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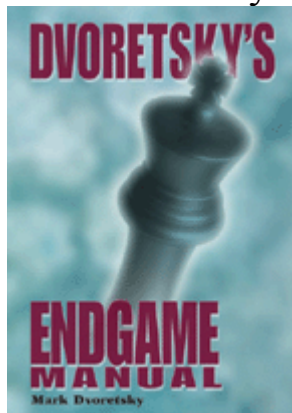
Lessons from Lilienthal

In two of the three games of Andrei Lilienthal, examined in the preceding article (see the [ChessCafe Archives](#)), the leitmotiv of White's play was the exploitation of his opponent's "bad" knight. I would like to show you two more examples of this theme. In both, the winner's strategy was also based upon the unfortunate placement of the enemy knight; and as you will see, sometimes the knight doesn't have to be at the board's edge to be out of play.

COLUMNISTS

The Instructor

Mark Dvoretsky



Umansky - Penrose

World Correspondence Championship, 1995

(Based on the original commentary by Mikhail Umansky)

1. d2-d4 d7-d5 2. c2-c4 d5xc4 3. e2-e4 e7-e5 4. Ng1-f3 e5xd4 5. Bf1xc4 Bf8-b4+ 6. Nb1-d2 Nb8-c6 7. 0-0 Ng8-f6 8. e4-e5 Nf6-d5 9. Nd2-b3 Nd5-b6 10. Bc1-g5 Bb4-e7 11. Bg5xe7 Qd8xe7

11...Nxe7 is an alternative.

12. Bc4-b5 0-0?!

Hardly a wise decision: for the sake of rapid development, Black allows the breakup of his queenside pawns. His dynamic resources may soon run out, while his weaknesses remain.

The line previously played was **12...Bd7 13. Bxc6 Bxc6 14. Nfxd4 Bd5** (as Robert Hübner pointed out, White gains the upper hand after 14...Bd7 15. Rc1 c6 16. Nc5) **15. Qg4**



In Kasparov - Hübner, Skelleftea 1989

(48/511), White obtained the advantage after 15...g6?! 16. Rfe1 0-0 (Hübner says Black also has a difficult position after 16...Be6 17. Nxe6 Qxe6 18. Qxe6+ fe 19. Nc5 0-0-0 20. Nxe6 Rd2 21. b3, or 17...fe 18. Rac1 Nd5 19. Nc5 Kf7 20. Nxb7 Rab8 21. Nc5 Rxb2 22. Qa4) 17. Nf5.

Later, Hübner found an improvement for the defense: **15...0-0**. According to his analysis, 16. Qxg7+ Kxg7 17. Nf5+ Kh8 18. Nxe7 Bxb3 19. ab Rfe8 results in an even endgame. And 16. Rfe1 Be6 17. Nxe6 fe 18. Rac1 Nd5 (18...c6

19. Nc5 Rae8 20. Ne4 is weaker) 19. Nc5 Rfe8 (19...Nf4 20. Re4) 20. Nxb7 Rab8 21. Nc5 (21. Na5 Rxb2 22. Nc6 Qa3) leads to unclear consequences after 21...Rxb2.

16. f4 g6!? 17. Nf5 Qd7 18. Nh6+ Kg7 19. Qg5 (19. f5? Kxh6 20. e6 [20. Rf4 f6] 20...Bxe6!) **19...Bxb3** (19...f6? 20. ef+ Rxf6 21. Nd4!) **20. ab** (20. Ng4 Nd5 21. ab

f5! is unclear) **20...Qd8 21. Nf5+ Kh8 22. Ne7 Nd5** (only move) **23. Nxd5** (23. Rad1 Qxe7 24. Rxd5 f6 =) **23...Qxd5**, with chances for both sides (I. Sokolov - Hübner, Haifa 1989 [48/512]; the variations are by Ivan Sokolov).

13. Bb5xc6 b7xc6 14. Ra1-c1!

After 14. Nbx4 c5!, Black equalizes; so White delays the advance of the c-pawn. He would have the advantage after 14...Ba6 15. Re1 d3 16. Nfd4, or 14...Rd8 15. Nbx4 (since 15...c5? is bad after 16. Nc6).

14...Bc8-g4 15. Nb3xd4 Bg4xf3

15...c5 could be met by 16. Nc6 Qe6 17. Rxc5 Nd7 (17...Qxa2 18. Qd4) 18. Rc3 Bxf3 19. Qxf3 Nxe5 20. Qe4 Rae8 (20...Nxc6 21. Qxe6 fe 22. Rxc6) 21. Re1 Qxa2 22. Rce3 (22. Nxe5 f6) 22...f6 23. b3, with advantage to White.

16. Nd4xf3 c6-c5 17. Qd1-c2 c5-c4



White's further strategy is a model of exact logic. He will gain the upper hand, if he can take the c4-pawn without conceding anything in return, because of the weakness of Black's remaining queenside pawns. In light of this, Black's knight is tied to the b6-square, which keeps it far from the kingside. This in turn means that White has what amounts to an extra kingside piece, and can thus prepare an attack involving the line opening e5-e6. This will be his basic plan, although he will continue to remind us that he might take the c4-pawn, if given the opportunity.

18. Rf1-e1

Intending Re4, Rce1 and e6, with an attack. 18. Rfd1 Rad8 or 18. Qe4 Rad8 19. Nd4 Rd5 20. Rfe1 g6 would be much weaker.

18...Ra8-d8 19. Re1-e4

On 19. Nd2, Black has the strong reply 19...Qb4!

19...Rf8-e8 20. Rc1-e1 Rd8-d5 21. h2-h3

Here, too, chasing after material is not justified: 21. Nd2?! Qb4 22. Nxc4 Rc5! 23. b3 Nxc4 24. bc Rcxe5 (25. Rxe5?? Qxe1+). But if Black plays 21...h6 or 21...c5, then White could very well go after the pawn with 22. Nd2.

21...Qe7-d8

On 21...Qd7, Black did not like 22. Ng5! g6 (22...Rd2 23. e6! Rxc2 24. ed Rf8 25. Rd1 and wins; 22...Qf5 23. f4 is good for White) 23. e6 fe 24. Nxe6 Rd2 25. Qc3. Now, however, White executes the long-planned line opening on the kingside.



22. e5-e6! f7xe6 23. Re4xe6 Re8xe6

No better is 23...Rf8 24. Qe4 Rdf5 25. Re7 Qd6 26. Qg4 Qg6 27. Qxg6 hg 28. Rxc7 R5f7 29. Rxf7 Rxf7 30. Ng5.

24. Re1xe6 Rd5-d6

After 24...Rd1+ 25. Kh2, 25...Qd3? 26. Re8+ Kf7 27. Ne5+ doesn't work; and on 25...Rd6, White plays 26. Re4, just as in the game.

25. Re6-e4 h7-h6 26. Qc2-e2

Not only does Black have one less piece available on the kingside; his king's pawn cover is also considerably more vulnerable than his opponent's. So White's attack quickly grows irresistible.

26...Rd6-d1+ 27. Kg1-h2 Qd8-d6+

27...Qd3? 28. Re8+ Kh7 29. Ng5+

28. g2-g3 Rd1-d5 29. Re4-e6!

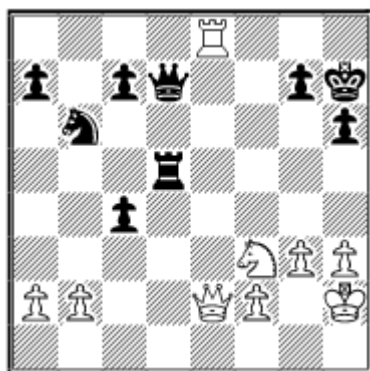
29. Re8+? Kf7! would have been premature. First, the enemy queen is forced to an inferior square.

29... Qd6-d7

29...Qc5 loses to 30. Re8+ Kh7 31. Qe4+ Rf5 32. Nd4.

30. Re6-e8+ Kg8-h7

Black can no longer play 30...Kf7, because of 31. Ne5+.



31. g3-g4!

Black meets the immediate check on e4 by interposing his queen at f5, which is why White takes control of that square first. 31. Nh4?, with the same idea, would be weaker on account of 31...Rd4 32. Qh5 Rd6.

31...Qd7-d6+ 32. Kh2-g2 Qd6-g6 33. Nf3-h4 Qg6-f6

On 33...Qd3, 34. Qe6 is decisive.

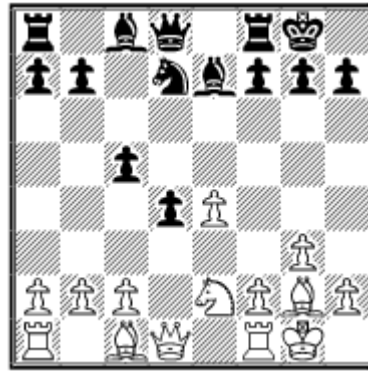
34. Qe2-e4+ g7-g6 35. Nh4xg6 Kh7-g7 36. Re8-e7+ Kg7-g8

And Black resigned. His knight is completely unable to come to the king's aid, having been forced to play the pitiful role of guard for the c4-pawn.

Gulko - Kremenetsky
Moscow 1983 (35/196)

1. e2-e4 c7-c5 2. Nb1-c3 e7-e6 3. g2-g3 d7-d5 4. e4xd5 e6xd5 5. Bf1-g2 Ng8-f6 6. d2-d3 d5-d4 7. Nc3-e4 Nf6xe4 8. d3xe4!? Bf8-e7 9. Ng1-e2 0-0 10. 0-0 Nb8-d7?!

A positional error: the knight should have been posted to c6.



11. c2-c3!

Exploiting the unfortunate position of the knight at d7, White rids himself of the strong pawn at d4.

11...d4xc3 12. Ne2xc3 Be7-f6

Now Black can meet the tempting 13. Nd5!? with 13...Bd4, and if 14. Rb1, then 14...Nb6, successfully completing his development.

Instead of 14. Rb1, however, 14. Be3! would be more energetic, as in: 14...Bxb2 15. Rb1

Bd4 (15...Be5 16. f4 or 15...Bf6 16. Qc2 would leave White with tremendous compensation for the pawn) 16. Bxd4 cd 17. Qxd4 Nb6 18. Qb4 Nxd5 19. ed, when White's advantage is obvious. Black would probably have preferred 14...Bxe3 15. Nxe3 instead, when his position would be only a little worse.

13. Bc1-e3!

White develops a piece, takes away the d4-square from the bishop, and ties the knight down to the c5-pawn's defense. Could you ask any more from one move?

13...Bf6xc3

On 13...Qa5, Black would have had to reckon with 14. Nd5 Bxb2 15. Ne7+ Kh8 16. Nxc8, which leads to a position with an unusual material constellation, favoring White: 16...Bxa1 17. Qxd7 Qxa2 18. Nd6 Rad8 (18...b6 19. e5) 19. Nxf7+ Qxf7 20. Qxf7 Rxf7 21. Rxa1 b6 22. Kf1.

14. b2xc3 Qd8-a5 15. Qd1-d5!?

15. Qc2 was weaker: Black replies 15...Ne5, to be followed by Be6, and Nc4 or Ng4. 15. Qd6!? looks tempting, though.

On the other hand, White has no need to sacrifice a pawn here. He could play simply 15. Qd3!? Nb6 (15...Ne5? 16. Qd5) 16. Rfb1! Be6 17. Qb5!, keeping the advantage.

15...Rf8-e8 16. Rf1-d1 Qa5xc3 17. Ra1-c1 Qc3-a5

17...Qa3 would probably have met the same response.

If 17...Qb2!? 18. f4 Nb6 19. Qxc5 Qxa2 20. Bd4!? (intending 21. Qg5), White has enough compensation for the pawn. 20. e5 was evidently less exact, in view of 20...Bg4 21. Rd2 Qb3 22. Bxb7!? Na4 23. Qd4 Qxb7 24. Qxa4, with equality.



18. e4-e5!

Recovering the pawn makes no sense: 18. Bxc5?! Nxc5 19. Rxc5 Qa3!? 20. Rc7 Be6 21. Qxb7 Qxa2 =. White must hold on to the advantage of the two bishops.

18. f4!? was a decent idea - more than likely, it would lead to the same position we got after 17...Qb2: 18...Nb6 19. Qxc5 Qxa2 20. Bd4!?

18...Re8xe5

Not 18...Nxe5? 19. Rxc5 Qa4 20. Rd4, and wins.

And 18...Rb8 allows 19. Bf4! b5 20. Qc6 (threatening both 21. Rxd7 and 20. e6) 20...Re6 (20...Rb7 21. Rxc5; 20...Rb6 21. Qc7) 21. Rd6.

If 18...Nb6, 19. Qxc5 Qxa2; and now instead of 20. f4 Bg4, as previously given, with unclear play, there is the stronger 20. Qc7!.

19. Qd5xe5! Nd7xe5 20. Rc1xc5 Qa5xc5

20...Qb6? loses at once to 21. Rxe5.

21. Be3xc5 Bc8-g4! 22. Bg2xb7 Bg4xd1

22...Rb8? is quite bad, in view of 23. Bxa7; however, 22...Re8!? deserved consideration, when White would reply 23. Rb1!, holding his advantage.

23. Bb7xa8

Two bishops in this endgame guarantee White a great advantage - most likely, enough to win. Gulko demonstrates outstanding technique in the concluding phase. I would ask my readers to test their own technical mastery by answering the questions that follow on your own (that is, before reading the following text). Thus you will see if those "easy, obvious" grandmaster moves come quite so easily to yourselves.

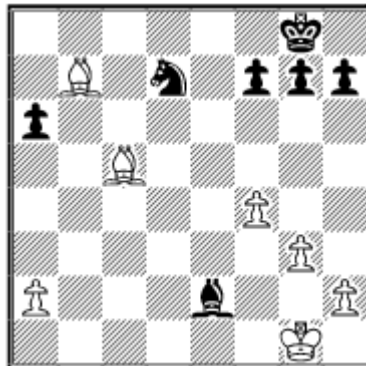
23...a7-a6

23...Bf3 is hopeless: 24. Bxf3 Nxf3+ 25. Kg2 (the a7-pawn is hanging) 25...Ne1+ 26. Kf1 Nf3, and now the most exact continuation is probably 27. Ke2! Nxf2 28. f3.

24. Ba8-b7!

The inaccurate 24. f4?! would have allowed the exchange of bishops by 24...Bf3!

24...Bd1-e2 25. f2-f4 Ne5-d7



How should White continue?

The tempting 26. Bb4? (so as to keep Black's king out of the center) is a mistake: Black responds 26...Bc4 27. a3 Nb6 28. Kf2?! Nd5 29. Bd2 f5! erecting a barrier the White king will find hard to penetrate. This line would most likely result in a drawn game.

The bishop must retreat to d4, keeping Black's knight on the unpromising d7-square.

26. Bc5-d4! Kg8-f8 27. Bb7-d5 g7-g6

The bishop endgame after 27...Nf6 28. Bxf6 gf 29. Kf2 (followed by Ke3-d4) is hopeless for Black.

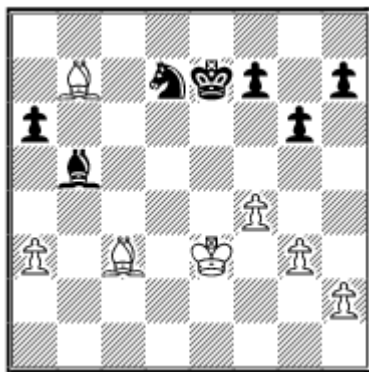
28. Kg1-f2

The time has come to bring the king to the center.

28...Be2-g4 29. Bd5-b7

29. a3 or 29. a4 are equivalent moves. But 29. Ke3? is inaccurate, allowing Black to trade off a pair of bishops by 29...Be6.

29...Bg4-e6 30. a2-a3 Be6-c4 31. Kf2-e3 Kf8-e7 32. Bd4-c3 Bc4-b5



How does White continue?

Before beginning any decisive action, it's a good idea to improve your position as much as possible. Among other things, it would be useful here to advance the g-pawn, in order to restrict the activity of the enemy knight, as well as the kingside pawns.

Of course, 33. Kd4 is a good move, too. This isn't one of those tempo-counting positions, so White could put off the pawn advance; but then, White would have to consider both

33...Be2!? and 33...h5!?

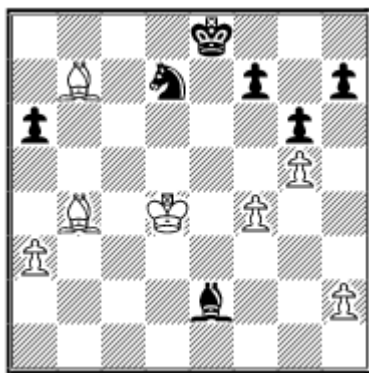
33. g3-g4! Ke7-e8

33...h6 or 33...Nf6 were more stubborn.

34. Ke3-d4 Bb5-e2 35. g4-g5!

Now the f6-square is forever closed to Black's knight, and the backward h7-pawn is also fixed.

35...Ke8-e7 36. Bc3-b4+ Ke7-e8



How does White play?

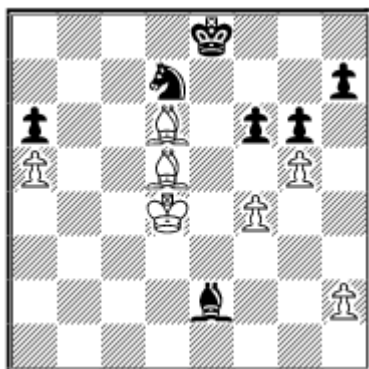
It makes sense to strengthen his position still further, by advancing the a-pawn to a5 - this fixes the weak a6-pawn, and takes away the b6-square from the knight, as well.

37. a3-a4! Be2-d1 38. a4-a5 Bd1-e2 39. Bb7-c6 Ke8-d8 40. Bc6-d5 Kd8-e8 41. Bd5-c6 Ke8-d8

Sometimes, even in a won position, it's no sin to repeat moves. In this case, it allows White to adjourn the game, and find the most exact winning line in home analysis.

42. Bb4-d6 Kd8-e8 43. Bc6-d5 f7-f6

After 43...Bf1, White could continue just as he did in the game.



What would be the simplest way for White to finish things off?

There would be no point in going after the h7-pawn: after 44. Bg8 fg 45. fg, capturing on h7 would be met by Kf7.

It is a known fact that when you have the two bishops, one of them can always be exchanged. Here the exchange of bishops is the simplest winning method. The knight on d7 that is left on the board is devoid of useful moves (thanks to the pawns at a5 and g5), which places Black

immediately in zugzwang.

44. Bd5-c4! Be2xc4 45. Kd4xc4 f6xg5 46. f4xg5

And Black resigned, in view of 46...Kf7 47. Kd5 - zugzwang.

Black's knight, which took up the unfortunate post at d7 in the opening, ended up staying there the entire game, becoming the chief negative factor in Black's position, and eventually the major cause of his defeat.

In the endgame, White demonstrated the typical techniques for converting his advantage and capitalizing on the power of his two bishops. To be precise: he centralized his king; he restricted the enemy knight with pawns; he forestalled his opponent's plans - first and foremost, his plan to exchange bishops prematurely; and he prepared the same exchange at the most favorable moment possible for himself.

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