



The Damned Pawn

Part 1

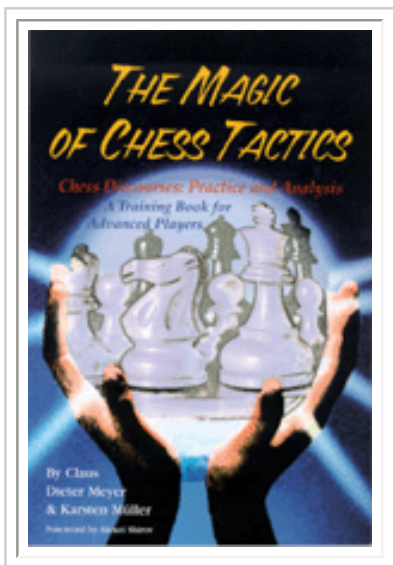
From time to time readers of *Fundamental Chess Endings* ask me about the famous Troitzky endgame 2N vs P as it is only covered very briefly in FCE. Unfortunately I can't simply say: Look it up in Nunn's *Secrets of Minor Piece Endgames* as Nunn has excluded it from his thorough treatise as Troitzky's analysis was extremely accurate. Before him Chapais (1780) and Guretzky-Cornitz had worked on solving the mysteries of this intriguing endgame and reached several results. But the true lord of this endgame is doubtlessly the great Russian analyst A.A. Troitzky. I can neither give all his results nor a full proof of them here. I will concentrate on techniques that shall help a practical player to understand the ending better: The endgame K+2N vs K is surprisingly drawn as the attacker can't avoid a stalemate defense, when the defending king is imprisoned in a corner. But an additional defending pawn opens Pandora's box as it can provide the desired tempi. The attacker should try to securely blockade the pawn as soon as possible to be able to win tempi for the blockading knight to approach the enemy king and to help in the mating process. But how far advanced can the pawn be, so that White can still force a mate no matter where all the pieces are (the pawn must be securely blockaded by a knight, of course)? Troitzky answered this question as follows:

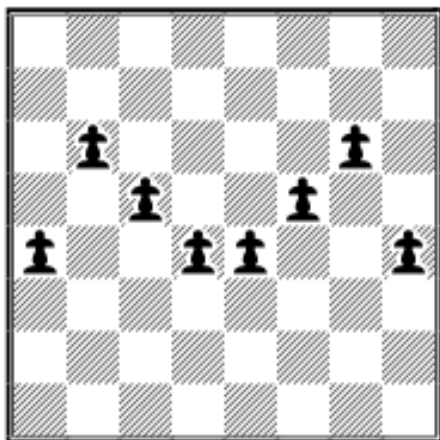
35.01 The Troitzky Line

COLUMNISTS

Endgame Corner

Karsten Müller



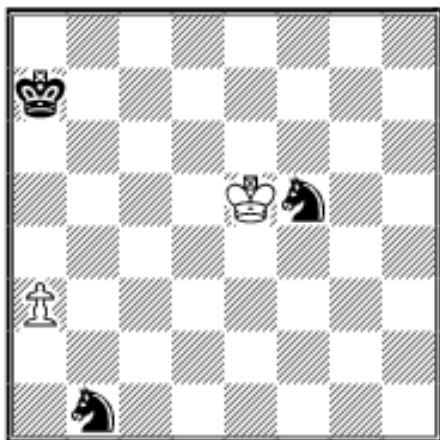


If the pawn is securely blockaded by a white knight no further down than the line then Black loses, no matter where the kings are. If the pawn has advanced beyond the line, there is usually a drawing and a losing zone for the defending king, which were also analysed by Troitzky. But there is one caveat: This rule does not take the 50-move-rule into account. So

over the board you may even with optimal play not be able to win some of the won positions, e.g., many positions with Black's pawn on d4 are not won with respect to the 50-move rule like $wKh8, Nd3, c7; bKg6, Pd4$ with Black to move is won in 82 moves. It would be interesting to find a "second Troitzky line", which takes the 50-move-rule into account. I guess that all the pawns should be one square farther back in order to always be able to win with respect to the 50-move-rule.

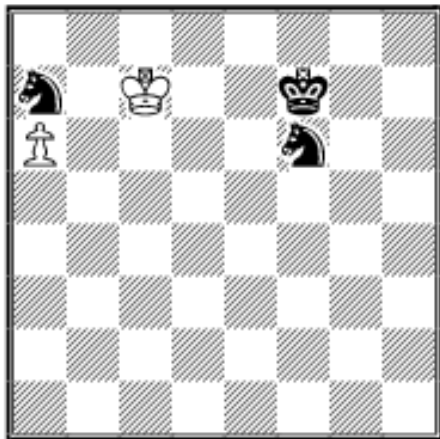
By the way: the longest win in the ending $K+2N$ vs $K+P$ lasts an amazing number of 115 moves!

35.02 Longest Win



Black starts with **1...Ne7!** and mates in 115 moves!

Before we enter the real jungle, I want to deal with two important techniques. The first is old and famous:



35.03 Stamma's Mate

E.Malmstig (2270) - K.Kiik (2438)
SoLett op Skelleftea 1999

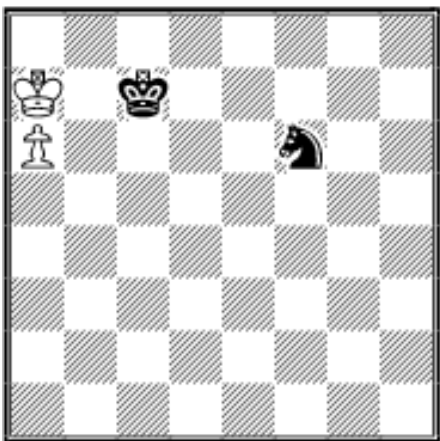
Unfortunaley Black ignored the golden moment, when Caissa was smiling at him:

85...Nd5+?

The a7 knight can be sacrificed: 85...Ke7 86.Kb6 Kd6!

A) 87.Ka5 Kc5! 88.Ka4 Kc4! 89.Ka3 Kc3 90.Ka2 Kc2 91.Ka3 Nd5! 92.Ka4 (92.Ka2?! Nb5 93.a7 Ndc3+ 94.Ka1 Nd4 95.a8Q Nb3#) 92...Kb2 93.Ka5 Kc3 94.Ka4 Nc7 95.Ka3 Ncb5+ 96.Ka2 Kc2 97.Ka1 Na3 98.Ka2 Nc4 99.Ka1 Kb3 100.Kb1 Nb2 101.Kc1 Kc3 102.Kb1 Nd3 103.Ka2 Kb4 104.Kb1 Kb3 105.Ka1 Kc2 106.Ka2 Nb5 107.a7 Nb4+ 108.Ka1 Nd4 109.a8Q Nb3#

B) 87.Kxa7 Kc7!



And now Black can deliver Stamma's famous mate: 88.Ka8 Nd5 89.Ka7 (89.a7?! Nb6#) 89...Ne7 90.Ka8 Nc8 forcing White to nail his own coffin 91.a7 Nb6#

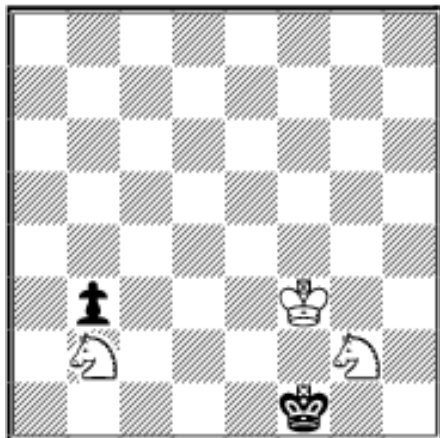
86.Kb7 Nb5 87.a7 1/2-1/2

Stamma's mate is the main reason why the rook's pawn can be so far advanced in the Troitzky line. In 35.03 the pawn has advanced one square farther than the line (in the following White's pawn on a6 is firmly blockaded by a black knight on a7), so a drawing zone for the defending king must exist. It is around the safe corner h1: c5-f5-g4-h3-h1-e1-d2-c3-c5. If Black's king is inside the zone then the postion is always drawn. If Black's king is

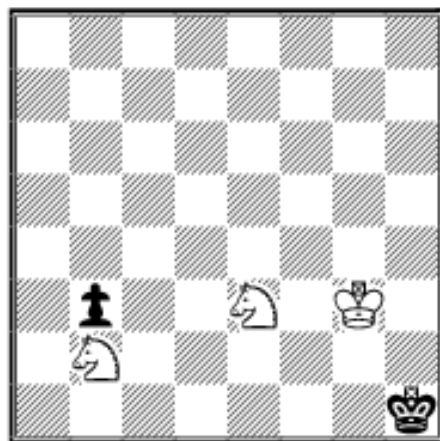
caught near the h8-corner then White has to force it into the a1- or a8-corner to give mate.

The second method is a typical way to imprison the defending king. The attacker has to be very careful here, as the knight can't lose a tempo. So White to move would only draw the following position:

35.04 After Troitzky



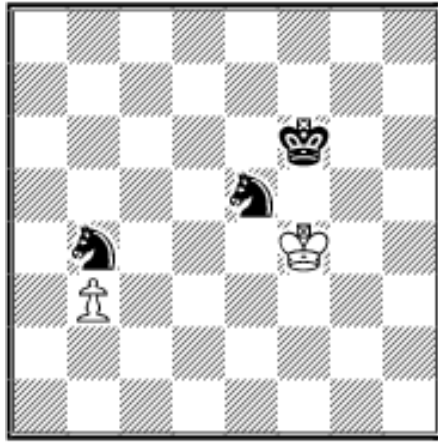
1...Kg1 2.Ne3! the first step to imprison Black's king on g1 and h1
2...Kh1 3.Kg4! the king has to lose a tempo (3.Kg3?! Kg1 would leave White "on the wrong foot" (this term was coined by Nunn).) **3...Kh2 4.Kh4 Kh1 5.Kh3!** now White is on the "right foot" **5...Kg1 6.Kg3 Kh1**



And finally the time has come to release the blockading knight from its duty **7.Nd3 b2 8.Nf2+ Kg1 9.Nh3+ Kh1 10.Ng4** forcing the damned pawn to seal Black's fate **10...b1Q 11.Ngf2#**

The Knight's inability to lose a tempo makes this endings very tricky. No less than 3,124 reciprocal zugzwang positions exist according to John Nunn.

The next example shows a typical win, when the pawn is blockaded on or below the Troitzky line:



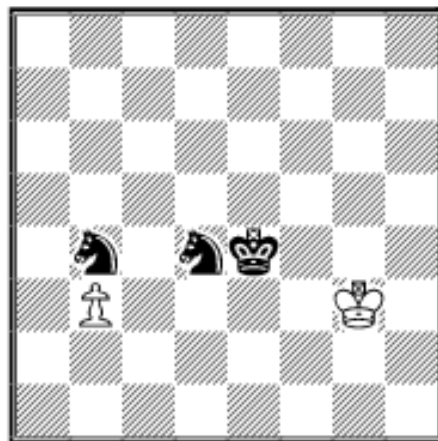
35.05 M. Vaculik (2150) - M. Vokac (2490) Ceske Budejovice open 1999

Black's aims are as follows: force White near the first rank and imprison it there. Then it is possible to mate White in the h1- or the a1-corner. To reach the first aim White has to act very precisely:

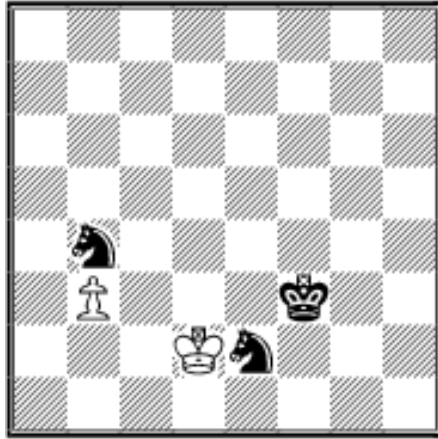
46...Ned3+ 47.Ke4 Ke6 48.Kd4 Kf5 49.Ke3

49.Kc4 loses as well, e.g. 49...Ke4 50.Kb5 Kd5 51.Kb6 Ne5 52.Kb5 Nec6 53.Kb6 Nd4 54.Kc7 Ke6 55.Kd8 Nb5 56.Kc8 Ke7 57.Kb7 Kd6 58.Kc8 Nd4 59.Kd8 Ndc6+ 60.Ke8 Ne5 61.Kf8 Ke6 62.Kg7 Ke7 63.Kh6 Kf6 64.Kh5 Kf5 65.Kh4 Nf3+ 66.Kg3 Ng5 67.Kh4 Ne4 68.Kh3 Kg5 and we have reached the game at the 66th move.

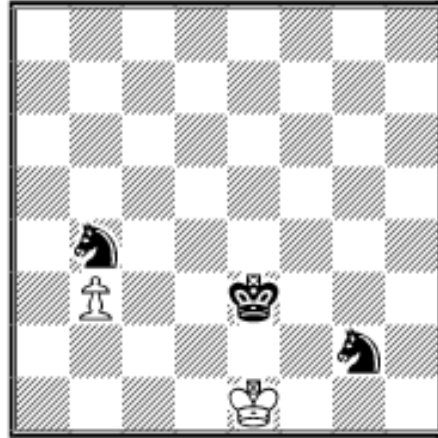
49...Ke5 50.Kf3 Nf4 51.Ke3 Nfd5+ 52.Kf3 Kf5 53.Kg3 Nf6 54.Kf3 Ng4 55.Ke2 Ke4 56.Kd2 Kd4 57.Ke2 Ne5 58.Kd2 Nf3+ 59.Ke2 Ke4 60.Kf2 Nd4 61.Kg3



61...Kf5! White's king shall not escape in the direction of the north east corner. **62.Kf2 Kf4 63.Kg2 Nf5 64.Kf2 Ng3 65.Kg2 Ne4 66.Kh3 Kg5 67.Kg2 Kg4 68.Kf1 Kf3 69.Ke1 Ng3 70.Kd2 Ne2**



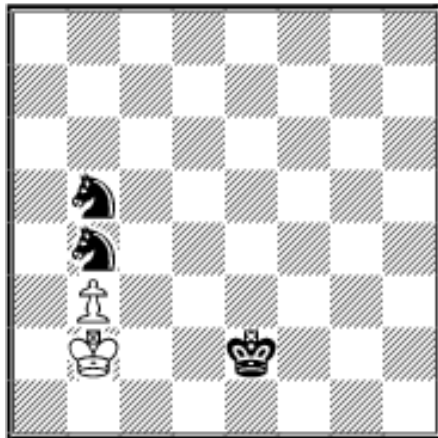
Now White's king is firmly caught near the right edge. Note that Black's blocking knight completes the barrier! **71.Ke1 Ke3 72.Kf1 Nf4!** Black starts the typical maneuver to imprison White's king **73.Ke1 Ng2+**



White can now only choose in which corner he wants to perish **74.Kd1**

74.Kf1 loses as follows (compare 35.04): 74...Kf3 75.Kg1 Ne3 76.Kh2 Kg4 77.Kh1 Kg3 78.Kg1 Nd3 79.b4 Nf2 80.b5 Nh3+ 81.Kh1 Ng4 82.b6 Ngf2#

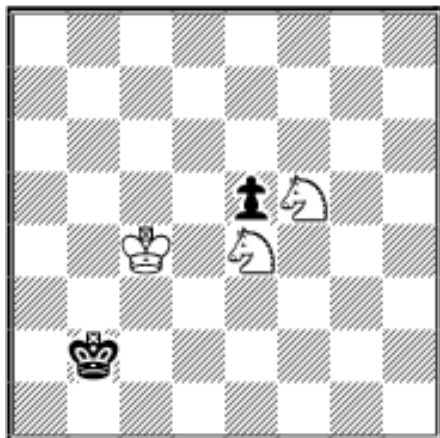
74...Kd3 75.Kc1 Ne3 76.Kb2 Nec2 77.Kc1 Ke2 78.Kb1 Na3+ 79.Kb2 Nb5



A typical set up of the knights. White's king can't break through their barrier **80.Kc1 Ke1 81.Kb1 Kd2 82.Kb2 Nd3+ 83.Ka2 Kc2** and White resigned due to **84.b4 Nc1+ 85.Ka1 Nd4 86.b5 Ndb3#**

Superb technique by Marek Vokac!

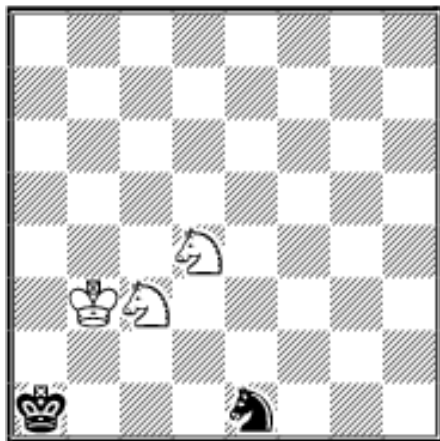
I want to end this part of my discussion with a nice underpromotion to a knight. Next month I will deal with very complex positions and more examples of drawing zones.



**35.06 M.Pervushov (2158) -
V.Yanvarev RUS-ch U14 Toljatti
2000**

**94.Ne3 Ka3 95.Nc5 Kb2 96.Kb4 e4
97.Na4+ Kc1 98.Kc3 Kb1 99.Nb2
Ka2 100.Nbc4 Kb1 101.Kd2 Ka2
102.Kc2 Ka1 103.Nd6 Ka2 104.Nb5
Ka1 105.Nf5 e3 106.Nc3 e2 107.Nd4
e1N+ (107...e1Q 108.Nb3#) 108.Kb3**

1-0



And Black is in fatal zugzwang. A very good performance by White! Does every Russian schoolboy know how to win this endgame?

Sources:

A. Troitzky, *Collection of Chess Studies*, 1937

Richard Forster, Late Knight column 24, www.chesscafe.com, April 2000, *Late Knights' Tango: The Troitzky Endgame*

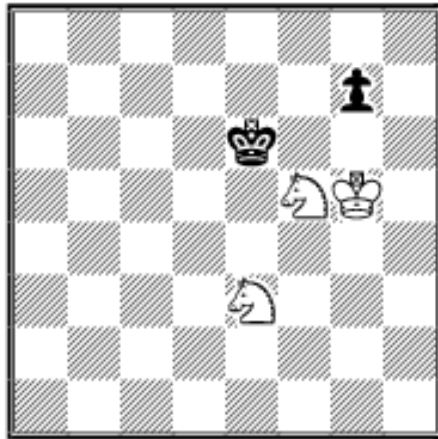
Balashov, Prandstetter, *Basic Endgames*, Prague Chess Agency 1992, p.55-65

Cheron, *Lehr- und Handbuch der Endspiele*, Band 2, 2nd edition, Verlag Das Schach Archiv 1964, pp.220–250

Speelman, Tisdall, Wade, *Batsford Chess Endings*, Batsford 1993, pp.112–115

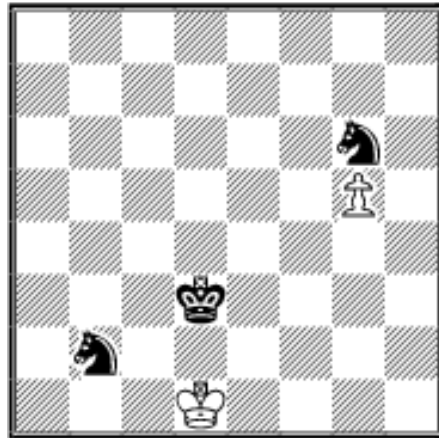
John Nunn, *Secrets of Minor Piece Endings*, Batsford 1995

Exercises (Solutions next month)



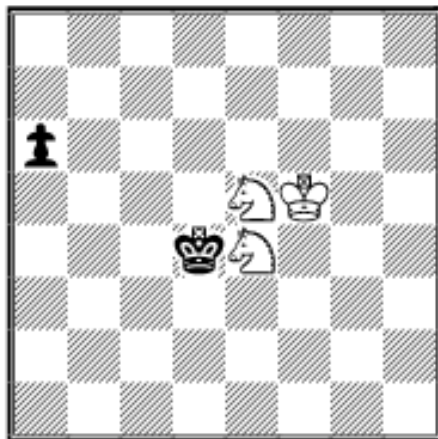
E35.01 C.O'Shaughnessy (2195) - N.Frost (2109) BCF-chT2 0001 (4NCL) England 2000

How to blockade Black's pawn to prevent it from crossing Troitzky's demarcation line? (White is to move)



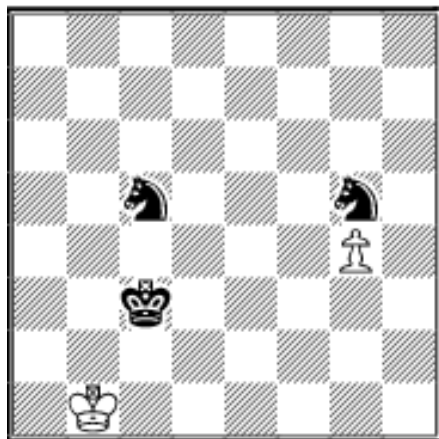
E35.02 S.Stanek - P.Skacelik (2240) Duras BVK op-A Brno 2001

White's king has two options, but only one saves it...



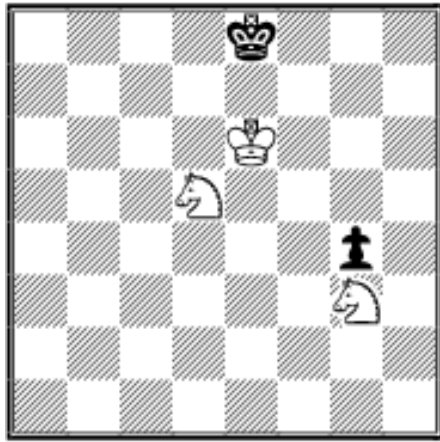
E35.03 A.Gual Pascual (2400) - A.van Benthem (2284) Hostafrancs op 3rd Barcelona 2001

Is Black doomed or is there a saving move for him? What happens, if Black's king is on e3 instead of d4?



E35.04 A.Tzermiadianos (2460) - H.Banikas (2521) GRE-ch51 Athens 2001

Is there an escape for White into the drawing zone?

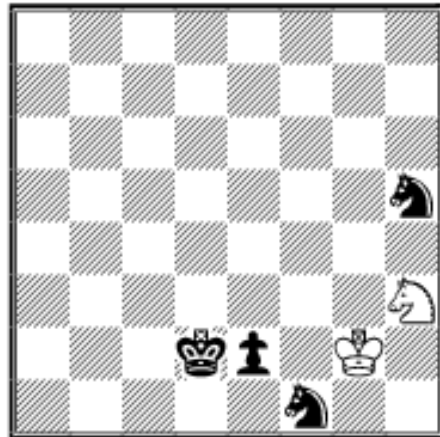


**E35.05 A.Elfer (2239) -
A.Shchegolev Suetin mem Tula
2002**

Black's king has two options
available...

Solution to last month exercise

**E34.01 A.Herbstmann and L.Kubbel 1st Price Troitzky
Tourney 1937**



1.Ng1 Ne3+

1...e1Q 2.Nf3+=; 1...Nf4+ 2.Kh1 e1N
3.Nf3+ Nxf3 stalemate; 1...e1N+
2.Kxf1=

2.Kh3

2.Kh2? e1N! and the three knights
win against White's knight. Note that

the 50-move rule has a strong influence on this endgame, but in studies there is no 50-move rule. There a win is a win no matter how long it lasts until a pawn moves or something is exchanged.

2...Nf4+ (2...e1N 3.Nf3+ Nxf3 stalemate) **3.Kh2** (3.Kh4?
e1Q+-+) **3...Ng4+** (3...e1N 4.Nf3+ Nxf3+ 5.Kg3=) **4.Kh1 Nf2+**

4...e1N 5.Nf3+ Nxf3 stalemate; 4...e1Q stalemate

5.Kh2 e1N 6.Nf3+ Nxf3+ 7.Kg3 Ke3 stalemate. This is one of
my favourite studies. A real masterpiece!

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