♖e8†, winning.

Now we see the other pawn advance and why it was important to put the queen on g3 rather than g2.

### 27.f5! ♔xf5

27...♖xf5 28.♗xd6† is now possible! Mate follows.

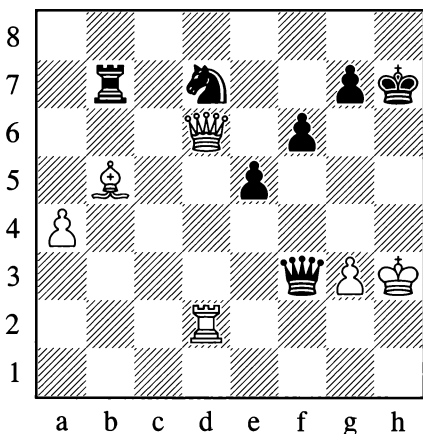
### 28.♗f4!



♖e1-f1 comes next, winning. This strikes me as nearly impossible for a human to find.

## 261. Emil Risteski – Robert Hovhannisyan

Terme Catez 2022



### 45.♗c6

The first move is not so hard.

### 45...e4

Now what? Always examine all checks and captures. White has no choice but to force his way through.

### 46.♗xb7!

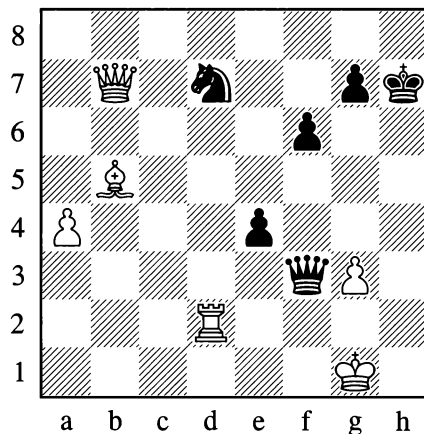
46.♖xd7? allowed a perpetual, which Black was happy to take in the game: 46...♗h1† 47.♔g4 ♖f3† 48.♔h3 ♗h1† 49.♔g4 ♖f3†

### 46...♗h5†

After 46...♔e5 47.♖h2, White is winning. ♔b5-e2 is coming.

### 47.♔g2 ♖f3† 48.♔g1!

White is also much better after 48.♔h2 ♔e5 49.♗c7 ♖e3 50.♖d7 ♖f2† 51.♔h3 ♖f5† 52.♔g2 ♖f3† 53.♔g1.



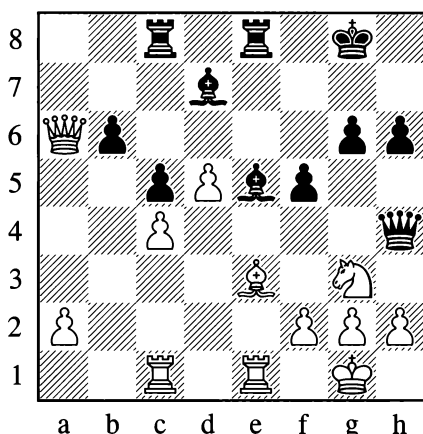
No need to be scared of ghosts. The king will find safety on the queenside.

### 48...♗xg3† 49.♔f1

The king runs towards safety, and Black is out of luck.

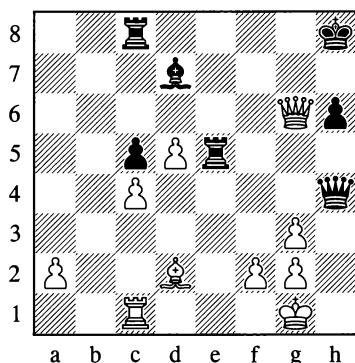
**262. Sanan Sjugirov – Velimir Ivic**

Belgrade 2022



This one was tough but solvable.

I liked 24. ♔d2!? the best. It is not as convincing as the main line, but it does prevent Black from pushing ...f5-f4: 24...f4 (Black can keep fighting after 24...♖b8!) 25. ♖xe5! ♖xe5 26. ♗xb6 White should win. 26...fxg3 27. ♗xg6† ♔h8 28. hxg3



White has too many threats.

Always examine all checks and captures:

**24. ♗xb6! f4 25. ♔xc5!**

I missed this when calculating because I only considered taking on g6 directly. Slow down!

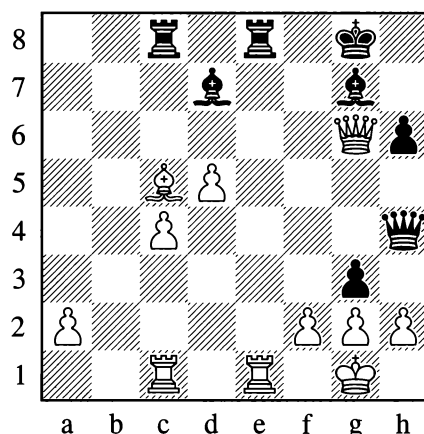
25. ♗xg6†?, as played in the game, was tempting but poor. After 25...♔h8, Black is safe enough. He is not losing c5. 26. ♔d2 fxg3 27. hxg3 ♗f6 was equal. The game was eventually drawn.

**25...fxg3 26. ♗xg6†**

The right moment.

Now, 26...♔h8 27. hxg3 ♗f6 28. ♗xf6† ♔xf6 29. ♔e3 wins. The pawns are coming.

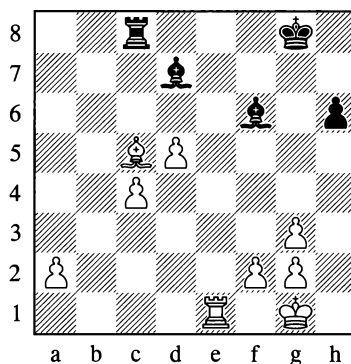
**26...♔g7**



**27. ♖xe8†!**

It is important to trade off a rook first.

After 27. hxg3 ♖xe1† 28. ♖xe1 ♗f6 29. ♗xf6 ♔xf6

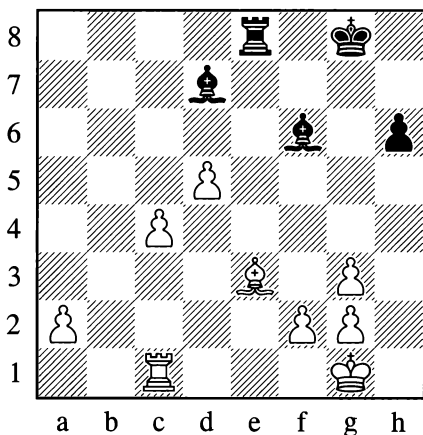


White is losing his c-pawn, so Black should hold.

### 27...♖xe8

After 27...♖xe8 28.♜e6† ♔h7 29.hxg3! ♜d8 30.♙e3, the pawns are devastating again.

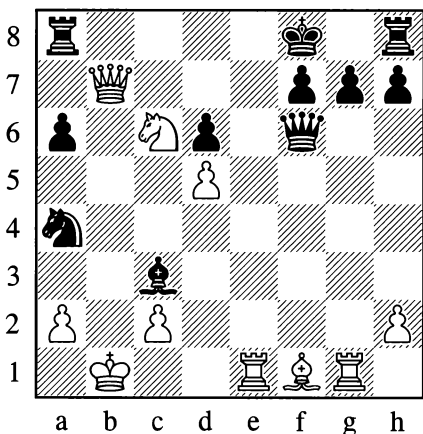
### 28.hxg3 ♜f6 29.♜xf6 ♙xf6 30.♙e3



Since White had the good sense to exchange rooks on the e-file, Black does not win the c-pawn. White has too many pawns.

## 263. Adam Horvath – Manish Anto Cristiano

Moscow 2021



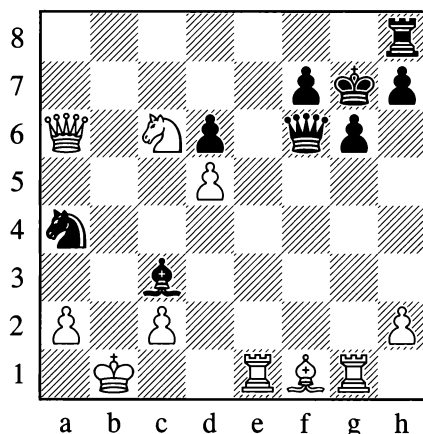
I thought this one was fairly straightforward.

### 23...g6!

What else? White was threatening mate. As soon as Black's king finds safety, he is obviously winning.

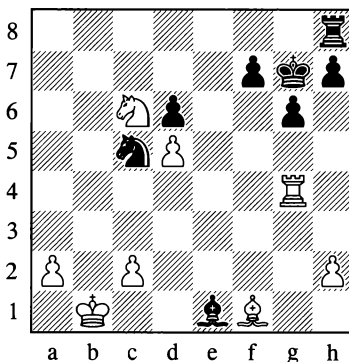
23...♖d8? was much less convincing. White held after: 24.♖e3! ♙d2 25.♜f3 ♖e8 26.♙g2 ♜c3† 27.♜b2 ♜d1† 28.♜b1 ♜c3† 29.♜b2 ♜d1† 30.♜b1 ½-½

### 24.♜xa8† ♔g7 25.♜xa6



I missed the best move here. But I do not think it matters. Black is winning in any case.

I proposed 25...♜c5!? 26.♜e2 ♜h4!. Black hits the rook on e1 and wins a tempo. He is ready for ...♜b8†, with ...♜b4† to follow once the knight is gone. The machine finds nothing better than: 27.♜g4 ♜xe1† 28.♜xe1 ♙xe1



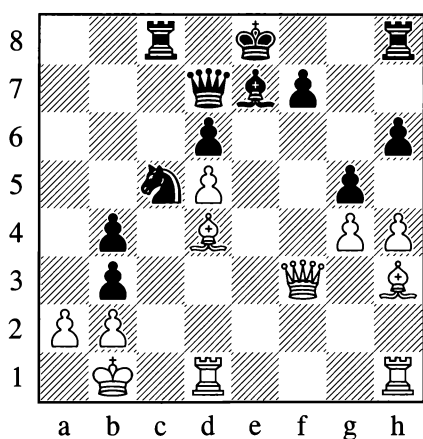
Black has a winning endgame, thanks to his superior structure and better pieces. The f-pawn rolls.

**25...♙a5!!**

White is mated.

### 264. Fabien Libiszewski – Alexander Naumann

Germany 2021

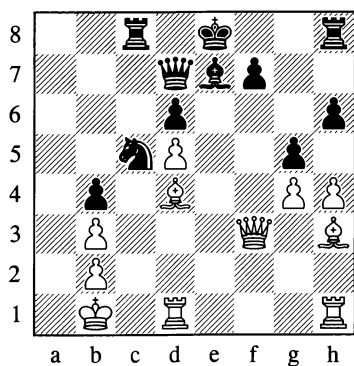


This one was also not too tough. Examine all checks and captures.

**24.♙xh8!**

See a rook, take a rook!

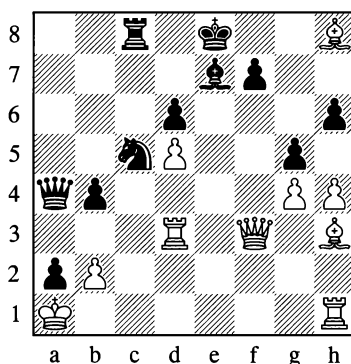
The move played, 24.axb3?, provided Black with an opportunity.



He should have castled out of it, with a substantial fight ahead: 24...0-0! Black should be fine. His king looks safe enough. Black is ready to recapture on g5 with the bishop.

White was winning after 24...f6? 25.♙de1 and won quickly thereafter: 25...♙f8 26.♙e3 ♙b7 27.♙he1 ♙f7 28.♙f5 ♖d7 29.hxg5 hxg5 30.♙g6 ♖e5 31.♙xe5 dxe5 32.♙f1 ♙d6 33.♙h3 ♖e7 34.♙xf7+ 1-0

After 24.♙xh8!, White wins: 24...bxa2+ 25.♙a1 ♙a4 26.♙d3!



An important move to see, but not a tough one. White remains a piece ahead.

Black also has the scary-looking:

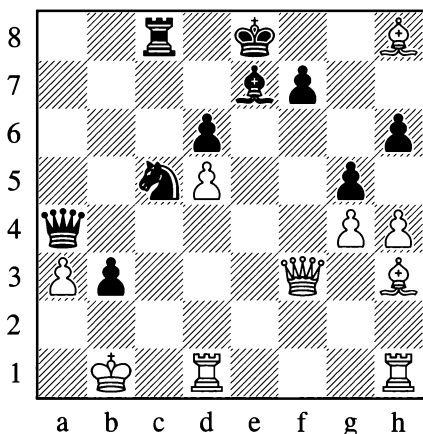
**24...♙a4**

But White has the cool reply:

**25.a3! bxa3**

Now everything wins. For example, 26.♙d4 ♙a5 27.♙c4. But I like taking on a3.

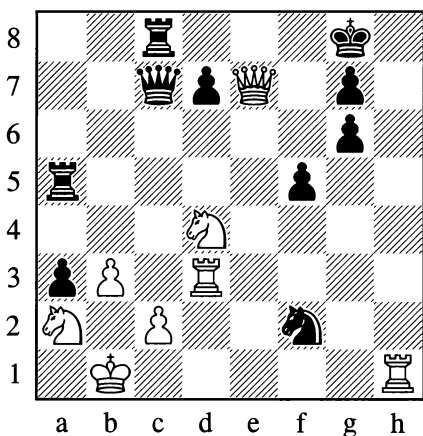
**26.bxa3**



White does not get mated once he puts a rook on the second rank. He has so many more defenders than Black has attackers.

### 265. Samvel Ter-Sahakyan – Klementy Sychev

Warsaw (rapid) 2021



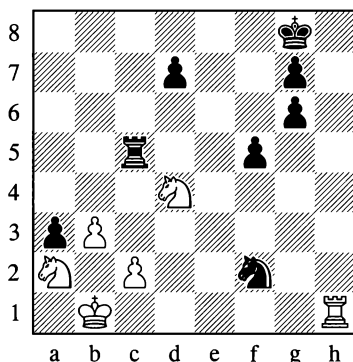
I was a little placid on this one.

32...Bc3!

The first move is obvious enough.

32...Bc5

Now I wanted 33.Bxc5?, which was played in the game. Both the Samuel's greatly underestimated Black's drawing chances! 33...Wxc5 34.Wxc5 Bxc5



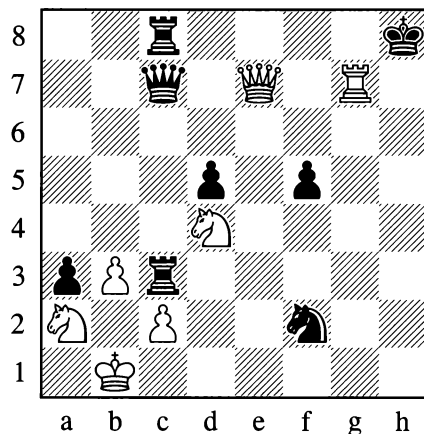
Eventually Black held. I was surprised that the machine claimed White was almost not even better here. I assumed the b-pawn would win.

33.Bg1!!

Momentum. Don't lose your breath.

33...Bxc3 34.Bxg6! d5 35.Bxg7+ Kh8

White now has an elegant combination to wrap things up:



36.Wh4+! Kh8 37.Qe6+

White wins material.

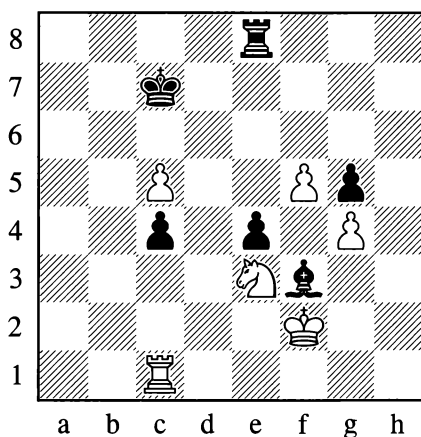
37...Kg8 38.Qxc7 B3xc7 39.Wxf2

Black can resign.



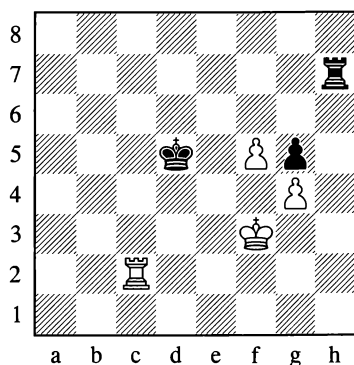
**266. Aleksey Dreev – Raunak Sadhwani**

Warsaw (rapid) 2021



This exercise can be worked out logically. All White needs to do to win the game is take on c4 with the knight and challenge the f3-bishop.

Black had good counterplay in the game after the c4-pawn was captured with the rook: 36.♖xc4? ♜c6! 37.♞c2 (or 37.♜g3 ♚e2!) 37...♞h8 (37...♞b8!) 38.♜g3 ♞h7 39.♙c4 ♜xc5 40.♙e5† ♜d5 41.♙xf3 exf3 42.♜xf3

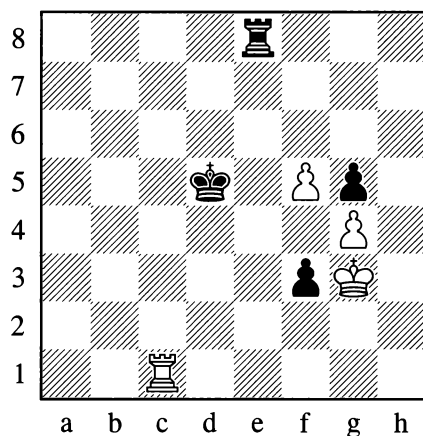


The black king was not cut-off. The game was drawn after a few more moves.

**36.♜g3!**

White overprotects g4. There is nothing Black can do about ♙e3xc4 next.

36...♜c6 37.♙xc4 ♜xc5 38.♙e5† ♜d5 39.♙xf3 exf3

**40.♞d1†!**

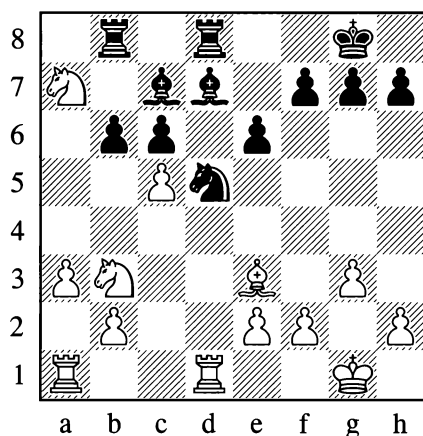
An important intermediate move, cutting off Black's king along the d-file.

**40...♜c5 41.♜xf3**

The rook endgame wins easily.

**267. Aleksandra Maltsevskaya – Alisher Suleymenov**

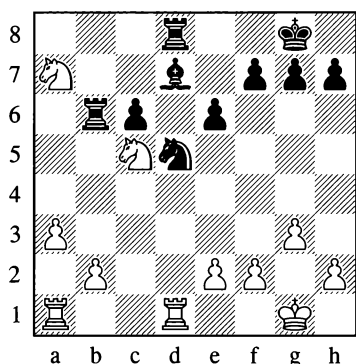
Chelyabinsk 2022



This one is about avoiding temptation. White has an obvious continuation that looks strong. But Black has a defense.

The natural 18.cxb6? was played in the game.

18...♙xb6 19.♙xb6 ♖xb6! 20.♖c5



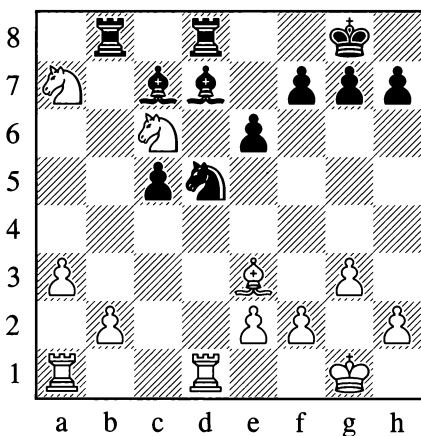
It is easy to make it this far and assume that Black will resign with e2-e4 coming next. But Black had: 20...♙e8! 21.e4 ♖a8! 22.exd5 cxd5 The knight was trapped on a7. White eventually won anyway. But for the moment, Black was very much back in the game. 23.b4 ♖xa7 was just equal.

So White needs to recalibrate:

**18.♖d4!**

Black collapses on c6. Allowing ...♖xe3 is not a problem.

**18...bxc5 19.♖dxc6**



I stopped calculating here, but apparently there was more work to be done.

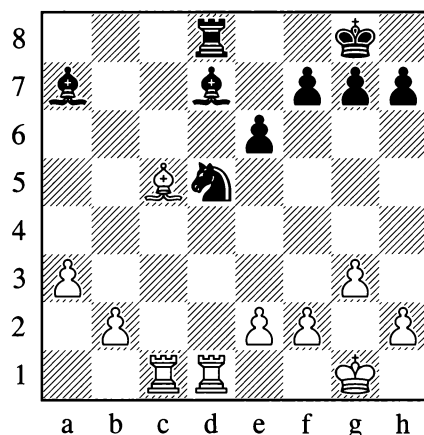
**19...♙b6 20.♖ac1!**

20.♖xb8?! is decent. White is better, but this is much less convincing: 20...♖xb8 21.♖ac1 ♙xa7 22.♙xc5 ♙xc5 23.♖xc5 g5

**20...♙xa7**

20...♖xe3 21.fxe3 ♙xc6 22.♖xc6 wins.

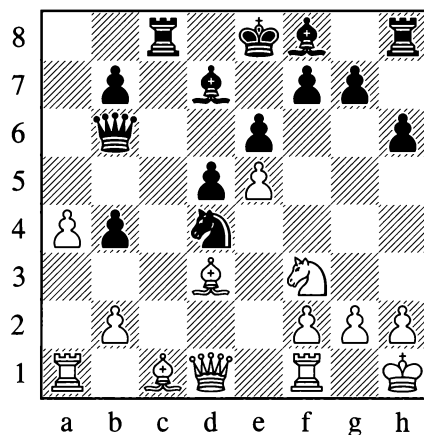
**21.♖xd8! ♖xd8 22.♙xc5**



Black is too passive. The rook and pawns are much better than the two pieces. The pawns are coming with e2-e4 and b2-b4. White is winning.

## 268. Gadir Guseinov – Karolis Juksta

Terme Catez 2022



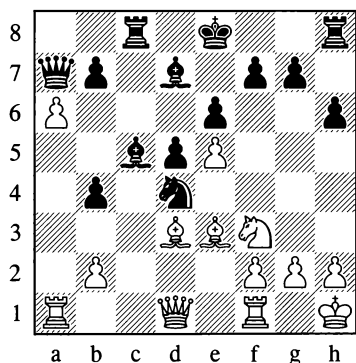
16...♔a7 17.♙e3

It is fine to start with this move too.

17...♙c5 18.♘xd4!

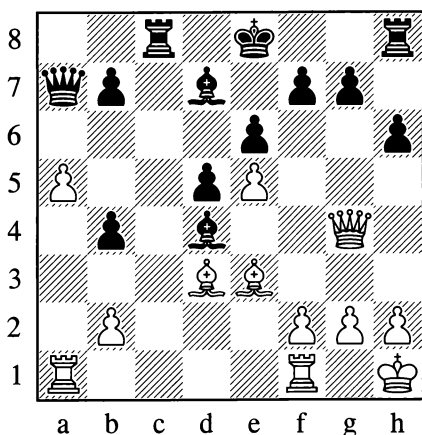
Always examine all checks and captures!

My answer was the tempting 18.a6?. I missed the same defensive resource that Guseinov did:



18...♘b5! Black was worse here and under a lot of pressure. But the game is far from over and was equal after: 19.♖a4 bxa6 20.♙xb5 ♙xb5 21.♖xb5† axb5 22.♗xa7 ♙xa7 23.♙xa7 ♖c2 White won in the end.

18...♙xd4 19.♖g4



19...♙xe3 20.♖xg7!

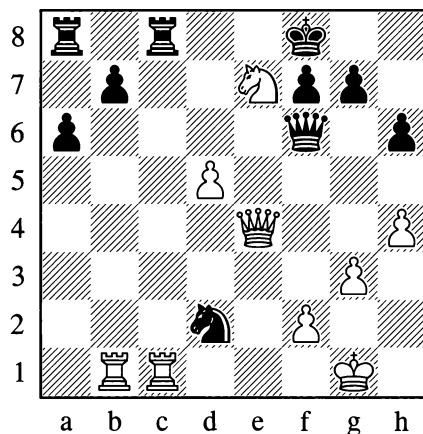
Checks and captures.

20...♗f8 21.fxe3 ♖xe3 22.♙g6!

The final winning blow.

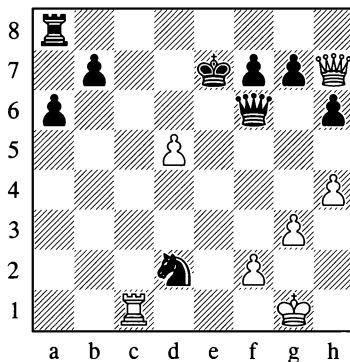
## 269. Valery Kazakouski – Rodion Radzhabov

Chelyabinsk 2022



White does not have time for 57.♘xc8. He is threatened with 57...♘xe4.

57.♖h7? allows the rook to be dragged to the wrong square: 57...♗xc1† 58.♗xc1 ♙xe7



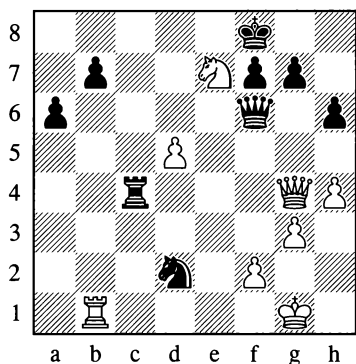
There is no ♗b1xb7†. And after 59.♗c7† ♘d6 Black is winning.

If ABC does not work, how about CBA?

57.♗xc8†! ♗xc8 58.♖h7!!

The right move order. Black is unable to stop all the threats.

Not: 58. ♖g4? ♜c4!



The attacking queen is herself attacked. The game was eventually drawn, but that is a surprise. My machine reads minus 7!

59. ♖e2 ♜xb1?

59... ♜c2! wins.

60. ♖xc4 ♖xe7 61. d6! ♖d7?

61... ♖xd6 62. ♖c8† ♔e7 63. ♖xb7† is slightly better for Black.

62. ♖c7 ♔e8 63. ♖b8† ♖d8 64. d7†?!

64. ♖xb7! is equal.

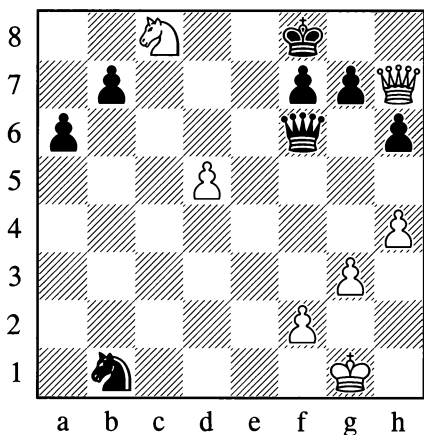
64... ♔e7 65. ♖xb7 ♖xd7 66. ♖xb1

Black had a slight advantage. The players shared the point, but the game was less than halfway through here!

58... ♜xb1

It is game over after both 58... ♔xe7 59. ♜xb7† ♔d6 60. ♜b6† and 58... ♜c7 59. d6 ♖xd6 60. ♜f5.

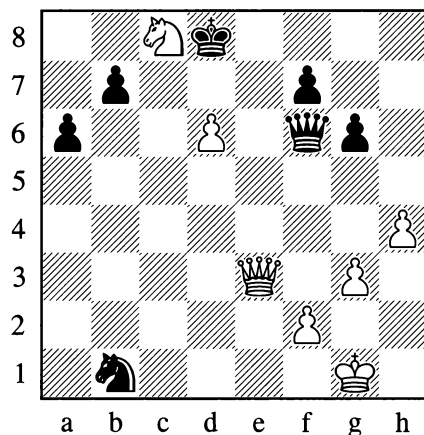
59. ♜xc8



59...g6

A sad necessity. 59... ♔e8 fails to 60. ♖xb1.

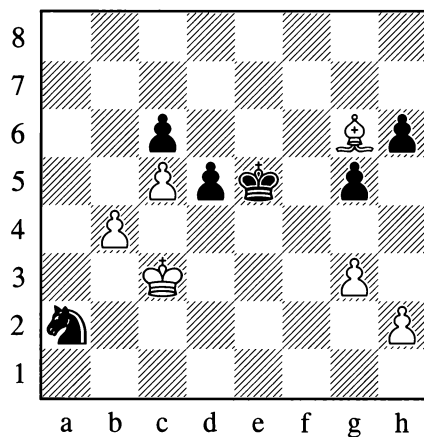
60. ♖xb6† ♔e8 61. ♖e3† ♔d8 62. d6!



Black is crushed. His queen cannot cover both b6 and e7 at the same time.

## 270. Yannick Gozzoli – Philip Lindgren

Germany 2021

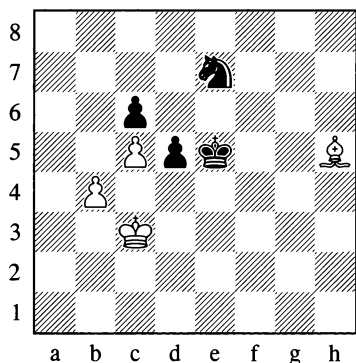


64. ♔b3 ♜c1† 65. ♔a4!

White has every reason to go for it here. It was a classical game, but I suspect the players were low on time by move sixty-five.

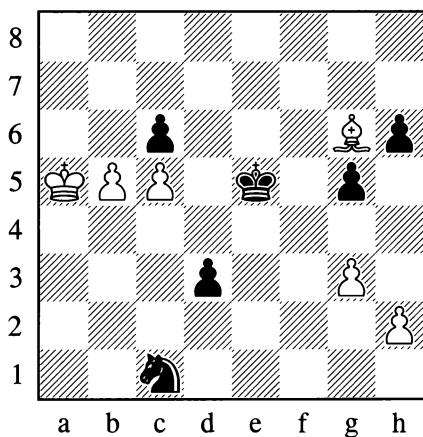
White played 65. ♔b2? ♜e2!. Black was fine here. 66. ♜d3 ♜d4 67. h3 h5 68. h4 gxf4

69.gxh4 ♖f3 70.♙e2 ♜xh4 71.♙xh5 ♜f5  
72.♙c3 ♜e7



The game was drawn a few moves later.

65...d4 66.♙a5! d3 67.b5!



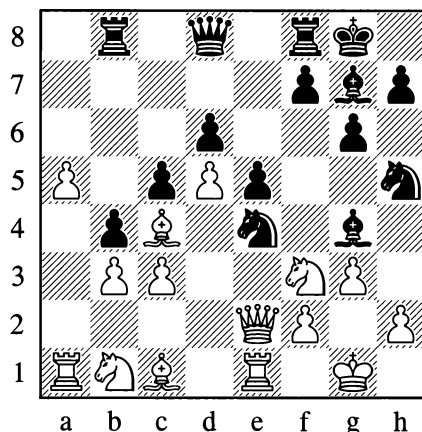
White wins the race. His bishop easily stops the d-pawn from h5.

67...cxb5 68.c6 ♜b3†  
68...d2 69.♙h5 also wins.

69.♙b6 d2 70.♙h5  
White wins.

## 271. Filip Haring – Daniil Yuffa

Terme Catez 2022



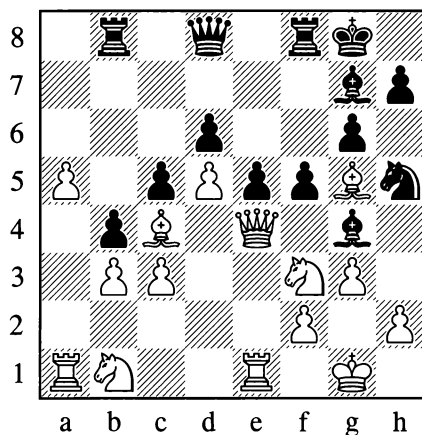
This one was not too hard.

19.♙xe4

White played 19.h3? and eventually lost after: 19...♙xf3 20.♙xf3 ♜xc3 21.♜xc3 bxc3 22.g4 (22.♙a2! was equal) 22...♜f4 Although Black was only slightly better here.

19...f5 20.♙g5!!

White is crushed after 20.♙e3? f4 21.gxf4 ♙xf4!. This is annoying for White. It would be good if the bishop could take the rook!



The main idea. White gets his bishop to g5. Before hiding his queen on e3 to make ...f5-f4 less scary. I did not see it fully to completion, and Black has a lot of possible moves here. But I did understand this is White's best option.

### 20...♖e8

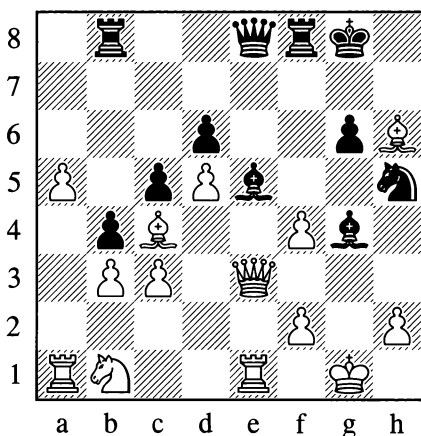
White has a large advantage after 20...♗d7 21.♕xe5! ♕xe5 22.♗d3.

### 21.♗e3 h6

Now, White loses a piece back, and should get as much as he can for it.

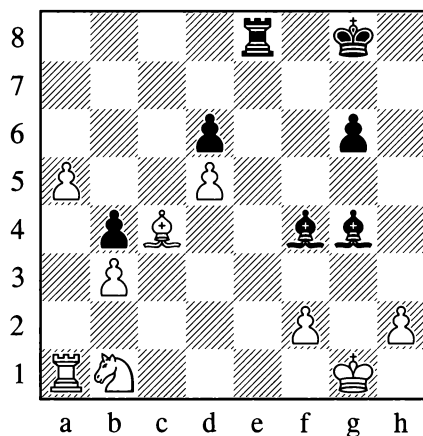
White is also winning after 21...f4 22.gxf4 h6 23.♕xe5 dxe5 24.f3.

### 22.♕xe5! ♕xe5 23.♕xh6! f4 24.gxf4!



Black is forced to trade off the queens, and his attack is over. Still, some care must be taken.

24...♕xf4 25.♕xf4! ♖xf4 26.♗xf4! ♕xf4 27.♖xe8† ♖xe8 28.cxb4 cxb4



### 29.♖a2!

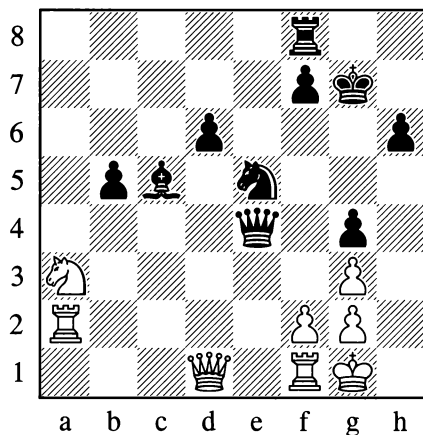
An important final subtlety. White is ready for ♕b1-d2 next.

### 29...♖e1† 30.♔g2 ♖xb1 31.a6!

Through to the end zone we go!

## 272. Alireza Firouzja – Levon Aronian

Paris 2021



This was one of the easier ones.

Black played 30...b4 31.♕b1 h5. He is better here, but the game goes on. He missed a direct knockout:

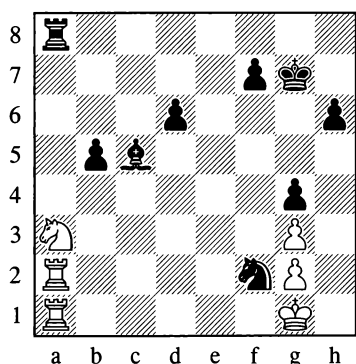
### 30...♖a8!

Black pins the knight. He was presumably worried about White regrouping with ♖a2-e2 and then moving the knight. But this is where we should examine all checks and captures.

### 31. ♖e2

Black duly wins the knight after 31. ♖a1 ♖a4.

After 31. ♖b3 ♖d3! 32. ♖xd3 ♘xd3 33. ♖fa1 ♘xf2



Black has a winning endgame after 34. ♖xf2 ♙d4.

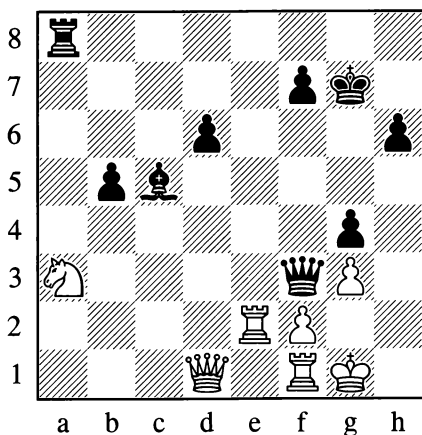
### 31... ♘f3!

The point.

### 32. gxf3

32. ♘h1 ♖f5 is curtains.

### 32... ♖xf3



The twin threats of ... ♖xa3 and ... ♖xg3† are decisive.

### 33. ♘h2

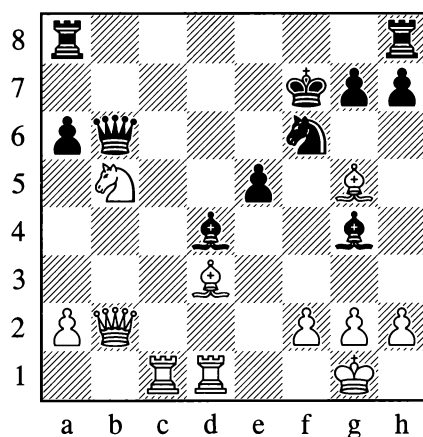
33. ♖a1† ♘h7 wins.

### 33... ♖xa3

Black should win.

## 273. Abhimanyu Puranik – Alvar Alonso Rosell

Warsaw (rapid) 2021

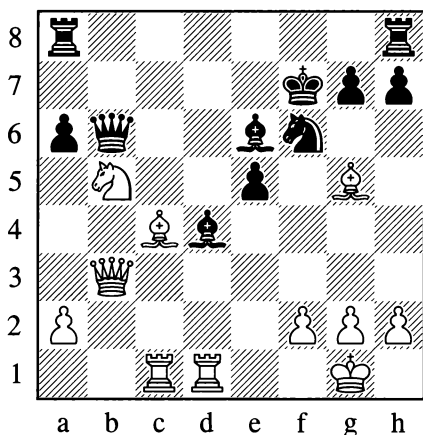


As always, checks and captures.

### 21. ♖b3†!

21. ♖c7†? is complacent. After 21... ♖xc7 22. ♖b3† ♙e6 23. ♖xe6† ♘xe6 24. ♘xc7† ♘f7 25. ♘xa8 ♖xa8, Black should easily make a draw.

### 21... ♙e6 22. ♙c4!



Black is unable to win any material. His major positional problems should soon decide the game.

### 22...♖xb5

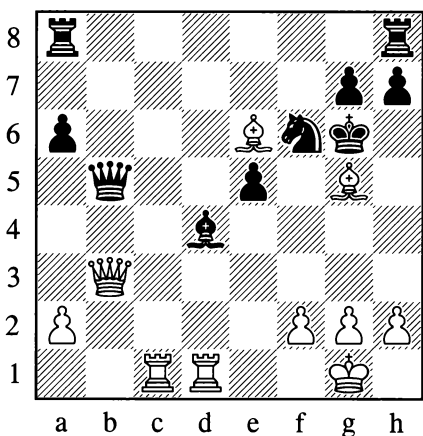
Black also loses with the alternative tries:

22...axb5 23.♙xe6† ♔g6 24.♞xd4 exd4 25.♞d3† ♔xg5 26.h4† ♔xh4 27.♞f5, and mate is coming.

22...♞he8 23.♜xd4 ♞xb3 24.♜xb3 winning.

22...♙xf2†? Opening the d-file only makes things worse. 23.♔h1 Black will regret allowing access to the d6-square.

### 23.♙xe6† ♔g6



Now everything wins. Pretty is:

### 24.♙f7†!

24.♞g3 is also good enough. As is my line: 24.♞c2† ♔xg5 25.♞f5† ♔h6 26.g4, winning.

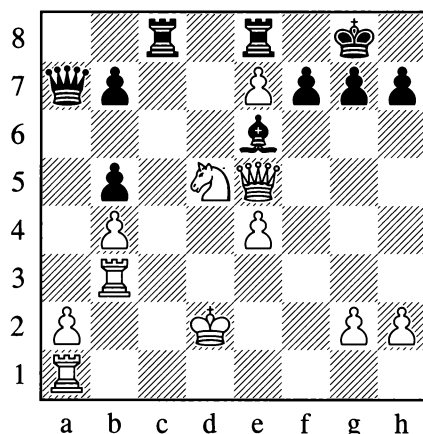
24...♔xg5 25.♞g3† ♔f5 26.♞f3† ♔g5 27.♞xd4 h5 28.h4† ♔h6 29.♞f5

1-0

Mate is unstoppable.

## 274. Ondrej Nytra – Lumir Mrazek

Czech Republic 2022



White missed his moment with:

### 23.♞e3?

He eventually lost after a lot of mutual errors.

### 23...h6?

23...h5! gives Black sufficient compensation.

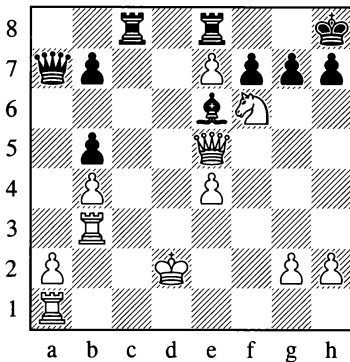
24.♞g3 ♞f2† 25.♔d3 f6 26.♜xf6† 26.♞xe6† ♔h8 27.♞f7 ♞c2† 28.♔e3 ♞g8 29.♞g6 wins.

26...♔h8 27.♜d5 ♞xe7 28.♞f3 ♞xg2 29.♞g3 ♞f2 30.♞ag1 ♙xd5 31.♞xd5 ♞cc7 32.♞lg2 ♞e1 33.♞e2 ♞c3#

0-1

Always be wary of automatic-looking moves: 23.♜f6†? Black does not need to take the knight. 23...♔h8



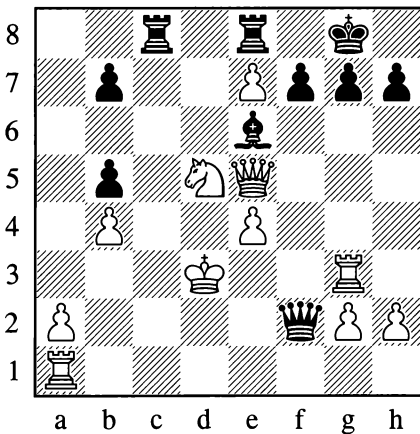


Too many threats. ...♙f2†, ...♚xb3 and ♜xe7. Time to resign.

### 23. ♜g3!

This move is obvious to consider since it threatens both mate and ♔d5-f6†. But it allows a check on f2. What happens if we do it anyway?

### 23... ♙f2† 24. ♚d3!



Black runs out of checks right away. White is good to go.

### 24... ♙c2†

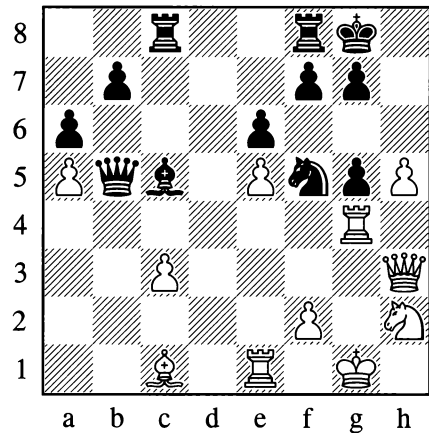
24...f6 25. ♙xe6† wins.

### 25. ♚e3

No more checks. White wins.

## 275. Ivan Saric – Ehsan Ghaem Maghami

Warsaw (rapid) 2021



It is natural to take on g5. White should consider the move order. He definitely wants to push h5-h6 to open up Black's king. But does he know which piece he wants to take on g5 with next?

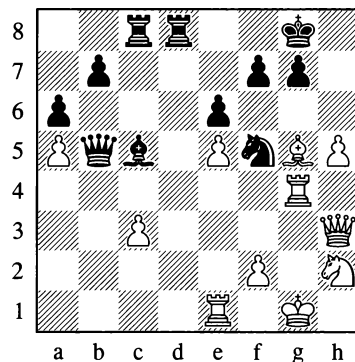
### 27. h6!!

Most flexible. Most forceful. Totally devastating.

Both captures on g5 are premature:

White played 27. ♜xg5? ♚e7 28. ♜g2 ♙xa5 and eventually saved the game, but was lost here. Black got his pieces back in ample time. White was not able to rid himself of the h-pawn.

### 27. ♚xg5?! ♜fd8!!



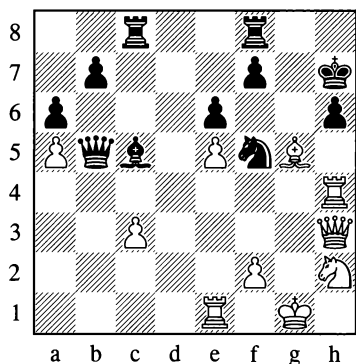
Black has reasonable counterplay here and the bishop will be a good defender on f8. White should be more energetic than this. Black has sufficient compensation for the exchange after 28. ♖xd8 ♜xd8 29. ♜g2 ♞d2.

27...g6

Other moves are no better:

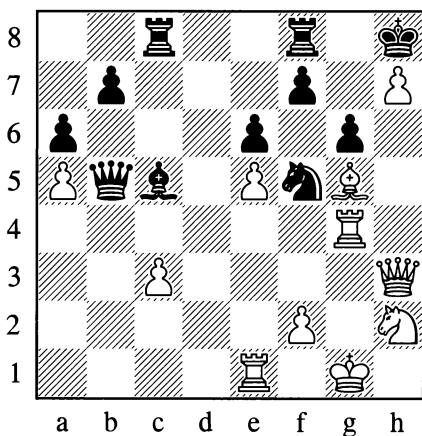
27... ♖xh6 28. ♜xg5! ♜f5 (or 28...f6 29. ♜xg7+) 29. ♜g4 Mate is coming. White is glad not to have his h-pawn here.

27...g6 28. ♜xg5! ♜h7 29. ♜h4



Black is crushed: 29... ♖xh4 30. ♜xh4 ♜d3 31. ♜xh6+ ♜g8 32. ♜g4 f6 33. ♖xf6+ ♜xf6 34. ♜xf6 and wins.

28.h7+! ♜h8 29. ♜xg5

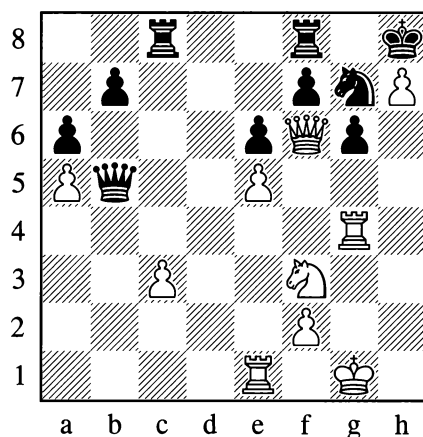


♜g5-f6+ is coming.

29... ♜e7 30. ♜xe7 ♜xe7 31. ♜h4!

The final difficult move. The rest plays itself.

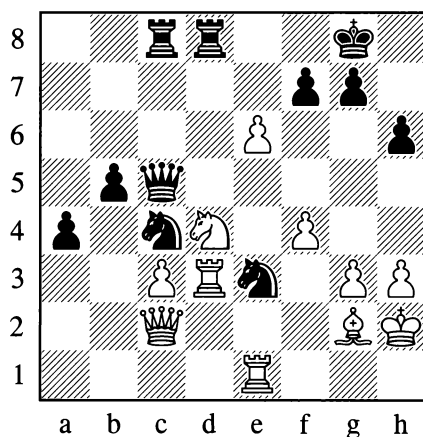
31... ♜f5 32. ♜f6+ ♜g7 33. ♜f3!



The knight coming to g5 will end the game quickly.

## 276. Vladimir Fedoseev – Sergey Karjakin

Warsaw (rapid) 2021



I got this one wrong.

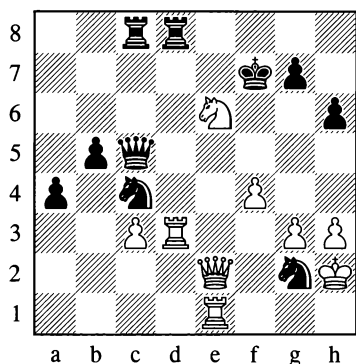
31. ♖e2?

This was Fedoseev's choice. It was the move I wanted as well.

31... fxe6?

31... ♖xg2! would have saved the game.

32. exf7† ♕xf7 33. ♖e6



I thought White wins here, but I had missed the key defensive resource: 33... ♖xe1! 34. ♖xc5 ♖xd3 Black is taking all of White's attacking pieces. White is lucky to have a draw.

32. ♖b7?

32. ♖xe3 This wins and this I did see.

32... ♖xe3 33. ♖xe3 ♖xc3 34. ♖xe6† ♕h8

35. ♖c6 ♖e8 36. ♖xe8† ♖xe8 37. ♖xe8† ♕h7

38. f5! winning.

32... ♖b8 33. ♖e4 ♖d6

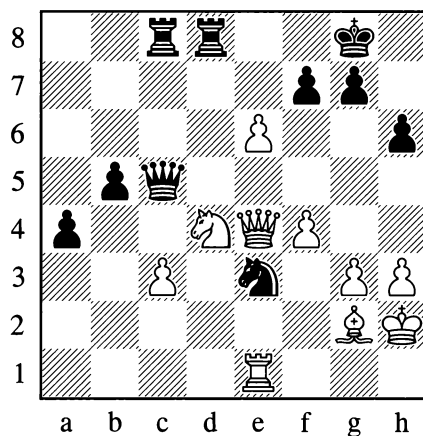
Black was safe enough, and even a bit better, though the game was ultimately drawn.

White wins with:

31. ♖dx3! ♖xe3

Now not 32. ♖xe3? ♖xd4. Taking with the rook is fine as well. 33. exf7† ♕xf7 White should be careful not to lose. But he has better:

32. ♖e4!!



The key point.

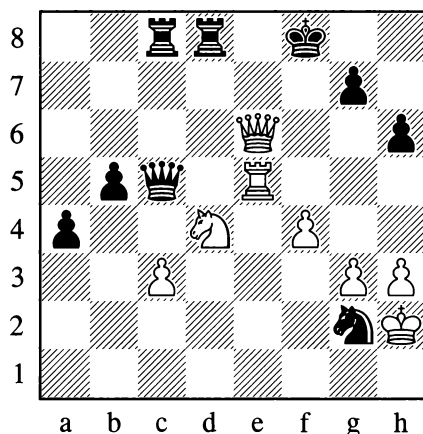
32... ♖xg2 33. exf7†

Now it is forceful moves all the way.

33... ♕xf7

33... ♕h8 is also hopeless: 34. ♖e6 ♖xc3 35. ♖xd8 ♖xd8 36. ♖e8† ♖xe8 37. fxe8=♖† ♕h7 38. ♖e4† wins.

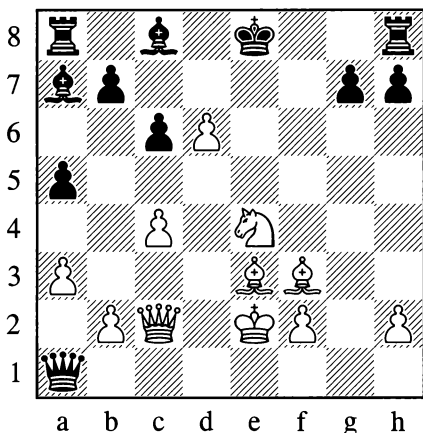
34. ♖e6†! ♕f8 35. ♖e5!



White wins the queen, and the game.

**277. Vitaliy Bernadskiy – Momchil Petkov**

Terme Catez 2022



21. ♖g5?

The move played in the game was natural but poor.

21... ♗d7!

Black's king will escape to the queenside. It is very surprising he did not win!

22. ♖e4† ♕d8 23. ♖f7† ♕c8 24. ♗g4 ♖xb2†  
25. ♗d2 ♖f6 26. ♖e5 ♖xf2†

26... ♗e6! wins.

27. ♕d3 ♗d8?

27... ♗c5 28. ♖xd7 ♗xd6 also wins.

28. ♖xd7 ♖d4† 29. ♖xd4 ♗xd4 30. ♖b6† ♕b8  
31. ♕xd4 ♖xd6† 32. ♕c3

The game is now equal and was later drawn.

Always examine all checks and captures:

**21. ♗h5†!**

This ends the game quickly.

**21...g6**

Moving the king out of check instead does not help:

21... ♕d8 22. ♗g5†, with mate soon.

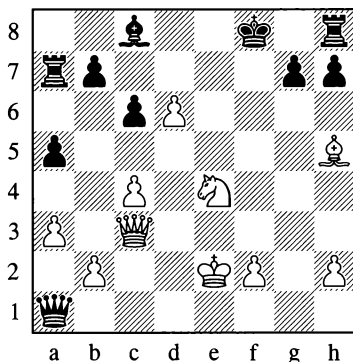
21... ♕d7 22. ♖c5† ♕xd6 23. ♖d2† ♕c7

24. ♖xa5† b6 25. ♗f4† ♕d8 26. ♖d2† ♕e7  
27. ♖d6#

21... ♕f8 22. ♗xa7 ♖xa7

22... ♗d7 23. ♖d2 wins.

23. ♖c3



We will see this move again in the main line.

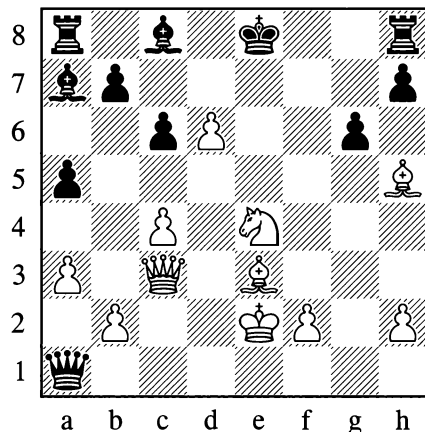
23... ♖h1

Both 23... ♗e6 24. ♖e5 and 23... ♖g1

24. ♖f3† win for White.

24. ♖e5

White wins.

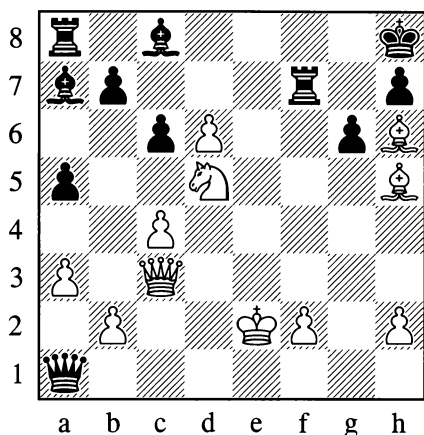
**22. ♖c3!**

Silent but deadly. The rest of the game plays itself.

**22...0-0 23. ♗h6! ♖f7 24. ♖f6†!**

Black will be mated in short order.

24...♔h8 25.♖d5†!



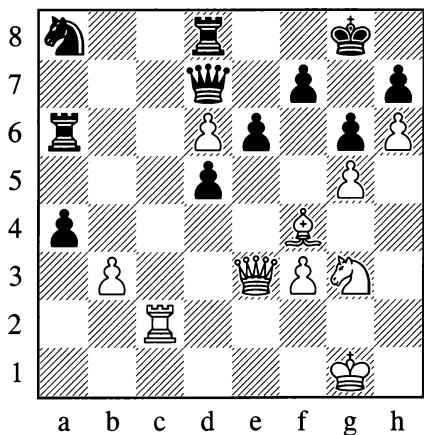
This is the easiest win.

25...♔g8 26.♖e7† ♜xc7 27.dxc7

Mate on g7 comes next.

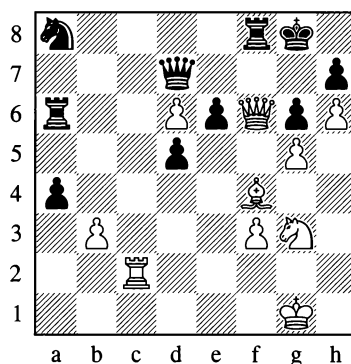
### 278. Rakesh Kulkarni – Baadur Jobava

Dhaka 2019



White has two winning moves.

36.♞e5 is one of them, but White needs an important resource. 36...f6! (36...f5? 37.♙e3, winning, is easy enough.) 37.♞xf6 ♜f8



I saw this far and thought Black is beating back the attack. But White is winning after 38.♜c8!! ♜xc8 39.♙e5. Though even that is not obvious after ...♜f8. I like my solution much more.

The move chosen in the game was not one of the winning moves:

36.♞d4?

Black eventually won, but only after many further mistakes:

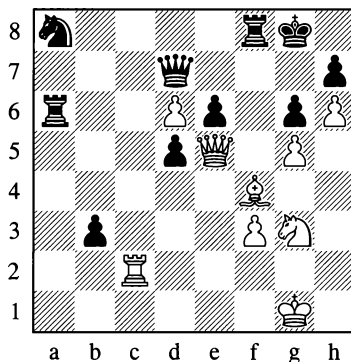
36...f6?

36...f5! was best, and unconvincing for White.

37.♞xf6 ♜f8 38.♞e5??

38.♜c8!! ♜xc8 39.♙e5 ♜f8 40.♞h8† ♔f7 41.♞xh7† ♔e8 42.♞xg6† ♞f7 43.♞d3 wins.

38...axb3

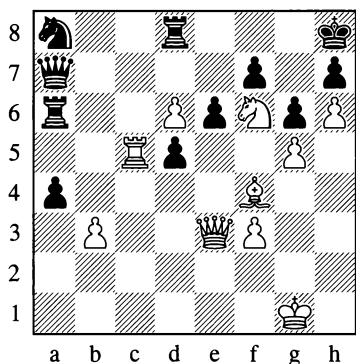


All bets are off now. Black won.

The other winning move, which I prefer, is:

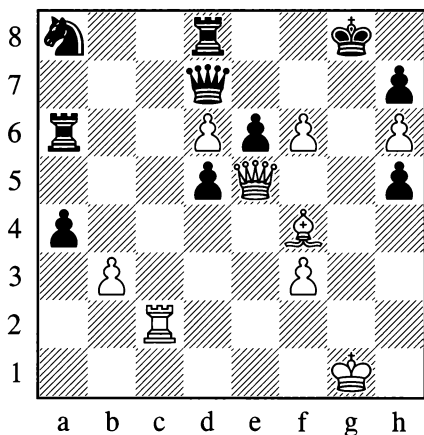
**36. ♖h5 gxh5**

Alternatively: 36... ♖a7 37. ♖f6† ♔h8  
38. ♖c5



Black does not trade queens (even that would not have saved him either!) and cannot stop White from coming to d4 next.

**37. ♖e5 f6 38. gxh6**



We see why including ♖g3-h5 and ...g6xh5 was important. The g-file beckons.

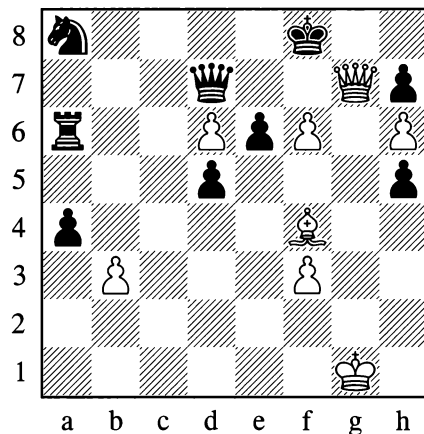
**38... ♔f7**

This was the main line of my analysis. White has more than one winning way.

38... ♔f8 39. f7 promptly leads to mate.

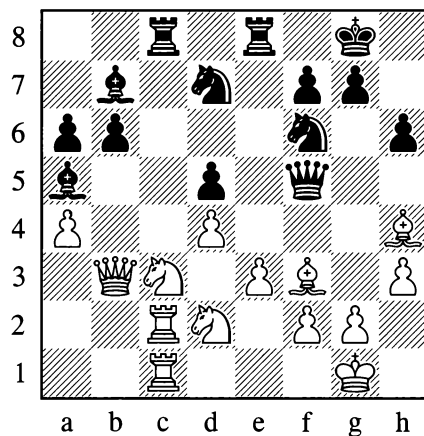
**39. ♖g2 ♖g8 40. ♖xg8 ♔xg8 41. ♖g5† ♔f8  
42. ♖g7!**

Splendid! 42.f7 also scores.



## 279. David Barak – Jan Malik

Czech Republic 2021



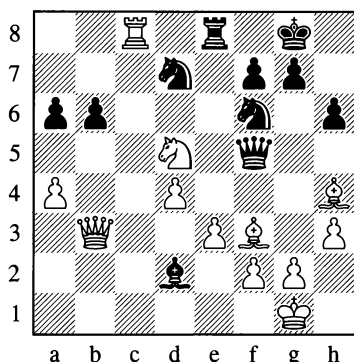
White is much better here, say after 23. ♖f1!?. But he should not miss his chance to knock his opponent out.

23. ♖g3!? was played in the game. White remains better, but the game goes on. Eventually he lost. 23... ♖g6 (better was 23... ♖e6) 24. ♖h2 ♔h8 25. ♖e2? ♖c5! Black equalized.

Examine all checks and captures!

### 23. ♖xd5!! ♜xd5

23... ♖xd2 is elegantly refuted by: 24. ♖xc8! ♖xc8 25. ♖xc8!



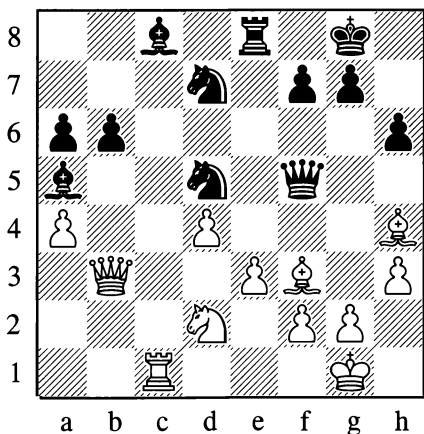
Black's e8-rook is overloaded.

23... ♖xd5 24. ♖xd5 ♖xc2 25. ♖xf7†! wins with an important intermediate move.

### 24. ♖xc8 ♖xc8

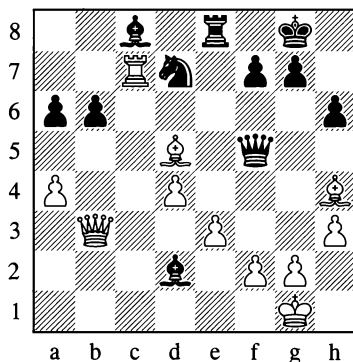
24... ♖xc8 25. ♖xc8† ♖xc8 26. ♖g4 wins.

Now, White has two ways to win.



Not 25. ♖g4?, as after 25... ♖g6! 26. ♖xd5 ♜f6! 27. ♖xf6 ♖xg4! Black lives. 28. hxg4 ♖xd2 29. ♖d1 ♖c2 is equal.

Winning is: 25. ♖xd5!? ♖xd2 26. ♖c7



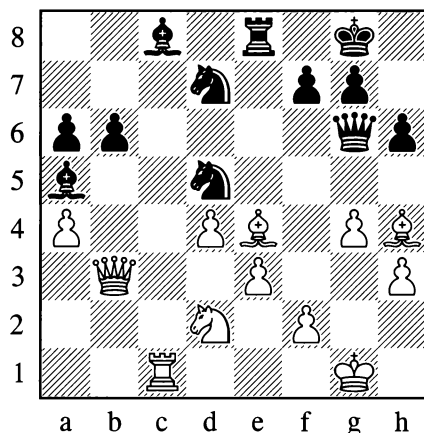
White has full domination despite the piece loss, and can look for ♖b3-c4 next. This is extremely difficult.

### 25. g4!?

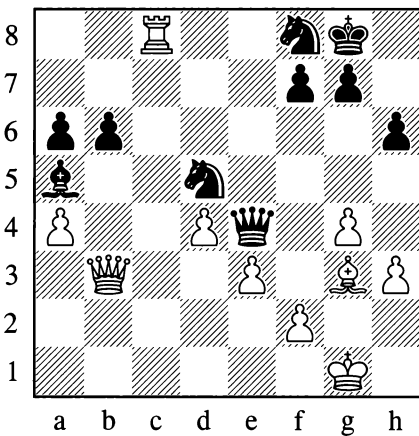
This wins too, but not if White plays the way I wanted to.

### 25... ♖g6 26. ♖e4!

I wanted 26. ♖xd5 ♖xd2 27. ♖xc8 ♖xc8 28. ♖xd7, and White is better. But I would not beat Carlsen too often.



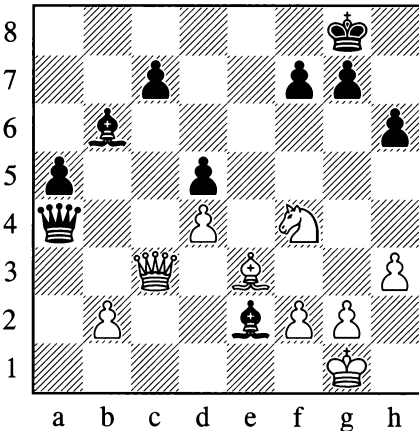
26... ♖xe4 27. ♖xc8† ♜f8 28. ♜xe4 ♖xe4 29. ♖g3!



White is solid and much better. ♕g3-d6 is coming next.

### 280. Krikor Sevag Mekhitarian – Jose Fernando Cuenca Jimenez

Floripa 2022

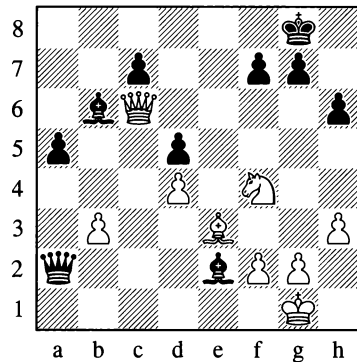


White missed a chance with: 32. ♖xd5? ♜c4 33. ♜xc4 ♜xc4 34. ♖xb6. The game was agreed drawn here, for obvious reasons.

Black's pieces are uncoordinated due to his awkward bishop on e2. White can take advantage.

### 32.b3! ♜b5

32... ♜a2 also loses: 33. ♜c6!



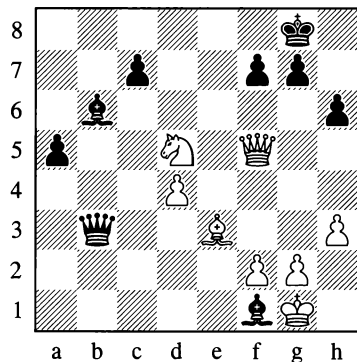
Black's queen is tethered to the defense of his bishop. There is nothing he can do about ♜c6-e8+ coming next, taking f7 and putting his king in a world of hurt. 33... ♜d1 34. ♜e8+ ♜h7 35. ♜xf7 wins.

### 33. ♜c2! ♜f1

There was no other square.

### 34. ♜f5! ♜e2

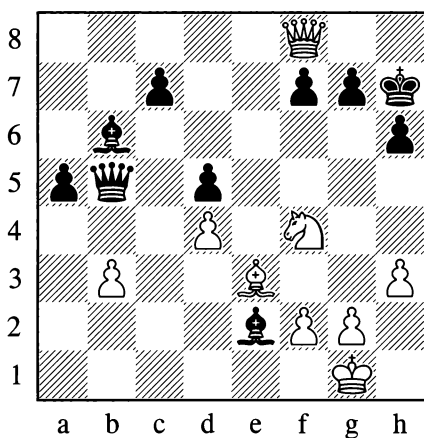
After 34... ♜xb3 35. ♖xd5:



Black's king is feeling lonely and will soon be finished off. ♜c8+ and ♖e7 are coming.

### 35. ♜c8+! ♜h7 36. ♜f8!

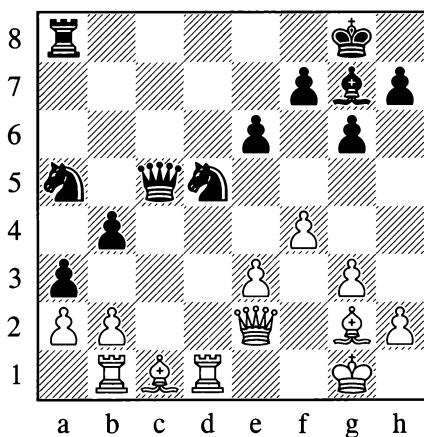




Black cannot save f7, and he loses.

### 281. Victor Mikhalevski – Grigoriy Oparin

Warsaw (rapid) 2021



I thought this was the easiest problem of the entire chapter. The most obvious move is right, and there is not that much to it.

#### 23...b3!

Black is an exchange down and needs to make something happen. Introducing pawn tension as far down as the third rank is a good place to start!

#### 24.♙xd5

Neither of the pawn captures appeals:

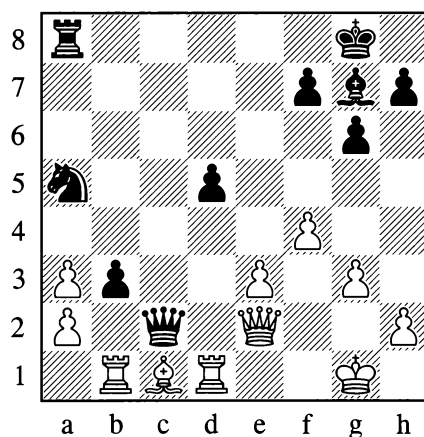
24.axb3 a2 25.♖a1 ♜xb3 winning, is easy enough.

24.bxa3 ♜c2! is also decisive.

#### 24...exd5 25.bxa3

Mikhalevski's choice in the game, 25.♙d2, did not make Black work too hard: 25...bxa2 26.♖a1 axb2 27.♖xa2 ♜c2 28.♖a3 ♙f8 29.♖c3 b1=♙ 30.♖xb1 ♜xb1† 31.♖c1 ♜b2 0–1

#### 25...♜c2!



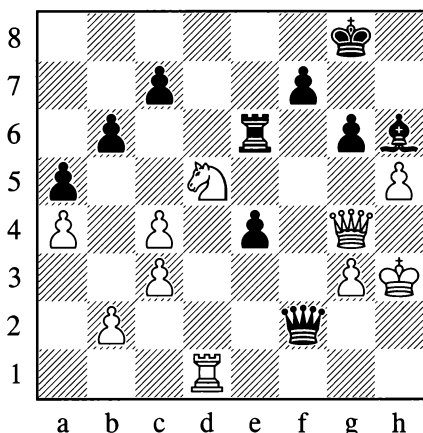
The point. White cannot take on c2, and otherwise he is unable to stop the numerous threats of ...♜xe2, ...♜xb1, or ...b3xa2.

#### 26.♙d2 bxa2 27.♖bc1 ♜b2

Black's a-pawn easily wins him the game.

**282. Fatih Baltic – Norbert Coenen**

Germany 2021



I thought this was an easier one as well.

**33.hxg6!**

Of course, the first point to see is that Black cannot take back on g6: 33...fxg6 34.♖xe6† and 33...♗xg6 34.♕e7† are both immediately decisive.

Black must play:

**33...f5**

But now the harder move comes.

**34.♖h4?**

This was played in the game. It is a less natural square for the queen since White no longer controls f3.

**34...♗xg6!**

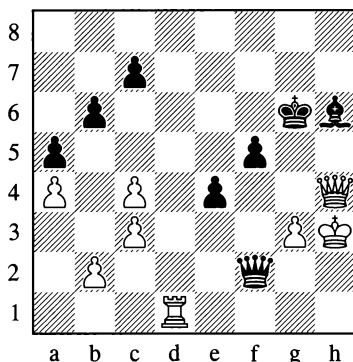
This would have saved the game.

The game went: 34...♕g7? 35.♕f4!! Now this works. But White should not have allowed ...♗xg6. 35...♕xf4 36.♗d7† ♕xg6 37.♖h7† ♕g5 38.♖h4† ♕g6 39.♖h7† ♕g5 40.♗g7† ♕f6 41.♗g6† ♕e5 42.♖xc7† 1–0 34...♖f3! is also good: 35.♖xh6 ♖g4† 36.♕h2 ♖e2† is equal.

**35.♕e7†**

35.♕f6† ♕f7 36.♗d7† ♕e6 Black's king is safe enough in the center. 37.♗e7† ♕xe7! 38.♕xe4† ♕g5 39.♖h7† ♕d8 40.♕xf2 ♗h6† 41.♖xh6 ♕xh6, with only a small White advantage.

35...♕f7 36.♕xg6 ♕xg6



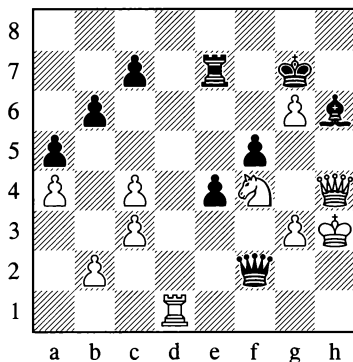
White's queen is badly misplaced and ...♖f3 or ...e4-e3-e2 will come next. Black has sufficient counterplay.

**34.♖h5! ♕g7**

White will win the endgame after 34...♖f3 35.♖xf3 exf3 36.♕xc7.

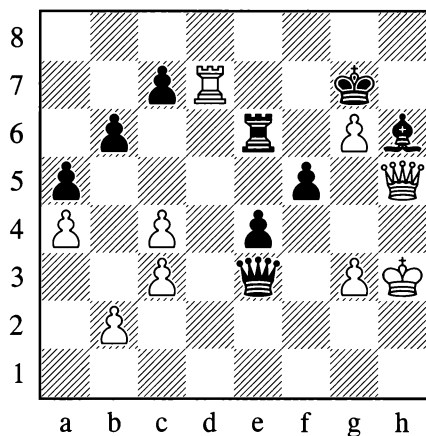
**35.♕e3!**

35.♕f4!? is the fine alternative which I wanted: 35...♗e7 36.♖h4!



The rook on e7 is hit. Moving it allows a check on d7. White is winning.

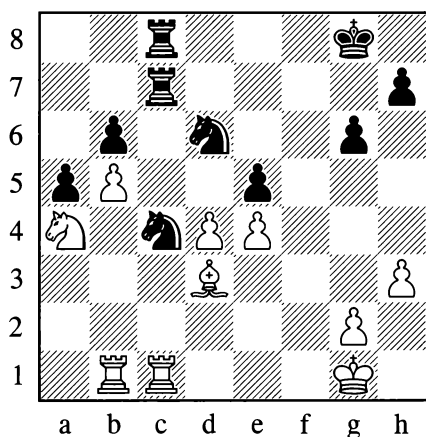
35...♔xe3 36.♖d7†



The f5-pawn falls and Black is mated shortly.

### 283. Aleksey Dreev – Ihor Samunenkov

Warsaw (rapid) 2021



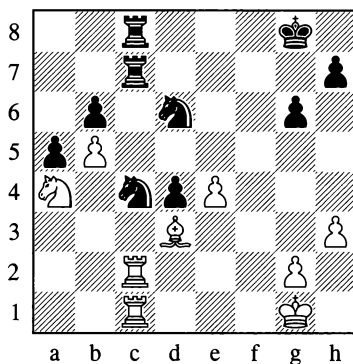
White played 29.dxe5? ♜xe5 30.♖xc7 ♖xc7, which was equal, and eventually drawn.

This exercise is mainly about pattern recognition. White should realize that doubling on the c-file will put Black in an immortal pin.

29.♖c2! ♜a3

Sadly, Black has to move his knight to avoid immediate disaster. This comes after both

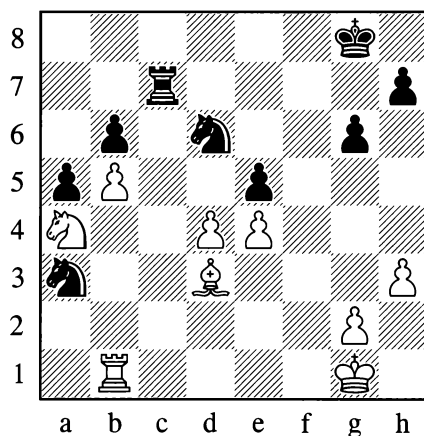
29...♜f7 30.♖bc1 ♜e6 31.d5† ♜e7 32.♜xb6 and 29...exd4 30.♖bc1:



Black cannot do a thing about ♜a4xb6 coming next.

But the main line will not save him either:

30.♖xc7! ♖xc7



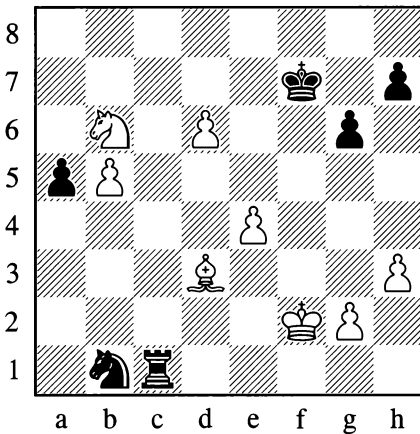
31.dxe5! ♜xb1 32.exd6 ♖c1†

32...♖d7 33.e5 Unstoppable identical twins.

33.♜f2! ♜f7

33...♖d1 34.♜e2 is game over.

34.♜xb6



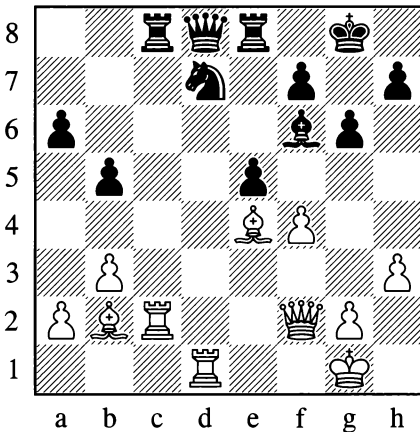
White has too many pawns.

**34...♔e6 35.e5! ♘a3 36.d7 ♕e7 37.e6**

The pawns are crashing through. Next is a check on c8 and even another pawn advance.

### 284. Jan-Christian Schroeder – Arturs Neikšans

Germany 2021



This one is a simple candidate move. And always be wary to avoid automatic ones!

**30.♖c6!**

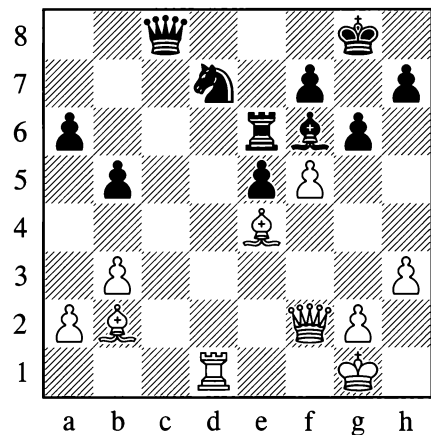
White makes many threats all at once, and all due to the weakness of the sixth rank.

Schroeder's choice in the game, 30.♖cd2?, was natural, but also not best. After 30...♖c7 Black was fine, and it is important that he was ready to meet f4-f5 with ...g6-g5. He even went on to win eventually.

**30...♖e6**

The best try. But Black's rook has been forced to the e6-square.

**31.♖xc8! ♖xc8 32.f5!**

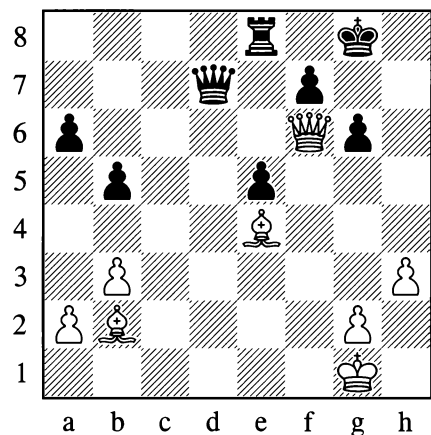


Black is unable to respond with ...g6-g5, and he cannot prevent the position from blowing up in his face.

**32...♖e8**

Material losses also follow from 32...♖b6 33.♖xd7, and 32...gxf5 33.♖xf5.

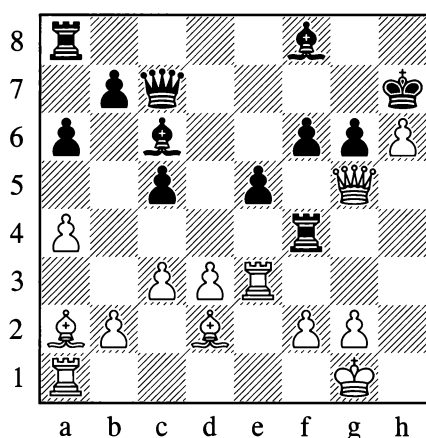
**33.fxg6! hxg6 34.♖xd7! ♖xd7 35.♖xf6**



White should win with his extra material.

### 285. Tor Fredrik Kaasen – Sondre Melaa

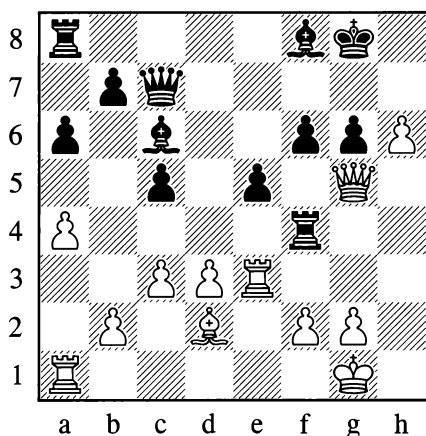
Fagernes 2021



White eventually won with 28. ♖g3?, but Black should be okay here. 28... ♕xh6? (28... ♕d6 was unclear) 29. ♖h2 ♖f5? (29... ♖h8 30. ♖h3 ♕g7 31. ♖h1!?, and White is much better) 30. ♖xe5! 1–0

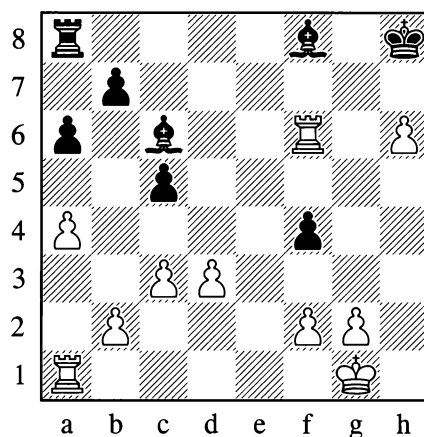
Always examine all checks and captures!

28. ♕g8†! ♖xg8



From here it is not too hard. The most natural moves are the best ones.

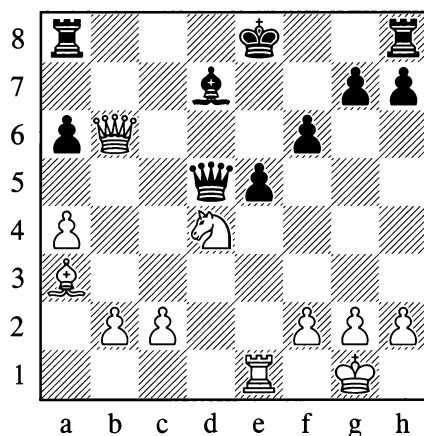
29. ♖xg6† ♖h8 30. ♖g3! ♖h7 31. ♕xf4 ♖xg6 32. ♖xg6 exf4 33. ♖xf6



White has too many pawns and Black faces an uphill defense. White has a large advantage.

### 286. Viachaslau Zarubitski – Mihail Nikitenko

Tashkent 2021



White is an exchange down and should be very direct. It will only take Black one move to get his king to f7 and be relatively safe.

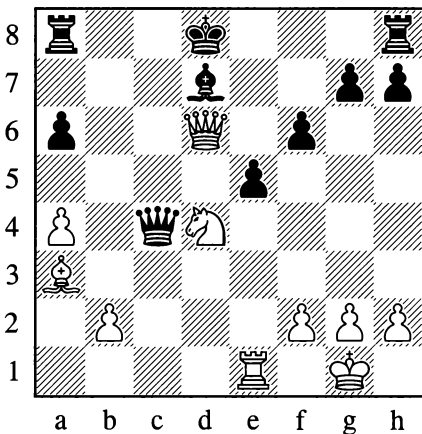
22. c4!

Black's queen is kicked away from the defense of d6.

22...♖xc4 23.♗d6! ♔d8

White crashes through in the center after 23...♗f7 24.f4!.

In the game, White faltered here:



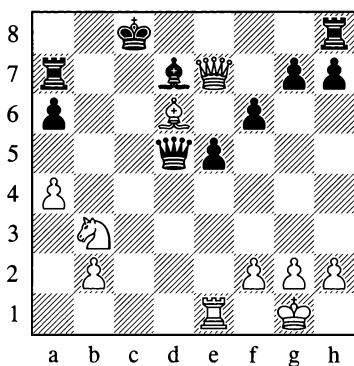
24.♗e7? ♔c8 25.♖b3

This let Black into the game.

25...♗d5!?

25...♞e8! 26.♗xg7 (26.♗d6 ♞e6 27.♗f8+ ♞e8 is equal) 26...♞g8 27.♗xh7 ♞xg2+, with equality.

26.♙d6 ♞a7



27.f3?

Too slow.

27.♖a5 ♗d2 28.♙b4 ♗d5 29.♙d6 ♗d2 would have been equal.

27...♞b7 28.♖a5 ♗d2 29.♞b1 ♞xb2

0-1

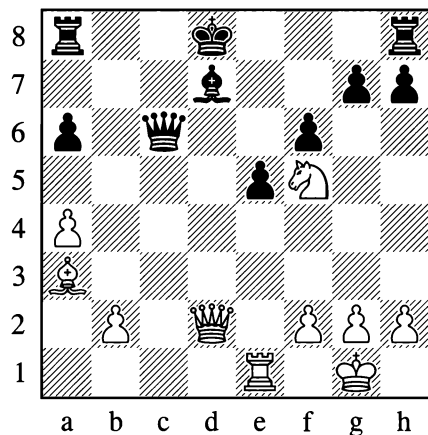
24.♖f5!

This is the cleanest win. The biggest threat is ♗d6-b6+.

24...♗c6

The pieces are coming in decisively after both 24...♞c8 25.♙b4 and 24...♞e8 25.♖xg7.

25.♗d2!



Coming next is ♞e1-c1, and that should be that.

25...♞c8

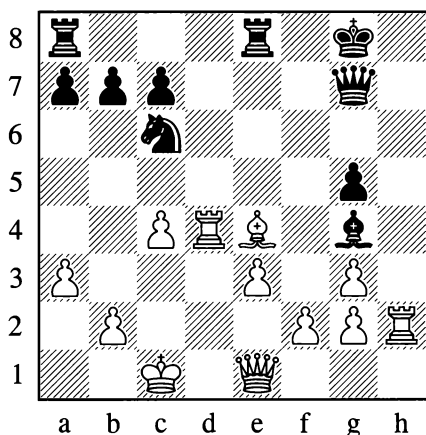
What else?

26.♖e7

Once approximate material parity is reached, the game is over. Black has a horrible king position.

**287. Timur Gareyev – Fabiano Caruana**

Warsaw (rapid) 2021



This was a simple candidate move. My suspicion is Gareyev missed it completely. Once you see it, there is not much more to it than that.

The game went 22. ♖xc6? ♜xd4! 23. ♙d5† ♜f8. Black was alive here, and eventually made a draw. 24. ♖h7 ♜f6 25. ♜b4† ♞e7 26. ♞f7† ♜xf7 27. ♙xf7 ♜xf7 28. f3 ♙e6 was equal.

**22. ♙h7†! ♜xh7**

22... ♜f8 23. ♞xg4 wins.

**23. ♞xh7 ♜xd4**

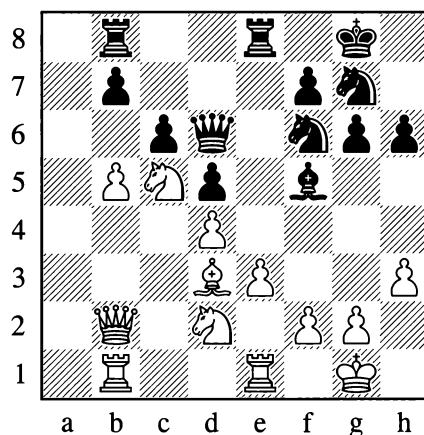
Now anything wins, but best is to grab another pawn.

**24. ♞xc7**

White is winning.

**288. Le Quang Liem – Jan-Krzysztof Duda**

Internet 2022



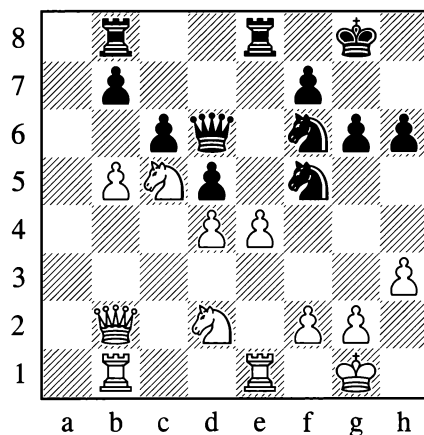
When you have a great position, always look for knockout blows! The first step towards not winning the game is not putting it away directly when you have the chance.

White eventually won after 26. ♞ec1?! ♙xd3 27. ♜xd3 ♜f5 28. ♜b4. But same question. Do you beat Carlsen here?

**26. ♙xf5! ♜xf5**

26... gxf5 27. ♜d3 Good luck defending those weaknesses.

**27. e4!**



Forceful and devastating. Black cannot avoid taking on e4 since e4-e5 and e4xf5 are both threats.

**27...dxe4 28.♟dxe4 ♚d8**

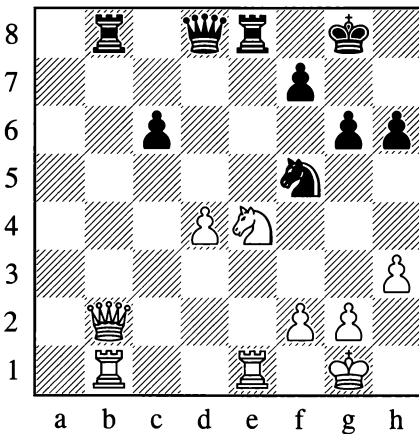
After 28...♟xe4 29.♟xe4, Black will not be able to maintain control of the f6-square following the advance of the d-pawn.

Now anything wins. My intended solution was to take on f6 and go for ♟c5-d7. There is something even more violent:

**29.bxc6 ♟xe4**

29...bxc6 30.♚xb8 is similar to the main line.

**30.♟xe4 bxc6**

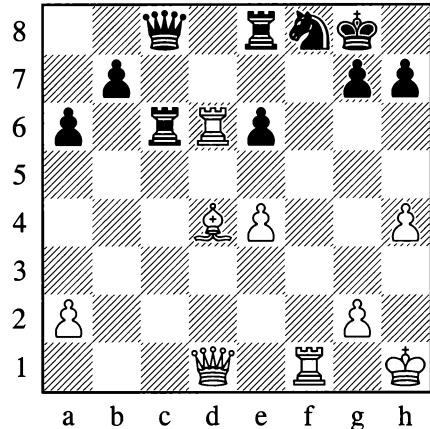


**31.♚xb8! ♚xb8 32.♟f6†**

An elegant finish.

## 289. Kirill Alekseenko – Anish Giri

Warsaw (rapid) 2021



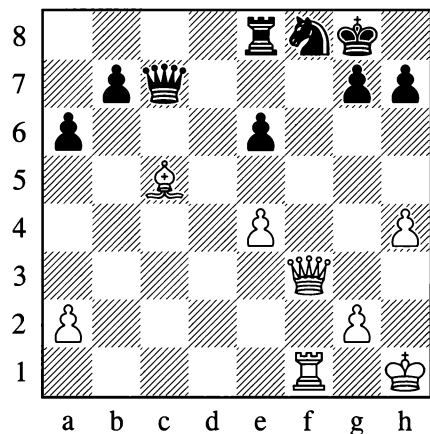
White is a pawn down and needs to be looking for direct counterplay. The puzzle is not too hard, but I was happy to solve it. I had been struggling a lot with exchange problems that Jacob had given me recently!

Alekseenko was lucky to hold a draw after 27.♚f3? ♚c7. Black is safe and better.

**27.♚xc6!**

An important move. The rook on c6 is a valuable defender which hopes to return to c7 next. The rook on d6 does nothing for the attack.

**27...♚xc6 28.♚f3! ♚c7 29.♟c5!!**





The point. Black's knight is trapped.

### 29...♘g6

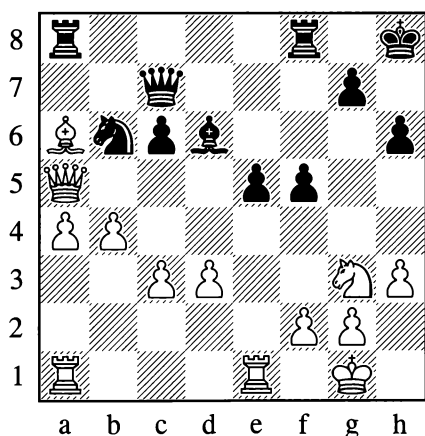
29...♘d7 is not possible due to 30.♙f7†.

### 30.h5

The knight is hit and cannot move on pain of mate on the back rank. White wins.

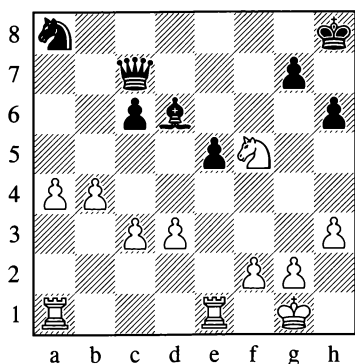
## 290. David Navara – Hans Niemann

Internet 2022



Black is two pawns down and should be looking for direct counterplay. The tough part about this position is to avoid temptation. Something I did not manage to do!

I wanted 23...♙xa6? 24.♙xa6 ♖a8 25.♙xa8†! ♘xa8 26.♘xf5:

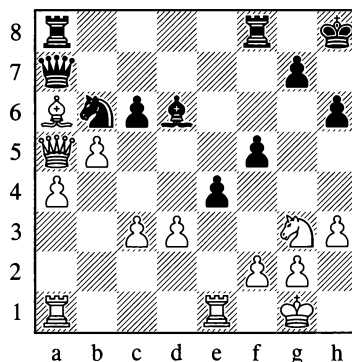


I was not sure about this position. I was surprised when the machine claimed White is much better! It does make sense though. There is a rough material balance. White coordinates much better than Black does.

23...f4?, the game continuation, was cooperative: 24.♘e4 ♖xa6 25.♙xa6 ♖a8 26.♙xb6! ♙xb6 27.♘xd6 White is winning, with a material advantage and dominant position. The lack of queen is of no consequence.

### 23...♙a7! 24.c4!

After 24.b5?! e4!



White is facing a vicious attack. The engine claims he is lost. In human practice, there are still some moves to make.

The queen really is trapped after 24.♙c4 ♙b7. White only gets a rook for it. Not enough.

### 24...♘d7!

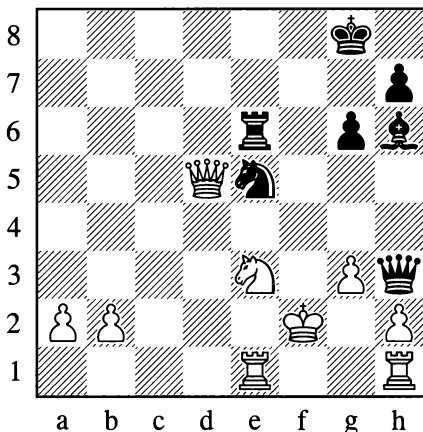
This is a very difficult move, and the one I missed when solving the position. Black threatens ...♙c7, winning the queen. White is forced to push:

### 25.b5 e4!

Black's initiative is jumping to life. Ideas include ...e4-e3, ...♙xg3 and ...♘e5. White is in huge trouble.

**291. Andrei Shishkov – Ilja Haitin**

Tallinn 2021



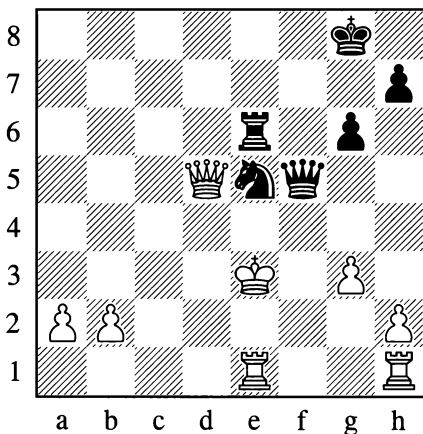
The first move is obvious enough, but what next?

**26...♙xe3† 27.♙xe3**

27.♞xe3 ♖g4† wins.

**27...♞f5!!**

After 27...♖f7? 28.♙f2!, the players repeated moves here, though White could have even played on. 28...♞f6† 29.♙g1! with advantage. (29.♙e3 ♞e6† 30.♙f2 ♞f6† 31.♙e3 ♞e6† ½–½)

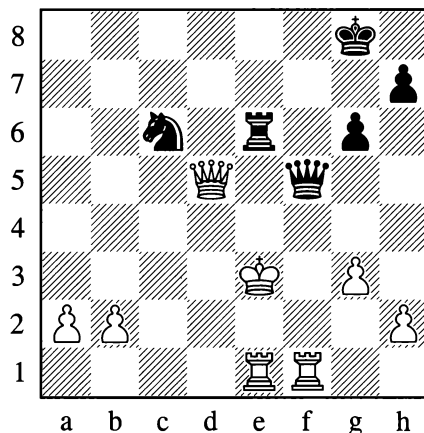


Silent and deadly. White's king is kept in the kill zone and has no safe square to run to. The discoveries are much stronger, now that moving the knight also opens up an attack on White's queen.

**28.♞hf1**

Black is also winning after both 28.♞d8† ♙g7, and 28.♙d2 ♖f3†.

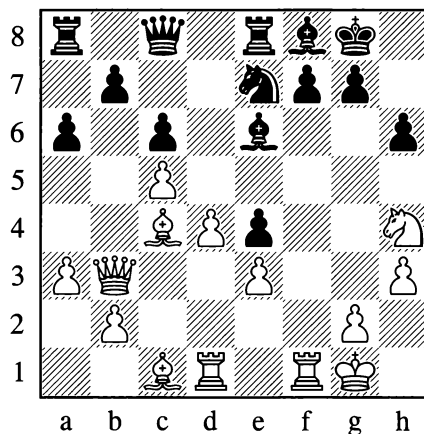
**28...♖c6†!**



The final blow. White's king is denied the d4-square. He will be relieved of his queen.

**292. Vincent Keymer – Anish Giri**

Internet 2022



This one was also not too hard. Checks and captures.

**22. ♖xf7! ♕xf7**

22... ♖d5 23. ♖f2 is a free pawn.

**23. ♖f1!**

This is the big point. It might look like White can take on e6 as well. But he should give the rook check first: 23. ♖xe6? ♜xe6 24. ♖f1+ ♖f5 Black has survived the worst of it.

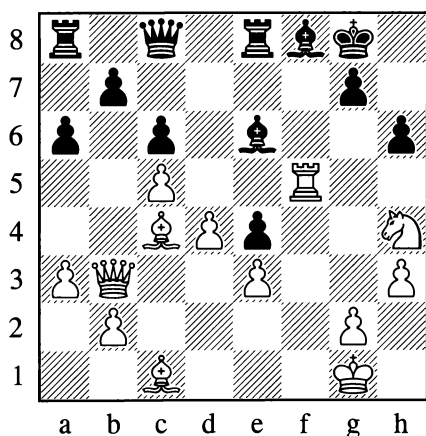
**23... ♖f5**

23... ♖g8 24. ♖xe6+ is clear.

**24. ♖xf5! ♕g8**

24... ♖e7 25. ♖xe6 ♜xe6 26. ♜xb7+ wins.

Now we see why it was important not to take on e6. White had no intention of ever doing so!



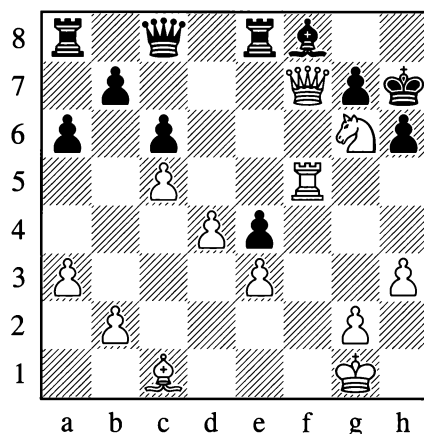
**25. ♖g6!**

Black has a hard time dealing with the simple threat of ♖f5xf8+.

**25... ♖xc4 26. ♜xc4+ ♕h7**

26... ♜e6 27. ♖xf8+! executes the threat.

**27. ♜f7!**



Black was paralyzed and crushed. My computer reads plus six! Keymer went on to win.

**27... ♖e7**

27... ♜e6 28. ♜xe6 ♖xe6 29. ♖xf8+ wins material.

27... ♜d8 28. ♖d2 The white pieces are too active.

**28. b4!?**

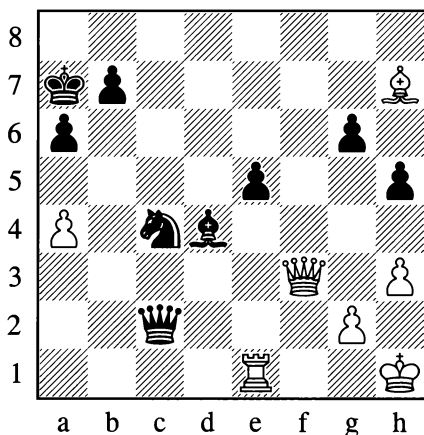
28. ♖f4 ♖f8 29. ♜g6+ ♕g8 30. ♖e6 wins. The g7-square is a problem.

**28... ♜d8 29. ♖e5 ♖f8 30. ♜g6+ ♕g8 31. ♖f7 ♜e8 32. ♖xh6+ ♕h8 33. ♖f7+ ♕g8 34. ♖h5 ♖xf7 35. ♜h7+**

**1-0**

**293. Aleksey Grebnev – Anna Sargsyan**

Chelyabinsk 2022



This one is a simple candidate move.

Black missed her chance with 46...h4?. The position was now equal and eventually drawn after the queens were exchanged with 47.♔e4.

**46...♘e3!**

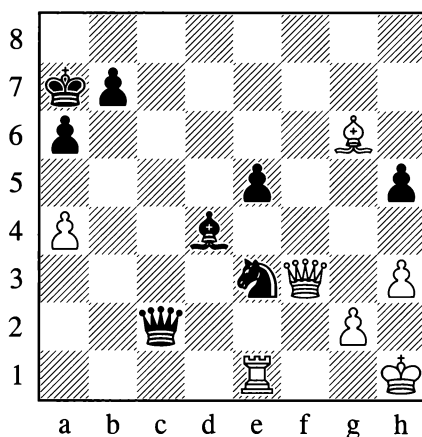
Very powerful. The knight is immune from capture thanks to a check on c1. Otherwise, ...e5-e4 is coming.

**47.♙xg6**

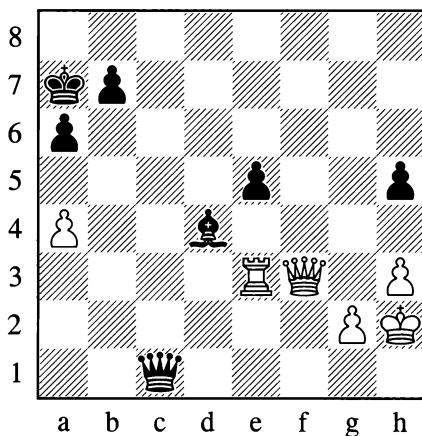
This is the best practical try. Even if you did not see this to completion, it is still clear that ...♘e3 was the best move.

Black wins easily after each of 47.♙xe3 ♔c1, 47.♙h2 e4 and 47.♙e2 ♔d1† 48.♙h2 ♘f1† 49.♙h1 ♘d2†.

But now, a final nicety would bring the game to its conclusion:

**47...♙xg6 48.♙xe3 ♔b1†!**

Black can do better than take the rook, equalizing material and agreeing a draw.

**49.♙h2 ♔c1!**

White's rook is hit. He will be mated or lose material.

**50.♙e4 ♙g1†! 51.♙g3**

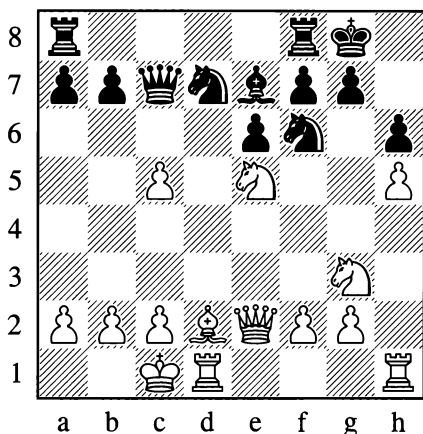
Or 51.♙h1 ♙f2† 52.♙h2 ♔g1#.

**51...♙g5†**

Game over.

**294. Vadym Petrovskyi – Bartosz Socko**

Warsaw (rapid) 2021

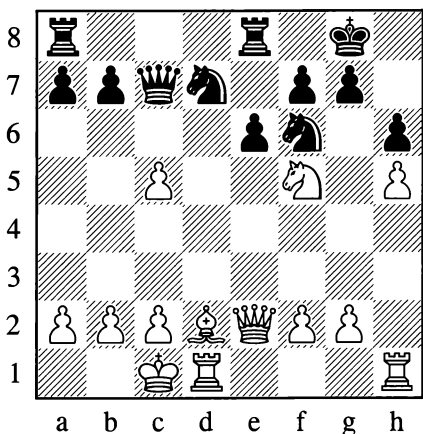


Black was fine in the game after 16...dxd7? dxd7. He was able to take c5 next with reasonable counterplay. He went on to win.

For anyone with experience on the white side of the main line Caro-Kann, the best move should not come as a surprise:

**16. d6! ffe8**

White crashes through after 16...fxg6 17. ♖xe6+ ♔h8 (17... ♖f7 18. hxg6) 18. ♖xe7.

**17. dxe7! ♖xe7 18. d5 ♖ee8**

Tempting as it may be to sacrifice something on g7 or h6, there is a time to be subtle:

**19. d6!**

As soon as the knight lands on d6, Black is done for.

**19... ♖e8**

19... ♖e8 20. g4! dxc5 21. g5 d5 22. db5 wins. The kingside is a demolition zone.

**20. e3!**

The best move by far, but also an easy one. Black cannot take on c5 with either his queen or rook.

Black fights on after 20. e4? dxc5.

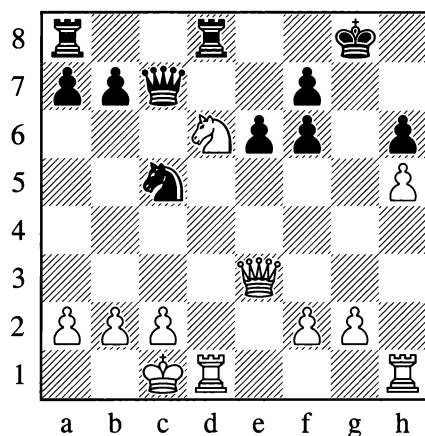
**20... dxc5**

This is the best try. White is winning after both 20... d5 21. ♖xd5 exd5 22. ♗g4, and 20... ♗xc5 21. dxb7.

White needs to be precise:

**21. e6 gxf6**

21... ♖xd6 22. ♗g4! wins.

**22. ♗e3!!**

The final touch. The knight is immune thanks to a check on g3. Black is facing a deadly attack.

### 22...♔h7

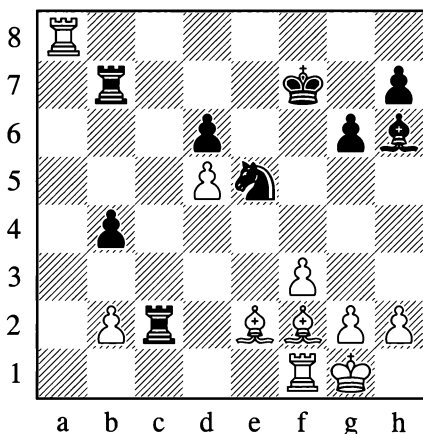
22...♔g7 23.♖h4 is a pleasing way to decisively activate the rook.

### 23.♜xf7!

White is winning. A pawn to the good with the better position.

## 295. Nikolas Lubbe – Sreyas Payyappat

Reinstorf 2022



It might be tempting to look at a position like this, with a pawn up playing against activity, and think “How can I consolidate the position?” But White should also remember that his extra pawn matters. The extra pawn is his f-pawn, allowing him to harass the knight. Black is absent his own f-pawn, keeping his king safe.

### 33.f4!

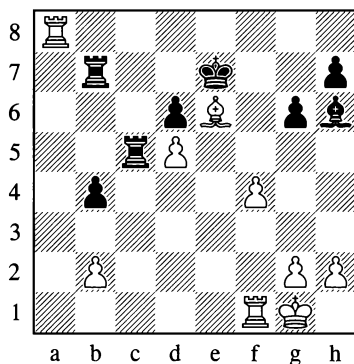
The right moment. Black's knight is hit, and at a moment when the bishop is still on e2. ...♜g4 is not possible, and if the knight retreats, then the bishop can go to g4 and e6.

The game continued 33.♙a6 ♜e7. Black had reasonable counterplay, although he eventually lost: 34.b3 ♜a2 35.♙d4 ♙g7 was equal.

### 33...♙xf4

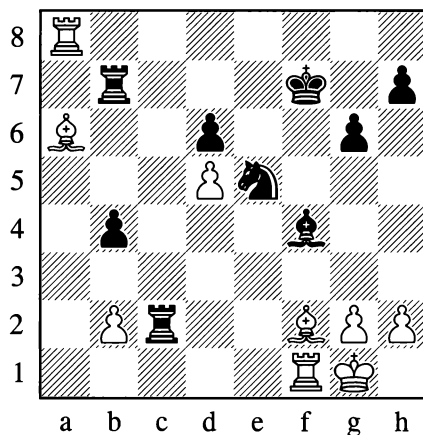
Everything wins after 33...♜xe2 34.fxe5.

White wins with kingside expansion after: 33...♜d7 34.♙g4 ♜c5 35.♙xc5 ♜xc5 36.♙e6† ♜e7



37.g4 ♙g7 38.g5 ♜c2 39.f5

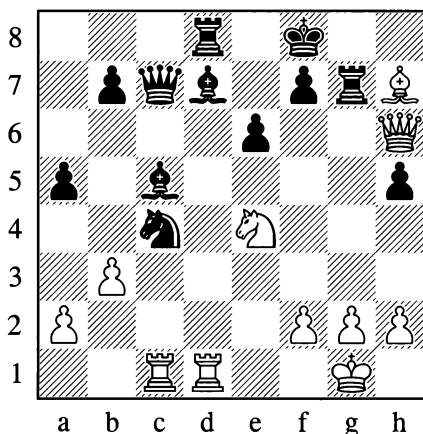
### 34.♙a6!



White saves his bishop with a gain of tempo. His bishop on f2 moves next, and he wins a piece.

## 296. Vladimir Kramnik – Teimour Radjabov

Paris 2021



We had already seen this game in an earlier exercise, with White to move. Now, Black had his chance to strike back after a mistake.

He did not take it:

24...♔c6? 25.bxc4?

25.♖xc5! It is not clear what Kramnik missed here. Blitz games lead to silly moves.

25...♖xd1† 26.♖xd1 ♘b2 27.♖c1, and White is much better.

25...♔a3 26.♖b1 ♔e7?

26...♖xd1† 27.♖xd1 ♜e5 wins.

27.♖xd8†?

27.♖g3! is unclear.

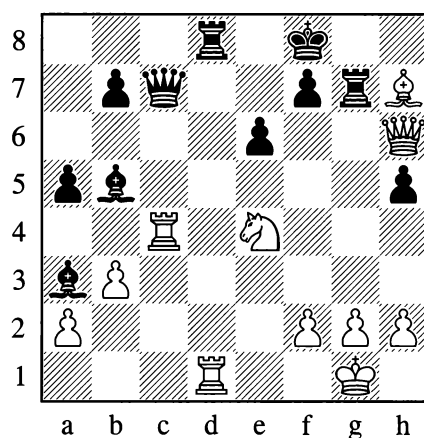
27...♜xd8 28.♖e1 ♜d4

0–1

24...♔a3!

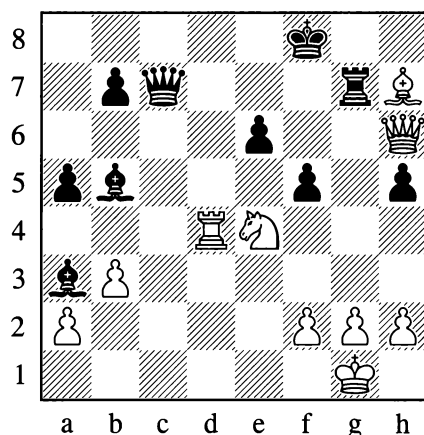
If Black had time on his clock, this move should have been findable.

25.♖xc4 ♔b5!!



The point. White faces direct threats and will struggle to defend his back rank.

26.♖cd4 ♖xd4 27.♖xd4 f5!

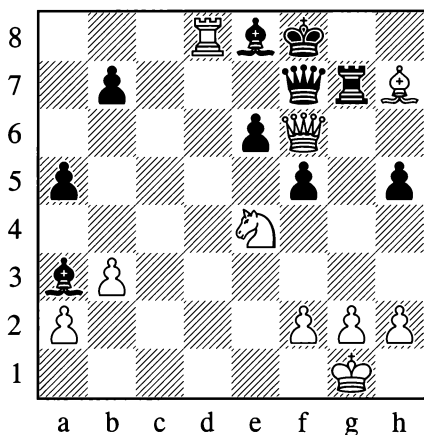


Black has other good moves, but this is the most precise by far. The knight is hit. It cannot go to g5 due to the mate on c1.

28.♜f6†

28.♖f6 ♜c1† The simplest of many winning moves. 29.♜xc1 ♔xc1 White will lose his bishop.

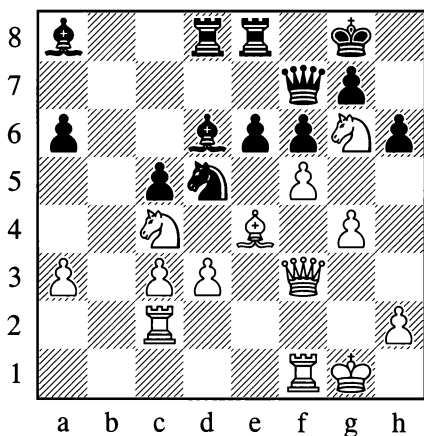
28...♜f7! 29.♖d8† ♔e8



White is out of steam. All his pieces are hanging.

### 297. Aryan Tari – Jakub Kosakowski

Warsaw (rapid) 2021



I got this one wrong. Let's see if you did better!

Black was fine after 32.h4? ♔c7 33.fxe6 ♖xe6. The game was eventually drawn.

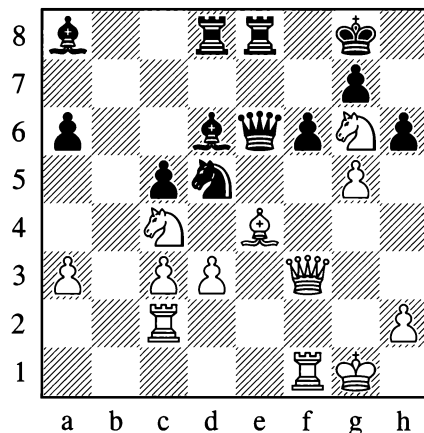
My solution was 32.♘xd6?. It is simple and second best. White is a bit better, but it misses a big chance. 32...♞xd6 33.c4 ♘b6 34.♔xa8 ♘xa8 35.♞e2 The knight on g6 looks good but the game goes on.

### 32.fxe6! ♖xe6

32...♞xe6 33.♖f5 is easy enough. White has too many threats.

Now, White has an important candidate move that I missed:

### 33.g5!!



It turns out the pawn cannot be captured. Once you realize that, the rest is easy.

### 33...fxg5

The other capture also loses:

33...hxg5 34.♔f5!

34.♖h5? Do not be too hasty! 34...♘f4 is equal.

34...♖f7 35.♘xd6 ♞xd6 36.♖h3

White's attack should crash through.

36...♖c7 37.♞e2!

The nastiest of many winning moves.

37...♞dd8

Or 37...♞xe2 38.♖h8+ ♔f7 39.♖f8#.

38.♖h8+!

38.♞fe1 wins.

38...♔f7 39.♘f8!! ♞xf8 40.♖h5+

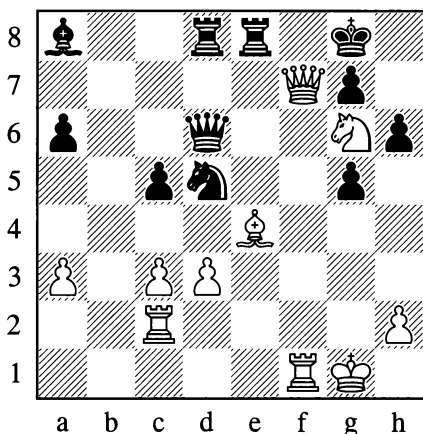
White wins.

### 34.♘xd6! ♖xd6

34...♞xd6 fails to 35.♖f8+! ♞xf8 36.♞xf8+ ♔h7 37.♞h8#.



35. ♖f7†

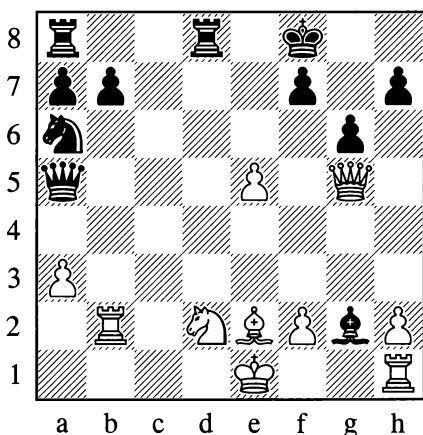


35... ♖h7 36. ♘e5† ♖h8 37. ♖f5

The end of the road.

**298. Eric Rosen – Marie Sebag**

Gibraltar 2022



White is in big trouble here and needs to be careful to hang on.

White played:

24. ♖xg2?

This was too cooperative. Black will crash straight through.

24... ♗xe5!

There were too many threats. Even with

some mutual errors, Black won without much trouble.

25. ♖b5

Blacks also wins after other rook moves:

25. ♖a2 ♖ac8, 25. ♖b3 ♖ac8 and 25. ♖c2

♗a1†.

25... ♗c3?

25... ♘c5! was lights out. 26. ♗g3 ♗d5 27. 0–0 ♗xd2 wins.

26. ♖d5?!

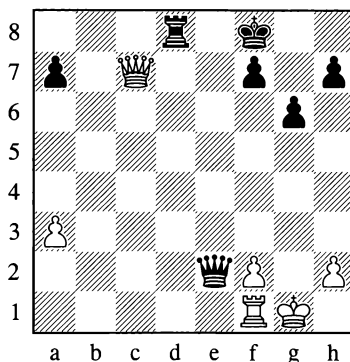
26. 0–0 White could have tried to play this miserable position, though I doubt it would have saved him.

26... ♘c7

26... ♗c1†! 27. ♘d1 ♖e8† 28. ♘e4 ♗c4 wins.

27. ♖xd8† ♖xd8 28. 0–0 ♗xd2 29. ♗xb7 ♗xe2

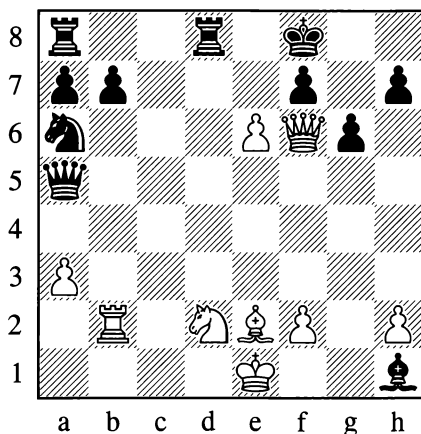
30. ♗xc7



30... ♖d5!

Black is winning.

24. ♖f6!! ♖xh1 25. e6!

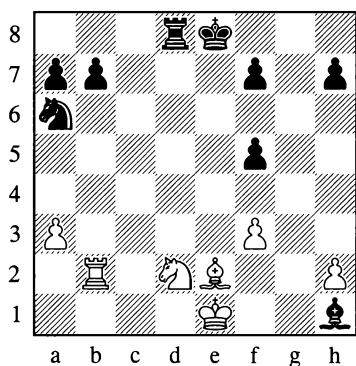


The point. The threat of mate on f7 forces Black back. White gets just enough activity to hang on.

25. ♖h8† ♕e7 26. ♖f6† ♕e8! is insufficient.

25... ♖c7

25... ♖f5?! is asking for it. 26. e7† ♕e8  
27. ♖xf5 gxf5 28. exd8= ♖† ♖xd8 29. f3



The bishop is nearly trapped. Black should be careful not to get into trouble.

26. ♖c2! ♕c6

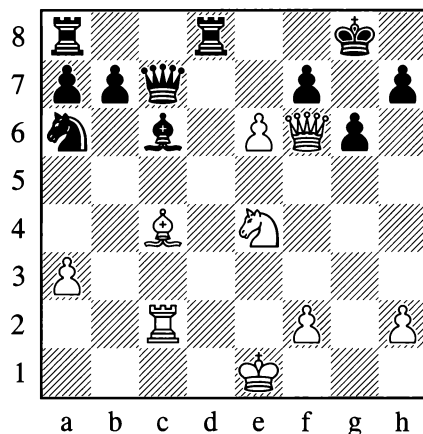
Not 26... ♖e7 27. ♖h8#. And 26... ♖c5?  
27. ♖xc5 would be embarrassing.

27. ♖e4!!

White gained the e4-square for his knight. Black is hard pressed to stop a perpetual with ♖f6-h8-f6.

But not 27. e7†? ♕g8, and Black is better.

27... ♕g8 28. ♕c4!



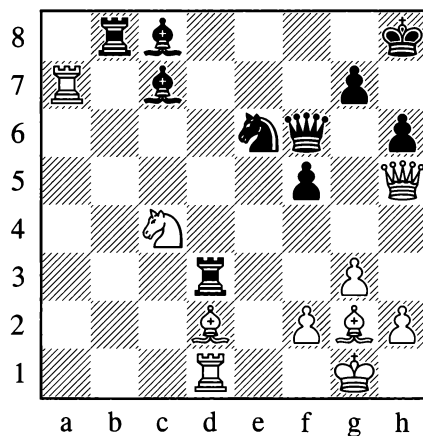
A final accurate move. White has enough counterplay. The engine advocates allowing a perpetual check.

28... ♖a5† 29. ♖d2 ♖xd2 30. ♖xf7† ♕h8  
31. ♖f6† ♕g8 32. ♖f7†

Draw.

### 299. Nodirbek Abdusattorov – Alexandra Kosteniuk

Internet 2022



This position was another of the type I like to think of as easy with time. The solution is straightforward, but you need the time to find the moves. They are not obvious at first glance. It took me about three minutes to work it all out. Surely that was more time than Abdusattorov had.

29.♖e1?

This let a chance slip, though White ended up winning eventually anyway.

29...♙d7?

29...♙d8 was equal.

30.♙f1! ♖xd2 31.♘xd2 ♗d4 32.♖a2 f4?

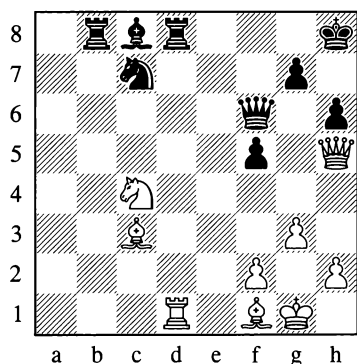
32...♘g5! 33.♙g2 ♙b6 would have given Black sufficient compensation.

33.♘f3

White was winning again.

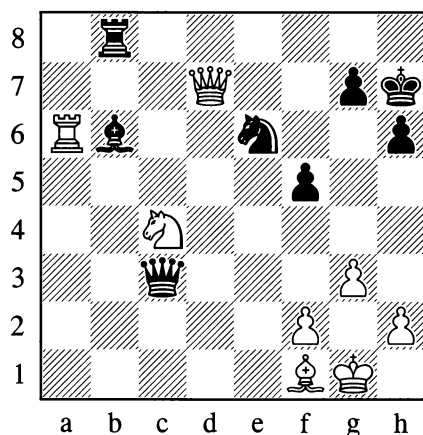
29.♙f1! ♖d7

29...♙d8 30.♖xc7! This is attractive as well. Checks and captures! 30...♘xc7 31.♙c3!



31...♗xc3 (31...♗e7 32.♖xd8† ♗xd8 33.♗xh6† ♘g8 34.♗xg7#) 32.♖xd8† ♘h7 33.♖xc8 Dead. ♗xf5† is coming.

30.♙c3! ♗xc3 31.♗e8† ♘h7 32.♖xd7 ♙xd7 33.♗xd7 ♙b6 34.♖a6!



Black is facing too many threats. She has a way to force you to find one more good move, but that is all.

34...♙xf2† 35.♘xf2 ♘d4

Now White has a pleasant choice:

36.♖a3

I wanted this, stopping any hope of ...♗f3, but the machine's move is far nastier.

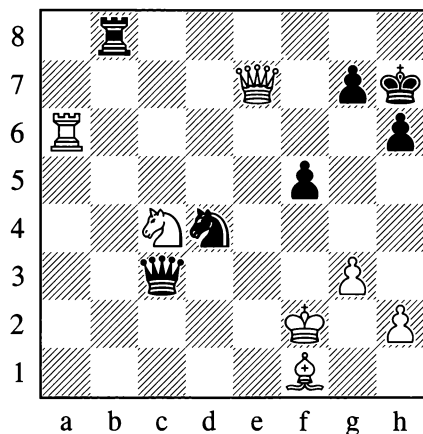
36...♖b2†

36...♗c2† 37.♘g1 White wins. No more checks.

37.♘xb2 ♗d2† 38.♘g1 ♘e2† 39.♙xe2 ♗xd7 40.♘d1

White should win in practice, but there is still some work to do.

36.♗e7!!



The queen is ready to come back to e3. Black must give a check and hope for the best, but it will not work.

36...♖f3† 37.♔g1 ♜b1

This looks scary, but White has a point:

38.♞xh6†! ♔xh6 39.♞h4†! ♞h5

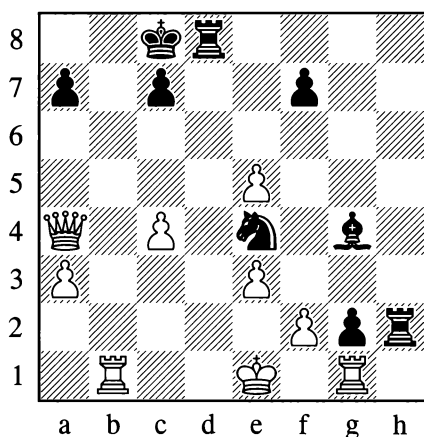
39...♔g6 40.♘e5#

40.♞xd4

White is winning.

### 300. Oleg Bykov – Sergey Drygalov

Yaroslavl 2019



This was simple comparison. White needs to deprive Black's king of a key square.

27.♞xa7 does not work: 27...♞h1 28.♞b8† ♔d7 29.♞d4† ♔e6 Black wins as his king is safe here.

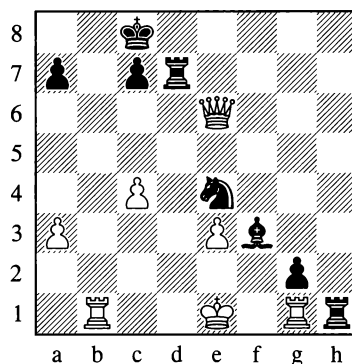
27.f3?

The game continuation is hard to understand.

27...♔xf3 28.e6 fxe6 29.♞c6 ♞h1

The point was presumably that in this position, White can make a draw by taking on e6. The bishop has been dragged from g4. But he should have been playing for a win.

30.♞xe6† ♜d7



The game ended in a draw after a lot of repetitions.

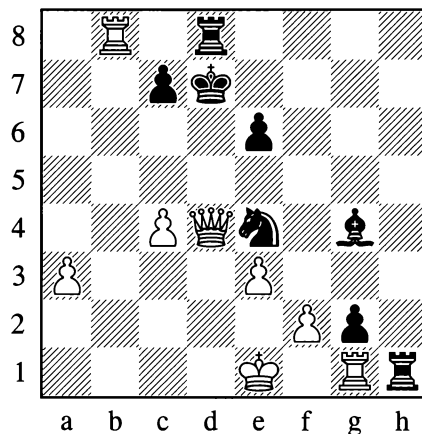
27.e6! fxe6

No choice. Mate on a6 was threatened.

28.♞xa7!

Now and only now.

28...♞h1 29.♞b8†! ♔d7 30.♞d4†!



Black is missing the move ...♔e6.

30...♔d6 31.♞xd8† ♔xd8 32.♞xg4! ♞xg1† 33.♔e2 ♔d7 34.♔f3

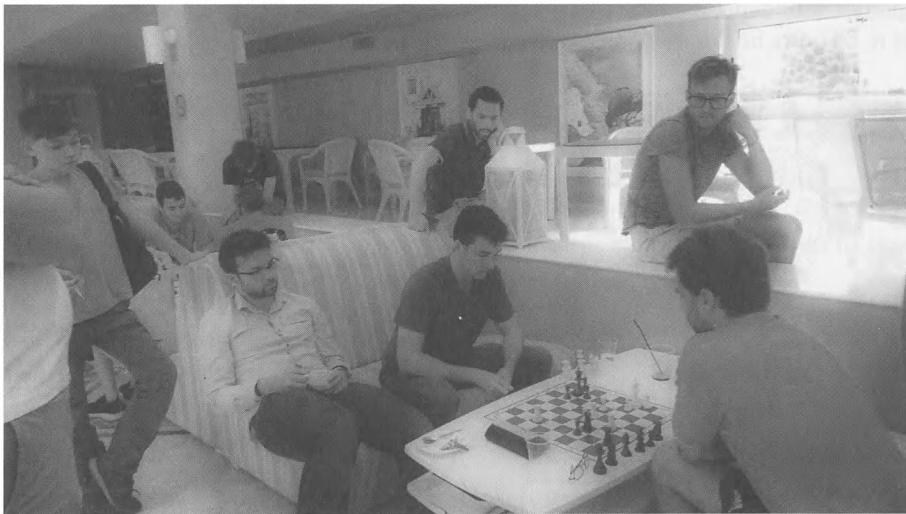
White should win. Black cannot coordinate his pieces enough to get the rook off g1.

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# Chapter 8

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## Conclusion



Blitz in the break at the 2019 Quality Chess Academy on the Greek island of Crete. In the photo you will find (some only by parts of body parts): *Boris Dimitrijevski, Gleb Dudin, Christopher Yoo, Andre Gjestemoen-von Hirsch, Jaime Santos Latasa, Ivan Salgado Lopez, RB Ramesh, Alexander Sasata, Gabriel Flom, Miguel Santos Ruiz, Noël Studer and Sam Shankland*

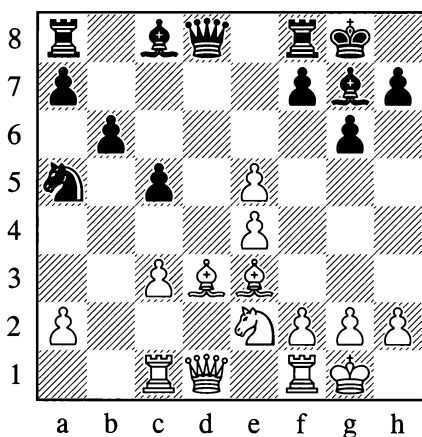
To finish off the book, I would like to show two games I played recently. I am not a perfect calculator; I never will be. But I think there has been a staggering improvement when comparing where I am now to where I was nine years ago.

### Sam Shankland – Nils Grandelius

Prague 2020

1.d4 ♖f6 2.c4 g6 3.♗c3 d5 4.cxd5 ♗xd5 5.e4 ♗xc3 6.bxc3 ♘g7 7.♙c4 c5 8.♗e2 ♗c6 9.♙e3 0-0 10.0-0 ♗a5 11.♙d3 b6 12.♞c1 e5 13.dxe5!

Almost a novelty. White usually takes on c5 with placid equality later on. For example: 13.dxc5 ♙e6 14.c4 bxc5 15.♙xc5 ♙h6! has been played a bunch of times. Black is well known to be quite fine despite the pawn less.



My chosen move is definitely risky due to the queenside structure. But you do not play the ♙c4/♗e2 system in the Grünfeld to reach a strategic game. White takes the kingside majority and sets it in motion.

13...♙xe5 14.f4 ♙g7 15.♗g3!

Black can face a vicious attack in the coming moves if he is not extremely precise.

15...♙g4

Not a bad move, though according to my analysis, ...♙b7 is best.

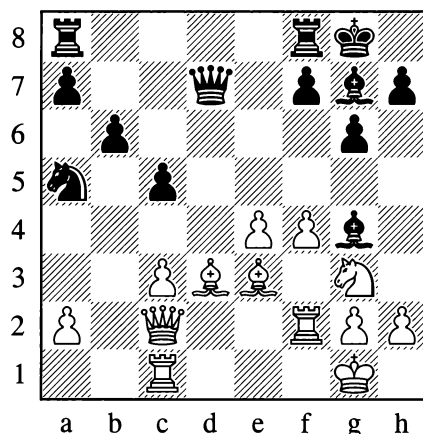
16.♞c2 ♞d7!

Well played, not fearing a trapped bishop after f4-f5.

17.♞f2!

Still in preparation.

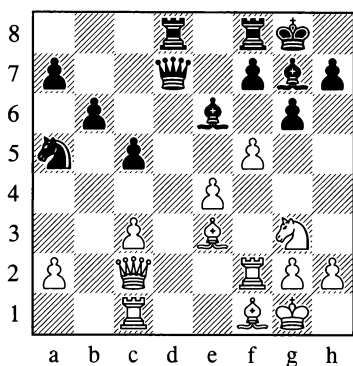
17.f5 ♞fd8 18.♙a6 b5! is messy but probably okay for Black.



17...♞fd8!?

I had not checked this move and remembered that the machine wanted ...♞ad8 instead. It looked unnatural to leave the rook on a8, since it has no prospects on the queenside. But there is some point to it.

17...♞ad8 feels more natural and was the only move I had checked. Unlike what we will see in the game, 18.♞d2?! would not be the best way to approach the position. Following 18...♞e7 19.e5 f6, the rook is strong on f8. Instead, after the best move, 18.♙f1!, White is a bit better because 18...♙e6? fails to 19.f5!:



Black's dark-squared bishop will end up in the corner. We see why Black would rather have the other rook on d8!

### 18.♙f1?

I knew this was best against ...♖ad8, but here it is wrong.

18.♖d2! was stronger. After 18...♗e7 19.e5 White is a little better. As seen above, it is clear that Black's rook on a8 would be much better on f8.

### 18...♙e6!

Once this position came on the board, I understood Black's point. With the rook on a8 instead of f8, Black need not fear f5-f6. His bishop will have a fine square on f8 rather than being marooned in the corner.

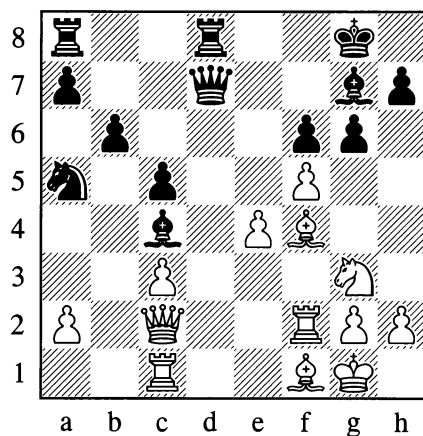
### 19.f5 ♙c4 20.♙g5

Still, here I was optimistic. If Black must play ...f6, he always has serious strategic weaknesses.

### 20...f6

Moving the rook would allow White to take over the d-file.

### 21.♙f4



### 21...♙d3?

Now ...g6-g5 will not work as well.

### 21...g5!

This is a hard move to play, but it turns out to be best. After:

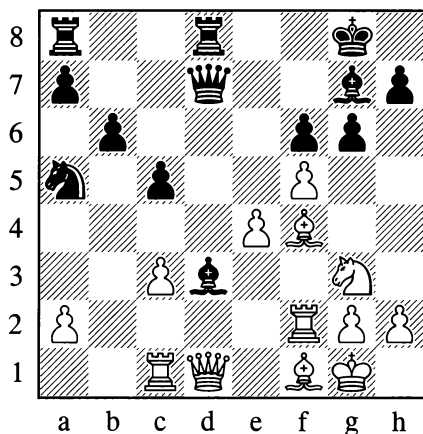
### 22.♙d2

22.♙e3 ♙d3! 23.♗d1 ♖c4 Black has everything under control.

### 22...♙xf1 23.♖xf1 ♖c4 24.♙c1

It looks scary for Black with ♖h5, h4 etc. on the way. But the computer thinks he is okay.

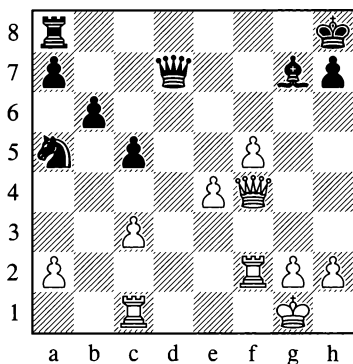
### 22.♗d1!



No queen trade for you.

**22...♙xf1**

It was too late for 22...g5?. I had calculated an important variation that ends in White's favor. 23.♙xd3! gxf4 (23...♖xd3? 24.♞d2 wins) 24.♘h5 ♖xd3 25.♗g4 ♞d7 26.♘xf6† ♘h8 27.♘xd7 ♖xd7 28.♗xf4!



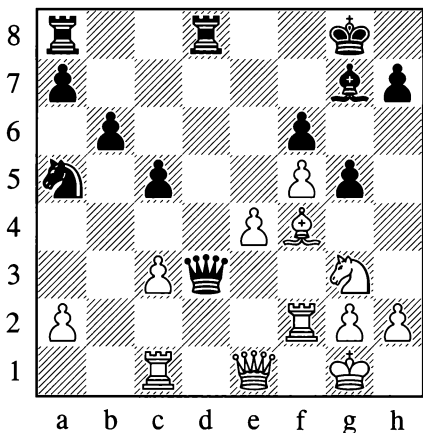
Dead. I saw this line to the end.

**23.♗xf1 ♖d3**

23...g5 was Black's best chance. But after 24.♙xg5!? fxg5 25.f6 ♙f8 26.e5, his position looks very dangerous.

**24.♗e1!**

Again, no queen trade.

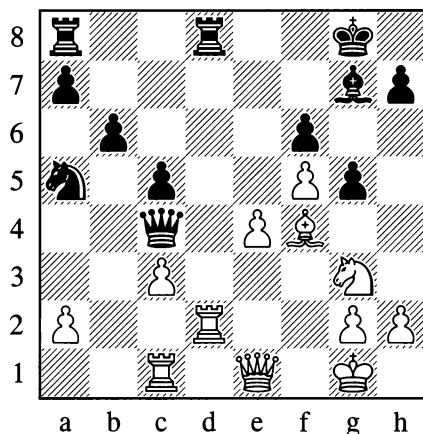
**24...g5****25.♞d2**

I thought I was immediately winning here, but I missed the idea of ...♖c4, ♙d6 and then ...♗f7!

I saw 25.♙xg5!? fxg5 26.f6. It looked strong. But I thought giving a piece was unnecessary, since ♞f2-d2 won easily. But this was too complacent. 26...♙xf6 27.♞xf6 ♘c4 White is a bit better but the game goes on. What I played was that not substantially worse than this, but it was poorly calculated.

**25...♖c4!**

I was expecting 25...♖b5. White is much better after 26.♞cd1. 26.♙c7!? is apparently even stronger, but I missed 26...♞d7 27.♗d1!.



Here I realized my intended ♙d6 would be met with ...♗f7. This was the most critical moment of the game. After a long think, I decided to play ♙d6 anyway. I had calculated very well to justify placing my bishop in a precarious situation where it looks nearly trapped.

**26.♙d6! ♗f7!**

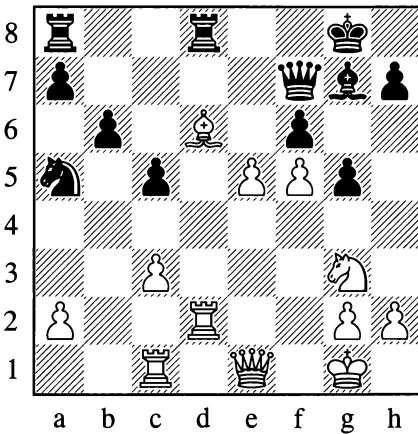
Otherwise, Black is dead lost after e4-e5. Now, ...♘c4 is on the way. This looks scary for White since his bishop is marooned. But if calculated well, it works like a charm.



Now after 27.♖cd1 ♘c4 28.♞d5 ♘b2, Black gives a perpetual against White's rooks.

Fortune favors the bold:

**27.e5!**

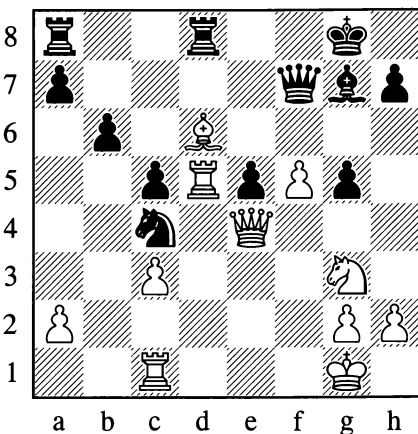


I was worried because my bishop will be both trapped and pinned on d6. I can lose immediately if I miss something. But I had confidence in my calculations and did not see a way for him to get it.

**27...fxe5**

27...♘c4? 28.e6 is easy. 28...♞e8 29.♖cd1 Despite the exchange up, Black may as well resign.

**28.♞e4! ♘c4 29.♞d5!**



Now we see the point. The bishop is immune from capture and the knight on c4 is hanging. After the game, Grandelius told me that he was planning ...♙f8 here, before realizing that the pawn up endgame would be unpromising for him.

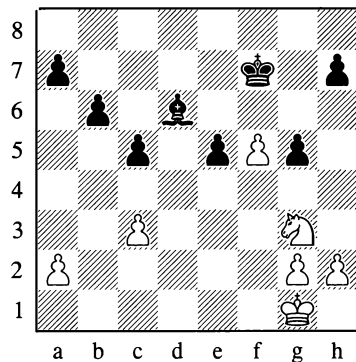
**29...b5?**

Black should have gone for ...♙f8 anyway:

29...♙f8! 30.♞xc4 ♞xd6 31.♖cd1 ♞xd5!

This should be preferred.

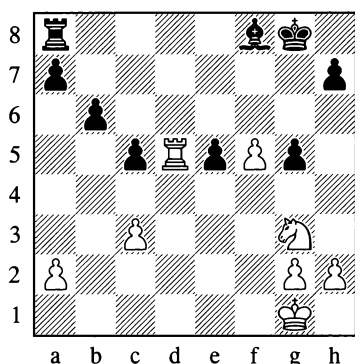
31...♞ad8?! 32.♞xd6 ♞xd6 (32...♞xc4 33.♞xd8 looks awful for Black. He will probably get mated, or at least lose his bishop.) 33.♞xf7+ ♔xf7 34.♞xd6 ♙xd6



After I played 29.♞d5, Nils had calculated this far and said he thought Black was lost here despite the extra material. I was not as confident as he was about this conclusion, and the computer manages to hold on with some strange only moves. But it is a very promising try for White, who can press with no risk. I would imagine even a very strong human could lose with Black.

35.♘e4 ♙e7 36.c4 and White is much better. ♙g4 will win. ♘c3, ♙e4 and ♘d5 may win. It is close though; Black is not without defensive chances.

32.♞xd5 ♞xd5 33.♞xd5



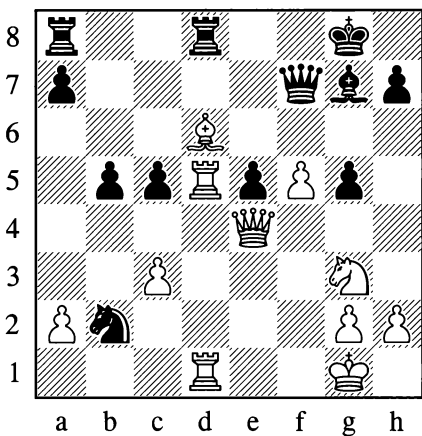
Black is a bit worse but can fight on. I am not sure if it is holdable, but he has some counterplay on the queenside.

### 30.♞cd1!

This was easy enough, but I knew Black will not just let me take c5 next and win. The key point was I had to see White's next move.

### 30...♖b2

Now, White needs to do a comparison to find the best move.



### 31.♞f1!

Very strong. It is not the easiest candidate move to spot. ♞d1-b1 looks much more natural.

White will struggle to defend c3 after 31.♞b1? ♖a4!. After 32.♞d3 ♗c4, I thought about this position and realized the b1-rook needs to be

on f1 here. This led me to finding the right move.

### 31...♗f6

The next move was a small blemish on an otherwise excellent game. I had calculated it all the way to ♞d1-d4.

The rook is useful on f1:

31...♖a4 32.♞d3! ♗c4 This position would be fine for Black if the f1-rook were on b1. Here, Black can instead resign after f5-f6.

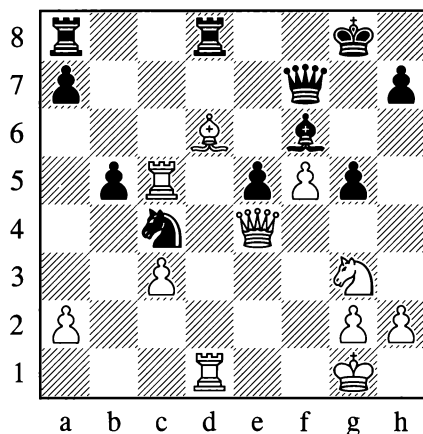
31...♖c4 32.f6! ♗f8 33.♖f5! Just in time. White keeps everything under control and Black is facing devastating threats.

### 32.♞xc5?

Tempting but poor. Black had a miraculous hold.

A silent move was best: 32.♗f3! Black should lose to ♖g3-e4 next, and we will see a useful comparison after his best prophylactic move. 32...♖h8! Black has prevented ♖g3-e4. But among other winning moves, 33.♞xc5! now gets the job done. Following 33...♖c4 34.♞c7!, Black cannot take on d6 and hit the loose queen on e4. White's bishop escapes, and it is game over.

### 32...♖c4 33.♞d1



I thought Black was collapsing here, and in the game, Nils did not manage to offer much resistance. But, he had an incredible saving resource that I had completely overlooked. This shows that while I have made great progress in my calculating abilities, there is always more work to be done.

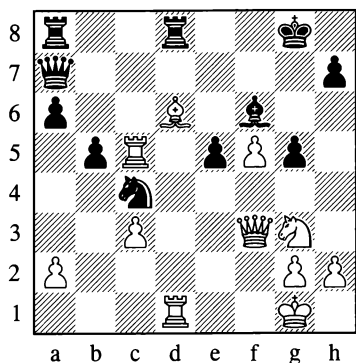
### 33...♔e7?

Human but poor. He probably missed ♖d1-d4.

33...a6!! This is an incredibly difficult move. The point is that Black needs to move the rook on a8 to threaten to take on d6. The only place he can move it is a7. Additionally, ...♞a7 is unexpectedly a huge threat. Somehow even with two moves, White is unable to secure the d-file.

34.♖cd5 ♘b2! I cannot get my rooks out of a perpetual. Sadly, this is probably the prudent choice for White to make.

34.♞f3? It looks very tempting to clear the e4-square. But Black executes his biggest threat. 34...♞a7!! Black wins material, highlighting another hidden point of advancing ...a7-a6. White would be much better if Black had instead chosen 34...♖a7? 35.♘e4 ♖ad7 36.♖cd5.



It would be easy to dismiss this missed defensive resource and say that I calculated

well enough to win the game, as my opponent missed it as well. But, had I brought this same level of calculation to the board, would I have beaten Magnus with 32.♖xc5? Perhaps, but I am not convinced.

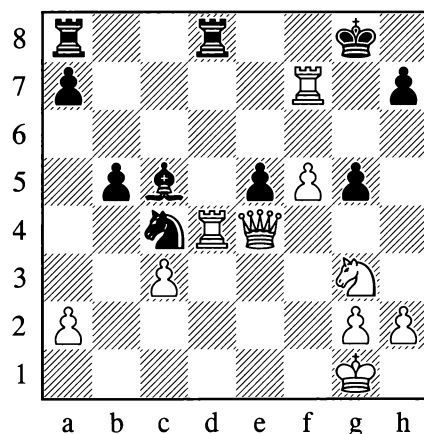
### 34.♖c7!

Well calculated.

### 34...♔xd6!

This looks scary and represents Black's best practical attempt in a lost position, but I had worked it all out.

### 35.♖xf7 ♔c5† 36.♖d4!



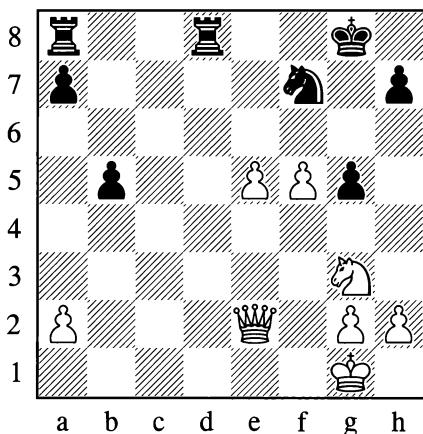
The point. Nils may have missed this when he played 33...♔e7?.

### 36...♔xd4†

I thought 36...exd4 was Black's best chance. But White wins with an important, though not so difficult, only move. 37.♖c7! d3† 38.♖xc5 d2 39.♞e6† ♘h8 40.♞f6† ♘g8 41.♞xg5† ♘h8 42.♞f6† ♘g8 43.♖c7! d1=♞† 44.♘f1 I had calculated all the way to here. This was not strictly necessary, but it is a nice line all the same.

36...♔xf7 loses routinely to 37.♞b7† ♘f8 38.♘h5.

37.cxd4 ♖d6 38.♚e2 ♜xf7 39.dxe5



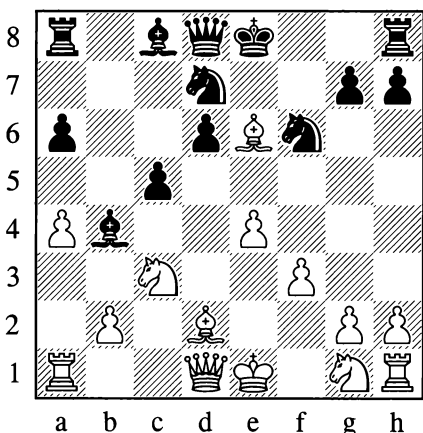
The rest was unnecessary.

39...♞ac8 40.e6 ♞c1† 41.♕f2 ♜h6 42.e7  
♞e8 43.♞e6† ♜f7 44.♜h5 ♞c2† 45.♕e3  
1-0

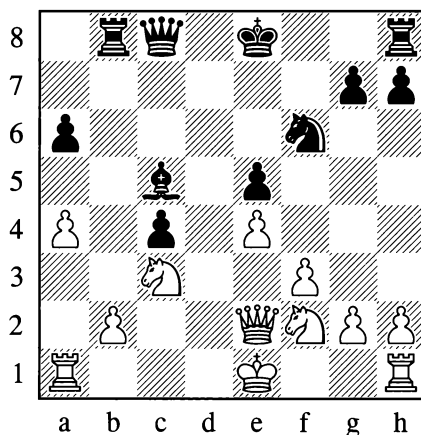
**Sam Shankland – Sergey Karjakin**

Wijk aan Zee 2022

1.d4 ♜f6 2.c4 e6 3.♜c3 ♞b4 4.f3 c5 5.d5 b5  
6.e4 d6 7.♞d2 a6 8.a4 bxc4 9.♞xc4 ♜bd7  
10.dxe6 fxe6 11.♞xe6



11...♜e5 12.♞xc8 ♞xc8 13.♞f4 c4 14.♞xe5  
dxe5 15.♜h3 ♞c5 16.♞e2 ♞b8 17.♜f2



Up to here, everything was preparation. I knew that Black's next move was a mistake, but I did not know why.

17...♞b7?

It is one thing to know that a position is good for you. It is quite another to play it well. On my first move out of preparation, I burned a lot of time before finding a strong continuation.

17...♞d4 was best. Black has good chances to fight for equality, though I would have had some ideas to force him to find some decent moves and put him under pressure.

18.0-0!

Fearless and strong. It looks scary to let Black take on b2. But I had calculated well and realized that it was all under control.

It would be quite sad to have to play 18.♞b1. Black's queen gets very annoying. 18...♞b3 19.0-0 ♞d4 Black cannot be worse with such active pieces.

18...♞xb2

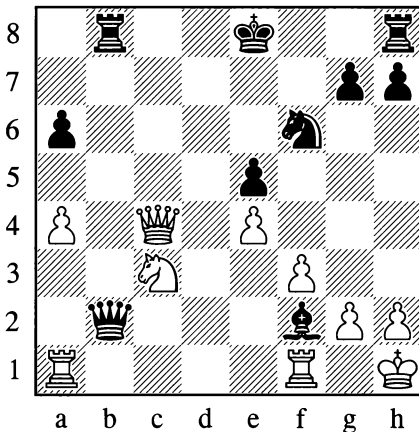
Perhaps Black should not have taken the pawn, but he is also clearly worse after 18...♞b4. White simply continues with ♞a1-c1 followed by ♞c1-c2. You do not play ...♞b7 to not take on b2 when given the chance.

**19.♟xc4!**

White sacrifices a piece.

**19...♙xf2† 20.♔h1**

Now we see the point. Despite the piece up, Black is facing massive threats and cannot castle. Still, there were some details that I needed to sort out.

**20...♟b3!**

This was Black's best practical try.

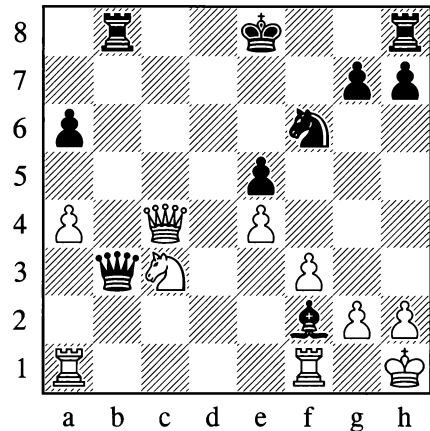
20...♙a7 21.♞ab1 ♟c2 22.♞xb8† ♙xb8  
23.♟c8† White wins material.

20...♙b6 21.♞a2! Black's queen is trapped.

The computer offers 20...♟b4, which immediately transitions into a pawn down endgame. Perhaps I would not beat Stockfish from here, but I don't think this is relevant. White's play is incredibly straightforward, and I cannot imagine a strong human ever choosing this move. 21.♟xb4 ♞xb4 22.♞xf2 and White is a clean pawn up with excellent winning chances.

After Karjakin's chosen defense, White needs to be extremely precise. I had seen this in advance and thought I was good to go with ♟c4-c7. But I still burned

twenty minutes calculating all the lines to completion.

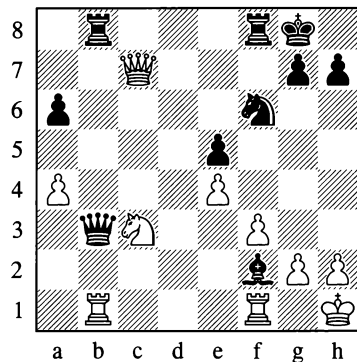
**21.♟c7!**

This is not the easiest candidate move. But it is clearly strongest. ♟c4-c6† looks much more natural but does not work:

21.♟c6†? ♔f7! 22.♞ab1 ♟a3! 23.♞xb8 ♞xb8  
24.♟c7† ♔g6 25.♟xb8 ♟xc3 White cannot take on f2 and will face an uphill struggle to make a draw.

**21...♟b6**

21...0-0 22.♞ab1!



Black is skewered on the b-file. Both ...♙b6 and ...♟f7 look like problems for White at first glance. But in both cases, White wins by examining all checks and captures. 22...♙b6

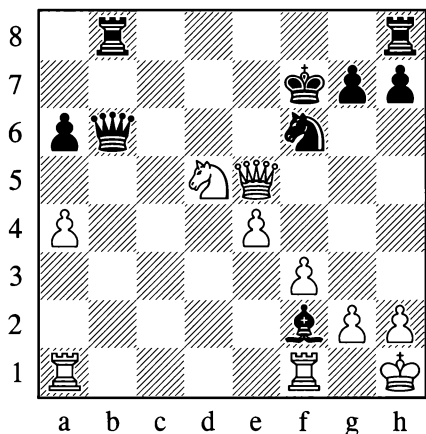
(22...♙f7 23.♜xb8! ♜xb8 24.♜xb8† ♘e8 25.♜xf2 wins) 23.♜xb8! ♜xb1 24.♜xf8†! White makes the last capture in a series of consecutive desperados, and he wins.

## 22.♜xe5†! ♘f7

I had seen up to this position when I castled, and I thought ♘c3-d5 looked promising. I had not seen beyond that. But once here, I noticed it wins cleanly.

## 23.♘d5!

23.♜ab1? ♜c5 Just like that, the tables have turned and White is lost.

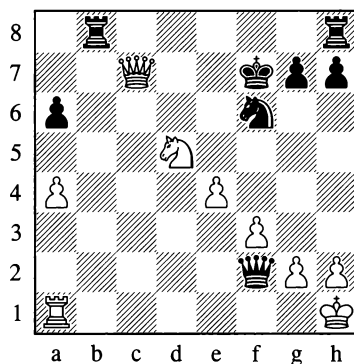


## 23...♘xd5

Black has other moves, but they can be solved by examining all checks and captures:

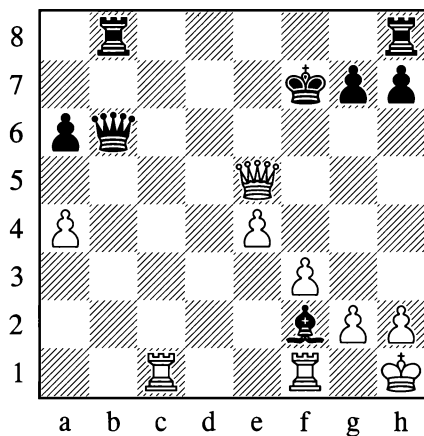
23...♜he8 24.♜xe8†! ♜xe8 25.♘xb6 White should win the endgame. The rook and two pawns look much better than the uncoordinated bishop and knight.

23...♜a7 24.♜xf2! ♜xf2 25.♜c7†!



A final important candidate move, again found by examining all checks and captures. Black's king cannot go to the back rank. If ...♔g6, White is happy to have not occupied the e7-square with his queen. 25...♔g6 26.♘e7†! ♘h5 27.♜e5† g5 28.♜xf6 Black gets mated.

24.♜xd5† ♘e7 25.♜e5†! ♘f7 26.♜ac1!



## 1-0

The final nuance. Black was powerless to stop ♜c1-c7†. Karjakin resigned rather than face the music.

26...♜b7 26...♜hc8 loses to 27.♜xc8! ♜xc8 28.♜f5†. 27.♜xf2 The simplest of many winning moves. 27...♜xf2 28.♜d5†

When comparing the quality of my calculation in these games with how I had played against Ehlvest, there is no comparison to be made. The three hundred problems in this book represent a great start towards improving your abilities, but it took me a lot more than three hundred to make this jump!

For further calculation work, I would highly recommend the *Grandmaster Preparation* series that Jacob wrote some years ago, as well as the online academy we own together, *Killer Chess Training*. This caters for a wide range of abilities and hosts at least one interactive training session every day of the year by several experienced trainers on a variety of topics. One of the most popular sessions is the Homework Club, split into two groups by approximate rating. Students solve more exercises just like these on a weekly basis. They submit them for marking by Jacob or Renier Castellanos, review their returned sheets and then participate in the online class where the solutions are fully explained and questions answered. Whenever I am not playing a tournament, I always make sure to turn in my answers!

# Name Index

In the last few decades in the chess world there has been a confusion regarding names. It all started with Viswanathan Anand, whose family name is Viswanathan and first name Anand. Still, he is known as Anand. Other Asian players are known by their first name, Vidit for example, while others are not. Some are known by the surname and others only by their full name. Ding Liren is now known as Ding, his family name, while Le Quang Liem is rarely referred to as Le.

This book does nothing to resolve this linguistic inconsistency and provides a name index to help the common chess player find the players in the book, based on a compromise between the naming we believe they are used to and what makes most sense. When in doubt, we have used the family name as the main name.

| <b>A</b>        |  | <b>B</b>        |                                    |
|-----------------|--|-----------------|------------------------------------|
| Aagaard (Jacob) | 7, 11, 15, 63, 86, 104, 115, 119, 166, 291, 330, 353 | Babula          | 43, 180                            |
| Abdusattorov    | 55, 57, 72, 84, 218, 229, 234, 238, 291, 340, 341    | Bachmann        | 28, 129                            |
| Acikel          | 41, 171  | Bagrationi      | 40, 168                            |
| Adams           | 31, 56, 145, 146, 226, 227                           | Bai             | 44, 185                            |
| Adly            | 16, 53, 87, 212                                      | Baldauf         | 70, 284                            |
| Agrest          | 64, 248  | Baltic          | 81, 324                            |
| Ahn             | 19, 43, 103, 181                                     | Barak           | 41, 80, 173, 320                   |
| Aitbayev        | 66, 261  | Barbot          | 23, 122                            |
| Alekseenko      | 17, 35, 82, 91, 92, 162, 330                         | Bartel          | 21, 31, 113, 143                   |
| Alexakis        | 30, 141  | Bashirli        | 69, 272                            |
| Almasi          | 19, 105  | Beliaevsky      | 33, 154                            |
| Alonso Rosell   | 20, 79, 108, 313                                     | Bellahcene      | 30, 138                            |
| Anand           | 55, 218  | Berchtenbreiter | 66, 259                            |
| Anto Cristiano  | 17, 78, 92, 304                                      | Bernadskiy      | 80, 318                            |
| Anton Guijarro  | 69, 77, 273, 300                                     | Bernasek        | 44, 182                            |
| Antoniewski     | 59, 243  | Bindrich        | 18, 101                            |
| Aronian         | 23, 43, 52, 79, 120, 178, 204, 312                   | Biolek          | 41, 173                            |
| Artemiev        | 33, 52, 66, 153, 205, 260                            | Blahynka        | 44, 65, 186, 254                   |
| Asadli          | 35, 44, 165, 184                                     | Blanco Acevedo  | 40, 168                            |
| Aziz            | 17, 46, 91, 196                                      | Blohberger      | 16, 21, 56, 89, 111, 223           |
|                 |  | Bluebaum        | 18, 96                             |
|                 |  | Bobras          | 54, 215                            |
|                 |  | Boev            | 21, 30, 44, 58, 111, 141, 184, 239 |
|                 |  | Bogner          | 64, 250, 251                       |
|                 |  | Boguslawski     | 28, 128                            |
|                 |  | Bruedigam       | 28, 131                            |
|                 |  | Brunello        | 23, 123                            |
|                 |  | Brynell         | 42, 175                            |
|                 |  | Buckels         | 20, 59, 110, 244                   |
|                 |  | Budisavljevic   | 71, 287                            |
|                 |  | Buhmann         | 42, 177                            |
|                 |  | Burdalev        | 41, 46, 173, 193                   |
|                 |  | Bykov           | 84, 342                            |



- C**
- Cadena 42, 175  
 Caletka 58, 65, 235, 254  
 Campora 16, 86  
 Carlsen 11, 48, 55, 57, 69, 116, 117, 121,  
 125, 143, 192, 196, 202, 203, 218,  
 222, 234, 238, 275, 293, 295, 321, 329  
 Carlsson 17, 90  
 Caruana 45, 46, 52, 82, 188, 192, 204, 329  
 Cech 58, 235  
 Cernousek 29, 133  
 Cheparinov 18, 55, 100, 222  
 Chigaev 59, 240  
 Chitlange Sakshi 17, 92  
 Christiansen 16, 19, 89, 102  
 Ciolek 41, 171  
 Coenen 81, 324  
 Cork 16, 86  
 Costachi 34, 58, 157, 239  
 Cuenca Jimenez 17, 52, 80, 90, 205, 322  
 Cvitan 41, 172
- D**
- Dardha 65, 76, 255, 293  
 Daulyte-Cornette 68, 270  
 Deac 71, 287  
 Demchenko 30, 46, 140, 194  
 Demidov 59, 245  
 Dimitrijeviski 343  
 Ding 32, 44, 52, 77, 147, 185, 205, 298  
 Dominguez Perez 68, 269  
 Donchenko 29, 67, 135, 264  
 Dragnev 70, 284  
 Dreev 44, 59, 78, 81, 183, 245, 307, 325  
 Drygalov 84, 342  
 Dubinski 67, 266  
 Dubov 30, 55, 140, 221  
 Duda 17, 76, 82, 93, 295, 329  
 Dudin 21, 32, 69, 114, 150, 275, 343  
 Durarbayli 22, 76, 119, 295
- E**
- Efimenko 64, 68, 250, 271  
 Efroimski 24, 126  
 Ehlvest 7, 11, 12, 353  
 Erigaisi 23, 33, 124, 155  
 Esipenko 76, 77, 297, 298
- F**
- Fauth 40, 169  
 Fedorov 43, 182  
 Fedorovsky 42, 177  
 Fedoseev 80, 316, 317  
 Felecan 66, 257  
 Finkel 40, 169  
 Firouzja 36, 40, 59, 79, 166, 167, 168, 242, 312  
 Flom 343  
 Frank 59, 67, 70, 243, 262, 278  
 Fridman 71, 286  
 Fruebing 66, 259
- G**
- Gabuzyan 20, 70, 109, 279  
 Gagunashvili 34, 52, 157, 205  
 Gajcin 24, 126  
 Gajewski 53, 76, 212, 293  
 Gareyev 47, 82, 199, 329  
 Garland 51  
 Garriga Cazorla 29, 136  
 Gelfand 32, 148  
 Ghaem Maghami 45, 80, 187, 315  
 Giri 46, 82, 194, 330, 332  
 Gjestemoen-von Hirsch 343  
 Gleb 114, 150, 275  
 Gokerkan 65, 252  
 Gonda 58, 237  
 Goormachtigh 29, 136  
 Goroshkov 36, 166  
 Gozzoli 79, 310  
 Grebeniuk 64, 251  
 Grebnev 83, 334  
 Grischuk 18, 57, 100, 101, 229  
 Guban 32, 150  
 Gumularz 29, 45, 134, 191  
 Guseinov 78, 308, 309

|              |                                    |              |   |
|--------------|------------------------------------|--------------|---|
| <b>H</b>     |                                    | <b>K</b>     |   |
| Haitin       | 82, 332                            | Kaasen       | 81, 327   |
| Hansen       | 45, 68, 76, 186, 269, 296          | Kanarek      | 54, 65, 214, 253                                    |
| Harikrishna  | 33, 77, 151, 299                   | Kanovsky     | 31, 142   |
| Haring       | 79, 311                            | Kantans      | 30, 137   |
| Harutjunyan  | 35, 163                            | Kantor       | 30, 140   |
| Hausrath     | 23, 121                            | Karjakin     | 19, 59, 80, 102, 242,<br>316, 350, 351, 352         |
| Heberla      | 54, 215                            | Karsay       | 41, 174   |
| Hector       | 19, 43, 103, 181                   | Kasimdzhanov | 21, 113   |
| Heimann      | 16, 33, 60, 89, 155, 247           | Kazakouski   | 79, 309   |
| Hess         | 11                                 | Kempinski    | 53, 211   |
| Hilby        | 32, 149                            | Keymer       | 23, 32, 43, 82, 120,<br>147, 178, 332, 333          |
| Hoffmann     | 35, 161                            | Kislinsky    | 59, 241   |
| Hollan       | 17, 30, 43, 94, 139, 180           | Klein        | 29, 135   |
| Holm         | 28, 131                            | Kobalia      | 45, 64, 191, 249                                    |
| Horvath      | 28, 78, 131, 304                   | Koellner     | 53, 208   |
| Hou Yifan    | 77, 301                            | Kolar        | 65, 254   |
| Hovhannisyan | 17, 57, 77, 93, 231, 302           | Kollars      | 59, 244   |
| Howell       | 41, 174                            | Korobov      | 36, 65, 66, 166, 256, 257                           |
| Hracek       | 65, 254                            | Korpa        | 43, 182   |
| Hrescak      | 71, 285                            | Kosakowski   | 16, 83, 87, 338                                     |
| Hungaski     | 28, 129                            | Kosteniuk    | 76, 84, 296, 340                                    |
| <b>I</b>     |                                    | Kostenko     | 66, 261   |
| Indjic       | 21, 32, 35, 58, 112, 146, 161, 238 | Kotsinis     | 41, 174   |
| Iniyan       | 72, 291                            | Kozak        | 68, 271   |
| Ivanchuk     | 76, 294                            | Kozul        | 43, 180   |
| Ivanisevic   | 41, 42, 172, 176                   | Kraemer      | 19, 34, 104, 155                                    |
| Ivic         | 54, 66, 77, 213, 257, 303          | Kramnik      | 53, 57, 69, 76, 83, 212,<br>213, 230, 277, 294, 337 |
| <b>J</b>     |                                    | Krasenkow    | 23, 65, 121, 253                                    |
| Jafarli      | 65, 255                            | Krastev      | 47, 197   |
| Jakubiec     | 54, 217                            | Krejci       | 17, 94  |
| Jakubowski   | 29, 134                            | Kulaots      | 21, 112   |
| Janik        | 54, 214                            | Kulkarni     | 80, 319   |
| Javornik     | 45, 190                            | Kuzmicz      | 22, 117   |
| Jirovsky     | 59, 241                            |              |   |
| Jobava       | 47, 80, 198, 319                   |              |   |
| Johansson    | 20, 21, 107, 113                   |              |   |
| Juhasz       | 20, 107                            |              |   |
| Juksta       | 78, 308                            |              |   |
| Jurcik       | 52, 206                            |              |   |

- L**
- Lagarde 69, 278  
 Lahav 40, 169  
 Lei 55, 222, 223  
 Lenderman 11  
 Le Quang Liem 56, 71, 77, 82,  
 228, 289, 300, 329  
 Levin 16, 19, 43, 88, 104, 179  
 Liang 70, 283  
 Libiszewski 40, 78, 169, 305  
 Lindgren 79, 310  
 Livaic 53, 210  
 Lodici 31, 143  
 Loiseau 43, 180  
 Lomaia 35, 164  
 Lubbe 23, 83, 125, 336
- M**
- Madaminov 67, 262  
 Mager 42, 176  
 Maghsoodloo 32, 66, 146, 147, 258  
 Mahitosh Dey 65, 252  
 Maiwald 20, 110  
 Malakhov 19, 60, 76, 105, 247, 297  
 Malik 80, 320  
 Maltsevskaya 16, 78, 88, 307  
 Mamedyarov 45, 56, 57, 67, 71, 186,  
 187, 225, 226, 231, 263, 289  
 Manor 34, 159  
 Maria 46, 191  
 Markgraf 68, 267  
 Markus 35, 56, 161, 201, 227  
 Marn 42, 178  
 Marticio 18, 98  
 Martin Barcelo 28, 130  
 Matinian 35, 163  
 Matlakov 30, 138  
 McShane 31, 34, 56, 145, 158, 225  
 Medina 18, 98  
 Megaranto 32, 150  
 Meinhardt 29, 135  
 Mekhitarian 80, 322
- Melaa 81, 327  
 Michalek 40, 171  
 Mihok 46, 195  
 Mikhalevski 22, 81, 119, 323  
 Mis 71, 290  
 Mladek 22, 119  
 Moiseenko 47, 200  
 Molina 53, 209  
 Morera Rodriguez 16, 86  
 Moroni 57, 232  
 Morris 16, 86  
 Moskvina 67  
 Moussard 69, 275  
 Mrazek 79, 314  
 Muetsch 34, 157  
 Muradli 17, 35, 58, 71, 95, 165, 239, 285
- N**
- Najer 42, 56, 175, 226  
 Nakamura 33, 36, 58, 66, 153, 154, 166,  
 167, 236, 260  
 Nareks 17, 95  
 Naumann 78, 305  
 Navara 56, 65, 82, 227, 256, 331  
 Neiksans 81, 326  
 Nemeth 64, 248  
 Nepomniachtchi 47, 52, 53, 68, 199,  
 207, 212, 218, 268  
 Nestorovic 33, 152  
 Nevednichy 18, 97  
 Nguyen 33, 153  
 Niemann 44, 55, 82, 185, 219, 331  
 Nikitenko 81, 327  
 Ning 35, 164  
 Novak 70, 278  
 Nytra 19, 24, 40, 79, 106, 126, 171, 314
- O**
- Onyshchuk 42, 52, 175, 208  
 Oparin 29, 81, 132, 323  
 Oratovsky 34, 159

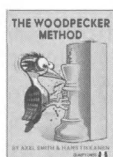
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|----------------|-----------------------|---------------|-------------------------------------|
| <b>P</b>       |                       | <b>R</b>      |                                     |
| Paichadze      | 31, 144               | Radjabov      | 69, 83, 277, 337                    |
| Pajeken        | 22, 47, 115, 200      | Radzhabov     | 79, 309                             |
| Papp           | 45, 189               | Ragger        | 48, 201                             |
| Parligras      | 54, 216               | Rajlich       | 23, 123                             |
| Parvanyan      | 31, 145               | Ramesh        | 343                                 |
| Pasztor        | 22, 118               | Rapport       | 44, 55, 57, 183, 219, 230, 232, 233 |
| Paulus         | 24, 126               | Redsziz       | 71, 290                             |
| Payyappat      | 23, 83, 125, 336      | Rhine         | 66, 257                             |
| Peng           | 22, 117               | Rios          | 40, 53, 170, 210                    |
| Perazic        | 67, 265               | Risteski      | 77, 302                             |
| Petenyi        | 44, 182               | Robson        | 11                                  |
| Petkov         | 80, 318               | Rogozenco     | 30, 68, 137, 267                    |
| Petrov         | 44, 185               | Rosen         | 83, 339                             |
| Petrovskiy     | 21, 83, 113, 335      | Roubalik      | 31, 142                             |
| Pilsova        | 41, 173               | Royal         | 20, 107                             |
| Polak          | 54, 217               | Rozentalis    | 56, 226                             |
| Ponkratov      | 19, 45, 104, 187      | Rubil         | 45, 190                             |
| Ponomariov     | 58, 237               | Rydl          | 30, 139                             |
| Poschadel      | 35, 161               | <b>S</b>      |                                     |
| Praggnanandhaa | 56, 69, 228, 275, 276 | Sadhwani      | 78, 307                             |
| Pranav Anand   | 31, 76, 142, 293      | Saduakassova  | 28, 128                             |
| Predke         | 58, 236               | Sahidi        | 53, 211                             |
| Predojevic     | 32, 149               | Salem         | 42, 177, 273                        |
| Priasmoro      | 31, 144               | Salimova      | 46, 191                             |
| Priehoda       | 21, 115               | Samunenkov    | 20, 81, 109, 325                    |
| Prokofiev      | 23, 122               | Sanal         | 33, 151                             |
| Prusikin       | 41, 174               | Sandhya       | 28, 130                             |
| Pubantz        | 53, 208               | Sankova       | 64, 248                             |
| Pultinevicius  | 42, 178               | Santos Latasa | 71, 286, 343                        |
| Puranik        | 77, 79, 299, 313      | Santos Ruiz   | 343                                 |
|                |                       | Sarana        | 55, 58, 66, 222, 238, 258           |
|                |                       | Sargissian    | 33, 154                             |
|                |                       | Sargsyan      | 20, 59, 83, 108, 240, 334           |
|                |                       | Saric         | 28, 80, 128, 315                    |
|                |                       | Sasata        | 343                                 |
|                |                       | Schroeder     | 81, 326                             |
|                |                       | Sebag         | 83, 339                             |
|                |                       | Sebastian     | 64, 248, 250, 251                   |
|                |                       | Seel          | 64, 251                             |
|                |                       | Sethuraman    | 31, 72, 142, 291                    |
|                |                       | Seul          | 67, 264                             |
|                |                       | Shahinyan     | 70, 279                             |
|                |                       | Shankland     | 6, 7, 343, 344, 350                 |
|                |                       | Sharan        | 28, 128                             |

- Shishkov 82, 332  
 Shoker 56, 223  
 Shytaj 18, 101  
 Simek 21, 22, 115, 119  
 Sjugirov 18, 47, 54, 77, 97, 197, 213, 303  
 Slobodjan 52, 206  
 So 55, 60, 67, 70, 71,  
 220, 246, 263, 280, 288  
 Socko 35, 83, 162, 335  
 Sonntag 69, 278  
 Sorm 67, 262  
 Spoelman 76, 293  
 Sprenger 77, 301  
 Stefansson 18, 100  
 Stoczek 47, 197  
 Stotyn 54, 214  
 Studer 343  
 Subramaniam 23, 69, 124, 272  
 Suleymenov 78, 307  
 Suran 34, 156  
 F. Svane 70, 281  
 R. Svane 34, 158  
 Svidler 32, 70, 71, 148, 280, 288  
 Sychev 78, 306
- T**
- Tang 64, 249  
 Tari 42, 47, 52, 83, 177, 198, 208, 338  
 Teclaf 68, 271  
 Tenor 6  
 Ter-Sahakyan 78, 306  
 Theodorou 21, 58, 114, 239  
 Timm 54, 214  
 Tologontegin 46, 54, 196, 216  
 Tregubov 33, 152
- U**
- Urh 18, 72, 100, 291  
 Utsab Chatterjee 53, 209
- V**
- Vachier-Lagrave 19, 45, 46, 52, 60, 68, 104,  
 189, 192, 193, 207, 246, 268  
 Vakhidov 34, 157  
 Vandenbussche 34, 155  
 J. Van Foreest 30, 55, 57, 69, 140,  
 141, 220, 221, 233, 273  
 L. Van Foreest 47, 197  
 Van Osch 16, 89  
 Van Wely 68, 271  
 Varshini 64, 251  
 Vastrukhin 20, 29, 111, 135  
 Vidit 32, 48, 150, 201, 202, 203  
 Vocaturo 40, 170  
 Vokhidov 20, 67, 111, 262  
 Volokitin 45, 188  
 Vrana 34, 156  
 Vrolijk 47, 199  
 Vujovic 67, 265  
 Vykouk 46, 195
- W**
- Wagner 70, 281  
 Walek 19, 106  
 Werle 20, 107  
 Wojtaszek 18, 47, 96, 97, 199  
 Wong 31, 145
- Y**
- Yoo 70, 283, 343  
 Yuffa 79, 311  
 Yunusov 40, 168
- Z**
- Zaragatski 22, 115  
 Zarubitski 43, 81, 179, 327  
 Zilka 28, 29, 44, 46, 131, 132, 186, 193  
 Zlatkov 22, 118  
 Zwardon 29, 133

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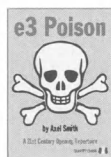
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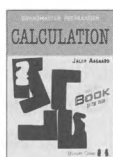
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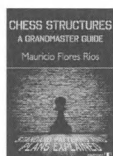
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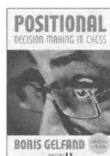
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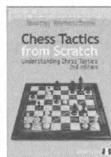
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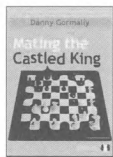
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