



Theoretical Discoveries

Part 2

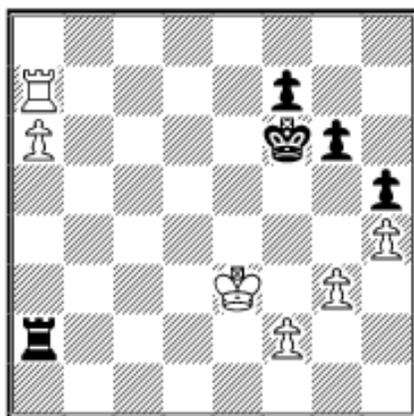
After the publication of my November column, in which the highly complex analysis of the important theoretical position of Kantorovich/Steckner occupied center stage, I had another exchange of letters with Johannes Steckner, leading to the correction of some variations.

COLUMNISTS

The

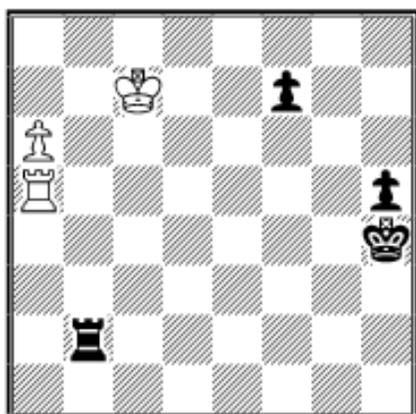
Instructor

Mark Dvoretsky



The assessment of **1...g5!?** hinges on the outcome of a lengthy and almost forced variation:

2. Kd4! gh 3. gh Ra5 4. Kc4 Ke5!? 5. Kb4 Ra2 6. f4+!! Ke6 7. Kb5 Rb2+ 8. Kc6 Rc2+ 9. Kb6 Rb2+ 10. Kc7 Ra2 11. Ra8 Kf5 12. Kb7 Rb2+ 13. Ka7 Kxf4 14. Rb8 Ra2 15. Rb5 Kg4! (on 15...f5 16. Kb6 Kg4 17. Ra5! Rb4+ 18. Kc7, White wins) 16. Kb6 Kxh4! 17. Ra5 Rb2+! 18. Kc7



I thought Black could save himself by **18...Rg2 19. a7 Rg8 20. a8Q Rxa8 21. Rxa8 Kg3 22. Rg8+ Kf3 23. Rh8 f5**. The concluding position of this variation is indeed drawn; however, White has better. Steckner found **19. Ra1!**, making it harder for the rook to return to g8. After **19...Kh3 (19...Rg8 20. Rh1+) 20. a7 Rg8 21. Rh1+! Kg2 22.**

Rxh5, White wins.

In search of a saving line for Black, I turned once again to the in-between check **18...Rc2+!**, which I considered a mistake, since in the variation 19. Kd7 (19. Kd8 is useless, because of 19...Rg2 and 20...Rg8+) 19...Rg2 20. a7 Rg8 21. a8Q Rxa8 22. Rxa8 Kg3 23. Rg8+! Kf3 24. Rh8! f5 (24...Kg4 25. Kd6 is bad, too) 25. Ke6, White wins (with the king at c7, this move is impossible, and there is no win).

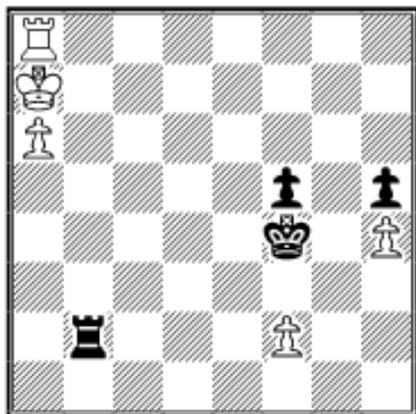
But Black must answer **19. Kd7**, not with 19...Rg2?, but with **19...Rb2!!** The point is that after **20. a7** (there's nothing better) **20...Rb7+ 21. Kd6 Rxa7 22. Rxa7 Kg3**, White's rook is on the 7th rank, instead of the 8th, where the Black pawn at f7 interferes with him. This small difference becomes decisive - Black is saved.

Along with 19...Rc2+!, Black also gets a draw after 19...Re2! 20. Kd7 Rb2!!, or 20. a7 Re7+ 21. Kb6 Rxa7. But after 19...Rg2? 21. Ra1!, Black can no longer fall back on the same defensive idea: 20...Re2 is not met by 21. a7? Re8 =, or by 21. Kd7?! Rb2!, but by 21. Kd8!! Rg2 (now Black can't play Rb2) 22. Ke7! and wins, since the rook, once again, is unable to reach the g8-square.

Vishwanathan Anand and Rustem Dautov have found a simpler way to draw. They examined **1...g5!?** **2. Kd4! gh 3. gh**, and now, not 3...Ra5, but **3...Ke6! 4. Kc4 Ke5**. The point is, that with the rook at a5, White wins a tempo with 5. Kb4, and after 5...Ra2 6. f4+!! Kxf4? 7. Rxf7+ Kg4 8. a7 Kxh4 9. Rd7(c7)!, the terrible threat of a horizontal check by the rook, followed by moving to the a-file and cutting off Black's rook, would decide the outcome.

But with the rook at a2, the king could not attack it, and in the line 5. f4+ Kxf4! 6. Rxf7+ Kg4 7. a7 Kxh4 8. Kb4 Kg3(g4), the draw becomes inevitable.

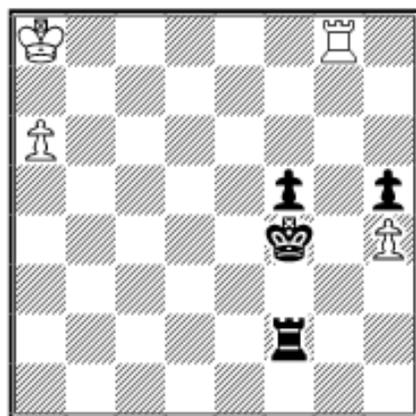
Therefore, White plays **5. Ra8 Kf4 6. Kb6 Rb2+ 7. Ka7 f5!**



8. Rg8!? (White gets nothing out of 8. Rb8 Rxf2 9. Rb4+ Kg3 10. Kb7 Ra2 =) **8...Kf3!** The best continuation, pointed out by Steckner.

9. Rb8 (9. Rg5 f4 10. Rxh5 Kxf2 =) **9...Rxf2 10. Rb5 Re2!** (but not 10...Kg4? 11. Kb6 Ra2 12. Ra5 Rb2+ 13. Kc7, with a winning position) **11. Kb6** (11. Rxf5+ Kg4 =) **11...Re6+**, etc.

Black's task is much more complicated after 8...Rxf2? 9. Ka8.



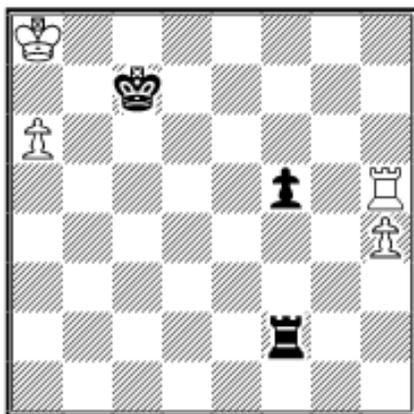
For example: 9...Rb2 10. a7 Ke3 11. Rb8 Ra2 12. Re8+! (a typical in-between check to win a tempo - the direct 12. Kb7? f4 costs the win) 12...Kf3 (12...Kd3 13. Rf8! Ke4 14. Kb7 f4 15. a8Q with a win, because the Black king has been driven from e3 to e4 - Steckner) 13. Kb7 Kg3 14. a8Q Rxa8 15. Rxa8 Kxh4 (15...f4 16. Kc6 f3 17. Kd5 f2 18.

Rf8 Kg2 19. Ke4 is hopeless) 16. Kc6 Kg3 17. Kd5 h4 18. Kd4! f4 (18...h3 19. Ke3) 19. Kd3! h3 20. Ke2 h2 21. Rg8+ Kh4 22. Rg7! (zugzwang) 22...Kh3 23. Kf2 h1N+ 24. Kf3 Kh2 25. Kxf4, and the knight is soon lost.

I also examined another, less standard defensive plan, beginning with 9...Ke5!?. The king heads over to the queenside, in order to impede the White king's escape from a8. He can't be prevented from this: 10. Rd8? Rh2 11. a7 Rxh4 =. And on 10. a7 there follows 10...Kd6! 11. Rg5 (11. Kb7 Rb2+ 12. Ka6 Ra2+ 13. Kb6 Rb2+; 11. Rg7 Rb2! 12. Rb7 Rg2 =) 11...Kc7 12. Rxh5 Re2 13. Rh7+ Kb6, with a draw. So White has to attack the g5-pawn immediately.

10. Rg5! Kd6!?. (Steckner gives the interesting variation 10...Rb2 11. Rxh5 Ke4 12. a7 f4 13. Rh7! - but not 13. Rh8? f3

14. h5 Rb5 15. Re8+ Re5 = - 13...f3 14. h5 Rb5 15. Re7+ Re5
16. Kb8! Rxe7 17. a8Q+) 11. Rxh5 Kc7



I thought that Black could get a draw in the variation 12. Rh7+ Kb6 13. Rh6+ Kc7 14. h5 f4! 15. Ka7!?! (15. Rf6 Rh2 16. h6 f3 =) 15...Rd2 16. Rf6 (16. Rh7+ Rd7!?!; 16. Rb6 f3 17. h6 Rh2 =) 16...Rd7! 17. h6 f3 =. However, Steckner rightly points out that White can win a vital tempo by playing 12. Ka7! at once. I shall give his main

variations: 12...Rh2 (12...f4 13. Rf5! f3 14. h5, or 13...Kd6 14. Kb7 Rb2+ 15. Ka8 Rb4 16. a7 Kc7 17. Rc5+ Kb6 18. Rc8 f3 19. Rb8+ Ka5 20. Rf8) 13. Rh7+ Kc6 14. h5 f4 (14...Rd2 15. Rh6+ Kc7 16. Rf6 Rd7 17. Rb6) 15. Kb8! (15. h6? f3 16. Kb8 Re2 17. Rf7 f2 = is a mistake) 15...Re2 (15...Rb2+ changes nothing: 16. Kc8 Ra2 17. a7, or 15...f3 16. a7 Rb2+ 17. Kc8) 16. Rh6+! Kc5 (16...Kb5 17. Rf6!) 17. a7! Rb2+ 18. Kc8 Ra2 19. Rh7 f3 20. Rc7+ Kd5 21. h6 f2 22. h7 f1Q 23. h8Q Qa6+ 24. Kb8 Qb6+ 25. Rb7 Qd6+ 26. Ka8, and White must win.

Our detailed analysis of the positions in the two preceding diagrams was done more on "sporting considerations", since it has no effect on the assessment of this endgame. Let me remind you once again of our main conclusion: the move 1...g5!?! is sufficient to draw. After 2. Kd4! gh 3. gh, Black gets a very complicated draw by 3...Ra5 4. Kc4 Ke5; far simpler is 3...Ke6! 4. Kc5 Ke5, and after 5. Ra8, the important thing is not to take the f2-pawn with the rook too soon.

However, Dautov has put forward the most secure defense, which is: **1...Ra4!**; if then 2. Kd3 g5! Now, 3. Kc3 gh 4. gh Rxh4 leads to an easy draw (as opposed to the analogous situation with the king at c5, after 1...g5!?! 2. Kd4! gh 3. gh Ra4+? 4. Kc5 Rxh4 5. Rb7 Ra4 6. a7, and wins).

In the November column, I mentioned that **2. Ra8** is also met by **2...g5**. Steckner correctly pointed out that Black obtains a

much simpler draw by 2...Kf5!, for example: 3. Kd3 (3. f3 Ra3+) 3...Kg4 4. Rf8 Rxa6 5. Rxf7 Kh3 =. This was published in the August edition of Karsten Müller's column, "Endgame Corner". There, too, we saw Steckner's demonstration that 2...g5 loses. And it is with this that I disagree.

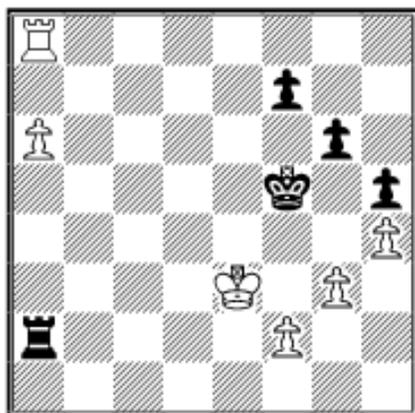
3. hg+ Kxg5 4. f3 (4. a7 Kf6 = Dautov) **4...Kf5 5. Kd3 Ra3+**. Steckner examined 5...Ke5 6. Kc3 Kd6 7. Kb3 Ra1, stating that after 8. Kb4? Kc7 9. Ra7+ Kb6 1. Rxf7 Kxa6, the position is drawn; yet after 8. Kc4! White's king stands, at the end of this line, a bit closer to the king's wing, which is enough to secure him the win.

6. Kc4 Rxf3 7. Kb4. Nor is 7. Rf8 Ra3 8. Rxf7+ Kg6 9. Ra7 Rxc3 10. Ra8 Ra3 11. Kb5 h4 dangerous, nor 10. Rc7 Ra3 11. a7 Ra1 12. Kb5 Rb1+.

7...Rf1 8. Rf8. 8. Rh8 runs into the same reply; and if 8. Rg8, then 8...Ra1 9. Kb5 Ra3! 10. Kb6 Rb3+ 11. Kc6 Ra3 12. Kb7 Rb3+ 13. Ka8 Ke4 =.

8...Rb1+! 9. Kc5 Rc1+ 10. Kb6 Rb1+ 11. Kc6 Rc1+ 12. Kb7 Rb1+ 13. Ka8 Kg4 14. Rg8+ Kf3 (14...Kh3) **15. Rb8 Ra1 16. Rb3+ Kg4 17. a7 f5 =.**

One final note: I was somewhat disappointed in my last example in the November column - the Kopayev/Dvoretsky position; I shall probably not be including it in the next edition of my book.



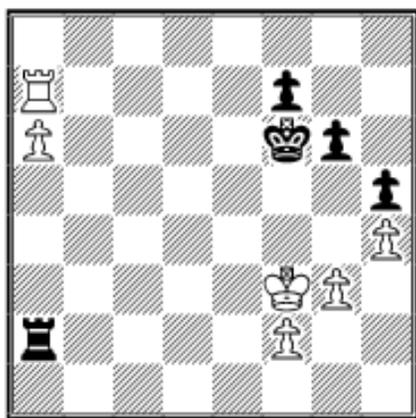
The problem is that, in reply to 1. **Ra7!?**, Black, it turns out, cannot only play 1...f6!?, but also **1...Kg4!?** 2. Rxf7 Rxa6 I thought, for some reason (without analyzing it) that the resulting position was difficult for Black; but now, after actually moving the pieces about, I cannot find any winning chances after 3. Ke4 Kh3! (or 3...Re6+!?)

4. Kd5 Re2 5. Rf6 Kh3) 4. Ke5 (4. Kf4 Ra5 5. Rf6 Kg2 6. Rxg6 Kxf2) 4...Kg2 5. Rf6 Ra5+ 6. Ke6 g5.

In fact, after **1...f6!? 2. Ra8 Kg4 3. a7**, Black can get a draw either with the **3...f5!? 4. Rg8 f4+!** I examined, or with **3...Ra3+ 4. Ke4 f5+ 5. Ke5 Kf3**.

Examples in which alternative means of achieving the goal are uncovered, become less interesting, and fail to leave a lasting impression. For this reason, I like to replace them with examples of higher quality.

Now let's look at some practical endgames, where very strong players suffered misfortune, although they could have saved themselves with correct defense. Knowledge of theory will help us make critical evaluations of their play; on the other hand, it probably will also allow us to find new ideas to enrich our current theoretical viewpoints. But for this, we cannot escape repeated immersions in piles of analysis.



Svidler - Akopian
European Cup, Kallithea 2002

Black to move

This is the Kantorovich/Steckner position, the only difference being that the White king is not so well placed at f3. This means that in some variations, Black has an extra

tempo, which must increase the number of drawing possibilities at his disposal.

51...Ke5

With White's king at e3, this move would lose; here, I believe, it's not bad. Black could also follow the "Dautov recipe":

51...Ra4!? 52. Ke3 g5, for example: 53. hg+ Kxg5 54. Ra8 Kg4 55. a7 Ra3+ 56. Ke4 Ra4+ 57. Ke5(d5) Kf3=. And the immediate 51...g5 works too (the only reply we have to worry about is 52. Kd4!, but here that isn't possible).

52. Ke3 Ra3+

In Informant No. 85, Peter Svidler recommends 52...f6 53. Kd3 Rxf2 54. Rb7 Ra2 55. a7 Kf5 56. Kc4 Kg4 57. Kb3 Ra6 58. Rb4+ Kxg3 59. Ra4 Rxa7. The sharp-eyed among you may perhaps recall that we have already seen this situation (in the November column): when we studied the Kantorovich/Steckner position; we reached it in the variation 4. Kc4!! f6 5. Kb4? Kg4 6. Kb3, and noted that it would be won with Black's pawn on f7, but drawn if it was on f6.

The move 52...f6 still appears dubious to me, in view of 53. Ra8 Ra3+ 54. Ke2, when Black would find it hard to avoid transposition to the won position from Unzicker - Lundin (after f2-f3 and a6-a7) without losing something.

53. Kd2 Ra2+?

The decisive mistake! Black had to use the same defensive plan as in the Kopayev/Dvoretsky position: the advance of his f-pawn. Here's a rough plan: 53...f5! 54. Kc2 (54. f3 f4 55. g4 hg 56. fg Ra2+ and 57...f3=; 54. Ra8 Ke4 55. Re8+ Kd5! =) 54...f4 (just not 54...Ke4? in view of 55. Re7+!, when the king cannot go to f3 because of 56. Re3+) 55. Kb2 Ra5 56. Kb3 (56. Ra8 fg 57. fg Kf5 and 58...Kg4=) 56...fg 57. fg Kf5 58. Kb4 (58. Rf7+ Ke6! =, but not 58...Kg4? 59. Rf4+ Kxg3 60. Ra4 Rb5+ 61. Kc4 Rb8 62. a7 Ra8 63. Kd5 and wins) 58...Ra1 59. Kb5 Kg4 or 59...Rb1+, with a draw.

54. Kc3

54. Kd3 would lead to the won position we have already analyzed. But of course, moving the king to c3 is more natural.

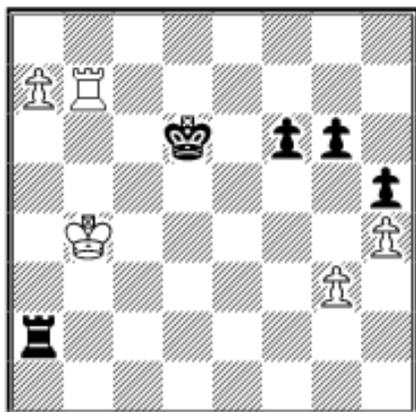
54...Rxf2 55. Rb7

The rook could also have gone to c7. Whereas the rook check we recommended with White's king on d3 is poor here: 55. Re7+?! Kd6! (55...Kf6 56. Rc7 and wins) 56. a7 Rf3+! (here's the difference: this check was not available in that line, because the king could attack the rook) 57. Kb4 (or anywhere else) 57...Kxe7 58. a8Q Rxc3. The rook is not lost, and Black

probably draws.

55...Ra2 56. a7 Kf6

In Svidler's opinion, Black could still have drawn by 56...f6 57. Kb4 Kd6 (57...Rb2+ 58. Kc5 Rxb7 59. a8Q and 57...Kf5 58. Rb5+ are both hopeless)

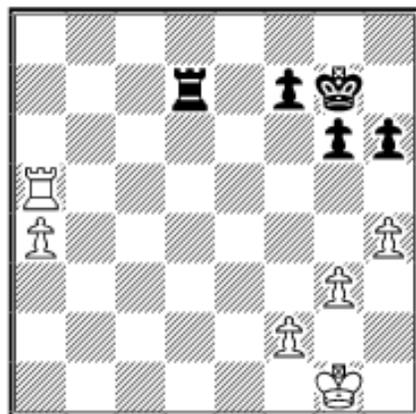


Steckner also analyzed this position (with White's rook at c7), but he came to the opposite conclusion. All that remained for me to do was to compare analyses. There's no difference in evaluation for the line 58. Rf7 Ke6 59. Rg7 g5 60. Kc5 Kf5 (Black's last two moves could be transposed) 61. Kb6 Kg4 - this is drawn.

But after 58. Rg7! Kc6, Svidler only looks at 59. Rxg6 Rxa7 60. Rxf6+ Kd5 61. Rf5+ Ke4 62. Rxh5 Rg7=; Steckner gives 59. Rf7! f5 60. Rg7 Kb6 61. Kc4, and White must win.

The concluding moves of the game are given without comment, since I cannot see where Black could have avoided his sad fate.

57. Kc4 Ra1 58. Kb5 Rb1+ 59. Kc6 Rc1+ 60. Kb6 Rb1+ 61. Kc7 Ra1 62. Kb8 Kf5 63. Rb4, and Black resigned.



Leko - Anand
Linares 2003

Black to move

Vishwanathan Anand undoubtedly knew that such positions, as a rule, are drawn. So it's not easy to understand why he avoided the standard pawn structure after

38...h5! After 39. Kg2 Rd3! and 40...Ra3, his rook is behind

the passed pawn, while simultaneously restricting the enemy king, and Black would draw without any special difficulty.

There was no need to fear 39. Rc5 and 40. a5 (or 40. Rc4). *Flank defense of the pawn by the rook makes sense only in one of two situations (neither of which applies here):*

- *a) when the pawn is far advanced (to the 6th or 7th rank); or*
- *b) when the rook defending the pawn simultaneously protects all the kingside pawns. Generally, this occurs when the a-pawn is on the 2nd or 3rd rank.*

38...Rd1+?! 39. Kg2 Ra1?

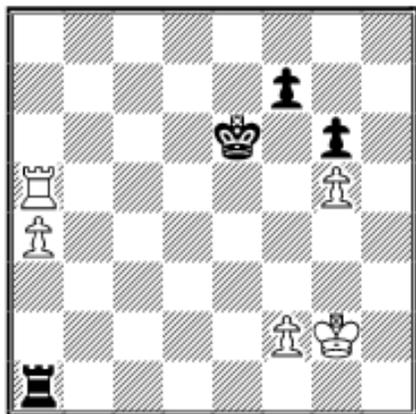
"When the engineer seeks new roads, the train goes off the rails." It still wasn't too late to play 39...h5, although this would be somewhat weaker here than on the previous move - White's king now has access to f3.

40. g4!

Of course! With this kind of structure, Black will find it much harder to create kingside counterplay. Also, in this new situation the standard schemes for counterplay are no longer applicable; Black will have to come up with a new defensive plan.

40...Kf6

At the end of November, I visited Denmark. There, IM Jacob Aagard presented me with the new book by GM Mihai Marin, *Secrets of Chess Defence*, in which he examines the endgame Leko-Anand. Marin's opinion was that "this is a good moment to play 41. g5+, when White should win without problems." I checked out this statement - I must admit that it was a rather superficial operation, due to lack of time - and was unable to find any win after 41...hg 42. hg+ Ke6.



43. f4 Ra3 44. Kf2 f5! (44...Kd6)
 45. Ke2 Kd6 46. Kd2 Kc6
 (threatening 47...Kb6) 47. Ra6+
 Kd5 48. Kc2 Ke4 49. Kb2 Rd3 50.
 Rxg6 Kxf4 51. a5 Kg4 52. Rg7
 (52. a6 Rd7 53. Kc3 Kh5 =; 52.
 Rg8 Rd5 53. a6 Ra5 =) 52...Rd6!
 53. Kc3 f4 54. g6 f3 55. Rg8 Kg3
 56. g7 Rd7 =.

43. Kg3 Ra2 44. f3 Ra1 45. Kf4 Kd6 46. Ra7 (46. Ke4 Re1+)
 46...Ke6 47. a5 (47. Ke4 Re1+ 48. Kd4 Rd1+ 49. Kc4 Rc1+
 50. Kb5 Rb1+ 51. Ka6 Rf1) 47...Ra4 48. Ke3 Kf5 49. Rxf7+
 Kxg5 50. Ra7 Kh4 51. a6 Kg3 52. Ra8 Ra3+ (52...g5 53. a7
 Kg2 doesn't lose, either) 53. Ke4 Ra4+ 54. Ke5 Kxf3 55. Kf6
 Kg4 56. Kxg6 Ra1 57. Kf6 Kf4 58. Ke6 Ke4 59. Kd6 Kd4 60.
 Kc6 (60. a7 Ra6+! 61. Kc7 Kc5 62. Kb7 Rb6+, but not
 60...Ra2? 61. Kc6 Kc4 62. Rc8+! and wins) 60...Rc1+! 61.
 Rb7 Rb1+ 62. Ka7 Kc5 63. Rb8 Rh1, and draws.

Of course I cannot swear to the correctness of these rough variation; I invite interested parties to find an improvement for White.

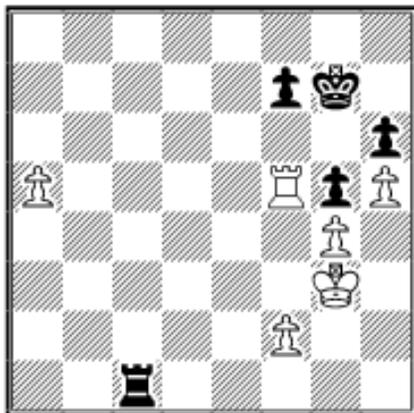
41. Kg3

Now if 41...Ra2, White continues 42. Kf3 Ke6 43. Ke3, followed by f2-f3 and Ke4. But the incautious 42. f3? would have led to a draw in view of 42...g5! 43. Rf5+ Kg6 44. h5+ Kg7 45. a5 Kg8. This pawn configuration is ideal for White: his rook defends everything, and he need only approach the a-pawn with his king. Unfortunately, however, the king is permanently shut in on the kingside.

41...Rc1

Anand changes his defensive plan. He will station his rook on the 4th rank, attacking the enemy pawn and restricting the movements of his rook and king. So Leko immediately removes his rook from the a-file.

42. Rb5 g5?! 43. Rf5+ Kg6 44. h5+ Kg7 45. a5



45...Ra1? This is inconsistent. He should have continued his intended defensive plan by **45...Rc4!**

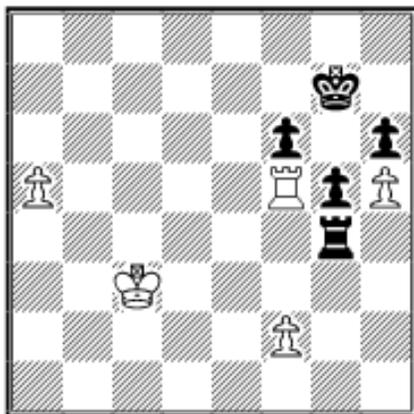
As Leko showed, **46. f3?!** allows Black to save himself by **46...Rc2 47. f4** (otherwise **47...Ra2**, and the king will never get out of g3)

47...Rc3+! 48. Kf2 gf 49. Rxf4 Ra3 50. Rf5 f6 51. Rb5 (51. Ke2 Kf7

52. Kd2 Ke6 53. Kc2 Rg3, with equality) **51...Kf7 52. Rb7+ Ke6 53. Rb6+ Ke5 54. a6 Kf4! 55. Rxf6+ Kxg4 56. Rxh6 Kg5 57. Rb6 Kxh5 58. Ke2 Kg5 59. Kd2 Kf5 60. Kc2 Ke5 61. Kb2 Ra5 62. Rh6** (62. Kb3 Kd5 63. Kb4 Ra1 64. Rh6 Rb1+ 65. Ka5 Kc5=) **62...Kd4 63. Rh4+** (63. Kb3 Ra1=) **63...Kd3 64. Rh3+ Kc4 65. Ra3 Rb5+ 66. Kc2 Rb8=.**

White would have to sacrifice the g-pawn by **46. Kf3 Ra4 47. Ke3 Rxg4 48. Kd3**, and here Leko ended his analysis, rightly concluding that Black would have a hard time drawing this. Which is true; because even though he has regained his pawn, he still has not created any real kingside counterplay. Nevertheless, can we give a one-sided appraisal of this position, and properly conclude that White wins by force?

48...f6 49. Kc3



Jan Timman (writing in *New In Chess* 2003 No. 3) says yes. His line is **49...Ra4 50. Kb3 Ra1 51. Kb4 Kf7 52. Kb5 Ke6 53. Rc5 Ra2 54. a6 Rxf2 55. a7 Ra2 56. Rc6+** and **57. Ra6**, winning.

Karsten Müller holds the opposite opinion. Instead of **49...Ra4?!** he looked at **49...Kf7 50. Kb3 Ke6.**

Here's his analysis:

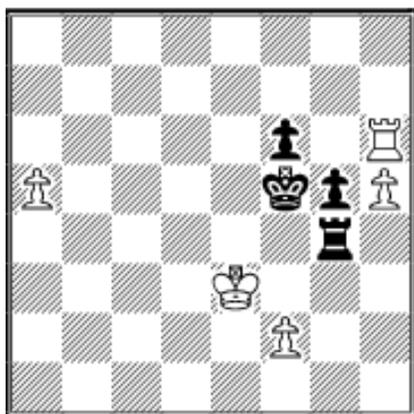
51. Rc5 Rg1 52. a6 Ra1 53. Rc6+ Kf5 54. Kb4 Kg4 55. Rxf6 Kxh5 56. f3 Ra2 57. Kb5 Ra3 58. Kb6 Rb3+ 59. Kc7 Ra3 60. Kb7 Rb3+ 61. Rb6 Rxf3=;

51. a6 Kxf5 52. a7 Rf4 53. a8Q Kg4 54. Qe8 Rxf2 55. Qg6 f5 56. Qxh6 Rh2 57. Qe6 Kxh5 58. Qxf5 Rh4=.

Now, there are many players (including the author of several endgame manuals, grandmaster Nikolai Krogius) who believe that in the "queen vs. rook plus pawn" ending, if the Black pawn (other than the rook pawn) moves off the 7th rank, his position is lost. But in fact, this evaluation does not hold with a knight's pawn, and the final position of Mueller's variation is in fact drawn.

Instead of 47. Ke3, Marin offered 47. Rd5 Kf6 48. Ke3 Ke6! (48...Rxc4? is bad because of 49. Rd4 and 50. Ra4) 49. Rb5 Rxc4 (49...f6? 50. f3) 50. Rb6+ Ke5 51. Rxc6 Ra4 52. Ra6, "and the white pawns look dangerous".

It would be more logical for Black to play 50...Kf5 51. Rxc6 f6



Here also, I do not see the win for White.

52. Rh8 Re4+! (or 52...Ra4 53. Ra8 Re4+!, but not 53...g4? 54. a6 Kg5 57. a7, winning) 53. Kd3 Ra4 54. Ra8 Rh4 55. a6 Rxc6 56. Rc8 Rh3+ 57. Kc4 Ra3 58. Rc6 Ke5 59. Kb4 Ra1 60. Rc5+ Kd4! - putting his king directly in front of its opponent, Black wards off the threat of blocking the a-file by 61. Ra5.

52. Rh7 Re4+! 53. Kd3 Ra4 54. Ra7 Rh4 55. a6 Rxc6 56. Rc7 Rh3+ (56...Kf4 57. a7 Rh8 was also worth looking at; this resource would not be available after 56. Rb7, but then the White rook is less well placed after 56...Rh3+) 57. Kc4 Ra3 58. a7 Ra1 59. Kb5 Rb1+ 60. Kc6 Ra1 61. Kb7 Rb1+ 62. Kc8 Ra1 63. Kb8

Kf4 64. a8Q (64. Rc3 Rb1+) 64...Rxa8+ 65. Kxa8 Kf3 66. Rc2 g4 67. Kb7 f5 68. Kc6 f4, with an obvious draw.

Now, let's return to Leko - Anand.

46. Kg2! (of course not 46..f3?? Ra2=) **46...Re1**

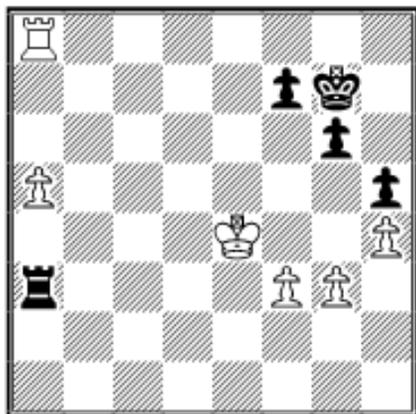
Another change in plans - Black tries to restrict the mobility of the White king by cutting him off on the e-file. In this situation, such a defensive method is as hopeless as waiting tactics: 46...Ra4 47. f3 Ra2+ 48. Kf1 Kf8 49. Ke1 Ke7 50. Kd1 Ke6 51. Kc1, etc.

47. f3 Re6 48. Kf2 Kf8 49. Rb5 Kg7

On 49...Ke7, 50. Rb7+ and 51. Rb6 decides. Here, Leko could have brought his rook around behind the passed pawn by 50. Rb3 Ra6 51. Ra3, with an easy win. He preferred to do some maneuvering first, hoping the Black king would go to a worse position.

50. Rf5 Kf8 51. Rc5 Kg7 52. Rb5 Kf8 53. Rb6 Re5 54. a6 Kg7 55. a7 Ra5 56. Rb7 Ra3 57. Ke2 Kf6 58. Kd2 Ke6 59. Kc2 f6 60. Kb2 Ra4 61. Kb3 Ra1 62. Kb4 Kd6 63. Rh7 Ke5 64. Kb5 Ra2 65. Kb6 Kd5, and Black resigned.

The following examples will enhance our understanding of the methods of attack and defense in such endgames.



Lerner - Dorfman
USSR Championship, 1st
League, Tashkent 1980

Black to move

58...Ra4+?

The rook is in an ideal position (keeping the White pawns under fire); it was the king that needed to be activated. After 58...Kf6! 59. a6 Ke6 60. Kd4 Kf5!, Black saves himself. For

69...Re8 70. Rc8! Re7+ 71. Kb6 Rxa7 72. Kxa7 Kxg3 73. Rg8 Kxh4 74. Rxg6, winning) 68. Kb6 f6 69. Kb7 g5 70. Rc8 Re7+, with a draw.

But White has one more possibility: 62. Kb4! Ra1 63. Kb5 Rb1+ 64. Kc6. If Black plays 64...Rc1+ now, then White should not continue 65. Kb7? Rb1+ 66. Ka7 Rb3 67. Rb8 Rxf3, but instead 65. Kd7! Ra1 66. Ke7, winning. On 64...Ra1, the decisive line is 65. Ra7! (but not 65. Kd7? Ra3) 65...f6 (65...Kf6 66. Kd7! followed by 67. Ke8, winning; 65...Ke6 66. Kb6 Rb1+ 67. Kc7 Ra1 68. Kd8 wins) 66. Ra8 and 67. a7, reaching our well known winning position from Unzicker - Lundin.

After the "theoretical" 61. Kc6 Rxf3?!, White could also successfully employ 62. Rd8! But if Black replies 61...Kf5!, White can no longer hit at the Black rook from b4 - this is why Vulfson's 61. Kc5! is the most accurate.

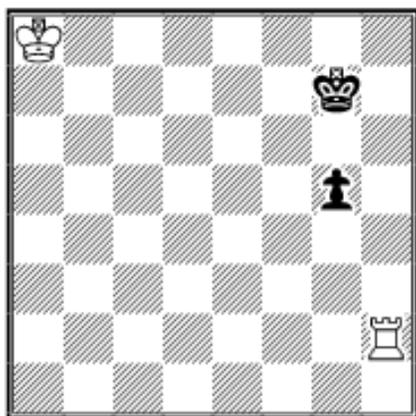
61. Rb8 Ra3 62. Rb6

With the king cut off, Black's position is lost.

62...Rxg3 63. Kc6 Ra3 64. Kb7 g5

64...f6 is no help: 65. a7 Rxa7+ 66. Kxa7 g5 67. Rb4!? Kg6 68. Kb6 Kf5 (68...gh 69. Rxh4 Kg5 70. Rh1 h4 71. Kc5 Kg4 72. Kd4 h3 73. Ke3 Kg3 74. Rg1+ - Y, Anikaev) 69. Kc5 g4 70. Kd4 (70. Rb1 g3 71. Rf1+ Kg4 72. Rxf6+ wins) 70...Kf4 71. Kd3+.

65. hg h4 66. a7 h3 67. a8Q (67. Ra6? h2) 67...Rxa8 68. Kxa8 h2 69. Rh6 f6 70. Rxh2 fg



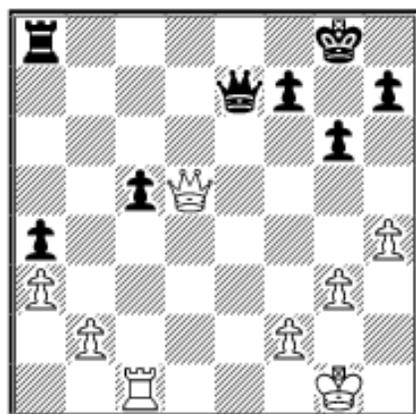
71. Rf2!!

Excellent! The rook prevents the Black king from "shoulder-blocking" its colleague, as in the line 71. Kb7? Kf6 72. Kc6 Ke5!=. One should not begrudge a valuable tempo in order to restrict the enemy king.

71...Kg6 72. Kb7 g4 73. Kc6 Kg5 74. Kd5 g3 75. Rf8! Kg4 76. Ke4, and Black resigned.

The 1999 World Championships in Las Vegas were an opportunity to fight for great prizes and the highest title in chess - and not just for all the leading players, but also for grandmasters of the second rank. A sharp contrast to today's sad state of affairs, with the unsporting and undemocratic politics practiced by FIDE in recent years!

It's well known, that in a mixed field, surprises are not just possible - in my view, they're even desirable! Such surprises as, for instance, what occurred this summer in Dortmund, where Viorel Bologan scored a brilliant victory. One of the surprises at Las Vegas was the silver medal earned by Vladimir Akopian. But who knows what his result would have been, if his opponent had put up a better defense in this endgame, which decided which of the two would qualify to the next stage.



Akopian - Kir. Georgiev
World Championship, Las Vegas, 1999

Black to move

Not liking passive defense (26...Rc8, with a small edge to White), Kirill Georgiev sacrificed a pawn to force a drawn rook

endgame.

26...Rd8!? **27. Qxc5 Rd1+!** **28. Kh2** (White loses after 28. Kg2? Qe4+ 29. f3 Qe2+ 30. Kh3 Qf1+) **28...Qxc5** **29. Rxc5 Rd2** **30. Kg2 Rxb2** **31. Rc4 h5!**

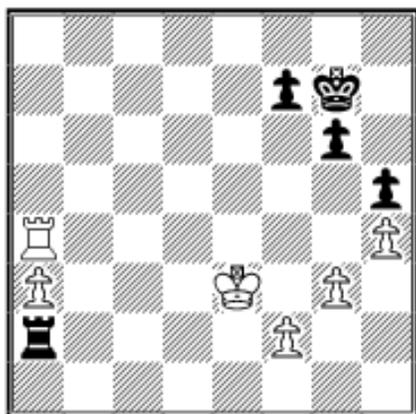
Unlike Anand, Georgiev sets up the standard pawn structure immediately.

32. Rxa4 Ra2

32...Rb3!?

 was worth consideration, restricting the mobility of the White king.

33. Kf3 Kg7 **34. Ke3**



34...Ra1?!

Just as in our earlier example, Lerner - Dorfman, Black fails to tend to the activity of his king. Perhaps Georgiev rejected 34...Kf6! because of 35. Rf4+ Ke6 36. a4, but then 36...f6! followed by g6-g5 drives White's rook from its comfortable position on f4,

where it defends all its pawns.

35. Ra6! Ra2 (35...Re1+!?) **36. Ra4?! Ra1?!** **37. Ra6! Ra2** **38. a4 Ra3+?**

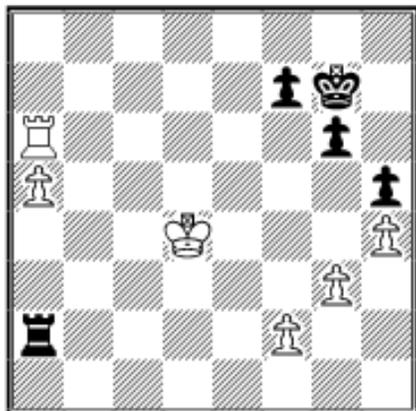
The same fatal strategy that betrayed Dorfman. True, here the a-pawn still has two more moves to make to get to a6; but on the other hand, in contrast to that game, White doesn't have to lose time bringing his rook from the 8th to the 6th rank.

After making the useful moves 38...f6! followed by 39...g5 on the kingside, Black should have obtained a fairly uncomplicated draw.

39. Kd4 f6?!

In this case, the mark "?!" indicates amazement. Black decides on the above-cited plan after all; but in that case, why chase the king closer to the queenside, and lift his attack on the f2-pawn? The rook check logically should have been combined with 39...Rf3 or 39...Ra2.

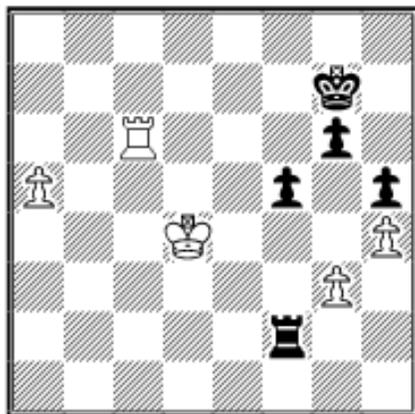
The position after 39...Ra2 40. a5 occurred, with colors reversed, in a game Krakops - Dautov, European Teams Championship, Batumi 1999.



Krakops declined to take the pawn; however, after 40...f6 41. f4! Ra3 42. Ra7+ Kh6 43. a6 g5 44. f5!, he had a lost position. The game concluded as follows: 44...gh (44...Rxc3 45. Ra8 Ra3 46. a7 Kg7 47. hg fg 48. f6+ Kf7 49. Rh8) 45. gh Ra4+ 46. Kc5 Rxc4 (on 46...Rc4+ 47. Kd6, the king easily escapes the "berserk" rook) 47. Ra8 Ra4 49. a7 Kg5 (48...Kg7 49. Kb6 Rb4+ 50. Ka5) 49. Rg8+ Kxf5 50. a8Q Rxa8 51. Rxa8 h4 42. Kd4 Kf4 53. Rh8 Kg3 54. Ke3 f5 55. Rg8+ Kh2, and Black resigned.

Let's look at the consistent 40...Rxf2 41. Rc6!

In the summer of 2003, Artur Yusupov gave a seminar with some young German players. During his demonstration of the Akopian - Georgiev endgame, one of his students, David Baramidze, suggested an interesting plan of counterplay: 41...f5!?



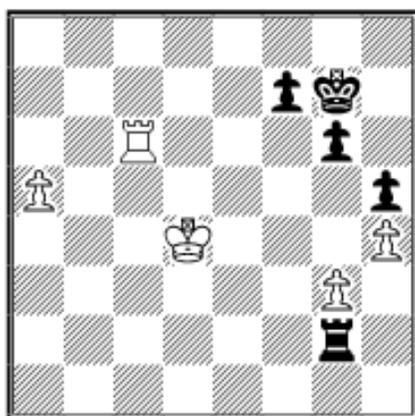
Black hurries to force matters on the kingside. 42. Ke5 Rf3 or 42. Kc5 f4 43. gf Rxf4, with 44...Rhx4 to follow, are not dangerous to Black - he can give up his rook for the passed pawn here, and draw.

Therefore, White plays 42. a6 f4 43. a7 Ra2 44. Rc7+ Kf6 45. gf Kf5 46. Kc5. On 46...Kxf4 47. Kb5

Black can only avert the a-file interference by 47...Kg3 48. Rc3+ Kh2, but then deflection wins: 49. Rc2+! Rxc2 50. a8Q - the position after 50...Rg2 is lost.

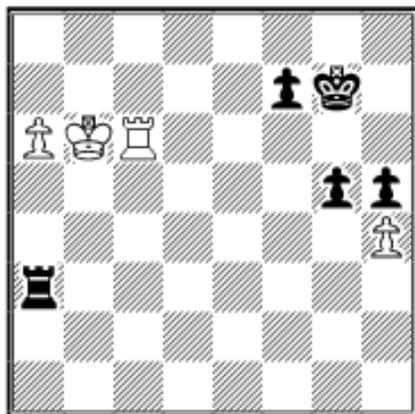
It would seem as though 46...Kg4 47. Kb5! Rb2+ (47...Kxh4 48. f5!) is stronger: on 48. Kc6 Ra2 49. Kb7 Rb2+ (49...Kxh4) 50. Kc8 Ra2 51. Kb8 Kxh4, Black is saved. However, Müller points out that White can play the interference card here: 48. Kc4! Ra2 49. f5! Kxf5 (49...gf 50. Kb3 Ra6 51. Rc4+ f4 52. Ra4 wins) 50. Kb4 Kg4 (50...Kf6 51. Kb5 wins) 51. Rc4+ Kg3 52. Rc3+ Kxh4 53. Ra3 and wins.

The main variation, of course, is 41...Rg2



After 42. a6 Rgx3 43. Kc5, the draw is still very difficult. For example: 43...f6 44. a7 Ra3 45. Kb6 g5 46. Rc8! Rxa7 47. Kxa7 Kg6 48. Kb6 Kf5 49. Kc5 gh 50. Kd4 Kf4 51. Rc3! (51. Kd3? h3 52. Ke2 h2 53. Kc1 Kg3; 51. Rh8? h3 52. Rxh5 Kg3=) 51...f5 52. Ra3 (zugzwang) 52...Kg4 53. Ke3 Kg3 54. Ke2+ Kg2 55. Ra8 wins.

Black can still save himself by playing either 43...g5! or 43...Ra3 44. Kb6 g5!, and now:



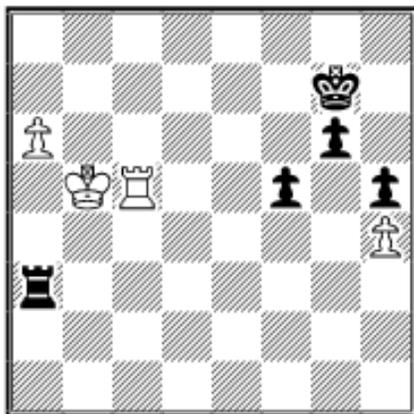
(a) 45. Rc5 gh 46. Rxh5 (46. a7 Rxa7 47. Kxa7 Kg6 48. Kb6 h3) 46...h3 47. a7 Ra1! 48. Rxh3 (48. Ra5 Rb1+ 49. Kc7 h2 5. a8Q h1Q) 48...Rb1+ 49. Kc7 Rc1+ 50. Kb7 Rb1+ 51. Ka8 f5 52. Rc3 Kf6 53. Rc8 Ke5 54. Rb8 Ra1=.

b) 45. hg h4 46. a7 h3 47. Rc3! (47. Rh6 Rb3+ 48. Kc7 Rc3+ 49. Kb7 Rb3+ 50. Rb6 h2) 47...Rxc3! (Black loses after either 47...Ra1 48. Rxh3 Rb1+ 49. Kc7 Ra1 50. Kb7 Rb1+ 51. Ka8 Kg6 52. Rh8 Kxg5 53. Rb8 Ra1 54. Kb7 f5 55. a8Q Rxa8 56. Rxa8 f4 57. Kc6, or after 47...h2 48. Rxa3 h1Q 49. a8Q, when White's king escapes the checks at h2) 48. a8Q Rg3=. White will have to give up his g5-pawn in order to eliminate the passed h-pawn, after which Black's rook goes to g6 with an easy draw.

For a while, I believed these complex variations demonstrated that the position with the capture of the f2-pawn was a draw. Grandmaster Dautov refuted this assessment by rather paradoxical means. Who would think that in the next-to-last diagram, White must avoid the absolutely natural move 42. a6?!, and instead bring his rook from the 6th to the 5th rank!

42. Rc3!! Ra2 43. Rc5 Ra3 (43...Kf6 44. Kc4 Ke6 45. Kb5 Kd6 46. Kb6 followed by 47. Rb5, and 43...f6 44. Kc4 g5 45. hg fg 46. Rxg5+ Kh6 47. Rc5 Ra3 48. Rb5 are of no help to Black - of course, the assessment of the final position in the second variation is not yet obvious; perhaps the reader would care to demonstrate it for himself) 44. Kc4 Rxg3 45. a6 Ra3 46. Kb5.

At first, Dautov only looked at 46...f6 47. Kb6 Kh6 48. Ra5 Rb3+ 49. Kc7 Rc3+ 50. Kd7 Rd3+ 51. Ke7 Re3+ 52. Kf7, winning. But then 46...f5! gave White much more difficult problems.



Nothing comes of 47. Kb6? f4 48. a7 f3 49. Rc7+ Kh6 50. Rc3 Ra1 51. Rxf3 Rb1+ 52. Kc7 Rc1+ 53. Kb7 Rb1+ 54. Ka8 g5 55. Rf6+ Kg7 56. hg h4 57. Rh6 Rb4=. In the line 47. Rc4?! g5 48. Ra4 Rb3+ 49. Kc6, Black does not play 49...Rb8? 50. a7 Ra8 51. Kb7 and White wins, but 49...Rc3+! (driving the king away from b7) 50. Kd7

Rd3+ 51. Ke6 Rd8 52. a7 Ra8 53. Kxf5 gh=.

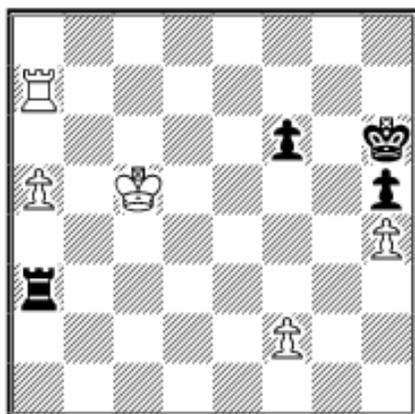
Dautov found a clever in-between check: 47. Rc7+!! Kh6, and only now does White continue 48. Rc4 g5 49. Ra4 Rb3+ 50. Kc6. Here 50...Rc3+ 51. Kd7 would be useless, as the king can hide from the checks at f7. After 50...Rb8 51. a7 Ra8, 52. Kb7?, which would win with the Black king at g7, now leads only to a draw: 52...Rxa7+ and 53...gh. But now there's 52. Ra6! Rxa7 (52...gh 53. Kb7+) 53. hg+ (or 53. Rxa7 gh 54. Kd5) 53...Kxg5 54. Rxa7 h4 55. Kd5 Kf4 56. Kd4 h3 57. Rh7 Kg3 58. Ke3, and wins.

This most complicated analysis leads to a simple conclusion: attacking the f2-pawn will not save Black. He committed his fatal error on move 38.

40. Ra7+ Kh6 41. a5 g5

41...Rf3 42. a6 Rxf2 43. Rc7 Ra2 44. a7 g5 45. Kc5 is hopeless.

42. Kc5 gh 43. gh

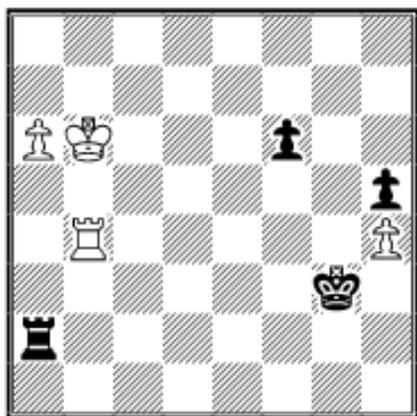


43...Ra4?

Yet another totally illogical move. It makes sense only in conjunction with capturing on h4; but Black cannot take that pawn. Of course, 43...Kg6 or 43...Ra2 were better. On the other hand, even then Black probably would not be able to save himself, despite the tempo saved. I

present herewith (with a few corrections) the main variation suggested by Steckner.

43...Kg6 44. a6 Ra2 (44...Kf5 45. Kb5 followed by Rc7) 45. Ra8 Kf5 46. Kb6 Rb2+ 47. Ka7 Rxf2 48. Rb8 Kg4 (48...Rf4 49. Rb5+ Kg4 50. Kb6 wins; 48...Re2 49. Rb4 Re7+ 50. Kb6 Re6+ 51. Ka5 Re7 52. Rb7 Re8 53. a7 Ra8 54. Ka6 wins) 49. Rb4+ Kg3 50. Kb6 Ra2



51. Kb5!! (both 51. a7? f5 and 51. Rb5? Kxh4 52. Ra5 Rb2+ 53. Kc7 Rg2 would let slip the win)

This last note was written a long time ago. But now, a few days before publication, I suddenly saw that after 53. Kc7, we get almost the same position that we examined at the very beginning (see our

second diagram): the only difference is in the position of the Black f-pawn. With that pawn on f7, 53...Rg2 is refuted by 54. Ra1!; here, with the pawn at f6, it's refuted the same way (54...Rg7+ 55. Kb6 doesn't help Black). And the saving idea 53...Rc2+ 54. Kd7 Rb2 is useless here, since after 55. a7 Rb7+ 56. Kd6 Rxa7 57. Rxa7, the rook has the run of the 7th rank - there's no pawn on f7 to interfere with the check he will give at g7. So 51. Rb5 does not let go of the win.

And knowing the outcome of the analyses made at the beginning of this article, we can also add that 47...Kf4 (instead

of 47...Rxf2) does not save Black: in the drawn position we studied, Black has an extra tempo, since his pawn is already on f5.

51...f5 52. Ra4 Rb2+ 53. Kc6 Rb8 54. a7 Ra8 55. Kb7 Rxa7+ 56. Rxa7! (56. Kxa7? f4 57. Kb6 Kxh4=) 56...Kxh4 (56...f4 57. Kc6 f3 58. Kd5 wins) 57. Kc6 Kg3 58. Kd5 h4 59. Kd4! h3 (59...f4 60. Kd3!) 60. Ke3 Kg2 61. Ke2 h2 62. Rg7+ (Black's own pawn at f5 kills him: if it were off the board, he could save himself here by 62...Kh1!) 62...Kh3 63. Kf2 h1N+ 64. Kf3 Kh2 65. Rf7!? (another way is 65. Rg2+ Kh3 66. Rg5 Kh4 67. Rg1, or 66...Kh2 67. Rxf5 Ng3 68. Rf8 Nf1 69. Kf2) 65...Kg1 66. Rxf5 Nf2 67. Rd5, and wins.

44. a6 Ra2

44...Rhx4 45. Ra8 Ra4 46. a7 Kg7 47. Kb6 Rb4+ 48. Ka5 loses immediately for Black.

45. Ra8 Kg6 46. Kb6 Rb2+ 47. Ka7 Rxf2 48. Rb8 Rf4 49. Rb5 Rxh4 50. Kb6 Re4 51. a7 Re8 52. Ra5 h4 53. a8Q Rxa8 54. Rxa8 Kg5 55. Kc5 h3 56. Rh8 Kg4 57. Kd4 Kg3 58. Ke3 Kg2 59. Ke2 h2 60. Rg8+ Kh3 61. Kf2 h1N+ 62. Kf3 Kh2 63. Rg2+ Kh3 64. Rg6 Kh2 65. Rxf6 Kg1 66. Rg6+ Black resigned.

The last example (along with the Lerner - Dorfman ending) brings us to the following useful conclusions:

The quickest possible activation of the king is an important priority for the defender.

With a standard pawn structure, the rook's placement at a6, in order to lock the king in at g7, can sometimes, from a practical standpoint, be no less dangerous than the advance of the pawn to a6.

The defender has a decent counterplan in f7-f6 followed by g6-g5.

My article has familiarized you with contemporary thinking in one of the most important facets of the rook endgame. As you can see, the theory grows rapidly these days, and I challenge my readers to take an active part in the process. Bring us new ideas, and correct the errors which undoubtedly exist in the highly complex analyses I have presented for you to study.

Copyright 2003 Mark Dvoretsky. All rights reserved.

Translated by Jim Marfia

*This column is available in **Chess Cafe Reader** format. Click [here](#) for more information.*



[\[ChessCafe Home Page\]](#) [\[Book Review\]](#) [\[Bulletin Board\]](#) [\[Columnists\]](#)
[\[Endgame Study\]](#) [\[Skittles Room\]](#) [\[Archives\]](#)
[\[Links\]](#) [\[Online Bookstore\]](#) [\[About ChessCafe\]](#) [\[Contact Us\]](#)

Copyright 2003 CyberCafes, LLC. All Rights Reserved.
"The Chess Cafe®" is a registered trademark of Russell Enterprises, Inc.