

How to Get the Most Benefit from Dvoretsky's Endgame Manual Hours of Learning... and Fun!

I WANT TO ADDRESS QUESTIONS I HAVE HEARD OVER THE YEARS ABOUT WHETHER THIS DVORETSKY IS "TOO DIFFICULT" TO READ, FOR SOMEONE NOT YET AT GRANDMASTER OR MASTER LEVEL. I REALLY THINK THAT ALL READERS WHO LOVE CHESS CAN FIND THIS BOOK USEFUL AND FUN.

By GM Alex Fishbein

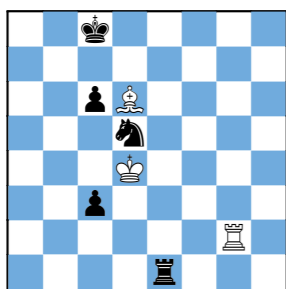
MORE ART, LESS SCIENCE

The book is not a conventional endgame textbook and should probably not be read in a conventional way. When I read great chess books, I try to take them in as I take in great works of literature. For me, that usually means that I want to read something more than once to understand it well, and that the second or third reading might elicit different emotions in me. Mark Dvoretsky uses many literary devices in his book. One of the most prominent is the "tragicomedy" – a big mistake committed by a strong player who should have known better.

Alexander Kochyev 2555

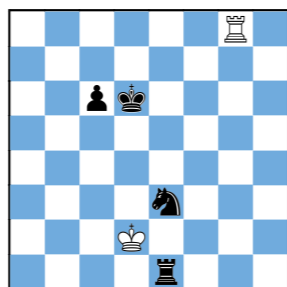
Vasily Smyslov 2575

Zonal, Lvov 1978



Dvoretsky begins this example with the moment of White's mistake, but in this article I can start earlier.

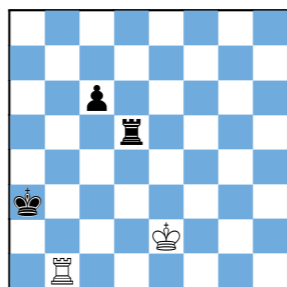
61...♔e3? The former world champion has a winning advantage here, and 61...♔d1+ would earn the full point quickly, e.g., 62.♔c5 ♔d7 63.♔g7+ ♔e6 64.♔xc6 c2 65.♔a3 ♔a1! 62.♔g8+ ♔d7 63.♔xc3! ♔xd6 64.♔d2!



Alexander Kochyev has swindled Vasily Smyslov into a rook ending where he can hold the draw by the "frontal defense." 64...♔d1+ 65.♔xe3 ♔c5! Smyslov proceeds to test his young opponent, who will have to find several "only" moves.

66.♔e2! The frontal defense will work only from the first rank, so the black rook is asked to leave.

66...♔d5 67.♔g1! ♔b4 68.♔b1+! ♔a3!



69.♔e3! This key move will bump the black rook off the fourth rank, where it can defend the pawn. Only then can the frontal defense succeed, as we shall see soon.

69...c5 70.♔e4! ♔d2 70...♔h5 71.♔d3 is an obvious draw.

71.♔c1 ♔d4+ 72.♔e3 ♔b4 73.♔b1+! ♔c4 74.♔c1+ ♔b5 75.♔h1 ♔d8 76.♔b1+! The frontal defense can only

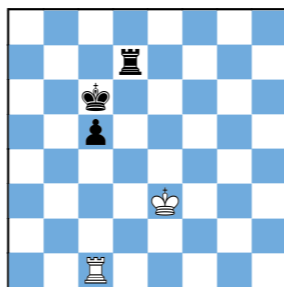


Born in St. Petersburg, Russia, in 1968, Alex Fishbein relocated to the United States in 1979. Mentored by Vladimir Zak, who previously coached Boris Spassky and Viktor Korchnoi, Fishbein swiftly built a strong chess foundation. By 14, he was a master, and he climbed the ranks to become an IM in 1988 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. Alex won the U.S. Senior Championship in 2025.

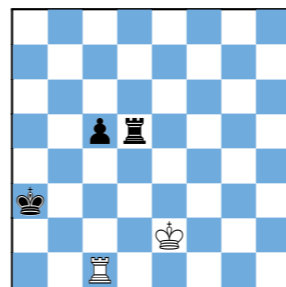
work if there are at least three squares between the rook and the pawn. If the black king moves forward the rook either checks it or attacks the pawn, forcing the king to go back. But if the black rook can safely defend its pawn from the side (thus also cutting off the white king) then the frontal defense will fail and the black pawn will advance.

76...♔c6 76...♔a4 77.♔c1! ♔b4 78.♔b1+ ♔c3 79.♔c1+ ♔b4 80.♔b1+ ♔a3 81.♔c1!, etc. 77.♔c1 ♔d7



78.♔e2?? The tragic moment. Having already demonstrated the drawing method, Kochyev slips and falls. The king cannot be on the second rank here. Almost any other move, such as 78.♔e4 or 78.♔h1, would draw.

78...♔b5! 79.♔b1+ ♔a4 80.♔c1 ♔b4 81.♔b1+ ♔a3 82.♔c1 ♔d5!



The white king cannot attack the rook, and the pawn gets to c4, after which the position becomes hopeless for White, as the Lucena finish is unavoidable.

83.♔e3 ♔b2 84.♔c4 ♔b3

White resigned

Mark Dvoretsky writes, a couple of pages later:

We have seen a tragicomedy in a game by Kochyev in which his grave error had fatal consequences. A draw would have maintained excellent chances for his qualifying for the Interzonal tournament. After losing, he failed to qualify, and the whole career of this young talented grandmaster declined sharply thereafter. Many have erred in similar situation, even the greats of this world.

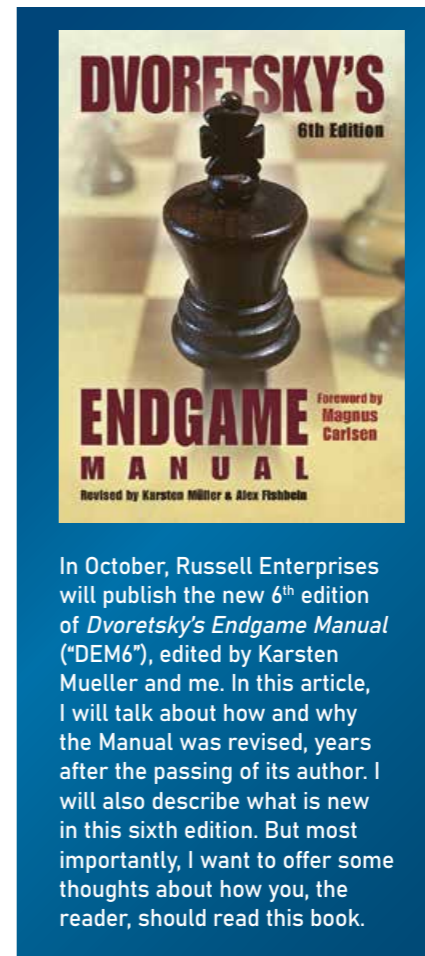
(And then he shows a mistake made by Tal.)

It is quite a stretch to imply that this loss was decisive in the entire life of Grandmaster Kochyev. This game was played in round 8 out of 15 rounds in this strong zonal tournament, and the loss dropped him to an even score. Kochyev won the next game, but losses in the last two rounds left him 1.5 points back of the score he needed for qualification.

But it is clear that Mark Dvoretsky added this commentary for dramatic effect! In his introduction to the book, he writes that "these cases tend to be very well remembered by the student and are therefore very helpful in absorbing and retaining endgame ideas."

Kochyev's mistake and its "fatal" outcome were certainly memorable for me after I read this. I have made and will continue to make many mistakes in rook endings, but not this mistake!

Some tragicomedies are more comical than tragic:

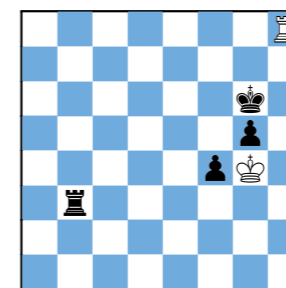


In October, Russell Enterprises will publish the new 6th edition of *Dvoretsky's Endgame Manual* ("DEM6"), edited by Karsten Mueller and me. In this article, I will talk about how and why the Manual was revised, years after the passing of its author. I will also describe what is new in this sixth edition. But most importantly, I want to offer some thoughts about how you, the reader, should read this book.

Joerg Hickl 2430

Stephen Solomon 2265

Chess Olympiad, Thessaloniki 1988



Black has just carelessly moved his rook to b3.

64.♔g8+ ♔f6 65.♔f8+?? 65.♔g6+! is a draw by stalemate if Black takes the rook, but neither player saw this resource. If Black tries 65...♔e5 66.♔xg5+ ♔e4, then 67.♔a5 is also a draw.

65...♔g6?? The sealed move! Black repeats the position, allowing White the stalemate trick again with ♔g8+ and ♔g6+. Instead, the king could have gone to e7 or g7 with an easy win, because

the rook gives check on g3 and then the pawns start moving. Here the game was adjourned and Mark Dvoretsky writes:

The captain of the Australian team ordered his player Solomon to look satisfied, to go back to the hotel immediately, and to stay silent. Hickl did not suspect that his opponent could have sealed such a move and did not want to return for a hopeless resumption, so he resigned the next morning at breakfast.

On the face of it, this seems like a tall tale. "Ordered his player to look satisfied"? It seems strange that White would not at least confirm what the sealed move was, given that the king was just on g6. But in any case, it's funny. Actually, for modern readers, the concepts of "adjourned game" and "sealed move" are comical in and of themselves.

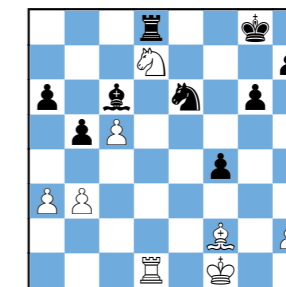
White resigned

Dvoretsky likes making fun of other endgame analysts (and also sometimes himself):

Juan Bellon Lopez

Dragoljub Minic

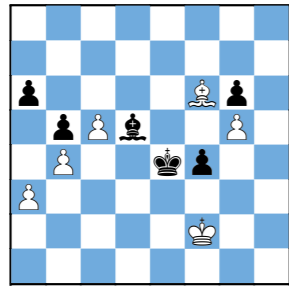
Chess Olympiad, Siegen 1970



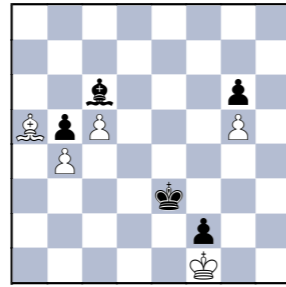
We again start a few moves before the tragicomedy strikes, just because we can. Black is winning here, with a passed pawn and more coming on the kingside and a safe blockade of White's passed pawn.

31.♔f6+ ♔f7? Why would Black voluntarily give up his h-pawn? 31...♔g7 32.♔xd8 ♔xd8 33.♔d4 g5! wins. 32.♔xd8 ♔xd8 33.♔xh7 ♔e6 34.h4? 34.♔h4! is necessary, because the opposite-color bishop ending in the game turns out to be lost.

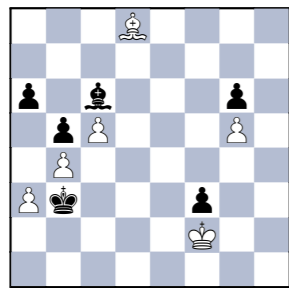
34...♔g7 35.♔g5 ♔xg5 36.hxg5 ♔f7 37.♔d4 ♔e6 38.b4 ♔d5 39.♔f6 ♔e4 40.♔f2 ♔d5?



and if the king takes then ...♙e2 wins.
And if White plays 54.♙f1 then
54...♙e3 55.♙c7 a5! 56.♙xa5 f2

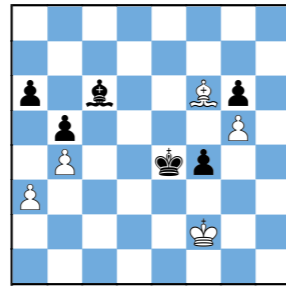


Now the position is drawn, but only if White sacrifices his protected passed pawn with **41.c6!!** In his detailed analysis, Dvoretzky explains why. If White passes with, say, 41.♙d8, then Black has a deep winning plan: 41...♙c6! 42.♙c7 f3 43.♙d8 ♙d3 44.♙c7 ♙c2 45.♙d8 ♙b3

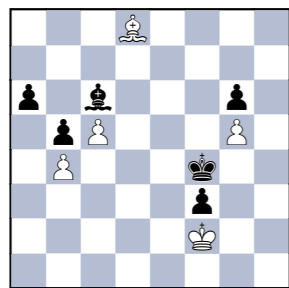


and a check by the bishop will win immediately. When we look at this last position, it becomes clear that the white c5 pawn is only an obstacle for him. Without that pawn, the bishop would have the a7-g1 diagonal and could check the black king away from e3. Therefore, he had to sacrifice it at the first opportunity!

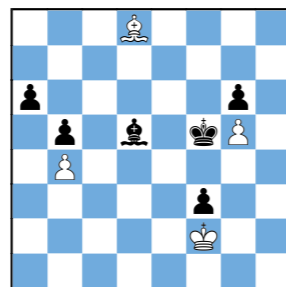
After 41.c6!!, if Black attempts the same plan as we just saw with **41...♙xc6**



White could do nothing to save the a3 pawn, but how does Black win even after he captures it? 46.♙e3 ♙xa3 47.♙a5 ♙a2 48.♙d2 ♙b3 49.♙e3 ♙c3 50.♙f2 ♙d3 51.♙d8 ♙e4 52.♙c7 ♙f5 53.♙d8 ♙f4!



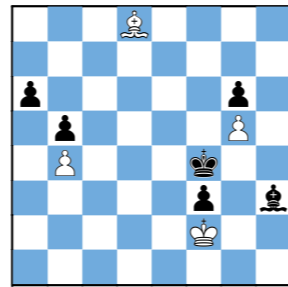
42.♙d8 ♙d3 43.♙c7! f3 44.♙d8 ♙c2 45.♙c7 ♙b3 46.♙d8 ♙xa3 47.♙a5 ♙b3 48.♙e3 ♙c4 49.♙f2 ♙d3 50.♙c7 ♙e4 51.♙b6 ♙d5 52.♙c7 ♙f5 53.♙d8, the absence of the c5 pawn will save White.



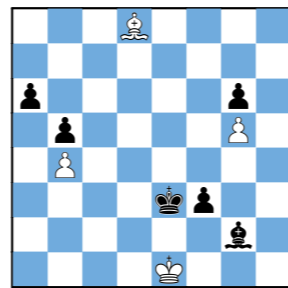
White is in zugzwang. If his bishop loses touch with the a5 square, Black plays ...a5!, and when White takes, the black bishop on c6 will protect his pawn on f3 and stop the two white queenside pawns all on the same diagonal, from c6. As a result, White can do nothing against the black king march back to the queenside to help the b-pawn queen. Also hopeless is 54.♙c7: Black takes on g5, moves his king to d3, and then after ...g3+, if the bishop takes then ...a5 wins as before,

Now 53...a5 is useless because White takes with the bishop and the black pawns on g4 and f3 (White had wisely forced the f-pawn to go to the light square f3) will be securely blockaded. **53...♙f4 54.♙f1! ♙c4+ 54...♙e3**

55.♙b6+!
55.♙f2 ♙e6 55...♙e2 56.♙g1! ♙e3 57.♙b6+!
56.♙b6 ♙h3 57.♙d8



57...♙g2 Trying to take away the f1 square while defending the f-pawn.
58.♙e1! ♙e3 58...♙g3 59.♙c7+! ♙g4 60.♙d8=



And again White has the saving check along the freed diagonal: **59.♙b6+! =**

In the game, White had to seal his 41st move. Any move other than the pawn sacrifice would lose. But the game was agreed drawn without resumption, and the annotations to the game by Minic didn't show any of these deep ideas. That likely means that the sealed move was not the pawn sacrifice. Dvoretzky writes: "It is surprising that even after home analysis, neither the players themselves nor their teammates were able to solve this rather simple position."

Simple position?!?! It took a twenty-move variation, with several side variations, to solve it. This is the type of comment that some readers find off-putting. But I don't think that is the right reaction. Of course, it is too late now to ask the great man himself. But I knew Mark Dvoretzky and I think he had his tongue firmly in cheek here. In the pre-computer age, many analysts, including Mark himself, committed the sin of giving long variations and saying the position had been solved, when it later transpired that the truth was something different. In any event,

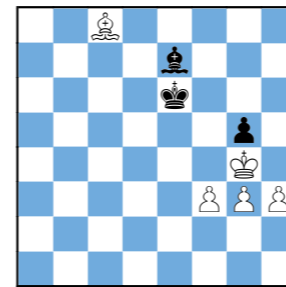
whether intentional or not, the phrase "rather simple position" is a joke here and should be interpreted as such.

The concept of sacrificing a pawn to gain squares in an opposite-color bishop ending, however, is no joke. In the OCB chapter, Dvoretzky explains how the number of pawns is often less important here than positional factors. I was reminded of the example we just discussed when I observed the following ending in a recent tournament I played in.

Semen Khanin 2576

Anthony Atanasov 2402

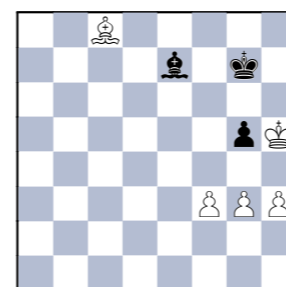
Chicago Open 2025



Grandmaster Khanin was obliterating everyone in the Chicago Open and had 6 out of 6 at this point. But this game certainly looked like it would end in a draw. However, when there is little time remaining, nothing can be taken for granted.

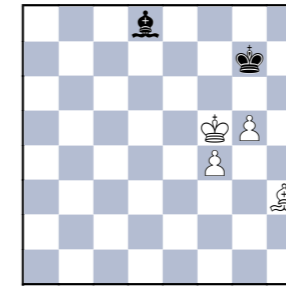
52...♙e5? Black can keep the king safely on g7. His defense is made much easier by the fact that White has the wrong bishop and h-pawn combination, if pawns get traded. For example, if White plays f4 and takes with the king, Black can give check on d6 and take on g3, with an immediate draw.

Let's see what would happen after the best defense: 52...♙f6! 53.♙h5 ♙g7.

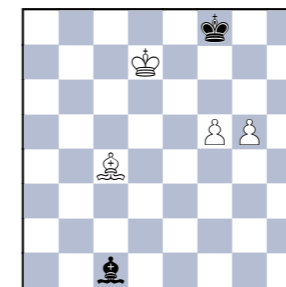


The most dangerous idea for White is to

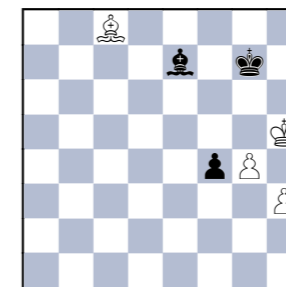
play f4 or h4 and then not immediately recapture, but play g4, leaving two connected passed pawns. But with the king on g7, it's not too scary. Let's look at both pawn moves: **A) 54.h4 gxh4 55.g4 ♙d8 56.f4 h3 57.g5 ♙e7 58.♙xh3 ♙d8 59.♙g4 ♙e7 60.♙f5 ♙d8** is a solid defense.



The black bishop is attacking the front pawn, so any plan with f4-f5 is useless: if ♙g4 and f5-f6+, Black just takes. If 61.♙f1 ♙e7 62.♙d3 ♙d8 63.♙e6 ♙f8 64.♙d7 ♙e7 65.♙c4 ♙a3 66.f5 (66.♙e6 ♙e7) 66...♙c1

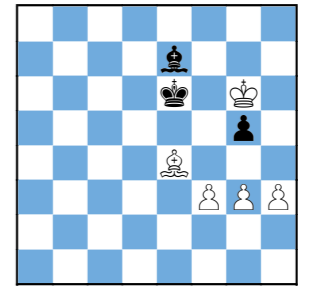


(if you can force the pawns to the light squares then it's an immediate draw) 67.g6 ♙g7 68.♙e6 ♙b2. **B) 54.f4 gxf4 55.g4!**



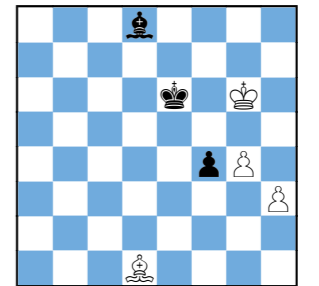
55...♙d8 56.♙b7 ♙e7 57.♙f3 ♙d8 58.h4 ♙e7 59.g5 ♙h7 60.♙g4 ♙g7 61.♙f5 ♙d8 62.♙e4 (62.♙e6 ♙xg5) 62...f3 It's safest, although not necessary here, to lose the pawn. 63.♙xf3 ♙a5 64.h5 ♙d2 65.h6+ ♙h8 Again, Black can just give up the bishop for the only pawn that can

queen. **66.♙g6 ♙xg5=.**
Now we come back to the game, where Black kept his king in the center. **53.♙h5 ♙f6 54.♙g6 ♙d8 55.♙b7 ♙e6 56.♙e4 ♙e7**

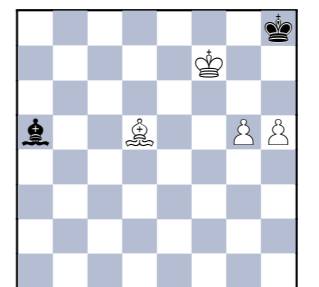


Now Black is in a more precarious position, and Semen Khanin will try to run the clock down as low as possible. There was a 30-second delay here (not increment).

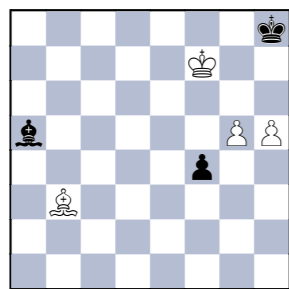
57.♙d3 ♙e5 58.♙c2 ♙d8 59.♙d1 ♙e6 60.f4 gxf4 61.g4!



61...♙h4? The young and talented Canadian IM Anthony Atanasov didn't have enough time to have a chance here. The only saving move is to sacrifice the pawn with 61...f3!! 62.♙xf3 ♙e7 63.h4 ♙f8 64.g5 ♙g8 65.♙d5+ ♙h8 66.♙f7 ♙a5 67.h5 (67.g6 ♙c3 68.h5 ♙g7=)

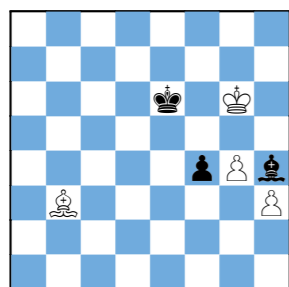


67...♙d2 68.g6 ♙h6=.
Instead, 61...♙e7? loses, as the unlucky f-pawn is Black's undoing: 62.g5! ♙f8 63.h4 ♙g8 (63...f3 64.♙h7!) 64.♙b3+! ♙h8 65.♙f7! and after 65...♙a5 (65...f3 66.g6 ♙f6 67.♙xf6 is not stalemate.) 66.h5



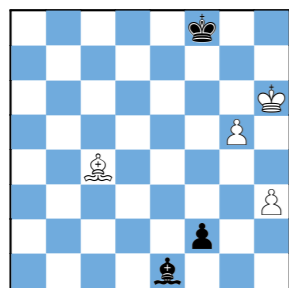
The pawn on f4 is in the way of the bishop, and the g-pawn will get to g7. After the game continuation, the black king doesn't get back home.

62. ♖b3+!



On this powerful diagonal, the bishop keeps the black king away from the corner.

62... ♗e7 63. ♖h5! ♕e1 64. g5 f3 65. ♗h6 f2 66. ♕c4 ♖f8



67. ♖h7! ♕c3 68. g6 Black resigned

RULES AND EXCEPTIONS

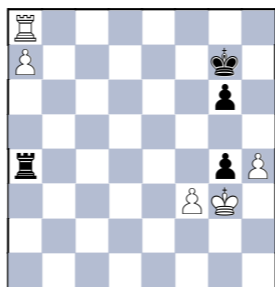
In addition to being a dramaturg of the tragicomedy, Mark Dvoretsky was also a master of what I would call “the exception that makes the rule.” Time and again, he places added emphasis on border cases, or situations where the general method does not work, aiming to thus better illustrate the general method. I think this makes for more interesting reading as well as longer retention of the material.



Mark Dvoretsky

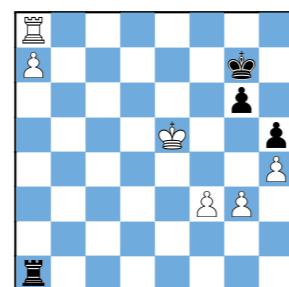
extra pawns do not bring White victory in this case.

1. ♖f4 ♖a4+! The only move. If, for example, 1... ♖a3, then White can form a passed f-pawn, even through fire and water: 2. g4! ♖a4+ 3. ♖g3 hxg4

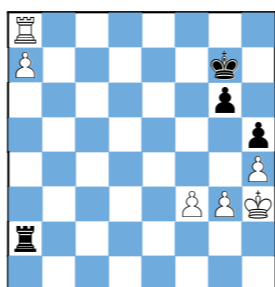


4. f4! (4. fxg4?? would only form a useless passed pawn.) 4... ♖a5 5. ♖xg4 ♖h7 6. h5! gxh5+ 7. ♖h4.

2. ♖e3 ♖a3+ 3. ♖f2 ♖a2+ 4. ♖g1 ♖a1+ 5. ♖g2 ♖a2+ 6. ♖h3



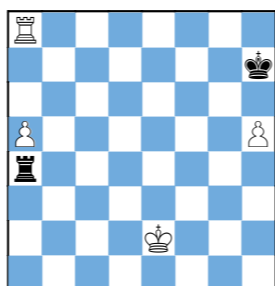
Kholmov
1983



6... ♖a3 7. f4 ♖a2 8. g4 ♖a3+ 9. ♖g2 and Black can just keep checking, because if the white king walks too far to the queenside, Black can take on g4 and push his own passed pawn.

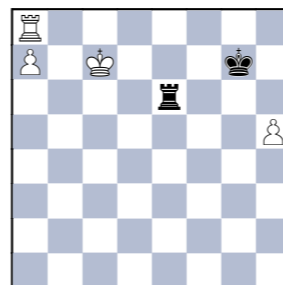
Another border case is the (♖ + a- and h-pawns) vs. ♖ ending, when the white pawn is not on the seventh rank, and the white rook is in front of the pawn. The defending side can draw if the rook can pin down the enemy rook and check the white king from the side.

♖ and a- and h-pawns – vs. ♖
2025



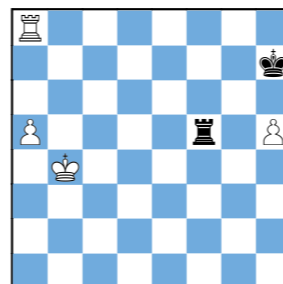
1... ♖e4+! 2. ♖d3 ♖e5! 3. ♖c4 ♖f5! 3... ♖xh5? 4. a6 ♖h6 5. ♖b5 ♖h5+ 6. ♖b6 ♖h6+ 7. ♖b7 and Black cannot give another check.

We should also note that three files between the pawn and the rook is not enough, e.g. 3... ♖g7? 4. ♖b4 ♖e4+ 5. ♖c5 ♖e5+ 6. ♖b6 ♖e6+ 7. ♖c7 ♖e5 8. a6 ♖e6 9. a7

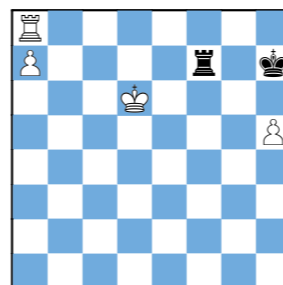


9... ♖e7+ (9... ♖a6 10. ♖b7) 10. ♖d6 ♖f7 11. ♖g8+-.

4. ♖b4 4. a6 ♖f6 5. ♖b5 ♖f5+ 6. ♖c6 ♖f6+ 7. ♖d5 ♖b6



4... ♖f4+! 5. ♖c5 ♖f5+! 6. ♖b6 ♖f6+! 7. ♖c7 ♖f5 8. a6 ♖f6 9. a7 ♖f7+ 10. ♖d6



and unlike in the case where the rook was on the e-file, Black has the saving check 10... ♖f6+, and if 11. ♖e7 ♖a6! =

Black's defensive method is called the Vancura defense (we have discussed it in this column), and Dvoretsky illustrates it with three tragicomedies. In DEM6, we made them part of the main section,

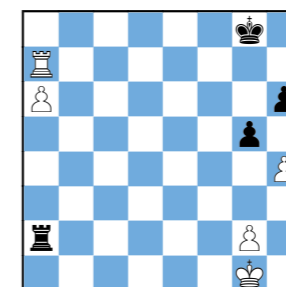
rather than the tragicomedy section, because experience shows that the Vancura idea is complicated even for grandmasters. You will also find there a new example, Caruana - Carlsen 2024, which was even more subtle.

NOT EVERYTHING WILL BE IN THE MANUAL!

I recently played an ending which featured three rook ending themes (frontal defense, pawn on seventh rank, Vancura defense) that we have just seen. But it was still a new situation.

Alexander Fishbein 2383
Varun Gadi 2156

Charlotte 2025



Black has just played ...g6-g5. His king is cut off on the back rank, so the black rook dare not leave the a-file because, after ♖b7 and a6-a7, White will win. So, White is threatening to slowly move the king toward a2. There is usually no Vancura defense if White has a g-pawn (remember that Black needed the f-file to give checks from, and the pawn from g4 would take away the f5 square).

But Black does have the resource of walking the king toward the queenside. With the king on e8, if I check, it can go to f7 and after a6-a7 to g7, after which we could have a draw with the pawn on the seventh rank of the sort we have seen earlier. If the king gets to d8, then after ♖a8+ ♖c7 my rook goes to the kingside. For this scenario, I instinctively wanted to keep more pawns. It turned out to be the wrong decision!

44. h5? After 44. hxg5! hxg5 45. ♖h2! ♖a3 46. g4! White wins by one tempo: 46... ♖f8 47. ♖g2 ♖e8 48. ♖f2 ♖d8 49. ♖a8+ ♖c7 50. a7 ♖b7 51. ♖g8 ♖xa7 52. ♖xg5 ♖b6



BROADEN YOUR HORIZONS!

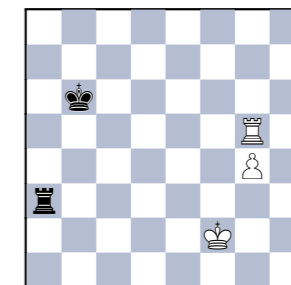
THE BLOG OF
GRANDMASTER ALEX COLOVIC

Ranked among the “Best Chess Blogs on the Planet” since 2016. Grandmaster Alex Colovic, President of Association of Chess Professionals (ACP) from 2019-2023, writes in style about all aspects of chess. From openings to endgames, psychology and practical advice, he provides deep insight into the secrets of our beloved game.

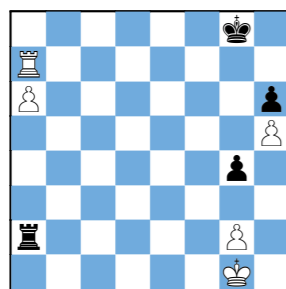
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Alex writes on Substack, subscribe at substack.com/@gmalexcolovic. He also shares his views on current news in video format at www.youtube.com/@gmalexcolovic.

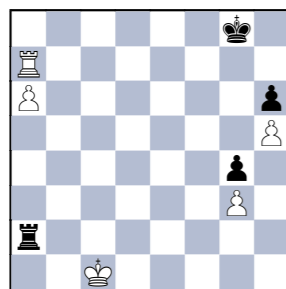
GM Colovic is the author of *The Sinquefeld Chess Generation*, a book that analyzes and explores in great depth the styles and preferences of America's top young talent.



53. ♖e5! ♖c6 54. ♖e3! ♖a8 55. ♖d3+- With a knight pawn on the fourth rank, the frontal defense will fail if the black king is cut off by three files (that's in the Manual). 44... g4! It's important for Black to prevent g2-g4.

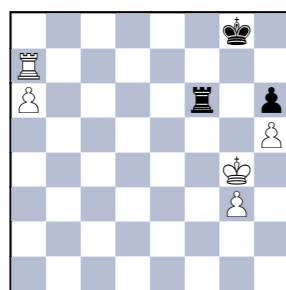


45.g3 ♔f8 46.♔f1 46.♖a8+ ♕g7 47.a7 ♕h7, as we already know, will be a draw even after White captures the g4 pawn. In general, you should be careful moving the pawn all the way to a7 with the rook on a8, unless you can see a forced win. 46...♔e8 47.♔e1 ♔d8? Black has almost a study-like draw: 47...♔f8! 48.♔d1 ♕g8 49.♔c1



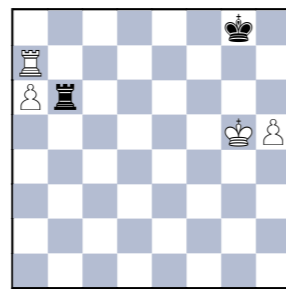
Normally, a disadvantage of having a pawn only on a6 (instead of a7 with a rook on a8) is that the black rook has time to leave the a-file and capture a pawn on the kingside. But in this position the black king is cut off on the eighth rank, and ♖b7 and a7 will force the black rook to return to the a-file, after which ♖b8+ and a8♙ will enable the white rook to stop the black g-pawn in time.

However, Black has another resource here. 49...♖a5! 50.♔b2 ♖b5+! 51.♔c3 ♖b6! 52.♔c4 ♖f6! 53.♔d4 ♕h8 54.♔e5 ♖b6 55.♔f5 ♕g8 56.♔xg4 ♖f6!

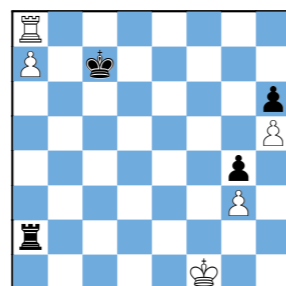


This is the problem. Yes, White has a g-pawn, but my king is stuck on the kingside. I had missed this detail when I

played 44.h5. The Vancura defense works after all! The only thing I could do here is enter the drawn a- and h-pawn ending: 57.♔h3 ♕h8 58.g4 ♕g8 59.♔g3 ♕h8 60.g5 hxg5 61.♔g4 ♕g8 62.♔xg5 ♖b6=.

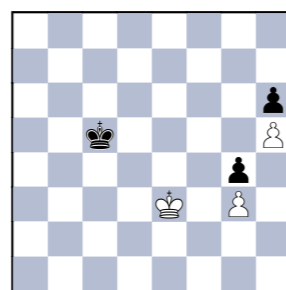


When the white king heads in the direction of the a-pawn, Black can put his Vancura rook on f6. If 63.h6, then 63...♕h8! removes the threat of the check on g7. 48.♔f1? By repeating moves in the hope Black continues toward the queenside, I give my opponent the chance to correct his mistake. 48.♖a8+! would win. 48...♔c8? 48...♔e8=. 49.♖a8+ ♔c7 50.a7



50...♔b7?! 50...♔b6 would force me to find 51.♖h8 ♖xa7 52.♖xh6+ ♔c5 53.♖g6 ♖a4 54.h6 ♔d5 55.♖xg4! ♖xg4 56.h7+-.

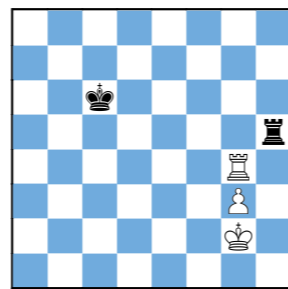
51.♖h8 ♔xa7 After 51...♖xa7 52.♖h7+ (52.♖xh6 ♖a2 53.♖g6 ♖h2 54.♖xg4 ♖xh5 55.♔g2 would win like in the game.) 52...♔b8 53.♖xa7 ♔xa7 54.♔f2 ♔b6 55.♔e3 ♔c5



it would still not be too late to make a mistake with 56.♔f4? (56.♔e4! ♔c4 57.♔f5 ♔d4 58.♔g6 wins.) 56...♔d4!

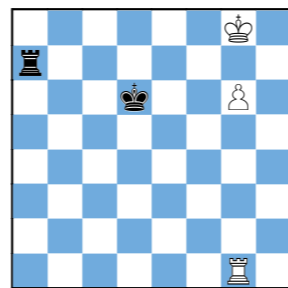
57.♔f5 (57.♔xg4 ♔e4 58.♔h4 ♔e5=) 57...♔e3 58.♔g6 ♔f3 59.♔xh6 ♔xg3 60.♔g6 ♔f3=.

52.♖xh6 ♔b7 53.♖g6 ♖h2 54.♖xg4 ♖xh5 55.♔g2 ♔c6



56...♖d4! The only move. With the g-pawn, the king needs to be cut off by 3 files.

56...♖h8 57.g4 ♖g8 58.♔g3 ♔c5 59.♖d1 ♔c6 60.♔f4 ♖f8+ 61.♔g5 ♖g8+ 62.♔f5 ♖f8+ 63.♔e6 ♖g8 64.♖c1+ ♔b5 65.♖g1 ♔c5 66.g5 ♖g6+ 67.♔f7 ♖a6 68.g6 ♖a7+ 69.♔g8 ♔d6



70.g7 **Black resigned**
This example shows that the book can guide you through difficult decisions, but you will still have to calculate variations.

WHAT IS NEW IN THE SIXTH EDITION?

So, if the book is so great, why did we need to revise it, especially long after the author had left us? Well, there are a few reasons:

Analytical corrections

A book of this size will have some mistakes in variations. We had received dozens of corrections, mostly in secondary lines but still significant. I can think of only one case (♙ vs. ♖ fortress position with pawns on one side) where the evaluation of a theoretical ending changed. But we also added back a famous ending, A.Petrosian

- Hazai, which had been removed from the previous edition (in 2020), but which was published here in ACM 20 and 21 (in 2021) by GM Peter Prohaszka, with his amazing discovery. The science and art of the endgame always move forward!

New material

The first edition of *Dvoretsky's Endgame Manual* was published in 2003. At that time, most of today's top players were little kids (or not even born yet). In later editions, new examples were added to illustrate new theory, not to further explain previously known concepts. But, almost a quarter-century later, it didn't seem fitting that Magnus Carlsen, probably the greatest endgame player of all time, was not featured at all in the *Manual*. The sixth edition corrects this omission.

As I have mentioned, the presentation style in Mark Dvoretsky's books is never dry and sequential. The various subsections are usually not by material, but by themes. While this is part of what makes the book excellent, we found one instance where we felt some important positions had been left out. We added a "rook and pawn vs. rook and pawn" section that illustrates situations where we felt people make a lot of mistakes.

DEM in the modern era

The book is a product of an age before fast time controls and before tablebases or strong engines. I thought for a while about how Mark Dvoretsky would revise his book if he were alive today. I took lessons from Mark in the 1990s. He shared with me his philosophical views about chess and his vision of how a player should try to improve. In our training, I never felt that his expectations of me were too high. He always praised me when I correctly solved a position, and when I made mistakes, he never made me feel like I had failed. If Mark Dvoretsky were alive today, he would see that some of the endings that he called "tragicomedies" would be considered well-played under today's time controls.

If Mark were writing the book today, he might ask a bit less of the reader than he did in DEM. But who is to say whether this would be a good thing? DEM would not be DEM, and would be not be nearly as effective, if it hadn't been written by Mark Dvoretsky in the way that he wrote

it. In this new revision, we tried to keep the flavor of the original, but in some cases, we slightly softened the narrative, with respect to mistakes that had been made by others. Additionally, we simplified the text in a couple of instances, removing lines whose only purpose was to show where previous analysts had erred.

The new foreword in DEM6 by Magnus Carlsen gives a perspective that we will all appreciate. Magnus says that you should not worry if you cannot solve the exercises, because some of them are too hard for him! The most important thing is to find the book enjoyable, and not to place any expectations on yourself.

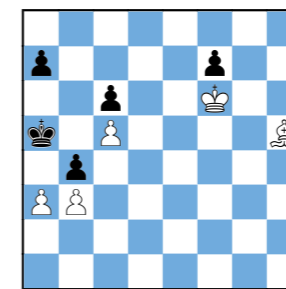
I think you will enjoy DEM6 the most if you read it like a story book, rather than a textbook you have to memorize.

MY FAVORITE PART OF THE BOOK

I always really liked the exercises in DEM. I would solve them before tournaments, to sharpen my mind. I still try to solve them from time to time, even when through all these revisions I have looked at all of them many times by now. After a while, you will forget the solution.

Here is an exercise I tried to solve just as I was writing this.

Gunst
1966



This position is in the Stalemate section, so the first part was obvious.

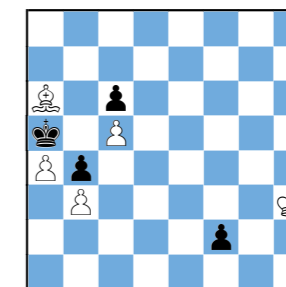
1.a4 a6, and now White has to somehow release the black king. But how? If you move the king away, the black f-pawn moves and once you capture it, it's stalemate. If you move the king to take the c6 pawn and try to move your c5 pawn, the black pawn has time to queen. What other ideas are there? I thought maybe I can take on a6 with the bishop, then move

the bishop back in the direction of f1 (it's still stalemate) and then try to somehow interpose with the king on the f1-a6 diagonal so the black king can move to a6. But it takes too long. The king needs three moves to get to where it closes that diagonal; the bishop needs three moves to take on a6 and come back to f1, but the black pawn just needs four moves to get to f2. Count it yourself: stalemate. Then I found a trick: you go to f5 with the king (now Black needs to move the pawn one square), then to e4 and d3 – that works, right? No, because ...f6-f5 will come with check, and you can't move your bishop when you need to.

I started getting desperate – I know I have solved this position before, perhaps several times, but I don't remember the solution and I can't find it! I looked at all kinds of crazy ideas, like taking the pawn on c6, letting Black queen and moving my pawn to c7 (that's how far it gets) in the hope of winning against a new queen. It's not close. After close to a half-hour I almost gave up, when the solution came to me:

2.♔f5! f6 3.♔g4!! f5+ 4.♔h3! There is a motif like this in pawn endings: gain a tempo by moving the king away from the opening check, but still equally quickly toward the destination.

4...f4 5.♔e2 f3 6.♔xa6 f2



7.♔g2! **Black resigned**
The king, not the bishop, will take on f1.

I sort of had the right ideas, but I had trouble seeing how to put them all together. That's always what's hard in chess. I usually don't give up even if I can't solve it after a long time. It's rewarding when I finally find the answer!

I hope that *Dvoretsky's Endgame Manual, Sixth edition*, will expand your knowledge of the endgame, but, more importantly, bring you many hours of interesting and stimulating chess reading. ■