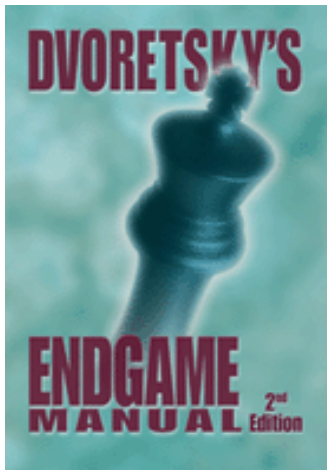




C O L U M N I S T S

The Instructor

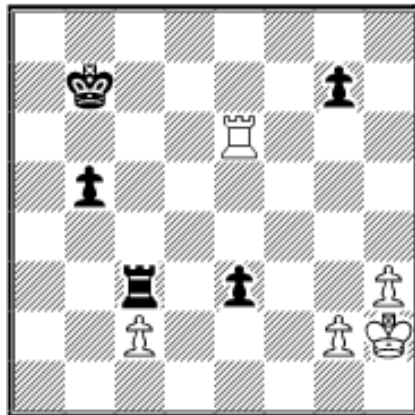
Mark Dvoretsky



Intermediate Moves in the Endgame

In the game I am about to bring to your attention, both sides have several pawns, so we can't just barge ahead and analyze this with our analysis engines. But many variations lead to exchanges, when it gets down to five- or six-piece endings; and here is where the computer makes the commentator's job much easier, since he no longer needs to investigate these variations to a conclusion. I will note here, however, that many years ago I was able to analyze endgames myself, without computer assistance. In fact, I even included a couple of engrossing episodes as exercises in my book, *School of Chess Excellence 1 – Endgame Analysis*. Here I am directing my readers' attention to a considerably fuller piece of analysis. Consequently, the list of exercises is also longer: every diagrammed position that is accompanied by a question mark.

Dolmatov – Kupreichik
USSR Championship, Minsk 1979



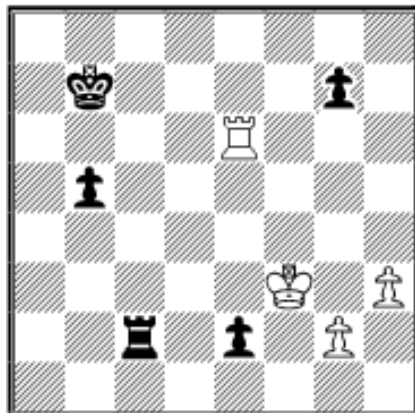
White stands noticeably worse; he will have to fight for the draw.

47 h3-h4

The move played in the game is undoubtedly a useful one. However, there is another attractive plan: the attempt to approach the enemy passed pawn with the king and capture it.

47 Kg3! Rxc2 48 Kf3 (48 Rxe3!?) 48...e2

In order to avoid the possibility of 48 Rxe3, Black could have transposed moves: 47...e2+ 48 Kf2 Rxc2. But then he would have had to consider the possibility of 49 Rg6! b4 50 Rg4! Rb2 51 Rxc7+

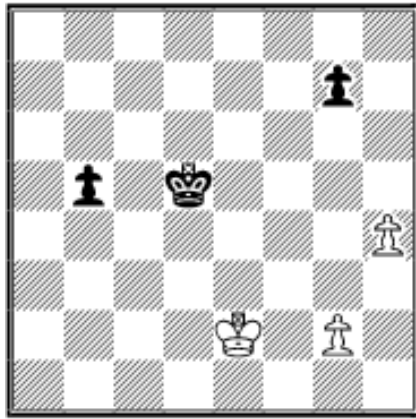


1.?

Can White take the e2-pawn? How would you assess the resulting pawn endgame?

A proper answer to this question requires that we discover an important finesse on move fifty-two during our calculations.

49 Rxe2! Rxe2 50 Kxe2 Kc6 51 h4 Kd5



1.?

Of course, White doesn't have time to trade off the pawns: 52 h5?? Ke4 53 g4 Kf4+ 52 Kd3? loses also: 52...Ke5 53 Kc3 Kf4 54 Kb4 Kg3 55 Kxb5 Kxg2! 56 Kc4 Kg3 57 h5 Kg4 58 h6 gh 59 Kd3 Kf3.

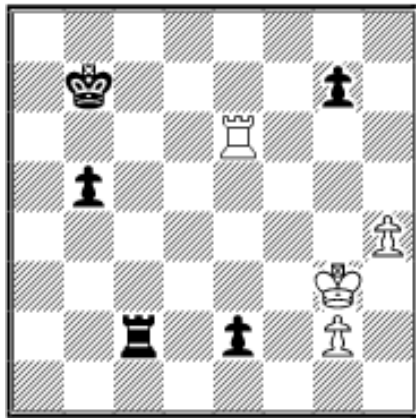
The only saving line is **52 Ke3!! Ke5 53 h5!**. For now, the enemy king is unable to reach the most important pawn, at g2; and capturing the pawn at b5 requires the same number of tempi with the white king at e3 as it did from d3.

53...Kf5 54 Kd4 Kg4 55 Kc5 Kxh5 (55...Kg3 56 Kxb5 Kxg2 57 Kc4 Kg3 58 Kd3 Kg4 59 h6 gh 60 Ke2 Kg3 61 Kf1 =) **56 Kxb5 Kg4 57 Kc4 Kg3** (White should meet 57...g5 either by 58 Kd3 Kf4 59 Ke2 Kg3 60 Kf1 Kh2 61 g4! =, or by 58 Kd4 Kf4 59 Kd3 =; but not by 58 Kd5? Kf4! 59 Ke6 g4 60 Kf6 g3 61 Kg6 Ke3+!) **58 Kd4 Kxg2 59 Ke5 Kg3 60 Kf5 =**.

47...Rc3xc2 48 Kh2-g3!

48 Rxe3 Kb6 looks dangerous, although it probably does not lose. Sergei Dolmatov preferred to keep his rook on e6, from where it "controls" the enemy king.

Black could reply **48...e2**

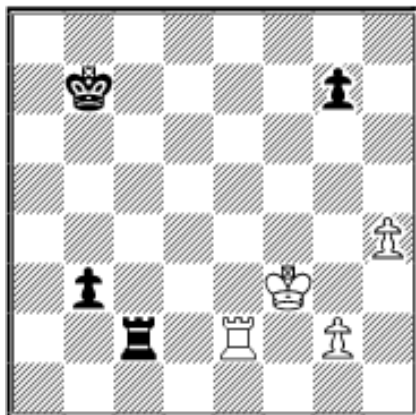


1.?

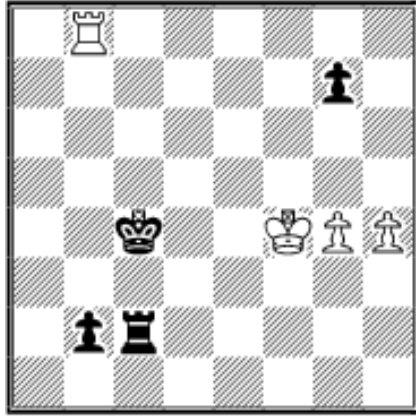
Now how should White defend?

He has an easy draw with **49 Kf2! e1Q+** (49...b4 50 Re4! =) **50 Kxe1 Rxc2 51 Kd1!** or 51 h5 Rh2 52 Re5! Kb6 53 Kd1 =, but not 52 Rg6? Rxh5 53 Rxg7 + Kb6 54 Kd2 Rc5+.

But if White, fearing 49...e1Q+, should play 49 Kf3? b4 50 Rxe2 instead, then he loses after 50...b3!



For example: 51 Re3 b2 52 Rb3+ Kc6 (52...Ka6?, threatens 53...Rc3+, but it's a mistake: 53 Rb8 Ka5 54 Ke3! Rxc2 55 Kd3 =) 53 Ke4 Rxc2 (53...Kc5!? 54 Kd3 Rxc2) 54 Kd4 g6 55 Rb8 Rh2 56 Kc3 Kd5+ , or 53 g4 Kd5 (53...Kc5 is equivalent) 54 Kf4 Kc4 55 Rb8



1...?

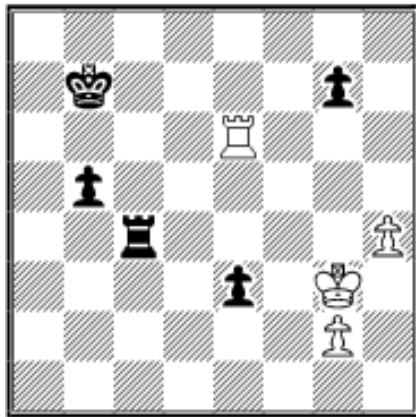
In such situations, every tempo counts. A king's march to the pawn's queening square (55...Kc3?) would take too long. Black wins vital time by threatening to interpose.

55...Rd2! (threatening 56...Rd4+, followed by another check and interposition on the b-file) 56 Rc8 + Kd3 57 Rb8 Kc2 58 Rc8+ Kd1 59 Rb8 Kc1 60 Kf5 Rd4! (61...b1Q+? lets the win slip: 62 Rxb1+ Kxb1 63 Kg6 =; however, he could play 60...Rd6! 61 Rc8 + Kb1 62 Rb8 Ra6-+) 61 h5 (61 g5 Rxh4 62 Kg6 Rg4-+) 61...b1Q+ 62 Rxb1+ Kxb1 63 g5 Rd6!-+.

In the previously diagrammed position, it would make sense to drop the rook back to the first rank by 51 Re1!?, hoping to avoid the loss of tempi involved in warding off the threatened interposition. And, in fact, after 51...b2? 52 Rb1 Kc6 53 g4 Kd5 54 Kf4 Kc4 55 Kf5 Kb3 56 Kg6, White achieves a draw. But if his opponent plays the more accurate 51...Kc6! 52 Rb1 Rc3+! 53 Kf4 Kb5 54 g4 Kb4 55 Kf5 Rc6! 56 h5 Rb6! (of course not 56...Ka3 57 Ra1+ Kb2? 58 Ra7 =) 57 g5 Kc3-+, or 52 g4 Kb5 53 Re7 (53 Kf4 Kb4 54 Kf5 Rc6-+) 53...b2 54 Rb7+ Kc4 55 Kf4 Rd2!, we reach the same winning position for Black from the last diagram, as we reached in the 51 Re3 variation.

In the actual game, Black rejected 48...e2, in favor of a move more dangerous for his opponent:

48...Rc2-c4!



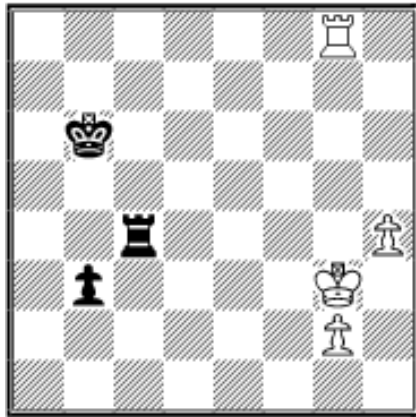
1.?

Now, attempting to force an exchange of pawns by 49 Kf3? Rxh4 50 Re7+ Kb6 51 Rxg7 is refuted by the typical shot: 51...Re4!-+.

White must therefore make a choice between another forcing continuation: 49 Rxe3 b4 50 Re7+; or the more restrained 50 h5 (or else the transposition 49 h5 b4 50 Rxe3, which doesn't change anything). Of course, this has to be calculated; but it's not a good idea to rely wholeheartedly on concrete analysis. It would make sense to check out the opening moves of

both sides' plans, compare the ensuing positions, and come to a decision based on your intuition.

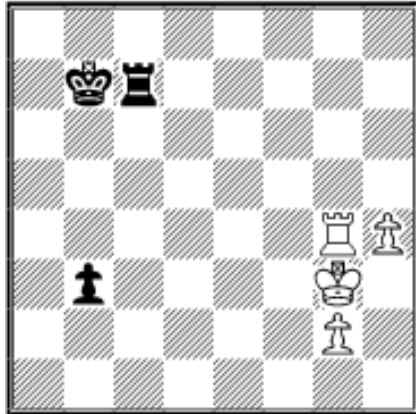
Let's examine **49 Rxe3 b4 50 Re7+** First, 50...Rc7? isn't enough to win: 51 Re4 Rc3+ 52 Kf2 b3 53 Ke2 Kc6 54 Rb4 Kc5 55 Rb7 (these are probably not the only moves White can play in this variation); therefore, Black plays **50...Kb6 51 Rxg7 b3** and White's only defense is **52 Rg8!**



1...?

Both 52...Rc7? 53 Rb8+ Rb7 54 Rd8 b2 55 Rd1 Kc5 56 Rb1, and 52...Rb4? 53 Rb8+ Kc5 54 Rc8+ Kd4 55 Rcl b2 56 Rb1 Kc3 57 h5 lead to a draw.

52...Kb7! is much stronger: **53 Rg7+ Rc7 54 Rg4** (54 Rg5 Ka6 55 Rg6+ Ka7! loses for White).



1...?

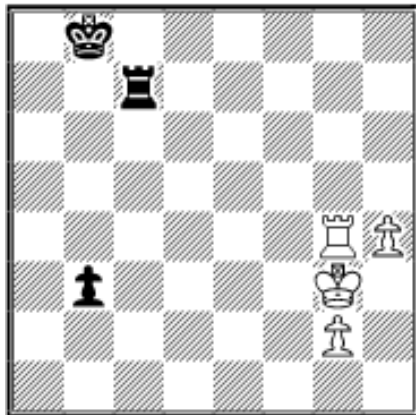
White will give up his rook for the b-pawn. The evaluation of the resulting “rook vs. two pawns” endgame will depend upon subtle nuances that will determine whether or not Black’s king can get back to the kingside in time.

In making his decision, it’s important for Black to identify all the sensible candidate moves and make logical comparisons among them. Then he can come to a decision without immersing himself in detailed

analysis.

The intermediate check **54...Rc3+!!** forces the enemy king back to the second rank, where it has less activity. After **55 Kh2(f2) Rc6!**, the win is not difficult.

As with the immediate 54...Rc6?, **54...Kb8?** lets the win slip away:



1.?

White’s position is still very dangerous. The only saving move here is **55 h5!!**

A) 55...b2 56 Rb4+ Rb7 57 Rxb2 Rxb2 58 Kf4 (or 58 Kg4) 58...Kc7 59 h6 (what saves White is that the enemy rook is not on the first rank, but the second, and therefore cannot reach the h-file in one move) 59...Rxc2 (59...Kd7 60 h7 Rb8 61 Kf5 Ke7 62 Kg6 =) 60 Kf5 Kd7 61 h7 Rh2 62 Kg6 Ke7 63 Kg7 Rg2+ 64 Kh8! = (but not 64 Kh6?? Kf7-+).

B) 55...Rb7 56 Rg8+!

An important intermediate check, driving the king a bit further from the kingside; White loses after 56 Re4? B2 57 Re1 b1Q 58 Rxb1 Rxb1.

56...Ka7

On 56...Kc7, White would exchange rooks: 57 Rg7+ Kc6 58 Rxb7 Kxb7 59 h6 =. This demonstrates the basic idea behind h4-h5!.

57 Re8 b2 58 Re1 b1Q 59 Rxb1 Rxb1 60 Kf4 Kb7 61 h6 Kc7 62 Kg5 =.

I note here that 54...Rc6? would allow White to save himself the same way: 55 h5!! (but not 55 Rg7+? Ka6!-+) 55...Rb6 (55...b2 56 Rb4+) 56 Rg7+!

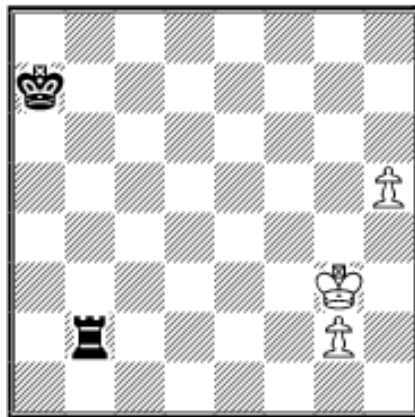
Let's look at one more possible variation: **54...Kb8 55 Rg8+?** (55 h5!!) **55...Ka7** (55...Kb7 56 Rg4 Rc3+!! would be simpler) **56 Rg4 b2**

With the king on the a-file, the rook check is now useless: 56...Rc3+? 57 Kf2 Rc6 58 h5 b2 59 Rb4 Rb6 60 Rxb2 Rxb2+ 61 Kf3 =.

57 Rb4 (57 Ra4+ Kb8!) **57...Rb7 58 Rxb2 Rxb2**

Now, is this position a win? To answer this question, we will have to solve another couple of puzzles, and find the best replies to both the natural moves at White's disposal.

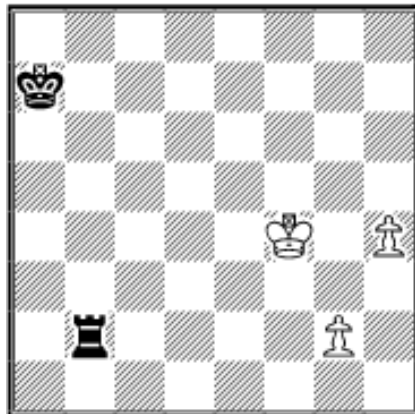
A) 59 h5



1...?

The only winning move is 59...Rb4! (the king must be cut off from its passed pawns) 60 h6 (60 Kh3 Kb7 61 g4 Kc6-+) 60...Rb6! 61 Kf4 Rxh6 62 g4 Kb6 63 g5 Rh1, and Black's king gets back in time.

B) 59 Kf4



1...?

It's a draw after either 59...Rxb2? 60 h5 Kb7 61 Kf5 Kc7 62 h6 Kd7 63 h7 Rh2 64 Kg6 Ke7 65 Rg7 Rg2+ 66 Kh8!, or 59...Kb7? 60 h5 Kc7 61 h6! Kd7 62 h7 Rb8 63 Kf5 Ke7 64 Kg6.

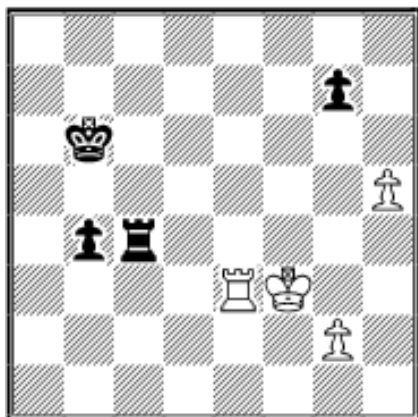
The decisive move is an unexpected intermediate check.

59...Rf2+!! 60 Kg5 (60 Kg3 Rf1-+, or 60...Rf8-+) **60...Rxb2+ 61 Kf6 Rh2!** (a typical move, driving White's king one step backwards) **62 Kg5 Kb7 63 h5 Kc7 64 h6 Kd7 65 Kg6 Ke7 66 Kg7 Rg2+ 67 Kh8 Kf7 68 h7 Kg6-+.**

I would like to draw your attention to the fact that solving many of these problems required you to search out powerful intermediate moves. And this is, of course, no accident – the role of such moves is exceptionally important. In the majority of cases, intermediate moves will be unexpected and easily overlooked – this is why I call this an important path for the completion of your tactical mastery.

Back to our game. Dolmatov is usually a skilled player in this kind of concrete endgame. Here, he senses the danger in time, and chooses the strongest continuation.

49 h4-h5! b5-b4 50 Re6xe3 Kb7-b6 51 Kg3-f3



It becomes clear that the game will end in a draw. Black's passed pawn is stuck; and White, depending upon circumstances, stands ready either to push his own pawns (g2-g4), or aim his king towards the queenside.

51...Kb6-a5

If 51...Rc5 52 g4 Rb5, White could play 53 h6! gh 54 Re6+. The rook removes the h6-pawn, and returns to b1 in time.

52 Kf3-e2

52 Re5+! Ka4 53 Re7 b3 54 Ra7+! (once again, the intermediate check!), followed by 55 Rxc7, might have been simpler. On the other hand, the king move is also enough to draw.

52...Rc2+ 53 Kd1 Rxc2 54 Kc1 Ka4 55 Kb1 Rg5 56 Rh3 b3 57 Rh1 Ka3 58 Ka1 Rg3 59 Kb1 Rc3 60 Ka1 (60 h6 =>) 60...b2+ 61 Kb1 Kb3 62 Rg1 Re3 (62...Rh3 63 h6! gh 64 Rg3 +!) 63 Rh1 Kc3 64 Ka2 Rf3 65 h6 ½-½

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