



A Perplexing Riddle

The eternal duel of bishop vs. knight often leads to fascinating fights and perplexing riddles. From time to time, I am asked about the following famous classic:

109.01 Stoltz, Goesta – Kashdan, Isaac
Den Haag, 1928



[FEN "6k1/p2b1pp/8/8/3N4/1P5P/5PP1/6K1 b - - 0 1"]

Black's bishop is superior to the knight, but with best defense I am convinced that White should be able to hold. Still, **Burkhard Treiber** from **Germany** has thoroughly checked the analysis in [Fundamental Chess Endings](#) and found that Frank Lamprecht and I overestimated White's defensive resources in the later stage of the endgame.

1...Kf8 2.Kf1 Ke7 3.Ke2 Kd6 4.Kd3 Kd5 5.h4 Bc8



[FEN "2b5/p4pp/8/3k4/3N3P/1P1K4/5PP1/8 w - - 0 6"]

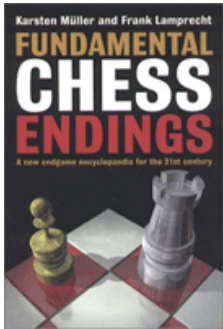
6.Nf3

White can try to build a barrier against Black's king directly with 6.f3 Ba6+ 7. Ke3 Kc5 8.Nc2 Bf1 9.g3

COLUMNISTS

Endgame Corner

Karsten Müller



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by Karsten Müller



Power Play 8: Knights and Bishops
by Daniel King



[FEN "8/p4ppp/8/2k5/7P/1P2KPP1/
2N5/5b2 b - - 0 9"]

Usually the attacking side tries to break such set ups by zugzwang or by opening a second front or a road for the king. But here it seems that White's narrow front does hold: 9...Ba6 10.Nd4 Bb7 11.Kd3 Kb4 12.Kc2 Bd5 13.Kb2 g6 14.Kc2 a6 15.Kb2



[FEN "8/5p1p/p5p1/3b4/1k1N3P/
1P3PP1/1K6/8 b - - 0 15"]

Black is still far away from victory according to Averbakh in his famous classic series on the endgame. I even think that he cannot win at all. Maybe a reader can find a way?

6...Ba6+ 7.Kc3 h6 8.Nd4 g6



[FEN "8/p4p2/b5pp/3k4/3N3P/
1PK5/5PP1/8 w - - 0 9"]

9.Nc2?

This allows Black's king to come one step closer and is probably the decisive mistake. After 9.f3 Ke5 10.g3, Frank Lamprecht and I claim in *Fundamental Chess Endings* that White can hold the position.

9...Ke4 10.Ne3 f5 11.Kd2 f4



[FEN "8/p7/b5pp/8/4kp1P/1P2N3/
3K1PP1/8 w - - 0 12"]

12.Ng4?!

In the following, the knight is floating around and plays no real part in the fight. But 12.f3+ is probably insufficient as well; e.g., 12...Kd4 13.Nc2+ Kc5 14.Kc3 Bf1 15.Ne1 Kd5 16.Kc2 (16.Nd3? leads to a lost pawn endgame: 16...Bxd3 17.Kxd3 a5 (17...Kc5? 18.Ke4 Kb4 19.Kxf4 a5 20.Ke4 Kxb3 21.f4 a4 22.h5=) 18.Kc3 Kc5 19.Kd3 (19.Kb2 Kd4 20.Ka3 Kc3+) 19...Kb4 20.Kc2 Ka3 21.Kc3



[FEN "8/8/6pp/p7/5p1P/kPK2P2/
6P1/8 b - - 0 21"]

Now Black uses his spare move to invade with his king: 21...h5 22.Kc2 Ka2 23.Kc3 Kb1 24.Kc4 Kc2+) 16...Kd4 17.Kd2 a5 18.Nc2+ Ke5 19.Ne1 Kf6 20. Kc3 g5



[FEN "8/8/5k1p/p5p1/5p1P/1PK2P2/
6P1/4Nb2 w - - 0 21"]

Black should be winning, as his king will invade sooner or later: 21.h5 (21. hxg5+ Kxg5 22.Kd4 Kh4 23.Ke4 Kg3+) 21...Kf5 22.Kd4 g4 23.fxg4+ Kxg4 24.Ke4 Ba6 25.Ke5 Be2 26.Nc2 Bf1 27.Ne1 Kg3 28.Ke4 Be2 29.Nf3 Kxg2 30.Nh4+ Kh3 31.Nf5 f3 32.Ke3 Kg2 33.Nh4+ Kh2+.

12...h5 13.Nf6+

13.Nh6 loses as well; e.g., 13...Bf1 14.f3+ Kd4 15.Nf7 Bxg2 16.Ng5 a5 17. Ne6+ Ke5 18.Ng5 Bf1 19.Kc3 Bb5 20.b4 a4 21.Nf7+ Kd5 22.Ng5 Bc6 23. Nh3 Ke5 24.Ng5 Bd5+.

13...Kf5



[FEN "8/p7/b4Np1/5k1p/5p1P/1P6/
3K1PP1/8 w - - 0 14"]

14.Nd7?!

14.Nh7!? is much more tenacious and Frank and I thought that Black has good chances to win, but that matters are not totally clear. Now Burkhard Treiber has convincingly proved the win with the following analysis: 14...Kg4 15.Nf8 Kxh4 16.Nxg6+ Kg5 17.Ne5 Kf5



[FEN "8/p7/b7/4Nk1p/5p2/1P6/
3K1PP1/8 w - - 0 18"]

White's knight has many squares, but no really safe harbor: 18.Nf3 a) 18.Nd3 Bxd3 19.Kxd3 Kg4 20.Ke2 (20.Ke4 h4 21.b4 a6 22.Ke5 f3+) 20...h4 21.b4 a6 22.Kf1 Kf5 23.Ke2 (23.Kg1 Ke4 24.Kh2 Kd4 25.Kh3 Kc4 26.Kxh4 Kxb4+) 23...Ke4 24.Kd2 f3+; b) 18.Nc4 Bxc4 19.bxc4 f3 20.g3 Ke4+; c) 18.Nc6 Bb7 19.Nxa7 (19.Nd4+ Ke5 20.Kd3 Be4+ 21.Kc3 Bxg2+) 19...Bxg2 20.Ke2 Kg4 21.Nb5 h4 22.Nd4 f3+!!



[FEN "8/8/8/8/3N2kp/1P3p2/
4KPb1/8 w - - 0 23"]

It is over. 18...Bb7 19.Ke2 a5 20.Nd4+ Ke4



[FEN "8/1b6/8/p6p/3Nkp2/1P6/4KPP1/8 w - - 0 21"]

21.Nc2 (*Fundamental Chess Endings* gives 21.Nf3 Bd5 and Black is only clearly better, but this is an understatement. Black is winning, as the bishop is superior in this open position and Black's king has penetrated too far.) 21...f3+ 22.gxf3+ Kf4 23.Ne3 Ba6+ 24.Ke1 Kxf3 25.Nf5 Bd3 26.Nh4+ Kg4 27.Ng2 Bf5 28.Ne3+ Kf4 29.Nxf5 Kxf5-+.

14...Bc8 15.Nf8 g5 16.g3 gxh4 17.gxh4 Kg4 18.Ng6 Bf5 19.Ne7 Be6 20.b4 Kxh4 21.Kd3 Kg4 22.Ke4 h4 23.Nc6 Bf5+ 24.Kd5 f3 25.b5 h3 26.Nxa7 h2 27.b6 h1Q 28.Nc6 Qb1 29.Kc5 Be4 0-1

In the next example, the knight is trying to win, but the bishop should be able to defend.

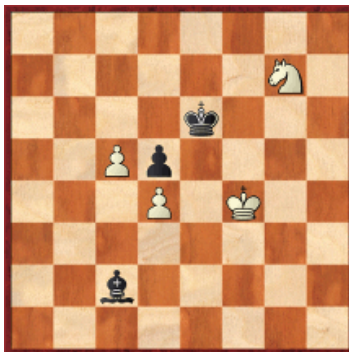
109.02 McShane, Luke (2616) – Sebag, Marie (2510)
9th Aeroflot Open A Moscow RUS (5), 13.02.2010



[FEN "8/8/4k3/2Pp2K1/3P4/3N4/8/7b b - - 0 134"]

134...Kd7?

Now White's king can enter the winning zone. It had to be kept outside with 134...Be4 135.Nf4+ Ke7, when Black's walls cannot be stormed: 136.Nh5 Bc2 137.Kf4 (137.Nf6 Ke6 138.Ne8 Ke7 139.Nc7 Be4 140.Kf4 Kd7 141.Nb5 Ke6=) 137...Ke6 138.Ng7+



[FEN "8/6N1/4k3/2Pp4/3P1K2/8/2b5/8 b - - 0 138"]

138...Kf7 (But not 138...Kf6? 139.Ne8+ Ke7 140.Nc7 Be4 141.Ke5+-) 139.

Nf5 Ke6 140.Nd6 Bg6 141.Kg5 Bd3 142.Ne8 Ke7 143.Nc7 Be4=.

135.Kf6 Kc6 136.Ke5 Kb5 137.Nf4 Kc6 138.Ng6 Kd7 139.Kf6 Bg2 140.Ne5 + Kc7 141.Ke6 Be4 142.Nf7 Kc6 143.Nd6 Bg2 144.Nf5 Kb5

144...Bh3 145.Ke5 Kd7 146.Ne3+-.

145.Ke5



[FEN "8/8/8/1kPpKN2/3P4/8/6b1/8 b - - 0 145"]

145...Bh3?!

145...Kc6 146.Ne7+ Kd7 147.Nxd5 Kc6 was much more tenacious:



[FEN "8/8/2k5/2PNK3/3P4/8/6b1/8 w - - 0 148"]

Now White's king has to make long marches in order to win: 148.Nb6 Bf3 149.Kf4 Bh5 150.Ke3 Bg6 151.Kd2 Bf7 152.Kc3 Kb5 153.Nd7 Bd5 154.Ne5 Be4 155.Kd2 Bb7 156.Ke3 Bg2 157.Kf4 Bd5 158.Kf5 Ka6 159.Kf6 Kb7 160.Nd3 Kc7 161.Nb4 Bf3



[FEN "8/2k5/5K2/2P5/1N1P4/5b2/8/8 w - - 0 162"]

162.Ke5+- This final action of the king is necessary, as 162.d5?? runs into 162...Bxd5 163.Nxd5+ Kc6=.

146.Ne7 Bg2 147.c6 Bh3 148.c7 1-0

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