

ENDGAME DEEP DIVE

By FM Grayson Rorrer

While it can't quite be said that the endgame was ever my favorite stage of the game, I have never had the same disdain for it that some other youngsters might feel. In the past it was a rarity for one of my games to reach this final, decisive phase, and therefore I was never able to form a clear opinion one way or the other. Recently, having gained experience and maturity as a player—and also coming up against more and more, strong opponents who refuse to buckle under middle game pressure—I have found myself entering an unexpectedly large amount of difficult, complicated endgames that have been intriguing both to play and analyze.

Endgames have massive instructional value and are, in my view, an area underappreciated by many chess players. In this primarily scientific phase of the game, exceptionally deep and accurate calculation is more possible and often required for success. The inevitable search for truth, both at the board and in postmortem analysis, has proven to be a quite worthy pursuit that I feel has deepened my understanding of the game of chess considerably.

With this in mind, I felt compelled to share the very particular endgame that was reached in my 7th-round game of the 2022 Charlotte Chess Center Fall IM Norm Invitational. In hindsight it can be observed that the precise pawn structure and material configuration has only occurred in high level practice once before, according to Chessbase's similar endgames/similar structures search in their 2020 Mega Database (I use version 14 of the program). While surely not perfect, after sorting through the examples it spit out, I consider the search function to be a very useful tool for research. It certainly saved me a significant amount of time and effort!

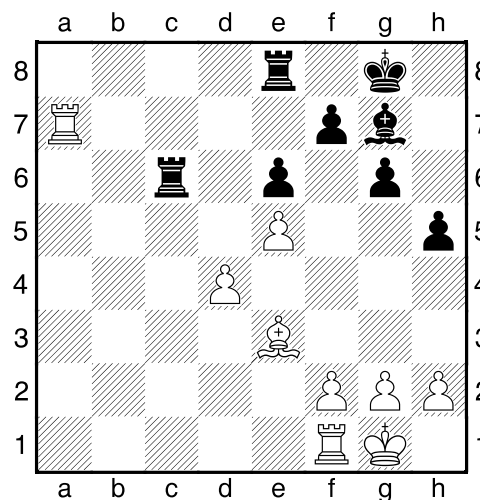
Before diving into the action, allow me to first give a little context regarding the tournament situation. I had started off with a spectacular 3.5/4, including a stretch of three straight victories which already clinched the FIDE Master title. There was a whole tournament ahead, though, and a precious norm to fight for, and understandably no room for complacency! After the quick start I had slowed down a bit with two draws and came into this game hungry for a win against one of the few remaining competitors in my section who was also in contention for an IM Norm.

Experimenting with the Grünfeld for the first time in my career in such a critical game was, in hindsight, a poor judgement call. After getting through the initial surprise, my opponent chose one of the many challenging variations... and, perhaps most importantly, one of the very few I had not refreshed my knowledge of before the event. It soon showed, as I misplayed the opening quite badly, and was arguably lucky to escape the middle game alive.

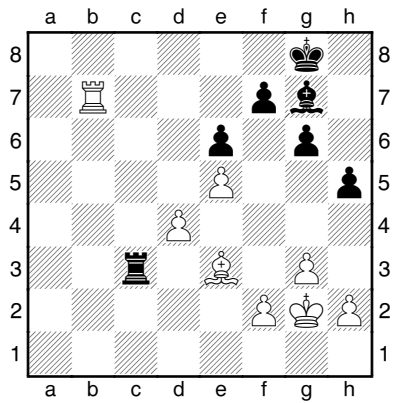
Missed chances aside, it was time for the endgame—the proverbial moment of truth. It would have been easy to fall under a cloud of despair after the unfavorable conclusion of both the opening and middle game, resulting in a one-sided game where I could

only hope to draw after a long, grim defense. It has never been in my nature to give up the fight prematurely, though, and this battle carried extra significance in that a loss would extinguish any remaining chances I had for an IM Norm. I resolved to put up the best defensive line of my capabilities, realizing that, regardless of the objective evaluation of the position, extended resistance was still possible.

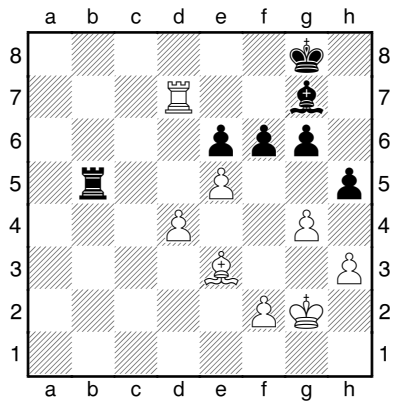
Putnam, Liam (2161) — Rorrer, Grayson (2230) [D85]
CCC Fall IM Norm Invitational (7), 21.11.2022
[GR]



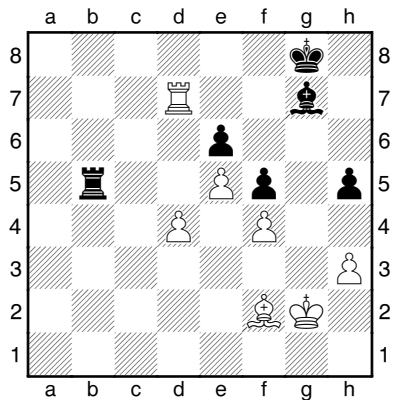
With the dust that rose from the middle game settled, it is the perfect time to provide a general summary of the ensuing position. From White's point of view he has plenty of reason to be optimistic, with a clear extra pawn and same color bishops. The torture will no doubt continue for as long as he wishes. Unfortunately, I was obliged to take the black pieces. I knew I was in for a long, miserable defense, but also recognized a few key characteristics that could make it difficult for White to eke out a win. The remaining pawns are all on the same side of the board, which greatly benefits the defender in most cases. My last move (...h5) also makes it much more difficult for White to advance on the kingside without leading to further exchanges, which should, once again, favor the defender. I concluded that, though White certainly has a permanent advantage, with stubborn defense I would be able to create difficult problems for him to solve, and a successful conversion was far from guaranteed. Now it is possible to conclude that Liam had an objectively winning position, but even so, I was going to make him fight hard for the full point. **24. ♖b1 ♜ec8!** The tactical point that my position was hinging on, since if White had managed to install both "pigs" on the 7th rank the game would have been as good as done. **25. g3** 25. ♖bb7?? ♜c1+ would be a tragic finish. **25... ♜8c7** **26. ♖b8+ ♣h7** **27. ♖bb7** My two rooks could be pesky had White tried to turn down this trade, and the method used also allows him to gain a tempo, for what it's worth. **27... ♜x b7** **28. ♜x b7 ♣g8** **29. ♣g2 ♜c3**



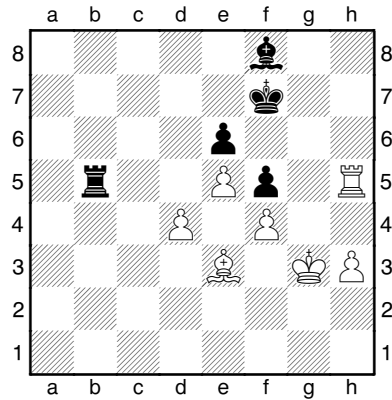
From now on, in essence, every move from Black is of equivalent value until he has potential threats to counter, and it is up to White to find a way to break through. 30.♖d7 ♖b3 31.h3 No harm can come from making a small improvement. 31...♗a3 A natural waiting move. The computer sees 31...♗b5 as best, though it is clear to me that White would be able to break through anyway with 32.g4. The the engine's idea is 32...f6?, but a human can see that such a tenuous fortress will be unlikely to hold for long.



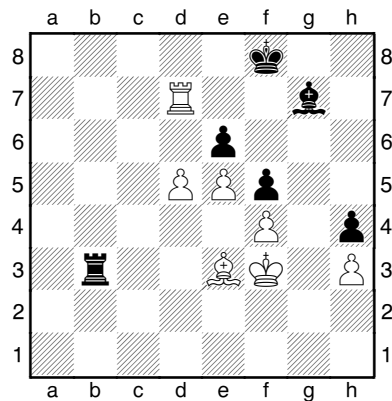
33.f4 f5 The best attempt to keep the position closed. (33...h×g4?! is no better, as the exchange only helps White open up the position further. 34.h×g4 f5 35.♗e7 ♗b6 36.d5! A concrete resource that speeds things up, though as we will see later White would also wind up on top with slow play. 36...♗b2+ 37.♗f3 e×d5 38.g5 ♗f8 39.♗d7+— After winning the d5 pawn back it will only be a matter of fairly simple technique.) 34.g×h5 g×h5 35.♗f2!



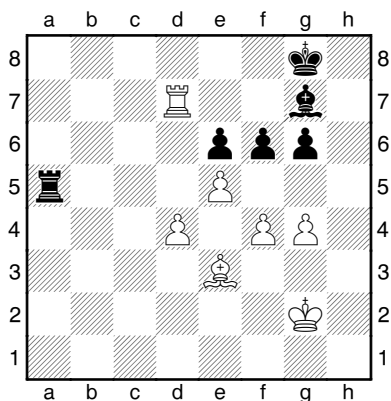
An important move, introducing the idea of ♗g3 h4 without allowing any pins on the third rank. 35...♗f8!? Otherwise the above plan would decide the outcome. As it is, Black prevents it for the moment, and thus other means of making progress must be found. (In contrasting with 36.♗g3 below, 35...♗a5? is ineffective thanks to 36.♗g3 ♗h6 37.♗h4 ♗×f4 38.♗×h5 ♗a3?! 39.♗g6!+— coming with a threat of mate!) 36.♗f3! Switching to the other side! (36.♗g3? would present White with serious difficulties in converting his edge to a win, since after 36...♗h6! 37.♗h4? fails to keep the pressure up. 37...♗×f4 38.♗×h5 ♗b3! 39.h4 ♗g3! =, and thanks to sudden counter play with the f pawn Black saves the day.; 36.♗g3 ♗h6 37.♗e3 would be a better try, reverting to the above plan, but Black can try to throw up a more water-resistant fortress with 37...♗e8! 38.♗h7 ♗f8 39.♗×h5 ♗f7±, when White has no immediate breakthrough, and it is unclear to me if he will be able to win, despite the two extra pawns.



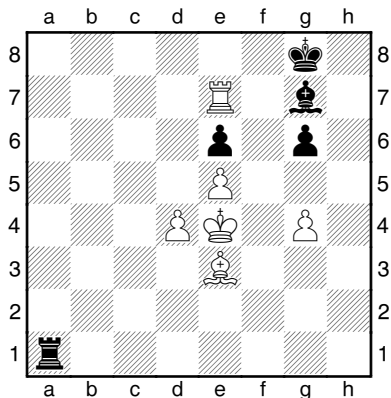
A remarkable position! One key point is that 40.♗f3 ♗b3 41.h4? ♗a3! comes with a much more significant effect than after 36...♗h6 below. 42.♗e2 ♗a2+ 43.♗d3 ♗a3+ 44.♗d2 ♗b4+! 45.♗e2 ♗a2+ 46.♗d3 ♗a3+ 47.♗c4 and, with the rook keeping sufficient distance, there is time for 47...♗e1! =. This version of the endgame certainly deserves more attention, but suffice it to say that this sort of line gives you an idea of the problems White has in conversion.) 36...♗b3+ allowing the decisive break, but there was nothing else. (36...♗h6 37.♗h7 ♗g7 38.♗×h5 ♗f7 isn't working as well as before, since White's pieces are much better positioned for the work to come. 39.h4 ♗f8 40.♗e3 ♗b3 41.♗e2+— The king enters the battle, which will soon decide the outcome.) 37.♗e3 h4! Once again, it is hard to make a better suggestion. (37...♗b5 38.h4! would fix White's weakness on h5, after which the breakthrough is only a matter of time. 38...♗a5 39.♗e2 ♗b5 40.♗d3+—) 38.d5!



Just in the nick of time! 38...exd5 39.♞xd5 ♖f7 40.♞d7+ ♖g6 41.♞d6+ ♖h7 42.♞e2+- White will eventually shepherd his passed e-pawn to victory, though I submit that the process won't be automatic. Still, I see no reason that Black should be able to survive its march. **32.♞g5! Unnecessary.** 32.g4! was already very strong. 32...hxg4 33.hxg4 ♞d3 34.♞g5+- See the main line of 36.g4. In essence we have reached the same type of position, where White convincingly demonstrated dominance. **32...♞d3** Continuing to wait, but in doing so I missed a second chance to return to the previous idea in a somewhat superior form. 32...♞a4!? would more or less force White to return the bishop with 33.♞e3 (I see no other plan that makes any headway), after which 33...♞a5 seems to be a much better version of 31.. ♞b5 above. With the rook better placed on the a-file, Black is able to pose many more challenges after the natural 34.g4—how else does White make progress? —34...f6 35.f4 hxg4 36.hxg4. The first player should still be able to convert such a huge advantage, but this time the margin is less comfortable. Several different plans can be considered.

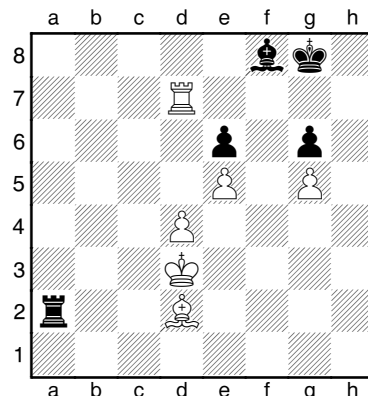


First of all, the straightforward 36...f5!?. Without a direct win, White will have to achieve the key central break, after which the passivity of Black's position will soon tell. 37.g5 ♞f8! Activating the bishop gives Black more hope than waiting passively. Even so, after 38.♞f3 ♞a3 39.♞e2 ♖f8 40.♞d3+- Black is helpless to stop White from achieving the d5 break in the long (or short) run; 32...♞a4 33.♞e3 ♞a5 34.g4 f6 35.f4 hxg4 36.hxg4 Next up is the natural 36...fxe5, reducing the pawn count by one. Despite this fact, the position becomes a bit too open and White has plenty of space in which to bring his king into the battle. 37.fxe5 ♞a4 38.♞f3 ♞a3 39.♞e4 ♞a1 40.♞e7!

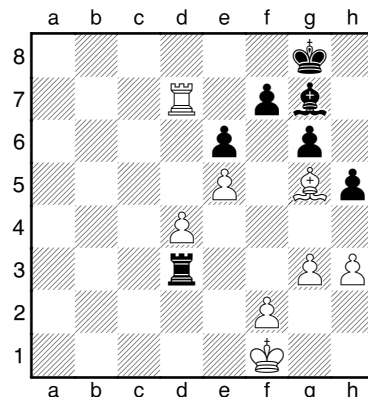


Very clinical. By attacking Black's main weakness, White stops any activity the rook may have been considering on a1. 40...♞a6 41.♞g5+- The position will soon open up further, with the bishop landing on f6. Black will not survive; 32...♞a4 33.♞e3 ♞a5 34.g4 f6

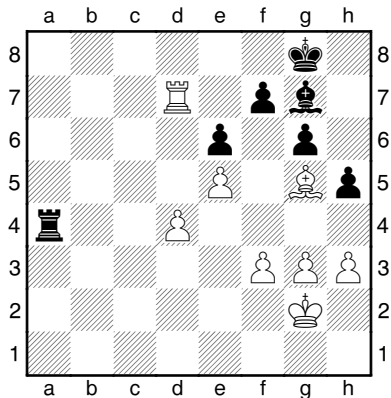
35.f4 hxg4 36.hxg4 Finally, having dispensed with the previous two structural changes, the question becomes—how does White make progress if Black stands still? 36...♞f8 is one such continuation, but it may be a bit premature. 37.♞f3 ♞a3 38.g5! fxg5 39.fxg5 ♖g8 40.♞e4 ♞f8 41.♞d2 ♞a2 42.♞d3+-



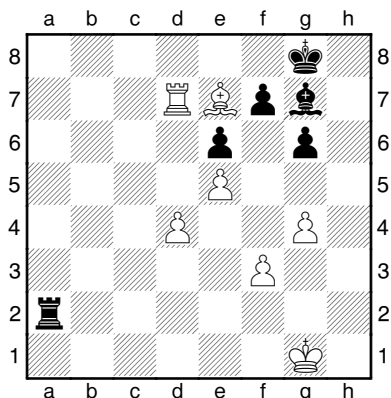
Black has been entirely deprived of counter play and will be faced either with a decisive d5 break or the invasion of White's king.; 32...♞a4 33.♞e3 ♞a5 34.g4 f6 35.f4 hxg4 36.hxg4 As a last ditch effort, Black can also try waiting with the rook. 36...♞a3!? 37.♞f2! This time the king needs to stay out of any third rank pins. With d5 a decisive threat, Black has no alternative other than to return with the rook. 37...♞a5 38.♞f3+- Black will soon be forced to return to one of the previously examined structures. The outcome is clear. Having worked our way through these winding paths, I am more or less happy with the method of defense I chose in the game. **33.♞f1!?** A small step that can't do any harm in the worst case, but there was a simpler way forward.



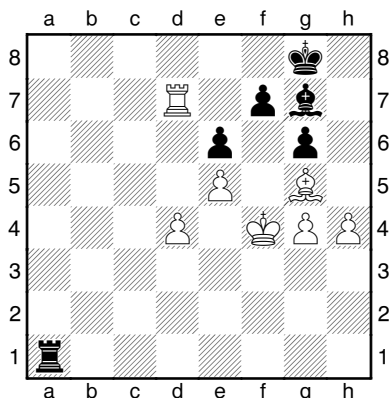
33.g4! would soon lead us back to 36.g4 below. **33...♞d1+?** Liam proved quite nicely that my rook tour did absolutely nothing, and in fact helped White improve his position. 33...♞xe5?? 34.♞d8+- was an important point.; 33...♞a3!? would have been more cautious—Black should keep waiting, after which White would need to find a plan. 34.♞g2 Should the king exit via e2 he will be hit with a barrage of checks. 34...♞a4! An important point—White is prevented from playing g4 for the time being. I would like to extend an invitation for you, the reader, to delve into this position in greater depth. My efforts have been in vain, as far as finding a clear winning plan for White. 35.f3! A very good try.



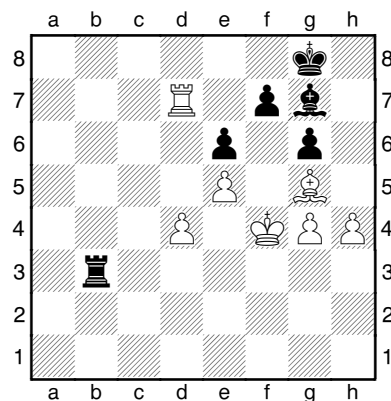
(35.g4?? h×g4 36.h×g4 ♖×e5!= is Black's main point.; 35.♔f3 would lead to play similar to 35.f3 below. 35...♞a3+ 36.♔f4 ♞a2 37.f3 ♞h2 38.h4 ♞a2 39.g4 h×g4 40.f×g4 ♞a1 with a direct transposition; 35.♙e3! is surprisingly best, admitting the mistake and returning to the correct plan of achieving g3–g4 directly. It takes a strong minded individual to make such a concession, though!) 35...♞a2+ 36.♔g1 ♞a1+ Black should keep checking and force the king to come out. This way the second player is able to force a more favorable structure. (36...♞e2?! It is also important to consider the consequences of Black keeping the White king cut off. It seems to be less challenging, surprisingly enough! 37.g4 h×g4 38.h×g4 ♞a2 39.♙e7!



An important nuance! White threatens to check on d8, play g5 and ♙f6, achieving similar dominance to the main line. 39...♞a8 Sadly, forced. 40.♔g2 ♞c8 41.♔g3 ♞a8 42.♔f4 ♞c8 43.♙f6+ Black has been subjected to utter passivity, and an eventual f4–f5 will decide the issue.) 37.♔f2 ♞a2+ 38.♔e3 ♞h2! Another important nuance, as this time Black successfully forces the h–pawn to move ahead. 39.h4 ♞a2 40.g4 h×g4 41.f×g4 ♞a3+ 42.♔f4 ♞a1

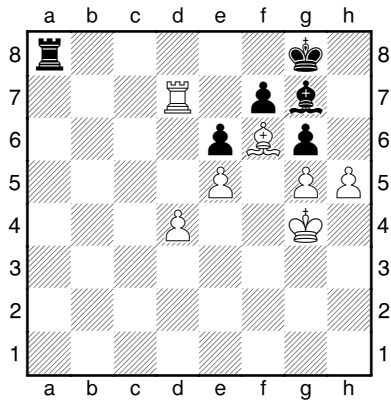


We have reached a nearly identical endgame to 35.h4 below, on which I have not been able to reach a clear verdict. The job is yours to carry out! 34.♔e2 ♞h1 35.♔f3! Nicely executed. 35.h4?! could also be played, though I felt White would lose some flexibility. As will soon be seen, White could follow a plan given later on in the main game, but with less clear consequences. Practically I see my opponent's choice in the game as by far the best–by retaining flexibility White can decide for himself whether to change the pawn structure with h4 or g4 at once. Later on, we will see that only the latter leads to a clear win for White, thus justifying his choice further. 35...♞a1 36.f3 ♞a3 37.♔f2 ♞b3 38.g4 h×g4 39.f×g4 ♞b2+ 40.♔e3 ♞b3+ 41.♔f4

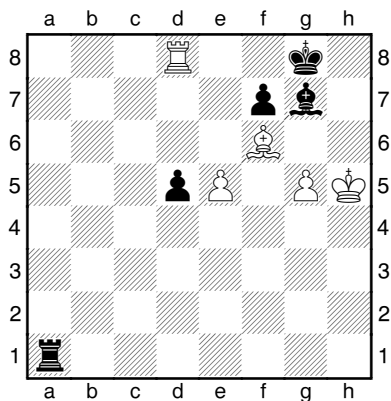


41...♞b2? I make this the main line because I am enchanted by the stunning variations that follow, and since it shows quite clearly the difference between the two squares. (41...♞b1! is an important nuance that allows Black to put up a great deal of resistance still, and probably what I would have played. I haven't been able to find any way for White to make progress, despite Stockfish telling me the position is "+3.66." A computer tip–in endgames, at least, if the engine's evaluation is exactly the same in three or four different lines, regardless of how high, it's a strong signal that the position could be unbreakable. A good exercise for the reader would be to try and find a winning plan for White, an aim in which I have been unable to succeed. Far from a simple task, particularly considering Stockfish 15, my engine of choice, is quite useless in such positions. I'm not sure about others, but I suspect the situation is much the same. Feel free to contact me if you feel you have managed to solve this problem, I am very interested!) 42.♙f6 Finally, after a bit of maneuvering, White's advantage is clear. With the pawn structure as it is, the simplest path to victory is playing on the kingside–g5, ♔g4, h5, etc. 42...♞b8 (42...♞f2+, the move that would have saved Black after 41...♞b1 above isn't as effective here. 43.♔e3 Now the rook is under attack, and White keeps his winning domination. 43...♞f1 44.g5 ♞b1 45.♔f4 ♞b8 46.♔g4+–, and we will soon be back to the main line.) 43.g5 ♞c8 44.♔g4 ♞a8 45.h5

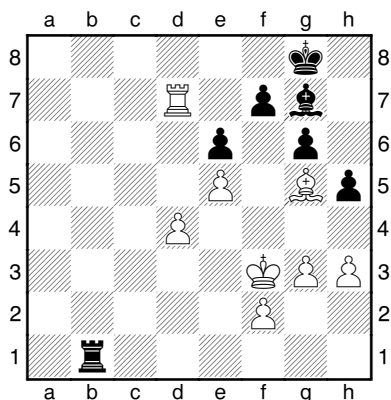
Endings of one rook and pawns are the most common sort of endings arising on the chess board. Yet though they do occur so often, few have mastered them thoroughly. They are often of a very difficult nature, and sometimes while apparently very simple they are in reality extremely intricate. ~ Jose Capablanca



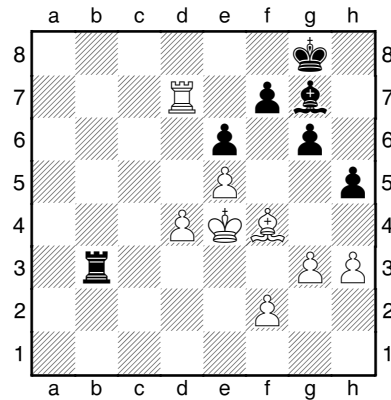
Black is defenseless. An example – 45...g×h5+ 46.♔×h5 ♖a1!? A last effort, but it falls short. 47.d5! e×d5 48.♖d8+! It was important to not fall for the incorrect move order.



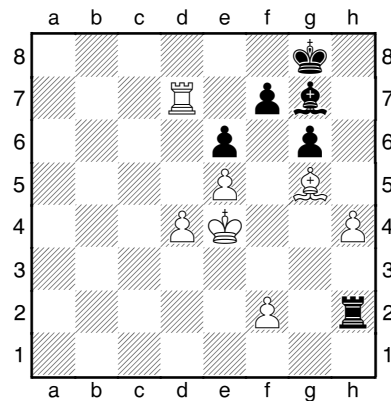
(48.e6?? ♕xf6! 49.exf7+ ♔f8=) 48...♔h7 49.e6 ♖h1+ 50.♔g4 f×e6 51.♖d7+– An analysis in the style of the old Soviet masters, who utilized adjournments to the fullest – though Black's improvement back on move 41 puts a tiny dent in that picture. White placed his pieces in precisely the right spots, and broke through at just the right time, but needless to say, it is far from simple to work out such a variation at the board! 35...♖b1 There was nothing better.



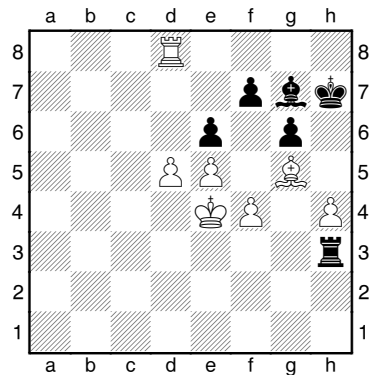
35...♖h3?? 36.♔g2+– It was time to advance with 36.g4!. I can understand his continued reluctance to exchange pawns, but with White having improved his position to the maximum there was no other way forward. 36.♕f4? was played in the game. A big step in the wrong direction, and more importantly giving me a chance to set a small trap of my own. 36...♖b3+ 37.♔e4? A serious technical mistake, allowing me to reduce the number of pawns. This should always favor the defending side.



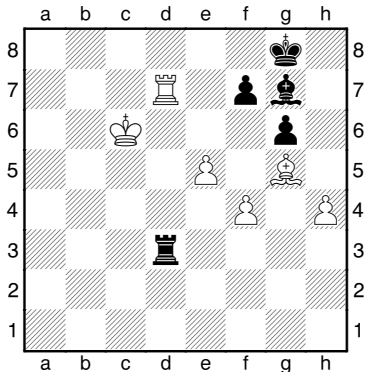
(37.♔g2 was needed, returning to the previous plan, though having lost some time. 37...♖b4 38.♕g5 ♖a4 This is the same position as after 33...♖a3 above.) 37...h4! The trick I was playing for all along! 38.g×h4 If not for White's unfortunate king position, he could attempt to play for the win. For instance, if the monarch was on g1 all would be in working order. (Keeping the kingside structure connected with 38.♕e3! was the first thought that came to my mind, but for concrete reasons Black is able to liquidate enough to draw. 38...h×g3 39.f×g3 f5+! 40.exf6 ♕xf6±. White will try, but I find further progress unlikely to be made.) 38...♖×h3 39.♕g5 ♖h2



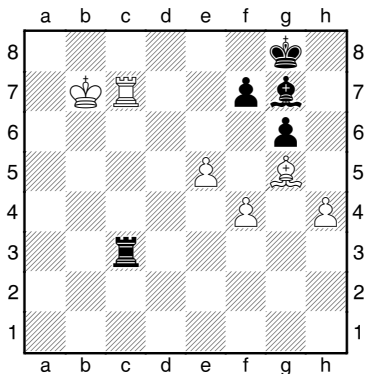
The situation has changed drastically over the past few moves. In allowing a pair of pawns to come off the board, it is becoming clear that White very well might not have enough material to win the game. That was my feeling at the board, at least. (There was a trick based off the h4 pawn's vulnerability combined with a fork after 39...♕h6!?, but it does very little. After 40.♕e7± the situation remains the same—White needs to make progress somehow but seems unable to do so without executing the d4–d5 break at some point.) 40.f4 ♖h3 41.♖d8+ ♔h7 42.♖d7 ♔g8 43.♖d8+ ♔h7 44.d5



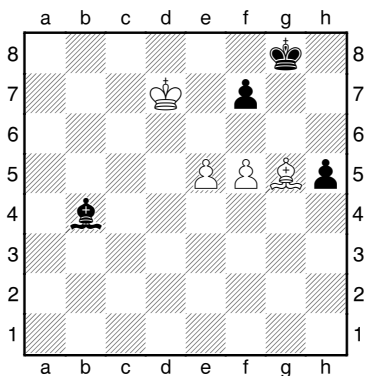
There wasn't anything else, and yet, another pair of pawns comes off... 44...exd5+ 45.♞xd5 ♞h1 46.♞d7 ♝g8 47.♞b7 ♞d1 48.♞e7 ♞e1+ 49.♝d5 ♞d1+ 50.♝c6 ♞d4 51.♞b7 ♞d3 52.♝c7 ♝h7 (The computer suggests the unnatural 52...f6! 53.exf6 ♞f8, which no human would ever play. At least optically, White's chances have clearly improved.) 53.♝b8 ♝g8 54.♝c7 He repeated quite often in this endgame to gain time and fortify himself for further winning attempts, but I am far from certain such maneuvers are worth undergoing. Indeed, he spent a good 30-seconds or so on each occasion, double checking with his scoresheet that a third repetition would not occur. 54...♝h7 55.♝c6 ♝g8 56.♞d7



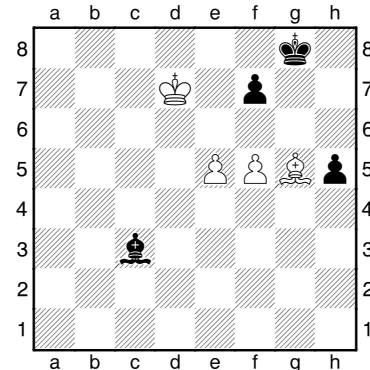
Finally making way for the king to enter on the kingside after a lengthy period of maneuvering. 56...♞c3+! The simplest. He has to give me a tempo to get my bishop out, after which the ensuing endgame should, in theory, be an easier draw. 57.♝d6 ♞f8+ 58.♝d5 ♞d3+ 59.♝c6 ♞c3+ (59...♞xd7 60.♝xd7 ♞c5 could have been played immediately. 61.h5 g×h5 62.f5 ♝h7!?, and Black is holding, as in the game.) 60.♝b7 ♞g7 61.♞c7



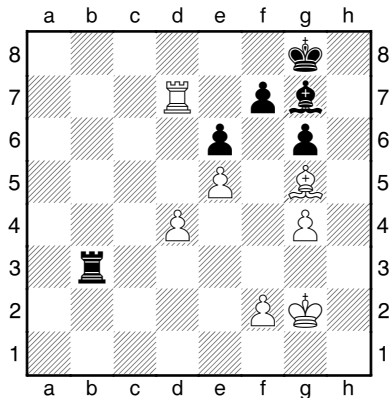
61...♞xc7+! A tough decision to make, but I came to the conclusion that the ensuing bishop endgame is drawn. 62.♝xc7 ♞f8 63.♝d7 ♞b4 64.h5 White has no way to make any use out of his extra pawn, if not for such a breakthrough. 64...g×h5 65.f5



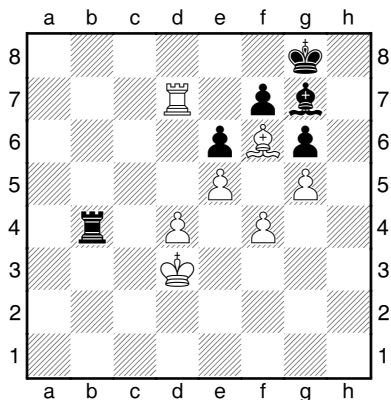
The critical moment of the game. I have defended quite well for forty moves straight, but finally lost my nerve... 65...♞c3?? Not like this...



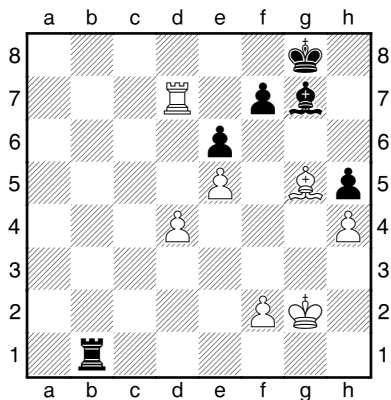
(It was imperative to remove the king from the back rank with 65...♝h7!, after which the pawn on h4 will soon be allowed to prove its worth. 66.e6 f×e6 67.f×e6 ♝g7! In a theoretical sense, the bishop endgame under examination is a win for White—without the h4 pawn, of course—unless Black's king can make it to d5. Thus, setting up shop passively would not do the trick. Here, however, Black is very lucky to still have the h-pawn, thus rendering White's only winning try harmless. 68.♞e7 ♞xe7 69.♝xe7 h4= Both sides queen in unison, and the game is drawn.) 66.♞f4?? What I was expecting, and now the position is indeed a draw. (The immediate breakthrough with 66.e6! would see White queen with check, since I made the mistake of leaving my king on the back rank. 66...f×e6 67.f×e6 ♞b4 68.♞e7! ♞c3 69.♞d6 ♞f6 70.♞c7! h4 71.♞d8+— White is just in time.) 66...h4 Finally, blessedly even, the game is a simple draw. Black's h-pawn is too far down the board for White to make any further attempts. 67.f6 (67.e6 f×e6 68.f×e6 ♞f6!?) 67...h3 68.♝e8 Threatening e5-e6, and forcing 68...♞b4!, the final only move. 69.♞g3 ♞a3 70.♞h2 ♞b4 71.♞f4 Gaining time, but eventually he had to come to terms with the fact that the position holds no further winning tries. 71...♞a3 72.♞g3 And we agreed on a draw. A close fight that I was very fortunate to hold. I needed to win both of my last two games to secure an IM Norm, which I succeeded in doing, despite overcoming some rocky moments in the process. Interestingly enough, though no IM Norms were recorded in either of the two other sections being played concurrently, my opponent in this game and Harshid Kunka also managed to reach the necessary 7/9 score in my group. Three norms scored at such an astronomically high score in one section is quite remarkable! In any event, it is time to come back to the main line and see how Liam could have brought the game to its worthy conclusion. 36...♞b3+ 37.♝g2 ♞b1!? White's task is certainly made more difficult now, compared to the relatively docile capture on g4 below. After 37...h×g4? 38.h×g4 White's plan is gradual, and very difficult to stop – f2-f3, ♝g3-f4 and, at just the right moment, ♞f6, with domination.



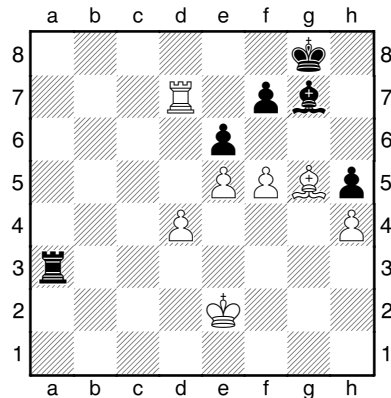
38...♖b4 39.f3 ♖b3 40.♔g3 ♖d3 41.♕f4 ♖b3 42.♘f6 Black is utterly paralyzed, and the win is close at hand. 42...♖b2 43.g5! Not a simple change of structure to decide upon, but it's necessary. 43...♖b4 With an additional defender of the bishop, White was threatening d4–d5. (43...♖b3? 44.d5 exd5 45.♗d8+ ♕h7 46.e6+– The same trick as before.) 44.♕e4 ♖a4 (Allowing d5 immediately with 44...♖b8 was no better. 45.d5 exd5+ 46.♕d5+– White's king penetrates with decisive effect.) 45.f4 ♖b4 46.♕d3+–



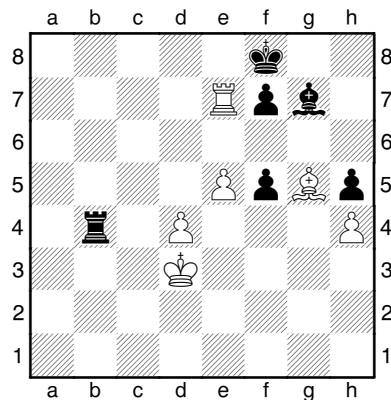
White will crash through with d5 and win shortly. While there are other options, clarifying the structure at once with 38.g×h5 seems like the simplest to me. 38...g×h5 39.h4! An important little detail.



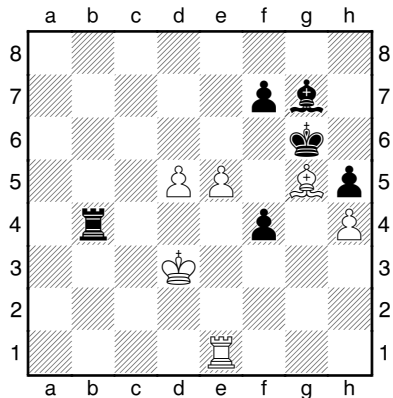
39.f4? would be a grave move order mistake, quite possibly depriving White of a well—deserved victory. 39...♖b2+ 40.♔g3 ♖b3+ 41.♕h4 Far from a natural or comfortable move to make, but the only way to continue the game. 41...♖f3± White has complicated his task needlessly, and appears unable to make progress from here. 39...♖b3 40.f4 ♖a3 Black has nothing better than to wait. White can now prevail through straightforward—though not necessarily simple!—means. 41.♕f2 ♖b3 42.♕e2 ♖a3 43.f5!



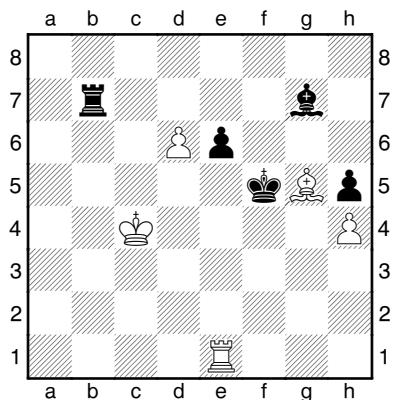
A key breakthrough, and showing one of the nice aspects of having an extra pawn—there is always the luxury to give it back when it most suits you. 43...exf5 44.♖e7! Giving the e5—pawn a helping hand and preparing to satisfy the newly created passer's lust for expansion. 44...♖a4 44...♖b3 Continuing to wait would allow the passer on d5 to become a decisive factor. 45.d5 ♖b5 46.d6 ♗xe5 47.d7+– 45.♕e3! Wasting a move is the simplest path to White's goal. 45.♕d3 ♖a6 The main difference between these two moves is that here 46.♖e8+? isn't working well anymore, though White can most likely still win by bringing his king up instead. (46.♕c4+– should be enough, though White's task has been complicated needlessly.) 46...♕h7 47.d5?! f6! 48.exf6 ♗xf6 49.♖e6 ♖a3+ The rook has too much distance from White's king, allowing for the liquidation into a trivially drawn endgame. 50.♕c4 ♗xg5 51.h×g5 f4= 45...♖b4 Otherwise White achieves either a well—timed d5 break or simply ♕f4, picking off the f5 pawn. 46.♕d3! ♕f8!?! Otherwise White is in time to play d5.



46...♖b6 It is especially instructive to pause and take a moment to contrast this position with the one arising after 45.♕d3 above. 47.♖e8+ ♕h7 48.d5 f6 49.exf6 ♗xf6 50.♖e6 ♖b3+ 51.♕c4+– Black's rook is undefended, making the win simple. 47.♖a7! The beginning of an ingenious plan. 47.d5? ♖e4! = 47...♕g8 48.♖a1! White will stick his rook on e1 next, temporarily confining it to a purely defensive role, but soon thereafter finally achieving the d5 break, with decisive effect. 48...♕h7 48...♖b6 49.♖f1! Showing the other idea of White's operation, and why the text was necessary. 49...f6 50.exf6 ♗xf6 51.♖xf5+– 49.♖e1 ♕g6 50.d5 f4!?



Introducing the possibility of activating his king is the only way for Black to keep slim chances of salvation alive. **51.d6** **52.Qxf4!** Certainly a committal move that should only be played if White has calculated the ensuing complications very precisely—but if he has, it leads to a clear win. **52...Qf5** **53.Qc4** **53...Bb8** the only alternative, as something has to be done about the quick moving passer. **54.Qd5!** Never underestimate the power of pawns! Giving a piece to ensure they remain safe is the easiest way to ensure eventual victory. **54...Qxf4** **55.Bf1+** **Qg4**, otherwise the capture on f7 is decisive. **56.Bg1+-**; **53...Bb8** **54.Qd5** It is worth noting that Black loses after **54...Bb5+** in similar fashion to the main line. **55.Qc6** **Bb3** **56.e6!** **fxe6** **57.Qg5+-** The pawn can't be stopped. **54.e6!** **fxc6** **55.Qg5**

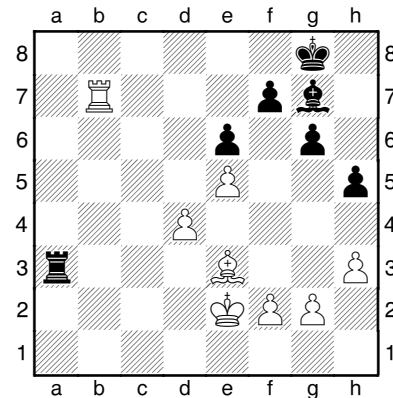


Black has to give up his bishop to halt the inexorable advance of the d6 pawn, thus deciding the game in White's favor. **55...Bd7** **56.Qc5** **Qe5** **57.Bd1+-** White's rook pawn is, quite importantly, the right color for the remaining bishop, deciding the game in the first player's favor.

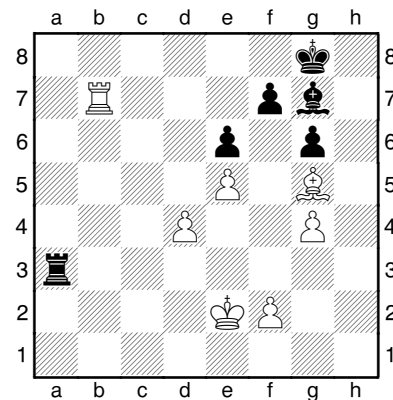
1/2-1/2

For historical significance, I am obliged to include the only other encounter I have managed to find that reached the exact same endgame—interestingly, another Grunfeld. On this occasion, the player with the White pieces managed to follow the correct path for some time, before eventually faltering and conceding a draw. There can be little to no doubt that the position is a hard one to handle correctly in practice.

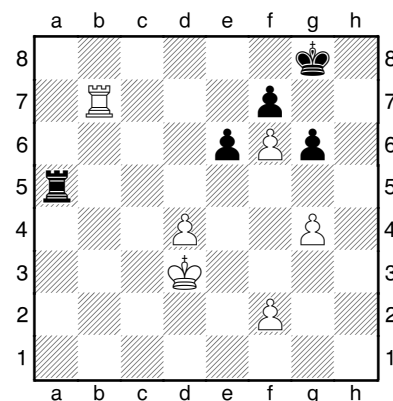
Plischki, Sebastian (2418) — Petrova, Kristyna (2172)
[D85] Marianske Lazne IM—B, Marianske Lazne (1),
 17.01.2009
 [GR]



35.g4 Plischki, an experienced German IM, has properly determined the right plan, though his king is a bit misplaced, giving Black increased drawing chances. **35...hxg4** **36.hxg4** **Bc3!** Practically, I feel it must be correct to stay on the third rank, not allowing the White king to make its way to the kingside so easily. **36...Ba2+!** **37.Qf3** **Ba3** **38.Bb8+** **Qh7** **39.Qe4+-** is a good example of what I mean – White's king is playing a major role in the game, leading to a fairly simple victory for the first player. **37.Qg5** A good start. **37.Qf3??** **Qh6±** is most probably a drawn rook ending. **37...Ba3**



The first critical moment of the game. **38.Qf6!** I have to condemn the transition to a rook ending regardless of whether or not it truly puts eventual victory in danger. There is no reason to take bishops off the board unless the moment is exactly right, since Black is entirely unable to generate any form of counter play with his minor piece. **38.f3** **Ba5** **39.Qf2+-** will soon return to the plan seen in my game. **38...Qxf6** **39.exf6** **Ba5** **40.Qd3!** Absolutely necessary to keep the win in hand.



Continued on page 33

velt1858), photographs of him and several other Presidents, are perhaps a bit superfluous. (My work with the Byrnes may skew my perspective, as I had over 2000 photographs to limit to about 30.) Roosevelt's inclusion is because he and Fox wore the same style glasses.

Hilbert has a tendency to "play" in his footnotes, rather than taking the view that footnotes should not contain material that should not be in the text. He is no different in this work as in his McFarland books. The footnotes are usually quite interesting and sometimes quite long, most of a page or spanning onto 2 pages. While I found the book even more enjoyable with the addition of footnotes, one could skip them and still have a firm grasp of the subject, though perhaps less of an understanding of Fox's chess associates.

My problems with the book are, literally, with the book. It is fair to say I am a bit rough around the edges and, perhaps, not as gentle as I should be on things. That said, I find that books from Moravian Chess to be weak especially in the binding and this one is no different. I have read through the book just once and gone back through a few places for this review and already have numerous cracks in the binding and though the pages have not yet come out, they could with the slightest provocation.

As is usual with one of Hilbert's books, this one can be wholeheartedly recommended as he is able to not only give the reader an understanding of Fox and his interactions with the chess greats, Lasker, Marshall, etc. and lesser known but important players such as Helms and Turover. In the end, the book is not just about Fox, but the players he knew and the world in which he lived.

QR code to Albert W. Fox, Moravian Chess Publishing

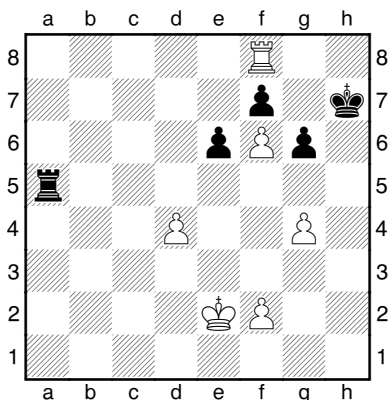


If you are weak in the endgame, you must spend more time analyzing studies; in your training games you must aim at transposing to endgames, which will help you to acquire the requisite experience. ~ **Mikhail Botvinnik**

In a rook and pawn ending, the rook must be used aggressively. It must either attack enemy pawns, or give active support to the advance of one of its own pawns to the queening square. ~ **Siegbert Tarrasch**

Continued from page 31

40.♖b8?? was played in the game, missing a devilish trick by Black that should hold the draw without further discussion. 40...♗h7 41.♖f8



41...g5! 42.♖xf7+ ♗g6 43.♖f8 White evidently thought that he was keeping an extra pawn. Petrova went a bit wrong and soon thereafter made a losing blunder, but could have cut the game short at this moment with 43...e5! 44.♗e3!? exd4+ 45.♗xd4 ♖a4+ 46.♗e5

♖a5+=. The king is unable to escape the checks without allowing Black to pick up the f—pawn. And now, back to the natural move made in the main line that proves to be the only way to keep the game going. 40...♖d5 Black can only wait and hope that White is unable to break through. 40...e5? looks promising at first, but fails tactically. 41.♖b8+ ♗h7 42.♖f8 g5 43.dxe5 ♖xe5 44.♖xf7+ ♗g6 45.♖e7 ♖d5+!? (45...♖a5 46.f7+[]) 46.♗e4! ♖d6 47.f7 ♖f6 48.♗e3+- 41.♗e4 ♖a5 42.f4 ♖d5 43.♖b8+ ♗h7 44.♖f8 ♖d7 45.♗d3+- It won't be long until Black is forced into a fatal zugzwang. ½-½

I gained a great deal of satisfaction and clarity from delving a bit more deeply into the nearly uncharted territory my opponent and I had navigated. There are indeed some questions that remain unanswered, and I look forward to hearing from the reader—thoughts, comments, suggestions, corrections, etc. are much appreciated. Absolute truth is an endless search, especially considering that the chess engine—despite being a great helper that allowed me to dig into this endgame at a depth that could have taken years unaided—can occasionally have a hard time evaluating properly the type of position under consideration. Nevertheless, I hope this examination has proved instructive, and helped the reader better appreciate an outwardly unassuming endgame that hides great beauty under the surface.