Part Three

Endgames for Class "D" (1200–1399)

Contents

remember going to my first tournament at age twelve. It was all quite magical, and as I watched other player's games in the under 1600 section I recall being amazed at their skills—skills which were far beyond anything I could fully understand at that time. Indeed, my view of 1200-1399 players as being demigods is not that out of line. Someone in this range is beginning to grasp many aspects of chess that would have seemed too difficult a short time before. If he plays in tournaments, he holds his own against many experienced players. If he competes against non-tournament playing friends, he most likely dominates them.

If you are reading this section, you either are a class "D" player, or you have learned all the material in the first two parts and wish to use this additional knowledge to help you break into the "1200-club." By this time you know a few openings, you have a reasonable grasp of tactics, and you've learned a positional concept or two. However, if you study with others in this rating range, you will quickly discover that endgames are not a priority, and endgame knowledge is often non-existent. That's one reason why players get stuck at a certain strength, and this is a shame since learning the material in the first three parts is within everyone's grasp—both talent-wise and time-wise.

So, before reading this section, make sure that you are thoroughly familiar with all the material presented in the first two parts of this book. Now it's time to gently add on to the knowledge we've already gained. You won't find anything too intense or profound here; all we're going to do is expand on the previously assimilated concepts and, when the smoke clears, leave you with a very solid endgame base. You'll need this for Part Four, which will take us far beyond anything presented thus far.

Here you'll add to your knowledge of Opposition, gain a deeper understanding of King-and-pawn vs. King positions, take a quick look at the drawing possibilities of rook-pawns, and be introduced to the simple but oh-so-important concept of Fox in the Chicken Coup.

Beyond Basic Opposition

In Part Two we learned all about basic Opposition—the battle of Kings that are only one square apart. This begs an obvious question: does Opposition exist if the Kings are more than one square away from each other? The answer is a resounding YES! In fact, Opposition exists from a distance, on diagonals, and even if the Kings don't seem to connect at all!

Sound terrifying? Too complicated? Trust me when I assure you that it's not. Carefully look over the material that follows (several times if necessary) and it will eventually begin to make sense. Then, after even more viewings, it will suddenly seem to be simplicity itself!

Diagram 55

a b c d e f g h
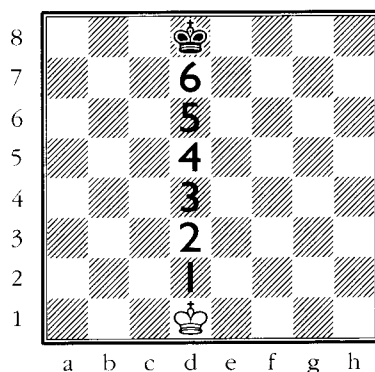
White to move

Distant Opposition

Distant Opposition is similar to basic Opposition (i.e., King's facing each other with only one square separating them), only in extended form.

RULE

Whoever moves with an odd number of squares between the Kings *does not* have the Opposition (it's the same in basic Opposition situations: one/odd square separates the Kings and the person to move doesn't have the Opposition). Conversely, the person to move with an even number of squares between the Kings *does* have the Opposition.


In diagram 55, there is an even number of squares between the Kings and it's White to move. This means White has the Opposition, since by playing **1.Kd2** he changes it to an odd number with his opponent to move. If they continue to walk towards each other (via 1...Kd7 2.Kd3 Kd6 3.Kd4) we would get diagram 44 again.

The same idea holds true for diagonal connections.

Diagram 56

> **REMEMBER**
>
> In such Opposition battles, you want to have an odd number of squares between the Kings with the other guy to move!
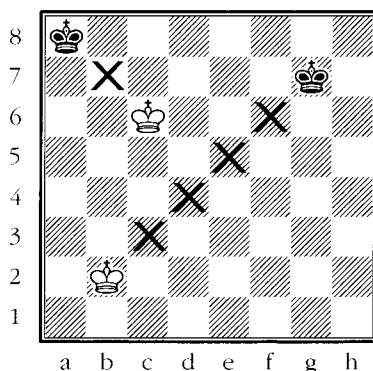
**Immediate and Distant-Diagonal Opposition**

Diagram 56 shows both the immediate and the distant forms of Diagonal Opposition. Whoever moves *does not* have the Opposition.

It can be seen that it is not difficult to determine who has the Opposition when the Kings "connect" on a rank, file, or diagonal. But what if they fail to connect altogether? Does one have to get out a pocket calculator and solve prolonged mathematical formulas? Not at all!

Diagram 57

> **RULE**
>
> In this type of situation, the rule is to make a square or a rectangle in which each corner is the same color *with the other guy to move.*
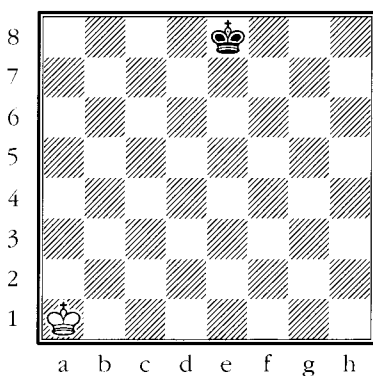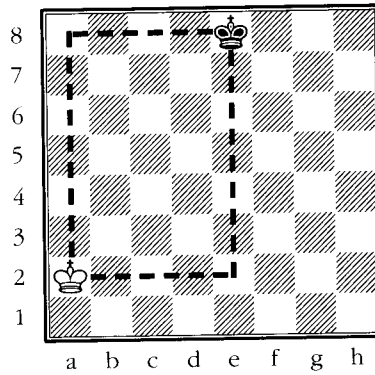

Opposition without a direct connection

Take a long look at diagram 57.

White to move plays **1.Ka2!**, when we get a clear picture of what we're after in diagram 58.

Diagram 58

Magic rectangle
Each corner is the same color

This diagram shows the connecting points a2-a8-e8-e2. Note how each corner of this "rectangle" has the same colored square (in this case, a white square). After 1.Ka2, White has the Opposition. Here's proof:
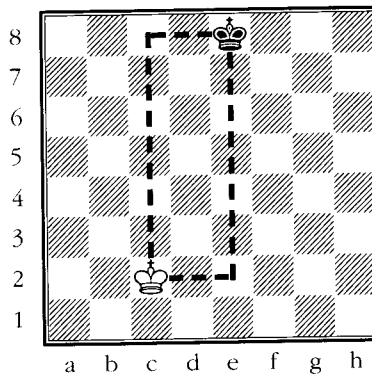
1...Kf8 2.Kb2

Now b2, b8, f8, and f2 are the connecting points.

2...Ke8

Other moves allow quicker proof. For example 2...Kf7 3.Kb3 with Diagonal Opposition, or 2...Kg8 3.Ka2 with more of the same.

3.Kc2

Diagram 59

White still maintains the Opposition: the new
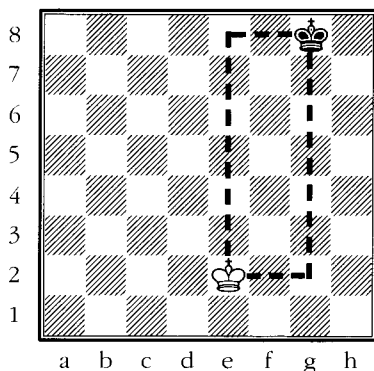**connecting points are c2, c8, e8, e2**

3...Kf8

Similar is 3...Ke7 4.Kc3, while 3...Kd7 4.Kd3 is a basic form of Distant Opposition.

4.Kd2

Now d2, d8, f8, and f2 are the connecting points.

4...Kg8 5.Ke2

Diagram 60

New connection points are: e2, e8, g8, and g2

5...Kh8 6.Kf2

Can you make out the connection points? They are: f2, f8, h8, and h2.

6...Kh7

White's point is proven after both 6...Kg8 7.Kg2 and 6...Kg7 7.Kg3.

7.Kf3

The noose tightens. Connection points: f2, f7, h7, h3.

7...Kh8

There is nothing else since 7...Kh6 8.Kf4 makes a square (f4, f6, h6, h4) *and* gives direct Diagonal Opposition to boot!

8.Kf4 and now Black can't avoid our final proof since 8...Kh7 9.Kf5 gives Diagonal Opposition while 8...Kg7 9.Kg5 and 8...Kg8 9.Kg4 both give basic Direct Opposition.

King and Pawn Endgames

## King and Pawn vs. Lone King (Stronger Side's King is in Front of its Pawn)

We've seen that the defender can usually draw if he gets his King in front of the enemy pawn. However, the stronger side's winning chances go way up if he manages to place his own King in front of his pawn. When this happens, three questions will decide the issue:

> **1** Is the pawn a rook-pawn?

> **2** Is the stronger side's King one square or two squares in front of its pawn?

> **3** Who possesses the Opposition?

Another Rook-Pawn, Another Draw

Unless the defending King is on vacation elsewhere on the board, the presence of a rook-pawn will make the game a draw.

Diagram 61
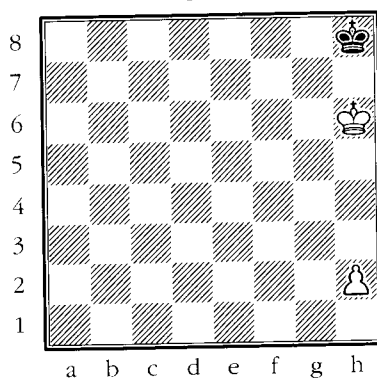
USEFUL ADVICE

If you're trying to win and you can enter a pawn up endgame where you have a rook-pawn, be careful! The words "rook-pawn" and "draw" seem to be bound at the hip!

Such a beautifully placed white King would ensure victory if the pawn was anything other than a rook-pawn. Unfortunately for White, black's King can't be chased out of the corner.

1.h4 Kg8

Black's moves are not hard to find!

2.Kg6 Kh8 3.h5

Even more pathetic is 3.Kf7 Kh7 (Again, the only legal move!) 4.Kf6 Kh6 followed by 5...Kh5 and 6...Kxh4.

3...Kg8 4.h6 Kh8

Of course, 4...Kf8?? 5.h7, 1-0, would leave us wondering about the state of black's mental health.

5.h7 stalemate.

Non Rook-Pawn
(One Square in Front, is it Enough?)

When the stronger side gets his King one square in front of his pawn, the only question that matters is, "Who owns the Opposition?" If the defender has it, then the game is a draw. If the stronger side has the Opposition, then the game is won.

Diagram 62
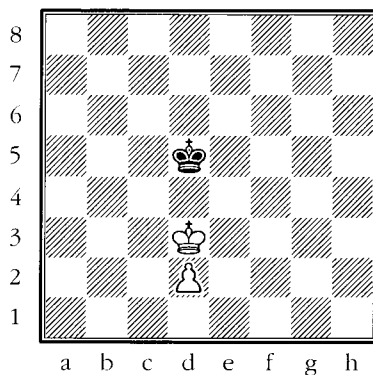
Whoever moves fails to achieve his goal

In diagram 62, whoever has the move *fails* to achieve his goal since that would give the opponent the Opposition. Let's first see what happens if White has the move (which means that Black has the Opposition).

REMEMBER

When the stronger side gets his King one square in front of his non rook-pawn, the only question that matters is, "Who owns the Opposition?"

1.Ke3

Obviously 1.Ke2 Ke4 is our basic draw, studied in Part Two.

1...Ke5!

Retaining the Opposition and *not allowing white's King to come forward*. Losing is 1...Kc5 (it retains the Opposition but lets white's King dance forward) 2.Ke4 when White wins. We'll see how this is done in a moment.

2.Kd3

The basic draw is reached after 2.Kf3 Kd4, so White squiggles a bit before accepting the inevitable.

2...Kd5! 3.Kc3 Kc5 and White can't make any progress at all.

If Black moves first (from diagram 62), though, things are very, very different:
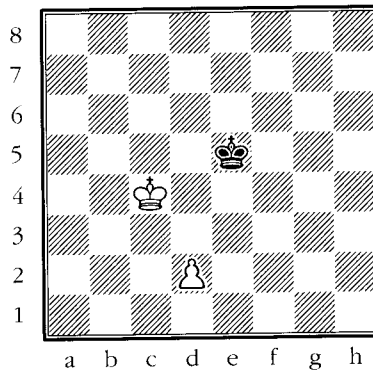
1...Ke5

Note that on 1...Ke6 2.Ke4, 1...Kc6 2.Kc4, and 1...Kd6 2.Kd4, White manages to move forward and retain the Opposition.

The other move, 1...Kc5, runs into 2.Ke4 with the same kind of play as will be seen against 1...Ke5.

2.Kc4

Retaining the Opposition by 2.Ke3 takes us back to our original position after 2...Kd5.

Diagram 63

Stepping forward

Stepping forward is the most important thing, with Opposition taking a back seat to this. Why? Because White can only win if he gains control of the queening square, while also making sure that his pawn is safe. This takes us to the winning formula for such positions.

RULE

Move as far forward with your King as possible, while always making sure that your pawn is safe!

2...Kd6

Other moves:

2...Ke4 is aggressive, and hopes for 3.Kc5?? (Moving forward but forgetting the part about making sure the pawn is safe!) 3...Kd3 followed by ...Kxd2 with an immediate draw.

Thus, after 2...Ke4 White should play 3.d4! (Also good is 3.d3+ Ke5 4.Kc5!, and not 4.d4+?? Kd6 with a basic draw.) when black's King can't get back in front of the pawn: 3...Kf5 4.Kd5! (moving forward and depriving the black King of a host of important squares) 4...Kf6 5.Kd6 Kf7 6.Kd7 Kf6 7.d5 Ke5 8.d6 Kf6 9.Kc7 when White makes a Queen and wins the game.

2...Ke6 (This takes the Diagonal Opposition but fails to prevent the advance of white's King.) 3.Kc5 (and *not* 3.d4?? Ke6 with yet another basic draw) 3...Kd7 (another try, as hopeless as all the rest, is 3...Ke5 4.d4+! [avoiding 4.Kc6?? Kd4 when the white pawn falls] 4...Ke6 5.Kc6! [again, 5.d5+?? allows the basic draw by 5...Kd7] 5...Ke7 6.d5 Kd8 7.Kd6! Kc8 8.Ke7 and it's all over) 4.Kd5! (Not falling for 4.d4?? Kc7 when 5.d5 Kd7 is a basic draw, while 5.Kd5 Kd7 is also drawn since Black has the Opposition.) 4...Kc7 5.Ke6 Kc6 (5...Kd8 6.Kd6 Ke8 7.d4 Kd8 8.d5 Ke8 9.Kc7) 6.d4 (Making sure the pawn is safe. Moving forward by 6.Ke7?? Kd5 would be a true tragedy.) 6...Kc7 7.d5 (7.Ke7 Kc6 would force White to repeat after 8.Ke6) 7...Kd8 (else White would play Ke7) 8.Kd6! Kc8 (8...Ke8 9.Kc7) 9.Ke7 followed by pushing the pawn to the 8th.

3.Kd4

Diagram 64
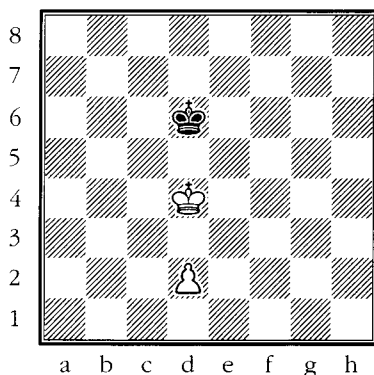
A very important moment. White was not able to advance his King safely anymore (i.e., 3.Kb5?? Kd5! and White can't stop his opponent from marching forward and eating the pawn), so it's time to regain the Opposition and once again force his opponent backward.

3...Ke6 4.Kc5

Continuing to trudge down the board, always getting closer and closer to that all-important d8-square.

4...Kd7

Black's defenses also fail after 4...Ke5 (still hoping for 5.Kc6?? Kd4, picking up white's pawn) 5.d4+ Ke6 6.Kc6 (Again, *not* 6.d5+?? Kd7 with a basic draw) 6...Ke7 7.d5 Kd8 8.Kd6! Kc8 9.Ke7 followed by pushing the pawn to the conquered d8-square.

5.Kd5

His pawn is safe, so White regains the Opposition. Naturally, 5.d4?? Kc7! would be a draw since white's King is only one square in front of the pawn with Black holding the Opposition.

5...Kc7 6.Ke6

More penetration, and a step closer to d8.

6...Kd8

One hopeless move among many. For example, 6...Kc6 7.d4 Kc7 8.d5 Kd8 9.Kd6 Ke8 10.Kc7 and wins.

7.Kd6
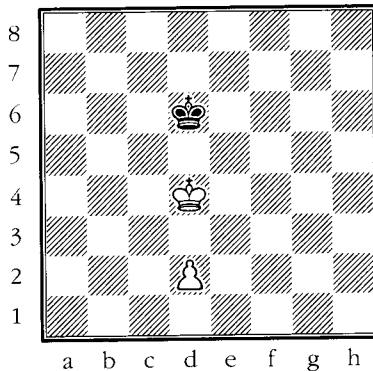
Also good enough is 7.d4 Kc7 8.d5 Kd8 9.Kd6.

7...Ke8 8.d4 Kd8 9.d5

This takes the Opposition and prepares one final bit of King penetration.

9...Ke8 10.Kc7 Ke7 11.d6+, 1-0.

Non Rook-Pawn
(Two Squares in Front Always Does the Trick!)

Diagram 65

> **RULE**
>
> When the stronger side's King manages to get two squares in front of its pawn (unless it's a rook-pawn, of course), the game is always a win (and an easy one at that).

White wins, no matter who moves

Here it doesn't matter who has the move, White wins. Obviously if Black were to move, White would have the Opposition. But even if White has the move, he can take the Opposition by playing:

1.d3!

Suddenly it's Black to move, White has the Opposition, and we only have to follow the rules in our previous example to make the win a simple matter (1...Ke6 2.Kc5, etc.).

Fox in the Chicken Coup

Imagine a basic King and pawn vs. King endgame. Then add some (one vs. one, two vs. two, etc.) frozen pawns (meaning that they are locked together and can't move) on the other side of the board. Though a pawn up, how does the stronger side go about winning this kind of very common position? The answer: Fox in the Chicken Coup!

Diagram 66
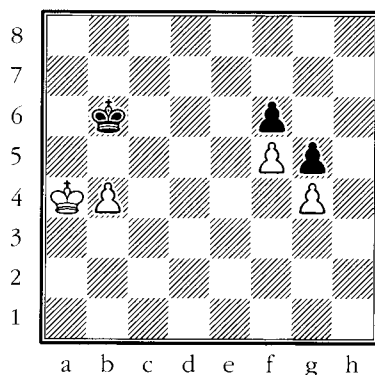
White wins

White wins in a walk by pushing the black King back and then abandoning it for the unguarded "chickens" on the kingside.

1.b5 Kb7

No better is 1...Kc5 2.Ka5 and the pawn queens.

2.Ka5 Ka7 3.b6+ Kb7 4.Kb5 Kb8 5.Kc6

REMEMBER

Fox in the Chicken Coup refers to a situation where the stronger side's King (the "fox") rushes to the other side of the board to feast on helpless enemy pawns ("chickens") while the defending King is busy dealing with a pawn on the other wing.

This position is a basic draw if the kingside pawns didn't exist. Unfortunately for Black, the fact that they are there leaves him dead in the water.

5...Kc8 6.Kd6!

White abandons his b-pawn, secure in the knowledge that while Black is busy dealing with it, White will capture all of black's bits on the kingside. Note that 6.b7+ Kb8 7.Kb6?? (7.Kd6 was still good enough) is a draw by stalemate.

6...Kb7 7.Ke6 Kxb6 8.Kxf6

Ah, chicken is indeed on the menu!

8...Kc7 9.Kxg5 and the rest is mindlessly easy: **9...Kd8 10.Kg6 Ke8 11.Kg7** (controlling the promotion square) followed by f5-f6-f7-f8=Q.

The Deep Freeze (When One Pawn Kills Two)

In King and pawn endgames, it's very important to avoid having your pawn majority devalued by allowing a smaller force to freeze a larger one in its tracks.

Diagram 67
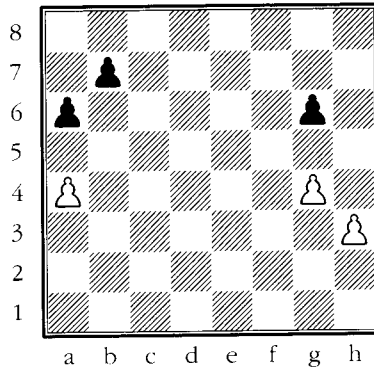
All sorts of interesting things are going on in this impossible diagram (no Kings!). For example, Black to move could create a passed pawn by 1...b5, while White to move could prepare the creation of a passer by 1.h4 followed by 2.h5.

However, the possibility to devalue the opponent's respective majority is also present. White to move could play 1.a5 when that one queenside pawn freezes black's two. On the other hand, Black to play could try 1...g5, when his one kingside pawn freezes both of white's.

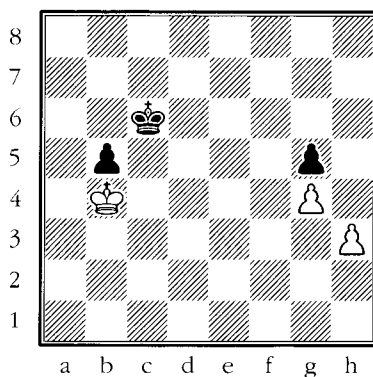Diagram 68
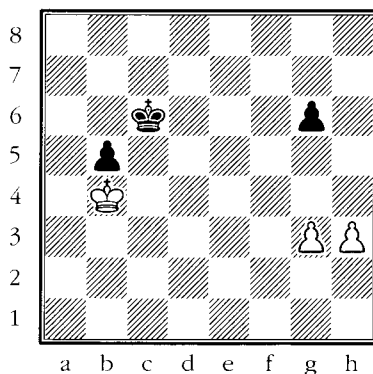
White to move

Though Black has a passed pawn, white's ability to create one of his own on the kingside ensures that the game will be drawn. However, disaster struck:

1.g4??

Correct was 1.h4 Kd5 (and not 1...Kb6?? 2.g4 Kc6 3.h5 gxh5 4.gxh5 and white's pawn will soon turn into a Queen) 2.g4 Ke4 3.Kxb5 Kf4 4.h5 gxh5 5.gxh5 Kg5 6.h6 Kxh6, ½-½.

1...g5

Diagram 69

The Chicken Coup will seal the deal

Suddenly white's kingside majority is frozen and useless. Now Black is, in effect, a pawn up and he wins the game by using the Chicken Coup technique.
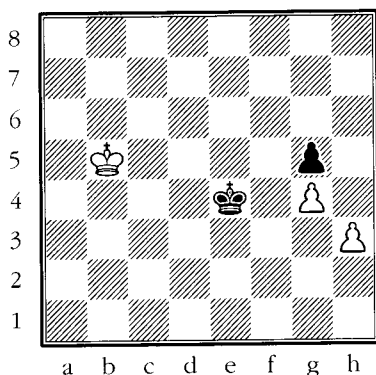
2.Kb3

Sacrificing the h-pawn in an effort to promote the g-pawn doesn't work: 2.h4 gxh4 3.g5 Kd6! 4.g6 Ke7 and Black stops white's g-pawn while White has no way of stopping black's h-pawn.

2...Kd5

While White has to deal with the b-pawn, black's King rushes over and demolishes white's two kingside bits.

3.Kb4 Ke4 4.Kxb5

Diagram 70

Black to move wins

4...Kf4!

Black must be careful since the natural looking 4...Kf3?? allows White to force a draw by the surprising 5.h4!! gxh4 6.g5.

5.Kc4

Now 5.h4 gxh4 is hopeless.

5...Kg3 6.Kd3 Kxh3 7.Ke3 Kxg4 8.Kf2 Kh3!

Making use of the rule that states, "When your King is in front of your pawn, go as far forward as possible until the pawn is in danger."

Mistaken is 8...Kf4 9.Kg2 g4?? (9...Kg4 would still win) 10.Kf2 with a basic draw.

9.Kg1

Or 9.Kf3 g4+ (avoiding the humiliation of 9...Kh2?? 10.Kg4 followed by Kxg5) 10.Kf2 when both 10...Kh2! and 10...g3+ 11.Kg1 g2 win.

9...g4 10.Kh1

White thinks he has the Opposition. Is this true?

10...g3

No, Black has it!

11.Kg1 g2, 0-1. There was no reason to play on and watch 12.Kf2 Kh2 transpire.

As you can see, a player must always be on the alert for such "freezing" moves!

Minor Piece vs. a Lone Pawn

In positions where a minor piece, Bishop or Knight, faces a lone pawn, any winning chances that might exist lie with the pawn. This might seem strange, but it makes perfect sense: a lone Bishop or Knight can't mate, but a pawn has the potential to become a Rook or Queen. In such situations, players sometimes refer to pawns of this nature as "baby Queens" since they have one purpose in life: to reach the end of the board and become an adult!

The question, then, is very basic: can the Bishop or Knight stop the pawn from reaching its final destination? If it can, then a draw results. If it can't, the game must be immediately resigned since a lone minor piece can't withstand the raw power of a Queen (as we saw in Part Two)!
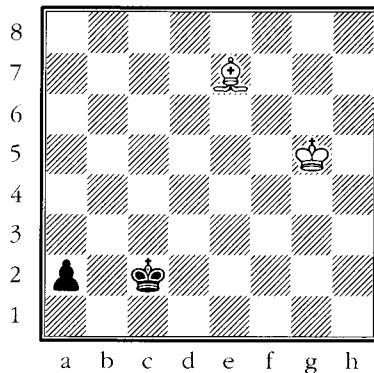
Bishop vs. Lone Pawn

This tends to be a ridiculously easy draw, since the Bishop can stop the pawn's march from a distance (which it can usually do even without help from its King).

Diagram 71

REMEMBER

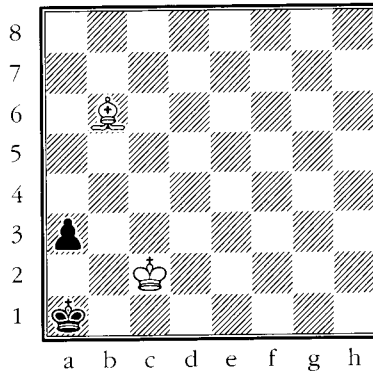A Bishop can stop a pawn even from a long distance.

White to move

If it was Black to move he would win the game by 1...a1=Q, when the resulting Queen vs. Bishop endgame is completely hopeless for White. However, White to move draws easily (even though his King is far from the action) by **1.Bf6 Kb1**

2.Kf4 (white's King doesn't have to take part in this battle. The game would also be drawn if the Bishop endlessly shuttled back and forth along the a1-h8 diagonal.) **2...a1=Q 3.Bxa1**, ½-½.

Though a pawn can beat a piece if it can promote, there is one way that the piece can win.

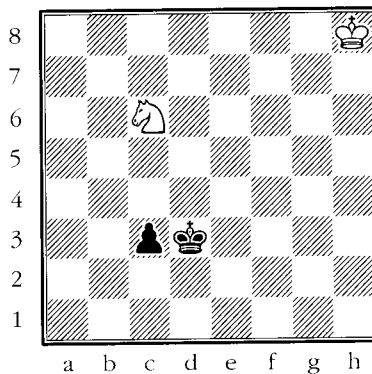Diagram 72

Black to move

RULE

A lone Bishop can triumph over a lone pawn if that pawn is a rook-pawn and if its King is trapped in front of it. Why? Because, in certain extremely rare instances, the rook-pawn allows smother mates to occur.

Black's pawn doesn't have any hope of promoting since his King is blocking its path to a1. A draw can be obtained by 1...Ka2 (one of only two legal moves!) when 2.Bd4 is a stalemate. However, if Black was in an "end it all mood" and couldn't find a noose, then an alternate form of suicide can be created by **1...a2?? 2.Bd4** mate.

Knight vs. Lone Pawn

The Knight doesn't have the long distance powers of a Bishop, but it can usually stop an enemy pawn even without help from its King *if* it's close to the pawn and can maintain control over the square in front of the pawn.

Diagram 73

Draw

The position in diagram 73 is drawn no matter whose turn it is. First, let's see what happens if White has the move.

1.Nb4+

Covering the c2-square. The Knight is more than happy to sacrifice itself for black's remaining pawn.

1...Kc4

Nothing is gained by 1...Kd2 2.Kg7 c2 3.Nxc2.

2.Nc2 Kb3 3.Nd4+

This Knight dance around the enemy pawn is the usual way such Knight vs. pawn endgames are saved—it allows the Knight to keep a permanent eye on the square in front of the pawn, thus stopping it from safely advancing. Such endgames are almost always drawn (the one exception is a rook-pawn) if the Knight can actually land on (or maintain a connection with) the square in front of the pawn (as it did on moves one, via 1.Nb4+, and two, 2.Nc2). Instead, 3.Na1+?? loses to 3...Kb2, winning the Knight and the game.

3...Kb2 4.Kg7 c2 5.Nxc2, draw.

Going back to diagram 73, we now give Black the move. However, the game is still a draw since White can target two squares in front of the pawn: c2 and c1.

RULE

If the Knight can safely land on (or keep connected to) the square (or squares, if the pawn isn't on the 7th rank) in front of the pawn, the game will be drawn (a rook-pawn being the one case where exceptions might occur).

1...Kc4!

A good try that doesn't allow the Knight access to the c2-square. An immediate draw follows the tempting 1...c2?? 2.Nb4+ followed by 3.Nxc2. Knight forks like this are common fare in Knight endgames, so be on the lookout for them!

2.Na5+

White also saves the game with 2.Ne5+, which leads to the same kind of play that is seen after 2.Na5+

2...Kb4

Things are easy for White after 2...Kb5 3.Nb3 Kb4 4.Nc1.

3.Nc6+ Kc5

Since 3...Kc4 4.Na5+ repeats the position, the only other aggressive move is 3...Kb5 but that falls on its face to 4.Nd4+ followed by 5.Nc2.

4.Na5 c2 5.Nb3+ Kc4 6.Nc1

Now White comfortably controls the square in the front of the pawn.

6...Kc3 7.Kg7

White has no reason to leave c1 unless he's attacked. However, even 7.Ne2+ works: 7...Kd2 (7...Kd3 8.Nc1+ Kd2 9.Nb3+) 8.Nd4! (threatening Nxc2) 8...c1=Q 9.Nb3+ picking up the newly born Queen before it even has a chance to blink!

7...Kb2

Black also has no chance to win after 7...Kd2 8.Nb3+ Kd1 (8...Kc3 9.Nc1 repeats the position) 9.Kf6 and the Knight on b3 is a rock that forever eyes c1.

8.Nd3+

Continuing with the Knight-jig. However, a calmer way to end things is 8.Ne2 when it's time to agree to the draw.

8...Kc3

8...Kb1 9.Kf6 also gives Black no hope at all.

9.Nc1 and Black is not able to make any progress and must (now or soon) agree to the draw.

> **REMEMBER**
>
> If the Knight can take control of any square in front of the pawn, the game is drawn.

As mentioned earlier, Rook pawns pose a problem for a Knight that doesn't enjoy the support of its King. Why is this? Because the Knight can't leap from one side of the pawn to the other because there is only *one* side to a rook-pawn!

Diagram 74
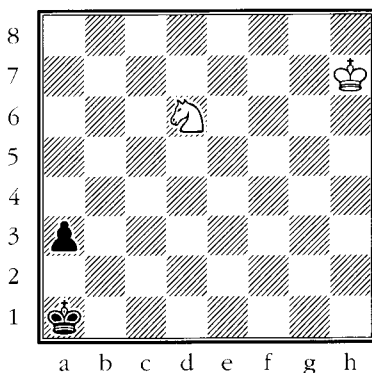
White to move draws, Black to move wins

We'll first give White the move from diagram 74.

1.Nb5 a2 2.Nc3 when Nxa2 with a draw can't be stopped.

Going back to the initial position in diagram 74, we'll now see what happens if Black has the move.

1...a2!

Simply intending 2...Kb1 followed by ...a1=Q and wins. Oddly, other moves don't work for Black:

➤   1...Kb2?? 2.Nc4+ followed by 3.Nxa3.

➤   1...Ka2?? 2.Nb5 followed by 3.Nxa3.

➤   1...Kb1?? 2.Nb5 (2.Nc4?? a2 wins for Black) 2...a2 3.Nc3+ followed by 4.Nxa2.

2.Nc4

Hopeless is 2.Nb5 Kb2 when the Knight can't approach the pawn.
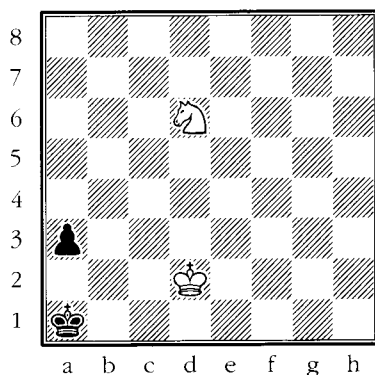
2...Kb1

Black's only legal move, but a winner nonetheless!

3.Na3+

Or 3.Nd2+ Kc2 and the "baby Queen" turns into an adult!

3...Kc1, 0-1.

Of course, White would have drawn this position if his King had been close:

Diagram 75
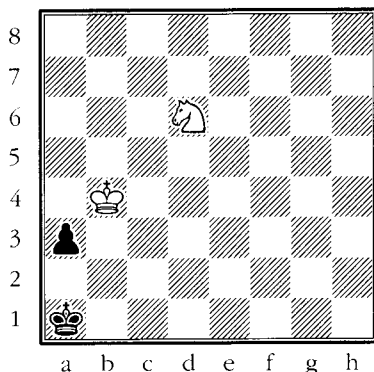

Black to move, draw

1...Kb1

Or 1...a2 2.Kc1, draw. White could also draw by 2.Nc4 Kb1 3.Na3+ Kb2 4.Nc2 covering the queening square.

On 1...Kb2 White draws immediately with 2.Nc4+ followed by 3.Nxa3.

2.Nb5 a2 3.Nc3+ followed by **4.Nxa2, =.**

Here's another tweak in the general situation we've been looking at:

Diagram 76

Black to move, draw

The pawn's hanging, and both 1...Ka2 and 1...Kb2 fail to 2.Nc4. Thus black's move is forced.

1...a2

Now 2...Kb1 or 2...Kb2 (depending on what White plays) followed by 3...a1=Q is threatened, so White has to put his Knight into overdrive if he wants to prevent this.

2.Nc4!

2.Nb5?? Kb2 (not 2...Kb1?? 3.Nc3+) forces the creation of a new Queen.

2...Kb1 3.Nd2+ Kb2 4.Nb3, ½-½.

The Knight can comfortably maintain its defense of the promotion square (a1) thanks to the secure protection of its King. Teamwork really is a wonderful thing!

As with the lone Bishop vs. lone pawn, the piece can occasionally win (in very rare instances!) only if the pawn is a rook-pawn and its King is trapped in front of it. Here's one such example of this occurring.

Diagram 77
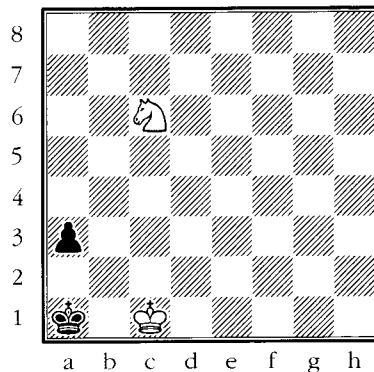
White to move

1.Nb4!

Taking the a2-square away from black's King and forcing the pawn to advance. This leaves the black monarch stalemated, which means that any check will be mate.

**1...a2 2.Nc2** mate.

REMEMBER

A lone Knight can only triumph over a lone pawn if that pawn is a rook-pawn and if its King is trapped in front of it. Why? Because, in certain rare instances, the rook-pawn allows smother mates to occur.

Rook vs. Lone Pawn

Unlike Bishop and King, which can't mate, Rook and King is a potent partnership. In this case the Rook will win if the pawn can be stopped or won. In this endgame, the side with the pawn can only hope to draw if the stronger side's King is too far from the action.

Diagram 78
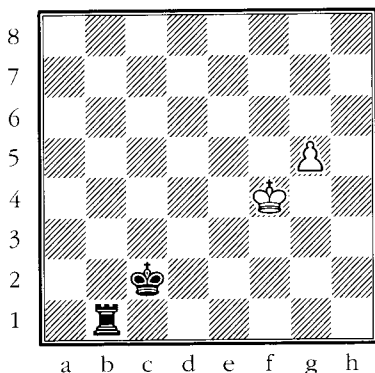
Leko - Kramnik, World Championship Match 2004

White to move

> **RULE**
>
> If the enemy pawn is well into its journey towards promotion, and if its King is helping, and if the Rook's King is off on vacation, then a draw will result.

In the present position, the pawn is too far and black's King is a non-participant. Thus, White won't have any problem saving the half point.

1.g6

The pawn is close to promoting, and black's King is too far to help stop the pawn's rush to g8.

1...Kd3 2.Kf5

It's very important that the King escort the pawn to the promised land. The immediate 2.g7?? would lose to 2...Rg1.
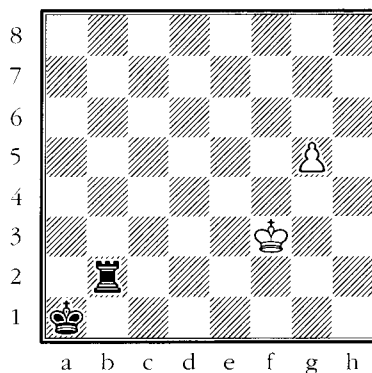
2...Rb5+

Also drawn is 2...Rf1+ 3.Ke6 Rg1 4.Kf7 Ke4 5.g7.

3.Kf6 Rb6+ 4.Kf7 Rxg6

Ending the game. Instead, 4...Rb7+ 5.Kf8 Ke4 6.g7 would still lead to the loss of black's Rook.

5.Kxg6, ½-½

Diagram 79

Black to move wins

In diagram 79 we get to see an important winning maneuver:

1...Rb4!

This traps white's King along the 3rd rank and, as a result, also defuses the pawn. This idea doesn't work if white's King gets to the 4th rank or beyond (as it was in the Leko-Kramnik game).

2.g6

Or Black will calmly walk his King over the kingside.

2...Rb6!

The point! Suddenly the poor pawn is on its own—its King is too far away to help it.

3.g6 Rg6, 0-1.

> **RULE**
>
> A pawn on the 5th rank and a King trapped on the 3rd rank by the enemy Rook is always a win for the side with the Rook.

In our next position (diagram 80), White wins (even though Black has the move!) because his King is close enough to the pawn to help the Rook stop it. A team effort between and Rook and King often allows White to fight success-fully for control over the queening square.

Diagram 80
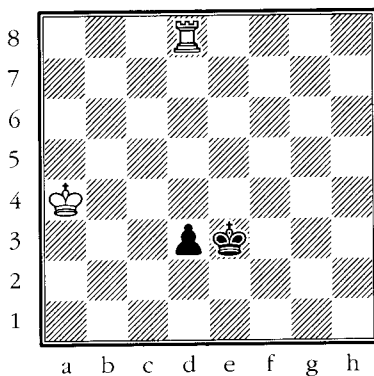
Black to move, white wins

1...d2

No better is 1...Kd2 2.Kb3 when black's pawn is going nowhere.

2.Kb3 Ke2 3.Kc2 and the pawn is lost, and with it the game.

Summing Up

Beyond Basic Opposition

▶ If the Kings are connected on a file, rank, or diagonal, then you can easily ascertain whether or not you possess the Distant Opposition—it's as simple as counting from one to six.

▶ The formula for Distant Opposition: You want an odd number of squares between the Kings with the *other* guy to move! (Conversely, if there is an even number of squares between the Kings, then you want to *have* the move.).

▶ To create Indirect Opposition, you want to create a square or rectangle connecting the Kings with every corner being the same color.

King and Pawn Endgames

▶ Rook-pawns often pose exceptions to all the normal endgame rules.

▶ In a King and pawn (any pawn *but* a rook-pawn!) vs. King endgame, if the stronger side's King is one square in front of its pawn, the win depends on whether or not he has the Opposition.

▶ In a King and pawn (any pawn *but* a rook-pawn!) vs. King endgame, if the stronger side's King is two squares in front of the pawn (which, of course, should be safe from capture!), he always wins.

Fox in the Chicken Coup

▶ Fox in the Chicken Coup is *the* way to win multi-pawn King endgames where one side possesses an outside passed pawn.

▶ The Fox in the Chicken Coup technique is: At the right moment, let the opponent win the passed pawn. While he's doing that, your King should be rushing towards the unprotected mass of enemy pawns, where it can eat them at will.
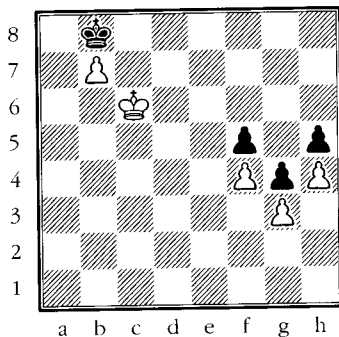
Minor Piece vs. a Lone Pawn

▶ A minor piece (Bishop or Knight) vs. a lone pawn is usually drawn, since the piece will sacrifice itself for the pawn and create a King vs. King draw.
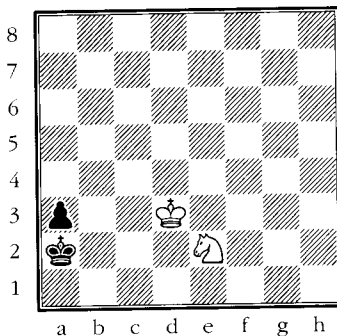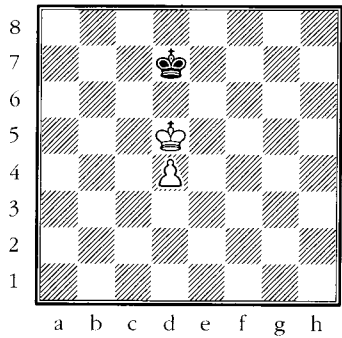
Diagram 81

White to move

Is White winning?

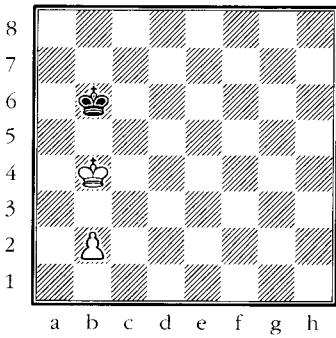Diagram 82

White to move

Is White in any danger?
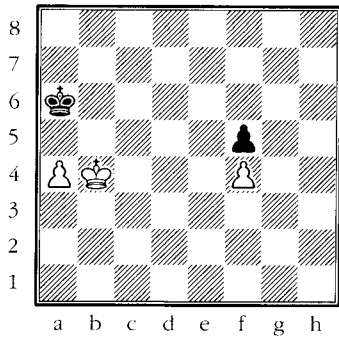
TEST 3

Diamgram 83

Is White winning?

TEST 4

Diagram 84

Is White winning?

TEST 5

Diagram 85

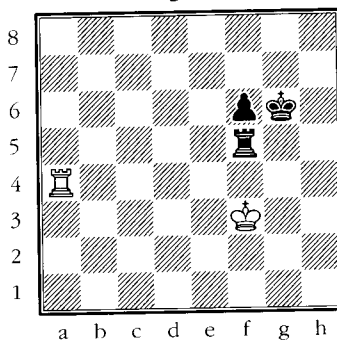**Black to move**

Can White win?

TEST 6
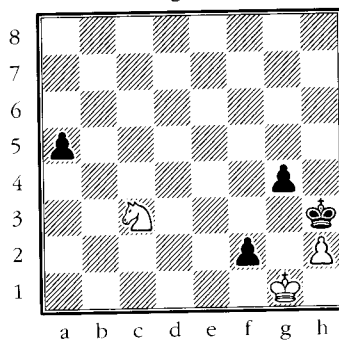
Diagram 86

White to move

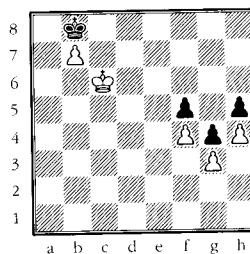Is the King and pawn endgame after 1.Rf4 drawn?

TEST 7

Diagram 87

White to move

Is White lost?

✱ ✱ ✱ ✱ ✱

SOLUTION 1

Diagram 81

White to move

Is White winning?

If you used the Fox in the Chicken Coup concept by 1.Kd6 or 1.Kd5 or even 1.Kd7, you did well since 1...Kxb7 2.Ke6 Kc6 3.Kxf5 is completely decisive: 3...

Kd5 4.Kg5 Ke4 (of course, 4...Ke6 5.Kg6 [5.Kxh5 Kf5 6.Kh6 also wins] 5...Ke7 6.Kxh5 followed by 7.Kxg4 is hopeless) 5.f5 Kf3 6.f6 Kxg3 7.f7 Kh2 8.f8=Q is game over.
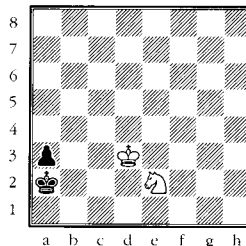
However, if you decided to hang onto your passed pawn by 1.Kb6?? you clearly have to rethink things since you've just stalemated your opponent and drawn an easily won game.

REMEMBER

As in all endgames, stalemates play an important part in the defender's hopes and must always remain in the stronger side's mind as something to avoid at all costs.

SOLUTION 2

Diagram 82

White to move

Is White in any danger?

No, White's not in any danger at all. Even if Black had the move, the game would be drawn: 1...Kb2 2.Nc3 a2 3.Nxa2, draw. However, it's White to move and this turns out to be one of those rare instances where the lone Knight beats the pawn.

1.Kc2!

This traps the enemy King in the corner, where it will block its own pawn.
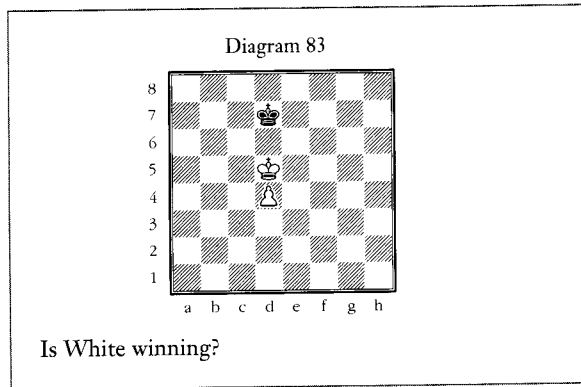
1...Ka1

The only legal move.

2.Nc1!

Takes away the a2-square from the black King and leaves him no choice but to push the pawn. However, this leaves the poor King completely immobile (meaning any check is mate!).

2...a2 3.Nb3 mate.

SOLUTION 3

Diagram 83

Is White winning?

If you answered "yes" or "no," you're wrong on both counts. The correct answer is, "It depends on who has the move!" If it's White to move, then the game is drawn since Black holds the Opposition:

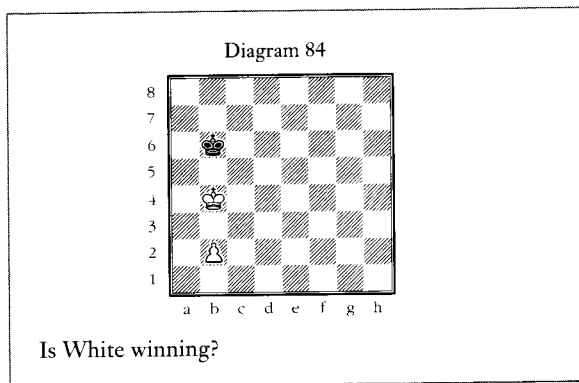**1.Ke5 Ke7 2.d5 Kd7 3.d6 Kd8 4.Ke6 Ke8 5.d7+ Kd8 6.Kd6** stalemate.

If it's Black to move, White wins since now White is in possession of the Opposition.

1...Ke7 2.Kc6 Kd8

2...Ke6 3.d5+ Ke8 4.Kc7! and the pawn pushes through and promotes.

3.Kd6 Kc8 4.Ke7 Kc7 5.d5 followed by d5-d6-d7-d8=Q.

SOLUTION 4

Diagram 84

Is White winning?

If you answered, "It depends on who has the move." you're wrong. White wins no matter who moves first. If Black moves first the win should be obvious:
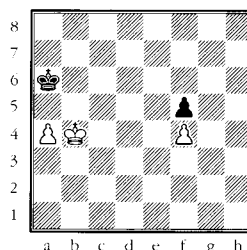
1...Kc6 2.Ka5 Kc5 3.b4+ Kc6 4.Ka6, etc.

If this isn't clear, go back and carefully reread the material on this kind of endgame, but at this point in your studies the win if White moves first should also be a no-brainer:

1.b3!

Taking the Opposition.

1...Kc6 2.Ka5, etc.

SOLUTION 5

Diagram 85

Black to move

Can White win?

I'm pleased if you thought that White might have problems because his passer is a rook-pawn, even though this isn't correct here (just the fact that you are now aware of the problems a rook-pawn can pose is a great sign!). The fact is, White wins no matter who moves, and the rook-pawn has no significance since White intends to sacrifice it anyway!

What we have here is another Fox in the Chicken Coup situation—White will give up the a4-pawn in order to win the f5-pawn, while also gaining a winning King position:

1...Kb6

If White had the first move then 1.Kc5 or Kc4 would both do the trick.

2.Kc4

White would also toss in 2.a5+ Ka6 3.Ka4 Ka7 4.Kb5 but it would lead to the same basic situation as reached after 2.Kc4.

2...Ka5 3.Kd5 Kxa4 4.Ke5

Black's King is far from the action, seemingly on vacation.

4...Kb5 5.Kxf5 Kc6 6.Ke6
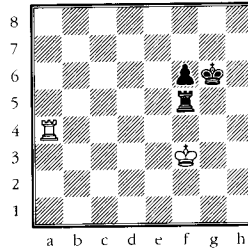
6.Kg6 is also sufficient for an easy victory.

6...Kc7 7.Ke7

7.f5 also wins, but why let black's King get closer to the key f8-square?

7...Kc6 8.f5 followed by f5-f6-f7-f8=Q.

SOLUTION 6

Diagram 86

Spielmann-Duras, Carlsbad 1907

White to move

Is the King and pawn endgame after 1.Rf4 drawn?

Even grandmasters blunder in the simplest of endgames. This position is hopelessly drawn and literally any King move would save the game. However, White decided to exchange Rooks and enter a "completely drawn" King and pawn vs. King endgame.

1.Rf4??

Expecting 2...Rxf4+ 3.Kxf4 with an immediate draw, he must have fallen out of his chair when Black played ...

1...Kg5!, 0-1. After 3.Rxf5 Kxf5 black's King has gotten in front of his pawn and has the Opposition. So the answer was yes, the King and pawn endgame was indeed drawn after 1...Rxf4+, but White is completely lost in the King and pawn endgame that arises after 1...Kg5!

SOLUTION 7

Diagram 87
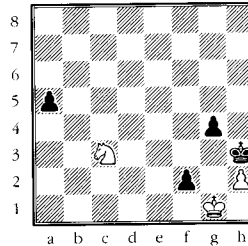
Akiko Uto – Tran, Paris 2005

White to move

Is White lost?

In this position White, suffering from the illusion that her King was needed on the kingside, resigned since black's pawns appeared to be unstoppable. However, the game is dead drawn:

1.Kxf2 Kxh2

Things seem bad for White since 2.Ne4 or 2.Ne2 is met by 2...a4 when both pawns can't be stopped.

2.Ke2!

This is what White missed—this changing of the guard (white's King runs to the queenside to deal with the a-pawn while the Knight will take on the g-pawn by itself) easily saves the half point.

2...g3 3.Kd2 g2 4.Ne2, ½-½. The Knight has no problem dealing with the g-pawn, while white's King will march over and snap off the a-pawn.

Final Thoughts

I've clearly ratcheted up the difficulty level in this section—diagonal and non-connecting forms of Opposition, King and pawn endgames, Fox in the Chicken Coup, the Deep Freeze. All this is a far cry from the overkill mates in Part One!

Nevertheless, the fact is that all these endgames and their accomplanying rules are extremely easy to absorb if you give the information a bit of time to sink in. Just because things appear hard due to a wide-eyed first impression doesn't mean that they are.

Yes, it will take more time than previously asked to thoroughly master this material. But you *do* have to master it—you shouldn't continue in this book until every nuance of Opposition, Fox in the Chicken Coup, and Deep Freeze is completely assimilated.