



Rook + Knight vs Rook + Bishop

COLUMNISTS

Endgame Corner

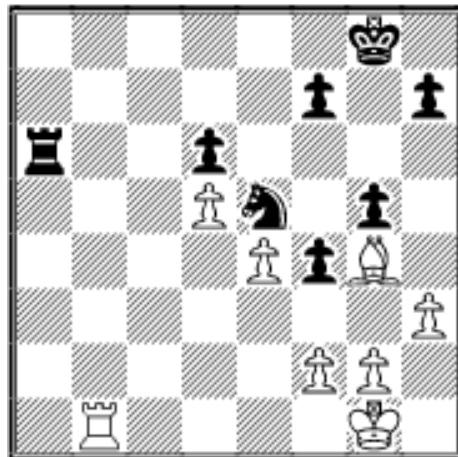
Karsten Müller



Following the underlying concept of this column it is now time to deal with Rook+Knight vs Rook+Bishop. Although the ending rook and minor piece vs rook and minor piece occurs very often in practical play, there is much less literature about it than about pure rook endings. This is probably due to the great complexity inherent in these endings. So I can only scratch the surface of the ending rook+knight vs rook+bishop in this column, but I will try to stress some very important points:

- (1) The **pawn structure** is very important. If the knight occupies a strong, secure outpost it can dominate the board.
- (2) Is there a **weak colour complex** (or weak pawns) on squares opposite to the bishop's colour? This is a good sign for the knight.
- (3) The **bishop likes to play on both wings**. In open positions it can form a very powerful duo of long range pieces. Robert James Fischer was especially strong playing with rook and bishop. (for Fischer's endings with Bishop vs Knight see an article by Hanon W. Russell in the [ChessCafe.com Archives](#))
- (4) Is the knight on a **bad circuit or has limited scope**? This is usually a very good sign for the bishop.

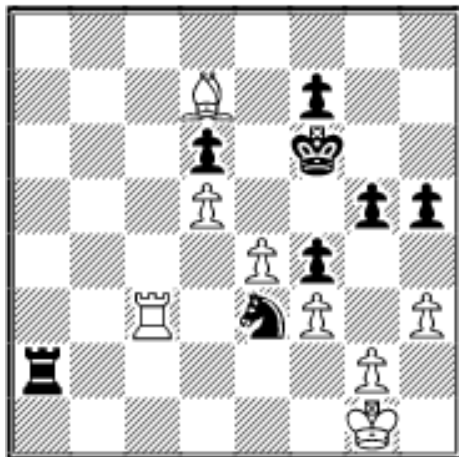
Of course **activity** is almost as important as in pure rook endings and several of the themes and motifs of the ending knight vs bishop are valid here as well. I want to start with positions favorable for rook and knight:



9.01 H.Herndl (2365) - S.Kindermann (2530) AUT-chT9697

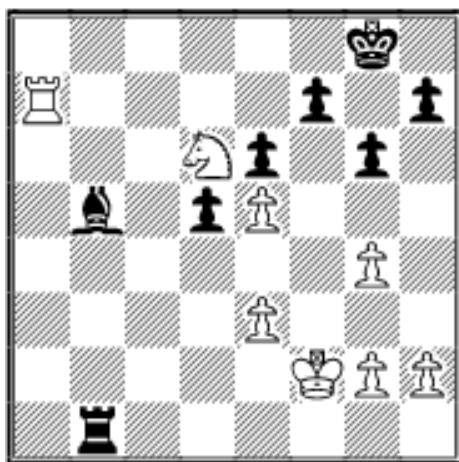
Black's knight has a dominating position and Kindermann managed to convert his advantage: **28...Ra4 29.Bf5** 29.Rb6 Nc4 30.Rc6? doesn't work: 30...Ra1+ 31.Kh2 Nd2 32.g3 (32.Rxd6?? Nf1+ 33.Kg1 Ng3+ 34.Kh2 Rh1#) 32...f3 33.Rxd6 h5 34.Bxh5 Nf1+ 35.Kg1 Nxc3+ 36.Kh2 Nxc5+ **29...h5 30.f3?!** This weakens the dark squares further and gives Black's knight another strong outpost on

e3. But it is very difficult to give a better defence for White, e.g., 30.Rb6 Ra1+ 31.Kh2 Kg7 32.Rxd6?! Nd3 33.g4 hxg4 34.hxg4 Nxf2 35.Rc6 Ra2 36.Kg1 Nd1 37.Rc1 (37.e5? f3--+) 37...Ne3 38.Re1 Kf6 and Black is clearly on top. **30...Kg7!** Kindermann brings his last unit into play, threatening to penetrate White's position via f6-e5-d4. **31.Rc1 Kf6 32.Rc3 Nc4!** Opening the king's path and heading for e3 **33.Bd7 Ra1+ 34.Kf2 Ra2+ 35.Kg1 Ne3**



Now it is completely clear that Black is winning. **36.g4 h4** Black doesn't want to exchange pawns of course. **37.Rc7 Rg2+ 38.Kh1 Rg3 39.Be8 Rxe3+ 40.Kg1 Rxf3 41.Rxf7+ Ke5 42.Re7+ Kd4 43.e5 Rg3+ 44.Kh2?! f3** and Herndl resigned as he can't prevent mate: **45.exd6 Nxe4+ 46.Kh1 Nf2+ 47.Kh2 Rg2#**

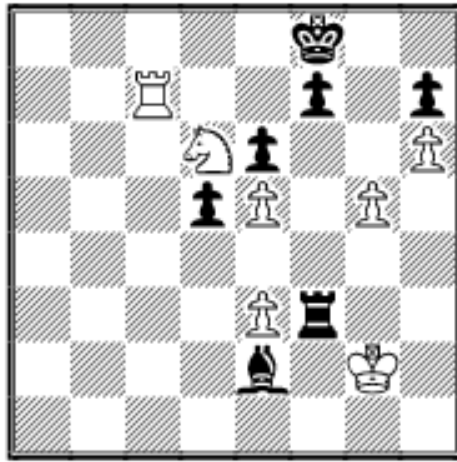
The next example is favourable for the knight again:



9.02 M.Krasenkow (2615) - A.Miles (2550) New York 1997

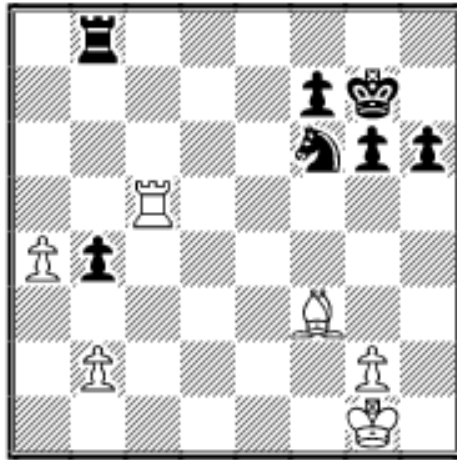
Black has to be play extremely precise in order to save the draw: **29...Rf1+?** 29...g5! to transfer the bishop to g6 was called for e.g. 30.Kg3 Rb3 31.Nxf7 Rxe3+ 32.Kf2 Re2+ 33.Kf3 Bd3 34.Nxg5 Rxe5 35.Kf4 Re2= (Krasenkow in Informator 69/344) **30.Kg3 Bc6 31.Rc7 Ba4 32.g5!** Fixing Black's pawns on light squares. The next step in Krasenkow's plan is to advance his

kingside pawns. **32...Kg7 33.h4 Kf8 34.Kh2 Kg7 35.g4 Rf3 36.h5 gxh5** (36...Kf8 37.h6 Bd1 38.Rc8+ Ke7 39.Re8+ Kd7 40.Rh8+-) **37.gxh5 Kf8** After 37...Rxe3 Krasenkow gives **38.Nxf7! Kf8 39.g6! hxg6 40.h6 Re4 41.Kg3 Re3+ 42.Kg4 Bd1+ 43.Kg5+- 38.h6! Bd1 39.Kg2 Be2 40.Rc8+ Ke7 41.Rc7+ Kf8**



After the repetition of moves Krasenkov now deals the final blow: **42.g6! fxc6** (42...hxc6 43.Rc8+ Ke7 44.h7+-) **43.Rxh7 Rxe3** (43...Kg8 44.Rg7+ Kh8 45.Ne8+-) **44.Rh8+ Ke7 45.Re8+ Kd7 46.h7 1-0**

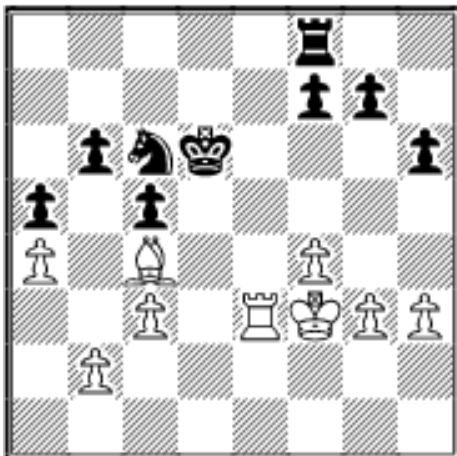
Now I want to show positions favouring the bishop:



9.03 *R.J.Fischer - M.Taimanov* Palma de Mallorca izt 1970

Black is a pawn up, but Fischer's bishop is too strong as it supports the advance of the passed a-pawn: **47.a5** 47.Rb5? spoils it of course: 47...Rxb5 48.axb5 Nd7 **47...Re8** (47...Nd7 48.Rc7 Ne5 49.Bb7 Rd8 50.Rc1+-) **48.Rc1** After 48.a6 Black's rook manages to get behind the a-pawn: 48...Re1+ 49.Kf2 Ra1 50.Rc6 but White has nevertheless good chances to win. **48...Re5 49.Ra1 Re7 50.Kf2**

White's king heads to the queenside to support the a-pawn or to win Black's weak b-pawn **50...Ne8** After 50...Kf8, one sample line runs 51.a6 Ra7 52.Ke3 Ke7 53.Kd4 Kd6 54.Kc4 Kc7 55.Kxb4 Kb6 56.Bb7 Nd7 57.Rf1 f6 58.Rd1 Kc7 59.Ka5+- **51.a6 Ra7 52.Ke3 Nc7 53.Bb7 Ne6 54.Ra5 Kf6** (54...Nd8 55.Rb5+-) **55.Kd3 Ke7 56.Kc4 Kd6 57.Rd5+ Kc7 58.Kb5!** and Taimanov resigned due to **58...Nd8 59.Rc5+ Kd6 60.Kb6 Nxb7 61.Rc6+--**. It wasn't too late to blunder with 58.Kxb4? Nd8=.

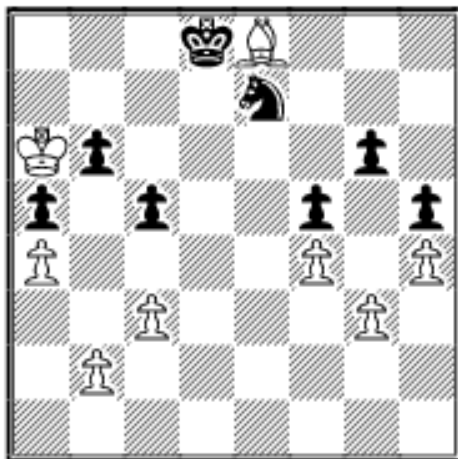


9.04 *R.J.Fischer (2740) - M.Taimanov (2620)* Vancouver cqf 1971

Black's knight has very limited scope and White's rook is more active than its counterpart, so Taimanov again faced a very tough job: **35.h4 h5?!** I don't like this move as it fixes the h-pawn on a light square. 35...Ne7 was probably preferable although Black's task is still very difficult. Putting all pawns on dark squares with 35...f6? loses unfortunately: 36.Re6+ Kd7 37.Ke4 f5+ (37...Re8?

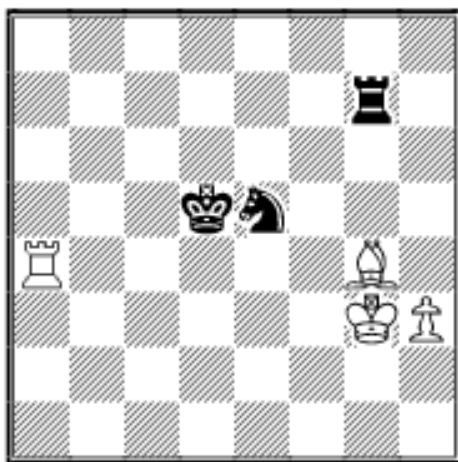
38.Rxe8 Kxe8 39.Bb5 Kd7 40.Kd5+-) 38.Kf3 Rf6 39.Rxf6 gxf6 40.Bb5+- **36.Rd3+ Kc7 37.Rd5!?** Fischer forces more Black pawns onto light squares

- a good strategy in this type of ending. In the following lines, it is difficult to say, when exactly Taimanov's position was lost. **37...f5 38.Rd2 Rf6 39.Re2 Kd7 40.Re3 g6 41.Bb5 Rd6 42.Ke2 Kd8?!** This allows Fischer to simplify into a winning bishop vs knight ending. **42...Rd5** seems to be tougher. **43.Rd3! Kc7 44.Rxd6 Kxd6 45.Kd3** Of course not **45.Bxc6?? Kxc6 46.Kd3 Kd5 47.c4+= 45...Ne7** After **45...Kc7** simplifying into the pawn ending wins: **46.Bxc6 Kxc6 47.Kc4 Kd6 48.Kb5 Kc7 49.Ka6 Kc6 50.c4 Kc7 51.Ka7 Kc6 52.Kb8+- 46.Be8 Kd5 47.Bf7+ Kd6 48.Kc4 Kc6 49.Be8+ Kb7 50.Kb5 Nc8 51.Bc6+ (51.Bxg6?? Nd6#) 51...Kc7 52.Bd5 Ne7 (52...Nd6+ 53.Ka6 c4 54.Bg8 Kc6 55.Bh7 Ne4 56.Bxg6 Nxc3 57.Be8+ Kc5 58.Ka7 Ne2 59.Bxh5 Nxf4 60.Bf3+-) 53.Bf7 Kb7 54.Bb3 Ka7 55.Bd1 Kb7 56.Bf3+ Kc7 57.Ka6 Nc8 58.Bd5 Ne7 59.Bc4 Nc6 60.Bf7 Ne7 61.Be8 Kd8**



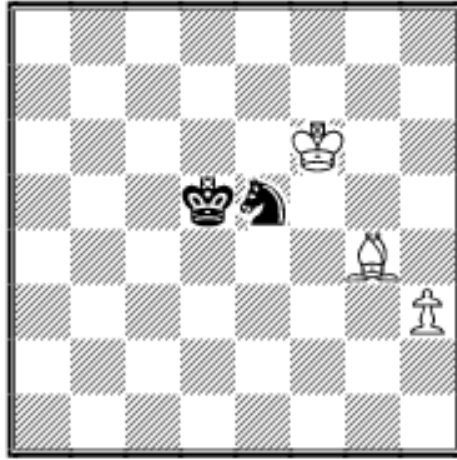
62.Bxg6! Now Black is defenceless against White's queenside pawns: **62...Nxc6 63.Kxb6 Kd7 64.Kxc5 Ne7 65.b4 axb4 66.cxb4 Nc8 67.a5 Nd6 68.b5 Ne4+ 69.Kb6 Kc8 70.Kc6 Kb8 71.b6 1-0**

The next example went no better for Taimanov:



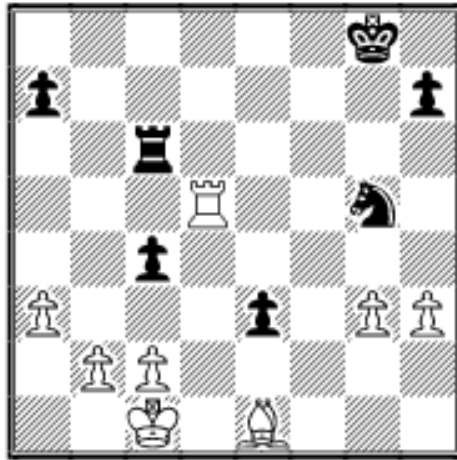
9.05 R.J.Fischer (2740) - M.Taimanov (2620) Vancouver ccf 1971

75...Ng6 75...Nxc4!? was easier: **76.Rxc4 (76.hxc4 Ke6 77.Rf4 Rf7=) 76...Re7 77.Rg6 Re6= 76.Ra6 Ne5 77.Kf4 Rf7+** Now **77...Nxc4?** doesn't work any longer: **78.hxc4 Rg8 79.g5 Rf8+ 80.Kg4 Ke5 81.Kh5 Kf5 82.Kh6+- 78.Kg5 Rg7+ 79.Kf5 Rf7+ 80.Rf6 Rxf6+ 81.Kxf6**



The position is still drawn, but now great care is required: **81...Ke4?** (81...Nd3 82.h4 Nf4 83.Kf5 Kd6 84.Kxf4 Ke7=; 81...Kd6 draws as well.) **82.Bc8 Kf4 83.h4 Nf3 84.h5 Ng5 85.Bf5 Nf3 86.h6 Ng5 87.Kg6 zugzwang 87...Nf3 88.h7 Nh4+ 89.Kf6 1-0**

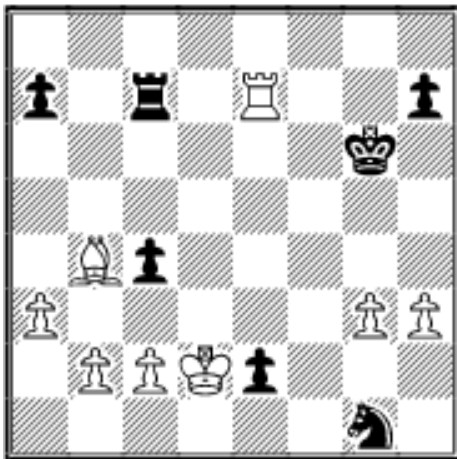
I want to end this column with two of my own games:



9.06 J.Hector (2546) - K.Müller (2523)
International Hamburg City
Championship 2001

Something had gone wrong after the opening and I had to pin all my hopes on the passed e-pawn: **29...Nf3 30.Rd8+ Kf7 31.Bb4 Ng1** I had originally planned to continue with 31...c3? until I spotted 32.Rf8+ Kg6 33.Rxf3 e2 34.Re3 Rd6 35.Bxd6+-. At first I had only seen 35.Rxe2 Rd1+ 36.Kxd1 cxb2 when I can fight on. **32.Rf8+ Kg6 33.Re8 e2**

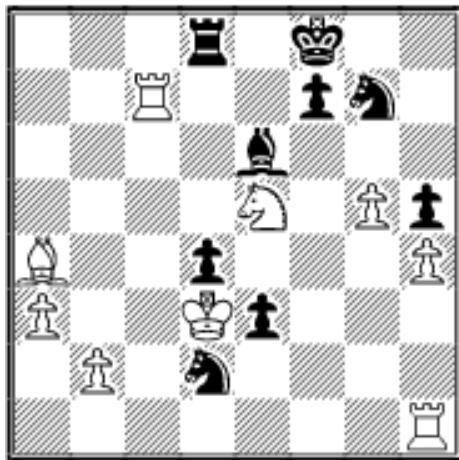
34.Kd2 Rc7 35.Re7



35...Rc8?? a sad error in time trouble, which spoils everything as Black's rook can't move to f8 in the critical line. 35...Rc6! was called for, when it is very difficult to prove a win for White, e.g.,

(A) 36.Bc3 Rc8 37.Re6+ (37.g4 Rf8 38.Rg7+ Kh6 39.g5+ Kh5 40.Bf6 Re8) 37...Kg5 38.Ke1 Rf8 39.Bd2+ Kf5 40.Re7 Kg6; or B) 36.g4 36...Kg5 37.Ke1 Rf6 38.Rg7+ Kh6 39.g5+ Kxg7 40.gxf6+ Kxf6 41.Bc5 Nxb3 42.Bxa7 Nf4 43.Bb8 Nd5 44.Kxe2 Ke6 and

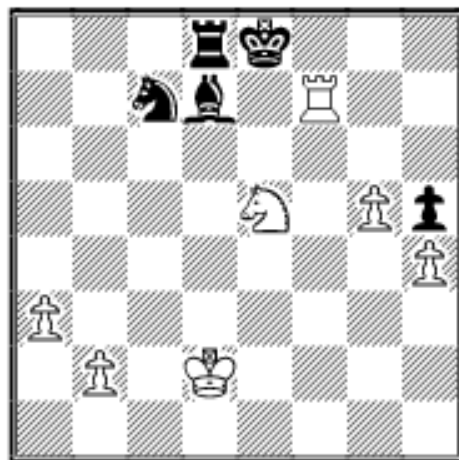
White is better, but is he winning ? **36.Ke1+- Rd8 37.Kf2 Rd1 38.Be1 Rc1 39.Kxg1 Rxe1+ 40.Kf2 Rb1 41.Kxe2 Rxb2 42.Kd2 a5 43.Re5 Rb1 44.Rxa5 Rg1 45.h4 h6 46.h5+ Kf6 47.Kc3 Rg2 48.Ra6+ Ke5 49.Rg6 Kd5 50.a4 1-0**



I start a bit earlier:

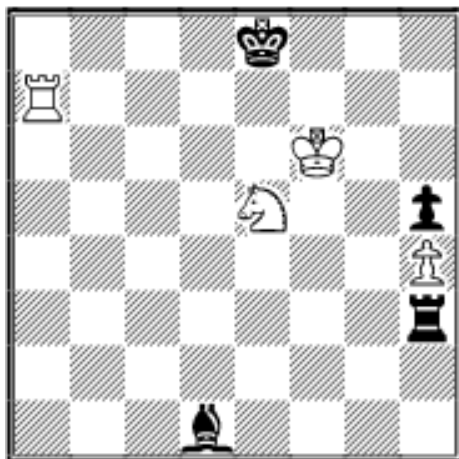
9.07 K.Müller (2523) - C.C.Buhr (2392)
International Hamburg City
Championship

Black's passed pawns are not as dangerous as they seem to be: **34.Bd7! Bd5 35.Re1 Be4+ 36.Kxd4 Ne6+ 37.Kxe3 Nxc7 38.Kxd2 38.Rd1!** was even better: 38...Nd5+ 39.Kxd2 f6 40.gxf6 Nxf6 41.Ke3+- **38...Bf5 39.Rf1 Bxd7 40.Rxf7+ Ke8**



Time trouble was over and I had time to think again. Unfortunately I made the wrong decision: **41.Ke1? 41.Rxd7!** was called for, e.g., 41...Rxd7+ 42.Nxd7 Kxd7 43.a4 Nd5 44.g6! to avoid a blockade 44...Ke6 45.a5 Kf6 46.Kd3 Kxg6 47.Kd4 Ne7 48.Kc5 Kf5 49.a6 Nc8 50.b4+- **41...Ne6! 42.g6 42.Rh7 Ba4 43.Rh8+ Ke7 44.Rxh5 Rd1+ 45.Kf2 Rd2+ 46.Ke3 Rxb2** and Black should be able to hold on. **42...Ba4 43.Rh7** After 43.g7 Rd1+ White's king lacks shelter: 44.Kf2 Rd2+ 45.Kg3 Rd3+= **43...Rd1+**

44.Kf2 Rd2+ 45.Ke3 Rxb2 46.g7 Nxb2 47.Rxb2 Rb3+ 48.Kf4 Rxa3 49.Ra7 Rh3 50.Kg5 Bd1 51.Kf6



The position is now completely drawn of course and my opponent defended accurately: **51...Bf3! 51...Kd8?! 52.Rd7+ Kc8 53.Rxd1 Rxh4 54.Rc1+** is unnecessarily risky. **52.Ke6 52.Rh7 Kd8 53.Nf7+ Kc8= (53...Ke8? 54.Ng5 Rxh4 55.Ne6+-) 52...Kd8 53.Kd6 (53.Rd7+!? Kc8 54.Nxf3 Rxf3 55.Rd5 Rf4 56.Rxh5 Re4+ 57.Kf5 Ra4=) 53...Kc8 54.Rc7+ Kb8 55.Nd7+ Ka8 56.Nb6+ Kb8 57.Nd7+ Ka8 58.Rc2 Kb7 59.Rb2+ Ka6 60.Ne5 Bh1 61.Rb4 Re3 62.Rf4 Re4 63.Rxe4 Bxe4 64.Nd7 Bf3 65.Ke5**

Kb7 66.Kf4 Kc7 67.Nf6 1/2-1/2

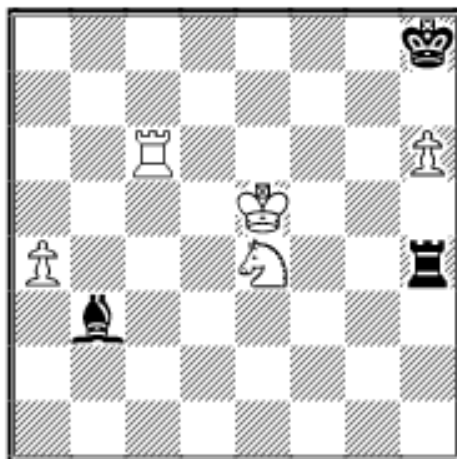
Sources:

ChessBase MEGABASE 2001

Informator 69

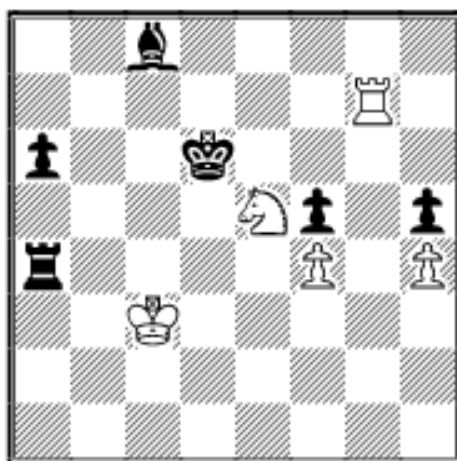
The Week in Chess

Exercises
(Solutions next month)



**E9.01 *Qin Kanying* (2501) -
A.Stefanova (2514) FIDE World
Cup-B (Women) Shenyang 2000**

White to move and win

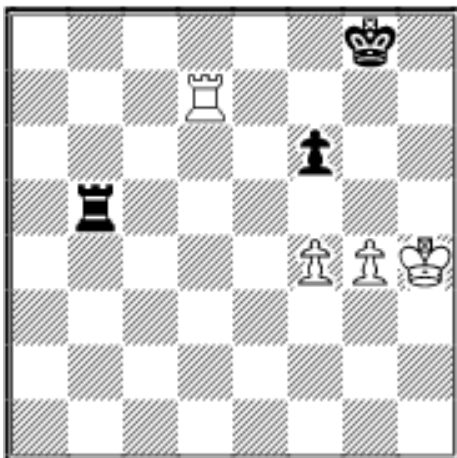


**E9.02 *G.Kasparov* (2849) - *P.Svidler*
(2695) World Cup of Rapid Chess-A
Cannes 2001**

Kasparov found a convincing way to reach the draw. What did he play?

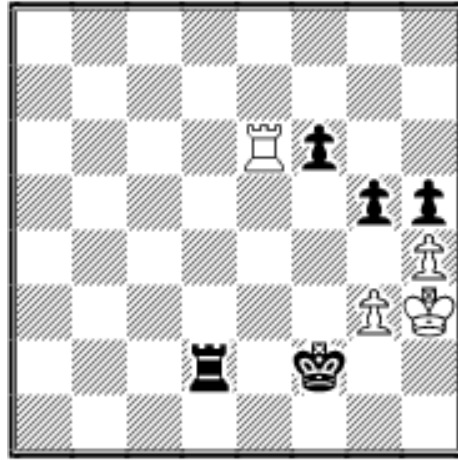
Solutions to last month's exercises

E8.01 *A.Zaitsev* - *R.Hübner* Büsum 1969



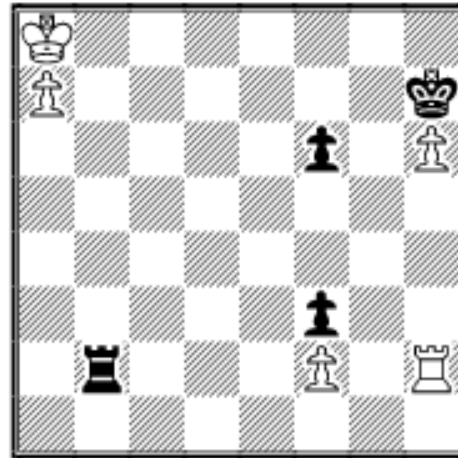
Black has to defend very carefully:

1...Rb1? 1...Rb4 was called for e.g. 2.f5 Ra4 3.Kh5 Rf4! (3...Kf8? 4.g5! Ke8 5.Rb7 fxg5 6.Kg6 g4 7.f6+-) 4.Ra7 Kf8 **A)** 5.g5 Rxf5 6.Kg6 Rf1! (6...Rxf5+?? 7.Kxf6+-) 7.gxf6 Rg1+=; **B)** 5.Kg6 5...Rxf5+ 6.Kxf6 Kg8 7.Ra8+ Kh7 8.Kf7 Rb4= **2.Kh5 Rg1 3.g5 fxg5 4.f5! Kf8 5.f6** and Hübner resigned due to **5...Rf1 6.Kg6 Ke8 7.Ra7 g4 8.f7+ Kf8 9.Ra8+ Ke7 10.Re8+ Kd6 11.f8Q+ Rxf8 12.Rxf8 Ke5 13.Kg5 g3 14.Rf3 g2 15.Rg3+-**



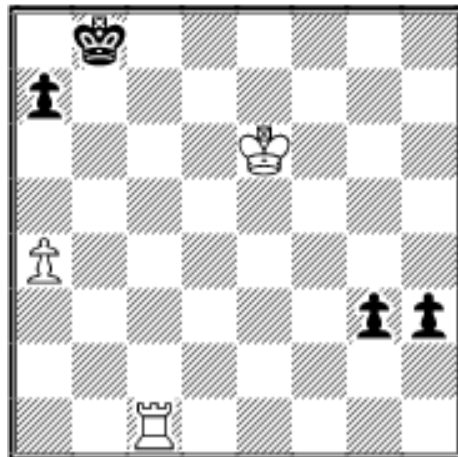
E8.02 F. de Gleria (2432) - A.Kveinys (2533) Julian Borowski-B Essen 2001

De Gleria drew as follows: **82.hxg5!**
 (82.g4? Rd3+ 83.Kh2 hxg4 84.Rxf6+ Rf3 85.Rxf3+ Kxf3 86.hxg5 Kf2 87.g6 g3+-+; 82.Kh2? Kf3+ 83.Kg1 Kxg3-+; 82.Rxf6+? Kg1 83.hxg5 Rh2#) **82...fxg5**
 (82...Kg1 83.Re1+ Kf2 84.Re6=) **83.Re5!?** **Kg1 84.Re1+ Kf2 85.Re5 Kg1 86.Re1+ Kf2 87.Re5 Kg1 1/2-1/2**



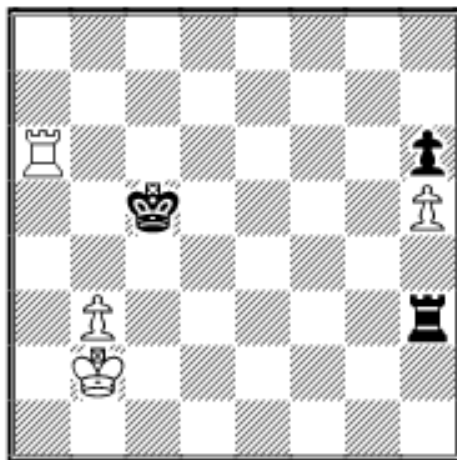
E8.03 A.Ehrke - K.Müller Hamburg 1994

After **53...Ra2** a draw was agreed as Black's counterplay is just in time, if White wins Black's rook for his a-pawn:
54.Rh5 Rxf2 55.Rb5 Ra2 56.Kb8
 (56.Rf5 f2 57.Rxf6 Rb2=) **56...Kxh6**
57.a8Q Rxa8+ 58.Kxa8 Kg6 59.Kb7 f2 60.Rb1 Kf5 61.Rf1 Ke4 62.Rxf2 f5 63.Kc6 f4 64.Kc5 Ke3=



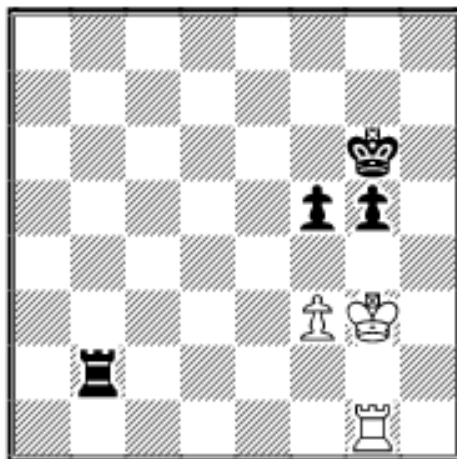
E8.04

The solution runs: **1.Kd7!** (1.a5? Kb7 2.a6+ Kxa6 3.Kd5 g2!-+) **1...Kb7 2.Rc6 h2 3.a5 a6 4.Rc7+=**



E8.05 A. Shirov (2722) - A. Morozevich (2749) Astana 2001

55...Kb4? Both players missed the surprising **55...Rxb5!** **56.Ra5+ Kb4 57.Rxb5** stalemate **56.Rb6+ Kc5 57.Rxb6 Kb4 58.Kc2! Rc3+ 59.Kd2 Rh3 60.Rh8 Kc5 61.Kc2 Kb5 62.Kd2 Kc6 63.h6 Kb7 64.b4 Ka7 65.Ke2 Rh4 66.Kf3 Rxb4 67.Rg8 Rh4 68.Rg6 Kb7 69.Kg3 Rh1 70.Kf4 Kc7 71.Kf5 Kd7 72.Kf6 Ke8 73.Kg7 1-0**



E8.06 R. Mamedov (2306) - Z. Izoria (2489) Batumi open 2001

A nice stalemate trick saved the day:
81...f4+ **81...Kf6 82.Ra1 f4+ 83.Kh3 Rf2 84.Ra6+=) 82.Kh3** (82.Kg4?? Rh2 83.Rh1 Rg2+ 84.Kh3 Rg3+--+) **82...Rf2 83.Rxg5+! Kxg5** stalemate 1/2-1/2

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