

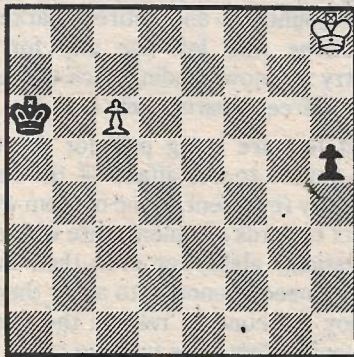
MURRAY CHANDLER

Simply fascinating

ALL STRONG PLAYERS who have misspent their youth playing chess have at some time misspent it more specifically in studying the endgame. A basic knowledge of ending principles is essential, despite the fact that studying openings and complex middlegames can be more exciting. It is said of the legendary Capablanca that he exhaustively studied more than a thousand rook endgames in order to attain his mastery in this field.

Once begun, such study often becomes intriguing, and even writing this column I was sidetracked by such rare possibilities as two knights v queen, or bishop and knight v queen (with no pawns in either case). I wonder how many New Zealand championship contenders could immediately say the former is a draw, the latter a probable loss? Of course it is not necessary to know all these esoteric endgames by heart, as adjournments mean a book can be consulted if one of these unusual positions looks like arising. Most important is a good grasp of the general rules.

This first position, an apparently trivial pawn ending, illustrates the remarkable depth even simple positions can contain. It is in fact a famous study in which, although White seems hopelessly lost, he draws by virtue of a diagonal advance.



R. Reti 1922

- 1. Kg7 h4
- 2. Kf6 Kb6

White still cannot catch the black pawn, but he has won back one tempo by forcing Black to make this king move. Instead 2... h3 3.Ke7 h2 4.c7 draws, as both pawns will queen.

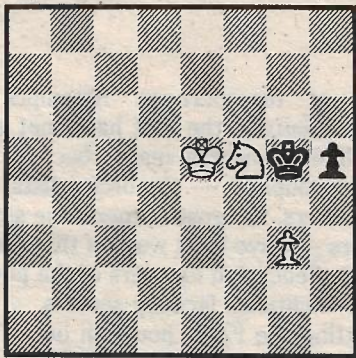
- 3. Ke5!
- The point. As White now threatens to catch the pawn with 4.Kf4, Black has no choice.
- 3... h3
- 4. Kd6 h2
- 5. c7 h1=Q
- 6. c8=Q

With a clear draw.

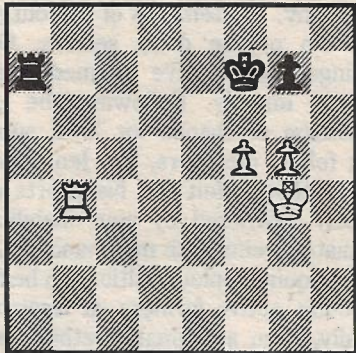
Knowing this next example (at the top of the next column) could easily save you a half point if it were ever to occur in one of your games.

Experienced players may know a position with a rook's pawn where Black draws against king and knight (White: Ka5, Nb5, Pa7. Black: Ka8) because the White king's approach will mean stalemate.

Here that resource is not possible, but Black still has an exceptional draw as White's king is tied to the knight's defence,



eg 1.Ke6 Kg6! 2.Ke5 Kg5 3.Ke4 Kg4 draws. Or 1.Ne3 h4! 2.g4 h3 etc. Note, however, that with Black to move White wins.



Chekhover-Kasakevich 1949

The most frequently occurring endgames of all are rook and pawn endgames. The importance of having an active rook and king in such positions cannot be over-emphasised. In the example above, although White has only a two-to-one pawn majority, and all pawns are on the same side of the board, he is able to eke out an interesting win.

- 1. Kh5 Rc7

If 1...g6 ch 2.Kh6! gxf5 3.g6 ch Kf6 4.Rb6 ch Ke5 5.g7 leads to a win. Terribly passive is 1...Ra8 2.Rb7 ch Kf8 3.Kg6 Ra6 ch 4.f6 gxf6 5.gxf6 Ra8 6.Rh7 with an easy win.

- 2. Rb8 Rc6

The best chance. The actual game went 2...Ra7 3.g6 ch Kf6 4.Rf8 ch Ke5 5.f6! gxf6 6.Kh6 and the g-pawn marched through to queen.

- 3. g6 ch Ke7
- 4. Rg8 Kf6
- 5. Rf8 ch Ke5
- 6. f6!

Very strong. Not, however, the capitalistic 6.Rf7 Rc1 7.Rxg7?? Kf4! when Black wins due to mate threats!

- 6... Rxf6
- 7. Rf7! Ke6

Now 7...Rf5 ch 8.Kg4 Rf6 9.Kg5 Ra6 10.Rxg7 wins easily.

- 8. Rxg7 Rf1
- 9. Ra7

Now the position is an easy theoretical win (which all tournament players should know!) as the Black king cannot get in front of the g-pawn. Whether you know or not, however, I can sincerely recommend Paul Keres's excellent work Practical Chess Endings, a book containing all of the above examples and much more. It is suitable for both learner and expert; available from bookshops or chess book dealers. ■