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Saving Combinations, Part Two

Nothing inspires one, so much as the realization of the hopelessness of one's situation. – a quote from the French writer, Albert Camus.

We shall look at our final two games in full, since in both of them, the crisis occurred just after leaving the opening. One of them was very short; the other considerably longer and more complicated.

COLUMNISTS

Morozevich – Korchnoi

Biel 2003

1 e2-e4 e7-e6 2 d2-d4 d7-d5 3 Nb1-c3 Ng8-f6 4 Bc1-g5 Bf8-e7 5 e4-e5 Nf6-d7
6 h2-h4 c7-c5 7 Bg5xe7 Ke8xe7

Of course not 7...Qxe7? 8 Nb5.

8 d4xc5

The quieter alternative was 8 f4. After the text, White has to consider not just 8...Nc6!?, but also the most principled reply, 8...Nxe5!?. This continuation has already occurred in practice; and to my knowledge, White has not succeeded in demonstrating an advantage. Conversely, I am not a specialist in opening theory – perhaps the experts in this variation have already corrected this evaluation, or maybe Alexander Morozevich has his own opinion.

In refusing to take the sharp course of action, Black finds himself in difficulties.

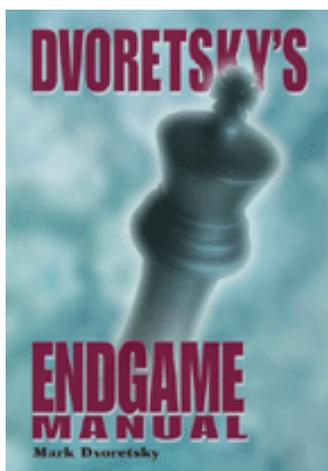
8...Qd8-c7 9 f2-f4 Qc7xc5 10 Qd1-d2 Nb8-c6 11 Ng1-f3 Nd7-b6 12 a2-a3!

Threatening to seize space by 13 b4, White provokes Black into weakening the b5-square. In the game Fontaine – Schaefer, Senden 2001, White played the weaker 12 0-0-0 Bd7 13 g4 h6 14 g5 Rac8 15 h5 Na5 16 gh gh 17 Qd4 Qxd4 18 Nxd4+/=.

12...a7-a5 13 h4-h5 h7-h6 14 0-0-0 Bc8-d7 15 Kc1-b1 a5-a4 16 Rh1-h3

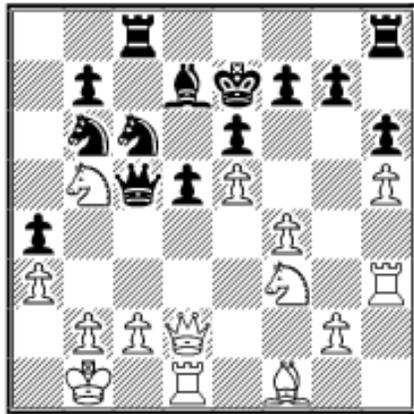
An interesting attempt to prepare the advance Nb5 (the immediate 16 Nb5?! would be met by 16...Nxe5!). The pawn sacrifice 16 f5 ef 17 Nb5 or 17 Qf4 is dubious, though tempting. The kingside breakthrough could be executed after the preparatory 16 g4!, which was probably objectively stronger than the game

*The
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continuation.

16...Ra8-c8 17 Nc3-b5



B?

The knight aims for d6; if it gets there, Black's position will become quite difficult. (The game's conclusion supports this evaluation.)

17...Rhd8 18 Nd6 Rb8 19 Rg3 Kf8 20 Qd3!
(threatening both 21 Qh7 and 21 Nxf7) Black resigned.

Now let's try taking on e5.

17...Nc6xe5! 18 Nf3xe5

Clearly, Korchnoi could not have been afraid of 18 Na7 Nec4 19 Nxc8+ Rxc8, when Black has enough for the exchange.

18...Bd7xb5 19 Rh3-c3

This is what our clever Morozevich had prepared against the pawn capture. The queen is tied to the bishop, and cannot therefore retreat; and if Black blocks the file at c4, White intends to capture there a few times, open up the d-file, and invade with his queen at d7.

Such a prospect could frighten anyone; and under normal circumstances, it would have been natural to end one's calculations here. But this could not be considered a normal situation: teetering on the edge of defeat, Black has to clutch at any straw, and carefully test all forcing variations, even if they look hopeless at first.

19...Nb6-c4!

19...Bc4? would be much weaker: White is not forced to capture, but can insert the powerful 20 f5! first. Black loses immediately after 20...Rhd8 21 fe fe 22 Qf4. And on 20...d4, there follows 21 Rxc4 Nxc4 22 Nxc4 b5 23 Na5 e5 (23...Qxf5 24 Nb7+-, preparing 25 Qb4+) 24 Nb7 (24 Bd3+ is good, too) 24...Qc7 25 Qb4+ Kf6 26 Bd3, with a decisive advantage.

20 Bf1xc4

20 Qe1 Rhd8 promises White little.

20...d5xc4

After 20...Bxc4? 21 Rxc4!, White's idea triumphs.

21 Rc3xc4 Rh8-d8!

This in-between move saves Black. A roughly equal endgame results after either 22 Rxc5 Rxd2 23 Rxd2 Rxc5, or 22 Qxd8+ Rxd8 23 Rxc5 Rxd1+ 24 Ka2 Bd7 (24...Be8 25 Rc7+ Kf8, intending 26...Rd2) 25 Rc7 f6. There is no change in the assessment after the unexpected 22 Nc6+ Qxc6 23 Qb4+ Kf6 24 Qc3+ Ke7, when White just has to repeat moves.

Whereas in the previous game Black quickly found himself in an inferior position, in the following encounter the opening had nothing to do with it: theory offers Black several acceptable continuations.

Polugaevsky – M. Gurevich

Reggio Emilia 1991

1 d2-d4 Ng8-f6 2 c2-c4 g7-g6 3 Nb1-c3 Bf8-g7 4 e2-e4 d7-d6 5 Bf1-e2 0-0 6 Ng1-f3 e7-e5 7 Bc1-e3 e5xd4 8 Nf3xd4 Rf8-e8 9 f2-f3 c7-c6 10 Qd1-d2 d6-d5 11 e4xd5 c6xd5 12 0-0 Nb8-c6 13 Ra1-d1

13 c5 Rxe3!? 14 Qxe3 Qf8! was an interesting exchange sacrifice, introduced in the 11th match game Karpov – Kasparov, New York/Lyon 1990.

13...Nc6xd4

13...dc!?! 14 Nxc6 Qxd2 15 Bxd2 bc 16 Bxc4 Be6 = was also possible.

14 Be3xd4 d5xc4 15 Be2xc4 a7-a6

15...Be6!?! 16 Bb5 Rf8 17 Qf2 (threatening 18 Bc5) 17...Qa5 led to an unclear position in the game Tal – Yurtaev, 1983.

16 Rf1-e1! Bc8-f5?!

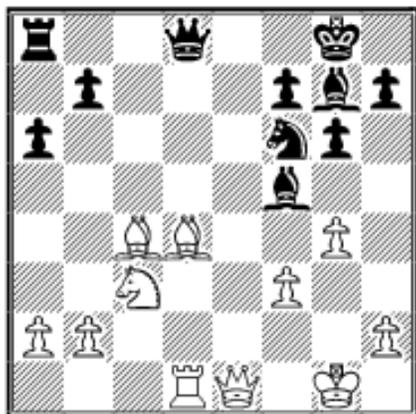
16...Bd7! was preferable: 17 Bxf6 Rxe1+ 18 Qxe1 Bxf6 19 Ne4 (19 Nd5 Bc6 =) 19...Be7! =; or 17 Qf4 Rxe1+ 18 Rxe1 Rc8 19 Bb3 Bc6 20 h4 Qc7 21 Qg5 Re8 = (Z. Polgar – Wojtkiewicz, Polanica Zdroj 1991).

17 g2-g4!

After driving off the bishop, White intends to continue g4-g5; and after trading off the dark-squared bishops, he will invade f6 with his knight.

On 17...Rc8, he has a pleasant choice between 18 Bb3 and 18 Bxf7+ Kxf7 19 gf.

And if 17...Be6, then 18 Bxe6 fe!?! (18...Rxe6 19 Rxe6 fe 20 g5 Nh5 21 Bxg7 Qxd2 22 Rxd2 Nxc7 23 Rd7+) 19 g5 Nh5 20 Bxg7 Nxc7 21 Ne4 Qxd2 (21...Nh5 22 Qe3) 22 Rxd2 Red8 23 Red1 Rxd2 24 Rxd2±.

17...Re8xe1+ 18 Qd2xe1

B?

Here you have perhaps the most complex task presented in this article. Black's position is not easy; however, he does have a brilliant saving combination at his disposal.

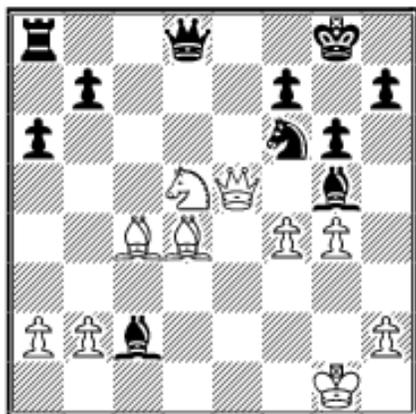
18...Bf5-c2!! 19 Rd1-d2 Bg7-h6!

On 19...b5, both 20 Bf2 Qc7 21 Bf1 and 20 Bd5 Nxd5 21 Bxg7 Kxg7 22 Nxd5 Qd6 (22...Qg5 23 h4 Re8 24 Qxe8 Qxd2 25 Qe5+)

23 Nc3 are strong.

20 Qe1-e5!

White gets nothing out of 20 Be3 Qe7, so he is practically forced to sacrifice the rook.

20...Bh6xd2 21 Nc3-d5 Bd2-g5! 22 f3-f4!

B?

After 22 Qxg5? Nxd5 23 Qe5 Nf6 the attack has been beaten off. Now, however, it looks as though Black is in trouble.

22...Qe8? loses to 23 Nxf6+ Bxf6 24 Qxf6 Kf8 25 f5 Qe1+ 26 Kg2. On 22...Be4?! 23 fg Bxd5 24 Bxd5 Qxd5 25 Qxf6 Kf8 26 Qh8+ Ke7 27 Bf6+ Ke6 28 Qxa8 Qd1+ 29 Kf2 Qd2+ 30 Kf3 Qd3+ 31 Kf4, it's hard to

determine whether or not the king can ever escape the perpetual check. Yet, White has another way: 23 Ne7+!? Kf8 24 fg Nd7 (24...Qd7 25 h3) 25 Qg7+ Kxe7 26 Qxf7+ Kd6 27 Qf4+ Kc6 28 Qxe4+ Kc7 29 Be3, when the black king is still in trouble.

22...Bg5-h4!! 23 g4-g5 Bh4-f2+!!

The point of Black's play! White must now pull his bishop back from the long diagonal (24 Kxf2?? Ng4+).

24 Bd4xf2

Now Black is able to trade off the dangerous knight: 24...Nxd5 25 Bxd5 Qe8 26 Bxf7+!? Qxf7 (if 26...Kxf7 27 Qd5+) 27 Bd4 Qd7 (27...Qf8 is the same thing) 28 Qh8+ Kf7, and it comes down to perpetual check. Another possibility is

24...Ng4 25 Qd4 (White will get no advantage out of 25 Qe2 Nxf2 26 Kxf2 b5!?)
25...Nxf2 (25...b5!? 26 Be1!? bc 27 Bc3 f6 leads to an unclear position) 26 Nf6+
Kh8 (26...Kf8 27 Nxf7+) 27 Nd7+ Kg8, and draws.

The above analysis was by your author, working with grandmaster Ernesto Inarkiev.

Other continuations fail to get Black out of trouble:

On 18...Bd7?! 19 g5 (19 Qe3!? is probably stronger still) 19...Nh5 20 Qe3, the dark-squared bishops will be traded off, and the weakness of f6 must tell.

18...Qc8?! leads to a tough ending for Black after 19 Qe2 (19 Bb3 is just as good; but 19 Qe7?! offers White little after 19...Qxc4 20 Bxf6 Bxf6 21 Qxf6 Qc5+, followed by 22...Be6) 19...Be6 20 Bxe6 Qxe6 (20...fe 21 g5 with an attack) 21 Qxe6 fe 22 g5 Nh5 23 Bxg7 Nxg7 24 Rd7.

Mikhail Gurevich chose **18...Qc7?!**, not fearing 19 gf Qxc4, and intending to meet the bishop's retreat by 19...Re8.

19 Bxf6! Bxf6 20 Nd5 Qc5+ (20...Qxc4 21 Nxf6+ Kg7 22 Qe5 is hopeless) **21 Kg2!**

Of course, 21 Qf2? is a mistake: 21...Qxf2+ 22 Kxf2 Bh4+ 23 Kg2 Be6 24 Nc7 Rc8. On 21 Kh1?!, the undefended f3-pawn would be a factor in some lines, such as: 21...Bg7 22 gf Qxc4 23 Nb6 Qf4.

21...Bg5

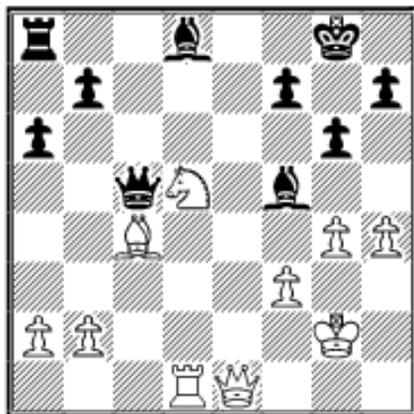
Other lines offer Black no relief:

- 21...Bg7 22 gf Qxc4 23 Nb6;
- 21...Bxb2 22 Qe2 Be6 23 Qxb2 Qxc4 24 Nb6;
- 21...Qxc4 22 Nxf6+ Kg7 23 Nd5, threatening both 24 gf and 24 Qe5+;
- 21...Bd8 22 Qe8+ Kg7 23 Ne3 (or 23 Qe5+ f5 24 Qe2).

22 h4! (22 gf? Qxc4 23 Nb6 Qc2+) **22...Bd8**

If 22...Bxh4 23 Qxh4 Qxc4, then 24 Qf2! decides, with its twin threats of 25 gf and 25 Nb6.

And on 22...Bc2 23 hg Bxd1, White can win either by 24 Qxd1 Qxc4 25 Nb6, or by 24 Nf6+! Kg7 25 Qc3 Qc6 26 Nd5+ f6 27 gf+.



23 Qe8+

23 gf!? Qxc4 24 f6! was very strong, too.

23...Kg7

Here, the decisive line was 24 Qe5+! f6 25 Qe2 Bd7 (25...Bc8 26 h5; 25...Rc8 26 Bb3 or 26 gf Qxc4 27 Qxc4 Rxc4 28 Ne3 Rc8 29 Rd7+) 26 Nf4 (there are other ways as well: 26 Nxf6 Bb5!? 27 g5!; 26 b4 Qc6 27 Nb6!) 26...Qc6 27 Be6! Be8 28 Bd5.

Unfortunately, Polugaevsky let slip a well-deserved win with **24 Ne3?**, which would only have worked had Black played the immediate 21...Bd8 (without the inclusion of 21...Bg5 22 h4).

24...Bxh4! (24...Be6? 25 Bxe6; 24...Qc7? 25 Rd7!!, or 25 gf Bxh4 26 f6+!) **25 Qxf7+** (on 25 Qxa8 Qxe3 26 Qxb7 Qf2+ 27 Kh1 Kh6!, the position becomes double-edged) **25...Kh8 26 gf** (26 g5 Bxg5 27 Rh1 h6!) **26...Qxe3 27 fg Qg5+ 28 Kf1 Qxg6 29 Qxg6** Draw.

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