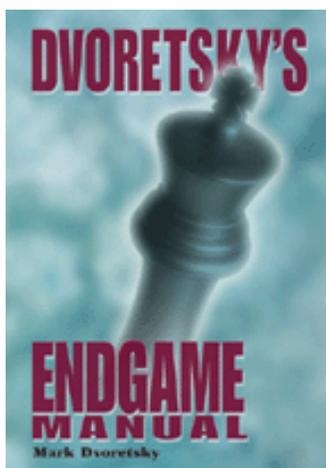




COLUMNISTS

The Instructor

Mark Dvoretsky



Grandmaster Technique, Part Two

Sometimes, a position may look (or even, in fact, be) absolutely winning, but a player will not succeed in winning it. Most often the reason for this is a loss of concentration (unless fierce time-pressure steps in, of course), and not paying sufficient attention to those few resources which may still remain, or which may accidentally find themselves at our opponent's disposal. A vital habit, allowing us to avoid this sort of error, is prophylactic thinking, which I write about literally in every one of my books. It comes down to placing oneself in the opponent's shoes, and constantly asking: What can he do here, what would I do in his place, if it were his turn to move?

In some of the following examples, the use of prophylactic thinking enabled the player to find ideal ways to exploit the advantage, which may not have been obvious at first sight. And in others, by contrast, these kinds of opportunities went unexploited, and the advantage disappeared.

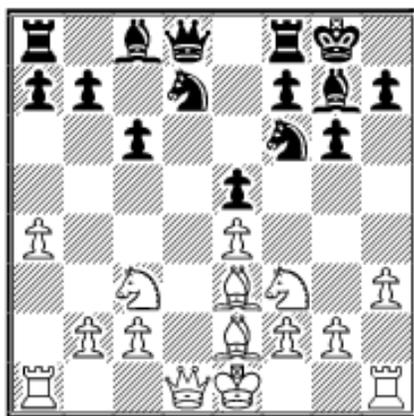
Xie Jun – Larsen

Monaco 1994

1.e4 g6 2.d4 Bg7 3.Nc3 c6 4.Nf3 d6 5.h3 Nf6 6.a4 0-0 7.Be3 Nbd7 8.Be2 e5 9.de!?

After 9.0-0, White would have to consider 9...d5!?

9...de



1. ?

10.0-0

Rather than this unsophisticated move, 10.Nd2! was stronger; if then 10...Qe7 11.Nc4 Rd8 12.Qd6!, with advantage to White (as suggested by GM Vladimir Potkin).

10...Qe7 11.Qd3 a5!?

Black forestalls the possible squeeze of his queenside by a4-a5. 11...Nh5!?, a typical maneuver in such positions with the idea of planting the knight on f4, or even continuing ...f7-f5 under the correct

circumstances, was worthy of consideration.

12.Qc4 Re8 13.Rfd1 h6

Black's last two moves are logically connected to each other: first, the rook clears the f8-square for the knight (which has just been denied the c5-square), or perhaps for the bishop; then the g5-square is placed under control, securing the f7-pawn against a sortie by the white knight. Such a plan of action is too slow, however. He probably should have preferred 13...Qb4, intending to meet 14.Ng5 with 14...Rf8, or 14.Nd2 with 14...Bf8.

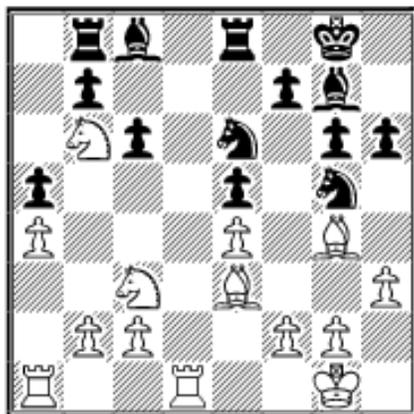
14.Nd2

White intends to retreat her queen to a2, and occupy c4 with the knight. By this time, 14...Qb4!? was necessary; however, Bent Larsen continues his kingside maneuvers, underestimating the strategic danger he faces.

14...Nh7?! 15.Qb3 Ng5 16.Nc4 Nc5?

The last chance was probably 16...Ne6, intending to sacrifice the exchange by 17.Nd6 Nd4! 18.Bxd4 ed 19.Nxe8 Qxe8.

17.Qa3 Nce6 18.Qxe7 Rxe7 19.Nb6 Rb8 20.Bg4! Re8 (20...h5? fails against 21.Bxg5)



1. ?

The knight at b6 squashes the enemy queenside; the pin on the h3-c8 diagonal is most unpleasant. There can be no doubt White has an enormous positional advantage. The only question is what the best technique to exploit it is.

It would be premature to try to force matters by getting the rook to d7: 21.Nxc8? Rbxc8 22.Rd7? (22.Bxg5 hg 23.Bxe6 Rxe6 24.Rd7 is stronger, when White still retains a small advantage) 22...Nd4! 23.Rxb7 Rb8: Black activates his pieces, and his position is no longer inferior.

Let's ask ourselves what our opponent would do, if it were his turn to move. Obviously, he would want to rid himself of the pin by playing ...h6-h5.

21.h4 suggests itself; after 21...Nh7 22.Nxc8!? Rbxc8 23.Bb6, Black's position remains difficult. But we would also have to consider the reply 21...h5!? For example: 22.hg hg, or 22.Be2 Nh7, with 23...Nd4 to follow – in both cases, Black has good chances to equalize.

White still retains a solid advantage with the continuation 22.Bxh5! Nh3+ (22...gh 23.hg, with a good pawn plus for White) 23.gh gh 24.Ne2! and 25.Ng3.

But the Chinese player's choice was stronger still.

21.Be3xg5! h6xg5

Thus, White liquidates the possibility of ...h6-h5, and maintains the pin on the knight at e6. But without her next excellent move, the complete bind on Black's position would not have come to pass.

What does Black want to do? Obviously, his best chance would be to disturb the dangerous knight at b6 by playing ...Bf8-c5.

22.Nc3-b1! Bg7-f8

22...Nd4 doesn't work: 23.Bxc8 Nxc2 24.Ra2.

23.Nb1-d2 Bf8-c5 24.Nd2-c4

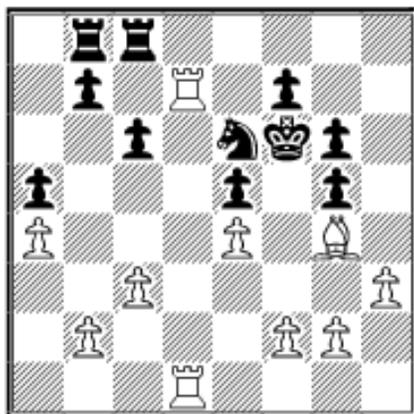
The knight arrived just in the nick of time, and now Black has simply nowhere to move. Meanwhile White will, at some point, invade at d7 with decisive effect. On 24...Rf8 (intending 25...f5), the simplest is 25.Nxc8 f5 26.Ncb6 fg 27.Nd7, or 25...Rbxc8 26.Bxe6 fe 27.Rd2, with a won position.

24...Bc5xb6 25.Nc4xb6 Kg8-f8 26.Rd1-d2 Kf8-e7 27.Ra1-d1 Re8-f8

Black has prepared ...f7-f5, but he never gets the chance to play it – White is now ready for the decisive incursion.

28.Nb6xc8+ Rf8xc8 29.Rd2-d7+ Ke7-f6

29...Kf8 30.Bxe6 fe 31.Rh7 was completely hopeless as well.



1.?

30.Bg4xe6 f7xe6 31.g2-g4!

White's next move will be 32.R1d3, with unavoidable mate (the immediate 31.R1d3 could have been met by 31...g4). Black resigned.

Some years ago, GM Vadim Zvjagintsev came up with a new plan for White in one variation of the French Defense, and suggested that I put his analyses to a practical test. We played two training games at a fast time control (15 minutes per game). Soon, there would be another test, at the Russian Cup, against a well-known expert in the French Defense.

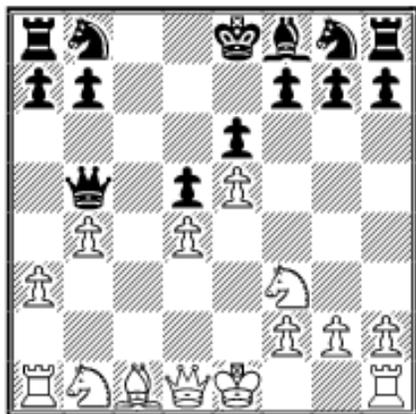
Zvjagintsev – Volkov

Russian Cup, Samara 1998

1.e4 e6 2.d4 d5 3.e5 c5 4.c3 Qb6 5.Nf3 Bd7 6.a3 Bb5

After this misfortune vs. Zvjagintsev, Sergey Volkov would switch to 6...a5!? With this variation, he played a pair of resounding games (with varying success) against Evgeny Sveshnikov and Peter Svidler.

7.b4!? cd 8.Bxb5+ Qxb5 9.cd



1...?

I was a regular on the black side of the French Defense, and was usually happy to rid myself of my “bad” light-squared bishop. These days, a space advantage is valued more highly than it used to be – many people are happy to play the white side of such positions. It’s no accident that the 3.e5 system against the Caro-Kann has also seen a sharp rise in popularity, with its early exchange of Black’s light-squared bishop.

The diagrammed position occurred in both training games with Zvjagintsev. Black has the choice of either continuing quietly, as with 9...Nd7!? 10.Nc3 Qa6; or of playing more sharply, starting with ...a7-a5. In our first game, I tried the tempting queenside break.

9...a5?! 10.Nc3

I continued 10...Qc4 11.Bd2 ab 12.ab Rxa1 13.Qxa1, and here, I stopped to think. I had planned to continue 13...Bxb4 14.Qa8 Bxc3 15.Qxb8+ Kd7 16.Qxb7+ Ke8; but I established that White could easily bring his rook into the game, either by 17.Qa8+ Kd7 18.Qa3, or by 17.Bxc3 Qxc3+ 18.Ke2, when there would be nobody to protect my king.

The search for an acceptable defense having proved fruitless, Black selected 13...Nc6 14.Qa8+ Nd8 15.Qa4+ Nc6 16.b5 Qxa4 17.Nxa4 Na7 (with the faint hope of defending the closed position after 18.b6 Nc6) 18.Ke2!, when Vadim confidently exploited his overwhelming lead in development.

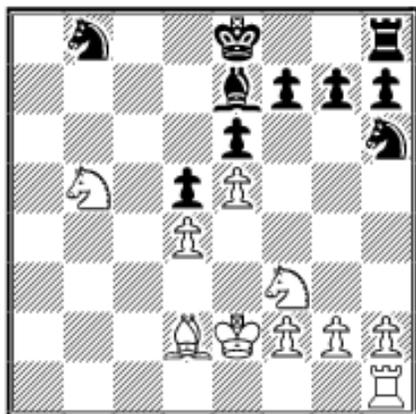
Volkov retreated his queen to a different square, but this did not change the way the game was going.

10...Qc6 11.Bd2 ab 12.ab Rxa1 13.Qxa1 Qa6 14.Qa4+! (the same technique he used in our training game) **14...Qxa4 15.Nxa4 b5**

15...Nc6 16.b5 would have transposed back into a position from the training game.

16.Nc3! (much stronger than 16.Nc5 – as in our game, Vadim aims for open

lines) **16...Bxb4 17.Nxb5 Be7 18.Ke2 Nh6**



1.?

White's solid positional advantage is, first and foremost, because of the unfortunate placement of Black's knights. It's important not to allow them back into play.

19.Rc1 suggests itself; but after 19...0-0 20.Rc7 Bd8 would be ineffective: depending on how White continues, Black could reply with either ...Nc6, ...Bb6, or ...Nf5-e7. On 20.Na7 Black continues 20...Re8 (with the

idea ...Nd7-b6) 21.Rc7 Bf8, followed by ...Nf5-e7, keeping a defensible position.

After some thought, the grandmaster discovered an elegant plan, allowing him to deprive both enemy knights of their mobility.

19.Nb5-a7!!

Later, I examined another way that White could play this position, which was also very strong: 19.Ra1!? 0-0 20.Ra7. 20...Nc6 is quite joyless for Black: 21.Rc7 Rb8 22.Nc3 Rb6 23.Na4 Ra6 24.Rc8+ Nd8 25.Nc5 Ra7. And on 20...Bd8 21.Bb4 Nc6 (the simplest reply to 21...Re8 is 22.Ra8) 22.Bxf8 Nxa7 23.Bxg7, White comes out a pawn ahead. But the game continuation is evidently stronger still.

19...0-0

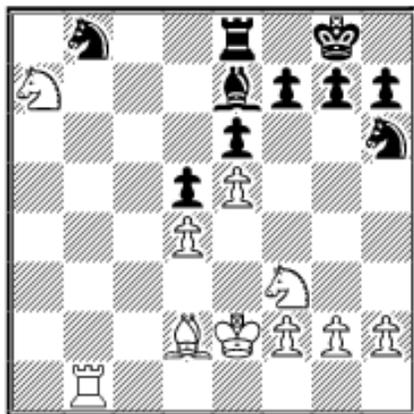
19...Kd7 loses to 20.Rb1.

20.Rh1-b1!

The rook stands better on the b-file than on the c-file.

20...Rf8-e8

Had Volkov foreseen his opponent's reply, he would probably have preferred 20...Nf5. 21.Rb7 Re8? is hopeless: 22.g4 Nh4 23.Nxh4 Bxh4 24.Bb4! and 25.Bd6, and the knight on b8 is lost. However, he could have defended by 21...h5! 22.h3 h4. Vadim would most likely have chosen 21.g4! Nh4 22.Nxh4 Bxh4 23.Rb7, intending both Bb4-d6 and f4-f5.



1. ?

But now White really must take 21...Nf5 into account, as well as 21...f6. For example: 21.h3?! f6!? (the knight heads for f7, but 21...Nf5 22.g4 Nh4 23.Nxh4 Bxh4 24.Rb7 Be7 is also possible) 22.ef Bxf6 23.Rb7 (23.Bf4 Nd7 24.Rb7 Nf8) 23...Nf5 24.Bf4 Nxd4+ 25.Nxd4 e5!.

And 21.Rb7 is also unconvincing: 21...Bf8, followed by ...Nf5-e7.

21.g2-g4!!

The point of White's plan! The knight on h6 is under arrest, as is the knight on b8. Black can no longer play 21...f6?, because of 22.ef Bxf6 23.g5. Also losing is 21...Nd7 22.Nc6! (22.Rb7 Nf8 23.Nc6 Ng6 would be less exact) 22...Nf8 (22...Bf8 23.Rb7; 22...Ba3 23.Rb7 Nf8 24.Ra7) 23.Nxe7+ Rxe7 24.Rb8.

Black's best practical chance may have been to give up the knight for two pawns: 21...Nxg4!? 22.Rg1 Nxe5 – but this is, of course, completely joyless.

21...Be7-f8 22.h2-h3 f7-f5?!

Passive waiting was better than this. The attempt at freeing himself meets with an efficient refutation.

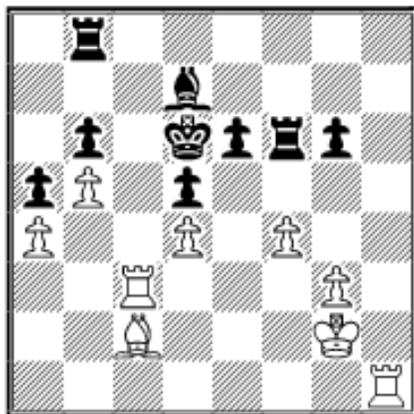
23.Bd2xh6 f5xg4 24.Nf3-h2!

Black evidently missed this. The rest is simple.

24...gh 25.Nxg4 Nd7 26.Rb7 h5 27.Rxd7 hg 28.hg Rb8 29.Nc6 Rb2+ 30.Kf3 Ba3 31.g5 Rb6 32.Rc7 Bb2 33.Kg4 Ra6 (33...Bxd4 34.Nxd4 Rb4 35.Re7 Rxd4+ 36.f4) 34.g6 Ra1 35.Ne7+ Kh8 36.Kg5 Rc1 37.Kf6 Black resigned.

Lutz – Dautov

German Bundesliga 1997

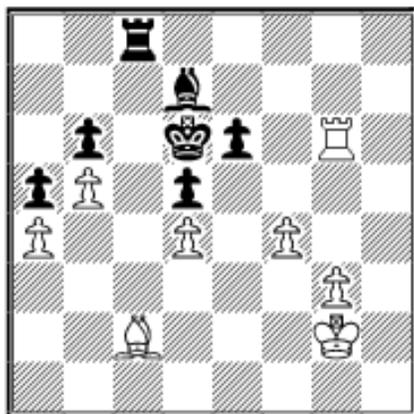


1.?

Black appears to be in a really bad way: his bishop is bad, he suffers from a space deficit, the g6-square is weak, and he has no counterplay whatsoever. But even in such positions (let me make that clearer – *precisely* in such positions), one must be especially on guard, to find and preemptively neutralize all of the opponent's active resources.

The natural move **43.Rh6?**, as played in the game, considered only the automatic response 43...Be8, when White would reply 44.Kf3, and Kg4-g5. But Black has the opportunity to generate some activity at the cost of a pawn, which Rustem Dautov duly exploits.

43...Rff8! 44.Rxg6 (of course White cannot permit the pin: 44.Bxg6? Rf6, to be followed by ...Rg8 or ...Be8) **44...Rbc8 45.Rxc8 Rxc8**



1.?

46.Bd1?! would be unpleasantly met by 46...Rc4. Christopher Lutz acknowledged that he panicked here, and took the draw. The finish was **46.Bf5?! Ke7** (White threatened 47.Bxe6 Bxe6 48.f5) **47.Rg7+ Kd6 48.Rg6 Ke7**, and drawn.

In his substantive and interesting book, *Endgame Secrets*, Lutz presented a fairly complex analysis to show that, with accurate play, he could still have maintained good winning chances. I have my doubts about his evaluation; but even if my conclusions should fall short of convincing some, this does not change the basic reality: clearly, in a position where White has so great a positional advantage, there was no point in allowing such sharp counterplay.

46.Bd3 Rc3

46...Ke7? is bad: 47.Rg7+ Kd6 48.g4 Rc3 49.Be2 Ra3 50.g5.

47.Be2 Rc2

47...Ra3? is a mistake: 48.f5 Rxa4 49.f6!; but 47...Be8!? 48.Rg7 Ra3 is quite playable, and probably leads to the same position as reached in the main variation.

48.Kf3

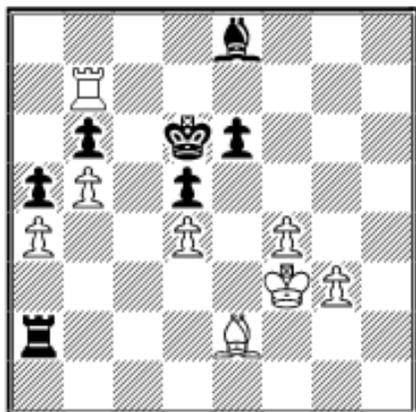
After 48.Kf2 Be8 49.Rg7 Ra2, White can't play 50.Rb7? Bh5; and if 50.Ke3,

then 50...Bd7 51.g4 Rxa4 52.g5 Ra3+ 53.Kf2 Rc3, with counterplay.

48...Be8

48...Ra2? 49.f5 Rxa4 50.f6 Ra3+ 51.Kf4 (threatening 52.Rg8) 51...Rc3 52.Rg8 Rc8 53.Rxc8 Bxc8 is a lost bishop endgame for Black: 54.Bd1 Bd7 55.Ba4 Be8 56.g4 Bf7 57.Bc2 (but not 57.Kg5? e5) 57...Be8 58.g5 Bxb5 59.g6 Be8 60.g7 Bf7 61.Bg6.

49.Rg7 Ra2 50.Rb7



1...?

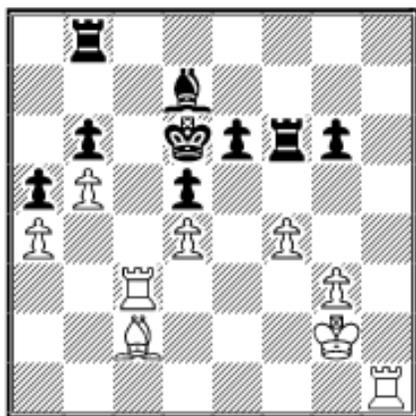
Up to this point, we have followed Lutz's analysis. His main variation is 50...Bh5+ 51.g4 Bxg4+ 52.Kxg4 Rxe2 53.Rxb6+, when White ought to win the rook endgame.

Black should retain the bishops.

50...Rxa4 (instead of 50...Bh5+?) **51.Rxb6+** (Lutz ends his variation here) **51...Ke7**

Black's defensive idea is to harry the enemy king and bishop with the rook. If 52.Ra6, then 52...Ra3+ 53.Kf2 Ra2, or 53.Kg4 Ra2 54.Bf1 Rf2. 52.Ke3 is met by 52...Ra3+, and the king is unable to approach the rook (because of the bishop's vulnerability), while after 53.Kf2, White has to consider 53...Ra2 (53...Ra4!?!; 53...Rb3!?) 54.g4 a4 (54...Bg6? 55.f5) 55.Ke3 Rb2.

But what should White play from the starting position? Using prophylactic thinking, we figure out the opponent's plan, and take measures against the rook's transfer to the c-file, by moving the bishop out of harm's way ahead of time.



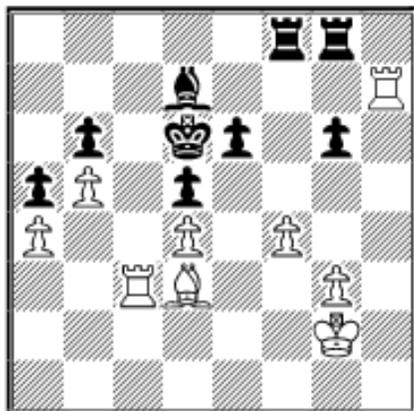
43.Bc2-d3!!

Now 43...Rff8? would be completely bad, owing to 44.Bxg6; and so would 43...g5? 44.fg.

43...Rb8-g8

Lutz continues with 44.Rh6 Rff8 45.Rxg6 Rc8 46.Rxc8 Rxc8 47.f5, which is of course enough to win. Vadim Zvjagintsev found another, more interesting plan.

44.Rh1-h7!? Rf6-f8



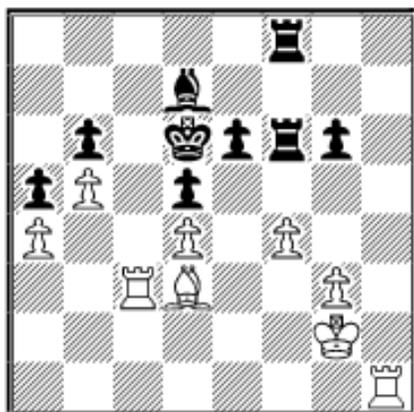
1.?

Now comes a spectacular, decisive blow:

45.Rc3-c6+!! Bd7xc6 46.b5xc6

Mate is threatened by 47.Rd7+ Kxc6 48.Bb5; and nothing is changed by 46...Kxc6 47.Bb5+ Kd6 48.Rd7#. And 46...Rd8 47.Bb5, or 46...e5 47.fe+, are hopeless, too.

Black's best chance is **43...Rbf8!?**, intending to continue with 44...g5.

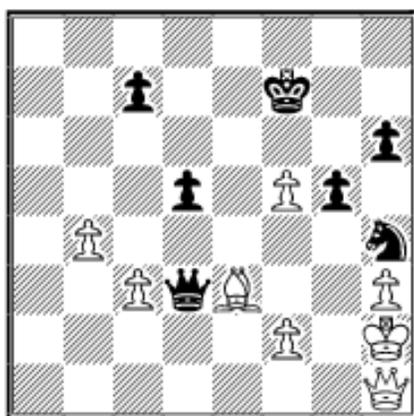


1.?

44.Rc2 g5 45.fg Rf3 46.Bh7 Ra3 47.g6 Rff3 48.Rg1!? Rxg3+ 49.Kh1 Be8 50.g7 Bf7 is unconvincing. However, **44.Rh6 g5 45.Rxf6 Rxf6 46.fg Rf8 47.g6 Rg8** (47...e5 48.de+ Kxe5 49.Rc7 Be6 50.Rb7) **48.Kf3 e5 49.de+ Kxe5 50.Rc7** would leave White with a considerable advantage.

Timman – Kasparov

USSR – Rest of the World Match, London 1984



1...?

Black's positional advantage is obvious, but it's not easily exploited. Every possible move, when subjected to careful scrutiny, reveals some shortcoming.

Of course, Black would like to take the pawn. But 49...Qxf5?! allows the strong reply 50.Qd1!, preparing not just the check on h5, but also 51.Qg4.

On 49...Nxf5?!, White has the tactical resource 50.Bd4!, when Black cannot play 50...Nxd4? 51.Qxd5+; and if he shores up the d5-pawn by 50...c6, his king is exposed, and White's queen breaks out with 51.Qa1.

Upon the immediate 49...c6?!, the same reply 50.Qa1! is still good.

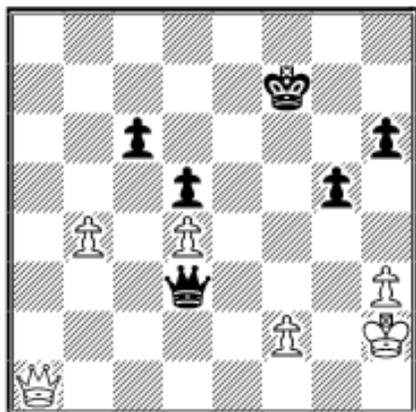
49...h5?! is tempting, since the pawn is taboo: 50.Bxg5?? Nf3+. On 50.b5 Qxf5 51.Qd1, Black would not play 51...Nf3+?! 52.Kg2 g4 53.hg Qxg4+ 54.Kf1 Qe4 (54...Ke6 55.Qd3) 55.Kg2!, but simply 51...Kg6!, with an overwhelming

advantage. A possible continuation: 52.b6 Qe4! 53.Qh1 Qe5+ 54.Kg1 cb 55.Bxb6 Qe6!, followed by 56...g4.

What saves White here is the pretty reply, pointed out by Kasparov: 50.c4!! Qxc4 (50...dc 51.Qc6) 51.Bxg5 (now 51...Nf3+ is prevented) 51...Nxf5 52.Qf3.

It appears that we have examined all the reasonable continuations, and found no solution. Nor did Garry Kasparov find one.

49...Nxf5?! 50.Bd4! c6 51.Qa1 Nxd4 (51...Qf3 52.Qa8!) 52.cd



1...

White's pawns are weak; however, the exposed position of the enemy king gives him sufficient counterchances.

52...Qd2

On 52...Qf3, Kasparov gives the line 53.Qa7+ Kg6 54.Kg1 Qxh3 55.Qb6 Qe6 56.b5, with equality. Instead of 53...Kg6, it would be a good idea to try 53...Kf6?!?, when 54.Kg1!?

Qxh3 is no longer effective, since after 55.Qb6 Qe6 there is no 6th-rank pin – the queen is defended by the king. White would have to play 54.Qa2, and if 54...Qf4+ 55.Kg1 Qxd4, then 56.Qa8.

53.Qa7+ Kg6 54.Kg2 Qxb4 55.Qd7! Qxd4 56.Qe8+

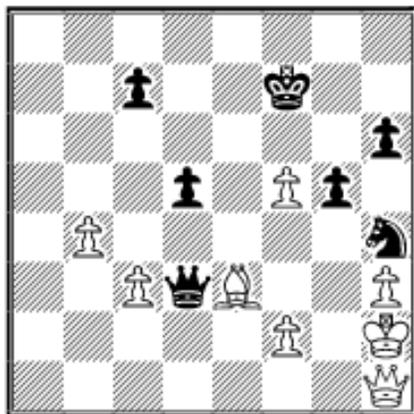
Timman is in no hurry to take the pawn (56.Qxc6+ Kh5) – first, he hopes to draw the Black pieces to inferior squares.

56...Kf5?!

As noted by Kasparov, the only way to continue fighting for the win was by 56...Kh7 57.Qd7+ Qg7 – nevertheless, the position after 58.Qf5+ Qg6 59.Qd7+ Kg8 60.Qd8+ Kg7 61.Qd7+ Qf7 (61...Kf8 62.Qd8+ Qe8 6.Qf6+ Kg8 64.Qxh6) 62.Qxc6 Qf5 is objectively drawn.

57.Qd7+ Kf4?! (57...Kg6) 58.Qf7+ Drawn.

Let's go back to the initial position. Note that White is completely tied up – not only is he unable to improve his position, but it's hard to suggest a move that would not weaken him. Nevertheless, Black is facing the same problem, since his pieces are already ideally placed. The only way to play for zugzwang is to come up with a non-obvious king retreat.



49...Kf7-g8!!

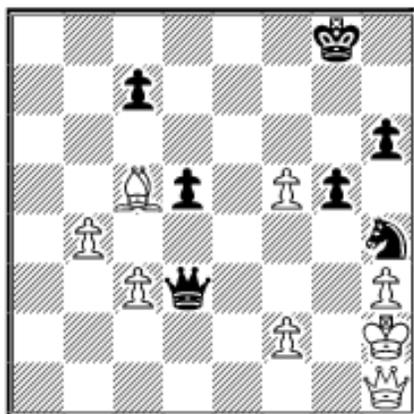
Now let's examine White's replies.

50.f6 Kf7 doesn't improve matters for White, who faces a difficult choice once again.

50.Qa1 hands over an important central square to the enemy: **50...Qe4! 51.Qh1 Qe5+** (or, per Kasparov: **51...Nf3+ 52.Kg3 Qe5+ 53.Kg2 Nh4+ 54.Kf1 Qxf5**) **52.Kg1 Qxf5** – the pawn at f5 has been taken, while the

enemy pieces are still boxed into the corner.

Now, let's look at **50.Bc5**.



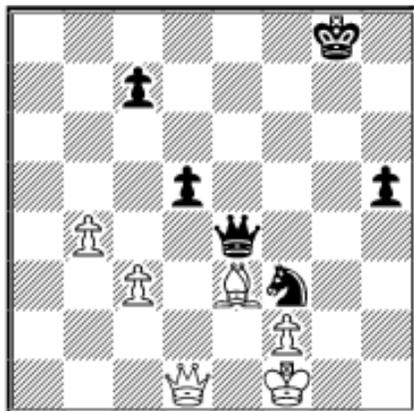
1...?

Kasparov gives **50...h5** (and appends an exclamation mark) **51.Be3 Qxf5**, missing the best defense: **51.Qc1! Kf7** (or **51...Qxf5**) **52.Qe3**.

Black retains a great advantage by playing **50...Nf3+! 51.Kg3** (after **51.Kg2**, both **51...Kf7 52.Be3 h5** and **51...Qxc3 52.Qd1 Qe5** are good) **51...Nd2+ 52.Kh2** (**52.Be3 Nf1+ 53.Kg2 Nxe3+ 54.fe Qe2+ 55.Kg3**

Qxe3+ – with an easily won pawn endgame) **52...Kf7**.

After **50.Bd4**, the tempting **50...Qxf5** is not completely convincing: **51.Qd1 Qf4+ 52.Kg1 Nf3+ 53.Kg2 g4 54.hg Qxg4+ 55.Kf1 Qe4 56.Be3 h5**.

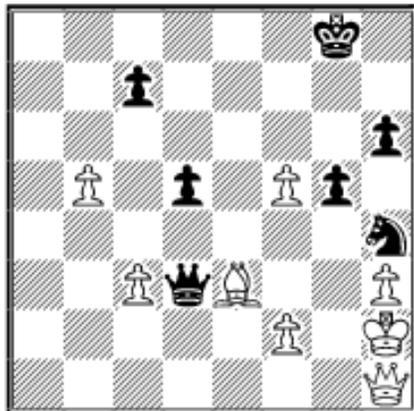


1.?

White parries the threatened advance of the h-pawn with the surprising **57.Kg2!**.

50...Nf3+ 51.Kg2 Qe4 would be much stronger: after **52.Be3**, Black may continue as in the **50.Qa1** variation: **52...Nh4+ 53.Kh2 Qe5+ 54.Kg1 Qxf5**.

All that remains is the desperate try **50.b5!?**



1...?

– which is only justified after Kasparov's suggested response, 50...Kf7 (once again, his exclamation mark should be replaced by a question mark) 51.b6! cb 52.Qa1, with counterplay. Black should content himself with a healthy extra pawn after **50...Qxb5 51.Qd1 Nxf5**.

And so, the move 49...Kg8!! would have retained Black's enormous advantage, probably enough to win.

Understandably, finding the key to this position was most complex, even under the classical time-control which was the rule at that time for all games played in serious competition. And it would be completely impossible, under the idiotic short control enforced today by FIDE. If, God forbid, these bureaucrats are successful, then finely-conceived, deep ideas will disappear completely from tournament chess (except, of course, for opening analyses, prepared with the aid of computer programs). And what will then be left for chess-lovers to enjoy: the standard plans and techniques, or the simple little combinations we have already seen a thousand times? It won't take an oracle to foresee terrible consequences in store, both for chess literature, and for the popularity of chess in general.

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