Little things that count

MANY OF the encounters publicised in this column are superb attacking games where the winner may sacrifice virtually unlimited quantities of material to force victory. But it is important to remember that these are extraordinary exceptions to the average chess game. In most encounters the advantage of a pawn will suffice to win; an extra piece is certainly decisive. Those sacrificial sprees must be unerringly calculated or the aggressor will lose the endgame.

The theory behind exploiting a one-pawn advantage is simple enough. One swaps off all the pieces to reach a pure pawn ending, and uses the material advantage to promote to a new queen. With the newly acquired huge plus in fighting power, checkmate can be trivially administered. All strong players are well versed in such bread-and-butter technique. Of course in many cases their opponent will resign before this stage, or the extra pawn can be queened earlier.

Against alert opposition it is not so easy to win a pawn, so the short-term goals are refined still more. One aims for even smaller advantages — control of an open file, for example. In the long run it is hoped that these positional factors will facilitate the launching of an attack, which will in turn win a pawn, and so on.

This week's game, taken from the Brighton Grandmaster tournament in England last December, shows just such a strategy in operation. Here the factor which the Icelandic International Master Jon Arnason builds on is a queenside pawn majority. In an endgame, because the kings have usually castled kingside, a passed pawn created on the queenside can prove difficult to stop. This time it becomes a decoy, luring the Black king away from the centre.

SICILIAN DEFENCE

J. ARNASON	W. WATSON
1. e4	c5
2. Nf3	d6
3. d4	c×d4
4. N×d4	Nf6
5. Nc3	g6
6. Be3	Bg7
7. f3	Nc6
8. Bc4	0-0
9. Qe2	Na5
10. Bd3	a6?

Black's correct continuation, according to theory, is 10. . . e5 11. Nb3 Be6 12. 0-0 Rc8! with equality.

| 11. 0-0 | b5 |
| 12. b4! | |

This is quite an original advance for a Sicilian defence. But in this case Black's knight cannot move to c4 or c6, and he will be forced on the defensive after the passive 12. . .Nb7 13.a4 Qc7 14.Qd2 b×a4 15.R×a4 a5 16.Ncb5.

12. . . .	e5
13. Nb3	N×b3
14. c×b3	Be6
15. a4!	

Utilising the queenside majority.

Even in the middlegame an advancing passed pawn can tie the opponent down.

15. . . .	b×a4
16. b×a4	Rc8
17. Bd2	

After 17.Rfc1 Black could try 17. . .a5 18.b5 d5.

| 17. . . . | Qb6ch |
| 18. Qf2 | Qd4 |

On 18. . .Q×b4 19.Nd5 Qb7 20.Rfb1 is exceedingly strong, and 18. . .Q×f2 ch 19.K×f2 would simply fall in with White's plans. Watson realises he must complicate matters to try to gain counterplay.

19. Q×d4	e×d4
20. Ne2	Bc4
21. B×c4	R×c4
22. Rfc1	Rfc8
23. R×c4	R×c4
24. Rc1!	

Trading all of the rooks makes White's potential outside passed pawn more dangerous. As well, the doubled Black d-pawns are now more susceptible to attack.

24. . . .	R×c1 ch
25. N×c1	d5
26. e5	Nd7
27. f4	Kf8
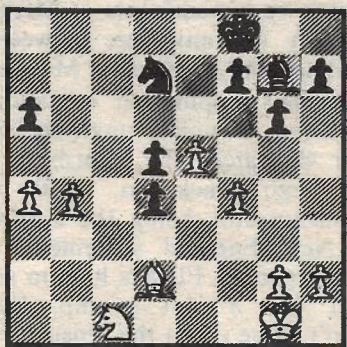
The king sets off for the queenside. It should be noticed that, although Black technically has two passed d-pawns, these are not quite such a problem for White.

28. b5	a×b5
29. Bb4 ch	Ke8
30. a×b5	Kd8
31. Nb3	d3
32. Nc1	Kc7?

Missing a last defensive chance in 32. . .Nc5! as 33.B×c5? loses to 33. . .d2. After 33.Kf1 White is still better but Black can fight on.

33. Ba5 ch	Kb7
34. N×d3	Bf8
35. Kf2	Nc5
36. N×c5!	B×c5 ch
37. Ke2	Bb6?

In time trouble Watson mistakenly puts his faith in the king and pawn ending, but the bishop ending should be lost in the long run anyway.

38. B×b6!	K×b6
39. Kd3	K×b5
40. Kd4	Kc6
41. g4	Kc7

Black had effectively run out of tempo moves. After 41. . .h5 42.g×h5 g×h5 43.h4 Watson would be in zugzwang, and forced to leave the defence of his d-pawn in any case.

| 42. K×d5 | Resigns |

A sample line in the pawn ending might go 42. . .Kd7 43.f5 g×f5 44.g×f5 h6 45.h4 h5 46.Kc5 Kc7 47. Kb5! Kd7 (47. . .Kb7 48.e6 f×e6 49.f6 and queens) 48.Kb6 Kd8 49.Kc6 Ke8 50.Kc7. Ke7 51.Kc8 Ke8 52.f6 Kf8 53.Kd8 Kg8 54.Ke8 etc.

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