

## GM Alex Fishbein on the Endings

WHEN A KNIGHT SUCCESSFULLY OPPOSES A BISHOP  
IN AN OPEN POSITION

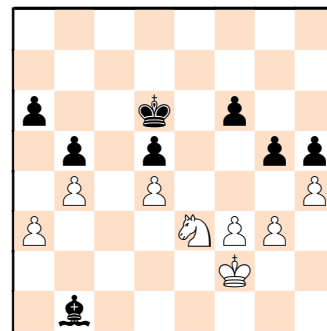
# THE ETERNAL STRUGGLE

Endgame strategy and fundamental preference for a bishop versus knight can be found quite often in chess literature. But then sometimes you come across a game between strong players where events take a completely opposite direction. A paradox or a rule without rules?!



Anatoly Karpov	2700
Garry Kasparov	2710

Game 9, World Championship Match,  
Moscow 1984



pen board? Pawns on both sides? Knight versus bishop? No problem! I have been meaning to write an article about the eternal struggle between the bishop and the knight. But so much has been written about it already! Actually, a whole series of books would probably not be enough to cover it.

But I got the impetus to tackle this subject from a game that ACM editor, Dusan Krunic, highlighted to me. In it, the knight prevailed over the bishop on an open board, with no passed pawns and in fact a pawn deficit. This made me think about the circumstances under which a knight can be stronger than a bishop in the ending. Usually, this is associated with something we call a “bad bishop”: a bishop biting on its own pawns. Here is a classic example:

**46...gxh4?** A fatal mistake, still within the scope of adjournment analysis. A waiting move would hold.

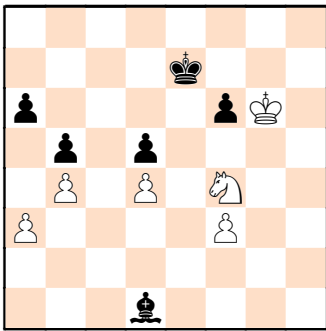
**47.♘g2!!** Today, if someone didn't see this move, spectators would come



yelling: “How could a GM make this blunder?? It’s +5 after ♖g2”.

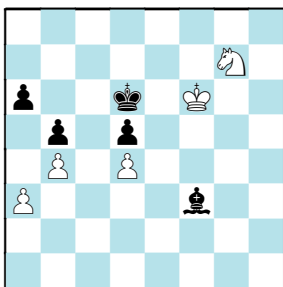
**47...hxg3+ 48.♙xg3** White outflanks the black king.

**48...♙e6 49.♖f4+ ♙f5 50.♖xh5 ♙e6 51.♖f4+ ♙d6 52.♙g4 ♙c2 53.♙h5 ♙d1 54.♙g6 ♙e7**



**55.♖xd5+?** Taking the d-pawn is an error. The key for White is to take it under such conditions that Black cannot activate his king.

He must play **55.♖h5!**, for example **55...♙xf3 56.♖xf6 ♙e6** (A better defense is **56...♙e4+**, but it also loses. We will not show all the variations, which are quite complicated, but instead refer the reader to Dvoretzky’s *Endgame Manual*, which has an excellent analysis of this famous ending.) **57.♖e8 ♙d7 58.♖g7 ♙d6 59.♙f6**



**59...♙d1** (Of course, **59...♙g4 60.♖f5+ ♙xf5 61.♙xf5** is a hopeless pawn ending.) **60.♖f5+ ♙c6 61.♙e5 ♙b3 62.♖e7+ ♙d7 63.♖xd5**, and then White wins easily by advancing his d-pawn.

**55...♙e6 56.♖c7+ ♙d7 56...♙d6** was better, but the text is also good enough to draw.

**57.♖xa6 ♙xf3 58.♙xf6 ♙d6 59.♙f5 ♙d5 60.♙f4 ♙h1 61.♙e3 ♙c4 62.♖c5 ♙c6 63.♖d3 ♙g2 64.♖e5+ ♙c3 65.♖g6 ♙c4 66.♖e7 ♙b7?**

This move is the decisive error. After **66...♙h1 67.♖f5 ♙d5** White cannot win, even two pawns up. That’s how strong the bishop is once it has diagonals to work on!

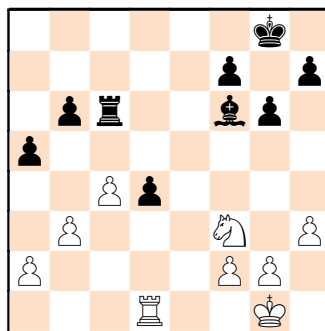
**67.♖f5 ♙g2?** An outright blunder. Black could still make it difficult for White with **67...♙d5 68.♙d3 ♙e6** and now the only way to win, as found by Karsten Mueller before there were computers that could solve this instantly, is **69.♖g7+!!** (**69.♖e3? ♙f3!** is a draw!) **69...♙d7 70.♖h5 ♙d6 71.♖g3!+-**. Again, DEM5 has all the analysis.

**68.♖d6+ ♙b3 69.♖xb5 ♙a4 70.♖d6**  
**Black resigned**

Again, the “bad bishop” is not our main theme here, but I want to show you one more example. Here, the center was not as closed, and the bishop didn’t look as “bad” – but it was.

Maxim Dlugy	2570
Alexander Fishbein	2465

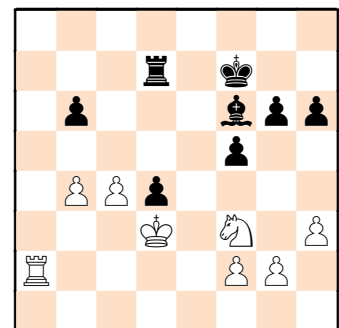
New York Open 1991



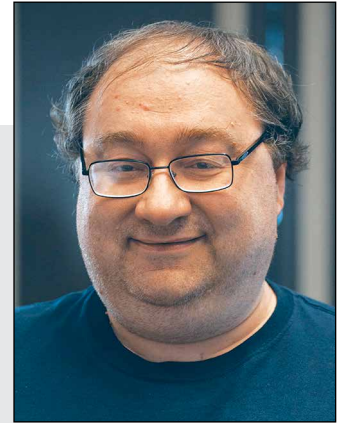
My eternal love for the King’s Indian bishop was my undoing here. My bishop is too busy defending my own pawn.

**25.♙f1 ♙d6 26.♙e2 ♙f8 27.♙d3 ♙g7 28.♙e1 h6 29.♙e2 f5 30.a3 ♙f6** Black has no active play and weaknesses not only in the center but on the queenside. White’s win is a matter of technique.

**31.b4 axb4 32.axb4 ♙f7 33.♙a2 ♙d7**



**34.♙a6?! 34.c5! bxc5 35.bxc5 ♙b7**



**Alex Fishbein** is an American grandmaster, residing in Tennessee. He was the winner of the inaugural Denker Tournament of High School Champions in 1985. He won several national and international tournaments in the 1990s, including in Denmark and Norway, and became a grandmaster in 1992. He then began a career in finance but continued to compete in his spare time, including four times in the U.S. Championship in the 2000s. He is known for his endgame knowledge, having won the Best Endgame Prize in the 2004 U.S. Championship, written a well-received book on pawn endings in 1993 and helped in revising Dvoretzky’s *Endgame Manual* in 2020.

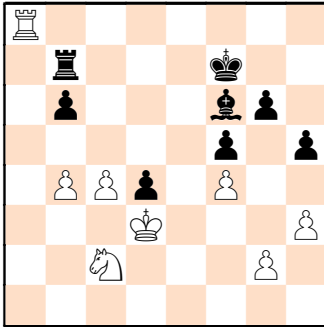


36.♔c4 would be quickly decisive. But Dlugy is too patient in converting the advantage.

34...♖b7 35.♗e1 h5 36.f4? I was very happy to see this. I thought my bishop would come to life now, with the f4 pawn as a target.

36...♗e7 37.♗c2 ♗f6 Unfortunately, 37...♗d6 fails because of 38.c5!

38.♖a8

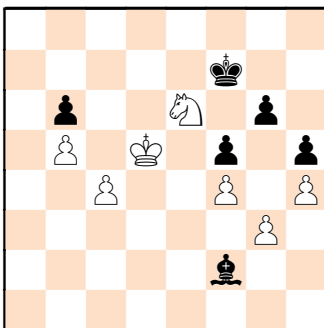


38...♔e7? 38...♗e7! should be enough to draw after 39.♔xd4 (39.b5 ♗d6) 39...♗d6 If the bishop has diagonals, a pawn can often be sacrificed (as we also saw in the previous example). 40.g3 ♗d7! 41.♔e3 ♖c7.

39.♖g8 39.b5! is decisive.

39...♔f7 40.♖c8 ♔e7 41.♖c6 ♔f7 42.b5! Now White converts flawlessly.

42...♗g7 43.♗b4 ♗f8 44.♗d5 ♗c5 45.♗c7 ♔e7 46.h4 ♔f7 47.♗e6 ♗e7 48.g3 ♗f6 49.♖c7+ ♖xc7 50.♗xc7 ♗e7 51.♔xd4 ♗c5+ 52.♔d5 ♗f2 53.♗e6



53...♔e7 Black doesn't have time to take the pawn with 53...♗xg3 due to 54.c5 bxc5 55.b6.

54.c5 bxc5 55.b6 c4 56.b7 ♗a7 57.♗d4 c3 58.♗c6+

**Black resigned**

I gave these two preliminary examples to illustrate how important it is for a bishop to have room to breathe. But now let's focus on our main theme: open positions.

What does the knight need in order to hold its own against a bishop which is not hampered by its own pawns? Usually, one or more of three things:

**SCHEME 1** Cooperation with an active king in the center

**SCHEME 2** The erection of a barrier by the knight

**SCHEME 3** The ability to create forks

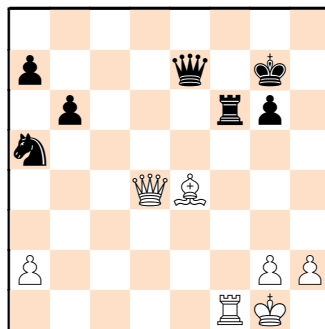
The knight is a devious creature, so we can call these the knight's three schemes.

**Boris Spassky**

**Robert Fischer**

2<sup>nd</sup> Piatigorsky Cup, Santa Monica 1966

As we turn our attention to open positions, it is hard not to recall Bobby Fischer's preference for bishops over knights. We saw a couple of examples in the Fischer article a few years back. But another famous ending with the bishop against a knight on an open board had Bobby on the losing side:



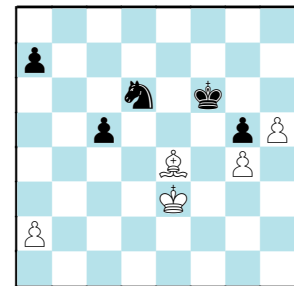
32...♖c5 33.♖xc5 ♖xf1+?! In his excellent book *How to Beat Bobby Fischer*, Edmar Mednis labels this move the decisive mistake. While it is true that 33...bxc5 would save a tempo because 34.♖c1 c4 offers White nothing, the game move still allows Black to hold.

34.♔xf1 bxc5 35.h4! Fixing the pawn on a light square where it is attacked by the bishop.

35...♗c4 36.♔e2 ♗e5?! The first step toward trouble.

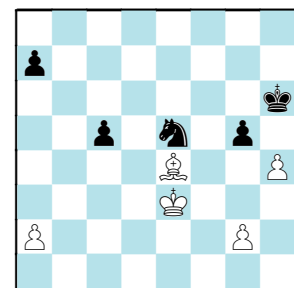
The most thematic defense is 36...♗d6!?, constructing a barrier for the white king **SCHEME 2**. It cannot penetrate through c4, d4, or e4. But after 37.♔d3, Black has to be very

careful. The only defense is 37...♔f7!! (37...♔f6? 38.g4 g5 39.h5 ♗f7 40.♔c3 ♗e5 41.♗f5+-) 38.g4 ♔f6 39.♔e3 (39.g5+ ♔f7 40.♔e3 ♗xe4! 41.♔xe4 ♔e6) 39...g5! 40.h5



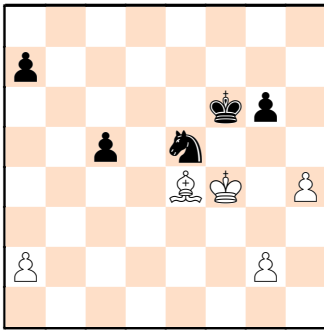
Normally this protected passed pawn would be decisive, but here Black has tactics to save him. 40...♗c4+! 41.♔e2 (41.♔d3 ♗e5+! with Scheme 3: the fork!) 41...♗e5 42.♗f5 ♗f7! 43.♔e3 ♔e5 occupying the center in time **SCHEME 1**.

All of that required some precise moves. A simpler method is 36...♔h6! 37.♔d3 (37.g4 ♗e5! 38.♗f3 g5 39.h5 c4 40.♔e3 c3 41.♗e2 ♔g7 and only White can be worse) 37...♗e5+ 38.♔e3 g5!



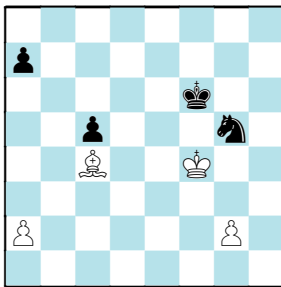
and the material on the board will be too limited for White to have a chance. But Fischer's move also does not lose.

37.♔e3 ♔f6 38.♔f4



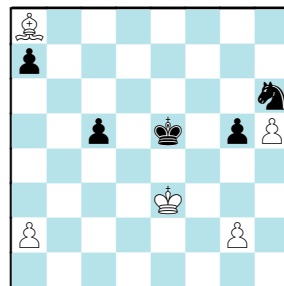
**38...♖f7?** This move loses. Black had to play 38...♗e6! 39.g4 (39.♗c2 ♖f6 40.g4 c4) 39...c4! and the passed pawn allows him to hold.

**39.♗e3?** Spassky gives his rival another chance! But the win would be very hard to find even if it weren't move 39: 39.♗d3!! g5+ (39...♗e5 40.♗e2! ♖f7 41.♗f1 ♗e5 42.♗e4 ♗e6 43.♗e2+-) 40.hxg5+ ♗xg5 41.♗c4!



and even though only two pawns remain on each side, the black knight is strangled to the extent that Black has no hope: 41...♗h7 42.♗e4 ♖f8 43.♗d5 ♗d7 44.♗b5, etc.

**39...g5?** The losing move! In this structure, the passed pawn on h5 will be decisive. Mednis correctly gives this move a question mark, with 39...♗d6 or 39...♗h6 as better alternatives, which would force White to find a winning plan. But he says that Spassky would undoubtedly have found the plan. This is typical pre-computer (actually, pre-Kasparov) commentary! Grandmaster Edmar Mednis was an esteemed endgame expert and understood chess very well. He did not see a winning plan here, so why did he assume that there is one? In fact, both of the grandmasters' suggested moves draw.



This position is very similar to what later happened in the game, but with a big difference: the white king is not yet on d3! The black passed pawn can make its presence felt. 44...c4! 45.♗b7 ♖f5+ 46.♗d2 ♗d4! continuing **SCHEME 1**, the centralized king.

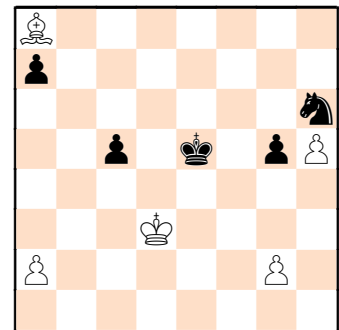


▲ Fischer, Spassky and Jacqueline Piatigorsky in an all-smiles moment at the Piatigorsky Cup in 1966.

39...♗h6! 40.♗d3 ♖f5 41.♗c4 ♗xh4 42.♗xc5 ♗e5 43.♗b7 ♖f5 is correctly given as a draw in DEM5.

Also good is 39...♗d6 (barrier!) 40.♗f4 ♖f5! 41.h5 g5+ 42.♗f3 ♗h6! 43.♗e3 ♗e5! King in the center! 44.♗a8

**40.h5 ♗h6 41.♗d3! ♗e5 42.♗a8**



The white king can get to c4, and that makes all the difference. While the knight is confined to the kingside, the black king cannot save the queenside pawns.

**42...♗d6 43.♗c4 g4 44.a4 ♗g8 45.a5 ♗h6 46.♗e4 g3 47.♗b5 ♗g8 48.♗b1 ♗h6 49.♗a6 ♗c6 50.♗a2**  
**Black resigned**

We saw that even using our schemes it

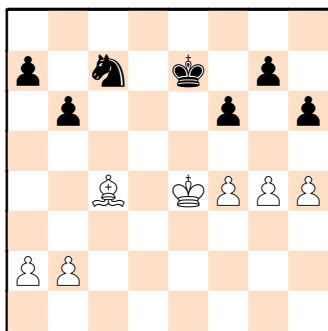




was difficult to draw here. This is because White had a two vs one advantage on the kingside, and that passed pawn posed great danger. From now on we will focus on positions where there isn't a pawn advantage for the bishop on either side. We shall see that here too, defense can be difficult.

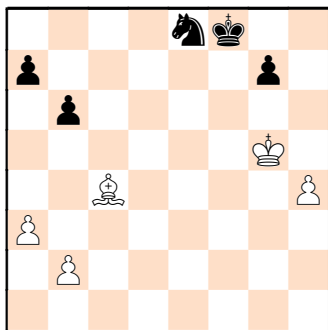
Garry Kasparov	2740
Anatoly Karpov	2705

Game 10, World Championship Match, London/Leningrad 1986



In this position, from game 10 of K-K III, Kasparov played 43.b4 and after 43...♔d6, the game was adjourned and agreed **drawn without resumption**. Kasparov later harshly criticized his decision to offer a draw.

In the diagrammed position, he considered the best chance to be 43.a3 ♔d6 44.♔f5 ♔e7 45.♔g6 ♔f8 46.g5 fxg5 47.fxg5 hxg5 48.♔xg5, but even here, after 48...♗e8

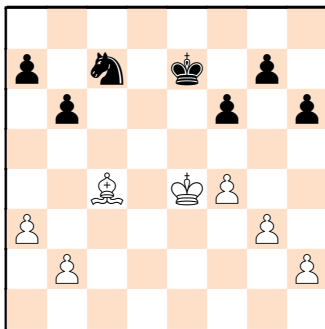


he was not able to find a win.

Well, this game remained unfinished. But perhaps it was fated to be resumed 36 years later, in an online rapid game (sign of the times)!

Magnus Carlsen	2861
Vincent Keymer	2693

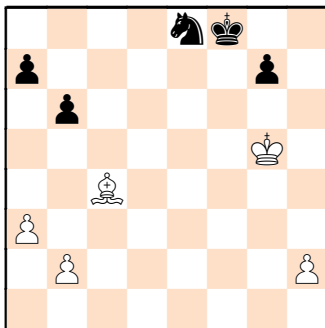
Julius Baer Generations Cup, Internet 2022



Look familiar?

44...♔d6 45.♔f5 ♔e7 46.♔g6 ♔f8 47.g4 ♗e8 48.g5 Magnus Carlsen, who knows all the classics, steers the game into the position that Kasparov thought was most promising for White.

48...hxg5 49.fxg5 fxg5 50.♔xg5



We have exactly the position from the end of Kasparov's analysis, except that it is Black to move and the white pawn is on h2 instead of h4.

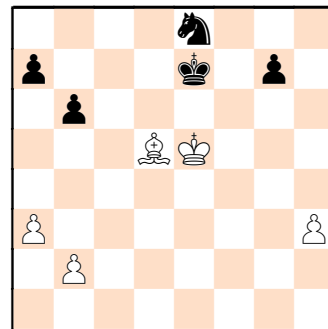
50...♗d6 51.♗d5 ♔e7 52.♔g6 ♔f8 Black has erected something of a barrier **SCHEME 2** against the white king which is aiming for the queenside. White will need to force some sort of Zugzwang, so he moves his pawns gradually.

53.h3 ♗e8 The computer likes 53...♗c8 **SCHEME 3**: fork! 54.♔f5 ♗e7+ 55.♔e6 but few (if any) people would venture into the pawn ending here with 55...♗xd5 56.♔xd5 ♔f7 57.♔c6 ♔f6 58.a4 ♔g5 59.♔b7 ♔h4 60.♔xa7

g5 61.♔xb6 ♔xh3 62.a5 g4 63.a6 g3 64.a7 g2 65.a8♗ g1♗+ 66.♔b5, which is drawn in theory, but maybe not in practice.

The computer also suggests 53...b5, putting a pawn on a light square. Here I will just have to be quiet, since it's above my pay grade to consider such moves.

54.♔f5! ♔e7 55.♔e5



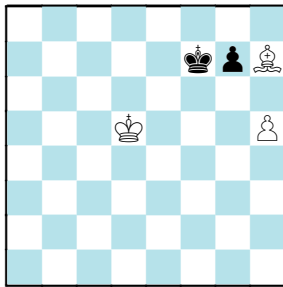
This is the position Garry K was dreaming about: the king got to e5. But even here Black has resources.

55...♗c7 56.♗f3 ♔d7 57.♗g4+ ♔e7 58.♗f5 ♗a6 59.♔d5 ♗c5 60.♔c6 Things are not looking good for the young German grandmaster, but now the knight digs into its bag of tricks.

60...♗a4! 61.b4 ♗c3! 61...g5! is also thematic: it will be easier to draw a possible ending against the wrong rook pawn.

62.♗d3 ♗a4 63.♔b7 a5! 64.bxa5 bxa5 65.♗c2 ♗b2 66.♗b3 ♔d6 67.♔b6 a4 68.♗f7 ♗d3 Again, I prefer 68...g5. All endings with the h3-g5 pawns are drawn, but with the h5-g7 pawns sometimes the bishop can go to h7 and it can be a matter of one tempo. Still the text move draws too.

69.♔b5 ♗f4 70.h4 ♗g2 71.h5 ♗e3 72.♗g6 ♗d1 73.♔xa4 ♔c5 74.♔b3 ♗e3 75.♔c3 ♗c4 76.a4 ♗b6 77.♔b3 ♗c4? Although Vincent's move also draws, I have to give it a question mark because he has a forced draw here with 77...♗xa4 78.♔xa4 ♔d6 79.♔b5 ♔e7 80.♔c6 ♔f8 81.♗h7 (81.♔d6 ♔g8 82.♔e7 ♔h8 is a well-known book draw: 83.♗c2 ♔g8 84.♗b1 ♔h8 85.♔f7 g5 86.hxg6 stalemate.) 81...♔f7 82.♔d5



**81...♖c6?** The only defense is **81...♗f5!** and if **82.♗e4 ♖g3+** **SCHEME 3** again!

**82.♗e4** Now the black knight is very poorly placed and White wins.

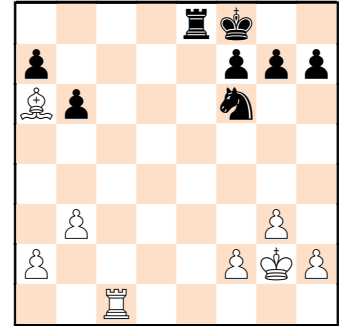
**82...♗d6 83.♗f3 ♗c5 84.♗e2 ♗d6 85.♗f4 85.♗f5? ♖d4+ 86.♗g6 ♖xe2 87.♗xg7 ♗g3=.**

**85...♗c5 86.♗g5 ♖e7**

our first two schemes (active king and barrier), even at the cost of a pawn!

Fabiano Caruana	2763
Wesley So	2774

U.S. Championship, St Louis 2022



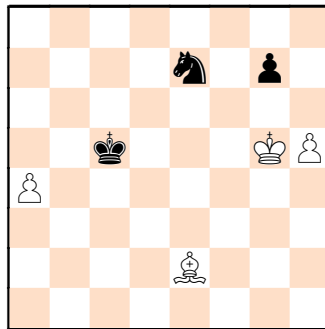
By the way, both of our previous endings started with rooks on the board (Carlsen-Keymer had two pairs of rooks). Kasparov later regretted having traded the rooks.

**32...g5!?** Preventing a white expansion on the kingside.

**33.♖c7 ♗e7 34.♖xe7 ♗xe7 35.♗f3 ♗d6 36.♗c4 a5!** It's too late to defend the f7 pawn: after **36...♗e7? 37.h3! h6 38.♗e3** the white king has a free path to the center.

and with White to move, he would win, but here **82...g6 83.h6 (83.hxg6+ ♗g7=) 83...♗f6! 84.♗g8 (84.♗e4 ♗g5=) 84...g5** is a draw. Of course, both players know these positions like the palm of their hand, but still, with seconds left, when it depends on one tempo, it's not easy.

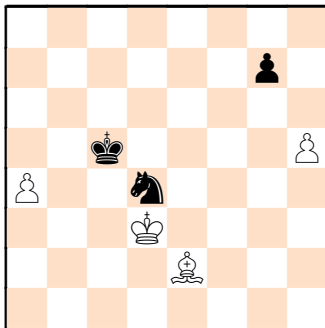
**78.♗d3 ♖e5 79.♗e2 ♖c6 80.♗c3 ♖d4 81.♗d3**



This last barrier won't hold.

**87.a5 ♗c6 88.a6 ♗b6 89.♗c4 ♗a7 90.♗f4 ♗b6 91.♗e5 ♖c6+ 92.♗f5 ♖d4+ 93.♗g6** **Black resigned**

We see that while the position is drawn, it can be hard to play in practice. Perhaps this is why Wesley So found a totally different way to defend: he combined



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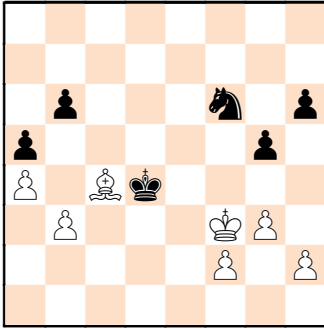
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37.♙xf7 ♖e5 The computer corrects Wesley's implementation of his creative idea. 37...b5! first is necessary.

38.a4! ♗d4 39.♙c4! h6

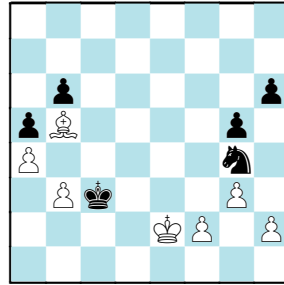


I am not sure I had seen this idea before in this structure. The black knight and g5 pawn form a barrier, and the king in the center dominates the board. But does it work?

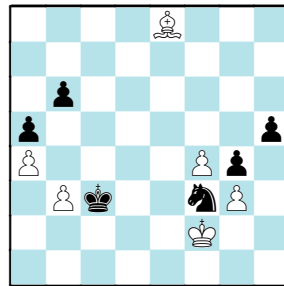
40.h4? The last move before the time control! Trading the rook pawn is a serious error. The key to the position is that White doesn't need the b3 pawn, as the bishop can come to b5, the a4 pawn holds two pawns, and the b3 pawn serves as a decoy. If the black king takes it, the white king comes to the center.

White wins with 40.♙b5! ♗c3 (40...♗e5 41.h3 ♗d4 42.♙f1 ♗e5 43.♗e3; Or 40...♗e4 41.♗g4! ♗xf2+ 42.♗h5+-) 41.♗e3! ♗g4+ (41...♗xb3 42.♗d4 ♗b4 43.f4+-) 42.♗e2

▼ Fabiano Caruana vs. Wesley So PHOTO: Crystal Fuller



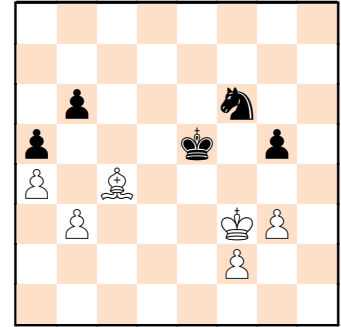
A) 42...♗xh2 43.f3! Perhaps Fabi had missed this move, which traps the knight. 43...h5 44.♗f2 g4 45.f4 ♗f3 46.♙e8



and the bishop vs. knight advantage is most apparent: 46...♗d2 47.♙xh5 ♗xb3 48.♙xg4 ♗xa4 49.♙e6 b5 50.f5 ♗e4+ 51.♗f3 ♗f6 52.g4.

B) 42...♗d4 43.h3 ♗f6, although it's still quite complicated: 44.♙c6 ♗g8 45.♙g2! (45.f4? gxf4 46.gxf4 ♗e7=) 45...♗f6 46.f4! gxf4 47.gxf4 ♗e4 48.♗f3 ♗d2+ 49.♗g4 ♗xb3 50.♗f5! b5 (50...♗c5 51.♙c6) 51.axb5 ♗c5 52.♙f3! a4 53.♙h5+-.

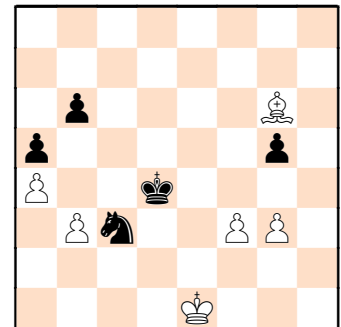
40...♗e5! 41.hxg5 hxg5



Now Wesley So has indeed built a barrier. As soon as the king tries to escape through e3, the check comes on g4 (a kind of fork!). White has no rook pawn anymore to stop it.

42.♗e3 ♗g4+! 43.♗e2 ♗d4! 44.♙b5 ♗f6 45.♗f3 ♗e5 46.♗e3 ♗g4+ 47.♗e2 ♗d4 48.♙c6 ♗e5 49.♙b5 ♗g4 50.f3 ♗e3 51.♙d3 ♗d5 52.♗d2 ♗f6 53.♙g6 53.f4 gets nowhere: 53...gxf4 54.gxf4 ♗d5 55.f5 ♗e5 56.♗c2 ♗d4.

53...♗d5 54.♙f7 ♗f6 55.♗e2 ♗d7 56.♙g8 ♗c5 57.♗d2 ♗d7 58.♙h7 ♗f6 59.♙g6 ♗d5 60.♗e2 ♗c3+ 61.♗f2 ♗d1+ 62.♗e1 ♗c3



63.f4 gxf4 64.gxf4 b5 64...♗d5 is also an easy draw.

65.axb5 ♗xb5 66.♗f2 ♗c3 67.♗f3 a4 68.bxa4 ♗xa4 69.♗g4 ♗c3 70.♙f7 ♗e2 71.f5 ♗e5 72.♙c4 ♗g3 73.♗g5 ♗xf5 74.♙d5 ♗xd5 75.♗xf5 **Draw**

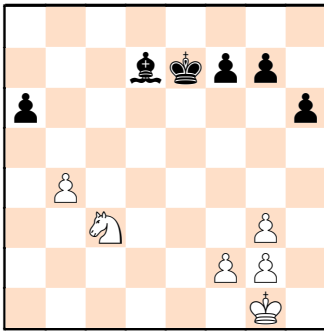
The idea of the knight making a barrier, at the cost of a pawn, was crucial in another recent ending, which I noticed in



GM Joel Benjamin's Chess Life column. I will use it here as it fits our theme, and hope to later repay the debt to Joel.

Igor Novikov	2547
Larry Christiansen	2577

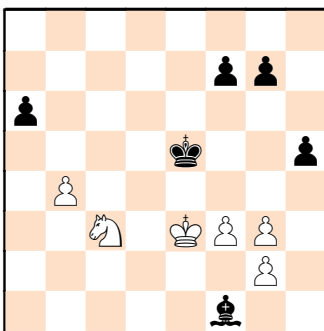
U.S. Senior Championship, St. Louis 2022



44.f3 White would have liked to make a barrier immediately with 44.f4, but his weak pawns on the kingside (starting with g2) are a problem. For example, 44...♔d6 45.♔f2 ♔e5 46.♔e3 ♖c6 47.♔f2 ♔e6 48.♔g1 ♔f5 49.♔f2 g6! 50.♔g1 g5 51.fxg5 ♔e5!-+.

44...♔d6 45.♔f2 ♔e5 46.♔e3 h5 47.♔d3 ♖b5+ 48.♔e3 White is almost guarding all entry points – but what about the g2 pawn?

48...♖f1!

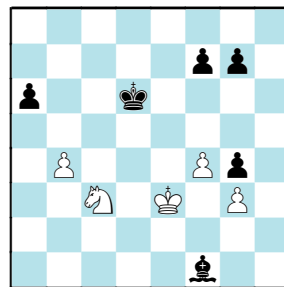


Taking advantage of the fact that 49.♔f2 loses to 49...♔d4!

49.f4+? As Joel pointed out, the “miracle draw” is 49.g4!! hxg4 (49...h4 50.f4+ ♔d6 51.♔f2 ♖c4 52.g3 h3 53.g5! ♔e6 54.♔g1 ♔f5 55.♔h2 ♔g4 56.♔e4! g6 57.♔d6=) 50.f4+ ♔d6 51.g3



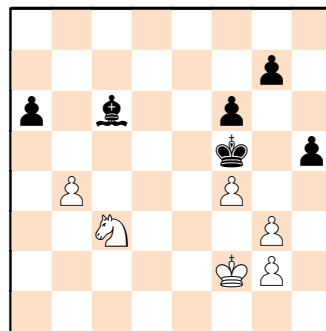
▲ Larry Christiansen PHOTO: Crystal Fuller



and the barrier is complete!

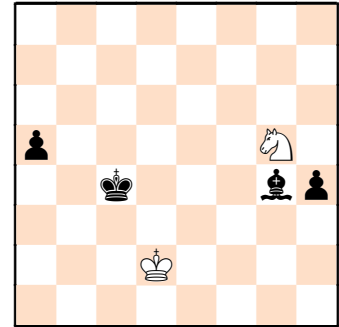
49...♔f5 50.♔f2 ♖b5 51.♔f3 ♖c6+ 52.♔e3 f6 52...♖xg2 immediately also wins.

53.♔f2



If the white pawn were on h2, he could maintain the zone. But here, the g2 pawn will be lost, after which White cannot prevent the formation of a decisive passed pawn.

53...g5 54.fxg5 fxg5 55.♔e3 ♔e5 56.♔d1 ♖xg2 57.♔f2 ♔d5 58.♔d3 ♖f1+ 59.♔c3 ♔e5 60.♔d2 ♔d4 61.♔e1 ♖g2 62.♔d2 ♔c4 63.♔d3 ♖f1 64.♔e5+ ♔xb4 65.g4 h4 66.♔e1 ♖h3 67.♔f3 a5 68.♔xg5 ♖xg4 69.♔d2 ♔c4



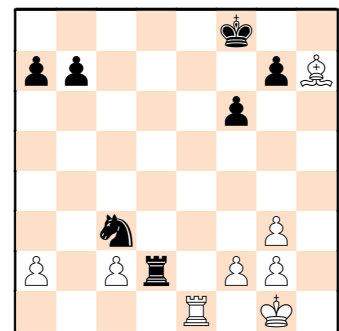
While the white king is busy attending to the a-pawn, the black king goes to the kingside and the h-pawn promotes.

**White resigned**

Saving the best for last, let's look at the game that Dusan showed me. A pawn down in an open position, with pawns on both sides, the knight wins! It will need all three of our schemes – and more!

Igor Samunenkov	2473
Frederik Svane	2566

U-20 World Junior Championship, Cala Gonone 2022

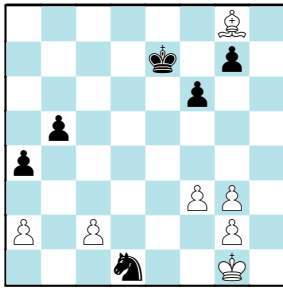


25...♖d1! A pawn down, Black trades rooks. The resulting position is actually better for Black; a revelation! It's possible that necessity was the mother of invention here, as White threatens ♖g6 with mate coming, and 25...♔f7 26.♖d3, where the white rook can become very active, doesn't look particularly attractive.





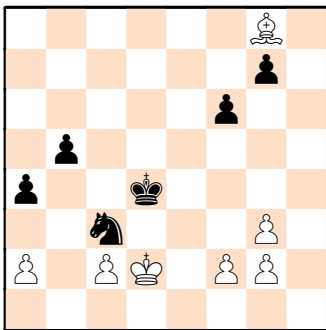
26.♞xd1 ♖xd1 27.♙e4 b5 28.♙d5 ♖c3 29.♙b3 a5! 30.♞f1 Sometimes the knight constructs a barrier **SCHEME 2** by itself (with the help of forks, **SCHEME 3**). It's important here that the king cannot access the e2 square. But if White tries to open the g1-f2-e3 path with 30.f3, then Black closes it down with 30...a4 31.♙e6 ♜e7 32.♙g8 ♖d1!



and if 33.♞f1 ♖e3+.

30...a4! The knight is dominating the bishop. Black gains a tempo for the king advance.

31.♙e6 ♜e7 32.♙g8 ♜d6 33.♞e1 ♜c5 34.♜d2 ♜d4

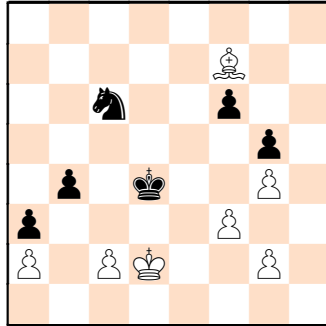


And, of course, we see **SCHEME 1**: a centralized king helping the knight. Now it's clear that only Black can be better, as White's kingside pawn majority cannot create a passed pawn. The white pawn on a2 is weak, and losing it (after, for example 35.a3? ♖b1+ fork!) can be fatal.

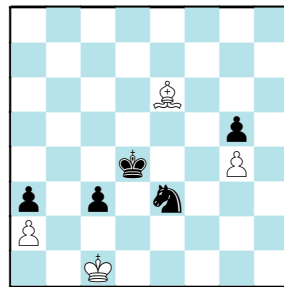
35.f3 ♖b1+ 36.♞c1 ♖a3 37.♜d2 b4 38.g4 ♖b1+ 39.♞c1 ♖a3 40.♜d2 ♖b5 41.♙f7 But with correct defense, White can hold.

41...♖d6 42.♙g8 a3 43.♙e6 ♖b7 44.♙f7 ♖a5 45.♙g8 ♖c6 46.♙e6

g5 47.♙f7? The bishop had to walk very carefully! 47.♙c8 ♖e5 48.♙a6! ♖g6 49.g3 ♖e5 50.♙e2 would be good enough to draw.



47...♖e5! 48.♙e6 ♖g6! 49.g3? The only defense was 49.♙b3!! ♖h4 50.f4! ♖xg2 (50...gxf4 51.♞e2 ♖xg2 52.♞f3 ♖e3 53.♞xf4 and the c2 pawn is defended.) 51.fxg5 fxg5 52.♙e6 ♖e3 53.c3+! bxc3+ 54.♞c1

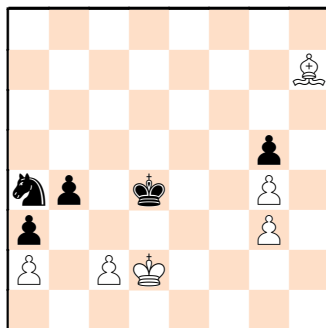


and I don't see a win for Black here.

49...♖e5 50.f4 ♖c6? Returning the favor. 50...gxf4! 51.gxf4 ♖g6 would win.

51.♙d7 ♖a5 52.♙e6 ♖b7 53.♙f5 ♖c5 54.♙h7 54.fxg5 fxg5 55.c3+ bxc3+ 56.♞c2! is a draw.

54...♖a4 55.fxg5 fxg5

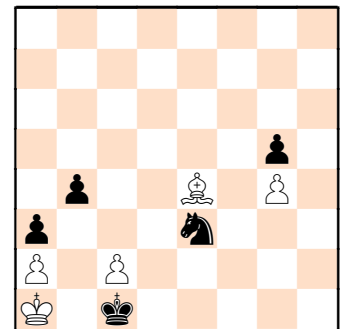


56.♙g8? The final mistake! Desperate times call for desperate measures. The c2 pawn was only strangling the white king. With 56.c3+! ♖xc3 57.♙g8 ♖e4+ 58.♞c2 ♖xg3 59.♞b3 ♞c5 60.♙c4 ♖e4 61.♙e2 White holds, even a pawn down. How important is piece activity, versus material, in the ending?

56...♖c3! 57.♙f7 ♖e4+ 58.♞c1 ♖xg3 59.♜d2 Now 59.c3+ ♞xc3 no longer helps.

59...♖e4+ 60.♞c1 ♞c3 61.♙e6 ♜d4 62.♙f5 ♖c3 63.♙e6 ♞e3 64.♙c4 ♞f3 65.♙e6 ♞e2 The king is about to be imprisoned.

66.♙f7 ♞e1 67.♙e6 ♖e2+ 68.♞b1 ♜d2 69.♙f5 ♖c3+ 70.♞a1 ♞c1 71.♙d3 ♖d5 72.♙e4 ♖e3



One last fork.

73.♙f5 ♖xf5 Not the only way to win, but Black has calculated the mate correctly.

74.gxf5 g4 75.f6 g3 White resigned, as 76.f7 g2 77.f8♞ g1♞ is mate in two by discovered check.

I think you will agree that new ideas are discovered in chess all the time, and not just in the opening! And I hope that the endings we looked at here will expand the horizons of your knights on the chessboard. ■