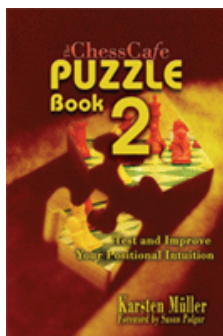




## COLUMNISTS

Endgame  
Corner

Karsten Müller



## CHESTHEATRE

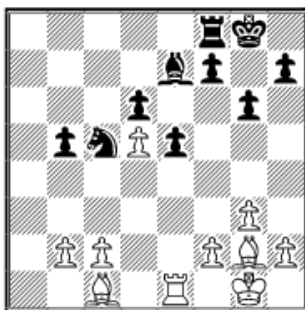
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## The Underestimated Knight

There is a tendency to underestimate the knight in chess literature. There is much written on the power of the bishop-pair or the excellent cooperation of rook + bishop vs. rook + knight (Fischer won a few instructive endgames with this material balance) or even the saying that the best knight is still worse than the worst bishop. But the knight is not that bad. Lars Bo Hansen presents the following example in his excellent work [How Chess Games are Won and Lost](#) (Gambit2008).

**96.01 Rasmussen,A (2468) – Nielsen,PH (2625)**  
ch-DEN Silkeborg DEN (3), 17.03.2008

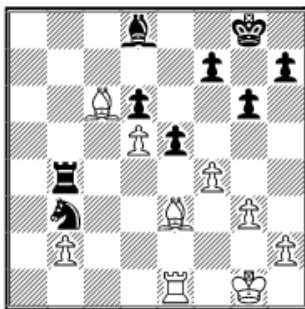


There was a long discussion after the game as to who was better in this position. Rasmussen had prepared this and claimed to be better because of the bishop-pair. Nielsen also claimed to be better. Hansen sides with Nielsen and I agree with them. If anyone, Black is for choice. Black has a strategic initiative on the dark squares, which is very difficult to counter because Black has one more piece that can operate on the dark squares. In the long run his kingside majority is easier to mobilize than White's majority on the queenside, where weaknesses may arise sooner or later. And finally White's light-squared bishop has problems finding a meaningful role. It can reach the outpost c6, but White can not support it in time as he must deal with Black's counterplay. Let's see how Nielsen began his initiative:

**20...Rc8 21.Bf1 b4 22.Bb5 b3 23.cxb3**

23.c3 Rb8 24.Bc4 Na4 (Nielsen) with annoying pressure.

**23...Rb8 24.Ba4 Nxb3 25.Be3 Rb4 26.Bc6 Bd8 27.f4**

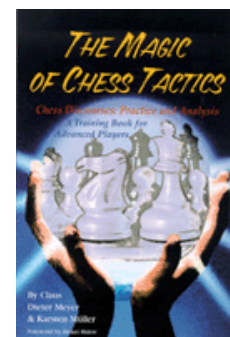


**27...Bf6**

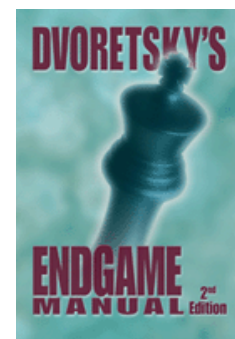
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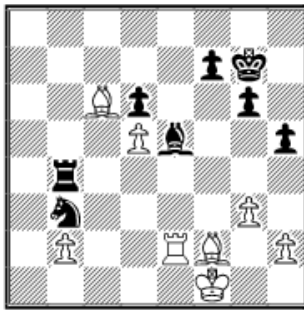
*The Magic of  
Chess Tactics*  
by Claus Dieter Meyer  
& Karsten Müller



*Dvoretsky's Endgame  
Manual*  
by Mark Dvoretsky

Hansen prefers 27...e4!? and I agree. Having more pawns on the board keeps more winning potential in reserve.

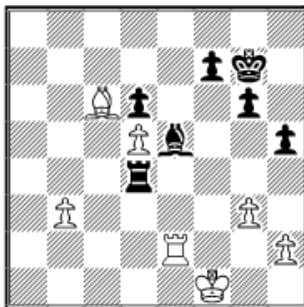
**28.fxe5 Bxe5 29.Re2 Kg7 30.Kf1 h5 31.Bf2**



**31...Nd4!**

Black exchanges his knight for White's good bishop to emphasize his superiority and initiative on the dark squares. Remember that opposite-colored bishops favor the attacker!

**32.Bxd4 Rxd4 33.b3**



**33...h4!**

Nielsen creates another weakness and opens a second front.

**34.gxh4 Rxh4 35.Kg1 f5 36.Rd2**



**36...Rh3**

Hansen suggests the slow approach with 36...Kf6!?. I like his suggestion, as White has difficulties finding a useful move. In the game Nielsen rushes a bit, which makes it clear for White as to what to do and where to defend. Here are just a few lines that illustrate White's problems: 37.Rc2 g5 38.Bd7 Rd4 39.Be6 (39.Rf2 Rxd5 40.Kg2 Bc3) 39...Rb4 40.Rc8 f4 41.Rf8+ Kg7 42.Rg8+ Kh6 43.Bf7 Rxb3 44.Rg6+ Kh5.

**37.b4 Bc3 38.Re2 Bxb4 39.Re6?**

Quite slow. 39.Re7+ Kf6 (39...Kh6 40.Re6 Rd3 41.Be8 Kg5 42.Rxg6+

Kf4 43.Bf7) 40.Re6+ Kg5 41.Be8 is a better way to generate counterplay against g6.

### 39...g5?

In time trouble Black rushes forward with his pawns. It was better to coordinate the pieces first: 39...Bc5+ 40.Kg2 Rb3 41.Re7+ (41.Be8? f4 42.Rxg6+ Kf8 loses.) 41...Kf6 42.Re6+ Kg5 43.Be8 f4 44.Rxg6+ Kf5 45.Rg8 (45.Rg7 Bd4 46.Rf7+ Ke4 47.Re7+ Be5 48.Bg6+ Ke3 49.Ra7 f3+ 50.Kf1 Rc3 51.Ra1 Bxh2) 45...f3+ 46.Kg3 f2+ 47.Kg2 Kf6 48.Bh5 Rb1 49.Rf8+ Kg7 50.Rf7+ Kg8 51.Rxf2 Bxf2 52.Kxf2 Kg7 and in both cases Black has better winning chances than in the game.

### 40.Be8 g4 41.Bg6?

41.Rg6+ Kf8 42.Bd7 Rf3 43.Kg2 Kf7 44.Rh6 (Hansen) was called for. White should be able to defend.

### 41...Bc5+ 42.Kh1 Ra3 43.Kg2

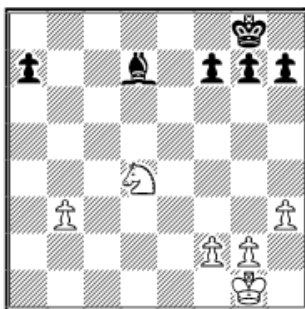
43.Bxf5? Ra1+ 44.Kg2 Rg1#.

### 43...f4 44.Bh5 f3+ 45.Kf1 f2 0-1

German IM Herbert Bastian wrote a letter to the German magazine *Schach* (8/2008, p.66f) about bishop vs. knight endgames indicating that the resources of the knight are often underestimated. One of his examples is the following famous classic:

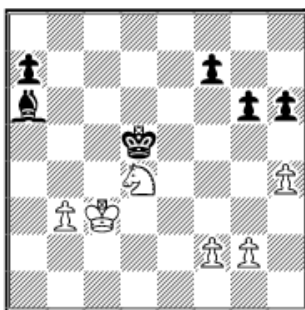
#### 96.02 Stoltz,Goesta – Kashdan,Isaac

The Hague (Men) The Hague (10), 30.07.1928



Some sources claim that Black is winning, while other authors think that White can draw with best defense. Bastian thinks that White should be able to draw and I agree, but some work still has to be done.

1...Kf8 2.Kf1 Ke7 3.Ke2 Kd6 4.Kd3 Kd5 5.h4 Bc8 6.Nf3 Ba6+ 7.Kc3 h6 8.Nd4 g6



We have reached the critical position, where Stoltz committed an error.

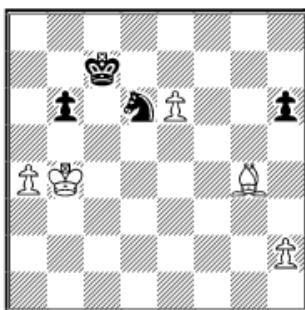
### 9.Nc2?

This allows Kashdan's king to penetrate one step further. 9.f3 was called for to erect a barrier against Black's king. Of course, Black can still try to use *zugzwang* and an advance of his pawns to probe White's fortress. Here more work is needed to establish the correct assessment, but I think that White can hold his own; e.g., 9...h5 10.g3 Bb7 11.Kd3 a5 12.Kc3 f6 13.Kd3 Ba6+ 14.Ke3 Kc5 (14...g5 15.Nf5) 15.g4 Bb7 16.gxh5 gxh5 17.Kd3 Kb4 18.Kd2. Can a reader find a win for Black after 9.f3?

**9...Ke4 10.Ne3 f5 11.Kd2 f4 12.Ng4 h5 13.Nf6+ Kf5 14.Nd7 Bc8 15.Nf8 g5 16.g3 gxh4 17.gxh4 Kg4 18.Ng6 Bf5 19.Ne7 Be6 20.b4 Kxh4 21.Kd3 Kg4 22.Ke4 h4 23.Nc6 Bf5+ 24.Kd5 f3 25.b5 h3 26.Nxa7 h2 27.b6 h1Q 28.Nc6 Qb1 29.Kc5 Be4 0-1**

Finally one example that seems to be dead lost for the knight:

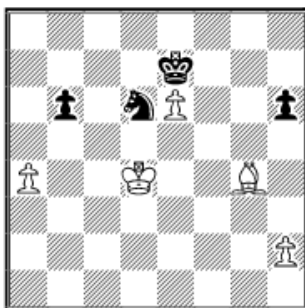
**96.03 Anand, Viswanathan (2725) – Tiviakov, Sergei (2625)**  
Hoogovens Wijk aan Zee (13), 28.01.1996



**94...Kd8**

94...Nc8 seems to draw as well; e.g., 95.Kc4 Kd6 96.Kd4 (96.Kb5 Kc7 97.Bf3 Nd6+ 98.Ka6 Nc8 99.Be4 Ne7 100.Kb5 Nc8=) 96...Ne7 97.Ke4 Nd5 98.Kf5 Ne3+ 99.Kf4 Nd5+.

**95.Kc3 Ke7 96.Kd4**



**96...Nb7?**

This allows White's king to penetrate. 96...Ne8? is wrong as well: 97.Ke5 Nc7 98.Bf5 Na6 99.Kd5 Nb4+ 100.Kc4 Nc6 101.Be4 Nd8 102.Kb5 Nxe6 103.Kxb6 Kd6 104.a5 Nc5 105.Bc6 Na6 106.h4 Nb4 107.Bb7 Kd7 108.Kb5+.

But 96...h5! amazingly seems to lead to a draw; e.g., 97.Bh3 (97.Bxh5 Kxe6 98.Bf3 Nf5+ 99.Ke4 Kf6 100.Kd5 Ne3+ 101.Kc6 Nc4=) 97...Kf6 98.Kd5 Ke7 99.Bf1 (99.Kc6 Nc4 100.Kb5 Nb2=) 99...Nb7 100.Bc4 Nd8 101.Ke5 Nb7 102.h4 Nc5 103.Be2 Nxe6 104.Bxh5 Nc5=.

**97.Kc4 Kd6**

97...h5 98.Bh3 Nd6+ 99.Kd5 b5 100.a5 b4 101.Kd4 b3 102.Kc3 b2 103.Kc2+.

**98.Kb5 Nc5**

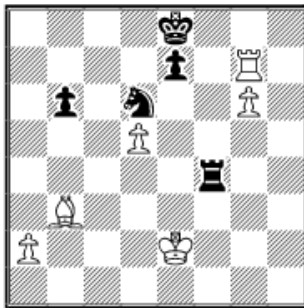
98...Kc7 99.e7 Nd6+ 100.Ka6 Kc6 101.Bh5 Kd7 102.e8Q+ Nxe8 103.  
Bxe8+ Kxe8 104.Kxb6+–.

**99.h4 h5 100.Bh3 Ke7 101.a5 Nxe6 102.Kxb6 Nf4 103.a6 Nd5+ 104.  
Kb7 Kd8 105.a7 Nc7 106.Bf1 Kd7 107.Be2 1–0**

**Exercises (Solutions next month)**

**E96.01 Balashov, Y (2407) – Ruchkin, I (2188)**

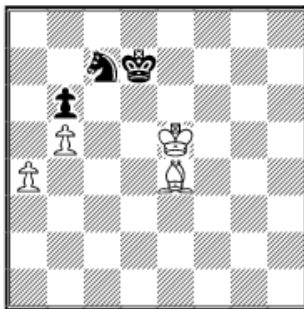
Open A Vladimir RUS (3), 14.08.2008



How did Balashov convert his advantage?

**E96.02 Luther, Thomas (2515) – Hoffmann, Michael (2470)**

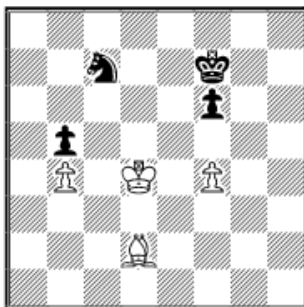
Lippstadt (9), 1994



Can Black to move save himself?

**E96.03 Larsen, B – Gligoric, S**

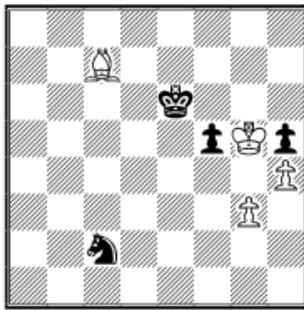
Linares, 1981



Find Black's path to draw!

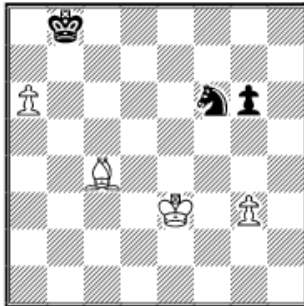
**E96.04 Spassky, B – Benko, P**

Palma de Mallorca, 1968



As there are only a few pawns left on the kingside, Black should be able to defend. How?

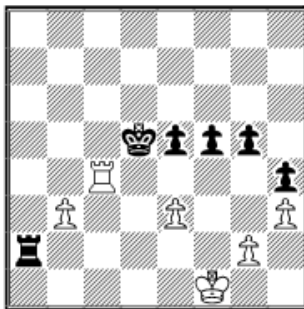
**E96.05** *Salov, V (2630) – Timman, J (2610)*  
Amsterdam, 1989



Timman drew easily. Can you do the same?

### Solutions to last month's exercises

**E95.01** *Papaioannou, I (2520) – Lutz, Ch (2600)*  
Elista (ol), 1998



Black triangulated with his rook to bring White into *zugwang*.

**49...Ra3! 50.Rb4 Ra1+ 51.Ke2 Ra2+ 52.Kf1 Ra1+**

A repetition to gain time on the clock and show “who is the boss.”

**53.Kf2 Ra2+ 54.Kf1 Rb2!**



Now White is in *zugzwang* and must make a concession.

#### 55.Ra4

55.Rb8 Ke4 56.Rb5 g4 57.b4 Rb3+; 55.Kg1 Re2+.

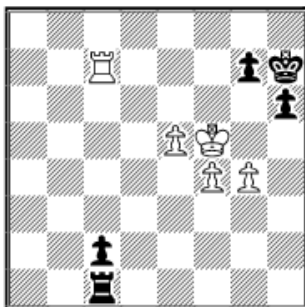
#### 55...Rxb3 56.e4+

56.Kf2 Rb2+ 57.Kf1 Rc2 58.Rb4 Ra2 again *zugzwang*.

**56...fxe4 57.Ke1 Rb2 58.Kf1 Rc2 59.Rb4 Ra2 60.Kg1 e3 61.Kf1 Rf2+ 62.Kg1 Rc2 63.Kf1 Rc4 0-1**

**E95.02 Hansen,Lars Bo (2565) – Blatny,Pavel (2519)**

BL2-Nord 0506 Germany (7.1), 19.02.2006



#### 43.Rc8?

HHansen showed the way to win in his excellent [How Chess Games are Won and Lost](#) (GAMBIT 2008): 43.e6 Kg8 (43...Ra1 44.Rxc2 Ra5+ 45. Ke4 Kg6 (45...Ra8 46.Ke5 Kg8 47.Kd6 Kf8 48.Kd7 Ra7+ 49.Rc7+–) 46. f5+ Kf6 47.Rc7+–) 44.g5 hxg5 45.Kg6 Kf8 46.fxg5 Re1 47.Rc8+ Ke7 48. Rxc2 Re5 49.Rc7+ Kxe6 50.Rxg7+–.

**43...g6+ 44.Kf6 Rf1 45.Rc7+ Kg8 46.Rxc2 Rxf4+ 47.Kxg6 Rxg4+ 48. Kf6 Rf4+ 49.Ke7 h5 50.e6 Kg7 51.Rc8 Rf1 52.Rc4 Re1 53.Kd7 Kf6 54. Rf4+ Kg5 55.Rf8 h4 56.e7 h3 57.e8Q Rxe8 58.Rxe8 Kf4 59.Ke6 h2 60. Rh8 Kg3 61.Kf5 Kg2 62.Kf4 h1Q 63.Rxh1 Kxh1 ½-½**