



C O L U M N I S T S

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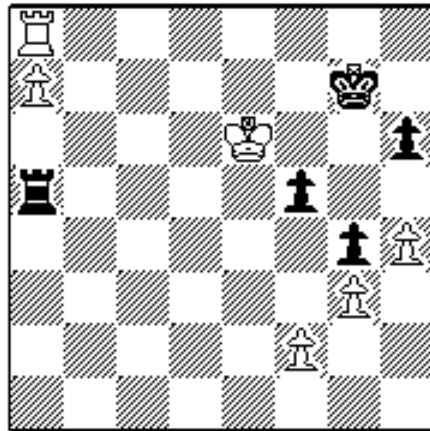


Averbakh

I AM IN THE PROCESS of writing an instructional endgame book. In the course of my work on this book, besides the rather extensive materials I had already accumulated, I of course made use of works by other authors, including the multi-volumed endgame set by Yuri Averbakh. Upon testing this material I found that an amazing number of endgames, including some well-known ones which have migrated from book to book, have been poorly analyzed and incorrectly evaluated.

The following example must set some sort of record.

Yuri Averbakh, *Chess Endings* (Rook) Page 299, Position No. 734 (See Diagram)



Black to move

First, I will give Averbakh's commentaries.

1... Ra2!

"The only move! 1...h5 is a mistake, because of 2. Kd6! (2. Re8 Ra6+! 3. Kxf5 Rxa7 4. Kg5 Ra5+ 5. Kf4 Ra2 is only a draw) 2... Kh7 3. Ke7 Kg7 4. Ke6 Ra2 5. Kxf5 Rxf2+ (5...Ra5+ 6. Kf4 Kh7 7. Rf8! Rxa7 8. Kg5 Ra5+ 9. Rf5 and wins) 6. Kg5 Ra2 7. Kxh5 Ra4 8. Re8 Rxa7 9. Kxg4, and White wins."

2. Kxf5 Rxf2+ 3. Kxg4 Ra2 Draw

Before reading what follows, I propose that the reader perform the following exercise (in the style of the outstanding John Nunn's *Chess Puzzle Book*): How many of the moves that Averbakh gives as best - or at least normal - are really mistakes that change the outcome of the game?

And now, let us begin our analysis.

After 1...Ra2, White wins: instead of 2. Kxf5? [1 mistake], he plays 2. Re8! Rxa7 [2...Ra6+ 3. Kxf5 Rxa7 4. Kxg4] 3. Re7+ Rxe7 4. Kxe7 Kg6 5. Ke6 Kh5 (the last hope - stalemate) 6. Kf6! (zugzwang) 6...f4 7. gf Kxh4 8. Kg6+-, or 8. f5+-. This error, by the way, was pointed out in the August 2000 issue of *Chess Life* by reader Chuck Adelman.

The other defensive try is 1... h5!? This position was examined in *Rook Endings*, by Levenfish and Smyslov. The authors demonstrate convincingly that the outcome hinges on whose turn it is to move.

If it were Black to move, he would draw by 2... Ra6+! 3. Kxf5 Ra5+ 4. Kf4 Ra4+, or 3. Ke5 Ra2! (3... Ra3? unfortunately loses to 4. Kf4 Ra5 5. Re8! Rxa7 6. Kg5 Ra2?! 7. Re7+!; but 3... Ra4!= is playable) 4. Kf4 Rxf2+ 5. Kg5 Ra2 6. Kxh5 f4!=.

But White to move wins by 2. Re8! Ra6+ (2... Rxa7 3. Re7+) 3. Kxf5 Rxa7 4. Re5! Kh6 (otherwise 5. Kg5) 5. Re6+ Kg7 6. Rg6+ Kh7 7. Rf6! (threatening 8. Kg5) 7... Ra5+ (7... Rg7 8. Rf8, with zugzwang) 8. Kf4 Ra2 (8... Kg7 9. Rf5) 9. Kg5 Ra5+ 10. Rf5+-.

Averbakh came to the opposite conclusion: White should lose a move here! As a consequence, nearly all of his moves are wrong! Let's return to his analysis once again, indicating his errors in boldface, accompanied by question marks where necessary, and showing the correct moves in brackets.

2. **Kd6?** [2] (2. Re8 Ra6+! 3. Kxf5 Rxa7 4. **Kg5?** [3] [4. Re5!+-] 4... Ra5+ 5. Kf4 Ra2=)

2... **Kh7?** [4] [2... Ra6+!=]

3. **Ke7?** [5] [Both 3. Kc6! Ra2 4. Rd8! Rxa7 5. Rd7+ Rxd7 6. Kxd7, and 3. Ke6! Ra5 4. Re8!, or 3... Ra6+ 4. Ke5! Kg7 5. Kf4! win]

3... Kg7 4. Ke6 **Ra2?** [6] [4... Ra6+!=]

5. **Kxf5?** [7] [5. Re8!+-]

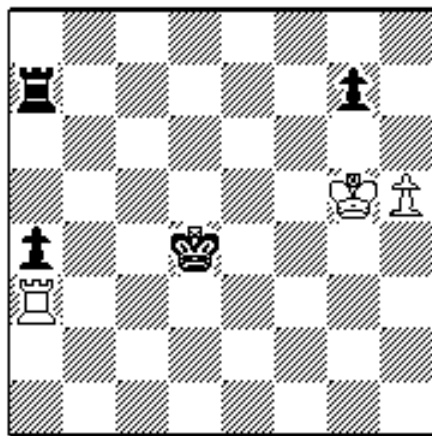
5... Rxf2+ (5... Ra5+ 6. Kf4 **Kh7?** [8] [Black gets a draw with 6... Ra4+] 7. Rf8! Rxa7 8. Kg5 Ra5+ 9. Rf5+-)

6. Kg5 Ra2 7. Kxh5 Ra4 8. Re8 Rxa7 9. Kxg4+-.

An amazing score: 8 (!) errors, in the analysis of a fairly simple position.

Analyzing the following endgame which he played himself, Averbakh opined that both sides erred more than once. Well, there's one pretty substantial error - one that changes the whole evaluation of the position - in his own analysis.

Taimanov – Averbakh Leningrad 1947 (See Diagram)



At the board, Black examined the natural 1...Kc4!?, but decided that it would lead only to a draw after 2. Kg6 Kb4 3. Rg3 a3 4. Rg2 a2 5. Rxa2 Rxa2 6. Kxg7.

Later, Averbakh found the improvement: 4... Rc7! (instead of 4... a2?) 5. Kh7 (5. Rg4+ Kb3 6. Rg3+ Kb2) 5... Rc5! 6. Kg6 (6. Rh2 Rg5 7. Rh4+ Kb5) 6... Kb3 7. Rg3+ Kb2 8. Rg2+ Rc2 (this is why the zwischenzug 5...Rc5! was needed - the king's placement means the rook cannot take the g-pawn) 9. Rg1 Rh2! (from here,

the rook not only defends the g7-pawn indirectly, but also shelters the king from both horizontal and vertical checks) 10. Rg5 a2 11. Rb5+ Kc1 12. Ra5

Rg2+ 13. Kh7 Kb1 14. Rb5+ Rb2 15. Ra5 Rb7-+.

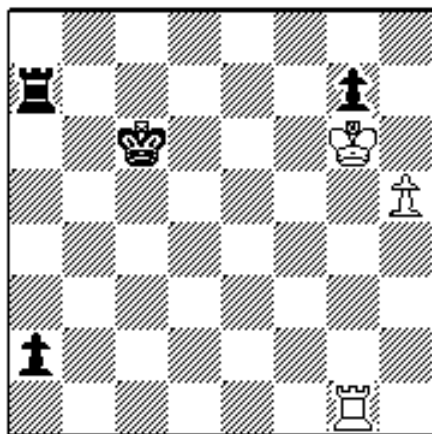
Unfortunately, the grandmaster did not consider all White's defensive resources in his analysis: 4. Rg2? is not the best move.

Nor does 4. Rg1? a2 5. Ra1 Kb3 6. Rg1 help White. Amusingly, commenting on a similar endgame for the *Encyclopedia of Chess Endgames* - the game Marshall - Duras, San Sebastian 1912 - Minev calls this position drawn, although 6... Rc7! wins easily.

The Rook is a long-range piece, able to check and drive the enemy king far from the center of the action. White must play 4. Rg4+!.

4... Kc3 leads to an immediate draw: 5. Rg3+ Kd4 6. Rxa3! Rxa3 7. Kxg7 Ke5 (7... Rg3+ 8. Kf7 Rh3 9. Kg6 Ke5 10. h6 Ke6 11. Kg7!)= 8. h6 Kf5 (8... Ra7+ 9. Kg6!) 9. h7 Ra7+ 10. Kh6!)=.

And if 4... Kb5, then 5. Rg5+! (5. Rg1 Rc7! is bad) 5... Kc6 6. Rg1 a2 (*See Diagram*)



7. Ra1 (7. Rc1+ is also possible) 7... Kc5. Two bad lines here are: 7. Rc1+? Kb4 8. Rg1 Rc7, and 7. Rxa2? Rxa2 8. Kxg7 Rg2+! (a typical tempo-winning zwischenzug) 9. Kf6 (White is also too late after 9. Kh7) 9... Rh2! 10. Kg6 Kd6 11. h6 Ke7 12. h7 Kf8.

There remains only 7. Kh7! - and now what is Black to do?

After 7... Kc4 8. Rxa2 Rxa2 9. Kxg7, White saves himself (as we have seen, this works even with the king on d4). And 7... g5+ 8.

Kg6 g4 9. h6 g3 10. h7 Rxh7 11. Kxh7 g2 is not dangerous, since the Black pawns are too distant from each other (this position would be winnable, if the pawn were on e2).

Let's try 7... Kd5 8. Kg6. If now 8... Kd6, the king has to return to h7, since White will lose after 9. Rd1+? Ke7! 10. Ra1 (10. Kxg7 a1Q-) 10... Kf8, followed by Ra6+. But after 8... Ke5, 9. Kh7? is bad because of 9... Kf5; however, we now have 9. Re1+! Kd4 10. Ra1! and 11. Rxa2 - the king cannot reach his pawn in time.

So Black has no win, although 1... Kc4!? was undoubtedly the best chance.

1... Ra6?!

The attempt to cut the king off from g7 doesn't work out.

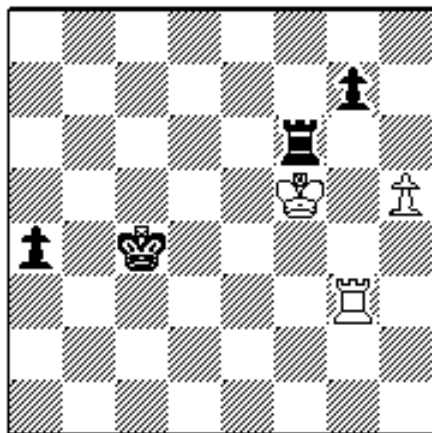
2. Kf5 Kc4 3. Rg3!

Here's the problem! 3... a3 4. Rxg7 a2 5. Rg1 is drawn.

3... Rf6+

Or 3... Ra7 4. Kg6 Kb4 5. Rg4+ Kc5 6. Rg5+ (6. Rxa4? Rxa4 7. Kxg7 Rg4+!)

6... Kb6 7. Rg1 a3 (with the pawn on the 4th rank, moving the rook to the c-file is useless, since White can even trade rooks); and now, not 8. Rb1+? Ka5 9. Rg1 Rc7!, but instead the waiting move 8.Rf1!=. 8...Kb5 is met by 9. Rf5+!; 8... Rc7 by 9. Ra1; and 8...a2 leads to the position in the previous diagram. (See Diagram)



4. Ke5?

The king gets too far away from the g-pawn. 4. Kg5! draws, for example: 4... Kb4 5. Rg4+ Kb3 6. Rg3+ Kc2 7. Rg2+ Kc1 8. Rg3 Ra6 9. Kf5 Ra7 10. Kg6 Kb2 11. Rg2+ Kb3 12. Rg3+ Kb4 13. Rg4+ Kc5 14. Rg5+, etc.

4... Rh6?

It is well known that victory goes to the one who makes the next-to-last mistake (White's decisive error is still ahead of us)!

The proper continuation was 4... Rf7! 5. Rg4+ Kb5 6. Rg3 Ra7 7. Kf5 a3 8. Kg6 a2 9. Rg1 Kc4! 10. Ra1 (10. Rg4+ Kd5 11. Rg1 a1Q 12. Rxa1 Rxa1 13. Kxg7 Rg1+! 14. Kf6 Rh1-+) 10... Kb3 11. Rg1 Rc7!-+.

5. Rg4+ Kb3 6. Rg3+ Kc2 7. Rg2+ Kd3 8. Rg3+ Kc4 9. Rg4+ Kb5 10. Rxc7??

The elementary 10. Kd4! would have secured the draw. The text is much weaker, since Black retains the possibility of covering the 6th rank with his rook.

10... a3! 11. Ra7

11. Rg1 Rxh5+ 12. Kd4 Kb4 13. Rb1+ Ka4 14. Kc3 a2 15. Rg1 Ka3-+

11... Ra6 12. Rb7+

No help is 12. Rg7 a2 13. Rg1 Rh6! 14. Ra1 (14. Kd4 Kb4) 14... Rxh5+ 15. Kd4 Rh2 16. Kc3 Ka4-+.

12... Ka4 13. Rg7 Ra5+ 14. Kf6 a2 15. Rg4+ Kb3

15... Kb5?? 26. Rg1=.

16. Rg3+ Kc4! 17. Rg4+ Kd3 18. Rg3+ Ke4 19. Rg4+ Ke3 (19...Kf3) 20. Rg1 Rxh5 21. Rg3+ Kd4 22. Ra3 Rh2 23. Kf5 Rf2+ 24. Kg4 Kc4, and White soon resigned.

Translated by Jim Marfia

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