



COLUMNISTS

*Endgame
Corner*

Karsten Müller

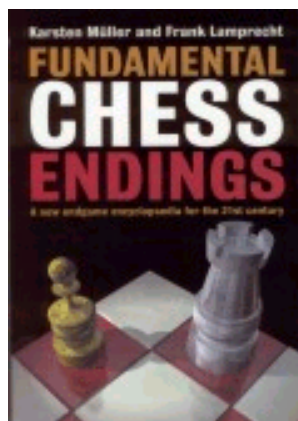
The Riddle of Bird vs. Morphy Revisted

At first I want to thank the many readers, who contributed valuable analysis or important sources (the thread 431 on the Bulletin Board was devoted to these reactions) to my article on Morphy's combination in The Skittles Room in August 2002 (see the [ChessCafe Archives](#)). In the end they supported my claim that Morphy's brilliant combination starting with 17...Rf8xf2! 18.Be3xf2 Qh3-a3!! was correct, but the reasoning was different from my original lines. So I decided to put the new ideas together in this article and publish it in Endgame Corner as the main part of the arguments is based on the resulting endgames. If readers know additional sources or analysis of this position or see improvements in the variations given here, they can send an e-mail to info@chesscafe.com.

23.01 *H.Bird - P.C.Morphy* [C41]

London 1858 5th match game

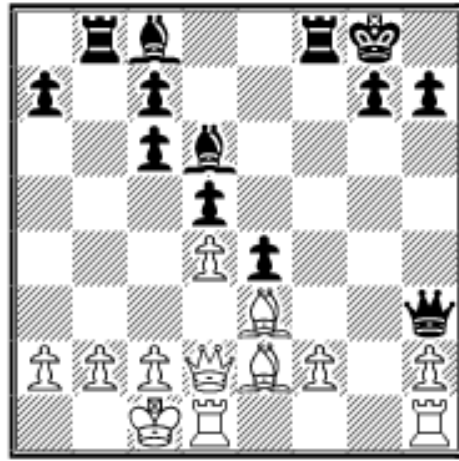
1.e4 e5 2.Nf3 d6 3.d4 f5 4.Nc3 fxe4 5.Nxe4 d5 6.Ng3 e4 7.Ne5 Nf6 8.Bg5 Bd6 9.Nh5 0-0 10.Qd2 Qe8 11.g4 Nxg4 12.Nxg4 Qxh5 13.Ne5 Nc6 14.Be2 Qh3 15.Nxc6 bxc6 16.Be3 Rb8 17.0-0-0



Order

[*Fundament Chess
Endings*](#)

by Karsten Müller &
Frank Lamprecht
The BCF Book of the
Year!

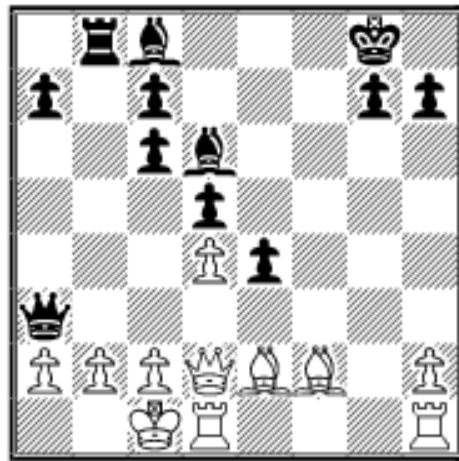


We should be grateful to Paul Charles Morphy that he didn't try to convert his extra pawn smoothly now, but tried to win by spectacular means.

17...Rxf2! "The rook sacrifice with which Morphy decided his match game with Bird made the rounds of the chess press."

(Neistadt in *Uncrowned*

Champions) **18.Bxf2 Qa3!!**



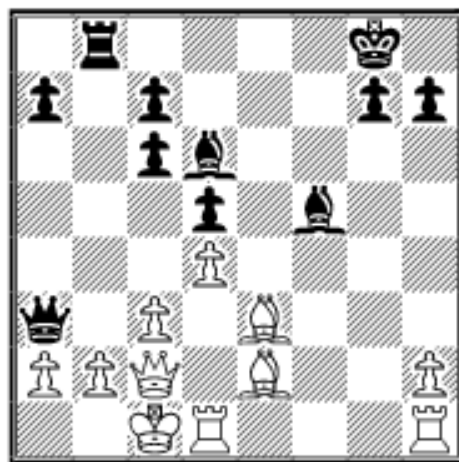
an amazing move from one edge of the board to another
19.c3! the only serious try.

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

II 19.bxa3?? Bxa3#

19...Qxa2

19...e3? is met by 20.Bxe3 Bf5 21.Qc2!!



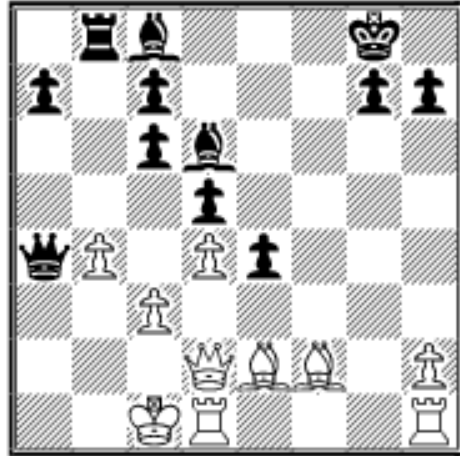
Dan Scoones pointed out (Bulletin Board item 431–10) that Yakov Neistadt credited the following analysis to Murey in his book *Uncrowned Champions*, which Dan Scoones translated from Russian.

21...Qxa2 22.Bd3 Bxd3

23.Rxd3 Ba3 24.bxa3 (or 24.Qb1 Bxb2+ 25.Kc2 Qa4+ 26.Kd2 Bxc3+ 27.Rxc3 Rxb1 28.Rxb1 Qa2+ 29.Kc1)

24...Qa1+ 25.Kd2 Qxh1 26.c4 Qxh2+ 27.Kc3 “In both variations Black ends up losing material.” (Neistadt)

20.b4 Qa1+ 21.Kc2 Qa4+ 22.Kb2? Bird cracks under the pressure. 22.Kc1!



is the critical try. Many sources claim that it is sufficient for a draw, e.g..

Euwe and Nunn in *The Development of Chess Style* (p.38, Batsford 1997):

“22.Kc1!...22...Qa1+ leads to perpetual check. This is the best line, but it means that with his

pretty combination Black has thrown away the win.”

Neistadt in *Uncrowned Champions*: “After 22.Kc1 Morphy would have had nothing better than satisfying himself with perpetual check.”

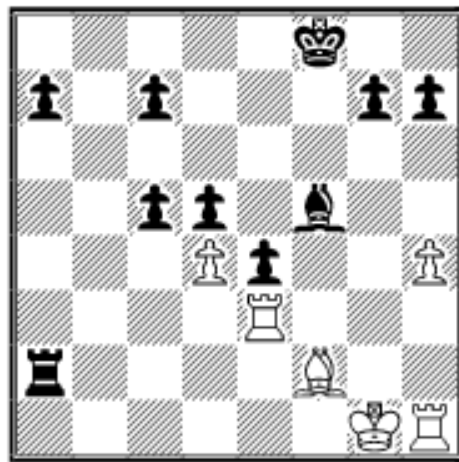
Fred Reinfeld and Andrew Soltis in their book *Morphy Chess Masterpieces* (First Collier Books Edition 1974, in descriptive notation, which has been converted to algebraic): “Legend has it that when an onlooker found that 22 Kc1! draws, no one would speak to him for a week. The point of 22 Kc1! is that 22...Bxb4? 23 cxb4 Rxb4 is not check so that White might escape with 24 Qg5! Qa3+ 25 Kd2 Rb2+ 26 Ke1 Rxe2+ 27 Kxe2 Qf3+ 28 Ke1 Qxh1+ 29 Qg1! and wins. So Black would have to take a perpetual check with 22...Qa1+.” (quoted from Claudio Correa de Almeida's Bulletin Board item 431–7) and last not least

Anatoly Karpov in his book *Miniatures from the World Champions* (Collier Books 1985) “Karpov...acknowledges contributions by ‘Soviet masters Gik and Rozenberg’...”

(Macon Shibut, Bulletin Board item 431–3).

Now I come to the analysis of 22.Kc1!:

A) The variation 22...Bxb4? is more difficult than I assumed in my Skittles Room article: 23.cxb4 Rxb4 24.Qg5 Qa3+ 25.Kd2 Rb2+ 26.Ke1 Qc3+ (26...Rxe2+?! 27.Kxe2 Qf3+ 28.Ke1 Qxh1+ 29.Qg1 Qf3 30.Qg3 (Neistadt in *Uncrowned Champions*) and White retains his material advantage.) 27.Kf1 (I only gave 27.Rd2? Rb1+ 28.Bd1 Rxd1+ 29.Kxd1 Qa1+ 30.Kc2=) 27...Bh3+ (27...Qh3+? 28.Qg2 and White is better.) 28.Kg1 Rxe2 29.Qh5 Qf3 30.Qe8+ Qf8 31.Qxf8+ Kxf8 32.Re1 Ra2 33.Re3 Bf5 34.h4 c5



35.Rc3 or 35.Re1 and White is probably better, but matters are still quite complicated. I guess that this variation is already known.

B) 22...Rxb4?! 23.cxb4 (23.Qg5? Rb2–+) 23...Bxb4 24.Qc2 Qa1+ 25.Qb1 Qc3+ leads to a draw.

C) 22...Bf5?! is interesting as well. Cyrille Viossat and Jean Jabbour tried to prove in a letter to *New in Chess Magazine* No.2/1992 (page 5f) that Black wins now. But there is a mistake in their line B). After 23.Qe3 Qa2 B1) 24.Rhg1 Bxb4 White can reach a draw with 25.cxb4 Rxb4 26.Rxg7+! . There is of course much more analysis of 22...Bf5, but I think that it is not sufficient to win.

François Le Guen suggested analysing the immediate 22...e3?, but this has the big disadvantage that White's king has a clear escape route, after 23.Qxe3, via d2–e1, e.g., 23...a5 24.Kd2 axb4 25.Ra1 Qb3 26.Rhb1 bxc3+ 27.Qxc3 Bf4+ 28.Be3 Qxc3+ 29.Kxc3 Rxb1 30.Rxb1 Bxe3 31.Rb8 +- or

23...Bf5 24.Kd2 Be4 25.Rhg1 Rxb4 26.Bg3 +- as White's king finds a safe shelter via e1-f2 or 23...Qa2 24.Qe8+ Bf8 25.Bd3 +-.

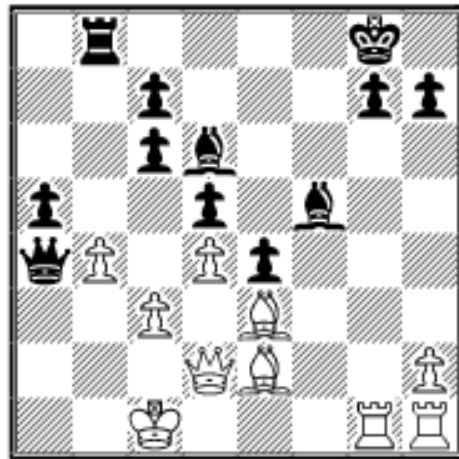
Now to my main line:

D) 22...a5! seems to win in the long run 23.Qc2 (see line D3)

White's alternatives are weaker:

D1) 23.Rhg1 Bf5 24.Qg5 (24.Be3 Bf4—+) 24...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 Bf5 (23...axb4? runs into the bolt from the blue 24.Rxg7+! +-) 24.Be3 (24.Qg5 Bg6 25.Kd2 e3+ 26.Bxe3 Qc2+ 27.Ke1 Qxc3+ 28.Bd2 Qa1+ 29.Bc1 Rf8—+; 24.Qh6 Bg6 25.Rxg6 hxg6 26.Qxg6 Qa1+ 27.Kd2 Bf4+ 28.Be3 Qb2+—+)

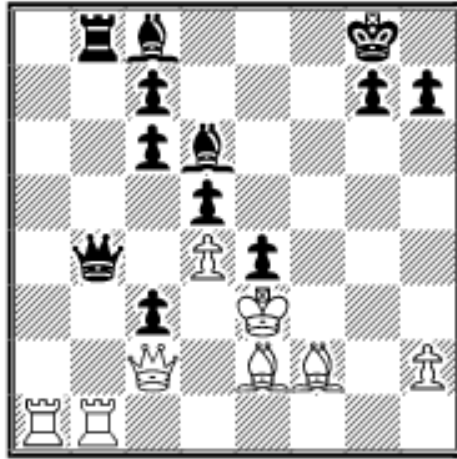


and now 24...Bf4!! is the right move, which I missed in my Skittles Room article (Dennis Breuker had found a flaw in my other line, so I had to look at it again) 25.Bxf4 Qa1+ 26.Kc2 e3+ 27.Qd3 Qa2+—+

D3) 23.Qc2 Qa3+

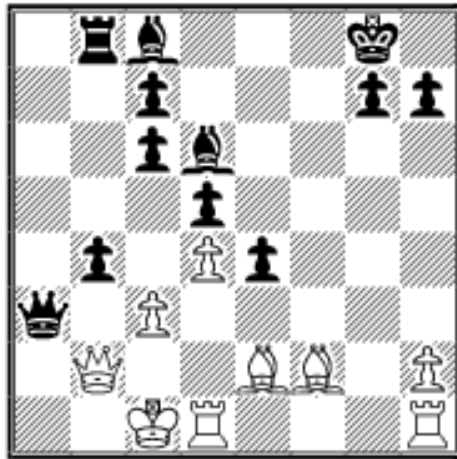
D3a) After 24.Kd2 Karpov gives the very beautiful:

24...axb4 25.Ra1 (25.Ke1 bxc3—+) 25...bxc3+ 26.Ke3 Qb4 (26...Bf4+ 27.Kxf4 Qd6+ 28.Ke3 Qh6# is even more precise.) 27.Rhb1?



27...Bf4+ 28.Kxf4 Qd6+
29.Ke3 Qh6#

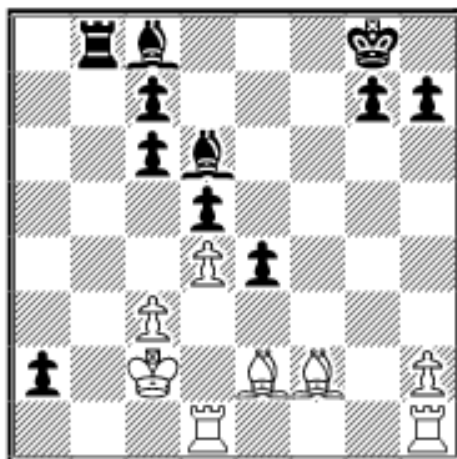
D3b) 24.Qb2 axb4



Dennis Breuker drew my attention to the king moves Kc2 and Kb1, which were not mentioned in my previous article. It seems that 25.Kb1 and 25.Qxa3 are most critical now.

D3b1) 25.cxb4? Bxb4 26.Qxa3 Bxa3+ 27.Kd2 Rb2+ 28.Ke3 Rb3+ 29.Kd2 e3+ 30.Bxe3 Bb4+—+

D3b2) 25.Kc2? b3+ 26.Kb1 (26.Kc1 Qa2 27.Qxa2 bxa2 28.Kc2



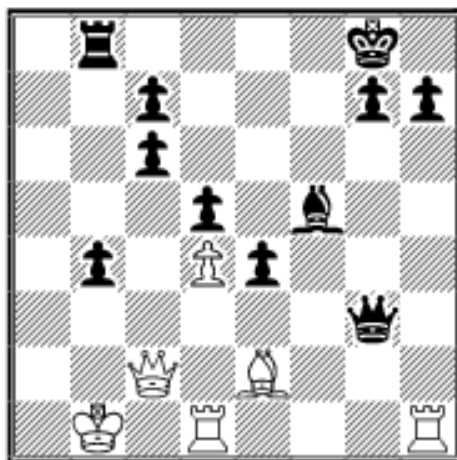
and now Dennis Breuker gives “28...e3! 29.Bxe3 Ba3 30.Ra1 Bf5+ 31.Kd2 Rb2+ 32.Ke1 Rb1+ 33.Kd2 Rxh1 34.Rxh1 Bb1 35.Bd3 a1Q 36.Bxb1 and Black must be winning.”)

26...Qa4 threatening a combination of Ba3,b2,Bf5,e3 and Rb3xc3 or Qa5xc3, e.g.

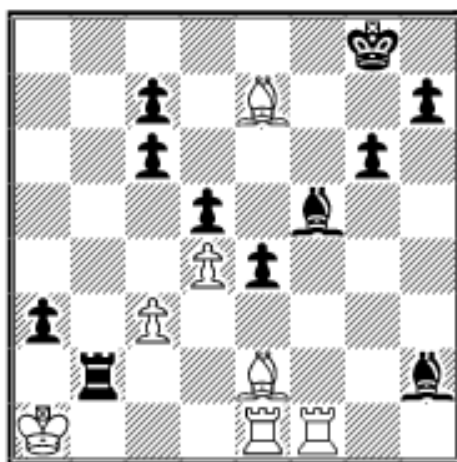
27.Bg3 Ba3 28.Qa1 Bf5 29.Rhf1 Bg6 30.Rg1 b2 31.Qa2 e3+ 32.Bd3 Rb3—+

D3b3) 25.Kb1!? Bf5 26.Qxa3 (26.Bg3 Qxc3 27.Qc2 Bxg3

28.hxg3 Qxg3

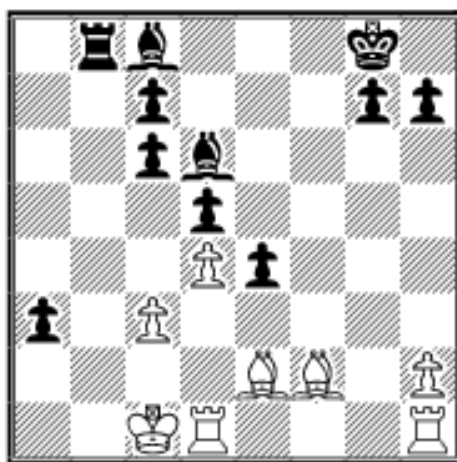


and Black should be winning in the long run.) 26...bxa3+ 27.Ka1 Rb2 28.Rde1 Bf4 29.Rhf1 (29.Bg3 Bd2 30.Rb1 Bxc3 31.Rxb2 axb2+ 32.Ka2 Bxd4—) 29...Bxh2 30.Bh4 g6 31.Be7



31...Bg3 or 31...Bd6 when Black is much better as his horde of pawns will sooner or later advance.

D3b4) 25.Qxa3 bxa3



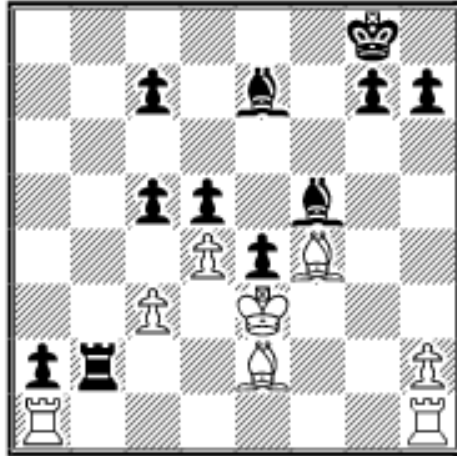
Anatoly Karpov has made a deep investigation of the resulting endgame and revealed many hidden White resources. But I disagree with his ultimate conclusion that White can hold the draw.

D3b41) After 26.Bg3 the important lines I gave in my previous article are: 26...Be7

D3b411) 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 30.Kc2 Ba3 31.c4 Rb2+ 32.Kd3 Bf5+ 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—+

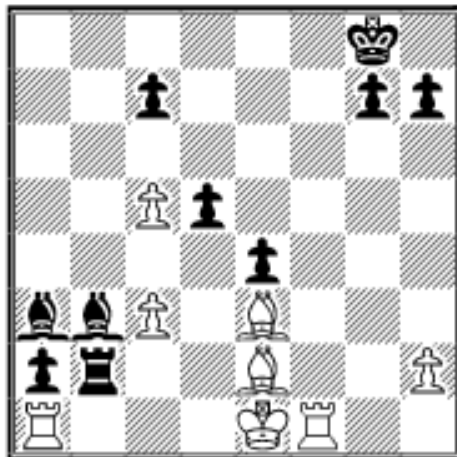
D3b412) 27.Bf4 Bf5 28.Kd2 a2 29.Ra1 (29.Ke3 Rb3 30.Ra1 Rxc3+ 31.Kd2 Ra3 with the plan c5 —+) 29...Rb2+ 30.Ke3 (30.Kd1 e3 31.Bf3 Rf2—+) 30...c5



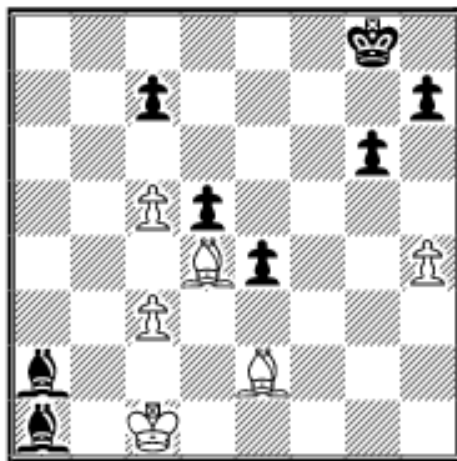
and Black's attack looks very dangerous, e.g., 31.h4 cxd4+ 32.cxd4 Bb4 33.Bxc7 Bd2+ 34.Kf2 e3+ 35.Kg3 Be4 36.Bf3 e2 37.Bxe4 dxe4—+

D3b42) 26.Be3

D3b421) My main argument last time was refuted by a beautiful study like idea by **Karpov**, who used a slightly different move order: 26...a2 27.Kc2 Ba3 28.Ra1 Rb2+ 29.Kd1 Bd7 30.Rf1 c5 31.dxc5 Ba4+ 32.Ke1 Bb3

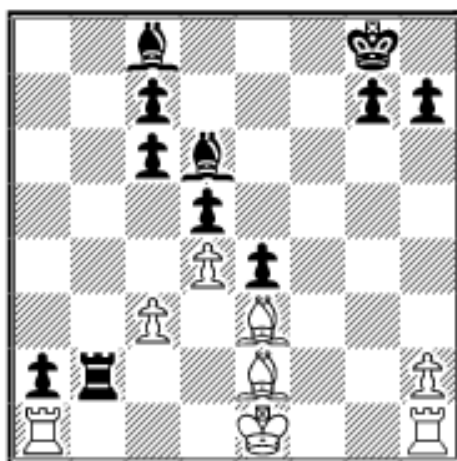


33.Bd4! Rb1+ 34.Kd2 Rxa1 35.Rxa1 Bb2 36.Rg1 (36.Rf1!?) 36...g6 37.h4 a1Q 38.Rxa1 Bxa1 39.Kc1 Ba2



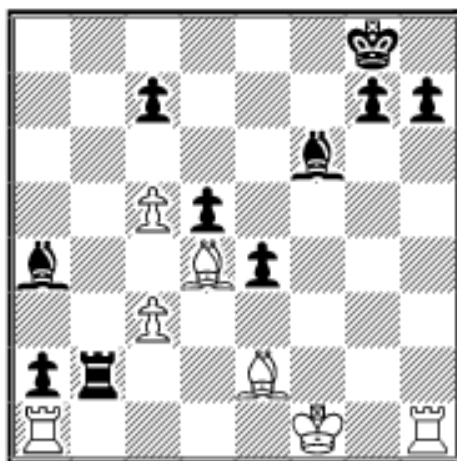
“Both sides are guaranteed a draw,” Karpov judges. “Black is two pawns up, but his bishops are in seclusion.” (Macon Shibut quoting Karpov).

D3b422) 26...Rb3 27.Kd2 Rb2+ 28.Ke1 a2 29.Ra1 (One possible line after 29.Kf2 is 29...Bf5 30.h4 Be7 31.h5 Kf7—+)



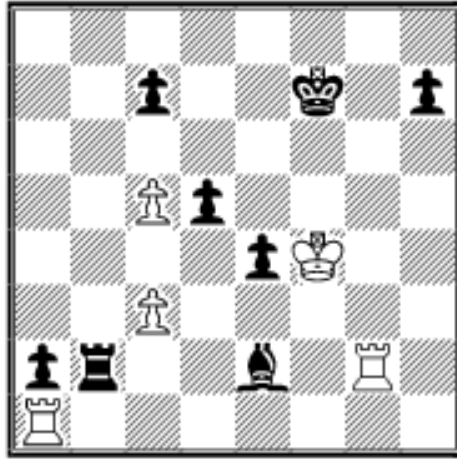
“and now Karpov looks at... 29...Bxh2?! but finds it wanting in view of 30 Kd1! threatening Bc1. Instead he suggests 28...Bh3 and ultimately concludes that ‘a position of dynamic equilibrium’ is what we have!” (Macon Shibut).

I continue with 29...Bd7 30.Kd1 (30.Kf2 Bg4 31.Rhe1 Bxh2 looks very good for Black.) 30...c5 31.dxc5 (31.c4 Be7 32.cxd5 Bh4—+) 31...Be7 32.h4 (32.Bh5 Ba4+ 33.Ke1 Bh4+ 34.Kf1 Bd7 35.h3 Bxh3—+) 32...Ba4+ 33.Ke1 Bxh4+ 34.Kf1 Bf6 35.Bd4



35...Kf7

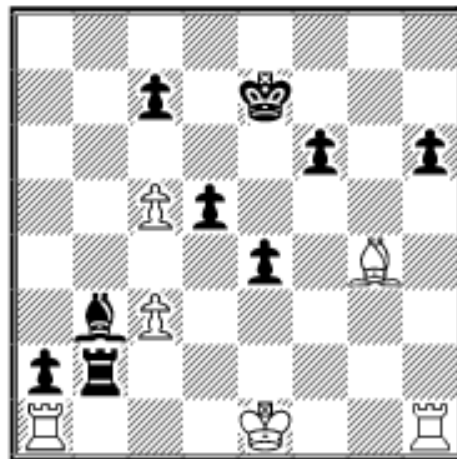
My first idea was 35...Bc2? but Kevin Bonham showed (in his Bulletin Board item 431–5) that it is flawed: 36.Bxf6 gxf6 37.Kf2 Bd3 38.Rhe1 f5 39.Ke3 f4+ 40.Kxf4 Bxe2 41.Rg1+ Kf7 42.Rg2



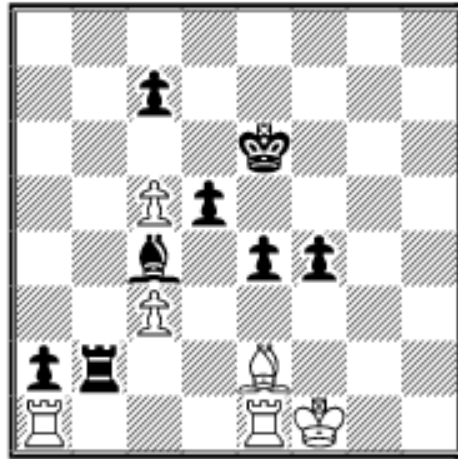
“when Black cannot stop White playing Ke3, forcing Black to play ...Rb1 and surrender the a-pawn, and after looking at several lines (both with 42...h5 and 42...Kf6) Black's position looks very difficult to win if it is even won at all.” (Kevin Bonham)

D3b4221) 36.Bxf6 gxf6 37.Rxh7+ (37.Bg4 Bb5+ 38.Ke1 Bd3 39.Bd1 Kg6—+ as White can't stop Black's slow progress.) 37...Ke6 38.Rh1 f5 39.Ke1 (39.Kf2 Bb5 40.Rhe1 f4 41.Kf1 Ba4—+) 39...Ke5 40.Kf1 f4 41.Rh5+ Kf6 42.Rh6+ Kg5 43.Rh5+ Kg6—+

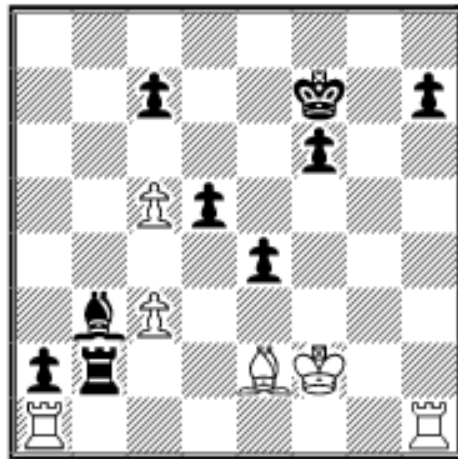
D3b4222) 36.Ke1 Bb3 37.Bxf6 (37.Rf1 Ke6 38.Bg4+ Ke7 39.Bxf6+ gxf6 40.Rh1 h6



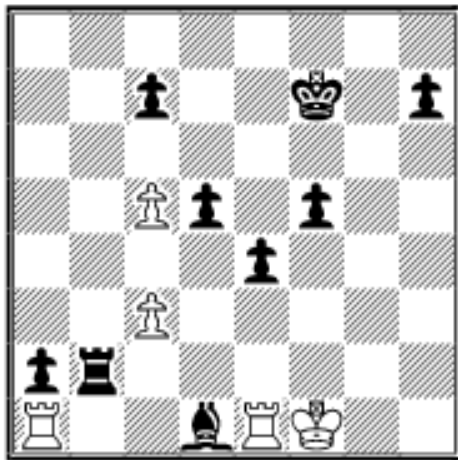
and Black has real winning chances as White's king is firmly tied to the first rank.) 37...gxf6 38.Kf2 (38.Rxh7+ Ke6 39.Rh1 f5 40.Kf2 Bc4 41.Rhe1 f4 42.Kf1



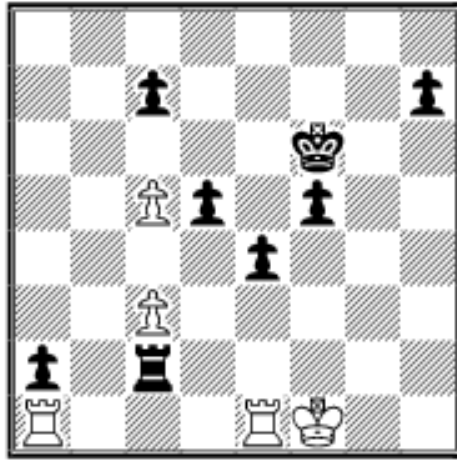
and now Black has the beautiful
42...Rxe2 43.Rxe2 f3--+)



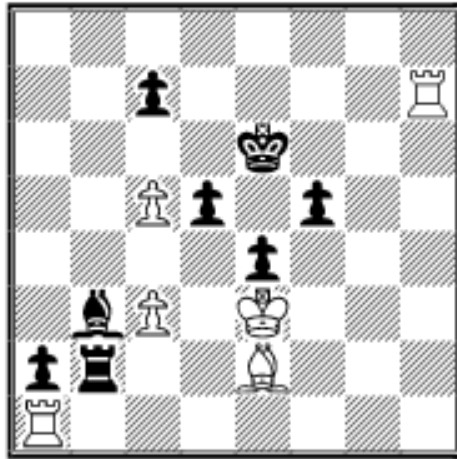
38...Ke6! (My first idea
38...Bc4? 39.Rhe1 f5 40.Kf1
Bb3 41.Bd1 Bxd1



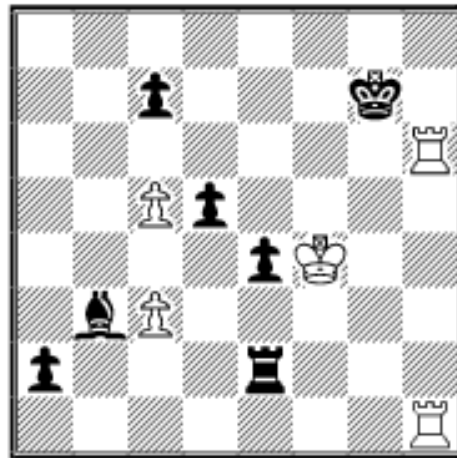
was refuted by Kevin Bonham:
42.Raxd1 Kf6 43.Ra1 Rh2
44.Kg1 Rc2 45.Kf1



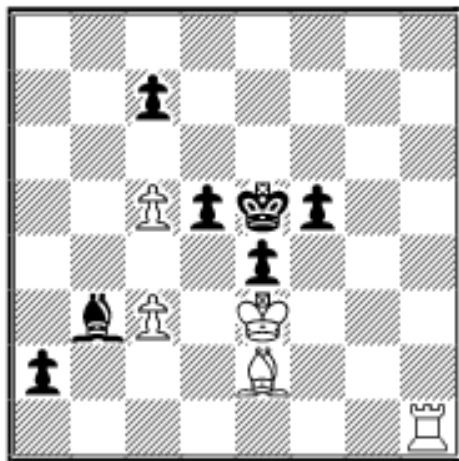
and I don't think that Black can win this position.) 39.Ke3 f5 40.Rxh7



40...Rb1! (40...f4+? does not work as Dennis Breuker has shown: 41.Kxf4 Rxe2 42.Rh6+ Ke7 43.Rh7+ Kf6 44.Rh6+ Kg7 45.Rah1

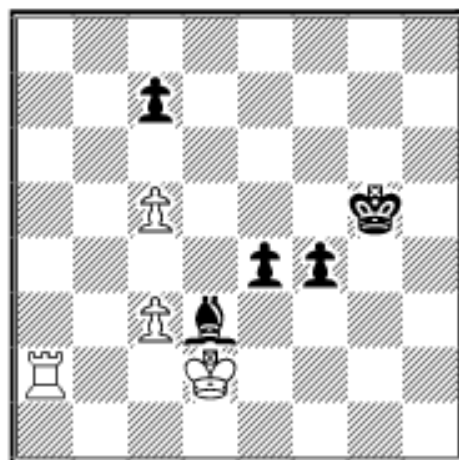


and White should be able to hold.) 41.Rh1 Rxh1 42.Rxh1 Ke5



This endgame seems to be winning for Black due to his dangerous horde of pawns (he wants to play f4+ followed by d4) and the passive white rook, which has to guard the first rank. I asked Dennis Breuker to check my assessment and he sent me the line 43.Ba6 f4+ 44.Kd2 d4 45.Rh5+ Kf6

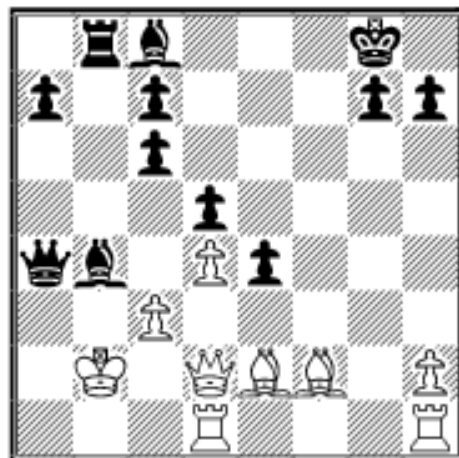
46.Rh6+ Kg5 47.Rh1 d3 48.Ra1 (I add the line 48.Bxd3 exd3 49.Kxd3 Be6 50.Rg1+ Kf6 51.c4 Bf5+ 52.Kc3 Bb1 53.Kb2 Ke5—+) 48...Bc2 49.Bxd3 Bxd3 50.Rxa2



which I continued with 50...Kg4 51.Ra4 (51.Ra7 Bc4 52.Ra4 e3+ 53.Ke1 Be6—+; 51.c6 Bc4 52.Ra4 e3+ 53.Ke1 Be6—+) 51...Kg3 52.Ra7 Bc4—+

After this long analysis of 22.Kc1 we now return to the game:

22...Bxb4!



23.cxb4 Rxb4+ 24.Qxb4 Qxb4+ 25.Kc2 e3 26.Bxe3 Bf5+ 27.Rd3 Qc4+ 28.Kd2 Qa2+ 29.Kd1 Qb1+ 0-1

I want to end this article quoting Dennis Breuker (from Bulletin Board item 431–13):

“So my whole feeling is Morphy's combination is winning, but that it is very difficult and tricky. Since some variations go to move 30 and further, it is not a full proof. It is difficult to make it entirely clear I think. And that is a pity, since I am a scientist and want a full proof.”

He certainly has a point, but at least I did not manage to find a drawing line for White.

Is the Riddle of Bird vs Morphy now solved or not?

Sources:

Euwe and Nunn, *The Development of Chess Style*, Batsford 1997.

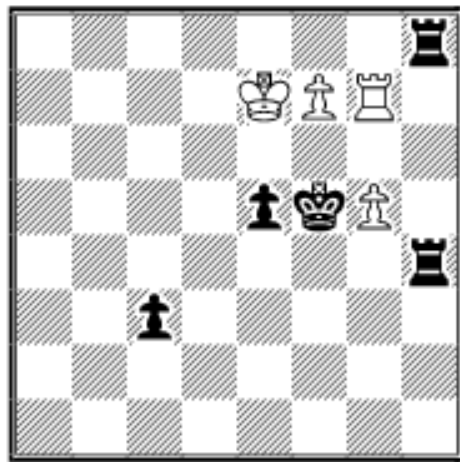
New in Chess Magazine No.2/1992

ChessBase MEGABASE 2002

ChessCafe Bulletin Board, Thread 431, Nos. 431–1 to 431–14 The following sources were mentioned there:

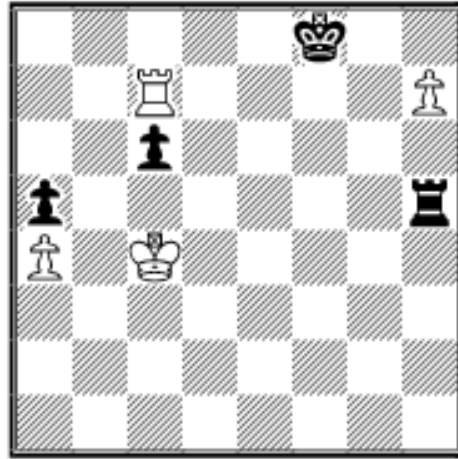
Yakov Neistadt, *Uncrowned Champions*; Fred Reinfeld and Andrew Soltis, *Morphy Chess Masterpieces* (First Collier Books Edition 1974); Anatoly Karpov, *Miniatures from the World Champions* (Collier Books 1985), Karpov...acknowledges contributions by “Soviet masters Gik and Rozenberg.” (M.Shibut)

Exercises (Solutions next month)



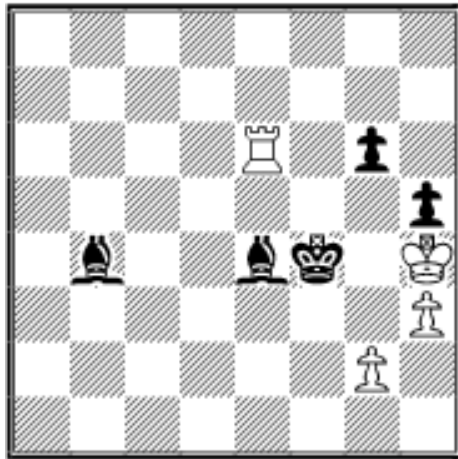
**E23.01 *P.C.Morphy -
C.Maurian* New Orleans 1869**

Can White to move save himself?



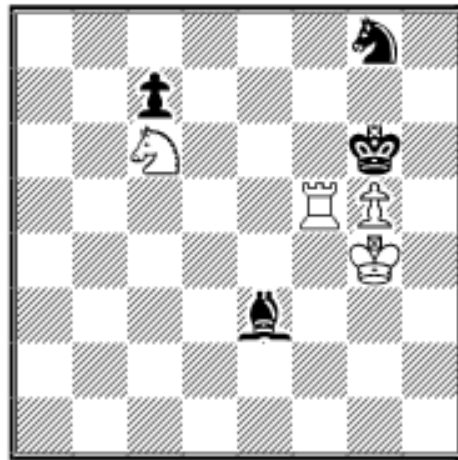
**E23.02 *P.C.Morphy* -
W.Thomas Philadelphia 1859**

White to move and win.



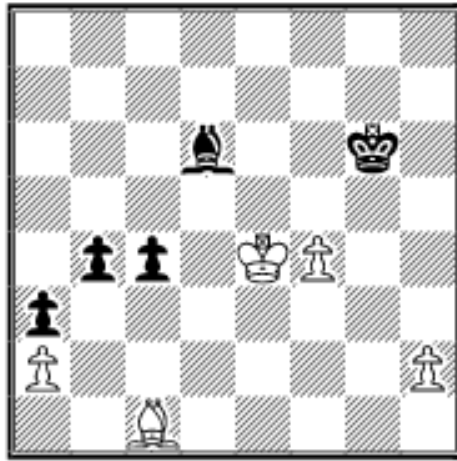
**E23.03 *P.C.Morphy* -
W.Thomas Philadelphia 1859**

It looks pretty grim for White.
Is he lost? (White is to move.)



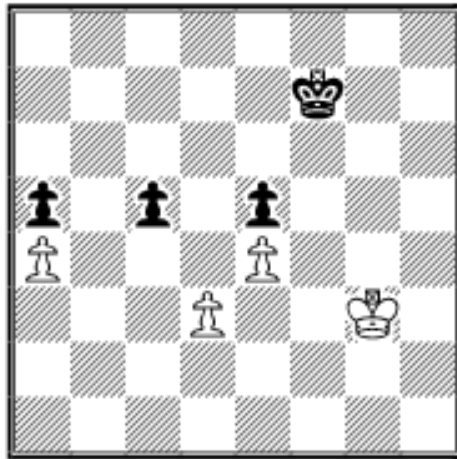
**E23.04 *P.C.Morphy* -
H.Richardson New York
simul 1859**

White mates in 3 moves.



E23.05 *P.C.Morphy - J.Loewenthal* London 1859

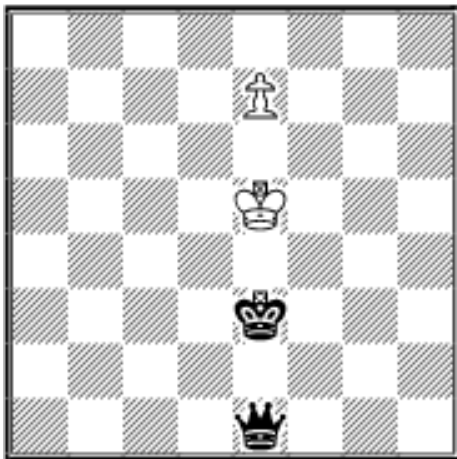
How to assess the position with White to move?



E23.06 *P.C.Morphy - J.Loewenthal* London 1858

Black to move and draw.

Solutions to last month exercises



E22.01 *A.Troitzky*, end of a study 1935

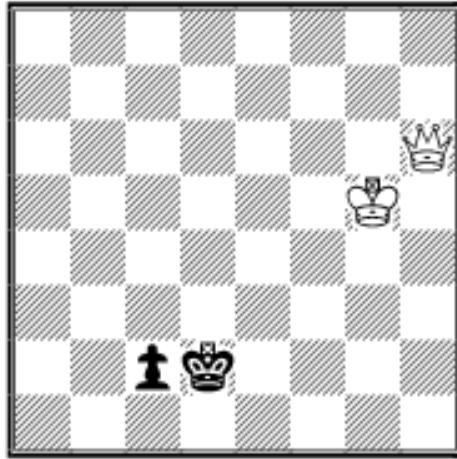
White draws with the surprising **1.Ke6!!**

I 1.e8Q? Kd3+ 2.Kd6 Qxe8—+

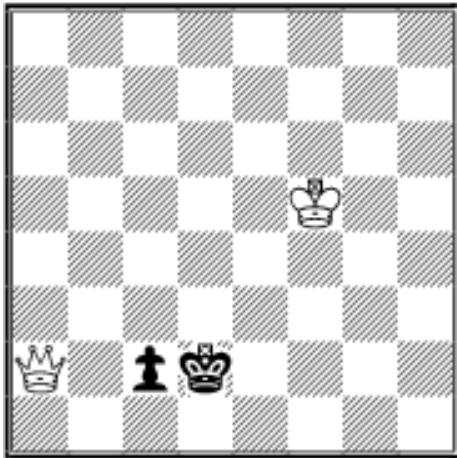
II After 1.Kd6? Black wins as usual:
1...Kf4 2.Kd7 Qd1+ 3.Kc7 Qh5 4.Kd8

Qd5+ starting the usual winning manoeuvre 5.Kc7 Qe6 6.Kd8 Qd6+ 7.Ke8 Ke5—+

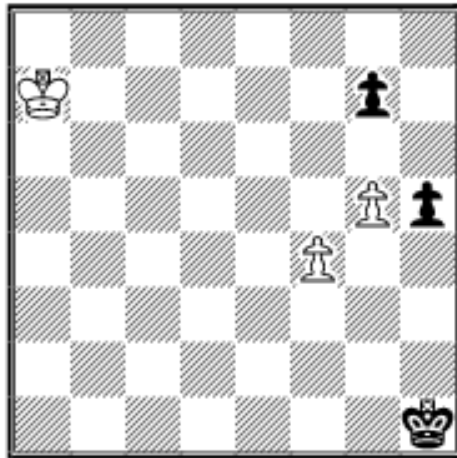
1...Kf4+ 2.Kf7=

**E22.02**

White's king enters the winning zone with check: **1.Kg4+**
 (1.Kf5+? is outside the winning zone: 1...Kd1! 2.Qd6+ Kc1
 3.Qb4 Kd1 4.Qb3 Kd2 5.Qa2

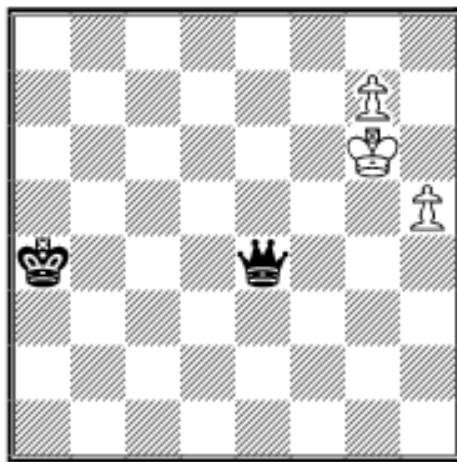


5...Kc3!!=) **1...Kd1 2.Qd6+ Kc1 3.Qb4 Kd1 4.Qb3 Kd2 5.Qb2 Kd1 6.Kf3 c1Q (6...c1N 7.Ke3+-) 7.Qe2#**

**E22.03 J.Diaz (2410) - G.Camacho Pinar del Rio 1996**

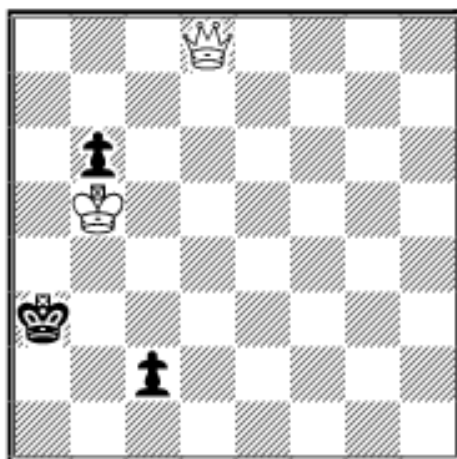
Black draws with **1...g6!** (1...h4 2.f5 h3 3.f6 gxf6 (3...Kg1? 4.fxg7 h2 5.g8Q+- G.Camacho in Informant 66/(569)) 4.g6 f5 5.g7 f4 6.g8Q h2 draws as well.) **2.f5 gxf5 3.g6 f4 4.g7 f3**

5.g8Q f2 6.Qf7 Kg2 7.Qg6+ Kh2 8.Qf5 Kg2 9.Qe4+ Kg1 1/2-1/2



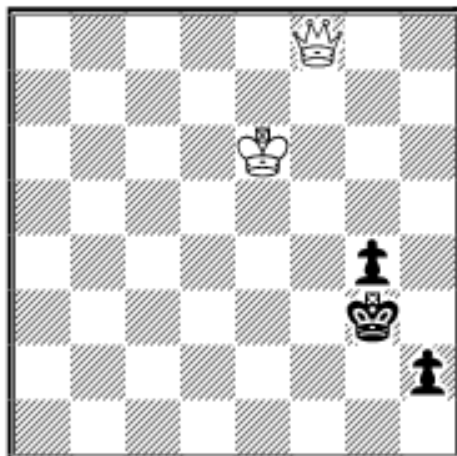
E22.04 N.Saleh (2256) - S.Testor (2164) Open Oberwart 2002

61.Kf7? (61.Kh6! is the right square, e.g., 61...Qe8 62.g8Q! Qxg8 stalemate) **61...Qf5+ 62.Ke7 Qe5+ 63.Kf8 Qf6+ 64.Kg8 Qh6 65.Kf8 Kb5 66.Kf7 Qxh5+ 67.Kf8 Qf5+ 68.Ke7 Qg6 69.Kf8 Qf6+ 70.Kg8 Kc5 71.Kh7 Qh4+ 72.Kg6 Qg4+ 0-1**



E22.05 H.Palsson (2182) - G.Rey (2359) Oz. comqualifier blitz Internet ICC 2000

White could indeed have won:
56.Qd3+? (56.Qd2! Kb2 57.Kc4 Kb1 (57...b5+ 58.Kd3+-) 58.Kb3 c1Q 59.Qa2#)
56...Kb2 57.Qd4+ Kb1 58.Qb4+ (58.Kb4 c1Q 59.Kb3 Qc2+ 60.Ka3 Qa2+=) 58...Ka1 59.Qa3+ Kb1 60.Qb3+ Ka1! 61.Qc3+ Kb1 62.Qxc2+ Kxc2 63.Kxb6 1/2-1/2



E22.06 R.Gimber - E.Maurer GER-ch Seniors 13th Dresden 2001

In the game White missed the win: **53.Qd6+?** (53.Qf1!+-)
53...Kh3? (53...Kg2=)
54.Qd3+? (54.Qc6 would still have won as the queening square of the h-pawn is firmly under control, e.g., 54...g3 55.Kf5 g2 56.Qf3+ Kh4

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