

Improve your Practical Play in the Endgame

First edition 2019 by Thinkers Publishing
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All sales or enquiries should be directed to Thinkers Publishing, 9850 Landegem, Belgium.

Email: info@thinkerspublishing.com
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Cover Design: Iwan Kerkhof

Graphic Artist: Philippe Tonnard

Production: BESTinGraphics

ISBN: 9789492510594

D/2019/13730/17

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Alexey Dreev

Thinkers Publishing 2019



Key to Symbols

!	a good move	±	White stands slightly better
?	a weak move	∓	Black stands slightly better
!!	an excellent move	±	White has a serious advantage
??	a blunder	∓	Black has a serious advantage
!?	an interesting move	+−	White has a decisive advantage
?!	a dubious move	−+	Black has a decisive advantage
□	only move	→	with an attack
N	novelty	↑	with initiative
⊙	lead in development	↔	with counterplay
⊙	zugzwang	Δ	with the idea of
=	equality	△	better is
∞	unclear position	≤	worse is
∞	with compensation for the sacrificed material	+	check
		#	mate

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Foreword

Dear chess partisan,

It is with great pleasure that I hereby present you with Russian Grandmaster Alexey Dreev's "Practical Play in the Endgame", a continuation of "Practical Play in the Middlegame" (released in 2018, by Thinkers Publishing). Dreev has for the past three decades been internationally regarded as one of the most tenacious and consistent chess players in the world. His results speak for themselves, including, but not limited to, the World Blitz Championship Title, Gold Medals at the Chess Olympiad with the Russian national team, World Championships Candidate Tournaments, and numerous 1st place finishes at internationally renowned tournaments at the elite level such as "Wijk aan Zee" and "Biel" - to only name a few. Even more importantly, with respect to this book, Dreev has been able to draw from his extensive and direct interaction as a pupil with the legendary and instructive chess genius Mark Dvoretsky.

The author's aim in this volume is to improve the tournament chess player and professional alike in their ability to evaluate and execute crucial and hard-fought practical endgames - either in converting a winning position or holding a draw. This book will also sharpen the player's overall cognitive competences in practical situations, where the normal laws of endgame theory have little or no value. Dreev accomplishes this by providing categorized and detailed examples with clear commentary from his own tournament games, as well as from other Grandmasters' at the elite level.

Throughout the translation of this book from Russian to English, I have attempted to adhere as strictly as possible to the author's original content, so as to provide the most authentic experience between the reader and the author. Therefore, certain passages in the examples might appear unduly mechanical or dry from a purely linguistic standpoint. However, I have purposely chosen this path, to avoid any excessive wording or phrasing, and provide the reader with the most unequivocal, clear-cut access to the material without attempting unnecessary augmentations.

In conclusion, I believe that the examples in this book are of very high value for both elite and aspiring chess players - even in the 21st century, a time of computer analysis and evaluation. The works themselves come from the highest level of tournament play, and many of the examples have an “etude” feel to them, where the solutions are often quite nonstandard, yet entirely practical from a critical over the board situation. The book before you engages the reader in useful calculations all the while expanding the player’s perception and confidence in a phase of the game where computer theory and preparation are of little value.

Sincerely,
Alexander Hart
Berlin, August 2019



Particular Endgames

In this chapter, we will look at endings that contain a non-standard balance of material. Rare and uncommon endings will also be considered.

Obviously, it is quite difficult to get used to the unusual, since otherwise the unusual would become the habitual. However, it is necessary to improve a player's intuition in such unusual situations, as they frequently occur in practical games.

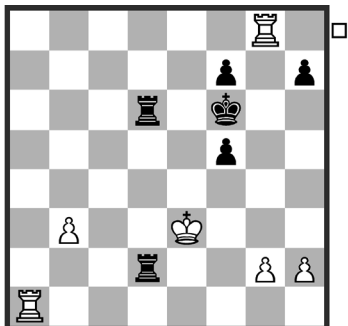
It can sometimes be a difficult task to assess the position in such an endgame, let alone find the correct moves.

Despite the active emasculatation of our game, professionals, as well as amateurs, cannot get by without the use of figurative drugs (computers). Fortunately though, engines cannot completely cover all areas of the game.

The name of this chess Atlantis is the endgame, and its beautiful capital could certainly be located precisely in endgames with a non-standard material balance, of which we will see many examples.

Example 1

From Khismatullin – Inarkiev
Satka 2018



The material is absolutely equal, but Black threatens mate in two moves.

44. ♖g3

At first sight, simpler appears to be 44. ♔f4 ♜2d3 [44... ♜6d4+ 45. ♔g3 ♜4d3+ 46. ♔h4=] 45. ♜a4= but the text move is certainly not a mistake.

44... h5

Black threatens to disturb the white rook with the h-pawn and White naturally tries to defend against this.

45. ♜a4??

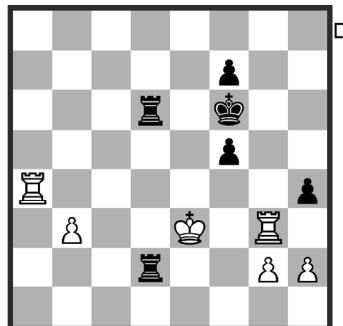
It seems that White is well protected from the movement of the h-pawn...

A) Almost any other move led to an inevitable draw: 45. ♜a5=.

B) 45. h4=

C) 45. ♜f3=

45... h4!!→



Position after: 45... h4!!→

And now...

46. ♜xh4

46. ♜f3 ♔g5!→

46... ♔e5

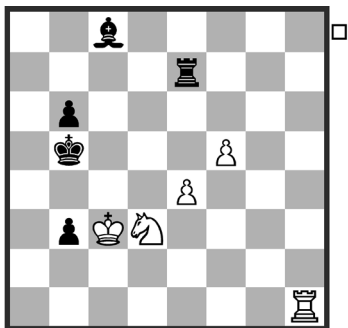
Thanks to the diversion of the a4-rook, White has no saving check on a5 and there is no defense against mate.

0-1

Example 2

From Martinez Duany – Demchenko
Rocheport 2018

(see diagram next page)



In the game, White hurried to set his passed pawns in motion.

51. f6?!

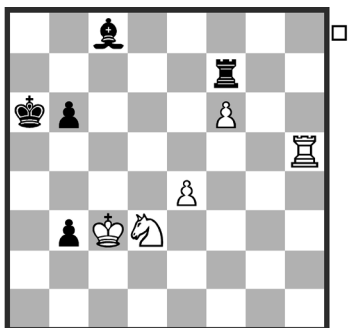
A) Winning easily was 51. ♖h5! Δ 51... ♜xe4 [51... ♔a6 52. e5+-; 51... ♔a4 52. ♘b2+ ♔a3 53. ♘c4+-] 52. f6+ ♔a6 53. f7+-.

B) 51. ♜h4 also wins, though not as quickly.

51... ♜f7! 52. ♜h5+

52. e5? ♙e6 53. ♘f4 ♜c7+=

52... ♔a6

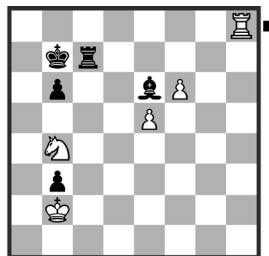


Position after: 52... ♔a6

53. e5

The best move, but even then, after a brilliant game by both sides, Black is saved.

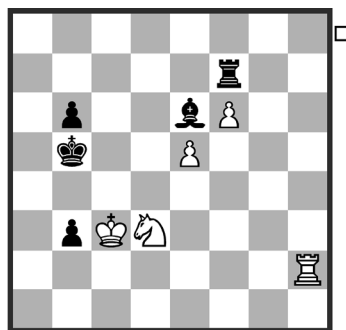
The game continued 53. ♘b4+?! ♔b7 54. e5 ♙e6 55. ♜h8 ♜c7+ 56. ♔b2



Position after: 56. ♔b2

♜d7 57. ♔a3 ♜d2 58. ♜h7+ ♔c8 59. ♜h1 b2 60. ♜b1 ♜e2 61. ♘c6 ♔d7 62. ♘d4 ♜xe5= ½-½ (65).

53... ♙e6 54. ♜h2! ♔b5!



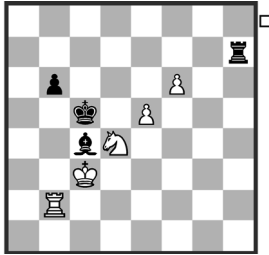
Position after: 54... ♔b5!

Without the king's help, one can only dream of salvation.

55. ♘f4 ♙c4 56. ♘e2 ♔c5 57. ♘d4

57... ♖f8!!

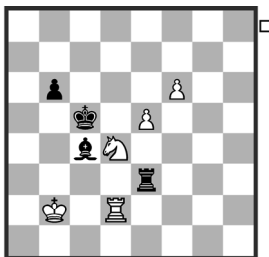
≤ 57... b2 58. ♖xb2 ♖h7



Position after: 58... ♖h7

A) ≤ 59. ♖f2 ♖h3+ 60. ♗f3 [60. ♖f3 ♖xf3+ 61. ♗xf3 ♔g8!=] 60... ♖h5 61. ♗e1 ♖h8!! [61... ♖h3+? 62. ♕d2 ♖h8 63. ♖e3 ♖d5 64. ♗f3+–] White's problem is that his king cannot support his passed pawns, and the rook ending that occurs after 62. ♗d3+ ♔xd3 63. ♖xd3 is drawn: 63... ♖d5 64. ♖e2 ♖e6=.

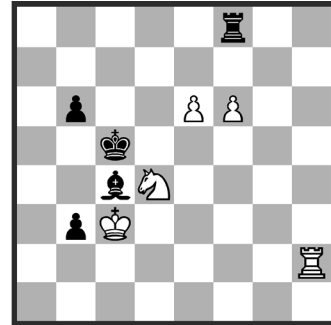
B) 59. ♖d2!! ♖h3+ 60. ♖b2! [60. ♖c2 ♖e3=] 60... ♖e3



Position after: 60... ♖e3

61. ♖c2! ♖xd4 [61... ♖xe5 62. f7+–] 62. ♖xc4+ ♖xe5 63. ♖f4!!+–

58. e6



Position after: 58. e6

58... ♖c8!!

58... ♖xf6? 59. ♖h5+–

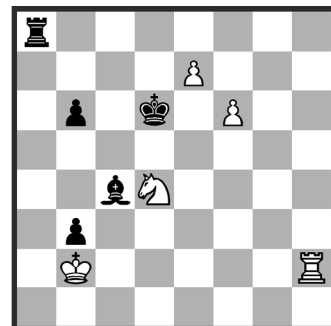
59. e7

59. f7 ♔d5! [59... ♔xe6? 60. f8=♖+ ♖xf8 61. ♗xe6+ 60. ♖h5 ♖d6+ 61. ♖b2 ♔xe6 62. ♖h6 ♖e7=

59... ♖d6 60. ♖b2

60. e8=♖ ♖xe8 61. ♖xc4 ♖f8 62. ♖f2 b2=

60... ♖a8□



Position after: 60... ♖a8□

60... ♔e5? 61. ♖e2+!+-

61. ♘xb3

After 61. ♔c3 ♖c8 White would have nothing better than 62. ♔b2, repeating moves.

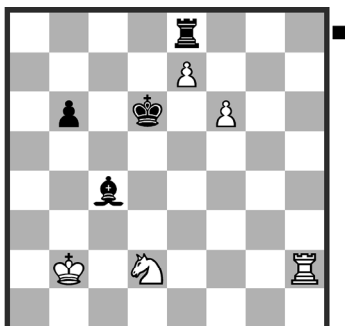
61... ♖e8!!

A) 61... ♙f7? 62. ♖e2!+-

B) 61... ♔e6? 62. ♖f2!+-

C) 61... ♙xb3? 62. ♔xb3 ♔e6 63. ♖d2+-

62. ♘d2



Position after: 62. ♘d2

62... ♔e5!

The final subtlety.

A) 62... ♔e6? 63. ♖f2+-

B) 62... ♙f7? 63. ♖e2!+-

63. ♖f2 ♙f7=

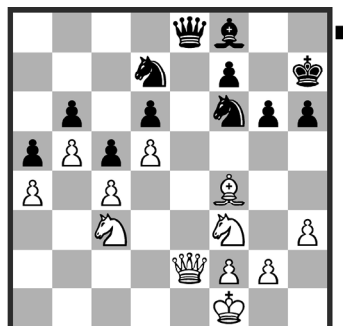
For example:

64. ♔c3 ♖h8 65. ♘c4+ ♔e6 66. ♘xb6 ♖h6

A very instructive struggle, demonstrating the possibilities of defense!

Example 3

From Dreev – Balashov
Odessa 1989



34... ♔e7!?

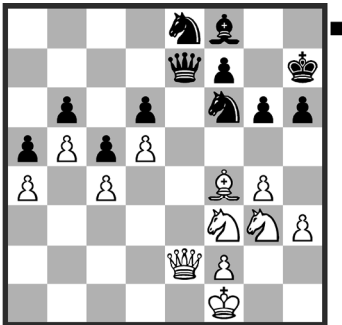
Seeing that the exchange of queens is almost inevitable, Black does a bit of “flirting”... Surprisingly, the fate of the entire battle was largely decided over this move.

34... ♔xe2+ 35. ♔xe2 g5 The black pieces are tightly packed, so it is important to seize as much space as possible. [To this purpose, also interesting is 35... ♘h5 36. ♙h2 f5=] 36. ♙h2 ♘e8 37. g4 f5 38. gxf5 ♘g7=

35. g4!±

Now Black is doomed to a passive defense.

35... ♖e8 36. ♗e4 ♘df6 37. ♗g3!



Position after: 37. ♗g3!

White doesn't exchange queens himself!

37... ♔xe2+ 38. ♔xe2 ♖e7

38... ♗d7!?

39. ♗d2 ♔g7 40. ♖e3 h5

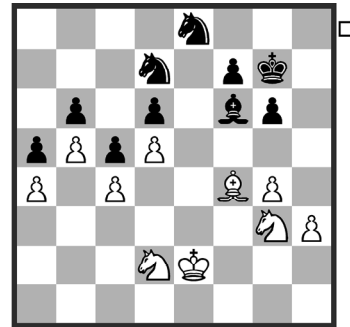
It was perhaps not worth trying to be active.

41. f3 hxg4 42. fxg4 ♗d7 43. ♖f4 ♖f6

(see diagram next column)

44. ♗f3

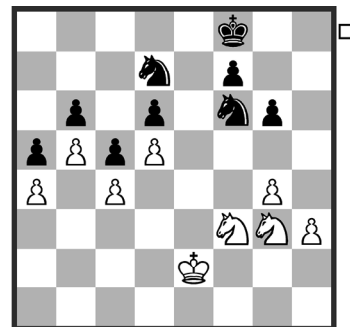
It is important to take control of the e5-square.



Position after: 43... ♖f6

Virtually the entire advantage would have been spoiled by the careless 44. ♗de4?! ♖e5.

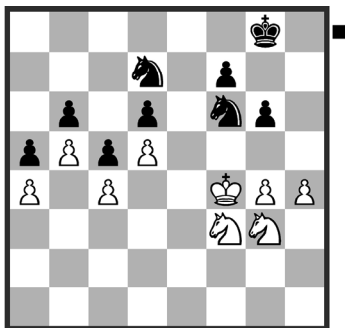
44... ♖e7 45. ♖d2 ♔g8 46. ♗e4 ♗ef6
47. ♖g5 ♔f8 48. ♗g3 ♔e8 49. ♖h6
♖f8 50. ♖xf8!? ♔xf8



Position after: 50... ♔xf8

White exchanged the bishops since the pawn structure had already changed for the better and it is now important for him to activate the king in order to push the h-pawn, which was much more difficult in the presence of the bishops.

51. ♔e3 ♔g7 52. ♔f4 ♔g8 53. h4



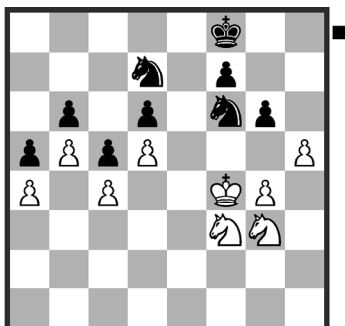
Position after: 53. h4

Until now, Black patiently waged an unpleasant defense, but as practice often shows, even very strong defenders in such cases sooner or later make an irreparable mistake...

53... ♔f8?

♞53... ♞e8 Δ 54. h5 ♔h7!±

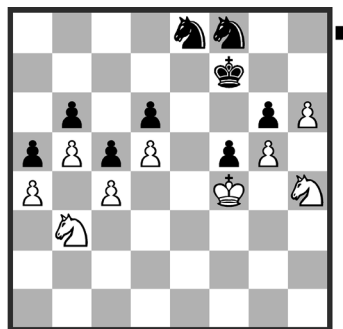
54. h5!+-



Position after: 54. h5!+-

The white pawn gets to h6 unhindered. Black cannot tolerate this by any means. White clinically converts the advantage, leaving no hope for Black.

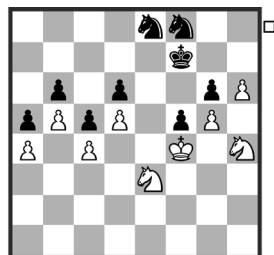
54... ♔g7 55. h6+ ♔g8 56. g5 ♞e8 57. ♞e4 ♔h7 58. ♞h2 f5 59. ♞d2! ♔g8 60. ♞hf3 ♔f7 61. ♞b3 ♞f8 62. ♞h4



Position after: 62. ♞h4

62... ♞h7

Stronger was 62... ♞c7. Then White could return to the plan of sacrificing the knight on f5, for example: 63. ♞d2 ♞e8 64. ♞df3 ♞c7 65. ♞g2 ♞e8 66. ♞fh4 ♞c7 67. ♞e3 ♞e8



Position after: 67... ♞e8

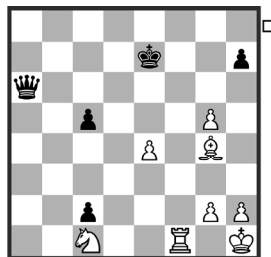
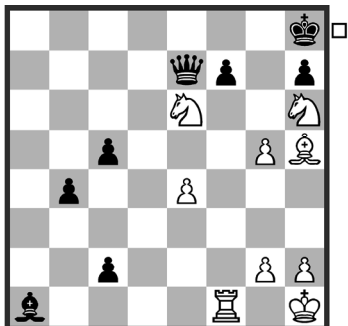
68. ♞exf5+-

63. ♞xa5 bxa5 64. b6 ♞f8 65. b7 ♞d7 66. h7 ♔g7 67. ♞xg6 ♔xh7 68. ♞f8+

1-0

Example 4

From Fier – Bologan
Moscow 2011



Position after: 54... ♖a6

It is not easy to win such an endgame, a player needs quite refined technique to be able to convert this. 55. ♙e2! [\leq 55. ♖g1 ♜g6 56. ♙f5 ♜xg5 57. ♙xh7 ♙e6=] 55... ♜g6 56. ♖f5 ♜d6 57. ♙d3±

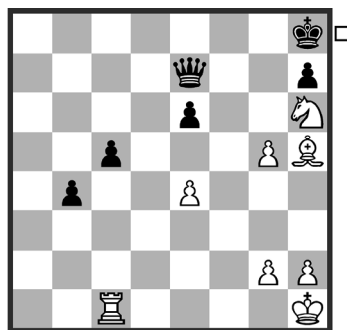
In this very non-standard ending, the opponents both made several mistakes, which is not surprising. In these types of situations, it is quite easy to lose one's way.

B) Also leading to the same result was 43... ♜b7! 44. ♘xf7+ ♙g8 45. ♘h6+ ♙h8 46. ♖f1, transposing to 43... ♜a7 after 46... ♜e7.

43. ♖xa1

44. ♖xc1 fxe6

43. ♘xf7+? ♙g8 44. ♘h6+ ♙h8 45. ♘f7+ [45. ♖xa1?? ♜xe6+→] 45... ♙g8 46. ♘h6+=



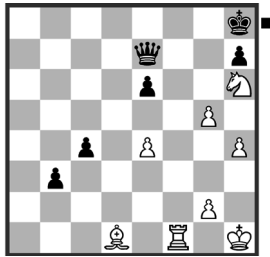
Position after: 44... fxe6

43... c1=♜+?

A) Probably not saving Black, but would have allowed for practical chances of salvation was 43... ♜a7! 44. ♘xf7+ ♙g8 45. ♘h6+ ♙h8 46. ♖f1 ♜e7 47. ♘d8!! b3 48. ♘df7+ ♙g7 49. ♘f5+ ♙f8 50. ♘xe7 b2 [50... ♙xe7 51. ♘e5] 51. ♘e5+ ♙xe7 52. ♘d3 b1=♜ 53. ♘c1 ♜a1 54. ♙g4 ♜a6.

45. ♖a1?

45. ♖f1! b3 46. ♙d1 c4 47. h4+–

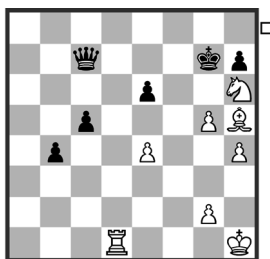


Position after: 47. h4+-

The black pawns are halted and the queen is restricted to the protection of the king in the "box". White gradually strengthens his position and attains victory, for example: 47... ♖c5 48. ♔h2 ♕e7 49. ♔h3 ♖c5 50. ♜f7 ♕d6 51. e5 ♖c5 52. ♙f3 b2 53. ♙e4+-

45... ♖f8?

Black was saved by a series of only moves: 45... ♔g7! 46. h4 [46. ♜a8? ♖xg5 47. ♜g8+ ♔xh6 48. ♜xg5 ♔xg5 49. ♙d1 ♔f4+-] 46... ♖b7! it is impossible to allow the rook to break through to the rear 47. ♜d1 ♖c7!



Position after: 47... ♖c7!

[47... ♖xe4?? 48. ♜d7+ ♔f8 49. ♜f7+ ♔e8 50. ♜f4+-]

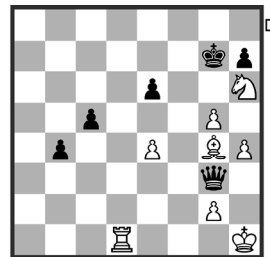
A) Obtaining nothing was 48. ♗f5+

A1) 48... exf5? 49. exf5 b3 50. f6+ ♔f8 51. ♜e1 ♖d7 52. f7 ♔g7 53. ♜e8 ♖xf7 54. ♙xf7 ♔xf7 55. ♜c8+-

A2) ≤ 48... ♔g8 49. ♗d6 b3 50. ♙f7+ ♔f8 51. ♙xe6 b2 52. ♗f5 [≤ 52. ♗c4 ♖f4 53. ♗xb2 ♖e5=] 52... ♖a5! 53. ♔h2 Threatening 53... ♖a1. 53... c4! 54. ♙xc4 ♖c7+ 55. ♔h3 ♖xc4 56. ♜d8+ ♔f7 57. ♗d6+ ♔e7 58. ♗xc4 b1=♖ 59. ♜d4±

A3) In view of the accurate response of 48... ♔h8!=.

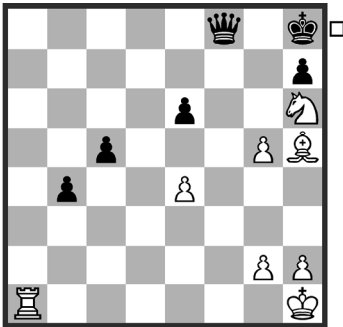
B) 48. ♙g4 ♖g3!



Position after: 48... ♖g3!

49. ♜d8 ♖xh4+ 50. ♙h3 ♖xg5 51. ♜g8+ ♔xh6 52. ♜xg5 ♔xg5 53. ♙xe6 ♔f4 54. ♙d5 ♔e5 55. ♔g1 ♔d4 56. ♔f2 c4 57. ♔e2 b3 58. ♔d2 b2 59. ♔c2 c3=

Back to 45... ♖f8.



Position after: 45... ♖f8?

46. ♘f7+?

The seemingly modest 46. ♘e2!+- led to the winning plan previously discussed.

46... ♔g7 47. ♖a7 b3 48. ♘h6+

White has no choice but to force a draw.

48. ♖b7? ♗a8-+

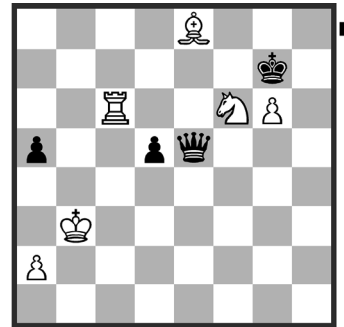
48... ♔h8 49. ♘f7+ ♔g7 50. ♘h6+ ♔h8 ½-½

Example 5

From Dreev – Savchenko
Apatity 2011

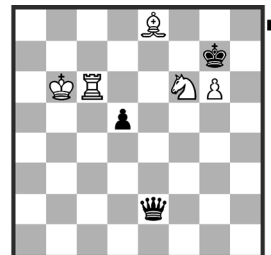
(see diagram next column)

Black has a way to draw, but he needs to understand the position in order to find it, and be rather resourceful.



36... ♗b8+?!

The only saving move was the "quiet" 36... ♗e2!! 37. ♔a4 [White cannot reorganize his pieces as 37. ♘d7 leads to a draw: 37... ♗b5+ 38. ♔c3 d4+ 39. ♔xd4 ♗b4+ 40. ♔d5 ♗b5+ 41. ♔e6 ♗e2+ 42. ♔f5 ♗f2+..] 37... ♗xa2+ 38. ♔b5 ♗b1+ 39. ♔xa5 ♗a2+ 40. ♔b5 ♗e2+ 41. ♔b6



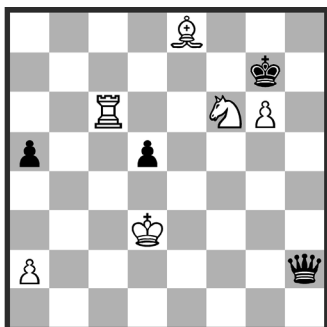
Position after: 41. ♔b6

41... ♗f2+ Only in this manner can the white king "cross the line" and head to the seventh rank. 42. ♔b7 ♗xf6! 43. ♖xf6 ♔xf6= and Black pushes his d-pawn and draws.

37. ♔c2 ♗h2+

37... ♖e5 38. ♔d3 ♜g3+ 39. ♔d4 is just a different move order.

38. ♔d3



Position after: 38. ♔d3

38... ♜g3+

In the game, Black did not react in time and immediately lost the opportunity for a draw: 38... ♖e5? 39. ♙f7 ♜f5+ 40. ♔d4 ♜f4+ 41. ♔xd5 ♜f5+ 42. ♔c4 ♜f4+ 43. ♔b5 ♜b8+ 44. ♔c5 ♜a7+ 45. ♔d5+- 1-0 (57).

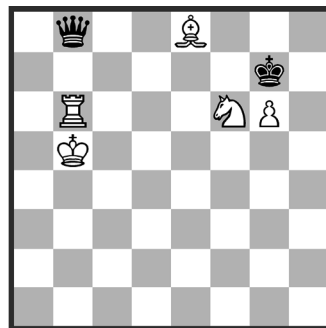
39. ♔d4 ♜f2+

≤ 39... ♜f4+?! 40. ♔xd5 ♜d2+ 41. ♔e6 ♜xa2+ 42. ♔d7+-

40. ♔xd5

Or 40. ♔e5 ♜e2+ 41. ♔xd5 ♜xa2+

40... ♜xa2+ 41. ♔c5 ♜a3+ 42. ♔b5 ♜d3+ 43. ♔xa5 ♜d8+ 44. ♔b5 ♜b8+ 45. ♜b6



Position after: 45. ♜b6

45... ♜d8!

It is extremely important for Black not to allow the king to a6.

45... ♜h2 46. ♔a6!! ♜e2+ 47. ♔b7 ♜g2+ 48. ♜c6 ♜b2+ 49. ♔c8 ♜a2 50. ♘d7+-

46. ♜e6!!

And yet, it appears as though the white king can make his way to the pieces with the aid of this fine rook move.

A) 46. ♘h5+ ♔f8 47. g7+ ♔g8=

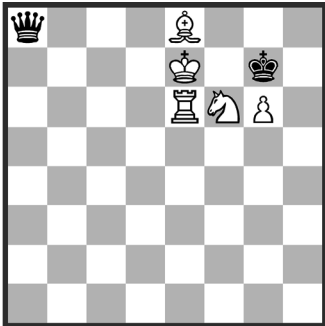
B) 46. ♔a6 ♜a8+ 47. ♔b5 ♜d8

C) 46. ♙f7 ♜d3+ 47. ♙c4 ♜b1+ 48. ♔a6 ♜a1+=

46... ♜d3+ 47. ♔c6 ♜a6+ 48. ♔d7 ♜b7+

48... ♜a7+ 49. ♔d8+-

49. ♔d8 ♚a8+ 50. ♔e7



Position after: 50. ♔e7

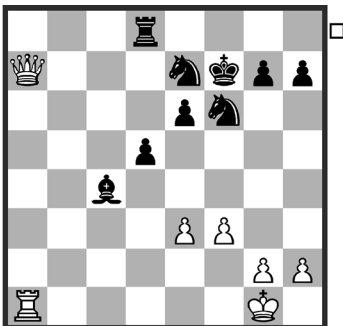
50... ♚a3+

50... ♚a5 51. ♖c6!+-

51. ♖d6 ♚e3+ 52. ♔d8 ♚a3 53. ♖c6
 ♚a5+ 54. ♔c8 ♚a8+ 55. ♔d7 ♚a7+
 56. ♖c7 ♚a2 57. ♘e4!?!+-

Example 6

From Dreev – Rausis
 Luzern 1993

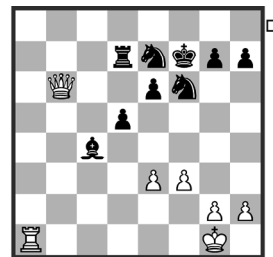


At first glance, in this position White cannot count on any advantage, since Black has enough material in return for the queen and does not have any real weaknesses. However, at this very moment, White can create serious practical problems, if not obtain a serious advantage. How is this possible?

32. g4!

Of course, after this move, White may not win, but at the very least he will firmly seize the initiative. The resulting defensive task for Black is not easy — now the game can only end in two ways...

The game continued 32. ♚b6 ♖d7



Position after: 32... ♖d7

A) 33. ♔f2 h5= 1-0 (101).

B) Here, the plan with the g-pawn advance is no longer as effective as before, as there are no pins along the seventh rank and the knight can easily retreat to e8: 33. g4 h6!? [33... h5!? 34. g5 ♘e8 35. e4! ♘d6 36. ♖a7 ♖xa7 37. ♚xa7 Threatening g5-g6. 37... g6! 38. ♚c7 ♘e8=; 33... g5 34.