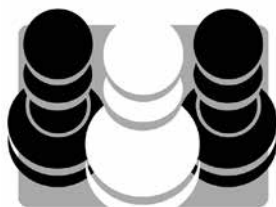


Practical Chess Strategy

By

Julen Arizmendi



Quality Chess
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Preface

Chess terminology is sometimes confusing. Take for instance “strategic” and “positional” play. They are often used interchangeably, but they are, in my opinion, quite different. Strategy is the process of planning and carrying out long-term operations that change the position accordingly. It involves deciding how to place your pawns and pieces, and considering which pieces you want to keep or exchange. Positional play, on the other hand, is generally short-term: the players maneuver their forces to profit from defects the opponent’s position already has, or they place their pieces as harmoniously as possible hoping that an opportunity to do something more meaningful will arise.

In this book, I want to discuss my approach to strategic thinking in chess and how to train it. One of the first things a beginner learns – if he or she manages to not quit the game altogether after being mated on f7 a dozen times – is the value of the pieces. This information is quite useful, since by simply adding points we can keep track of how things are going. Counting material becomes our first evaluation tool. It’s an effective one, as it allows us to dramatically cut down on the number of reasonable moves: we go from considering any move to only those that do not hang material. But then things start to get more complicated.

My first chess book was a gift from my grandfather: *Capablanca*, by Vasily Panov. It was not really a “basics” book, but my grandfather was Cuban, and Capa is a national hero. I remember going over the games, reading the annotations, and sometimes even wondering about some alternative moves. But with no engine or a strong player around at the time, I would mostly end up trusting the author and his assessments. I knew what he meant by “the position is complicated” or “Black has a difficult task ahead of him”. However, weaknesses, piece activity or a bad bishop are more abstract than material and therefore not as quantifiable. In that regard, it was difficult for me to keep up, but there really is no way around that.

Everyone needs to first pick up the concepts from books or another player. Then by analyzing, training, playing and implementing a process of trial and error, we eventually develop a better feeling for when one concept carries more weight than another. This in turn allows us to compare different variations in a more reliable fashion. And what is decision-making in chess, if not a constant case of *comparison*? We always need to compare different possibilities and try to choose the best one.

At some point, when you analyze many of your games with a stronger player or the engine, you realize there are quite a few situations in which this “evaluation feel”, otherwise known as *intuition*, fails miserably. Often, we are unable to pinpoint why exactly. In 2001, I came across Dorfman’s *The Method in Chess*. I enthusiastically went through the explanations, games and analysis, but many questions remained unanswered. Ultimately, this method was not for me, but it did open my mind to a new way of thinking about chess in general. By building on that, I developed my own approach, which is anyway what all experienced players end up doing. We take what we can from others, adapting it to best fit the way our own individual brain works.

Some might be disappointed, but what follows is not a set of rules to use at the board to play better chess. In my view, this game is far too complicated and concrete for that. The concepts I will cover are intended to help the reader gain a deeper understanding: of the overall needs of a position; of strategy; of which exchanges to seek or avoid. The best way to integrate these ideas into our chess is through deliberate practice, focusing on them while solving exercises or analyzing games at home.

Personally, I recommend to my students to follow games live and try to evaluate interesting middlegame positions they come across; then they can turn on the engine and compare. If the assessment is way off, you can try making small changes to the position to figure out the significance of which element was wrongly assessed. Throughout the book, I will be using this tool to highlight the huge impact some of these seemingly small changes can have.

I have worked with this approach over the years to improve my own game, as well as that of my students, who in turn have helped me fine-tune it and understand many of the difficulties different types of players face when evaluating positions. The result of this work is what I will be presenting.

Julen Arizmendi

La Bisbal del Penedés, April 2025

Chapter 1

King Position

In my experience, the static position of the king is by far the most underestimated factor in chess. After all, why should I worry about my king when there is no immediate attack? This element is mostly a potential issue, so it is easy to dismiss it as unimportant. Humans are hasty, impatient beings, always valuing more what's happening *now*, disregarding future consequences. That's not true only in chess, but everyday life in general. However, even though it might pain us to invest money towards our pensions, it is always important to plan for the future.

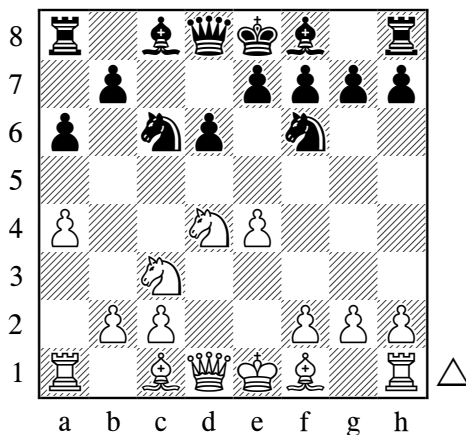
As we will see, factoring in the robustness of a king shelter is important, even if no direct attack is in sight.

In the following game, Kamsky sacrifices a pawn to break Black's pawn structure and strip the opponent's king of a safe haven. It might be surprising that White does not try to exploit this advantage right away, especially when down material, but Kamsky understands that a king without a home is a static feature that will not go away as long as queens are on the board. This is why he instead slowly builds up and aims at the queenside weaknesses to increase the pressure.

Gata Kamsky – Salem Saleh

Moscow 2016

1.e4 c5 2.♘f3 d6 3.d4 cxd4 4.♘xd4 ♘f6 5.♘c3 a6 6.a4 ♘c6



7.a5!?

An interesting gambit, introduced by Kamsky himself five years earlier.

7...♖xa5

In Kamsky's first try, Black declined the offer. After 7...e6 8.♖xc6 bxc6 9.♙d3 ♙e7 10.0-0 c5 11.♙f4 ♖c7 12.♙e2 White was clearly in the driver's seat in Kamsky – Topalov, Kazan (1) 2011. White has a space advantage, and Black has important structural weaknesses on a6 and d6.

8.♙d5!

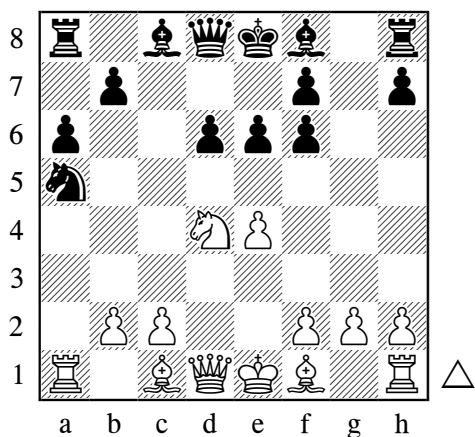
An idea reminiscent of Fischer – Najdorf, Varna (ol) 1962.

8...e6?

This is natural, yet a serious mistake.

8...♖c6 had to be played, the idea being that 9.♖xf6† can now be met with 9...exf6!. This is the key defensive move. Even though the weak pawn on d6 and White's activity provide enough compensation for the missing pawn, Black can at least count on a safe haven for his king on the kingside.

Another try is 9.♙e3 ♖xd5 10.exd5 ♖e5 11.♙e2, when White again has good prospects, but after 11...g6 Black remains quite solid, and the king will feel relatively safe on g8.

9.♖xf6† gxf6

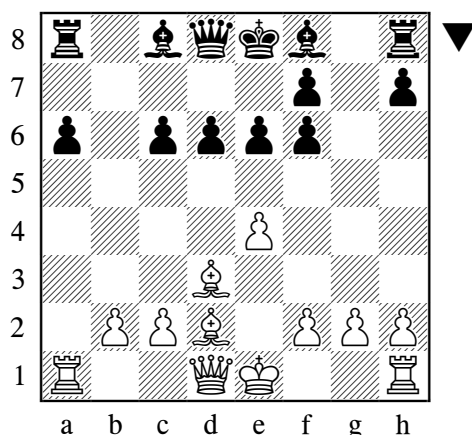
This is the structure White wanted to get. Let's follow the game for a few more moves before taking stock:

10.♙d2!

Other good ways to play also exist, but this one is best.

10...♖c6 11.♖xc6!

This great strategic concept is the reason behind Kamsky's previous move. The exchange on c6 not only leaves Black with a weak pawn on the a-file, but also ensures the queenside will never be a good hiding place for the king.

11...bxc6 12.♙d3

The position has clarified. What does White have for the pawn?

Black is restricted and there are several pawn weaknesses in his position, most notably the a6-pawn. However, the most important factor is the position of the king. White does not have a direct attack at this point in time, but the potential for it is permanent because there is no safe haven for the king anywhere on the board. This might sound strange at first, given that this pawn structure is quite typical in the Classical Sicilian. Yet there is one key difference: in that Sicilian variation White gives up the dark-squared bishop on f6, not

a knight. Hence, in those lines Black has the bishop pair, and the black king (although not entirely secure) can count on the unopposed dark-squared bishop to provide decent cover.

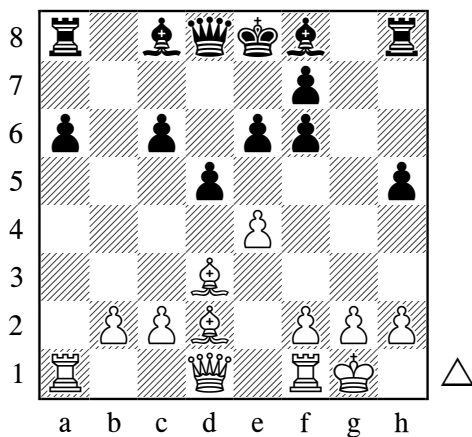
So how will White convert his advantage? Since the compensation is static in nature, there is no need to rush. Kamsky can improve his pieces, aiming them at weak spots, or create more weaknesses through pawn breaks. One thing White should be careful to avoid would be to trade queens. In the diagram position, if we remove both queens from the board, White has good compensation for the pawn due to Black's weak a-pawn, but it could hardly yield more than equality.

12...h5

A standard move in these positions, stopping ♖h5 and creating the possibility for ...♗h6.

The situation does not change much after: 12...d5 13.0-0 ♗b7 14.♖e2! ♗g7 15.♞a4 White can regain the pawn on a6 if deemed necessary, and the rook on a4 is ready to swing to the kingside.

13.0-0 d5



14.♗a5

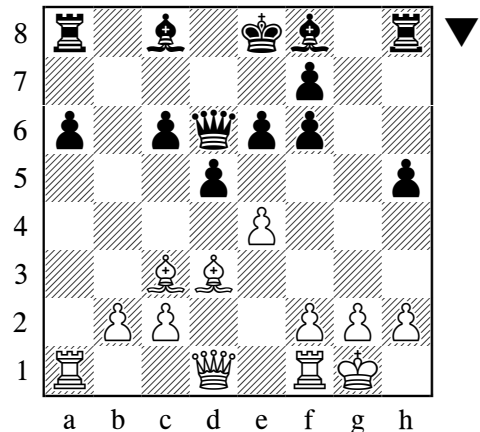
Creating a confrontation in the center with 14.c4! d4 15.b4 would have given White

excellent chances. The threat is c4-c5, and if 15...c5, then 16.bxc5 ♗xc5 17.♞a5! and White starts developing a strong initiative. The open nature of the position gives White easy access to the opponent's weaknesses.

Also good was 14.♖f3 ♗d6 15.♞a4!? with ideas similar to the ones mentioned in the note regarding 12...d5.

14...♖d6 15.♗c3

Kamsky's idea is to invite the black pawns to advance, claiming that such an advance would expose more weaknesses in the enemy pawn structure.



15...♗e7?!

Black should have accepted the chance to gain more space with tempo: 15...d4 16.♗d2 h4 17.h3 c5 Although White retains the easier game, Black's space and extra pawn shouldn't be underestimated. Breaking through has become harder after the last few moves.

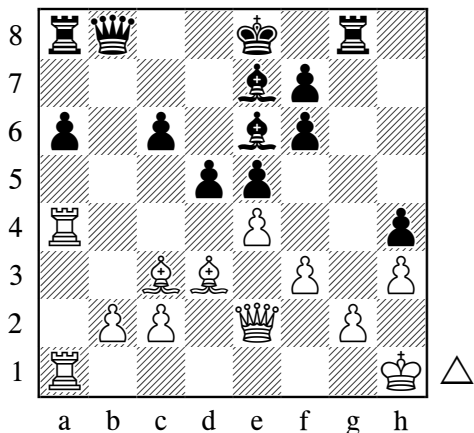
16.♞a4 e5 17.♖e2 ♗g4 18.f3 ♗e6 19.♔h1!

I like this move. Kamsky is in no rush – despite being down a pawn, his main focus appears to be restricting Black's counterplay.

19...h4 20.h3 ♞g8 21.♞fa1

It was a good opportunity for 21.f4!.

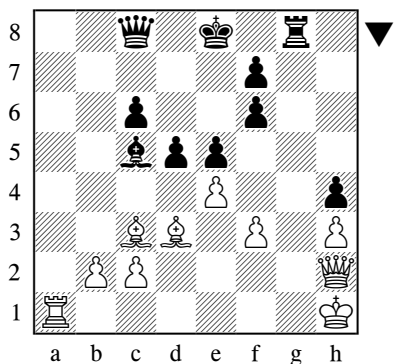
21...♖b8



22.b4!

This move fulfills two purposes: it fixes the weakness on a6 while preventing a hidden defensive resource.

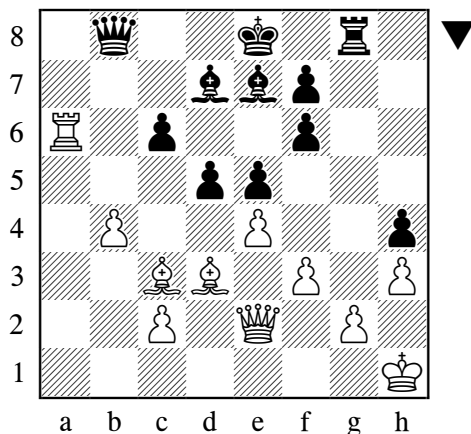
Kamsky sidesteps 22.♖xa6? ♖xa6 23.♖xa6 which would allow a beautiful shot: 23...♙xh3!! 24.gxh3 ♖c8 25.♖h2 ♙c5! 26.♖a1



26...♙g3! White would be forced to give up the queen: 27.♙f1 ♙g1† 28.♖xg1 ♙xg1 29.♙xg1 ♖b8 White's king is too open for White to have an advantage, despite the material disparity. The game will likely end with a perpetual check.

22...♙d7 23.♖xa6 ♖xa6 24.♖xa6

White finally regains the pawn he parted with on move 7. Black, on the other hand, has been unable to solve the problem of the king on e8.



24...♖c8

With c5 covered, 24...♙xh3? 25.gxh3 ♖c8 no longer works: 26.♖f1 ♙g3 27.♙h2 White wins.

25.♖f1

Avoiding any funny business on h3.

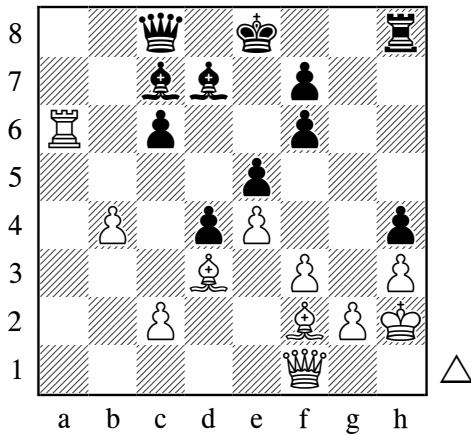
25...♙d8 26.♙e1!

The bishop was doing nothing on c3, whereas from f2 it will eye the h4-pawn while protecting White's weaknesses on the kingside and influencing events on the queenside.

26...♖h8 27.♙f2 d4

This blocks the f2-bishop, but it relinquishes any pressure previously exerted against the white center and tremendously weakens the light squares. It was such pawn advances leaving weaknesses behind that Kamsky was trying to provoke all along.

28.♙h2 ♙c7



Kamsky has placed his pieces on their optimal squares. This means White is ready to open the position and reap the fruits of his previous efforts.

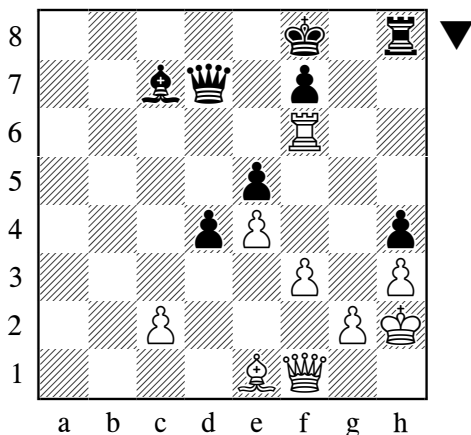
29.b5! cxb5 30.♙xb5 ♕e7 31.♙e1!

All the pieces should be included in the attack. The obvious threat is ♙b4†.

31...♔f8

31...♙d6 loses to 32.♖a7.

32.♙xd7 ♖xd7 33.♖xf6



White is a pawn up, with the more active pieces, better structure and safer king.

33...♖h5 34.♖a6 ♔g7 35.♙d2 ♙d8 36.♖d6 ♖c7 37.♖c6 ♖d7 38.♖h6!

Trading the defender is a common way of breaking through, especially when the opponent's position is full of weaknesses.

38...♖g5

After 38...♖xh6 39.♖xh6† ♔g8 40.♙g5! White eliminates the last defender, and Black is about to lose more pawns.

39.♖d6 ♖e8 40.♖xh4 ♖g6 41.♖g4 ♖xg4 42.fxg4 ♔g8 43.g5

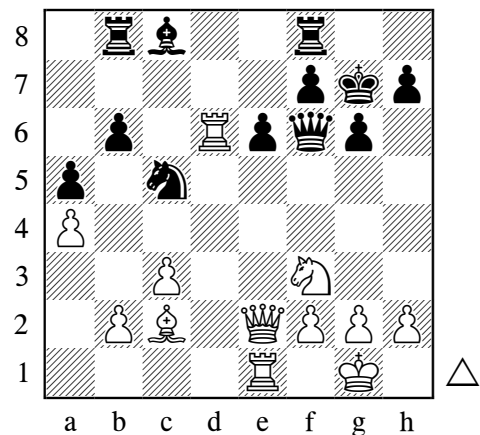
Black resigned.

1–0

Although Black's king never came under a direct attack, the lack of a safe shelter was felt throughout the game. Salem avoided castling short because his king would have been too exposed, but keeping the king in the center prevented him from connecting the rooks and fully coordinating. We saw other aspects of the position changing, but the lack of shelter for the black king was always there, prevalent and making Black's life miserable.

Volodar Murzin – Daniil Yuffa

Moscow 2019



As shown by the previous game, a weak king does not necessarily have to come under heavy fire to be exploited, but keeping the queens on is essential. In this case, the first thing that catches the eye is the weakness on b6. Furthermore, White's pieces are clearly more active compared to their counterparts.

23. ♖e5?

The Rapid World Champion was even younger in 2019 than he is now. The redeeming factor of his youth notwithstanding, his decision relinquishes the entirety of White's huge advantage. Once the queens go, the black king's weakened shelter is no longer relevant. Only the b6-pawn remains as a target, which makes it difficult to get something out of White's piece activity.

Instead, 23. ♘e5! with ♘g4 and ♖e3, or b2-b4 in mind, is winning for White. By playing in this fashion, White highlights how the more active pieces can be used to attack the black king, and not only to put pressure on a single pawn weakness. Due to the black dark-squared bishop missing from the board, Black's king is permanently weak, and the task of defending is nearly hopeless.

23... ♙d7?

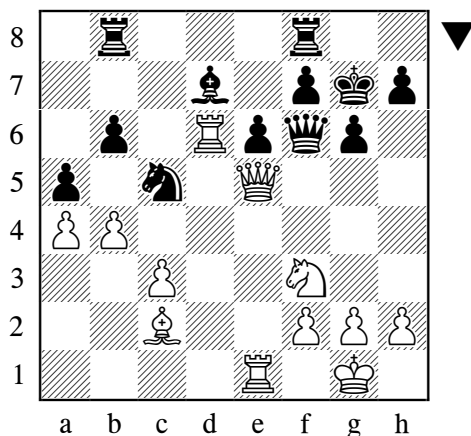
Yuffa allows his young opponent to correct his mistake.

He probably missed that after 23... ♖xe5 24. ♘xe5 Black has 24... b5!, ridding himself of the weak pawn and fully equalizing.

24. b4?

The more restrained 24. b3!? would be enough to keep a sizable advantage. After 24... ♖xe5 25. ♘xe5 ♙e8 26. ♘c4 b5 White has 27. ♘xa5 bxa4 28. b4! with a large advantage, due to the connected passers.

However, 24. ♖e3!, avoiding the queen exchange, would be even stronger.



24... ♙xa4!

This small trick allows Black to simplify the position and reach an equal endgame.

25. bxc5 ♙xc2 26. cxb6 ♖fc8!

It is important to put immediate pressure on the c3-pawn.

26... a4?? would allow 27. ♖e3! ♖fc8 28. ♘e5 and Black is lost, due to the weak king and the strong passer on b6.

27. ♖xa5 ♖xc3 28. ♖e5† ♖xe5 29. ♘xe5 ♙a4

White's pieces are unable to break the blockade and support the b-pawn's advance. The game uneventfully ended in a draw on move 48.

... 1/2–1/2

Once the queens came off, Yuffa had a much easier time because his king was no longer a target, and he could focus on defending the single weakness on the queenside. At first it was his b6-pawn, and then it became a question of defending against the white passed b-pawn.

The key piece needed to exploit a weak king position is the queen. The importance of this

concept is highlighted by the fact that had Murzin recognized his mistake and avoided the exchange with 24. ♖e3!, he would have kept a big advantage despite wasting a full tempo. It was key for White to realize that despite seemingly adequate pawn cover, there were significant weaknesses on the dark squares around the black king.

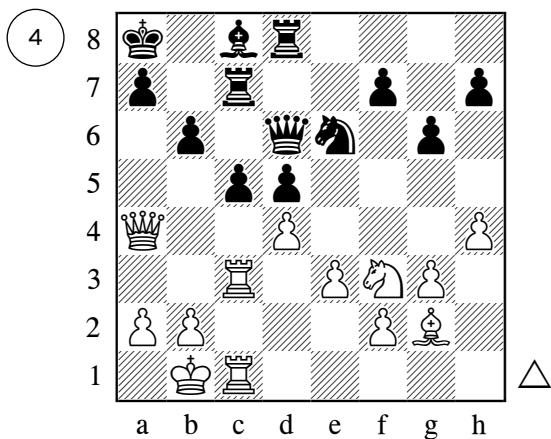
Chapter 6

Exercises

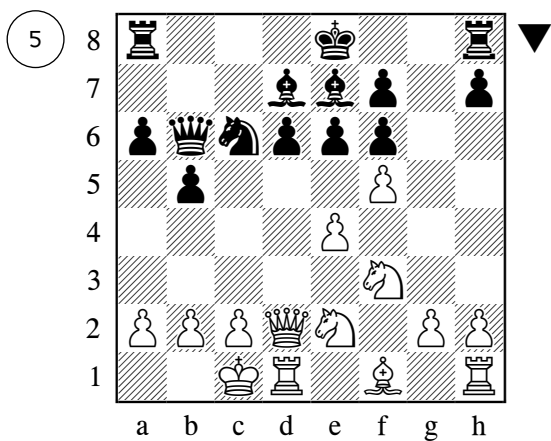
After all that, I think the time has finally come to solve some exercises and check out whether you have learned anything from my ramblings! In some cases, we'll just give a brief solution, while in others, when the game was of particular interest or instructive value, we might give it in its entirety.



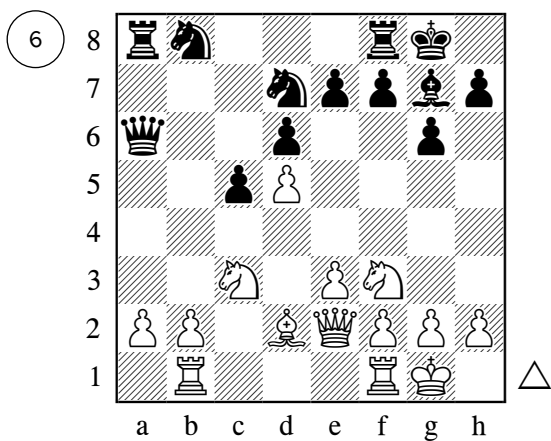
Kasparov – Andersson, Reykjavik 1988



Abdumalik – Cheng, Gibraltar 2022



Serarols – Valenzuela, Barcelona 2021



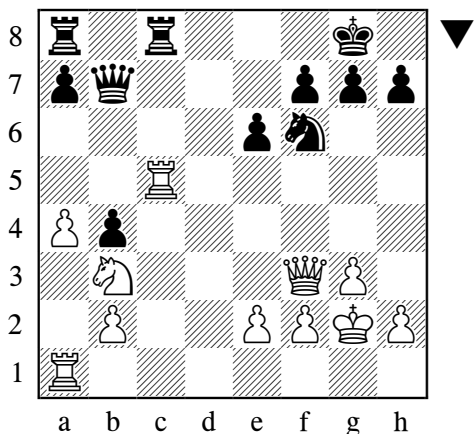
Chapter 7

Solutions



1. David Paravyan – Aram Hakobyan

Jermuk 2021



The two distinct elements are White's slightly weakened king, and the weak black pawns on the queenside, which have gone a bit too far up the board. The latter is more relevant in this instance, but Black should definitely keep the queen. That's not because he is looking for mate, but because he needs it as a means for future counterplay.

21...♔xf3?

Instead, 21...♖d5! 22.♖a1 h6 should be played. White has a small edge, but Black should be able to gradually untangle.

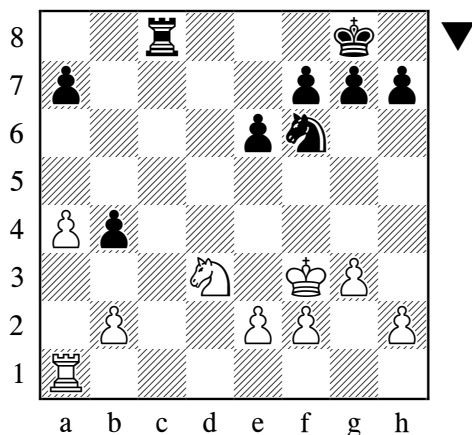
22.♕xf3

Without any compensating element, the queenside weaknesses make this endgame quite difficult for Black. Moreover, the white king, which we previously dubbed "slightly weakened", has now become a force to be reckoned with. His Majesty is an active participant in this endgame, while Black's is still irrelevant on g8.

22...♖xc5 23.♖xc5 ♖c8 24.♖d3

Threatening the b4-pawn and to trade rooks with ♖c1.

Objectively better is 24.♖c1! which stops the black king from coming towards the center and prepares to trade rooks with ♖d3 all the same. With this move order, White is close to winning.



24...a5?

This almost automatic reaction for a human is the decisive mistake according to the engine.

Hakobyan could have retained hopes with 24...♕f8! 25.♖xb4 e5!, but hardly anyone would be willing to give up a pawn like that, especially considering White's win after the text move is not immediately obvious.

25.♖c1!

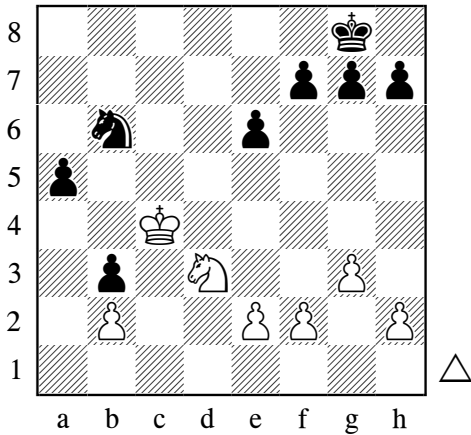
Without rooks, the disparity in the activity of the two kings becomes obvious.

25...♖xc1 26.♖xc1 ♖d7 27.♕e4!

The key idea. Paravyan sacrifices one of his pawns to activate the king, which will eventually gobble up both of Black's queenside pawns. White needs only one of his queenside pawns to win the game.

27.♖b3? runs into 27...♖e5+ 28.♕e4 ♖c4, which is an issue, since after taking on b2 Black will be ready to take on a4 as well.

27...♖c5† 28.♔d4 ♖xa4 29.♖d3! b3
30.♔c4 ♖b6†



31.♔b5!

I like the text more than 31.♔xb3, after which White's king is cut off. This also wins though, as ♖c5-b7 will force the a5-pawn forward.

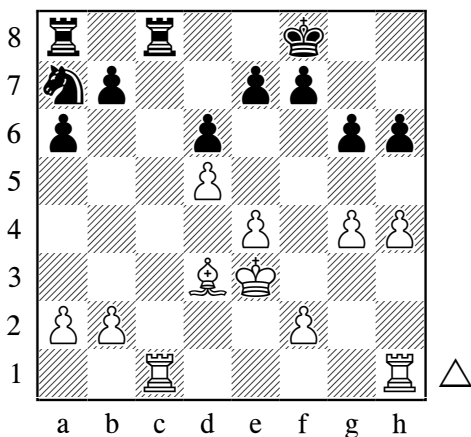
31...♖d5 32.♔xa5 ♔f8 33.♔a4 ♔e7
34.♔xb3

White is winning with his extra pawn, and Black had to resign on move 50.

...1-0

2. Vassily Smyslov – Thomas Ernst

London 1988



In such endgames, the usual strategy is to exchange one rook to prevent annoying counterplay, while keeping the second rook to extract more weaknesses.

22.♞cf1!

However, in this case, White has many pawn breaks on the kingside that can lead to attacking chances or targets. Since all the entry squares on the c-file are covered, Smyslov decides to maintain both rooks. Once the kingside opens, it will be easier for him to invade if he can double rooks on an open file.

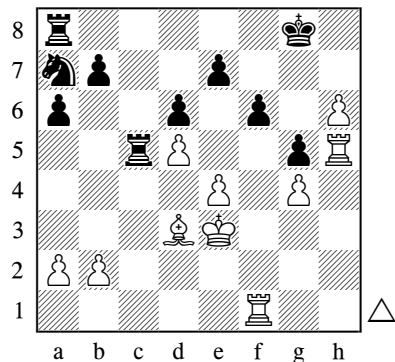
To illustrate: 22.♞xc8†? ♞xc8 23.f4 ♔g7 24.h5 This is also slightly better for White, but only due to the space advantage and the black knight on a7. The black king is not feeling any heat. You can compare this to the game seen below:

22...♔g7 23.f4 ♞c5 24.h5!

That's the way to open the maximum number of lines. The black king is the target. It's not a matter of putting pawns on the correct color at this point.

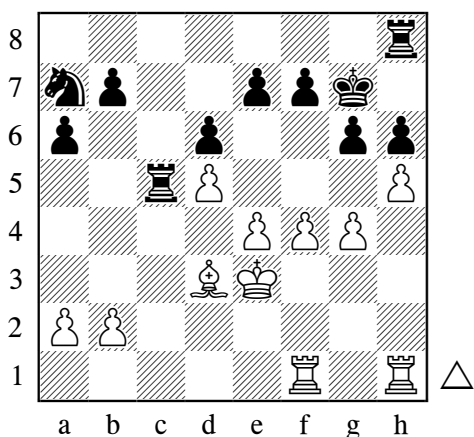
24...♞h8

One might think that 24...g5 is advisable, trying to gain control of some dark squares. And this might indeed have been lovely if the knight was on a relevant square in the center or kingside. As things stand, White can demonstrate his attacking potential in full: 25.fxg5 hxg5 26.h6† ♔g8 27.♞h5 f6 Two consecutive pawn breaks will allow White's rook and bishop to join the attack.



28.e5! dxe5 29.d6! This works well because Black's pieces – especially the knight – are doing nothing on the queenside. 29...exd6 30.♖xf6 White wins.

24...gxh5 would be the reaction if only one pair of rooks remained on the board. But with two rooks for each side, after 25.♖xh5 the threat of ♖h1 and ♖xh6 is pretty much unstoppable. Another idea would be g4-g5, opening another file and getting a massive attack. Black is toast.



25.hxg6 fxg6 26.♖hg1!:

Better is 26.♖fg1!, intending to force new weaknesses with g4-g5. The problem with the move in the game is that g4-g5 can be answered with ...hxg5, and Black's rook takes over the h-file. The possible check on h3 is annoying.

26...♜b5?

This is just a waste of time. Ernst tries to provoke more pawns onto light squares, but when the knight is terrible, there's no one there to exploit the dark-square weaknesses.

It is hard to suggest a good plan, but 26...a5 might be worth a try, with ...a5-a4-a3 in mind to create some weaknesses on the queenside.

27.a4! ♜a7 28.♞d4

It is clear that White's plan has been a complete success. I cannot resist showing the

remainder of this game though – it's such an instructive example!

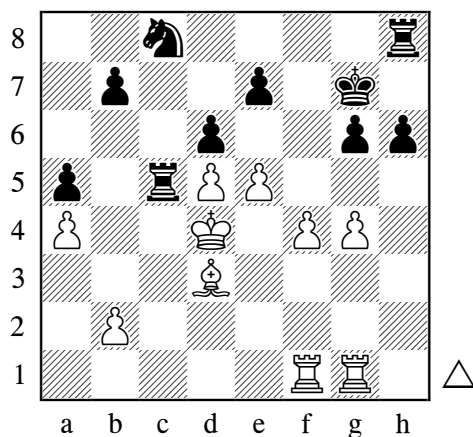
28...a5 29.e5

The right idea, but not the most accurate execution.

Instead 29.f5! g5, and only now 30.e5, keeps the position under control.

29...♞c8

Ernst could have tried to complicate matters with 29...e6!?, breaking White's pawn structure and allowing his knight back into the game. With an engine running, it's clear this is nothing. During a game on the other hand, many would panic. Losing control is the first step towards tragedy. A relatively clean engine solution is: 30.dxe6! ♞c6† 31.♞e3! ♞e8 32.f5 ♖xe5† 33.♞d2 The passed pawns should decide.



30.♖c1!

Black was intending ...♞b6 to pressure d5, so Smyslov decides to eliminate one of the attackers. This is the perfect moment to do so, now that the knight on c8 obstructs the h8-rook from fighting for the c-file. Moreover, the pair of white rooks has served its purpose, by forcing Black to make multiple concessions on the kingside to avoid getting mated.

30...♖b6

There is no other choice.

The passive 30...b6 31.e6 offers no hope. The knight's existence is surrounded by nothing but sadness. White will break through on the kingside during the next few moves.

31.♖xc5 dxc5† 32.♙xc5 ♖xa4† 33.♙d4 ♖xb2 34.♙b5

The threat is ♖b1.

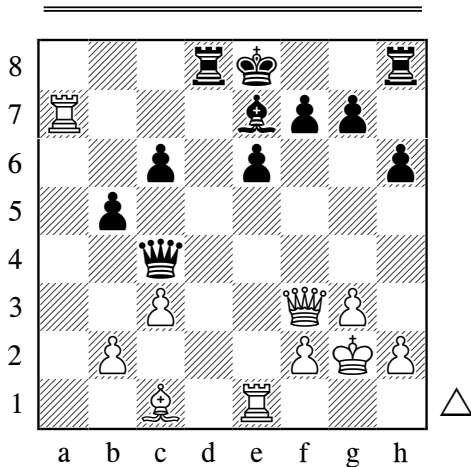
34...a4 35.d6

There is little Black can do against the advance of the d-pawn.

35...exd6 36.exd6 ♖d8 37.d7 ♙f6 38.♖e1 a3 39.♙c3 ♖a8 40.♖e8 ♖a4† 41.♙xa4

An amazing positional display by Smyslov, who was sixty-seven years old at the time.

1–0

3. Training Position

Even though White is a pawn down, he has excellent attacking chances thanks to his active pieces and Black's king in the center. Therefore, he must prevent 1...♗d5, exchanging queens.

1.♖e5!

It is possible to recover the pawn with 1.♖c7?!, but that would be selling White's activity short. After 1...♗d5! 2.♙e3 ♙f6 3.♖xc6 0–0 the position is close to equal.

1...♖d5

To a human, this appears forced. White's previous move not only prevented ...♗d5, but created the threat of b2-b3, distracting the queen from the defense of the c6-pawn.

To an engine, there is also 1...g5!?, the idea for Black being to meet 2.b3 with 2...g4 and still be significantly worse after 3.♗xf7†!

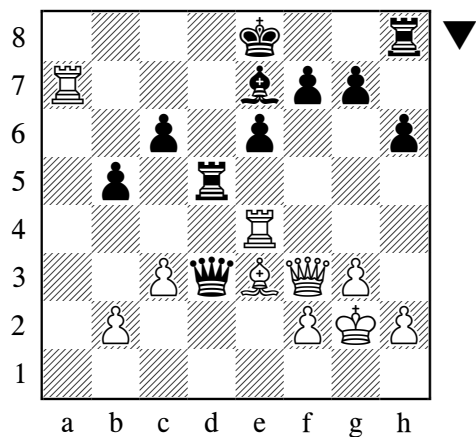
While that endgame is already enough of an advantage for White, accepting that Black's idea of pushing the g-pawn has some merit and opting for 2.♖c7! ♖d6 3.h3! is even stronger.

2.♖e4!

The rook on d5 takes away that square from the queen.

2...♗d3 3.♙e3

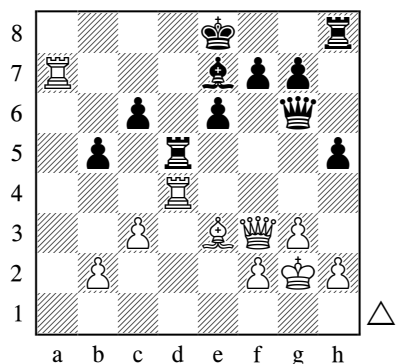
White has prevented the queen exchange while keeping Black's king in the center. There are several ways to increase the pressure, namely ♖f4, ♖g4 or ♖d4.

**3...♙f6**

The bishop is not hanging anymore, and Black is ready to castle.

Trying to exchange queens with 3...♖d1 can easily be sidestepped with 4.♗f4!, threatening ♖d4, with a crushing attack. White is winning.

Another idea is to control the key g4-square with 3...h5, while also hoping for counterattacking ideas with ...h5-h4, which would also make use of the rook on h8. Normal play would continue: 4.♖d4! (4.♗f4?! ♜f6 showcases one of the ideas behind putting the pawn on h5, as White cannot play ♗g4.) 4...♗g6



It looks like White is stuck, and ...h5-h4 is coming. 5.♗f4! The queen finds a way to activate herself and threatens to invade the black camp. 5...♙d8 This is forced. Black prevents ♗c7 and defends against a check on b8, while removing the bishop from attack and intending to castle. (Of course, White would need to spot that 5...e5? runs into 6.♖xd5! exf4 7.♖a8†.) 6.♖xd5 exd5 (6...cxd5?? 7.♗d6 is curtains.) 7.♗e5†! There's nothing more, so White will strive for a pleasant endgame. 7...♗e6 8.♗xe6† fxe6 9.♙d4! White has excellent chances, due to the huge disparity in the activity of the pieces.

The previous lines show the importance of the f4-square, which suggests 3...g5 as a defensive try. Black would struggle to defend after 4.♖d4 (4.b4!! is the engine's contribution) 4...♗g6 5.c4! bxc4 6.♖xc4, due to his poor king position.

4.♖g4!

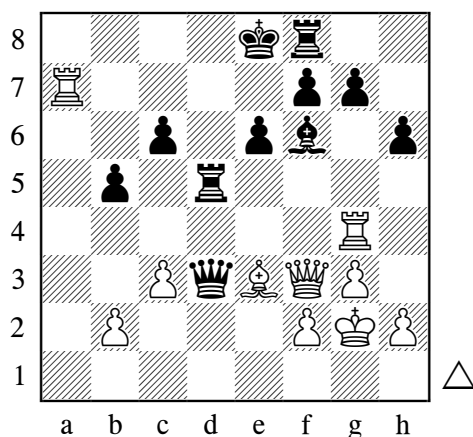
A fantastic attacking idea. Not only does it threaten ♖xg7, but it also keeps the black king in the center because castling would allow ♗xf6.

Meanwhile, 4.♖d4? ♖xd4 5.♗xc6† ♖d7 6.♙d4 0-0! would not lead anywhere.

4...♖f8

Defending against ♖xg7, but leaving the king stuck in the center forever.

Again, trading queens does not make life easier either: 4...♗d1 5.♖a8†! ♙d8 6.♗xd1 ♖xd1 7.♖xg7 It's a winning endgame for White due to the more active pieces, and Black's weaknesses on f7 and c6.



Black's king cannot run away, and White's pieces are active. Such dynamic advantages are best exploited by opening the position, either with pawn breaks or sacrifices:

5.♖f4!

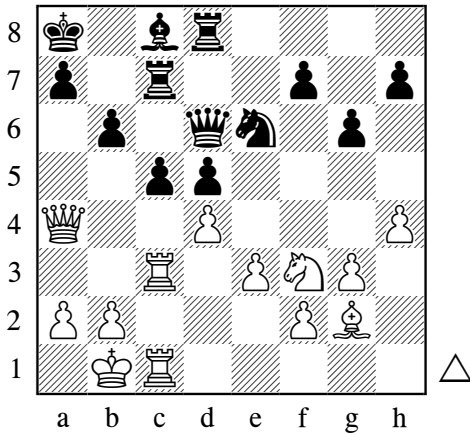
Threatening ♖xf6.

5...♙e7 6.♖d4 ♗g6 7.c4! bxc4 8.♖xc4

The attack is coming from too many directions.

4. Garry Kasparov – Ulf Andersson

Reykjavik 1988



White has the slightly safer king and a more compact structure, since both pawns on d5 and c5 are weak. These factors are not catastrophic for Black, but they are certainly enough to give White a comfortable advantage. In order to expose the weaknesses, dxc5 will be required, and the resulting hanging pawns offer dynamic possibilities that need to be tamed. Kasparov finds an excellent solution.

29. ♖g5!

Trading the knight on e6 weakens c5 further, and the g2-bishop is free to aim at the d5-pawn. White also prevents ...c5-c4, which would give Black a pawn majority and a space advantage on the queenside that could later be increased with ...b6-b5.

Releasing the tension first with 29.dxc5 bxc5 30. ♖g5 gives Black more options. The one making the difference is 30... ♖b7!, intending ...c5-c4 and ... ♖c5. Black's space and strong knight would then be quite annoying. As a rule of thumb, it is best not to release pawn tension unless there is a concrete reason to do so.

29... ♖xg5?!

This is not ideal. White's pawn on g5 will fix Black's entire kingside, making f7 and especially h7 into vulnerable targets.

Better is:

29... ♖b7 30. ♖a3!

Preventing ...c5-c4 while also increasing the pressure on c5.

30. ♖xh7 is probably what Andersson was most worried about, but after 30...c4! Black would manage to gain counterplay by pushing his pawn majority on the queenside. I do not think Kasparov would have gone in that direction.

30... ♖xg5 31.dxc5!

An important intermediate move.

31.hxg5 would allow 31...c4!, when Black's center is stabilized and the queenside pawns are ready to advance.

31... ♖xc5!

31...bxc5 is also playable, but trading rooks is desirable when we have to defend pawn weaknesses on an open file.

32. ♖xc5

32.hxg5 ♖dc8 33. ♖xc5 bxc5 is just a transposition.

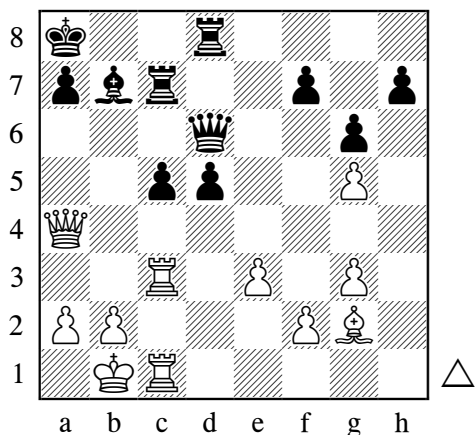
32...bxc5 33.hxg5 ♖c8

The weaknesses remain, so White keeps an advantage, but the version he gets in the game is much better.

30.hxg5 ♖b7 31.dxc5!

It is important to get this move in before the black pawn reaches c4.

31...bxc5



32. ♖f4!

I believe this is the best move in practical play. Exchanging queens exposes Black's numerous weaknesses even further, as we have seen in many examples in this book.

32... ♗xf4?

Andersson, widely considered an endgame maestro, decides to seek salvation by entering the phase of the game that suits him best against his young but formidable opponent. But given his numerous weaknesses, keeping the queens was the way to go. Besides, Kasparov was also no slouch as far as endgame mastery is considered. In reality, this mistaken decision was likely the result of a miscalculation.

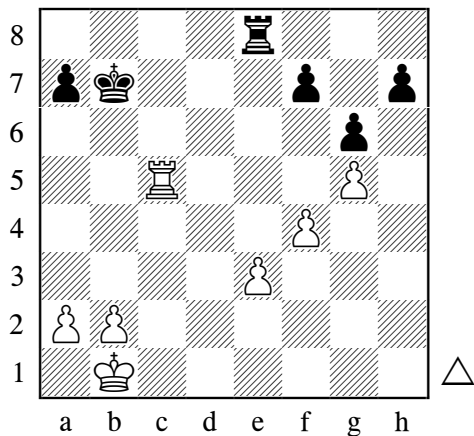
After the correct 32... ♗e7 White is certainly better due to the weaknesses on d5, c5 and h7. But most of these can be protected, and White must always watch out for ...d5-d4, or even ...c5-c4 followed by pressure on the b2-weakness.

33. gxf4 d4?

This loses right away, but it must have been the reason why Andersson accepted the queen trade.

33...c4 34.b3 is much better for White anyway.

34. ♖xc5 ♖xc5 35. ♗xb7 ♗xb7 36. ♖xc5 dxe3 37. fxe3 ♖e8



It was this endgame into which Andersson was trying to escape.

38. ♖e5!

Kasparov gives up his extra pawn, but he has accurately assessed that the pawn ending is winning thanks to the pawn on g5, which neutralizes all three of Black's kingside pawns in one go.

Even the passive 38. ♖c3 is winning for White though.

38... ♖xe5 39. fxe5 ♗c6 40. ♗c2 ♗d5 41. b4 ♗xe5 42. a4

White first needs to create an outside passer to distract the black king.

42...f6 43. gxf6 ♗xf6

Andersson got rid of the g-pawn, but he will not be in time to stop White's passers.

44. b5 ♗e6 45. a5 ♗d6 46. e4 ♗c5 47. b6! axb6 48. a6! ♗c6 49. e5
1-0