

Efstratios Grivas

Mastering queen vs pieces endgames



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Mastering queen vs pieces endgames
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KEY TO SYMBOLS

=	Equality or equal chances
±	White has a slight advantage
∓	Black has a slight advantage
±	White is better
∓	Black is better
+ -	White has a decisive advantage
- +	Black has a decisive advantage
∞	unclear
∞̄	with compensation
↔	with counterplay
↑	with initiative
→	with an attack
Δ	with the idea
□	only move
N	novelty
!	a good move
!!	an excellent move
?	a weak move
??	a blunder
!?	an interesting move
?!	a dubious move
+	check
#	mate

INTRODUCTION

Dear Reader,

As you may already be aware, the publishing house 'Chess Evolution' is printing a series called 'The Modern Endgame Manual' which will consist primarily of eight books and will deal with everything concerning the endgame.

I was surprisingly pleased when the Editor in Chief, GM Arkadij Naiditsch, asked me to write two of the total eight books. But I was a bit 'disappointed' when it was made clear to me that I would have to deal with a quite difficult subject: Queen vs Pieces Endgames!

But OK, nothing is really difficult nowadays. The modern author has at his disposal powerful databases, tablebases, analysed material, books and, by adding his knowledge, you will always find what you are looking for!

The endgame is a phase of the game that has been extensively analysed and formed to concrete conclusions, although in nearly all the books I know of, very little space is dedicated to the queen vs pieces endgame subject.

I think this is mainly because of space limitations and because it's a difficult theme that doesn't appear too interesting for the readers. But a modern chess player cannot really choose what he likes or prefers — this has nothing to do with openings!

Today we have shorter time-controls and there isn't really enough time to dig around on the subtleties of each ending. You have to know and to repeat knowledge; don't be carried away by the usual myth of the 'chess talent'. As I have repeatedly written and proved, 'talent is the excuse of the failed'.

'Unfortunately', the modern chess player is entitled and forced to work more than his predecessors. The modern chess trainer also needs to prepare more delicate themes, understand them and then teach them to his students as well. So, there is plenty of room for everything and for everybody who is thirsty for knowledge.

Knowledge is the key word, and knowledge is absorbed sub-consciously; it is impossible to remember everything you study. So, it is highly important to work with good material and good trainers in order to improve towards the ‘Chess Olym-pus’.

Nowadays the help of the Silicon Monster (chess analysis engines) is quite valuable, as it can save an author countless hours of analysis and checking. But still the role of the qualified trainer remains important; he knows where the truth is — he knows what to keep and what to throw away...

I do not want to hold a high nose and claim that everything I have written is perfect and completely sound; I am always aware of the surprise factor and I just try to write honestly and with responsibility.

As an author, I feel that I should especially congratulate four important figures of our chess literature world: Alexander Baburin, Karsten Muller, John Nunn and Jan Timman. Dr. John Nunn was kind enough to permit me to publish his analysis of the game Piket-Nunn, Wijk aan Zee 1990 — I truly thank him!

Finally, I would like to thank three readers who each contributed valuable time and effort to check and correct my work:

- Former FIDE Women World Champion, GM & FST Antoaneta Stefanova.
- Endgame Expert & Author, GM Karsten Müller.
- Lecturer in Computer Science, who has championed advances in the creation and use of chess endgame tables, Guy Haworth.

Have a nice reading journey!

Athens, 2016

Efstratios Grivas

EDITORIAL PREFACE

In this series of nine endgame books, FIDE Senior Trainer Adrian Mikhalchishin, FIDE Senior Trainer Efstratios Grivas and IGM Csaba Balogh combine their experience as trainers and as practical players to create something very special.

The authors aim for very understandable explanations of every endgame position in each book.

The specification:

- ◆ 1st book — Queen and pawn endgames.
- ◆ 2–3 — Minor piece endgames (bishop and knight endgames).
- ◆ 4–5 — These will feature the fight between different material constellations.
- ◆ 6–8 — These books are going to focus on the most common endgames, which are of course rook endings.
- ◆ 9th — This book will focus on exchanges and simplifications.

The main concept of each book is to provide theoretical knowledge which can be used in practical games. It means the focus of the books will be on positions which are the most likely to occur - and the practical playing of them.

That's why you will firstly meet the theoretical part, and secondly the practical examples of how games actually continued in a particular endgame.

Yes, you're right, you won't find too many very complicated studies, stunning manoeuvres or rarely-appearing positions — and there is a simple reason why not!

How often do we see positions, for example two knights vs pawn where one knight is blocking the pawn and the other one tries to get the king to the corner before releasing the second knight for the mate? Or constellations with crazy material on the board? This might happen in one game out of 100! You could spend hundreds of hours working on something that might bring you “only” a single point more out of 100 games!

Our approach is quite different: let's make more points in the other 99 games! And who knows, we might also be lucky in the remaining one, but actually, statistically, it would almost not matter.

“The Modern Endgame Manual” will make an expert out of you in most of the endgames which are going to appear in your long career as a chess player!

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The above sources were my main help and guide while writing this book. I would like to thank the (rest) of the authors for their contributions to chess literature and the chance they gave to all chess players to become better. Wikipedia was quite helpful too!

If I forgot to ‘mention’ somebody or if I used ‘modified’ material and didn’t mention the original author, I want to apologize. Obviously I didn’t do it on purpose; I don’t need to, as I am capable of writing and analysing things myself. I am just getting old and sometimes my collected old material fails to remind me exactly who did what...

CHAPTER 1

QUEEN VS QUEEN & BISHOP

Many interesting endings can arise from the rare opposition of a queen against a combination of major and minor pieces. We can accept as a general rule that, when there are no pawns on the board, the superior side can win if its material advantage is at least one rook (using standardized material value).

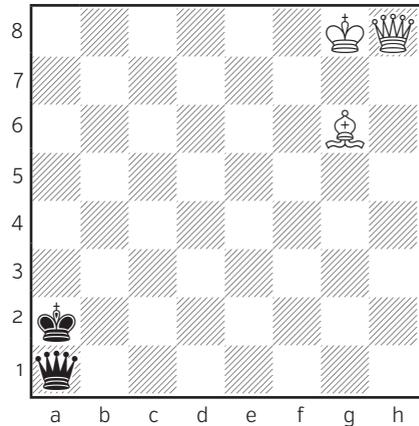
Without pawns, the ending of queen vs queen & bishop is drawn. Naturally, there do exist (as always) a few exceptions in which the defending king is caught in an uncomfortable position.

It has been proven that the bishop-side can win when his king is near enough to co-operate with the rest of his forces.

Usually, however, the queen and bishop don't co-operate in a successful manner due to the bishop's restriction to only the half of the squares on the board.

1

▷ Ni Hua
▶ Wu Wenjin
Beijing 2001

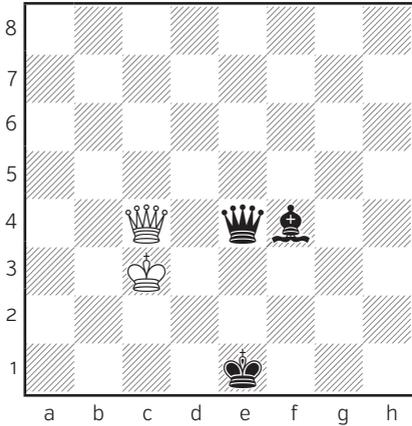


The white king is very far away and cannot assist, so the position remains drawn.

64. ♖f7+ ♔b1 65. ♚h1+ ♔b2
66. ♚h2+ ♔a3 67. ♚d6+ ♔b2
68. ♚d4+ ♔b1 69. ♚b4+ ♔c1
70. ♚f4+ ♔b2 71. ♚d4+ ♔b1
72. ♖g6+ ♔a2 73. ♚a4+ ♔b2
74. ♚c2+ ♔a3 75. ♖f7 ♚g1+ 76. ♔f8
♚e3 77. ♚a2+ ♔b4 78. ♚b2+ ♔c5
½-½

2

▷ Mladenov Svetlin
▶ Koch Thomas
Germany 2012



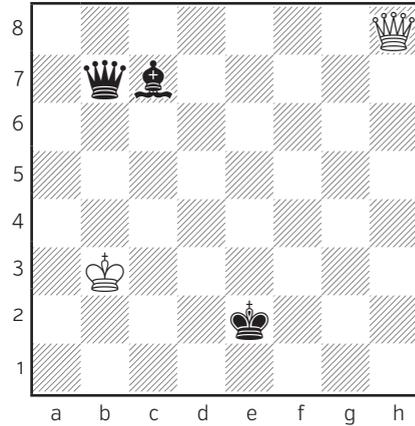
Here we have a model defence. White checks from the opposite-coloured squares to the bishop.

103... ♔e5+ 104. ♕b3 ♘d2 105. ♔h4+ ♕d1 106. ♔h1+ ♘e1 107. ♔c6 ♕d2 108. ♔g2+ ♕e3 109. ♔g1+ ♕e2 110. ♔g4+ ♕f2 111. ♔h4+ ♕f3 112. ♔h3+ ♕e4 113. ♔g4+ ♕e3 114. ♔g1+ ♕f3 115. ♔f1+ ♘f2 116. ♔d3+ ♘e3 117. ♔f1+ ♕e4 118. ♔g2+ ♕f5 119. ♔f3+ ♕e6 120. ♔c6+ ♕e7 121. ♔b7+ ♕d8 122. ♔c6 ♔d4 123. ♔c4 ♔xc4+ 124. ♕xc4 ½-½

Many factors can affect a game but the most usual in these endings is time-trouble, as they do tend to appear at a very late stage of the game, where time is limited...

3

▷ Muzychuk Anna
▶ Harikrishna Pentala
Wijk aan Zee 2010



86. ♕a2?

A losing move by the sister of the former Women's World Champion! 86. ♕c2, 86. ♕c3 or 86. ♕c4 were all good alternatives.

86... ♔d5+! 87. ♕b1 ♔e4+ 88. ♕a2 ♘e5

The bishop plays its part in the mating net, while the white queen has no available checks!

89. ♔h6

Or 89. ♔h5+ ♕d2! 90. ♔g5+ ♕c2 91. ♔e3 ♔c4+!-+.

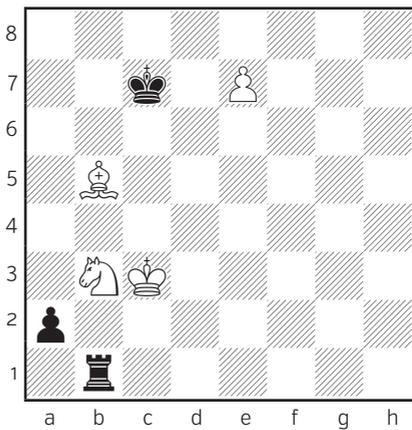
89... ♔a4+ 0-1

90. ♕b1 ♔b3+ 91. ♕c1 ♔d1#.

The following examples can prove the viability of the ending. Note that in all the positions the superior side's king was close enough to his counterpart.

4

▷ Wibe Terje Paul
 ▶ Hurme Harri
 Ybbs 1968



It appears that Black will queen as well, but White will have the move...

81. e8 ♔ ♖xb3+ 82. ♔xb3 a1 ♔
 83. ♔c6+

83. ♔d7+ is good as well.

83... ♔b8 84. ♔d6+! ♔b7

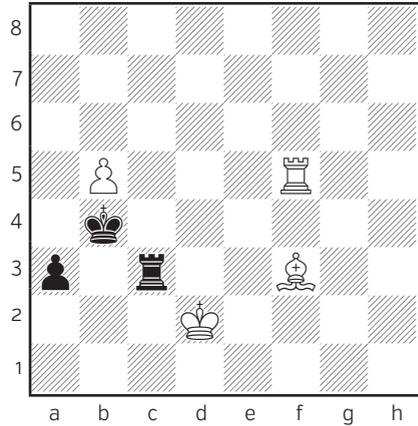
84... ♔c8 85. ♔d7+ ♔d8 86. ♔g4+ ♔e8 87. ♔h5#.

85. ♔c6+ ♔b6 86. ♔d5+ 1-0

And Black resigned: 86... ♔b5 87. ♔c6+ ♔a5 88. ♔c7+ ♔b5 89. ♔c4#.

5

▷ Moskalkenko Viktor
 ▶ Shchekachev Andrei
 St Petersburg 1993



What White needs here is some precise calculation.

71. ♖f4+!

By the way, 71.b6 wins as well.

71... ♖c4

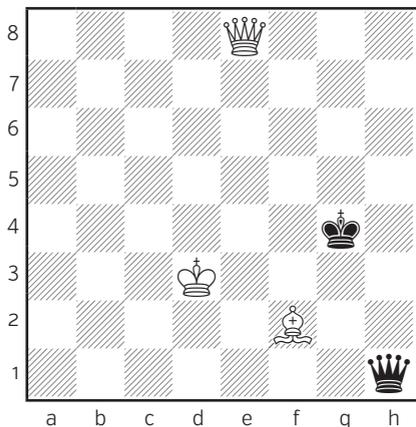
71... ♔b3 72. ♔d1+ ♔b2 73. ♖b4+-.

72. ♖xc4+ ♔xc4 73. ♔e2+! ♔b3 74. b6 a2 75. b7 a1 ♔ 76. b8 ♔+ ♔a3 77. ♔a7+ ♔b2 78. ♔d4+ ♔b1 1-0

And Black resigned due to 79. ♔d3+ ♔a2 80. ♔a4+ ♔b2 81. ♔b4+ ♔a2 82. ♔c4#.

6

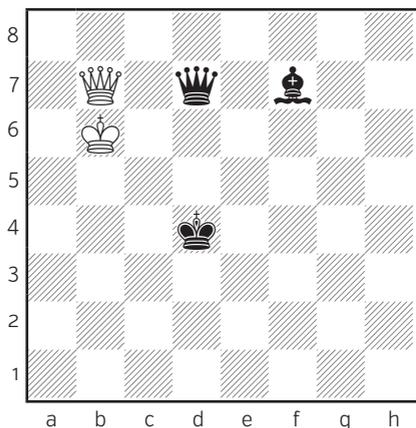
▷ Sarkar Justin
 ▶ Devereaux Maxim
 London 2000



75. ♖g6+ ♔f4 76. ♗g3+ ♔f3 77. ♖c6+
 ♔xg3 78. ♖xh1 1-0

7

▷ Dawson Jeffery
 ▶ Karstensen Christian
 Copenhagen 2006



Even if this position doesn't look great, White can still defend.

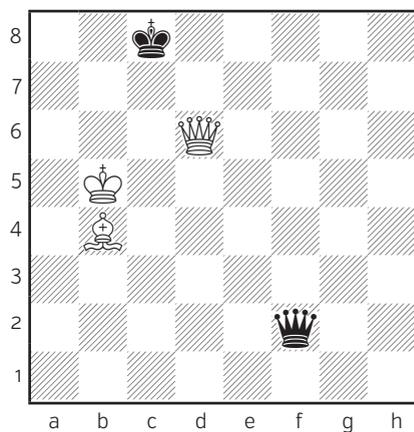
87... ♖d6+ 88. ♔a7 ♖a3+ 89. ♔b8
 ♖d6+ 90. ♔c8?

White blunders! Fine was 90. ♔a7=.

90... ♗e6+ 0-1

8

▷ Langer Mikhail
 ▶ Pruess David
 Stillwater 2007



61. ♖e6+! ♔c7 62. ♗d6+

The bishop decisively joins to the attack.

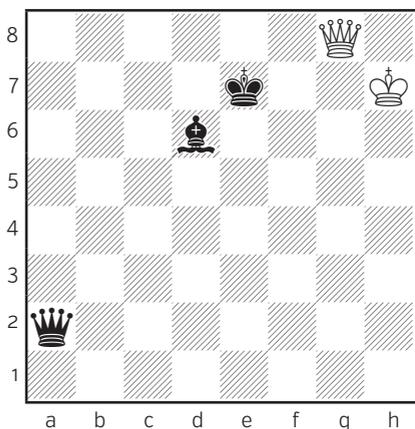
62... ♔b7

62... ♔d8 63. ♖e7+ ♔c8 64. ♖c7#.

63. ♖d7+ ♔a8 64. ♖c8+ 1-0

9

▷ Polok Kacper
 ▶ Krainski Aleksander
 Poronin 2014



76... ♔h2+!

The black queen will approach the white king like a sneak-thief!

77. ♔g6 ♕g3+ 78. ♔h7 ♕h4+ 79. ♔g6
 ♕g4+ 80. ♔h7 ♕h5+ 81. ♔g7 ♖e5#
 0-1

QUEEN & PAWNS VS QUEEN & BISHOP

In general everything depends on the specific position! The pawns' side should usually opt for a queen exchange to reach a favourable pawns vs bishop ending.

I wouldn't say that the pawns' side is completely out of danger of losing, as sometimes the pawns can be an obstacle to the perpetual check! Feeling too safe in chess is a good step towards losing, so stay alert!

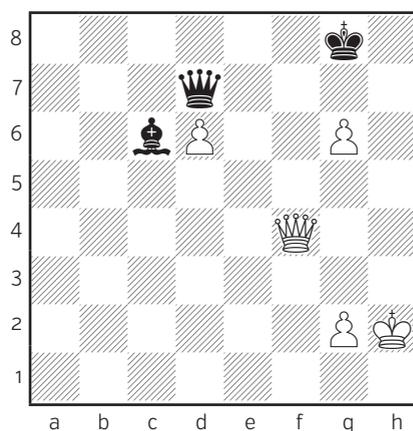
There are no concrete rules of thumb as exist in numerous positions but in general vs two pawns the draw shouldn't be difficult, while vs three or more pawns things can start to become dangerous.

As usual, co-operation is the starting point; the queen should take care of the opposite-coloured squares to the bishop.

Let's examine some positions:

1

▷ Ponomariov Ruslan
 ▶ Grischuk Alexander
 Moscow 2009

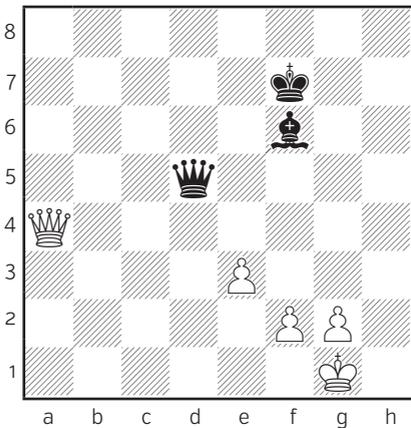


Easy stuff for Black - weak and separate pawns are never really a threat...

55. ♖f6 ♘d5 56. ♙g3 ♚e6 57. ♚xe6+ ♘xe6 58. ♙f4 ♙g7 59. ♙e5 ♘d7 60. ♙d5 ½-½

2

▷ Nakamura Hikaru
▶ Gelfand Boris
London 2013



White's three connected pawns look scary but Black's set-up is solid and his king will assist in stopping the pawns as well.

54.g4?!

54. ♖g4, with the idea of e4 and g3 should be more promising for White.

54... ♚f3!

Blocking the pawns and restricting White from any plan for improvement.

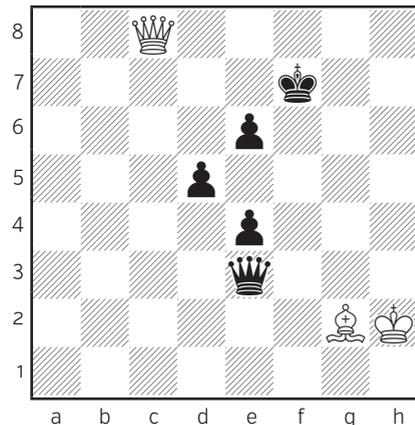
55. ♚d7+ ♙f8 56. ♚f5

Probably there is nothing better, but now the draw is not so difficult.

56... ♚xf5 57.gxf5 ♙f7 58.f4 ♘b2 59. ♙g2 ♙f6 60.e4 ♘c1 61. ♙f3 ♘d2 62. ♙g4 ♘c1 63.e5+ ♙f7 64. ♙g5 ♘d2 65. ♙g4 ♘c1 66. ♙g5 ♘d2 67.f6 ♙e6 68. ♙g6 ♘xf4 69.f7 ♘h6! 70. ♙xh6 ♙xf7 71. ♙g5 ♙e6 72. ♙f4 ♙e7 73. ♙f5 ♙f7 74.e6+ ♙e7 75. ♙e5 ♙e8 76. ♙d6 ♙d8 77.e7+ ♙e8 78. ♙e6 ½-½

3

▷ Andersson Ulf
▶ Kasparov Garry
Madrid 1988

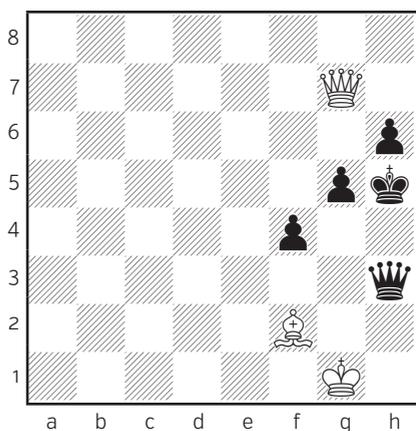


As is logical, the connected pawns are always scary to meet. But here the black queen is not so well-placed, allowing White to achieve a perpetual check or material gain.

58. ♖c7+ ♔f6 59. ♗d8+ ♕e5 60. ♖c7+
 ♔d4 61. ♖b6+ ♔d3 62. ♖xe6 ♖f4+
 63. ♕g1 ♖e3+ 64. ♕h2 ♖c5 65. ♖e5!
 ½-½

4

▷ Lagno Kateryna
 ▶ Vescovi Giovanni
 Wijk aan Zee 2006



Again a difficult position for White - she has to be accurate...

54... ♖e6 55. ♖c3! ♖e4

55...g4 56. ♖c5+ ♔g6 57. ♖c7=.

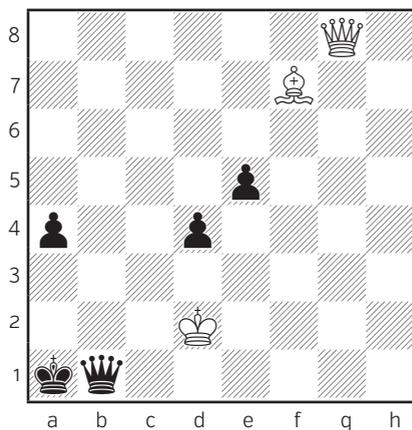
56. ♖h3+ ♔g6 57. ♖c8

The white queen takes care of the light squares and the bishop of the dark ones.

57... ♖d5 58. ♖a6+ ♔h5 59. ♖e2+
 g4 60. ♖e8+ ♔g5 61. ♖e7+ ♔g6
 62. ♖e8+ ♔g5 ½-½

5

▷ Shulman Yuri
 ▶ Marin Mihail
 Reykjavik 2009



The black king is pretty safe, while the black pawns are free to move.

49...e4! 50. ♖e8 a3

Black advances all his pawns and in the same time he keeps the shelter for his king.

51. ♖a4 ♖b2+ 52. ♔e1 e3

Good dark square domination!

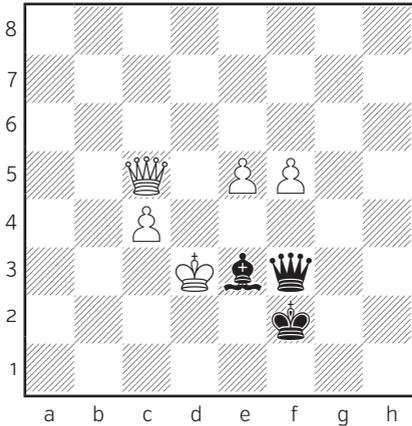
53. ♖d1+ ♖b1!

The ending is easily winning, as the bishop cannot stop all the pawns.

54. ♔e2 ♖xd1+ 55. ♔xd1 ♔b2 0-1

6

▷ Hornicek Jiri
 ▷ Zvara Tomas
 Czech Republic 2000



Here White overdid things!

61. ♔c8?

He should have gone for 61. ♔d5 ♕xf5+ 62. ♕e4 accepting a draw.

61... ♖c5+!

Now Black mates, as the white pawns are 'assisting' his plans!

62. ♔c2 ♕e4+

Quicker is 62... ♖d4 63. ♕b8 ♔e2!.

63. ♔b2 ♕d4+ 64. ♔b3 ♕d3+ 65. ♔b2

65. ♔a4 ♕xc4+ 66. ♔a5 ♕b4+ 67. ♔a6 ♕b6#.

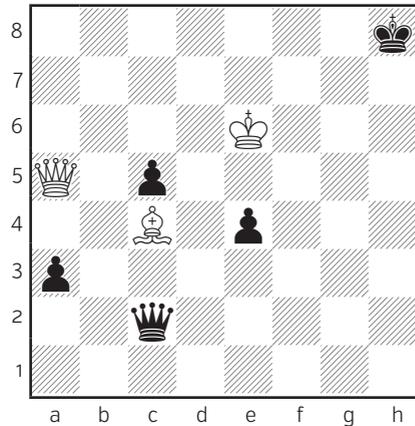
65... ♕d2+ 66. ♔b1 ♕b4+ 0-1

67. ♔c2 ♕a4+ 68. ♔d2 ♖b4+ 69. ♔d3 ♕d1+ 70. ♔e4 ♕f3+ 71. ♔d4 ♔e2! 72. e6 ♖d6! and... ♕d3 mates!

And here is a second example of what can happen in no time!

7

▷ Moiseenko Vadim
 ▷ Sarkar Justin
 Riga 2016



It seems that Black is fine, but the white forces are well connected and can deliver a deadly finish.

48. ♕d8+! ♔h7 49. ♕h4+ ♔g7 50. ♕g3+ ♔h7 51. ♖d5!

Preparing the end. Again the pawns block the perpetual check!

51... ♕d3 52. ♕h4+ ♔g7 53. ♕g5+ ♔h7 54. ♔e7! a2 55. ♔f8!

Completing the mating net.

55... ♕f3+ 56. ♖f7 1-0

