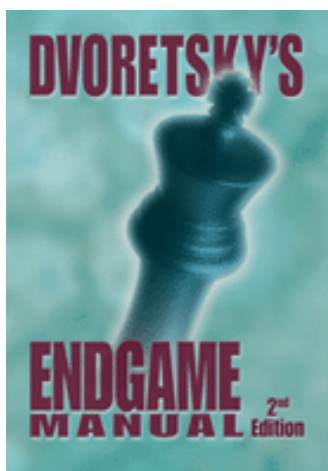




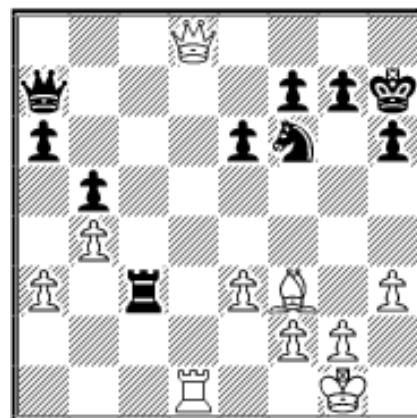
COLUMNISTS

The
Instructor
Mark Dvoretsky



New Surprises in Calculating Variations

Once again, our diagram displays “the Miles Position.” I published a detailed analysis of it in May 2006, entitled [Surprises in Calculating Variations](#). The article ended by extolling the richness of ideas in chess. But I could have never guessed that unraveling the secrets of such a simple and natural-looking position would turn out to be so exceptionally difficult, or that its study would yield so many deep, subtle, and occasionally also very beautiful variations. Even knowing that chess is inexhaustible – I still could not guess that I would have to prepare yet another column on the very same theme, so soon after publishing the previous one. The reason for this was the response of my readers – to whom I am genuinely grateful.



In the computerized era, our approach to decision making over-the-board, and still more in analysis, has become considerably more concrete. Chessplayers no longer believe in generalizations – they require exact proof, with variations. But this fact does not reduce the importance of skillful positional assessment.

Correct assessment helps decide the proper direction in which to search, to concentrate on studying the most important lines, and thus avoid unnecessary labor, saving time and energy. Calculating all variations to the end is something we lack the ability to do; this is why we must rely on generalizations (and sometimes on gut feelings) about both the starting position and about positions that arise in the course of our calculations. Our judgments or feelings are sometimes right – but they can also be wrong, in which case the results are usually dire.

Nimzovitch wrote, “to play positional chess means to express our judgments, and then strive to prove they are correct.” Judgments are usually based on our intuitive grasp of the position on the board. One of the best ways to develop a positional sense is the analytical testing of our intuitive judgments. In this way, we deepen and refine our understanding of many different types of positional problems and rid ourselves of misapprehensions.

When we test our intuitions, it’s important to know how to steer between the Scylla of uncertainty and the Charybdis of stubbornness. We should not alter our opinion at the first sign of difficulty; nor should we stubbornly adhere to it,

despite ever growing signs that it is wrong.

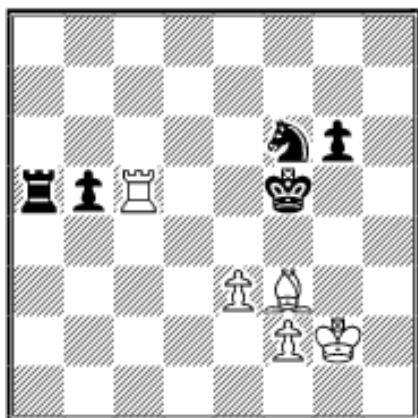
In this article, we shall encounter a great number of evaluative problems, whose solutions are unclear to me. Sometimes, in such situations, I will give my own opinion and present a few variations; in others, I will only give the problem itself. The reader should develop their own suggestions, and perhaps begin moving the pieces about with a friend whose opinion differs. And if you're a trainer, it would make sense to go over these problems with your pupils. Let me repeat: this kind of work is exceptionally useful in developing a player's positional understanding.

Here's an example of this sort of problem. One reader, named Igor, writes:

Most likely, the concluding position is still closer to a draw.

He's apparently referring to the concluding position of the previous article. This position came about after what was supposed to be best play for both sides.

Evaluative Problem No. 1



After 14...Ke6, White plays 15 Be2 or 15 Bc6, winning the b5-pawn. I wrote, "In chess terminology, this position is "±" – White has the advantage, but no guaranteed win." Igor was less optimistic and evaluated the position as "more like fifty-fifty." I'll let the readers decide as to which of us was closer to the truth.

In any case, whether Igor was right or not, his judgment was quite sound, which means it deserves to be taken seriously. (Sound judgments may also be in error, just as formally correct ones can transpire to be totally wrong. But I will not develop this interesting theme any further here.)

Igor's other judgment was: "White had to have more somewhere..." I agree, but at the same time I refuse to believe that, in a position with an indisputable-looking advantage, White can only maintain winning chances by keeping to a narrow path of exceptionally accurate moves. Such feelings are very important – they usually stimulate us to search for new possibilities.

In order to make what follows easier to understand, I will cite, in edited form, the main conclusions of the previous article.

White has an elegant combination to trap the queen: 1 Be4+!? Nxe4 2 Rd7. Of Black's many possible defenses, only one – 2...Rc1+! 3 Kh2 Nd2! (threatening perpetual check), and if 4 h4, then 4...Rd1!! – can save him.

The positional plan of a kingside pawn storm: 1 g4! a5! 2 h4! (or 1 h4!

a5! 2 g4!) is very dangerous for Black. However, with 2...Qc7!, he avoids immediate danger in favor of an inferior endgame. Best play for both sides reaches the position we have just seen.

For a fuller, more detailed understanding of the problems confronting both sides, I recommend that you review my earlier [article](#).

The article also appeared on the *Chesspro.ru* website, after which I received a letter from Emil Sutovsky. The grandmaster attempted to resolve Miles' Position, and...

After 10 minutes thought, I found a couple of promising ideas, which I then decided to compare with your conclusions. And here was a surprise – chess is, indeed, inexhaustible – my moves had not really been analyzed in the text.

Sutovsky checked his ideas carefully and sent the results of his analysis. A new facet of the position had been revealed. I had suspected as much when I wrote, "Or perhaps, the chosen plan was just too complex, and I should be paying more attention to the more primitive strategy." I had it in mind to look for a clear advantage somewhere in those quiet lines, which had not yet been examined or examined only superficially.

What follows will be based mostly upon Emil's analyses. I have made a few corrections and additions, some in the treatment of new discoveries and also some analyses in the concluding segment of this article.

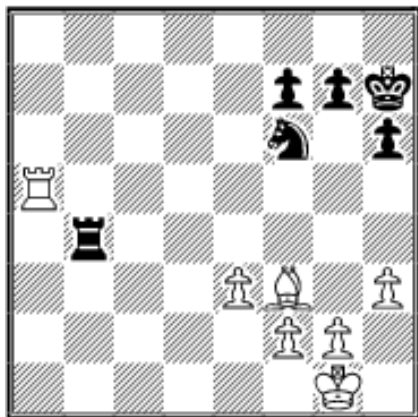
We must continually compare these new variations with those we studied before – sometimes, the positions are very similar; and the ideas are, from time to time, also the same, but used in slightly differing circumstances.

Let's return to the Miles' Position.

In the first place (or more accurately, in the third or fourth place, since the important line comes later), we found that Black's defense is difficult, even after the stupid-looking move **1 Qa5?!**

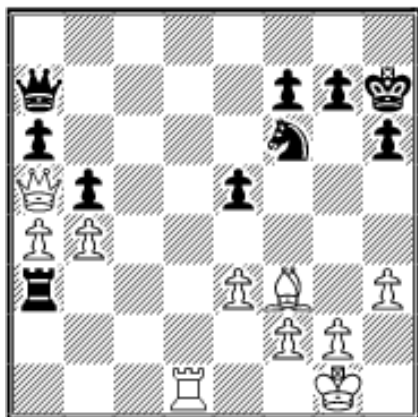
I suggested **1...e5** in reply, giving the short variations 2 Rd6 Rc1+ 3 Kh2?! e4, and also **2 a4 Ra3**. In place of Black's last move, Sutovsky also examined 2...ba?! 3 Qxe5 Qc7 4 Qxc7 Rxc7 5 Ra1 Rc4! 6 Rxa4 a5! 7 Rxa5 Rxb4.

Evaluative Problem No. 2



“It’s hard to give a simple assessment of this endgame, but White keeps realistic winning chances,” writes Sutovsky. How great are those chances? It seems to me that Black’s drawing chances are not less. Analysis is not likely to help here – a sensible idea would be to look it up in the books or using a computer database with the same approximate configuration of forces. Absorbing all the prior experience can help us make a better estimation of the chances for both sides and their optimal plans of action.

Now let’s see what happens after 2...Ra3.



3 Qd8! leaves Black in a dilemma: how to capture on a4?

Sutovsky only looked at the pawn capture. And rightly so – the alternative, 3...Rxa4?, is refuted by 4 Qd3+ Kg8 5 Qd6 (threatening 6 Qxe5) 5...e4, and now the familiar combination: 6 Be4! Nxe4 7 Qd8+ Kh7 8 Rd7. I won’t repeat the combinative niceties analyzed in detail in the first [article](#). I will only say that the differences from the prior position (the absence of White’s a3-pawn and

Black’s e6-pawn) are clearly in favor of White. And if Black had to save himself there by means of a series of only moves, then he’s not likely to be able to do so here.

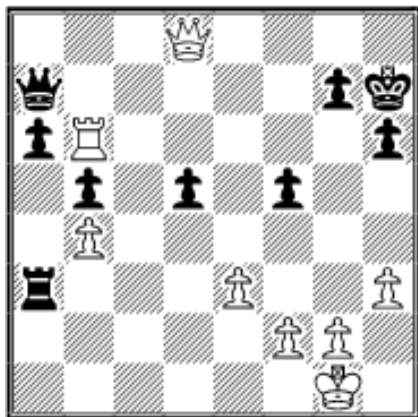
3...ba! 4 Bc6

An important idea found by Emil, which will be used repeatedly in what follows: the move ...e6-e5 allows White a new attacking possibility: Bc6-d7-f5. Here, however, this pretty bishop maneuver does not win.

4...Rc3! 5 Bd7 (5 Bxa4 Qc7 = is harmless) **5...Qc7! 6 Bf5+ g6 7 Qxf6 Rc6!** (“this move is the linchpin of Black’s defense”) **8 Bxg6+ fg 9 Qf8 Rc1 10 Rxc1 Qxc1+ 11 Kh2 Qc7**, “and now it’s White who has to think about holding the balance.”

In the second place, my analysis of **1 Rd6!?** turns out to have been clearly insufficient: Black’s position is much more dangerous than it had appeared. Igor also reached the same conclusion – the variations he gave were the same as the main lines from Sutovsky’s letter, which I had received the day before.

I suggested two means of defense against the threatened Rb6-b7: 1...a5 and 1...Rxa3 2 Rb6 Nd5 3 Be4+ f5 4 Bxd5 (4 Rxe6 Nxe3!) 4...ed

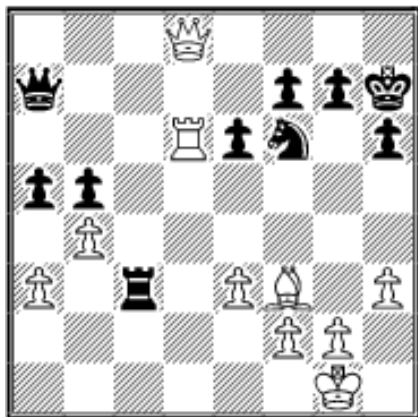


However, the second defense is no good. White does not continue 5 Rb8? Rxe3!, but by 5 Re6! instead. The main threat is 6 Qe8 followed by 7 Qg6+ On 5...Qf7, White plays 6 Qxd5 Qf8 (the threat was 7 Rxh6+) 7 Rd6, and Black is in a bad way.

After 1...e5, 2 Bc6! is very strong (but not 2 Rb6? e4): 2...e4 3 Bd7 (again, I remind you of the combination 3 Bxe4+!? Nxe4 4 Rd7) 3...Nxd7 5 Rxd7 Rd3 5 Rxd3 ed 6 Qxd3+ g6 7 Qd6, with a winning queen endgame.

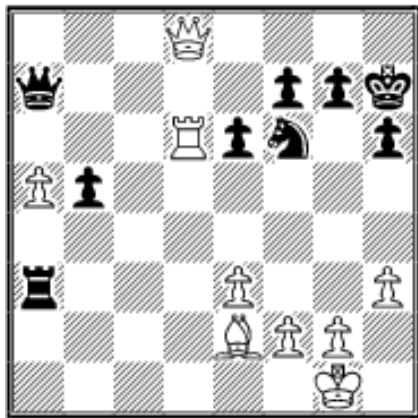
1...Rc1+ 2 Kh2 Rc7 would be no better. Here, the most forceful move is probably 5 Bc6!?, with the greatest possible restriction of the opponent's pieces. But going into a pawn-up endgame by 3 Rxa6 Qxa6 4 Qxc7 Qxa3 5 Qxf7 Qxb4 6 Qxe6 should also eventually bring home the point.

There remains only my reply, **1...a5!**, but cutting short the analysis at this point turned out to be premature.



True, 2 Rb6? is no longer dangerous to Black: 2...ab 3 ab Qa2 4 Rxb5 Rc1+ 5 Kh2 Qxf2, and he seizes the initiative. An equal endgame results from 2 Qxa5 Qxa5 3 ba Rxa3 4 a6 b4 5 Be2 b3 6 Bc4 Nd5.

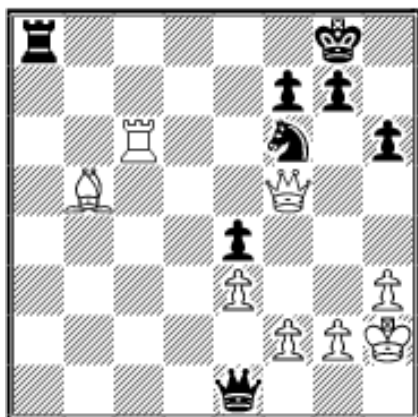
2 ba Rxa3 3 Be2 would be much stronger.



Black loses immediately after 3...Rxe3? 4 Qb6!. And 3...Nd5? 4 Rd7! Qc5 5 Rxf7 Nxe3 6 Rf8! is also hopeless.

On 3...e5?!, White does not continue 4 Rc6 Qxa5 5 Qe7 Qe1+ 6 Kh2 Qxe2 7 Qxa3 Ne4, with plenty of counterplay for Black, but 4 Qc8! Qxa5 5 Qf5+ Kg8 (5...Kh8 6 Rc6 Qe1+ 7 Kh2 Qxe2 8 Rc8+ Ng8 9 Qxf7+-) 6 Rc6 Qe1+ 7 Kh2 Ra8 8 Bxb5 e4.

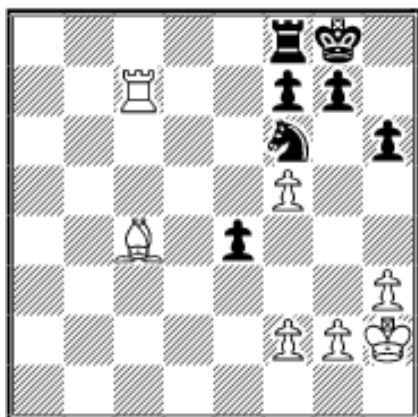
Evaluative Problem No. 3



What is your assessment of the pawn-up queen endgame that arises after 9 Rxf6!? gf 10 Bc4 (threatening 11 Qg6+) 10...Kg7 11 Bxf7 Kxf7!? 12 Qh7+ Kf8 13 Qh8+ Kf7 14 Qxa8 – how great are White’s winning chances?

Yet, White has a stronger idea in playing for domination: 9 Bc4 Qb4 10 Rc7! (again declining the pawn-up queen endgame by 10 Bxf7+ Kxf7 11 Rxf6+ gf 12 Qd5+ Kg7 13 Qxa8+) 10...Qd6+ (on 10...Rf8 11 Bxf7+!

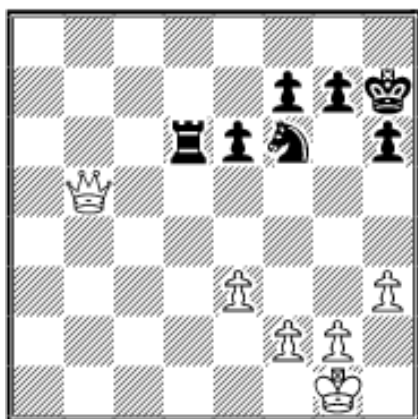
Rxf7 12 Qe6 Qf8, White would first improve his kingside pawn structure by 13 f4!, and only after 13...Qe8 would he take the queen by 14 Rc8 Qxc8 15 Qxc8+ Rf8 16 Qe6+ Kh8 17 g4+–) 11 Qf4 Qxf4+ 12 ef Rf8 13 f5!.



And Black has no moves; for example, 13...Ne8 14 Rd7! Nf6 15 Re7 Nh7 16 Kg3 Nf6 17 Kf4, etc.

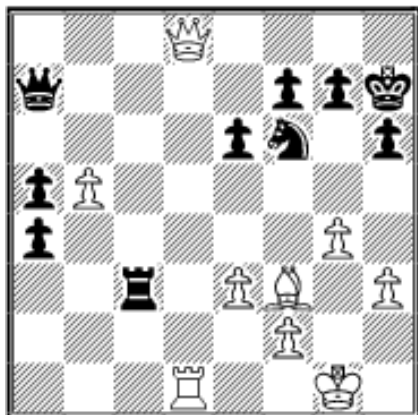
Let’s return to the position after 3 Be2. Black has only one possibility left: taking the a5-pawn with the queen immediately, even if this leads to loss of the queen.

3...Qxa5! 4 Bd3+ Rxd3 5 Qxa5 Rxd6 6 Qxb5



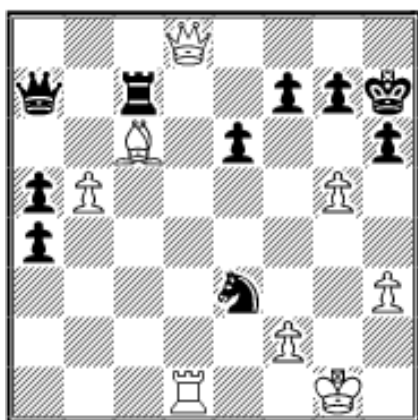
This position is probably drawn.

There’s one more tense variation, in which Black holds on by means of “only” moves, if after **1 g4!? a5**, White tries **2 a4!? ba 3 b5**



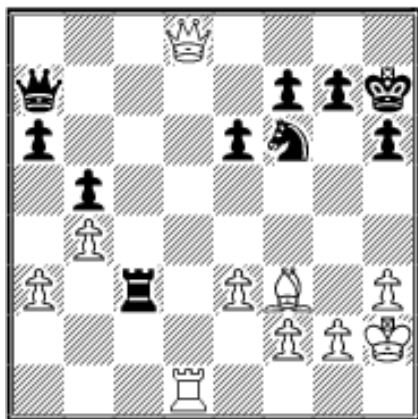
3...Qc5 4 b6 Rb3 5 b7 Qe5 would not be good, in view of 6 Qc8! (threatening 7 Rd8) 6...Nd5 (6...a3 7 Qc2+; or 6...Rb2?! 7 Rd2!) 7 Qc2+ g6 8 Bxd5 ed 9 Rb1! Rxb1+ 10 Qxb1 Qb8 11 Qb5 a3 12 Qd7! (12 Qxd5 Qc7 is inferior) 12...a2 13 Qxf7+ Kh8 14 Qf6+ Kh7 15 Qb2 a1Q+ 16 Qxa1 Qxb7 17 Qxa5 – here White's extra pawn must win.

Black has to continue **3...Rc7! 4 Bc6 Nd5**, without fearing 5 Bxd5 ed 6 Qxd5 Qb7=. And **5 g5!** is met, not by 5...hg 6 Qxg5 a3 7 e4+–, but by the counterblow **5...Nxe3!**.



Here, just as in the main line after 1 Rd6, White wins the queen by **6 Be4+ g6 7 b6! Qxb6 8 Bxg6+! fg 9 Rd7+ Rxd7 10 Qxb6 Nf5**, but he has no chance of winning.

Now it's time to evaluate Sutovsky's most important suggestion: **1 Kh2!**



What is its point? Well, above all, like almost any strong positional move, it contains a prophylactic idea. It turns out that this constitutes an indirect defense of the a3-pawn.

On 1...Rxa3?, White replies 2 Rc1, threatening both 3 Rc8 and 3 Rc7 Qb6 4 Qe7. With the king still on g1, Black would have the strong reply 2...Rxe3!. Here, this is not possible – both because White could now take the rook (since his king would no longer be in check from e3), and in view of 3 Rc7 (there's no first-rank rook check).

In several lines I tried to double major pieces on the 8th rank by Qf8 and Rd8, and it would never work, because of the counterattack beginning with Qc7. But here, White controls both the open c- and d-files, so there is no counterattack.

Emil continues his line as follows: 2...e5 3 Rc7 Qb6 4 Qe7 Qe6 5 Qf8 Qf5 (5...e4 6 Rxf7 Qe5+ 7 g3 Qg5 8 Rxf6 (threatening 9 Bxe4+) 8...ef 9 Re6! Ra2 10 Qxf3+–) 6 Rxf7 Qg6 (6...Qg5 8 Rxf6!) 7 Ra7! (the computer's recommended move, 7 Qe7, is strong too) 7...e4 8 Ra8 Qf5 9 Qh8+ Kg6 10 Ra7 Qe5+ 11 g3

Ne8 12 Bg4, “and mate is not far away.”

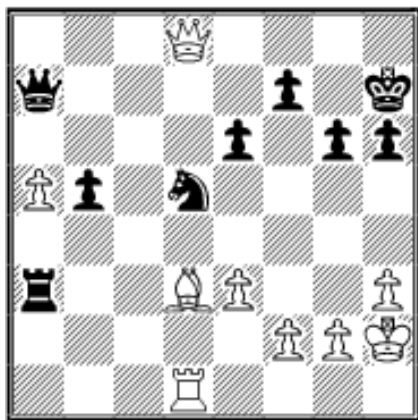
So what else can Black do? He doesn't have all that many resources left. Not 1...Rc2?!, because of 2 Qd3+. After 1...Rc7 2 Rd6 Rc2, the rook on c2 is vulnerable once again: 3 Rxe6! Rxf2 (3...fe 4 Qd3+ and 5 Qxc2) 4 Re7 Rd2 (only move) 5 Rxa7 Rxd8; and here, perhaps the most efficient way to win is 6 Bc6!?, since 6 Rxa6 Nd5 leads to some technical difficulties for White (my variation).

Instead of 2...Rc2, Sutovsky examined 2...Rd7 3 Rxd7 Nxd7 (3...Qxd7 4 Be4+) 4 Qe7 Qc7+ 5 g3 Kg8 6 Qe8+ Nf8 7 Qc6, and the a6-pawn must fall.

In reply to 1 Kh2, Black may of course trade queens by 1...Qc7+, but this endgame looks difficult. It would make sense to return to the analysis after answering the main question: what does White have after the programmed advance 1...a5!?.

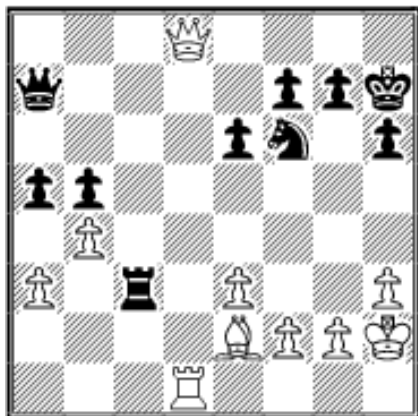
It turns out that, by comparison to the starting position, the move 2 Be2! is now much stronger. Recall that, after the immediate 1 Be2?!, Black replied 1...Nd5 (but not 1...e5? 2 Bd3+ e4 3 Bxe4+! Nxe4 4 Rd7+--) 2 Bd3+ g6 3 Be4, and now either 3...Qc7 4 Qxc7 Nxc7 5 Rd7 Kg7, or 3...Nxe3!?. But here, Black no longer has the Nxe3 counterstroke, the b5-pawn is *en prise*, and the possibility of b4xa5 might also sow confusion in Black's defensive plans.

By the way, 2 ba?! would be inaccurate because of 2...Rxa3 3 Be2 Nd5! (3...Ne4? loses to 4 Bd3 f5 5 Bxe4 fe 6 Rd7 Qc5 7 Qf6 Qd6+ 8 Rxd6 gf 9 Rxe6) 4 Bd3+ g6



5 Rc1 Qe7! leads to a drawn endgame: 6 Qxe7 Nxe7 7 Rc7 Rxd3 8 Rxe7 Kg7 9 Rb7 Rb3. And on 5 Bxg6+ fg (5...Kxg6? 6 Rxd5! ed 7 Qd6+ and 8 Qxa3) 6 e4, Black saves himself by 6...Qxf2 7 ed (7 Qd7+ Kh8 changes nothing) 7...Qf4+ 8 Kg1 Rxb3!.

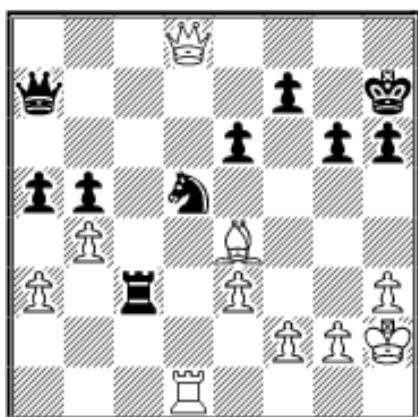
So we must play **2 Be2!**.



There's no time for 2...ab? in view of 3 Bd3+; and after 2...e5? the familiar bishop transfer to the f5-square by 3 Bxb5 Rxa3 4 Bd7! would be strong.

That leaves only **2...Nd5**. White of course does not continue 3 ba? Rxa3 – we just looked at this position – but instead **3 Bd3+ g6** (the exchange sacrifice 3...Rxd3 4 Rxd3 ab 5 ab Qa2 is hopeless: 6 e4 Nxb4 7 Rf3+–, or 6...Qb1 7 Rf3 Qxe4 8 Rxf7+–) **4 Be4!**

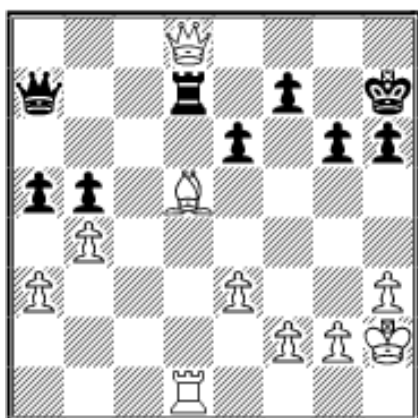
(again, not 4 ba? Rxa3)



This pretty bishop maneuver, setting off from f3 on a roundabout journey to e4, thereby breaking up Black's defense, is all known to us by analogy with the move 1 Be2, but here it's considerably more effective.

4...ab is met by 5 Bxd5 ba (5...ed 6 ab Rc2 7 Kg3 is hopeless for Black) 6 Bxe6 Qc7+ (there's nothing better) 7 Qxc7 Rxc7 8 Bd5, and the extra bishop must win for White.

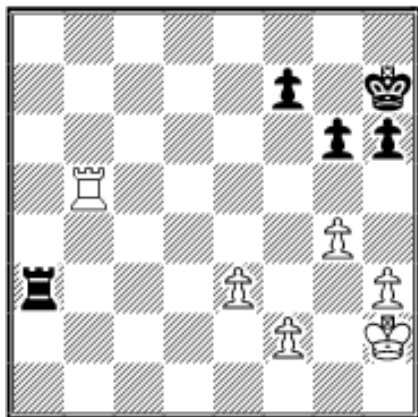
The variations after **4...Rc7!?** **5 Bxd5 Rd7** are decidedly non-trivial.



The a5-pawn is untouchable: 6 Qxa5? Qb8+! 7 g3 Ra7!, and unexpectedly the white queen is trapped.

An important position (not for evaluating this particular variation, but for general chess culture) arises in the line 6 Qf8 ed 7 ba Qxa5 8 Qc5 Qc7+ 9 Qxc7 Rxc7 10 Rxd5 Rc3 11 Rxb5 Rxa3 12 g4.

Evaluative Problem No. 4



With best play for both sides – is this a win or a draw?

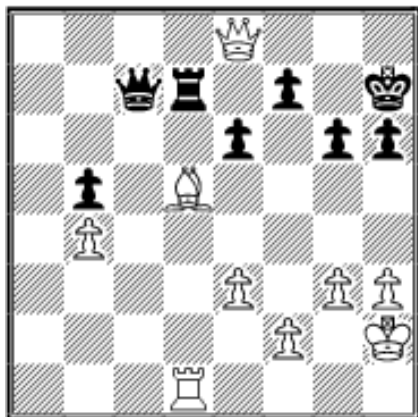
If Black had had time to play h6-h5, he could hold this position without any particular trouble. But since his opponent has prevented this, now the defense will be difficult. Still, objectively the position is drawn. To indicate one important guidepost: White obviously will continue h3-h4-h5. After g6xh5, he will recapture with the rook, then he will move the rook away and try for e3-e4-e5. So Black

should prevent the pawn's advance to e5, by playing f7-f6! at the proper moment. This is not the only path to the draw, but it's probably the simplest, at least from a practical point of view. This kind of recommendation is easily understood and memorized.

Instead of 6 Qf8, a stronger move is 6 Qe8!, attacking the black rook (now Black doesn't have 6...ed? 7 ba). The main threat is to bring the rook via c1 to c8. Black can't prevent this: 6...Qc7+ 7 g3 ab 8 Rc1! Qd8 9 Qxd8 Rxd8 10 Bc6 ba 11 Bxb5+; so he plays 6...ab!

Let's assume that White responds simplistically: 7 ab Qc7+ 8 g3.

Evaluative Problem No. 5



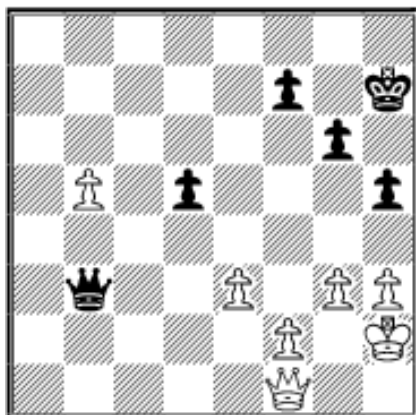
How does Black defend? Which line gives him the greater drawing chances?

Emil restricted himself to the short variation 8...ed 9 Rd4, maintaining the material balance, and evaluated Black's position as "very unpleasant." This is most likely correct.

In my day, when faced with similar difficult situations, I successfully employed the "escapology technique" (discussed in detail in the last quarter of my book, [School of Chess](#)

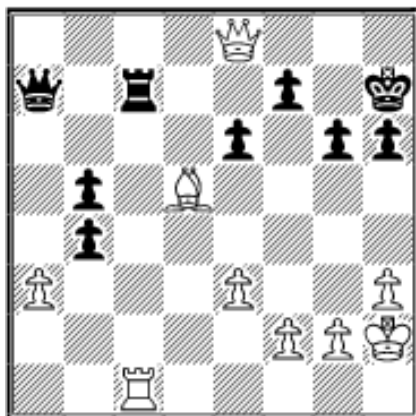
[Excellence 2 – Tactical Play](#)) – that is, I sought a way to sharply alter the character of the game, even if it meant losing a little material.

Therefore, my attention was drawn to 8...Rxd5!? 9 Rxd5 ed 10 Qxb5 Qc2, since the only way White can defend the f2-pawn, while avoiding some unpleasant checks, would be the passive 11 Qf1. Now it's not at all certain that Black must lose in the lines 11...Qc4?! 12 Qb1 d4 13 ed Qxd4 14 Kg1, or 11...Qb2 12 b5 d4 13 ed Qxd4 14 Kg1, but these positions still don't look good for him. In my view, it would be better for Black to try to restrict the opposing queen: 11...Qb3! 12 b5 h5.

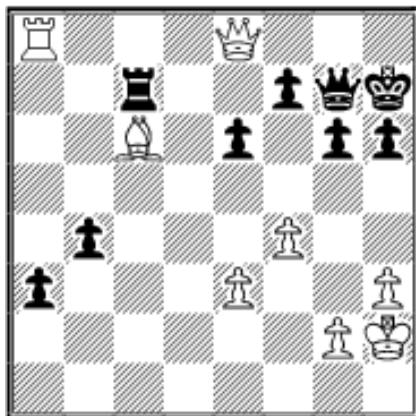


And I don't see how White can make any progress. Black's more active queen goes a long way toward balancing his pawn minus.

White's game can be strengthened by **7 Rc1!**. The threat of 8 Rc8 is too dangerous – I see nothing better for Black than **7...Rc7**.

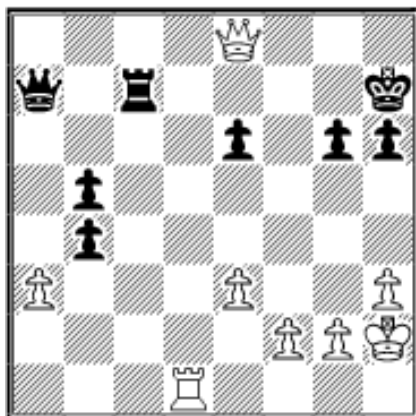


And White keeps his extra piece after **8 Bc6!**
ba 9 Rd1 Qc5 10 Rd8 Qe5+ 11 f4 Qg7 12 Ra8 b4.

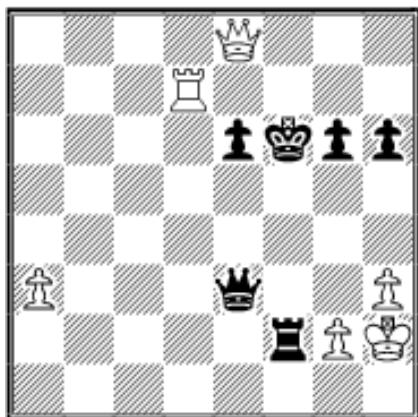


The final exactitude: the tempting 13 e4? (planning to wall in the queen by e4-e5) is refuted by 13...b3! 14 Rxa3 Qf6!=. So White plays simply 13 Be4!, with a gradual win, since the pawns will advance no further.

The attempt to play "brilliantly" is less convincing: 8 Bxe6!? fe (8...Rxc1 9 Bxf7 Kg7 10 Qg8+ Kf6 11 Qxg6+ Ke7 12 Qe6+ Kd8 13 Qe8+ Kc7 14 ab would be hopeless) 9 Rd1!.

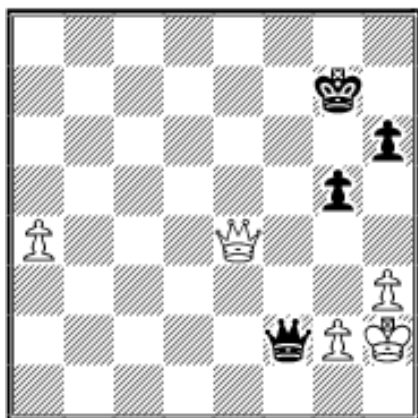


Considering the mortal threat of 10 Rd8, Black has no alternative but to harass the enemy queen by 9...Re7 10 Qf8! Rf7 11 Qxb4 Rxf2 12 Qxb5 Qxe3 13 Qd7+ Kg8 14 Qe8+ Kg7 15 Rd7+ Kf6.



I don't see any straightforward win: 16 Qe7+ Kf5!, or 16 Qd8+ Ke5 17 Qc7+ Ke4 18 Qc6+ Ke5. White must take the pawn-up queen endgame after 16 Rf7+ Kg5 (or 16...Ke5 17 Rxf2 Qxf2 18 Qxg6, with an overwhelming advantage) 17 Qe7+ Kh5 18 Qb4! g5 19 Qg4+ Kg6 20 Rxf2 Qxf2 21 Qxe6+ Kh7 22 Qe4+ Kg7 23 a4.

Evaluative Problem No. 6



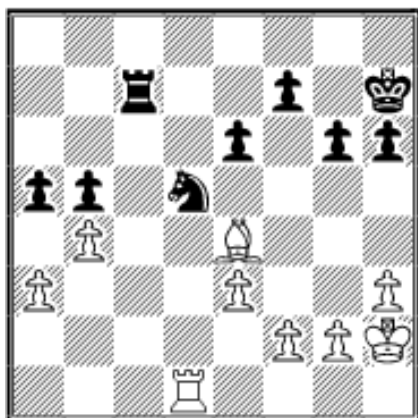
Can we say that White's position is won? I'm not so sure. The problem is that, after 23...Qc5, White's queen is unable to secure the pawn's advance, while simultaneously securing the king against checks, which means that the king must go forward. If Black's king could hide in the corner behind its own pawns, then there would be a great likelihood of a perpetual check. But with the black king out in the open, the defense becomes more difficult: the enemy queen can improve its position with tempo and

sometimes even block a check while giving check.

We've looked at 4...Rc7!?. Perhaps Black could offer greater resistance by exchanging queens: 4...Qc7+! 5 Qxc7.

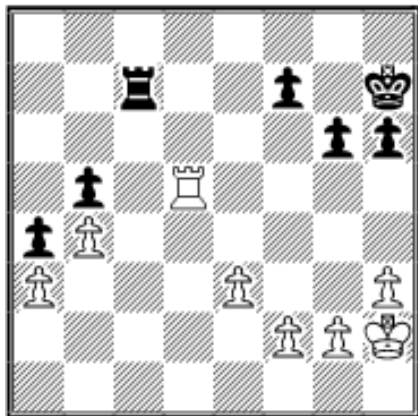
Without the moves 1 Kh2 a5, Black would have held the position by recapturing with the knight. But here, 5...Nxc7 would be bad in view of 6 ba Kg7 (6...Rxa3 7 Rd7) 7 Rd7 Kf8 8 Bb7! Ke8 9 Rxc7 Rxc7 10 a6. So 5...Rxc7 is necessary.

Evaluative Problem No. 7



Which rook endgame do you prefer: taking twice on d5, or playing 6 ba (there's no difference if you play it immediately or after 6 Bxd5 ed)?

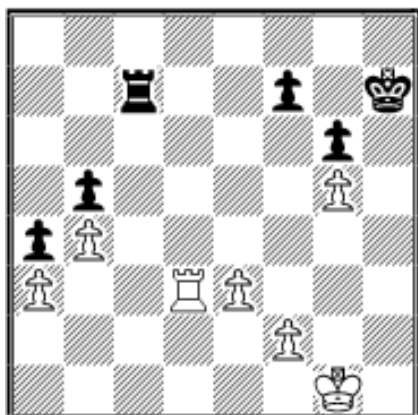
At first, Sutovsky argued for 6 Bxd5 ed 7 Rxd5. But he changed his mind after I pointed out the reply 7...a4!.



8 Rxb5 Rc3 9 Ra5 Rxa3 inevitably leads to the “four-vs-three-on-one-side” rook endgame; for example, 10 g4!? Ra1 11 h4 a3 12 Kg3 Rb1 13 Rxa3 Rxb4. We have already examined this endgame – see Evaluative Position No. 4.

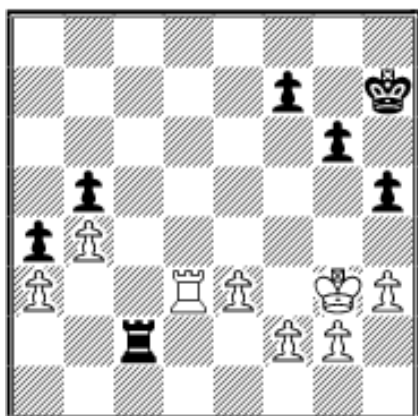
White can retain the queenside pawns by playing 8 Rd3 (there’s no need to fear Black’s rook getting to b3, since White’s king comes over in time to defend the rook). Among other

things, this situation occurred at one point in our previous article in this series: after 1 g4!? a5 2 h4 Qc7! 3 Qxc7 Rxc7 4 g5 hg 5 hg Nd5?! (5...ab!) 6 Be4+! g6 7 Bxd5 ed 8 Rxd5 a4! 9 Rd3!.



Black has lost his counterplay on the kingside, so White’s winning chances were considered quite realistic. But here, he does have counterplay, and Black has every right to expect a draw in my view.

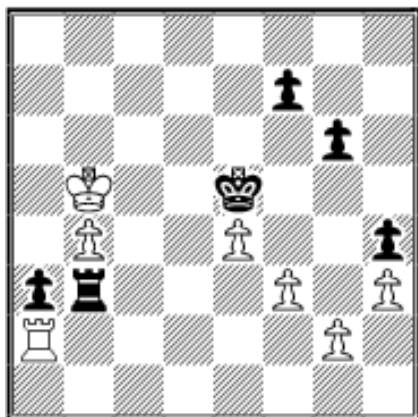
For example: 8...Rc2 9. Kg3 h5.



Black should probably not respond to 10 h4 with 10...f5?! on account of 11 f3± (11 f4 Rb2 12 Kf3 Rb3 13 Ke2 Rb2+ would be weaker) 10...Kg7 is safer: 11 e4 Kf6 12 f4 Ke6 13 Kf3 f6+/-.

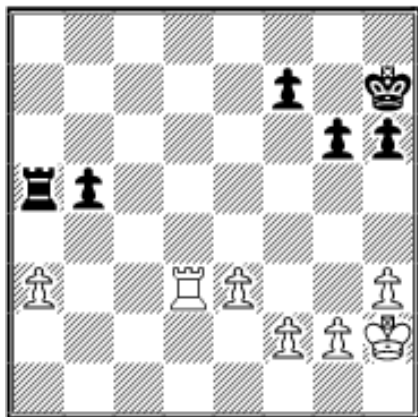
And after 10 e4 h4+ 11 Kf3 Kg7 12 Ke3 (12 e5 Kf8) 12...Kf6, a drawn outcome is also the most likely. Here’s an interesting – although probably not forced – variation: 13 Rd2 (13 g3 hg 14 fg Ke6 15 h4 f6+/-) 13...Rc3+ 14

Kd4 Rxa3 15 Kc5 Ke5 16 f3 (16 Kxb5 Kxe4) 16...Rb3 17 Kxb5 a3 18 Ra2



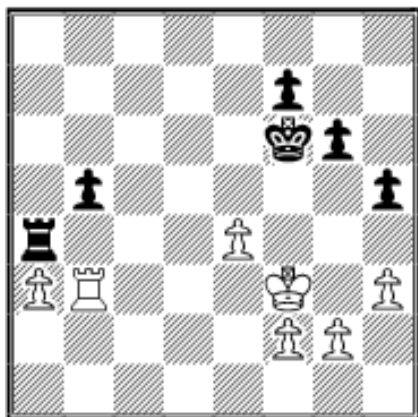
18...Kd4!? 19 Ka4 Rb1! 20 Rxa3 (20 Kxa3 Kc3; 20 b5 Kc4) 20...Kc4 21 Ka5 Rxb4, with equality.

There is a different pawn structure that is more promising for White: **6 ba! Ra7** (6...Nf6 7 Bd3+-) **7 Bxd5 ed 8 Rxd5 Rxa5 9 Rd3.**



We saw a similar situation to this once before also – in the variation 1 g4!? a5 2 h4 Qc7! 3 Qxc7 Rxc7 4 ba Ra7 5 g5 hg 6 hg Nd5! 7 Be4+ g6 8 Bxd5 ed 9 Rxd5 Rxa5 10 Rd3. Black has the vital tempo move 10...Ra4!, creating the threat of 11...Rg4+ and 12...Rxc5. After 11 f4 b4, the queenside pawns get traded off.

But here, 9...Ra4 is met by 10 Rb3. Sutovsky examines the following variations: 9...Ra4 10 Rb3! h5! (10...Kg7 11 g4! Kf6 12 Kg3 Ke6 13 h4) 11 Kg3 Kg7 12 Kf3 Kf6 13 e4!



13...Ke6 is met by 14 Ke3, or 14 h4 first. "I think that objectively speaking, the endgame must be a win, although it's hard to give mathematical proof of this."

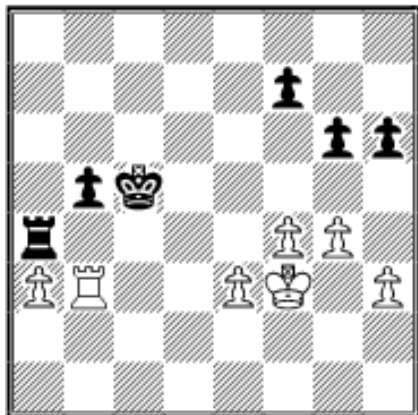
9...Kg7! 10 g4!

10 Kg3 Kf6 would be inaccurate; for example, 11 Kf4 Ra4+ 12 e4 b4, or 11 f4 Ke6 12 e4 Ra4 13 Kf3 b4 – trading off the queenside pawns allows Black to save himself.

10...Kf6 11 f4 (11 Kg3 Ke5 would be inferior) **11...Ke6 12 Kg3 Ra4 13 Rb3 Kd6 14 Kf3**

Once again, White should not take the "four-pawns-vs-three-on-one-side" endgame: 14 Rxb5 Rxa3 15 Kf3 Ke7 16 h4 Kf6 17 h5 gh 18 Rxh5 Kg6 – with an appropriately-timed f7-f6, Black achieves the draw.

14...Kc5

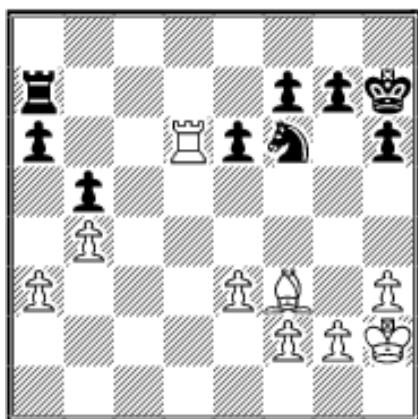


After 15 e4 Kc4 16 Re3 b4 17 ab Rxb4 18 f5 Kd4 19 e5 Kd5 20 e6 fe 21 fg e5 22 h4 (22 g7 Rb8) 22...Ke6 23 Ra3 Kf6 24 Ra6+ Kg7 25 h5, the position is most likely a draw. But White has the very strong 15 Rc3+! Kd6 16 Rd3+ Kc6 (16...Ke6 17 Rb3) 17 h4. "Now, with the king cutoff, all 4-vs-3 endgames should be easily won."

Thus, the rook endgame is very difficult for Black, probably even lost. This circumstance forces us to look more closely at the situation

after the exchange of queens on the very first move. Let's examine **1 Kh2! Qc7+!? 2 Qxc7 Rxc7 3 Rd6 Ra7.**

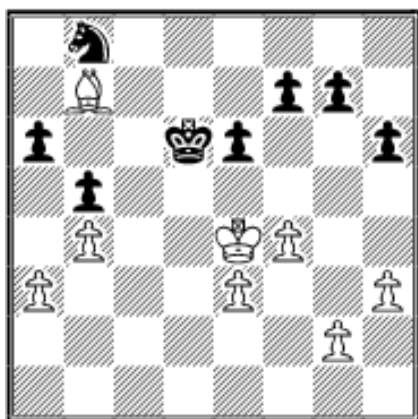
Evaluative Problem No. 8



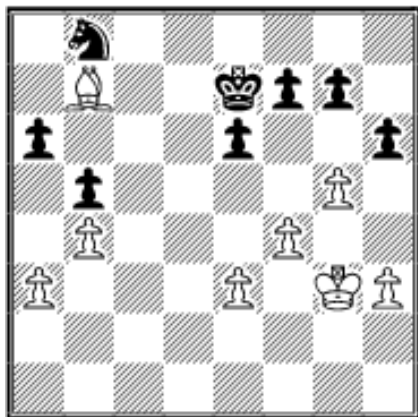
How would you assess this endgame? How great are White's chances of winning (and consequently – Black's chances of drawing)?

4 Rb6 creates the threat of 5 Rb7. After 4...Nd7 5 Rb7 Rxb7 6 Bxb7 Nb8, Emil thinks White should win. I'm not so sure Black's defensive plan is simple enough: bring the king via d6 to c7; after the bishop retreats, either Nc6 (and a6-a5, if allowed), or more likely, Nd7-b6, threatening Nc4. For example, 7 Kg3 Kg6 8 Kf4 Kf6 9 Ke4 Ke7 10 f4 Kd6,

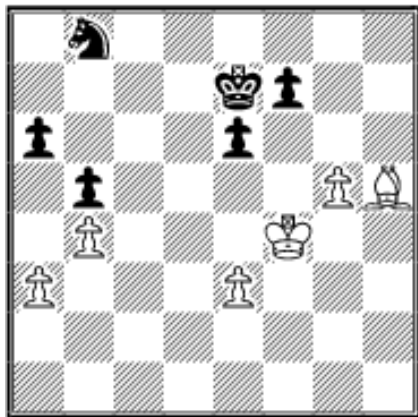
and now what?



In principle, while Black is improving his position on the queenside, White should be creating problems for him on the kingside. Instead of 7 Kg3, he could try 7 f4!? Kg6 8 g4 Kf6 9 Kg3 Ke7 10 g5.



The variations are very tense, but again, I could find no win. For instance: 10...hg 11 fg g6 12 h4 Kd6 13 Kf4 (13 h5 gh 14 Kh4 Kc7 15 Be4 Nd7 16 Kxh5 Ne5 17 Kh6 Kd6 18 Kg7 Ke7 isn't dangerous) 13...Kc7 (but not 13...Nd7? 14 Bxa6 Kc6 15 Bc8 Nb6 16 Bxe6! fe 17 Ke5) 14 Bf3 Kd6 15 h5 (I don't see how else to make progress) 15...gh 16 Bxh5 Ke7.



Now 17 Ke5 Nc6+ is useless. On 17 e4, Black does not respond 17...Nd7 18 e5 Nb6 19 Be2, but 17...f6! 18 gf+ Kxf6 19 e5+ Ke7 20 Bf3 Kd8, or 18 g6 Kf8 19 Bg4 (19 e5 Kg7) 19...e5+ 20 Kf5 Kg7 21 Ke6 Nc6 22 Kd5 Nd4. And if 17 Bf3, then Black can even sacrifice the a6-pawn: 17...Nd7!? 18 Bb7 Kd6 19 Bxa6 Kc6 20 Bc8 (20 e4 Nf8; 20 Ke4 Nf8 21 Ke5 Nd7+ 22 Kd4 Nf8) 20...Nb6 21 Bxe6 (White can also expect no advantage from 21 g6 fg 22 Bxe6 Nc4) 21...fe 22 g6 (22

Ke5 Kd7) 22...Kd6 23 g7 Nd5+ 24 Kg5 Ne7 25 Kf6 Ng8+ 26 Kf7 Nh6+ 27 Kf8 Kd5 28 g8Q Nxg8 29 Kxg8 Kc4 30 Kf7 Kb3 31 Kxe6 Kxa3 32 e4 Kxb4, and the pawns queen simultaneously.

Besides, as Sutovsky himself pointed out, the knight doesn't have to retreat to b8. 4...Ne8!? deserves serious consideration. On 5 Rb7 Rxb7 6 Bxb7, the pawn does not need to be defended: Black has 6...Nd6! 7 Bxa6 Kg6. The king threatens to go to c6, which forces White to play a move he doesn't want to play: a3-a4, after which there's no point in even talking about an advantage for him. The attempt to drive the knight from d6 by advancing the pawn to e5 doesn't work: Black plays e6-e5 himself (8 f4 Kf6 9 g4 e5).

And if White doesn't exchange rooks, he will always have to consider the a6-a5 advance, leading to the exchange of all the queenside pawns. For example, 5 Bb7 Nc7 6 Kg3 g5 (an unnecessary move) 7 Kf3 a5 8 Bc6 (Sutovsky) 8...ab 9 ab Ra6!, with a draw. And neither 5 e4 Kg6 nor 5 Be4+ g6 6 Kg3 Kg7 7 Kf4 Kf6 is dangerous to Black.

On 5 Kg3, Emil composes the variation 5...g5 6 Bb7 Nc7 7 Bc6 f5 8 Rb8, considering that White retains a solid advantage. I note that Black should restrain himself from playing g6-g5 in such situations, as tempting as the move appears, in order not to give his opponent a target for active kingside play. A decent alternative is 5...Kg6!? 6 Bb7 Nc7 7 Bc6 Kf6 8 Kf3 a5!? (8...Ke7) 9 ba (9 Bxb5 ab 10 ab Nd5) 9...Rxa5 10 Rb7 Nd5, and all that White has achieved is the "four-pawns-vs-three-on-one-side" endgame.

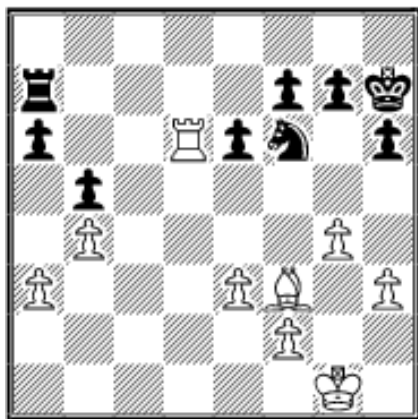
If White does not play 4 Rb6, Black will prevent this move for good, by playing 4...Nd7.

For example, 4 g4 Nd7 (other continuations are weaker: 4...a5? 5 Rb6; 4...Kg8 5 Rd8+; 4...g5 5 Kg3 and 6 h4) 5 Kg3 Kg6 (now there is the idea Ne5) 6 Be2 Kf6 7 f4 Ke7 8 Rc6 a5! 9 Bxb5 ab 10 ab Rb7, with equality. Or 4 Kg3 Nd7 5 Kf4 g5+ (here the pawn move is justified, since 5...Kg6 6 Bc6 Nb8 7 Be8 Kf6 8 Rb6 would lead to the loss of a pawn) 6 Ke4 Kg7 7 Kd4 Kf6, with excellent saving chances.

These variations are certainly not forced and most likely can be improved for both sides. But for now, the impression grows that Black's defensive resources are great enough. Sutovsky considers that, no matter what the "theoretical" assessment of this endgame is, saving it in practice is nearly impossible, and a grandmaster with good technique will more than likely win it. I find this opinion debatable. Black would find it hard to steel himself to enter such an endgame (so painful-looking at first glance). But once it actually occurs on the board, it's not that hard to play, in view of Black's limited selection of defensive resources. Meanwhile, White is the one who must resolve the task whose answer we do not yet know: how to avoid the exchange of queenside pawns, while maintaining long-term pressure. Finding such a path over-the-board is very difficult – if such a path even exists.

Among others, Black can also defend himself by means of the first move we recommended in the previous article: **1 g4!?**, as follows: **1...Qc7!?** (instead of 1...a5!?) 2 h4! Qc7!) **2 Qxc7 Rxc7 3 Rd6 Ra7**.

Evaluative Problem No. 9



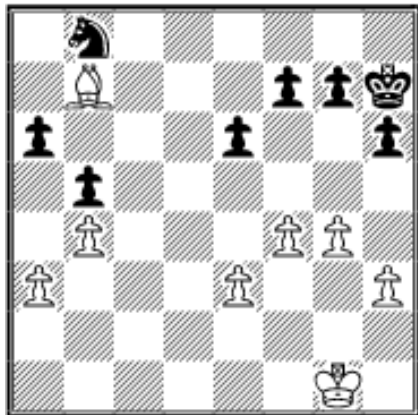
Who benefits from the change in position by comparison with the line 1 Kh2 Qc7+ (after g2-g4 has been played instead of Kg1-h2) – how much have White's winning chances increased or even decreased?

I propose that this situation is better for White. In the first place, the kingside pawn advance is already underway, and creating problems there for Black is one of the most logical plans, flowing as it does from the "two weaknesses principle." In the second place, the white king's march to the queenside (behind his pawns, not in front of them) is more natural – and sometimes shorter as well (after the likely continuation f2-f4). The only question is – does this circumstance have any significance to the overall assessment of this endgame.

It seemed to me that, in a bishop vs. knight battle (with or without rooks on), White's positional advantage would be overwhelming. Now I understand that I overestimated his position.

I see no reason not to play the natural **4 Rb6!?**, hindering Black from playing a6-a5 and creating the threat of 5 Rb7. If White does not, we have already seen that he must consider 4...Nd7 – and 4...g5, followed by Kg7-f8-e7, is also possible then.

In the preceding article, 4...Nd7 5 Rb7 Rxb7 6 Bxb7 Nb8 7 f4 was proposed.

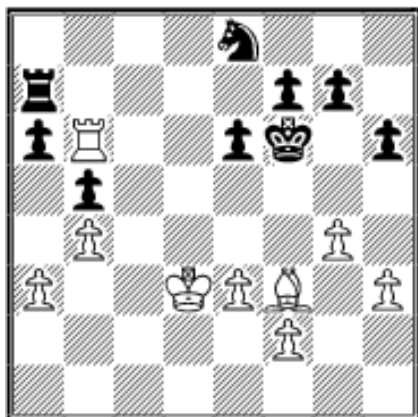


The assessment, “A difficult endgame for Black,” seemed obvious to me. I still think it’s not far from the truth. On 7...g5, White replies h3-h4! (either immediately or after the preparatory king move). If 7...Kg6, then 8 Kf2 Kf6 9 h4!? Ke7 10 e4! Kd6 11 e5+ Kc7 12 Be4 Nd7 13 Ke3 Nb6 14 Kd4, and 14...Nc4 can be unpleasantly met by 15 a4. White will exploit the first favorable opportunity to play h4-h5. Note the “pawn square” on the kingside – this sort of formation is very good for White. Now there

is the possibility of a pawn break (for example, after trading down to a pawn endgame), the f7-pawn is weak, and the advance of any of Black’s kingside pawns will create fresh weaknesses.

Of course, this variation does not exhaust the possibilities of this position, it only demonstrates some of the ideas, one being the e3-e4-e5 advance.

The advantage is harder to prove after **4...Ne8!**. On 5 Rb7 Rxb7 6 Bxb7, as before, Black can reply 6...Nd6!. An instructive line is **5 Kf1 Kg6 6 Ke2 Kf6 7 Kd3**.



If now 7...Ke7 8 Kd4 Nd6, then 9 Bc6 Nc4 10 Kc5! Nxa3 11 Rb7+ Rxb7 12 Bxb7, with a great advantage. However, Black can play more actively by sacrificing a pawn: **7...a5!? 8 Rxb5 ab 9 ab Ra2**, with unpleasant counterplay.

So the immediate exchange of queens is undoubtedly the best way of defending against Sutovsky’s recommendation of 1 Kh2!. He himself shares that opinion, as does Igor. But even my recommendation, 1 g4!?

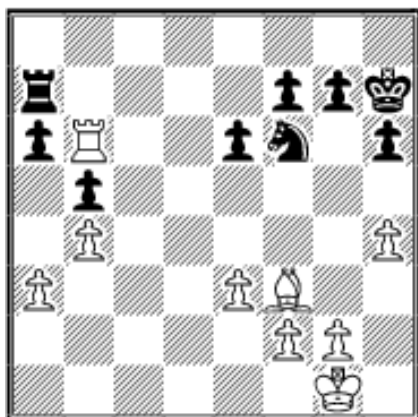
Qc7!?, although less effective, is still a worthy alternative to the main variation analyzed in the previous article.

Now is just the time to recall that White’s opening moves in that preceding main variation (1 g4 a5 2 h4) could be transposed without doing any harm. I must admit that this circumstance gave me pause at first – I knew that this wasn’t right. Why? Let me quote the opinions of two well-known specialists.

In positions that are right on the line which separates a draw from a loss, we generally find, as a rule, a single solution. – Gavriil Veresov.

Many years experience in analysis have convinced me that in balanced, tense positions there cannot be more than one path to victory. – Igor Zaitsev.

Let's try starting out with **1 h4!**. The advantage of playing the other move first shows itself precisely after the reply **1...Qc7?!**. In this situation, the endgame that arises after **2 Qxc7 Rxc7 3 Rd6 Ra7 4 Rb6** really is very difficult for Black.



Now **4...Ne8** would be bad, in view of **5 Be4+!** (**5 h5** would be strong too) **5...g6** (**5...Kg8?** **6 Rb8 Kf8 7 Bc6**; **5...f5?** **6 Rxe6 fe 7 Rxe8**) **6 h5**. And after **5...Nd7 6 Rb7 Rxb7 7 Bxb7 Nb8**, the bind imposed on the king's wing by **7 h5!?** is quite unpleasant for Black.

Let's take stock. The plan recommended in the previous article (in its most accurate version, **1 h4!**) makes an immediate transposition to the endgame unfavorable for Black. Conversely, there is no assurance of a

White win in the concluding positions of the complex variations beginning with **1...a5 2 g4 Qc7!**.

Sutovsky's recommended **1 Kh2!**, on the other hand, practically negates the effectiveness of **1...a5**, but after **1...Qc7+!**, White's win is cast into great doubt.

Now I will offer the reader, who has taken in all this information, a final evaluative problem to solve. Where does White's greatest chance of success lie – after **1 h4!**, or after **1 Kh2!** – which would you prefer?

Let's return to our thoughts on the inexhaustibility of chess. Before publishing my previous article, I showed Miles' Position during many training sessions with strong players. I made one correction after another to my analysis. As a result, I got the impression that I knew practically all there was to know about this position, except for some small possible improvements.

But it turns out that matters are much more complicated – many previous assessments were thrown into suspicion, fresh ideas were discovered, and new, impressive analytical branches appeared.

In this article, by contrast with the preceding one, the analysis offered is still green and insufficiently tested, so it's probably going to be extended and improved upon. And, whereas before I was acquainting my readers with my own finished conclusions, now it is the reverse – this article is filled with debatable problems. Some I do not know the answers to and can only guess. How much effort may still be required before we can achieve a somewhat accurate picture of the simple, natural position with which we started?!



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