



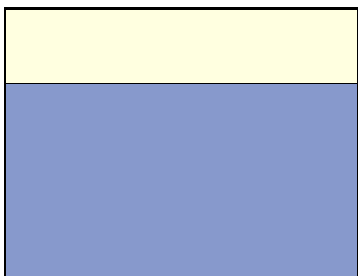
SKITTLES ROOM

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German grandmaster and ChessCafe.com columnist Karsten Müller has established established himself as one of the leading endgame authorities of the day. Witness his two highly acclaimed, books, *Secrets of Pawn Endings* and *Fundamental Chess Endings* (both co-authored with IM Frank Lamprecht). His electronic book, in CCR format, on the Kramnik-Kasparov match is one of the most popular downloads at ChessCafe.com.

Karsten recently turned his attention to one of Morphy's most spectacular games, played in 1858 against Henry Bird. We hope you enjoy his latest article...

The Riddle of Bird vs. Morphy

by Karsten Müller

The brilliant American player Paul Charles Morphy graced the world with many beautiful games. In 1858, as the entire chess world watched attentively, he traveled to Europe. None other than Howard Staunton wrote in the June 19, 1858 edition of the *Illustrated London News*: "A communication which has just reached us by the *Fulton*, from New York, conveys the gratifying intelligence that Mr. Paul Morphy has definitely settled to visit England and attend the meeting of the British Association at Birmingham..."



One of Morphy's most famous games was played in August 1858 in London against the British master Henry Bird. David Lawson, in his biography of Morphy, wrote of this game: "This is one of Morphy's brightest games.

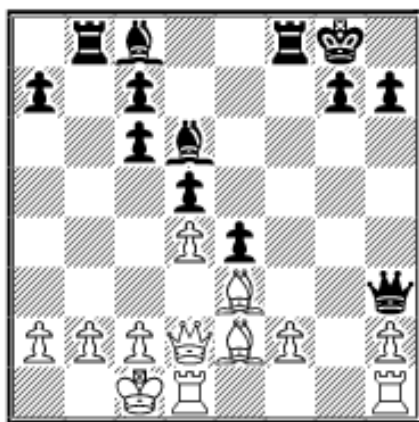
Steinitz gives it no rating, apparently because it was a casual game and also because Morphy plays dangerously more than once. Already with a won game, he makes a risky sacrifice just after Bird castles, the start of a combination that concludes with move [25...e3!], which Steinitz concedes to be 'A beautiful masterstroke,' in his *Modern Chess Instructor*." (*Paul Morphy*:

The Pride and Sorrow of Chess, 1976 David McKay Co., Inc., p. 345)

In this article I want to prove, that his combination against Bird was sound. I welcome analysis and other comments from readers. Please send them to info@chesscafe.com.

H.Bird - P.C.Morphy [C41] London 5th match game 1858

1.e4 e5 2.Nf3 d6 3.d4 f5 4.Nc3 fxe4 5.Nxe4 d5 6.Ng3 e4 7.Ne5 Nf6 8.Bg5 Bd6 9.Nh5 0-0 10.Qd2 Qe8 11.g4 Nxg4 12.Nxg4 Qxh5 13.Ne5 Nc6 14.Be2 Qh3 15.Nxc6 bxc6 16.Be3 Rb8 17.0-0-0



Instead of trying to convert his extra pawn, Morphy starts one of the most famous combinations in chess history. **17...Rxf2! 18.Bxf2 Qa3!!** this fantastic shot was Morphy's intention.

18...Ba3 can be answered with 19.Qe3! (19.c3? is wrong due to 19...Rxb2 20.Rde1 Rxa2+ 21.Kd1

Rxd2+ 22.Kxd2 Bg4--)

19.c3! The only serious try.

I 19.Qg5? Rxb2 20.Qd8+ Kf7 21.Bh5+ g6 22.Bxg6+ hxg6--

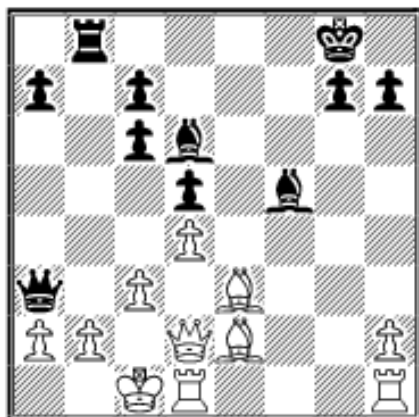
II 19.bxa3?? Bxa3#

19...Qxa2

19...e3

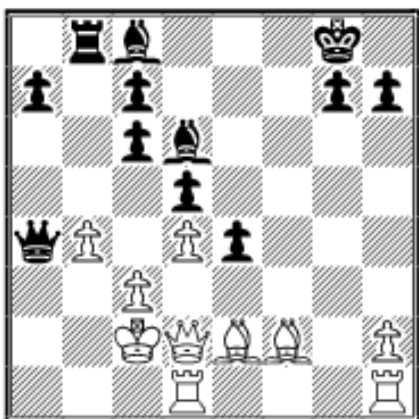
A) 20.bxa3? Bxa3+ 21.Kc2 Bf5+ 22.Qd3 (22.Bd3? Rb2+ 23.Kc1 Rxd2+ 24.Kb1 Bxd3+ 25.Ka1 Bb2#) 22...Rb2+ 23.Kc1 Rxe2+ 24.Kb1 Bxd3+ 25.Rxd3 exf2 26.Rf1 Bb2--

B) 20.Bxe3 Bf5



The point of the pawn sacrifice e4-e3. But White has 21.Qc2!! Qxa2 22.Bd3 Bxd3 23.Rxd3 Rxb2 24.Qxb2 Ba3 25.Qxa3 Qxa3+ 26.Kd1 Qb2 27.Rf1 Qxh2 28.Bf4 and White should not be worse.

20.b4 Qa1+ 21.Kc2 Qa4+



22.Kb2? Bird cracks under the pressure.

22.Kc1! is the critical try. Euwe and Nunn claim in *The Development of Chess Style* (Batsford 1997), that 22.Kc1 is sufficient for a draw.

A) 22...Bxb4? is answered by 23.cxb4 Rxb4 24.Qg5 Qa3+ 25.Kd2 Rb2+ 26.Ke1 Qc3+ 27.Rd2 Rb1+ 28.Bd1 Rxd1+ 29.Kxd1 Qa1+ 30.Kc2= (30.Ke2?! Ba6+ 31.Ke3? Qc3+ 32.Kf4 Qf3+ 33.Ke5 Qf8-+)

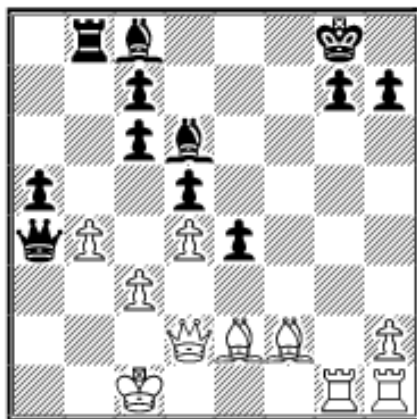
B) 22...Rxb4? 23.cxb4 Bxb4 24.Qc2 Qa1+ 25.Qb1 Qc3+ leads to a draw.

C) 22...Bf5 is interesting as well and I want to prove now that

D) 22...a5!/? wins:

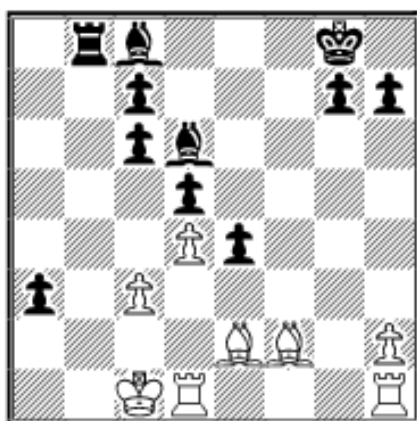
D1) 23.Rhg1 Bf5 24.Qg5 Bg6 25.Kd2 axb4 26.Rc1 (26.Ke1 bxc3 27.Rc1 c2 28.Bh5 Qb4+ 29.Kf1 Be7-+) 26...Qa2+ 27.Ke3 bxc3 28.Be1 Bb4 29.h4 Qb2-+

D2) 23.Rdg1



23...Bf5 (23...axb4? runs into the thunderbolt 24.Rxg7+!+-) 24.Qg5 (24.Be3 axb4 25.Qb2 b3 26.Kb1 Ba3 27.Qd2 Ra8-+; 24.Qh6 Bg6 25.Rxg6 hxg6 26.Qxg6 Qa1+ 27.Kd2 Bf4+ 28.Be3 Qb2+--+) 24...Bg6 25.Kd2 e3+ 26.Bxe3 Qc2+ 27.Ke1 Qxc3+ 28.Bd2 Qa1+ 29.Bc1 Rf8-+

D3) 23.Qc2 Qa3+ 24.Qb2 (24.Kd2 axb4 25.Ke1 bxc3--+) 24...axb4 25.Qxa3 (25.cxb4 Bxb4 26.Qxa3 Bxa3+ 27.Kd2 Rb2+ 28.Ke3 Rb3+ 29.Kd2 e3+ 30.Bxe3 Bb4+--+) 25...bxa3

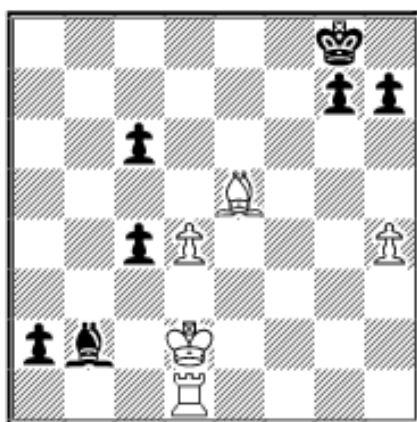


It looks unlikely, that Black can successfully continue his attack without queens, but I think he can:

D3a) 26.Bg3 Be7

D3a1) 27.h4 e3 28.Bxc7 (28.Rdf1 a2 29.Kc2 Ba3 30.c4 Rb2+ 31.Kd3 Rb1 32.Rxb1 Bf5+

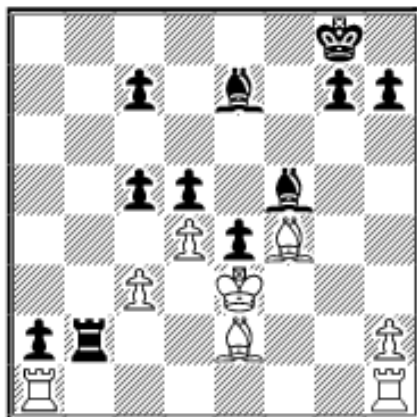
33.Kxe3 Bxb1-+; 28.Rhe1 Rb2 29.Bf1 Bf5-+) 28...Rb7 29.Be5 a2 (29...Bf5?! 30.Bd3 Bxd3 31.Rxd3 Bxh4 32.Rxe3 Bg5 33.Kd2 a2 34.Ra1 Rb2+ 35.Kd3 Bxe3 36.Kxe3 and it is not clear, if Black can win this endgame.) 30.Kc2 Ba3 31.c4 Rb2+ 32.Kd3 Bf5+ (After 32...dxc4+ 33.Kxe3 Rxe2+ 34.Kxe2 Bg4+ 35.Kd2 Bxd1 36.Rxd1 Bb2



White has 37.d5!! Bxe5 38.dxc6 Kf7 39.c7 Bxc7 40.Ra1 and it is not clear, if Black can win.) 33.Kxe3 Rb3+ 34.Kf4 Bb1 35.Rdg1 Rb7 36.Bxg7 a1Q 37.Be5+ Kf8 38.Bd3 Qc3 39.Bxb1 Rf7+ 40.Kg5 Be7+ 41.Kh5 Qf3+ 42.Kh6 Bb4-+

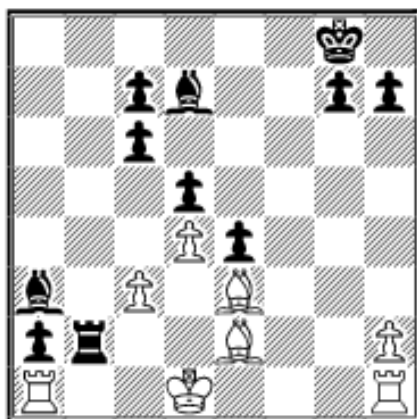
D3a2) 27.Bf4 Bf5 28.Kd2 a2

29.Ra1 (29.Ke3 Rb3 30.Ra1 Rxc3+ 31.Kd2 Ra3 with the plan c5 –+.) 29...Rb2+ 30.Ke3 (30.Kd1 e3 31.Bf3 Rf2–+) 30...c5



and Black's attack looks very dangerous, e.g., 31.h4 cxd4+ 32.cxd4 Bb4 33.Bxc7 Bd2+ 34.Kf2 e3+ 35.Kg3 Be4 36.Bf3 e2 37.Bxe4 dxe4–+

D3b) 26.Be3 26...a2 27.Kc2 Ba3 28.Ra1 Rb2+ 29.Kd1 Bd7



White seems to be in dire straits despite his extra rook 30.Rf1 (30.Rg1 c5 31.dxc5 Ba4+ 32.Ke1 Bb3–+) 30...c5 31.dxc5 Ba4+ 32.Ke1 Bb3 33.Bg4 this counterattack is very difficult to parry:

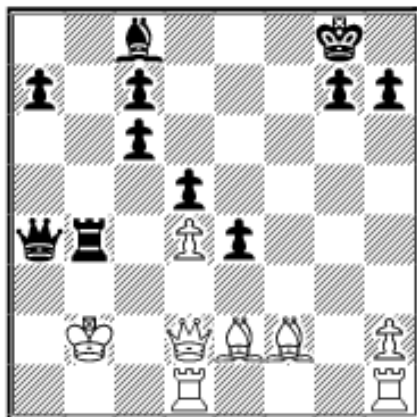
D3b1) 33...h6? 34.Be6+ Kh7 35.Bf5+ Kh8 36.Bd4 Rb1+

37.Kd2 Rxa1 38.Rxa1 Bb2 39.Rg1 Kg8 40.Rxg7+ Kf8 41.Rxc7=

D3b2) 33...h5? 34.Be6+ Kh7 35.Bf5+ Kh8 (35...g6 36.Be6 g5 37.Bd4=) 36.Bd4 Rb1+ 37.Kd2 Rxa1 38.Rxa1 Bb2 39.Rg1=

D3b3) 33...d4 34.Bxd4 Bc4 35.Rg1 g6 36.h3 (36.c6 Be7–+; 36.Kd1 Rxh2 37.Be5 Rb2 38.c6 e3 39.Bxc7 Be7–+) 36...Kf7 37.Kd1 (37.h4 h5 38.Bc8 e3 39.Kd1 Rd2+ 40.Ke1 Rc2 41.Bxe3 Re2+ 42.Kd1 Rxe3–+) 37...Ke7 38.c6 Kd6 39.Bd7 Bb3+ 40.Ke1 Rb1+ 41.Kd2 Rxa1 42.Rxa1 Bb2–+ and the resulting ending should be winning for Black.

22...Bxb4! 23.cxb4 Rxb4+



There is no defence: **24.Qxb4**
Qxb4+ 25.Kc2 e3! 26.Bxe3 Bf5+
27.Rd3 Qc4+ 28.Kd2 Qa2+
29.Kd1 Qb1+ 0-1

I am sure, that this position was analysed in many sources, so I am grateful, if readers find articles or books, where the combination is analysed or mistakes in my work.

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