



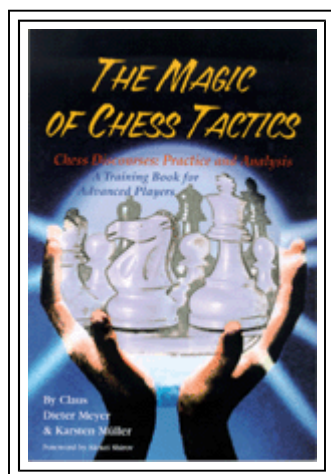
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COLUMNISTS

Endgame Corner

Karsten Müller



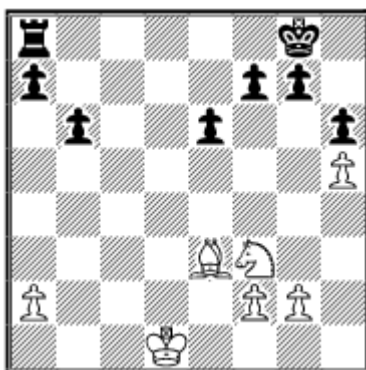
A Fascinating Fight

My friend Merijn van Delft plays for BIS Apeldoorn and he had a very close look at his game with Tom Middelburg (LSG Leiden), which was played September 27th during the first round of the Dutch Meesterklasse. Merijn included his thoughts after a very brief analysis with me, and a few lines by his Amsterdam club mate Rob Witt. I have also added a few remarks, which start with KM.

37.05 T.Middelburg (2387) - M.van Delft (2402)

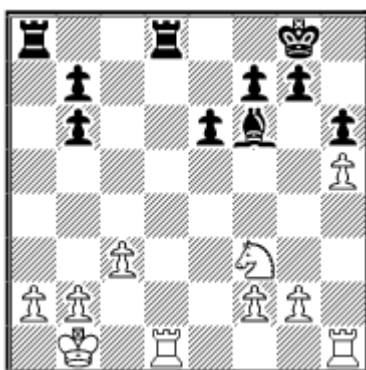
[B19] Dutch League 2003

1.e4 c6 2.d4 d5 3.Nc3 dxe4 4.Nxe4 Bf5 5.Ng3 Bg6 6.Nf3 Nd7 7.h4 h6 8.h5 Bh7 9.Bd3 Bxd3 10.Qxd3 e6 11.Bd2?! (Critical is 11.Bf4) 11...Ngf6 12.0-0-0 Be7 13.Ne4 0-0 14.Kb1 c5 The equalizer. 15.dxc5 Nxc5 16.Nxf6+ Bxf6 17.Qxd8 Rfxd8 18.Be3 Na4 (Black also has other options, for example: 18...Rxd1+ 19.Rxd1 Rc8; 18...Rdc8; 18...b6) 19.c3?N (A very unfortunate move. The alternatives lead to equal play: 19.Rxd8+ Rxd8 20.c3; 19.Bd4) 19...Nb6? This misses the sudden opportunity for 19...Rxd1+ 20.Rxd1 Bxc3! 21.bxc3 (21.Rd7 Bxb2 22.Rxb7 Bf6 and Black stays a pawn up because of Nc3.) 21...Nxc3+ 22.Kc2 Nxd1 23.Kxd1 b6 (see diagram)



followed by Rd8-d5 gives Black a clear advantage. My teammate Sipke Ernst, who has a lot of experience with the Open Spanish variation where Black exchanges two pieces against rook and pawn at f2, found it incredible that I did not go for this line.

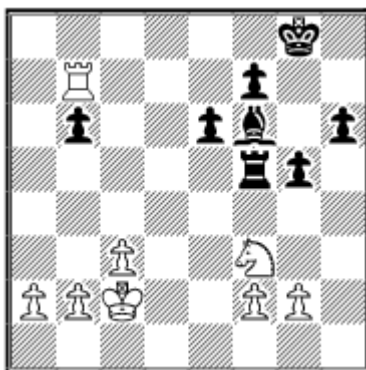
20.Bxb6 axb6 (see next diagram)



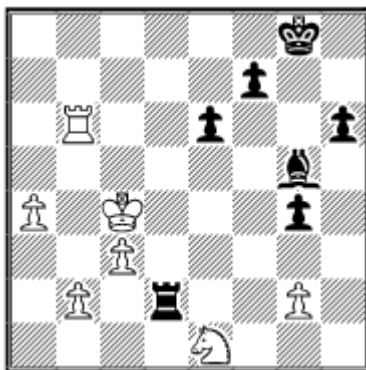
After this exchange the position has become remarkably sharp. The duel between the white knight and the black bishop is very interesting. In some positions the knight is stronger, while in others the bishop is superior. **21.Rxd8+ Rxd8 22.Kc2 Rd5** This active rook compensates for the weak queenside. In this line of the Caro-Kann Black can often make some concession in the transposition to the ending, because White's kingside (pawn h5) can also become weak. **23.Rd1!?** White keeps the game sharp. 23.g4 Ra5 24.Kb3 (24.a3 Ra4! followed by Rf4.) 24...Rb5+ 25.Kc2 Ra5 leads to a draw.

23...Rxb7 24.Rd7 Rf5! The move missed by White. 24...Rh1? is less good. **25.Rxb7** (25.Kd3!? g5 (25...Rd5+? 26.Rxd5 exd5 27.Nd4 Kf8 28.Nf5 Be7 29.b4 Bg5 30.a4 and despite his extra pawn Black has problems. This is a good example

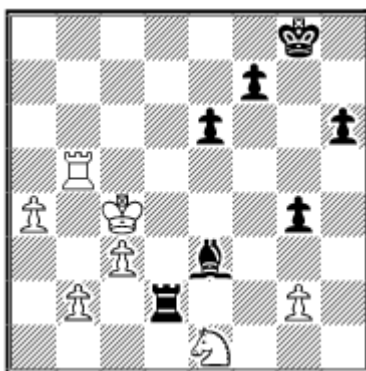
of a scenario where the white knight is superior.) 26.Nd2 is comparable to the lines examined next move.) **25...g5**



26.Rxb6? A big mistake, after which the black bishop becomes very strong, while the white knight becomes very passive. It was necessary to retain the coordination between the white pieces with 26.Kd3! b5 27.Nd2! with about equal chances: 27...Kg7 (27...Rxf2 28.Ne4 Rf5 29.Nxf6+ Rxf6 30.Rxb5 Rf2 leads to a very sharp rook ending, for example: 31.a4 Rxb2 32.a5 Rg1 33.b4 Ra1) 28.Ne4 Rd5+ 29.Ke3 Kg6 and the position is more or less balanced. **26...g4 27.Ne1 Rxf2+ 28.Kd3 Bg5!** Now the black rook and bishop are forming a perfect team. **29.a4 Rd2+ 30.Kc4** (see next diagram)



30...Be3? A superficial move which disturbs the coordination between the black pieces. In this critical position sharp calculation was required. Black could have won with 30...Re2! 31.Nd3 Rxb2 32.a5 and now the a-pawn is stopped by 32...Rg1! 33.a6 Ra1 after which the g-pawn decides the game. **31.Rb5** (see next diagram)



31...h5? This leads to trouble, better was 31...Re2

A) 32.Nc2 Ba7 may still be better for Black, although the position has become less clear. (32...Rxc2 33.Kd3 Rxb2 34.Kxe3 and Black seems to be more passive then in an earlier version of this rook ending.)

B) 32.Nd3 Rxb2 33.Re5 Bg1 and the position is not quite clear to me.

32.Rxh5?

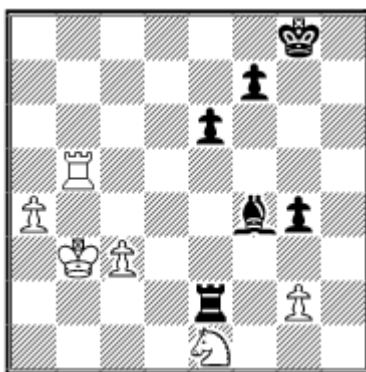
Strong was the counter-intuitive 32.Re5! Bf4 (32...Bg1 33.b4 Kf8 34.a5 Ke7 35.b5 h4 36.b6 Kd6 37.Rb5 Re2 38.Rb1 h3 39.gxh3 gxh3 40.Nf3 h2 41.Nxh2 Bxh2 42.a6 Ra2 43.Kb5

Kd7 44.a7 and White wins, in this sample line given by the Amsterdam chess player Rob Witt.) 33.Rxh5 wins at least a tempo in comparison to the game, for example: 33...f5 (33...Rxb2 34.Nd3 Re2 35.Nxf4 Re4+ 36.Kb5 Rxf4 37.a5 does not seem to work as we saw in our joint analysis, which was also attended by Dirk Sebastian.) 34.a5 Re2 35.Nd3 Be3 36.g3 Rg2 37.a6 Rxb3 38.Rh6! and White wins. **32...Rxb2 33.Re5**



33...Bd2? Again leading to problems, better was 33...Bf4

A) 34.Rb5 Ra2! Forces the king to b3, so the defence Rb2 is no longer possible. 35.Kb3 Re2! (see next diagram)

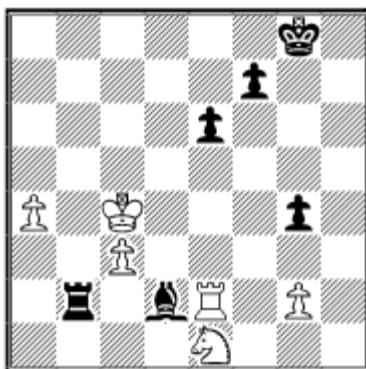


seems to keep the balance, according to analyses by Rob Witt: 36.Nd3 (36.Rb4 e5 37.Nd3 Rxc2 38.Nxf4 exf4 39.Rxf4 Rg1 40.a5 g3 41.a6 Ra1 42.Ra4 Rxa4 43.Kxa4 g2 44.a7 g1Q 45.a8Q+ Kg7=) 36...Bh6 37.a5 Rxc2 38.a6 Be3 39.Ra5 Ba7 40.Ne5 g3 41.Nc6 Bb6 42.Kc4 f5 43.a7 Bxa7 44.Rxa7 Rf2 45.Ra1 f4 46.Ne5 f3 47.Rg1 g2=

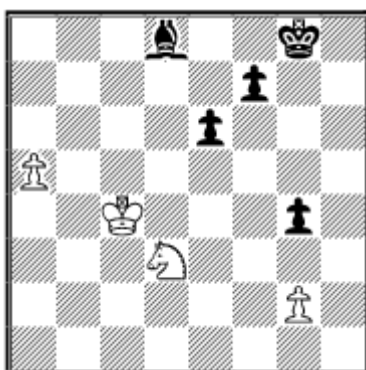
B) 34.Nd3 Ra2 35.Kb3 Bxe5 36.Kxa2 Bxc3 37.Kb3 Ba5 and Black has a better version of the ending we will see later, and thus he is able to draw.

34.Re2! (see next diagram)

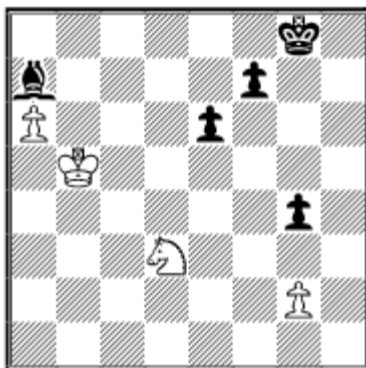
After the exchange of rooks, the a-pawn becomes very strong. And yes, in the following it paradoxically seems to be the white knight who is working on two wings!
34...Bxc3 35.Rxb2 Bxb2 36.Nd3 (36.a5 Be5) **36...Bf6 37.a5 Bd8** (see next diagram)



38.a6! After the obvious alternative 38.Kb5? Bxa5 39.Kxa5 Kg7 40.Kb5 Kf6 41.Kc5 Kf5 42.Kd4 Black can save the game with 42...e5+! 43.Ke3 (43.Nxe5 Kf4 44.Nc4 Kg3 45.Ne3 f5=) 43...Ke6 followed by f5 with a positional draw. **38...Bb6 39.Kb5 Ba7** (see next diagram)

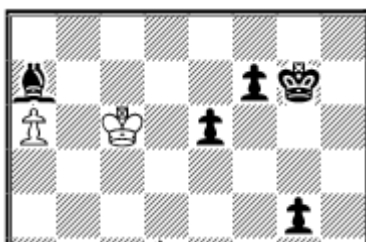


40.Ne5? In time trouble it was impossible for White to find the amazing win: 40.Kc6! Kg7 (see next diagram) (40...f5? 41.Kb7 Bd4 42.a7 Bxa7 43.Kxa7 Kg7 44.Kb6 Kf6 45.Kc5 e5 46.Kd5 wins for White.)

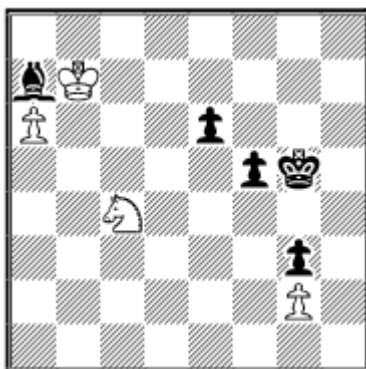


A) 41.Kb7 Bd4 42.Kc6 (42.Ne5 f5) 42...Ba7 only repeats moves.

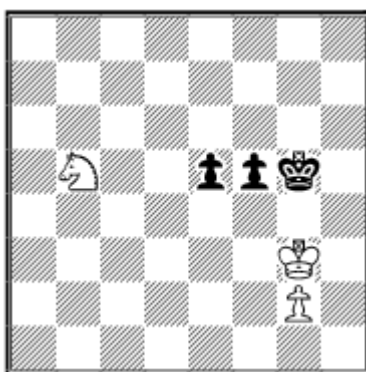
B) 41.Kd6!! This move was indicated by Rob Witt. The idea is to force the black pawn to g3 after which an old-fashioned good knight-bad bishop scenario remains. Yet with the modern paradoxical feature of the knight working on two wings. 41...Kf6 42.Ne5! g3 (42...Bb8+



43.Kc6 Kxe5 44.Kb7! is a nice point.) 43.Nc4 Kg5 (43...Kf5 44.Kc6 with the idea of Kb7 and Nb6 wins.) 44.Ke5 (I just noticed that the simple 44.Kc6? also seems to win. KM: This is (fortunately) not the case: 44...f5 45.Kb7 (see next diagram)

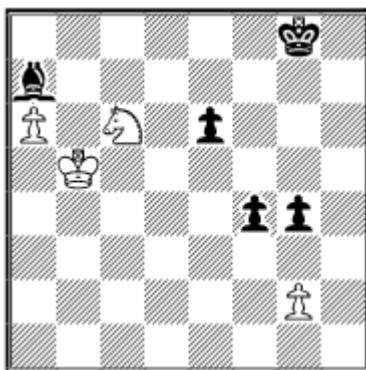


45...Bc5!! 46.Nb6 f4 47.a7 f3 48.a8Q fxc2=) 44...Bb8+ 45.Ke4 f5+ 46.Kf3 and White wins. KM: Let me explain: 46...Kf6 (46...f4 47.Ne5 Ba7 48.Nc6 Bf2 49.a7 Bxa7 50.Nxa7 Kf5 51.Nb5 e5 52.Nc3 Kg5 53.Ke4 Kf6 54.Ne2 Ke6 55.Ng1+-; 46...e5 47.Nxe5+-) 47.Na5 Ba7 48.Nc6 Bf2 49.a7 Bxa7 50.Nxa7 e5 51.Kxg3 Kg5 52.Nb5 (see next diagram)

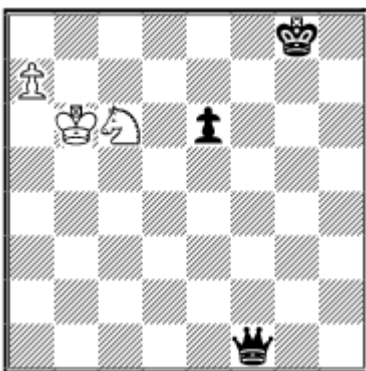


and now White has to force a pawn move and then blockade the resulting hole: 52...Kf6 (52...f4+ is met by 53.Kf2! Kf5 54.Nd6+ Ke6 55.Ne4 Kd5 56.Kf3 Ke6 57.Kg4 Kd5 58.Nf6+ Ke6 59.Nh5+-; 52...Kh5 53.Nd6 Kg5 54.Nc4 Kf6 55.Kh4+-) 53.Kh4 Kg6 (53...e4 54.g3 Ke5 55.Kg5 e3 56.Nc3 Kd4 57.Kf4 Kd3 58.Kf3 Kxc3 59.Kxe3+-) 54.Nc3 Kf6 (54...Kh6 55.Nd1 Kg6 56.Nf2 e4 57.Nh3+) 55.Kh5 e4 (55...Ke6 56.Kg5+-) 56.Ne2 Ke5 57.Kg5+-

40...f5 41.Nc6 f4 (see next diagram)



42.Ne5! This forces a draw by one tempo. 42.Nxa7? f3 43.gxf3 gxf3 44.Nc6 f2 45.a7 f1Q+ 46.Kb6 (see next diagram)



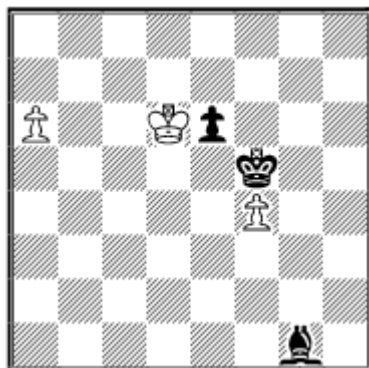
seems to win for Black after a zigzag manoeuvre by the new queen: 46...Qb1+ 47.Kc7 Qa2 48.Kb7 Qb3+ 49.Kc7 Qa4 50.Kb7 Qb5+ 51.Kc7 Qa6+- 42...f3! 43.Nxf3 (43.gxf3 g3 (see next diagram)



Merijn van Delft stops this line here. I (KM) continue to prove that the position is drawn: 44.f4 g2 (44...Kg7 45.Kc6 Kf6 46.Kb7 g2

50.Kd6= (see next diagram)

47.Nf3 g1Q 48.Nxg1 Bxg1 49.Kc6 Kf5



as Black can't make progress due to the vulnerability of his e-pawn.) 45.Nf3 Kg7 (45...g1Q 46.Nxg1 Bxg1 47.Kc6 Kf7 48.Kd6=) 46.Kc6 Kf6 (46...Kh6 47.Kb7 Bf2 48.a7 Bxa7 49.Kxa7 Kh5 50.Kb6 Kg4 51.Ng1 Kxf4 52.Kc5 e5 53.Kd5=) 47.Kd6=) **43...gxf3 44.gxf3 Kf7 45.Kc6 Kf6 46.Kb7 Be3 47.a7 Bxa7 48.Kxa7 Kf5 49.Kb6 Kf4 50.Kc6 e5 (50...Kxf3 51.Kd6=) 51.Kd6 Kxf3 52.Kxe5** And the arbiter declared the game drawn ½–½

KM: What a tough fight! Well done, Merijn!

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