

Jesus de la Villa

100 Endgame Patterns You Must Know

**Recognize Key Moves & Motifs and
Avoid Typical Errors**

New In Chess 2021

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Introduction

The rationale for this book

The urge to write this book originated in all the years that I have been working as a trainer, and more particularly in the huge number of games I have observed and analysed, played by developing players – not only my students, but often also their opponents, or anyone else whose games have crossed my path in my investigations. The specific locations where I have observed and analysed more games each year have been the Spanish Junior Championships, held on the last nine occasions in Salobreña (Granada), and the European or World Junior Championships. Examining these games, I discovered over and over again that the mistakes that are made can be grouped together and are often repeated. I thought about a lot of things that I had not considered before regarding the reasons behind the most common mistakes, and I became more and more convinced about the theory of patterns, because I seemed to be discovering that the cause of many mistakes was the lack of familiarity with one pattern or another.

Of course, these mistakes can occur at any stage of the game, and in all cases they are worth attention, but I decided to focus in the first place on endgame positions, first theoretical endings and then practical ones, and I set to work compiling interesting examples.

From the start, I wondered whether these mistakes were being made because they were patterns which were not known, or which had been studied using unimpressive examples, although I believe that in the majority of cases, the answer lies in something as trivial and mundane as carelessness.

The aim of this book is to present, with good examples and, therefore, in a clear fashion, those situations which I consider to be useful patterns in positions with few pieces, the study of which should allow us to eliminate mistakes which we can consider systematic.

This book is not exactly a continuation of my earlier book *100 Endgames You Must Know*. It would be more accurate to say that they complement each other, since *100 Endgames You Must Know* concentrates on theoretical endgames, while this book deals precisely with the stage of the game that precedes the appearance of the theoretical endgames.

Beginning with one book or the other, or alternating between them, may be a matter of experience or taste, but it is probably more systematic to start with the study of theoretical endgames.

For the student who began with *100 Endgames You Must Know*, this new book is a further step in his immersion in the world of endgames. In order to take this step it is most advisable, and in some cases necessary, to be familiar with the theoretical endgames, in order to analyse, and consequently to fully understand, the basic-level practical endgames, which are the ones presented in this book.

In theoretical endings, there already appear some of the patterns which subsequently appear in positions with more pawns, which will serve as a useful introduction, whereas other patterns are completely new and they would make no sense in positions with only one or two pawns.

Learning endgame theory and learning typical patterns can also be carried out simultaneously, as I do not think we should discount the role of serendipity in chess progress. The performance-enhancing aspect of merely studying positions is always a result of the increase in interest, sometimes even passion, which is aroused when a topic is approached in circumstances other than the purely systematic ones, such as for example its resemblance to an endgame which has just been completed, or which has just been seen in another game, and which has given rise to a 'significant increase' in our level of curiosity.

Defining the endgame

For ever and ever, we have heard that there is a stage of the game called the endgame, that it is the third stage, and that it follows the opening and the middlegame. This stage has characteristics which are sufficiently differentiated to merit this division, both from the point of view of the competitive struggle and from that of analytical investigation. However it has never been clearly pinned down by a definition, which has led to a range of interpretations, such as for example describing positions with several major pieces as 'the fourth stage of the game'.

If we search on the Internet for a rough definition of the endgame, which many amateur players may well do, we shall perhaps find something similar to the following: 'The endgame is the third stage of the game, in which there are few pieces left on the board and the final outcome is imminent.' The idea that the final outcome is imminent might amuse us, because some endgames go on for ever, but the real problem of this attempt at a definition, and of other attempts, is how many pieces constitute 'a few pieces'? Some writers sidestep this definition by material and are of the opinion that the endgame is the stage of the game when there is no longer an obvious danger of mate. Although there are some endgame positions where one plays for mate (see **Pattern 86**), this conceptual division is very good, because the characteristics of the

endgame, which in the first chapter we shall call ‘Distinctive facts’, are based precisely on the fact that mating plans are infrequent. However, this division does not allow us to establish a classification of endings according to the material remaining on the board, since this makes it depend on a circumstance which is separate from such a classification. And of course, the classification based on material, although it may be rather limiting, makes matters regarding investigation and learning much easier.

It is a fact that positions which are usually called endgames coincide with those where there is little danger of mate. Nonetheless, in some cases positions with quite a lot of pieces are spoken of as endgames, simply because the queen has been exchanged, which is clearly incorrect. I think that a reasonable definition would be to consider as endgames those positions where the player with more material has a maximum of two pieces, provided that one of them is not the queen. This would rule out, among others, positions with queens and bishops, which we can consider borderline and which in many places are studied as endgames; and of course many people will not agree, but it comes very close to the general sense of what an endgame is, and tries to confine it to a classification by material, which for some questions is useful and almost necessary.

I propose therefore to consider as endgames those positions where the stronger side has a maximum of two pieces, without counting the king and the pawns, and provided that the queen is not one of them. However, in this book I shall look only at positions where the stronger side has one piece. The first reason is that the idea of patterns lends itself much better to positions with one piece, because the patterns arise from the properties and limitations inherent in the movement of each piece. The second reason, equally decisive, is that to include patterns found in two-piece endgames would require much more research and more space. Patterns with two pieces introduce many new elements and are also very interesting; I do not know whether I shall return to this at some time.

Some thoughts on the system of patterns

At all stages of the game and in all its aspects, not only in endgames, but also in tactics and strategy, mastery is achieved through accumulating knowledge of patterns.

Experts’ skill in rapidly understanding the keys to a problem, which is sometimes called intuition, is not a magical quality; it is the result of years of investigation and experience which always leads to the same scenario: familiarity with a large number of patterns.

Some theories talk of 50,000 or 100,000 patterns, accumulated through 5,000 or 10,000 hours of study. The exact number is not important; it is

even possible (I would say probable) that different people store them in different ways. What matters to us is the method of discovering and using patterns, and ascertaining which ones are really common at the stage which we are studying.

It is easy to think that patterns merely guide us towards the idea to be followed. Even more so when we tend to read (often with reference to endgame positions): 'now it's all a matter of calculation and theoretical knowledge is of no use'.

As a matter of fact, I believe that is not the case, and that stored patterns are just as important in calculating variations as in establishing little plans, because they guide our selection of candidate moves at each moment.

So it is a question of improving intuition by analysing positions, not in a random way though, but focusing on representative positions in which over and over again we can find interesting ideas, which recur in different variations and subsequently in different positions.

At present, many books are based on (or rely on) this idea of patterns, and this will be one of them. At the risk of repeating myself, it is a question of choosing the best examples, the clearest and the most correct, and in this way making the pattern 'unforgettable' (in the literal sense of the word). Every time I see a better example (and this judgment is inevitably subjective), I replace the old example, although I understand that this way of working is never-ending and that there must be a more efficient way.

Many patterns are discovered during play, and for the observant and self-critical player these are the ones which stick more firmly in the memory. However, the patterns that we encounter while playing are not all there are, and sometimes they are unclear and require a certain amount of analytical work, in order for us to identify them and understand them.

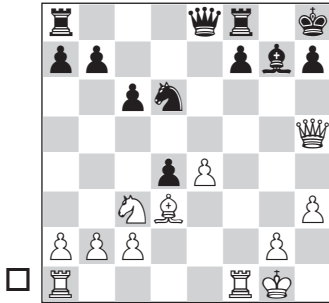
For this reason it becomes necessary to take note of other players' games and to analyse them with the same interest as we do our own. And therefore one aspect of a trainer's work, perhaps the most important aspect, is to recognise patterns and to find the best examples in order to present them; a pattern introduced by means of an excellent example is more likely to be assimilated and remembered.

Let us now reflect on these ideas with some practical examples.

The following game by Bobby Fischer created a type of combination which occurs from time to time, and it has been very popular since then. Perhaps without it many other combinations would not have been produced.

Bobby Fischer Pal Benko

New York ch-USA 1963 (10)



In this position, Benko (one of the best players in the world at the time) was expecting 19.e5, which he planned to answer with 19...f5, and the game would continue. But Fischer now played one of the most famous moves of his career:

19. ♖f6!!

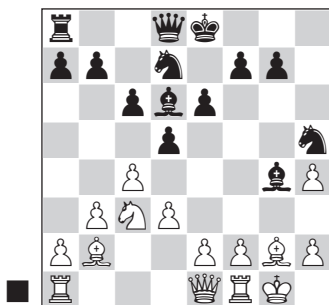
Benko could have resigned here, but he tried a few more moves:

19... ♔g8 20.e5 h6 21. ♗e2! 1-0

But this finish by the Cuban player Otero is even more elegant:

Jorge Marcos Gomez Sanchez 2430
Diasmany Otero Acosta 2438

Santa Clara 2017 (4)



Of course White, who had just played 12. ♖e1, was also expecting 12... ♖xh4, which he would have answered with 13.f4 (like Benko), and the game would continue.

12... ♗f3!!

And here too White tried to resist a bit longer. Resigning on the twelfth move, after such a brilliant move, is a rather difficult step to take.

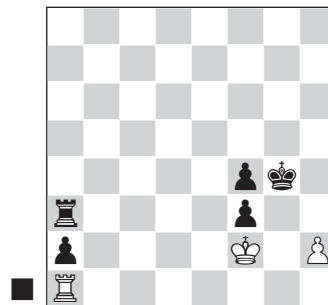
13. ♗c1 ♖xh4 14.h3 ♗f4 15. ♗xf3 ♖xh3 0-1

And it will be mate in two in any case. But of course it is almost certain that Diasmany Otero was familiar with Fischer's game and it is even possible that it did not take him very long to find the move.

And now, a couple of the author's own experiences in the endgame, with very contrasting outcomes.

Roberto Garcia Lafuente Jesus de la Villa

Barcelona 1975



I will remember that on that day I was rushing, for reasons unconnected with chess, essentially down to my lack of experience,

since one should never rush. In the game, everything had been going swimmingly and now all that was needed was to bring home the point. White's rook is completely immobilised in front of the imposing pawn on the second rank. It was very simple; all it needed was for me to bring the king across to the queenside.

62...♙h3 63.♙g1!

My opponent plays hard to get, defending the pawn.

63...f2+ 64.♙f1 ♔xh2??

White has no pawns and his king can hardly move, but at the time I had not taken in this clue.

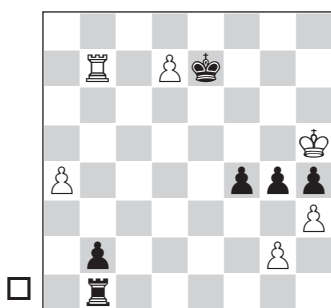
65.♖xa2! ♖f3 66.♖a8

Draw.

And now, the positive experience:

Roman Bordell Jesus de la Villa

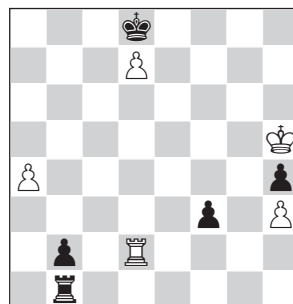
Sitges 1990



The game is analysed in **Pattern 77, Vancura**. Here we are just going to reflect on the knowledge of patterns. My opponent thought for a long time and after much strolling up and down I returned to the board and saw that he had moved: **55.♖b3!?**

I had not foreseen this move, which at first sight looks pointless. By chance, I was already familiar with the Vancura position and seemingly it was still fresh in my mind. I immediately guessed his ingenious idea and quickly neutralised it with: **55...♙d8!**

There were other winning moves, although not the impatient 55...f3? 56.gxf3 gxf3 57.♖d3 ♙d8 58.♖d2



analysis diagram

and both Black's passed pawns are held up by the white rook – a brilliant version of the Vancura idea.

56.a5 f3 57.gxf3 gxf3 58.a6 h2 59.a7 ♖a1 60.♖xb2 h1 ♔0-1

I wanted to use my own experience as an example, because I am much more certain that that is what I was thinking at the time, but I could have chosen games by other players as an example. Without going any further, the reader can now check the final example of **Pattern 12**, the Staunton-

Williams game, and he will suspect as I do that Staunton was not familiar with the pattern of diagonal opposition.

So, knowing the pattern is essential. Sometimes you will be able to find the right idea without it, but on many more occasions you will not manage it. Some patterns are very well known (for example, players quickly learn that two pawns on the sixth rank beat a rook, if no other piece intervenes); others are less well known, even some very common ones, just because we have not come across them with an inspirational example. After the chapter on the distinctive features of the endgame, we shall begin to study the 100 patterns which I have chosen because I consider them to be the most important.

The choice of patterns and their presentation

Well then: which patterns should we choose? Which patterns should we study? How many patterns are there?

These questions have an answer, although it might not be a categorical one. As regards which ones to study, that is the easiest: all the ones you come across and which you can identify as recognisable in different positions.

The job of gathering material and deciding which to present has understandably been much harder than what was required for the book on theoretical endings. Some have been left out, while others needed more than one section in order to explain all their aspects (or at least the most important aspects, from my point of view). One hundred is neither such a large number that it can encompass all the ideas that exist in endgames, nor such a low one that it leaves most of them out. Finally, I think it is sufficiently flexible for the chosen field (endgames with one piece, as I shall explain at a later stage) and it allows the collection of 'almost all the important material'.

Having finished the work, I feel that I have been able to include all the material I had in mind, and I think that the reader, after studying it, will be much better equipped for playing simple positions. In *100 Endgames You Must Know*, there were already some situations which can be considered to be patterns; some of these I have now left out of this selection, because I do not think it would be possible to add much to what is presented there, but other patterns will appear and some of them more than once, depending on the pieces involved.

Amongst the patterns studied, some are basically tactical, others more strategic; some are very concrete and others more abstract; but I think they all have one distinguishing feature: they are easily recognisable when they appear in a practical game. Each section will present one pattern,

with a few examples. I am convinced that one excellent example can be sufficient, provided it is able to make a big enough impact. But those perfect examples do not always exist, or else I have not been able to find them. For that reason, there are always at least two examples; at least one of these tries to be very simple, in order to introduce the idea, and then there follow a few more complicated ones, which can reinforce the idea, or introduce variations on the theme.

Nonetheless, in practice it is unusual for an endgame to be based on just one idea; perhaps one theme stands out more, but there are many more in the background. Inevitably in most of the examples more than one pattern will appear, although in each case we shall highlight the pattern featured in that section.

For a pattern to be well understood, it is preferable for the analysis not to be too complicated. Of course it is useful to be aware of the truth about a position, and sometimes that necessitates a very complex analysis, in which it is difficult to separate out the simple elements underpinning it. Even so, I have tried to give every position a clear evaluation, analysing some of them more deeply. But in a few patterns (especially numbers 75 and 76) I have decided not to pursue some variations to exhaustion.

In some cases, within one pattern another one will appear, which has not yet been studied. This is also almost impossible to avoid and it is what often happens in practice: we find ourselves faced with patterns we do not yet know. The curious reader can jump forward at this point and study that pattern, if he so wishes. What is definitely recommended is to go over the patterns for at least a second time, at some point after having finished the book.

As for the order of the chapters, I have decided to arrange them in increasing order of strength of the material: beginning with pawns, next pieces against pawns, then minor pieces and finally major pieces. Somehow it attracted me to see how patterns more typical of the middlegame were appearing, and how the part played by the king was declining, an aspect I hope readers will also enjoy.

Finally, I want to comment on another important decision. In a few cases, some patterns are studied in only one chapter, i.e. in one type of endgame, although they are not exclusive to that endgame; for example the highway theme, studied under bishops of the same colour, could also appear in bishop vs knight and in rook vs bishop. I could have repeated it in each of these chapters, with different examples, but I chose not to do so, because I felt it added little to the topic. With other patterns I did decide to repeat the theme, but only when I considered that it had different

connotations; this was another subjective decision, which may not always have been the best one. One example of a theme which I could repeat is the great detour in knight vs bishop endings, but it seems to me that the concept is exactly the same. In contrast, I have repeated the stalemate theme in both rook endings and queen endings, because typical and very different constructions appear.

Selection of material

I shall move on now to make some comments on the selection of material, not only to explain or justify the system I have followed in putting this book together, but also to discuss the usefulness of some choices and ultimately to convince readers that it is possible to learn something, not only from the games of famous players, but from any position, and to encourage them to look for lessons in their own games, or in those of players of the same level.

First of all, there is the decision between recent material or classical material. Naturally I believe it is better to present recent material, because the classical material has already been published, sometimes on many occasions, in other books. Furthermore, presenting recent material reinforces the idea that patterns are something 'live', which can arise in 'real' games. However, there are a number of classical examples which I have not been able to replace with recent ones that are also better. Perhaps this is influenced by the fact that these examples are the ones that I have always identified with the basic pattern, and therefore it is more difficult for me to find substitutes; in any case, all of them are analysed with the 'vigilance' of the latest analysis engines.

The second big decision is between choosing only high-level material, or including material from amateur games. I believe that it is best to choose both kinds of examples, and this is what I have done with almost all the patterns. This book is not about considering the merit or usefulness of a game extract perfectly played by one of the players, but about incorporating new patterns in our repertoire, or acquiring a better understanding of the ones we already know. In this regard, error is something fundamental and the 'frequent error', in other words the one that often occurs in certain types of position, is hugely instructive. For that reason, I think that analysing amateurs' games allows us to have a better appreciation of the eminently practical aspect of this way of studying chess, and if these games are correctly analysed (as I hope is the case) they allow us to see what were the correct moves at each point. We might say that 'the errors we have made are not important, what matters is knowing which they were'.

Another decision is between positions from real games or composed positions. As I have already pointed out in my *100 Endgames You Must Know WORKBOOK*, I prefer to limit composed studies to the minimum possible, not because I am unaware of their beauty or their ability to present an idea brilliantly, but because I think that in some way studying a pattern is more justified if it arises in practice, and if it occurs frequently there should be good examples from real games; but here again I have not always been able to find them. So the result is that I have included just a few studies, both in the descriptive part and in the exercises. Regarding composed studies, I favour the simple ones, those which illustrate a single idea. The more complex ones serve another purpose.

Evaluating positions and symbols of evaluation

For years now, punctuation marks and evaluation symbols have been used to be able to convey the correctness of the course of a game and its trend in favour of one side or the other, without our having constantly to get bogged down in long explanations. Although this ‘system of symbols’ was invented and developed at a time when analysis engines did not exist, and although it is essentially imprecise (which is most evident in the evaluation of endgames), it is still the system that is best adapted to human thought. I suspect that we are seeing it in its last throes and that it will soon be abandoned and replaced by something else, but for the moment I am not going to ignore it.

I prefer to dedicate a few lines to explaining my own criteria in the use of symbols, instead of limiting it to a short section without words. I have often used some traditional symbols from the *Chess Informant*, especially the ones used for a decisive advantage (+– for White and –+ for Black), as well as the symbol for equality, =.

I haven’t used the symbols for a slight advantage (\pm or \mp), because I think that they have little meaning in an endgame; the ideal is to be able to arrive at a definitive evaluation. It is therefore only in variations which are not main ones that I have allowed myself to abstain from an exhaustive analysis and instead make an evaluation that we could call imprecise or approximate.

As for punctuation marks (!, ?, etc.), I think that the only important one is the question mark (?) which should indicate that this is a move which endangers the correct result of the position. In second place would be the exclamation mark (!) which objectively should indicate the only winning move (or one of the few), but which I have used sometimes in the much more subjective sense of the middlegame, to indicate a move that is good

but not obvious. I have used the ?! symbol to indicate a move that does not endanger the result but makes the task more difficult, which is a subjective evaluation. And I would say that the other symbols are not important in this type of book, although I have sometimes ‘punished’ a move with ??, when the error is very blatant and perhaps caught me in a bad mood. And a few times I have rewarded moves that have impressed me with !!, although this is always a subjective judgment.

How to study endgames

In recent years I have frequently been asked about how to study endgames. Of course, this question could be asked about any aspect of chess and the answers will often have elements in common.

In any case I shall try to suggest some useful approaches, consistent with the focus of this book and in which I shall reiterate some of the ideas already outlined.

One prerequisite to improving endgame play is an attitude of constant curiosity. This is useful for everything, but as the study of endgames has a reputation of being dry, it is a little more difficult to achieve it. Curiosity must be applied to the study of any book or game. A player should be constantly prepared to ask himself all kinds of questions about what will happen or what could happen if there should be a slight variation from the game continuation. Approaching our own games in this way is fundamental, although it seems easier; we could say that if we have no curiosity about what should have happened in one of our endgames, then our progress will be slow at best, too slow to be of use.

We should extend this curiosity to any position we come across along the way, especially to rapid games. Some of my students look at me with horror when I talk about this: ‘do we really have to study our quick-play games as well?’ But we must not be frightened by the mountain of work which awaits us. We do not have to study our rapid games; we have to study the interesting positions that arise in our rapid games, which naturally are not that many, and we should do so because we have a greater ‘link of curiosity’ with them than with others. Every time we come across something we do not understand, whether it is a theoretical endgame or an interesting pattern situation, if we work at deciphering it, very soon we shall have a huge stock of knowledge, which will turn into resources that we shall be able to exploit.

As for the order, studying theoretical endgames first is the most logical, because otherwise unanswered questions will endlessly arise in other endgames. The most common are absolutely essential, then the rest can be added more slowly, and at the same time as practical patterns are being

studied. And after they have read this book, I believe that all readers will be prepared to recognise (or to think they recognise) new patterns in their games, if they did not already do so before, as well as using and perfecting the ones they have already studied, of course.

How often in our games does a theoretical ending arise and how often do we see a typical pattern in an ending with one or two pieces? It depends on many things, but one of the most important is how well we know them; the more of them we know, the less often they arise for us. How can that be? Well, very easily: as both players become acquainted with the theoretical result of a position, it is usual for one of them to avoid it, if there are alternatives. The same thing will happen with typical patterns, but as they are much less concrete, and as they require a higher level of knowledge, they will be avoided far fewer times and therefore they will arise much more often. Try playing a few dozen games against beginners and you will certainly manage to profit from endgame knowledge which you will not be able to apply in games against players of your own level. How many games by elite players do you see with typical well-known mating combinations? Relatively few, as both players know them. And this search for complexity extends also to strategy and to the study of openings.

Over the last few months I have put this question to myself regarding this book's theme of patterns, and I decided upon two areas of material to study: games from the tournaments which I was following on an almost daily basis and my own fast games online (it should be understood that this book was written during 'lockdown', although it is not that I am very active now in any case). Would those patterns arise in these two sets of test material? They did so to a greater extent than I was expecting: some of the games from this period have their place in the book and, as regards my own fast games, I would say that of every twenty games, at least one would be relevant to one of the patterns (even today, the very day when I am writing these words), although of course I will not be so boring as to present them all.

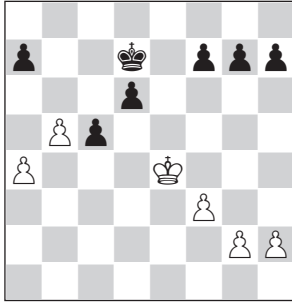
The following extract is from a game which was played on the day I was writing this (and the whole game can be found online).

Algernoon
Ngazio2000

Lichess.org blitz 2020

2428
 2441

quality majority appears and a draw is inevitable: $\frac{1}{2}$ - $\frac{1}{2}$.



Black, with an impressive pair of passed pawns, could have suspected the danger of the creation of a high-quality majority by White (see **Pattern 3**). He could have prevented it with 35...a6! and if 36.b6 a5!-+. Instead he played 35...♔c7? and after 36.a5! the high-

So the best advice I can give is to analyse everything and try to draw meaningful conclusions, in order to be able to apply them in the future. The ability to see interesting ideas is developed by playing and by solving exercises. Do not waste any collection of puzzles you come across by looking at the solution straight away. That would be like trying to improve our tennis serves and strokes by watching videos, but not putting them to the test until we get to the decisive game. Each exercise solved is a source of satisfaction, and each exercise analysed in depth is a greater source of learning.

CHAPTER 10

Rook endings

As was only to be expected, this will be the longest chapter in the book and for the practical player it is also the most important one. At all levels of play, rook endings are the most common, and we need to know more patterns here than in all the other types of endings.

A huge number of books have been written about rook endings, from both the theoretical and the practical point of view, but their secrets remain hidden from most players. The comment that Spielmann addressed to Rubinstein, 'Akiba, if you had lived in the Middle Ages you would have been burnt at the stake. What you do in rook endings can only be described as acts of witchcraft!', reveals his frustration and surprise at having been beaten from a position that he considered clearly drawn, and it reflects great empathy for the feelings of many more players throughout history. In more recent times there are some efforts by Karpov and especially Carlsen which stand out, in that they too seem like witchcraft. We are going to encounter some of them in this book, and the rest are available to the most studious seekers after improvement by investigating in the databases.

A few years ago now, Kortchnoi wrote an interesting little book in which he analysed a few rook endings in very great depth (an approach that was normal in the era of adjourned games) and he said that anyone who studied the book carefully could increase their rating by 100 points. Of course the benefit cannot be quantified, but when we think that rook endings will occur in 10% of our games, it is certain that improvement in this area will have a greater effect on our results than improvement in other endings or other areas of the game.

It should be pointed out that the theory of these endings is expanding, thanks to more precise analysis using analysis engines, and many more positions, which occur frequently despite involving three or four pawns for each player, are being studied in detail. I have tried to remain as faithful as possible to the idea of this book, which is to present positions with clear and simple patterns, without adding any theoretical investigations, but it has not been possible for me in every case. In particular, **Patterns 74-76** are a world that floats between theoretical and practical endings, and given the current ease of analysis, soon there will be others like this.

The status of the passed pawn

There is one theme which is connected with several of the distinctive features of the endgame and which is possibly more important or more complex in rook endings than in others. It is the differing role of passed pawns, depending on circumstances. We could refer to it as the status of the passed pawn in rook endings, and it can help us establish plans and correctly distribute tasks to the pieces.

I believe that the complexity arises from the only slight difference in strength between the pieces which take part in this ending, the king and the rook (5 points to 4, according to the most accepted theories) and from the very different abilities of each of them. While the king is very strong at close quarters and therefore becomes the ideal piece to stop or support passed pawns, the rook is stronger for capturing pawns, controlling at a distance and using checks to harass the king, the further away the better.

I propose to distinguish the following six situations:

1) An isolated passed pawn, supported by the rook and blocked by the enemy king.

Evaluation: the pawn is harmless and its value is almost zero.

2) A passed pawn, protected by another pawn and blocked by the enemy king.

Evaluation: The pawn cannot advance unless its king arrives to support it, but it is an advantage, as it keeps the enemy king tied up attending to it.

3) A passed pawn blocked by the enemy rook in front of it.

Evaluation: It leaves the enemy rook out of play and usually wins unless there is compensation, or the king can quickly come to its aid.

4) A passed pawn controlled by the rook from behind.

Evaluation: The pawn cannot move forward on its own. Unless its king can get close, it constitutes a slight advantage.

5) A passed pawn supported by its king (with the defending king in front of the pawn).

Evaluation: If the defending rook has plenty of lines to give check, it can only be useful to force a draw; if the defending rook cannot help with checks, it is decisive.

6) A passed pawn supported by the king (with the defending king cut off).

Evaluation: The pawn will cost the defender his rook, usually within a few moves.

In most of the following patterns we shall see again and again how the role of the two important pieces is adapted to this evaluation of the passed pawns.

PATTERN 65

The umbrella

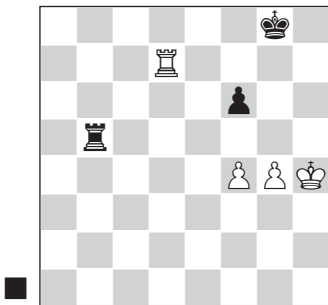
We shall begin with three simple patterns, fundamentally tactical in nature, but very important. The *umbrella* is an enemy pawn which shelters the king from distant checks by the rook and allows it to comfortably support a passed pawn, which in other situations would be harmless.

This theme occurs frequently, and on many occasions even strong players overlook it, because the sense of materialism takes over, and a manoeuvre which consists of sacrificing a pawn remains hidden. What is more, the *umbrella* has a special power, which is that sometimes it prevents the Philidor Defence, so typical of endings of rook and pawn against rook.

Alexander Zaitsev

Robert Hübner

Büsum 1969 (11)



White has a two to one majority on the same wing which is almost harmless. White can only win if Black ‘forgets’ the mechanism of the *umbrella*.

57...♖b1??

With 57...♖c5, waiting on the fifth rank, Black draws easily, for example 58.f5 ♖c1 and now if 59.♕h5 ♖g1! and there is no way to make progress.

58.♕h5 ♖g1 59.g5!

This is the typical pawn sacrifice which sets up the *umbrella*.

59...fxg5 60.f5 ♕f8 61.f6 1-0

White continues with 62.♔g6, a move that would be impossible without the pawn on g5.

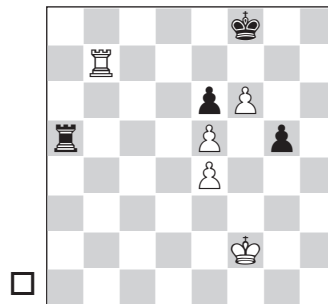
Veselin Topalov

2788

Rustam Kasimdzhanov

2670

San Luis Wch 2005 (7)



This is the ending of a famous game, played in the tournament that allowed Topalov to win the World Championship.

It appears that the two white pawns on the e-file are going to be captured, and this is so, but what White needs to queen his f-pawn is the black pawn on g5.

71.♕g3! ♖xe5 72.♕g4 ♖xe4+ 73.♕h5! 1-0

This position would be a draw if there were no black pawns, but here Black loses immediately, thanks to

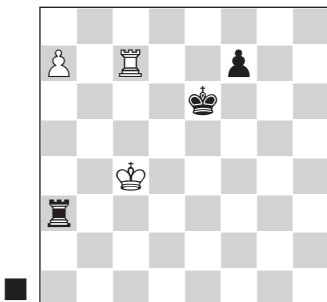
the umbrella effect of the black pawn on g5.

PATTERN 66 The bridge

The bridge is a theme already studied in basic endgame theory; it is useful and even at times necessary, in order to promote a pawn on the seventh (See 100 *Endgames You Must Know – Ending 53*). Now we are going to see that it also occurs in endings with more pawns. Its main usefulness is that it makes it possible to save many tempi in races between passed pawns, and it forces the opponent to exchange his rook much sooner than would be the case if the pawn had to be advanced all the way to the eighth rank. And in a few cases it is the only way of promoting the pawn.

Jesus de la Villa
Agustin Garcia Luque

Marchena 1990



Here Black can force the draw by bringing the king closer, but in the heat of battle he made the most natural move:

59...f5?

How can this lose, when White needs many tempi to win the black rook, and by then Black will have advanced the f-pawn very close to the promotion square?

The response is that White can arrange to capture the black rook under optimal conditions, by means of repeated use of the bridge. Instead, 59...♔d6! would have brought the king closer and forced a draw very soon.

60.♕b5!

This move, which was not made in the game, would have won with incredible ease. Black is unable to defend against the threat of building a bridge with ♖c6+-♗a6. The game continued 60.♕b4? and I can recall perfectly that I made this move with the feeling that victory was an illusion. In fact, that is always the case if we fail to take advantage of our opportunities: 60...♗a1 61.♗c6+. Now I realised that I needed to try to build a bridge, but that with a modicum of care on the part of my opponent, it would be too late.

(61.♔b5!? forces 61...♖b1+!, preventing the bridge: 62.♕c6 ♖a1 63.♔b7 (threatening to build a bridge with 64.♖c6+ and 65.♖b6) 63...♗xa7+ (this is satisfactory, although unnecessary) 64.♕xa7 ♕d5!= 65.♔b6 f4 66.♗f7 ♕e4 67.♕c5 f3 68.♕c4 ♕e3 69.♕c3, reaching the well-known extreme position where if the side with the pawn is to move it is a draw) 61...♕f7

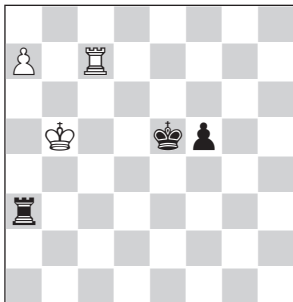
(61...♕d5!? leads to a draw, but with a special resource: 62.♖c5+ ♕d4! 63.♖a5 (the bridge) 63...♖b1+! and the bodycheck triumphs over the bridge: 64.♕a3! (64.♕a4 even loses after 64...♕c4!–+) 64...♖a1+, forcing a repetition) 62.♖c7+ ♕g6 draw.

60...♕e5

A) 60...♖a1?! allows the immediate construction of the bridge:

61.♖c6+ ♕e5 62.♖a6 and White will very soon win the rook, e.g. 62...♖b1+ 63.♕c4 ♖c1+ 64.♕d3 ♖c8 65.a8♖+–;

B) Or 60...♖b3+ 61.♕a4 ♖b1 62.♖c3, with the idea of building the bridge on a3.



61.♖c5+!

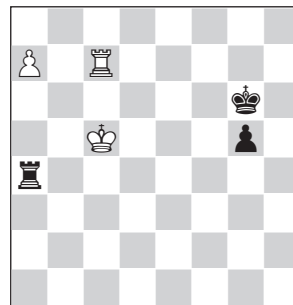
A very important resource to remember. White will build a bridge on either the fifth or the third rank and Black is helpless to prevent it.

61...♕e4

61...♕f6 62.♖c6+ ♕g5 63.♖a6+–
62.♖c4+ ♕e3 63.♖a4 ♖b3+
64.♕c4+–

**Yury Balashov
 Mark Dvoretzky**

USSR 1967



A position almost identical to the one in my game after Black's 59th move. The difference is that it is Black to play here. However, I have found other similar positions in modern databases. I have chosen to repeat this example (Balashov-Dvoretzky) to complete my personal history of learning about this pattern. This position is older than the previous one. But I did not study it until years later, when Dvoretzky's books began to be tremendously popular. In this case it is Black to move and he can escape from the dangerous threat by moving his rook away in time:

1...♖a1!

A) 1...♖f5? 2.♖b5 ♖a1 3.♞c5+— would have led to the famous position which precedes the construction of a bridge on the third or fifth rank;

B) 1...♖h5? looks like a good way to escape this, but White can play 2.♖b6! and to Black's great misfortune his pawn is unable to advance due to the immediate construction of a bridge on the a5-square. Despite Black's wide choice of moves here he is unable to save the game. For instance:

B1) 2...♞b4+ 3.♖a5 ♖b1 4.♞c4+—, with a bridge on a4;

B2) 2...♖h4 3.♖b5! ♖a1 4.♞c4+!, followed by a bridge on a4;

B3) 2...♖a1 3.♞c8! (the rook is much better placed here than on c5: 3.♞c5? ♖xa7! 4.♖xa7 ♖h4 5.♖b6 g4= and the white king has been deprived of its natural highway) 3...♖h4 (3...♖g4 4.a8♚ ♖xa8 5.♞xa8 ♖f3 6.♞f8+! ♖e3 7.♞g8 ♖f4 8.♖c5 g4 9.♖d4 ♖f3 10.♖d3+—) 4.a8♚ ♖xa8 5.♞xa8 g4 6.♖c5 g3 7.♖d4 g2 8.♞g8+—.

2.♖b6 ♖b1+

Thus, Black hinders both bridge-building and the plan of simply supporting promotion with ♞c8.

3.♖c6 ♞c1+ 4.♖b7 ♖b1+ 5.♖c8 ♖a1 6.♖b8 ♖f5 7.a8♚ ♖xa8+ 8.♖xa8 g4 9.♖b7 g3 10.♖c6 ♖f4 11.♞g7 ♖f3 12.♖d5 g2=

The bridge can also arise in positions with more pawns, as long as a passed pawn can be produced.

The most common case is the classic ending with an extra pawn on the queenside, which we shall study in **Patterns 74, 75 and 76**.

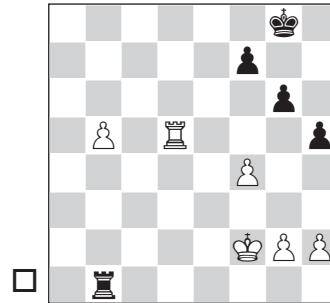
Ulf Andersson

2545

Larry Christiansen

2490

Hastings 1978/79 (11)



This is the typical position for making use of the resource of the bridge.

White must send his king to support the passed pawn on the queenside and in the process he will lose a pawn on the other wing.

41.♖e3 ♖b2?!

41...♖b4, cutting off the king, looks more tenacious, but after 42.♖d3 ♖f8 43.♖c3 ♖b1 44.♖c4 ♖e7 45.h4 ♖e6 46.♞d3 ♖f5 47.g3 ♖g4 48.♞b3 ♞c1+ 49.♖d5 ♞c8 50.b6 ♞b8 51.♖c6 ♞c8+ 52.♖d7 ♞b8 53.♖c7 ♞e8 54.b7 ♞e7+ 55.♖d6 ♞xb7 56.♞xb7 ♖xg3 57.♞xf7 ♖xh4 58.♖e5 White wins.

42.♖d4

Andersson has it all worked out; he has seen how to accelerate the win of Black's rook.

42...♞xg2 43.b6 ♖b2 44.♖c5 ♞c2+ 45.♖b5

45.♔d6 ♖xh2 46.b7 ♜b2 47.♕c6!,
with the threat of 48.♜b5, would
also have won.

45...♜xh2 46.♜d4

Preparing the bridge.

46...♞e2

If 46...h4 47.b7 ♜b2+ 48.♜b4+-,
constructing the bridge once again.

47.b7 ♞e8 48.♜c4 ♕g7 49.♜c8 ♞e1

50.b8♖ ♜b1+ 51.♕c4 1-0

PATTERN 67 Stalemate and the crazy rook

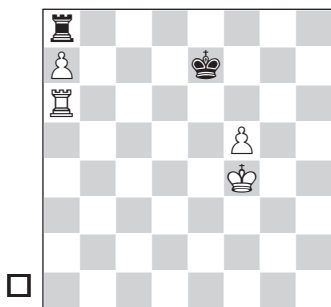
Stalemate is waiting for us at any point in an endgame, especially in games on the Internet. It is almost always the result of a blunder. But in certain positions, stalemate is typical and it is appropriate to be aware of it. In rook endings those circumstances tend to be common. Above all, there are two situations that occur often: one is usually the consequence of a certain impatience in advancing a pawn, and the other (more striking) consists in repeatedly offering to sacrifice the defending side's rook, which is usually called the *crazy rook*. But we must not be overconfident and think that by taking care of those two we shall be free from error.

First, some very short examples of a situation usually caused by impatience.

Roger Garay Murua

Rodolfo Redolfi

Cordoba 1968



Here, 75.f6+, followed by the march of the white king to the b7-square, would win easily, but White thought he saw a common trick

which would help to shorten his task:

75.♜h6? ♜xa7!

With the result that it was White who got tricked:

76.♜h7+ ♕f6 77.♜xa7

Stalemate.

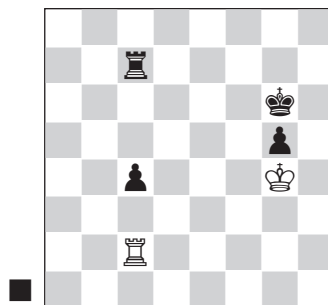
Goran Dizdar

2500

Alex Avshalumov

2420

Baku 1988



Black was in a hurry here as well:

67...c3?

As before, 67...♔f6 68.♖f2+ ♔e5 and the king moves to support the most distant passed pawn.

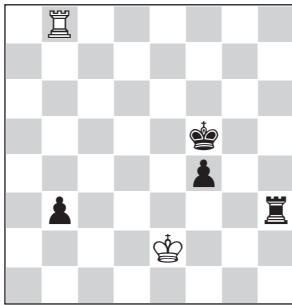
68.♖xc3 ♖xc3 ½-½

Even the greatest players can sin through impatience.

Ossip Bernstein

Vasily Smyslov

Groningen 1946 (7)



59...b2??

Among other things, 59...♔e4 would have won, e.g. 60.♖b4+ ♔d5 61.♖xf4 ♖h1 62.♖b4 b2–+.

60.♖xb2! ♔g4

Black declines the rook (60...♖h2+ 61.♔f3 ♖xb2 would be stalemate) but the damage is done.

61.♔f1 ½-½

The stalemate theme does not always arise due to an oversight. Sometimes it is a correct and necessary resource. But it could almost always have been prevented earlier.

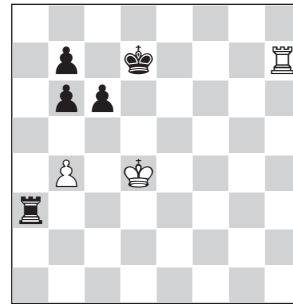
Paul Motwani

2355

Julio Granda Zuñiga

2475

Thessaloniki ol 1988 (7)



In this position it seems that White will soon lose the b4-pawn and the game, but he has a solution.

48...♔d6?

Black was in a hurry and had discovered a variation which would win the pawn on b4. Instead, 48...♔c8! would have won uneventfully, but would have taken longer. Now White discovers an opportunity, which he must have calculated at this point in order to be able to make the decision to capture the pawn on b7:

49.♖xb7! b5 50.♖h7 ♖b3

The pawn seems defenceless.

51.♖h6+! ♔c7 52.♖h4! ♖xb4+ 53.♔c5

And Black cannot capture the rook due to stalemate. The position is a draw.

But there can be few examples which are more striking and more characteristic of rook endings than the popular crazy rook.

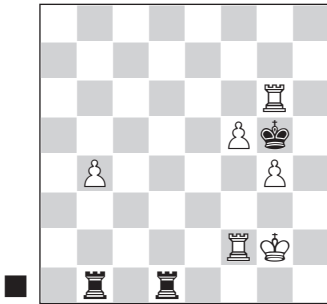
Ron Henley

2525

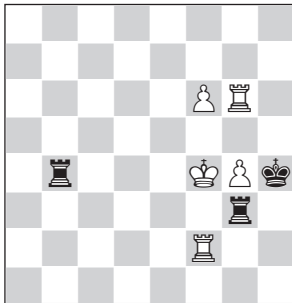
Jay Bonin

2330

New York 1983 (7)



**40...♔h4 41.f6 ♖g1+ 42.♕f3 ♜g3+
43.♕f4 ♜xb4+**



Everything is going well, the checks are coming to an end.

44.♕f5?

44.♕e5 would have ended the checks, but it would have taken a few more moves. Once again, impatience.

44...♜f3+!!

Black sacrifices the first rook in such a way that its capture is forced.

45.♜xf3 ♜b5+ 46.♕e6 ♜e5+!

And now the second one is transformed into a crazy rook, one that repeatedly offers itself,

pursuing the enemy king wherever it goes, because if it is captured the game ends in stalemate.

47.♕f7 ♜e7+ 48.♕g8 ♜g7+

Incredible nerve.

**49.♕h8 ♜g8+ 50.♕h7 ♜g7+ 51.fxg7
1/2-1/2**

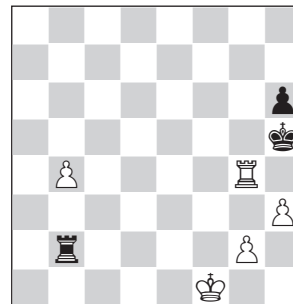
To prevent the annoyance of being assailed by a crazy rook, it is always useful to pay attention to a very clear sign: the enemy king's lack of squares.

Thezlo Ondok

2175

Ioan Mihut

Hungary tt 1997



The black king has no moves. Careful!

54.♕e1?

He should have played 54.♜e4, for example, although there would still have been work to do.

54...♜e2+!

The crazy rook runs riot.

55.♕f1 ♜f2+ 56.♕g1 ♜f1+! 57.♕h2

♜h1+ 58.♕g3 ♜xh3+ 59.♕f4 ♜f3+

60.♕e5 ♜f5+ 61.♕xf5

Draw.

PATTERN 68 The king supports the passed pawn

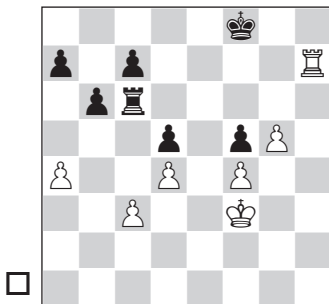
In the next three sections we are going to look at different circumstances relating to the role of the king in rook endings, both in its positive and negative aspects. The common factor is the idea that the king should take up the most active position possible, escape from restricted positions, and take part in the struggle of the passed pawns, either by supporting them or by blocking them.

As we have already mentioned in the introduction to this chapter, with reference to *the status of the passed pawn*, the difference in value of passed pawns can be dramatic. A passed pawn is much stronger when supported by its king and even when opposed by the defender's king it can become decisive if there are other pawns (of either colour) present, making the defence by means of distant checks by the rook more difficult.

We cannot do better than begin with the classic ending on this theme, even though it is very well known.

José Raul Capablanca
Savielly Tartakower

New York 1924 (6)

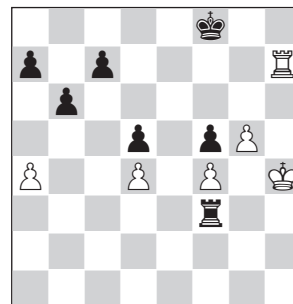


I can still recall the impression this endgame made on me when I saw it for the first time. It even looks as though Black is better with his very active rook, which is about to capture a pawn. The manoeuvre of the white king, which succeeds in coordinating with his passed pawn and rook, proves to be more important than the deficit of pawns arising.

35. ♔g3! ♖xc3+

The alternative 35...a6!? is also interesting here, with the same plan as a move later.

36. ♔h4 ♖f3?!



This is the most natural continuation, but it loses, and in a way that now seems trivial to us. But otherwise White gains two connected passed pawns which seem to win easily:

A) After 36...♖c1?! the rook fails to arrive in time: 37. ♔h5 ♖h1+ 38. ♔g6+-;

B) 36...c5?! logically seeks counterplay, but is also too slow: 37.dxc5 bxc5 38.g6 d4 39.♔g5 d3 40.♕f6+—;

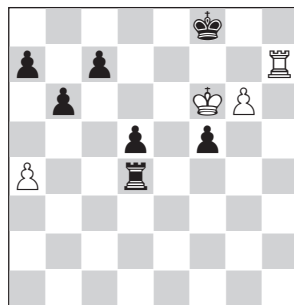
C) 36...a6!? on the other hand, is very interesting. It took many years before this plan was analysed. The idea is typical of modern chess; Black seeks counterplay and so creates a passed pawn on the queenside. But the essential element of this plan for Black is that his rook remains available to give check along Black's third rank, which means that the arrival of the white king on f6 is not as dangerous. Nevertheless, White can win with 37.♕h5! (the move played in the game, 37.g6, does not work here since it allows Black's whole idea to be revealed: 37...b5 38.axb5 axb5 39.♔g5 b4 40.♕f6 ♖c6+ and this check disrupts White's winning mechanism) 37...b5 38.♔g6! and now 38...bxa4 (or 38...b4 39.♖h8+ ♔e7 40.♕xf5 b3 41.♖b8+—; or 38...♖c6+ 39.♕xf5 bxa4 40.♖h3 and the two connected pawns should win) 39.♗d7 (perhaps a difficult move, since the objective is to deploy the rook behind the a4-pawn, but other moves also win) 39...a3 40.♖xd5 ♖c6+ 41.♕h7!. The white king has completed a brilliant journey and is now ideally situated to support the g-pawn to the end of the board.

37.g6!

White offers another two pawns. In reality, by now this could not be avoided, but the visual impact remains tremendous.

37...♖xf4+ 38.♔g5 ♖e4

The third pawn cannot be captured: 38...♖xd4 39.♕f6!



analysis diagram

and White's idea has been crowned with total success. The king supports the pawn and there is no way for Black to prevent its rapid promotion other than to give up his rook for it: 39...♔e8 40.♖xc7 ♖g4 41.g7 d4 42.♖c8+ ♔d7 43.g8♗ ♖xg8 44.♖xg8 ♔d6 45.♕xf5, and the black pawns are not dangerous.

39.♕f6 ♔g8 40.♖g7+ ♔h8 41.♖xc7 The formidable strength of the rook on the seventh, the king and the passed pawn forces Black into total passivity.

41...♖e8 42.♕f5

White now wins prosaically as the position no longer requires any finesse. 42.♕f7! was the consistent way to implement the plan of collaboration between the rook, the king and the passed pawn right to the end: 42...♖d8 43.♖c1 ♗d7+ 44.♕f8 ♖d8+ 45.♔e7 ♖b8 46.♕f7 ♖b7+ 47.♕f6 ♖b8 48.♖h1+ ♔g8 49.g7+—.

42...♖e4 43.♕f6 ♖f4+ 44.♔e5 ♖g4 45.g7+!

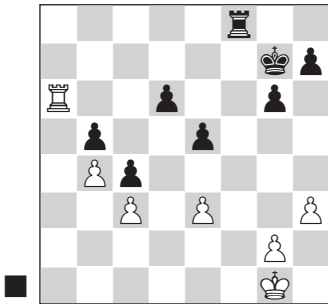
And making use of the circumstance that the pawn ending is winning,

White advances his pawn to the seventh and continues to condemn the black king to total passivity.

45...♔g8 46.♖xa7 ♜g1 47.♕xd5 ♜c1
48.♕d6 ♜c2 49.d5 ♜c1 50.♜c7 ♜a1
51.♕c6 ♜xa4 52.d6 1-0

Marcelino Sion Castro 2380
Alexander Beliavsky 2650

Leon 1994 (5)



This position arose in a game that I saw live and was commenting on with some other players. Despite having studied the Capablanca-Tartakower position we were unable to find the winning plan for Black. Once again it seems that White has a lot of counterplay and is going to be able to draw, but once again the solution for Black is to sacrifice several pawns in order to support his passed pawn. But which passed pawn? Answer: the one on c3!

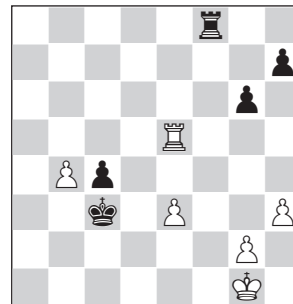
43...♕f6!

After this tremendous move, everything is clear. White can restore material equality, even win a pawn, but the black king descends upon the white pawn chain and does all the work: first it creates a

passed pawn and then it supports it all the way to promotion. 43...♜d8?!
44.♜b6 or 43...d5 44.♜d6! d4
45.exd4 exd4 46.♜xd4 cannot win.
44.e4

This is one of several attempts, each with different plans. In this case, White blocks the black king's path.

A) 44.♜xd6+ is what we might call the collaborative option. White captures everything he can: 44...♕f5!
45.♜d5 (after 45.♕f2 ♕e4+ 46.♕e2 ♜a8! 47.♜d2 ♜a3 48.♜c2 g5 White is completely passive and losing)
45...♕e4 46.♜xb5 ♕d3! (46...♕xe3 was also winning, but after 47.♜d5! the passed pawn is less dangerous, although Black should still win)
47.♜xe5 (compared with the initial position, Black has lost three pawns, but now his king, finally, creates a passed pawn and supports it to the eight rank) 47...♕xc3+—



analysis diagram

and now the c-pawn, supported by its king, will very soon cost Black the rook: 48.b5 ♕b3 49.b6 c3 50.b7 c2 51.♜c5 ♜b8 52.♕f2 ♜xb7 53.♕e2 ♕b2, followed by 54...c1♞;

B) The other option is to activate the king: 44.♕f2 ♕g5+! 45.♕e2 ♜f6

46. ♖b6 ♔h4 47. ♖xb5 ♔g3—+ and in this case the king descends upon the kingside pawns.

44...♔e6?!

The contrast between this and the previous move is curious. The previous move was strong and imaginative; this one is weak and timid. Probably the difference is that now Black has a guaranteed advantage. Instead, 44...♔g5! would have been consistent with the plan initiated with 43...♔f6 and is a stronger move, e.g. 45. ♖a2!?

(preventing 45...♔f4; 45.g3 ♖f3!; 45. ♖xd6 ♔f4 46. ♖d5 ♔xe4 47. ♖xb5 ♔d3! 48. ♖xe5 ♔xc3—+ as in the variation in the previous note) 45...h5! (zugzwang) 46. ♖d2 (46.♔h2 ♖f1!) 46...♖a8 47.♔f2 ♖a3—+.

45. ♖a5 ♖f4 46. ♖xb5 ♖xe4 47. ♔f2 ♖f4+ 48. ♔e2 ♖f8 49. ♖a5 h5 50. ♖a7 ♔d5 51. ♖a6?!

51. ♖g7 is the most logical move, trying to make the black rook passive, but the solution is 51...♔e4! (not 51...♖f6?! 52. ♖c7! g5 53.b5 and the b-pawn will reach the seventh rank) 52. ♖xg6 d5, followed by ...d5-d4.

51...g5 52. ♖a7 ♔e4 53. ♖g7 d5

54. ♖xg5 d4 55.cxd4 exd4—+

The two connected passed pawns are irresistible.

56. ♖xh5 d3+ 57. ♔e1 c3 0-1

As a final touch to this theme, here is a game which was of great importance in a World Championship match and is of exceptional profundity.

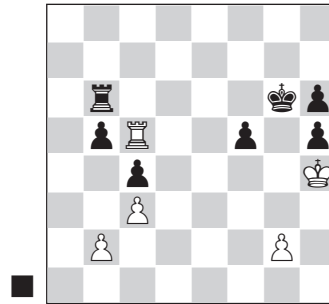
Viswanathan Anand

2775

Magnus Carlsen

2870

Chennai WCh 2013 (m/6)



In this game, Anand had played the rook ending very accurately, keeping his rook active and with the better structure in exchange for the two pawns. At this moment all the live commentators, including myself, were prophesying that the game was going to soon finish in a draw. The engines think likewise. But the reality is that the scenario is prepared for a manoeuvre of even greater profundity than the one in the game Capablanca-Tartakower: **48...♖e6!!**

I think in a book of practical endings awarding two exclamation marks does not make much sense, but this move is absolutely extraordinary and few (if any) understood it when it was made on the board. Most of us were thinking that it was one of the manifestations of Carlsen's tenacity, with the sole intention of making Anand suffer a little bit longer, but with no real hopes of winning. However, move 58, 10 moves further on, will show

us the profundity of Black's idea. Probably Carlsen did not see all the concrete variations, since there are many similar options, but he definitely saw the outlines of the idea: Black will sacrifice three pawns! These will include the two which seem most healthy, sacrificed to create a new passed pawn, but one supported by his king. The idea is not sufficient to win against correct play, but it is evident that it creates enough practical problems for a world champion to go astray.

49. ♖xb5 ♗e4+ 50. ♖h3 ♖g5 51. ♖b8?!

It cannot be said that this move is a mistake, but if Anand could have imagined what was awaiting him he would perhaps have decided to force simplification with 51.b3! ♗e3+ 52. ♖h2 ♗xc3 53.bxc4 ♗xc4, leading to an ending which has occurred many times and should finish in a draw.

51...h4 52. ♗g8+ ♖h5 53. ♖f8 ♖f4

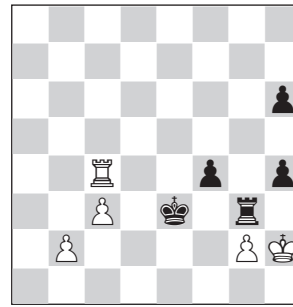
54. ♗c8 ♗g4 55. ♖f8 ♗g3+ 56. ♖h2 ♖g5 57. ♗g8+!?

This does not seem necessary, but the alternative leads to similar difficulties, e.g. 57. ♗c8 ♗g4 and now White has two options:

A) 58. ♖h3 might be the correct move, but it leads to problems similar to the game, e.g. 58...h5 59. ♗c7 ♗g3+ 60. ♖h2 f4 61. ♗xc4 ♖g4 62. ♗c8 h3 63.gxh3+ ♖f3! and finally the black king supports the advance of the passed f-pawn: 64.b4 ♗g2+ 65. ♖h1 ♗b2 66. ♗f8 h4 67. ♖g1 ♗b1+ 68. ♖h2 ♗b3 69. ♗c8 ♖f2, followed by 70...f3;

B) 58. ♗g8+?! ♖f4 59. ♗e8! ♗g3 60. ♗e7 h3! and here too Black creates a protected passed pawn, under better conditions: 61.gxh3 ♖f3, with the idea of ...♗g2 and ...♗b2: 62.h4 ♗g2+ 63. ♖h3 f4 64. ♗c7 ♗g1 65. ♖h2 ♖f2 66. ♗xc4 f3 67. ♗c6 h5 68. ♗c5 ♗g2+ 69. ♖h1 ♖e3 70. ♗xh5 ♗g8 and White will have to give up his rook for the passed pawn very soon.

57... ♖f4 58. ♗c8 ♖e3! 59. ♗xc4 f4



Black is close to crowning his strategy. He will play ...h4-h3 and the f-pawn will be converted into a passed pawn, supported by Black's king and with the enemy king cut off. Now, for the first time in a long time, the defence has to find an only move. Anand begins to panic, and a long and fairly correct defence ends in a debacle.

60. ♗a4?

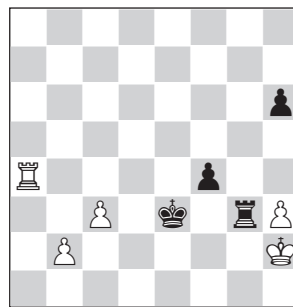
60.b4! was the move that led to a draw. The idea is logical, to create counterplay with the pawn as quickly as possible, and the variations are not too complicated, but for a human player it is a brutal psychological shock to be suddenly confronted with the necessity to

calculate accurately and make a draw by a single tempo, when just a few moves ago the position looked dead. 60...h3 61.gxh3 ♖g6 62.♙c7 f3 63.♙e7+ ♔d2 64.♙f7 ♔e2 65.♙e7+ ♔f1 (65...♔f2 66.b5 ♖g2+ 67.♔h1 ♖g1+ 68.♔h2 ♙e1 69.♙xe1 ♔xe1 70.b6 and the pawn queens just in time) 66.b5! ♖g2+ (66...f2 67.c4) 67.♔h1 ♙e2 68.♙f7 f2 69.b6 ♔e1 70.b7!, arriving in time.

With the move in the game, White wants to prepare a defence based on checks from the side (the famous long-side defensive method), but his own two pawns block this attempt. It is curious to verify that if either of these two pawns were removed the position would be a draw.

60...h3! 61.gxh3

This position (above right) should be compared with the one at the start of this example. Black has lost three pawns and now wins.



61...♖g6 62.c4

There are too many white pawns in the way. 62.♙a8 is a logical defence, to start checking from behind, but it is too slow: 62...f3 63.♙e8+ ♔f2 64.b4 ♖g2+ 65.♔h1 ♖g1+ 66.♔h2 ♙e1—+ 67.♙f8 ♔e2 68.♙e8+ ♔f1, followed by ...f3-f2 and then ...♔e2.

62...f3 63.♙a3+

Or 63.b4 f2 64.♙a3+ ♔f4 65.♙a1 ♙e6—+, followed by ...♙e1.

63...♔e2 64.b4 f2 65.♙a2+ ♔f3

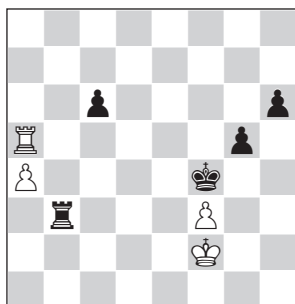
66.♙a3+ ♔f4 67.♙a8

If 67.♙a1 ♙e6, followed by ...♙e1.

67...♖g1 0-1

The pawn will cost White his rook.

PATTERN 69 The dominant king



We have already seen this concept in other endings, but as usually happens it takes on characteristics of its own in a rook ending. In this case

it is a question of a king fighting to gain a little more space and restrict the opposing monarch, with the support of a few pawns, but above all assisted by the rook's ability to place the enemy king in check and to worsen its position.

We begin with an example in which the topic is presented in its positive and negative aspects with respect to the two kings.

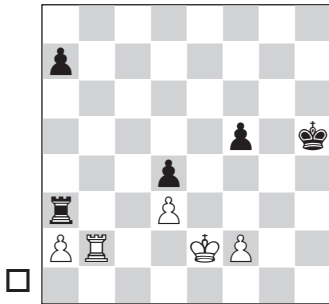
David Lariño Nieto

2325

Juan Mellado Triviño

2426

Calvia 2005 (9)



White's position seems under pressure but not critical, yet with just one careless move it becomes so:

37. ♖b4?

Instead of attacking the d4-pawn, the correct move was to sacrifice the pawn on d3 with 37. ♕f3!, after which White's king gains the dominant position: 37... ♕g5! (the capture of the pawn makes things easier for White: 37... ♗xd3+ 38. ♕f4 ♕g6 39. ♖b5 ♗d2 40. f3 ♗xa2 41. ♗xf5, and the draw is simple) 38. ♖b3! (passivity with 38. ♗d2 can end badly, although in this case it would be hard to demonstrate anything more than a slight advantage for Black) 38... ♗xa2 (after 38... ♗xb3 39. axb3 a5 the pawn ending is a draw) 39. ♖b4=. The

d4-pawn falls and there is no advantage.

37... ♕g4!

Black does understand the importance of advancing the king, although strangely enough he also sacrifices a pawn with check.

38. ♗xd4+ f4

Now it is impossible to prevent the black king from reaching either f3 or g3.

39. ♗d7?!

Still not losing, but it was much better to play either:

A) 39. ♗c4!, keeping the rook ready to attack the a7-pawn from the front if Black captures the f2-pawn, e.g. 39... ♗xa2+ 40. ♕d1 ♗xf2 41. ♗a4! =; or

B) 39. ♕d2!, which also draws, e.g. 39... ♕f3 40. ♗c4 ♗xa2+ 41. ♕c3;

C) 39. f3+? ♕g3–+ is even worse.

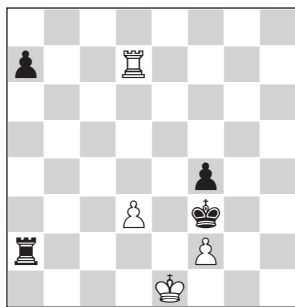
39... ♗xa2+ 40. ♕e1?

Finally the losing move. Engine assistance confirms that the variation 40. ♕d1! ♕f3 41. d4 ♕xf2 42. d5 leads to a draw, but it is clear that White has a very delicate position.

40... a5?!

It is curious that Black does not pursue the idea consistently by advancing his king to f3, although both moves win.

With 40... ♕f3! the black king exerts maximum domination:



analysis diagram

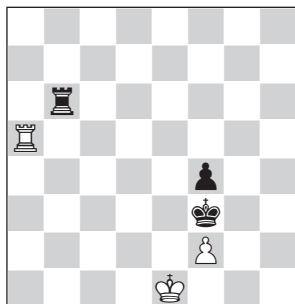
41.d4 (41.♖e7!? a5 42.d4 ♖b2!
 (preparing both to advance Black's
 pawn and to control the white
 passed pawn) 43.d5 ♖b1+ 44.♔d2
 ♖b5–+) 41...♖e2+ 42.♔d1 ♔xf2
 43.♖xa7 f3 44.d5 ♖e5 45.♗d7 ♔g1
 46.d6 ♖g5! (46...♗d5+? does not
 win: 47.♔c2 f2 48.♖g7+ ♔f1 49.d7!)=)
 47.♖f7 f2 48.d7 ♗d5+ 49.♔e2 ♖xd7!
 50.♖xf2 ♖e7+–+.

41.d4 ♔f3 42.d5 ♖e2+

42...♖xf2 wins, according to the
 Lomonosov tablebases, but the
 move in the game is more natural.

43.♔d1 ♖e5?

Now both ways to capture the f2-
 pawn lead to a draw, but 43...♖b2!,
 to deploy the rook behind the white
 pawn, is winning, e.g. 44.♔e1 ♖b5
 45.d6 ♗d5 46.♖a7 ♖xd6 47.♖xa5 ♖b6



analysis diagram

and we have reached a very
 common type of ending. The
 f2-pawn will fall and since White's
 king cannot position itself on the
 short side (for instance if he could
 play ♔g1 here) he ends up in a
 theoretically lost ending.

44.♔c2! ♔xf2 45.♔c3?

White has taken immediate advan-
 tage of the opportunity offered for
 counterplay but now he misinter-
 prets it. 45.d6! f3 46.♖h7 a4 47.d7
 would have forced the draw.

45...f3! 46.♔c4?!

The king moves to a square where
 it will be in check when Black's
 f-pawn promotes to queen, but
 46.♔d4 also loses: 46...♖g5 47.♖f7
 ♖g4+! 48.♔c5 ♔g2–+.

46...a4?!

It was simpler to play 46...♖f5 47.d6
 ♔g3 48.♖g7+ ♔f4 49.d7 f2–+.

47.d6 ♖e2?

Now 47...♖a5 was still winning, but
 only thanks to some very subtle
 details: 48.♖e7 (48.♖h7 a3 49.d7
 ♖a8–+) 48...a3 49.d7 ♖a4+ 50.♔b3 a2
 51.d8♖ a1♖ and it is hard to believe
 that in this position, even though
 White can check first, he loses:
 52.♖d2+ (52.♖b6+ ♖d4!) 52...♔g3!
 53.♖d6+ ♖f4–+ 54.♖g6+ ♖g4
 55.♖d6+ ♔g2 56.♖d2+ f2 57.♖d5+
 ♔g1 and the checks run out.

48.♖a7 ♗d2 49.♔c5

The king supports the passed pawn
 and the draw is immediate.

49...♔e3 50.♖xa4 f2 51.♖a1 ♖c2+
 52.♔b6 ♗d2 53.♔c7 ♔e2 54.d7
 ♖xd7+ 55.♔xd7 f1♖ 56.♖xf1 ♔xf1
 57.♔e6 ½-½