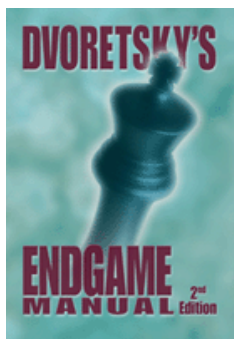




COLUMNISTS

The Instructor

Mark Dvoretsky



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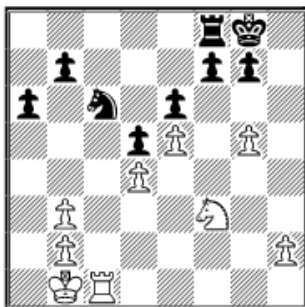
When Technique Fails

The most important principle of the technical realization of your advantage is to restrict your opponent's possibilities to a minimum.

The successful resolution of this task requires you to develop **prophylactic thinking**: the habit of attentive control of your opponent's intentions and the resources he has at this disposal.

Prophylactic thinking is one of the most useful habits to have in chess. It will come in handy, not just when you have the advantage, but in the opposite case as well, when you are defending an inferior position – in fact, everywhere: in the most varied situations, at every stage of the game.

Bartel – Kosyrev
Moscow 2002



W?

Black threatens to activate his king by Kg8-h7-g6; this must be prevented.

26 Rg1?! isn't very convincing: 26... Kh7! 27 g6+ fg 28 Ng5+ Kg8 29 Nxe6 Rf5! –/+ , followed by 30...Kf7 – White's pawns (especially d4) are weak, while Black's pieces are now active.

26 h4! solves the problem: now 26...Kh7 is useless, in view of 27 h5. And if 26...f6, then 27 g6! fe 28 Nxe5 Nxd4 29 Rc7 (or first 29 Nd7) gives White counterplay.

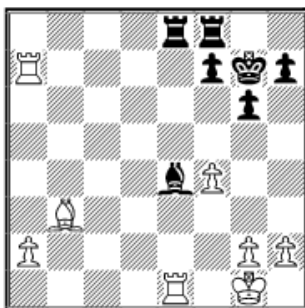
26 Kc2? Rc8?

Black fails to make use of his chance: 27...Kh7! would have given him a solid advantage.

27 Kd2 Kf8 1/2-1/2

27...Kh7 is no longer as strong here, in view of 28 Nh4 and 29 Ke3.

Yusupov – Timman
Candidates Semi-Final, Game 7
Linares 1992



W?

Here White has an extra pawn, and an overwhelming position to boot. There's no reason for him to hurry with promoting the passed pawn – with his opponent's pieces completely tied up, the more technical solution would be to first get his own pieces to their best possible squares. While doing so, **it's important to control the opponent's possible actions, forestalling any reasonable move where possible.**

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by Victor Bologan

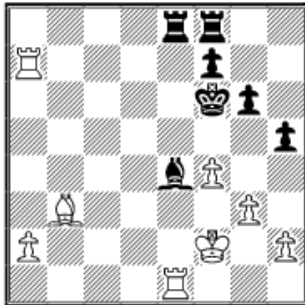
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With 26 g4!, White would “squeeze” the kingside, depriving his opponent of any chance of untying his pieces.

26 Kf2?!

A tiny inaccuracy. Observing the game, while I understood that Yusupov’s move doesn’t change the assessment of the position, I was nonetheless sorry that Artur hadn’t chosen the most technical continuation. This seemed a bad sign to me – evidence that further, and perhaps weightier, errors lay ahead.

26...h5 27 g3 Kf6



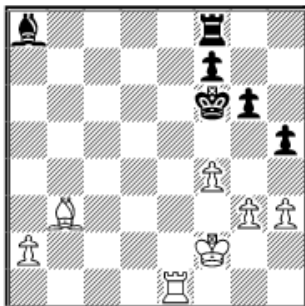
W?

Black would gain saving chances if he could trade bishops, but he can only dream of this for now. In order to untangle himself to any degree, first it’s important to trade one pair of rooks. Jan Timman did not play 27...Bc6, since after 28 Rxe8 Bxe8 (the rook cannot recapture, owing to the weakness at f7) 29 Ra8!?, the other pair of rooks must inevitably be exchanged, after which the bishop endgame is an elementary win. Nor would 27...Ra8 28 Rxa8 Bxa8 29 Re7 suit him, since the remaining black rook would be forever tied to the defense of f7.

Having taken the e7-square under control with his last move, Black prepares to exchange rooks, which could have been easily prevented by 28 Rc7!. After this simple prophylactic move, White’s position would have remained absolutely winning.

28 h3? Ra8!

But now, matters are more complicated. What should White do? If he retreats the rook to the seventh rank, the bishop goes via f5 to e6, taking the pressure off f7. Nor is everything clear after 29 Rxa8 Bxa8.



W

30 g4 hg 31 hg g5 promises White little. On 30 Re5 (intending g4-g5+), Black can cover the seventh rank by 30...Rc8 31 g4 hg 32 hg Rc7. White keeps the extra pawn and good winning chances, but the win is not guaranteed.

Another try is 30 Rc1, threatening 31 Rc7. If 30...Rd8 (with the idea 31 Rc7?

Bd5) 31 Rd1! – the bishop endgame is lost; and if Black avoids the exchange, the rook invades the seventh rank. Therefore, Black replies 30...Be4! 31 g4 (31 Rc7 Bf5) 31...hg 32 hg g5! 33 f5 (33 Rc4 Bd5 34 fg + Kg6 35 Bc2+ Kg7 36 Ra4 Rb8, with counterplay) 33...Rh8 34 Rc7 (34 Ke3 Re8!) 34...Ke5, and all his pieces unexpectedly become very active.

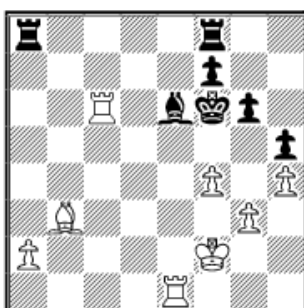
29 Rc7 Bf5 30 h4

30 Ree7 Be6 is not dangerous, but perhaps it would have made sense to keep Black from trading bishops by 30 Rc6+!? Kg7 31 Re7 (31 h4 Ra7) 31...Rae8!? (31...Bxh3 32 Rcc7+–) 32 Rxe8 Rxe8 33 h4+/-.

30...Be6 31 Rc6



B?



30...Rfc8?!

He had to play 31...Rfe8. After this move, Black's position becomes critical again.

32 Rxc8 Rxc8 33 Bxe6 fe 34 a4 Ra8

Going after the g3-pawn offers no chances: 34...Rc4 35 Ra1 Rc2+ 36 Ke3 Rc3+ 37 Ke4 Rxc3 38 a5 Rb3 39 a6 Rb4+ 40 Kd3 Rb8 41 a7 Ra8 42 Ra5+-.



W?

35 Ra1?

The rook usually stands best behind its passed pawn, but in this case, Black manages to trade off too many pawns. Meanwhile, going to e4 instead would allow the rook to secure all of its pawns, permitting the king to move unimpeded to the queenside. Thus, 35 Re4! would

have led to victory:

35...Kf5 36 Re5+ Kf6 (36...Kg4 37 Rg5+) 37 a5.

35...Ra5 36 Ke3 Rd5 37 Re5!.

35...Ke7 36 Ke3 Kd6 37 Kd3, followed by Kc3.

35...Ra5! 36 Ke3 e5! = 37 Ke4 (37 fe+ Kxe5 38 Kd3 Kd5 39 Kc3 Kc6 40 Kb4 Re5 =) **37...ef 38 Kxf4** (38 gf would leave White with weakened pawns) **38...Ke6 39 Ke4** (there's no win after 39 Re1+!? Kf6 40 Re4 g5+ 41 Ke3, either) **39...g5! 40 hg Rxc5 41 Kf3 Ra5 42 Re1+ Kf5 43 Re4 Rc5 44 Re3 Ra5 45 Ra3 Ke5 46 Ke3 Ke6 47 Ke2 Kd6** (47...h4 48 gh Rh5 =) **48 Kf2 Ke6 49 Re3+ Kd5 50 Ra3 Ke6 51 Ke3 h4 52 g4 Kf6 53 Kf4 Kg6 54 Kf3 Kg5 55 Ra2 h3 1/2-1/2** (55...Ra8 56 a5 Rf8+ =)

Naturally, Artur was terribly upset at this result, berating himself mainly for his oversight in the rook endgame. I, on the other hand, was considerably more disappointed at his simple technical errors in the preceding stage of the game, in a completely winning position. For Yusupov possesses great technique; once he obtains an advantage, he usually realizes it very confidently and accurately. So what happened here?

In my view, the explanation is that whatever useful habits or knowledge a chessplayer may have worked out are not everlasting, but must be regularly reinforced. Roughly a year before his Candidates Match with Timman, Yusupov moved to Germany; for that entire year we did not meet or train as we had before. Evidently, Artur himself had done no work for a long time on the problem of realizing one's advantage – his most recent games had given him no reason to think about it. And as a result, his technical mastery slipped slightly.

My ruminations may seem speculative to my readers. And in fact, there is no ironclad way of proving such subtle matters, but I shall support my point of view by describing one further episode that occurred in the same Candidates' Match, two days earlier. In this case, the victim was Artur's opponent.

Yusupov – Timman

Candidates' Semi-Final, Game 5

Linares 1992



B

It was at this point (or perhaps a bit earlier) that I entered the match press center, where I found two Dutch journalists, GM Hans Ree and master Gert Ligterink. We knew one another: in the mid-70s, we had all played at Wijk aan Zee.

Timman had clearly solved his opening problems, and the Dutch players were happy with their countryman's position. They asked me how I would evaluate the position now on the board.

"It's about even," I replied, "but I think Yusupov will win today."

"Why?"

"I looked at Timman's games, and I don't remember a single one in the last couple of years where he had a full-fledged "opposite-colored bishop" game. Playing that particular complex is difficult without experience, and Timman will probably make a mistake somewhere. Yusupov, on the other hand, is familiar with the ideas of the opposite-colored bishops, which we have subjected to careful study."

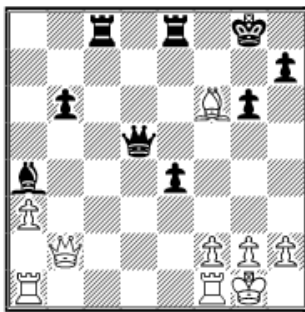
The game's further course supported my prediction. Watching the game develop, I noted the gradual deterioration of Black's position, pointing out to Ree and Ligterink the inaccuracies Timman was committing. The course of events made a powerful impression on my colleagues, as Ligterink later described in a column he wrote for the Dutch press.

21...Ba4?

The most important factor in evaluating "opposite-colored" middlegames is control of the initiative. The text move hands the initiative to White, while the obvious 21...f6 would have held the balance.

22 e4! +/- f6

It's not easy to decide on a move like 22...de!? – the a1-h8 diagonal is opened, after being weakened by g7-g6. And yet, this was Black's best chance. After 23 Nxc4 Qe6 24 Ne3 Nf6 (24...Bc6 is weaker: 25 d5! Bxd5 26 Rfd1 with compensation) 25 d5! (before Black plays 25...Nd5) 25...Nxd5 26 Nxd5 Qxd5 27 Bh8 f6 28 Bxf6 (28 Qxf6 Qf7) 28...Rac8!?, White's advantage is small.



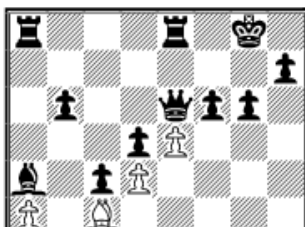
W

For example, 29 Qxb6?! e3! 30 fe Rc2 31 e4 Rxe4 32 Rf2 Rxf2 33 Qxf2 Bc6, and the extra pawn isn't worth much.

23 Nxd7 Qxd7?!

It would have been a good idea to bring the bishop home: 23...Bxd7 24 e5 Qc6.

24 e5! (of course not 24 ed? b5 =) **24...Qe6**



W

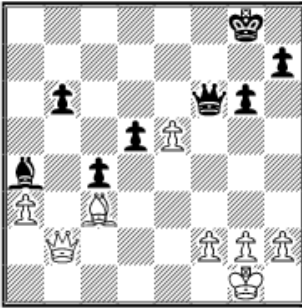
An interesting moment. Yusupov rejected the natural 25 Rae1!?, because it would have allowed Timman to close



lines by 25...f5. True, White would still have had the upper hand: he could gradually construct a kingside attack, while his opponent would have had no active possibilities at all.

Artur preferred the plan of occupying the strong point e5 with his rook. After the forced exchange on e5, White would be left with a favorable pawn structure.

25 e5!? Qxf6 26 Rfe1 Rxe1+ 27 Rxe1 Re8 28 Re5 Rxe5 29 de



B

29...Qe6

In such cases, it's important not to go into a bunker defense – better to disturb your opponent with some activity of your own. From this standpoint, the move 29...Qf4!? is attractive, but after 30 h3! (not 30 e6? Qg4!) 30...Bd7 doesn't work in view of 31 Qxb6! Qc1+

32 Kh2 Qxc3?! (32...Qf4+ 33 g3+/-) 33 Qd8+, with a won queen ending for White. White also maintains strong pressure after 30...Be8 31 e6 b5 32 Bh8 Qf8 33 Qe5.

30 Bd4 Bb3?!

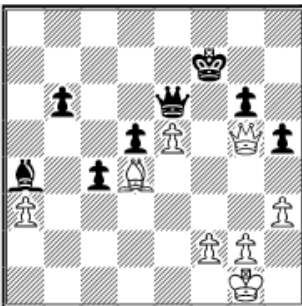
Here and later, Timman mistakenly refuses to advance his pawn by 30...b5. The pawn is weak at b6, and eventually drops.

31 h3 h5 32 Qd2

A strategic double attack! The queen threatens to invade Black's position either via b4 or g5.

32...Ba4 33 Qg5 (33 Qb4!?) 33...Kf7

If 33...Bd7, then 34 Qd8+ Kf7 35 Bxb6 c3 36 Bc5+/-, 33...Be8 34 f4 Kf7 35 Qd8 (35 g4 hg 36 hg Bd7) 35...b5 was worth looking into, although after 36 Kf2, White still has the advantage. But in any event, Black would have brought his bishop home, and advanced the b-pawn to the protected square b5.



W

Here, the sortie 34 Qd8!? looks attractive. The pawn at b6 is attacked, and the natural response 34...b5? would allow White to whip up a strong attack on the king using minimal force: 35 Bc5 Kg7 (35...Qxe5? 36 Qf8+ Ke6 37 Qe7+ Kf5 38 Qf7+ Qf6 39 g4+) 36 Bf8+!? (36 Be7 is good too, forcing the reply 36...g5) 36...Kf7 37 Bb4! (still stronger than

the obvious 37 Bh6) 37...Kg7 (37...g5 38 Qxg5 is also hopeless) 38 Qd6!!+, and after the queen trade on d6, the pawn queens unimpeded. Now you see the point of moving the white bishop from c5 to b4: depriving Black of the defense b5-b4.

Black would have to give up the b6-pawn in order to trade queens: 34...Be8!?. After 35 Qxb6 Qxb6 36 Bxb6 c3 (or 36...Ke6 at once: 37 Bd4 Kf5 38 f3 h4+/-) 37 Bd4 c2 38 Bb2 Ke6 39 f4 Kf5 40 Bc1 h4+/-, the most likely outcome would be a draw. White's play is strengthened by the intermediate check 35 Qc7+! Kg8, and now either 36 Qxb6 Qxb6 37

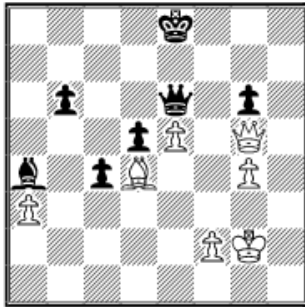
Bxb6 c3 38 Bd4 c2 39 Bb2+/-, or 36 Bxb6 Qc6 37 Qxc6 Bxc6 38 Bd4+/-.

Yusupov preferred a different plan, involving the advance of his kingside pawns.

34 g4!? hg 35 hg Ke8

35...Bd1 would be useless in view of 36 f3!, but he should have preferred 35...Bd7 36 f3 b5+/-.

36 Kg2



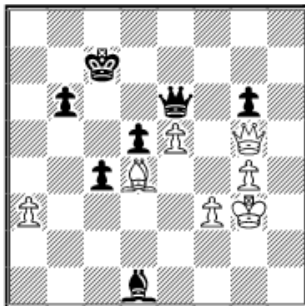
B

36...Kd7

The desperate sacrifice of a pawn by 36...c3 brings no relief: 37 Bxc3 d4 38 Bb4 Bc6+ 39 Kg3+-. 36...Bd1 is met by 37 f3, and if 37...Qf7?!, then 38 Qe3 b5 (otherwise 39 Bxb6) 39 e6 Qf8 40 Be5 +-. 36...b5!? was once again Black's relative best, hoping to put together some sort of defense after 37 Kg3 Bd1 38 f4 Bc2 or 38 f3 Qf7. White replies 37 f3!+/-, intending 38 Qd2, for example: 37...Qf7 38 Qd2 Qe7 39 Qa5 Qxa3? 40 Qa8+ Ke7 41 Qb7+, with mate soon to follow.

37 Kg3 (37 f3!?!+/-) 37...Bd1 38 f3 Kc7?

Black's position was not to be envied after 38...b5 39 Qd2! Ba4 40 Qa5 Qc6 41 f4 or 38...Qf7!? 39 f4 Bc2 40 Bxb6, but now the solution is simpler still.



W

39 Qf6! Qxf6 40 ef Kd7 41 Bxb6

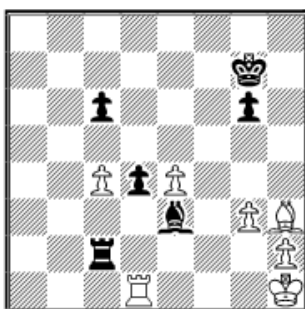
As often occurs in "opposite-colored bishop" endgames, separated passed pawns are much stronger than connected ones. White has a standard plan of action: his bishop will blockade the central pawns, while his king advances in support of the passed pawn, which the enemy bishop has to deal with.

41...c3 42 Bd4 c2 43 Bb2 Ke6 44 g5 Be2 45 Kf2 Bb5 46 Ke3 Be8 47 Kd3 Ba4 48 Kc3 Kd6 49 Bc1 Ke6 50 Kb4 1-0

Curiously, a similar story, complete with a prediction about the "opposite-colored bishop" situation, was described by GM Viorel Bologan in his outstanding book, [Victor Bologan: Selected Games 1985-2004](#).

Benjamin – Bologan

Moscow Olympiad 1994



B?

Time-pressure is over and the position is objectively even. At this moment, Mark Israilevich Dvoretsky appeared in the playing hall along with Boris Gulko. Together, they began analyzing my position. Dvoretsky said, "Most likely, Victor wins this." "How?" wondered Gulko, "the position is drawn!" "Well,



Black has the initiative here; and besides, we spent ample time on opposite-colored bishop endgames.”

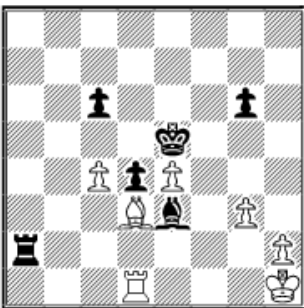
Well, the trainer proved to be right! The fact that Benjamin had a material advantage played a nasty trick on him. He has great technical skill, but White cannot think about winning. It's clear that with his king cornered on h1, White should concentrate on finding the most precise drawing line.

41...Kf6!?

In opposite-colored bishop positions, the initiative, activity, attacking the king – all these are worth far more than a pawn. This principle remains in force even in the endgame – with the obvious exception of “pure opposite-colored bishop endings” (with no other pieces on the board). On the other hand, even there pawn sacrifices come up all the time, although with a different motivation: there it is to create or to break down a fortress.

On 41...Rxc4 42 e5, White gains some activity, making his later play easier. Bologan declines to win material, preferring maximal restriction of his opponent's pieces.

42 Bf1 Ke5 43 Bd3 Ra2



W

44 h4?

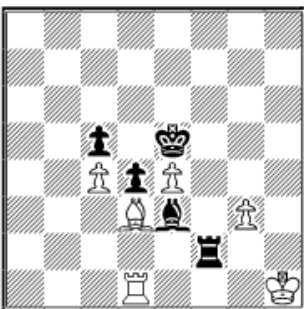
A positional error, and not an obvious one. Now Black has a plan of invading the kingside with his king, creating mating threats. Analyzing later, Bologan was unable to find any way of breaking down White's defense after 44 h3!. The difference between the two pawn moves

will soon become obvious.

44...c5 45 Bb1 Rb2 46 Bd3 Rf2!

A necessary refinement: the rook cuts off the king's path to the center. The hasty 46...g5?! 47 hg Bxg5 would allow White to get his king out of the corner by 48 Kg1 Be3+ 49 Kf1 Rf2+ 50 Ke1, with reasonable drawing chances.

47 Bb1 g5 48 hg Bxg5 49 Bd3 Be3



W

50 Bb1

Exchanging rooks would not help: 50 Rf1 Rxf1+ 51 Bxf1 Kxe4, and it is easy to see that White will soon have to give up his bishop for the d-pawn.

50...Kf6 51 Bd3 Kg5 52 Ra1

White could hold out a little longer with 52 e5 Kg4 53 Rg1!, although after 53...Ra2, his position remains difficult. For example: 54 Rg2 (54 e6 Bxg1 55 e7 Ra8 56 Bg6 Kxg3 57 e8Q Rxe8 58 Bxe8 Be3+) 54...Ra3 55 Bh7 (55 Be2+ Kf5 or 55 e6 Rxd3 56 e7 Rd1+ 57 Kh2 Re1 58 e8Q Bg1+ 59 Rxg1 Rxe8 are just bad, but 55 Be4!? d3 56 e6 d2 57 Bc2 Ra7 58 Bd1 + would be a little better) 55...d3 56 e6 Ra1+! 57 Kh2 Ra8+.

52...Kg4 53 Ra7 Rd2 54 Bf1 Kxg3 55 Rg7+ Kf4

55...Kf3! was more energetic: 56 Bg2+ (56 Rf7+ Bf4; 56 e5 Rd1) 56...
Rxc2! 57 Rxc2 d3-+.

56 Rd7 (56 e5!? Kxe5 57 Re7+ Kf4 58 Bg2) **56...Kxe4** (56...Kf3,
followed by 57...Bf4) **57 Re7+?! Kf3 58 Rd7 Rd1 59 Rf7+ Bf4 60 Kg1**
d3 0-1

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