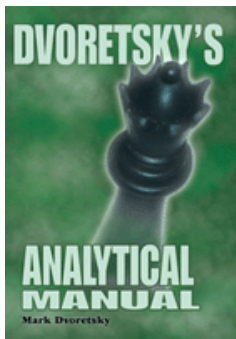




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The Worst-Piece Principle

Part Two

Oll – Hodgson

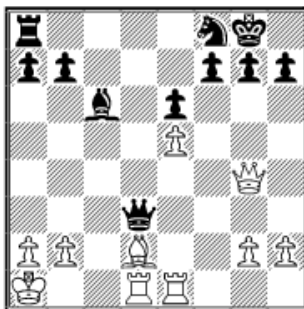
Groningen 1993

(Based on comments by Julian Hodgson)

1.e2-e4 c7-c5 2.Ng1-f3 d7-d6 3.d2-d4 c5xd4 4.Nf3xd4 Ng8-f6 5.Nb1-c3 Nb8-c6 6.Bc1-g5 e7-e6 7.Qd1-d2 Bf8-e7 8.0-0-0 0-0 9.f2-f4 Nc6xd4 10. Qd2xd4 Qd8-a5 11.Bf1-c4 Bc8-d7 12.e4-e5 d6xe5 13.f4xe5 Bd7-c6 14. Bg5-d2 Nf6-d7 15.Nc3-d5 Qa5-d8 16.Nd5xe7+ Qd8xe7 17.Rh1-e1 Rf8-d8 18.Qd4-g4 Nd7-f8 19.Bc4-d3 Rd8xd3!? 20.c2xd3 Qe7-d7 21.Kc1-b1?!

At one time, this was considered the strongest move here. But Vasilios Kotronias found an excellent riposte, which he then showed to Hodgson, who used it in the present game. After this, the theoretical main line became 21.Bb4! Qd5 22.Bxf8! Rxf8 23.Kb1 Qxg2 24.Qxg2 Bxg2, with a somewhat inferior, although probably defensible, endgame for Black. Now, consigning oneself from the very start of the game to a difficult fight to draw is not the most pleasant prospect; so gradually, Black ceased to play this line.

21...Qd7xd3+ 22.Kb1-a1



B?

22...h7-h5! 23.Qg4xh5

On 23.Qe2, Hodgson would have replied 23...Qg6, with good compensation for the exchange.

23...Bc6-a4! 24.Bd2-c3

The point of Black's idea can be found in the short variation 24.b3 Qd4+ 25.Kb1 Bb5, with dangerous threats to White's king, which can only be neutralized, if at all, with great difficulty. Thus, White has to return the exchange.

This could have been done by 24.Bb4!? Bxd1 25.Rxd1 Qe4 (25...Qc2 26. Bxf8 Rxf8 27.Qf3=+/) 26.Bxf8 Rxf8 27.Qg5=+/+. The presence of the white e5-pawn on the board renders White's bishop "bad," so it would make sense to get rid of it. On the other hand, the text move should not have led to an inferior game, either.

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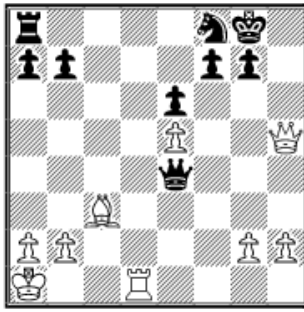
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24...Ba4xd1 25.Re1xd1 Qd3-e4



W?

26.Qh5-g5

White's attacking chances are a mirage, while Black is in a position to whip up an assault by advancing his queenside pawns. White's position would become especially uncomfortable if the knight were to return to play, operating in concert with the queen (queen + knight are, as is well known, a most dangerous tandem). From this, it follows that White should trade queens by **26.Qf3!** The game Hracek – Leko, Brno 1993, saw this move, and continued 26...Qxf3 27.gf Kh7 28.b4 Kg6 29.a4 (29. Rg1+ Kh6 30.Rd1 =) 29...Kf5 30.h4 Rc8 31.Kb2 g6 32.Rd4 Rc7 33.a5 Nd7 34.Rg4 Rc8 35.Kb3 a6, with equality.

The main reason for Lembit Oll's loss in this game was apparently that he would refuse a trade of queens under any circumstances.

26...a7-a5! 27.Qg5-d2

White could have held the balance by **27.h4!?** b5 28.h5 b4 29.Bd2 a4 (29...Rc8!?!=+) 30.Qf4.

27...Nf8-g6!

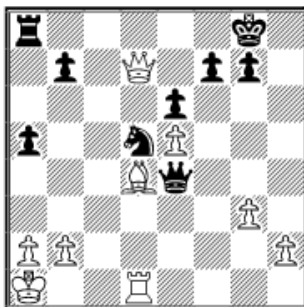
As a consequence of White's passive move, the knight obtains the opportunity to move through either e7 or f4 to the excellent central square d5. White would be ill-advised to take the a5-pawn: 28.Bxa5? Qa4 29.b4 Nxe5.

28.g2-g3 Ng6-e7 29.Qd2-d7?

Now White's position grows difficult. It was necessary to drive the queen from its active position by **29.Qd3!** But as we have already noted, Oll's list of candidate-moves did not include any moves involving a queen trade.

29...Ne7-d5 30.Bc3-d4

The only move; 30.Qxb7? Nxc3 loses.



B?

30...Qe4-e2

Hodgson spent a long time weighing the consequences of simplifying the position by 30...Nb4?! 31.a3 Qd5 32.Qxd5 Nxd5, but was unsure whether or not he could win this endgame. And in fact, the middlegame was more promising.

With the text, he takes away the f-file from the white rook, but he should probably have taken control of a different file, instead: **30...Qc2! 31.Rf1 Rf8**. Now 32.a3 fails against 32...Qd3 (double attack!) 33.Rxf7 Rxf7 34.Qe8+ Rf8 35.Qe6+ Kh8 36.Qxd5 (36.Qh3+ Qh7) 36...a4!? 37.Ka2 Kh7! 38.Qe6 (38.e6 Rf5!) 38...Qxd4 39.Qh3+ Kg6 40.Qe6+ Kh5 41.Qh3+ Kg5+. And after 32.Qb5, Black could choose either 32...Qd2, 32...Qxh2 33.Qxa5 Qxg3, or 32...b6 33.Bxb6!? (33.a3 Qxh2 34.Qd3 Rc8 35.Qf3 Rc7) 33...Rb8 34.Qd7 Nxb6 35.Qxf7+ Kh8 36.Qxe6 Nd5 37.Qh3+ Qh7 38.Qxh7+ Kxh7, in all cases with an obvious advantage to Black.

30...Qg4, expecting 31.Rf1? Rf8, with the bishop on d4 under attack, would be less convincing. White would reply 31.Rd2, and after 31...Qg5 32.Rd1 Rd8, he has the saving move 33.Be3!.

31.Rd1-c1! b7-b5

31...Qd2? 32.Rf1 Qxd4 33.Qxf7+ leads to a perpetual check.

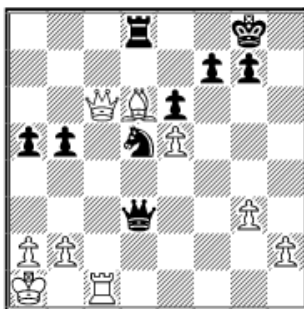
32.Bd4-c5 Qe2-d3

Again, the English grandmaster rejects the exchange of queens: 32...Qxe5 33.Qxb5 Rb8 34.Bd4! Rxb5 35.Bxe5 f6 – this endgame offers Black only a small advantage.

33.Qd7-c6?!

In Hodgson's opinion, it would have been better to play 33.Qb7, keeping an eye on the f7-pawn. However, after 33...Rd8 34.Bd6 b4, or 34.Be7 Nxe7 35.Qxe7 b4, White's position would remain difficult.

33...Ra8-d8 34.Bc5-d6



B?

Black has an indisputable advantage, but how can he make use of it?

34...Kg8-h7!?

Lembit gave me a rather funny look as I played my move. To say I was pleased with 34...Kh7 is something of an understatement – it is the one move that stands out from all others.

However, if one examines the position logically, it is actually not so difficult to find. Here is what went through my mind: my queen and knight are superbly centralised on d3 and d5, so there is no need to move them.

However, my rook is not pulling its weight on d8. How can I get it into the game? Simple – play my king to g6, and then manoeuvre my rook to f5 via h8 and h5!

What can White do against this plan of his opponent's? Could he, for instance, enter the endgame by **35.Qc2!?** If 35...Nb4?!, then 36.Bxb4? Qxc2 or 36.Qf2? Rc8! would be bad; and on 36.Qb1, Black would have the strong reply 36...f5!. He would have to play 36.Qxd3 Nxd3 37.Rf1!, meeting 37...f5 with 38.ef!.

Black's best choice then would be **35...Qxc2 36.Rxc2 f5!**. After 37.Rc5 g5 (or 37...b4 38.Rxa5 g5), he would obtain a powerful passed f-pawn, but it's unclear whether this would be enough of an advantage to win.

Black's idea – unusual, yes, but also completely in accordance with the worst-piece principle – was awarded two exclamation marks in all the publications. But there were, in fact, some serious alternatives.

For example, a different means of executing the same strategic idea of getting the rook into the game – **34...g5!?** – was worth considering. Black's plan of g5-g4, Kg7, and Rh8 is not easily countered. On 35.Qc2 Qxc2 36.Rxc2 f5, he reaches the endgame in a more favorable version, since his opponent lacks the time to attack the queenside pawns: 37.Rc5 f4 38.gf gf 39.Rxb5? f3 40.Bc5 Ne3+-. If 35.Qb7 (threatening 36.Be7), then 35...g4! 36.Be7 (36.a3 b4 is just bad), and now, not 37...Ne3? 38.Qc6, nor 37...Re8?! 38.Bg5, but 37...Qd2!, with a great advantage to Black (38.Kb1 Re8 39.Bd6 Qd3+ 40.Ka1 Kg7, etc.) On 35.h4, there follows 35...g4!.

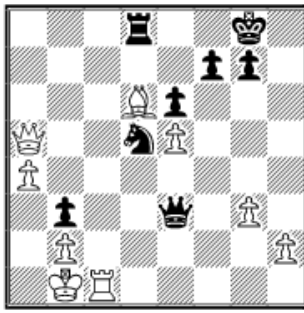
The best, and quite surprising, response to the g-pawn push was pointed out by Alexander Motylev. White can, in turn, justifiably move a pawn away from his king, too: **35.a4!!** ba 36.Qxa4, or 35...b4 36.Qb5 Qd2 37.Kb1, with an unclear position.

Additionally, the same reply – 35.a4!! – also lets White solve his problems in answer to 34...Kh7!?

And now, it will be easier for us to assess the significance of the simple **34...b4!** – which was, in my view, the strongest. For now, Black postpones the activation of his rook, in order to squeeze his opponent even more tightly on the queenside. This move is also useful if White is thinking about entering the endgame: **35.Qc2 Qxc2 36.Rxc2 f5!**. For example, 37.Rc5 g5! 38.Rxa5 f4 39.gf gf, and it will be very hard to stop the passed f-pawn. The attempt to make it harder to create a passed pawn, with 37.h4, runs into a strong riposte 37...Nf6!. In the variation 38.Rc5 (38.ef Rxd6+–) 38...Ne4 39.Rxa5 Nxc3 40.Rb5 Ne4 41.Rxb4 Nxd6 42.ed, Black does not continue 42...Rxd6?!, in view of 43.a4 e5 44.Rb5, but instead plays 42...e5! immediately: 43.Kb1 (on 43.a4, Black has the same response) 43...f4! 44.Kc2 Rxd6 45.Re4 f3! 46.Re1 e4! 47.Rf1 Kf7+–.

After 35.Qc5 Kh7!, the a5-pawn is taboo: 36.Qxa5? Rc8! +–.

And finally, on **35.a4**, Black has a good reply in 35...ba, and if 36.Bxa3, then 36...Nb4! Another possibility is **35...b3!?**; for example, 36.Qc4 Nb4! 37.Qc7 (37.Qxd3 Nxd3+–) 37...Ra8 38.Bxb4 ab 39.Qc6 Ra6+–. White could defend more stubbornly with **36.Qb5**, to which Black replies **36...Qd2!** (36...Qe3 37.Qc4 would be inferior) 37.Qc4 Nb6 38.Qf4 (38.Qc3 Qd5+–) 38...Qxf4 39.gf Nxa4, with a healthy extra pawn for the endgame. Or **37.Kb1 Qe3! 38.Qxa5** (on 38.Qc4 Nb6, we see the downside of White's unfortunate king move from a1 to b1).



B?

38...Kh7!! 39.Qxd8?! (39.Qe1 Qd3+ 40.Ka1 Ra8 41.Qd1 Rxa4+ 42.Ba3 Qxe1 43.Rxe1 Re4+→) **39...Nc3+!! 40.bc Qe2 41.Qh4+ Kg6+→.**

35.Qc6-c5?! Kh7-g6!

My king is perfectly safe on this square, as it is very difficult for any of White's pieces to attack it. White's bishop on d6 is especially ineffective – it is more like an overgrown pawn.

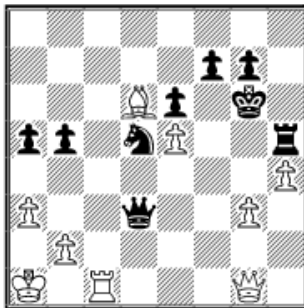
36.h2-h4 Rd8-h8 37.a2-a3?

Once again, it was necessary to exchange queens: 37.Qc2!, even though the endgame after 37...Qxc2 38.Rxc2 f5! would be a difficult one for White.

37...Rh8-h5

Psychologically, one can understand why Hodgson would not deviate from his intended plan to transfer the rook. But after the weakening move a2-a3, the rook could also be of service on the eighth rank. 37...b4 was worth considering; and if 38.Qxa5?! (38.ab would be better, to be followed by an offer to exchange queens), then 38...Rc8!. Taking the rook would lose by force: 39.Rxc8? Qd1+ 40.Rc1 (40.Ka2 b3#) 40...Qxc1 + 41.Ka2 Qc4+ 42.Ka1 (42.Kb1 Qd3+) 42...b3 43.Qe1 Ne3!→.

38.Qc5-g1



B?

38...Kg6-h7?

This error could have cost Black dearly. Hodgson apparently rejected 38...Rf5! because he was afraid of his king getting chased after 39.g4. But White's attacking resources are clearly insufficient: 39...Rf3 40.h5+ Kg5 41.Qh1 (threatening 42.h6) 41...Rh3 42.Qg2 b4-/→.

And 38...b4! would have been just as strong as before. Here's a sample variation: 39.Rd1 Qb3 40.Qd4 ba 41.ba (41.Bxa3 Rxe5+→) 41...Nc3 42.Qd3+ Kh6 (42...Rf5? 43.Rd2) 43.Qd2+ (43.Rd2 Rxe5!) 43...Kh7 44.Rc1 Ne4-/→.

39.Rc1-d1?

The double attack by **39.Qa7!** wins a pawn. Hodgson shows Black keeping the upper hand in the variation 39...Rf5 40.Qxa5 Rf2! (40...Qxg3 41.Qxb5) 41.Qe1 (41.Bc5? Rf1! 42.Rxf1 Qxf1+ 43.Ka2 Qc4+) 41...Qd4! (41...Qxg3 42.Rc2! Rf3 [42...Rg2?? 43.Qe4+] 43.Qe4+ would be unclear) 42.Rb1 Rd2!, “with total domination.” Well, not really: he won’t have time to make the planned move b5-b4, after his opponent replies either 43.Bc5 Qd3 44.Qf1 Qxg3 45.Qxf7 Qxe5 46.h5 unclear, or 43.Qf1 Nc3 44.Qxf7 =.

39.Qe1! would have achieved the same purpose, creating the threat of 40.g4, in addition to the attack on a5. In fact, White could also have pushed the g-pawn immediately: **39.g4! Rxb4 40.Qf2** (yet another double attack, this time on h4 and f7) 40...Qh3 41.Qxf7 Qxg4 42.Qa7 =.

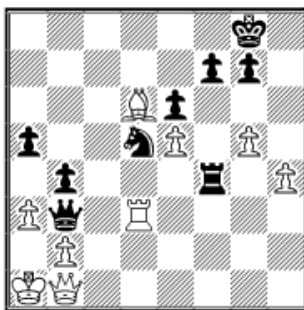
39...Qd3-b3 40.Rd1-d2

40.Rf1 Rf5 41.Rxf5 ef-/+ would hold out longer.

40...Rh5-f5 41.g3-g4 Rf5-f4 42.Qg1-b1+ Kh7-g8 43.g4-g5 b5-b4!

Black’s attack is irresistible. If 44.h5, then 44...Nc3! 45.bc Qxc3+ 46.Qb2 (46.Rb2 ba) 46...Rf1+ 47.Ka2 b3+ 48.Qxb3 Ra1# (Hodgson).

44.Rd2-d3



B?

The English grandmaster finishes spectacularly.

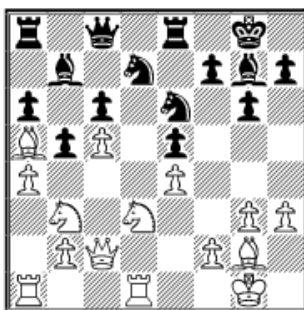
44...Nd5-c3! 45.Bd6xb4

Could Black have overlooked this reply?

45....Qb3-a2+!!

No, he did not. White resigned.

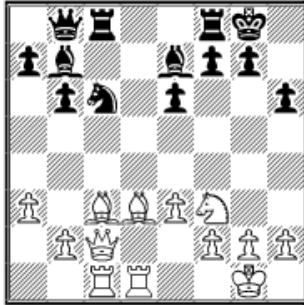
In conclusion, let me offer a simple positional quiz. In all examples, the worst-piece principle will help you to arrive at the correct solution.



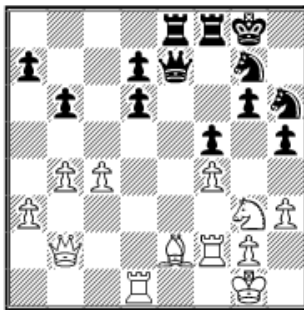
W?



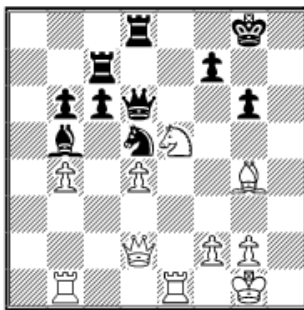
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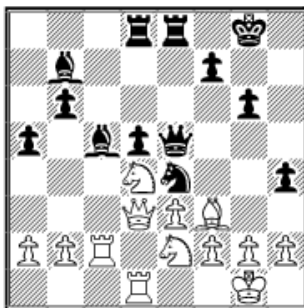
W?



B?



W?



B?

Solutions

1. *Korchnoi – Penrose*, Palma de Mallorca 1969

1.h3-h4! Bg7-f8 2.Bg2-h3+/-

By bringing the bishop into the game, White has considerably increased the pressure on his opponent's position.

2...Qb8 3.Kh2 Bc8 4.Bd2 Bb7 5.Be3 Qc7 6.Qc3 Rad8 7.f3 Ra8 8.Rd2 Rad8 9.Kg2 Ra8 10.Rdd1 Rad8 11.Qa5!+—

The most accurate way of exploiting White's advantage: if 11...Qb8, then 12.Bxe6 followed by 13.Nb4; or if 11...Qc8 12.Nb4, and White may proceed either by doubling rooks on the d-file, or by continuing 13.ab ab 14.Qa7.

11...Qxa5?! (the trade of queens leads to the destruction of his queenside) 12.Nxa5 Ba8 13.Bxe6! Rxe6 14.Nb4 Kg7 15.Nxa6 1-0

2. *Short – Vaganian*, Biel Interzonal 1985

1...Ng6-f8!

Transferring this knight to e5 lets Black take over the initiative.

2.c3 Nd7 3.Ra2 (3.Bb1 Nc5 [3...Bb6!? 4.Rxa8 Rxa8] 4.Qc2 g6) 3...Nc5 4.Bxc5? (4.Qd1!-/+ was better – White has no attacking chances anyway, and the dark-squared bishop is an important defender of his weaknesses) 4...Qxc5 5.Nd4 Bb6 6.Qb1 Ne3! 7.Re2 Qa3!—+ 8.Nb3 Rc7 (White can find no useful moves) 9.h3 h5! 10.Kh2 h4 11.gh (11.g4 Qa4! 12.Nd4 Rxc3! 13.Rxc3 Qxd4) 11...Rac8 12.Qa2 Qxa2! (12...Qe7 13.Qd2) 13.Rxa2 g6! 14.Nd2 Rxc3 15.Rxc3 Rxc3 16.Be2 Nf5 17.h5 Be3, and Black won.

3. *Petrosian – Smyslov*, USSR Championship, Moscow 1961.

1.Qc2-a4!

“A simple move, but with killing force. Taking the queen to the kingside gives White the opportunity to obtain an irresistible attack” (T.Petrosian). On 1...g6, besides 2.Qg4 or 2.h4, White could play the equally powerful 2.Be4, intending Rd7, or perhaps Bxg6 and Qg4.

1...Rfd8 2.Qe4 g6 3.Qg4 h5 (3...Kh7 4.Bxg6+! fg 5.Qxe6 Rf8 6.Rd7 or 6.Nh4) 4.Qh3 f5 (4...Rd6 5.g4 Rcd8 6.gh) 5.Bc4 Rxd1+ 6.Rxd1 Kf7 7.e4 Qf4 8.Re1! Qg4 9.ef Qxc4 10.fg+ Ke8 (10...Kxg6 11.Rxe6+ Kf7 12.Rxc6) 11.g7 e5 12.Qxh5+ Kd7 13.Rd1+ Bd6 14.Bxe5 Nd4 15.Nxd4 1-0

4. *Korchnoi – Hamann*, Buenos Aires Olympiad 1978

Black must bring the unfortunately placed knight on h6 over to f6.

1...Kg8-h7!

And Ng8-f6 follows.

2.Bf3 Ng8 3.Qd2 Nf6 4.Re2 (4.Qxd6 Qxd6 5.Rxd6 Re3) 4...Qf7 5.Qxd6 (5.Rxe8!? Rxe8 6.Qxd6 Re3) 5...h4 6.Nf1 Rxe2 7.Bxe2 Re8?! (7...Ne6 8.Bf3 Ne4 9.Qxd7 Nxf4 =) 8.Bg3 Rc8, and the game ended as a draw.

5. *Kasparov – Hübner*, 2nd Match Game, Hamburg 1985

1.Rb1-b3!

Once the rook is added, all of White's pieces will be participating in the attack. If 1...Qf6, then 2.Rf3 Qg7 3.Nxf7! Rxf7 4.Be6 Nf6 (4...Rf8 5.Bxf7+ Rxf7 6.Re8+) 5.Qf4 Rf8 6.Qxf6+—.

1...f5 (1...Re7 would have lasted longer) **2.Bd1** (2.Bxf5!? gf 3.Rg3+ is tempting, too) **2...Rg7** (2...Rh7 3.Rg3) **3.Rh3! Qxb4** (5...g5 6.Bb3+—) **4.Qh6! Qxe1+ 5.Kh2 Kf8 6.Nxg6+ Kg8** (6...Kf7 7.Ne5+ Kf8 8.Rg3+—) **7.Qh8+ Kf7 8.Qxd8 1-0**

6. Beliavsky – Geller, USSR Championship, Minsk 1979

1...Rd8-a8!—/+

2...Ba6 comes next. By bringing his light-squared bishop into the game, Black obtains the upper hand.

2.a4?! (2.Bxe4 de—/+; 2.Nc3 Ba6 3.Ncb5 a4—/+) **2...Ba6 3.Qb3** (3.Nb5 Nxf2!) **3...Bc4 4.Rxc4 dc 5.Qxc4 Rad8 6.Qb3 Rd6 7.h3 Rf6 8.Qc2** (8.Bxe4 Qxe4 9.Nc3 would have been better) **8...Ng5 9.Bb7? Bd6—+ 10.Nf4 Rxf4! 11.Nc6 Nxh3+ (11...Qf6!?) 12.gh Qg5+ 13.Kf1 Rf6 14.Qd2 Bg3 0-1**

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