

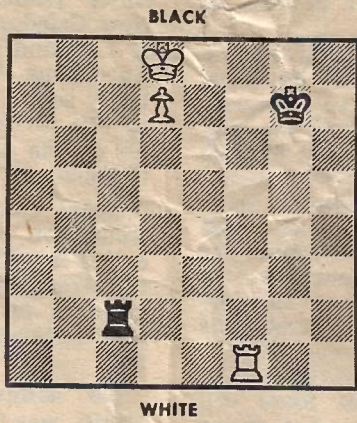
Winning rooks

ROOK ENDINGS are the most frequently occurring, and yet so often players do not even know basic winning positions.

A study of rook endings pays great dividends in extra half points. Larsen's policy is "pawn up: win, pawn down:

draw". When players have only a rook and a few pawns each left complications requiring extensive skill and knowledge often arise.

A basic but not so simple winning position is the following, called the Lucena position:



Things look good for White; his king is aggressively placed, his pawn far advanced and the black king is cut off as well. But how does he win?

On 1, Ke7 Black simply checks until the white king finds shelter behind his pawn again. 1, Re1 fails to 1... Kf8 and again no progress has been made. Consequently two players agreed to a draw in this position at a recent tournament I attended!

There is an easy win, however with a technique sometimes called "building a bridge":

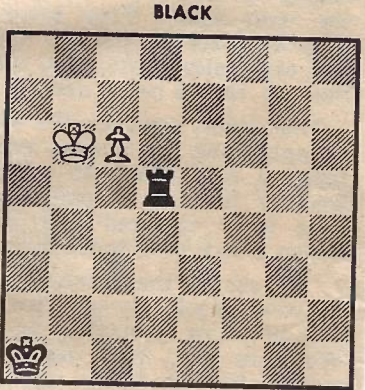
1. Rf4! Rc1
2. Ke7 Re1 ch
3. Kd6 Rd1 ch
4. Ke6 Re1 ch
- (4... Rd2, 5, Rf5 and Rd5).
5. Kd5 Rd1 ch
6. Rd4 and wins.

There is also an alternative method in

1. Ra1 Kf7
2. Ra8 Rc1
3. Rc8 Rd1
4. Kc7 Rc1 ch
5. Kb6

If Black continues the checks the white king can approach the black rook and stop them; then the pawn must queen.

The possibilities available even in endings with greatly well known example (Saavedra):



- White to play and win!
1. c7 Rd6 ch
 2. Kb5!
- Not 2, Kc5 Rd1 and Rc1 Draw.

- 2... Rd5 ch
3. Kb4 Rd4 ch
4. Kb3 Rd3 ch
5. Kc2

Black seems to have no way of preventing the pawn from queening but there is a brilliant stalemate try.

- 5... Rd4!
 6. c8=R!
- For if c8=Q Rc4 ch! 7, Qxc4 stalemate. Black is now forced to guard against the threatened mate.

- 6... Ra4
 7. Kb3 and wins!
- Black's rook as well as mate on the move is threatened.

It can be very expensive not to win rook endings. The following one, in particular, cost me £750.

Going into the last round of the huge Evening Standard chess congress four of us were first equal on 4½/5 points. C. Pritchard surprisingly beat Grandmaster B. Karajica leaving me to try and win a rook ending to share first place and £1500.

Due to a "10 minute" time control we had to play all of the moves after our 40th in just 10 minutes. Usually I can work out the correct moves in such endings, but due to the fast time control this was one instance where it was essential to know exactly what I should do.

The notes are what I saw during the game.

This ending demonstrates well the problems of seemingly simple wins. For me, of course, it was a most expensive lesson!

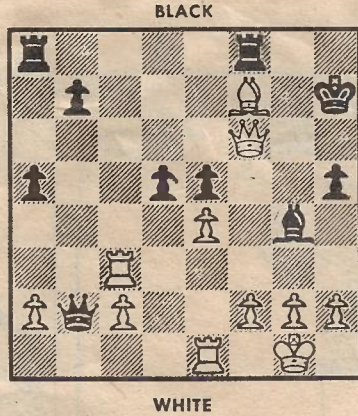
More on computers (see last week's column):

One thing I found amusing in Levy's book was the idea of computers "hiding their heads in the sand".

The earliest example of this occurred in the game "Programme" v Human, Manchester 1951. Position: 1r3rk1 / pP3ppp / B2p4 / q1n1p2b / Pb2P2P / 2N2P2 / 1PPBQP2 / R3K1R1.

White must lose his pawn on b7 eventually, but the programme staves this off as long as possible. It plays 1, Rg5 working out that after 1... Bg6 it can move its attacked bishop on a6. Of course the pawn has not been saved but the computer can't see as far as that. It avoids the inevitable by pushing it over the horizon; this is known as the horizon effect. Who says computers aren't human?

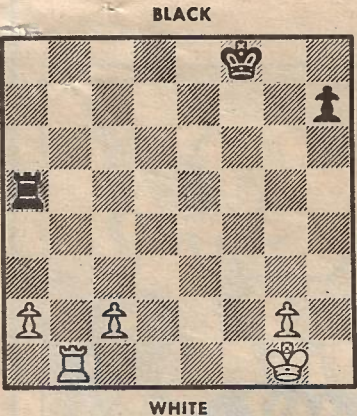
This position was reached in the fifth ACM tournament after RIBBIT's 22nd move.



TECH 11 has several mates available, 23, Qg6 ch being the shortest and 23, Rc7 taking slightly longer.

Due to a "bug" in the programme it was confused by the large number of wins available and thought and thought and thought, finally losing on time 45 minutes later. These are the sort of problems programmers have to iron out.

MURRAY CHANDLER



National Bank of Dubai: Open, 1976:

- M. Chandler J. Littlewood
1. Rb2 Ra3
2. Kh2

2, c4 Rc3. 3, Rb4 Ra3 wins a pawn or White concedes a draw.

- 2... Kf7
3. g3 Ra4
4. c3 Rc4
5. Rc2 h5

Now if 6, Kh3 Kg6. 7, a4 Rxa4. 8, c4 Ra6. 9, c5 Rc6. I saw this position and the continuation 10, Kg2 Kf5. 11, Kf3 Ke5. 12, Ke3 Rg6! Draw. Instead I continued with my original plan.

6. Kg2 Ke6
7. Kf3 h4!
8. gxh4?

I knew some positions of R versus R and "a" pawn and "c" pawn were drawn but I also knew that the technical difficulties for the defender are usually enormous. Unfortunately for me this was an exception.

- 8... Rxh4
9. Ke3 Kd5
10. Rd2 ch Kc5
11. Kd3 Rg4
12. Kc2 Kc4
13. a4 Rh4
14. Kb2 Rg4
15. Rd8 Rg2 ch
16. Ka3 Kxc3
17. Rc8 ch Kd4

... a drawn position. (66 moves.)

The game had been shown on a demonstration board and several people couldn't quite believe I had drawn an ending two pawns up! But when we looked at it afterwards we found the ending, if played correctly by both sides, is an extremely difficult one to win. In fact nobody could suggest a clear cut winning line at all — an incredible situation in an ending where White has a two-pawn advantage. Several promising lines were found though, and the general opinion was that it must be a win. Only when actually writing this article did Max Fuller and I find a win for White.

After much trial and error we solved the problem with:

1. Rb2 Ra3
2. c4!! Rc3
3. Rb4 Ra3
4. Rb7! h5
5. c5 Rc3!
6. Rc7 Ke8
7. a4! Kd8
8. Rc6 Kd7
9. Rd6 ch Kc7
10. Rd5 h4
11. Rh5 Kc6
12. Rxh4 Kxc5

White will win, though certainly not without difficulty.