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Inside Chess

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Yasser Annotates

Andersson-Hübner, Ter Apel 1997

Ulf Andersson (2655) – Robert Hübner (2600)

Ter Apel (1), 1997

Slav Exchange [D14]

1.d4 d5 2.Nf3 c6 3.c4 Nf6 4.cxd5

The Exchange Slav is not a popular choice with chess fans, nor is it a pleasure for the player with the black pieces. While the positions that occur remain closely balanced, it is usually White, with his extra tempo, who manages to score a win or two. Ulf's choice suits his style perfectly. Known for being safe and careful, Ulf doesn't lose very often, courtesy of his opening choices. He does, however, revel in the ending, where he is a superb technician. The Exchange Slav often leads to wholesale exchanges and an ending.

4...cxd5 5.Nc3 Nc6 6.Bf4 Bf5

The modern 6...a6 has superseded this move and with good reason. I like playing the Exchange Slav and meeting 6...Bf5.

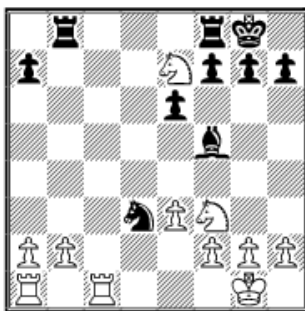
7.e3 e6 8.Qb3 Bb4 9.Bb5 Qa5 10.0-0 0-0 11.Bxc6 bxc6 12.Bc7 Qxc7 13.Qxb4 Rab8?!

Better was 13...Rfb8 as we shall soon see.

14.Qa3 Nd7 15.Rfc1 c5?

A miscalculation. Black wasn't happy about the prospects of defending against 16.Na4, with a grip over the c5-square, but that was his fate.

16.dxc5 Qxc5 17.Qxc5 Nxc5 18.Nxd5 Nd3 19.Ne7+



This is White's point as he takes advantage of Black's thirteenth move. The game has quickly moved to an ending in which Ulf shepherds his advantage.

19...Kh8 20.Rc3 Nxb2 21.Ne5! Ra8

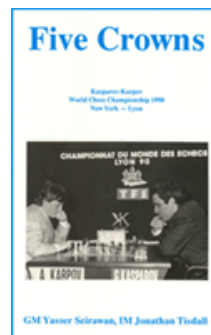
A disheartening decision, but, in view of White's threat of Ne5-d7, this is the safest square. Black can't afford 21...Rb7? 22.Nxf5 exf5 23.Rb3,

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when the far-flung Black knight is in trouble.

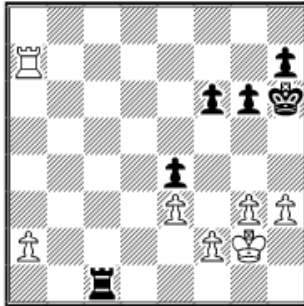
22.Nxf5 exf5 23.Rb1 Na4 24.Rc7

A strategic triumph for White, as now all his pieces are more active than their counterparts. A gain in material isn't far away.

24...f6 25.Nf7+! Kg8 26.Nd6 Rfb8 27.Rxb8+ Rxb8 28.g3 g6 29.Rxa7 Nc3 30.Ra3!

Black's knight has found a good place to pause and White gives the knight a sharp nudge.

30...Rb1+ 31.Kg2 Rc1 32.Ra8+ Kg7 33.Ra7+ Kh6 34.Nf7+ Kh5 35. Nd6 Kh6 36.h3 Ne4 37.Nxe4 fxe4



The players have reached a very intriguing rook ending. If Black is able to swap one of his kingside pawns for White's a2-pawn, he will reach a four-versus-three ending on the kingside and a likely draw. The only way for White to avoid this fate is to bring his king to the queenside to aid in a promotion. However, that is unlikely to happen, as it appears White's king hasn't anywhere to go. Is the game a draw? This is an excellent point to stop and think: What would you do as White?

38.g4!

An important move, as the e4-pawn is now isolated. Black is prevented from playing ...f6-f5 and must consider how to stop Kg2-g3-f4, clipping the e-pawn. His response is forced.

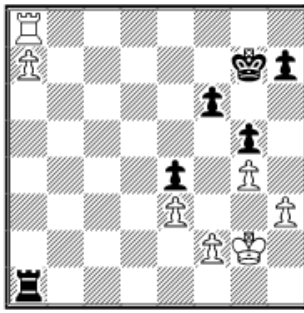
38...g5 39.a4!

As pointed out, 39.Ra4 Ra1 40.Rxe4 Rxa2 is a benign draw. White will use his a-pawn as a decoy, but he doesn't want to trade it for the e4-pawn.

39...Ra1 40.a5 Ra2

Black would like to trade h-pawns, but he is unable to do so. Even if his king were on g6, 40...h5 41.gxh5+! Kxh5 42.a6 Kg6 43.Ra8 Kf5 44.a7 Ra2 45.Kg3 Ra1 46.f3 exf3+ 47.Kxf3 Ra3 48.Ke2 Ra4 49.Kd3 will expose Black's king. For example, 49...Ra3+ 50.Kc4 Ra4+ 51.Kc5 Ra1 52.e4+ Kf4 53.e5! and wins.

41.a6 Kg6 42.Ra8 Ra1 43.a7 Kg7



Now the black king is frozen. He can't move up the board and a line like ...Kg7-f7 allows Ra8-h8, winning on the spot. White's task still isn't all roses. His own king isn't yet free.

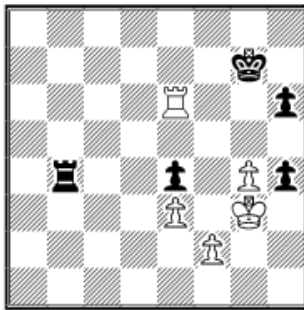
44.Kg3 Rg1+ 45.Kh2 Ra1 46.Kg2!

This little triangulation has its point: it's Black's move. The rook is frozen, as otherwise White's king can scamper and pick up the e4-pawn.

46...h6

The key alternative for Hübner was 46...Kh6, allowing the swap of his f6-pawn for the a7-pawn. The winning plan is instructive: 47.Rf8 Rxa7 48. Rxf6+ Kg7 49.Re6 Ra4 50.Kg3 Kf7 51.Rh6 Kg7 52.Rd6 Ra7 53.Re6 Ra4 54.h4, transposing back to the game position.

47.Kh2 Kh7 48.Rf8 Rxa7 49.Rxf6 Kg7 50.Re6 Ra4 51.Kg3 Rb4 52.h4! gxh4+



Another unpleasant decision. If White is allowed h4-h5, Black's king will be driven back to the last rank. The problem with the text is that it gives up control over the f4-square, a nuance that White is quick to exploit.

53.Kxh4 Ra4 54.Kg3 Rb4 55.Re5 Kg6 56.Rf5

Now the threat is 57.Rf4 and f2-f3, clipping a second pawn. Black can no longer defend the e4-pawn from the side of the board.

56...Rb8 57.Kf4 Re8 58.Re5 Rxe5

As 58...Rf8+ 59.Kg3 wins at once. Any chances in a king and pawn ending?

59.Kxe5 Kg5 60.Kxe4 Kxg4 61.Kd3! 1-0

Nope. White seals his hard earned Netherlands victory. If 61...h5, 62.Ke2 h4 63.Kf1 is a trivial win. And when both sides queen after 61...Kf3 62.e4 h5 (62...Kf4 63.f3) 63.e5, the move Qe8-e4+ is curtains.

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