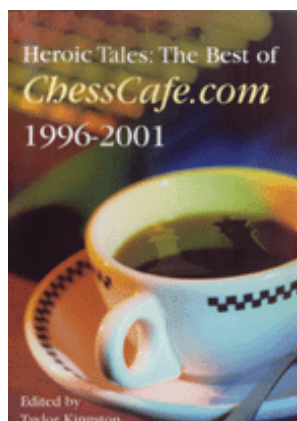




BOOK
REVIEWS

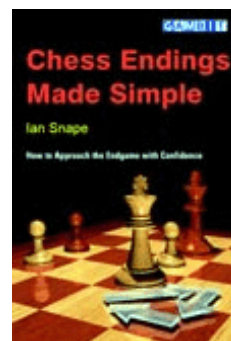


Simple Is Good

Ted McHugh

Chess Endings Made Simple by Ian Snape, 2003 Gambit, Figurine Algebraic Notation, Softcover, 144pp., \$19.95.

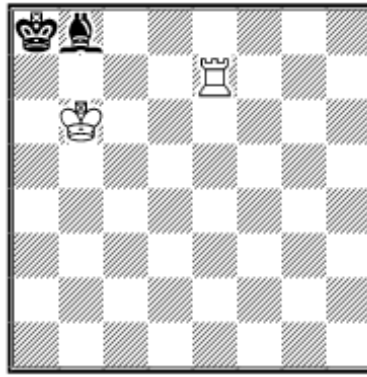
I must confess that if I had not agreed to review Ian Snape's *Chess Endings Made Simple*, I never would have read it. I was not judging the book by its cover, which is actually rather snazzy, but perhaps instead by its author. Who is Ian Snape, I wondered, and how can he possibly explain endgame theory in only 84 pages? (The book is actually 144 pages long, but 50 pages are devoted to exercises and answers aimed at reinforcing the theory section, and 10 pages contain the introduction, table of contents, player index and the like.)



The back cover of the book revealed: "Ian Snape enjoyed considerable success in junior chess before concentrating on a career in banking, but has returned to the game in the last decade. In correspondence chess he has qualified as an ICCF International Master and registered a grandmaster norm. Over the board, he has played in the British Championship on three occasions and competes regularly in league chess and other events." According to ChessBase, Snape is 51 years old.

Reading the book revealed that my snap judgment was incorrect, as in my opinion Snape on the whole did an outstanding job in identifying the most important endgame principles (note that unlike Gambit's *Fundamental Chess Endings*, this is not an endgame encyclopedia) and explaining them in a comprehensible manner.

The theory section begins with pawnless endgames. Snape covers: mating with a bishop and knight; queen versus rook; rook and bishop versus rook; rook versus bishop; and rook versus knight. Snape's coverage of rook versus bishop endings is excellent, pointing out the principal defensive technique (defending king, when driven to edge of the board, heads for the corner of the opposite color of his bishop) and practical pitfalls the defender must watch out for.



Gonda-Paci
Budapest 2001

Play continued: 93...Bd6?? 94 Ra7+ Kb8 95 Rd7 1-0

Any other sensible placement of the bishop on the diagonal would have enabled Black to respond to a rook attack with a check. It is therefore worth remembering in this type of position that the bishop needs to be able to respond to a rook attack by checking the opposing king. For this reason, it makes sense to move the bishop well away from the opposing king.

Rook versus knight was well covered too (defender should keep the knight near his king) as was queen versus rook. My only quibbles with this section are: 1) the coverage of the bishop and knight mate does not show how to corral the king if it attempts to make a break from the edge of the board instead of being dragged across the edge to the correct corner (color of the bishop); and 2) the coverage of rook and bishop versus rook does not mention two key defensive ideas-- the 2nd rank defense and the Cochrane defense.

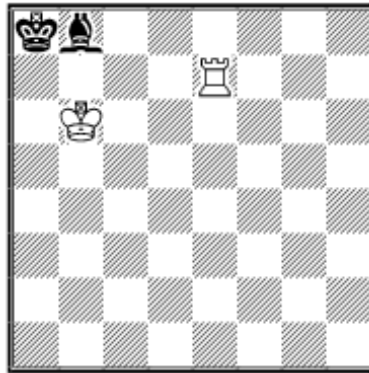
King and pawn endings are covered next. This section is relatively short, but Snape provides several useful guidelines and covers key concepts such as triangulation (see also the cover of the book), pawn sacrifices on the 5th rank to seize the opposition, the decisive value of a king on sixth rank ahead its pawn, and the value of protected/outside passed pawns.

Snape points out that rook and pawn endings occur five times more frequently than king and pawn endings and his coverage of rook and pawn endings is accordingly more lengthy. The Lucena position, the Philidor position, the Vancura position and the Saavedra study are all covered, as are the rook versus pawn concepts of shouldering and cutting the defending king off from the fourth rank so that his pawn falls when it advances to the sixth rank. The best testament to the quality of Snape's rook and pawn coverage is that all of the major ideas covered in Edmar Mednis' classic *Practical Rook Endings* are covered here as well (with the exception of passive defense for battling knight and rook pawns).

Snape's coverage of knight endings is brief but good and includes thorough coverage of the knight stopping a pawn without assistance from its king. Even better in my opinion is Snape's coverage of bishop endings and the attendant diagonal zugzwangs and intercepts. For example:

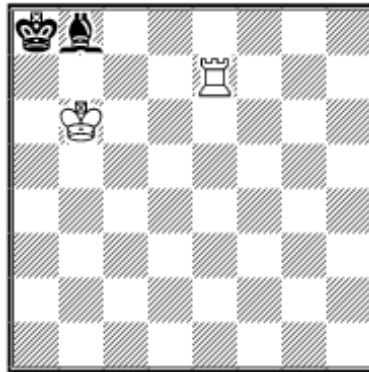
Diagonal Zugzwangs

The attacking side has a powerful technique which it can use in situations where the defending king has not succeeded in getting in front of the pawn. In this case, the bishop is left in sole charge of the queening square and can be embarrassed if one of the diagonals to that square is three squares or less in length.



The black bishop must remain on either the a3-h8 diagonal or the h6-f8 diagonal to cover f8, and this enables White to win: 1 f7 Be7 2 Bg7 Bd6 3 Bf8. White first drives the bishop off the longer diagonal. 3...Bf4 4 Bc5 Bh6 5 Bd4. With this move White puts Black in zugzwang, and wins. The bishop cannot move as it must cover f8. Moving the king allows White to play Bg7.

There is also an interesting section on “frustrating draws.” Speaking of frustrating draws, the coverage of opposite colored bishop endings is good too: **DIAGRAM**



Krasowski-Krueger
Rowy seniors Wch 2000

The king blockade the f-pawn, the bishop patrols the b1-h7 diagonal and there is no way in for White.

The final two chapters of the theory section deal with bishop versus knight endings and queen endings and I thought both were well done.

On a general note, all of the examples used in the book are taken from contemporary play. Snape included several positions from his own games which I liked as they were on point, well played, and allow the reader to learn more about Snape the chessplayer (besides, its his book). I believe this

book is suitable for players of all standards as it can be used either to learn the basics or to reinforce knowledge a reader already has (or a bit of both). In sum, *Chess Endings Made Simple* was a pleasure to read and I strongly recommend purchasing it. It is an excellent value at \$19.95.

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by Ian Snape

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