



West Chester Chess Club - West Chester, PA

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Over 50 Years of Great Chess!

The West Chester Chess Club plays USCF-rated [OTB chess on Thursday evenings](#), for players 16 years of age or older. Details and contacts are [here](#). For newsletter-related questions and comments, please reach out to wccnewsletter1974@gmail.com

Newsletter – February 2026

Content:

- West Chester Chess Club, Championship: Aaron Biscoe – Joseph Mucerino
- Visualization exercise
- Did you know? [Match results on the WCCC website](#)
- West Chester Chess Club, Gap Open: Kritarth Acharya – John Helmbrecht
- The Lewis Chess Pieces
- A Practical Pawn Endgame - Pattern Recognition Supported by Calculation
- 58th Annual Liberty Bell Open: Jeffrey Gelman (1910) - Kritarth Acharya (1772)
- Tribute to Greg Nolan: “I play chess, therefore I exist”

West Chester Chess Club Championship, Round 2, January 15, 2026: Aaron Biscoe (2057) – Joseph Mucerino (2057)

By Joe Mucerino

[Click here](#) to follow the game on lichess.org.

Aaron and I both had the same official January USCF rating!
1.d4 d5 2.Nf3 Nf6 3.e3 e6 4.Bd3 c5 5.b3



This is a Colle-Zukertort System. 5.c3 would be a Colle-Koltanowski.

5...Nbd7 6.Bb2 b6 7.0-0 Bb7 8.Nbd2 Bd6 9.Ne5 Qe7

Stockfish does not like this. It prefers castling. But then white will play f3 with a rook lift. That, along with white's bishops, really put black's king in the crosshairs.

10.f4 0-0-0?!



Probably dubious, but I want to try to get white out of book and have a double-edged game. Sometimes I win, and sometimes I lose.

11.a4 Ne4?!

The odd looking 11...a5 might slow down white's attack for a few moves.

12.a5 f6 13.Nxd7 Rxd7 14.axb6 axb6 15.Nxe4 dxe4 16.Ba6 Rhd8 17.Qe2 Bb8 18.Qb5



With the threat of 19.Qc6+ Rc7 20.Bxb7 mate, which I did not appreciate at first. I wanted to play 18...Qd6 and 19...Qc6 to trade queens, but then I saw the pin.

18...Kc7?!

18...Qd6 was still best.

19.Bxb7 Kxb7 20.dxc5?!

A slight error. White should double the rooks along the a file.

20...Qxc5 21.Qa6+ Kc7 22.Bd4

I was hoping white would play this move, because now I can get an imbalance.

22...Rxd4 23.exd4 Rxd4 24.Kh1 Rd2



25.c4?? Qd4??

Both players missed that 25...e3 was pretty strong.

26.c5 Qxc5 27.b4 Qc6 28.Qa3 Kd8 29.b5 Qd6



30.Qxd6+??

White, who has been winning for a while, now loses all of his advantage.

30...Bxd6 31.Rfd1 Bxf4 32.Rxd2+ Bxd2 33.Kg1 Be3+ 34.Kf1 Bd4 35.Ra4 Bc5 36.Rxe4 Ke7



37.Ra4 Kf7??

What was I thinking? After 37...f5, black's king stays closer to the center, and it is much easier to move the pawns.

38.Ra7+

White is winning again.

38...Kg6 39.Rc7

With the threat of capturing the bishop and pushing the b pawn.

39...Bd4



40.Ke2??

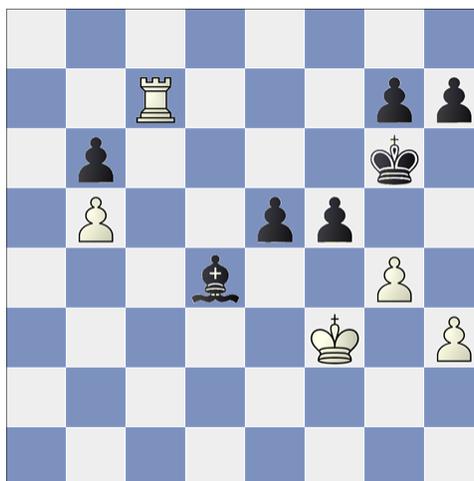
Now we are getting into some technical stuff that even I don't fully understand. According to Stockfish, white went from +4.0 to +0.25 on this move! Moving the king into the center certainly make sense to me! Stockfish likes both 40.Re7 and 40.Rd7, with the former as its top choice. After 40.Re7 e5, the *only* winning move is 41.g4. The idea is to restrict black's king, while white's king goes to c6 with the idea of the rook capturing on b6.

So, what's wrong with 40.Ke2 right away? Black again has the opportunity to play 40...f5 with a later 40...Kf6, and white's king is basically locked out from reaching c6 because the pawn on e6 takes away the d5 square. So, on move 40, white needed to either capture the e6 pawn or force black to move it to allow white's king to infiltrate later.

40...e5??

Considering it took me 15 minutes with the help of a computer to understand what was going on white's last move, it's no surprise that I blundered on the board. For reasons explained in the last note, this actually helps white. 40...f5 and 40...h5 are still equal.

41.g4 Bg1 42.h3 Bd4 43.Kf3 f5



44.h4??

White loses much of his advantage here. I bet everything has to do with white's ability to play Ke4-d5-c6. By far the best move is 44.Rc6+ Kg5 45.h4+ Kxh4 46.gxf5 Kg5 47. Ke4 h5 48.Rg6+ Kh4 49.Rxg7. So,

black's king has been pushed to the side and is blocking the pawn he wants to push.

44...fxg4+

Wow, I did something right! This is the only move that retains equality.

45.Kxg4

This is correct. In previous notes, I said white's king wanted to go to e4. But, in this position, 45.Ke4?? would be losing for white. Black's winning line is 45...h6! (not 45...h5? because black's king wants to go to h5) 46.Rb7 Kh5 47.Rxg7 Kxh4 48.Rg6 h5 and black wins.

45...h5+ 46.Kg3

All king moves are equally as good.

46...Kf6

The only moves that leads to equality.

47.Rd7 g5

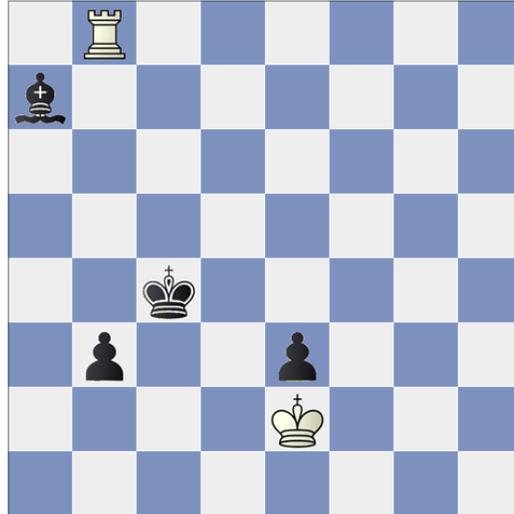
My whole plan was to liquidate white's h pawn, run my king and capture the b pawn. I would be guaranteed a draw and possibly have slight winning chances.

48.Rh7 gxh4+ 49.Kxh4 Ke6 50.Rc7 Kd5 5b.Kxh5 Bc5 52.Kg5 e4 53.Kg4 Kc4 54.Kf4 e3 55.Kf3 Kxb5



I did what I wanted and simplified things. I really cannot lose, but can I win? Now, I tried a lot of trial and error.

56.Ke2 Kc4 57.Rb7 b5 58.Rb8 b4 59.Rb7 b3 60.Rb8 Bd4 61.Rc8+ Bc5 62.Rb8 Kc3 63.Rc8 Kc4 64.Rb8 Bb4 65.Rc8+ Kd4 66.Rb8 Kc4 67.Rc8+ Bc5 68.Rb8 Ba7



69.Rb7??

This gives me my chance! But, with only two minutes left on my clock, I did not realize it. White needed to play 69.Rc8+.

69...Bd4 70.Rc7+ Kb5??

This throws away the win. Correct is 70...Bc5, but I didn't see the win. One line is 71.Rb7 Kc3 72.Rc7 Kb4 73.Kd3 b2 74.Rb7+ Ka3 75.Rb8 e2 76.Kc4 (threatening mate) Ka2 77.Ra8+ Ba3 and one of the pawns will queen.

71.Kd3 Bc5 72.Rc8 Bb4 73.Rb8+ Kc5 74.Rc8+ Kb5 75.Rb8+ Kc5 76.Rc8+ ½-½

Visualization exercise

By Dirk Troltenier

One important skill in playing chess well is the ability to think several moves ahead, i.e., to visualize what the position will be like. Visualization is a skill that requires continued practice to get better at. To that end, check out the exercises below to test and improve your visualization skill.

The solutions to the last 3 problems below [are chapters in this lichess study](#):

- 1) Let's start with something that's not so hard: After 1.e4 c5 2.Nf3 d6 3.d4 cd4:
Why is playing 4.Be3 not the best idea?
- 2) This one is a little harder to see: The game Blohberger - Mastrovasilis went: 1.e4 c5 2.Nf3 e6 3.d4 cxd4 4.Nxd4 a6 5.Bf4
What should be Black's next move?
- 3) I am glad you are still trying: The game Gutman, Lev - Forthoffer, Patrick went: 1.e4 Nc6 2.Nf3 d6 3.d4 Nf6 4.c3 Nxe4

What should be White's next move?

4) Now this one, a study from Hasek, is hard, even when using a chess board:

White: Ke7, g5, h4

Black: Kh8, h7, h5

What should be White's next move?

Did you know? -> Match results on the WCCC website

By Dirk Troltenier

In our recurring column "Did you know?" we this time want to point a special feature on the [wonderful WCCC website](#). You can find all your match results of all WCCC tournaments on the [Club Members and Match Results](#) page. Who you played against, in which tournament and with which result, including USCF rating. The page is updated after each Swiss or quad is completed and published on the USCF site. Check it out!

West Chester Chess Club, Gap Open: Kritarth Acharya (1769) – John Helmbrecht (1831)

By John Helmbrecht

[Click here](#) to follow the game on lichess.org.

1.d4 d5 2.Nf3 Nf6 3.Bf4 Since returning to over-the-board rated play after a 30+ year break, I've noticed that the London is a very popular club opening!

3...e6 4.e3 Bd6 5.Bg3 White retreats the bishop anticipating that Black does not want to capture and open up the h-file.

5...0-0 My plan is to play c5, Qc7, Nbd7 and fight for the e5 square.

6.Bd3 c5 7.c3 Qc7 8.Nbd2 Nbd7 9.0-0 b6 Trying to find some active squares for my white squared bishop.

10.Rc1 Bb7 11.Qc2 c4 Planning queen side expansion with a possible b5 coming next.

12.Be2 b5 13.Rfe1 I assume that Kritarth was focusing on preparing e4.

13...Ne4? Ill-timed which gives white the advantage in the center. The engine likes 13...Bxg3 14. hxg3 Rfc8 and still playing for an advantage on the queen side.

14.Bxd6 Qxd6 15.Nxe4 dxe4 16.Nd2 f5 I thought this would be a good position for black but the engine thinks otherwise! Advantage is now for white which can start to attack my weakened pawns.

17.f3 17. b3! puts a lot of pressure on my c-pawn. During the game, I was expecting 17. f3.

17...Nf6 18.b3 Nd5 19.Bf1 Now what do I do? I am starting to not like my position!

19...exf3 20.Nxf3 Nb6 Keeping my c4 pawn protected but now I have allowed a very strong knight to

be placed on e5.

21.Ne5 Now that is a well placed knight!

21...Be4 22.Qf2 Qd5 23.bxc4 Nxc4 24.Bxc4 bxc4 (At this point, Kritarth picked up his queen rook with the intention of moving 25. Rb1 but then realized that my bishop covered the square. So, since he had to move the rook somewhere because he touched it, he went placed it on d1.)

25.Rcd1 Rab8 26.Re2 Rb7 27.Rb2 Rfb8 28.Rdd2?



Stockfish recommends to exchange off a pair of rooks and then give the king some safety by moving the pawn to h3.

28...Qa5! Targeting the undefendable c3 pawn and then threatening back rank checks on c1.

29.Nd7?! Adds complications but less accurate. 29.Nxc4 Qxc3 30.Qe2 Rxb2 31.Nxb2 Qc1+ 32.Qd1 provides better resistance.

29...Rxb2? Lazy move. 29....Qxc3! would pretty much end the game. But I chose a less complicated and much inferior move.

30.Rxb2 Rd8 31.Qh4?! I was expecting 31. Ne5 here but Stockfish likes 31. Nc5 much better.

31...Rxd7 32.Rb8+ Kf7 33.Qh5+



Can you find the only move that keeps Black's advantage?

33...Ke7? I certainly did not find it! I figured that I could just run the king to the queen side and I would be safe. But this move allows White to escape with a draw. I think this might be out of my pay grade, but here is a variation that holds the advantage for black: 33...Kf6! 34.Rf8+ Ke7 35.Qe8+ Kd6 36.Qb8+ Rc7

37.Rf7 Qb6 38.Qd8+ Kc6 —+

34.Qg5+? 34. Qe8+! equalizes the game: 34.Qe8+ Kd6 35.Qf8+ Kc7 (35...Kc6 36.Qc8+ Kd6 (36...Qc7 37.Qa6+! +—) 37.Qf8+ =) 36.Qc8+ Kd6 37.Qf8+ =

34...Kd6 35.Qg3+ Kc6 36.Rc8+ Rc7 37.Rd8 Qa3 Covering the d6 square.

38.Qe1 Qe7 38...Rb7 should have been easy to see and is much better threatening check on b1. But, I guess I was just focusing on defense.

39.Rb8 Rb7 40.Rxb7 Qxb7 41.Kf2 Qb2+ Threatening to win the g pawn with mating possibilities unless the queen intervenes.

42.Qe2 Qxe2+ 43.Kxe2 Bxg2 44.Kf2 Be4 45.Kg3 g5 46.h3 h5 47.a3 a5 48.Kf2 Kb5 49.Ke2 Ka4 50.Kf2 Kxa3 51.Kg3 Kb3 52.Kf2 a4 53.Ke2 a3 54.Kf2 a2 55.Ke2 a1Q 56.Kf2 Kxc3 57.h4 g4 58.Kg3 Qf1 59.d5 Qf3+ 60.Kh2 Qg2# 0–1

The Lewis Chess Pieces

By Jaan Troldenier

Perhaps the most famous chess pieces the world over, the Lewis pieces have loomed large in the public imagination for many decades. Today they reside in the British Museum and the National Museum of Scotland when they are not on tour, but they can also be seen in facsimile in multiple popular entertainments ranging from an Agatha Christie mystery to a game of 'Wizard chess' played by Harry Potter and a friend.

The objects, carved painstakingly from walrus ivory, were rediscovered in 1831 buried in the soil of the island of Lewis in the Outer Hebrides of Scotland under somewhat mysterious circumstances—were wee folk involved? — along with a cache of other luxury items such as an elaborately carved belt buckle. Probably fashioned in Trondheim, Norway, a center for artisans specializing in working with walrus ivory, the nearly eighty pieces come from four incomplete sets. The pawns measure between $1\frac{3}{8}$ - $2\frac{1}{4}$ inches, with the other pieces larger, at $2\frac{3}{4}$ - 4 inches. How did they traverse the circa 500 nautical miles from Norway to Scotland? Norway held political and ecclesiastical sway over the Outer Hebrides, and Norwegian shipping lanes passed nearby. People in this area were world travelers. The pieces, along with other luxury goods, may have been in the pack of a merchant whose wares never reached his destined market (at least not in his lifetime). Did he misplace his pack? Was he the victim of a shipwreck? Or had there been criminal mischief at foot? The truth may never be known.

Chess dates from India around the sixth century AD and the Lewis pieces date from the twelfth century, when the game was relatively new in Europe. The pieces reflect this history. In fact, they are one of the first chess piece collections found that features both bishops and queens rather than elephants and viziers.

Indian chess sets had a piece in the form of an elephant which in Europe morphed into a bishop, reflecting the increasing power of the Christian church (and the total lack of elephants). What connects elephants and bishops? The elephants' tusks protrude in a way that to people of the time resembled bishops' miters.

Indian chess sets also boasted a vizier or royal counselor which in Europe morphed into the queen. Does this change indicate that royal wives in Europe enjoyed greater power than their counterparts in India? Maybe. The vizier to queen transformation probably reflects the power of earthly queens of the period such as the Holy Roman Empresses Adelaide (ruled 963-973 AD) and Theophano (ruled 983-999 AD). And perhaps celestial ones as well—the cult of Mary was burgeoning during the twelfth century.

Early European chess sets typically pitted white/beige against red, rather than black, and originally some of these pieces were apparently tinted red with cinnabar, a mercury-containing compound. However, few traces of this color remain. Now their shade is somewhat mottled owing to the interaction of their toothy substance with soil chemistry during their long sojourn under the earth.

Let's examine the photos of two of the pieces. Now imagine the other eighty or so and know that they are each individualized to a marked degree. There are some conventions, however. Kings can be identified by the swords they hold across their laps, which probably represent that they both actively participated in battle, and also meted out justice. Some kings are hirsute, one even sports what resemble dreadlocks, and some are clean-shaven, sporting different types of headgear. Many of the queens hold hands to their faces in what to us today looks like someone suffering toothache. Body language sometimes does not signify across the ages. This gesture may have



Queen



Berserker (Rook)

signified the queens' sorrow over warriors fallen in battle, or a habit of deep contemplation. (Contemporary depictions of Mary sometimes show her in this pose also.) Some of the queens hold what looks to us to be a cornucopia. This could have been a drinking horn or a telecommunications device, medieval style. Noblewomen of the time have been found buried with horns stuffed with coins, so the horn may indicate the queen's wealth. My own personal favorite pieces are the rooks, also called warders or berserkers. They are shown biting the edges of their own shields, in a gesture that to us is a bit comical but at the time registered their dedication to bloodletting and mayhem. Recall that English borrows its word *berserk* from this type of Norse warrior, so frenzied and warlike,

and so intent on his enemy he can only quell his mania by biting his own shield. 'This is what I'll mete unto you next, my foe!'

What about their facial expressions? Are they bored? Angry? None of the pieces is depicted smiling. Medieval people loved jokes and ribaldry, but you would never know that from looking at their art.

Almost no one in art smiles before the thirteenth century, and anyone depicted smiling is typically a demon. The seriousness of the Lewis chess pieces' facial expressions probably signified to contemporary viewers that they represent venerable individuals. Smiles would be completely out of character.

Let's now consider some technical aspects of these intricate pieces, which are made from walrus tusk, specifically from either Iceland or Greenland.



You can see the curved shape of the tusk. We who have no experience carving walrus ivory do not realize that walrus ivory is not as uniform in its composition as elephant ivory, and some parts of it are more friable and prone to splitting. The artists who created the Lewis pieces had to take care to carve the larger, more ornate pieces such as the king from parts of the tusks least likely to fracture. This sometimes resulted in particular pieces ending up with a bit of a lean to them.

Another aspect of the carvings that demonstrates the artists' expertise is their overall shape. The pieces with human form lack a critical body part—their neck. Consider how and how often chess pieces are picked up. If these had been fashioned with a neck, how prone to breakage at that point they would be!

Some of the kings and queens boast elaborate abstract designs on their reverse, to give both players something to contemplate as each plotted his or her moves. What planning and expertise went into crafting these pieces.

Walrus do not donate their tusks for use in human games and the trajectory of these specimens of Arctic sea mammal dentition from Greenland to the British Museum is itself worthy of research for what it says about doughty walrus, medieval trade routes, the courage of sea-faring peoples, and the skill of Trondheim artisans.

The Lewis chess pieces are good to think.

All images from the Metropolitan Museum of Art. Follow this link for more information, more images of the pieces, and several videos: <https://www.metmuseum.org/ru/exhibitions/listings/2011/the-game-of-kings-medieval-ivory-chessmen-from-the-isle-of-lewis>

A Practical Pawn Endgame - Pattern Recognition Supported by Calculation

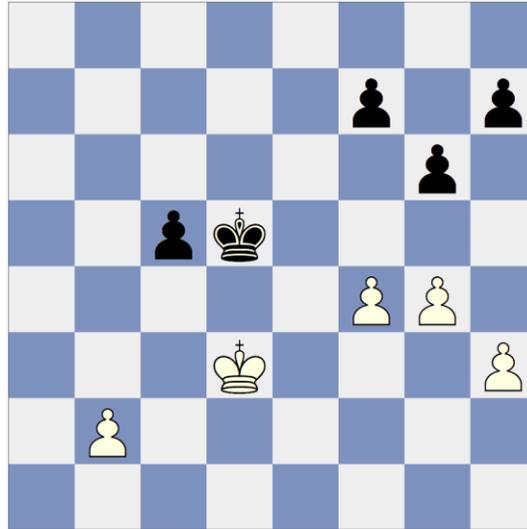
By Denis Markov

What comes to mind first when you think about studying endgames? Memorizing theoretical positions? Lucena, Philidor? The “dreaded” *Dvoretsky’s Endgame Manual*, the book that everyone owns but few actually read? Hours spent studying positions that may never occur?

Most club players don’t like endgames. We don’t have much time, and naturally we want to invest it wisely. The common logic is that not every game reaches the endgame, while every game has an opening, and most games have at least some semblance of a middlegame. Guided by this approach, we look for trickier opening lines, solve tactical puzzles, and watch game analysis videos. Then we play, hoping to win early enough to avoid having to convert an extra pawn in a rook endgame - let alone mate with a knight and bishop.

In the modern world, playing an endgame is often not the same experience as it was 30 or 40 years ago. Back then, tournament games would be adjourned and finished on a different day. This meant you had plenty of time to research the position with a reference book or consult a stronger player. That’s where the aforementioned “Endgame Manual” would come in handy! Now, there are no adjournments and time controls are shorter. If you have 10 minutes left to figure out a complex endgame, it’s not too bad. What *is* bad is having to play it with only a 5-second increment. You only know what you know, or what your intuition tells you.

In this article, I would like to give an example from one of my recent tournaments. It’s a pawn endgame.

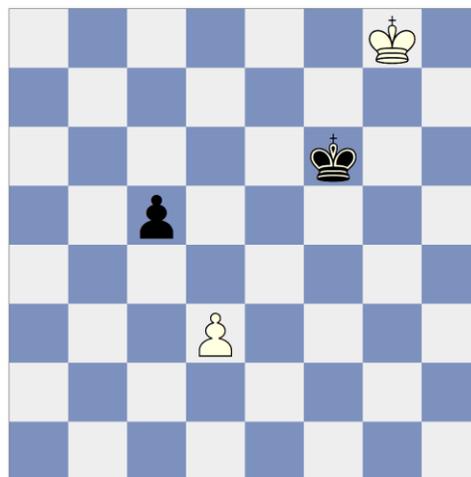


N.N. vs Markov, Exton, PA, 2026

Usually, pawn endgames are more about calculation than strategy — only a limited number of moves remain, and with enough time one should be able to figure out the final outcome. However, in this case there wasn't much time left, and both of us had to play rather intuitively. Where did that intuition come from?

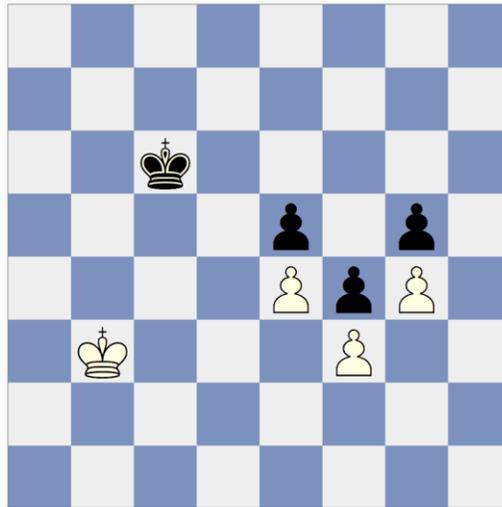
Before going through the endgame, let me show you three basic positions and one more complex example. Being familiar with these helped me navigate a more complicated situation in an actual game.

Example 1



It's White to move, and at first glance it may seem that Black should be winning. The black king is closer to both pawns, and the white king has been "shouldered" into the corner. But after 1. Kf8 Ke5 2. Ke7 Kd4 3. Kd6, Black has no way to capture the white pawn without losing contact with the pawn on c5. If the pawn moves, it will be immediately exchanged. The white king attacks the black pawn from behind, and the position is a draw.

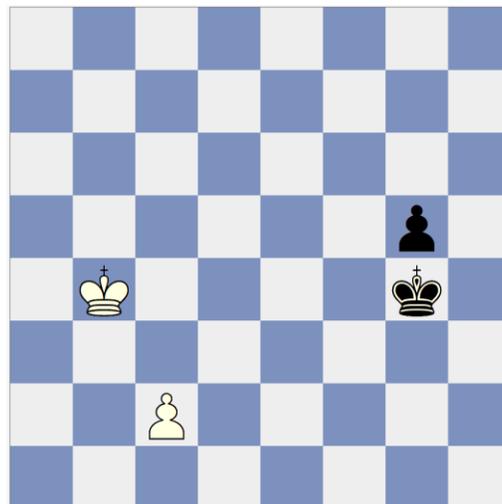
Example 2



A rather obvious and intuitive move here is 1. Kc4 — and it's the only winning move. The white king opposes its black counterpart, and White wins thanks to superior king activity. The game could continue: 1... Kd6 2. Kb5 Kd7 3. Kc5 Ke6 4. Kc6 Ke7 5. Kd5, and in a few moves the e5 pawn will fall.

Let's move to a slightly more difficult example.

Example 3



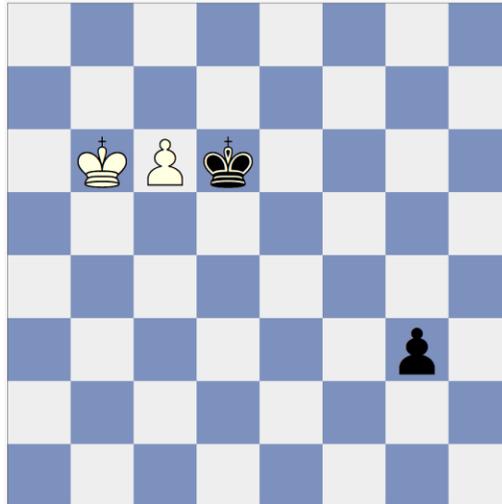
Obuhovski – Grabczewski, Dubna 1971

Here Black starts with 1... Kf4. At first glance, it looks like both pawns will queen at the same time. Can Black win? Yes!

The correct plan is to attack the white pawn in order to force the white king to defend it — specifically to step onto b6 so that when the black pawn queens, it does so with check.

2. c4 g4
3. c5 Ke5

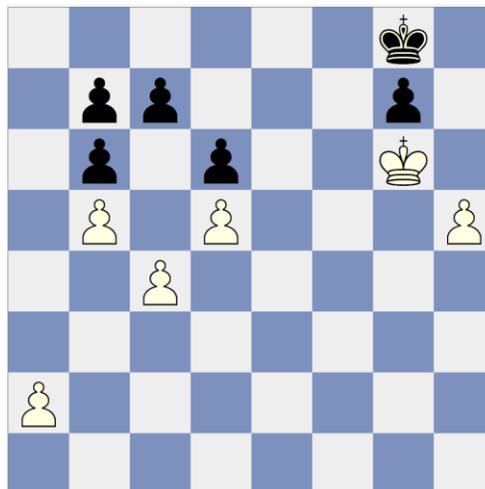
4. Kb5 g3
5. c6 Kd6
6. Kb6



Now 6... g2 7. c7 g1Q+ wins for Black.

And now the most difficult and very instructive example.

Example 4



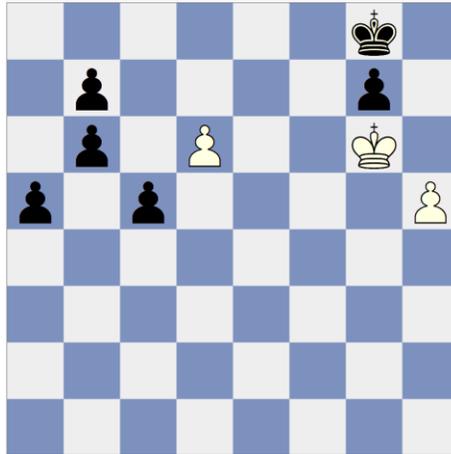
Yusupov – Ionov, Podolsk 1977

Here White has a pawn breakthrough on the queenside. However, to achieve it, the a-pawn must reach a4. Should White play 1. a4 or 1. a3? It turns out that the slower move is correct.

1. a3 Kf8
2. a4 Kg8
3. c5 dxc5 (after bxc5 White wins easily by obtaining a remote passed pawn on the a-file)
4. a5 bxa5

5. b6 cxb6

6. d6 — and we have our passed pawn!



There is one more trick:

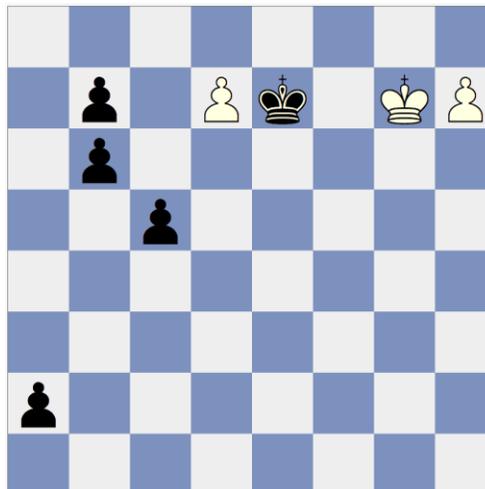
6... Kf8

7. d7 Ke7

8. Kxg7 a4

9. h6 a3

10. h7 a2

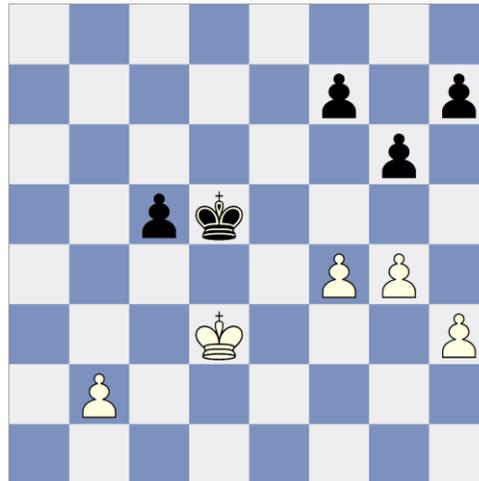


11. d8Q+! Kxd8

12. h8Q+ — and White wins.

What is critical in this example is how important spare tempi can be. In many pawn endgames, you win because you have pawn moves available while your opponent does not. Had the white pawn already been on a4 instead of a3 earlier, the breakthrough would not have worked because the black king would have been one step closer. In fact, the pawn break would lose now! Which means a draw - White is left without any active plans.

Now let's return to the position from my game.



How would you assess this position? Let me disappoint you — with best play, it's a draw. However, in a practical game anything can happen, and there is still play left.

1... c4+

With this move, I create a pawn structure similar to Example 1 and gain some space. Based on that example, this structure should not be losing. Worst case scenario, the pawns will be exchanged. What's particularly useful about this move is that my opponent now faces an important decision — where should the king go? There are five possible squares: e3, e2, d2, c2, or c3. With time trouble approaching, asking a multiple-choice question is often a good practical strategy.

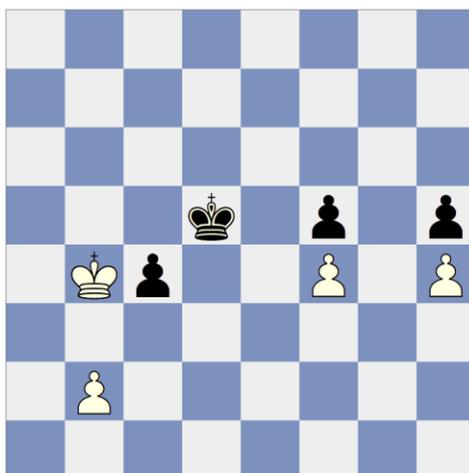
How should White choose?

There are two strategic options. Should White allow the black king to infiltrate on the kingside? If yes, then the only counterplay lies in attacking the c4 pawn and promoting the b-pawn. If not, White must think about creating an opposition setup that denies the black king entry squares. The situation is complex because both sides still have spare tempi — the pawn structure is not yet fixed — so concrete calculation is required.

2. Ke3?

It turns out that 2. Kc3 was the only move to hold the draw.

After 2... f5 3. gxf5 gxf5 4. Kc5 h6 5. h4 h5, neither side can make progress:



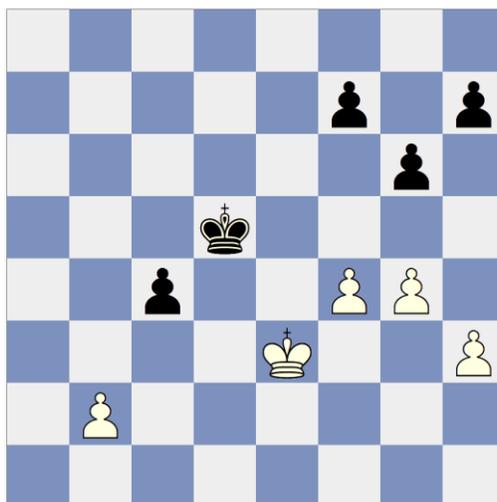
White shuffles the king between b4 and b5, while Black stays on d4 and d5. If Black goes after the f4 pawn, it leads to a pawn race where both sides queen at the same time.

Other tries fail:

2... Kc5? 3. g5! (again, Black lacks spare tempi), or

2... Ke4 3. Kxc4 — both lose for Black.

Let's get back to the game. After 2. Ke3? we reach this position:

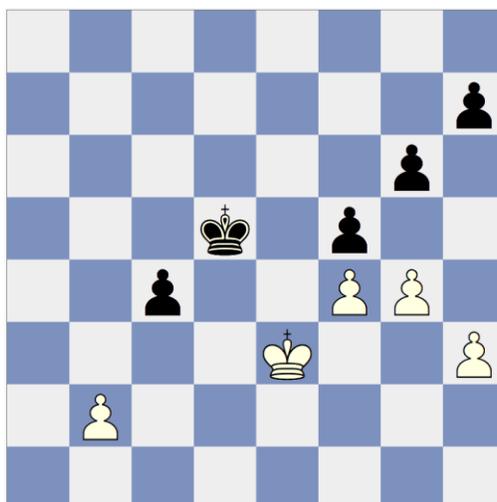


Black now has two candidate moves: 2... h5 and 2... f5.

2... h5 promises no more than a draw. After 3. f5! gxf5 loses to 4. gxh5, and White obtains a remote passed pawn. After 3... hxg4 4. hxg4 fxg6 5. fxg5, the position remains drawn.

In a practical game, you don't need to calculate everything to the end — seeing 3. f5 is enough to postpone further analysis of this line and examine 2... f5 instead.

2... f5!

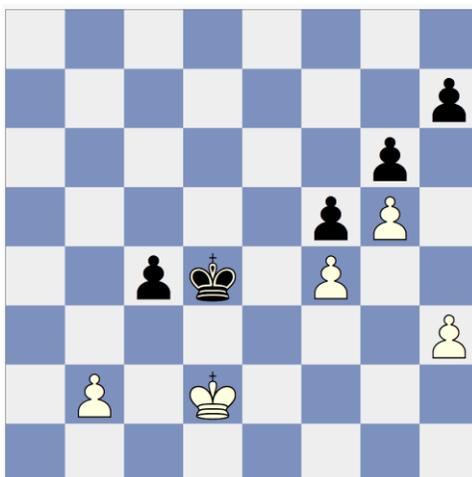


After 3. gxf5 gxf5, the simplest continuation is 3... h6, using an extra tempo. Then 4. h4 h5 — and White must eventually allow the black king to infiltrate.

3. g5 Kc5

4. Kd2 (4. h4 fails to 4... Kd5)

4... Kd4



We've made progress. Think about Example 2 and king's activity! Is it enough to win?

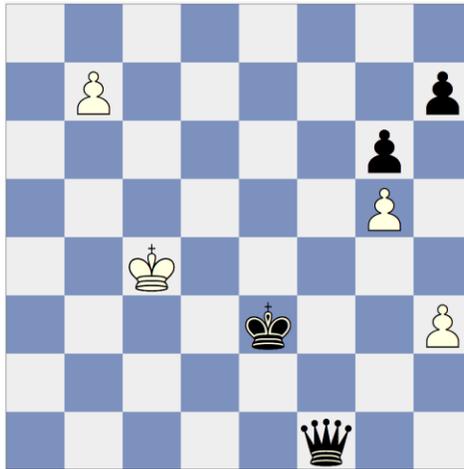
From Example 1, we know that there is no way to win the b-pawn directly - shouldering the white king won't work. So the only realistic chance is a pawn race.

And we have an advantage in that race. Why?

First, the white king has lost contact with the c4 pawn - it won't be captured immediately (recall that 2. Kc3 was essential). Second, the pawn is already on c4. If White captures it and Black promotes the f-pawn, the promotion will come with a check. Example 3 comes into play!

With that understanding, the rest is straightforward.

5. Kc2 Ke4
6. Kc3 Kxf4
7. Kxc4 Ke3
8. b4 f4
9. b5 f3
10. b6 f2
11. b7 f1Q+



There comes the check — and a few moves later White resigned.

58th Annual Liberty Bell Open - Rd 4:

Jeffrey Gelman (1910) - Kritarth Acharya (1772)

By Kritarth Acharya

[Click here](#) to follow the game on chess.com

1.e4 e6 2.d4 d5 3.e5 c5 4.c3 Nc6 5.Nf3 Qb6



The standard French Advance Variation. White secures a space advantage and hopes to launch a successful kingside attack, while Black aims to undermine the d4 pawn by challenging the center.

6.a3 Bd7 7.b4 cxd4 8.cxd4 Nge7 9.Be2?! Nf5



Building the pressure against d4. 9.Be2 is more passive, and an interesting alternative is 9.Nc3 Nf5 10.Na4 Qd8 11.Bb2 a6 12. Bd3 Na7 13.Nc5 resulting in a preferable position for White.

10.Be3 Be7 11.0-0 0-0 12.Qd2 Rac8? 13.Rc1 f6 14.exf6?!



A standard pawn break in the French, challenging the center. 14.exf6 is okay, but gives away White's space advantage. A better option would have been 14.Nc3 keeping the tension and a possible continuation could be 14...fxe5 15.dxe5 d4 16.Nd1 dxe3 17.Qxd7 exf2+ 18.Nxf2 Kh8 19.Qxe6 Nfd4 where White is up a pawn but Black's piece activity gives him a slight advantage.

14...Bxf6 15.Rd1 Kh8?



I spent a lot of time thinking on move 15, and this was my calculation: 15...e5 16.dxe5?? Nxe3 17.fxe3 Nxe5 18.Qxd5+ Be6 19.Qd2. My hesitation in the game served well since 16.dxe5 was a mistake and my opponent could have simply played 16.Nc3 with an equal position.

According to the engine, I could have played 15...Be8 instead which is a normal bishop maneuver in the French, to later place it on the kingside.

16.Nc3 h6?! 17.Bb5 Nxe3 18.fxe3



Here, 18...Nxd4 was something I considered during the game, but soon realized it didn't work because of: 19.Nxd4 Bxb5 20.Ndxb5 (20.Ncxb5 is still winning after 20...e5 21.Nf5 Qxb5 22.Nd6 and white forks the Queen and Rook) 20...a6 21.Nd4! and white has successfully won a piece.

18...a6 19.Bxc6 Bxc6 20.Rdc1 Rce8 21.Re1 e5 22.h3?! e4!



22.h3 was a mistake by my opponent because it allows the crushing e4, which forces his knight back to a passive square on h2. His best moves were to take e5 with either the knight or the pawn, and the engine also seemed fine with 22.Rf1, opening up the somewhat better square on e1.

23.Nh2 Bh4 24.Rf1 Qc7 25.Rxf8+ Rxf8 26.Rf1 Rxf1+ 27.Nxf1 Qd6



Despite a fifteen-minute time disadvantage in this position, I was feeling confident because of the following:

- I had the bishop pair.
- All of White's pieces were playing defensive roles, while mine had attacking plans.
- The center was closed so I had better kingside attacking chances; e.g. Qg6-Qg5, Bd7 and h5 (with a later h6 and pawn storm).

As you will observe in the next few moves, my opponent would linger around with his pieces (and make grunting noises in the game) which gave me a mental boost when playing face-to-face.

28.Qe2 Qg6 29.Kh2 h5 30.Qd2 Be7 31. Qe2 Bd6+ 32.Kh1 h4 33.Kg1 Qf5 34.Qf2



A vital point in the game. I spent a lot of time deciding whether to trade queens in the game, and with 2 minutes on the clock I hastily took my opponent's piece, which was a mistake.

While annotating this game, I felt that this decision was rather inaccurate. I had been building my position for the past ten moves with a decent win in mind, and then just gave it up in one move. Trading queens is never the best when you have attacking possibilities, yet I let my opponent secure a draw by going ahead with the queen exchange.

The best move according to the engine is 34...Qh5, stopping any chances of counterplay. Though winning the game after this move wouldn't have been easy, I still would have had some chances. The game ended:

34... Qxf2+ 35.Kxf2 Kg8 36.Nd2 Kf7 37.Nb3 b6 38.Na1 Kf6 39.Nc2 b5 40.Ne2 Bd7 41.Nf4 after which I accepted his draw offer.

½-½

Tribute to Greg Nolan: “I play chess, therefore I exist”

As you all know, our friend and WCCC member, Greg Nolan, tragically passed away in October of last year. Please check out [Eric John's tribute to Greg and his chess activities](#).

