



Secrets of Pawn Endings: Bishop and Rook Pawns against Rook Pawn

# Four Key Positions To Learn And Remember

A few weeks ago at the Norway Chess tournament, Alireza Firouzja stumbled into a well-known pawn ending where his opponent, Magnus Carlsen, won by triangulation. I am sure that Alireza knew the ending: it must have been some hallucination or maybe even a *fingerfehler*.

When I looked in the literature, I did find examples of strong players making mistakes in such positions. Then I looked at some less “basic” positions with the same material: f- and h-pawns vs. h-pawn. It turned out that quite a few masters and grandmasters either didn’t know the positions or couldn’t figure out how to reach the required position with the right side to move. As you got into non-theoretical positions where you had to calculate ahead to a theoretical one, the error rate started approaching 100%!

Well, pawn endings are hard. But you can master them! I want to show you how.

In this article, I focus on the “King + Bishop Pawn + Rook Pawn vs. King + Rook Pawn” ending. It has some unique qualities. Anywhere else on the board, a two vs. one configuration like this would usually be an easy win, because you can use your extra pawn as a decoy, capture the opponent’s pawn, and queen your remaining pawn because your king will be ahead of it. But here, it’s a rook pawn, so that plan is unlikely to work.

I have identified four positions that I think serious students of chess should learn. If you learn them, then the next step is to “factor down” more complicated situations into one of the four key ones. I will refer to the key positions as Key Position 1, 2, 3, and 4 and go in order of increasing complexity. I will also give these key positions descriptive names.

Even the most simple endings can hide a lot of secrets. By continuously and systematically accumulating your knowledge of basic examples, you will be able to identify the patterns and apply them correctly.



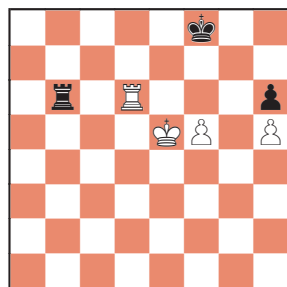
Born in St. Petersburg, Russia, in 1968, Alex Fishbein relocated to the United States in 1979. Mentored by Vladimir Zak, who previously coached Boris Spassky and Viktor Korchnoi, Fishbein swiftly built a strong chess foundation. By 14, he was a master, and he climbed the ranks to become an IM in 1988 and a GM in 1992 after an international victory in Norway. In 1985, Fishbein championed the first Denker Tournament of High School Champions, setting off a string of achievements at home and abroad. Even while pursuing a career in finance, he remained an active competitor into the 2000s, appearing in four U.S. Championships.

## Key Position #1 – Triangulation

We begin with *Triangulation*.

Magnus Carlsen	2830
Alireza Firouzja	2737

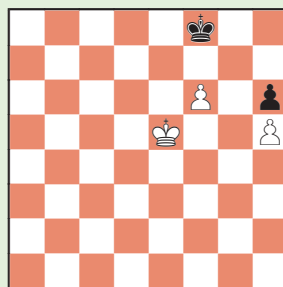
Norway Chess, Stavanger 2024



77... $\text{Bxd6??}$  Having to defend an unpleasant three vs. two ending, Alireza allowed his opponent more chances than he needed to. Here, he must enter the notoriously complicated ending with the rook versus the rook and f- and h-pawns. It is still a draw with precise defense: 77... $\text{Bb1}$  78. $\text{Bxh6}$  (78. $\text{f6}$   $\text{g8}$  79. $\text{g6}$   $\text{g1+}$  80. $\text{fxh6}$   $\text{f7!}$ ) 78... $\text{g7!}$  79. $\text{Bg6+}$   $\text{f7!}$  An

analysis of this ending is beyond our scope here (if my readers insist, I might cover it in a future article). It would be excusable to lose this drawn position. But Black had to enter it, by the process of elimination.

78. $\text{fxd6}$   $\text{f7}$  79. $\text{e5}$   $\text{e7}$  80. $\text{f6+}$   $\text{f8}$

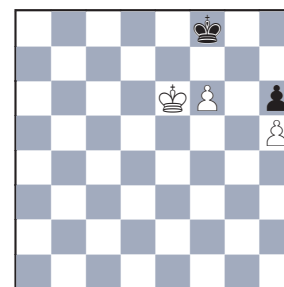


Here is **Key Position #1**, the *Triangulation* position.

Direct attempts by White don’t work: if 1. $\text{e6}$  then 1... $\text{e8}$  and no progress can be made. If 1. $\text{f5}$  then 1... $\text{f7}$ . But we quickly see that f7 is a mined square for the black king. If the black monarch ever steps there when the white king can go to f5 next, the

game is over as the white king goes to g6 and wins the h-pawn. The solution is to make a triangle with the king, always eyeing, but not stepping on, the f5 square. The white king can do that, but its counterpart cannot make such a triangle, because the f6 pawn takes away the squares the king would need. 81. $\text{f4}$   $\text{e8}$  82. $\text{e4}$  Black resigned here.

If 82... $\text{f8}$  83. $\text{e5!}$  reaches Key Position #1, except now with Black to move. Going to f7 loses the h-pawn after  $\text{e5-f5}$ , and if 83... $\text{e8}$  84. $\text{e6}$   $\text{f8}$



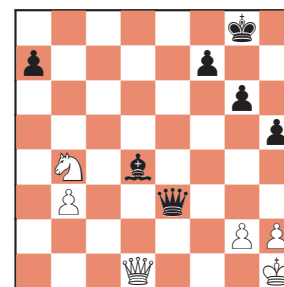
85.f7  $\text{g7}$  86. $\text{e7}$  wins. Just don’t make a queen immediately after 86... $\text{h7}$ , but play 87. $\text{f6}$  first.

These theoretical positions are like beacons that guide you across the stormy endgame seas. Once we learn **Key Position #1**, we see that any position with pawns on h5 and h6, and an f-pawn anywhere, such as on f4 or f5 (as long as one of our pawns is not getting captured) will be winning. This will help us make the right decisions in more complicated situations.

Lev Alburt

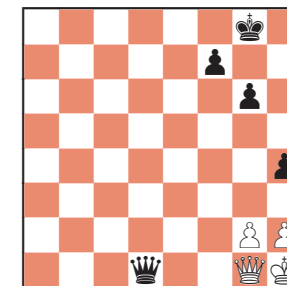
Garry Kasparov

Soviet Championship Semifinal, Daugavpils 1978

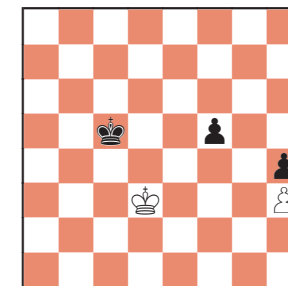
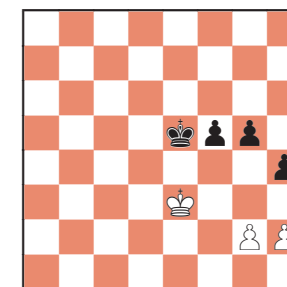


35... $\text{h4}$  The 15-year-old future world champion allows his opponent, an endgame specialist, to trade into a queen ending.

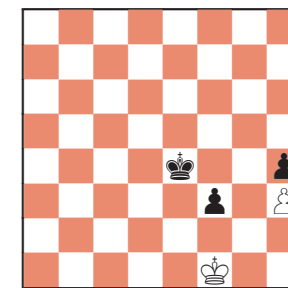
36. $\text{dxc2}$   $\text{xb3}$  37. $\text{Bxd4}$   $\text{Bb1+!}$  38. $\text{Bg1}$   $\text{xc2}$  39. $\text{Bxa7}$   $\text{d1+}$  40. $\text{Bg1}$



40... $\text{Bxg1+!}$  On move 40, Garry correctly liquidates into a winning pawn ending. The queen ending would have been drawn. 41. $\text{Bxg1}$   $\text{g7}$  42. $\text{f2}$   $\text{f6}$  43. $\text{e3}$   $\text{e5}$  44. $\text{f3}$  f5 45. $\text{e3}$  g5



and Black can steer toward the known triangulation: 50... $\text{d5}$  51. $\text{e3}$   $\text{e5}$  52. $\text{f3}$  f4 53. $\text{f2}$   $\text{e4}$  54. $\text{e2}$  f3+ 55. $\text{f1}$



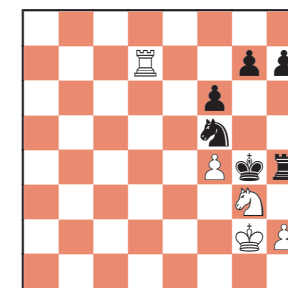
55... $\text{f5}$  56. $\text{g1}$   $\text{e5}$  White resigned

## Key Position #2 – Energy vs. Patience

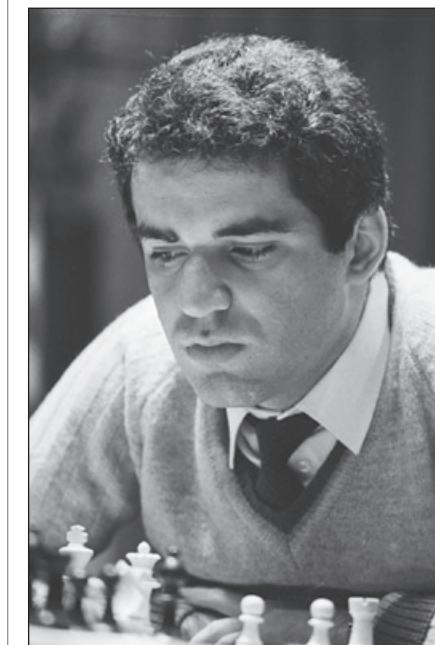
So if the weaker side’s rook pawn has already moved, that’s a problem. But what if the pawn is still on its original square? Well, if the opponent’s rook pawn also hasn’t moved, it’s bad news for the defender.

Gilberto Eduardo Hernandez	2554
Hikaru Nakamura	2686

Chicago Open 2008



51... $\text{xf4!}$  Hikaru Nakamura heads for what will be our second key position. In his *Liquidation* book, Joel Benjamin recounts how Hikaru had traded queens against him to reach the same position (with sides and colors reversed). 52. $\text{dxf5}$   $\text{xf5}$  53. $\text{Bxg7}$   $\text{g4+!}$  54. $\text{Bxg4}$   $\text{xf4}$  55. $\text{f2}$   $\text{f4}$  56. $\text{e2}$  f5 57. $\text{f2}$



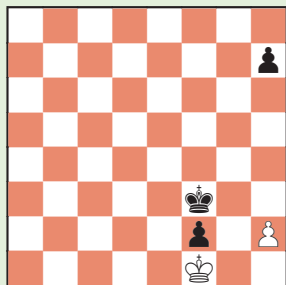
▲ Garry Kasparov

46.h3 Now White has the losing structure, but other tries also fail: 46.g3  $\text{hxg3}$  47. $\text{hxg3}$  g4 48. $\text{d3}$  f4 49. $\text{e2}$  f3+ 50. $\text{f2}$   $\text{e4}$  51. $\text{f1}$  f2 52. $\text{xf2}$   $\text{d3}$ ; or 46. $\text{f3}$  g4+ 47. $\text{e3}$  f4+ 48. $\text{e2}$  g3 49.h3  $\text{e4}$  50. $\text{f1}$   $\text{d3}$ .

46... $\text{d5}$  47. $\text{d3}$   $\text{c5}$  48. $\text{c3}$  If 48. $\text{e3}$ , then 48... $\text{c4}$ . 48...g4 49. $\text{d3}$   $\text{gxh3}$  50. $\text{gxh3}$



♔e4 58.♔e2 f4 59.♔f2 f3 60.♔f1 ♚e3 61.♔e1 f2+ 62.♔f1 ♔f3 White resigned here.



This is our **Key Position #2**, which I will call “Energy vs. Patience.”

I first learned it from Nimzovich’s *My System*. In one of my favorite metaphorical passages in the book, the author speaks of a pawn which, like a kid in school, can run forward with energy, or exercise patience in his pursuits. If he chooses energy with 63.h4, we reply calmly with 63...h6!, and after 64.h5 we can un-stalemate the white king and win. If, however, the kid asks to be forgiven for being overzealous and moves quietly with 63.h3, then we show that sometimes you have to be energetic: 63...h5 64.h4 ♔e3.

So the key is that the rook pawn had not moved and has the option to lose a tempo at the right moment. Nimzovich begins this ending with the bishop pawn on its fourth rank, and the king next to it. He notes that if the stronger side’s rook pawn had moved, and the weaker side’s had not, the position would have been drawn. He does not go into detail here. We will study this case now.

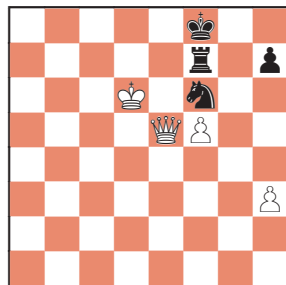
▼ Hikaru Nakamura



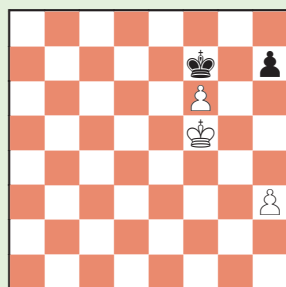
### Key Position #3 – The Same Color Square Retreat

Yuri Vovk	2561
Jozsef Horvath	2552

Vaujany Open 2010



Black is trying to hold the fortress, and indeed it’s hard to see how White can break through. With his next move, White tempts his opponent into a pawn ending. 72.♔e6 ♔e7+! Black correctly takes the bait! The pawn ending will be drawn. 73.♔xf6 ♔xe5 74.♔xe5 ♔f7 75.♔f4 ♔f6 76.♔g4 ♔f7 77.♔g5 ♔g7 78.f6+ ♔f7 79.♔f5

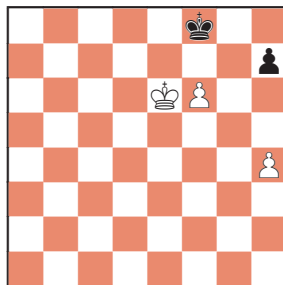


We have reached our **Key Position #3**, “The Same Color Square Retreat.”

Black needs to move the king back, but where? 79...♔f8?? Not here! This is a draw if the black king goes to the square of the same color as the opposing rook pawn. For example, 79...♔e8! 80.♔e6 ♔f8 81.f7 h6! 82.h4 h5 83.♔f6, stalemate.

If the white pawn were on h4 in the last diagram, then the king would need to go to f8. If on h5, then to e8 (g8 also works). This idea of tempo play might be hard to figure it in time trouble. You instinctively want to move the king straight back, as you would in just a ♔+♔ vs. ♔ ending. But here, there is no concept of opposition: it’s a matter of counting tempi. I found a few examples of players going the wrong way here. That’s why I consider this a key position you should know. Of course, if the white

pawn were on h2, then Black would lose, as White could always win the tempo game (as Nimzovich eloquently explained). 80.♔e6 ♔e8 81.h4! Not 81.f7+?? ♔f8 and Black has the reserve tempo. But now if 81...h5, then White would go back with ♔f5 and ♔g5, winning. 81...♔f8

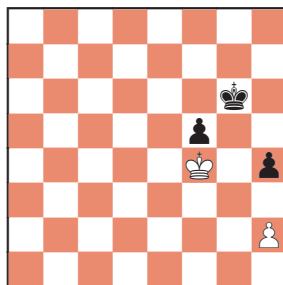


82.h5! ♔e8 83.f7+ ♔f8 84.♔f6 Black resigned because he must now move his pawn after which it will be lost.

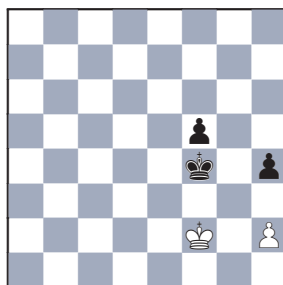
In our next example, American GM James Tarjan shows that he knows his pawn endings.

James Tarjan	2525
Bent Larsen	2620

Interzonal, Riga 1979

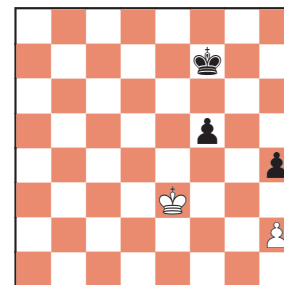


71.♔e3! The only move! White wants to prevent the black king from stepping in front of its pawn. That could only happen if the white king could not either oppose the black king or stand on f3. If the black king is on g5, the white king has no access to g3 and therefore must step on f3. Otherwise White loses: 71.♔f3 ♔g5 72.♔e3 ♔g4! 73.♔f2 (73.♔e2 ♔h3) 73...♔f4!

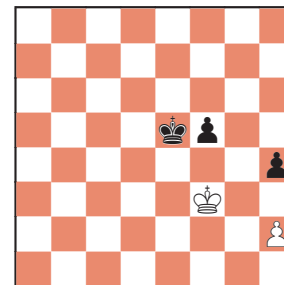


▲ James Tarjan

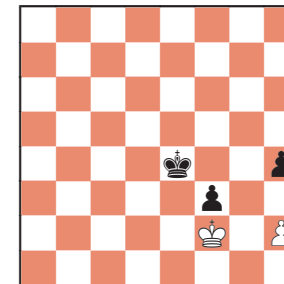
and now Black wins with a problem-like technique which, if you offer me your patience, I will show in our next example. 71...♔f7



The task for White remains the same: stop the black king from moving ahead of its pawn. 72.♔f3 ♔e6 73.♔f4 ♔f6 74.♔e3! ♔e5 75.♔f3



75...f4 Once this pawn has moved, the black king has no hope of advancing in front of it. White only needs to know **Key Position #3**: retreating to the *same-color square* as the black h-pawn. 76.♔e2 ♔e4 77.♔f2 f3



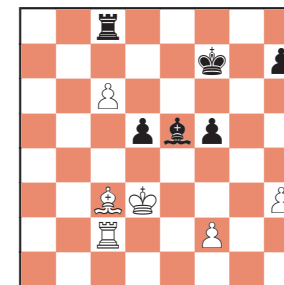
78.♔e1! ♔e3 79.♔f1 f2 79...h3 reaches a drawn position no matter whose move it is here: this will always be stalemate. 80.h3 ♔f3 **Draw**

### Key Position #4 – The Backward Decoy

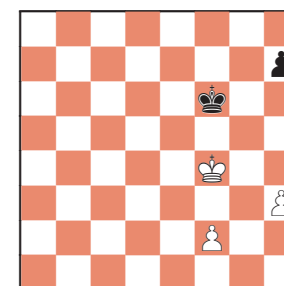
We will next come to our fourth and final key position, which I will call “The Backward Decoy.”

Boris Gulko	2615
Alexander Khalifman	2650

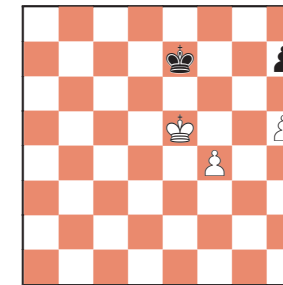
Yerevan 1996



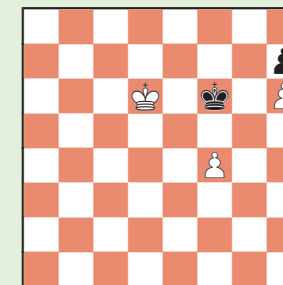
Boris Gulko moved his bishop to c3 on the previous move because he knew an important theoretical position that is often credited to the prolific Soviet author, Ilya Maizelis, who published his analysis of this ending in the 1950s. Alexander Khalifman could have held this position by moving his bishop away, but he jumps head first into the claws of the **Backward Decoy**. 33...♔xc3? 34.♔xc3 ♔e6 35.♔d4 ♔d6 36.c7! f4 37.♔c5 ♔xc7 38.♔xc7 ♔xc7 39.♔xd5 ♔d7 40.♔e4 ♔e6 41.♔xf4 ♔f6



The white rook pawn has moved, so Black was hoping this could be drawn. But the white king is ahead of its f-pawn. 42.h4 ♔e6 43.♔g5 ♔f7 44.♔f5 ♔e7 45.♔e5 ♔f7 The exact same position occurred in Indjic-Kamsky, Moscow 2017. There, White played f2-f4 and then f4-f5?, which draws as we know. 46.h5! ♔e7 47.f4



47...♔f7 We know that 47...h6 loses because of the triangulation we saw in **Key Position #1**: 48.f5 ♔f7 49.f6 ♔f8 50.♔f4 ♔e8 51.♔e4 ♔f8 52.♔e5. 48.♔d6! How does this work? 48...♔f6 49.h6!



Here is **Key Position #4 – The Backward Decoy**.

The white f-pawn is held back as far as

▼ Boris Gulko

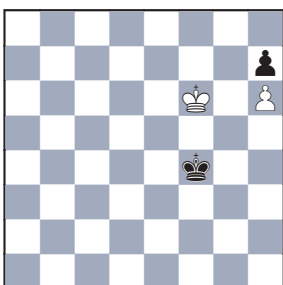




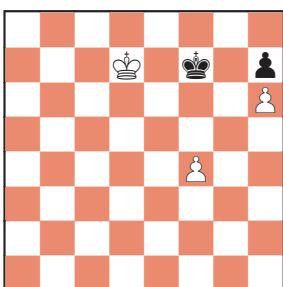


possible, two squares behind its brother in arms on h6. We now have a mutual zugzwang.

**49...♔f7** Remember how I said that you can't give away the outside passed pawn, the f-pawn, as a decoy, because you will be left with a rook pawn that cannot queen? Well, here is an exception: **49...♔f5 50.♔e7 ♔xf4 51.♔f6!** (Not **51.♔f7?? ♔e5 52.♔g7 ♔e6 53.♔xh7 ♔f7=**)



**51...♔e4 52.♔g7+-.**  
**50.♔d7!**

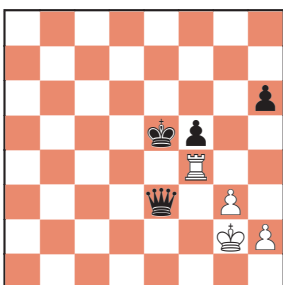


**Black resigned** in view of **50...♔f6 51.♔e8 ♔f5 52.♔f7 ♔xf4 53.♔g7.**

Like fellow American legend Jim Tarjan, Boris Gulko knows his pawn endings. While doing research for this article, I found a few examples. Here he shows that the extra f-pawn doesn't always win if the king is in front of it.

Boris Gulko	2559
Jesse Kraai	2509

US Championship, Tulsa 2008

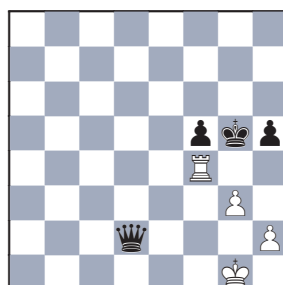


**58...♖xf4?** Black can break this fortress without immediately liquidating. For



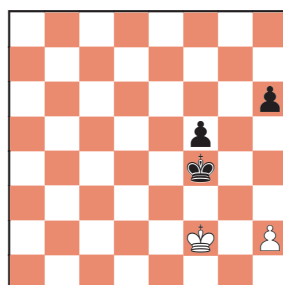
▲ Jesse Kraai

example: **58...h5 59.♖h4 ♖e2+ 60.♔g1 ♔f6 61.♖f4 ♔g5 62.♖h4 ♖d2** and now if **63.♔f1** then **63...f4**, but if **63.♖f4**

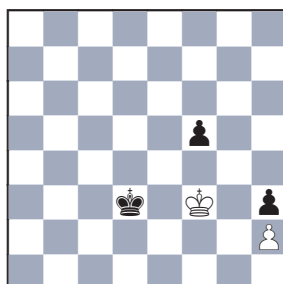


then – guess what? – now Black can take the rook and get the **Backward Decoy** position: **63...♖xf4 64.gxf4+ ♔xf4 65.♔f2** (White would have needed to play **♔e2** to draw) **65...h4 66.♔e2 ♔e4 67.♔f2 ♔d3 68.♔f3 h3!**

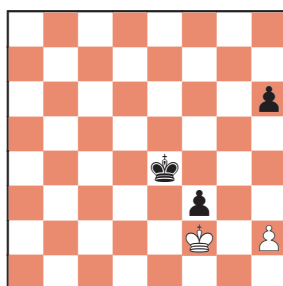
**59.gxf4+ ♔xf4 60.♔f2**



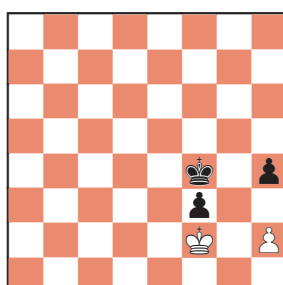
**60...♔e4** The idea in these endings is to reach **Key Position #4** (*Backward Decoy*) with the right side to move. We saw that it was a mutual zugzwang, so you want to reach that position with your opponent to move. This usually requires some calculation. Here, the black pawn is on the wrong square, and he cannot win: **60...h5 61.♔e2!** Black cannot outflank White on g3. **61...♔e4** (**61...♔g4 62.♔f2 ♔h3 63.♔g1 f4 64.♔h1** is also a draw.) **62.♔f2 h4** (**62...♔d3 63.♔f3** and Black would need to be able to play **...h3** here.) **63.♔e2 h3 64.♔f2 ♔d3 65.♔f3!**



...and the backward decoy does not win because it is Black to move. He will have to move his f-pawn too far ahead. Draw by zugzwang: **65...♔d2 66.♔f2! f4 67.♔f3** (**67.♔f1 ♔e3 68.♔e1 ♔f3 69.♔f1** also draws.) **67...♔e1 68.♔xf4 ♔f2 69.♔e4 ♔g2 70.♔e3=.**  
**61.♔e2 f4 62.♔f2 f3**



You know which square to go to. **63.♔e1! ♔f5 64.♔f1 ♔f4 65.♔e1 ♔e3 66.♔f1 ♔e4 67.♔e1 h5 68.♔f2 ♔f4 69.♔f1!** Now to the light square, as the pawn is on h5. **69...♔e4 70.♔f2 ♔f4 71.♔f1 ♔e3 72.♔e1 h4 73.♔f1 ♔e4 74.♔f2 ♔f4**

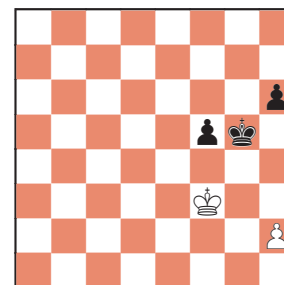


**75.♔e1!** And one last time!  
**75...♔e3 76.♔f1 f2 77.h3**

Draw

Rafael Vaganian	2570
Jaime Sunye Neto	2375

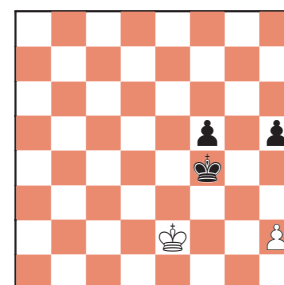
Interzonal, Rio de Janeiro 1979



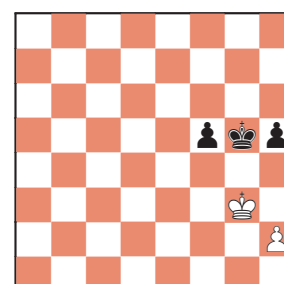
Where does the white king go? You're not going to figure this out if you don't know our **Key Position #4**. If you do know it, you have a chance!

I found six games in the database where this exact position occurred (usually with reversed sides or colors). Only one move saves the game for the defending side. In all six games the king went the wrong way! That includes this game, where White was a world-class grandmaster, and, I believe, the game had been adjourned a few moves prior.

**61.♔g3?** **61.♔e2!** draws. It aims for the position we just saw in Gulko – Kraai. **61...♔g4** (**61...♔f4 62.♔f2 ♔e4 63.♔e2 h5 64.♔f2** is the same thing.) **62.♔e3!** (**62.♔f2? ♔f4 63.♔e2 h5 64.♔f2 h4** transposes to the game.) **62...h5 63.♔f2 ♔f4** (**63...♔h3 64.♔g1 f4 65.♔h1 f3 66.♔g1=**) **64.♔e2!**

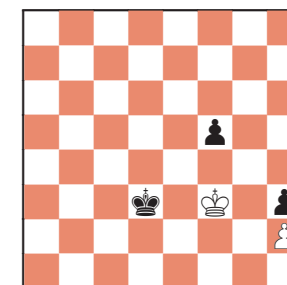


**61...h5!**



But now Black wins the tempo game. Pal Benko was Sunye Neto's second in this Interzonal. He knew this ending and, if I recall correctly from an article he wrote, he explained to Sunye Neto how to win in the event this position arose.

**62.♔f3 h4! 63.♔g2 ♔g4! 64.♔f2 ♔f4 65.♔e2 ♔e4 66.♔f2 ♔d3! 67.♔f3 h3!**



White resigned

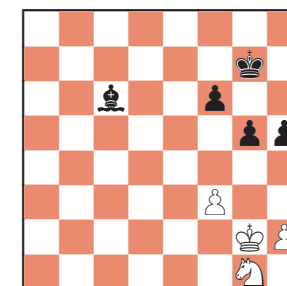
I have shown you four key theoretical positions in the “f+h vs. h” pawn ending: **Triangulation, Energy vs. Patience, Same Color Square, and Backward Decoy**. I haven't seen any book which lists them in the same section (including my own book on pawn endings). The fourth position is usually given somewhere near the end. Yet these are the four guideposts that will navigate you through all of the “f+h vs h” pawn endings.

### How to Apply What We Previously Learned

I did find a few rare cases that don't fit neatly into any of these categories. Here are two of them.

Andrei Sokolov	
Oleg Romanishin	2585

Chigorin Memorial, Sochi 1983



A 3 vs. 2 with minor pieces is a draw, but Black can convert this into a pawn ending. **60...g4! 61.♔g3 ♔xf3 62.♔xf3 gxf3 63.♔xf3**

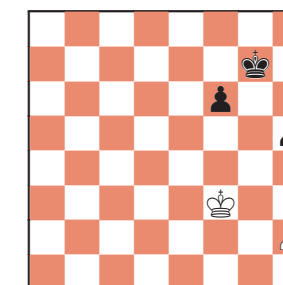


## Chess Academy Marija & Merab

Gagunashvili Chess Academy offers online chess lessons for children and adults. GM Merab and WIM Marija, founders of the Academy, would like to transfer their rich experience gained as players and trainers to all the chess lovers. Marija teaches children basics of chess in a fun and exciting way, while Merab helps them enrich, develop and apply their knowledge until they win their first titles.

You can contact us via email  
[academy@chessgagunashvili.com](mailto:academy@chessgagunashvili.com)

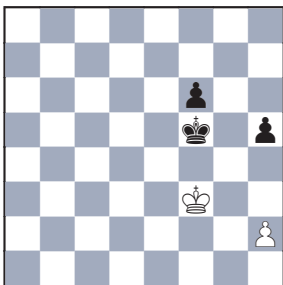
Viber or WhatsApp  
**+995 599 40 81 75**



**63...♔g6?** This is not one of our theoretical positions, and I don't think it should be. A concept which we have learned will help here: because his h-pawn has already moved, Black can



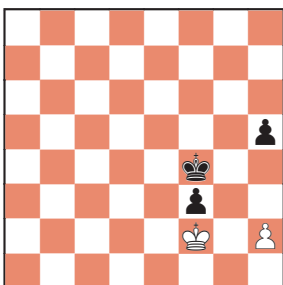
only win if his king can get in front of his f-pawn. This can only be done with 63...♔h6!!; for example: 64.♔f4 ♕g6 65.♔e4 ♕g5 66.♔f3 ♔f5



67.♔e3 ♕g4 68.♔f2 ♔f4 69.♔e2 f5 70.♔f2 ♔e4 71.♔e2 h4 72.♔f2 ♔d3 73.♔f3 h3, winning with the **backward decoy**.

In the game, Black can no longer win after 64.♔f4 f5 64...♔h6 does not win: 65.♔f5 ♕g7 66.♔e4! ♕g6 67.♔f4.

65.♔f3! ♕g5 66.♔g3 f4+ 67.♔f3 ♔f5 68.♔f2 ♔e4 69.♔e2 f3+ 70.♔f2 ♔f4



71.♔f1! ♔e4 72.♔f2 h4 73.♔e1! ♔e3 74.♔f1 ♔e4 75.♔f2 ♔f4 76.♔e1

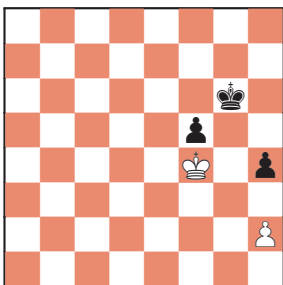
**Draw**

Our last example features an unusual, but important, idea.

**Vojtech Plat** 2546

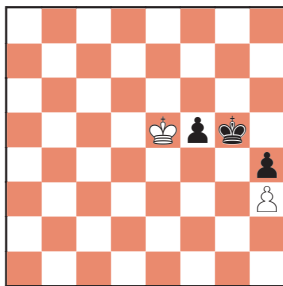
**Daniel Sadzikowski** 2527

Polish Team Championship, Legnica 2021



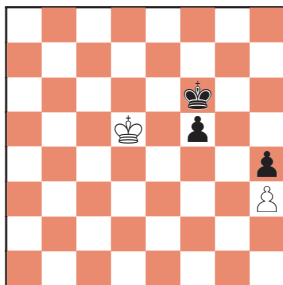
This is the same position as in Tarjan-Larsen. We know the king needs to go to e3. In the game, White chose another move

– and didn't pay a price for it! 60.♔e5? ♕g5 61.h3

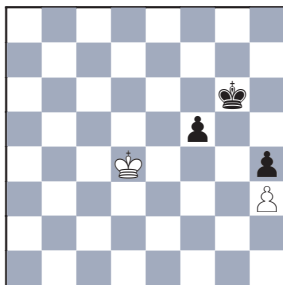


Well, with the pawns on h3 and h4 it's just **triangulation**, our first key position, right?

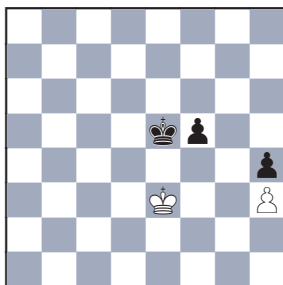
61...♔g6 62.♔d4 ♔f6 63.♔d5! A great practical chance!



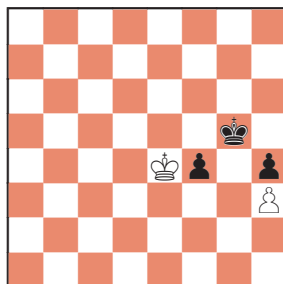
63...f4? Allows a hidden resource. To win, Black must use the squares on the h-file at his disposal: 63...♕g6 64.♔d4



64...♔h5! 65.♔e3 (65.♔e5 ♕g5 66.♔d4 ♔f4; 65.♔d3 ♕g5 66.♔e3 ♔f6 67.♔d4 ♔e6) 65...♕g5 66.♔f3 ♔f6! 67.♔f4 ♔e6 68.♔e3 (68.♔g5 ♔e5 69.♔xh4 f4 70.♔g4 ♔e4) 68...♔e5

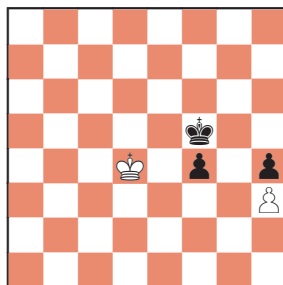


and then you get **Key Position #1**. 64.♔e4 ♕g5

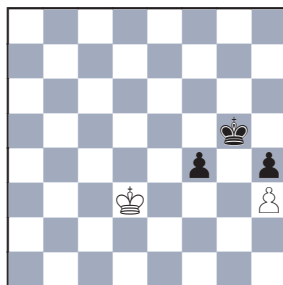


When the king is to the side of the pawn, there are sometimes tricks.

65.♔d3! ♔f5 66.♔d4!



Black agreed to a **draw** here. If the pawn advances, it is lost, and if the king lands on g5, the white king can always step on either e4 or d3. For example, 66...♔f6 67.♔e4! ♕g5 68.♔d3!



Do you have to know all four of our key positions? Well, as you become stronger, you will progress through them. I think even knowing the first two will get you far. I didn't know the fourth one until I was already a grandmaster. But I think mastering all four will not only help you avoid errors in this 2 vs. 1 pawn ending, but also give you patterns and ideas you can use in other endings. ■

## SOLUTIONS - Exercises for solving

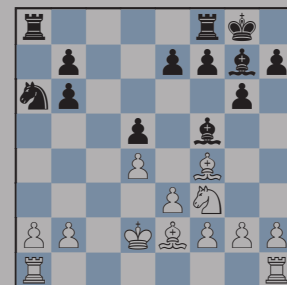
from page 39

### 1 BLACK TO MOVE

Arman Mikaelyan 2524

Illia Nyzhnyk 2578

World Open, Philadelphia 2024



Let's begin with a game I played recently at the 2024 World Open.

13...♔b4? I correctly identified that my knight is misplaced on a6, and immediately attempted to bring it back to a more normal-looking square on c6. While this plan definitely helps to improve the knight, it does not reveal the knight's true potential.

Instead, it was better to start with 13...♔fc8!, obtaining control of the c-file. Then after 14.♔hc1 – which would be White's automatic response despite significantly misplacing the rook – allow the “heaviest of hits” to be delivered by 14...♔c5!., when, even if the knight is captured, Black will obtain a playable endgame with a rook and two pawns for two minor pieces. 15.dxc5 (15.♔e5, ignoring the knight, was certainly a possibility, but I would not play this as White in a practical game, as after 15...♔e4+ 16.♔e1 g5 17.♔g3 ♔xc1+ 18.♔xc1 ♔xa2 19.♔d3 h5∞, Black has no issues, whilst maintaining a reasonable amount of pressure.) 15...♔xb2 16.♔d4! White has to be extremely careful here, as most logical moves would lose on the spot. (For example, 16.cxb6?? ♔xc1+ 17.♔xc1 ♔xa2+ 18.♔d1 ♔xc1+ 19.♔xc1 ♔xe2–) 16...♔xc1+ 17.♔xc1 ♔d7 18.♔b2 bxc5 19.♔b5 ♔a5 20.a4♣ Eventually White manages to build a fortress against Black's amazing pawn chain, although practically speaking Black will likely always be the one trying to win here.

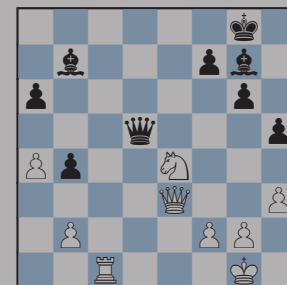
14.a3 ♔c6 15.♔hc1 ♔ac8 16.♔c3± The problems with my queenside left me barely able to survive instead of having winning chances. **Draw**

### 2 WHITE TO MOVE

Khazar Babazada 2468

Vugar Asadli 2560

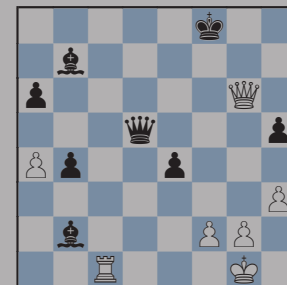
Baku Open 2024



In the following puzzle, we will once again be facing the problem of choice. What should White do to give himself the best chance to survive?

29.♔e1? White decided to keep queens on the board, hoping for some counterplay. Unfortunately, the bishop pair really shines in open positions, especially when supported by a heavy piece, so White did not last as long as he probably expected.

29.♔c5!? Forcing an endgame is the way to go, as the rook will have a shot to combat the bishop pair when no heavy pieces are involved. 29...♔xe4 30.♔xe4 ♔xe4 31.♔c4 ♔d3 32.♔xb4 ♔f8 33.♔b7♣, and while White's position is still objectively worse, he will undoubtedly have drawing chances. 29...f5 30.♔g3 fxe4 31.♔xg6 ♔f8 32.♔c1 ♔xb2 While it looks like the black king is exposed, White has no way to punish it.



33.♔h6+ 33.♔c7? ♔d1+ 34.♔h2 ♔e5+–. 33...♔g7 34.♔f4+ ♔g8 35.♔c7 e3! 36.♔g3 exf2+ 37.♔xf2 ♔d2+ 38.♔g1 ♔d4+ 39.♔h2 h4

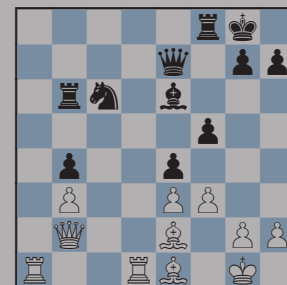
**White resigned**

### 3 BLACK TO MOVE

Arik Braun 2594

Gata Kamsky 2613

German Team Cup 2023/2024

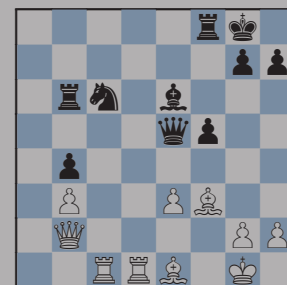


Last but not least, we have a puzzle in which Black needs to understand the true danger that lies within his opponent's plans.

24...exf3? This is playing right into White's plans, after which he will have a monstrous bishop pair.

24...♔f6! was the only way to survive, taking queens out of the equation and ensuring counterplay against the b3 pawn. Then, after 25.♔xf6 ♔xf6 26.♔ab1 exf3 27.♔xf3 ♔e5, threatening transposition into the opposite-colored bishops endgame, forces White to waste even more time, thereby denying him any chance of winning the b4 pawn. 28.♔e2 ♔g4 29.♔d4 ♔xe3 30.♔xb4 f4=.

25.♔xf3 ♔c5 26.♔ac1 ♔e5



27.♔xe5? This essentially transposes into the position that Black was looking forward to. Needless to say, Black managed to survive shortly afterwards.

Keeping queens on the board by 27.♔c2! is the right way, as Black quickly gets overwhelmed and loses material. For example, 27...♔e7 (or 27...♔a5 28.♔g3 ♔f6 29.♔c5+–) 28.♔g3 ♔f6 29.♔c5 ♔a6 30.♔e5 ♔g5 31.♔d6+–. 27...♔xe5 28.♔d5 ♔xd5 29.♔xd5 ♔g4 etc. **Draw**