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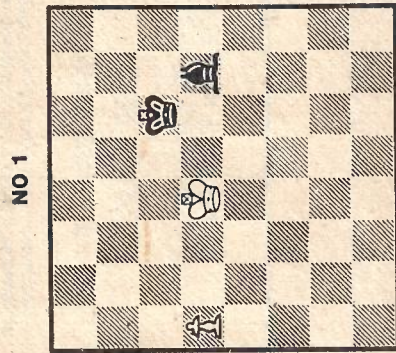
Chess

Last rites

BISHOP ENDINGS are the subject of a new book by Russian Grandmaster Yuri Averbakh, the fourth in his specialist end-game series. It is published by Batsford. The book is an unparalleled work in the depth and number of examples. Averbakh's analysis is directed at the experienced

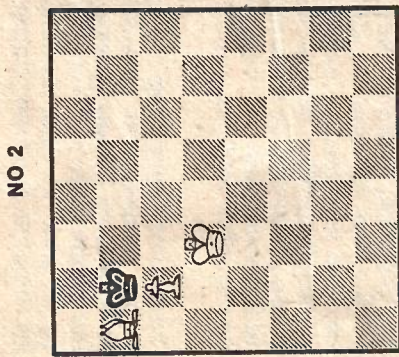
player, with the work subdivided under three main headings: bishop v pawns, bishops of the same colour, and bishops of opposite colour.

Part one begins with a deceptive example probably designed to shatter any illusions the reader might have about "simple" positions.



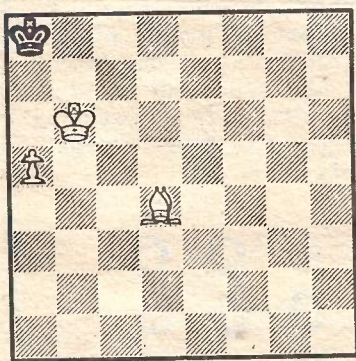
study by Otten after 1, Ke4! Bh4 2, Kf3! when the unfortunate placement of Black's king and bishop leave him powerless to prevent White's threatened 3, a6 and 4, A7. Averbakh points to two exceptional cases where a player all of a bishop and pawn up does not win. Every serious player should learn such positions. In No 2 no progress can be made because of the ridiculous bishop on a7. Any attempt leads to stalemate: eg 1, Kd6 Ka8 2, Kc6.

White wins in this famous



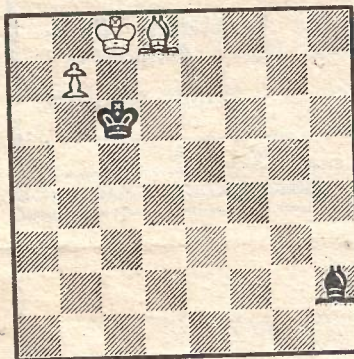
D. Ponziani, 1782

Diagram No 3 is a better known example which still claims a lot of victims, particularly in skittles games! The situation is commonly referred to as "having the wrong colour rook's pawn". In fact there is nothing wrong with the colour of the poor thing; what is meant is that the queening square (in this case a8) is not the correct colour in relation to the remaining white bishop.



Despite his vast superiority in material, White cannot win, eg 1, a6 Kb8 2, a7 ch Ka8 3, Kb5 (or else Black is stalemated) 3... Kb7 and Black simply alternates his king between b7 and a8, with a draw. But note what a difference if White's bishop stood instead on d3, a white square! The pawn just marches through to queen, 1, a6 6 Kb8 2, a7 ch Kc8 (or 2... Ka8 3, Be4 checkmate) 3, a8=Q ch etc.

One of my favourite showpieces used to be a particular bishop and knight's pawn v same colour bishop end-game. I used to play black and force my opponent to win three times against varying defences before I would concede that he understood what was happening! It was never solved and yet the position isn't really a study at all.



L. Centurini 1847

The first step was finding the manoeuvre 1, Bh4 Bf4 2, Bf2 Bh2 3, Ba7! Bf4 4, Bb8, driving Black from the long diagonal 4, Be3 5, Bg3 Ba7 — the only way to stop the pawn queening — and now 6, Bf2! wins.

After this idea was grasped I would change the black defence, 1, Bh4 Kb5! 2, Bf2 Ka6! The point: White cannot go to a7 with his bishop.

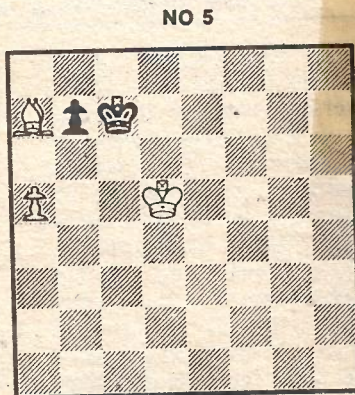
The way to break this defence is to entice the black bishop out of its lair on h2: 3, Be3! Bg3 4, Bg5 with the idea of going to d8 and c7. The Black king scurries back... 4... Kb5 5, Bd8 Kc6. Looks identical to the starting position? No, there is one important difference that allows White to win a valuable tempo — the fact that Black's bishop is out of its shelter on h2. 6, Bh4! Bh2 7, Bf2! and the original circling manoeuvre will win again.

But Black's defence can be improved yet again! Starting from the original position, play proceeds 1, Bh4 Kb5 2, Bf2 Ka6 3, Be3 Bd6! Exposing the flaw in White's plan, which he continues as before. 4, Bg5 Kb5 5, Bd8 Kc6 6, Be7 Bh2 And, oh dear! White has gained his tempo but it's not much use if his bishop can't go to c5. The correct solution goes 1, Bh4 Kb5 2, Bf2 Ka6 3, Bc5!! The only move 3... Bg3 4, Be7 Kb5 5, Bd8 Kc6 6, Bh4! Bh2 7, Bf2 Bf4 8, Ba7 Bh2 9, Bb8 Bg1 10, Bg3 Ba7 11, Bf2! and wins.

If that isn't food for thought then try the following.

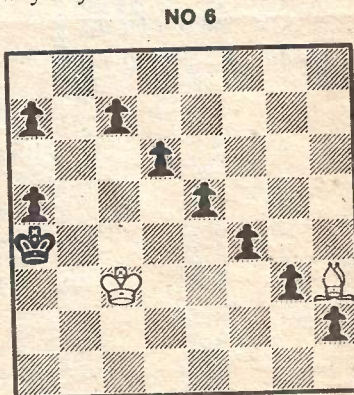
In the first (very difficult by the way) be wary of the set-ups shown in diagrams 2 and 3, or you may find yourself caught out — as Paulsen was in the game.

White to play and win.



PAULSEN v METGER
Nuremburg 1888

In the second, a bizarre problem from Sam Lloyd, you have the chance to prove that "bishop endings are stupid anyway".



SAM LLOYD

White to play and... draw?!

MURRAY CHANDLER